what the sigma?

UNDERSTANDING

GEN ALPHA'S

RELATIONSHIP
WITH MEDIA AND
ADVERTISING

Disclaimer

The 'What the Sigma?' report has been conducted in alliance with Futurebrands Consulting.

This report does not purport to represent the views of ASCI and is the outcome of independent analysis undertaken for non-commercial and informational purposes only.

ASCI does not endorse, promote, or recommend any company, brand, product, or service, nor is this report intended to target or comment on any specific company, brand, or product.

While reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this report, no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to the accuracy, completeness, reliability, or freedom from errors or omissions of the information contained herein. The copyright holders shall not be liable for any loss or damage arising from reliance on this report.

All names used in this report are representative and any resemblance to actual individuals is coincidental.

All logos, trademarks, service marks, trade names, interface elements (including UI/UX), screenshots, and images of third-party platforms reproduced in this report remain the property of their respective owners. Such materials are included solely for research, commentary, and identification purposes.

Their inclusion does not imply any affiliation with, sponsorship by, partnership with, or endorsement by the respective rights holders. No commercial use is intended or undertaken.

All material contained herein is the joint property of The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and Futurebrands Consulting, unless otherwise stated.

ASCI ACADEMY

Supported by

DIAGEO INDIA

Hindustan Unilever Limited

Mondelēz International

Nestlē. Good food, Good life

CiplaHealth

Coca-Cola

Colgate

kenvue

pepsico
Food. Drinks. Smiles.

games 24x7

P&G

BAJAJ — THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE INDIAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Santosh Desai
Founder and Director,
FutureBrands Consulting

Every new generation has always been, in part, a mystery to the preceding one. But when we say that Gen Alpha is different, we mean something more fundamental than the usual gap between generations. For one, the difference is marked even when the age difference between the two generations, Gen Alpha and Gen Z is small. And more significantly, the difference is structural.

The primary world that this generation is growing up in is digital. Which means that they have a one-to-one unmediated relationship with the outside world way sooner than previous generations. **Children have been watching screens for a long time now; here they are living inside the world created by the screens. This is where the formation of the self is taking place**, where socialisation is occurring, where culture is appearing in a manifest form.

This changes everything about how children grow up, about how they process the world. Their sense making apparatus works differently. It changes what they covet, what they fear as well as the language in which they covet and fear. It reconfigures their relationships with parents and other authority figures. Sanskar does not flow down only from parents. Knowledge is no longer received exclusively from teachers. Older siblings are often the first interpreters of the new world. Peers do not merely influence, they co-construct reality.

Given that their lives are wrapped up in constant communication, the idea of regulating the infiltration of content by advertising messages becomes a complex question. The earlier separation between advertising and content was easy to make out but now the two wear similar clothes. Entertainment, gaming, influencer content and advertising all merge into what is consumed as content.

That is why this study matters. It goes behind Gen Alpha's consumption of content and locates it in an emerging culture that needs to be understood on its own terms. While the answers on how to protect them from promotional content are not easy, it is important to understand the nature of the problem and to understand how children are dealing with this issue today.

As always, India adds texture and nuance to this issue. The coming of the phone has been for many Indians, a source of great empowerment and access. This is a culture that sees technology primarily through a lens of possibility and transformation. It is a way to catch up, to reach outwards and to vault over obstacles. Anxiety is not the dominant filter applied to the use of the phones. Even when there are concerns about the way children are growing up, there is always a sense that they need to be aligned to the future which necessarily would involve comfort with technology. Children thus enjoy a level of effectively unsupervised autonomy in finding their own way through this new landscape.

It is understandable that this kind of change would cause anxiety. What is desirable is to separate the anxiety from the understanding of what is happening. **Children are bound to be shaped by the reality around them. What we need to understand is how this change is interacting with the minds of children and how it is altering their worldview.** That does not mean that some action is not called for, but that understanding must precede reasoned action.

That is the spirit in which this report has been created. The partnership between Futurebrands and ASCI brings together two complementary instincts. One, the need to understand what is happening and locate it in an appropriate cultural context. Two, to ensure that regulatory oversight keeps pace with changing contexts.

What this exercise has taught all those who have been involved is the importance of humility. Adults look at children with the lens

of their own understanding which is firmly rooted in a context that no longer exists. Any deviation from those causes anxiety. **Today's children live in today's time. They are learning a new mechanism for making meaning in real time. Sometimes they are more perceptive than we assume. Sometimes they are more vulnerable than they appear. Sometimes they understand exactly what is happening, and still choose it, because belonging matters more than logic.**

This report does not pass a verdict on Gen Alpha, but invites readers to step into their world and see it from their vantage point. If we can understand the texture of their attention, their humour, their anxieties and their cues of trust, we can protect them more effectively. We can also design guardrails that come from a place of understanding and live within the reality of what is possible.

Gen Alpha needs to be understood so that it can be protected and this report is a step in that direction.

The executive summary

This study 'What the Sigma?' seeks to make sense of a generation that cannot be captured by conventional metrics, categories, or assumptions - one that is outpacing the frameworks meant to define it, even as we write this report.

Objective:

The report examines how children between the ages of 7 to 14 years today (part of the popularly called Gen Alpha) identify, classify, and interpret commercial messaging. What is central to this study is the content consumption culture and the aspects it mediates today. The intent of the study is to understand the relationship that Gen Alpha has with content and advertising so as to inform responsible responses from the advertising ecosystem to address this new segment of consumers.

Methodology:

Drawing on field interviews across metro and non-metro Indian cities, the study identifies the evolving dynamics between children, screens, and commercial influence. The methodology involves extensive ethnographic style interactions via in-home observations, content-use walkthroughs, and mapping platform-behaviour with children, parents, teachers, counsellors, education experts and media and brand experts at the helm of children brands. Conversations with kid-fluencers and their families were also conducted to gain a well rounded perspective of emerging creator economies amongst children.

Limitations of the study:

This study is qualitative and directional, and not statistically representative. The sample is limited to selected urban and peri-urban contexts, as it intended to capture high content consumption and therefore smartphone ownership. Observations capture a moment in time within a rapidly changing digital ecosystem. Platform-level data was not available, and expert inputs reflect individual perspectives rather than consensus.

Key findings
of the study

1.
The discontinuous generation

Generation Alpha isn't just different - they're discontinuous. They're growing up inside a hyper-digital ecosystem where global trends, chaotic content, and new cultural code shapes their identities faster than adults can follow. The familiar logic of childhood - clear stories, shared references, value systems – appear to have collapsed, leaving adults culturally outpaced and unable to rely on old frameworks to understand them. This generation's world is highly shaped by content itself, making them the first truly difficult to recognize cohort of the modern era.

Authority vacuum:
Adult mediated childhood to algorithm mediated childhood?

A defining feature of contemporary childhood is the emergence of an authority vacuum - a gap created when traditional adult institutions struggle to interpret or meaningfully mediate the environments in which children now grow. Historically, parents and educators served as the primary custodians of knowledge and behavioural frameworks. Their authority rested on a shared cultural universe: adults understood the stories children consumed, the worlds they inhabited, and the rules that governed their socialisation.

With Generation Alpha, this shared cultural substrate appears to be eroding. Their everyday worlds are shaped by digital ecosystems whose logics, languages, and cultural codes are difficult to understand. The limited ability to contextualize children's digital experiences generates hesitation and repeated revision of boundaries. In effect, adults appear to be

slowly losing the dominant authority to anchor childhood.

Raised by and being prepared for algorithms?

This report acknowledges that digital content no longer surrounds the child, rather it sits at the center of childhood - nourishing it, coddling it, entertaining it as well as mentoring it.

As parental certainty falters and teachers' guidance fragments, the algorithm becomes a steady presence in a child's life. Always on, always responsive, it delivers a continuous stream of cues - what to watch, emulate, want, or imitate. Children don't intentionally follow algorithms, yet they absorb its signals almost as effortlessly as breathing.

Parents increasingly acknowledge that they cannot fully control what their children encounter online. The same device that hosts homework can also open the door to the unfiltered Internet, making strict monitoring feel futile.

Instead of shielding, we found many parents who chose to expose their kids to this environment - believing early familiarity will equip their children to handle digital complexity later. Children now co-view content with parents that once would have been firmly off-limits - violence, gore, kissing scenes, even adult dramas. A 10-year-old in Mumbai described feeling "VIP-like" watching Squid Game, while a 12-year-old in Shillong noted that such scenes "feel normal" because everyone in school watches them.

This shift reveals a new parenting logic: teaching children to self-navigate. Parents assume that discernment can only develop through trial and error, and that resilience comes from exposure, not avoidance. Stretched between concern and practicality, they appear to trust their children to self-correct in environments they themselves don't fully understand.

Digital is a society; not just media

Calling Gen Alpha "digital citizens" feels inadequate because it implies a chosen identity rather than an inherent state. For this generation, the digital world isn't a space they enter - it is home. Their fluency is instinctive and inseparable from who they are. They move across platforms and conversations with unconscious ease, not as users but as beings shaped within a borderless digital environment. The paradox is that the most connected generation is also the least aware of its own connectivity; their digital existence isn't a performance, but it simply is.

The great media Mukbang: a metaphor for media consumption

A state of nonstop, unmoderated, multisensory consumption where content, commerce, and entertainment spill into each other without boundaries. Borrowing from the chaos of the Mukbang genre, where excess is the spectacle, their media world functions as an endless table of stimuli: Shorts, memes, vlogs, gameplay, ads, and "kid-ified" versions of adult content like Squid Game all served in the same overwhelming stream. Today consumption doesn't seem structured and deliberate; it's ambient, and continuous. Kids seem to be growing up inside an "all-you-can-eat" media feast.

2.
Meaning of advertising and branding for Gen Alpha

The report proposes that Generation Alpha's relationship with brands is flirtatious - best described as "situationships". Brand choice is entirely dependent on context and mood. It's like a vibe that needs to be matched to the moment.

Categories that seduce them: beauty, fashion, gaming & tech

These categories naturally fit into children's worlds of play and creativity, offering spaces to explore, express, and belong.

Eg. Beauty is experimentation. Tutorials, filters, and trends let children craft identities & signal style, making self-care a tool for expression. Tech is where Gen Alpha showcases expertise. Reviews, updates, and comparisons fuel curiosity, social currency, and even shape family decisions.

These categories tap children's instinct to build and broadcast – what they know, love, and how they want to be seen.

When advertising meets Gen Alpha

The report further delves into how children understand advertising. For this enquiry, children were exposed to an array of ad material including traditional ads, branded collabs, brand logos, influencer content etc., to understand how they identify and relate with advertising.

To summarise the understanding of ads across sub age groups:

7-9 years - An ad is identified as something that "sells" obviously, and stands out due to its glossiness, brightly coloured images, slogans and mascots. Kids know it is something made by companies, they understand that it clearly solicits through its messaging. Anything that does not sell in an obvious and overt manner is seen as the flow of content.

10-12 years - While they are able to identify "paid promotions", this age group is not necessarily able to frame every piece of commerce as advertising. If ads blend into the experience of consuming content, they are often not seen as advertisements.

13-15 years - This age group is more likely to identify commercial intent even when it is disguised or not overt. A sharper realisation of

the world of commerce, they are able to pin-point ad links, influencer solicitation. But they are accepting of commercial contexts if it feels passion driven or interest based.

3.
The Big Gap - The imagination of childhood by the industry vs. how it's lived today

Advertising featuring children tends to speak in tidy binaries - good vs. bad, clean vs. messy, responsible vs. reckless. In a world where content is ambient and identity fluid, traditional representation in advertising feels like static - too framed and too eager to deliver a message. What slips through the cracks is the real texture of Gen Alpha's childhood: playful, ironic, global, and largely unbothered. As brands rush to blend into the stream rather than stand beside it, they risk erasing the boundaries between persuasion and play. And while campaigns try to feel seamless and native, regulatory frameworks built for overt advertising will need to keep pace with content that no longer announces itself as advertising at all.

Shared responsibility in a blurred media landscape

The final section outlines the tensions in a rapidly converging landscape of content, commerce, and creator culture – zones where children are at risk of encountering influence that may be unclear, age-misaligned, or commercially motivated in ways they may not fully recognise.

The challenge is twofold – the collapse of clear content categories and the fragmented visibility with which parents navigate digital life- make rigid and prescriptive regulation unrealistic. The terrain shifts too fast, the formats morph too quickly, and the signals of persuasion are too intricately woven into everyday media to be governed by rulebooks written for another era. Any attempt to impose fixed, prescriptive guidelines risks either

becoming obsolete overnight or over-regulating forms of expression that are now part of how children learn, socialise, and play.

What the moment calls for instead is shared orientation, a flexible, principle-based approach that recognises the fluidity of this ecosystem while keeping children's interests at the centre.

Rather than claiming to solve the complexity, the report offers a set of orienting principles - steady enough to guide decision-making, but adaptable enough to stay relevant as content, commerce, & childhood continue to evolve. Embedded within this is the role of early media and advertising literacy, particularly in school settings, as a shared capacity-building effort that can support children in recognising influence without narrowing the worlds they live in.

chapter 1
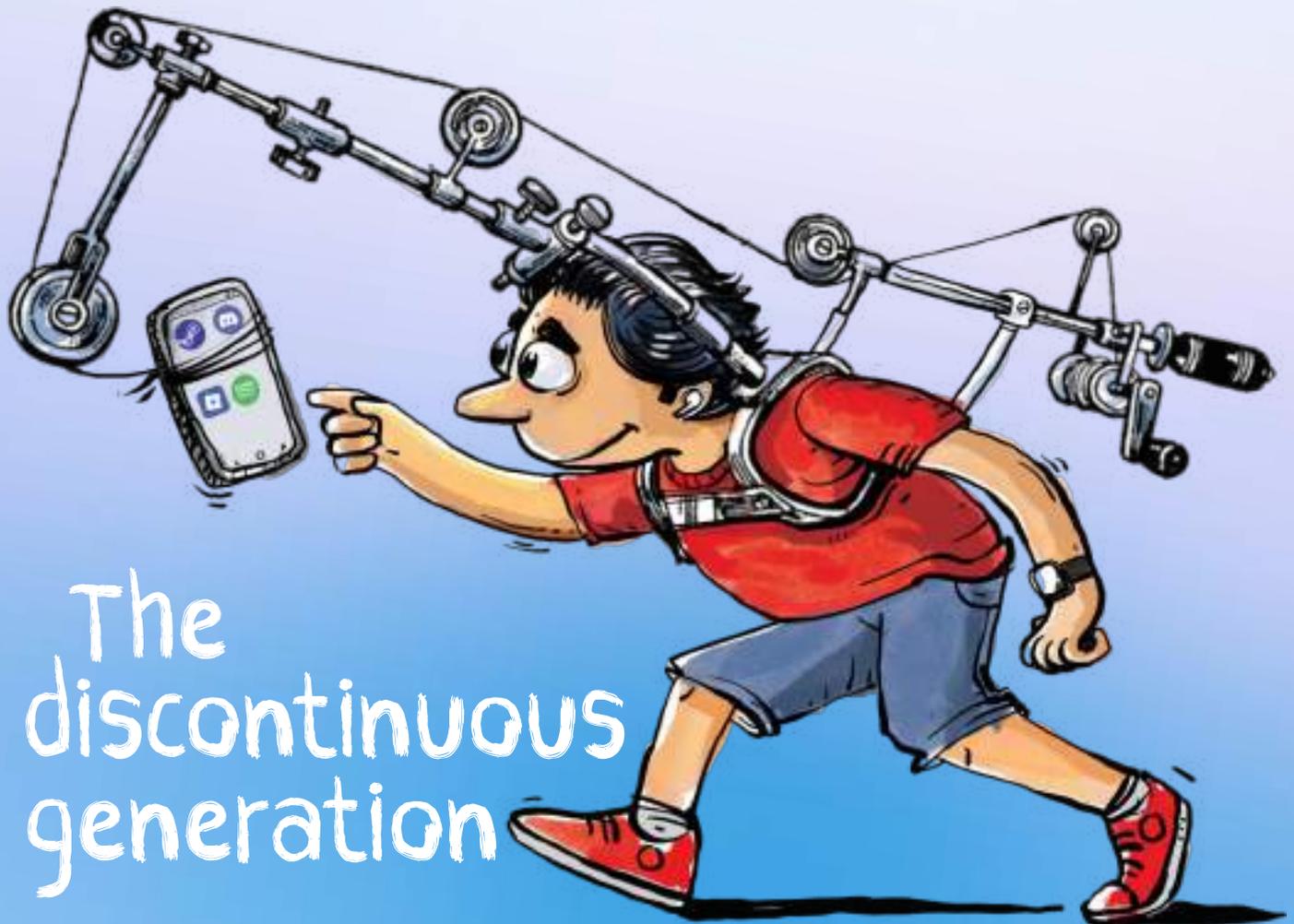
The discontinuous generation

Aim:
This chapter establishes

- The external landscape of Generation Alpha to clarify why they merit a focused study

- Outlines the core questions driving our inquiry

- Shows how legacy cultural frameworks no longer adequately explain their behaviour

- Argues for 'content' as a critical new lens of analysis

Recently when a young child from Delhi appeared on television on KBC answering questions with the poise of an adult, and a certain 'arrogance' when speaking to the nation's most revered father figure - Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, absolute chaos ensued online. Social media was awash with commentary around the kind of parenting that leads to such children today.

Kids today. Generation Alpha. We don't quite know where to place them.

And in that unfamiliarity, there is a lot of blame placed - some say it is the failure of gentle parenting, some say this is what happens when kids are screen-obsessed & have underdeveloped emotional intelligence, and some child experts are still trying to give a measured opinion but find their own theories insufficient. Collectively, the easiest way to reduce a national sentiment has become about saying - *"kids these days."* Of late, many such events have put adults in a bit of a frenzy.

There have been many new waves of change that have become foundational to raising Generation Alpha today - whether it is new parenting philosophies of gentle parenting, education systems that have rehauled age-old tenets like rote learning or authoritarian teaching to a large extent (or at least have adopted new codes, new destinations, new teaching styles), a pandemic that has made the screen a necessity for society-approved endeavours like studying, and in general a far more information-rich and access-rich environment fuelled by global exposure and India's ongoing digital revolution.

Yet, it is becoming more and more difficult to shake off the collective feeling that accounted-for changes at a societal level are not enough to explain what Generation Alpha is revealing to us.

That digital access has collapsed class boundaries is an established truth. What is striking today is the extent to this democratisation amongst the youngest generation in question. A young 9-year-old from a small peri-urban region off Vizag is referencing 'Manga Cosplay' videos, in exactly the same note of excitement as a young 9-year-old who stays in South Mumbai / South Delhi, goes to an International school, & whose parents come from a very different economic mobility and access story.

There has always been a children's shared world that existed across generations - one that deliberately excluded adults, and experts as well as parents have understood and even relished it.

However, the new grammar of this generation - the words they use, the greetings they have for each other, the "chatroom" abbreviation of random words, the adjectives they use to describe feelings - tends to feel disproportionately new to us, yet amazingly synchronised not just across country but across the world amongst themselves.

These are words that get taken from arbitrary sources, and then take on a life of their own - and meaning itself becomes unnecessary.

Earlier, 'kids' stuff' was easily identifiable - a parallel universe of imagination where everything from color palettes to character design spoke clearly of who it was meant for. It evoked emotions which were 'child-like' - innocence, fantasy, fun, wonder, awe. The characters were simple, black or white, from endearing cartoons to superheroes who brought alive their fantasies.

Whether it was Saturday morning Mowgli or Shaktiman in the DD era or Chota Bheem and Shiva in the 2000s, or even the Superheroes/Princesses of DC/Marvel/Disney, "kids' content" carried a sense of coherence because it was story-driven, fantastical, and 'age-coded'.

The characters that populate children's screens today feel stranger than ever before - bizarre, loud, and often indecipherable. In the past, even if adults didn't like shows like Shin Chan or Peppa Pig (vs. say a Chhota Bheem that was more familiar), they at least understood that these worlds were meant for kids. That instinct - that unspoken trust in what belongs within childhood - seems to have thinned.

Today, Italian brainrot has an inexplicable pull amongst younger kids. Children react with utmost glee when asked about it and rattle off a chant without pause of a "Bromadillo
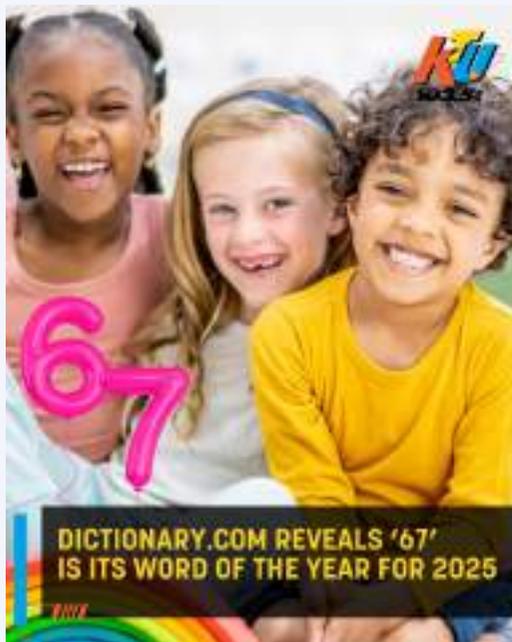
The viral "6-7" chant

A nonsensical countdown echoing across global and Indian classrooms and Instagram reels feels like it is more than mischief, but we struggle to understand it. **Kids scream '6-7' and buzz with an energy - as if there is an inside joke - but there is none.** And children across cities know of this chant.

DICTIONARY.COM REVEALS '67' IS ITS WORD OF THE YEAR FOR 2025

'Semantic Bleach'*

or kids' device to exclude adults

Beneath the meaninglessness lies an interesting question: **Is this semantic bleaching (where words lose their original sense through overuse) or a clever social code?**

In many ways, these slang terms act as linguistic passwords, allowing kids to build their own cultural space and subtly exclude adults.

Yeet, Ohio, Skibidi, Rizz -

The more popular linguistic worlds we heard everywhere, don't seem to have any one meaning. They are a **'vibe container'** and need gestures, eye rolls, and body language performance. Repeated online usage has made these part of everyday vocabulary.

'Mewing' -

Kids during our research running one finger along their jawline to look 'Chad'. **What does that mean? Is it a way to be cool? Is it about an accentuated jawline? What about it is fun?**

50 Italian brainrot animals as ranked by 'AI Gods'

Crocodillo, Tralala Sharkala, Fruelli Fruella, Cocofanto, Ballerina Cappucino". No one knows what this means.

In general, parents today often find themselves puzzled, unable to fully grasp what their children are watching or why they love it.

The sense of familiarity that once tethered adults to children's media has loosened, leaving a quiet uncertainty and in some cases parental anxiety stemming from feeling inadequate.

The references no longer seem to flow from our shared cultural past - they are fragmented, fast-moving, global, and local all at once.

The result is that we look at Gen Alpha "from the outside" because we no longer share the reference points, the languages, the rhythms, the aesthetic of good vs. bad anymore.

Adults watch in disbelief, trying to decode humour that seems to have no punchline, and aesthetics that seem to have no beauty standard.

Maybe the real question isn't why it's chaotic - but whether we've misunderstood what 'coherence' even means in their world.

That generation gaps have been shrinking is an old reality, and at this point frankly - a truism.

However, something about the way Gen Alpha appears before the world feels fundamentally disruptive, as if they are operating on a different playing field that we cannot fully map.

Today, 'generation gap' doesn't feel like enough to explain just how different Generation Alpha feels from everyone else. Older generations, for

Another example:

"Tung Tung Tung Sahur"

Children hear the sound of his name and that much is enough for them to feel like they are saying something that means something only to them. Famed Tung Tung Tung Sahur is a baseball bat holding a baseball bat - experts can make what they want to make of it.

the first time, are at a point where they feel like they cannot confidently guide / say what is right or wrong anymore - because they themselves do not know. Is it right to have a blanket rule on something like 'screen time'? If a kid asks for a better phone, or access to a laptop to play a coding game - is that good or bad? If a child demands access to ChatGPT for homework - is that copying or learning? The older generation starts with some rules of their own, but very quickly they find themselves revising permissions.

"I make sure that ChatGPT is on his father's laptop - and my kid can learn under supervision what all can be done with it - but I can see that it is helpful in making homework better. His geography assignment was to make slides

about the Himalayan Range - and it really helped him" - Parent

Most child, education, anthropological experts are finding themselves asking many questions - are these kids accelerated? Are they 'spoiled'?

The critique often lands on the surface. But what it misses is the structure of their world. This is a realm where digital access, self-paced learning, and media immersion rewrite what childhood even looks like.

"It is just that the very idea of time has changed. We took months and years to propose to a girlfriend / boyfriend. For these kids who have phones and connectivity in their hands, the idea of time is different. Intense conversations happen over a week, not months" - School Counsellor, Cuttack

Wild, Loud and Horrific

The visual and cultural aesthetics of Generation Alpha are wild, loud and often baffling to older observers- colour-splashed horror-game skins, rapid-cut memes with zero punctuation, and "surreal-kid" mash-ups that flick between nursery & nightmare within seconds.

Deciphering this world is hard. We, the adults, are outsiders. We come from eras when screens were accessories, not the soil in which childhood grew. We still reach for frameworks of generational identity that demand neat boundaries - eras defined by media shifts, iconic youth movements, offline-to-online transitions.

In this report, we will see how the meanings of authority, learning, friendship, and leisure for this generation have quietly shifted form. And how we're still trying to study this generation through old lenses, hoping familiar theories will hold.

But what if the transformation is too deep, too current, too ongoing to be captured by anything that came before? What if this isn't just another generational shift - but the birth of an entirely new logic of growing up?

And in this new logic, why does content - once a backdrop to childhood - feel urgent to understand all over again?

Content is no longer what surrounds the child. It is what builds their world.

It teaches, entertains, consoles, and mirrors. It's a playmate, a teacher, a moral guide, a marketplace. And what might studying content - its languages, rhythms, and values - finally reveal about the most discontinuous generation we've ever met.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT:

If content now sits at the center
of childhood, its influence can
no longer remain unexamined.

**Today, content feels like
a galactic black hole -
massive, magnetic, and yet
curiously under-studied -
as it quietly shapes a generation
that already feels beyond
our grasp.**

chapter 2
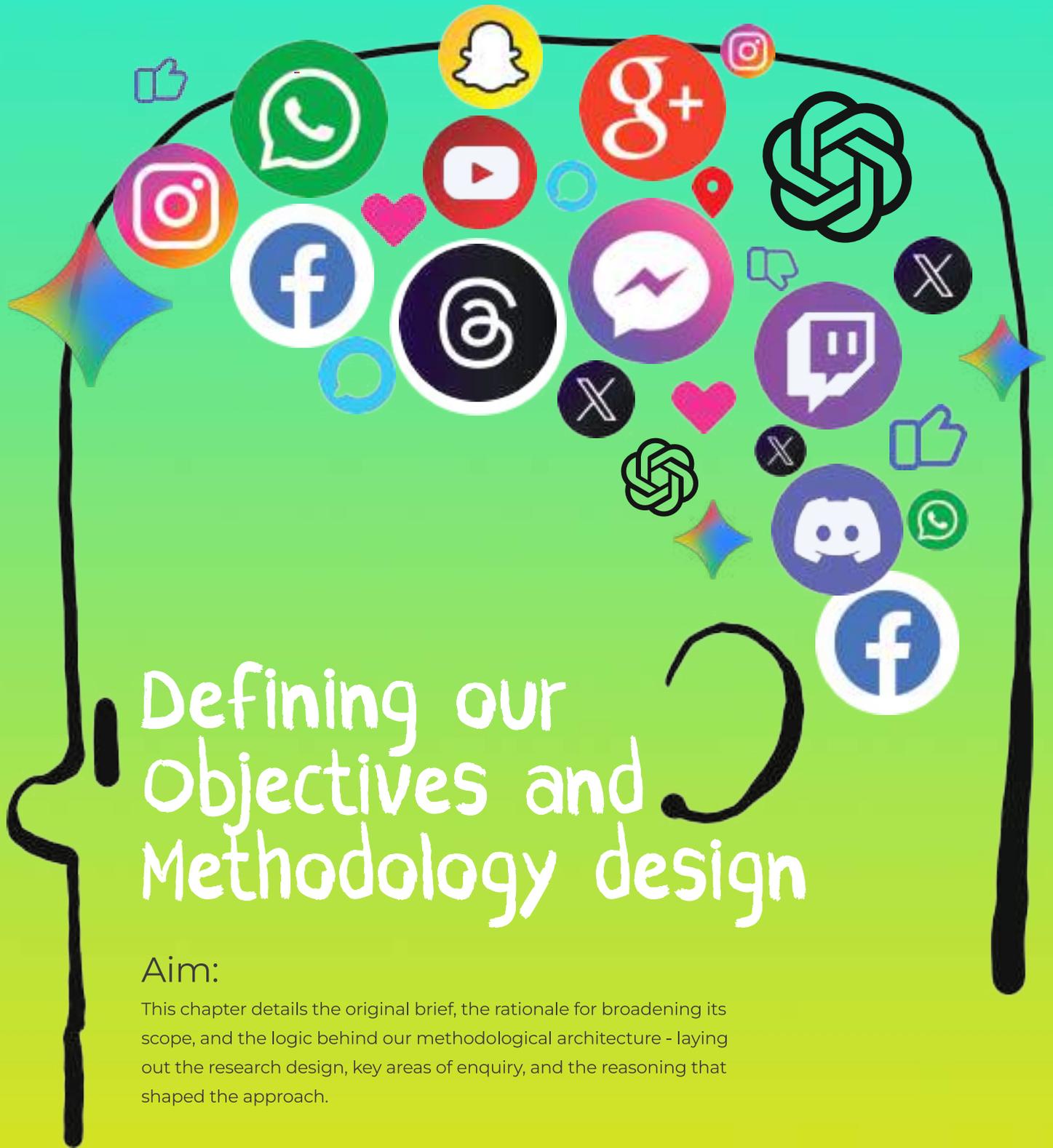
Defining our Objectives and Methodology design

Aim:

This chapter details the original brief, the rationale for broadening its scope, and the logic behind our methodological architecture - laying out the research design, key areas of enquiry, and the reasoning that shaped the approach.

Research premise

At the outset, the objective of this study has been to understand **how children identify, classify and discriminate between content that is branded** (advertising, influencer promoted) and content that is not.

Children today grow up in a digitally saturated, algorithmically curated content society in which the boundaries between entertainment, information, personality, and persuasion have collapsed.

As mappers of cultural change and custodians of one of society's most influential forces - advertising and messaging - we began this study with questions that were raw, fragmented, and urgent. Sense-making felt both difficult and necessary.

The centrality of content and the renewed objectives: Along the way, we realised that content is no longer a backdrop to childhood but a profound cultural force shaping every aspect of children's lives. It mediates how they learn, play, socialise, and understand the world. Recognising this, we broadened the scope of our inquiry and refined our research objectives to meaningfully interpret what is unfolding in the world of children today.

Key Research Questions

- *How do children today conceptualise the boundary between content & advertising across different platforms?*

- *What cues do they rely on to identify advertisements, especially in influencer marketing, in-game purchases, or branded content?*

- *How has the rise of personalization, interactivity, & algorithmic feeds affected their critical thinking and skepticism?*

- *What cognitive or emotional gaps make children more vulnerable to certain forms of Advertising?*

Research Objectives

As defined for this report, are as follows:

1.
Understand how children today identify, classify, and interpret commercial messaging

- How do they differentiate between branded and non-branded content?

- What cues do they recognise - and what do they miss?

- How do they perceive influencer-led communication compared to brand-led communication?

2.
Map children's actual content ecosystems

- What is the mental model of media consumption today?

- What platforms, genres, formats, and creators dominate their daily media lives?

- How do algorithms shape their lives, identities and consumption?

3.
Capture the parental, educational, and expert view of children's digital behaviours

- What concerns do adults hold?

- How do they regulate or enable content consumption in their lives?

- How do experts interpret the developmental and behavioural shifts associated with digital immersion?

4.
Understand the supply side realities and challenges

- How do creators/brands conceptualise their messaging to young audiences?

- How do brands integrate commercial messages into content consumed by children?

- What pressures, incentives, and grey zones shape the creator–brand–child ecosystem?

5.
Identify gaps in children's ability to recognise commercial intent

- Where vulnerabilities are most pronounced?

- Which content structures or formats create maximum ambiguity?

Snapshot of methodology

This was an exploratory, qualitative study designed to uncover emerging threads & cultural signals that aren't yet visible through existing datasets.

The sample was intentionally constructed to offer a panoramic view of India, allowing us to observe diverse behaviours and contexts rather than measure them. Because of this design, all findings are qualitative in nature and rooted in cultural insight rather than statistical validation.

Throughout the report, **the intent is to surface hypotheses, provoke questions, and highlight patterns that merit deeper investigation**. These early signals can help shape the direction of a national survey, a quantitative study, or even a neuroscience-led investigation that aims to build more conclusive, statistically robust

frameworks for understanding how Generation Alpha interprets and decodes messaging.

To understand how children today perceive, interpret, and navigate branded and non-branded content across digital environments, we designed a multi-pronged approach:

1.
Listening to the voices of a generation

Primary qualitative engagements with kids from the ages of 7-15 years old across 6 culturally different centres in India - Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Shillong, and Vizag.

These centres were chosen keeping in mind that language, influences, and cultures need to have their unique flavours yet in the spirit of our exploration be able to give us a unified and rich

Centers	Types of Engagement		
	Dil, Dimag, Bachpan (IDIs)	Suno Toh Sahi (FDGs)	Jugalbandi (Dyads)
Mumbai	1 x (7-9 yrs) + 1 x (10-12 yrs)	1 x (13-15 yrs)	1 x (7-9 yrs) + elder sibling
Delhi	1 x (7-9 yrs) + 1 x (10-12 yrs)	1 x (13-15 yrs)	1 x (10-12 yrs) + elder sibling
Kolkata	1 x (7-9 yrs) + 1 x (10-12 yrs)	1 x (13-15 yrs)	1 x (7-9 yrs) + elder sibling
Chennai	1 x (7-9 yrs) + 1 x (10-12 yrs)	1 x (13-15 yrs)	1 x (10-12 yrs) + elder sibling
Shillong	1 x (7-9 yrs) + 1 x (10-12 yrs)	1 x (13-15 yrs)	1 x (7-9 yrs) + elder sibling
Vizag	1 x (7-9 yrs) + 1 x (10-12 yrs)	1 x (13-15 yrs)	1 x (10-12 yrs) + elder sibling
Total engagements: 24 **No. of Participants = 54** *(excluding back-ups)*	Total ISIs across 2 age-groups (7-9 yrs, and 10-12 yrs), Split equally **=12**	Total FGDs across 1 age group (13-15 yrs) **=6**	Total dyads across 2 age groups (7.9 yrs, & 10-12 yrs) **=6**

starting point to a national, popular mainstream insight.

There were 3 types of qualitative engagements:

A. **12 x 2 hr in-depth interviews** *('Dil Dimag Bachpan' - loosely translates to 'heart of my childhood')* across the 6 centres with kids between the age groups of 7-9 yrs and 10-12 yrs each, in the presence of their parent / guardian.

B. **6 x 2 hr friendship mini-groups** *('Suno toh Sahi'- loosely translates to 'just listen to me!')* across 6 centres with kids between the age groups of 13-15 yrs, with due permission from their parent / guardian.

C. **6 x 2 hr sibling dyads** *('Jugalbandi' - loosely translates to 'friendly face-offs')* across 6 centres with kids - one of whom is 'Generation Alpha' between the age group of 7-15 yrs, & one who is older (by a minimum of 4-5 yrs).

2.
Anchoring ourselves into industry-facing realities for marketers:

Primary qualitative engagements with media and brand creators who are trying to understand this generation's demands as well as parental concerns while creating content for them. We needed to understand what key stakeholders of children's consumption culture think about / grapple with when they create commercial messaging for children today.

- Media creator for multiple popular kids franchises: TV broadcast and mobile

- Global media consultancies tasked with regulation

- Categories for who children are 'consumers': Confectionary

3.
Studying how change and childhood as social constructs have taken shape in India:

Primary qualitative engagements with child psychologists, educational authority figures - longstanding subject matter experts who have themselves studied and observed this generation, and have mapped social-cultural-digital waves that have caused seismic shifts.

- A leading child psychiatrist in India

- A senior school counsellor based out of Cuttack

- A leading Indian educationist and parenting mentor

- 15 x Teacher figures (Principals, subject matter teachers, extra-curricular teachers, tuition coaches - those who are in direct contact with children over a long period of time)

4.
Understanding Generational Alpha content creators - called 'kidfluencers':

Primary qualitative engagements with national and regional influencers - kids, or combination of kids and parents / adults - who are using content to put themselves out there.

We spoke to young content creators that represented those who were actively leveraging opportunity in a digital, tech laden, content heavy world. This was important so that our study would balance the reality of the digital opportunity, and not just reflect the adult, usually-anxious gaze. These 'kidfluences' were chosen based on their reach and their current relationship with brands - national influencers working with brands, regional vernacular influencers not yet working with brands and emerging regional influencers with considerable followership who are just beginning to work on branded projects

- National 'kidfluencer' duo that works with brands, supported by parents*

- Regional vernacular content creator, supported by parents, not yet monetising*

- Regional and international 'kidfluencer' that works with smaller brand experiences such as 'reviews', supported by parents*

- Founders of platform for emerging 'kidfluencers'

5.
Secondary reading:

Reading into secondary sources to understand the consumption culture amongst children. Looking at global reports, semiotic reading of content aimed at children, articles on Gen Alpha trends and case studies of child focussed

*All conversations happened in the presence of parents

brand collaborations.

6.

And finally, becoming kids to the best of our ability:
Immersing into content that this generation immerses in, with a view to understand what is loved, what is rejected, what works - what really constitutes this world of content that has become so central to how this generation manifests itself.

Summary of all stakeholders

Stakeholder Group	Geography	Age/Type	Purpose of Engagement
Children	Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Shillong, & Vizag	7–15 years	Understand perception of ads vs content; observe media habits
Parents	Same centres as above	Parents of 7–15 year olds	Understand mediation, anxieties, strategies
Teachers, school, and experts	Schools across centres	Counsellors, teachers, administrators	Understand behavioural and learning shifts
Child psychologists	Multi-region	Practising experts	Developmental and cognitive interpretation
Digital creators & kidfluencers	National + regional	YouTube/ Instagram/ Gaming creators	Understand creator ecosystems & commercial messaging
Marketers & child-first brands	National	Brand/marketing teams	Understand current practices & compliance realities

Additional notes

- **Parental / guardian consent:** At every step of this exploration, we had to keep in mind that we are entering the world of children, and therefore, due process of seeking parental / guardian permission had to be upheld.

- **Exploratory, not statistical:** Our study is only the first step to understand how we, as custodians of messaging in this commercial world, can better understand the future of advertising by being both relevant and responsible to Generation Alpha. The findings in this report should be read with the spirit of further enquiry as we lay out new questions, considerations and hypotheses that will need further robust validation.

- **City selection driven by smartphone and data access:** The study required us to engage with children who have consistent access to smartphones and data, in order for us to be able to study their relationship with content. This is an urban-centric study. We have met children across socio-economic strata within urban centres.

- **Expert opinions reflect professional judgement, not universal consensus:** The conversations with experts were exploratory in nature, designed to provoke new thinking and emerging hypotheses. This means that present studies authored by these and other experts may not have fully captured the phenomena we have set out to study - that of decoding Generation Alpha through the content they consume

- **As children's digital environments evolve rapidly, the findings represent a snapshot in time:** Attempts have been made to use case studies, viral content phenomena that are ongoing, as a symbol to arrive at our insights. The very nature of content is such that the specifics / examples / references may change. Our attempt therefore, has been to create overarching theories / hypotheses / starting points that can be sense-making tools, rather than focussing on the particularity of content that we encountered.

-

chapter 3
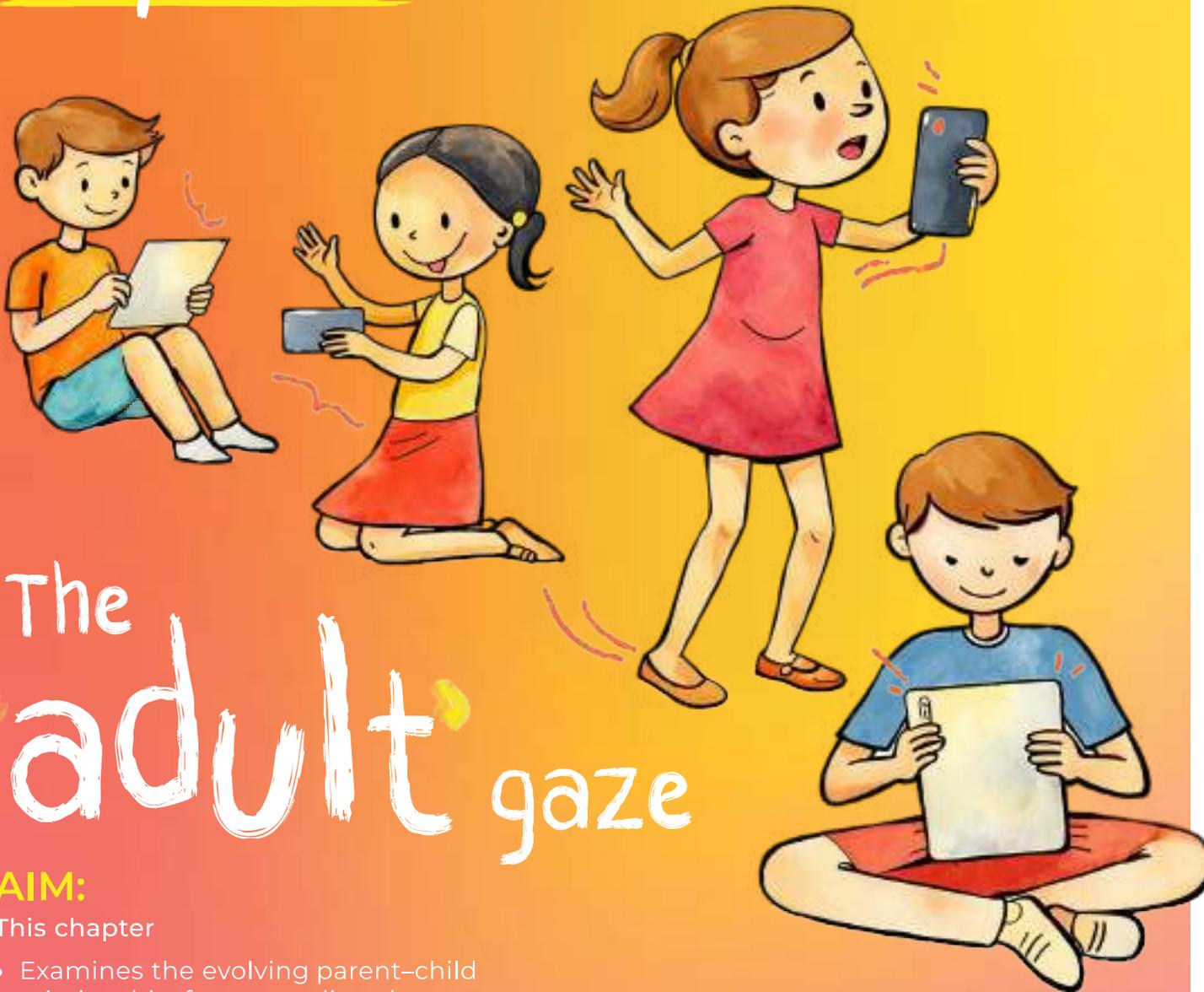
The 'adult' gaze

AIM:

This chapter

- Examines the evolving parent–child relationship, foregrounding the centrality of technology and digital life in that shift.

- Maps emerging parental anxieties and traces how institutions like schools are drawn into the orbit of digital concern.

- Incorporates perspectives from experts to contextualise these tensions.

Together, these elements outline how 'adult supervision' in India is being reshaped - and where its contours remain unsettled.

The 'Screen'

The bane & boon of contention
from the parents' POV

Everything seems 'Up for Negotiation' today

Devices are the arena where new parenting seems to be playing out.

It is impossible today to have a conversation about children without talking about mobile phones, YouTube & screens. The conversations are not about 'whether or not to provide access to the digital world' anymore but have moved to 'how to negotiate the ever increasing digital-ness or virtuality in our lives'. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the screen is becoming increasingly central in mediating parent-children relationships today.

Some of our observations that demonstrate this phenomenon:

Shared feeds: Screens are shared and as a result feeds too. This is the parents' way of 'keeping an eye' on what their kids are watching.

Wink-wink-screen-screen: Structuring screen time generally turns out to be a vain attempt with revised rules every few days, slipping back into screen time being a languid undefined idea.

"Officially she is allowed 1 hour but I know she watches for 2-3 hours a day" - Parent

Independence within boundaries: An independent phone, if given at around 12-13 yrs, comes with a lot of terms and conditions. Social apps like Instagram with the possibility of a 'two way communication' from strangers are mostly avoided. However, there are work-arounds.

I have got two instagram accounts one is public and the other is for close friends only - Child

Control, and negotiation: Devices become points of contention and negotiation. Parents set limits, revoke privileges, and make rules, yet deep down, they do not believe they are in full control. Homework and learning gradually blur into leisure & entertainment, often without anyone realising when the shift begins.

No set rules to device ownership: Children's access to screens tends to follow an age-graded progression.

Younger children (7–9 years) typically use a parent's phone—most often the mother's for entertainment or school tasks.

By ages 10–12, early adolescents in metros may receive personal smartphones, while in smaller cities this remains inconsistent and dependent on family norms.

By the teenage years, personal smartphones seem to become a default, across metro and non-metro towns.

Schools, too, follow mixed policies: some require students to deposit phones at the gate, while others allow children to carry devices with varying levels of supervision.

Search for non-screen time: There is a growing restlessness amongst parents to find something that is off-screen - irrespective of what the activity is, anything where the child is not glued to a phone is welcome.

What works in favour of the [screen] then?

Peeche na rah jaye -
My child must be with the times
"If I don't allow my child to play on Roblox the next day he will feel lost amongst his classmates. He won't know what they are talking about"

Entertainment -
The need to disconnect and drift
Parents realise the importance of giving children a break from the pressures of school, structure, and expectation. Research[1] by nonprofit Common Sense Media and C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in the US found that over half the participants in their study used their phones on school nights, often to listen to music to wind down or get to sleep.

Creativity -
The need to build and express
Parents feel a sense of pride that through access to the right content, they are raising a generation of children modeled to be "thinkers" not "parroters", in contrast to how they have grown up.

Learning and productivity -
The need to feel 'accomplished'
"My daughter is learning two languages on Duolingo"

Exploration and curiosity -
The need to wander and discover
"Everyday my son comes up with these random facts from around the world. He keeps watching these videos"

PARENTING in a conundrum... a 'Tightrope' walk?

Parents seem anxious yet fascinated by social media. They can neither embrace it fully nor reject it outright.

On the one hand, they see clear positives such as children becoming more aware, expressive, and globally connected than ever before. On the other hand, they watch a new kind of upbringing unfold, shaped by content, algorithms, trends, and virtual peers they can't fully understand.

As Consumer Research Platform, Attest[2], further explains, Generation Alpha consumes a sheer volume of content that invariably exposes them to a broader spectrum of ideas, cultures, and lifestyles than any previous generations encountered at the same age. They can instantly access news and commentary from around the world, and hear directly from independent creators, activists, and niche communities. By providing a window beyond mainstream narratives, social media helps this 'Autonomous generation' form their own independent worldview.

As a result, many parents seem to live in quiet self-doubt. They are proud of their children's confidence and exposure, yet uneasy about the world shaping them. At times, it feels as if the kids don't entirely fit into the parents' world and the parents don't quite belong fully in theirs. While the sentiment may not be unique to this generation of parents and children, the gap in familiarity and an understanding of the kids' world today seems to be higher than before.

Parents today are raising children in a world whose cultural codes, learning rhythms, and digital behaviours they no longer fully understand. This creates a deep & persistent tension: parents are expected to guide, regulate, and protect, yet they themselves feel under-equipped.

Gen Alpha's content world shifts faster than any adult can track. As a result, parents experience:

- Loss of authority, because they cannot confidently distinguish "good" from "bad" digital behaviours.

- Constant rule-revision, where screen-time guidelines, device access, and online permissions keep changing out of practical necessity.

- Confusion between enabling & protecting, because digital exposure is both a risk and a requirement (for learning, socialising, creativity, homework).

Parents today are caught in a double bind: **they must set boundaries in a landscape they cannot map, and must support children in ecosystems they themselves never grew up in.** Many platforms do provide tools such as privacy settings and timing reminders that can help parents create restrictions or supervisory guardrails, however lack of digital fluency around online safety prevents them from leveraging these fully and confidentially.

REFERENCES

[1] www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2023-cs-smartphone-research-report_final-for-web.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1768030464322123&usg=AOvVaw0otjXh_uL0IGvovnGVl67I)

[2] https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.askattest.com/blog/articles/the-gen-alpha-report-us-edition%23h-chapter-4-developing-an-independent-worldview&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1768030464324040&usg=AOvVaw1Pwp1TYsWDQQ5fQ-v5Fh05

WHOSE CHILD
is it anyway?

Parents', Teacher's or
the Algorithm's?

THE PARENTING PARADOX
Provide, DON'T PRESCRIBE

Indian parents, no matter from which socio-economic strata, are no longer unaware about evolving parenting philosophies.

They may not have the language to explain their style, but they do have the language to explain what kind of relationship they want with their children.

"I want to be my child's friend. He/ she should not feel like they should hide something from me"

- this is a sentiment that is taking root across the Indian parent's consciousness.

There are differences in the degrees to which new parenting paradigms are being adopted, but today it would be incorrect to say that 'Indian parenting' has not changed its shape and form.

Recently, as part of '21 Parenting Rules' published by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)*, even the apex body recommended that parents should endeavour to be both, "Parent as well as a friend: Assure children that they can approach you as a confidant or reach out to you for support and advice, without any hesitation. When your children talk about friends or their day at school, listen to them attentively. Get to know them as friends."

Kids today aren't being raised by a single parental voice so much as they're being raised into a whole ecosystem of 'parenting' - an ever-shifting philosophy machine that their parents themselves are constantly learning from, tweaking, and subscribing to.

Therefore, unlike previous generations, children today are not simply "raised by parents" - they are raised into parenting - a more 'intentional' way of upbringing that feels like a system more than an instinct of a parent.

This leads to a paradox: Parents recognise the need for a new, systematised approach to parenting - yet remain uncertain about its framework, rules, and boundaries, & increasingly unsure how to truly engage with their children within this new order.

TEACHERS & EXPERTS
Virtue signalling, but lacking practical solutions for parents?

As parents work through the dilemmas of modern parenting, experts hypothesise a somewhat foreboding picture of modern childhood. For our expert conversations we spoke to educators, school counsellors, teachers, child psychologists and activity instructors in an attempt to gather a holistic view from stakeholders:

School Teachers: An observed diminishing role as knowledge providers, and an increasing expectation of them being a 'moral guide' to an allegedly "directionless" generation.

There seems to be a discernible shift in the self-image and functional role of teachers today. With knowledge easily accessible through AI tools and digital platforms, students no longer view teachers as primary sources of information. Consequently, educators are increasingly positioned as facilitators within a system rather than as individual role models, leading to a gradual erosion of the personal and human dimension traditionally associated with teaching.

Expert-speak

Screen time as 'band-aid' for parental absenteeism?:
Counsellors hold the belief that children's screen dependency often begins when busy parents replace emotional bonding with digital distraction.

Unconsciously conditioning hyperconsumerist tendencies:
Educators note that parents, driven by FOMO, unknowingly nurture early consumerism by exposing children to branded, trend-driven ecosystems.

The rise of 'container' babies:
A term coined by an expert to refer to the phenomena where children are glued to their screens for hours at an end. Choosing online activity over physical movement/ proximity.

"Parents are the kids' drug suppliers. They are constantly injecting sugar, technology and brands leading to a generation that is always hyperstimulated" - Child educator
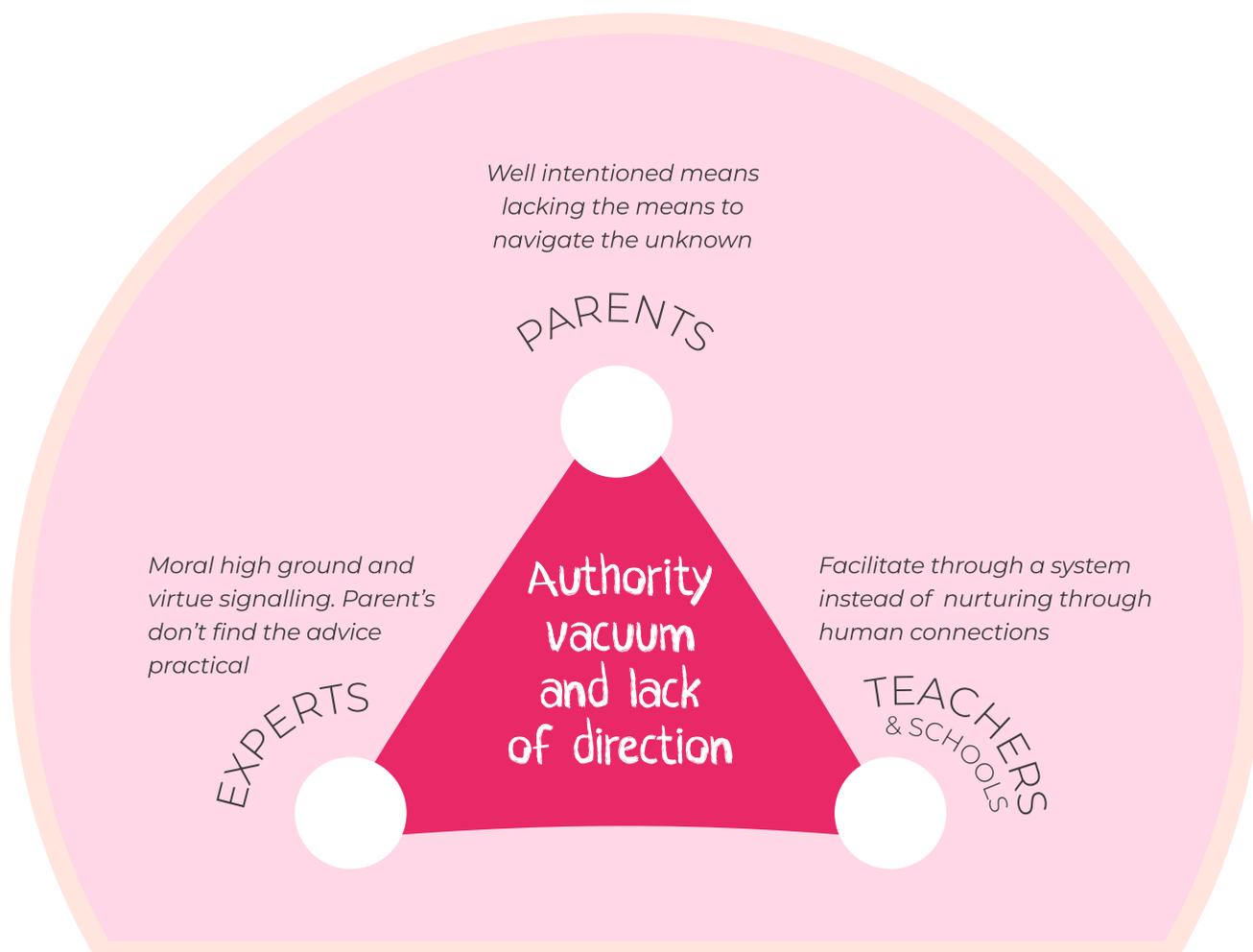
"Sassiness" as a coping mechanism:
A child psychologist notes that popular media glamorizes sassiness through trends like roasting and trolling, turning insolence into an aspirational trait rather than a defense mechanism.

Erratic attention patterns:
Experts we spoke to warn that screen-induced dopamine hacks create attention echo chambers, leading to hyperfocus on interests but patchy cognitive development overall.

At this point, **it appears that child experts may be drawing from theories that have not yet fully accommodated the lived realities of today,** and nurturing a somewhat misplaced belief that parents knowingly steer children down a counterproductive path.

Well intentioned means lacking the means to navigate the unknown

PARENTS

Moral high ground and virtue signalling. Parent's don't find the advice practical

Facilitate through a system instead of nurturing through human connections

Authority vacuum and lack of direction

EXPERTS

TEACHERS & SCHOOLS

Experts (Counsellors and child psychologists): At this moment about a conversation so ripe, they tend to blame parents for pre-emptively immersing children into overstimulated environments. They tend to hold a restrictive view on gadgets and content, which parents find ideal but impractical.

Are children growing up in an authority vacuum?

While adults try to 'soften' authority structures for children, is there a simultaneous collapse of accountability across all stakeholders that shape kids' lives?

Parents blame schools and society, teachers blame parents and culture, experts blame media and parents creating a chain of blame that exposes the fragility of modern child-rearing ecosystems where the traditional pillars of guidance are crumbling.

When authority thins out, digital systems move in

As parental confidence wavers, teacher influence fades, and expert advice feels impractical, a silent but dominant force steps forward: **the digital content and recommendation algorithms.**

It becomes the one presence in a child's life that is consistent, responsive, and always "on." Unlike adults, algorithms don't hesitate, negotiate, or contradict themselves. They offer an uninterrupted stream of cues - what to watch, who to follow, what to desire, how to behave. Over time, this consistency starts to look a lot like guidance.

Children may not be consciously "listening" to algorithms, but they're unquestionably learning from them. Not just entertainment preferences, but values, identity formation and even emotional templates.

The growing centrality of personalised digital experiences

In the vacuum left by fragmented adult authority, algorithms increasingly become a stable system shaping childhood today; not because they are better, but because they are **consistently available, adaptive, and responsive to individual interests**.

While adults negotiate rules, boundaries, and philosophies, the algorithm quietly writes its own - absorbed by children in real time, scroll by scroll. The role of the algorithm becomes more visible when we compare the digital lives of Gen Alpha in major metropolitan hubs like Delhi and Chennai vs. tier 2 cities like Shillong. Parents from tier 2 towns employ a stricter approach towards screen supervision, consistently emphasizing the importance of physical experiences vis-a-vis screen time.

In geographies where vernacular grounding amongst children is robust, the cultural authority of parents remains comparatively undiminished.

Parent's instinct

Their response to **digital content environments**

Illusion of CONTROL?

Parents today believe they know what their children are watching.

The screens are in the living room, the volume is audible, the characters look cheerful. The content appears safely "made-for-children." This creates a comforting sense of supervision, reinforced by the occasional shoulder-surfing glance.

But this sense of control is sometimes overstated.

What parents see is the packaging of content, not the depth of it. Content today spills far beyond conventionally defined boundaries. Beneath its childlike surface, the digital world is dense with cues about identity, self-image, beauty, belonging, consumption, and popularity.

They know what their children are consuming, but not what is consuming them.

Content has become a world that is both visible and opaque, harmless in appearance yet quietly formative.

The challenge for parents is no longer just managing screen time - it is learning to understand a language that has long outgrown its subtitles.

Parents remain at a tertiary level -
aware of what is being watched, but not what is being absorbed.

Parental response:
Equipping kids for the unknown 'verse'

Exposure builds immunity: The Indian mental model of upbringing

Parents frequently admit that they struggle to fully monitor what their children consume, as the same devices that host classroom content also offer unrestricted access to the adult Internet. Instinctly and subconsciously their response is not to curb but to allow an exposure to content so that their children are prepared when wading through the content ocean alone.

"Watching Squid Games gives me a VIP-like feeling. They show it like that on the show " recounted a 10-year-old from Mumbai. *"I don't get scared seeing all the blood and violence in the show, I think it's pretty normal. All my friends in school also watch it"* shared a 12-year-old from Shillong.

It was revealed to us during our interactions that parents are co-viewing/shoulder-surfing content with their children which was once off-limits for kids. Be it violence, gore, or kissing scenes a tad too age inappropriate, kids are seeing it all, mostly with their parents but sometimes alone.

In fact, even the digital media literacy nonprofit, MediaSmarts*, emphasises that co-viewing is one of the most important things you can do to raise media-savvy kids. "That includes listening to their music, watching TV, movies and videos together, getting to know their favourite apps and playing the games they enjoy. It also includes talking to them about their media lives: what they like, what they're excited about or looking forward to, and what worries or annoys them. While just being with them is an important step, this is also a great opportunity to help your kids think critically about the media they consume, by asking them questions about it and, sometimes, answering back."

Parents are letting children stumble a bit and self-correct, trusting that discernment is a muscle that strengthens only when stretched.

Building up children for 'self navigation'

This reflects parents' attempts at shaping a generation of digital 'self-navigators'. Parents, stretched between work & worry, often believe that early exposure will help their children develop discernment. A view that if they learn to swim in shallow waters, they won't drown in deeper ones. In many ways, children are being trained to self-regulate in an ecosystem that even adults struggle to comprehend.

"I am aware of the dangers of the online world, but I know my kid. He is sensible enough to handle things on his own"

"We cannot be with the kids all the time. I have told them not to click on any links. We have to make them independent. My daughter is awake till late at night on the phone but she wakes up early and is good at studies."

This belief that familiarity breeds control is giving rise to a new kind of digital upbringing, which creates a sense of independence and mutual trust as both parents and children navigate the unknown together.

Safety
The Indian WAY

What is the operating truth about **how Indians treat the online/ digital world** and the idea of 'safety' for children?

India's digital mood

Still in wonder of technology

India is a country that still approaches technology and digital possibilities with a sense of awe and excitement.

From shopkeepers live-streaming on YouTube to homemakers becoming Instagram stars, there is an unmistakable joy in participation. The larger cultural mood around digital, online, content, social platforms is one of celebration, exploration, and brimming with optimism rather than of suspicion and caution.

In our conversations with Indian parents, these concerns felt distant, even elite. For the majority, the digital world appears to represent mobility, voice, and agency, not surveillance or threat.

A mother we met is not just comfortable but is encouraging her 3-year-old to converse with Alexa when she is engaged with some chores.

In an obscure, state-run school in the town of Shillong - teachers of primary schools are having a dialogue in the staff room about introducing 'How to use social media' to young kids. Affordable private schooling (APS, technically a rung of schools that sit between government schools and private schools) includes screens, phones, coding curricula.

The aim is to teach how to work with these elements of a changing society - how it enhances productivity, how it expands future opportunities.

INDIAN ADULTS:

A trusting view of the online world

It's not that people are unaware of scams, but there's a common belief that the internet is safe as long as you don't 'engage' with strangers and behave pragmatically.

Many children we met felt confident clicking on 'sponsored' links simply because they appeared within Google's search results. That is why YouTube, the biggest platform that kids are on, feels extremely safe to them because it feels like a one-way stream. Mothers often employ shared-account strategies, logging into their own and their children's phones using the same credentials in order to stay informed about what content is being surfaced.

This uniqueness of India's predisposition to tech is important to register because in many other parts of the world the conversation around technology has already moved to 'post-tech' anxieties - privacy, data ethics, concerns around algorithmic control.

Is digital safety taking a secondary position for most parents?

While parents are taking some preliminary steps to ensure online safety for kids, these function more as guardrails than active protection. What is noticeable is the relative absence of conversation around a range of digital safety risks across households. Even widely discussed concerns such as phishing, cyber bullying, trolling, sexualisation of content, deepfakes, identity theft were not a part of everyday conversations between parents and children.

This reflects a broader national posture towards technology itself. In an environment marked by optimism and trust, parents may not yet be equipping children with the full range of skills needed to navigate digital spaces safely. In most cases, guidance focuses on avoiding obviously inappropriate content or steering clear of suspicious links.

The task is not to introduce a vocabulary of fear that feels alien or disproportionate, but to shape an awareness that protects without patronising or reducing agency, and guides without closing doors.

India's digital transformation is still tender. It thrives on participation, aspiration, and optimism.
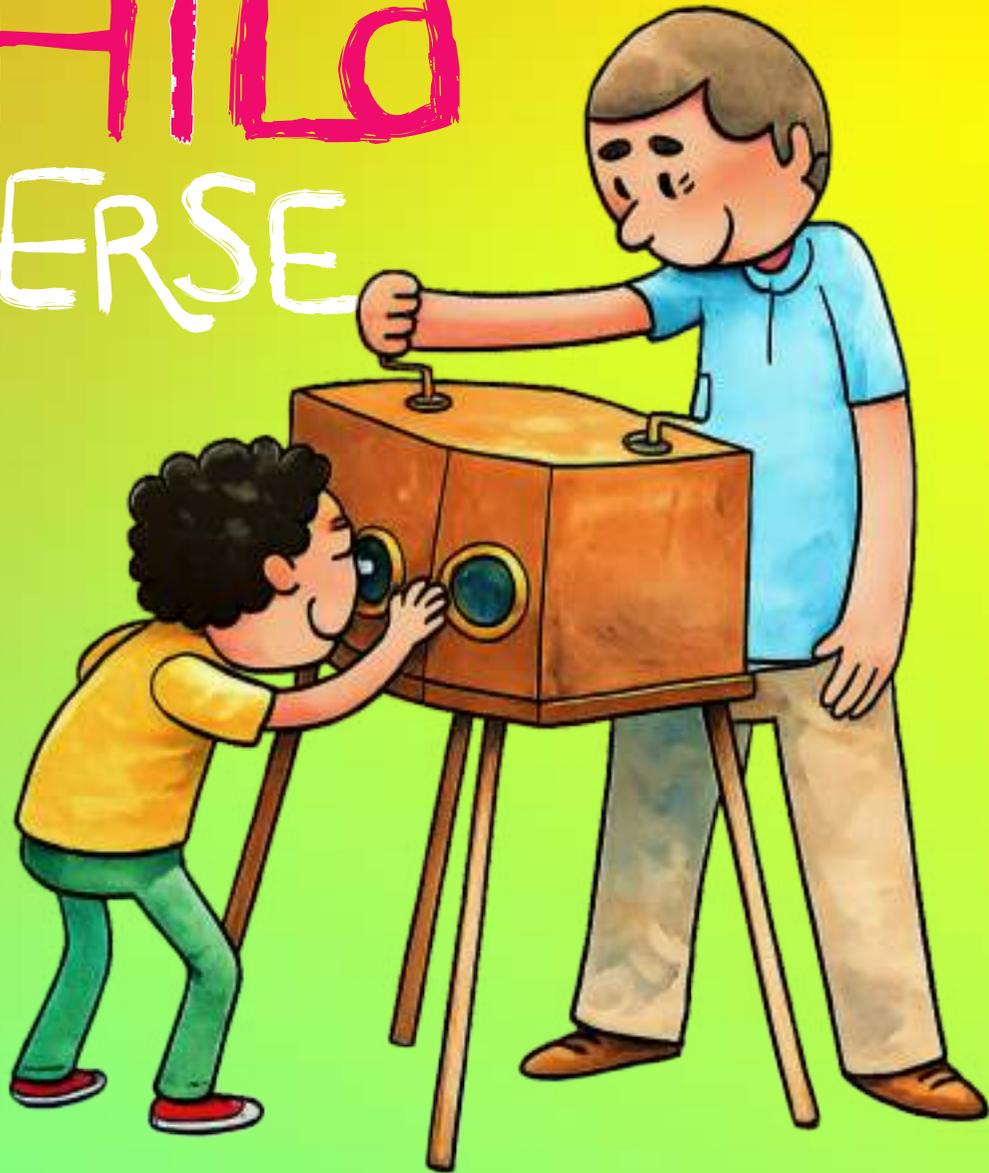
The challenge, then, is to introduce responsibility without dulling that sense of wonder - ensuring that what has only recently opened up for millions remains empowering, open, inclusive, and safe.

chapter 4

enter the:

CHiLd
VERSE

AIM:

This chapter immerses us in the content ecosystems children inhabit

- Detailing whom we engage with and what they watch

- Offers some working hypotheses on the appeal and function
  of this content in their lives.

Meet
the
KIDS

The following section details results of onground
research and interaction with children from across india.
Interactions were recorded in 6 centres across India.

Delhi NCR

Mumbai

Kolkata

Chennai

Vishakhapatnam

Shillong

meet,

Rishika Malhotra

She sometimes plays a game about Make Up on her Mother's smartphone.

She watches Instagram Reels all day - without pausing even for a minute.

"I want a phone... Mama said she'd give me a phone after 6th Standard."

8yrs old
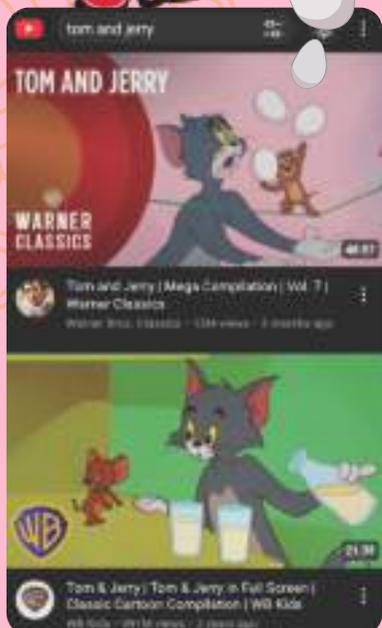
Vlogging Is Playtime, Rishika Enjoys Making Vlogs Like Aayu And Pihu

Delhi NCR

meet,

Aryan Mehra

"Influencer woh hota hai jiska monetization shuru hojata hai."

The Mehra family comes together to watch the Aayu and Pihu Show on YouTube.

"I watch gaming videos only at night... they're too dark to see during the day."

10yrs old

COSCO MILANO

"I mew after my best video edits"

His YouTube channel - editing & uploading videos on Ronaldo.
"GOAL: 5K SUBSCRIBERS"

snippets from his phone

meet,

Garima Tandon

"Parents should have faith in their children... they shouldn't doubt us and invade our privacy. It affects our mental health."

"I want to study Psychology in Edinburgh... the city gives vampire-ish vibes."

"I'm a little bit dyslexic." (When unable to think quickly)

15yrs old

project_awaaz

project_awaaz

| 18 posts | 553 followers | 11 following |

Project_Awaaz
Community organisation

forms.gle/Ej2BPqBRfyccViJ28

Follow   Mes

FE!N
CHASE B REMIX
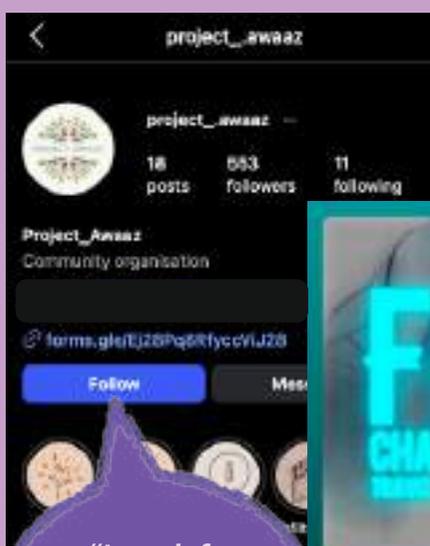
"I work for a Foundation, Project Awaaz. I am an Editor... I make Posts and Stories for them."

Never Have I Ever
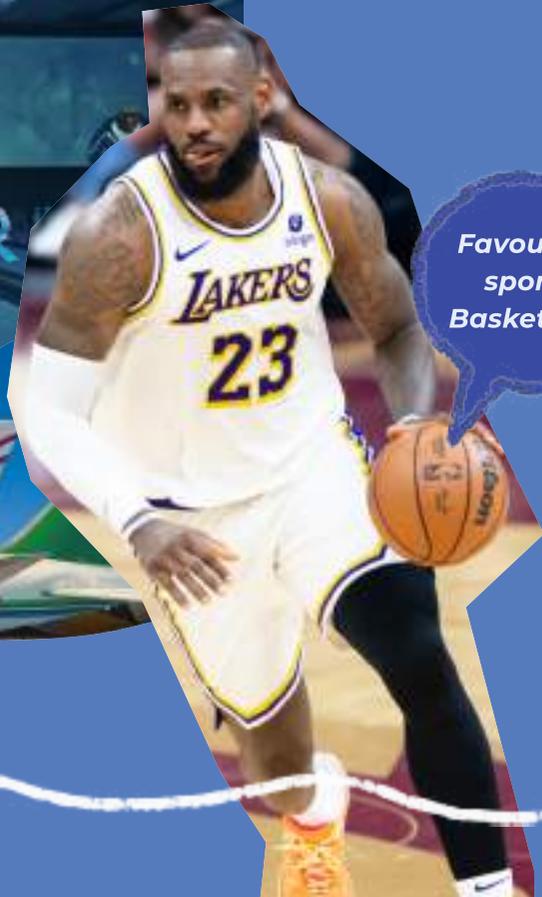
Delhi NCR

meet,
Noah Fernandes

"If the Ad is of girls' things... I'm not interested. If there are candies, those Ads are important"

"Mom doesn't let me use YouTube Reels or Instagram Shorts. They are vain."

"Children my age too should have a phone to Like and Subscribe."

7yrs old

Favourite song: Baby by Justin Bieber. "Because they are bowling"

Favourite sport: Basketball

"I know many airlines... Air New Zealand, Qantas, Lufthansa, American Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Air Canada"

Mumbai

meet,

Deepti &
Hitesh Patel

"I locked YouTube because he watches non-stop Minecraft" - Deepti, "I deleted her Instagram" - Hitesh

"Gen Alpha has technology... AI will enhance human life" - Hitesh

Deepti uses Snapchat as her default app to take photos.

14 and 9yrs old

MINECRAFT

COPPER CAPE CHALLENGE G

REBEL KID

Mumbai

meet,
Tashi Davar

"To be an ambivert is to be someone who opens up with time."

She believes bonds are strengthened if friends roast each other.

"People who call me fat. I tell them they have problem in their eyes... do not look at me."

13yrs old

Discord: Beyond gaming, a popular communication platform. "Unlike WhatsApp, you don't know the person's contact information."

"I like Sugar... it is new brand, very trendy. They come up with new products which makes it more interesting."

meet,

yahika chatterjee

"Our school has a robotics class in third grade... It's like solving a puzzle or a maze."

"I don't know why everyone likes Mr. Beast... I know him because of Feastables. (his brand)"

"I used to play the 100 stairs game on Roblox... but it's very childish. I now play car racing."

10yrs old

Learning Robotics in school

CHEF SLASH

LEGO MINDSTORMS
10+

lovely

"Lovely is one of favourite songs... I'm practicing playing it on my guitar"

Kolkata

meet,

samariddhi Dash

"In school, we are allowed to keep our phones on silent mode... we go in the back and watch netflix."

"My mother knows that I have an instagram account... She doesn't know I have multiple acccounts."

"My perfume brand would be called Risk-It... If we take a risk, we can get a good future."

13yrs old

ZARA
15

zudio

Insta Baddie outfits

"I have taken special permission to wear my smartwatch in school"
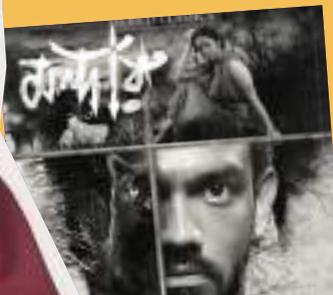
meet,

Mahil Basu

"If someone wants to do bad things, they will keep the account private. I only post cricket videos and fitness videos."

"9 years old, I would see reels of people not eating after a breakup... turning 13, I understood."

"I follow bodybuilder Bhupendra Singh. He says, build your body naturally."

14yrs old

I like Dhruv Rathee. He's an environmentalist. He does everything good.

THE STORY OF DHRUV RATHEE

Arijit Singh
53.8M monthly listeners
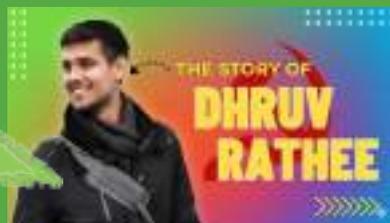
I want to be sponsored by adidas.

I like old masters like Kishore Kumar. Arjit Singh and slow songs which really touch the heart.
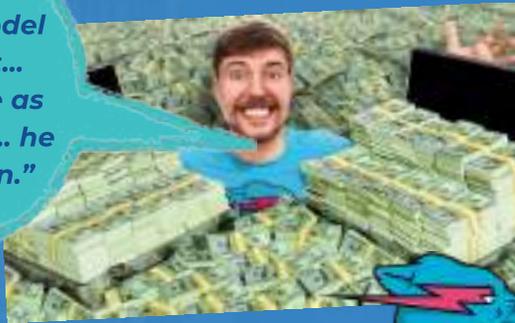
Kolkata

meet,
Maran K.

"When I grow up, I want to change the colour of my car based on the colour of my outfit."

"I ask ChatGPT questions like... When will I die? Why did they name me Maran... how were humans formed?"

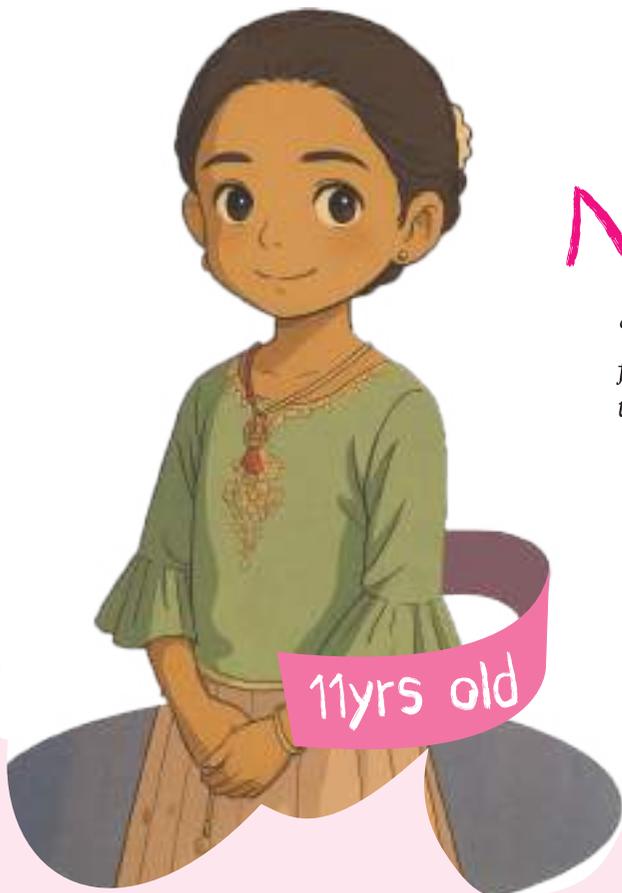*"I watch Instagram with Mummy. She posts about make-up... I don't like it, but I have to watch."*

7yrs old

"My role model is MrBeast... I want to be as rich as he is... he has 1 Million."

"I will race my Green Lamborghini and earn money."

Chennai

meet,

Namrata K.

"I have a friend on Duolingo. He is from the US... we both play the same time to see who can win more coins."

"I think brain games are better than brain rot. Brain games gives you knowledge, brain rot does not."

"AI will hack us... I do not share any secrets with any AI. I only ask what I want to know"

11yrs old

CHERRY POP PRODUCTIONS

COZA

DEFENDHER STUDIO

HUNTR/X

"I learnt Karate... I have a Black Belt. If I'm going somewhere like the market... and a stranger comes... self defense is important."

K-POP DEMON HUNTERS
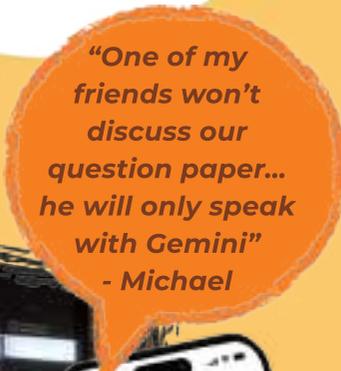
Chennai

meet,
Michael & Mariyam Joseph

Michael and Mariyam regularly appear in their Mom's YouTube videos

"Yes, she (my sister) is an Influencer... she has 800 Subscribers" - Michael

"Sometimes we make fun of Mom... we have more Subscribers than her."

"We make content with our mother. We make Reels and mostly our father shoots us."

11 and 15yrs old

"One of my friends won't discuss our question paper... he will only speak with Gemini" - Michael

SEPHORA

Show me in latest makeup style

meet,

Balakrishna & Venkat Chagallu

"My father uploaded a YouTube video... in which we make homemade bubbles" - Venkat

Balakrishna has become obsessed about Virat Kohli from watching Reels of his 'SHOTS.'

8 of the 10 products Venkat will always have with him are related to skincare, for 'glamour.'

8 and 11yrs old

Balakrishna, 8 yrs: a Virat Kohli superfan, watching every possible video related to his hero

"I will always carry skin creams... to prevent tanning, for smooth skin, for glamour" - Venkat, 11 yrs

Vizag

meet,

Sai Arnav

"I like Robotics... because you get to solve problems and create your own. We have to use our own logical reasoning."

Arnav's Mother uses YouTube videos to teach important life skills.

"On Roblox, I like this game... Math or Die. You have to solve problems or you drown in lava."

11yrs old

"My main hobby is making Robots... I make a Robot Car. Then using bluetooth, I can control it."

meet,
Harshini

"I won't love anyone in the future also... I don't believe in love"

"I want to go to Finland... it is the happiest country in the world, studies are good, and it is beautiful"

"AI shouldn't do all our homework... we should try ourselves. We should have logical thinking"

14yrs old

IIT MADRAS

AMPUS TOUR

"I want to go to IIT, if you can score more... you can go for free"

80 MILLION + VIEWS

RKD STUDIOS

SAINDHAV

Vizag

meet,
John Sangma

"ChatGPT is good... but my Bible is better"

Learnt the distinct sound different luxury cars make from YouTube

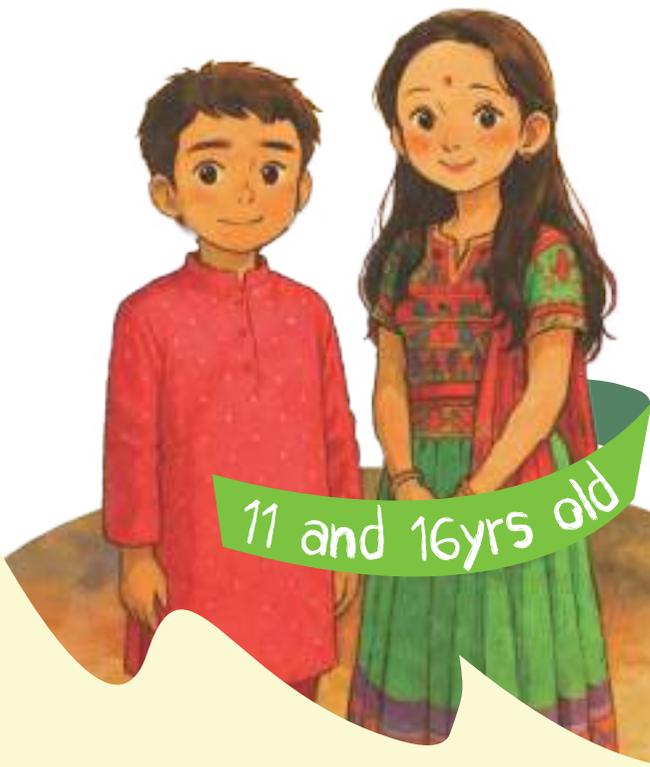*"Can you give me your laptop to play Scratch?" (Programming app for children by MIT)*

8yrs old

"I want a laptop so that I can play Scratch (an educational coding language by MIT)"

SCRATCH

Advanced Scratch Tips
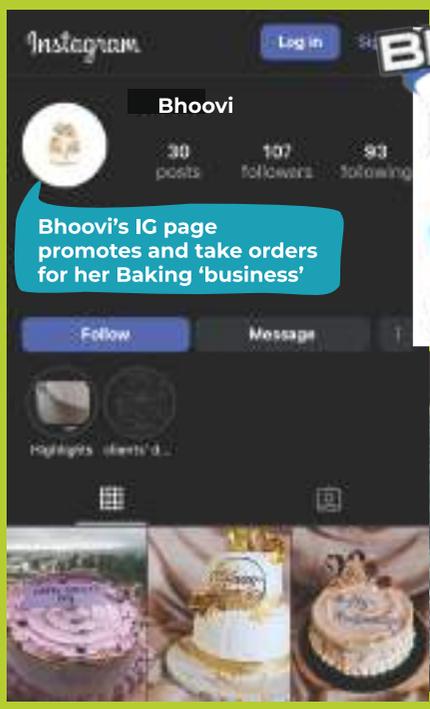
Shillong

meet,

Hiren & Bhoovi Mahajan

11 and 16yrs old

"My friend came in a Ayush Bhandari video... I also want to" - Hiren

"Aura: When you're good at something and it makes you look good" - Hiren

"I get up at 6 am to exercise... I always feel better after I workout" - Bhoovi

Bhoovi's IG page promotes and take orders for her Baking 'business'

"I love doing MUNs" - Bhoovi, 16 yrs

Shillong

meet,

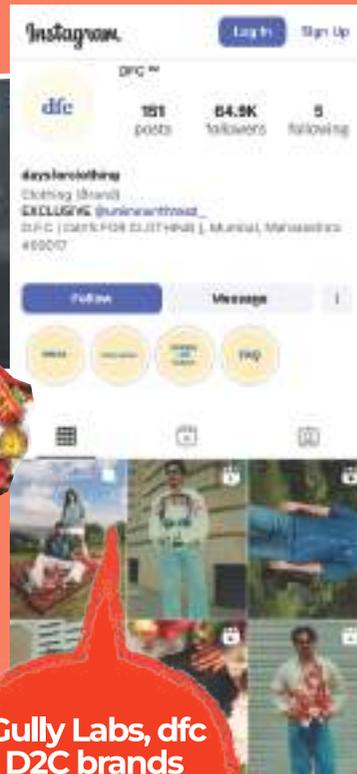# Avik Dasgupta & Vivek Shah

16 and 15yrs old

"I use ChatGPT for subjects I don't like"

"I came across Gully Labs on Instagram... have been trying to convince my parents."

"Hritik Roshan's character in ZNMD is someone who I want to be like. I think money is very important."
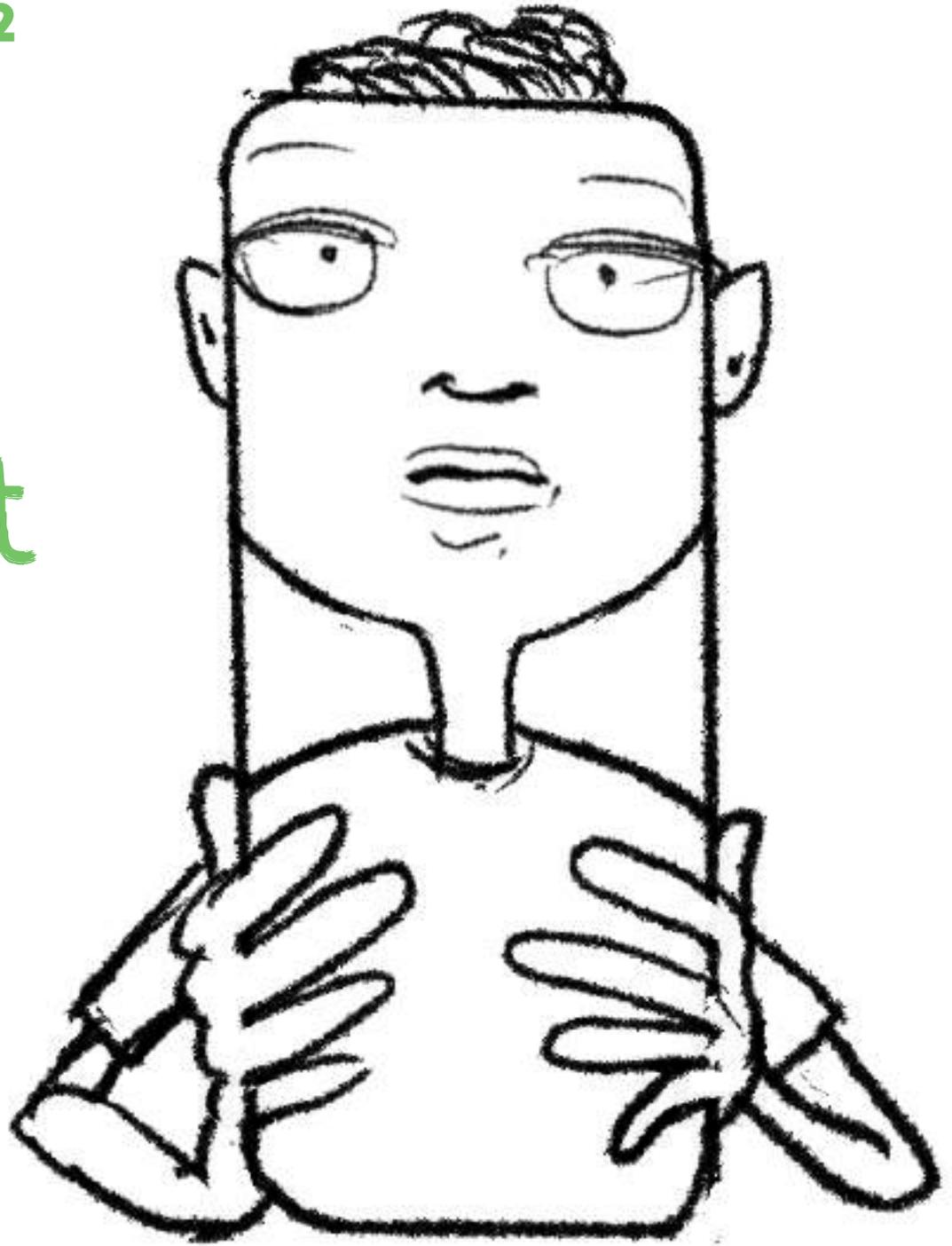
Gaming parlour - an occasional hangout spot

Gully Labs, dfc - D2C brands capturing attention

what
do
they
see
on
their
phones?

During this exploration, we were given a front-row seat to what children watch and enjoy.

From parents' screens to borrowed laptops to their own glowing devices, they let us peek into their digital playgrounds. What unfolded was a delightful chaos of content – a wide mix of genres that captured their endless curiosity, and held their attention, cutting across age, geography, and context.
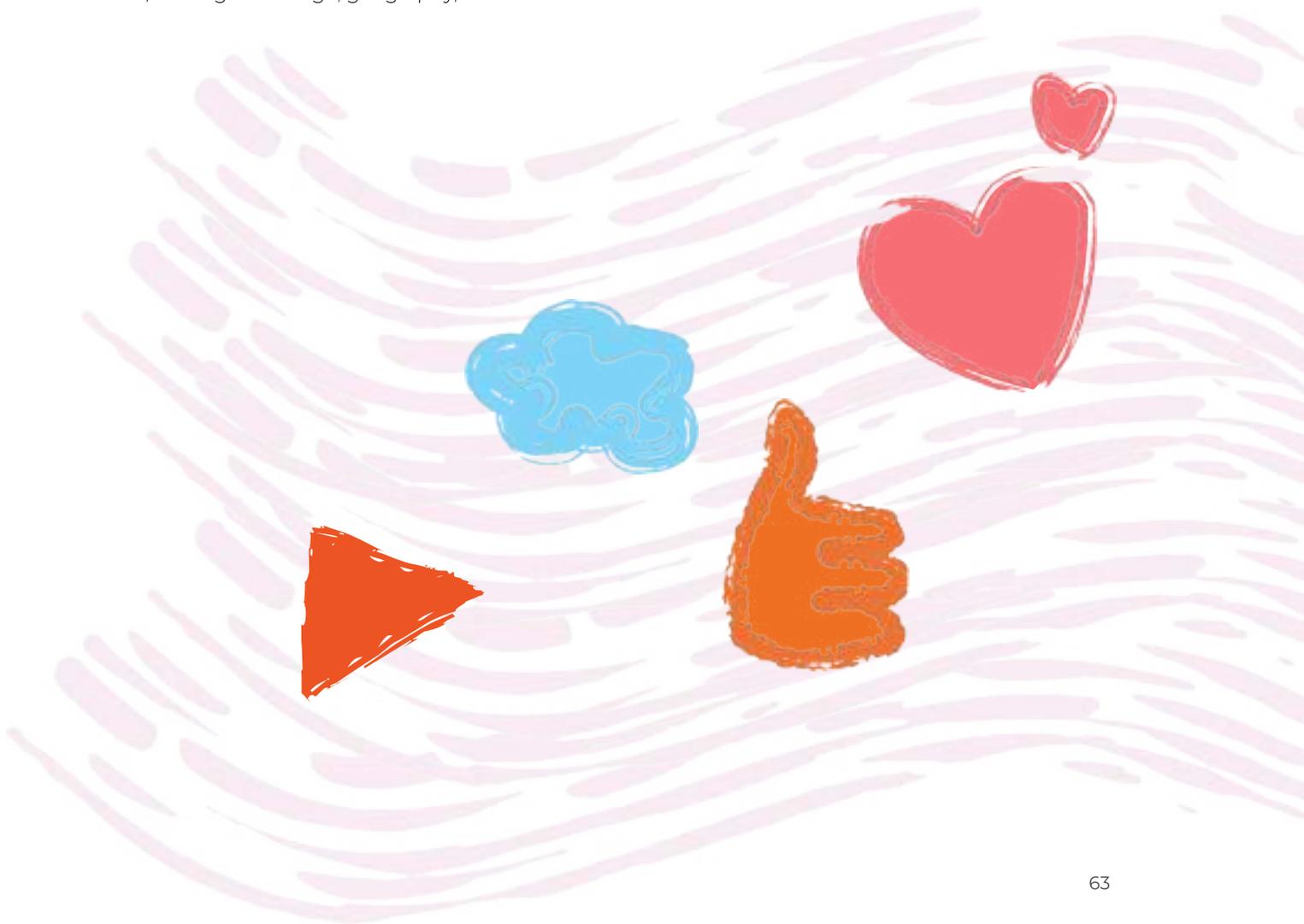
Horror

Peppers an otherwise non-stimulating flow of continuous content: Cuts through monotony by offering shock, suspense, and surprise. Jump scares, eerie sounds and a world that is slightly unaligned to expectation.

An aberration to online worlds that are 'perfect': Horror adds, in a strange way, a sense of 'realness' to screens that otherwise look too pretty.

It is not 'scary': These kids know what special effects are, what camera edits are - and they do not tend to register horror as something which scares them.

Not just a content genre but an 'aesthetic' that has permeated into everything - from fashion, to games, accessories

"I like watching horror stuff. Sometimes, I cover my eyes, but I will still look. It is cool. And it is funny also!!!

Vlogs

Predictable rhythms: Watching everyday people doing mundane, everyday activities on their Youtube channels. 'Vloggers' emphasise normalcy - messy rooms, lazy moments.

Family TV: Family vlogs, byte sized content episodes with a topic (Ex,. "my cousins came from USA") - make for the whole family to view this on TV together, streamed via YT.

Not a 'kids only' genre: Parents as part of this, either the co-creating vlogs with their kids, or watching together.

Vlogs are teaching these kids the new syntax of content: Jump cuts, montages, lo-fi music, and time-lapses form the visual grammar of vlogs. They set the rhythm and mood of the story. A sped-up routine means energy, a soft filter means sincerity, music tells them what to feel.

a new Avatar

that feels like the old comfort of 'TV viewing'?
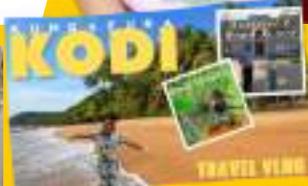
'Vlog' the most common word used by the kids we met to describe the always-on hum of YouTube shorts. Easy, Friendly, Non-purposive and entertaining.

KDrama
AND KPOP

It is hyperfluent in emotional expression: The screen 'slows down' - to communicate emotion - tension, sadness, violence, love.

No ambiguity when it comes to intent: Gore means gore, romance means romance - there is a simplicity - much like a graphic novel, the mood is set from the beginning.

Stylised fantasy of 'adulthood': Gives a handle to children to imagine 'grown ups' in a way that is aspirational to them.

Constantly provides shorthands to belong: Gestures, hook steps, movements that have an anthemic quality of bringing kids together.

Shaped in a way that is naturally digestible for kids. Doesn't 'treat' them like children, but doesn't rush them into adulthood either?

Young boys blushed, embarrassed. Young girls already adopting K-pop behaviours - covering their mouths while laughing, a new language of 'shy.'

You can't do that/ It's not possible

Yes, another heart symbol

Heart Symbol/ I love you

Heart Symbol

Brainrot

Obviously disruptive:
Fast paced, absurd characters, bewilderment value.

Excludes elders: Fiercely protected, this generation's 'IYKYK.'

The 'kids only' digital community: Shared language, sense of being insider.

Where children enjoy the

feeling of not needing to 'make sense',

powerful at a time where all actions expected of them should be purposive?

Ta Ta Ta Sahur is Tung Tung Tung Sahur's father.
These are made by AI. These are Italian brainrot. I do not know why they are called brainrot - maybe they rot the brain.

anime と manga

Adult stories packaged in 'cute' faces: Coming together of two very disparate themes - innocence, and maturity. Especially true in games of slightly older teenagers - topics such as loneliness / anxiety - all delivered through the Dori Dori aesthetic of baby faces, baby voices etc.

The 'futuristic' aesthetic: A mix of tech and myth, almost always 'sci-fi.'

The new vehicle to the oldest tenet of 'oral' storytelling

heroes, narratives, lessons and good vs. bad

Yet clear moral codes - a value-first narrative: Hero journeys, struggles, perseverance, importance of friendships and teams.

Hyper drama: Fast paced action, and 'action' is no holds barred - bloody, gory, graphic.

I am Into Manga. I also copy and learn how to draw it.

Manga means it is a good story.

Minecraft & Roblox

Adult free playgrounds: No adult (even if they try like we did!) will get the hang of this world, truly a child's world.

Creates actual communities of kids: Collaborating with friends, for instance, having a shared vision, working together, trading, chatting.

Minecraft as today's Lego?: Pixelated, the feeling of something being 'unfinished' and needs to be built up, encourages tinkering.

Roblox an actual replica of the games earlier generation has played (pithu, vish amrit, gallery, stapoo, lock and key) without physicality: Refreshed with new rooms and challenges, new kinds of games, clear winners, space to chat while playing.

'Third Spaces'
for these kids today

I play Minecraft and follow YouTube channels that tell me how to play it better.

Evening time after homework is Roblox time.

Challenge Videos

'What-if' fantasies: A neatly packaged content format that speaks to these children's inherent curiosities.

A complete experience on its own: Doable challenges that mimic the logic of offline playing, winners and losers, the right amount of unpredictability, and the high of competing against 'professionals.'

The MRBEAST PHENOMENA:

- Larger than life, BIG money, BIG challenge, BIG backdrops
- Using money won positively
- 'PRANKING'!!
- Showing how 'power' can look like to kids

One step ahead from the earlier appeal of **'game shows'?** Bye Bye Takeshi's Castle and Hello Challenge Videos

"I like watching challenge videos because it's very entertaining. It's fun to watch people trying hard to win a challenge.

I want to grow up and give money to the poor, just like how Mr. Beast does in his videos."

Streaming Reaction Videos

The streamer breaks the '4th wall': An immediate participation where when kids write on the chat of the video, the streamer immediately responds - collective participation, a strong sense of 'conversation.'

Embedded within cues of realness: Background noises, bad connection that stops the streaming - kids are 'in the room' with content creator.

The streamer as 'Sherpa': Explaining things (games, songs, a 'viral video'), breaking it down, making children travel with him/her.

To react to content 'together',

moderated by the 'streamer' - creates a feeling that they are in a two-way interaction, not just a one-way screen?

iPhone 16 MIL GAYA

pov : Maa Roasts you non-stop

Technogamer is good. I also like Mythpat Total Gaming. These channels talk about stuff. The last one reacted to Iphone 16.

Reaction Video

Op Song Techno Gamerz

LIFE

Life Song

BISHAKTO CHELE

TOXIC

GRWM

Speaks to this child's instinct that 'self-presentation' is important: Beauty and fashion especially, as the most expressive categories that they are engaging with.

Intimacy that makes learning wholesome: Stories of self-discovery, jokes, anecdotes about friend circles while putting on makeup.

Beginnings to the currently nascent idea of 'lifestyle': Not as much about brands maybe, but about to achieve a certain look, what is 'my idea' of taste, tuning into aesthetics and vibes: 'Clean girl' or 'Soft boy', for example.

Something that is often enjoyed along with parent: Mothers especially - 'twinning.'

More than consumption, these videos feel like the 'TLC' of the earlier generation - giving kids a sense of lifestyle, aspirations - a moodboard and not a destination just yet

TLC of today

I like watching Rebel Kid. She shows how we can do styling. She also wears fun things.

Rebel Kid became a FAIRY for her birthday!

TheRebel-Kid

GRWM for Tomorrowland Day 2

Educational Content

An explosion of 'science' channels: The workings of the universe, facts and trivia, general knowledge.

Understanding niche concepts deeply: What is climate change? Why are plastics bad? What is happening to ocean life? How can we understand the sun?

Information that attracts them without needing a parental push today?

Educational but not 'education': Never about a school book based chapter - this is not a tuition format. These are short form, intriguing forms that seem to mimic the world of wikipedia or even reddit.

Dr Binocs is good. Indian channel is in Hindi but there is another channel also. Both teach but are not boring.

ASMR and
oddly satisfying videos

Sensory stimulus overload: Sounds, sights, watching things being made and destroyed on loop.

Arbitrary consumption: Often of things that are not part of their immediate environment or even that common - a construction building, a pool of slime.

Safe curiosity: Exploring even 'gross' textures - slime, sand, glue, - in a hypnotic format - it's almost like play but it is happening in pixels.

That hypnosis of 'quiet'
in a content world that is otherwise quite abuzz?

This is ASMR!! They keep coming on Shorts. It's just doing things basically. There are sounds. My friends say it is for relaxing.

'Feelings' wale songs

Rap and Punjabi - not about the lyrics but about the innocuous sense of angst: heartbreak, betrayal, the world is unfair.

Love, romance (not sex): Saiyaara - one of the most searched, discussed movies during the course of this project - even though understanding it deeply was not deemed necessary.

Songs that are loved by parents, a thread of continuity: Arijit Singh, Sonu Nigam - a whiff of millennial parents and the world of cinema and music that they love, which these kids seem to pick up.

A direct window for this generation to **feel like they can be 'cool'** and talk to their cooler 'bhaiyas' and 'didis'?

KESARIYA - BRAHMASTRA | ARJIT SINGH | DOREMON VERSION | NOBITA SHIZUKA

I listen to Karan Aujla. Don't know all words but vibe hai. Arijit Singh is a good singer. I like listening to sad songs when I am feeling sad.

Tu Sath Hai

Karan Aujla - Admirin' You (Unplugged) | Making Memories | Latest Punjabi Songs...

9.5M views • 2 years ago

Karan Aujla

Karan Aujla & Sandeep Rehaan Presents Admirin' You Unplugged Performance
Artist: Karan Aujla Piano: Sandy Schwaberg ...

4K

KARAN AUJLA
"ADMIRIN' YOU"
UNPLUGGED

3:28

Regionalised Global content

Regional versions of prominent global formats: Regional reprises of content styles that have been made popular by global creators, staged to make familiar environments, language & rituals appealing.

Reaction to global content: Adding a layer of familiar culture, through vernacular commentary, to prevalent global trends.

Regional creators **mimicking global aesthetics** and styles while portraying local culture from different vantage points

There is this guy called Ayush Bhandari. He makes challenge videos and some **really fun videos like Mr. Beast.**
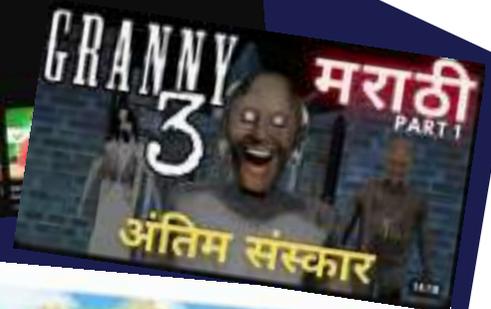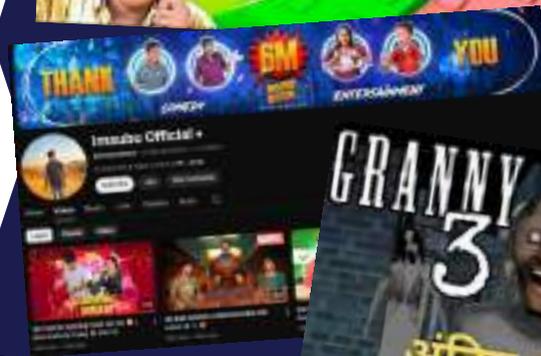
Vernacular Cultural Icons

A cultural anchor in a flood of global trends: In the homogenised stream of global content, offering a connection with what is commonly seen around - language, rituals and moral codes.

Cultural representation in popular culture: Offering a sense that local realities and the icons coming from these realities are as worthy of popularity as global stars.

Providing a sense of belonging without having to translate or perform: Enabling a sense of belonging without having to shed what comes most naturally.

Representation and stardom
without having to culturally rewire

> We are Vijay fans. Vijay is the best actor, even better than most Hollywood heroes.

South Indian Cinema

Punctuating fantasy scenarios with easily understood emotion: Helping make the unreal feel native and believable with emotional codes that are easily recognizable.

Creating a visual world that is familiar, not hyper-real: Stylized worlds that children themselves inhabit, not hypothetical worlds.

that are difficult to imagine or feel choreographed.

Commoners as heroes: Providing a reference point to how to become aspirational without replacing local cultural identity with a global one.

The perfect blend of **fantastical worlds** & **relatable emotional landscapes**

I am a Allu Arjun fan.
I really like Pushpa.
I have watched the movie so many times now.
It comes dubbed in Hindi on TV, even in Shillong.

What we saw on their phones, pointed to the amorphous nature of content - that allows for both commercial and non-commercial messaging to sit side by side often without clear boundaries.

However, to understand whether they recognise this distinction, or how they interpret it, it becomes essential to first understand where children are coming from and what the world looks like through their eyes.

what did we
observe
About the kids ?

Through the interviews, observations and research, several themes arose, repeated in the sentiments of children across the country.

1.
Mature little 'pookies' that parents are proud of

"He has created a wishlist of what he wants for his birthday. It is based on priority. He loves Nike football studs but he knows he has to wait till he stops growing because they will become tight for him. And last on his list is a birthday video - because we did have a photoshoot for when his younger sister was born" - Parent

2.
Happy to 'self label' to be understood better

"Sometimes we know the words before the feeling."

"I think I have anger issues. I fight a lot with my parents. After my parents scold me, sometimes they come and say sorry, but I never say sorry to them."

"I think I'm dyslexic."

3.
'Loneliness' appears as a theme in conversations

"I don't want to be lonely in school. So I play Roblox that a lot of my friends in school play."

"I feel lonely at home when mom and dad fight."

*"I don't want my parents to be lonely when they become old. For example, if my father goes somewhere else to work and lives alone, he will become lonely.
Who will look after him if he becomes sick?"*

4.
Being an introvert is cool

"I think being introverted is cool."

"She is very introverted. She talks to people, but it takes time for her to open up. I think she is an ambivert."

5.
Evolving the 'many-me's' strategy

"I am two different people. One is for my parents and relatives and the other is for when I'm hanging out with my friends."

6.
Have a surprising grasp on 'feelings management'

"Whenever I am sad or angry I listen to either Alan Walker or this song called Senorita. I also sometimes watch Cherry Pop Productions. Once I do this, I don't feel sad or angry anymore."

7.
If you are not 'roasting' them, then they are not your friends

"We are frenemies. We've known each other for a long time. We keep roasting each other."

8.
'Are we the drama?' Maybe, maybe not

"I use a lot of hand gestures like clapping hands and using signs while speaking. I had seen this on Mean Girls when Regina George did it."

9.
Kids and adults are 'frenemies'

"Me and my dad banter with each other about multiple things. We keep sharing memes with each other."

chapter 5

the
child's
gaze

AIM:

This chapter

- Examines the meaning-worlds of Gen Alpha, unpacking the habits, symbols and digital practices that often appear opaque to older cohorts

- Interprets key observations from the study to clarify how children navigate digital spaces, construct identity and form social ties

- Situates emerging patterns of consumption culture within broader developmental questions around learning, agency and technology
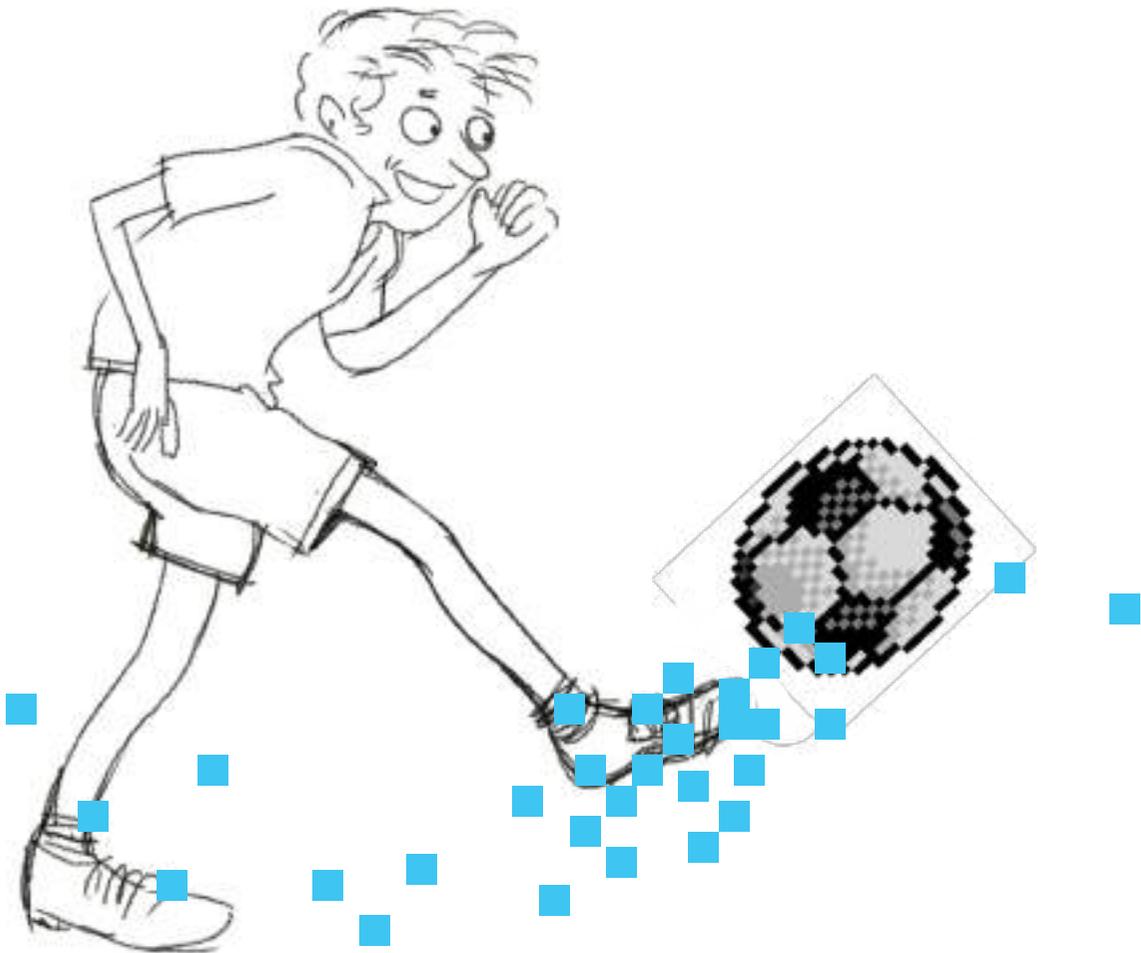
Digital is society, not just media

What does it really mean to be part of a world **where offline and online are not two spaces** but one continuous reality?

Generation Alpha:
Born into a digital blur between online and offline

To call Generation Alpha "digital citizens" feels both accurate and insufficient because such a label points to the truth but misses its depth.

Yes, they inhabit digital worlds with an ease that no generation before them has managed. They navigate platforms, languages, and interfaces as if they were born pre-coded for it. Their fluency is startling - switching between Minecraft servers, class WhatsApp groups, Roblox avatars, and real-world family conversations with a seamless, unconscious rhythm.

Yet, something about the term digital citizenship feels too neat, too external, as though it describes an 'acquired' identity.

For them, the digital world is home - not something that is used, or chosen to enter and exit, but something where they comfortably belong, live in, come back to. 'It just is'.

And yet, this comfort does not come from intention.

It is instinctive, unexamined, ambient. They do not "use" digital media - they exist through it. Their digital selves are indistinguishable from the whole.

The paradox here is striking.

The most connected, fluent, and networked generation in history may also be the least aware of their own connectivity.

Their digital behaviour is not performance, not strategy, not rebellion. It simply is. And perhaps this is what unsettles us. Our language for understanding them - "citizen," "user," "generation" - belongs to a world that assumes

a line between the online and the real. For them, that line never existed.

1.
Everything on the screen
The phone as the primary interface to 'life'

For children today, the screen is synonymous with the phone. It is the gateway to play, learn, and socialise. Tablets, laptops, and TVs exist, but the phone is the hub - portable, personal, and always within reach. It holds games, videos, social feeds, messaging apps, and even schoolwork, all in one place.

Unlike adults, who may compartmentalise devices and purposes, children experience the phone as the primary interface of their world.

"He has a friends' WhatsApp group on my phone called Jersey No. 7 - they are all football fans and they talk about games, birthday parties, homeworks - other mothers are also on it but we let the kids chat. After covid, teachers are also on WhatsApp. I gave my phone for YouTube to him. Abhi phone na dena bewakoofi hai - sab hai uss pe (not using the phone is stupidity - it has everything)" - Parent

The natural progression from parent-supervised WhatsApp groups of friends is WhatsApp groups without parents. Parents initiate, and then an older child steps into this social world. Much like how it used to always be - except it was not on screens.

2.
'Raised' by algorithms?
From searching for content to being shaped by it

The most significant shift in children's online engagement comes from the platforms they frequent. YouTube and YouTube Kids remain

PHONES WITHOUT SIM

In fact, today, parents seem to be handing children phones without SIM cards, loaded with fun and educational apps. A quick search on e-commerce platforms like Amazon shows a strange world of 'phones for kids' where functions of connectivity do not even exist. The device itself signals to the child that they are part of the digital world.

dominant, with algorithms offering an endless stream of content - from toy unboxing videos and nursery rhymes to lifestyle creators, vlogs, and shorts. Online engagement increasingly resembles 'inhabiting' these platforms, rather than being a portal where earlier things were actively 'looked up'.

YouTube, in particular, occupies a distinct position. Parents tend to classify it differently from other social platforms (such as Instagram or Snapchat) and feel more comfortable permitting access due to the absence of direct two-way interaction. At the same time, YouTube offers a vast and open-ended playground that aligns with children's instinct to wander and discover. **For many children, YouTube feels like the primary surface they move through – a space they walk inside, return to, and live within.**

Earlier algorithms: Structured discovery

- **Structured search:** For the earlier generation of children, YouTube was consumed in a way that was far more 'structured' with clear 'use cases' that could be summed up:

- Searching for school projects

- Rewatching favourite cartoons or scenes and reliving them

- Exploring specific interests that then became rabbit holes

- **Customized for the user:** Looking at a person's feed gave a textured picture of the content consumer - what they studied, what game they enjoy, what their parents may have enabled, and what passions might be emerging. It told stories of digital self-expression.

Algorithms were tools of choice - shaping individuality, serving as quiet assistants to discovery.

Today's algorithms: Continuous and immersive, but seemingly incoherent

With Generation Alpha, that paradigm has flipped. Recommendation-driven feeds increasingly shape how content is encountered, not just what is accessed. The endless scrolling often feels less like a means to an end and more like the experience itself.

- **Shaping interests and exposure:** Parents seemingly find it harder to relate to what their children enjoy and what they are expected to study. Interspersed with the 'learning videos' are ASMR, experiment videos, Korean food recipes, pranks and endless stream of more such content - much of what reaches a child today is surfaced through algorithmic flows. Shorts, in particular, compress this experience into an intense, fast-moving format.

- **Evolving parental role:** Where parents once controlled access, filtering, and curation

more directly, content exposure today is shaped through algorithms and broad settings and systems that are not fully understood by parents. In effect, algorithms now curate content experiences, which was once the sole domain of parents.

- **Endless and open-ended:** Content has no beginning, middle, or end; only an infinite flow of videos, shorts, reels and recommendations that appear faster than they can be consumed. There is always "one more" waiting, blurring the line between active selection and passive drift. There is no clear narrative arc, no defined takeaway, just an infinite scroll of moments stitched together. For Gen Alpha, this lack of order isn't disorienting; it's simply the background rhythm of their digital world.

- **Parents as content co-creators:** In several cities like Chennai, Kolkata and Jaipur we met parents who assist children in creating content, analysing what performs well, and learning how frequency, formats, and trends influence visibility. In doing so, parents inadvertently become co-creators within the same digital ecosystems shaping their child's online behaviour.

What this creates is a generation living inside a stream rather than navigating one. Digital systems increasingly organise the environment in which meaning is encountered. Children do not always search to make sense of it - the feeds decide what feels meaningful.

3.
An emerging mental model of content consumption - 'Ambient intimacy'?

It was revealed during the course of this study that Generation Alpha, despite deep immersion in a sea of global, local, and regional influencer content, often struggles to name individual creators. They don't always register individual identities or creators - they absorb whatever the algorithm serves. Content isn't 'authored' - it simply appears, flows, and vanishes, blurring the very idea of who is behind it.

The comfort of "pointless presence"
Generation Alpha readily watches vlogs with no narrative, no takeaway, and often no intention

— whether from influencers or classmates. Someone folding clothes, eating lunch, or chatting idly still attracts steady, passive viewership. The act of watching is simply coexisting within the digital hum of other lives.

Content as 'ambience'
For these children, the 'influencer' becomes background ambience - like a distant conversation. Not fully heard, but unmistakably there. Streaming is a mode of presence and functions as a substitute for company, conversation, or focus.

A new kind of 'togetherness'?
This redefines connection. Presence no longer requires dialogue or performance - just existing alongside. These slow, unstructured vlogs create a new form of closeness: an ambient intimacy.

4.
Gaming: More than play, it is a parallel social universe: A 'third space' for kids to bond with other human beings

Gaming is a parallel world where children are developing skills, identities, and communities. Globally popular games like Minecraft, Roblox, Fortnite, and Among Us are platforms for creation, collaboration, and socialisation - functioning as platforms for collaboration and social life, not just play.

In India, titles like Free Fire, PUBG Mobile (in its rebranded avatars), and BGMI dominate, particularly among older children and teens.

These gaming ecosystems are immersive and identity-driven. The "metaverse-like" aspects of these games mean that kids are experimenting with who they are - adopting skins, costumes, and behaviors that allow them to role-play new identities.

"If I do not let my son get onto Roblox in the evening then basically I am not letting him go out to play. Today these kids meet during evening virtually - there is no going out" - Parent of 8-year-old kid

The social life now gets performed on these gaming platforms, where children hang out and bond over shared interests and new engaging games.

5.
Artificial Intelligence - Playfully entering the future

AI has entered children's lives with the thrill of a brand-new gadget; something to poke, play with. It is approached with curiosity and wonder rather than caution. While adults continue to negotiate their skepticism about dependence, authenticity, or effort, children meet AI with an ease that feels almost instinctive. They aren't intimidated by it; they are delighted by it.

A move away from 'supervised' tech literacy

This marks a sharp contrast from how "future tech" was traditionally introduced to young people. The 'future' was something to be taught. Earlier, anything futuristic came wrapped in structure - computer labs, scheduled lessons, supervised workshops. The future was taught with seriousness, not spontaneity. But AI has disrupted & pattern. It has made creativity instant and unboxed.

AI is seen by kids less a technological tool and more an imagination machine.

What started as a homework companion has quickly evolved into a cultural practice of its own: vibe building. And vibe building isn't

about coding apps or building robots. It's about using AI to bring flair to everyday life - generating characters for a story just for fun, designing worlds that previously lived only in daydreams, shaping the aesthetic of a school project, writing jokes, or capturing the feeling of a mood. Tasks once limited by skill or software now unfold with playful fluidity.

## A deeper cultural current: To deny AI is to deny relevance?

For Gen Alpha, relevance isn't about being "tech forward" but about belonging. When classmates and teachers all use AI, opting out begins to feel like opting out of the shared language of their generation. AI literacy is no longer a bonus skill; it is quickly becoming an everyday competency.

Parents sense this too. Their anxieties about overuse exist alongside a growing recognition that AI fluency will soon be as basic as a Google search. Schools, meanwhile, are treating AI not as enrichment but as foundational.

So while adults debate its risks and merits, children have already embraced the playful, creative promise of AI. Learning feels expansive, expressive, and genuinely fun.
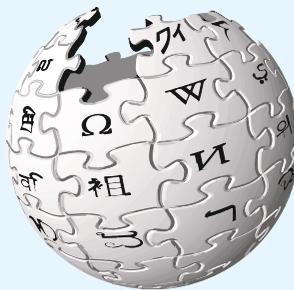
In a surprising revelation, most children we met could not identify the Wikipedia logo while easily recognizing ChatGPT's.

A telling sign of an emerging way of engaging with technology and knowledge. Wikipedia as symbolic of didactic structured learning vs. GPT as a lively, responsive answer to curiosity.

In a short span of time, AI's use cases have moved beyond homework

"I gave it last-10-years model papers and asked it to give me a probable model paper for this year's exam."


"My mother is opening a food store. I asked ChatGPT for name suggestions and then mixed and matched with what I had in mind. I even asked it to create a logo."

"I took a picture of a cloud where I could see a character, I asked ChatGPT to draw it on the cloud."

"A young, 10-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo fan was speaking to GPT to give him details about his "player statistics from the recent match."
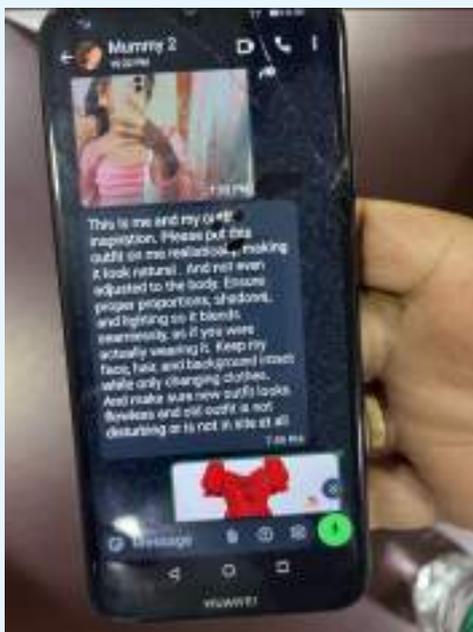
"I upload my picture and then upload different dresses. I ask it to make my picture wear all those dresses. I got that prompt from an Instagram reel."

Generation Alpha:
Not screen obsessed, simply living in a digital society

**Digital is no longer just 'media'.
It is 'society'.**

They are the first generation that knows no other world other than this one where offline and online are not two spaces but a continuous reality. Being "online" or on a "screen" constitutes the very context in which they live, learn, and relate. Screens are the environment, not a tool. This has profound implications for how we understand childhood & adolescence today.

The fundamental question then is, **if digital is the world children are destined to inhabit, how do they engage with brands, categories, advertising and messaging in these worlds?**

Digital interactions today fulfill core human needs, and even important developmental ones:

How to belong

"We were making YT vlogs - there is one in which we had so much fun - he sings well, he is singing Kesariya Tera from Brahmastra and we both are sitting on the swing in the park" – Mother

How to trust themselves

"I know what to watch and what to swipe. Main gandi cheezein nahi dekhta (I do not watch shady things)" – 8-year-old

How to learn

"I asked GPT how an app can be made that can also make money. I wanted to know the coding" – 10-year-old

"The idea is mine. My friend and I used the last games period to put down the group homework in the structure of slide 1, slide 2, slide 3. Then, once that happens we can take GPT's help" – 10-year-old
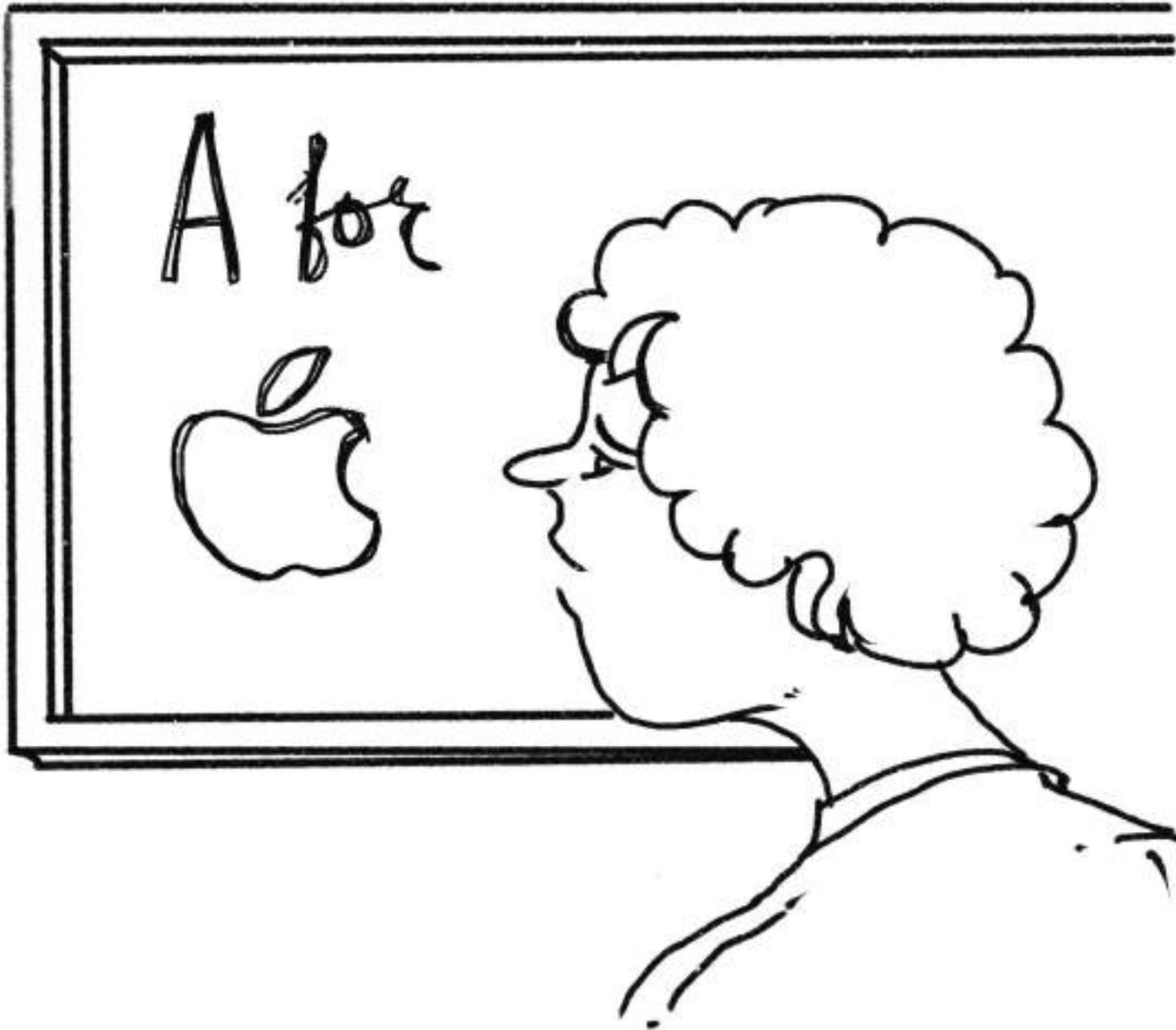
what brands
mean to them?

where does the excitement lie?

Wen lambo?* –
Icons of internet culture

"Wen lambo" is a phrase from the cryptocurrency community that asks when investors will become wealthy enough to buy a Lamborghini. Symbolizing impatience for financial success and prosperity.

While everyday brands have faded into routine, brands like Lamborghini, Rolex, Dior, Apple, Tesla have gained energy through newer lifestyles propelled by social media. For today's children, these names aren't tied to ownership, their ability to buy them, or aspiration in the traditional sense. Instead, they exist as cultural symbols - shorthand for success, power, or exclusivity, circulating through memes, music videos, and influencer feeds. These brands no longer live in showrooms or advertisements; they live in the collective imagination of the internet, where status is streamed, not bought.

"Before I turn 21, I have to buy a Rolex" - 10-year-old boy from a very modest household, Chennai

"I bought a Dior bag online (for Rs. 3,000). Not sure if it's real or fake but I really like it" -12- year-old girl, Chennai

This is the same cultural terrain that creators like MrBeast have propagated, where value is measured not by possession but by visibility. In his world, money, cars, and mansions are not markers of wealth but props in a narrative of spectacle.

The new landscape of
consumption

Children today inhabit a world where consumption is constant. It is no longer a reward, a treat, or an event - it feels like it may be a default state of life.

Products and experiences circulate so freely that acquiring them almost feels routine.

'Typical' categories and brands losing their ability to excite
In this climate of abundance categories like confectionery, toys, board games, snacks, food and beverage come as natural fixtures in their normal days - "no biggie". These are now encountered as functional and need-based, used or consumed without much fanfare.

Categories that seduce children into the world of brands today:
beauty, fashion, gaming, technology

Playing 'Lifestyle lego'

The first brush with consumption is happening through categories that mirror the worlds children naturally inhabit.

- Constantly refreshed with trends and updates

- Offer a living canvas for self-expression and belonging

- Providing ways for kids to shape and display facets of themselves

- Serve as a canvas for expressing their individuality.

Parents: Shaping early encounters with brands

Traditionally, parents attempted to keep their children away from consumption culture as far as they could. However, those voices now appear to be on the decline. While some parents take pride in not introducing their kids to brands early and in having children who are not 'demanding', the mainstream view seems to have shifted.

Interestingly, during children's formative years - when brand awareness is still nascent - it is often parents themselves who are playing an active role in shaping early consumption.

"I buy him clothes according to the occasion. Like if he is going to a Birthday Party and kids will be wearing branded clothes... so we too will have to dress him accordingly... so he does not look or feel cheap" - Mother of a 10-year-old boy, living in Mumbai

Parents dress, accessorise, and style with a quiet undercurrent of anxiety - a concern that their child might be judged, embarrassed, or excluded, by peers or even other adults.

Beauty: Early exposure to personality, self-care and identity

In our interactions we found young girls engaging with the beauty category at a much earlier age than the generations before them.

- Beauty content now appears as a regular feed, not an occasional curiosity.

- What was once an imitation of adult behaviour has transitioned into experimentation with selfhood.

Some of the girls were spending money on skincare products they had seen marketed on their social media feeds

These girls were regularly seeing products from brands like CeraVe, The Ordinary, Drunk Elephant, Bubble, and others being marketed on their feeds from an array of pages or creators. These were typically not pages they followed.

"I see like make up hacks and you know, stuff like that, like what's a good product and what's a bad product for your skin [...]. I've seen 'the ordinary' serum online. I wanted it for ages and all my friends had it and it's really good for their skin...it's mainly influencers talking about it. I don't know if it's true because they get money from it." Amber, 12

"I saw a few people on Get Ready With Me videos using CeraVe, or like Nivea. They'll be like, 'Oh it's good for your skin. It's hydrating'. I wouldn't get everything that I see...but then, if I feel like one product would work for me, then I'd get it." Amira, 14

A few of the girls, such as Suzy, Amber and Willow had seen skincare and beauty videos featuring young children marketing their favourite skincare products.

"Sometimes I see influencers, There's a big thing with like eight or nine year olds, we call them Sephora kids, it's like wee girls that want to be grown up. Wee girls using retinal, wee girls buying Drunk Elephant and Bubble [...] and all those big skincare things" Suzy, 12

Figure 18: Screenshots of 'glass skin' TikTok search results (Mresso, 2025; innobbysigue, 2024; Beconschie, 2024; jxy.cs, 2024; SangeBskin, 2024)

Ofcom report, Children's Media Lives 2025

- Tutorials, filters, and product hacks enable construction of identities anchored in new aesthetic fluency.

"Maybelline is an old brand, and Sugar is a new brand. Maybelline does not come up with new products, but Sugar is very trendy. They come up with new products which make it more interesting. Even packaging matters... Sugar brings in a different packaging." - Mumbai, group of boys and girls, 13-15 years old.

"I use lipstick from Lakmé, face powder from White Tone, and kajal stick from Himalaya... any brand is okay, but it should be costly. If it is expensive, the quality of the product will be nice, so that it won't affect our skin." - Visakhapatnam, 9-year-old girl

In line with global trends
Indian tweens behaviour mirror developments seen internationally in the beauty (and fashion) category.

Beauty speaks to everyone
The beauty category is no longer confined to girls.

- The influence of Korean culture has ushered in a new sense of androgyny in fashion, beauty, and self-care
- Grooming is less about gender and more about expression.

In one instance, when we asked a Vizag boy to list ten essential items he'd take to a deserted island, seven of them turned out to be beauty products - a telling reflection of how self-care has begun to be fluid and normalized for this generation.

"I will carry these creams... to maintain my skin always. If I don't have these creams... my skin won't be smooth, and there won't be any glamour." -10-year-old boy, Vizag

Tech categories: Cultural locus for Gen Alpha

Technology represents one of the defining cultural spaces of our times - A domain where every update, comparison video, or creator review becomes an invitation to engage.

- Excitement comes from keeping up with what's best, and what's next

- Fluency in comparing and recommending products gives children confidence and social currency

- Children's expertise often reconfigures family dynamics, as parents seek their advice.

"My mind... like half of it is in technology. I like YouTubers such as Technico and Dinocornel who buy and review stuff like the RTX 1590 (a graphics chip)."- Group of 13-15 years old, boys and girls, Mumbai

The Kantar Kidscan 2024* study acknowledges this reality as well, i.e., the outsized influence Generation Alpha wields in shaping their family's purchasing decisions across various categories, including IT products, durable goods, and FMCG.

Overall, these categories tap into children's instinct to build and broadcast - to show what they know, what they love, and how they wish to be seen.

Gen Alpha and brands

is it a 'situationship' and not, a love affair?

These days children are flirting and experimenting with brands - effortlessly plugging in and out. These are real relationships, but rarely enduring. Even within the same category, their choices remain fluid, shifting with context, mood, and moment.

For Gen Alpha, it isn't about how expensive the brand is. It's about whether it fits the vibe. A 299 Rs. T-shirt from Bewakoof can hold the same cultural currency as a Nike hoodie if it captures the mood of the moment.

Each time they go online, they come across new brands - at times even lesser-known-instagram-native brands end up becoming their "favourite" for a brief period of time.

Their connection with brands mirrors the grammar of a situationship - fluid, undefined, and contingent on relevance rather than loyalty.

Relevance, over rituals

For Gen Alpha, a brand matters only as long as it matches the cultural moment they're living in at the moment.

Transaction of 'vibes'?
They choose brands as mood markers - instant signals of the persona they want to project.

Emotional access, not 'ownership'?
Belonging comes from participation, not possession; access is enough to feel aligned.

Love you, leave you.
Their loyalty ends the moment the vibe shifts - without drama, just a clean cultural exit.

Overall:
Children appear to be signalling a relationship with brands that feels advanced. It bypasses traditional trajectories of brand engagement and education.

Rather than forming long-term affiliations, they use brands as tools for assembling identity – often without fully grasping the formal concept of a brand itself.

This relationship is advanced not because it is deeper, but because it is more instrumental. Brands are understood as resources that can be activated in service of highly personal pursuits.

chapter 6

when

ads met GEN alpha

AIM:

This chapter addresses the core research objectives-

- Assessing Gen Alpha's ability to discriminate between branded and unbranded communication

- Grounds these findings in the media landscape children now inhabit

- Outlines the key shifts that shape how they read and respond to content

- It then interprets the cognitive and contextual forces behind these patterns and calls attention to radically new ways of understanding this generation and what advertising signifies in their worlds
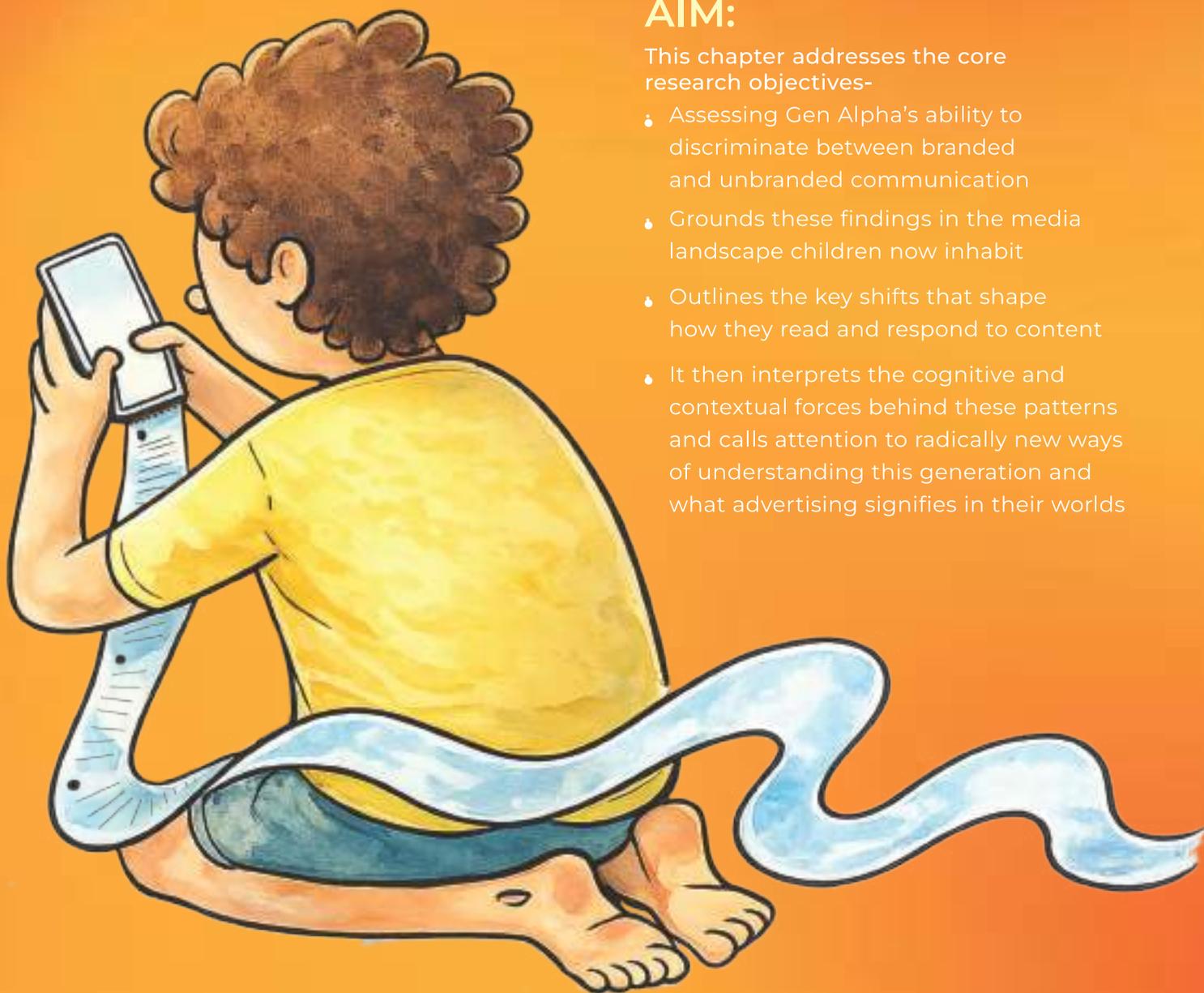
Growing up in the blur

What did kids say when we asked them **"What is an ad?"**

7-9 years:
An ad is that which sells 'obviously'

For younger children, the concept of advertising still echoes the past.

To them, an ad looks like a TV commercial or a printed page: glossy, brightly colored, filled with jingles, slogans, or mascots. Their classification system is rooted in the physical and the obvious. A CGI rich biscuit ad coming on TV or before videos on YT, a shiny toy spread in a magazine, or even a banner before their YouTube cartoon - all slot neatly into the "advertisement" box.

This age group sees ads as external and not of the 'natural' worlds that otherwise show up on their screens. They know it's something "made by companies," and they frame it as separate from the content they actually want. Their instinctive reaction is often impatience - the origin of the now-familiar "skip ad" reflex.

Ads that are embedded into content are often not recognised as distinct, and are experienced as part of the content flow they are already engaged in.

10-12 years:
Deeply into content, when 'advertising' becomes hazy

Between ages 10 and 12, things get more complicated.

Children in this bracket live in sprawling digital environments where brands appear in less explicit ways.

They recognize some "paid promotions" on YouTube, especially when labeled, but they don't necessarily frame every form of commerce as advertising.

If a gaming YouTuber promotes a new keyboard, it often feels like advice rather than an ad. If a fashion influencer talks about a lipstick they truly seem to love, it registers as passion, rather than persuasion. When influencers launch their own products - snacks,

beauty lines, merch - kids tend to treat them as natural extensions of identity, rather than promotional activity.

Screen orientation deepens this blur - vertical formats (Reels, Shorts, TikToks) are decoded as "content" or "vlogs," while landscape ads still indicate "TV style advertising."

Games intensify this ambiguity. A branded burger making an appearance inside Minecraft, or branded skins inside Roblox, don't register as ads – they feel just part of the play environment. Packaging in the physical world is also not framed as messaging for them. For children in this stage, ads are visible only if they interrupt the seamless flow. **When commercial elements blend into the experience of consuming 'content', they are absorbed as part of the world itself.**

13-15 years:
Still into 'content', but the concept of 'commerce' is more recognised

This age is marked by exposure to Instagram in particular.

While **advertising embedded within stories and reels continues to blur into the broader content world**, what becomes clearer is the presence of commerce itself – "Shop Now" links, tagged brands, affiliate codes, "swipe up," and "link in bio". The realisation that commerce itself can be the intent for a reel or Youtube short begins to take shape. For example, they are quick to spot when an influencer is "selling out" or over promoting, while remaining receptive when commercial activity feels passion-driven or naturally integrated.

'Non-advertising messaging' is another way children experience content. And herein lies the reason why this report explores the landscape of content, and not advertising alone.

Generation Alpha is not able to fully identify advertising when it is embedded in the larger content world they inhabit.

Let's break down what makes an

'advertising message'

identifiable by kids:

1.
Element of 'commercial machinery'
Ads are outputs of companies and corporations, with the clear purpose of selling something. Even "brands" are recognised as companies - and amongst younger or less fluent children as "shops".

There is an established idea amongst children that they are part of a broader commercial system. They interpret ads as tools of an economic system - an artificial mechanism designed for commercial gain.

2.
High production value:
Polished editing, scripted delivery, heavy use of graphics or music - this slickness itself becomes a signal of commercial intent.

3.
Repetition as a clue for the 'outsider' nature of ads:
Ads appear repeatedly, they make children think that this is not something that is "searched for by them" or "meant only for them". Ads do not blend into the main flow of content - they are seen as intrusions, external to what kids actually want to watch.

4.
Landscape orientation (especially for kids between 7-9 years):
Ads are coded as "TV-style"- wide-screen, landscape visuals that feel like they belong on television rather than a phone screen.

5.
Familiar call-to-action seeded in by YouTube:
"Skip ad" - a universal way of knowing that what is being shown on the screen is not what the child intended to watch.

6.
Zoomed-in products:
When something small takes obvious centre stage - a biscuit packet, a shoe, a cream bottle - the framing feels intentional, and promotional.

**Let's break down
what kids decode as a**

non–advertising message':

1.
"Seemingly" organic:
Feels like it is part of the content
being watched.

2.
'Channel' coding:
If content only appears once and can be
'missed' - then it is unlikely to be an ad.

3.
Looser production style -
the "vlog" style:
Less polished, less edited, minimal
'special effects'.

4.
Vertical mode:
Content orientation towards a phone
screen - like a YT short.

5.
Passion-driven advocacy:
When creators talk about things tied to their
own passions (gaming gear, beauty products,
sneakers), it does not feel like selling. A sports
enthusiast talking about football shoes by
Nike is unlikely to be viewed as an ad.

6.
Influencers' own products:
When creators launch their own merch, beauty
line, or snacks, children often experience this
as part of the creator's identity. E.g., MrBeast's
Feastibles, Rhode By Hailey Bieber.

7.
Packaging doesn't count:
Kids are not tuned into messaging that sits
outside of a screen. For example, a product's
box or design with fine print / a tagline - is
not seen as an 'ad'.

8.
Integrated into
the environment:
A burger ad in Minecraft or branded gear in
Roblox feels like part of the game world and
not an ad.

9.
Experienced as entertainment
or guidance:
Such content is interpreted by children who
interpret it as sharing knowledge, experiences,
or fun - not a commercial attempt.

/Section 2

The Great Media Mukbang

Why are the lines blurred?
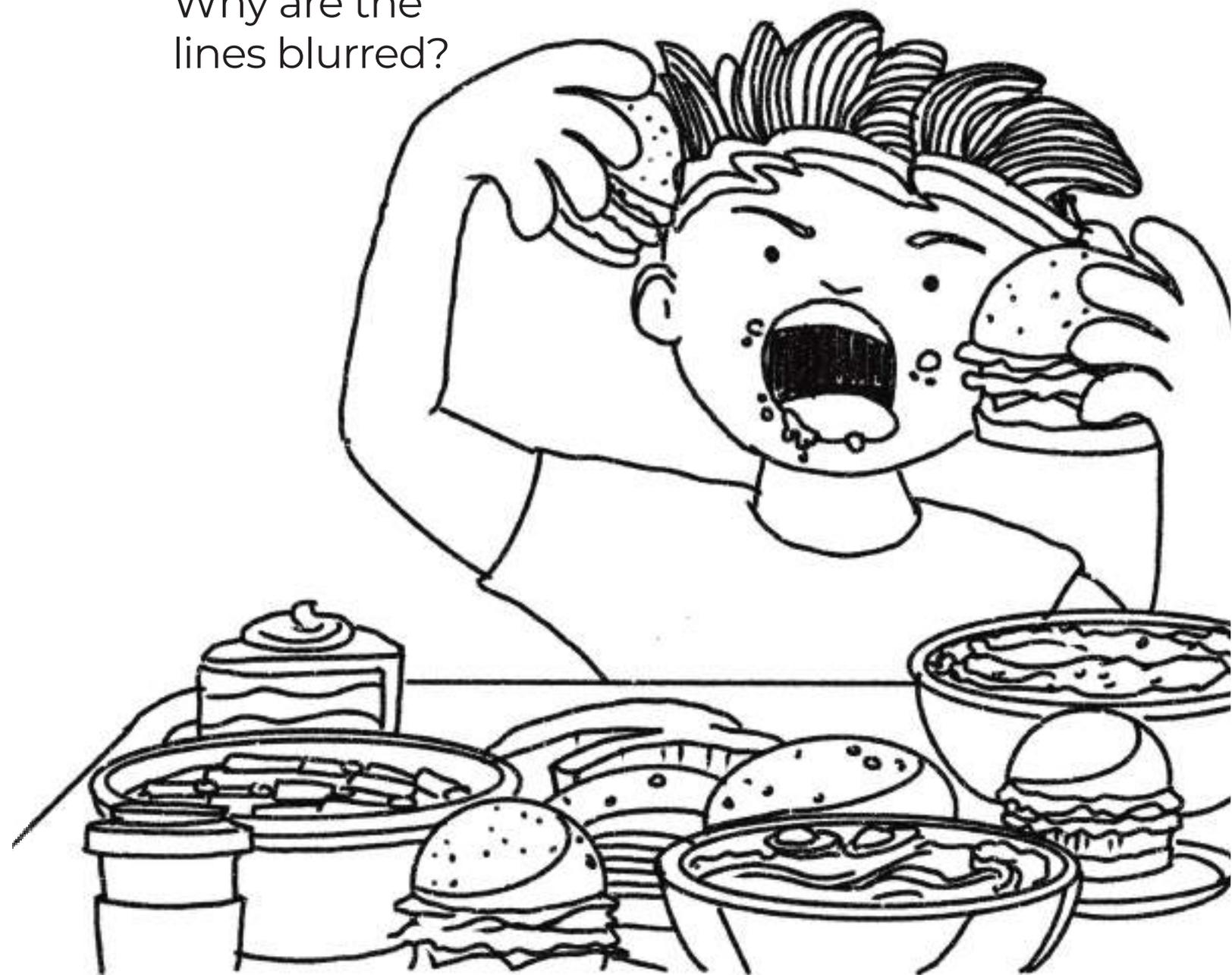
The content-commerce continuum:

No sense of separation for kids.

Today even seemingly casual moments like an influencer's favourite snack, a gaming setup, a back-to-school haul, are built on commercial partnerships that make products feel like natural parts of life rather than deliberate promotions. For a child, it's difficult to tell when they've moved from watching something for fun to being sold something.

Has the rise of what we are loosely calling 'content', led to commercial messaging finding a new un-defined, uncontained space where it can flourish seamlessly?

What complicates this further is the rise of passion-driven creators like gamers, DIY artists, young cooks, or dancers, who build trust through authenticity. Their content feels personal and real, almost like a friendship formed on a shared interest. When these creators talk about a brand, it doesn't register as an ad, it feels like advice from someone they admire.

When the feed thinks for them

The confusion around what kids are "meant" to watch isn't about inattentive parents or naïve children. It's baked into how the media now works. Content lives inside algorithmic feeds where entertainment, communication, information, and utility blur into one continuous stream. In this world, discovery isn't always intentional; the feed chooses before the child does. The only real moment of agency is deciding when to stop - a decision made harder by the infinite pull of what comes next.

The feed becomes the feast

Scrolling through children's YouTube history, during the course of the project, hit us with a sense of dizziness.

- Bright neon colored graphics of experimental videos

- ASMR of multiple kinds trying to appeal to the viewer in a hyper-sensorial manner

- Jump cuts of Ronaldo's videos put to the 'Fast and Furious' soundtrack

- Seemingly-random sounding brain rot content with human heads floating inside toilets and infinite memetic versions of these floating heads:

"I don't like very long YouTube videos. It takes a lot of time to get to the point and at the end of it, it ends with nothing. I am happy with YouTube Shorts"

This new content world runs on pure stimuli - color, sound, speed, and repetition. Every element is crafted to provoke a reaction.

As a child psychologist told us -

"Children are exposed to such rapid cycles of emotion and excitement that they start becoming numb to what they're watching. So, the next wave of content has to be louder, faster, more intense to break through the growing numbness. It becomes an infinite loop of craving and saturation, each turn more intense than the last."
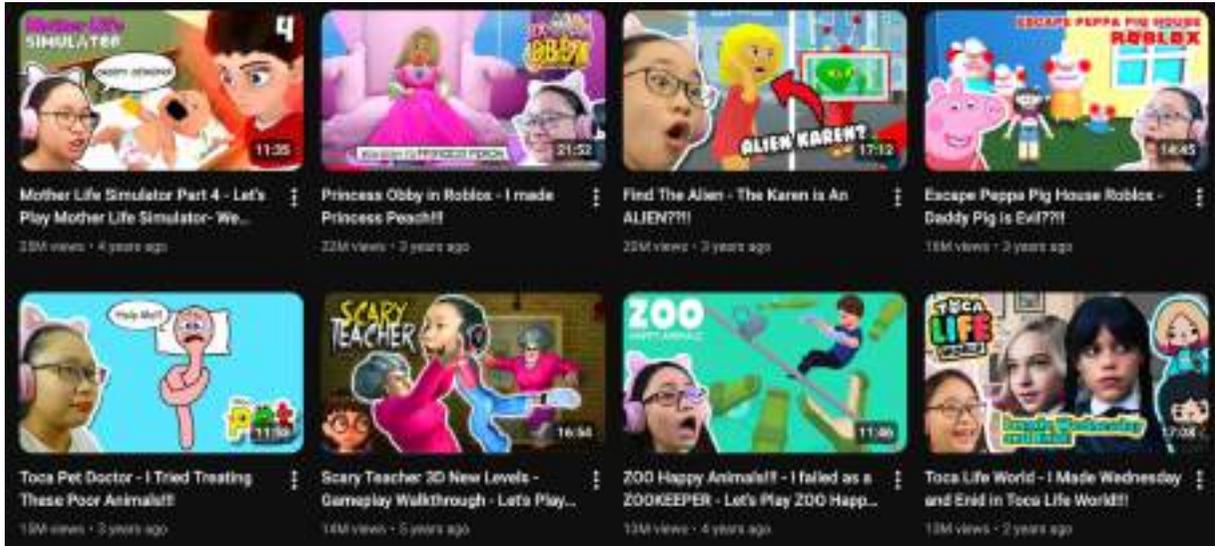
Continuous appetite - content as a state of being

"Whenever I feel angry or sad or unhappy, I just watch Cherry Pop Productions. Regardless of how I feel at the start of it, I know I will feel happy at the end of it. I can go on watching it for hours without a break, even if I have seen the same video before". - Child

Kids have a tremendous appetite for content consumption - but the point of today's media is not to satiate this. In fact, the very nature of algorithms is to keep serving more.

Children no longer approach content as a quest ("I want to watch this") but as a state of being ("I am watching").

When content's purpose is viewed through the lens of creating more desire rather than satiety, Gen Alpha's behaviours begin to make more sense.

The endlessly looping nature of media breeds a kind of frenzy - a rhythm of randomness that we saw in this study. For example:

Lack of content boundaries: Kids now move across platforms as if they are one universe, carrying trends seamlessly from YouTube to Instagram to WhatsApp.

Lack of chronology: Their feeds blend unrelated genres into a single stream where context, chronology, and hierarchy no longer exist.

Lack of memory: They immerse themselves in hyper-brief, high-intensity trends that are designed to be consumed in the moment and forgotten just as quickly. Eg. Ganji Chudail existed in a moment in time - intense, all encompassing. Skibidi existed for a moment in time.

Lack of closure: They experience content as a continuous flow with no real endpoint, making the idea of 'finishing' something almost meaningless.

Understanding the nature of media

Mukbang as a metaphor:

A peculiarly interesting yet puzzling content niche that has emerged in the past decade perfectly captures **this spirit of media consumption - The Mukbang.**

Mukbang - A genre where people eat enormous amounts of food on camera. A performative act where all your senses are engrossed in consumption of food and tables overflowing with food items. It is a spectacle with exaggerated sounds of chewing, slurping,

Mukbang YouTuber — Stephanie Soo

and crunching creating an ASMR-like sensory experience. **The Mukbang is our metaphor for consumption with no end.**

These children inadvertently find themselves in the midst of experiencing the great media Mukbang. There was a time when advertising was a subset of content, and content of media. The great media Mukbang reflects the reality that this ladder has been broken.

CASE IN POINT:
Squid Game

Perhaps the best way to explain the Mukbang would be to talk about the ultimate Gen Alpha phenomena - Squid Game

In its original imagination, Squid Game is a Korean, A-rated, limited series that lives in

the closed world of a platform as a proprietary IP. Access was already mediated by age, platform, and household economics.

In no time however, Squid Game broke out of this lock-box:

1.
It jumped from Netflix to far-away platforms that were not even in the orbit of A-rated or OTT channels.

'Squid Game' clips appeared across YouTube feeds - including YouTube Kids. Roblox chatroom spaces often permitted to children after careful parental consideration became sites of reference and play. As a result, children encountered Squid Game even in households without access to the original platform.

2.

It somehow fell into the erstwhile codes that have always existed in children's content, while being able to dissociate from the inherent horror of the adult version.

It was 'kid-ified' enough for it to feel like it can be adopted by kids. Many children we met spoke about making the ddakji game in their craft classes. The 'red light' 'green light' became a game that was recreated with friends.

The series was transformed in ways that aligned with existing visual and narrative codes familiar to what a child's feed looks like - candy colours, playground like arenas (like Mr. Beast's videos), hot-pink costumes (straight from the anime world that kids immerse in).

3.

It was the right recipe of thrill for a generation just before Gen Alpha -

The bhaiyyas and didis (older brothers and sisters) that Gen Alpha tries to emulate.

By commercialising itself through brands like Puma, dropping 'tracksuit' and 'sneaker collections' - Squid Game content bytes managed to become youth culture. Newer reality shows meant for the youth openly mimic Squid Game - from their uniforms, to their game formats. The commercial messaging was not targeted to Gen Alpha - it was for the youth - and in that it did what most commercial messaging does - it created an aspiration for an audience for whom it wasn't 'technically' meant.

Once it entered mainstream youth culture Squid Game became a universal 'vibe' even for branded categories that had nothing to do with the original content.

It is interesting to note how the media landscape absorbed, adapted and repackaged the Squid Game phenomena across formats and contexts.

At what point was it a show?

At what point did it become part of culture?

At what point did it become the bedrock of commercial messaging?

*"**Knorr**'s television ad recreates the eerie tension of Squid Game's high-stakes games. Players face elimination if they fail to slurp ramen within the time limit. Familiar faces from the series, like the pink guards and the ominous doll Young-hee, make appearances, reinforcing the Squid Game atmosphere."*

(Source: The Financial Express)

*"**Duolingo's** "Learn Korean or Else," incorporates Squid Game's signature tension into Duolingo's humorous tone. Duolingo saw a 40% increase in Korean learners after the first season of Squid Game.*

(Source: The Financial Express)

CONTENT   **CULTURE**   **COMMERCE**

Are boundary-less

Squid Game and its many avatars show that there are no boundaries between content, culture and commerce. Even when it does not start out as intentionally marketing to Gen Alpha, the marketplace appears to enter their world seamlessly, and rapidly.

Hence, mapping the broader landscape of content and how things fall into the world of Gen Alpha is core to understanding how to guide more responsible, informed marketing to this generation.

what does this mean for the advertising ecosystem

How do we begin thinking about **responsibly advertising to this generation?**

EARLIER MENTAL MODEL
OF ADVERTISING
announcement!

Advertising once sought to stand out. It found ways to grab attention by being different from what the audience was viewing.

It announced itself with jingles, taglines, and logos that cut through the noise. The goal was visibility.

It created desire by repeatedly telling people what to want. After having 'persuaded' the consumers about the brand and its life changing qualities, with celebrities wearing brand color saris and T-shirts there was a need to hammer in a 'Call to Action', just in case the message was not clear enough. The louder and more memorable the slogan, the better the recall.

now,

EMERGING MENTAL MODEL
OF ADVERTISING -
content adaptation

Messaging today does not try to 'shout' to gain attention, it increasingly resides in our ambient atmosphere of media consumption.

It lives inside a reel that we innocuously share with our friends, appears as part of a meme that we have seen in multiple versions, it flashes as a backdrop of the world within a game, or blends into the aesthetic of a streamer.

Within the media Mukbang we are in - messaging grows less like an announcement and more like an organism, spreading through engagement, mutating through memes, and adapting to the climate of the moment.

Children tend to resist interruption.

In the kinetic flow of their content streams, anything that breaks the continuity feels like an error in the system. The "skip ad" reflex is about protecting the flow of their worlds.

They physically dismiss through frantic swiping / scrolling past and agitated movements with their phones to get rid of commercial

interruption and get back to 'the experience they were immersed in.

This presents a significant and immediate challenge for advertising as it has traditionally been understood.

This generation may not pay any attention to 'advertising' unless it is embedded seamlessly into the amorphous, unending world of 'content'. They run the growing risk of not grasping the intent of commercial messaging, consuming it instead as content that they are used to.

chapter 7

exploring the next NORMal

The 'legibility' issue

When
children
consume
without
noticing,
**how can the
environment
act?**

The great media Mukbang has dissolved the idea that content is a series of discrete messages. Gen Alpha consumes digital content as a default surround sound. The fact that content today is endless has trained this generation to have an appetite for it, constantly. Consumption, therefore, becomes passive, even subconscious, with no clear start or end point, and very little friction to signal intention.

Within the workings of the great media Mukbang, branded messaging that feels most 'content-adjacent' becomes a blind spot for kids.

1.
A story integrated promotion which becomes un-identifiable

Products are woven directly into storylines, character arcs, challenges, or play sequences.

A major example of something like this exists in the format of 'experiments'. A growing subset of creators positions their content as playful testing, reviewing, or rating exercises within which commercial presence is not always immediately distinguishable from narrative play.

2.
Commerciality that feels hidden behind loved creators

Current media consumption patterns show that children increasingly form relationships with creators who operate within genres they personally identify with - gaming, DIY crafts, beauty and skincare, sports, collectible toys etc. These creators often occupy a dual role - they are both relatable peers and aspirational figures. Within these affinity-based ecosystems, creators frequently introduce or use products that align with their genre. While such integrations may stem from genuine personal interest, the distinction between organic enthusiasm and commercial promotion can be difficult to discern for child audiences.

3.
'Vlogs' that naturalise brand appearances

A substantial volume of content created by kidfluencers consists of daily-life vlogs - morning routines, school preparations, playtime diaries, hobby segments, family outings, and celebration videos etc. Within these candid narratives, brands are embedded as part of the everyday environment. A new backpack appears during a school routine, a snack brand is casually eaten on camera, a toy is unboxed "as part of the day," or a new outfit is tried on during a regular home vlog.

4.
Superlative consumption as entertainment - rather than advertisement

A recurring pattern in child-oriented digital ecosystems is the depiction of superlative, hyper-luxury, or status-driven consumption. References to high-end fashion brands, exotic vehicles, premium gadgets, designer

accessories, and other aspirational symbols originate from broader internet culture. Ex: Lambo, Gucci, Rolex, Apple etc.

5.
Gaming platforms feel too personal to be evaluated as real estate for advertising by kids

Sponsored content/characters on gaming platforms are not typically consumed as brands - even if logos, apt disclosures, tagging etc. - are implemented responsibly. Be it the rampant presence of Squid Game on Roblox, or sponsored characters in Minecraft - even when kids can identify something as part of a commercial world (a brand / a show) - the very fact that such elements are found in their own games can significantly dilute perceived commercial intent.

6.
Early entry of categories like beauty, fashion, and tech into children's lives.

An environment has emerged where categories such as beauty, fashion, and technology enter children's lives earlier and with surprising nuance.

Product literacy, aesthetic discernment, and brand awareness appear early, often at a level that makes Indian adults uneasy. The discomfort appears to stem not merely from exposure but from the degree of sophistication children demonstrate when the language of ingredients, features, drops, hauls, and upgrades is absorbed long before traditional ideas of "consumer readiness" were intended to apply.

7.
Early meaning-making, without selling: Connecting with a generation long before they will 'buy'

For children especially, brands now exist first as characters, worlds, languages, and repeated presences in their digital lives. Familiarity

precedes function. Affinity is built through watching, learning, playing, and belonging and not merely through purchase. The "brand" increasingly functions as a cultural object, long before it becomes a commercial one.

This offers advertisers an opportunity to contribute to children's worlds without prompting consumption - by supporting interests, skills, and communities. A brand can stand for curiosity, creativity, or competence without asking for immediate action.

In this sense, advertising becomes closer to cultural participation than persuasion, helping children understand categories and values before they ever encounter a transaction.

The opportunity, then, is to build brands as useful presences rather than future demands.

The great media Mukbang has made the going tough and created challenges for the advertising ecosystem. Well outlined, traditionally coded, heavily regulated and familiar advertising is immediately classified as an "interruption" by this generation.

Such advertising follows simplistic codes - clear brandedness, disclaimers, production value - even the youngest cohort of 7-9 yrs is able to identify this content as branded with ease.

The next wave of Gen Alpha consumers tends not to engage with content that demands a detour. The pace of their feeds, and their own content verse resists that which feels like it has 'something else' to say.

●

Adding to the general blur created by embedded advertising is the fact that most devices are shared between parents and kids. The algorithm tends to show content - branded as well as unbranded - to both.

There is, therefore, a need for marketers to locate brands responsibly within the seamless, fluid world of content – remaining relevant within the surround sound while maintaining clarity of intent.

/Section 2

Shared frictions and discussion prompts
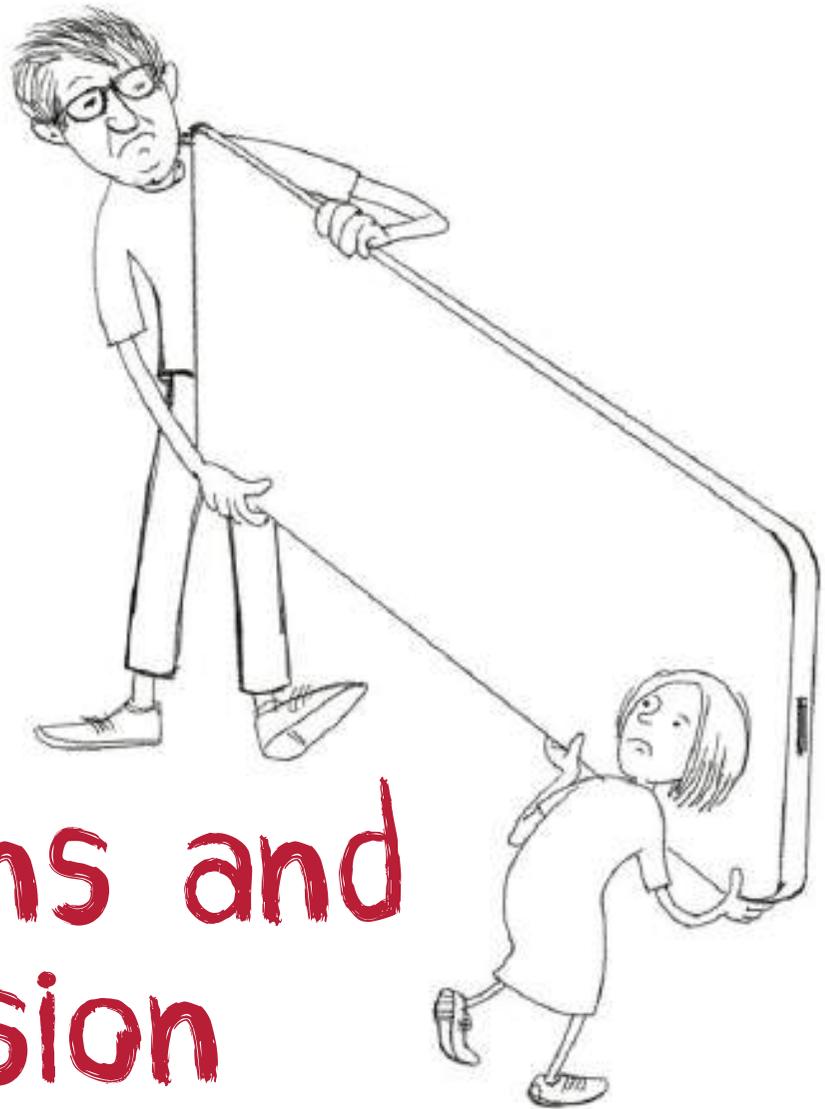
Towards a common framing for collective action across the advertising ecosystem

The report hopes to surface the core frictions that are emerging as children navigate increasingly blurred content environments. These frictions, point to areas where existing approaches are under strain, and where progress will require coordination across stakeholders rather than isolated action.

Across the media Mukbang, two shared challenges are becoming increasingly evident:

CHALLENGE

1

Children's ability to recognise commercial intent is being tested by content environments designed for seamlessness and immersion. As advertising increasingly appears in content -adjacent, narrative-led, or experiential formats, identification becomes harder to achieve without reintroducing disruptive cues.

CHALLENGE

2

At the same time, advertisers face the challenge of **maintaining transparency in environments that resist interruption**. Traditional disclosure mechanisms may feel misaligned with how children wish to experience content today, yet removing clarity risks eroding trust and informed engagement.

Outlining some pathways from where the advertising ecosystem may develop shared understanding.

1.
A universal signposting

When lines between advertising and content started to blur around influencer content some years ago, a protocol of disclosure norms and tools started to emerge to put transparency at the forefront to ensure consumer trust and informed content engagement. Regulators around the world started asking for clear and upfront disclosures, and in due course platforms started to offer native ways of disclosing commercial content. This marked a significant advantage for the entire ecosystem as native disclosures made it easier for

consumers to spot commercial intent but in a way that minimally interfered with creative freedom and content experience.

Taking this forward for a generation that accesses online content at a much earlier age, it may be useful for the next generation of disclosure practices to be guided by the principles of universal design and signposting that allow for universal recognition in content environments.

Approaching disclosure through the lens of Universal design offers a useful way forward. Universal design principles emphasise clarity, consistency, and ease of recognition across diverse users, ages, abilities, and contexts. Applied here, this suggests that future generations of disclosures should not rely on literacy level, attention span, or prior knowledge

of advertising codes, but instead work intuitively for everyone encountering them.

Some opportunities for application of Universal design principles are as under:

- **Consistent visual cues for recognisability across people (not just children):**
A symbol or mascot that accompanies all commercial content, remaining consistent across platforms and genres, allows recognition to be learned through repetition rather than explanation. Much like other universally adopted cues, familiarity builds meaning over time.

- **Extending signposting into media literacy:**
Such symbols or mascots can serve a dual function – not only marking commercial intent in the moment, but also becoming reference points in broader media-literacy education. Recognition becomes embodied and habitual, rather than instructional.

- **Learning from precedent:**
The red and green dot system in food labelling addressed a significant comprehension gap among Indian consumers by simplifying complex information into an instantly recognisable visual language. A similar approach could help address the legibility gap in children's content environments.

The development of universal signposting needs intent and cooperation across the ecosystem, and for technology to play a major role in shaping this approach. It also needs global alignment and dialogue due to the consumption of content across borders. However, the advantages of such a consensus could be many - including for adults.

2.
Locating responsibility across the ecosystem

As children's content experiences are increasingly shaped by platforms, there is a growing recognition that transparency needs the entire ecosystem to respond cohesively.

Parents retain agency through supervision, boundary-setting, and the use of platform-

provided controls, while creators shape what feels ordinary or desirable through the genres, references, and everyday practices they normalise.

As content environments become more immersive, these roles increasingly intersect. Advertiser intent, creator practices, platform design choices, and parental mediation often operate alongside one another. However, a shared frame of reference for transparency would drive greater coherence and impact across these parallel efforts as children's media experiences continue to evolve.

3.
Building on existing protections: making safeguards legible and future-ready

Across major digital platforms, a set of protections already shape how children and teens encounter content. These include community guidelines that prohibit content endangering minors, differentiated policies for younger audiences, and guardrails intended to limit the recommendation of low-quality or harmful material.

Platforms also offer tools that allow both parents and young users to influence how content is experienced. Privacy controls, wellbeing features such as take-a-break and bedtime reminders, and viewing settings that support more intentional consumption reflect an acknowledgement that children's media environments require additional care.

However, as content experiences become more immersive, creator-led, and continuous, safeguards and protections need to evolve to ensure that advertising remains identifiable. Looking ahead, there is scope to consider how existing protections can evolve from background features into more integrated elements of children's media experiences, supporting awareness, agency, and informed engagement alongside safety.

4.

Strengthening media and advertising literacy as a shared foundation

As children encounter branded content earlier and in increasingly blended forms, the ability to recognise advertising cannot rest on disclosures alone. Media and advertising literacy become important enabling conditions for informed engagement, particularly in environments where commercial and non-commercial cues are closely intertwined.

Introducing age-appropriate advertising literacy within formal education systems can help build shared language around persuasion, intent, and commercial influence. When such understanding develops progressively, recognition becomes cumulative rather than episodic.

Existing initiatives that introduce children to how advertising works offer useful reference points. Strengthening media and advertising literacy, supports the effectiveness of disclosures, complements platform safeguards, and enables children to engage with branded content with greater awareness and agency over time.

Charting the next normal in advertising requires acknowledging that children's media environments are evolving faster than existing frameworks, and that responsibility will need to be shared across the ecosystem.

Designing branded communication for this generation is both a strategic challenge and a collective responsibility –

one that benefits from alignment, experimentation, and continued dialogue rather than premature closure.

End note

At ASCI, our role is increasingly moving beyond responding to complaints or adjudicating disputes after the fact.

Meaningful consumer protection today requires anticipation - an ability to see where new risks and vulnerabilities may emerge, and understanding how advertising is being experienced by consumers today that may not be well served by our current frameworks.

Reports like 'What the Sigma' are about building insight and foresight for the industry because before we can meaningfully build trust with consumers, we must first understand the contexts in which they encounter and interpret advertising. Through our partnership with Futurebrands, we have attempted to dig deep into Gen Alpha's childhood realities and how they are being shaped by content. The findings are fascinating to say the least, and have a huge implication on how we think of the future of responsible advertising. The report reveals how advertising is increasingly embedded and is becoming invisible to many, but especially to kids as they consume vlogs, games and even AI. To avoid interruption of content flow, both kids and advertisers may find it attractive for advertising to increasingly become indistinguishable from content. But in the long run, this will lead to an erosion of trust in brands and pushback from regulators. Agency must remain in the hands of consumers, even the youngest ones.

For industry, the value of this report lies in understanding the emerging future and preparing a responsible response to the peculiarities of how this generation consumes content and advertising. Those who engage with these questions early will be better placed to build trust and sustain credibility with consumers and other stakeholders over time.

For ASCI, the insights from this work inform how self-regulation must continue to adapt -

by understanding patterns, environments and cumulative effects. This strengthens our ability to work collaboratively with stakeholders and to develop guidance that remains relevant as advertising continues to evolve.

Protecting children in the future will require shared understanding, adaptive thinking and a willingness to design responsibility into the world children inhabit. ASCI's commitment is to ensure that as advertising adapts to new realities, it does so in ways that are thoughtful, proportionate and worthy of the trust placed in it. When it comes to Gen Alpha - the future of responsible advertising is both exciting and complex. This report is a step in that direction. We hope that you've found it as exciting and insightful as we have.

Manisha Kapoor
CEO & Secretary General
Advertising Standards Council of India

Gen Alpha's Vocab World

'Aura' vocabulary: Words and phrases leveraged to express and describe their imagination of self

ADHD - A shorthand kids use to proudly own their restlessness and distractedness

Ambivert, extrovert, introvert

Creep - Someone who's personality or overall behaviour is perceived to be strange or weird

Ronaldo - (A) A loud declaration of being part of the fandom, and (B) A shorthand for "I'm good at football", "I'm confident", or "I'm a standout player"

Footballer - Not just someone who plays football, rather someone who identifies with the culture, skills, and look of it

Attitude Boy - A boy who acts confident, bold, slightly rebellious, or "too cool, for school"

Mog (Mogging, mogger) - Slang for outclassing someone, looking better, performing better, or dominating socially

Mew - Refers to a jawline-shaping trend (pushing tongue up to the palate); used jokingly to describe someone trying to look sharp

Infinite aura vs., negative aura - Describing the 'presence' someone has and how 'self-assured' they are about it

Sigma - A lone-wolf archetype: independent, confident, doesn't follow the crowd

Rizzler - Someone who is smooth, charismatic, good at talking to people

Simp - Someone who tries too hard to impress or please someone they like

Active vocabulary: words and phrases embedded in everyday parlance (including functional vocabulary)

Cringe - Something that is embarrassing, awkward, or try-hard

Flex - To 'show-off' and boast in an attempt to impress, at times trying to do so without making it obvious

Roasting - To humorously mock or humiliate someone with a well-timed joke, diss, or comeback

Real vs., fake - A means to callout authentic vs. inauthentic behaviour

Streaks / snapstreaks - Represents the 'Fire' emoji (🔥) that appears next to a friend's name when you have exchanged Snaps with them for a consecutive 24-hour period, starting after three consecutive days

Savage - A person or action that is bold, fearless, witty, and unapologetic

Sick - Awesome or impressive

GG (Good game) - Used to end online multiplayer games or signal sportsmanship

OG (Original gangster) - widely used to signal someone or something that is authentic, exceptional, or 'old-school'

Doomscrolling / doomsurfing - Spending an excessive amount of time, mindlessly, watching short-form content

ASMR - YouTube, and other social media videos that use gentle satisfying sensory sounds to help viewers relax, de-stress, or fall asleep

GOAT - 'Greatest of all time', used to speak about someone or something that is the best in their field

Sus - Suspicious or sketchy behaviour

No cap - I.e., 'no lie'; used to assert that something is true or not exaggerate

Salty - Refers to someone who is bitter, angry, or upset, often over something minor or trivial

Lowkey - Quietly, discreetly, or without intense emotion

Delulu - Delusional in a playful way - unrealistic fantasies

Chat - A term of address used by streamers (on platforms like Twitch) to speak to their live audience

OP - Describing someone 'overpowered'; exceptionally good.

W (Dub) - A win, success, good outcome

L - A loss, failure, embarrassing moment

Baddie - Short for 'a bad bitch'; typically used to describe a woman who is sexy, confident, and no-nonsense

Ate - Performed flawlessly; nailed it

Pookie - A term of endearment and affection for someone or something cute

Yap / yapping - Describing somebody who talks incessantly, often to an uninterested audience

Tea - The best kind of gossip, typically shared between friends

Ambient vocabulary: Words and phrases in their environment. Words that catch their attention, that are consumed, and even momentarily engaged with

Skibidi - A chaotic meme-world from Creator 'DaFuq?Boom!', used as shorthand for absurd, hyper-silly 'Brain Rot' content and to signal that a conversation is entering that territory

Six-seven - It began as a throwaway line from a 2024 drill track by rapper Skrilla, then slipped into meme-culture where it mutated beyond meaning. Today, kids use it as a catch-all reaction to anything absurd, chaotic, weird, or just plain funny

Cooked - Describing a situation or person: exhausted, overwhelmed, or in serious trouble

Rizz - From 'charisma', an effortless charm or smoothness; particularly, in romantic contexts

FR (For real) - Internet shorthand for truthfulness

Aura - The sum total of a person's energy, stylishness, and confidence. Gen Alpha's version of cool.

Auramaxxing - Holistic efforts to boost one's aura overtime

Aura farming - Performative actions to gain 'aura points' to deliberately increase one's aura in a specific context

Ghosting - The act of suddenly & without explanation ending all communication with someone

Ohio - Internet joke that has mutated to represent something bizarre, glitchy, or cursed

Brain rot - Refers to online culture characterized by absurd, AI-generated characters with bizarre backstories and exaggerated accents

Ganji chudail - An animated internet meme character, known for her antics and relatable content

Bibliography

Executive Summary

Squid Game, Hwang Dong-hyuk, Netflix. Accessed at: *https://www.netflix.com/title/81040344*

Mukbangs are everywhere, for better or worse, Kyndall Cunningham, Vox. Accessed at: *https://www.vox.com/culture/368208/mukbangs-origin-youtubers-hot-ones-asmr-seafood-boil-taco-bell*

Ryan's Squid Game SCHOOL: Guard Edition!!, Ryan's World. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyblaOxey50*

$456,000 Squid Game In Real Life!, MrBeast. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0e3GPea1Tyg*

Diana pretends to have her own beauty salon with New kids makeup kits!, Kids Diana Show. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzBxhvq8PhM*

Meta Ray-Ban Display Unboxing & First Look - The Future Of Smartglasses!🔥🔥🔥, Technical Guruji. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scu6_n8ozqE*

New Oreo Pokémon. Twist, lick and play with 'em all!, Oreo India. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjBRq0Uud58*

Oreo Milkshake Asmr cooking, Azhar's Kitchen Asmr. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7ZfRknYUSE*

Lets Make OREO MILSHAKE 🥤 | KIDs Favorite MILKSHAKE RECIPE 🧑‍🍳, Afshan's World. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNfdqXAk7vQ*

@chhavihussein has sowed the seeds of playfulness with her #OreoPlayPledge, how about you?, Chhavi Mittal, oreo.india. Accessed at: *https://www.instagram.com/p/CLt5ubkpEWB/*

A Minecraft Movie | Official Trailer, Warner Bros. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJO_vlDZn-I*

Official Minecraft Trailer, Minecraft. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmB9b5njVbA*

Enter The Minecraft Universe | McDonald's, McDonald's. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lXGoJqft8tQ*

We BROKE McDonalds..., Aphmau. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i24K6RemA9w*

For all the Desi Rebels🔥, thesouledstore and thesouledstore_women. Accessed at: *https://www.instagram.com/p/DLz1PhRzqMz/*

Which show's aesthetic is your vibe? 🎬, thesouledstore_women. Accessed at: *https://*

www.instagram.com/p/DLARrAlNEK4/

Made By Humans, Worn By Superheroes!, The Souled Store. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2Zhi496Gg0*

Chapter 1

Reality of KBC Kid | Why are Kids becoming Arrogant? | Dhruv Rathee, Dhruv Rathee. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9bLCcBGt9g*

KBC 17's Ishit Bhatt clarifies it 'wasn't his intention to be rude', issues apology after viral controversy, Trisha Bhattacharya, mint. Accessed at: *https://www.livemint.com/news/trends/kbc-17-s-ishit-bhatt-says-it-wasn-t-his-intention-to-be-rude-to-amitabh-bachchan-issues-apology-after-viral-backlash-11760970136715.html*

Viral KBC Kid And Six Pocket Syndrome: Psychologists Explain The Impact On A Child's Overall Growth, Sameeksha Sharma, Onlymyhealth. Accessed at: *https://www.onlymyhealth.com/six-pocket-syndrome-impact-on-child-overall-growth-psychologists-explain-12977839889*

KBC contestant controversy: Schools, not just parents, are raising overconfident kids, Deebashree Mohanty, India Today. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/parenting-toddlers/story/kbc-17-contestant-controversy-schools-not-just-parents-are-raising-overconfident-kids-kaun-banega-crorepati-2802255-2025-10-13*

What's Wrong With Gentle Parenting?, Emily Edlynn Ph.D., Psychology Today. Accessed at: *https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/parenting-is-not-a-fad/202403/whats-wrong-with-gentle-parenting*

How Frontier Technology Is Making Personalised Education a Reality for 1.15 Cr+ Children Across India, Raajwrita Dutta, The Better India. Accessed at: *https://thebetterindia.com/education/frontier-tech-ai-robotics-smart-classrooms-india-education-tonk-pune-rural-kids-10566764*

AI PCs in schools: How they can change the way students learn tech, The Times of India Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/ai-pcs-in-schools-how-they-can-change-the-way-students-learn-tech/articleshow/123767161.cms*

How mobile screens are quietly rewiring young minds, India Today. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/how-mobile-screens-are-quietly-rewiring-young-minds-2757449-2025-07-18*

Understanding Virtual Autism: The Impact of Excessive Screen Time on Children's Development, Sneha Das, The Times of India. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/understanding-virtual-autism-the-impact-of-excessive-screen-time-on-childrens-development/articleshow/123737555.cms*

The future classroom: Replacing legacy with interactive technology, Dave Haynes, Samsung Insights. Accessed at: *https://insights.samsung.com/2021/09/28/the-future-classroom-replacing-legacy-with-interactive-technology/*

Here's what happens when teachers tailor their lessons to students' individual learning styles, Virginia Clinton-Lisell, The Conversation. Accessed at: *https://theconversation.com/heres-what-happens-when-teachers-tailor-their-lessons-to-students-individual-learning-styles-242075*

Innovative teaching methods in CBSE: Best practices for educators, India Today. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/innovative-*

teaching-methods-in-cbse-best-practices-for-educators-2595016-2024-09-06

ComiCon Mumbai Craze!! | Ultimate Fan Experience from Comicon 2023 | Mayo Japan, मायो जापान Mayo Japan. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLwWndQ4vHI*

'Six-seven': what does the latest slang mean (and should parents be worried)?, The Guardian. Accessed at: *https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/oct/20/six-seven-latest-slang-should-parents-be-worried*

67 [siks sev-uhn], Dictionary.com. Accessed at: *https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/67/*

Kids Can't Stop Shouting 'Six Seven'—Here's What It Really Means, Annabelle Canela, Parents. Accessed at: *https://www.parents.com/why-cant-kids-stop-saying-six-seven-11722015*

55 Gen Alpha Slang Words You Need To Know To Keep from Being 'Beta', Kellye Fox, Parade. Accessed at: *https://parade.com/living/gen-alpha-slang*

Decoding "Ohio Slang Meaning": Why Gen Alpha's Favorite Insult Is Taking Over the Internet in 2025, Andrew Jones, Rizzlane.com. Accessed at: *https://rizzlane.com/ohio-slang-meaning/*

Why Kids Are Screaming "6-7" in Classrooms Everywhere | Vantage with Palki Sharma, Palki Sharma, Firstpost. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDqfuoawH4M*

How to mew 🧔, spacefunkoffical. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/5szPs6SUU0c*

Kids TV Is Dead, Long Live Kids TV, Kayla Cobb, Yahoo Entertainment. Accessed at: *https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/kids-tv-dead-long-live-130000641.html*

What is brain rot?, BBC. Accessed at: *https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zx6qg2p*

Gen Alpha '67' obsession: How brain rot became their bonding ritual, Times Entertainment. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/etimes/trending/gen-alpha-67-obsession-how-brain-rot-became-their-bonding-ritual/articleshow/125345253.cms*

Italian Brainrot memes 2025: Everything you need to know about the viral TikTok trends from Tung Tung Sahur to Lirilarila, The Times of India. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/technology/social/italian-brainrot-memes-2025-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-viral-tiktok-trends-from-tung-tung-sahur-to-lirilarila/articleshow/120756370.cms*

Every Italian Brainrot Character Explained, cardogjones. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9qYKRO-9xg*

Gen Z vs. Gen Alpha: What really sets them apart?, Georgie Walsh, GWI. Accessed at: *https://www.gwi.com/blog/gen-z-vs-gen-alpha*

How Generation Alpha Will Change the World | Vantage with Palki Sharma, Palki Sharma, Firstpost. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO6k_rjTZUk*

Understanding Gen Alpha: Viral Nonsense Or Cultural Shift?, Sritama Bhattacharyya, Outlook. Accessed at: *https://www.outlookindia.com/culture-society/understanding-gen-alpha-viral-nonsense-or-cultural-shift*

Hear, hear: Generation Alpha is here, Harish Bijoor, The New Indian Express. Accessed at: *https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2022/Nov/22/hear-hear-generation-alpha-is-here-2520677.html*

GENERATION ALPHA: The future of a new era of users, WDR (Western German Broadcasting). Accessed at: *https://zukunft.wdr.de/assets/pdf/WDR-GenAlpha_Report-EN.pdf*

Gen Alpha unfiltered, Matt Smith, Shauna Moran, and Georgie Walsh, GWI. Accessed at: *https://www.gwi.com/reports/gen-alpha*

Generation Alpha: Initial insights into a new generation, OneHope. Accessed at: *https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51af4604e4b0a1d38d429214/t/64df6982e5e5ca204c9be8d8/1692363138766/Gen-Alpha-Report_Mar-9-2023.pdf*

Understanding Generation Alpha, Mark McCrindle and Ashley Fell, McCrindle. Accessed at: *https://generationalpha.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Understanding-Generation-Alpha-McCrindle.pdf*

Understanding Generation Alpha: Inside the Alpha Brain, HOTWIRE and WIRED Consulting. Accessed at: *https://cnda.condenast.co.uk/wired/UnderstandingGenerationAlpha.pdf*

Generation alpha: what's changing?, Jeremy Lamri, Medium. Accessed at: *https://jeremy-lamri.medium.com/report-generation-alpha-whats-changing-394af9f7c800*

Chapter 3

Giving a smartphone to your child? Wait till this age if you want to avoid mental health, weight and sleep issues, says study, Times Entertainment. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/health-fitness/health-news/giving-a-smartphone-to-your-child-wait-till-this-age-if-you-want-to-avoid-mental-health-weight-and-sleep-issues-says-study/articleshow/125800785.cms*

Online Safety for Children: Protecting the Next Generation from Harm, Sadhna Singh, Niti Aayog. Accessed at: *https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2025-06/Online-safety-for-children-protecting-the-next-Generation-from-harm.pdf*

Parenting in the age of smartphones: Setting boundaries and modelling healthy tech use, India Today. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/balancing-screen-time-tips-for-parents-navigating-the-smartphone-era-2547385-2024-06-03*

Indian kids under 5 spending double the safe screen time, finds study, The Times of India. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/2-2-hours-per-day-screen-time-of-indian-kids-2x-safe-limit-claims-study/articleshow/122328190.cms*

Constant Companion: A Week in the Life of a Young Person's Smartphone Use, Common Sense Media and C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. Accessed at: *https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2023-cs-smartphone-research-report_final-for-web.pdf*

It's time to do as the Australians do and ban your kids from social media, Kara Alaimo, CNN Health. Accessed at: *https://edition.cnn.com/2025/12/09/health/social-media-ban-kids-australia-wellness*

Parenting advice on social media is often poor quality, says Phillipson, The Guardian. Accessed at: *https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/oct/14/parenting-advice-on-social-media-is-often-poor-quality-says-phillipson*

The Gen Alpha Report (US edition), Bel Booker, Attest. Accessed at: *https://www.askattest.com/blog/articles/the-gen-alpha-report-us-edition#h-chapter-4-developing-an-*

independent-worldview

What I Wish Parents Knew about Social Media, Laura Edelson, Scientific American. Accessed at: *https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-i-wish-parents-knew-about-social-media/*

Teen mental health and social media, Unicef. Accessed at: *https://www.unicef.org/parenting/mental-health/social-media-teens*

The Future of Parenting in India: Insights and Trends that are here to stay, See Saw. Accessed at: *https://seesowkids.com/blogs/news/the-future-of-parenting-in-india-insights-and-trends-that-are-here-to-stay?srsltid=AfmBOor1hlwKPqbqn_bE9g8uvnxN5M7KNmd5xYKdGrWxZcdCfjp8bHSM*

From obedience to openness: How Indian parenting is being rewritten, Sanjukta Acharya, India Today North East. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatodayne.in/lifestyle/story/from-obedience-to-openness-how-indian-parenting-is-being-rewritten-1258579-2025-08-09*

Traditional Indian Parenting Styles and Their Modern Adaptations, Pakhi Rewri, Bournvita Tayyari Jeet Ki. Accessed at: *https://www.tayyarijeetki.in/articles/traditional-indian-parenting-styles-and-their-modern-adaptations*

Why FAFO parenting is blowing up right now, Mehak Malhotra, India Today. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatoday.in/lifestyle/society/story/why-fafo-parenting-is-blowing-up-right-now-2766561-2025-08-06*

Meet the new-age parents, The Times of India. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/parenting/meet-the-new-age-parents/articleshow/114379419.cms*

Positive Parenting: A Ready Reckoner, Central Board of Secondary Education. Accessed at: *https://www.cbse.gov.in/cbsenew/documents/CBSE_Positive_Parenting_Book.pdf*

Meet Gen Alpha: Parents and teachers reveal how they are coping with the iPad kids, Dristi Sharma, India Today. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatoday.in/lifestyle/story/meet-gen-alpha-parents-and-teachers-reveal-how-they-are-coping-with-the-ipad-kids-2487469-2024-01-14*

Why the future of learning belongs to curious thinkers, not rule followers, Geeta Jayanth, The Times of India. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/parenting/moments/why-the-future-of-learning-belongs-to-curious-thinkers-not-rule-followers/articleshow/125711290.cms*

Parenting Gen. Alpha - Navigating The Uncharted | Ms. Rubina Khatib Siddiqui | TEDxPortBlair, Ms. Rubina Khatib Siddiqui, TEDx Talks. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fXtf1hSwzU*

Gen A: understanding the psychology of the first fully digital generation, George Gillett, The Independent. Accessed at: *https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gen-a-generation-alpha-online-kids-teens-psychology-b2863219.html*

Meet Gen Alpha, the 'mini-millennials' who are poised to take over the internet, Aimee Pearcy, Business Insider. Accessed at: *https://www.businessinsider.com/gen-alpha-explained-technology-views-mental-health-2023-10*

Social Workers Guide to Thriving with Gen Alpha, Agents of Change. Accessed at: *https://agentsofchangeprep.com/blog/social-workers-guide-to-thriving-with-gen-alpha/*

Digital Safety Resources: Tools for the home, Be Internet Awesome by Google. Accessed

at: *https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/en_us/families*

Be cyber smart!: How to keep kids safe online — a parent's guide, KPMG. Accessed at: *https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/dp/pdf/2024/october/Cyber%20Day%20Parent's%20Guide_2024.pdf*

Co-viewing with your Kids, MediaSmarts. Accessed at: *https://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/tip-sheet/tipsheet_co-viewing_with_kids.pdf*

How to keep your children safe in the Digital space?, Telengana State Police, Telengana Cyber Security Bureau. Accessed at: *https://tgcsb.tspolice.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/English-Parental-Guidelines-e-version.pdf*

80% of parents see academic improvement with experiential online schools: Could this be the future of learning?, Sanjay Sharma, The Times of India. Accessed at: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/80-of-parents-see-academic-improvement-with-experiential-online-schools-could-this-be-the-future-of-learning/articleshow/114767151.cms*

How digital transformation is creating job opportunities in India | Explained, India Today. Accessed at: *https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/jobs-and-careers/story/how-digital-transformation-is-creating-job-opportunities-in-india-explained-2382999-2023-05-23*

Most Indians share personal data online and trust companies to not misuse information, Hindustan Times. Accessed at: *https://www.hindustantimes.com/more-lifestyle/most-indians-share-personal-data-online-and-trust-companies-to-not-misuse-information/story-ZiBlprXOJszbEBz1JfqNNJ.html*

Chapter 4

Tom and Jerry | Mega Compilation | Vol. 7 | Warner Classics, Warner Bros. Classics. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GE6zf_hH48*

Tom & Jerry | Tom & Jerry in Full Screen | Classic Cartoon Compilation | WB Kids, WB Kids. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0Q2otsqC4I*

iPHONE 16 MIL GAYA | Family Vlog | Aayu and Pihu Show, Aayu and Pihu Show. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkarSCZnml4*

Never Have I Ever, Mindy Kaling, Lang Fisher, Netflix. Accessed at: *https://www.netflix.com/title/80179190*

Justin Bieber - Baby ft. Ludacris, Justin Bieber. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kffacxfA7G4*

Kyu nahi ho paa raha ghar aesthetic - A house tour, The Rebel Kid. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vDtCD44dDs*

Billie Eilish, Khalid - lovely, Billie Eilish. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1Pl8CzNzCw*

Mandaar, Anirban Bhattacharya and Pratik Dutta, hoichoi World Classics. Accessed at: *https://www.hoichoi.tv/shows/watch-mandaar-bengali-web-series-online*

Watch this Video ONLY if you live in North India!, Dhruv Rathee. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UE9xMBZCRJg*

Badshah X Arijit Singh - Soulmate (Live Video) | Ek THA RAJA, Badshah. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3ijQJjUbTs*

Chhod Diya (Lyrics) - Arijit Singh, Kanika Kapoor | Baazaar, Soulful Arijit Singh. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMz2pTfRIxw*

Protect $500,000 Keep It!, MrBeast. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ESeQBeikKs*

KPop Demon Hunters, Maggie Kang, Netflix. Accessed at: *https://www.netflix.com/title/81498621*

Questions and Answers! 100k Subs Special Q&A!!! Cherry Pop Productions, Cherry Pop Productions. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2hrZU_mDZE*

I Tried Building My Own Space Satellite, Mark Rober. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KcV1C1Ui5s*

Ultimate Nerf Gun Battle w/ Zach King!, Mark Rober, CrunchLabs. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efovc4SiXic*

Virat Kohli Top 10 Tremendous Sixes In Cricket Ever (Ft King Kohli), Cricketainment. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3QFtXecdqg*

Saindhav (2024) New Released Full Hindi Dubbed Action Movie | Venkatesh, Nawazuddin, Arya, Shradha, RKD Studios. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRCIvHBY2gI*

Celebrating 10 years of Scratch, MIT Media Lab. MIT News. Accessed at: *https://news.mit.edu/2017/celebrating-10-years-of-scratch-0511*

A Shoe In for Gully Labs, Pranita Joshi, The Voice of Fashion. Accessed at: *https://www.thevoiceoffashion.com/centrestage/features/a-shoe-in-for-gully-labs-6440*

BEYBLADE X | NEW EPISODE! | Ep.53 Signs of a New Era, Beyblade XBEYBLADE English - Official Channel. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heWZLJqdGD4*

THIS TOY FACTORY IS SO SCARY! (Poppy Playtime), Mythpat. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twf9-LXJpA8*

Squid Game Creepy Kinder Joy Witch Horror Video! 🧙‍♀️🍬 She Steals Candy of Kids!", Romacreativeai. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/lqKaWgCtDVU*

COOKIE KA BIRTHDAY | 1st Birthday party with pets | Aayu and Pihu Show, Aayu and Pihu Show, Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=908d9hzsqfA*

Best Visiting Place of Kundapura, PragnyaTheExplorer, Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwsXyJbxCU0*

TEACHERS DAY in SCHOOL - Senior vs Junior Class | First Time School Girl In Saree | MyMissAnand, MyMissAnand. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CX7J2XtUVYY*

Using Only *Black Pink* Things and Food For 24 Hours Challenge😍, SoNeha Vlogs. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwyQqIqRuUQ*

(6 DIYs) Cutest BTS Crafts Every *ARMY* Will Love!"💜✨, Shifa Craft. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq0uEb9GoSc*

BLACKPINK - '뛰어(JUMP)' M/V, BLACKPINK. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgCVZdcKcqY*

$1,000,000 Brainrot in Steal a Brainrot..., ToSlow. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/OhVB3NSv7Nc*

BARBIE x ITALIAN BRAINROT, Mango Animation. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxYOCMyIeLs*

One-Punch Man - Episode 07 (S1E07) [English Sub], Muse Asia. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwQoGQaI-4Y*

Minecraft Speedrunner Swap VS 2 Hunters, Dream. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zj3G5hN-EBQ*

Sammy Attacked Me.. 🍖▮ (Roblox Steal A Brainrot Halloween ASMR), Spizee. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/ESJ8aDeMxdg*

I Stole NEWEST CHRISTMAS UPDATE BRAINROTS in Steal a Brainrot Roblox, SenpaiUnlimited. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQaOjYG3w8g*

I Tried Every illegal Skill!, Ayush Bhandari. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6svV07oLvew*

I Secretly Lived In MrBeast's Theme Park, Airrack. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r69YQ_8rPWg*

ZeltraX vs Aashi is Live | Fight against Girl Streamers 🔥| Reaction @ThorGaming77, Thor Is Live. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi0uuR6M56U*

MOST EXPENSIVE CAR IN THE WORLD (850 CRORES), Mytho. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrnANgnPAZQ*

Another GRWM! 💅💄, TheRebel-Kid. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/ViKAEjkRBlU*

GRWM for School 📚💄, PrarishDevyal. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Q_-82k4jtzw*

What if a Polar Bear Attacks You? | How to Survive Bear Attack? | Deadliest Animals | Dr Binocs Show, Peekaboo Kidz. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vizcybwj_j0*

The Real Reason We Should Revive Extinct Animals, Cleo Abram. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iX6w1P60m8M*

Satisfying Slime ASMR | Relaxing Slime Videos Compilation No Talking No Music No Voiceover, Talisa Tossell. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcPTDc9vHkE*

Satisfying Slime ASMR | Relaxing Slime Videos 248, SatisfyingASMR738. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Rf-ls3znRkY*

Which Dream Bed Would You Choose? 🛏️✨ Ultimate Oddly Satisfying AI ASMR, Impossible Ais. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DIFQm4MXYI*

Kesariya - Brahmāstra | Arijit Singh | Kesariya Tera Ishq Hai | Doraemon Version | Nobita Shizuka, BALA COMEDY. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLDFbuGhFVU*

Saiyaara Title Song | Ahaan Panday, Aneet Padda | Tanishk Bagchi, Faheem A, Arslan N | Irshad Kamil, YRF. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSJa1UytM8w*

|| Saiyaara || 💜 BTS 💜 hindi song video 💜💜💜, BTS_love_💜💜. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qh2Y7kVeDkY*

Uncharted: The Lost Legacy In Telugu (Part 1) 💖 - Munna Bhai Gaming, Munna bhai gaming. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7O8-1cx19ZM*

Our First Pottery Try! 🏺 Village Vibes & Full Fun with Nirav🔥, Imsubu Official. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxABhaRl2XY*

They Call Him OG - Firestorm Lyric Video | Pawan Kalyan | Sujeeth | Thaman S | DVV Danayya, Sony Music South. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbXOsVByKmk*

Kantara Chapter 1 Trailer - Kannada | Rishab Shetty | Rukmini | Vijay Kiragandur | Hombale Films, Hombale Films. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMQUFhWm8C0*

Lokah Chapter 1: Chandra | Official Trailer | Kalyani | Naslen | Dominic Arun | Nimish Ravi, Dulquer Salmaan. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64XHtNWTB5o*

Chapter 5

Generation Alpha, YourStudio. Accessed at: *https://weareyourstudio.com/media/emchtg45/240215_gen_alpha_report-compressed.pdf*

Inside the Mind of Generation Alpha, Retail TouchPoints. Accessed at: *https://d5544430a84c15063ea9-24a29c251add4cb0f3d45e39c18c202f.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/RTP_RT404_SR_Inside-the-Mind-of-Gen-Alpha_January-2024_Final.pdf*

HMD's X1 Fusion should be your child's first smartphone – with one caveat, Adam Smith, Tech Advisor. Accessed at: *https://www.techadvisor.com/article/2816605/hmds-x1-fusion-xplora-children-smartphones.html*

Easyfone Star: The Best Kid's Safety Phone For Your Child? | Cell Guru, NDTV. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbbcBm4BuBc*

Marketing to Gen Alpha, a generation raised by AI, Shamita Islur, Social Samosa. Accessed at: *https://www.socialsamosa.com/experts-speak/marketing-to-gen-alpha-generation-raised-by-ai-10654475*

News Flash: Generation Alpha Is Starting To Date And It's Not Happening The Way You Think, Cathy Hackl, Forbes. Accessed at: *https://www.forbes.com/sites/cathyhackl/2025/03/31/news-flash-generation-alpha-is-starting-to-date-and-its-not-happening-the-way-you-think/*

'I want him to be prepared': why parents are teaching their Gen Alpha kids to use AI, Aaron Mok, The Guardian. Accessed at: *https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/mar/01/parents-children-artificial-intelligence*

Children's Media Lives 2025, Ofcom. Accessed at: *https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/children/childrens-media-lives-2025/childrens-media-lives-2025-summary-report.pdf?v=396299*

Gen Alpha has surpassed $100 billion in spending power from side hustles and bankrolling parents—and Roblox and Nike are among the big winners, Sasha Rogelberg, Fortune. Accessed at: *https://fortune.com/2025/08/08/gen-alpha-100-billion-spending-power-nike-roblox/*

Gen Alpha Is Rewriting the Holiday Shopping Playbook, Maura Brannigan, Vogue Business. Accessed at: *https://www.vogue.com/article/gen-alpha-is-rewriting-the-holiday-shopping-playbook*

Gen Alpha are ready to spend – and they want to be treated like adults, Kate Lindsay, BBC. Accessed at: *https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20240226-gen-alpha-spending-power-shopping-trends*

Gen Alpha has greater say in household shopping, Shuchi Bansal, Hindustan Times. Accessed at: *https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/gen-alpha-has-*

greater-say-in-household-shopping-101717096170700.html#google_vignette

Children's Day: Generation Alpha leads family dynamics: Can marketers keep up?, Soumya Gawri, Exchange4Media. Accessed at: *https://www.exchange4media.com/ marketing-news/gen-alpha-leading-family-dynamics-can-marketers-keep-up-138691. html*

Gen Alpha calls the shots, Avantika Bhuyan, mint. Accessed at: *https://www.livemint.com/ mint-lounge/ideas/gen-alpha-calls-the-shots-111668146405662.html*

Chapter 6

McDonald's Happy Meal for Kids | McDonald's Happy Readers - McDonald's India, McDonald's India. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GPhgWfP_6g*

Kinder Joy - Harry Potter 6", Kinder ANZ. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch? v=zH2ElMh6HHA*

Kinder Schoko Bons Crispy welcomes Karisma Kapoor - 20 sec, Kinder India. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGMFgLlFmOs*

Nestlé MILO® India #Khudse Campaign, Nestlé India. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=SBUPu_pLGFc*

Share The Love, Share The Mango! | Hindi, Rasna International. Accessed at: *https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=8okuAlHQJK8*

Kelloggs Chocos Space Edition TVC, kelloggchocos. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=vd_HlMpSuNs*

Pepsi Yeh Dil Maange More is back | Ranveer Singh, pepsiindia. Accessed at: *https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=23aWGQH133U*

PEPSI Rise Up Baby X Ranveer Singh, pepsiindia. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=YMvhq34exO0*

250 ml Sting®. Fully Electric! | TVC, Sting Energy Drink India. Accessed at: *https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=vPRUwiym2FU*

Win a chance to take off to space!, Oreo India. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=F1HCrtD3TEs*

boAt | Nirvana Ion ANC Wireless Earbuds | Crystal Bionic Sound, boAt. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqStIveTwwo*

boAt x Veer Pahariya, boAt. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fv3fIgzFCPE*

Apple AirPods Bounce, ReelChicago Reel360. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=vGqOFu65KHY*

Own Your Beauty Power | Sephora SEA, Sephora Asia. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=Nyccy2bQg_o*

#AllThatYouLove with Janhvi Kapoor | Nykaa TVC | Extended Cut, Nykaa. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xlBM1L4mEM*

Apple Intelligence | Clean Up Photos: Flex | iPhone 16, Apple. Accessed at: *https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=iL88A5F9V3k*

Bournvita - Get The Message, Cadbury Bournvita. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=EkCtQT2yfig*

How Feastables Chocolate is Made, Mrbeast 2. Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AT-ElP8uSTE*

Hailey Bieber's Beauty Brand Rhode Plots Global Expansion, Vogue Business. Accessed at: *https://www.vogue.com/article/hailey-bieber-beauty-brand-rhode-plots-global-expansion*

Brands play the game! Squid Game Season 2 inspires strategic collaborations, Financial Express BrandWagon. Accessed at: *https://www.financialexpress.com/business/brandwagon-brands-play-the-game-squid-game-season-2-inspires-strategic-collaborations-3690733/*

Chapter 7

SUPER CAR SELECTION | Mummy ka Anniversary Gift | Aayu and Pihu Show, Aayu and Pihu Show, Accessed at: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_NL-zfimg0*

Squid Game Knockoffs Are Blowing Up on Roblox, Matt Kim, IGN. Accessed at: *https://in.ign.com/roblox/167583/news/squid-game-knockoffs-are-blowing-up-on-roblox*

Scratch Cat - Fictional Characters in Coding, Wing Ngan, MIT, Scratch Cat. Accessed at: *https://characters.fandom.com/wiki/Scratch_Cat#:~:text=The%20Scratch%20Cat%20is%20the,male%20pronouns%20for%20Scratch%20Cat.*

Google's Chrome Dino, Dino Game, Wikipedia. Accessed at: *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinosaur_Game#:~:text=The%20Dinosaur%20Game%20(also%20known,and%20Edward%20Jung%20in%202014.*

Acknowledgements

About

Established in 1985, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is the self-regulatory body of the Indian advertising industry. ASCI addresses concerns related to misleading or dishonest advertising, indecent or offensive content, harmful advertisements, and advertising that is unfair in competition.

ASCI examines advertisements across all media and formats, including television, print, digital, outdoor, radio, point of sale, and claims made on packaging. It works with a range of stakeholders in the interest of consumer protection. ASCI's Code forms part of the Advertising Code under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1994, providing a legal backstop to the self-regulatory framework.

The ASCI Academy is the capacity-building and thought-leadership arm of ASCI, focused on advancing responsible and progressive advertising practices. The academy works with advertisers, agencies, academic institutions, and consumers to strengthen the preventive aspects of advertising self-regulation.

The academy focuses on training and education, e-Learning, advisory services, and thought leadership, with an emphasis on ethical and responsible advertising. ASCI Academy undertakes research and publishes reports and white papers on emerging topics and evolving narratives in advertising, with a focus on consumer protection

To know more, visit: www.ascionline.in/academy/

Futurebrands Consulting, a part of the Think9 group, is one of India's leading brand strategy and consumer insight consultancies. It has closely watched and mapped cultural change in India for close to two decades. As experts in immersive ethnography, Futurebrands has consistently advised leading brands on evolving their narratives to become more meaningful in the lives of their consumers.

Since 2007 they have been building themselves as cultural analysts who can build out emerging markets and audiences with a keen eye that appreciates nuance, and larger Indian truths - and it is this, that gives them a head start in their effort to analyse Generation Alpha, and how advertisers should build responsibly for them in the future.

Contributors -
Team Futurebrands

Sunil Vashishth is Sr. V P - Brand Strategy, Futurebrands. Sunil operates at the intersection of culture, myths & brands. He led the Gen Alpha study through two intersecting lenses: Cultural inquiry and everyday witnessing, as a father to a Gen Alpha son, who coined the report's title, 'What the Sigma'. This dual vantage point sharpened his perspective, adding depth to how he envisioned the project.
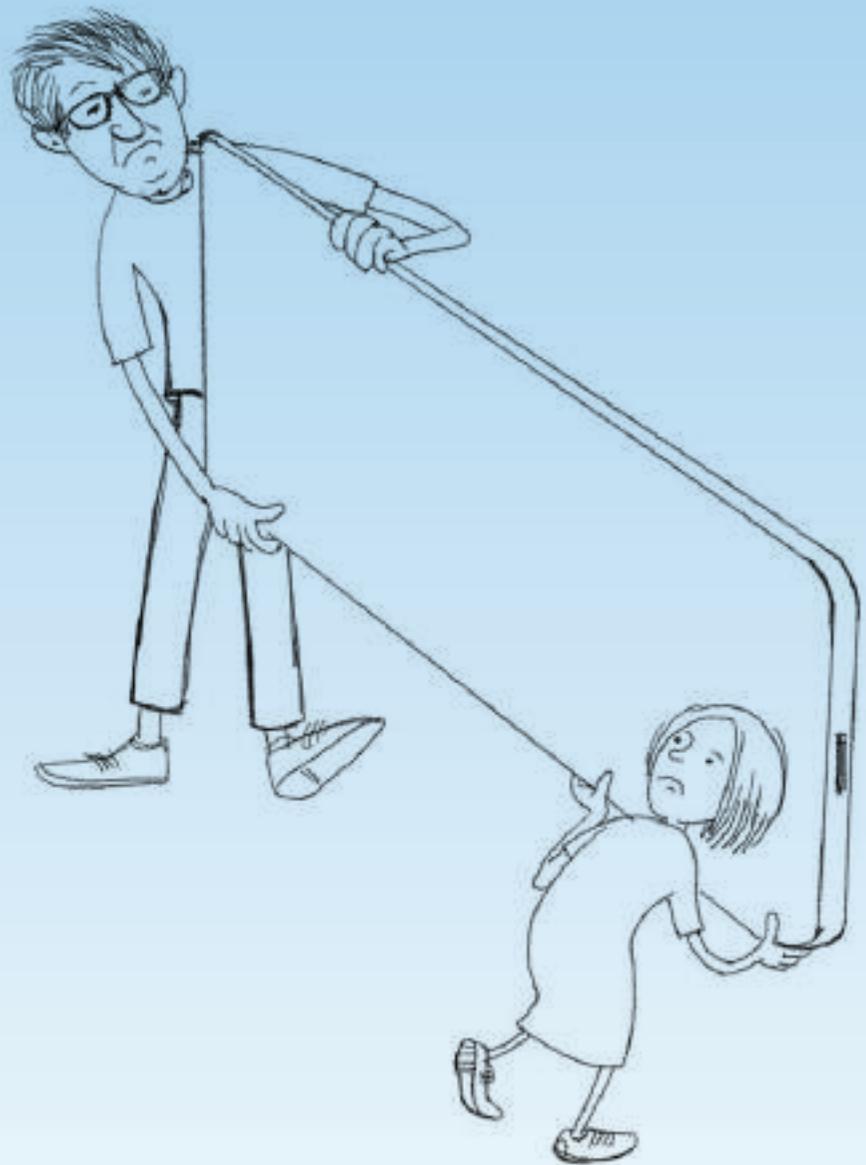
Tarini Bandhu is Sr. Director - Brand Strategy, Futurebrands. She enjoys translating cultural challenges into meaningful businesses. She was core to shaping the Gen Alpha report, motivated by the challenge of understanding the generation on its own terms rather than through inherited marketing frameworks. Spending time with the children, listening to how they see the world and noticing what genuinely sets them apart made the process feel fulfilling and humbling.

Nainika Chauhan is a brand strategy consultant based in Delhi, specialising in applied semiotics. She has contributed to the ASCI Gender NXT report and ASCI's Wielding Influence & Nurturing Trust report on influencer marketing. Drawn to Gen Alpha with the quiet hope of one day playing Roblox as effortlessly as the kids do. Her contribution to What the Sigma report explores contemporary childhood as a radically new cultural generation fluent in the language technology.

Shailin Goel is a Sr. Strategist with Futurebrands Consulting. He brings a business-first lens to the study of human behaviour and category dynamics. For the Gen Alpha study, Shailin intentionally suspended his business lens, leaning instead into his naturally unselfconscious presence. This approach made him an insider, earning access to Gen alpha worlds: the content they consumed, and what mattered to them.

Arjun Keshav is a Mumbai-based brand strategist whose work sits at the intersection of culture, behaviour, and brands. For the Gen Alpha report, he explored children's media ecosystems, mapping the contentscape they inhabit today. His focus went beyond cataloguing content, to uncovering the deeper logic of children's consumption - how, why, and when media captures their attention, and what that reveals about a generation growing up inside algorithms.

Notes