

South African business, meet your future consumer

 By [Nicola Cooper](#)

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With the majority of South African consumers being under the age of 21, we cannot look to Gen Z or those younger as our 'future' consumer. Gen Z is already entering varsity and/or the work environment, which means our 'future' consumers are even younger.



Nicola Cooper, senior trend analyst and cultural strategist at Nicola Cooper & Associates.

The term for this is Generation 'Alpha' or 'Gen A'. 'Generation Alpha' are also known as the "children of millennials," is the first generation born entirely within the 21st century. (Gen Z stretches back to the mid-1990s.)

Mark McCrindle, a generational researcher and consultant in Australia, coined the term back in 2005. It has stuck with generational forecasters so far.



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This generation is born from millennial parents and the oldest of the generation is only eight-years-old. McCrindle states that about 2.5-million Generation Alphas are born every week globally, according to a [2005 article](#) by Christina Sterbenz.

This generation is informing purchasing decisions and is also already making a great impact on the internet and social media. Millennial parents have created social media profiles for their young ones – often before they were born.

“ Videos of children before school-going age are going viral, with toddlers becoming internet famous with millions of followers and launching kid-ready campaigns or accounts such as [@Hypekids](#). ”



[View this post on Instagram](#)



#hypekids: Squad in @yoahnewyork 💎💎 Photo: YOA H

A post shared by [hypekids \(@hypekids\)](#) on Dec 13, 2018 at 6:55am PST

With information a touch of a screen away, what is the purpose of school if you have already had so much success at such a young age?

What will this mean for the future of our businesses? How can we incorporate the Alpha gen mindset already into our strategy for the future?

Youth marketing trends: KYOG – Kids Getting Older Younger and Play

Two key trends which are a direct result of both the Gen Z and Alpha gen consumers are KYOG – Kids Getting Older Younger and Play.

In today's society, the youth are ageing at a faster rate. As children are growing older younger, this means that the youths' needs are increasing and constantly changing in terms of their age-specific requirements – including faster education and larger rates of intellectually stimulating content with which to engage.

In South Africa, we are witnessing a growing sense of social awareness and health awareness amongst today's youth.



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According to a survey carried out by British company Bullguard: "The leading cause of this early development was technology, including access to digital devices, Facebook and Google. The proliferation of these tools has allowed children to quickly absorb a wealth of knowledge that was unavailable to previous generations."

These trends explore the need for playful, fun, interactive and engaging environments to create an equally safe, enjoyable and educational consumer shopping experience – for children and their parents alike.

Digital and interactive in-store experience

Interactive environments for children in retail environments as well as general living environments are on the rise. Some of these environments are created with digital integration and learning, while others focus on promoting and creating a playful and interactive environment for children.

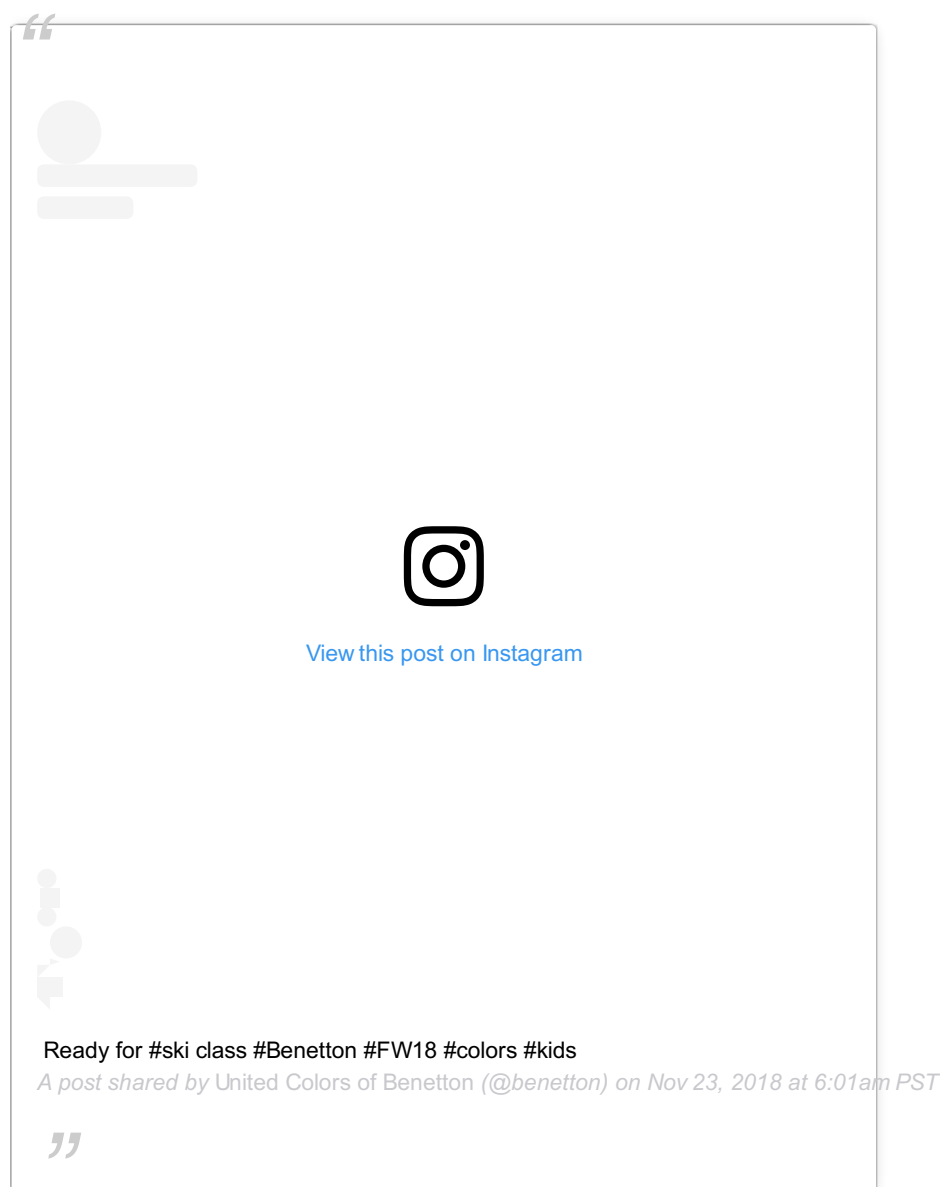
The adoption of these playful environments can be generalised, in-store as well as entirely separate locations. This consumer desires playful interaction and the ability to explore in a safe environment.

Successful examples of this include [Young Entrepreneur Learning Labs](#).

This company was created in order to introduce children to the world of entrepreneurship. There are three programmes offered by Young Entrepreneur Learning Labs – Lemonade Stand Kids, for children aged 7-9; KidPreneurs, for children aged 10-12; and lastly Biz Kids for children aged 13-15.

These programmes facilitate the learning of vital life skills from a young age, so that they can apply to any career choice, in any economic environment.

Or there's retailer United Colours of Benetton, which uses colour-block merchandising within store layouts, as well as a 12m high LED screen featuring interactive colourful content.



Then there's global company Pantaloon's, which curated a store layout to promote "memorable in-store retail experiences". The main objective of their store re-design was "to put kids first, without forgetting about the parents or guardians accompanying them".

The use of brightly coloured floor paths served as an inviting welcome to the store. Multi-colour panels were used to help kids find their size in an interactive way. Shopping bags are kid-friendly in the sense that they are able to be worn around the shoulders, or driven across the floor.

The 'youth market' are of great significance to marketers, with roughly half of South Africa's population being under the age of 24, and the most recent annual spend for consumers aged 8 to 23 being estimated at around R111bn.

Against this backdrop, it is therefore hardly surprising that many brands today are affording serious consideration to the importance of understanding and connecting with this highly lucrative consumer segment.

ABOUT NICOLA COOPER

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