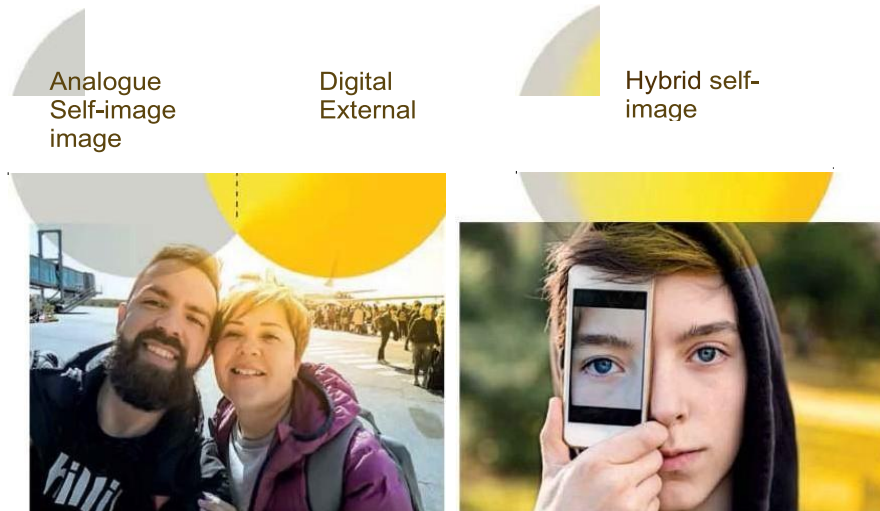


## Gen Y

## Gen Z

Analogue World Digital World

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*For Gen Z, the digital and analogue worlds are merging. Almost everything is "shared" everywhere and at all times.*

*(Photo: K&A BrandResearch).*

# Generation Z: trick or treat for brand loyalty?

Dr. Uwe Lebok from K&A BrandResearch shows which challenges brand manufacturers have to master among those born between 1995 and 2009.

Some of the upcoming Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009) is already of age. But it is still difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between them and their predecessors, the millennials of Generation Y. They are similar in many ways - and yet very different. So right away, this generation is not easy to characterise. They are highly contradictory, which is also a key feature of their zeitgeist. Either digital or analogue, either idealism or pragmatism, sweet or healthy - everyday life constantly presents us with antagonisms. For Gen Z, this is apparently not a contradiction.

Gen Z are "true" digital natives. They cannot remember a time without the internet, without Instagram, Snapchat, Google or Amazon, nor a time without unlimited access to Wikipedia knowledge, without permanent networking. This clearly distinguishes them from the millennials who, as tech pioneers, also internalised the digitalisation of our society, but still experienced a childhood far removed from smartphones, Instagram, Netflix and the like. From current studies within the framework of psychodrama research by K&A BrandResearch, we know that for this generation, life without a smartphone would be unthinkable.

If the Millennials were still concerned with transferring their analogue lives into the digital world in order to leave as positive an impression as possible, for Gen Z it is virtually routine that "sharing" takes place almost always and everywhere and that private things are

experienced all over the world. They do not distinguish between the real and the virtual world; both blur into a new "real" entity. Life is "both" and "both". This applies to the whole of everyday life - whether work, lifestyle, food or dating.

Gen Z likes to inspire themselves digitally in order to later act analogue or vice versa. Shopping is possible 24/7, and even in brick-and-mortar stores, instant price comparisons are always just a tap also internalised the fear that mistakes and embarrassments will always be publicly visible and then relentlessly commented on.

### Falling to stand out from the anonymous crowd

It is therefore no longer so important for them to be presented smiling and flawless in every photo. They don't necessarily want to be pretty like models in selfies, but above all to stand out from the anonymous masses, but without making an unpleasant impression. At the same time, they are anxious to present their attitudes and values in a socially desirable light. When there is no longer a distinction between analogue and digital reality, what is shared online becomes a real part of the self-concept. And those who do nothing wrong in the process have nothing to hide and thus no need for data protection.



*Young people are primarily concerned with their own good conscience, which they buy with the corresponding products. Here the gap between "talking" and "doing" - habitualised self-dramatisation - becomes clear - not only at Friday demonstrations. (Photo: © Fridays for Future Deutsch/and).*

This development may have contributed to the fact that young people as a whole are more controlling when it comes to behaviour with high social undesirability. For example, excessive "coma drinking" hardly takes place any more. and less than 10 per cent of adolescents between the ages of twelve and 17 still smoke.

### The new regionality among Generation Z

In addition, Gen Z pays increased attention to appearances. This results in a veritable fitness and health craze, which is also reflected in the hype about protein products and in specific nutrition trends. According to the Dutweiler Institute, two mega-trends coexist across generations:

"Science" and "Romance". On the one hand, it's about smart & robotic, self-optimisation, increased efficiency, drone delivery and much more. At the same time, the megatrend of so-called Romance is taking place - if you like, a kind of return to homemade, freshness and naturalness, craftsmanship and regionality.

For example, regional products have been gaining enormous momentum in the food segment for some years now. With regard to the assessment of what is regional, a not insignificant shift seems to be emerging between Generation Y and Gen Z.

For Gen Z, it is commonplace throughout their lives that food and products from all over the world are available in unlimited quantities. Every desire can be satisfied at any time, including the desire for fresh fruit in January. Moreover, their own mobility radius is large enough that a weekend trip to New York is just as easy to realise as three days of skiing in Leogang. "Regional" thus becomes synonymous with: originating from a specific region.



"good morning, we are generation x, y & z. at the very end of the alphabet and right at the beginning of the future - awake, reflective and ready to make a difference". This is how the cult limo greets the users on its homepage under the title "freedom. equality. wakefulness".  
(photo: fritz -kola.de).

And the German fruit and vegetable farmer nearby is mentioned in the same breath as the fair trade tea plantation owner in Sri Lanka. Both appear morally superior to "industrial" goods with no traceable regional connection. Some manufacturers already seem to be reacting to this change in interpretation. At Ritter Sport, for example, the regional origin of the cocoa bean is becoming the focus of their own campaign. And other companies are also "regionalising" their products by focusing on the place of origin, e.g. through country concepts.

### trust in the brands of large corporations

Today, companies and brands not only have to present themselves regionally, but also in a socially responsible, environmentally friendly and animal welfare-conscious way, in order to score emotional points with Gen Z. This is usually easier for smaller medium-sized companies, as the "big" corporations often have too complex structures and cannot map the production and trade chains transparently enough. This is usually easier for smaller medium-sized companies, as the "big" corporations often have too complex structures and the paths of the production and trade chains cannot be mapped transparently enough. The scepticism of many young consumers is therefore great - reinforced by the omnipresent fake news feeling. In general, trust in corporate brands is dwindling.

A psychodrama study conducted by K&A BrandResearch on the attitudes and consumption behaviour of Gen Z in 2019 once again provided the psychological insight that brand loyalty has become obsolete among Gen Z as a sustainable measurement tool for brand relationships. Instead, immediacy shapes their consumer behaviour. This means that if something is desired, this need should be satisfied as quickly as possible. So if they want nuts, they want them immediately and exactly the ones that are most readily available. In times of too much variety and oversupply, people simply select one of the numerous alternatives, which is quickly achievable in the respective context and provides the supposedly most efficient solution.

Some brands are already succeeding in presenting themselves as "all-round good" in the eyes of Gen Z, such as Katjes Fassin with its consistent "veggie" strategy. The brand clearly positions its gelatine-free fruit gum and liquorice products in line with the zeitgeist, is developing positively overall and has even ventured into vegan chocolate in 2019. A strategy that gives the company a clear image advantage with Gen Z. Not least because the company is a brand with a strong reputation. Not least because as a follower of brands like Katjes, fritz-kola, Alpro & Co. you can also present yourself as a socially responsible, conscious consumer.

Even if Gen Z demands social responsibility from brands, the young target group mostly reacts selectively and often very superficially. Gen Z is enthusiastic about topics such as regionality, animal welfare, etc., but ignores relevant aspects such as long transport routes and environmentally damaging disposable packaging. They are concerned about the local people, about their own good or well presented cause, and there above all about their own good conscience, which they buy with corresponding products. Here, the gap between "talking" and "doing" the habitualised self-dramatisation becomes clear. Not only on the demonstrative Fridays.

### No fun without maximum safety

Like all young people, Gen Z also strives for self-fulfilment. A big difference to previous generations is the all-round care they received in childhood from their own "helicopter parents", the early freedom to make decisions since childhood about the numerous options for their own education and leisure activities, and the learned habit that once "achieved", it can be kept. They appreciate reassurances and also clear rules that make it easier for them to take responsibility for decisions. Depending on their youth, taking responsibility themselves is not yet a characteristic of Gen Z, nor is the permanent striving for achievement of their predecessors. Gen Z is often referred to as the "spoiled" generation of heirs who did not have to work for prosperity themselves, but who want to maintain it for themselves as best they can.

When familiar systems and certainties are shaken, Gen Z is also worried. In the eyes of this generation, the current news in the media proves that many things are moving towards new uncertainties.



*The vegan chocolates give Katjes Fassin an image edge with Gen Z. Here Junkfoodguru tests the novelty on Youtube (Photo: Youtube.com).  
And the newsletter of the insect bar "Swarm" (below) points out the close correlation between gym and protein*



Nothing will remain as it is. And many things seem gloomier, more crisis-ridden. Therefore, Gen Z often reacts very pragmatically to the respective everyday context:

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. They like to long for the carefreeness of their helicopter childhood, but they are aware that it is over: anything that provides collateral is therefore appreciated all the more.

### Anything that provides collateral is therefore valued all the more

Accordingly, they are happy to accept offers that take into account their need for security and at the same time convey a feeling of boundless freedom. For example, the freedom via digital dating portals such as Tinder & Co. to evaluate the potential partner market individually for themselves and to swipe away "unworthy" ones with the greatest possible anonymity. Making a choice on comparison portals like check24 with the security of the community behind you, which has already shared experiences with every option. Or the freedom of travelling to distant countries and cultures and being taken by the hand by local guides.

Many trend researchers also point to a serious change in consumers' health and nutritional behaviour. In the "Food Report 2019", for example, Hanni Rutzler highlights the "green" attitude of young consumers, but also the even stronger convenience attitude. Buzzwords like "snackification" are doing the rounds, bowls, fresh-cut salads and homemade food are postulated as (healthier) food trends. Supposedly healthier living and still being able to snack quickly on the go - these are certainly two central zeitgeist phenomena of Gen Z.

In fact, they pay even more attention to vitality and everyday fitness than their older Gen Y siblings and avoid products that could be harmful to their health or do not fit into their socio-ecological worldview. Salty snack products have an easier time with Gen Z, because at first glance they seem less harmful than "sweets". They have already learned from their helicopter parents that too much sugar is bad. Rather, a measured, occasion-related consumption ("sweet flexitarianism") is more in line with the demands and lifestyle of this generation.

However, the average Body Mass Index (BMI) of today's children and adolescents has never been so high. An indicator that even at a young age, desire and reality diverge, even among Gen Z. Nevertheless, information about supposed product advantages such as protein, nootropics, etc. support the decision-making process. For example, the growth in protein bars, which correlates with the run on fitness studios, is an indicator of product-compliant behaviour as a result of health and self-optimisation by Gen Z: sweet reward after sweaty performance. Other alternatives also score points if they reinforce the "insidery" of Gen Z, are unusual and somehow "different" (e.g. cannabis), but never represent a loss of taste compared to conventional comparison products: maximum best taste and consumption fun with the best possible health impression.

### Maximum taste and consumption pleasure with the best possible health impression

Even though loyalty has had its day, marketing will certainly find ways to activate Gen Z. The omnipresent oversaturation of information shapes everyone's everyday life. Gen Z, however, seems to be almost drowning in it due to a lack of structure, permanent distraction, less reading and less of their own retrievable knowledge. This is especially true for brands. If brands want to reach Gen Z, then only if they succeed in picking them up where Gen Z is concerned with their topics and wants to engage with brands.

This is probably quicker and stranger via concrete occasions and relevant everyday situations. Psychological contexts open doors to people who are otherwise difficult to reach through advertising.

For the young, advertising is first and foremost "empty advertising". Content is not always effective, especially since Gen Z itself produces an immense amount of content on its social networks.

This makes it all the more important to create brand experiences in ideally "brand-typical" everyday contexts more strongly and thus to stage them in a memorable way. So that the pragmatic Gen Z knows that certain brand offers "simply" offer the best solution in the respective everyday contexts.

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