Fifth Annual Synovate Media Atlas Study Reveals The Silver Hair Generation...

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...Is More Social Media Savvy Than Most Think

Synovate, one of the top four global custom market intelligence firms, today released the latest findings from its Media Atlas Hong Kong study, revealing the lifestyles, attitudes, spending, media and digital habits of consumers in this ever changing metropolitan city.

This marks the fifth complete year of the study, which showcases trends and changes in various aspects of the Hong Kong population.

One of this year's findings showed that the Silver Hair generation is experiencing the most rapid growth among all age groups engaging with social media. This group has seen a 42% growth in contributing to blogs and forums from 2009 to 2010.

Steve Garton, Managing Director of Media for Synovate in Greater China, commented:
"This marks the fifth year anniversary of the Media Atlas study in Hong Kong and we are very excited. We have been helping marketers, advertisers, media owners and media specialists uncover the likes and preferences of Hong Kong consumers with now a five-year trend overview. Particularly on the digital media front, over these past few years we are seeing the rapid adoption of social media, even by the Silver Hair generation."

The Silver Hair generation
There are over 1.4 million people in the Silver Hair generation (ages 50 to 64) in Hong Kong. This group is larger than the popularly referenced Post 80s generation (995,000 of 20 to 29-year-olds), and more than double the size of the Post 90s (683,000 of 12 to 19-year-olds).

Said Susanna Lam, Director of Synovate in Hong Kong:
"The Silver Hair generation has been overshadowed by the recent attention on the Post 80s group. However, marketers and companies alike have been thinking about how to tap into this segment of more mature consumers for some time. They are likely grandparents and/ or empty-nesters, with time to engage in any pursuits they choose and less discretion on how their money should be spent. We are seeing this as maybe one of the most interesting groups to study in the near future."

"See you on Facebook," said the Silver Hair
In the 2010 analysis of the Synovate Media Atlas findings, respondents with internet access in the past month can be grouped into four categories based on their habits of using social media. Those between the ages of 50 to 64 were found to have the most rapid growth in engaging with this medium.

The first group of social media engagers are called "Participants." They read blogs, but without commenting. This is the group that listens to podcasts and gleans information from reading forums and discussion groups.

There has been a 17% growth of the Silver Hair generation in Hong Kong becoming "Participants" in social media, the highest growth among all age segments.

The second group is called "Connectors." This group befriends, follows, links up, and connects with others through social networks. Fifty-eight percent of internet users aged 50 to 64 were considered Connectors in 2009. In 2010, two of every three internet users in the Silver Hair generation in Hong Kong are connected in social networks (67%).

The third group is called "Reactors." They post their comments on blogs and other social media platforms, contribute their thoughts to forums, and edit articles in wiki. "From one in four silver-haired Reactors in 2009 to now 35%, this group shows the most rapid growth in contributing to the social media world. This is a 42% year on year growth, the highest across all age segments," commented Lam.

The fourth group is called "Creators," those who create their own blogs and personal pages, and share their self-produced videos and other creations on public sites. In 2010, one in four (25%) Silver Hair internet users are Creators, a 41% growth from the previous year and once again the top group among all ages.

Please see Figure 1 which shows the growth of these four groups among the different age segments in Hong Kong.

"We are seeing a trend that more and more consumers in the Silver Hair generation are venturing into social media and being fearless creating content and sharing themselves through this medium. Over the next few years it is anticipated that even more of these mature consumers will interact with each other and with brands through social media. What are companies doing now to ensure they capture these opportunities?" said Garton.

Five year trend on Hong Kong consumers' habits and lifestyles
Since its inception in 2006, Synovate Media Atlas has captured the everyday lifestyles, habits, spending, and media consumption of the Hong Kong population. A five year analysis highlights trends that show certain product categories are continuing to grow while some are diminishing.

The financial crisis during this period had also made an impact on consumers' attitudes, reflected in the Media Atlas findings.

Over the years, ownership of different gadgets has continued to grow, from laptops (81% growth in ownership from 2006 to 2010), portable electronic games (47% growth in ownership from 2006 to 2010), desktop computers (15% growth), to mobile phones (8% growth).

And as it may be replacing the traditional tube, or adding more screens and entertainment at home, the most noticeable growth is with LCD/ Plasma TVs, which experienced a 139% growth in household ownership from 2006 to 2010.

Household ownership of DVD players (-6%), MP3 players (-4%), and digital still cameras (-2%) have seen a decline over the past five years. Commented Lam: "There are so many multifunctional gadgets out there that devices with only a singular use are slowly being phased out. People now can have one pocket holding just one gadget that does it all."

Please see Figure 2 on summary of ownership and growth in key product categories from 2006 to 2010.

It is also no surprise that Hong Kong consumers' attitudes have changed over the years.

"The depth of the financial crisis was between Q4 of 2008 to Q3 of 2009. We see from the attributes measured in Media Atlas that Hong Kong consumers' mentality on certain aspects of life has changed after this period. And until now it has not yet return to the pre-crisis level," said Garton.

From Q3 of 2007 to Q2 of 2008 - considered still the good times in the economy - over half (54%) of the Hong Kong respondents indicated that paying extra for quality is worthwhile, while 46% said sometimes they like to treat themselves to something special, even if it is expensive. In 2010 (Q1 2010 to Q4 2010), there has been a drop to 51% and 44% respectively saying the above.

Most noticeable for merchants and retailers alike, the impact of Hong Kong consumers' lifestyle changes is felt through the sales figures. From 56% of respondents indicating they go shopping at least once a week in the good financial times (between Q3 of 2007 to Q2 of 2008), this dropped most dramatically during the depth of the financial crisis (between Q4 of 2008 to Q3 of 2009) to 49%, while in 2010 it picked back up to 53%.

Commented Garton:
"We have now probably seen the extent of the recovery as far as it will go in terms of the rebound in confidence. This implies there has been a lasting, although modest, downward reset in consumer attitudes. Memories of the global financial crisis and its impact on Hong Kong will remain in people's minds for some years to come."

Making history: The year when Hong Kong consumers spent more time going online than watching television

From five years of tracking by the Media Atlas study, Hong Kong consumers are seen to be spending increasingly more time on the internet, while time toward the television has been diminishing.

The 2010 analysis shows that this is the year when Hong Kong consumers spent more time online than watching television. In 2010, internet users have indicated spending 145 minutes a day online (about 2.42 hours), while TV viewers had spent 140 minutes a day watching television (about 2.33 hours).

This was an increase from the year before in 2009 of 7% more time spent online, while television had maintained its level.

Compared to 2006, time spent engaged online grew 24% (from 117 minutes in 2006 to 145 minutes in 2010), while for television there has been a decrease of 6% (from 148 minutes in 2006 to 140 minutes in 2010).

Garton commented:
"Media Atlas provides an accurate and timely gauge of consumers' habits and preferences, enabling marketers,

advertisers, media owners and media specialists to spot opportunities ahead and seize them right as they happen. New attributes seen from trends we are spotting, such as the opportunities of the Silver Hair generation engaging with social media, are added to the study to stay ahead of the changing society. We look forward to propelling the success of Synovate Media Atlas Hong Kong from the last five years even further to the next five and beyond."

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