

In Search Of The Digital Consumer

Contributed by GfK
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Around 300 marketing experts attend GfK Research Summit

How do companies reach their customers in the digital age? An international GfK conference dealt with this very question.

“The Digital Connected Consumer” was the topic of this year’s GfK Research Summit, which was held in Vienna in June and attended by around 300 marketing experts.

The program focused on how market research can contribute to understanding digital consumers, their consumption behavior and lifestyles. In addition to traditional tools, new techniques were introduced, including the conducting of surveys via mobile phones, the use of avatars in online questionnaires and tools such as the GfK Media Efficiency Panel.

The topic was explored from different angles and brand strategies in the digital sector were introduced by several GfK experts and a series of representatives from major companies, including mobile provider Mobilkom Austria, Microsoft, Coca-Cola and US online qualitative specialist Revelation.

Ronette Lawrence, representing Microsoft, compared the world of social communities to an ant hill in her presentation. The ants form a community and interact like a social network. From an outsider’s perspective, it is possible to approach and observe what happens, but things should never be stirred up by wildly prodding around in the hill.

For a company and its brands, this means that integrating in a social community is beneficial, but only if members are not disturbed or alienated, as, in a worst-case scenario, they could be driven to leave the social network. Ronette Lawrence illustrated the major role of new market research tools with the example of online gaming. According to Microsoft, 97% of teenagers play games online, and almost one in three do so every day.

Playing these games requires full attention, as it is almost impossible to do anything else at the same time. Microsoft developed in-game brand exposure tracking in order to research advertising impact. Advertisements were integrated into the virtual world of online games.

A survey found that around 60% of young gamers recalled the advertisement afterwards, said Ronette Lawrence. Furthermore, the integrated advertisements were perceived as authentic and added a more realistic dimension to the game.

In another lecture, Ian Ralph from GfK NOP Custom Research and Steve August from online qualitative specialist Revelation presented a joint pilot study. This study explored the potential that smartphones offer for market research, in comparison to qualitative online surveys that are currently only conducted on an individual’s computer at home.

The 40 participants were asked to complete a variety of tasks on their smartphone and computer. The study found that participants preferred to switch between the two devices, skillfully combining their respective strengths: providing information quickly and conveniently or giving short answers over the smartphone, while time-consuming discussions and more detailed answers were completed on the computer at home.

In future, conducting qualitative studies over smartphones will therefore be most appropriate when factors such as place, time and spontaneity are key.

The GfK Research Summit

The GfK Research Summit is a two-day conference organized by GfK Custom Research, which a select group of clients is invited to attend. The conference takes place annually, and has a different theme and venue every time.

During the event, some of the most interesting examples of GfK research are presented and discussed together with representatives of the major brand names. This year’s title for the Vienna conference was “The Digital Connected Consumer”.

The GfK Group

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