

### Do you strongly disagree/totally agree with these statements?

Statement	Strongly disagree		Totally agree		
	1	2	3	4	5
'I look for security in my life'	5.5	10.3	23.6	35.5	25.2
'Rebellion is part of my attitude'	31.3	33.9	16.5	9.4	7.1
'I know about my future, my life can be planned'	52.8	25.2	15	3.9	3.1
'I would like to be able to plan my future more'	4.7	15	21.3	29.1	29.9
'A big part of my identity is being puzzled'	7.1	16.5	25.2	24.4	26.8
'I have one or more products I use everyday that give me a good feeling'	3.1	7.1	23.6	32.3	33.9

Source: Evo Research

### Key learnings

- Young people are becoming more conservative in their tastes. This may affect the products they buy and how they respond to marketing messages.
- Brands that traditionally market to older consumers should examine if it is worth targeting a younger audience.
- Nostalgia and 'retro' brands are important to this market. Can your brand hark back to a glorious heritage?
- Don't stereotype: young people mix and match identities from many influences.

Young people also lack the ethical framework of previous generations. Politicians are seen to give no clear moral lead, so young people are free to build their own moral systems. Although some are still more traditionally rebellious – joining the left-wing, anti-globalism movement – many millions also gathered in Rome's St Peter's Square to mourn the very conservative Pope John Paul II. There is an element of mix and match in this generation's moral identities.

It appears young people react to their feelings of puzzlement and irritation by adopting the values and fashions of their parents' generation, where identities were more clear-cut. Ninety-seven per cent of respondents to a recent German Bank Council youth study considered it important or very important to achieve something in life. Ninety-five per cent also claimed it was important or very important to have security.

This is not all bad news for brands. It does not imply that this generation is boring or trend-resistant. This is a group that travels, downloads music and games, and enjoys fashion. But new attitudes require new products, or at least different ways of communicating existing brands. Some companies are capitalising on the youthful conservatism. German building society Schwaebisch Hall ran a TV ad aimed at 18-25 year olds, which showed young people enjoying their parents' house while they were out. The strapline stated: 'One day, I want my own place'. Another building society, LBS, also ran a TV campaign about a trailer-park family with an 'alternative' lifestyle. The young daughter tells her father that her best friend's family owns a house, which he dismisses as being 'square'. The girl says: "One day, I want to be square too." The campaign has been extended onto LBS' website, where teenagers discuss whether saving for a house is cool or not.

Sports brand Puma harks back to the 1970s with its retro-style shoes, while Adidas has begun creating new versions of its 1960s products in an appeal to modern consumers. The new Mini car and the upcoming Fiat Cinquecento are capitalising on the desire to

mimic the past. Face cream Nivea has also seen a resurgence of popularity after its slightly old-fashioned heritage became a positive attribute for young consumers.

Brands and products that act as portable, constant 'companions' in an uncertain world are very popular. Sixty-six per cent of the young people questioned own a product that fulfils this role. Apple's iPod music player is a popular example of this new genre.

### European trend

The research suggests that a trend of new conservatism is typical across the whole of Europe. In Ireland, Spain and Italy, young people stay in the parental home for as long as is possible, according to BBDO. While it is hip for young Berliners to embrace the fashions and décor of the 1970s, it is chic in France to wear a black turtleneck with dark glasses and watch 1960s movies. In Russia, young people even hold 'Soviet parties' to reminisce about the old days.

British young people are drawn more to moral topics. Fifty-nine per cent of young female voters in the UK claim to favour stricter abortion laws. David Goodhart, editor-in-chief of UK political magazine *Prospect*, claims that the country is making a definite shift back to Victorian values and codes of behaviour.

Marketers attempting to enter this climate must be careful to make the right impression. Some companies are clearly tapping into the themes very successfully, but others have to adjust their marketing to suit this generation. The new conservatism shows no signs of fading away soon. Take young peoples' needs, confusion and loss of orientation, and offer serious solutions – because this is a very serious generation. *Daniel Plettenberg is managing director of Evo Research GmbH, which conducted a study into young Germans' attitudes to life. The article also draws on BBDO Europe's research on young consumers' beliefs across Europe, the University of Mainz's intercultural youth study 2004 and the German Bank Council's 2003 youth survey. danielp@evomarktforschung.com*