

Peeping into the fun territory of kids and how it is changing

Background

In the last decade, the three key factors of:

- a) Multi-level, multi-cultural exposure provided by media and technology,
- b) the new hierarchy of needs created by a growing country and
- c) changing family structure - have been a potent force towards the development of an aware, enabled and pampered child. Not only is the child influencing decisions regarding brands, he is also the key trigger into categories in many cases.

The Research Objective

Throw light on some of the compelling aspects of the kids today - their beliefs, value systems and personalities; and also explore the 'new' drivers, triggers and connects.

The Challenge

Kids are essentially fun loving and what could enable a firm grasp on them is to enter their 'fun' world and understand the changing manifestation of 'fun' in their lives. Understanding them is definitely no child's play. Pests, brats, temperamental, unstoppable, volatile..they are all of this and more!

The Research Methodology

We spent time with kids (SEC A, 4-12 years) on their turfs, through extended creativity workshops (2-3 kids in each group) conducted across 5 major metros.

Key Findings

- **Fun and Play is their world**....as they are essentially fun seekers, and hence they are constantly on the look out for entertainment and adventure.
- **Manipulative**...whichever way, they have the finesse to manage their way. Depending upon the situation, they can be demanding, persuasive and opinionated like adults or pester and throw tantrums like kids.
- **Action speaks louder than words**...irreverent, naughty, and bursting with excess energy, they are always finding something to do and have immense liking for physical play.
- **Fantasy – their kingdom**....Like Alice in Wonderland, they are living in a self-made 'free' empire. Hungry for heroes, they glorify good over evil. The magic of Harry Potter, the power of Pokeman, the glamour of Barbie, and a whole lot of cartoon characters successfully tie in with their fantasies.
- **Curious devils**....high need to discover and explore. Mastering skill or knowledge in a particular field gives them power over others. That's why they are always questioning and understanding the whys and whats of various things around.
- **Fickle-minded**...extremely volatile and whimsical by nature, they get bored a lot faster with a lot more things. There is a constant search for variety...be it in play or in food.

4-8 YEARS OLDS	9-12 YEARS OLDS
The Dependent Stage	The Autonomous Stage
Physiological & psychological dependence on parents	More independent, with peer perspective getting stronger
A very parent influenced advice	Parents no longer in charge of choice
More into individual 'physical' play/naughtiness	More into group activities
Tech aware, not tech savvy	Getting tech savvy
Living in a fantasy world	Differentiate between fantasy & reality
Understand the performance- reward link	Greater sense of achievement- more goal oriented play
Child-like spontaneity intact	Aspirational teen wannabes

Key hallmarks of today's child

1. Outside play tops but is declining
2. Living like Alice in Wonderland, fantasy is their kingdom
3. 'Result oriented' play creeping into their playground - the new age parents fueling this trend.
4. Television, the baby sitter
5. It's the wired generation showing strong 'Button' fascination - which is also changing the nature of play.

- Increasingly, kids today are **behaving as mini adults** - an In-Control, Assertive and Evolved generation. Kids today are opinionated and are confident to voice their opinions.
 - **Increasing Self-orientation.** They are seeking more independence. They have a fierce need to be recognized as an individual – to be heard and exercise point of view.
 - **Goal-oriented generation.** It has become socially acceptable to make money thus making them competitive. At the same time, parents are encouraging the result-oriented attitude in their kids.
 - **Rising aggression.** Surrounded by action and violence on TV, Computer, Movies, Games - where 'fast' is excitement and 'slow' is passe, they view aggression positively.
 - **A pompous generation.** Without doubt, kids today like to display what they own and what they know. Showing off their goodies empowers them. Knowledge of a skill or in a particular area gives them a sense of power.
- While they have an adult like mind, they have a child like heart and their spontaneity is still intact. However, the urge to do something different and creative comes out only if they have the time to get bored, and when away from the riff-raff – of technology, TV, competitive pressures etc.

- Whether the personality shift is redefining their fun territory or whether newer fun avenues are causing the transformation– it is difficult to predict which happens first. Whatever be the case, the fact remains the kid fun zone has changed and various aspects of personality are finding expression in this new playground. In keeping with the kids, the new playground is challenging, exciting and adventurous, versatile, is part-play and part-attitude, poses high need to discover...and most importantly, makes them feel smart and confident.
- The new playground has gone 'digital': Kids today are completely glued to TV and obsessed with Computer/Internet. While not using it, they are aware and informed about Mobile phones, Cars and Bikes, and carry an opinion on models and brands. In fact both parents and teachers encourage interaction with technology.
- **It is hip to handle technology:** Connoting prestige, technology stands for values of modernity and forward looking. Fast, Speed, Efficiency, Power – are all outputs of technology. Overwhelmed by buttons, kids feel an unstated attitude if they are familiar and knowledgeable about it. And look down on others who cannot handle it.

The Results

The key implications were in terms of what titillates this '2 feet nothing' target group, be it entertainment that works or taking them to their fantasy land or leveraging the fads (the must-to-have) or using cartoons intelligently! The findings were used by the advertising agency to develop exciting and relevant communication routes for various brands targeting this segment.

Sum up

Considering the wealth of learning we got on this research with kids, the study became an eye opener in how strong an influence kids are and the maxim 'Child is the father of man' suddenly started to look up. Not just for the products meant for them but also for other categories..definitely not a segment that can be ignored.