

## **ADVERTISING & CHILDREN 1**

1. Communicating to children was harder. There were few successful magazines aimed at youngsters, children read little that contained advertising -- newspapers for example -- and on the radio they listened mainly to family programming until they were in their teens. Kids' films were not an advertising medium. The points of contact between the marketplace and children were few and unsuited to advertising. So it fell to television to open up new lines of communication with children making marketing to young children possible. (Kline)
2. The Mickey Mouse Club was a fantastic success. Kids, it turned out, flocked to the screens to see a more engaging program tailored to their very own cultural inclinations.... For the first time television had offered a programming format for children that could provide up to 90% exposure ratings and a loyal audience. The scene was thus set for marketing more directly to children.... Television advertising to children rose quickly, from about \$25 million a year by 1956 to about \$750 million by 1987. In opening up a vision of children's culture, television brought the children's segment from the fringes of intellectual marketing into the inner regions of targeted marketing. (Kline)
3. We were shaping products to the needs of the television eye and ear...what a successful plaything must be able to do to perform in the commercial to sell itself at its best. (Russ Alben, Mattel Account Manager)
4. Television advertising proved a successful weapon for changing family dialogue. The evidence was that kids who watched a lot of television, and who zeroed in on commercials, began to make more requests for specific goods in the supermarket. Heavy advertising therefore increased children's influence and consumer 'power'. As one marketing analyst baldly states: 'The trend is for children to get more decision making authority and exercise that authority at a younger and younger age.' (Kline)

5. In the campaigns to market toys on television, the role of fantasy quickly emerged as an important dimension: 'In showing our earliest television commercials to children, we also realized something more important that persists to this day. The play situation in which you place a toy becomes a fantasy for the child. The fantasy presented becomes as important as the product.' (Cy Schneider, Mattel ad executive) Toy marketers realized they were not so much promoting a toy's use-value as marketing a particular imaginative relationship with the toy. Barbie was not a baby doll but a fashion model; her identity was tied in with the imagery of the glamour world of teenage fashion and romance.... Barbie's attraction as a doll was that children identified with her character rather than with her 'role' as a toy. Hence the way they played with her changed.... They didn't rehearse motherhood as they did with other dolls but spent a lot of time just staring at and admiring her in various outfits. Some 90% of their playtime was preoccupied with dressing and undressing Barbie; given this ritualistic and repetitious form of play activity, Mattel concluded that Barbie's appeal lay in her ability to evoke fantasy in the child -- what went on in their heads during play. The television back-story worked and Barbie sold in the millions in the first few years after her introduction.
6. The use of the weekend-morning time slot for children's programming did not come about in response to a demand from the viewing public. In fact, statistics indicate that less than 9% of all television viewing by 2 - 11 year old children takes place on Saturday morning. Although a potentially larger child audience could be attracted at other times, the "kid-vid ghetto" represents an assessment by the broadcasting industry of the most profitable alternative use of that particular time period. The lack of children's programs at other times when even more children would be watching reflects an economic determination of greater profit opportunities through scheduling other types of programming. The relatively isolated viewing by children on Saturday morning enables the advertiser to exploit more homogeneous submarkets of children (for example, the "pre-school market") without paying a lot of the heterogeneous "waste" circulation encountered during prime time. [Melody and Ehrlich]
7. It was time to move away from thinking about broadcasters as trustees. It was time to treat them the way almost everyone else in society does - that is, as businesses...Television is just another appliance. It's a toaster with pictures. [Mark Fowler, FCC Commissioner]

8. The fact is, there has probably never been a more creative moment in children's TV than the present one; creative, that is, as long as what appears on the screen is seen as a listless by-product of an extraordinary explosion of entrepreneurial life force taking place elsewhere - in the business of creating and marketing toys...It is the story of how "authorship" as a business concept shifted from television studios to the toy industry as well as to greeting card companies, advertising agencies and cereal makers - and how, in only a few years, a relatively small-scale business of licensing popular kids characters to appear on products has been transformed into a multibillion-dollar industry. This neat trick has been accomplished by unleashing the corporately minted "licensing character" and with it, for television, the program-length commercial. [Engelhardt]
9. The Mattel toy company, for example, came up with the idea of He-Man and the Masters of the Universe program in the early 1980s. The series cost over \$14 million to produce, but this roadblock was overcome by financial arrangements between television producers, licensing agents and the toy maker. The up-front financial commitments, along with guaranteed advertising contracts also proved a strong and necessary inducement to the toy distributors, who would see that the program's products got priority space in stores. (Kline)
10. Barbie's first serious rival in the market - Jem - was launched by Hasbro in 1986 complete with a Japanese-produced animation series and a comprehensive marketing plan. Deregulation of television allowed Hasbro to portray Jem/Jerrica as a dynamic modern woman of the 1980s - a manager by day and rock star by night. The designers paid excruciating attention to all the symbolic dimensions that would appeal to girls in the four-to-nine market, and the media buyers made sure that Jem's saturation through syndicated television and extensive spot advertising was well targeted... The stores were filled with Jem sticker books, posters, T-shirts and tape-recorders. Girls might receive the Jem doll at Christmas, but they would be buying her accessories all year round. (Kline)

11. In making these changes, Mattel had to violate the ideas of Barbie's original designers. Ruth and Elliot Handler of Mattel had believed that Barbie's personality should never be overly specified in her advertising or design because this might limit the imaginations of the girls who played with the dolls. Ruth Handler said, 'Each little girl has her dreams about who Barbie is.... If you give her a specific personality, it could mean that little girls will lose their ability to project whatever personalities they want onto Barbie.' In reworking the Barbie concept, Mattel conceded that their own fiction and fantasies of marketing worked more effectively than leaving it up to little girls' imaginations. It seemed that the fantasies researched, designed and scripted by marketers were the best means of engaging children with a particular personality. (Kline)