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Comparison of Communication Medium Preferences in Two Different Cultures

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Abstract

Young people have many mediums for interpersonal communication; among them, Twitter, Facebook (FB), Instant Messaging (IM), face-to-face (FTF), telephone, email, Short Message Service (SMS) and Discussion Forums (DF). In our study we examine the impact of different cultures on the personal communication medium preferences of young people in three specific scenarios: communicating with peers, lecturers or with parents. We conducted a survey among university students in two countries, China and New Zealand, who may be seen, to some extent, as representatives of Eastern and Western cultures.

The results show that medium preference is different in different scenarios. In Western cultures, people are more likely to use telephone, face-to-face, SMS and IM to discuss personal problems with their parents and peers. However, they are more likely to choose telephone, face-to-face, DF and email as their most preferred tools to talk with higher authorities or under the supervision of the authorities. In Eastern cultures there are no significant differences between three scenarios. People are more willing to use telephone, face-to-face, SMS and IM to discuss problems with their parents, peers and lecturers. In general, our survey results show that FTF, telephone and IM were the most preferred mediums for most activities in both cultures. For people in the East, SMS is still a very popular communication tool, whereas DF, RenRen, Weibo and email are the least preferred mediums for most activities. For Western people, email, SMS, DF and Facebook are very common communication tools, regardless of who they communicate with, while Twitter is the least preferred medium.

Keywords: communication medium preferences, culture difference

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