

## Group E: Urban Intelligence

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### Sociology and Environment

#### Summary

*Urban Intelligence* mostly contains young and well educated people who are open to new ideas and influences. Young and single, and few encumbered with children, these people tend to be avid explorers of new ideas and fashions, cosmopolitan in their tastes and liberal in their social attitudes. Whilst eager consumers of the media and with a sophisticated understanding of brand values, they like to be treated as individuals, and value authenticity over veneer.

#### Demography

Education is important to *Urban Intelligence*. Many are still in further education, while others are making the transition from full time student to full time worker. Many in full time employment are eager to further develop their level of 'human capital'. This is a culture in which work involves intellectual rather than merely inter-personal or manual competences.

While most may enjoy casual or transitory relationships, they do not feel ready to make permanent commitments, whether to important 'others', to professions or to specific employers. For this reason, many prefer to occupy themselves with a mix of study and part time work, and to live in rented flats which they often share with people in similar circumstances. This flux creates neighbourhoods that are highly transient, resulting in a level of mobility that makes it difficult for older established residents to sustain the networks that give identity to the community. The older people then tend to leave, abandoning their old neighbourhoods to the young. The resulting anonymity and lack of cohesion contributes to increases in the levels of petty crime which then renders the neighbourhoods unsuitable for families, other than those with very young children, further reinforcing the dominance of young singles. The internationalisation of higher education has also resulted in *Urban Intelligence* acquiring significant numbers of foreign born residents. This contributes to a cosmopolitan atmosphere that further encourages ethnic and cultural variety. Many of the partnerships in these areas are between people of different ethnic groups.

#### Environment

Neighbourhoods of *Urban Intelligence* occur mostly in inner London and in the inner areas of large provincial cities, especially those with popular universities. Whilst the nucleus of the student population initially lived in halls of residence, the growth in student numbers has led to a dispersion of students into older working class communities as well as into the areas of large old Victorian houses, which often surround the older universities. Extending beyond these immediate environs are other attractive inner city areas that are now taken over by recent graduates and by young professionals who want to live close to their work and to the restaurants and entertainment facilities of the inner city. Increasingly, with demand for flats outstripping supply, developers are now building smart new flats as well as refurbishing older houses, particular in locations close to old canals and docklands. In London the pressure of demand from young professionals and childless couples extends into previously lower middle class suburbs such as Wandsworth and Hammersmith resulting in the extensive purchase and restoration of the more decorative older terraces. Outside London the needs of this Group are met by new 'dinky' developments of town houses and small flats, often on brownfield sites, catering for the demand for accommodation which is new but which is designed for the needs of people without children. A common feature of all these types of *Urban Intelligence* neighbourhoods is the plentiful supply of places to eat and drink.

#### Economy

*Urban Intelligence* neighbourhoods are very dependent on knowledge work, particularly in government, the media, research and consultancy, marketing and information technology. Not needing space other than to accommodate intelligent brains, employers of such expertise find it convenient to establish themselves in city centres or near city centre locations that provide good access to potential customers. Universities and the human capital that they create thereby become a source of economic regeneration for many city centre and inner city locations.

### **Consumer Values**

*Urban Intelligence* is the most liberal group in terms of their values, the most catholic in their tastes and the most international in their orientation. Although highly aware of the values associated with different brands, and particularly the brands that they choose, many people are at the same time hostile to artifice and manipulation and attach a high importance to personalisation and authenticity. In general this population is particularly supportive of businesses whose priorities involve environmental sustainability and the avoidance of cultural imperialism.

### **Money**

Particularly under current government funding arrangements, many students and recent graduates expect to start their careers burdened by debt. Discovering how to use financial products, how to survive on a budget and how to manage debt is therefore a concern for many in this Group. On the other hand there is an increasing population of young professionals living in these neighbourhoods who are earning significantly more than they can easily manage to spend. Mindful of career uncertainties these more affluent populations have become an interesting market for various forms of high risk investment whether in short term trading or in the buy to let market. The presence of overseas students and of ethnic minority groups can make the international transmission of money an important financial need in certain localities.

### **Consumption Patterns**

Being well educated, *Urban Intelligence* is a group who are enthusiastic consumers of all forms of media, in particular the broadsheet press, current affairs and environment magazines, foreign newspapers and the Internet. These people are particularly interested in issues based content and in news rather than in entertainment and celebrity gossip. People spend much time in bookshops. The less well off pay little attention to fashion, dressing informally in denim and T-shirts, though the better off are very often leaders in fashion, applying designer criteria not just to clothing but to accessories such as glasses and haircuts and creating an urban style of their own which spills over into exclusive restaurants and bars.

While students at the lower, younger end of this Group own any cheap car, those at the higher end of the Group can often be seen driving luxury German and Swedish, as well as conspicuously individualistic, sports cars.

Tastes in food are experimental, with parties of students or young professionals frequenting restaurants offering the most exotic of cuisines, in preference to traditional English food. People are very aware of the relationship between food and health, which results in a demand at grocery stores for fat free and organic products, as well as vegetarian alternatives to mainstream products. Small household sizes and small kitchens results in smaller and more frequent shopping trips and the purchase of products in smaller pack sizes than in areas of *Happy Families*. In London, in particular, the older and better off members of this Group can display very considerable interest in shopping at very specialist stores, which offer a particularly high standard in specific areas such as fish, cheese, fruit or wine. The leisure focus of this Group is particularly oriented towards the arts and entertainment, with large numbers visiting the cinema, attending plays and concerts or visiting exhibitions. Travel agents do particularly good business in these neighbourhoods, especially in summer months.