

We're buzzing



Here at Pelican we like a nice fresh cup of coffee to start the day but concerns about caffeine addiction have got us cutting back on our favourite cup of Java.

With the explosion of coffee shops on our high streets you could be forgiven we've become a nation of caffeine addicts.

In recent years, growth in the number of outlets for the leading operators of branded coffee shops has been in the region of 15% per annum and growth is predicted to continue at 12% in the immediate future in terms of outlet numbers. However, this rate is forecast to slow to 7.9% by 2011.

Caffeine is the world's best-known stimulant. Many of us have to have a hit of caffeine to kickstart the day. To modest coffee and tea drinkers, relaxing with their cuppa and a crossword, the idea that caffeine could have serious adverse effects on our health might seem outlandish. But caffeine intake is increasingly causing concern.

Many people feel jittery or "buzzy" and make frequent visits to the bathroom if they drink too much coffee or cola. Such reactions are relatively common, as are slight withdrawal symptoms and feelings of edginess or headaches before the first coffee of the day. They are reminders that caffeine has a drug-like action. It is known, for example, to affect kidney function.

Consuming more than 600-750mg of caffeine a day can lead to extreme effects, known as caffeinism, which include missed heartbeats and palpitations, mood swings, sweating and even panic attacks. Those who have a high "addictive" level crave caffeine and only feel revived by drinking more and more coffee or cola to disperse the jitteriness. Levels above 1,000mg are said to be toxic.

Coffee also contains anti-oxidants – up to four times as many as green tea – and, according to Britain's industry-funded Coffee Science Information Centre, might reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer. Around 20,000 studies have been completed, many of the results of which are conflicting and confusing.

Despite the powerful effect on the mind and body, there is a reassuring consensus that caffeine is safe in moderate amounts. Advice from the British Dietetic Association is that for most people, up to 400mg of caffeine a day – the equivalent of four or five cups of coffee – should not cause side effects.

Double espresso anyone?

Seen and Heard

"If you can look back on your life with contentment, you have one of man's most precious gifts – a selective memory." *Jim Fiebig*

"Fantastic! – And all done with a quill pen!" *Sam Goldwyn's thoughts on Shakespeare.*

"My laptop went on the blink so I've had to do my reports on paper. It means I've got through all my jobs much quicker" *A British Gas engineer explaining why he arrived in the morning for an afternoon appointment through the wonders of technology.*



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Printed on recycled paper



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Billboard

Summer 2008 • Issue 11

Aspects of PR and People Development

How much packaging do shoppers really want?

The latest global survey on packaging reveals half of the world's 'eco-aware' consumers would give up convenience packaging but are less inclined to forgo packaging that provides hygiene and protection.

Nielsen's Global Food Packaging Survey has identified nearly half of 'eco-aware global consumers (shoppers who say stores that "use recyclable bags and packaging are important when deciding where to do grocery shopping") would give up all forms of packaging for convenience purposes if it would benefit the environment.

This includes: packaging designed for easy stacking and storing at home (49%); packaging that can be used for cooking, packaging that doubles as a re-sealable container (48%) and packaging designed for easy transport (47%).

At the other end of the scale however, the Nielsen survey identified these global eco-conscious shoppers were least willing to give up packaging designed to keep products clean and untouched by others (27%), packaging designed to keep products in good condition (30%), packaging information in the form of food labelling, cooking and usage instructions (33%) and packaging that preserved products to make them last longer/stay fresher (34%).

One in 10 self-acclaimed 'eco-aware' global consumers said they were not prepared to give up any aspect of product packaging for the benefit of the environment.

Nearly 60% of Europeans and North Americans said they would give up packaging designed for stacking and storing at home, and 55% said they were willing to give up packs that can be cooked in or kept at home as a re-sealable container. Among Asians however, a lower 42% said they would be prepared to give up stack-and-store packaging and only 39% would be prepared to forgo easily transportable packaging.

The factors influencing packaging preferences across cultures include whether consumers drive themselves to the shops or if they rely on public transport; the size of their homes and more specifically, storage space in their kitchen.

Cultural food and shopping habits are also main influencers in packaging choice. As global concern and awareness for the environment continues to grow, consumers around the world are demanding more action from retailers and fmcg manufacturers to protect the environment.

While all eco-friendly packaging might not be the top priority for all shoppers today, it's certainly a growing priority the food industry cannot ignore.

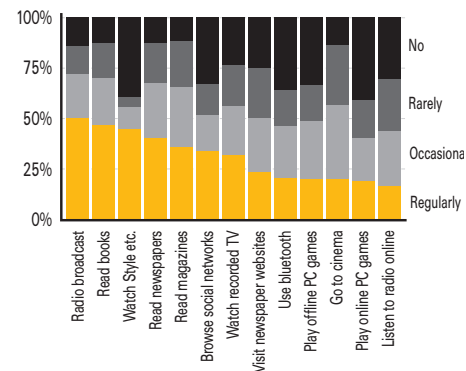




Reading – it's so yesterday

A very interesting survey by Entertainment Media Research for media lawyers Wiggin contains good and bad news for print media.

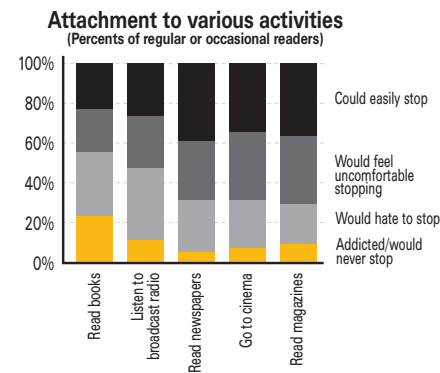
First the good news – as the chart below shows almost nine out of 10 adults (86%) claimed to read books and almost half (47%) claimed to do so “regularly”.



The equivalent figures for reading newspapers were 86% and 41% and for magazines 87% and 35%. Only listening to broadcast radio beat reading books for regular participation and on the face of it the health of the printed word seems pretty robust.

The bad news is that all three kinds of reading are skewed towards older rather than younger people and reading books and magazines, towards women rather than men. Newspaper readership is especially weak among young women.

The really bad news is contained in the chart below showing how emotionally attached people are to various media. Whilst reading books seems well entrenched, with only about one in four saying they could easily stop and almost as many saying they were addicted and could never stop reading books, neither newspaper nor magazine readers show such attachment. In both cases about four out of 10 regular or occasional readers say they could easily stop.



It does indicate that print media has yet to find the formula for co-existing with new technologies. If four out of 10 readers of newspapers and magazines feel they could easily stop the warning signs are clear – you can no longer rely on traditional print media to deliver your message.

PR campaigns need to be designed with digital and print media as clear targets. If you're relying on web sites to pick up stories that first appear in print it's already too late. Digital media in all its forms has different and specific requirements that must be met if you want to reach all you audience.

The Digital Entertainment Survey on which this piece was based was commissioned by Wiggin and carried out by Entertainment Media Research. The base was 1,608 UK adults and is was conducted online in January 2008.

Is it time to bin the BlackBerry?

Is new technology creating a nation of people who find it difficult to concentrate for more than a few minutes?

Many people say they feel the need to be constantly connected to a 24-hour cycle of bleeping BlackBerries and blaring televisions.

The impact of all this technology is added stress, disturbed sleep and ultimately poor health. Increasingly this pressure is starting to effect young people and the long-term implications are worrying.

New research has shown teenagers who send more than five text messages or make more than five calls a day on their mobile phones are ruining their chances of getting a good night's sleep.

As a consequence "excessive texters" felt more tired during the day and drank more caffeine to help them stay awake.

Many young people also felt a "pressure" to be at the end of their phones "around the clock", the stress of which led them to take up smoking or drinking, the team behind the research warned.

The study, presented at SLEEP 2008, the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies (APSS), in Baltimore, found that teenagers who used their mobiles often were more prone to disrupted sleep, restlessness, stress and fatigue than other young people.

They tend to consume more stimulating beverages and have more susceptibility to stress and fatigue. They behave more like larks than owls, suggesting a delayed biological clock.

"Addiction to mobile phones is becoming common. Youngsters feel a group pressure to remain inter-connected and reachable round the clock. Children start to use mobile phones at an early stage of their life. There seem to be a connection between intensive use of mobile phones and health compromising behaviour such as smoking and use of alcohol," said Dr. Badre the report's author.

The long-term implications of a generation of stressed teenagers becoming increasingly stressed adults doesn't bode well for employers, looking to ensure they get the most out of their staff.

Research has repeatedly shown that sleep recharges the brain, repairing important neuronal connections and helping it organise data. Sleep also gives the cardiovascular system a break and helps damaged cells mend themselves.

Studies have linked disturbed sleep patterns to heart disease and diabetes, and found that a twenty-something deprived of sleep for 36 hours will have the mental capacity of a 60-year-old. The RAC says that sleepy drivers were to blame for 20,000 crashes in 2006.

Getting staff to work long hours or evenings and weekends may therefore be counter productive. Whilst we are all under pressure to achieve, companies that allow staff to build thinking time into their workload will be the winners.

Maybe it's time to bin the BlackBerry?

