

Thought leadership • 2023

Exploring Generation Alpha

A Look into the Future

razorfish

SPOILER ALERT:

Remember when
you were a kid?

Alphas are
nothing like that.

Are You **Alpha-Ready?**

Brands today are focused
on Gen Z

Digital natives, aged 18-25, who have taken commerce, gaming, and social media by storm.

But what about Alphas?

The fast-growing generation. expected to reach 2.2 billion by 2024. They are the <17-year-old children of millennials and Gen Z and are the future consumers of many brands.

Going deeper than what you already “**know...**”

Yes, Alphas love their smartphones,
... but do you know what they would change about them?

Yes, Alphas are influenced by content creators,
... but do you know if they want to be one?

Yes, Alpha's favorite games are Roblox, Minecraft, & Fortnite,
... but do you know *why*?

Yes, Alpha's relationships with brands are still developing,
... but do you know what their favorite brands are today?

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Objective

1. Uncover the attitudinal characteristics and behaviors of Alphas
2. Draw clear contrasts between Alphas and Gen Z
3. Prompt new thinking and opportunities for how brands can resonate with Alphas

Our Approach & Methodology

QUALITATIVE

Gen Alpha Ethnographies

Going Deep

We partnered with youth specialist research house, The Pineapple Lounge, to delve into Gen Alpha. We explored their habits, tech usage, gaming behavior, and brand awareness and created 16 unique online activities where, over a 7-day period, respondents and their parents answered prompts with text, video, and images.

Sample

- 15 Alpha respondents (ages 8-10)
- Mix of gender, household income (HHI), race, and locations within the U.S.
- All tech-forward and tech-fluent

QUANTITATIVE

Gen Alpha Primary Usage & Attitudes Survey

Going Wide

We partnered with preeminent research company, GWI, to create a survey exploring the similarities and differences across Gen Z and Gen Alpha. This study aimed to validate the findings from our qualitative research and uncover additional insights. Results were also compared to GWI Kids panel.

Sample

- 500 Alpha respondents (ages 8-10)
- 464 Gen Z respondents (ages 16-24)
- Mix of gender, HHI, and locations within the U.S.
- Global coverage will be available for future surveys

INSIGHT ZERO

Before we start

The undeniable, irreversible impact of COVID-19.

The pandemic changed the relationship between Alphas, their parents, and technology. Those changes are now permanent.

1. Accelerated Adoption

Alpha's digital usage and adoption increased during the pandemic. What initially seemed like it might be problematic, has now been proven to be a positive.

2. Parents' (Forced) Acceptance

Due to the challenges of schooling and remote work colliding, parents handed kids technology earlier than desired, unsure of the consequences.

3. Embedded in Education

Remote learning was practically non-existent prior to 2020. Schools needed to integrate tech to engage students in this new environment.

“

I honestly didn't expect her to be as connected to other people as she is, but it's a nice surprise.

I figured she would just play some games, by herself, and only interact with the computer. I hear her chatting with friends through the calling feature on the games.”

– Parent of 10 yr. old girl | Missouri

Technology happened kind of by accident here. We didn't have tablets, but once the pandemic started and the kids were home, my husband and I were both home working **we ordered the kids Kindle Fires because we needed help keeping them busy!**”

– Parent of 8 yr. old girl | New York

I try to be consistent, try to make it steady, but **school has done a lot really in introducing technology to him through there. They get an iPad for school.**”

– Parent 10 yr. old boy | Missouri

”

INSIGHT ONE

For Alphas,
it's **purpose** first.

Alphas aren't focused on fame; they are motivated by a greater sense of purpose.

Q. Fill in the blank.

My dreams for the future are_____

I am inspired by _____.

"To become a vet and I am **inspired by my dad** because **he is always working hard and getting us what we need.**"

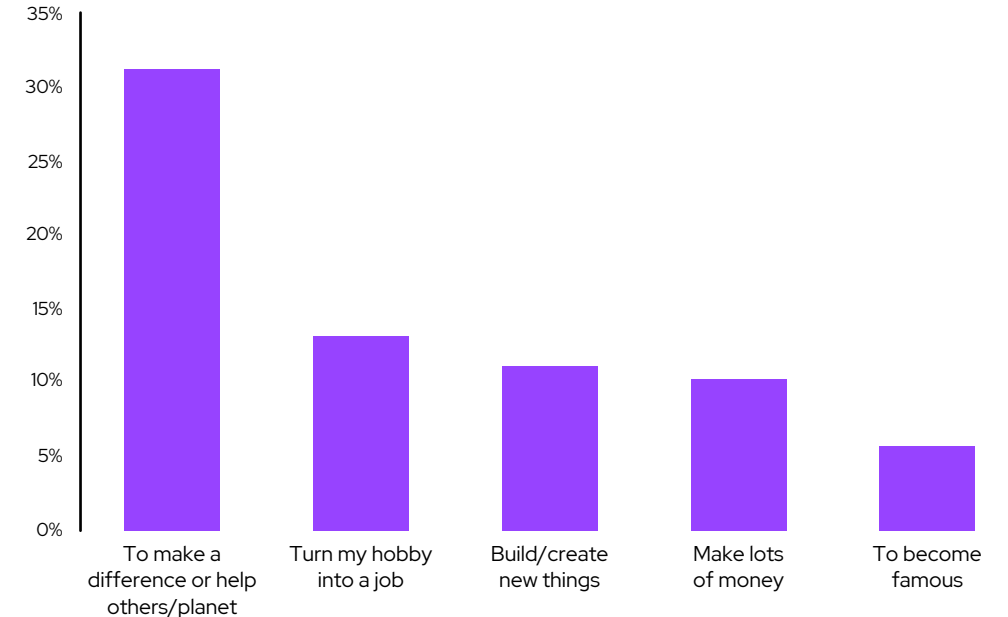
– 9 yr. old boy | Arizona

"To become a chef and open my own restaurant and I am **inspired by my parents and what they teach me.**"

– 10 yr. old girl | New York

"What do you want to do when you grow up?"

It isn't all about the money with Alphas. They are selflessly focused on making an impact that will shape the world around them through careers like doctors, veterinarians, and scientists.



Alpha:

vs

Gen Z:

#1 & #2

Future career choice of Alphas helps people or animals in need, respectively.

Only 15%

Future career choice of Gen Z helps people or animals in need.

INSIGHT TWO

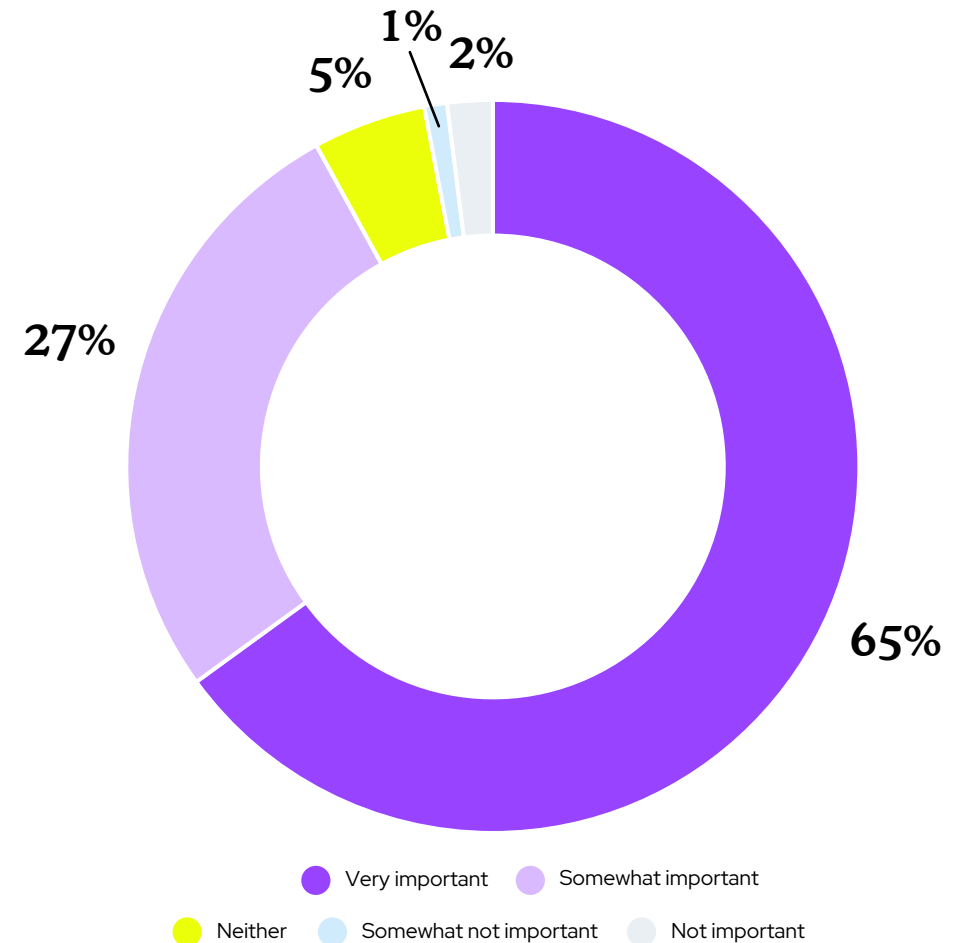
Even at their young age,
Alphas are true to themselves.

Alphas are already unapologetically themselves.

Despite Alphas growing up surrounded by endless "glossed up" and questionable authentic content on social media, **92% of them value being themselves.**

Alphas understand the power of authenticity and resist pressure to be someone else.

"How important is it to be yourself?"



Only Gen Alpha respondents

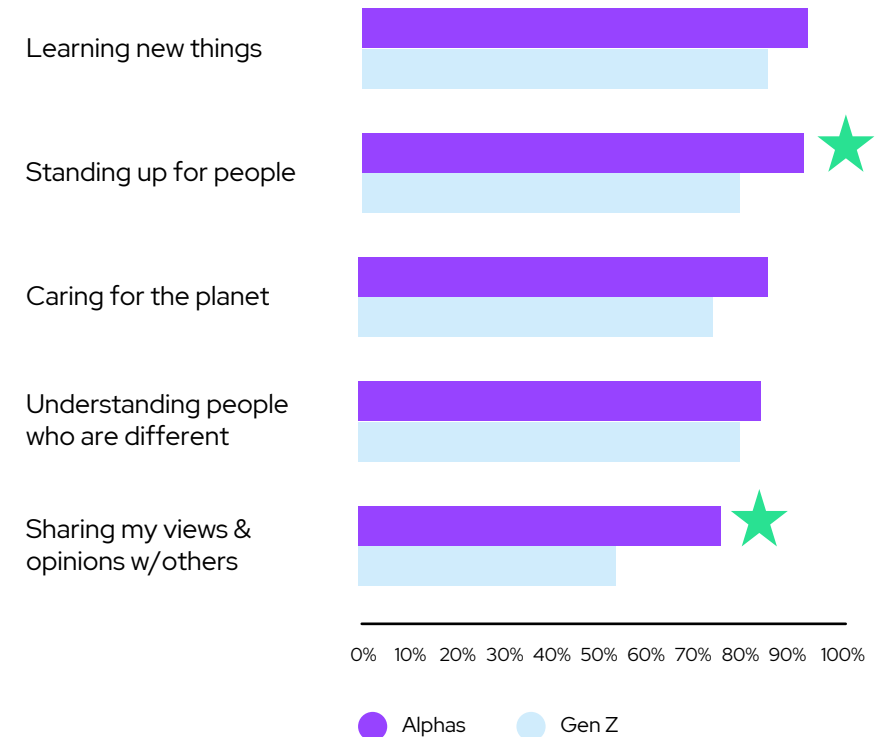
Gen Z's values?

Alphas have supercharged them.

Alphas are already focused on sustainability, inclusion, and being open to other world views.

They are outpacing their Gen Z predecessors across these key values and won't hesitate to speak up and call out those who dissent.

"How important are these values to you?"



Alpha: vs Gen Z:

For Alphas, voicing their values is the default.

+43%

of Alphas are **more likely** than Gen Z to **value sharing their views and opinions with others.**

Gen Zs have a high moral compass, but aren't as inclined as Alphas to speak up about their opinions.

-30%

of Gen Z are **less likely** than Alphas to **value sharing their views and opinions with others.**

INSIGHT THREE

Tech-empowered.
Not tech-dependent.

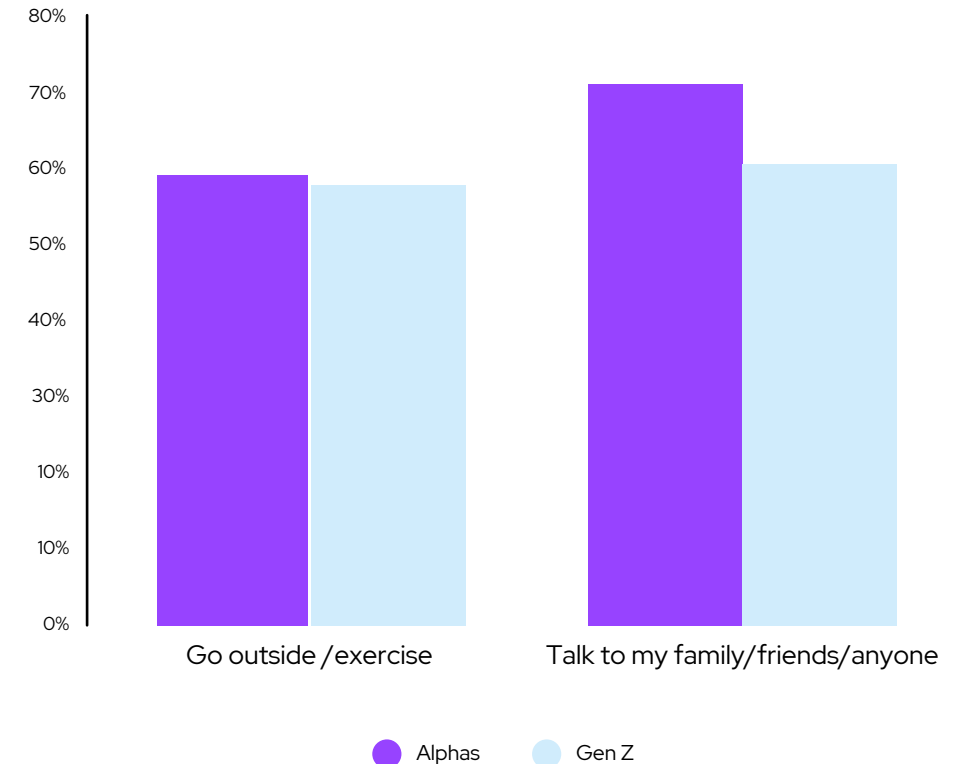
Mental health: Already a priority at their young age.

75% of 8- to 10-year-olds
are thinking about mental health

Gen Z ushered in more awareness and openness about mental health. Now Alphas are poised to eliminate any stigma completely.

For Alphas, mental health support will likely become a major driver of brand affinity and purchase consideration.

“Which of these do you do to help your mental health?”



Alpha: vs Gen Z:

74%

Of Alphas prefer to **go outside / exercise or use tech less** to manage their mental health and disconnect.

51%

Of Gen Z practice self-care through **pampering themselves**, 2X more than Alphas (e.g.: painting one's nails, caring for their skin).

For Alphas, tech and life are already in balance.

Alphas know to seek and maintain a healthy balance between their online and offline hobbies despite their growing tech adoption.

They already understand the importance of outside play and their online activities like gaming are used less as time-wasters.

“

Q. Why do you love to game?

I like to take a break from playing outside (like riding my bike or running around with friends) or when it rains, I have something to do.

It's relaxing – Because it gives me a break to relax from playing sports. I play a lot of sports so when I come home from games or practices, I like to chill. I also like to play video games when it's raining or cold outside.

”

Alpha: vs Gen Z:

Only 20%

of Alphas would like to spend **more** time online.

55%

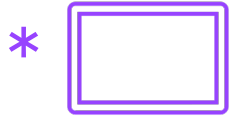
of Gen Z believe they should **spend less** time online than they currently do.

INSIGHT FOUR

“Native” is an understatement.
They’re **digital ninjas**.

Device ownership milestones for Alphas:

* Key milestone



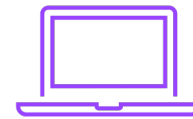
3-5 Years Old

Alpha's entryway to technology are their tablets, with **43%** having one before the age of 6.



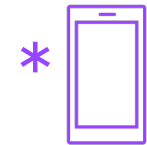
6-7 Years Old

Between the ages of 6-7, Alphas begin adopting more complex technologies like **video game consoles (55%)**, **Smart TVs (48%)**, and **earbuds (31%)**.



8-9 Years Old

Laptops are typically introduced between ages 8-9 for schoolwork, gaming, or leisure, with **nearly half (47%)** saying they own one.



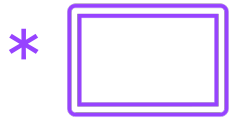
10 Years Old

Most Alphas (**58%**) receive their most desired device, the smartphone, by the age of 10.

Device ownership milestones for Alphas:

How do the parents feel about this?

* Key milestone



For “Being Kept Busy”

“[We] introduced tablets for games and shows when traveling, I know the kids start using the iPad in Kindergarten and every year after that for educational games and activities.”

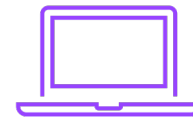
- Parent of 10 yr. old girl



For Entertainment & Skill-building

“I have always believed that video gaming is good for creativity, problem-solving, socialization, etc. Video gaming is better than a lot of other digital entertainment.”

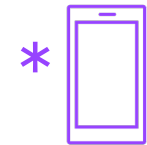
- Parent of 9 yr. old girl



For School and #adulthood

“My son uses technology mainly for completing school assignments. He loves how fast he can get answers to some of the questions he has for homework.”

- Parent of 9 yr. old boy



The Last Tech Steppingstone

“Now that we’ve introduced a cell phone, we have total control over it... We turn the phone off at 9pm and it turns back on at 9am. NO SOCIAL MEDIA!”

- Parent of 10 yr. old girl

Early usage is not
the same as early adoption.

It's **Alphas, not Gen Z**, who are more
interested in adopting the latest tech.

Alpha:

vs

Gen Z:

Early adoption is in Alpha's blood.

63%

value having the latest technology.

Gen Zers are tech-savvy, but not nearly as tech-eager.

Only 31%

value having the latest technology.

Today's smartphone: jam-packed with features and new tech, yet it's still **not enough to satisfy Alphas.**

Alphas are already imagining far more advanced products.

Q. We want to hear about your first mobile phone. If you don't have one, then we want you to imagine getting to choose one.

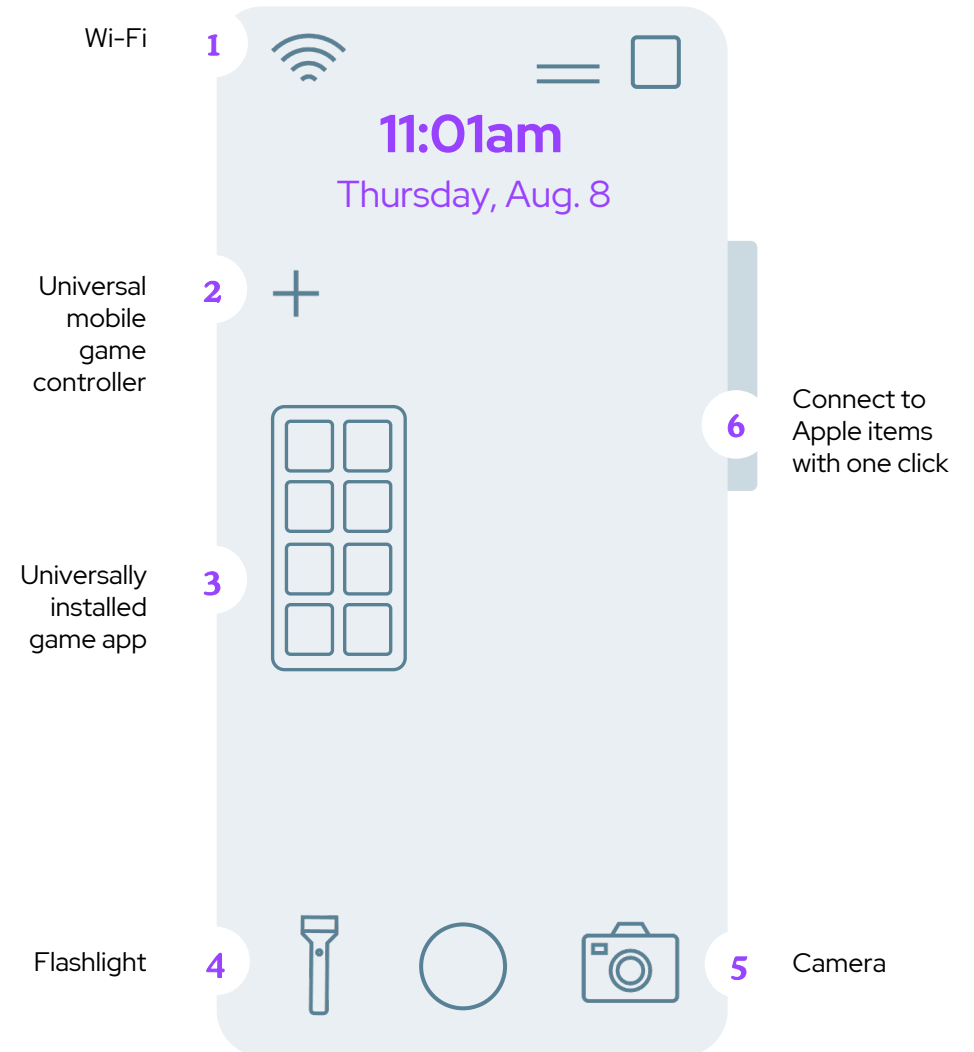
"I would like an automatic button on the side of the iPhone to connect to other Apple products by clicking on the button. So, if my phone dies it automatically saves and picks up from where I left off using the new device (iPad)."

– 9 yr. old boy | Arizona

"The iPhone 17... the cool features it has [is] being able to play my console games on it and having 1 week battery where you don't have to worry about it dying."

– 9 yr. old boy | North Carolina

Diagrammed from actual Alpha sketch



Alpha:

vs

Gen Z:

Alphas don't just want the latest tech; they want not-yet-developed features.

+46%

of Alphas are more likely than Gen Z in wanting a phone that has a 3D hologram.

Unlike Alphas, Gen Z is focused on practical features like a 1-week battery over "futuristic" ones.

-32%

of Gen Z are less likely than Alphas in wanting a phone with 3D holograms.

Gaming is more than entertainment, it's a creative outlet.

Gaming has evolved from gameplay and socializing with friends, to self-expression. Alphas use gaming to express their creativity.

When playing, this generation is motivated by building and creating their own worlds.

“

Q. Why do you love to game?

I enjoy building up my houses in the game and then showing my friends what I did. I like to change my avatars according to what style I want them to wear.

Because I can build. It's fun to build your own house and cities and ramps however you want. You can build anything!!!! Even weird things like llamas. I can be creative.

I can make my own world and I can play with my friends in their worlds.

”

Alpha:

vs

Gen Z:

Alphas game with **intention** and are

2x

more likely than Gen Z to see games as a means of **expressing creativity** or **building things**.

Gen Z use gaming as a form of **escapism**.

#1

relaxation is the top reason for Gen Z to game.

INSIGHT FIVE

Alphas' brands are
already **your brands.**

Most of Alpha's favorite brands **are your favorite brands.**

Access to the internet has **accelerated Alpha's brand maturity** at a higher rate than previous generations. Brands formerly seen as adult-focused are drawing in Alphas and **pulling them away from "kiddie brands"** before Alphas even enter their teens.

"For my birthday I want a Lululemon Swiftly Tech [shirt] because I really like the way it looks."

– 10 yr. old girl | Missouri

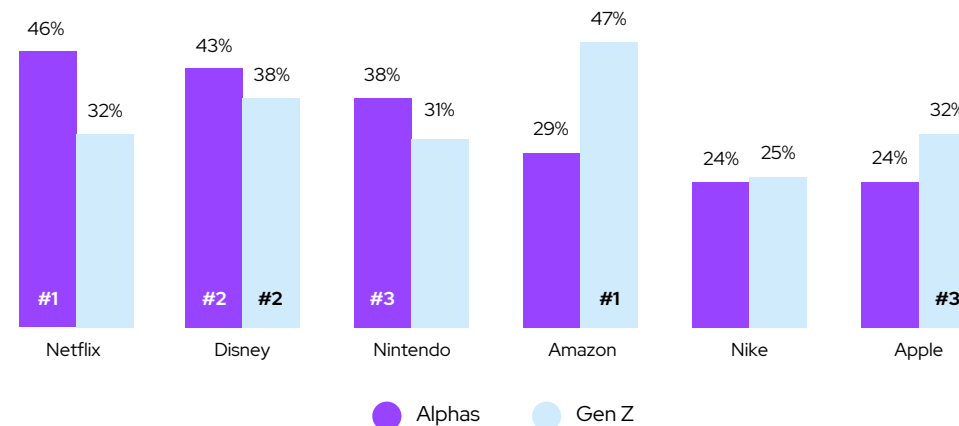
"For my birthday I want a pair of Oakley's because all of the cool older [baseball] players wear Oakley's and I want to look like a real baseball player."

– 10 yr. old girl | Missouri

"When I see the word brand, I immediately think of Nike. It is one of my favorites."

– 9 yr. old boy | North Carolina

% Alpha / Gen Z who say the following brands are currently their favorite



8/10 of the top 10 favorite brands for each generation **are the same** (Amazon, Netflix, Apple, Nintendo, Target, Disney, Nike, and Walmart).

If you're not on YouTube, **you're not on Alpha's radar.**

Whether they're watching "slime" videos, how-to's, or their favorite content creators, YouTube has established itself as the mainstay for Alphas.

While entertainment is their primary use of the platform, it's evolved into a place of search and product discovery too. Ultimately, YouTube is already influencing their path to purchase and future brand affinities.

“

What drives his interests? He follows **YouTubers** like Dude Perfect a lot; I mean, he's constantly watching them. So, **anything they talk about, he likes.**

– **Parent of 10 yr. old Boy** | Missouri

They don't really know celebrities in the way I think of them – they know YouTubers.. I would say **YouTubers have more of an influence** on my kids.”

– **Parent of 10 yr. old Girl** | Arizona

[I like] YouTube, because **I try to find people who would fit my liking** of things. Favorite YouTubers basically.”

– **8 yr. old Girl** | Missouri

”

Alpha:

vs

Gen Z:

YouTube is Alpha's primary path to brand discovery.

51%

of Alphas first hear about brands through YouTube videos.

While traditional social media remains Gen Z's top source for brands discovery.

47%

of Gen Zers say they see or hear about brands on traditional social media like Instagram and TikTok.

Alphas: **Insight Summary**

INSIGHT ZERO

The undeniable, irreversible impact of COVID-19.

INSIGHT ONE

For Alphas, it's purpose first.

INSIGHT TWO

Even at their young age, Alphas are true to themselves.

INSIGHT THREE

Tech-empowered. Not tech-dependent.

INSIGHT FOUR

“Native” is an understatement. They're digital ninjas.

INSIGHT FIVE

Alpha's brands are already your brands.

Are you Alpha-ready?

1. Never treat Alphas as kids. They're already mini-adults.
2. Don't think of Alphas as younger Gen Zs. They're already more Gen Z than Gen Z, at a younger age.
3. Alphas seek more than fame – they want to shape the world. Empower them.
4. Whatever you're innovating, anticipate that Alphas are already expecting more.
5. Don't treat gaming as just an entertainment outlet – it's Alpha's creative expression canvas.

Thank you.

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