

Move over Yuppies, here come the Skippies

It's happening again. Market research and advertising industry experts have discovered two more consumer segments for retailers to appeal to. Complete with trendy acronyms, the two groups consist of young consumers, ages six to 21, possessing a considerable amount of discretionary income. Are they worth going after? Read on.

by Jean Adamczak

A couple years ago, Yuppies (young, upwardly-mobile professionals) were the consumers retailers targeted their marketing efforts to. Last year it was Sinks (single income, no kids) and Dinks (double income, no kids). It should come as no surprise, then, that yet other new and exciting groups, two, in fact, have been discovered. What's amazing about the consumers in these groups is their age.

Skippies

Skippies (school kids' with income and purchasing power) are six- to 12-year-olds who spend an average of \$30 a week, according to New York advertisers and marketers. Flyers (fun-loving youth en route to success) are comprised of the generation after the Baby Boomers, and are said to have much discretionary income.

Many retailers, especially those carrying expensive, breakable merchandise, cringe when children enter their stores. With the advent of Skippies, this perception is changing. Skippies enjoy relatively higher family incomes than ever before, a result of the two-parent, two-paycheck syndrome. With the appropriate inventory and a few creative display techniques, florists can tap into and reap the rewards of this segment, too.

"The lucrative children's market is currently composed of 45.3 million pre-teens and may reach a peak of 49.3 million in 1995, before an inevitable demographic decline," stated an article in the February issue of *Gifts & Decorative Accessories* magazine. "About 25 percent of the population will be under 18 years old by that time. Children from higher income families, especially in the three- to 12-year-old range, are having a

say in purchases as well. Exposure to media, travel, elite schools and upscale adult lifestyles has influenced these children."

To meet the demands of Skippies, there's a whole new crop of specialty children's stores offering clothing, accessories, furniture and gifts geared to the young consumer. The older

schools. Judy Samuelson, owner, Sunnyvale Florist, Sunnyvale, Calif., has been doing just that for more than seven years.

"I started speaking to children simply because I love them," she explained. "The first time I went into a school was by invitation to speak at a career day. I've talked to students in the



the child, the more interest he or she will show in deciding what to purchase, whether it's a gift or something for himself or herself.

Reaching Skippies

There are ways florists can reach the six- to 12-year-old market without spending a lot of time and money. One way is to get acquainted with children through career days at local elementary and junior high

fourth through seventh grades. I begin telling them how important a good education is when trying to get a job. Then I talk about flowers.

"I begin by telling them how important it is to water flowers and plants," she continued. "I take some flowers and arrangements with me, too. I usually show them how to make a little corsage or bow, because they like seeing you demonstrate something. Some-

FLORIST

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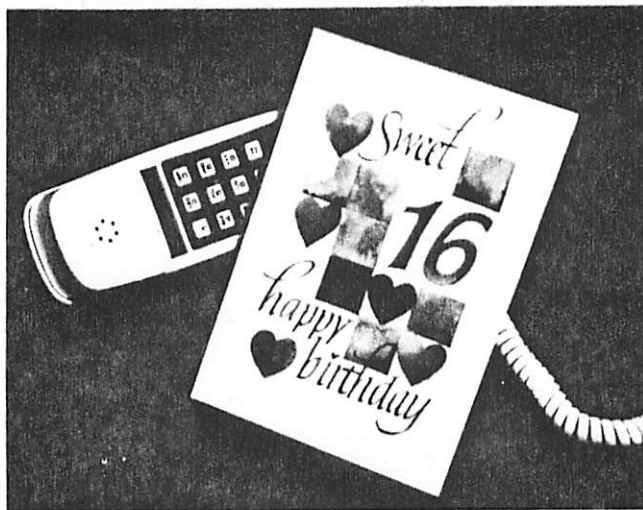
times I'll finish up an arrangement, but I don't usually design in front of them because it's too time-consuming and messy. And I always leave flowers with the teacher and most times I'll take a carnation or other flower for each student."

Another way Samuelson gets the students involved in her presentation is by giving them advertising flyers distributed by wire services, such as Florists' Transworld Delivery Assn. (FTD). "They love the flyers, they love to get paper; so I always have at least two or three different kinds to pass out," she said. "The FTD Pick-Me-Up® Bouquet flyers are well-liked by children because they all have seen the flowers advertised on television and they can relate to that.

"I know that these children are potential customers for our shop and, of course, their parents will probably see the flyers at home and, hopefully, they'll see what nice people we are and they'll visit our shop. Not only do the kids' parents come in, but I also get teachers and principals in who have never been to our shop before."

Flyers

Generally, Flyers (a.k.a. teenagers) are a rich bunch of kids. According to *American Demographics* magazine, teenage spending on products for the family exceeded \$40 billion in 1986. Additionally, kids have access to more than \$30 billion of their own money, earned mainly through part-time or summer jobs, the magazine reported. Flyers



are trendy, clannish and spend money with gusto. According to market researchers, this consumer group spends money on non-essential items, regardless of price. Flyers buy big and small-ticket items. They want things that will make them look and feel better, products to make them stand out in a crowd. And they'll work for the money to purchase those items.

Both teenage girls and boys are working more to supplement their already healthy allowances and to support their purchasing habits. Boys age 13 to 15 have a total weekly income of \$24.45, according to an annual study conducted by the Rand Youth Poll of New York. Girls in the same age group have a weekly income of \$25.60, the company reported. The amounts get bigger in the 16-19 year-old age category. Here, boys average a total of \$57.35 a week, and girls \$58.85 a week, Rand said.

Although teenagers may not be a traditional target

market for florists, it's important to keep in mind that loyalties and buying habits are formed at a young age. An excellent way for florists to pursue this profitable market segment is through prom flowers. Often a teenager's first "real" dance, the prom is usually a formal affair, requiring corsages for the girls and boutonnieres for the boys. For many young men, purchasing prom flowers and their first visit to a flower shop occur simultaneously. In such cases, patience is a virtue, Samuelson said.

"We sell a lot of corsages for proms, homecomings and dances," she said emphatically. "I like to wait on the boys because they're so cute. They're a little embarrassed about being in a flower shop. They don't know what to ask for, they don't know how to tell you what they want. I enjoy helping them out."

If a young consumer has a pleasant first experience in her shop, Samuelson said they'll eventually be back for other floral and

non-floral purchases. An average junior or senior high school student's purchase runs between \$4 to \$10, she said.

"The high school boys like to buy single roses, wrapped," she related. "A lot of times a balloon will be attached to it. If they can't afford roses, there's carnations, and we always try to emphasize that the price of the flowers doesn't matter, it's the thought behind it. That way, they're not embarrassed if they don't have enough money for a dozen roses or whatever."

A good way for florists to get involved with prom work and other high school activities is to advertise in high school newspapers, yearbooks, and sports and graduation programs. A coupon for a free flower, redeemable by showing a student identification card, will get Flyers into your shop. Providing flowers for the homecoming queen and her court will ensure your shop's name is mentioned at the festivities and in the program.

The college market

East Lansing, Mich., is home to approximately 47,000 Michigan State University (MSU) Spartans. The city's business district is located a convenient 100 feet north of campus. Occupying approximately 2,800 square feet of this bustling area is Norm Kesel Florist, Inc., co-owned by Dave and Marsha Mansfield. An FTD Top 200 member, Mansfield attributes much of his shop's success to the student market.

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—Dave Mansfield, florist

customers are MSU students,” Mansfield said. “The average amount a student will spend in my shop is in the \$20 range for arrangements, but we also sell a lot of single roses at \$3.50 apiece.”

Roses were very hot items at Mansfield’s shop in January, when the MSU football team won the Rose Bowl game. “We sold a ton of stuff during the Rose Bowl fever months of November, December and January,” he said. “During the last regular season football game against Indiana, we were selling roses for \$1 and \$2 apiece out the front door and we had about 7,000 roses in here that Saturday.”

Along with offering the usual fare of fresh flowers and arrangements, Mansfield also sells a number of

non-floral items, such as stuffed animals, balloons and greeting cards.

“All of those items are floral-related,” he pointed out, “and are perfect add-ons to floral products. We incorporate a lot of stuffed animals into our arrangements, a balloon tied to a stuffed animal, a box of roses with a ‘Happy Birthday’ Mylar balloon attached to it—they’re all excellent second-sale and add-on items. A lot of customers, while waiting for an order, will browse the card rack and see a card they like and buy that, too.”

Affluent coeds

“America’s 12.5 million college students with \$20 billion in annual discretionary income have come of age as consumers,” stated a recent article in *Gifts &*

Decorative Accessories magazine. “The college market is a lucrative one . . . on-target product mix, display, service, promotion and advertising and service can reap not only short-term, but also long-term, customers.”

“They’re all future customers,” Hazel Jokinen, manager, Westchester Florists, New Rochelle, N.Y., stated. “I’ll give the kids a break on their flowers now, because some of them are going to wind up getting married someday and when they do, maybe they’ll remember our shop.”

With the all-girl College of New Rochelle—Arts and Sciences in the immediate vicinity of Westchester Florists, Jokinen said much of the shop’s business involves school-related functions, such as dances, grad-

uations, and other campus activities.

“The College of New Rochelle has a house account with us, so when the college has any kind of a function where flowers are needed, 90 percent of the time we will provide the flowers,” Jokinen explained. “We also get a lot of students in. Most of them come in to buy boutonnieres or corsages for dances. The kids are good buyers. If they pay cash, I give them a better deal.

“I think we’re a little bit more flexible in our prices and in what we’ll do for the younger consumer,” she continued. “Coincidentally, our flower shop is run by women, and I think we have the patience to deal with the kids. We like the kids to come in our shop and we encourage their business.”

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Toy industry trivia

Whether or not these youth-oriented products are stocked in your store, the child in everyone will delight in discovering the answers to some of the toy industry’s biggest mysteries. The information was originally published in the January issue of *Giftware News*.

● Almost every organization has a spokesperson, but only one has a “spokesbear.” The popular talking toy bear, Teddy Ruxpin, “speaks” for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

● The stories found in Little Golden Books have entertained children for generations. Published by Western Publishing Co., the company’s most popular book is *The Pokey Little Puppy*, which has sold more than 13 million copies since 1942.

● Fun and games weren’t the only things on Donald Duncan’s mind. Creator of the yo-yo in 1929, Duncan is also credited with inventing the parking meter.

● Ever wonder what the most popular Barbie doll outfit is? Her wedding gown, of course.

● Those pliable pieces of orange and green rubber, Gumby and Pokey, were first introduced as guests on television’s “The Howdy Doody Show” in 1956. Gumby is named after gumbo, a type of soil which

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Advertising to Skippies, Flyers and college consumers demands imagination and versatility. Visiting elementary, junior and senior high schools during career days is one way for these market groups to become acquainted with your flower shop. Try to tie into school activities, such as fairs, circuses, dances and athletic events. Bridal fairs, college newspapers and college telephone directories all target college consumers—advertise or participate in these functions. Create bright, exciting window dis-

plays featuring the local high school or college colors or mascots. Mansfield said he has had good luck with redeemable coupons placed in direct-mail promos.

“We run a coupon that comes in a coupon pack which is mailed to students at the beginning of each term,” he explained. “In that pack are three ‘buy one, get one free’ coupons from our shop. We stipulate that the coupon isn’t good a week prior to a holiday, which saves our fanny on Valentine’s Day. We get a very, very good response

from that promotion. Another popular one with the kids is a happy hour of ‘two-fers,’ where they can come in and buy one rose and get another one free.”

Customers for life

Young shoppers, ages six to 21, are a rich, vital part of the ever-changing consumer marketplace. Since purchasing habits and loyalties are formed early in life, it would be wise for florists to tap into the youth market’s wealth. Flashy displays, trendy

items and slick advertising can help lure the youth market to your business, but friendly and helpful store employees also go a long way toward developing a good impression.

“I think you can impress someone in that age group [six to 21 years] easier than you can adults,” Jokinen opined. “I think adults take our shop for granted; that we’re here and only a phone call away. They complain we’re not open on Sundays. The kids will listen, they’re a little more understanding.” □

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turns thick and clay-like when wet.

● At 73, Raggedy Ann is believed to be the oldest licensed product in the toy industry. For your information, her birthday is celebrated Dec. 14.

● Widely known for its line of yellow toy trucks, the Tonka Co. was named after Minnesota’s Lake Minnetonka.

● One of the many misfortunes of World War II is Silly Putty. The pliable substance was developed accidentally in a General Electric laboratory when scientists were trying to discover a viable synthetic rubber to aid the war effort.

● The next time Scrabble tiles have you stumped, remember this: There are 3.2 billion possible word combinations which can be made from the basic seven-letter

unit in Scrabble.

● A torsion spring that fell off a table and bounced inspired Richard James to create the Slinky spring toy.

● Aspiring board game inventors, take heart! The real estate game Monopoly was originally rejected as having 52 fundamental errors. To date, more than 100 million Monopoly games have been sold.

● The longest Lionel train ever operated had 10 engines, 750 cars and one caboose.

● Toy manufacturer Kenner Products actually began as a soap producer. To get people to buy its soaps, an in-box toy premium was offered by the company. The toys were well-liked by consumers. The soap was not.

● The nation’s largest supplier of stuffed toys, R. Dakin and Co., was

founded in 1955 as an importer of handcrafted shotguns and related products. Stuffed animals were used as packing material for the firm’s shipments. Richard Dakin liked the packing material more than the other products and R. Dakin & Co. toy supplier was formed.

● Like his famous architect father, John Lloyd Wright was fascinated by shapes and forms. In 1916, J.L. Wright invented Lincoln Logs. The wooden toys are made of ponderosa pine harvested from national forests in Oregon.

● The Hacky Sack footbag and game is based on a kicking game invented in 2597 B.C. by Chinese Emperor Hwang Ti.

● More than 500,000 Mr. Potato Head toys are sold each year. —J.A.