

GET IN WITH GEN Z

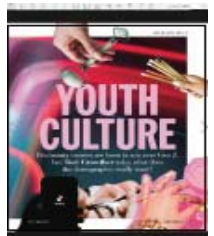
# YOUTH CULTURE

Pro beauty owners are keen to win over Gen Z, but **Tori Crowther** asks, what does the demographic really want?

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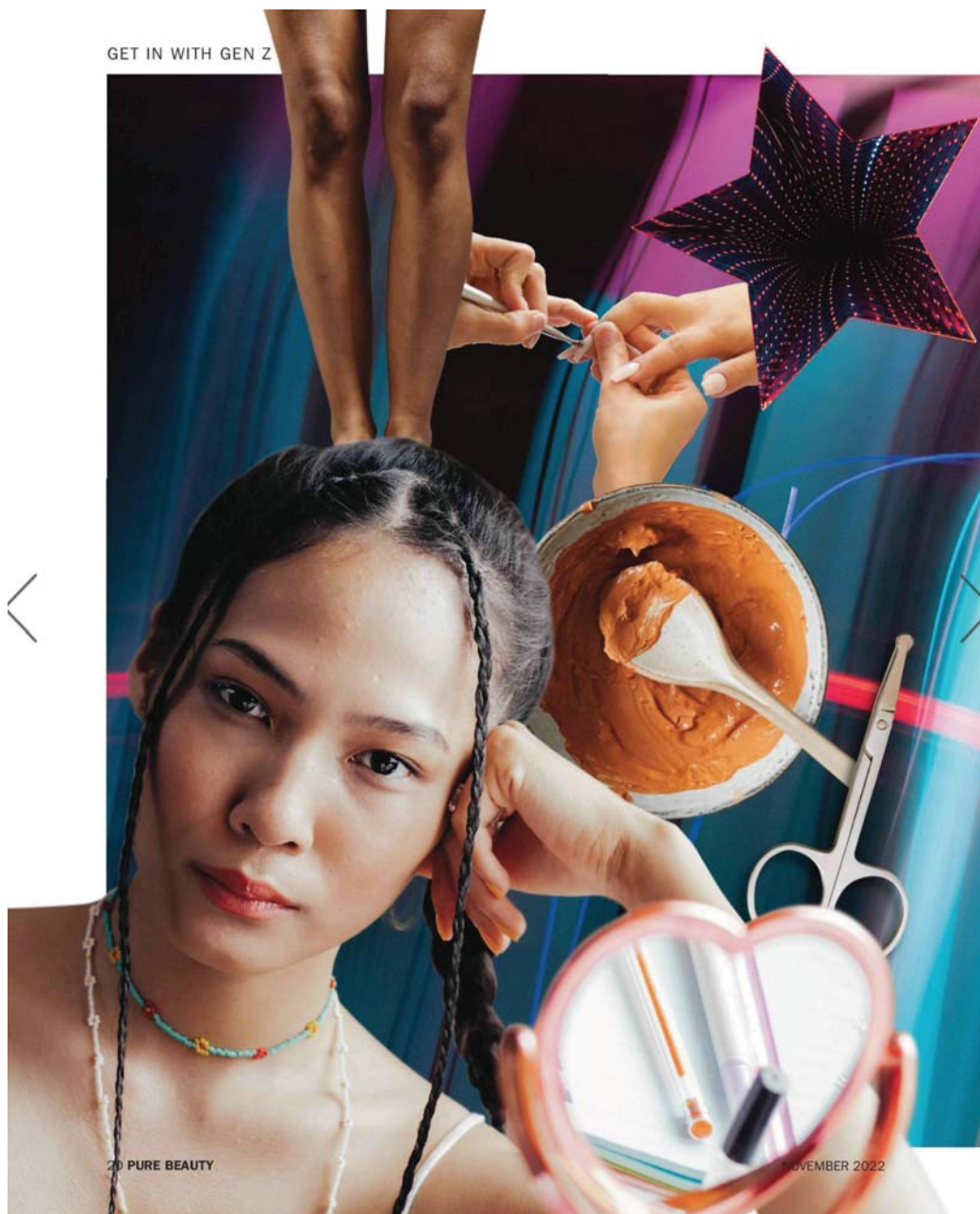
TikTok

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**W**hether we like it or not, Generation Z are change drivers. They intrinsically seek to know and demand more in beauty. In their quest for knowledge, experimentation, sustainability, and ridding tradition, they've undoubtedly changed the sector as we once knew it.

While it's important not to abandon the needs of other generations, the influence of 12-26 year-olds (for the better and for the worse) is one we should not ignore. According to beauty experts, this is how it's changing the pro beauty sector.

#### EDUCATION REIGNS SUPREME

Once upon a time, beauty professionals would be the sole treatment adviser for patients. For the younger generation, that's flipped. Gen Z almost always knows exactly what they want (or have a very good idea about it) and what the treatment entails before booking. "By the time they come in for a consultation, they've probably seen my work or the treatment on multiple platforms and know so much about it," says Dr Ahmed El Muntasar, GP and aesthetician.

This hunger for education has influenced the ways businesses use social media platforms to present knowledge and services. They are utilising TikTok for 20-second myth debunkers, Instagram to relay salon options, and YouTube for showing first-hand accounts of treatments.

Perhaps surprisingly, brands have also turned to bricks-and-mortar to amplify the education element of business. Dyson uses its Beauty Lab to give shoppers an "active approach" to their hair health — the affordable in-store appointment has never been more popular among Gen Z, especially thanks to PR and Influencer Manager Iman Leila documenting her visit on TikTok, which racked up 3.1 million views.

With education and community at its forefront, Ruka has undertaken permanent residency in Selfridges to revolutionise the hair care market for black consumers.

#### THE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION

Often overlapping with education is technology, which has fundamentally changed the entire professional beauty landscape.

Booking apps have made it easier for the phone-fearful generation to schedule treatments without uttering a word. "I use Booksy, which is popular with Gen Z because a lot of their bookings come at random times, so having that online booking platform is amazing because they can book at 3am if they so wish," says Alice McNails, a UK-based nail artist. Flexible payment options and monthly saving schemes make these treatments more accessible to the masses.

Social media quickly became a 'must-have' versus a 'nice to have' and business owners pivoted to cater. "To grow this side of the business we realised that we also need to drive our social media in order to get Victor & Garth on the radar of a younger demographic," say co-founders Dr Lauren Hamilton and Dr Miriam Adebibe. Clinics also adapted the ways in which they present information to younger clients. "Our YouTube channel works really well to provide aftercare advice as it seems that today's preference is definitely the spoken word rather than our old fashioned way of handing out leaflets," says Elizabeth Rimmer, Advanced Nurse Practitioner and founder of London Professional Aesthetics.

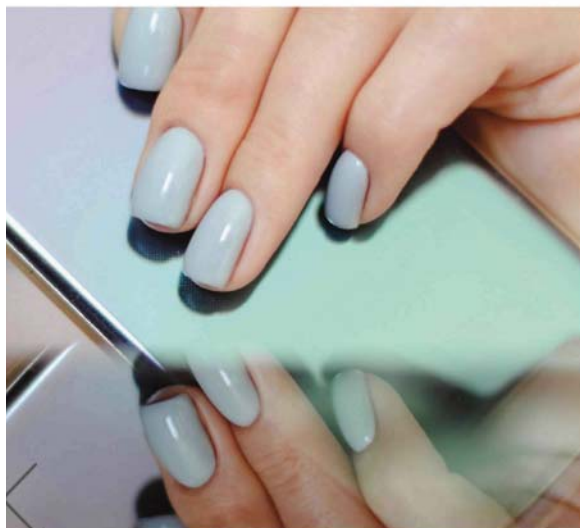
While tech has its advantages, an increasingly altered sense of reality has its disadvantages. "A prospective client would once enter clutching a photograph of a celebrity, they now present a digitally-altered image of their own face. These filters create an unrealistic version of themselves; a warped sense of perfection," explain Dr Hamilton and Dr Adebibe. This is something clinic-owners have to be increasingly cognisant of.

#### GIVING SUSTAINABILITY THE LIMELIGHT

When it comes to sustainability, no generation has been more on it than Gen Z and there is a simple reason for that. "Gen Z cares about sustainability because they genuinely have to — we have no choice!" Alicia Lartey, London-based esthetician emphasises. Managing Director at Treatwell Miranda Mathews echoes this: "When making decisions on beauty products and treatments, they highly consider ethical practices and sustainability at the forefront of what they choose."

## 'Gen Z highly consider ethical practices





You would be hard-pressed to find (successful) new-to-market beauty products that are not marketed as cruelty-free or sustainable. The pro industry is certainly moving that way with salons being as transparent as possible when it comes to eco-conscious practices, but it is not easy. "It's really hard to have sustainable treatments because all equipment needs to be sterile and a lot of components are disposable," Lartey admits.

Positioning this as a priority with clear sustainability KPIs is something Gen Z will seek more of from salons and clinics.

#### THE NECESSITY OF AN AESTHETIC

Everything is an aesthetic in 2022, including a salon visit, which goes beyond just being inviting.

For younger generations, they are drawn towards salons that offer an experience and provide an engaging space for content creation. "Nail salons are showing off their decor and what their drink offerings are; something that's going to look cute in a picture or a Reel; something salon owners have to think of more now," explains McNails. Lartey echoes this to some degree. Although she feels that many salons still have a "general spa aesthetic", she says "my

Bricks-and-mortar experiences are increasingly important to Gen Z, so an Instagram-friendly salon aesthetic is key

clinic is designed to look like a slice of my social media page in real life."

#### WON OVER BY TRENDS

One could argue that Gen Z is ultimately led by trends. They jump on nail art, skin treatments and hair colour trends quicker than most of us can keep up with. This has influenced an all-time high for beauty experimentation among various generations. In doing so, "Gen Z are also moving away from gender stereotypes that are so ingrained in much of the older generation, which makes the whole beauty landscape seem much freer and more exciting," says Dr El Muntasar. This is, without question, a hugely positive step forwards for the industry.

The downside of trend-led beauty, though, is that younger generations are more vulnerable to misinformation on platforms like TikTok, where, quite literally, anything goes. Controversy drives engagement, thus misleading content is rife. All of the clinics we spoke to offer robust medical and emotional wellness assessments. During every consultation, Dr El Muntasar "puts his GP hat on" screening for body dysmorphic disorder, getting to the bottom of what clients' ideas, concerns and expectations (ICE) are of the treatment. Victor & Garth work with Safe Space, a counselling service located nearby the clinic.

#### THE FUTURE OF PRO BEAUTY WITH GEN Z'S INFLUENCE

Businesses are forced to retire old ways of presenting information and up their game to give customers the knowledge they crave. Booking systems will likely become more streamlined without opening hour constraints. Bricks-and-mortar stores are being reinvented to breathe life to brands and blend our real and virtual lives together.

Health-enhancing treatments will increase in popularity, with skin boosters and non-invasive problem-solving treatments taking top spot.

Being informed about the relationship between mental health and beauty is non-negotiable in this tech-led landscape. This, coupled with the managing of expectations, comes with part of the job for practitioners carrying out injectables, particularly on younger patients.

Gen Z has spending power and is willing to use it – so long as the return produces results and the process is authentic. They are not easily sold by the beauty giants, and they are influencing other generations to have power in their pound, too.