Consumers are signing on the dotted line for polka-dot fashions, rugs, sheets and more. The classic graphic is back again in bolder prints and vibrant colors.

By Megan H. Chan Star Tribune Staff Writer

Teenagers apply high-tech high pressure

By Alex Williams

New York Times

Last Christmas, Kristi Stangeland, a mother of two who lives in Farmingdale, N.Y., bought a greaseboard. She bought her 14-year-old daughter, Erka Stellan, the wrong MP3 player. “I tried to get away with getting her an MP3 player that was $100 cheaper,” Stangeland explained sheepishly. “I was in the biggest dog lose,” she said, recalling Erka’s crystalline response. “She went to school, and everyone else had got an MP3 for Christmas. It was like, ‘Hey everyone else got one, and you couldn’t buy me an MP3?’ So we go in for her birthday two months later.” While teenagers once revered $100 sneakers and jeans (arguably necessities because, after all, they are clothes), the must-have items now — iPods, cell phones with cameras, and portable DVD players — are high-tech, constantly in need of upgrade and can cost up to $500 each. These items are increasingly out of reach for most high school students, so the wish list is pressed on to more formal and dad.

Researchers who study child behavior use the terms “nag factor” or “power poses” to describe how young children, in whom advertising has planted a desire for junk food or toys, lobby their parents. Now the same principle is reaching a feer pitch among teenagers. “It’s a good reason never to grow up,” said Carey Silber, vice president for consumer trends at Teenage Research, a Los Angeles-based consumer research firm, which recently found that 18 percent of boys aged 13 to 17 surveyed owned an MP3 player, and that 17 percent owned a DVD player. But only 10 percent of the teenagers had a job, and on average they netted only $28 a week.

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