

*TREND REPORT 05.10*

# STATISTICS

# DRIVERS

# Statusphere

**Customers are finding increasingly diverse ways to get their status fix. Are you ready?**

*Like it or not, the need for recognition and status is at the heart of every consumer trend\*.*

*Status is the ultimate (hidden) motive, a subconscious but ever-present force. Now, in a traditional consumer society, where consumption is one of the leading (if not the leading) indicators of success, those who consume the most (and especially those who consume the rarest and most expensive), will typically also attain the highest status. This is why brands have, for decades, gladly provided people with goods, services and experiences that help them (boldly or subtly) impress their peers and help alleviate their anxieties about how they're perceived by others.*

*However, mature consumer societies are changing, and so is the 'STATUSPHERE': an increasing number of consumers are no longer (solely) obsessed with owning or experiencing the most and/or the most expensive. Our definition: STATUSPHERE | As consumers are starting to recognise and respect fellow consumers who stray off the beaten consuming-more-than-thou-path, 'new' status can be about acquired skills, about eco-credentials, about generosity, about connectivity... All of this makes for a far more diversified 'STATUSPHERE' than most brands and organizations have traditionally catered to. Time to really figure out how and where your customers are now finding their status fix.*

*In other words, traditional status symbols (BMW's X6! Marc Jacob's latest eyewear! Emirates' Airbus 380 Suites!) are no longer every consumer's wet dream.*

*Now, while none of this should be (very) new to you, and we obviously had to work hard to prevent this briefing from turning into a 200 page report, this framework will hopefully help you to take an even more integrated approach to this 'trend of all trends':*



## 1. BIGGER, BETTER, HARDER

*(consuming the most, and the most expensive)*

*Traditional consumption is about buying (and enjoying and showing off) more and/or better stuff than fellow consumers. We've dubbed this the BIGGER, BETTER, HARDER realm. Which is by no means dead. The recession is just a blip on the radar when it comes to some consumers' appetite for expensive, in-your-face brands and products that feed off status anxiety (to all marketers: it's never a bad idea to re-read Allain de Botton's excellent book on status, meritocracy and anxiety). And even if (a big if) conspicuous consumption were ever to subside significantly in mature consumer societies, then count on the emerging middle classes in China, India, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, Nigeria, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil to pick up the slack.*



## 2. GENEROSITY

*(giving instead of taking)*

*Owning is no longer the only way for consumers to get their status fix: the act of giving reflects well (if not better) on individuals, too. As we stated in our GENERATION G briefing, last year: "GENERATION G captures the growing importance of 'generosity' as a leading societal and business mindset. As consumers are disgusted with greed and its current dire consequences for the economy—and while that same upheaval has them longing more than ever for institutions that care—the need for more generosity beautifully coincides with the ongoing (and pre-recession) emergence of an online-fuelled culture of individuals who share, give, engage, create and collaborate in large numbers."*



## 3. GREEN CREDENTIALS & UNCONSUMPTION

*(greener or less consumption)*

*As entire societies have embraced sustainability in everything as the (only) way forward, and as millions of consumers are now actively trying to greenify their lives, green credentials are an endless source of status. Just witness a substantial subset of consumers already bestowing recognition and praise on Prius and Insight owners while scorning SUV owners.*

*Consumers' interest in green credentials will lead to even more eco-friendly goods and services sporting bold, iconic markers and design, that help their eco-conscious owners show off their eco-credentials to their peers.*

*Also count on a massive increase in green stories (as told by consumers): detailed information on (eco-friendly) sourcing, production, ingredients and distribution all represents a potential benefit to consumers who are keen on sharing their green status stories. And the concept is extra attractive for service providers, who often don't have physical products with which to convey their eco credentials. By the way, what will make green stories even more powerful is the fact that while each individual can 'do their bit' on the environmental issues, their actions are going to be wasted unless everybody else does the same.*



## 4. IN THE KNOW & SKILLS

(knowing and doing versus consuming)

*Growing pockets of consumers find pleasure (and STATUS STORIES) in mastering skills and acquiring knowledge. They attain status from finding an appreciative audience that's impressed with what they know, and can create, instead of what they consume.*

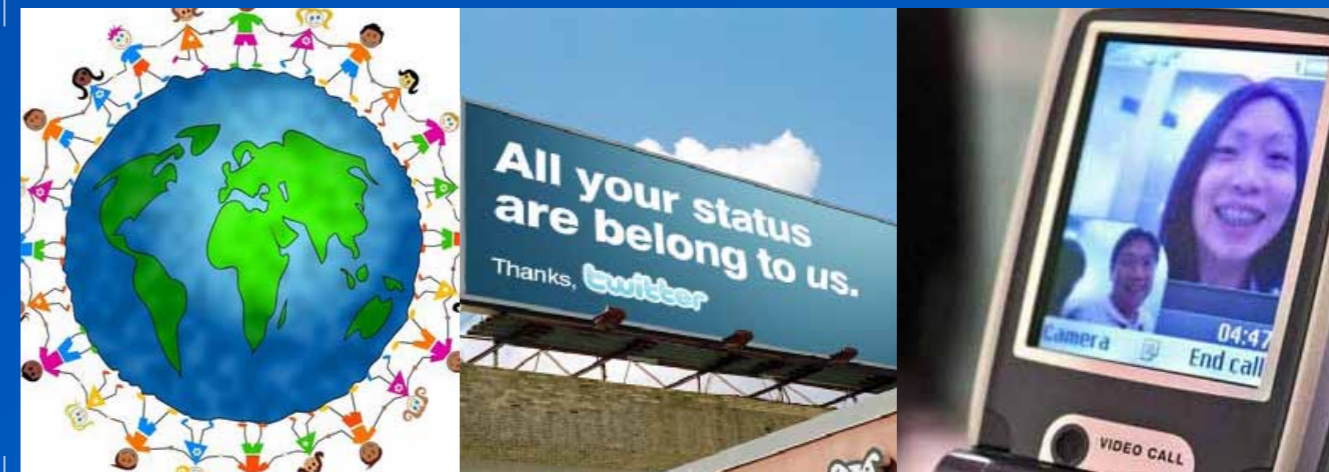
*To be on the inside, to be in the know, to have access, to be knowledgeable, but also, to be able to lead the way to the unique, the avant-garde, the cool, the latest, the cutting-edge... This is now an established source of status, from consumers-turned-experts, to younger audiences obsessed with cool hunting. A few fun examples from our recent BRAND BUTLERS briefing:*

- Nike's True City is an iPhone app that aims to give consumers 'insider' information on six European cities, while also allowing users to share their own tips and delivering exclusive Nike offers and information.
- The Adidas Urban Art Guide is a free iPhone travel guide listing Berlin and Hamburg's best graffiti. Users can click on each marked location to retrieve images and information about the piece and the artist.
- Beck's Gig Finder app helps users to find local music gigs. The app's map and GPS interface allow users to see where they are in relation to the gigs.



## SKILLS

*Closely related to status and knowledge: status and skills. Especially for younger (and younger-at-heart) consumers, participation is the new consumption. Brands that help consumers develop skills and create professional-grade output will gain an appreciative audience.*



## 5. CONNECTIVITY

(social status, especially online)

*No, we're not forgetting the online world, which is truly an endless source of new status fixes. First and foremost, when it comes to online status\*, it's all about who you connect to, and who connects to you, tribal style. It still is about being unique, but it's about belonging, too: belonging to tribes whose membership renders status to its members. Unlike in the 'offline world', these connections (in numbers and in profiles) are visible: friends and acquaintances are no longer the subject of awkward name-dropping, but are visible to all.*

*This will then lead to an even-bigger need for consumers to 'feed', maintain, and improve their online presence with a steady stream of content: thoughts, photos, videos, songs, opinions, stories and so on.*

*Does the above cover the entire STATUSPHERE? Of course not. Because man's vanity, ego, his yearning to be recognized, seen, admired, heard, envied and lusted after knows no boundaries, there will always be new ways to help him/her stand out from the herd, as long as you keep a close eye on societal changes that lead to shifts in what constitutes status.*

## OPPORTUNITIES

Here's what:

- Develop a better understanding of who (and how) your customers are trying to impress. If you find your brand is still mainly focusing on BIGGER, BETTER, HARDER, but your customers aren't, then you obviously and urgently need to start exploring the rest of the STATUSPHERE.
- If you already actively serve a diverse crowd of status seekers, figure out how you can help them to better show off their new status symbols or better tell their status stories. While they're used extensively in the BIGGER, BETTER, HARDER realm, elements like showcasing, visibility, and story ingredients are still often overlooked in the GENEROSITY, GREEN, IN THE KNOW & SKILLS, and CONNECTIVITY realms.

*No doubt a topic to keep you busy for a while to come. Meanwhile, we're working on our June briefing, diving deeper into the MASS MINGLING phenomenon. No rest for the wicked!*

