

relevant to teens, it's essential that you address—or perhaps even offer a solution to—teens' needs. Let's take a look at the needs one by one. In doing so, ask yourself whether your company or brand strategy hits one or more of the teen need-states.

### Teen Need: Fun

Perhaps the most obvious teen need-state, fun is synonymous with youth. Teens are keen observers, and they understand that although adulthood means greater freedom, it also means greater responsibilities and obligations. All in all, most teens seem to view adulthood as a rather unholy tradeoff—older people have more money and independence, but they're often so hamstrung by work, bills, and family obligations that they can't take advantage of them. This was brought home to me when a group of teens explained quite seriously why fun is so important, contrasting their lifestage with that of adults. They closely watch their parents and other adults, they told me, and have come to the conclusion that older folks just don't have a whole lot of fun. Teens know that at some point in their lives they, too, will be saddled with adult responsibilities and sensibilities, and fun will become less of a priority. Therefore, they reason, they should concentrate on having as much fun as possible now—in a sense, get it while the getting is good. Consequently, most teens consider having fun their most pressing job for the time being. And they take it quite seriously!

The teen appetite for entertainment and socialization has always been insatiable. Especially today, when teen lives are increasingly overscheduled, they make sure to carve out lots of time for fun with their friends. When TRU asked more than 2,000 teens which attitudes best describe their generation, 21 percent said they have too much to do and too little time in which to do it. Another 17 percent said they are overly stressed, and 13 percent said they feel too much pressure to succeed. Still, the response that garnered the most support was, "we're all about fun." And, just as fun and youth are synonymous, teens say fun and friends are too—almost anything can be fun if it includes their friends! Much more on that later.

# What Best Describes This Teen Generation?

Half of teens say their generation is about having fun.

*(percent of teens citing characteristic as one of three  
that best describes their generation)*

We're about fun	50%
High-tech is so much a part of our lives	41
We're living in dangerous times	25
We're open to new ideas	24
We have too much to do and too little time to do it	21
Our world moves faster than it has for other generations at our age	21
We're about individualism	18
We're overly stressed out	17
We'll have great opportunities as adults	13
We're accepting of differences	13
There's too much pressure to succeed	13
We're focused on our own goals	11

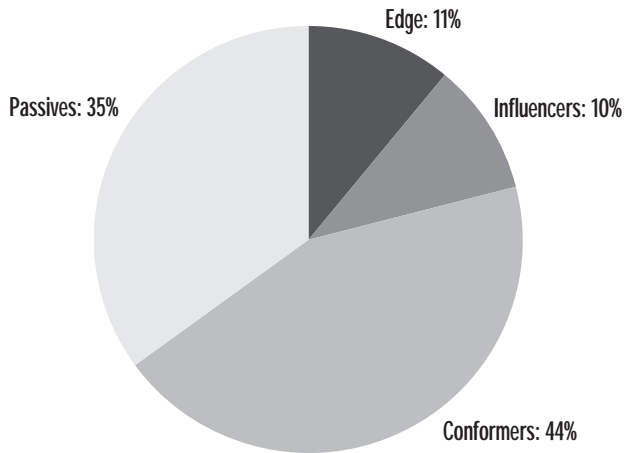
*Source: The TRU Study, Teenage Research Unlimited, Inc.*

# Teen/Types: Teen Segmentation System

Conformers make up the largest share of teens.

*(percent distribution of teens by TRU's Teen/Types Segmentation System)*

Edge	11%
Influencers	10
Conformers	44
Passives	35



*Source: The TRU Study, Teenage Research Unlimited, Inc.*

**Edge Teens.** If Edge teens are annoyed to hear that they are on the cutting edge of teen lifestyle and fashion trends, it's only because these fiercely independent youths often consider themselves removed entirely from the traditional teenage social strata. Edge teens are often rebellious, sometimes reckless, and always cool (though many won't acknowledge caring about such things). Many of the trends eventually adopted by the larger teen population start with Edge teens, including skateboarding, alternative music, body piercing, funky hair coloring, and tattoos. Still, this segment tends to bristle at being labeled "trendsetting." They are the least traditional and least family-oriented of the Teen/Types, yet Edge teens still frequently betray a fondness for "retro" activities like family dinners. Such contradictions define these teens, who sometimes mock the "constructs" of style and fashion, but swear by a wardrobe of Morbid Threads, Porn Star, and Menace.

Though some adults would automatically label them "antisocial," nothing could be further from the truth. They want out of the house as much as possible—to be with friends. They are most likely to be involved in "action" sports like motocross or skysurfing, and least likely to be interested in conventional sports like baseball or basketball. They like to push the envelope—whether at school, at home, or at play. They are experimental, experiential, and adventurous. In short, they've been known to break a few rules.

Edge teens are frequently quite bright—just as often, however, their grades don't reflect their abilities. As a result, they are not optimistic about future success, instead throwing themselves headlong into their current experiences and living for the moment. More than any other group, these teens have an abiding love for music, whether at an open-air concert or in a used CD bin at a local strip mall. They're the heaviest readers of *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*; they're also by far the biggest fans of dance and rave, hardcore, and punk music. They are less interested in rap, hip-hop, and

## How Teens Keep in Touch With Friends

When teens communicate with friends, the old-fashioned telephone still rules. But instant messaging is in second place.

*(percent of teens responding when asked, "When you are not with your friends, which one way do you most often use to keep in touch with them?" by gender)*

	females	males
Regular phone	53%	55%
Instant messages or online chatting	17	19
Cell phone	11	11
E-mail	9	7
Letters or notes	3	1
Pager	1	1

*Source: The TRU Study, Teenage Research Unlimited, Inc.*

friends—though we suspect this number has grown since we quantified it in 2001. This form of communication is distinctly teen; even non-tech-savvy users can carry on a conversation with several friends independently of one another, and if the discussion gets dull, they can check out Web sites, listen to music, or watch videos. Instant messaging is a much more appropriate teen online forum of conversation than e-mail, which teens say is more appropriate for communicating with an out-of-town aunt. Teens love the impulsiveness, informality, and immediate gratification of trading instant messages. They simply log on and they can instantly send and

sports with perhaps fewer (but more passionate) participants. The index reveals the sports that marketers should consider as attractive options. Some may be less well known, but they are often so popular with their adherents that their appeal will likely spread to teens who have not yet participated in them.

Which sports rank highest on the Affinity Index? Cheerleading, basketball, martial arts, and football top the list, with some notable differences by gender. (See the accompanying table for the complete list.) Clearly, the board sports as well as a handful of outdoor activities (among guys, motocross, dirt biking, and hunting; among girls, horseback riding, water skiing, and kick boxing) are highly ranked on Affinity, especially in comparison to their participation numbers.

While some brands have successfully appropriated high-affinity sports in attempting to get closer to teens, savvy brand managers know that tying their products to the latest cutting-edge sport comes with risks. Sports that grab teens' fickle attention may be relevant one moment but "been there, done that" the next. The decision comes down to whether your involvement is short-term, such as a promotion, or a long-term brand-building relationship. Therefore, it's important to be sure you're targeting the right teen audience (the one with the greatest likelihood of identifying with and, ideally, embracing your brand) with the right sport.

### **Pro Sports**

Teens love to watch sports as well. This is especially true for boys, whose media preferences alone tell a big story. For example, sports is typically the first section guys turn to when reading a newspaper; *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN the Magazine* are their two most regularly read magazines; *SportsCenter* is one of their favorite TV shows; and ESPN.com is one of their most-visited Web sites.

When it comes to attending a sports event, girls are almost as involved as guys: nearly one-third of girls and 40 percent of boys attend a sporting

# Sports Affinity Index

Sixty percent of boys involved in martial arts name it as one of their three favorite sports. For girls, the top honor goes to cheerleading.

*(Sports Affinity Index by gender)*

<b>FEMALE</b>	Sports Affinity Index	<b>MALE</b>	Sports Affinity Index
Cheerleading/poms	63	Martial arts	60
Basketball	53	Basketball	58
Baseball/softball	51	Football	52
Soccer	50	Baseball/softball	44
Horseback riding	49	Skateboarding	41
Swimming	49	Ice hockey	39
Volleyball	48	Motocross	38
Gymnastics	47	Soccer	37
Snowboarding	35	Hunting	36
Track and field	34	Weight training	36
Downhill skiing	32	Snowboarding	35
Water skiing	31	Fishing	32
Kick boxing	31	Billiards/pool	31
Football	31	Wrestling	30
Exercise/aerobics	29	Golf	27
Tennis	29	Track and field	27
Jet skiing	26	Downhill skiing	26
Inline skating	26	Swimming	26
Yoga	26	Dirt biking	26

*Note: The Sports Affinity Index is the percentage of teens participating in a sport in the past year who also name the sport as one of their three "favorites."*

*Source: The TRU Study, Teenage Research Unlimited, Inc.*

upwards toward Quadrants II and I, although category dynamics place most snack foods in Quadrant III. Through carefully crafted advertising, promotion, and packaging (as well as its inherent product appeal to teens), it's defined itself as the teen-appropriate, fun, party snack brand (more on Doritos soon).

Four product categories fall into Quadrant IV: toothpaste, contact-lens solution, bar soap, and camera film (which, thanks to highly sought-after digital cameras, is declining as a relevant teen category). Teens use the same brands repeatedly in these categories, but they do not regard brand as particularly important. Most likely, Mom is choosing the brand and the teen is content to use whatever brand is available. Marketers of these products need to appeal to teens directly, so that teens begin to request certain brands. Another approach would be more long-term: develop a strong relationship with young consumers, recognizing that they typically are neither the purchasers nor active requesters now, but will be when they are adults.

### **Summing It Up: Teen Branding Guidelines**

Now you have a handle on the importance of branding to teens—what brands mean to them emotionally, psychologically, and physically, as well as which brands have developed the type of emotional connection with teens that set them apart. I've also shared a host of qualitative experience, quantitative data, and secondary research to show the relationship between teens and brands. This chapter's final pages seem to call for both a workable definition of what a brand is from a teen perspective and what it takes to become a strong brand from a marketing perspective.

First, a brand is who you are. It's that simple—a brand is an identity. As brand managers, you need to understand what consumers expect of you and what you can rightly deliver. Similarly, you need to know what you aren't and where you can't go. In other words, understand your boundaries! Teens might respect you today, but understand that it's a contextualized respect. If you stray outside the realms of where teens feel

you belong with new products and/or marketing, you're vulnerable to being dismissed.

Think about Doritos. As mentioned earlier, much of its advertising has positioned it as the party snack chip brand. But through conducting research with teens, its brand managers learned that being the party brand wasn't enough. More so, they learned that simply being relevant to teens wasn't enough. The Doritos brand team learned that teens wanted and expected product variety from Doritos. Consequently, in keeping with the brand personality, Doritos launched irreverent new-flavor introductions, coming out with a host of crazy, anything-but-ordinary flavors. Go to a grocery store today and take a look at all the flavors, sizes, and variations, including four cheese, salsa verde, taco, toasted corn, ranchero, and Doritos 3Ds (an extension that itself comes in different flavors).

So, a brand is first and foremost your identity. But, it's much more than just who you are. It's what you stand for—it's your core, and it's the underpinnings of your identity. Truth, the antitobacco campaign, is a prime example of a brand whose identity transcends a symbol or a current marketing campaign. And Truth clearly transcends product—after all, it's a product-less brand. What most distinguishes Truth is what it stands for and—in this case—what it stands against. Truth is, well, for truth—it fights against the deceptions and lies that historically have been the hallmark of tobacco-industry marketing. Sounds boring from a teen perspective? Truth is all about tonality and execution. Its ads are anything but preachy and pedantic; instead, they're irreverent, edgy, and—at times—funny. In fact, since the American Legacy Foundation launched the campaign, Truth ads—created by Arnold Advertising in Boston and Crispin Porter + Bogusky in Miami—have garnered a good share of mentions in each wave of TRU's favorite commercial measure, in which our quantitative teen sample is asked to write in their three favorite commercials. So, teens rate Truth's ads on the same level as those from Nike, Pepsi, and other traditional youth advertising heavyweights.

countries than they are in the United States. As this book went to print, Finland was set to pick a fight with Hollywood over product placement in movies — especially alcohol and tobacco, which the country has barred from advertising since 1979. Logically enough (notwithstanding the very real censorship concerns), the Finnish government appears increasingly hostile toward films that accept money for alcohol and tobacco product-placement contracts. Officials say they're out to protect children and teens from messages that portray the use of these products as cool. One Finnish producer (who described the review process as akin to being "put through the grinder") said he finds it unlikely that many U.S.-produced films will be acceptable to government watchdogs.

### The Internet

Anyone who doesn't consider the Internet part of the average teen's media panoply is making a grave miscalculation. Although some adults (especially those who don't use the 'Net at work) may consider the Web foreign and esoteric, it is just as important as TV, radio, and magazines to today's teens. To help illustrate this point, let's put things in perspective. Today's oldest teens were born in 1984, two years *after* the first production models of the Commodore 64 rolled off assembly lines. The Atari 2600 video-game system was already seven years old when today's oldest teens were born. And today's youngest teens were just undertaking potty training when a group of tech-heads hatched the idea for the Excite search engine in 1993. If teens seem more comfortable with technology than adults, it's because they are. Downplay the Internet's importance to young people at your brand's risk.

Considering these facts, it's somewhat less surprising (though still impressive) that 91 percent of teens tell us they have access to a home computer. Fully 82 percent of teens say they can connect to the Internet at home. And 29 percent of those who can get online report having a high-speed 'Net connection.