Exploratory study into the perceptions of knowledge sources and knowledge uses among students

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NZCA Annual Conference, 5-7 Dec 2007
Research method
Exploratory research

• Questionnaire survey
• Convenience sample – 100 respondents
• Participating researchers:
  – Dr Petra Theunissen (AUT University)
  – Dr Christopher Theunissen (Manukau Business School)
  – Dr Mary Allan (University of Canterbury)
Analysis

• SPSS package
• Combination of statistical methods:
  – Frequencies
  – Cross tabulation
  – Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficient
  – T-test
  – Principal component analysis (factor analysis)
Profile of respondents
Institution of study

- AUT University: 42%
- Manukau Business School: 21%
- University of Canterbury: 35%
- Other: 2%
Gender distribution

Female 76%
Male 24%
Age groups

16-24 years old: 65%
25-34 years old: 9%
35-44 years old: 14%
45-54 years old: 9%
55-64 years old: 3%
Country of Birth

New Zealand 66%

India 2%

Japan 1%

Other 34%

South Africa 5%

Zimbabwe 1%

Fiji 6%

Russia 2%

USA 3%

Tonga 1%

Zambia 1%

China 4%

Samoa 1%

Canada 1%

Germany 1%

Bhutan 1%

Australia 1%

France 1%

Sudan 1%

Japan 1%

India 2%
Internet use
Surfing the Internet: Language of choice

- English: 94%
- Other: 6%
  - Japanese: 1%
  - Russian: 1%
  - Chinese: 3%
  - German: 1%
Surfing the Internet: Second choice language

- English: 30%
- French: 15%
- German: 10%
- Chinese: 10%
- Russian: 5%
- Japanese: 5%
- Spanish: 10%
- Afrikaans: 5%
- Hindi: 5%
- Samoan: 5%
- French: 15%
Hours of Internet use (daily)

- Never use the Internet
- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- 3 hours
- 4 hours
- More than 4 hours

Number of respondents
Hours of surfing

- The more hours respondents spent on the Internet, the more likely they were to:
  - Perceive it as a place to exchange ideas
  - Perceive it as a social networking place
- Weak link between hours surfing the Internet and:
  - Gaming
  - Live chat using a webcam
- Both had a weak relationship with gender
- No significant correlation between hours and gender/age but aforementioned does imply some relationship – needs to be investigated further
General Internet use

- Search for information: 95
- Discussion forums: 37
- Blogging: 28
- Email: 97
- Live chat: 46
- Search for music/multimedia: 70
- Downloading podcast/vidcast: 24
- Shopping: 47
- Other: 85
- Live chat using a webcam: 12
- Gaming: 14
- Search for interest groups: 21
- Search for support groups: 10
- Search for a romantic partner: 3
- Receive RSS feeds: 8
- Other: 17
Internet as a social network place

• Respondents who felt that the Internet was a place to exchange ideas were more likely to:
  – Perceive Internet as a place to meet people, and
  – It being a social networking place.

• Respondents who used the Internet for discussion forums on topics of interests:
  – Perceived the Internet as a place to exchange ideas (and thus a social networking place), and
  – Used it to search for interest groups & support groups.
The Internet as a place to conduct business

• Respondents who perceived the Internet as a place to conduct business:
  – Perceived it as a place to shop (!)
  – Perceived it as a source of entertainment and information
  – Used the Internet for shopping.

• Gender and age had no impact on shopping online.
The Internet as a source of entertainment and information

- If respondents perceived the Internet as a source of entertainment and information they were likely to
  - Use it for searching for (and downloading) multimedia and music, and
  - Use it to meet people (= social networking).
- Age played a role in perceiving the Internet as a source of entertainment.
The impact of age

- Respondents over 35 years were less likely to:
  - Perceive the Internet as a source of entertainment (functional tool?)
  - Use the Internet for live chat (23% compared to 55% of those younger than 35)
  - Search for music and multimedia as well as podcasts.

- Respondents *over 25 years* rated *print* newspapers and magazines as more reliable.
- Respondents *under 25 years* rated *online* newspapers and magazines as more reliable.
Impact of gender

• No **significant** correlations were found between gender and Internet use
• Weak correlations between gender and:
  – Using live chat with a webcam
  – Gaming.
• No discernible differences between male and female perceptions of the Internet
• Inconclusive: further research needed.
Principal component analysis of citing sources for academic work

COMPONENT 1
• Citing Wikipedia
• Citing wikipages
• Citing online newspaper/magazines
• Citing Google scholar
• Citing business sites

COMPONENT 2
• Citing hard copy academic journals
• Citing online academic journals
• Citing educational/academic sites

COMPONENT 3
• Citing podcasts/vidcasts
• Citing blogs
• Citing print newspaper/magazines
Principal component analysis for overall reliability of sources

COMPONENT 1
• Television
• Radio
• Internet website

COMPONENT 2
• Blogs
• Podcasts/vidcasts
• Wikipedia

COMPONENT 3
• Academic journals (online & hard copy)
• Print magazines/newspapers
• Online magazines/newspapers

COMPONENT 4
• Family member
• Friend
Conclusions

• Generational shift in perceived reliability of “traditional” sources and “emerging” sources (social media)
• Generational shift in perception and use of the Internet
Impact on teaching

• Tutors need to:
  – Familiarize themselves with current uses of Internet and knowledge sources
  – Be aware of the shift in perceptions
  – Adapt their teaching strategies

• Action research into current teaching strategies and methods?
Impact on industry

- Channel reliability and effectiveness
- Greater divergence of age groups
- Convergence may make some channels obsolete (e.g. print media)
- Continued analysis & evaluation of target audiences and channel/message appropriateness needed – more so than before
Further research

• The nature of the generational shift and impact on teaching and learning as well as communication-related industries.
• The existence of gender differences in using the Internet and impact on communication and society.
• The impact of social networking sites on communication and relationship-building.
Thank you!