

BEANO
BRAIN

COOLEST
BRANDS
2025
US





Helenor Gilmour



Gen Alpha are brand literate

So here it is our 2025 list of the Coolest Brands according to 7–14-year-olds, and a salient reminder of how brand literate Generation Alpha are. These are the brands kids and teens are using, loving, talking about and engaging with. Drawn from a year of observing kids, the list is a snapshot of their lives. And a window into just how sophisticated kids' brand behaviour can be.

Only a few classic kids' brands appear in our top 100 and some that began as being "owned" by kids such as Roblox and TikTok have rapidly been adopted by adults - a clear reflection of the disappearing boundary between the lives of kids and adults. As much as we are keen that "kids stay kids" for as long as possible they are introduced to and develop an understanding of brands early on – even if those brands do not target the directly.

But it's also wise to remember that kids and teens are products of the 21st century and have high expectations of brands. Continuous innovation, personalisation, quality, continuous visibility, super smooth user experiences, and the ability to touch the funny bone are just some of the brand expectations Gen Alpha have. Which makes it even more fascinating when brands DO break through and the lessons we can learn from them. This year, brands like Adidas, Sol De Janeiro and Jellycat prove that with a clear marketing strategy and a strong USP it is possible to challenge the incumbents and waken up a sector.

And just to emphasise that high barrier that kids set for brands, YouTube may have held the top spot, but they have done anything but stand still when it comes to strategy. Leaning into their creator community and developing long and short form catalogues whilst earning the trust of kids and parents takes some doing!

And despite being born from 2010 onwards it also seems that heritage brands still engage Gen Alpha who seem to absorb longstanding brand values especially when it comes to food and drink. Kit Kat is a clear example – born in 1935 it has burst into our top 100 this year because of familiarity, ASMR crunch and extensive flavour range catering to Gen A's global palate.

However, what I love most about our Top 100 Coolest brands is being able to spot early trends and watching them grow. Thus in 2025 we see skincare brands rising up the ranks, athleisure brands dominating and early signs of the impact of AI with Google taking a hit in rankings. All life is here to see.





Pete Maginn



Evolve, diversify, emote repeat

At Beano Brain team the annual Coolest Brands reveal has become a much-anticipated occasion for us – think of it like a birthday, Xmas, Channukah, Diwali & Eid equivalent for us kids' insight passionistas!

As we've been pouring through the 2025 results, here are some of the gifts that it's given us...

The Top 10s remain largely unchallenged. The fact that it's largely the same 10 brands occupying the top spots doesn't mean same old same old. In fact, quite the opposite. These brands have not stood still but have continued to do something new, working hard to engage, interest & relate to Gen Alpha. This generation demand, not just expect, this from brands more than previous ones. There's a strong risk for brands that are not seen to be doing anything to become uncool quickly.

"Cool" is not the preserve of just a handful of categories such as gaming & content. Just within the Top 10s in both markets there are multiple categories represented. This year, it is noteworthy that some of the biggest risers & strong performers have been diversifying way beyond their original categories. For example, Minecraft - a video game pushing into multiple of categories, most notably long -form content & becoming the highest-grossing video game adaptation of all time. This extension & diversification is clearly reflected in our Coolest Brands 2025 rankings, it's broadened out its audience, as well as deepened its connection amongst existing brand fans.

In our Food Thought report published earlier this year, one of main themes we unearthed was "Food as Love", covering the emotionality of food & importance around it in social occasions for Gen Alpha. This year's Coolest Brands underlines the role that brands can play in "Food as Love" with so many assorted brands ranging from Doritos to Oreo, Skittles to Domino's ranking highly and are lynch pins for social occasions with family & friends.

My last observation is from a year when Beano Brain has been doing an increasing range of work with clients around Gen Alpha's digital behaviour, against a backdrop of growing media attention & Governmental initiatives. Two of Gen Alpha's most popular digital brands for - TikTok & Snapchat - feature strongly on both sides of the Atlantic. Irrespective of the narratives & initiatives, many of which are rightly concerned about digital safety for kids, it is important not to underestimate just how big a role they play for Gen Alpha - connecting with friends, entertainment, emotional regulation & support and perhaps the most often-overlooked - how they find out news and how early they hear news compared to more traditional media.

I hope you enjoy unwrapping it as much as I do!

Methodology: Motivations Framework

Our motivations framework has been built on years of experience observing kids' interactions with brands. It unearths the needs met by brands and as part of our consultancy work can help clients explore their brand's core purpose, how it delivers against kids' expectations and against competitors.



Autonomy

They need to build towards independence and self expression



Mastery

The desire to perfect something and be seen as an expert



Social

The desire to interact with peers and gain social currency



Learning

A basic desire to develop cognitively and feed the brain



Creativity

Creativity and construction often associated with mindfulness



Mood Management

The desire to hype up or chill back



Identity

The desire to explore self and demonstrate that to the outside world, particularly peers



Performance

The desire to demonstrate achievement and/or seek approval by displaying a skill or talent to an audience



Nurture

The desire to take responsibility and care for another



Collectability

Building a sense of identity and designing their own environment through carefully curated collections



Repetition

The comfort in the familiar, also driven by the desire for mastery



Competition

The desire to compete and win



Methodology: Trendspotter + Omnibus

Step 1: Observation

Spontaneous and prompted mentions from our longitudinal panel of kids and teens age 7 – 14

Step 2: Longlist

150 brands derived from observations and conversations

Step 4: Top 100 Draft List

Step 3: Survey

130 brands analysed via Beano Brain Omnibus in the US
"Which of these brands do you think is cool?"
Over 36,000 "kid first" responses in the US.
Run in December/January and June to smooth out seasonal impacts.

Step 5: Ask the Experts

Our kids and teens panel have their say on the top 100

Step 6: The Final Top 100



Rebel Thinking

Kids always question **"why?"** And so do we.

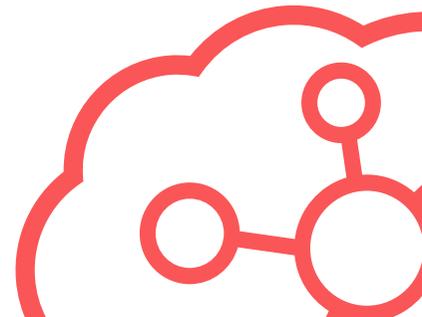
We're born from the original Beano rebels and their spirit lives on within **our brain.**

We call it **Rebel Thinking**

We're not glued to the same set of thoughts. We **thrive on innovation and challenging perspectives.**

Our brain combines fresh insights and data with existing knowledge, connecting the dots to **create Rebel Thinking.**

Original, **thought-provoking solutions** and approaches to help brands cement their places in kids' lives and family homes.



Top 100 Brands

 YouTube	 NETFLIX		 TARGET	 SOUR PATCH KIDS	 Nintendo	 OREO	 Chick-fil-A	 amazon	 ROBLOX
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
 Disney		 m&m's	 LEGO	 KitKat	 JOLLY RANCHER	 HERSHEY'S	 skittles	 M	 Sprite.
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
		 MINECRAFT	 SQUISHMALLOWS		 TikTok	 Spotify	 crocs	 Google	 Goats
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
 Doritos	 DUNKIN'	 nutella	 Domino's	 FORTNITE	 Pink Panther	 Coca-Cola	 XBOX	 Reeses	 Pokémon
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
 FANTA	 7 ELEVEN	 CHEEZ-IT	 Harry Potter	 STANLEY	 Dr Pepper	 adidas	 SUPER MARIO	 NERF	 NFL
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
 Pizza Hut	 pepsi		 hulu	 TACO BELL	 UNO	 Walmart	 Bath & Body Works	 SEPHORA	 MARVEL
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
 FAMILY STAPLES	 EPIC GAMES	 Lays	 DICK'S SPORTING GOODS		 EA	 STAR WARS	 Wendy's	 DOLLAR TREE	 KFC
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
 BURGER KING	 CONVERSE	 lululemon	 PUMA	 OLD NAVY	 MONOPOLY	 SAMSUNG	 HARIBO	 UGG	 Pinterest
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
 FEASTABLES.	 Cane's	 Microsoft	 Toys R Us	 Hello Kitty	 Hot Wheels	 UB BE	 claire's	 MINI BRANDS!	 THE NORTH FACE
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
 elf <small>eyelip face</small>	 UNDER ARMOUR	 HOT TOPIC	 SOL de JANEIRO	 DRUNK ELEPHANT	 JELLYCAT	 GLOW RECIPE	 peacock	 SHEIN	 SONY
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100



"I love the waffle fries in Chick-fil-A - and, oh, their sauce! It's like honey mustard and I love it!" - Adan

2025 Movers and Shakers



With a jump shot worthy of its name, Air Jordan soared 17 places to land in the top 25 this year. It's a standout case of brand salience, with kids and teens viewing it as distinct from parent brand Nike. Rooted in Michael Jordan's legacy and basketball heritage, the designs remain iconic, while Air "Lows" pay tribute to other sporting heroes. For young fans, Air Jordans aren't just sneakers - they're a powerful way to express identity and style. The brand is great at storytelling with their designs like the AJ3 "Pure Money" and AJ1 Low "Better with Time" backed by strong narratives.



YouTube retained its #1 spot in Coolest Brands 2025. However, the brand hasn't rested on its laurels. It earned the top spot by crafting a successful two-pronged strategy, combining YouTube Shorts with a growing compendium of long-form content. Regarded by both parents and kids as a safer video platform, YouTube delivers bite-size morsels of content in Shorts, which compete directly with TikTok. The brand also drives kids and teens to an ever-growing library of long-form content from YouTube's greatest asset - its creator community. Top-ranking YouTube influencers ensure the platform is always current, on-trend, and at the forefront of kids' minds.

Target jumps an impressive eight places from last year's rankings, breaking into our top five. And it seems the brand has discovered a secret for revitalizing retail - the ability to spotlight the brands, franchises, and products kids are most excited about. From its famous candy and drink aisles to in-store favorites like Starbucks, Target consistently taps into what's trending. The brand is also deeply tied to seasonal excitement in the minds of kids and teens, especially around youth-favorite holidays like Halloween and Christmas.



"I've been seeing a lot of Minecraft stuff on YouTube recently. You can do lots of things in Minecraft, Red-stone, Wars, building fun little things. I went to see the movie and now I'm starting to quote it!" - Abby

"Sprite is actually really

The presence beauty and skincare sector in our rankings has grown from 1 in 100 in 2024 to 5 in 100 in 2024. A significant increase that appears to be eating at gaming and traditional retailers alike. Sephora, the aspirational haunt of tweens and teens, successfully surfed the aesthetics wave to jump 17 places this year. Beauty and skincare for tweens may be controversial, but its dominant presence on social media means that brands easily find a young audience whether targeted or not. Brands like e.l.f. cosmetics, Sol De Janeiro and Drunk Elephant have all grown significantly in our rankings this year with their products decorating many a tween girl's carefully curated bedroom shelves.

good in McDonald's. There's no caffeine in it and it's just a simple, good soda." - Sawyer

Somewhat of an evergreen in Gen Alpha's world, Minecraft has jumped 7 places this year to secure the #23 spot. It's a brand that kids and teens never seem to reject. They may abandon it occasionally, but their love is regularly re-awakened by friends or, this year, by the box-office hit A Minecraft Movie. A movie that could so easily have gone wrong, it was carefully crafted with the fans in mind and hit just right as exemplified by not only its success but the huge number of viral memes and "Chicken Jockey" trend taking over social media for a month.

"I like Air Jordans because Michael Jordan made them - I have some black ones that I wear when I play basketball. I like Nike, but I don't know who makes Air Jordan." - Jah

When it comes to kids and teens it's easy to forget the power of heritage. And nothing reflects that more than Sprite as it continues its upward trend, rising five places this year to take the #20 spot. In a competitive market with challengers like Prime, the brand is holding its own, thanks to on-trend innovations (Sprite Chill flavor range and the Tik-Tok trend-inspired Sprite + Tea) and inspirational marketing. In fact, Sprite is proving just as bold in its marketing as it is with its flavor innovations - the brand is testing smart billboards that activate on hot days to push cold drinks, while also leaning into Gen Z's love of spice with its global "Hurts Real Good" campaign, created in partnership with McDonald's and Takis. Comparing Sprite's upward trajectory with influencer-backed brands such as Feastables (entering at #81) and Prime (dropping 30 places out of the top 100), it's clear that short-term buzz does not a brand make!

Finally, it's clear that bans (or potential bans) never really work. TikTok has risen 10 places this year despite the debate surrounding it and ongoing concerns about kids' safety online. It ranks #26 in our top 100 overall but rises to #8 among girls. This indicates that the ban and surrounding publicity, with fans prompted into vocal advocacy, only served to make the platform more aspirational among kids and teens. It is the old adage - you never know what you have until it's (nearly) gone!



Food and bev features prevalently in our 2025 rankings, making up the largest category overall and accounting for 29% of the top 100. Establishing itself as US kids' favorite fast-food brand is Chick-fil-A, leaping 6 places into the top ten. The renowned chicken chain has been carving a niche for itself in a highly competitive industry with its winning formula: commitment to using only premium, all-natural chicken raised without antibiotics, a hero product (Chick-fil-A's secret sauce) and super-clear product positioning backed by humorous marketing that really 'speaks' to kids.

"I'm following Jandel on TikTok - he's the guy that made Roblox: Grow A Garden and he speaks to people that play the game and responds to ideas to make it better which is pretty cool. I like that he listens to people and updates them" - Ellis

YouTube

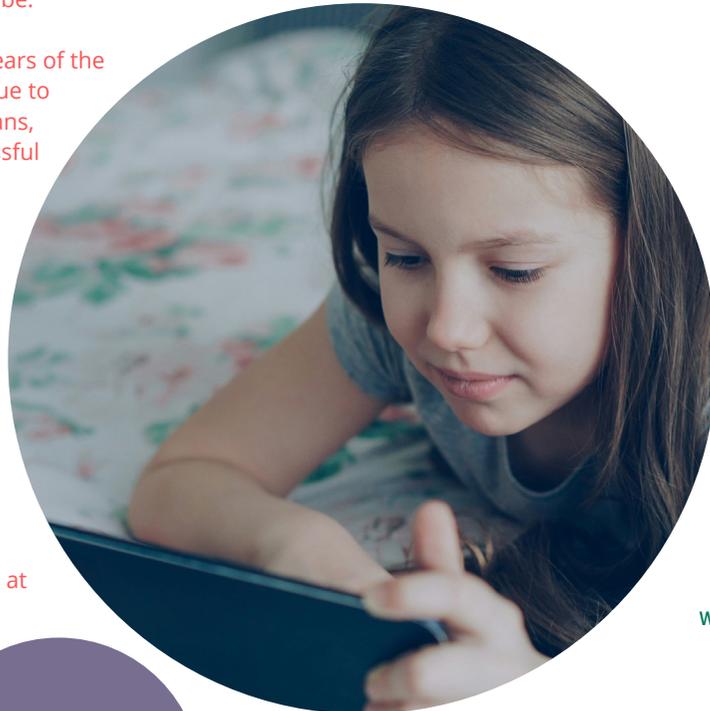
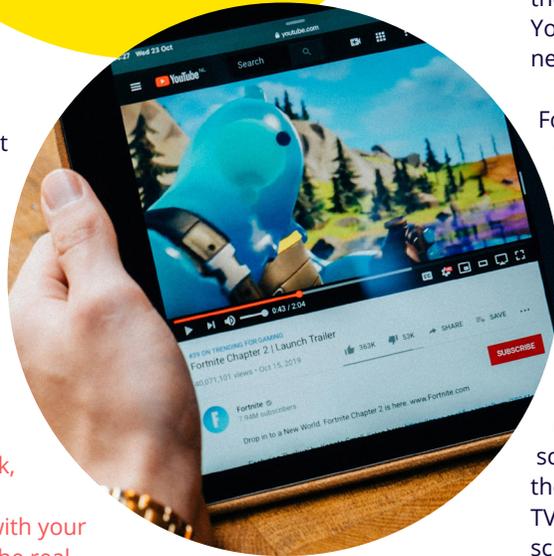
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YouTube reigns supreme at #1 for the second year in a row and has secured a more comfortable lead against Netflix. Since its launch in 2005, YouTube has become the dominant video platform of modern times. On average, over 20 million videos are uploaded daily to YouTube, and the platform is used by over two billion people across the globe. YouTube Shorts – the platform’s answer to TikTok – is averaging over 70 billion daily views.*

YouTube’s popularity is undoubtedly based on the immense depth and breadth of the content it offers. For kids, YouTube is often a more powerful tool than Google when it comes to search and discovery on any topic imaginable. And, unlike TikTok, YouTube is seen by kids as a trusted source and an absolute go-to for any kind of learning – need help with your math homework or want to know if your Labubu is the real deal? The answer is on YouTube.

In the face of long-standing fears of the death of long-form content due to ever-decreasing attention spans, YouTube has crafted a successful two-pronged strategy in the form of YouTube Shorts. These bite-size morsels of content are competing directly with TikTok but are also driving kids to their ever-growing library of long-form content from YouTube’s greatest asset – its creator community. YouTube’s long list of influencers, from macro to micro, ensure the platform is always current, on-trend, and at the forefront of kids’ minds.

Roblox games I like.” – **Jah**



This year, as producers follow younger audiences to their platform of choice, YouTube’s ‘TV’ content has surged, with hit shows such as INSIDE from YouTube squad Sidemen and Locked In from the Footasylum brand. The crossover works both ways too, with YouTube giant MrBeast making the leap to Amazon Prime for his new show, Beast Games.

For kids, YouTube is the new TV, dominating US viewing by capturing 12.4% of all watch time in April 2025 — its highest share yet, making it the top platform for a third straight month. CEO Neil Mohan is tuned into what young audiences want – multiple ways to watch and interact: “As more creators produce content for the big screen, we’re bringing the best of YouTube to TVs, including a second screen experience so you can comment or make a purchase from your phone while watching.”

AI is also driving the platform forward, with tools to determine users’ ages and deliver age-appropriate content. Currently being tested in the US with ID or credit card verification as backup, the move meets new UK, EU and Australian regulations, positioning YouTube ahead of compliance standards while aiming to protect younger viewers.

“YouTube has so many different videos that you can definitely find something to watch. You will never get bored, and people are always uploading things – unlike TV which can end, when it gets to the end of a show or series. You can just keep scrolling on YouTube or YouTube Shorts and find interesting things.” – **Ajeya**

“YouTube has all my favorite YouTubers – KorykKenshin, Foltyn, GamingwithKev. They play on all the

US Top 25



What makes up the Top 100 Coolest Brands?



60%
of US girls think Target is cool vs 48% for Amazon

56%
of US boys age 11-14 think Playstation is cool vs 26% of 11-14 year old girls

57%
of US girls think Starbucks is cool vs 29% of boys

46%
of US boys think LEGO is cool vs 38% of girls

63%
of US kids think YouTube is cool

60%
of US kids age 11-14 think Netflix is cool vs 50% of 7-10 year olds

45%
of US 7-10 year olds think Minecraft is cool vs 33% of 11-14 year olds

57%
of 8 year olds think Sour Patch Kids are cool

Top 5 Food + Drink Brands

1 Sour Patch Kids		[5]
2 Oreo		[7]
3 Chick-fil-A		[8]
4 Starbucks		[12]
5 M&M		[13]

Top 5 Retail Brands

1 Target		[4]
2 Amazon		[9]
3 7-Eleven		[42]
4 Stanley		[45]
5 Walmart		[57]

Top 5 Gaming+Tech+Social Brands

1 Nintendo		[6]
2 Amazon		[9]
3 Roblox		[10]
4 Minecraft		[23]
5 PlayStation		[25]

Top 5 Entertainment Brands

1 YouTube		[1]
2 Netflix		[2]
3 Disney		[11]
4 Harry Potter		[44]
5 NFL		[50]

Top 5 Sport+Lifestyle Brands

1 Nike		[3]
2 Air Jordans		[22]
3 Crocs		[28]
4 Adidas		[47]
5 Converse		[72]

Top 5 Toy Brands

1 LEGO		[14]
2 Squishmallows		[24]
3 Pokemon		[40]
4 Nerf		[49]
5 UNO		[56]

If you would like to delve deeper into



breakdowns of Top 100 Coolest Brands by gender and age are available for purchase.

Please contact us at

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