

What Were They Thinking?

In 1994, General Mills introduced a product under the Wheaties name called Wheaties Dunk-A-Balls cereal. The sweetened corn-and-wheat puffs cereal was shaped like basketballs. The target market, children, might have been very satisfied with the product; however, it could only be reached via the market who would actually be buying the product—parents and guardians. Since adults tend to dislike kids playing with their food, the cereal failed in the marketplace. Is there any way that General Mills could have avoided this costly disaster?

means by which to purchase it. Marketers regard the consumer market as comprising not only current consumers, but also future consumers of their products or services,

For example, there are few, if any, high school students who are active consumers of Alcan products. However, Alcan actively markets the company and its products to high school students using an information package written specifically for them. The hope is that if a positive attitude toward Alcan can be developed now, young people will be more likely to become customers or employees of the company in the future.

All marketing efforts are directed at a specific group of consumers that the marketer most wants to attract. This group is called the **target market**. If the target market is everybody, the market is called an **aggregate market**. However, most consumer markets are **differentiated markets**. These markets are characterized in some specific way; for example, by consumers' income, geographical location, personal values, gender, age and so on.

The **competitive market** comprises all the products or services that compete with one another for consumers' money within a specific category. Categories, which can include anything from bowling to DVD rentals, can be very narrow (flavoured sparkling water), very broad (toys), or even unrelated (the entertainment market). If the consumer has \$20 to spend, then all manufacturers or service providers would like to have at least part of that \$20, if not all of it. The consumer, on the other hand, can freely choose how to spend this money. The main goal of every marketing effort is to direct, if possible, consumers' spending toward the marketer's products or services.

Products within the same competitive market compete for potential buyers in various consumer markets. Nintendo might select young males between the ages of 14 and 19 as its Gamecube target market. Microsoft's Xbox might target older males, perhaps 18- to 30-year olds, who have higher incomes.

Often, the consumer market defines the marketing effort more than the competitive market does. If Sony PlayStation selects families as its target market, it is competing with DVD players, television sets, CD players, and other major family purchases, not just the other video-system manufacturers.



Does this girl reflect a typical target market?