

**twitch**



# The Third Age of Digital Culture

March 2026



What makes content  
feel authentic and drive  
real engagement in the  
era of Generative AI?





## Methodology

Cultural analysis and semiotics, online surveys and qualitative research and live stream experiments with over

**10K**  
participants

## Locales

US, Europe, Latin America, and Asia



Trust in formulaic marketing? Dead.



# Gen Z are in a content crisis that brands can't ignore



78%

think social media  
is fake

68%

are drowning in  
AI-generated "slop"

# Gen Z has officially checked out of traditional content:

“ Content from pre-recorded or short clips don't relate to me as a whole as they try to use social norms which were relevant at the time of recording but then feel dated and inappropriate to me ”

—Male 28, US



# The Authenticity Paradox:



## The Authenticity Paradox:

# What Gen Z calls “real” in 2026 isn't what you think...



Live and Entertaining

Entertaining live content creators with high community interaction delivers surprise and engagement

ORIGINAL

# 77%



Want content free from formulaic authenticity playbooks, shifting their attention to creators who guarantee deep connection and surprise

Live and Earnest:

Live creators who keep content real and positive and offer human connection that mirrors IRL



What Gen Z actually wants in 2026 and beyond:

# Content that is Alive!



SURPRISING

# 79%

Break the algorithm, shock us!

DEEP

# 70%

Long-form, uncut, unfiltered realness

HUMAN

# 84%

Real creators, real vibes, real connections



Brands that go live and keep it real will capture Gen Z's attention (and wallets)



# Twitch is still winning the authenticity game

“ Live content has a more exciting appeal to me especially when it involves a topic I am interested in. Compared to pre-recorded content live content has a more natural take on topics and tends to be more authentic than pre-recorded content which focuses more on gaining likes and shows deliberate intention to market someone or something.”

—Female, 26, UK



Twitch is still winning the authenticity game

Compared to everyone else, Twitch delivers:



1.5x



better creator-chat chemistry

1.4x



stronger community bonds  
(dedicated fans, not  
followers )

1.3x



more "this feels real" energy  
(not formulaic)

81%



average attention scores  
(we're literally top  
percentile)

# Twitch Live Streams has Gen Z's Attention and Trust and the Numbers Don't Lie

Full funnel performance: Strong performance across the entire funnel (awareness → purchase)

87%

of viewers actually DO something after seeing ads

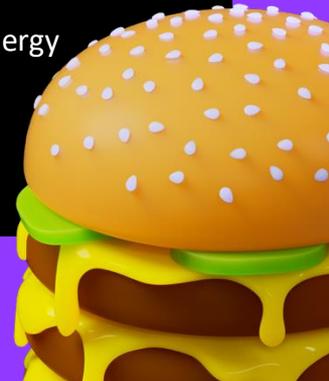


“

I saw an advertisement during a live stream and it was for McDonald's. They were showing off all of their new food items with cool graphics. Because of this advert I went to a store the next day to purchase McDonald's because it looked amazing in the adverts.

It stood out from others because of the energy present in the advert.”

—Male 17, UK



# Something big is shifting



# 1

## THE AUTHENTICITY PARADOX:

What Gen Z calls "real" in 2026 isn't what you think...

# 2

## THE NEW CREATIVE EQUATION:

Something's changing in how Gen Z responds to technology in content...

# 3

## THE COMMUNITY CODE:

Gen Z communities are developing their own rules. Brands need to learn them...

# 4

## THE PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION:

Passive watching is dying. Something else is taking over...

# Twitch Creator Soupforeloise enters the chat



**twitch**



**Thank you**  
**Thank you**  
**Thank you**