

Local Hong Kong Sites Annihilate International Competitors For Online Chat About Technology Brands

*Experts Say Companies Without a Localized Online Engagement Strategy Now At
Significant Competitive Disadvantage as Chat Volume Spikes 40 per cent*

Hong Kong, January 19, 2010 – A new industry study reveals that online conversations about technology brands in Hong Kong jumped 40 per cent in the last quarter of 2009, compared to the previous three months, and that most of that conversation is happening on local Hong Kong channels.

Leading global communications firm Edelman and online brand research and intelligence experts, Brandtology, today jointly released the findings of the second of their quarterly Hong Kong Digital Brand Index (DBI) research.

“This is a very significant increase in a very short time and demonstrates clearly the rising importance of online discussions and the influence they wield,” said Andres Vejarano, Director of the Technology and Digital Practice at Edelman Hong Kong. “But even more significantly, nine of the Top Ten “Buzziest” Channels are Hong Kong sites capturing 70 per cent of the conversation about the brands we researched. Twitter was the only international channel to make the Top Ten.”

“This is a wake-up call to marketers in *all* industries. We researched 66 technology brands because this sector usually sets the trends for online marketing. It’s now very clear that companies that don’t have a very tailored local strategy and program for managing the online conversations about their brands are, at the very least, missing an important opportunity to engage,” Mr. Vejarano said. “They are putting themselves at risk of being out of touch with a significant and important portion of their customer base and losing ground to competitors.”

The DBI, which reveals which technology brands are the most talked about online, showed that there were 225,009 posts about the 66 brands tracked in the study in the three months from October-December. This compares with 164,126 posts from July-September 2009. The posts came from 42,509 “unique voices” (different people).

What sites are the most popular?

Golden Forum is by far the number one destination for technology brand discussions, with 87,291 posts in a single discussion channel in three months. Twitter remained a distant second destination for technology brand conversation (27,236 posts), although the number of Twitter posts increased nearly four times compared to the previous quarter. The local Eyny Forum (8,683 posts) rounded out the top three, knocking Yahoo! HK Forum into fourth spot with 7,538 posts.

What technology brands are being discussed?

The latest study reinforced the results of the first DBI, which showed that online destination brands still dominated the attention of Hong Kong netizens with Microsoft's MSN leading the charge, Yahoo! second and Facebook and Google in third and fourth places respectively. YouTube captured sixth place with Twitter entering the Top Ten for the first time in seventh place.

When online destination brands are excluded, consumer electronic brands dominate the chart: PlayStation (1), Sony (3), HP (5), Nokia (6), Samsung (7) and LG (9). Microsoft (2) and Intel (4) stood out as the most discussed software and IT brands.

How should business and marketers respond?

"Our tool not only helps businesses identify the most influential channels and voices online, but also the *type of content* that appeals to their audiences the most," said Eden Lau, Co-founder & Managing Director of North Asia, Brandtology. "Marketers can then engage netizens through compelling social media campaigns instead of just banner ads, websites and traditional one-way online marketing. This is what will ultimately increase their brand "buzz", preference and profitability."

Mr. Vejarano agrees that being willing to engage in two-way discussions and with a much more credible tone and language than traditional advertising, is critical to online campaigns.

"Marketers must have the courage to enter the conversations about their products and brands in a new way," he said. "They must listen, be willing to respond and build trust in a sincere and genuine way. It's a new environment and success demands a much more open and engaging approach."

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