It's a woman's World Wide Web

In August, Media Metrix and Jupiter Communications released new data on what had been a gender gap concerning use of the World Wide Web. In the first quarter of 2000, the number of women online surpassed that of men (50.4% vs 49.6%) and the online population of women is growing faster than the online population overall (34.9% vs 22.4%).

Females aged 2-11 currently represent just 4% of the overall Web population. The Websites with the highest percentage of this group are: 1) Amandaplease.com based on program on cable TV's Nickelodean, 2) Barbie.com which provides product information on the popular doll and related merchandise,3) Nick.com, the cable network's online site. In general, girls in this age bracket visit sites featuring television-related content, licensed merchandise, music, and learning.

Females 12-17 showed the most dramatic growth in Web use -- up 126.3% over the last year. These teens are interested in teen-targeted fashion magazines, shopping, and music. The sites with the highest percentage of these teen visitors are: 1) online magazine Cosmogirl.com, 2) e-zine Teenpeople.com and 3) shooping site Delias.com. According to the report, teenage girls also seek to communicate with others and to make their opinions known: they are well represented among visitors to free e-mail site Gurlmail.com, teen community site Teen.com, and polling site freevote.com.

Interestingly enough, young women ages 18-24 are the only female demographic to show a decline in Web usage. Not surprisingly, the sites they visit most often are college and education-related: 1) Bigwords.com offers textbooks, used book buybacks, and campus gear online and 2) the student community site Collegeclub.com.

Women ages 25-34 tend to use the Web to make everyday life easier. Popular sites focus on children, motherhood and health. The sites attracting the highest compostion of this demographic are 1) Babygear.com, 2) Pampers.com which offers parenting advice along with product information and 3) Walgreens.com.

35-44 year-old females showed a small increase in Web usage. Their usage focuses on product information and family and community concerns. The top three sites are: 1) Alka-Seltzer.com, 2) Marketday.comwhich features an online food cooperative that raises money for local schools, and 3) Birthdayexpress.com which provides birthday party planning.

Shopping and hobby/leisure sites interest women ages 45-54. Top three sites here are: 1) Onehanesplace.com which features hosiery, intimate apparel, and casual sportswear for purchase, 2) Coldwatercreek.com sells "country casual" sportswear and accessories, and 3) Housenet.com for home and garden enthusiasts.

Senior women (55+) still make up a small portion (4.4%) of total Web usage, but have shown remarkable growth over the last year (110%). Jupiter Communications believes this is due to declining PC prices, ease-of-use and th availabiliy of compelling new sites. The top three sites here are: 1) AARP.org, the advocacy group for retired persons, 2) Merck-Medco.com, a managed health care site and 3) Funstun.com which features jokes, stories,cartoons,etc.

The leading women's community site ranked by composition of females age 2 and above is Clubmom.com, with 74%, followed closely by Women.com with 73.5%, Homearts.com with 70.4%, Oxygen.com with 70.3%, iVillage Sites with 69.1%, Womenswire.com with 67.9% and finally Onhealth.com with an audience that is 59% comprised of female visitors. By and large, these sites lure a higher number of unique visitors -- nearly 4.2 million for iVillage sites in May 2000 -- although in compositional terms they trail sites whose narrower scope helps tap into women at a distinct life stage.

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