

Consumers prefer personal touch in purchasing decisions nielsen

Ninety-three per cent of consumers still prefer talking over tapping (with 89 per cent) when it comes to sharing their brand experience or seeking recommendations, according to a recent consumer study released by global measurement company Nielsen.

The Nielsen Digital vs. Real Life survey was conducted among more than 3 300 consumers across eleven countries: Australia, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand, and Turkey. The fieldwork was conducted from September 23 to October 4, 2019.

The sample was sourced from external sample providers and includes internet users who agreed to participate in the survey, with quotas based on age and sex for each country. It is weighted to be representative of internet consumers by country.

The obsession around social media creates the illusion that digital reality rules, putting all real-life communications on the backburner. However, Nielsen's Real Life vs. Digital Life report shows that although consumers are actively engaging online, word-of-mouth or real-life conversations have a stronger influence on consumers' minds and, therefore, their purchasing decisions.

More than half of respondents (58%) confirmed that word-of-mouth influences them greatly (vs. 46% for social media), while 71 per cent indicated that real-life conversations make an impact on their purchasing decisions.

"Word-of-mouth has always been and remains one of the greatest enablers for marketers in the battle for consumers' hearts and minds, and it is crucial to understand the way you can leverage its opportunities for your brand," said Ms. Sue Temple, Vice-President, Global Consumer Insights, at Nielsen. "It is easier for us to trust people we know – friends, spouses, and colleagues – than unknown personalities on social media, so to unlock this opportunity for business more effort is needed in ensuring a positive experience, which will encourage customers to share their experience within their personal network."

The more they use, the less they trust

Global consumers are very much tending to go digital and use social networks more often, but when it comes to trust they still rely on more traditional channels. Newspapers have a Trust to Usage index of 240, outdoor/billboards 178, and magazines 162, against internet/digital media's



much lower 78. Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) happen to be the most loyal audience for all channels, with newspapers being the most trusted channel (with an index of 356) for them, while Baby Boomers (born between 1944 and 1964) are sceptical towards all channels and the Silent Generation (born between 1925 and 1945) has a clear preference for newspapers (with an index of 241).

“With social networks rising in popularity over the last decade it is no surprise that their use and spread among all generations is leaking into consumers’ everyday lives,” Ms. Temple said. “Nevertheless, the quality of digital communications hasn’t developed at the same pace, and having been burned too many times when dealing with fake news, frauds, and data breaches, consumers respond with less trust of information shared via new media.”

Australia, Germany, and South Korea are ahead of the curve with word-of-mouth dominating over social media, with it having the strongest “influence level” on consumers’ minds and purchasing decisions. Furthermore, manufacturers and retailers should be mindful when allocating their marketing and advertising budgets between “Tap” and “Talk” across markets, as the most trusted media differs by country, skewing towards digital media in Mexico and Turkey (71% and 61%, respectively) versus a more even split between TV and digital media in Australia and Germany (34–35% for each media in both countries).

The reasons to go digital vary across the regions,



but on the top of the list is when consumers seek recommendations (46%), find it interesting to read something online (42%), or wish to share their own experience (38%). Most consumers express their personal opinions in real life because they are sharing their experience (45%), commenting on exclusive deals and offers (42%, and would like to recommend good products (42%).

“That being said, consumers are taking on the role of observer when online,” Ms. Temple explained. “They are on the lookout for information about products, and relevant and interesting content may inspire them to take the dialogue offline. It’s crucial to understand the link between the two – digital and real life – and what triggers having a broader discussion about the brand. Clearly, real

life conversations remain consumers’ comfort zone; a way to share true emotions with their community. When impressed by the experience, they can easily become brand ambassadors.”

At the same time, more consumers prefer to talk about brands in person rather than posting online, and countries dominated by the older generation – Australia, Germany, and South Korea – are at the head of the trend, contrary to Indonesia and Thailand, where consumers prefer to post more about their experience with the brand. “These regional differences have a direct impact on the efficiency of marketing campaigns,” she said. “Knowing who are the most probable influencers will help in sharpening brands’ social media campaigns.” **SR**