

## Press release

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**Subject:** Deloitte Digital Consumer Trends 2025

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## Social media and AI reshape how young audiences discover information

### Deloitte study reveals that 17% of young adults now rely on AI chatbots for news; one-third usually skip fact-checking

#### Brussels, 17 March 2026

Deloitte Belgium today released the latest edition of its Digital Consumer Trends report, analysing how Belgian consumers engage with digital media, digital news and connected devices. The report highlights profound changes: Households are spending significantly more budget on video streaming services, while connected devices such as smart TVs have reached record adoption levels at 67%. Younger audiences are changing how they get information, relying more on social platforms, news influencers and AI-generated updates, whether via search summaries or AI chatbots. Older consumers are true “silver surfers”, active on social networks, consuming short-form content and playing video games. Together, these trends show how new technologies are reshaping the way Belgian consumers engage with media in their everyday lives. In addition, the study reveals that generative AI adoption has accelerated rapidly in Belgium, with more than half of consumers already using AI tools. Notably, the gender gap in awareness and usage of generative AI is now nearly disappearing.

#### Key highlights:

- Younger audiences increasingly rely on digital platforms for news, with 44% of Gen Z using social media as their preferred source and 17% already relying on generative AI for updates.
- Generation Z shows less interest in regularly keeping up with the latest news, with 61% updating themselves once a week or less and 16% not updating themselves on news at all.
- Among consumers of AI-generated news, 33% is satisfied with the AI summary and therefore neither clicks through to the original article nor cross-checks the primary news source
- 61% of Belgians have access to a paid video streaming service and the share of households spending more than €20 per month on streaming has increased from 6% in 2020 to 44% in 2025.
- YouTube is Belgium’s most-used video streaming service on a weekly basis, with Netflix in second place. Local broadcasters remain competitive with VRT Max, VTM Go, RTBF Auvio, Play and RTL play in the top 10.
- Connected devices reach record adoption, with smartphone ownership at 94%, smart TVs present in 67% of households. Baby boomers are the fastest adopters of Smart TV (+21% year on year)

- 56% of Belgian consumers have already used generative AI tools, more than doubling compared to two years ago. Adoption reaches 85% among students and 64% among working individuals.
- The gender gap in generative AI usage has largely disappeared, 58% of men and 54% of women now use AI tools, compared with 31% and 17% respectively in 2023.

## Younger audiences increasingly rely on social media, influencers and AI for news

Social media has become the preferred news source for Gen Z, with 44% preferring it for updates on current affairs and 18% also turning to influencers for the same purpose. In addition, 17% of Gen Z already rely on generative AI chatbots or web summaries to stay informed, highlighting the growing role of AI in how younger audiences discover and consume news. Among those who read AI generated news summaries, around 33% say the summary provides enough information on its own. As a result, they neither click through to the original article nor verify the information with another source, suggesting that AI tools are increasingly shaping how news is accessed and consumed online.

Concerns about misinformation are also widespread among Belgian consumers (73% are concerned). Around 52% say they have recently seen, read or heard information they believed to be false, with exposure highest among Gen Z (59%) and lowest among Baby Boomers (47%). Despite this exposure, many users remain confident in their ability to recognise misleading information. Nearly two thirds of Belgians (64%) say they feel capable of identifying fake news when they first encounter it, with confidence highest among Gen Z at 71%.

“We are seeing a clear shift from traditional news consumption towards more fragmented and algorithm driven ways of discovering information. For many younger audiences, social media platforms and increasingly also AI chatbots or web summaries are becoming the first entry point to news rather than traditional media. This raises important questions around visibility, trust and how users verify the information they encounter online, as well as significant threats for publishers and news providers business models,” **says Vincent Fosty, Technology, Media & Telecommunications Industry Leader at Deloitte.**

Traditional channels nevertheless remain dominant across the broader population. Television and radio continue to be the most widely used news sources in Belgium, particularly among older audiences. While 80% of Baby Boomers rely on TV to follow the news, this drops to just 31% among Gen Z. News websites and apps still reach Millennials (41%) and Gen X (38%) effectively but attract fewer younger users (24%).

Beyond where they get news, younger audiences check it far less often than older generations and are increasingly avoiding it: 16% of Gen Z do not follow news at all, and 61% do so only weekly or less, compared with 75% of Belgians aged 45+ who update themselves daily.

## Belgian media remain competitive in the streaming era: 6 broadcaster VOD services rank among the top 10 most-used video streaming services in Belgium each week

Streaming services have become a core part of entertainment consumption in Belgium. 76% of Belgians have already used a video streaming service, free with ads or paid, and consumers typically combine several platforms to access different catalogues. On average, Belgian users have interacted with 4 video streaming services, including 2 to 3 (2.4) paid subscriptions. Since 2020, spending on streaming has increased sharply, the share of households spending more than €20 per month on video subscriptions has risen from 6% to 44%, while 17% now spend more than €40 per month.

Netflix clearly acts as the anchor subscription in Belgium, with 40% of consumers subscribing to Netflix as their only service among the three major platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+). Services such as Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ are typically added as complementary subscriptions rather than used on their own. For example, 13% of consumers combine Netflix and Disney+, while another 11% combine Netflix and Prime Video. Pure standalone usage remains very limited, with only 3% subscribing only to Disney+ and

6% only to Prime Video, illustrating how these platforms are most often stacked on top of Netflix rather than replacing it.

Local broadcasters remain highly competitive in the streaming landscape. Six broadcaster video on demand platforms appear in the list of the 10 most used video services in Belgium, including VRT Max, VTM GO, RTBF Auvio, Play, RTL play and Streamz. Some of them even rank ahead of major international subscription services such as Disney+, Prime Video and HBO Max in terms of weekly usage, highlighting the continued strength of local content and the important role Belgian broadcasters still play alongside global streaming platforms. “Three in four Belgians now include streaming in their media mix. While uptake is strongest among younger users, older cohorts are not far behind, with over 60% of those aged 45+ having used a streaming service. Younger audiences gravitate to international platforms such as Netflix and YouTube, whereas older viewers are more present on broadcaster services. Interestingly, certain consumption metrics indicate that global platforms are more effective at driving catalogue exploration and binge-watching than local ones,” **says Michele Gabriel, Lead Strategy Partner for the TMT Industry at Deloitte.**

## Connected devices reach record adoption in Belgium, especially among Baby Boomers

Connected devices are becoming increasingly embedded in everyday life in Belgium. In 2025, several device categories reached their highest adoption levels to date, reflecting the growing integration of smart technologies both in the home and on the go.

Smart TVs are seeing record adoption (67% of Belgians own a smart TV, 81% use it daily). Broadcasters and streaming platforms are increasingly prioritizing smart TV apps, bypassing telecom set-top boxes and competing for prominence on the home screen. Why the fight? Because two in three Belgians never customise their smart TV, making pre-installation crucial for visibility.

The smartphone is near-universal in Belgium (94% own one; 95% use it daily) and acts as a Swiss Army knife for Gen Z, rivalling dedicated devices for activities such as radio listening (18% of Gen Z prefer smartphones over traditional radio) and watching films and series (16% prefer smartphones over TV screen).

Baby Boomers are the fastest-growing adopters of smart TVs (up 21% year on year) and wireless earbuds (up 43% year on year) in Belgium. These newly tech-equipped Boomers are riding the digital wave: 84% are active on social networks, 75% consume short-form content, 42% play video games, and 35% watch YouTube weekly, making it the leading video streaming platform for Belgians aged 60+.

## Gender gap in generative AI adoption nearly disappears in Belgium

56% of Belgian consumers say they have already used generative AI tools, more than doubling compared to two years ago. The technology is being adopted particularly quickly among younger and professionally active audiences. 85% of students report using generative AI tools, while 64% of working individuals say they have already used them, highlighting how AI is increasingly integrated into study and work routines.

While there was still a clear gender gap in generative AI awareness and adoption in the past, this difference has now largely disappeared. In 2025, 77% of men and 73% of women are aware of generative AI tools, while 58% of men and 54% of women report using them, bringing adoption levels close to parity between genders. This marks a significant shift since 2023, when the gap was much wider. At the time, 54% of men were aware of generative AI compared to 36% of women, while usage stood at 31% among men and just 17% among women.

“Many consumers are discovering generative AI through a relatively small number of well-known tools. Once those platforms become the main entry point, they often shape how people experiment with and integrate AI into their daily routines. The relatively low awareness of European initiatives such as Mistral AI shows how

challenging it can be for newer players to build visibility in a market already dominated by a few global platforms,” says **Vincent Fosty, Technology, Media & Telecommunications Industry Leader at Deloitte.**

See the full report here: [www.deloitte.com/be/digital-consumer-trends](http://www.deloitte.com/be/digital-consumer-trends)

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