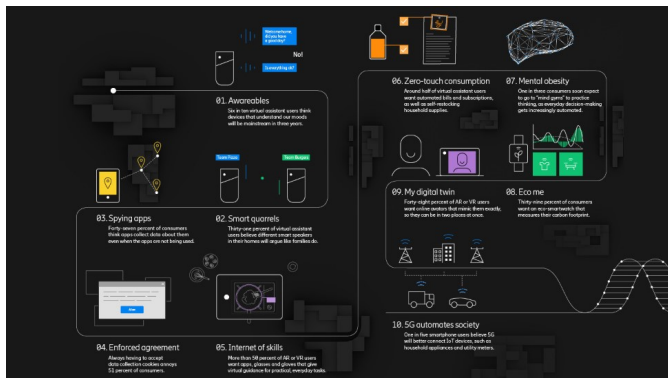# 10 Hot Consumer Trends for 2019

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Ericsson takes a peek into the crystal ball to predict what will be hot for 2019-- a year promising more convenience through increasingly capable virtual assistants, emotion-reading AI and even means to appear in two places, at the same time!

To work out what exactly will be huge next year, Ericsson held an online survey on October 2018 of 5097 "advanced" internet users in a number of cities, namely Johannesburg, London, Mexico City, Moscow, New York, San Francisco, São Paulo, Shanghai, Sydney and Tokyo. It also makes use of 2017-2018 survey data from the Ericsson ConsumerLab analytical platform, with data from 72067 smartphone users in 50 countries. Anyway, here are the trends:

Awareables: devices will be fully aware of the users, being able to understand their personality just by looking at their eyes or hearing their voice. 50% of surveyed virtual assistant (Google Now, Siri, Alexa, etc) users already think smartphones will be able to understand emotions sooner, not later, while 42% think smartphones will soon understand them better than their friends. Astoundingly, many people would rather trust an AI with their secrets than a human! Less virtual assistant, more virtual confidant?

Smart Quarrels: What will happen if a household uses multiple virtual assistant? Will they start bickering, like family members tend to? Of the surveyed virtual assistant users, 47% believe different assistants give different answers, and 41% think it is important for couples to have compatible assistants.

Spying Apps: It is no secret that apps collect a lot of data on their users. Or, at least, many people believe that is the case. In fact, 47% of respondents believe many popular apps collect data about everyday behaviours through cameras, microphones and location tracking, even when not in use. In addition, 52% of consumers think popular apps collect more data than they

should, leading to developers profiting from such data. As a result, 59% say the world needs global personal data protection principles, and the question of individual integrity will only rise as society becomes more digitised.

Enforced Agreement: Consumers are tired of agreeing with companies to sign away their rights to personal data, something that came about following the EU's GDPR regulation. Over 50% of respondents believe there should be a single standardised agreement used by all companies, allowing a choice over a level of personal data use consumers accept. Only 8% are comfortable with having to always accept cookies and data collection, while 51% find it annoying. As such, the internet clearly needs a business model beyond advertising, and 42% insist it should be changed fundamentally if it is to become a force of good in society.

Internet of Skills: More time on the internet means less time in the real world, and less time in the real world means less application of real world skills. But will the internet come to the rescue? 82% of AR/VR users believe we will soon get custom YouTube videos able to help with all sorts of problems, showing one how to do anything from fix a piece of furniture to cook a meal. AR and VR can be even more useful, as 60% would like glasses with on-screen instructions to help one fix anything, while 56% want to learn how to dance through an AR experience.

Zero-Touch Consumption: Keeping track of the necessary things in life-- buying the groceries, paying the bills, handling finances-- can be boring. But what if a virtual assistant can do it for us? This is exactly what 55% of respondents would like to automate. 47% would even let a virtual assistant handle all their finances, including tax declarations, while 52% want a virtual assistant able to manage warranty repairs of household electronics.

Mental Obesity: What would happen if one lets a virtual assistant wholly manage their life, to the point they wouldn't be able to decide what to have for breakfast without asking for the opinion of Alexa or Siri? Will this lead to a world where smartphones need to be able to tell when their user is sick, since they'd rather trust a device instead of a human? 34% of respondents believe critical thinking is already disappearing due to virtual assistant overuse, and 31% of consumers think we will soon have to attend "mind gym" in order to flex the mental muscles. As opposed to the physical gym, since virtual assistants will presumably not only take care of subscriptions, but ensure we actually attend that on the regular...

Eco Me: Taking a look at news from the environmental front paints a regularly grim picture of a

world on the brink of climate change-driven disaster. No wonder people want to ensure their lives lead to a healthy environment, with 39% of respondents wanting an eco smartwatch able to measure their daily carbon footprint. 40% also want a virtual assistant able to environmentally optimise temperature and water use, while 75% think they should both work and play from home, via teleworking and VR holidays.

My Digital Twin: The idea of having a digital avatar able to attend events in your place might sound like the premise of a Black Mirror episode, but it is also something at least 50% of survey respondents want. After all, 48% of AR/VR users think avatars will mimic their face so well it will as if they are looking at a mirror, while 47% find it difficult to judge whether a politician or celebrity is real or a digital avatar. Such technology is still far off, but it can lead to the refinement of industries already focused around automation, such as customer service and support.

5G Automates Society: Smartphone users in 50 countries have high expectations for 5G. Not only will it further improve communications, they believe it will also support automation in various way. 37% think it will better enable home alarms, while 23% believe it will benefit self driving cars. IoT devices can also become more useful via 5G, such as electricity, gas and water meters, refridgerators, stoves and washing machines. However 5G needs an iconic device to truly drive its benefits, perhaps an AI phone able to act as a hub for all IoT devices. This is something the early adopters surveyed by Ericsson will definitely buy, followed by a self-driving car, AR phone and smart glasses.

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