



# TWINKLE TWINKLE

Hot on the heels of the back to school campaigns comes sales opportunities for Christmas.

BY BRIONY REED

The Christmas period should provide a flurry of sales activity for dealers. Not only will consumers be looking for vast quantities of products for wrapping and card writing, but they'll also be after gifts, from little stocking fillers right up to serious presents – items such as PDAs or top-of-the-range fountain pens.

So what are your product options for the festive season? With present wrapping and card writing going on, demand will be high for coloured pens – including gold and silver markers – to make the right decorative impression. Not to mention the cards, paper, scissors and sticky tape also needed to complete the gift. Business supplies dealers are well placed to offer a one-stop shop for these products, so point that out to all your customers!

And you can provide the present itself as well. As previously mentioned, PDAs and high-end writing instruments are one option, but it's not just expensive gifts that you can cater for. Artists' materials make good gifts for anyone with creative talent, while many manufacturers do gift sets around this time of year. For anyone of school age such items can make good – and useful – presents. For example, a complete set of coloured pencils or smelly gel pens would be a welcome addition to many a child's pencil case on the return to school after the Christmas break.

And of course there are stocking fillers. Character, amusing items are particularly good for this, but anything small and useful is also a good candidate. And overall, there will be a lot of them being purchased come December, so make sure you get in on the act and start thinking about stocking up now!

## DID YOU KNOW?

>> In both **FRANCE** and **GERMANY** children leave shoes or boots out for Father Christmas, rather than stockings.

>> The modern tradition of the Christmas tree originated in **GERMANY**.

>> **NORWAY** is the birthplace of the Yule log – the ancient Norse used the Yule log in their celebration of the return of the sun at the time of the winter solstice.

>> A specifically **SPANISH** Christmas tradition is that of Hogueras (bonfires). The observance of the winter solstice, characterised by people jumping over fires as a symbolic protection against illness.

>> Another custom peculiar to **SPAIN** is that of ‘swinging’. And no, not the variety you’re thinking of! Swings are set up throughout the courtyards and young people swing to the accompaniment of songs and laughter.

>> It is not Santa who comes to **SPAIN** bearing gifts, but the Three Wise Men.

>> **ATHENS** boasts one of the world’s largest outdoor Christmas ‘trees’, constructed of thousands of lights on cables emanating from the top of a tall tower – despite the fact that Christmas trees were unheard of in Greece until a few decades ago.

>> In **ICELAND**, they have no fewer than thirteen Santas, known as Jólásveinar. Said to be descendants of a mythological figure known as Gryla the Ogre and Leppaludi, each begins visiting Icelandic homes on December 12th and, by Christmas Day, they’ve all arrived. Each character makes his presence felt in mischievous ways. With names like Door Slammer, Candle Beggar and Meat Hooker, you can probably guess what these are...

>> In **NEW YORK CITY**, an ice rink is created beneath the tree at Rockefeller Center, while in Washington, DC, the focal point of the season is the lighting of the tree on the Ellipse with a large tree representing the **US** and smaller trees representing each state.

>> In **ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA**, the oldest city in the **US**, a city ordinance prevents anyone from displaying outdoor Christmas lights that are not white. The one exception is a colourfully decorated tree in the town square.

>> And in **AUSTRALIA**, some people – especially tourists – have their Christmas dinner on the beach, with Bondi alone attracting thousands of people on December 25th. ■

