

Consumers have acclimated to using mobile devices for shopping, food delivery

Article

The pandemic accelerated mobile trends by years, and these changes should stick even as the pandemic wanes. Many people were forced to use apps for food delivery,

finance, fitness, and shopping, and they've become accustomed to these new behaviors. Even app categories that were hurt during the pandemic, such as travel or dating apps, have been resilient. People have acclimated to new forms of mobile shopping and activities, and they'll be more willing to try mobile interfaces for other activities going forward.

Tablet usage was also rejuvenated by the pandemic, but the mobile future will still be predominantly about smartphones, particularly if expandable formats, such as foldable phones, gain wide-scale acceptance. Tablets will likely remain important primarily for relatively confined uses, such as video, shopping, enterprise, and schooling.

"Will some people unplug from their phones as a way of liberating themselves from lockdown life?" said Yory Wurmser, eMarketer principal analyst at Insider Intelligence. "Probably, but all indications are that any backlash will not have a major impact on overall mobile time spent."

Overall, mobile users clearly prefer an app experience. App usage continues to increase steadily and accounts for the vast majority of time spent on mobile devices.

That said, the distinction between browsers and apps has been blurring for years. Much of browser time occurs in webview windows within apps. For instance, if you click on an article in the Facebook app, you'll likely see the article in a browser rather than Facebook's native Instant Articles format. Even beyond webview, mobile browsers will remain important for certain activities, such as shopping.

There are also signs that progressive web apps, which replicate a native experience within a browser, are gaining traction. For one, they have the advantage of working on all mobile devices. Additionally, they avoid app stores' commissions, possibly making them more appealing as developers become less tolerant of Apple App Store or Google Play Store tariffs.

The key to successful web apps, however, is delivering an app-like experience. For many applications, this will remain possible only within native apps. In fact, we expect native apps will continue to increase their share of mobile time spent throughout the forecast period.

eMarketer PRO subscribers can read more about our latest mobile time spent forecast, focusing on whether the pandemic-induced changes will stick.

Report by Yoram Wurmser Jun 02, 2021

US Time Spent with Mobile 2021

