



**Meet the new Head of  
the Household**

by



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## Why this topic? 2 main reasons:

(1) A lot of media chatter about Gen Z, who are portrayed as **more empowered & savvy** than any other generation because they are digital natives.

(2) We were hearing in our research projects more and more parents admitting to learning from and being influenced by their children more than ever before.

This got us thinking : has this led to some kind of power shift within the household?

And, if this generation is as savvy as portrayed, could this mean there is **a new Head of the Household** that marketers need to be aware of?



3 Parents' groups  
 4 Kids' friendship triads (11-14)  
 2 Family Encounters  
 25 Parent Vox Pops



## A multi-methodological approach

(1) Friendship triads with children aged 11-14 yrs. A deliberately narrow age span to keep the learning focused. Also we know that 11 yrs is a watershed age for children when lots of things start to change; school, friendships, phones!

(2) Group discussions with parents of those children to understand if the parents and kids viewpoints converged (or not!)

(3) Family Encounters for a 'collective' view from all household members

(4) 25 parent vox pops



“I am much weaker than my parents were with me”

(Richard, Dad of Katie 12)

Parents acknowledge there has been a **fundamental shift in parenting styles**. A marked difference in how parents treat their kids today Vs. previous generations of parents

Negotiation, rationalising, & empathising with children is the name of the game

So, today's parents are **actively engaging with their children** : conversing & socialising with them, encouraging them to have a voice and listening to what they say



66% of UK Mums are in some form of work

In stark contrast to previous years, where parents typically adopted the '**children should be seen and not heard**' mentality

**66% of UK Mums are in some form of work.**

The traditional scenario of Mum as homemaker, staying at home to look after the kids has shifted. Parents in this study were all working, often long hours & away from home. To assuage guilt they admitted to indulging their kids, not just financially & materialistically, but also in terms of HOW they engage with them.

Hence, children are being invited to have their say. And if not invited, they are confident enough to offer their opinion anyway!

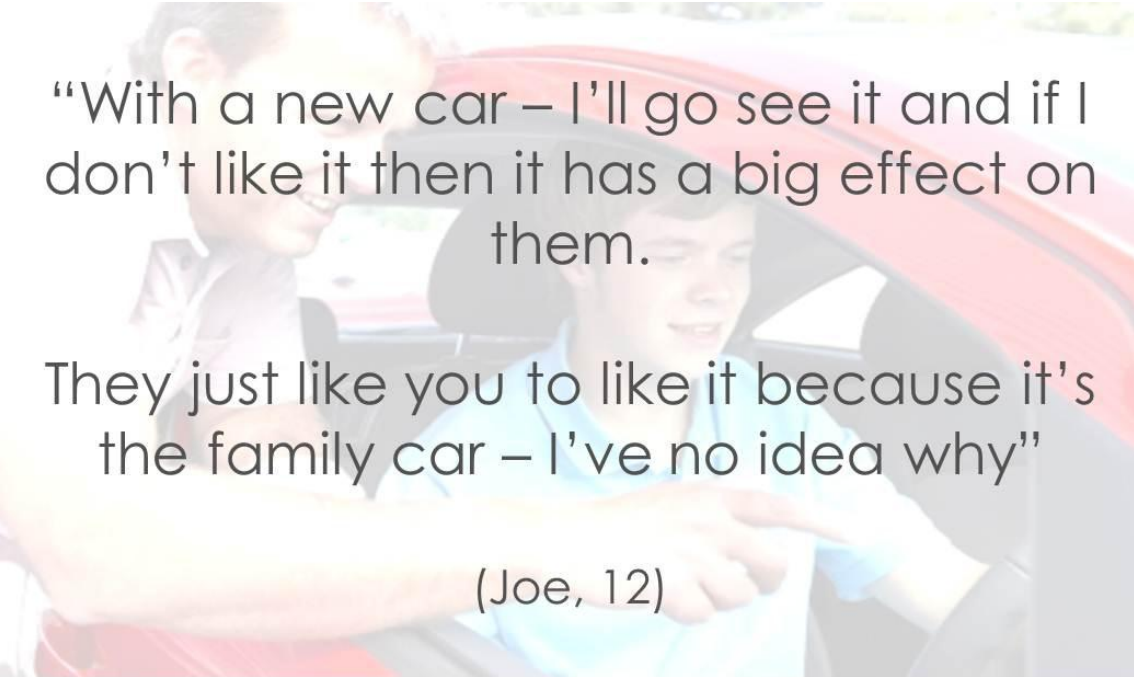


**The result?** A democratisation of the decision making process

Kids influence extends beyond typical pester power & everyday purchases to broader household & family decisions.

Whether it is a family dinner, holiday or a day trip, you can be guaranteed the kids will be consulted.

**So, lesson one** : if you please the kids, you please the whole family!



“With a new car – I’ll go see it and if I don’t like it then it has a big effect on them.

They just like you to like it because it’s the family car – I’ve no idea why”

(Joe, 12)

Even more revealing is how children are often being included in decisions over less obvious purchases where they **aren’t necessarily the immediate end consumer**. Examples given in this study included a family car, TV and even a sofa!

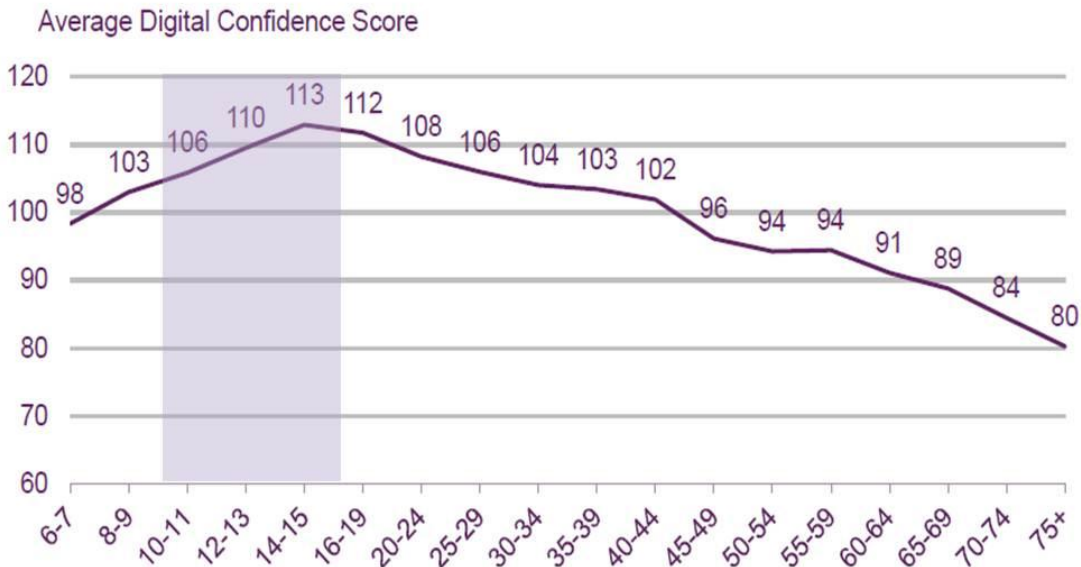
As this quote demonstrates, kids are often unwittingly having an influence over decisions, even when they don’t feel informed enough to share an opinion



The **looming presence of technology** has exacerbated the situation.

As these headlines highlight, the impact of technology on kids and the family is a well documented subject. family dynamics and the 'digital divide' they reference, was evident in our research





Source: Ofcom research Base: All GB (2,753)

And, this is not surprising given how **confident this generation** is with technology. Ofcom research shows by the time children are 10 or 11, they are already as confident as someone in their late 20's.

But this is a generation born into a digital age, who don't know anything different. Whereas adults adopt technology as a way of making their lives easier, these kids are embracing it as **a way of life**.



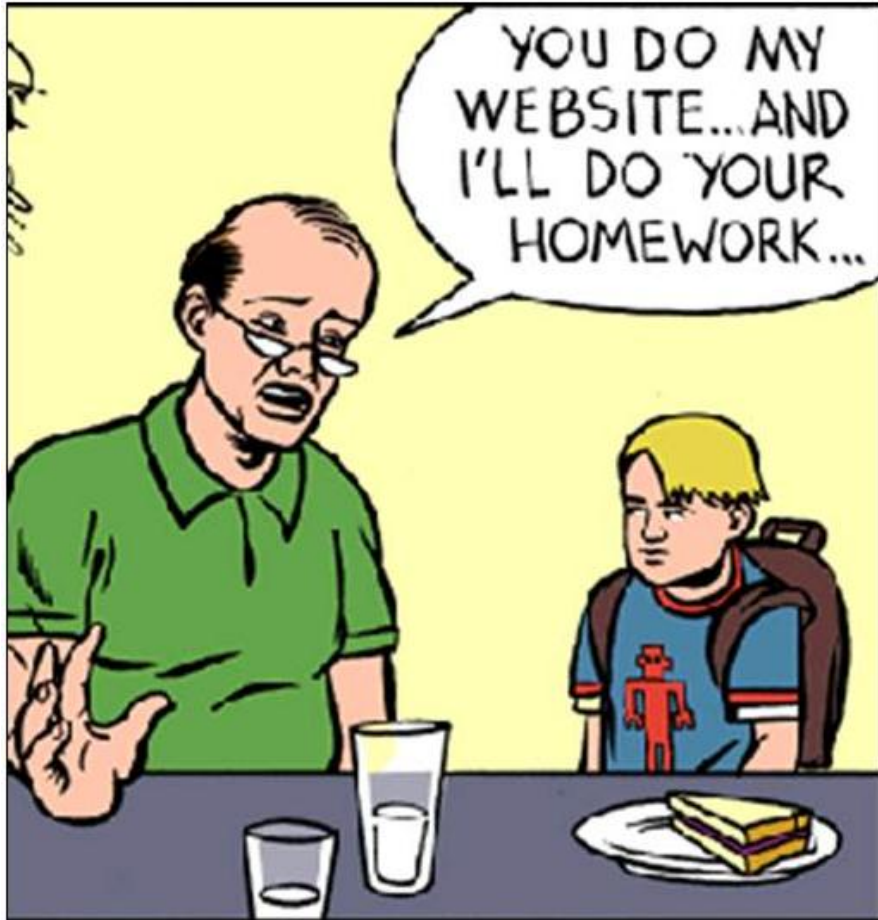
“I have told Alex if he wants advice on anything to come and talk to me. But he just looks at me as if to say...

***‘Why would I want to do that?’***

(Neil, Dad of Alex, 13)

75% of kids aged 12-15 yrs have **3 or more devices of their own**. This immersion is giving them access to a wealth of information, making them more in-tune and switched-on than ever before.

And parents are aware of this and it is making them feel quite **redundant** and out of touch, as this quote shows



.. Not helped by the fact that parents are becoming increasingly dependant on their kids for help with new technology & interfaces

Importantly, **children are observing this lack of know-how** and it is putting them in a position of power : having the upper hand over parents

And it is not only in terms of operating the kit that they are persuasive but also in terms of which kit to buy.....

*“My dad wrecked his phone and was asking me which phone he should get, because I know more about it than the rest of my family so I’ll tell him which features they have”*



“Mum is the boss, then me, then Dad, then my brother. I come before Dad because he is not good at making decisions, whereas I have straightforward answers when asked my opinion”

(Lilly, 13)

So, what we are seeing is an emergence of **Upward Influencing** : kids who are informing & guiding household decisions

This presents an opportunity for brands as it opens up different avenues for targeting the family unit beyond the traditional gatekeeper

So, how do we get onto their radar?

First, let's paint a picture of this age group from a **psychological & developmental perspective** as this sets the backdrop for how they are behaviours & how they are engaging with technology

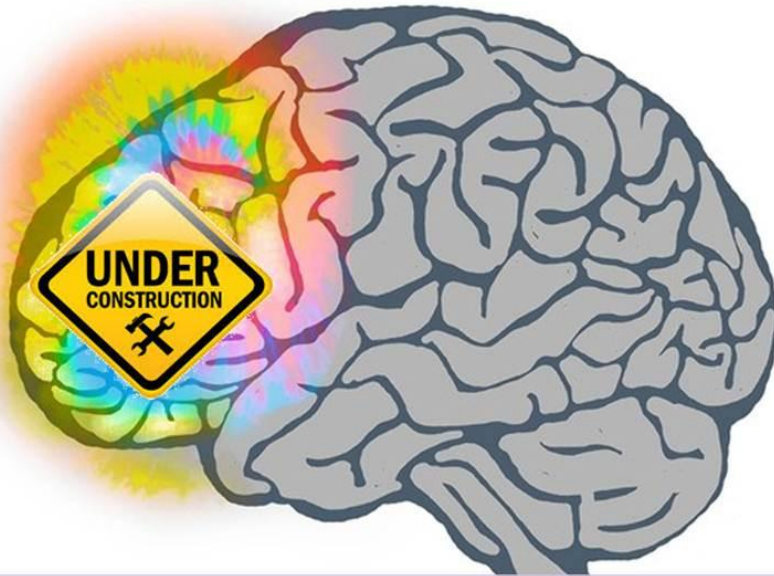




Self-Identity : Individual or Crowd Follower?

At this age (11-14), a child is becoming more aware of who they are and their **self-identity is starting to develop**. Their growing independence leads them to branch out with peers and wider circles

They will be looking to put themselves and their identity out there, make their mark. Influencing purchase decisions is one way of doing this



Avoiding Information Overload

Another factor is the prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain which helps them solve problems and make decisions) which is not yet fully developed at this age

As such, 11-14 year olds rely on the 'amygdala', the part of the brain (associated with emotions, aggression and instinct) to make decisions. Hence why their **decision making can often be impulsive** and at times, irrational

Furthermore, children's executive functioning abilities are still developing, which is why this age group struggle to process or concentrate on large quantities of information



In addition to cognitive factors, personality plays a key role when children influence & negotiate with parents

At this age, personality is about instant gratification : **want, want, want!** Resulting in a behavioural strategy they use to get what they want – PERSISTENCE

If children of this age initiate discussions around products, research has shown this is more likely lead to them influencing their parents to buy the product



\*A US study showed how teenagers spend 7hrs 38 mins each day consuming media. But because they are multi-tasking with devices & apps – they are actually consuming 10hrs 45mins worth of content in those 7hrs 38 mins.

When thinking about how to tap into these Upward Influencers, **social media is a good start point**. BUT as they are using technology differently to how their parents use it, means that brands need to have (i) a different conversation with them (ii) this conversation needs to take place in their world

This statistic shows how **HYPER-STIMULATED** this audience is : expert attention switchers, cherry picking what they are consuming.

**Herein lies the challenge** : whilst they are influential, they are also fickle, transient and always seeking out the next new thing. Cutting through is tricky!



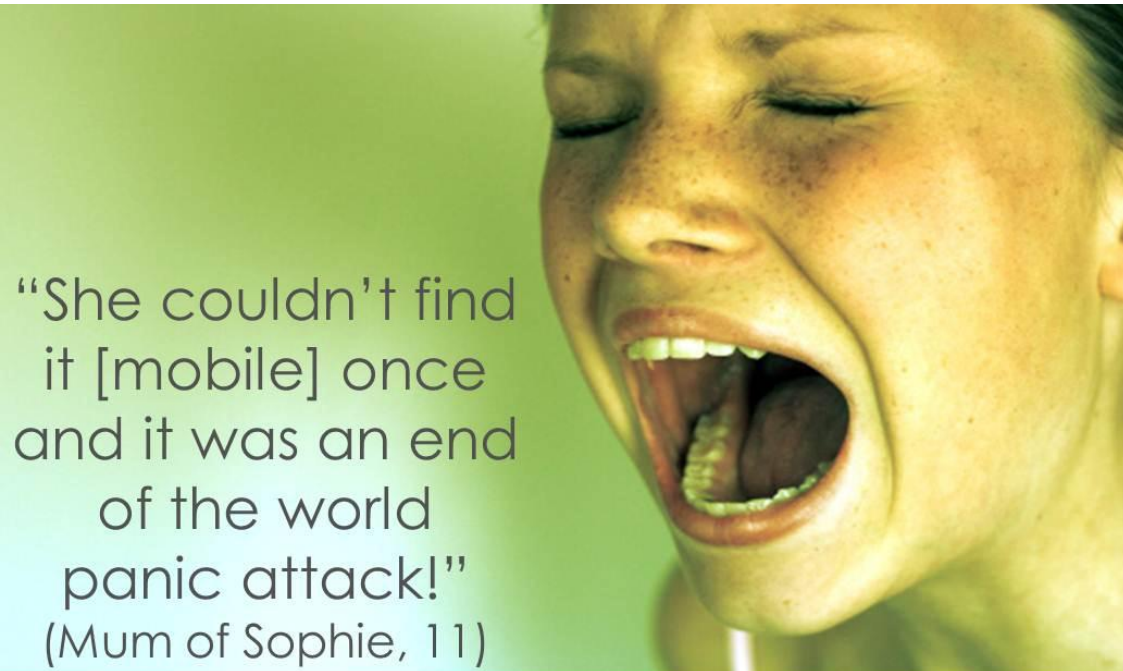


## Two thirds of UK 12-15 year olds now have a smartphone

This brings with it important implications

Firstly, parents struggle to monitor what children are consuming. Children are thus exposed to a whole other world of content which parents don't know about or comprehend. Reinforcing the point that brands need to be engaging them differently

Secondly, their mobile makes them **HYPER-CONNECTED** ; constantly switched on, consuming content on the move all the time. So, web, mobile & social media marketing can no longer be an add-on



This quote demonstrates just how absorbed they are with their phones and how much they are relied upon to keep them in the know. **And immediacy is paramount**

As Kieran summed it up, *“My parents don’t know what it is like to miss out”*

Social media plays a key role in keeping this audience ‘in the know’. As well as keeping connected with friends, chatting about passions & hobbies....this is also where they discover and share information about products & brands

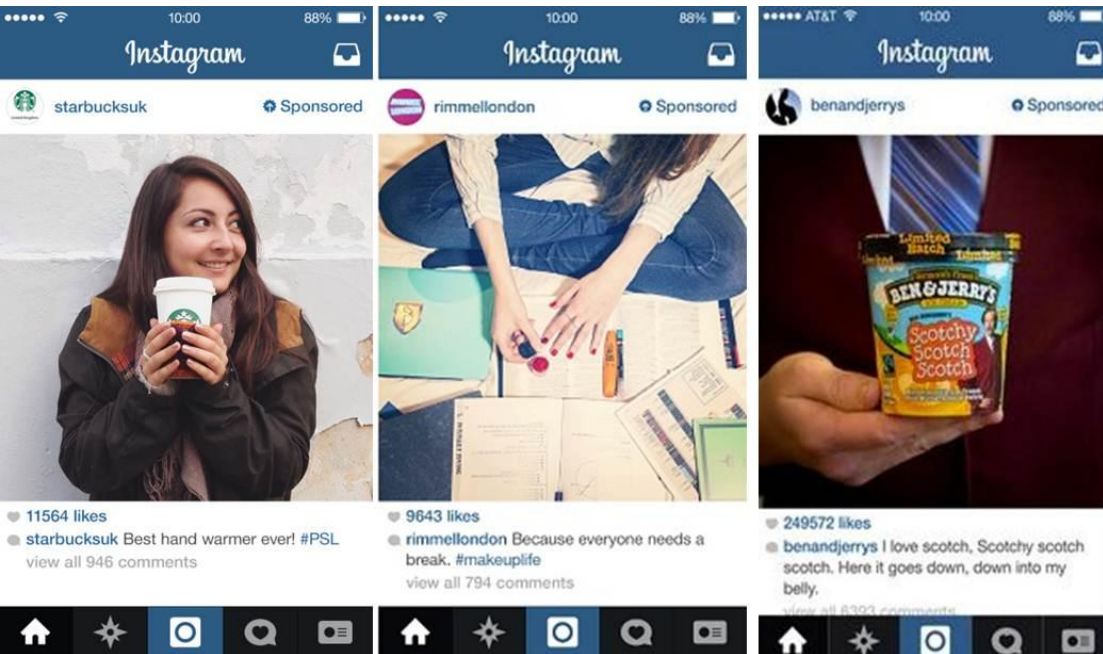


“Nike on Instagram have special pictures. That’s how it gets around, one person might see it, screenshot it then pass it on. You have to make the photo look good; if it’s not then it won’t get shown around”  
(Tom, 12)

Instagram is a key go-to app for sharing & discovering new brands and products, mainly in the form of beautifully shot pictures of trainers, clothes, & make up.

**Visual communications dominate their conversations.** But not just any visual, it has to have an element of creativity, expression & exclusivity to make it share-worthy

Then, once exposed to a picture of someone (preferably a celebrity!) wearing said product, this provides the endorsement needed to instigate the purchase



When Instagram launched Instagram ads, they gave valuable advice to brands ....  
*"[it is about] trying to capture moments more than a product"*

Rather than doing the hard sell, brands must find a way to **'slot into' this audience's life in a relevant way.** Create a seamless integration into their daily conversations and routines

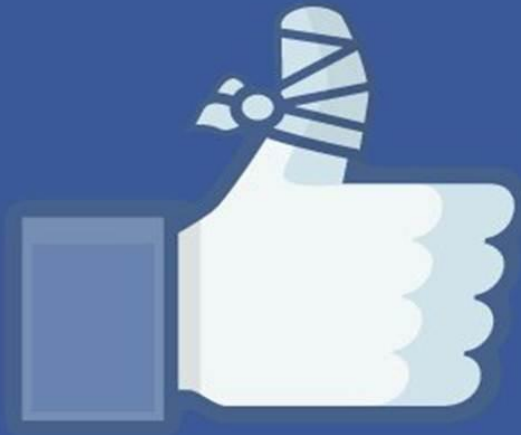
A number of brands (opposite) are successfully exploiting this and making themselves relevant by being part of their conversation



Snapchat & Vine also key apps.

They satisfy their desire for instant gratification & immediacy with short bursts of video footage or content that is very short-lived

But, the thing that knits these apps together is **SIMPLICITY**, which is where Facebook is falling down for this audience



Aside from the fact that Facebook is considered just for “old people” and the embarrassment of having your Mum or Dad commenting on photos is just too cringe-worthy...

...children complained the **interface was difficult to use**; too many buttons, too much information, too cumbersome.

Further reinforcement that this audience will not work too hard, they will only engage if it is easy for them

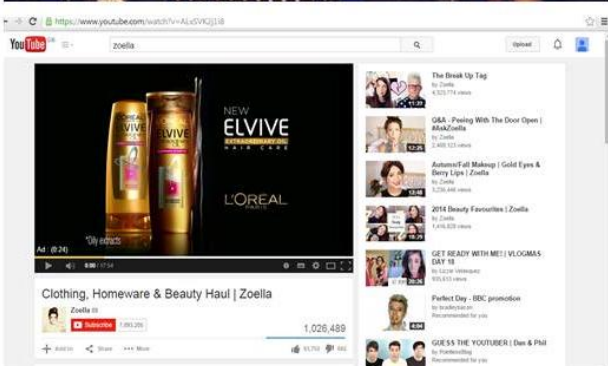


Top row (L-R) : Zoella, Thatcher Joe, Dan Howell  
 Bottom row (L-R) : Pewdie Pie, Marcus Butler & Alfie Deyes, Stampy Long Nose

**You Tube** emerges as another hugely influential channel for this audience

If you don't know any of these faces opposite, then you should. These are the new wave of celebrities who are directly influencing our influencers

All have YouTube channels which act like **mini-social networks** of their own providing people with a place to share their interests, no matter how niche. And their subscriber numbers highlight just how much influence they are having



A close up on Zoella, recently dubbed *"the most famous woman in Britain you've never heard of"*

- **7 million subscribers**
- Her novel *Girl Online* sold 78K copies in it's first week – more than JK Rowling's first *Harry Potter* book
- Hosts a midweek radio show on BBC Radio 1
- L'Oréal are placing their ads on her channel





In summary, whilst the kids we spoke to might not literally be the Head of the Household, they are having **more of a voice than ever** and influencing household decisions

Whether a result of a change in parenting styles, the impact of technology or both, the power of this audience should not be ignored

And, whilst Gen Z might not be your core target, there is a strong chance your core target is listening to them

**So, what are the rules of engagement?**



I'll give you 8 seconds....GO!

## I'll give you 8 seconds..go!

If you want their attention you need to grab it here and now.

Precise targeting & timing is key. If you miss them, you won't get a second chance. They are only ever scrolling forwards!



Keep it short

## Keep it short.

Delivering content in snackable chunks but more frequently is easier to digest. Don't forget, a 7-sec video is sufficient!



Keep it simple

## Keep it simple..

..has always been a watch word for advertising. But, this audience, more than any other, will not work to seek things out or decipher messages



Don't tell me, show me

## Don't Tell, Show Me

As the old saying goes, a picture paints a thousand words. And this is even more applicable to this audience



Content worth sharing

## Content Worth Sharing

....armed with the right content and any child could be an effective ambassador for your brand. They will help you shout about your brand....but only if the content is right



Master the art of subtle selling

## Master the art of subtle selling

It is less about the hard sell and more about becoming part of their conversation and seamlessly integrating into their lives



"If the world is just going to stay like this, what's going to happen in the future? The world's going to become more like this. It's not going to back into Victorian times and have wooden cars and stuff"

Jamie, 12

**Final thought :**

Brand owners and marketers must keep an eye on how they behave today to inform their future behaviours. This audience will be your direct target consumers who hold the purse strings.

As this quote shows, the way in which kids engage with technology is not going to change and this raises challenging questions for the future of marketing





Thank you