

## Tekst 4

### Shop for Little Horrors

#### Children are not big earners or spenders. So why are television channels so keen to reach them?

**B**Y THE time American children leave high school, they have spent more than 20,000 hours watching television – almost double the 11,000 hours they will have endured in the classroom. But, from a TV programmer's viewpoint, the American child is an exasperating and demanding beast. Children change with bewildering speed: every year at school is a different audience. 13 they are increasingly distracted by other screen-based delights, such as video games and the Internet.

All this explains why children's television has usually been treated as a Saturday morning ghetto of cartoons and clowning; and why two of the three older broadcasting networks, CBS and NBC, are now 14 their children's programming. But the other big network, ABC, now owned by Disney, is rapidly expanding its children's broadcasting. And two media moguls who seldom miss a trick, Rupert Murdoch and Ted Turner, are pouring money into childish TV projects of their own.

The reason is the cable channel, owned by Viacom: Nickelodeon. Watched on average by 1.3m two- to eleven-year-olds a day, Nickelodeon has wooed its young audience so deftly that in most weeks it has at least 40 of the top 50 shows on American basic-cable TV. "We are," boasts Jeffrey Dunn, its chief operating officer, "the fastest growing network in the United States in terms of ratings."

American children's television has lots of 15, but

Nickelodeon seems astonishingly immune. Amy Jordan, an academic who recently compiled a report on children's television, found that Nickelodeon accounted for 18 out of 75 programmes listed as "high quality", more than any other broadcaster.

The channel's magic recipe has been to see the little dears as an audience in their own right, rather than appendages of their parents. That makes sense. These days, American children 16 watch with mum: a study by Roper Starch, a consultancy, found that 32% of six- to seven-year-olds have a television in their own room, as do 50% of eight- to twelve-year-olds and 64% of thirteen- to seventeen-year-olds. So children are largely free to choose.

#### Resistance is futile

One reason why the moguls are now scrambling after kids is that advertisers have begun to realise how 17 they are. Douglas Zarkin of Grey Advertising, an agency that claims to place about a quarter of all children's

advertising in the United States, reckons that children aged between three and twelve control about \$47 billion of spending a year. Their own pocket money comes to \$540m; the rest, says Mr Zarkin, is "pester power".

Others produce different numbers; but all agree that the growth in the numbers of dual-income, one-child and single-parent households has increased children's 18. "If you have so little time with your children, do you want to spend it arguing over whether to go to McDonald's or Burger King?" asks Joan Chiaramonte at Roper Starch. 19, McDonald's is one of the biggest spenders on advertising on children's TV.

20, children are the consumers of the next generation. One of Mr Zarkin's triumphs was to help launch Kids' Aquafresh, a children's version of the adult toothpaste. Hook them on a brand today, and with any luck they will still be using it in the middle of the next century.

But another reason for chasing children is that a channel, once created, can be sold abroad. "If you think about worldwide markets," says Lloyd Shepherd of *TVInternational*, a newsletter, "they boil down to news, business news, sports and children – and children must be the most lucrative."

Keeping the attention of the little horrors will not be easy. Apart from distractions, electronic and otherwise, 21 have to step through a minefield of regulation: even in the less-regulated United States, they have to provide a minimum amount of "educational" material. But the way children watch today will be the way adults watch tomorrow. That alone makes them a market worth chasing.



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*Kies bij iedere open plek in de tekst het juiste antwoord uit de gegeven mogelijkheden.*

1p **13** ■

- A And
- B But
- C Instead

1p **14** ■

- A cutting
- B increasing
- C modernising
- D promoting

1p **15** ■

- A analysts
- B critics
- C fans

1p **16** ■

- A also
- B often
- C seldom
- D still

1p **17** ■

- A critical
- B demanding
- C powerful
- D sensitive

1p **18** ■

- A bargaining power
- B behavioural problems
- C feelings of insecurity
- D sense of independence

1p **19** ■

- A Luckily
- B Not surprisingly
- C Quite remarkably
- D Unfortunately

1p **20** ■

- A Also
- B Finally
- C In short
- D On the other hand

1p **21** ■

- A advertisers
- B broadcasters
- C parents
- D teachers