

A MARKETER'S PLAYBOOK

The new **wellness** marketing playbook

A marketer's guide to claims, creators, and proof for the next generation of wellness spending.

237 HOURS OF CONVERSATION WITH
1,400+ GEN Z + GEN ALPHA VOICES

JULY 2026

START HERE

Recently, our insights team published the Health + Wellness edit of the **Next Gen Spenders** report — 237 hours of conversation with 1,400+ Gen Z and Gen Alpha participants on how they spend, what they trust, and which products start to feel like a scam.

This playbook turns those signals into the practical layer: better claims, sharper creator briefs, and smarter campaigns for GTM teams trying to stay fluent. Four moves, each with the data behind it, the rule that follows, and a checklist your team can run today.

01

Claims need receipts

Where is the proof?

02

Influence is not a credential

Who can credibly make it?

03

Segment by motive

What is the entry point?

04

AI can hold the clipboard

Is AI staying in its lane?



SECTION 01 · CLAIMS NEED RECEIPTS

Receipts. **Proof.** Timeline.

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

1 in 5

name proof — research, third-party testing, real numbers — as the top trust driver.

15%

name reviews as a trust driver — with bad reviews often doing the most work.

~1 in 3 females

flag coupon codes and affiliate links as instant disqualifiers — about 2× the male rate.

Gen Next distrusts wellness claims that feel too perfect, too fast, or too sure of themselves. They do, however, reward restraint — what the product cannot do, what proof exists, and what the customer still has to bring to the table.

On what makes a claim believable

"what makes a product believable is not making any wild statements like 'take this pill and you'll lose fat in 30 days.' i want something that'll **go alongside my efforts** rather than it do all the effort."

MALE / 26 / HUMBLE, TX

HEALTH + WELLNESS

What this means for marketers

01 Careful with speed.

If the product works best alongside a behavior — going to the gym, using it consistently, changing a routine — say so. This generation understands that good things take time. The promise gets more believable when the brand is honest about what the customer still has to do.

OKAY

"Results in 30 days."

BETTER

"Results build with consistent use over time."



SEEN IN THE MARKET

Dieux's "rituals, not miracles" tells the customer not to expect magic — which makes the promise feel more believable.

02 Outside voices.

Brand-site reviews can help, but third-party reviews carry more weight because they feel less filtered. Pull them closer to the claim, especially when the promise is doing heavy lifting.

On reviews

"reviews are very very important to me... it has to be a **third party website** that's not affiliated with the brand too — I feel like they can skew reviews if it's their own website."

FEMALE / 18 / AMES, IA

HEALTH + WELLNESS

03 Show off the tradeoffs.

A product that works for everyone, instantly, with no caveats, starts to feel fake. Name the pros and cons. Say who it is for, who may not get the best result, what usage notes matter, and where expectations should be managed.

OKAY

"Works for all skin types."

BETTER

"Best for oily and combination skin;
sensitive skin should patch test first."

04 Proof should be easy to find.

Research, third-party testing, certifications, real numbers, and outside reviews should live close to the claim. Do not make someone go hunting for the reason to believe.

On what counts as proof

"for a product to be believable, there has to be unbiased sources... a supplement or a vitamin must be **third-party tested**, specifically for things that are known contaminants within the product."

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

HEALTH + WELLNESS

OKAY

Proof buried in the FAQ, footer, or ingredient page.

BETTER

Proof visible in the ad, PDP hero, packaging, caption, or claim module.



SEEN IN THE MARKET

Ritual makes proof part of the product experience: traceable ingredient sourcing, third-party testing, certifications, and published research live close to the claim.

05 Make before-and-after feel believable.

Use real people, real timelines, and real texture. If you show results, say what else may have happened: how many applications, how many weeks or months, and whether the product was used alongside another routine, treatment, or diet. The question is not just "Did we use AI?" It is "Could this *look* like it was made by AI?"



SECTION 02 · WHO CAN MAKE THE CLAIM

Influence is not a credential

Young consumers are skeptical of wellness advice that looks too polished, or too far outside the creator's actual expertise. Trust compounds when the creator can explain why they are credible enough to make the claim.

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

22%

of participants name **no** health or wellness creator they actually trust. Some say the most famous creators are the most suspect — reach and credibility have almost nothing to do with each other in wellness.

The Medicube case is the clearest illustration of the pattern. Even with Kardashian and Alix Earle behind the product, one respondent put it plainly:

On the Medicube campaign

"all those people already have beautiful skin and there's no way to really show it. it makes things more believable if I can see **real results from real people** and not paid promotions."



[C] FEMALE / 16 / LOS ANGELES, CA

VOICE NOTE

Doctor Mike was one of the few creators trusted by a meaningful number of respondents across genders — largely because his authority is obvious: he is an actual doctor.

THE RULE

Find the creator with **permission to make the claim.**

That permission can come from credentials or lived use. A trainer can speak to a recovery routine. A creator with a visible before-and-after journey can make a skin or fitness product feel more real. But a famous face with perfect skin and a discount code may make the product feel *less* credible, not more.

Claim-risk ladder

RISK	CATEGORY EXAMPLES	CREATOR REQUIREMENT
Low	Taste, convenience, routine fit	Lifestyle creators can work
Medium	Sleep, skin, energy, digestion	Lived use + clear explanation required
High	Hormones, anxiety, weight, mental health	Expert, clinician, or very careful limits

Creator brief check

- ☐ Why would this audience trust this person on this topic?
- ☐ Does the product fit what they already talk about, buy, use, or believe?
- ☐ Can the creator explain why it works, when it works, and what they actually noticed?
- ☐ Is the creator allowed to mention tradeoffs, limits, or who the product is not for?
- ☐ Would a coupon code, affiliate link, or too-perfect testimonial weaken trust?



Segment by **motive**

The same wellness product can read as proof, pressure, or scam bait depending on who is looking at it.

That is the trap for brands: one product may need several messages, because different audiences need different reasons to care and different objections answered.

Red light therapy is the clearest example in our data. For some it is skincare; for others it is expensive wellness theater. Same product, two completely different reactions:

SEES: SKINCARE

"Love it. Everyone does it. I've seen benefits to my skin from it and **10 out of 10**, 100% recommend."

[C] FEMALE / 23 / N. CHARLESTON, SC

HEALTH + WELLNESS

SEES: THEATER

"first of all it's creepy... too much like one of those scam LA health nut things. like I'm supposed to buy a \$100+ mask?? they don't have that in the blue zones and they're doing just fine."

[C] FEMALE / 19 / BROOKLYN, NY

HEALTH + WELLNESS

One person sees visible skin benefits and social proof; another sees cost, hype, and a product that feels out of touch. The split shows up in the numbers: **females** are more into red light overall and skin is the #1 reason across genders, while **males** are 2× more likely to frame it as recovery — and uniquely flag hair regrowth.

On red light — recovery + hair

"they really talk about the benefits of red light therapy and how it can help reduce wrinkles and clear your skin, but also help with hair growth and make your skin ultimately healthier."



MALE / 18 / HURST, TX

VOICE NOTE

Red light, read three ways

One product, three motives — each needs a different message.

● Skin / appearance

SEES: VISIBLE IMPROVEMENT

LEAD Realistic timelines, before-and-afters, and reviews from people with similar skin.

WHY They want visible proof — but overproduced results can make the claim feel fake.

● Recovery / performance

SEES: A ROUTINE TOOL

LEAD Use case, cadence, fit with training, and measurable recovery context.

WHY They need to know when to use it, why it belongs in the routine, and what result to watch.

● Skeptic / hype-fatigued

SEES: WELLNESS THEATER

LEAD Caveats, third-party proof, and what the product does not promise.

WHY They are not waiting to be inspired; they are looking for reasons to dismiss it.

Wellness entry-point map

Red light is one example. Before you decide what to say, figure out which motive the product serves. Use these as planning lenses, not fixed consumer segments.



Proof

What evidence makes the claim believable?



Routine

Where does this fit in the day?



Appearance

What visible feedback are they watching?



Relief

What stress, sleep, or decompression need does this answer?



Performance

What number, score, or progress signal matters?



Skepticism

What would make this feel overhyped, expensive, or fake?



Occasion

What repeatable moment does the product own?



The clipboard? Yes. The lab coat? No.

Gen Next is most receptive to AI when the job is practical and bounded: organize a thought, compare ingredients, build a plan, or make a routine easier to follow.

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

35%

trust AI to build a workout plan, meal plan, or diet approach — the most concrete use case.

65%

of females rank AI chatbots as their **most-distrusted** source for health info.

46%

of males distrust AI too — they distrust TikTok most, but AI is close behind.

The most trusted use case is also the most bounded: give me the structure, help me compare, make it easier to follow. The wall is **authority**. One respondent drew the line clearly — AI can help her narrow down what to ask a doctor; it cannot be the doctor.

On AI and diagnosis

"if I have something I'm not gonna trust AI to diagnose me — I'm gonna use AI as a search engine to narrow down what I may have so I can present my suspicions to a doctor ."



[C] FEMALE / 19 / IRVINE, CA

VOICE NOTE

Where AI can help

HELPFUL ROLE	RISKY ROLE
Pattern spotter — "You mentioned poor sleep three nights this week."	Diagnoser
Comparator — "Here is how these ingredients differ."	Claim validator
Planner — "Here is a workout plan based on your goals."	Therapist substitute
Question generator — "Ask your provider about..."	Testimonial generator

The same skepticism shows up in copy. Gen Next can feel when wellness language gets too polished, too templated, or too obviously generated.

On AI-coded copy

"you genuinely can not tell. only thing you can tell is if it sounds like it's AI.
for example, 'it's not this, it's that' — AI makes things sound like scams ."

[C] MALE / 22 / EMERYVILLE, CA

HEALTH + WELLNESS

AI-coded copy gives Gen Next the ick. Worse, it can make the promise feel *unearned* — too smooth to trust.

Synthetic vibe check

Before a wellness message goes live, look for:

- ☐ Does it skip who the product may not be for, when it may not work, or what to know before trying?
- ☐ Does it sound scientific without naming the ingredient, behavior, pathway, study, or feature?
- ☐ Does the product appear to work for every body, routine, goal, and timeline?
- ☐ Do testimonials repeat the same benefit, sentence shape, or emotional arc?
- ☐ Does the copy sound emotionally fluent but nonspecific?
- ☐ Does the message open with the promise and make the reader hunt for the reason to believe?

HOW [CAFETERIA] CAN HELP

Test what they'll **believe** before they buy.

Wellness marketing is getting harder because the audience is getting sharper. Use this playbook to spot where a claim, creator brief, product page, or launch message needs a sharper gut check.

And when you want to know how Gen Z and Gen Alpha actually *hear* it before the hard launch, bring it to [cafeteria]. Ask us things like:

→ Does this claim sound credible, or does it sound like wellness math?

→ Which version of this product page makes the benefit easiest to believe?

→ What proof would make this message feel worth trying?

→ Which motive should we lead with — proof, routine, appearance, relief, performance, skepticism, or occasion?

→ What would make this feel trusted, questioned, or dismissed?

Get in touch → HELLO@TEAMCAFETERIA.COM