The
Truth
about...

YOUTH

McCANN
TRUTH CENTRAL

THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUTH

INTRODUCTION

What motivates young people around the world today? Money? Fame? Justice? What makes them different from every generation that has come before?

We asked 7,000 young people around the world and harnessed the collective genius of McCann Worldgroup to find out. In a world awash z information and misinformation, we found some TRUTHS.

Quantitative research conducted in US, UK, China, India, Spain, Mexico and Brazil.

Qualitative research conducted in US, UK, China, India, Spain, Mexico, Brazil, Singapore, Malaysia, Chile, South Africa, Italy, Germany, Korea, Japan, Australia and Philippines

Exploring Motivations

If we want to truly understand a group of people (or in this case a generation), then we need to dig into what really motivates them. We've identified and classified 16 human motivations that range from the more outer-directed (like Mutiny and Surge) to the more inner-directed (like Cocoon and Becoming).

These motivations provide a powerful framework for brands that wish to connect with people. Youth were asked to rate a series of value statements, which allowed us to ascertain the individual importance of each motivation.

Justice
The need for social or personal justice, to do what's right, to be an activist..

Flight
The need to release pressure and find tranquillity / peace / quiet in a fast paced world..

Order
The need to organise, rationalise, categorise.

Contact
The need for emotional and physical closeness.

Commune
The need for connection, relationships and community..

Journeying
The need for exploration, experimentation and discovery.

Surge
The need for visceral excitement and raw rush.

Muscle
The need to exert power or exert control.

Authenticity
The need to see things as they are.

Mutiny
The need to rebel and push against the status quo.

Membership
The need to be in-the-know, an insider or part of the crowd.

Gauntlet
The need to compete and win, to challenge yourself, to prove your capabilities.

Becoming
The need for personal development, greater independence an

Props
The need for personal recognition, attention and admiration.

Cocoon
The need for safety and a feeling of security.

Assurance
The need to avoid mistakes and prevent trouble.

Global Citizens

We've seen the emergence of a generation with fundamental commonalities that transcend borders. The same three motivations are ranked highly in every country:

Commune
the need for connection, relationships and community.

Justice
the need for social or personal justice, to do what's right, to be an activist.

Authenticity
the need to see things as they are.

Technology, of course, is the great global unifier; it is the glue that binds this generation together and fuels the three motivations above.

Compared in the past to an extra 'limb' for young people, we believe technology has become even more fundamental.

1. Technology As A Fifth Sense

Given a list of things (including cosmetics, their car, their passport, their phone and their sense of smell) and told they could only save two, 53% of those aged 16–22 and 48% of those aged 23–30 would give up their own sense of smell if it meant they could keep an item of technology (most often their phone or laptop). We all know how important technology is to young people, but a willingness to sacrifice one of their human senses to keep it shows just how intrinsic it has become.

Perhaps it's not all that surprising when you consider that technology represents all the friends you could ever want, all the knowledge you will ever need, and all the entertainment you could desire. For young people, technology is more than a useful tool or an enabler. It is truly their fifth sense.

Youth see technology as Plah–Doh—something they use in an utterly malleable and instinctive way. Older generations start with "what will this box allow me to do?" Whereas this generation starts with "what do I want to do? Where can my imagination take me?" Technology enables young people to sense the world and make sense of the world. It is this deep relationship with technology that is shaping their attitudes towards community and truth and allowing them to re-imagine justice for a new era.
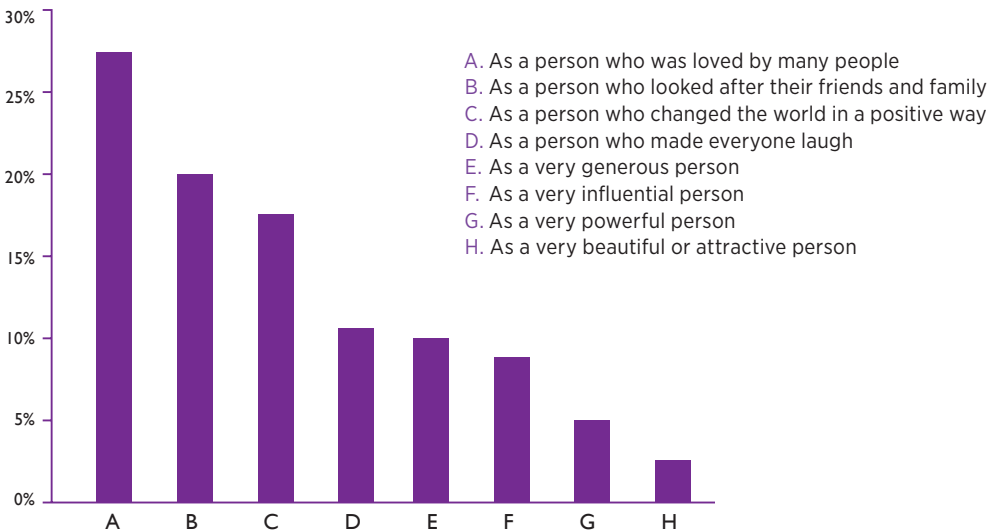
2. The Social Economy

Commune (the need for connection and community) was rated as the most fundamental motivation by young people. Globally, over 90% agree and 55% strongly agree with statements related to the *Commune* motivation.

When asked to draw a picture to sum up their motivations, a young person in Mexico drew the Infinity symbol, stating that it represented "unlimited possibilities and infinite connections through all experiences and people." Young people in South Africa spoke of the spirit of Ubuntu (a sense of community) and how the true power of togetherness has finally been unleashed by social networking technology.

If we want to truly grasp the power of connection for this generation, we can look at how they want to be remembered. It is not for their beauty, their power, or their influence, but simply for the quality of their human relationships and their ability to look after those around them.

How Would You Most Like To Be Remembered?

A. As a person who was loved by many people
B. As a person who looked after their friends and family
C. As a person who changed the world in a positive way
D. As a person who made everyone laugh
E. As a very generous person
F. As a very influential person
G. As a very powerful person
H. As a very beautiful or attractive person

Experience Economy vs Social Economy

The term "Experience Economy" was first coined in a 1998 Harvard Business Review article by James Gilmore and Joseph Pine. The theory goes that in economies of mass affluence, people become more and more interested in paying to do things, rather than paying to own things.

Our research indicates that our economy is moving into a new phase whereby young people seek to define themselves not only by what they own or what they do but primarily by their ability to connect, to share and to broadcast. The term 'Social Economy' helps us to capture not only the thing which consumers are placing more and more emphasis on when it comes to self-definition but also an insight into hard economic value. Smart new business ventures like Groupon are exploiting the new Social Economy to great effect.

The emergence of the Social Economy doesn't imply that the Material or Experience Economies have gone away, rather that these Economies should now be viewed through the lens of the Social Economy.

The Influence Of Friends

As any young person with access to social media will tell you, their friends are increasingly 'ever-present'. A young person in South Africa related how his mother asked him a perfectly benign (but to him, seemingly ridiculous) question: "Have you spoken to your friends today?" His response was 'like duh!'

Interestingly, in China and India two-thirds of young people admit that their friends have more influence over their decisions than their family does (higher than all other countries in the study). It is in these developing markets where young people, truly at the vanguard of technological change, are most different from their parents.

From Belonging To Connecting:
Redefining Friendship In The Social Economy

According to young people the world over, a true friend will always be defined in the same way; whether it's the person who backs you up in a fight, the person who likes the same music as you, or the person you can truly be yourself with, the things that make a friend a true friend don't change. But at a broader level, the definition of friendship for young people is being stretched, segmented and reinvented...

Once upon a time, teenagers had a small group of friends (typically 4–7 people), and these were often people met through school. Within this group young people could express their individuality, but it was vital that they belonged to the group. However, nowadays things are more complex. Using social media, a typical teenager is likely to manage and maintain multiple, intersecting groups of friends. In this sense, 'connecting' to a broader network of friends has replaced the singular need to 'belong' to a tight-knit group of friends.

The Friends Arms Race

In this new world of infinite connections, one's quantity of friends becomes an important indicator. In India we see a virtual 'arms race' amongst young people hoping to accumulate more friends than anyone else. In other markets like the UK, having too many friends can be seen as an act of desperation, and networks are actively culled. The downside to amassing so many 'friends' is that you're bound to pick up a rack of fakes along the way. This is truly a global phenomenon, known as 'stranger friends' in India, 'disposable friends' in Singapore, 'obligation friends' in Australia and 'recyclable friends' in Chile.

These non-friends are maintained for a number of reasons:

1. To make you look more popular

2. To 'spy' on (i.e. you don't regard them as a real friend, but you like to check up on them every now and again to compare their life to yours)

3. To 'show off' to (i.e. you might not want to hang out with them, but they still provide an audience)

4. Because, strategically-speaking, you might need them in the future (you don't need them now, but at some point you might want to bolster numbers at a house party or need them to recommend you for the job you want)

Of course the downside to maintaining and managing such a large network of so-called 'friends' is that sometimes it becomes harder to figure out who your real friends are...

Your Audience Awaits

Once you've amassed your audience...the challenge is to keep them continuously interested in and entertained by your life. Even going on a short underground train journey can cause anxiety because this is like being without one of your senses for a short period. Youth fear missing out (or 'out of circulation' as it was referred to in Malaysia) because they worry that lack of presence, even temporarily, can impact their social status.

The need for approval is tangible – as a teenager in UK said "When you've put a status up that you've put a lot of effort into, you want someone to comment on it. When you see no comments, you're like, Damn!" Young people describe sitting in front of the laptop continuously hitting refresh...waiting for someone somewhere to hit 'like'...

Pics Or It Didn't Happen

In the Social Economy it's not good enough to simply do something...you have to tell people about it before it becomes real. In other words..."pics or it didn't happen!" The best possible result in social media for young people is when someone else uploads a photograph of you looking cool and then tags you.

In this scenario you get all the credit without looking overly vain or full of yourself.

Creativity And Competition

Asked to draw what motivates them, a young person in Germany draws a depiction of being creative, a young person in Korea draws an image to represent the fear of being surpassed by your friends...

In many ways this is a generation who define themselves via their creativity. After all, they are the first generation in history that had mass democratic access to the tools of creativity: digital cameras, cheap editing software, design programs and blogging platforms. The flipside to mass self-expression and connectivity is the ability to continuously measure your own life achievements against those within your network. Never before have young people found it easier to benchmark their successes (or lack of). As the Social Economy increases its reach, could we find an entire generation impacted by social status anxiety?

Being Socially Useful

Of course there are many brands that aim to thrive in the Social Economy.
The most successful brands have a deep understanding of what being social means to young people. Socially useful brands will help young people to...

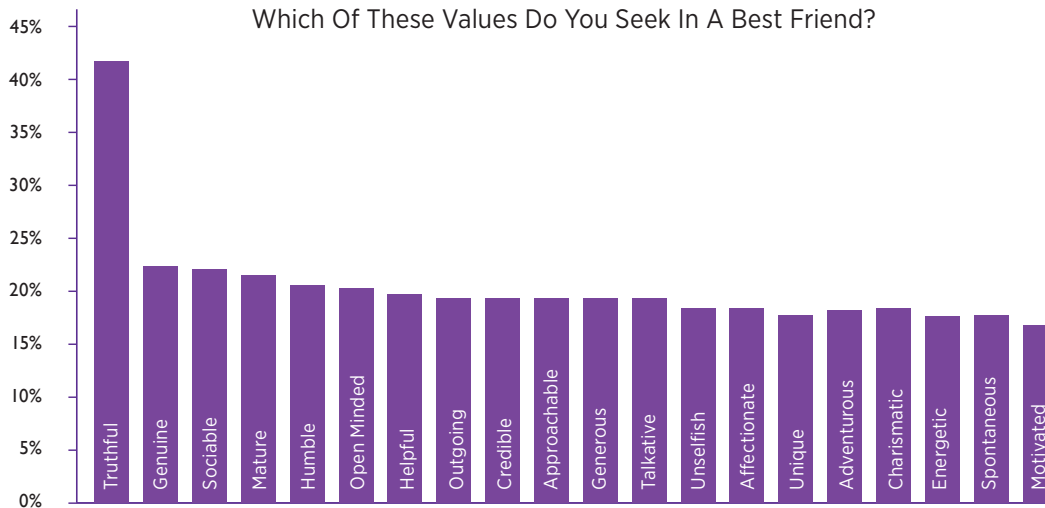...Broadcast
...Share
...Entertain
...Make new connections

...Manage their connections
...Beat their friends
...Narrate their lives
...Be chameleons

There's been a rush amongst brands to populate social spaces and connect with the young people who live their lives there. But there's a danger of brands feeling like just another 'fake friend'.

In order to achieve a more authentic role, it's helpful for brands to understand what young people value in their REAL friends.

"I'm actually friends with TopShop, but I want to get rid of it as it does my head in. I did it a few years ago and they constantly send you messages and come up on your homepage"

—Anonymous, United Kingdom

Which Of These Values Do You Seek In A Best Friend?

The top five values young people seek in their friends provide an interesting blueprint for how a brand should behave in a social context (i.e. social media):

5. Humble—One of the worst mistakes a brand can make is to overplay its importance in the lives of young people. Young people love brands if they are useful, timely and allow them to express themselves...young people tire quickly of brands which clutter up their feeds with useless information.

4. Mature—Young people love having older friends that they can look up to. Similarly, they value brands that are worthy of their respect and demonstrate a compelling and consistent point of view.

3. Sociable—Being sociable is about being present at the right time and in the right way. Friends you love to socialize with share cool things with you, have a dialogue with you, and have a style that suits their personality.

2. Genuine—Being genuine is about being worthy of trust. Inviting a brand into your personal space requires trust, and brands should be mindful of not abusing this trust.

1. Truthful—Truthfulness is more than twice as important as its nearest competitor. This is the clear winner in terms of values that young people seek in their friends.

This desire for truthful friends marries up with the desire for Authenticity, one of the highest scoring motivations at a global level...meet the Truth-Hunters.

3. The Truth Hunters

Globally, the brand that young people say they most want to 'hang out with,' as well as the brand they most admire, is Google.

Google is part of the fabric and infrastructure of their lives and is seen as the route to knowledge, to know-how, to problem-solving and ultimately (they believe) to truth.
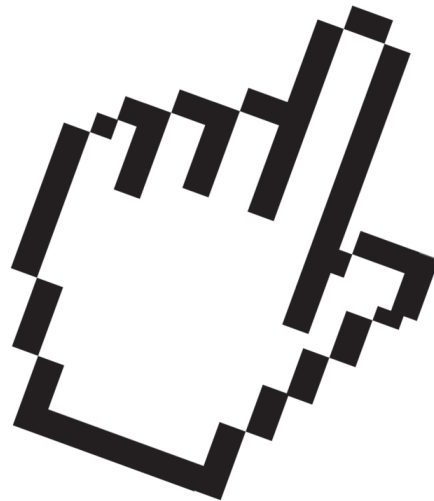
Why Is The Truth So Very Important To This Generation?

Truth is more rare and therefore more valued in a world of 'fake friends' and curated identities. Moreover, the democracy of the Internet has brought with it a sea of information, opinion, talent and 'facts'. In the cacophony of noise it's trickier to ascertain whom you should listen to and whom you should drown out.

The young people we met in Chile placed a lot of emphasis on authenticity as a motivation because, in their view, nothing is original anymore; everything nowadays is a copy of a copy of a copy.
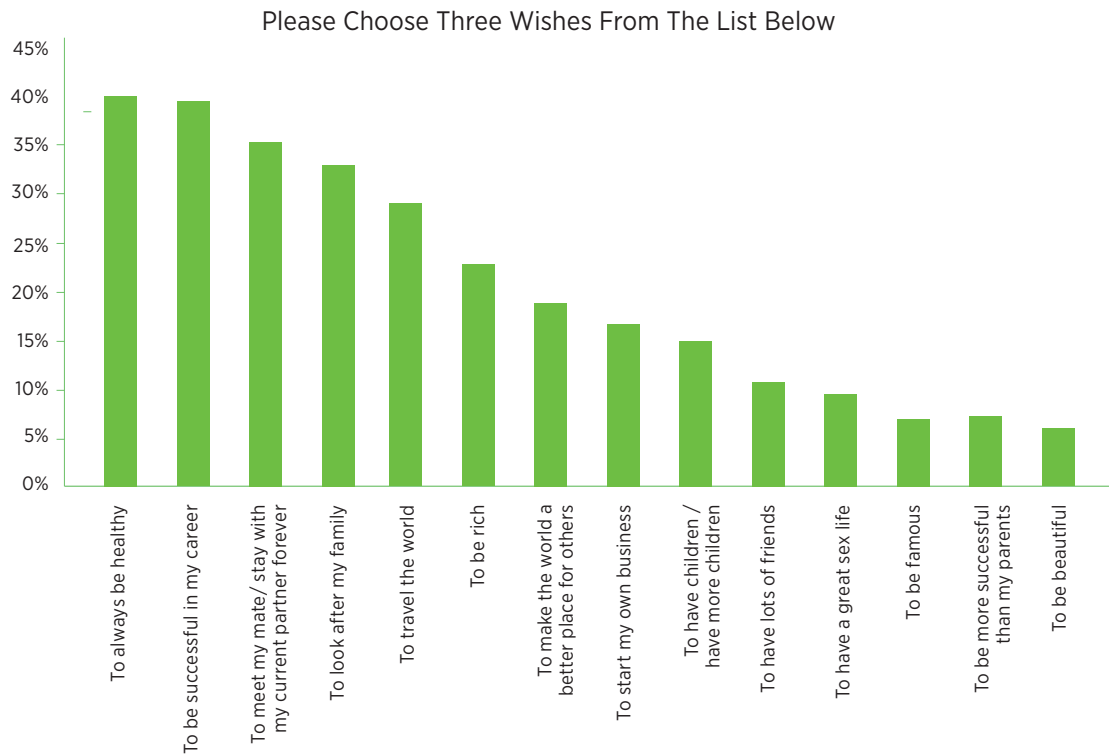
Idols Come Down To Earth

For young people today, their idols are more 'real' and accessible than ever. Twitter and social networking sites have brought the once 'untouchable' celebrities firmly down to earth as these tools provide access to the intimacies of idols' everyday lives.

When I Grow Up I Want To Be…Not Famous

If we give young people three wishes for their future, we see that their aspirations are actually pretty grounded. Whilst many would assume that young people these days are a generation of attention-seeking fame obsessives…only 6.3% globally were interested in being famous. Their top wishes for their futures were to maintain good health (40%), be successful in their chosen career (40%), meet their soul mate (36%) and look after their family (34%).

Young people in the U.S. were most interested in finding love (44% versus 36% global average), and young people in Mexico are most interested in starting their own businesses (30% versus 18%).

Please Choose Three Wishes From The List Below

In India, However, We See A Different Attitude To Fame

Here, young people are living their lives in 'constant audition mode' because they believe fame is just around the corner. Youth reality shows have started playing a major role in creating youth lingo & attitude.

18% of young people in India would use one of their three wishes to be famous (versus just 6% of young people globally). Similarly, 32% of Indian youngsters would like to be rich, versus 23% of total sample.

But Even In The Ultimate Celebrity Cultures…

Young people purport to prefer stars that are connected to real life and not 'preachy'. They claim to seek substance as well as style; preferring celebrities who have a strong POV. Amongst the celebrities youth admired the most were: Gandhi, Bill Gates, Mother Theresa, Jesus, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama, Steve Jobs, Marie Curie, Angelina Jolie and Albert Einstein.

Also of interest is the proportion who named their mother and father (despite being asked for famous people). Idols don't come much more down to earth than that!

Brands Of Substance

Just as young people nowadays seek truth and substance from their celebrities, they also seek it from the brands that populate their world. They reserve their most scathing attacks for brands that aren't true to themselves or break promises. We see particular sensitivity around anything pertaining to environmentalism or corporate social responsibility. Our young interviewees in Japan described how they skeptically examine a company's social activity for any signs of ulterior motives and then decide according to real actions and evidence rather than (a projected) image.

This is a generation who pride themselves on their ability to distinguish right from wrong and have a strong commitment to JUSTICE (one of the top three dominant global motivations). This next chapter explores how young people are using technology to create their own version of justice and change the world along the way.

"What corporate people want to do good? They don't really care. They are only doing it to make them look good. It's disgusting"

—Anonymous, Singapore

2011

A Year of Social Justice

4. Justice Re-Imagined

Just behind **Commune, Justice** was chosen by young people globally as the second highest rated motivation.

Justice is broadly interpreted here as 'doing the right thing', and the concept can be applied on two different levels:

1. Social Justice: The need to do what's right for society

2. Personal Justice: The need to do what's right for me

1. Social Justice:
The need to do what's right for society

2. Personal Justice: The need to do what's right for me

2011: A Year Of Justice

In the Middle East we see how social media has been used to great effect as a tool for change. Communities across borders have harnessed social media to report, to share information and to build networks of support and encouragement. This isn't to underestimate the significant impact of traditional media (Al Jazeera most notably) or the role of those individuals on the street who have little or no interaction with social media. The situation that unfolded in Egypt was a great example of the harmonisation of old and new media; working side by side, one providing fuel and 'evidence' on the ground, the other providing profile and analysis.

And it isn't just in the Middle East that we've seen the politicization of social media. In every country around the world we see people joining groups and registering their discontent on a wide range of topics, everything from corruption in politics to freedom of speech or human rights abuses.

Re-Imagining Personal Justice

Personal justice is defined by young people as doing the right thing for yourself and being treated fairly in your everyday life. It is interesting that globally the thing young people are most likely to say they're good at is 'knowing right from wrong'. But do they define 'right' and 'wrong' in the same way as other generations?

We've seen evidence that they are developing their own distinctive moral framework, which is heavily influenced by the 'laws' of the internet rather than the laws of any individual nation state. As our research team in Mexico pointed out, "Young people are looking for their own justice…and that means avoiding impositions, rigid rules and structures where they can't negotiate."

"I wouldn't steal a car but I would sure as hell download one if I could"
Facebook Group

Older Generations See As Wrong		Younger Generations See As Right
Stealing is taking anything you haven't earned	⟷	Downloading isn't stealing. they'll download content 'illegally' but find others ways of supporting artists they like
Using someone else's idea is plagiarism	⟷	It's not where you take things from it's where you take things to (Jim Jarmusch) - welcome to a world of rehashing, remashing, remixing.
Acting before you think is a recipe for trouble	⟷	Ask for forgiveness not permission (5 minutes late is 5 minutes too late- tweet now think later)
Staring at a screen in company is rude	⟷	Looking away from a screen is rude to your friends
Not working at work is a disciplinary issue	⟷	Work can be disrupted by play and play can be disrupted by work

The more time young people spend living their lives online the more the culture of the Internet will influence their moral framework and notion of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Essentially they live in a world where...

Borders won't be tolerated. More than any other generation this generation doesn't think in compartments. If I can have that here, why I can't I have it there? If this is 'right' here, why is it 'wrong' there?

Collaboration is hardwired. The third thing young people pride themselves on is 'working in a group or team', and 8 out of the top 10 things that young people think they're good at cover how they relate to other people.

The context is global. It's getting harder and harder for nation states to maintain their own moral silo when young people are more aware of how justice is defined elsewhere.

Business Beware

It is of this strong sense of 'personal justice' that businesses can sometimes upset. The moment young people feel hemmed in, ignored or personally hard done by, they aren't afraid to shout about it or name their perpetrator. A whopping 90% globally would make a point of telling their friends about unjust behavior from a brand.

From a young person's point of view, the worst thing a brand can do is make a promise it doesn't keep. Given their focus on truth and authenticity, youth want brands to adopt a form of justice that is a) credible and b) true to the brand. They want brands to do the right thing in a way that seems right for that brand. Anything that seems cynical or piecemeal will be quickly dismissed.

What Is A Justice Brand?

When asked to name 'justice brands', young people all over the world put forward a rich and diverse selection of brands. Countless small, local initiatives were mentioned from big brands and small brands, old brands and new brands, thereby demonstrating that you don't have to make some big sweeping change to be recognized. Everyone could recount specific actions associated with these brands that had caught their attention.

But when asked to choose the brands that have made the most positive difference to our lives from a list of the biggest global brands, technology brands (Google, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook) are the clear winners of the day. Young people place a huge amount of faith in these brands, believing that technology brands will solve most of the problems the world faces today, from environmental issues to food shortages. Which is just as well given that it is these brands (that transcend borders like no government can) that will increasingly influence the shape of global justice, from freedom of speech to privacy and terrorism.

It's interesting that Microsoft trumps Apple to the number two spot; it may not score quite so highly as a brand that young people want to 'hang out with' today, but young people everywhere seem to acknowledge that we wouldn't be where we are today without Microsoft. If Apple has seen further, it is because it stood on the shoulders of Microsoft, a true technological giant of our times. The presence of Coca Cola, Disney and Nike in the top ten demonstrates the importance of optimism and the spirit of carpe diem for this generation.

Summary

Our top three highest rated global motivations (*Commune, Justice* and *Authenticity*) provide compelling insight into the lives of young people today

Technology As A Fifth Sense

All three of these motivations are underpinned by, and fuelled by, their relationship with technology, now so intrinsic and fundamental that half of young people would sooner give up one of their human senses than give up their technology.

The Social Economy

Young people nowadays exist in a Social Economy where they are increasingly defining themselves via who they connect with and what they connect people to. Unsurprisingly, we've seen a rush of brands into the social space. However, to avoid feeling like just another 'fake friend', brands must understand the values young people seek in their true friends: Humble, Mature, Sociable, Genuine, Truthful…

The Truth Hunters

Truthful is the single most sought value in a friend, and **'AUTHENTICITY'** is one of the highest rated motivations. Little wonder young people are obsessed with the truth when they exist in a world of curated identities, Facebook-worthy lives and infobesity! Google is their number one ally in the quest for truth, and they are seeking substance from brands and celebrities alike.

Justice Re-Imagined

Young people around the world are reinventing the idea of what justice is and how it works. Social media is having a powerful (and somewhat paradoxical) role in the quest for doing the right thing. On a personal level young people believe they have a strong notion of the difference between right and wrong…but this is increasingly informed by the values of the Internet. Their new moral framework will continue to transform everything around us from the laws that govern our lives to our workplaces.