

Bob plush toy: loved by children, disliked by adults

For a study 53 kindergartners, 45 TV experts working at public broadcasting stations, and 29 educators evaluated 12 licensed plush toys. They chose their favourite and least favourite toy.

For years, the stop-frame-animation-series *Bob the Builder* has been a successful format in the preschoolers' television programme. The builder has also proven to be a great success in terms of merchandise and franchise: in Germany alone, there are, among other things, DVDs, books, audio-books, children's wardrobe, LEGO-toys, and a magazine by or with Bob the Builder. A Bob-the-Builder-plush toy with a small functioning torch light was one of 12 licensed toys kindergartners, educators, and TV experts were asked to evaluate for an IZI study.

The TV experts' comments



Bob as a licensed plush toy is getting exclusively negative assessments by experts working for children's programmes of public broadcasting stations. In particular, they criticise the quality of the material used.

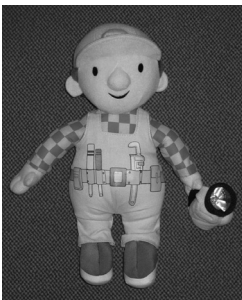
"Tools are just painted on, not real, seems cheap. The face is not nice; too technical with the torch light in hand." (male TV expert)

"Hideous from head to toe." (female TV expert)

"Bad quality/materiality; look and feel negative/loveless." (female TV expert)

"Looks cheap and does not feel good. No love for detail. Moreover, I do not like the show." (male TV expert)

The children's comments



Beside SpongeBob SquarePants, Bob the Builder is, according to the study, one of the most popular licensed toys with the 3- to 6-year-olds. Especially boys, but also some girls chose Bob as their favourite toy. The children specifically emphasise the functioning torch light, as well as the printed-on tool-belt, Bob's helmet, and the very detailed design of the hands as positive characteristics of the plush toy:

"He's got a helmet and a cool belt and cool clothes and cool shoes and the lamp, it glows." (boy, 3 years old)

"Because he can work and it's nice that he can glow." (boy, 4 years old)

But the attractiveness of the licensed toy is also a result of Bob's popularity:

"I think he's funny, we also have him here out of Lego." (girl, 4 years old)

"Because I have a lot of stuff with him, a pyjama, a blanket." (boy, 3 years old)



The educators' comments

Educators view the licensed plush toy Bob in a predominantly negative light. They criticise, above all, its texture and the lack of playing possibilities. However, there is disagreement regarding the lifelikeness of the toy:

"He is a person and he is able to talk. He is well proportioned and is 'right' because he looks lifelike."

"The toy is too close to reality and offers very little potential for creativity."

"Bulky, too colourful and unhandy."

"Inflexible material and synthetic fibres. A plastic effect."

Bob the Builder: TV-character (top), 35 cm Bob licensed doll (middle) and the interview situation at the kindergarten (bottom)

Andrea Holler/Birgit Kinateder (IZI)
Source: Study "Gefährten der Kindheit" ["Childhood companions"]
(Cooperative study IZI/Foundation "Chancen für Kinder durch Spielen")