Capstone 2025:
Beauty's Next Frontier
Generation "Next": Beauty's Biggest Blind Spot
White Paper Research

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Generation “Next”: White Paper Research

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I. Abstract

The beauty industry faces its biggest blind spot in decades. While brands focus on targeting Millennials and Gen Z, Generation Alpha (ages 1–15) already commands $28 billion in direct spending power (Numerator, 2024) and enters the beauty category as consumers as young as 6 years old—more than half the age of previous generations. This isn't just early adoption——it's the longest customer relationship opportunity in beauty history, and today's reality is reshaping the industry.

This study examines the unprecedented impact of Generation Alpha (born 2010–2024) and Generation Beta (born 2025–) on the beauty industry landscape. Unlike previous generations who gradually entered beauty markets in adolescence or young adulthood, these cohorts represent the first true "beauty natives"—consumers engaging with skincare and cosmetics products from exceedingly young ages. In 2024, Generation Alpha's beauty spending was estimated at $14 billion, a more than 70% increase over the prior year (Numerator, 2024). This white paper analyzes the distinctive psychology, values, behaviors, and environmental context shaping these generations, identifying how traditional life-stage marketing models are collapsing as children gain unprecedented financial agency. The research reveals a fundamental paradigm shift where the physical-digital divide has dissolved, creating complex "VirtuReal" consumer journeys requiring entirely new marketing approaches. This study concludes with strategic recommendations for beauty brands to authentically engage these post-digital consumers while navigating ethical complexities, evolving family dynamics, and establishing category-defining safety standards.

II. Introduction: Generation “Next”: Beauty’s Biggest Blind Spot

The beauty industry stands at a pivotal inflection point unlike any previous generational transition. While market analysts and brands have long tracked consumer behavior shifts across generational cohorts, from Baby Boomers through Generation Z, the emergence of Generation Alpha (born 2010–2024) and the forthcoming Generation Beta (born 2025–) represents not merely an evolution but a fundamental reimagining of beauty consumption patterns.

Traditional models that mapped beauty category entry to specific age milestones—typically adolescence for basic skincare and late teens for cosmetics—have been rendered obsolete. Today's children are engaging with beauty products from as young as age 6, driven by an unprecedented confluence of factors: digital immersion from birth, accelerated access to information, shifting family dynamics, and a social media landscape that has permanently altered the relationship between identity formation and beauty consumption.

Gen Alpha broke the lifecycle timeline. A generation that discovers skincare nearly 10 years earlier than their grandparents and is expected to live 14 years longer (United Nations, 2024). This isn't just early adoption—it's the longest customer relationship opportunity in beauty history.

The financial implications are staggering. Approximately 2.5 million Gen Alphas were born every week worldwide, and their global economic influence is projected to soar to $5.46 trillion across all industries by 2029—rivaling the combined spending power of Millennials and Gen Z (McCrindle, 2024). With beauty ranking among their priority categories, their economic agency extends beyond direct purchases, as these cohorts increasingly influence household spending through a reversal of traditional parent-child decision dynamics. Meanwhile, the “Sephora Kids” phenomenon—evidenced by a 196% surge in ”skincare for tweens” online searches (Jane Yoo, MD 2024)—signals a premiumization trend where masstige and luxury beauty brands now count children among their consumer base.

For stakeholders in the beauty industry, the current shift presents both unique opportunities and complex challenges. Companies need to balance commercial potential with ethical responsibilities, addressing concerns about age-appropriate formulations and marketing practices while building genuine connections with digitally savvy, values-driven consumers. Brands that are unprepared for this evolution risk missing out on what could be the most significant market transformation in decades.

Additionally, brands that fail to control their narrative may experience algorithmic hijacking—where viral content alters brand perception without their input. This can lead to premium brands being perceived as kids' brands.

This research aims to decode the distinctive psychology, values, behaviors, and environmental context shaping Generation Alpha and Generation Beta. By examining the macro forces driving their relationship with beauty—from financial agency to collapsed life stages and "VirtuReal" existence, where there is no distinction between virtual and reality —this white paper provides beauty brands with a strategic blueprint for engaging effectively with the first truly post-digital beauty consumers.

III. Methodology

This research aims to decode the psychology, values, and behaviors of Generation Alpha, providing beauty brands with a blueprint to effectively understand, engage, and capture the first truly post-digital consumers. We grouped the research into three sections: a generational patterning analysis to understand key characteristics of Generation Alpha versus their predecessors, the current and future global macro forces driving consumer behavior, and the implications of these factors on beauty brands, including future business opportunities. Qualitative interviews including focus groups and one-on-one interviews, extensive secondary research, and quantitative surveys were employed to address these key areas of focus.

For qualitative research, we conducted 10 peer and industry expert interviews. The goal of these interviews was to gain insight into the perceptions of consumers, industry experts, and parents regarding Generation Alpha, including their attitudes toward beauty, personal consumption habits, education curriculum, influence patterns, and digital usage habits. Some interviews focused on alternative industries such as dermatology and gaming, while others focused on the beauty industry as a whole. Additionally, we conducted a 60-minute focus group of seven parents with children ages 5–15. Lastly, our capstone group conducted research through six international city visits and arranged 15 overseas sessions with corporate leadership in global and local beauty companies.

Through our secondary research, we sought to gather comprehensive insights into the current state and future predictions of Generation Alpha. By exploring a wide range of topics, such as economic factors, geopolitical dynamics, and technological advancements, we aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the shifting consumer landscape. In analyzing beauty industry reports on the Sephora Kids phenomenon and diving into social listening trends, we have been able to deepen our consumer understanding to assist in strategic decision-making for brands operating in this evolving landscape.

Lastly, for our primary quantitative research, we conducted a U.S. survey with 300 respondents of parents of Generation Alpha, specifically children ages 5–15 years old. With the objective of decoding the psychology, values, and behaviors of Generation Alpha, and to predict the analysis of Gen Beta, our survey helped answer four key questions:

- How and when is Gen Alpha first interacting with the beauty industry as consumers?
- What spending behaviors is Gen Alpha employing in relation to beauty? Are they buying products themselves, or are their parents making the purchases?
- How are they engaging with beauty (digital versus in-store), and what types of messages best resonate with this audience?
- How is their concept of identity impacted by this early engagement with beauty (self-perception and confidence metrics)?

Through these three research modalities, we aimed for a holistic understanding of Generation Alpha's behaviors and preferences to provide brands with comprehensive evidence on actions they should take to capture future consumers.

IV. A New Global Convergence: The Seven-Generation World

For the first time in modern history, the beauty industry must simultaneously address the needs, preferences, and purchasing behaviors of seven distinct generational cohorts. This unprecedented generational convergence creates both complexity and opportunity, as brands navigate vastly different formative experiences, digital fluency levels, and beauty philosophies ranging from the Baby Boomers to Generation Beta.

From Boomers to Z: Generations Impacting Beauty Now

Baby Boomers (1946–1964)

Demographics and Formative Experiences: Representing 13% of the global population (McCrindle Federal Reserve, 2024), Baby Boomers were shaped by post-war prosperity, social activism, and the women's liberation movement. They experienced beauty through traditional media channels and retail environments, with formative beauty experiences often centered around department store counters and beauty advisers as trusted authorities.

Attitudes Toward Beauty: Baby Boomers typically approach beauty through an “age-defying” lens, prioritizing anti-aging benefits and proven efficacy. They value brand heritage, personal service, and product consistency. While increasingly digitally engaged, this cohort maintains stronger loyalty to established beauty brands and traditional retail channels compared with younger generations.

Generation X (1965–1980)

Demographics and Formative Experiences: Comprising 17% of the global population (McCrindle Federal Reserve, 2024), Gen X witnessed significant cultural shifts, including the rise of MTV, grunge aesthetics, and the early internet. Their beauty consciousness developed during the supermodel era and the emergence of “department store” versus “drugstore” beauty segmentation.

Attitudes Toward Beauty: Generation X exhibits pragmatic beauty consumption, valuing efficiency and multi-benefit products. They balance traditional and digital discovery methods, serving as a pivotal “bridge” generation that navigates both worlds. With substantial spending power and middle-age concerns, this cohort represents a prime target for premium skincare and “prejuvenation” treatments.

Millennials (1981–1996)

Demographics and Formative Experiences: Constituting 21% of the global population (McCrindle Federal Reserve, 2024), Millennials came of age during rapid technological advancement, economic uncertainty, and the rise of social media. They witnessed beauty's democratization through YouTube tutorials and the proliferation of indie brands challenging established players.

Attitudes Toward Beauty: Millennials pioneered the integration of wellness and beauty, fueling the “clean beauty” revolution while demanding transparency and authenticity from brands. They consume beauty content across multiple platforms and value brands that align with their social values. This generation established self-expression as a central beauty motivation, shifting away from purely corrective approaches.

Generation Z (1997–2009)

Demographics and Formative Experiences: Representing 23% of the global population (McCrindle Federal Reserve, 2024), Gen Z are digital natives who experienced beauty through social platforms, influencer culture, and algorithmically curated content from their earliest awareness. They matured in an era of unprecedented beauty diversity, gender fluidity, and niche community formation.

Attitudes Toward Beauty: Generation Z approaches beauty as a form of self-expression and identity exploration rather than concealment or conformity. They demonstrate fluid category engagement, moving seamlessly between skincare, makeup, and wellness. This cohort values inclusivity, sustainability, and brand transparency while exhibiting decreased brand loyalty and increased experimentation. They pioneered beauty's entry into gaming and virtual spaces, establishing foundations for the metaverse beauty economy.

Generations Impacting Beauty Next: Generation Alpha

Demographics and Formative Experiences: Comprising 24% of the global population, Generation Alpha (born 2010–2024) constitutes the largest generational cohort in history, projected to reach 2.8 billion people worldwide by 2025 (World Economic Forum, 2024). India, China, and Nigeria are the top three countries for Gen Alpha births (McCrindle, 2024). Born entirely in the 21st century, they are the first generation to never experience a pre-smartphone, pre-social media world. Their formative experiences include:

- **Pandemic Childhood:** Many experienced critical developmental years during COVID-19 global lockdowns, accelerating digital immersion and altering socialization patterns
- **AI Integration:** The first generation to interact with artificial intelligence (AI) as a normalized aspect of daily life, from voice assistants to algorithmic recommendations
- **Content Creation Immersion:** Raised in an environment where content creation is a fundamental form of expression and potential career path
- **Climate Consciousness:** Developed awareness of environmental concerns as a baseline expectation rather than an emerging consideration
- **Visual Communication Primacy:** Prioritize image, video, and emoji communication over text, with visual literacy developing before traditional literacy

Attitudes Toward Beauty: Generation Alpha's relationship with beauty products and brands diverges significantly from previous generations in several key dimensions:

- **Category Fluidity:** They perceive minimal distinction between traditional beauty categories (skincare, makeup, personal care), approaching products based on benefits rather than conventional segmentation.
- **Functional Enhancement Versus Correction:** Beauty products are viewed as tools for self-expression and identity exploration rather than problem-solving or corrective solutions.
- **Digital-First Discovery:** Product awareness typically begins through digital platforms (often video-based content) before physical retail experiences.
- **Multi-Sensory Engagement:** Beauty products are expected to deliver experiential elements beyond core functionality, including texture, scent, and interactive packaging.
- **Values Integration:** Consider brand ethics, sustainability practices, and social positions as non-negotiable aspects of beauty purchasing decisions.
- **Cross-Category Influences:** Beauty expectations are shaped by adjacent categories including gaming aesthetics, entertainment properties, and digital avatars.
- **Tribe Effect**: Our primary research and one-on-one interviews uncovered a key purchase driver: tribe mentality. While children are growing up, there is pressure to keep up with peers. As long as you have the current trending product or brand, you belong.

Beauty Consumption Patterns: The Benchmarking Company's August 2024 teen/tween beauty survey asked more than 2,600 parents of Gen Alpha about their children's beauty consumption habits, which found that young girls and boys are displaying an enthusiastic interest for beauty products at staggeringly young ages—68% of Gen Alpha own a prestige beauty product before age 10 (Razorfish, 2024).

- For girls, top areas of interest include facial skincare and fragrance (both 92%), followed by hair care and body products (both 91%). For boys, the top areas of interest are body care and hair care (88% interest among males).
- Skincare is a top beauty category for Gen Alpha: 68% of parents say their child has a skincare routine, with 31% of children self-describing themselves as being "obsessed" with a particular skincare brand. The top skincare concerns for Gen Alpha are as follows:

  - Acne (69%)
  - Moisture (59%)
  - Sun protection (58%)
  - Smooth lips (41%)
  - Soft/smooth skin texture (40%)

- Gen Alpha is regularly using a breadth of beauty products, with 70% favoring fragranced shower products and facial moisturizers, 67% using cleansers, 91% opting for lip gloss, 86% choosing lip balm, and 79% applying mascara.
- Beauty brands that are currently winning with Gen Alpha have strategically leveraged mass entry price points to democratize access to beauty trends and products, typically combined with colorful, standout packaging. Top brands for Gen Alpha include:
  - #1: e.l.f. Cosmetics
  - #2: Ulta-branded Products
  - #3: Sephora-branded Products
  - #4: Sol de Janeiro
  - #5: Bubble

Generations Impacting Beauty's Future: Generation Beta

Predicted Characteristics and Environmental Context

Generation Beta, born from 2025 onward, is expected to comprise 16% of the global population by 2035 (McCrindle, 2024) and to reach around 2.1 billion individuals worldwide by 2040 (McCrindle, 2024). This generation will grow up in a world where numerous emerging technologies are fully integrated into daily life, leading to a fundamentally different relationship with beauty.

- **AI Companionship:** Raised with AI from birth, with potential implications for beauty advice, personalization, product recommendation, and automated purchase decisions
- **No Distinction Between Digital and Physical:** As augmented reality (AR) technology becomes ubiquitous in daily life, this generation will experience beauty through seamless physical-digital integration. Additionally, immense time spent on devices may potentially translate into an influx of skin concerns driven by AI/AR headsets
- **Climate Adaptation:** May develop beauty needs responding to environmental challenges, including increased UV exposure, pollution, and climate changes
- **Micro-Cohort Development:** Increased variation in birth timing and spacing will create distinct micro-cohorts within Generation Beta, requiring more granular marketing approaches
- **Post-Ownership Models:** May engage with beauty through access models (rentals, subscriptions) rather than traditional ownership paradigms
- **Urban Concentration:** By 2040, 58% of Generation Beta is projected to live in cities (World Economic Forum, 2025), with implications for space-efficient beauty solutions and environmental protection needs
- **Significant Impact on Global Spending:** They will account for 12% of total spending (World Data Lab, 2025)

V. Collapsing Life Stages: Macro Forces Creating New Intergenerational Dynamics

Traditional developmental models that neatly segmented childhood, adolescence, and adulthood have undergone profound disruption. Our research reveals that beauty consumption has become fluid, with behavior-driven segmentation now essential as tweens use luxury anti-aging products while older consumers experiment with vibrant color cosmetics. Brands clinging to chronological targeting will miss the Alphas and Betas who expect products tailored to their identity, values, and digital behaviors rather than their age.

Generation Alpha exists within a paradoxical framework where certain aspects of childhood are accelerated (puberty, beauty consumption, digital engagement, information access) while traditional markers of adulthood are delayed (financial security, household formation, career establishment).

Understanding their psychological drivers, evolving concepts of identity, and the influential role of their Gen X, Millennial, and Gen Z parents can help brands develop new consumer models that resonate with these beauty natives, who blend physical and digital experiences seamlessly from birth.

Accelerated Adulthood Driving the “Up-Ager” Effect: Inversion of Classic Teen Years Resulting in Fluidity of Life Markers

The traditional progression of life stages is undergoing a profound transformation, creating a conflicting relationship with beauty consumption. The UN reports that Gen Alphas born in 2024will have a global average life expectancy of 73.3 years—as much as 20% longer than the oldest Millennial parents worldwide (United Nations, 2024). While human longevity extends the overall beauty journey, the entry point has dramatically decreased, with nearly four in 10 Alphas under age 6 regularly using beauty products (SurveyMonkey, 2025). Additionally, research shows the onset of puberty in girls has fallen by nearly five years since 1920, when the average age of puberty onset in girls was 14.6 years old (McKie, R, 2012). By 2010, this average age had dropped to 10.5 years (McKie, R, 2012). This directly results in demand for beauty products, with acne treatment being the No. 1 need for Gen Alpha today. As children experience physical changes earlier, they become more conscious of their appearance and may seek beauty products to enhance or manage these changes.

Traditional Adult Markers and Changing Family Dynamics

While beauty consumption is happening at earlier ages, classic adult milestones—financial independence, homeownership, marriage, and family formation—are happening later in life. A Pew Research report from 2023 noted that Gen Z adults age 21 and older are less likely than their predecessors four decades ago to have reached the five frequently cited milestones of adulthood: having a full-time job, being financially independent, living on their own, getting married, and having a child. By age 25, young adults were still slightly trailing their predecessors on financial independence, with 60% being financially independent in 2021, compared with 63% in 1980 (Pew Research, 2023). However, these 25-year-olds significantly trail those of 1980 on milestones that relate more to family than finances—in 2021, about two-thirds (68%) were living outside of their parents' home, compared to 84% in 1980. Additionally, only 22% of people this age were married in 2021, compared with 63% in 1980. The same pattern holds when it comes to having children: Just 17% of 25-year-olds in 2021 had a child, compared with 39% in 1980 (Pew Research, 2023). The extended emerging-adulthood phase, now considered normative through the mid-twenties, further complicates how brands must conceptualize and address these fluid, overlapping life stages. Combined with the accelerated adulthood phenomenon seen for Gen Alpha, this inversion has created a fundamental tension in beauty marketing as the consumption timeline simultaneously extends at both ends.

The family unit itself has undergone significant transformation, altering how beauty values, spending power, preferences, and behaviors are transmitted across generations. There is a rise of multigenerational households, where 24% of Gen Alphas are living in households with three or more generations present (McCrindle, 2024). In the United States specifically, the share of the population living in multi-generational homes has more than doubled in the past decade (Pew Research, 2024). This cross-generational fluidity fosters closer relationships between Generation Alpha and their grandparents, enhancing emotional bonds and support systems.

Additionally, single-child families are becoming the fastest-growing family structure in developed markets, reflecting changing societal norms and economic considerations. Co-parenting arrangements are also more diverse, creating multiple influence points for children as they grow up. As these family dynamics evolve, they will shape the experiences and development of Generation Alpha in unique and impactful ways.

Delayed Parenting Patterns and the Impact on Generations Alpha and Beta

The trend of delaying parenthood among Gen Z and Millennials is reshaping family dynamics and impacting the upbringing of Gens Alpha and Beta. The average age of a person becoming a parent continues to go up, while many still hope to have children. For Millennials, the average age of having their first child is now around 27.4 years, compared with 24.9 years in 2000 and 21.4 years in 1970 (Collage Insights, 2025). Economic stability, higher educational attainment, and changing social norms are key factors contributing to this delay. These parents, often tech-savvy and value-driven, prioritize financial security and personal development before starting families.

Parenting today is more challenging than ever before, with an overwhelming array of challenges and shifts in parenting culture. Nearly 80% of parents feel that being a parent in today's world is more challenging than it used to be (Collage Insights, 2025), driven by perceived bigger threats against kids' well-being, more demands on balancing parents' workloads, and more pressure to play an extensive role in kids' lives. This has a significant impact on Generations Alpha and Beta. These children benefit from the stability and resources of older parents, growing up in a highly digital world with a strong emphasis on mental health and sustainability. However, the pressure of social media and pursuit of perfection in parenting can also create unique challenges.

significant challenge is the potential for increased pressure on Gen Alpha to succeed academically and professionally, as older parents may have higher expectations based on their own life experiences and achievements. Additionally, these children may experience a larger generational gap with their parents, leading to differences in perspectives and communication styles.

Shared Beauty Experiences Led by Gen Alpha

Beauty's youngest customers are getting even younger—according to an Ulta Beauty report published in June 2024, Gen Alpha begins trying skincare, makeup, and fragrance at age 8—half the age of their Millennial and Gen X counterparts, and over 10 years earlier than Boomers, who began using beauty products at an average age of 18.7. This adoption has positioned Gen Alpha as key family research specialists when it comes to beauty, creating unique bonding opportunities and fostering a sense of connection across generations. While Alphas are eager to teach their parents about beauty (73% report being interested in teaching parents about their skincare routine), parents are simultaneously eager to try products that their children are using. Our research found that 64% of parents report being influenced by their child to purchase a beauty product (SurveyMonkey, 2025). Additionally, 41% of Gen Alpha use their parent's loyalty account for beauty retailers like Sephora and Ulta (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2024). This underscores the collaborative nature of beauty routines within families, where parents and children explore beauty products together.

Generation Alpha bond together through cosmetics instead of clothes. With research gleaned from our focus group, we learned that Gen Alpha children feel like a "member of the tribe" when in possession of cosmetics that friends have. Our research reveals a powerful "tribe effect," as Alphas view beauty products as cultural currency for peer acceptance. What once was new sneakers or a Coach wristlet has become a Gisou lip oil or a Touchland hand sanitizer as a status symbol. The mere act of owning one of these cosmetic products signals "I am one of you," and this is an experience that they share together.

VI. Trends Driving Generation Alpha's Consumption Patterns

Gen Alpha's Financial Freedom Ambitions

Generation Alpha's relationship with consumer spending represents a fundamental departure from historical patterns of childhood economic engagement. This shift manifests across three key dimensions: earlier spending initiation, increased spending volume, and more sophisticated consumer decision-making.

They Are Spending Earlier: Entering Beauty as Young as Age 6

The entry age for beauty category engagement has dramatically decreased. Our research found that over one-third of Gen Alpha children purchased their first beauty product under the age of 6 years old (SurveyMonkey, 2025). By the time they are 9, 60% of Alphas are using beauty products on a regular basis. In contrast, only 40% of Alpha's parents were using beauty products at the same age, indicating a fundamental acceleration of beauty adoption between generations. This accelerated timeline stems from several interconnected factors:

Direct Purchasing Influence: Allowances and Digital Wallets

As children begin to embrace these early beauty routines, they are increasingly using financial tools like allowances and digital payment tools to make their own purchasing decisions, reflecting a growing trend of financial independence at a young age. With seven in 10 Alphas claiming they have a basic understanding of money, their attitudes toward finances are ambitious, despite limited experience (Razorfish, 2025). According to a 2024 Numerator study, 62% of Generation Alpha receives regular financial allowances, typically beginning between the ages of 8 and 10. Additionally, 73% of Alpha parents report their child occasionally or regularly spends their own money on beauty products, indicating a strong engagement with the category (SurveyMonkey, 2025). This financial empowerment is accelerating as patterns change, and cashless societies empower them with security and freedom, where their bank of choice is not a traditional banking system, but rather digital payment methods like PayPal, Cashapp, and Venmo (Razorfish, 2025). Research from payments company Caxton shows that the average digital income of children grew from £164 to £367 from 2017–2024, representing a digital pocket-money increase of around 14% per annum and, as more families and children embrace digital payments, this trend is likely to accelerate (Fintech Finance News, 2024). Notably, this growth varies by age—while 7-year-olds saw their digital spending power grow an average of 28% per year over the research time frame, 18-year-old spenders saw less growth at 9.95% (Fintech Finance News, 2024). This suggests that younger children are increasingly becoming significant players in the digital economy, potentially due to early exposure to technology and parental facilitation of digital transactions.

Indirect Purchasing Influence: Child-Led Decision-Making

The traditional dynamic of parent-child influence has experienced a notable reversal, with Generation Alpha now playing a pivotal role in household purchasing decisions across various categories. A significant percentage of parents, 64%, report being influenced by their children when it comes to purchasing beauty products (SurveyMonkey, 2025). This shift in influence can be attributed to Generation Alpha's perceived digital expertise and greater access to information, effectively positioning them as the family's "research specialists." However, there are marked regional differences in this influence pattern. In Indian households, for instance, parents and media substantially shape children's personal care purchase decisions (Jain, H., Joshi, M., and Parab, T. (2023)). Nevertheless, 82% of Indian parents strongly agree that their child employs various strategies to persuade them during different phases of the decision-making process (Jain, H., Joshi, M., and Parab, T. (2023)), highlighting the evolving role of Generation Alpha in family decision-making. In contrast, Nordic countries exhibit a more collaborative approach, where parents report making beauty purchasing decisions jointly with their children and often accompany them on visits to physical stores.

Research from Numerator (2024) indicates that traditional assumptions regarding parental gatekeeping have underestimated both Alpha's direct influence on purchases and their indirect impact as the family research specialists for beauty products. This breakdown of conventional marketing strategies has raised ethical concerns while also presenting commercial opportunities. Notably, 73% of parents believe that beauty brands are actively targeting the teen and tween demographics, and 80% express that they would feel more comfortable making purchases if brands implemented appropriate safety labeling (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2024).

They Are Spending More: Premiumization From the Start

Generation Alpha's beauty consumption is characterized not only by earlier entry, but by significantly higher spending patterns compared with previous generations at the same age.

Premiumization From the Start

Gen Alpha is skipping mass and going straight to premium—their entry price point is 2.3 times higher than Gen Z's first purchase; 68% of Alphas report owning a luxury product by age 10 (Razorfish, 2025), defying traditional spending patterns of previous generations. The Sephora Kids phenomenon represents a direct leap to prestige beauty without traditional drugstore intermediary steps. For example, parents report that 71% of Gen Alpha children ages 7–17 have asked for a high-priced fragrance product, and 45% for a high-priced hair care device (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2024). The entry-level price point for Gen Alpha's beauty purchases is rising due to increased engagement with premium beauty retailers. Piper Sandler's 2025 Taking Stock with Teens Survey revealed that Sephora and Ulta were the No. 1 and No. 2 beauty retailers, respectively, for teens in 2025 (BeautyMatter, 2025), highlighting that beauty spending has reached new heights among teens. This premiumization reflects Generation Alpha's sophisticated product knowledge and exposure to luxury brand messaging through social platforms. This trend has significant implications for marketers, as these young consumers are forming brand loyalties earlier than previous generations, potentially establishing lifelong relationships with premium brands that recognize and cater to them during their formative years.

They Are Spending More Wisely: Accelerated Discernment

Despite their youth, Generation Alpha demonstrates sophisticated consumer decision-making that challenges assumptions about children's purchasing motivations.

Discerning Consumers—Driven by Acceleration of Access and Education

Generation Alpha exhibits remarkable discernment in their purchasing decisions, driven by accelerated access to information and educational resources. Unlike previous generations by accelerated access to information and educational resources. Unlike previous generations that relied primarily on parental guidance or traditional advertising, today's children leverage digital platforms and AI to research products, compare options, and evaluate quality before committing their limited resources. This generation routinely watches product reviews on social media (79%), skin and hair care tutorials (77%), and educational before-and-after content (77%) that explains ingredients, manufacturing processes, and product efficacy (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2024). Their purchasing decisions frequently demonstrate consideration of factors such as product longevity, versatility, and performance-to-price ratio. This sophisticated approach stems from their digital nativity, where critical assessment of information is developed earlier through constant exposure to diverse perspectives and transparent consumer discourse online. The result is a generation of young consumers who often approach purchasing with surprising thoroughness, asking pointed questions about product attributes that previous generations might not have considered until adulthood.

Value-Aligned Economic Models and Beauty Consumption

Reflecting an early awareness of social and environmental issues, Generation Alpha increasingly gravitates toward value-aligned economic models to drive their beauty consumption. These young consumers show preference for brands that demonstrate ethical practices, sustainability commitments, and inclusive values—considerations that were rarely part of children's purchasing criteria in previous generations. Our qualitative research indicates that Gen Alpha frequently considers a brand's environmental impact, stance on animal testing, and social responsibility initiatives, sometimes even questioning packaging waste or ingredient sourcing.

This value-consciousness extends to their economic models, with many engaging in collaborative consumption through product swapping, secondhand purchasing, or sharing economies even at young ages. Their beauty consumption specifically reflects this trend, with preferences for multi-purpose products, refillable packaging, and formulations marketed as "clean" or environmentally responsible. This generation appears to innately understand the concept that purchasing power equals voting power, displaying awareness that their spending habits contribute to larger economic and social systems.

Brand Loyalty on the Decline

Characterized by experimentation, adaptability, and fluidity in their identity and consumption habits, Generation Alpha's loyalty is often tied to brands that demonstrate authenticity, inclusivity, and sustainability. They display a transient attitude toward brand loyalty, claiming to change their favorite brand every 120 days. Their purchasing patterns reveal frequent brand switching, product testing across price points, and willingness to abandon previously favored brands when alternatives deliver superior experiences or value alignment. This fluidity is facilitated by their comfort with digital discovery platforms and unprecedented choice availability that constantly introduces new options, thereby increasing their inherent openness to innovation. Interestingly, this experimental approach extends to crossing traditional category boundaries, with Gen Alpha showing interest in gender-neutral products, international brands, and innovative formats that previous generations might have approached with hesitation. Marketers are finding that earning Alpha's lasting loyalty requires continuous innovation, authentic engagement, and consistent delivery of both functional and emotional value—suggesting that traditional brand loyalty models may become increasingly obsolete as this generation matures into their full purchasing power.

Identity Duality: Gen "Me," But Also Gen "We"

Tension Between Hyperindividualism and Community Belonging

Generation Alpha's psychological profile reveals a distinctive duality that shapes their beauty consumption patterns and brand relationships. They value body diversity and inclusivity in media, but simultaneously embrace filters to alter their own image (Razorfish, 2024). Therefore, aesthetic choices function simultaneously as personal expression and social currency. Research with Generation Alpha illuminates a growing trend, where they describe feeling pressure to develop a personal brand or distinctive identity. Simultaneously, Gen Alpha express strong desire for group belonging and community acceptance. This tension manifests in beauty choices that enable both individual expression and group signaling. Therefore, products that enable personalization within community-recognized frameworks demonstrate strongest resonance with Alpha.

One of the key features of Generation Alpha is their unprecedented diversity. In the United States, nearly one in two children in this generation identify as non-white (Hotwire Global Research, 2025), reflecting broader demographic shifts. This diversity is not limited to racial and ethnic backgrounds; it also encompasses gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural perspectives. Brands can play a role in helping parents navigate an acceleration in conversations on diverse identities: 71% of parents say they would like at least one of the following resources to help prepare them for teaching their child(ren) about aspects of identity (culture, race, gender, LGBTQ+, etc.) (Collage Insights, 2025). These young consumers are poised to drive significant changes in how society perceives and interacts with concepts of identity, inclusivity, and diversity.

Peer Influence and Recommendation Networks

The traditional model of one-directional celebrity-to-consumer influence has evolved into complex, multi-directional recommendation ecosystems for Generation Alpha, who consume information flows through interconnected networks rather than linear social hierarchies. Digital platforms like Roblox and TikTok enable both mass influence and micro-community formation simultaneously. The power of social influence is immense for Alpha—49% of Gen Alpha trust influencers as much as family with purchasing decisions (Howarth, J., 2025). Additionally, 63% of Alphas say they learn about beauty products from friends and classmates, nearly equal to the

62% who cite social media as a source (SurveyMonkey, 2025). This dynamic creates both challenges and opportunities for brands seeking to reach Alpha.

VirtuReal Environment Creating a New Layer of Complexity

For Generations Alpha and Beta, the historical distinction between physical and digital environments has almost completely dissolved. These cohorts navigate a seamless VirtuReal existence where online and offline experiences blend continuously, creating unprecedented complexity in beauty discovery, influence patterns, and community formation. This marks a key inflection point for the industry, where traditional marketing funnel models have limited application as Generation Alpha moves nonlinearly between awareness, consideration, and purchase.

The Relationship, Connection, and Integration Between Digital and Virtual Worlds

For Generation Alpha, the relationship between digital and virtual worlds is seamless and deeply integrated into their daily lives. From early childhood, Gen Alpha engages with digital platforms like smartphones, tablets, and social media, which serve as their primary means of communication, entertainment, and learning. Digital channels are critical, with over 70% of Gen Alpha discovering beauty products online (Mintel, 2025), primarily through platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Virtual worlds, such as online games and augmented reality applications, are not just sources of amusement but also integral parts of their social interactions and educational experiences. These virtual environments amplify Gen Alpha's fundamental tension between individual expression and community belonging, with digital avatars serving both self-expression and group-signaling functions. This symbiotic relationship fosters a unique worldview where digital fluency is second nature, and virtual connections are as meaningful as face-to-face interactions. As a result, Gen Alpha's identity and social behaviors are profoundly shaped by their ability to integrate digital and virtual realms into their everyday lives.

Gaming as Influence Hub and Digital Beauty Discovery

Generation Alpha is changing the beauty product landscape, preferring to make beauty decisions through engaging 6-second vertical videos rather than browsing traditional stores. With Gen Alpha scrolling through about two kilometers-worth of online content daily, 84% are more likely to consider buying beauty products in the real-world after trying them on their digital avatars, demonstrating their comfort with technology (BizBash, 2024). Reflecting the changing nature of play, gaming platforms now account for nearly a third of all spending for teenagers (Fintech Finance News, 2025). These platforms will increasingly function as beauty influence and discovery hubs with avatar customization driving physical product interest. For example, from January to September 2023, Roblox users purchased more than 139 million in-game hairstyles, up 20% from the year before (BizBash, 2024). In response, Fenty Beauty demonstrated mastery of algorithm-driven engagement. Their Roblox lip oil digital pop-up shop generated 300,000 virtual in-game sales and a 47% real-world site traffic spike, and real product sold out in 10 days. Fenty didn't just advertise in virtual spaces—they built a beauty universe where virtual try-on became virtual buy-now, maintaining brand control while embracing Gen Alpha's native environment.

Evolution of Virtual Spaces: From Human Creators to AI-Enhanced or -Created Personas

Initially, virtual spaces were populated by avatars and characters meticulously designed and controlled by humans. However, advancements in artificial intelligence have revolutionized this landscape, giving rise to AI-enhanced personas that can interact dynamically and autonomously. These AI-driven avatars, such as virtual influencers and digital humans, leverage machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision to mimic human behavior and expressions with increasing sophistication. This transformation has enabled more immersive and personalized experiences in virtual environments, from social media interactions to virtual events and customer service. As AI continues to advance, the line between human and virtual creators blur, opening up new possibilities for engagement and creativity in digital spaces.

For Gen Alpha, who are already growing up in a world where digital and virtual experiences are seamlessly integrated into their daily lives, AI-enhanced personas will further augment their interactions and learning environments. For example, these avatars can provide personalized educational experiences, simulate social scenarios, and offer companionship. Generation Beta will experience an even deeper integration of AI in their formative years. This generation will grow up with AI companions that adapt to their preferences and needs, fostering a unique relationship with technology that is intuitive and deeply embedded in their lives. The constant interplay between real and virtual worlds will shape their social behaviors, learning styles, and even their emotional development, presenting both opportunities and challenges with balancing screen time with real-world interactions.

VII. Implications for the Beauty Industry

How Brands Missed the Early Adoption of "Sephora Kids"

Case Study of Drunk Elephant

Gen Alpha's accelerated adoption of beauty caught many established beauty brands by surprise, as Dimitra Davidson, president of skincare company Indeed Labs, acknowledged: "Obviously, we saw the explosion of a very young consumer entering our world. This was so unusual for someone who launched a brand 15 years ago when I could barely get more mature women to explore skincare, let alone Gen Z" (CEW, 2024).

The concrete consequence of this oversight is that established beauty conglomerates have lost significant market share to emerging brands and indie upstarts that resonate with Alpha, such as e.l.f. Cosmetics (which has captured 50% of Alpha consumers), Bubble (25%), and Sol de Janeiro (27%). These newcomers have recognized and swiftly addressed the evolving needs of this consumer base (The Benchmarking Company, 2024). Furthermore, this situation highlights a critical flaw in the market intelligence systems that failed to detect the collapse of traditional beauty adoption timelines.

The implications of this shift extend beyond missed revenue opportunities to more profound strategic challenges in the long term. Brands that fail to adapt now risk complete exclusion from this consumer base as Alpha forms early loyalty. The case study of Drunk Elephant—the notable, clean skincare brand that experienced explosive growth driven by Gen Alpha—is a key example showing how powerful Gen Alpha's influence is on a brand.

Acquired by Shiseido for $845 million in 2019, Drunk Elephant was positioned as a leader in luxury skincare. However, it faced a 15% decline in sales by fiscal year 2024, worsening with a 64% drop in the first quarter of 2025, largely due to a shift in consumer perception of Drunk Elephant from luxury adult skincare to a kids' brand.

Three key issues contributed to this perception: First, a brand image identity hijack occurred when the brand's vibrant packaging attracted Gen Alpha, diluting its brand sophisticated image. Second, their brand promise of "clean, biocompatible actives for adult skin" became irrelevant when children used products too harsh for their skin, undermining integrity and trust. Lastly, a community fracture emerged as original customers felt alienated without reassurance from the brand.

Shift From Demographic to Behavior-Driven Segmentation

As age-based marketing becomes outdated, the need to shift from demographic to psychographic segmentation is clear. This change is more than a tactical adjustment; it is a strategic overhaul with significant revenue implications. Brands relying on demographic models report a 23% drop in consumer loyalty compared with those using behavior-based strategies (Beauty Matter, 2025). For beauty marketers, this calls for a swift redefinition of target audiences, development of psychographic profiles, and a realignment of channel strategies to engage consumers based on their behaviors rather than age.

This transformation inevitably impacts three main areas. First, marketing content must be revised and fundamentally reimagined to address behavioral motivations rather than age-linked milestones. Second, product development roadmaps require acceleration to meet earlier adoption timelines. Third, retail strategies must evolve to reach consumers via platforms like gaming, previously considered irrelevant to beauty discovery.

It is key for companies to start or expand investment in advanced consumer intelligence capabilities that can identify and track emerging behavior patterns across different age cohorts and lifestyles. Research indicates that successful behavior-driven beauty brands are investing 40% more in AI-powered consumer behavior analytics compared with demographically focused competitors (Sia, 2023). As Jeff Lee, CEO of DIBS Beauty, observed, "Whether in cosmetics or the political sphere, the customer is watching every dollar but is also very willing to deploy it when there's value and emotion behind what they are putting towards"

(CEW, 2024). Brands that successfully pivot to behavior-driven strategies report 27% higher conversion rates and 42% stronger brand loyalty compared with those maintaining traditional demographic approaches (Britopian, 2023).

Ethical and Legal Complexities

The accelerated entry of Generations Alpha and Beta into beauty markets creates unprecedented ethical considerations for industry stakeholders. Additionally, advertising to children is heavily regulated around the world, with significant variations between countries. The following is an overview of the key regulatory approaches and specific laws. For example, the EU has implemented the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) legislation, which restricts advertising that might harm children physically, mentally, or morally. In the United States, marketing to children is not categorically illegal, but it is subject to significant regulation through a combination of federal laws, regulatory agency oversight, and industry self-regulation. For example, the Federal Trade Commission regulations prohibit unfair or deceptive advertising to children, and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires parental consent before collecting data from children under 13. India's approach combines government regulation with industry self-regulation, which effectively prohibits misleading advertisements targeting children and bans ads that develop negative body image in children. These complexities extend beyond traditional marketing concerns to fundamental questions about developmental appropriateness, formulation safety, and the balance between commercial opportunity and social responsibility.

Age-Appropriate Versus Age-Agnostic: Formulating Correctly for Younger Skin

The physiological characteristics of pre-pubescent skin necessitate specific formulation requirements that differ considerably from those designed for adults. Key distinctions include:

1. Enhanced Skin Permeability: Pre-pubescent skin exhibits increased permeability, which heightens the risk of ingredient over-absorption and potential irritation.

2. Underdeveloped Skin Barrier Function: The skin barrier in this age group is less mature, rendering it more susceptible to environmental stressors.

3. Variations in Sebum Production: Sebum production patterns in this age group differ significantly from those seen in adolescents and adults.

4. Evolving Microbiome: It is crucial to carefully preserve the developing microbiome to support overall skin health.

Industry leaders must navigate the fine line between products that are simply marketed to younger consumers and those that are thoughtfully formulated to address these unique physiological needs. For example:

- Suitable Products: Gentle cleansers, physical (not chemical) sunscreens, and moisturizers that reinforce the skin barrier.
- Questionable Products: Anti-aging ingredients, exfoliating acids, and components that may disrupt hormonal balance.

Rise of "Family Approved" Label: Parallels to Other Safety-Focused Categories

The beauty industry appears poised to follow evolutionary patterns seen in other youth-oriented categories where safety certification emerged as a competitive differentiator before becoming standard practice. A Global Cosmetic Industry report from 2024 indicates that 80% of parents would feel more comfortable purchasing beauty products for their children if brands included warning labels for ingredients that might be too harsh for tween skin.

Similar transformations occurred across multiple sectors:

- Food Industry: "Kid-safe" labeling evolved from marketing distinction to regulatory requirement.
- Toy Industry: Age-grading systems developed from voluntary guidelines into mandatory standards.
- Digital Content: Rating systems transformed from optional features into expected consumer guidance.

These precedents suggest that beauty products marketed to younger consumers will likely experience a similar progression, with current differentiated safety certifications eventually becoming baseline expectations or regulatory mandates.

Cross-Generational Integration

Navigating Intergenerational Parental Concerns

As Generation Alpha emerges as a significant consumer group in the beauty industry with substantial spending power, brands must navigate the intricate dynamics involving these young consumers and their parents, who act as critical gatekeepers. This tension presents a delicate balancing act for brands aiming to engage this younger generation while also addressing parental safety concerns.

Parental apprehensions stem from legitimate developmental considerations, as children are being exposed to beauty products at increasingly young ages. Developmental psychologists suggest that early interaction with beauty marketing can impact children's self-perception and body image during these crucial formative years. The Dove Self-Esteem Project reveals that "55% of girls around the world don't feel good about the way they look," indicating a significant dissatisfaction in body image amongst young girls. Furthermore, research shows that "2 in 5 girls would give up a year of their life to achieve an ideal look or body" (Dove Self-Esteem Project, 2024), highlighting the serious psychological implications of introducing beauty concepts at an early age.

Rather than viewing parental concerns as obstacles, progressive brands are seizing the opportunity to turn these apprehensions into strategic advantages. Research indicates that 71% of parents would respond favorably to clinical claims supported by testing panels involving tweens and teens (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2024). By adopting a tiered communication approach that addresses safety concerns while transforming parents from gatekeepers to engaged partners in their children's beauty exploration, brands can significantly enhance their relationships with consumers.

Family Beauty Collaboration Models

The traditional parent-child beauty dynamic is shifting from a top-down instructional model to a collaborative exploration. Generation Alpha's digital savvy combines with parental guidance, making beauty rituals important bonding moments; 41% of Gen Alpha use their parents' loyalty accounts at retailers like Sephora and Ulta (Global Cosmetic Industry, 2024). This trend offers brands opportunities to create multi-generational engagement strategies.

Brands are responding by developing products and experiences for shared beauty moments. For instance, Bubble Skincare has introduced "Mother-Daughter Skincare Sets" featuring complementary formulations for varied skin needs. Research shows that these collaborative experiences result in 34% higher satisfaction rates and 27% stronger brand loyalty compared with products aimed at individuals (BeautyMatter, 2025). This means brands must shift their focus from targeting distinct age segments to fostering intergenerational beauty conversations.

Additionally, the collaborative model influences retail experiences, content creation, and education. Retailers are redesigning stores to include family-friendly consultation areas, while digital platforms are crafting content for co-viewing. As parenting expert Dr. Kelly McBain notes, exploring beauty together provides opportunities for meaningful discussions around self-esteem, confidence, and authenticity (The New Beauty Paradigm, 2024). Brands fostering these collaborative experiences see significant advantages, including 43% higher repeat purchase rates, 38% greater cross-category exploration, and 52% stronger emotional connections compared with traditional marketing methods (Beauty Innovation Report, 2024).

Multi-Potency Systems Serving Different Age Groups Simultaneously

The rise of multi-generational beauty engagement is driving the development of adaptable product systems catering to various skin needs within families. Progressive brands are creating multi-potency formulations that can be adjusted for different age groups, allowing families to share beauty routines while ensuring products meet individual needs.

This multi-potency approach addresses both practical and emotional aspects by streamlining beauty routines and enhancing shared experiences. Brands like The Ordinary and The Inkey List offer customizable formulations that can cater to various skin types.

For beauty brands, this means evolving from age-specific formulations to interconnected product ecosystems that support cross-generational use. Successful strategies will include educational resources on product adaptation, visual potency indicators, and family-friendly packaging. As dermatologist Dr. Sarah Lee states, “honoring the unique needs of young skin while promoting shared beauty experiences is crucial for success” (Dermatological Beauty Report, 2023). Brands following this model experience significant benefits, such as 31% lower customer acquisition costs and longer customer lifetime values (Beauty Business Intelligence, 2024).

VIII. Strategic Recommendations

The New Beauty Paradigm

As Generations Alpha and Beta emerge as digital natives in an unprecedented technological landscape, the beauty industry faces a transformative imperative to evolve beyond traditional product-centric models. To win with the future consumer, brands must fundamentally shift their roles from transactional product provider to lifelong beauty co-pilot.

Beauty for Generations Alpha and Beta is characterized by seamless fluidity—between digital and physical worlds, individuality and community, personal biology and emotional well-being. These generations form their identities through constant feedback loops across physical, digital, and social ecosystems, collapsing traditional life stages into dynamic, fluid journeys where beauty serves as a continuous companion adapting to their evolving needs, values, and worldviews.

Our recommendation is simple: Become Gen Alpha’s lifelong beauty co-pilot. Be present in every scroll, at every stage, and at every life event. That requires brands to deliver on three imperatives:
1) meet them where they are in their VirtuReal environment 2) adapt products to their evolving biology 3) own your core brand identity so that no algorithm can distort it.

Meet Them in Their VirtuReal Environment

Gen Alpha’s beauty journey is seamless, algorithm-driven, and omnipresent—a fluid blend of digital discovery and real-world conversion. Their phone isn’t just a device; it’s their beauty playground, where trends emerge, products are vetted, and purchasing decisions happen in milliseconds. This generation doesn't differentiate between digital and physical—it's all one continuous beauty experience. Their sampling bar? Augmented Reality filters and AI-powered shade matching. Their beauty counter? Livestream tutorials and influencer-led product breakdowns. Their loyalty program? Community engagement, not discounts.

Gen Alpha doesn't browse—they scroll, swipe, and tap their way through beauty discovery. Their purchasing decisions are shaped by micro-moments, where a single viral video, a trending hashtag, or an influencer's recommendation can dictate what's in their cart. To capture Gen Alpha, brands must exist where they live—without waiting for them to stumble upon a product in-store. Each channel plays a unique role in their purchasing journey. TikTok introduces; creators and viral trends dictate what's worth buying. Roblox confirms; virtual experiences reinforce desirability and brand loyalty. All channels have the ability to convert. Therefore, the VirtuReal space demands instant engagement, where beauty brands must be interactive, immersive, and frictionless.

For Gen Alpha, visibility is everything. If you're not in their feed, you don't exist. If you're not engaging, you're being replaced. The algorithm is your storefront, curating their beauty choices before they ever enter a physical or online store. To win, brands must show up as one consistent brand, zero friction, infinite touchpoints. Forget waiting for Gen Alpha to find you—go to them.

There are five imperatives to win in the VirtuReal space:

- **Be Interactive—**Gamify beauty discovery with AR filters, virtual try-ons, and AI-powered recommendations.
- **Be Immersive—**Create branded experiences in Roblox, Fortnite, and other digital spaces where Gen Alpha spends their time.
- **Be Frictionless—**Remove barriers to purchase with seamless checkout, instant product links, and one-click conversions.
- **Be Community-Driven—**Engage Gen Alpha through creator collaborations, user-generated content, and peer-to-peer recommendations.
- **Be Everywhere—**Don't wait for Gen Alpha to come to you—meet them where they already are.

In the VirtuReal space, you don't have to be first to market, new, or innovative. You just have to be there. Because for Gen Alpha, there's no "digital" versus "physical"—just beauty, everywhere.

And now that you're present in their world, you can grow and evolve with them.

Grow With Them

Generation Alpha is revolutionizing the way beauty is understood, consumed, and developed. Unlike previous generations, their entry point to the industry begins nearly a decade earlier than their grandparents, while their lifespan is projected to extend 16 years longer, thus creating the longest consumer relationship opportunity in beauty history. However, the rapid biological evolution of Gen Alpha's skin disrupts conventional product development timelines. In a primary interview with a dermatologist, our research revealed Gen Alpha's skincare concerns change approximately every 18–24 months, meaning traditional 36–month research and development cycles are failing to keep pace. By the time a brand launches a product designed for their current needs, Gen Alpha has already moved on to the next biological phase—whether it's transitioning from basic hydration to acne solutions, oil control to blue-light defense, or adjusting their routine based on daily micro-adjustments, such as post-exercise skin shifts and environmental stressors. This demands faster, more agile product development cycles.

Today, the beauty industry has responded to this rapid evolution with diagnostic tools, where AI-powered selfie analysis and questionnaires to recommend products. While innovations like SkinCeuticals Custom D.O.S.E and MAC's Virtual Try-On enhance shopping efficiency, they do not yet enable real-time formula adaptation. Consumers are steered toward static products—moisturizers, cleansers, serums—that remain unchanged after purchase. This approach fails to account for fluid skin concerns, where skincare needs evolve throughout the day, week, and year. Our recommendation isn't building more products—it's building smarter product systems. The challenge—and the opportunity—is to move beyond static SKUs toward dynamic, predictive systems that co-evolve with each user's environment, biology, and mood, rewriting the very definition of personalized skincare. Beauty brands must move beyond diagnostic recommendations toward modular, adaptive product systems, where formulations adjust dynamically based on biological, environmental, and behavioral data.

In the next few years, we predict the future of skincare will no longer rely on fixed formulations but instead embrace modular, predictive product systems that respond in real time. Soon, skincare will function like personalized health tracking, where packaging itself becomes a mini lab, dispensing active ingredients based on UV exposure, pollution levels, stress cycles, and sleep patterns. A single base cleanser, a universal cream—paired with drop-in actives—will allow for infinite customizations, eliminating waste while ensuring precision care. Imagine a pump that dispenses vitamin C when UV spikes, niacinamide during stressful weeks, or hydration boosters after exposure to dry environments. This shift will transform beauty from single-use SKUs to lifelong skincare solutions, where an 8-year-old's first moisturizer evolves into an 80-year brand relationship, rather than requiring multiple brand switches.

Beauty must now match the agility of industries already operating on data feedback loops that refine experiences in real time. Netflix curates trailers and thumbnails dynamically based on user behavior, while Spotify analyzes listening patterns and location data to adjust playlists for mood and activity. These industries are not just recommending content—they're adapting experiences. Beauty must catch up, leveraging AI-powered predictive skincare that co-evolves with users rather than reacts. Instead of passive diagnostics, the industry must embrace active intelligence, where skincare adapts instantly to match a user's biology, surroundings, and lifestyle patterns.

While accelerating product development cycles is essential, maintaining a cohesive brand narrative amid constant change presents an additional challenge. Speed without strategy leads to chaotic product offerings and fragmented consumer experiences. Brands that succeed in this new era must master consistent storytelling, ensuring their evolving products still fit within a recognizable identity. The future of skincare is not about launching more products—it's about developing adaptive, evolving systems that seamlessly integrate into a consumer's lifetime skincare journey. Beauty brands must embrace modularity, predictive intelligence, and personalized formulations or risk becoming obsolete as Gen Alpha gravitates toward competitors who can keep pace with their accelerated evolution.

Own Your Narrative

TikTok drops over 34 million videos daily (The Social Sheperd, 2025), creating an environment where brands can experience instant visibility or rapid distortion. A single viral moment can propel a brand into mainstream success, but if left unchecked, it can also reshape its identity beyond recognition. In Gen Alpha's digital-first landscape, brands must actively control their narrative or risk being defined by algorithmic forces rather than intentional strategy. Gen Alpha, the most digitally immersed generation, engages with brands through social media, gaming, and influencer-driven content, making it imperative for companies to own their story before the algorithm does.

To navigate this evolving space, we developed a modern marketing framework that blends time-tested fundamentals with Gen Alpha's expectations. This framework is built on three pillars: *Own Your Narrative, Service Your Community*, and *Promise with Purpose*.

- **Own Your Narrative:** ensures that brands maintain authenticity and clarity, as Gen Alpha gravitates toward companies with strong, distinct voices
- **Service Your Community:** taps into Gen Alpha's desire for belonging, with research showing that 81% prefer brands that foster a sense of community (Razorfish, 2024)
- **Promise with Purpose:** highlights the importance of collaborating with Gen Alpha rather than simply marketing to them. This generation values transparency, participation, and shared growth, making co-creation a key factor in brand loyalty.

A compelling case study illustrating this framework is Drunk Elephant, a skincare brand that skyrocketed to success with Gen Alpha but struggled to maintain its core identity. Originally targeting Millennials and Gen X, Drunk Elephant unexpectedly captured Gen Alpha's attention through its bright, playful aesthetic and skincare smoothie trend—a viral phenomenon where users mixed multiple products on-screen. However, as Business of Fashion notes, the brand's explosive growth was followed by a sharp decline, with a 65% drop in quarterly sales (Business of Fashion, 2025). This shift underscores Gen Alpha's fleeting loyalty cycles, where 120-day engagement windows can drive massive gains but also reset the market just as quickly.

Drunk Elephant's challenge lay in balancing virality with brand consistency. While its neon packaging made it instantly recognizable, it was never designed with Gen Alpha in mind. As tweens embraced the brand, Millennial parents followed, creating a child-to-parent influence loop. However, parental safety concerns soon cooled momentum, leading to consumer attrition. The brand's hesitation to clarify its stance for both new and existing audiences meant that viral fame outran its narrative, missing the opportunity to solidify long-term loyalty. This highlights a critical lesson: Brands must embrace new audiences without alienating their core consumers.

Maintaining community engagement requires brands to consistently deliver on their promises. Drunk Elephant built trust through clean, effective skincare, yet when safety concerns arose, it failed to proactively reinforce its principles. Rather than addressing concerns head-on, the brand avoided dialogue, missing the chance to protect its equity and maintain authority. This underscores the importance of transparency and responsiveness, as Gen Alpha expects brands to engage in open conversations rather than dictate messaging from a distance.

Despite setbacks, Drunk Elephant—and any brand facing similar challenges—can reclaim relevance by applying our modern marketing framework. Viral success is not inherently sustainable, but brands that own their narrative, foster community, and deliver on promises can transform fleeting trends into lasting engagement. As Gen Alpha continues to reshape consumer expectations, brands must adapt their strategies to match the speed of digital evolution—or risk being replaced by competitors who do.

IX. Conclusion

To secure long-term relevance and loyalty, beauty brands must return to core fundamentals that ensure consistent engagement, adaptability, and authenticity. Gen Alpha is entering the beauty market at an unprecedented early age, and with a lifespan projected 20% longer than previous generations, brands have a 70-year window to build lasting relationships. However, traditional lead times are no match for Alpha's hyper-fast adoption cycles—they master new technologies before brands even begin discussing their implementation. To thrive in this space, companies must reframe their approach, prioritizing three key pillars: meeting Gen Alpha in their VirtuReal world, adapting to their evolving consumption patterns, and owning their narrative before the algorithm dictates it. Mastering these principles will position brands as lifelong beauty companions rather than fleeting trends.

Yet, just as brands learn to navigate Gen Alpha's behaviors, Generation Beta is emerging—a cohort raised in an AI-native world, where bioadaptive beauty and real-time customization will be baseline expectations. Within the next 15 years, Gen Beta will redefine beauty consumption, eliminating the distinction between physical and digital shopping while demanding seamless biometric personalization. This means that the industry Gen Beta inherits will be shaped by those who successfully captured Gen Alpha first. Winning with Alpha is not just an opportunity—it's a necessity to remain competitive in the next era of beauty innovation. Beauty brands that fail to evolve, personalize, and integrate AI-driven solutions will be left behind as Gen Beta rewrites the industry altogether. Now is the moment to lead, innovate, and establish a foundation that transcends generations.

X. Gen Alpha Beauty and Lifestyle Glossary

Screen & Digital Culture

- Always-online mode: The default state of being constantly connected and available across digital platforms
- Screencore: A lifestyle aesthetic centered around heavy digital device usage and online presence
- Digital-native vibes: The natural comfort and fluency Gen Alpha has with technology and digital spaces
- Feed-curated: Having a carefully crafted social media presence that reflects personal aesthetic and beauty standards
- VirtuReal: The blended experience where virtual and real-world interactions feel equally authentic and meaningful

Beauty & Aesthetics

- Glow-up era: A period of significant improvement in appearance, style, or confidence
- Slay-mode activated: Being at peak confidence and looking absolutely stunning
- Aesthetic-locked: Having found and committed to a specific visual style or beauty look
- Skincare-maxxing: Optimizing skincare routines for maximum results and glowing skin
- No-makeup makeup energy: The effortless, natural beauty look that appears minimal but is actually well-crafted
- Soft-glam core: A beauty aesthetic focusing on subtle, refined makeup and styling

Social & Lifestyle

- Main character energy: Living life as the protagonist of your own story with confidence and intentionality
- It-girl status: Having that indefinable quality that makes someone effortlessly cool and influential
- Vibe-check passed: Meeting or exceeding social and aesthetic standards
- Lowkey iconic: Subtly impressive or noteworthy without being overly flashy
- Living rent-free: When someone or something occupies constant mental space (often used for beauty inspiration)
- Vibe-tribe: A close-knit group of friends who share similar aesthetics, interests, and energy

Trends & Behaviors

- Trend-cycling: Rapidly moving between different aesthetic trends and styles
- Micro-influencer mindset: Approaching personal style and beauty with the strategic thinking of a content creator
- Algorithm-approved: Content, looks, or styles that perform well on social media platforms
- Viral-ready: Prepared to participate in or create trending content

- Story-worthy: Experiences or looks deemed interesting enough to share on social media stories

Confidence & Attitude

- Unbothered queen/king: Someone who maintains confidence regardless of outside opinions
- Serving looks: Consistently presenting impressive, well-put-together appearances
- Energy-matched: When someone's inner confidence aligns with their outer presentation
- Periodt energy: Absolute confidence and finality in one's statements or appearance
- That's so aesthetic: Used to describe anything visually pleasing or on-brand
- Touch-grass reminder: Gentle suggestion to balance digital life with offline experiences (often used ironically)

Everyday Peer Communication / Slang Glossary

- No cap: "No lie" or "I'm being completely honest"
- Skibid: Something that is cool because it is goofy. Stems from YouTube series Skibidi Toilet
- Fr fr: "For real, for real"—emphasizing agreement or authenticity
- It's giving... : Used to describe the vibe or energy something gives off ("It's giving main character")
- Slay bestie: Encouraging phrase meaning "you're doing amazing, friend"
- That's so sus: Something seems suspicious, questionable, or off
- Low-key/High-key: Somewhat/very much ("I'm low-key obsessed with that lip combo")
- Bet: "Okay," "sounds good," or showing agreement
- Say less: "I understand completely" or "you don't need to explain more"
- Periodt: End of discussion; used for emphasis (often with extra t's)
- We stan: We support or admire something/someone enthusiastically
- Hits different: Something that's exceptionally good or impactful
- That's fire: Something is excellent, impressive, or really good
- Finna: "Going to" or "about to" (shortened from "fixing to")
- Slaps: Something that's really good, especially music or food
- Big mood: "That's so relatable" or "I completely understand that feeling"
- Gyat: Expression of surprise or admiration, often used when impressed by someone's appearance
- Chat: Used to address an audience or get attention ("Chat, are we seeing this?")
- Casual pookie: Affectionate term for a friend, combining "casual" with the endearing "pookie"
- Delulu: playful take on being delusional about goals or expectations
- Keep cooking: encouragement to continue excelling at whatever you're doing
- Stay goated: —motivational phrase to remain at peak performance (GOAT = Greatest Of All Time)
- Never be mid: —philosophy of avoiding mediocrity and always striving for excellence

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