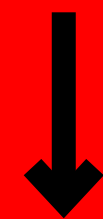


REDWOOD | BBDO



5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT GEN Z

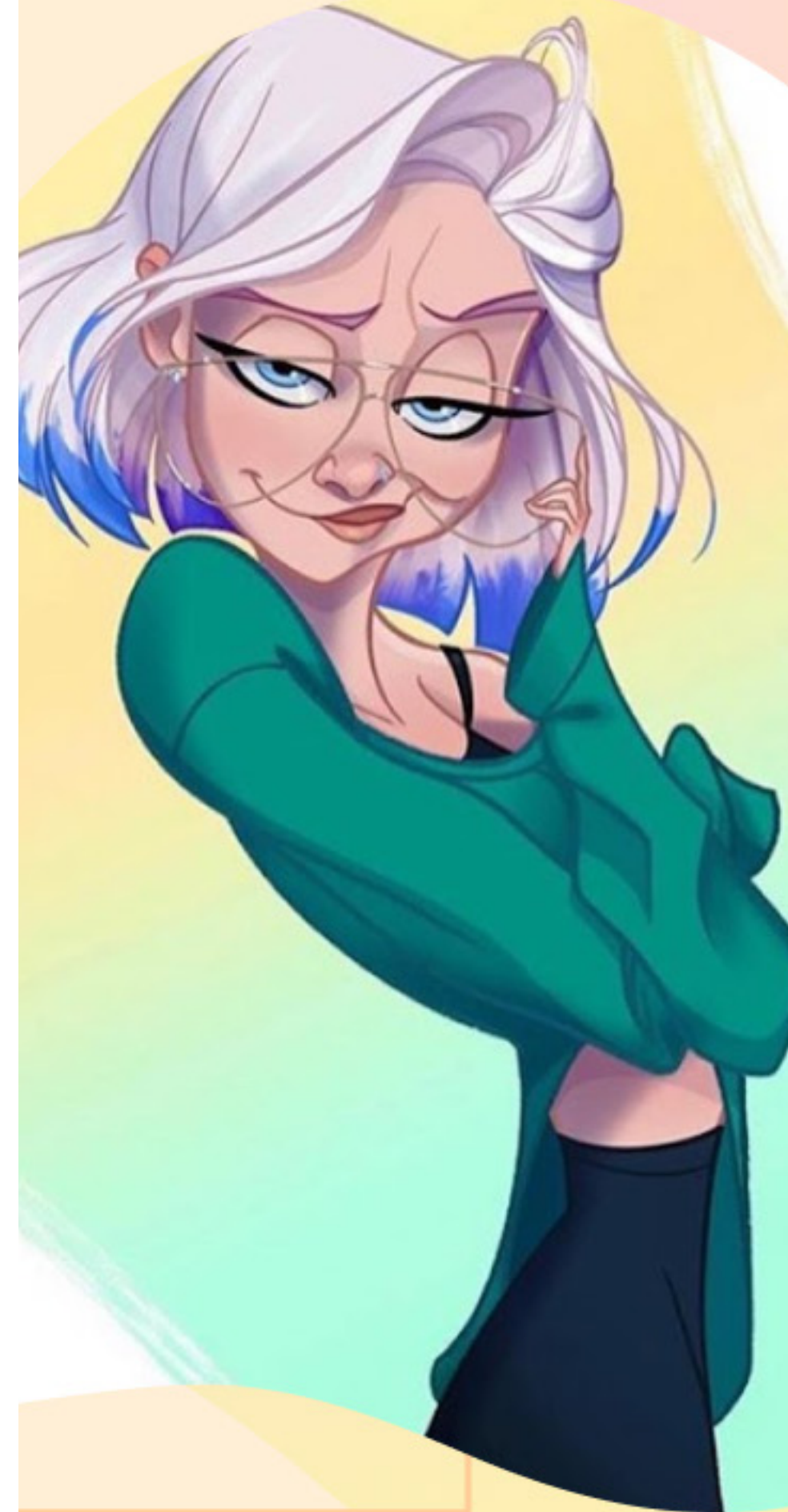


If you're reading this, you've probably read it all before: **Gen Z, the generation born between roughly 1997-2012**, are digital natives; unlike Millennials, they've grown up around technology and social media from day one. They're also highly engaged with important global issues, they're incredibly stressed out and they reject the filtered, polished images on social media in favour of **"Being Real"**.

You've heard it all before, but is hearing the same handful of insights about a generation that makes up a third of the world's population all that useful? If you know a Gen Zer, do they fit into the boxes analysts, marketers and journalists have been putting them in? We're in a digital age where relevance and personalisation are key, where brands are expected

to be authentic, ethical and transparent — so when it comes to understanding our audience, scratching the surface just doesn't cut it.

At Redwood, **understanding Gen Z at a deeper level is part of the process**. As Lipton Ice Tea's integrated social content agency, for example, we carried out qualitative research with a panel of young creatives and Gen Z wellbeing experts to help inform our approach to an interactive social campaign. And working with the Culture & Trends team at YouTube, we've been deep-diving into just how much this generation is shaping digital culture. We believe that conducting thoughtful, thorough research leads to work that is more original, impactful and authentic.



So for something completely different, here are five things we've learnt through our work that you probably didn't know about Gen Z

#1 THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CONSUMERISM? IT'S COMPLICATED...

It's true that Gen Z are passionate about sustainability and are setting the pace for climate action. From research for a project with Google, we learned that **70% of Gen Z care about the environmental impact of their purchases**. But when we dug deeper, we also found that more than half buy their clothes from fast fashion retailers. It's a complex, contradictory relationship; Gen Z wants to be the first to wear a trend and to only share new outfits on their socials. **They out-consume older generations** when it comes to fashion purchases. Speed and value are essential, but they don't want to compromise on sustainability.

Fashion isn't the only area where this generation contradicts itself. **Our research for YouTube in MENA** showed an increase in entrepreneurial spirit among this generation. At the same time, we know Gen Z are incredibly mindful of burnout, sharing self-care messages on social media, and focused on moving away from more traditional career paths to strike an optimal work-life balance. Their ambitions and actions are often odds, hindered perhaps by lack of opportunity and resources.



EDITOR'S NOTE:

How can brands make sense of these contradictions? Where are the intersections and what do they tell us? In the case of fast fashion vs. sustainability, consider the popularity of Depop. Often referred to as "Instagram meets eBay," its success tells us something that's actually been true of most younger generations: they love to buy second hand. It's just about packaging it in the right way that fits the current generation's specific mindsets and lifestyles. In the case of Gen Z, convincing a generation passionate about the environment to recycle clothes is an easy sell — Depop just turned that sentiment into a cool, collective experience by leveraging social media.

#2 BEING “AUTHENTIC” IS MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

The popularity of social app BeReal has reinforced the claim that Gen Z wants to throw off the filters and show a more authentic side to themselves — but it also suggests something deeper. We know this generation is hyper-connected: **98% of them own smartphones**, on which they spend **18% more time daily than the global average**. At the same time, we know they're hyper-lonely. With little boundary between their on and offline worlds, being always-on means they're

more likely than other generations to think they have to be “perfect” on social media.

For a Lipton Ice Tea project, we built on the brand purpose of “wellbeing as a team sport” to create a digital campaign to launch a reimagining of the game Truth Or Dare for Gen Z. To ensure we got it right, we went straight to the source and convened a steering group of young people to deep dive into the topic of interdependence for wellbeing.

They concluded that a top priority for reimagining this game was creating “a safe space where we can be the most authentic version of ourselves, without judgment from others.” This informed our thinking for developing “truth” and “dare” scenarios that allow people to “go deep” and express unique things about themselves, without worrying about the peer pressure or discomfort associated with earlier iterations of this game.



feeling they can be their “true self” with friends

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Gen Z value authenticity in personal relationships, with 71% feeling they can be their “true self” with friends. They're empathetic, seeking connection through authenticity and cultivating safe spaces. This generation is already “hyper-connected,” so how can we as marketers facilitate deeper, more authentic connections that build trust?



#3 THEY'RE NOT TOO YOUNG TO FEEL NOSTALGIC

Yes, Gen Z are the tech-savvy children of the future but they are also the reason for the recent explosion of nostalgia: see Kate Bush topping the charts amid a sea of bucket hats and flip phones. We worked with YouTube on their **Culture & Trends report** and found that **82% of Gen Z have used YouTube to watch content in order to feel nostalgic** — this is an overwhelming figure. Insider supposes that “youth become nostalgic when the economy is

struggling, seeking comfort and connection,” while The Guardian argues that Gen Z's obsession with nostalgia can be better understood “in the broader context of Gen Z's love of mimicry and intertextual references.”

Either argument can certainly be backed up by Gen Z's love of meme culture. A staple of internet culture, this idea consists of making and remaking something as a means of connection and creativity with

peers. Gen Z are highly creative, with **51% believing they are the most creative generation yet**. Three quarters explore some form of creative pursuit in their spare time — so it makes sense that their shared online language allows them to flex those muscles. Meme culture enables them to contribute a new, personal meaning to something that feels both niche and popular — **proving the “in crowd” never goes out of style**.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Gen Z lives in an increasingly personalised world. As we found in YouTube's Culture & Trends report, pop culture has become increasingly fragmented and individualised. Monoculture doesn't exist in the same way as it did for previous generations, making nostalgia something easy to commodify. There are particular images, fashions, songs, movies that are representative of an entire decade. But is that true of today? It's possible that Gen Z are seeking an anchor, something consistent to ground them in a specific time and place. Brands are one of few entities that arguably remain constant in an ever-changing world, thus creating an opportunity to be that mainstay.

“youth become nostalgic when the economy is struggling, seeking comfort and connection”

— The Guardian



#4 THEY'RE MAKING PERSONALITY QUIZZES COOL AGAIN

If you haven't taken an online personality quiz since 2014, that doesn't mean the trend is now lying in the depths with the Harlem Shake. Our Gen Z research for YouTube revealed online quizzes are making a comeback. Young people have driven their acceleration in popularity, with 2022 seeing searches for "personality quiz" hitting a 5-year high (Google Trends) and fun BuzzFeed quizzes like "What's Your Inner Aesthetic?" and "Which 'Schitt's Creek' Character Are You?" being taken over 1,000,000 times each (Buzzfeed).

Is Gen Z's love of nostalgia behind the resurgence? Not entirely. Taking a quiz can be a shortcut to finding out who you are and what you like — "particularly with young people, they're trying to form an identity, a sense of themselves and how they fit into the world, and how they differ from other people," says a professor of psychology at the University of Notre Dame (Insider).

"particularly with young people, they're trying to form an identity, a sense of themselves and how they fit into the world, and how they differ from other people"

— a professor of psychology at the University of Notre Dame (Insider).

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Our research with Lipton Ice Tea revealed that Gen Z friendship groups aren't bound by location or economic background, with 66% of them believing communities are created by values and interests. Eight per cent consider expressing this individuality to be important, with 58% even willing to pay more for products and services that highlight their individual personalities, values, and beliefs. How can marketers help Gen Z along the path to self discovery?



66%

of them believing communities are created by values and interests



58%

willing to pay more for products and services that highlight their individual personalities, values, and beliefs.

#5 THEIR OWN BRAND OF HORROR IS CREEPY

With access to endless information on a 24-hour cycle, Gen Z are hyperstimulated and reportedly more exhausted than previous generations. Despite technology being the cause of this fatigue, it's also how they seek to remedy it.

The YouTube Culture & Trends Report uncovered that 83% of Gen Z have used YouTube to watch soothing content that helps them relax. As a self-aware generation when it comes to mental health matters, this insight is not all that surprising.

However, a deeper dive revealed that over half of Gen Z agree that online horror content also appeals to them. What's more, it's a specific type of horror they're seeking out, different to previous generations. "Millennial horror tends to be more about the adrenaline rush of the jump scare," the report says, "while Gen Z horror tends to be far more atmospheric. Hence the rise of found-footage-style "analogue horror" among young people." Much like soothing content, the report supposes that horror content also acts as a cathartic salve for anxiety.

“Millennial horror tends to be more about the adrenaline rush of the jump scare”



EDITOR'S NOTE:

Platforms like YouTube help transport viewers to another place and, as the popularity of ASMR has shown, to experience a different feeling. Simply, they want to feel something real, something tangible; something other than just "overwhelmed." What are some of the ways brands can provoke these kinds of visceral responses?

REDWOOD | BBDO

If you want to get, and retain, the attention and loyalty of Gen Z, keeping up with these fast-movers is vital. You've seen how quickly a meme grows, thrives and dies. Make an effort to expand your listening efforts, in method, channel and demographic — and do it often. If you want to attract younger consumers who are truly going to engage with your brand, look deeper, look for nuance, and you'll find them.

**To build authentic brands
that resonate, please contact:
mark.harrop@redwoodlondon.com**

