

11-30-2006

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Link to published article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07363760710822927>

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### APA Citation

Andersen, L., Tufte, B., Rasmussen, J., & Chan, K. (2006). Tweens and new media in Denmark and Hong Kong. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 6 (24), 340-350. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760710822927>

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# Tweens and new media in Denmark and Hong Kong

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to present a study that compares ownership and usage of new media among young “tween” consumers in Denmark and Hong Kong. Further, it shows the ways of finding new interesting web sites.

**Design/methodology/approach** – In 2004-2005 a survey was conducted in Denmark and Hong Kong of 434 fourth, fifth and sixth class students. Questionnaires were distributed in six elementary schools. Hypotheses about new media ownership and usage in the two societies are formulated based on the economic development and individualistic/collective cultural dimensions of the societies.

**Findings** – Household ownership of new media, ownership of mobile phone and heavy use of the internet were found to be more prevalent among Danish tweens than among Hong Kong tweens. Danish tweens were more likely to use mobile phones and the internet for interpersonal communication and for enjoyment than Hong Kong tweens. Hong Kong tweens used the internet more for educational purposes than Danish tweens. The results seem to support that adoption and consumption of new media are motivated differently in cultures of individualism and collectivism, and consequently that the tween consumer segment is not as globally homogeneous as it is claimed to be.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study was based on a convenience sample, thus it may be problematic to generalize from the findings.

**Practical implications** – The study can serve as a guideline for marketing communication targeting tweens. The emphasis on the hedonic use and social function of new media may be suitable for a highly developed, individualistic society. In collective societies, marketers may need to put emphasis on the instrumental values of new media, such as improving academic performance.

**Originality/value** – This paper offers insights into designing communication strategies for Danish and Hong Kong tweens, particularly when incorporating new media. Findings are compared with existing preconceptions of the tween segment in the marketing literature.

**Keywords** Youth, Socialization, Information media, Cross-cultural studies, Denmark, Hong Kong

**Paper type** Research paper

**An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.**

## Introduction

Children and young people are increasingly being considered consumers in their own rights (Brzezinski, 2004; de La Ville, 2005; Siegel *et al.*, 2004). They are also very important influencers of the family's purchase decisions (Gram, 2005). Until recently, marketing efforts were mostly directed at teenagers, but in recent years, the so called “tweens” has become an important marketing segment (Brzezinski, 2004; Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003; Siegel *et al.*, 2004).

The conceptualization of the tween segment implies the idea that these children are “naturally born” users of new media. Furthermore, because of the globalizing nature of this

new media environment, they are claimed to be one, truly global segment (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003) even though it may also be quite a fickle and difficult segment (Acuff, 1997; Lindstrom, 2004). Also, the “old” media of television is claimed to be an important factor in creating a globalized children's culture through a process referred to by the (negative) expression “McDonaldization” (Lemish, 2007, original concept by George Ritzer).

Some cultural differences between children from different parts of the world have to be expected, also in modern, developed societies with important tween markets (Hofstede, 1980, 1983; Lin, 1990). From the contextual descriptions below of the Danish and Hong Kong school systems and the culturally rooted conceptions of childhood, it should be evident that the everyday reality experienced by Danish and Hong Kong tweens are likely to be quite different.

It remains to be studied, however, whether these cultural differences will manifest themselves in ways that are relevant

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Journal of Consumer Marketing  
24/6 (2007) 340–350  
© Emerald Group Publishing Limited [ISSN 0736-3761]  
[DOI 10.1108/07363760710822927]

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The Danish study presented in this paper was part of the project “Tweens between media & consumption”, supported by the Danish Research Council for the Humanities. The Hong Kong study presented in this paper was fully supported by a Faculty Research Grant from the Hong Kong Baptist University (Project No. FRG/04-05/II-45).

to marketers targeting tweens, Or, if it is justified, to consider the tween segment to be a truly homogeneous, global consumer segment. Following the importance of new media in the conceptualization of tweens, a natural starting point of a comparative study of the tween segment is tweens' use of new and old media.

### The tween concept

The “tween” concept originates in marketing (Cook and Kaiser, 2004; Siegel *et al.*, 2004), and even though it is a widely used term in marketing- and media research, the concept should not be taken for granted. The construction and cultivation of “tween-hood” deserves much more elaboration than is possible within the frame of this paper. What follows is a brief outline.

“Tweens” is a sub-teen consumer segment that has been (re-)invented as “the new teens”, a pristine and lucrative consumer segment to be cultivated by the marketing industry (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003; Siegel *et al.*, 2004). This interest for a special age group may be compared to the interest for “teenagers” in the 1950s:

The post-war period also saw the rise of youth as a distinct market segment. [Hebdige] claims that the teenager was invented in the relatively affluent period of the 1950s with stress on consumption and leisure. During this time and subsequently, childhood and youth came to be understood as fully separated categories to be expressed, in part, through separate modes of consumption (Kenway and Bullen, 2003, p. 43).

Tweens are defined by age and the concept is based on being “in-between” childhood and teen-hood (Siegel *et al.*, 2004; Cook and Kaiser, 2004). Several terms exist in marketing research, e.g. “pre-teen”, “tweenie” or “tweenage” (Cook and Kaiser, 2004; Dibley and Baker, 2001; Grant and Stephen, 2005; Lindstrom, 2004; Siegel *et al.*, 2004). The tween age span has been defined as wide as 8-14 years of age (Lindstrom, 2004) or as narrow as 11-12-year-olds (Dibley and Baker, 2001). Most commonly, tweens are defined as 8-12-year-olds (Siegel *et al.*, 2004). The definitions with the widest age span are problematic as the average 8-year-old, is different from the average 14-year-old (John, 1999). To the other extreme, some researchers have claimed that “tween” is not an age but simply a state of mind (Siegel *et al.*, 2004). In the present article, we focus on the 10-12-year-olds, which we consider to be the older part of a tween segment ranging from 8-12 years of age.

The tween is generally portrayed as some form of a “teen-wanna-be”, almost in a state of schizophrenia:

... We see the defining characteristic of tweens as their “split personality” which toggles between kid behaviours and attitudes and those of a teenager (Siegel *et al.*, 2004).

Tied to this conception is the popular phrasing of KGOY, “Kids Grow Old Younger”. This not only means that children stop playing with toys earlier but also that they become fully-fledged consumers and brand connoisseurs at a much younger age than before. This idea of KGOY is not entirely new, but can be traced back to the beginning of the last century (Cook and Kaiser, 2004). However, whether tweens are still playing, or if they just play in a different way compared to children some years ago, is not entirely clear. For example, it could be inferred that when they are using the internet, they are actually playing “old” games in a “new” media, using the chat rooms for jokes and communication with friends, playing games and, for example – as far as the girls are concerned –

actually playing with “virtual” paper dolls instead of physically “real” paper dolls. Thus, the internet makes it possible to move the play from physical toys to “virtual” toys and games, and consumption related to play becomes heavily dependent on new media. The same move could be important in relation to educational activities.

Tweens are not only considered to be powerful influencers of their parents' consumption but also to be consumers with a considerable direct consumption of their own (Brzezinski, 2004; Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003; Siegel *et al.*, 2004). Lindstrom (2004) argues that the global direct – and indirect – tweens' consumption was no less than 1.18 trillion US dollars in 2003. Add to this, that they are in a phase of establishing brand preferences – presumably to last a lifetime.

Lindstrom's (2004; Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003) global tweens research with Millward-Brown, which spanned 14 countries and 15,000 children, presented some impressive claims, for example that 25 percent of all tweens communicate weekly with tweens in other countries, and that 24 percent of all tweens use the internet as primary means of communicating with friends (in place of face-to-face or telephone). Several assumptions are made about the tween segment: tweens are supposedly a truly global segment, communicating across national boundaries creating fast sweeping global trends, and they are innately brand and media savvy with a natural flair for new media (Lindstrom, 2004; Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003; Siegel *et al.*, 2004).

Even though Lindstrom (2004; Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003) and Siegel *et al.* (2004) present tweens as a truly global, unified segment, they also claim the segment to be very fickle and demanding. Branding towards tweens...

... involve electronic screens, pocket computers, mobile phones and personal computers; they work across multiple platforms – targeting tweens across multiple dimensions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and because of this your brand most likely will have to turn just as interactive all day round (Lindstrom, 2004).

There are very few current studies of tweens with an intercultural perspective, but a study of British and Spanish girls' preferences of snack foods show significant differences in the values influencing their choice of brands (Dibley and Baker, 2001).

### Danish school system and leisure time

Education in Denmark is organized for six age groups:

- 1 pre-school day-care/kindergarten;
- 2 public school education (*Folkeskole*);
- 3 secondary education;
- 4 higher education;
- 5 adult education.

Public school covers the whole period of compulsory education. This form of education cannot, as in the case of many other countries' education system, be divided into primary and secondary education. The public school consists of a voluntary pre-school class, nine years of obligatory education and a voluntary tenth year. This means that the pupils are between 6 and 17 years old. Municipal public schools teach about 88 percent of all pupils of compulsory school age. They provide basic education free of charge. Private schools teach about 12 percent of the pupils in the compulsory school age.

### Leisure activities

Almost all Danish children participate in different sport activities. The most popular sports are football and swimming. More than 80 percent engage in regular leisure activities such as sports, scouting, drama, film, dance, horseback riding (Hansen *et al.*, 2002).

### Danish demographics and family structure

The number of Danish households was 2.5 million in 2006 (Danmarks Statistik, 2006). Roughly half of this figure is single person or single parent households, the proportion of households consisting of couples (with or without children) being only slightly bigger. Nuclear families living with grandparents as vertically extended families are very uncommon among ethnic Danes, but recombined families extended from divorce-remarriage are quite common. The average household consists of only 2.2 persons. The population of school children attending first to seventh class was 481,255 in 2004 (Danmarks Statistik, 2006).

### Mobile phones and new media

Denmark is one of the European countries with the highest penetration of mobile phones and new media. In 2005, the number of mobile phone subscriptions reached a figure slightly larger than the population (National IT and Telecom Agency, 2006). Among tweens it is common to own mobile phones: 59 percent of the 7-15-year-olds have their own mobile phones (Bille *et al.*, 2005), with increased ownership by age. When Danish children become teens, almost all children own mobile phones (93 percent of the 13-15-year-olds have their own mobile phone (Bille *et al.*, 2005).

### The Danish media scene and children's general media use

The two most used TV channels in Denmark are DR (Danmarks Radio), which is a public broadcasting organisation, and TV2, which is both a public service and a commercial channel. The average adult Dane watches television 2.5 hours on weekdays and 3.2 hours on weekends. 7-15-year-old children watch 1.5 hours of TV on average on weekdays and 2.4 hours in weekends. An interesting perspective is that there has been a slight increase in the viewing of the adult population whereas children watch less TV than some years ago (Bille *et al.*, 2005). This is probably because there has been a tremendous growth of the internet access in Danish families. In 1997, 8 percent of Danish families had internet access. In 2005, 71 percent of the families had internet access, and the percentage for families with children was 92 percent (Danish Ministry of Science, 2006). Most of the 7-15-year-old children use the internet in their leisure time. 28 percent use it almost every day and 22 percent use it several times a week. They use the internet for playing computer games, but many also seek information, e-mail, chat, and surf (Bille *et al.*, 2005). This trend is very much in accordance with the results of a comparative study of the 12-18-year-olds' use of the internet and of mobile phones in nine different European countries in 2005-2006 (www.mediapro.org). Among the Danes in this age group, 89 percent said that they used the internet every

day or several times a week, whereas the use of the internet in school was just 33 percent.

### Conception of children and childhood in Denmark

Since the 1980s there has been a general change of attitude moving away from considering the "child as vulnerable" to a conception of the "child as a competent actor" in his/her own life. Inspired by the theory of Jean Piaget, the child was previously perceived as an insufficient, vulnerable being that gradually – with assistance from teachers and parents – develops into a competent grown-up person: a concept defining the child as a "social becoming". Recently, social interaction and negotiation between child and adults have been brought into focus. This contemporary childhood sociology is to a large extent is based on the research of British sociologists (James *et al.*, 1998). In this kind of research, the child is perceived as a competent actor, a "social being" (Alanen, 2000; Brembeck *et al.*, 2004). As expressed by Jan Kampmann: "The childhood research has been wrested from the iron grip of developmental psychology in which it has been kept" (Tufte *et al.*, 2003).

This development has influenced parents' and teachers' approach to children. Different themes are negotiated with children that would never have been a topic for discussion previously, and the Danish family in general is called "a family of negotiation" (Gram, 2005). Accordingly, the modern culture of individualism is moderated in Danish families where the "tween" child is viewed very much as an individual to treat with respect, a natural partner in family decisions and a social being in its own right.

### Hong Kong school system and leisure time

Chinese societies place strong emphasis on education. The Hong Kong government spent 23 percent of the total government expenditure on education in the year 2004 to 2005. Hong Kong children attend kindergartens from the age of three. Parents must pay for their children attending kindergartens. The government provides nine years of free education (six years of primary education plus three years of secondary education) for children from the age of 6 to 15. Admission to Primary one in elementary schools is gained through a centralized educational system. At the end of Primary six, all pupils are provided with places in secondary schools. Graduates from the Secondary's third class can either proceed to subsidized education in the fourth or fifth class of Secondary school or choose vocational training. There is a competitive public examination after the fifth year of secondary education. About one-third of the pupils leaving the Secondary's fifth class continue their studies in the sixth and seventh classes of the subsidized Secondary school. The remaining two-thirds go to private institutions to continue studying or they start working. Students completing the Secondary's seventh class need to pass a public examination to compete for places in the public universities (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2004). The educational system in Hong Kong has been criticized for being examination-oriented, passive and "spoon-feeding" and for lacking creativity (Children Council Working Committee, 2005). Because of the highly competitive educational environment, parents put a lot of emphasis on children's academic performance. In 2005, a survey indicated that 47 percent of children of school age

received private tuition at home or at educational institutions outside school hours. The average time they spent on tutorial lessons after school was 4.8 hours a week (Children Council Working Committee, 2005).

With high pressures of studies, Hong Kong children enjoy very little leisure time. A recent survey of primary and secondary school children in Hong Kong found that watching television, playing computer games or surfing on the internet at home was the most common way of spending leisure time (Children Council Working Committee, 2005). Hong Kong children were reported to be extremely inactive (Hui, 2001). Most Hong Kong elementary schools offer only two physical education classes a week (compared to at least five a week in the USA). The lack of physical exercise was considered as a contributing factor of still more obese children in the society (Hui, 2001).

### Hong Kong demographics and family composition

According to official statistics in 2002, the number of households in Hong Kong was 2.1 million. Typical household compositions were nuclear families (66 percent), one person households (16 percent) and vertically extended families with grandparents, parents and children (9 percent). The average household size in Hong Kong was 3.2 persons (Census and Statistics Department, 2003). In the year 2005, there were 425,900 students enrolled in primary schools and 482,500 students enrolled in secondary schools (Census and Statistics Department, 2006).

### Ownership of mobile phones and new media in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is rich in telecommunication and new media. With a population of 6.9 million, it has more than 3.8 million fixed telephone lines and 8.2 million mobile phone subscribers (119 percent of the population). A survey of 613 households found that 67 percent of these households had a mobile phone for family members under 18, and more than one-quarter had a mobile phone for family members under 13 (*Telecom Asia Daily*, 2005). Broadband coverage reaches virtually all commercial buildings and households, with 71 percent of households having personal computers (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2004).

### The Hong Kong media scene and children's general media usage

Two companies provide free domestic television programming services in Hong Kong, including Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) and Asia Television Limited (ATV). Each of these companies operates one Chinese and one English channel. Children's programmes are scheduled for around 9–11 a.m. and 4–6 p.m. on weekdays, but only in the mornings of Saturday and Sunday. Most of the programmes are cartoon series imported from Japan and the USA.

There is no public broadcasting channel in Hong Kong. Radio and Television Hong Kong (RTHK), a government department, is an editorially independent broadcaster that aims at providing quality programmes to inform, educate and entertain the people of Hong Kong (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2004). RTHK's television programmes are broadcasted on domestic free- as well as domestic pay

channels. Most of the programmes produced by RTHK are documentaries, talk shows and current affairs. RTHK does not produce children's programmes on a regular basis, although some of their programmes may appeal to children.

Most of the children in Hong Kong spend two to four hours a day watching television (Hong Kong Christian Service, 2002). This may be attributable to lack of outdoor activities in the crowded urban life. According to a weekly Nielsen television rating report, the average rating of TVB-Jade, the dominant, free, Chinese domestic channel for children aged four to 14, broadcasts from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. on a school day in January 2006, was 11 rating points (equivalent to an audience size of 90,000) Children watch a lot more television during school holidays. The average rating of TVB-Jade in an Easter holiday was 16 rating points (45 percent more audience than on a typical school day). In the evening, children watch many television programmes for adults. The average television rating for primetime in the evening, from 7 to 10 p.m., was 31 (equivalent to an audience size of 250,000). There are not many radio programmes for children, and there are no newspapers specifically for children, though a few major papers have daily children's sections or columns. Some of the magazines, such as *Yellow Bus* and *Milk*, are published specially for children and teenagers. The contents of children magazines are mainly cartoons while the contents of youth magazines are mainly features about fashion, beauty, movies, and trendy electronic goods.

### Conception of children and childhood in Hong Kong

Influenced by Confucianism, family interaction in Chinese societies shares the characteristics of parental control, strict discipline, emphasis on education, filial piety, respect for seniors, avoidance of conflicts, and family obligations (Chao, 1983; Glenn, 1983; Ho, 1989). A survey has found that Chinese and immigrant Chinese parents in the USA tend to rate parental control, encouragement of independence and emphasis on achievement higher than Caucasian-American parents do (Lin, 1990). Another qualitative study has found that parent-child relationship in Hong Kong is a hybridised and evolving relationship with constant negotiations between hierarchy and equality, obedience and disobedience with quarrels as well as praise and spank (Luk-Fong, 2005). This seems to imply that parents perceive children on one-hand vulnerable and needing guidance, but on the other hand competent and able to make independent choices. This view is also reflected in the public attitudes toward advertising addressing children. A survey of Hong Kong adults in April 2002 found that 50 percent reported a neutral attitude toward the statement "Television advertising takes undue advantage of children", while 25 percent agreed and 25 percent disagreed (Chan, 2006a). Every year, the Broadcasting Authorities in Hong Kong receive about 1,000 to 2,000 complaints about television commercials. Most of the complaints are related to the contents of the commercials being too scary for children, or the contents being inappropriate for children (Chan, 2006b). This indicates that in Hong Kong, children are seen as vulnerable in the eyes of parents.

## Hypotheses

Denmark and Hong Kong are both rather small and homogeneous areas at an advanced stage of technological development. Advertising to children is allowed in both societies. Denmark is more advanced than Hong Kong in terms of economic development. Per capita GDP of Denmark in 2002 was 28 percent higher than that of Hong Kong (US\$ 30,940 vs. US\$ 24,121). As Denmark has a higher level of economic development, we therefore propose the following hypothesis:

*H1.* The ownership and use of new media will be more prevalent among Danish tweens than Hong Kong tweens.

The two societies are different cultures. In Hofstede's (1980) theory of cultural dimensions, national culture differs in terms of the relationship between the individual and the collective group. In an individualistic society, ties between individuals are loose and all are expected to take care of themselves. In a collective society, individuals are subjected to strong societal norms, and collective goals take priority over personal goals. In Hofstede (1980) Denmark is ranked higher than Hong Kong in terms of individualism (score 74 versus 25). Individualistic societies put more emphasis on individual variety and pleasure (Hofstede, 1984). We therefore advance the following hypothesis:

*H2.* Danish tweens are more likely to use new media for fun and pleasure than tweens in Hong Kong.

## Methodology

### Participants and procedures

Respondents were 434 fourth, fifth and sixth grade students aged ten to 13 years who were recruited from four schools in Denmark and two schools in Hong Kong. The schools in Denmark were situated in both urban areas and suburban areas while the two schools in Hong Kong were situated in urban areas. There were nearly equal numbers of boys and girls. Of the respondents, 81 percent had siblings and the remaining 19 percent of the respondents were the only child in the family. The Hong Kong sub-sample contained a significantly higher proportion of only children than the Danish sub-sample (Chi-square value=19.8,  $p < 0.001$ ). A draft questionnaire in Danish was constructed, partly based on a previous study (Hansen *et al.*, 2002) and additional questions about tweens' use of new media and leisure time. The questionnaire was tested and revised. The authors translated together the questionnaire from Danish into English, and one of the authors translated it into Chinese. A (female) graduate employed as a research assistant translated the Chinese questionnaire back to English to check for consistency. The questionnaires were distributed and collected in normal class sessions, for the Danish sub-sample during the period of October 2003 to February 2004, and for the Hong Kong sub-sample from October to November 2005. Children were asked to fill in the questionnaires. Six questionnaires were invalid as over half of the questions were not answered and the response rate was 99 percent.

## Measures

### Household ownership of media

Children were asked if they owned eight types of media such as TV and DVD in their homes on a dichotomy level.

### Media usage

Children were asked how often they use various media, for example "How often do you read a book in your leisure time?" Respondents could select from one of the five answers, including never, rarely, several times a month, several times a week, and almost every day.

### Ownership of mobile phone and usage

Respondents were asked if they had a mobile phone, and those who had were asked to check what they used it for. A list of possible answers such as "I talk to my friends and classmates" and "I send text messages" were provided and respondents selected the answers "yes", "no" or "don't know".

### Access to internet and usage

Similarly, respondents were asked if they use internet and for those who do, they were asked to tell what they use the internet for. A list of possible answers such as "I play games" and "I download music" were provided and the respondents selected the answers "yes", "no" or "don't know". The respondents were also asked how they get access to the internet and how often they use it.

### Interesting web sites

The respondents were asked how they find new and interesting web sites and to write down their favourite ones.

The results reported in Tables I-III presents the percent agreeing with the statements. The respondents answering "no" and "don't know" were collapsed into one category of "non agreement", and chi-square figures and significance levels are calculated on the basis of this.

## Findings

Table IV shows the ownership of media among the sample. The most popular media owned by tweens (and their families) in Denmark was television, videotape player, computer, and music center. The most popular media owned by tweens (and their families) in Hong Kong was television, computer, DVD player and game consol. Results of Chi-square tests indicated that tweens in Denmark were more likely to have music systems, ghettoblaster, videotape player and game consol than tweens in Hong Kong.

Table V shows how often tweens consume various media during leisure time. Results indicated that reading books and magazines were popular among tweens in both Denmark and Hong Kong. Listening to radio was more popular among tweens in Denmark while reading books and newspapers was more popular among tweens in Hong Kong.

Mobile phone ownership was 75 percent among Danish tweens and 47 percent among Hong Kong tweens. Mobile phone ownership was higher among Danish tweens than among Hong Kong tweens ( $t = 63$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). For comparison purpose, Table I shows tweens' use of mobile phone (for those who owned mobile phones). Tweens in Denmark mainly used their mobile phones for sending and receiving text messages, as well as communicating with parents and friends. Tweens in Hong Kong mainly used their mobile phones for communication and playing games.

Table I Tweens' uses of mobile phones

How do you use your mobile phone? (for phone owners)	Denmark ( <i>n</i> = 165) %	Hong Kong ( <i>n</i> = 100) %	Chi-square
I use it to make appointments with my parents	85.5	64.0	16.4*
I receive text messages (SMS)	95.8	28.0	136.6*
I send text messages (SMS)	93.9	20.0	151.8*
I use it to make appointments with friends	80.0	28.0	70.4*
I use it to talk with friends	69.7	39.0	24.1*
I play games	58.8	46.0	4.1**
I receive photos	55.2	21.0	29.8*
I take photos	41.8	29.0	4.4**
I send photos	46.7	15.0	27.5*
I participate in competitions (SMS)	21.2	6.0	11.0*
I go on the internet	12.1	6.0	2.6

Notes: \*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$

Table II Tweens' use of the internet

How do you use the internet? (for internet users)	Denmark ( <i>n</i> = 209) %	Hong Kong ( <i>n</i> = 183) %	Chi-square
I use the internet to play games	85.2	79.2	2.4
... to find information	45.5	83.1	59.2*
... to surf for fun	62.2	38.8	21.4*
... for homework	41.1	59.6	13.2*
... to e-mail	46.9	50.3	0.5
... to download pictures	45.0	37.7	2.1
... to chat	46.9	28.4	14.1*
... to download music	23.9	30.6	2.2
... to participate in competitions	18.2	7.1	10.6*
... to download movies	12.0	9.3	0.7
... to buy things	8.6	5.5	1.4
... to order free things	7.2	6.0	0.2

Note: \*  $p < 0.001$

Table III Tweens' ways to find out web sites

How do you find new, interesting web sites?	Denmark %	Hong Kong %	Chi-square
I hear about them from friends	78.7	72.5	2.0
I search for them myself	60.4	76.9	12.2*
I hear about them from brothers or sisters	43.5	32.4	5.2**
I know about them from commercials	30.4	9.3	25.2*

Notes: \*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$

Participating in competitions and going on the internet were the least popular uses of the mobile phone in both societies.

A total of 95 percent of Danish tweens and 89 percent of Hong Kong tweens reported that they had used the internet before. Ever-use of internet was higher among Danish tweens than among Hong Kong tweens (Chi-square value=5.8,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Results showed that on the whole, tweens in Denmark owned more diverse media types than tweens in Hong Kong.

Ownership of mobile phone and percentage of respondents who have used internet were higher among Danish tweens than among tweens in Hong Kong. Therefore *H1* was supported.

Danish tweens accessed to the internet: mainly at home (89 percent), in school (75 percent), at friends' home (69 percent) and in schools' library (58 percent). Hong Kong tweens accessed to the internet: mainly at home (98 percent), in school (44 percent) and at friends' home (27 percent).

Table IV Tweens' ownership of various media

Do you have these in your family?	Denmark (n = 220) %	Hong Kong (n = 214) %	Chi-square
Television	100.0	98.6	3.0
Computer	93.8	96.2	1.3
Computer connected to the internet	90.4	94.3	2.3
DVD-player	87.1	85.8	0.2
Music center	92.4	65.4	45.9*
Game console (e.g. PlayStation)	78.0	65.7	7.8**
Ghettoblaster	71.9	42.2	37.9*
Videotape player	95.1	55.9	86.2*
MP3	n.a.	64.9	

Notes: \* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; n.a.=not available

Table V Tweens' use of various media

How often do you do this in your leisure time?	Denmark <sup>a</sup>	Hong Kong <sup>a</sup>	t-stat.
Read a book	3.3	3.7	-3.5*
Read comics or other magazines	3.1	3.0	0.8
Read newspapers	2.2	3.3	-9.4*
Listen to the radio	3.6	2.4	9.2*

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Mean of a five-point scale (1 = never, 5 = almost every day); \* $p < 0.001$

Tweens' use of the internet was measured on a five-point scale (1=never, 5=nearly everyday). The mean values of the internet use at home and in schools were 2.2 and 3.3 for Danish tweens. The mean values of the internet use at home and in schools were 2.0 and 3.7 for Hong Kong tweens. Results show that Danish and Hong Kong tweens used the internet more often in schools than at home.

Table II shows tweens' use of the internet. Only respondents who use the internet were included. Tweens in Denmark mainly used the internet for playing games, surfing for fun and for emails. Tweens in Hong Kong mainly used the internet for finding information, playing games, and for homework. Buying things, ordering free things, and downloading movies on the internet were the least popular use in both societies.

Tweens in Denmark were more likely to use the internet for surfing for fun, for chatting and for participating in competitions. Tweens in Hong Kong were more likely to use the internet for homework and for finding information.

Danish tweens were found to be more likely to use new media for entertainment and pleasure than tweens in Hong Kong. As a result,  $H_2$  was supported.

Table III shows how tweens find new and interesting web sites. For both societies, results indicate that word-of-mouth from friends and searching on the internet were the two most popular ways of getting to know new web sites. Danish tweens were more likely to locate new web sites through their siblings or commercials. Hong Kong tweens were more likely to find new web sites by searching on the internet.

Table VI shows the number of favourite web sites reported by the respondents. About one-third of respondents in Denmark reported two and about one-quarter of them reported three web sites. 60 percent of the Hong Kong

Table VI Tweens' favourite web sites

What are your favourite web sites? (open ended, number of web sites mentioned)	Denmark %	Hong Kong %
1	14.4	59.8
2	30.6	10.3
3	23.4	9.2
4	8.6	3.3
5 or more	14.4	0.5
Not mentioned/don't know	8.6	16.8
Total	100.0	100.0

respondents reported one and 10 percent two favourite web sites. Tweens in Denmark reported on average more than twice as many favourite web sites than tweens in Hong Kong (Chi-square value =121,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## Discussions and conclusion

The present study attempts to investigate the media ownership, and usage of mobile phones as well as the internet among Danish and Hong Kong tweens. As the samples are drawn from a non-probability sample of schools, we may not be able to generalize the results beyond the sample. Comparison between students of the two societies should be viewed with caution. Results can be considered as a pilot data and may signal trends that can be further explored among larger and more representative samples.

Danish tweens own and use more new media, i.e. mobile phones and the internet, than tweens in Hong Kong. It suggests that economic development of a society is linked to

the new media ownership. When we examined the data more closely, we found an interesting observation. We notice that in both societies, household ownership of television, computer, computer with internet connectivity, and DVD player did not show significant differences. Household ownership of music and game-related media (music center, ghetto blaster and game console) was higher among Danish tweens. The lower ownership of media among Hong Kong tweens may be attributed to the rapid replacement of old media by new media in Hong Kong. For example, ghetto blasters and music centers were less popular in Hong Kong, probably because households in Hong Kong use newer personal media such as MP3, iPod or mobile phones that can play music. The videotape players are less popular in Hong Kong as they have been replaced by DVD players.

Results showed that ownership of mobile phones was higher among Danish tweens. An explanation could be the fact that many elementary schools in Hong Kong place restrictions on bringing mobile phones into schools, and therefore the children are less likely to want one. Even if certain restrictions on mobile phones also exist in Danish schools, they are rarely strictly enforced bans.

Sending and receiving text messages were more popular among tweens in Denmark than among tweens in Hong Kong. This may be related to language problems. Most of the elementary school students use Cantonese (a Chinese dialect) as their daily language. They need to learn a special typing method in order to send Chinese messages. Perhaps the difficulty in typing text messages hinders the use of them, (among Hong Kong respondents) but a more weighty cultural explanation could be the social function of SMS and the general use of mobile phone as indicated in the findings of this study: that Danish tweens use the mobile to a significantly higher extent for perpetual contact with peers, a finding in line with previous qualitative studies of Scandinavian children (Puro, 2002). As most competitions, using mobile phones as media, apply SMS messages as mode of feedback, participation in these competitions is also found to be much less common among tweens in Hong Kong than among Danish tweens.

The use of the internet showed the largest difference between the two sub-samples. The internet was used as a tool for academic activities among tweens in Hong Kong. Contrary to this, the internet was used as a tool for fun, entertainment and interpersonal communication among tweens in Denmark. Danish tweens were more inclined to use the internet for entertainment and communication with peers than Hong Kong tweens, and Danish tweens were much better at recalling favourite world wide web (www) homepages. This shows that Danish tweens mainly use new media for personal enjoyment and perpetual contact with friends. The result also reflects the strong emphasis Chinese children and young persons put on education, also from a competitive point of view. Schools in Hong Kong now consider the internet as a new media for teaching and learning. Third to fourth grade students have to learn how to search for information on the internet. Students must often work in groups to work at projects on a specific topic under the guidance of a teacher. It would be too simplistic to conclude that the use of new media for educational purposes is simply a consequence of the collective-oriented culture of the Hong Kong society. This is because good academic results can be a personal goal (to improve one's living standard) as

well as a collective goal (to bring glory to the family). Further study is needed to explore the underlying motivation for the use of new media.

When comparing the tween segments of the two countries, we must conclude that their daily life is quite different and consequently their use of media. Tweens in Denmark, a more economically advanced society, enjoyed more different media types than tweens in Hong Kong. There are similarities in the penetration and ownership of new media that could be misleading, but it must be remembered that the tweens' use of new media is different, just like the functions and gratifications they obtain from them. The Danish use of mobile phones suggested a social function with the mobile phone (particularly the use of SMS messages) as an important way of keeping in touch with friends.

Therefore, we question Martin Lindstrom's (2004; Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003) conclusion that tweens can be considered a homogeneous, global consumer segment.

### Marketing implications

Marketers should be cautious about implementing marketing strategies based on the premise that tweens are one common global segment, particularly if the communications strategy involves the use of new media. A strategy targeting tweens with entertaining internet homepages are more likely to be successful in Denmark (and similar countries) where tweens mostly use the internet for entertainment and are more likely to learn new web sites from advertising. Targeting Hong Kong tweens would be more successful if the communication strategy involved edutainment or integration with educational material and internet homepages with search engine optimization (designed for a high ranking on relevant searches, for example on Google).

As this study found many significant differences in the tweens' use of mobile phones, marketers of mobile communication services and mobile phones should be aware that services and marketing communications are differently estimated and must be adjusted to the preferred use in the respective cultures and regions.

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### Executive summary and implications for managers and executives

*This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this article. Those with a particular interest in the topic covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefits of the material present.*

#### The tween segment

Studies have shown that young people are increasingly influencing family purchase decisions and many marketers now regard children as “consumers in their own right”. There is particular interest in “tweens”, defined as young consumers making the transition from child to teenager. The age band of this segment varies and can be anything from 8 to 14 years old. Some researchers label tweens as aspirant teenagers and regard “tweenhood” more as a state of mind.

There is plenty of evidence to show that tweens are an important market segment. In 2003, for example, the total direct and indirect consumption attributed to tweens around the world was \$1.3 trillion. They are perceived as natural adopters of new media, making them highly influential on other tweens due to the global communication that new media permits. A study of 15,000 children in 14 countries showed that 25 percent of all tweens communicate weekly with counterparts in other nations. The research also discovered that around a quarter of tweens use the internet as the main source of communicating with friends.

Such findings have led to assumptions that communication across national boundaries enables speedy adoption of global trends, prompting many researchers to consider tweens as a single global segment. There have been few studies of tweens from an intercultural perspective but Andersen *et al.* believe

that some cultural differences between children from different nations and areas of the world are to be expected. The aim of this study is therefore to determine whether these differences are relevant to marketers targeting tweens and to ascertain whether or not the segment can be regarded as global.

#### Issues to consider

The authors’ starting point consists of a comparative examination of tweens’ use of old and new media in Denmark and Hong Kong, countries with similar-sized populations and at comparable stages of technological development.

##### In Denmark:

- children are active and 80 percent engage in regular sporting activities;
- in 2006, there were 2.5 million households containing an average of 2.2 people. Extended families including grandparents were uncommon;
- the country boasts one of the highest penetration rates in Europe for mobile phones and new media;
- there has been rapid growth of internet adoption and by 2005, 71 percent of households had access. This figure increased to 92 percent among families with children;
- children use the internet mainly to play games, seek information, send and receive emails, and chat and surf. A survey indicated that Danish children are similar in this respect to children in many other European countries;
- the growth of the internet has led to a reduction in the number of hours children spend watching television; and
- since the 1980s, children have been increasingly recognized as individuals with a role to play in family decision making.

##### In Hong Kong:

- as within other Chinese societies, the importance of education is recognized. In 2004–2005, almost one-quarter of government expenditure went on education;
- parents likewise value education and in 2005, 47 percent of children received extra tuition outside of school hours;
- children have little leisure time because of the focus on education;
- extended families are more common in Hong Kong and there were an average of 3.2 people per household in 2002;
- the country is rich in new media and boasts widespread ownership of mobile phones and adoption of broadband internet connection;
- children’s television programs are only available during certain periods and many children watch the documentaries, chat shows and current affairs programs that are transmitted as part of an aim to educate and inform the population;
- children in Hong Kong engage in low levels of physical education; and
- society is collectivist and characterized by parental control, strict discipline, family obligation, respect for seniors and an emphasis on education and achievement.

Andersen *et al.* conducted a study within schools in Denmark and Hong Kong. Participants were aged 10–13 and the authors received a 99 percent response rate from the 434 originally targeted. The gender of respondents was almost equally divided.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected in class and the authors sought information about ownership and usage of different media types, mobile phones and the internet. Respondents were additionally asked to reveal the methods they used to discover interesting web sites.

As Denmark is more economically advanced than Hong Kong, the authors expected to find higher levels of new media ownership among Danish tweens. They also hypothesized that Danish tweens would be likelier to use new media for fun and pleasure because of the country being more individualistic in nature than Hong Kong. Previous studies had shown that individualistic societies place greater emphasis on individual variety and pleasure.

### Study findings

The authors' claim support for the first hypothesis because findings showed a more diverse ownership of media among tweens in Denmark. However, tweens in Hong Kong enjoyed greater access to newer media such as MP3 players, iPods and DVD players, which have respectively replaced ghetto blasters, music centers and video recorders. Mobile phone ownership was considerably higher in Denmark but this may be partly due to restrictions about taking these items into Hong Kong schools. The authors speculate that this may dampen tween enthusiasm for mobile phone ownership. Respondents in Denmark used their phone primarily for texting and communication, while communication and playing games were the main functions used among those in Hong Kong.

Respective use of the internet provided the largest difference between the two samples. A high level of respondents in both countries had internet experience, though regular usage was greater in Denmark. Danish tweens revealed their online activities to be mainly playing games, surfing for fun and sending and receiving emails. In Hong Kong, survey participants use the internet to find

information, play games and complete homework. This indicated support for the second hypothesis.

In both samples, recommendations from friends and use of search engines were the two most popular way of finding new web sites. However, Hong Kong tweens were likelier to use search engines, while those in Denmark preferred to acquire the knowledge through friends or advertisements.

The findings highlight the emphasis placed on education by young people in Chinese societies. Schools in Hong Kong now consider the internet as a valuable learning tool and teach children how to use it for search purposes. Andersen *et al.* believe that such new media use may not entirely relate to collectivist goals and suggest further study is needed to determine underlying motivations.

### Marketing recommendations

In view of the outcome, the authors claim that the tween segment cannot be regarded as homogenous and warn marketers against implementing strategies based on such assumptions – particular when communication involves new media. It may prove more effective to use attractive internet pages when targeting tweens in Denmark or other countries where internet usage centers mainly around entertainment and new web sites are discovered via advertising. Successful targeting of tweens in Hong Kong may require a communication strategy that aligns education with entertainment and uses internet homepages with “search engine optimization”.

It is also pointed out that mobile phone functions may be prioritized differently within different nations or cultures and that marketers should adjust their focus accordingly.

The authors regard the investigation as a pilot study that indicates trends that might be confirmed by further research into larger and more representative samples.

*(A précis of the article “Tweens and new media in Denmark and Hong Kong”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)*