

Consumer Media Usage Grew at Fastest Rate in 5 Years in 2020, Fueled by Surging Digital Video, Audio, Gaming, But Pandemic-Distorted Growth to Resume Deceleration in 2021

Distorted by the impact of COVID-19, global consumer time spent with media, including all digital and traditional media, grew at an accelerated 2.8% to an average of 53.1 hours per week in 2020, according to PQ Media's annual Global Consumer Media Usage Forecast 2020-2024.

STAMFORD, Conn. ([PRWEB](#)) January 19, 2021 -- In contrast to the loss of momentum in advertising and marketing spending in 2020, consumer time spent with media surged at the fastest growth rate since 2015, reversing a five-year trend of decelerating growth in media usage, according to new research released today by leading media economist [PQ Media®](#). Distorted by the impact of COVID-19, global consumer time spent with media, including all digital and traditional media, grew at an accelerated 2.8% to an average of 53.1 hours per week (HPW) in 2020, according to PQ Media's annual [Global Consumer Media Usage Forecast 2020-2024™](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the stay-at-home countermeasures employed to stem its spread, shook up the media economy in such a way that secular trends driving down media usage in some segments were reversed, while cyclical trends expected to boost usage in other sectors were postponed, and still other emerging trends were accelerated, positioning newer digital media channels to capitalize on the social and economic turbulence that rocked the media landscape in 2020.

As a result, global digital media usage bolted up 9.6% to 15.1 HPW in 2020, accounting for 28.5% of consumer time spent with media worldwide, gaining nearly 11 share points on traditional media in just five years. Key growth drivers were a slew of mobile media, including mobile video, audio, games, books and news, as well as social media channels, podcasting and OTT streaming video services, all of which posted consumer usage growth rates exceeding 15%, according to [PQ Media®](#).

Not since the Great Recession has there been a 10-point differential between the growth of overall consumer media usage and that of total advertising & marketing spending. But in the upside-down media economy of 2020 the pandemic drove down advertising & marketing spending 6.8%, while consumer time spent with media grew 2.8%, which was the fastest annual growth rate in five years, according to the [Global Consumer Media Usage Forecast 2020-2024™](#).

“The prime beneficiaries of this paradoxical growth surge in media usage were consumer-supported media, particularly digital video, audio, games, social media and chat services. There’s no doubt that streaming media as a group were the hands-down winners in an otherwise loser of a year for many media stakeholders, particularly those dependent on advertising-driven media,” said PQ Media CEO Patrick Quinn. “As a result, consumer-driven media usage continued a nearly 20-year pattern of snatching away market share from advertising & marketing-supported media, as consumer-driven media accounted for over 55% of all media usage in the US, while its share grew to nearly 35% globally in 2020.”

Of the 22 digital media channels covered in PQ Media's report, consumers spent the most time with OTT video, like video-on-demand and streaming TV programs on connected devices, reaching an average of 5.04 HPW in 2020. While global mobile media usage was nearly 6.0 HPW in 2020, mobile video and games were

the only mobile channels to exceed 1.0 HPW. New streaming video and audio services proliferated in 2020 as their audiences grew simultaneous to COVID-19 forcing consumers indoors for longer periods, pushing up digital video and audio consumption.

Netflix added 26 million global subscribers in 1H20 compared to only 12 million in 1H19, as original hit series like “Tiger King,” “Ozark” and “The Queen’s Gambit” provided fresh content to growing stay-at-home audiences. Just one year after its launch, new video streamer Disney+ amassed nearly 74 million paid subscribers by 4Q20. With movie theaters shut down and studios forced to either delay film releases or launch them via streaming services, Disney debuted both “Mulan” and “Soul” on Disney+, while Warner Bros. launched “Wonder Woman ‘84” concurrently on HBO Max and in theaters.

While videogames tend to buck trends in typical years, with usage declining prior to major hardware upgrades, this was not the case in 2020, as videogame usage surged throughout the year. Several franchise titles, such as Activision’s “Call of Duty,” were updated with new editions to great success – even before the blockbuster releases of Sony’s Playstation 5 and Microsoft’s Xbox Series X in 4Q20 – while titles like “Animal Crossing” and “Among Us” became international hits, driving up time spent with videogames.

Meanwhile, several traditional media that had posted declining or decelerating growth rates since the Great Recession recorded their strongest growth in over 10 years. Print newspaper and book readership ticked up, but much of the fuel driving traditional media’s growth came from radio listenership, which 2.8% in 2020, as radio was a primary source for pandemic information in rural areas. Consumers turned to live TV more than any other medium (20.7 HPW) and terrestrial radio was the only other medium to exceed 10.0 HPW.

But not all media shared the good news. Print magazines lost subscribers who were afraid to touch mail and retailer subscribers like salons that had to eliminate waiting rooms. Particularly hard hit were film & DVD viewing (down 30%) and both traditional and digital out-of-home media, as stay-at-home edicts sapped travelers from the roads and skyways and foot traffic from many other venues.

Despite the expectation of COVID-19 vaccines being distributed widely by mid-2021 and a minor upswing in media consumption during the Tokyo Summer Olympics postponed from last year, consumer time spent with media will resume decelerating growth in 2021. PQ Media projects global consumer media usage to rise only 1.4% this year.

“We projected last year that consumer media usage would likely reach a tipping point at which media consumption flattens by the end of 2023. And while the pandemic reversed some secular trends in 2020, we believe this was simply a short-term disruption of key long-term trends that will resume in 2021,” Quinn said. “The key factors remain, as various traditional media usage will continue to either decelerate or decline, while smartphone penetration is at or near saturation in major markets worldwide, and several internet and mobile media channels will continue to experience slower annual growth.”

The rise in mobile media usage has a direct correlation to the growing influence of younger generations. Although iGens (born 1981-1996) use overall media much less than older generations (29 HPW in 2020) almost half of their media consumption is done via digital devices. In comparison, the Great Generation (born pre-1945) use media the most (89 HPW in 2020), but only 22% of their media consumption occurs on digital devices.

Among the 20 largest media markets, Japan posted the highest usage in 2020 (79.6 HPW), while Russia boasted

the fastest growth (up 4.5%), and South Korea had the highest digital media share of total consumer media usage (45.3%). US consumer media usage was up 2.9% to 73.0 HPW, as streaming video and audio drove up digital's share of total media usage to 42.4%, PQ Media estimates.

About the Forecast:

The 8th annual [PQ Media Global Consumer Media Usage Forecast 2020-2024™](#) delivers the world's most comprehensive and actionable media consumption intelligence covering the 2014-2024 period; the Top 20 Global Markets and the Rest of the Countries in each of the 4 major global regions; 25 digital media platforms & channels; 11 traditional media platforms; 11 hybrid (digital + traditional) media silos; 6 consumer generations; and both genders. The new edition includes in-depth econometric data and market insights delivered through a Report & Analysis providing 450 slides of analysis and 600 datagraphs; and a Deep-Dive Excel Databook delivering 250,000 data points examining all media platforms, channels, and markets worldwide. Click the link above to download free report samples and to purchase a copy of the report.

About PQ Media:

[PQ Media®](#) delivers intelligent data and analysis to the world's leading media organizations via syndicated market intelligence reports, custom drill-down research, and on-demand strategic consulting. PQ Media publishes the annual [Global Media Forecast Series 2020-2024™](#), which includes three reports that cover the industry's KPIs: advertising & marketing spending; consumer media usage; and consumer spending on media. Click the link above to download free report samples and for details regarding our Special Three-Report Bundle License.



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