

Impact of Technology on Relationships - UK - October 2010

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What is this report about?

Consumers are now more connected than ever thanks to the rising ownership of mobile phones and the lower cost of minutes and texts, as well as the burgeoning penetration of fixed-line broadband. More recently, smartphone ownership has also grown, allowing owners to take their online lives with them wherever they go, from email to social networking profiles and beyond. This report will analyse the trends behind the growth of the 'always-on' consumer in the UK today and explore the way in which this has affected relationships between friends and family. It will also seek to provide insight into who is more likely to be connected, as well as the impact that this has had on face-to-face communication during leisure activities outside of the home.

What have we found out?

- SMS text messages are the most popular communications channel, used on a daily basis by 55% of respondents, closely followed by mobile voice calls (44%). Usage of fixed-line calls is driven by older respondents, with 50% of over-55's communicating this way on a weekly basis. In addition, over a third of respondents send a letter on a monthly basis.
- Despite consumers increased reliance on mobile communications, 38% of respondents association fixed-line communications with the word 'essential', five percentage points more than SMS texts and only ten percentage points less than mobile voice calls. Perhaps because fixed line offers the reassurance of having a physical connection to the outside world.
- Some 50% of respondents agree that they are doing more social networking compared to two years ago, a reflection of the rapid growth in popularity of such sites. According to comScore data, 38.1 million unique internet users accessed a social network in 2010, more than double the figure in 2006 (19.4 million).
- Over half of the respondents surveyed agree that they try to be in constant contact throughout the day via their mobile phone. This is likely to be driven primarily by a desire to be in voice and SMS contact. However, in the case of more advanced smartphone users, the ability to be in constant contact with a social network or email account is also likely to be of importance.
- Females have a greater tendency to share photos online (77% compared to 69% of males) because they are more enthusiastic users of social networks, where photos are regarded as a common currency to be shared with friends. Older respondents tend to share less overall, reflecting their lower tendency to use online communication channels on a daily basis.
- Despite the increased popularity of social networking, a third of respondents agree that they are using instant messenger more compared to two years ago, while a further 38% agree that they are sending more emails. However, in the case of instant messaging,

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growth in the last two years has been offset by the fact that 27% of internet users agree they are using these types of services less.

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