



# GenWorld

The New Generation of Global Youth

An Overview

# Shifts in Global Teen Culture

They are hyper-informed. They are worried about the state of the world around them. They believe it won't be easy to secure a happy life, but are prepared to fight for it. In short, they are the next generation of global teens, and they are unlike any generation that came before them.

Certain experiences transform the outlook of an entire generation. In the case of today's 13 to 18-year-olds, events since 9-11 have acted as a shot heard 'round the world. Global conditions changed overnight — from a world filled with the optimism and endless possibility of the Internet boom, to a dark and anxious place threatened by global war and international terror. These dramatic changes could only logically result in equally important shifts in global teen culture.

The GenWorld global teen study set out to explore the recent changes in global teen attitudes, lifestyle and values. Conducted by Energy BBDO in Chicago, GenWorld is the largest and most comprehensive public study of its kind in recent years. Our key discovery: seven seismic shifts that we believe will be known as the hallmarks of a new generation.

**1. Zeitgeist: From Optimism to Determination in a Dark World** Far from the exuberant optimism of teens in the 1990s, just 14% of global teens today say, "I think the world is becoming a better place." Yet rather than resignation, teens are finding a new will to fight. They are facing the future with courage and determination. How can brands follow suit?

**2. Success: From Entitlement to Self-Activism** Forget the "whatever" detachment and sense of entitlement that defined the 1990s. A new attitude reigns in this generation: "I would fight for a cause I believe in." Their number one cause: hope for their own future. Today's teens are striving for mature, long-term goals like security, balance and enjoyment in life. Can brands act as an antidote to the serious challenges of contemporary teen life?

**3. The Vanguard of Cool: From USA Teens to Creatives** American teens once represented the vanguard of global youth culture. But in today's world where authenticity matters most, a new group of teen leaders has emerged. Defined more by values than geography, Creatives are curious, altruistic, open to new ideas, and actively engaged in creating youth culture. How can brands leverage their one golden rule: express yourself?

**4. American Teens: From Edgy to Traditional** Where the last decade of American teen culture seemed dominated by gritty urbanism, American teens today poll among the most conservative in the world — valuing religion, hoping to get married and become parents and striving to live by high moral standards. How can brands authentically tap growing conservatism in a normally no-holds-barred market?

**5. Wired Teens: From an Elite to a Mass Market** In the 1990s, being wired was limited to a global techno-elite (wealthy kids in the developed world). Today technology is a hallmark of mainstream cool. How can brands follow the lead of SuperConnectors, teens who use technology to create vibrant social networks and are constantly engaged in a whole new, virtually connected world?

**6. Global Brand Leaders: From American Brands to World Brands** While American brands still top the charts in terms of overall awareness, overall likeability for global giants such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola has slipped. A new guard of world brands (including Sony, Nokia and Adidas) seems to be winning teen popularity contests. Why? Evidence suggests they are better equipped to meet the desires of this burgeoning generation.

**7. Brands: From Symbols of Status to Drivers of Apathy** Marketers face big trouble: 62% of global teens are apathetic about marketing and advertising. That is, they are not anti-brand, but perhaps more dangerously, they just don't care — don't care about wearing brand logos, don't believe advertising, and feel there is too much advertising in the world. For a brand, is taking a stand yourself the only way to get a rise out of this generation?

## Our Take:

Today's global teens may be fearful, but they still give us cause to be optimistic. Ubiquity of information access may give this generation greater equality of opportunity. Their passion and determination may mean a greater willingness to tackle difficult societal problems. And the rise of social networks may lead to increased interpersonal and global understanding.

Perhaps the sharpest signal this generation is sending is to marketers, whose messages and approaches leave them indifferent. American marketers in particular may need a wake-up call. Only by offering global teens understanding and respect can they expect to leverage the full power of the newly emerging global teen culture.

## Methodology:

The GenWorld Teen Study, commissioned by Energy BBDO, gauged the lifestyle, values, attitudes and brand perceptions of 3,322 teens aged 13-18 in 13 countries around the world. Countries included: USA, Mexico, Brazil, U.K., France, Germany, Spain, Australia, Russia, Poland, China, Taiwan and India. The study was fielded over the summer of 2005 and administered in participants' indigenous language. An online methodology was used in developed countries where Internet access is widely available and an in-person methodology was used in developing countries. The sample was balanced male and female, with older and younger teens equally represented, and reflected broad socioeconomic status (A, B, C social classes).

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