

The Social Life Of Brands

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Wave 5 - social media is instrumental to consumer decisions formed

50% of the respondents discover new brands via social networks

Malaysians use Facebook, Twitter & MySpace to better engage

Universal McCann's recent Wave 5 study has shown that the role of social media in relation to how Malaysians form decisions about brands has grown significantly. Consumers are heavily reliant on the platform for a variety of reasons.

Local customers utilize sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter to widen their pool of contacts for work, promote themselves and change or shape opinions. In West Malaysia, the study involved 500 respondents between the ages of 15 and 54.

Based on the data compiled, up to 50% of the respondents have uncovered new brands via social networks.

According to UM, the research exercise is one of the longest-running examinations of the impact of social media on today's global marketplace. The latest instalment served to explore the changes in communication technology and ways in which this element affects consumer habits. It measured trends as far back as 2006 until the present.

"The research is extremely useful in identifying ways in which clients can utilise the social media landscape to engage and connect with consumers to drive sales," said Prashant Kumar, CEO, Universal McCann Malaysia.

The most obvious shift in recent years is the ability of users (males of a higher socio-economic status), to engage using mobile devices - debunking the myth that social media is dominated by a younger demographic.

While 38% of social media users are in the 25-34 age bracket, the 35-44 age segment is fast catching up with 24% of them using social media actively.

Worldwide, Malaysia also ranks among the highest in terms of managing a profile on an existing social network. The study determined that the top social media activities are visiting friends on a social network page and watching videos online.

Wave 5 also revealed that 80% of the respondents have visited an official company or brand website in the last six months.

"New conversation tools are emerging daily, and companies must leverage on these developments by saying something meaningful. Even traditional media is shifting to digital. It is imperative that at a minimum, brands invest in social listening," Kumar added.

Blogging in Malaysia has also grown from 75.5% in 2008 to 80.4% this year, despite a huge drop in Europe.

"The challenge is to identify the type of social experience customers want. We must understand consumer needs before we can create compelling and successful social media programs," he noted. Â

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