TOPICAL SPOTLIGHT THE DIGITAL HOME

Home Technology — Luxury or Necessity

An AARP Tech Study reports digital home technology ownership and use among the 50-plus

Technology is a significant part of our everyday lives. We use it at work, at school, we carry it with us everywhere we go, and yes, we use it at home. Some of the technology available today to make our home lives easier is not yet as widely adopted as other, more common, types of technology like smartphones and Smart TVs. However, there is significant year over year growth in ownership and use of digital home technology such as home assistants and smart home technology among the 50-plus.

Though these voice-first products are not yet mainstream, they can be of significant value, specifically to the 50-plus. What might be preventing some of this audience from quicker ownership is not knowing whether these items are a luxury or a necessity. In addition, these lesser-known products may seem too complicated to use at first blush, as those with lower level of tech confidence are less likely to have bought one yet. But on the bright side, among those with a desire to learn about new technology, smart home tech and home assistants were mentioned most.

So now it's a matter of educating this audience. Knowing that the 50-plus prefer to learn about new technology primarily through friends and family provides some insight as to how such items may need to be marketed in the future.

50-plus Ownership:

29%
Home Assistant

19%
Smart Home Technology

Ownership of Digital Home Technology is Growing

When compared to Smart TVs, adoption of home assistants and other smart home technology such as security systems, doorbell cameras, and wireless systems that control thermostats and lights (e.g. ADT, Ring, Vivint) are not yet mainstream. That said, ownership of such items has significantly increased year over year with about 1 in 4 owning a home assistant and 1 in 5 owning smart home technology.

Digital Home Technology Ownership Among 50-plus

Those with children in the household are significantly more likely than those without children to own most of the technology items evaluated, and home assistants and smart home tech are no exception.

Digital Home Technology By Children In The Household

But when it comes to usage patterns, the majority of those who own home assistants and/or smart home technology use it daily, regardless of age, gender, or household composition.

Digital Home Technology Usage

Smartphones are used more often than tablets or computers for accessing both home assistants and smart home tech.

How Digital Home Technology Accessed

Cost and confidence go hand in hand with digital home adoption

In comparison to other tech devices, such as smartphones and Smart TVs, digital home technology is not the most expensive. However, they may be seen as more of a luxury than a necessity as ownership increases with income.

Digital Home Tech Ownership by Income

■ <\$40k (n=967) ■ \$40k - \$75k (n=823) ■ \$75k + (n=1,017)

The data also suggests the lack of knowledge around how the home assistant or smart home technology work may be standing in the way of greater adoption. Those more confident in their use of technology, in general, are significantly more likely to own a home assistant and/or smart home technology than those who are uncertain about their know-how.

Digital Home Tech Ownership by Tech Confidence

■ Home Assistant ■ Smart Home Technology

Educating consumers about technology can help overcome adoption hesitations

The 50-plus audience, in general, typically waits for technology to be a proven benefit before they invest the time or money in it. Among those who do express an interest in learning about some of the newer technology, the top two of greatest interest are smart home technology, as cited by 26%, and home assistants, cited by 25%.

Interest is even higher among those who are uncertain about their use of technology, 33% and 30%, respectively. So, there is opportunity for growth in digital home technology, however, the benefits of such an investment and the ease of using the technology needs to be made clear. Additionally, privacy concerns about voice-first home assistants also need to be addressed as over half (54%) are not confident that what is said to or picked up by the home assistants will not be used by a third party.

The majority of the 50-plus (72%) prefer to learn about new technology through friends and family, and this is specifically true among those who are uncertain about their technical prowess (82%). Therefore, personal story telling, sharing of positive experiences, easy show and tell and clear communication about privacy might go a long way in helping the 50-plus better understand how technology such as voice-first home assistants and smart home technology could benefit them.

As more people adopt the idea of, and the products associated with, the digital home, and real benefits are seen and valued, the 50-plus are more likely to come on board.

Preferred Ways Of Learning About New Technology

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