



## Bridging Media and Retail: 3 Entertainment-led Purchasing Trends

The entertainment industry has long influenced the products consumers buy. For instance, “Top Gun,” the hit 1986 film about a U.S. Navy pilot, helped popularize Ray-Ban’s Aviator sunglasses. They haven’t gone out of fashion since. Today, the amount of content generated from streaming services and other forms of digital media is exploding. As a result, consumers increasingly will be exposed to new ideas for product use.

To stay relevant, brands and retailers must be ready to capitalize on today’s biggest entertainment trends, while also preparing for the next big craze. We identified three prominent entertainment trends that have had an impact on retail this year and that we expect will continue to do so. Take a look at these emerging trends — you may discover opportunities to secure your brand’s relevance in the dynamic media landscape.

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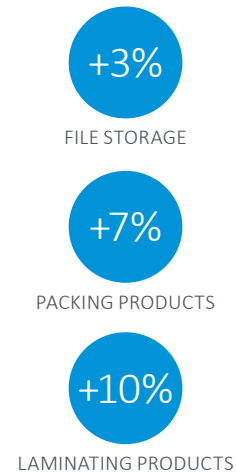
## In Brief:

- 1 As consumers pay more attention to self-care and self-improvement content, brands should consider how their product improves wellness — and then focus their attention on that message.
- 2 Brands should look to the proliferation of online fan communities, such as anime fans, to spark ideas for new products that appeal to customer segments across a wide array of interests.
- 3 Documentaries can influence the issues that consumers care about. Brands should consider these popular causes when pursuing purpose-driven marketing initiatives.

## Wellness Content Drives Aspirational Purchasing

Wellness is the latest dominant cultural obsession, says the [New York Times](#). In an age fraught with digital bombardment, consumers have sought opportunities to seek balance in all aspects of their lives, fostering engagement with categories across entertainment and general merchandise. Self-care apps won Apple's 2018 [top app trend](#). In books, our NPD BookScan™ data shows the self-help category grew by 12% in the first quarter of 2019, outpacing the rest of the industry. Earlier this year, the hit Netflix series “Tidying Up with Marie Kondo” encouraged millions to “choose joy” by decluttering their homes. As a result, sales of organizing products like file storage (+3%), packing products (+7%), and laminating products(+10%), increased year over year in the four weeks following the show's premiere, [as shown by our Retail Tracking Service information](#).

## Marie Kondo Drives Organizing Product Sales



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In a time when health, wellness, and mindfulness have become essential values to consumers' daily operation, retailers and brands have an opportunity to help the consumer take control of their 'joy' by helping them remove what is distracting, and enhance what promotes a mindful life.

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**Leen Nsouli**

Office Supplies Analyst, The NPD Group

Consider the folder manufacturer Smead. The company’s branded podcast doesn’t just talk about folders. The podcast, [Keeping You Organized](#), focuses on how to develop mindsets that foster organizational skills that help consumers with diverse life-skills ranging from leadership to better test scores.

“It’s critical for brands to focus on how to make a consumer’s life more efficient while still maintaining the ‘fun’ and ‘lifestyle’ aspect integrated into the product experience. Consumers have a view of who they aspire to be; the products they choose to buy, even in office supplies, are a reflection of that aspiration,” said Nsouli.

No matter the product, there’s a good chance it’s helping to make someone’s life better. As consumers pay more attention to their self-care and self-improvement routines, brands should discover how their product improves lives — and focus their attention on that message.

### Anime and Manga Fandom Inspires Brands

One of last year’s [hottest limited sneaker releases](#) from Adidas was inspired by the 1990s anime series “Dragon-Ball Z.” The show was a childhood favorite among many of today’s Millennial and Gen Z consumers, presenting the brand an opportunity to emotionally connect with those consumer segments while dovetailing with anime’s re-emergence into the mainstream.

Today, anime is the latest battleground between the major streaming giants on the heels of Hulu’s recent partnership with anime distributor Funimation. For example, the number of viewers watching anime content\* on Netflix outpaced other genres between 2014 and 2018, as shown by our [Subscription Video Track service](#). Anime’s impact has even crossed over into books, where sales of the manga format (which is often related to anime series, and like anime, comes from Japan) grew 16% YOY from January 1, 2019 to May 11, 2019. NPD BookScan data ranks it one of the fastest-growing book formats.

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Manga is one area of the U.S. book market catching fire with a whole new set of younger and more diverse book buyers, especially those with a special interest in Japanese content across many platforms. As of 2017, about three-quarters of manga buyers were between the ages of 13 and 29, making it an important audience to watch from a future consumer buying perspective.

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**Kristen McLean**

Books Analyst, The NPD Group

### Smart Brands Look to Fan Communities for Inspiration

In toys, sales of anime/manga-inspired properties were up 18% vs. the prior year and represented about \$330 million in sales (YTD July 2019), while the entire toy market shrank, as shown by our Retail Tracking Service information. “The United States traditionally has been the dominant

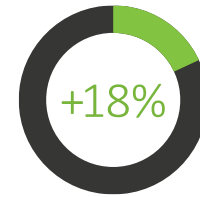


exporter of culture around the world. However, here we have a big wave of imported culture that is finding a hungry and growing audience,” said McLean.

Consider Funko’s Pops line of collectibles. In order to innovate in the collectibles category, the brand’s design team looked to online fan culture, settling on Japanese anime and manga as opportunities to bring something new to the table, says [Hollywood Reporter](#). Funko’s Pop line adds a Japanese-design flair to well-known properties, like Batman and Star Wars. Funko is growing rapidly; net sales increased 38% year over year in the second quarter of 2019, [according to company financial statements](#).

Funko’s success demonstrates that brands and retailers that monitor emerging fan communities across diverse interests, and tailor product offerings accordingly, are well situated to find new avenues for growth. As the media environment continues to fragment, an understanding of niche fan communities is one way to discover new growth opportunities and maintain relevance.

### Toy Sales



ANIME/MANGA-INSPIRED  
PROPERTY SALES

*\*TV and movies. Manga series included.*

## Gear Sales Grow with Climbing Community After Academy Awards

The world watched in trepidation as Alex Honnold climbed Yosemite’s El Capitan without any gear. Honnold made it back in one piece, and “Free Solo,” the documentary that captured the feat, won best documentary at the 2019 Oscars. A week later, in March, the film was aired on National Geographic, reaching 1.45 million viewers. It was National Geographic’s most-watched premiere ever.

Honnold’s historic ascent, along with the recent rise of indoor climbing clubs that have made the sport more accessible, inspired a new wave of climbers, Sports Industry Advisor Matt Powell explained. Fortunately, most of those climbers plan to use gear. The Oscars and National Geographic premiere contributed to a sales lift that made March the greatest single month of growth in climbing gear sales in the last three years, up 47% versus the prior year, as shown by our Retail Tracking Service information. The two following months, April and May, also had impressive year-over-year gains, 44% and 20%, respectively.

While the entire climbing category reaped the benefits of Honnold’s ascent, his sponsors fared best. In March, sponsoring brands grew 61% year over year, while non-sponsoring brands grew 39%. Growth among sponsoring brands continued to outpace non-sponsoring brands through June, the last month studied in the analysis.

### Free Solo Sponsors Outperform Non-sponsors



SPONSORING BRANDS



NON-SPONSORING BRANDS



## Interest in Outdoors to Create New Sponsorship Opportunities

Climbing will make its Olympic debut in Tokyo next year. “With already strong momentum, there’s a good chance the event will lead to further interest in the category as more media attention is paid to the sport,” said Sports Industry Advisor Matt Powell.

While equipment brands are a natural fit for sponsorship opportunities, brands in other categories have also looked outdoors to pursue mission-driven initiatives. Bally, a Swiss fashion house, recently sponsored a mission to remove garbage from Mount Everest, the [Wall Street Journal reported](#). The clean-up mission ties back to Bally’s legacy of exploration; the brand sponsored Sir Edmund Hillary’s and Tenzing Norgay’s historic 1953 Everest expedition. While Bally’s CEO, Nicholas Giroto, said business returns weren’t a motivator for the Everest clean-up, he acknowledged that brands like his must have a purpose beyond profit.

“Aligning a brand with an activity that people are interested in and feel good about is yet another way to be transparent to the consumer about the causes supported by the brand,” said Powell. Given sustainability’s importance among younger generations, brands should consider how these groups are engaging with the outdoors, whether in real-life or through entertainment, to discover sponsorship opportunities that give brands a voice on the issues consumers care most about.

## Keep Current to Spot New Opportunities

As the media environment continues to fragment, reaching a mass audience will become harder. Audiences increasingly will demand content that meshes with their individual tastes and lifestyle preferences, while niche fan communities continue to proliferate. Brands and retailers should look at these sources as an opportunity to establish their product’s relevance in the rapidly changing marketplace. Doing so, while remaining authentic, will require a shift toward solution-focused product positioning, an understanding of fan culture, and cause-based initiatives that appeal to consumers’ aspirations.

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