

TECHNOLOGY NO LONGER JUST KID STUFF

Plugged-in parents still spy on their children, but most take to texting and social networking to feed their own interests

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EVERYONE KNOWS a mom who's joined Facebook to check out what her newly off-to-college daughter is posting (Please friend me. Or else, Love, Mom). Or the business-traveler dad who plays games with his tween son to stay connected while away.

But guess what: Parents aren't online just for the kids. Today's digital moms and dads are texting each

other and hooking up with their own friends on social networks. Blending parenting and technology isn't easy, however—70% of moms say they have it tougher than moms did 20 or 30 years ago. Razorfish surveyed 1,500 online moms to find out what the 27 million digital moms are doing, and CafeMom surveyed 1,700 members to understand the different types of moms and what marketers can do to engage them.

First of all, "moms use [digital media] for themselves primarily and secondarily for their kids," said Terri Walter, VP of emerging media, Razorfish. They're most interested in fashion and food, regardless of age and their use of online video, blogs and DVRs have become mainstream, in the 29% to 36% range, while podcasting, RSS feeds and mobile-web browsing remain niche channels, used by 10% to 21% of respondents.

They learn about new products from TV, friends and magazines, followed by e-mail, websites, podcasts, search engines and mobile-web browsing. Among mobile-internet users, web browsing was almost as important a new-product source as search engines in brokerage, telecommunications, electronics and cars.

Moms are also watching out for their kids online (or, as the kids might put it, spying). Moms with children 12 and older are more likely to watch

online videos and play games—and are more likely to be doing it because they're monitoring their children. Almost half of the social-network users monitor their children's behavior online; and 40% of blog readers mind their children's blogging habits.

CafeMom identified five segments of digital moms; and three additional psychographic profiles below are from a survey and profile analysis of digital parents by Mindset Media.

SELF-EXPRESSER

These 30-something, outgoing women make up 40% of CafeMoms and are eager to connect with other moms. A self-expresser typically has a preschooler at home and is thinking about more children. Her favorite online discussion topics are parenting and shopping, although she still consults her "in-person" friends first. She gathers information and responds to online polls and most likely has at least some college education.

UTILITY MOM

The "veteran mom" denoted by this moniker defines 26% of CafeMoms. She has the most children of the five segments and is usually in her mid-to-late 30s with tween-age kids. She spends the most time online, although she is relatively introverted, using social networks mostly to stay in touch with people she already knows. She shares the least number of photos with others, but likes to play games and puzzles.

GROUPSTER

This 30-ish mom is likely to have young, school-age children and makes up 12% of those studied. She's an active online participant, often joining and starting groups, blogging, and asking and answering questions. She is the most influenced by brand sponsorships on social networks but often gets more friend requests than she sends out. She uses private messaging more often than the other segments and is less likely to share photos or answer polls.

INFOSEEKER

Another 12% of the CafeMoms fell into this group, the youngest segment. The Infoseeker is typically a woman in her late 20s with a baby and maybe a toddler, and while she is most likely of all the segments to stay at home, she is also the most educated. She is not very social or engaged online, and instead prefers to go straight for the parenting information she needs. The infoseeker likes reading blogs and looking at other moms' pictures and will even willingly upload her own baby's photos.

ONLINE-MOM STATS

84%

of online moms are defined as those who use at least two Web 2.0 technologies and have shopped online in the past three months.

65%

use social networks. Other staples include text messaging, used by 56%; instant messaging, used by 55%; and gaming, used by 52%.

21%

use RSS. Other niche technologies include podcasting and mobile browsing, each used by 10% of digital moms.

47%

of moms who use social networks and have children ages 12 to 18 and use the sites to monitor their children's behavior online.



HYPERCONNECTOR

The smallest segment of the CafeMom sample is also the most digital. The hyperconnector, in her 40s, has finished looking for parenting advice, for the most part, and is more likely to be looking for online friends to chat with and compare shopping notes. She uses social networking to check up on her teen children online. She blogs and uses personal messaging, and is most likely to respond to open-ended questions and comment on others' posts.

RESPONSIBLE RECYCLERS

Thorough, detail-oriented parents are 24% more likely than other parents to allow their children unrestricted internet access, according to Mindset Media's recent study of 10,000 parents with children under the age of 18. Indeed, the people who consider themselves most accountable are also among the most permissive when it comes to the web. "Maybe it's the expectation that their children will be as responsible as they are in the medium," said Mindset Chief Operating Officer Sarah Welch. Highly responsible people also index high for recycling and use of skin-care products.

SOCIALLY LIBERAL ORGANIC EATERS

Parents who rank low as being dogmatic are most likely to allow their children unrestricted digital and media access. In fact, these non-dogmatics, described as "socially liberal types who disdain so-called moral authorities, especially the conservative kind," are 39% more likely to never restrict internet access, 30% more likely to allow unlimited video games and 40% more likely to give no restrictions on music.

PUGNACIOUS TRUCKERS

So who won't let their kids online? Pugnacious parents, or those unafraid to tell others what they think. They value honesty and bluntness and are 30% more likely to cut the web cord. They also overindex as truck and BMW owners, which makes sense as they tend to be "own-the-road" types, Ms. Welch said.