

Q&A: Reaching Gen Z customers and creating authentic Pride Month marketing with Couplet Coffee

Article

Gefen Skolnick

Founder and CEO at Couplet Coffee



Gefen Skolnick, founder and CEO at Couplet Coffee, grew tired of specialty coffee brands with pretentious labels and created her own eccentric coffee brand, carrying heart-shaped French presses, coffee beans packaged in holographic bags, and moka pots spotted like a cow. Insider Intelligence spoke with Skolnick about what it means to create a brand catering to the interests of the Gen Z consumer and her thoughts on the trends in performative marketing around Pride Month.

Insider Intelligence: What matters to Gen Z consumers when choosing brands?

Gefen Skolnick: People really like to hear about who is behind the brand and learn whether the brand has a cool story. A lot of people like the story of Couplet and that I wasn't in the coffee industry and am a queer woman who is pretty abrasive and has an online identity that transcends to my brand. The brand is genuine, authentic, and human-centered, instead of feeling like a stale brand that just kind of follows a formula of what it means to be a brand.

II: As it's Pride Month, how can brands be more inclusive in their marketing?

GS: A lot of brands are super performative and care about the queer community in June when they can commercialize it, but Couplet Coffee is queer every day. Brands put out merch products that clearly someone queer was not part of creating, and it feels like low-hanging fruit for brands to say they've done something in their marketing calendar for Pride.

I would challenge brands to think deeper about how they can empower the queer community, whether it's partnering with nonprofits or organizations that help folks out in the queer space or empowering small businesses like Couplet versus the mainstream alternatives.

It is more about empowerment and helping the community year-round—not just dropping merch that says “Slay” on it. That's all we're asking for.

II: What changes do you hope to see in the coffee ecommerce space?

GS: Overall, brands need to be more approachable. Not all brands need to go and have holographic, funky packaging like us, but I would love to see incumbents and the OGs in the ecommerce space push the boundaries of what it means to be a coffee drinker and to be more inclusive in representation in the equipment that they sell and in the way that they position themselves as a brand. A lot more people would be very down to participate in specialty coffee if it felt less intimidating.

Traditional coffee brands can be overwhelming for a lot of consumers because they don't have context on what elevation and varieties mean and that's always something that's super

highlighted on traditional coffee packages. It's just coffee, we don't need to take everything so seriously. People just want to enjoy coffee.

II: Why do you think the current coffee space is outdated, and what are you doing to change the status quo?

GS: I have a lot of respect for the incumbents in the coffee space, and took great interest in understanding why certain companies became more successful than others. But my main question was, When is someone going to build a better coffee brand for Gen Z? I wanted to see more soul and color and community-focused initiatives and an abrasive brand identity. Couplet Coffee doesn't have bland white packaging with lingo on it that you need a PhD to read. We have poems on the bags—hence the word Couplet, which means two-line poem—to describe the beans rather than talk too much about tasting notes, which have been off-putting historically to most consumers.

In terms of expanding on what we sell at Couplet, we have a cow-print moka pot and a heart French press and people eat it up. It keeps going viral on TikTok, whenever our creator makes a video with our coffee equipment and our bags—people are obsessed with it. We've done a lot of things to differentiate as a brand, but the main reason that people have been super attracted to Couplet is that we stand out as an overall fun and approachable coffee brand.