

Top 6 Gen Z trends every marketer should know in 2023

Issued by [Student Village](#)

23 Jan 2023

It's that time again when we sit down to discuss the biggest consumer trends that we see impacting South Africa's Gen Zs in the coming year. These trends and insights are based on our soon-to-be-released **Youth Spend and Lifestyle Report 2022**. So, get your notebooks ready. We're about to spill the T on what's worth looking out for in 2023.



1. Tik Tok on top

During the past two years there's been a steady climb in the popularity of **Tik Tok** among Gen Zs. It's estimated that six million South Africans are currently on the platform and half of those are younger than 24. Although we see no signs of Tik Tok slowing down, there are some other platforms and features worth keeping an eye on.

As part of our **Youth Spend and Lifestyle Report 2022**, we found that many students continue to use WhatsApp for features like disappearing messages and status updates. Similarly, Snapchat is also making a comeback internationally with 78% of US and UK Gen Z students back on the platform. Even though we're still waiting to see if Snapchat will catch on in South Africa, there's no denying the benefit that more personal and intimate social media features can provide Gen Zs in sidestepping online trolls and drama.

2. Mental health matters

Two-thirds of the young people that we surveyed reported feeling stressed and worried. It's no surprise, based on the immense financial, and social pressure they face. This coupled with school/work-load requirements, often seems to create anxiety that leaves many feeling overwhelmed and somewhat crippled.

In a way to combat some of these pains, Gen Zs have started putting their mental health first. Many are attempting to create a healthier work-life balance through "quiet quitting" while generally being more emotionally open to speaking about mental health issues. What's interesting is that since many Gen Zs lack access to mental health professionals, some are turning to social media platforms like Tik Tok and YouTube for advice and support.

3. Hustle and (cash)flow

It's no secret that South African Gen Zs are under huge financial pressure. More than half of the respondents from our **Youth Spend and Lifestyle Report 2022** still live with family members, while only 33% of older working Gen Zs live with friends, a partner or on their own.

Apart from cohabiting, another way in which Gen Zs are making up for financial pressure is through **side hustles**. Thirty-four percent of our respondents have a side hustle outside of their main job or studies. This includes their own businesses and other gigs like getting paid to sign up friends and family for products and services like bank accounts and ride sharing.

Gen Zs are also looking to brands to provide them with more value, **discounts**, and cheaper alternatives. We found that 79% of Gen Zs are likely to sign up to a **loyalty programme**, which paired with good value, is a big opportunity for brands.

4. Brand values create brand value

Gen Zs are activists that expect their brands to live up to their values. More than 90% of the Gen Zs we surveyed believe in the importance of brands sharing their values and actively support brands whose values are aligned to their own. It's therefore critical for brands wanting to reach young people effectively, to appeal to what's important to them. This means being open, honest, and transparent about how brands conduct their business; standing for something beyond the bottom line; and giving back to causes that Gen Zs are passionate about.

5. Doing diversity right

Everyone knows that Gen Zs value **diversity**. However, if done wrong, brands run the risk of getting cancelled and called out for being inauthentic. Done are the beer commercial days of a "diverse" range of characters going on awkward road trips. Gen Zs are looking for authentic representations that reflect their diverse lifestyles. As one of our youth said:

"It's not just about adding a plus sized or LGBTQ+ model to your ad. It's about being recognised and seen as a person with a diverse point of view - not a character in some boomer's fantasy about what a diverse South Africa looks like."

This need for authentic representation also extends to **Gen Z influencers** with 61% of respondents reporting that they have bought a product because of an authentic **social media influencer** or content creator's recommendation.

6. Community. Community. Community. (Did we mention community?)

From obscure K-Pop artists to niche video games, Gen Zs are building communities with like-minded people from all over the world. This has given rise to online communities on Discord and Twitch where Gen Zs can geek-out with like-minded people.

Since many Gen Zs share a distrust of governments, businesses, and other large institutions, some would rather place their trust in communities, friends, and family. In order for brands to remain relevant in the years to come they will need to learn how to build relationships with Gen Zs through communities on a one-on-one level, instead of the "Voice from beyond" approach of old.

To 2023 and beyond

And that's it; our 6 youth trends to keep an eye on for 2023. To learn even more about the trends and insights bound to shape youth marketing in South Africa in the coming year, speak to jono@studentvillage.co.za about how you can access our **Youth Spend and Lifestyle Report 2022**.

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