

First Internet Survey on Net Behaviour of Local Youths by Breakthrough

Breakthrough has recently conducted a “Survey on Net Behaviour of Youth in Hong Kong”. The survey reveals the two basic elements of net behaviour of local youngsters - being the various activities of using resource network, and the different patterns of chatting by internet users of which the number is increasing.

The survey was carried out between September and October, 1997. Six hundred and eight self-responded questionnaires were collected through internet. At the same time, six thousand five hundred and fifty messages were downloaded from a newsgroup server for content analysis.

The results obtained through questionnaires demonstrated that the main activities on internet are web browsing (92.2%) and emailing (85.7%). Less frequent activities are researching (60.9%) and chatting (52.9%). The content browsed is mainly about “entertainment” (84%), other content browsed includes “cyber/computer” (61.7%), “public affairs/politics/general information” (51.7%), and “information of studies” (41.8%). Only 46.9% of respondents had browsed pornographic homepage.

There is an increasing tendency for youths to chat on net. Over 80% of respondents had chatted on net with different patterns. Over 70% had participated in real time chatting. ICQ (Internet Personal Online Communication) was the most frequent tool for real time chatting (60.5%).

Nearly 70% of respondents replied that they had the experience of chatting with unknown persons and became chatting partners through chatting, conferencing or exchanging ICQ numbers. Over half of the users were under twenty, and that they browsed web sites and chatted frequently (85.8%). Communicating with overseas youths or strangers is very popular among local youths.

The content analysis of the messages downloaded from Newsgroup reveals that nearly one thousand users chatted on a specific homepage within twenty-four hours. The most frequent topics were “entertainment”, “cyber/computer/information technology”, and “personal life/love affairs/ religion” respectively.

However, in terms of the number of messages, the category “personal life/love affairs/religion” is the highest one. Further to that, from the above category, love affairs was a hot topic which goes as high as 42.1%. Nearly 30% was on personal life/habits/interests. Friendship is also the topic they were concerned about. This demonstrates that youths like to make friends through Newsgroup and they view Newsgroup as “communication area”.

Chatting patterns concerning “cyber/computer/information technology” and “investment/finance” were mainly “enquiries/information seeking” and “questions and answers”. About half of the net users inclined to see Newsgroup as a “Resource Network”.

Chan King Chuen, Information and Research Manager of Breakthrough, Said that the popularity of “Real time chatting” shows that youths yearn for interpersonal communication and sharing. They have stable chatting partners instead of fooling around. Youth workers have the responsibility of guiding the youths to use internet positively in obtaining information.

He added that there are many youths discussing topics like “personal life/love affairs/religion”. This can be a new trend in media. He believed that counselling on internet is a service that worths development.

In response to the findings of the survey, Samuel Choy Chung Leung, the Information Pavilion Manager of Breakthrough, said that Breakthrough aims to give young people a better understanding of the internet and to nurture a new generation of leaders in information technology, who are creative and have strong sense of commitment.

Uzone is a web site (www.uzone.com.hk) established by Breakthrough Information Pavilion with the above aim. By providing youths with an unlimited zone for expression, they can develop a better self identity and have their own values affirmed. In Uzone, they can share their knowledge and talents with others learn to be a responsible person during the communication process.

About Breakthrough and the Breakthrough Youth village

Established 1973, Breakthrough is today one of Hong Kong's largest voluntary youth organisations, reaching over 1,000,000 youths through various channels (including print and electronic media, counselling services, youth rallies and group training programmes) on a yearly basis.

Located on A Kung Kok Shan Road, Shatin, the Breakthrough Youth Village is composed of four major pavilions, namely the Cultural, Information, Pathfinding and Renewal Pavilions. It offers information, art and cultural, counselling, training, recreational and temporary residential services and facilities under one roof.