

The Barbie® Case

Introduction

When on October 11, 2005, Neil B. Friedman was promoted from his position as head of the successful Fisher-Price® division to become the President of the combined operations of the merged Mattel® and Fisher-Price® units, he might have considered this promotion to be a daunting task to take on.

At the start of this job as the President of the Mattel® Brands Division, the sales of Barbie®, Mattel®'s signature doll and profit engine, which account for an estimated 25¹ to 35%² of Mattel®'s sales had fallen for seven straight quarters on a year-to-year basis.³ Barbie®'s global third-quarter sales in 2005 were down 18% from the previous year, and U.S. sales decreased 30%. This decrease in sales affected Mattel®'s overall performance as shares tumbled to their lowest point in four years.⁴

The toy industry overall was struggling, with sales down 5.3% through the first nine months. U.S. retail sales of dolls fell 6% in that period, according to market researcher NPD Group. Analysts believe the slide will continue as more kids choose video games and digital-music players over action figures and board games.⁵

In addition, Friedman was confronted with an anti-Barbie climate with campaigns challenging Barbie®'s beauty ideal launched by The Body Shop and more recent ones by Dove® and Nike® as well as a tradition of Mattel losing legal battles time and again against artists who parodied Barbie®.

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1. History of Mattel, Inc.

1.1. The Early days: 1944-1950s

Mattel, Inc. was founded in 1944 by Ruth and Elliot Handler and Harold “Matt” Matson, hence the name “Matt-el”. The first Mattel® products were picture frames. From the scraps of these picture frames Handler developed a side business in dollhouse furniture. Harold Matson soon sold out to his partners, and, encouraged by the success of the doll furniture, the Handlers turned the company’s emphasis to toys.⁶ “The post World War II demographics of a huge baby boom plus a virtually toyless marketplace provided a unique opportunity to gain a place in a growing toy market.”⁷ Mattel® developed a basic mechanism around which new products could be designed year after year.”⁸

By 1955, the decision of Mattel® to promote its newest toy, “The Burp Gun”, through children TV started “a marketing revolution in the toy industry.”⁹ ABC-TV offered Mattel® an exclusive 52-week sponsorship of a 15-minute segment in its new program, The Mickey Mouse Club. Toy advertising at that point consisted primarily of catalogs and trade advertising before the holiday season. “Television was still a new medium, and ABC’s price tag was a steep, non-cancelable \$500,000”, a sum comparable to Mattel®’s net worth at the time.¹⁰ The presence on the popular Mickey Mouse Club translated into gigantic sales for the Mattel® brand after Thanksgiving weekend, weeks after the show’s debut on October 3, 1955. Mattel® sold more than one million Burp Guns that Christmas for the price of \$4 each.¹¹

Mattel® made toy industry history again in 1959 with the introduction of Barbie®. In spite of the cool reception at the 1959 New York Toy Fair¹², the doll would soon grow to become an icon of its own.

1.2. Publicly Owned Company: 1960-1980s

Encouraged by the success of Barbie®, Mattel® made its first public stock offering in 1960, “selling shares at \$10 each.”¹³ By 1963 it had its common stock listed on the New York (NYSE: MAT) and Pacific Coast Stock Exchanges. By 1965, sales skyrocketed from \$26 to \$100 million, and Mattel® joined the Fortune 500.¹⁴ In revenues, Mattel® rocketed from \$18.3 million in revenues in 1960 to \$211 million in 1969, with profits peaking in 1970 at \$17.4 million. And that \$10 share was worth \$522.50 at the stock’s height in 1971.¹⁵

But later in the 1970s Mattel®’s growth stumbled plagued by operational problems including a fire in Mattel®’s Mexican plant and shipping strikes that interrupted the flow of goods from Asia. “In 1973, Mattel® was caught issuing misleading financial reports. The SEC filed charges against the Handlers and a federal judge ordered Mattel® to restructure the board, forcing the Handlers out. Under a new management team, Mattel® regained profitability and started diversifying into other children’s products including publishing and entertainment.”¹⁶

Mattel® made a variety of acquisitions that looked promising at first sight, but poor performance during the 1980’s forced Mattel® to divest many of them at steep losses. “By 1987, Mattel® had fallen into even deeper trouble with heavy losses in video games. The stock had lost two-thirds of its value since 1982, forcing the board to appoint a new chairman - John Amerman, who had joined the company in 1980 as head of Mattel®’s international division.”¹⁷ He had a new strategy for Matte®, closing 40% of manufacturing capacity, including plants in California, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Most importantly, Amerman focused the company on its core brands Barbie® and Hot Wheels®. The Barbie® line was expanded to include approximately 50 different dolls per year with many new accessory items. He also made selective investments in new toy development.¹⁸

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1.3. Toy Industry Leader: 1990s^{19 20}

Mattel, Inc. became the world's largest toymaker in the 1990s due to high Barbie® sales, a series of smart acquisitions of other toy companies and strong alliances with the entertainment industry.

“A promotional campaign built around Barbie®'s 30th birthday in 1989 propelled her onto the cover of Smithsonian Magazine, confirming her status as a true American icon. The Barbie® make-over was so effective that from 1987 to 1992 sales shot up from \$430 million to nearly \$1 billion, accounting for more than half of the company's \$1.85 billion in sales. At that time, Mattel® estimated that 95% of all girls in the United States aged 3 to 11 owned Barbie® dolls.”

In 1991, a strengthened strategic alliance with The Walt Disney Company gave Mattel® the exclusive rights to sell dolls, stuffed characters, and preschool toys based upon Disney movie classics such as the Lion King and The Hunch Back of Notre Dame.

In 1993, Mattel® acquired Fisher-Price® in a deal lauded by Wall Street analysts. Four years later, in 1997, the acquisition of Tyco boosted Mattel®'s revenue to \$4.8 billion and “pushed Mattel, Inc. past Hasbro, Inc. making it the undisputed leader in the toy industry.”

In 1997, Mattel® introduced hundreds of new toy products. Many of the new toys reflected increased demand among core product lines - for example, the market's renewed interest in collectible Barbie® and Hot Wheels™ products. Beyond core products, there remained a large, lucrative segment of non-core toys whose market life was typically less than one year, of which many were related to popular movie characters. These were high turnover products where time to market was critical. Mattel® typically produced core product lines in-house and outsourced the production of non-core lines to a network of vendors. Outside vendors gave Mattel® the needed flexibility to handle hot products and the seasonal changes in toy sales. In the US, toy sales historically followed strong seasonal trends with nearly 45% of all sales in 1997 coming in November and December.

1.4. Ups and Downs: 1998-2005

Even though Mattel® is still the world's largest toy maker today (see Appendices: Exhibit 1), the company has had its ups and downs. Mattel® designs, manufactures, and markets a broad variety of toy products. “Mattel®'s products include Barbie® dolls, Fisher-Price® toys, Hot Wheels® and Matchbox® cars, American Girl® dolls and books, and various Sesame Street, Barney, Ferrari and other licensed items. Mattel also produces action figures and toys based on Walt Disney movies and the Harry Potter children's books. Mattel® is trying to reduce its reliance on its biggest customers - Wal-Mart, Toys "R" Us, and Target - through its own catalog and Internet sales.”²¹ Most of these toys are made overseas, primarily in Southeast Asia.²² “Mattel®'s principal manufacturing facilities are located in China, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Mexico. Mattel also utilizes third-party manufacturers to manufacture its products in the US, Europe, Mexico, Asia and Australia.”²³

The past years Mattel® dropped a considerable amount of spaces in the Forbes and Fortune rankings.²⁴ In 2005, it dropped to #383 in the Fortune 500 ranking compared to #352 in 2004 and #337 in 2003. In the Forbes Global 2000 list, a composite ranking from four metrics - sales, profits, assets and market value - in a multinational business world Mattel® dropped 115 spaces: from #697 in 2004 to #812 in 2005. These droppings in the rankings are due to a variety of factors: strong competition from other toy manufacturers, fierce opposition from several angles and undoubtedly also poor decision-making by Mattel® such as the purchase of The Learning Company.²⁵

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2. History of Barbie®

2.1. The Beginnings of Barbie®: 1950s

Arguably the single most important moment in the history of the American toy industry took place in 1956 during the Handler family's vacation in Switzerland. While shopping, Ruth Handler discovered a strikingly adult doll named Lilli, complete with a curvaceous figure and high heels.²⁶ In Hamburg, Germany, the artist Reinhard Beuthien, had created a character, name Lilli, for the Bild Zeitung newspaper. In August 1955, Lilli was given a third dimension and sold as an eleven and one half inch doll. Ruth Handler did not realize at the time that Lilli was a symbol of sex and pornography for the men of Germany. She was often a gag gift and was a type of "fantasy doll".^{27 28}

For years Ruth Handler had been trying to persuade Mattel®'s designers to create a three-dimensional adult doll. She had seen her daughter and her friends play with adult paper dolls, preferring them to baby dolls. They would play make-believe and mimic the conversations of their parents. "They were using the dolls to project their dreams of their own futures as adult women," she realized. But she had met with resistance from Mattel®'s engineers - all men - who told her that the doll would be too expensive to produce and from Mattel®'s ad agency, which worried that a voluptuous doll might be too sexy.²⁹

She insisted that Mattel®'s development team create something similar to Lilli, and they resolved the cost issue by having the doll produced in Japan. The result, after nearly three years of design work, was Barbie®, named after the Handler's daughter Barbara.³⁰ The new doll was modified to look less like a street walker. Her body was made into a softer vinyl and her face was given a softer look. This was done by "rotation-molding", a process where the mold was turned slowly while the vinyl hardened. This process helped to create finer details in this new doll like fingers and toes.³¹

At first, the dolls did not look innocent because of the heavy makeup on their faces. Mattel® changed this problem by advertising and eliminating or editing the less popular features. For instance, Mattel® gave Barbie® a softer skin tone and new hair, which was a bubble-cut.³² The doll, officially named "Barbie® Teenage Fashion Model" in the false hope that making her a teenager desexualized her, debuted at 1959's Toy Fair and was a "crashing bomb," according to the New York Times. Buyers - again, all men - immediately objected to the doll's breasts, which were unlike anything the industry had seen before.³³ A then-unprecedented \$12,000 market-research test also found mothers hating the doll, even though girls loved her. The Handlers, disappointed but resigned, grudgingly lowered their sales projections and reduced their factory orders further.³⁴ That turned out to be a huge mistake because Ruth Handler had been right all along. In 1959, Mattel® sold 351,000 Barbie dolls at \$3 apiece, making the doll a smash hit. Mattel® added factory capacity and warehouse space and couldn't keep up the demand for the next three years.³⁵

2.2. Barbie® in the 1960s-1980s

By 1961, Ken® was released and became Barbie®'s boyfriend. In 1967, Barbie® acquired eyelashes, a rotating waist, and bent legs. The sixties were times of protests, marijuana smoking, and rebellion. Instead of showing Barbie as a negative role model for children, Mattel® kept her away from the rebellion, but up with the items. She began to dress in the mini skirts, wear dangle earrings, and gogo boots. Also, to keep up with the times on issues of racial equality, Mattel® released a black version of Barbie® in 1967, named "Colored Francie". Francie did not do very well on the market. This could have been because parents were just not ready to show diversity to their children during that time period.³⁶

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In 1971, during the sexual revolution, Barbie®'s look changed. Until the 1970s her eyes were cast down to one side, giving her a pure, innocent look. They were gradually changed to eyes looking almost straight ahead, which gave a look of more confidence. Also in the 1970s, changes were needed in Barbie® because Mattel® was going bankrupt and the Handlers had to leave the company. She acquired a grin in 1975 and a permanent smile in 1977.³⁷

In 1985, Barbie® portrayed a yuppie lifestyle with her "Day and Night" theme and her many accessories represented the high consumption lifestyle. She had her dream house, completely furnished, a racy sports car, and a wardrobe that expanded almost every day.³⁸ Graduate Barbie® showed that Barbie® now was educated. Barbie® also began not to be confined to just her sports car and dream house. Mattel® released "Astronaut Barbie®" in 1986 and "Dr. Barbie®" in 1988. In essence, according to her themes, she transformed and grew from secretary to executive. Again, Mattel® tried to break Barbie®'s ethnic barrier by bringing in different Barbies from different backgrounds,³⁹ including a Hispanic doll, Theresa® (1988), and an Asian friend, Lia® (1990).⁴⁰

3. The Influence of Barbie® Dolls on Children

The Barbie® discourse is riddled with conflicting pedagogies. While Barbie® is idolized as a role model for young girls, an icon of American culture, a model of aesthetic perfection and a cultural icon of heterosexual femininity, Barbie® is on the other hand despised by feminists and child educators for being a tool of racism and sexism, and a contemporary epitome of the cult of thinness.⁴¹ Barbie®'s measurements are projected as 39-21-33⁴², 39-18-33⁴³, 36-18-33⁴⁴, 38-18-34⁴⁵ or 33-18-31⁴⁶, depending on the source. Mattel® claims that Barbie® is "not scaled to human measurements."⁴⁷

Kuther (2004)⁴⁸ describes that there has been "a great deal of debate over the influence of Barbie® dolls on girls' developing self-concept and body image." She conducted two qualitative studies in the U.S. to gather information about early adolescents' experiences with, and perspectives on Barbie®. In the first study, focus groups with twenty 6th-grade girls suggested that they have ambiguous feelings toward the doll and the feminine sexualized image Barbie® represents. The second study gathered essay responses from fifty 7th- and 8th-grade boys and girls regarding their experiences with and opinions on Barbie® dolls.

Participants reported both positive and negative feelings toward the doll and its influence on girls' development. Barbie® dolls were pervasive in the experiences of both the young adolescent girls and boys surveyed. While girls generally reported imaginative play with Barbie® dolls, boys tended to report destructive play and the disfiguring of Barbie®. The girls' reported experiences support the notion that play with Barbie® entails enacting adult social scripts, and perhaps shaping girls' developing self-concept through the internalization of stereotyped feminine scripts (cf. Kline: 1993 and Koste: 1995).

During late childhood and early adolescence, imaginative play with Barbie® dolls became less appealing, and many girls reported disfiguring and damaging the dolls. Referring to Turkel (1998), Kuther (2004) explains that destructive play can function "as a means of expressing anger and fantasy deemed inappropriate for public expression. The disfigured Barbie® doll may represent girls' views about their developing feminine self."

In the U.K., Nairn (2005) describes the destructive play with Barbie® of 7-11 year old girls as a normal rite of passage and a rejection of their past. When groups of junior school children were asked about Barbie®, the doll provoked rejection, hatred and violence. "The meaning of 'Barbie®' went beyond an expressed antipathy; actual physical violence and torture towards the doll was repeatedly reported, quite gleefully, across age, school and gender." "Of all of

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the products we asked the children to describe as ‘cool’ or ‘not cool’, Barbie® aroused the most complex and violent emotions.” They see Barbie® torture as a legitimate and cool play activity. “The types of mutilation are varied and creative, and range from removing the hair to decapitation, burning, breaking and even microwaving.”⁴⁹ Analyses of the children’s comments indicated that Barbie® is hated because she is ‘babyish’, ‘unfashionable’, ‘plastic’, has multiple selves and because she is a feminine icon. “The most readily expressed reason for rejecting Barbie® was that she was babyish, and girls saw her as representing their younger childhood out of which they felt they had now grown.”⁵⁰

4. Role of other players

4.1. Opposition

4.1.1. Body Shop: Ruby, the Anti-Barbie®

In 2001, the body care retailer store The Body Shop created Ruby, “the Anti-Barbie®”, in 1996 and launched the self-esteem campaign worldwide in 1997/1998 (see Appendices: Exhibits 4 and 5). Her rubenesque figure graced windows in The Body Shop along with the slogan, “There are 3 billion women who don't look like supermodels and only 8 who do.” The doll was intended to challenge stereotypes of beauty and counter the pervasive influence of the cosmetics industry and kick-started a worldwide debate about body image and self-esteem.⁵¹

4.1.2. Dove®: Campaign for Real Beauty - “Real Women Have Real Curves”

In 2005, the Unilever brand Dove® created the “Campaign for Real Beauty” (see Appendices: Exhibit 6), with “Real Women Have Real Curves” as its tagline. The company published *The Dove® Report: Challenging Beauty*, launched an ad campaign featuring six women with real bodies and established the Dove® Self-Esteem Fund. In the official Dove® Report, a “10-country study of more than 3,200 women that Unilever conducted with Harvard University and the London School of Economics”⁵², experts discuss the recent deconstruction of the beauty myth.

In the 1990s, the female beauty ideal looked like Barbie®: tall, young, thin, blonde, Caucasian, and large-breasted. Meanwhile, research established that women felt a lowered sense of self-esteem when they read fashion magazines and saw models than when they did not. Recently “women’s attitudes toward beauty have undergone a marked, and measurable, sea change. Women have largely taken apart in their own minds the “ideal” that is imposed on them, and done some creative thinking to work out for themselves a comfortable, affirming new “beauty philosophy” that is a far cry from the rigid exclusive beauty ideal of the recent past.”⁵³ In the Dove® study, expert Naomi Wolf even launched a direct attack on Barbie®: “if I were betting on culture as a form of stocks, I would get out of skinny Barbie® and into multi-ethnic, imaginative Bratz™ dolls.”⁵⁴

The first phase of the campaign consisted of a series of outdoor billboards and print ads that featured nontraditional beauties and challenged viewers to vote on each image - wrinkled or wonderful, fat or fit, freckled or fabulous.⁵⁵ Dove® then set out to sponsor the Oprah Winfrey show and the campaign was endorsed by Oprah Winfrey herself: the influential talk show host invited “the Dove® Women” to her studio for an interview.⁵⁶ (see Appendices: Exhibit 6, Figure 10) In addition, The Dove® Self-Esteem Fund offered a variety of workshop materials to boost the self-esteem and body image of girls and boys aged 8-14. In the BodyTalk materials, an entire activity sheet was devoted to “Playing with beauty: Barbie® and Ken® – are they just fun-inspiring dolls?” (see Appendices Exhibit 7)

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4.1.3. Nike®: “What Story Does Your Body Tell?”

The latest company to join in on the “challenge beauty” trend in 2005 was Nike® with its “What Story Does Your Body Tell?” campaign⁵⁷, often dubbed the “Big Butts, Thunder Thighs and Tomboy Knees” campaign (see Appendices: Exhibit 8). The ads were authoritative and bold, with a bit of humor. The six different images represented six different parts of the body. There were no TV executions in the campaign, which was designed to drive the audience to NikeWomen.com and, ultimately, its fitness apparel. The Nike® Women website featured “short films of women discussing topics such as their bodies and working out.”⁵⁸

4.1.4. AdiosBarbie.com: A Body Image Site for Every Body

Numerous independent websites were created in the past years to boost the self-esteem and body image of girls and women. For instance, AdiosBarbie.com,⁵⁹ created by women who struggled with their body image, contains a great number of anti-Barbie messages. “The goal of AdiosBarbie.com is not to make girls who are naturally thin or blonde feel invisible. Barbie® is just a symbol of the quest for an impossible, plastic perfection.” In other words, the editors of this website blamed Barbie® for the beauty ideal that caused problems for the body image and self-esteem of many women and thus foster anti-Barbie feelings by encouraging people to say “Adios” to Barbie®.

4.2. Competitors: Bratz™ Dolls

Not only curve-friendly campaigns that foster anti-Barbie® feelings are responsible for the 30% decrease in U.S. Barbie® sales in 2005. In 2001, MGA Entertainment™ introduced the Bratz™ dolls. Bratz™ racked up \$2.5 billion in global sales of dolls and related merchandise in 2004, putting it close behind the \$3 billion Barbie® franchise, and Bratz™ sales are up about 40% so far in 2005.⁶⁰ According Isaac Larian, founder of toymaker MGA Entertainment Inc. and father, of the Bratz™ dolls, “Kids don't want to play with Barbies® anymore.”⁶¹

Bratz™ dolls are more realistically shaped than Barbie®: curvier and shorter (see Appendices: Exhibit 7). “If Barbie® were a real woman, she would stand 6 foot 2 and most likely would be unable to stand because of her tiny waist and large bust. By contrast, if Bratz™ were real girls, they would stand about 5 foot 6 and sport bodies that look more like entertainers Beyonce Knowles and Jennifer Lopez than the Amazon stance of Barbie.”⁶² In addition, the Bratz™ dolls display none of the “role modeling” Barbie® did for decades. “Bratz™ don't have careers per se, or at least their clothes don't reflect that. Instead, the dolls' clothing and accessories are knockoffs of the fashions young girls see—and want—in the real world or on channels such as MTV and BET. The girls decide what they want their dolls to be when they grow up or if they just want to hang out and try on clothes. There was no rule book on what was appropriate for these young girls, no role model of what they should be or shouldn't be.”⁶³

Bratz™ are far more in keeping with the new worldview for girls and women than Barbie®, despite Mattel®'s best efforts to keep Barbie®'s image up with the fast-changing roles of women. “Barbie® did advance as women advanced. She had a doctor's outfit, she went into space. But she was still blonde and blue-eyed when a majority of girls in the U.S. and the world were not. She still followed stereotypes of women. Where Barbie® represented the past, Bratz™ represents at least one view of the present and quite possibly some insight into the future of where women and girls are headed. It is a future where young girls don't need their dolls to show them the career choices they have open to them. They already know they can choose any career and pursue it. It's a future where the rules about the size and shape of women's bodies, and how women express their sexuality, are far broader and more open.”⁶⁴

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4.3. Parody/Homage of Barbie®

On the music scene, the Danish pop-dance group Aqua released a song called "Barbie® Girl" in 1997. It contained lyrics such as "You can brush my hair/Undress me everywhere" and used graphics similar to the pink Barbie® logo. Mattel® used this as grounds for a trademark infringement and defamation lawsuit filed on September 11, 1997. However, it was dismissed by the court as parody on May 15, 1998."⁶⁵

In the field of advertising, "a commercial by automobile company Nissan featured dolls similar to Barbie® and Ken® driving in a toy car was the subject of another lawsuit on September 18, 1997."⁶⁶

In the fine arts (see Appendices: Exhibit 11), "Thomas Forsythe, a Utah-based professional photographer, created photos called "Food Chain Barbie®" to criticize the objectification of women and the impossible beauty myth the Barbie® dolls represent. Forsythe's photographs show the doll in various imaginative and often sexualized positions. Some like "Mixer Fun" depict Barbie® being attacked by kitchen appliances. Others like "Barbie® Enchiladas" show the doll wrapped in tortillas and covered with salsa in a casserole dish in a lit oven."⁶⁷

5. Responses by Mattel®

5.1. Response to Reality: Decrease in Barbie® Sales

When Mattel® realized that Barbie® was mostly being bought by girls aged three to seven, the company decided to purchase the Pleasant Company® in 1998 because Mattel® also wanted to stay the premier girls consumer product company for girls of ages seven to twelve: "The American Girl® brand is the second largest girls brand in the world and is targeted to girls ages seven through twelve. Barbie®, the number one girls fashion doll brand, is targeted to girls ages three to seven."⁶⁸

Other actions used by Mattel® over the years included the following. In 1999, Mattel® launched a series of "Girl Power ads" featuring a small pink Barbie® logo and "slogans like "Girls rule" and "Be anything", clearly gleaned from the feminist-inspired girls' movement."⁶⁹ Also in 1999, at Barbie®'s 40th anniversary, Mattel® announced its "Ambassadors of Dreams" Program and a three-year partnership with Girls Inc., a non-profit service organization that was formerly the Girls Club of America. The mission of Girls Inc., which has 350,000 members nationwide, is to "inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold young women."⁷⁰

A few months before the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000, Mattel® released Swimming Champion Barbie and let five-time Olympic Gold Medal Winner Jenny Thompson launch her into the YMCA Pool in New York "to inspire girls, once again, to dream of becoming world class athletes".⁷¹ Also in 2000, Mattel® released President 2000 Barbie and announced that Barbie® was going to run for President of the United States. She hit the campaign trail – exclusively at Toys "R" Us stores - with a nationwide movement aimed at inspiring young people to become educated about their right to vote and emphasizing the importance of women in politics in a partnership with Girls Incorporated and The White House Project.⁷²

In 2001, Mattel® launched Spanish-language website BarbieLatina.com.⁷³ Also in 2001, Mattel® entered into two world-wide licensing agreements with interactive industry leaders Vivendi Universal Publishing and THQ for the development and publishing of gaming, educational, and productivity software based on Mattel®'s cache of power brands, including Barbie® and American Girl.⁷⁴ Also in 2001, Barbie® starred in her first feature-length computer-generated imagery (CGI) production, "Barbie® in the Nutcracker".⁷⁵

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In 2004, Mattel® announced a new strategy for Barbie®: the Barbie® world would come to life through storytelling. Mattel® had the plan of turning “the toy industry's traditional toy manufacturing model on its head by writing the stories first, and then creating dolls and toys to play out the stories.” For older girls, Mattel® took a more visual approach with a 44-minute Barbie DVD, a funky magazine, CDs and partnerships with hip fashion retailers like Sephora and Levi's. For younger girls, Mattel® brought the stories to life with pop-up books and rich story "maps." Each of these value-added content components was included in the toy packages to encourage cross-selling and deeper purchase.

In talking with girls, Mattel® confirmed that girls aspire to different things at different ages. Younger girls aspired to a world of fantasy and imagination, while older girls wanted authentic fashion and real-world experience. For older girls, the MyScene™ dolls celebrated the key times in a teenager's life, fulfilling aspirational play patterns for tween girls as they aspired to a realistic teen lifestyle. And, the Cali Girl™ dolls reinvented the swimsuit doll segment with Barbie® doll and friends living it up in California style.⁷⁶

Two days before Valentine's day, February 12, 2004, Mattel® announced the Break-Up of Barbie® and Ken®.⁷⁷ A few months later in the summer of 2004, Mattel® told the world that Barbie® found a new beau: the surfer Blaine® from Australia.⁷⁸ The same summer, Mattel® announced Barbie®'s surprise bid for the 2004 presidency:⁷⁹ (see Appendices: Exhibit 2) That same year the Mattel® brand was extended with an increased emphasis on Barbie® Style, the growing apparel and accessories business. The company announced the releases of the first-ever Barbie® fragrance in a partnership with PUIG Beauty and Fashion Group⁸⁰, Cali Girl™ Barbie® with a new pedicure from LA's Hottest Mani/Pedi Salon - The Paint Shop⁸¹

In 2005, Mattel® announced the introduction of Barbie™ Hair Care, a full line of salon-quality products designed for girls of all ages in a partnership with MZB Personal Care⁸², the “Barbie® Live in Fairytopia!™” and Spring 2006 Live Stage Tour in a collaboration with Clear Channel Entertainment Productions⁸³, the release of the My Scene™ Goes Hollywood Direct-To-Video Animated Movie⁸⁴ among other smaller initiatives.

But undoubtedly the two most important announcements came in the fall of 2005. First, the announcement of the Barbie® Luxe Collection, in which top fashion designers partnered with the Barbie™ brand to launch the adult collection Barbie™ Luxe. Anna Sui, Paper Denim & Cloth, Citizens of Humanity and Other Designers created a Limited Edition, Barbie™ Inspired, Adult Line of Apparel and Accessory Items. “Barbie® appeals to 'girls' of all ages and Barbie™ Luxe is designed for women who grew up with Barbie® and told us that they want to incorporate the doll's sense of unique fashion and beauty in a fun way.”⁸⁵ Later in 2005, Mattel® announced that Ken® is getting a total makeover to win Barbie® back. (see Appendices: Exhibit 2)⁸⁶

The past years Mattel® also released several celebrity Barbie® dolls such as Brandy (2001), Hillary Duff (2004) and Lindsay Lohan (2005) as well as dolls based on movie characters such as Legally Blonde's Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) (2003) and also dolls based on the stars of American Idol (2004) and (2005).

5.2. Response to Anti-Barbie® Opposition: The Body Shop, Dove® and Nike®

Instead of acknowledging the critique and starting a discussion with the opposing campaigns, Mattel decided to either simply ignore the critique or take the other party to court.

In 1997, Mattel® announced that a few Barbie doll models would be receiving new measurements and it seemed that Mattel® was giving in to the critique by eating disorder activists and anti-Barbie crusaders, but Mattel®'s intention was for her to have more of a

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teenage physique. In order for hip-huggers, the doll's debut outfit, to look right, Barbie® needed to be more like a teen's body. The fashions teens were wearing didn't fit properly on Barbie®'s current sculpting.⁸⁷

In 1998, Mattel® sent The Body Shop a cease-and-desist order, demanding we pull the images of Ruby from American shop windows. "Ruby was making Barbie® look bad, presumably by mocking the plastic twig-like bestseller." According to The Body Shop's founder, Anita Roddick, The idea of one inanimate piece of molded plastic hurting another's feelings was absolutely mind-blowing."⁸⁸

A FAQ posted on Mattel®'s consumer relations website acknowledged Barbie®'s measurements:

Barbie® doll is not scaled to human measurements. The Barbie® doll was developed after Mattel studied the popularity of paper fashion dolls (which had more adult-like figures than the dolls of the day) among children. Finding the marketplace receptive to the idea, a team of Mattel® employees translated the paper doll concept into a three dimensional doll with life-like characteristics.⁸⁹

As of yet, Mattel® has not officially responded to the Dove® and Nike® campaign ads launched in 2005. There have been no mentions of the campaigns in Mattel® and Barbie® press releases and Mattel® spokespeople have not officially commented on the campaigns. Mattel® has not started lawsuits either, most likely because the campaigns indirectly attack Barbie®'s beauty ideal, as opposed to The Body Shop Ruby campaign.

5.3. Response to Competition: Bratz™

Mattel®'s initial response to Bratz™ was so slow and ineffective due to the company's internal challenges such as the catastrophic acquisition of the Learning Company distracting management as well as its disinclination to change its key product. Long-running successes such as the Barbie® doll can make managers at large companies such as Mattel® near-sighted: "Focused on a mainstay product, they tend to ignore fresh information that diverges from their accepted norm in three basic areas: marketplace trends, the interests of target consumers, and threats from competitors."⁹⁰

Due to Mattel®'s decisions and actions in the Barbie® – Bratz™ battle, Mattel® found itself again in a few lawsuits. On April 13, 2005, Isaac Larian, the creator of Bratz™ sued Mattel® in federal court, accusing the world's largest toymaker of unfair competition, intellectual property infringement, and "serial copycatting." The suit claimed that Mattel®'s My Scene™ and Flava™ (see Appendices: Exhibit 10) Barbie® dolls "mimic the look, themes, and packaging of Bratz™. It also alleges that Mattel® has threatened retailers and licensees with retribution if they do business with MGA entertainment™ and that Mattel® tried to lock up the supply of doll hair." Suits such as these are difficult to win because the plaintiff has to prove that shoppers were confused and that its business suffered. Mattel® said it would vigorously defend itself and considered this suit retaliation for its own legal claim: that doll designer Carter Bryant came up with the idea for Bratz™ while still working at Mattel®.⁹¹

5.4. Response to Parody/Homage: Music, Advertising and Fine Arts

Instead of engaging in a meaningful discussion about Barbie® in the media, it seems that Mattel® again only uses the strategy of taking the other party to court. In the case of the following three cases of parody, this strategy obviously did not work.

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First, Mattel® filed a trademark infringement and defamation lawsuit on September 11, 1997 against Aqua's song "Barbie® Girl" in which the Danish band used lyrics such as "You can brush my hair/Undress me everywhere" and used graphics similar to the pink Barbie® logo. This lawsuit was dismissed by the court as parody on May 15, 1998.⁹²

Second, in the field of advertising, "a commercial by automobile company Nissan featured dolls similar to Barbie® and Ken® driving in a toy car was the subject of another lawsuit on September 18, 1997."⁹³ Again, Mattel® lost the lawsuit.⁹⁴

Most recently, Mattel® sued a photographer. Although Forsythe's "Food Chain Barbie®" photos of Barbie® generated only \$3,600 in revenues, Mattel® sued him for copyright infringement but Forsythe successfully argued to the district court that his photographs were fair use under the Copyright Act. "The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that result. The court stated that "Mattel® brought objectively unreasonable claims against an individual artist. The court also found that Forsythe's defense advanced the Copyright Act by more clearly defining the boundaries of fair use parodies and by encouraging further creative works of this kind. The court ordered Mattel® to pay Forsythe's legal fees of \$1.8 million and his court costs of \$241,000. Forsythe advises that Mattel® has now paid in full."⁹⁵

6. Friedman's dilemma

As Neil B. Friedman took on the leadership of the Mattel® Brand unit and the Barbie® product line in particular, he was faced with a dilemma:

Would he continue on Mattel®'s defensive and conservative path and follow a protective approach whenever a *threat* occurred? In the recent past Mattel® had been faced with decreasing Barbie® sales, anti-Barbie® campaigns launched by The Body Shop, Dove® and Nike®, competition from other doll lines such as Bratz and the use of Barbie® in parodies/homages in music, advertising and the fine arts. Mattel® responded to these "threats" in a very protective manner by refusing to adapt Barbie® to the new beauty ideal or by starting lawsuits. Mattel® saw the image and reputation of Barbie® as one of its biggest strengths, something the company and PR strategists were not willing to give up easily.

Or would he decide to offer a more substantial answer to an anti-Barbie® climate with decreased sales, opposition, competition and parodies of Barbie®, a climate in which research described destructive play with Barbie® as a normal step in childhood development. If he was given the necessary autonomy and freedom to lead the Mattel® unit and Barbie® product line, Friedman could have decided to approach these anti-Barbie® tendencies no longer as *threats* but rather start interpreting them as *opportunities* for Barbie®. Opportunities Mattel® can learn from to adapt Barbie® to today's trends in order to reverse the opinions of children and parents to become pro-Barbie®.

It is early to say which direction Friedman is going to follow because earlier decisions taken by Mattel® such as the Ken® makeover and the Barbie™ Luxe Fashion line have been realized the first months after Friedman's promotion. Still, it is very likely Friedman will be forced to opt for the first option of continuing on the same path unless he receives sufficient autonomy and freedom from Mattel® to transform Barbie® and accordingly provide a more substantial response to the current anti-Barbie climate.

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7. Appendices

Exhibit 1: Top Global Toy Manufacturers Ranked By Sales⁹⁶

Top Global Toy Manufacturers Ranked By Sales	
1.	Mattel, Inc. (MAT)
2.	Hasbro, Inc. (HAS)
3.	Bandai Co., Ltd.
4.	Lego Company
5.	Sanrio Company, Ltd.
6.	Ty Inc.
7.	LeapFrog Enterprises, Inc. (LF)
8.	JAKKS Pacific, Inc. (JAKK)
9.	RC2 Corporation (RCRC)

Table 1: Top Global Toy Manufacturers Ranked By Sales

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Exhibit 2: Exerpts from Mattel® Press Releases

The Storybook Romance Comes To An End For Barbie® And Ken®

The Break-Up of the Millennium for the "Doll" of a Couple

MALIBU, Calif. (February 12, 2004) - After more than 43 years together, Hollywood's quintessential "doll" of a couple, Barbie® and Ken®, have decided to spend some time apart. Although Barbie® has befriended some of the world's most famous celebrities, from popular boy bands to super secret agent spies, Ken® always remained her #1 sweetheart.⁹⁷

The Original Cali Girl™ Finds A New Man From Land Down Under

Barbie® Names Hot Australian Hunk As Her New Beau

MALIBU, Calif. (June 29, 2004) - Since the Barbie® and Ken® February break-up, Over the past few weeks, more than two million girls worldwide logged on to Barbie.com to help Barbie® choose a new beau, and Blaine™ doll is the undisputed winner.⁹⁸

Barbie® Announces A Surprise Bid For The 2004 Presidency

Barbie® To Represent Popular "Party of Girls"

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. (August 12, 2004) - As the 2004 race to the White House heats up, the current Presidential candidates received an unexpected announcement today: Barbie® is joining the race, representing the "Party of Girls!"⁹⁹

Ken® Wants Barbie® Back

Hollywood's Insiders Spotted Giving Advice to America's Beloved Leading Man, Fueling Rumors of a Total Makeover

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. (October 21, 2005) – A year and a half after the shocking split of the world's most quintessential "doll" of a couple, sources say Ken® is determined to win back his lifelong love, Barbie®. Single since their very public breakup in February 2004, America's favorite "arm candy" has recently been seen in Los Angeles, talking to A-list celebrity stylists Phillip Bloch and Illya Knight and stoking speculation that he is in search of a new "look."

Steve Altese of Us Weekly's Fashion Police dished, "He should possibly consider eyelid surgery. The Ken® I know hasn't blinked in 20 years. I'm a little concerned. Maybe he could just have one eye worked on so he can wink at Barbie®."

To give Ken® more pointers on how he should look and what he should do to get Barbie® back, today, his biggest fans and foes – girls logged on to Barbie.com – began to voice their opinions.¹⁰⁰

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Exhibit 3: The Mattel® Barbie® Doll¹⁰¹



Figure 1: First Barbie® Doll (1959)



Figure 2: Silken Flame (1962)



Figure 3: Barbie®'s Car (1978)



Figure 4: World of Barbie® (2000s)

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Exhibit 4: The Body Shop “Ruby” Campaign

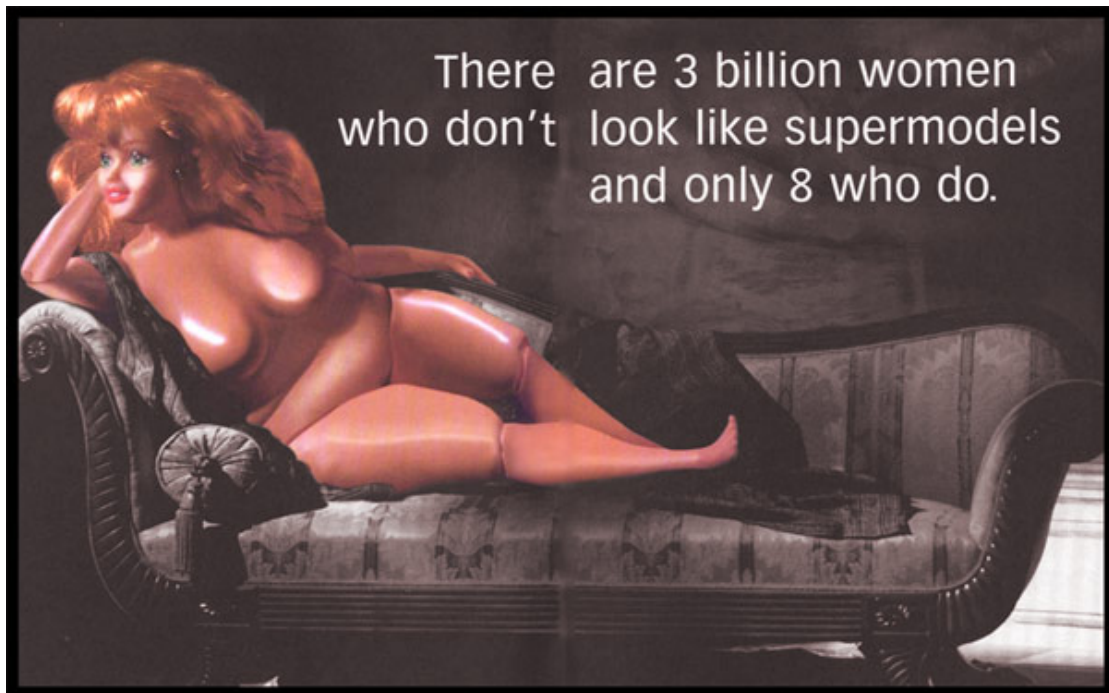


Figure 5: “Ruby” Advertisement

Figure 6: “Ruby” Advertisement

Figure 7: “Ruby” Advertisement

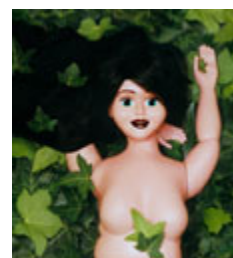
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Exhibit 5: The Body Shop “Ruby” Campaign¹⁰²

Activate Self Esteem

Ruby Profile

Rubenesque Ruby is The Body Shop mascot for activating self esteem.



RUBENESQUE RUBY'S CV

Date of Birth	September 1996
Place of Birth	On an Apple Macintosh, Soho, London (Photoshop and Illustrator package). It was a difficult labour but she turned out just gorgeous.
Spiritual Birthplace	Anita Roddick's office, The Body Shop International, Littlehampton, West Sussex.
Current Residence	None. Constantly travelling.
Education	Mistress of Arts in Celebrating Beauty In Diversity. Professor of Self-Expression. Post-graduate Degree in World Beauty.
Status	Informed, educated, challenging and always speaks her mind.
No Dependents	
Current partner	Was seeing Kenneth for a while, but found him to be too much of a himbo. Now seeking plastic partner with brains and personality, and a proper package instead of a bump.
Campaign Experience	Ruby has dedicated her life towards the pursuit of equality and the celebration of all types of beauty. First featured in The Body Shop inaugural issue of Full Voice on body image and self- esteem; has recently appeared in the issue on Body Image and Ageing. Helps to personify The Body Shop 'Redefinition of Beauty'.
Hobbies	Campaigning, late night debates with her slender colleagues.

© The Body Shop 2005

Figure 8: Ruby's profile on The Body Shop Australia website

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Exhibit 6: The Dove® “Campaign for Real Beauty”

For too long,
beauty has been defined by narrow, stifling stereotypes.
You’ve told us it’s time to change all that.
We agree.
Because we believe real beauty comes
in many shapes, sizes and ages.
It is why we started the Campaign for Real Beauty.
And why we hope you’ll take part.

Welcome.

 campaignforrealbeauty | Dove.

Figure 9: Screen shot of welcome page of Dove®’s “Campaign for Real Beauty” website¹⁰³



Figure 10: The Dove® Women on the Oprah Winfrey Show¹⁰⁴

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Exhibit 7: The Dove® “Campaign for Real Beauty”



Activity Sheet 2.4 – Playing with beauty

Barbie® and Ken® – are they just fun-inspiring dolls?

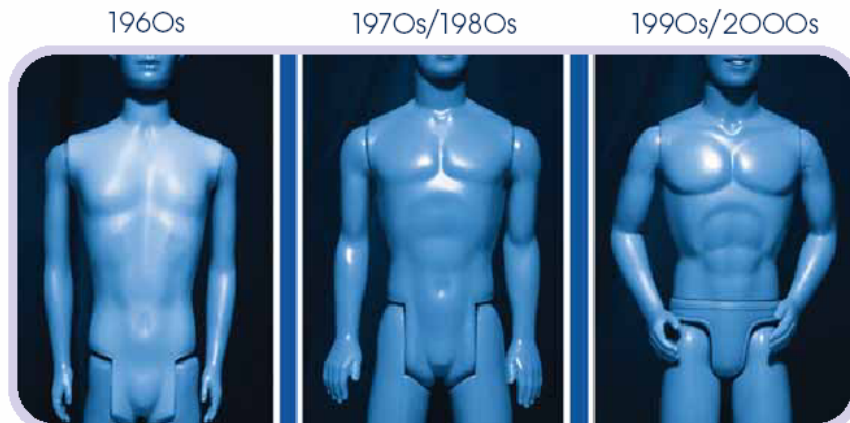
- Barbie’s waist is the same diameter as her head.
- Her neck is twice as long as an average human’s.
- Her legs are 50% longer than her arms. For an average woman they would be around 20% longer.

Keeping hip measurements constant, here is what young healthy adults would need to change to match the same body proportions as Barbie and Ken.

	Woman vs Barbie	Man vs Ken
Height	+ 61 cm	+ 51 cm
Waist	– 15 cm	+ 25 cm
Chest	+ 13 cm	+ 28 cm
Neck length	+ 8 cm	
Neck circumference		+ 20 cm

Source: Int Journal of Eating Disorders, Vol 18, No3, 1995 © John Wiley & Sons, Inc

Look at how Ken’s body shape has evolved:



‘Evolution of Ken II’ © Albert Crudo

Q1. Why do you think Barbie and Ken are shaped the way they are?

Q2. Do you think we are influenced by the shapes of the toys we play with?
Why do you think this?

Figure 11: Activity Sheet Dove® “Playing with beauty: Barbie® and Ken® – are they just fun-inspiring dolls?”¹⁰⁵

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Exhibit 8: Nike® “What Story Does Your Body Tell?” Campaign

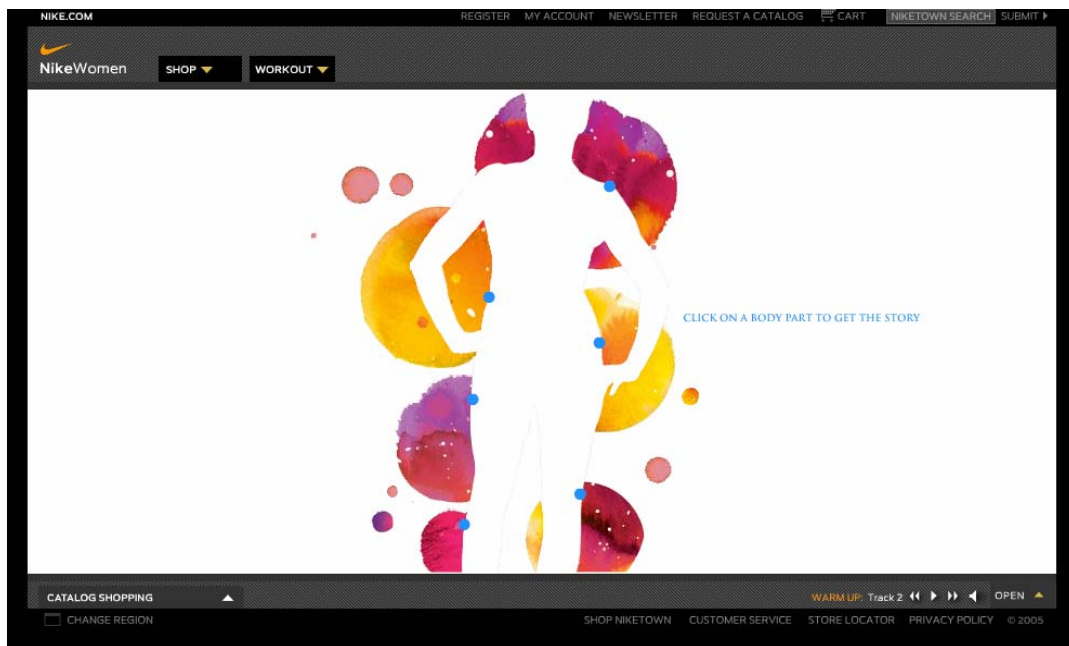


Figure 12: Screen shot of Nike® Women Campaign Website¹⁰⁶



Figure 13: “My Butt is Big” Story from the Nike® Ad Campaign¹⁰⁷

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Exhibit 9: The MGA Entertainment™ Bratz™ dolls¹⁰⁸



Figure 14: Bratz™ Dolls



Figure 15: Bratz™ Dolls



Figure 16: Bratz™ Boy Doll

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Exhibit 10: The Mattel Flava™ and My Scene™ Dolls¹⁰⁹

Figure 17: Mattel's Flava™ Dolls

Figure 18: Mattel's My Scene™ Dolls

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Exhibit 11: Tom Forsythe's "Food Chain Barbie"®¹¹⁰



Figure 31: Fondue for Three



Figure 32: Mellow Yellow



Figure 33: Mixer Fun

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