



Blogging Phenomenon Sweeps Asia

*Research from Windows Live Highlights
New Opportunities for Advertisers in Asian Blogosphere*

Key Research Findings

- Advertisers extend reach across Windows Live services as users share and connect in Asian blogosphere
- Persistent, unobtrusive display ads give advertisers targeted message impact in Windows Live Spaces
- Nearly half of those online in Asia have a blog
- 74% find blogs by friends and family to be most interesting
- Young people and women dominate (except India where it is overwhelmingly a male domain and Korea where blogging is a part of everyday life for all)
- 50% believe blog content to be as trustworthy as traditional media
- 41% spend more than three hours a week blogging
- More than 40% have less than 10 visitors per week

Hong Kong, 27 November 2006 – Asia’s blogosphere is surging forward with nearly half, 46%, of those online actively blogging, according to research released today by Microsoft’s MSN and Windows Live Online Services Business. The research showed that blogging is a social phenomenon with Asians primarily blogging as a means to maintain and build their social connections and to express themselves.

Blogging Asia: A Windows Live Report, released today, details the research findings, which are based on an online survey of more than 25,000 MSN portal visitors across seven markets.

Implications for Advertisers

Blogging is a dynamic and exciting online service that is beginning to drive audiences in the millions across Asia. Each blog may not attract a huge number of visitors but there are millions of people blogging and they are beginning to spend more and more time online. The survey showed that 41% spend 3 hours or more each week blogging. There is also the opportunity for brands to use blogs themselves to engage with their audience in a new and interactive way.

Microsoft Digital Advertising Solutions is helping advertisers in Asia take advantage of opportunities presented by Asia's thriving blogosphere by providing a rich environment through which brands can target a highly engaged business savvy audience. For example, the superbanner opportunity runs through all Windows Live Spaces, providing a continuous, non-obtrusive presence in the engaged world of the Space user or Author.

"Innovative advertisers in the region such as Lenovo in Singapore and ANZ in Australia are already tapping into the blogging phenomenon and targeting campaigns to users of Windows Live Spaces. We expect as blogging becomes an even bigger part of the social fabric of communities across Asia that more and more big brand advertisers will begin to use this dynamic advertising medium," said Stewart.

Advertising on Windows Live Spaces provides advertisers with:

- Greater level of branding and functionality
- Customizable ad layout and design
- Greater levels of interaction with users

Social Connections and Self Expression Drive Asia's Bloggers

Blogging as a corporate or business tool still appears to be nascent in most markets, with little interest from consumers in blogs from business or political leaders with exceptions in online powerhouse Korea where blogging has permeated all aspects of life and in India where a culture of self improvement is seeing business related blogs become very popular.

According to the report, the region's bloggers are primarily driven by the need to express themselves and share their lives with family and friends. The highest number of respondents (53%) indicated that they chose to start a blog to share a diary or photo album with loved ones.

The report also showed that Asia's blogosphere is fueled by youth with almost half of all bloggers (56%) under 25, while 35% are 25 to 34 years old, and 9% are 35 years old and over. When broken down by gender, 55% of bloggers in Asia were found to be female and 45% male.

"User created content and community based online services are really propelling the Internet in Asia right now," said Alex Stewart, Director of Microsoft's Online Services Business, Asia Pacific. "With the introduction of easy to use services such as Windows Live Spaces, blogging has moved into the mainstream and become a popular way for people to stay in touch with family and friends. Today, instead of sending out mass emails or holiday letters, people are using their blogs to express themselves".

Whose Blogs do we want to read?

Most blogs will have a small audience; in fact over 40% of all blogs have fewer than ten visitors each week. However in Korea, where blogging is more established 11% had more than 50 and 12% more than 250 visitors per week.

Netizens in Asia are most interested in those blogs written by our friends and family (74%) while blogs by work colleagues were the second most popular blog but were a distant second with only a quarter of respondents showing interest. In Korea and India however respondents are most interested in blogs covering a specific topic of interest.

Politicians fared poorly across the region with only 14% interested in reading their blogs except in Malaysia where they were quite popular with 20% listing this type of blog as being of interest. Sporting personalities also failed to impress in general with only 8% expressing interest – suggesting we are more interested in their talents on the field or the pitch than their views or perspectives on life.

India stood out with half of all respondents showing a strong interest in business blogs, ranking them as the most interesting, versus the rest of the region where just over a quarter were interested in blogs written by business leaders. Korea also showed high interest in this area.

What makes a good blog?

Bloggers must make sure they update their blog regularly to ensure that people keep coming back. Respondents indicated that a good blog should, firstly, be updated regularly and secondly be well written with eye catching pictures. Among the most annoying things about blogging, netizens pointed to not knowing when a blog is updated, 44%, boring content, 41%, and badly written entries, 32%, as things that turned them away.

“One of the benefits of Windows Live Spaces is that it is integrated with Windows Live Messenger and when you update your Space your online contacts are informed via what’s called a ‘glean’. This is a great feature and really addresses one of the biggest pet peeves for blog readers in Asia – not knowing when they are updated,” said Stewart.

“In addition, Windows Live Spaces puts people in control by being easy to use and customizable so people can design their Space in a way that reflects their personality – this is a really important aspect to people as reflected in the research results”.

According to internal data, as of October 2006, more than 70 million Windows Live Spaces have been created. Blogs hosted by the Windows Live service receive 120 million unique visitors every month.

The New Fourth Estate?

The survey also shows that blogs are a relatively trusted source of information with half of respondents believing that blog content is as trustworthy as traditional media. A quarter of respondents also believed blogs to be the quickest way to learn about news and current affairs.

The Future

According to Stewart, blogging is still evolving but it is set to become a vital and important part of the way we communicate and express ourselves across society – be it for business or social purposes.

“At the moment Asia’s blogosphere is primarily driven by social connections, people wanting to have their own corner of cyberspace where they can express themselves with their network of family and friends. However, in more developed markets like Korea we see blogging taken to a whole new level with it permeating across the community. In time blogging will evolve in this way across the region,” said Stewart.

Ends

* comScore World Metrix’s proprietary audience report for April 2006 showed the total number of unique visitors to Windows Live Spaces was 101 million ranking the service as the most widely used worldwide. The statistics do not include unique visitors in some countries, including China where MSN Spaces has over 20 million unique visitors.

About the Study

Blogging Asia: A Windows Live Report was conducted online on the MSN portal and across seven markets in Asia - Hong Kong, India, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. Over 25,000 people took part in the survey which took place in August and September. The results were analyzed by Harris Interactive, the 12th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at www.harrisinteractive.com.

About Windows Live Spaces

Launched in August 2006, Windows Live Spaces is the next generation of MSN Spaces. It is the most widely used blogging service in the world with more than 120 million unique visitors per month. Windows Live Spaces is easy to use, offers great integration with Windows Live Messenger making it easy to connect with friends and family and offers customization features that allow people to make their Space a true reflection of themselves and their personalities.

About MSN and Windows Live

MSN attracts more than 465 million unique users worldwide per month. With localized versions available globally in 42 markets and 21 languages, MSN is a world leader in delivering compelling programmed content experiences to consumers and online advertising opportunities to businesses worldwide. Windows Live, a new set of personal Internet services and software, is designed to bring together in one place all the relationships, information and interests people care about most, with enhanced safety and security features across their PC, devices and the Web. MSN and Windows Live will be offered alongside each other as complementary services. Some Windows Live services entered an early beta phase on Nov. 1, 2005; these and future beta updates can be found at <http://ideas.live.com>. Windows Live is available at <http://www.live.com>. MSN is located on the Web at <http://www.msn.com>. MSN worldwide sites are located at <http://www.msn.com/worldwide.ashx>.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

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