

Create a Target Market Profile for Internet Users

More than a billion people use the Internet worldwide, reports "PC Magazine." In America, 88 percent of the population state that the Internet has a role in their lives and 53 percent report that they do more of certain everyday activities" simply because they can do them on the Internet,says Ronald Roach, who recently did a survey of Internet users for Black Issues in Higher Education. Understanding Internet users is important to thousands of people with Internet businesses and others who use the Internet to complement their off line businesses. Business owners can better understand Internet users and any market or group of people by using a new Matrix Market Segmentation process. This process involves gathering facts about a market and from those facts, determining personality and social characteristics. For example, age, education level, income, and social class facts about a market reveal other characteristics that can improve a business owner's ability to communicate with and relate to market members more effectively. Age Almost two-thirds of Internet users are older than 35. Yet few are elderly. This indicates that Baby Boomers comprise the majority of Internet users. The early adulthood and middleclass life stages dominate. Baby Boomers differ by when they were born. The Vietnam Group was born between 1946 and 1955, and the Me Group was born between 1956 and 1965). Because their attitudes about finances, social activity and spirituality differ considerably, knowing their age provides personality and social characteristics that enable business owners to separate them into niches. Similarly, life stages provide characteristics that can be used to segment markets. Two life stages - Early Adulthood (ages 30 to 45) and Middleclass (ages 45 to 55) - include the majority of Internet users. Life stage information deals with tasks that are important during each stage. Differences between the two stages include that people in early adulthood often sacrifice themselves for family and jobs, but by Middleclass, people reevaluate these sacrifices, questioning their earlier choices. Education A little less than a third of Internet users have a college degree. According to an article on Internet connectedness, High School students use the Internet for social interaction and entertainment rather than to gather information. Thus, they do not comprise potential customers for Internet businesses. Because Internet connectedness has been positively related to increased education, better-educated people are more likely to find and buy products online. Most education characteristics relate to social class, but some differ strictly by amount of education. Characteristics for college graduates and people with some college differ significantly. For instance, people with some college watch more television, save their money rather than invest it, and value what is hot more than price. College graduates read more newspapers, invest more of their money, and spend money on cultural and aesthetic products. Income A 2001 study found that half of Internet users earn more than \$40,000 per year while the other half earn less. A later study reported higher incomes with the vast majority earning between \$35,000 and \$75,000, and less than 20 percent earning more than \$75,000. Social Class Income and education demographics reveal that the middle classes comprise the majority of Internet users. Middle Class characteristics include being conservative and traditional, valuing education and substance over style, living graciously and bettering careers. Gender and National Origin Although most early Internet adopters were male, gender ratios now almost represent the population. Caucasians make up three-quarters of Internet users, with Asians comprising the largest non-Caucasian group, according to an article in "The Information Society." Putting the Characteristics Together By putting these characteristics into a matrix, the Matrix Market Segmenting process reveals those characteristics most shared across segments.

About the Author

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