

the BRAND *researchbook*

'23

Welcome to The Brand Yearbook: Class of 2023.

Inside, you'll find the totally subjective (yet deeply considered) product of our preoccupation with Gen Z and how we believe brands can best serve their tastes, motivations and obsessions.

We believe these brands connected most with Zs in 2023, capturing their mindshare and dollars, or have the most potential to do so, either due to market dominance or another unfair advantage. You'll also find the playbooks we think they should be leveraging to stay on course with Zs.

Though not Zs ourselves, we are digital obsessives with backgrounds in editorial content, digital commerce and social platforms who spend inordinate amounts of time talking to our Gen Z brain trust and consuming as much information as possible about the generation roughly born after 1997 and projected to be the largest consumer base in the U.S. by 2026.

You'll find recurring themes in these pages: drops, collabs and customization as table stakes, nostalgic IP as a ticket to ubiquity, participatory game mechanics driving virality, content and commerce finally tying the knot, and billionaire influencers, to name a few. The brands also speak to major shifts reshaping Gen Z lives, such as the rise of AI, digital campfire platforms and the collapse of traditional media channels. These brands all know how to garner the most valuable commodity in the world: attention.

TL;DR: We reverse-engineered a roadmap for building a brand that's guaranteed to win with Gen Z. So enjoy this masterclass in marketing, making and remaking culture. Then feed it into your AI chatbot and make it spit out a cheat sheet of strategies based on our prognostications so you can build your own. You're welcome.

Your Yearbook Editors,
Sara Wilson & Michelle Goad



P.S. Missed last year's Brand Yearbook? Check it out at thebrandyearbook.com.

Yearbook Editors



Sara Wilson
Founder, SW Projects

Sara is a journalist-turned-social-marketer who works with brands, publications and platforms like Nike, YouTube and Bumble to help them find, engage and grow obsessive communities across digital channels through her consultancy, SW Projects. Sara writes frequently on digital marketing trends; she coined the term “digital campfires” in *Harvard Business Review* to describe the types of spaces young audiences are gathering online today, and often speaks on this and other topics related to social innovation to companies such as Microsoft and McKinsey. Prior to founding SW Projects, Sara ran lifestyle partnerships at Facebook and Instagram and was an editor at *The Huffington Post*.



Michelle Goad
Founder, Greatest of All Digital

Michelle is the founder of Greatest Of All Digital, a social-first commerce studio bridging the worlds of creators, social and gaming to commerce to connect with the next generation. Previously, Michelle was an operating partner at The Chernin Group, head of Global Branded Services and GM of Gen Z Innovation at Nike, co-founder and CEO of the pioneering social shopping app PS Dept. (named a “Breakthrough Brand” by *Fast Company*) and a merchant marketer for Marc Jacobs and Barneys New York. She has been featured as an authority on next-gen commerce in publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and more.

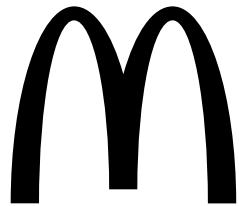
For in-house speaking and strategic initiatives to help your organization connect better with Zs, **contact editors@thebrandyearbook.com**.

CapCut

crocs™



Google



Nintendo®

OZEMPIC®

Rare Beauty

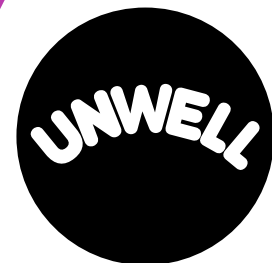


SKIMS



TAYLOR SWIFT

TikTok Shop



CapCut

Most likely to help you win an Oscar

When was the last time something as unsexy as an editing tool so quickly ingrained itself into the culture as CapCut has? With over 200M MAUs, the app became the #2 top free iPhone app in 2023, just behind Temu, fueling a zillion Wes Anderson homages and 6T (yes, *trillion*) views of the #capcut hashtag on TikTok. CapCut is a video-editing app, but that descriptor doesn't capture its magic. First, there's the app itself, giving everyone the AI-enabled tools to transform their vacation videos into Spielberg-level cinematic productions (or turn themselves into animated Barbies as the mood might strike). Then there's the synergy between the app and the most powerful content distribution hub ever. It's no secret that CapCut and TikTok are both owned by ByteDance, but let's define what that means in practice. The machine currently colonizing the world's attention (TikTok) is guaranteed

an infinite content supply from its baby sister (CapCut). A power pairing, indeed.

What we hope happens next:

As long as CapCut keeps launching features at warp speed, we're betting it'll become the go-to social network for Alphas. Where else would a generation of creators convene but in a virtual playground stocked with creation tools? Before that happens, we're hoping savvy brands will realize, in a world where everyone is a creator, creators *are* their consumers, and therefore a valuable audience. We expect brands to leverage CapCut to empower creators, dropping templates with their IP that creators can use to engage their audiences—while in turn, scaling the brands' own. CapCut templates have the potential to become a whole new viral loop, and we're here for it.

crocs™

Most responsible for rebranding “ugly”

Speaking the language of the Internet is required for brands to meaningfully connect with young audiences, but few are as fluent as Crocs, the clog equivalent of a viral TikTok. The 19-year-old brand pulled off the rarest of feats: transforming an aggressively ugly (if practical) product intended for boaters and Mario Batali into a wardrobe staple for Gen Z. It's made red carpet appearances on Bieber and debuted on runways at London Fashion Week. Dismissed as a Covid-era fad, sales have surged, especially among teens who purchase multiple pairs, customizing each with Jibbitz, the charms designed to personalize the clogs—a core reason behind the brand's transformation. Known for collaborations that put Z-favorite brands and pop culture IP at the forefront, Crocs achieved a new level of virality in 2023, tapping design collective MSCHF to design a Big Yellow Boot, a

spinoff of its over-the-top Big Red Boot that took over the Internet during Paris Fashion Week. (It's working—the brand is up in sales nearly 200% since 2019.)

What we hope happens next:

As fashion goes ultra-casual (paging Balenciaga x Erewhon), Crocs will dominate as the go-to footwear (Yeezy who?). An upcoming sneaker collaboration with Salehe Bembury (tapped previously to design one of the most sought-after Croc drops) will secure its place in this category. But why stop there? The brand's cartoonish silhouettes, plastic holes and personalized flair connect to identity, meaning it has the ingredients to build a platform based on self-expression. Hello iPhone cases, pet collars and even playgrounds.



*Most likely to bring more drama than a
Real Housewives franchise*

In 2023, F1 flew off the racetrack into our social feeds, with November's Las Vegas Grand Prix serving up more celeb-fueled social action than the Met Gala. The ascendancy of Formula One, driven by an audience of young fans (many of them female), actually started in 2016. Once beloved by millions but declining in popularity due to an aging fanbase, F1 was acquired for \$4.4B by Liberty Media, which kick-started its metamorphosis into one of the fastest-growing sports globally, thanks to a shift in focus on Gen Z. While TikTok and YouTube have been tools in the brand's glow-up, home to memes and red-hot homages to drivers that sparked *The Cut* to proclaim we're in the midst of a "Fangirlification of Formula 1," the brand's ascendancy can be traced to a less sexy source: documentaries. We challenge you to binge *Drive to Survive*, the Netflix docu-series, and not feel shook. The fierce competition,

glamorous locations and larger-than-life personalities rival anything on Bravo.

What we hope happens next:

With an average viewership of over 1M for each season's 20+ races, 54B views of the #Formula1 hashtag on TikTok and a bevy of twentysomething drivers who are the age of its target audience, the brand is poised to be a popular entertainment franchise that just happens to be based on a sport. We'd expect fashion and music collabs, a comeback in video games, next-gen sports community apps like Real fueling superfandom, with FanDuel and its sports-betting counterparts raising the stakes even further (literally).



Most likely to enhance our lives

Gen Z is at the forefront of experimenting with new technologies, and that's perhaps never been truer than with AI, the most exciting technology since...ever. Zs have embraced AI to level-up their schoolwork with AI study assistants, transform online identities with AI filters and navigate issues like depression with AI therapy "dudes" (yes, really). If there's one company that can capitalize on this momentum, it's Google.

What we hope happens next:

OpenAI's ChatGPT is the favorite among Zs—for now (the majority of U.S. teens know of it and 1 in 5 use it for schoolwork according to a Pew study). But like countless other AI products (including Bard, Google's chatbot), they're still just tools, not full-fledged brands. We think Google is in the best position to dominate here—a

company whose product suite (Gmail, Docs, Slides) and content (YouTube) are established go-tos for Gen Z. The trick will be to stop conceptualizing itself as a tech company and reimagine itself as a lifestyle brand. Hear us out. AI isn't *just* about enhancing productivity—it could help us achieve self-actualization (it could also bring robots who kill us, but that's another conversation). If Google shows Zs how AI can improve their lives by integrating it into everything they are already doing, the company could carve out a lane to win their hearts. Google hasn't been great at brand-building (or even product rollouts—witness the release of AI model Gemini), but maybe the threat of losing more Gen Z mindshare to TikTok will spark some much-needed shifts. We're optimistic.



Most likely to be the next Corteiz

Last year, we named little-known streetwear label Corteiz “Most likely to make you climb a fence to score a hoodie.” After we published, Nike announced a collaboration with Corteiz, catapulting it out of obscurity. You heard it here first: Hellstar is the next Corteiz (and could be bigger). Why do we think the LA-based label, launched in 2020, is the next streetwear superstar? Its distinctive designs on t-shirts, sweatpants and hoodies are showing up on rappers like Young Thug, Metro Boomin, DaBaby and Gunna. In 2023, the brand collaborated on a limited-edition t-shirt with Post Malone. It trades at a premium on resale marketplace StockX, where searches spiked 12,000%. Although Hellstar’s only official social presence is on Instagram, there are nearly 40M views of #hellstar on TikTok, while there are Reddit discussions about the best strategy for getting coveted pieces.

Hellstar’s July drop (which, like all its others, was a limited capsule collection) sold +\$2M of stock in an hour and crashed its site.

What we hope happens next:

Founder Sean Holland said its name was inspired by the hymn “This Little Light of Mine”—an homage to the idea that although life on earth “can feel like hell,” you must shine through. And it isn’t lip service—the brand recently launched Hellstar Sports, a program bringing 7on7 football tournaments (and merch) to students in 5th grade through high school. It’s a great move that’s an example of how to build a true brand community. We hope other brands take notice.



Most likely to make the drive-through entertaining

For a generation supposedly obsessed with environmental sustainability, Gen Z sure loves its fast food. You could call it having contradictory values. We call it being human. No brand tapped into Gen Z’s humanity more in 2023 than McDonald’s, proving that entities with nostalgic IP can become entertainment brands with the right social-first strategy (it doesn’t hurt to *already* be embedded in American pop culture). We loved their “As Featured In Meal” campaign, resurrecting menu items that had made appearances in film, TV and music throughout the years, along with exclusive new merch and collabs appealing to kid-ults, the fastest growing segment in the toy (ahem, collectibles) sector. But the pièce de résistance was the berry-flavored Grimace Shake. Turns out a nostalgic character (especially one with Grimace’s chaotic mystique) is tailor-made for virality. As billions of views of

#GrimaceShake on TikTok proved, give people access to the right material and they’ll spread the word for you (such as participating in a hilariously haunting trend driving 1.4B views on TikTok in two weeks). It’s no wonder McDonald’s stock and revenue are up.

What we hope happens next:

We love that 2023 saw McDonald’s flex its muscles in experimental extensions, like the drinks-only CosMc’s that checks our beverage-as-social-flex box. Now that McD’s has shown it lives in people’s lives (not just stomachs), we’d love to see a push into premium content and products that lean harder into the lore of McDonald’s characters. A Hamburglar movie from Phil Lord and Chris Miller? Yes, please.



Most likely to make what's old new again

The oldest video game company sure had a moment in 2023, but it wasn't from a new game release. Instead of competing with Microsoft, Sony and Tencent as a gaming brand, Nintendo made itself over as an entertainment brand, drawing on decades' worth of IP with *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*, earning \$204M in its first five days and +\$1B in revenue globally—the largest global debut of an animated film. It also spiked Nintendo's overall profit by 52%. Their chess move: turning a game franchise into an object of fandom for a new generation. How'd they do it? A multipronged marketing approach pulled directly from the *Minions: The Rise of Gru*'s playbook (you'll find our adoring assessment of that in last year's Brand Yearbook). Among our favorite moments: an ode to Princess Peach, featuring Jack Black playing a peach-hued piano (the ballad made Billboard's Hot 100). Another standout: the opening of Super Nintendo World at Universal

Studios Hollywood, with its Mario Kart ride, Piranha Plants and Toadstool Cafe. No wonder #mariobros has +10B views on TikTok—the brand knows how to get Gen Z talking.

What we hope happens next:

Writing a new playbook is hard for any brand—but especially a brand founded in 1889 to sell Japanese playing cards. With their latest hit, *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*, we expect to see another nostalgia-driven box office home run. From there, perhaps more world-building that leverages its IP in clever mashups. Like a next-gen Power Pad in the run-up to the Olympics (World Class Track Meet 2.0)? Or comebacks of Dance Aerobics (with Megan Roup) and Super Punch-Out (with Jake Paul)? The partnerships and IP opportunities are unlimited, and so is the growth potential.



Most likely to make thin back in

With all the body-positivity talk from Gen Z—whether reclaiming the word “fat,” endless TikTok videos pointing out the dysfunction of Almond Moms or supporting fat-activist movements like Health at Every Size—it's easy to forget that being skinny is still a desirable thing for many Zs, especially teen girls. Even where such progressive ideas are entrenched, weight obsession is still embedded in the culture of Zs—it's just gone underground. Proof: Eating disorders in teens, especially those with larger bodies, more than doubled during the pandemic. That's why we put Ozempic on our list this year. The medication (including Mounjaro and Wegovy) is part of a class of drugs called GLP-1 which is literally reshaping young adulthood. More than half of Zs are overweight or obese (~56% of Americans ages 18 to 25), yet Zs (+18) are twice as likely than older adults to report trying prescription weight-loss drugs. *Fortune* dubbed

this the “Ozempic economy,” fueled by social media marketing, including influencers reportedly trading referrals for drug discounts and cash by sharing their “weight-loss journeys.”

What we hope happens next:

Though the long-term effects are unknown, research shows that GLP-1 may go beyond weight loss, with people tending to eat healthier, drink less and curb addictions like smoking and opioids. While the positive implications won't excite the fast food or beverage industries, we're looking forward to seeing new products serving healthier lifestyles and hope more resources will support the seismic shift we could undergo. We like companies like Found, which champion holistic weight management (vs. prescribing meds). We hope this leads to more of the same, as young people on these medications spike.

Rare Beauty

More likely to solve the teen mental health crisis than the Surgeon General

When faces are literally *in our faces* thanks to the ubiquity of social feeds, it's no wonder the beauty market has been on a trajectory expected to reach approximately \$580B by 2027, with growth on track to explode in makeup and fragrance as Gen Alpha gets in on the act. Prompted by this, beauty became the go-to category for every influencer looking to monetize followers. Social reach alone isn't enough, however; just ask Addison Rae, whose beauty line was dropped by Sephora. TL;DR: Business success isn't a given, however, even if you're Selena Gomez—the most-followed woman on Instagram. So how did her makeup line, Rare Beauty, which launched in 2020 to kick-start conversations around self-acceptance, exceed \$300M in 2023, triple what it earned in 2022? The answer is social-first marketing firing on all cylinders, a founder showing up daily to connect with her fans, an

experimental approach to community-building designed to dial up loyalty and customer listening (think: handwritten notes from Gomez to superfans) and taking actions that reflect core values, including launching an impact arm to fund destigmatizing mental health struggles which Gomez has personally experienced.

What we hope happens next:

Given that Rare has carved a unique lane for itself by helping consumers feel as beautiful on the inside as the outside, few brands are as well-positioned to make a dent in the teen mental health crisis. Rare could curb the toxic effects of social platforms on teen girls, including going against social media giants to implement platform changes through Congress to safeguard that cohort. Never underestimate the power of lip gloss to fuel progress.



Most likely to be the Internet's town square(s)

No longer just a watering hole for the world's weirdest dudes, Reddit is on track for user growth set to surpass Twitter in 2024. While subreddits like [r/teenagers](#) have long drawn young audiences, the platform has never been a mecca for Zs. That's set to change: It's seen increased engagement from older Zs who will rival Millennials on the platform by 2027 (coincidentally, the platform just turned 18). Reddit checks key boxes for young audiences looking to find "their people" online; anonymous profiles provide respite from the self-construction of most social platforms, while over 130,000 subreddits reflecting every interest provide connection for Zs. Still, the platform pissed off power users last summer after announcing it will charge API fees—a shrewd move showing there will be definite bumps ahead in balancing business interests with the needs of its core communities.

What we hope happens next:

Reddit is already the crème de la crème of digital campfire platforms, home to a gazillion micro-communities and fandoms. At minimum, the platform is best positioned to power the future of the loyalty space. With the addition of an SDK, brands could integrate subreddits into their owned experiences and use native mod tools to reward fans and supercharge fandom. Signs the platform is on its way include the EOY Spotify-inspired Reddit Recaps which hint at the mountain of audience data it's sitting on. Throw in targeting capabilities and we have a personalized community-focused rocket ship, 18 years in the making.



Most likely to have the last laugh

Now that Kim Kardashian is firmly in her mogul era with a social reach larger than the Super Bowl viewership, it's easy to forget she was once an outsider, excluded from the most important rooms across fashion, business and tech industries. Evidently, that helped her hone an instinct for market opportunities those rooms were missing, all while amassing a loyal audience whom she could activate when the time was right. And activate she did, with the launch of Skims. Five years later, the underwear-loungewear-shapewear brand has become a juggernaut valued at \$4B, with revenue landing ~\$750M in 2023. In a competitive market, Skims has dominated by zigging where others zag (Victoria's Secret, Spanx). A diverse array of skin colors? Check. Sleepwear that's sexy *and* cozy? Check. A UGC-friendly assortment that prompted a billion #skimshaul videos? Check. The result: A brand Zillennials (that is, older Zs) have welcomed into their closets.

What we hope happens next:

Kim understands how to insert herself into cultural conversations, so it's no shocker that our favorite attention-getting moments came from Skims, whether it was tapping Lucia and Mia from *White Lotus* for a photoshoot, a '90s-inspired spread with Carmen Electra and Jenny McCarthy or a video featuring Kim which improbably linked hard nipples with melting icebergs. 2023 saw Skims become the Official Underwear Partner of the NBA (was that ever even a thing before Skims?) so we're betting on Skims' own take on the Calvin Klein-Jeremy Allen White moment, but with NBA athletes and bikini influencers (call it *Skims Illustrated*—you're welcome).



*Most likely to survive the apocalypse...
or at least a car fire*

In last year's Brand Yearbook, we wrote that beverages had replaced fashion as the way to flex on social platforms, because showing off one's drink of choice telegraphed identity as much as showing off an on-trend 'fit. In 2023, one brand emerged victorious as the go-to receptacle for self-expression. Among all contenders, Stanley was the most improbable—a century-old name designed for WWII pilots and deep sea explorers. Even more improbable: that it would spark a collector frenzy vying for first dibs on its signature Quenchers, buoying \$750M in sales in 2023. Stanley's approach, which helped the brand grow 10x since 2019, was marketing the bottles as sleek accessories in slightly different #aesthetic shades. But water-bottles-as-accessories isn't a new concept—remember the VSCO girl with her Hydro Flask? Stanley's genius was combining this approach with marketing

tactics made famous by streetwear collaborations and sneaker drops. Lastly, the brand's social strategy went viral by reacting to a TikTok video showing the only thing surviving a car fire was a Stanley tumbler with ice cubes intact. Sound reminiscent of another brand on our list? Terence Reilly led marketing at Crocs before jumping to Stanley, applying the same wizardry.

What we hope happens next:

Think the only market for wellness-focused collectibles is women? Not so fast. With longevity influencers like Bryan Johnson, the rise of Huberman Husbands obsessed with "protocols" and the growth of guy-friendly spas like Remedy Place, we predict dudes will make space for Stanley tumblers next to their sneakers soon enough.



*Most likely to appear next to the word
“spicy” in Merriam-Webster*

If you have teens, you’ve probably discovered the brand’s purple bags covered in orange-dusted fingerprints under their beds. For those not in the know: Takis is the Mexican taquito-shaped snack founded by Grupo Bimbo which created a foothold in the U.S. by targeting convenience stores and gas stations. When Hostess Brands went bankrupt in 2012, discontinuing Twinkies, Takis filled the void. When a post went viral claiming the snack caused ulcers (later refuted), the attention helped the brand amplify its danger-adjacent positioning as the “most intense snack” in the world. It also transformed Takis from a mere chip into high drama that’s been social media gold, with customers filming themselves taste-testing the product—especially their bestseller, “Fuego.” The result: Virality that’s driven +8B views on TikTok alone. Multiyear deals with Charli D’Amelio and streamer Ninja as

well as product placement in *Euphoria* boosted the brand’s relevance with Zs, but our favorite marketing was 2023’s UK campaign featuring a series of codes on posters that, when cracked, revealed the locations of Takis “drops” at Aldi.

What we hope happens next:

The term “spicy” has cemented itself in Gen Z consciousness to describe a particularly out-there POV. Why not extend the concept with a campaign for older Zs looking to spice things up? Think: bored employees eating Takis on corporate Zoom calls and moms at school pick-up lines eating Takis to feel alive. There’s an opportunity to insert Takis into relevant cultural moments where public figures are in “the hot seat.” Think sponsored BTS of #scandoval. Too spicy, perhaps?

TAYLOR SWIFT

Most popular (in the universe)

No, Swift isn’t a brand, but in 2023, she gave a masterclass in modern brand creation—an alchemy of marketing, community-building and business strategy. This year she not only became a billionaire, but also morphed into a deity, blessing disparate sectors of the economy. Her crowning achievement was the Eras Tour, the highest-grossing of all time, boosting the U.S. economy on par with the GDP of Barbados (over \$5B in consumer spending). In a time devoid of shared cultural experiences where loneliness has reached epidemic levels, Swift showed she’s a unifying force more powerful than religion (and a lot more skilled with Easter eggs). This year Swift debuted gamified marketing initiatives designed to reverse-engineer virality, spark fan participation and take the personal bond she has with fans to the next level. Our fave was a partnership with Google, wherein Swifties unlocked a virtual

vault to reveal hidden track titles on *1989 (Taylor’s Version)* by collectively solving 33M puzzles.

What we hope happens next:

It’s hard to overstate how profound Swift’s influence has been on fans. While we typically wax poetic on enterprise expansion, Swift has checked all those boxes, having globalized her business, launched DTC by rerecording her songs, transcended categories from country to pop and so much more. We’d love to see her expand her empire in any way. Perhaps that means building the record label to find next-gen artists without exploiting them? Or writing a novel that ignites a love of reading among girls and increases the literacy of women globally? Or perhaps it means falling madly in love? Whatever she does, we support it.

TikTok Shop

Most likely to dethrone Amazon

First comes love (content), then comes marriage (shopping), then comes baby in the baby carriage (total disruption of entertainment/commerce as we know it). TikTok Shop—the Chinese platform’s foray into native shopping that arrived in the U.S. in September—may seem as immature as a schoolyard song, but while the numbers are small(ish) (consumers spend ~\$4M a day on the platform in the U.S.), it’s already doing well outside the country and is looking to grow to \$17.5B in America in 2024. Haters say the Shop rollout has made For You Pages feel like walking through a dystopian mall where randos hawk endless varieties of snail mucin. And we don’t necessarily disagree. But 84B views of #tiktokmademebuyit don’t lie: TikTok owns Gen Z eyeballs, and helping them discover things they “need” is where it excels (more than Temu and Shein). We see this content-to-commerce combo as the biggest

threat to our commerce ecosystem—bigger than Amazon’s launch was to brick-and-mortar.

What we hope happens next:

The time is now for brands to break from the traditional 18-month product creation roadmap. TikTok Shop will only get smarter—the more time consumers spend on the platform, the more the algorithm can predict what they’re interested in, like a personal shopper on steroids. When brands can identify thousands of new points of distribution through personal accounts, we envision the most efficient manufacturing chain that ever existed, which means you *could* be saving the planet with every TikTok Shop purchase (okay, that may be a stretch).



Most likely to build the next Harpo Productions for twenty somethings

In 2021, Alex Cooper signed a \$60M deal with Spotify for her raunchy sex and dating podcast, *Call Her Daddy*. Powered by listeners calling themselves the Daddy Gang, Alex grew the show into the #2 top podcast on the platform. That deal was #DayOne in this media empire-building strategy. 2023 saw her morph from podcast queen to media mogul by launching The Unwell Network, her production company aimed at Gen Z women. It debuted with podcasts by TikTok superstars Alix Earle and Madeline Argy, the first two personalities signed. Unwell is a subsidiary of Trending, which Cooper co-founded with fiancé Matt Kaplan to extend the content to TV and film, including 2023’s Netflix rom-com *Love at First Sight*. A Daddy Gang screening and social amplification ahead of its premiere made it the most-seen film in its debut week, with +14M views. Unwell’s formula—a one-

two punch of premium content plus guaranteed audience—is music to any financier or distributor’s ears, making it a formidable brand for securing Zs’ attention on streamers.

What we hope happens next:

Zs are having less sex than previous generations, but as Cooper proved, they still want to talk about it—especially women. Who better to create the Gen Z *Sex and the City* than Unwell? We imagine a series on TikTok, events at themed Netflix Houses and product collaborations (Unwell Night After Supplements, anyone?). Meanwhile, we’re excited for Unwell to announce more talent deals with creators we love—but with more diverse voices, please.

Yearbook Memories

Some of our fave industry luminaries shared their most memorable (but underrated) brand moments for Zs in 2023



Andrew Roth
Founder of dedx, a Gen Z research & advisory firm



Kim Johnson
Community strategist (formerly Geneva & Glossier)



Lia Haberman
Creator economy expert & author of *ICYMI* newsletter

“‘Gail Lewis, signing out, good night.’ ~1B organic views later, the legend of Walmart’s 10-year associate Gail Lewis lives on. What could have been the beginning of amplifying employee stories from Walmart led solely to Gail’s cultural stardom.”

“‘Topicals’ Summer Camp series! They hosted several events to help their community ‘connect and commune through activity, play and well-being’ including yoga sessions, dance parties and a field day. Great representation of a brand bringing FUN back to IRL activations.”

“I loved the David and Victoria Beckham ‘be honest’ meme, but it may have overshadowed the series of videos TikToker Khaby Lame collaborated on with David for the soccer club Inter Miami CF that I think should have gotten more attention.”



Nathan Jun Poekert
Social, influencer & content strategy officer



Rachel Karten
Social media consultant & author of *Link in Bio* newsletter

“For me, it wasn’t a single moment. It was the transformation that Abercrombie did on social. They completely leaned in on attainable luxury and elevated content. In 2022, they had industry-worst reach and engagement, but ended 2023 as industry best.”

“It was so genius that the emergency contraceptive pill brand Julie collabed with my favorite college DJ, Amanda Shultz (aka, @dj__mandy) on TikTok. The sponsored post has 6.4M views!”

Rare Beauty
Reddit
TIKTOK
Google
F1
HELLSTAR.
Taylor Swift
McDonalds
Unwell
Ozempic
Crocs
CapCut
Nintendo.
TikTok
STANLEY



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