

UNDERSTANDING GENERATION ALPHA

WHAT THE PARENTS HAVE TO SAY



HOTWIRE
THE GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY



Let's be honest – there's more new technology out there today than most of us have a hope of keeping up with. And that's only thinking about what adults are asked to deal with. If you have kids, then good luck to you.

From Tik Tok (formerly Musical.ly) and YouTube through to Snapchat and Instagram, parents aren't just trying to understand the tech and apps they use on a daily basis, but also a whole new digital world frequented by their children.

So it's no surprise that parents across the world worry they're not able to keep up with their children. While the last couple of generations have been described as digital natives, it's Generation Alpha – children born after 2010 – who best lay claim to that title. From toddlers able to swipe up on

an iPhone to dismiss an incoming text that has gotten in the way of watching Peppa Pig, to seven-year-olds making their own movie trailers and music videos, these kids are streets ahead of previous generations in terms of inherent tech know-how.

And their parents are well aware of this – on average they believe that by the time their children are eight, they'll already outstrip them when it comes to their ability to use new tech – whether that's electronic devices or social platforms.

THE SHIFTING **BALANCE OF POWER**



The tables really are turning now. If an eight-year-old has a better overall grasp of technology than their parents, then does it not naturally mean they have more of the power too? The research certainly seems to support this, with parents revealing they aren't just considering how children will use the devices they're purchasing, but even asking their opinion before putting any money down.

Two thirds (65%) of parents said the habits and needs of their children influenced their last purchase, a number which is broadly consistent across every European market, but increased to 81% in the US, which is a remarkable showcase of pester power. And one in four (27%) revealed they asked their kids' opinions before buying a new TV, laptop, tablet or phone, rising to 38% for British parents.

Is this the new normal? Or will parents look for ways to increase their own tech skills and knowledge, both to keep pace with their children and to ensure the products they buy really are child friendly and secure?

DON'T SHOUT QUITE YET

[Our first study](#) explored how voice and touch would become the natural input systems across devices. And while touch is firmly established, our latest research reveals that voice has a way to go before it becomes the control scheme of choice for Generation Alpha.

Partly this is due to a lack of penetration – just [one in five US](#)

[households](#) currently have voice speakers. But, even in households where voice speakers are more established, parents believe it's them, not their kids who are most likely to use them.

Over half said they were the family member most likely to talk to a device, although one in five (21%) British parents said it was

their children. Even though devices like Amazon Echo and Google Home capture the imagination of tech junkies like us, it will be a while before they become a main interface to rival the screen in the family home. Instead, the focus for kids and parents remains on apps.

PLAYING CATCH UP

We've all been there – the awkward moment when you ask a younger relative if you can follow them on Snapchat. And we know the reaction – they recoil in horror.

But, it's something parents are increasingly doing – joining new social networks and apps to help them understand how their children are using them.

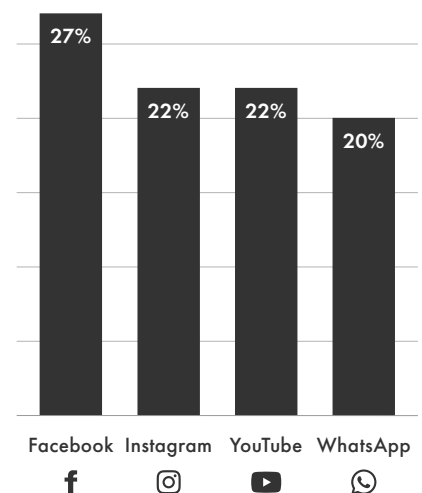
But, the platforms they are joining aren't necessarily the apps you'd expect.

More than a quarter (27%) of parents polled have downloaded or re-downloaded Facebook in the last 12 months, because their child had it, or mentioned it, and they wanted to see how it worked (and yes, we were a little surprised too at how many of them weren't using Facebook on their phone already).

This was closely followed by:

- Instagram (22%)
- YouTube (22%)
- WhatsApp (20%)

APPS DOWNLOADED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS BY PARENTS



Again, you'd assume this is what most adults would download for themselves. But where are the parents joining Tik Tok, Snapchat or Tumblr? We hear from influencers and commentators that children are shunning the major networks for these platforms, but parents don't seem to be monitoring them in the way they are monitoring the more traditional social media platforms. Hardly a day goes by that the media aren't covering horror stories about online trolling and cyber bullying. So why are parents not flocking to these social platforms to either monitor and protect their children or educate and prepare themselves for when their kids do inevitably join them?

Perhaps this is because children aren't sharing the apps they're really using, instead choosing to tell their parents they're using the apps grown-ups use to help retain control over the digital version of themselves they're sharing with their family.

Unsurprisingly, younger parents are more likely to get an app to see how it works, with 62% of 20-25 year olds downloading these apps, compared to 37% of 51+ year olds.

More surprising is the divide between the US and the rest of the world – over 60% of American parents have followed their children onto a social network,

compared to 49% of the rest of the world, and even less in the UK (35%). Whilst Snapchat is given short shrift by parents in other countries, American mums and dads are well aware of its influence, with 36% admitting to downloading it in the last year because their kids are on it or talking about it.

What this suggests is the trend towards "helicopter parenting" and getting heavily involved in children's education is now crossing over into their social lives in the US too. How long before the rest of the world follows suit?

WHO ARE KIDS LISTENING TO?

The days of a TV ad being able to single-handedly empty shelves of the hottest Christmas gift are over. It's their friends who now have the biggest impact on kids' wants and desires when it comes to new products, with more than one in three (36%) parents saying their children are most influenced by their friends' possessions and behaviours.

Even though the dominance of TV is in decline, advertising hasn't quite given up the ghost yet – 22%

of parents say their kids are most influenced by adverts and we'd bet good money on a large chunk of this influence coming from pre-roll content on YouTube.

Why? Because a further 14% of parents say their kids are most influenced by online influencers like vloggers – and if your brand can't afford the eye watering sums charged by ToysandMe, Zoella and her ilk, then advertising on the platform they all hang out on is the obvious next step.

36%

of children are influenced by their friends' possessions and behaviours

22%

of children are influenced by advertisements

14%

of children are influenced by online influencers

KID INFLUENCERS TO WATCH



ToysandMe

9.2M Subscribers

Tiana is from Nottingham in the UK. She is 11 and has been filming YouTube videos since she was seven with her dad. She reviews toys and activities and gives them to charity after or to her fans. She has another site called Tiana and a link to where fans can buy her merchandise.



Hailey's Magical Playhouse

1.4M Subscribers

American Hailey stars in videos filmed by her dad. She reviews toys that have been sent in, donating them to needy children after filming.



EthanGamerTV

2M Subscribers

Worth an estimated £1M, Brit Ethan plays and reviews video games – mainly Roblox and Minecraft. He has another channel on which he unboxes online orders.



Ryan ToysReview

15M Subscribers

Ryan is from Texas and has been reviewing toys online since he was four, while his aunt and parents did the filming. The number of viewers translates to about \$1M in ad revenue.



JacyandKacy

2.9M Subscribers

A sister and best friend duo from Florida started making kid-friendly DIY craft videos 2014 and have since accumulated over 760M views.



McClure Twins Family

1M Subscribers

In 2016 these twins went viral when their parents posted a video titled "Twins Realize They Look The Same" and this family hasn't looked back since.



Kitties Mama

2.3M Subscribers

Another friend group out of Florida that has amassed over a billion views in 10 years.



FamilyFunPack

8M Subscribers

A family of six out of California that has "fun with the family, every day" and 10B YouTube views.



EvanTubeHD

5.6M Subscribers

This experiment-focused channel encourages kids to tap into their curiosity and realise learning can be fun.



GamerGirl

2M Subscribers

Karina Calor aka GamerGirl is just 11 years-old, but has already partnered with some of the top video game developers like Roblox and Minecraft.



TAKING TECH TOO FAR?

In our first study into how Generation Alpha use technology, we referenced [a report on children's media use](#) in 2016 by Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator, which told us that around 40% of kids aged between 5-15 own a smartphone or tablet.

Our second study shows that one in four (26%) parents believe their kids value these phones and tablets more than any other possession

or activity, from traditional toys to holidays and even days out with their friends and family. An alarming statistic and one which causes these parents some concern.

Over 70% believe the main negative effect of technology on their children is the amount of time they spend staring at screens.

And, they're still believers in the power of the great outdoors – 39%

think tech is limiting the amount of fresh air children get, while a further 48% worry it's having a negative impact on the amount of exercise children are doing. Brands like Fitbit are working hard to challenge this – launching bespoke fitness trackers for kids. But they'll need to do a lot more to convince parents that tech and exercise can be complementary and aren't opposing forces fighting for their children's attention.

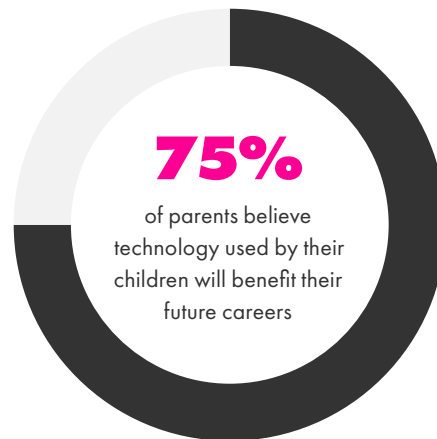
TECH TODAY AS A **PRECURSOR TO SUCCESS TOMORROW**

However, what these parents also recognised was that their kids' current relationships with all things tech today will help them when they come of age tomorrow. Roughly 75% of parents believe the technology their kids use now will be a benefit in their future careers.

Why? Parents believe technology is helping them develop soft skills which will form a crucial part of succeeding in the workplace tomorrow – everything from quick thinking (50%) and problem solving (46%) through to enhancing their hand-eye coordination (43%).

Ironically it's because of technology that these skills are so important today. The growth of smartphones and tablets means almost everyone has a high-powered computer within arm's reach at any time. So we no longer need to remember facts, dates, numbers or places and can focus our brain on more intellectually demanding activities. Even now in a lot of primary / elementary schools, there's less emphasis on memorising times tables to understand multiplication, and more focus on understanding the problem itself.

A [July 2017 report by PwC](#) researchers estimates that 38% of US jobs could be automated by the early 2030s, with sectors including transportation, manufacturing and

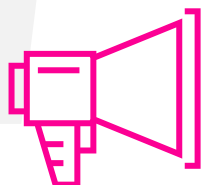


retail at the highest risk. As employment becomes more widely disrupted by automation – from driverless cars and the internet-of-things to AI robots – the human brain won't be needed for traditional tasks so those softer skills like problem solving and quick thinking will start to become even more important. And those that have honed these skills since childhood? Well they become part of a class of super specialists who everyone wants to work with.

Parents across the globe are waking up to realise that their children's tech usage today is a real precursor to them getting good jobs tomorrow. Whilst screen time shouldn't overshadow kids getting the right of amount of exercise and playing outdoors, it can no longer be seen as a cheap way to entertain the kids, but as a necessary tool to helping build a brighter future.

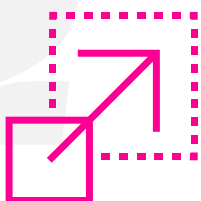
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BRANDS?

1



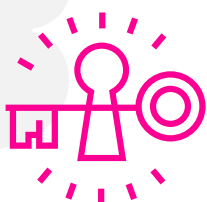
Whether you agree with it or not, **kids now have a strong voice** when it comes to making purchases in the family home. So brands selling to families, or to adults in general, need to consider children when marketing their wares. What's in it for them? How will they use it? Why would they want it? And who is influencing them? Your audience may be a grown-up but it's the kids who are becoming the key decision makers.

2



Are the days of kiddie versions of apps or devices numbered? If eight-year-olds now have a better grasp of technology than their parents how long will they be satisfied using a pared-down device or app "made for kids?" Brands should be questioning whether they need to develop multiple versions of their product. And instead **focus on creating universal devices that everyone can use, but that come with scalable safety features.** And from a comms perspective, kids don't want dumbed down versions for their age brackets when they're already having to help their parents used the full-featured versions.

3



Parents worry about their kids having too much screen time, a lack of exercise and not getting enough fresh air. But they know that **tech helps their kids become better problem solvers and quicker thinkers.** Brands targeting family and home life can tap into these concerns and beliefs by developing campaigns that specifically talk to these themes. By doing so they will build a more meaningful dialogue with parents about what really matters to them, which in turn will help build emotional connections and long-term loyalty.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out by OnePoll on behalf of Hotwire in July 2018, with a sample size of 8,000 people with children aged between four and nine years-old across the following countries:

- UK
- USA
- Australia
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Spain
- The Netherlands

ABOUT HOTWIRE

Hotwire, the global communications agency, helps CMOs better engage and connect with their customers. From Sydney to San Francisco, we operate with a borderless mind-set across 22 locations including the UK, US, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Australia, together with co-branded partners Yellow Communications in the Netherlands and Belgium, Active DMC in the Middle East and VIANEWS in Brazil, as well as other affiliate partners. For more information, please visit www.hotwireglobal.com.

CONNECT WITH US

f [/hotwireglobal](#)
t [/hotwireglobal](#)

in [/company/hotwireglobal](#)
@ [/hotwireglobal](#)

