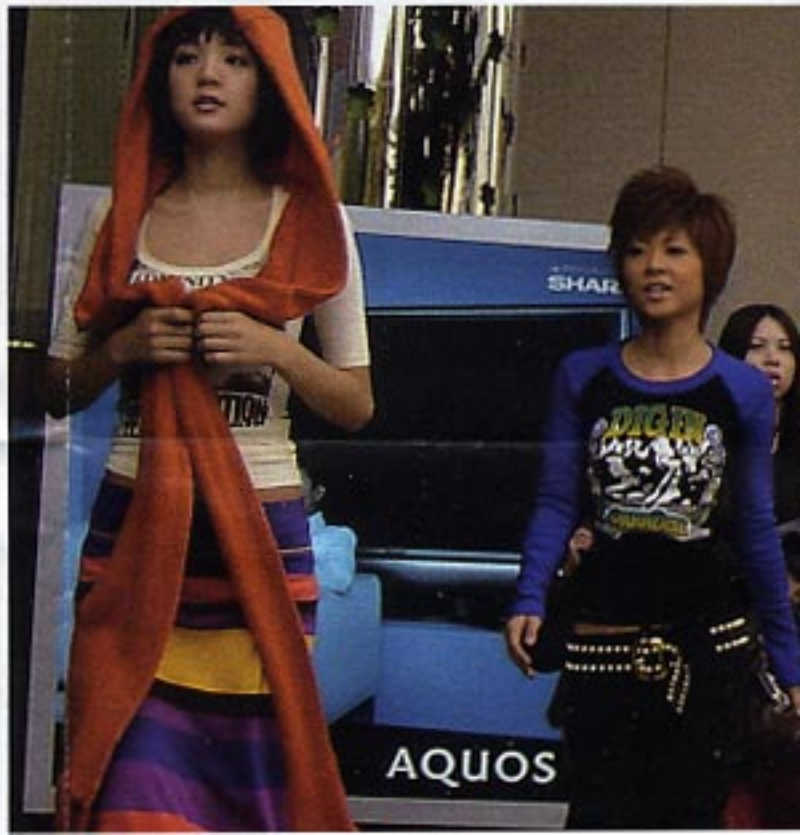




new age-y

ACT YOUR AGE, OR THE ONE YOU WANT TO BE. THIS IS THE NEW DIKTAT IN MARKETING THAT DOESN'T CARE FOR FIXED TARGET GROUPS, BUT RATHER BELIEVES IN ANY CONSUMER'S DESIRE TO BE A DIFFERENT PERSON – EVERY DAY. **WORDS: MARIA CRISTINA PAVARINI**

Forget old marketing rules and target groups defined by age. This hot topic has inspired the Italian trend consultancy Future Concept Lab's "The Performance Age" seminar series. According to it, age has acquired a new and more strategic importance. Today, the Western markets' largest consumer groups are adult. In Italy they are ages 30 to 44 and in the USA they are ages 40 to 54 (in addition to the 14 to 24 age group). As a result, consumers' perception of the relationship between the different generations is changing. Some contributions to this hypothesis come from the USA: David B. Wolfe's book *Ageless Marketing* speaks about some basic values of the new society. For instance, the baby boomers are getting old but their perception of later life is totally different from prior generations since they feel that they can use this time to return to study or start new endeavors. The *Xtribes* reports by international marketing company Extreme Information also notes how this is happening everywhere – from emerging countries to old Europe. "Ageless marketing is an hypothesis that doesn't mean that we are all the same and buy the same goods," says Future Concept Lab sociologist and president Francesco Morace, "though there are various ways to act in the market to get the attention of people from different ages." Among the new consumer marketing categories FCL has defined are groups such as the Expo Teens, Japanese teenagers who live their lives as a form of exhibition, which they boost with their sharply honed technological skills. Most of them are tough, talented and want to reach fame early. Nami Tamaki, for instance, is a 16-year-old Japanese pop singer who sang for a Japanese cartoon TV series and lent her face to the character of a video game. Morace also suggests that New York City's Adidas flagship store, which mounted enormous plexiglass boxes with models inside doing yoga exercises, for the launch of Adidas by Stella McCartney's new collection last year, is precisely the kind of venue the performance/promotion-savvy Expo Teen might relate to. Overall, Expo Teens may love the spotlight but can also be content exchanging experiences, even through storytelling, with people of different ages. Role-playing can also get kids' and adults' attention. The so-called Posh Tweens – kids who are forced to mature early because their mothers spend time at work away from them – often establish a playful relationship with their moms. The mothers exchange clothes and accessories with their girls, hoping to look like them – and vice versa for the girls. Italian women's footwear manufacturer Nebuloni has already picked up on this trend. Co-owner Biagio Nebuloni explains: "In the last two years 35- to 50-year-old women are looking for younger models like biker boots and punk-inspired shoes, while teenagers want smart ballerinas." Other new groups named by FCL include the Sense Girls, refined and sensitive women with an Asian-like aesthetic and sensibility; De Luxe Men, luxury lovers who represent the nouveau riche of emerging countries; and Tripping Seniors, baby boomers who refuse to act old. Morace believes a desire for independence unites these groups. "In this endless choice of experiences, no one wants to be labeled but to rather feel free and be able to switch easily from one identity to another," he says. "We are now moving from lifestyles to life occasions. A Rolling Stone concert can draw 15- to 60-year-olds." For marketers, then, tomorrow's challenge will be to create products and campaigns that



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: POSH TWEENS FROM MILAN, ITALY AND TEL AVIV, ISRAEL; A TRIPPING SENIOR FROM SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL; AND EXPO TEENS FROM TOKYO, JAPAN (ALL IMAGES FROM FUTURE CONCEPT LAB PHOTO ARCHIVE).