

Mobile Year in Review: The Launch of 5G Is the Biggest Story in a Busy Year for Mobile

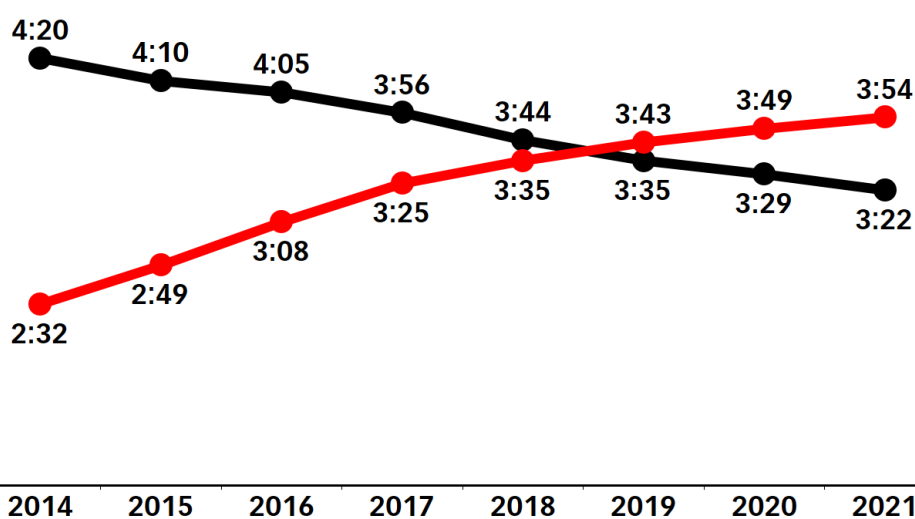
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Mobile dethroned TV in 2019 as the channel where US adults spent the most time. While it may be a symbolic threshold for now, it's still notable that the average US adult spent 3 hours, 43 minutes (3:43) on their mobile devices in 2019, compared with the average 3:35 spent watching TV. As recently as 2016, US adults watched nearly an hour more of TV than they spent on their smartphones and tablets (4:05 vs. 3:08).

TV and Mobile Devices: Average Time Spent in the US, 2014-2021

hrs:mins per day among population



■ TV* ■ Mobile devices

Note: ages 18+; time spent with each medium includes all time spent with that medium, regardless of multitasking; for example, 1 hour of multitasking on desktop/laptop while watching TV is counted as 1 hour for TV and 1 hour for desktop/laptop; *excludes digital

Source: eMarketer, April 2019

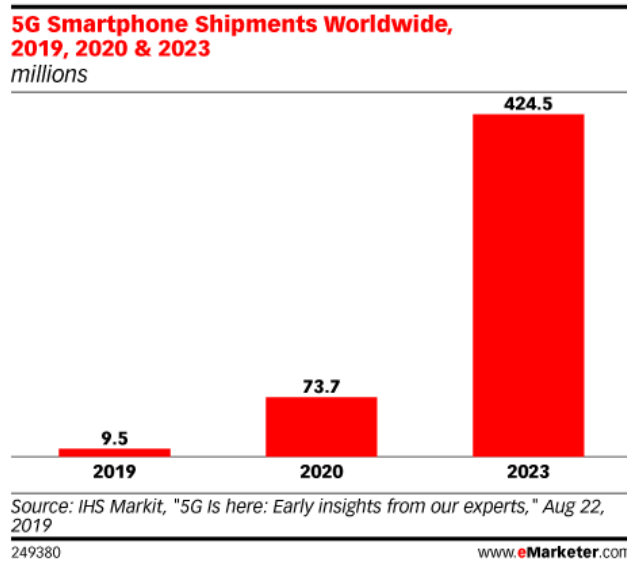
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With consumers spending more time with their phones, advertisers continue to shift dollars to mobile advertising. We estimate that mobile ad sales in the US reached \$99.21 billion in 2019, a 22.3% increase year over year. With that strong growth, mobile ad sales represented 76.7% of total digital ad spending and 41.6% of total media ad spending.

Our forecasts, however, tell only part of the story. An even bigger long-term milestone was the official launch of 5G services by all four major networks in the US, as well as the leading networks in China, South Korea, the UK, Germany and a handful of other countries. The arrival of 5G will enable all types of new services due to its higher network capacity, lower latency (lag time) and faster speeds.

Even so, the current extent of 5G coverage is more symbolic than transformational. The networks themselves are still incomplete, and few people connect to them. In an [IHS Markit](#) report from August 2019, the London-based insights provider estimated that 9.5 million 5G smartphones would be shipped worldwide by the end of the year. The mere launch of these networks marks the opening of a major new era of mobile, albeit still a few years from its peak.



Privacy issues continued to become more salient for mobile marketers this year. One major change came with the introduction of Apple's iOS 13 in September 2019. iPhone users can now see which companies track their location data and can choose whether to accept tracking once, when the app is in use, always or never. These options have led to a drastic reduction (up to 80%) of background data— which is data from apps that always track location—collected on iOS devices, according to [Location Sciences](#), a location data verification provider.

The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) also looms, with marketers needing to comply with its privacy restrictions by January 1, 2020. Upon a consumer's demand, any company operating in California must show what personal data is being collected on that individual. Users can opt out of data tracking if they don't want their information to be kept, shared or sold. Many mobile publishers and data companies have been working in 2019 to prepare for CCPA.

The challenges of privacy and meeting the opportunities of 5G will continue to be the big stories for mobile in 2020. As 5G networks shift from being rudimentary to covering a decent part of the country—and with many more people buying 5G phones—it's likely that marketers and developers will start taking advantage of the possibilities opened up by 5G.

We expect more mobile AR, remote gaming and interactive video to come, as publishers can take advantage of cloud computing, low latency and higher throughput rates to deliver new forms of media and advertising. Although 2019 was the symbolic beginning of the 5G era, 2020 will have the first stirrings of the 5G services and media revolution.