

Through Children's Minds: The Marketing and Creation of Children's Products

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Stanley Goldstein, Ph.D.

**Through Children's Minds:
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Of Children's Products**

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To children, who dream of their future
and can hardly wait until *then*...

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Author's Note

My thought of writing *Through Children's Minds* originated in workshops on telecommunications and marketing which I prepared under the auspices of Behavioral Information Services. The telecommunications workshop explained eighty percent of the telecommunications section in the *Encyclopedia of Engineering* in just one day. My goal was comparable for the Children's Marketing Workshop.

This book requires no prior knowledge of advertising, marketing, or child psychology. Its only requirement is the willingness to abandon the inaccurate explanations of children's behavior which each person, naturally and intuitively, has created, the "naïve psychology" to which Fritz Heider, a leading figure in the field of social psychology, devoted a lifetime of study.

Discarding cherished conclusions is difficult for these are the bedrock of our personality. Yet children easily accomplish this task as they develop. Should less be demanded of adults?

Foreword: Who Should Read This Book

Children are cherished in all societies but the same cannot be said of marketing and advertising professionals. And particularly not about those who market to children, an activity which many people consider unsavory and believe that the regulatory agencies should more vigorously confront.

Moreover, they insist, why should a company even bother to market to young people? They have minimal pocket money compared to adults, and behave inexplicably to their parents and less logically with strangers. If valid, these would be justified objections but they are not.

The truth is that children like most television commercials, which they consider thirty-second entertainment; and that they are far more sophisticated in their response to marketing than most people believe.

And while children do present a far smaller market than adults, their spending money is in the multi-billions of dollars and has increased tenfold over the past fifty years.

Children get money from their parents and relatives and the only people they have to spend it on is themselves. Adults have bills to pay but children only want to have fun. And while parents do buy most of a family's products, children and particularly teenagers direct many of these purchases. Also, few parents will buy food which they are sure that their children will not eat, and children often determine the restaurant where the family eats.

Furthermore, children who become familiar with a brand may, as adults, be faithful customers for their products and to a child, who is a new customer, all brands are novel and so the youth market is continually fresh.

Shopping is an experience for children rather than an errand, an event and not a chore. And though often difficult to understand, there is a logic to children's behavior which readers of this book will learn along with guidelines in the marketing and creation of products which children value.

The belief that marketing to children is synonymous with exploitation is as false and simplistic as the notion that children believe all that they are told and are easily manipulated through advertising. Try telling *that* to the marketers of failed children's products! They have learned that children are smart and that you can't fool a child.

The purpose of marketing is to provide a product which satisfies a need. This is, for children, to see the product and think "Wow!" Even if parents, who control the purse strings, like a product and consider it wholesome, their positive feelings can be offset by the whining influence which children have on parents.

Through Children's Minds provides insight into the marketing and creation of children's products. After reading this book you will understand: what children value and why; the buying behavior of children, and how children influence adult purchases; why some children's products, television programs, and commercials are more successful than others; marketing in the global children's market; and the nature of market research with children.

But behaving ethically is equally important for a company's franchise is tenuous. If a children's product isn't advertised accurately or the parent feels that the company is just selling products and doesn't really care about their child, the child will be upset and their parents will be enraged, not only at that company but toward the entire industry.

So because every child is someone's child this book also includes ethical guidelines when marketing to children. These are crucial to consider to avoid causing harm, a public relations disaster, and possible government involvement.

This book is intended for manufacturers, product designers, and marketers of products for children between the age of three and twelve years though there is some information about teenagers too.

Readers who are seeking "recipes" to assure a successful product or marketing campaign will be disappointed for this is not possible. "By the numbers" creation does not usually work, as evidenced by the reported statement of the Disney executive after the disappointing opening sales of their 2013 movie, *The Lone Ranger*: "All the numbers looked good!"

But while promising that your product will become a hit is not possible, combining the insights which you gained from this book together with your creative imagination will make your success more likely.

Note: The pagination differs in the printed book but this content is accurate.