

Consumers attitudes to sustainability in the beer industry



About the project and the research



This research was undertaken as part of a dissertation for an MSc Global Sustainability Solutions student to help understand consumer attitudes towards sustainability in the brewing industry.

Over 258 consumers were surveyed and this report covers three key topics; understanding consumer attitudes to sustainability, are consumers willing to pay more and how to effectively engage consumers on sustainability.

The goal of this research was to help understand how brands that are taking climate action can ensure they can communicate the work they're doing to help grow sales.

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As the value of the green economy in the UK surpasses £1 billion*, there has never been a more important time for brands to engage with sustainability. Yet, understanding how to attract green consumers is often a challenge.

This research has been incredibly useful for the Zevero team in understanding how we help breweries share their climate journey. My key takeaway from this report is that integrating sustainability messaging into each customer interaction—right down to every pour—is crucial in engaging consumers.



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*[Source](#).

Project Executive Summary



- Taste and price are primary considerations for beer consumers.
- Sustainability efforts of breweries are becoming a crucial factor in consumer choices and is the third largest factor in choosing a beer.
- However, consumers often struggle to assess a brewery's sustainability status.
- Displaying sustainability impacts in on-trade sales and through websites or supermarkets can influence consumer preferences towards lower carbon beers.
- Crucially, consumers demand transparency and data to back up any climate claims.
- Partnering with a company like Zevero can help a brewery understand its climate impact and establish it as a leader in sustainable brewing

Overview



- 1 Survey participants; age distribution and purchasing habits

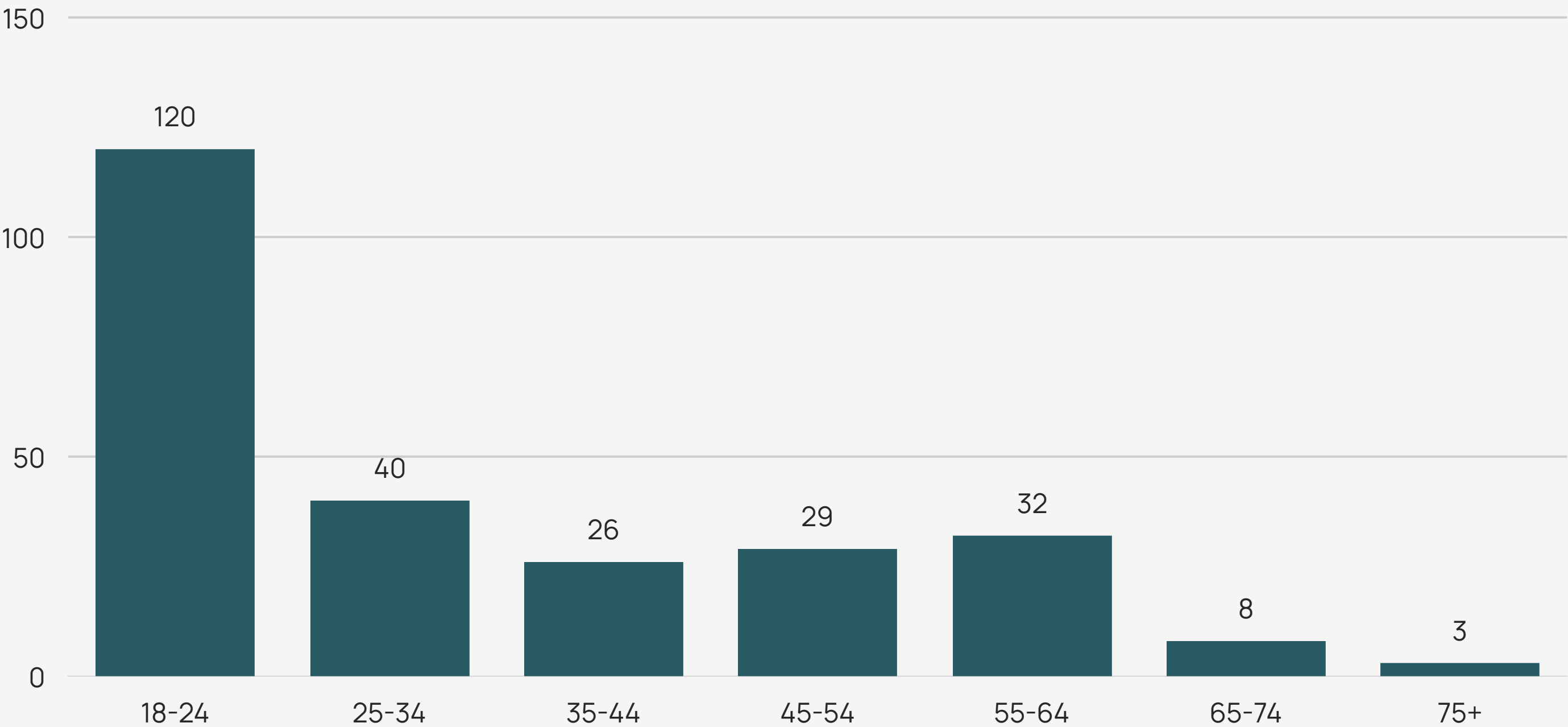
- 2 How do consumers choose a sustainable beer?

- 3 Are consumers willing to pay more for sustainable consumption?

- 4 Engaging green consumers

Survey Age Distribution

The distribution was skewed towards those aged 18-24. The results from this survey are, therefore, more representative of younger consumers but shows breweries how to engage with the next generation of beer drinkers.



Where do consumers purchase beer?

The vast majority of people purchase beer in a pub or from supermarkets. Therefore, finding ways to engage consumers on brewers' sustainable practices at the point of purchase is crucial to effectively communicate sustainability.

81%

Pubs and Bars

56%

Supermarkets

8%

Other

Includes: online, breweries, bottle shops, tap rooms, beer subscriptions



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How often would consumers choose the sustainable option over a non-sustainable option?

Although most consumers care about the sustainability factor of a beer, quality and price are always prioritised.

Consumers selecting 'other' stated that they didn't know how to tell a beer is sustainable. Some respondents also said that sustainability does not influence decision-making, price and quality is more important.

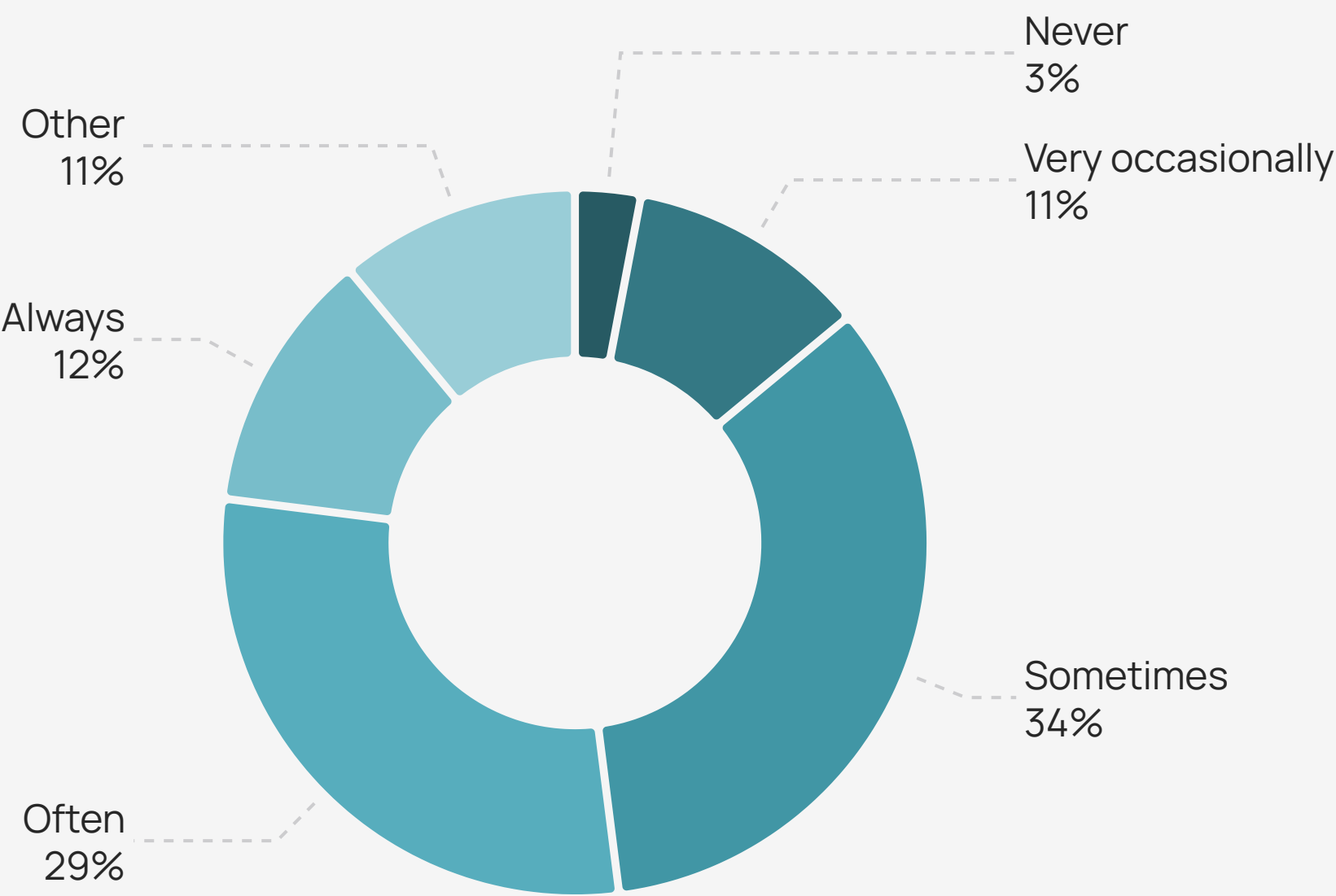
75%

of respondents would at least sometimes choose the sustainable option.

80%

80% of global consumers saying they are more likely to be swayed by a retailer offering a bigger choice of sustainable products.*

[*Source - NIRAS.](#)



Why might a consumer forego the sustainable option?

Sustainability can't be a replacement for a great product. Consumers want to drink a beer that tastes great and at a fair price. Every brewery should already be focused on making this happen, but sustainability can be an important way to differentiate your product.

However, **55% of consumers can't tell if a beer is sustainable**, and expecting consumers to know you've written a blog post on what you're doing to reduce your impact probably won't help you cut through the noise.

To overcome this, breweries need to find effective ways to communicate their impact and continue to spread awareness about the work they're doing. Section four highlights steps breweries can take to make this happen.

Interestingly, this survey found that 18% of consumers are not willing to try a new beer. Therefore, tastings or promotions would not only help communicate sustainability but also encourage consumers to try new beers and brands.

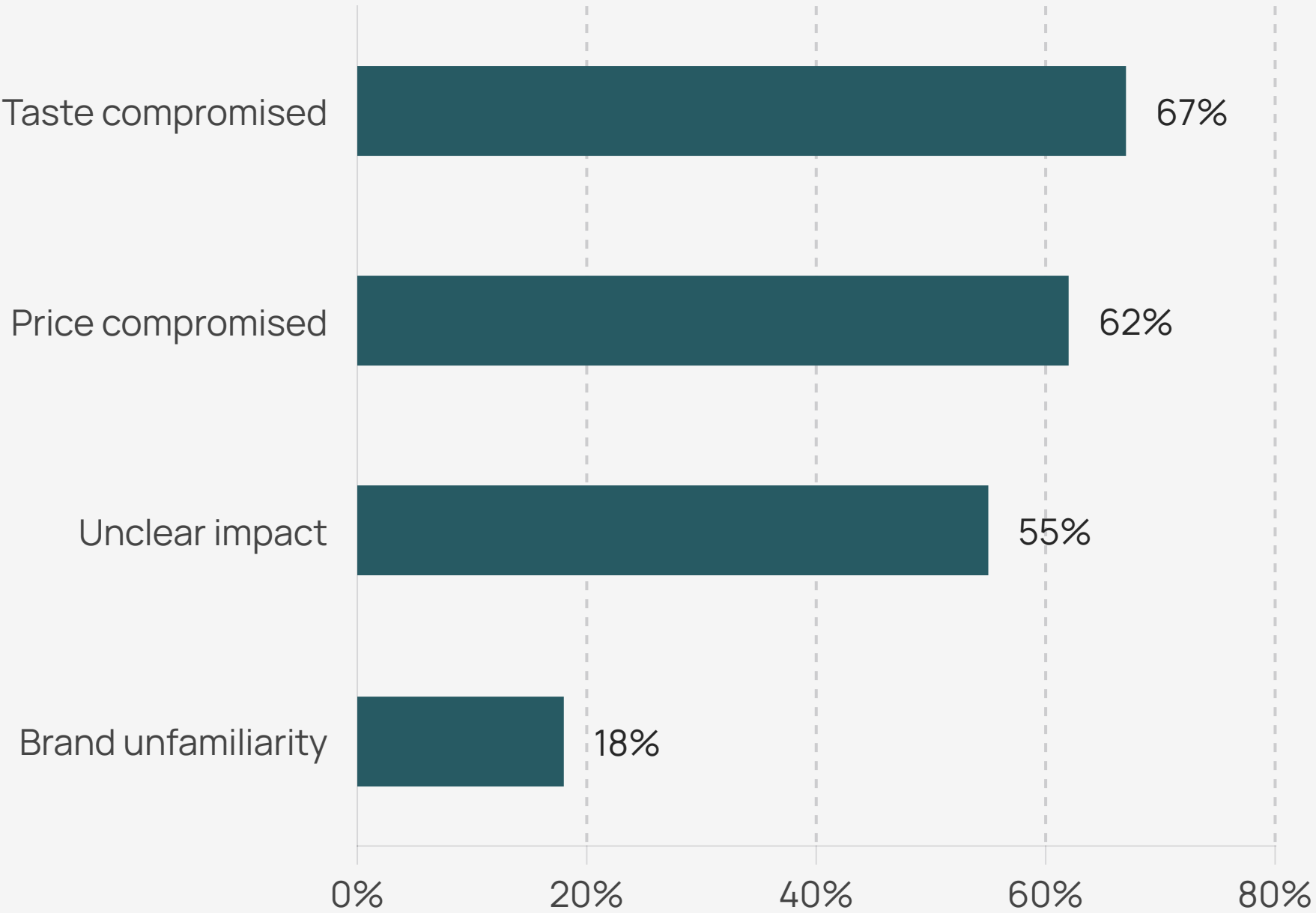


Table: What consumers think is important when choosing a sustainable beer.

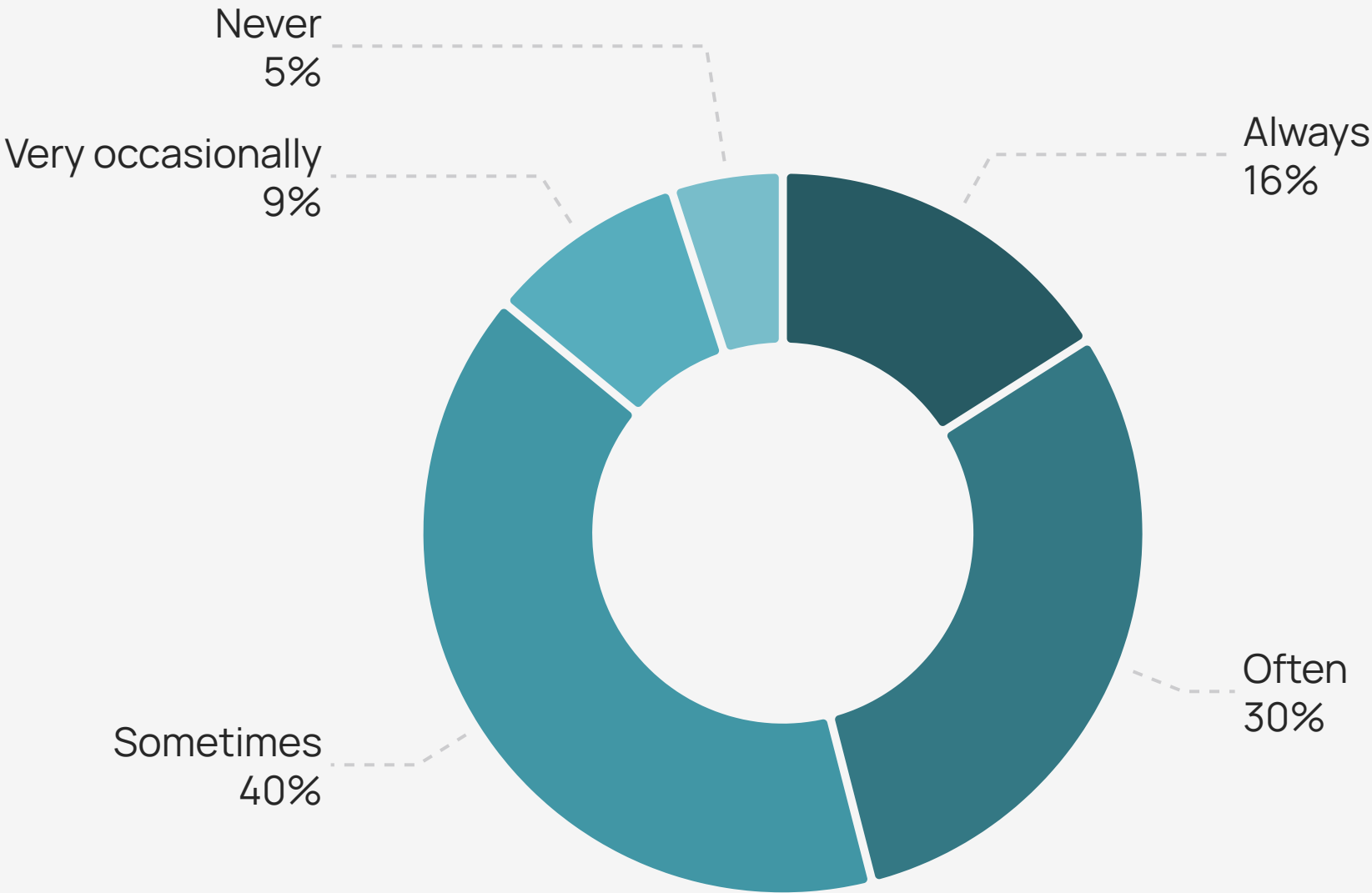
Would consumers be willing to pay slightly more for a sustainable beer?

Hypothetically, most consumers willing to pay more would do so because they believe it is the **right thing to do** or they are looking to **reduce their environmental impact**.

However, price shows as the second biggest factor for a consumer to forego sustainable consumption. We found that on average, consumers suggested they would be willing to pay **between 10p and £2 more** for a sustainable option.

It is important to recognise that there is often a difference between what consumers say and what they do. This is particularly important during the 2023 cost of living crisis.

The good news is that research, both from Zevero's customers and more generally, suggests that **sustainability can help breweries reduce their costs in the medium to long term**. By being a more efficient brewery, and investing in projects like on-site solar and carbon capture, breweries can use sustainability as an opportunity to lower production costs.



What do consumers look for when actively engaging in sustainable consumption?

By now, it's clear that taste and price of a beer are top priorities for consumers. However putting these two factors aside, these are the other prime factors that consumers search for for indications of sustainable consumption:

Also, while a number of consumers suggested that local is important to them, it's important to know that local doesn't always mean green. How crops are grown is more important than where they are grown*.



Response	Count	% of responses
Packaging / branding (inc. logos)	34	13%
Carbon footprint displayed	28	11%
Local production and/or ingredients	25	10%
Marketing / advertising demonstrating sustainability	23	9%
Transparency / credibility	17	7%
Supply chain source	13	5%

*Understanding the emissions of malt and hops.

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What determines whether a consumer would pay more for a sustainable beer?

As we can see again, price and taste are the key reasons that a consumer would choose a sustainable beer. After this, transparency and credibility of climate data are key requirements.

Zevero plays a huge role in consumer determinants ranked 3 and 4 on the table. Hence, our work brings great added value to the consumer.



Figure - word cloud from consumers answers.

Response	Count	% Response
Taste	123	47%
How much more expensive it is	35	14%
Transparency / credibility	31	12%
Clear explanation of how it is sustainable	25	10%
Effective marketing	13	5%
Quality	10	4%
Whether additional cost is used for good	9	3%
Recognisable brand	8	3%
Disposable income	7	3%
Reputation among consumers	7	3%

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1 Survey age distribution and purchasing habits

2 How do consumers choose a sustainable beer?

3 Will consumers pay more for a sustainable beer?

4 How to engage sustainable conscious consumers

How can breweries effectively communicate the impact of their beer with consumers?

55% of consumers can't tell if a beer is sustainable, therefore breweries need to think of innovative ways to communicate their impact at the point of purchase and through their branding. These options may include:

Branding and Visuals:

- Product labelling
- Fun, eye-catching designs
- Beer name implying sustainability
 - Clearhead by Bristol Beer Factory is a great example of a low-alc beer using the name to help users understand the product.

Digital and Engagement:

- QR codes linking to the brewery's sustainability webpage
- Direct interaction with consumers e.g. tap take-overs

Certifications:

- B Corp certification
- Carbon footprinting with a third party



Figure - word cloud from consumers answers about how to effectively communicate sustainability and a beer.

Some examples of brands that communicate sustainability well



GIPSY HILL

As part of their carbon-negative beer release with Wildfarmed barley, Gipsy Hill made pump clips that highlight the saving per pint. The team have also created 3D-printed tap handles using waste plastic.



Carbon Footprint Per Can	0.43 kgCO ₂ e
Raw Materials	0.12 kgCO ₂ e
Processing	0.11 kgCO ₂ e
Packaging	0.14 kgCO ₂ e

DEYA BREWING COMPANY

DEYA were one of the first UK breweries to put their emissions per product on every can and link to their sustainability page on their website.



Carbon Footprint Per Pint	0.35 kgCO ₂ e
Raw Materials	0.13 kgCO ₂ e
Processing	0.12 kgCO ₂ e
Packaging	0.02 kgCO ₂ e

What sustainable beer brands are consumers aware of and why?

How do consumers know the brand is sustainable?

Brand Communication:

- Packaging: Eco-friendly materials, showcasing sustainability (e.g. JUBEL's product info).
- Advertising: Highlighting green initiatives (e.g. BrewDog's carbon-negative claim).
- Digital Outreach: Social media and websites promoting sustainability efforts.

Certifications & Recognitions:

- B Corp status: Mark of environmental and social responsibility.
- Awards: E.g., SIBA awards for sustainable practices.

Community Engagement:

- Word of Mouth: Consumer discussions on sustainable brands.
- Sustainability Reports: Detailed insights into a brand's green commitments.

Brands consumers said were sustainable



It's worth noting a number of respondents also mentioned that while they saw Brewdog were doing a lot, they questioned some of their work and the potential for greenwashing.

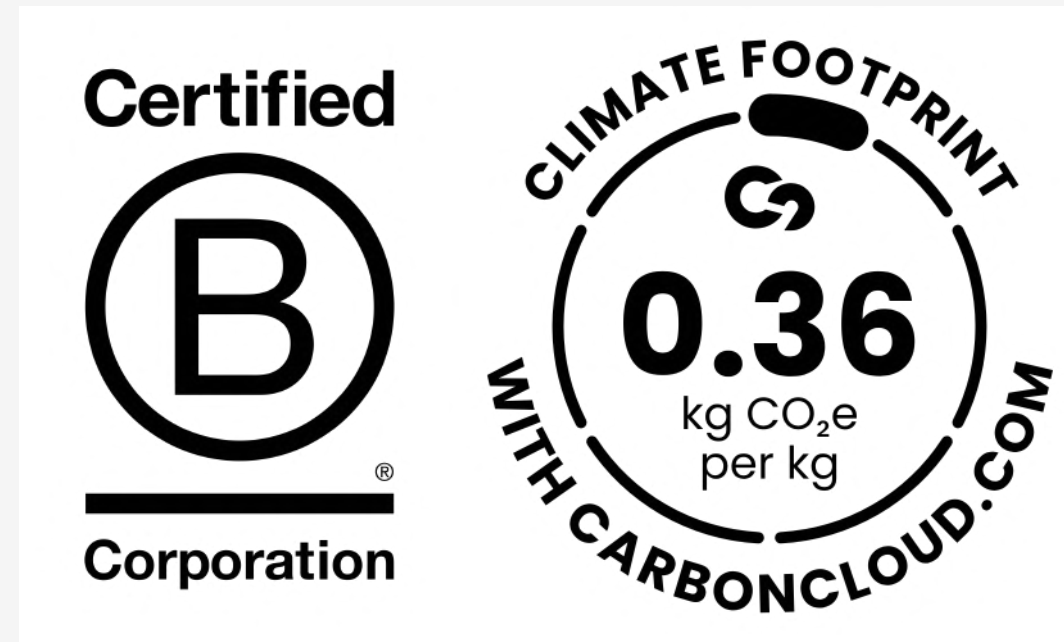
How can breweries communicate effectively with consumers in the on-trade?



Point of Purchase Displays

The point of purchase is crucial and the limited real estate that independent breweries are given can be used to tell the story of the beer a consumer is buying.

- Display the carbon footprint on the pump clip
- Use a QR code to take consumers to your sustainability page and give them more data
- Use the design to imply sustainability, perhaps innovate and use spent grain beer mats.



Universal Symbols or Rating Systems

Recognisable symbols and ratings help consumers know if a brand is sustainable.

- There are now over 1,500 B-Corps in the UK and the brand value is increasingly important
- Carbon footprint labels with the emissions per kg or litre of a product can help consumers compare products but are often pricey.



Tap Take-Overs and Educate Bar Staff

The person selling your beer to consumers is not your staff member. Build an education campaign so bar staff can talk about your beer with pride.

- Help bar staff understand the story of your beer and the work you're trying to do.
- 82% of consumers are willing to try a new beer, offering samples with a story can bring you new customers.

Does your brewery need help with its climate plan?

Get in touch to see how Zevero can help.

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