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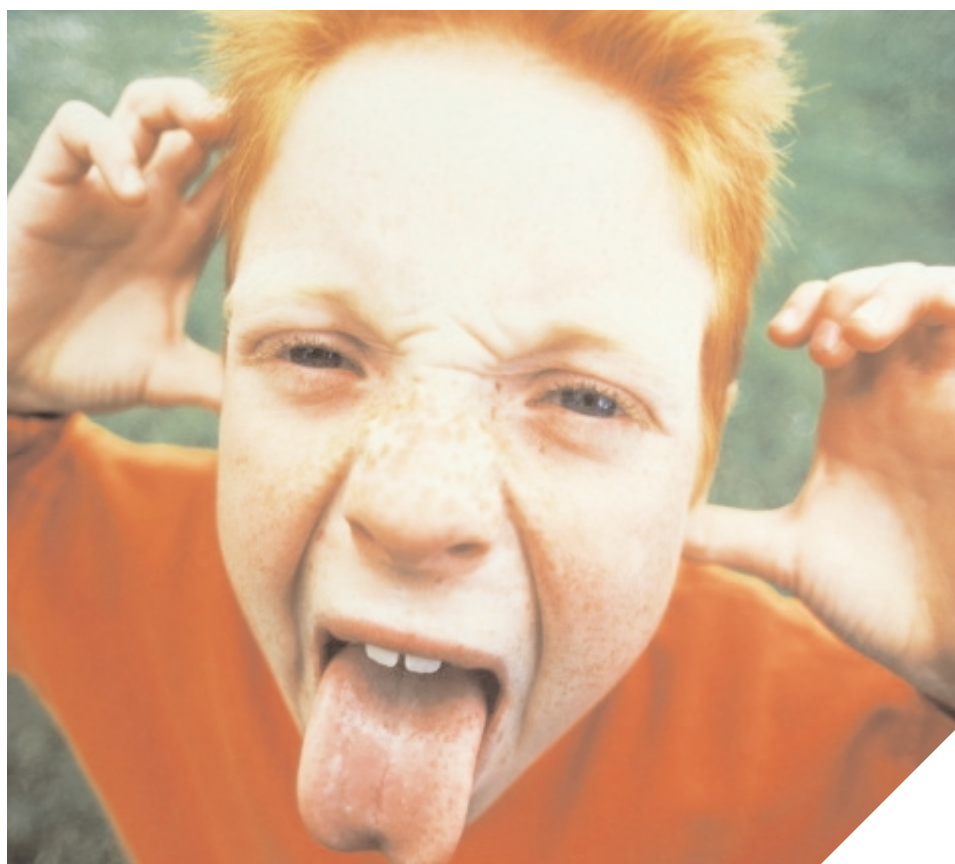
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"I no longer associate Subway with, well, subs, because the first image that comes to mind is Jared Fogle and those oversized pants."

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Tween Beat **Reaching — and winning over — the lucrative 8- to 12-year-old market**

Go to the **Web site** of the Schwan Food Co. (www.theschwanfood.com) and you'll find homey recipes and eye-catching photos of gourmet delicacies. When you click on the link for one Schwan product, Tony's Pizza, it's as if you're entering an alternate universe. A swirling pizza counts off the seconds until you're transported to a Nintendo-powered mall that promises "cool games, cool prizes and hot pizza."

For a second, you're unsure if the site is peddling food or video games. In truth, it's doing a little of both — and playing right into the hands of the tween demographic (kids 8–12, mostly white). Schwan repositioned Tony's Pizza a few years back to target this lucrative market segment after learning that 53 percent of tweens declared frozen pizza their favorite food. More important, Schwan found that tweens influence 45 percent of frozen food purchases.

Last year, Tony's unveiled a \$10 million advertising campaign aimed at tweens. One ad, which depicted a girl on a hang glider swooping into a tree house to snatch a slice of pizza from a group of stunned boys, included the slogan, "Get what you really want."

"Kids today are very ad savvy," says Tere Camel, Tony's brand manager. "If you are too heavy-handed in your message, they'll tune you out."

Tween Beat

A Complicated Target

The size of the tween market is an estimated 20.9 million, and it accounts for at least a quarter trillion dollars in spending, according to the book *The Great Tween Buying Machine*. A recent article on mediapost.com noted that tween boys alone spend \$18 billion annually and influence an additional \$145 billion in bigger-ticket purchases.

“Twins have the greatest influence on families,” says Anne Sutherland, a consultant and a coauthor of *kidfluence*. “They have more reasoning ability and get increasingly articulate on the benefits-value equation [than younger children] and how to sell it to mom and dad.” And they are typically more involved in the family than teenage offspring.

But because tweens are undergoing fundamental physical and social changes, they are complicated targets for marketers. David Siegel, a marketing consultant and author of *The Great Tween Buying Machine*, could tick off dozens of conflicting hot buttons that appeal to tweens, but the four key motivators are power, freedom, fun and belonging.

Power. Tweens want to establish that they are growing up, so they relish that which gives them control, such as being able to mix ingredients or to change the color of a food. General Mills played off this with a commercial in which animated tweens took over a factory that made Fruit Roll-Ups. Siegel says tweens respond to any marketing in which they outwit adults.

Freedom. Because they are being weaned from their parents, tweens are connected to cell phones and the Internet, yet they still want the protective umbrella of their families.

Fun. Tweens expect advertising and marketing to be fun. Marketing, to them, is entertainment. A recent print ad for Trolli Gummi candies featured a simple word puzzle that gave every successful entrant a free bag of candy. Half a million kids took part.

Belonging. Tweens move from close-knit family and friends to complete immersion in elementary school, making them extremely conscious of social acceptance. “If you ask a group of tweens what’s cool,” says Siegel, “they won’t say anything, because they’re afraid of getting it wrong.”

Some companies have done a superb job of appealing to tweens by pushing several hot buttons at once. Take Go-GURT, yogurt in a tube. It’s inherently fun, with flavors like “Berry Blue Blast” and “Rad Raspberry.” And it appeals to the tweens’ on-the-go lifestyle without their moms having to belabor the health aspects of the food.

An Appetite for Media

Last fall, a survey by Primedia/Roper National Youth Opinion found that today’s tweens are pragmatic, self-reliant, ambitious and discriminating when it comes to media messages. Kids Foot Locker saw its sales of athletic shoes jump 34 percent when it switched from a mom-

centric message of “fitting right” to the tween-focused message of “fitting in.” A successful ad for the Super Soaker water gun featured a tween who had been pushed around by bullies coming back as an Arnold Schwarzenegger action hero. Tweens got the message and humor, while kids under age 7 missed the subtleties.

“Inexperienced marketers have a tendency to dumb down tween marketing,” says Kirsten Osolind, founder of re:invention inc., a Chicago consulting firm. Tweens don’t want to be viewed as babies. As Siegel puts it, “Disney is death to tweens.” Disney characters may be cool for adults and kids under 5, but studies show that tweens prefer sharper images, such as Warner Bros. characters like Bugs Bunny, who have attitude and are drawn with more jagged lines than the rotund Disney figures.

However, tween marketing can go in the opposite direction, with messages that are too sophisticated and visuals that are too fast. “A tween’s brain is just developing, so the message can’t be too abstract,” Siegel says. Teenagers, however, can process complicated print ads with jarring visual elements and circled headlines to shift their attention.



Tweens respond to any marketing in which they outwit adults.

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Tweens need a more linear storytelling, taking them through the A-B-C steps of a story and ending with a punch line.

Tweens are also fast followers of trends. A few years ago, a client of Siegel’s launched Power Ranger Cheese, playing off the popular Power Rangers TV show. The concept tested so well with moms that Siegel told his client not to waste money on advertising. The product bombed. Follow-up research indicated that because the kids hadn’t seen the cheese advertised on TV, they never asked their moms for it. To tweens, it’s not a trend unless they see it on television.

Learning something new is a primary interest of tweens, Siegel points out. That’s why successful products aimed at this segment introduce new wrinkles every few months, such as a new package or new flavor. “A tween in the cereal aisle is looking at the products to see what’s new,” he says. “And that is the best kind of consumer to market to. It’s easy to reach them — the tricky part is keeping them.” •

A former editor of *Advertising Age* and *Business Marketing* magazines, Joe Mullich has contributed to more than 20 national magazines and has won 25 journalism awards.