# Channel 4 urges advertisers to back quality content as Gen Z rejects cheap digital reach



# Channel 4 Urges Advertisers to Prioritise Quality Content for Gen Z Amid Digital Dilution

In a fervent appeal to advertisers, Channel 4’s Chief Commercial Officer Rak Patel highlighted the inherent dangers of digital media consumption for younger audiences, particularly Generation Z. Speaking at an event centred around the broadcaster's recent research on Gen Z, Patel emphasised that investing in television as a trusted medium does not contribute to harmful societal issues such as hate speech, child exploitation, or mental health crises—contrary to the risks associated with various social media platforms.

Patel's remarks resonated with sentiments shared earlier this year by the outgoing Channel 4 CEO, Alex Mahon, who condemned social media for its "wanton abandonment of the pursuit of truth." Mahon called for governmental intervention to promote trustworthy public-service media in an era characterised by rampant misinformation. Patel reiterated that the advertising sector must support quality content in safe environments, urging advertisers to reassess their reliance on less reliable media channels in pursuit of cheap and immediate returns.

The call to action comes as Channel 4 undergoes a significant digital transformation strategy termed “Fast Forward,” aiming to establish itself as a digital-first public service entity by 2030. This strategic pivot necessitates a balanced approach; while Channel 4 is increasingly engaging with platforms like YouTube, it also seeks to ensure that the content remains high-quality and relevant to its audience.

#### The Varied Landscape of Gen Z

The event also highlighted critical insights from Channel 4’s comprehensive research into Gen Z's media consumption habits. As noted by commercial insight manager Katie Gordon and analyst Izzy Turner, the generation grapples with the nebulous nature of truth amidst an oversaturated digital landscape. They pointed out that Gen Z is not a monolithic entity; instead, it comprises distinct segments with varying attitudes toward trust and authority. This diversity complicates brands' efforts to engage meaningfully with younger audiences, who are characterised by their scepticism towards established media outlets and preference for relatable individual creators.

Research indicates that many younger individuals have grown disenchanted with traditional adult milestones—viewing adulthood as beginning at the age of 27 due to economic instability. This shift has encouraged Gen Z to seek out new experiences rather than adhering to the rigid frameworks of previous generations, often indulging in small luxuries to enhance their day-to-day existence.

Furthermore, despite being keenly aware of social issues, Gen Z prioritises immediate and tangible concerns in their daily lives, representing both a challenge and an opportunity for brands. Authenticity emerged as a critical theme, with the younger demographic favouring brands that resonate with their values and experiences.

#### The Need for Positive Role Models

As the event progressed, Patel posited that there is a significant gap for positive male role models in media—an alternative to the toxic narratives often perpetuated in the "manosphere." Drawing attention to the perilous influence of figures such as Andrew Tate, he championed personalities like Jamie Laing, who advocate for mental health awareness and holistic success beyond conventional measures of masculinity. Laing underscored the importance of fostering genuine relationships and emotional intelligence, countering the superficial achievements often highlighted on social media platforms.

Patel’s discourse posits that brands have a unique opportunity: to define what success means for contemporary young men by presenting more nuanced, healthy representations of masculinity. This could offer a corrective lens to the problematic ideals that pervade many social media narratives, thus enriching the cultural dialogue surrounding masculinity for younger generations.

#### Conclusion

As Channel 4 continues to innovate amid this shifting media landscape, the onus remains on brands to engage with Gen Z authentically. Rak Patel's comments serve as a clarion call for the advertising industry to invest in trust, quality, and meaningful content. The objective is not merely to capture fleeting attention but to build lasting relationships rooted in shared values.

The implications of these discussions are profound: as the media landscape evolves, the responsibility falls on both broadcasters and advertisers to adapt swiftly, ensuring that they meet Gen Z's expectations for honesty, authenticity, and social responsibility—all critical in combating the pervasive misinformation that threatens to undermine young people’s connection to the truth.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://uk.themedialeader.com/channel-4-commercial-chief-advertisers-chase-cheap-reach-at-gen-zs-peril/), [[2]](https://www.channel4.com/4producers/news/gen-z-trends-truth-and-trust-alex-mahon)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://uk.themedialeader.com/channel-4-commercial-chief-advertisers-chase-cheap-reach-at-gen-zs-peril/), [[4]](https://pressgazette.co.uk/news/channel-4-chief-says-gen-z-news-media-habits-causing-immense-issues/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.marketingsociety.com/think-piece/gen-z-decoded-channel-4s-alex-mahon), [[5]](https://www.channel4.com/corporate/about-4/gen-z-trends-truth-and-trust)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://hayymedia.com/from-trends-to-trust-why-gen-z-demands-more-authenticity-in-advertising/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://uk.themedialeader.com/channel-4-commercial-chief-advertisers-chase-cheap-reach-at-gen-zs-peril/), [[7]](https://www.channel4.com/news/climate-change-politics-and-global-news-drive-unprecedented-digital-growth-among-gen-z-and-millennials-for-channel-4-news)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://uk.themedialeader.com/channel-4-commercial-chief-advertisers-chase-cheap-reach-at-gen-zs-peril/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.channel4.com/4producers/news/gen-z-trends-truth-and-trust-alex-mahon> - In a media environment that is oversupplied, fragmented, and often polarized, Channel 4 CEO Alex Mahon discusses how young people in the UK navigate news, who they trust, and what they define as the truth. She highlights the need for public service media to lead and act to restore bonds between young people and reliable sources of information, emphasizing the responsibility to build a future that Gen Z can believe in.
3. <https://www.marketingsociety.com/think-piece/gen-z-decoded-channel-4s-alex-mahon> - Alex Mahon reveals that Gen Z is not a homogeneous group but consists of six distinct segments, including 'Girl Power' optimists and 'Zero-sum thinkers.' She discusses how trust patterns are flattening as Gen Z ceases to follow the traditional hierarchy of trust in information sources, preferring friends, influencers, brands, and advertisers, which makes them more vulnerable to unregulated, polarizing content. Mahon stresses the need for maintaining the prominence of public service and fact-based content alongside training AI on verified, factual content.
4. <https://pressgazette.co.uk/news/channel-4-chief-says-gen-z-news-media-habits-causing-immense-issues/> - Channel 4 CEO Alex Mahon states that news providers must adapt rapidly to reach a Gen Z audience, which consumes information in a radically different way from previous generations. She cites research showing that many individuals aged under 27 are more likely to lack faith in democracy and have different video viewing habits compared to older demographics. Mahon emphasizes the need for urgent action to address these challenges and ensure that young people have access to trusted news sources.
5. <https://www.channel4.com/corporate/about-4/gen-z-trends-truth-and-trust> - Channel 4’s new landmark study, 'Gen Z: Trends, Truth and Trust,' reveals why this matters for all of us and why urgent action is needed. The study explores the key findings, including the need for industry action and new regulation to protect Gen Z from false information online. It also features a speech by CEO Alex Mahon, calling for the restoration of bonds between young people and reliable sources of information.
6. <https://hayymedia.com/from-trends-to-trust-why-gen-z-demands-more-authenticity-in-advertising/> - This article discusses why Gen Z demands more authenticity in advertising. It highlights that Gen Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, has grown up in the digital age and values individuality, social justice, and a strong sense of identity. The article emphasizes that brands need to go beyond catchy slogans and polished images, focusing on realness, transparency, and a sense of purpose to connect with Gen Z consumers.
7. <https://www.channel4.com/news/climate-change-politics-and-global-news-drive-unprecedented-digital-growth-among-gen-z-and-millennials-for-channel-4-news> - Channel 4 News achieved record digital growth in 2024, with a 49% global increase in views, reaching 1.83 billion total views. The growth was driven by content on climate change, UK politics, global conflicts, and the war in Gaza. TikTok led the way, accounting for 57% of digital views, with 67% of viewers under 35, underscoring young people’s desire for trusted, impartial news in a fragmented social media world.