

DIGITALISING CHILD'S PLAY POST-PANDEMIC: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INDIAN MARKETPLACE

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Abstract

Pandemic is expected to be a defining event for the next generation because the age at which we are exposed to a transformational event affects how deeply it will be ingrained in brains. The pandemic has already impacted today's youngsters. Children are becoming prominent online influencers and vloggers who market, review and sell companies and items to their fans worldwide. Marketers have been tapping them on the 8-inch screen for the last year. According to McCrindle's research, 84 per cent of respondents believe COVID-19 will significantly impact Generation Alpha. Still, the good news is that 78 per cent feel COVID will make their Generation Alpha children more resilient in the future. The popularity of online games, educational applications, and websites has risen. Most millennial parents admit that their alpha children influence their latest purchases. Children frequently desire "conversations" with artificial intelligence-driven devices like Siri or Alexa. Children have always had "imaginary pals," so it's not unreasonable to expect them to become "friends" with A.I.

Because technology has been a part of this generation's existence since infancy, marketers and advertisers have both an opportunity and a difficulty. Advertisers and marketers will find Generation Alpha an easy target because technology can easily reach them. This paper will discuss generation alpha's features and insights and how marketers may utilise them to develop marketing strategies that target the untapped market. This paper will also highlight the relationship of Generation Alpha with Millennial Parents.

Keywords: Digitalisation, Generation Alpha, Pandemic, Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Strategies, Consumerism.

Introduction

Sociologist Mark Mc Crindle coined the term 'Generation Alpha', the generation born between 2011 and 2025. By 2025, its population worldwide will reach up to two billion. To begin with, Generation Alpha has grown up with A.I., mobile gadgets, social media, and robots as a part of their daily life. So far, they are the most technological generation. Gen Alpha, by far, is the most advantageous in terms of resources readily available at disposal in history. As a result, they spend heavily on items that are non-essential than the previous generation. As a result, they will prove to be the most knowledgeable population worldwide, with information just a click away.

Technology

Technology is a constant change in Gen Alpha. Looking at the pace at which technology is gathering space in Gen Alpha's life, A.I. and robots will be fully incorporated into everyday life by 2025. This technology will change and improve the standard of living forever. For advertisers and marketers, Gen Alpha will be a tech-savvy audience with sound knowledge about every product.

Similarly, Gen Alpha will also reject the outdated marketing methods liked by their parents. The level

of personalisation and customisation has found its way to engage them in a humanised way. COVID-19 has boosted the use of technology among the generation.

Education

Generation Alpha is anticipated to be the most educated in history. During the pandemic, COVID-19 Education was changed radically and ingrained digitally into the lives of Gen Alpha. Access to study material, lectures, and sessions were readily available 24X7. Generation Alpha will utilise these improved digital resources for customised learning. Their opinions on education, though, will diverge. The focus will be more on skills than formal degrees. Aside from these developments, an increase in the customisation of educational content. Long lectures and seminars are likely to only survive in a generation used to instant access to knowledge. Instead, tutorials will be used by them, which will help Gen Alpha's technical proficiency.

Social Media

The increasing growth in young people seeking to create social media accounts and profiles today is evidence of the presence of social media in our lives. Due to the expansion of social media e-commerce, social media has become one of the essential marketing platforms available today. According to studies, today's 16- to 24-year-olds conduct more research on the internet and social media networks before purchasing than their parents. Social media will be integral to Gen Alpha's lives as they grow up. Generation Alpha already uses social media in a different way than their parents. Facebook and Twitter will need to be updated. Instagram and TikTok will be the most popular media since they keep up with the latest technology and trends prevalent among this emerging generation.

Healthcare

Like their millennial parents, Gen Alpha will follow the same path of researching treatments, hospitals, and medications online. COVID-19 has prompted everyone to look into self-care. Children today know much more about illnesses than their parents did when they were their age. They are more mindful of healthy lives and engage in physical activities to improve bodily strength. The younger generation is open, conscious of the connection between mental health and overall well-being, and courageous to seek treatment.

Media Literacy

Generation Alpha will be the most media-literate generation of all time. They can distinguish between reality and fiction and spot fake news and conspiracies on social media. This indicates that traditional marketing may fail to persuade this well-informed population. Podcasts have replaced radios, OTT platforms have replaced T.V.s, and online games have replaced classic playtime. This generation is rushed and wants to save time on things. Personalisation in marketing will also gain popularity. Gen Alpha will only be satisfied with pushing a sale. Marketers have to find out newer ways to engage them.

Family

Because of COVID-19 Lockdown, this Generation was compelled to remain at home. This has had a significant impact on the younger generation. Working from home provided a benefit in that children could spend meaningful time with their parents. This one-of-a-kind family time is a positive result of

COVID-19 and may indicate a future shift in some families' priorities and time allocation. Gen Alpha assists parents in making purchasing selections for the family. They readily provide advice on topics that are not linked to them. They have grown environmentally sensitive and have set an excellent example for their parents.

Marketing to Gen Alpha

It is critical to investigate current trends in how products and services are designed and promoted to meet the demands of this generation. Here are a few marketing examples that demonstrate the need to discover innovative techniques to capture the interest of generation alpha.

Hamleys Get Creative

Following the preceding arguments, it is evident that this generation is different on so many levels that traditional marketing tactics will negatively influence their thinking. In May, Hamleys India launched a month-long Get Creative campaign online, in which parents were urged to register their children for this class online, so their children to learn crafts while having fun. They are attempting to interest youngsters in what the brand offers in this manner. Anchors from Hamleys hosted the event, creating a fun and lively setting for the youngsters to learn different crafts on different days. **(Refer Figure 1)**

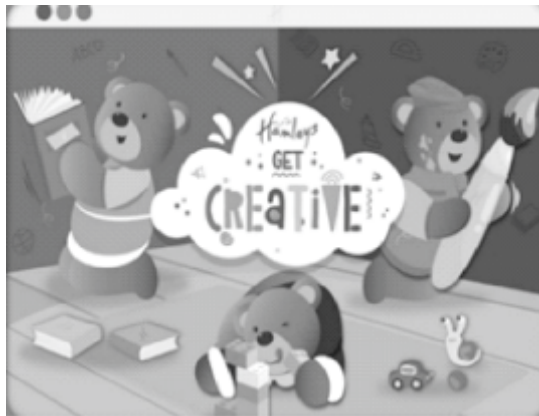


Figure-1: Hamleys Creative

Source: <https://allevents.in/online/hamleys-get-creative/80007854873759>, accessed on December, 2022.

Hamleys Play

Hamleys India built the world's first indoor play arena, Hamleys Play, in Mumbai and Gurgaon. The arena has cutting-edge technology-enabled play zones where children can have endless fun and entertainment. The concept plainly states that they wish to bring outside play indoors. Slides, trampolines, wall climbing, and fun zones are available at Hamleys Play. **(Refer Figure 2)**



Figure-2: Children Playing at Hamleys Play
Source: shorturl.at/dfkT9 accessed on December 2022.

Cadbury Gems

Another recent example was virtually enjoying Cadbury Gems' Big Birthday celebration. They have partnered with the cartoon character Chota Bheem and the most popular Indian Kids Vloggers on YouTube with the channel name: Aayu and Pihu Show, which has over 14.5 million followers. The brand desired to hold a more colourful and entertaining virtual birthday celebration. They used technology to get influencers to invite their fans to the celebration. The event highlighted the product's new features. The turnout was so large that it was dubbed the "largest virtual birthday celebration ever." (Refer Figure 3)



Figure-3 Digital Creative Invite

Source: <https://indiantelevision.com/mam/marketing/mam/cadbury-gems-brings-in-kids-from-across-the-nation-to-celebrate-its-birthday-210826>, accessed on December, 2022.

Yellow Classes App

Yellow Classes is another free online platform for children ages 12 to study painting, crafts, and languages. They request parents tag their children's works on social media and other micro-blogging sites. In turn, Yellow Classes feature the stories of parents on their social media handles to display consumer feedback. (Refer Figure 4)



Figure-4: Poster of Yellow Classes

Source: <https://www.gleefulblogger.com/10-extracurricular-activities-for-kids/> accessed on December, 2022.

KidZania

KidZania is another example of how to take experiential learning to the next level. KidZania's concept is to provide the most significant learning experience possible through role-playing within a kid-sized indoor scaled city with its economy. Today's children want to learn through creating, discovering, and collaborating. Therefore, they provide realistic role-playing for over 100 different job possibilities. This is one of the world's most innovative family entertainment concepts today. Each activity is designed to empower children, giving them the confidence to do their best and inspire them to become global citizens. (Refer Figure 5)

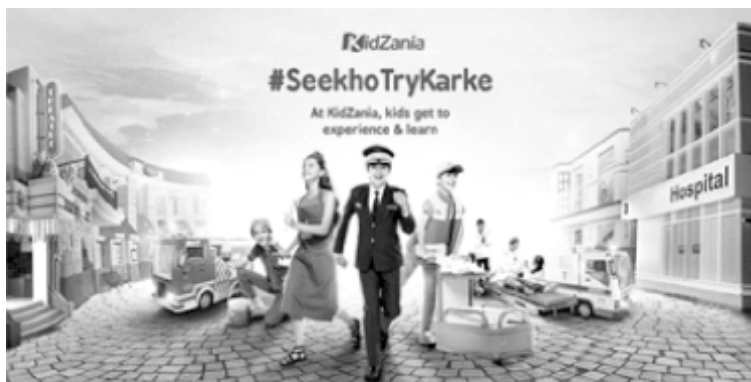


Figure-5: Poster Displaying Role-play Opportunities at KidZania.

Source: <https://in.bookmyshow.com/events/kidzania-tickets/ET00019735>, accessed on December, 2022.

Byju's Early Learning App

Byju's, India's top and most popular education app, has a market capitalisation of \$13 billion and is the most popular app among students of all ages. With its one-of-a-kind approach to providing original material through lush animation, interactive simulations, and creative teaching pedagogy, it

has raised its revenue to 28 billion in F.Y. 2020, up from 2.5 billion in F.Y. 2017. It demonstrates the significance of technology to the alpha generation. To engage the Alpha generation, Byjus has collaborated with Disney to employ its animated characters to teach math, science and English to children aged 6 to 8. (Refer Figure 6)

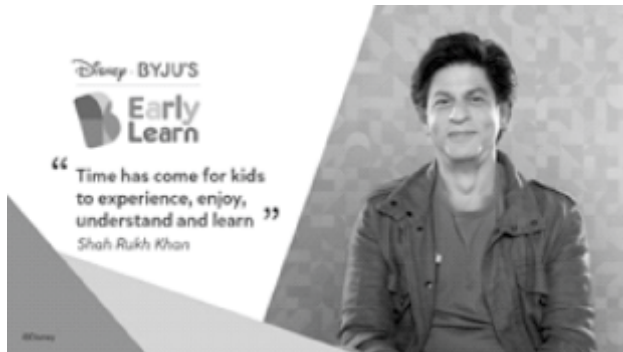


Figure-6: Brand Ambassador SRK in Digital Poster

Source: Byju's YouTube Channel accessed on December, 2022.

India Kids Summit

Another forum that organises annual conferences around the theme Kid Economy is India Kids Summit. Speakers, creators, marketers, and influencers from different industries whose primary consumers are today's children gather under one roof to address the current challenges of the kid's economy. This year's summit agenda included Screentime for Kids: Pros and Cons, Kids Entertainment: Then, Now, and Future, and Monitor What They Watch: Internet Safety for Kids, Innovative Marketing Campaigns for Kids: The Right Content, Kids Entertainment, and OTT: The Right Content Formula, Brands, and Children's Content: Evolving Trends They invite young YouTube sensations and vloggers to connect with them. This mainly signifies that Kids' Entertainment's rise in India is on Boom and here to stay for a long time. (Refer Figure 7)



Figure-7: Digital Poster of the Event

Source: <https://www.indiakidssummit.com/> accessed on December, 2022.

Vox Box App

VoxBox is an additional internet-based programme that gives children a virtual playground for their imaginations. This software enables youngsters under 13 to record stories based on selected themes. Children can create narrative narratives using their dreams. According to the website, this is a secure and safe atmosphere for youngsters to enjoy themselves since their names are not revealed, enough parental supervision is provided, location monitoring is not performed, etc. The software also promises to adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule (COPPA), based on U.S. enforcement rules designed to protect citizens. **(Refer Figure 8)**



Figure- 8: Logo of VOXBOX

Source: <https://voxbox.club/> accessed on December, 2022.

Code

Code.org is a non-profit organisation devoted to increasing school-based access to computer science. Their aim is for every kid in every school to be able to learn computer science as part of their curriculum. This website is supported by major technology companies such as Microsoft, Google, Facebook, and the Infosys Foundation. Children of all ages can enrol in coding-related courses that are available online. In addition, the unique method of utilising cartoons to teach the fundamentals of coding language allows little children to comprehend the ideas more quickly. **(Refer Figure 9)**

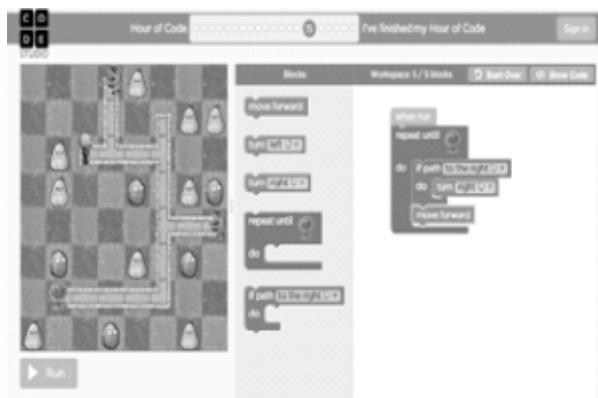


Figure-9: User Interface of CODE

Source: <https://code.org/> accessed on December, 2022.

YouTube Kids

YouTube Kids is another example of a website designed for young children. This page complies with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), which is based on U.S. enforcement rules intended to protect citizens. It delivers ad-supported T.V. shows, music, instructive videos, and user-generated content for preschoolers through tweens. In addition, it has parental control features that allow parents to manage content based on age rating, block movies or channels, and even set their passcodes. **(Refer Figure 10)**



Figure-10: Kid with Balloons in front of YouTube Kids Banner

Source: <https://www.techspot.com/news/80560-youtube-kids-generates-fraction-traffic-main-site.html>
accessed on December, 2022.

Instagram Kids

Facebook stated in March 2021 that they are developing a kid's version of their successful photo and video-sharing platform, Instagram. Instagram currently prohibits children under the age of 13 from using the platform. According to the officials, many children today want to use Instagram independently. However, Instagram was quickly chastised by many governments, parents, and social groups for offering such a forum for such young children. They are fragile at this age and will not grasp the consequences. So, in the face of such criticism, administrators shut down Instagram Kids on September 27, 2021. **(Refer Figure 11)**



Figure-11: Poster Displayed on the site.

Source: <http://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/pausing-instagram-kids>, accessed on
December, 2022.

Conclusion

From the framework described above, it is apparent that Generation Alpha's route will be entirely digital and experiential. According to an Ofcom analysis, children under ten now own a smartphone. Most child users choose to watch video-on-demand rather than live television broadcasts. Most youngsters under ten are familiar with at least one social networking platform. TikTok and Twitch have grown in popularity among tweens. During the epidemic, online involvement and participation increased. Children are aware of vloggers in their age group and follow the stuff they provide. They understand how to work with search engines.

Children have become environmentalists, concerned about the items they consume being eco-friendly and sustainable. In comparison to prior years, youngsters have begun to utilise social media to promote issues by sharing and commenting. Even during the epidemic, youngsters used social media to aid others needing food, vaccines, and medical care. However, it was also observed that youngsters experience the same amount of pressure online as they do in real life. Keeping up with pals by publishing images and videos of their everyday routines and matching the same status as their peers unnecessarily places stress on young brains.

In conclusion, generation alpha's attention span has decreased. They are interested in everything innovative and beyond the norm of the league. They absolutely reject conventional learning and comprehension methods. Even when playing, they desire to create and innovate. Therefore, marketers must pay attention to how successful businesses entice consumers and discover methods to be a part of their lives, whether online or offline.

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