

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

'Gen Z is accessing luxury through fragrance': report

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Kyra's State of Beauty 2023 Report suggests that the appeal of luxury scents remains higher among younger consumers than that of high-end cosmetics. Image credit: Kyra Media

By AMIRAH KEATON

Young consumers are continuing to use perfume as an entry point to prestige beauty.

Gen Z is interacting with luxury most readily by way of the personal care category, according to leaders at creator agency Kyra. The collective's latest [State of Beauty Report](#) names digital influencers and platforms such as TikTok as the primary drivers of engagement for this segment of shoppers in 2023, highlighting the importance of content creation in swaying the purchase decisions of the ever-evolving client base today.

"Gen Z is accessing and wardrobing luxury through fragrance," said Marina Mansour, vice president of beauty and wellness at [Kyra Media](#), London.

For the report, the firm surveyed 1,000 18 to 25-year-old consumers across the U.S. and U.K. in November 2023 using Instagram's survey function.

Gateway to luxury

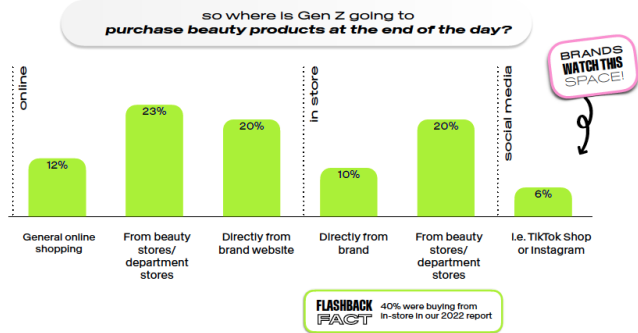
Touching on fragrance, haircare, makeup and skincare, a few key takeaways float to the top of Kyra's third-edition research exercise.

First, TikTok, Instagram and Pinterest are proving most powerful when it comes to demographic-informed product discovery.

The whitepaper provides another web-based update: beauty exploration on Google's YouTube ([see story](#)) is down year-on-year, from 15 percent of respondents citing it as a resource in 2022 to 6.4 percent in 2023.

When it comes to "latte makeup," "blueberry milk nails" and other content waves to go viral recently, three of every four Gen Zers cited being very likely to buy after spotting that a brand is engaging with social media trends.

Whereas in 2022, 40 percent of Kyra's respondents were shopping in-store, this edition of data posits that roughly one in three are venturing into bricks-and-mortar locations.



Around one in three respondents headed in-store for beauty buys in 2023. Image credit: Kyra Media

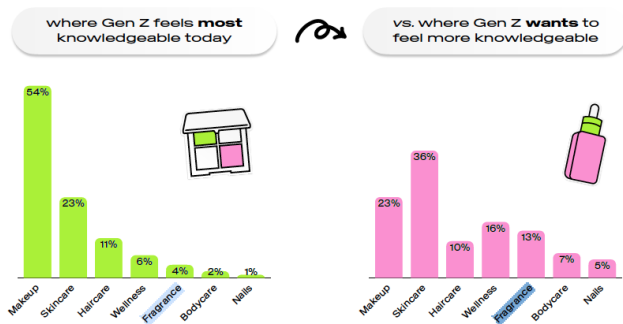
Regarding direct conversions happening within TikTok Shop and via Instagram Shopping's features, Kyra advises that marketers "watch this space."

Offline trial does not seem to be as much of a concern with this generation, whose behaviors defy expectations in the most hands-on of categories. In fact, half of the age group reports having purchased a fragrance without smelling it first.

The year prior, this figure came in at 36 percent vanilla, rose, and "fruity" varieties are among this cohort's favorites, according to the report's authors.

Perfume usage rates are also up, as 80 percent of young shoppers spray every day, a notable jump from 21 percent of respondents who admitted to daily use last time around (see story).

Their top three picks in 2023 include those from French luxury houses Dior and Chanel, as well as American fashion designer Marc Jacobs, who recently paired with U.S. beauty group Coty to revive an active licensing agreement (see story).



Gen Zers consider themselves most knowledgeable about cosmetics as opportunities arise to educate this group on skincare and wellness. Image credit: Kyra Media

This trio takes the top three slots. Other honorable mentions include Gucci, Saint Laurent, Tom Ford (see story) and Burberry.

The latter name, coming in at number seven on the list, has seen outsized success over the last twelve months, as its Goddess line (see story) "continued to set new records, becoming the #1 fragrance launch in multiple markets, and together with Burberry's other icons, Hero and Her, propelled strong market share gains and brand rank improvements globally for Burberry," according to a Feb. 6 earnings statement from Coty.

In the last six months, a third of Gen Z has handed over cash in exchange for a fragrance they have never used before, and 63 percent are buying a new fragrance a few times a year.

The report states that 45 percent of Zoomers are copping never-before-used scents in the interest of trying something different; the same amount owns more than one or multiple fragrances, with slightly less 42 percent owning four to eight options.

"The pull of heritage luxury brands is highly relevant for fragrance when it comes to Gen Z, whereas, in cosmetics, their top brands have been diversified by the meteoric rise of indie, clean, celebrity and drugstore beauty brands," said Ms. Mansour.

In a proposition that Kyra points out is new this year, results suggest that 21 percent of Gen Z beauty purchase decisions are influenced by content creators.

Content creators versus celebrities

When it comes to product recommendations, ratings and reviews, industry best practices range.

Newer direct-to-consumer players, for instance, have been known to leverage user-generated content quite frequently, even amplifying those with nano-followings ([see story](#)) in exercising the cheap yet effective tactic.

Conversely, legacy brands often turn to the film and music industries ([see story](#)) or professional models ([see story](#)) for credentialing, placing those with extensive reach and aspirational appeal front and center.



Emma Chamberlain is Lancme's newest global ambassador, signaling a shift in the prioritization of a digitally-based demographic. Image credit: Lancme

Many of luxury's prestige members arguably exist between these two goalposts, uniquely positioned to experiment with both approaches, tapping well-known faces like YSL Beauty's stint with global music star Lil Nas X ([see story](#)) from time to time, relying on alternate talents at other points, as was the case with L'Oreal-owned Lancme last January.

Then, American internet personality Emma Chamberlain joined stars such as Penlope Cruz, Lupita Nyong'o, Amanda Seyfried, Kate Winslet and Zendaya in signing on to represent the renowned beauty business ([see story](#)), tapping the authenticity advocate and gaining access to her fan base of almost 30 million.

Of the report's insights, TikTok's growing relevance stands out, with its authors stating that Gen Zers are trading in traditional, longer-form digital media sites such as YouTube for "spontaneous" bouts of content.

It shares that the transition "emphasizes the need for brands to adapt to the evolving landscape and collaborate with influencers who resonate with Gen Z's desire for authenticity and relatability."



The American rapper and singer, known for challenging outdated gender norms, has been named as the brand's newest U.S. beauty ambassador. Image courtesy of YSL Beaut

The stance may leave luxury strategists wondering where celebrities fit in.

"Generally speaking, luxury brands don't work with celebrities because they're relatable, they work with them because they are aspirational, inspiring, powerful, etc," said Kyra's Ms. Mansour.

"Digitally-native creators, however, forge a unique bond with their audience, marked by authenticity and genuine connection, so relatability plays a huge part in their relationship with their fans," she said. "While collaborating with celebrities may garner

attention, if your aim is to engage with Gen Z audiences on social platforms, this is best achieved by collaborating with creators.

“The power of working with (the right) celebrity exists to some extent, but when it comes to beauty, Gen Z’s trust and influence largely reside with creators.”

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