



# CONNECTING WITH GEN Z



INSIGHTS FOR TODAY'S  
COMMUNICATIONS CLIMATE

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Dukkan Media's Insight Deck entitled "Connecting with Gen Z: Insights for Today's Communication Climate."

As I write this, our region is tackling some of the most challenging humanitarian issues of our time. The practice and principle of building this particular deck was born out of a need to navigate the challenging communication climate faced by brands and marketers.

We embark on this journey with a sense of urgency and pride, standing strong in our resolve to be a voice from the Middle East to the World.

Our goal is to inspire courageous actions. We aim to assist brands in building communities, communicating effectively with their audiences, and supporting creative projects both online and offline.

Though our network is expansive and our insights run deep, we do recognize there are gaps in the information available, both online and offline. about Gen Z's unique behaviors and how regional socio-political dynamics influence their consumption patterns. We invite collaboration to address these gaps and enrich our understanding.

Thank you for joining us on this insightful journey. We look forward to sharing more about the region with you from our perch at the intersection of data and the ever-changing human condition.

From the Middle East to the World.

**REEM HAMEED**  
AKA AUNTIE REEM



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# METHODOLOGY

## TLDR:

Creating an insightful marketing deck for Gen Z in the GCC region involves a streamlined, two-phase approach. Initially, we'll gather a rich tapestry of data, combining AI-generated insights with comprehensive desktop research and first-hand cultural insights from our network. This phase focuses on understanding Gen Z's digital behaviors, cultural values, and social attitudes in the GCC. We'll use AI tools for trend analysis, delve into recent studies and reports, and engage with local experts and Gen Z individuals for a deeper cultural perspective.

In the second phase, we synthesize our findings to identify key patterns and insights. This involves integrating the diverse data sources to highlight prevalent themes and cultural nuances relevant to Gen Z in the GCC. The resulting deck will be structured to provide a coherent narrative, encompassing market analysis, cultural insights, and practical marketing strategies. Special emphasis will be on creating content that's both informative and culturally sensitive, supported by engaging visuals and real-world case studies. This final product will not only offer valuable insights but also practical, culturally attuned strategies for effectively engaging with Gen Z audiences in the GCC region.

## ADDENDUM:

### 1. Establishing the Framework:

- **Objective Setting:** Define clear objectives for the insight deck, focusing on understanding the cultural, social, and digital nuances of Gen Z in the GCC.
- **Scope Definition:** Determine the geographic, demographic and cultural scope, emphasizing Gen Z in the GCC region.

### 2. Data Collection and Analysis:

- **AI-Generated Insights:**
  - Utilize AI tools like ChatGPT for initial data gathering and trend analysis.
  - Generate prompts focusing on cultural trends, digital behaviors, and marketing responses among GCC Gen Z.
- **Desktop Research:**
  - Conduct extensive research on recent studies, reports, and publications relevant to Gen Z in the GCC.
  - Explore topics like digital media consumption, cultural values, and social attitudes of Gen Z in the region.

- **Cultural Insights from Network:**

- Engage with local experts and stakeholders to gather firsthand cultural insights.
- Conduct interviews or surveys with Gen Z individuals in the GCC to understand their perspectives.

### 3. Synthesizing Insights:

- **Integration of Data:** Merge findings from AI-generated insights, desktop research, and cultural insights.
- **Identifying Patterns:** Look for common themes, trends, and cultural nuances that are pertinent to Gen Z in the GCC.  
Gap Analysis: Identify any knowledge gaps and address them through targeted research or expert consultations.

### 4. Developing the Insight Deck:

- **Structure and Content Creation:**
  - Design a coherent structure for the deck, including sections like Introduction, Market Analysis, Cultural Insights, Best Practices, and Recommendations.
- **Develop content that is informative, culturally sensitive, and tailored to marketing professionals targeting Gen Z in the GCC.**

**Visuals and Design:**

- Use engaging visuals, infographics, and charts to represent data and insights effectively.
- Ensure the design is culturally appropriate and resonates with the professional audience.

### 5. Practical Application and Recommendations:

- **Strategy Development:**
  - Translate insights into practical strategies and recommendations for marketers.
- **Focus on culturally sensitive approaches, digital engagement techniques, and communication styles preferred by Gen Z.**
- **Case Studies:** Include relevant case studies or examples that demonstrate successful marketing practices within the GCC.

### 6. Review and Refinement:

- **Expert Review:** Have the deck reviewed by cultural experts and marketing professionals for accuracy and relevance.
- **Incorporate Feedback:** Revise the deck based on feedback to ensure it meets the set objectives and is culturally sensitive.

## 7. Finalization and Distribution:

- **Final Edits:** Make final edits focusing on clarity, conciseness, and visual appeal.
- **Distribution Plan:** Develop a plan for distributing the deck to the intended audience, which could include marketing teams, corporate clients, and industry stakeholders.

## 8. Feedback and Iteration:

- **Gather Feedback:** After distribution, collect feedback from users to understand the deck's impact and usefulness.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly update the deck with new insights, trends, and data to keep it relevant and valuable.

By following this methodology, you can create an insightful, culturally sensitive, and practical guide for marketers targeting Gen Z in the GCC region. This approach ensures the deck is not only informative but also resonates with the unique cultural context of the GCC.

# AI PROMPT STRUCTURE

## METHODOLOGY PROMPT:

Develop a detailed methodology for creating an insight deck focused on sensitive marketing practices in the GCC region, considering the cultural, social, and digital nuances of Generation Z. This methodology should encompass the integration of AI-generated insights, extensive desktop research, and cultural insights from our network. Additionally, the approach should detail the process of synthesizing these elements into a coherent and valuable guide for marketers, with an emphasis on practicality, cultural sensitivity, and effectiveness in engaging diverse audiences, particularly Gen Z

## Understanding the Audience:

- **Prompt for AI:** "Generate a comprehensive analysis of Gen Z's values, communication preferences, and their perspective on global issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict."
- **Why This Works:** This prompt focuses on understanding the specific demographic's viewpoints, which is essential for tailored communication.

## Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness:

- **Prompt for AI:** "Provide detailed examples of successful and respectful marketing campaigns in politically sensitive environments, highlighting strategies that avoided cultural insensitivity."
- **Why This Works:** Learning from past successful campaigns can offer valuable insights into what works and what to avoid.

## Navigating Sensitive Topics in Communications:

- **Prompt for AI:** "Outline best practices for corporations when discussing complex and sensitive global topics in their communication, emphasizing respect and cultural understanding."
- **Why This Works:** This prompt focuses on the general approach to sensitive topics, avoiding direct reference to any specific political issue. It aims to extract guidelines on respectful and culturally aware communication strategies, essential for multinational and diverse audiences.

## Crafting Engaging Content for Diverse Audiences:

- **Prompt for AI:** "Create a guide on how to engage diverse audiences, including Gen Z and older generations, on complex topics like the Israel-Palestine conflict, focusing on inclusivity and education."

**Why This Works:** It's important to address different age groups separately, as their perceptions and media consumption habits can vary widely.

## Risk Management and Crisis Communication:

- **Prompt for AI:** "Develop a crisis communication plan for potential backlash or misunderstandings arising from marketing communications related to sensitive geopolitical issues."
- **Why This Works:** Preparing for potential negative reactions is a key part of risk management in sensitive communication.

## Feedback and Iteration:

- **Prompt for AI:** "Analyze feedback mechanisms that can be used to gauge audience response to marketing content about sensitive topics like Israel-Palestine, and suggest iterative improvements."
- **Why This Works:** Continuous improvement based on audience feedback ensures that the communication strategy remains relevant and respectful.



# O1

CHAPTER 1:

# UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE



**“You don’t talk to Gen Z, you listen to them.”**

Aqib Anwar AKA @GibsterG

## DIGITAL SAVVY

Gen Z consumers in the GCC, who demonstrate a preference for digital payments, showcase their digital savviness—a trait underscored by the high usage of mobile phones and internet in the region. This trend reflects their comfort and proficiency with digital technology.

Over the past three years, our exploration of the banking sector, with a specific focus on technological advancements within conventional banks, has been conducted in response to the escalating digital demands of millennials and Gen Z throughout the GCC region on behalf of our client, **R/GA**. Our research has revealed that the digital preferences of Gen Z extend beyond just utilizing digital banking services. We have observed their inclination to fulfill banking needs online, with a preference for digital interactions. In instances where direct communication is necessary, there is a distinct avoidance of traditional phone calls, often resorting to engaging with banks' **IVR (Interactive Voice Response)** virtual assistants. The least favored option appears to be physically visiting a bank branch. This trend is further substantiated by the increasing migration towards digital banks that lack physical locations for in-person visits.



[Source photo: Anvita Gupta/Fast Company Middle East]

[Gen Z & Millennials in The UAE Turn To Social Media To Shop...](#)

[READ MORE](#)

## EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS:

In the UAE, Gen Z's perspective on education is evolving, influenced by the rise of digital entrepreneurship and the gig economy. This shift indicates a broader change in how education and career paths are viewed, moving away from traditional academic pursuits towards digital and entrepreneurial ambitions.



UAE: Gen Zs no longer interested in traditional schooling...

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## SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

It is noted that younger generations, including Millennials and Gen Z, are more engaged with climate change issues than older adults. This trend likely extends to Gen Z in the GCC, considering their global connectivity and access to digital information.



COP28: A Business Revolution for Climate Action... [READ MORE](#)

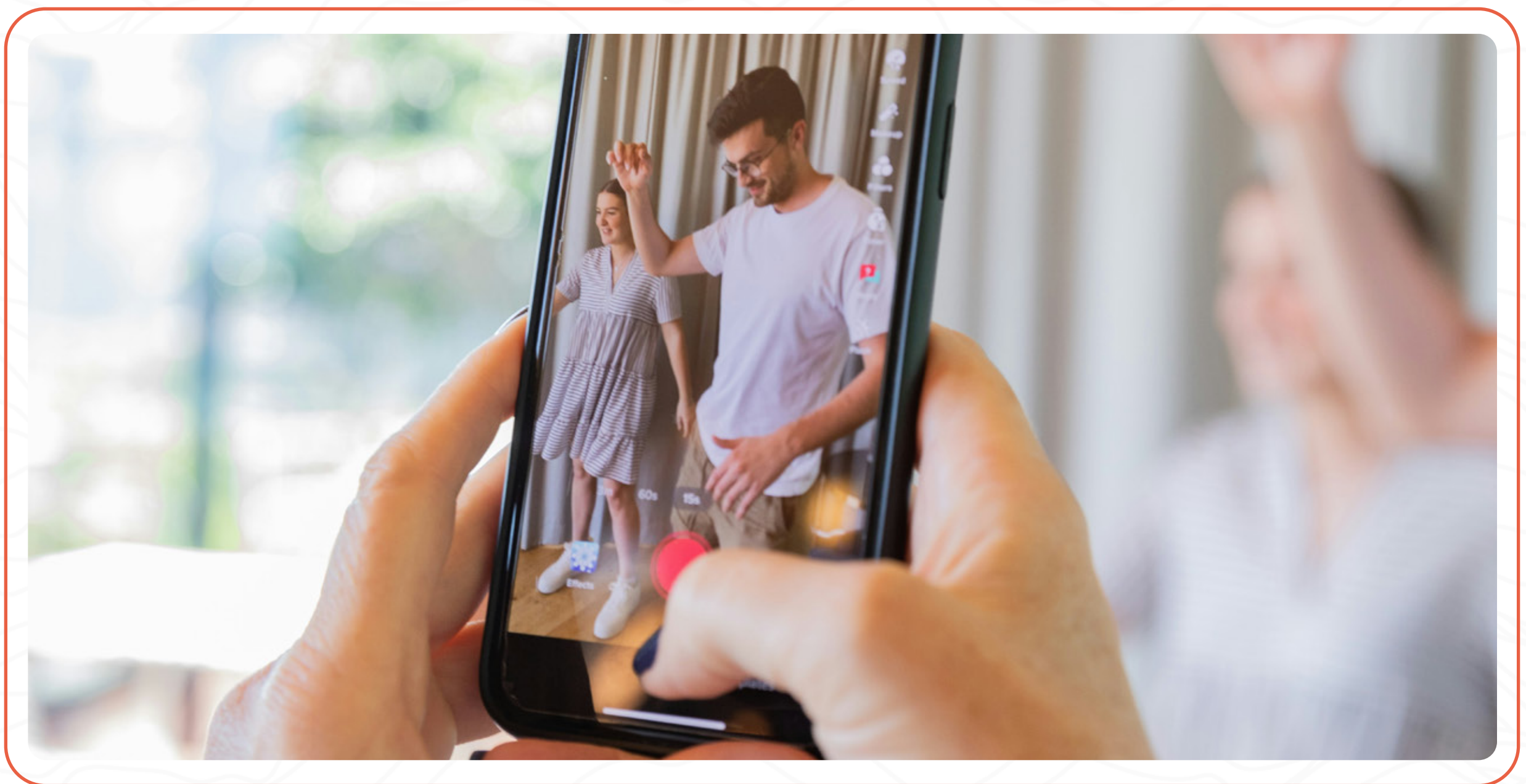


Gen Z Takes a Seat - and Sets the Table - at COP28... [READ MORE](#)

## COMMUNICATION STYLE:

Gen Z's communication style is characterized as concise, informal, and heavily reliant on digital formats like text. They value transparency and personal interactions, reflecting their upbringing in a digital world.

Generation Z embraces digital communication as second nature. They prefer instant messaging, video conferencing, and collaboration tools. They appreciate authentic, real-time feedback and seek diverse and inclusive workspaces.



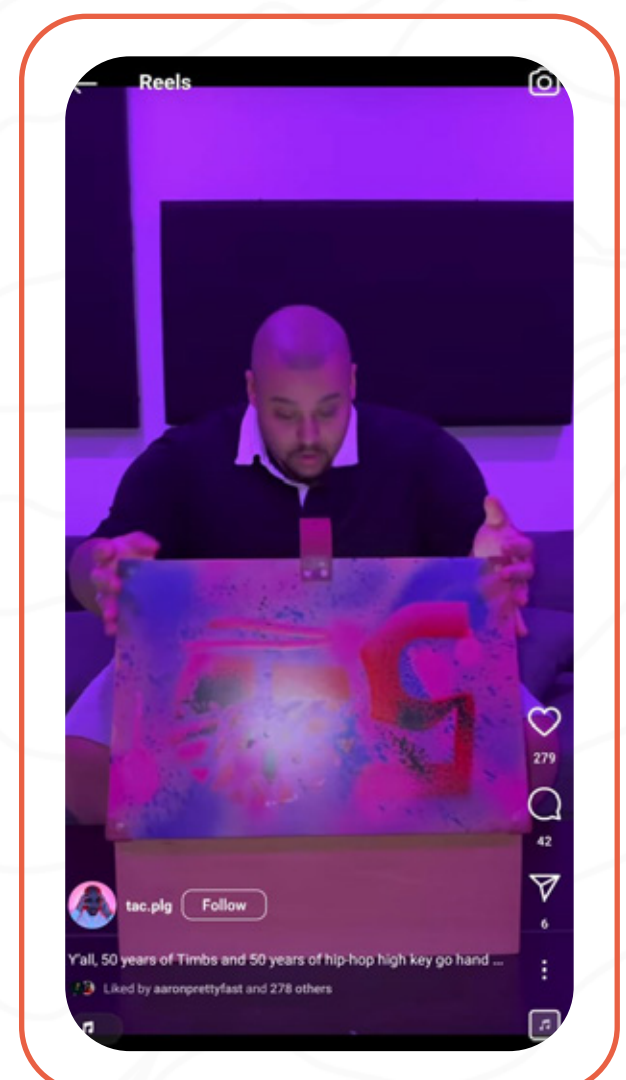
[Understanding Generational Diversity in the Workplace...](#)

[READ MORE](#)

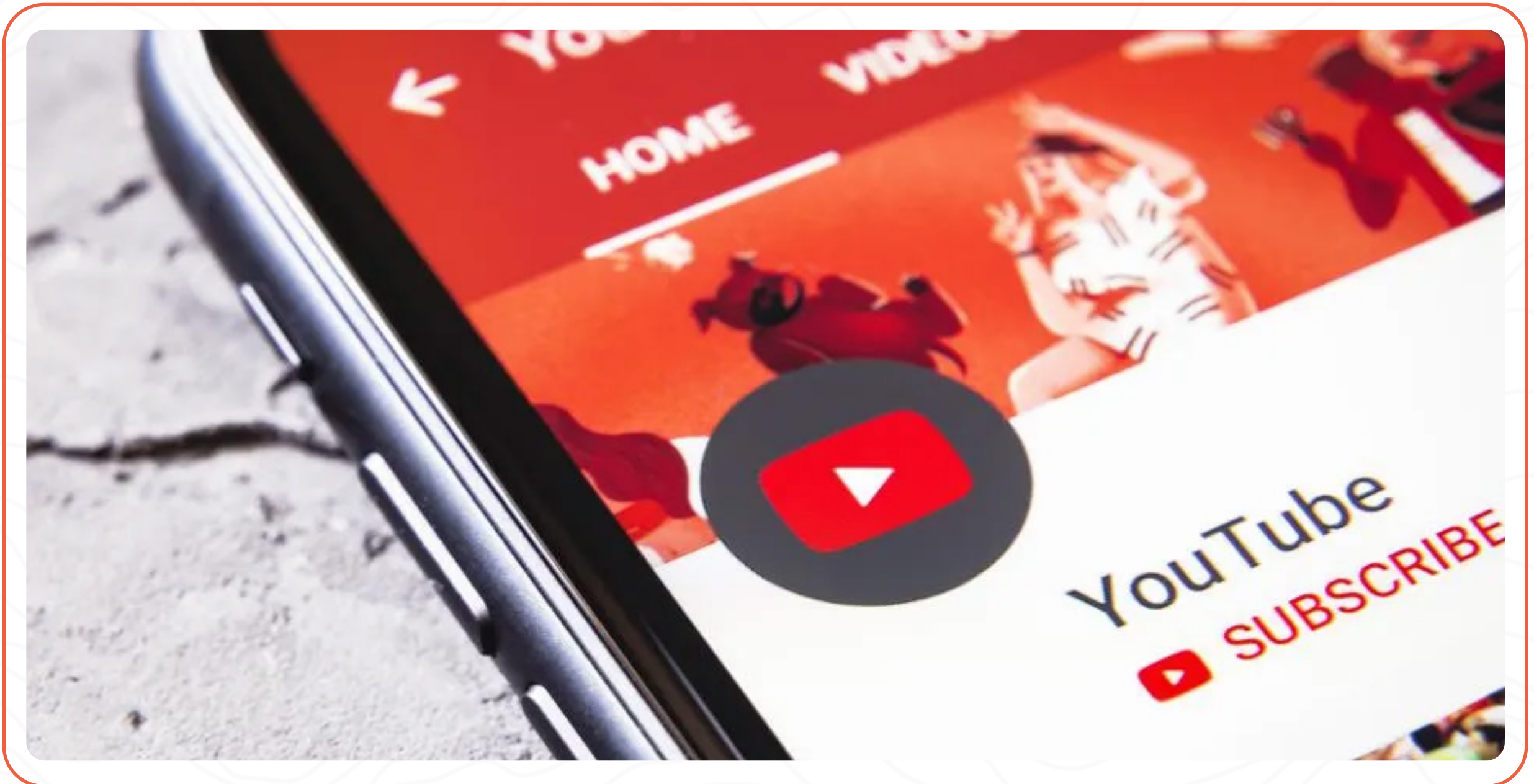
## VISUAL AND INTERACTIVE CONTENT:

Known as the "Tik Tok generation," Gen Z's preference for visual and interactive content is shaped by their familiarity with social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat.

Gen Z and their learning preferences. LinkedIn Pulse.



The key to Gen Z is video content. Forbes.

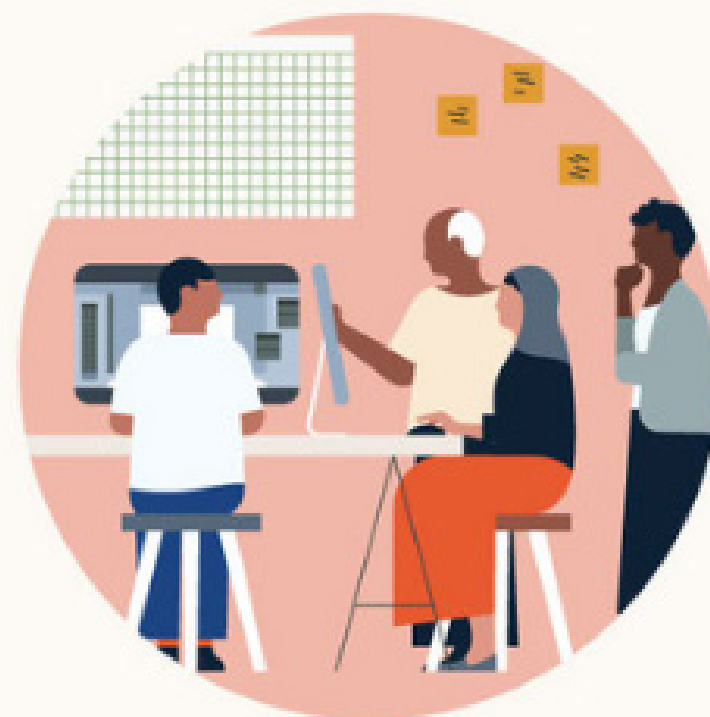


The Key To Gen Z Is Video Content...

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What Gen Z  
Actually Wants



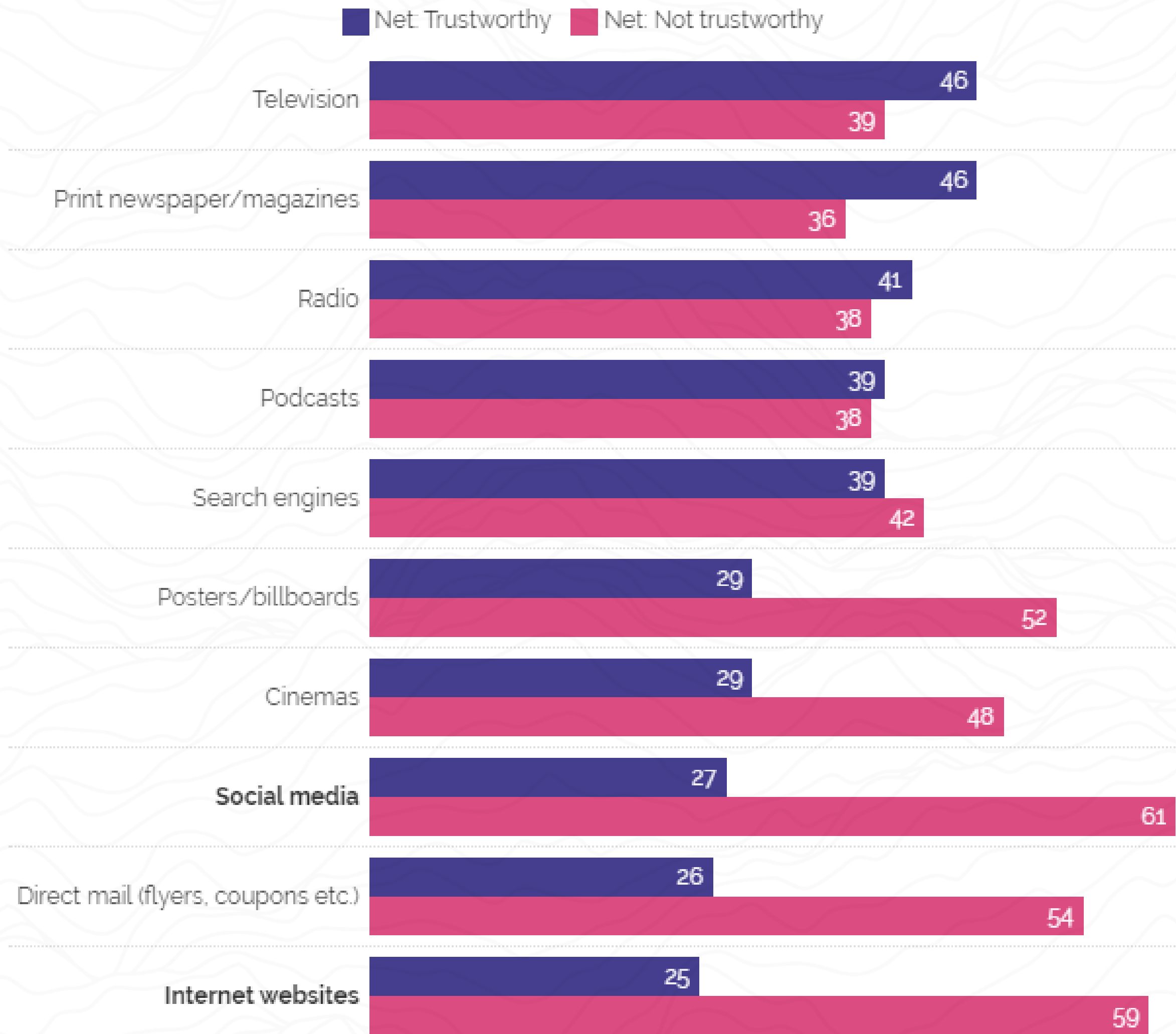
L&D Perception of what  
Gen Z Wants

Gen Z and their learning preferences ...

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## Gen Z tends to distrust online and social media ads

How trustworthy, if at all, do you consider advertising to be in each of the following types of media? (% of US adults aged 18-24)







The Gen Z Perspective ...

WATCH NOW!

# GAP

## CULTURAL PRIDE & IDENTITY

I conducted a search to find specific references regarding Gen Z's cultural pride and identity in the GCC. However, I was unable to find direct sources that specifically address this aspect for Gen Z in the GCC context. The available information did not provide a clear insight into how Gen Z in the GCC perceives and expresses their cultural pride and identity.

# 02

CHAPTER 2:

## **CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN THE GCC - A PRIMER**

# NAVIGATING THE NUANCES OF A DIVERSE REGION

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, encompassing Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, presents a dynamic and culturally rich landscape for businesses seeking to establish a successful presence. Understanding and respecting the intricate cultural sensitivities within each nation is paramount for building trust, fostering meaningful connections, and achieving sustainable success. This chapter serves as a formal primer, guiding you through the fundamental principles of cultural sensitivity in the GCC.

## 1. Embracing the Tapestry of Diversity:

Each GCC nation boasts a distinct cultural identity, shaped by its unique heritage, language, and customs. Recognizing and appreciating this diversity, from national variations to local nuances within each country, establishes a foundation for respectful interactions and trust-building.

## 2. Unveiling the Layers of Local Customs:

Beyond national distinctions, a wealth of local customs dictates social etiquette, nonverbal communication, and religious observances within each GCC nation. Understanding these intricate details, from greetings to attire, ensures respectful engagement and avoids unintentional offense.

## 3. Cultivating Respectful Communication:

Language serves as a powerful tool for building positive relationships and fostering understanding. In the GCC, employing inclusive and respectful language, devoid of discriminatory terms and offensive references, is essential. Additionally, adapting humor to resonate with local sensibilities demonstrates cultural awareness and appreciation.

## 4. Building Trust through Transparency and Authenticity:

Transparency and authenticity are cornerstones of building trust in the GCC. Clearly communicating your intentions and objectives while engaging in open dialogue demonstrates a commitment to ethical practices. Acknowledging limitations and embracing feedback further strengthens relationships and fosters genuine connections.

## 5. Empowering Diverse Voices:

The GCC is a vibrant tapestry woven with diverse voices. Partnering with local influencers, community leaders, and various cultural representatives ensures your communication reflects authentic perspectives and resonates with the intended audience. This collaboration fosters trust and strengthens the foundation for meaningful engagement.

## 6. Fostering Collaboration and Partnerships:

Building bridges requires collaboration. Partnering with local businesses, organizations, and influencers allows you to gain valuable insights, navigate the complexities of the market, and establish a strong presence within the community. This collaborative approach fosters trust and creates mutually beneficial relationships.

## 7. Demonstrating Commitment through Local Initiatives:

Support for local causes and initiatives that resonate with the community demonstrates your commitment to the region and its people. This social responsibility not only strengthens your reputation but also builds positive associations with your brand and fosters a sense of belonging and trust.

## 8. Embarking on a Journey of Continuous Learning:

Cultural sensitivity is a continuous journey, not a destination. Staying informed about emerging trends, evolving social norms, and changing sensitivities within the GCC is crucial for maintaining effectiveness and relevance. Actively engaging with local discourse, embracing feedback, and adapting your strategies as you learn and grow ensures you navigate the dynamic landscape of the region with confidence.

## 9. Building Bridges through Respect and Appreciation:

By embracing cultural sensitivity, you embark on a journey of building bridges and fostering meaningful connections across diverse communities within the GCC. Respecting traditions, honoring local customs, and appreciating the unique cultural tapestry of the region are key to establishing a successful presence and building lasting relationships.

This formal primer provides a foundational understanding of cultural sensitivity in the GCC, equipping you with the knowledge and tools to navigate the region's diverse landscape. By continuously learning, adapting your strategies, and prioritizing cultural sensitivity in your endeavors, you can build trust, foster positive relationships, and achieve sustainable success within the dynamic and vibrant GCC market.

**Lush Cosmetics' Environmental and Social Campaigns:** Lush Cosmetics is known for its strong stance on environmental conservation and ethical sourcing. They have launched various campaigns focusing on issues like animal testing, LGBTQ+ rights, and environmental sustainability. For instance, their "Gay is OK" soap campaign raised awareness and funds for LGBTQ+ rights. Lush's approach to marketing is respectful and sensitive to cultural and political nuances, emphasizing ethical sourcing and cruelty-free products, aligning with their brand values and customer expectations.

**Ben & Jerry's "Pecan Resist" Campaign:** Ben & Jerry's launched the "Pecan Resist" flavor and campaign to support groups fighting against regressive policies in the United States. The campaign was sensitive to political issues, focusing on positive messages of change and inclusion, and successfully avoided cultural insensitivity by partnering with and supporting diverse social justice groups.

**Patagonia's Environmental Advocacy:** Patagonia has been known for its environmental advocacy, including its campaign to protect national monuments. Their marketing strategy involves taking a stand on environmental issues without alienating customers. By focusing on broad environmental concerns rather than specific political figures or parties, they've managed to engage in sensitive political matters respectfully.

# 03

CHAPTER 3:

# NAVIGATING SENSITIVE TOPICS IN COMMUNICATIONS

In a world increasingly interconnected and yet marked by profound cultural differences, the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively across these divides is not just valuable but essential.

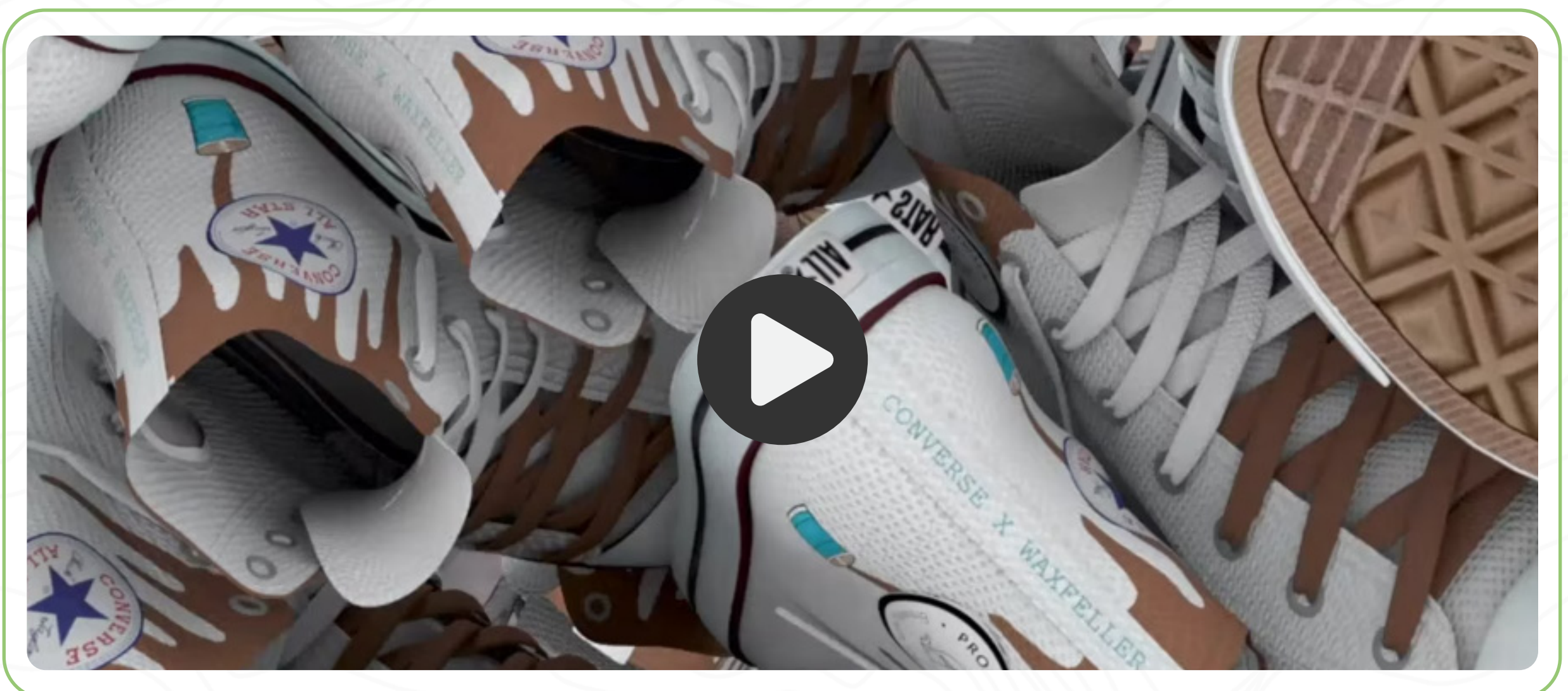
This chapter delves into various strategies and principles crucial for navigating the delicate terrain of cross-cultural communication. From understanding the cultural context to engaging in active listening, using respectful language, ensuring transparency, collaborating with experts, and fostering empathy, each section offers insights into how to handle sensitive topics with care and understanding. Additionally, this chapter emphasizes the importance of balanced representation, ongoing education, responsiveness to feedback, legal and ethical considerations, and consistency across communication channels.

These components are critical for anyone looking to communicate effectively in a globalized world, ensuring messages are not only heard but also respected and understood across different cultural landscapes.

Here is an outline of best practices that corporations can undertake when navigating sensitive topics in communications.

## 1. Understanding the Cultural Context:

- Research the cultural, social, and political backgrounds of the regions and communities involved.
- Recognize diverse perspectives and avoid assumptions based on your own cultural norms.
- Thorough research into the cultural nuances of different regions is crucial. For instance, McDonald's tailors its menu in India to respect local dietary preferences, offering vegetarian options and avoiding beef. Similarly, Netflix adapts its content and subtitles for regional markets, showing an understanding of local languages and cultural references.



## 2. Engage in Active Listening:

- Encourage a culture of listening to understand, not just to respond.
- Show genuine interest in different viewpoints and experiences.
- Proper listening involves withholding judgment and embracing cultural openness. By demonstrating a genuine curiosity and openness to understanding diverse perspectives, we create a space for meaningful cross-cultural communication. This involves not only hearing words but also acknowledging the nuances of cultural context, fostering empathy, and building connections that transcend boundaries.
- This involves paying close attention to the voices and concerns of local communities. Starbucks, for example, holds community meetings to understand local needs and preferences, shaping their services accordingly. LEGO engages with its global fan community through online platforms, gathering feedback and ideas for new products.

### EXAMPLES OF HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE IN ACTIVE LISTENING

- Consumer testing in Sprints.
- Focus groups.
- 1 on 1 interviews.
- Video + audio podcast episodes.

**Get in touch if you would like to explore any of these options with Dukkan**

### Respectful Language and Tone:

Using inclusive language helps avoid alienation. Coca-Cola, in its global campaigns, often uses universal themes and avoids cultural stereotypes, focusing on messages of unity. Google, in its international communications, maintains a neutral and respectful tone, ensuring its messages are culturally sensitive.

### Transparency and Honesty:

Being open about objectives and limitations builds trust.

Patagonia openly shares its environmental impact and ongoing efforts towards sustainability, acknowledging areas for improvement.

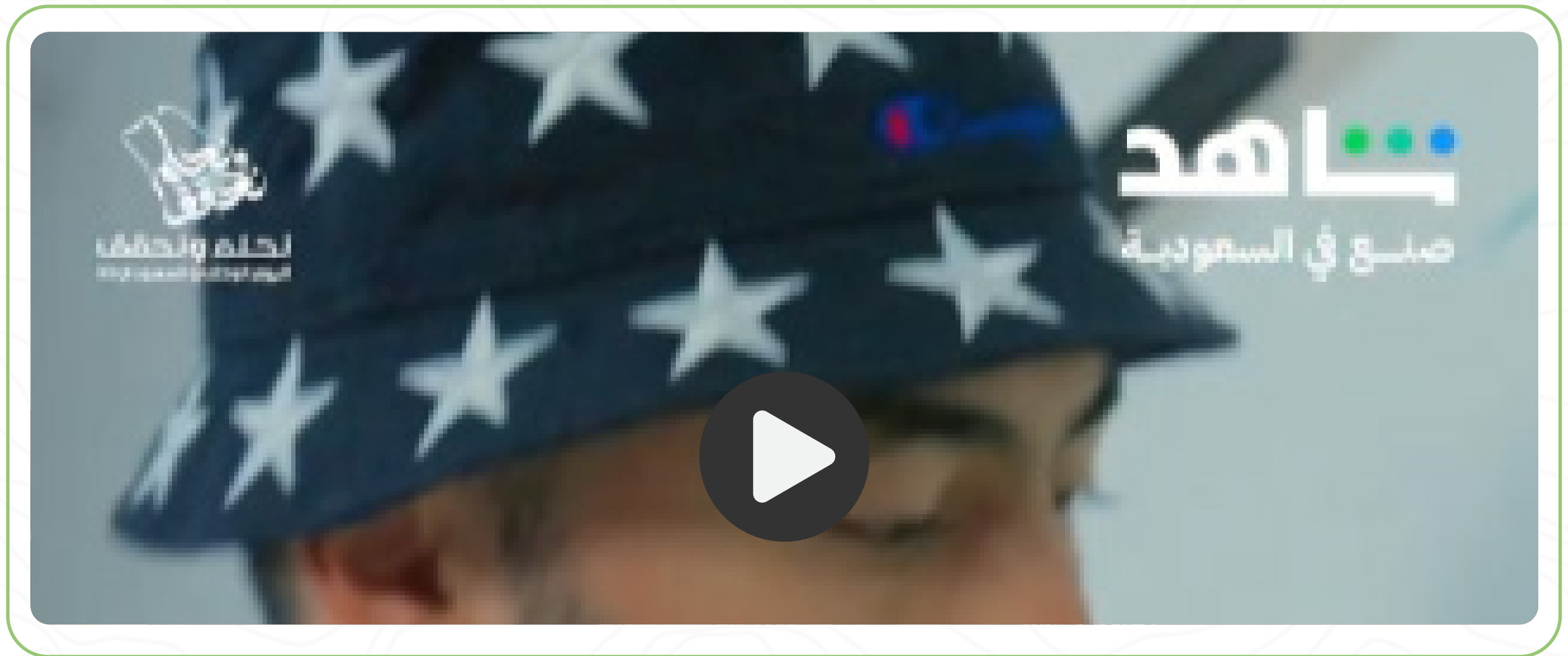
Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan outlines its goals and progress in a transparent manner, fostering trust among consumers.

Amongst Few fire situation.

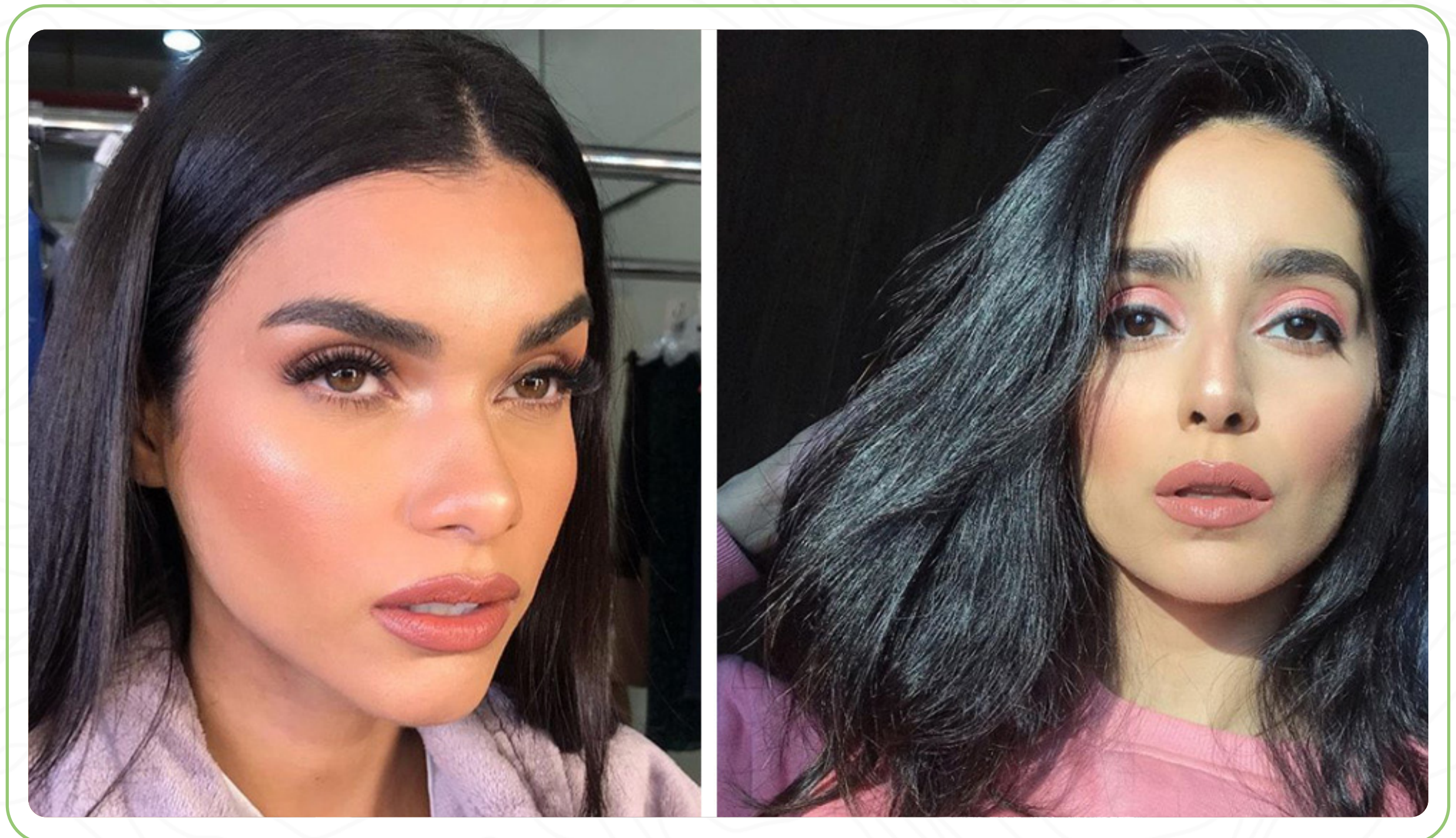


### Collaboration with Experts:

- Partnering with cultural experts can guide communications. Example: Saudi National Day video by Shahid, a statement made in collaboration with young Saudi artists.



- Sephora example:



Sephora Middle East Launches The First Regional Beauty Influencer Programme...

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Sephora's collaboration with experts to build the Sephora Squad exemplifies a progressive approach to influencer marketing and community engagement. Recognizing the diverse needs and preferences of its customer base, Sephora engaged with beauty experts and influencers from various backgrounds and specialties to form the Sephora Squad. This initiative was not just about promoting products, but also about creating a platform for authentic voices in the beauty industry. By collaborating with these experts, Sephora ensured that its marketing and product recommendations were inclusive, culturally sensitive, and resonated with a broad audience. This strategy demonstrates an understanding of the importance of diverse representation in beauty and retail, and positions Sephora as a brand that values expert opinions and diverse customer experiences. The Sephora Squad, therefore, serves as a bridge between the brand and its diverse customer base, providing insights and guidance that are both relevant and respectful of the varied beauty narratives in its community.

- IKEA collaborates with local artisans and designers when entering new markets to ensure cultural relevance in their products. Microsoft works with local educators globally to tailor its educational software, ensuring it meets regional educational needs.

### **Empathy and Compassion:**

- Showing understanding towards diverse experiences is key. Airbnb launched campaigns showing support for refugees and displaced individuals, demonstrating empathy.

### **Balanced and Fair Representation:**

- Ensuring a diversity of perspectives in communication is important. Tier e-mobility company from Germany, launching in the GCC with UAE as a launchpad has introduced itself in the market by celebrating and showcasing the diversity through the hand picked cast, who aren't actors at all but rather real people who represented themselves and the brand authentically.



Take a ride. Take a friend. Take a break. Take a TIER...

WATCH NOW

- BBC World Service, in its news coverage, strives to provide a balanced view, representing multiple viewpoints. The Economist regularly features articles and reports from various global perspectives, ensuring a wide range of voices are heard.

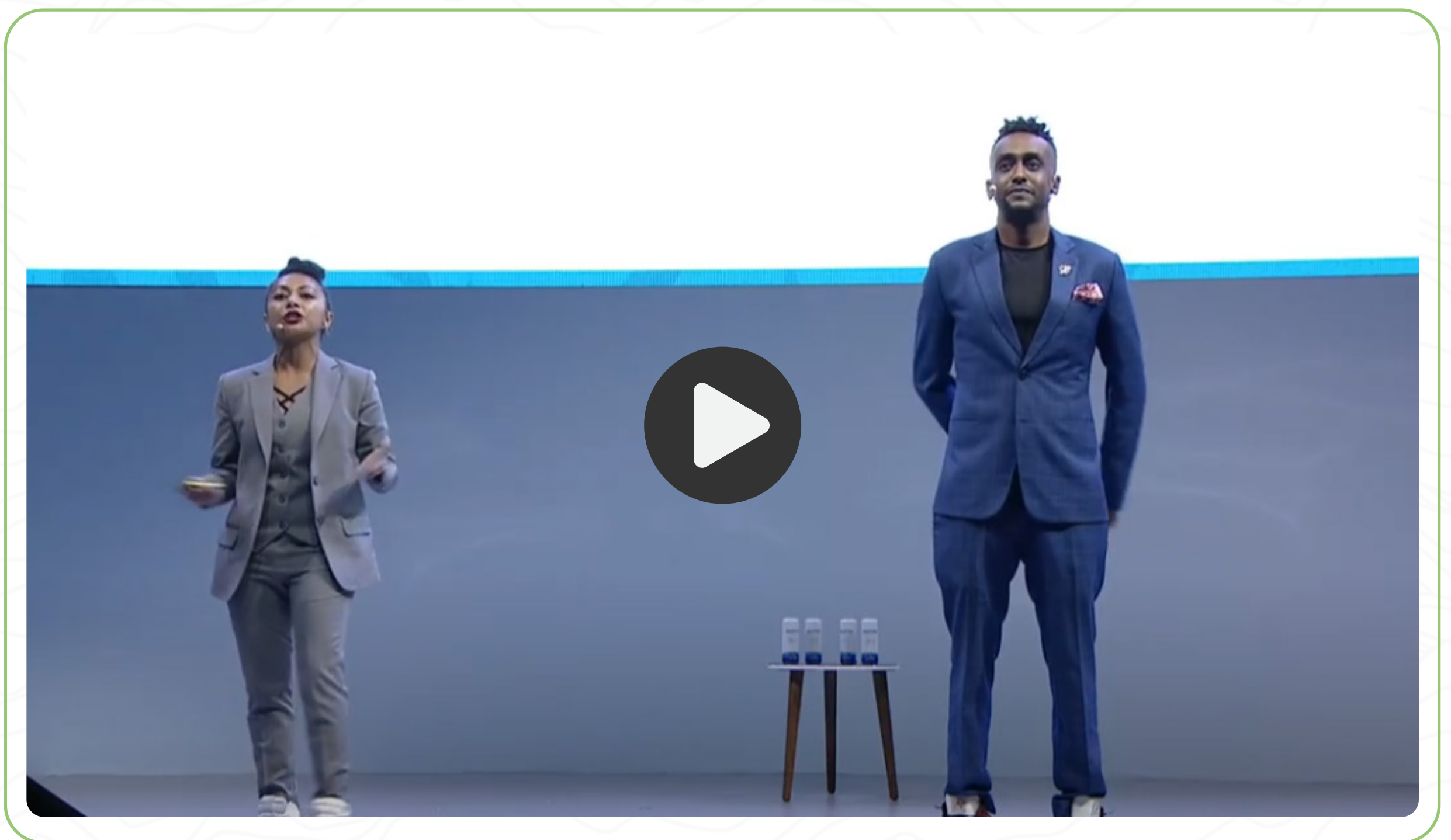


BBC Announces Plans To Be The Benchmark ...

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## Ongoing Education and Training:

- Continuous learning about cultural nuances is vital. Accenture offers its employees extensive diversity and cultural sensitivity training. HSBC has cultural exchange programs for its employees to foster understanding of the diverse markets they operate in.
- WCCE Talk:  
Here's an example of us using our podcasts and tools to document, analyze and share insights of the various the cultural nuances and developments that we've learnt from our guests on the Dukkan Show podcast.



World Conference on Creative Economy (WCCE 2021) Keynote...

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## Consistency Across Channels:

- Maintaining a unified message across platforms is important for global brands.

Nike's consistent branding and messaging across different countries reinforce its global presence.

Apple ensures that its core values of innovation and quality are reflected consistently in its marketing across different regions.

# 04

CHAPTER 4:

# RISK MANAGEMENT AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

# RISK MANAGEMENT AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis communication plan for potential backlash or misunderstandings arising from marketing communications related to sensitive geopolitical issues in the GCC introduction. Navigating sensitive geopolitical issues in the GCC region requires a delicate approach, especially when it comes to marketing communications. Brands operating in the GCC must be mindful of the region's cultural sensitivities, political complexities and diverse audience perspectives to avoid potential backlash or misunderstandings (Al-Khateeb, 2013). This crisis communication plan outlines strategies for proactive preparation, effective response, and rapid resolution in the event of a crisis arising from marketing communications related to sensitive geopolitical issues.

Proactive Preparation; so you don't come off as tone-deaf:

## 1. Establish a Crisis Communication Team:

Assemble a dedicated team with expertise in public relations, crisis management, cultural sensitivity, and geopolitical understanding (Kerr & Scoones, 2009).

## 2. Conduct Thorough Research:

Before engaging in any marketing communication during sensitive geopolitical issues, conduct in-depth research to understand the historical context, cultural implications and potential sensitivities surrounding the topic (Sullivan & Ramsey, 2012).

## 3. Seek Expert Guidance:

Consult with local experts, cultural consultants and political analysts to gain insights into potential sensitivities and ensure messaging aligns with regional norms (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

## 4. Develop Guidelines and Protocols:

1. Establish clear guidelines and protocols for reviewing and approving marketing materials to minimize the risk of unintentional missteps (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

## 5. Monitor Social Media and Media Outlets:

Continuously monitor social media and media outlets to identify and address emerging issues or concerns promptly (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

## EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

### 1. Prompt Acknowledgment:

In the event of a crisis, acknowledge the issue promptly and sincerely. Demonstrate empathy and understanding towards those affected. (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 2. Open and Transparent Communication:

Maintain open and transparent communication throughout the crisis. Provide clear and accurate information to address concerns and prevent misinformation (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 3. Engage with Affected Communities:

Engage directly with communities affected by the crisis, listen to their concerns, and facilitate solutions when relevant and possible. (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 4. Cultural Sensitivity and Respect:

Maintain utmost cultural sensitivity and respect in all communications. Avoid language or imagery that could be perceived as insensitive or offensive (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 5. Seek Expert Support:

If necessary, engage external experts in crisis management, public relations, and cultural consultancy to guide the response and ensure effectiveness (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

## IF YOU DROP THE BALL:

### 1. Identify Root Causes:

Conduct a thorough investigation to identify the root causes of the error and implement corrective measures to prevent recurrence (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 2. Issue Clear Apologies:

1. Offer sincere apologies to those affected by the crisis, acknowledging any mistakes or missteps (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 3. Demonstrate Commitment to Change:

1. Demonstrate a genuine commitment to change and implement measures to prevent similar incidents in the future (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 4. Rebuild Trust and Relationships:

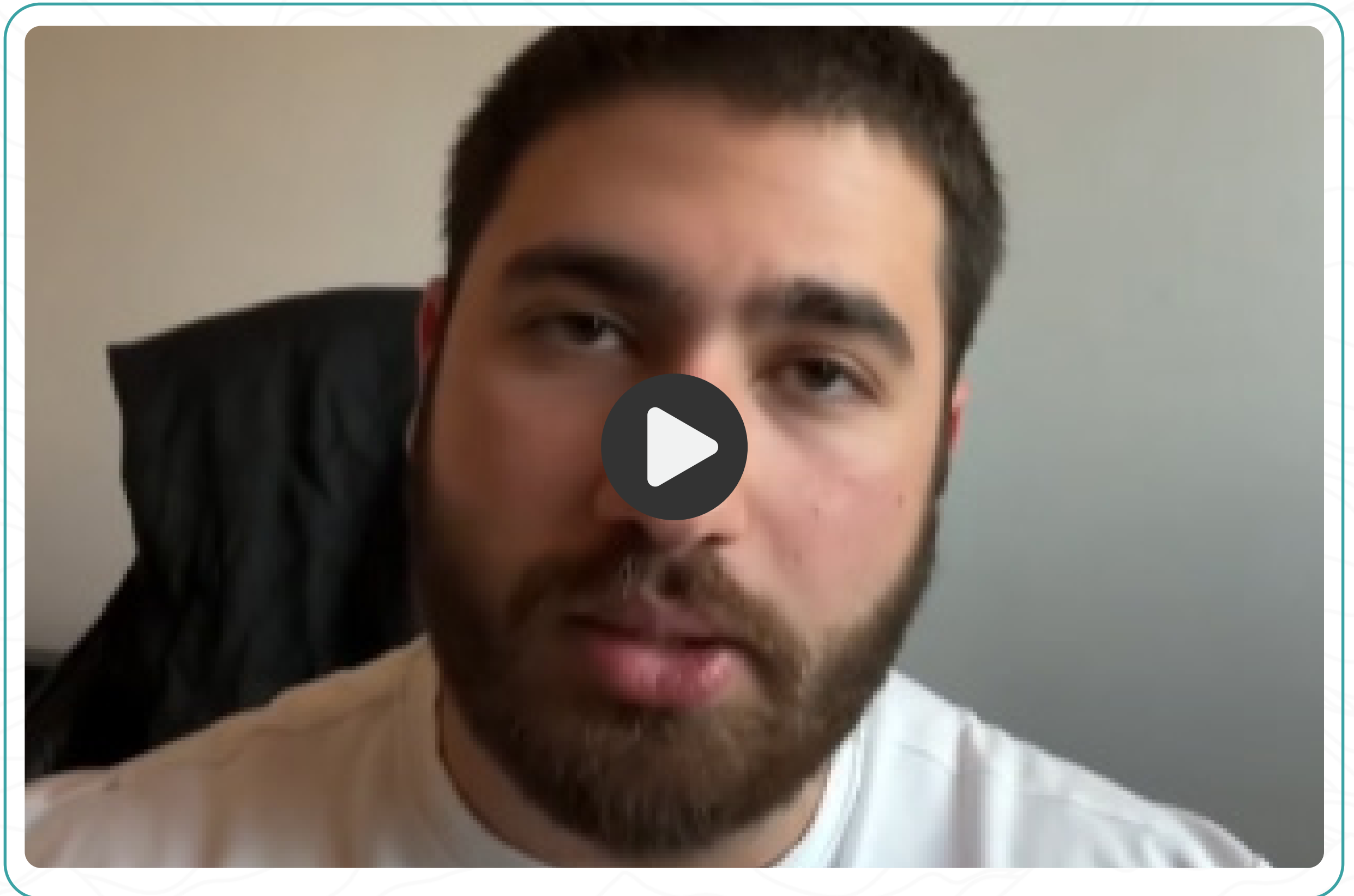
1. Actively rebuild trust and relationships with stakeholders, customers, and the wider community through transparent communication and positive actions (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

### 5. Continuous Learning and Improvement:

1. Utilize this crisis as an opportunity to learn, adapt, and improve communication strategies to navigate sensitive geopolitical issues effectively in the future (Coombs & Holt, 2007).

## EXAMPLES

Example of what you should do: Shawn's statement prior to:



Examples of what you shouldn't do:

- Example 1 Zara New Ad Campaign (2023).





Focusing on crisis communication planning in the context of sensitive geopolitical issues in the GCC, the recent situation faced by Zara serves as a pertinent case study. Zara launched an ad campaign titled "The Jacket," which inadvertently sparked controversy due to its imagery.

The campaign featured models posing with broken sculptures wrapped in plastic and fabric, which critics argued evoked images from the Gaza conflict, specifically the shrouded bodies of victims.

Despite Zara's clarification that the campaign, conceived in July and photographed in September, aimed to showcase garments in an artistic context, the timing coincided with the Israeli offensive in Gaza, leading to public backlash. Zara responded by expressing regret over the misunderstanding and removed the images from the campaign.

This situation highlights the need for brands like Zara to employ thorough research and expert guidance in their marketing communications to preemptively identify and mitigate potential sensitivities, especially in regions like the GCC where geopolitical issues are highly sensitive

- Example 2: Pepsi's "Live for Now" Campaign (2012)

In 2012, Pepsi launched the "Live for Now" campaign in the Middle East, featuring a commercial that showed a group of young people from different cultures enjoying life together. However, the commercial was criticized for its perceived insensitivity to the ongoing Arab Spring uprisings, which were taking place in several countries across the region. Pepsi was accused of trivializing the struggles and suffering of the people affected by the uprisings.

References:

"Pepsi Pulls Ad Criticized for Insensitivity to Arab Spring" by The Guardian (2012)

- Example 3: Waleed Shah Satwa

In a neighborhood of old Dubai, a controversial photo shoot set among the traditional barbershops and corner shops sparked a significant debate about cultural appropriation and race politics. The shoot featured a fashion model and was initially well-received on social media. However, the narrative shifted when the images were posted more permanently online, leading to accusations of exploiting the poor and insensitivity to racial and cultural dynamics. The photographer defended the choice of location, citing personal connections to the neighborhood and its culture. Local residents and shopkeepers involved in the shoot reported the experience as respectful and saw no issue with the portrayal. Reflecting on the incident, it was recognized that there is a global conversation

about cultural appropriation that demands sensitivity and awareness, highlighting the importance of comprehensive storytelling and giving credit to all participants to foster community solidarity.



Scandal in Satwa: the fashion shoot in old Dubai that sparked debate about...

[READ MORE](#)

- Example 4: KitKat's "Have a Break" Ramadan Campaign (2020)

In 2020, KitKat launched a Ramadan campaign in the Middle East featuring a commercial that showed a man breaking his fast with a KitKat bar. However, the commercial was criticized for its perceived disrespect towards the sanctity of Ramadan. The brand apologized for the commercial and removed it from circulation.

References:

"KitKat Apologizes for Ramadan Ad Deemed Disrespectful" by Arab News (2020)

# 05

CHAPTER 5:

# FEEDBACK AND ITERATION

Customer feedback remains a vital element in product development, marketing, and sales, and its importance is undiminished for Gen Z.

However, the methods for gathering feedback and insights require adjustments to align with this generation's unique preferences and communication styles.

By adapting these practices, brands can gain crucial insights into how their content resonates with Gen Z audiences, identifying opportunities for enhancement and tailoring their strategies accordingly.

Here are some specific feedback mechanisms that can be used to engage Gen Z in the GCC:

- **1-on-1 Interviews:** Personalized interviews offer an opportunity for direct, in-depth conversations with individual Gen Z members, providing unique insights into their perspectives and experiences.
- **Focus Groups:** Focus groups can be a valuable way to get in-depth feedback from Gen Z in the GCC. Brands can use focus groups to gather insights on a variety of topics, such as brand perception, product preferences, and marketing campaigns.
- **Social Media:** Social media is powerful for engaging with Gen Z to gather feedback on their marketing content and they've got great tools, such as running polls, hosting discussions and tracking sentiment.
- **Opinion Shapers' Consultations:** Brands should also consult with Gen Z Opinion Shapers on marketing and culture to help them acquire feedback and insights.

In addition to using feedback mechanisms, brands can also take other steps to engage Gen Z in the GCC and improve their marketing content. Such as:

- **Be truly authentic & transparent:** understandably true authenticity and transparency might be difficult to achieve, yet the practice of constant course correction and genuine attempts by brands to truly be authentic and transparent go a long way. [Dukkan Media's Open Letter]
- **Be culturally sensitive:** The GCC is a diverse region with rich cultures, history, tribes and communities. Brands should be mindful of cultural sensitivities, when developing any marketing content. [Soul of Dubai Podcast highlights the culture that makes Dubai].

Fam,  
If you're reading this, then you know who we are and what we stand for.  
Thank you for supporting us all these years.


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**Arab-owned and led.**  
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And right now, we are hurting. Badly.  
We refuse to be led by this pain, but it is there.  
It was always there.  
Why else would we build a universe to make a home for people who belong nowhere and everywhere?

For years, we have tackled issues surrounding the Arab experience through our work.  
**Our episodes**, posts and live activations **encapsulate the voices of leaders** who toil to make the world a more equitable place.


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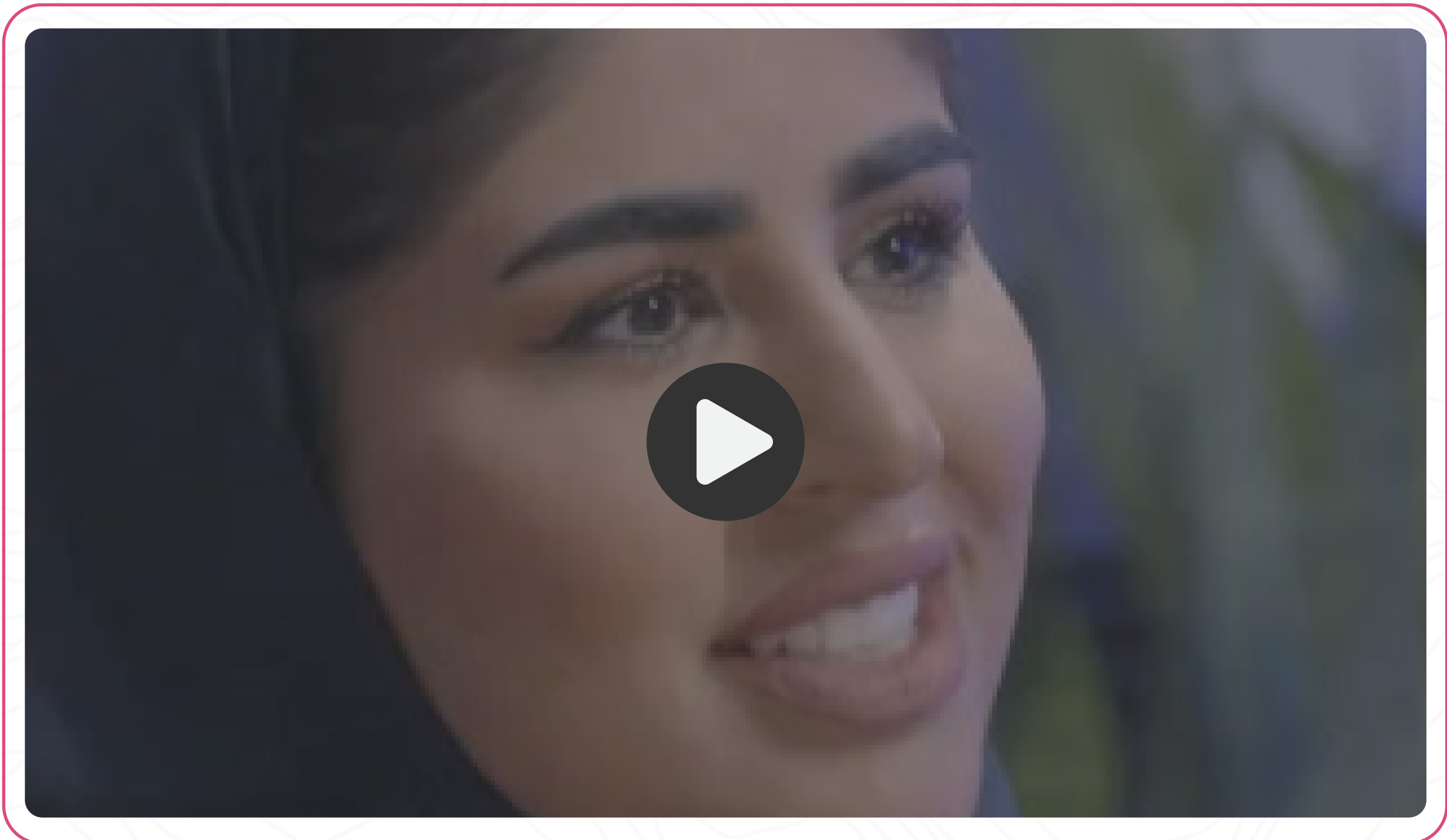


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- The “Soul of Dubai” podcast is a series that celebrates Dubai’s unique character and culture. It highlights the city’s “unique heartbeat, youthful soul, and magical culture,” which is constantly being redefined and celebrated by its incredibly diverse population. The podcast aims to acknowledge and honor the various individuals who contribute daily to Dubai’s vibrant community and its prominent position in the global landscape
- Be inclusive: The GCC is incredibly diverse. Brands should create marketing content that is inclusive and representative of all the people that fit within their target audience.
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- Be inclusive: The GCC is incredibly diverse. Brands should create marketing content that is inclusive and representative of all the people that fit within their target audience.



- Be socially conscious: As social issues and sustainability are becoming center stage, especially with events such as COP28 being held in the region, the role the countries in the GCC have committed to play and Gen Z tackling social issues openly online, brands should show that they are committed to social responsibility and sustainability.[Adidas plastic sneakers, Timberland Dukkan]
- With social issues and sustainability increasingly at the forefront, particularly with events like COP28 in the region and GCC countries’ commitments to social responsibility, along with Gen Z’s active engagement in social matters online, it’s crucial for brands to demonstrate their commitment to these values. Embracing social consciousness and sustainability in brand strategies is essential to resonate with contemporary audiences and align with the evolving global narrative.

These examples demonstrate the power of engaging Gen Z in feedback mechanisms to create marketing content that is relevant, authentic, and aligned with their values. By actively listening to the voices of Gen Z, brands can foster meaningful connections, build trust, and establish themselves as leaders in the GCC and worldwide.

# 06

CHAPTER 6:

# TRENDSPOTTING



## TREND 1: EMBRACING PURPOSE-DRIVEN MARKETING

Consumers in the GCC are increasingly drawn to brands that align with their values and make a positive impact on society. Brands can harness this trend by incorporating purpose-driven messaging and initiatives into their sensitive marketing campaigns.

### Key Considerations:

- **Authenticity:** Brands should genuinely care about the causes they support and demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility, aligning with the values of GCC consumers. (Al-Hallaq, 2019)  
**Example:** UAE-based telecommunications company Etisalat has launched several purpose-driven initiatives, such as the Future of Good Awards, which recognize and support social entrepreneurs in the region. This campaign aligns with Etisalat's commitment to social responsibility and resonates with GCC consumers who value innovation and social impact.
- **Relevance:** Purpose-driven messaging should be relevant to the brand's products, services, and target audience, addressing issues that resonate with GCC consumers. (Alawadi & Al-Kuwari, 2020)  
**Example:** Saudi Arabia-based food and beverage company Almarai has implemented sustainable agriculture practices and reduced its environmental footprint. This aligns with Almarai's commitment to sustainability and resonates with GCC consumers who are increasingly concerned about environmental issues.
- **Measurability:** Brands should track the impact of their purpose-driven marketing efforts and communicate their progress to consumers, demonstrating tangible outcomes. (Al-Yahya, 2022)  
**Example:** Kuwaiti-based bank Gulf Bank has launched a financial literacy program for youth. This campaign aligns with Gulf Bank's commitment to education and financial inclusion, and the bank measures the program's impact through increased knowledge and skills among participants.

## TREND 2: UTILIZING USER-GENERATED CONTENT FOR AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

User-generated content (UGC), such as customer reviews, social media posts, and testimonials, can provide authentic and relatable voices for sensitive marketing campaigns in the GCC.

### Key Considerations:

- **Community Engagement:** Encourage UGC creation by actively engaging with GCC consumers, fostering online communities, and running contests or challenges tailored to local preferences. (Al-Deeri & Al-Khalifa, 2022)  
Example: Qatari-based fashion retailer Fifty One East has encouraged UGC creation by hosting design competitions and sharing customer-submitted photos of their outfits on social media. This approach has fostered a sense of community and enhanced brand engagement.
- **Curating and Vetting:** Carefully curate and vet UGC to ensure it aligns with brand values, is culturally sensitive, and adheres to ethical standards, maintaining brand reputation and avoiding offensive content. (Al-Azzawi, 2023)  
Example: Kuwaiti-based beauty brand GlamGlow has established a UGC review platform where customers can share their experiences and product reviews. The brand carefully curates and responds to reviews, demonstrating responsiveness and customer care.
- **Attribution and Recognition:** Properly attribute UGC to its creators and recognize their contributions to the brand's marketing efforts, fostering a sense of community and appreciation. (Al-Mulla & Al-Haddad, 2023)  
Example: UAE-based ride-hailing app Careem has implemented a program that rewards customers for sharing their positive experiences on social media. This approach recognizes customer contributions and encourages continued engagement.

## TREND 3: PRIORITIZING DATA PRIVACY AND ETHICAL USE OF CONSUMER DATA

Data privacy and ethical use of consumer data are paramount considerations in sensitive marketing in the GCC. Brands must demonstrate responsible data practices and build trust with consumers.

### Key Considerations:

- **Data Transparency:** Clearly communicate data collection practices, usage purposes, and privacy policies to consumers. This includes providing easily accessible and understandable information about how their data is collected, used, and shared. (Al-Shehhi, 2023)
- **Data Security:** Implement robust data security measures to protect consumer information from unauthorized access or misuse. This involves employing advanced encryption techniques, access controls, and regular security audits to safeguard sensitive data. (Al-Kuwari & Al-Hallaq, 2023)
- **Consumer Consent:** Obtain explicit and informed consent from consumers before collecting, using, or sharing their personal data. This ensures that consumers are aware of and agree to the data practices employed by the brand. (Al-Mulla & Al-Haddad, 2023).

**Example:** UAE-based online food delivery platform Zomato has implemented a clear opt-in mechanism for data collection, requiring explicit consent from customers before using their data for marketing purposes. This approach respects consumer privacy and ensures compliance with data protection regulations.

## TREND 4: EMBRACING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND INCLUSIVE MARKETING

Sensitive marketing requires a deep understanding of cultural nuances, avoiding stereotypes and ensuring inclusivity. Brands should represent diversity and adapt their messaging to specific cultural contexts.

### Key Considerations:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Conduct thorough research and seek expert guidance to understand cultural sensitivities and avoid unintentional offense. This involves engaging with local experts and community members to gain insights into cultural norms and expectations. (Al-Azzawi, 2022)
- **Inclusive Representation:** Ensure that marketing campaigns represent the diversity of the target audience, avoiding stereotypes and promoting inclusivity. This means showcasing a diverse range of models, ages, ethnicities, and abilities in marketing materials. (Al-Deeri & Al-Khalifa, 2022)
- **Localized Adaptation:** Tailor marketing messages, imagery, and language to resonate with specific cultural contexts and local communities. This involves considering local preferences, language dialects, and cultural references to enhance relevance and engagement. (Al-Shawi, 2021).

**Example:** Kuwaiti-based food delivery app Carriage has localized its app interface and marketing materials to cater to the preferences of Kuwaiti consumers, including culturally relevant menu options and Arabic language support. This localization enhances user experience and builds brand affinity.



# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX

## CHAPTER 4: RISK MANAGEMENT AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

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## CHAPTER 6: TRENDSPOTTING

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