

a day in the life of a

tween

Powered by

**noesis**

2012

KT

CM

KF

In

HP

HH

WU

RS

AS

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WD

Co

Pr

# table of con- tents

KT	KEY TAKEAWAYS	// 4 - 5
CM	COMMUNICATION MANDATORIES	// 6 - 7
KF	KEY FINDINGS: DEFINING TWEENS	// 8 - 17
In	TWEEN INFLUENCERS	// 18 - 29
HP	HABITS AND PRACTICES	// 30 - 37
HH	A DAY IN THE LIFE OF - HOUR BY HOUR	// 38 - 39
WU	HOW TWEENS WAKE UP	// 40 - 49
RS	THE ROLE OF SCHOOL	// 50 - 51
AS	AFTER SCHOOL – FUN AND SNACKING	// 52 - 69
RD	THE ROLE OF DINNER	// 70 - 71
WD	HOW TWEENS WIND DOWN	// 72 - 81
Co	CONCLUSIONS	// 82 - 85
Pr	THE PROCESS	// 86 - 87

## This Report

This report provides learning and insights about today's tweens. In addition to the general and day part analysis, we also provide 'journal pages' that provide a first person look into the lives of today's tweens. You will meet the following tweens, who are a composite of actual tweens living in those regions.

Marcel, age 9, Latin America  
Huang Yan 10 – Asia  
Luc 11 – Western Europe  
Jessica 12 – North America



These characters serve as up close and personal observers of the unique lifestage known as tweenhood.



# Executive Summary

## Key Takeaways

KT

- **Tweens want to be teens.** Their role models are older siblings and the teens they see on TV.
- **Mom and Dad are their heroes and their friends.** They still prefer family to friends.
- **School is cool.** Kids love the socialness of school and enjoy the structure.
- **Snack time = fun time.** This is the one time of day when rules are relaxed and 'junk food' is most likely allowed. It is a special 'golden hour' of re-connecting with Mom and fueling up for the next round of activities.
- **Tweens love tech!** They spend a great deal of time online, on their phones, and in front of the TV.





# Communication Mandatories

Talk to kids like they are teens. They look for products that make them feel older.

However, do not use boy/girl relationships as the basis for any message or story – they are not ready!

Older siblings are the ultimate arbiters of taste. Tap into that power.

Tweens love humor and music. Make it funny. Make it shareable.

Kids love mobile! Give them something they can watch and share.

Mom is their BFF – they don't want to upset her or do something behind her back. They want to spend time with her.

Grant them some power, they feel powerful. Give them a voice or a say, they will become a strong ambassador.



# Key Findings: Defining Tweens

## Why look at tweens?

Well, to start off with, they are a big part of the world's largest demographic grouping: 21% of the world's population is between 8 and 19. And, they are more alike – despite the range of countries they hail from – than they are different. The tween tribe is distinctly similar and will only grow more so as technology continues to unite them.

**Tweens are those children aged 9 – 12.** This group populates the critical space between childhood and the teen years. Technological natives, they have been tethered to the internet since birth and ride the spaces between virtual and real with grace and ease. They are accustomed to processing huge amounts of data in the blink of an eye and have a supreme confidence that they can accomplish anything, born from instant search and how to videos.

**(Tweens consume almost twice the amount of mobile video content than an adult, with almost 60% of tweens owning a cell phone).**

Pair that with the physiological time and place they live in where they have complete mastery of difficult sports skills, have permission to cook up a snack or meal, play a musical instrument, or perform in a play or a dance, you have a perfect storm. They are masters of the universe and are ready to plunge into the world.





# Tweens – Growing up Fast

**Tweenhood is a special sweet time for mother and child.**

It is a time of shared experiences, extreme closeness, and a sense of joy over the adult the child is becoming. Less of a responsibility and more of a friend, **parents of tweens find a companion in their tween** and savor this moment in time. They can see the cantankerous teen emerging from this fun loving chrysalis and anticipate the lure of friends and the outside world that is beginning to beckon.

joy





Age/  
attitudes  
shifts

# Tween

age 9 <.....> age 12

# Tension

Happy

Sunny

Goofy

Eager to please

Wants to share  
everything

Family oriented

Cranky

Moody

Friends come first

Testing boundaries





# Tweens just want to be Teens

Unlike any period of time before, what tweens want around the world is what their parents want, from technology to clothing labels. Tweens are interested in being older, most wishing to be 13, 15 or 18, and the products they desire need to represent teen sophistication to be cool. **They are desperate to become teens** and look for products and places that allow them to feel older and cooler. Childish advertising is for 'babies'. Tweens are eager to 'try on' adulthood and look for those brands that will give them credibility and permission to play with the 'big kids'. Their favorite items are those passed down (or borrowed!) from an older sibling. **Mom and Dad are their heroes and their friends**, and they greatly enjoy their new found respect and role as a householder and decision maker. The role of 'culture scout' is also one they relish, as they introduce the family to music, websites, games and memes. **Skill mastery** is very important to them at this stage, and they want to learn to play the guitar, ice skate, do skate boarding tricks, cook, and more.

**(Worth noting** – this generation of kids – unlike any other for a long time – is acutely aware of the recession and its affects on their parents. With this comes a sense of rational decision making and the idea that they need to make responsible choices for items – impulse only doesn't cut it anymore.)



**Tweens are**

CURIOUS **Teen envy**

Sensory craving Bossy

BRAVE **Live Out Loud**

Culture Vultures

Brand Loving **Gamers**

**Mom=BFF** School Centric

PLAYFUL Silly **Family Leaders**

Foodie **Skill Masters**





# Tween Influencers

**Tweens hunger to be teens.** To them, this is the brass ring. Our tweens around the world chose **15** as their sweet spot, with a few even reaching to 18. They take their clothing, brand and media cues from the teens in their lives. Most influential? An **older teen sibling**. If they do not have one, they look up to a friend's older teen sibling or chose one from a favorite TV show.



# Hungry to be Teens

## – Tweens Share

"When my brother isn't home, I like to wear his clothes."

"I always use my sister's shampoo and conditioner so I can smell like a teenager."

"I listen to the slang the older kids use at school and then use it with my friends."

"I try to get my mom to buy me the kind of clothes I see on TV."

"I always bug my older brother for the names of the music he listens to, and then I download it to my phone."



# The Other Influencers – Mom and Dad

The generation gap has shrunk dramatically. Globally, **tweens do not feel any need to push their parents away.** First and foremost, they choose their parents as their role models and still choose time spent with them over time spent with friends. Tweens and their moms are especially close and share a desire to learn about pop culture and trends.







# Parents Savor their Tweens

Parents around the globe agree on most key issues regarding tweens. Globally, they say want to run a **'fair but firm'** household (with the exception of Asia, who sees their family as a democracy), yet concede that their **tween has a significant impact on brand** and product choices. Due to the unique life stage of the tween, they are apt to spend the most time with this child and share confidences, dreams and plans. They are thrilled that their small child has grown into a **confidant and friend** and use them to explore the outside world of trends and style. They cherish this little window of fun before teenhood and try to make it as light and enjoyable as possible. Special snacks and treats and **self-selection** of snacks and sodas are rewards for the feeling of being close. Despite the overarching awareness that moms must be the gatekeeper for healthy food, this **snack window seems to be its own golden circle of fun**. "Junk foods', soft drinks and treats are permitted, and moms rationalize it as a time to re-fuel and pre-fuel from school and before the next wave of activities.



# Mom

Says Today's Tween is....\*

Adventurous    Amazing    Awesome  
Active    Caring    **Creative**    Curious  
Dramatic    Emotional    **Energetic**  
Fun    Funny    Goofy    Happy    Independent  
Intelligent    Kind    **Loving**    **Moody**  
Smart    Sensitive    **Silly**  
Responsible    Social    Spunky    Stubborn  
Sweet    Lively    **Loving**    Lovely

\*According to their moms





# Mom Vs. Tween

Moms see their tweens...

Children

Innocent

Culture Scouts

Fun loving

Silly

Friend

Needs to be protected

Tweens see themselves.....

Practically teenagers

Sophisticated

In the know

Fun making

Funny

Friend

Ready to take on the world

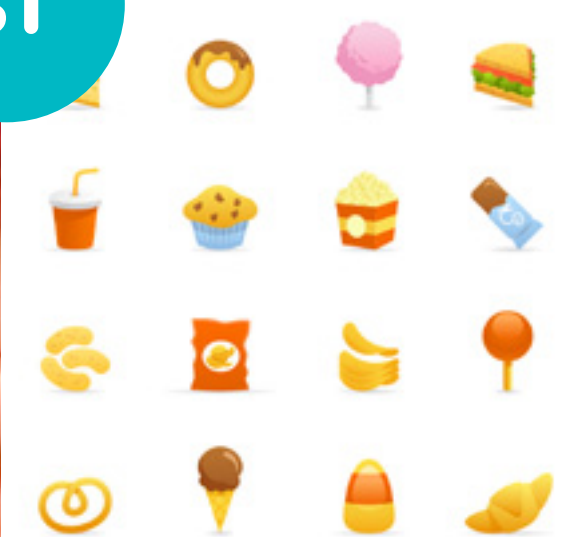




## Snack Time = The Golden Hour



ST



Around the world, tweens own a powerful position within their household. They are finally old enough to be a **companion to Mom** and love to share their discoveries with her. The **after school hour** provides an especially sweet bubble in which mom and child chat, snack and confide in each other. **The tween has a great deal of choice in the after school snack**, often buying it themselves from a vending machine at school or at a local convenience store nearby. If it is something picked up with mom, the tween still gets the choice predominantly. Globally, moms rationalize this rule suspension, citing the need to give the child a break, a reward, and a chance to refuel for the next round of activities.

**The tween also serves as a shopping wingman to Mom and has a great deal to say about the purchases that come home.**



# Tweens Grocery Gurus

Around the world, moms concede that tweens have a large say in what comes home from the store. Using both '**pester power**' and new product knowledge, over 80% of moms say their tween helps pick out products at the store. (Part of this is a function of age; tweens are too young to stay home alone.) **Tweens serve as cultural ambassadors**, informing moms of what is new, and what is hip.

'pester power'





# Masters of Media

Around the world,  
**tweens are masters of media.**

Many have smart phones and define entertainment as anything they see on a screen – be it a game on their phone, a music video on Youtube, a TV show, or a web series. Tweens still are **huge fans of TV**, but watch with a computer or phone close by.

They **control their media** and know how to track down anything on a computer. **Video** is their favorite form of search. They want to see, not read.





# What are they Watching?

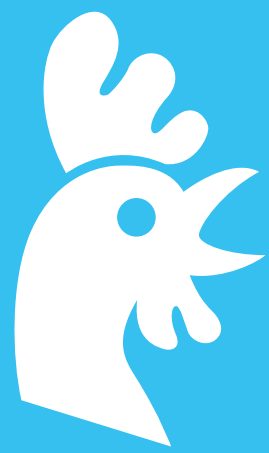
Adventure American Idol  
Big Bang Theory  
Anime  
Cartoons  
Discovery Channel  
Comedies  
Disney Channel Phineas and Ferb  
Glee Good Luck Charlie Hockey  
iCarly Myth Busters Mad tv Nick  
Reality Shows Sponge Bob  
Sports Star Wars VIDEOS



# A Day in the Life of a Tween Hour by Hour







WU

# How Tweens Wake Up

At the early start of tweendom, kids everywhere are full of **energy and excitement**, feel deeply confident in their burgeoning physical and mental skills, and simply love life. They have tremendous **hopes and dreams** and feel in charge of their own future.

Mornings – although **moms around the world still wake them**, they are often in charge of their own meal. This is usually something small; tweens do not have the ravenous appetites of their teenage elders. They are also **too busy playing to really eat a meal**. This is a time for multi-tasking, physical play, and family connecting.

**School is** the first order of the day, and they **welcome** the socialness and the chance to be with friends. Around much of the world, they can walk there and enjoy laughing and joking with friends. They swap videos and games on their phones and always try to share something **funny or new**.



# Marcel

age 9

I wake up every morning for school at 7:00. My mother comes in and rubs my back and opens the curtains. I am happy it is a new day! I put on my clothes for school: a t-shirt and a pair of pants (I like to wear the same ones every day but my mom gets mad!) I grab my soccer ball and start dribbling down the hallway. Everyone is busy. My mom is helping my little sister get dressed, my dad is talking on the phone, so I go out to the back yard and start practicing my moves. I will be the next Cristiano Ronaldo – just you wait! My mom yells out the back door for me to eat. She has ham and cheese with bread out on the table. I may take a little and pour some milk. When no one is looking, I switch on my phone and start to play a driving game – I am good!! I can beat anyone in my class! I barely start to play when my mom tells me to grab my bag. It's time for school. I run out the door and meet my friends at the corner. We show each other funny videos on our phones. We always find the coolest stuff!





# Huang-Yan

age 10

Every morning, my mama comes in to wake me up. I never get out of bed right away. Instead, I curl up with my kitty. I wear a uniform to school, which I hate, but I make it pretty by wearing colored bows in my hair. (My friend, Kumpatt and I will have talked about this the night before and will have matching colors.) I also keep my tennis shoes very neat and clean so it all looks nice. Mom has porridge and buns on the table for me to eat. After breakfast I check my back pack and make sure all my papers are there. I do not like to forget anything! Mama gives me money for a snack after school. My friends are already on the bus, and we quickly sit together to talk about the TV shows we watched last night.





Luc

age 11

My dad always wakes me up so I can see him before he leaves for work. We always make a bet about something silly, like how many times I can raise my hand in class or how many times I can juggle a soccer ball in the yard when I get home. After he leaves, I turn on my TV and start to watch cartoons while I get dressed. I usually get distracted, and my mom has to come in and turn the TV off – she gets so mad!

I get dressed in the clothes she leaves on the bed, and then I go down to the kitchen. I pour some juice and make bread with Nutella, my favorite. It is my job to walk our dog, Simba, and I run up and down the street with him. My mom brushes my hair – I hate when she does that – and I run out to meet my friends. One of them shows me a new video by Chris Brown. Its crazy!





# Jessica

age 12

My alarm goes off. I cannot believe it is morning already. I was up so late texting with my best friend Chloe and with Matt as well! I always lose track of time. I run to get into the shower before my big sister. She takes forever!! I like to use all of her hair products. They smell so good! I take a lot of time drying and fixing my hair so that it looks nice. I get dressed, I always try to look like Selena Gomez – she is my idol!! I am always nagging my mom to get me boots and clothes like her. After I am dressed, I go downstairs and pour some cereal. My dad is reading the papers on his iPad, so I jump onto Farmville and start playing with my friends. There is always somebody who is on when I am! I decide I do not like my outfit and go upstairs to change (and to maybe steal something from my sister's room), but my mom starts yelling that I will be late. I head back down, she makes me take my vitamins (Yuck!) and we get into the car. I slip on my iPod and listen to Rhianna. My mom gets mad, but it makes me happy in the morning to listen to music. She is on the phone anyway 😊.







# The Role of School

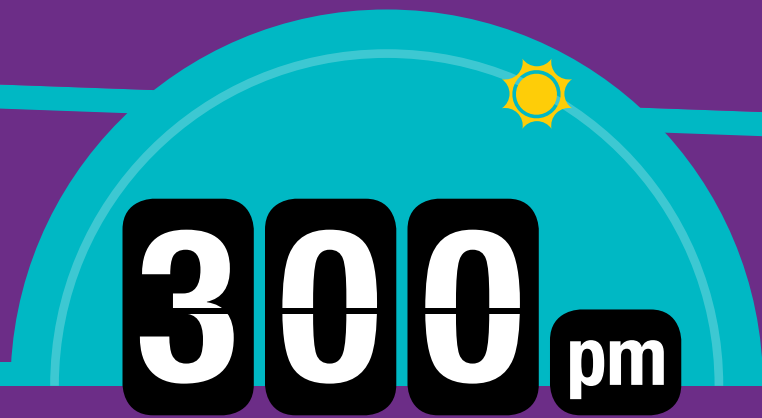
For the tween everywhere, **school rules**. The school day actually creates the perfect tween balance; it's a day that starts and ends with a great deal of **family** interaction but provides the social connection with **friends** that they crave. Tweens are starting to form their own **cliques and tribes** at this age and are excited to test the waters both socially and athletically. They see themselves as **mini-teens** and mimic the attitudes and affects they see teens utilize in real life and on TV. They want to be 'up' on the latest bands, fashions, and slang. (And if asked, most **tell you they wish they were 15**).

RS





# After-school Delight



Tweens live for the special window afterschool. They get to kick up their heels, consume media, and experience a bit of freedom they are receiving for the first time.... **and they love it.**



# After school Snacking = Tweens Golden Hour

After school represents perhaps the **Golden Hour** of tween life. Globally, this time window is **savored and enjoyed by both tween and mom**. Kids either pick up snacks with their own pocket money from vending machines at school or at a convenience store on the way home. For others, mom picks them up, and they stop for a treat – often of the child's choice - on the way home. This is the moment of the day where **kids rule**, and fun and junk reign supreme. There is a lot of rationale here; moms speak of fortifying the child for the rigors of homework or after school activities. There is also the idea of a reward for a day spent in school. As one mom put it, **"Snacks after school are to enjoy and to be happy after a long day at school."** This little pocket of time is uniquely special. The tween will become a teen and move on to friends and lengthier activities, but for now, there is, for mom and tween, an afternoon of conversation, cultural sharing, and a **suspension of the usual rules around food and nutrition**.





What are Tweens Favorite Treats?

**Candy**

Brownies

Cakes

Cereal

Cheezits

**Chocolate Chip Cookies**

Crackers

**Doritos**

French Fries

**Hot Cheetos**

Food

Oreos

Peanut Butter Cups

**Ice cream**

Sour

**Pizza**

Popcorn

**Snacks**

Sweets

**Crisps**





# Marcel

age 9

School's out! Hooray!! My friends and I rush to the front gates and spill out into the street. We are starving! We use our pocket money to buy snacks and sweets. My favorite? Fanta and potato chips – oh! And M&Ms. We joke, look up funny videos on our phones, and finally head home. Mama has a snack waiting for me, and we go outside and sit in the garden. She sees my candy wrappers, but we just laugh about it. She knows I like my candy! I like this time of day. It is just her and me, and we get to talk and tell stories. I go on the computer and show her music videos and funny episodes my friends and I love to watch. My little sister is inside watching TV, and I feel like I have Mama all to myself. I have a music lesson soon, so she lets me stay on the computer to just goof around for a bit.





# Huang-Yan

age10

School is done! My friends and I walk outside and wait for the bus. My best friend is coming over to play for a bit – we are excited! Mama is waiting for us, and she has a snack of soup and rice. We beg and plead for sweets, and finally she gives in and pulls out Orion Choco-Pies and Garden Wafers. Yumm!! We all laugh, and Mama watches us dance. All too soon, it is time for Kumpatt to go home and for me to study. My first responsibility is to get good grades and to work hard in school. I belong to a tutoring club, and we go there every afternoon. That and tennis lessons take up most of my time. I try to do my best but am happy to be home with my kitten and my friends.





Luc

age11

School is done! Hooray! Time to play! My friends and I stop and buy chocolates, soda and chips at the shop across the street. We hang around and talk about our favorite soccer teams. Soon, I go home. I have karate lessons today, and Mama is expecting me. She and I sit at the counter eating cookies and talk about our days. I love my Mama! We are discussing where to go on holiday. I want to go on a cruise; Mama wants to go to the mountains. I think I will win! We talk a bit about my school work, and I tell her I am worried about mathematics. She promises to help me and to find a tutor. I go on the computer and play games until it is time to go to my class. I promise that I will go grocery shopping with her on the way home from class. She loves that!





# Jessica

age12

School is over – at last!! Dying to get out and head out!! My mom picks me and two friends up, and we stop for some fast food. We are starving!! Fries and shakes and we are good to go! We make a plan to go to the mall this weekend. I wish we could go today, but I have dance practice in an hour, so no go. Mom drops my friends off, and we catch up on the day. I tell her about the cute new boy in class and make a list of clothes that I want for my birthday. My mom is cool to talk to. We always laugh and have fun. I run upstairs to change for class. I complain about going, but I really love our dance class, especially love the music. I bring my books in the car. I try to study on the drive over and back so I have time to text with my friends at night. My day is jammed!





# Tweens Activities

Tweenhood is considered “the dressing room” period of life.

Tweens are now fully integrated into their bodies and are looking to master bigger skills. Search engines have given them answers to all their questions at the click of a button all their lives, so they are secure they can figure anything out. Having **no fear of failure** (yet) they are excited to sign up for and try their hands at art, theater, and all sorts of sports. Their experience **playing games online** has given them permission to always start again, even after a ‘fail’. They seek out activities that give them independence: cooking, sports, theater.

They are starting to build their own independent world.



This ‘dressing room’ phase is also quite literal. This is an age for trying on different looks and different personas. From prepster to fashionista, rocker to grunge, kids try on different looks and experiment with different music and hair styles as they ramp up to becoming a full fledged teenager. **Older siblings are the role models here, and they long to convince the world they are already teenagers.**



Tweens love to....

Dance

draw

Video Games

Computers

garden

Cook

martial arts

sing

Sports

theater

Animals

Homework

Friends

art

magic

TV

Clothes





# The Role of Dinner

**Dinner is an important meal all over the world.** For most tweens, this means a **sit down meal with the whole family.** While it is more regimented in terms of **healthy food and drink** than the other meal occasions, most moms report it to be 'fun and relaxing'. The day is done, and the family can sit and share their stories. It is often the one meal that is prepared fully at home and where time is not being watched. **Tweens like to be a part of the meal preparation** and help decide what the meal will be. They also tend to be very verbal at the table and have a great deal to share. They are proud of their varied, busy life and like to act as a **social reporter for the family,** filling them in on what is next and new in the world.



# How Tweens

The space between dinner and bedtime tends to be a long one for tweens around the world. There is homework to be done, television to watch, friends to text and siblings to play and fight with. Often, this is done in a multi-tasking format. Children will study with the TV on, while texting on their smartphone, or chatting on a computer, often while listening to music. This **multi-dimensional lifestyle is natural to these digital natives**, and the parents permit this as long as the grades hold up.

Snacks – often sweets – are requested before bed and are often indulged. Often, the adults are indulging as well, so a **treat in front of the TV** and before bed becomes **communal**.

## multi-tasking

## Wind Down

830 pm

As it gets time for bed, bathing rituals take place. During the tween years, most baths and showers take place at night. As the tweens age into teens, they chose to bathe in the morning so as to look their best for the opposite sex.



# Marcel

age 9

Dinner is over, and I know I need to start my homework, but I don't want to. I start to tickle my little sister and she squeals. We run around the house until my mother tells me to stop and to sit down and work. I go to my room and pull out my books. I have forgotten to write down my assignment, so I text my friend Marco for the work. He tells me (after he calls me stupid!) and we go back and forth for a bit. I bring my books into the den so I can watch TV with my family while I study. Mama brings us all some ice cream after a while. Not bad! It is getting late, and Papa reminds me to get into the shower. Reluctantly, I do, and then end up in their for a long time singing and telling stories to myself. Finally, I get my pajamas on and go back to say goodnight to everyone. The TV is still on, so I watch for a bit, until my parents notice the time. I am sent to bed. I say goodnight, but then I turn on my phone and play a racing game...





# Huang-Yan

age10

I have been studying very hard, and it is getting late. My mom and dad are in the other room talking and watching TV. I carry my kitty in with me and curl up to watch with them. They are concerned I have not finished my work, but I assure them I have. My mom will bring us some small cakes or sweets that we share. Then I go take a bath and put on my pajamas. I am very tired. Mama will come in and if I beg, will read me a story (even though I am not a baby I still like when she does this!). She makes sure I have clean clothes put out for the next day (of course!) and says good night.





Luc

age 11

After dinner, I am usually back on the computer playing games, unless I can convince my dad to play X-box with me. He is really good. We get a little crazy playing until my mom comes in to tell us to quiet down! She also wants to watch some of her TV shows, so we need to clear out. Dad goes into his study to work, and I will go back on the computer and watch Youtube or play games. I remember some homework and start that at the table. I finish pretty quickly and then ask my mom for a treat. She almost always says yes. I watch a little TV with her until she sends me off into the shower. I play games on my phone in bed, until my dad comes in to say good night.





# Jessica

age12

Dance practice almost always goes late, so my mom calls my dad and asks what we should pick up. I am with her, so I get the biggest vote! It is usually some sort of Mexican food. I love Taco Bell or El Pollo Loco. We turn on the radio loud and sing to all the songs. My mom is pretty good! I think she is also relaxed on the nights she doesn't have to cook. Its just more fun.

We get home and put out the food. It is getting late, so we all eat pretty fast. My mom is on the phone, my dad is looking at the news, and my brother is playing X-box. It is loud in here!! I text a few girlfriends, and we gossip about the day while I finish my homework. We all try to figure out what to wear the next day; we like to create the same looks for our group.

Its getting time for bed, so I say goodnight and go up to my room. I watch an episode of Gossip Girl on my computer until my mom comes in and tells me to go to bed. Its hard to go to sleep!





# Con- clusions

Tweens is named for the 'in-between' life stage between childhood and the teenage years. Yet as opposed to it being a way station, it is really a unique destination.

- Tweens are avid users of media, loving computers, games, television, smart phones and more.

- Tweens are the social glue for their families. Funny and energized, they bring everyone together with cultural reports, music videos must sees, and reports of their latest accomplishments.

- Tweens aspire to be, well, teens! They work very hard to age themselves up and borrow slang, clothes and cues from their older siblings and teens they see on TV.

- Tweens are key influencers for household purchases. BFFs with Mom, they are often mom's sidekick at the grocery store and have a strong voice in choosing the brands that come home.

- Tweens have a new role in choosing the afternoon snack. Often armed with pocket money, they can select their brands by themselves. Moms grant them this power in the magical 'golden hour' after school and before activities, a sort of sweet spot for the day.

- Tweens welcome brands and the experiences they provide. They are looking for those companies that recognize their move into the teen world and make them feel grown up.



# Con- clusions 2

**After visiting moms and kids in 10 distinct countries, one fact remains:** the similarities of this age group far out way the differences! From America to Brazil, France to South Africa, tweens are a robust, energized group who embrace family, technology, friends and animals!

**Tweens love name brand products,** and with the proliferation of brands such as Nestle and Doritos, snack products are becoming universal.

Their moms adore this special stage and find in their tweens a built in afternoon companion, a culture scout who clues them into fashion and music trends and helps keep them current.

**The afterschool window is a precious one,** where the tween is indulged with treats and where home is an oasis between school and the onslaught of afternoon activities.

Although we saw a stronger degree of youth insulation in China and Nigeria, these households are still moving towards increased autonomy for tweens and an acceptance of the independence technology brings.



# The Process

**The challenge:** to take an up close and personal look at tweens around the world. What are their special rituals? What are their dreams? What habits and attitudes to tweens share, wherever they live? To do that, Noesis took two routes.

## **Route 1:**

We synthesized major studies from sources such as Mintel, AVG Digital Diaries, Ypulse, Euromonitor International, NPD, Millward Brown Marketing Week and more. This formed the foundation for our work.

## **Route 2:**

We conducted an international qualitative study in the following countries:

USA, Germany, Spain, France, Mexico, Brazil, Thailand, China, South Africa, Nigeria \*

We conducted virtual ethnographies, having kids and moms answer some in depth questions, draw pictures and create video 'Lif-Umentaries' of a typical day in their lives.

\* Custom data from Nigeria was less stable and only included where points concurred with other sources.



# TEENS

NEXT EXIT 

