



Change in brand choice

Society is changing. The number of people with a migration background is increasing. Brands need to understand the changing needs of consumers and learn to bridge cultural differences and connect consumers.

Society and brand owners are not short of challenges at the moment. Even before Corona, there were gloomy predictions about the impact of digitalisation on job security. During the pandemic, the collective race to catch up in terms of digital and virtual is providing a foretaste of the force with which our value creation will change. Jobs, companies, industries, even entire business models are at stake.

While Corona acts as an accelerator for social transformations (e.g. home schooling, home office), new shopping behaviour (e.g. delivery services, online shopping) and economic bankruptcies (e.g. Galeria Karstadt Kaufhof, Tom Taylor), other megatrends such as climate change and migration have been pushed into the background in the meantime. However, both remain relevant. We were able to experience for ourselves that people seek the best individual living spaces when we moved out in droves to the countryside, the sea and the mountains after the first loosening of the lockdown. International migratory movements are similar - but for existential reasons: People always strive for better living conditions for themselves and their relatives.

Megatrend migration

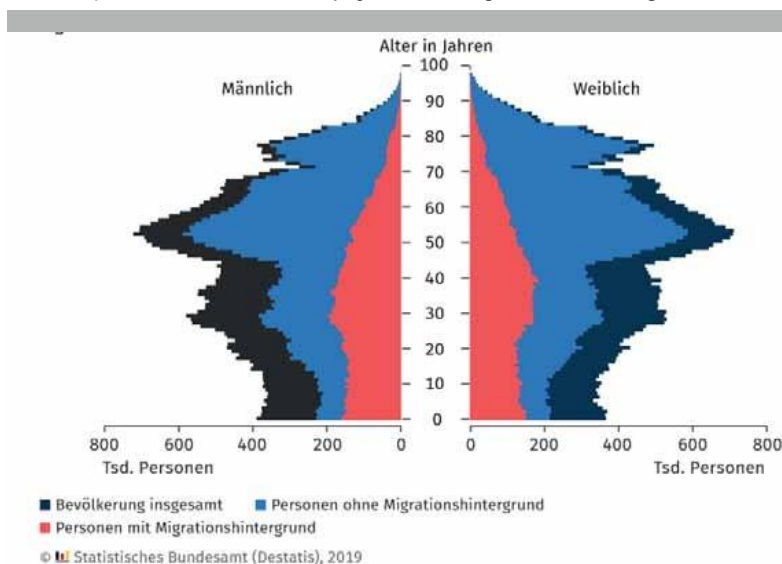
Without migration, humanity would have died out at least twice - as Australopithecus or as Homo Sapiens in its early phase. Migration has always been a survival or success-securing instinct - starting from Africa and always in connection with drastically changing climatic living conditions.

Just as migration is understood dynamically in demography, the concept of culture is also to be understood dynamically: When populations meet, there are regular moments of friction as well as 'exchange and change'. This shows that culture is changeable. That which the vernacular cherishes and cultivates as German culture, or in some social classes wants to defend as German cultural assets, is often nothing other than a historical cultural mix. Christian Easter was based on the pagan Germanic fertility festival of the goddess Ostara. The Christmas tree, which has been popularised since the 18th century, is a further development of the Roman cult of Mithras, All Saints' Day becomes Halloween and Thanksgiving is Oktoberfest, which Bavarians now gladly share in united costume with Hamburgers, Berliners, Westphalians and, before Corona, also with Italians and Chinese.

25 % of all German citizens have a migration background

In the course of immigration and globalisation, behaviours and traditions are changing: The contexts of origin of people with a migration background are the driving force for cultural change in societies, which never runs in only one direction. According to the Federal Statistical Office, at least one in four people in Germany today has a migration background. Around 25 per cent of all German citizens have thus immigrated to Germany themselves or have at least one parent who was not born in Germany.

Population in private households by gender, migration background and age (2018)



Every fourth German citizen is an immigrant or has at least one parent who was not born in Germany

About 60 per cent of people with a migration background live in large cities. Due to the significantly younger age structure, their share will continue to increase. Additional net immigration even reinforces this effect demographically: According to UN/DESA projections, without additional disasters at least 82 million people will emigrate by 2050 - besides the USA and Canada, Germany, the UK and also France will be important destination countries. These facts cannot be changed even by walls. Brexit or the Yellow Vests and Black Lives Matter protests are ultimately only harbingers of the social conflicts on the way to new social cultures.

What role do brands play?

Ultimately, brands are above all markers. Signals that are intended to simplify complex decisions (for consumers) and accelerate them (for suppliers). As such, brand constructs never exist in a vacuum.

They are contextualised in their respective market and people environment and at the same time form an important level of the everyday context themselves. If the culture of a migration destination country changes beyond very long-term shifts in a comparatively short time, then a whole range of perspectives open up for brands as a result. A particularly intensive cultivation of one's own culture of origin, even to the point of romantic exaggeration, is not an uncommon effect. In Germany, we know it from German expellees and ethnic German immigrants after the Second World War or currently from communities of Turkish origin. Brands from the homeland can profit from this just as much as those that strategically allude to the respective homeland. In this sense, brands (re)establish an old order for people with a migration background. Often a supposedly good old order. But what happens to the formerly order-giving insignia of an immigration culture in transition? Beer, rusk and potato dumpling brands do not really impose themselves as migration winners.

When brands shape change

In ethno-psychodramatic interviews, a very constructive role regularly emerges that brands are very capable of taking on: that of a 'branded melting pot'. The brand invites to unite and bridge cultural differences and to connect people. Such a brand personality is particularly obvious in sociable categories and suits Heineken, Ouzo12 or Paulaner, but also Deutsche Bahn. Much more challenging, but also particularly promising, is the opening up of brands and categories that are not necessarily close to migration for social change. Katjes caused a stir with an attention-grabbing move in addressing Muslim population groups, but was also rewarded for their courage. Of course, the right product (here: vegan = without animal/pork gelatine) contributes a lot to success.

What we need in terms of migration effects are brands that build cultural bridges. Dr Uwe Lebok, K&A Research



'Branded Melting Pots': Communication connects people

Learning from Corona

If the Corona pandemic has anything positive, it is its role as an impetus and catalyst for change. In addition to the dominantly negative processes of change with regard to freedom and interpersonal contacts, gears are now also moving that have been standing still for a long time. From a psychological point of view, an acute pressure of suffering is usually needed to change human behaviour. This is now also driving digitalisation and the flexibilisation of the presence culture in companies, to name just two examples. There is also much to learn about resilience and positive development curves in times of change from brand successes during and after the first Corona shock. Netflix, PayPal, Amazon and Parship build bridges that make it easier for consumers to deal with change. In this sense, they increase personal efficiency in the new everyday life. People who have had such an efficiency experience are very likely to remain loyal to it in the medium and long term. What we need in terms of migration effects are brands that build cultural bridges. Brands that design fast, efficient paths to new German consumers and thus actively and constructively negotiate the current of change. This requires an empathetic and at the same time purposeful understanding of the change itself as well as the needs that come together in the process. In this way, it is possible to define offers to which change does not simply happen, but which help to formulate it.

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