

The market for girl toys is expanding at the moment. In the early 1970s, as a result of the feminist movement, the toy market was mostly gender neutral. There was not a huge divide between "boy" and "girl" toys. Towards the end of the decade, however, marketers realized that if they gender targeted toys, they could actually sell twice the amount of toys. Families would buy the same ball twice because their son wanted one blue ball and their daughter wanted her own pink ball. Unfortunately, as a result of this marketing decision we saw a stratification of toys. "Boy" toys focused on developing skills like spatial awareness and interest in science and engineering (Legos, k'nex, remote control toys). "Girl" toys encouraged empathy, caregiving, and appearances (kitchens, baby dolls, beauty products). Many experts argue that this difference results in the large underrepresentation of females in fields like engineering, mathematics, and science, or what are known as the traditional STEM fields. Toy companies' response to this criticism was to take traditionally "boy" toys and color them pink and purple. These colored toys did not appeal to girls.

Recently, new toys are hitting the market, however, to address this problem. Toys like Goldie Blox and Roominate encourage girls to learn building skills like Legos does with boy. They differ from previous toys in that they incorporate the traditional "girly" methods of play, storytelling and social interaction, with a traditionally "girly" toy, dolls. With this change, I suspect that we will see changes in the market of girl toys. But how big of changes? What will these changes be? I examine these questions in my project.

The demand for new STEM toys is clear, but there are two other key factors driving the market for girl toys. One is the willingness of toy companies to change their approaches to design. The new toys hitting shelves are outliers, created by small companies run by female engineers. For the new trend to really take off, big companies like Mattel and Hasbro must join the movement and change their designs to invited girls into these fields. The second driving force is the marketing approach. If toy companies begin to drop their gender-driven advertisements, then girls will be more likely to buy toys already on the market. Boys will also likely buy more "girl" toys and the future will look more mixed.

There are four scenarios based on these forces: Girly Gals, Free Play, Girl Power, and Cooties No More. In Girly Gals, the new designs fail and advertisers continues to target based on gender. We see the continuation of segmented toys, with boys having easier access to STEM toys. Girl toys will focus purely on fashion, art, and care taking. Free Play is a future in which the new designs fail, but advertising changes. Based on the success of movements in the UK and Scandinavian countries, which have already banned or agreed to drop gender-based marketing from toy advertisements, the US does the same. Toy 'R' Us in the UK has already agreed to phase out its gender marketing in stores, so it would be easy for the US portion to follow suit. We do not see many more toys like Goldie Blox. Girls now feel comfortable shopping for Legos because they are no longer in "boy" aisles. Studies show that girls actually prefer gender-neutral toys to "girl" toys when it comes to STEM fields, so in Free Play, girls begin to freely play with STEM toys. In Girl Power, we see new designs take off, but marketing refuse to change. Girl toys will begin to include features to help encourage interest in STEM fields. For

examples, more of their toys will move and be controlled by remotes, which fosters spatial awareness. These motorized toys may even run on water, a design currently being tested and which would allow children to have remote control cars that are powered by H₂O. They will be able to design their own toys, allowing girls to become more comfortable with computer programs. Dolls will include codes that allow girls to play as their doll online and with other girls and their dolls. Electronics will invade more items like books to create a digital experience with almost everything. However, since companies know they can make more money by having targeted advertisements, US companies refuse to switch to gender-neutral marketing. Since "girl" and "boy" toys still exist, dolls will continue to be huge. We will see, however, changes in the occupation of the dolls. For example, both Barbie and Legos will feature females as doctors and engineers. We will also see toys that reflect social changes in other aspects. In my project, for example, I created a Lesbian Barbie, which in 12 years is a likely toy. This scenario is the most likely because the US still expresses serious concern over boys playing with "girl" toys. Girls are highly encouraged to play with "boy" toys like Legos, but when boys begin to play with dolls and kitchen items, parents still ask if there is something wrong with their son. The US is just not ready for gender-neutral marketing. In the last scenario, both design and marketing changes. Engineering toys will include social and storytelling aspects, and be marketed to both boys and girls.

As the most likely scenario, my example toys are from the Girl Power scenario.

For more on this topic, take a look at articles and other reading on this topic, listed below.

Articles:

http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/29/shopping-for-a-girl-consider-science-and-engineering-toys/?ref=technology&_r=0

<http://danville.patch.com/groups/business-news/p/seven-toys-better-and-more-stimulating-than-goldieblox>

<http://www.citytowninfo.com/career-and-education-news/articles/toy-company-nurture-girls-interest-in-stem-13112701>

<http://www.mommyshorts.com/2012/02/princess-toys-that-enhance-math-and-science-skills-1.html>

<http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/20/10-awesome-geek-gifts-for-girls/>

<http://management.fortune.cnn.com/2013/10/30/toys-girls-boys/>

<http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2013/10/21/latest-toys-sales-show-girls-just-want-to-have-fun/>

<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/09/09/2588081/toys-gender-stereotypes/>

<http://tomaaurora.blogspot.com/2013/11/inapoi-in-copilarie-ce-as-fi-schibat.html>

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/currency/2013/12/can-toys-help-create-future-engineers.html>

<http://techland.time.com/2011/08/30/the-future-of-toys-is-apples-ipad/>

<http://www.openideo.com/open/creative-confidence/inspiration/toys-3.0-the-next-generation-at-play-the-future-of-toys>

<http://toyportfolio.com/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joan-marans-dim/barbie_b_1654407.html

Toys - Images

<http://www.roominatetoy.com/>

<http://www.legoeducation.us/eng/categories/products/elementary/storystarter>

http://www.amazon.com/SpinMaster-20060245-Flutterbye-Flying-Fairy/dp/B00DK25M6C/ref=sr_1_83?s=toys-and-games&ie=UTF8&qid=1387122898&sr=1-83

<http://www.disneybaby.com/products/minnie-mouse-19-plush-toy-red-dress/>

<http://www.ebay.com/itm/3-5-Channel-Remote-Control-3-5CH-RC-Helicopter-with-GYRO-Infrared-Pink-Mini-Heli-/320921835003>

<http://www.talash.com/disney-tangled-rapunzel-doll-india-product.html>

http://toyology.typepad.com/play_a_while/2007/11/sakura-robot-on.html

http://d1435t697bgi2o.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/mmw_popup_080910.gif

Future Toys

<http://www.fastcodesign.com/1673066/disney-s-living-eyeballs-harken-the-future-of-toys#4>

http://news.cnet.com/8301-13772_3-10317117-52.html

<http://gigaom.com/2012/06/06/makie-future-doll-toy-funding/>

And of course Toys 'R' US (<http://www.toysrus.com/>)