

Zoom and FaceTime Are Holding Back OTT Messaging App Adoption in the US

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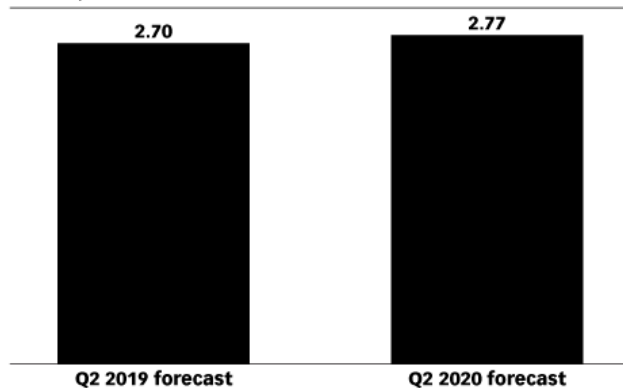
Jasmine Enberg

Mobile messaging apps were already gaining ground before the pandemic, but stay-at-home mandates accelerated their adoption worldwide. Engagement has slowed since earlier this year, but many new users will stick around, boosting the global monthly user base.

According to our latest forecast, there will be 2.77 billion monthly mobile messaging app users worldwide in 2020. We previously expected the number of mobile messaging app users worldwide to reach 2.70 billion, meaning that the pandemic will help add roughly 70 million new monthly users this year.

How Has Our Forecast for Worldwide Mobile Messaging App Users Changed?

billions, 2020



Note: mobile phone users of any age who use an over-the-top (OTT) messaging app via mobile phone (browser or app) at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, Aug 2020

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The US is one country where the pandemic has had little impact on our forecast, however. This year, there will be 146.3 million monthly messaging app users in the US, up 3.6% from 2019. That growth rate is only a few tenths of a point higher than our previous estimate of 3.1%.

The limited new uptake in mobile messaging has to do with the fact that people in the US already have well-established ways of communicating via mobile, such as traditional SMS and phone calls, that have persisted throughout the pandemic.

A CivicScience survey conducted in March 2020, for example, showed that 50% of US adults stayed connected during the pandemic primarily via phone calls.

Voice and video calling have also been major drivers of OTT messaging app adoption in other countries during the pandemic. In the absence of in-person interactions, mobile messaging services quickly became an alternative way to communicate “face-to-face” and in larger groups.

But the US is an iPhone-heavy country; 45.6% of US smartphone users will be iOS users this year. iPhones already have a built-in video calling feature, FaceTime, reducing their users’ need for a standalone app to video chat during the pandemic.

And then there is Zoom, a primarily enterprise-facing videoconferencing app that was quickly adopted by consumers for after-work happy hours, family get-togethers, and even church services. According to an April 2020 poll conducted by Ipsos for Mozilla, 66% of US video chat users used Zoom, making it the most popular platform, followed by FaceTime (48%).

To learn more about how the pandemic has changed our forecast for global mobile messaging app users, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

Report by Jasmine Enberg Oct 21, 2020

Global Mobile Messaging 2020

GLOBAL MOBILE MESSAGING 2020

How the Pandemic Is Changing Adoption and Usage of OTT Messaging Services

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