

Gen Z's social media habits: Divided, but a shift toward meaningful content

Our latest Varsity Vibe study, surveying over 12,000 South African students and young people, reveals a clear divide in how Gen Z feels about their favourite social media platforms.

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When asked to rank which platforms they use most, TikTok stood out for its polarising effect. It was either students' most used app or their least used – with little-to-nothing in between. The data shows that Gen Z's relationship with TikTok is anything but neutral: they either love it or steer clear entirely.

Instagram, meanwhile, is fighting for the middle ground. It appeared most frequently in the #2 and #4 spot suggesting that while it remains a go-to platform for connection and inspiration, it's no longer the automatic favourite it once was.

Snapchat mirrors this trend, also competing for second or fourth place, with strong showings at both #1 and #5. The takeaway? Engagement remains steady, but loyalty is fragmented.

Facebook still features in students' digital lives, but it's faded into the background. Most respondents rank it at #3 – not disliked, but far from exciting.

And then there's X (Twitter), which remains steady but subdued, showing consistent use but no peaks in preference.

But beyond where Gen Z spends their time, the question is what are they watching.

The survey found that:

- First: Educational videos are Gen Z's top choice, showing a clear appetite for content that informs and

adds value.

- Second: Hauls and unboxings come next, proving that product discovery and peer influence still hold strong interest.
- Third: Short vlogs round out the top three, reflecting Gen Z's growing love for authentic, everyday storytelling.

Together, these insights point to a broader shift: Gen Z's online habits are evolving from passive entertainment towards content that feels personal, informative and real.

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