

The rise of Gen-Z in influencer marketing

 By TT Ndhlovu

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We're looking at a generation of the next big disruptors, where the vast majority can't imagine what the world would be like if social media didn't exist. They are connected to the beat of the online world; to friends, businesses and have access to a plethora of information instantaneously. They are tech-savvy, know exactly what they want and are changing the rules of engagement. They are Generation-Z!



Image source: [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

According to an article published on Ernst & Young, 93% of Gen-Z's parents say that their children have some kind of influence on household spending decisions; 65% say that they have an influence on vacation choices, while 32% say that their children's opinions matter when it comes to buying home furnishings. I can personally relate to this considering my Gen-Z brother has a big influence on my mother's current decision to purchase a new car, the salesman might want to be his best friend during this process.

As if marketing to millennials wasn't a stretch over the past few decades, marketers are now challenged with thoroughly studying the digital natives and garnering insights that'll help them engage with this new and authoritative generation that has quickly taken shape in the world.

Influencer marketing was a huge hit with millennials and they still continue to grow this formidable industry to heights that have never been imagined. But with Gen-Z on the rise, a generation that is the first to grow up online, influencer marketing is not going anywhere anytime soon. If anything, influencer marketing continues to soar and it's safe to say that millennials have paved the way for Gen-Z.



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Marketers need to take notice and start channelling their strategies to incorporate more tactics that'll speak to these highly tuned in disruptors and one such tactic is influencer marketing. Gen-Z is typically not moved by traditional advertising, they are not interested in directly interacting with a brands promotion but are most likely more willing to listen to the opinion of an

influencer they trust.

I believe Gen-Z will have an easy time walking through influencer culture because they simply are it. This is a generation that puts everything on blast through social media platforms, they are changing how everyone interacts with the world and how society is currently shaped. With the eldest Gen-Z being 25 this year, it's critical for brands to consider fittings ways in which they'll reach this market.

It's going to take a little extra effort to gain their trust

Gen-Z finds legitimacy in supporting brands that they believe in and reflect who they are, loyalty likely only stems if they feel that a brand understands them and truly reflects their values. But because they are so fickle, the loyalty game requires brands to always be on the pulse and not break their promises or they'll simply walk away.



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They are more fixated in building their personal brands, essentially not allowing brands to define their identities. They are not letting brands lead them, they prefer to use products in whichever way they'd like and hence the power of influencer marketing, where it's all about how your brand is perceived and which influencer is interacting with it.

Influencer marketing is shaping their purchase decisions

Authenticity is key and Gen-Z look for that in their engagement, so they won't exactly be taking a brand's promotion at face value; they want to know what their peers think about the brand and what their experiences have been with the products. One way to reach this generation is through effective influencer marketing campaigns.

But of course, content needs to be entertaining and not just another promotion, so to reach them successfully marketers will need to really think about what "entertaining" looks like from their brand's point of view. Gen-Z listens to the opinions of influencers and this trend is here to stay.



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The evolution of content curation across YouTube, TikTok and Instagram

Gen Z is the most digitally connected generation and they keep getting better and better. They are very big on Instagram, YouTube & now most recently TikTok. They prefer bite-sized video content and are not about to start compromising now, that's why YouTube, Instagram and TikTok are coming up at the top of their list.

TikTok has taken over and marketers have been trying to find ways to appeal to their audience on this new and rapidly growing platform for short video content. Video is the way to go and you don't want your brand to be left behind.

YouTube has gained a lot of traction however this obviously isn't all because of Gen-Z but they are really owning this space and you can simply see this growth through the number of hits that influencers get on their videos as opposed to what this landscape used to look like five years ago.

Instagram is still very popular, it's a platform where many Gen Z go to discover new brands and products. It's a great place to get inspiration on the latest trends and looks, it's fantastic to see brands continue to leverage this platform.



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Personalisation is the way to go

You don't want to generalise when you're targeting Gen Z, in fact, it's the last thing you want to do. Personalisation isn't a new thing, many brands have executed successful personalized campaigns but in the case of Gen Z, it seems there is no compromise.

When it comes to this generation, smart brands are ones that diversify their marketing technology in an effort to achieve a more personalised one-on-one marketing relationship with a generation that expects nothing less.

You have to move with speed, be quick...

This generation flips through data very quickly so you want to make sure that you grab their attention using fast and interactive elements. So we're looking at sharp and effective content that builds strong brand presence while cutting straight to the point. No frills!



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This is something to think about where influencer marketing is concerned because you want to select influencers that are able to translate content to their Gen-Z community in a quick and capturing manner.

In conclusion, Gen-Z generally looks to social media in aiding their purchase decisions and marketers that aren't focusing on them are missing out. I've previously mentioned that this generation takes the opinions of influencers seriously and all this exchange in information takes place on social media. Gen-Z aren't moved by celebrities selling them products as much as millennials and other generations would have and that's what makes influencer marketing an important tool for marketers in reaching this specific generation.

Many clothing brands have shifted to using ordinary, everyday people who have an influence in specific communities to relay their marketing messages. There's a certain level of authenticity and trust that comes across as opposed to yet another celebrity promo. This was prevalent with millennials and will certainly be even more so with the rise of Gen-Z.

They are challenging marketers to create content that speaks to their human experience, they are faced with a myriad of products to choose from and that gives them the power to be selective and not even feel apologetic. It going to be interesting to see how marketers will react the more the new kids on the block take over.

ABOUT TT NDHLOVU

I am passionate about the world of brand marketing. I've had the honour of working on some of the biggest local and global brands in my professional career, executing bold and cutting-edge PR, marketing and influencer social media campaigns over this time. I've mainly worked for PR agencies, handling lifestyle accounts in the FMCG space.

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