

## Press release

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## Smartphones overtake laptops in popularity among Belgian consumers

- **84% of Belgians age 18-75 own or have access to smartphones, compared to 82% for laptop users**
- **96% of 18-24 year olds have smartphones, and 40% of them watch a video on their smartphone every day**

**Brussels, Belgium – December 11, 2018**

For the first time this year, Belgians own more smartphones than laptop computers, Deloitte Belgium reports. The company's annual Mobile Consumer Survey found 84 percent of consumers own smartphones, up four percent from last year, and 82 percent of Belgians own laptop computers, up one percent from 2017.

Belgians join people all over the world in choosing smartphones over laptops. The increase in the popularity of smartphones is staggering. In 2013, 38 percent of Belgians owned a smartphone. Now, almost every young adult owns a smartphone. All of this buying has saturated the market, leading to a slowing of sales in most age groups over the past two years.

### Smartphones take the crown

"Smartphones have taken the crown as the preferred device of Belgians," says Vincent Fosty, Deloitte Belgium's Technology, Media and Telecommunications Industry Leader. "They are eating the laptop's lunch on every sort of online activity or transaction from banking to entertainment."

With each passing year, the study has shown that smartphones have become the dominant and preferred device for a growing number of media, entertainment and finance activities that the survey reports on. Compared to 2017, smartphones are now the preferred device for younger age groups to watch short videos. Additionally, among 18-24 year olds, their phones are the preferred device for browsing shops online and online search.

### Convergence of three screens

Despite the smartphone dethroning the laptop, this year's survey shows that smartphones, laptop computers and televisions coexist as three devices that people turn on a daily basis for news, entertainment, shopping, banking and communicating. These three devices rule as the preferred channels for Belgians to consume media. While the tablet certainly isn't dead, this year's study found that it is no longer the preferred device for any age category for the media, entertainment and finance operations the survey examined.

Fosty suggests businesses pay careful attention to the phenomenon around the convergence of three screens. The 18 to 24-year-old age group is the most important to watch. They use three screens effortlessly. These young adults are bellwethers for the generation's digital habits.

"This is an evolution, not something that's going to go away," Fosty says. "We're not going to get off the TV screen. These screens will continue to co-exist."

## **Less spending on new phones**

The study also finds that although Belgians own more smartphones than ever, most are not buying them as frequently as in the past. People of all ages are keeping their phones longer. When asked how long they have owned their smartphone, 55 percent of the respondents said they had owned their phone for 18 months or less, down from 62% just 2 years ago. The market, especially among younger Belgians, is very saturated.

"Any additional growth in smartphone adoption will be among those aged 45-plus to catch up," Fosty says. "The potential for the most growth in sales for manufacturers is in the 65-plus category, in which 69 percent of people own a smartphone."

Overall, as consumers are expected to spend less of their available resources on hardware, the balance will be spent on communications services and content, a positive outlook for telephone companies, digital platforms and developers.

## **Invisible innovation**

In the early years of smartphones, manufacturers made huge leaps forward with every new release. With each new model, consumers could see significant design changes right out of the box. Today, innovation is invisible. New models add features based on artificial intelligence, geolocation and voice assistance.

"Significant changes are occurring which allow us to use more of our phones," says Fosty. "This invisible innovation means more revenue for the businesses relying on the smartphone as the primary touchpoint with their customers and users."

Deloitte researchers found most Belgians are either not aware or simply not using the machine learning features on their phones. The results show that 31 percent of Belgians don't know about those features, and 42 percent said they never use them. The most popular machine learning feature is predictive texting, which 29 percent of Belgians use. Only 19 percent of Belgians use route suggestions, and 13 percent use automatic news or information updates.

Smartphones are ideal gateways to news, games and music, Fosty says. He says this is leading to more online subscriptions. The ease of payment offered from a smartphone also can be used to manage transactions for video media subscriptions, and events like concerts. Over the next decade, the smartphone likely will help drive the monetization of media.

Read all of the results of the Mobile Consumer Survey at [https://deloitte-be-mobile-consumer-survey.readz.com/2018\\_filters?preview=134201](https://deloitte-be-mobile-consumer-survey.readz.com/2018_filters?preview=134201).

## **About the research**

The Deloitte Global Mobile Consumer Survey provides unique insight into the mobile behaviour of nearly 54,150 respondents across 35 countries, with the sample for Belgium covering 2,002 respondents aged 18-75. The largest consumer survey of its kind, this year's report compiled three years of data.

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