

Kendra Scott courts Gen Z with community, co-creation

Article

As Gen Zers grow up and their purchasing power expands, they're redefining the relationship between brand and consumer, expecting brands to be community-focused, authentic, and culturally relevant.

Here's how brands like Alo Yoga and Kendra Scott are adapting to new Gen Z priorities and how others can better engage with this audience.

Come together: The brands that are winning with Gen Z are the ones that aren't just thinking about how to create a relationship between brand and customer, but also thinking about how to create relationships between customers themselves, said Gen Zer Ziad Ahmed, founder and CEO of JUV Consulting, **during our virtual summit last week.**

- “Historically [with brands], it was commerce first, then content, then community,” he said. “[But it] really has to be the reverse, right? You need to build the community, and that community is going to make content with each other. Then that’s going to push commerce.”
- One way to inspire connections between brand and communities is through co-created content.
- “We want to co-create the things that are meant to serve us,” Ahmed said. “We are the stewards of both our present and our future, and when we co-create with [other] diverse young people to serve diverse young people, the net impact is through the roof.”

Community before commerce: Community and co-creation are foundational to Alo Yoga’s marketing strategy, said Angélic Vendette, CEO and founder of Ave Advisory and former vice president and global head of marketing at Alo Yoga.

“Even before we launched products or went about an activation, we would take it to our community,” she said. “We would want to hear their feedback before it went out to the larger market.”

To reinforce the importance of community, Alo hosts Alo House events that are solely about bringing consumers together, not about sales.

- “You could not buy any products at any of our experiences,” said Vendette. “They were to give back to the community and to really feel and breathe the values that Alo has.”
- Even in the digital world, Alo focuses on immersing consumers in the community experience.
- “Leveraging technology to further that consumer journey is really important,” she said, citing Alo’s VR experiences that enable consumers to take classes or browse products. “It’s just not a two-way street anymore. We’re in it together, and both sides have something to [take away from it] to truly make it special and meaningful, especially with Gen Z.”

Be real: Gen Z can spot an inauthentic brand a mile away, said Ahmed.

“When you have a roomful of people who look nothing like the community that you’re trying to serve, it’s going to feel forced. Because it is,” he said. “It feels like a bunch of folks who are not our generation decided what they thought was cool. And it really isn’t. So it’s easy for us to scroll right past that because we see through it.”

One of the best ways to craft messaging that’s more authentic to Gen Zers is by including them in the conversation.

- Jewelry brand Kendra Scott tapped its Gen Z team members to create its recent “Hey Elisa!” campaign, an in-person tour of colleges based on one of the brand’s most popular pendants, said Michelle Peterson, CMO of Kendra Scott.
- “We had this super fun, immersive experience,” she said. “[Attendees could] take a survey [to discover which pendant was right for them], they got a custom coffee that also fit with the survey, and they could do it as a group.”
- The tour resulted in a 30% increase in sales of the Elisa pendant over the next couple of weeks, said Peterson.

Keep up: Authenticity is especially important when it comes to social media, as Gen Zers become more judicious with how and where they’re spending their time.

“In an ecosystem with so much choice, it would be reckless to give somebody more than a second to earn our attention,” said Ahmed.

To stay relevant, brands can lean on content creators who know Gen Z trends and culture.

- “If you’re not leveraging and working with folks that are out on those platforms, day in and day out, then you’re missing the boat,” said Vendette.
- This will require a bit of flexibility from brands, as trends can change rapidly from one day to the next.
- “[Gone] are the days of planning your marketing calendar 12, nine, six, even three months out,” said Vendette. “That just doesn’t cut it anymore. If something is trending and it’s hyperrelevant, then [brands] need to go to market in a way that speaks to the audience now.”

[Watch the full session.](#)

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