

Brands aren't pushing bloggers' buttons: study

By Ella Fitzsimmons

HONG KONG New research indicates that brands need to modify their approach to the region's bloggers if they want better results interacting with this community.

The study, by Text 100, polled more than 150 of Asia's most popular bloggers.

It was found that 58 per cent of bloggers named e-mail as their preferred medium of contact. Commenting on their blog came in at 23 per cent, with only 11 per cent wanting



Woolf... it's a matter of trust

to be called. "This is partially because bloggers tend to trust and respect other members of the blogging community," said Jeremy Woolf, managing consultant at Text 100.

According to the survey, two thirds of bloggers spend less than eight hours blogging per week. "They have other jobs so calling them during the day, or inviting them to events during work hours tends not to be a good idea," he added.

"The world of corporate communications have to be less tech-shy," added Michael Netzley, assistant professor of corporate communications at Singapore Management University.

This is supported by the re-

search, which indicates that while 84 per cent of Asian bloggers would welcome being approached by PR professionals, 34 per cent have not heard from PR firms in the last six months.

Bloggers in Asia demand the modes of communication to be geared toward their interests. 52 per cent indicate video content as their preferred medium.

This is at odds with the usual press release approach favoured by PR agencies.

EA mobile ups its games

Global gaming giant set to launch a slew of products after buying Korean studio

By Michael Hoare

SEOUL Global gaming giant Electronic Arts is planning a string of mobile gaming launches on the back of its US\$29 million cash purchase of a South Korean mobile gaming studio.

EA recently announced it had secured all the assets of developer and publisher Hands-On Mobile Korea, a subsidiary of San Francisco-based Hands-On Mobile.

Hands-On Mobile develops and distributes mobile content to mobile operators in 60 countries. The purchase does not affect the remainder of the organisation and the Korean studio will be renamed EA Mobile Korea.

The studio is perhaps best known for Korean role-play game *Hero's Lore*, the market's number one mobile game in sales and users.

EA, which has been weak in the RPG sphere to date, will roll out *Hero's Lore 3* this year in Korea, then worldwide. It will also use the Korean business as a development studio for transferring PC-based titles such as *Fifa Online* onto mobile. The purchase shows



Electronic Arts... feeling bullish on the regional gaming market

just how bullish EA is on the Asia-Pacific gaming market, a region that the PricewaterhouseCoopers Entertainment and Media Outlook says is the world's biggest con-

sumer of gaming titles in the world, worth US\$11.7 billion in 2006 and forecast to grow at 10 per cent per year.

Mobile gaming is growing in stature, with Gartner estimat-

ing in its 2007 report titled *More Growth Ahead for Mobile Gaming* that as many as 10 per cent of Australian mobile internet subscribers use their mobiles for gaming.

EA's director of mobile, Asia, Mike McCabe, said demand for mobile games in developed markets, such as Australia and Japan, is strong but that emerging markets were also showing strong growth.

EA is expecting healthy expansion in South Korea, and "significant changes" in mainland China and India.

These include mobile carrier flexibility, and the opening up of billing systems to allow content providers to sell off-deck, as telecoms firms realise the importance of quality content.

Mobile games are attractive to developers such as EA as they are cheaper to develop than PC titles and can be used to introduce a mainstream audience to gaming.

They are also attractive to content-hungry mobile operators, and EA has been working closely with China Mobile to expand this part of the carrier's business.

Social networks pave way for third-party apps

BEIJING Two of the mainland's most popular home-grown social networking platforms are throwing open their application programming interface to third-party developers, a move that opens new marketing opportunities for brands.

The development means that the websites will be open to applications developed by third parties, including those commissioned by brands. Social network 51.com announced it would have the first applications ready this month. 51.com claims it has more than 25 million active users who are predominantly young and from second- and third-tier cities. Its decision to



51.com... young user base

open up was quickly followed by its rival Xiaonei.com — often called the mainland's Facebook for its resemblance to the US network. Xiaonei was originally tailored to high

school seniors and university students but was opened up to everyone last year.

There is the suspicion that Xiaonei — which has about 8.8 million active users — rushed the move in response to 51.com because the announcement was made on an employee's blog. So far only applications created by Xiaonei or its holding company Oak Pacific Interactive have been added to the platform but third-party applications are reportedly on the drawing board.

Both sites will have a first-mover advantage against their main rival, Qzone, the social networking arm of the hugely profitable QQ empire,

which claimed 317 million active users and 13 per cent of its revenue from online advertising in its March quarterly report.

Rex Ng, the managing director at Hong Kong-based social network application publisher 6 Waves, believes the move creates a new opening for brands.

"The mega-brands will benefit more, since the SNS medium is more aligned to building brand engagement than driving direct response," he said.

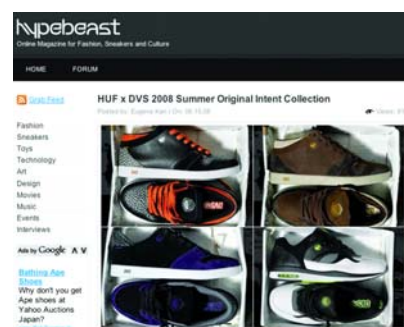
Mainland social networks generally attract the 15- to 24-year-old demographic. As a result, said Ng, the flavour of any applications or widgets will be entertainment-related.

READERS' PICK

Media...

James Stewart III on Hypebeast.com

"Fashion is all around us, whether you are into it or not. But now, with the help of the internet, I am able to find trends and styles much faster just by clicking a button. My current favourite web page is a streetwear blog called Hypebeast.com.



This Hong Kong-based site is dedicated to promoting clothing lines and fashion trends around the world, whether the company has been in existence for a long time or is a start-up. This site helps people see what's new on the market and directs them to web pages where they can purchase the products. Magazines used to be the best way to get exposure for clothing brands but now it seems that the internet is the way marketing is going."

James Stewart III, design assistant, Benjamin Bixby

Interactive...

Ravi Shankar Bose on Ananda Utsav

"This website is dedicated to the global Indian. The site captures the New Year festive theme perfectly with a touch of nostalgia.

Soft music is played on the homepage to provide a soothing background while browsing the site.

The videos and slides are beautifully presented and capture the festive and artistic flavour of New Year. One of my favourite sections is the Mahishasur Pala, which is a series of small animated videos — original humour and excellent voiceovers make it a treat to watch over and over again. I am also very happy to see the photo blogging section where users from around the world upload pictures of the New Year celebrations from where they are.

The site scores well for creativity and the quality of the content. I



have come across many innovative sites but a site that captures the theme, artistry and imagination of a festive season so well, is unique."

Ravi Shankar, director, Fugumobile

Branding...

Katherine Wood on The Easy PB&J Jar

"Simply put, this is a jar with two lids. Soon, the days of throwing away a jar with the last peanut-butter goldmine remaining will be long gone. Totally obvious! Simple. And it probably should have been invented a long time ago. We marketers can learn a lot from this humble jar. It screams: 'Start a-fresh'.

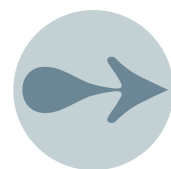
Run around the block and pretend you've never met your brand, or even more critically, your consumers.

Don't commission another survey, get up from your desk, close Excel and go hang out and watch your brand live its everyday life. You'll be surprised what you learn."

Katherine Wood, marketing director, Get Reading Right



ON ASIA.BRANDREPUBLIC.COM



Synovate launches consumer experience

practice Synovate is to look at customer loyalty and employee engagement in areas including

mystery shopping and shopper behaviour. **HP teams with EA game release** Hewlett-Packard has launched an online marketing initiative to tie in with Electronic Arts' Spore computer game.