



INTERESTS AND INSIGHTS

Gen Z: All Grown Up

Introduction

If you think it will be enough to copy and paste Millennial playbooks into Gen Z planning decks, think again.

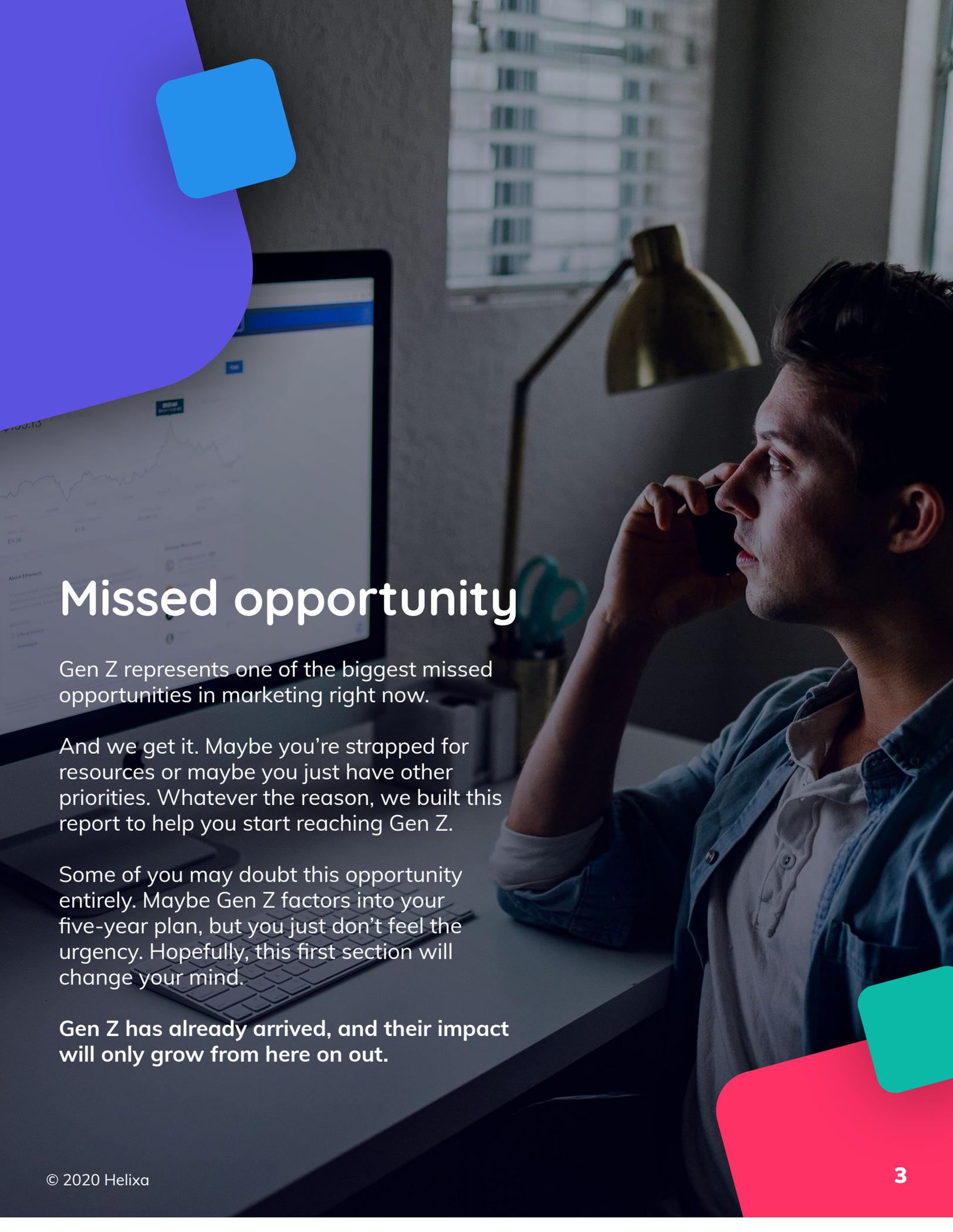
Gen Z is hard to pin down and impossible to generalize, so we took a closer look with that in mind. This report, which focuses on Gen Z adults (18-22), highlights our findings. It's one small step toward reframing the way we think about reaching this passionate, new generation and connecting with them in meaningful ways.

— Florian Kahlert, Helixa Co-CEO

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Missed opportunity

Gen Z represents one of the biggest missed opportunities in marketing right now.

And we get it. Maybe you're strapped for resources or maybe you just have other priorities. Whatever the reason, we built this report to help you start reaching Gen Z.

Some of you may doubt this opportunity entirely. Maybe Gen Z factors into your five-year plan, but you just don't feel the urgency. Hopefully, this first section will change your mind.

Gen Z has already arrived, and their impact will only grow from here on out.

A \$143 billion dilemma



Big spenders

Gen Z adults are filling their first shopping carts, right now.

Some are lining up to grab the hottest new video game, while others struggle through their first solo trip to the grocery store.

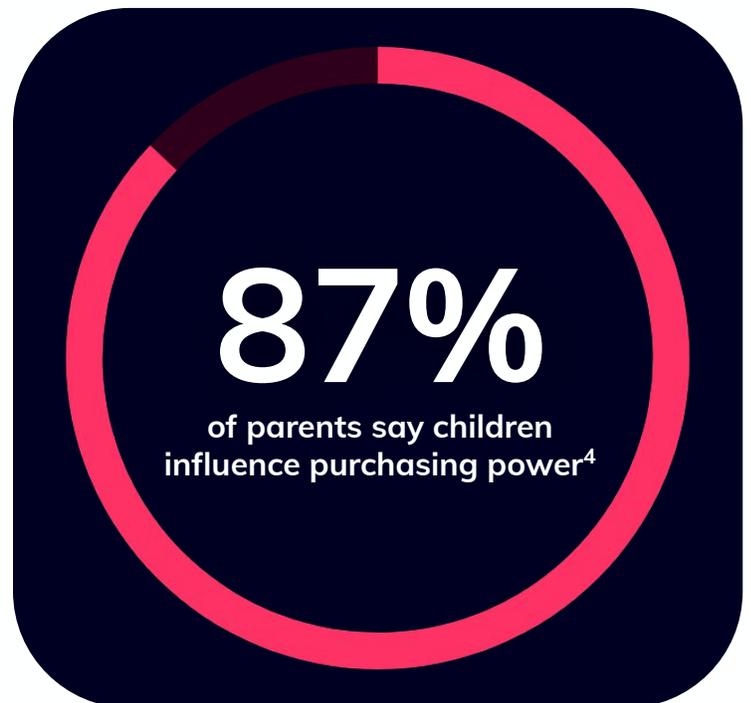
The decisions they make at these critical moments could represent a lifetime of brand loyalty. If you lose them to your competitors, the sting may be felt for years to come.

Household influencers

Outside of their own purchases, they wield considerable influence at home.

Not only do members of Gen Z influence their parents' brand decisions, they also impact the retailers and product features their families consider when making purchases.²

46% of parents say the impact is significant³



“Gen Z is not as elusive as many think, but reaching them requires nuance.” — Christine Burke, Helixa VP of Growth

1: Forbes 2018, “How Much Financial Influence Does Gen Z Have?”

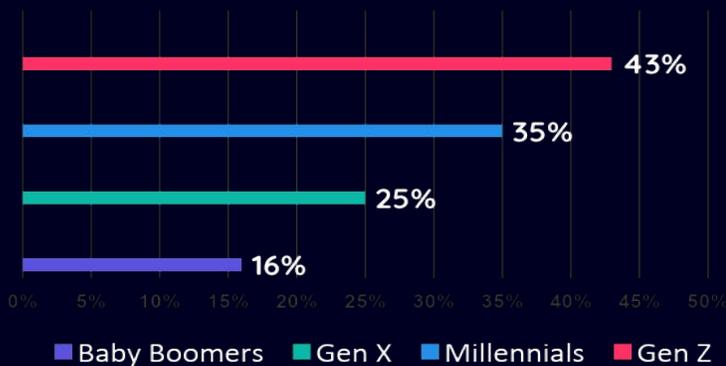
2, 4: NRF Consumer View Fall 2019

3: MRI 2020, accessed through Helixa Discovery

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Gen Z is ready to connect. Are you?

“I like to connect with brands on social media”¹



We often hear from companies who think influencers are the only way to get the attention of Gen Z. Truth is, they are more likely to connect with your brand online than any other generation.

But if you want to cut out the middleman and speak to them directly, **you need to understand what they care about.** That way, you can create content worth sticking around for.

40% will provide personal info for something they want²

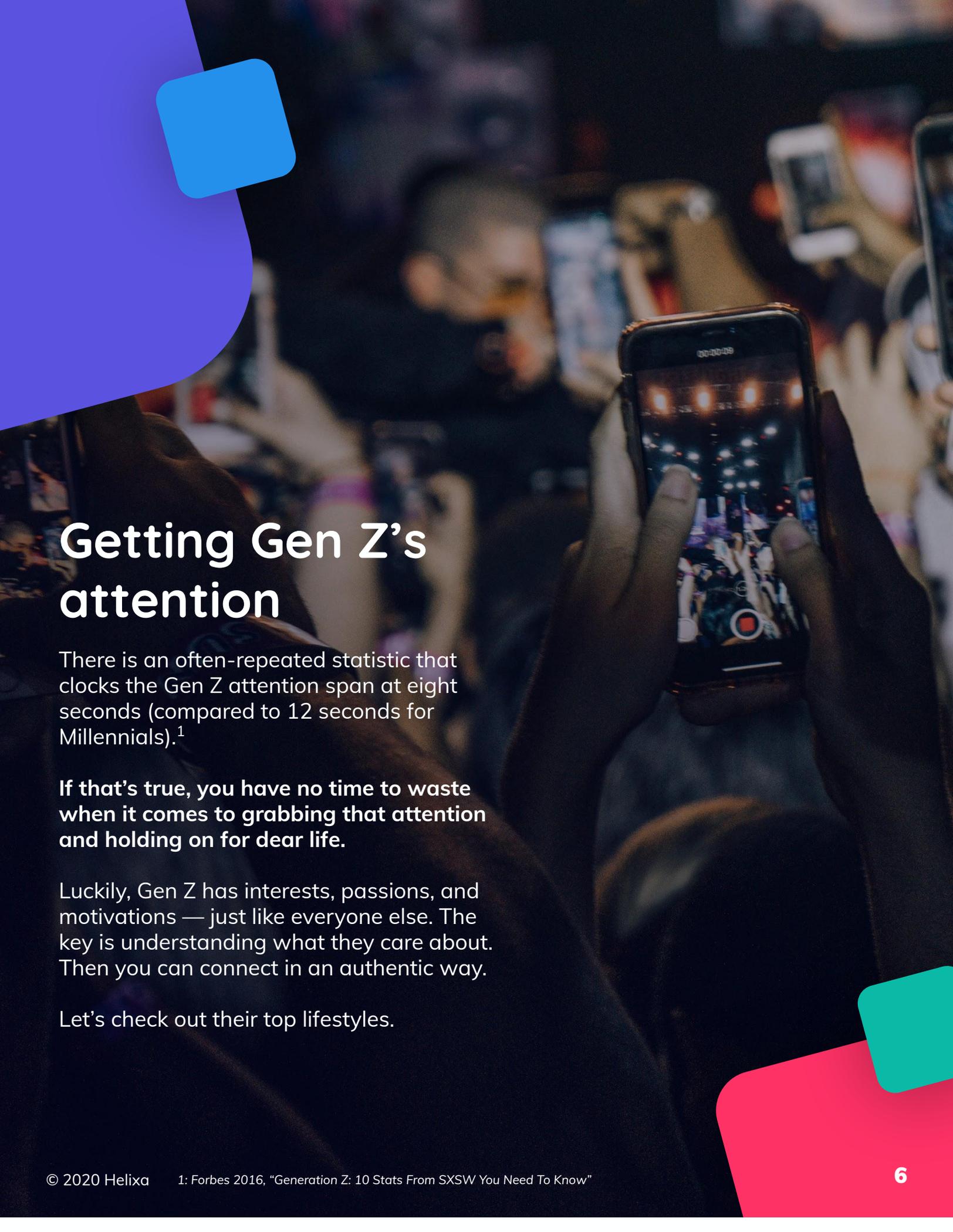
Connecting Authentically

Due to an early and constant exposure to the World Wide Web, Gen Z is also more comfortable with brands having access to its personal info online.

There's just one catch: They want to feel like they're getting something in return. If they feel that balance has shifted, **they are savvy enough to cut your access off.**

It's time to figure out your Gen Z audience, before they decide to ghost you.





Getting Gen Z's attention

There is an often-repeated statistic that clocks the Gen Z attention span at eight seconds (compared to 12 seconds for Millennials).¹

If that's true, you have no time to waste when it comes to grabbing that attention and holding on for dear life.

Luckily, Gen Z has interests, passions, and motivations — just like everyone else. The key is understanding what they care about. Then you can connect in an authentic way.

Let's check out their top lifestyles.

Top lifestyles and interests

What's in¹

Gamers
3.21x

Entertainment Junkies
1.52x

Outdoor Enthusiasts
2.57x

Sports Fans
1.43x

Motor Lovers
0.89x

Thoughtful Eaters
0.21x

Readers
0.41x

Beauty & Wellness
0.59x

What's out²

NOTE: The above affinity scores index the interest of a specific audience (in this case, Gen Z) against the average U.S. adult, based on online engagement. 1.00x would represent average interest. You will see these scores throughout the report.

What's in

Gen Z includes many gamers — more than any other generation. With the rise of multiplayer online games and eSports, gamers are more social than ever before. Plus, many people in this generation are passionate about being outdoors and playing sports. They are digital-first, not digital-only.

What's out

For us, the most surprising insight from this section was the low affinity for the beauty & wellness category. However, when you dig deeper in the platform, you find that the segments of Gen Z that are into beauty are really, really into it. The key is using segmentation to find those consumers.

Segments provide a clearer view

Agree to disagree

Because Gen Z can't seem to agree on much, we think the best way to understand them is through segmentation.

The lifestyles on the previous page are a great start, but they are just isolated categories.

For personas to be effective, they need to blend interests, actions, motivations, and demographics. Your audience will be identified at the intersections of those attributes.



Find the intersections

We used the AI-powered segmentation tool in Helixa Discovery to split Gen Z into five interest-based segments.

This will help us focus in for more useful and actionable insights.

You will see those segments on the next page — where we break down core attributes for each. They will also appear throughout the report as we explore different interest categories.

Gen Z in five segments

Gen Z segment

Notable interests¹

Music Lovers



- Gaming
- Celebrities
- Music equipment
- Record labels
- Punk musicians

Dedicated Gamers



- Strategy games
- Technology
- eSports leagues
- Video game companies
- Gaming influencers

Competitors



- Outdoor activities
- Sports video games
- Gaming influencers
- eSports leagues
- Professional athletes

Entertainment Fanatics



- Music
- Online video
- Social media apps
- TV networks and shows
- Gaming influencers

Trendy Snack Lovers



- Trends
- Snack foods
- Cosmetics
- Candy & sweets
- Reality show influencers



Consumption is changing

40 percent of Gen Z would prioritize WiFi over a working bathroom¹.

You probably aren't surprised to hear about this generation's obsession with the online world, but that statistic really puts things into perspective. The internet is essential to their daily lives and routines.

Unlike the Millennial generation, Gen Z was born and raised online. Even the oldest ones probably have no recollection of the grating dial-up tone.

Let's take a look at how deeply that has affected the way they consume content.

Holding Gen Z's attention

Half of Gen Z said they weren't going to watch the Super Bowl in 2020¹ but they spend **10.6** hours a day engaging with online content²

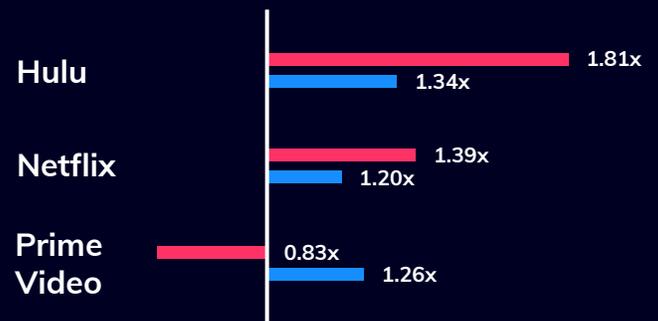
Streaming habits

They are more likely to stream than their millennial counterparts³, but prefer specific services. It's important to look at each streaming service individually.

Key

Gen Z Millennials

Used in the last 30 days*⁴



*at the time of the survey

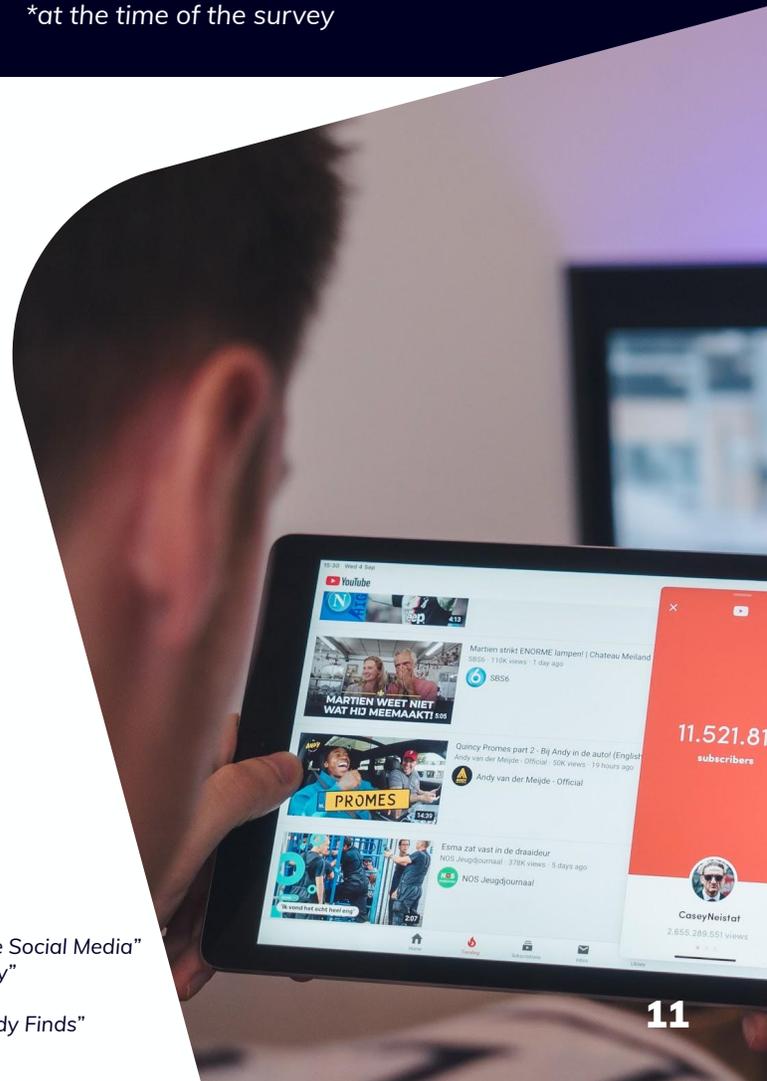
Reaching Gen Z

In a 2019 study, Gen Z and Millennials expressed a higher tolerance to advertising than older generations.⁵

That's huge. **Not only are Gen Z open to connecting with you online, they are more willing to watch your ads too.** There are so many opportunities to reach them directly.

The key is finding the **right** opportunities to connect with **your specific audience**. But first, let's take a look at Gen Z's favorite shows, overall.

1: MediaPost 2020, "Half of Gen Zers Won't Watch Super Bowl, Some Will Use Social Media"
 2: Marketing Tech 2018, "Gen Z engaging with 10 hours of online content a day"
 3, 4: Simmons 2020, accessed through Helixa Discovery
 5: MediaPost 2019, "Gen Z, Millennials Have Higher Tolerance For TV Ads, Study Finds"



The content they crave

Favorite TV Shows^{1*}

Though Gen Z’s attention is focused online, there are still many TV shows that draw them in.

In addition to the shows currently airing, there are several shows that still engage Gen Z online, years after the series finale.

Others, like *Supernatural*, started when they were still toddlers and grabbed their attention later in the show’s run.

Streaming plays a huge role in the resurgence of older shows among the Gen Z audience.

Past generations had to rely on older siblings or friends to find the best shows they missed out on. Meanwhile, Gen Z can learn about the shows on social media and stream them immediately.

30% of the top 10 shows are no longer on air

#	Name	Affinity	Category
1	SpongeBob SquarePants	3.64x	Animated
2	Pretty Little Liars**	3.34x	Thriller & Horror
3	Rick and Morty	2.87x	Animated
4	Stranger Things	2.47x	Sci-Fi & Fantasy
5	Glee**	2.23x	Comedy
6	The Office**	2.21x	Comedy
7	The Late Late Show with James Corden	2.02x	Talk Show
8	Tosh.0	2.00x	Comedy
9	American Horror Story	1.89x	Thriller & Horror
10	Supernatural	1.84x	Sci-Fi & Fantasy

The content they crave (cont.)

Gen Z segment

Favorite TV shows¹

Music Lovers



1. Skins
2. Dragon Ball Super
3. Rugrats
4. That 70's Show
5. Avatar: The Last Airbender

Dedicated Gamers



1. Naruto
2. Regular Show
3. RWBY
4. Chowder
5. Steven Universe

Competitors



1. Blue Mountain State
2. ItsTheReal
3. Fútbol Picante
4. ESPN College Basketball
5. Guy Code

Entertainment Fanatics

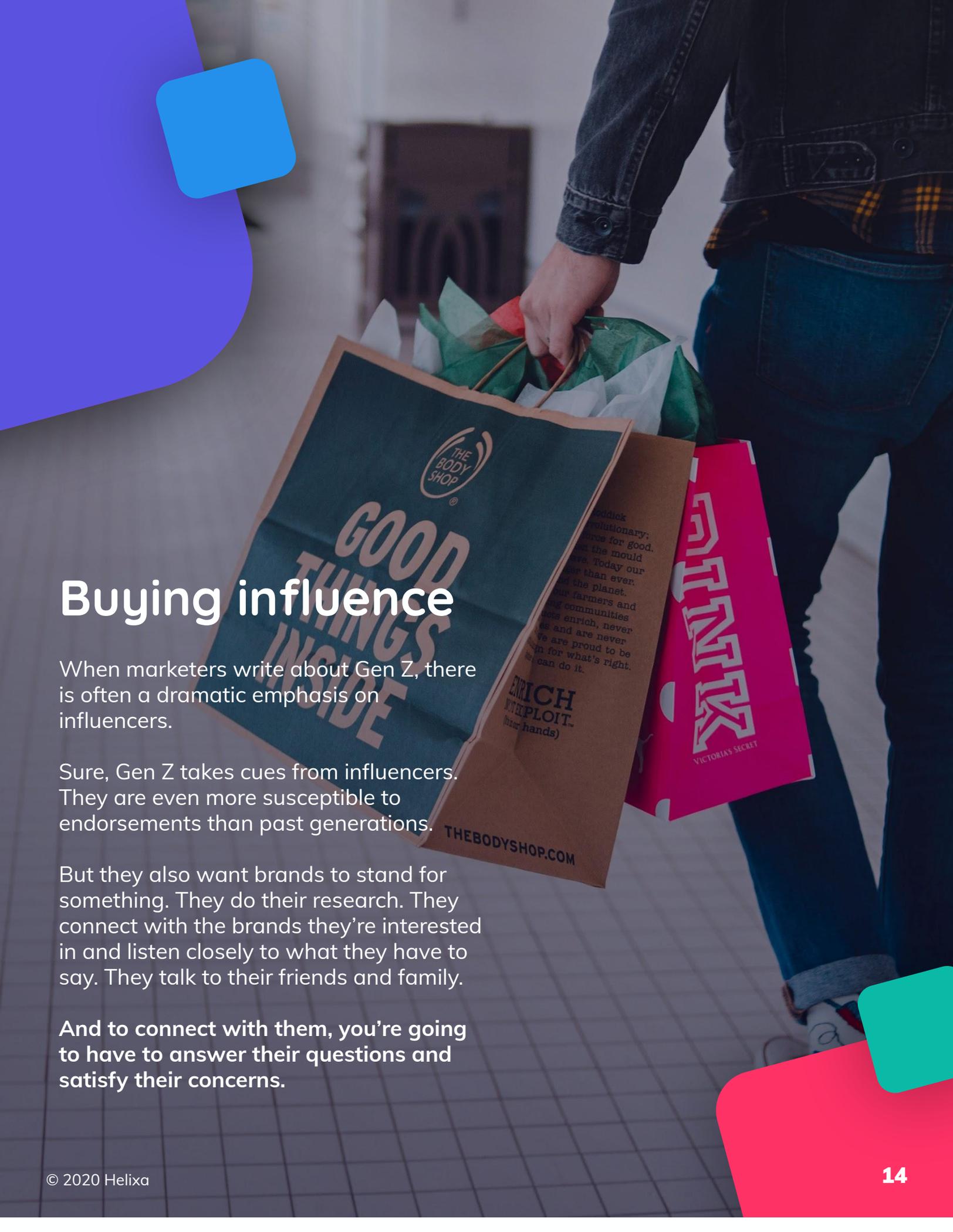


1. Young & Hungry
2. Dance Moms
3. Steven Universe
4. Avatar: The Last Airbender
5. Adventure Time

Trendy Snack Lovers



1. Hit The Floor
2. Degraasi: The Next Generation
3. Sam & Cat
4. The Secret Life of the American Teenager
5. Victorious

A person wearing a denim jacket and jeans is holding several shopping bags. The most prominent is a brown paper bag from 'THE BODY SHOP' with the slogan 'GOOD THINGS INSIDE' printed in large, bold letters. Below the slogan, there is a paragraph of text starting with '...addict revolutionary; ...eros for good. ...of the mould. ... Today our ...er than ever. ...of the planet. ...our farmers and ...ng communities ...its enrich, never ...s and are never ...ve are proud to be ...n for what's right. ...an do it.' Below this text, it says 'ENRICH WATER PLOIT. (their hands)' and 'THEBODYSHOP.COM' at the bottom. To the right, there is a pink bag with 'VICTORIA'S SECRET' printed vertically in white. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a tiled floor. There are decorative blue and purple shapes in the top left and red and teal shapes in the bottom right.

Buying influence

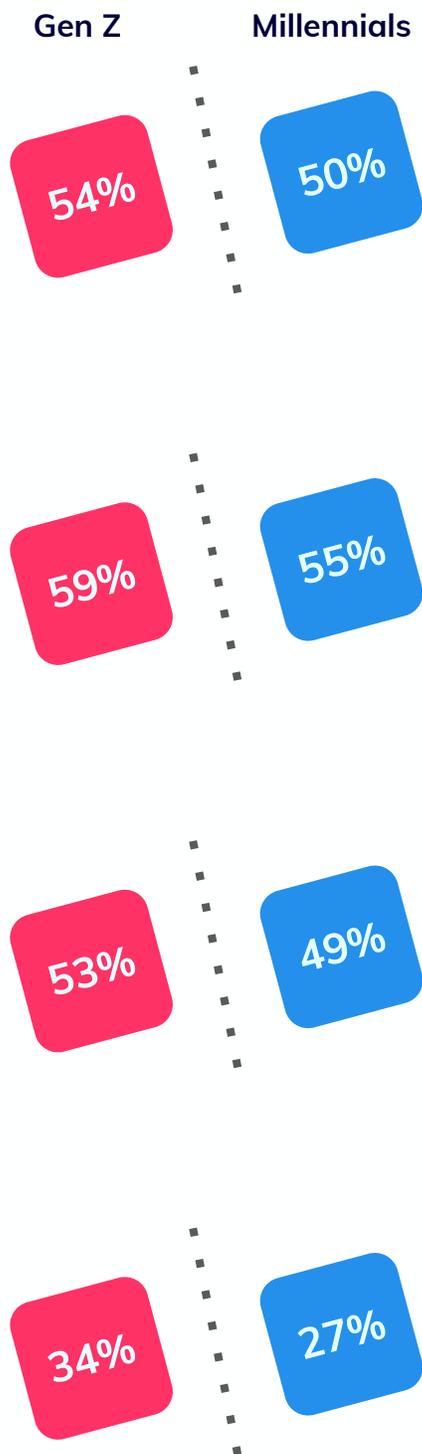
When marketers write about Gen Z, there is often a dramatic emphasis on influencers.

Sure, Gen Z takes cues from influencers. They are even more susceptible to endorsements than past generations.

But they also want brands to stand for something. They do their research. They connect with the brands they're interested in and listen closely to what they have to say. They talk to their friends and family.

And to connect with them, you're going to have to answer their questions and satisfy their concerns.

Top purchase considerations



...prefer brands they grew up with¹

Gen Z and Millennials are often linked to newer and even more disruptive brands. However, our platform shows that many still have a soft spot for the brands their parents kept **stocked in their childhood homes**.

...prefer brands that support their causes²

It can be risky to take a stand in these divided times, but Gen Z has made it clear that it's **almost riskier to stay silent**. This data shows that you'll be rewarded if you get it right, so do the research and listen closely.

...often seek advice before purchases³

Gen Z is more likely than previous generations to take a more **collaborative path to purchase**. The "influencers" they rely on increasingly include those in their inner circles.

...influenced by celebrity endorsements⁴

The influence of celebrity is spreading within younger generations, **but so is their definition of "celebrity."** Turn the page to see who's really influencing Gen Z at the cash register.

The gatekeepers of Gen Z

Favorite influencers¹

All of these influencers are content creators. Some are releasing edited videos on YouTube, others are streaming on Twitch, and all of them are supplying an endless supply of content to their social accounts.

But it's not enough to pump out content — it has to be believable.

That's probably why most of Gen Z's top influencers are part of Gen Z themselves, or a little bit older.

In fact, authenticity is the No. 1 consideration when members of Gen Z are deciding whether to follow an influencer.²

The top influencers have passed that test, so listen to their ideas if you partner with them. They know their audience better than anyone.

78% of people, age 17-21, follow influencers³

#	Name	Affinity	Category
1	Anthony Padilla	6.25x	Comedians
2	JC Caylen	5.76x	Online Celebrities
3	Connor Franta	5.69x	Online Celebrities
4	Ansel Elgort	5.67x	Actors & Directors
5	Madison Pettis	5.55x	Actors & Directors
6	Kian Lawley	5.46x	Online Celebrities
7	Twaimz	5.36x	Online Celebrities
8	FaZe Banks	5.27x	Gamers
9	Conan Gray	5.25x	Singers & Bands
10	Jennette McCurdy	5.05x	Actors & Directors

The gatekeepers of Gen Z (cont.)

Gen Z segment

Favorite influencers¹

Music Lovers



1. BryanStars
2. Chris Motionless
3. Neck Deep
4. Motionless in White
5. Real Friends

Dedicated Gamers



1. ChimneySwift11
2. NobodyEpic
3. TmarTn
4. Toby Turner
5. LilyPichu

Competitors



1. Gareth Bale
2. Mesut Özil
3. Sergio Ramos
4. Tfue
5. Devin Booker

Entertainment Fanatics

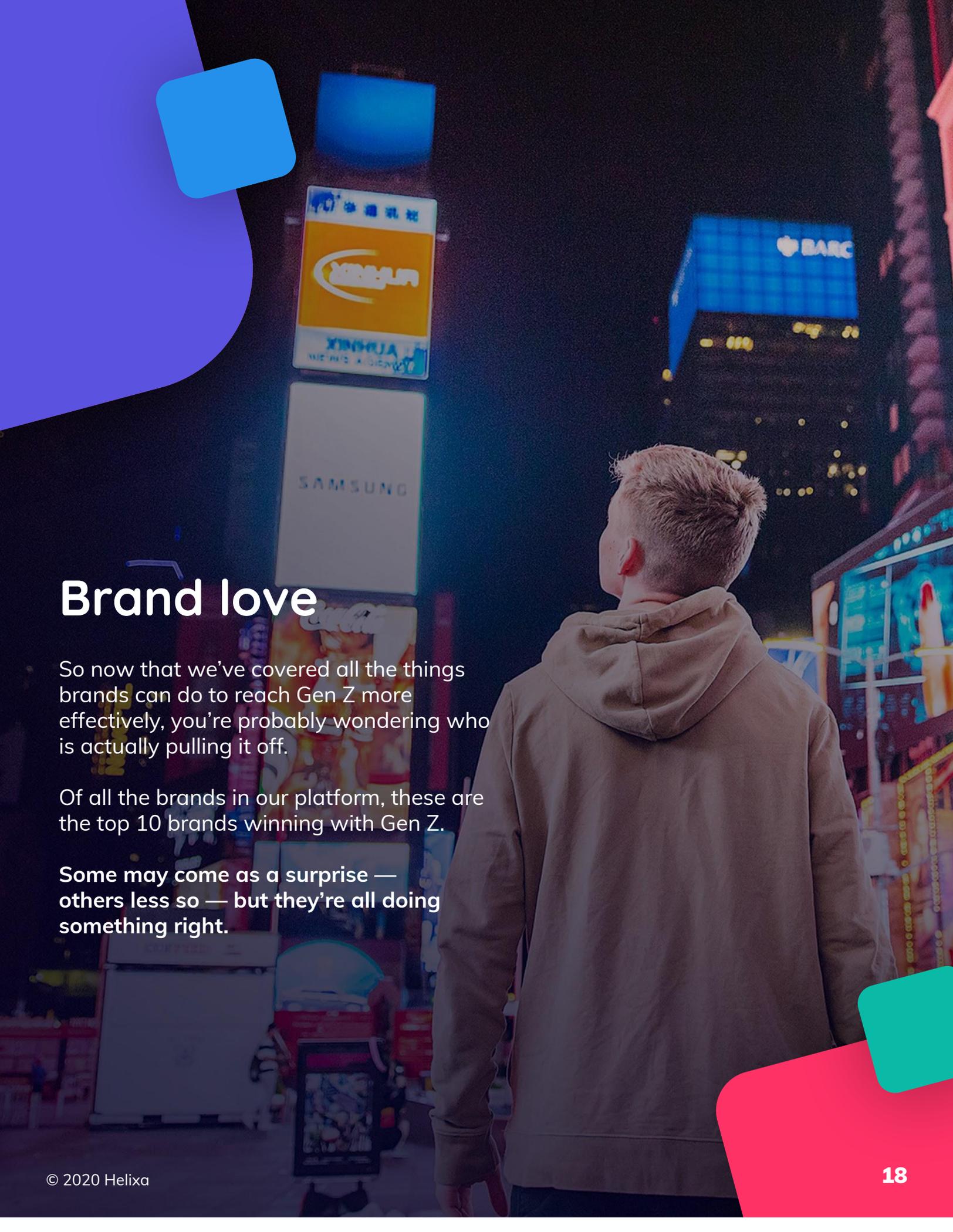


1. Bardock Obama
2. Khalil Underwood
3. Jacksfilms
4. Alonzo Lerone
5. Brittany Broski

Trendy Snack Lovers



1. Ansel Elgort
2. 5 Seconds of Summer
3. JC Caylen
4. Lucy Hale
5. Madison Pettis



Brand love

So now that we've covered all the things brands can do to reach Gen Z more effectively, you're probably wondering who is actually pulling it off.

Of all the brands in our platform, these are the top 10 brands winning with Gen Z.

Some may come as a surprise — others less so — but they're all doing something right.

Winning over Gen Z

Favorite brands¹

Raise your hand if you're surprised to see youth apparel, snacks, and gaming brands at the top of the list. It's what we would've expected for a segment of young adults, too.

But while we may have had a good hunch on the categories, we could've never guessed that Call of Duty would be the top video game. We would've never thought they were this engaged with chewing gum. And we didn't even realize Hollister was still this popular!

It's always great when our assumptions are proven out in the data. But if we relied on them, instead of digging further, **we would miss out on a lot of interesting insights along the way.** That's especially true as you start drilling down to specific brands.

And when we start segmenting the audience, we see additional niche brands and even combinations we wouldn't have expected. Let's dig into that further on the next page.

#	Name	Affinity	Category
1	Hollister Co.	5.51x	Apparel
2	5 Gum	5.46x	Snacks
3	PacSun	5.10x	Apparel
4	Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	4.51x	Gaming
5	Hot Topic	4.46x	Apparel
6	Infinity Ward	4.40x	Gaming
7	Pop-Tarts	4.37x	Snacks
8	Converse	4.04x	Apparel
9	Pokémon	4.04x	Gaming
10	League of Legends	4.03x	Gaming

Winning over Gen Z (cont.)

Gen Z segment

Favorite brands¹

Music Lovers



1. Fearless Records
2. Rise Records
3. Hopeless Records
4. Sumerian Records
5. Epitaph Records

Dedicated Gamers



1. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
2. KontrolFreek
3. Treyarch
4. Infinity Ward
5. Turtle Beach

Competitors



1. Champs Sports
2. Adidas Basketball
3. Nike By You
4. Soccer.com
5. Adidas Football

Entertainment Fanatics



1. The Hunger Games
2. Kingdom Hearts
3. Hot Topic
4. Cyanide & Happiness
5. Sonic The Hedgehog

Trendy Snack Lovers



1. Sherri Hill
2. Hollister Co.
3. eos
4. 5 Gum
5. Dippin' Dots

Winning over Gen Z (cont.)

Gen Z segment

Favorite brands (non-endemic)¹

Music Lovers



1. Journeys
2. Hot Topic
3. Vans
4. Minecraft
5. FUNimation

Dedicated Gamers



1. Monstercat
2. G Fuel
3. FUNimation
4. Mountain Dew
5. Monster Energy

Competitors



1. G Fuel
2. Beats by Dre
3. Oakley
4. Red Bull
5. Old Spice

Entertainment Fanatics



1. Pop-Tarts
2. PacSun
3. ColourPop
4. Denny's
5. Converse

Trendy Snack Lovers



1. Sharpie
2. Duck Tape
3. Young Money
4. Disneyland
5. Beats by Dre

Insights in minutes, not hours

“

*“We find the insights we get from Helixa so valuable, we use it on **every single project.**”*

-Concept Arts

*It would take **multiple tools** to replace the deeper insights I can uncover with Helixa.*

-VMLY&R

”

Your fans are unique...

Hopefully, this report has given you a clearer, data-supported view of Gen Z — and a head start over the companies who aren't even targeting this generation.

But general insights only get you so far. As you saw with the five Gen Z segments, things can change a lot once you start getting specific.

To understand your audience, you need insights that center your audience. We can help.

...and so is Helixa

Helixa is a forward-thinking audience insights platform that uses responsible AI and machine learning technology to connect data sources in one easy-to-use tool.

We've built a research platform for the 21st century with more depth and detail than you would ever get from a single source.

If you're ready to spend less time searching and more time thinking, give us a call.

[SCHEDULE A DEMO](#)

Who we are

We built a research platform for the 21st century with more depth and detail than you would ever get from a single source platform.

We believe that detailed research and a respect for privacy are not in conflict.

We help brands and marketers connect in a more deep and meaningful way with the audiences that matter most to them.

“At Helixa, we leverage state-of-the-art machine learning and develop novel solutions to understand human behavior. Their potential effects on society are a top priority for our team.”

**– Gianmario Spacagna,
Helixa Chief Scientist**

Methodology

Helixa observes real-time social media interactions of millions of consumers, and applies machine-learning algorithms to calculate consumer interests and affinities.

We also overlay the survey data from MRI and Simmons Research to provide a deeper understanding about the American consumer’s consumption habits, opinions and attitudes.

To fuse the datasets from MRI-Simmons, we use advanced look-alike modeling to match the most similar respondents based on a detailed set of linking variables such as demographic traits and common interests.

Our consumer data is calibrated against the latest U.S. Census studies (ACS and CPS) to ensure that all the analyses reflect a picture of the real world. Our goal is to create the most accurate representation of the U.S. consumer.

The analysis for this report was conducted using Helixa Discovery in Q1 2020. The generations were defined with the following age ranges: Gen Z (18-22), Millennials (23-42), Gen X (43-54), and Baby Boomers (55-69, 69 being the platform age cap).