

POST-PANDEMIC

Shifts in Consumer Shopping Habits: Authenticity, Personalization and the Power of UGC



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Introduction

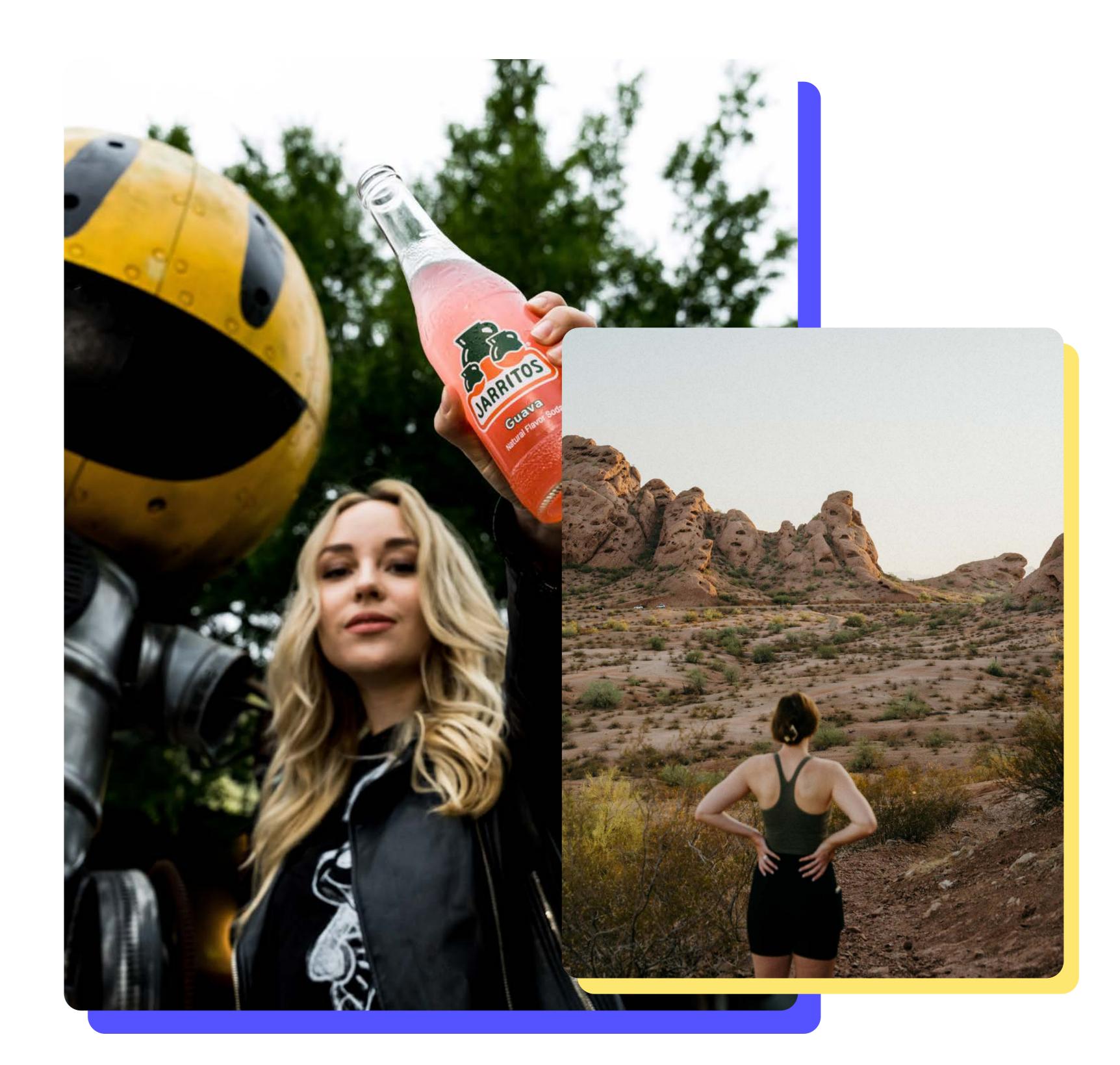
After a year of stay-at-home orders and social distancing due to COVID- 19, consumers all around the world now shop and interact with brands differently.

When non-essential stores were closed and people were largely limited to the confines of their homes, many turned their attention online. This caused a surge in online shopping and social media usage—accelerating an already-growing consumer shift towards eCommerce. Over the last year, we saw in-person social activities move to video chats and social media platforms while online shopping and the average time spent on social networks reached all-time highs.

But have the effects of 2020 permanently impacted how people discover, shop and engage with the outside world, and what implications do these trends have for brands in 2021 and beyond? What does all of this mean for consumer shopping habits going forward?

We surveyed 2,042 consumers across the U.S., UK and Australia, revealing that not only are these post-pandemic shopping habits and social trends here to stay, but people also increasingly seek out and value the social content that real customers are creating about brands. This means that visual social proof—like user-generated content (UGC)— is more important now than ever for brands to leverage as part of their online marketing strategy.

As social content creation and consumption rises in tandem with online shopping, shoppers now expect brands to provide them with more authentic, relevant and personalized content experiences. Our findings show that UGC is the most influential content people look to when making online purchasing decisions, and people are willing to not purchase from brands that don't deliver these types of experiences.





Key Findings

Post-pandemic shifts to online shopping are here to stay

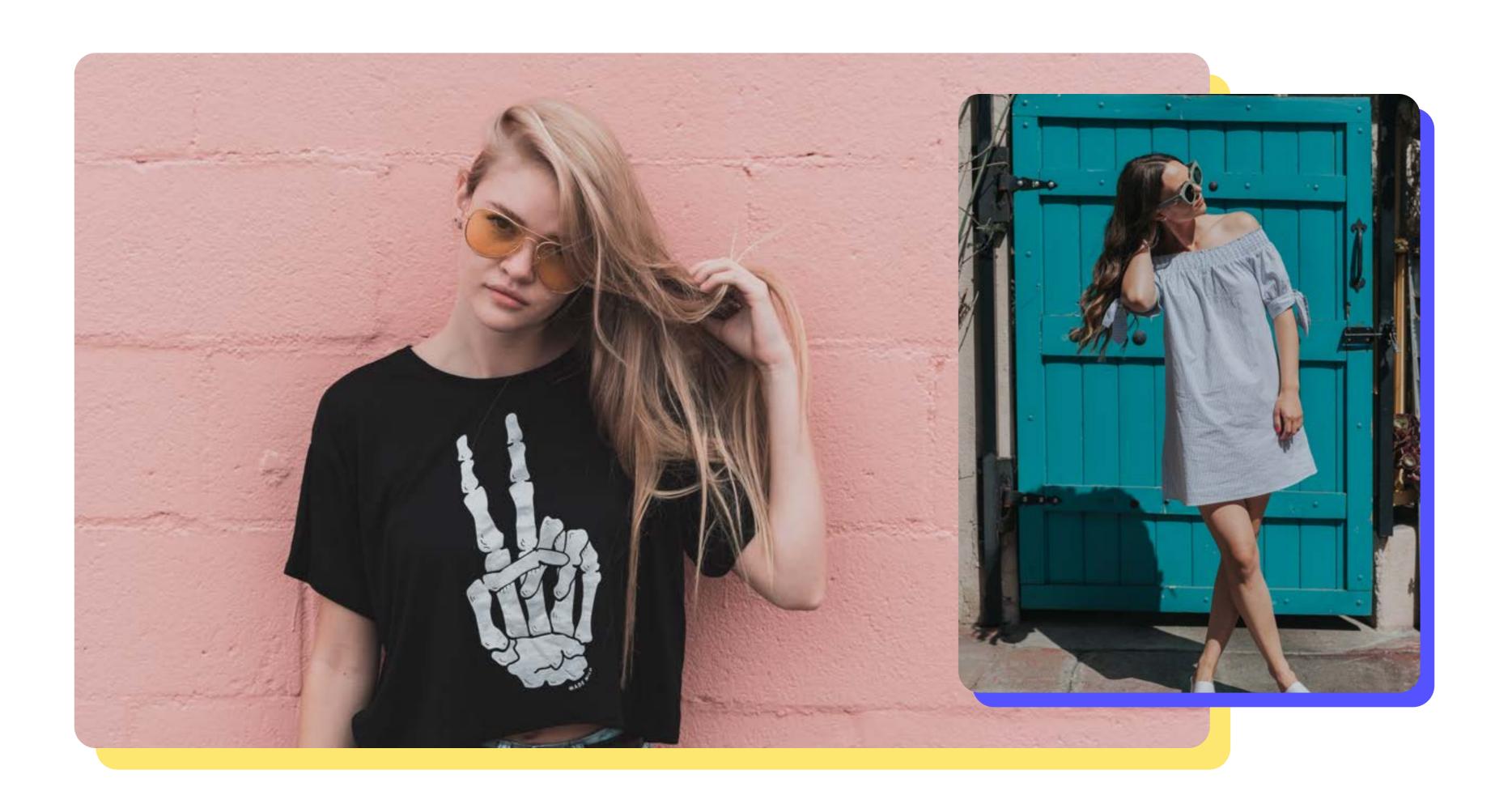
- 67% of consumers say their online purchasing has increased since the start of the pandemic (with 27% saying it's increased a lot)
- 91% of those who have increased their online shopping say they're likely to continue purchasing more items online in the future
- 59% of consumers have purchased from new brands since the pandemic started—75% of which are likely to continue purchasing from those new brands in the future

People are creating & consuming more content on social platforms

- 72% of consumers say the amount of time they spend on social media has increased since the pandemic started
- 41% of consumers say the amount of content they post to social media has increased since the start of the pandemic
- Instagram (47%), Facebook (38%) and YouTube (36%) are the social platforms people now look to most of purchasing inspiration

Shoppers increasingly seek authentic & personalized experiences from today's brands

- 88% of consumers say authenticity is important when deciding which brands they like and support (with 50% saying it's very important)
- 83% of consumers believe retailers need to provide more authentic shopping experiences to customers like them
- 59% of consumers say user-generated content is the most authentic type of content
- 70% of consumers say it's important for brands to provide them with personalized experiences—up from 67% in 2019
- 72% of people say they are more likely to purchase from a brand if it consistently provides them with a more personalized experience.

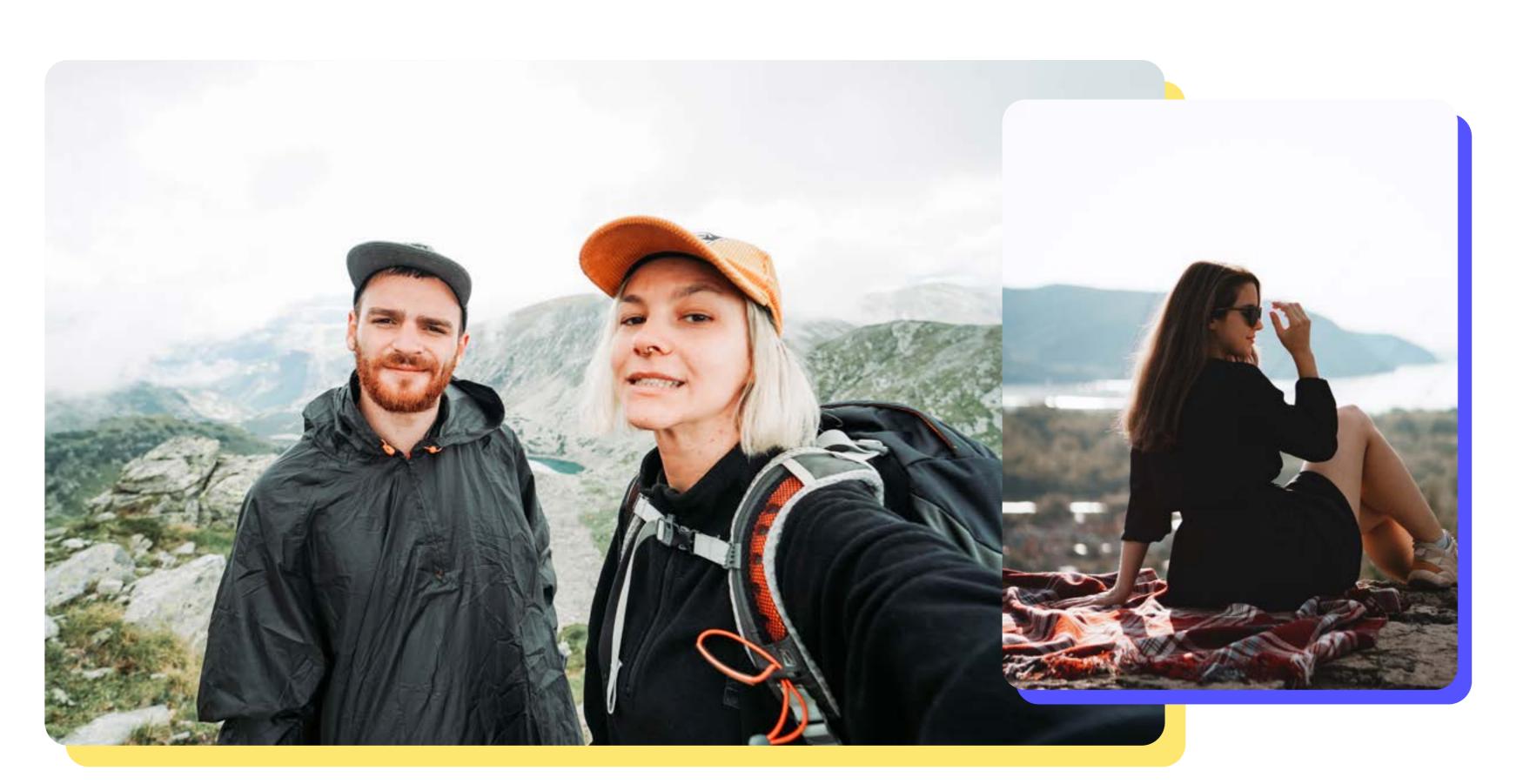




Key Findings

UGC's influence on purchase decisions is greater than ever

- 79% of people say UGC highly impacts their purchasing decisions, while only 12% say branded content and 9% say influencer content is impactful
- 56% of consumers say they're more influenced by social media images and videos when online shopping now than they were before the pandemic
- 80% of consumers say they'd be more likely to purchase a product from an online store if its website had photos and videos from real customers
- 66% of consumers have been inspired to purchase from a new brand after seeing social media images from other consumers
- 58% of consumers have left an eCommerce store without purchasing because the site didn't contain any customer reviews or photos



Consumers demand & act on UGC across industries

- 72% of consumers say photos and videos from real customers is the content they most want to see on eCommerce sites when making buying decisions
- 65% of consumers have purchased apparel or fashion items based on UGC from real customers
- 53% of consumers have purchased beauty, health or wellness products based on UGC
- 42% of consumers have purchased home or sporting goods based on UGC
- 52% of consumers have made travel plans based on UGC

People will reward brands who build creator communities

- 43% of consumers are more likely to continue engaging with a brand if it shares their photo or video (47% of Gen Z)
- 62% of consumers are likely to join an advocate community to actively help create content for the brand
- 61% of consumers would be more loyal and more likely to buy from a brand if they were invited to be part of a customer advocate community of content creators





POST-COVID CONSUMER SHOPPING & SOCIAL TRENDS

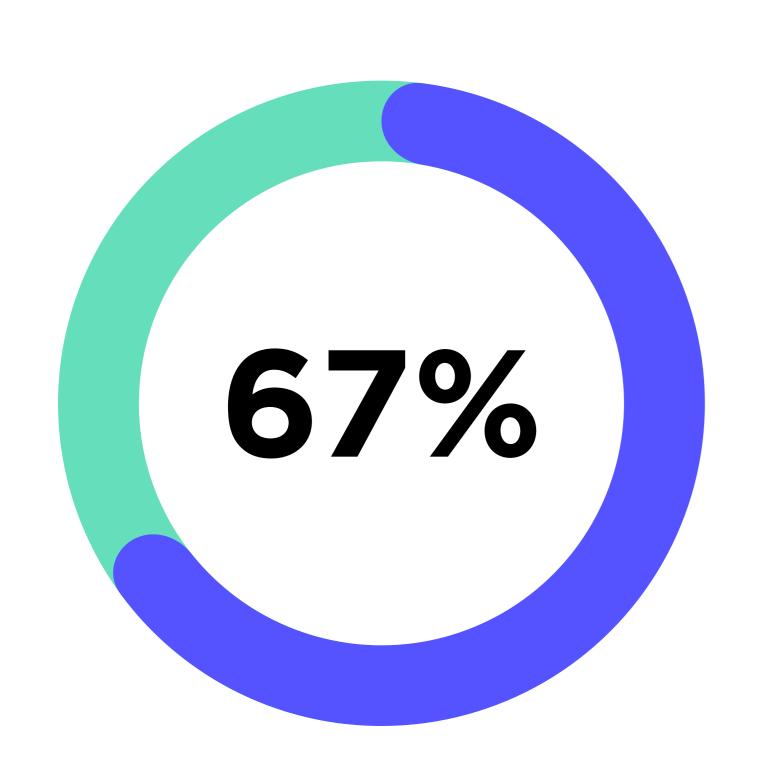


Online Shopping Growth is Here to Stay

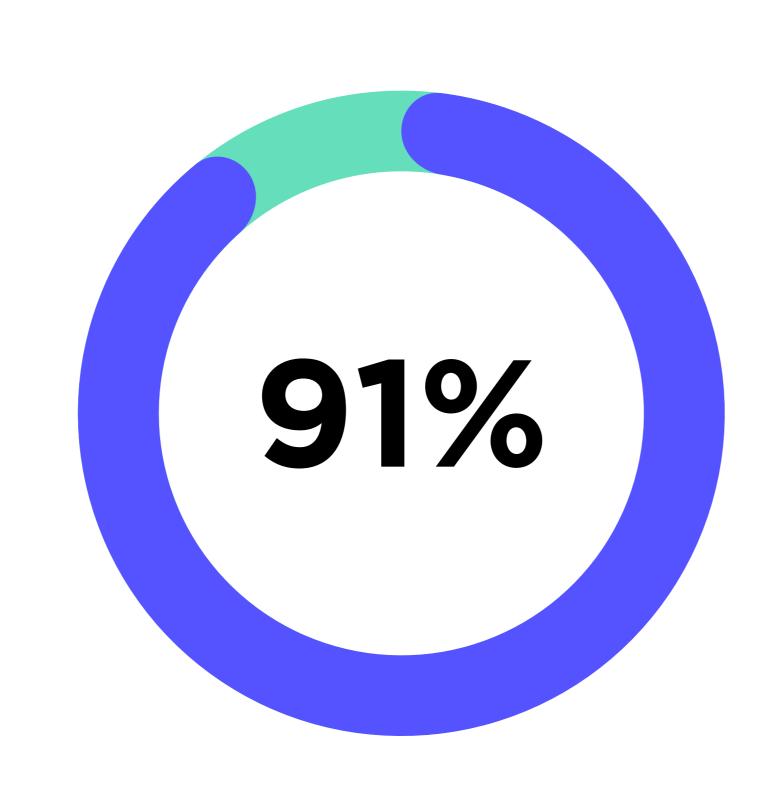
Although eCommerce was growing quickly before COVID-19, data has shown that 2020 saw the highest annual online sales growth of any year before it. Our survey reinforced this with 67% of global consumers saying their online purchasing has increased since the start of the pandemic—and 27% saying it's increased a lot. This was especially true for younger consumers, with 73% of Generation Z respondents saying their online shopping increased.

Now that people have become accustomed to buying more things online (clothes, footwear, health and beauty products, groceries, home goods, etc.) we can safely say this trend is here to stay. Our survey found that a whopping 91% of those who increased their online shopping during the pandemic say they're likely to continue purchasing items online in the future (with 52% saying they're very likely to do so).

Change in online purchasing habits post-COVID



of global consumers say their online purchasing has increased since the start of the pandemic

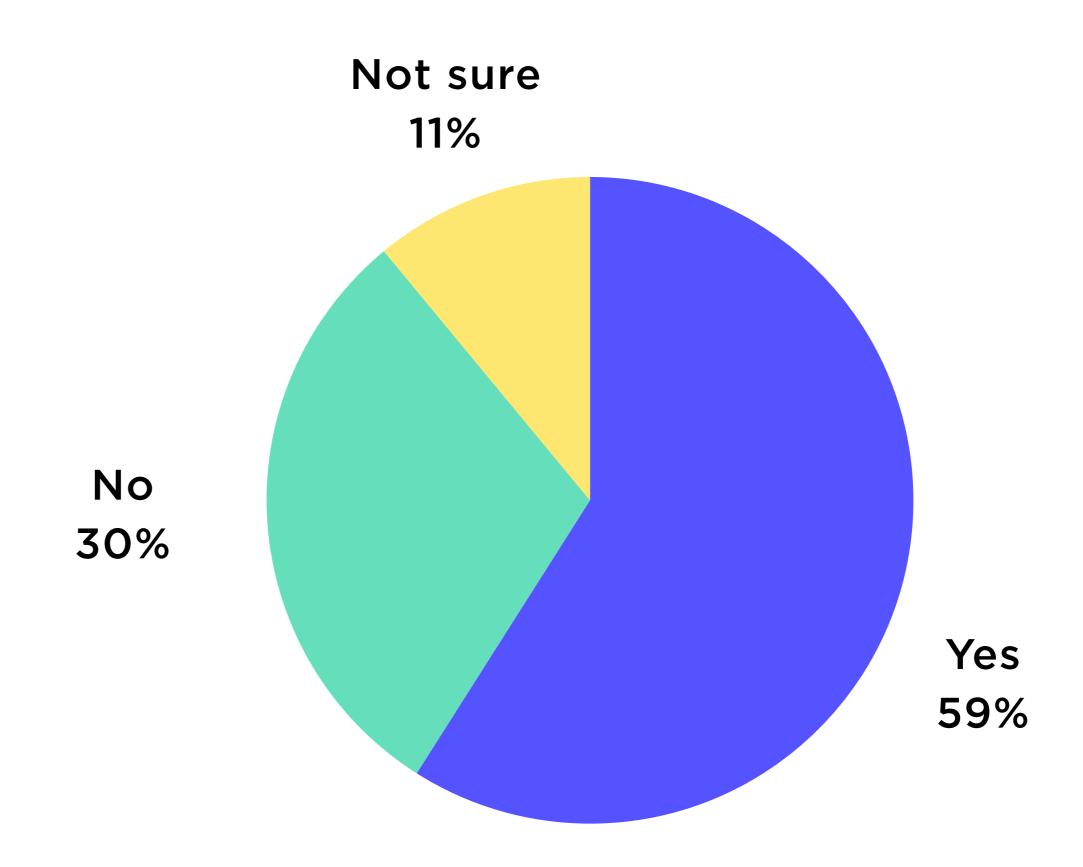


say they're likely to continue purchasing items online in the future

Store closures and fears of contracting the coronavirus not only caused consumers to do more of their shopping online, but it seems to have also made them more open to buying from new brands. In fact, 59% of consumers report having purchased from new brands since the start of the pandemic—75% of which say they're likely to continue purchasing from those new brands in the future.

We also found that younger shoppers are more likely to buy from new brands, with 63% of Gen Z consumers saying they've purchased from a new brand since the pandemic started.

Have you purchased from new brands since the pandemic started?



75% of people say they're likely to continue buying from new brands in the future

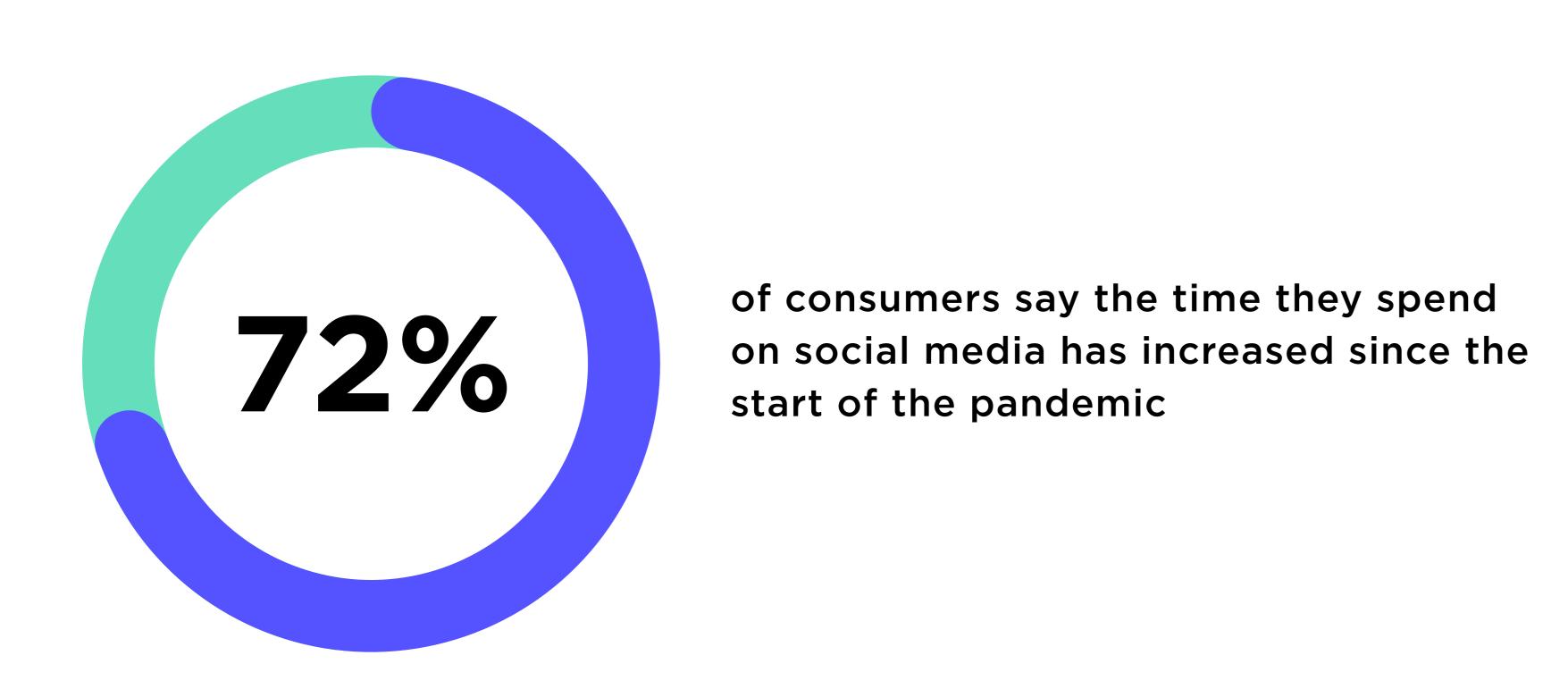


People are Creating & Consuming More Content on Social Platforms

COVID-19 inspired a change in people's social media habits. Across all regions and age groups, people are creating and consuming more content on social media than they were before the pandemic.

Of consumers surveyed, 72% report that the time they spend on social media has increased since the start of the global pandemic. With Gen Z this number is even higher, with 79% saying their social media time increased and 46% saying it's increased a lot.

Change in time spent on social media post-COVID



Change in time spent on social media by generation



But which social media platforms are people spending the most time on?

Our survey found that consumers spend the most time on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, with the popularity of YouTube remaining consistent across each age group. Aside from that, platforms varied in their popularity among the different generations.

For GenZ, YouTube is the platform they spend the most time on (23%) followed by TikTok (21%) and Instagram (20%). For Millennials it was Facebook (36%) followed by Instagram (24%) and YouTube (22%). For Gen X, nearly 60% report spending the most time on Facebook, followed by YouTube (21%) and Instagram (8%).

Time spent on different social media platforms post-COVID

		No. Rankings
f	1 - Facebook	1,800
	2 - Youtube	1,836
O	3 - Instagram	1,642
	4 - Snapchat	1,269
	5 - TikTok	1,206
	6 - Twitter	1,233
P	7 - Pinterest	1,166

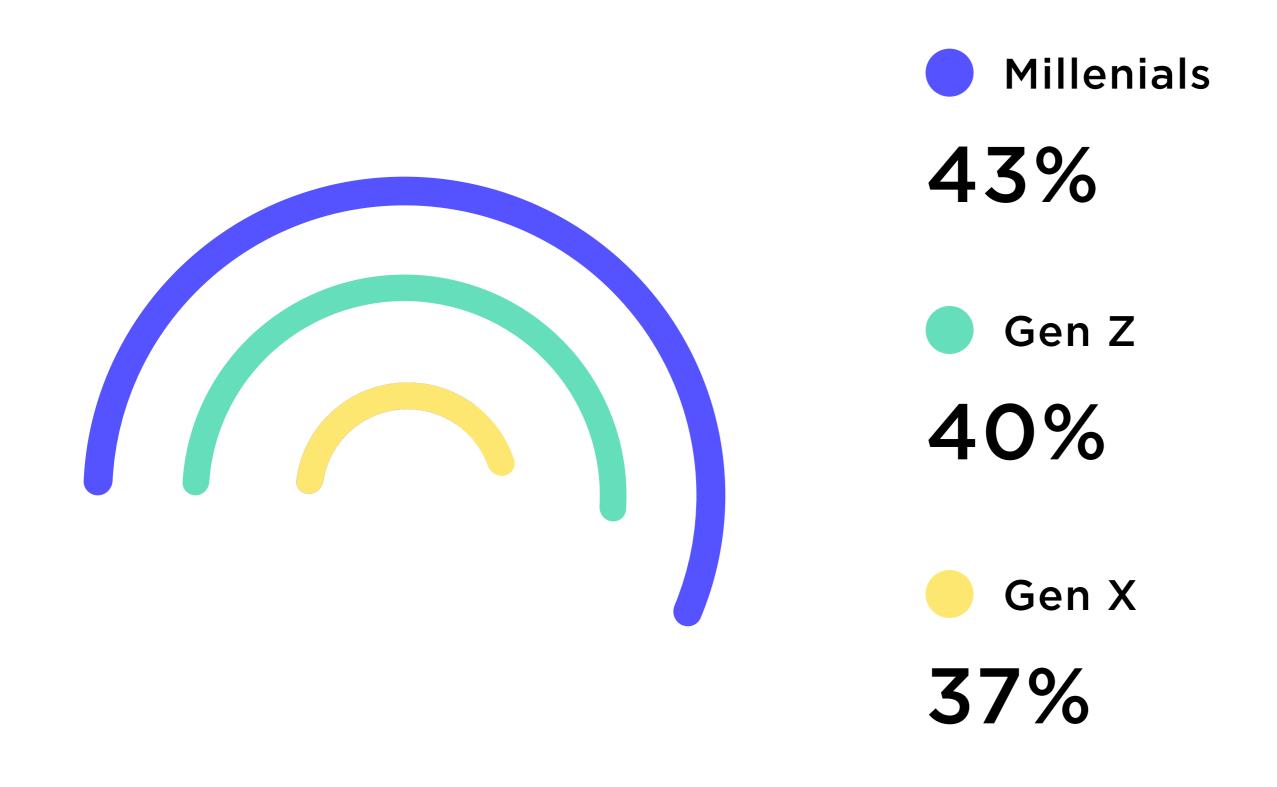


People are Creating & Consuming More Content on Social Platforms

Not only has the time people spend on social networks grown but so has the amount of content they post. A good portion of respondents (41%) say that the frequency in which they post to social media has increased since the start of the pandemic—with Millennials' social media posting habits increasing slightly more (43%) than average consumers.

However, the survey reflected differences in where people spent most of their time versus the platforms they post the most content to. Across the board, the platforms people post the most to are Facebook (64%), Instagram (56%) and Snapchat (28%).

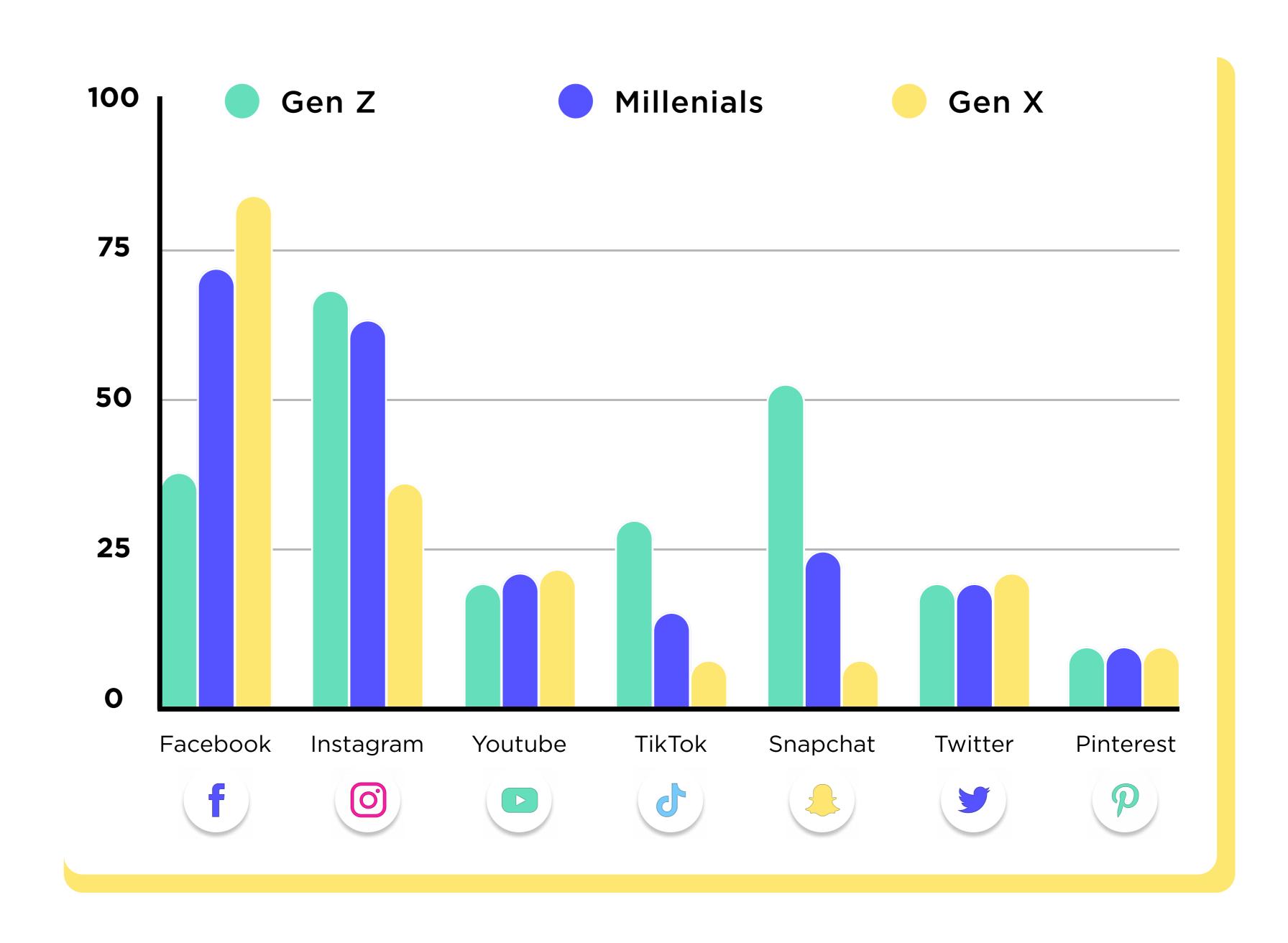
Increase in frequency of social posting by generation



Gen Z report posting the most to Instagram (68%) followed by Snapchat (51%) and Facebook (36%). A surprising finding was that less than 30% of Gen Z respondents reported posting the most to TikTok, which indicates that they use this platform more for consuming rather than sharing content.

Facebook held the top spot for Millennials (70%) and Gen X (84%), though a high number of Millennials (62%) also report Instagram as a top platform they post content to.

Social platforms consumers post the most content to by generation





People are Creating & Consuming More Content on Social Platforms

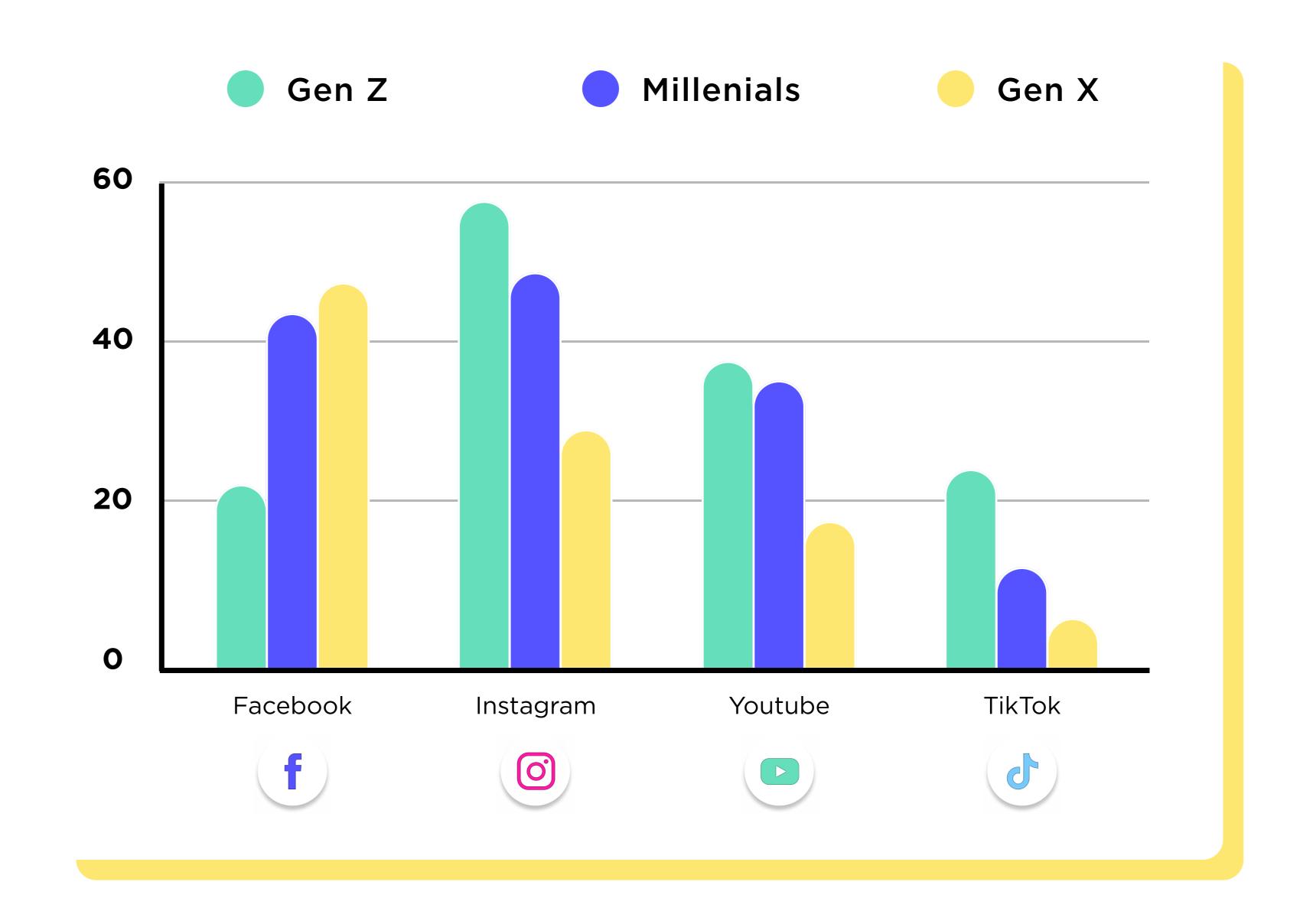
When looking to market products on specific social channels, it's important for brands to know where their audiences are most likely to discover and be inspired to purchase from them. We asked global consumers which social platforms they go to most for buying inspiration. Instagram (47%), Facebook (38%) and YouTube (36%) were the top three responses.

Looking at the results by age group, Instagram still held the top spot for purchase inspiration with Gen Z (59%) and Millennial (51%) shoppers, while Facebook (49%) was the social platform Gen X shoppers look to most for buying inspiration.

Social platforms consumers look to most for purchase inspiration

40 30 20 10 Facebook Instagram Youtube Snapchat TikTok Twitter Pinterest

Social platforms consumers look to most for purchase inspiration by generation



Shoppers Seek Authentic & Personalized Experiences from Today's Brands

Authenticity can make or break a brand these days. The overwhelming majority of consumers (88%) say authenticity is important when deciding which brands they like and support—with 50% saying authenticity is very important to them.

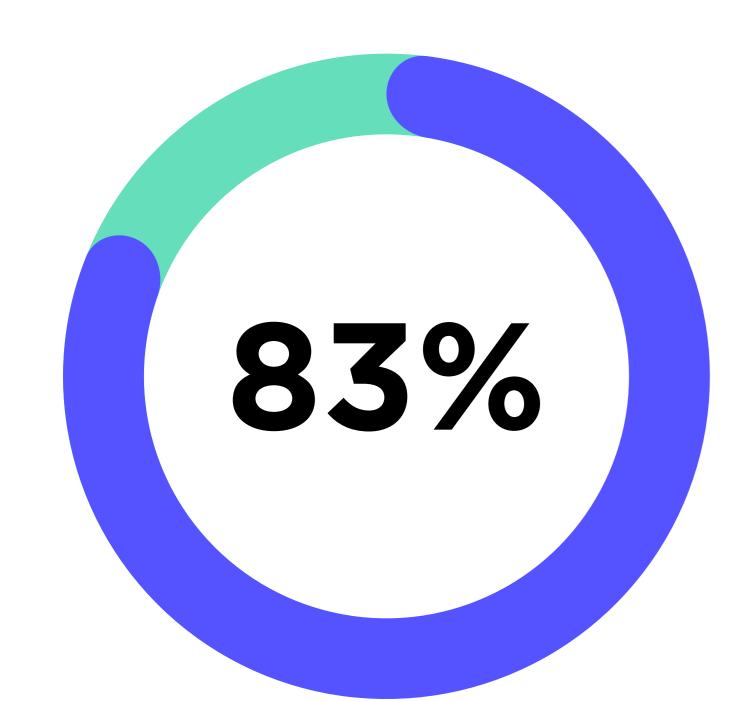
If you thought the market was already saturated with brands trying to create authentic experiences, think again. Our report revealed that 83% of consumers believe retailers need to provide more authentic shopping experiences to customers like them —indicating there is still plenty of opportunity for brands to grow and get ahead of the competition.

88%

of consumers say authenticty is important when deciding which brands they support



Consumers seek more authenticity from brands

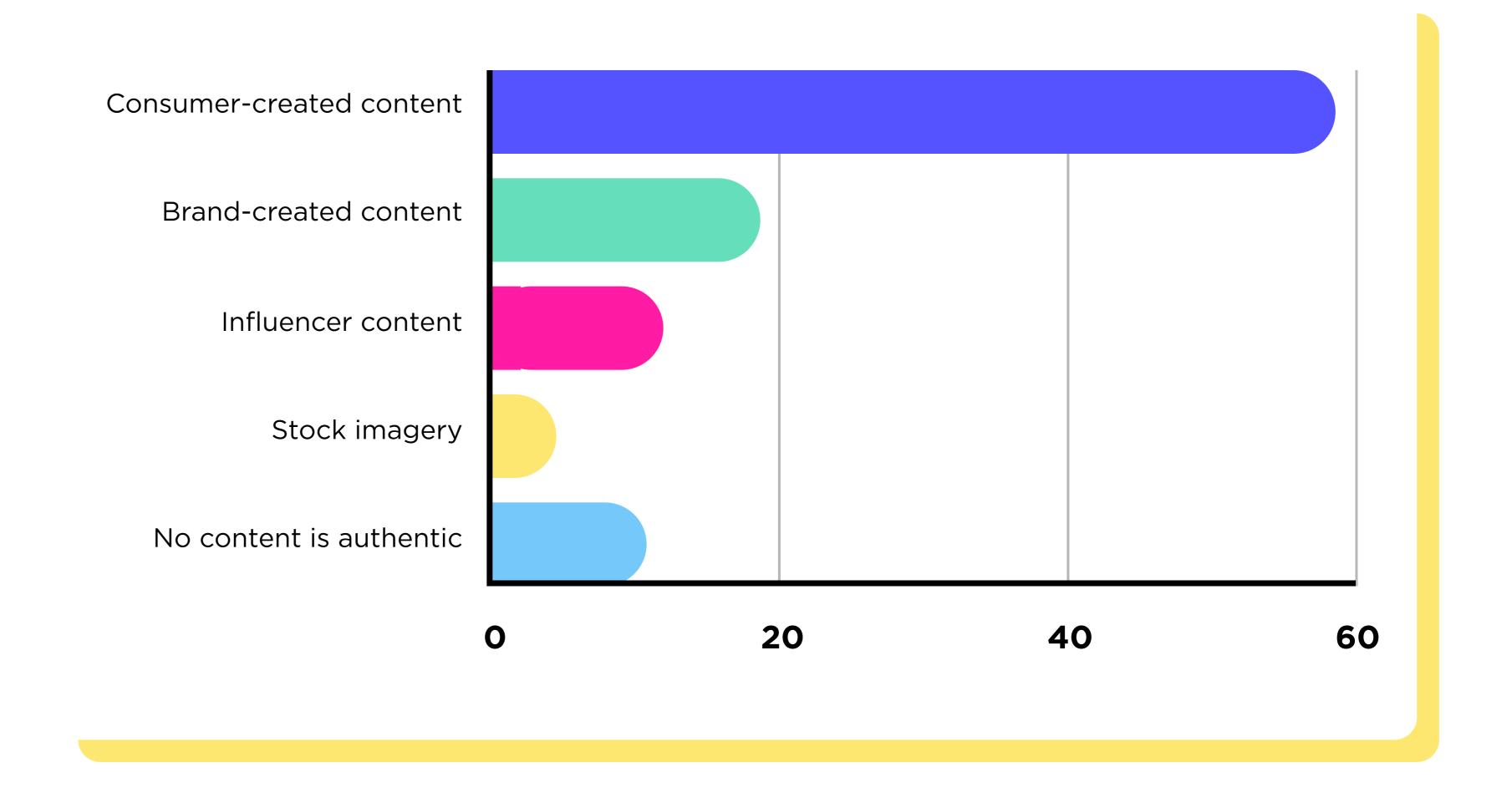


of consumers believe retailers need to provide more authentic shopping experiences to customers like them If consumer behavior continues to evolve towards authentic experiences, what kind of content resonates as authentic to consumers across generations and geographic regions?

Despite the large amounts of budget allocated toward influencer marketing strategies these days, only 10% of consumers say influencer content resonates as authentic with them, and a mere 19% say that brand-created content is the most authentic.

Conversely, 59% of consumers say content created by other consumers (i.e. user-generated content or UGC) is the most authentic type of content—meaning people are 3.1x more likely to say user-generated content is authentic compared to brand-created content and 5.9x more likely to say it's the most authentic compared to influencer content.

What type of content is most authentic?





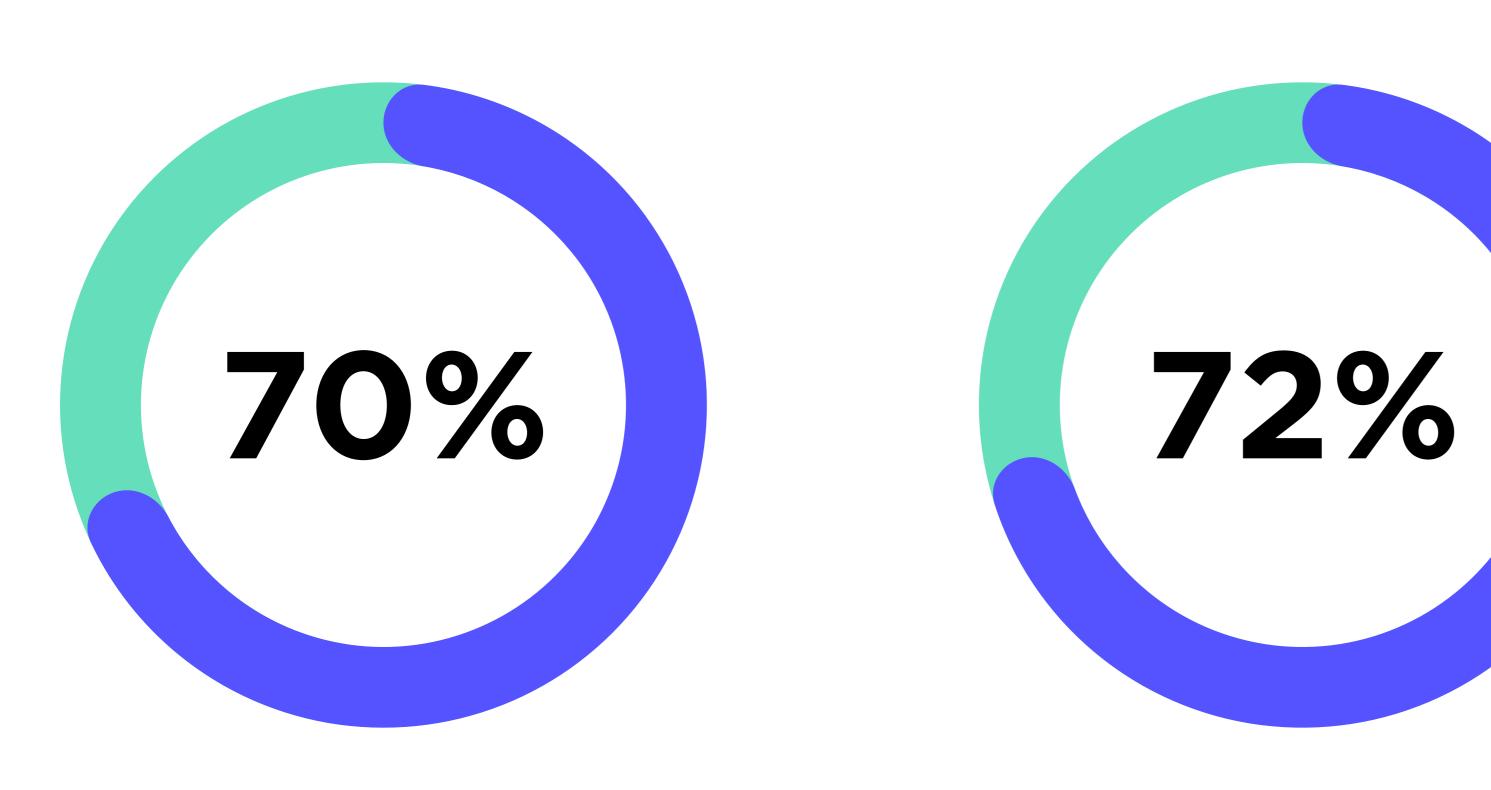
POST-COVID CONSUMER SHOPPING & SOCIAL TRENDS

Shoppers Seek Authentic & Personalized Experiences from Today's Brands

It isn't just authenticity today's consumers desire; most consumers (70%) say it's important for brands to provide them with a personalized experience—up from 67% in 2019.

Personalization has become so important that 31% of consumers say they've left an eCommerce site without making a purchase because the experience wasn't personalized enough.

Consumers want personalized experiences and will reward the brands that provide them



of consumers say it's important for brands to provide them with more personalized experiences are more likely to buy from a brand if it can consistently provide them with a personalized experience

Our survey shows that brands making committed efforts to provide more relevant and personal online shopping experiences will be strongly rewarded by consumers. In fact, 72% of people say they are more likely to purchase from a brand if it can consistently provide them with a more personalized experience.

It would seem that brands have improved in making personalized experiences a priority, though there is still a lot of room for growth. In 2019, 55% of consumers either disagreed or were ambivalent about whether a majority of brands provide personalized experiences. In this most recent survey, that number went down by seven percentage points to 48%.

31%

of shoppers have left
an eCommerce site without
making a purchase because the
experience wasn't personalized
enough



UGC's Influence on Purchasing Decisions is Greater Than Ever

The people have spoken and the content they most prefer to see from brands is user-generated content, i.e., the content created by real customers and peers (friends, family, etc.). UGC continues to rank well above traditional brand-created content as well as influencer content when it comes to the types of content that most influences consumer buying decisions.

In our report, UGC was shown to be 8.7x more impactful than influencer content and 6.6x more influential than branded content in consumers' eyes—with 79% of people saying user-generated content highly impacts their purchasing decisions.

8.7x

UGC is 8.7x more impactful in influencing purchasing decisions than influencer content

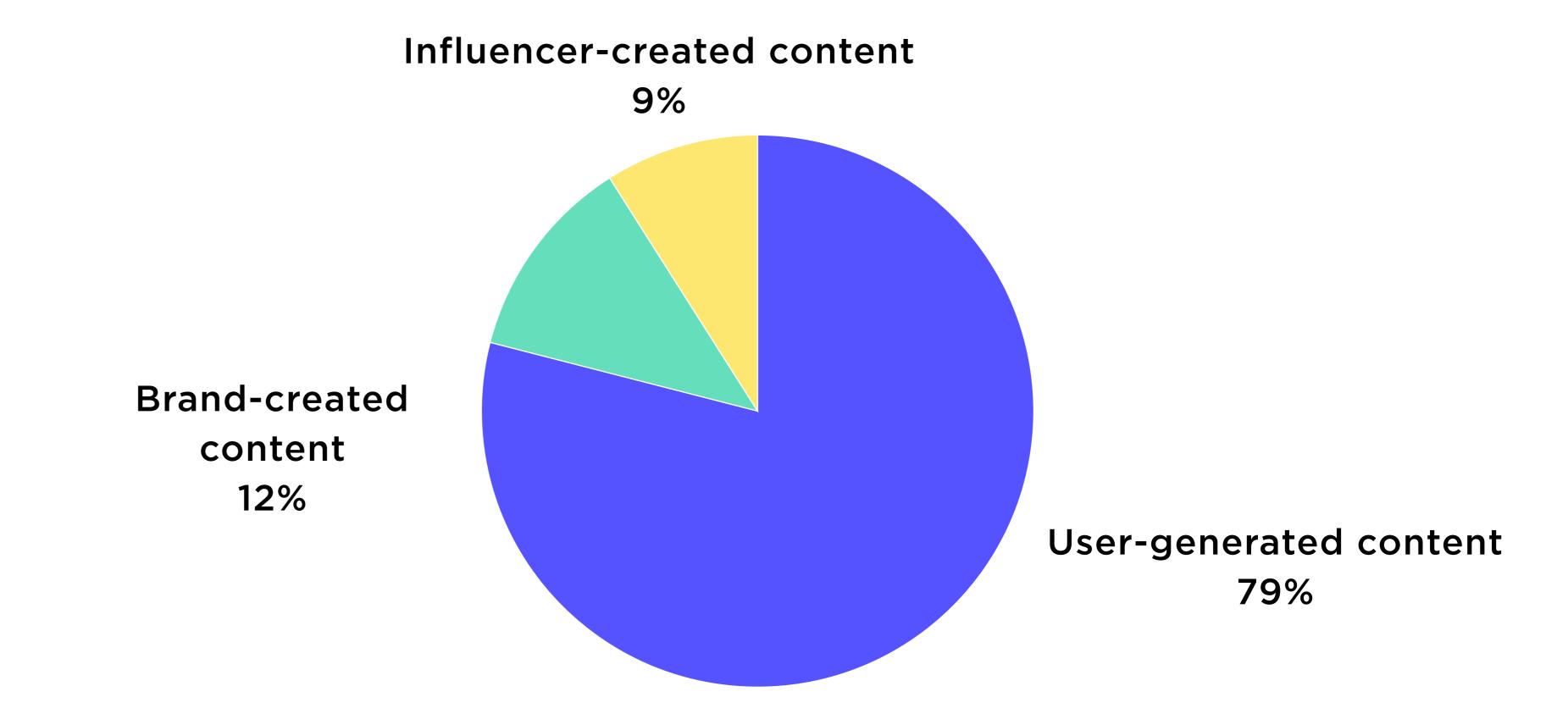


of people are more influenced by user-generated images and videos when shopping now than before the pandemic

Store closures and fears of contracting the coronavirus not only caused consumers to do more of their shopping online, but it seems to have also made them more open to buying from new brands. In fact, 59% of consumers report having purchased from new brands since the start of the pandemic—75% of which say they're likely to continue purchasing from those new brands in the future.

We also found that younger shoppers are more likely to buy from new brands, with 63% of Gen Z consumers saying they've purchased from a new brand since the pandemic started.

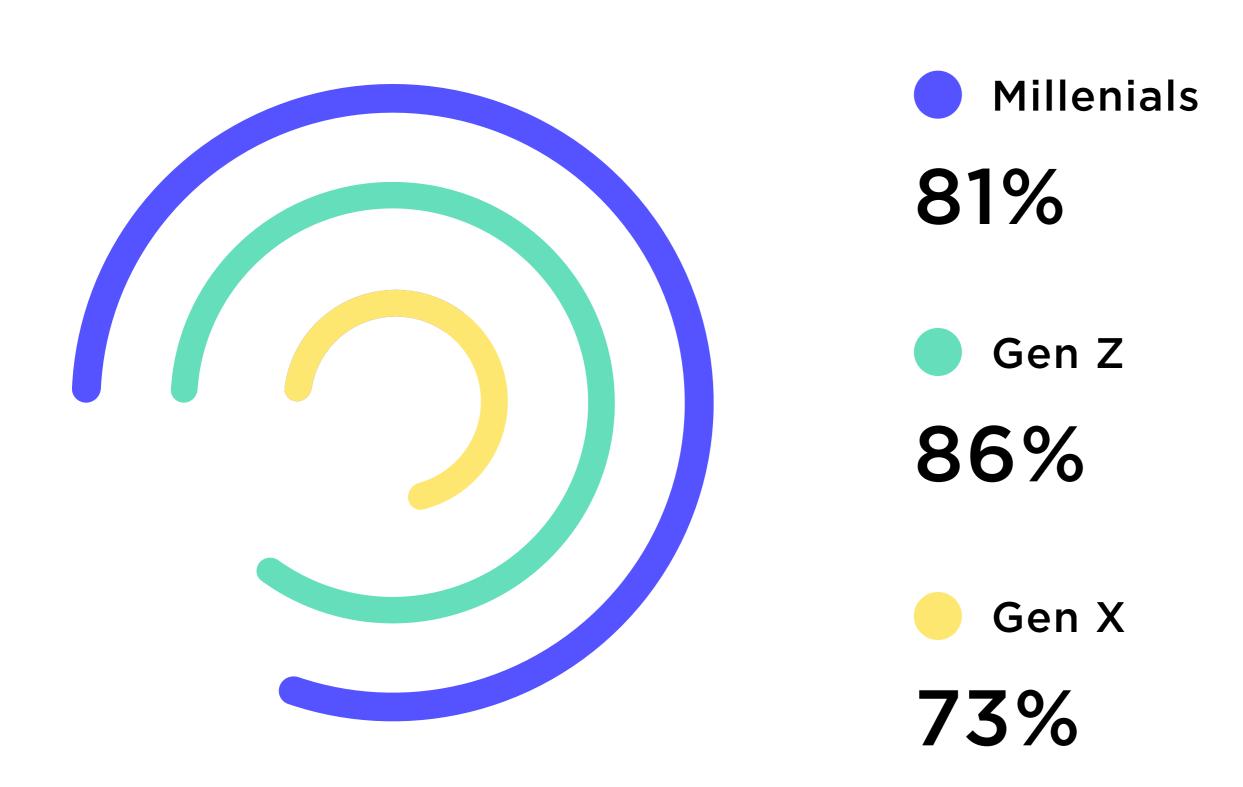
What type of content highly impacts your purchasing decisions?



UGC's Influence on Purchasing Decisions is Greater Than Ever

In fact, the majority of consumers (80%) say they'd be more likely to purchase a product from an online store if its website featured photos and videos from real customers. Gen Z (86%) and Millennials (81%) in particular say they are more likely to buy from eCommerce sites that display UGC visuals.

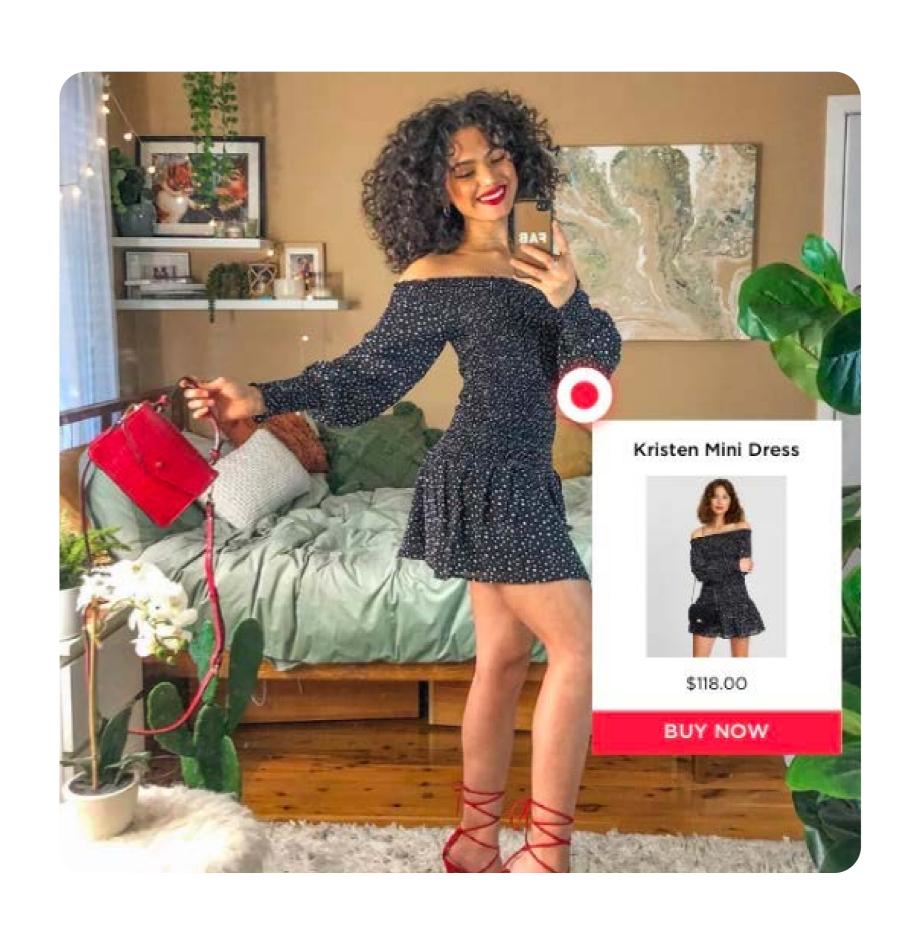
Consumers who would be more likely to purchase a product from an online store if the website featured UGC photos and videos



of global consumers would be more likely to buy from an online store if its website featured UGC images and videos

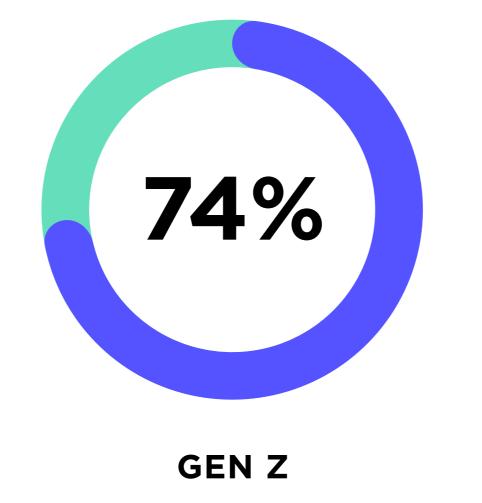
What we also found is that user-generated visuals are even more powerful when brands add shopping functionality to them—increasing the likelihood that online shoppers will make a purchase.

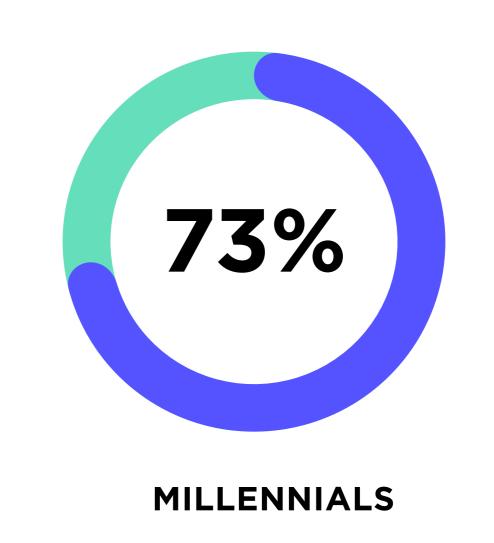
When shown the UGC image below with a 'Buy Now' shoppable call-toaction, 71% of consumers agree they'd be likely to purchase from an online store if the brand made it easy to click-to-purchase an item directly from an inspirational image (like the one shown). This is even more true with Gen Z (74%) and Millennials (73%).

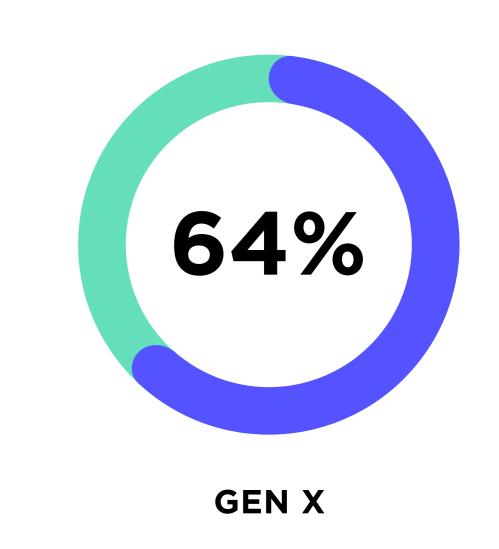


71%

of people would be more likely to buy from an online store if it made it easy to click-to-buy an item from an inspirational image





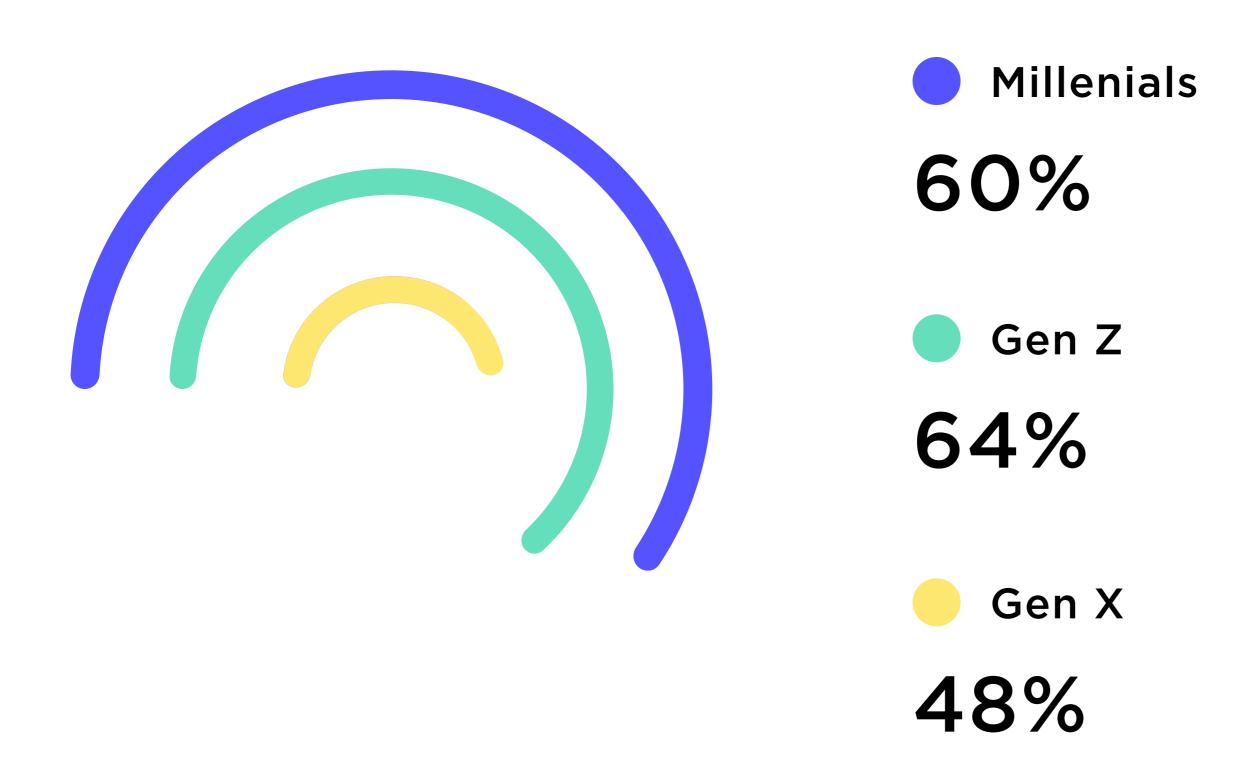


UGC's Influence on Purchasing Decisions is Greater Than Ever

Just how passionate are consumers about needing to reference UGC when online shopping? Enough that 58% report having left an eCommerce store without purchasing because the website didn't include customer reviews or photos.

Again, this trend is even bigger with younger consumers. Gen Z (64%) and Millennials (60%) report having exited eCommerce stores that fail to provide UGC as third-party validation (i.e. social proof).

Consumers who have left an eCommerce store without purchasing because the site didn't include customer reviews or photos.

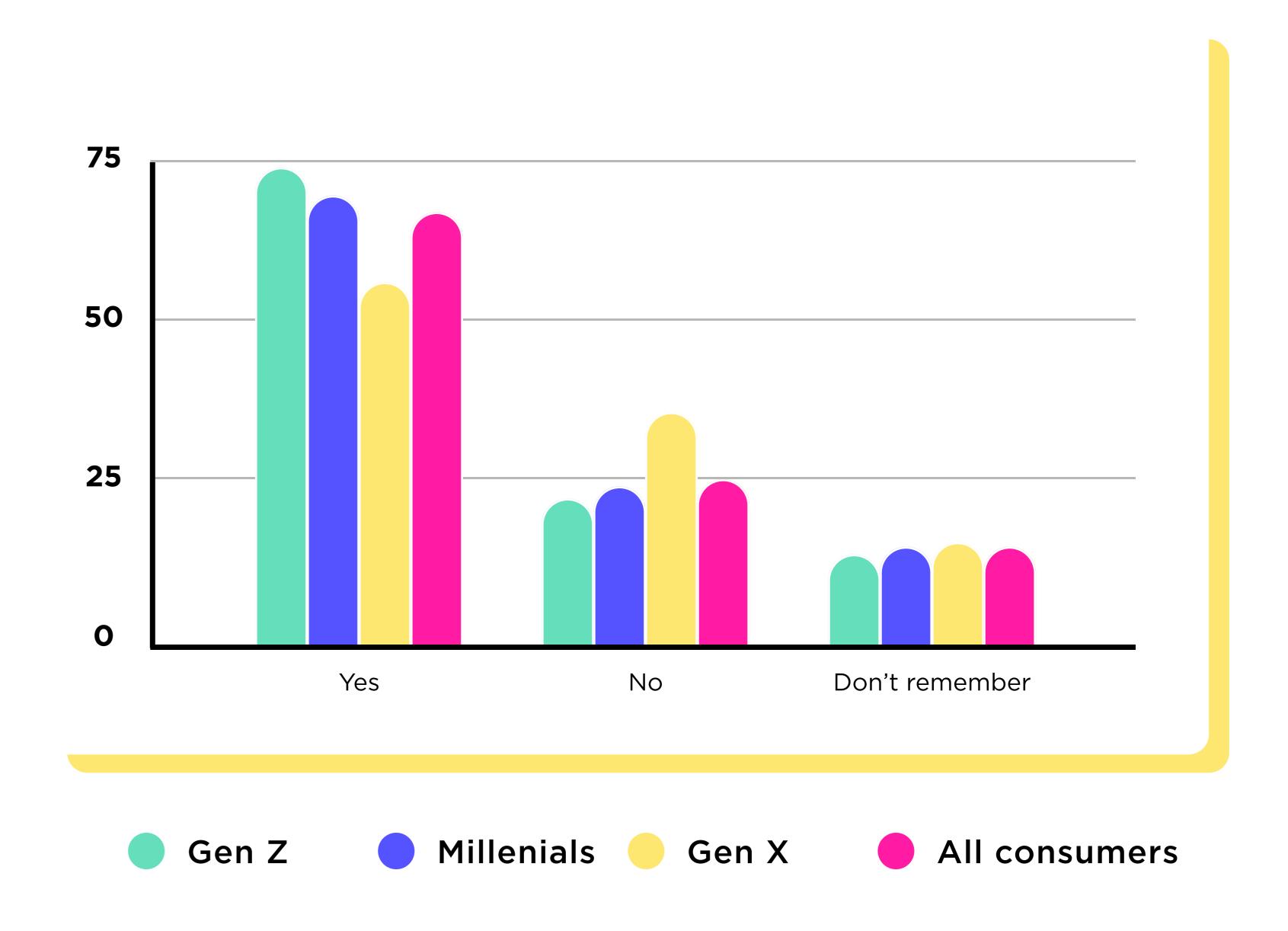


of global consumers have left an eCommerce store without purchasing because the site didn't have customer reviews or photos.

However, brands that effectively showcase user-generated visuals throughout their online shopping experiences can expect to make more net new sales.

Most people (66%) say they've been inspired to purchase from a new brand after seeing social media images of that brand from other consumers. This increases with Gen Z (73%) and Millennials (67%).

Have you ever been inspired to purchase from a new brand after seeing UGC images?







INFLUENCING ONLINE PURCHASES ACROSS INDUSTRIES



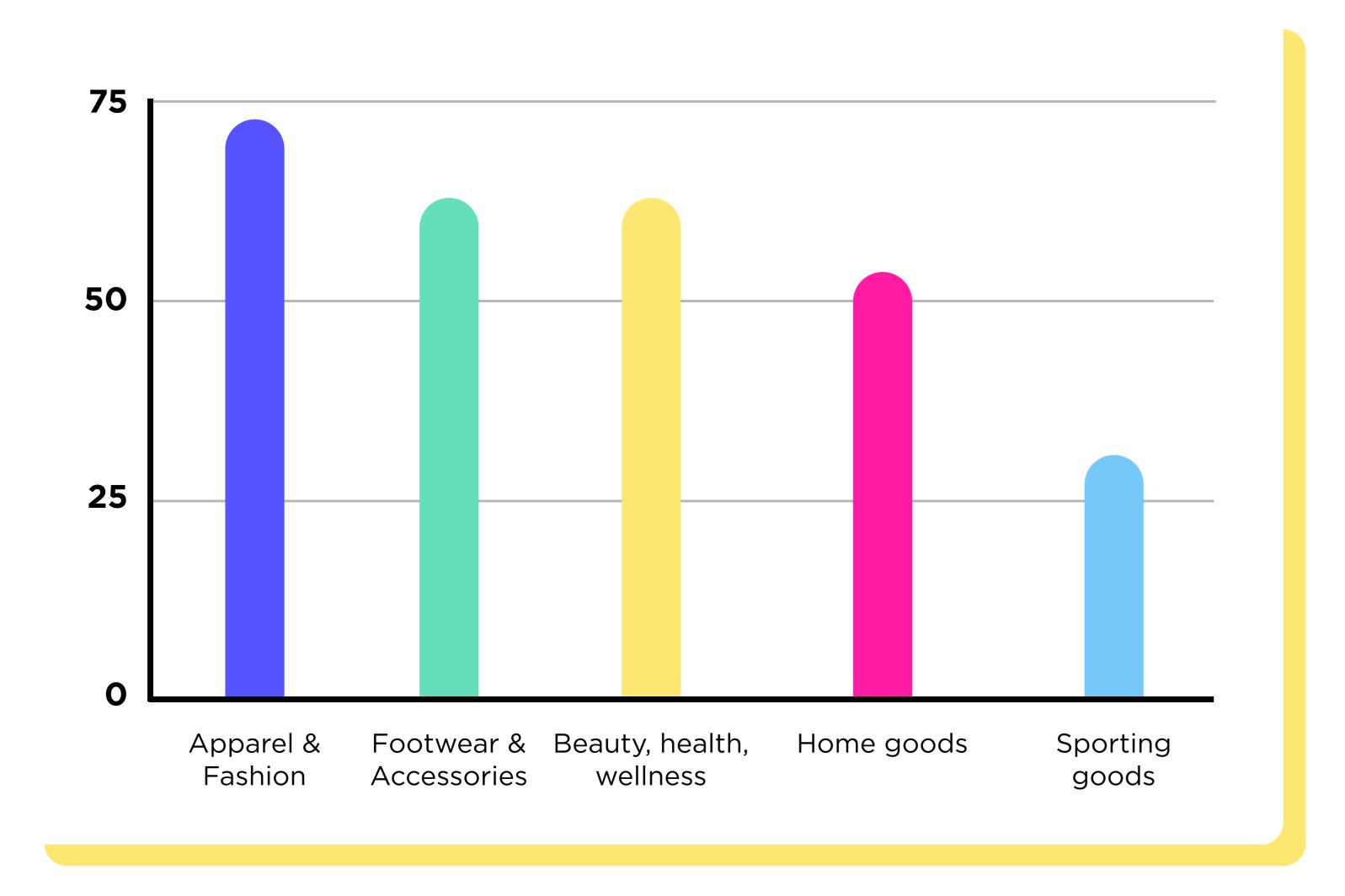
Apparel & Accessories

We know people are flocking to online channels in large numbers to do their shopping, but what are the types of items they're browsing and buying? And what types of visual content are they most influenced by?

When asked which types of products they prefer to buy online, 73% of people say they are most likely to purchase apparel and fashion items. This is especially true for Millennials (78%) and Gen Z (74%).

Footwear and accessories are a close second, with 60% of consumers saying these are the products they're most likely to buy online—with 64% of Millennials agreeing.

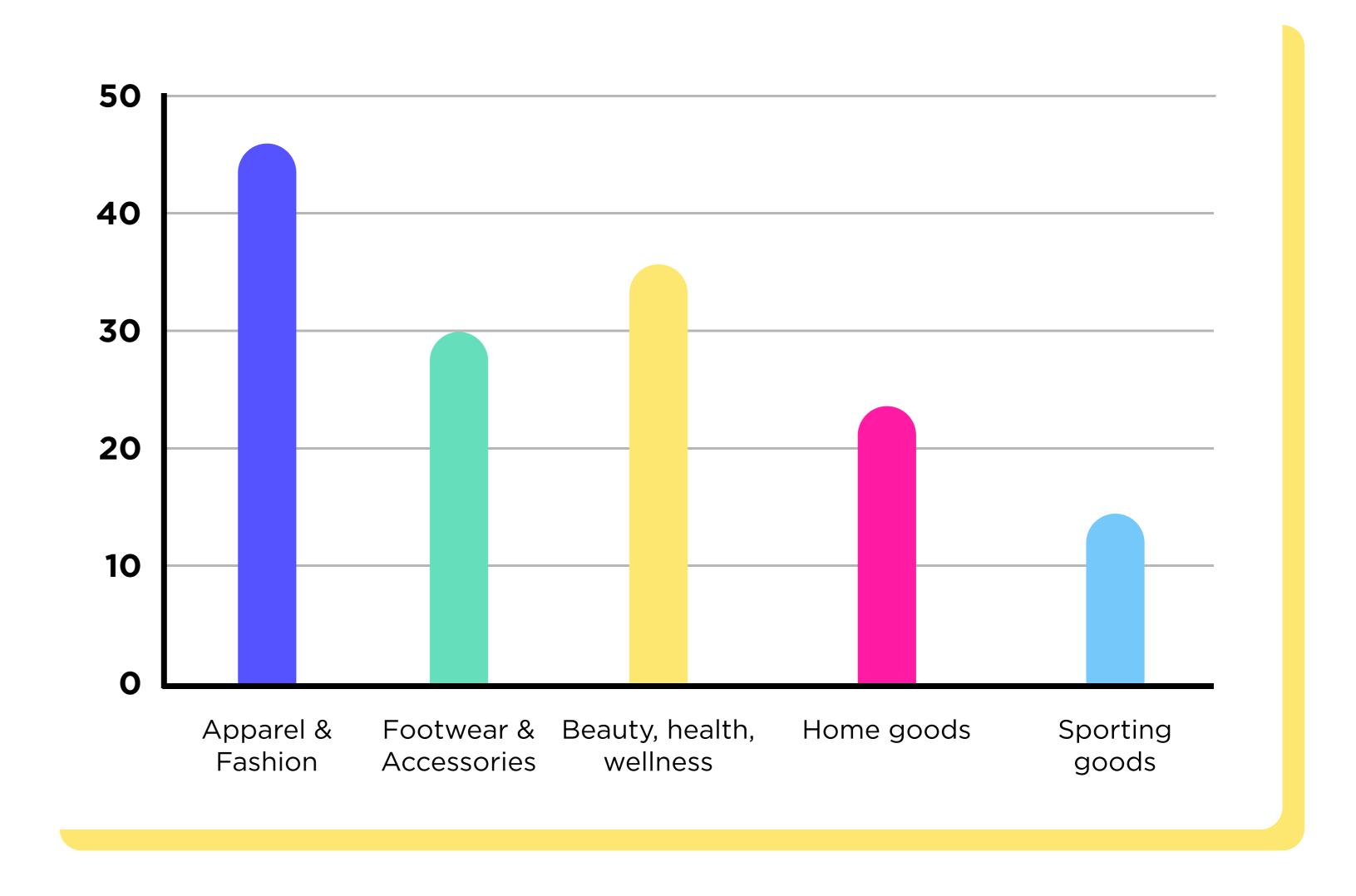
Which types of products are you most likely to purchase online?



When it comes to the types of products people like to purchase on social media platforms, apparel and fashion items also reign supreme. Forty-six percent of people—55% of Gen Z and 49% of Millennials—say fashion and apparel items are what they're most likely to buy on social media.

However, results showed people are not as likely to buy footwear and accessories on social networks. Only 28% of consumers say footwear and accessories are the types of products they are most likely to purchase on social media platforms. Younger generations are slightly more likely (32% for Millennials and Gen Z).

Which types of products are you most likely to purchase on social media platforms?



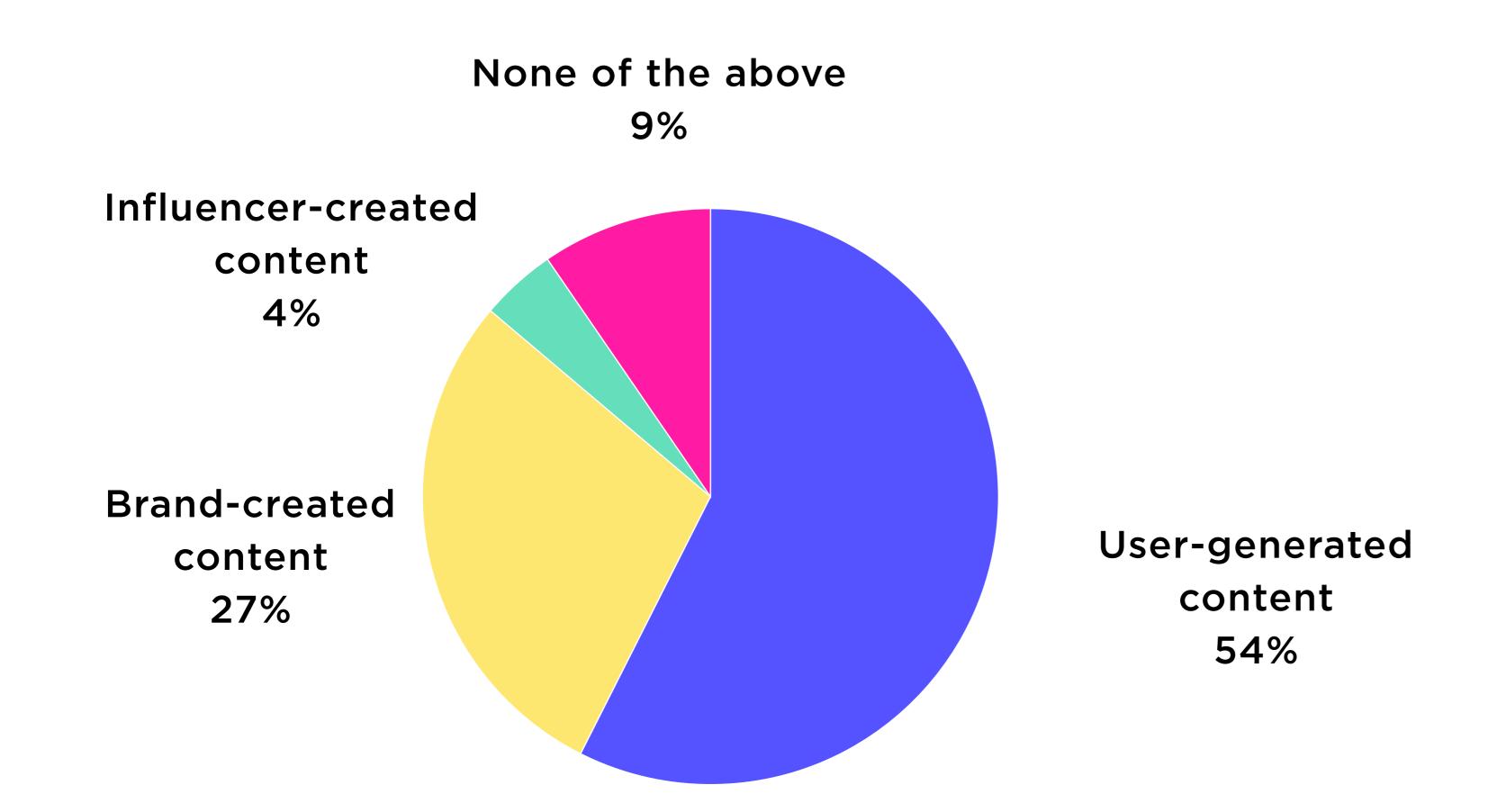


Whether just browsing or buying on social media or eCommerce sites, what kinds of content are most influential with people making fashion buying decisions?

Although the fashion industry employs a high number of influencers, only 4% of consumers surveyed report that celebrity or social influencer photos are the most influential when making fashion purchasing decisions.

On average, 54% of consumers report that user-generated content is the most influential when making fashion purchasing decisions. The influence of UGC grows with Millennials (56%) and Gen Z (60%) when buying fashion items.

What is the most influential content when making fashion and apparel purchasing decisions?



Not only is UGC the most influential fashion content, it is also the most actionable. Most consumers (58%) have purchased apparel or accessories based on an image or video they saw a friend, family member or peer post on social media. Again, Gen Z is the group that is the most likely of any consumer age group surveyed to act on UGC, with 66% saying they've purchased apparel after seeing a consumer-created image or video.

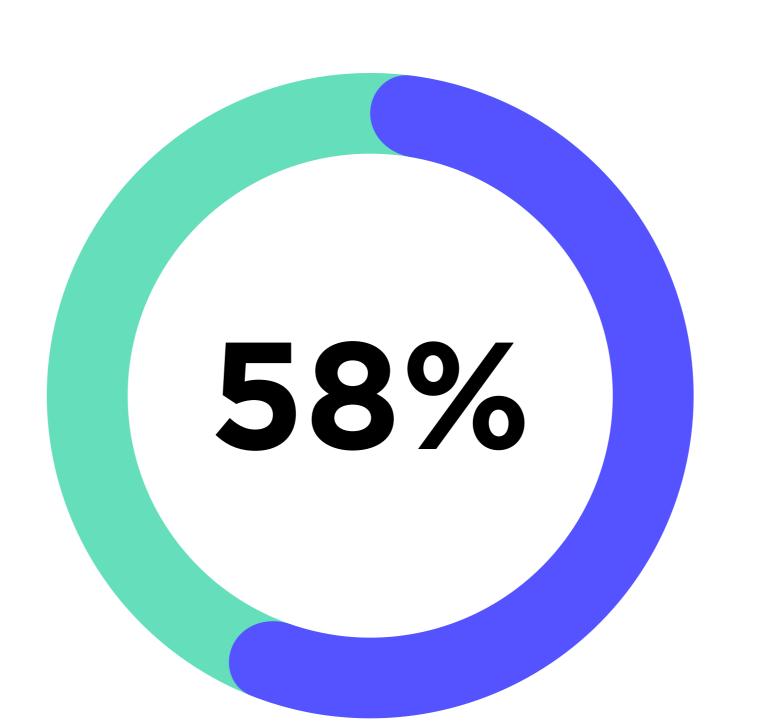
Apparel and fashion brands should look to the content created by everyday consumers if they hope to increase purchase inspiration and online conversions. Luckily for them, our survey found that most people (58%) say they would be willing to grant a brand permission to use an image or video they posted of a piece of clothing or accessory they purchased online in their marketing.



66%

images and videos

of Gen Z say they've purchased apparel after seeing user-generated



of people would grant a brand permission to use an image or video they posted of a piece of clothing or accessory in their marketing



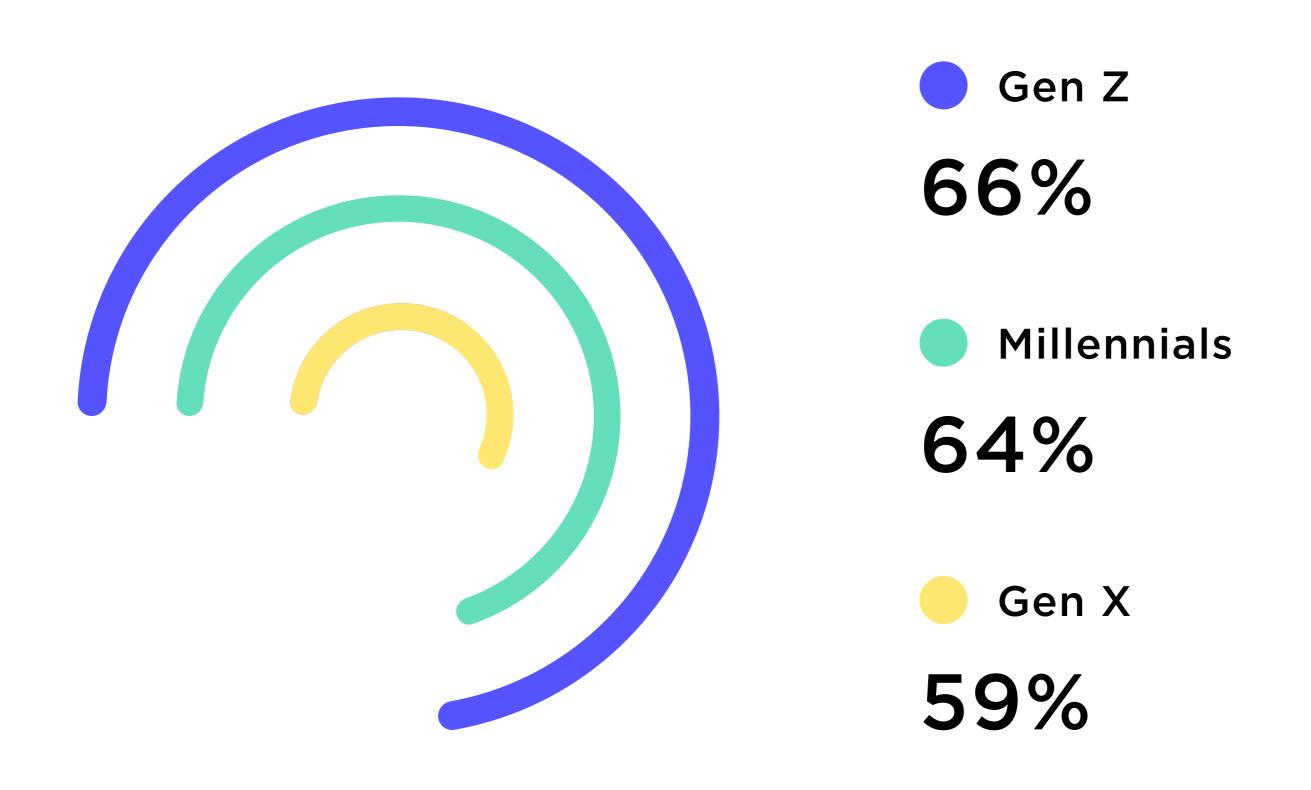
Beauty, Health, & Wellness

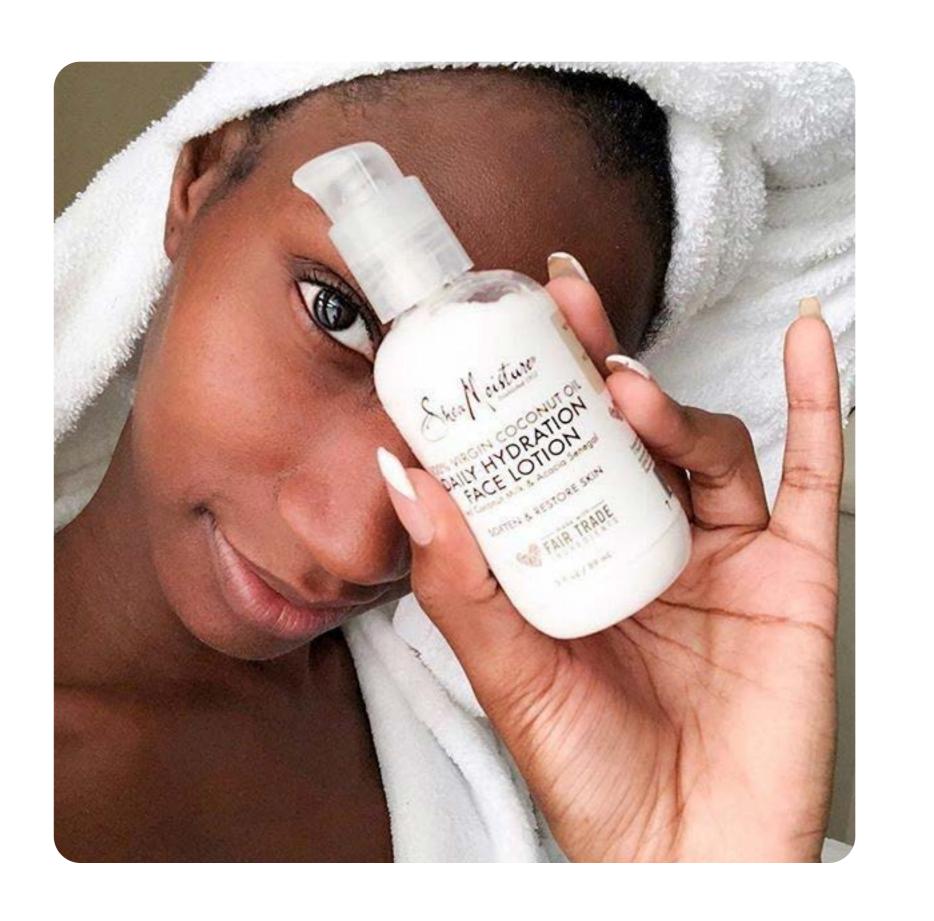
Beauty, health and wellness products were another category of items people across all age ranges like to purchase online. Overall, 60% of consumers say these are the types of products they are most likely to purchase online, with that number increasing to 64% among Millennials.

People are slightly less inclined to purchase beauty, health and wellness products on social media platforms. Of the consumers surveyed, 36% say they'd purchase these types of consumer packaged goods on social platforms. But again, when it comes to younger shoppers, they are slightly more willing to make beauty buys on social media. For these groups, 39% of Millennials and 38% of Gen Z say they'd be likely to purchase these products via social networks.

Although people report a low likelihood of buying beauty products on social media, a way brands can improve those numbers is by sharing compelling, consumer-created content. Forty-two percent of consumers say user-generated content is the most influential when making beauty, health and wellness purchasing decisions—with only 10% saying celebrity or social influencer photos are influential.

Consumers who are most likely to purchase beauty, health or wellness products online by generation

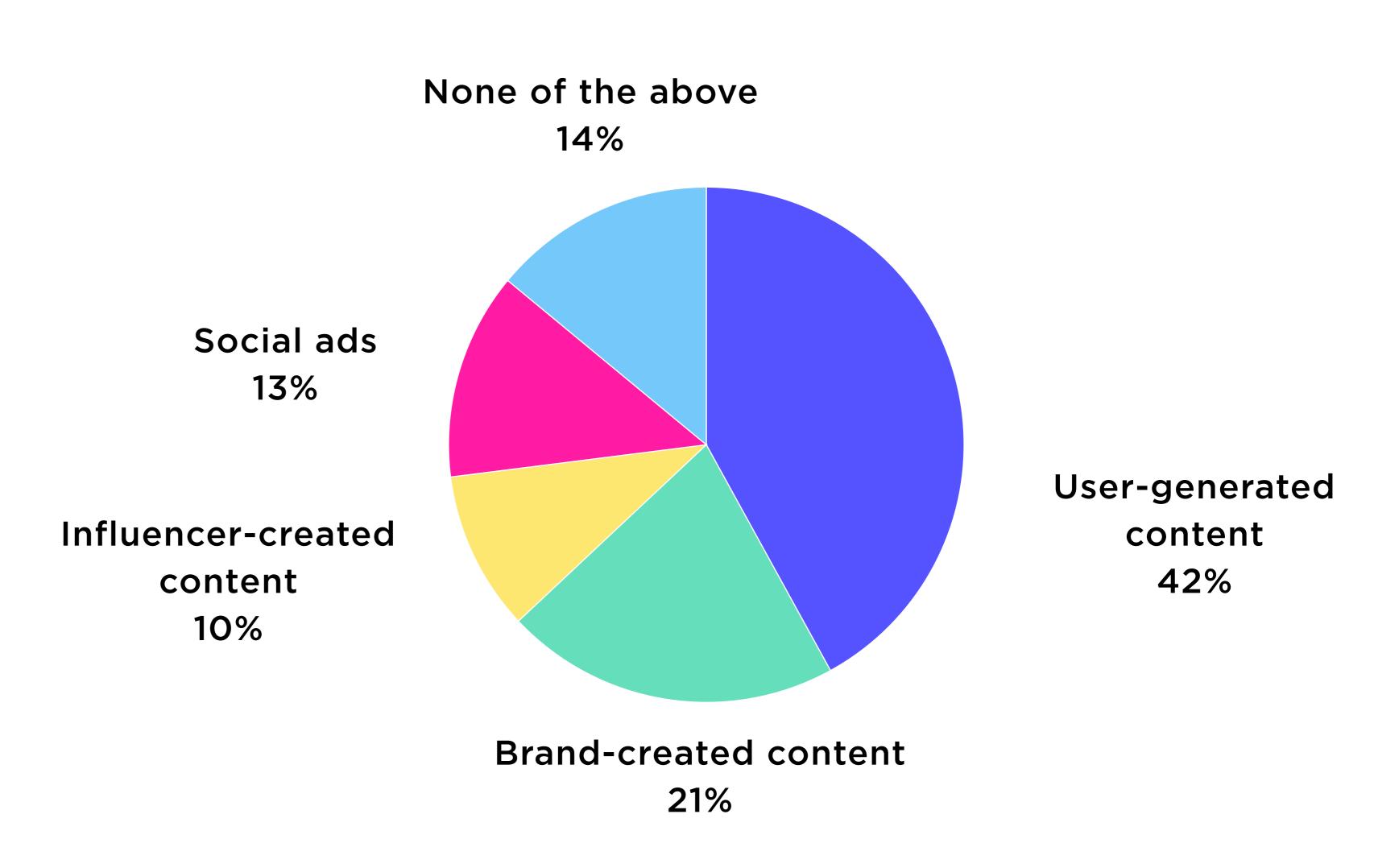




39%

of Millennials would be likely to purchase a beauty, health or wellness product on a social media platform

What is the most influential content when making fashion and apparel purchasing decisions?





INFLUENCING ONLINE PURCHASES ACROSS INDUSTRIES

Beauty, Health, & Wellness

Shoppers are putting their money where their mouths are, with more than half of consumers (53%) saying they've purchased a beauty, health or wellness product based on an image or video they saw a friend, family or peer post on social media. True to form, even more Gen Z shoppers (58%) have purchased beauty items after seeing inspirational UGC.

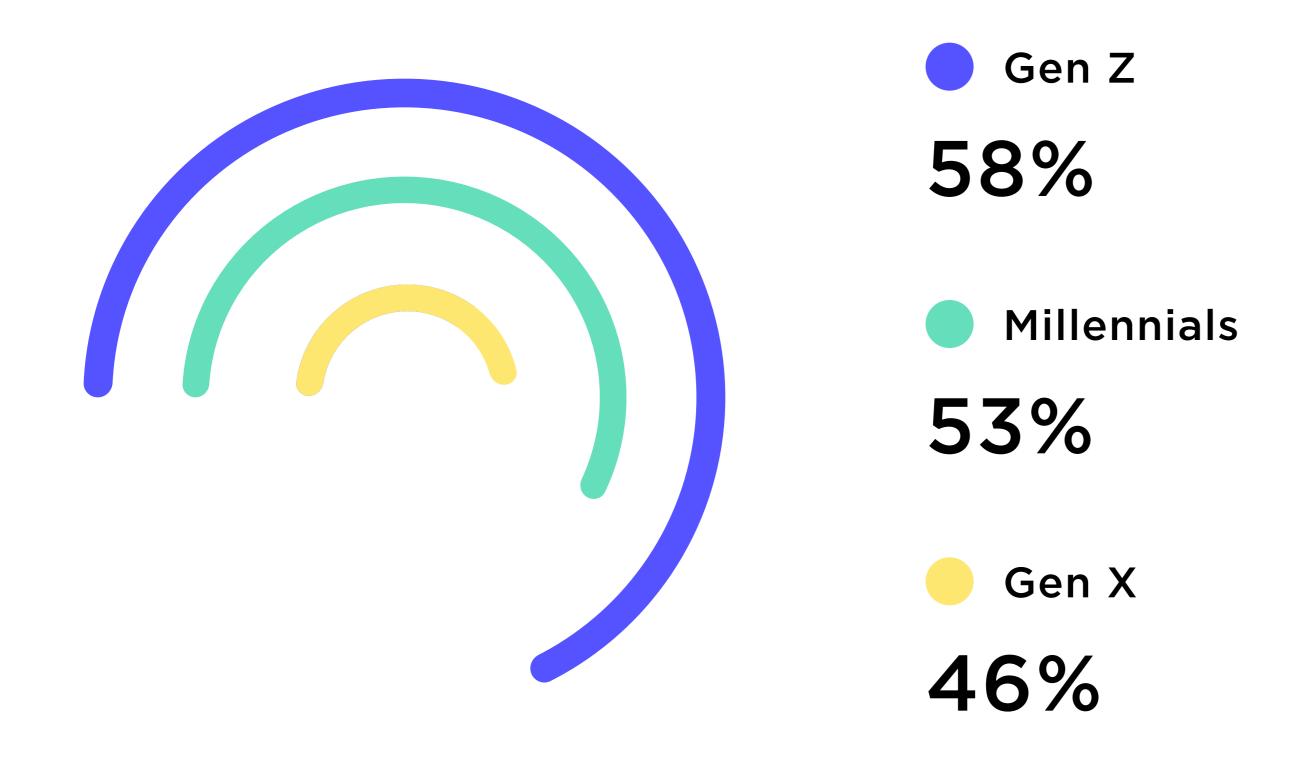
Plus, brands won't be coming up empty in finding and sharing these types of visuals. With 54% of people saying they would grant a brand permission to use an image or video of a beauty, health or wellness product they purchased throughout their marketing, brands in this industry have a wealth of authentic and influential visuals to tap into to help inspire new online purchases.



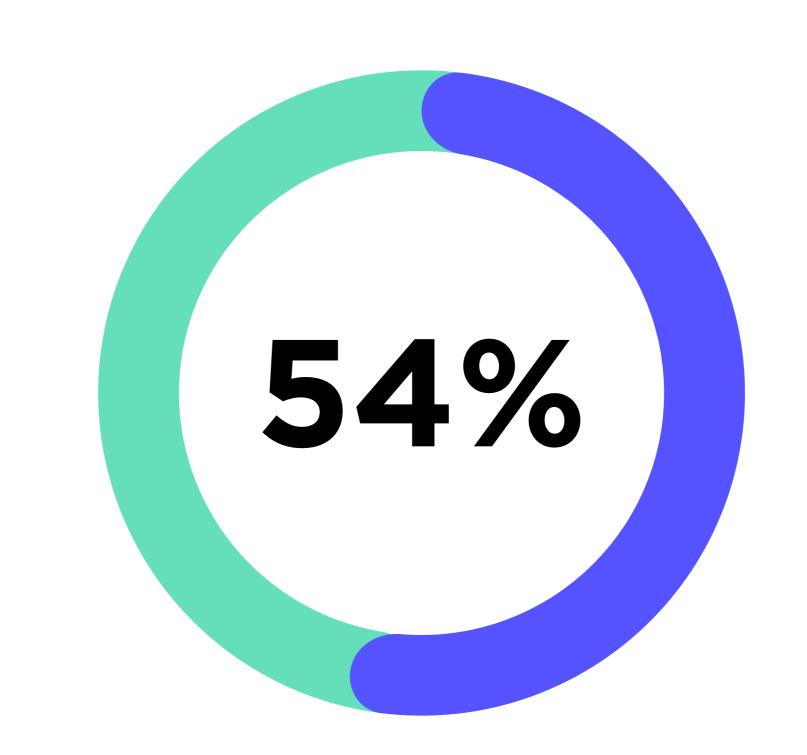
39%

of consumers have purchased a beauty, health or wellness product based on a social image or video from family, friends or peers

Consumers who have purchased beauty, health or wellness products based on seeing UGC images



People are willing to share their beauty, health and wellness visuals with brands



of people would grant a brand permission to use an image or video they posted of a beauty, health or wellness product in their marketing



INFLUENCING ONLINE PURCHASES ACROSS INDUSTRIES

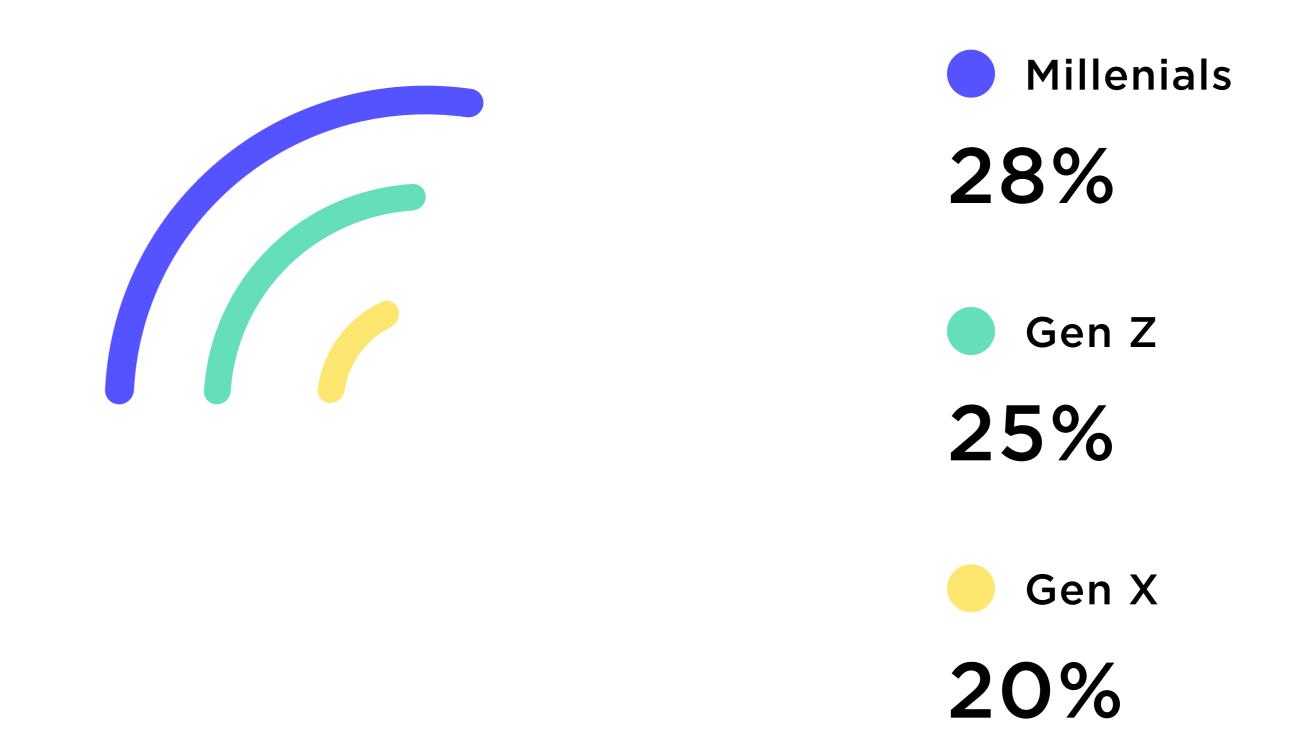
Home & Sporting Goods

Home goods and sporting goods are two consumer industry categories that grew during COVID-19.

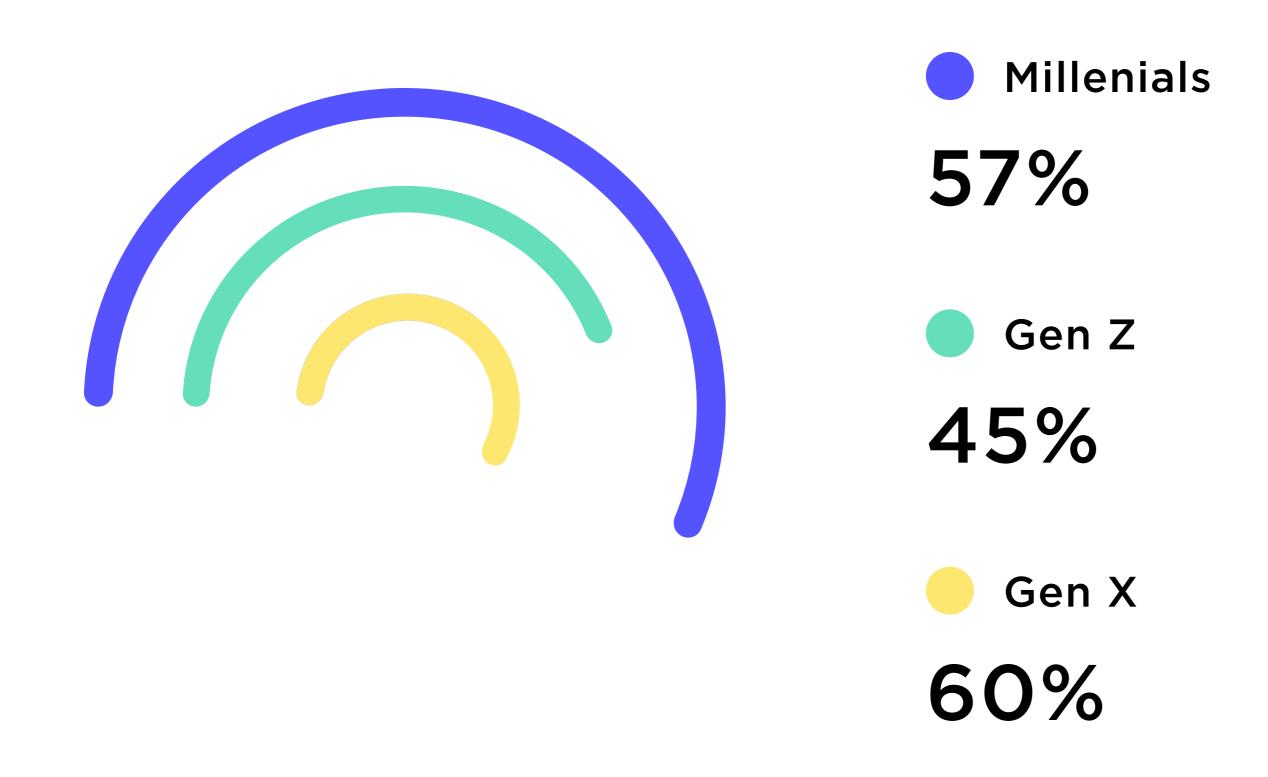
Home goods are particularly popular online shopping items, with 54% of consumers saying home goods are the types of items they're most likely to purchase online. This is particularly true for Gen X (60%) and Millennials (57%).

Yet, consumers across the board are a lot less willing to purchase home goods on social media. Only 24% of consumers say home goods are the types of products they are most likely to purchase on social media platforms. However, Millennials (28%) are more likely than other groups to say they will purchase home goods products via social media.

Consumers who are likely to purchase home goods products via social media



Consumers who are most likely to purchase home goods online by generation





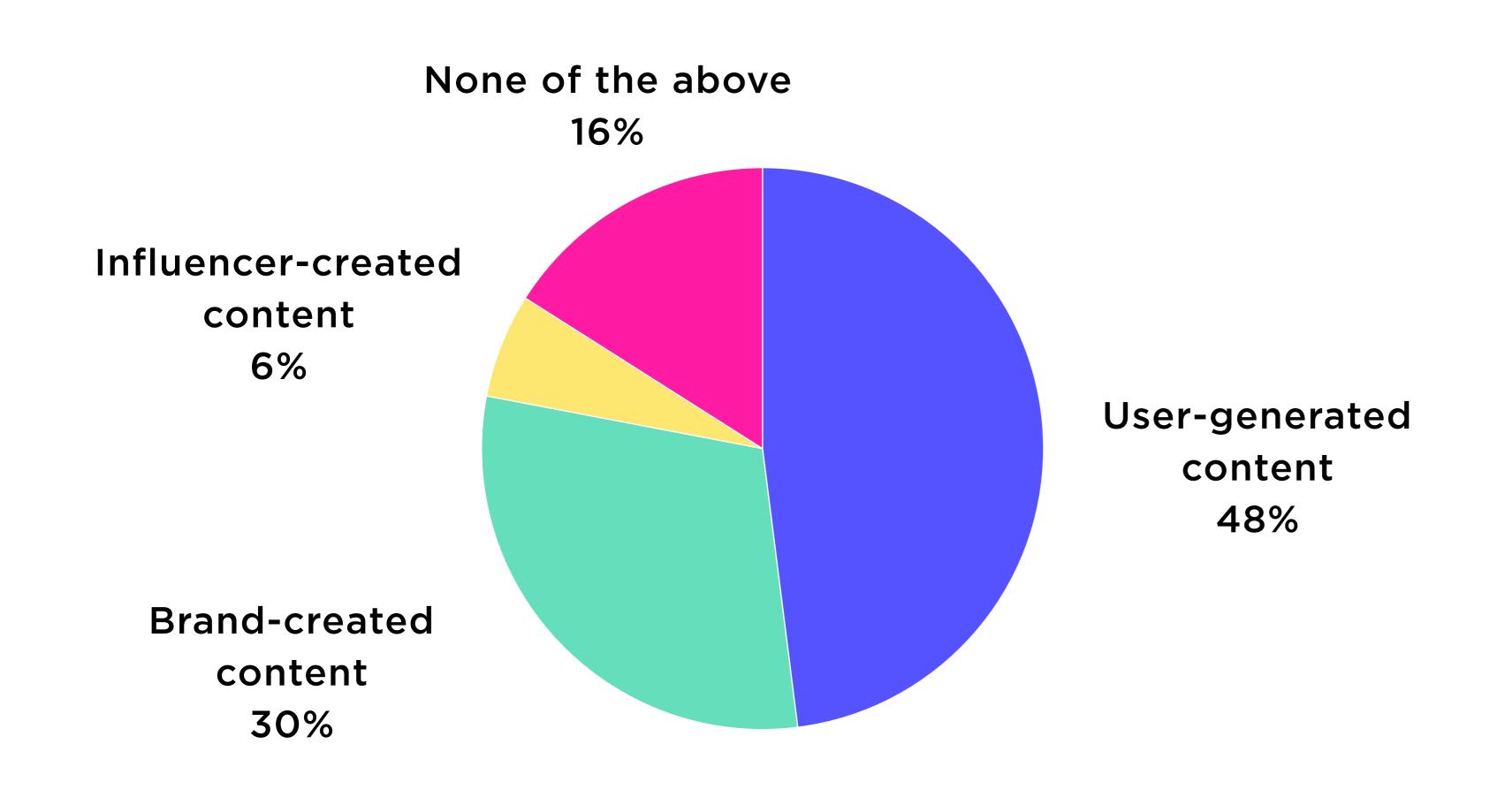
54%

of consumers say home goods are the products they are most likely to purchase online Sporting goods didn't fare as well as home goods when it comes to the types of items people are most likely to purchase on social media or eCommerce sites. Only 29% of consumers say sporting goods are the types of products they are most likely to purchase online, and a mere 15% say sporting products are items they're most likely to buy on social networks.

What type of content do consumers say is most likely to sway them towards buying home or sporting goods online?

User-generated content once again rises to the top, with 48% of consumers saying UGC is the most influential when making home or sporting goods purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, only 6% of people say celebrity or social influencer photos impact their home and sporting goods buying decisions. Younger consumers (50% of Gen Z and Millennials) seem to be a bit more influenced by content created by other customers when browsing home and sporting goods products.

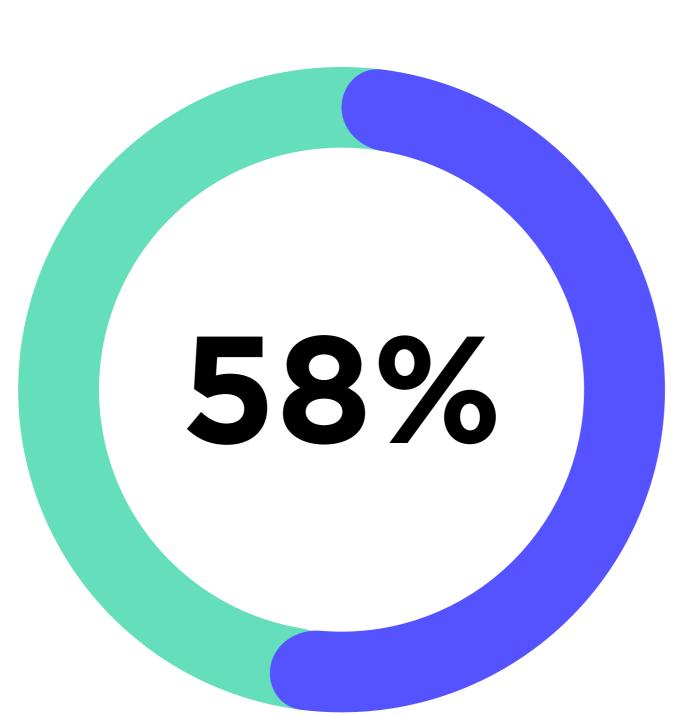
What is the most influential content when making home and sporting goods purchasing decisions?



In fact, many consumers across all age groups have made home and sporting goods purchases solely based on UGC. Forty-two percent of survey respondents have purchased home or sporting goods based on an image or video they saw of a friend, family, or peer post on social media.

People are proud to show off their home and sporting purchases too, with 58% saying they would grant a brand permission to use their home goods images throughout its marketing. For sporting goods, 53% say they would let a brand leverage their customer photos and videos—meaning there is lots of content just waiting at brands' fingertips.

People are willing to share their home and sporting goods visuals with brands



of people would grant a brand permission to use an image or video they posted of a home goods item in their marketing



42%

of consumers have purchased home or sporting goods based on seeing UGC images or videos



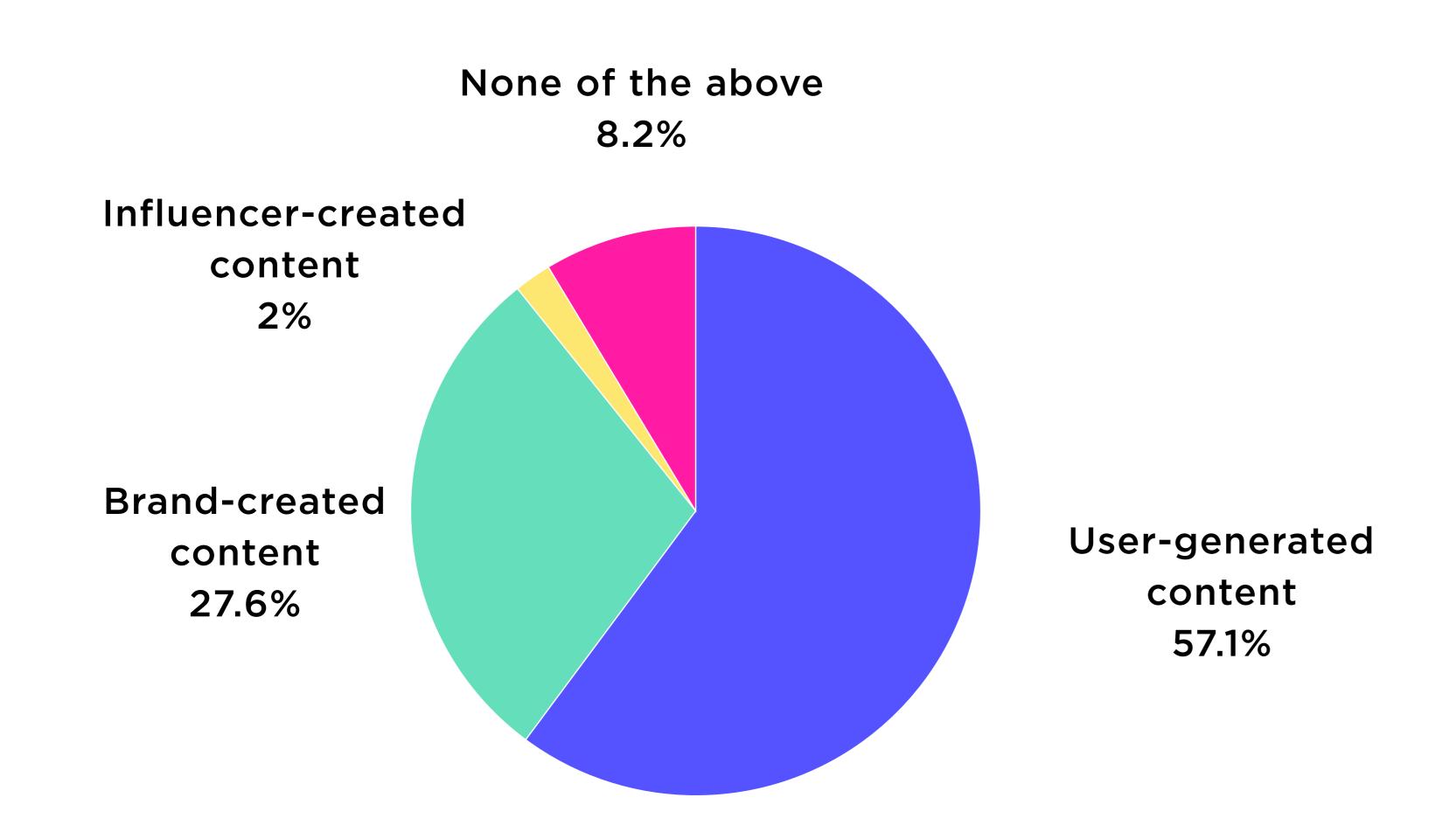
Travel & Hospitality

While there are lots of different types of content people reference when deciding on travel destinations, accommodations and attractions, consumer-created content is definitely the most impactful. Most people (56%) say user-generated content was the most influential when making travel booking decisions. That number is even higher with Millennials (57%) and Gen Z (59%).

Surprisingly, only a mere 2% of consumers say photos from celebrities or social media influencers impact their travel purchasing decisions.

Acting as visual inspiration and third-party validation, UGC directly drives travel bookings. Over half (52%) of consumers report making travel plans based on an image or video they saw of a friend, family or peer post on social media. Plus, 54% of Gen Z consumers say they've booked travel after seeing UGC.

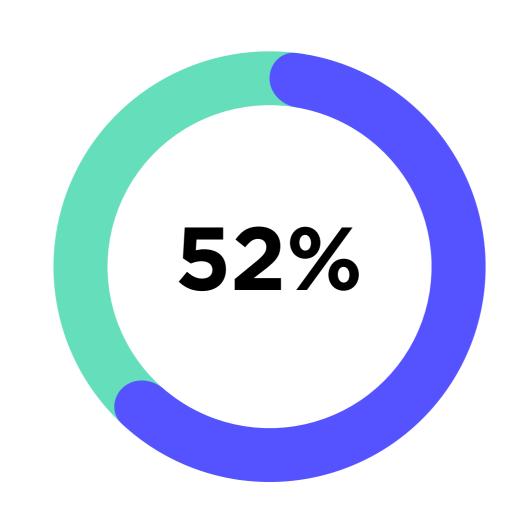
What is the most influential content when making travel booking decisions?



There is an overwhelming abundance of travel and hospitality visuals across the most popular social networks—and people are willing to let brands use their content.

In fact, 52% of people say they would grant a brand permission to use an image or video of a recent trip or excursion they posted on social media throughout their marketing.

People are willing to share their home and sporting goods visuals with brands



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52%

of consumers have booked travel after seeing UGC images or videos





CULTIVATING COMMUNITY CAN INCREASE LOYALTY



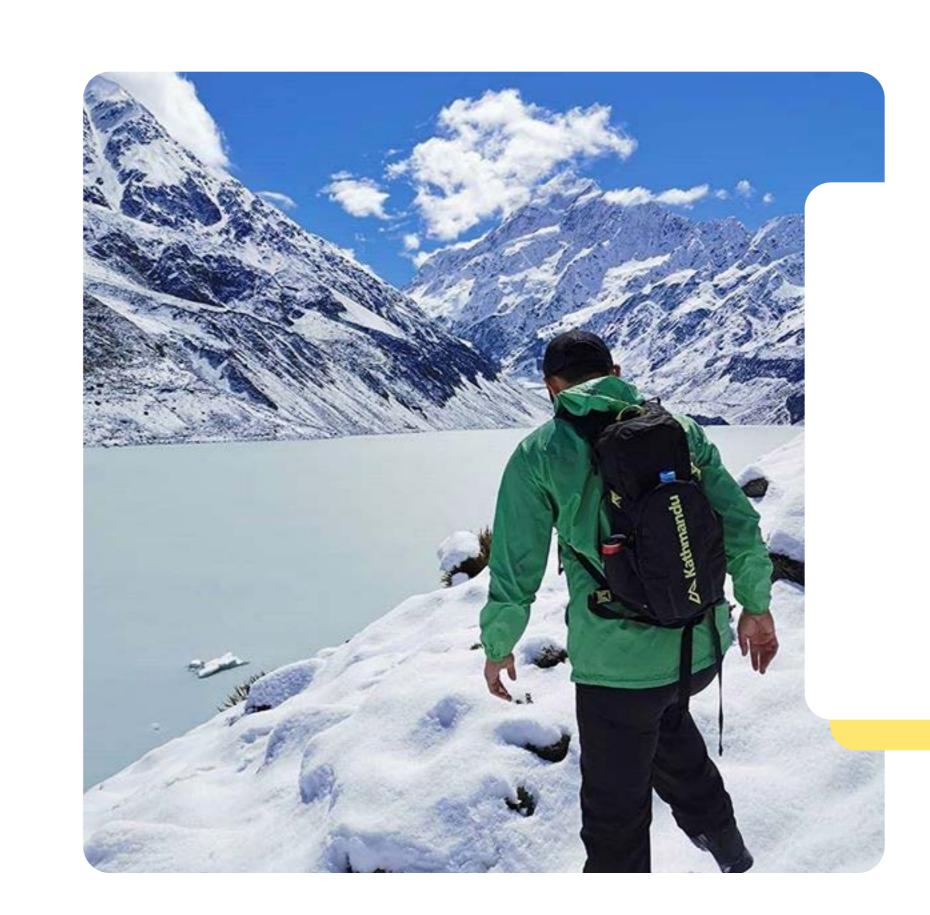
Shoppers Seek Authentic & Personalized Experiences from Today's Brands

Word-of-mouth has always been one of the most effective forms of persuasion for brands. Today, user-generated content acts as a digital form of word-of-mouth. People tend to create UGC from a place of real passion and excitement. Our survey results prove that the influence of that genuine endorsement on other consumers is unmatched. What's more, people are eager for the content they create to be seen and used by their favorite brands.

Consumers would grant a brand permission to use an image or video they posted of clothing or accessories (58%), a home goods product (58%), a beauty/health/wellness product (54%), a sporting goods product (53%) or a recent trip/excursion (52%) throughout their marketing.

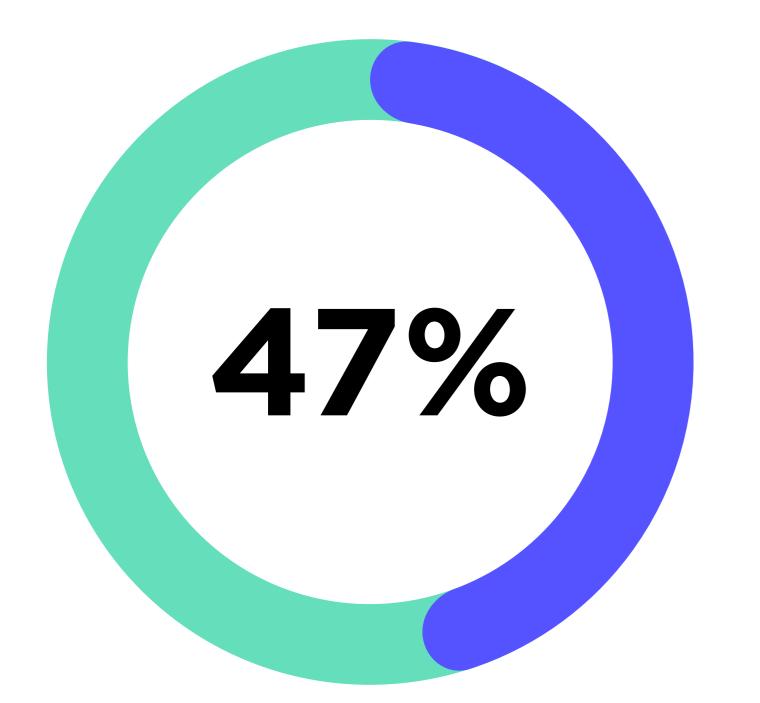
Furthermore, our survey shows that brands that leverage their customers' user-generated images will be rewarded for doing so. Fortythree percent of consumers—and 47% of Gen Z—say they would be more likely to continue engaging with and purchasing from a brand if it shared their photos or videos throughout its marketing.

Percentage of people who would give a brand permission to use their image or video of the following products:





clothing or accessories



of Gen Z would be more likely to engage with and purchase from a brand if it shared their visuals in its marketing



home goods product



54%

beauty / health / wellness product



sporting goods product



recent trip / excursion



Shoppers Seek Authentic & Personalized Experiences from Today's Brands

In our 2019 data report, we surveyed 150 B2C marketers across the U.S., UK and Australia. Of those marketers surveyed, 50% said producing or sourcing enough engaging visuals was one of their top content challenges. Tapping into the abundance of UGC is an effective way to solve that problem.

Today, many brands have started taking the extra step to form communities of passionate customers who actively help them create content for their brands to leverage. When we asked consumers how interested they'd be in participating in this type of community, 62%—and 65% of Gen Z—say they would be likely to join an advocate community to actively help create content for a brand they purchased from.

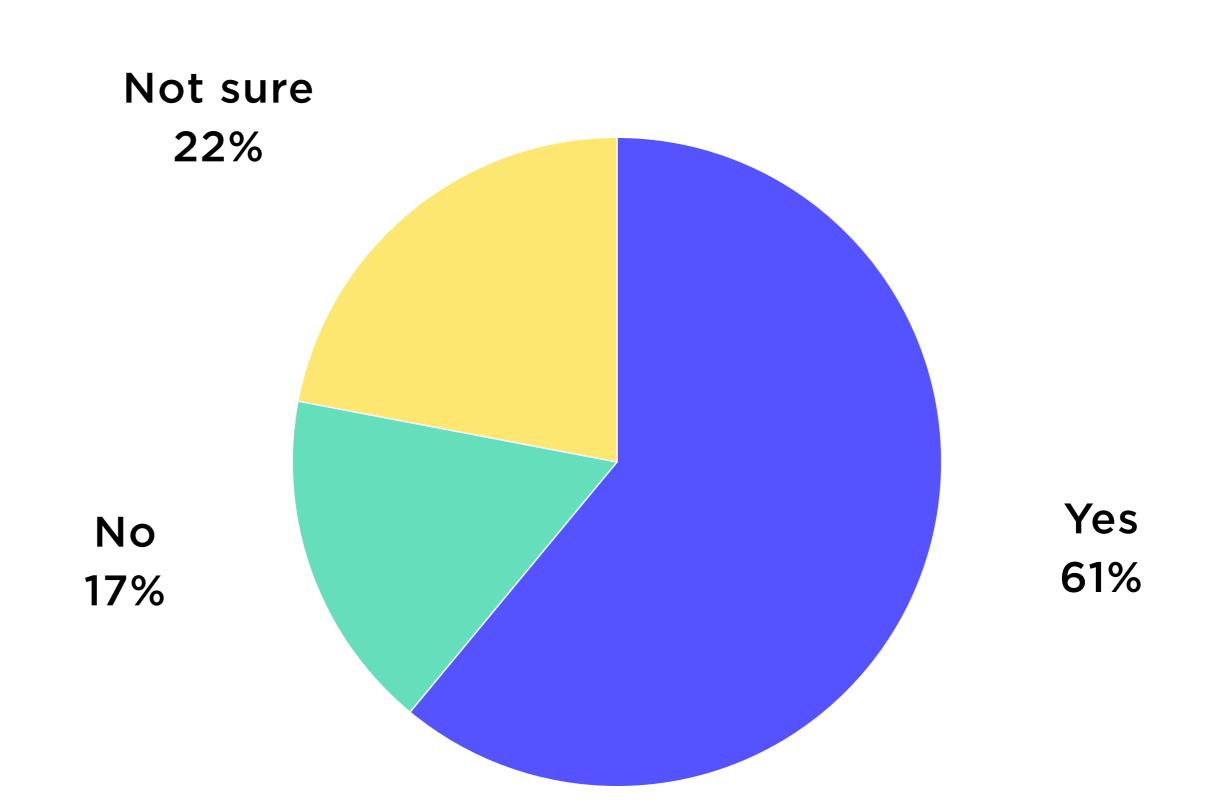
When people feel like they're a part of a brand, they're much more inclined to remain loyal to that brand. In fact, 61% of consumers—and 65% of Gen Z—say they would be more loyal and more likely to buy from a brand if they were invited to be part of a customer advocate community (as we've described it above).

Would you be more loyal to or more likely to buy from a brand if it invited you to join a customer advocacy community where you could actively help it create content for its brand?

65%

of Gen Z would be likely to join a customer advocacy community to actively help create content for brands they buy from





Conclusion

The global pandemic has forever changed consumers' online shopping behavior and expectations for brands.

After having little choice other than to buy everything from food and toiletries to clothing and home goods online instead of in-store, everyday consumers are now accustomed to the ease and convenience of eCommerce—and intend to maintain their elevated online shopping habits post-COVID. Over 90% of consumers who have increased their online shopping since the pandemic started say they're likely to continue purchasing more items online in the future.

As online shopping surges, consumers increasingly seek more authentic and personalized experiences from brands—and are willing to leave eCommerce sites altogether without purchasing if the content and experience don't meet their expectations. Nearly 90% of consumers say authenticity is important when deciding which brands they support and 70% say it's important for brands to provide them with personalized experiences.

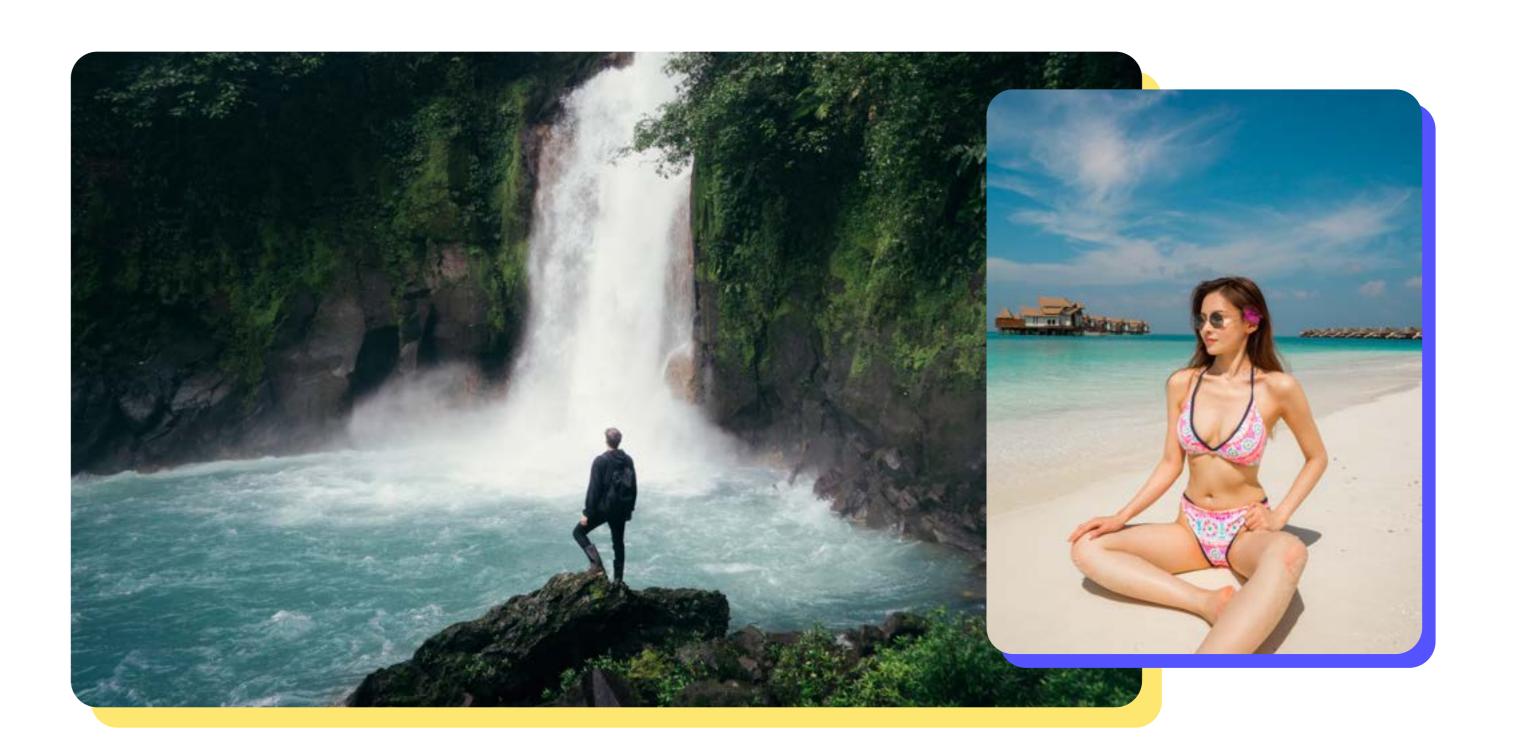
With social media consumption and creation rising along with online shopping, the demand for user-generated content (UGC) has never been greater. Not only do the majority of consumers see UGC as the most authentic and influential form of content, but 72% of people say it's the content they most want to see on eCommerce sites when making purchasing decisions. Not to mention that 56% of consumers say they are more influenced by UGC when online shopping now than they were before the pandemic. In fact, 66% have been inspired to purchase from a new brand after seeing user-generated images, while 58% have left an eCommerce store without purchasing because the site didn't contain any customer reviews or photos.

User-generated content's ability to drive inspiration and online purchases can be seen across regions, age groups and industries. Over half of all consumers say they've booked travel, purchased apparel and beauty, health and wellness products after seeing UGC images or videos.

The results are clear: what consumers want is more authentic, personalized shopping experiences. They want more user-generated content, and they're willing not only to share it but also reward brands that acknowledge them and use it. More than half of consumers say they would grant brands across industries permission to use their images and videos throughout the company's marketing, with 43% saying they would be more likely to continue engaging with a brand if it shared their photo or video.

Understanding that consumers want to be involved and have a voice in the brands they love most, some companies are forming communities around their brand and inviting these advocates to participate in creating authentic content for them. Our report shows that not only would the majority of consumers seek to join this type of community, but that most people would also be more loyal and likely to buy from a brand if they were part of an advocate community.

With more people browsing and buying products online, it's more imperative now than ever before for brands to create digital experiences for consumers that are real and relevant. The brands that succeed in using UGC to consistently provide inspiring and personalized experiences for shoppers are the brands that will break past the competition, forge deeper relationships with customers and increase new and repeat business.





Methodology

Online surveys were conducted via market research firm Infosurv (commissioned by Stackla) and their sampling partners. In order to participate in each of the surveys, respondents had to meet the following criteria:

Consumer Survey Criteria

- Live in the United States, United Kingdom or Australia
- Be between 18 to 55 years old
- Use social media (browse or post) at least once a week
- Have purchased items other than just food delivery or groceries online in the last three months

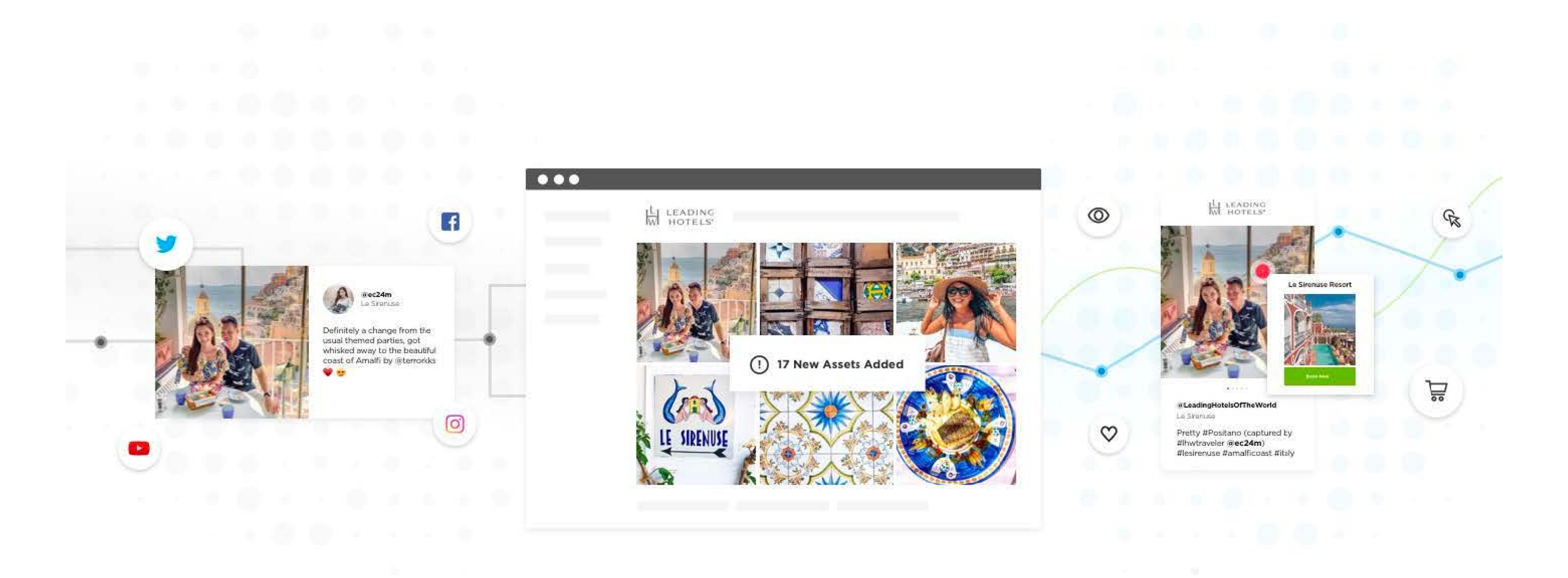
In this report, we define the generational breakdown of consumers as respondents who were within the following age ranges at the time the survey was fielded:

- Gen Z 18-25 year olds
- Millennials 26-40 year olds
- Gen X 41-56 year olds

In total, we received 2,042 valid consumer respondents—with 1,015 from the U.S., 517 from the UK and 510 from Australia.



The World's Smartest Visual Content Engine



Visuals have become vital to modern marketing, but they're notoriously difficult and costly for brands to create at scale. Instead of wasting tons of time and money creating picture-perfect visuals for all your marketing activities, you could be tapping into the wealth of photos and videos your customers share online everyday.

Stackla Visual UGC by Nosto helps marketers find, manage and publish the best authentic consumer content across all their marketing touchpoints — from ads and emails to websites and events.

As the leading Al-powered user-generated content (UGC) platform, asset manager and creator community tool, Stackla sits at the core of the marketing stack, enabling brands to build a rich library of visual content by actively discovering, recommending and rights managing content from across the social web to fuel personalized content experiences at scale.

Want to learn more? Visit stackla.com to request a personalized demo.

