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## Features

- [Home](#)
- [Current Issue](#)
  - [Table of Contents](#)
  - [Breaking News](#)
  - [Editor's Page](#)
  - [Meetings/Events](#)
  - [Ad Index](#)
  - [Formulary](#)
  - [Grayson Report](#)
  - [New Products](#)
  - [New Package](#)
  - [Personnel Round Up](#)
  - [Article Archive](#)
  - [Formulary Archives](#)
  - [Webguide](#)
  - [Company Websites](#)
  - [Professional Resources](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Annual Features](#)
  - [Buyers Guide](#)
  - [Company Profiles](#)
  - [Literature Showcase](#)
  - [Corporate Profiles](#)
  - [Happi Latin America](#)
  - [Stock Market Summary](#)
  - [Contract Manufacturing / Private Label Directory](#)
- [About Us](#)
  - [Guidelines](#)
- [Advertise With Us](#)
  - [Media Kit](#)
  - [Personal Care Cybrary®](#)

### [Return to Table of Contents](#)



The shift in age demographics has resulted in a significant growth in 10- to 14-year olds in the U.S. compared to most other developed countries, where young people are declining numbers. According to Claire Briney, analyst for Euromonitor, that helps explain why the teenage market really has its roots in the U.S.

In the all-important U.S. market and elsewhere, the teenage population demands to be catered to and have an unprecedented amount of disposable income," she maintains. "Consumption by teenagers in the U.S. cosmetics and toiletries market is estimated to be 20% of total value sales, thus making teenagers a very important consumer market.

And it is not just in the U.S. that marketers are focusing on these younger consumers occurring in those countries where the biggest demographic growth has been among young consumers. In several European countries, the numbers of 10- to 14-year old consumers are starting to rise, including Germany (+1.1%), Italy (+0.2%) and the UK (+2.7%). But in the UK, the trend is the reverse with 10- to 14-year olds declining by almost 10% between 1998 and 2000.

The "kidult" phenomenon starts young, with girls as young as five or six wanting to be like the adults with all manner of lip glosses and balms, nail color and hair products. According to Mintel, in its report entitled "Teenage Cosmetics & Toiletries UK," young consumers' interest in cosmetics is fuelled by reading teen magazines, swapping ideas and recommendations with their peer group and watching what their mothers use.

"Teenage girls are concerned with acne and having a clear complexion, keeping their skin in good condition, feeling fresh and being attractive to the opposite sex. These grooming habits obtained early, stay with them as they grow older and become more sophisticated in their knowledge and usage of products," reported Mintel. Ms. Briney concurred. "Teenage consumers are at a critical point in developing brand preferences that may endure to affect the market for years to come," she said.

The other significant group of young consumers are 8- to 12-year old girls who typically have the same tastes and buying habits as teen consumers and buy into products aimed at this older demographic. New products targeted at tweens are being launched, representing another potential growth area.

"In fact, the mass-market Naturistics brand recently updated its marketing campaign to reach the 22 million female tween to teen shoppers, a group estimated to be growing annually," said Ms. Briney.

Targeting these young consumers means tapping into today's media culture through the Internet and music scenes and being aware that they quickly adapt to emerging styles promoted in the mass media. "This aspect of the teen market poses a peculiar challenge for marketers," noted Ms. Briney. "However, certain themes remain constant in what teens look for from their favorite brands—fun, convenience and basic quality."

The tastes of these young consumers can be extremely fickle and more than one cosmetics company has had its fingers burned. Estée Lauder, for example, purchased the mass cosmetics Jane brand only to sell it in 2003. And LVMH Moët Hennessy similarly acquired and then disposed of the youth-oriented Hard Candy and Urban Decay cosmetic lines.

According to Mintel's global new products database (GNPD), a total of 486 new products aimed at tweens and teens were picked up in Europe and North America in 2004. The largest increase in new lines was seen in Europe, where 223 tween- or teen-oriented products were registered, up from 131 in 2003. Cosmetic products make up by far the greatest number of new introductions, accounting for 43% of the total for both regions. Makeup palettes are popular with the younger set, such as Boots 17 Electric Vibe Colour compact, a limited edition kit containing "everything a girl needs for a big night out," including three eye shine creams, two lip and cheek colors and a glitter lip gloss. U.S. brand Mary-Kate & Ashley has recently launched a new range of makeup aimed at young teenagers called Glam collection, which includes a body color kit of Go Shimmer shimmering lotion, Shimmer Plus All Over Color pencil, Sequin Dust Sparkling powder in a Divine variant and Aroma Sparkle body spray available in a Warm Vanilla scent.



Novelty plays a key role in attracting teens and tweens, especially if linked to other consumer products. Bonne Bell's Smackers Gloss 'n Greeting Card is a neat two-in-one idea of a lip gloss attached to a greeting card, while Bonne Bell's Lip glosses and Lotta Luv Hershey's Kisses (a chocolate scented lip gloss) tap into girls' favorite candy flavors in a lip product formulation.

Children's and teenage-targeted fragrances are far more popular in Europe than in the U.S., where the tradition for mothers to use fragrance on their babies and young children. In 2004, 35 new fragrance launches in Europe aimed at this group, compared to just five in the U.S. New brands included Barbie My Scene from Compagnie Européenne des Parfums (CEP) and Coty's Chupa Chups I Love Me eau de parfum range of three variants called Nigil Vinyl and Soul Shine, launched in the Austrian market. Parfums Vanderbilt extended its Pure Fashion Fragrance eau de toilette range with new color-coded variants.

Mintel reported that future growth in cosmetics and toiletries for tweens and teenagers will depend upon manufacturers and retailers creating new opportunities for new and existing brand consumers. Young consumers may appear to be sophisticated in their use of products, but Mintel does not see the link between categories, such as personal freshness and taking a daily shower. Education should therefore be a key plank in manufacturers' strategies in selling to this target market.

