

A generation is a group of people who witness similar events at a common age. They tend to have aligned views and share a similar environment. Generation Z consists of anyone born between 1997-2012 (Dimock 4). Currently any person 10 to 25 years old is part of Generation Z. Generation Z is a powerful consumer group because they have purchasing power themselves coupled with influence over other's purchases. One of the primary similarities among people in Generation Z is their technological knowledge. This generation has never been without the internet on mobile platforms and has learned to navigate media and other applications from a young age. As peer acceptance is important to this generation, they value authenticity. They face school violence, economic uncertainty, tweendom¹, and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. Generation Z values the family unit, supports traditional beliefs, and is more responsible and self-controlled than previous generations. With a confident and optimistic demeanor, those in Generation Z believe they can truly impact the world. "They quite possibly are the most imaginative generation and they think more laterally according to the Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business" (Williams 1).

The researcher chose to examine Generation Z in this study due to this group's spending influence on the economy. In 2020, Generation Z made up 26% of the U.S. population making them the biggest generation (US Population by Age and Generation in 2020 1). With the generation's large numbers and purchasing power, they are one of the most impactful consumer groups. In 2017, "more than 70% of Generation Zers said they influence their family's spending" (Meet your future power shopper: Gen Z 1). Specifically in 2018 this would mean those who said they had influence, controlled 93% of their families purchasing decisions (Uche 20). While Generation Z has a disproportionate amount of spending power within their families, they also have great economic power themselves. Generation Z's spending power is recorded to be up to \$143 billion as of 2018 (Uche 20). In addition to their direct purchasing, parents, grandparents, and other friends and family also purchase goods for Generation Z which increases the economic impact of the Gen Z group of consumers. Generation Z is also a primary demographic to which marketing is directed today.

History

In the past decade, companies have become gradually more transparent with their production and practice methods. Consumers have become more aware of the impacts of these actions, entering a period of so-called "social wokeness." This has led consumers toward a path of desiring more sustainable products and ethical brands. Generation Z aligns with this ideal as 62% prefer to buy from sustainable brands (Petro 2). Sustainable fashion, however, was first taken negatively by consumers. Greater acceptance was influenced by multiple industrial disasters. Fast Fashion's² faults were highlighted in 2013 through the collapse of the fashion factory Rana Plaza in Bangladesh where 1330 people died and 2500 were injured (Kusá 1). Popular companies such as Walmart, Gap, and Adidas manufactured goods at Rana Plaza during this time (Collapse at Rana Plaza 1). This and other tragedies helped spark interest in the advantages of ethical fashion (Kusá 1).

With the ubiquity of social media, brands have been forced to be more upfront with information. News now travels faster than ever and can be accessed through the click of a button. Multiple studies have shown that consumers will pay more attention to negative information than to positive. An incident with negative perception regarding manufacturing or sourcing can have significant consequences. 74% of Generation Zers spend their free time online (Uniquely Generation Z What brands should know about today's youngest consumers 3). Consequently, social media has been a substantial influence and is engrained in everyday life. In Generation Z, 41% are influenced by Facebook ads, 30% by YouTube videos, and 26% by Instagram (Meet your future power shopper: Gen Z 2). Brands must continuously show their commitment to consumers in order to be relevant and be successful in this technologically advanced world.

¹ The push of a Tween lifestyle heavy on teen aspiration that results in the loss of childhood.

² Quickly released apparel and accessories with a fast delivery time to retailers to meet the high demand, but short renewal cycle and negative impacts throughout production processes.

