

Different Priorities in Smartphone vs. Computer Use, But Some Common Ground

Texting, navigation, free downloads, email and social media top smartphone uses

New York, N.Y. – January 3, 2013 – When we hold smartphones in our hands, we are in effect grasping miniscule computers. Their capabilities far outpace those of desktop units of yore, and their perpetual state of connectivity mean that smartphone users are almost never disconnected from the Internet. But even if they are at least somewhat comparable to full-fledged computers, are they used comparably? *The Harris Poll* tested smartphone owners' regular use of computers and smartphones for a series of tasks either product can complete, in order to find out.

These are some of the results of *The Harris Poll* of 2,383 adults (991 of whom own and use a smartphone) surveyed online between November 14 and 19, 2012 by **Harris Interactive**.

Many top uses for smartphones and computers are device-sensitive

When smartphone owners are asked which of a set of actions (common to both devices) they regularly perform on a smartphone and/or on a computer, there are both divergences and similarities in how the two devices are used. For example, the immediate communication of text or instant messages is the most common smartphone use (87%) and the least common use for a computer (20%). In contrast, emails are the top use for computers (90% for all email uses combined). Email is still a highly utilized feature on smartphones (72% combined), though it is worth noting that reading emails (67% personal, 38% work) outpaces actually writing emails (56% personal, 32% work) on smartphones.

Smartphone owners also appear to favor computers for researching goods and services (81% / 3rd most reported activity vs. 45% / 8th for smartphone use) and purchasing products or services such as clothing and holiday gifts (78% / 4th vs. 23% / 12th).

In contrast, mapping/navigation is among the top uses for smartphones (73% / 2nd), but only a mid-tier use for computers (56% / 7th).

Social Media use is similar on both devices

Despite the many differences between smartphone and computer use, combined social media interactions make for the 5th most frequent use for both a smartphone (64%) and a computer (69%). In both cases, reading posts (56% smartphone, 62% computer) is the top activity, followed by sharing (44% smartphone, 51% computer) and writing (43% smartphone, 50% computer). A similar percentage use their smartphones to "check in" (43%), while far fewer do so on computers (28%).

Children in household increase likelihood of nearly all activities on smartphones

Smartphone owners with children in their household are significantly more likely than those without to indicate using smartphones for most of the activities tested, including mapping/navigation uses (79% among those w/

children in hh, 68% without), downloading free applications, music or videos (72%, 62%), combined social media use (72%, 59%), playing games (62%, 52%), researching goods or services (54%, 39%) and many others.

So what?

Understanding what smartphones are used for is an integral part of designing a successful device. For example, the prevalence of text messaging calls for a well designed keyboard interface. Similarly, smartphone users' reliance on their devices for mapping and navigation services calls for either a well designed mapping interface or the ability to download one.

Furthermore, the prevalence of data-munching activities like texting, navigation, downloads, emailing speak directly to smartphone owners' data plan needs, and as reliance on these devices continues to grow both data plans and entire data networks may be affected in any number of ways.

TABLE 1
ACTIONS REGULARLY PERFORM USING A COMPUTER & USING A SMARTPHONE
[Summary Table]

"Thinking generally about your media and communication behavior on a smartphone versus on a computer, please indicate which of these actions you regularly perform on each."

Base: Smartphone users

	Using a computer		Using a smartphone
	%		%
Email [NET]	90	Send or receive text or instant messages	87
Send personal emails	84	Mapping, navigation, etc.	73
Read personal emails	82	Email [NET]	72
Send work emails	60	Read personal emails	67
Read work emails	59	Send personal emails	56
Take surveys	86	Read work emails	38
Research goods or services	81	Send work emails	32
Purchase other products or services (e.g. clothes holiday gifts, etc.)	78	Download free applications, music or videos	66
Social Media [NET]	69	Social Media [NET]	64
Read social media posts on sites or apps such as Facebook or Twitter	62	Read social media posts on sites or apps such as Facebook or Twitter	56
Share social media posts (e.g. news, jokes, pictures, etc.)	51	Share social media posts (e.g. news, jokes, pictures, etc.)	44
Write social media posts	50	"Check in" via social media	43
"Check in" via social media	28	Write social media posts	43
Find or research restaurants	61	Play games	56
Mapping, navigation, etc.	56	Find or research restaurants	53
Play games	52	Research goods or services	45
Download free applications, music or videos	38	Purchase applications, music or videos	42
Purchase applications, music or videos	37	Take surveys	24
Video chat (e.g. FaceTime, Skype, etc.)	35	Video chat (FaceTime, Skype, etc.)	23
Send or receive text or instant messages	20	Purchase other products or services (e.g. clothes, holiday gifts, etc.)	23

Note: Multiple responses allowed

TABLE 2
ACTIONS REGULARLY PERFORM USING A SMARTPHONE – by Children in HH
[Summary Table]

“Thinking generally about your media and communication behavior on a smartphone versus on a computer, please indicate which of these actions you regularly perform on each.”

Base: Smartphone users

	Total Smartphone Users	Smartphone users WITH children <18 in HH	Smartphone users without children <18 in HH
	%	%	%
Send or receive text or instant messages	87	89	86
Mapping, navigation, etc.	73	79	68
Email [NET]	72	76	69
Read personal emails	67	71	64
Send personal emails	56	60	53
Read work emails	38	44	34
Send work emails	32	37	29
Download free applications, music or videos	66	72	62
Social Media [NET]	64	72	59
Read social media posts on sites or apps such as Facebook or Twitter	56	63	51
Share social media posts (e.g. news, jokes, pictures, etc.)	44	51	40
“Check in” via social media	43	53	36
Write social media posts	43	51	37
Play games	56	62	52
Find or research restaurants	53	56	50
Research goods or services	45	54	39
Purchase applications, music or videos	42	50	36
Take surveys	24	31	19
Video chat (FaceTime, Skype, etc.)	23	28	19
Purchase other products or services (e.g. clothes, holiday gifts, etc.)	23	30	17

Note: Multiple responses allowed

Methodology

This **Harris Poll** was conducted online within the United States between November 14 and 19, 2012 among 2,383 adults (aged 18 and over), of whom 991 own and use a smartphone. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure,

unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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