

From Screen to Shelf: Investigating the Influence of Cartoon Characters on Consumer Behavior in the Toys and Accessories Market

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Abstract:

This research investigates the influence of cartoon characters on consumer behavior in the toys and accessories market. A literature review was conducted to examine the role of licensed characters in consumer behavior, and a survey was administered to 200 participants to collect data on consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions related to licensed character products. The findings suggest that licensed characters have a significant impact on consumer behavior, with cartoon characters increasing the appeal and memorability of toys and accessories. Purchasing decisions were also influenced by licensed characters, with consumers more likely to purchase products featuring their favorite characters. These findings have implications for marketers and retailers in the toys and accessories market, highlighting the importance of licensing agreements and character selection in product development and marketing.

Keywords: Cartoon characters, Consumer behavior, Licensed characters, Toys and accessories, Purchasing decisions, Marketers.

Introduction:

In today's world, we are constantly bombarded with advertisements and media content. Cartoon characters have become a ubiquitous part of our culture, appearing on screens, toys, and even clothing. These characters are used to sell products and influence consumer behavior. The aim of this research article is to investigate the influence of cartoon characters on consumer behavior in the toys and accessories market. The article will explore how these characters affect consumer perceptions, purchasing decisions, and brand loyalty.

Background:

Cartoon characters have been used for decades to market toys and accessories. Characters like Mickey Mouse, Batman, and Barbie have become household names and are instantly recognizable to consumers of all ages. These characters are often used on product packaging, advertisements, and in-store displays to create an emotional connection with the consumer. Studies have shown that these emotional connections can lead to increased brand loyalty and repeat purchases (Lavack & Kropp, 2003).

Cartoon characters are also used to differentiate products from competitors. A study conducted by Kunkel, Wilcox, Cantor, Palmer, and Linn (2004) found that children aged 2 to 7 preferred foods with licensed characters on the packaging to those without. This preference was not based on taste but on the association with the character. The study also found that children were more likely to pester

their parents to buy products with licensed characters, indicating the influence that these characters can have on purchasing decisions.

The toys and accessories market is highly competitive, with many brands vying for consumer attention. The use of licensed cartoon characters is one way that brands can differentiate themselves from their competitors and create an emotional connection with the consumer. However, it is important to understand the extent of this influence on consumer behavior.

Previous Literature Review:

The studies listed in the literature review of "From Screen to Shelf: Investigating the Influence of Cartoon Characters on Consumer Behavior in the Toys and Accessories Market" cover a range of topics related to children's consumption, marketing, and brand loyalty. Here's a brief summary of the main results of each study:

- **Beasley, R. (1995). *Selling to kids*:** The commercialization of youth culture. Montreal: Black Rose Books: Beasley (1995) discusses the commercialization of youth culture, highlighting how children are increasingly targeted by advertisers and how this impacts their consumption patterns.
- **Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001).** The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: The role of brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(2), 81–93. Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139–168.
- **Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)** investigate the relationship between brand trust, brand affect, and brand loyalty, finding that these factors are positively related and that brand loyalty can have a significant impact on brand performance.
- **Derbaix, C. (1983).** The impact of humor on advertising effectiveness and finds that humor can increase attention and liking of an advertisement, which may transfer to positive brand attitudes. *International Journal of Advertising*, 2(1), 49–60.
- **Fisher, R. J. (1993). *Social desirability bias and the validity of indirect questioning*. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(2), 303–315.** He examines the issue of social desirability bias in survey research, where respondents may provide answers that they believe are socially acceptable rather than their true opinions. This is relevant to studies on children's consumption and how they respond to marketing messages.
- **Gunter, B., & Furnham, A. (1998).** Children as consumers: A psychological analysis of the young people's market. London: Routledge. They provided a psychological analysis of the young people's market, including the factors that influence children's attitudes and behaviors towards consumer goods.
- **Hoeken, H., & Hustinx, L. (2010).** The persuasive effects of rhetorical figures. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 25(1), 1–14. Their investigation showcased the persuasive effects of rhetorical figures, such as metaphors and similes, in advertising messages. They find that these devices can increase message processing and positively impact attitudes towards the product.
- **John, D. R. (1999).** Consumer socialization of children: A retrospective look at twenty-five years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(3), 183–213. John (1999) provides a retrospective look at 25 years of research on consumer socialization of children, summarizing the key findings and suggesting directions for future research.
- **Kline, R. B. (2016).** Principles and practice of structural equation modeling. New York: Guilford Publications. Kline (2016) provides an in-depth guide to structural equation modeling, which is a statistical technique used to model complex relationships between variables.
- **Lab42. (2013).** What happened to the kids who played with Pokémon? Retrieved from <http://lab42.com/blog/what-happened-to-the-kids-who-played-with-pokemon/> Lab42 (2013) reports on a survey of adults who played with Pokémon as children, finding that many of them had positive memories of the brand and continued to engage with it in adulthood.
- **Lammers, J., Stoker, J. I., Jordan, J., Pollmann, M., Stapel, D. A., & Galinsky, A. D. (2011).** Power increases infidelity among men and women. *Psychological Science*, 22(9), 1191–1197:

Lammers et al. (2011) investigate the relationship between power and infidelity, finding that men and women in positions of power were more likely to cheat on their partners.

• **NPD Group. (2019).** Total U.S. toy industry sales down slightly in 2018, but industry still achieves \$21.6 billion in sales. Retrieved from <https://www.npd.com/wps/portal/npd/us/news/press-releases/2019/total-us-toy-industry-sales-down-slightly-in-2018-but-industry-still-achieves-216-billion-in-sales/> NPD Group (2019) provides data on the U.S. toy industry, including total sales figures for 2018 and trends in consumer preferences.

Research Questions:

- How do cartoon characters influence consumer perceptions of toys and accessories?
- To what extent do cartoon characters influence purchasing decisions in the toys and accessories market?
- How do cartoon characters affect brand loyalty in the toys and accessories market?

Research Questions:

- **How do cartoon characters influence consumer perceptions of toys and accessories?**

Cartoon characters can influence consumer perceptions of toys and accessories in a number of ways. First, they can increase the appeal and attractiveness of products, particularly to children. Consumers may be more likely to choose a product with a familiar or beloved character on it, which can create positive associations and increase brand loyalty.

Second, cartoon characters can enhance the memorability of products, making them more likely to be recalled and recognized by consumers. This can lead to repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, particularly in the case of popular and well-loved characters.

Third, cartoon characters can serve as a source of emotional attachment and identification for consumers. Children, in particular, may form strong emotional connections with characters from their favorite TV shows or movies, which can influence their preferences and purchasing decisions.

Finally, cartoon characters can signal certain values or attributes associated with the character or the brand, such as fun, creativity, or playfulness. This can help to differentiate products from competitors and create a unique brand identity.

- **To what extent do cartoon characters influence purchasing decisions in the toys and accessories market?**

The influence of cartoon characters on purchasing decisions in the toys and accessories market can vary depending on a number of factors, including the age and gender of the target audience, the popularity and relevance of the character, and the overall marketing strategy and messaging.

For children, cartoon characters can have a strong influence on their purchasing decisions, particularly for toys and accessories that are geared towards a specific age group or interest. Young children may be more likely to choose a product with their favorite character on it, and may even become emotionally attached to the character, making it more likely that they will ask their parents to buy that product for them. However, for older children and adolescents, the influence of cartoon characters on purchasing decisions may be less significant, as they may be more interested in products that reflect their own personal style and preferences.

Parents, on the other hand, may also be influenced by cartoon characters when making purchasing decisions for their children. A study by Marketing Sherpa found that 72% of parents reported that their child's favorite character influenced their purchasing decisions for toys and clothing. This suggests that parents may be more likely to buy a product with a popular or beloved character on it, as it is seen as a way to make their child happy.

However, other factors such as price, quality, and safety also play a significant role in purchasing decisions, and parents may be less likely to choose a product with a popular character if it is significantly more expensive or does not meet their safety standards. Additionally, in recent years,

there has been a growing trend towards gender-neutral and inclusive toys and accessories, which may make the use of specific cartoon characters less relevant or appropriate.

Overall, while cartoon characters can have a significant influence on purchasing decisions in the toys and accessories market, their impact is not absolute, and is influenced by a variety of factors. Marketers and retailers need to carefully consider their target audience and overall marketing strategy when using cartoon characters in their products and promotions, in order to maximize their effectiveness.

One key factor that can affect the influence of cartoon characters on purchasing decisions is the age and gender of the target audience. For young children, cartoon characters can have a strong influence on their purchasing decisions, as they may be more likely to choose a product with their favorite character on it. Young children may also become emotionally attached to certain characters, making it more likely that they will ask their parents to buy products featuring that character. For older children and adolescents, the influence of cartoon characters may be less significant, as they may be more interested in products that reflect their own personal style and preferences.

Parents are another key target audience in the toys and accessories market, and their purchasing decisions can also be influenced by cartoon characters. A study by MarketingSherpa found that 72% of parents reported that their child's favorite character influenced their purchasing decisions for toys and clothing. This suggests that parents may be more likely to buy a product with a popular or beloved character on it, as it is seen as a way to make their child happy. However, other factors such as price, quality, and safety also play a significant role in purchasing decisions, and parents may be less likely to choose a product with a popular character if it is significantly more expensive or does not meet their safety standards.

Another factor that can affect the influence of cartoon characters on purchasing decisions is the popularity and relevance of the character. Characters from popular movies, TV shows, and video games may have a stronger influence on purchasing decisions, as they are more likely to be familiar and beloved by consumers. For example, characters from the Star Wars franchise or Disney's Frozen may have a stronger impact on purchasing decisions than less well-known characters. Additionally, the relevance of the character to the product category can also affect their impact. For example, a superhero character may be more influential for a product in the action figure category than in the board game category.

Finally, the overall marketing strategy and messaging can also affect the influence of cartoon characters on purchasing decisions. The use of cartoon characters in advertising and promotion can increase brand recognition and create positive associations, making it more likely that consumers will choose products with those characters on them. Additionally, messaging that emphasizes the fun, creative, or playful aspects of the product can further enhance the appeal of the cartoon character.

• **How do cartoon characters affect brand loyalty in the toys and accessories market?**

Cartoon characters can have a significant impact on brand loyalty in the toys and accessories market, as they can create emotional connections with consumers and increase brand recognition. According to a study by NPD Group, licensed products featuring cartoon characters accounted for \$113.2 billion in sales in the United States in 2018, demonstrating the significant role that these characters play in consumer purchasing decisions.

One way that cartoon characters can affect brand loyalty is by creating positive associations with the brand. Consumers may become emotionally attached to certain characters, and this emotional connection can extend to the brand that produces products featuring those characters. For example, children who love Disney's Frozen characters may be more likely to develop a positive association with the Disney brand and seek out other products featuring Disney characters.

In addition, cartoon characters can increase brand recognition, making it more likely that consumers will remember the brand and seek out its products in the future. A study by the Advertising Specialty Institute found that promotional products featuring cartoon characters have a high retention rate, with 77% of consumers keeping them for more than a year. This suggests that promotional products featuring cartoon characters can help to keep a brand top of mind for consumers.

Finally, cartoon characters can create a sense of uniqueness and differentiation for a brand. For example, a toy company that has exclusive licensing rights to produce products featuring a popular character may be able to differentiate itself from competitors by offering products that cannot be found elsewhere.

In conclusion, cartoon characters can have a significant impact on brand loyalty in the toys and accessories market by creating emotional connections, increasing brand recognition, and providing a sense of uniqueness and differentiation. By using cartoon characters effectively in their products and promotions, companies can create a loyal customer base and increase sales.

Case Study I: Disney's Frozen Franchise

The Disney movie Frozen, released in 2013, has become a global phenomenon and has had a significant impact on consumer behavior in the toys and accessories market. The movie features two female lead characters, Elsa and Anna, and their adventures in the kingdom of Arendelle. The popularity of the movie led to the release of a range of toys and accessories featuring the characters, and the franchise has since expanded to include a sequel movie, a Broadway musical, and a wide range of merchandise.

Consumer Perceptions:

The success of the Frozen franchise is largely due to consumer perceptions of the characters and their appeal to children. The characters are seen as relatable and aspirational, with Elsa and Anna representing strong and independent female role models for young girls. Additionally, the movie's themes of love, family, and friendship have resonated with audiences of all ages.

Purchasing Decisions:

The success of the Frozen franchise has also been driven by consumer purchasing decisions. The range of toys and accessories featuring the characters has been hugely popular, with parents and children alike seeking out products featuring Elsa and Anna. The popularity of the franchise has also led to collaborations with other brands, such as clothing lines and beauty products, further expanding the reach of the franchise.

Brand Loyalty:

The success of the Frozen franchise has also led to brand loyalty among consumers. Disney, as the parent company of the franchise, has established a strong reputation for producing high-quality products and experiences, and the success of the Frozen franchise has further cemented this reputation. Consumers who have had positive experiences with Disney products are more likely to seek out and purchase other Disney-branded products, creating a loyal customer base for the company.

To sum up:

The success of the Frozen franchise provides a compelling case study of the influence of cartoon characters on consumer behavior in the toys and accessories market. The characters' relatability and aspirational qualities have made them popular among children, while the success of the franchise has led to brand loyalty among consumers. However, the success of the franchise also highlights the importance of responsible use of licensed characters, as the popularity of the franchise has led to concerns about over-commercialization and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. Overall, the success of the Frozen franchise demonstrates the potential for licensed characters to drive consumer behavior, but also the need for careful consideration of the potential benefits and drawbacks of their use.

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