Researching Trends in Internet Use

LSE (12 Feb 2008)

Ellen J. Helsper
‘Trendy’ Debates in Policy

- Digital divides
- Digital choice
- Predicting engagement
- Risk and security – Digital literacy

- Linking social and digital engagement

- What can we do to understand developments over time and predict the future?
‘Trendy’ Problems

- Lack of integrated theory
- Lack of detailed, representative cohort evidence
- Lack of longitudinal evidence
- Measurement of ‘effect’
- Rapid change
- Our poor record in knowing our future selves
Trend Models: Basic conflicting theories

- Vicious circle (differences get bigger)
  - Digital Exclusion
- Consistent separation (continued catch up)
  - Digital Divide
- Narrowing gaps (time heals)
  - Diffusion of innovation

- Disparate processes for different groups:
  - ‘They will die eventually’ (Generation/Cohort model)
  - ‘Ingrained inequality’ (Life stages/Panel model)
Let's focus on Gender

- Generational differences? – Diffusion of innovation
- Life stage differences? – ‘Continued’ inequalities

Or both?
Focus on Gender

Use by Gender (QH19 by QD3)

% that uses the internet

2003: 64 Men, 55 Women
2005: 63 Men, 57 Women
2007: 70 Men, 65 Women

OxIS 2003: N=2,029, OxIS 2005: N=2,185, OxIS 2007: N=2,350 (Women=1,222, Men=1,128)
Focus on Age

Use by Age (QH19 by DQ1)

% that uses the internet

OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007: N=2,350
Focus on Life stage

Use by Lifestage (QH19 by QD14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OxIS 2003: N=2,029; OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007: N=2,350 (Students: N=202; Employed: N=1,262; Retired: N=506)
Hypothetical models: Cohort

- High Engagement
- Medium Engagement
- Low Engagement

Young age | Middle age | Old age

Men

Women
Hypothetical models: Life Stage - Labour

Student
Employed
Retired

High Engagement
Medium Engagement
Low Engagement

Men
Women

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Hypothetical models: Life Stage - Freedom

- High Engagement
- Medium Engagement
- Low Engagement

[Graph showing engagement levels for Single, Married, and Divorced individuals, with separate lines for Men and Women]
## Interactions: Breadth of Use: 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>p.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>12.15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender (Female)</td>
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<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>GenXUnempl</td>
<td>-1.95</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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</table>
## Interactions: Breadth of Use: 2003 & 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Retired</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>-0.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>GenXSingle</td>
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<td>-0.12</td>
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<td>GenXEmpl</td>
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Trends and analyses: Cohorts 2005/2007
Breadth of Use, Gender and Life stage I 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breadth of Use, Gender and Life stage I 2007

**Student:** Men 20.8, Women 21.6

**Employed:** Men 18.2, Women 16.0

**Unemployed:** Men 7.5, Women 8.3

**Retired:** Men 5.6, Women 3.6
Breadth of Use, Gender and Life stage II 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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</table>
Breadth of Use, Gender and Life stage II
2007

Breadth of Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>11.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specific behaviours

♀ **Health**: Gender and Employment
Throughout the life stages

➢ **Finance**: Gender, Employment and Divorced
Gender interacts with life stage (Single

♂ **Sexual material**: Gender
Gender interacts strongly with life stage (Student, Retired, Single, Married)
Finance, Gender and Life stage

Extent of online finance

- **Single**
  - Men: 1.67
  - Women: 1.62

- **Cohabiting**
  - Men: 2.16
  - Women: 1.94

- **Married**
  - Men: 2.08
  - Women: 1.97

- **Divorced**
  - Men: 2.00
  - Women: 1.64
Sexual material, Gender and Life stage I

% that looks at sexual material

Men | Women
--- | ---
Single | 28% | 8%
Cohabit | 19% | 8%
Married | 15% | 5%
Divorced, separated | 46% | 4%

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Sexual material, Gender and Life stage II

% that looks at sexual material

- Student: 19% Men, 3% Women
- Employed: 24% Men, 8% Women
- Unemployed: 28% Men, 9% Women
- Retired: 7% Men, 0% Women

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Conclusions

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- Trends based on current data
- Trends based on cohort data
  - As always live not straightforward and it is NOT either...or...

What we need

- Changing nature of the internet complicates research replicability – If only we had known then what we would think is important now.

What we really need

- A crystal ball
Thank you.

Oxford Internet Surveys
http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/microsites/oxis/
oxis@oii.ox.ac.uk

Oxford Internet Institute
http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk