



50 giving stories shared as part of The Marketors' Trust's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2026

No 37: Why young children watch other children on YouTube



The 2024 Thesis Prize winners at the Bowden Dinner. Left to right: Dr Junior Oliveira, Dr Georgina Lack, Dr Craig Bradshaw, Liveryman Dr Sarah-Louise Mitchell, and Liveryman Professor Phil Harris, Chairman of the Awards Committee.

Watch a small child with a tablet and there is a good chance they are watching another child. Millions of young children spend hours with child YouTubers, unboxing toys, playing games, narrating their days. It looks like harmless fun, and often it is. But it is also one of the first ways a child learns what to want, what to value and who to be. Dr Junior Oliveira set out to understand exactly what is going on, and in 2024 his work won the Worshipful Company of Marketors Best Thesis Award.

Junior, a Lecturer in Marketing and Management at Oxford Brookes Business School, studied the motivations that draw young children to child YouTubers, and what that engagement does to them. His finding, that children are not simply passive viewers but exercise a kind of “socialisation-driven agency” as they learn from the influencers they watch, has since been published in the prestigious *Journal of Business Research*. It is research about the consumers of tomorrow, and about the digital world we are building for them.

For Junior, the recognition mattered well beyond the personal. In his own words:

“Receiving the Worshipful Company of Marketors Best Thesis Award in 2024 has been a significant milestone in my academic career. Beyond the personal recognition, it has helped raise the profile of my research on children as consumers in an increasingly digital world, opening new opportunities for collaboration, research funding, and knowledge exchange. I am incredibly grateful to the Worshipful Company of Marketors for recognising research that has the potential to make a meaningful difference for future generations.”

This is exactly what the Trust's Thesis Prize is for. Each year the Worshipful Company of Marketors recognises the best marketing thinking and research: the doctoral work that pushes the discipline forward and, at its best, does some good in the world. Junior was named one of the national winners of 2024, honoured alongside fellow marketers at the Company's Bowden Dinner.

It is easy to think of marketing research as something that serves business. The best of it serves everyone. Junior's work helps parents, teachers and policymakers understand a world their children already live in, and it asks the industry a fair question: if children are learning from what they watch, what are we teaching them? Backing research like this is the Trust's way of making sure that question keeps being asked.

Website: marketors.org

Find out more: marketors.org/news/winners-2024-thesis-prize-academic-excellence (the 2024 Thesis Prize winners)

How to give

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