

What the past few months of TikTok trends teach us about marketing to Gen Z

Article

Following TikTok trends is vital for staying relevant when working with influencers, creating content on owned channels, or developing paid social ads. But trending content on the

platform also reveals greater patterns of what works (and what doesn't) with Gen Zers, 71.1% of whom will be on TikTok next year, according to our May 2023 forecast.

Here are some recent TikTok trends and the lessons we can learn.

1. Authenticity, authenticity, authenticity

The trend: The “no makeup makeup look” has over 200 million views on TikTok. The trend revolved around light coverage makeup, rejecting the heavier looks that were popular over the past few years. Videos show TikTokers demonstrating their minimalist makeup routines and displaying the products they're using.

The takeaway: If there is one takeaway to glean from Gen Zers' TikTok habits, it's that they prioritize authenticity. Not only does this trend emphasize low maintenance makeup, it shows the honesty behind achieving the look.

Makeup and skincare brands can capitalize on the trend to sell products, as Sephora and Bobbi Brown have done. But this trend extends beyond beauty—any brand can lean into authenticity on the platform by working with the right creators.

2. Less is more

The trend: Unpolished, lo-fi content works better on TikTok than the heavily curated photos and images popularized on Instagram. This is emphasized by one creator's viral video, which jokes about how low-effort videos from brands like Burger King can be to get views.

The takeaway: Don't overproduce content. Gen Z isn't looking for high-budget displays of audiovisual innovation from brands. Especially on social media, content that is quick, reactive, and simple can take off with Gen Z. This pivot away from less engineered content is why a TikTok from the actual Burger King account features a quick drawing of a banana with a voiceover.

3. Reality check

The trend: One of the weirder recent viral trends on TikTok right now features slideshows of seemingly AI-generated memes that are absolute nonsense. “AI generated meme” has 1.6

billion views on TikTok. **AI has had a place in meme creation for a long time**, but these images don't make sense because there is no sense to be made of them.

The takeaway: Gen Zers are both embracing and rejecting generative AI. They accept the tech as an inevitability and are comfortable with using it, but they're not exactly taking generative AI seriously. Leaning into generative AI to the point of absurdity is a way for Gen Zers to reclaim the spiraling tech innovations defining their generation.

For brands, this means AI can be a useful gimmick in creative campaigns, like **The Coca-Cola Co.'s "Create Real Magic"** AI art contest. It also means that brands shouldn't shy away from absurdity when reaching Gen Z. Whimsy in advertising can pay off, like it has with **MSCHF and Crocs viral boot collaboration**.

4. Price matters

The trend: The quest for dupes (cheaper alternatives to expensive products) may be an older trend on TikTok, but it's a lasting one. **"#Dupes"** has 3.5 billion views on TikTok.

The takeaway: Gen Z wants quality products at lower prices. Any way brands can communicate that they are delivering value could push Gen Zers to purchase, be that with discounts, free shipping, or exclusive offers.

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