Turkey's Generation Y

During this earlier part of the 21st century’s second decade, Turkey is once again undergoing a radical transformation. And, while not affecting everyone, information technologies have brought clear changes across all industries and lifestyles. In the marketing world, these winds of change are studied under the name “trends.”

The most important trends are social media, the quest for well-being, reality, sincerity, the seeking for transparency, a business focus and openness - even hunger - for new experiences. Marketing professionals want to be able to identify these trends’ impacts on brand preferences, and to then be able to engage in brand-orientated discourses on these trends. This is because they well know how missing the boat on any new trend leads directly to a loss of popularity, especially amongst the youth segments, as well as resulting in an overall weakness in brand-benefit communication. The question of “What’s in it for me?”, often asked by brand owners to research companies and strategists during presentations, is now being put to the brand owners themselves - by consumers. To be able to reply to this question, expressed in the consumer’s own language, the questions: “What are you promising me?”; “How will it work for me?”

Why yours, why not that other one?” and other common questions can only be answered by those who have managed to catch the boat on trends.

So, let’s get on that boat: you already know where the tickets are sold (Table 1), but how to chat and make friends now that you are together on the same boat? Probably, the first question to ask is: “Who are our traveling companions who led us to catch this boat in the first place?”. “Where are we heading, and why?”

To answer these questions, during April of this year Conento carried out specialized “webnographic” research among a broad range of young adults, combining online data gathering techniques with content analyses. The core aim of this research was to understand how global consumer trends are reflected in the lives of young adults in Turkey. The study was undertaken via the Internet, collecting raw data from 331 well-educated (high school graduate or higher) 18-35 years old ABCI SES group members from across Turkey. Given their dates of birth and their internet consumption habits, these young adults are Generation Y, representing up to 5 million people in Turkey.

Actually, looking at demographic data, the number Generation Y population members is 25.5 million in Turkey. This presents an amazing demographic window of opportunity, if these people’s involvement in the economy could be accelerated. However, the high overall rate of unemployment and therefore low income levels and even poverty, and the sexual culture that limits women’s involvement in the labor market are together the two most important barriers depriving us of this opportunity.
In such a situation, the marketing word naturally targets those sections that represent an economic force, and that have the education and life style to empower their consumption. Those who have managed to catch the boat when it comes to trends are our representatives of Generation Y.

The segmentation of Generation Y has been undertaken based on the way they enjoy their life and the priorities in their lives. The themes elucidated from the interviewee's own narrations were then tested with further questions. Thus, Generation Y is generally divided into four groups: Individualists, Success-Oriented, Idealists and Family Oriented. At different life stages different groups come to the fore.

Looking at this picture, Generation Y's Individualists and its more Success Oriented members are the most prominent in the youngest sub-segments. But we also see them in the other life stages.

The biggest transformation is being experienced by those of Generation Y who are building a family. These hints at two probabilities: each member of this new generation will either grow as a Success-Oriented Individualist, or they will leap from one group to another based on the requirements of each of their life stages. Both of these options may happen together. The answer is hidden in the family model established by the Individualists, the most definite representatives of Generation Y. For example, will an Individualist build a life where the women work more, having children but remaining outward-looking, while maintaining a life open to adventure? Such a projection is beyond the scope of our current research. So only time will tell.

Studying Western sources we see that descriptions of Generation Y generally focus on the Individualist, as compared to the other groups. However, in Turkey, this generation does not have just one single face. It is the environment that they find themselves in - factors such as their school, family and their marital status - that are keeping their expectations separate from the lives. Yes, they are all online, but some are 24/7 while others only 3 or 4 days each week. Yes, they all want more enjoyment in their life, but some feel it more when going out with their friends while others find it in spending time with their children. The most important characteristic distinguishing this generation from others generations is that they do not just accept statuses at work, at school and in marriage without questioning them. For example, although Generation Y mothers consider spending time with their children as their primary source of joy, they also feel free when walking through Beyoğlu with their husband, when they spend time online finding the cheapest toy for their son or daughter, and when they share their experiences on 'mother & child' websites.
Socializing on the Internet is the key for those in Turkey who enjoy some solitude, who can make decisions on his or her own and who can do whatever he or she wants. Our young adults, distressed by the responsibilities and difficulties of life, come to take a breather on Facebook and to express themselves on Twitter.

It is remarkable that nearly 80 percent of this group consider freedom to be a positive value that should be unlimited, while only 10 percent of them approach freedom cautiously.

On the other hand, studying the narratives supplied by Generation Y members, it can easily be said that they are not as close to freedom—which they know and understand—as they would wish to be. It is a feeling that they can only experience while fishing in the middle of the ocean or looking at passing birds. We have discovered that Generation Y solves the space problem, which restricts their freedom, by choosing social media. Socializing on the internet is the key for those in Turkey who enjoy some solitude, who can make decisions on his or her own and who can do whatever he or she wants. Our young adults, distressed by the responsibilities and difficulties of life, come to take a breather on Facebook and to express themselves on Twitter.

Turkey’s Generation Y has pretty much adopted the most popular trends (Table 3). This group can even be defined as “the trends machine”. Of course they want a healthy life and their longing for frankness is very evident. They also say “yes” to socialization, but only when they want it, and only as much as they want. They are busier compared to other generations but, unfortunately, unemployment is a serious problem for this generation. The trend embraced the least is the “openness/hunger for new experiences”: this is actually a failing that should be considered together with the lack of creativity, traces of which we looked for during our research but unfortunately could not find. Their lack of creative thinking, restricted by their education and cultural lives, also blocks their desire for new experiences.

For those young adults of our country who get old very quickly, marriage and work-time are the breaking points. On this aspect the Individualists are separated from the others, exerting efforts to continue their lifestyle, both while school and during their business lives, remain distant from the marriage issue as much as possible. This group considers even the world of work as a field for socialization, self-development and even entertainment. They are unhappy with any business environments that do not satisfy them in this search, immediately starting to look for a way to quit.

This is because ‘freedom’, for them, is one of their most basic needs list.

**FREEDOM IS THE LIFE PER SE**

In determining the needs of Generation Y, the definition of freedom functions like a litmus paper. For them, freedom is the life per se (see Graph: 2).