

Awareness of protection of intellectual property rights enhanced

A survey commissioned by the Intellectual Property Department has shown that Hong Kong people are becoming more aware of the importance of protecting intellectual property (IP) rights.

Since such surveys started in 1999, public awareness of IP rights has significantly improved. The percentage of respondents who knew that IP included copyright, patents, trademarks and registered designs increased to 91.6% in 2008, compared with 84.7% in 2005.

A majority of the respondents (96.3%) considered it necessary to protect IP rights in Hong Kong.

Only 8.6% of respondents would often (0.2%) or sometimes (8.4%) buy pirated or counterfeit goods. That is markedly less than the 15% in 2005. Survey data over the previous years showed that the situation had been improving gradually.

“While it is encouraging to see that awareness of intellectual property among Hong Kong people is increasing and they are buying less pirated and counterfeit goods, we need to focus on new trends,” the Director of Intellectual Property, Mr Stephen Selby, said at a press conference announcing findings of the survey today (February 19).

“The survey has provided us a better understanding of the situation of legal downloading of files from the Internet among the general public, especially the young generation,” Mr Selby said.

More than 80% of respondents correctly identified that “selling (98.2%)/ buying (89.2%) pirated CD/DVD/VCDs or computer software, buying counterfeit goods (87.5%), downloading files and uploading them to Internet for sharing purposes (85.1%)” are acts which infringe IP rights. However, relatively fewer respondents (40.7%) considered “buying a genuine CD and converting it to MP3 for personal use” an infringing act, although doing so could result in civil liability.

Most of the respondents (80.3%) agreed that it was morally wrong to download files from unauthorised websites. However, the majority of those who surfed the Internet (78.6%) claimed that they would not pay for legal downloading from

authorised websites. A total of 47% of respondents considered it inconvenient to purchase online.

For the survey in 2008, the Intellectual Property Department added questions about respondents' opinions towards the "No Fakes Pledge" Scheme. A total of 50.1% of respondents had heard of the scheme, and more than four-fifths considered it helpful in building confidence among consumers and tourists shopping in Hong Kong and strengthening the city's status as a shoppers' paradise (83.9%), and promoting respect for IP rights among the general public (80.7%).

The survey showed nearly 77% of respondents received information about protection of IP through television, more than 10% higher than the 65% in 2005.

"The department put out a TV announcement last year promoting the 'No Fakes Pledge' Scheme in Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province. It was effective in attracting the attention of the public and we will continue to put out publicity messages on TV and other media," Mr Selby said.

Regarding public attitude towards long-term development of IP rights, 76% of respondents believed that IP protection could help the development of local creative industries. More than 80% felt that the Government should put more resources in protecting IP rights in the long run.

The survey report is available on the website of the Intellectual Property Department at www.ipd.gov.hk.

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