



Android's weak gravity

How smartphone ownership and intention changes between 1st, 2nd and 3rd phones.

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Our research into the Android Engagement Paradox has uncovered an interesting insight about ownership and intention as smartphone users move from their first to second to third phone: the more smartphones a person has had, the more likely they are to own an iPhone. This article shares research data which supports this finding, and discusses some of the implications for Android device manufacturers.

We didn't initially set out to investigate this phenomenon. Our study – involving both qualitative and quantitative fieldwork – was primarily focused on a subject that has become known as the [Android Engagement Paradox](#): why do Android device owners generally use fewer of the features of their phone compared with iPhone users? And for the features they do use, why do they use them with less frequency? Why do they engage in less ecommerce activity?



Image: [Irving Martinez](#)

We wanted to check for ourselves if this paradox actually exists by running our own research. We also wanted to move the discussion further by exploring *why* this would be happening. A lot of the commentary on this issue so far has been conjecture, and we wanted the qualitative part of our study to illuminate this issue from the user's perspective.

The insights we've gathered are fascinating, and we'll be publishing a report shortly. In the meantime we thought this insight about ownership and intention is too interesting to sit on – and might be overlooked when we make our full report.

In the long run, Apple wins

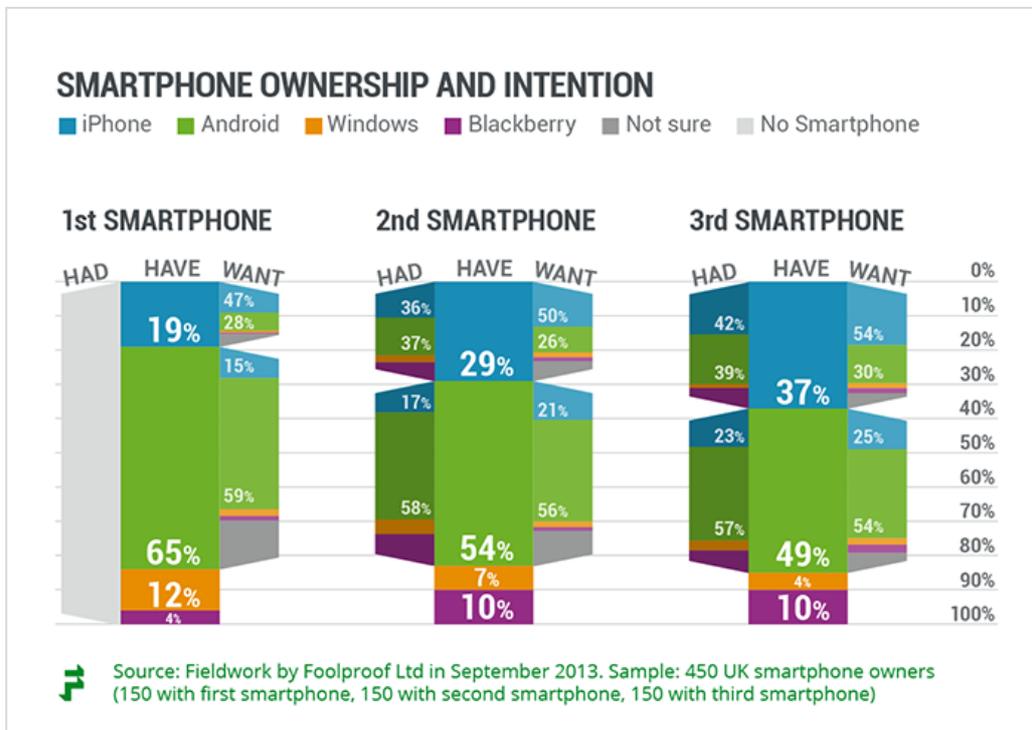
In the first graphic below we summarise the data which relates to how ownership and purchasing intention changes with people's first, second and third smartphone.



Each column represents a separate sample of 150 UK smartphone owners. The labels 'Had', 'Have' and 'Want' relate respectively to:

- What was the operating system of the previous smartphone they owned?
- What's the operating system of the phone they own now?
- What's the operating system of the phone they intend to get next (when they replace their existing device)?

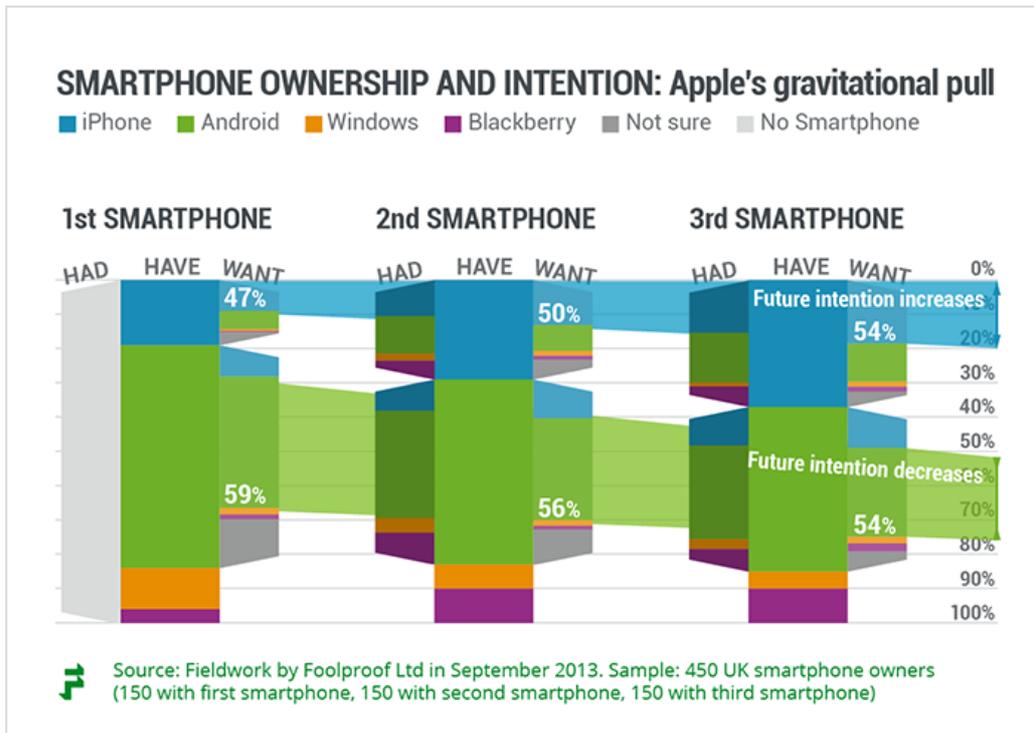
To make the graphic less overwhelming we've not shown all the values, but if you want the full data table just [contact us](#) and we'll send it to you.



The data shows that the more smartphones a person has owned, the more likely they are to own an iPhone. For people that own an iPhone, the more smartphones they have had the more likely they are to intend to buy another iPhone. For those people owning an Android phone, the more smartphones they have had, the less likely they are to intend to buy another Android.



A second version of our graphic (below) has been amended to draw more attention to this trend.



The gravitational pull of Apple

Smartphone penetration is expected to reach [75% of the UK population by 2014](#) so it's becoming less likely that demographics are a significant driver of this trend. That leaves the operating system and the overall user experience of the device.

Our view is that the more smartphones someone has had, the more they value what it can do. They transition from thinking of it as a phone to thinking of it as a computer in their pocket. Other data in our research (which we'll explore in our full report) supports this: those who have owned more smartphones have higher usage and place greater importance on what a smartphone can do. And as a smartphone becomes more valuable to people, they seek out the best smartphone. At the moment, that's the iPhone.



What can Android learn from Apple?

I want to experience the device before I buy

Android phones are primarily sold by resellers who have non-interactive dummy phones in their shops. Compare this to Apple's stores where you can experience the devices and service, and it's easy to see why someone who values their smartphone might be attracted to them.

Why would I stay?

There is little friction to stop someone switching from their Android phone to another, or to an iPhone. In contrast, Apple's iCloud service and its larger range of apps give iPhone customers reasons to stay. On Android, what do you lose by switching?



Image: Foolproof

I want the best experience

While it's hard to pin down quantitatively, Apple's attention to detail and control of hardware, software and services gives it a distinct advantage over Android phones. With their organisational change putting one person in charge of all design, this will continue to be a strength.

Give me something useful I can use

Once someone values their smartphone more, they begin to consider higher-end devices. But many of the features on high-end Android phones like eye-tracking are of marginal benefit, driven by technology rather than user needs. Apple, on the other hand, chose to address tedious PIN-entry with their Touch ID sensor in the iPhone 5s. This aligns perfectly with user needs: the more you value your phone, the more you want to secure it with a PIN, but the more annoying entering that PIN all the time becomes.

I want the best apps

Apps are what make or break a smartphone experience, and the iOS App Store has the most, and generally the highest-quality apps. There are also few apps exclusive to Android, while many are only available on iOS.



I know where to go for support

If you want to get your iPhone fixed or have a question about your phone, you go to an Apple store. And it's free – up to the point of hardware needing to be fixed or replaced. Where do you go for support for an Android phone?

This research points to a movement in the market away from Android. As late adopters become fewer, and more people move to their fourth and fifth phones, this is likely to become more pronounced unless Android responds to the user experience challenges posed by Apple.

About Foolproof

[Foolproof](#) is an experience design company with offices in London, Norwich and Singapore.

Our purpose is to create measurably better digital products and services that deliver value for brands and their customers. By understanding the needs of the business and the end-user we guide the design process towards what we call [the win/win](#).

Our design approach is collaborative, iterative and evidence-driven, bringing both our clients and customers into the design process to create new and better digital experiences.

Foolproof employs 80 people and has a specialist skillset, giving us the capability to help define the experience strategy and execute solutions through research, design and optimisation. Our team is made up of people from a wide variety of backgrounds including psychologists, researchers, ergonomists, product and interaction designers, social scientists, data analysts and graphic artists.

Our practice spans four main specialisms: Strategy and Planning, Design Research, Interaction Design and Conversion Rate Optimisation.