

MARKETING TO YOUTH

The generation game

German research has shown that young people are becoming more conservative in their outlook. **Daniel Plettenberg** examines how this will affect marketing strategies

Conventional wisdom suggests that young people are more open-minded than their elders, making them an attractive group for marketers. Influencing this age range offers brands the chance of shaping the buying habits of the future.

But in recent months, attitudes among young Germans have changed. Conservatism is on the rise among the 17-30 year old age group. It is now considered acceptable, even attractive, to talk about what would formerly have been considered dull topics. When young Germans were recently asked to describe their ambitions, you might expect dreams such as becoming an artist or going on safari. But a typical response was: "I want a wife, kids, a cool car and a nice house in the suburbs." (Martin, 20, first-year undergraduate.)

Sixty-seven per cent of respondents claimed that a rebellious attitude was not natural to the 17-30 year old age group. Sixty-one per cent were looking for security. When the young people were asked what security meant to them, they replied that it involved having a mortgage, the right insurance and the prospect of a good pension. A further 60% agreed that they would like to better plan their future.

This trend is mirrored in other research. Eighty-eight per cent of young Germans have definite aims for the future, according to BBDO. Only Russians are more goal-orientated, with 93% having clear aims.

Seventy-one per cent of Germans think that getting married and having kids is their most important objective, while 60% believe that it makes sense for women to stop working and bring up the children. What has caused this change of attitude?

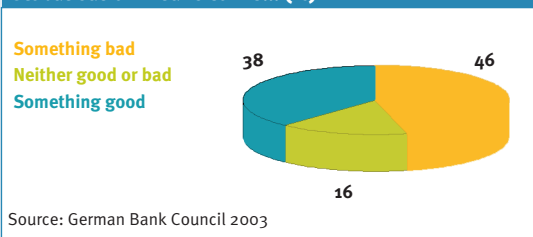
Changing attitudes

More than half of young people polled agreed that they "often feel puzzled and irritated by the world around me". This is a reflection of the economic climate. Jobs are no longer safe; life cannot be planned. A young person's working life is likely to include different jobs, even different careers.

Until the 1990s, popular culture provided role models for young people. Contemporary music movements, such as punk and new wave, were of vital significance in defining attitudes. But there are no such dominant trends today, so the young can mix and match identities. Although this can be seen as an opportunity, it can also intensify feelings of insecurity.

Young people also see very little need for rebellion. They see the fight for equality as nearly won. Fifty-seven per cent of respondents are equally comfortable in gay or straight company, according to BBDO. This reaches 70% in the UK and 75% in Sweden. Sexuality and race are no longer key issues that divide groups of young people.

Globalisation means to me... (%)



Attitudes to politics and economics, by gender (%)

| | Not at all | Only a bit | Yes |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| 'I am interested in political issues' | 22/37 | 40/44 | 38/19 |
| 'I am interested in economic issues' | 23/33 | 35/43 | 42/25 |

Source: German Bank Council 2003 Key: Young men/Young women

How important are these aims to you?

