



2024 **Gen Z** Marketing and Engagement Report

Insights on Influencers, Authenticity,
Sustainability, and Brand Loyalty



Reach3



RIVAL GROUP COMPANIES



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Generation Z: Who are they and why should marketers care?

Making up 40% of today's global consumers and holding a spending power of \$140 billion is Gen Z. Born between 1997-2012, they are tech-savvy, never knowing a world without the internet. They also happen to be the most diverse generation to date with 48% identifying as racial minorities.

They are a dynamic group that can be split into three distinct sub-groups, each demanding a tailored approach.



Younger Gen Zs (12-15 years)

These Gen Zs are in elementary school and middle school. They are dependent on their parents and don't have their own money but they are driving purchasing decisions.



Middle Gen Zs (16-20 years)

This group is in high school or just starting post-secondary. They may be getting their first jobs and just starting to understand what brands they like. Because they generally won't have rent or major costs, they can be big spenders.



Older Gen Zs /Young Millennials (21-27 years)

They are in college or have their first full-time jobs. They probably are having to live on a budget for the first time, which impacts their purchasing decisions.

Understanding the nuances of each cohort — and what matters to them — is critical to brand engagement. But so is recognizing the things they have in common.

3 principles of Gen Z engagement

Regardless of the subgroup you're trying to engage, if you want to engage with Gen Zs, then you need to play by their rules.

Keep these principles in mind to get authentic and deeper insights from them.

- 1. Transparency:** Be clear about who you are, what the purpose is for the engagement, and what you stand for
- 2. Authenticity:** Live up to what you stand for. And most importantly, don't be fake
- 3. Trust:** This is what you ultimately build when you have transparency and authenticity



“Among a generation fueled by skepticism, trust is paramount for both engagement and loyalty. And since authenticity, honesty, and transparency are critical in building that trust, they should be the goals of every marketer with young consumers in their sightlines.”



Jennifer Reid, Co-CEO and Chief Methodologist,
Rival Group (Rival Tech & Reach3 Insights)

A closer look at Gen Z attitudes

Many Rival Tech and Reach3 customers are curious about Gen Z and have **insight communities** of young consumers. So, naturally we wanted to learn more about this cohort.

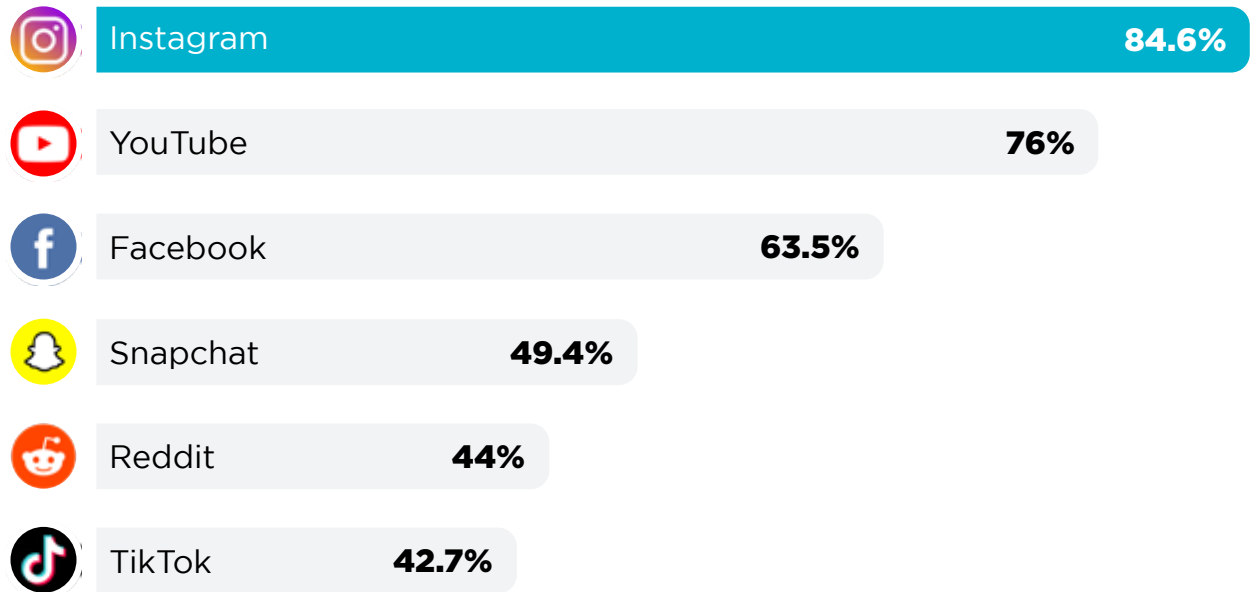
In April 2024, we surveyed 750 young adults (aged 18-27) in the US and Canada using our **conversational research platform**. Our goal? Get Gen Z's candid thoughts on marketing. Our mobile-first tech allowed us to get quant, qual, and video feedback in one learning stream while keeping the survey engaging and enjoyable.

The insights from the study are astonishing—and often surprising. Keeping these themes in mind will help senior marketers, customer insights professionals, and brand strategists connect better with this generation.



At a glance: Gen Z behaviors & preferences

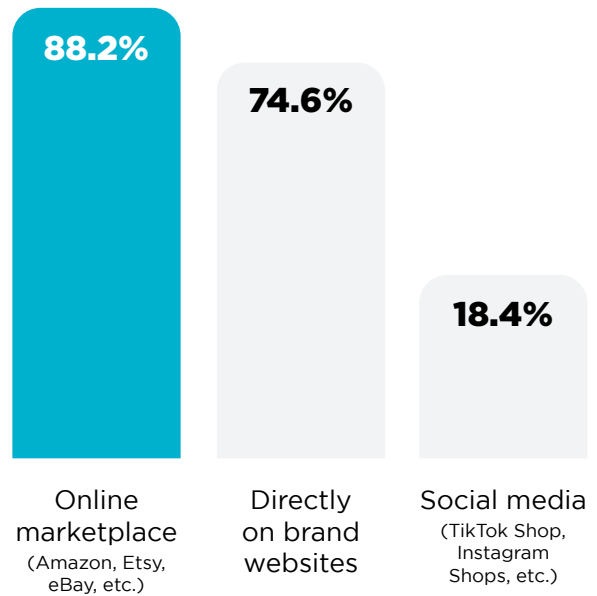
Top social media sites (by monthly use)



How frequently do they shop online?



Where they shop online



At a glance: Gen Z behaviors & preferences

Top categories when shopping online



30%

Apparel



11.5%

Groceries and food delivery



10.8%

Health & personal care (skincare, etc.)



10.1%

Home, kitchen and garden



8.3%

Gaming



6.9%

Electronics and tech



6.9%

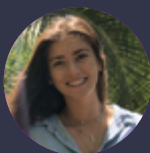
Media (e.g. streaming services)



6.5%

Beauty

In our research, 43% of Gen Z said they used TikTok. While this number may be lower than expected, among users who do use TikTok, they're likely to be spending a lot more time on the app than other platforms. Furthermore, some young people are starting to **reject social media**, ironically seen via online trends like "Dopamine Detox" or off-the-grid viral influencers (@ballerinafarm). We saw this reflected among our sampled group of Gen Z: about 60% felt that they used social media too much."



Lianne Frick, Senior Researcher, Reach3 Insights




**Social media is
for discovery**



The purchasing power of Gen Zs is growing. In fact, our research shows that 42% of Gen Z is now making an online purchase at least once a week.

Social media plays a huge role in how Gen Zs learn about new brands and products, but it is only one step in a long and complex buying journey. Among Gen Z consumers who discover brands on social, only 20% complete the purchase directly through social channels. In contrast, 88% buy via online marketplaces (Amazon, Etsy, etc.) and 75% through brand websites.


Gen Zs will take their time to research (online, through comments, or friend reccos) before they buy on online marketplaces like Amazon and Etsy or directly on brand websites. Gen Z has limited money and wants to avoid spending on a product that's just "meh."



"I just purchased marshmallows from Australia which is kind of crazy if you think about it. I follow them on TikTok and they just looked so good."

Gen Z-er

"Last week I bought a new skincare product. I had seen ads about it and the more natural/ holistic influencers and a friend recommended it."



Gen Z-er



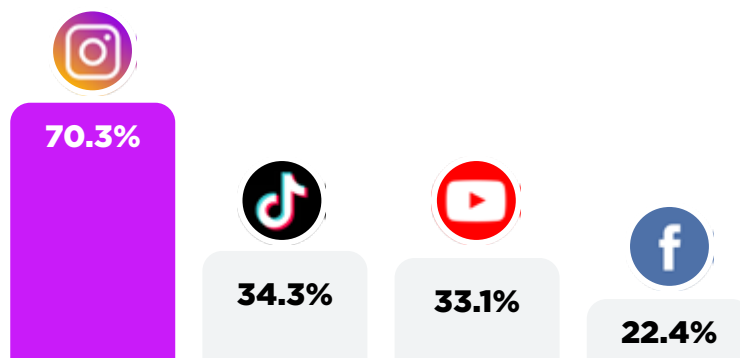
So how can you get the attention of Gen Zs on socials? As it turns out, price is the top consideration for young consumers today. In the face of high inflation and a challenging job market, perhaps that's not surprising. But don't forget about real reviews and product benefits — those rank high with Gen Zs, too.



Four words: word-of-mouth reviews. They're still the most persuasive tool for younger audiences. Gen Z craves authenticity and brands should highlight real customers as part of their online marketing strategy. Showcase real feedback from real people to prove to Gen Zs that they can rely on the quality of your products and services.

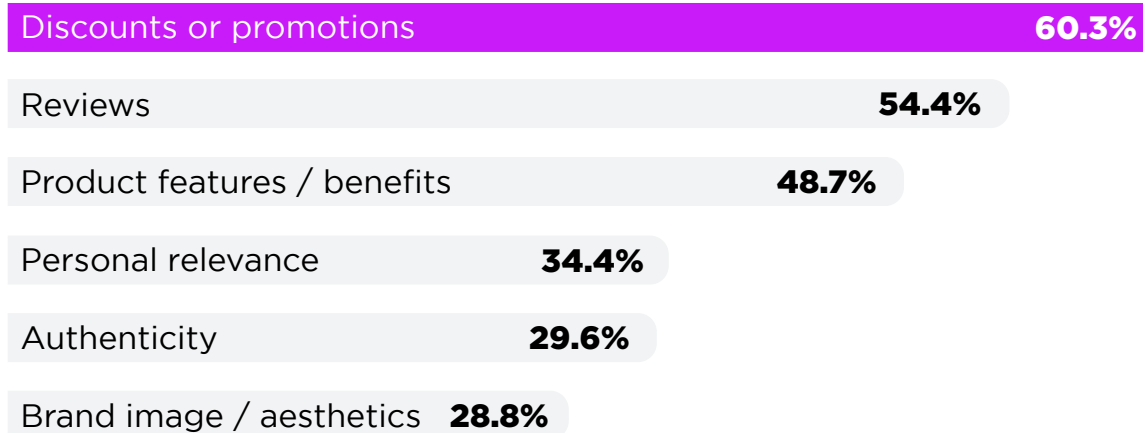
Top social media platforms for Gen Z discovery

Which social media platforms do you use to learn about new brands?



Gen Zs want both value and quality

What stands out to you in a brand/marketing message?





**They're in their
de-influencing era**



Previous studies (including [this one from HubSpot](#)) suggest that Gen Zs love influencers. But our latest research shows this may be changing.

In fact, 47.5% of Gen Zs said they are less likely to buy a product recommended by influencers. Many participants described paid influencer partnerships as “very insincere” or “annoying.”



47.5%

of Gen Zs are “not very likely” or “not likely at all” to buy something recommended by influencers

✱ “I lose respect for brands that use influencers to promote their brand. It comes across as trying to “hype” their product which seems very insincere. I would like to see more focus on actually advertising the product and not the person telling me about the product.”

Gen Z-er

✱ “I want normal people with normal incomes and lives to be presenting products for every day individuals. I can’t relate to “influencers” and will trust the opinions of the team itself or normal everyday people.”

Gen Z-er



Focus on authenticity and relatability (think: content with real people giving real reviews and a behind-the-scenes look). Forget the scripts and beware of paid influencers. While influencer marketing can still work, just make sure they are the right fit and create relatable content. This generation responds to personal and approaches.

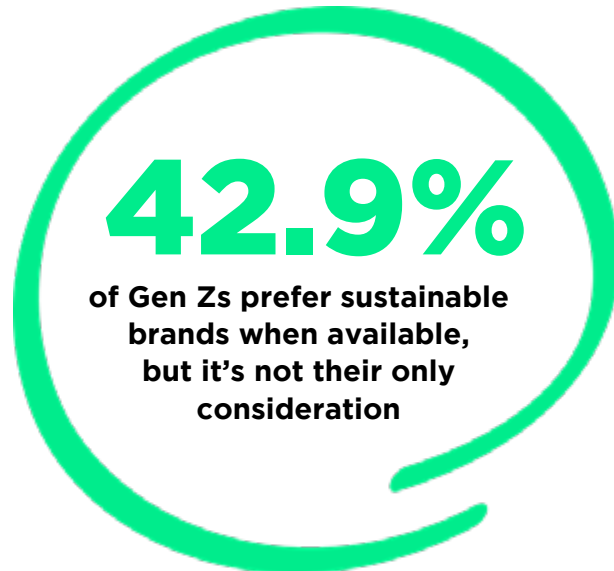


Sustainability
is important...

as long as it's within budget



Previous studies have suggested that Gen Zs are prioritizing sustainability and will pay more for it. Our research paints a more nuanced picture: 42.9% said they prefer sustainable products when available, but it's not the only consideration. Gen Zs mention budget and price as big factors in their decision.



GEN Z TIP

Gen Z wants to do their part to help the planet and wants to learn about a brand's sustainability efforts. But price will still be the main decision-maker for this generation. When communicating a brand's values, do it in an authentic way that doesn't feel like greenwashing.

* "I like when brands do more to help the environment, but at the end of the day I have to consider my budget as a consumer."

Gen Z-er

* "Affordability is a big part of it. For me to get by, I can't simply purchase products based on sustainability."

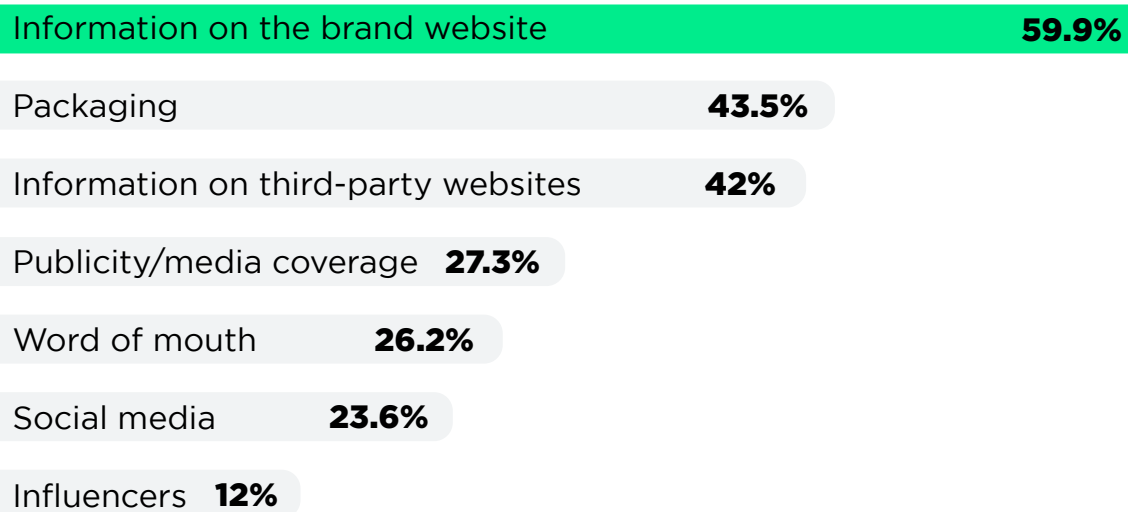
Gen Z-er



For many brands that cater to Gen Zs, sustainability can still be a huge competitive advantage as long as your price remains competitive. Being transparent about your claims can help, too. Our research suggests that your brand website and packaging play a key role in communicating what you're doing regarding sustainability. And when it comes to this issue, Gen Zs are much more likely to believe third-party websites than influencers.

Are you really sustainable? 🤔

How Gen Zs research whether a brand is sustainable or not



“Our research highlights how the attitudes and behaviors of Gen Zs can shift significantly as they go through different life stages and as socio-economic factors evolve. To get accurate insights on Gen Zs and win their loyalty, brands need to engage with these young consumers on an ongoing basis and do it in a way that’s aligned with their expectations and behaviors.”



Andrew Reid, CEO and Founder, Rival Technologies



5 key takeaways: What marketers need to know about Gen Zs today

- 1** Most purchases happen on online marketplaces and brand websites. Invest in your digital presence to drive revenue from these channels.
- 2** Social media platforms play a key role in discovery, but not direct purchase. At least not yet. Word of mouth is critical in evaluation.
- 3** Discounts and promotions capture attention. Whenever possible, use reviews from real people to build trust with Gen Z buyers.
- 4** Gen Zs can see through influencers. Be picky and strategic about your approach to influencer marketing. Authenticity counts.
- 5** Sustainability is important to most Gen Zs, but it is seen as a luxury rather than a necessity.



Final thoughts: Gen Zs want a **conversation**

Our research reiterates the fact that Gen Z wants to build an authentic and personal connection. And their preferences and attitudes change over time as they move through different life stages. Socio-economic factors like inflation can have very real impact on how Gen Zs view and prioritize issues like sustainability.

“We want relevancy in our conversations...
We want to know that we’re receiving something
that’s topical.”



Francesca Spizzo, Senior Research Associate
from Reach3 Insights (and a Gen Z!)



Want Gen Zs to give you their candid feedback and insights? Meet them where they are: on their phones. As much as you can, mimic the digital space they’re used to. That means, your marketing or surveys should have a personal touch and use simple, conversational language—ditch anything that sounds too clinical or formal. Mobile-first conversational research platforms (like Rival 🗨️) make Gen Z feel like they are texting with friends. Videos can also help with engagement, set the tone, build trust, and offer a way for Gen Z to leave deeper, more authentic responses.

Get ongoing insights from Gen Zs

At Rival and Reach3, our conversational research technology has proven very effective in reaching and engaging with Gen Zs. Curious how companies like **Oura Ring, REVOLT TV,** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** use our platform to build Gen Z insight communities?

rivaltech.com/demo

reach3insights.com/contact-us

Community 2.0

Insight Communities Reimagined,
Powered by Conversation



Increase engagement and get closer to your customers
using an agile, conversational research platform



rivaltech.com/community

