

Press Release

15 June 2021

BEREC publishes a study on EU consumer perceptions and behaviour on digital platforms for communication

To get a better understanding of digital platforms and consumers' views on digital platforms, and specifically of their role as providers and distributors of digital services, the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) has published a study entitled [Analysing EU consumer perceptions and behaviour on digital platforms for communication](#). BEREC commissioned the study from PPMI, a leading European research and policy analysis centre. The analysis solely reflects the views of the authors.

Study focus and methods

The study examined the usage of 17 very popular and widely used digital platforms that facilitate communication services, with an emphasis on interpersonal communication services (e.g. Whatsapp, Facetime, Snapchat) and the interactive exchange of information and media (e.g. Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Tiktok). The study only focused on those platform products that are free to use for consumers, at least in their basic setting. Communication platforms developed primarily for business use (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams and others), which have become extremely popular during the COVID-19 pandemic, were excluded.

The study focused on consumer attitudes, behaviours and preferences relating to the use of the selected digital platforms and the survey output is based on a sample size of 12,399 responses of messenger application users from 12 BEREC Member States, obtained in September and October 2020.

Main findings

Despite the fact that most consumers use multiple social network sites to access different types of information and different messenger applications to communicate with friends and family from different social circles, generations and countries ("multihoming"), the study also found that consumers have developed a strong attachment with and loyalty to their main messaging application services.

The main reasons for using application services are that they can be accessed and used free of charge, that they are easy and convenient to use, and that they provide connections with the family and friends who are on the network.

The study found the importance of the zero-cost of digital platform communication services for consumers to be very strong. The analysis of experimental data showed it to be a more important feature in the choice of interpersonal communication services than its convenience to use, display of advertising, and stronger data/privacy standards, added together.

Respondents of all demographic segments indicated that the fact that messenger applications are free to use is one of their key motivations to use them. This is seen as one of the main advantages over more “traditional” person-to-person communication services (also referred to as “number-based interpersonal communication services”), and it is a key point in deciding to adopt new applications for communication services.

For secure and private communication, a slightly stronger reliance on traditional electronic means of communication was observed, even though messenger apps were still the choice for a larger share of respondents. Only for urgent communication, more respondents reported using traditional electronic means of communication.

Michel Van Bellinghen, Chairman of BEREC in 2021: *“I welcome the extensive information this study provides. It is an important source for BEREC and its Members to evaluate the state of competition and the protection of the interests of consumers in today’s and tomorrow’s digital and communication markets.”*

The study on EU consumers perceptions and behaviour on digital platforms for communications will be among the topics presented during the [BEREC public debriefing on 16 June 2021](#). BEREC invites journalists to register, submit questions via the registration form, or send queries before the event to press@berec.europa.eu until 15 June 2021 COB. The speakers will answer the received questions during the public debriefing.

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