

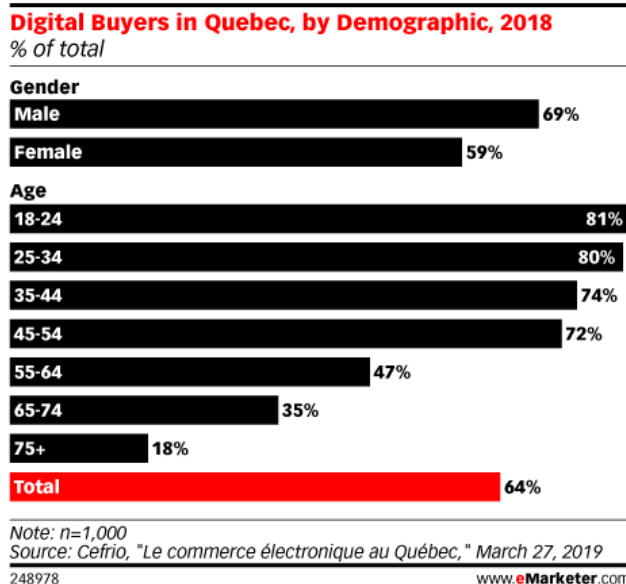
Why Ecommerce Adoption in Quebec Still Lags

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eMarketer Editors

French speakers in Quebec are still slower to adopt aspects of digital like ecommerce and video, something digital marketers must account for when targeting consumers in the province.

Cefrio's annual tracking of digital purchases by age and gender, "Le commerce électronique au Québec," shows that in 2018, more men were online shoppers than women by a wide margin—69% of males, compared with 59% of females. Overall, 64% of respondents were digital buyers, with the age categories 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 leading the way. They were well above the average, with digital buyer rates of 81% and 80%, respectively. (Cefrio's 2019 buyer data was not available during the writing of our latest report, "[French Canada 2020](#).")



In English Canada, digital buying is at a higher level than in Quebec. Our forecast for 2018 puts digital buyers at 67.2% of the population that year (the 2020 rate is 70.2%, but we're citing the earlier year to match Cefrio's estimate timeframe). However, our figures include non-adults ages 14 to 17. Therefore, the 64% level estimated for adults by Cefrio is significantly less than our own estimate.

"Quebec residents are visiting online shopping sites like eBay.ca, BestBuy.ca, Walmart.ca, Amazon.ca and CanadianTire.ca as often as residents from other regions do anywhere in Canada, even more in some cases," said Marie-Christine Simard, vice president of activations at Cossette Media. Citing a 2018 study from Environics Analytics and J.C. Williams, she added that "the province's average online spend still generally lags behind the national average."

"Quebec is a bit late in terms of ecommerce," said Alain Desormiers, CEO of Quebec for Omnicom Media Group. "It's mainly because of the smaller size of the market, limited shipping options, and the efficiency of different providers. In the past two years, it's been double-digit growth in terms of ecommerce adoption in Quebec."

A significant obstacle for non-Quebec retailers is language laws that require any website selling to Quebec residents be available in French. Several US retailers have chosen to eschew the province in marketing because of this requirement.

“A lot of American companies are not launching in Quebec because of the language requirement,” said Jean-François Renaud, co-founder and partner of Adviso, a Montreal-based consultancy. “Urban Outfitters and Crate and Barrel are just two examples among many retailers that have chosen not to offer their catalog in Quebec because of the language laws.”

But local companies don’t have the requirement to be bilingual on the web, as they can launch in French only. Venerable Quebec grocer IGA is a good example of one of the first grocers in the country that offered an online channel for ordering.

“People are a little slower to go on the web and transact on the website than the rest of Canada or the US here in Quebec,” said Marie-Violaine Gabriele, head of research marketing at Sobeys, which operates the IGA brand. “But there is demand, and that’s why we’ve launched click-and-collect and also delivery for the segment of the population that values that capability.”

By reading our new report, eMarketer PRO subscribers can explore the similarities and differences between Canada’s Francophone and Anglophone populations when it comes to digital media adoption.

Report by Paul Briggs Mar 12, 2020

French Canada 2020



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