

# Inkbox: temporary tattoos catering to commitment-phobia

CASE STUDY | Jun 24, 2022

Catering to self-expressive yet commitment-phobic Gen Zers, Inkbox's temporary tattoos offer short-lived and customizable body art without risk of regret. For an impulsive generation keen on flexibility and keeping up with trends, can brands offer the fleeting fun that today's young people are after?

## AUTHORS

Jacqueline Salomé

**LOCATIONS:**  
UNITED STATES

**GENERATIONS:**  
GEN Z (BORN  
1997-2010)  
GEN Y (BORN  
1982-1996)

**SECTORS:**  
SHOPPING  
BEAUTY



## EXPERTS

Kate Messinger

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 01** Inkbox gives people a chance at 'lasting main character energy' through over 10,000 pre-made temporary tattoo designs or tools to draw their own
- 02** Temporary tattoos are perfect for commitment-phobic and impulsive Gen Zers who are interested in personalized products and self-expression
- 03** The social media shareability of made-to-fade tattoos, as well as their ability to keep up with rapid trend cycles, have influenced their success

## DATA

- 41% of American Gen Yers and 23% of Gen Zers have at least one tattoo
- One in six Gen Zers say they aren't consistent in how they portray themselves online
- 71% of consumers expect companies to deliver personalized interactions and 76% get frustrated when it doesn't happen

## SCOPE

Tattoos have been the epitome of cool for generations, a trend that stands today for the 41% of American Gen Yers and the 23% of American Gen Zers who have at least one tattoo. [1] Though tattoos are becoming less culturally taboo, especially in urban centers, they still come with a risk of regret as styles and interests (and lovers' names) change over time. That's where [Inkbox](#), a temporary tattoo brand offering 'lasting main character energy' for commitment-phobic Gen Zers, comes in. With over 10,000 designs made of proprietary, plant-based ink that fades within 1-2 weeks, Inkbox provides Gen Zers with the customization and flexibility they're after, allowing them to explore their ever-evolving identities without lasting consequences. With prices ranging from \$7 to \$23, Inkbox allows for a level of spontaneity that normal tattoos don't, as even the smallest permanent tattoo incurs minimum costs of \$100.

Both Gen Yers and Zers have been conditioned to value flexibility, evident in the 72% of Gen Zers who have left or considered leaving their job due to an inflexible work policy. [2] Commitment-free flexibility also shapes their identities – one in six Gen Zers say they aren't consistent in how they portray themselves online, and as 1.2 million LGBTQIA+ Americans identify as non-binary, many are exploring gender fluidity and are less willing to stick to rigid stereotypes of how they should present themselves. [3][4] That's why when it comes to tattoos, "the only thing that may hold Gen Zers back is the idea of life-long commitment," says Kate Messinger, head of content at temporary tattoo brand [Ephemeral](#). [5]

As one of the only North American companies making semi-permanent tattoos using ink that sinks deeper into the skin, Inkbox has profited from being first-to-market, leading to its acquisition by Bic in January 2022 for \$65 million. [6] Its designs have been featured in movies and TV shows like *Stranger Things*, and have been spotted on celebs including John Legend. Artist collaborations with [Post Malone](#), [Kurtis Conner](#), and others have further propelled the brand's popularity, along with slick branding and a strong social media strategy centered on re-sharing photos of youth wearing their 'temporary bad decisions' on [TikTok](#) and [Instagram](#). What can the rise in popularity of temporary tattoos tell us about catering to the commitment-phobia, impulsivity, and personal expression of Gen Zers?



Inkbox offers 10,000 designs made of proprietary, plant-based ink that fade within two week

@getinkbox | Twitter (2022)

## CONTEXT

### CUSTOMIZABLE FUN

Social media and the proliferation of direct-to-consumer brands have created a marketplace with high consumer expectations for customized content – 77% have either selected or paid more for a personalized experience, and 44% of Gen Zers will give up their data for it. [7][8] Customisation is more than a shopping experience – it helps Gen Zers express their unique personal identities. “Gen Zers are young people just experimenting with who they are,” says Messinger – and they’re using temp tattoos to do it. [5] Alongside Inkbox, brands like [Tattly](#) and [Momentary Ink](#) nail customization through their massive libraries of pre-made tattoos for every niche interest, and by allowing consumers to upload their own designs.

### NO REGRETS FOR THE COMMITMENT-PHOBIC

Economic insecurity has created two generations of youth who haven't been given the tools to commit to anything: only 30% of Gen Yers live with a spouse or a child, far below other generations, while one in ten urban Gen Yers scrapped

home ownership plans after the pandemic. [9][10] COVID-19 uncertainty exacerbated existing fear of commitment – in January 2020, before the pandemic had taken hold, around 50% of Gen Zers reported that they go to bed without any idea of what the next day will hold, and 40% said their life felt inconsistent and unpredictable. [3] Temporary tattoo brands like Inkbox transmute the stresses of commitment and uncertainty into a moment of fleeting fun for risk-averse generations. [Ephemeral](#) markets its tattoos as made to fade in nine to 15 months as a way to ‘regret nothing’, while [Conscious Ink](#) offers fine-line mantra tattoos with spiritual sayings that may resonate for now, but not forever.

## IMPULSIVE GENERATIONS

“I think every generation gets blamed for having a shorter attention span, but I’d argue that we all live in the fast-fashion, fast-food, fast-everything generation now, and we want options. Gen Z is just bold enough to admit it,” says Messinger. [5] [TikTok](#) has been linked to shortening attention spans, and “shorts” are being adopted across all social media platforms, with fast-paced online trends influencing the purchase decisions of an impulsive generation – as is evident in the 28% of Gen Z who have bought something they’ve seen on TikTok. [11] By keeping up with what’s hot now – like Y2K and vaporwave designs – and making its tattoos eminently shareable on social media, Inkbox drives Gen Z’s online impulse buys and makes them possible with affordable pricing.



The variety with affordable pricing of Inkbox tattoos appeal to impulse-buying Gen Zers

@getinkbox | Twitter (2022)

## INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### GET PERSONAL

Younger people want flexibility and customization and they’re willing to pay a premium for it, as shown by the 71% who expect companies to deliver personalized interactions and the 76% who get frustrated when this doesn’t happen. [12] Brands have an opportunity to offer uniquely personal product offerings that not only make shopping effortless but also



cater to Gen Z's desires for fluid, individual and personalized self-expression. Inkbox's [tattoo marker](#) is a great example, giving consumers the tools to draw their own designs – an important offer for the 73% of Gen Zers who believe more self-expression leads to a happy life. [13]

## SHAREABILITY DRIVES IMPULSE BUYS

“People naturally love to show off their tattoos, but since ours fade, it's something you need to celebrate in the now,” says Messinger. [5] The time pressure of a short-lived product can add fuel to impulse buys, catering to consumers living in the here and now. Brands can prioritize promoting products that are trending on social media in order to gain impulse buys from young consumers and add to social media product virality. As 97% of Gen Z consumers say they use social media for shopping inspiration – the hashtag [#TikTokMadeMeBuyIt](#) has over 14 billion views – brands can capture this audience's attention by prioritizing authentic, organic user-generated content – both Inkbox and Ephemeral repost Instagram photos of peoples' tattoo fade stories. [14][15]

## KEEP UP WITH TREND CYCLES

One way that Inkbox stays relevant is by offering on-trend designs through unique artist partnerships, and brands can tap into the power of influential cultural figures that can flexibly shapeshift according to trend waves. In collaboration with [BTS](#), Inkbox released a tattoo series inspired by the band's hit tracks, and they've also released tattoo replicas of [Rupi Kaur's Insta-famous poetry](#). These collaborations have staying power, as new tattoos can be released with any new song or book or whatever an artist is currently promoting. To stay current, brands can also look at keeping up with micro-influencers – who one in four Gen Zers see as key to developing new trends – as a way to tap into engaged fan audiences. [16]

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