

# Research reveals media influences on youth

A 2009 model of youth media consumption indicates that traditional media, such as television, catalogues and magazines, generally have a stronger influence on purchase decisions of secondary education learners than new media, such as cellphones and the Internet.



This is one of the key findings from research released this week by the Youth Research Unit (YRU). The YRU was established in 2009 by the Bureau of Market Research (BMR) at the University of South Africa (Unisa) in collaboration with the Film and Publication Board (FPB) and Vodacom. It provides detailed and custom-made research regarding the youth market in South Africa, the so-called technology-savvy youth (the Net generation).

## Characteristics of the Net Generation

Early technology adopters, fashion and brand conscious (as dictated by clothing, accessories, ringtones, etc) are some of the characteristics associated with the exceptionally technology-savvy youth of the modern age. According to Dr Isa van Aardt, YRU manager, the rapid adoption of technology associated with teenagers has raised some important research questions such as: Why the adoption? How is technology integrated into daily lives? Do traditional and modern activities of the youth complement each other?

Research conducted in 2009 among 490, 1 038 and 764 high school learners in Tshwane, Gauteng and nationwide respectively, revealed some interesting facts about the South African youth (high school learners aged 10-18) and their media consumption behaviour.

## Results

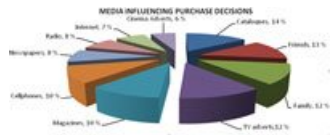
- Influence of family on purchasing decisions equals that of television advertisements and exceeds that of magazine advertisements;
- Cautious when using instant messaging services, such as MXit - 41.1% learners in rural areas have had regular contact with strangers on MXit, 52% in the metro/city areas;
- Distinct digital divide between secondary education learners in urban and rural areas;
- Consumption of traditional media such as the print and broadcast media is not under threat but rather complemented by new media;
- Internet sites that facilitate communication (e-mail and social networking sites) are most popular among learners in towns and rural areas;
- Metro cities' learners prefer informational sites such as Google, Waptrick, Napster and Yahoo;
- 7.2 % report regular use of cellphones while at school;
- Primary motive for owning a cellphone is to interact with existing friends and make new friends, make plans with friends or to gain popularity. Safety has also been cited as one of the motives for cellphone ownership.

According to Nnono Shai, YRU research intern, the studies revealed that the youth's perception of technology is broader than its functionality, ie status associated with having the latest cellphone technology is more important than it being a communication tool. If effective decisions are to be taken and policies formulated, the youth's perspective has to be acknowledged, she says.

## Future research

According to Dr Van Aardt, the YRU will develop a research model that will explore the personal values that the South

African youth associate with media consumption. Concomitantly, the research model will assess the level at which industry meets these values. In addition, the model will test access to age-inappropriate media content to regulate media distribution ahead of 2010 Soccer World Cup. The findings of the research are expected to be released in May 2010.



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