

Alpha Impact: How Kids Are Shaping Media, Tech & Commerce



Gen Alpha: the generation born between 2010 and 2024 (and so now aged up to 15).

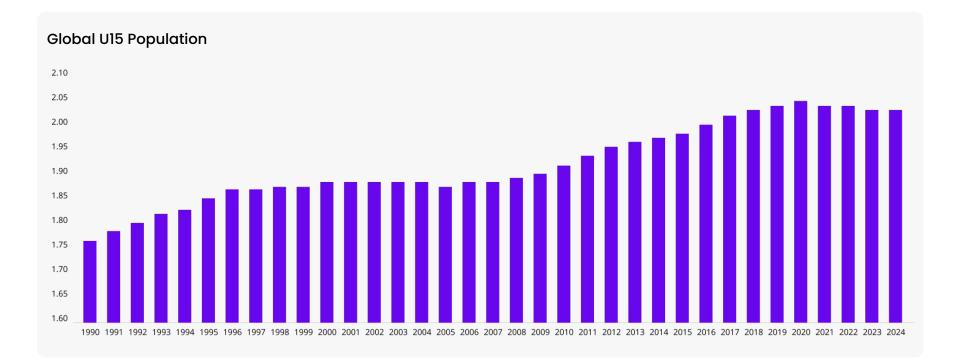
In some cases data about this generation is hard to find, so where it makes sense we make cautious use of data sets including older ages.

In the presentation, when we say:

- 'Kids' we mean U13s
- 'Gen Alpha' we mean U15s
- 'Gen Z' we mean people aged 15 25
- 'Teens' we mean people between the ages of 13-17 unless otherwise stated. This includes some members of Gen Alpha and some of Gen Z.

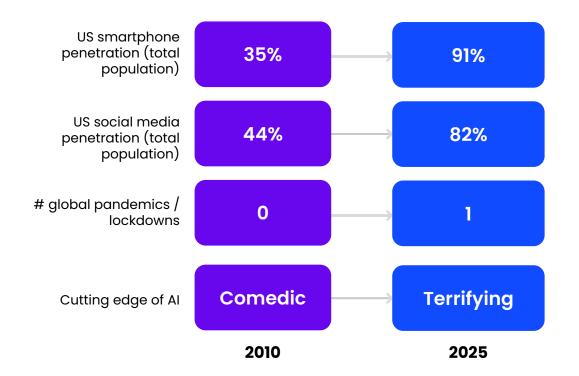
Every kid is a member of Gen Alpha. There are over 2bn U15s on earth





A generation that's lived through interesting times... and may be pretty different as a result







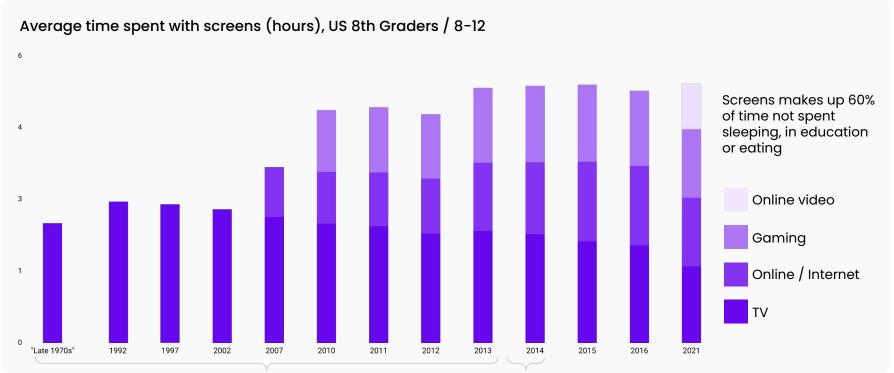
What happens if you raise a generation while you're re-inventing the world?



- 1. Tech, Regulation and the "Avatar Generation"
- 2. Attention Fragmentation and the End of "Kids TV"
- 3. "Dismissed as Toys" Gen Alpha and the Future of Social
- 4. Shoppers and Makers
- 5. Gen A(I) and the Next Generation of Products

All time high in screen time - although not that much more absolute time than a decade ago





13-14 year olds

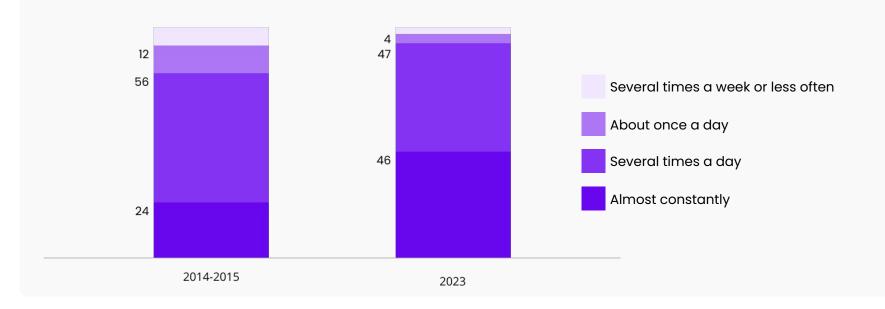
8-12 year olds

Source: Trends in U.S. Adolescents' Media Use. 1976 - 2016. APA, Common Sense Media

But the change feels even more dramatic: half of teens say they are online "almost constantly"

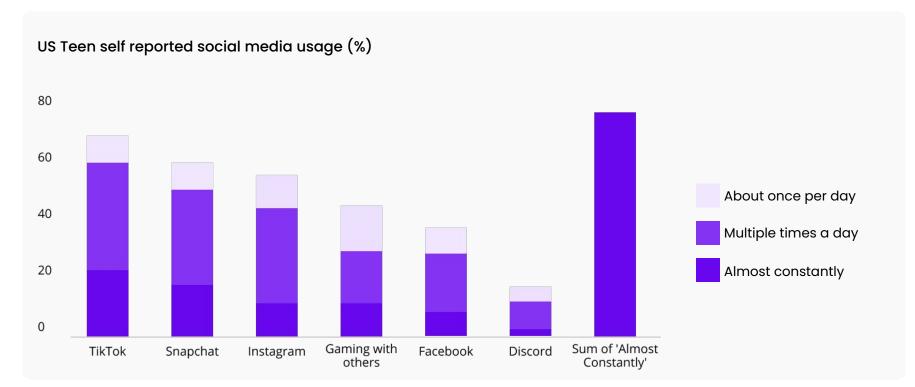


% of US Teens aged 13-17 who say they use the internet....



And a lot of that time is spent on social media...





We're worried!

"My claim is that the **new phone-based childhood.... is making young people sick** and blocking their progress to flourishing in adulthood. We need a dramatic cultural correction, and we need it now."

Jon Haidt, 2024, The Anxious Generation

The Anxious Generation

How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness



...not for the first time

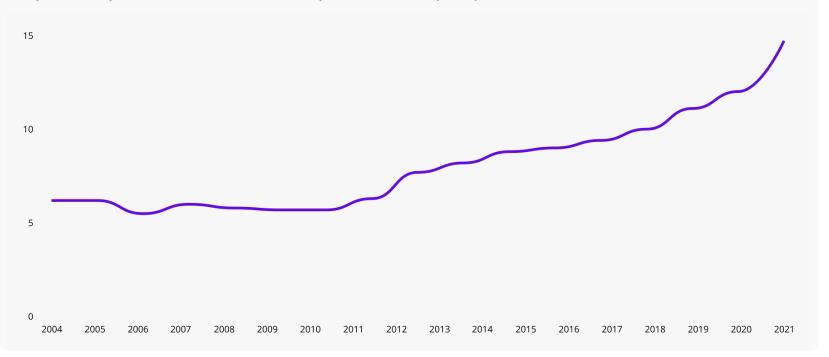
"Few parents are unaware of the lure of radio and of its effects upon the attitudes and ideals of children. More and more parents are taking troubled note of the kind of radio to which their children have become accustomed... They fear it is counteracting the best influences of home, church and school.

Dorothy Gordon, 1943, All Children Listen

This doesn't look great...



% Percentage of US youth ages 12–17 who had at least one Major Depressive Episode (MDE) with severe impairment in the past year





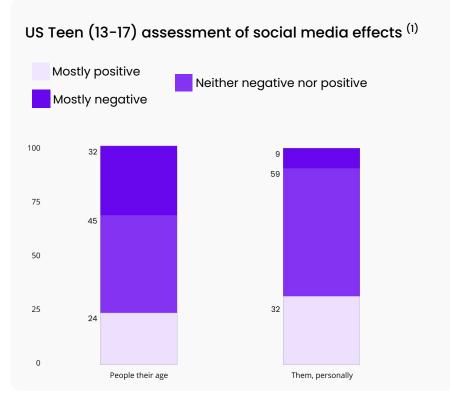
But do we really understand what's going on...?

There's broad agreement that child and adolescent mental health is not good - but much less consensus as to why...



Simply asking Gen A strongly suggests social media is at least *part* of the problem





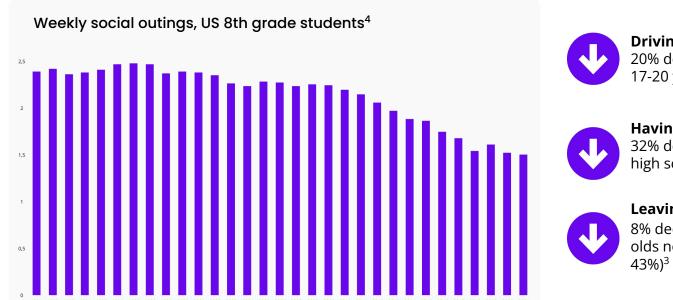
And in particular.... of US girls using Snapchat have been contacted by a stranger in a way which made them feel uncomfortable ⁽²⁾

6 US teens report that social media at least
 80% sometimes worsens 'appearance' pressure (vs 40% who say it sometimes helps) (3)

44% of UK kids say they're worried they spend too much time on at least one online service (4)

An "Avatar generation"? The more time kids and teens spend online, the less time there is out in the world





Driving later 20% decline since 2010 in car trips by 17-20 year olds (UK)¹

Having sex later

32% decline between 2013 and 2023 high schoolers who have "ever had sex"²

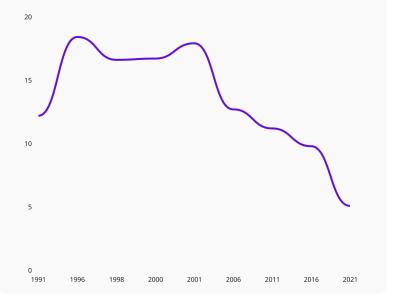
Leaving home (a bit) later

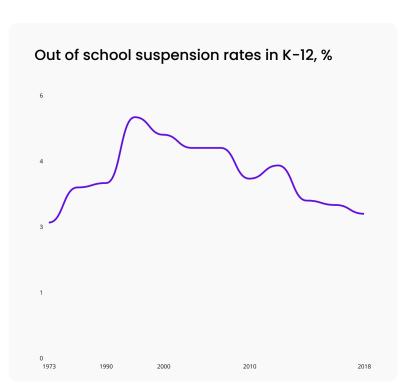
8% decline 2010 to 2024 in 18-24 year olds not living at home (from 47% to $43\%)^3$

Some changes we like: longer term pattern of declining risky behaviour

And the less you're "out in the world", the fewer opportunities there are to get into IRL trouble.

% of 10th graders reporting trying any drug other than marijuana in the last 12 months

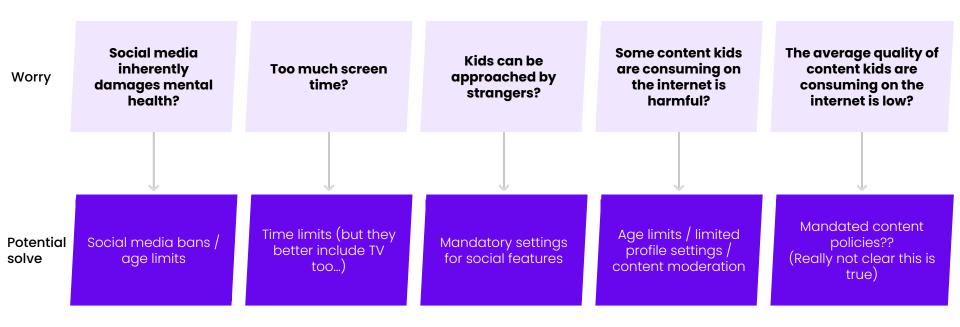






We'd like to regulate something. But what?

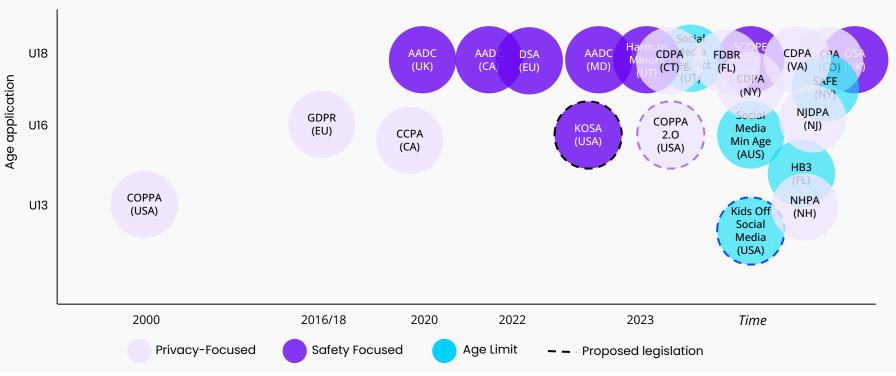




A regulatory battle that's just getting started



Actual and prospective legislation impacting kids' online services



Confidential - © SuperAwesome 2013-2025



But none of this works if we don't rethink age verification

hday		
anuary 1, 2000		
Co	ntinue	
Co October November	ntinue	1997 1998
October	29	
October November	29 30	1998
October November December	29 30 31	1998 1999



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Everyone knows kids aren't watching tv any more

But the consequences for loyalty and fandom formation are underappreciated

The choices kids make count. Life long fandoms are established before the age of 16





When did you...

- → Fall in love with your favorite band?
- → Adopt a sports team?
- Decide which brands were cool?
- → Get into Marvel, or Star Wars or LOTR?

For most people, these decisions get made well before the age of 16...

Millennials and (most of) Gen Z grew up in an era when <u>concentrated attention</u> created <u>concentrated fandoms</u>





Producers:

A relatively small number of professional content studios produced TV, books and movies

New projects could often be pre-sold to multiple distributors, reducing financial risk



Distributors

Distribution through multiple intermediaries (channels, stores) with limited shelfspace

Producers kept a lot of rights to their creations



Kids (the audience)

Linear scheduling and limited choice drove repeat kid viewing and concentrated attention

Result? Fandom

That concentrated attention was enough to spawn fandom

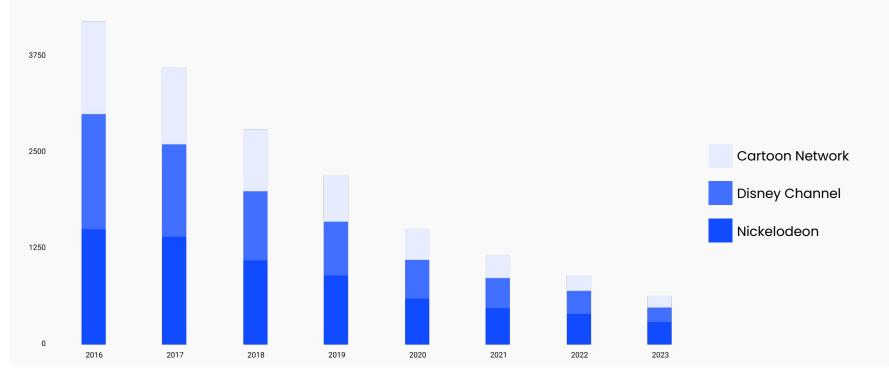
That fandom often manifested itself in sales of toys and experience tickets that further enriched content studios and funded more content



Linear TV <u>was</u> a powerful vehicle for concentrated attention. No longer.



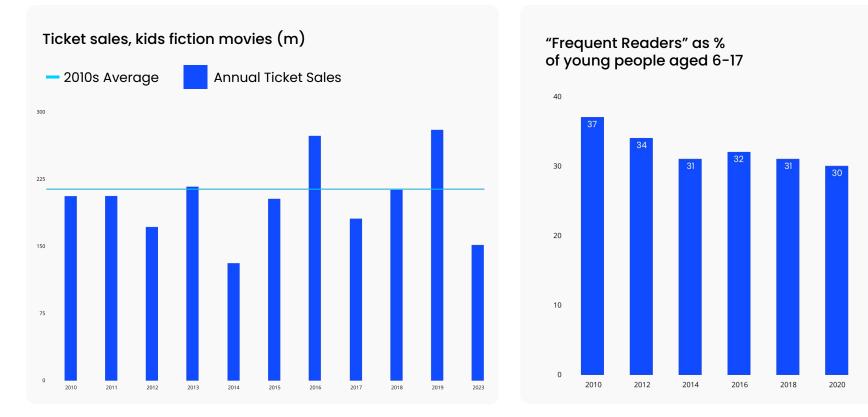
Nielsen ratings, selected kids' channels



Cinema and reading aren't looking too good either



28

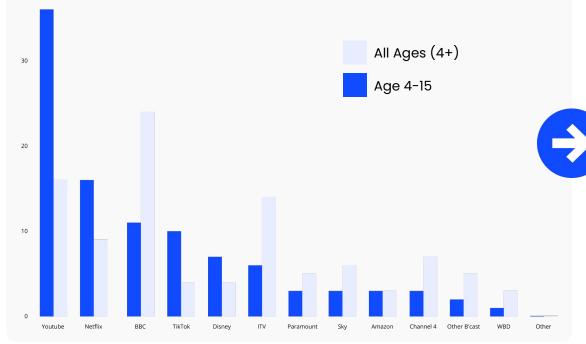


Source: The Numbers, Scholastic, 2020 reading data not available, calculated as average of 2018 and 2022

2022

Instead, "kids tv" is being replaced by general audience digital platforms, particularly YouTube

% of time spent watching video services, kids (4-15) vs all ages and quotient kids to all ages, UK, 1H 2024

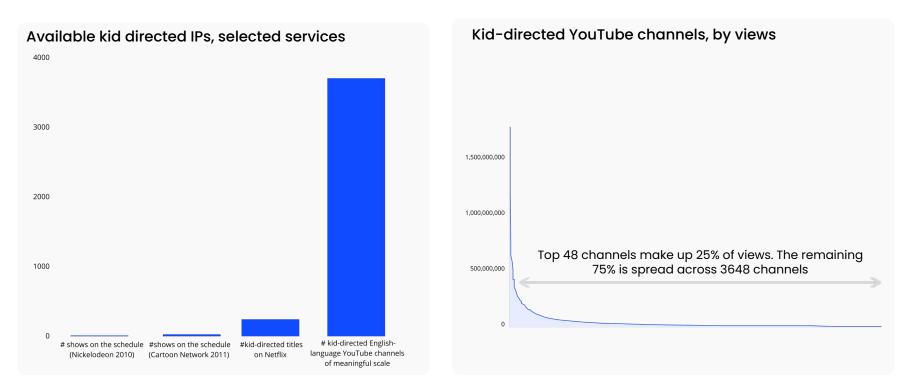




Kids' attention has shifted to a small number of global tech platforms which offer content for both kids and adults, with creator-led platforms like YouTube and TikTok wildly over-indexing

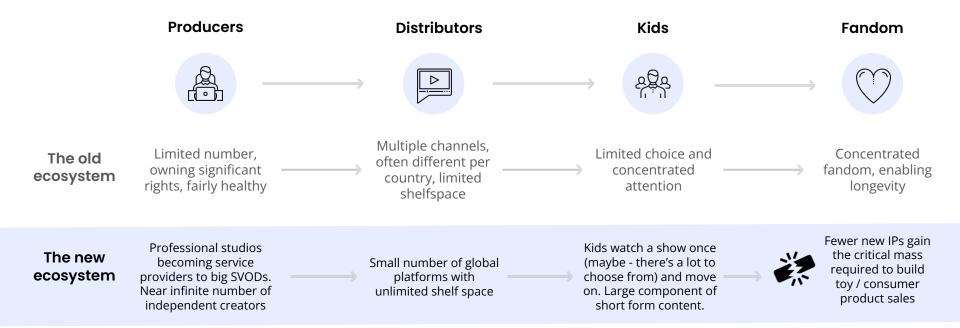
Gen A have have a lot to choose from resulting in very fragmented attention





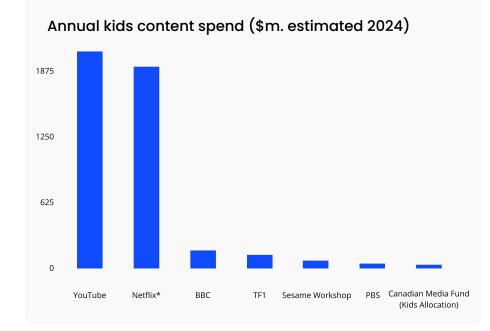
Driving a breakdown in the ecosystem of concentrated fandoms







Independent kids producers have lost market power as spend concentrates with global streamers



Children's TV In Crisis: Netflix, YouTube, BBC & Others To Be Summoned To Summit Exploring How To Resuscitate Genre In The UK

By Max Goldbart [+] December 6, 2023 1:00am



"Paw Patrol": UK execs worry kids are becoming "culturally swamped" by shows from outside the country. Nickelodeon/courtesy Everett Collection

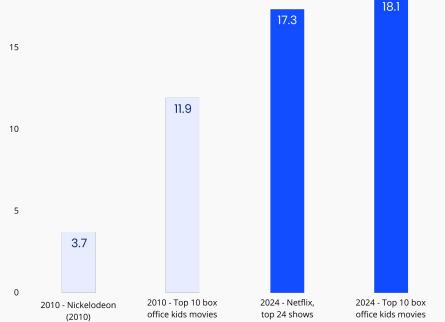
EXCLUSIVE: The biggest players in UK children's TV are being asked to attend a summit early next year to try and resolve grave funding issues amidst existential questions over the genre's future.

The Children's Media Foundation (CMF) has been preparing the summit for months including via a series of consultative meetings with all the major broadcasters, producer groups and lobbyists from August to October. The likes of <u>Metflix and YouTube</u>, which have been hugely influential in shaping the modern children's TV sector, will also be invited to attend. Organizers are concerned

It's getting harder to break new IP. Paradoxically, in a tech-forward world, we're reliant on 'old' IP

With new shows harder to break and content producers less able to take risk, fewer brand new IPs are being created

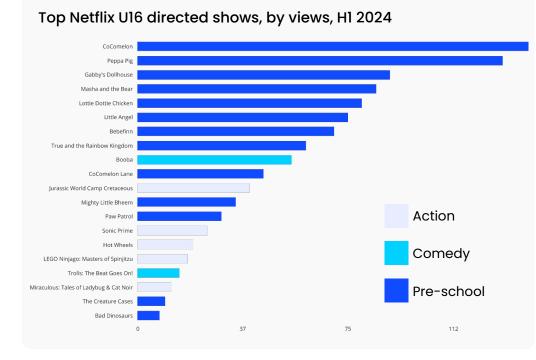
Years since creation of original IP, selected channels, 2010 vs 2024





CONSEQUENCES / 3

At the key ages for fandom development, Gen A aren't watching "kids" content at all



"Kids" has come to mean "pre-school" - over 80% of views for kids content on Netflix are for pre-school shows. Meanwhile, anecdotally at least, 11 years old are far more likely to be watching *Wednesday...*









We've entered a new era of fragmented fandoms

We asked a sample of US kids and teens what fandoms they felt "connected" to.



named a fandom not referenced by a single other person in the survey

Awesome Intelligence, Fandoms Research, 2025



New IP is still emerging - but it looks very different

"Skibidi Toilet" - a YouTube originated series by a single creator, starring a human-headed, singing toilet. **65bn views so far**.

	From this	To this	Internet-native IP demands increasing levels of cultural savvy
Creative control	Top-down and total	Loose	Know Your Meme Encyclopedia 🛦 Image
Storytelling	Planned and elaborate	Emergent, fan-driven, lore-first	Skibidi Toilet Part of a series on Source Filmmaker, [View Related Entries] (View Related Sub-entries] Updated 5 unothis, ago by Autumn Able. Added about a year ago by Fillip Hamilton.
Production value	High	Low (but improving)	Share S
Tone	Curated by few, to many	Anything goes.	Featured Episode
Production cycles	Long, but channel-dependent	Short (but getting longer)	Skibidi Toilet
Cross-media expansion	Slow and controlled with select partners	Instant (through UGC)	
Content length	Long	Short (but getting longer)	Korr Mene

Impacting more than just media - toy companies are finding there's not enough fandom amongst kids

The 'professional' content ecosystem isn't spawning enough IP that kids *love* rather than just watch, leaving toy companies increasingly reliant on nostalgia and older buyers

"This resilience in our business model has been years in the making, strategically shifting our mix towards games, digital, and IP licensing – the future of play.

This is where the consumer is heading, and we're following our fans as they age up and look for their favorite brands on digital platforms"

Chris Cocks, Hasbro CEO

FORBES > BUSINESS > RETAIL

Will Kidults Save The Toy Industry This Christmas?

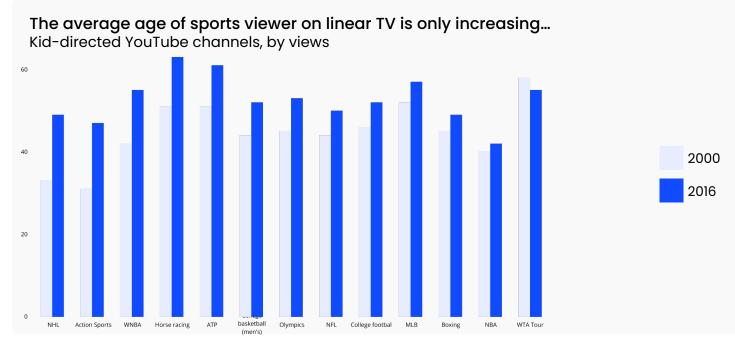
Joan Verdon Senior Contributor © Joan Verdon is a veteran retail reporter based in Northern New Jersey. Dec 24, 2022, 12:16pm EST



CONSEQUENCES / 6



Impacting more than just media (pt 2.) - sports franchises can't rely on TV to build fandom with the next generation

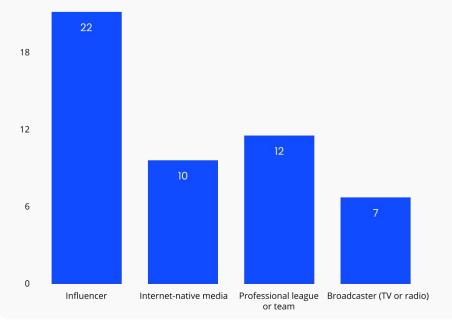


Source: Sports Business Journal

And traditional players are far from guaranteed to dominate attention on new platforms



Influencers are the most popular YouTube sports content providers. Make up of the top 50 most watched kid-directed YouTube channels about sports



The soccer example:



@futcrunch Top ranked football channel, 188m 30D VIEWS



@premierleague Second ranked football influencer, 101m 30D VIEWS



Who won the Superbowl?

Sport leagues are hacking a fragmented attention ecosystem by co-opting creators and influencers:

Kendrick attracted twice the search volume of either of this year's Super Bowl teams

While the Paul-Tyson fight was the "single largest acquisition moment' in [Netflix's] history" ⁽¹⁾

But long-term, who's the star and who's the support act?

Kendrick Lamar American rapper Kansas City Chiefs American football team Football team
United States VouTube Search VouTube
* <> &
27 Dec 2024 28 Jan 2025



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Disruptive innovation is often dismissed as trivial

But pay attention to gen alpha's choices and behaviors and we can see the emerging contours of a very different social landscape



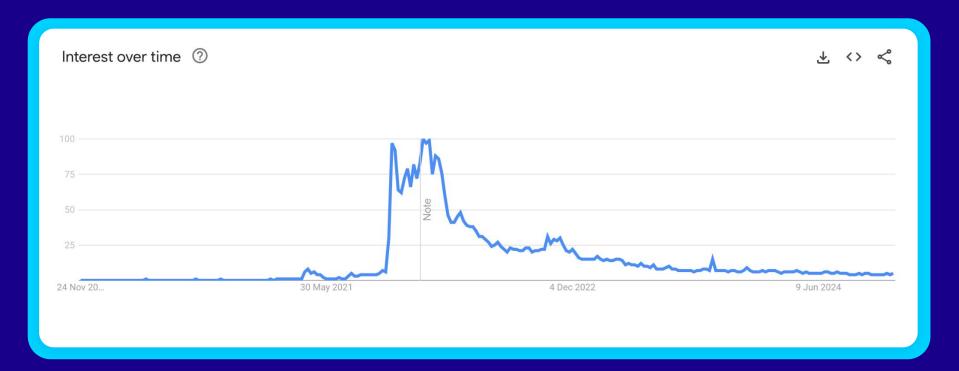


Mark Zuckerberg, Meta CEO, October 2021



Source: **BBC**.

The Metaverse is dead...





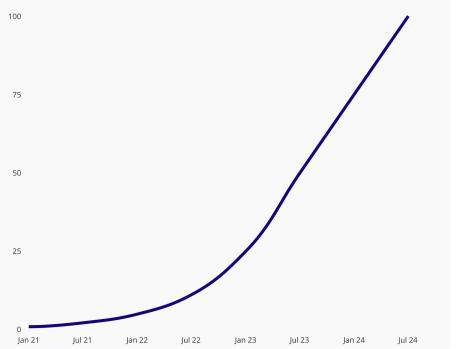
Or is it? "The reason big new things sneak by incumbents is that the next big thing always starts out being dismissed as a 'toy."

Chris Dixon, a16z



"Dismissed as a toy" - Part one

Gorilla Tag - a VR game largely played by kids - has grown into a sleeper hit Cumulative revenues, \$m





"Many in the field, both inside and outside Meta, were hostile to Gorilla Tag because it didn't look like their vision of VR success. When the market is talking, you should listen!"

John Cormack

"Dismissed as a toy" -Part two

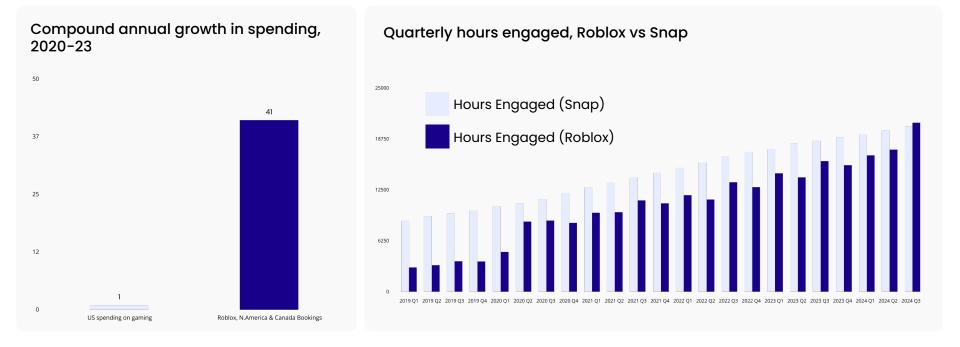
"My assumption is that most devs think Roblox is for kids and so don't bother playing it unless they have children in their lives.... Like many things made 'for kids' it's not taken seriously by adults"

Josh Ling, <u>Adopt Me</u>



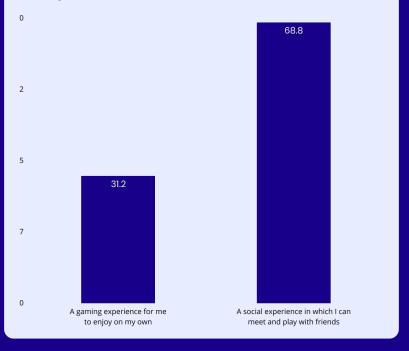
Roblox is beating out competition on both revenue and engagement





An inherently social platform

Which of the following best describes how you view Roblox?



And it's... pretty good?



If you designed a platform to answer to Jon Haidt's criticism of social media it might look like Roblox

- → Unstructured free play
- → Creative
- No likes, shares or asynchronous reward
- → No body image issues
- → Anonymous by default
- → "Off by default" direct messaging



And it may not be 3D - but there is a sense on which Roblox users do enjoy "a feeling of presence"

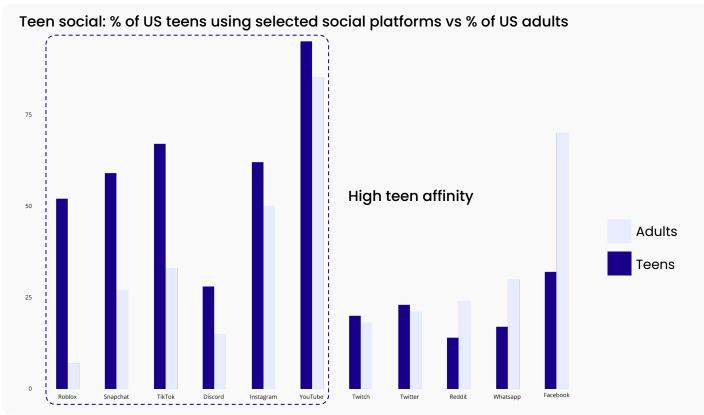
"Over half (56%) of Gen Z respondents say styling their avatar is more important to them than styling themselves in the physical world (as compared to 42% answering a similar question last year)"

35% of young audiences in the US say they prefer an in game item over the real version of the same thing



Along with Snap and Discord, Roblox forms a key part of the teen social stack





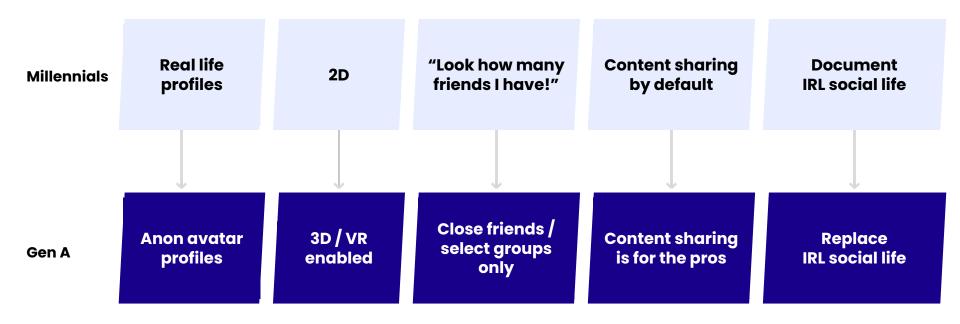


"Continuing a trend seen... over the last few years... children's caution about what they shared publicly online had further increased, with social interaction now confined mostly to chat apps and gaming."

OFCOM, Children's Media Lives, 2024

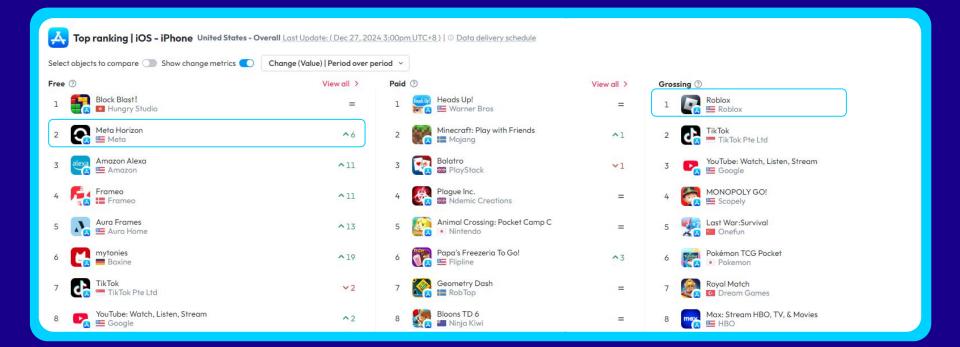
Emergent social behaviours





"Toys" for Christmas... (2024 edition)







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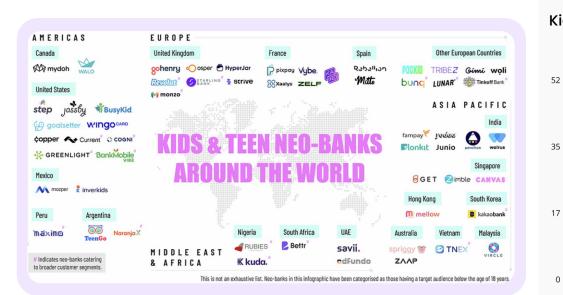


Gen Alpha are doing more online than ever before

We're very focused on what they're watching. But we tend to miss what they're buying, making, and selling...

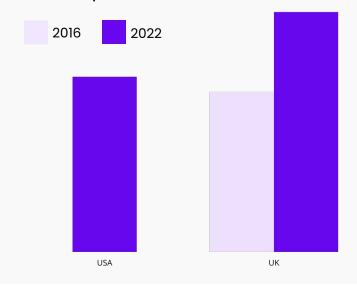
Kids are now pretty widely banked





Kid debit card penetration, US & UK

0



\$20bn in annual youth purchasing power in the USA & UK alone



	AGE	YEARS	PEOPLE	SPEND/HEAD/MONTH	OPPORTUNITY
USA					
	6-9	3	10770	\$25.00	\$3,231,000.00
	10-12	3	10770	\$50.00	\$6,462,000.00
	13-15	3	10770	\$65.00	\$8,400,600.00
					\$18,093,600.00
GBP					
	6-9	3	2100	\$26.00	\$655,200.00
	10-12	3	2100	\$26.00	\$655,200.00
	13-15	3	2100	\$39.00	\$982,800.00
					\$2,293,200.00

GRAND TOTAL \$20,386,800.00

More than just pocket money: Making real money, increasingly online

US monthly income by type, 6-18 year olds, 2021

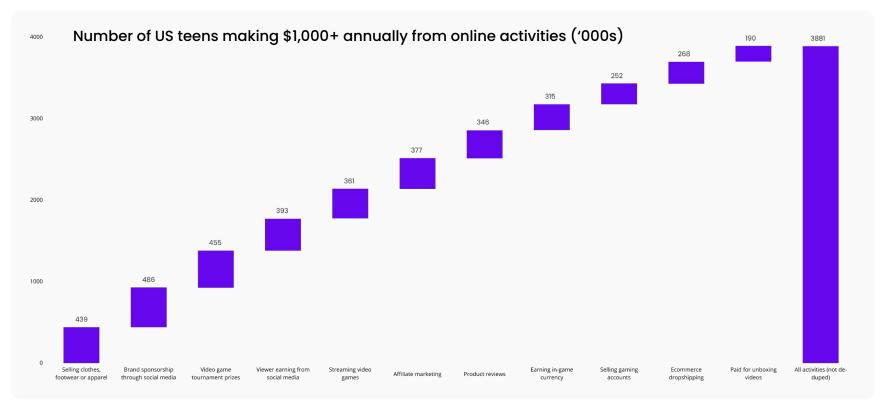


SUPER AWESOME

C. 40% of earned income coming from online hustles or content creation

The creator elite: Around 10% of teens are making \$1,000+ a year





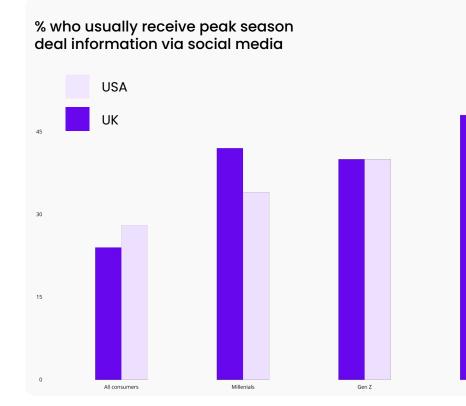
More than just purchase influencers: Two thirds of kids buy things independently

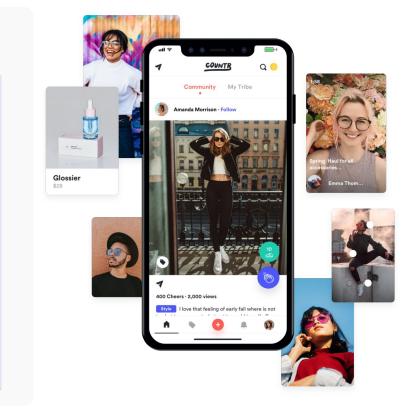


	8 YEAF	ROLDS	14/15 YE	14/15 YEAR OLDS	
	USA	UK	USA	UK	
% of children making payments independently	63%	62%	64%	71%	
#1 place to buy	Physical Stores	Physical Stores	Social Commerce	Physica Stores	
#1 method of payment	Cash	Cash	Debit Cards	Cash	

How to spend it? the younger you are, the more discovery takes place via social







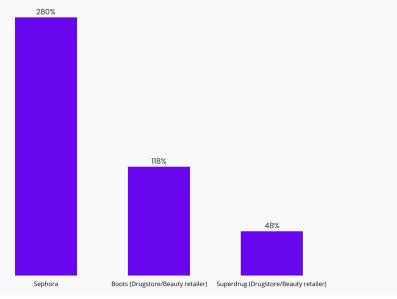
Gen A



"Across all age and affluence groups there is a large focus on spending more on appearance"

Where kids (6-17, UK) are spending their money top 20 merchants by category **Ouick service** restaurants Beauty & Wellness General Retail Gaming Apparel & Fashion Food / Grocery

Spend increases 2023-24 (UK kids and teens, 6-17) - selected retailers



Not for the first time, we're not quite sure how to think about this...



BBC

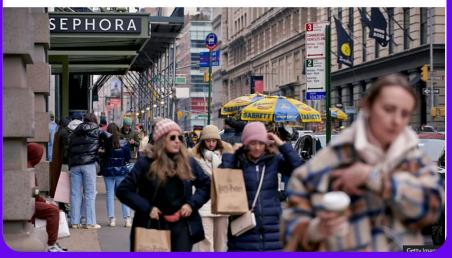
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live

'Sephora kids' and the booming business of beauty products for children

22 January 2024

Share < Save +

Mia Taylor Features correspondent





THE WEEKEND ESSAY

WHAT TWEENS GET FROM SEPHORA AND WHAT THEY GET FROM US

Kids are mimicking the semi-professionals they see on their phones, imbibing ideas about beauty rooted in deep desires and capitulations.

> By Jia Tolentino August 10, 2024

The 'Sephora kid' trend shows tweens are psyched about skincare. But their overzealous approach is raising concerns

f 🗶 🗖 👁



Chance to change the "playbook"?



Kids take an IRL behaviour online

Things go off track...

The industry starts to build solutions

PLAY

Example behaviour:

Kids start showing up in games like Fortnite...

Epic fined over \$0.5bn by the FTC (*link*)

The LEGO Group and Epic Games Team Up to Build a Place for Kids to Play in the Metaverse

ADVERTISING

Kids publishers need to monetise through advertising

"Viacom, Hasbro and others fined for ad tracking" (link)

WPP and SuperAwesome announce global partnership to ensure privacy and safety for kids and families within online advertising

SOCIAL

U13s become regular users of social networking

"Social media giants face hefty fines.. under proposed privacy measures for kids" (link) Instagram, Facing Pressure Over Child Safety Online, Unveils Sweeping Changes

(Still very early days for 'solutions')



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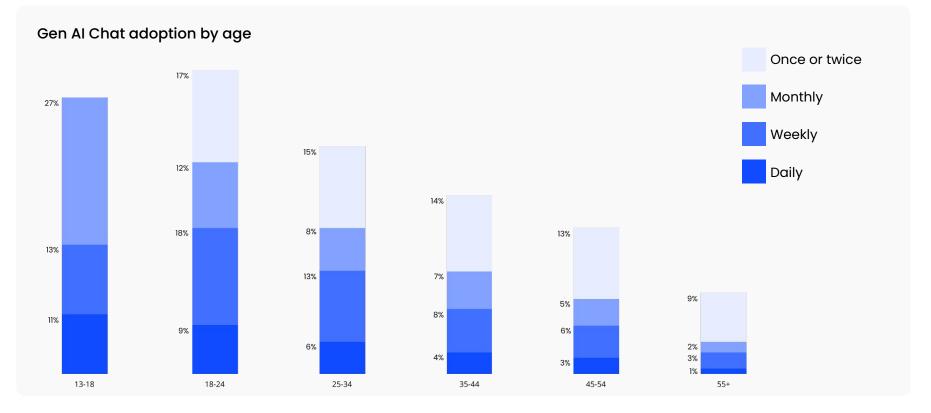


New products break through when there's a paradigm shift in technology, or big changes in consumer attitudes

Gen Alpha are experiencing both. What might that tell us about the products that will win in the next 10 years?

Start with AI: Gen A/Z are early adopters



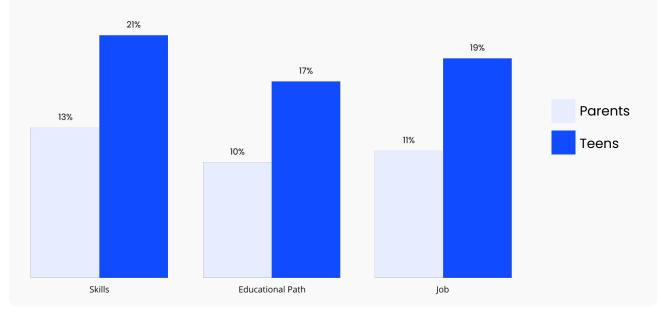


Sources: 18+ data from Reuters Institute (May 2024, ChatGPT only). Teen data from CSM, all chat bots, March / April 2024

Still early - but teens are roughly twice as likely as parents to expect AI to change their future



% of teens and parents expecting Gen AI to change their future plans, by type of plan



Product market fit



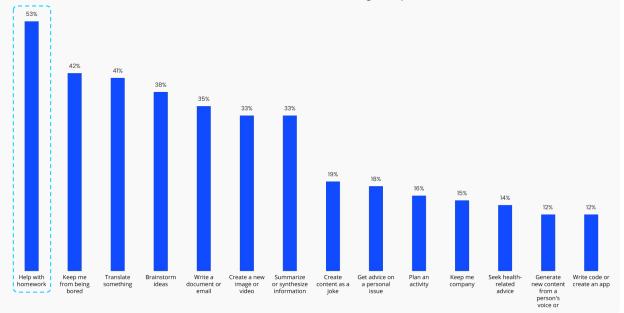
While analysts might wonder about Gen A use cases...

"We've had ChatGPT for 18 months, but what's it for? What are the use-cases? Why isn't it useful for everyone, right now?

Benedict Evans, April 2024

...for teens the answer is emphatically "Homework!"

Among teens who use gen AI, the percentage who have ever used it to assist them in the following ways...



FIRST BLOOD



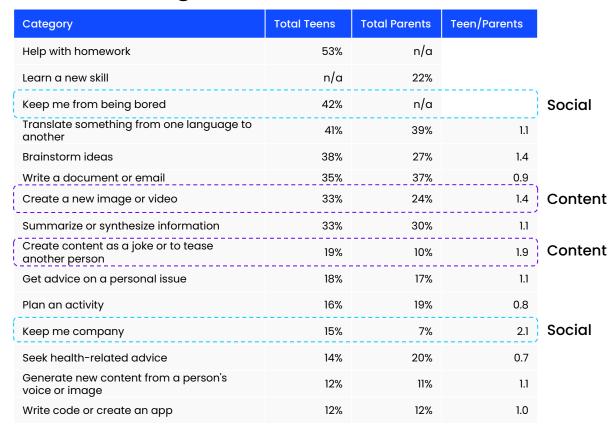
"The speed and scale of Google's AIO rollout, and student adoption of generative AI products, have negatively impacted our industry and our business"

Nathan Schulz, CEO, Chegg

For a while, Chegg.com was the go to place for sample essays to help you cheat on be inspired for your homework. Then generative AI showed up....



Over-indexing on social & content creation





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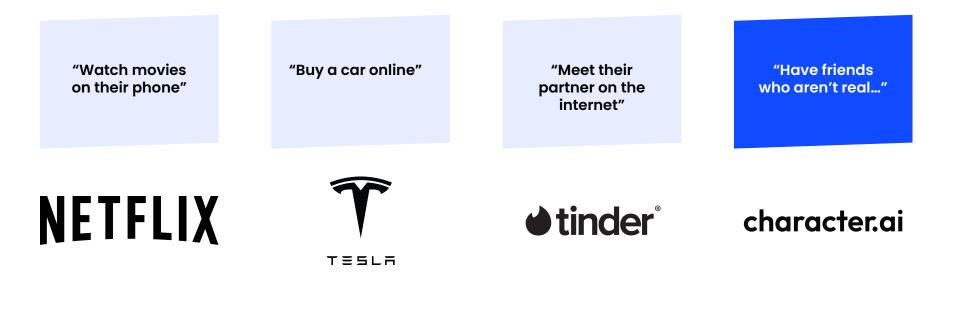
Among teens and parents who use gen AI, the percentage who have ever used it to assist them in the following ways...

Sources: Common Sense Media, March / April 2024

GEN A USE CASES: SOCIAL

"No one will ever..."





AI USE CASES: SOCIAL

Making AI safer for the next generation lots to think about...

Content

"Hey Chat, I think I might be transgender..." How do we want this answered? How does that change for a 9 year old, a 13 year old and a 17 year old? When do we want AI to bring in trusted adults... and how does that fit with privacy requirements?

Bias

"Hey Chat, should we pass laws banning guns"

The right answer to some questions looks very different for different groups. How do we keep bias out of training data - and for some questions, what does bias even mean?

Safety

"Hey Chat, are you real...?"

How do we tell the difference between a chatbot and a real person - and when is each preferable? What's in the "best interests" of a kid whose best friend is an AI agent? Does a kid understand AI's limitations?

Privacy

"Is my personal data in your training set...?" If a kid posts PI, are we sure it won't make its way into model output? And if you tell your AI friend where you live - what happens to that data?





Generative AI could spark an explosion in Gen Alpha content creation

Default creator generation	No gatekeepers	Engagement being shaken up	Creativity at a premium
Think of the "creator elite" already making \$1000+ a year And unlike previous generations, Gen Alpha can sell to their peers	Increasingly the platforms for attention (YouTube, TikTok, Twitch) and consumption (Roblox, Fortnite, social commerce) are open (so long as you're 13+) Gen Alpha don't need to ask anyone's permission to create	VR, AR and the internet of presence offer the chance for Gen A to win in new mediums	Gen Al makes it imaginable for one person to master both complex content creation and running a business back end



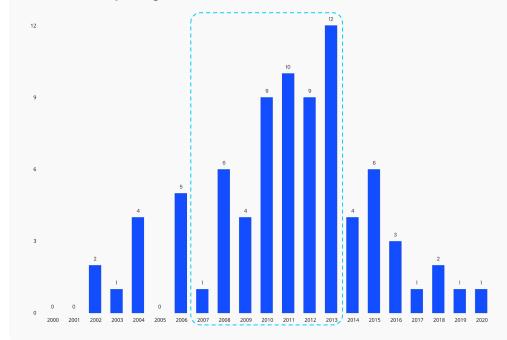
"In my little groupchat with my tech CEO friends there's this betting pool for the first year that there is a one-person billion dollar company"

Sam Altman

That founder will likely be from Gen Alpha



Year of founding of companies started by the world's 100 youngest self made billionaires



Explosion of mobile resulted in a surge of new unicorns being founded - with the peak six years after the iPhone launched

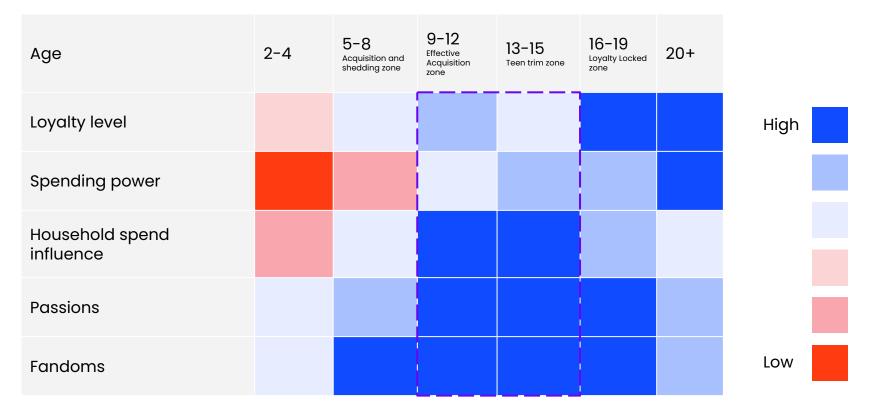
Six years after the launch of ChatGPT will be 2029 - when Gen A will be turning 18

Companies founded in the 6 years after the iPhone launch. 2013 launches include:



What tools is that founder falling in love with right now?





Takeaways





Fragmented fandoms

Gen A's attention is more fragmented than ever, and so are the communities of shared interest that define them. Brands need to re-tool their digital engagement strategies for a world which is more fragmented, community-owned and memetic than ever before.



The Semi-social stack

Relative to previous cohorts, Gen A are over-indexing on social platforms which are anonymous, game-first, 3D (and sometimes VR). Brands need to design community and creator strategies for a new social paradigm.



An Explosion of Gen A(I) Creativity

Gen AI will see us reinvent digital engagement at least as profoundly as the shift to mobile, and will further accelerate the shift towards creator-media. Get ready for a world in which Gen AI propels Gen A to take their place hyper content creators in their own right.

SuperAwesome helps brands responsibly and meaningfully engage youth audiences across their digital universes





The world's first youth-audience and data recommendation platform.

Enabling brands to understand their under-18 audiences' interests and motivations in order to effectively connect with them where they are.



We empower brands to deliver safe, exciting, and insights-driven gaming programs, whether it's custom integrations, skins, UGC or other in-game opportunities.



Engage youth audiences at scale with +155B available monthly impressions across mobile, web, in-game, CTV, YouTube and YouTube Shorts.

AwesomeAds provides creative services, measurement, and optimization using safe data gleaned from every platform kids & teens are in.



Deliver high-engagement creator content with fully managed talent partnerships.



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