

# The Pandemic Will Push China's Time Spent with Smartphones to a Near 20% Annual Increase

## ARTICLE |

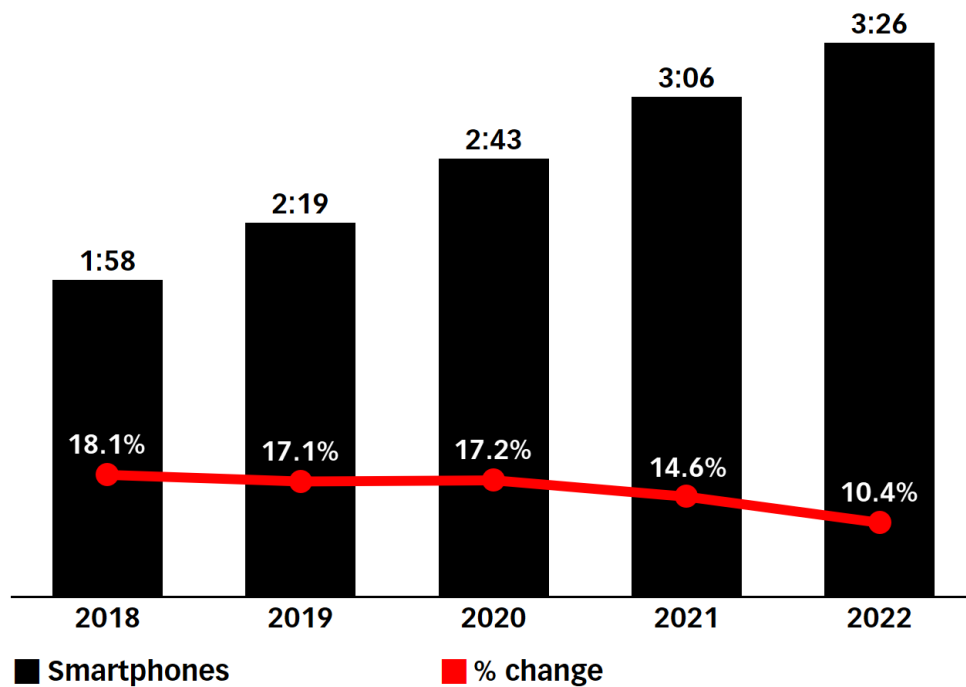
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After the first reported cases of the coronavirus in Wuhan, China, in late December 2019, the government issued a mandatory quarantine order on January 23 that confined the city's inhabitants to their homes, and other cities soon followed with their own lockdowns. With little to do and nowhere to go, media usage in China spiked.

The nation's consumers are already heavy digital users, and the coronavirus pandemic made them even more dependent on their devices, particularly smartphones.

## Smartphones: Average Time Spent in China, 2018-2022

hrs:mins per day among population and % change



Note: ages 18+; includes all time spent with nonvoice activities on smartphones, regardless of multitasking; excludes Hong Kong  
Source: eMarketer, April 2020

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Now that most of the shelter-in-place measures have been lifted and travel restrictions loosened, China's consumers are now adjusting to a new normal. The changes in media behavior there can serve as a case study for what other countries impacted by the pandemic can expect as their economies begin to reopen.

## Smartphone Time Spent

Smartphones are already an integral part of the lives of China's consumers. During the coronavirus pandemic, they also become the safest way for people to communicate with their loved ones, which led to a boost in smartphone time spent.

We expect adults in China to spend an average of 2 hour, 43 minutes per day on their smartphones this year, up 17.2% from 2019. In our April 2019 forecast, we had estimated a slowdown in growth for 2020,

and while it's not a complete reversal of the trend, the updated figure will bring smartphone use to new heights in 2021 and beyond.

Of course, consumers in China aren't using their smartphones only for communication. Short-form video and gaming were already pivotal for smartphone usage growth before the pandemic, and the stay-at-home measures simply accelerated their use. Douyin—China's version of TikTok—and video sharing app Kuaishou, for example, both saw further increases in daily active users (DAUs) in February, compared with the same period in 2019.

The pandemic has also led more businesses to try live streaming to convey ecommerce opportunities. As the coronavirus shut down most brick-and-mortar stores in China, many businesses integrated with short-form video platforms (as well as Alibaba's live ecommerce channel Taobao Live, which lives under its peer-to-peer platform Taobao) to conduct live streaming commerce.

For more insights on time spent with media in China, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

**Report** by Man-Chung Cheung May 01, 2020

**China Time Spent with Media 2020**



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