



aaf american
advertising
federation

TEAM 371

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Executive Summary

AT&T has faced challenges in effectively connecting with Gen Z. To address this, we developed a marketing campaign designed to resonate with this demographic by showcasing the relatable challenges they face at this particular stage of life. Through engaging and humorous content, the campaign will highlight realistic situations where AT&T's connectivity services step in to solve problems and keep them connected to what matters most.

This campaign is focused on building a deeper connection with Gen Z and also attracting this key demographic to AT&T's offerings. By demonstrating how AT&T can make a tangible difference in their lives—whether it's staying connected with friends, accessing crucial information or solving everyday dilemmas—we aim to position AT&T as a brand that truly understands and supports Gen Z's needs. Through authentic and compelling storytelling, the campaign will foster brand loyalty and drive engagement, encouraging Gen Z to choose AT&T for all their connectivity needs.

Campaign Objectives



Increase awareness of AT&T among American Gen Z by 25% in 6 months.



Increase favorable sentiment among Gen Z by 20%, as measured through surveys and social media sentiment analysis.



Generate a 15% conversion rate from campaign interactions to website traffic or sign-ups.



Increase the number of Gen Z clients of AT&T by 10% by the end of the campaign.

The telecommunications industry is undergoing rapid transformation due to evolving consumer behaviors, technological advancements and increasing demand for high-speed connectivity.

Market growth in the telecom sector is largely driven by investments in 5G, fiber-optic networks and artificial intelligence-powered services. As consumer expectations shift, digital-first interactions, seamless connectivity and transparent pricing are becoming key factors in purchasing decisions. Additionally, government and private sector initiatives continue to expand broadband access, particularly in underserved rural areas, improving nationwide connectivity.

Market Trends + Emerging Technologies



5G Expansion + Adoption

The continued rollout of 5G is enhancing mobile network capabilities, improving speeds and supporting high-bandwidth applications such as gaming, AI-driven automation and real-time streaming.



Artificial Intelligence Integration

Telecom providers increasingly rely on AI for customer support, network optimization, fraud detection and predictive maintenance.



Growth of Alternative Communication

Messaging apps, video conferencing and social media continue to disrupt traditional mobile communication, leading providers to diversify their services.



Cybersecurity and Data Protection

As reliance on digital services grows, cybersecurity concerns drive investment in AI-powered fraud detection, encryption and data privacy policies.



The Future of IoT and Smart Networks

With the rise of the Internet of Things, telecom companies are shifting toward smarter, adaptive networks capable of handling interconnected devices in homes, vehicles and workplaces.

Competitive Analysis

The telecom industry is highly competitive, with companies differentiating themselves through technology, pricing strategies and customer experience initiatives.

Service Innovation and Differentiation

Companies are bundling services with exclusive streaming content, cloud storage and smart home integrations to retain customers.

Flexible Pricing + Subscription Models

Telecom providers are shifting toward customizable plans, family-sharing options and budget-friendly alternatives to attract younger consumers.

Marketing Strategies for Digital-First Consumers

Industry leaders leverage influencer marketing, user-generated content and interactive social media campaigns to reach younger audiences.

Tech-Driven Competition

Providers are investing in cutting-edge technologies such as AI-driven personalization, virtual and augmented reality experiences, and blockchain-powered security to stay ahead.

AT&T competes in a crowded space where price, speed and coverage drive consumer decisions. While Verizon dominates in speed and T-Mobile attracts budget-conscious users, AT&T holds a strong middle ground—offering high reliability, technological innovation and bundled service options.

Key Takeaways

Affordability matters.

AT&T must highlight competitive pricing and flexible payment options.

Reliable, high-speed data is a must.

AT&T must highlight competitive pricing and flexible payment options.

Authenticity drives engagement.

To connect with Gen Z, AT&T should focus on peer-driven marketing, social media engagement and gaming sponsorships.

Market Overview

AT&T's Positioning:

Mid-tier pricing with a balance of cost and value-added services.

Competitor Comparison:

- **Verizon** – More expensive but offers the fastest data speeds.
- **T-Mobile** – More budget-friendly with transparent pricing (taxes/fees included).

Key Differentiators:

Strong network reliability and technological innovation. Comprehensive service offerings, including wireless, internet and entertainment bundles.

Consumer Perception of Major Carriers

- **Verizon** – Premium pricing, best speed & coverage, but expensive
- **T-Mobile** – Affordable, transparent pricing, but weaker reliability
- **AT&T** – Balanced pricing, strong network, but perceived as expensive

SWOT Analysis

S

Strengths

Competitively Strong Network reliability and coverage.

Oldest Telecom company, long history planted in the industry

Diverse services: U-Verse, Internet, Cell Service, etc

Innovations – early adopters of 5G and fiber optics

W

Weaknesses

Overall Perceived as expensive compared to competitors

Weaker brand engagement with the target demographic (Gen-Z)

3rd fastest data speed in USA (Speedtest.net)

Not perceived to have best outdoor coverage compared to competitors

O

Opportunities

Relationship building with Gen Z – fostering young, lifelong subscribers

Social media and digital engagement – Having more personable and relatable social media accounts could attract target audience

AR/VR technology – Continues to develop and implement innovative tech within campaigns

T

Threats

Verizon (perceived as having faster speeds and better regional coverage)

T-Mobile (perceived as cheaper – are very strong competitor and has more of an active following on social media)

Rising inflation – inflation could price out some people who were intending on becoming customers, but can no longer afford it

What Gen Z wants from a mobile carrier

Gen Z isn't just looking for a mobile plan—they want a brand that fits their lifestyle. Their expectations for a mobile carrier go beyond basic service, prioritizing affordability, faster reliable connectivity, and a brand that engages with them in meaningful ways. Our research highlights three key areas that influence their decision-making:

1 Affordability & Transparent Pricing

Gen Z is highly cost-conscious, with many feeling they do not earn enough to afford their desired lifestyle. (50)

They look for straightforward pricing with no hidden fees and affordable unlimited data options. (50)

Flexible plans are important, including split-payment options and "Friends & Family" plans. (50)

2 Speed & Reliability

Gen Z relies heavily on fast and uninterrupted connectivity for streaming, gaming and social media.

They have a low tolerance for slow speeds or service disruptions.

High-speed data, strong 5G coverage and fiber internet expansion are key selling points that resonate with this audience.

3 Digital-First Engagement & Brand Experience

They prefer authentic, relatable advertising rather than traditional corporate messaging.

Influencer marketing is effective, but only when it feels genuine.

Micro-influencers and real customers sharing their experiences resonate more than celebrity endorsements.

Marketing Segmentation explores key insights for Gen Z (13-27), focusing on their mobile usage, values and brand preferences. It covers their preferences for affordability and transparency, loyalty to brands that align with their values and their behavior in the world of connectivity. It also examines the most effective ways of marketing to the Gen Z audience along with other strategies such as humor-driven campaigns and exclusive perks. In the end, it outlines how AT&T can cater to their needs and enhance brand appeal.

Key Demographics Insights

Survey results cover ages 16-25. (11)
While broader, secondary research covers 13-27.

Gen Z has a higher mobile usage for social media, streaming and communication, spending over 300 minutes each day on their phone.

Generation Z customers use phones more and experience more network problems, J.D. Power finds. (14)

Unlimited Data (78.9%) and Affordable Pricing (74.6%) were the most critical features.

Behavioral Insights

Social media and TV commercials are the most influential advertising channels (>90%). (11)

Short-form videos (TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts) are the preferred content format (>50%). (11)

Short-form videos (66.2%) and Humor/meme-based content (66.2%) proved to be the most influential marketing tactic among Gen Z.

#WHAT'S NEXT?

Psychographic Profile

Gen Z values brands emphasizing authenticity, social responsibility and digital connectivity.

Gen Z has a strong preference for brands supporting social causes while simultaneously offering competitive pricing (>80%). (11)

Brand loyalty when needs – such as affordable prices and unlimited data – are met, customers consider themselves a “forever customer”. (11)

What are your thoughts on AT&T? What does AT&T mean to you?

“They’re a phone provider.. that’s about it.”

“It felt like every other wireless provider’s ad. They’re all kind of the same.”

“I want a clear picture of the rates that I am paying monthly and exact numbers for the data plans... preferably unlimited data”

Implications for AT&T’s Marketing Strategy

Research shows AT&T must shift toward authentic, entertaining and interactive content to effectively reach Gen Z audience.

Short-form video and humor-driven campaigns work best to engage younger audiences

AT&T can strategically leverage social responsibility efforts while maintaining affordability to strengthen brand image.



Jared

15 Years Old
High School Sophomore
Unemployed

Social Media



Interests

Motivations

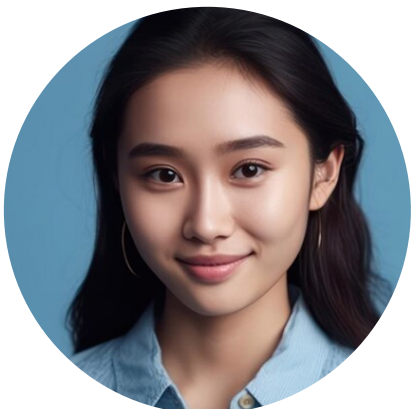
Unlimited data, reliable coverage, streaming service incentives, short-form comedic videos

Phone Plan

His parents pay for his phone plan and he doesn't know much about it

Pain Points

Does not like having poor data coverage, has no connection or deep knowledge of any phone plan provider



Taylor

20 Years Old
College Sophomore
Part-Time Sales Associate

Social Media



Interests

Shopping, music, partying

Motivations

Unlimited data, reliable coverage, streaming service incentives, exclusive concert/ event incentives, short-form comedic videos

Phone Plan

Parents pay for phone plan, but she knows she will have to soon

Pain Points

She dislikes poor data coverage, she does not know much about phone plans besides the perks she can get



Makayla

25 Years Old
MBA
Full-Time Office Worker

Social Media



Interests

Reading, traveling, cooking

Motivations

Affordability, reliable coverage, international data coverage, streaming service incentives, entertaining but informative short-form videos

Phone Plan

About to be kicked off of her parents phone plan and needs to find a new provider

Pain Points

She does not like high prices or poor data coverage

The ‘What’s Next’ campaign captures the awkward milestones of growing up, using humor to connect with Gen Z while highlighting their innovative, out-of-the-box thinking. With AT&T’s reliable connection, they’re always in the loop, connected to those who matter and ready to face whatever comes next.

Creative Concept

Gen Z is navigating major life moments like graduating, moving out, and starting new jobs, with the question ‘What’s Next?’ on everyone’s mind. This campaign positions AT&T as a reliable presence in their lives, keeping them connected to friends, family and the information they need. In a world full of unknowns, AT&T offers the stability and support they need to confidently navigate each step.

Humor with a twist

Awkward, funny and relatable situations where AT&T plays an unexpected, but important role in keeping people prepared. Real life moments take surprising turns, thanks to the connection only AT&T can provide.

3 age ranges

To effectively reach Gen Z, we’ve divided the generation into three distinct age groups, each at different stages of life. By targeting these groups with tailored advertisements on the platforms they engage with most, we ensure the message resonates with their current experiences and needs.

12–18 years old

In a transitional phase, juggling school, friendships, and early identity exploration. They’re likely dealing with high school, growing independence, and starting to think about their future.

Preferred Social Media



19–22 years old

Experiencing early adulthood with more independence and the pressure of figuring out career paths, relationships, and life goals. Many are in college or starting their first jobs.

Preferred Social Media



23–27 years old

Entering into career-focused years, managing financial independence, and navigating serious relationships and adulthood responsibilities. Many are starting to settle into their careers and adult life.

Preferred Social Media



How It Resonates with Gen Z

53%

of Gen Z states influencer marketing doesn’t impact their decisions, the campaign focuses on peer-driven content and relatable experiences.

77.8%

prioritize network coverage and 70% value data speed, AT&T’s reliable connectivity is a key message.



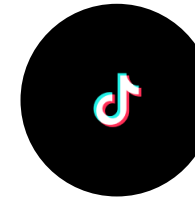
67.9%

of Gen Z are using Instagram daily.



53%

of Gen Z are using Youtube and Youtube Shorts.



46.9%

of Gen Z are watching short form content on TikTok daily.

The campaign maximizes reach, retention, and audience interaction by using dynamic, visually compelling content tailored to each platform's strengths. Tactical executions to bring the Big Idea to life. Different advertisements with the campaign's message have been designed to target three groups within Gen Z.

Driving Awareness

Basketball Game Promos

Digital Screen Ads:

Subway Stations, Bus Stops, City billboards

NCAA Promotion:

Jumbotron ads: Promoting our competition and "What's Next" videos.

Branded Merch Giveaways:

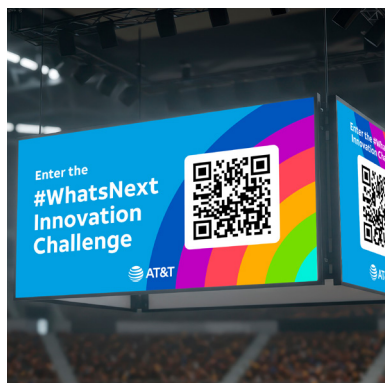
Fans can score exclusive "What's Next" gear like basketballs, shirts, and other merch, handed out throughout the event or via halftime contests.

Engagement Opportunities:

QR codes on the merch or displayed on the jumbotron direct fans to a landing page where they can learn more about the campaign and enter the #WhatsNext Innovation Challenge.

Las Vegas Sphere Digital Display:

Extend the hype beyond the court with a stunning visual takeover of the Las Vegas Sphere. The display will showcase AT&T's vision for the future with immersive, 360-degree animations of the glowing sphere logo, accompanied by "What's Next?" messaging.



Evolving Brand Perception

Interactive Phone Booths:

These phone booths will be placed in high-traffic areas like Times Square or near large college campuses, serving as both a visual ad and a functional space to help people connect when they're facing difficulties using their own devices.

Short Form Video Series:

This video series will run during the first 6 months of the campaign, featuring humorous short skits of Gen Z encountering problems and AT&T personified helping them figure it out. We have mapped out example videos for each age range, and ideally, these videos will be released bi-weekly for the first half of the campaign.

Video 1 (Ages 12-18)

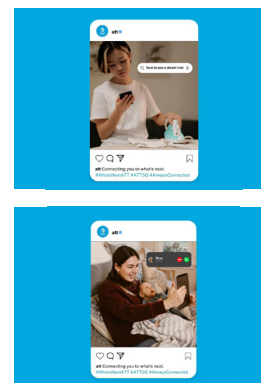
A high school freshman student is struggling with making friends.

Video 2 (Ages 19-22)

Without the necessary kitchen supplies, a college freshman attempts to cook mac and cheese.

Video 3 (Ages 23-27)

A 23 year old is excited about their job until they are given a long list of tasks to complete. With the guidance of the AT&T representative, each task gets completed.



Longevity + Loyalty

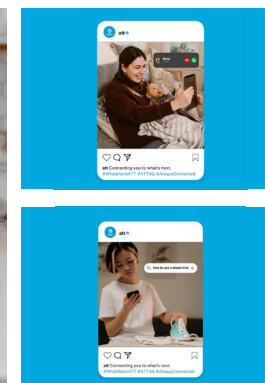
#WhatsNext Innovation Challenge:

The challenge empowers high school and college students to showcase their most innovative ideas for "What's Next" at their school. Ideas could range from reimagining classrooms with tech to creating solutions for everyday challenges. Submissions will be posted with the #WhatsNext hashtag on TikTok and Instagram Reels during the last 6 months of the campaign. The winner receives a complete upgrade of technology and computer labs for their school.

Competition-Specific Advertising:

Bring the contest to life with a blend of digital and nostalgic marketing. Feature QR codes on cereal boxes, snack packaging, and other products students grew up with, leading directly to the contest page.

This will be complemented with dynamic social media content, using platforms like TikTok and Instagram to highlight submissions, build momentum, and drive engagement.



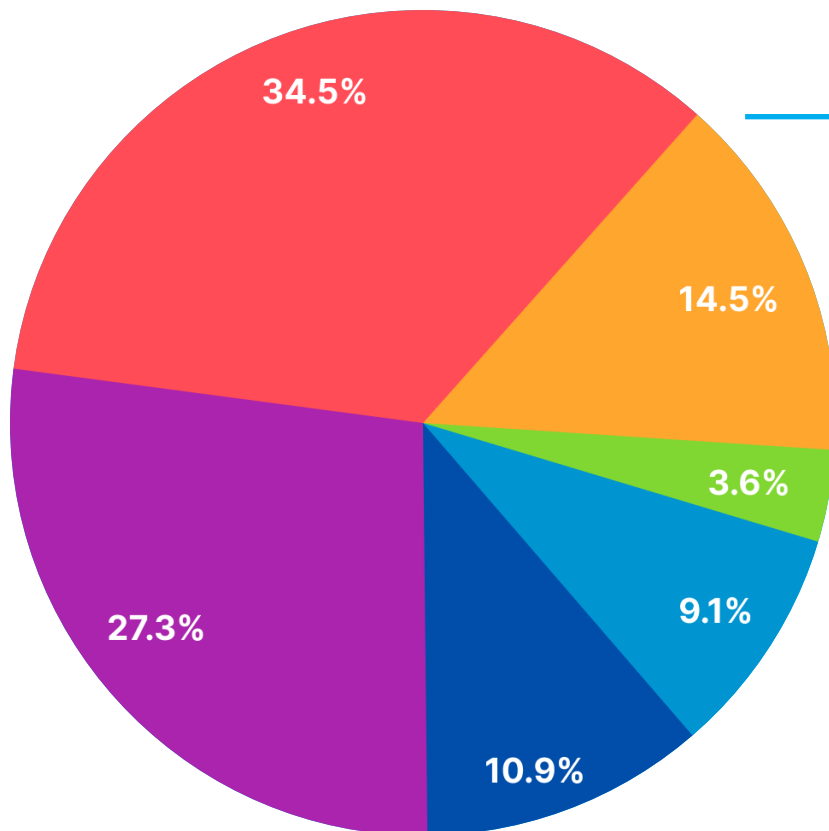
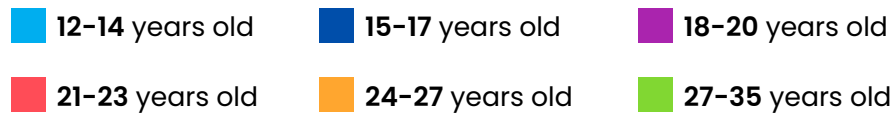
We conducted strategy testing through Google Forms with **55 respondents**, ages 12–35 (13)

Objective:

Our goal was to gather feedback from Gen Z to assess how effectively the campaign met its objectives by presenting key elements and evaluating their responses.

Key Findings

Our respondents ranged from 12–35 years of age



79.9%

of respondents were over the age of 18 and this majority showed a stronger preference for advertisement concepts featuring college students (**68.5%**) and new hires (**44.4%**), aligning with their life stages and experiences.

60%

of respondents indicated that the mock-ups resonated with them.

49.1%

of respondents were willing to engage with the interactive portion of the campaign.

When asked which campaign resonated most, 54.5% of respondents selected the ad featuring the college student.

Respondents' perception of AT&T improved post-campaign, with engagement ratings shifting from lower scores (2–5) to higher ones (5–8), suggesting a successful impact.

Recommendations

When asked which campaign resonated most, **54.5%** of respondents selected the ad featuring the college student.

Respondents' perception of AT&T improved post-campaign, with engagement ratings shifting from lower scores (2–5) to higher ones (5–8), suggesting a successful impact.

Conclusion

The data shows a clear improvement in respondents' perception of AT&T after the campaign. Initially, ratings were concentrated on the lower end (**2 at 20%, 4–5 at 32%**). Post-campaign, most responses shifted to 5–8, with a notable rise in ratings of 7 and above (**36.3%**), indicating a positive impact on brand perception and engagement among Gen Z.

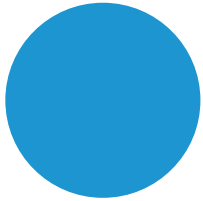
This style guide aligns with AT&T's brand identity and resonates with and personifies Generation Z's vibrant energy. AT&T's "What's Next" is a commitment to their customers that they can support them in the next steps of their life. The brand promise for the campaign is to instill confidence in our community that helps them get through turbulent times.

Visual Identity

Color Palette

Our campaign features a prominent use of AT&T Blue along with the six supporting colors. These bold colors speak to the high energy that Gen Z exudes, along with the comfort and security that AT&T provides. These colors work well across the digital space.

Primary Color



Supporting Colors



Typography

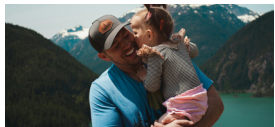
Pair AT&T's official typeface with typefaces that feel more casual and modern. These typefaces mimic text messages or social media captions to show the real feel of today's world.

AT&T Alek Sans

Primary Typeface

Photography

Use natural lighting and raw, unfiltered shots to create an organic feel. Incorporate selfie-style filming to mimic diverse Gen Z characteristics and their content.



Campaign Messaging

Authenticity. The Unexpected. Connection.

Key Messages

AT&T keeps you connected, so you're always prepared for what's next.

Core Messages

Stay connected. Stay prepared. Choose AT&T.

Call to Action

AT&T aims to share your real-life moments, that might be unfiltered. Unexpected, hilarious, and 100% relatable. AT&T will keep you in the loop. The channels will be shared primarily on social media, such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X to reach Gen Z.

Campaign Asset Examples

Social Media Ads: Short-Form Videos (Reels/TikToks/YouTube Shorts): Scenarios where Gen Z searches for immediate answers (e.g., "How to escape an awkward date?").



Static Ads: Text-based memes mimicking viral Twitter/X carousel posts, with elements leading to AT&T solutions.



Additional Ideas:
Snapchat & Instagram AR Filters featuring awkward/hilarious face effects with "What's Next?" prompts.
Spotify Ads & Playlists with influencer-curated "Stay Connected" vibes.



Paid Media

The paid media will consist of ads on social media platforms, ads on streaming platforms, paid social media influencers, concert sponsorships, as well as interactive experiences and subway ads.

Earned Media

A majority of earned media will be coming from reposts and interactions with the company's social media posts and ads. Those interactions will be from the #WhatsNext innovation challenge. There will also be various news outlets discussing the new phone booths, concert sponsorships, and the new social media challenge.

Owned Media

All owned media will be coming from the company posting the short and long form videos on company social media. It will also be coming from press articles on the AT&T website and newsletters detailing the latest bundle deals, the social media challenge, and where people can look for physical ads.

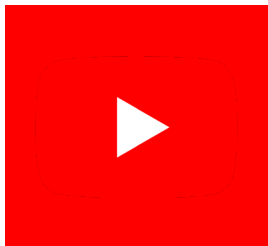
Social Media Preferences



- In the U.S., 56% of adults aged 18 to 34 use TikTok regularly.
- In 2024, U.S. adults aged 18 to 24 spent 76 minutes daily on TikTok, the highest among platforms, while adults aged 25 to 34 averaged 50 minutes (47). 54.2% of Gen Z prefers humorous, meme-based content.
- UGC on TikTok generates 22% higher engagement than traditional brand content, making it perfect for UGC-based campaigns (10).



- 26.5% of Instagram users are aged 18–24; it's a top U.S. platform for visual and influencer-driven content (19).
- 89% of Gen Z in the U.S. use Instagram; 60% of users are under 35, with an even gender split for broad reach (45).
- Gen Z spends 95 minutes daily on Instagram, with stories and posts being their preferred formats (38).



- 85% of participants prefer engaging with short-form content like YouTube Shorts over traditional long-form videos (36).
- YouTube Shorts exceeds 70 billion daily views, highlighting its popularity (29) and attracts high engagement with fast, visual content aligning with Gen Z viewing habits (43).
- Shorts outperform long-form in views and interaction, with over 2B monthly users (53).

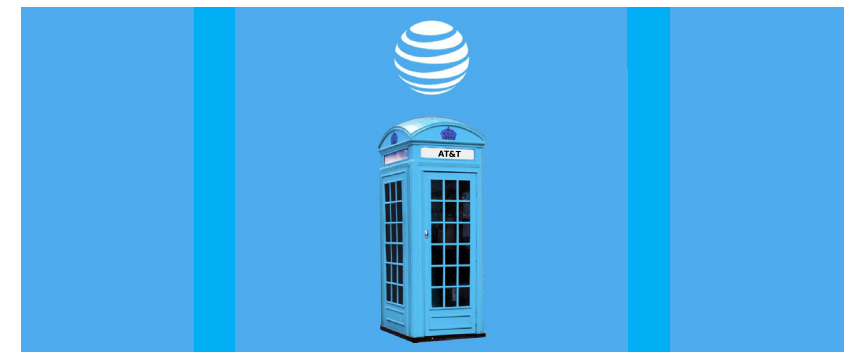


- 58.8% of users are aged 13–24, making this platform ideal for reaching high school and college students (46).
- Users on average open Snapchat 40 times daily (34).
- The platform's authenticity and real-time interaction make it perfect for connecting with Gen Z through content, ads and influencers.

Interactive Digital Experiences



Instead of traditional billboards, AT&T will use immersive digital experiences, including a 360-degree animated takeover of the Las Vegas Sphere, reinforcing AT&T's future-forward vision screens in subways and train stations.



These will provide consistent exposure to students, young professionals, and daily commuters. The Telephone booths are a fun and engaging way to interact with AT&T, while helping visitors connect.


\$58.180M **\$4.866B**

DMAs

WEST

Seattle, WA Portland, OR Denver, CO San Francisco, CA San Mateo, CA San Jose, CA
Palo Alto, CA Los Angeles, CA San Diego, CA Boise, ID Scottsdale, AZ Salt Lake City, UT

NORTHEAST

Boston, MA New York City, NY Philadelphia, PA Pittsburgh, PA Tampa, FL Columbia, SC
Charlotte, NC Washington, D.C. Nashville, TN

MIDWEST

Madison, WI Kansas City, MO
Chicago, IL Detroit, MI

SOUTH

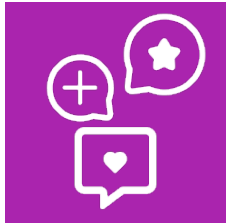
Austin, TX Dallas, TX Fort Worth, TX Atlanta, GA
Arlington, VA Miami, FL

To effectively evaluate the success of the campaign, we will propose the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):



Brand Awareness KPIs

The primary metric for brand awareness will be reach and impressions across platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Growth in social media mentions and search volume for AT&T within the Gen Z demographic should be tracked. Additionally, brand tracking surveys will help to measure recognition before and after the campaign.



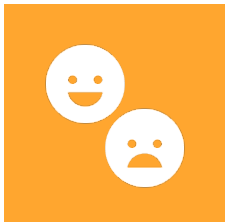
Engagement KPIs

Engagement could be assessed through the engagement rate on TikTok and Instagram. Metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and click-through rates should be monitored. This will help to determine which content types, such as memes and influencer collaborations, generate the most interaction.



Conversion KPIs

The click-through rate (CTR) and conversion rate from campaign interactions to website visits or sign-ups should be key metrics. We recommend using Google Analytics to track traffic generated by the campaign and analyze conversions like sign-ups or account activations from Gen Z individuals.



Brand Sentiment KPIs

Social media sentiment is recommended to be conducted to measure the tone of conversations around AT&T, categorizing mentions as positive, neutral, or negative. This will help assess how Gen Z views the brand, particularly in terms of its role as a connector.



Customer Acquisition KPIs

Success in acquiring new Gen Z customers should be tracked by monitoring new sign-ups and sales growth. Special promotions and targeted sign-up links will help track new customer acquisitions, while sales data will provide insights into any growth directly driven by the campaign.

Future Considerations

Content Types

Based on engagement and sentiment data, we recommend focusing on refining content types that performed best. If humorous or relatable content resonates strongly with Gen Z, these elements should be incorporated more heavily in future campaigns.

Tailored Efforts

Additionally, if certain platforms outperform others in engagement, future campaigns should allocate more resources to these platforms and tailor content specifically to their unique formats. Furthermore, data on which influencers generated the highest engagement and positive sentiment can help identify the most effective influencer partnerships. For future campaigns, focusing on these influencers will maximize reach and authenticity.

Retaining Loyalty

Finally, once Gen Z customers have been acquired, loyalty programs or exclusive offers should be introduced to keep them engaged with the brand. Future campaigns can build on this customer base by integrating post-purchase engagement strategies, such as tailored content, special deals, and referral incentives, to ensure long-term brand loyalty from this customer base.

#WHAT'S NEXT?