

# CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

Powering connection,  
creativity and control across  
the student years

An Eighteen24 White Paper · Nov 2025



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**A preview of how UK students choose their tech, why it matters, and how brands earn lifetime value.**

The full paper sets out the scale of the consumer electronics opportunity on campus, the motivations and behaviours shaping Gen Z tech choice, and how brands earn lifetime value from the moment students start making technology decisions for themselves. This summary gives you the headlines.

### FOR THE FULL PAPER

Email

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### INSIDE THIS SUMMARY

- Section guide
- Six headline insights
- How to access the full paper

# A complete guide to consumer electronics and the UK student audience.

The full paper covers category data, motivations and mindsets, shopping behaviour and media planning implications, drawn from 30+ industry sources including HESA, Ofcom, Deloitte, YouGov, UNiDAYS, WPP, Dentsu and HEPI.

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| <b>03</b> | Motivations and Mindsets: what drives student tech choices       | <b>04</b> | Refurbished and Repairable: the rise of the circular economy   |
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This summary covers six headline insights. The full paper goes further with category segment maps, the academic-year demand calendar, the psychology of habit formation and the activation playbook for reaching 70% of UK students.

## What the data tells us.

### INSIGHT 01 • THE MARKET OPPORTUNITY

#### A £25bn category with strong growth ahead.

Consumer electronics is one of the UK's most dynamic retail categories, forecast to exceed £31 billion by 2030. Smartphones remain the largest segment, with laptops and gaming hardware close behind, while wearables and e-readers post the fastest growth. The full paper breaks down each segment and what's driving demand across the student years.

**£25bn**

**UK consumer electronics market today, forecast to exceed £31bn by 2030**

Source: Channel Life, quoting Q2 2025 Consumer Electronics Report (MediaVision)

### INSIGHT 02 • MOTIVATIONS AND MINDSETS

#### Tech is a tool of identity, independence and confidence.

Students choose devices not just for what they do, but for how they help them feel organised and in control. They are deliberate buyers who research, compare, and look for performance they can rely on, while remaining curious and motivated by progress. The full paper explores how brands earn relevance beyond spec sheets.

**63%**

**of students buy tech to improve how they create, learn or connect**

Source: UNiDAYS Q4 2024 Student Insight Report

### INSIGHT 03 • REFURBISHED AND REPAIRABLE

#### Refurbished is no longer a compromise. It's a smart, sustainable, mainstream choice.

Cost-of-living pressures and rising environmental literacy have moved the circular economy from niche to default. Students mix refurbished and new in the same setup, and look for trade-in programmes, transparent warranties and repair services. The full paper sets out how premium brands can win in this shift.

**25%**

**of all UK mobile phones sold in 2024 were refurbished, up from 19% in 2021**

Source: The Guardian, June 2024

# From discovery to lifelong loyalty.

## INSIGHT 04 • FROM AI TO ANALOGUE

### AI and analogue habits sit comfortably side by side.

Students use AI to structure research, refine ideas and manage time, while embracing film cameras, record players and projectors as creative choices. The full paper explores how this dual instinct shapes the devices students choose and how brands can show up credibly in both worlds.

**88%**

of UK undergraduates have used AI tools for assessments

Source: HEPI Student Generative AI Survey 2025

## INSIGHT 05 • WHERE LIFELONG HABITS BEGIN

### Most tech purchases are decided long before active shopping begins.

Behavioural research shows that consumer electronics buyers arrive at the purchase moment already leaning towards one or two brands they trust. The student years are when those biases form. The full paper unpacks the psychology of habit formation and the ecosystem effect that compounds over decades. Think iPhone leading to AirPods to MacBook.

**81%**

of consumer electronics purchases are made by people choosing brands they're already biased towards before active shopping begins

Source: WPP Media, How Humans Decide 2025

## INSIGHT 06 • THE CAMPUS SIGNAL

### Students trust what they see in shared, authentic spaces.

77% of students tune out social media advertising. Digital fatigue is rising. Campus DOOH cuts through. The full paper sets out why Students' Unions are high-dwell, high-trust, full-attention environments where consumer electronics brands can earn the credibility that high-ticket categories need.

**73%**

of students are more likely to trust a brand after regular campus exposure

Source: Native Student Life Report 2025/2026

GET THE FULL PAPER

## Ready for the full picture?

We share the full white paper directly with brands, agencies and media planners working in this category. It's a short conversation and we'll send the complete report straight back to you.

### Email us for the full paper.

Tell us a bit about your brand or planning brief and we'll send the complete consumer electronics white paper, plus answer any questions you have about reaching the UK student audience.

[sales@eighteen24.com](mailto:sales@eighteen24.com)

Already chatting with someone at Eighteen24?  
Reply to their last email and ask for the full Consumer Electronics paper.

#### Curated research

Sourced from 30+ industry references including HESA, Ofcom, Deloitte, YouGov, UNiDAYS, WPP, Dentsu and HEPI.

#### Built for planners

Category segment maps, behavioural frameworks and an academic-year demand calendar structured for use in briefs and recommendations.

#### Built for high-ticket

Reflects the considered nature of consumer electronics buying, where 81% of decisions are shaped before active shopping begins.

**Eighteen<sup>24</sup>**

## The UK's largest student DOOH network

Over 400 premium full-motion D6 screens placed inside Students' Unions across 130 campuses and 90+ universities, including 21 of the top 25. Positioned in cafes, study areas, gyms, social spaces and walkways where dwell time is highest.

**400+**

SCREENS

**90+**

UNIVERSITIES

**2M**

STUDENTS  
REACHED  
WEEKLY

**116M**

IMPRESSIONS  
PER FORTNIGHT

### Our formula for effective Gen Z engagement

Be where they  
**are**

Be where they  
**care**

Be where they  
**share**

Be where they  
**see you**

**Don't miss the moment to be chosen  
as the tech they trust first.**

University is when high-value tech decisions get made for the first time, and when ecosystems take shape that compound for decades. The phone chosen on campus today shapes the upgrades, accessories and household devices a graduate buys for the next twenty years.

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