Harmonya

CATEGORY
TRENDS
2026

TREND FOCUS: CLEAN LABEL IS MATURING

TOP 5
TRENDS

1 Functional Everything

2 **CLEAN LABEL IS MATURING**
Our second report in this series covers how shoppers respond to clean label claims across four product categories.
Missed the first report? Check it out.

3 Purposeful Indulgence

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INTRODUCTION

This report examines how shoppers respond to clean label positioning across consumer categories using large-scale review and discussion data, all sourced via Harmonya's Insights Agent.

Clean label and ingredient transparency appear across most major categories, but review behavior suggests these claims function as trust signals rather than primary drivers of satisfaction. Shoppers reference ingredient simplicity, "no artificial," and "free from" language when they are scanning for risk reduction, sensitive use cases, or product credibility.

Across food and beverage, personal care, household cleaning, and pet care, clean label language appears alongside experience language rather than replacing it. Taste, texture, comfort, ease of use, and visible results remain the most common drivers of positive sentiment.

The analysis focuses on where shoppers reference clean label claims, what they associate those claims with, and where skepticism emerges around ambiguity, reformulations, or perceived greenwashing.

SCOPE

This report analyzes shopper behavior across four categories:

- Food and Beverage
- Personal Care
- Household Cleaning
- Pet Care

Findings reflect how clean label positioning performs across different product contexts rather than category-specific tactics.

METHODOLOGY

Insights are based on analysis of consumer reviews and Reddit discussions collected between October 2025 and January 2026.

Review data captures post-purchase evaluation, including sentiment drivers, attribute mentions, and outcome descriptions. Reddit data captures earlier-stage evaluation, where shoppers discuss use cases, ingredient concerns, performance expectations, and tradeoffs.

Together, these sources provide visibility into how functional expectations are formed, tested, and reinforced over time.

FOOD AND
BEVERAGE

CLEAN LABEL AS A SECONDARY SIGNAL

In food and beverage categories, clean label language appears infrequently in reviews and is typically **secondary to taste.**

Across sports drinks, powder concentrates, snack bars, and nutrition bars (46,713 reviews, last 3 months), clean label and simple ingredient language appears in 1.0% of reviews.

Mentions concentrate most in nutrition bars (1.7%), followed by snack bars (0.8%), powder concentrates (0.6%), and sports drinks (0.5%).

When clean label language appears, it is most often paired with "no artificial sweeteners" and "natural ingredients," and it is evaluated alongside sensory experience

Customer voice suggests clean label is treated as a baseline expectation.

"No artificial sweeteners"

"Natural ingredients"

Shoppers reward ingredient simplicity when the product also tastes good.

Negative sentiment tends to cluster around artificial aftertaste and ingredient skepticism when products claim "natural" but still feel processed.

PERSONAL CARE

In personal care, clean label language appears more frequently than in food and beverage and is tied to safety, gentleness, and trust.

Across 371,158 reviews (last 3 months), "natural ingredients" appears in 2.9% of reviews and "clean label" appears in 1.5%. Specific "free from" claims show similar presence: "no parabens" (1.7%), "no sulfates" (0.9%), and "free from chemicals" (0.7%).

TOP PERFORMING BRANDS IN CLEAN LABEL PERSONAL CARE
(October 2025 - January 2026)

Native
(8,398 reviews, 4.79/5)

Old Spice
(1,947 reviews, 4.73/5)

Ivory
(810 reviews, 4.71/5)

Dove
(492 reviews, 4.71/5)

"Free From" Claims Map to Safety and Trust

These mentions cluster around products positioned for sensitive skin and daily use. Shoppers often treat "free from" as a screening tool and use it to justify brand trust, particularly when paired with performance signals like good lather, freshness, and skin feel.

CLEANING:

CLEAN LABEL COMPETES WITH PERFORMANCE

In pet and household cleaning, clean label positioning is evaluated alongside cleaning efficacy rather than in isolation.

Reddit discussions show strong preference for enzyme-based and targeted cleaners for pet-related messes, particularly stain and odor removal. **Enzymatic products are repeatedly described as more effective than DIY or broadly positioned "natural" remedies,** which are often criticized for poor performance and unpleasant residual odors.

Ingredient transparency and safety remain important. Shoppers frequently seek products described as pet-safe, non-toxic, or fragrance-free, especially for use on pet bedding, floors, and high-contact surfaces.

Approximately 40% of discussions reference fragrance sensitivity or avoidance of artificial scents.

Brand-level discussion reflects this tradeoff. Products positioned as natural or lower toxicity are appreciated for scent and safety, but are criticized when they leave residue or fail to remove tough stains. Many shoppers report combining natural detergents with enzyme boosters or reverting to mainstream formulations when performance falls short.

Overall, clean label functions as a risk-screening signal in cleaning, but efficacy remains the deciding factor in repeat use.

PET CARE

In pet care, clean label themes extend beyond ingredient simplicity into broader trust and transparency concerns.

Reddit discussions concentrate on avoiding artificial preservatives, dyes, and additives, with frequent comparisons to European ingredient standards. Formula changes and unclear sourcing generate sharp negative sentiment, particularly when associated with digestive issues or allergic reactions.

Clean label in pet care functions as a credibility filter.

Shoppers use it to evaluate brand trustworthiness before assessing functional performance outcomes.

Shoppers often express skepticism toward large manufacturers and place greater trust in brands that clearly communicate ingredient sourcing, testing standards, and formulation rationale. Raw, fresh, and wet diets are frequently discussed as alternatives, praised for perceived health benefits while also raising concerns about safety and nutritional completeness.

Review and Reddit language play complementary roles in how shoppers evaluate functional products.

REVIEW LANGUAGE
AND REDDIT SIGNALS

Reviews capture post-purchase assessment. Shoppers mention "clean," "natural," and "free from" claims when they believe the product delivered on gentleness, safety, or digestive comfort, often alongside experience signals (taste, texture, skin feel, residue, pet acceptance).

Solly Pop Soda ★★★★★
"Great taste! Love that it has probiotics. "

Solly Pop Soda ★★★★
"Just ok. Wish the vanilla was stronger."

Reddit surfaces earlier-stage evaluation. Shoppers use discussion to validate ingredient risk, compare standards, interpret labels, and assess trust. Threads concentrate on preservatives, sweeteners, fragrances, and reformulations, with strong skepticism toward vague claims.

Together, these signals show how clean label expectations form through risk screening and are validated through real-world outcomes.

This dynamic highlights the value of connecting early-stage shopper language with post-purchase outcomes. **Understanding where questions originate and how they resolve allows teams to identify gaps between positioning and performance, surface emerging needs earlier, and track which functional attributes actually sustain positive sentiment.**
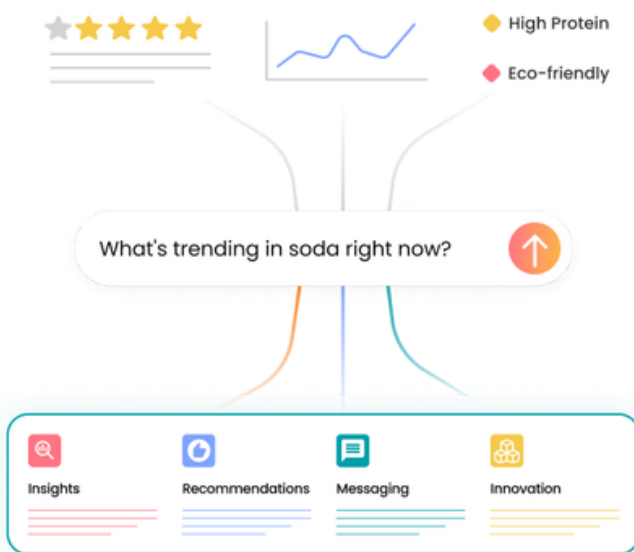
Harmonya

Harmonya helps teams analyze review and discussion language together, linking early shopper signals to validated performance outcomes.

By structuring and quantifying shopper language across sources, we reveal which functional attributes generate interest, which claims are tested during evaluation, and which experiences ultimately sustain positive sentiment after purchase.

YOY Growth
+51.7%

Avg. Rating
★★★★½

Summary
Authentic, premium, nostalgic, great taste

★★★★★

High Protein
Eco-friendly

What's trending in soda right now?

Insights   Recommendations   Messaging   Innovation

Legacy product data wasn't built to reflect how shoppers browse, search, or decide what to buy. As a result, critical signals around emerging needs, sentiment shifts, and functional tradeoffs often remain hidden.

Harmonya enriches product data with the language consumers actually use.

We add depth, structure, and shopper context to every product, so your team sees what's happening and why it matters.

WHAT THIS SIGNALS FOR 2026

Clean label is becoming a baseline expectation rather than a primary differentiator.

Across categories, shoppers reference ingredient simplicity and "free from" claims as trust and risk-screening signals. These claims contribute to confidence, particularly in sensitive or high-stakes contexts, but do not replace experience as the driver of positive sentiment.

Ambiguous claims, unexplained ingredients, and formula changes produce outsized skepticism, especially in pet care. Brands that pair ingredient transparency with consistent performance sustain stronger sentiment over time.

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