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Licensing International's 2026 Global Study Shows Licensing Industry's Continued Growth, Reaching \$389.8 Billion in Sales

Global sales of licensed merchandise and services increased 5.45% in 2025, fueled by Sports, Character/Entertainment, Toys, Video Games, and strong regional growth in North Asia

LAS VEGAS, May 19, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [Licensing International](#) today released the executive summary of its 2026 Global Licensing Industry Study, reporting \$389.8 billion in global sales of licensed merchandise and services in 2025. The 5.45% year-over-year increase once again outpaced the broader global retail market, which grew nominally by 4.52%, reinforcing the continued strength of licensed products across categories and regions.

The annual study, conducted by independent research firm Brandar Consulting, highlights continued consumer demand for licensed products tied to nostalgia, escapism, and shared brand experiences. As consumers navigate economic uncertainty and digital fatigue, licensed properties continue to offer trusted connections to the brands, characters, and stories they love.

"This data confirms what licensing professionals around the world already know to be true, which is that licensed merchandise is a powerful business-driver," said **Maura Regan, President of Licensing International**. "This is not an industry anchored to one consumer category or one type of fan engagement. Licensing is a dynamic, global business that continues to move at the pace of changing consumer behavior. From sports and entertainment to anime, gaming, and location-based experiences, licensing continues to deepen consumer engagement in powerful ways and drive revenue."

The 2026 Global Study results are derived from multiple sources of market information as well as survey-reported data from 51 countries across all seven major geographic regions. In all, the study's analysis includes licensing data from 1,068 companies spanning the globe.

Key takeaways from the 2026 Global Licensing Industry Study include:

- **Character/Entertainment Licensing Remains a Significant Growth Engine**
 - The Character/Entertainment segment grew 8% to reach \$161.8 billion in retail sales, driven by healthy box office performance and strong contributions from the Anime and Video Game sectors.
 - Anime, Video Games, Comics, Social Media, and Other properties now make up a combined 34% of licensing revenues in the category, slightly ahead of Feature Films and Scripted & Unscripted TV at 33%.
- **Sports Becomes the Fastest-Growing Property Category**
 - The Sports property category reported the highest growth of any property type this past year, increasing 8.5% to reach \$44.4 billion.
 - Sports is now the third-largest property category, representing 11.4% of the market, its highest share ever in the Global Study.
 - Other top-performing property categories in terms of growth rates in 2025 included Publishing (+5.9%), Art (+5.7%), Collegiate (+4.8%), and Music (+3.1%).
- **Licensed Toys Benefit from the Rise of the Kidult Consumer**
 - The licensed Toys product category reached \$46.4 billion, fueled in part by the growing “kidult” demographic.
 - In 2025, nearly 40% of European adult consumers reported purchasing toys for themselves or another adult.
- **North Asia Leads Regional Growth**
 - North Asia was the fastest-growing region globally at +14.1%, driven by robust increases in global box office sales, video games, and anime streaming content, led by Japan, South Korea, and China.
 - Other high-growth regions included LATAM (+7.6%) and South Asia/PAC (+5.3%).
- **Online Retail and Social Commerce Create New Pathways for Licensed Sales**
 - Online retail sales rose to 32% of all global licensed retail sales.
 - For the first time, the study tracked social commerce, finding that 16% of all online sales globally were generated from social media platforms.
- **Mature Consumers Represent a Significant Long-Term Opportunity**
 - The study also highlights a significant long-term opportunity with mature consumers aged 60 and older, a demographic forecast to increase spending to \$43 trillion by 2040 as older consumers significantly outnumber younger generations in several key global regions.

Further results from Licensing International’s 2026 Global Licensing Industry Study will be published in the complete report, including regional and country-by-country breakdowns for major markets. The full Global Study will be made available for free to Licensing International members (and publicly for purchase) later this summer.

About Licensing International

Licensing International is the leading trade organization for the \$389.8+ billion global licensing industry. Licensing International’s mission is to foster the growth and expansion of licensing around the world, raise the level of professionalism for licensing practitioners, and create greater awareness of the benefits of licensing to the business community at large. Founded in 1985, Licensing International members in over 40 countries enjoy access to an array of benefits, including extensive educational programming and worldwide networking events. Visit [LicensingInternational.org](https://www.LicensingInternational.org) for more information and to utilize licensing’s definitive online resource.

About Brandar Consulting, LLC

Brandar Consulting, LLC is an 18-year-old firm committed to providing companies subject matter expertise in the areas of Brand Licensing, Market Research, Market Analysis, Brand Extension and Business Strategy. The firm specializes in helping organizations start or proactively expand Brand/Trademark Licensing Programs. The key components in its suite of services are conducting brand equity & category extension research, in-licensing brand identification research, product market analysis, modeling brand royalty potential, and conducting factor analysis to set priorities for Licensing Plans. Visit www.brandar.com for more information.

Media Contact:

Licensing International

Elizabeth Foster
EFoster@licensing.org