Yet Another Gen Z Presentation
An Exploration of What Creates Connection with Today’s Most Contradictory Generation
Engaging Gen Z is a priority for brands and marketers across industries

“We’re really manifesting the brand in a way that we think is going to excite the next generation of consumers and get them to think of Walmart differently.”

JUSTIN BRETON
Director of Brand Experiences & Strategic Partnerships
Walmart

“If you look at Chips Ahoy! over the last few years, we’ve really re-engaged that cohort of the Gen Z consumer. Part of that is thanks to Chip. He really is that embodiment of happy-go-lucky fun, and part of it is because of how & where we show up.”

TANYA BERNAN
SVP, Biscuit Category Mondelez

“Hours of watching, reading the comments, trying to learn and genuinely understand helped us see what this [campaign] was about: brilliant creativity, unfiltered fun, peak absurdist Gen Z humor, just the way a new generation of creators and consumers play with brands.”

GUILLAUME HUIN
Social Media Director

“The Gen Z revolution is starting, as the first generation born into an online world is now entering the workforce and compelling other generations to adapt to them, not vice versa.”

HAIM ISRAEL
Global Head of Thematic Investment Strategy

MC

BANK OF AMERICA
Growing interest in this younger audience is evident, as this topic increasingly influences search traffic and media conversations.

Google Topic Search, U.S.
Because they are valuable...

...but difficult to understand
Gen Z’s purchasing power, influence over the workforce, and uniqueness make them a valuable & nuanced audience for brands

Have an estimated purchasing power of over $360B\textsuperscript{1}

Spending more than other generations did at the same age

Continue to make up a larger % of the population & workforce

Currently 30% of the world's population & will make up 27% of the workforce by 2025\textsuperscript{2}

Are more racially & ethnically diverse than previous generations

A bare majority (52%) are non-Hispanic White, 25% are Hispanic, 14% are Black, 6% are Asian, & 5% are another race or 2 or more races\textsuperscript{3}

But the contradictory nature of their behavior makes authentically connecting with them feel out of reach

Having grown up in the age of social media, Gen Z has lived and shared much of their lives online. This constant visibility creates a need to publicize their opinions, but there’s pressure for those opinions to be the ‘right’ ones. This can sometimes create misalignment between the values this younger generation preaches and the actions they take away from prying eyes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offline vs. Online Behaviors</th>
<th>Community vs. Individual Mentality</th>
<th>Vintage vs. New Preferences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What They Say</strong></td>
<td><strong>What They Do</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>54% of Gen Z think being on devices worsens mental health and well-being&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>80% of Gen Z has said they consume more social media than food&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>80% of Gen Z say they like when brands bring back things from their childhood&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>73% of Gen Z say they will pay up to 10% more for sustainable clothing&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>62% of Gen Z admit to shopping at fast fashion retailers monthly&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>51% of Gen Z say they prefer new and trendy brands&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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Sources: 1. JUVConsulting; 2. Indyx; 3. GWI
Knowing there has been an abundance of research conducted on Gen Z, this report focuses on what seems to be working with this audience vs. what makes them unique.

Speaking with NBCUniversal content creators and marketing leaders, as well as our very own pages and interns, we asked why certain pieces of ‘content’ successfully resonate with this younger generation. ‘Content’ included TV shows, movies, sports, brand ad creatives, sponsored custom content, and other experiences.

As a result, we’ve arrived at several key themes we believe brands and marketers should consider when endeavoring to create content or experiences that will successfully reach and engage Gen Z.
**GEN Z KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

**Six Key Themes**

we believe brands & marketers should consider when seeking to connect with this younger generation

1. Content as a Shared Experience
2. Twisting Tropes & the Art of Surprise
3. Cultivating Organic Brand Partnerships
4. The Next Generation of Sports
5. Keeping it Fresh with “Newstalgia”
6. Next Gen Attention
01. CONTENT AS A SHARED EXPERIENCE

A generational desire for connection is prompting many to turn to content for shared experiences.

Growing up amidst a backdrop of tech advances & pandemic isolation has fueled a FOMO mentality across Gen Z.

#Barbenheimer
Letting the Community Market the Movement

1.2B
#Barbenheimer trend views on TikTok

75% & 47%
of Barbie’s and Oppenheimer’s opening weekend audience were 13 – 29yrs, respectively

#GentleMinions
Nurturing, but Not Overtaking the Meme

51%
Of Gen Z saw, read, or heard about the #GentleMinions trend on TikTok

@UniversalPictures
To everyone showing up @Minions in suits: we see you & we love you

#Scandoval
Providing a Holistic Fan Experience

4.1M
cross-platform viewers tuned in to the Vanderpump Rules S10 finale

30K
fans attended BravoCon 2023

Sources:
1. Barbenheimer TikTok
2. Statista
3. Hollywood Wins Over Gen Z by Turning Movies Into Memes (Morning Consult)
4. Variety
5. Rolling Stone
Harness the Power of Community

Gen Z has a strong desire to feel part of something bigger, and fan-favorite content serves as a unifying force that transcends borders.

By aligning with this content, brands can create virtual & IRL connections – but should remember to empower fans while not overtaking the movement.

“In some cases, Gen Z is more about subcultures than mass culture. There’s no magic formula for what will resonate, but this doesn’t mean that a brand shouldn’t do their research.”

GIAN PABLO GATES
VP, CLIENT ADVOCACY
NBCUNIVERSAL
Gen Z’s desensitization to traditional genre tropes has caused content to evolve.

Superheroes
Darker superhero stories have been met with critical & commercial success. Gen Z isn’t tired of superheroes, they’re tired of the traditional superhero story.

147i
Gen Z Positive Sentiment

Killer Dolls
The killer doll concept has been taken in new directions, such as through the lens of a coming-of-age story or a comedic killer AI story.

77%
of audience composition was 13-34yrs

Pirates
Flipping traditional pirate tropes on their head, placing DE&I front and center with a subversive queer rom-com masquerading as a traditional pirate story.

77%
Positive sentiment driven by Gen Z

New storytelling approaches are being embraced to capture audience attention.
Growing up with access to a never-ending library of content, a desensitized Gen Z yearns for moments of surprise.

Their dynamic view of the world invites brands to experiment, take risks, evolve messaging and show up in unexpected ways to delight audiences without losing what makes your brand special.

"Gen Z enjoys surprising content, but the surprises can't be cheap, it needs to make sense within the context of the content."

KIM BLANDO
VP & CREATIVE DIRECTOR, NBCUNIVERSAL

"Gen Z has had access to all types of content at their fingertips, so their standards to remain engaged are significantly higher than previous generations...content concepts cannot be derivative, they need to evolve or be completely flipped on their heads."

STEVEN RUMMER
SVP, HEAD OF CREATIVE, NBCUNIVERSAL
Gen Z not only demands authenticity from brands but also their partnerships, which need to feel natural & refreshing

60% of Gen Z & Millennials have purchased special edition releases from brand collaborations.¹

Sources: 1. ADM Group; 2. Prime Scale Creative; 3. Morning Consult

03. CULTIVATING ORGANIC BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

Minions: The Rise of Gru + IHOP
Sparking “Joy” with your Fanbase

“IHOP is excited to spark joy and bring guests together this summer through a mutual love of film... and a little Minions magic.”
KIERAN DONAHUE, CMO, IHOP

Duolingo + Peacock “Love Language”
Creating Synergy through Strengths
(Peacock’s Reality TV Strength + Duolingo’s Irreverent Humor = 14M Social Views)

“Ingenuous fusion of content marketing, entertainment, & education for Millennials & Gen-Z.”
PRIME SCALE CREATIVE²

Barbie + Dozens of Brands
Getting Closer to New Audiences & Surprising Existing Ones

Dozens of Barbie-themed partnerships maintained a calibrated feel, leaning into Barbie’s “playfulness & pinkness” but with a fresh spin

72% of Gen Z adults were aware of Barbie-Themed brand partnerships³

Barbie + Dozens of Brands
Getting Closer to New Audiences & Surprising Existing Ones

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72% of Gen Z adults were aware of Barbie-Themed brand partnerships³
This younger generation is savvy and unafraid to share their thoughts. In return, they **expect transparent, unforced experiences from brands & creators**.

Partnerships should feel like a **natural fit**, **bring your brand into new areas**, and **deliver value** to your audience.

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“Authentic and organic means it **blends** seemingly well with the brand and their image; it **makes sense** and isn’t reaching. But on the other hand, this also means doing something **completely unexpected** that you wouldn’t think this brand wouldn’t do... but in the end it makes sense, or you find a clever tie-in that **puts it altogether**.”

22, FEMALE, WHITE

“I **honestly love** when creators are **honest about** their sponsorships and branded content. I understand they’re just trying to make a living and that they’re being honest about it.”

20, FEMALE, ASIAN

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Source: 1. NBCUniversal’s Consumer Insights Lab; Gen Z’s NBCU Interns/Pages survey, Q4 2023; Sample Size, 183 Early Career Professional
**THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPORTS**

Gen Z’s unique relationship with sports requires a more nuanced approach to sports partnerships, as evidenced in Olympic Fandom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Their Appreciation of Athletes Transcends Sports</th>
<th>They View Sports as a Cultural Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>49% of Gen Z adults watched livestreams or replays of sporting events on YouTube over the past month(^1) given a desire for “snackable content”</td>
<td>75% of Gen Z are fans of athletes &amp; 43% seek out stories about them(^2)</td>
<td>69% of Gen Zers say they are interested in attending a team’s “cultural night”(^3)</td>
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<td>#1 Olympic athlete and torch bearer, Naomi Osaka, is Gen Z’s favorite female athlete, driven by her support of mental health awareness(^5)</td>
<td><strong>“The fact that the Olympics are a global event is what makes them so special. Their ability to transcend sports […] make them […] more of a cultural &amp; historic event.”</strong>(^4)</td>
<td>-GEN Z, MALE, WHITE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Morning Consult  
2. FleishmanHillard  
3. The Score  
4. NBCU Proprietary Research  
5. Morning Consult  

The Olympics (Gen Z top indexing generation)\(^4\) 

**Sources:** 1. Morning Consult  2. FleishmanHillard  3. The Score  4. NBCU Proprietary Research  5. Morning Consult
A generation known for “FOMO,” Gen Z often watches sports to be part of the cultural conversation.

Their desire for snackable sports content and for authentic behind-the-scenes access into the lives of athletes requires brands to take a more holistic approach to these partnerships.

“It is accepted and embraced when athletes expand their brand in other ways, Gen Z is interested in what happens beyond the games.”

ALBERT ALCARAZ
SENIOR DIRECTOR, SPORTS AND OLYMPICS
NBCUNIVERSAL

“The Olympics, like many sports, transcend culture. Gen Z wants to engage in this cultural narrative with their friends and family, and there is definitely a fear of missing out.”

JOSH NOVAL
SVP, OLYMPIC AD SALES
NBCUNIVERSAL
ProperDoc
Finding comfort in today’s confusing world is a top priority for Gen Z, driving much of their purchasing behavior.

Brands that leverage beloved nostalgic themes can win the hearts of younger consumers – but must make sure to put a creative spin on their output or risk being branded as “pandering” (gasp).

“Even though I was only 3 years old when the content was released, I grew up understanding its cultural relevance. Almost 20 years later, it was exciting to see the entire original cast in their former roles.”

[On Mean Girls Walmart Commercial]

22, FEMALE, BLACK
While often stereotyped for a short attention span, less patient doesn’t mean less attentive.

Feeling
More likely to seek out mood-boosting content than other generations, Gen Z embraces content that sparks a desired emotion.

Source: NBCUniversal’s Consumer Insights Lab; Gen Z’s NBCU Interns/Pages survey; Q4 2023; Sample Size, 183 Early Career Professional

Fandemonium
Longing to be on the ‘inside’ of social conversations, Gen Z embraces content that is buzz-worthy, socially-ready, and provides a community connection.

Source: NBCUniversal’s Consumer Insights Lab; Gen Z’s NBCU Interns/Pages survey; Q4 2023; Sample Size, 183 Early Career Professional

Raised in the era of Amazon & Uber, Gen Z desires content experiences that deliver on immediacy and accessibility expectations. However, when content strikes the right chord, high levels of engagement can be seen.
Forge a Connection via Feeling & Fandom

Knowing this younger generation is less patient, the time brands have to capture their attention is small (vs. them having a short attention span).

Consider lean-in formats, emotion-sparking content, and the power of fandom as ways to create connection and make the viewing experience as enjoyable and memorable as the content itself.

“Gen Z creators are seamlessly blurring the line between what is content and what is marketing. Marketing doesn't have to feel like “advertising;” when brands ‘create like a creator’ (or engage a creator to market for them), marketing will simply be entertaining content.”

MARIE DENNING
VP, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
NBCUNIVERSAL
R E C A P: Six Key Considerations
when seeking to reach and engage this younger generation

1. Content as a Shared Experience → Harness the Power of Community
2. Twisting Tropes & the Art of Surprise → Test the Unexpected
3. Cultivating Organic Brand Partnerships → Keep it Real; Avoid the Ick
4. The Next Generation of Sports → Play Beyond the Game
5. Keeping it Fresh with “Newstalgia” → Give Nostalgia a Modern-Edit
6. Next Gen Attention → Forge a Connection via Feeling & Fandom
At NBCUniversal, we’ve found that leveraging these considerations across our own portfolio has enabled us to capture attention and build deeper connections with younger generations.
NBCUniversal Reaches 37M Gen Zs in an average month.
We continue to invest in our content and portfolio capabilities to empower our partners to relevantly reach & engage Gen Z
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