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AUGUST 2018 VOLUME 21 NUMBER 4

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BuzzFeed has built its business by tailoring its engaging content to meet audiences where they are. Now it's taking that same basic principle and applying it to brand extensions.

## Plus:

- Leading Licensees 2018
- Beauty: The \$445 Billion Beast
- Silvergate: Mission to China

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**35 LEADING LICENSEES 2018**

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Eric Karp, head of licensing, BuzzFeed Commerce

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# BITING INTO LICENSING

Licensed consumer products within the food and beverage space are growing, and if the wider market's response to the segment is any indication, it will continue this upward trend.

The food and beverage segment amounts to more than \$5650 billion globally as of 2017, according to ReportLinker's Food and Beverages Global Market Report 2018. It makes sense, everyone needs to eat, right? There's no work around for food sales. Sure you can go off the grid, grow a vegetable garden, house some chickens... but sooner or later, you'll need to head to the local grocery store for some Goldfish crackers. And thank goodness for that convenience!

It's interesting that within the segment, licensed consumer products make up just 6 percent of total global retail sales. (Source: LIMA Annual Global Licensing Industry Survey.)

But licensors are identifying the space as a key area for growth, thanks in part to the relative stability of food retailers.

The proof is out in the marketplace now—grocery services are being viewed by the big companies as an essential piece to doing business. Like Amazon's \$13.7 billion buy of Whole Foods in 2017, Target and Walmart's continued investment in their food aisles or Kroger's interest to bring more product offerings (such as its branded line of lifestyle gear) onto its store floors, it's clear that big business is paying attention to what's happening at our local markets.

Whether it's through upending the retail model and bringing innovations like online purchasing and same-day delivery or through new product development, companies are finding ways to continue to penetrate the food and beverage space and meet diverse customers at every price point.

Consider Target's December 2017 purchase of same-day grocery delivery service Shipt for \$550 million. Over the course of the year, Target has begun rolling out Shipt services in key U.S. cities like Washington D.C., Baltimore, New Orleans and Phoenix, and will open the New York City market this month.

The obvious advantage here for food and beverage brands is having more products in more hands even easier than ever before. Online grocery is also opening up product offerings and diversifying the shelf space, bringing new names and labels into homes.

Amazon, considered the obvious contender to conquer the online grocery space, is likely to capture 31.8 percent of all e-commerce food and beverage sales in the U.S., says eMarketer, with the overall category growing more than 40.1 percent this year.

But the grocery aisle is not the only place where food and beverage brands are finding worthwhile extension points. Brands continue to innovate in the space, and it's becoming more and more important to their extensions in new, non-traditional retailers, as well.

Let's look at island lifestyle brand Tommy Bahama,

who is making a splash (get it?!) with its piña colada cake in collaboration with Los Angeles bakery chain Sweet Lady Jane. The cake is a must-order at Tommy Bahama restaurants, and now it is available for overnight delivery.

Tommy Bahama is further taking its brand into additional products like chocolates with Lula's Chocolates, snack mixes with Feridies, hot chocolate coffee and sauces.

Then there are the food brands that see opportunity in experiences, such as Nesquik, which celebrated its 70th anniversary with a pop-up shop in Santa Monica, Calif., or conversely, entertainment brands that see the advantage of the food and beverage space and experiences, as did NBCUniversal with the Saved by the Max pop-up, based on its hit '90s tween series "Saved by the Bell." The pop-up restaurant is making a mini tour of the U.S., with stops in Chicago, Los Angeles and San Diego.

Sanrio is also expanding on food and beverage service, incorporating Hello Kitty into several concepts including the roving Hello Kitty Café Truck (two are on the road, one covering the U.S. East Coast, the other on the West Coast) and two limited-edition concepts—the Hello Kitty Café pop-up container and the mini café. Later this year, a permanent establishment, the Hello Kitty Grand Café, will open its doors in Irvine, Calif. Each of these service concepts serve themed food and drink offerings, but also incorporate merchandise. And of course, there is the extension the other way—onto food items. Hello Kitty can now be found on wine (produced by Torti "L'Eleganza del Vino" Wines), Kikkoman soy sauce, collaborations with Sugarfina and more.

Taking it a step further, food and beverage brands are finding new places to go completely unrelated to food, like fashion.

Historically, nostalgia has always played well for any brand, so it's no wonder that classic logos for properties like Coca-Cola, M&M's, Hershey's and others are finding equal success crossing over from the food aisle to the fashion runway.

Spanish lollipop brand Chupa Chups from Perfetti Van Melle is capitalizing on its 60th anniversary this year with various promotions and activity, but notably is taking its iconic and eye-popping graphics to apparel with a collaboration with designer Maya Hansen. The MayaHansenXChupaChups collection launched in July at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week with an assortment of looks, from mini dresses to crop tops, leggings, a corset and more.

The point is this: whether a licensor takes its food and beverage brand beyond the grocery aisle, or a food brand finds even more interesting and new ways to stay on shelf, the segment is growing, it's important and it's a safe bet. ©



by **AMANDA CIOLETTI**  
content director, License Global

# SEISMIC SHIFTS IN FASHION BRANDS

There is a major shift happening in fashion. Steven Ekstract explains how licensing has a part in it.



by **STEVEN EKSTRACT**  
brand director, global licensing  
group, UBM

With MAGIC Marketplace taking place this month in Las Vegas, Nev., it seems apropos to focus on the major changes taking place among fashion and apparel brands, and how these changes will influence the licensing marketplace.

The fashion landscape is best described as being in crisis. The crisis is threefold. First, traditional mid-tier brick-and-mortar department stores that sell fashion are suffering significant customer loss. (30 percent of all U.S. apparel and accessories sales in 2018 are online purchases.) Second, social media users have become major influencers of fashion, which has changed the dynamic of the designer as an influencer. Lastly, fast fashion has become much more acceptable to consumers.

And these three factors are causing the seismic shifts.

Both the first and the third scenarios are intertwined. A current example is Marks & Spencer, one of the U.K.'s largest and best selling apparel retailers, and who is now set to close 100 stores by 2020. M&S will soon be eclipsed in sales by Primark, the fast fashion chain.

Then, in the U.S., Hudson's Bay Company announced in June that it was closing 10 of its 50 stores in the U.S. including the Lord & Taylor flagship store on New York's Fifth Avenue.

An example of the influencer power is the streetwear brand Supreme. At this year's CFDA Fashion Awards held this past June in Brooklyn, New York, the Men's Fashion Designer of the Year award went to James Jebbia, founder of Supreme, which is known mostly for its scarcity of products that are worn by the coolest of the cool. Supreme's designs are not revolutionary or edgy in the least, it is simply that their products are considered cool and hard to find, which translates into "must haves" for those who follow the brand and its influencers on social media.

## Fashion Acquisitions Keep Piling Up

One can make the argument that successful brands are vital to the fashion industry and can be leveraged to realize value when a business is in financial distress. Brand value can exist in a multitude of (and sometimes hidden) places. For example, a customer database, an inactive domain name, a trademark registration or an archive of design material.

Arguably, 2018 has seen more fashion and apparel brands change hands than any other year in recorded history. Here are a few of the major ones that have the most effect on licensing.

Last month, Authentic Brands Group acquired the Nine West and Bandolino brands. This has increased ABG's footwear business to more than \$2 billion in global retail sales, which positions ABG as a leader in fashion footwear and brings its licensed brand portfolio to nearly \$8 billion.

On the heels of the ABG acquisitions, Global Brands Group (a Li & Fung spinoff) is selling off its licensed portfolio business to Differential Brands Group, owner of the Hudson Jeans, Robert Graham and Swims brands.

The questions being asked by the licensing industry are: did GBG acquire too much, too fast and then have difficulty managing and monetizing the business? And how will Differential Brands separate its management of all of these disparate brands?

Immediately following the DBG announcement in June, Randa Accessories announced its intention to acquire Perry Ellis International, owner of such bellwether brands as Perry Ellis, Original Penguin by Munsingwear, Laundry by Shelli Segal and many more. This was an unsolicited bid for Perry Ellis International by a licensee, while the founder of Perry Ellis, George Feldenkreis, was in the process of trying to take the company private.

As if all of this activity was not enough to keep tongues wagging, Iconix Brands announced the unexpected departure of John Hough, chief executive officer. Iconix was one of the pioneers of the brand licensing management firms, with mostly direct-to-retail deals. Since the forced departure of its founder Neil Cole and the continuing loss of significant retail support for its brands, the stock has gone from \$40 to below \$1 dollar a share.

While all these deals were taking place, Sequential Brands Group announced that Karen Castellano, formerly of G-III Apparel Group, had joined as president of their fashion group. Sequential owns apparel and lifestyle brands such as Martha Stewart, Ellen Tracy, Jessica Simpson, Emeril Lagasse and Joe's just to name a few.

Coincidentally, the chairman of the board of both Differential Brands and Sequential is William Sweedler. It's clear that Sweedler and his financial backers see the value in buying up financially distressed fashion businesses.

There is one thing that all of these companies going through changes and acquisitions have in common: they each represent established brands that have performed well at retail for decades. But the question is: can these brand holding companies continue to keep these mature brands relevant for Millennials and Gen Z and can they make the successful transition to e-commerce? ©

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# MUSEUMS: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Lauren Sizeland explores how museums have a different proposition to offer, and how these institutions can make the most of their heritage to appeal to the consumer.



by Lauren Sizeland  
head of licensing and business development, V&A

Lauren Sizeland has more than 25 years' experience as a leader within the arts, heritage and museum sector. Following developmental roles in retail and licensing at the Royal Academy of Arts and Science Museum Group, she joined the V&A in 2005. Sizeland is responsible for the V&A's multi-award winning licensing and publishing programs. Her strategic vision and ability to evaluate and translate ideas into bespoke marketable solutions has enabled the business to achieve sustainable growth in a broad range of product categories through working with licensees, retailers and media internationally.

In today's competitive marketplace, retailers and manufacturers are increasingly looking at ways to differentiate their offer and to communicate good quality and authenticity, essentially so that consumers can trust their product. This is where heritage brand licenses can add value, lending their recognizable stamp of approval, knowledge and expertise to create product stories with real significance. Many cultural institutions already have a loyal following through their exhibits and education programs. Now they are reaching out to broader audiences through increasingly sophisticated merchandise and commercial activities.

## The Place

The key differentiating factor between lifestyle and museum brands is the location, which offers a place to visit and engage where consumers can really experience the brand. From the very beginning, the V&A's building was integral to its mission to delight and inspire, and today it is as much a part of the experience as the objects it houses. We are looking for ways we can extend this experience in other territories with new V&A sites in Dundee, Scotland, and Shenzhen, China, though we are yet to understand how visitors will respond to these new locations.

## Bringing the Museum to the Consumer

These iconic locations also provide incredible backdrops to drive content creation, such as VR footage of the museum building that enables consumers to get up close to the original artifact that inspired a product, or they allow an international audience to experience the incomparable surroundings and astounding architecture of the museum's galleries and spaces. From media visits to press launches and photoshoots, these locations provide huge value and prestige to the licensees and enhance the promotion of their ranges.

We are focusing on new channels to engage and reach consumers via pop-up stores and cafés, an opportunity that would resonate strongly with the V&A brand, as it was the first museum in the world to open refreshment rooms to the public back in the late 19th century.

## Behind the Scenes

Museums can also be used to host events for key leaders, and we are in the position of being able to leverage this privileged access. Providing influencers with behind-the-scenes access offers unique opportunities

for storytelling and engaging a potentially new audience. This access provides a different perspective to that of a typical visitor at the museum.

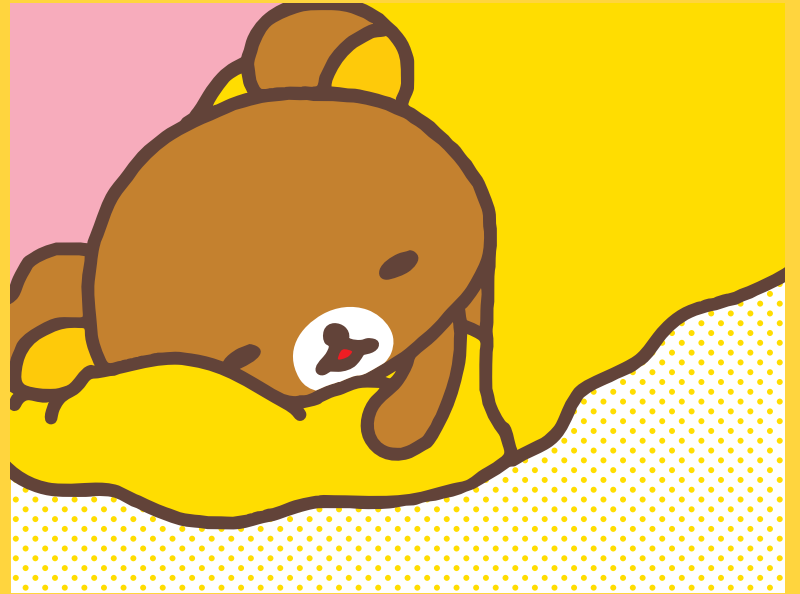
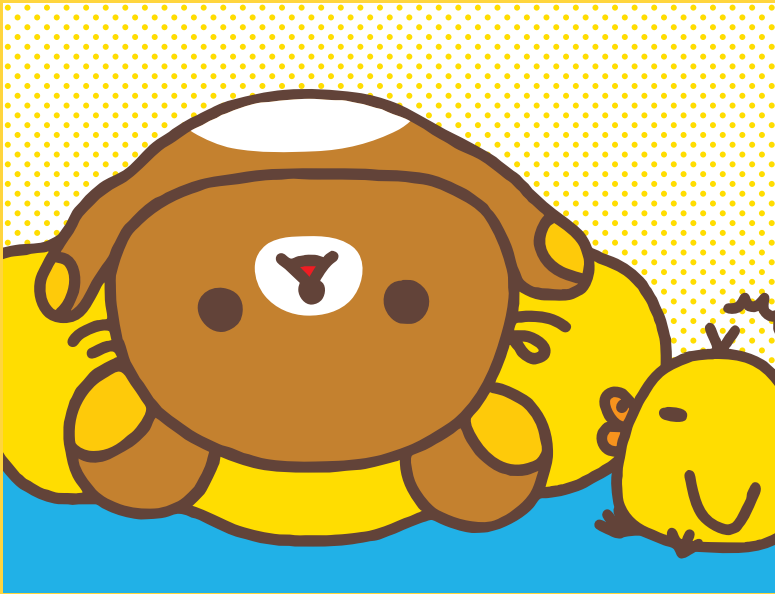
Creating content for social channels is a high priority for all brands, and museums have a constant source of inspiration—the archives. Each object has its own story, from the reason for its creation to the technique and materials used. It is important to add weight and authenticity to the licensed products. We also have a desire to share the stories of the many objects that are not on display. The expertise from the museum community is a rich resource, so it is important for us to initiate interviews with the people who work hard to make museums the wonderful places they are.

## Brand Integrity

As a British institution responsible for the national collection, we have an obligation to ensure high quality and to drive innovative design while protecting the integrity of the original material. It's a fine balance of creative expression and commercialization, and we aim always to be sensitive to the object and the artist's principles. For that reason, it can be a challenge working with an agent as the creative and approval process still must be managed in-house. The V&A team are brand ambassadors with an innate understanding of the look and feel that is so unique to the museum. Unlike many character or entertainment licensing programs, we do not produce seasonal style guides. The licensing team instead assists licensees to navigate through the vast archive, providing a trend-led research and design resource and lending its expertise to the creative process. For many newcomers to the heritage space it is often a surprise that isn't as simple as identifying objects on display in the galleries. There are a variety of intricacies at play, in particular third-party rights may need to be considered.

## Charitable Motivations

What we are sure of is that the consumer appreciates finding out about the history behind our products. They also identify strongly with the museum's design credentials and want to align their taste with the strong reputation of the world's leading museum of art, design and performance. The fact that their purchases also help to fund the charitable work of these institutions appeals to a consumer's benevolent inclination, supporting the museum to look after the nation's treasures for the benefit of future generations. ©



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# LICENSING IS A CHILD'S BUSINESS

Licensing is big business for children's products, with one-quarter of all kids' merchandise featuring a licensed brand. NPD names those that are leading the pack in 2018.

Compiled by



Licensed products captured 26 percent of unit sales in the U.S. for kids ages 14 and under, according to Q1 findings from the U.S. Kids' License Tracker, the latest service from global information company The NPD Group that tracks spending across 17 industries. While present in kids' lives throughout their youth, licenses, and the means through which they engage with them, tend to change and age in and out of children as they move through their different life stages.

Kids ages 3 to 5 represented the largest age group for licensed sales based on units sold, or 30 percent. The industries that over-indexed in this age group were toys, games and puzzles; arts and crafts; and health and beauty. Children ages 6 to 8 was the second-largest group, with 23 percent share of the kids' licensing market. On the other hand, the industries holding the

**"IN A WORLD WHERE CONSUMPTION KEEPS CHANGING RAPIDLY, KIDS LOVE LICENSED PRODUCTS."**

highest share for this age segment were school supplies, consumer electronics and accessories and arts and crafts.

"There is a lot of fluidity in the kids' licensing market, and understanding the differences among age groups is critical to finding opportunities," says Juli Lennett, senior vice president and industry advisor, toys, The NPD Group. "Change is only growing stronger and faster today as technology continues to accelerate the pace of trends and carves out additional ways for consumers to engage. Kids are utilizing more platforms than ever before to interact with their favorite licenses. Finding synergies across industries and extending the life of a license where it makes sense are important avenues for licensors and retailers to pursue."

In Q1, licensed sales for kids amounted to \$14.2 billion in consumer spending. Across all industries, clothing captured the largest share of product sales, followed by toys, games and puzzles; party supplies and costumes; and DVD/Blu-ray and digital.

"One thing is clear: in a world where consumption keeps changing more rapidly than ever, kids love their licensed products and in particular, love to wear them," says Marshal Cohen, chief industry advisor, The NPD Group. ©

## Top 5 Licenses Across All Ages and Industries

1. "Paw Patrol"
2. Mickey Mouse
3. Disney's *Frozen*
4. NFL
5. Disney Princess

Source: The NPD Group / U.S. Kids License Tracker, January-March 2018

"License" is defined by a cartoon, game, movie or fictional character, famous personality or group (band or celebrity), or sports team.



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# 'Llama Llama' Signs Big Partners, Mama!

Genius Brands International has greenlit season two of its animated preschool series "Llama Llama," with Netflix again on board for distribution.

And as the series continues to solidify its viewership, Genius is building momentum for its licensing and merchandising program, thanks in part to the series' universal themes.

"The stories in 'Llama Llama' revolve around children's first childhood challenges that kids of that age (preschool) immediately relate to and understand," says Lloyd Mintz, senior vice president, global consumer products, Genius Brands International. "It speaks to them because it is showing someone of their age struggling with the very same issues that they do, and it shows them ways to overcome their anxieties or fears about a certain situation."

GBI has signed two new major partners to the "Llama Llama" program—Phat Mojo has been named master toy partner and will introduce a complete range of playsets, figures, carry cases, plush and construction toys; while Kids Preferred has agreed to expand its plush, infant and development toys with soothers, wooden toys, nap mats and more.

More partners are set to come on board in coming weeks and months, and negotiations have begun with a myriad of partners across a broad swath of products including talks for

a master apparel partner and fulfillment of categories such as sleepwear, bedding, bath play time, novelty toys, holiday ornaments, oral care and exclusive e-commerce products.

"We expect to see a surge of licensed 'Llama Llama' products at retail starting spring 2019 and growing throughout the year," says Mintz. "Consumers will be able to find 'Llama Llama' products at all their favorite traditional and online retailers."

Mintz says GBI is further looking to engage international licensing agencies to represent the brand for consumer products.

Season one of "Llama Llama" debuted worldwide on Netflix in January in 20 different languages and stars Jennifer Garner as the voice of Mama. Garner will return for season two.

GBI says Netflix has been a great home for the series, which is based on the best-selling book series by author and illustrator Anne Dewdney, and is a natural fit.

"The series tells nurturing sweet stories of Llama Llama and remains unlike many animated shows with lots of bells and whistles—Llama Llama's focus is on classic storytelling, and



Netflix completely understood the decision to maintain the continuity between the beloved books and the animated series," says Mintz. "Netflix was comfortable with using a classic animation style that reinforces the stories and themes of family, friendship and kindness by encouraging children to talk about their feelings in order to process, as well as coping with challenging situations in constructive ways."

Season two of "Llama Llama" is currently in production, as are two new 30-minute specials, including one for Mother's Day.

New products will begin hitting retail in Q4, with a major retail launch anticipated for spring/summer 2019.

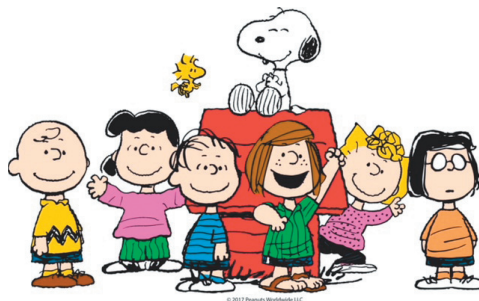
# Peanuts and NASA Reach for the Stars

Peanuts Worldwide and The National Aeronautics and Space Administration have signed the Space Act Agreement, a multi-year initiative to promote interest in STEM and space exploration among a new generation of students.

The deal will see the companies join forces to create new original content starring Astronaut Snoopy as well as in-school STEM-based curricula about America's latest research in space.

The program is set to coincide with NASA's 50th anniversary celebration of the Apollo 10 next year.

The new agreement builds on the deal that series creator Charles M. Schulz made with NASA in the 1960s that gave the agency the right



to use Snoopy in its spaceflight safety material. In 1968, NASA expanded the collaboration when it unveiled the Silver Snoopy Award, a special honor given to NASA employees and contractors

for achievements related to safety or mission success in human spaceflight. A year later, NASA named the Apollo 10 command and lunar modules "Charlie Brown" and "Snoopy."

"My husband, Charles Schulz, fully embraced collaboration with NASA for Snoopy, and he was inspired to create a series of original comic strips detailing Snoopy's fantastical journeys through space," says Jeannie Schulz, widow of Charles M. Schulz. "Those strips remain among the most popular ones in circulation today."

The countdown for the anniversary celebration kicked off last month at San Diego Comic-Con.

# Pocket.Watch Clocks New Deals

Pocket.Watch, a media brand that creates, acquires, distributes and curates content for kids ages 2-11 across a variety of platforms, negotiated a deal for YouTube influencer Ryan ToysReview for his own line of toys, available exclusively at Walmart.

Named Ryan's World, the toys and apparel for children ages 3 and up will be available at 2,500 Walmart stores (and online) starting Aug. 6.

Recently named one of *Time's* top 25 biggest Internet influencers and ranked No. 1 on *Forbes'* list of most powerful creators, the six-year-old also served as creative director on the line.

With the new toy line, Ryan's subscription base of more than 15 million can play with the toys Ryan showcases on his YouTube channel like blind bag collectible toys, slime, vehicles, stuffed animals, squishies, putty, apparel and more.

The range not only includes 15 collectible toys, but four t-shirt designs that incorporate Ryan's favorite things, like his pal Gus, The Gummy Gator and pizza.

This is exactly the type of deal Pocket.Watch aims to work on for its roster of clients, including YouTube influencers EvanTubeHD, JillianTubeHD, HobbyKidsTV and CaptainSparklez.

While these clients may not be eligible for a driver's permit, their online presence is

commanding. Ryan ToysReview is the most viewed YouTube channel in the world, with more than 15 million subscribers and over 20 billion views/year, EvanTube has over 5 million subscribers with over 3 billion views/year and HobbyKidsTV has over 3 million subscribers and over 5 billion views/year.

One of Pocket.Watch's disruptors will be through licensing. Under the company's respective apparel and toy banners, it has entered into a master apparel agreement with The Bentex Group and a robust toy licensing agreement with Bonkers Toys for a dedicated line of apparel, toys and collectibles featuring the likenesses of Pocket.Watch's YouTube influencers and original characters.

"We're going to celebrate everything for kids and we're going to absolutely change kids' content in the media landscape," says Stone Newman, chief revenue officer, Pocket.Watch. "We're going to change what they watch, where they watch it, how they want it, when they watch the stars they love."

There will be a Pocket.Watch book imprint with Simon Spotlight, a division of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, where Ryan ToysReview, CaptainSparklez, EvanTubeHD, HobbyKidsTV and original Pocket.Watch characters will appear in books. The first title,

*Watch This Book*, will feature illustrations, original art and stories (like what superpower Ryan wished he had, the biggest mess HobbyKidsTV made during an episode, Evan's favorite food). It will also include tips and advice from each of these stars on how to make videos like theirs.

"YouTube is the most desired occupation for ages 6 to 11," says Newman. "To me, this generation is full of unique learners, which is a big part of our business today. We're not purely a YouTube link, despite the fact that we all know the data that children's television audiences are in decline.

Kids are consuming more and more content through digital streaming services, heavily dominated by YouTube. And we focus on creating content."



# emoji Dresses Brands Around the World

The emoji company, owners of the registered emoji trademark, is taking its iconic graphics and lending them to a boatload of fashion apparel and accessories ranges, ensuring that you'll be able to find an outfit for every mood.

At London Fashion Week, Edward Crutchley debuted an emoji-branded haute couture collection under his eponymous menswear label. The range, available in select regions such as the U.K., France, Japan, Singapore and Korea, will be available in high end boutiques and reflect what Crutchley calls "true contemporary luxury."

This year, emoji has continued and expanded its partnership with fast fashion retailer Zara beyond a kids' collection (launched in 2016 and 2017) to now include men's polo shirts, t-shirts and hoodies, as well as baby shirts and hoodies and t-shirts for boys and girls. The strengthened



collection will hit Zara stores around the globe, including Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Russia, South Korea, Spain, the U.K., the U.S. and many more.

Find the emoji brand on a range of apparel, home and living, accessories and stationery at global retailer Cotton On. Launched in March, the emoji x Cotton On line will hit nearly 1,600 stores around the world and across various channels of distribution including the flagship

Cotton On store, as well as Cotton On Kids, Cotton On Body, Rubi Shoes, Typo, Free by Cotton On and Supre.

In April, emoji tapped Kipling to bring its breadth of graphics to bags, backpacks, accessories and luggage for sale in numerous countries including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, India, Brunei, Korea, Japan, Australia, Indonesia and Myanmar.

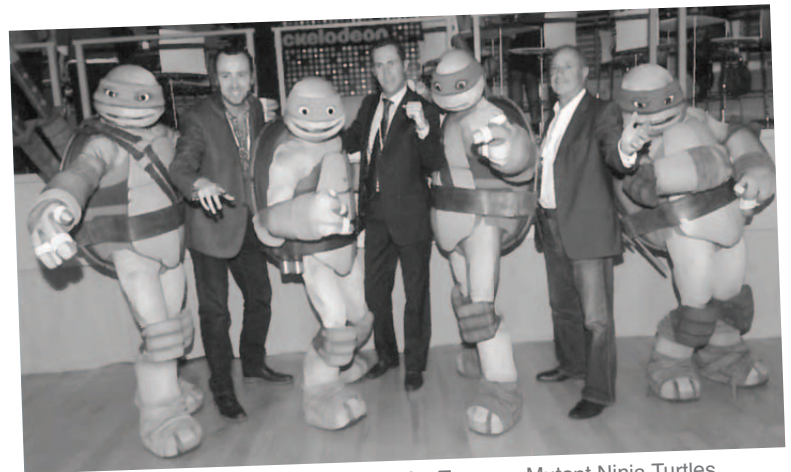
Other fashion apparel and accessories licensees on board for emoji apparel include Peacebird in China; Incity in Russia, the Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and more (and also includes footwear, bags and toys); Giordano in the Philippines; Faberlic in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and more; Beijing Gold for jewelry in China; and Safiya for an assortment of shoes, backpacks, bags and accessories in China.

# Handcraft

Sewing Joy Since 1946<sup>®</sup>

Handcraft Manufacturing brings to market all of childhood's first friends.

Handcraft has been a mainstay of family life in the United States for nearly three quarters of a century. Founded, in 1946 by Joseph Mizrahi as a way to support his young family selling handkerchiefs door to door. "Your grandfather may very well have had a drawer full of Handcraft handkerchiefs and today your children have drawers full of our licensed underwear." says Marshall Mizrahi, Joe's grandson and current Head of Licensing for Handcraft.



The Mizrahi's exchanging tips with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Even in its earliest days Handcraft separated itself from the competition by creating new and unique packaging concepts which elevated their brand above others and that became the driving force behind everything they do. Create a high quality product and showcase it in new and innovative packaging.

In the mid -1990s, as Marshall joined his older brother Joe and their father, Irwin in the business, the concept of licensing began to take hold. Many of Handcraft's retail accessory buyers were also the children's underwear buyer and were running into quality issues from their existing underwear suppliers. Irwin Mizrahi, the founder's son shared his insight "In our business there are many opportunities to be cheap and many opportunities to be late" and Handcraft recognizes that they have an obligation to the licensees to maximize the use of their property, to their retailers to capture all possible sales and to their consumers to provide the best possible quality, comfort and design. So, when that movie or TV show is a runaway success or that new toy skyrockets to the top of the holiday list, Handcraft is sure to be in front of that demand.



Oscar The Grouch and Marshall Mizrahi Talking Shop



Handcraft Accepting the Universal Brand Development 2017 Product of the Year Award

With offices and manufacturing facilities throughout the world, Handcraft's design team can take a property and masterfully create the products that inspire joy and ignite a child's imagination. The highest quality standards insure all Handcraft products satisfy mom and dad as well. Aaron Bosworth, Licensing Manager at Hasbro, says "Marshall from Handcraft understands the entertainment licensing business and what makes it ebb and flow. Working with him has offered strategic insight that influences far further than his home category of underwear."

As America's leading provider of children's character underwear, the #1 incentive for children who are potty training, parents often contact Handcraft with their concerns or questions. In recent years that has led to the success of Handcraft Licensed Training Pants, the Handcraft Potty Training Kit and Change Kits. "After more than twenty years in children's underwear, we recognized the amount of confusion associated with potty training and the lack of one site where a parent could research, interact and get advice from other parents and professionals who could support them" says Marshall Mizrahi, "that's where [www.pottygenius.com](http://www.pottygenius.com) came from, a need we saw unfilled." On [www.pottygenius.com](http://www.pottygenius.com) parents can opt -in to receive news of the latest movie release, promotion, games or offering on exciting Handcraft licensed products, thereby inviting parents back to our retail partners to purchase the newest trend-setting character launch.



**America's Leading Provider of  
Children's Character Underwear**

# A Letter from London

Anna Knight, brand director, Brand Licensing Europe, talks about how summer is shaping licensing, and what's new with this year's BLE event, taking place Oct 9-11 at Olympia, London.

A big hello from the U.K.! Earlier this summer, the U.K. was melting in an extraordinary record-breaking heatwave that resulted in a hosepipe ban and renewed concern that global warming has not only arrived, it's here to stay.

At the same time, stores have run out of fans and paddling pools (did someone say hosepipe ban?), and sales of barbecues, TVs, food and alcohol have rocketed. It's fair to say the country is on a bit of a high right now.

Of course, U.K. retailers have been delighted by the recent World Cup fever. It's hardly surprising, really; things have been pretty rocky recently. A number of middle-market, high-street brands have fallen by the wayside and others are under threat of disappearing. By April this year, 450 U.K. stores had closed; we've waved goodbye to BHS, Maplin and, of course, Toys 'R' Us. In a worrying downward

trend for the U.K. department store, M&S and House of Fraser are closing stores, Debenhams has issued a profit warning and even national treasure John Lewis has reported a decline in sales. Mothercare and Poundworld are unlikely to exist beyond the heatwave.

Why is this happening? Some blame Brexit, others the migration to online shopping. Poor management and bad decisions may also be to blame. And many people in the U.K. are poorer as a result of austerity measures to get the economy back on track, and this has impacted consumer spending in middle market stores.

On the upside—because there's always an upside—value retailers like Primark, Matalan and Lidl are thriving. E-commerce operations are recording enviable results: Boohoo's revenue is up 53 percent and ASOS (the darling of U.K. online retail) continues to lead the way as pioneers in this industry, not least by the way it has embraced diversity without fuss (it recently introduced a jumpsuit designed for wheelchair users, models its clothes on a variety of body shapes and featured men in its Go Play advert for makeup). ASOS' chief executive officer Nick Beighton was crowned Retail Leader of the Year at this year's Retail Week Awards.

Some niche stores are also doing well—in January, Games Workshop reported a 53.6 percent rise in sales to \$141.7 million; sales for fashion brand Oasis, which partnered with the V&A last year, were also up.

Despite posting an 84 percent drop in profits, Debenhams refuses to go down without a fight. The retailer is culling senior management, opening a new store and investigating creative news ventures and partnerships. It recently brought online furniture brand Swoon in-store and launched a new initiative to offer independent food producers space.

Primark continues to buck each and every high street trend. This year, as sales rose by 4 percent, it overtook M&S as the U.K.'s largest fashion retailer. The retailer is first to

admit that its licensed ranges have played a huge part in that success. It has an innate talent for "fast licensing" by capitalizing on cultural phenomena, such as "Love Island," the TV show that's taken the U.K. by storm and has succeeded in tearing Millennials away from YouTube. Although the show was only on-air for a few weeks, Primark managed to create ranges and get them into store before the season finale.

Agent Licensing Link followed in Primark's footsteps with its timely trademarking of the phrase "Football's Coming Home" in the midst of the World Cup Final and when England hysteria was at its peak.

Of those retailers that are doing well, the one thing they have in common is not that they're online, that they're cheap or even that they have very lean business models. It's that they understand their customers and give them what they want in a timely, creative, price-relevant manner. They're also looking ahead to try to understand what will be important to their customers in the future so that they can continue to deliver products and a shared value that resonates. And the good news is licensing definitely has a role to play in this.

In other news, Brand Licensing Europe has now launched its License This! competition to uncover the next generation of successful licensable properties. This year, we have two award categories—Brand & Design and Character & Animation—which means there's an even bigger chance of winning. It's free to enter, and the winners receive a year's LIMA membership, a free stand at BLE 2019 and valuable PR and marketing support, as well as the chance to receive priceless advice from licensing experts.

So, if you have an unlicensed brand or you know someone who does, please nudge them to enter. As is the case with all industries, it's vital that we encourage and nurture the development and success of new blood into this industry to shore up its future success.

For more information about BLE or to register for free, visit [BrandLicensing.eu](http://BrandLicensing.eu).



**ANNA KNIGHT**  
brand director, Brand Licensing Europe

# U.S. Polo Assn. Scores On and Off Field in Licensing



Chances are you've seen U.S. Polo Assn.'s double-horseman logo around—it has a worldwide presence in retail. The sports-inspired lifestyle brand includes accessories, footwear, travel, home goods and apparel for men, women and children.

With such a wide reach, U.S. Polo Assn. has a \$1.6 billion global retail footprint and is in the Top 50 of the world's largest licensors, according to *License Global's* Top 150 Global Licensors report. It has more than 1,000 monobrand retail stores, independent retailers, department stores and e-commerce in 150 countries worldwide.

The brand refers to itself as one of the best kept secrets in licensing. In reality, it took about five to 10 years of getting U.S. Polo Assn. assimilated into the public eye.

"The brand really had to focus on its authentic connection to the sport of Polo and make sure those two are connected," says Michael Prince, chief executive officer, U.S. Polo Assn. "Also, we had to build authenticity for both the sport and the brand to connect together. We

always like to say, 'Where the sport goes, the brand goes.' The brand was off the radar while we were building this platform of public awareness. My goal is to tell a story of this brand and the sport and how they go hand-in-hand."

While the sport does have a luxury component to it, polo is not an exclusive sport.

"When you think about it, it's all over the country, it's all over the world," points out Prince. "The sport itself is played by men and women, young and old. It's an accessible sport more so than people realize."

The brand partnered with CBS Sports to broadcast the 2018 U.S. Open Polo Championship last April, to an audience exceeding 2 million unique viewers.

While maintaining a foot in key U.S.-based tournaments, U.S. Polo Assn. has been increasing its involvement with global events. It's the official apparel provider for the Federation of International Polo, which gives the brand the opportunity to have prominent placement at major international events such as the European Polo Championship, planned to take place in Italy in September.

In addition to the partnership with FIP, U.S. Polo Assn. will serve as the apparel sponsor for Team USA at the 2018 Westchester Cup in England. (In the polo world, the U.S. and England have one of oldest rivalries in the sport.) The brand also hosts influencer events, ranging from the 2018 Snow Polo Championship in Aspen, Colo., to the Bentley Scottsdale Polo Championship in Scottsdale, Ariz.

"Being on the ground with these types of events is a great way to bring our 'Live

Authentically' platform to life," says Prince. "It also provides the perfect opportunity to capture the kind of digital content that not only appeals to our consumers, but sets the U.S. Polo Assn. apart as a truly authentic polo brand.

"Licensing is 100 percent of the strategy and we control intellectual property," continues Prince. "We have brand partners around the world that help us build the brand, build retail stores, and grow digital presence."

Recently, U.S. Polo Assn. was the official apparel partner and outfitter for the 2018 Sentebale ISPS Handa Polo Cup, co-founded by the Duke of Sussex. The USPA provided custom jerseys for all participating polo players, as well as raised money for a charitable cause.

"We have the opportunity to support a wonderful and very important cause while also expanding global awareness for our brand and our ongoing support of the sport of polo around the world," says Prince.

There are licensing deals that have been concluded in Scandinavia and South Africa, with the aim to sign several additional countries in rest of 2018 and into 2019.

"We're one of the largest sport brands in India, and one of the largest in the Middle East and Turkey," says Prince. "When I look at our growth opportunity in China, I think in the next five to seven years, we'll be one of the bigger international sports brands for China."



# New Toys, Gear for 'Fortnite' Coming Soon

Epic Games has acquired a number of licensing partners for its video game "Fortnite."

First, Funko will create a line of toys and collectibles inspired by its video game "Fortnite." The range of "Fortnite" merchandise will consist of more than 10 product lines, including Funko's Pop! figures, 5 Star figures, Pint Size Heroes, vinyl, keychains, Pop! apparel and more.

"We are thrilled to collaborate and partner with Epic Games to create the inaugural 'Fortnite' product collection and to bring these characters to life for the first time," says Brian Mariotti, chief executive officer, Funko. "This collection will be a true celebration of 'Fortnite's' incredible popularity and cultural significance, and we believe our Funko 'Fortnite' collectibles will strongly resonate with fans of the game. Ultimately, our goal is to create a powerful merchandise strategy for the 'Fortnite' brand, as well as bring these amazing collectibles to fans around the world."

The "Fortnite" line from Funko will be on shelves this holiday season at a wide variety of retailers worldwide.

Epic Games also tapped Jazwares to serve as the master toy partner for "Fortnite."

Jazwares' "Fortnite"-branded range will offer true-to-game figures including Doomez, loot boxes, play sets, environments, game-replica weapons, tools, plush, vehicles and more.

"We are thrilled to be part of the 'Fortnite' experience," says Judd Zebersky, chief executive officer, Jazwares. "This is more than just an entertainment property with product, it's a global movement. Our product line will push the boundaries of traditional toys, bringing the



digital world to physical product unlike anything fans have ever seen. We are so excited to be going on this journey with Epic Games."

The Jazwares "Fortnite" toy range will launch in December at retailers worldwide.

More recently, Spirit Halloween and Spencer's have both announced officially licensed "Fortnite" cosplay costumes, accessories and gear such as costume skins and accessories, game-replica weapons and equipment inspired by the game.

"Fortnite' fans will be able to don their favorite costume skins preparing for epic battles in official gear and accessories," says Kym Sarkos, executive vice president, Spirit Halloween and Spencer's. "Dance battles, gaming with friends and cosplaying are only the beginning. We will continue to add detailed replica products for

'Fortnite' fanatics, so be sure to keep an eye out for additional supply drops."

Lastly, Epic Games will work with Mad Engine on a range of "Fortnite" apparel for North America. The new "Fortnite" collection will include fashion knits, long- and short-sleeve tops, swimwear, outerwear and sportswear sets. Additional accessories will also be available in the Canadian market. The collection will be available at specialty retailers nationwide.

"We are excited to bring compelling apparel to retail for both fanatics and casual 'Fortnite' fans," says Danish Gajiani, chief executive officer, Mad Engine. "Apparel presents the perfect opportunity to bring this pop culture phenomenon to players, offering them product reflecting the dynamic world of the game."

# Differential Brands Buys GBG

Differential Brands Group has agreed to purchase a significant portion of Global Brands Group Holding Limited, a spin-off of Li & Fung.

The transaction, valued at \$1.38 billion, will be paid in cash and is subject to approval, and will give Differential a significant portion of GBG's North American licensing business.

The deal will see Differential Brands Group, which consists of Hudson, Robert Graham and

SWIMS, absorb licenses for Disney, Star Wars, Calvin Klein, Under Armour, Tommy Hilfiger, BCBG, Bebe, Joe's, Buffalo David Bitton, Frye, Michael Kors, Cole Haan, Kenneth Cole and more.

"We are thrilled to join Differential Brands Group and lead our combined platform by leveraging our expansive infrastructure, distribution and sourcing networks to drive growth, and we look forward to working with

the Differential management team and Tengram to help support the company's growth as it capitalizes on promising market opportunities," says Jason Rabin, president, GBG North America. "We are proud of what we have accomplished since joining Li & Fung in 2009, judiciously expanding the GBG platform and driving profitability, and thank them for their long-standing support and partnership."



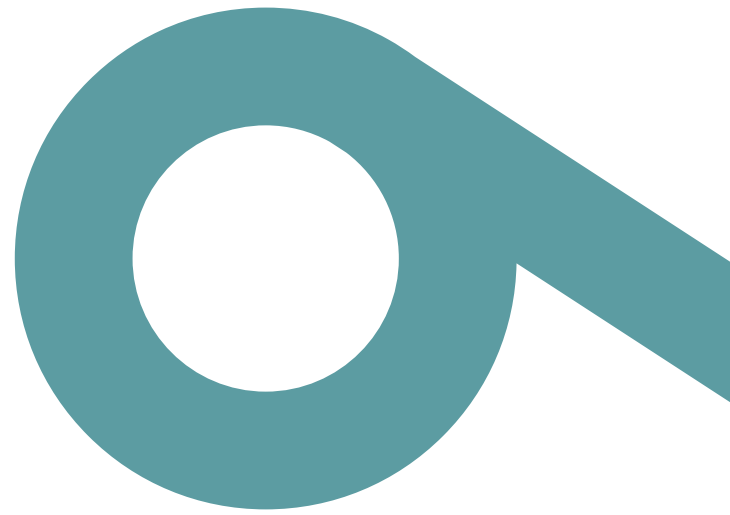
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# BuzzFeed

FTW

BuzzFeed has built its business by tailoring its engaging content to meet audiences where they are. Now it's taking that same basic principle and applying it to brand extensions.

by AMANDA CIOLETTI

**H**ave you ever taken a BuzzFeed quiz? Shared one of its “You knew you grew up in the ‘00s/‘90s/‘80s” lists? Pinned a recipe to try at home later? Probably, and BuzzFeed is now banking on that sense of loyalty, appreciation and affinity with brand extensions.

As one of the world's leading tech-powered media companies, BuzzFeed hardly needs any introduction. The cross-platform news and entertainment network reaches upwards of 790 million people across the globe, thanks to its original content that generates more than 9 billion views each month. It's not off-brand to say, “OMG.”

**ERIC KARP**  
head of licensing,  
BuzzFeed Commerce



BuzzFeed also has a coveted audience—Millennials. According to the company, 50 percent of its quiz takers are from the valuable demographic... and that's just for its lighthearted material.

The company has three major brand verticals: there's BuzzFeed Entertainment, which houses the quizzes, lists and the pop culture content that the site built its foundation upon; BuzzFeed News, a hard-hitting, investigative news organization that, frankly, rivals any legacy media company out there; and BuzzFeed's lifestyle brands.

Sitting within the lifestyle pillar is BuzzFeed's new-ish consumer products division, BuzzFeed Commerce, which aims to bring many of the media company's sub-brands to retail.

In truth, BuzzFeed has always been about "tapping into human connection at scale," says the company, and in October of 2016, it created Product Labs, Inc., led by Ben Kaufman, which was tasked with creating physical product and social commerce experiences. It first launched product into market such as a fully-customizable cookbook and candles that resonated with customers, becoming a revenue driver for the wider organization. That group ultimately evolved to become BuzzFeed Commerce, which oversees licensed merchandise, promotions, retail business development and content licensing for the organization's various brands.

Tapped to helm the next phase of product development for BuzzFeed is Eric Karp, head of licensing, BuzzFeed Commerce.

"Ben's vision for BuzzFeed Commerce (and formerly BuzzFeed Product Labs) was to find that place where product meets commerce," says Karp. "But his original version did not include licensing, but rather was about BuzzFeed's huge and robust affiliate business, which has grown enormously over the past few years and has become a major driver within the company, almost rivaling our ad sales business."

Kaufman is now secretary of commerce at BuzzFeed and oversees five major pillars—licensing; affiliate, which employs a team of editors who are constantly testing and featuring new and relevant products; merch; partner innovations, which creates immersive brand integrations with BuzzFeed Commerce and offers consulting to help brands solve their toughest marketing problems, create new products and reach consumers in interesting ways; and experiential.

Karp, who joined in summer 2017, is tasked with scaling the company's licensed merchandise offering via a wide and diverse range of physical products at retail through the licensing business model.

But you can only assume that, as with everything BuzzFeed does, its products too,

whether in manifestation on shelf or through the manufacturing process itself, break the mold.

"Some of the things that are unique to BuzzFeed Commerce—that you'll find in no other licensing group anywhere else—is the fact that we actually design our products, from ideation to shelf. That includes low-touch products like t-shirts and publishing, all the way up to extraordinarily high-touch products like consumer electronics," says Karp.

It's arguable that no one knows their audience better than BuzzFeed, and it's this deep understanding of who its users are and what they truly want that gives the company a leg up over the competition. Simply put, BuzzFeed has a lot of data.

"The group within our organization that is our secret weapon is our data science group," says Karp. "These are the people who analyze the mountains and mountains of data from all of our audience touchpoints so that the folks that are managing the business verticals can respond to the business needs thoughtfully."

And the high volume of content that BuzzFeed generates allows the organization to be quite nimble, applying a "test and learn" philosophy to much of what it produces, ultimately giving BuzzFeed Commerce a very helpful set of metrics to glean insight from.

"Our producers are empowered to speak in their own voice, and at the same time we embrace a test and learn philosophy, meaning we are not afraid to make mistakes or publish things in a format, style or on a topic that we've never done before. And if it happens to resonate with our audience, we double





down on it. There are no penalties for creating content that doesn't work, so long as we learn from each other's experiences," says Karp.

That's how BuzzFeed got Tasty, its food network brand that employs a trademark top-down, "hands and pans" video format and sped up style that has transformed the way the public engages with cooking content.

Tasty, which is only 2-years-old, brings in more than 2.1 billion monthly views across all platforms and reaches more than 540 million people globally. On Facebook, Tasty has 95 million followers and is the No. 1 content publisher on the platform, as well as the most downloaded recipe app, says BuzzFeed, with a healthy demographic that spans 17-year-olds to 55-plus. It's also grown to include sub-brands like Bien Tasty, Proper Tasty, Tasty Demais and Tasty Vegetarian, each with millions of Facebook fans apiece.

"Tasty was launched in an effort to crack Facebook video back when it was new, and what came from testing and learnings was this huge brand that democratized food and changed food media," says Karp. "And with our other brands, we're thinking about the same types

of things. It's not just that we say, 'Let's make a brand for X,' there's always a problem-solving capacity.

"Once we find that there is a signal within our audience, we then get extraordinarily serious and strategic about the roll-out of that content," continues Karp. "And from a business function, we think about how we bring the brand into people's lives in a meaningful way and provide them with purchase opportunities that speak to their love of content and create product that fulfills on those affiliations and connections."

Tasty is the first BuzzFeed brand to manifest into physical product, and it's setting a blueprint, so to speak, for how the company plans to bring merchandise to market.

In October 2017, Tasty signed publisher Penguin Random House as one of its first licensing partnerships to create a cookbook that reached store shelves—and the *New York Times* Best-Seller list—in less than two months, flipping the traditional 6- to 18-month product cycle on its head.

Then in March, kitchenware hit market with an exclusive line at retailer Walmart. The Tasty-branded cookware collection includes more than 90 products ranging from nonstick cookware to high-quality bakeware, kitchen gadgets, accessories and more from licensee Epoca



International. The landmark deal is part of a wider strategic partnership between Walmart and BuzzFeed, which will see the two companies collaborate across creative development of an array of consumer products, experimentation and innovation in e-commerce, media marketing and more, like including links within Tasty videos to buy kitchen tools, groceries and more via Walmart.com or its sister site, Jet.com.

"When I joined, we had one licensee in place, and

they had designed no goods, manufactured no goods or shipped no goods. We had a licensing business with the retail value of \$0," says Karp. "And because we have embraced a retail-first strategy, meaning we believe that each of our lifestyle verticals has value, an enormous audience and a willingness to purchase goods so long as those goods are right, it was necessary for us to start with our biggest brand and create a retail partnership and a home that was exclusive enough in one product category so that that account would have an ownership stake in our business and be dedicated to our long-term success. We were very fortunate in that the message we were selling

resonated very, very strongly with the folks in Bentonville at Walmart, but also the folks in Hoboken at Jet.com.”

In 2019, Karp says the Tasty footprint at Walmart will grow more than 25 percent to 12-linear-feet with new ranges, such as a stainless steel line, and licensees like Cuisinart, who is on board for kitchen electrics.

Tasty is also set to grow globally, having recently engaged a network of licensing agents around the world including Licensing Matters in EMEA, Haven in Australia and New Zealand, La Panaderia in Mexico, Lotus Global LatAm for Spanish-speaking Latin America, Lotus Global Brasil for Brazil and Gaia in Japan. More partners in Asia will be announced later this year.

A similar Tasty model is being applied to other BuzzFeed brands, such as Goodful, which centers on philosophies of mindfulness and wellness. With 62.2 million active monthly users, 20 million fans on Facebook and 2.4 million followers on Instagram, Goodful was the fastest brand launch from BuzzFeed to-date and was the next natural step for BuzzFeed Commerce.

“Goodful is the second entertainment vertical that will be launching at retail for BuzzFeed,” says Karp. “We’re extraordinarily proud of Goodful because it speaks to several things: No. 1, it says that BuzzFeed is not just all about Tasty, but that we have other lifestyle verticals that speak to other affiliations and interests; but the other piece is that it speaks to speed to market. We put this program into play, from the go-ahead moment from the partner to in-store execution, in about six months, including full product development, manufacturing and shipping.

“We’re trying to impress upon our partners that they don’t have to continue to embrace their old business models and that there is a new way of doing business that is sensitive to currentness

and immediate demand,” continues Karp.

Licensees on board for Goodful include Cuisinart for kitchen electrics, Welspun for textiles and Epoca for kitchenware. AeroGarden is also on board for the in-home garden system category with plans to anchor an exclusive product launch at a major yet-to-be announced U.S. retailer. Details are expected to come this fall.

There are other brands, too, that have extensions in the works, such as Nifty, BuzzFeed’s DIY home brand that is meant to inspire people to solve common problems and be more creative around the home, and As/Is, a fashion-focused brand that speaks to inclusivity and personal empowerment.

Both Nifty and As/Is are just gaining traction across BuzzFeed’s network of platforms and have a “watch this space” component as of now, but Karp is enthusiastic about their viability and confident that each will find a home for their respective product ranges in no time.

For Nifty, Karp says BuzzFeed is currently partnering with a design team to develop and curate a trend-smart range of home furnishings, craft and outdoor products that speak to multifunctionality and life hacks; while for As/Is, BuzzFeed is exploring all areas of personal care and fashion (apart from color cosmetics) for brand extensions.

Another big opportunity is for Playfull, the first co-brand born out of a strategic partnership between BuzzFeed and NBCUniversal.

Aimed at Millennial parents, Playfull wants to help inform and enhance parents’ lives with relatable content on various themes such as DIY hacks, honest parent conversations, humor and creative parenting tips that connects with audiences and creates a community, similar to the Tasty model.

BuzzFeed says there is ample opportunity to leverage NBC’s vast talent network for the Playfull brand that has the potential to reach 49 million unique parents on Facebook and 28 million parents on its site.

As of now, the brand is focused on content creation with a dedicated Facebook page and cross-promotions and segments on NBC series such as the “Today” show, but as it continues to grow and expand, Karp sees an obvious connection to consumer products.

“People have been making lifestyle content for some time now, but BuzzFeed really owns it when it comes to speaking to the Millennial generation and the new generation—we speak in their voice,” says Karp. “Our lifestyle verticals differ from everyone else’s because we own the platform. No one else is delivering a suite of lifestyle content that’s identity-based, affiliation-based that is distributed across the web, and more specifically across the social web.” ©





The company behind “Octonauts” and “Peter Rabbit” are crossing over and can help those who want to break into the China market, just as long as it’s the right brand. **by BARBARA SAX**

The sheer size of the Chinese market makes it very attractive for any brand to increase its visibility. However, companies big and small have discovered that it can be a struggle to break in. Silvergate Media, a TV production and licensing company for children’s brands like animated preschool series “Octonauts,” has been taking its mission to break into China seriously, finding success with its IP launches and further developing a new business arm to help other companies grow in the territory as well.

“We have a fantastic content pipeline of great shows that we own or produce, but what really sets us apart as an organization is the way we’ve gone deeper and deeper into the Chinese market and been so successful with our existing IP over the past five years,” says Ron Allen, executive vice president, commercial, Silvergate Media. “We were in the market with first-class content at a time when the market was opening, so we developed strong licensees and brand partners such as shopping malls and activations. We now have an extensive knowledge of the Chinese market, and there are very few companies in the licensing business that have been able to break into this market so successfully.”

The team at Silvergate has a deep knowledge of Chinese business and culture (and some can speak Mandarin as well). The company is open to sharing that expertise through selective partnerships with IPs that meet its criteria.

“There are a lot of properties out there with great audience numbers that may need help converting those numbers into successful consumer product programs,”

says Allen. “We know how to do that. We have a great network of partnerships in place from content providers, to companies that do brand activations, drive toy sales at retail and operate attractions and theme parks.

“When you can be quick, decisive, opportunistic and flexible, your chances of success are much higher,” he continues.

Part of Silvergate’s success in the market is its partnership with CCTV, China’s national television station and broadcasters for “Octonauts.” Produced by Silvergate Media for the BBC channel CBeebies, the animated TV series is based on American-Canadian children’s books and follows an underwater exploring crew of anthropomorphic adventurers who go on undersea adventures with the help of a fleet of aquatic vehicles.

Since it’s set underwater, “Octonauts” isn’t culturally specific. The show also has an educational element, a big plus for the Chinese audience.

“It was a real coup for us when CCTV decided they loved ‘Octonauts’ and wanted to put it on-air,” says Allen. “The reach of CCTV is enormous—its 100 percent. Once ‘Octonauts’ was on-air, the show resonated with Chinese kids and the feedback was very positive.”

China is the most successful market yet for “Octonauts,” says Silvergate, and the brand is on track to become a “super IP” with billions of views on web TV, millions of books sold and triple-digit toy sale increases.

On-demand web platforms are also critical in this market, and Silvergate has forged



**RON ALLEN**  
executive vice president,  
commercial, Silvergate Media

The logo for TASTE beauty features a stylized icon on the left composed of three overlapping circles in blue, orange, and pink, with a pink inverted triangle below them. To the right, the word "TASTE" is written in large, bold, multi-colored letters (orange, pink, blue), and "beauty" is written below it in a smaller, grey, lowercase font.

# TASTE beauty

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[taste-beauty.com](http://taste-beauty.com)

critical partnerships with key providers.

“In a market that is so high-tech, online-focused and digital savvy, you cannot underestimate the importance of web TV channels. You have to broadcast through your gadgets, that’s how you reach your audience,” says Allen. “On-demand web TV platforms, such as Tencent Video and Youku and iQiyi, are where we saw extraordinary reach. Last year we were at 15 billion, and this year we are targeting 30 billion by the end of the year.”

Online retail, intertwined with on-demand content, has been fundamental to the IP’s success.

“One exciting difference in China is that our on-demand partners are offering fans of our properties content, but in a way we’ve yet to see in other markets,” says Allen. “There’s a direct link to online retail and direct online promotion. The company that owns an online retail platform may also be an owner of one of the leading content platforms, then they are open to promoting brand events in a way you can’t do in other territories yet.”

In a landmark partnership, Silvergate also teamed up with Wanda Kids Group for large-scale activations in shopping malls across China.

“Malls bring huge scale and market access and are incredible partners for us in building brand awareness and support of licensees,” says Allen.

On Children’s Day, a key retail touchpoint in China, the company organized an “Octonauts”-themed race for families across all shopping malls, with more than 100,000 participating. This summer, the company also launched “Octonauts” ocean ball activity events at 230 shopping malls with a reach of more than 100 million people.

The company has made a heavy investment in “Octonauts”-themed indoor attractions for families as well, with 55 existing locations and 88 planned by the end of the year. Additionally, 100 “Octonauts” early learning education centers will open at malls nationwide by the end of the year.

“When you combine online retail promotion with shopping mall activations, brand events and kids’ clubs, you’ve got massive consumer engagement with the IP,” says Allen.

The fifth season of “Octonauts” will be co-produced by CCTV. This is an indicator of “the level of trust that we have developed with China,” says Allen. New episodes will be tailored to the market and will include a Giant Salamander special and a new character, Mapmaker Min, a red panda. Silvergate has greenlit the production of “Octonauts” films for theatrical release in China in 2020.



Licensing for the property continues to expand. Since launching a toy line in 2015, Mattel has had triple-digit growth of its “Octonauts” toy line in China, the company says.

“Our most established licensing partner is Mattel and they’ve done a fantastic job translating our show to 3D toy form and in getting product out to retail. They’ve expanded the presence of ‘Octonauts’ across China and are hitting 10,000 doors with a toy line this year,” says Allen.

Then there is publishing partner Dolphin, who sold 6 million “Octonauts” books in under 18 months.

“In a market where we’ve only had a program of consumer products for just under two years, it’s a record we’re extremely proud of,” says Allen. “The licensing program is growing every year with new secondary toy licenses, apparel and gifting licenses and apps under development.”

Theme park attractions are a top priority going forward. Silvergate’s extensive network of contacts at

Chinese attractions developers, management companies and real estate groups includes Luneng Group, Pinnacle, HNA, Wanda, InTime and China Housing.

But Silvergate has more than “Octonauts” in its portfolio—it’s also a co-owner with Penguin of the “Peter Rabbit” animated television series and the global merchandising agent of the classic *Peter*

*Rabbit* publishing property, and is looking to expand that IP beyond children’s product licensing. Later this year, the company will announce details of new “Peter Rabbit” theme park attractions in China.

“The animated series is bright, fast-paced and full of adventure, and it’s a story of friendship that’s a good fit for the Chinese market,” says Allen.

The launch of Sony’s *Peter Rabbit* film this past year had a significant halo effect on the brand and should propel new opportunities going forward.

Silvergate is also focusing on its new “Monkey with a Toolbelt” IP. The animated television series, which has been commissioned by Netflix outside of China, centers around a team of action-hero engineers who fix the problems that befall the town of Blunderberg.

“The show ticks many of the right boxes in China,” says Allen. “There’s an educational component, it’s intrinsically toyetic and its 3D CGI, which is hugely popular in China right now. Also, the lead character is a monkey, an animal that has been hugely popular in China for centuries.”

Silvergate is exploring alternative broadcast options in China and seeking a master toy partner for the new IP. ©





Licensing professionals have responded to the unprecedented consumer interest in the beauty industry with unique partnerships.

# BEAUTY

## THE \$445 BILLION

# BEAST

by AMBER NICOLE ALSTON

**T**he beauty industry has undergone a huge shift. According to *Forbes*, consumers spent \$445 billion on skincare, haircare and color cosmetics in 2017, a number fueled by changes in technology, socio-political developments, retail trends and the proliferation of social media. The innovations taking place in the beauty industry have presented unique opportunities to licensees, licensors and IP holders looking to extend the life of their properties

“Change was the theme of the beauty industry in 2017, from the shifts in trends and category performance to the wave of mergers and acquisitions, which show no signs of abating in the near future,” says Larissa Jensen, executive director and beauty industry analyst, The NPD Group. “The industry has not only adapted to this change but has continued to achieve strong and consistent growth, as it has seen for the last few years. We can expect change to continue to be the catalyst of growth for the industry in 2018.”

Traditionally, large beauty conglomerates like L’Oréal and Estée Lauder have controlled the market. Having the resources to support the sourcing, lab testing, distribution and marketing necessary to launch a new product, they dictated trends, created and sold product unrivaled.

“Beauty was a vacuum we were able to control. You could only buy Lancôme at a department store and a studio line at the drug store,” says Paul Flett, senior vice president,

sales and business development, Healthy Lifestyle Brands. “With the new retail market structure, consumers can buy their products online and in many more places.”

Collaborations were reserved for celebrities with a global presence, a necessity for companies looking to profit at their large number of distribution points. Brands like Disney and other children’s entertainment properties ventured into beauty in the ‘80s and ‘90s, but their partnerships were limited to playful goods like clear lip gloss and sparkly nail polish for young girls.

The dawn of social media democratized the beauty industry. Hyper-visual platforms like YouTube and Instagram offered men and women from all walks of life a place to build a community around makeup, skin and hair care. It also allows space for honest reviews about products.

Now, licensors have stepped into the beauty category hoping to appeal to consumers who have expanded the boundaries of what beauty can be, and who are interested in seeing their favorite properties behind the makeup counter.

Recently, Peanuts Worldwide paired with Korean beauty brand Innisfree for a line of nail, lip and eye products; Fleischer Studios teamed with LVMH-owned MAC Cosmetics for a red lipstick inspired by Betty Boop; and Toei Animation linked with Japanese beauty brand Creer Beaute for a line of “Sailor Moon”-inspired lipsticks.

Unexpected entries include The Andy Warhol

Foundation and Artestar for a collaboration with NARS, Pantone and Sephora for a Color of the Year collection, shoe brand Christian Louboutin and Batallure Beauty for nail polish, Crayola's partnership with Clinique and ASOS for separate lines, fitness giant Equinox and Wieden + Kennedy New York for perfume and lipstick, MGA Entertainment and Taste Beauty for an LOL Surprise! line, Emoji with Pond's for skincare, SEGA and GlamGlow for a Sonic the Hedgehog skincare capsule and Nintendo with Shu Uemura for a range of hair products.

Publishers have also taken interest in beauty products. *Vogue* teamed with Comme des Garçons for a 125th anniversary fragrance, Lagardère Active partnered with Watier Cosmetics for a line inspired by *Elle* and Hearst teamed with The Box Out Group for a *Cosmopolitan* subscription box

The collaborations point to the personal nature of beauty—a subjective, discernible category that is often the subject of debate. Brands like Nintendo and Crayola inspire childhood nostalgia but offer product refined enough for adults; while Andy Warhol and Christian Louboutin products can provide shoppers with an affordable piece of an aspirational brand.

Taste Beauty has taken notice. Earlier this year, the manufacturer restructured its licensing business into three categories—Taste & Friends, which focuses on evergreen brands and has partnerships with Disney, Nickelodeon and General Mills; Taste Beauty, which focuses on Gen Z consumers; and Taste Labs, an incubator that orchestrates exclusive collaborations with retailers, media and lifestyle brands.

“Self-care is a driving force. It’s not a big impulsive purchase, but it’s something that you can share,” says Alex Fogelson, co-founder and chief executive officer, Taste Beauty. “Some consumers like having one patch of color from something like the Nickelodeon splat; others like collecting these items—they’re a showpiece.”

Equally impactful on the beauty industry are influencers, the social media stars whose effect on the purchase decision is in some way significant or authoritative. They have surpassed celebrities as the preferred spokespersons for beauty products and have landed partnerships with leading makeup companies.

A survey conducted by influencer marketing research

group MuseFind found that 92 percent of customers trust an influencer compared to a celebrity endorsement. *Bloomberg* adds that companies spend \$255 million on influencer marketing per month.

Beauty brands of all sizes have entered into deals with top influencers. Mac Cosmetics tapped 10 influencers from around the globe, each with an Instagram following between 800,000 and 4.3 million; Too Faced cosmetics has tapped Kande Johnson for two collaborative color cosmetics lines; Ofra Cosmetics and Too Faced linked with NikkieTutorials; Anastasia Beverly Hills teamed with Nicole Guerriero; and MAC Cosmetics has plans for a line with Patricia Bright. The Brand Liaison currently reps influencer Sofie Dossi, while Brand Central supports licensing for LaurDIY.

“The blogger has now taken the place of the beauty editor and the beauty consultant,” says Byron Donics, founder, president and chief executive officer, HTI Collection. “We’ve seen a major shift in the statistics we get from retailers about the percentage of consumers who walk in, having consulted that product through someone online. It’s over 80 percent.”

No influencer has been more successful than Kylie Jenner, the youngest of the Kardashian-Jenner family. On her way to becoming the world’s youngest self-funded billionaire, she has sold more than \$630 million worth of makeup since launching her Kylie Cosmetics beauty brand with LVMH-backed Seed Beauty. The brand has no physical retail presence, save for a few pop-up shops, and does its marketing and distribution online, with Jenner’s posts accounting for most of the brand’s traction.

On the manufacturing side, social media has given niche beauty brands the ability to grow their business without the need for overhead or large marketing budgets. By studying the behaviors, buying patterns and pop culture interests of a given demographic, start-ups can craft products and enter into partnerships that feel tailor-made for their audience.

“Now you can commercialize a business through Facebook,” says Flett. “Before you would have to put hundreds of thousands of dollars forward to produce a commercial; if it wasn’t working, you would have to place it strategically, and now you can do a low-budget, low-tech but effective campaign that goes to mobile phones—you can start small and refine as you move up.”

Seed Beauty, which produces Kylie Cosmetics and Colourpop; Hatch, the company behind manicurist Jenna Hipp’s polish line and makeup artist Kristofer Buckle’s cosmetic range; LVMH-incubator Kendo, which produces Rihanna’s Fenty; and Masea Group, who produces fragrance for H&M, Urban Outfitters, Michael Kors and Aéropostale are among such groups under a private label or discreet manufacturers.

Reflecting changes within society, including a push for racial diversity and LGBTQ inclusivity, beauty companies



and licensed brands have seized on the opportunity to include marginalized people through licensed collaborations. In 2017, pop singer Rihanna and Kendo Brands joined forces for Fenty Beauty. The line included 40 shades of foundation, one of the most diverse beauty offerings of all time.

*Vogue* estimates that the line earned \$100 million in the first 40 days of its release, with fans willing to pay an average of \$471 per year on the line, more than Kim Kardashian's KKW and Kat Von D's eponymous line. In 2017, *Time* magazine awarded the line Invention of the Year.

"Rihanna spoke to women of color; there is no hotter topic right now, and it's no longer acceptable to be eight shades," says Debi Donics, co-founder and partner, HTI Collection. "A study showed that by 2050, the population will become less Caucasian. We have to service that consumer."

The so-called "Fenty Effect" forced its competitors to re-evaluate offerings, with established companies such as NARS and Make Up For Ever quickly activating campaigns to inform customers that they offered a larger range of shades. Recently, Too Faced cosmetics announced a collaboration with influencer Jackie Aina for its Born This Way foundation; Maybelline tapped influencer Shayla; and MAC is teaming with blogger Nyma Tang.

The push for diversity extends into gender as well. Brands such as Milk Studio's Milk Makeup stand out for the inclusion of men in their campaigns. According to *Euromonitor*, the male grooming industry including haircare, skincare and shower products is expected to earn more than \$60 billion by 2020, outpacing men's haircare and fragrance.

At retail, beauty was segmented into prestige (high-quality products befitting of a higher price point) and mass (lower price and lower-quality fare). As consumers ask for more enhanced experiences at retail and flock to the Internet to make their purchases, the term "masstige" has come to describe the changes taking place at beauty retailers such as Sephora and Ulta.

"The lines from mass to class has blurred," says Debi Donics. "If the L'Oréal mascara at \$8.49 is doing what it's supposed to do for you, you no longer have to buy the Lancôme."

Ulta has revamped its in-store displays for mass products and included products favored by Millennials, regardless of price point. The retailer's new merchandising strategy sees prestige lines like Estée Lauder alongside drugstore staples like Neutrogena.

Ulta is also launching exclusive collaborations and selling products with cult followings.

"We're at a crossroads; we used to say there is product, promotion, place and price—the place is no longer critical," says Debi Donics. "Once upon a time, you'd never talk about going to Ulta. Now you want to be



there, and they are the 80,000-lbs. gorilla in the room."

In the event space, Sephora announced a live beauty event dubbed SEPHORiA that will offer a day of try-ons, lectures and branded events; while Beautycon, the four-year-old beauty convention, attracted more than 150,000 attendees in New York alone. Brands across price points including Fenty Beauty, St. Ives, Beautyblender (a makeup tool company) and more have opted for pop-ups instead of permanent retail opportunities.

The beauty industry has undergone significant change and shows no signs of stopping. With a shifting focus to micro-influencers and the brands, the industry may prove fruitful to licensees, licensors and IP holders looking to extend the reach of their products, specifically into skincare and beauty tech.

L'Oréal recently acquired the Canadian tech firm ModiFace, which makes an app that can superimpose products onto face and hair, while NBCUniversal purchased "Priv," a beauty-service-on-demand application.

According to a recent NPD survey, skincare has overtaken makeup. Healthy, glowing skin is the new status symbol, with sales of prestige skincare treatments up 14 percent in the U.S., ahead of makeup which gained just 4 percent in the last 12 months of the year.

"The biggest thing we can all expect in the beauty industry is change," says Jensen. "While this has been a catalyst for many brands and retailers in beauty, it has left others in the space of uncertainty. However, the industry is especially adaptable to change. Moreover, it is because of change and all the emotion we tie into our decisions that beauty has been at the forefront of growth across many industries and will continue to succeed in the year to come." ©

# LICENSE®

THE LICENSING INDUSTRY'S THOUGHT LEADER  
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## The OFFICIAL Publication of Brand Licensing Europe



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# LICENSE<sup>®</sup>

THE LICENSING INDUSTRY'S THOUGHT LEADER  
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## Leading Licensees 2018

In this report, *License Global* has identified some of the best-in-class licensees worldwide. Here are 175 leaders in the industry, from apparel to consumer electronics and everything in between.



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# Leading Licensees 2018

Licensees are a vital part of retail. As third-party services for design, distribution and manufacturing, licensees help licensors' product get to as many retail shelves as possible.

*License Global* compiled a list of some of the leading licensees across all categories. Included within these pages are 175 (up from last year's 150) of the best-of-the-best in the business, from apparel licensees all the way down to consumer electronics manufacturers.

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\* The 175 Leading Licensees report is compiled from reader surveys, *License Global* industry intelligence and covers all major categories. It is not intended to be a comprehensive industry survey.

\*\* Boxed listings are compiled from advertorial content.

**ABG Accessories**

[www.abgnyc.com](http://www.abgnyc.com)

Categories: Headwear

**Accessory Innovations**

[www.accessory-innovations.com](http://www.accessory-innovations.com)

Categories: Accessories

**Accutime Watch Corp.**

[www.accutimewatch.com](http://www.accutimewatch.com)

Categories: Watches

**Activision**

[www.activision.com](http://www.activision.com)

Categories: Video games

**Adjmi Apparel Group**

[www.adjmi.com](http://www.adjmi.com)

Categories: Apparel and accessories

**American Greetings**

[www.americangreetings.com](http://www.americangreetings.com)

Categories: Stationery, gift wrap and party supplies

**Amscan International**

[www.amscan.co.uk](http://www.amscan.co.uk)

Categories: Party products

**Arabia  
(Fiskars Group)**

[www.arabia.fi](http://www.arabia.fi)

Categories: Dinnerware

**ASHKO Group**

[www.ashkony.com](http://www.ashkony.com)

Categories: Footwear

**Avec U.K.**

[www.avecuk.com](http://www.avecuk.com)

Categories: Homewares, arts and

crafts, gifts, stationery, partyware, health and beauty and textiles

**Bandai America**

[www.bandai.com](http://www.bandai.com)

Categories: Action figures and electronics

**BBC International**

[www.bbcint.com](http://www.bbcint.com)

Categories: Footwear

**Beams International**

[www.beamsinternational.com](http://www.beamsinternational.com)

Categories: Food and beverage

**Bendon Publishing**

[www.bendonpub.com](http://www.bendonpub.com)

Categories: Publishing

**Bentex Group**

[www.bentex.com](http://www.bentex.com)

Categories: Apparel, home décor, electronics and pet products

**Berkshire Fashions**

[www.berkshireinc.com](http://www.berkshireinc.com)

Categories: Accessories and intimate apparel

**The Betesh Group**

[www.beteshgroup.com](http://www.beteshgroup.com)

Categories: Homewares and electrics, bedding and accessories

**Bioworld Merchandising**

[www.bioworldcorp.com](http://www.bioworldcorp.com)

Categories: Men's, junior's and youth apparel; headwear; sleepwear; small accessories; socks; bags; Internet of Things (technology); jewelry; and

casual footwear

**Blues Clothing**

[www.blues-clothing.com](http://www.blues-clothing.com)

Categories: Outerwear, apparel, swimwear, nightwear and underwear

**Blueprint Collections**

[www.blueprintcollections.co.uk](http://www.blueprintcollections.co.uk)

Categories: Stationery

**Bulls i Toy**

[www.bullsitoy.com](http://www.bullsitoy.com)

Categories: Toys

**Caleres**

[www.caleres.com](http://www.caleres.com)

Categories: Footwear

**CandyRific**

[www.candyrific.com](http://www.candyrific.com)

Categories: Toys and games, novelties and confectionery

**The Carat Shop**

[www.thecaratshop.co.uk](http://www.thecaratshop.co.uk)

Categories: Jewelry and accessories

**Card.com**

[www.card.com](http://www.card.com)

Categories: Branded financial service programs

**Cartamundi**

[www.cartamundi.com](http://www.cartamundi.com)

Categories: Games

**Castlewood Apparel Group**

[www.castlewoodapparel.com](http://www.castlewoodapparel.com)

Categories: Apparel and accessories





**Ceaco**

[www.ceaco.com](http://www.ceaco.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games, novelties and puzzles

**Centum Books**

[www.centumbooks1td.co.uk](http://www.centumbooks1td.co.uk)

**Categories:** Publishing

**Changes**

[www.changesonline.com](http://www.changesonline.com)

**Categories:** Apparel

**Character Options**

[www.character-online.com](http://www.character-online.com)

**Categories:** Toys and collectibles

**Character World**

[www.characterworld.com](http://www.characterworld.com)

**Categories:** Home textiles and bedding

**CHF Industries**

[www.chfindustries.com](http://www.chfindustries.com)

**Categories:** Homewares and textiles

**Children's Apparel Network**

[www.childrensapparelnetwork.com](http://www.childrensapparelnetwork.com)

**Categories:** Children's and infant apparel

**Cooneen by Design**

[www.cooneenbydesign.com](http://www.cooneenbydesign.com)

**Categories:** Nightwear and underwear

**Corsair Toiletries**

[www.corsair.co.uk](http://www.corsair.co.uk)

**Categories:** Health and beauty

**Coty**

[www.coty.com](http://www.coty.com)

**Categories:** Health and beauty

**Crocs**

[www.crocs.com](http://www.crocs.com)

**Categories:** Footwear

**Concept One Accessories**

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[www.concept1.com](http://www.concept1.com)

**Bernie Hafif, vice president, licensing and acquisitions**

**T: 212-868-2590 ext. 111**

**E: [bernie@concept1.com](mailto:bernie@concept1.com)**

**Categories:** Accessories, headwear, cold weather accessories, luggage, bags, belts, wallets, pins, patches, buttons and lanyards

Concept One Accessories is a premier resource for licensed fashion and entertainment accessories. The company's well-rounded portfolio and expansive product offering establish Concept One as a go-to resource for accessories across all distribution channels.

Concept One holds licenses with top licensors and leading brands including Disney, Marvel, Lucas, Warner Bros., FUL, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Smooshy Mushy, Oddbods, Hasbro, Peanuts, Twentieth Century Fox, Sony, Ubisoft, Activision, SEGA, Bungie, Bravado, Perryscope, Epic, Ford, Chevy, Corona, Coca-Cola, Mountain Dew, U.S. Polo Association, Sean John, Aeropostale, RBX, Hind, Van Heusen, Macbeth Collection, C&C California and more.

The company, headquartered in New York City with a heavy global presence, says it prides itself on delivering quality and value by creating products, such as bags, luggage and accessories, that will last consumers a long time.

Concept One also aims to include the latest fashion and pop culture trends while consciously incorporating brand characteristics into their products in an effort to make consumers feel the product is an extension of the brand.

Concept One plans to announce a host of collaborations with some of its licensors during the remainder of 2018 and in 2019.



### CSS Industries

[www.cssindustries.com](http://www.cssindustries.com)

**Categories:** Sewing supplies

### Cudlie Accessories

[www.cudlieny.com](http://www.cudlieny.com)

**Categories:** Infant and toddler apparel, accessories, hard and soft goods

### Cryptozoic Entertainment

[www.cryptozoic.com](http://www.cryptozoic.com)

**Categories:** Games, collectibles and novelties

### Danilo Promotions

[www.danilo.com](http://www.danilo.com)

**Categories:** Greeting cards and calendars

### Dark Horse Comics

[www.darkhorse.com](http://www.darkhorse.com)

**Categories:** Publishing

### DecoPac

[www.decopac.com](http://www.decopac.com)

**Categories:** Confectionery décor

### Delta Children's Products

[www.deltachildren.com](http://www.deltachildren.com)

**Categories:** Furniture and baby gear

### Disguise

[www.disguise.com](http://www.disguise.com)

**Categories:** Costumes and accessories

### DITEXMED

[www.ditexmed.es](http://www.ditexmed.es)

**Categories:** Children's apparel

### FAB Starpoint

[www.fabny.com](http://www.fabny.com)

**Jeffrey Fisher, senior vice president, corporate business development**

**T: 212-947-9001 ext. 133**

**E: [jeffrey.fisher@fabny.com](mailto:jeffrey.fisher@fabny.com)**

**Categories:** Handbags, backpacks, luggage, gift and home décor, housewares and cold weather accessories

FAB•NY

FAB Starpoint, a division of FAB NY, focuses on categories such as back-to-school, luggage and travel, handbags, cold weather, gifts and home décor geared toward the youth and adult accessory markets.

The company has built partnerships with all major licensors including Hello Kitty, Disney, Marvel, Lucasfilm, Nickelodeon, Hasbro, Warner Bros., MGA Entertainment and many others.

FAB's brands include Mojo Life, a backpack brand inspired by music, fashion and pop culture, that was launched in 2011. Mojo Life has now evolved into a lifestyle brand that continues to grow via its robust co-branding success with properties such as Deadpool, "Pac-Man" and "SpongeBob Squarepants," and it has exciting partnerships on the horizon. Other FAB NY proprietary brands include dELiA\*s Girl, which is marketing to the tween consumer.

In 2010, FAB founder Steve Russo launched the Danielle Nicole brand alongside its founder and creative director, Danielle DiFerdinando. The line caters to a price-conscious contemporary consumer with key price points ranging from \$68 to \$199. In 2016, FAB and Danielle Nicole partnered with Disney's Princess franchise to create a co-branded line that appeals to the nostalgic and whimsical side of the contemporary consumer. The line currently sells at retailers such as Topshop, Asos, HSN, Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, Fred Segal and more.

As the Danielle Nicole social media following has evolved, so too has FAB NY's ability to expand its partnerships. Co-branding with leading consumer products companies such as Warner Bros. for Harry Potter and "Looney Tunes," HBO for "Game of Thrones" and Nickelodeon for a throwback '90s "Rugrats" experience are just a few of the dynamic initiatives FAB NY is working on.

FAB NY strives to remain flexible and adjust to an ever-changing retail environment. The company has partnered to bring fashion products in its core categories to the market, achieving a unique balance between fashion, brands and content-driven entertainment.



**Ecell Global**  
[www.ecellglobal.com](http://www.ecellglobal.com)  
**Categories:** Smartphone accessories

**Egmont U.K.**  
[www.egmont.co.uk](http://www.egmont.co.uk)  
**Categories:** Publishing

**Elope**  
[www.elope.com](http://www.elope.com)  
**Categories:** Apparel, accessories and costumes

**ENESCO**  
[www.enesco.com](http://www.enesco.com)  
**Categories:** gift, seasonal decor, collectibles and collector vinyl

**EPOCA**  
[www.epoca.com](http://www.epoca.com)  
**Categories:** Homewares

**Essential Brands**  
[www.essentialbrands.com](http://www.essentialbrands.com)  
**Categories:** Apparel, accessories, homewares and private label programs

**Fashions U.K.**  
[www.fashions-uk.com](http://www.fashions-uk.com)  
**Categories:** Apparel and footwear

**Fast Forward**  
[www.fastforwardny.com](http://www.fastforwardny.com)  
**Categories:** Backpacks, lunch kits, beverage bottles, handbags, luggage, accessories, small

leather goods and stationery

**Fifth Sun**  
[www.fifthsun.com](http://www.fifthsun.com)  
**Categories:** Apparel

**Fisher-Price**  
[www.fisher-price.com](http://www.fisher-price.com)  
**Categories:** Baby gear, toys and games

**Foster Grant**  
[www.fostergrant.com](http://www.fostergrant.com)  
**Categories:** Eyewear

**Franco Manufacturing**  
[www.franco-mfg.com](http://www.franco-mfg.com)  
**Categories:** Homewares and bedding

**Forever Beauty NY**  
[www.foreverbeauty.com](http://www.foreverbeauty.com)  
**Brad Anzaroot, president**  
**E: [brad@foreverbeauty.com](mailto:brad@foreverbeauty.com)**

**Categories:** Color cosmetics and makeup for lips, nails and eyes; skin wipes; brush products; lotions; and storage and cosmetic bags

Founded in 2002 by president Brad Anzaroot, Forever Beauty New York manufactures specialty beauty products including makeup, nail polishes, beauty brushes, cosmetic storage containers, fragrances and creams.

FBNY considers itself a fashion company that focuses on the hottest trends in cosmetics with an emphasis on sharp colors, innovative packaging and quality products. Differentiating itself from established beauty industry giants like Estée Lauder and Revlon, FBNY says it aims to make fresh and fashion-forward products, similar to Kylie Cosmetics by Kylie Jenner and ColourPop.

FBNY also offers licensors innovative products in men's beauty, an underpenetrated segment, it says. It offers face scrubs, creams and lotions. For women's beauty, FBNY is ushering in new canisters and new packaging options that use an array of eye-catching colors.

In 2017, Goldview Capital, managed by Elie Levy, acquired a majority stake in FBNY. Levy, founder of Planet Sox, has helped FBNY acquire licenses, improve its replenishment systems and strengthen its research and development.

While keeping a strong focus on its private brands The Beauty Shop and Totally Girlz, FBNY will launch three new brands in 2018 and 2019—Donna Loren, Pink Label and Xoxo.



### Freeze

[www.freeze-showroom.com](http://www.freeze-showroom.com)

**Categories:** Apparel

### Funko

[www.funko.com](http://www.funko.com)

**Categories:** Collectibles, novelties and apparel

### Funtastic Limited

[www.funtastic.com.au](http://www.funtastic.com.au)

**Categories:** Toys and apparel

### GB Eye

[www.gbeye.com](http://www.gbeye.com)

**Categories:** Posters and gifting

### Giochi Preziosi

[www.giochipreziosi.it](http://www.giochipreziosi.it)

**Categories:** Toys and games

### Global Brands Group

[www.globalbrandsgroup.com](http://www.globalbrandsgroup.com)

**Categories:** Apparel, accessories, footwear and health and beauty

### Golden Bear Toys

[www.goldenbeartoys.com](http://www.goldenbeartoys.com)

**Categories:** Toys

### Golden West Food Group

[www.gwfg.com](http://www.gwfg.com)

**Categories:** Food and beverage

### good2grow

[www.good2grow.com](http://www.good2grow.com)

**Categories:** Beverages

### Ground Up International

[www.groundupintl.com](http://www.groundupintl.com)

**Categories:** Footwear

### Handcraft

[www.handcraftmfg.com](http://www.handcraftmfg.com)

**Marshall Mizrahi,**  
vice president

**T: 212-251-0022**

**E: [marshallm@handcraftmfg.com](mailto:marshallm@handcraftmfg.com)**

**Categories:** Children's underwear, training pants, socks

Handcraft, a leading provider of children's character underwear, offers an array of children's products and solutions for parents of young children in the potty-training phase. Handcraft creates high-quality products, including quick change kits and potty-training kits, that fill gaps in the market and extend beyond current market needs.

According to Handcraft vice president Marshall Mizrahi, the company maintains 99 percent of the children's licensed underwear market in the United States and prides itself on constant innovation. In 2008, during an economic decline, Handcraft became a market leader when it increased the basic three-pack underwear product to a seven-pack product, according to Mizrahi. The physical footprint of the seven-pack product was the same as the three-pack product, an added bonus for buyers who may have been limited by space restrictions.

Two years ago, Handcraft introduced cotton training pants as a licensed product featuring characters that children love. Cotton training pants had previously been available only as a branded product, according to Mizrahi, who added that Handcraft's cotton training pants remain the company's top item on Amazon.

Founded in 1946 by Joe Mizrahi, who sold handkerchiefs door-to-door, Handcraft has established and nurtured deep relationships with its partners for decades. The company proudly spends a substantial amount of time with each buyer to review all properties available to buyers.

For the remainder of 2018, Handcraft plans to focus efforts to grow PottyGenius.com, a robust online community established by Handcraft that serves as a resource for parents who are potty training. Handcraft hopes to use the online community to cross-sell products and expand business. The company says it also plans to push gaming and athletic wear to target older segments, such as tweens, who want tech and innovation in their products and who love soft, stretchy fabrics.





**Grosvenor Consumer Products**

[www.grosvenor.eu.com](http://www.grosvenor.eu.com)

Categories: Health and beauty

**Hallmark**

[www.hallmark.com](http://www.hallmark.com)

Categories: Gifting, homewares, special occasion and stationery

**Happy Socks**

[www.happysocks.com](http://www.happysocks.com)

Categories: Socks

**Hasbro**

[www.hasbro.com](http://www.hasbro.com)

Categories: Toys and games

**Havaianas**

[us.havaianas.com](http://us.havaianas.com)

Categories: Footwear

**HER Accessories**

[www.heracc.com](http://www.heracc.com)

Categories: Watches, cosmetics, jewelry and hair accessories

**Her Universe**

[www.heruniverse.com](http://www.heruniverse.com)

Categories: Apparel, accessories and homewares

**High IntenCity**

[www.highintencity.com](http://www.highintencity.com)

Categories: Accessories

**High Point Design**

[www.moret.com](http://www.moret.com)

Categories: Hosiery

**Hot Toys**

[www.hottoys.com.hk](http://www.hottoys.com.hk)

Categories: Gifting and collectibles

**Huffy**

[www.huffybikes.com](http://www.huffybikes.com)

Categories: Bicycles

**Hybrid**

[www.hybridapparel.com](http://www.hybridapparel.com)

Categories: Apparel and accessories

**Hypnotic Hats**

[www.hyponline.com](http://www.hyponline.com)

**Just Funky**

[www.justfunky.com](http://www.justfunky.com)

Raj Arora, chief executive officer

T: 234-249-0145 ext. 3201

E: [raj@justfunky.com](mailto:raj@justfunky.com)

Categories: Beverageware, home decor, impulse, kitchen, bedding

Just Funky is a premier manufacturer of licensed and private label merchandise for the mainstream retail market.

With an extensive portfolio of licenses with big brands such as Marvel, Guns N' Roses, "The Golden Girls" and PlayStation, Just Funky says it aims to make high-quality, exciting lifestyle products using cutting-edge techniques. The company's impressive list of retail partners includes Target, Nordstrom and Spencer's, to name a few.

Comprised of fans that design for fans, Just Funky considers itself a group of "out-of-the-box thinkers" who constantly seek out new techniques and products to offer its customers. For example, the company had 12 patents in just the last year and new offerings like Pokémon Pokémikke ice cream summer collection.

For the remainder of 2018 and 2019, Just Funky plans to continue setting new benchmarks in its lifestyle business, expanding sales territories, creating new techniques and patents and closing deals with exciting new properties that will allow the company to continue offering top-notch products.



**Categories:** Hosiery

### **IDW Publishing**

[www.idwpublishing.com](http://www.idwpublishing.com)

**Categories:** Publishing

### **Innovative Designs**

[www.innovativenyc.com](http://www.innovativenyc.com)

**Categories:** Stationery and arts and crafts

### **Isaac Morris Limited**

[www.isaacmorris.com](http://www.isaacmorris.com)

**Categories:** Apparel and accessories

### **Jacobs Douwe Egberts**

[www.jacobsdouweegberts.com](http://www.jacobsdouweegberts.com)

**Categories:** Food and beverage

### **Jakks Pacific**

[www.jakks.com](http://www.jakks.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games

### **Jay Franco and Sons**

[www.jfranco.com](http://www.jfranco.com)

**Categories:** Homewares and bedding

### **Jazwares**

[www.jazwares.com](http://www.jazwares.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games and novelties

### **Jellifish Kids**

[www.jellifishkids.com](http://www.jellifishkids.com)

**Categories:** Apparel, toys and gaming

### **Jelsert**

[www.jelsert.com](http://www.jelsert.com)

**Categories:** Food and beverage

### **J!nx**

[www.jinx.com](http://www.jinx.com)

**Categories:** Apparel and accessories

### **Josmo**

[www.josmo.com](http://www.josmo.com)

**Categories:** Footwear

### **Kids II**

[www.kidsii.com](http://www.kidsii.com)

**Categories:** Baby gear and toys

### **KidzTech Toys**

[www.kidztech.net](http://www.kidztech.net)

**Categories:** Toys and games, novelties

### **KIDdesigns**

[www.kiddesigns.com](http://www.kiddesigns.com)

**Categories:** Electronics

### **Kinnerton Confectionery**

[www.kinnerton.com](http://www.kinnerton.com)

**Categories:** Confectionery

### **Kurt S. Adler**

[www.kurtadler.com](http://www.kurtadler.com)

**Categories:** Holiday décor

### **LEGO**

[www.lego.com](http://www.lego.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games

### **Leese Enterprises International**

[www.leese.ca](http://www.leese.ca)

**Categories:** Confectionery, bakery and snack foods.

### **Leomil Group**

[www.leomilgroup.com](http://www.leomilgroup.com)

**Categories:** Footwear

### **Mad Engine**

[www.madengine.com](http://www.madengine.com)

**Categories:** Men's, junior's, boy's, girl's, toddler and private label apparel

### **Majesty Brands**

[www.majestybrands.com](http://www.majestybrands.com)

**Categories:** Accessories

### **Masterpieces Puzzle Company**

[www.masterpiecesinc.com](http://www.masterpiecesinc.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games

### **Mattel**

[www.playmattel.com](http://www.playmattel.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games

### **McFarlane Toys**

[www.mcfarlane.com](http://www.mcfarlane.com)

**Categories:** Collectibles, novelties, toys and publishing

### **Merlin Entertainment**

[www.merlinentertainments.biz](http://www.merlinentertainments.biz)

**Categories:** Toys and games, novelties, leisure entertainment and live entertainment

### **Mezco**

[www.mezcotoyz.com](http://www.mezcotoyz.com)

**Categories:** Collectibles and novelties

### **Mimoco**

[www.mimoco.com](http://www.mimoco.com)

**Categories:** Computer electronics

### **Misirli**

[www.misirli.co.uk](http://www.misirli.co.uk)

**Categories:** Nightwear, underwear,

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socks and hosiery

**MiWorld Accessories**

[www.miworldaccessories.com](http://www.miworldaccessories.com)

**Categories:** Apparel, health and beauty, FMCG and gifting

**MJC International**

[www.gomjc.com](http://www.gomjc.com)

**Categories:** Apparel, sleepwear, underwear and loungewear

**Monogram International**

[www.monogramdirect.com](http://www.monogramdirect.com)

**Categories:** Accessories, gifting, collectibles, homewares, stationery, toys and games and novelties

**Museums and Galleries Collection**

[www.museumsgalleries.co.uk](http://www.museumsgalleries.co.uk)

**Categories:** Greetings cards and gift stationery

**NECA**

[www.necaonline.com](http://www.necaonline.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games and

novelties

**Neon Tuesday**

[www.neontuesday.com](http://www.neontuesday.com)

**Categories:** Apparel and accessories

**New Era Cap**

[www.neweracap.com](http://www.neweracap.com)

**Categories:** Accessories and hats

**The Northwest Company**

[www.thenorthwest.com](http://www.thenorthwest.com)

**Sakar International**

[www.sakar.com](http://www.sakar.com)

**Liza Abrams, senior vice president, global licensing**

**T: 732-248-1306**

**E: labrams@sakar.com**

**Categories:** Audio, STEAM, robotics/RC, DIY toys, mobile accessories, health/wellness/fitness and grooming, wheeled goods, outdoor and seasonal toys

Sakar International is a leading provider of consumer electronics and accessories. Founded in 1977, Sakar's core categories include audio and mobile accessories, youth electronics, digital imaging and optics, wheeled goods, musical instruments and health and wellness. Sakar also owns several brands including Vivitar and Altec Lansing, both of which are distributed globally.

Sakar has a broad portfolio of licenses on the youth entertainment side including major studios and global toy companies across their brands as well as newer licensors, lifestyle kids' brands and adult corporate and consumer electronics brands. Some of the company's hottest licensed lines include Barbie, Hatchimals and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," to name a few.

Sakar's strength is in its inventory power, global reach, deep distribution networks, brand portfolio and consumer electronics category assortment, as well as its award-winning packaging and display innovations. The company is also known for being nimble, for its speed to market and for providing value and great quality to its customers.

With headquarters in Edison, N.J., and offices around the world, Sakar is truly global. Its product managers and key creatives travel constantly, attending trade shows, shopping retailers around the world and following fashions to ensure that its products, technologies, packaging and displays are on-trend.

For the remainder of 2018, Sakar plans to expand into new product lines on the kids side and to streamline its focus on brands in order to give added attention to each product it launches.







**Categories:** Home textiles

**Nouveau Eyewear**  
[www.nouveaueyewear.com](http://www.nouveaueyewear.com)  
**Categories:** Accessories

**NTD Apparel**  
[www.ntdapparel.com](http://www.ntdapparel.com)  
**Categories:** Apparel and accessories

**Olaes Enterprises**  
[www.odmart.com](http://www.odmart.com)  
**Categories:** Apparel

**Open Road Brands**  
[www.openroadbrands.com](http://www.openroadbrands.com)  
**Categories:** Home décor

**Paladone**  
[paladone.com](http://paladone.com)  
**Categories:** Accessories, home décor, glassware

**Paul Dennicci**  
[www.dennicci.co.uk](http://www.dennicci.co.uk)  
**Categories:** Apparel

**Penguin Random House**  
[www.penguinrandomhouse.com](http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com)  
**Categories:** Publishing

**Phoenix International Publications**  
[www.pikidsmedia.com](http://www.pikidsmedia.com)

**Categories:** Publishing

**Ping Solutions**  
[www.pingsolutions.com](http://www.pingsolutions.com)  
**Categories:** Food and beverage

**Playmates Toys**  
[www.playmatestoys.com](http://www.playmatestoys.com)  
**Categories:** Toys

**Poetic Brands**  
**Categories:** Apparel

**Pyramid International**  
[www.pyramidinternational.com](http://www.pyramidinternational.com)  
**Categories:** Posters, calendars and stationery

**SportLife Brands**  
[www.SportLifebrands.com](http://www.SportLifebrands.com)  
**Michael Kassin, president**  
**E: mkassin@sportlifebrands.com**

**Categories:** Underwear, intimates, sleepwear, and activewear

SportLife Brands is a premier apparel manufacturer specializing in performance wear, activewear, underwear and intimates.

SportLife, which began as a manufacturer and later expanded its competencies to serve as an agent, has a well-established factory and a robust global sourcing base. The company prides itself on providing high quality products with an impressive speed-to-market delivery. More recently, SportLife has been obtaining its own licenses.

SportLife's partners include retail heavyweights Macy's, Bloomingdales and Nordstrom, and the company has had deals with Disney, Marvel and Elle, according to the company's website. The apparel brand offers licensors unique printing, performance wicking yarns and odor repellent yarns that contain silver and copper.

Founded in 1967 by president Michael Kassin's father, Abe Kassin, SportLife Brands has been operated by Michael and his brothers for a decade following their father's passing.

In 2017, Blackview Capital, managed by Elie Levy, founder of Planet Sox, purchased a large stake in SportLife Brands, propelling the company's expansion and growth.

For the remainder of 2018, SportLife is set to launch six new licenses in North America and launch various businesses in Japan, Europe and Russia.



## Taste Beauty

[www.taste-beauty.com](http://www.taste-beauty.com)

**Alex Fogelson,**  
co-founder and chief executive officer

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**E: alex@taste-beauty.com**

**Categories:** Cosmetics, personal care

Taste Beauty is a leading beauty brand for teens, tweens and beyond. The pop-culture-driven brand creates fun, flavorful and unique products that have captured the attention of major retailers like Sephora and Hot Topic.

Founded in 2015 by a trio of proven beauty industry executives—Tom Crowley, Alex Fogelson and Sabrina Vertucci—Taste Beauty achieved early success by creating buzzworthy, trend-driven custom products via 3D printing that were made of high-quality flavors, fragrances and formulations.

Taste Beauty offers licensors creative custom packaging that is unique to each brand and easily captures the consumer's attention. Its cosmetic products are gluten-free and never tested on animals. The company prides itself on delivering high-quality products, excellent customer service and rapid speed to market.

Some of Taste Beauty's most notable products that successfully leveraged viral tween trends include GlamSpin, a fidget spinner that contains three lip glosses, and a popular "Bye, Felicia" lip balm.

Taste Beauty plans to significantly expand its bath and body business for the remainder of the year and in 2019, as licensors gravitate toward the company's innovation in the personal care space.



## Randa Accessories

[www.randa.net](http://www.randa.net)

**Categories:** Men's apparel and accessories

## Ravensburger

[www.ravensburger.us](http://www.ravensburger.us)

**Categories:** Puzzles, games and arts and crafts

## Ripple Junction

[www.ripplejunction.com](http://www.ripplejunction.com)

**Categories:** Men's and junior's t-shirts, fleece, cut-and-sew apparel, headwear, socks, bags and small accessories

## RMS International

[www.rmsint.com](http://www.rmsint.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games

## Roy Lowe & Sons

[www.roylowe.co.uk](http://www.roylowe.co.uk)

**Categories:** Apparel

## Rubie's Costume Co.

[www.rubies.com](http://www.rubies.com)

**Categories:** Costumes and accessories

## Safilo

[www.safilogroup.com](http://www.safilogroup.com)

**Categories:** Eyewear

## Sambro

[www.sambro.co.uk](http://www.sambro.co.uk)

**Categories:** Youth

## SAVVi

[www.savvistuff.com](http://www.savvistuff.com)

**Categories:** Stationery and novelties



**Scholastic**

[www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)

**Categories:** Publishing

**SG Companies**

[www.thesgcompanies.com](http://www.thesgcompanies.com)

**Categories:** Apparel and footwear

**SHR Jewelry Group**

[www.shrjewelrygroup.com](http://www.shrjewelrygroup.com)

**Categories:** Accessories

**Sideshow Collectibles**

[www.sideshowtoy.com](http://www.sideshowtoy.com)

**Categories:** Collectibles and novelties

**Silver Buffalo**

[www.silver-buffalo.com](http://www.silver-buffalo.com)

**Categories:** Drinkware, hydration, tabletop dinnerware, barware, sports bottles, coffee accessories, melamine, throws, canvas wall art, wood wall art, metal and tin wall art, wall wobblers, key rings, lanyards, buttons, magnets, journals, notebooks and note pads

**Simba Dickie Group**

[www.simba-dickie-group.de](http://www.simba-dickie-group.de)

**Categories:** Toys and games

**Spray Ground**

[www.sprayground.com](http://www.sprayground.com)

**Categories:** Accessories

**Stor**

[www.storline.es](http://www.storline.es)

**Categories:** Homewares

**Sun City**

[www.sun-city.fr](http://www.sun-city.fr)

**Categories:** Children's apparel

**TCG Toys**

[www.tcgtoys.com](http://www.tcgtoys.com)

**Categories:** Toys and games and novelties

**TDP Textiles**

[www.tdptextiles.com](http://www.tdptextiles.com)

**Categories:** Textiles

**The Cookie Company**

[www.cookiecompany.nl](http://www.cookiecompany.nl)

**Categories:** Children's apparel

**Thermos**

[www.thermos.com](http://www.thermos.com)

**Categories:** Homewares

**Time 100**

[www.time100.cn](http://www.time100.cn)

**Categories:** Apparel and accessories

**Titan Books**

[www.titanbooks.com](http://www.titanbooks.com)

**Categories:** Publishing

**Tomy**

[www.tomy.com](http://www.tomy.com)

**Categories:** Toys

**The Topps Company**

[www.topps.com](http://www.topps.com)

**Categories:** Collectibles

**Trau & Loevner**

[www.trau-loevner.com](http://www.trau-loevner.com)

**Categories:** Apparel

**Trevco**

[www.trevcoinc.com](http://www.trevcoinc.com)

**Categories:** Apparel, homewares, wall art and accessories

**Ty**

[www.ty.com](http://www.ty.com)

**Categories:** Toys and collectibles

**Unique Industries**

[www.favors.com](http://www.favors.com)

**Categories:** Partyware

**Upper Deck**

[www.upperdeck.com](http://www.upperdeck.com)

**Categories:** Collectibles

**Vandor**

[www.vandorproducts.com](http://www.vandorproducts.com)

**Categories:** Homewares

**Vivid**

[www.vividtoysandgames.co.uk](http://www.vividtoysandgames.co.uk)

**Categories:** Toys and games

**VMC Accessories**

[www.vmcaccessories.co.uk](http://www.vmcaccessories.co.uk)

**Categories:** Accessories

**White Coffee Corp.**

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# Manufacturing à la Mode

Mad Engine reflects on its stellar year and discusses how it stays current in an ever-changing climate.

by AMBER NICOLE ALSTON

The last 18 months have been a whirlwind for Mad Engine—the global licensed apparel wholesaler has acquired three companies, established its first international post and produced a plethora of apparel associated with this year’s top-grossing movies and pop culture trends.

Boasting a full production setup, a young staff with its finger on the pulse of pop culture and a realistic approach to the contemporary retail landscape, Mad Engine is redefining what it means to be a modern licensee.

Mad Engine was founded in 1987 as a small California-based manufacturing business. Built around making t-shirts, the last 30 years have seen the company grow to now include multiple operations facilities in the U.S. and Mexico, while bringing nearly every step of the manufacturing process under one roof.

The company boasts an impressive list of partners including Nickelodeon, Marvel, Disney and many more. This year alone, the company produced best-selling goods featuring JoJo Siwa and the record-breaking *Avengers: Infinity War*. Mad Engine products are distributed domestically and internationally with a continued presence at retailers such as Target, Party City, Universal, Urban Outfitters, Saks Fifth Avenue and more.

Mad Engine made a bold move in 2014 when it acquired Xtreme Worldwide, a Toronto, Canada-based sourcing firm that supplied licensed apparel to department stores and mass merchants. Initially slated to continue as an independent entity, Mad Engine ultimately retooled the company into its international business division.

Since acquiring Xtreme Worldwide, Mad Engine has expanded its North American operations and improved its marketability to customers outside of the U.S. in part through maintaining Xtreme’s employees,

a group with an intimate knowledge of the Canadian marketplace. Chief executive officer Danish Gajani describes the new approach as “boots on the ground” and one that he plans to replicate as the company set its sights on new opportunities overseas.

“We see our competitors working in Canada without having an office or infrastructure there; we used to do that and we weren’t as successful as we have been working with people in the country,” observes Gajani. “You have to mastermind how to do business in every country, and there’s nothing like being part of the culture and understanding the needs of the consumer.”

Shortly after the Xtreme conversion to Mad Engine, the company acquired Lifted Research Group, a California-based urban streetwear brand that marked Mad Engine’s first foray into the proprietary branding and laid the foundation for the absorption of other established brands.

Next, Mad Engine acquired Neff Headwear, a youth-focused headwear, accessory and apparel brand that offered the company a devoted fan base rooted in action sports and nostalgia.

Finally, Mad Engine obtained Mighty Fine, a wholesaler



**DANISH GAJANI**  
chief executive officer,  
Mad Engine





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in the specialty and department store segment.

Each of these deals reshaped the business, transforming it into three distinct operations. While ultimately beneficial for Mad Engine, the strategy of buying multiple companies was risky at a time when increased competition and the need for quick turnaround forced the hands of many of the company's competitors.

"I think it's time for consolidation," says Gajiani. "We wanted to be consolidators and that's why we started buying certain companies. We didn't have much expertise in the brand space and that's why we wanted to buy Neff and LRG, to understand that space. It's done well for us as both the brands are beginning to see growth again, we're bringing direction to them."

Most recently, Neff collaborated with Kellogg's, while LRG outfitted rising musicians.

Focused on continued expansion and seemingly unshaken by the shuttering storefronts and massive closures including Toys 'R' Us, one of Mad Engine's clients, Gajiani believes that in addition to consolidation, changes at retail are long overdue.

"I think people still want to go out, to touch things, try things on, especially apparel and even toys," says Gajiani. "Retailers need to change to make things more experiential. Toys 'R' Us had a big offering, but there was no experience when you walked in—the store became obsolete for those reasons. It doesn't matter if you're big or small, if you aren't willing to pivot and look at a new way of doing business, you will become obsolete."

To sustain its reputation as a trend-setting, forward-thinking operation, Mad Engine employs a young staff who live for pop culture. Employees come from diverse backgrounds as wide-ranging as the arts and law, which impacts the business from individual products to entire backend operations.

"Everything is about culture, and we have a young team including myself and my partners," says Gajiani. "We are all in our mid-thirties, we grew up on pop-culture; living and breathing it is what keeps us on track and upon the next thing. I think pop culture is the most important thing in people's lives today."

Mad Engine's savvy is best displayed through its social media. The company has more than 4,700 followers across all platforms. Using colloquialisms, trending hashtags, product shots and influencers of varying levels, the team has created a unique voice that is palatable to suppliers, potential partners and fashion aficionados alike.

"We're on all of the major platforms—it's all handled internally, each [division] has its

own operation and we use the channels to stay relevant," says Gajiani. "It works to promote more products and to figure out what the cool thing is that we need."

But, Mad Engine doesn't operate from behind computer screens. Company staff attend events like Coachella and Comic-Con and are avid consumers of television, film and music. As soon as they notice a trend or key into a property with potential, its brought back to the office for further research.

Beyond its cool factor, Mad Engine attributes its success to its vertical capabilities. The company owns nearly every part of the manufacturing process including knitting, dyeing, cutting, sewing and printing. With those capabilities, it produces a range of apparel across boys, men's, juniors and adult categories including t-shirts, novelty loungewear, puffers and underwear. Perhaps most impressively, Mad Engine can turn around a full set of inventories in about three weeks, an ability that gives the company a competitive edge.

"We are taking a product from the beginning to the end because we are fully vertical," says Gajiani. "We have our own knitting and dyeing facilities and own the yarn all the way up. We can beat a lot of our competitors with turnaround because we are coming from a manufacturing background and doing everything. We can replenish more quickly than our competition."

Mad Engine has its sights set on further international expansion and consolidation, with full ownership of its manufacturing process as its goal. With an exciting year behind it and a future paved with technological innovations, Mad Engine is revving up for its future. ©







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# TRENDING TOPICS



Just Funky has a knack for forecasting trends, and also showcasing both new and evergreen brands in a new light at any cost.

by **PATRICIA DELUCA**

To say that the team at Just Funky has an eye for detail is an understatement. A few years ago, the team was working on a “Sons of Anarchy” fleece blanket, which took six months of development. Chief executive officer Raj Arora noticed something in the photo rendering of the fleece blanket: a slight shadow on Jax Teller’s hand didn’t come out properly.

“I wouldn’t let it go. The licensor and customer said, ‘We’re OK with it, just ship it.’ But we had to perfect it,” says Raj Arora.

Let it be known that when you work with Just Funky, quality control is intense and may not meet tight shipping deadlines, but its product will stand out in the market.

“When we work with a licensor, we look for the value that we as a partner can add on to their property,” says Shivani Arora, president, Just Funky. “We want to make sure we’re representing our licensing partners with the best in

designing and innovation and that we share the same vision.”

Just Funky launched in 2012, and is a family-orientated company based in Wooster, Ohio. In its earlier days, the Aroras and their small staff (which is now up to 84 employees) did their due diligence for ways to stand out in the market.

“Our program is a well-researched portfolio of trending and classic licenses,” adds Shivani Arora. “We started with an idea by filling a void—selling cool products that were high-quality but affordable.”

“I didn’t want to be just another guy selling mugs and sell them cheaper to have a business relationship,” says Raj Arora. “We wanted to come up with something where we provide a value not just to the retailer but to the consumer.”

It was a meeting with the head of Spencer’s that kickstarted Just Funky’s new licensing venture.

“Steven Silverstein said something which really struck me: ‘Raj, we don’t sell things anyone needs. We sell things



**RAJ ARORA**  
chief executive officer,  
Just Funky

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people got to have. That's what you should be doing," recalls Raj Arora. "I came back from the meeting like an excited kid, because this is what I wanted to do."

Just Funky's credo for working with licensors is simple. "We provide best product and best quality; no logo-slapping at all," says Raj Arora.

"We're extremely hands-on in every aspect," continues Shivani Arora. "Starting with the vision of the licensor, to the needs of our buyers and their market and demographic."

"If you come up with an awesome product, you're going to make a profit," says Raj Arora. "Profit is a byproduct. And that's what I've always believed in, and culturally that's what we want for our company. Our No. 1 objective is to deliver a product that would make a consumer say, 'Wow!'"

What is the wow factor?

"When a customer sees [a Just Funky product] on the shelf at GameStop or Spencer's, and if they only have \$10 in their pocket and the mug was \$9.99, and if the \$10 meant buying an extra gallon of gas, they'll stretch on gas for another mile and buy the mug," says Raj Arora.

And, judging by its vast catalog of licensors, the company's objective has helped business. Since launching in 2012, the company now has more than 100 licenses for kitchenware like 3D beverage mugs, home décor, automotive, pins and keychains for properties like TV's "Rick & Morty," "Riverdale" and "The Golden Girls;" music properties Pink Floyd, Guns N' Roses and Live Nation; and video games such as "Cuphead," "Fallout" and "Halo" that are sold at retailers like GameStop, Hot Topic and Target.

While the products may be considered novelty to some, their price points make sure both licensors and retailers are getting the most out of its licensed products.

"We were never the cheapest, but we started getting more of the market share, which gave us more confidence," says Raj Arora. "Just Funky challenged the retailers to go ahead and sell something more expensive. The customers will pay for it because they're lacking that product in the market."

To make sure Just Funky is getting the right products

out to consumers, staffers meet with Raj Arora regularly to pitch properties like TV shows, video games and bands.

"When we believe in something, we will go to the ends of the earth to make it work," says Kristin Raap, licensing coordinator, Just Funky.

Sometimes Just Funky's faith in innovative products might seem like a gamble to licensors and retailers, but end up with surprising results. Before the "Sons of Anarchy" fleece blanket launch, another customer came to Just Funky to produce a licensed fleece blanket. The catch was, it had to be at a lower price point to compete with the other fleece blankets out in the market. Armed with two years of on-site research with Chinese manufacturers, Arora had a plan.

"Instead of going lower, let's make a blanket no one has made before, with digital photo-realistic print, 10 colors instead of three, and the price point will be double," Raap recalls.

The average retail blankets were selling at \$9.99; Just Funky's new blanket would retail at \$19.99.

"The customer was concerned, but bought into it because Raj said it was a good idea," says Raap.

Just Funky used their own money to make sure the order minimum of 3,000 blankets could be made. The customer sold out the blankets within a weekend.

Another roll of the dice was for "Breaking Bad" beaker housewares, which came out during season 3 of the AMC TV series. The staff at Just Funky were fans of the show, and wanted to create product that fans would use.

"While we were developing it, the factory thought we were going to mix chemicals in the beakers but needed handles on them," says Raj Arora. "They were trying to figure out why we were buying 40,000 beakers at a time."

The line became one of the best-sellers at Think Geek.

Just Funky's practices may be unorthodox, but it's the fans' feedback about the product that matters most to the company.

"Once we got it out there, the fans said, 'We don't care how much it costs. That's what I want,'" says Raap. ©



**SHIVANI ARORA**  
president, Just Funky

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