



Analysis of Axel Dammler, Managing Director of Iconkids & Youth

Minions vs. Tom & Jerry

How to License Shooting Stars and Classics

The current wave of the Kids License Monitor sees two licenses ranking top in the lists that could not be more different: The Minions and Tom & Jerry! Obviously, both appeal to a broad target group what makes them so outstanding – and interesting for licensed products.

➔ Yet their «recipe for success» is completely different. Tom & Jerry is a classic franchise that builds its appeal on simple slapstick humour, the clever small mouse everyone can identify with, and its fights against the wicked cat. This works universally, across the ages, for both genders, and in all markets. Their constant breaking of rules and their utter ignorance of political correctness gives them a twist that goes beyond being just funny.

This last point is a similarity to the Minions: They are mischievous little fellows, too, and their specific humour is highly visual. However, this is also where the similarities end: While Tom & Jerry address well-known stereotypes (the cute mouse vs. the evil cat), the Minions are so crazy they escape any references. Although Minions and Tom & Jerry may appear to be comparable licenses at first sight, they are very different and their background has massive implications on how they should be marketed.

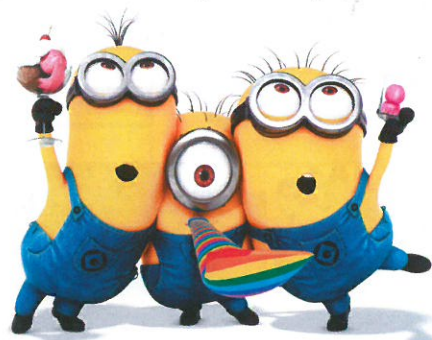
There is no doubt that Tom & Jerry are very popular, but they are not «hot».

Slapping them on a product would not really raise any eyebrows or create enthusiasm: this merchandise would probably be nice, but not special. Tom & Jerry as well as other popular classics such as Donald Duck or Bugs Bunny can become the initial door-opener, but the challenge is to create a new, contemporary, exciting approach for these classics to make them work. A year 2015 t-shirt with Tom & Jerry on it has to look different from a year 1990 t-shirt, it has to «explain» its up-to-da-

teness through its design. So when considering to sign a classic, the first thing you should do is to check the available style-guides: don't look for the Tom & Jerry of your own childhood, but for designs that make the characters relevant for the current generation of children!

With the Minions it is a completely different story

At this time in their career, they are still very «fresh» so that everyone can connect to them easily. This is a great stage in their development and 2015 will definitely be their year. The big question is, however, where will



the Minions move from here? It was a similar situation when SpongeBob came into the market: this guy was so weird he attracted a broad age group at the beginning – even adults watched the cartoons. Then, slowly, but steadily, SpongeBob became a character for kids. His target audience grew younger and younger and the triggers of this process where the presence on kids TV channels and, of course, all the licensed products for children in the stores.

When looking at the merchandise overkill around the release of the Minions movie, it can make you wonder for how much longer they can keep their teenage and adult fans. The best way to lose older supporters is to scream «I am for kids!» and the Minions seem to scream this louder with every day. They really are at an

exciting stage of their development at this time, but this is also a critical stage for the future of the license. It is possible to keep an older audience attracted for a long time (the Simpsons prove this for decades!), but it would need the right content and fitting style guides to keep the anarchist humour that is still owned by the little yellow fellas. Too much simplicity in the visual execution and humour would turn the Minions into a kids-only license within months – and this is in fact a highly dangerous territory. Once the novelty value of their funny looks is worn out, the Minions will face the competition of more gender specific and story-driven

franchises – from Star Wars to Monster High. These licenses have more depth and offer more variation than the Minions and are therefore more likely to convince buyers again and again.

For those who can ride on top of this summer's Minions wave, it's going to be a perfect season, but for those who think about signing the Minions for the next years: it needs the re-invented Minions 2.0 to turn them from a temporary hype into a long-term seller. Be it classics or shooting stars: the challenge is always to understand the drivers behind the current success in order to understand the future potential.

The author

Axel Dammler is Managing Director of iconkids & youth in Munich (Germany). His quarterly study Kids License Monitor tracks the market status of relevant licenses among children aged 4-12 years in France, Germany and the UK.