

THE DEATH OF CAPITAL LETTERS? CAPITALISATION RULES IN ENGLISH

English-is-weird Series

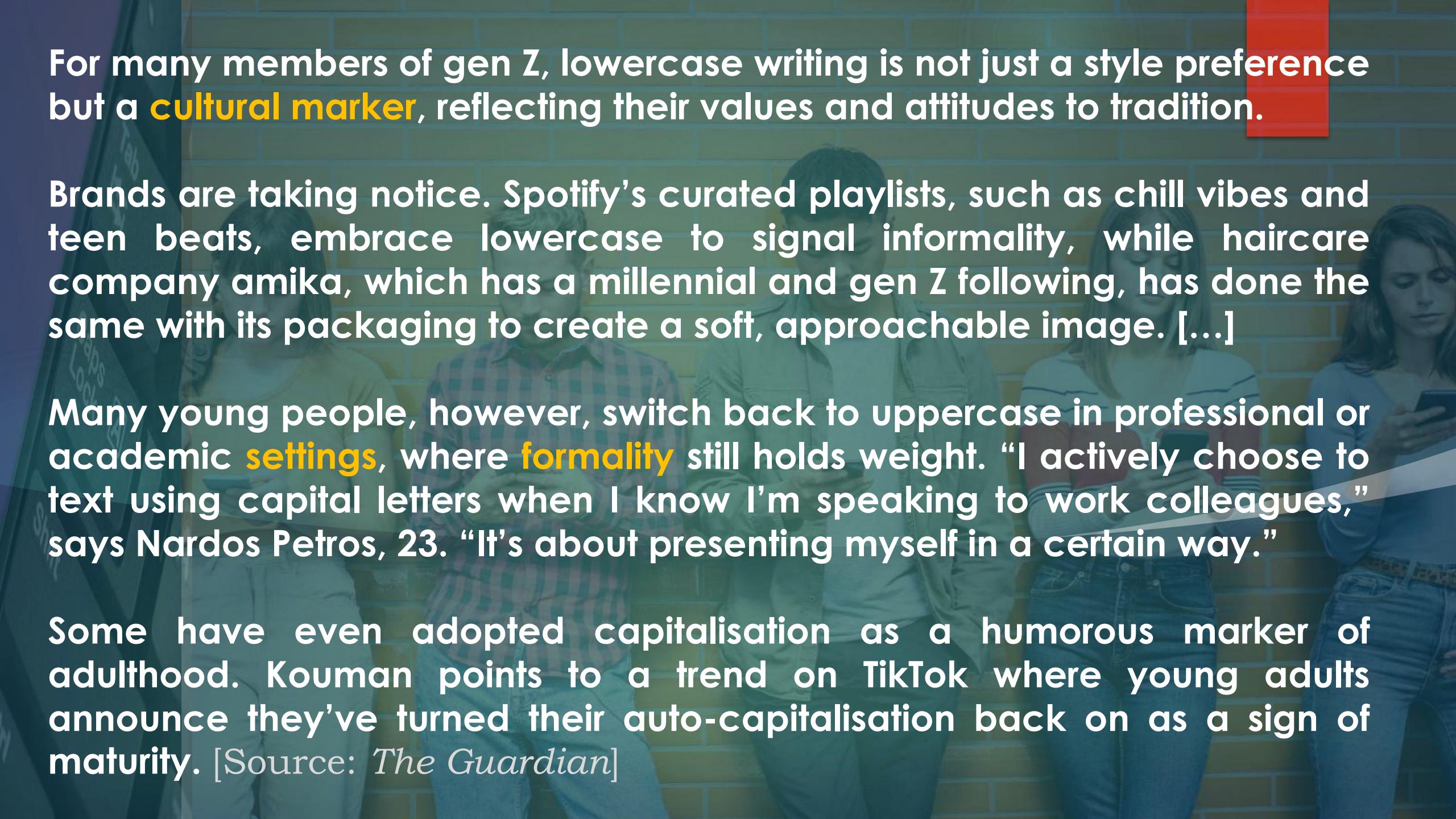


The death of capital letters: why gen Z loves lowercase

Young people have ditched capitalisation in favour of a writing style that reflects their values and attitudes to tradition. Will this change our language for ever?

[Source: *The Guardian*]

Gen Z is canceling capital letters—should you join them or fight in grammar's last stand? [Source: Reader's Digest]

A photograph of a group of young people, likely teenagers, sitting on bleachers in a school setting. They are all looking down at their mobile phones, which are held horizontally. The background shows a brick wall and other students in the distance.

For many members of gen Z, lowercase writing is not just a style preference but a **cultural marker**, reflecting their values and attitudes to tradition.

Brands are taking notice. Spotify's curated playlists, such as chill vibes and teen beats, embrace lowercase to signal informality, while haircare company amika, which has a millennial and gen Z following, has done the same with its packaging to create a soft, approachable image. [...]

Many young people, however, switch back to uppercase in professional or academic **settings**, where **formality** still holds weight. "I actively choose to text using capital letters when I know I'm speaking to work colleagues," says Nardos Petros, 23. "It's about presenting myself in a certain way."

Some have even adopted capitalisation as a humorous marker of adulthood. Kouman points to a trend on TikTok where young adults announce they've turned their auto-capitalisation back on as a sign of maturity. [Source: *The Guardian*]

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CAPITALIZATION in English:

When Where Why?

NB: focusing only on differences / French

CAPITALIZATION in English:

- **Days of the week** (Wednesday), **months** (January), **holidays** (Easter, Passover) but as a rule NOT seasons (summer, winter)
- **Directions as region** (the South, the Northwest); **lakes, rivers, mountains** (Lake Leman, The Loire, Mount Everest); **planets** (The Earth, Mercury...); gods (Venus)
- Nouns+Adjectives of **nationality** (the French, French people), **religion** (Quaker), **political or cultural affiliations** (Liberal Democrats), sometimes **race/ethnicity** (Black) (but not always)
- Names of specific **languages** (English, Chinese)

CAPITALIZATION in English:

- **Events or historical periods:** *The Reformation, the Middle Ages, the Great Depression* but NOT centuries: *the eighteenth century / an eighteenth-century comfy chair*
- **Titles of books** (*Through the Looking-Glass*), **songs** (*Candle in the Wind*) or **movies** (*Batman Returns*)
- **Function/official titles**, including **family** when followed by a proper name (*King Louis XIV, Doctor Khumalo, Uncle Bob*)
- **University degrees** and **subject matters** (*Bachelor of Science, Physics*)