

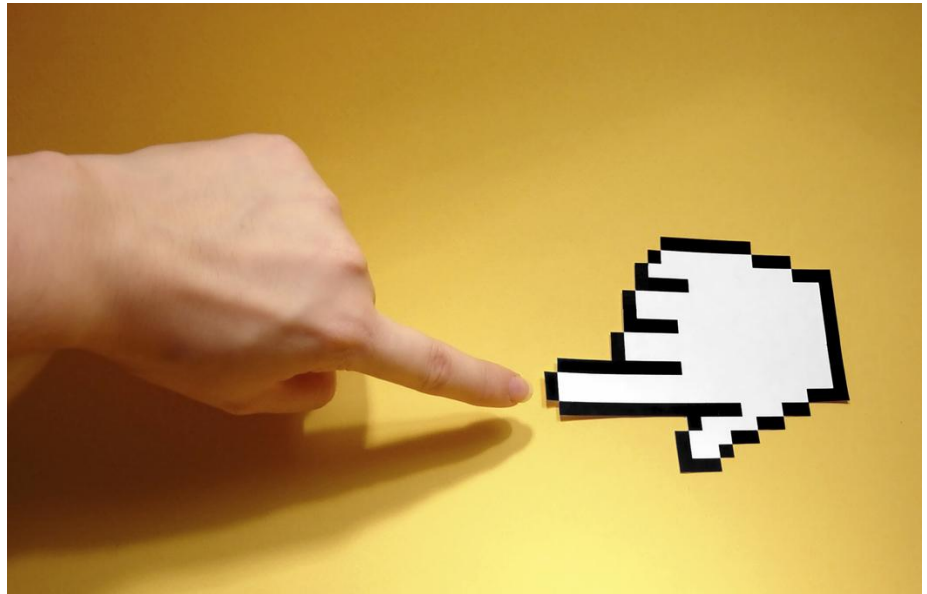
2012: The Year of Digital Influence

As the last issue of The Economist of 2011 noted, 'the only area of business that seems to be recession proof is social media.' Social networking sites continue to enjoy phenomenal growth, with the number of global Facebook users expected to reach one billion during 2012. As consumers in many parts of the world grow less trusting of advertising as a source of information and turn increasingly to word of mouth and online recommendations (something we see in our data), the challenge for marketers in 2012 will be to successfully unlock the value of social networking as a marketing tool. We offer some food for thought in this month's issue.

Share the Passion

Four in ten Internet users worldwide are Online Recommenders, according to the Roper Reports® Worldwide 2011 25-country survey. That is to say, they have made recommendations to people they don't know personally but have "met" online, posted a recommendation or complaint about a product or company online, or posted a rating or review of a product or service online. More than half of Internet users in Latin America, the Czech Republic, Taiwan, and Turkey qualify as Online Recommenders.

What most distinguishes Online Recommenders is a passion for life. This includes an enthusiasm for technology but extends well beyond it. They express a greater-than-average interest in topics ranging from movies to environmental issues, and they are more likely to make recommendations in areas



from home furnishings to alcoholic beverages.

Marketing tips:

Marketers should not assume that virtual recommendations are coldly objective just because they are conveyed via technology. Online advice can be as passionate as the people who offer it. Marketers should also be prepared to facilitate online recommendations on all types of platforms to avoid missed opportunities.

Share the Wisdom

Online Recommenders are receptive to advice, too. They are more likely than average to say they are interested in other people's opinions about what products and services to buy. Fully 43% read ratings and reviews online compared with 26% of all Internet users.

Online Recommenders are more likely than average to say that the "good listener" traits they most prize in the people they trust for advice include asking "appropriate questions that show they are paying attention" and sharing "their own ideas about the topic of conversation."

Marketing tip:

Online Recommenders appreciate getting advice themselves and grasp the value of exchanging knowledge. Marketers can help by offering means and ways for consumers to easily comment on and share the information they seek.

Market Manifestation:

Heinz 'Get Well' Soup Cans

Heinz in the UK recently ran a campaign via Facebook encouraging users to send a can of chicken or tomato soup – popular comfort foods – to sick friends with a personalised 'get well soon' message.

<http://www.facebook.com/HeinzSoupUK>

For more information
Europe: Anna Clark,
anna.clark@gfk.com
+44 (0)20 7890 9479

Asia Pacific: Jodie Roberts,
Jodie.roberts@gfk.com
+61 (0) 426 503 995