

## A grown folks tale

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil  
Friday, 16 September 2011 14:06

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I'd like to share a love story with you. It's probably not the kind you'd expect. The characters in this story are not sultry women and manly men. They are tablets, like iPads, eReaders (electronic devices that allow you to digitally read books, magazines, etc.), and other mobile connected devices. But, I promise I'll make it interesting.

Once upon a time, oh, way back a year ago (which is, in fact, a long time as technology seems to evolve at warp speed), Nielsen's quarterly survey of smartphones, tablets and eReaders reported that men and younger folks dominated the tablet and eReader ownership market. The survey showed that 62 percent of tablet owners were 34 and younger, and that those in the 55-plus crowd made up only 10 percent. But, old man time came along, and showed what a difference a year makes! By the second quarter of 2011, the percentage of users over 55 jumped to 19 percent; while the number of young'uns who owned tablets dropped to 46 percent, according to Nielsen data. While men (still by far) prefer tablets more than women, 61 percent of women have taken an affinity to eReaders, up from just 46 percent this time last year.

Smartphones are the darling devices and are pretty evenly split between men and women. To break down our love affair with smartphones even further, Nielsen research shows that 40 percent of all of U.S. mobile owners over the age of 18 own smartphones. And, of those, Android is now the most popular operating system (40 percent) edging out Apple's iOS (iPhones), which came in second with 28 percent of all smartphone owners. I heard you gasp! Surprised weren't you? What's a story without a twist?

People across the land are pretty passionate about their smartphones. I've witnessed some conversations that almost take on a Hatfields vs. McCoys quality between devotees of the iPhones vs. the Android. But wait, there's more. There's a new sheriff in town – er, uh, a new device in town. I told you I'd make it interesting.

While the iPhone may be behind in the smartphone market, additional Nielsen research shows that the iPad continues to dominate the market in the United States in the tablet race; even with the introduction of new Android-based entrants to the field almost everyday, like the Samsung Galaxy and the Motorola Xoom. So, now people may have the Hatfields and the McCoys living

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harmoniously in the same house. And, the manufacturers across the land are of course pleased as punch with this co-existence.

So, we have all of these cool toys. How are we using them? Households with mobile connected devices as well as desktops or laptops were asked which device they use more since they acquired a tablet: 35 percent of tablet owners report using their desktop computers less often or not at all, while 32 percent of laptop owners say they use their laptops less often or not at all and 27 percent of those tablet owners who also own eReaders reveal that they now use their eReaders less often or not at all.

As is often the case with any story there is a damsel in distress. And, in this story that would be me! I own both a Kindle and an iPad2, but I prefer to cuddle up in bed with a good book. But, I'm clearly in the minority because according to Nielsen, 61 percent of eReader owners are snuggling up in bed with one of any number of eReaders, rather than a conventional book. Somebody save me! The eReaders are taking over; bookstores are rapidly closing down (a moment of silence please over their demise. No really, ssshhh). But, I remain steadfastly devoted to the smell of freshly printed books and the feel of actual, not virtual, pages between my fingers. So, I'm holding out hope against hope that books won't go the way of the dinosaur, the eight track or VCR!

Of course, people are not just reading in bed (mind out of the gutter people, it's not that kind of story). Research reports show that we enjoy playing with all of our technical toys while supine as well: 57 percent of tablet owners and 51 percent of smartphone users are using them in bed, and 70 percent and 68 percent of tablet and smartphone owners, respectively, use them while watching TV.

The moral of this story is whether you're reading this column, holding the paper in your hands, or skimming it on your smartphone, tablet, eReader, laptop or PC; keep reading! Because knowledge is power. The End.

*Cheryl Pearson-McNeil is senior vice president of public affairs and government relations for Nielsen. For more information and studies go to [www.nielsenwire.com](http://www.nielsenwire.com)*