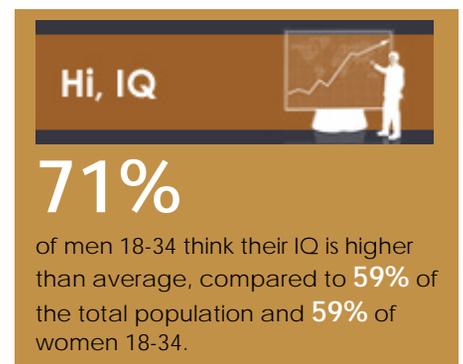




## Smarter than the Average Bear

Living in the Information Age, it's hard to argue that knowledge is power, and for men ages 18 to 34, having the right information input has a special significance. These young men show an affinity for information that gives them the cutting edge—so much so that the status of having the right information and using it well even plays a role among their entertainment options. Take, for example, fantasy sports leagues, which play to one's ability to leverage information for competitive advantage—it is estimated that 18 million players participate in these leagues. <sup>(1)</sup> Then consider other online pursuits, such as researching property values and searching for a new job, that now play a part in how these men spend their free time. This week's MONITOR Minute takes a look at how information is capital among men 18-34.



## Smarts as Status

Young men exude a unique confidence in their personal abilities and their sense of smarts. While the vast majority of the population expresses that they're above average in the brains department and want to be seen by others as being self-sufficient and possessing valuable insight, men 18-34 are more likely to care about having the upper hand when it comes to knowledge. Indeed, these men think they're superior in the brains department compared to the rest of the population, and they require a constant feed of up-to-date and well-presented information that respects them as people of above-average intelligence. What's more, in a marketplace where there's almost always a catch buried in the fine print, these men increasingly place a high value on being seen by others as having the savvy to see through exaggeration and hype. And this skill is even more in demand as consumers try to winnow down the marketplace to find the real deal.

## The Company They Keep

As social networking grows and as consumer-created content continues to flourish and to influence consumers' marketplace decisions to a greater extent, the demand today is to keep (virtual) company with consumers of equal intelligence who possess extra insight. In the online world, this might require a higher degree of quality control than average Webmasters have exercised in the past. Indeed, almost nine in 10 consumers in general—and men 18-34—believe that “there are too many people these days giving their opinions who know much less than they think they do.” The more attractive option is space that is provided exclusively for experts and for knowledgeable and articulate amateurs to trade insights and inside tips and tricks.

## Bottom Line

Men 18-34 today find status in information, relish being seen as knowledgeable about lots of things and desire to reinforce their smarts, and all of these factors influence their marketplace decisions. Integrating “smarts” into your brand—whether it’s providing consumer information on the Web, sponsoring special information supplements and shopping guides, or upgrading your sales training—is more likely to gather the respect and confidence of these young male shoppers.

## Implications and Opportunities

- **Find ways to create communities of the knowledgeable among your customer base.** But remember, these groups are often only as good as their moderator. Take an editor's eye towards vetting and fact checking, especially when dealing with higher-risk information. Also, dig through your message boards and consumer-created content areas and highlight “diamonds” to draw in community members.
- **Make information easy to share.** Men 18-34 want to be seen as brokers of quality information.
- **Make sure you’re keeping your staff as connected to information as their customers are.** Service staffers need to be schooled in the information that’s available to the average customer on the Internet, especially in categories such as consumer electronics, where comparison shopping is the norm.
- **Sure, authenticity is a big marketing buzz word, but let’s be frank: These guys don’t want a load of BS.** When talking to these consumers, admitting the shortcomings of certain product offerings and steering them to products that have a stronger lifestyle fit is critical for ensuring customer satisfaction and building repeat business.
- **Consider new information-driven leisure pursuits as ways to reach these elusive guys.** (2)



## DIGGING DEEPER

	Total Population	Men 18-34	Women 18-34
I think my IQ is higher than average	59%	71%	59%
<i>Characteristics important to the way others see you:</i> (6-7 on a 7-point scale, where 7 is “extremely important”)			
Knowing how to get things done	73	78	78
Someone who gives smart advice	67	71	75
Knowledgeable about current events	54	58	43
Having the inside scoop	31	43	34
<i>Important in your personal life:</i> (6-7 on a 7-point scale, where 7 is “extremely important”)			
Spending time with people who are just as passionate and knowledgeable about the things you care about as you are	55	56	58

	Total Population		Men 18-34		Women 18-34	
	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007
Characteristics important to the way others see you: (6-7 on a 7-point scale, where 7 is "extremely important")						
Someone who can see through exaggeration and hype	38%	56%	49%	62%	40%	59%

## Running with It

- **Collective Smarts**—The Brian Lehrer Show on National Public Radio asked listeners in the NYC area to go to their nearest market and report back on the price of a head of lettuce, a quart of milk and a six-pack of Budweiser Beer. Then they plotted the results, ranking the most and least expensive places to pick up some brews.
- **Everyone's a Critic**—Criticter uses collaborative searching tools similar to how Netflix makes DVD recommendations to connect online users with professional and amateur critics who are simpatico. Users fill out a profile describing tastes and then are sent out to explore other film buffs' reviews and comments.
- **Keyboard Quarterbacks**—ESPN.com's Crystal Ball enables fantasy sports league players to size up the competition, leverage the latest injury reports and consult experts on how their players may perform in upcoming games.

## MONITOR Resources

MONITOR 2007/2008 State of the Consumer Report: "Pinpointing" and "Looping"



## Sources

(1) Fantasy Sports Trade Association

(2) For more information about the online behaviors of Men 18-34, download our New 2007 MONITOR E-Tabs data using the file Banage2. Tables 247 and 249 provide details on the frequency with which men 18-34 participate in numerous online activities.