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MARKETING

Guest Column: Kids – Influencers of today & consumers of the future

By [Ambika Sharma](#)

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Ambika Sharma,
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"Dear fourth grader,

While you are playing angry birds on your android device, the only birds I saw when I was your age were in books and trees."

Sincerely,

A young marketer

There was a time when parents used to take their kids shopping. But now times have changed. If figures are anything to go by, it is the children who are now taking parents shopping. As per The Economic Times, the Indian kids' market is worth Rs 20,000 crore distributed over sectors such as apparel, FMCG, gizmos, media/entertainment, games, toys, IT, nutrition and food. With the child population of 450 million and another eight million being added each year, India is the youngest country in the world. Every brand has done the math; it is official that kids hold the purse strings!

Children are hubs of information; three-year olds begin to recognise, form opinions on brands and tend to skew towards products. This translates in pester power or in the least, tipping the scales in favor of their preferred brand. It is but natural that brands build a strong bond with these young school-going influencers.

Connecting with kids at schools is not a new approach; in fact it's amongst the earliest approaches in the industry. However, with the deluge of information and adverts that an average child receives every day, the humble SCP too has evolved. It's no longer just making contact; it's now about creating a connection.

The six things that go into brands creating a connection with kids at school are:

Make it special: Experiential marketing is about delivering an experience for the product and brand both, making the experience special and engaging. Don't bore them with the map-it-to-the-text-book stuff, as they already do that all day!

Make an effort, customise: If you have to give a lot of information, make it entertaining; put in the extra effort to create an animation film, a video or a jingle. Remember that what you show them is being compared in quality to Cartoon Network or MTV. You don't want to fall short.

Don't be boring: You must reward, but don't go with the boring bags and books. Give them what they want or at least find a balance. Gadgets, PCs, trips to universal studios; the fun glam stuff is what breaks the clutter and captures their imagination.

Keep it light: Don't cook up a plan that gives them more work than their homework (unless you have a prize line-up to make it worth the effort). Kids are busy, they have home work, tuitions, projects and peer pressure to cope with. Keep the engagement simple, meaningful and time it just below the 'zone-out zone' (kids' zone out of something is too lengthy), so a 2,000 word essay and the make-a-comic book is out.

Connect with the parents: A great opportunity is to connect with parents, and one must not miss this as long as it's not too intrusive. Parents know about marketing and will not take too kindly to a 'buy me' force on to them through their children. Find a relevant point of conversation; don't hard sell.

Create value: Most importantly, create value. If your brand creates value, then so must each initiative of the brand, especially when dealing with a sensitive audience such as kids. Blatant commercialisation finds no sympathy with either the parents or the teachers, who are the gatekeepers.

In planning a successful activation for kids, identifying kids' icons and what interests them becomes imperative. When planning the activation, one needs to ensure that it answers a few relevant questions. Is the activation engaging enough for the kids? Is the gratification going to excite/interest them? Is the communication going to capture the gatekeepers' interests? Is it going to breeze through their lives with little impact, or will it capture their interest and tickle their imagination? If the answers to these questions is 'yes', then we have on our hands, a successful campaign that can draw long-term benefit for the brand.

The author is CEO and Managing Director, Pulp Strategy Communications.

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