

STAYING IN WITH THE KIDS.

How the fashion industry is winning over Gen Z on lockdown



Fashion is hurting right now.

That's because as an industry, it's inherently tied to trends – and with most of the world spending 23 hours of the day indoors, people just don't have as much need for those trend-driven pieces.

Throw corona-induced anxiety into the mix and unless you're making face pieces for the rich and famous (see: **Bella Hadid** and **Gwyneth Paltrow**), it's not all puppies and rainbows for anyone working in fashion right now.

In just two weeks, millions of jobs have been put at risk. As restaurants, cafes, gyms, and cultural institutions shutter, Gen Z are disproportionately likely to suffer corona-related layoffs, with Global Web Index reporting them to be the most likely demographic to delay purchases in several categories.

So how can fashion brands win with Gen Z in this time of crisis?

Research from Kantar has shown that going silent and cutting budgets will only help defend profits in the very short term – brands that maintain a share of voice amidst the downturn will see the greatest long term benefits.

Here's a **three-point guide** for anyone wondering how to come out of lockdown in fashionable favour with the youth.

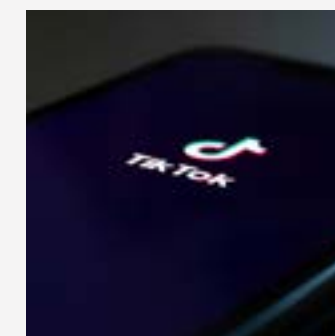


From left to right - Bella Hadid and Gwyneth Paltrow



#1 BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Schools have closed, exams are cancelled and young people everywhere are now adjusting to a new lifestyle defined by social distancing and self-quarantine.



But isolation doesn't necessarily mean staring at a blank wall everyday.

Instagram, whose chief currency is FOMO, offers limited value in quarantine society. **TikTok**, on the other hand (whose platform use has doubled since February), is the **perfect place for alleviating the boredom of confinement.** Stuffed to the brim with everything from lip syncs to virus inspired bangers and jokes about out-of-touch parents – it's the ideal outlet for young people stuck at home with their families.

So where do fashion brands fit in?

With people filming themselves working out at home, it's an easy win for athleisure-wear. **Nike** is now offering its video workouts free of charge on the platform, while outfitters like Gymshark and Puma are posting their own challenges and partnering with content creators that already have large followings there.



JanSport, popular student backpack outfitter in the US, is running a hashtag challenge on TikTok to raise awareness for a charity group helping students affected by the coronavirus pandemic. To participate in the challenge, TikTok users video themselves emptying out a backpack and passing it to the left to the tune of Greyson Chance's "Seasons Nineteen."

So whether it's entertaining the kids with challenges, how-tos or supporting the causes that matter to them – learn the platform and offer some lighthearted value.

#2 DON'T BE A ROBOT

While many fashion brands might want to avoid the coronavirus conversation for fear of saying the wrong thing, it's important that they keep the dialogue open right now



Over 70% of Gen Z wants to align with brands on a values level – and that means hearing their perspectives.

While brands have an obvious need to communicate functional messages at this time, they also have an obligation to be human, by showing empathy, transparency and understanding of the rollercoaster of emotions felt by everyone.

Many brands are taking the opportunity to establish commonalities and ask their fans what they want to see from them. Depop, once described as “a siren pitched at a frequency easiest for teens and the recently teenage to hear”, is ‘keeping the lines open’ and creating new community focus groups:

We want to keep talking to you [...] So keep talking to us. Tell us what you want to know, share what you're wearing and what you're doing to get through this with #DepopOnLock.

French Connection has launched a #TreatTuesday series. Every Tuesday, fans have the chance to tag someone who needs a little love, or someone they believe has gone the extra mile. Ten are chosen and spotlighted to share their #TreatTuesday surprise.

In short: open up the conversation, spread the right vibe, and you might even build some loyalty in the process.

#3 PLAY NICE

According to Kantar, **what people most want to hear from brands is how they are helping out**, such as donating money or products, or offering paid time-off for employees. This messaging was even more popular among Gen Z respondents, who've shown interest in purpose-driven messaging from brands before the pandemic started.



H&M have been leading the charge.

The brand's foundation has donated over £400k to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, began producing PPE products for hospitals and healthcare workers, and – most recently – donated their social media channels (reaching ~35 million) – to global aid organisations in order to help them better spread their messages of health and safety.





From **Vogue**, Anna Wintour has launched “a common thread”, a fund to help young designers, retail workers and seamstresses pay their bills during the ongoing pandemic.

These are big examples, but smaller brands can get involved too. Could you spotlight and support any up and coming Gen Z talent? Is there anything you could donate to frontline workers?

Either way, right now isn't about making a quick dime, it's about looking out for each other and spreading goodwill where you can.



In a nutshell...

Coronavirus may well be the shake up that teaches young people what they can and can't live without. As they reassess their values and how they spend their time and money, they'll be looking at what brands are doing for the greater good.

Whether it's entertaining them in their hour of need, opening up an important conversation, or showing off your altruistic deeds, there's no better time than right now to step up, set aside profits and work on driving brand love.



THANK YOU.

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