

As Many as 51% of British Consumers Have a Tablet in Their Home

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Just four years after the launch of Apple's iPad - new research from Mintel finds that today, one in two Brits now has a tablet in their home. Indeed, following the meteoric rise of the tablet, as many as 51% of British consumers have a tablet in their home, up from 44% in December 2013. Mintel estimates that 9.5 million tablets were sold in 2013, up from 5.6 million in 2012.

And there is no sign of the market maturing quite yet, as over one in five (21%) Brits plan to purchase or upgrade a tablet computer in the next three months. Whilst the exceptional sales volume growth seen in the tablet market in both 2012 and 2013 is unlikely to be repeated in 2014, the reach of tablets will continue to increase. Indeed, as many as half (49%) of those who are planning to buy a tablet computer in the next three months do not currently have access to one in their home.

Paul Davies, Senior Leisure and Technology Analyst at Mintel, said:

“Tablets are now in half of homes in the UK, despite arriving on the market in their current form just four years ago. Tablets have not replaced other computers, but have instead provided many people with an additional form factor, thereby allowing them to pick the optimum device for the type of activity they want to perform. Indeed, the rise of tablets has exemplified consumers' enthusiasm for portable, personal computers.”

But while tablet ownership continues to surge, penetration of desktop PCs is declining - standing at 58% as of April 2014. Mintel's research shows how tablet owners like the option of diverting to a laptop when performing more complex activities at home. Indeed, just 1% of computer owners rely solely on a tablet, and laptop penetration (83%) has remained stable throughout the past couple of years.

Tablets are generally used in evenings for casual tasks such as streaming video, playing games or browsing the web. Over half (52%) of tablet owners have used their device to stream video in the past three months, compared with just 31% of smartphone users. In fact, only 21% of tablet owners say they bought their device to use for work outside the home.

Today, the most common activities performed online are 1. Sending or receiving emails (95%), 2. Using a search engine (85%), 3. Shopping online (83%), 4. Checking the weather (76%) and 5. Managing finances (74%).

“A larger screen size than smartphones - and the fact that tablets tend to be used at home - means that tablets are better suited to watching longer videos. Generally people have retained laptops for complex, or work-oriented tasks, as the lack of keyboard and software on tablets has made these more difficult for users. As internet usage spreads across myriad devices, it will be more difficult for consumers to justify investing in a top-end PC. As a result, low-cost Chromebooks could defy the overall decline in the wider laptop market in years to come.” Paul continues.

However, the recent surge in 7" tablet sales could be put under pressure as more consumers acquire phablets (5-7" smartphones). Indeed, Mintel's research highlights the attraction of larger screen phones, with almost half of consumers (47%) claiming that acquiring a larger screen smartphone would be the most important factor for them when buying a new handset.

“As brands once again launch flagship smartphones with even larger screens than before, the distinction between devices could become more blurred than it is for most owners today. The increasing size of smartphone screens could put people off buying tablets, as those with 5-7" smartphones may see less benefit in owning two similarly sized devices. Instead, they may opt to replace existing tablets with 2-in-1 hybrid computers - 10"++ devices that have a detachable keyboard.” suggests Paul.

The report highlights the top five household technology products owned: 1. Any Television (95%), 2. Laptop or Notebook computer (83%), 3. DVD player (75%), 4. Smartphone (72%), 5. Desktop PC (58%).

The products to have shown the greatest growth in the past four months are: 1. Tablet Computer (up from 44% to 51%), 2. Blu-ray Player (exc games consoles - up from 25% to 27%), and Internet Enabled TV (EG smart TV - 25% to 27%) and 3. E-readers (33% to 35%).

Meanwhile, the products to have seen the greatest decline in the past four months are: 1. Digital or Video Camera (excl mobile phones - down from 61% to 56%), 2. DVD Player (down from 79% to 75%), 3. Basic Mobile Phone (down from 37% to 33%).