

# Trends & Tudes

3 Volume  
4 Issue

April  
2004

Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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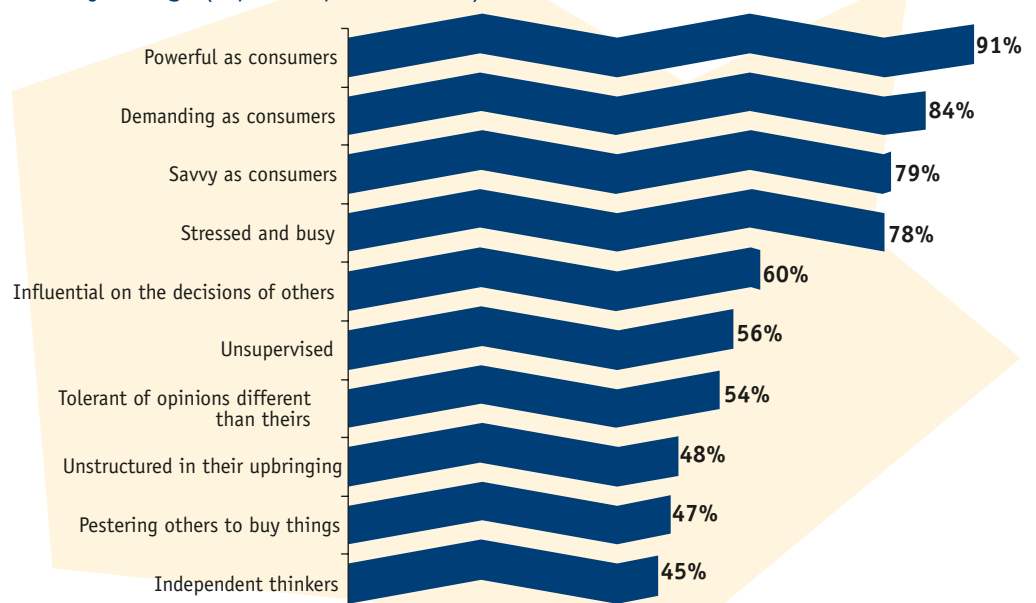
## What Does the Youth Marketing Industry Think of Commercialism and Youth?

Harris Interactive, along with the Kid Power Xchange, recently conducted a poll among professionals who work in youth-related fields. This study covered a number of topics, and this month we would like to share some of the findings as they relate in general to marketing to today's youth generation.

Generation Y is unique from many perspectives, not the least of which is their emergence as a powerful consumer group. Demographically, there are more teenagers in the United States than at any other time in history. The number of teenagers in the United States has roughly doubled in the past 50 years. A Harris Interactive study in 2002 showed that U.S. teenagers are spending almost double the amount of money (in real dollars) as baby boomer teens spent in the 1960s.

One goal of our youth marketer poll was to understand how those working in youth fields define the generation. More than 35 potential descriptors were presented to respondents. As the chart below shows, those working in youth fields tend to define the generation as a consumer group. Four of the top five descriptors, according to youth marketers, related to their value as consumers.

**% Saying word/phrase describes today's youth generation MORE than young people 10-15 years ago (Top 10 responses shown)**



Source: Harris Interactive/Kid Power Poll of Youth Marketers, February 2004

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YOUTH AND EDUCATION  
**The Harris Poll**® PEOPLE

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## Editorial: Our Take On It

by **John Geraci**

Vice President of Youth and Education Research

Youth marketing practices are coming under increased scrutiny by the media, academics and government. Issues such as increased commercialism directed toward children, online privacy, marketing in schools, the content of children's media and advertising, and childhood obesity have become part of a national discourse.

There has been both information and misinformation placed into the public debate regarding these issues. One voice that has not been documented is the youth marketing industry itself – a point of view that is critical to understand and fundamental to making positive progress on these important issues.

This is why, along with the Kid Power Xchange, Harris Interactive embarked upon a project to understand the industry's viewpoints toward these issues. Our national study of 878 individuals working in youth-related fields pursued topics that are as consequential as they are complex.

The study presents a number of interesting findings (a full report is available for free upon request). First, results show that those working in youth fields are very aware of

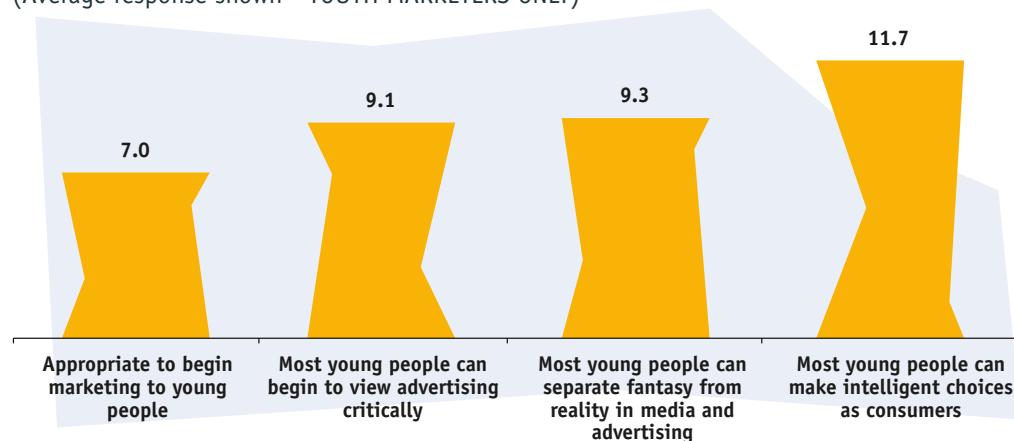
It is often said that Generation Y contains the smartest and best-educated group of consumers in history. Respondents agree: They see today's youth as more powerful, demanding, and savvy consumers than in previous generations. At the same time, they characterize young people as disconnected from world events, disrespectful of authority and rules, not nurtured by adults, and not as religious as past generations. The perception is that young people have become powerful and smart, but also that something important has been lost along the way.

Teenagers view themselves as a more disaffected group than the youth industry sees them. Where the industry described the generation in terms of their power as consumers, teenagers in a related Harris Interactive study provided more emotional descriptors – stressed, busy, unsupervised, depressed, angry and rebellious. The youth industry paints a more sanguine picture of today's youth than youth themselves construct.

On average, those working in companies that market products and services to young consumers feel it is appropriate to begin advertising to children at age 7. This is more than two years before they feel young people can view advertising critically (age 9.1), or when they feel young people can effectively separate fantasy from reality in media and advertising (age 9.3). A stark finding from this study is that those working in youth marketing feel it is appropriate to advertise to children almost five years before they feel that young people can make intelligent choices as consumers (age 11.7). There is a sense of urgency to reach them while young, so that they will be familiar with a brand when they do reach an age where they make or influence purchase decisions.

### At what age do you feel ...?

(Average response shown - YOUTH MARKETERS ONLY)



Source: Harris Interactive/Kid Power Poll of Youth Marketers, February 2004

There is a consensus among those working in youth-related fields that young people are marketed to in ways they do not even notice. Most feel that companies put pressure on children to pester their parents to buy things and that companies pressure kids to grow up faster than they should. Most also feel that advertising to children begins at too young of an age and that there is too much advertising and marketing directed toward children.

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and concerned about issues that relate to the well-being of children. Respondents feel that the ethical and moral standards of the youth marketing industry is on par with the standards of other industries. That said, they do feel that ethical standards in youth marketing are not being maintained at as high a level as they have been in the past. Those working in media, advertising, public relations and in youth marketing are far more comfortable with the industry's ethical standards than those working in nonprofits, market research or for academic institutions.

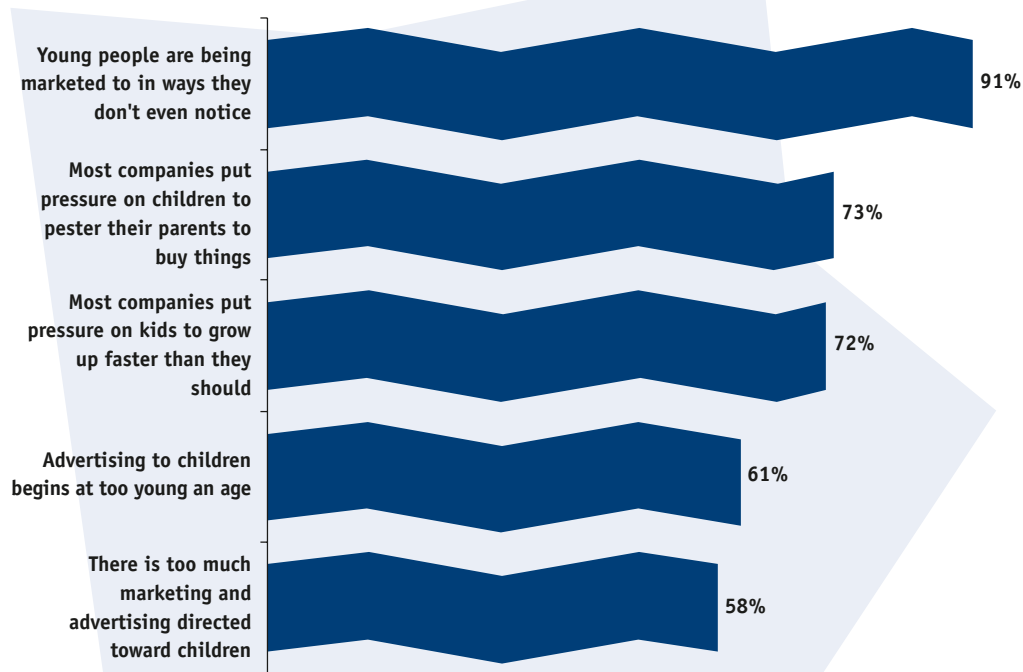
Respondents also feel that their management's sense of ethics is comparable to their own. Most state that ethical issues inherent in youth marketing can and are discussed openly in their organizations. They are comfortable expressing their views and report that they are not placed in situations where their personal sense of ethics have been compromised. They tell us that their organization treats young people and parents with respect, and they are proud of how their employer treats young people. A full 78% feel their organization plays a positive role in the lives of children, and 74% feel that their organization's positive actions for children far outweigh any negative actions.

Further, few respondents say that the desire for business or career success gets in the way of

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## % Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement



Source: Harris Interactive/Kid Power Poll of Youth Marketers, February 2004

A full report from the Harris Interactive/Kid Power Poll of Youth Marketers is available free of charge. The study results will be presented at the Kid Power conference in Orlando.

## Recent Research for Public Release

From time to time, the Harris Interactive Youth Research team is fortunate to work with media, leading foundations and nonprofit organizations, and often we are able to release the results of some of these studies publicly.

### College Women Close Technology Gender Gap

360 Youth College Explorer™ nationwide survey reveals college women adopt technology on par with men

The annual 360 Youth College Explorer study, powered by Harris Interactive, today revealed that despite commonly held beliefs that college women lag behind in technology ownership and use, they actually share more similarities with men than ever before. Results from college men and women surveyed on technology use challenge widely held presumptions that young women are slow to adopt technology.

Technology use remains a vital part of college students' daily lives and continues



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acting ethically in their organization. Study results show that those working in youth fields are comfortable and supportive of their organization's practices.

But, have those working in this field become *too* comfortable?

Reviewing the results, it became clear that youth marketers are quick to criticize the industry as a whole, but reticent to question the ethics of their own organization. This is a natural tendency but results in inaction across the industry as a whole.

Ethics can be a matter of intention and not necessarily results. Those within the industry see ideas get discarded because they may not be suitable for young consumers even though these ideas may have great commercial value. They see ad campaigns and products modified at great expense to improve their appropriateness. They spend considerable resources on market research to be sure their products have an educational value for youth and are acceptable to parents. Many of the most ethical practices in the industry take place behind the office park walls, and are not seen by the media, the public, or politicians.

Issues that result from increased commercialism directed toward youth have multiple causes and owners. The childhood obesity issue is a good example. The

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to show significant growth. Ninety-five percent (95%) of college students are online. Sixty-five percent (65%) of online college students use broadband Internet access compared to 37% in the general online population, reinforcing that college students are the most connected demographic to date. Ownership of digital cameras and DVD players has increased for both college men and women since 2002. Intent to purchase these products in the next year is equally strong for both sexes.

Entertainment is a powerful and influential presence in the lives of college students. College students spend nearly \$3 billion a year on entertainment categories such as movies and gaming.

For more information: [www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=773](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=773)

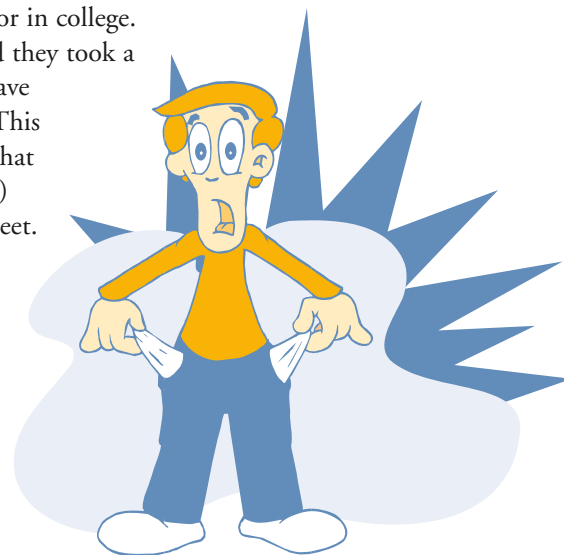
### With College Loans Bills Coming Due, Not All Graduates Are Prepared to Pay

A new survey of recent college graduates indicates that high student loan debt is having a significant impact on the decisions many make in post-graduate life - decisions that may have lasting affects on their career paths and financial health. The survey, released today by Collegiate Funding Services, LLC (CFS), also shows a jump in the number of college graduates who are unprepared to make their monthly student loan payments when the first bills begin arriving this fall.

The "2003 CFS Planning and Paying for Higher Education" survey conducted by Harris Interactive paints a clear picture of the implications of student loan debt among college graduates. As tuitions rise, so does student loan debt - more than half of college graduates (52%) report owing between \$10,000 and \$40,000 in student loans. In addition, many are carrying credit card debt into their post-graduate years - a time when earning power is traditionally at its lowest. 83% of college graduates surveyed report making monthly credit card payments.

More than half (55%) of college graduates said that student loan debt is making it difficult for them to fulfill their financial objectives. As a result, nearly a fifth (17%) have had to make tough choices in order to meet their student loan obligations - including decisions not to pursue careers they may have studied for in college. One in three college graduates (30%) said they took a job that paid more over a job they may have preferred in order to make more money. This is an increase over last year's CFS survey that found one in five of those surveyed (20%) took a second-choice job to make ends meet.

For additional information, please visit [www.cfsloans.com](http://www.cfsloans.com)



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issue of overweight youth is a serious public health concern, yet has not come about overnight or from one overriding cause. Dozens of contributing changes have happened slowly, over a period of time. These changes have resulted in a crisis that, according to some observers, has created the first generation of children whose life expectancies may be lower than that of their parents.

Our poll results show that youth marketers feel that marketers have played a role in some of these issues, but that so have many others. This poll reveals that youth marketers feel that these issues also come down to personal responsibility and parental influences.

This is undoubtedly true. But the industry has to find a winning strategy for marketing to youth, or it risks vilification. Public policy debates aren't about complexity. Rather they are about distilling an issue to simple causes and advocating simplistic solutions.

There is an activist adage that "if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." The youth industry will be seen as being a cause of many of these issues if they don't start taking more active steps to be part of the solution.

## Ask a Question...

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> youth omnibus. Just send us an email with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of the newsletter.

## ...Get an Answer

Michael May from South Seattle Community College submitted the following question:

### From which of the following do you learn about college programs in your area?

	13-15 Year Olds	16-18 Year Olds
Mailed materials	57%	70%
School counselors	63%	66%
Internet	49%	58%
TV	32%	23%
Newspaper	20%	19%
Radio	18%	12%
Other	18%	20%
I do not learn about college programs in my area.	10%	7%

Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery, March 2004, 13-18 year old boys and girls

## The 2003 Wave of YouthPulse is Now Available

YouthPulse, Harris Interactive's lifestyle and attitude study of 8- to 21-year-olds, is now available by subscription. YouthPulse provides important insights to youth marketers and can help connect your organization with this Millennial Generation. Contact us at 877.919.4765 or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com) for details.

## 360 Youth College Explorer: 2003-2004

### Powered by Harris Interactive is Now Available!

You can now subscribe to 360 Youth College Explorer, the annual study of college students powered by Harris Interactive. This is the only study of its kind to provide marketers with insights about the entire college market of 18- to 30-year-olds, including: full- and part-time students, students at 2- and 4-year institutions, and undergraduate and graduate students. This year's topics cover income and spending, financial services, online behavior, technology and wireless, entertainment, food and dining, and much more. Contact us at 877.919.4765 or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com) for details.

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## Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of Trends & Tudes, please visit our website at [www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\\_k12.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_k12.asp).

## Election Update!

Starting this month and until the Presidential election in November, Harris Interactive will report on our election poll that we are conducting among 8- to 18-year-olds.

In March 2004, this study found that if the election were held today and these respondents could vote, 37% would vote for George W. Bush, 38% for John Kerry and 24% would be undecided. Slightly more than half (53%) said that President Bush is doing an excellent or pretty good job as president, while 47% said that he is doing a poor or only fair job.

## Come See Us...

### Kid Power Spring!

Harris Interactive will give two presentations at Kid Power Spring, May 3-4 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida:

- “The New Gender Gap: The Differences Between Boys and Girls” will be conducted with the Girl Scouts Research Institute.
- “What Do Youth Marketers Think About Selling to Kids?” This Harris Interactive/Kid Power Poll is considered to be the first survey to study issues of marketing to children from an industry perspective.

We hope to meet you at these presentations. For more information, go to: [www.kidpowerx.com](http://www.kidpowerx.com)

### Tween and Teen Power!

June 22-24, 2004 at The Catamaran Resort in San Diego, Ca. This event focuses on these two booming consumer groups (tweens 8-12 year olds and teens 13-19 year olds). For more information, go to: [www.kidpowerx.com](http://www.kidpowerx.com)

### IIR's Youth Marketing Mega-Event!

We will also be presenting, along with our colleagues from Yahoo!®, at the IIR's Youth Marketing Mega-Event, June 27-30, in Anaheim, California. This session will present the results of the “Born to Be Wired: A New Media Landscape Comes of Age” project, which we conducted for Yahoo! and Carat Interactive in June 2003. More information is available at <http://www.iirusa.com/youth/>

## Contact Us

To make suggestions regarding this newsletter or to discuss a business issue involving youth or the people and issues that influence today's youth, please contact our Information Desk at 877.919.4765 or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com).

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