

Impact of The Recession on Media Usage (The) - UK - January 2010

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What is this report about?

Even before the onset of recession in the second quarter of 2008, media usage patterns were undergoing a dramatic change, driven by the growth in digital media and led by increased internet penetration.

If anything, the recession has served merely to hasten these trends, while at the same time putting pressure on providers of paid-for content, who are finding their customers deserting them in ever-increasing numbers for free alternatives.

This report focuses on consumers' perceptions of how their media usage has been impacted on because of the recession, looking at which media they use, what they are doing more or less of, how it has affected their purchasing of media-related goods and services and, specifically, how it has influenced usage of newspapers, magazines and satellite/cable TV.

What have we found out?

- Almost nine out of ten adult internet users are surfing the net more at home in response to the recession. This reflects the fact that it is an extremely cost-effective – and usually fixed-price - method of accessing a wide variety of media.
- Other popular responses to the recession include recording films off TV to watch later as a substitute for renting DVDs (44%), reading free newspapers and magazines instead of paid-for publications (43% and 34% respectively) and downloading free rather than paid-for music and podcasts (20% and 13% respectively).
- An HDTV is the item people are most likely to be deferring the purchase of in response to the recession, cited by nearly one in five adults. Generally, it is upgrades to existing technology that they already own which are the biggest casualties of recessionary cutbacks.
- Consumers are still prepared to spend money on media that is important to them. A laptop is the item people are most likely to be buying despite the recession. Almost one in three adults have bought one since the recession began.
- Other recession-driven switching behaviour includes moving away from buying paid-for newspapers, towards using their websites (one in six adults have done this) while with magazines one in seven have switched to using websites – both those of the magazine itself and also specialist websites and forums.
- Families with children have cut back most on their media usage. This sector tends to be heavy users of media but also have large regular financial commitments and concerns about job security and pay.

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