

Sozo Trend Report

Progressive thinking about the baby/kids' market

THE RICH GET RICHER

Has “gifting,” the marketing tool companies employ to put products in the hands of celebrities, gotten out of hand? With wealthy celebrities receiving oodles of freebies, and gift baskets for the Academy Awards worth more than the GNP of some Third-World nations, I would say yes. Some of the rich and famous, as Madonna told Jay Leno, think it's ridiculous to get so many gifts, but they are likely in the minority. However, celebrities are seen as the world's trendsetters, so companies must continue giving till it hurts if they hope to be featured in most magazines or plugged on TV talk shows.

IS AMERICA READY FOR EURO-STYLE?

I've wrestled with this one for a long time: Are American consumers disinterested in tastefully designed products, or are those products just unavailable at most retailers. I believe if consumers are exposed to more sophisticated and adventurous Euro-styled products, they will gravitate away from mundane pink and blue pastels and tired old graphic themes. Though good design is breaking through in boutique environments, it's been slower to enter the mainstream. Target is a noticeable exception, as they are pushing the design envelope in all product categories, including stylish Philippe Starck-designed baby accessories.

SO MANY SIZES FOR SO LITTLE TIME

American standards call for outfitting newborns with new sizes every three months (0-3, 3-6, 6-9, 9-12). From experience, I find this range too narrow—they fit perfectly at the low to middle range and are too snug at the high end. Parents are put in the position of having to reinvest in a newborn's wardrobe with alarming frequency. I believe a more realistic range is 0-6 months and 6-12 months, similar to the European philosophy of stretching size ranges to accommodate the rapid growth of infants. Companies may profit from more sizes, but I see it as wasteful consumerism.

FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS—FAMILY STYLE

I find two types of business women in the news: High-powered executives married to their careers, or women who have left corporate confines to raise a family. On the contrary, the majority of children's product companies appear to have been started by women who are trying to balance family and entrepreneurship. More newsworthy would be articles about these women who find a way to be there for the family while continuing to thrive in business on their own terms.

Call me anytime to comment on trends in the baby/kids' market!

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