

What Everyone's **Getting Wrong** About Gen Z

What does Gen Z value?

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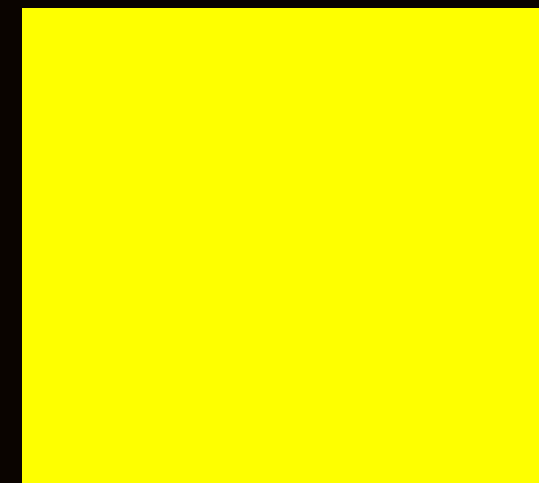
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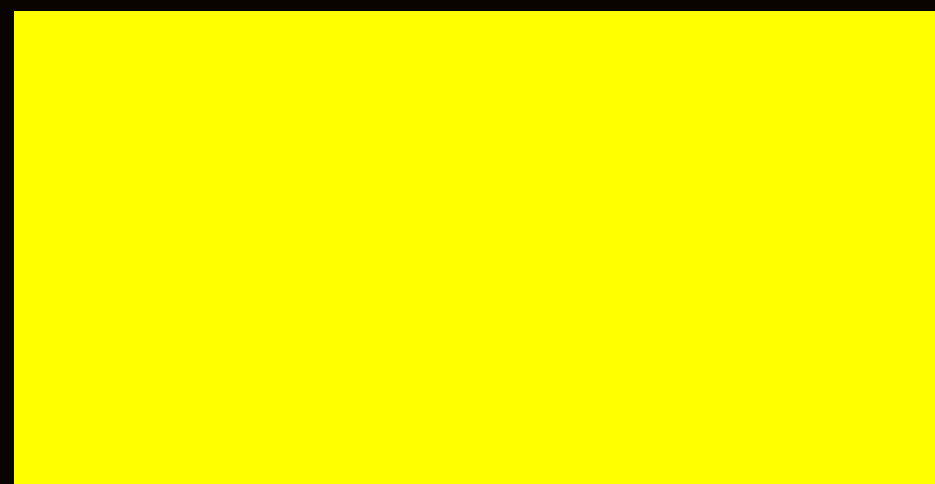
of gen Z



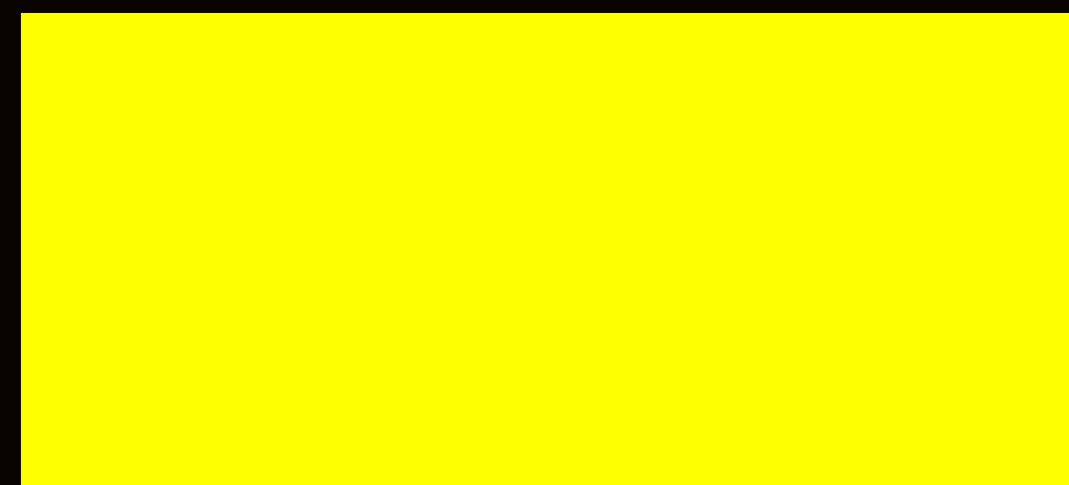
CONTRADICTIONS.



CONSTRAINTS.



CRAVINGS.



“

It's hard when you think of Gen Z; there's so many different types of people. I don't know how you can clump it into one. ”

21, Biochemistry



Gontradiotions.

Gen Z's Inner Conflict

We Hear These Buzzwords:

Sustainability

Privacy

Authenticity

Equality

Diversity

Inclusivity

Transparency

Advocacy

**But Here's What Gen Z is Actually
Doing:**

“

We're all fighting for the environment,
but then we're shopping on Shein. ”

– 24, Animal Science

“

I go to Starbucks ... and I don't
support any of those values. ”

– 23, Pre-med

“

I haven't posted to support a single
Jewish thing, and I'm the Vice
President of Hillel. ”

– 21, Biochemistry

What We Say vs What We Do

(All real Gen Z contradictions)

“

I support LGBTQ+ rights.

But I wouldn't not get Chick Fil A
because of that.

”

– 21, Biochemistry

“

I don't support the big corporations that exploit their workers.

I have an Amazon Prime subscription and currently have something on the way as we speak. ”

“

I support and value the
environment's health.

I use Chat GPT every day. ”

Stats



Temu is the **most downloaded shopping app** for Gen Z, but **91%** of Gen Z says they want to buy from sustainable companies.

(PDI, 2023)

77%

of Gen Z say they care about **brand ethics**.

38%

of Gen Z say ethics actually impact their **purchasing decisions**.

(Campbell, 2022)

**We're not hypocritical.
We're human.**

To reach us, brands must acknowledge the contradiction
between **who we want to be** and **how we actually live.**



onstraints.

Morality is a Luxury

Constraints

Morality is a Luxury

Oftentimes, the limits we face financially and socially can override our values.

- Convenience and price trump values
- Brands lose us when they forget that not every Gen Zer can afford to be idealistic

Walmart



- Cost effective
- Higher number of US stores (4,605)

VS

Sprouts



- More expensive
- Less common (457 US stores)

“

There's a fine balance; it depends on the situation, how dire the demand is, and if there are viably cost-effective alternatives.

”

23, Pre-Med

“

I would love not to shop at these places [businesses that don't align with values] if I could.

”

18, Media Management

Constraints Morality is a Luxury

Affordability—Convenience

In an ideal world, we would buy the most **organic and ethically sourced** products.

Constraints

Morality is a Luxury

	Ideal	Reality
Affordability	Purchasing the most organic and ethically sourced products	As product quality increases, so does the price, leading many Gen Z consumers to turn to buy-now, pay-later services. ¹
Convenience	Having quick and easy access to stores with a wide variety of products	Stores that carry high-quality products that are sustainably sourced are less common and require you to travel far or go out of your way. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• McDonald's is affordable and accessible, which is why it's so popular.²

¹<https://www.foodandwine.com/>

²<https://www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/>

“

The problem is that SHEIN is the **more affordable option**, especially for those looking for plus size clothing.

”

23, Pre-Med

“

So if it's cheaper and just easier to get, people are more likely to buy it no matter what they believe.

”

21, Social Media Content Creator

69% of Gen Z consumers say they are living paycheck to paycheck.²

Gen Z had the **highest poverty rate** in recent decades.

Gen Z consumers: **lowest income, highest economic pressure.**

²<https://www.pymnts.com/>

**We don't always have
the luxury to choose
values first.**

Brands must recognize the gap between what we want
and what we can have.



Gravings.
Image is everything

CRAVINGS

Gen Z's craving for **connection**, **identity**, and **belonging** often turns into something tangible.

57% of Gen Z feels constantly *judged* on social media.

48% of Gen Z feels *left out* because of social media.

Products become more than just items, they become tools for self-expression and social signaling.

CRAVINGS

Influencers don't just sell products, they sell a lifestyle.

- They live the life we crave, so we buy what they endorse because we want to be like them- even if our values say otherwise.

Influencer culture turns products into personality traits.



STANLEY CUP

Signals “clean girl,”
“TikTok wellness,”
or “I’m in the know.”

\$45



AIRPODS MAX

Not just functional,
but also a fashion
statement

\$549

“ I literally will **only buy something if either a friend has bought it, my mom, or an influencer.** Influencer marketing is huge. ”

21, Social Media Content Creator



CRAVINGS

Influencers live the life that we want, but they have resources we don't.

Owning the **exact item** matters for image

- But when it's inaccessible, Gen Z turns to unethical *dupes**

*Dupe: a “duplicate” or copy of a product.



84% of Gen Z say they often make impulse purchases online, especially on mobile platforms.

**It's less about owning something and
more about being seen having it.**

We don't just buy products – we buy what they say
about us. To win us over, brands need to sell a story,



Key Takeaways



Be Real About the
Contradictions

Design With
Constraints in Mind

Lean Into
Craving Culture

Contradictions • Constraints • Cravings