

VALUES & VISIONS 2030

What will matter tomorrow?

By Hannes Fernow, Mirjam Hauser, Björn Huber



GIM | RELEVANCE COUNTS.

IMPRESSUM

Authors

Hannes Fernow, Mirjam Hauser, Björn Huber

Advisory Board

Wilhelm Kampik, Jörg Munkes, Stephan Telschow,
Stephan Teuber, Kerstin Ullrich, Susan Shaw

Freelance collaborators

Thomas Arnold, Marlon Meierhöfer

Editing

Matthias Bauer, Tobias Sauer

Layout/Illustration

Joppe Berlin

Publisher

GIM Gesellschaft für Innovative Marktforschung mbH
Goldschmidtstraße 4-6
D-69115 Heidelberg
Telephone +49 (0) 62 21 8328 0
info@g-i-m.com
www.g-i-m.com

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Management Summary

Exploiting opportunities in a changing world

Over the next fifteen years, the existing triad of globalisation, liberalisation and digitalisation is set to change our society even more. The way in which people communicate with each other, organise their communities and even handle their own bodies will be strongly influenced by technological and scientific achievements. New designs for life are emerging; the relevance of some social values is increasing whereas that of other values is declining; boundless creative opportunities are challenging each of us to realign our lives.

On the one hand, this rapid change is causing acute anxiety in citizens and consumers when it comes to globalisation and the future; it is also instilling in them a fear of being left behind and disenfranchised due to their inability to adapt. While they hope to find new ways to participate and assume responsibility, they are simultaneously looking towards the tangible community of those close to them as a welcome haven.

The impact of such change will make itself felt in companies and businesses across all economic sectors. Decision-makers who are aware of the hopes and fears of their staff and customers will be in a better position to identify the strategic potential and risks in the business segments of today and tomorrow, develop scenarios for new lifeworlds and their needs, and come up with a sustainable and value-based form of brand management.

Summary of the study

The GIM study “Values and Visions 2030” wants to take a socio-scientifically substantiated look at the future. To this end, experts identified five social megatrends likely to influence our lives in the coming years. From these tendencies – ranging from algorithmisation to ‘relocalisation’ – we derived 33 assumptions about future bench marks for our actions and decisions. A select group of experts and a representative online panel of interested members of the German public were asked whether these assumptions will be relevant in future, and whether they will offer support or spark fear. The answers obtained show what will ultimately matter in a world that in many respects is renewing itself, and indicate what people want for themselves and their lives. Eight value trends have been distilled from this process: responsibility, justice and solidarity, achievement and competition, comfortable in the digital realm, getting up close, tradition and the place we call home, communities of choice, along with security and control.

Managers of companies need to pay special attention to three main areas – transparency, closeness/proximity and acceptance – so they can adjust early to the future expectations of their staff and customers. This also presents an opportunity: those who tackle change successfully stand a good chance of making it in the future.

Creating transparency

In the near future, people will be more intent than ever on assuming responsibility for their decisions and acting 'well' in the ethical sense. Since they will have access to more and more information, the odds of this happening are quite high. As consumers, they will also look to companies as potential partners. If these companies appreciate that they have to help their customers assert their value judgements, and if they render their production processes as transparent as possible, then they can present their brand in a more positive light and enhance customer loyalty. Sound information about where raw materials are sourced and how a product is manufactured creates a sense of security and dependability – and those brands on which people can depend will enjoy the greatest success.

There is, however, a second area where citizens want to be taken seriously, namely data protection and data security. Customers are aware of the enormous gains in convenience to be had from sharing personal data. On the other hand, they're afraid of the loss of control that comes with it. Companies can combat customers' mistrust by explaining in the most precise terms possible how they intend to use the data. By emphasising to customers their intention to protect privacy and handle the data entrusted to them with the utmost care, such companies signal their recognition of the public's desire for a free and self-determined life.

Getting up close

Globalisation and digitalisation have profoundly altered the world in recent years – and nobody believes that this process is nearing its end. And yet a world governed by non-transparent codes and obscure computer operations is an unapproachable world. Simplicity of use and ease of operation make things easier for us to understand. Citizens are now also placing greater value on interpersonal relations and are looking more to their real-life home as a tangible sphere of experience – in theory at least. In actual fact, despite a strong yearning in this direction, the prognosis is that face-to-face human contact will have no greater role to play future than at present, unlike the digital assistants.

Nonetheless, those businesses that can boast a local, decentralised production are fulfilling what customers really long for. Companies can also build emotional ties to their customers with a sales approach that doesn't rely solely on the latest technology for its efficiency but also provides scope for human contact.

Guaranteeing acceptance

More and more areas of life can now be recorded, analysed and utilised in digital form. Herein lies a massive opportunity for citizens – who are both consumers of products and producers of media content – to make their own voice heard, and to be noticed and taken seriously as individuals. In this context, companies should tune into the power of influencers and adapt their PR work to this radically new communication environment.

At the same time, however, citizens fear an increasing pressure to achieve, and feel at risk of perpetual physical and mental overload due to the shrinkage of those areas of life that take place outside competition and market logic. Products are needed which are better able to handle the new scope for creativity and optimisation touching all areas of life. The research findings have demonstrated the

important role played by a certain slowing down of life and the physical presence of products and people. Companies therefore need to make their customers and staff feel accepted in terms of both their strengths and their weaknesses. Customers must be confronted with as few hurdles as possible when seeking contact with the company. As far as building staff loyalty is concerned, this may mean a cautious approach to introducing flexible work models and staying in constant dialogue with the workforce in order to give everyone time to adapt.

Conclusions

The rapid pace of technological change impacts on societal life, hopes, fears and values. The social megatrends currently in evidence, along with the corresponding changes in family, are forcing the hand of companies as well.

In this study, GIM Future Research shows how companies need to act in three areas to head off the risks posed by the latest developments and to take the opportunities available. Companies should

- firstly create transparency via dependability,
- secondly, build closeness and proximity via a human and emotional form of address, and
- thirdly, take staff and customers (with all their uncertainties) seriously so as to lessen the sense of overload and foster acceptance for innovations.

From the perspective of staff and customers, this allows companies to become trustworthy partners who understand their fears for the future and help them be confident about assuming responsibility for tomorrow's world.