

Marketing Strategies for Generation Z: A Comparative Analysis of Two French Startups, Amo and Numera

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Abstract: This paper examines the marketing strategies of two French startups, Amo and Numera, that target Generation Z, a consumer group defined by its digital nativeness, demand for authenticity, and value-driven purchasing behavior. Amo, operating in the social tech sector, emphasizes peer-to-peer connection and de-influencing strategies. At the same time, Numera, a sustainable cosmetics brand, integrates ecological messaging with micro-influencer collaborations and community engagement. Through a qualitative case study, this research highlights how empathic response, social responsibility, and user participation serve as central forces of brand loyalty among Generation Z. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how startups can effectively adapt their marketing to emerging generational values despite limited resources. Comparing two contrasting industries offers practical insights into how purpose-led branding and authentic communication foster long-term consumer relationships. The findings serve as a strategic reference for other early-stage ventures striving to stand out in a competitive, value-conscious digital market.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, Generation Z (Gen Z) emerged as a dominant force in the consumer market. This group grew up surrounded by digital tech all around them. Because they're always using phones, social media, and messaging apps, they've developed their own special way of shopping and spending money. Their consumer behavior reflects a marked departure from previous generations, with particular emphasis on brand authenticity, customized experiences, and corporate values that resonate with their personal ideologies. These evolving preferences are fundamentally transforming brand communication strategies and value proposition frameworks.

The emergence of digitally native consumers has compelled businesses to fundamentally reconfigure their marketing paradigms. Conventional approaches, predominantly characterized by mass broadcasting and brand-centric messaging, have proven inadequate in engaging this demographic. Contemporary marketing strategies must instead prioritize interactivity, community engagement, and social

responsibility to resonate effectively. This shift has elevated social media platforms, influencer partnerships, and user-generated content from supplementary tactics to core components of successful Gen Z marketing initiatives.

For early-stage ventures operating in competitive markets such as France, this generational transition constitutes a dual proposition of strategic challenges and growth potential. Unlike established corporations with substantial marketing resources, startups typically possess constrained budgets but greater organizational agility, positioning them to pioneer innovative engagement tactics. Their inherent flexibility enables experimentation with unconventional approaches to cut through market noise and capture Gen Z attention. For these emerging businesses, mastering generation-specific engagement strategies represents not merely a competitive advantage, but a fundamental requirement for sustainable market penetration and long-term viability.

1.2 Research Questions

This research conducts a comparative case study of two emerging French brands, Amo and Numera,

analyzing their distinct approaches to engaging Gen Z consumers. The investigation focuses on three aspects of Gen Z's consumption psychology: their demand for brand authenticity, expectation of digital-native engagement, and preference for socially conscious business practices. By systematically comparing these startups' marketing tactics, the study reveals both convergent strategies and divergent implementations across different market segments. The analysis evaluates campaign performance through multiple metrics: social media interaction rates, consumer sentiment analysis, and market share progression. These quantitative measures are complemented by qualitative examination of brand narrative coherence and value alignment. The findings demonstrate how resource-constrained startups can leverage generational insights to achieve disproportionate market impact, suggesting that strategic authenticity often outweighs budgetary advantages in Gen Z marketing.

1.3 Research Significance

This research is significant in that it offers practical insights into how startups can successfully tailor their marketing efforts to meet the expectations of Gen Z. By analyzing the strategies of Amo and Numera, this study provides a reference for other French startups seeking to innovate and improve their market positioning. It also contributes to a broader understanding of evolving marketing practices in the digital age.

1.4 Research Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative case study approach, focusing on Amo and Numera as representative examples of French startups targeting Gen Z consumers. Their marketing strategies are analyzed and compared to identify patterns, differences, and potential best practices.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Generation Z Consumer Behavior Characteristics

Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a new wave of consumers whose expectations and behaviors diverge significantly from previous generations.

Understanding their unique characteristics is crucial for startups aiming to effectively engage with this cohort.

Gen Z consumers place a high value on personalized experiences and authentic communication with brands. They expect brands to understand their needs, preferences, and identities. Traditional mass-marketing techniques tend to fall flat with this audience, which favors tailored messages and real-time interaction (Francis and Hoefel, 2018).

Social and environmental awareness is a defining trait of Gen Z. They tend to support brands that align with their values, including those that demonstrate commitment to sustainability, diversity, and ethical business practices. For startups, aligning with these values can be a major competitive advantage. Influencer recommendations, user reviews, and branded content on these platforms play a significant role in shaping their purchasing decisions (Turner, 2015).

2.2 Contemporary Marketing Theories

As marketing evolves in response to changing technologies and consumer expectations, three emerging approaches have gained prominence among startups: influencer marketing, emotional marketing, and brand communities. These theories resonate particularly well with Gen Z values and offer innovative pathways for new companies to connect with their audience.

Influencer marketing involves partnering with individuals who have built a significant following and credibility in specific niches to promote a brand's products or services. This strategy thrives on the trust and perceived authenticity that influencers have cultivated with their followers (Brown and Hayes, 2008). Gen Z values authenticity and peer-like communication, making influencer marketing particularly effective. Micro- and nano-influencers, with smaller but highly engaged audiences, are especially relevant for startups due to their cost-effectiveness and closer audience relationships (Kapitan et al., 2021).

Influencers can act as powerful intermediaries who humanize the brand and make its message more relatable. Influencer endorsements significantly affect consumer attitudes toward the brand, especially when there is a high level of congruence between the influencer's image and the brand values (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Emotional marketing aims to build strong emotional bonds between a brand and its consumers, going beyond the functional attributes of a product. It involves storytelling, symbolism, and sensory appeal to evoke specific feelings that can lead to stronger brand loyalty (Matzler et al., 2008). Gen Z consumers respond well to brands that evoke empathy, humor, nostalgia, or inspiration. Startups can harness emotional marketing by sharing authentic origin stories, challenges faced during development, or missions that resonate with broader societal values. This emotional connection encourages long-term engagement and fosters word-of-mouth promotion. Additionally, emotional marketing contributes to brand differentiation in highly saturated markets. As startups often struggle to compete on price or distribution, emotional appeal offers a unique and memorable positioning strategy.

A brand community is a group of customers who form meaningful connections with each other around their shared admiration for a brand. These communities are not just marketing tools but cultural and social ecosystems that drive customer loyalty and co-creation (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Startups can benefit significantly from fostering brand communities, especially in the early stages of business development. These communities serve multiple purposes: they offer organic brand promotion, real-time feedback, and a sense of belonging that ties customers to the brand identity. Engagement tools such as social media groups, interactive forums, and brand-led events can facilitate community development. Moreover, brand communities support peer-to-peer interaction, which Gen Z values as a trusted source of information and support.

2.3 Marketing Challenges and Opportunities for Startups

Startups navigate the business landscapes marked by resource constraints and intense competition, yet these conditions often spur creative marketing approaches perfectly suited to Gen Z consumers. The inherent limitations of startup marketing budgets demand exceptional efficiency, making cost-effective strategies like authentic influencer partnerships and emotionally resonant storytelling particularly valuable compared to traditional advertising expenditures.

The saturated startup ecosystem presents another fundamental challenge: cutting through the market

noise requires genuine differentiation through compelling brand narratives and distinctive value propositions that resonate emotionally. Interestingly, Gen Z's appreciation for raw authenticity over polished perfection allows emerging brands to turn their developmental journey and transparency into competitive advantages rather than weaknesses.

These digital-native consumers actually provide a strategic roadmap for startup marketing success through their demonstrated preferences for purpose-driven brands, interactive digital experiences, and community-oriented engagement. Startups that skillfully incorporate these elements can develop meaningful connections and foster impressive brand loyalty despite their newcomer status, proving that in today's market, cultural relevance and authentic engagement often outweigh budgetary advantages.

3 CASE STUDY

This research focuses on Amo and Numera, two post-2022 startups chosen for their groundbreaking approaches to connecting with Gen Z consumers through non-traditional marketing tactics. Operating in social technology and eco-friendly beauty respectively, these companies provide particularly insightful case studies for examining how modern brands are successfully employing emotional engagement, community-focused initiatives, and alternative influencer strategies to resonate with young consumers while staying true to core generational values.

3.1 Amo: Innovative Marketing Strategies Focused on Authentic Social Interaction

Amo is a Paris-based startup founded in 2022 by a team of former Snapchat engineers. Its mission is to reinvent social interactions for Gen Z users through apps that prioritize real-time, emotional connection. Amo's main products include Tilt (a real-time camera app that only opens once per day), Bump (a tool for making new friends nearby), and ID (a customizable social profile card). Rather than promoting likes, followers, or curated identities, these apps encourage spontaneous, personal sharing.

Amo is positioned toward Gen Z consumers, who prioritize authenticity, emotional connection, and meaningful digital interaction. This generation is increasingly skeptical of traditional influencer-driven

platforms and prefers content that reflects real life. Amo's vision directly aligns with these values by fostering intimate, friend-focused communication spaces.

Rather than relying on traditional influencers or celebrity endorsements, Amo embraces a de-influencing approach. This involves peer-to-peer promotion, community seeding, and "friend first" discovery models. It aligns with recent marketing research indicating a shift in Gen Z trust away from macro-influencers toward micro-networks (Campbell et al., 2023). Amo's growth relies on small-group virality and app-based referrals, making it a natural fit for decentralized influence strategies.

Amo brands itself around the core principle that real relationships matter more than public image. This emotional positioning taps into emotional branding, creating stronger affective ties between users and the product (Thomson et al., 2005). The emotional experience is integral to the app itself, not just its marketing campaigns. Amo's user experience is deliberately designed to market itself. Daily photo prompts, visible user actions (e.g., "you missed today's moment"), and real-time notifications generate organic content and drive re-engagement. As such, the product functions as both a utility and a viral communication engine, minimizing the need for external advertising.

3.2 Numera: A Sustainable Approach to Digital Marketing

Numera is a Lyon-based beauty and wellness startup founded in early 2023. It specializes in solid-format cosmetic products, such as solid shampoo bars, face cleansers, and body moisturizers. The brand's core promise is zero waste and carbon-neutral production, aiming to reshape consumer habits in the beauty industry. Packaging is biodegradable, and all ingredients are ethically sourced.

Numera primarily targets environmentally conscious Gen Z and Millennial customers. This demographic increasingly values brands that reflect their ecological and ethical concerns. 73% of Gen Z consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products (NielsenIQ, 2015). Numera's brand purpose which combines personal care with planetary care is an explicit response to these evolving values.

Numera promotes its products directly through platforms like Instagram and TikTok, integrating e-commerce capabilities (e.g., Instagram Shop) with user-generated product demonstrations. The brand

encourages customers to post content showing their plastic-free routines, thereby leveraging authentic content over polished ad campaigns. Inspired by grassroots sales models, Numera offers digital ambassador programs, where customers become affiliate marketers with unique referral codes. These micro-entrepreneurs are trained to represent the brand authentically and educate their audiences. This hybrid between influencer marketing and direct sales promotes ownership, trust, and relatability (De Veirman et al., 2017). The company consistently weaves its ecological mission into every piece of communication, from packaging and email newsletters to influencer partnerships and video campaigns. This deep narrative integration supports strong emotional ties and reinforces the brand's purpose-driven identity. **Erro! A origem da referência não foi encontrada..**

4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MARKETING STRATEGIES

4.1 Marketing Positioning Comparison

Amo and Numera are two emerging French startups that have adopted distinctive marketing positions aligned with the values and behaviors of Gen Z consumers. Although they operate in vastly different industries, Amo in the social media tech space and Numera in sustainable cosmetics, both aim to connect deeply with their audiences through innovative strategies.

Amo, founded in 2023 by Antoine Martin, the co-founder of Zenly, presents itself as an alternative to traditional, curated social media platforms. Its products, Tilt, Bump, and ID, focus on fostering raw, real-time, and friend-first interactions, deviating from influencer-centric engagement. Amo positions itself as an antidote to the perfection of mainstream social platforms, specifically targeting younger users disillusioned with the artificial engagement metrics and performative culture prevalent on Instagram and TikTok. By centering its brand philosophy on "real friends, real interactions," the platform deliberately rejects algorithmic virality in favor of authentic interpersonal connections, creating a space where genuine relationships take precedence over mass visibility.

Numera approaches the market differently as a mission-led beauty brand aiming to make sustainable

personal care accessible. Through its innovative solid-format product line, the company attracts environmentally aware Gen Z consumers who prioritize ethical consumption, effectively selling not just cosmetics but an entire eco-conscious lifestyle. The brand's marketing blends product education with environmental advocacy, using compelling narratives and community initiatives to foster deeper emotional investment from its customer base.

Though operating in distinct industries, both startups demonstrate how effectively addressing Gen Z's twin priorities of authenticity and social impact can drive brand success. Amo fulfills the desire for truthful digital interactions, while Numera meets the need for consumption aligned with personal values, proving that meaningful engagement outweighs traditional marketing tactics for this demographic..

4.2 Social Media Marketing Comparison

Social media plays a vital role in the marketing strategies of both Amo and Numera, yet the way each brand engages with the medium reveals profound differences rooted in their respective brand philosophies.

Amo takes a radically different approach to social media marketing by intentionally rejecting influencer partnerships, advertising, and algorithm-driven content. Instead, Amo's strategy is built on what might be described as "de-influencer marketing." The product itself becomes the main promotional tool, relying on organic, peer-to-peer discovery. This aligns with the "friends-first" interaction model that prioritizes meaningful engagement over superficial likes or shares. In this model, virality is not the objective; rather, depth and frequency of usage within small friend circles are the keys to growth. This form of social media marketing reflects the shift that emphasizes the growing Gen Z preference for authenticity over aspiration (Vredenburg and Kapitan, 2022). Amo's growth tactics, such as exclusive invite systems and time-sensitive content, stimulate curiosity and "fear of missing out"(FOMO) while keeping the platform intimate and close-knit. It is a form of "social-first" branding where community precedes brand narrative.

Numera skillfully leverages social media's dual potential for narrative-building and market expansion by blending conventional influencer partnerships with purpose-driven messaging. The company strategically partners with environmentally aware

micro-influencers whose personal commitment to sustainability lends credibility to their promotion of plastic-free living, minimalist lifestyles, and solid-format beauty alternatives. These authentic collaborations typically feature practical demonstrations, honest product assessments, and interactive sustainability challenges that motivate audience participation. Complementing this organic content, Numera incorporates seamless social commerce functionalities like in-platform purchasing options and referral incentives, effectively bridging the gap between compelling storytelling and convenient transaction opportunities. This integrated approach merges inspirational eco-conscious messaging with smooth conversion mechanisms, facilitating a natural transition from brand discovery to customer acquisition while maintaining consistent environmental values throughout the consumer journey. Gen Z consumers respond more favorably to brands that embed social responsibility in their social media presence rather than using it as a gimmick (Hughes et al., 2019).

In sum, while Amo uses social media to foster closed, personal circles of interaction, Numera leverages it as an educational and commercial tool to widen the reach of its sustainability mission. Both models are effective, yet cater to different consumer desires within the same generational cohort.

4.3 Brand Community Building Comparison

The concept of brand community has become indispensable in contemporary marketing, particularly for Gen Z audiences who prioritize meaningful connections and shared values. Amo and Numera exemplify two divergent yet equally effective approaches to community building that cater to this demographic's expectations.

Amo's community emerges organically from its product design rather than manufactured marketing efforts. The app's architecture facilitates real-time, private interactions between friends while deliberately avoiding public engagement metrics, fostering intimate digital circles where the platform naturally becomes a space for authentic micro-communities. This product-led approach aligns with Gen Z's preference for genuine connection over performative social media behaviors, bonding through shared experiences rather than curated content.

Conversely, Numera cultivates community through structured participation frameworks that transform customers into active stakeholders. The brand orchestrates sustainability initiatives, user-generated campaigns, and an ambassador program that collectively foster a multi-tiered ecosystem ranging from casual buyers to devoted advocates. By highlighting customer journeys and eco-conscious transformations, Numera builds an identity-based collective where members co-create brand meaning through their environmental commitments.

While Amo relies on platform-based interaction to build tight-knit user circles, Numera constructs an aspirational identity-based community through participation and shared values. Both models, while different in form, fulfill Gen Z's desire for connection and involvement.

4.4 Application of Sustainability Elements

Sustainability forms the foundation of Numera's entire operation, shaping everything from product design to customer communications. The brand has consistently applied circular economy concepts across its value chain, ensuring environmental responsibility influences not just marketing messages but also tangible business decisions regarding formulations, packaging solutions, and stakeholder engagement. This holistic approach to sustainability enables Numera to maintain credibility with eco-conscious consumers while differentiating itself in the competitive beauty market. Solid cosmetics reduce water content and eliminate plastic packaging, and the brand ensures transparency by communicating its ingredient sourcing and production practices. Every aspect of its brand touchpoints reinforces environmental consciousness, whether it's on social media, product labels, or customer emails. This consistency strengthens Numera's credibility as a sustainable brand and satisfies the increasing consumer demand for transparency and accountability in business practices. Nearly 73% of Gen Z consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products, a sentiment that Numera effectively captures (NielsenIQ., 2022).

In contrast, Amo does not explicitly highlight sustainability in its marketing or operations. However, one could argue that by operating entirely in the digital sphere with no physical products or logistics, the environmental footprint is inherently lower than that of traditional industries. Nonetheless,

this aspect is not framed as part of the company's narrative, and thus does not function as a competitive advantage in its branding. This absence of a sustainability message may not hinder Amo's appeal in the short term, given its focus on real-time interaction and emotional connection, but could become a missed opportunity as digital sustainability becomes more relevant.

4.5 Consumer Feedback and Market Impact

Both Amo and Numera have gained significant market traction by aligning with Gen Z's core values, though each faces unique challenges moving forward. Amo's emphasis on authentic peer connections has resulted in impressive user retention, with app store reviews and media reports highlighting its innovative approach to social networking. By eschewing traditional ads, the platform has cultivated strong user trust, though this very strength presents monetization hurdles that will require creative solutions to ensure sustainable growth while preserving its community-focused ethos.

Similarly, Numera's commitment to sustainability has driven steady monthly growth, with customers particularly praising its clean formulations, environmentally-friendly packaging, and informative brand messaging. While its influencer collaborations and affiliate programs provide cost-effective scaling opportunities, the brand must carefully maintain its authentic voice to avoid alienating its environmentally-conscious customer base that remains wary of overly commercialized partnerships. Both cases illustrate how startups can successfully engage Gen Z through value-driven approaches while navigating the inherent tensions between growth, authenticity, and financial sustainability.

5 STRATEGIC INSIGHTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

5.1 Key Findings

Amo's strategy capitalizes on Gen Z's craving for authentic connection by transforming its platform into a vehicle for genuine peer interactions rather than staged influencer content, effectively tapping into this demographic's preference for unmediated social experiences.

Numera's approach demonstrates how environmental consciousness can become a powerful brand differentiator, merging eco-friendly product development with community-driven marketing tactics that turn customers into active brand ambassadors. Both cases underscore a crucial market insight: for Gen Z consumers, emotional resonance and value alignment consistently outweigh traditional considerations like price or features when building brand loyalty.

The success of these startups highlights a fundamental shift in effective marketing paradigms, where traditional advertising gives way to strategies prioritizing community building, authentic storytelling, and shared purpose. These findings suggest that companies seeking to capture the Gen Z market must move beyond transactional relationships to cultivate meaningful connections rooted in identity and values.

5.2 Marketing Implications for French Startups

For social and digital offerings, adopting decentralized communication strategies that prioritize organic peer sharing and authentic user interactions proves particularly impactful. These platforms succeed when designed to facilitate natural user engagement, effectively transforming the product experience into its own marketing vehicle through genuine word-of-mouth propagation.

For physical product startups, especially those in lifestyle and ethical categories, combining social commerce mechanics with sustainability narratives creates powerful brand affinity. These companies benefit from implementing community-oriented sales approaches that actively involve consumers in co-creating brand stories, thereby strengthening emotional connections while increasing visibility. Despite the resource limitations typical of early-stage ventures, this focused approach centered on core values enables startups to make memorable impressions that resonate with Gen Z's priorities and consumption habits.

6 CONCLUSION

This study compares how two French startups, Amo and Numera, engage Gen Z through distinct yet equally effective strategies. Both leverage social media differently: Amo fosters intimate peer

communities while rejecting influencer culture, whereas Numera combines eco-conscious influencers with grassroots sustainability education. Their success reveals Gen Z's dual priorities: Amo demonstrates the power of authentic emotional connections, while Numera shows the importance of aligning with consumer values through its solid-format products and environmental mission. Ultimately, both cases prove that for startups targeting this demographic, building genuine community ties and demonstrating social responsibility outweigh traditional marketing approaches in fostering long-term loyalty.

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