iBesties: Middle School Moguls

Concept Paper

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OVERVIEW

iBesties is a transmedia brand that aims to inspire and connect with girls ages 7-12 through storytelling, consumer products and technology. The iBesties brand tells the story of 6 young friends running a hit social networking startup under the cloak of secrecy. The girls are “middle schoolers by day...moguls by night.” The iBesties brand promotes entrepreneurship, friendship, diversity, technology learning, and goal-setting for young girls. The iBesties series breaks stereotypes by teaching girls they can play an integral role in STEM focused careers while also showing a diversity of characters from different backgrounds who are all able to create their own happily ever.

THE MARKET NEED FOR iBESTIES

Why Launch iBesties Now?
There is currently a huge push for better role models for young girls in the media. Mattel and Disney are both constantly receiving criticism for the body shapes and antiquated messages behind their female characters and toys. Another major push in the US is to increase STEM learning in young girls. iBesties is a brand that answers all of these concerns while still appealing to the target market.

The Need for the Promotion of STEM Initiatives to Young Girls
In middle school, 74% of girls express interest in STEM, but when choosing a college major, just 0.3% of high school girls select computer science. A reason for this is the lack of female characters with STEM careers in the media. Currently most movie studios and CAA and UTA have branches of their operations aimed at STEM promotion. iBesties has met with UTA and gained valuable feedback.

The Buying Power of the Tween
Estimated at $1.5 billion in disposable income, tweens are a sizeable direct market. They are characterized as “more connected, more direct, more informed, have more personal power, more money, more spending power within the family and have more influence than previous generations (Lindstrom & Seybold, 2003).

There is a large disparity in the market between what girls are interested in and the brands available to them.

According to the Girl Scouts of America, today’s girls ages 7-12, have interest in technology, leadership, business, science, fashion, gaming and more.

The toys, books and dolls marketed to this same age group primarily focus on fashion and fantasy – with an emphasis on fairies, princesses, monsters and vampires.
### iBESTIES PRODUCTS

The iBesties brand is in the development stage of operations but has completed and market tested its first book and its character illustrations. The company has also built a brand image that has been approved by a leading branding expert. The iBesties product mix and each stage of development can be seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer Goods</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book 1 (&amp; E-book)</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Interactive Website</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book 2 (&amp; E-book)</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Intro Cartoon</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolls</td>
<td>Future Development</td>
<td>Games</td>
<td>Future Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HOW iBESTIES WILL BE MARKETED

iBesties will be marketed using a multimedia approach, public relations and strategic partnerships. According to a research study by Grunwald and Associates, it is crucial for brands to reach tweens using multichannel marketing. This means connecting to their world both online and offline. In offering an interactive website, games and online advertising, iBesties will connect to its customers online. Events and strategic partnerships will connect iBesties to the target market offline. The company currently has strategic partnerships with the Girl Scouts of America and Girls Who Code.

### MARKET TESTING

iBesties has completed extensive market testing on the brand story and character images. These tests were conducted within public schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District as well as through an online survey sent out to girls throughout the US. iBesties also made a point to conduct market research aimed at parents of the company’s target market, who often make final purchasing decisions. Overall, the majority of participants said that they would purchase a book or toy from the company. A sample of these results can be seen below.

Q: Do you feel like you can relate to the iBesties stories and characters?
- GIRLS: 74% YES, 26% NO

Q: Would you want to own an iBesties book or doll?
- GIRLS: 77% YES, 23% NO

Q: Are satisfied with the current book and toy offerings for your daughter?
- PARENTS: 32% YES, 68% NO

Q: After seeing the iBesties product would you buy it for your child?
- PARENTS: 83% YES, 17% NO
COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

In entering the children’s book and toy market, iBesties will see global competition. Many competing companies offer additional products and media such as cartoons, toys, games and more. While the competition is fierce, the landscape is changing. While the Barbie brand loses relevancy, such brands as American Girl continue to rise. This shows the interest by parents in brands that offer inspirational or educational value over fluff. The closest direct competitors within these perimeters can be seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Target Age</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Dolls</th>
<th>Interactive Website</th>
<th>Appeals to Parents</th>
<th>Appeals to Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iBesties</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Future Vertical</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss O &amp; Friends</td>
<td>9-14</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monster High</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Girls</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION TEAM

iBesties currently employs an experienced and passionate team of women who are working everyday to grow the brand. This includes an award winning children’s book author, a STEM-focused technology consultant and an illustrator and web developer. For the business plan competition team, the iBesties team will focus on sales and marketing growth. The team for the competition can be seen below:

GINA HEITKAMP, Co-Founder & Business Mind
Gina is a tech-savvy MBA candidate who is tired of being one of a small handful of women at entrepreneur and tech startup events. Gina has worked building and selling social media sites in the past and now works as a strategy consultant, bringing new products to market. With iBesties, she hopes to inspire girls to think outside the box and create new technology innovations. Gina’s favorite iBestie is Sunny.

JENAE HEITKAMP, Co-Founder & Creative Mind
Jenae is a MFT who works with young girls in Los Angeles. Jenae has over ten years of experience working with iBesties’ target market and hopes to use iBesties as a platform to entertain young girls in a positive way and to inspire her baby daughter Ava. Jenae is the creative mind behind the characters in the books. Jenae’s favorite iBestie is Izzy.

MELANIE CRYER, Marketing and Social Media Guru
Melanie Cryer is an experienced and savvy businesswoman with a passion for seeing women achieve their goals. As a corporate trainer for over ten years, Melanie is used to molding the next generation of minds. In the MBA program, Melanie’s focus has been on marketing and she looks forward to assisting the iBesties team in any way possible. Melanie’s favorite iBestie is Sarah.