

LC Paper No. CB(1)1080/09-10

Meeting of the Information Technology and
Broadcasting Panel of Legislative Council

Review of Telephone Directory Enquiry Services

8 February 2010



Background

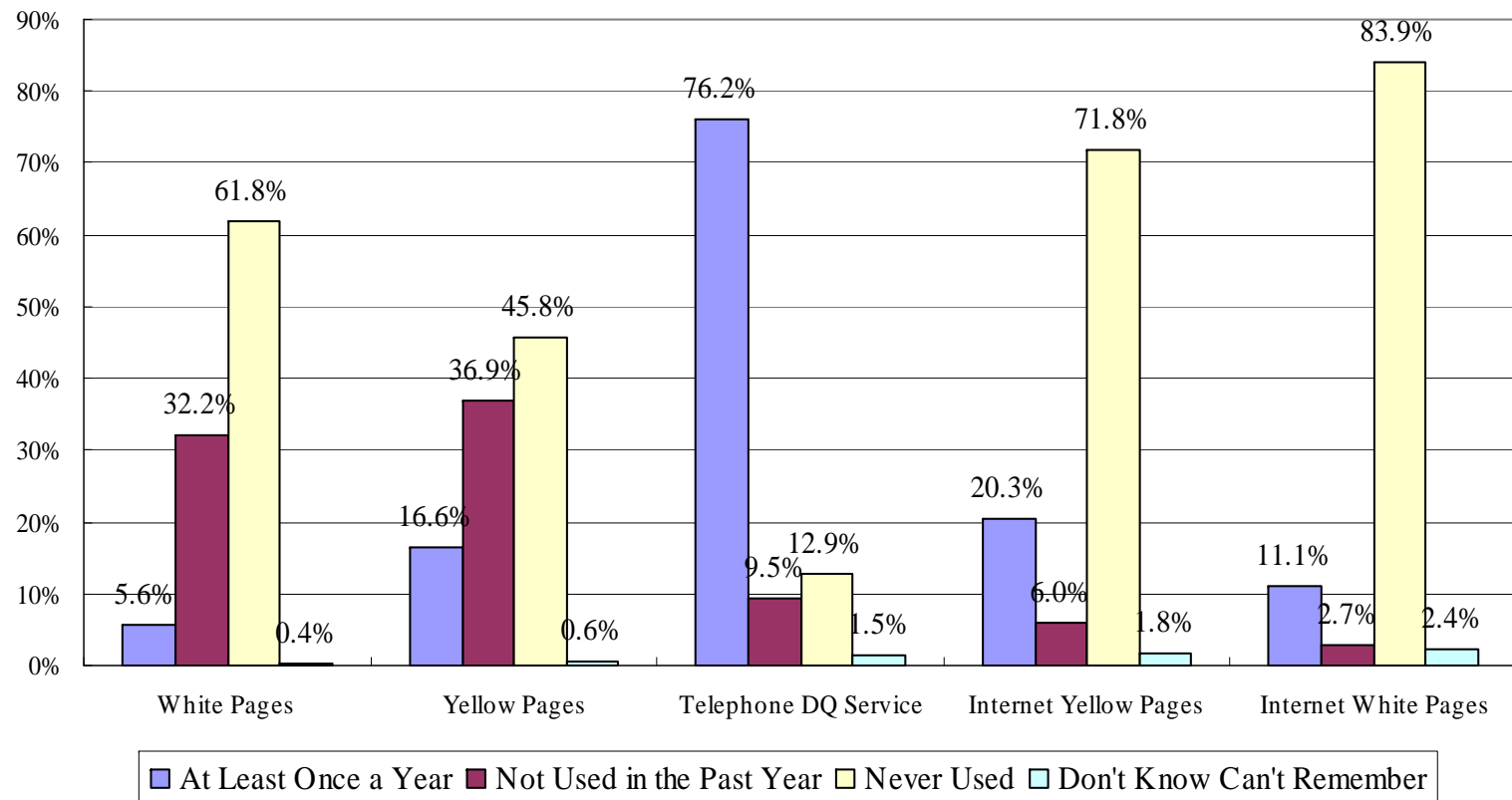
- **Licence conditions mandate the provision of the following directory services by fixed network operators**
 - Printed directory (White Pages)
 - “1081/1083” directory enquiry (DQ service)
- **Mobile network operators are also required to provide the above directory services if they are directed by the Telecommunications Authority (TA) under the relevant conditions of their unified carrier licences. At present, they are providing the DQ service out of their commercial consideration**
- **The following directory services are not regulated**
 - Yellow Pages
 - Internet directory services



Consumer Survey

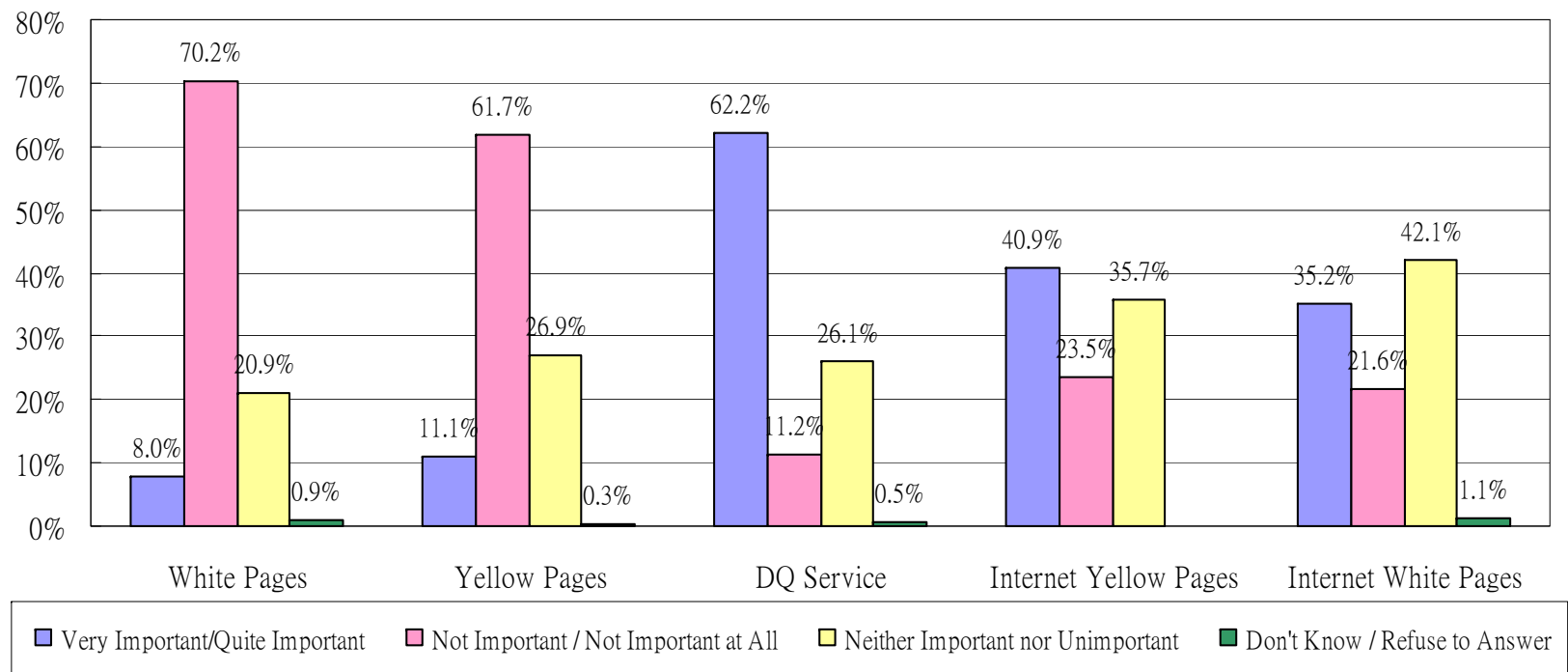
- **Commissioned the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong to conduct a consumer survey in early 2009**
- **The survey aims to understand the public demand for directory services**
 - Need for various types of directory services
 - Level of usage
 - Opinion on any cost recovery scheme
 - Opinion about inclusion of mobile phone numbers
- **Over a thousand successful interviews were conducted**

Frequency of Using Directory Services

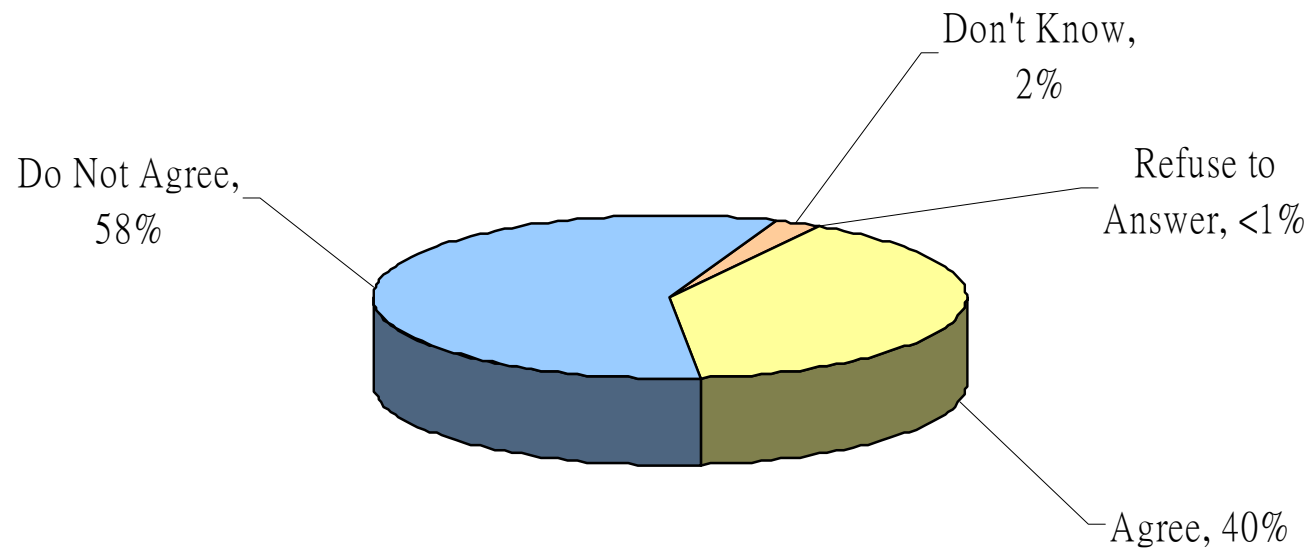


(Base: All respondents = 1,036)

Importance of the Directory Services

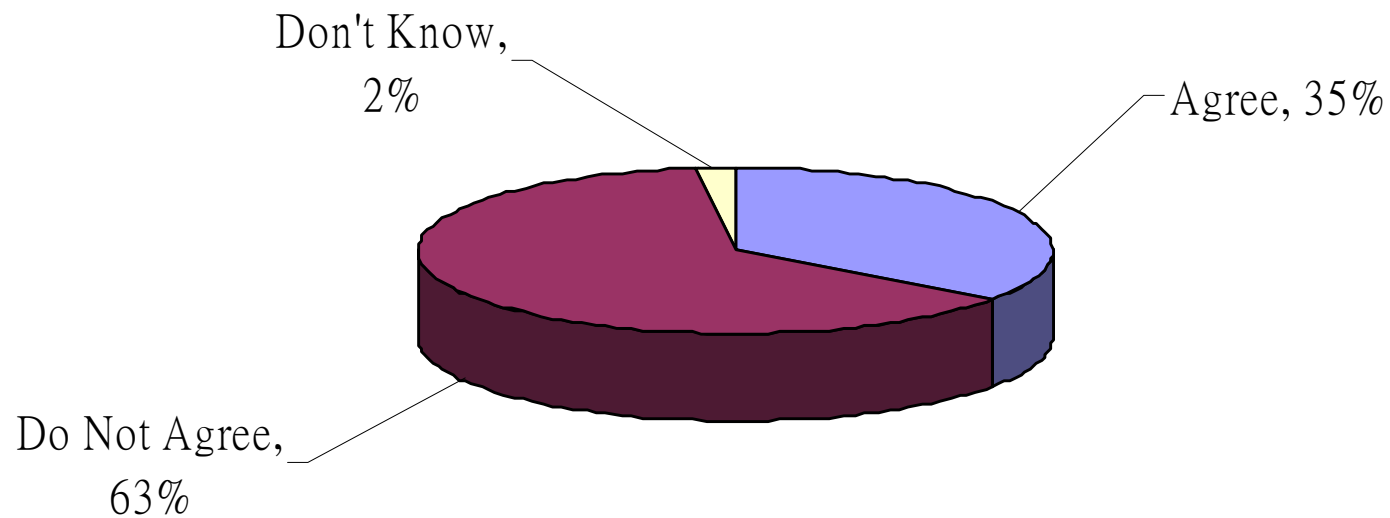


Charging for Additional DQ Calls



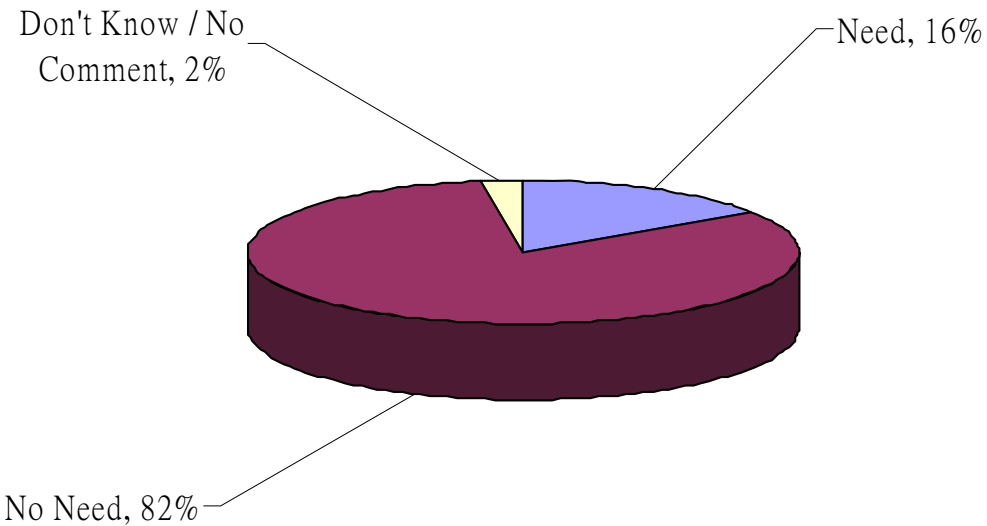
(Base: All respondents = 1,036)

Listening to Advertisement before the Enquiry is answered



(Base: All respondents = 1,036)

Inclusion of Mobile Phone Numbers in the Directory Database



(Base: All respondents = 1,036)

- **35% of proponents (accounting for 6% of the total respondents) agreed to include their mobile phone numbers in the directory database**



Public Consultation

- **Solicit the views of the industry and the public on whether, and if so how, the regulatory regime governing the provision of directory services should be updated**
- **The consultation commenced on 6 November 2009 and ended on 19 January 2010**
 - a two-week extension was given in response to the requests from the industry
- **A total of 11 written submissions received**
 - 8 from the industry
 - 3 from members of the public / telecommunications users group



Review of White Pages

- **The TA proposed the deregulation of the provision of White Pages**
 - ▶ The use of White Pages is very low
 - ▶ Most respondents considered White Pages unimportant
 - ▶ Fixed network operators can make use of the resources for other services
 - ▶ Ceasing the printing of White Pages will result in less paper consumption
- **Feedback: All the respondents agreed with the proposed deregulation**



Review of DQ Service

- **The TA proposed to maintain the current requirement to mandate the provision of the DQ service**
 - High public demand for DQ service
 - DQ service is also important to tourists
- **Use of the service**
 - Most of the subscribers (>99%) make no or not more than 10 DQ calls in a month
 - A few subscribers, many of which are business entities, are generating a disproportionately large number of DQ calls
- **Possible options of cost recovery from heavy users**
 - Impose charge for additional DQ calls which exceed the free quota in a month
 - Allow advertisement before answering the enquiry



Feedback in relation to DQ Service

- **The interest of disadvantaged groups (e.g. visually impaired) should be protected**
- **Those supporting cost recovery**
 - ▶ Mainly fixed network operators
 - ▶ An operator proposes to charge not more than \$1 per DQ call
 - ▶ Encourage development of innovative services (e.g. call connection service to the search number, referral service, etc.)
- **Those opposing any cost recovery scheme**
 - ▶ Complication of the currently flat-rate tariff
 - ▶ Revenue unlikely to recover the cost of providing DQ service, especially including the administrative cost for metering and charging DQ calls
 - ▶ Cost saving by other means (e.g. setting up a single DQ call centre for all fixed network operators)




Review of Yellow Pages and Internet Directory Services

- **The TA proposed to continue to forebear from regulating these services**
 - Pure business initiatives
 - Low public demand
- **Feedback: Most of the respondents agreed that there is no need to regulate these services which are currently offered based on the business decision of the industry**



Inclusion of Mobile Phone Numbers?

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- The survey result indicates that there is insignificant local demand for the inclusion of mobile phone numbers in the directory services
 - Feedback: Mobile phone numbers are regarded as a vital piece of personal information. Most of the respondents considered that there is no substantial need for inclusion of mobile phone numbers in the directory database



Way Forward

- **The TA would consider carefully the views collected in the public consultation before coming to a decision**
- **Views from Members are sought**



Thank You