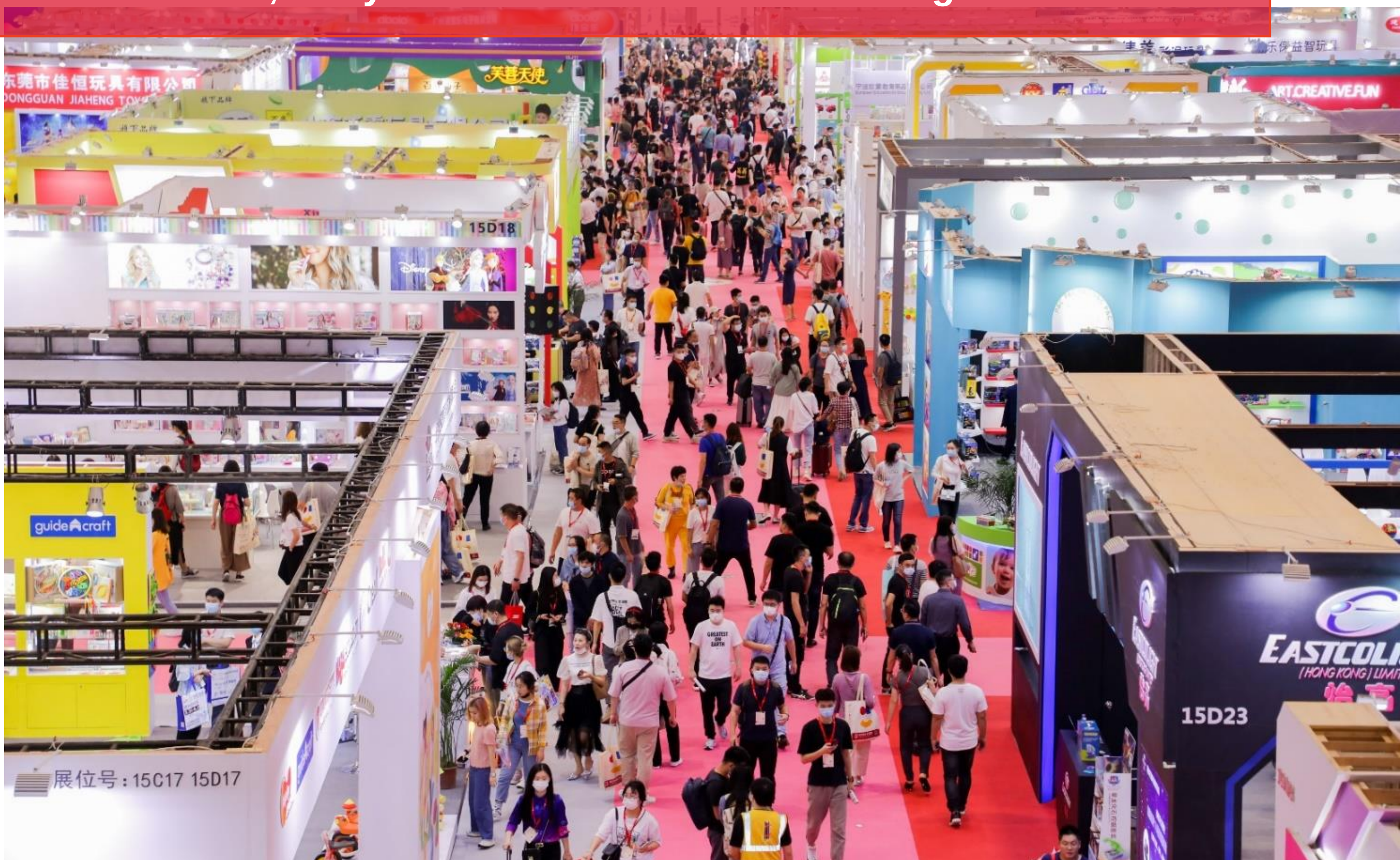
toy & edu CHINA | baby & stroller CHINA | licensing CHINA

Pandemic fuels play: opportunities revealed at Toy & Edu China, Baby & Stroller China and Licensing China



The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly caused a thorough shakeup of the global economy and forced businesses of all types to quickly adapt to the new normal. In China meanwhile, the toy, baby product and licensing industries have already seen a rapid recovery. Making hay out of this market rebound, **1,413 exhibitors from 13 countries and regions** participated in the 2021 editions of Toy & Edu China, Baby & Stroller China and Licensing China, whilst **82,481 buyers** attended. Messe Frankfurt spoke to a number of fairgoers, revealing the latest trends and opportunities in the Chinese toy, baby product and licensing sectors.

Blind boxes and China chic: what Chinese millennials are eyeing up now

Against the backdrop of an increasingly consumer-driven economy, ‘blind boxes’ and ‘China chic’ are some of the latest retail buzzwords gripping millennials, the key consumer target group in China. These millennial-driven demands inspired brands and manufacturers to showcase their innovative products and bring new ideas to this year’s fairs.

> “The concept of blind box has become a sensation in the Chinese market,” Mr Shane Ouyang, Sales Manager of Eastern Progress Company Ltd from Hong Kong shared. “So this year we featured Baby Shark plush toys in mystery packaging and capsules. These have received a lot of enquiries from visitors, particularly from claw crane arcades.”

Meanwhile, across many consumer goods categories in China – the fashion industry to begin with and now extending to children-dependent sectors – more brands are incorporating local cultural and nostalgic elements to entice shoppers with emotional connections. At the same time, consumers are increasingly gravitating towards China’s home-grown brands.

Mr Yuming Zhang, Marketing Manager of the Guangdong Sembo Culture Industry Co. Ltd noted the popularity of their collections that highlight traditional heritage and the country’s significant breakthroughs: “We are showcasing our most recent licensed construction blocks of the Forbidden City, the Chinese space rockets and more. Toy & Edu China is perfect for new product launches since all our potential and existing clients are gathered here. It is also a delight to see the quality and aesthetics have improved a lot for local brands.”

Meanwhile, to continue to evolve and pivot to meet consumers' diversified needs, the company has moved their business online and utilised livestreaming, an increasingly important marketing tool, to engage with younger consumers and further boost product sales.

The licensing industry has likewise seen the surge of ‘China chic’ with the first-time exhibitor, Shenzhen Golden Idea Cultural and Creative Co. Ltd outlining the potential for fellow Chinese licensing players. Ms Yunyi Shao, Agent, said: “Though licensing is an emerging industry in China, I’m very optimistic about its future. The rising appetite for home-grown labels in the market, together with the government’s on-going efforts on protection of intellectual property rights, means it’s prime time for licensors who create their own IP to exploit the growth prospects.”

Play smart

The other prevailing trend in the Chinese market as witnessed at the fairs is educational toys and products, and there is no indication that this is going away any time soon. As NPD Group's data analysis suggests, the largest categories of toy e-commerce sales in China for the first month of 2021 were infant, toddler and preschool toys, many of which consist of educational elements. It is evident that Chinese parents often place high importance on educational value when it comes to choosing suitable toys for their children. When the pandemic dragged on and parents realised they needed to keep their children entertained, toy sales spiked, particularly for smart toys, STEM / STEAM tools and more.

> Commenting on the future development of educational toys, Mr Ivan Ting, Chairman of Hong Kong Toys Council said: "Education is very important in China and across the world so I think toys that help children learn such as science-based toys and building sets will become more popular in the future."

> Visitors were also pleased to see a wide range of educational toys featured at Toy & Edu China. Mr Xin Wang, General Manager of Star Home Shopping highlighted: "I am here to source educational toys and I'm particularly impressed with the offerings from Hape and Qisehua. Amid the pandemic, the demand for educational toys has increased rapidly as children have to attend online classes, and brands are focussing on toys that aid their learning process."

Well-recognised in the world of play

What makes Toy & Edu China, Baby & Stroller China and Licensing China so popular amongst industry players? As the leading trade platforms for the respective sectors in the country, the events allow companies to tap into the thriving domestic demand, especially in the Greater Bay Area, a new government initiative to boost economic growth in the south of the country.

What's more, the three concurrent events create synergy results as a comprehensive range of toys, educational products, baby products as well as licensing and licensed products are brought together under one roof, allowing industry players to enjoy emerging cross-sector business opportunities and added exposure. Read the first-hand experiences of your peers below.

> Hape International (Ningbo) Ltd, the Chinese subsidiary for the eponymous German wooden toy brand joined Toy & Edu China for the first time. Mr Nicky Wang, Copywriter of the company expressed: "The fair is the leading trade event for the sector in China and it plays an important role globally as well. This is why we wanted to exhibit here in the first place. Overall we are very satisfied with the results as we were able to meet with major distributors and clients in South China."

> As the sole distributor of May Cheong Group in China, Dongguan Tai Tat Premier Commerce Ltd has been a long-term exhibitor of Toy & Edu China, according to their Sales Director, Mr Xingzhuan Ye. "We greatly value the event as it presents us valuable opportunities to showcase our brands. The fair is useful in helping us locate new customers and capture the market potential of the Greater Bay Area. There is still much potential to offer as the country is focusing on the stimulation of internal circulation and demand," he commented at the fair.

"The concurrent events help gather customers across different trade sectors. This is very important to us especially when we want to expand our business in South China. We will return to the fair in the future!" Mr Heming Huang, Sales Director of Shenzhen Windspeed Technology Co. Ltd said, explaining why they decided to debut at Baby & Stroller China.

Further elaborating on the synergies of the events, Mr Conan Chen, General Manager of Guangdong Winsing Company Limited noted: "With licensing taking up more market share in the toy sector, brands can take advantage of this to differentiate their products from others. So we have been licensing out our IP, Gogobus, to a number of toy manufacturers and over 10 of them are exhibitors at the concurrent Toy & Edu China fair. Their licensed toys have received great feedback from visitors, which in turn provides extra exposure for our brand."

Toy & Edu China, Baby & Stroller China and Licensing China will return to the Shenzhen World Exhibition & Convention Center from 30 March – 1 April 2022. The fairs are organised by Guangdong Toy Association, Guangzhou Li Tong Messe Frankfurt Co Ltd and Messe Frankfurt (HK) Ltd.

messe frankfurt