

Simmons Leverages TikTok to Target Young Consumers

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Mattress company Simmons is turning to TikTok to help drive brand awareness and attract a younger audience as it looks to adapt in a competitive, digitally native space.

The 150-year-old company tapped independent agency Burns Group to help with a “Just for Fun-ZZZ’s” campaign on TikTok, which aims to create a virtual festival experience as consumers continue to social distance. We recently spoke with Andrew Long, head of marketing at Simmons, about the campaign and the company's new direct-to-consumer (D2C) site.

What is the story behind Simmons' new marketing campaign?

At Serta Simmons Bedding [SSB], we didn't have a brand that had products below \$500, and that's really what we challenged the Burns Group to help us with. We've got this historic brand name, and we have a target customer who will spend under \$500—but we need to really reinvent our brand for that to work. They came back with a really fun take on what a mattress brand could be with the tagline “Just for Fun-ZZZ's.”

With this campaign, we're targeting Gen Z. We did some research, and we know that sleep is a relatively low priority for them—they have a kind of 'crash pad' mindset. For them, the mattress isn't just for sleeping. If you think about their bedrooms, whether they're in a dorm

or at home, often the mattress is considered just a piece of furniture. It's where they're streaming TV, for example.

We also found that 70% of 18- to 24-year-olds spent less than \$500 on a mattress in 2019.

Why TikTok?

For one, that's where Gen Zers are. We also want consumers to think about mattresses differently. TikTok is a really creative place for advertising, whereas with some of the other platforms, brand content can seem like just a commercial.

Launching on TikTok was actually in our plans before COVID-19. The app's popularity has seemed to double in the past few months, and that surge has only validated our choice.

As a brand that's been around for a long time, Simmons has run countless campaigns on various platforms. How is this one different?

I've been with the company in the marketing department for about seven years now, and when I started, it was all TV campaigns. Last year—and I'm talking about some of the other brands within SSB—it was almost all social and digital applications.

This one is very different because we're not talking about the mattress or the price. It's a fun awareness campaign where we're sponsoring a hashtag challenge.

We're drawing from all that's going on in the world, and we want to be relevant [to our target consumers]. Part of that is acknowledging that one of the things Gen Zers really love is going to music festivals, but now they're all canceled.

With lockdown measures still in place, we thought about what would be a fun topic to reach that younger cohort. The campaign's concept is centered around the fact that music festivals are canceled, so fall back on your mattress and take us somewhere really creative in your imagination that represents the fun you had at music festivals before the pandemic.

Simmons also launched a D2C site. Are you aiming to drive traffic there via this campaign?

Yes, we're now selling direct. We've made the website as simple as possible, and we don't use a lot of the complicated mattress jargon. Right now, we're in soft-launch mode, and we're excited to see what happens as traffic from our TikTok awareness campaign gains traction.

In July and August, you're going to see more paid social search campaigns, where we're going to focus on more of the product education and conversion, whereas the TikTok effort is really just a fun "intro party" for the brand.

What was the strategy behind the site? Is it a solution to the acceleration in ecommerce that we're seeing now? Or is it because buying a mattress online has become the norm in recent years?

It's really the latter. It's almost an unfortunate coincidence that we're in this situation now. We started development of the site before March, and we've just launched it. Our ecommerce presence certainly will become a larger focus for us in terms of driving the business because of the trends that you just referenced.

Right now, you're selling just one product: a mattress. Will you be adding more products in the future?

Yes, and I can imagine there will be pillows, adjustable bases, a foundation that ships in a box, toppers to help. I think we could have a huge business for dorm mattresses and things like that.

Right now, we're trying to get the fundamentals in place and understand how people use and shop on our site. Then we'll continue to build from there.