

# Gen Z

## by the numbers

32% of the population will be Gen Z by 2019



5 number of screens used concurrently

50.4%

of Americans born after 2007 are minorities

60% want the work they do to impact the world while..

76% hope they can turn their hobbies into full-time jobs



2X\*

more likely to make a purchase via a mobile device



7.6

average amount of hours spent socializing with friends and family

33% watch lessons online

\* than Millennials

# their brands

I am a parent of two Gen Zs. My youngest, at age 2, delighted in the virtual joy of watching videos of a little Play-Doh egg being pried open to reveal a secret surprise whereas my son regularly regales me with his knowledge of scientific facts courtesy of YouTube “not school.” They both love to shop at Goodwill, and Netflix is their preferred streaming brand.



Researching this paper confirmed what I already knew. These kids are resourceful, thrifty, socially responsible and innovative. And they are decidedly different from their Millennial predecessors.



**“Compared to any generation that has come before, (Gen Z) are less trusting of brands. They have the strongest bullshit filter because they’ve grown up in an era where information was available at all times.”**

Emerson Spartz, CEO of the digital media company Dose

However some Brands are winning with the Gen Z's. YouTube, Netflix, Google Chrome, Oreo, GoPro, Doritos, Nike, – all of these brands continue to resonate with Z. But why?



One way brands appeal to Gen Z is through interaction. They cleverly invite teenagers to help create their brand story. Through social media, video and blog content, they encourage participation and appeal to the innovative Z's that want to be involved as partners, not just as consumers.



**“... the biggest difference is millennials join brands. They're brand evangelists and wear with pride on their sleeves.... Teens and the younger millennials are more like curators... they use brands to build their own brand.”**

Therese Caruso, managing director of Zeno Group

Another way Gen Zers pick brands is by how closely they reflect their own values and goals. Is the brand inclusive of all genders, and abilities; are they environmentally responsible? Gen Z believe their brands should behave in ways that they themselves hold dear. In this way perhaps this generation is most likely to hold brands up to human standards, seeing them less as corporations and more as living, breathing entities with a set of rules, behaviors and personalities like their own.



**“Authenticity and transparency are two ideals that they value highly,”**

Emerson Spartz, CEO of the digital media company Dose

# millennials & gen z: key differences

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born 1991-1996

self-centered  
entitled  
idealist  
creative  
dependent

self-aware  
persistent  
realist  
innovative  
self-reliant



born 1997-

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One thing we can be certain of in culture is the swinging of the pendulum and Gen Z have swung away from their older counterparts in a few important ways.

Millennials love to text but Gen Z prefer photos, videos, emojis – images essentially– that get the message across faster.

The post - 9/11, financially frugal 2000's left their mark on the Z's. Millennials optimistic outlook and aspirational brands (Abercrombie & Fitch), have been replaced with mission brands like Toms or thrift store bargains.



Gen Z are bad sharers & prefer  
Whisper, Snapchat and Music.ly  
to Facebook and Instagram

Some brands have already made shifts in the right direction to counter changes in attitude while others are slower on the uptake. To that end, let's take a closer look specifically at fashion brands Millennials loved that have been sidelined by Gen Z.

**Puma** was a top 5 teen choice for footwear in the late 2000s. But, even though Gen Zs love sneakers and streetwear brands, Puma has lost out in 2018 to brands like Vans and Nike.

**Abercrombie** hit the ground running in the 90's and 00's as a teen favorite is now struggling. This is probably due to several factors, the most important being Z's preference for street over preppy and Abercrombie's corporate leadership that has failed to prove itself as socially responsible.

**Steven Madden** has been the go-to for girls and women looking for fashion-forward shoes and was the preferred brand among upper-income teens in 2007. Now Gen Z females are tossing their heels for comfortable sneakers from Nike and adidas. Maybe with the growing awareness of gender fluidity and the androgynous trends of recent years, teens today may be at the forefront of redefining gender roles in society.



Gen Z multitask even better  
than their predecessors with 5  
screens versus 3

# shifting sands

Convenience has been a hot topic for a few years now, with time-starved, busy, multi-tasking parents looking for ways to shave minutes off their day. However, Gen Z consume more convenience items than any other generation, viewing them as necessities rather than luxuries. Convenience is the driver, technology is the vehicle.

The Digital generation has never known a world without devices and are more comfortable with screens than they are with face to face interactions. **McDonalds**, for example, has had so much success with it's digital ordering screens that they are expanding the program and adding more screens to restaurants worldwide.

**“They’ve grown up with constant streams of data and instant access to information. Instant gratification is their modus operandi.”**

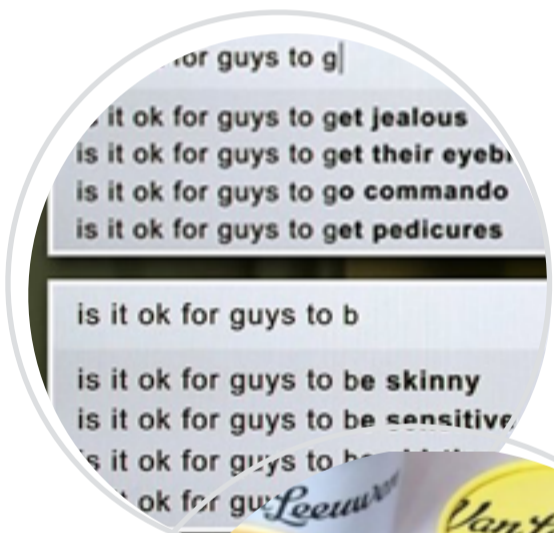
- (source) Entrepreneur

**Kashi** is bucking trends and staying relevant in a fiercely competitive arena with some serious strategy shifts. Its new look, which debuted a few years ago did not toe the line and certainly turned a few heads. Skip to 2018 and its new product line for kids was developed by a team of Gen Z teenagers who helped develop overall concept, flavor combinations and naming conventions.

**Axe's** “is it OK for Guys?” campaign aims to tap into some long-held tropes about what it means to be male. The brand has pivoted from a somewhat archaic metaphor (a literal tool for picking up women) to something much more likely to appeal to today's teenager who is self-aware, tuned in to differences and striving to be an individual.

Pentagram was asked to redesign the **Van Leeuwin** brand packaging by making it “more Instagrammable.” The result is a package that is really just color and shape. The large logo on a plain background looks good on shelf and online. Consumers reportedly have shown support for the redesign by excitedly sharing the packaging on Instagram with comments indicating they were motivated to buy the brand because of the new packaging. With social media increasingly influencing consumer decisions, shareable packaging appears poised to become a growing packaging trend.

Similarly the **Me Undies** brand changes their packaging every 2 months to generate interest and provide “shareable” content.





## Speak in pictures

Emojis, symbols, pictures, videos



## be real

Real people v celebrities  
Show your 'human' side



## diversity rules

Be inclusive & tolerant of all  
Highlight similarities while  
acknowledging the individual



## be collaborative

Include them in the process  
Give them tools to educate themselves  
Give them a cause to get behind



## Be 8 second worthy

Get to the point quickly  
Be Instagrammable

# in conclusion

Here are 3 ways that we, as marketers, designers and strategists can engage with Gen Z.

Take a leaf out of Kashi's book & involve them. If they are actively involved in the creation of a product or a message, they will sit up and take notice.

Be real. It's nothing new for teenagers to look for authenticity but today's teens have been challenged to separate truth from fiction unlike any generation before them. If we turn a mirror on them and reflect their reality, they will respond positively.

We know it's important to this generation to be social responsible, but what exactly does that mean for Gen Z? Basically anything that speaks to a greater (societal) good. Providing quality goods at a reasonable price is considered socially responsible to Gen Z. Studies have shown that they want to know their brands are involved in creating equal opportunities regarding race and gender as well as environmental issues.

**With all the talk about Millennials and their spending power, we can't afford to ignore Gen Z. This may mean a small shift for some brands and a major pivot for others – but ignore them at your peril.**

# thanks!

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