

Fashion icon and career woman, Barbie turns 59

Despite celebrating her 59th birthday on Friday, 9 March, Barbie remains the most popular toy and doll brand in the world. Barbie boasts 99% brand awareness across over 150 countries, over 14 million Facebook fans, more than 4.5 million monthly app users, over 4 million active website users, 3.2 million YouTube subscribers, 268,000 Twitter followers, and has one of the world's fastest-growing Instagram accounts, currently sitting at 1.9 million followers.



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She may have started her life as a teenage fashion model, but just one year later, she was promoted to fashion editor. And the year after that, she shattered the plastic ceiling and entered the working world as a 'career gal'. She's been an aerobics instructor, a ballerina, a fashion designer and an Olympic athlete, as well as a Marine Corps sergeant, firefighter and airline pilot. In fact, Barbie has over 180 careers on her resume, inspiring little girls to dream big along the way.

In 2011, Barbie committed to entering into a new career every year, specifically those that are traditionally under-represented by women, such as computer engineering, film directing, and entrepreneurship. Of late, she has broken into the spy world and tried her hand at being a superhero.

Barbie creator Ruth Handler comments:

“ *My whole philosophy of Barbie was that through the doll, the little girl could be anything she wanted to be. Barbie always represented the fact that a woman has choices.* ”

Shattering stereotypes

In 2015, in a bid to provide girls all over the world with role models who looked just like them, she broke more boundaries when she hit shelves in a variety of skin tones and hair textures. This was closely followed by different body types in 2016, to better represent a more varied and authentic reality.

The stereotype-shattering Fashionista range now includes four body types (the original and three new shapes - petite, curvy, and tall), seven skin tones, 22 eye colours, 24 hairstyles and countless fashions and accessories.

Girls across the globe can now choose to play with a Barbie who looks just like them, or create a group of friends who is more like their own group of friends at school.

The celebration of Barbie's 59th anniversary in March brings with it a host of new products for girls from all walks of life, from new dolls in the Fashionista range that better reflect the world girls see around them and bring imaginative play even closer to home, to new clothing ranges, linen lines, jewellery, accessories and sporting goods.



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Branding giant

Barbie's image is used on over 45 consumer product categories, from clothing, shoes, accessories and linen, to stationery, games, magazines, books, sporting goods, consumer electronics and even food items.

In South Africa alone, over 10 million units of Barbie emblazoned consumer products were sold in 2017, from clothing lines reminding kids that It's Great to Be a Girl, and encouraging them to Make Things Happen, to school bags, stationery and scatter cushions reminding them to Dream Big, Think the Unthinkable, and Always Show your Sparkle.

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