

Zooming In on Gen Z Skin Care Challenges—Behaviors to Grow Your Practice



Aligning your efforts to connect with Gen Z is critical for growing your practice.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> Around this time last year, the *American Academy of Dermatology* shared the results of a survey that found up-and-coming Gen Z consumers remain in the dark about sun damage. “Post-millennial” adult respondents aged 18 to 25 years still fell prey to long-held myths about tanning and UV damage. Despite the abundance of sunless tanning options available on the market today, of the respondents:

- 60% still tan
- 27% believe a “base tan” protects against skin cancer
- 38% think tanning is safe as long as they do not burn
- 49% think sunscreen is unnecessary on a cloudy or overcast day
- 23% do not know sunscreen should be reapplied

These findings seemingly scream for helpful, eye-catching, and entertaining social posts and media on “to-do’s”—do reapply sunscreen at least once every two hours, do wear proper UVA-UVB sunscreen every day, and so on. Opportunities are ripe for marketing proprietary sunless products that look natural and attractive and align well with combating the myth of the “safe tan.” Depending on the nature of your practice, relevant products could be subject to sunny summer discounts or loyalty-boosting promotions (discounted products in return for referrals).



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MIND HOW YOU REACH OUT

How do we overcome the invincibility of youth, the notion that “I will never get skin cancer or saggy, spotty skin?” Like the rest of us, Zoomers are not getting any younger. The oldest among us are starting their own families. They are in control of the household “spend.” It is essential to understand that resonating with the Zs requires different approaches than their senior counterparts, especially the “geriatric millennials” and “baby Gen X’ers,” who may be upwards of two decades older than the youngest Gen Z adults. The oldest millennials could easily be Zoomers’ parents. How we reach out and engage with parents is likely different than children. Notably, what parents may need or want in their 40s can differ significantly from their teenage children’s skin health needs. Consider the following:

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- Zoomers are likely grappling with establishing healthy skin care regimens. Content can again include essential sun protection measures; however, due to the nature of this demo, communications should also address elements such as products and services to minimize acne breakouts.
- With excessive screen time, Zoomers are also increasingly concerned about the threats blue light presents. Pay careful attention to how you empower your community with credible information on the potential effects of blue light on skin cells and the specific services and products to market as proactive preventative or treatment options.
- Speaking of digital technologies and ubiquitous devices, there is a tendency to lump Zoomers and Millennials together as “digital natives.” However, as indicated above, there are significant distinctions between the groups. Millennials are not as “native” as their younger counterparts. Gen Z is truly the first generation to grow up with the Internet. There are plenty of millennials who remember the Internet coming of age and still wistfully talk about the “good ol’ days” before ever-present mobile screens.

As Hootsuite noted in its research on getting marketing to Gen Z “right” in 2023, Gen Z is largely more educated and self-identifies as more progressive and ethnically diverse than its older counterpart. The bones of the content and the platforms and ways you reach out must account for diversity in identity and thought. Here, too, are opportunities in areas such as marketing prevention to younger Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) patients; for instance, address the higher percentages of ALM among people of color. Ensure your language and efforts reflect inclusivity—the same type of inclusivity that is furthermore reflected in the composition of your own teams and staff!

Here are some more nuances to consider in the ways that you communicate and in what you write:

- **Communicate values.** Nearly half of Gen Z adults are motivated to engage with brands that are transparent and appear authentic. While you are generally told

to “speak their language,” this is an uphill battle. You do not want to appear to be disingenuous or trying too hard when it comes to slang. In fact, the creatives behind *Clueless* were so aware of this challenge that they created their own slang rather than attempting to speak like teens when they were well into their adult years. This might be a good opportunity to run anything you question past your younger team members or even your kids!

- **Avoid “rainbow washing.”** Again, posts that come off as using things like LGBTQI+ awareness or other awareness months or causes to advance a practice’s bottom line can turn off the next-generation healthcare consumers that you want to attract. It can be a fine line to walk, but generally, consider what you are actually doing to advance your role in the community and society as a responsible steward and neighbor rather than just what you are saying. It is one thing to have your pages be awash with rainbows; it is quite another to prioritize supporting historically disadvantaged vendors or hiring and promoting from such groups.
- **Do not disregard influencers.** If we have learned anything in recent analyses of marketing trends, it is that influencers are not going anywhere anytime soon. And they are particularly important as brand ambassadors for younger demographics. In fact, nearly a quarter of the coveted Gen Z female demo says that they most often turn to influencers when evaluating products and services to patronize/buy. And just where are these younger women? They are still on TikTok! So many services you offer likely lend themselves to the visual. And, since this is where current- and next-generation consumers are at, lean in!
- **Account for what makes platforms attractive.** TikTok shines in its capacity to entertain. Do not be afraid to be bold, always showing and not telling. Just mind the authenticity. Don’t force something if it is not natural to you or is simply too much of a stretch. Today’s up-and-coming consumers sniff out the disingenuous and desperation from miles away.

Analysts are already exploring how to communicate best and reach Generation Alpha, the “COVID” generation. Just as the clinical aspects of your practice should never stand still, do not let your marketing and communication efforts lag. As needed, delegate and partner well so you can focus on your practice and what you do best: treating patients! ■

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Mr. Arulrajah reports no relevant financial disclosures.