



THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSUMERS

It goes without saying that a lot of brands are highly focused on reaching millennials. And why not? They fall into the sweet spot demographic of 18-34, and they're just hitting the workforce, so they have lots of new disposable income.

But in our research for [FutureM](#), we found that what brands should really start planning towards isn't millennials—it's the generation that follows them. It's a generation that's thus far been unnamed, but is rapidly making their voices heard. Today's little kids and tweens having buying power to the tune of **\$1.2 trillion per year**.^[1]

What does that mean for brands and marketers? Well, it's impossible to truly predict exactly what this generation will do ten years from now, and what they'll buy. But as both marketers and parents, we did our research, talked to our kids, and then brought a panel of five preteens (ranging from ages 10-13) onstage on Wednesday to find out what they really think.

Here's what we observed, and predict:

THIS GENERATION IS MULTI-CULTURAL AND MULTI-INTEREST

Older cultural stereotypes are fading away—these kids wouldn't be surprised to see a vegan athlete who likes comic books. They're engaged in more ideas and interests than any generation before them.

Why? Because there's more opportunities available to these kids than any other generation. There's a ton of information at their disposal—digital has given them the tools to create anything they want. This generation is resourceful. They're makers. And because of that, brands need to be resourceful in the ways they try to reach them. We believe that these kids are going to make more and buy less, because they value that creation more than the actual purchase of a product. Brands will need to figure how to tap into that.

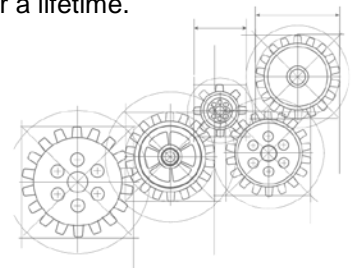
THIS GENERATION HAS MASSIVE INFLUENCE ON THE PURCHASING POWER OF ADULTS

That \$1.2 trillion figure isn't just about how much kids buy themselves—it also includes the degree to which they're influencing their parents' purchases. For instance, 60% of all tweens today have substantially influenced their parents' final decision on which car to buy.^[2] We've witnessed it in our own home: a big part of the reason we chose our new car was because the kids really liked the refrigerated center console, so that they could store their drinks and yogurt packs.

Our panel of tweens wasn't surprised. They admitted that it was pretty easy to persuade their parents into making purchases for them, be it a new case for their iPhone or a souvenir on vacation.

The fact is that we're treating our kids more like adults than ever before. In school and at home, they're exposed to more adult topics: discussions on poverty, war, the environment, and more. And because we're treating them more like adults, what we're seeing over time is that they're showing preference for adult things. When asked about their favorite brands, our panel replied H&M, Nike, and anything Avengers-related. They like the same brands that we do.

What does that mean for marketers? We believe that we'll see fewer multi-brands, and more mega-brands. We'll see less youth-specific offshoot companies, and that's okay. Because not only does this generation like the same brands that we do, but they're going to stick with them for a lifetime.





SOCIAL ALONE WON'T BE THE ANSWER

Social media plays a key role in reaching and engaging the next generation. But a social strategy doesn't equal social relevance—and relevance has a deadline. Brands today must be nimble and proactive, staying on top of what's trending in the news and what their audiences are talking about, so that they can stay relevant in the eyes of their consumers. That's the key to creating engagement.

We believe that this generation values experiences more than products. If your brand is playing a role in that experience, making it better, then they'll stick with it. But if not, they'll go elsewhere. Our panel of preteens bemoaned the fact that some of their friends post constantly on social networks when they don't actually have anything to say—they post updates just for the sake of posting. They also didn't like being bombarded with the same brand messages over and over again; to them, a video that's funny the first few times very quickly becomes stale and annoying. The takeaway is clear: brands need to focus on regularly providing fresh content that's relevant to their audiences, not content just for content's sake.

Here's some other interesting tidbits from our panel:

- Everyone on the panel either already had a cell phone or knew when they would be getting one. A couple of them cited cell phones as their main form of communication—but not via phone calls. It's all through text messages, Instagram, or other digital networks.
- When asked what social network they used the most, one girl specifically said Google+. She said that not a lot of her friends were on Facebook because that's where all their parents are—so they all use Google+ instead.
- We asked them if it's easy for them to hide what they do online from their parents, and a couple of them almost immediately replied yes—not reassuring for the parents in the audience. They said they either cleared their browser histories or just hid their phones.

^[1] Lindstrom, Martin. "Tween marketing – it's no longer child's play!" ANA Magazine

^[2] Lindstrom, Martin. "Tween marketing – it's no longer child's play!" ANA Magazine

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