

## Crate & Barrel partners with Zola

Crate & Barrel is teaming up with a competitor in the race against Amazon, according to Business Insider UK. The home furnishings chain announced a new partnership with Zola – an up-and-coming wedding registry startup that's geared toward millennial couples – to bring thousands of its products to Zola's site.



Previously, customers could link to Crate & Barrel products in their Zola registry but when it came to purchasing, gift-givers would have to click through to the external site, which was not a particularly user-friendly process. Now, customers will be able to choose from 3,500 Crate & Barrel products and add these directly to their Zola registry. The new partnership enables Crate & Barrel to reach more millennial shoppers by meeting them in a place that they increasingly want to shop, Neela Montgomery, CEO of Crate & Barrel, says.

Zola, which is known for eschewing tradition and allowing couples to register for cash or experience-based gifts such as vouchers for Airbnb or Hotels.com, is fast becoming one of the leading disruptors in the market. In May, it announced that it had raised US\$100 million in funding from investors that included NBCUniversal and Goldman Sachs. Rather than being crushed by its competitor, Crate & Barrel is teaming up with it to take on a new and growing threat in the marketplace – Amazon. ■

Source: *Tableware International*

## US furniture and home furnishings store sales up 3.5% in August



Sales for furniture and home furnishings stores rose 3.5% in August over the same month last year, trailing the broad retail sector for the fourth consecutive month this year. Home furnishings store sales increased to \$10.17 billion in August from a revised \$9.82 billion for the same month a year ago. Sales decreased 0.3% from July sales, which were revised up to \$10.2 billion.

August sales for the combined US retail and food services industries increased 6.6% from a year ago to \$509 billion, and edged up 0.1% from July. Retail trade sales increased 6.2% from August 2017 and 0.1% from the month before. The last time home furnishings stores beat the year-over-year gains of all sectors combined was in April, when furniture stores sales jumped 6.1% vs. the 4.7% increase for all sectors.

August sales at gas stations and non-store retailers, primarily e-commerce and catalog businesses, topped all retail trade sectors with year-over-year gains of 20.3% and 10.4%, respectively. The sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book stores sector repeated as the worst performer, with a year-over-year sales decline of 3.9%. The only other category in negative territory was department stores, a subset of general merchandise stores, with a 0.7% sales decline from the year before.



For the June-through-August period, home furnishings store sales increased 4% from the same three months a year ago. That compares to a 6.5% gain for the overall retail and food services sector and a 9.9% increase for non-store retailers.

In its statement about the figures, the US National Retail Federation said the retail economy remains strong despite consumer worries about the effects of the Trump administration's tariffs on imported products. "Consumers are still in the driver's seat," said Jack Kleinhenz, NRF's chief economist. "Clearly, household spending is resilient and a contributor to third-quarter GDP growth. However, uncertainty over tariffs is creating anxiety and could fuel material changes in consumer spending." ■

Source: *Furniture Today and Home Textiles Today*

## Accounting for \$7 bn. of US toy industry sales, grandparents hold large spending power



Grandparents account for about one-quarter of sales, or nearly \$7 billion, within the \$28 billion U.S. toy industry, according to findings from The NPD Group's latest report, *The Power of Grandparents within the US toy industry*. Compared to other consumer segments, the market for grandparents is stealing the spotlight in more ways than one. While parents spend the most on toys, grandparents' spending growth in the last 12 months exceeded nearly all other consumer segments, including parents. In addition, grandparents' online spend has grown at a faster rate than any other toy consumers.

"The toy industry is amidst unprecedented change, and toy retailers and manufacturers are leaving no stone unturned as they look to succeed and carve out additional space for themselves in the new retail environment. The market for grandparents is often overlooked, but holds tremendous opportunity. I expect this segment will continue to grow as Baby Boomers' children, who are mostly Millennials, enter parenthood," said Juli Lennett, senior vice president and industry advisor, Toys, The NPD Group. With over one-third of grandparents' toy sales going towards kids ages 2-4, grandparents over-index on shopping for categories that cater to younger ages – particularly infant/toddler/preschool toys and outdoor & sports toys (bubble toys/solution, playground equipment, and ride-ons).

In terms of how grandparents are making their purchases, 85 percent shopped in a physical store for toys in the last year, while 72 percent shopped online. However, the online channel is growing more than two-times faster for grandparents compared to the rest of the market, and grandparents spend 3.5 times more per toy online than they do in-store. In addition, over 60 percent of grandparents that previously shopped at Toys"R"Us report that they will be shopping for toys online in the future.

"Retailers and manufacturers seeking to reach more grandparents need a solid online strategy. On top of that, as more grandparents migrate to the online channel post-Toys"R"Us, there is an important opportunity here to grow grandparent dollars," said Lennett. ■ *Source NPD*

## EPCH's facility for UV Curable Coating at CFC-Saharanpur

Managing an industrial wood finishing operation is demanding, and survival in today's business climate is not possible by ignoring these issues. For the wood finisher, it is essential to use finishes that are less labour intensive and are applied and dried fast to facilitate high-production speeds. They must also have a low impact on the work and natural environment.

New technology is making a dramatic impact, but the transition to new finish and their associated processes can be costly to implement and time consuming to learn. EPCH has taken an initiative in this direction by Setting up an UV Curable Coating Plant at CFC-Saharanpur.

The ultraviolet curing, is also known as UV curing, a photochemical process of instantly curing or drying the inks, coatings or adhesives by using high intensity ultraviolet light. The UV coatings have many advantages over the traditional curing and drying methods such as PVC coatings. UV curing coatings are used to increase production speed and improve scratch and solvent resistance. The UV cured coatings has been adopted by many industries such as automotive, telecommunications, glass & plastic decorations and graphic arts. The demand of the UV cured coating is increasing rapidly due to its higher productivity in lesser time, with a reduction in the waste, no environmental pollutants and no loss of coating thickness which leads to the growth of the global UV cured coating market. The plant at Saharanpur is functional to provide its services to members w.e.f. 5th May 2018. Members are requested to avail the services.

Contact: Mr. Mohd Asif, Incharge, CFC-Saharanpur; Tel.: 0132-2613093; 09027463858.

## Sustainable apparel products evolve with many takers

An increasing number of environmentally-conscious consumers are looking for sustainable apparel products, and nearly a quarter of US adult consumers say that they have purchased sustainable products. As consumer interest in sustainability grows so do the efforts of the industry, but there is a clear need to educate shoppers in order to make this connection.

Human rights in terms of social responsibility is a pillar of sustainability efforts in the industry. When NPD asked consumers what their top social concern is in terms of clothing production, 29 percent said human rights and fair wages. Human rights ranked significantly higher than consumers' concerns about toxic dyes and chemicals, animal welfare, minimising waste, and global warming. One-third of consumers say a brand's social responsibility and social position are extremely important to their purchase decision. Although consumers aren't always aware if an apparel item is sustainable in terms of the label's commitment to environmental and social responsibility, if they were aware almost one-third of consumers say they would be willing to pay more for a sustainable apparel item. Young adult consumers, ages 18 to 34, are most inclined to spend more on sustainable apparel, and 33 percent of women say they would pay more for clothing that was described as sustainable, eco-friendly, organic, or ethical than for clothing that was not. On the other hand, the majority of consumers (two-thirds) were not willing to pay more for sustainability indicating they are looking for it to be a part of a brand's social responsibility. ■ *Source: NPD*

## AHFA partners with UL to help reduce tip-overs

### Stability Verification program lets consumers know which products meet voluntary stability standards

The American Home Furnishings Alliance has announced that four case goods resources have successfully completed a new Stability Verification Program it has developed in cooperation with Underwriters Laboratory (UL). The Stability Verified mark shows that various products have met voluntary stability standards for clothing storage furniture, including chests and dressers. The four companies, which completed the requirements this month, include Ashley Furniture, Hooker Furniture, Samson Marketing and Sauder Woodworking, which served as pilot sites for the program. The AHFA noted that some are expected to have Stability Verified products available online or at retail stores as early as November. "Each of the four pilot companies completed the program requirements in about four to six weeks," said Bill Perdue, AHFA vice president of regulatory affairs Bill Perdue. "Now that the program and all processes within it have been tested, we expect future participants will be able to complete the requirements in three to four weeks."



As part of this process, UL reviews and verifies a company's in-house stability testing process, including confirming that the company has the testing facilities, trained personnel, test methods and record keeping in place to verify that products pass the stability requirements of ASTM F2057. In addition, this step verifies that companies have a corrective action plan in place to identify, modify and retest any products that fail the stability tests. In the second part of the process, UL, reviews and approves a company's product test data, which determines whether the products can carry the "Product Stability Verified" mark. The AHFA said that all critical design components of the covered products are documented and that UL repeats stability testing on the sample units at factories to confirm compliance. These program components also require a visit from UL once a year to ensure that companies continue to meet all program requirements.

ASTM-F2057 establishes voluntary stability standards for clothing storage units, some of which have been involved in child injuries and deaths resulting from tip-over incidents. To meet the standard, an empty unit must not tip when any doors on the unit are opened to 90 degrees and all drawers are fully extended to the stop. In absence of a stop, drawers must be opened two thirds of the way. A second test requires a piece not tip when one drawer is open and a 50-pound weight is gradually applied to the front edge of the open drawer. According to the AHFA, the piece also must pass this test in the same manner for each drawer and door in the unit. The Stability Verified program is open exclusively to all AHFA members through the end of this year. UL will open enrollment to the entire industry in January 2019. UL has a two-tiered fee for the program with the first tier covering process verification and the second tier covering product verification at a single factory. Additional factory locations can be added for an additional fee and AHFA members receive a discount on the fees. Data from participating companies, including a list of all the products that are eligible to carry the "Product Stability Verified" mark can be seen on UL's website. ■ *Source: Furniture Today*