

Information Seeking Observation

Population: Low SES middle school music students

Place: Music Room, Franklin Classical Middle School, Long Beach, CA

Timeframe: May

Sample: 29 Students; 19 Female, 10 Males

Abstract: A questionnaire was given to a middle school classroom to survey their information seeking behaviors. Students answered four questions, and the following is an analysis of the results.

Question 1: What kind of information do you seek?

Overall the survey showed that the students seek information pertaining to videos games. This included games info, guides, codes, and game play videos. Various forms of Media such as music and videos were another top answer. News was chosen occasionally, specifically sports related. There were five instances of seeking social information regarding their friends. Academic information included grades, school work, college information, specifically science and physics. Culture related information included shopping and clothes, but surprisingly included specific internet related culture such as memes and Rage Comics. A lot of answers pertained to general information such as weather, maps, animals, and finding answers to questions. There were five instances of seeking information regarding musical instruments. One notable answer that occurred twice was “stuff my mom needs help on.”

Question 2: How do you get this information? What do you use to get it?

62% of the students mentioned using a device to get information. The computer was the top recurring answer (41%) and 21% mentioned using a smartphone. 86% of the sample said they receive their information via the internet. 62% of the students use search engines, with Google being noted by 48%. YouTube was a reoccurring answer showing up on 34% of the surveys. Specific social networking websites like Facebook and Tagged.com only accounted for 17%, whereas communicating with people was noted twice. There was one instance of an email (Hotmail) website, and only one instance of Wikipedia. Two students mentioned the television, specifically the news. One student cited a book, whereas another student specifically wrote “NO BOOKS!”

Question 3: Where are you when you seek this information? Home, friend’s house, school, etc.?

Not surprisingly, 97% of the students said they are at home when they are seeking information. Interestingly, the restroom was the most specific place at home mentioned (3 times). 34% are not at home when hunting for information, with a “friend’s house” accounting for half of those students. 31% mentioned school, with no location specified. Notable answers include “anywhere,” showing use of mobile technology, church, and Wi-Fi hotspots.

Question 4: How has technology changed the way you seek information?

This was probably the toughest question for the students to understand, as they have grown up in a generation where computers and smartphones are a cultural norm. Overall, the most frequent responses were faster and easier access to information. Elimination of behaviors such as using a phone to talk to people, asking questions, listening to a radio, and buying a map were mentioned. Four students said “Nothing” has changed in their behavior. Some notable answers include “watch less TV,” “don’t waste time,” and “communicate with friends.”

Summary

The results of this survey contribute to my assumption that the digital divide of the 2000s is gone. The majority of the low SES population cited the internet through a home computer device as their source of information. Most of the information they seek online regards video games and media such as music, however there were frequent instances mentioned of students seeking knowledgeable information in various forms. Google and YouTube are popular among the children, and surprisingly there were not a significant number of mentions of social media websites like Facebook, Tumblr, or Twitter. This may convey some evidence of parental control at home with social media, or the usage just hasn’t reached the population yet. Overall, it appears the internet is the primary of source of information for these children.