NEWS RELEASE

Trading Cards are Winning Wallets: RRD Study Shows What Drives Collector Investments

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- 31% of collectors' collections now have more value than their savings accounts, while nearly 40% have prioritized collectible purchases over essential bills.
- Nostalgia and "Kidult" consumers are transforming hobbies into assets, a trend cited as a key business driver by 47% of industry professionals.
- Physical perfection is now critical, with 70% of collectors declining purchases due to "cheap" packaging and 51% of brands investing in higher-grade materials to meet grading standards.

CHICAGO--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- New research by **RRD** finds trading card collectibles have evolved beyond a hobby into a serious asset class. RRD's **2026 Collectibles & Trading Card Report** found more than a quarter of respondents (31%) report their collections are worth more than their savings account, and nearly 40% of collectors have prioritized purchasing a collectible over traditional necessities like bills or home repairs. Additionally, almost 40% of respondents rank saving their collection "high" or "number one" priority in an emergency or fire after people and pets, emphasizing the commitment to collecting.

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Nostalgia and the rise of "Kidult" consumers — adults buying for themselves, driven by deep-seated emotional connections and personal history — represent a key driver for 47% of industry professionals. As a result of this trend, the market is shifting toward high-value, precision-crafted products where quality and packaging directly influence purchasing decisions. RRD's study found that 70% of collectors have declined a purchase because the packaging felt "cheap" or low-quality.

The Nostalgia vs. Investment Paradox

While trading cards are increasingly winning the wallets of consumers as a serious investment class, this financial commitment remains strongly linked to personal history. With nostalgia as a primary purchase driver for 33% of collectors, nearly half (48%) now view their collection as a strategic hybrid of hobby and financial asset.

- Asset rivalry: 31% of collectors report their collection is worth more than their savings account, and nearly a quarter (24%) say their collection is worth more than their vehicle.
- Financial sacrifices: Nearly 40% of collectors have prioritized purchasing a collectible over paying for traditional necessities like bills or home repairs.
- Emergency priority: In a fire or emergency, nearly 40% of collectors rank saving their collection as a "high" or "number one" priority after people and pets.

"There's an increasing shift in consumer behavior where nostalgia is a primary factor driving high-stakes financial commitments," said Chip West, Retail and Consumer Behavior Expert at RRD. "For the modern collector, these items have evolved beyond a hobby into investment assets that demand a level of quality and authenticity reflective of their personal and financial value. The challenge for trading card brands is to ensure that every physical touchpoint, from the artwork to the packaging, meets the rigorous demands of today's collectors."

Packaging Now a Dealbreaker

While "cheap" packaging can be a dealbreaker for three quarters of collectors, sustainability is a priority. Fifty-eight percent are willing to pay a premium for products that use sustainable, plastic-free packaging. However, the scrutiny of substrates doesn't stop there. As collectors increasingly view their collections as investments, material quality has shifted from an aesthetic choice to a core business risk, leading 51% of industry decision-makers to invest in higher-grade materials and card stock specifically to meet the standards of professional grading services, according to RRD's research.

Additionally, as businesses navigate material cost increases and secondary market volatility, over 60% of decision makers now view single-source partnerships as a strategic necessity for cost-efficiency and quality consistency.

The Discovery Mismatch

Despite the digital push — where 52% of brands design up to half of their products specifically for social media "Live Breaking," livestreams, and social-driven sales — collectors still rely on a broader ecosystem for discovery. A quarter (26%) still discover sets in retail stores, while 21% prioritize community and friends, suggesting a critical need for omnichannel strategies that digital-only approaches may miss.

The world's most popular and emerging trading card and board game brands rely on RRD as their behind-the-scenes production engine. With a 37-year legacy in the collectibles industry, RRD has partnered with global and regional brands to design, print, package, kit, warehouse and fulfill trading cards, games, toys, books, manuals and other collectibles at scale. For more information about RRD's 2026 Collectibles & Trading Cards Report, visit **https://go.rrd.com/collectibles**.

About RRD

RRD provides a complete portfolio of marketing, packaging, print and business services to the world's most respected brands, including 92% of the Fortune 100. The company's proprietary technology, advanced data analytics and established expertise fuel organizational decision-making, from strategy through execution. With operations in 30 countries, global organizations and regulated industries trust RRD to reduce complexity and drive audience connections across the entire customer journey.

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Source: RRD