

Research reveals changes in online behaviour

By [Carole Kimutai](#)

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Digital Life, a global research project into people's online activities and behaviour has revealed significant findings as well as indicators for the future of the world's online behaviour. The research covered 88% of the world's online population through 50,000 interviews with consumers in 46 countries.

From the research, mature markets are being left behind online, as Kenya and other emerging markets become more active. Online consumers in rapid growth markets have overtaken mature markets in terms of engaging with digital activities. When looking at behaviour online, rapid growth markets such as Egypt (56%), China (54%) and Kenya (51%) have much higher levels of digital engagement than mature markets such as Japan (20%), Denmark (25%) or Finland (26%). This is despite mature markets usually having a more advanced internet infrastructure.

Increase in mobile use

Data also shows an increase in mobile use as consumers seek greater access to social networking on the go and that online is now the media of choice. Activities such as blogging and social networking are gaining momentum at huge speed in rapid growth markets. The research shows four out of five online users in China (88%) and over half of those in Kenya (55%), Brazil (51%) and Tanzania (50%) have written their own blog or forum entry, compared to only 32% in the US.

Growth in social networking is attributed to the transition from PC to mobile. Mobile users spend on average 3.1 hours per week on social networking sites compared to just 2.2 hours on email. The drive to mobile is driven by the increased need for instant gratification and the ability of social networks to offer multiple messaging formats, including the instant message or update function.

Online photo-sharing

The internet has also become the default option for photo sharing among online users in rapid growth markets, particularly in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The number of online consumers who have ever uploaded photos to social networks or photo sharing sites is 92% in Thailand, 88% in Malaysia, 87% in Vietnam, 74% in Kenya and 72% in Tanzania whilst developed markets are more conservative. Globally, people who have online access have digital sources as their number one media channel. 61% of online users use the internet daily against 54% for TV, 36% for radio, and 32% for newspapers.

When looking at how the digital landscape will change in the future, the research shows that consumers expect their use of social networking on mobiles to increase more than use through PC. In Kenya, for example, 78% of online consumers expect their use of social networking on a PC to increase in the next 12 months compared to 84% who will be looking to their mobile to increase usage. In Uganda the figures are 66% and 74% respectively and in Tanzania 71% and 69%.

Average time spent online

One further finding of the study showed that online consumers are, on average, spending more time on social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn than on email, despite the former only becoming mainstream in many markets over the last few years. The heaviest users of social networking are in Malaysia (9 hours per week), Russia (8.1 hours per week) and Turkey (7.7 hours per week). Kenya (6.5 hours per week) is closely behind the heaviest users while Uganda (1.5 hours per week) and Tanzania (1.6 hours per week) are currently amongst the lowest users.

ABOUT CAROLE KIMUTAI

Carole Kimutai is a writer and editor based in Nairobi, Kenya. She is currently an MA student in New Media at the University of Leicester, UK. Follow her on Twitter at @CaroleKimutai.

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