

Digital Trends Spring - UK - April 2011

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What is this report about?

Although the market for fixed line broadband is now relatively saturated, with penetration standing at nearly 70% of households in Great Britain, there is considerable variation by demographics. Further complicating the issue, it is estimated that up to a third of the country in rural and other remote areas will not be provided with next generation broadband, which requiring the laying down of cable or fibre optic networks, by providers, meaning that there will have to be some form of government intervention. The report goes on to look at the commercial impact that the extreme weather conditions throughout December had on the all important Christmas trading period, and also suggests ways in which sites can become more competitive.

What have we found out?

- Broadband penetration for all British adults reached 68.5% this quarter. But whilst some demographic groups such as ABs and 35-44-year-olds are at virtual saturation with around 85% penetration, others and most notably the old and poor are struggling to rise above 30%. This digital divide is structural and has been widening over the years.
- Use of social networking sites has dipped slightly from its April 2010 high but is holding steady at just over 60% of internet users. At the same time Facebook is reported as having generated \$1.2 billion in revenue during the first nine months of 2010.
- Usage figures for mobile internet activities boomed in the last quarter of 2010; using a search engine was up 36%, email was up 29% and accessing a social networking site rose 40%.
- Users of mobile phones based on Google's Android operating system now have the option of the Firefox 4 browser from Mozilla, which many users will be familiar with from the PC. Firefox 4 allows users to synchronise bookmarks with the desktop version which could be its greatest asset as users increasingly demand a mobile experience that matches up as closely as possible to the desktop one.
- The run-up to Christmas 2010 featured some considerable rises in traditional festive purchasing categories, such as CDs/DVDs (up 22%), books (13%), toiletries (43%), toys and games (56%) and gifts (38%).
- Amongst internet users as a whole the most common words or phrases associated with online dating (aside from 'not for me') are "unsafe", "expensive", "embarrassing", "desperate" and "waste of time". Lapsed users (10% of internet users) are more likely than the average internet user to see online dating as more expensive and more of a waste of time, suggesting that the experience leaves many disillusioned.

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