

'Kidult' trend shaking up the toy sector

There's a new trend on the rise in the toy sector, with 'kidult' toys surging in popularity as young adults look to their childhood toys for comfort and nostalgia during difficult times, according to retailer Toys R Us.



Source: Supplied

According to *Toy World Magazine*, in the past year, roughly a quarter of all toy sales have gone to young adults aged between 19 and 29. Toys have always been big business, with global sales hitting nearly \$104bn in 2021 - up by 8.5% growth over 2020.

“This year is set to be another bumper year for the industry as the traditional toy market bounces back,” says Catherine Jacoby, marketing manager at Toys R Us. “The traditional toy market is making a comeback, with ‘vintage’ trends at the forefront.”

She explains by way of example that half of all Lego sold is bought by adults. “Strong brands like Lego, Barbie, Hot Wheels, Pokémon and Rubik’s Cube, that have continued over the years are now going from strength to strength.”

According to NPD’s *Global Toy Market Report*, the kidult sector rose by 19% in the past four years with games and puzzles as one of the highest growth categories in 2021.

“We’re all kids at heart,” says Jacoby. “Toys are for everyone and we’re seeing consumers return to brands they loved in

their childhood.”



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17 Jun 2021



Power of nostalgia

“During the pandemic, with many consumers enjoying more time than they would usually have, sales of games, puzzles and construction kits boomed, with a significant number of those purchases made by kidults,” she adds. “During the second and even third lockdown people appeared to need the distraction of a new hobby, as the novelty of staying at home all but vanished.”

“Let’s be real, the pandemic was a grim time,” she says. “You can find comfort in childhood memories while reigniting passion.”

Jacoby explains that recent data suggests there is plenty of desire to buy in the kidult marketplace. “With this comes plenty of opportunities for us as a toy retailer to expand our existing ranges offering more exploration in the category.”

“We’re inviting kidults to come take a journey with us as we remember the life-changing toys of the sixties to nineties,” she says. “Feel the power of nostalgia as we remember the brands that brought so much enjoyment to our lives.”

“We all have fond memories of playing with toys when we were young,” she adds. “Whether it’s trading Pokémon cards or snuggling a favourite stuffed animal, it’s hard not to have at least one happy childhood toy story.”



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19 Feb 2019



Millennial consumers driving change

But it’s more than just nostalgia Jacoby explains, while there is a growing body of evidence that nostalgia is good for helping cope with stress and anxiety is everywhere these days. “Nostalgia is not the only factor driving this trend; social media is making it easier for adults to find toys and the stigma associated with adults buying toys is fading.

Jacoby says that millennial consumers are changing the toy industry for good. “No longer is it an embarrassment for an adult to buy ‘kid toys’ for themselves. The market is continuing to explode in popularity and there’s no reason to think it will slow down any time soon,” she adds.

Commenting on which ‘kidult’ toys are most popular Jacoby explains that the vintage eras of the sixties and seventies, with wind-up function having changed the way we interacted with toys sees brands like Stretch Armstrong, Hot Wheels, Pez Candy and Star Wars increasing in renewed popularity.

Jacoby says, “Toys from the eighties, when technology was introduced to toys: motorised movement, light and sound action technology, as well as Nintendo revolutionising the TV games industry, are seeing a comeback.”

“We’re seeing the resurgence of GI Joe, Turtles, Rubik’s Cube, Thundercat’s and Nintendo as action figures linked to TV shows and movies are seeing a huge explosion,” she adds. “The nineties, had a shift in focus on high-tech toys and action figures, this is seeing the reigniting of brands like Tamagotchi, Pokémon, Polly Pocket, Barbie, Hot Wheels and Power

Rangers.”

“Movie franchises and TV shows create sought-after memorabilia merchandise and collectibles and are on the rise with a number of franchises being released this year,” says Jacoby. “Blockbusters always contribute to the popularity of collectibles, and we can expect to see many of these during 2022 and 2023.”

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