

TikTok strikes big with Gen Z: what makes it tick?

February 2021



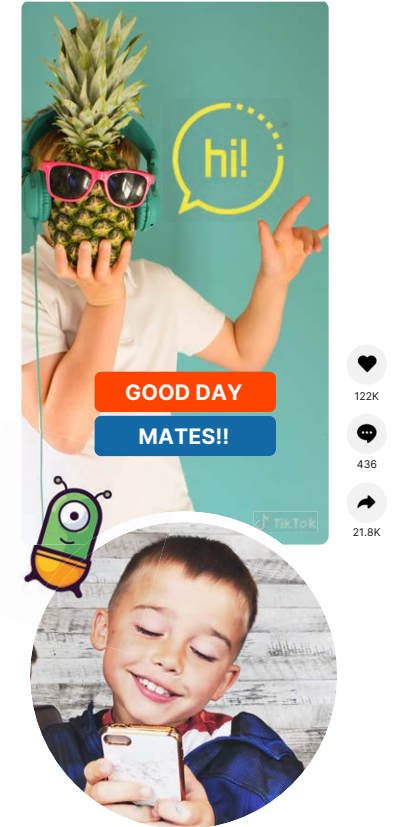
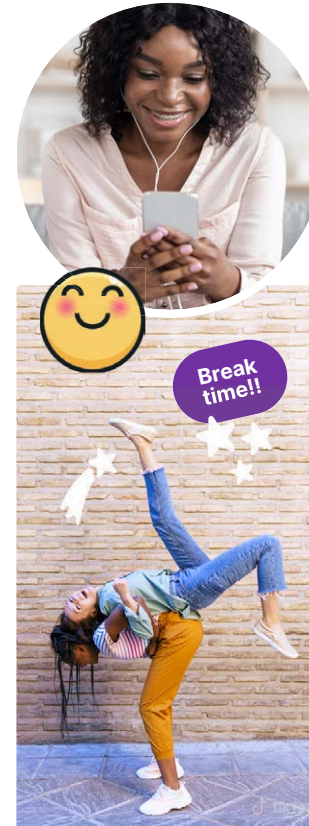
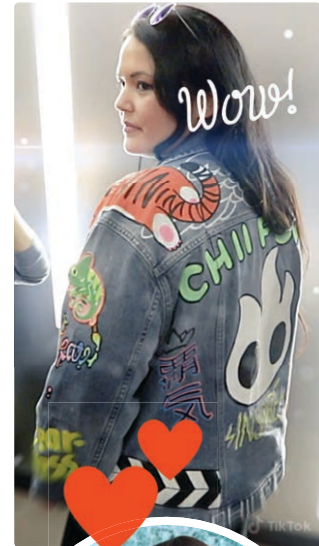


a Cultural Phenomenon

Today's youth have only known the digital age.

As the first generation of “digital natives,” they have **new expectations for entertainment and the role content plays in their lives**. They are now equal parts consumer and creator and last year's apps just won't do.

This shift profoundly impacts how brands effectively engage with Gen Z. Nowhere is this trend more apparent than with TikTok.



2 Billion+

 Downloads

800 million
users
worldwide



100 million
active U.S.
users¹



The most avid users are

Gen Z

ranging from
8-24 years²



What makes TikTok tick for Gen Z?

Based on qualitative research by The Marketing Store, this generation feels especially passionate about TikTok because it **delivers on three of their biggest desires to:**



#1

Be entertained—on their own terms



#2

Develop and express their identity



#3

Connect with others and be part of an active community

what makes TikTok tick for Gen Z

#1

Entertainment on their own terms



Gen Z loves to be entertained, but they want it to be easily consumable, tailored to their busy lifestyle/interests, and exciting! TikTok delivers this type of entertainment by...

Providing immediate gratification

When they open the app, videos immediately play. No waiting. No extra steps.



Building a sense of anticipation and spontaneity

With an endless loop of videos from TikTok’s ever expanding universe, they never know what they’re going to see.
A new K-pop group?
A funny prank?
A political message?



Delivering customized entertainment

They love TikTok’s “For You” page which curates and pushes content based on their individual interests/preferences. No need to seek out content. It comes to you.



what makes **TikTok** tick for Gen Z

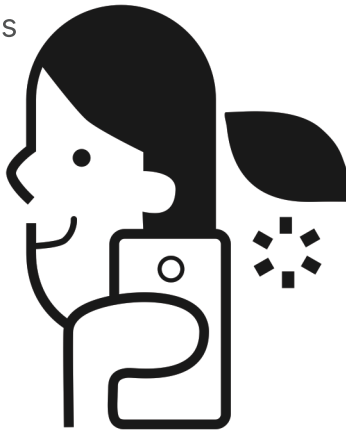
#2

Developing and expressing their authentic identity

Gen Z seeks out opportunities to be creative, experiment and express themselves. This helps them develop their identity, which is exciting, if not a little anxiety-producing. With TikTok, they...

Feel free to express themselves

The general ethos is “anything goes on TikTok”, so there’s no pressure to be perfect.



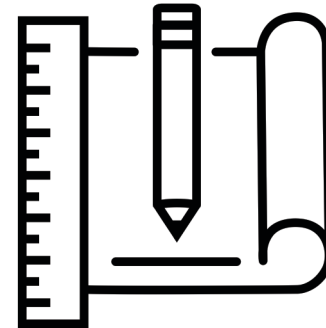
Gain exposure to the broader world, providing fodder for experimentation

Videos introduce them to a diverse range of people, with different styles, interests, social perspectives and relevant topics (from budgeting to politics to Black Lives Matter).



Have easy-to-use tools for creativity and self-expression

Being a creator only requires making a “15 second video” or interesting commentary.



TikTok’s large array of simple visual/sound/music effects helps novices easily make stylish videos.

what makes TikTok tick for Gen Z

#3

Social connection and community

Gen Z is at a point in their lives where they are becoming more independent, trying to find their social group among peers and nurturing those relationships. They like how being on TikTok...

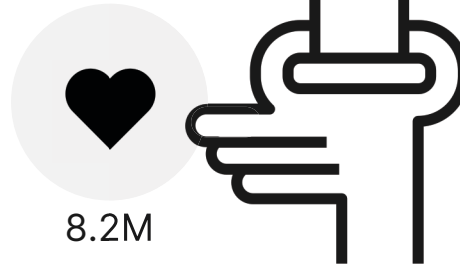
Feels like they are part of the “cool new thing”

“Anyone who is anybody is here.”



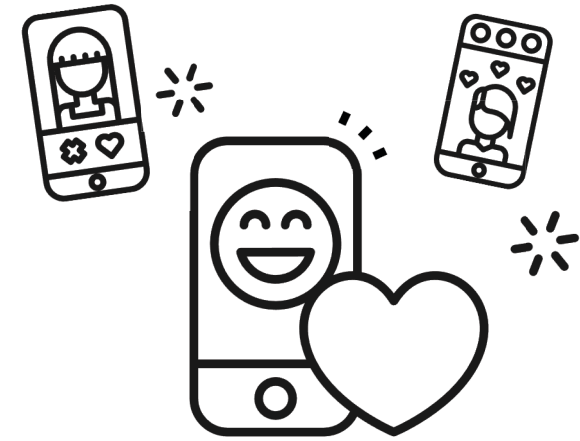
Gives them a shot to “go viral”

With its millions of users and algorithm, random videos can “blow up” overnight.



Builds self-confidence

Every positive “like” or comment provides a sense of personal validation.



But more importantly, TikTok...

Helps them find their group

Given the range of videos, users and algorithm, it's easy to find others like them. Finding others like them (or in similar situations) means they aren't alone or "weird".

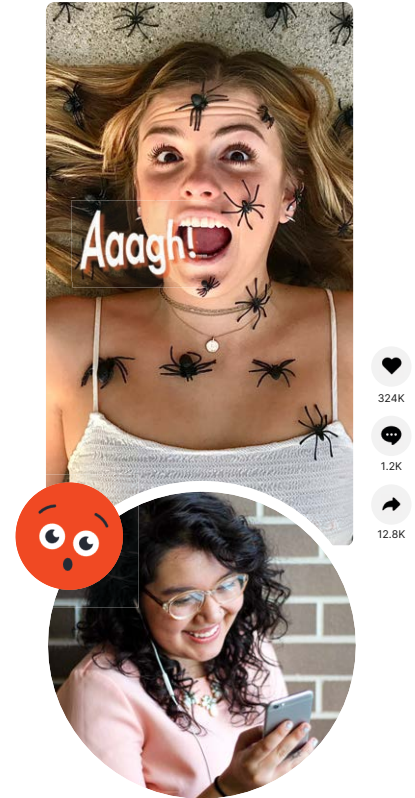
Fosters interaction and collaboration with others

Comments, riffing off each other and sharing videos are all encouraged.

Provides shared experiences that help solidify a sense of belonging

While using the platform, they learn new concepts (e.g., duet videos), participate in challenges and share content.

These experiences create a common frame of reference and lend themselves to "inside jokes" and "allusions" that only members of their social community will understand.



**So, what does this
mean for today's
marketers?**

what does this mean for **today's marketers?**

Driving engagement with today's youth can be elusive. While brands may or may not want to embrace the TikTok platform, they can be inspired by its ability to attract Gen Z, by delivering an experience that meets three of their biggest desires:

#1

Entertain them —
on their own
terms

#2

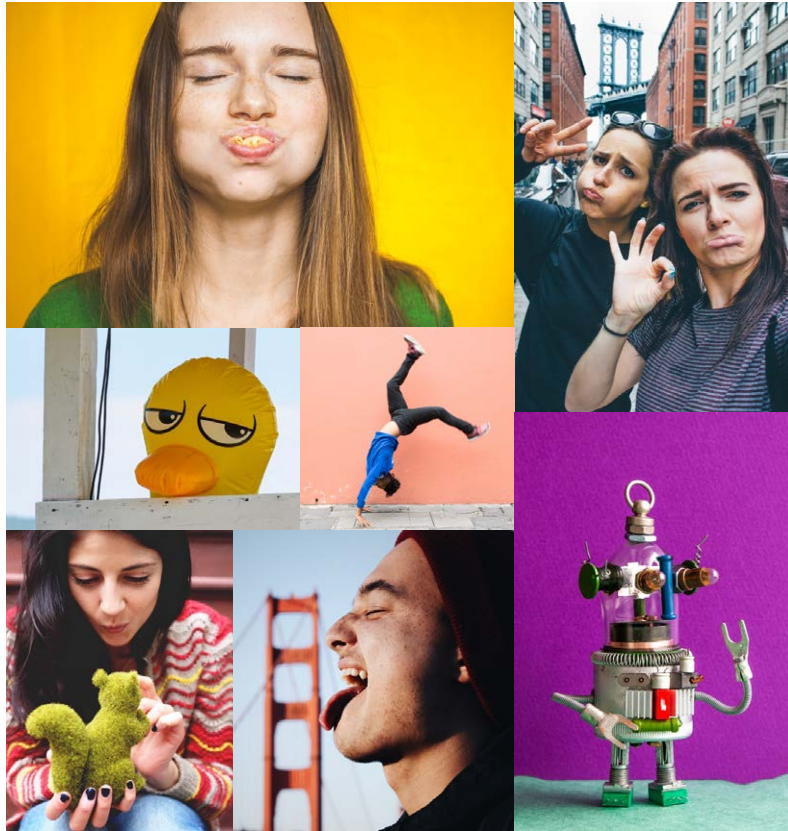
Help them develop
and express their
authentic identity

#3

Facilitate social
connections that
create a sense
of community

what does this mean for **today's marketers?**

Look to leverage some of the key attributes TikTok uses to foster these types of experiences:



Instant gratification
with an element of surprise

Short, “snackable” content that
is curated and personalized

Easy-to-use tools for
creativity and self-expression

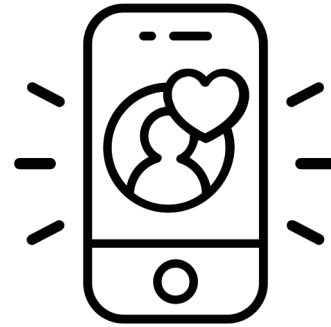
Focus on “good vibes”
and personal validation

Easy interaction, collaboration
and sharing with others



what does this mean for **today's marketers?**

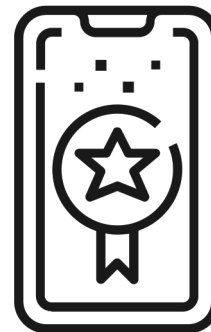
By infusing these elements in their brand experiences, marketers can drive deeper engagement with Gen Z.



Loyalty



Social activations



Promotional gaming

what does this mean for **today's marketers?**

**This is powerful. It moves brands beyond
fleeting transactions to building richer emotional
connections and brand love with today's generation.**



THE
MARKETING
STORE

Looking for more insights on marketing to Gen Z and beyond during the “new normal”? Check out this additional white paper and trend report:



Game On: Family Life in a Pandemic World

And if you’re ready to have The Marketing Store show you how we can drive your business results with cutting edge promotional gaming concepts, partnerships and more please contact:

alysa.kozlowski@tmsw.com

We’d love to work with you.

Appendix



Methodology

Qualitative Focus Groups

To gain insight into TikTok's appeal, we interviewed youth (11-17 years old) who are regular users of TikTok. The interviews included online mini-focus groups and in-depth personal discussions conducted during September 2020.¹

Authors

Renee Weber, PhD. V.P. of Family insights and Research

Renee is an expert in youth and family with a focus on technology's impact on kids and their play. At The Marketing Store, her primary responsibilities have been to provide in-depth understanding of youth, moms, and families, help lead consumer-based product innovation and establish The Marketing Store Play Lab. In the past, Renee has shared some of her insights at Playcon, the Digital Kids Conference, Mom2Mom conference, and Food & Beverage Conference. She holds a Ph.D. in Psychology from Northwestern University.

Jeff Thomas, V.P. of Family Strategy and Engagement

Jeff is a leader in youth and family strategy, with a focus on family engagements that drive results. At The Marketing Store, he heads up the Family Strategy and Engagement team, primarily leading innovation and program development for the McDonald's business. Prior to joining The Marketing Store, Jeff spent much of his career in CPG, working with a mix of blue chip and challenger brands and driving the development of innovative campaigns and strategies that reinvigorated brand usage.