

Swipe to Engage: How Age Shapes Carousel Ad Interaction and Recall

Stefan Rohrbach

University of Wuppertal

Daniel Bruns

University of Wuppertal

Tobias Langner

University of Wuppertal

Cite as:

Rohrbach Stefan, Bruns Daniel, Langner Tobias (2026), Swipe to Engage: How Age Shapes Carousel Ad Interaction and Recall. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133844)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



Swipe to Engage: How Age Shapes Carousel Ad Interaction and Recall

Abstract

Growing up in social media, Generation Z has developed distinct habits in navigating social media and interacting with advertisements. This study explores how age influences carousel ad activation, defined as the intentional sideways swipe to view additional cards beyond the first card, and how this behavior affects brand recall. Using mobile eye-tracking in a naturalistic setting and a content analysis of real newsfeed posts, we show that Gen Z activates carousel ads substantially more often and recalls advertised brands better than older generations. At the same time, younger recipients employ more sophisticated ad-avoidance strategies, making carousel posts that visibly resemble advertising less likely to be activated, whereas older generations engage less overall but show greater tolerance for such advertising cues. These findings highlight age differences in interactive ad responses and underscore the need to align ad design with cohort-specific expectations to maximize advertising effectiveness.

Track: Advertising & Marketing Communications