

Selling the World

Mouseketeers to Marketeers

BY KEVIN KELLY



Amon Rappaport

Mickey may have been the first global teen. It's hard to go anywhere in the world where he hasn't already been. He usually appears without the official blessings of Disney, as a sort of global teen runaway. Like other runaway kids in Cairo, Egypt, he wound up peddling soft drinks on the street.



TO THE QUESTION "Is there a global teenager?" the major consumer manufacturers answer, "Definitely yes."

It is a significant issue for those who make things for kids. There are now 1.37 billion people between the ages of 10 and 19, yet most of them are *not* living in the US. But the companies that advertise globally have found that these international kids respond to their products in a similar way. According to *Adweek's Marketing Week* (February 6, 1989), Benetton, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Levi Strauss, Gillette, and Swatch, among others, "are now behaving as if there is one generic type of teenager in most parts of the world." A look at the images on these pages confirms this.

Whatever the reasons or deeper social meanings, these companies point out, aiming a pitch at the global teenager works. They do concede that it only works on TV, though. Print

In heavy black-on-black fashions, Japanese teenagers herd into a McDonald's in southern Japan. Rock 'n' roll blares from speakers inside.

Swatch schoolbook jackets.



ads still must be tailored to local "untranslatable" traditions. However, TV commercials are a universal language, apparently appealing without distinction around the world. As Tim Schramm, director of international advertising at Gillette International told me, "We are using the same TV commercials in 19 countries and they all get the same results."

TV, combined with rock 'n' roll, is nearly symbiotic with the global teenager. MTV and its clones are now in 24 countries. MTV plans to launch a global TV-magazine show of music/culture/fashion sometime in 1990. The Swatch watch company is contemplating a regularly scheduled global teen show called "Swatch This," based on a half-hour show made four years ago — the "Swatch





The United Colors of Benetton, a highly calculated system of tracking kids' color preferences around the world. Said the founder of Benetton, "Teens wear uniforms. There's a global teenager emerging. I want to make the uniform for global teenagers." Benetton stores are now found all over the world.

Hello Tomorrow,
Your children are here.
Can you hear the new drummer?
The future is clear.

We're taking our place now.
We're grabbin' hold
On a rainbow of promises
We are your gold.

A generation of change.
A generation of song.
A generation of laughter
Coming on strong.

A generation of color.
Black, white, yellow, red.
A generation of Pepsi
A generation ahead.

We speak the same language.
We share the same voice.
We feel the same feelings.
But we make our own choice.

A generation of life
Now let it be said
A generation of Pepsi
A generation ahead.

Generation Pepsi, generation.
A generation ahead.

World Break Dancing Championship from the Roxy" — which was syndicated in 13 countries. Numerous other pilot shows directed at the global teenager have been produced, including one (made in London) that featured a global weather report — snippets of a monsoon in India, a heat wave in Brazil, and dust storms in Morocco.

It is interesting to keep in mind that global marketing has been tried many times but never really seemed to work . . . until it was tried on those under 20. There are a number of other things that have been tried globally without success that may yet work with those under 20, too. Environmentalism, world government, resource sharing, and good old peace are the ones that readily come to mind. ■



Amen Rappaport

A street sign in Argentina points the way to the future — jeans. (Note how the logo stylishly rises above the decrepit street names.) In countries outside of the US, Levi's jeans are marketed as providing a slice of the American Dream. In Japan, James Dean in jeans and cigarette (Rebel Without a Cause) is the central imagemaker.

(Left) Lyrics to new Pepsi commercial filmed in San Francisco. About 80 percent of the 300 children used were non-white. © 1989 PepsiCo.

Coke around the world. On the one side of the bottle, the classic logo; on the other, the native script, with often-clever translations. The Chinese version, "Ke Ko Ke Le" means literally, "you can have happy feelings in your mouth." The scripts from left to right: Arabic, Ethiopian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Hebrew.



Don Ryan