

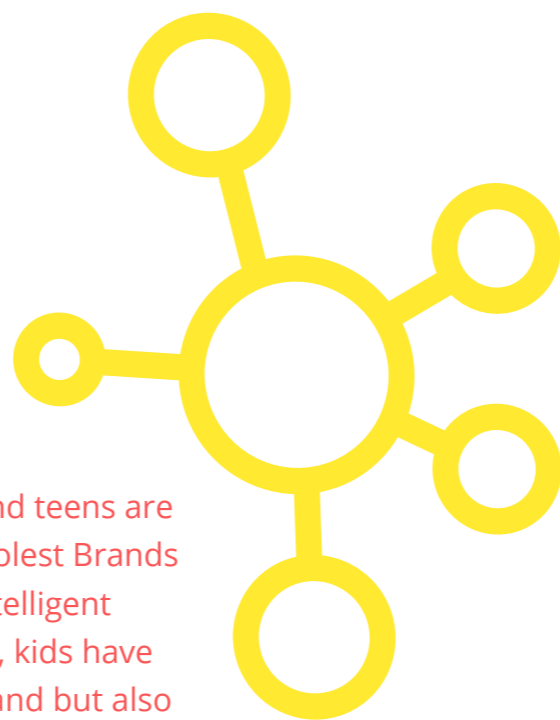


# Helenor Gilmour

## Want to know if your brand is cool? Ask a kid!

I never cease to be amazed at how sophisticated kids and teens are in their brand consumption and our 2024 list of the Coolest Brands is a perfect example. Often more discerning and intelligent than adults when it comes to the brands they use, kids have a clear sense of the practical advantages of a brand but also how it affects them on an emotional level.

Want to know why one brand of snacks is cooler than another? Ask a kid. We did, and they told us about the “mouth feels”. Want to understand your brand positioning – ask a kid and hear how it helps them fit in with their peer group or even gives them the confidence to stand out.



Only a few classic children’s brands feature in our top 100. 5 out of the top 25 could be regarded as children’s properties. But we often forget that Gen A are growing up in a world designed and built by adults and at a younger and younger age they are exposed to brands that form the backbone of their existence – but are not explicitly designed for them. Brands are anchored in kids’ lives from an early age marking key moments and milestones.

In our 2024 list it is also abundantly clear how brands rooted in storytelling are loved by kids and teens. Netflix and YouTube compete for top place with Nintendo and Disney earning places in the top 10. This sets the bar super-high for any brands hoping to challenge these storytelling behemoths. It also illustrates just how high Gen Alpha’s expectations are when it comes to depth and breadth of content.

Food and drink brands feature heavily in the top 25, unsurprisingly given the size of marketing budgets historically but they are also closely associated with treats and fun family time. They are valued by kids for the products themselves, but how they differ from other products AND how they make them feel. Kids understand the added brand values and personalities of the best ranked brands.

It’s not as easy to make an impact as a new brand because kids’ expectations are high. Constant innovation, super-fast delivery, reliability, safety built-in and depth and breadth are all simple hygiene factors to this most brand-literate generation. Only 2 of our top performing brands – Amazon and Roblox were born in the 21st century. However, we have seen clear upward trends in some sectors, often aligned to gender. The gaming sector has performed really well this year with gaming brands – products and gaming companies moving up our ranks. Whilst riding the crest of the aesthetics wave, skincare, fashion and beauty brands have risen in popularity with girls.

Finally, brands that upped the funny this year have acquired cool points with kids. Friendly brands and brands that know how to make kids laugh do well in our rankings. Humour is playground currency for kids and welcomes them into the brand’s world. Create the LOLs and you capture coolness!



# Pete Maginn

There's potential for brands to tap into kids' daily & cyclical lives with relevance whilst injecting newness & excitement.

Welcome to Coolest Brands 2024! In my (admittedly biased!) view, this just gets more interesting each year! There are clearly some Top 10 ever-presents who although their precise ranking might change year to year, manage to achieve consistent coolness with kids over time.

Once again being a cool brand is simply not the preserve of one particular category – it's not all about entertainment brands or gaming brands. Within the Top 20 we have 14 different categories represented – ranging from confectionery to physical play, from lifestyle to retailers. I believe that all brands – irrespective of which category they sit within – have the potential to be cool for kids today, if they want to. But to do this does require an understanding of the brand attributes that make them cool for kids.

This year there are a number of stand-out attributes that unify these coolest of brands. We know that having a low barrier to entry that enables kids to easily, quickly & safely engage with the brand is key. In the context of the cost-of-living crisis it is no surprise that the low barrier to entry has included price/affordability for kids – saver menus & offers, free access to a large amount of content. There's no doubt that the impact of the cost of living has reached beyond adults to kids too.

Brands that have leaned heavily into highly emotive, sharing opportunities with family & friends, whether food & drink, gaming, play, music have performed strongly again, moved higher up the rankings. Cracking inter-generational enjoyment and appeal should be a top priority, if it is not already, for your brand.

The brands that have taken risks and pushed far out of their comfort zone this year are also noteworthy. This includes some surprising cross-category collaborations – savoury snacks & footwear - as well as well-established brands diversifying from their original & core category such as long-form content into gaming and gaming into short-form content. There's no doubt that these collaborations, merges & extensions echo the fluid world that is Gen Alpha's reality – they expect it and are engaged by it.

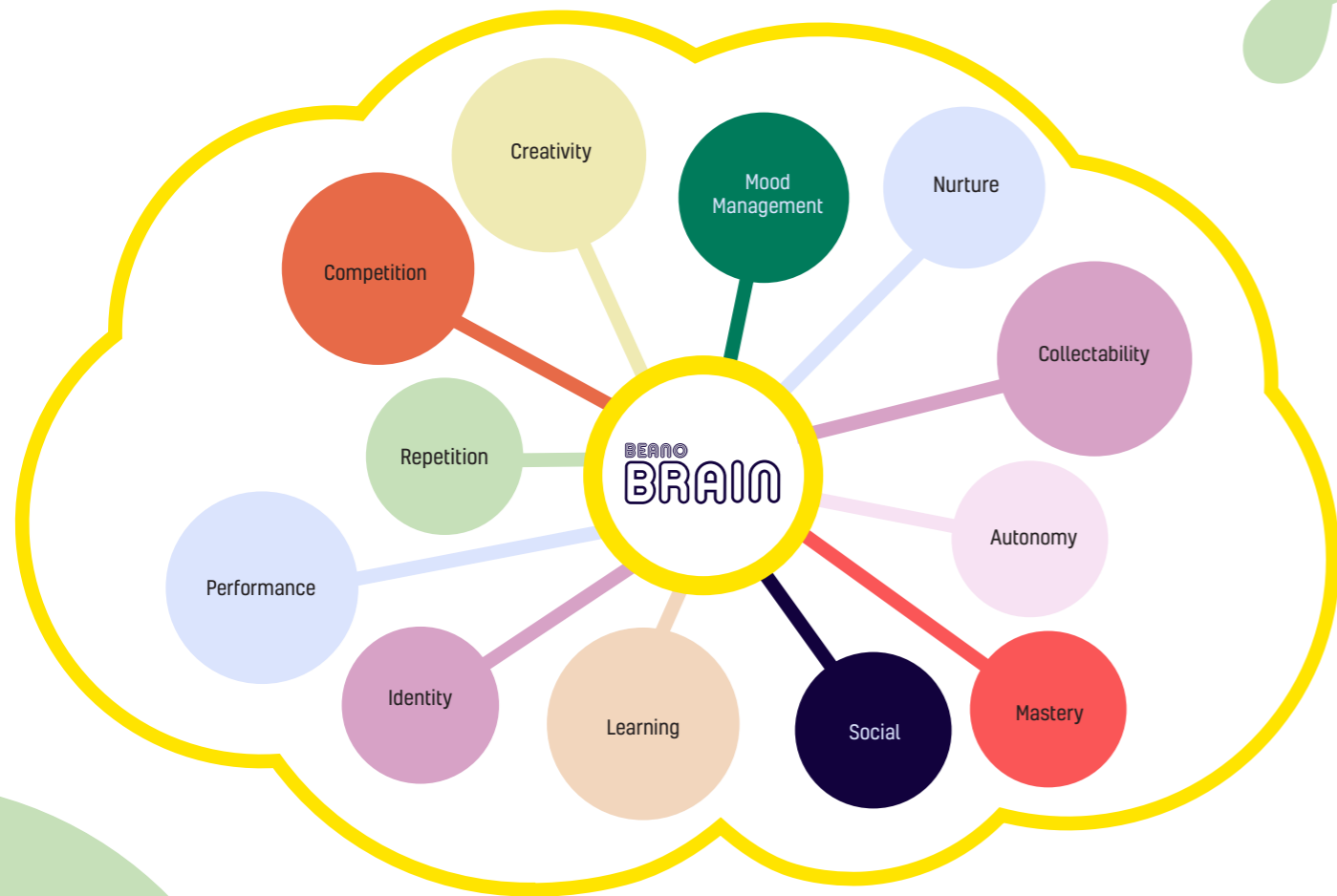
Some of the most absorbing conversations I've had this year with clients have been around the huge potential to tap into kids' daily & cyclical lives with relevance whilst injecting newness & excitement too. There are great examples of this in the Top 100. McDonald's, a 50-year-old familiar, tried & tested brand for so many families, harnessing & delighting with limited editions (whilst also lending themselves strongly to social media virality too). Squishmallows, a relatively new, all-year round play brand, credibly harnessing the whole Hallowe'en & Holidays vibe. These brands show an intelligent understanding of kids' worlds and the attributes which make them cool in their eyes.

I hope you enjoy diving into the coolest brands this year!



# 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.



**Creativity**  
Creativity and construction often associated with mindfulness

**Mood Management**  
The desire to hype up or chill back

**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

**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

**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

**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

Over 150 brands derived from observations and conversations

## Step 4: Top 100 Draft List

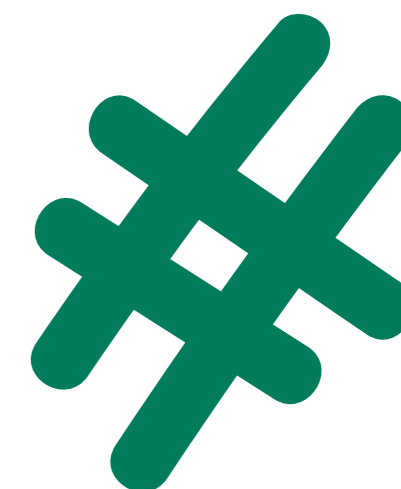
## Step 6: The Final Top 100

## Step 3: Survey

130 brands analysed via Beano Brain Omnibus in the UK  
"Which of these brands do you think is cool?"  
Over 45,000 "kid first" responses in the UK. 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





# 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		 Nintendo		 ROBLOX	 OREO			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
 amazon									
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
									
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
									
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
									
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
									
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
									
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
									
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
									
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
									
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100





"I keep seeing loads of adverts for Crocs on TikTok - everyone loves Crocs - I think that's why I wanted to buy them after seeing them so much!" - Lori

"You can build anything with LEGO! The instructions are really clear and at the end you have something that you made!" - Jake

# 2024 Movers and Shakers

In Coolest Brands 2024 our top three brands (YouTube, Netflix, McDonalds) remain the same as last year. Although YouTube has leapfrogged last year's winner, Netflix to take first place.

LEGO has jumped into the top ten this year driven in main part by boys who have noticed the the brand's collaborations with key fandoms such as Minecraft and most notably Fortnite. The brand constantly finds new ways to connect with the kids by hitting current themes and trends - their Botanical Collection, appears to be an attempt to up-age the brand, attracting girls in particular.

Brands that appeal equally to both boys and girls tend to do well as demonstrated by the top ten. However, in this year's list the highest movers have a distinct boy or girl appeal. Step forward the highest mover, up a whopping 35 places to number 49 on our list - Crocs. Whilst rising in popularity with both boys and girls, it's the latter who have really driven the brand up our list. Exemplifying the post-pandemic shift to loungewear, Crocs have been spotted on Kendall Jenner, Bella Hadid and Justin Bieber. An Amazon top seller in 2023, the secret to their appeal lies with the shoe charms and gems (jibbitz) allowing kids to simultaneously personalise their shoes and curate collections.

Girls have also driven Squishmallows up 29 places into the top twenty at number 18. Girls love the product for its self-soothing effects and cute aesthetics. The endearing plushies with character faces are collectible, squishy and huggable, with a soft sensory feel that triggers happy feelings in kids. They also feed the desire for collectability.



"Squishmallows are cool. You can cuddle them, jump on them, throw them - you can do anything!" - Olivia

"I like that Fortnite is evolving and adapting and it listens sometimes to what the community are saying - not about everything but some stuff. The OG game was good" - Theon

"I got UNO Flip. It's like normal UNO but on the other side it's pink, purple, green and orange. I got the whole family playing it including my gran and granddad" - Rose

It's not just the girls who have shaken up our lists this year. Fortnite and its publisher Epic Games have risen thirteen and twelve places respectively. Fortnite now sits at number 47 but at 6 overall for boys indicating just what an impact the game has on boys' lives. After reaching its highest ever player numbers in 2023 following the launch of Fortnite OG it's clear that the game - and Epic - have claimed serious cool points amongst boys.

New entrant to our top 100, board game UNO jumps in at number 46 this year. Uniquely designed to appeal to all ages - often putting the youngest member of the family in the driving seat - the game has cleverly innovated with different versions and has leaned firmly into the trend of shareability and families desire to come together.

Having parted company with FIFA this year, EA Sports relaunched the hugely popular soccer game as FC 24 and achieved the most successful release of the game to date. So it's no surprise that EA Sports have entered our top 100 at number 65. Featuring the Premier League, La Liga, UEFA Champions League and pretty much every competition in both the men and women's game alongside super-regular updated features and a whole host of influencers raving about the product, EA Sports made FC 24 the most-played game by boys in the UK.



"It's been FIFA [EA Sports FC 24] all holidays! Me and my friends got back into it - mainly the Pro Clubs. It's so funny, there's loads of screaming - especially at me and my moves. It gets really heated!" - Harris



“YouTube is cooler than TikTok because of the age and there’s more longform videos. I think parents find it’s better for kids because they

# YouTube

# 1

YouTube has overtaken Netflix this year, grabbing the top spot for itself. Since its launch in 2005, YouTube has become the dominant video platform of modern times. Viewers globally are watching more than 1 billion hours on average of YouTube content every day and YouTube Shorts, introduced in 2020, is now averaging over 70 billion daily views. A whopping 500 hours of content is uploaded to the platform every minute.\*

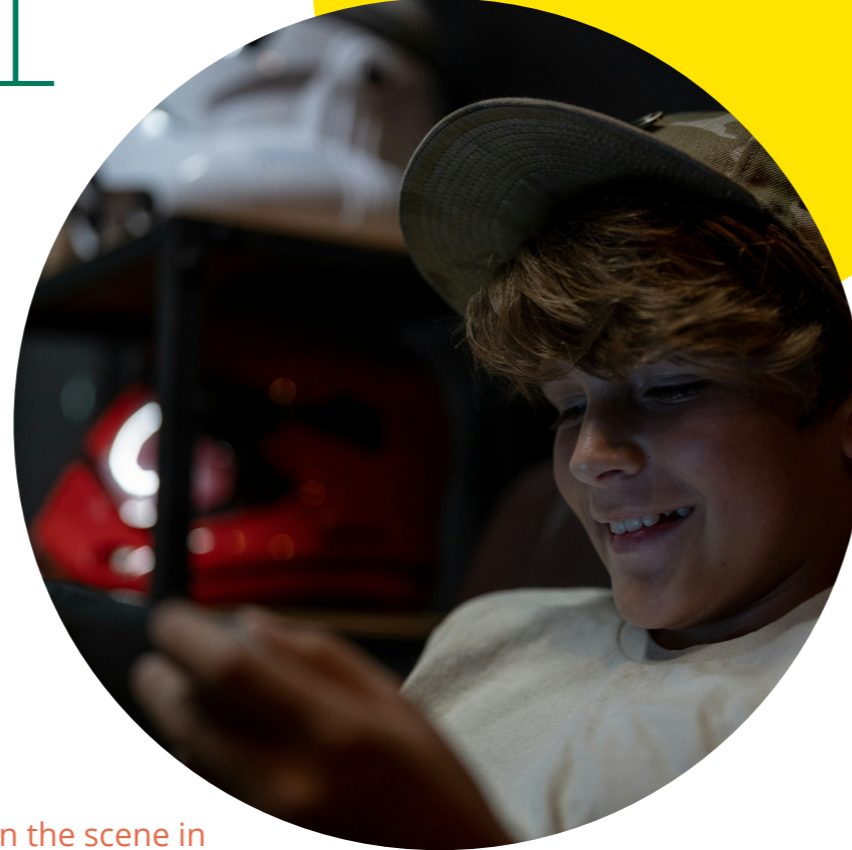
New CEO, Neal Mohan, arrived on the scene in March of 2023 and immediately set to work on delivering new features to take on YouTube’s rivals. Enhanced video quality for Premium subscribers was launched in August, followed by the ‘You Tab’ – a feature that collects the user’s watch history, likes and playlists in one place, much like the ‘For You’ feature on TikTok.

YouTube’s popularity is due to its sheer breadth of content and adaptability. There is quite literally something for everyone, and the platform successfully mixes long and short-form content, allowing kids to dip in and out for as long as they like. YouTube Shorts offers kids a quick nibble of content and has cemented the channel’s position against the onslaught of TikTok.

really manage their content - on TikTok, kids might see [inappropriate] things, but YouTube

is very strict on content management.” - PJ, 12

\*Source - YouTube



Kids consider YouTube ‘safe’; a place where they’re less likely to stumble across upsetting or inappropriate content, unlike TikTok. Having successfully positioned music and TV within its proposition, YouTube has ensured it’s the one-stop-shop for this incoming generation. Furthermore, and most distinctly, YouTube is seen as the platform where kids find experts and learn from them or find help with their homework. As a result of its safe reputation, educational content and extensive library, YouTube has managed to gain something every brand covets: parental approval.

Development of the platform is moving at pace, fuelled by AI and a passion to dominate the online entertainment arena. From singers allowing creators to produce songs with their voice to identifying songs from a simple hum, AI is at the forefront of YouTube’s tech advancement. Content-wise, YouTube Playables, a collection of 75+ games, has been made available to a limited number of users, with a promise of widening availability in the near future.

However, it’s the CEO’s promises to the creator community that’s really set the blogs abuzz. From their improved monetisation tools and brand partnership opt-in scheme to AI-boostered creativity and a new ‘Creator Collective’, designed to allow creators to learn and grow from each other, YouTube is putting its content creators at the very heart of the platform’s growth.



“You can also watch YouTube Shorts if you’re not allowed to have

TikTok. A lot of kids my age use it.” - Elizabeth, 10

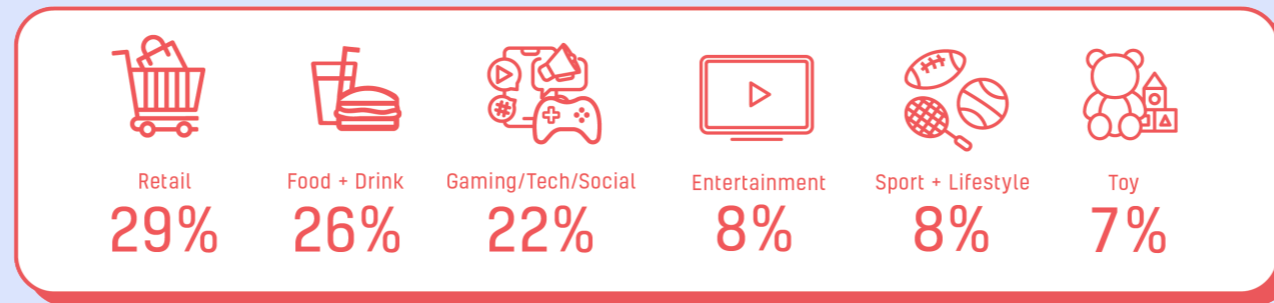


“There’s a variety of videos on YouTube - you can learn from a video or laugh at one.” - Caylen, 12

# UK Top 25



## What makes up the Top 100 Coolest Brands?



**65%**  
of UK boys think LEGO is cool vs 48% of girls

**66%**  
of UK boys think Nintendo is cool vs 55% of girls

**70%**  
of UK kids 7-14 think YouTube is cool

**62%**  
of UK girls think Primark is cool vs 22% of boys

**60%**  
of UK girls think TikTok is cool vs 38% of boys

**77%**  
of UK kids 7 - 10 think Squishmallows are cool vs 54% of 11 - 14s

**63%**  
of UK kids 11 - 14 think Spotify is cool vs 49% of 7 - 10s

**72%**  
of UK kids 7 - 10 think Disney is cool vs 62% of 11 - 14s

- Top 5 Food + Drink Brands**
- 1 McDonald's [3]
  - 2 Oreo [7]
  - 3 Pringles [8]
  - 4 Skittles [12]
  - 5 Coca Cola [14]

- Top 5 Gaming + Tech Brands**
- 1 Nintendo [4]
  - 2 Roblox [6]
  - 3 Apple [13]
  - 4 Playstation [23]
  - 5 Google [24]

- Top 5 Retail Brands**
- 1 Amazon [11]
  - 2 JD Sports [41]
  - 3 Smyths Toys [43]
  - 4 Sports Direct [44]
  - 5 Primark [47]

- Top 5 Entertainment Brands**
- 1 YouTube [1]
  - 2 Netflix [2]
  - 3 Disney [9]
  - 4 Spotify [22]
  - 5 Harry Potter [37]





Breakdowns of Top 100 Coolest Brands  
by gender and age are available for  
purchase for both the UK & US

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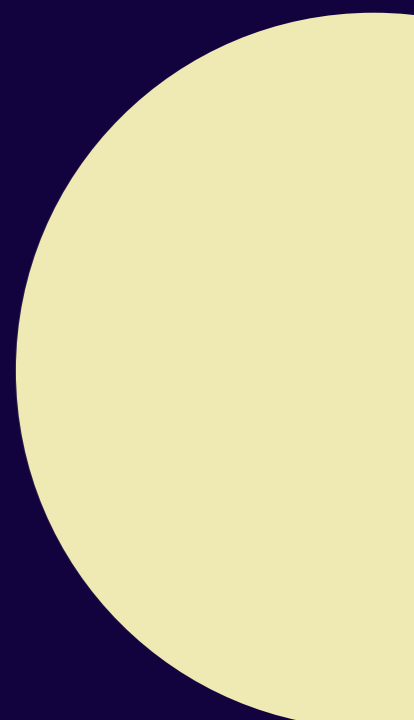
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