



SMART SPEAKERS ARE GROWING, BUT NOT A STAPLE

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While COVID-19-induced lockdowns have caused some uptick in usage, ownership rates might not reach those of tablets and other tech.

Smart speaker ownership has tripled over the last two years, reaching nearly one third of Canadian households. But intent to purchase is low, with three in five households without a smart speaker indicating they are “not at all likely” to obtain one over the next year.

That’s according to The Media Technology Monitor, which looked into how quickly smart speakers are gaining traction with Canadians, as well as how the devices are being used. Overall, it found “adoption may not reach the highs of other staples in technology,” such as tablets and smartphones, despite having seen strong growth early on.

Streaming music was found to be the most common smart speaker activity. Sixty-one percent of device owners have used it to stream music in the past month. That was followed by checking the weather (42%), doing research (28%) and listening to AM/FM radio (25%). The least commonly used function was scheduling events or meetings at 7%.

MTM found certain activities experienced growth during the COVID-19-induced lockdown. For example, since last fall, the proportion of respondents using their smart speakers to play a game grew from 7% to 9%. Similar growth was recorded for using the device to make a purchase (from 3% to 6% over the same period) and to order delivery (from 2% to 7%).

Google Home remains the by far the dominant smart speaker in Canada and is owned by two-third of households with the device. The second-most popular, Amazon Echo, has a market share of 34%, while luxury brands Sonos One and Apple HomePod currently both sit at 8%.

Ownership rates are higher among Canadian anglophone than francophone households, and have been since at least the spring of 2018, though growth among Francophones has been rapid over the last two years, jumping from 6% to 24%.

According to MTM, lower rates of ownership of Francophones are “likely a result of their slower tendencies to adopt new technologies and a lack of support for French language commands when several of these devices first launched in Canada.”