**BTS NDRC – LVA OBLIGATOIRE 2024**

**Toy Fair sellers chase 'kidults' with cuddly toy offering**

**Fail to buy the latest cuddly toy or collectable action figure and there will be tears and tantrums - and that's just the grown-ups.**

Sales to so-called "kidults" rose by 6% last year, bucking the 5% downturn in toy sales as a whole in the UK.

Adopting a "can't beat them, join them" approach means this group is buying enough games and toys to account for more than a quarter of the market.

Analysts suggest that is now worth more than £1bn a year.

"The main reasons adults said they were buying for themselves was because toys were fun and also good for their mental health," said Melissa Symonds, executive director at toy data tracking company Circana.

Toy manufacturers and retailers had a year to forget last year, with the number of sales down by 7% and a 5% drop in the value of toy trading.

A wet summer particularly hit outdoor toys and games sales, while cost of living pressures put a lid on small, impulse buys.

However, the UK market remains one of the biggest in Europe, worth £3.5bn last year.

The annual Toy Fair, a three-day trade show at London's Olympia, has just ended. Observers would have noted that many of the big companies are increasingly targeting a range of age groups, not just primary and pre-schoolers.

Kidults are defined as aged 12 and over, but Ms Symonds said it was the over 18s driving the increase in sales to this group. […]

The enthusiasm of older players, via specialist events, shops and cafes accounts for part of the rise in popularity of kidult games. Lockdown days during the pandemic also saw families stuck at home dust off the games cupboard.

Adam Turner, founder of game distribution business Aleto Games, is another exhibitor who turned his hobby into a business.

"There were games that I played and enjoyed that were hard to get hold of in this country," he said, explaining his motivation for the business.

However, it is not just board games that are driving the rise of sales to kidults. Action figures, collectables, and building sets such as Lego are all appealing to older consumers.

Even cuddly toys - the classic gift to toddlers - are being sold to adults, helped by social media exposure and their perception of helping people to relax.

"There's no shame in it," said Kerri Atherton, head of public affairs at the British Toy and Hobby Association. "It is ok to buy one for yourself."

Simple economics were also at play here, she said. A falling birth rate means there are fewer children for whom to buy toys.

Kevin Peachey, bbcnews.com January 2024