

AMASA debate reveals interesting facts on the SA teen market

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The recent AMASA discussion on de-mystifying the huge and often misunderstood SA Teen Market, revealed some very interesting facts and brought those who attended a little closer to solving the puzzle of SA's teen market.

The meeting, sponsored by Logistix Kids SA, a company focusing on Creative Market Solutions for the kids' and youth markets, saw various experts making the following key points:

- **Kids are getting older younger.** It's a fact that should be recognised if advertisers hope to communicate to the teen market successfully. It is the younger marketers actually living the lifestyle young people aspire to, who should be the ones doing the communicating.
- **If you could buy peer pressure, there would be no need for marketing!** The teen market relies heavily on "style leaders" to set the trends, which all the rest will then follow! As soon as everyone else cottons on, the style leaders will then find a new trend to latch onto.
- **Common words used to describe this market are:** fickle, influential, self-assured, self-oriented, materialistic and more affluent than previous teen generations.
- **Teen wants and needs are very different.** Their wants fluctuate according to the latest fads, while their needs, such as happiness and success, remain constant.
- **There is a convergence of cultures.** Modern teens "pluck" what they need from various cultures and create unique identities of their own. Especially among black youth, it is creative people like DJs, singers and fashion designers that are being emulated.
- **The print medium is extremely important.** This market is inundated with media messages, but we cannot underestimate the power of the written word and should encourage them to read.
- **Marketers and advertisers should listen to this market and adjust their message accordingly.** Media schedules must be flexible in order to accommodate regular, yet erratic shifts in teen trends.
- **You need to advertise to teens consistently and continuously.** Teens want to interact regularly with the brands they identify with, and expect a strong element of trust and loyalty from these brands.
- **The role of the family is extremely important.** Interestingly, the second highest ranked activity amongst teens (according to Logistix Kids SA) is spending time with family. The lines of communication between parents and teens seem to be a lot more open than in the past,
- **Teens today are extremely media savvy.** Communication via electronic means such as the Internet, e-mail and SMS, is crucial. Advertisers must find out what teens want and need by building databases and sending out regular e-mail newsletters, or running competitions via websites, SMS and so on. Teens want to interact with the media they consume and like things to happen spontaneously.
- **Don't talk down to them.** This is a highly intelligent market, with enormous buying power, that likes to be well informed. For example, Renault overseas has started marketing their cars to teens, because they know they are their potential future customers. Teens also help their parents make huge purchasing decisions.
- **When marketing to the teen market (13-19 year-olds), never forget to include the tweens (9-12 year-olds).** They also have immense buying power and consume everything from cellphones to music and clothing. They are very discerning about quality and expect products with local relevance, but of international standards.

The speakers panel was as follows:

Craig Simms - MD of Atoll Media and Publisher of Zigzag, Blunt & Saltwater
Girl magazines

Sam Sneddon - MD of 8 Ink Media & Publisher of Seventeen Magazine

Seugnette Comber - Director, Owner and Marketing Editor of Free 4 All magazine

Helen Smit - Head: KTV, K-World, and Go
Phiona Okumu - Deputy Editor Y-Mag

Special thanks to Gill Randall for organising the monthly AMASA meetings, ably assist by Robyn Joseph. For more info on future AMASA meetings and topics, visit www.amasa.org.za.

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