



Beyond the Zodiac

How Gen Z Finds Meaning in a
Secular World

A hand holding a starfish against a dark background with a spiderweb and other starfish.

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Spirituality today is more than horoscopes, tarot and palm reading. It's a way for Gen Z to make sense of themselves when everything feels so uncertain. What once was relegated to whispers behind closed doors, is now astrology memes and manifestation TikToks and spiritual apps; faith is now something you can talk about in the office. The previous report I worked on, *Written in the Stars*, discussed the role of astrology in fostering relationality and emotionality in online spaces. This report leans on that work, with the addition of new primary research, to question whether these practices represent anything genuinely comforting and connective, or mere performance.

*The report will investigate the interests of Gen Z in online-based astrology and spirituality as a coping mechanism or an aspiration for authenticity and community in an unstable environment. It will use *The Age of Relevance* and Marcuse's concept of false needs as a theoretical framework.*



METHODOLOGY

This project was done through a mixed methods survey using an online questionnaire followed up with interviews. The survey questions attempted to get at the relationship that Gen Z has with astrology and spirituality, asking how often the responders engage with astrology-related information online and whether they think it is comforting or ironic.

The final survey sample was nineteen participants, aged 19 to 22. I will also conduct a series of interviews about how people feel about

astrology and tarot as practiced online, whether they feel it is a genuine pursuit or just for fun, and how they feel about brands using spiritual language.

Participants will be informed of the research and consent to their responses being used anonymously. Descriptive statistics will be applied to the quantitative data from the survey and thematic analysis to the qualitative data from the interviews. Using both quantitative and qualitative data will illuminate how and why people engage with digital spirituality.

*In my previous report *Written in the Stars* I explored the way that Gen Z turned to astrology and spirituality as a way to cope with uncertainty and identity in a world that is always changing; they exist in a space of irony and sincerity where a horoscope meme can be a joke and serious at the same time. *The Age of Relevance* describes people “lost in limbo” and looking for a sense of belonging and meaning. Astrology apps and online rituals may provide a feeling of comfort and belonging even if they are mediated by a screen and an algorithm. This project builds on existing work to investigate whether consumers feel that these practices are meaningful or performative and the emotional dynamics of a generation shaped by digital technology.*

EVIDENCE FROM PROJECT 1

In *Written in the Stars*, I analyze the ways that astrology and spirituality are remediated in the social media age as accessed through TikTok astrology communities, Instagram astrology memes, and astrology apps, and how these forms of media have performed a shift in spirituality from a set of beliefs and practices to a shared digital language of humor, emotion, and performance. On TikTok, tarot and astrology pro-

vide entertainment and comfort, with billions of views under astrology-related hashtags. They present “messages from the universe” that are intimate but simultaneously “shaped by algorithms”, that *The Age of Relevance* describes as related to “performance participation” - a desire not only to believe but to be seen believing. TikTok turns private spirituality into public performance, showing how belief and identity co-

alesce in online spaces.

Astrology has become the joke of Instagram. “I’m such a Scorpio.” “Gemini energy.” These faux-horror claims combine irony and sincerity to make a point: belief is a form of self-expression, creating a shorthand for mood and identity and a way to understand a moment.

As *The Age of Relevance* describes, youth hold on to ‘tropes and truths’ of the quotidian experience of irony, humor and authenticity. They use it to connect to others and to a larger sense of belonging in an uncertain world: laughing at, but also recognizing, their traits.

Apps like Co-Star, The Pattern and Sanctuary have commodified spirituality as products available at a set time every

day, from daily affirmations and emotional support to intimacy and companionship through data, notifications and algorithms. However, following Marcuse’s idea of the “false needs”, these merely prolong the systems of reassurance. The attention to the self is turned into a commodity, but in any case they are a moment of contemplation and reflection in an otherwise busy world, suggesting some of the power of mediated spirituality.

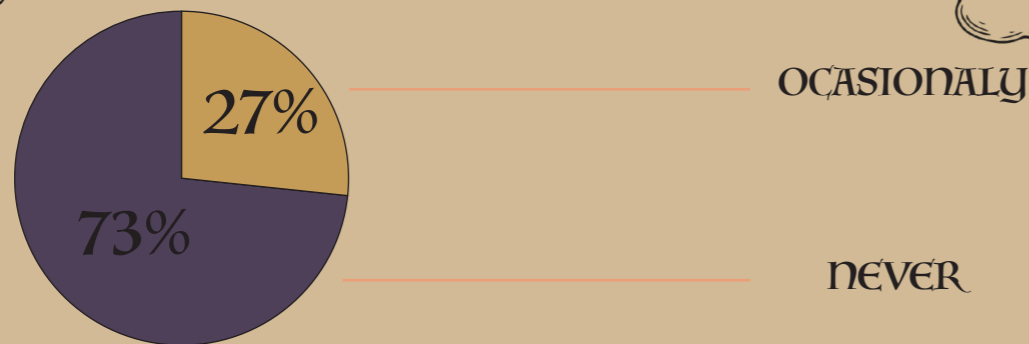
Combined, these offered a foundation for my main piece of research (a survey and set of interviews) to determine whether these practices offer consumers any real relief or simply reflect another performative trend propagated by digital culture.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Survey data and interviews revealed astrology and spirituality as unique emotional resources for Gen Z. Rituals once tied to belief and belonging became practices of reflection, distraction and digital performance, as they helped convey emotion, substantiate identity, and build communities for navigating uncertainty about the future amid a potentially chaotic present.

ENGAGEMENT WITH ASTROLOGY

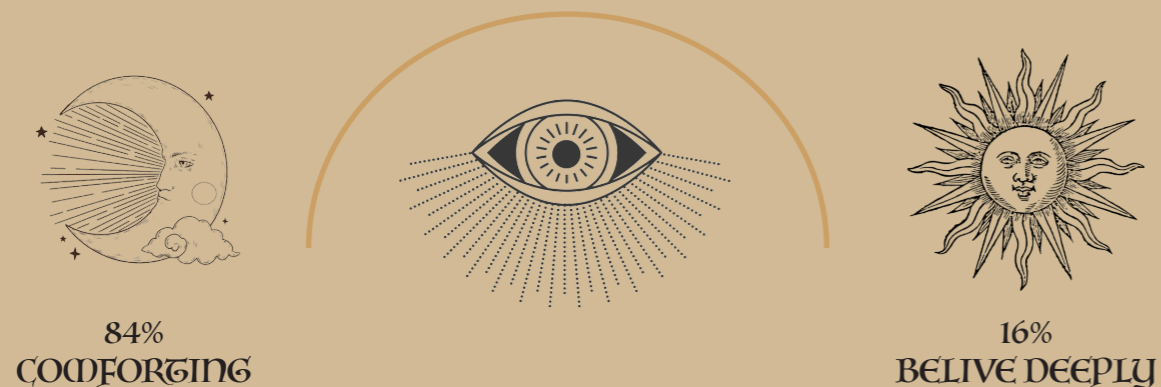
How often do they follow astrology?



Platforms used to follow astrology



How do they feel about astrology?



Nineteen respondents said 63 per cent engaged a little or a lot in astrology or spiritual content. Ten per cent said they engaged in it every day. TikTok is the social media platform where 55 per cent of survey respondents consume astrology content. Instagram is the platform for 40 per cent. Astrology has become part of daily scrolling on social media. What is personal has become universal. Astrology is something you come across, not look for. You're scrolling down your feed and suddenly you're on a timeline of astrology mixed in with the news, the trendy memes, the social media fads, the curation of an algorithm.

When the participants were asked whether astrology comforts them, 47 per cent indicated 'yes' while a further 32 per cent confirmed that they engage with astrology ironically. The modern relationship to belief is thus both emotionally and self-reflexively caught. Even non-believers have said they enjoy the reflectiveness and relatability, which The Age of Relevance links to Gen Z's experience of living: "between irony and authenticity. It is a generation that makes meaning via performance but knows it is performing" (Morning FYI, 2025).

Participant 1 described astrology as "something that makes me comfortable", as it gives "some sort of idea of what could happen next". Participant 2 described astrology content as making them "curious and sometimes reflective" yet they do not believe in astrology when reading astrology articles. "I enjoy how it encourages people to become self-aware." If we read this alongside Marcuse's (1964) emotional technology, astrology is a new emotional technology: it is commodified yet meaningful and translates instability into small moments of order.

Interestingly, 42 per cent of respondents to a poll said they use astrology or manifestation to cope with anxiety or stress, which chimes with what all three interviewees say spirituality provides: a place to pause, check in and find calm. Likewise, participant 3 said that it was, "a peace of mind where I'm able to have everything under control about myself and the others around me." The sense of control is a false need created by a system dedicated to selling comfort, rather than freedom (Marcuse 1964). Nevertheless, it is real to the subject. Nevertheless, there is the position that such digital culture can be helpful to the emotional regulation and mindfulness of the generation (Digital Methods for the Spiritual and Mental Health of Generation Z, 2024).

The interviews covered themes including the difference between performing online and offline. The first participant said that while astrology holds more authenticity offline, it is “just for fun” online. The second participant said that whether or not astrology holds a purpose online depends on the intention of the creator. Some creators use it for guidance, while others use the trend. In these reflections, a sense of the spiritual experience being mediated through visibility and a sense of belief in performed ways nonetheless comes through as real.

Finally, when asked whether astrology creates connection, 58 per cent said it helps them to “connect with yourself”, and 26 per cent said it helps them to “connect with others”. Participant 2 stated that astrology can create connection, even if it is “symbolic rather than scientific”. Participant 3 summed it up better than any of the rest of us: “Absolutely with the others, with the universe, with myself - oh my God, yes!” Whether a sort of detachedly ironic bemusement like the others or a headlong plunge of total immersion, the question was the same.

Consumer attitude towards using astrology or manifestation as a marketing strategy was felt to be mixed in the responses. Participant 1 warned against using astrology or manifestation as a brand marketing strategy as it can lose meaning if consumers feel like they are being used to get more audience. Participant 2 shared that spirituality can feel forced too, however consumer reaction is positive when brands use astrology or manifestation as part of real brand storytelling as it can target a certain group. They value meaning and the coherence between message and purpose.



KEY IMPACTS

This mirrors Marcuse's (1964) critique of modern culture that, even in a capitalist, commodity-driven society, people still yearn for authentic experiences despite its commodification. The difference is that Gen Z know what the system is and they still engage in the cycle of commodification. As McKinsey & Company (2024) note, this generation often finds spiritual practices to care emotionally for themselves: it gives them language to explore their interior lives, make jokes, and find connection, even if it comes from an algorithm.

Ultimately, survey responses and interviews show that for most people, astrology

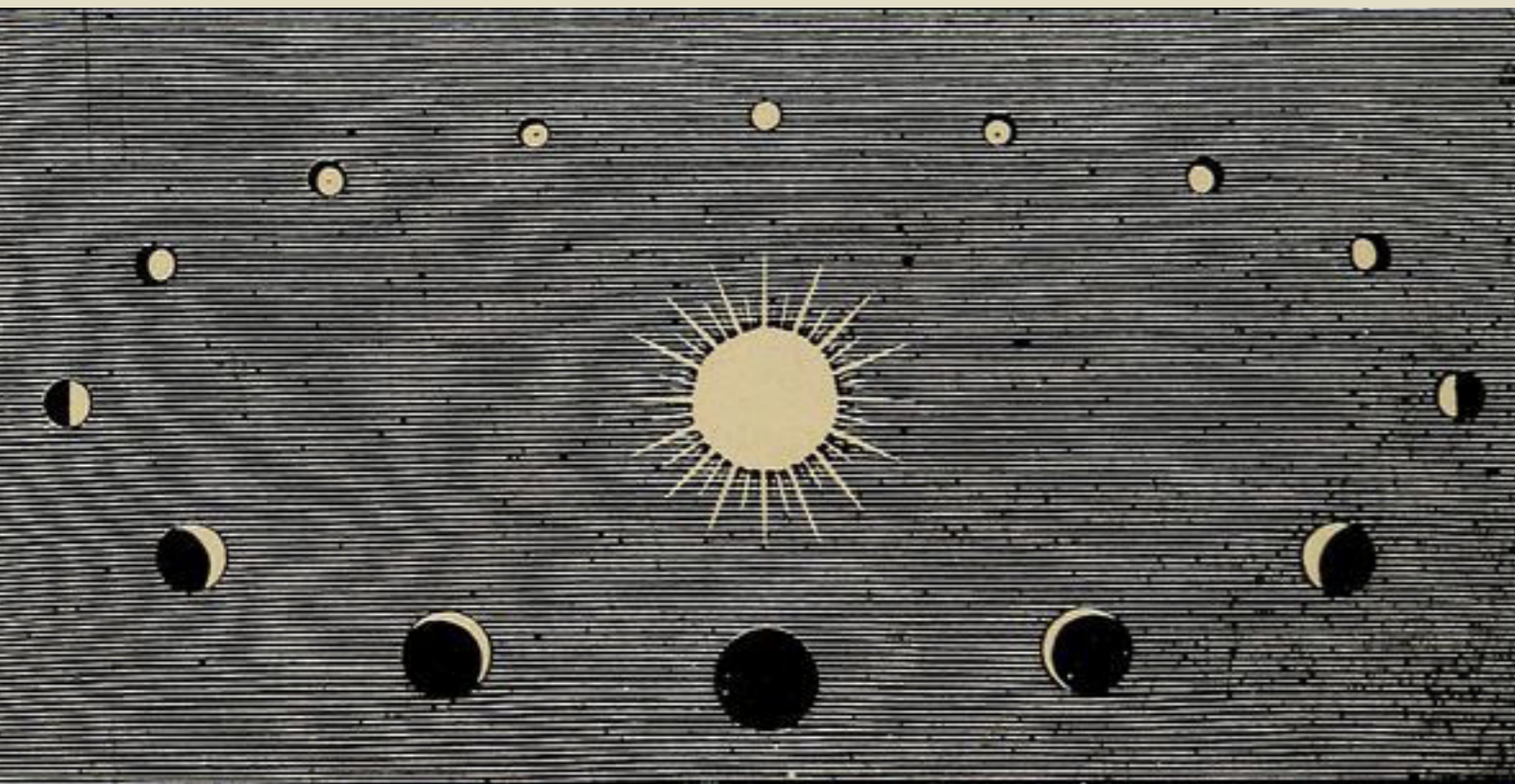
today is a cultural hybrid: belief and performance at once, conscious and ironic, dialectical and earnest, individualized and collective. Written in the Stars raised these questions in a theoretically abstract form, but here, with real subjects, the pressure builds. As one respondent in our survey wrote: "It's not about believing the stars. It's about understanding yourself for a minute". In that moment, the coexistence of faith, data and emotion may be the most authentic manifestation of spirituality in the digital world.

See Appendix : Interview Participants 1,2,3.

Astrology and spirituality are part of Gen Z's emotional and social behavior, a new kind of language for negotiating identity and self-perception, giving them a sense of belonging in a fractured world, and turning anxiety into meaning-making through humor, reflection and community. It is no longer a private belief system but an interactive, algorithmically shaped and shared aesthetic experience, lived on screens, where there are always viewers.

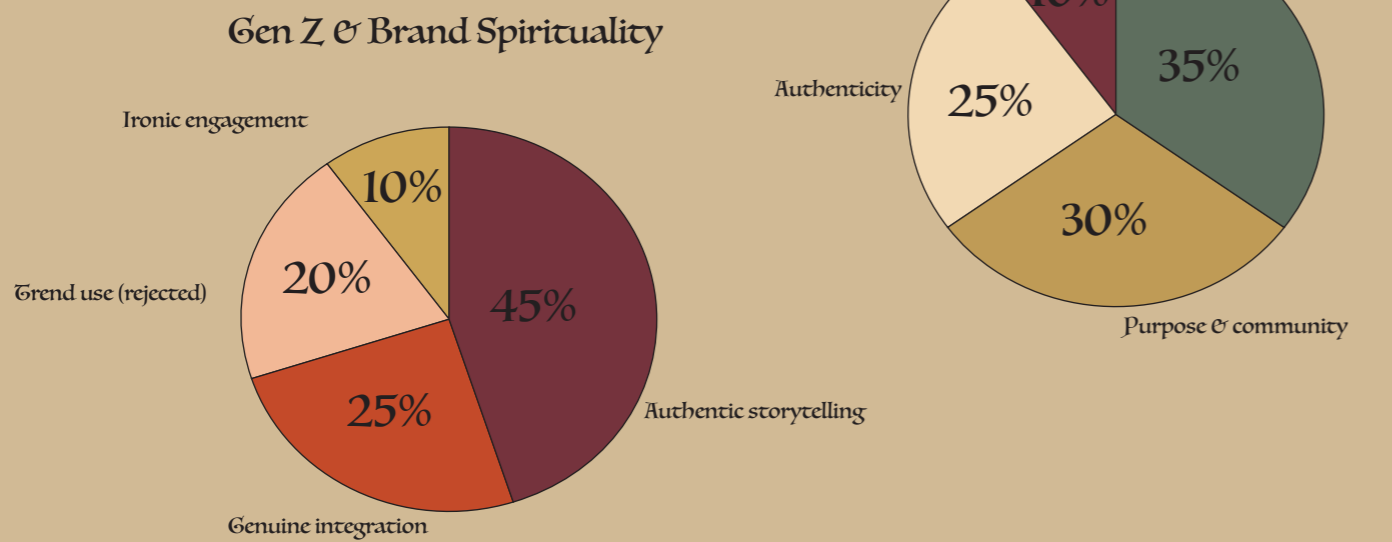
For many Gen Z consumers, spirituality no longer means religious beliefs, but by connecting with themselves and their feelings: 47 per cent say astrology gives them comfort and 42 per cent say they look to it as a way to manage stress and anxiety. This reinforces the idea of digital spirituality as a form of coping mechanisms and everyday rituals for comfort. Participant 1 described astrology as "something that makes me comfortable" whilst Participant 3 stated that it brought them "peace of mind and control". Even if they're not believed, these micro-practices still serve a symbolic purpose, being virtual points of balance within an otherwise chaotic and dynamic digital field.

However, there is frequently another layer to this belief. According to the Age of Relevance, Gen Z exists in a world "between irony and authenticity" (Morning FYI, 2025). The data reflects this. The generation can both mock horoscopes and find comfort in them. Spirituality is seen here as an aesthetic release. It is once again Marcuse (1964) who describes the false needs of astrology: it is an attempt to find meaning and order in systems that work on the basis of uncertainty. However, as the interviews suggest, these "false needs" feel very real, making commodified spirituality a potential source for meeting genuine needs.



"It's not about believing the stars. Its about understanding yourself for a minute"

84% of consumer are looking for authenticity



This creates opportunity and a challenge for brands: consumers like spirituality, but they're looking for authenticity. Participant 2 said that when brands use astrology "just as a trend, it feels forced." Participant 3 said it's "a powerful tool" within when it's embedded into the real storytelling behind the brand. This suggests astrology marketing works best when it communicates real values, instead of being a surface aesthetic.

Brands can reach this audience without exploiting belief by the use of mindfulness, community and the self. Campaigns that appropriate or co-opt spirituality will not resonate with this audience with a weakening of trust. Digital spirituality rises as Gen Z wants brands to understand their emotional world and talk to them with empathy.

Faith, irony, and digital culture shape Gen Z's view of authenticity. According to a 2024 report by McKinsey & Company, Gen Z prefers emotional well-being and purpose over status and exclusivity. They are spiritual, and they practice. They are not just spiritual on the inside. Only brands who understand this can make a difference.





CONCLUSION

Astrology resurges online among Generation Z as they search for comfort, identity, and meaning in an uncertain world. While once a form of magic, astrology today balances irony and sincerity, providing an emotional habit in digital participation. Internal evidence suggests that within a commodified belief system spirituality is still used for coping and as performance of belonging where individuals still reflect and connect with each other. Meaning can live within the mechanisms that reason through it (Marcuse, 1964), and Gen Z's spirituality has not completely disappeared. It is simply evolving in time with a digital world.



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APPENDIX

Survey:

1. Age range (multiple choice: 16–18 / 19–22 / 23–26 / 27–30)
2. Gender
3. Do you engage with astrology/spiritual content online (horoscope reading, spiritual apps, tarot reading online, manifestation videos)?
4. How often do you engage with this content? (Daily / Weekly / Occasionally / Never)
5. What platform do you use for this content? (TikTok / Instagram / Threads / Twitter / Other)
6. What best describes your attitude towards astrology?
 - I genuinely believe in it
 - I find it comforting
 - I engage with it ironically
 - I don't believe in it at all
7. Do you use astrology or manifestation to manage anxiety or stress? (Yes / No)
8. Have you ever purchased an app subscription, reading, or astrology-based product? (Yes / No)
9. If yes, please indicate which product or service you purchased.
10. How accurate do you think these apps are? (1 = Not accurate at all, 5 = Very accurate)
11. Do you feel online spirituality builds community or creates pressure to perform belief?
12. Do you think online astrology content helps you connect with others, with the universe, or with yourself — or does it fail to connect with anything as it's mediated through a screen?

Key Results:

- 63% of participants engage with astrology occasionally; 10% daily; 27% never.
- TikTok (55%) and Instagram (40%) are the main platforms for astrology content.
- 47% find astrology comforting; 32% engage ironically; 21% do not believe.
- 42% use astrology or manifestation to manage stress or anxiety.
- 58% feel online spirituality helps them connect with themselves; 26% with others; 16% believe it fails to connect meaningfully.
- Only 3 respondents (15%) had paid for astrology-related apps or readings, and most rated accuracy between 1–3 out of 5.

Interviews:

Participant 1:

Hi Camille. Hi. Do you follow any astrology or spirituality content on social media? Yes I do. And have you seen any videos on your ForYou page recently? Yeah. About what? About tarot readings. How do astrology or tarot practices make you feel? Comfortable because I can know some sort of like how my future is gonna be. Okay and do you think making these practices in an online space is something genuine or just for fun? It depends within the context and everything. For me it's just for fun. Online just for fun and in person you would think that is more genuine? Exactly, yeah. Okay and have you ever thought about downloading any spirituality apps or do you have any? I have, yeah. Which one? Starlar or something like that. CoStar actually, yeah. Do you believe astrology content helps you connect with others, with the universe, or with yourself or it doesn't help you at all? With all of them. It's like a unison of all of it. Okay and how do you feel about brands using astrology or manifestation in a marketing forum to appeal to the younger generation? I mean it depends on the approach. It depends on the focus and the target market that they have. But do you think that brands kind of like marketing these, it's making it less genuine because they're using it in like they define, they want to sell so they're kind of like... Yeah, I get it. It loses the meaning for me. I mean it depends. This is spirituality. It depends if you believe or not. If you do believe then it's not gonna be like a bad thing to do. But if you're using it for a sense of getting more audience, I don't think they're gonna get it. Okay. Because nowadays not everyone is spiritual. Okay, the interview concludes. Thank you. Thank you.

Participant 2:

So for the first question if I follow astrology or spiritual content on social media I actually don't actively follow astrology or spiritual accounts but I often come across short videos or posts on my feed especially about zodiac sign or moon phases and like manifestation tips and they seem to appear quite often because I think the topic has become quite popular online For the second question, how do astrology or tarot practices make you feel? They actually make me feel curious and sometimes reflective, I would say. Even if I don't take them too seriously, I actually enjoy how they can encourage self-awareness and make people think about their emotional goals in different ways. For the third question, I actually think it's a mix of both Some creators generally use a story to guide people, while others I think post it more as entertainment or like for content trends, so it really depends on the person's intention and how the audience interpret it.

For the fourth question, so if I ever thought about downloading any spiritual app or if I have any, I thought about I thought about it quite often, but I actually never downloaded one and I know there are apps for daily horoscopes or meditation, but I don't know, I usually prefer to just read quick posts or watch short videos instead, unlike TikTok or Instagram Reels. For the fifth question, so if I believe astrology content helps me connect with others, the universe or myself. To be honest, yes, in a way, because it can create a sense of connection with others, especially when I don't know, people share subject traits or talk about it. So it also makes some people feel more in tune with themselves or, I would say, the universe, even if it's like symbolic rather than scientific. And for the last question, so how do I feel about brands using astrology or manifestation in marketing? I think that it can be clever if done authentically. because when brands use astrology or like manifestation just as a trend, it feels like forced, but if they like integrate it thoughtfully, like connect it to personal growth or positivity, I think that it can actually resonate with younger audiences.

Participant 3:

Do you follow astrology or spiritual content on social media? If not, have you ever seen any video for your page? Yes, I've seen them a lot in various social media platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram. And by the way, yes, I do follow them. And I'm very interested in this kind of like astrology stuff and everything. How do astrology or tailored practices make you feel? Actually very good, they put me in a peace of mind where I'm able to have everything under control about myself and the others around me. Do you think making these practices in an online space is something genuine or just for fun? Absolutely super genuine, it could help really people like understand a little bit their entourage and as well like their inner wants and needs as well. Have you ever thought about downloading any spiritual app or do you have any? I actually do have one about astrology and so basically every day tells me how my day is gonna go, where I have to focus, where is my pinpoint area, yeah I actually do follow and I'm really interested so I think it can be linked with many disciplines and many other aspects of the world. Do you believe astrology content helps you connect with others? Yes!! With the universe or yourself? Absolutely with the others, with the universe, with myself, like... Oh my God! Oh my God! Yes, absolutely! I totally agree with this sentence. How do you feel about brand using astrology or manifestation in marketing form? I think it can be a really powerful point and could be extremely helpful for brands in order to target a certain like a determined group of audience and as well to really have like a profit and a margin but not only based on the profit but based on the real brand history and brand storytelling

Insights:

Participant 1

She follows social media accounts about astrology and wrote that her feed is full of tarot videos. She said it makes her feel “comfortable because I can know some sort of like how my future is gonna be”. For her, astrology online is a “just for fun” practice, and in-person is more serious; she said she uses the app Co-Star. On spirituality, she said it “connects me with everything - myself, others, and the universe”. On branding, she said it “depends on the approach” and when it’s “just to get more audience, it loses meaning”.

Participant 2

Participant 2 does not actively search for astrology accounts but often encounters this content on her feed. She described the content as making her feel “curious and sometimes reflective”, and appreciates it for its self-awareness-promoting quality. She sees astrology online as “a mix of both genuine and entertainment” depending on the intent of the creator. Though she has thought about downloading spiritual apps, she prefers short content over TikTok or Instagram Reels. On astrology, she said it connects people with others and helps people feel in tune with themselves, even if symbolic instead of scientific. She believes astrology can be a clever marketing tool if done organically. She feels it is forced when brands use it just as a trend.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is an astrology fan, saying it makes him feel “very good... they put me in a peace of mind where I am able to have everything under control”. He believes online astrology to be “super genuine”, and helpful for users to learn “their inner wants and needs”. He uses a mobile application to receive daily astrology readings for personal understanding, saying it helps him remain focused and balanced. On connection: “Absolutely, with the others, the universe, myself.” On branding, astrology is “a really powerful point” in targeting audiences when “it’s based on real brand storytelling, not only profit.”

Summary Insights

All three interviews framed astrology as a supportive and reflective coping mechanism, though sincerity is highly contextual: in online spaces, it can be performative or trendy. Nevertheless, all participants felt a sense of connection and control in the system of astrology. An undeniable finding, however, is that spiritual references have to be authentic, because otherwise they feel forced, while authentic stories from brands can truly resonate.



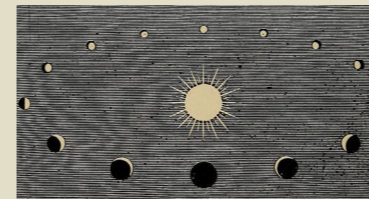
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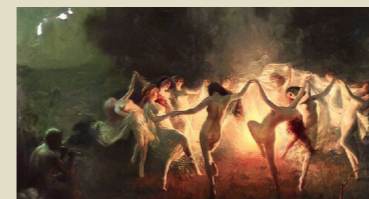
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