Technology Causes One In Ten Irish Consumers Sleepless Nights

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While technology ownership in Ireland has seen swift growth - with 60% of NI (Northern Ireland) and 51% of RoI (Republic of Ireland) consumers owning smartphone and a further 18% of Irish technology loving consumers saying they plan to buy one by the end of 2012 - it seems todayâ€™s technology is not without its pitfalls.

Indeed, it seems technology may be taking its toll on the physical health of the nation as today, over one in ten (12% RoI and 11% of NI) Irish consumers claim that technology and the internet has negatively affected their sleeping habits.

Indeed, new research from Mintelâ€™s Irish Lifestyles report, examining the impact of technology on Irish consumer habits, finds that some consumers may in fact be over-reliant on being online, with some 18% of consumers feeling a sense of anxiousness when they are â€˜cut offâ€™ from technology and the internet.

Brian Oâ€™Connor, Research Manager at Mintel Ireland, said:
"Consumers are getting less sleep because they don't want to switch off from technology. Between on-demand TV, addictive video games and the constant bombardment of information from the internet, consumers are finding it harder to pull away from technology and get a full nights rest. In the end, the more consumers use technology, the more anxious they are likely to be when 'cut-off'."

Between 2004 and 2011, the amount of consumers using the internet increased from 49% to 71% in NI and from 44% to 81% in RoI. Furthermore, Irish consumers are increasing the amount of time they spend online per day - from 26% in NI and 9% in RoI - spending 4 to 6 hours online per day in 2009 to 31% in NI and 23% in RoI in 2012.

Today 66% of NI and 72% of RoI consumers feel the Internet is the best information tool available to them, with 67% of NI and 73% of RoI consumers feeling the Internet is useful for answering any questions they have.

However, technology is not without negative effects, with the biggest worry being fraud. Mintelâ€™s research found concern from consumers about having their gadgets stolen, with some 25% of RoI and 21% of NI consumers feeling they risk being a victim of theft by carrying expensive technology devices. In addition 60% of RoI and 56% of NI consumers in 2012 worry that their personal details are at risk of exposure and may be stolen.

Today, 88% of RoI and 81% of NI consumers dislike the idea of being in debt and 41% of NI and 38% of RoI claim that they â€œstay in and watch TV more often to save money on going outâ€•. Indeed some 75% of RoI and 70% of NI consumers own a HD TV and 58% of NI and 51% of RoI own a games console - with a massive 67% of RoI and 65% of NI consumers claiming that technology and the Internet have changed the way they entertain themselves as well as 65% of NI and 58% of RoI shopping online for physical items and downloading more content directly to their devices.

Despite this, it appears consumers are not willing to get into debt to fund their technology habits with 77% of Irish consumers noting that when buying expensive technology items, they are most likely to save up their money as opposed to rely on credit functions, such as loans or credit cards.

And it seems Irish consumers are looking at technology to make their lives even easier, with some 52% of RoI and 36% of NI consumers claiming that a home security system controllable via a smartphone app would appeal to them. Meanwhile 48% of RoI and 38% of NI consumers showed interest in a similar system to control heating and lighting in their homes.

Further to this, â€˜smartâ€™ kitchen appliances are also in demand, with 36% of RoI and 34% NI consumers wanting washing machines and dishwashers with advanced functionality and 15% wanting cookers and microwaves that can be controlled remotely via a smartphone. Meanwhile Internet deal-of-the-day sites are a big hit with consumers - with 25% of RoI and 16% of NI consumers noting they feel deal-of-the-day websites have good offers.

Furthermore, the fact that the Internet has enabled consumers to make their thoughts known on brands is highlighted by the 41% of RoI and 38% of NI consumers who claim that the Internet has made it easier for them to make their opinion on a product or service known, or to complain to a company.

With 66% of RoI and 50% of NI consumers noting that they shop in discount retailers and 43% of RoI and 23% of NI consumers claiming to shop at discounters more due to the recession, it appears technology is also playing a part in reducing food bills, with 27% of NI and 15% of RoI consumers noting they shop online or use price comparison websites in 2012.

How consumers plan their holiday has also changed in recent years in line with technology, with 63% of NI and 38% of

RoI consumers noting that the internet and technology has changed the way they book and source holiday information. Furthermore, 45% of RoI 29% of NI consumers booked their holidays and short breaks online in 2011.

Irish consumers also rely upon technology and the Internet when managing their finances, with 21% of NI and 19% of RoI consumers accessing their current account daily via the Internet and 35% of RoI and 27% of NI consumers carrying out online bank balance enquiries in 2011.

Furthermore, over half (54% NI and 55% RoI) of consumers feel that the Internet has made managing their finances easier, while 77% of RoI and 68% of NI consumers note that online banking is less time consuming. A further 6% of NI and 4% of RoI consumers are using their smartphone to access their banking details on a daily basis.

Source: Mintel Oxygen Reports

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