

Gen Z has a 1-second attention span. That can work to marketers' advantage

Article

Gen Z loses active attention for ads after just 1.3 seconds—less time than any other age group, according to a global study by Yahoo and OMD Worldwide. But most marketers

haven't moved on from the mindset of 30-second appointment TV ads. There's a creative advertising opportunity for meeting Gen Z where they are. Here's how you can make the most of 1.3 seconds.

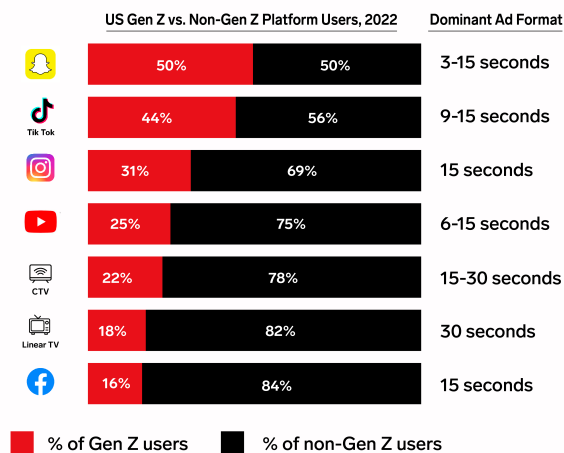
“Attention must be earned in an instant.” That's according to our analyst Paul Verna, speaking on our **“Attention! Trends and Predictions for 2023”** event last week.

- Skippable ads like those on YouTube and vertical scrolling like on TikTok have reinforced an expectation for young people that many ads are essentially optional.
- Gen Z decides instantly where their interests lie, and then they skip or scroll past content that doesn't intrigue. That contrasts with older generations who expect to sit through ads as they did (and still do) with TV commercials.

A snap judgment: Perhaps this is why Gen Z frequents platforms with shorter ad formats.

- Half of US Snapchat users are Gen Z.
- Gen Z has a higher penetration of US TikTok use than any other age group.
- Young users make up a significantly smaller portion of connected TV and linear TV viewers, where ads are frequently over 15 seconds.

Social Platforms Shape Gen Z Ad Expectations



Source: eMarketer, 2022; platform ad guidelines
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What works? “The dominant ad formats [on social media] are below 15 seconds and in some cases as low as 3 seconds,” according to Verna.

- **Do** move away from 15- and 30-seconds ads. Consumers won't pay attention.
- **Do** be prepared to react quickly to pop culture moments and changing interests.
- **Don't** use inflexible processes or rely on high-end production expectations. Following trends quickly can yield far more attention than slower, high-expense ads.

Take this TikTok, for example.

The score from Titanic plays for 7 seconds over a popular meme format with the text, "The social media manager trying to explain that this boat vid is going to get way more views than the glossy editorial vid that cost thousands."

The poster is right; the video currently has 3.9 million views. This is a brand social media post rather than a paid ad, but the marketing takeaway holds: authenticity and immediacy shine over polish and production.

"You really do need to be more agile to compete in this short attention economy," noted Verna. Marketers who can't adapt "risk becoming irrelevant."

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