

The Class of 2012 Grows up Green

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College Students Back on Campus in Record Numbers, with More Green in Their Pockets and Greener Practices on Their Minds

Alloy College Explorer Finds Students Setting New Records in Spending, Civic Engagement and Digital Connectivity

Students Cast Their Vote for "Top Socially Responsible" Brands

The nation may be experiencing a cooling economy, but it's apparent that the economy on the college campus quad is booming. In findings released today, Alloy Media + Marketing's 8th annual College Explorer, powered by Harris Interactive(R), show this wave of students' spending habits, spheres of influence and concern for their habitat pacing at record figures.

Now the largest class in history, with 13.6 million college students (ages 18-30) arriving on campus this year, this influential group totes back a record \$237 billion in consumer spending this year - up 20% since '07 and marking the largest jump reported since the study's inception. Notable rises are revealed across other key areas of influence, from their political and social concerns and purchasing preferences to the distinct evolution of their media connections - this year's study finds quad life markedly redefined with students setting the new curriculum.

'This year's class reveals an empowered group of consumers. From their purchasing decisions and media consumption to their pull at the polls, this college consumer is clearly in control and showing their strength in numbers', stated Dana Markow, VP, Senior Consultant, Youth Center of Excellence, Harris Interactive. 'For any group striving to make an impact with the college class, the survey offers a quantitative depiction of this ever-evolving group and important insights into what it takes to succeed.'

ECO-nomics

College students continue to demonstrate strong commitment towards the brands they feel are contributing positively to world issues and the environment. And with this year's findings, it's clear students' preference for brands they perceive to be socially responsible is on the rise. A growing 41% (net) of respondents prefer socially responsible brands - compared to the 37% reporting last year and a 24% increase since '06 figures.

And what determines how these corporations are impacting society and earning high status with students? At the top and rising in importance over last year's statements, 69% expressed 'donating money to a cause or charity' or 'using eco-friendly or 'green' business practices.' Dropping slightly from top ranking last year, 68% stated 'fair labor practices.' Also of note, almost half (49%) give brands a hint on what might sway them, sharing that social messages incorporated into advertising have an effect.

Students also appear to be increasingly aware of the positive effect of their own actions. The study finds a record number of students recycling - 71% report doing so in the past six months, up a measurable 54% since 2006, and this wealthy bunch are proving to be philanthropic minded, with a significant 40% stating they have donated to a cause they believe in within the past six months.

As the nation heads towards an important election, the survey finds students more likely than ever to wield both their votes and their consumer power for good. With a vast majority of students (9 in 10), planning to cast their presidential vote in November and civic responsibility on their minds, Alloy asked students to cast their choice for the corporations they feel are the 'Top Socially Responsible.'

'Perception of social responsibility remains critical to garnering college students' brand loyalty. In current collegiate environment it is very cool to be 'good.' Brands who enable college students to reflect their own social responsibility by association have an advantage', commented Samantha Skey, EVP, Alloy Media + Marketing.

'Although most students are judging corporate social responsibility via advertising and branding, they are quick to castigate the brands who they believe are not authentically and consistently committed.'

The 'Alloy U Awards' expand this year, giving students the opportunity to voice their opinions across the brand categories leading their purchases: Food and Beverage, Automotive, Personal Care, Retail, and Shoes/Apparel.

For 2008, the #1 choice for 'Top Socially Responsible' Brand as recognized by college students in the following categories are:

FOOD/BEVERAGE: YOPLAIT

AUTOMOTIVE: TOYOTA

PERSONAL CARE: BURT'S BEES

RETAIL: TARGET

SHOES & APPAREL: NIKE

Yoplait, Burt's Bees, Nike and Target have each received Top 10 recognition overall in past rankings.

John Replogle, Burt's Bees President & CEO commented, 'We are extremely honored to again be recognized by college students as a top socially responsible brand. It makes me incredibly optimistic about the future to see youth demanding socially and environmentally conscious behaviors of companies.'

'It's humbling to know we're meeting their high standards. More than ever, Burt's Bees is committed to delivering the best natural personal care products that promote well-being. As a business, we commit to continuous improvement, driving for innovation and leadership in all aspects of social responsibility - it is part of our commitment to The Greater Good.'

Hannah Jones, VP for Corporate Social Responsibility at Nike, commented, 'The energy behind Nike has always been innovation and we're proud to be recognized by college students as a leading company in social responsibility. We have, and will continue to use the power of our brand and the passion in our people to create positive change in the world.'

The Art of Me

College students are notably aware of their influence, whether it's their feelings on who has the most ability to change the world (according to the study, 36% state only THEY have the power!), who will swing the presidential vote (a plurality (43%) state they're 'Pro-Obama'), and who will listen to them, with 64% sharing that word of mouth is a key driver over their purchasing decisions. Movies and electronics remain top areas of interest where overall, students turn to their peers for advice with almost half (48%) of male students turning to friends when it comes to word of the hottest video games.

With a whopping \$53 billion in discretionary dollars at their disposal, and showing a noteworthy 10% jump since '07 figures, this group decidedly holds the power.

Students responded that they learn about brands and products through advertising, at 62% - but how those ads reach them can make all the difference. They have more money, but they remain a thrifty bunch. Providing samples consistently shows strong acceptance by students, with 97% stating they are least likely to ignore or avoid these type of ads and a record 60% stating they find this type of advertising most useful to making purchasing decisions. Social responsibility makes an impact here as well, with 93% stating they are less likely to ignore an ad that promotes a brands partnership with a cause.

Obama-nomics

The study documented Obama's apparent rise in popularity with college students and, measurably, the wide use of the web as preferred platform to gather information about the Presidential candidates. Candidates' presence on social networking sites became just as vital as a campus town hall and with 88% of students (up from 73% just last year) reporting engagement with social media, including visiting social networking web sites, video web sites like YouTube, and blogs - campaign mottos could have been, 'You Tube or You Lose.'

Of these social media users classified as most active, an influential 85% claim to be 'promoters', passing along and sharing information to their wide social 'peer' networks. For students who have created a social networking profile - a significant 81% - popular activities reported include posting applications, with 39% doing so, and almost 1/3 posting videos. 1 in 5 use their profile to show their support for the causes they believe in.

Whether it's the next President elect or a brand vying for this group's discretionary dollars, the message is clear: win a college student's loyalty, and you may also gain the full power of that student's online audience.

E-visiophonexting

It's students who are defining it. As one Alloy reporter stated, 'My PDA is essential and it's just easier to have everything that I need always at my fingertips - I get my emails immediately, I can find out where my friends are, and I can go on the Internet to check out You Tube or the weather - it's basically my all in one lifeline.' -Ilyssa Coghlan 21, University of Pennsylvania

These days, you'd be hard pressed to find a college campus that hasn't gone wi-fi to meet the needs of this perpetually connected consumer. 2008 reveals a distinct evolution across students' media usage with emerging behaviors in full view as the market meets their demand with fusing technologies allowing for enhanced mobility, entertainment and function.

Mobility appears to be mandatory with 7 in 10 students now owning a laptop (a 67% increase in three years) and their stationary counterpart on its way to becoming 'ancient history', with desktop ownership dropping 34% over the last three years. Ownership of MP3 players has seen striking increases, with 67% of students now owning one and using it for more than just music. 23% are now watching downloadable videos on the 'small' screen. The cell phone, once just a utility for getting in touch with friends and family, is now favored by a growing number of students who use it as their all-in-one device for communication, entertainment and web access.

In other words, the screens are undoubtedly shifting and students are merging them with ease.

With improved technologies and growing options, major shifts in TV viewing are quickly revealing students new preferences. For the first time, the study finds college viewers making an appointment on their digital devices to catch up on their favorite TV shows. Fully 62% of students report watching TV online. While 26% are choosing to visit the various major networks websites, 34% are opting for You Tube, with others utilizing emerging platforms such as Veoh, Hulu, and Joost.

Skey concluded, 'The digital revolution on campus shows no signs of slowing. Students have come to expect 24/7 connectedness and mobility, now flexibility and ease of function to socialize, communicate and be entertained, is what they're demanding.

'With college students quickly and easily adopting new technologies enabling a constant desire to engage and connect, the study gives marketers more than just a glimpse into students' media behaviors, but also an essential view into finding their way in.'

Survey Methodology

The 2008 Alloy College Explorer study was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Alloy Media + Marketing between April 1 to April 17, 2008 among 1,554 U.S. 18-30 year old college students (2-year, 4-year and graduate students). Results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, region and school status (full-time, part-time, 4-yr., 2-yr.). Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words 'margin of error' as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. 18-30 year old college students. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Alloy Media + Marketing

Alloy Media + Marketing (AM+M) (NASDAQ: ALOY) is one of the country's largest providers of media and marketing programs reaching targeted consumer segments. Alloy manages a diverse array of assets and services in interactive, display, direct mail, content production and educational programming. Alloy works with over 1,500 companies including half of the Fortune 200. For further information regarding Alloy, please visit our corporate website at www.alloymarketing.com.

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