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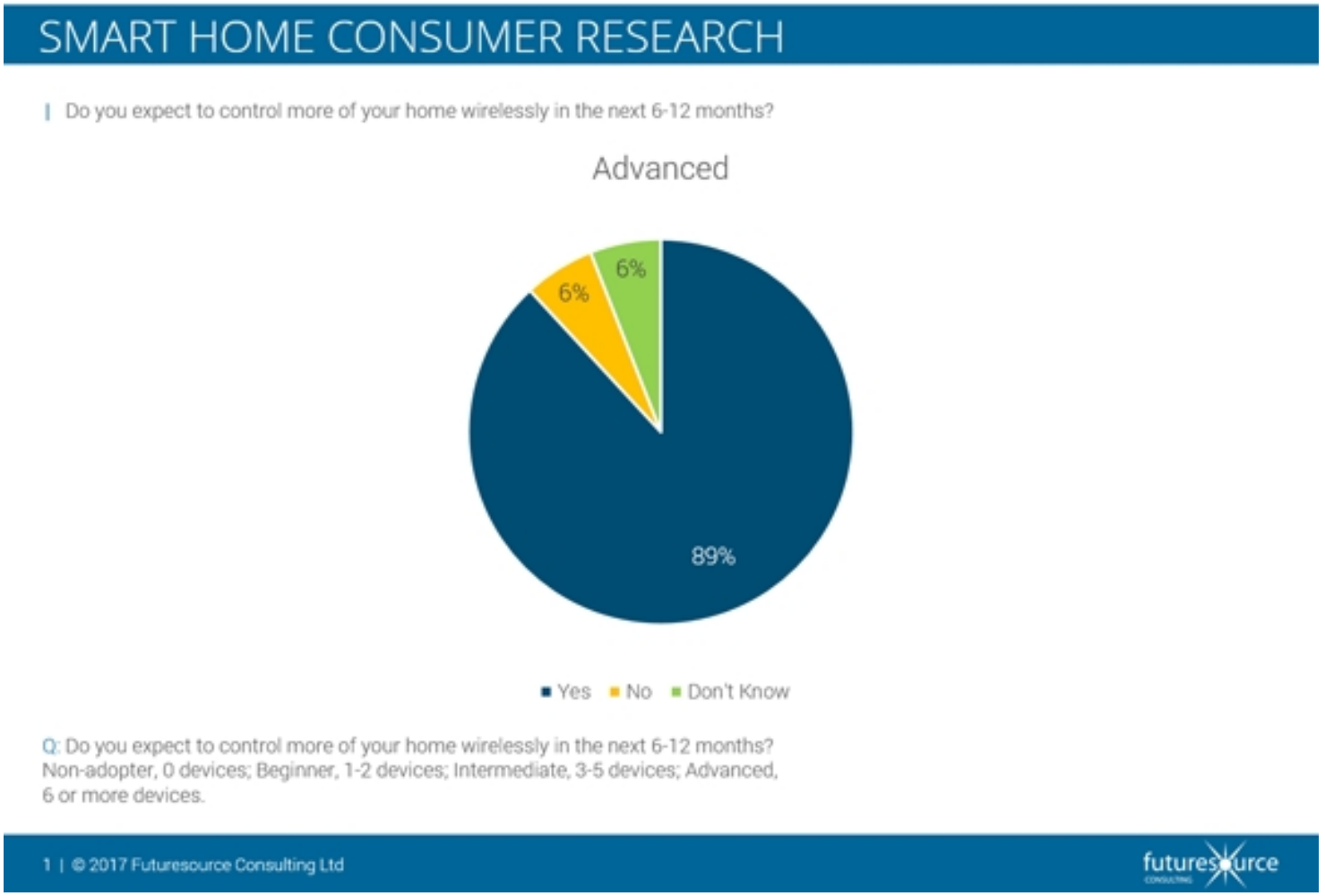
The smart home market is set to emerge "by stealth," Futuresource reports-- once a consumer buys a first connected device, they will be keen to automate further, leading to slow but steady growth.

The conclusion comes from a survey of over 4000 consumers in France, Germany, the UK and the USA covering smart home devices (including smart/Voice Personal Assistant speakers), appliance ownership, perceptions and purchase intent. Respondents are segmented into 4 different levels (non-adopters, beginners, intermediate and advanced), as based on the number of smart home devices owned.



Among the 4 countries, the USA is the one with the highest penetration, with 38% of respondents having at least 1 smart home device installed. Germans are the most resistant to smart home devices, as only 20% own at least 1 such device. Audio and video content make a common first step into automation, as 2 out of 3 respondents consider music and other AV content as "important" in the smart home context.

VPA speakers are another smart home adoption driver, since a "substantial" number of respondents use their VPA speaker to control heating or lighting. Around 30% of respondents say they received a VPA speaker as a gift, pointing out a retail opportunity in bundling such speakers with other smart home devices.

Another possible opportunity is in smart appliances-- replacement cycles might be long, but consumers are open to the idea of a connected washing machine or fridge. However interest is declining in at least some appliance features, meaning vendors must stimulate consumer interest by clearly pointing out the benefits.

"The results provide evidence that the smart home can grow by stealth as users who installed one device are more likely to want to automate their homes further," Futuresource adds. "Across all segments, 30% of consumers expect to control more of their homes wirelessly in the near future. However, the number is substantially higher among those who already own at least one smart home device, with 89% of advanced users expecting to control more of their homes wirelessly in the next 6-12 months."

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