

e-Management Digest

A collection of management articles for the aspiring managers

November 2006

This Management Digest is prepared for the aspiring managers as an update to what they already know. This newsletter is sent monthly to delegates following courses provided through Consort Management Consultants Ltd. and to members of the Hong Kong Institute of Marketing. It is also posted on the Hong Kong page of the Institute of Administrative Management website.

MARKET RESEARCH

World's Shoppers

Results from the global ACNielsen survey in June 2006 about consumers' attitudes towards shopping have confirmed that the world's biggest shopaholics are to be found in Asia and more closely Hong Kong!

The survey conducted among 22,000 Internet users in 42 markets has revealed that 74 percent of world's consumers admit to shopping as 'a form of entertainment' while 93% of Hong Kong consumers see the same.

Hong Kongers rank first again for shopping as frequent as twice a week just 'for something to do', followed by Thailand's distant second (9%) and Singapore the third (7%).

How often do you go shopping for "something to do" or for entertainment, when you don't actually need anything?



"Hong Kong has long been promoted as a shopping paradise. The opening of bigger and better shopping malls with shopping, dining and entertainment all under one roof are everywhere, not to mention the close

proximity of everything in the city," said Bienvenido Niles, Regional President, ACNielsen, Asia Pacific. "Meanwhile neighboring countries are also fast catching up with new or even what some claimed as the biggest or tallest malls keeping local people and tourists busy!"

As frequent as they shop, Hong Kong shoppers however do not necessarily think they are doing it for therapeutic purpose as some might have thought given the relatively fast pace lifestyle and work stress in the city. "For many people in Hong Kong, shopping is probably a way to get away from the relatively small living space and hang out with friends," Mr Niles added.

Consumer Confidence

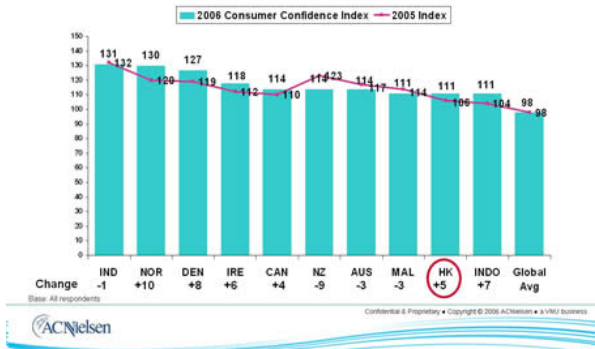
In a separate survey in August, AC Nielsen found that Hong Kong consumers' confidence continues to improve year on year. India leads the world in the 2006 survey as having the most confident consumers, followed by Norway and Denmark. Hong Kong was the 9th most optimistic market.

However, there were worries. Consumers worldwide cite the Economy (47%), Health (37%) and then Job Security (31%) as their major concerns for the next 6 months. In Hong Kong the ranking of concerns is slightly different: Economy (64%), Job (48%) and Health (37%).

The least optimistic countries in Asia Pacific are Taiwan (80), Japan (79) and South Korea

(54). In Korea, nine in 10 consumers surveyed felt it is not a good time to spend on things that they need in the next 12 months. They have been impacted upon by global oil prices, the rising Won and a stagnant real estate market.

Top 10 most optimistic - India still on top of the world for the third round in a row since 2005. Hong Kong consumer confidence ranked 9th globally, index scores rose for 5 points and reached 111 in 2006, significantly higher than the global average of 98



What do people buy?

In the Confidence survey, investing in shares and stocks has become a major channel for consumers in Asia Pacific to spend spare cash. Taiwan (42%), Hong Kong and India (each 40%) where the level of interest in investing in stock/shares is among the world's highest.

Otherwise, in the Shoppers survey, "The young adult populations of China and India have money to spend on their lifestyle. They are also brand-conscious and aware of what their counterparts in the West are wearing and buying." Niles, the Regional President said. "These millions of consumer represent the dream generation for international manufacturers and retailers where international brands – from shampoo and household goods to luxury designer goods – are all clamoring to capture a share of the booming consumer market in India and China."

The Russians are probably the keenest clothes shoppers, with 40%, followed by

Japan (38%) and Hungary (37%). Globally, only 18% of the people consider clothes shopping as an essential event. But in Europe, over half of consumers in Austria, Norway, and the Netherlands describe clothes shopping as a necessary chore. Only one European country made it into the global top ten ranking for clothes shopping being the "favorite" thing to do - and no prizes for guessing - it's the trend setting Italians who lead the fashion shopping pack in this region.

*(Adapted from AC Nielsen
www.acnielsen.com.hk)*

MENTORING

Oliver's Army

Anyone who loves food would have found Jamie Oliver's style of cooking informal and those who are engaged in a study of his management styles in Jamie's Kitchen (his TV series in 2002) will enjoy seeing how his coarse words and bullying tactics palatable. The series was about his mission to help high school dropouts finding in a career in the culinary field.



Jamie set up a 'training restaurant' in East London and staffed it with trainees selected from a long queue of unemployed teenagers. The restaurant, called Fifteen, provides training to two dozen disadvantaged young people annually.

His concept of taking 15 disaffected youngsters and opening a restaurant with them has now settled into an 18-month training course offered each year to around 25 young people. During the course, they get

to feel the heat in the restaurant kitchens.

Many of the youngsters come to Fifteen with complex problems stemming from drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness and prison terms. Fifteen has brought in extra staff and outside agencies to help the trainees deal with these problems.

Of the group of 24, around 15 would finish. "Some don't like cooking, or the standing up, or an outstanding arrest warrant catches up with them – there's not much we can do about that," said one director. "But I felt we could offer more support to those who wanted to succeed but who struggled to get through what is an extremely demanding course."

"We do informal mentoring all the time," says Liam Black, director of Fifteen. But the process is now being formalised: "We turned six members of staff into qualified mentors to support our more vulnerable youngsters," he says.

Black decided on a formal mentoring programme to give vulnerable trainees one-to-one support. He hopes this will help to prevent some youngsters from "hitting the self-destruct button in their heads" when things get tough.

Black asked for volunteers from Oliver's various companies – not staff working directly with the trainees – and was overwhelmed with offers. The six selected – a deliberate mixture of men and women from diverse backgrounds – are now working towards a Certificate in Workplace Mentoring from the Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring (OSCM).

The work for the six-month blended learning programme has challenged all the trainee

mentors, with its monthly round of reading, research, writing, online assessments and individual practical sessions. For these, each trainee mentor has experiment their learning on their friends, family and colleagues, who act as "practice" mentees in monthly one-to-one sessions. The trainee mentors then reflect in writing on how the sessions went, and at the end of the scheme the guinea pigs give their own views.

One issue is the amount of time the programme takes up. "It's hard to dedicate clear, focused time to it when you're busy," says Claire Postans, marketing manager for Oliver's international merchandising outfit Sweet as Candy, and one of the trainee mentors.



'A is for Alcohol, B is for Beer, C is for Crisps...'

In fact, a group of six senior staff, including Black, who started the programme at the same time, had to give up owing to work pressures. They were aiming not to qualify as mentors, but to become champions of the process and pass a mentoring culture to new Fifteen franchises. "It's very time-consuming, and I simply couldn't devote the necessary time to do it justice," says Black.

However, the trainees say they are being well supported. Although the aim of mentoring is to help the Fifteen youngsters to set goals, develop coping strategies and gradually build their often non-existent self-belief, the OSCM trainees felt concerned initially that they

might find themselves dangerously out of their depth, faced with sudden revelations of heavyweight issues such as abuse or self-harm.

"Conscious of this, I tailored the standard certificate for Fifteen," says Mel Leedham, business performance consultant and one of OSCM's associates, who developed the programme. "I added a masterclass with an expert in mentoring vulnerable youngsters, changed a textbook to one dealing with social exclusion, and ensured all faculty coach mentors had experience of working with disadvantaged young people."

Vanya Barwell, project co-ordinator for Fifteen, is pleased with the support given. "I was concerned, but we've talked openly about this in our workshops and I'm now confident of my boundaries as a mentor. My role is to refer young people to relevant experts, not to tackle it myself."

She and her fellow trainees say they are seeing benefits already. "It's an eye-opener working with my practice mentees, and I find the communication and interpersonal skills I've gained are already helping me in my approach with new staff I'm taking on," says Postans.

Barwell enjoys the sessions with mentees and has learnt that mentoring is about helping others to find answers rather than about imposing solutions. "You're listening and helping them to get clarity in their thoughts, so they can move towards what they want to do," she says.

Black has plans for mentoring to become a condition for accepting future Fifteen franchises. There are three franchises already in Cornwall, Amsterdam and Melbourne.

A long-term advocate of mentoring and coaching, Black had initially organised external mentoring for the Fifteen youngsters with City executives, but for various reasons this wasn't successful. "Sessions on the fourteenth floor of imposing City institutions was probably too daunting for our youngsters," he says.

Still, Black is confident that the in-house scheme will work. "If we get a cohort of passionate mentors who can help the young people most at risk of dropping out to graduate, I'll consider that a success," he says. "Fifteen is really about getting young people to believe in themselves – to change their sense of who they are by giving them something purposeful to do. I hope the mentoring will help to flick that switch in their heads from, 'I'm homeless', 'I'm a troublemaker' or whatever, to 'I'm a chef'."

(Adapted from People Management, September 2006)

ENGLISH

Words Worth

WRONG	RIGHT
× Is that 1234-5678? No, here is 1233-5678.	✓ Is that 1234-5678? No, this is 1233-5678.
▪ 'Here' and 'This' are translated as 呢度 in Cantonese, but there is a difference in English.	
× Hello, I'm David	✓ Hello, it is David or ✓ Hello, this is David
▪ In this context, the Cantonese saying 我係 is translated as 'it is' or 'this is'.	
▪ I think the bill is calculated wrongly	▪ I think the bill is wrong ▪ I think there is a mistake in the bill
The word 'calculated' is inappropriate. Probably, it is included in the expression because of the Cantonese expression 計錯數	