

Are Music Listeners Ready To Move To The Cloud?

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Many consumers still want to own their tunes

New options for media consumption on the web as well as mobile and smart devices are continually emerging, and Spotify's launch in the US is just one of the latest changes to shake things up.

With Apple's iCloud debuting in iOS 5, what do consumers think of storing and streaming their music from the cloud and the concept of renting vs. owning it?

A September 2011 survey of US online music consumers conducted by Insight Research Group for digital music subscription service eMusic found that more than half of respondents preferred to purchase music files online, the top way of consuming music. Even buying physical copies of CDs or vinyl edged out free online streaming options, though the three choices were grouped closely together. Only 13% of online music consumers preferred to pay for online streaming.

Overall, the survey found that ownership of music had strong positive connotations for music listeners: 91% said they preferred to own music so they could listen to it as they pleased, and nearly as many considered it more secure.

Many saw streaming, instead, as a "try before you buy" option 76% said they use online streaming to find new music before deciding to purchase.

This finding is supported by results of a December 2010 TargetSpot survey conducted by Parks Associates. Nearly seven in 10 US internet radio listeners said they preferred to purchase music after hearing a song on an online radio station.

The research suggests a mix of behaviors will continue. eMusic asked about future plans to listen to and purchase music, and most respondents believed they would continue to stream music for free but never give up on also owning it outright. About 40% would want to store their owned files in the cloud for convenience, but just 14% said they thought they would pay for streaming in the future.

For music listeners, streaming options have become key to discovering new artists or songs, but those options must be free of charge to the consumer to facilitate the music purchase process they prefer a process marketers will be critical to enabling.

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