TWEENS 'R SHOPPERS
A LOOK AT THE TWEEN MARKET & SHOPPING BEHAVIOR

POPAI
THE GLOBAL ASSOCIATION FOR MARKETING AT RETAIL
Tweens are a complicated bunch—as parents and marketers know. Considered “too old for toys, too young for boys (and girls),” this demographic of kids ages 9 to 13 is feisty, opinionated, honest, sharp, cynical, and responsible for $200 billion in sales a year - of which $43 billion comes from direct spending of their own disposable income. With that much spending power, reaching today’s tween can hardly be viewed as simple child’s play.

The 20 million boys and girls in this country aged 9 to 13 are the new power players of consumerism. It’s little wonder that marketers are paying so much attention to them, devoting an estimated $17 billion a year to get in front of their shorter-than-a-tweet attention spans.

And it’s not just the usual suspects trying to catch the attention of tweens. Over the last 10 years there has been an increase in the number of marketers competing for tween’s attention - car companies, airlines, hotels, and financial services are competing with traditional kid marketers to win over this influential demographic.

If tween allowances keeps increasing and 100% of their money is ‘spending money’ - is it any wonder that marketers are trying to attract their attention?

So what exactly has changed over the past 20 years to give kids such influence over spending, while simultaneously redefining the meaning of being a kid? Today, kids now are more adult in appearance, attitude, and thinking than ever. However, this transformation from child to mini-adult hasn’t happened overnight. It has been a progression incorporating numerous societal, behavioral, and technological influences. Could such seemingly abstract things really be affecting kids? The data and research in this white paper seem to suggest that the answer is yes.

Further complicating the tween machine phenomenon is the changing composition and structure of family units, values, and spending habits. Beyond the takeoff of helicopter moms and the advent of the stay-at-home dad, parents in general tend to be more involved with their children’s lives now, altering long-established norms of family life. Now, parents fit their lives around their kids. In many households, lives—social, financial and intellectual—are at a tween level.

In short, today’s tweens demand a more personal, more tactile, truly up-close-and-in-person connection from family, friends, and their favorite brands and retailers.
To be a “tween” is to be part child and part teen. This is an adventurous and often challenging time for pre-adolescents who are becoming more self-aware and starting to reach for more independence. They are a generation stuck on fast forward, in a fearsome hurry to grow up. Richer than ever, they’re also a retailer’s and brand marketer’s dream, with a seemingly insatiable desire for the latest in everything.

But it’s important to remember that the word tween is a marketing term used to help define this audience. You won’t find tween listed as a developmental stage in any medical books or literature. As such, one marketer’s definition of a tween can differ slightly from another’s. On the whole, most marketers agree that tweens fall somewhere between 9 and 13 years of age. For the purposes of this white paper, that’s the measure used as a basis for comparison and examination of this increasingly influential demographic.

While ambiguity masks the clear cut lines between kid, tween, and teen one thing is certain: the phenomenon of age compression is, bar none, the most significant development affecting youth marketing today. Tweens, especially girls, want to look older and to act and behave like teenagers. However, there is some evidence that shows that efforts to treat the teen and tween demographic as one will backfire because it’s very difficult to push one coherent message to kids who can be up to six years apart in age. After all, a year or two in the youth community can make a huge difference, and there is a striking attitudinal distinction between grade schoolers and middle schoolers.

This brings up two important points to note: First, there is a major difference between boys and girls, with girls maturing more quickly than boys; and secondly, there appears to be an important shift in attitudes and behaviors around age 11 – this is the age at which kids go from primary school to middle school and the peer group takes on new importance, and social skills also develop at this age. These two points have major ramifications for marketers. Where there used to be one market segment for kids there are now several and the demographic composition of each of those markets looks different. Marketers need to understand these nuances in age groups during these crucial years and where the product fits in with these kids’ lifestyles.

How Tweens Spend Their Freetime (Weekends)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log on Internet</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang out with friends</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch Movie/DVD at home</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play video games with others</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play video games alone</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare a meal</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Shopping</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: C+R Research Youthbeaat Report

TODAY’S TWEENS: REPRESENTING THE CHANGING FACE OF AMERICA

In 2011, there were 73.9 million children in the United States, 1.5 million more than in 2000. This number is projected to increase to 85.9 million by 2050. By 2015, the largest cohort of children under the age of 14 will be under the age of 5 and the second largest group coming from the 10 - 14 division followed closely by the 5-9 age division identified by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2011, children made up 24 percent of the population, down from a peak of 36 percent at the end of the “baby boom” in 1964. Children are projected to remain a fairly stable percentage of the total population through 2050, when they are projected to compose 23 percent of the population.

Tweens represent the changing face of America. The Census Bureau projects that by 2015 there will be 21 million tweens between the ages of 10 - 14 in the U.S. Minorities will comprise more than half of all children by 2023, with nearly 40% to be Hispanic. As a result, this group isn’t likely to see race and ethnicity as a point of differentiation.

In fact, racial and ethnic diversity has grown rapidly in the United States, and the composition of the population continues to change. By 2023, less than half of all children are projected to be White, non-Hispanic. By 2050, 39 percent of U.S. children are projected to be Hispanic (up from 23.6 percent in 2011), and 38 percent are projected to be White, non-Hispanic (down from 53.2 percent in 2011). Children who identify with two or more race groups are projected to make up 5 percent of all U.S. children by 2050 (up from 3.8 percent in 2011). Children who are Asian alone are projected to increase from 4.6 percent of the U.S. child population in 2011 to 6 percent in 2050.
MEET MY FOLKS: FAMILY STRUCTURE & HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

There’s almost no such thing as a “traditional family structure” for tweens. The U.S. Census Bureau shows that for the nearly 74 million children under age 18 living in the U.S. in 2012, more than two thirds (68.1%) live in a household with a married couple, while 24.4% live in a household headed by a single female, 3.9% live in a household headed by a single male, and 3.6% live in a household with neither of their parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Families Tweens Live With, By Age, 2012</th>
<th>9 - 11 years</th>
<th>12-14 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living with both parents</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with mother only</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with father only</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with neither parent</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tween family structure mirrors the national average fairly close with a little less than two thirds (66.5%) living in a household with a married couple, 25.3% living in a household headed by a single female, 4.7% living in a household headed by a single male, and 3.5% living in a household with neither of their parents. Furthermore, two in three live in homes that their parents own, while the rest live in rented homes or apartments.

SPENDING POWER: A LOOK AT TWEENS & THEIR PARENTS

A key trend driving the spending habits of tweens in the U.S. is the “age compression” phenomenon, also known as KGOY (Kids getting older, younger). This trend has seen tweens rejecting traditional toys in favor of more grown up products, previously targeted at teenagers, such as mobile phones, video games and music players. This has opened up a host of opportunities for manufacturers of these products and services to tap into the tweens market. Tweens’ technology-savvy choice in “toys” has also provided an ideal opportunity for manufacturers to spread brand messages and promotional offers via websites and SMS.

Despite the growing sophistication of the tween generation, and their aspirations to be like their older siblings, a significant portion of their pocket money still goes to confectionery, carbonated drinks and snacks.

Predictably, the biggest slice of the tween money pie goes to video games (31 percent), with apparel/footwear and impulse buys, like snacks, tying for second (20 percent each). Consumer electronics and music/books vie for third (10 percent each), followed closely by toys/crafts (9 percent).

TWEENS SPEND BUT DON’T SPLURGE

While tweens incomes are all discretionary, marketers should beware: in the wake of the recession, they have demonstrated an understanding of the importance of saving and restraint, even if they are apt to blow their entire allowance on candy or the latest fad.

In the wake of the recession, tweens have proven themselves surprisingly savvy about finances. They understand the importance of saving and restraint. One in five have advised their parents to curb unnecessary purchases.

Economic concerns have not escaped their radar. In fact, the issue that tweens express most concern over right now, and for the past two years, is the economy, followed closely by “joblessness.” An estimated 6.5 million children under the age of 18 were living in families with an unemployed parent during an average month in 2011, based on data through the first nine months of the year. Just under half of those children were living with parents who have been out of work for more than six months. It makes sense that this cohort has grown up with more sensitivity towards sales, and more common sense when it comes to how they spend. When their parents were asked how the economy has affected their tweens, it becomes clear that tweens continue to shop, but they’re more cautious with their cash than in previous years.

Nevertheless, they are still impulsive. In fact, 47% of parents dole out their children’s allowances knowing it will be spent rather than saved. Moreover, no other previous generation had this much disposable income.
Not only can they spend money but they are also savvy enough to know what to buy. By eight years of age kids are able to comparison shop and even when parents say ‘no’ nearly 6 out of 10 kids keep asking for brands they want on an average of 9 times. Call it pester power if you want, but all that pestering adds up to some serious cash.

PESTER POWER: THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN TWEEN SPENDING
For those marketers looking to cut out the middleman — the parents — take caution. Mom and Dad remain important parts of a tween’s purchasing life and marketers must keep them in mind when targeting this age group. Tweens represent a unique dynamic in that they are old enough to be influenced by the world around them. However, since tweens still rely on their parents for the majority of their purchases, this creates an interesting dynamic - while tweens drive demand, parents are the real buyers. Therefore marketers must make an effort to reach the parents of tweens in order to truly be effective and gain access to the larger share of dollars at stake.

The involvement of parents is not only financial: tweens cannot drive themselves anywhere yet, so Mom and Dad are often making decisions about where and when to go shopping. In fact, 72 percent of all tween purchase decisions are made jointly by parent and child, and 19 percent are made by the parent on the child’s behalf. Only 8 percent of tween purchase decisions are actually made by children themselves.

Therefore, before marketers invest time and resources into a campaign, they should understand whom their talking to, what they want to know, and what’s going to resonate with them. With tweens, marketers have to do double diligence; it’s not just talking to the child, it’s also ensuring that the parent is comfortable with what is happening.

DRIVERS & MOTIVATORS OF TWEEN BEHAVIOR
The average tween today has three key defining behavioral characteristics: instant gratification, success as a given, and liberal social values. The availability of everything from information to well-stocked super stores allows parents the opportunity to give kids what they want and when they want it. These parents, for the most part, are successful and provide appropriate motivation, consequently encouraging the feeling of limitless possibilities.

Kids today are also exposed to everything from the Sandy Hook school shooting to MTV’s 16 and Pregnant, thus making nothing taboo or providing any kind of shelter encouraging them to maintain a childhood status or innocence throughout the elementary school years.

Consequently, expectations for today’s 9 to 13-year old are
different than those of the previous generation. The tween today is more logical in his or her thinking, and more motivated to think about what is right or wrong and what is in or out of style. They face an earlier onset of puberty, entering the teenage stage at a more advanced rate.

Looking at the psychology of today’s tweens through Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs offers some interesting insights into this emerging demographic. The two basic categories of personal and social needs contain the four concepts of belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Feeling accepted by a peer group is probably highest on a tween’s behavioral needs priority list. Staying in tune through the media via chat rooms, television commercials, and the like are indicators of what is and will be in or out of style. Choosing movies they like, clothes they think are stylish, and make-up do’s and don’ts allows kids to stay in control and make decisions. Breaking free from parental controls at an earlier age with tether-like cell phones, smartphones and latchkey situations gives kids from working-parent homes more distance-supervised freedom than before. Having fun that is not necessarily related to specific toy or play situations, but more reliant on attitudes and behaviors, represents the norm for today’s tween.

While age compression has its limits, and the attitudes and interests of current tweens are not likely to shift to an even lower age group, tweens will continue to become more empowered, and will become more interested in issues that previously related to teenagers or adults. While they will not mature physically any earlier than they do now, their desire to emulate role models and not be treated like children will develop further as they are exposed to ever more videos, films and a vast array of teenage magazines covering older topics. This is positive for industries such as fashion, cosmetics, music and film, but will put further pressure on industries traditionally targeting children, such as toys.

Marketers should also note the gender differences in leisure activities that need to be taken into account. Tween girls often enjoy more alone time doing artistic activities such as reading books, while the majority of tween boys like to play sports. Research shows that top tween interests for tween girls include music, nature & animals, famous people, arts & crafts, fashion, and dance. For tween boys, interests include sports, participation, watching sports, music, science, and famous people.

Tween girls often are motivated by messages related to beauty, glamour, and the desire to master a particular task, while boys typically desire mastery and are motivated by messages expressing power, bravery, and conquests of “good vs. evil.”

To be successful, future marketing campaigns aimed at the tween generation must be multidimensional, multichannel and highly interactive. The most important of these channels to the tween audience are TV, music, magazines, friends, brick n’ mortar stores, the Internet, chat rooms and interactive gaming. If they see something they like, tweens are likely to check it out with friends, in a chat room or on the Internet.

Don’t try to treat all tweens the same. There is a significant difference between emerging (7 - 9) and transitioning (10-12) tweens. Market to each age group accordingly. While all kids aspire up, marketing programs that treat them more like teens and less like kids will find greater success, but don’t forget to include their parents as they make the majority of the purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, tweens will expect to be treated like young adults rather than children, and will not tolerate false promises so marketers take note and act accordingly.

IDENTITY CRISIS: TWEENS RELATIONSHIP WITH BRANDS

Tween girls often adopt brands as they wish to, making them an integral part of their lives turns them into brand ambassadors. And that is the most desirable kind of marketing for any company trying to reach this active, multi-tasking, totally connected demographic.

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Twins are very brand-conscious, highly impressionable, and use popular brands to define themselves. The key to success when marketing to tweens is to let them define what their brand experiences will be, rather than trying to deliver the experiences as companies think they should be. This generation of tweens has learned how to create their own experiences - in their online and offline lives, and they expect to be able to personalize their brands, as well.

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Brands have become an integral part of the way tweens define themselves. According to Lindstrom, tweens are the most brand-conscious generation yet and are exposed to over 30,000 brands. With such a prevalence it is no wonder
that for tweens it is far more important to wear the right label than it is to wear the right clothes.

Tweens want to be popular and appear older, utilizing brands helps them achieve these goals. Whereas teens use style as their indicator of fashion acceptance most tweens don’t have a lot of fashion sense, but they do have tremendous brand sense. This brand awareness and aspirational desire does not stop at clothes and apparel.

Brands have become symbols of identity in every facet of a tweens life, offering the opportunity to be trendy, cool, rich, outrageous, rebellious, or just plain stylish. Tweens respond very favorably to being able to have control over, or being able to create, their own experiences. Mass personalization enables them to take control of brands and truly make them their own. “Mass customization” is nothing new, of course. Yet, for this specific demographic, the concept especially resonates. Business models that cater to mass personalization are a hit with tweens.

By specifically gearing brands for them in a relevant and authentic manner, and marketing them as “just for you”, companies find acceptance for their products with tweens. When companies acknowledge who tweens are, respect their intelligence, wants and needs, tweens will return the favor by becoming true brand adherents. Even more importantly, tweens will share new brands and products with their friends. Over 60% of tweens report hearing about new brands from their friends and the good news for brand marketers is that tweens love to experiment and try new things.

Since most tweens use word of mouth and peer referrals to pass on information about brands, behavior segmentation allows marketers to target a specific type of tween so that the message can get to the appropriate recipient. Using Lindstrom’s tween segmentation there are four groups that marketers can reach out to: edges, persuaders, followers, and reflexives.

**EDGES**

Edges are the independent rebellious tweens who don’t necessarily see themselves as being on the cutting edge. They are anti-fashion and supposedly anti-brand. However, they often identify with brands that reflect their rebellious behavior. These tweens are typically anti-mainstream culture and brands although they do tend to still dress similarly to other edges often wearing brands they feel they have discovered.

**PERSUADERS**

Persuaders or influencers are the most popular tweens in school who everyone wants to secretly be friends with and emulate. Their decisions are adopted by the whole group and this is the group that marketers vie to harness.

**FOLLOWERS**

Followers represent the mainstream and form the bulk of today’s tweens. They listen to persuaders, but also have an ear open to the fringes and emerging brands and trends.

**REFLEXIVES**

This group tries to increase popularity and acceptance among their peers, often without much success. With few friends, members of this group try to increase their popularity and acceptance among their fellow tweens. Reflexives are also followers and rarely pick up fashion trends.

In their book *The Great Tween Buying Machine*, Timothy Coffey, Gregory Livingston and David Siegel identify five rules for ensuring success of new products targeted to tweens: (1) the product must be fun; (2) tweens must have the impression the product is just for them; (3) it must appeal to as many of the senses as possible.

While following these five rules will win brands favor with tweens the unfortunate news is that like most teen and adult shoppers, economic factors due influence tween spending, trends, and brand loyalty. Because tweens are more local (no car access) than teens and may have smaller allowances a new trend is emerging. While brands are still big, tweens are beginning to demonstrate that it is not entirely a ‘brands or bust’ situation. Perhaps triggered by the recession and the fact that tweens now feel the necessity to pinch their pennies, tweens are more willing to pass up big name labels for the sake of value and economy -- as long as they have one hot ticket outfit or item.

Despite this trend tweens are still on the whole very loyal to brands that it’s like a friendship. Tweens expect people and brands to make mistakes in life. What they are looking for are ‘real’ or human reactions. Therefore, brands need to be viewed not as a brand, product, or object that needs to be marketed, but rather as an actual ‘human’ with complete emotions and personality.

**DIGITAL NATIVES**

Today’s tweens aren’t just digital natives; they don’t know a world without the social and mobile web. In addition being smart about tween products, marketers have to be savvy about their advertising and promotions. Gone are the days of reaching tweens via 30-second TV spots. Tweens are tech-obsessed, always looking for the newest and coolest platforms and gadgets. This audience likes to push its boundaries, albeit within a controlled environment like...
Mommy and Daddy’s house.

Although 80 percent of tweens say they “love” TV, if they had to choose only one communication medium most would select the internet. The Internet and cell phones are rapidly becoming Tweens’ favorite communications platforms. Nine out of ten tweens use online computer services, spending the majority of the time playing online games, or downloading music. Tweens visit websites of their favorite cable networks, including Disney, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network. Tweens socialize online through email, instant messaging (IM) or blogs. Tweens typically use a computer and access the internet while being observed by their parents. The key point: technology is an integral part of their lives, and the preferences are many so an omnichannel marketing approach is best.

TWEENS ARE SOCIAL BEINGS BUT DON’T ENGAGE THEM VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

While there is big talk about social media amongst marketers trying to reach teens most tweens haven’t really had the chance to engage on popular social networking forums like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. The reason being that Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, which limits companies from collecting personal information about kids under 13, automatically precludes tweens from these popular online platforms. Some kids younger than 13 dodge those age limits by faking their birth date and setting up an account, whether their parents know it or not. While some tweens do join YouTube, Google, Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter, despite policies meant to bar kids under 13, it is not advisable that brands reaching out to tweens turn to these communication vehicles. Instead tween marketers should capitalize upon these mediums once tweens have transitioned to teens and they are looking to transition these teens to the more age appropriate versions of familiar tween brands they have encountered and grown up with.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? TWEENS & MOBILE PHONE USE

Ordinarily, when reaching out to mobile device users, it makes the most sense to find out everything about what phone they are using, how they use it, and when. In the case of tweens, there are special constraints. Many parents are purchasing phones for their children only for use in emergency situations, or for use under very specific circumstances. Still, as the market matures, major phone manufacturers are beginning to introduce products and services tailored to the teen and tween market.

Nearly six out of 10 parents with tweens (56 percent) have purchased cell phones for their young children, ranging from a high of 62 percent in households earning over $100,000 a year to a low of 41 percent in households under $50,000 a year. Parents in a third of households earning under $50,000 are paying more for their tweens cell phone than they had expected. Overall, about a quarter of households (23 percent) report they pay more than they had anticipated would be the case.

The 10-11 age range appears to be the “sweet spot” for pre-teens to receive a cell phone. Six out of 10 pre-teens were aged 10-11 when they received their phone. Twenty percent of 8-9 year olds and 15 percent of 12-year olds received a cell phone. Parents who are paying more than they thought they would for their tweens cell phone would: investigate parental controls offered by wireless carrier to control costs (62 percent); set a monthly budget with child (38 percent); cancel phone (23 percent); and switch to prepaid or postpaid unlimited plans (22 percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Reasons Parents Buy Cell Phone For Tweens</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>84% - SAFETY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>73% - TRACKING AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16% - ASKED FOR ONE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ORC International/National Consumers League

Given how big texting is in the tween audience, this is relevant to marketers, as a well-executed campaign can increase interaction. The trick is reaching the child in an appropriate, timely manner. A television ad, for example, gives less time to type in the text than the back of a cereal box, or point of sale signage. Additionally, brands considering texting campaigns should be completely transparent to kids and parents alike. Show any carrier costs up front, provide easy ways to opt out, and never, ever try to sneak anything by. This is unfair to children just learning about marketing, and is guaranteed to make enemies with the parents holding the purse strings.

A much better direction is parents and the passback phenomenon. In short, studies have shown that parents are willing to hand their expensive smartphones to their children to keep them busy. By providing apps that can be downloaded on the parent’s device to keep the kids busy, marketers are provided with a much more sophisticated platform. Mobile application development costs are fairly low, and by offering the games for free, it is much easier to earn a space on someone’s phone. Underlining this point is the breakdown of how tweens spend their time and money...
with gaming taking prevalence in both cases. As such offering an app that contains games for free, along with a wide array of content ranging from direct product tie-ins across on and offline, to apps that take advantage of the platform and keep users engaged will provide more returns in the long run and get tweens more engaged with the brand.

RETAIL DONE RIGHT

Appealing to parents and tweens isn’t easy, especially when talking about designing a retail experience that speaks to both segments. In designing a retail experience for tweens it is easy to overlook the obvious — play is important, they’re still kids. Retailers need to create an environment where they can encourage tweens to enjoy and play with the accessories. They need to feel like it’s their little sorority or fraternity.

Retailers also have a lot of room to experiment with sensory marketing as tweens love an appeal to the senses. They love sensory overload — bright colors, music videos, aromatic fragrances, a variety of merchandise, the tumult of all of that really gets tweens engaged with the retail environment.

Finally there’s affiliation, the feeling like they belong. They want to feel good about themselves, and catering to that will get retailers far with this demographic.

Interactive adventures that engage tweens, whether that involves in-store contests, product testing seminars, or product promotion fairs at schools, sports leagues or other events.

ETHICS

There’s no doubting that the economic power and social connectedness of tweens have made them especially valuable to marketers—but the path to these consumers is also a minefield. Tweens have gone beyond nature and nurture to encompass another behavioral element—networking—and the comfort level today’s tween has with technology is unlike that of any previous generation. And yet, mature as they are, these are still just kids. The under-13 set remains barred from Facebook—for now anyway. The social network is reportedly exploring special accounts for tween users—albeit equipped with parental controls. Nonetheless, advocates of Internet safety for kids have their hackles up.

A number of companies are seeking to become “lifestyle” brands for tweens, branding everything from room décor to cell phones to video games. This enables manufacturers to be present not only in the toy aisle but in multiple sections of major stores like Target, Kohl’s, and Wal-Mart. In their quest to expand beyond the toy aisle, however, companies targeting tweens must be conscious of providing products which are relevant to the targeted segment, rather than simply enticing the tween to consume products. In other words, companies need to recognize their ethical responsibility not to saturate or overwhelm the tween with products that do not have a place in the life of an 8 to 14 year old, while building a strong brand across product categories.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of all this marketing is to instill lifetime brand loyalty from cradle to the grave, to borrow a phrase from Proctor & Gamble. While the number of tweens will slightly decrease in the distant future, research suggests that tweens will still manage to increasingly become powerful and influential consumers. This will result from greater levels of independence, a general rise in disposable income and increased pampering from parents.

Yet, even more interesting, is the idea that the tween segment actually encompasses three markets in one:
1. Current Market - spending their pocket money on their own desires.
2. Future Market - for most goods and services
3. Market of Influentials - influencing what their parents buy

With the combination of the tween market size, enormous spending power, obsession with all things tween and the ability for them to become a lifetime consumer, it’s easy to see why tweens are the largest and most influential market today and companies are battling each other for their attention.

Tweens are constantly multitasking and this makes them both a shopper marketers dream and nightmare. By using multiple platforms and technologies to create an omnichannel experience, tweens can be successfully marketed to and brands/retailers can grow successfully both today and well into the future. Addionally, focusing on strategies and marketing programs that empower tweens by helping them to contribute back to the community making it a better place will gain more fanfare and further instill a sense of brand loyalty.

If a brand is exploring engagement with tweens, it is essential to be careful. Engage tweens in a way that will not turn parents off, but instead is open and transparent. Not quite kids and not quite teenagers, this is an audience that changes quickly. Start with careful due diligence. Study not only how the tweens might engage with the product, but also how to build trust with the parents. When exploring different platforms, remember that basic rules apply around creating a good user experience, along with added constraints from regulation and parental requirements. Some platforms, such as mobile, will provide multiple opportunities, while others like social are less fertile ground without significant investment.
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