

KANTAR

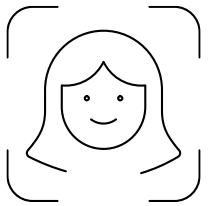
ARE YOU TEAM CHEUGY OR TEAM ZOOMER?

Decoding the new visual and verbal
language of Gen Z and Millennials.



When Collins Dictionary announced 'cheugy' as one of its 2021 'Words of the Year', we knew that this once-niche descriptor needed investigating.

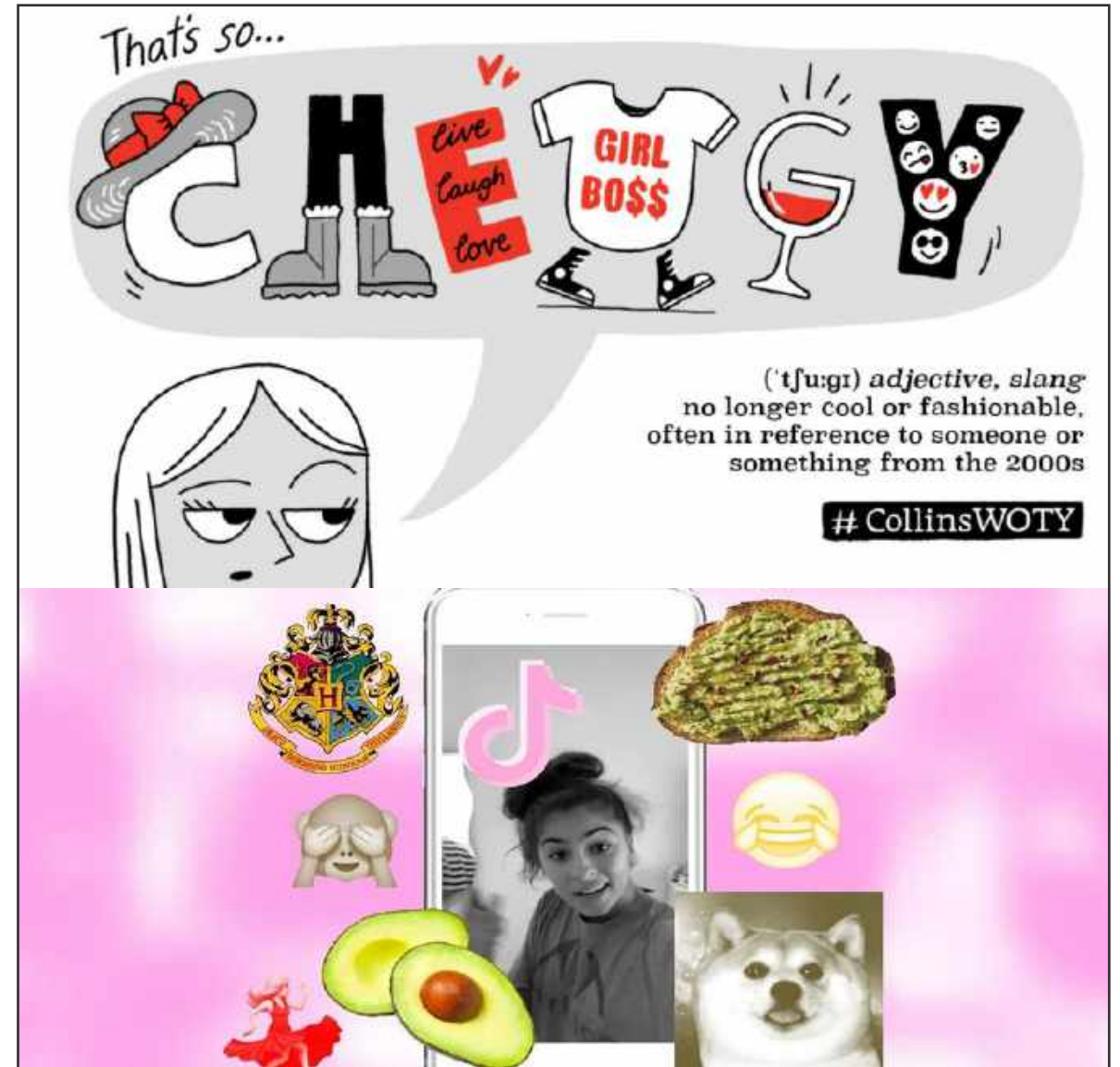
Popularised via TikTok, the term is used by Gen Z to call out Millennial trends such as avocado toast, being a girlboss and having a side parting as no longer cool. In fact, it's the very act of following trends that is 'peak cheugy.'



70%

of UK Gen Z feel that it is extremely/very important to have the freedom to be unique, stand out from others versus 61% of Millennials (UK, GM 2021)

Joining the ranks of 'OK Boomer' and 'Millennial snowflake' as inter-generational insults, 'cheugy' captures the growing divide between Gen Z and their older counterparts.



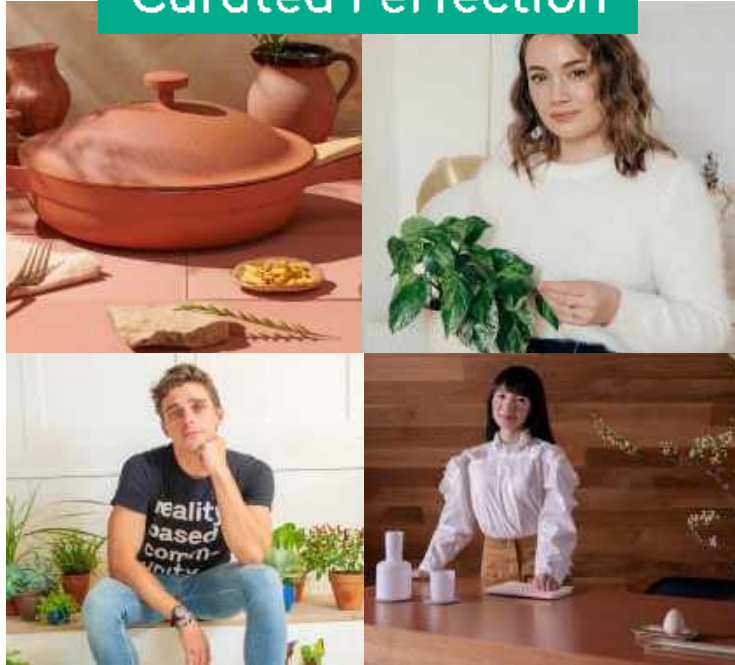
This desire for authentic expression manifests in contrasting visual worlds

Curated Perfection

Deliberately hyper-curated perfectionism underpins Millennial visual language.

Dominated by control, minimalist cohesion and conventional 'beauty', they present a sense of their individual achievement by creating an outwardly polished aesthetic.

Related to life-stage, as Millennials set up home and start families, they take the principles of curation honed through Instagram and apply it to real-life spaces.



Messy Realness

Gen Z embraces imperfection in the pursuit of authenticity. Realised through DIY visual mediums like zines and the raw candour of cluttercore and photodumps on social media, a desire for real self-expression drives their aesthetic.

Given that most Gen Z are CARLYs (Can't Afford Real Life Yet) still living at home, in student accommodation or in short-term rental, cluttercore may be an aesthetic of necessity.

Millennials Cheat Sheet

Visual Cues:

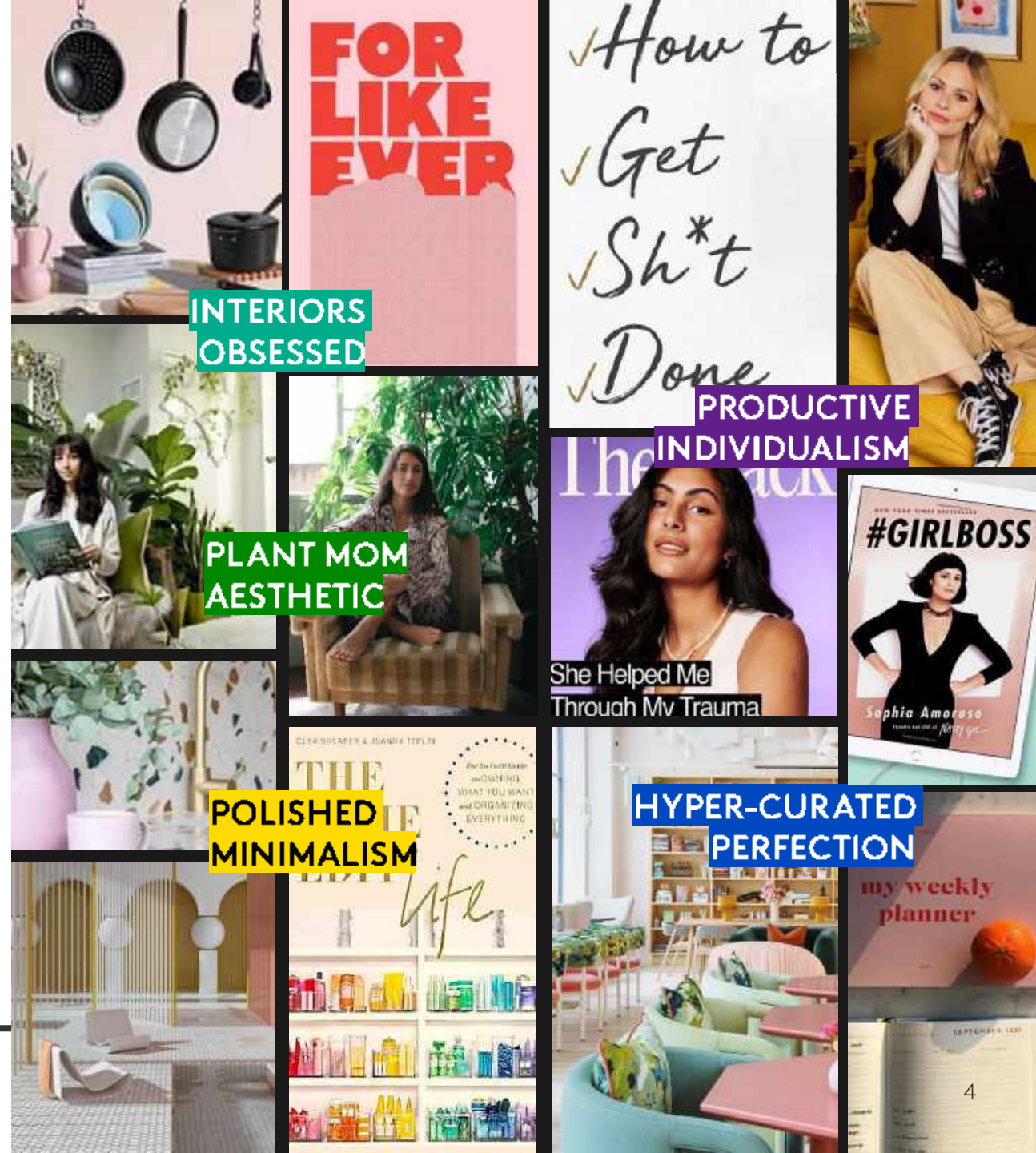
- 'Instagrammable' curation (e.g. flat lays & sleek finish)
- Wellness aesthetics including abundant greenery and perfect, glowing skin
- Soft pastel hues: millennial pink and lilac
- Hygge interiors: sheepskin rugs, wicker chairs, terrazzo tiles

Tone of Voice:

- Production driven, motivational phrases (i.e. 'Get Shit Done')
- Self-referential tone (i.e. 'adulting', 'the struggle is real')

Cultural Figures:

- **Influencers:** Start Up Queens, Emily Weiss, Sharmadean Reid & Sophia Amoruso
- **Musicians:** Lana Del Rey, The Weeknd, Beyonce, Adele
- **Actors:** Phoebe Waller Bridge, Carey Mulligan, Dakota Johnson, Adam Driver, Riz Ahmed



Gen Z Cheat Sheet

Visual Cues:

- Bright, clashing colours
- Collage style layering
- Blending of digital and analogue forms (e.g. Zines, resurgence of film photography)
- Embracing fluid gender aesthetics
- Unretouched/low-res rendering
- Cluttercore (e.g. photo dumps; messy backdrops)

Tone of Voice:

- Post-ironic, dark, fatalistic humour
- Down-to-earth, conversational TOV
- Candid language foregrounding authenticity

Cultural Figures:

- Influencers: Tik Tok babes Addison Rae, Charli D'Amelio & Emma Chamberlain
- Musicians: Olivia Rodrigo, Billie Eilish, Willow Smith, Lil Nas X
- Actors: Timothee Chalamet, Zendaya, Amandla Stenberg



Despite these differences, the generational siblings can both be catered to simultaneously under smart campaigns like Spotify's zeitgeisty 'Wrapped'. Spotify truly 'understood the assignment' once again with their 2021 campaign.

Design-wise, the soft pastel colour palette appeals to Millennials, while the bold, collage-like aesthetic and ironic tone of voice taps into Gen Z youth culture.

This year's edition also included Audio Aura describing the listener's top music 'moods' appealing to those in both demographics who are 'like literally obsessed' with Astrology.

But perhaps the most obvious red thread explaining Wrapped's success with both cohorts is that it taps into their innate impulse to self-brand and to share their uniqueness.



In a year like 2021,
even your music
gets a vibe check

It's time to unveil your audio aura.



Me analyzing my crush's @Spotify Wrapped so we can have more in common in 2022:



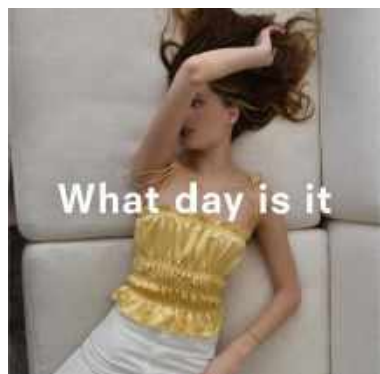
roach ^.^
@a_roach06



I'm completely obsessed with Spotify Wrapped day I'm sorry like.. the vibes are immaculate it's like a little show and tell at the psych ward

Let's look at the brands that appeal to our cohorts, across categories.

Millennials



BEAUTY: A natural look that is perfected and healthy; *Glossier, Goop, Kosas*. This extends into skincare: *Fresh, Paula's Choice, Supergoop!* and hair: *Ouai, Olaplex*.

FASHION: Chic, cool investment pieces from *Reformation, RIXO, Ganni*; with a guilty pleasure for a fast fashion fixer from *Zara* and *ASOS*.

HOME: Minimalist interior design & homeware: *Our Place, LICK, HAY*.

FINANCE: High street brand apps and Fintech first-movers: *Monzo* and *Starling*.

SOCIAL MEDIA: *Instagram* for curated highlights reels; *Pinterest* for inspiration.

FOOD: The generation that made an art out of avocado toast and flat whites to express social currency.

WELLBEING: Apps and subscriptions that optimise individual health and wellbeing; *Headspace, Calm*, Supplement Subscriptions like *Ritual* and *Care/of*.

Gen Z



BEAUTY: Makeup for experimental self-expression, embracing imperfections like acne/scars: *Starface, Fluide, SquishBeauty*

FASHION: Eclectic styles sourced second hand from *Depop*, charity shops & eBay; microtrends on TikTok quickly replicated by brands like *Jaded London, Motel*.

HOME: Cluttercore; mood lighting & sunset lamps.

FINANCE: Digital assets and cryptocurrency; new ways of earning via side hustles

SOCIAL MEDIA: *Instagram* for 'photodump' and sharing memes, *TikTok*.

FOOD: TikTok trending Streetfood like Bubble Tea, Korean Hotdogs and sharing experiences with friends.

WELLBEING: Frank and honest conversations around mental health, chronic illness and the impact of social inequality on health. Influencers; *Adwoa Aboah, Lone Gambie* and *Scarlett Curtis*.

This piece was brought to you by Kantar's Creative Strategy team, using Cultural Insight and Semiotics to decode attitudinal differences. These disciplines can be applied to many client questions from brand re-positioning, to comms development, to New Product Innovation.

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