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# “Ok, Zoomer”: The Journey of Gen Z

## The Generation of Contrasts: What We Can Learn from Gen Z

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We live in a digital-first world. But Gen Z is the first generation that is truly digitally native. Described as creators, social and environmental justice pioneers, inclusion champions, and culture drivers – Gen Zers are also uniquely individual. And their behaviors are having an increasing impact on how global brands approach the modern consumer journey.

## Understanding “Zoomers” is the key to brand growth in 2022 + beyond

Gen Z, colloquially known as “Zoomers,” are born roughly between 1997 and 2010. They are specifically unique from their predecessors, as they don’t know a time before the internet, living their lives through apps and instant communication with their peers. This makes them interesting consumers, who already make up for around $145 Billion in spending power, which is only estimated to rise.

## Gen Z are a journey – not a set audience

Ranging between the ages 12-25, this generation encompasses several phases of life with varying interests and a distinct contrast between attitudes and behaviors. Take for example, their dedication to shopping sustainably while also being the largest consumers of fast fashion. Or the fact that they usually want to fit in with their group and peers, evidenced across platforms like TikTok, with trending challenges that see mass participation. If you miss out on that viral TikTok trend or recipe, the FOMO is real.

In contrast, Gen Z are also known for wanting to stand out from the crowd. They look for personalized products from brands to give them a unique edge.

To provide a third contrast, this generation spends over 10 hours on their phone each day, but they place significant value on physical experiences as well as their wellbeing.

## What makes Gen Z so contradictory?

This audience is so multi-faceted, and so nuanced, that it’s difficult to group them together. And it’s hard to know exactly why or when their attitudes don’t line up with their behaviors. Maybe they shop fast fashion because it’s all they can afford. Or maybe it’s because they’re essentially on camera every day, and therefore have a more constant need to look on-trend. Or maybe, their allegiance to the climate crisis isn’t as strong as they claim.

## The cultural impact at play

With all this said about the complexity of Gen Z, it’s important to remember that this generation has grown up with pervasive trauma of the recession, the climate crisis, and the pandemic. And they’ve grown up with instant access, communication, and gratification at their fingertips.

These unifying cultural moments, and the very nature of their upbringing, provide specific trends that are more widespread in Gen Z.

## Purpose & Drive for Action

Gen Z is frequently commended for their commitment to activism in many forms, most notably in sustainability and demanding change from their governments. This extends to their relationship with brands, too. In fact, 75% of Gen Zers would prefer to buy sustainably than a brand name. This generation takes note of brands who live by their values and take a stance on key social issues.

## Breaking Down Barriers

More connected than any generation before them, Gen Z meet friends and mentors through social media, gaming, and other online communities. It's not unusual for Gen Zers' best friends to be on the other side of the world. This hyperconnectivity on a global level increases their understanding of different people from various walks of life. They are quickly becoming experts on breaking down social and cultural barriers in terms of what we understand the world to be in labels. To demonstrate this, 75% of Gen Z say that their race, sexual orientation, or gender cannot be categorized. They prefer a more fluid way of being and they seek this out in the brands they associate with, too.



## The Need for Nostalgia

With all that's gone on in the past decade, Gen Z understandably look to the past to seek comfort. This influences everything from fashion trends, the music they listen to, to the TV shows they watch.

It's no secret that their obsession with Y2K has pushed many brands to rethink their marketing strategies or create entire collections dedicated to this nostalgic feeling of the 90s and early 00s. Gen Z have managed to romanticize this era to such a degree that many things that millennials might look back at and cringe over, are now trendy, like: bucket hats, blue eyeshadow, and low-rise jeans.

## Authenticity

A marketer's favorite buzzword. But being 'real' is key for this generation. Gen Z have acute awareness of the gap between the 'fantasy world' portrayed by brands and media, and real life, which is filled with global crises. Polished photoshoots and flawless models are on their way out, as this generation wants to see something rawer and more relatable.

Gen Z does their research before deciding if they want to associate with or purchase from a brand. This makes them less susceptible to impulse buying and more likely to see shopping as an experience to fulfill their self-expression. They enjoy going into retail stores and discovering new stories and products that connect to their values.

## So, how can brands be part of these trends?

Brands need to evaluate the trends in relation to themselves and find where values overlap to create stories within campaigns to connect with Gen Z on an emotional level. We need to rethink creative copy and imagery, utilize innovative media placements, and partner with diverse and sustainability-focused platforms and creators to connect with this audience.

Until Gen Alpha grow up, “Zoomers” are defining the consumer journey. The time is now to put Gen Z first in your brand’s growth strategy.

# TLDR: The Top 10 Takeaways

1. Ranging from 12-25, Gen Z encompass many phases of life, interests, and attitudes – and thus should be thought of as a journey, not a set audience.
2. Gen Z highly value social and environmentally conscious brands and prefer to shop sustainably – though they’re also big shoppers of fast fashion.
3. Gen Z like to fit in with their peers, often taking part in TikTok trends en masse.
4. Simultaneously, they like to stand out from the crowd, seeking rare and personalized experiences and products.
5. The connected experience of the climate crisis, pandemic, and uncertainty drive core behavioral trends amongst Gen Z.
6. A hyperconnected generation, Gen Z have friendships all over the world, breaking down physical barriers as well as social constructs.
7. Gen Z are a fluid generation, they do not subscribe to traditional ways of thinking about gender, sexuality, and race.
8. They cope with the difficult reality of the world today by looking to the past, seeking comfort in nostalgia.
9. Authenticity is a key factor that Gen Z looks for when shopping, as they link their identity with their purchases.
10. Brands should synthesize research on Gen Z and leverage top trends to create campaigns that connect emotionally with this generation.