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## Europeans View Work as a Chore, While Chinese Work Hard to Become Rich

Young Chinese Are More Optimistic About the Global Economy, Says DDB's Dick van Motman

by [Dick van Motman](#)

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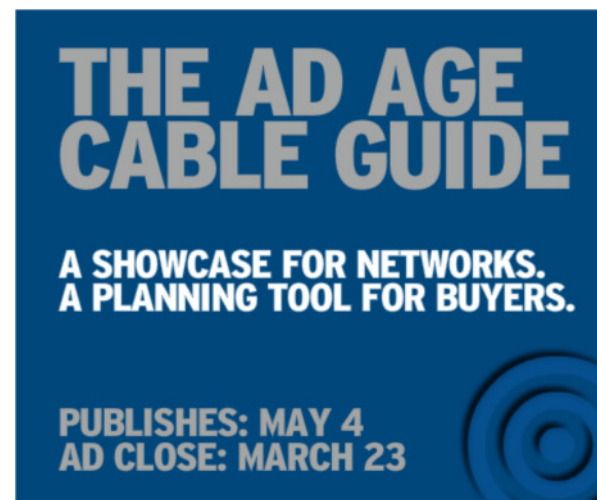
SHANGHAI (AdAgeChina.com) -- How are Chinese youth different from those in Europe? How do their perceptions of the global economic crisis differ? We recently interviewed a group of urban Chinese and European creatives, all whom were under 30. The difference in their outlook on life was astounding.

While young middle-class Chinese tend to be excited about the future, energized by the opportunity and invigorated to work hard, their European counterparts have a much dimmer view on the world and their place in it. Chinese, on the whole, remain very positive regardless of the economic crisis.

Listen to the words of this 25-year-old office worker in Shanghai:

*"I hear people say that this isn't the worst part about the financial crisis yet and that 2009 will be really bad. I feel that the people around me are not very affected, but just some friends in particular industries such as finance or the car industry experience more effects. But my family and myself are quite fine. I don't think China will suffer as much as America or Europe, just that things will not be as prosperous as before. So, there's really no need to fear."*

Her views are echoed by many of her contemporaries. Chinese want it all and feel much more pressured to succeed and live up to expectations than young Europeans, partly as a result of the one-child policy. All the young Chinese we interviewed were born after 1979, when that policy was instituted.



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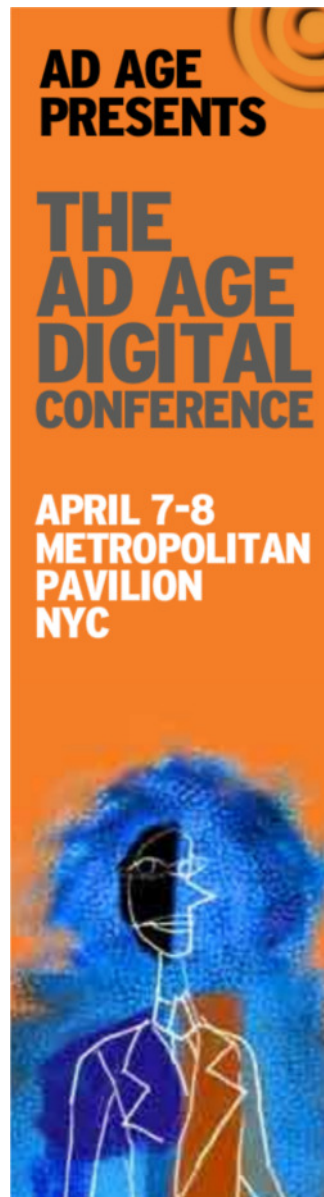
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DDB's Dick van Motman in Shanghai

They've been brought up surrounded by economic growth and relative prosperity compared to their parents. They are much more career orientated. They are driven to succeed professionally, to make money and to surpass the professional status of their parents.

Importantly, responsibility towards their parents and family weighs heavily on their conscience.

Europeans, on the other hand, joke about wanting to get away from their parents and be more independent. Many of the youths DDB has spoken to in Europe describe work as a "chore" to pay the bills and cite their social life as the most important aspect of their life.

In terms of ambition, many Europeans simply said they were not ambitious, they just want to have fun. They don't have a three-to-five-year plan and prefer to take each day as it comes.

In contrast, all of the Chinese interviewed by DDB list owning a home as their first dream, followed by a car and perhaps a pet. They have high material aspirations as well as the drive to succeed academically and professionally too. They are not decreasing their spending even if newspapers are full of stories about the global meltdown.

Here are a few more clues to understand the Chinese mindset.

Chinese are driven. They aspire to lifestyle and high quality objects. They are always looking for a better tomorrow. It's out



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with the old, in with the new and make my life better.

Chinese are stressed. Along with striving for a better life comes the fear of missing out on life's opportunities. This generates high levels of anxiety.

Chinese are competitive. That fear of missing out makes them competitive and hungry for success. They will take extreme measures to out-do the competition.

What defines success in China today? Simple..becoming rich. Chinese have embraced materialism and consumerism with passion. Deng Xiaoping, the de facto leader of the People's Republic of China from 1978 until the early 1990s, opened the floodgates nearly thirty years ago with the now legendary line, "To get rich is glorious."

European youth tend to have a more holistic approach to their lives, looking for more idealistic rather than material fulfillment. Europeans are far more pessimistic about the future due to the global economic slowdown, while their Chinese counterparts remain positive and bullish.

*Dick van Motman is president-CEO, China of DDB Group, which includes DDB, Tribal DDB and RAPP. He is based in Shanghai.*

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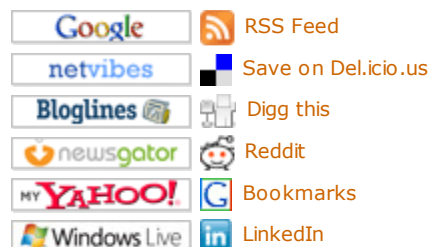
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