

Six Surprising Facts About the Way We Spend Our Time with Media

Conventional wisdom doesn't always match up with reality

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It is common knowledge that US consumers fill their waking hours with media usage. But how people split up their media time may surprise you. Here's some data drawn from eMarketer's latest estimates for time spent with media.

No. 1: US adults spend much more time with nondigital radio than they do with social networks.

There's no shortage of buzz about social media. There's next to none about radio. (If "buzz" and "radio" appear in the same sentence, somebody is probably complaining about static.)

1h 26m

Adults' average daily time spent with radio in 2017

But according to eMarketer's latest forecast, US adults' average daily time spent with nondigital radio is much higher than their time spent

with social media. The average for radio in 2017: 1 hour, 26 minutes. The average for social media: 40 minutes via mobile devices and 11 minutes via desktop/laptop.

No. 2: We're in a period of gradual change—not of wild volatility—in the ways US adults spend their time with media.

“Wild volatility” would have been a fair way to describe the shifting landscape at the beginning of this decade, when rapidly growing smartphone penetration was a highly disruptive force. But that phase has passed. With smartphone penetration expected to gain less than a single percentage point per year by 2020, media consumption is in something of a lull until the Next Big Thing comes along.

Among the media categories for which eMarketer gauges time spent, there aren't any we anticipate will see double-digit increases or decreases next year. (Mobile video comes closest, with an 8.7% rise expected.) Overall, time spent with digital media is expected to grow a modest 3.5%.

No. 3: Despite the ascent of other social networks, US adults are still increasing (very slightly) the amount of time they spend on Facebook.

Calculated across the whole adult population, daily time spent with Facebook is expected to rise from 25 minutes in 2017 to 26 minutes in 2018 and 27 minutes in 2019.

It's not just a matter of Facebook penetration still inching up.

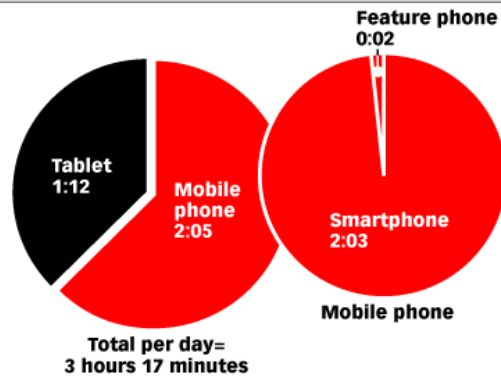
Calculated just among users of the platform, average time spent is expected to gain one minute per year in that period as well—same as the increase among users of Instagram and Snapchat.

No. 4: Though excitement about tablets has died down, they account for more than one-third of adults' smartphone-plus-tablet nonvoice time.

For 2017, eMarketer pegs average daily nonvoice time at 2 hours, 3 minutes for smartphones and at 1 hour, 12 minutes for tablets.

Average Time Spent per Day with Nonvoice Mobile Activities by US Adults, 2017

hrs:mins



Note: ages 18+; time spent with each device includes all time spent with that device, regardless of multitasking; for example, 1 hour of multitasking on a smartphone while on a tablet is counted as 1 hour for smartphone and 1 hour for tablet

Source: eMarketer, Sep 2017

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Tablet users averaged more daily web time this year via their devices (26 minutes) than did smartphone users (16 minutes). Smartphones more than made up for that deficit, though, with much higher average in-app time among users—2 hours, 11 minutes, vs. tablets users' 1 hour, 27 minutes.

No. 5. Even in the age of Netflix and YouTube, adults' average daily time spent with nondigital TV is more than 2 hours higher than their time spent with digital video.

There's a big caveat here: Time spent with traditional TV is declining steadily, while time spent with digital video is rising steadily. But there is far to go before the latter catches the former. Our estimate is that adults will average 3 hours, 58 minutes per day with nondigital TV in 2017, vs. 1 hour, 17 minutes with digital video.

By 2019, the gap will be narrower but still substantial, at 3 hours, 47 minutes for TV and 1 hour, 26 minutes for digital video.

No. 6. The share of ad dollars going to nonvoice mobile is now significantly higher than the share of consumers' time going to that category.

There may be a lingering perception that advertisers—stuck in their old ways—spend their money in ways far out of sync with how today's

consumers spend time with media. But that notion no longer holds up as a broad generalization. Indeed, in their eagerness to reach consumers via mobile devices, advertisers now spend an outsize share of their money there—30.2% of ad dollars vs. 28.1% of consumer time spent in 2017.

And the gap is growing, as we forecast mobile's share of ad outlays will reach 38.3% in 2019, vs. its 30.4% share of adults' media time. That will be considerably larger than the disparity between nondigital TV's share of ad spending (33.6%) and its share of consumer time spent (32.0%).