



GEN Z: THE CREATION GENERATION

There's no doubt about it: Gen Z is an extremely influential demographic. From catapulting [Regency-era sea shanties](#) to the top of the music charts in the first months of 2021, to [crowdsourcing an entire musical](#) via TikTok, and demanding brands be held [accountable](#) for their impact on the environment, people born between 1997 and 2012 have already made a huge mark in the world — and by [2025](#), they'll account for half of consumers in APAC.

This report seeks to get to the heart of who Gen Zs are in Southeast Asia, to show that they are a generation of creatives at their core, and how brands can best approach them to start a conversation.

WHO IS THE CREATION GENERATION?

We call Gen Z the 'Creation Generation.' They love to express themselves by creating new content, whether it's a TikTok dance, a mukbang video, or an entire universe of their own design. In Southeast Asia, Gen Z accounts for one quarter of the population, and they're hungry to make their mark in the world.

There are **four key factors that contributed to the development of the Creation Generation:** — environment, technology, attitude, and society.



WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

The cortisol-inducing environment of the pandemic has only encouraged the desire in Gen Z to discover new ways to release stress, which they often find through creativity. The rise of 'small-business TikTok' in Southeast Asia, original fiction, and dance trends are all great examples. In Southeast Asia, being in lockdown led many to look for a way to express themselves, resulting in a huge outpouring of content. **Gen Z responds to stress by creating — like 'fight, flight, or write'!**

Technologically, there has been a huge democratization of the Internet in recent years. **Anyone doing anything has the opportunity to influence their peers, whether they're a singer, a dancer, or a chess grandmaster making their mark on Twitch.** The rise of local influencers are incredibly popular on the web, too, with smaller Internet users taking a stand to defend their countries against racism from larger institutions. No more is celebrity just reserved for celebrities. This has led Gen Zs to let their creator freak flag fly. And their friends are much more accepting of their individuality!

Rather than reacting negatively to others being passionate about their hobbies, Gen Zs accept and encourage them, demonstrating a big attitudinal shift. The rise of podcasts has allowed stereotypical 'geek' interests like Dungeons and Dragons to see huge popularity in the webseries Critical Role, and the once-peripheral horror community gather to listen to local podcasters like Malam Seram. With Southeast Asia's Gen Z population steadily growing, many young members of this generation are taking to the Internet to find their own voice.

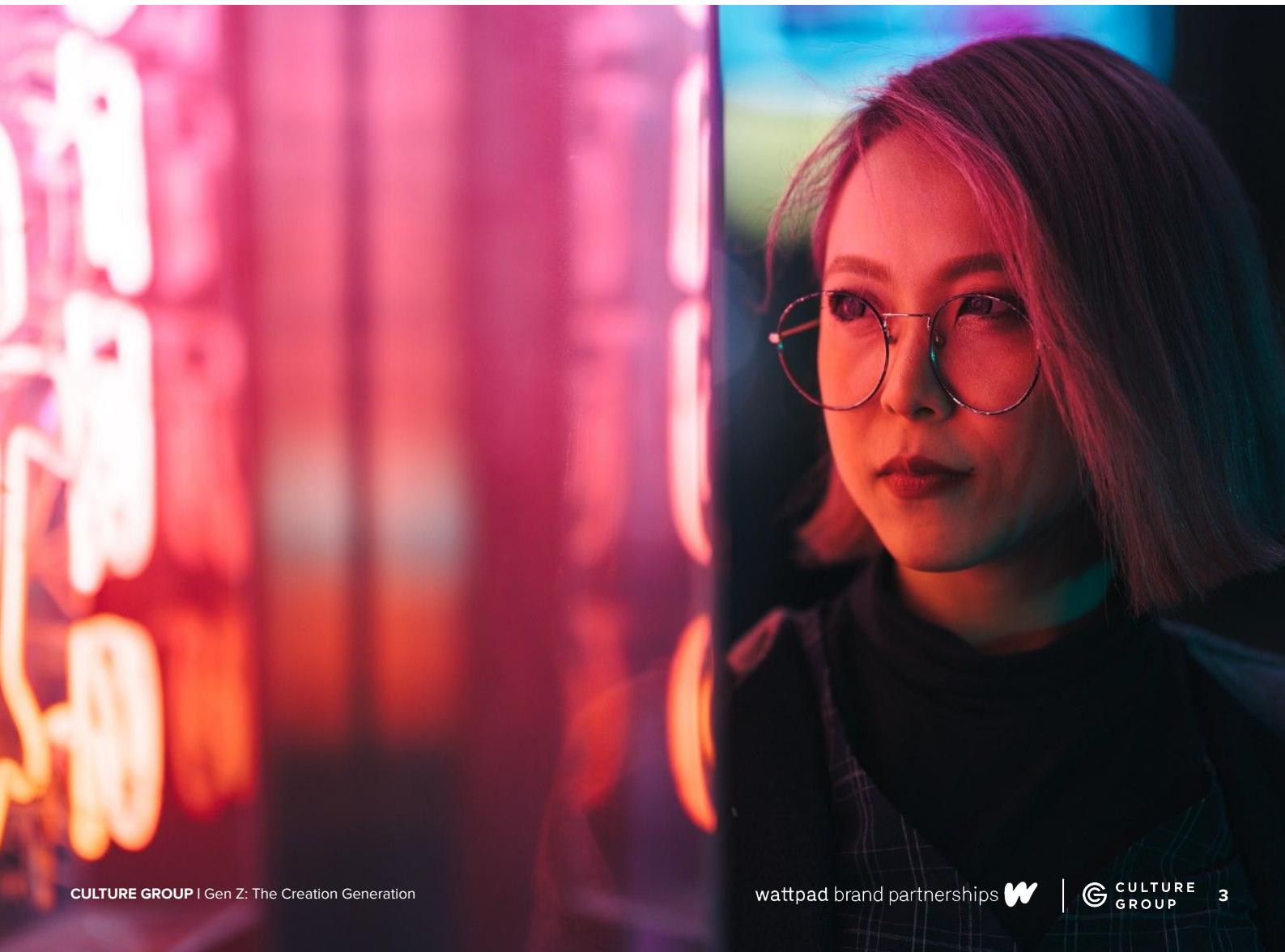
Culturally, **Gen Zs are keen to get out there and be changemakers.** Wattpad, the world's leading social storytelling platform and global entertainment company, reported a **93% increase** in the number of stories tagged #Activism in 2020, and in June alone over 5.7 million minutes were spent reading stories on Wattpad tagged #BlackLivesMatter. Gen Zs are extremely active in promoting various causes through communities and fandom movements. Last year, K-pop fans raised money to save Indonesia's mangroves as a gift to their favourite pop star.

WHO ARE THEY?

The user base on Wattpad is decidedly female, especially in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, **86% of the 9 million person community identify as women**. In the Philippines, **77% of the 6 million person community identify as teens and young women between 13 and 24**.

These creative minds spend millions of minutes collectively reading and writing on Wattpad. Stories can be anywhere from one chapter long to dozens of chapters, and some even evolve into multi-story series. For most of these writers, the goal is to share stories that could potentially build a highly-engaged fanbase. A fanbase is an incredible way for stories to get noticed by TV and film companies, which can use the highly-engaged audience to gauge interest on a certain story, trope, or trend before it even hits the screen.

The works of indie Wattpad authors have been adapted into books, TV shows and films around the world. Mediacorp Singapore's *Slow Dancing* (2021) was originally written on Wattpad, and now it's a hit TV series! The original Wattpad story garnered over 10.3 million reads on the site, and it has since translated perfectly to the small screen. Elsewhere in the region, Wattpad stories like Indonesia's *Turn On* (2021), which broke a record 10 million views in Q1 2021 before getting greenlit for a second season, and the Philippines' *She's Dating the Gangster* (2014) have been turned into huge hits on big and small screens.



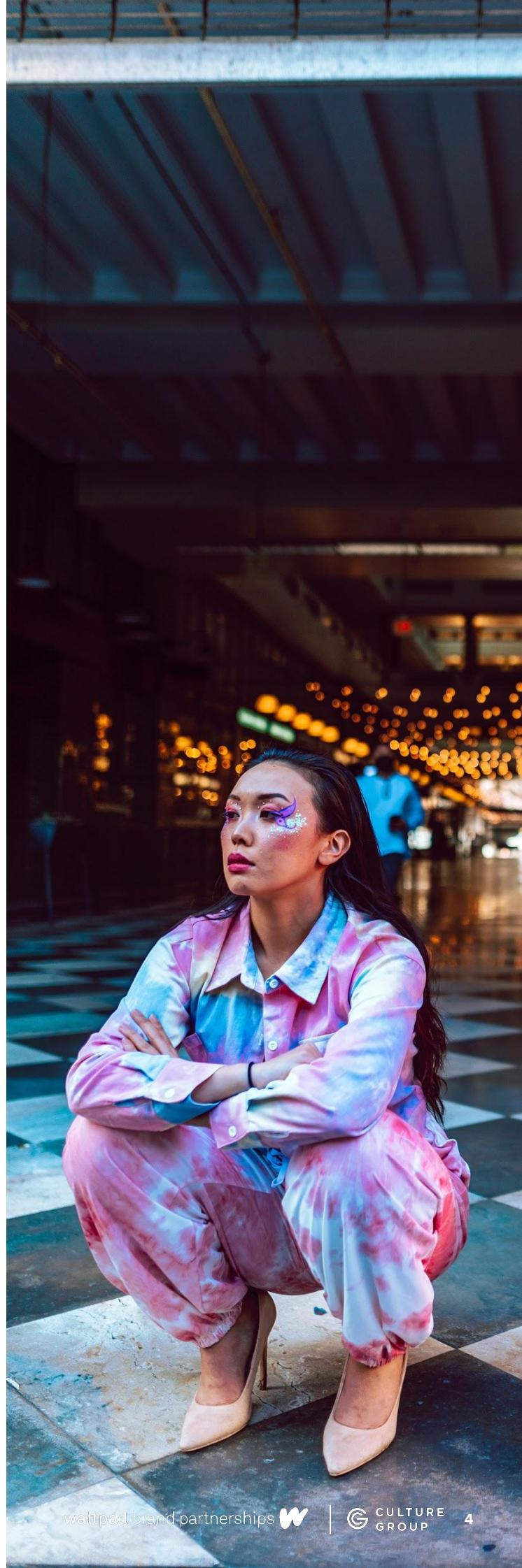
WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

The coronavirus pandemic has accounted for a global surge in reading and writing activity on Wattpad. In fact, When the pandemic first began, Wattpad saw more than 50% increase in signups in April 2020 over early March 2020. Since then, global sign ups have continued to rise, with a 53% increase in January 2021 over March 2020.

The number of new stories uploaded to Wattpad also steadily increased since the pandemic began, with a 98% increase in story part uploads in January 2021 over March 2020. In the same period, the number of new writers increased by more than 60%, showing just how Gen Zs react to stress — by creating their own narratives and building their own worlds.

The Creation Generation has had great success writing original fiction, creating their own worlds out of thin air. V.S. Santoni's *I'm a Gay Wizard*, a story set in a rich fantasy world of magic and wizardy, but featuring a diverse range of protagonists, is a perfect example. The story, which started on Wattpad, was recently published by Wattpad Books and is available to buy in stores and on bookshelves. For many young writers, this is a dream come true.

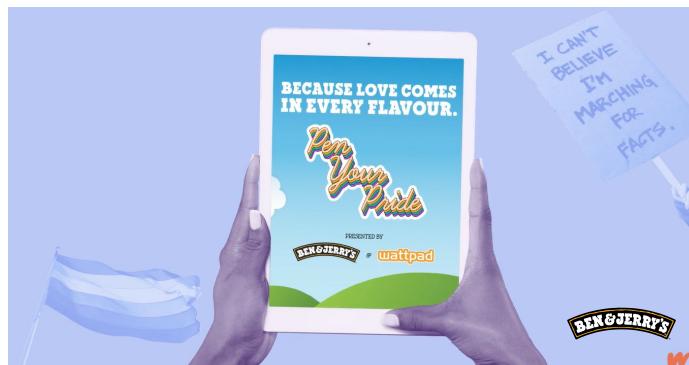
A great way to see the impact that the Creation Generation has made is in the way they write. On Wattpad, they've popularised a type of story called 'xreader,' in which the love interest is in love with the reader. The protagonist of the story is described as looking exactly like the reader through cues like "your hair colour" and "your eye colour." Over 566,000 stories have been written on the topic, with over 4 million unique readers. Gen Zs aren't just writing for others to read — they're creating whole new worlds to inhabit.



HOW CAN BRANDS UNLOCK THEM?

The Creation Generation is keen to flex their writing muscles, and are an open book to tap into. One great way that Wattpad has utilized the flair of the Creation Generation is by offering prizes for writing competitions, which gives this keyboard-happy demographic inspiration, as well as a chance to be recognized by brands, other writers, and Wattpad itself.

BEN & JERRY (PEN YOUR PRIDE)



A global write-a-thon launched in Canada aimed at positioning Ben and Jerry's ice cream as a brand for LGBTQ+ youth saw 590,999 engagements. The brand was thrilled by how the campaign cemented it as an LGBTQ+ safe space for Gen Z, tying its image to their strong sense of social justice. The Ben & Jerry's campaign on Wattpad was a fantastic way to see how Gen Z embraces, elevates, and celebrates the LGBTQ+ community.

KIN WRITING CONTEST



KIN is a TV show run by Mediacorp in Singapore. As a series of one-off specials, Mediacorp posted a competition for fans to write their own stories about the characters — alternate timelines, family secrets, swapped genders, and even flashes forward into the future. The top four most popular stories were then turned into hugely successful specials for the show. Gen Zs want to be able to react and interact with the content they consume, and by harnessing it through writing challenges, brands are able to tap into this creative spark that keeps them going.

JOLLIBEE



Jollibee, the Filipino fast food company, sponsored three new award categories to encourage the Filipino Wattpad community to share heartwarming stories — times that made them feel as good as eating Jollibee! This was huge for the brand, as it resulted in 45M+ minutes spent on branded content engagement, 23M engagements throughout the campaign, and 1,000 submissions by the end of The Wattys 2016.

WHY SHOULD MARKETERS LOOK TO LEVERAGE THE CREATION GENERATION?

Now, you're probably wondering: **Where do we fit into all of this?**

Unlike most platforms for Gen Zs, **Wattpad is a place for your brand story and brand values to live in harmony.** It's a platform where you can allow your consumers the ability to interact and engage creatively with your brand in ways most advertising media cannot.

If you let the Creation Generation create with your brand, they'll gain a deeper understanding of what you as a company stand for, what your brand is all about, and why your brand should matter to them. By being able to see themselves in what they make, whether that's in writing their own endings to pre-existing stories or by using your brand as a jump-off point to start their own worlds, Gen Zs

end up having skin in the game. They will play a much bigger role in your story as a brand, and you, in turn, will be able to live rent free in their heads.

Remember: **Gen Zs are fiercely loyal, excited, and eager to make a difference in the world.** Brands have the power to not only give them access to the things they already love, but also celebrate how this demographic is bringing their love and acceptance of the non-traditional into the mainstream through writing.

Brands that want to develop a fiercely loyal, responsive, and ardently creative community have to **reach out to Gen Z and harness their passion to make things their own.** It's the Creation Generation's world — and you can help give them the tools to help them build it.





ABOUT CULTURE GROUP

Culture Group is Southeast Asia's leading popular culture marketing agency. Our team of thinkers, makers and marketers collaborate with clients to turn pop culture moments into brand movements, resulting in business outcomes. Sitting at the intersection of culture, media, technology, and entertainment, we have an unparalleled history of ideating and activating for the region's most progressive brands, media companies, and emerging ventures.

Our experience in working across music, kpop, games & esports, beauty & fashion, sustainability, sports, and immersive technology gives us a unique perspective to forecast what's new & next in the pop culture landscape, how brands can participate, and companies to watch in the year ahead.