

Global @dvisor Survey Reveals Sharply Contrasting Attitudes

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13th July 2007 - The world's most engaged consumer-citizens embrace global trade and investment, but want their governments to increase regulation on companies

The world's most engaged citizens say that while they personally embrace global trade and corporate investment in their homeland, they want their governments to more aggressively crack down on the activities and influence of national and multinational corporations, a new survey reports today.

The survey by leading research firm Ipsos, covering a new breed of influencers in 20 of the world's leading and burgeoning powerhouse economies, highlights the risk for global and national corporations because potential government intervention and tighter regulatory regimes will be backed by their most engaged citizens.

Encompassing 20,000 interviews, the survey shows a large majority (71%) of these socio-political activists feeling that foreign companies have too much influence over the economy in their country, and even more (75%) believing their government should be more aggressive in regulating corporations.

Comments Stewart Lewis, Head of the Ipsos MORI Reputation Centre: "Our survey illustrates the importance of a new breed of social and political activists (SPA's) that have grown up around the world. These influencers are engaged citizens who lead and stir debate. They galvanise public opinion by directly and indirectly pressurising business and government. They are consumer-oriented and drive others to reward and punish good and bad corporate behaviour. As a result they are a force to be reckoned with; industry and governments ignore these individuals at their peril."

Despite their desire for greater regulation of companies within their countries, these engaged individuals are actually global trade and corporate investor supporters, not the expected stereotype.

Among other findings, 91% believe that expanding global trade is a "good" thing, another 81% advocate that investment by global companies in their country is essential for their growth and expansion, and two-thirds (63%) agree that overall, globalization is a good thing for the world.

The survey audience represents an intelligent, active and engaged population. Half have instigated political, social and economic discussions, and 37% have signed a petition in the past year. All are online; half are under 35; half have university-level education. They translate their concerns into their behaviour as consumers, and lead by example. Almost half (47%) have chosen to buy a product or service on the basis of the company's ethical, social or environmental reputation, while a third (33%) have advised others against buying from a specific company on the same grounds.

The 20-country Ipsos survey shows that China and India are by far the most optimistic about their future; these optimists outweigh the pessimists by 41%; Russia is some way behind in third place. In most of the developed countries, pessimists outnumber optimists – including the US, Germany and especially Britain.

However, the stereotypical view that developing countries focus on material improvement while the developed world cares more about social and environmental issues is well wide of the mark. According to this survey it is developing countries that call for increased regulation, with environmental protection at the top of their agenda.

SPA's are more positive than negative about the influence of the military, major corporations, the World Bank, the media and their political leader on their country. The opposite is true of their attitudes towards national governments, justice systems, unions, religious leaders and pressure groups. Most countries see the influence of the military on their country as a positive, especially India; the exceptions are Argentina, South Korea, Germany and Sweden. At the other end of the spectrum, few countries consider the impact of unions and pressure groups as mainly positive; and the USA is the only country that sees religious leaders as a positive force.

Attitudes towards major corporations tend to be more positive among developing countries, including China, India and Brazil, than among developed countries such as the USA, Britain and Germany.

Concludes Stewart Lewis: "The survey's findings demonstrate the apparent dichotomy in developing markets which are both in favour of corporate globalisation and more regulation of large corporations. While socio-political activists in developing markets are hungry for the fruits of corporate globalisation, they may recognise that their justice systems are not sufficiently robust to control the excesses of unfettered corporate growth. Hence, they see a need for greater political regulation of big business." global@dvisor: Accessing engaged consumer-citizens around the world. An essential tool for

multinational organisations (pdf, 277KB)

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Technical Note

The Ipsos Global@dvisor-Reputation Risk Identifier is specifically constructed to understand the reputation risk that is critical to protecting goodwill and equity-both financial and public-of corporate brands. The first wave of interviews was conducted in April 2007, and will be repeated in October 2007. It surveys 1,000 citizens in each of 20 countries " from Britain to Brazil, Canada to China, USA to India via the internet. Respondents were categorised as 'broad elites, Internet Intelligaged, and digital information opinion leaders'. Respondents were questioned about corporate, social & political issues, foreign investment, expansion, the environment, and other critical risk s affecting their business landscape. The results were made available through the Global@dvisor research service digital platform within 20 days of initiating the global survey. Clients can also add their own proprietary questions, and add countries beyond the 20 included in the study.