The Marketing to KIDS Report®
Our tenth year tracking news, trends and developments in the youth and teen markets.

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Pokemon Fifth U.S. Anniversary Sees Global Sales Top $15 Billion

Back in September of 1998, Nintendo, Creatures and Game Freak (creators of "Pocket Monsters" on the original Game Boy hand-held platform in Japan in 1996) saw merchandise sales top $4 billion. Then "Pokemon" arrived in the United States.

As the global phenomenon marks its fifth anniversary this fall, Pokemon merchandise has generated over $15 billion in worldwide retail sales since coming to America, according to Bruce Loeb, Vice President of Marketing at Pokemon USA Inc. The New York-based subsidiary of The Pokemon Co. in Japan manages and oversees the Pokemon franchise in North and Latin America.

This includes revenue from licensing, merchandising, TV animation, theatrical releases, DVD and VHS home video entertainment, Game Boy/Color/Advance (GBA) and GameCube interactive games, the official Pokemon Web site, the Pokemon Center NY in Rockefeller Center and www.pokemoncenter.com, an e-commerce site. The video game franchise has already sold a staggering 38 million games in North America and 110 million games worldwide

At Nintendo of America (NOA), Pokemon Pinball: Ruby and Sapphire hit stores Aug. 19 as the newest installment. To commemorate the launch, NOA partnered with Toys 'R' Us to return to Topeka, Kan., for a Sept. 1 wrap-up of the EON Ticket Summer Tour, which had already visited more than 125 TRU stores in 25 major markets.

"The return to Topeka, better known as 'ToPikachu,' celebrated the debut of the wildly popular games that started it all, Pokemon Red and Pokemon Blue," recalled George Harrison, NOA Senior Vice President, Marketing and Corporate Communications. "Five years later, those precious gems have evolved into Ruby and Sapphire, with the release of Pokemon Pinball kicking off a line of great new adventures that will be introduced in the coming months."

Other highlights of Pokemon marketing activity noted by Gail Tilden, NOA Vice President of Brand

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Legal Battle Over Brand Name Has Wiggles Creator Squirming

HACKENSACK, NJ — In 1993, Carolyn Zorn finally realized her dream when she started Wiggles N' Tunes, a company specializing in children's music entertainment products and a ready-to-use music curriculum in a kit for early childhood educators. Not only did the company start to take off as parents, educators and children discovered her products and CDs, Discover Zone started carrying the product in 1997, calling it "hands down, parent-pleasing favorite music curriculum." That took the brand national.

But then, Ms. Zorn heard about an Australian group using a similar name. She immediately took legal action, as she had three trademark registrations, including Wiggles and Wiggles N' Tunes. At that time, the Australian Group didn't seem like any kind of real threat, but she wanted to be safe rather than sorry.

"Wiggles is my brand and I was the first one here," said Ms. Zorn, who also performs as Miss Wiggles — the Singin', Wigglin' Violinist of the Wiggle Ensemble, a wacky group that gives live concerts for kids. "I have a lot at stake here. So, from day one — long before anyone had heard of them — I've tried to get them to cease and desist using the name. I've been accused of going after them when they got big, but their growth has happened since I first talked to them."

Of course, The Wiggles have gone on to become a huge phenomena in children's entertainment. With the backing of Hit Entertainment and the Disney Channel, the group has sold millions of CDs and other products, has TV specials, videos and a concert tour.

Zorn often compares it to a David vs. Goliath situation now. "And they are Goliath," she said. "They

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Views From the Playground

Fashion Sense —What was the No1l back-to-school look for teen girls? Think J.Lo when spotting designer sweat pants, mini skirts, jeans jackets and glam military. Obvious bleaches on jeans are out and natural washes are in. Boys are more into the Justin Timberlake look with fedora hats cocked to the side and button-down collars on flowing shirts.

Shoe Sense — The latest shoe fashion for girls won't be from TV's Friends or Giglio. In fact, there's nothing human about this show inspiration. Brown Shoe Company has the license to create a new line of footwear featuring the characters from Universal's Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat. These shoes, which include sneakers, casuals, boots and slippers, will come with colorful characters, including the Cat in the Hat, Thing 1 and Thing 2. Anyone for Green Eggs and Ham?

TV Sense — A new survey by Bolt shows that reality TV is starting to wear thin with viewers in the 13 to 24 year old age range, even though American Idol is still a huge favorite. It may be because viewers are starting to see through the "reality" of the show. In fact, 63 percent of the kids surveyed said they don't think there's much real in these reality shows. And 68 percent said they're tired of reality TV. This observation goes out the real window when it comes to the mega-popular American Idol, which 91 percent claimed they'll watch this season.

Theme Sense — Are scary rollercoaster rides on their way out? According to the Wall Street Journal, theme parks such as Disney, Universal, Paramount and Six Flags are opting for more family-oriented 4-D rides instead of the faster, extreme rides that have dominated the theme parks for the last decade. For instance, 46 new roller coasters were built in 2002, while a mere 19 have been constructed so far in 2003. Instead, 4-D movies (3-D films with chairs that move and other special effects) are hot, with 13 of them recently opening at theme parks.

Board Sense — Speaking of old-fashioned, family-oriented thrills, board games are making a surprising comeback. According to the Washington Post, other toy sales may be down, but board games experienced a 63 percent spike in the first half of 2003. Now that's making the right move.

Rena Karl

Rena Karl, Publisher

Creative U

By Dan Merson

Creative I

I've been writing this column for about five years now. Two years ago, I told my brother about this piece and he said, "Still? I would have thought you would have run out of ideas by now!" But that's the trick; to keep having ideas.

Writing these articles does test my creativity, especially since I only have one main belief about what it takes to "be creative" and how to coach others to be creative: the tenet of Awareness. I mean, if I had a dozen or so major points, it would be easier to find things to write about. But all I got is one: Awareness.

And yet, it's just that principle that allows me to continue to find new things to discuss and write about. It's how I continue to come across creativity engendering methods and processes. I then test these ideas, turn them into actions, and try to illuminate these activities for others in my writing.

So where do these ideas come from and how can they happen for you? Discovering creative techniques is my "meditation." Next to animal rights, a lot of my life's focus is on creativity: how, why, where, who, what, when. So I view most everything through that kind of lens. With everything I hear, taste, touch or contemplate, I think, "What does this have to do with creativity? Is there a connection?" Sort of like a cook critiquing anything they eat, except "everything" is my food.

It is easy to do. Here are some recent examples of how it works:

A few weeks ago I was on the ferry from Martha's Vineyard to Quonset, Rhode Island. While the ferry chugged through the Atlantic, I noticed, way out in the distance, where the water met the sky, there seemed to be a land mass. My wife Alison noticed too. "That dark line looks like land, doesn't it? It must have been hard to navigate on the water a long time ago, if it always looked like land 'just over there.'"

That got me to thinking, "what is the connection between that thought and a creative concept---is there some sort of creativity insight here?" Navigation is about having the right tools. Ancient mariners had the stars at first, then sextants, compasses and maps. And what about those brave souls, like the first Hawaiian who got into a canoe

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Roundtable

How much do parents have a say in what kids buy?

Wendy Watson
Senior Vice President and National Youth Marketing Practice Leader
Porter Novelli

Clients in the award-winning youth practice include The Jim Henson Company, Mattel, Inc., MGM and Procter and Gamble. Contact: (310) 444-7087; wwatson@porternovelli.com.

"Over the past decade, the direct and indirect spending influence of kids has been studied, acknowledged and revered by marketers and manufacturers worldwide. The facts are that American kids, teenagers, and young adults, aged 8 to 21 years, have annual incomes totaling $211 billion and this group is spending at a rate of approximately $172 billion per year (Harris Interactive Poll). But, only recently have researchers and marketers begun to fully understand the influence parents have on the purchases of their children.

"A few trends related to parental influence on children's purchases include:

• With children ages 8 to 12, parents serve as the first line of defense to kids' wallets, acting as gatekeepers in categories such as health and beauty, food, toys and games and entertainment. As a result, parents are able to take note of children' interests and purchasing patterns and make alternate suggestions or buying decisions as a result. This trend is evident in the results of a recent Harris Interactive YouthPulse Poll, which shows that 72 percent of kids' ages 8 to 12 tell their parents about all of their purchases.

• Annually, moms and dads hold the top spot on kids' hero lists. The respect and admiration these children have for their parents play a part in kids' purchasing patterns. While children may not always agree with their parents' opinions, the more respect the children have for their parents, the more inclined they are to be swayed into different purchasing decisions.

• Even as children grow into adulthood, parents still play a role in their children's buying habits. With more than half of all 21-year olds still living at home with their Baby Boomer parents, research is showing a boomerang effect in the purchasing influence between parents and their children — coined the Boom-Boom effect within the industry. "Parents are exposing their children to classic movies, music and television that have been modernized in the form of retro apparel and nostalgic licensing. Meanwhile, Baby Boomers are gaining an appreciation for reality television, fashion-forward clothing and urban music."

Grant MacDonald
Founding Partner
North Castle Partners.

North Castle Partners, a Connecticut-based advertising firm, has a particular expertise in building brands among the youth and young-adult markets. The firm has helped marketers at Slim Jim, Hershey, Kraft/Nabisco, ConAgra, Planters and Coca Cola build campaigns geared toward these young decision makers. Contact: 15 Bank St., Stamford, CT 06901; (203) 358-2100; Fax (203) 969-7620; gmacdonald@northcastle.com.

"Parents choose their battles carefully. And in today's hectic world, where parents often feel inadequate in their role, kids are making most of the purchase decisions for products and brands that affect them. Putting basic acceptable human behavior and issues of personal safety aside, for better or worse, parents have very little influence on the products their teens, and even young children, purchase.

"Take for example, breakfast. Parents often become stressed about their children's breakfast. Achieving the balance of being a 'good' parent in the eyes of a child (and in turn, keeping the peace) and supplying a nutritional meal is not an easy task. No parent wants to engage in a screaming match over what's for breakfast before rushing their child off to school. As one mother recently told North Castle Partners, a Connecticut-based ad firm which targets teens and youths, 'I know Breakfast With Barbie Cereal may not be the best, but at least I'm getting something into my child… and for the moment there is peace in the world.'

"Likewise, in a child's eyes, goods or products often replace quality (and quantity) of time in defining a "cool" parent. Compensating parents feel this struggle as they're forcedto make this trade-off on a day-to-day basis. So, what are the facts behind such a jaded perspective? Unfortunately there are none. There is no absolute amount of influence parents have over kids' purchases; it varies by purchase-to-purchase and situation-to-situation. But there are a few things we do know:

"The younger the child, the more influence the parents have.

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Pokemon.. continued from page one

Management, include:

• The TV series debuted Labor Day 1998, syndicated to network affiliates and indie stations, then to Kids WB! in February 1999 and exclusive that fall worldwide, with top ratings for boys age 6 to 11 and kids age 2 to 13, trading the top spot with Yu-Gi-Oh. Season six kickoff was Sept. 13, with the Ruby and Sapphire storyline and 130 new characters introduced this month. Cartoon Network has been airing the first season as a Monday through Friday strip at 9 p.m., with good ratings.

• The Pokemon Trading Card Game, launched in early 1999 by Wizards of the Coast, now a Hasbro subsidiary, and fueled by organized play and league programs in 47 countries, has spurred global sales of more than 10 billion cards to date. NOA has acquired rights to market the Pokemon Trading Card Game with e-Reader coding and is handling all future issues, including the recent Pokemon-eSandstorm and Pokemon-eDragon, due Dec. 17, both with new Ruby and Sapphire characters.

• Pokemon movies, five in the U.S. and six in Japan, all had some theatrical presence. In the U.S., the box office on movie No. 1 hit $83 million, with a worldwide gross of over $200 million and 20 million home video units. For Pokemon No. 6 in Japan this summer, an offer of a special character download to the Ruby or Sapphire GBA video game with a pre-purchased ticket resulted in about 1 million pre-sales, with over 4 million since July. That's a "super hit" in Japan. A U.S. release is projected for summer 2004, with a similar presale program under review.

Stay Strong in All Categories

"For Pokemon USA, our key priority is to make sure that Pokemon maintains its strength in all categories," Mr. Loeb emphasized. "We're working with NOA on strong video game launches for both Game Boy Advance and GameCube, on introducing new characters to kids with the trading cards and more expansion of league play with retail partners."

He also recapped several recent successful promotions. A Wendy's Kids' Meal in May and June over five weeks offered one of five different toys and 15 collectible cards in three packs. "It brought some new people into the franchise, with younger siblings getting into Pokemon now," he said. For a second year the brand partnered with the New York Yankees. At an Aug. 9 Yankee Stadium sellout with the Seattle Mariners, 25,000 kids got a special Pokemon plush and had a chance to meet Yankees star Matsui as well as costumed Pikachu and Treecko at a pre-game ceremony.

Pokemon Center NY on March 15 hosted "Pokemon Rocks at Rockefeller Center" for the launch of Pokemon Ruby & Sapphire for GBA, drawing 6,000 for the biggest sales day ever.

At 4Kids Entertainment, Al Kahn, Chairman and CEO, recalled, "We had been tracking Pocket Monsters in Japan since they launched and had seen its success with kids and teens. We got together with Nintendo and struck a deal with the TV producer to get master licensing rights outside of Asia for what became Pokemon. We helped put together strategy for the TV launch and signed Hasbro as master toy licensee and Wizards of Coast for trading cards as the first major deals."

For 2004, he forecast a lot more new licensees and renewals, as well as new products from existing licenses. Included are eWatch Factory for design-your-own watches; Fleer for candy; Fujitsu/FDK Corp. for Pokemon AA-batteries (with four different characters, Pikachu, Treecko, Torchic and Mudkit); and Funai, which recently launched a low-priced Pikachu VCR for kids.

"At Licensing 2003," he added, "we were looking to get back to relaunch interest in expired license categories. Among the more important is apparel, as it's critical to get kids to wear Pokemon items, accessories and more toy/play patterns, apart from Hasbro. It looks like a lot of resurgence with Pokemon going forward."

So, "as one of the most popular franchises for kids' celebrates its fifth year in the U.S.," said Pokemon USA President Akira Chiba, "we continue to reach out to our loyal fans, while positioning the brand to attract a new group of young admirers."

"Retailers get nervous with long-time franchises," added Mr. Loeb, "and all this activity should reassure them that Pokemon is viable as an evergreen. My perspective is that markets outside of Asia represent about 80 percent of business, and with this year even better than 2002, I think we can continue this for a long, long time."

—Steve Traiman

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Special Report: PC & Video Games' Positive Values

By Steve Traiman

Computer (PC) and video games offer many positive aspects related to education, socialization, child development, visual skills and pain management, reinforced in a series of recent academic studies and a well-received book. These were highlighted by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), formerly the Interactive Digital Software Association, in the aftermath of this June's unanimous decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

The ruling struck down a St. Louis County law that sought to ban the sale of violent video games to minors, finding that video games are a constitutionally protected form of expression and that the government cannot legally enact laws regulating their sale.

"This decision is a total and unambiguous affirmation of our position that video games have the same constitutional status as a painting, a film or a book," said Doug Lowenstein, President of the ESA, whose member companies represent about 90 percent of game sales in the United States. Credited with a big assist was an amicus brief filed by the Free Expression Policy Project, 33 media scholars, historians, psychologists and games researchers, with the bottom line: "Credible studies on video games containing violent content have not found adverse effects on players."

Added Carolyn Rausch, ESA Senior Vice President, "In terms of research, part of the reason for exposure of positive aspects of games is that people are starting to understand the medium itself. They've been afraid of the phenomenon but kids now in college and beyond are realizing that games can be very positive in one's life, reflected in recent research."

Games and Education

"Games have promising potential as learning tools" is the key conclusion of What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy (Palgrave Macmillan 2003) by Dr. James Paul Gee. Gee is the Tashia Morgridge Professor of Reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Gee installed a game lab at the university, with his first graduate course in "Video Games and Education" offered in fall 2002.

"Playing games about two years ago with my then 6-year-old boy, I thought they were good for his causative development," he said. "I quickly found he was as good as me, and intrigued about adult games, I picked The New Adventures of the Time Machine, a long, complex and challenging game. What got kids into this lengthy challenge when we couldn't get them to do 12 minutes of algebra homework led me to explore the world of computer and video games from the perspective of an educator."

Among key conclusions: "Video games have great potential for learning, art and cultural change, a potential that, I believe, will be realized more quickly than many now assume. The issue of violence and video games is widely overblown, especially in a world where real people are regularly really killing real people in wars that we watch on TV. Too much ink has been given to violence and gender. Though both issues are important, in the long run they will take care of themselves as new genres of games arise for girls and women start playing more games.

"Video games have the potential to lead to active and critical learning. They require parents to actively think about games as another tool to accelerate their child's learning and growing experiences. We're getting a lot of stuff on technology at home that's not available in school."

Games and Socialization

"Games are a social activity for today's young adults and players say they promote positive feelings" is the key finding in "Let the Games Begin: Games and Entertainment Among College Students." Part of the continuing Pew Internet & American Life Project, it will be presented this month in Toronto at the Association of Internet Researchers meeting. Steve Jones, Professor of Communications, University of Illinois-Chicago and Project Senior Research Fellow, noted his own area of research in general Internet studies, and that college students playing of online games motivated his interest in a separate gaming study. The Pew study surveyed 1,162 college students from across the country, including 10 Chicago-area schools, to examine their use of video, PC and online games, and to measure their impact on the students' lives.

"Somewhat surprising to me," he said, "is that this generation has always had gaming as part of their social mix with friends, like playing ball or Monopoly earlier. It was also interesting how many women are active players, with 60 vs. 40 percent of men in the sample."

The distinction was in game types, with women more into basic games out of boredom and men more attracted to action sports, shooters and role play. "All games are woven into the fabric of everyday life for college students," he added. Jones is hoping in a year or so to go

beyond the college student audience and do a general population study of the effects of gaming.

Games and Child Development

"Games are a positive part of a well-adjusted lifestyle for young people" is the key finding of "Not So Doomed: Computer Game Play and Positive Adolescent Development," in the October/December 2002 issue of the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology. Bonnie Barber, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Arizona, College of Family Studies & Human Development, has been involved in a 20-year Michigan "Study of Adolescent Life Transitions."

Back in 1988, her interest was in the emergence of computer use and if students were taking advantage of the new technology. As a visiting scholar at the University of Western Australia about three years ago, she met Professor Kevin Durkin in the School of Psychology. "He's an expert on media use of adolescent kids," she recalled. "Our interests converged and we did most of our work in 2000 to review the leisure time use of what kids did with the early computer games."

The Durkin-Barber study explores the association between game play and positive development, drawing from a sample of 1,304 then 16-year-olds, both male and female. "It's been speculated that computer game play by young people has negative consequences," Dr. Barber noted, "but our study obtained no evidence of negative outcomes among game players. Players scored more favorably than did peers who never played games on family closeness, activity involvement, positive school engagement, positive mental health, substance abuse, self-concept, friendship network and disobedience to parents."

Acknowledging that the data is 15 years old, she emphasized that, "It remains useful to record that a large sample of American youth exposed to early generations of computer games did not manifest evidence of negative social and behavioral consequences of play involvement."

Games and Improved Visual Skills

"Games can improve visual skills" is the key finding in "Action Video Game Modifies Visual Selective Attention" in the May 29 issue of Nature. Researchers at the University of Rochester Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences conducted five experiments using 10 non-video game players and 10 video game players (VGPs), ages 18 to 23. The purpose was to measure changes in visual attention due to high-action game-play and to see if game-play could improve visual attention through training. The VGPs had played a minimum of an hour a day for four days a week the prior six months on Grand Theft Auto 3, Half-Life, Counter-Strike, Crazy Taxi, Team Fortress Classic, 007, Spider-Man, Halo, Marvel vs. Capcom, Roguespeare and Super Mario Kart.

Associate Professor Daphne Bavelier, co-author of the study, reported that the experiments show that active game players are better at localizing a target object in a cluttered environment, can apprehend and keep track of more targets at once, and can better process fast occurring visual information. "The results don't mean that playing video games is good for you in general," she observed. "However, when it comes down to vision, action video games have very positive effects. This should be useful for folks with jobs that are visually demanding, such as pilots, for rehabilitation of patients with visual deficits or for keeping up the visual skills of elderly people."

Games & Pain Management

"Games can help manage pain" is the key finding in "Differential Effects of Video Game Play on Pain Tolerance and Threshold," presented at the North American Society for the Psychology of Sports & Exercise, this June in Savannah, GA. Dr. Bryan Raudenbush, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Director of Undergraduate Research at Wheeling (WV) Jesuit University, has worked mostly with sensory systems, particularly taste and smell. "Some friends with small children mentioned that video games were a distraction to homework," he recalled, "and past research indicated that visual distractions may increase human pain tolerance."

Working from that hypothesis with research assistants Jerrod Koon and Sarah Lilley, the study involved 30 volunteer students, both gamers and non-players, and assessed different types of video game distractions and personality characteristics on pain threshold, tolerance and ratings. Participants engaged in a mental video game, an active video game and a baseline control. They experienced each 10 minutes prior to the pain administration with a cold pressor test, and during subsequent pain testing. Following the pain administration, participants completed questionnaires concerning competitiveness, aggressiveness and video game playing habits.

"Mainly by distracting from the pain itself," Dr. Raudenbush noted, "the present study indicates that active video game play is an effective adjunct to pain management, regardless of aggressive or competitive tendencies, or prior video game playing habits."

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University of Arizona, Bonnie Barber Ph.D., Associate

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Unfortunately, 'control' doesn't last much beyond the age of three. As soon as children begin their social life, they begin to assert their influence on purchases across almost every category. Exposure to toys, clothes, snacks and even electronics often starts as early as nursery school. And 'keeping up with the Jones'' starts at this early age as well.

"A parents' influence tends to be higher for low-involvement categories. These categories include soap, furniture, shared entertainment devices, health and safety, etc. Almost every other category has a large "kid-influence" connected to it. This includes food purchases and restaurants, entertainment, movies or music, even vacation destinations. More so, children have subtle but strong influences on major purchases, such as cars or computers. A child's influence is everywhere.

"Recently, a study by Just Kid Inc. [the Global Kid Study] addressed these same issues. The study, which monitored the purchase influence of kids and parents across almost every category, found that kids are consulted on most purchases involving them or the entire family. For example, only 9 percent of parents say that they choose their kids' toys alone. And unfortunately, as highlighted above, it's likely that these parents are not 'the coolest on the block.' Similarly, only 14 percent of parents say they choose which fast food restaurant they eat in. In addition, the survey found that parents rarely have much influence in categories such as athletic shoes, books, clothing, candy and breakfast foods to name just a few.

"All of this offers incredible marketing opportunities to reach both kids and parents. Today's kids have become supercharged consumers, influencing most daily purchases made by parents. And these dynamics allow children to become informed decision-makers about many of the products with which they interact. Parents may be abdicating some of their decision-making in an effort to be a good parent, but they still believe they are acting in a nurturing and responsible manner. And these are great emotional issues that marketers need to connect with."

Dave Siegel
President
Wondergroup

Wondergroup is the largest independent youth marketing and advertising agency in the U.S. Contact: 312 Plum St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45202; (513) 357-2950: Fax (513) 651-1162.

"Over the years, as a result of helping dozens of clients craft their marketing and advertising plans to today's young families, we have had lots of opportunities to study kid/parent influence on what is bought by parents and by children.

"Much has already been published on what parents buy as a result of kid influence, but we are continually amazed by just how much kid influence really does exist today. Today's moms are Gen-Xer's and as a result, we have seen them literally form an open partnership with their children when it comes to purchasing products. In fact, this mom/kid partnership has become so strong that we coined the term the 'Four-Eyed, Four-Legged Consumer' to describe what truly goes on with today's household purchases by moms and their children. Today's moms actually welcome their kids' suggestions, as 70 percent of today's moms reported that, 'It makes my shopping easier when my child knows what brand he or she likes.' (Source: 2003 Yankelovich Youth Monitor)

"Now, when it comes to how much parents have a say in what children buy we can confidently and conclusively say 'It depends!'

"First, it depends on the type of product being bought. For instance, according to our just completed study (in my soon-to-be-published in the second edition of The Great Tween Buying Machine by Dearborn Trade Publishing), about 60 percent of today's kids buy at least some candy, games and toys totally on their own. At least one in three buy at least some video games, CDs and books solely by themselves as well. For those products bought by children and consumed by children, we have seen parents have relatively little to say.

"Second, it depends on whether or not the product is to be used in the company of other children. This is especially relevant to the child over the age of 7—the tween. One of the primary drivers of today's tween is the strong need to fit in with other kids. As a result, parents have very little say in those products or brands that kids might perceive as making their friends see them as being different from the group. Clothing, sneakers, school supplies, lunch room snacks, places to shop and eat are all areas where moms have a tougher time determining what their child buys or wants to buy.

"Lastly, it depends on whether or not certain brands or products are marketing themselves to kids. Kids are generally not interested in many products or brands unless they have a reason to be so. Kids couldn't care less about what yogurt they or their mom's bought, until of course they heard

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of Go-Gurt.

"Kids do care what their parents think. They still trust their parents for advice and they certainly want to please them. One still sees many young girls shopping with their moms in Limited Too and they still ask their moms if they like the outfit too.

"BUT…it depends!"

Betsy B. Holloway, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Marketing
Samford University

Holloway is in the process of a cross-cultural study examining this very issue among a sample of U.S. and Chinese teenagers. Contact: 800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, Alabama 35229-2306; (205) 726-4109; Fax (205) 726-2464; bbhollow@samford.edu.

"I find the question to be somewhat backwards. After all, who is paying for such purchases? More often than not, it is the parent(s) of these young consumers who are actually paying the bill.

'Therefore, I thought I would share some insights to this issue from a slightly different perspective: the influence of children in the family/parental decision to purchase. Not surprisingly, this topic has been of increasing interest to marketing researchers in recent years, and we have developed a relatively strong understanding of child influence across various purchase decisions. First, research of children's influence shows that younger children have less influence, and that this influence generally increases with age. "Moreover, children are more influential in purchases that they perceive to be important, and research consistently finds that children are most influential when they are the primary consumers, such as in the case of toys, clothes and school supplies. Previous research also shows that children are considerably influential in purchases involving family leisure time, such as vacations, movies, cable TV, and eating out, though less so than when they are the primary consumer. Interestingly, children tend to overrate their own influence relative to parents' ratings of children's influence. In other words, kids tend to have the impression that their opinion matters more in the purchase decision than their parents report them to have.

"Two increasingly relevant issues affecting children's influence in purchase decisions are financial resources and parental employment status. First, research shows that children who are employed and earning money outside of the home are more influential in the decision to purchase both personal as well as family/household items. As more children are working, and as kids begin working at younger ages, this will be an increasingly important factor to consider. Second, quite recent research has shown that children with more modern family structures and working mothers exert higher levels of influence in family/parental purchase decisions. There are various explanations for this finding: these mothers may have less time to dedicate to purchasing, the children may be more knowledgeable and/or independent as a result of the working mother, or the working mother may allow the child to exert more influence in order to relieve the guilt associated with working outside of her home and away from her children. Whatever the reason(s), considering the growing number of working mothers in our country one would expect our children to have increasing influence over purchasing in the years to come.

"In conclusion, though we've established a pretty good basis for understanding how much kids have a say in what their parents buy, this is an issue that is continually evolving and must be monitored regularly to be understood."

Ken Brown
Vice President/Account Manager
SBC Advertising

SBC Advertising is a privately held, full-service advertising and marketing services company that specializes in the retail market. With great strategic insight and world-class creative, the company has been providing effective and comprehensive marketing solutions to retailers and national brands for more than 30 years. The agency's clients include Big Lots, Inc., Bob Evans Farms, KB Toys, Wayne-Dalton, Dutch Boy Paints, Elmer's, KrazyGlue, Baldwin Hardware, Ultimate Software and DSW Shoe Warehouse. With capitalized billings of $80 million, SBC Advertising's award-winning services are created with the support of its 80 employees. Contact: 707 Park Meadow Road, Columbus, Ohio 43081-2891; (614) 891-7070; Fax (614) 891-3664; www.sbcadvertising.com.

"Parents and their kids reflect a fascinating dichotomy. Parents don't like being dictators, but they are obviously charged with the safety and well being of their children. Kids, on the other hand, continually seek out ways to gain more independence and control of their lives, starting even before they can speak. And we see this struggle play out daily in our

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homes, in restaurants, and in retail outlets. (Do the words 'Don't touch anything,' sound familiar?)

'Parents, however, display their ultimate power and control of their children by simply pre-empting children's 'nagging' behavior. While studies have shown that the 'nag factor' plays a significant role in purchasing goods and services, parents still have the car keys and can completely avoid places that are catalysts for nagging outbursts: toy stores and toy departments, gift shops or play areas at restaurants, or even specific aisles in grocery or discount stores. Marketers need to remember that when parents wield that kind of power, the potential loss of sales can be devastating.

"In order to get parental approval of kids' purchases, marketers must remember two key rules:

"Rule # 1: Become a better kid manager. Parents are more likely to shop your stores, dine in your restaurants, and buy your products when they have a smooth, positive experience with their kids. Retailers should make sure the aisles are wide enough for strollers and carts, breakables are out of reach, and restrooms are clean and convenient. Restaurants should follow the same guidelines, but also include fun, healthful meals with plenty of table activities to keep kids busy. Product marketers should not only make their products safe for kids, but also should consider the amount of prep and clean up.

"Rule # 2: Create a 'smart nag.' Since kids are strong influencers over their parents, we want to encourage what we call 'the smart nag' in order to increase family business. The 'smart nag,' as opposed to the 'whiney nag,' which is annoying and often ignored, can be created by giving kids extra support when they make the nag. It can be as simple as offering a healthy side dish to go with those fried chicken nuggets or an activity book sponsored by a mother-endorsed educational partner. The goal is a nag whom mom can feel good about saying yes to.

"A prime example of both managing kids and generating smart nags is Wendy's latest menu item. In a few test markets, Wendy's is giving health-conscious parents the option of fresh fruit (cantaloupe and honeydew) in their kid's meals. The jury's still out, but chances are that when a kid asks for a happy meal, moms and dads may just steer through the Wendy's drive-thru instead of the other fast food alternatives.

"When marketers note the possible clashes between parent and child, and do what they can to minimize those clashes, customers and marketers are both winners."

Creative U...from page three

and journeyed way past the sight of land to discover and then regularly travel between the islands? Wow! What is the connection between navigation and creativity?

That's a topic.

I was reading an interesting article on The Wright Brothers; it is the 100th anniversary of their famous flight at Kitty Hawk. The article declared that part of the Brothers' success was that they, unlike their competitors, didn't try to mimic the design of birds' wings. Additionally as important to the Brothers' success was that, unlike their rivals again, the Wrights constantly attempted to remove elements from their future aeroplane vs. adding layers of complexity. They sought to simplify. And it paid off with flight. And I thought, "What is the connection between this behavior and creativity?"

That's a topic.

And speaking of Brothers, the new guitarist for The Allman Brothers Band is the very talented Derek Trucks (nephew of the group's drummer, Butch Trucks). During a recent interview on NPR radio Derek Trucks spoke about how he makes music, "The idea is to, hopefully, let it (the music) run through you. To kind of be an antennae and let the music come through. It's just a matter of getting out of its way and letting it happen."

I heard this right after reading about the Wrights' simplifying, and felt there was a connection. Both were achieving results by "getting out of the way." Then I scratched my head and wondered what is the connection between "getting out of the way" and creativity, and how could I codify this concept, make it actionable and then articulate it in a column like this?

That's how I get many of my ideas for this column, and ideas to apply to issues at work and at home. Now — go out and write your own column on creativity.

Dan Merson heads MersonCo, offering creativity services including brainstorm facilitation, concept development and creativity development workshops. Contact: (310) 850-2988; dan.merson@cox.net.

Wiggles... continued from page one

believe that we can co-exist in the market and I find that insulting. It's like they're saying, 'do your little thing.' And they now have the position in the market and people think I'm a copy-cat, taking advantage of their name.

"It's not right when a major multi-national entertainment conglomerate tries to run roughshod over individuals who play by the rules and try to do the right thing to help children enjoy a fresh musical experience."

Education has always been as important to Ms. Zorn as entertainment. She's been an award-winning music educator for 20 years who started her career at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and is an accomplished violinist and Suzuki instructor. After the success of her live act, Ms. Zorn has produced several audio and video releases that are distributed nationally through the Discovery Zone, Amazon.com, CDBaby.com and the company's own Web site (www.wigglesandtunes.com) and through other other strategic partnerships such as Turtle Magazine. She estimates that more than 12,000 children have enjoyed her "Wiggles experience."

"We already have a national presence, but we need more financial backing to take it to the next step," she said. "I'd like to see the brand get more national distribution in mainstream stores. I also have a TV show concept written, but it will take funding or a tie-in partner to get off the ground."

But, she contends, the confusion over the Wiggles name is now hurting business.

"I can't get in with national distributors because of it," she said, adding that she gets calls all the time intended for the Australian group. "Who would invest capital in a company involved in a trademark infringement suit? And I can't help but wonder how big I would be without this."

The idea of re-naming her company and its products is unthinkable at this point.

"The name Wiggles is interwoven throughout all the arrangements," she said. "And it's not just a name, it's a brand based on the whole concept of wiggling."

Ms. Zorn originally filed her suit in May of 2002 and knows that it will probably be a protracted legal battle. But it's one she's committed to.

"This is my blood, sweat and tears," she said of her company. "Even if I let a generation of kids go by, I can never recover from this."

—Patricia Morris Buckley

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