

The 2006 Online Entertainment Services Survey is part of a descriptive research effort to begin understanding the phenomenon of employing online entertainment services on college and university campuses in the United States. As this is an emerging phenomenon, a mixed method descriptive research design was selected. This is a brief description of the methodology employed in constructing and analyzing data collected using the survey instrument employed as part of this research.

Careful selection and definition of the population and the variables are critical in descriptive research (Van Dalen, 1979). The population of this research was defined to be those institutions that the researchers were able to positively identify as employing one or more of the 4 most popular online entertainment services: Cdigix, Napster, Rhapsody, and Ruckus. These services were identified in preliminary research as the most popular services and the services for which the researchers could most easily identify the full population of subscribing institutions. Apple's iTunes was not included in this research as (a) it was not a service to which institutions subscribe or otherwise typically engaged in a meaningful relationship, financial or otherwise, and (b) there was no readily available list of institutions employing iTunes. The variables included on the survey instrument were those identified by the researchers, content experts consulted by the researchers, and survey pilot participants as being well-defined (through common usage or definition within the survey) and likely important in understanding the phenomenon.

The population of 78 institutions and systems was identified in November, 2005. The survey instrument was constructed from November, 2005, through January, 2006. The survey was piloted in early February, 2006, with members of the ResNet Applied Research Group, the ResNet Steering Committee, and select content experts at various institutions. The survey was open from February 17, 2006, until March 2, 2006. Institutions and systems were invited to

participate via e-mails sent to the most senior administrator with direct responsibility for Information Technology, typically the CIO. 30 institutions and 1 system responded yielding a response rate of 40% (one institution in the sample was not contacted due to unusual circumstances).

Twenty-five of the thirty-one questions were multiple choice with an additional response option allowing respondents to supply additional responses not included in the predefined choices. Those additional responses were added to the predefined choices as appropriate in post-survey analysis.

The remaining six questions were open-ended. Responses to those questions were analyzed using standard qualitative coding procedures (Creswell, 2002; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995) and a constant comparative method to draw meaning from the data (Merriam, 1998). In brief, two researchers independently assigned each response to one or more progressively broader topics with the third researcher assisting in arbitrating differences and helping the researchers reach consensus and congruence in their coding.

Although several demographic descriptors were collected either directly through the survey or post-survey, the small population and subsequent low number of respondents made any desired comparisons between groups of respondents or tests for correlations inadvisable.

References

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