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NAIL CARE

Teen, Preteen Girls Big Retail Business

NEW YORK—The children's market represents a lucrative opportunity for nail care suppliers and retailers that are willing to respond to the fluctuating choices of teens and preteens.

Girls between the ages of 4 and 12 collectively spend $17.8 billion and influence another $250 billion in spending every year, according to research by cosmetics manufacturer Bonne Bell Inc., which offers shades in finishes from matte to metallic under its Nail Gear line.

Gathering some of those sales requires careful observation of such consumers' involvement with contemporary pop culture, according to Josie Moreau, art director for Entrepreneur Corp.'s Fing'rs division.

"Teen fashion magazines and the entertainment industry tremendously influence this segment," Moreau remarks. "So we try to keep abreast of whatever such popular television shows as 'Dawson's Creek,' which are aired at that market, are doing."

In addition to many television programs and films, trends set by figures in worlds of music, fashion and sports influence the development of young people's identities and the manner in which they express them.

"Children and teens today are extremely interested in being able to express themselves," Moreau points out. "The products offered by Fing'rs allow them to do that."

The company, which targets consumers ages 8 to 25 with nail polishes and other in striking bear- and cat-shaped bottles, recently launched an entire line of Little Fing'rs press-on nails for children 10 and up. The collection includes decals, a miniature manicure set, a nail file, a top coat, polish in bear-shape bottles and nail jewels.

Fing'rs also features wash-off and peel-off nail polishes, coarse and fine grit files that come with glitter polish, and a glitter line that lets children paint top and bottom layers on their nails in different colors as well as add a glittering line of polish in between. The supplier has also developed Cool Tips and Hair Clips, stick-on nails along with matching hair clips.

With its constantly expanding audience, the Internet provides Fing'rs and other suppliers with a useful tool to track the latest interests of its consumer base.

"We receive between 70,000 and 80,000 hits per day on our web site and we respond to what the users say," remarks vice president of sales Sean Battles.

The untapped potential of the children's market is reflected in the fact that it is attracting manufacturers from categories not usually noted for offering items for young consumers.

"We see the dramatic increase of products being developed for the teen market as an important trend," says Barbara Shannon, consumer products marketing manager for nail care implements supplier W.E. Bassett Co. "In addition to our teen line, we will be introducing several items for baby nail care."

Offering products that cater to members of Generation Y (ages 12 to 19) is the core of Fun Cosmetics Inc.'s business. It offers metal barrettes together with nail polishes that can be used to decorate the barrettes as well. The company also features an Envious Eyes nail polish in color and clear versions, which includes 10 nail decals with movable "eyes."

This fall Fun Cosmetics will introduce its Lotsa Loot change purse, which contains quick-drying nail polishes in holographic green and burnt sienna as well as lip gloss. In November the manufacturer will launch its Glitzy line, which includes a gold disco ball/bag filled with nail polishes in pearly white, glittering gold, sparkling silver and metallic red.

Young people want to express themselves

The increasing popularity of manicures and pedicures is partly due to the proliferation of white-collar service industries that emphasize a person's appearance at work, according to Tweezerman Corp. chief executive officer Del LaMagna.

"This trend has increased the number of people who go to manicurists and pedicurists, and encouraged more people to purchase their own nail-grooming tools and bring them to these professionals," he says.

Fear of contagious diseases has also prompted women to bring their own implements to nail technicians, he adds.

33-SKU Tweezerman LTD line of tweezers, stainless steel cuticle nippers, and manicure and personal care implements.

The line, which will make its debut in select chain drug stores next month, comes with a free lifetime sharpening guarantee, which Lamagna notes will help generate word-of-mouth sales for all of the company's products.

Other manufacturers also look toward the professional beauty care industry to provide pointers on which products offer optimum crossover appeal.

"Professional beauty care usually features the newest of the new," remarks Patrick Patterson, director of sales for the Cook Bates Co. division of Pacer Technology. "We ask cosmeticians, 'Which items can go into the mass market?' If we feel the consumer is ready for it we'll take a shot."

A manufacturer of nail clippers, emery boards and other manicure tools, Cook Bates is a leading private label supplier and marketer of value-price items sold under such brand names as GEM and Korlash Diamond Deb.

The company also holds licenses for such major brand names as Oleg Cassini, under which it recently unveiled a line of nail implements. The collection includes such items as angular carbon fiber tips and slant precision grip tips tweezers, clippers, natural pumice stones and professional-style buffers. The Cassini Conditioning Cushion Pro Boards emery board uses patented technology to release microencapsulated aloe conditioners during use.

"The trend is toward upscale, better functioning implements," says Patterson, who adds that Cook Bates is preparing to offer a laser-etched nail file that provides ultrasmooth filing. "These types of products help retailers, because they provide a bigger ring at the cash register."

The demand for premium-quality pedicure tools has been a factor in W.E. Bassett's strong sales growth.

The 13-SKU TRIM collection is designed for women who have their nails manicured at salons but want the same implements to perform touch-ups between appointments.

The line includes callus shavers and removers, pumice stones, toe separators and one of the few toenail clippers manufactured with the straight-across cutting edge podiatrists recommend, Shannon notes. The company is also launching a complete line of manicure implements this year that targets the teen market.

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Meanwhile, W.E. Bassett's patented Easy Hold line comes with plastic attachments that help hold the tools and, on the nail clippers, catch clippings.

Several manufacturers are stressing superior technology to attract consumers. Revlon Inc. features a Sure Grip line of fingernail and toenail clippers, emery files and tweezers that have large handles and specially contoured finger grips to facilitate holding.

Fashion is also playing a significant role in nail care implements. The popularity of open-toe shoes, has helped secure for quality tools that fit personal needs.

Del has recently unveiled Fun Elegant Emery Boards, a LaCross brand. The product is outfitted with high-quality, a resilient foam backing to the shape of the nail filing. The product

Artificial Nails Still Have Loyal

NEW YORK — Challenged by recent consumer enthusiasm for natural nails, suppliers of artificial nails insist that a viable market still exists for their offerings.

The combination of the increasing number of women who prefer their own nails and heavy item duplication in the artificial nail segment contributed to a 4.9% decline in sales during the 12 months ended June 12, according to ACNielsen.

"As we review the nail care category right now, artificial nails tend to be down for everyone nationally," Rite Aid Corp. category manager Judy Wray says.

There are some bright spots, however. Retailers and suppliers point out that a recent wave of successful launches of high-quality nail tips and sculpting kits at low prices promises to enhance the category performance.

Among drug chains Walgreen Co. has identified some positive trends. "We are seeing strong gains in nail care due to such new products as Kiss Products Inc.'s Broadway Nails artificial nails and airbrush kit, and Del Laboratories Inc.'s Sally Hansen Teflon Tuff treatments," a spokeswoman for the retailer comments.

Kiss already offers an extensive lineup of full-cover artificial nails, tips, adhesives, nail enhancements and abrasives. To accommodate consumers' growing desire to use fashion to express themselves, the company's newly launched Work of Art program features four collections of decorated full-cover nails that a spokesman says are handmade by professional nail artists.

Taking a technologically

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