



↗ We Know Experiences

Connected Consumers



Through the Lens of Gen Z

Introduction

Gen Z is often described as a generation in transition, predicted to make up approximately 27% of the workforce by 2025. Born between the years of 1997 to 2010, they have been shaped by a unique upbringing in a digital, globalized environment.

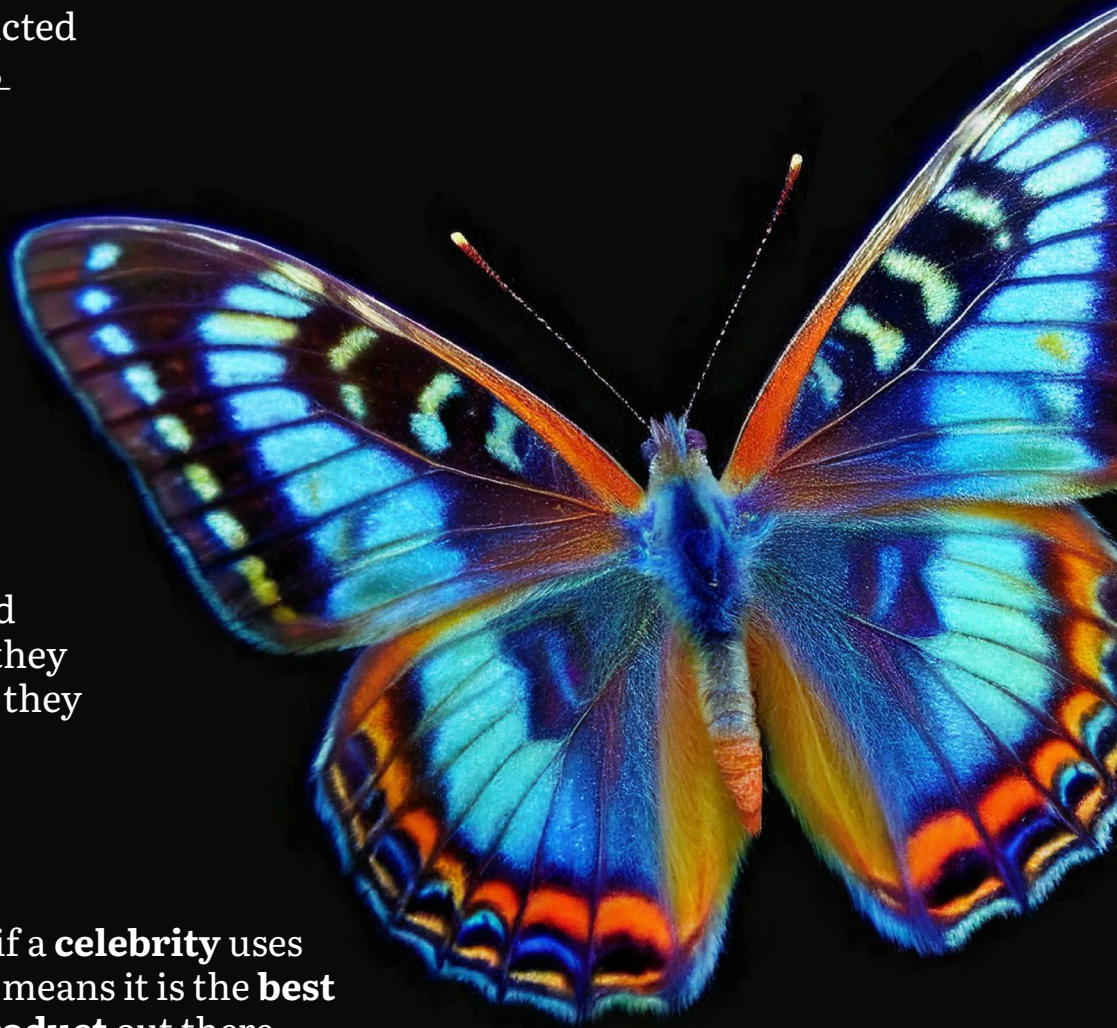
They are known for being a **generation of differentiation**, their uniqueness being noted and celebrated across countries and cultures. This extends to how they behave as consumers and how they approach brands.

1/3

believe that if a **celebrity** uses a product, it means it is the **best available product** out there.

This group of consumers find themselves subject to both excitement and scrutiny as brands wonder:

- What experiences resonate with Gen Z?
- How might brands build lasting relationships with this generation?
- How can brands meet their expectations for inclusivity and diversity?
- And what values drive their consumer behavior?



Gen Z is one of the most researched generations to date. This analysis highlights the often-overlooked details of Gen Z stereotypes, exploring the following opposing forces at play:

1

Connected
yet **Isolated**

2

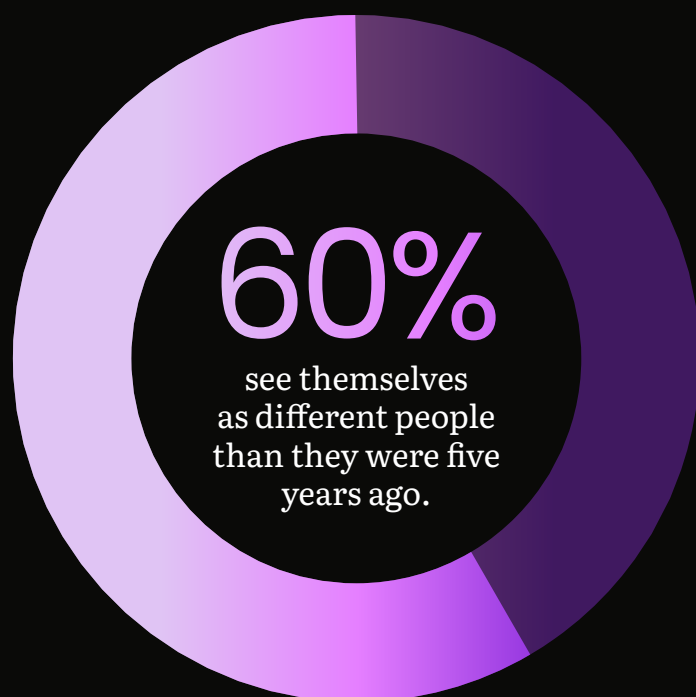
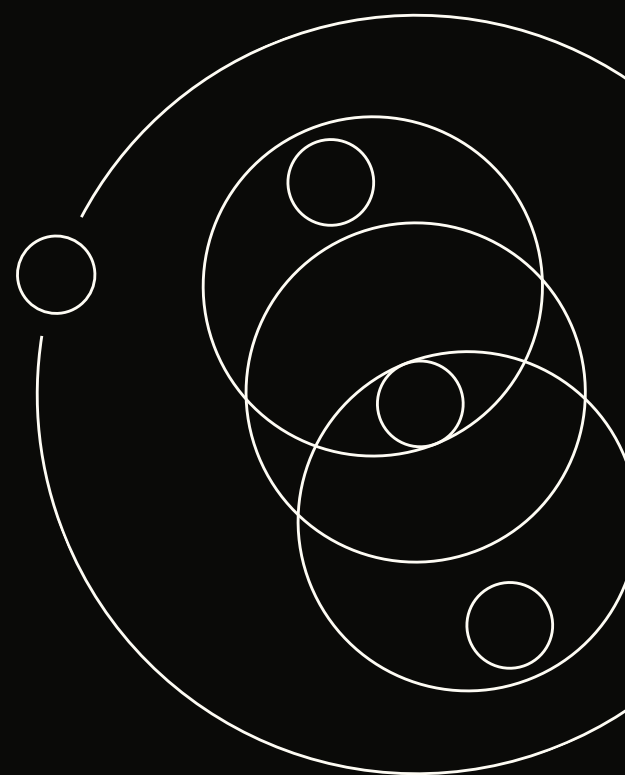
Adventurous
yet **Selective**

3

Inclusive
yet **Exclusive**

Before we dive into the research, we'd like to set the stage by highlighting several notable characteristics that drive some of the findings in our study.

First, Gen Z is in flux. The oldest are now 2–3 years into the workforce, and the youngest halfway through high school. They are a shifting, growing bunch in a transitional period of life.



This generation has grown up in a dynamic, erratic world, from the widespread adoption of smartphones to dealing with rife racial unrest to the onset of a global pandemic.

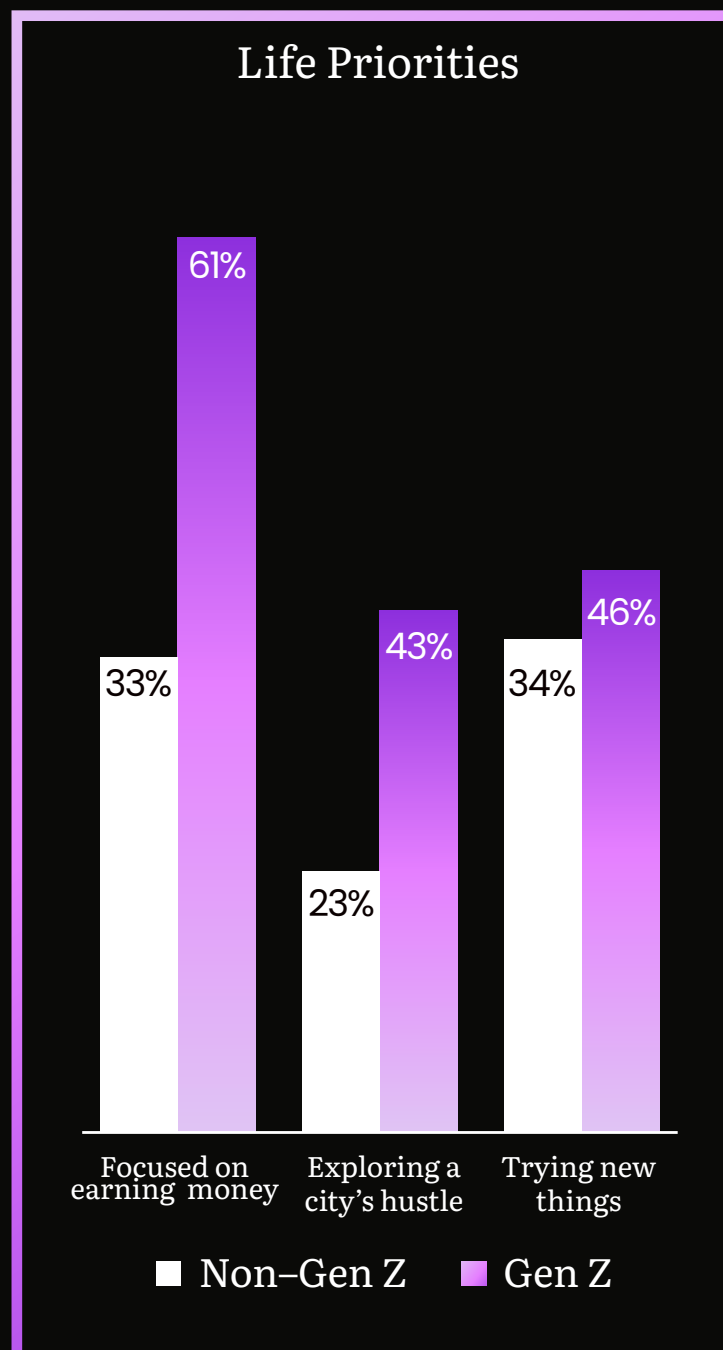
Secondly, they are excited about all the possibilities at their fingertips. Eager to try new things that no one else has (55%), Gen Z is here to explore what life has to offer and to make their mark.

As a result, they often have trouble deciding how to spend their free time given the seemingly limitless number of options (65%). Nearly half have picked up or tried a new hobby within the past 12–18 months, demonstrating their passion for discovery.

1 in 2

Gen Zers have picked up or tried a new hobby within the past year and a half.

Third, they are the most diverse generation ever. Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation, being **2.5x more likely to identify as non-white compared to other generations.**



Compared to non-Gen Zers, Gen Zers are...

2.5x

more likely to identify as **non-white**

4x

more likely to identify as **neurodivergent**

1.5x

more likely to say they have a **physical disability**

This report seeks to uncover how these unique identifiers shape Gen Z's seemingly contrasting behaviors and preferences. With this in mind, let's get started!

Opposing Forces at Play

The Most Connected Yet Most Isolated Generation

Boasting thousands of social media followers and having the ability to speak near-instantly with friends, family and acquaintances around the globe, Gen Z appears to be **the most connected generation yet**.

However, genuine, fulfilling connections are harder to come by for a generation raised on two-dimensional screens and social platforms that quantify relationships into likes and comments. As they confront their turbulent teenage years and early 20s, they also face a loneliness epidemic, with **73% saying they struggle with loneliness**. As a result of their digital upbringing, they wrestle with person-to-person interactions.

Nearly

2 out of **3**

Gen Zers are **anxious to be around large groups of people** in public, compared to 47% of Non-Gen Zers.

1 out of **3**

Gen Zers believe that **making friends is more difficult for them** compared to others they know.

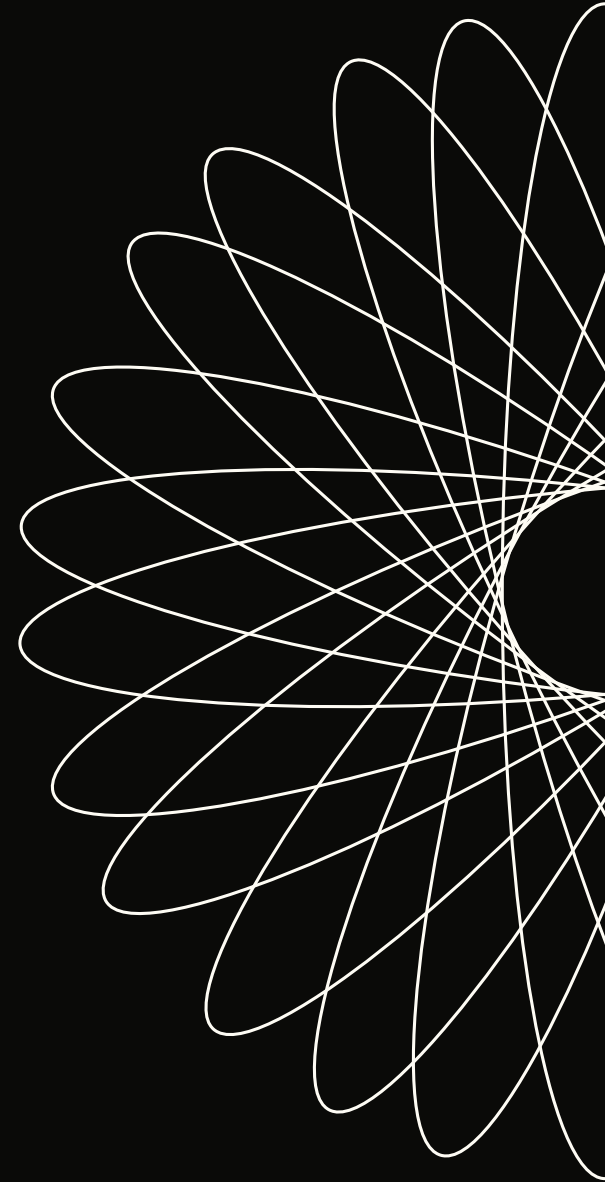


Perhaps at odds with Gen Z's desire for connection is their **digital dependency**.

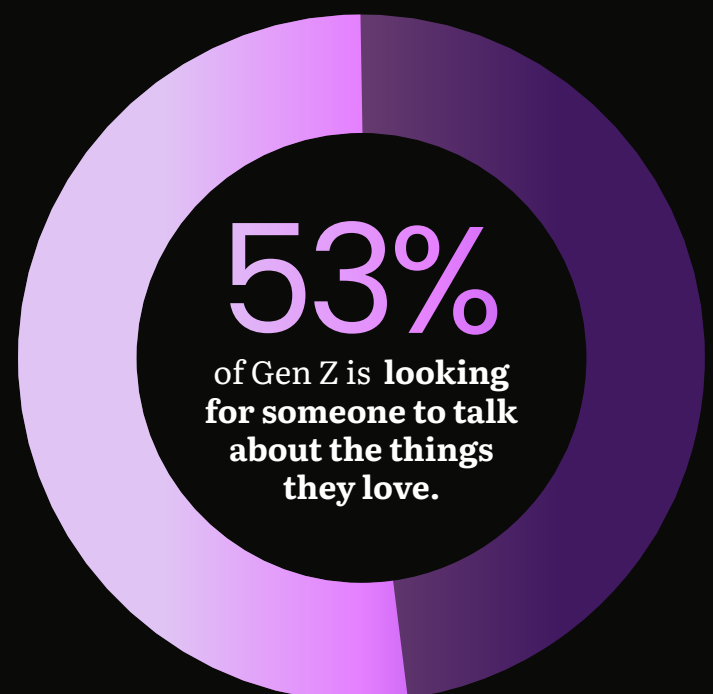
They are more likely to turn to digital spaces (e.g., social media, chat apps) and spaces they are "required" to be in (e.g., school, work). Although these spaces can expand the number of people Gen Z has access to, they don't always allow for authentic self-expression.

In contrast, other generations, raised in a more communal manner, are more likely to turn to "third spaces" (e.g., bars/restaurants, museums, local events, volunteering) to find connection. While not necessarily a guarantee for connection, these spaces allow us to express ourselves in a more multi-dimensional manner, expanding beyond our work personas or curated Instagram posts.

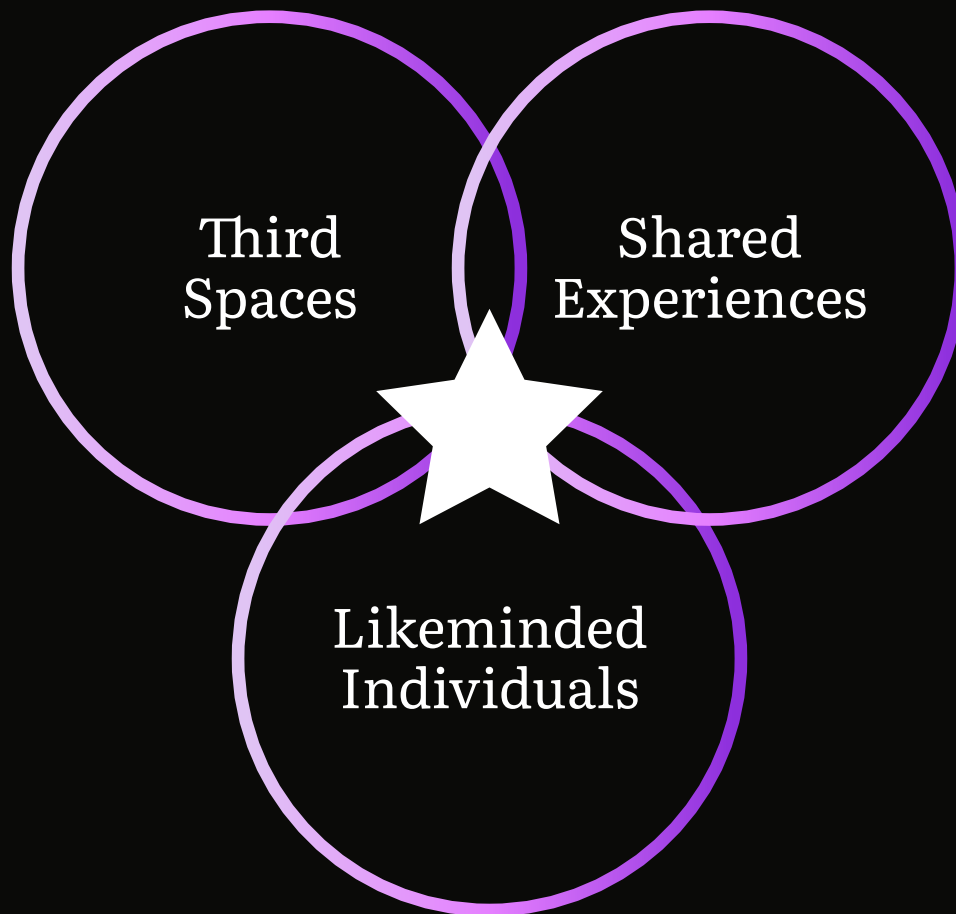
There is a lot of discussion about the death of third places, but simply being together in a space does little to help build the relationships desired. When thinking about connection, Gen Z is also looking for those with similar interests with whom they can create shared memories.



When it comes to making connections...



To create fulfilling, authentic connections, brands need to **integrate these three elements:** shared experiences with like-minded individuals in spaces beyond the typical.



Insight:

What “third spaces” offer opportunities for one-off or recurring experiences to create and foster meaningful connections and help Gen Z create lasting memories with others that share their same interests?

Key takeaway:

The Portal. A two-way connection between NYC and Dublin helped passersby incorporate a connection to another community during their commute to work. A simple concept that utilized a unique connection to create something memorable in the mundane.

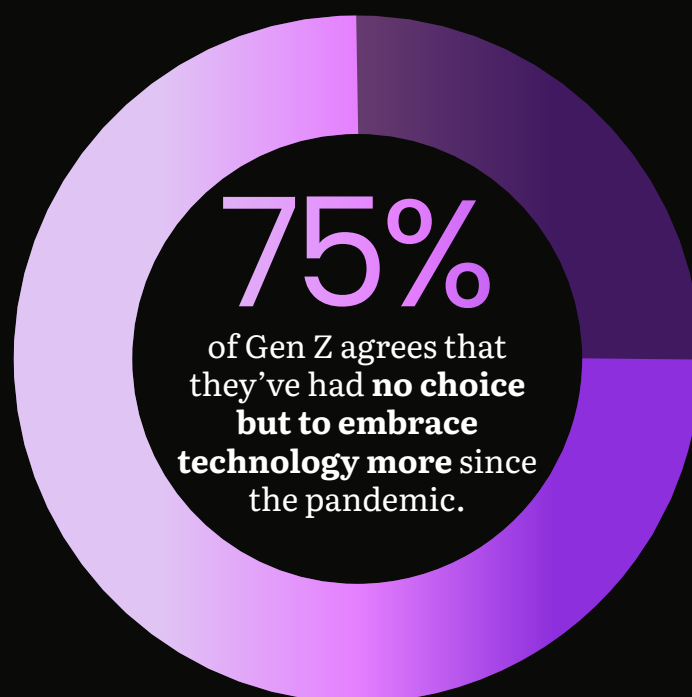
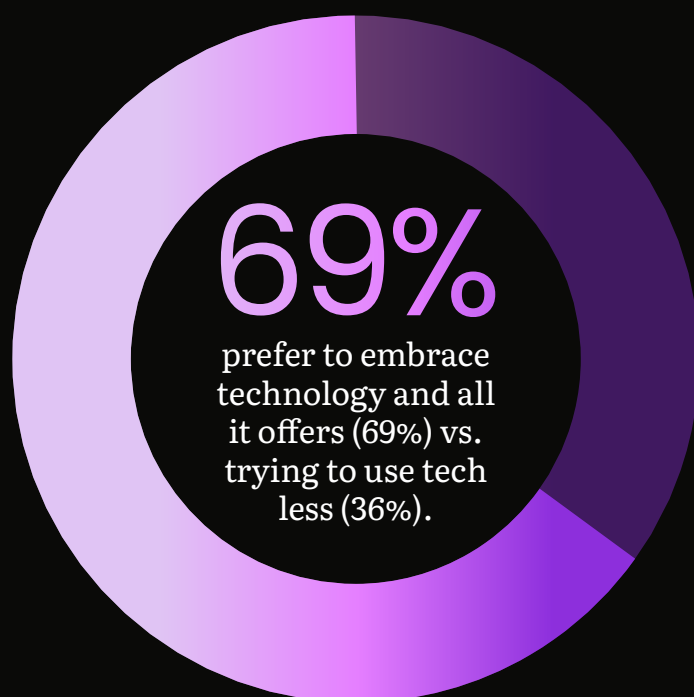
Photo by maxim bober on Unsplash

Tech: Shop Or Drop?

Smartphone-owning, social-media savvy, early tech adopters, Gen Z seems to navigate the various woes of their generation armed with easy confidence and a sharp sense of humor.



However, as much as older generations are mocked for cutting back on technology, Gen Z also longs for simplicity in today's overwhelming flood of information.



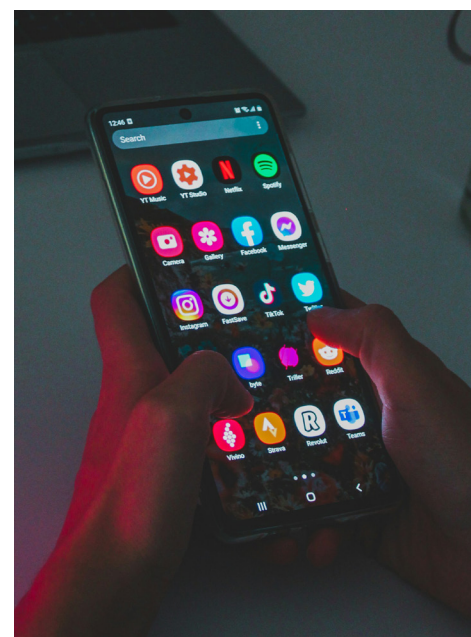
“Aware,” “conflicted,” “addicted” and “dependent” are four words that Gen Z is more likely to use to describe their current relationship with technology. This ongoing battle of awareness vs. addiction is evident as more and more delete their social media and dating app accounts **to look for simpler options.**



**“The ultimate waste”:
Young people say
no to TikTok,
social media**



**Why Gen Z is ditching
dating apps**



**Dumb phones are on
the rise in the U.S. as
Gen Z looks to limit
screen time**

Yes, Gen Z is **often drawn to all that is shiny and new**, but they are more cognizant of the impact those shiny and new offerings may have on their time, attention and overall well-being.

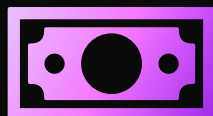
As a result, they're **prone to dropping things** the moment they no longer offer any value, as witnessed through the quick rise and fall of Tumblr, BeReal and Clubhouse (and so on).

They're open to including new technologies into their lives, but brands must keep this in mind: not everything works, and not everything sticks. **To make a positive, long-lasting impression, technology must not only elevate their experiences but also align with the values of this generation.**

Values of Gen Z:



Growing as a person



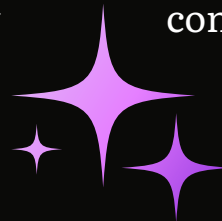
Being smart with money



Hanging out and connecting with others

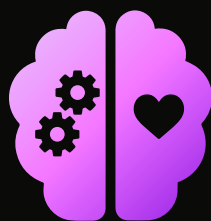


Learning and getting smarter



Chasing adventures and new experiences

Technology-Related Advancements that Gen Zs Say Have Made the Most Positive Impact in Their Lives:



Awareness of social media's impact on mental health



Growth of mental health apps for self-care



Emphasis on financial literacy and planning



Online community building for support and connection

**Insight:**

When implementing consumer-facing technology, how might your brand go beyond novelty into something that sticks?

Key takeaway:

Taylor Swift concert bracelets. The artist's most recent tour utilizes a somewhat analogue technology, LED bracelets, to help enhance the concert experience. Afterwards, many concert-goers, having developed a strong emotional attachment to this vivid, communal experience, have elected to keep the bracelets as a souvenir.

Photo by Samuel Regan-Asante on Unsplash

The Coexistence of Inclusivity and Exclusivity

On the surface, Gen Z is **known for their progressive stance**. Open-minded and vocal, they can hold their own when speaking on a variety of socioeconomic topics, and they're often considered to be the most inclusive generation to date. In turn, this perspective has translated into support for brands that promote accessibility, with 42% of Gen Z refusing to go to stores that do not make accommodations for persons with disabilities.

78% agree that **society is more understanding of people who are different** from them compared to five years ago.



75% agree that **brands should focus on inclusivity and safety** to ensure growth and keep customers loyal.



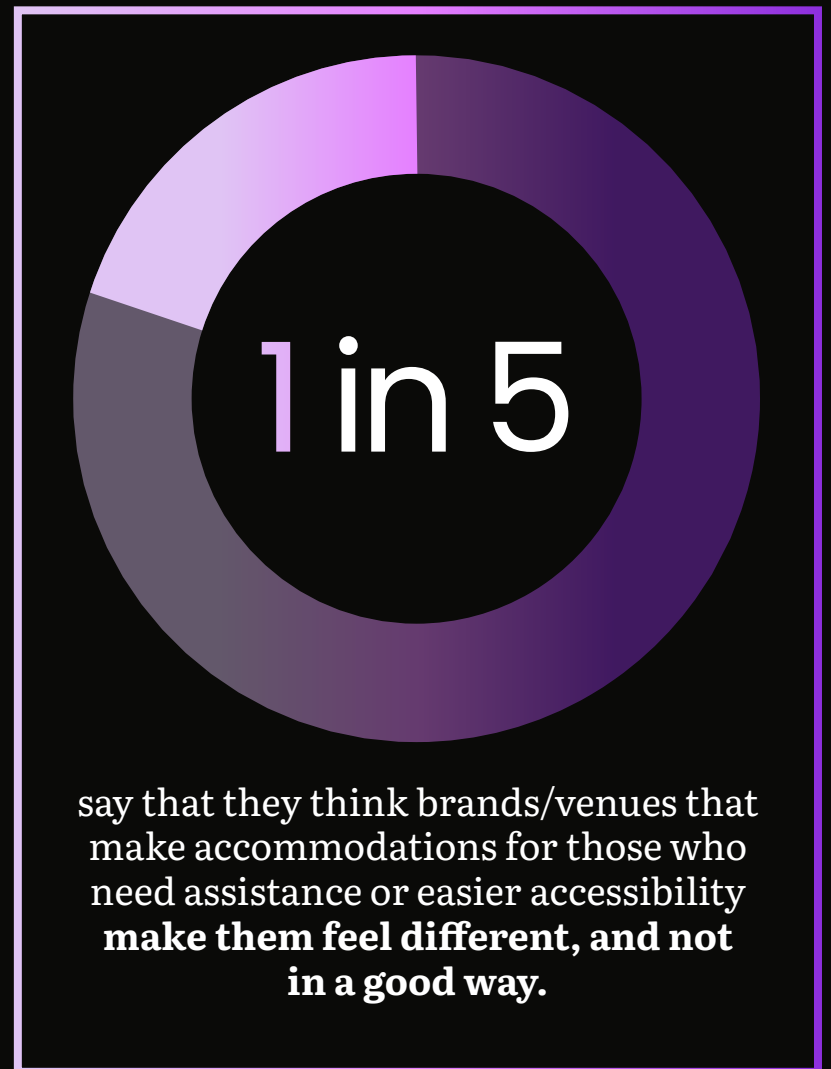
74% agree that brands that make an effort to be accessible are more likely to provide higher quality products and services than those that do not.



Yet Gen Z's approach to inclusivity is not quite so cut and dry. Digging deeper, we find that Gen Z does expect and support accessibility initiatives, it's just that they also **have higher standards** for what that looks like compared to other generations.

Because Gen Z is more likely to be (or to acknowledge being) diverse across a variety of identity markers, including neurodivergence and physical ability, they are also more likely to be sensitive to inclusivity initiatives. As a result, they can see the differences between brands that truly celebrate their minority identities vs. those that do not.

Brands that fail to truly understand Gen Z run the risk of alienating this group of consumers, who do not want to feel "singled out" or victimized.



"Just treat me like everyone else.
Don't single me out."

Gen Z, Female, identifies as neurodivergent

"I would **feel like an outcast or victim** and I don't want to feel that way." Gen Z, Female, identifies as neurodivergent

This nuanced view of accessibility sets the stage for yet another seemingly opposing Gen Z preference: **as much as they value inclusivity, they equally value exclusivity.** When it comes to brands, Gen Z is looking for unique, personalized experiences, with 45% agreeing that an experience is enjoyable only if it is available to a select few.

These seemingly opposing perspectives highlight the complexity of Gen Zers, who want both inclusive and exclusive experiences. As minorities, they want to be authentically understood and integrated into experiences without being singled out; at the same time, they want to feel valued and be celebrated for their unique differences.

There is a fine line between celebration and embarrassment, and brands must take care to respect and understand how their Gen Z consumers interpret inclusivity in order to build a meaningful, authentic connection.

1 out of 3

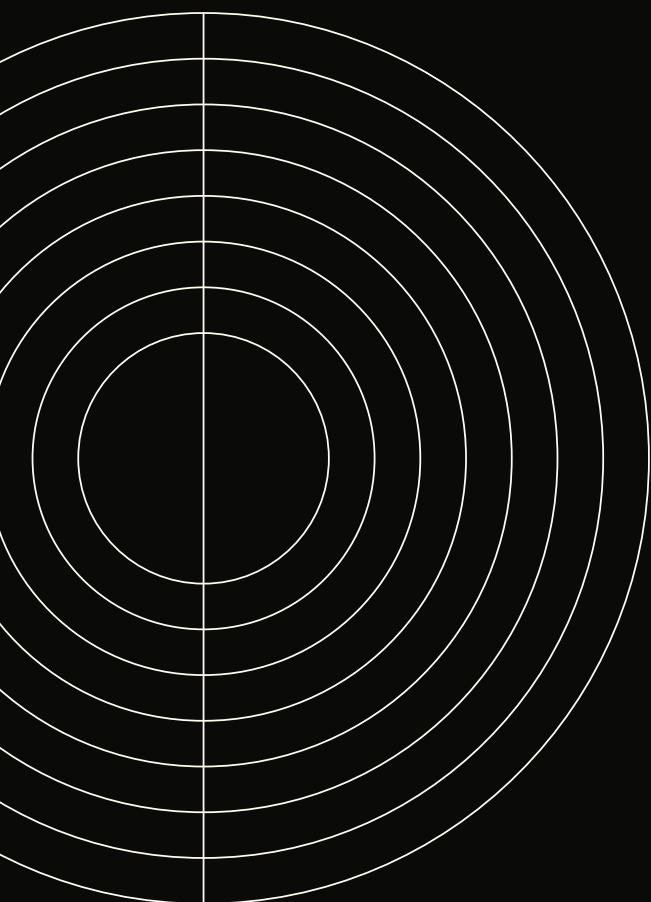
Gen Zers are concerned about **getting a generic, “this works for everyone” feeling** from brand-driven experiences/initiatives.

Insight:

How might your brand provide exclusive experiences that make Gen Z feel special and valued, while also creating an inclusive environment that acknowledges and truly celebrates their diverse identities?

Key takeaway:

e.l.f. Show Yourself series. e.l.f. celebrated diverse identities through a short documentary series that premiered in a curated space (Tribeca Film Festival), with the ultimate goal of bringing these identities into the broader “collective cultural conversation.”



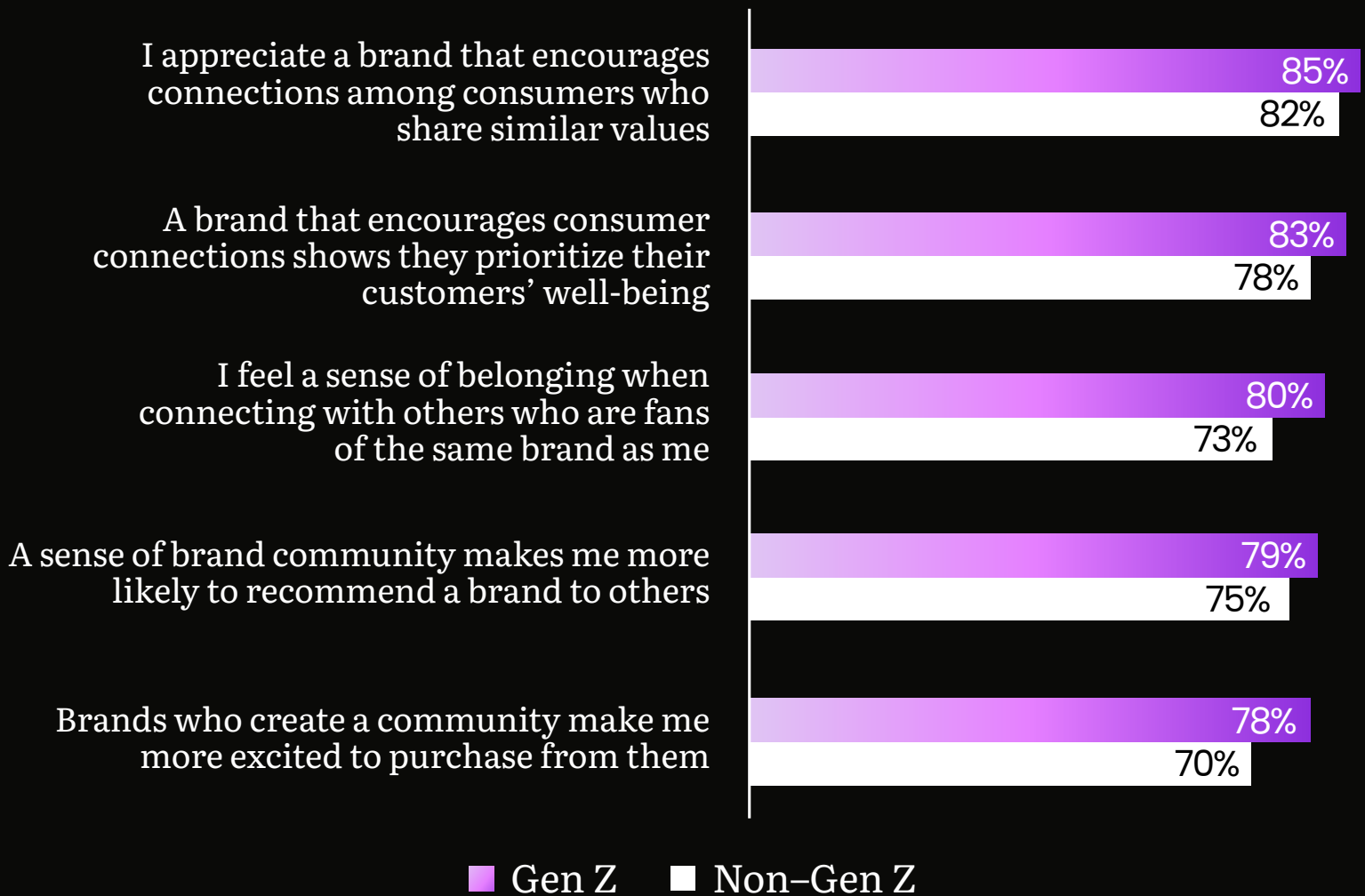
Gen Z on Branded Experiences

Across all generations, Gen Z is the **most likely to lean into brand communities** and connections with brands offering them an outlet for self-expression.

Brands that guide them along their growth journey and resonate with their values will find themselves recipients of Gen Z’s enthusiasm, championed by a sizable crew of brand advocates.

We see this in their support for language learning app Duolingo, which taps into Gen Z’s desire for self-improvement as well as their absurdist humor; in Coach’s rebrand from exclusive to inclusive, positioning itself as accessible for the everyday consumer; and in e.l.f.’s positioning as an affordable makeup brand fighting for workplace diversity.

Gen Z Opinions on Brand Experiences



In addition to their support for brands and brand communities, Gen Z especially values the connectivity and thrill of being present at live events and experiences. In a world ruled by easy access to cheap, fast fashion and shallow digital connections, Gen Z places more value in **experiences that mark an exclusive, memorable moment in time** over material goods they can find in abundance.

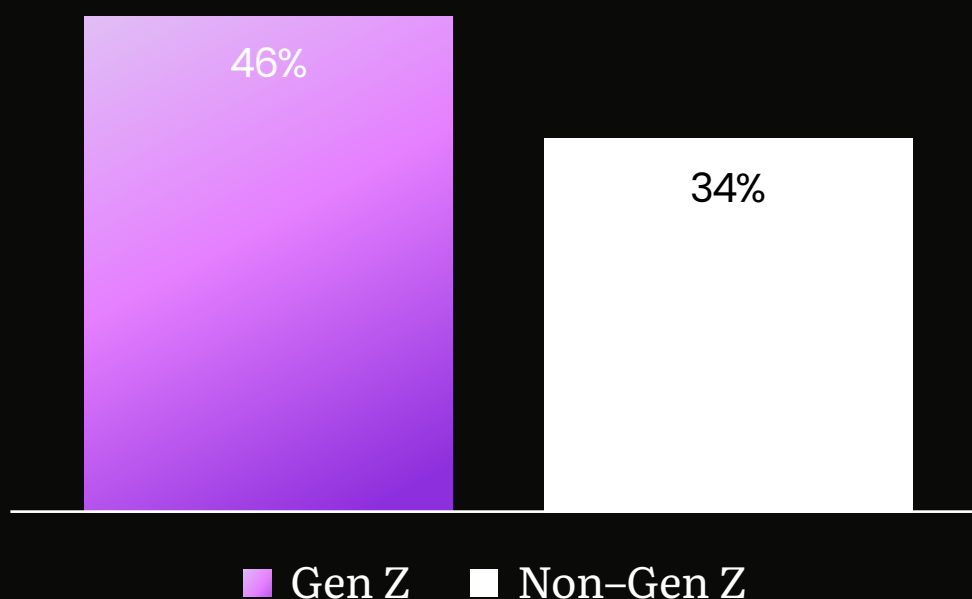


are “very interested” in a live event or experience.



say exclusive experiences are for the **most passionate fans**.

% Who Have Attended a New Type of Experience/Event in the Past 12–18 Months That They’ve Never Been To Before



From gaming events to movie theaters to pop-ups, Gen Zers are drawn to a variety of experiences that uniquely appeal to their interests or their **desire to connect with likeminded peers.**

In the past 12-18 months...



Gen Zers have attended a music concert or festival by themselves.



Gen Zers have participated in a protest for a cause/movement they believe in.

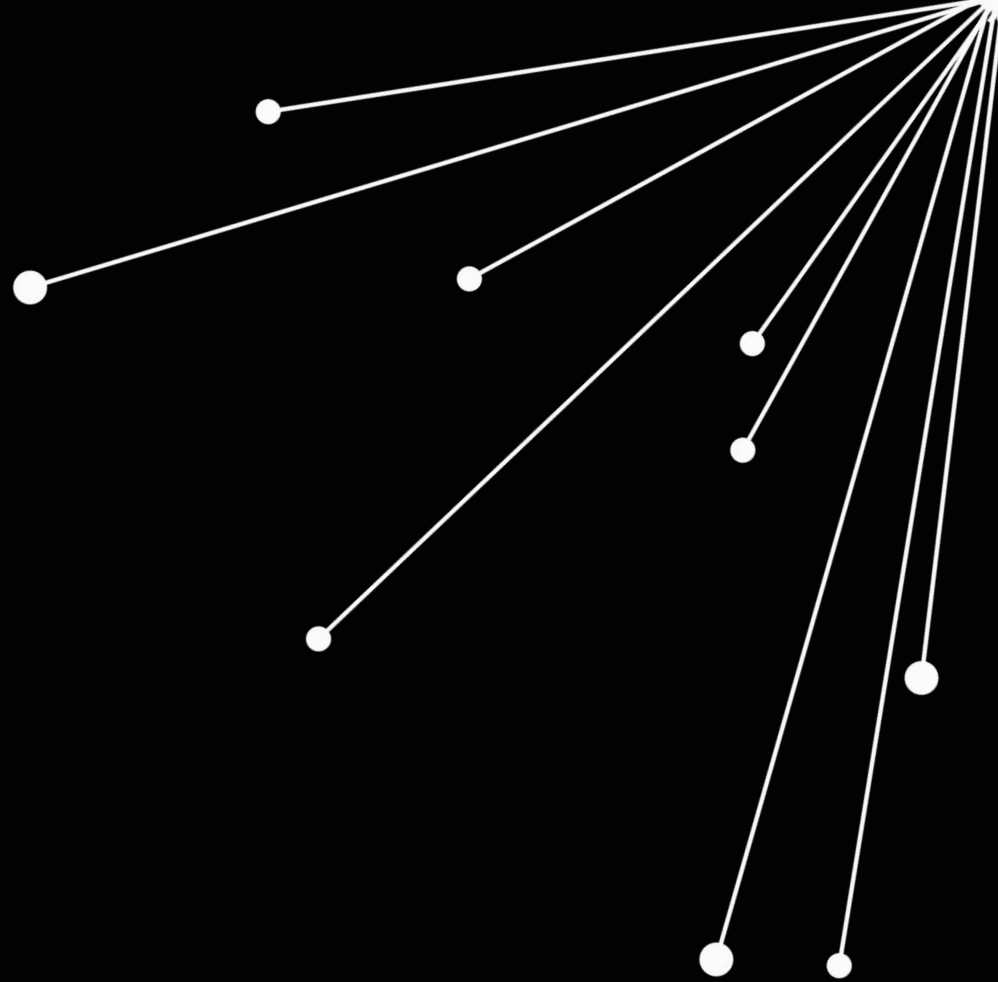


Gen Zers are looking to **find community** when participating in an experience (vs. 1 in 5 Non Gen Zers).

Key takeaways based on the contrasting forces we've discussed above about brand experiences:

What Gen Z Wants	More Detail	Brand Experience Considerations
<p>Genuine connection with brands as the catalyst.</p>	<p>Gen Z is looking in digital and “required” spaces, but these may not be the most conducive to connection.</p>	<p>How might your brand create opportunities for Gen Z to build genuine, fulfilling connections?</p> <p>Should your brand meet Gen Z where they are? How might you utilize shared experiences to foster genuine connections in digital and required spaces?</p> <p>Alternatively, how might your brand help Gen Z expand into non-digital, non-required spaces? What tools can you give to help enable them to build connection in these spaces?</p>
	<p>Gen Z may not be as comfortable with in-person interaction.</p>	
<p>Technologies that provide value in their lives.</p>	<p>Gen Z may love new and shiny things, but they're just as quick to drop them as soon as they no longer provide value.</p>	<p>How might your brand stay agile in tapping into Gen Z's values to ensure that your products & services remain relevant and beneficial?</p> <p>How can your brand address Gen Z's conflicting relationship with technology, providing solutions that help them balance the benefits of technology with the need to avoid addiction and dependency?</p>
	<p>Gen Z is overwhelmed by the rapid pace of change. Although they're digital natives, they're equally trying to fight back from letting technology take over their lives.</p>	

Ultimately, Gen Z's contrasting preferences are what make them unique but also challenging to reach. By enabling shared experiences in new and old spaces, providing lasting value through continuous brand innovation and thoughtfully celebrating their diverse identities, brands can earn Gen Z's trust and advocacy.



↗ We Know Experiences

For More Information

✉ weknowexperiences@momoww.com