



TOP TRENDS

FROM CES 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Consumer Electronics Show is a week of innovation, showcasing the latest technology of thousands of exhibiting companies from across 150 countries. As the global stage for innovation, products that end up changing the way we interact with and see the world often make their first appearances to the public at the show.

While there may not have been the next 'big thing' this year, we did see trends in 5G, widening ecosystems in connected tech, smart home and voice that will have significant implications on the brands we market every day. We saw many of these trends focused on the consumer and making their lives easier, healthier and safer at home and on the go. This new age might be referred to as the age of "assistance".

Not assistance defined by "voice" interfaces alone; rather, by assistance defined as broadly distributed active, passive, timely and anticipatory devices, assisting you by design. As we now seem to be on a two-to-three-year pathway to a truly connected future enabled by 5G, all the talk of internet-connected everything quickly becomes a discussion of all the data that these devices will generate. As we were reminded by the [larger-than-life Apple ad](#) "welcoming" the world to the Vegas strip, there is a runway to align ethics and policy around the implications of technology's future.

With virtually every company looking to redefine itself as a technology company, those that succeed will have applications into making the world a better place.

Here is our take on the trends that will impact and influence our industry in the coming year.

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Opening the floodgates on 5G

5G was the talk of the town during CES 2019. Yes, much of the talk was about how 'real' it is, (particularly in the USA where all the telco's announced their plans) but as the writer William Gibson said, "The future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed".

5G is up to 100x faster than 4G because it is an entirely new wireless infrastructure. All the previous 'G's' were delivered by towers blasting low frequency radio bands with long distance reach. 5G will operate on higher frequency bands that travel shorter distances but are more directional. Instead of towers, it uses distributed small cells to create a mesh network with greater density of coverage - meaning more bandwidth, less latency and fewer dead zones.

The connectivity benefits of 5G will make businesses more efficient and give consumers access to more information with quicker downloads and reliability.

But what does it really mean for the brands, marketers and storytellers of the world?

Everything.

It's easy to envision what we could do faster with 5G. But every G has brought with it a paradigm shift:

1G – Voice, untethered talking

2G – Text, a new communication style

3G – Data, the app landscape

4G – Streaming video, the Netflix generation

Companies like Airbnb, Uber, Netflix and Spotify may not have been possible without 4G technology.

In his Keynote speech, Hans Vestburg, CEO of Verizon, put things in perspective when he said that with an estimated [three million people](#) moving into U.S. cities every week, the strain on infrastructure is all too real. Today, there are some [8.4 billion connected "things" in use](#)— up 31% from 2016. That number will grow to more than [20.4 billion by 2020](#).

With such incredible demands on network bandwidth, 5G helps ensure that everything that should connect, can connect, leading the [Internet of Things](#) to thrive on a truly massive scale.

5G will inevitably shake up the media and entertainment landscape. According to Verizon, it's expected to drastically increase media usage. The average monthly traffic per 5G subscriber will

grow from 11.7GB in 2019 to 84.4GB per month in 2028, at which point video will account for 90% of all 5G traffic.

When 5G starts to realize its full transformational potential we can expect to see a significant impact on traditional media usage and mass-scale adoption of AR and VR (reduced latency). We'll also see the emergence of new use cases such as 3D holographics, advanced interactive entertainment and immersive new media applications.

Mixed reality with a backend system that is collecting and analyzing data will provide the best of both worlds for consumers and retailers. Consumers will have a blast in digitized experiences while retailers will gain valuable insights into shopper behaviors.

Through Seamless connectivity, massive computing power, and access to rich data and analytics (stored in the cloud) 5G will open up the floodgates on new and innovative ways to tell stories, and reach digitally savvy consumers.

Ecosystems of data, software and partnerships

Google's presence was heavily felt at CES – and not just because of its huge Google Assistant installation (complete with a rollercoaster). You couldn't walk more than two minutes in the halls of CES without encountering a white suited, bobble hat wearing, real-life Google Assistant.

In 2018, the focus was not so much the on hardware, but the software powering the devices. Increasingly, hardware manufacturers were asking consumers to 'Ask Alexa' or say 'Hey Google' to operate their devices. For CES 2019, the big step change was that suppliers had stopped creating their own software, and started looking to the likes of Google, Amazon and Microsoft to 'power' their devices.

The aforementioned Google 'bobble hats' presence was to remind attendees that the new TVs they were gawking at were not just amazing pieces of hardware – but that they also carried the knowledge of Silicon Valley's smartest minds.

While this does create an element of product homogenization, using common software solutions in this way means all hardware companies will be able to insure their products are up to the same level of 'smarts' as competitors and can focus on innovation such as pixel density, product design and cost efficiencies.

For consumers, that provides yet another link to the wider tech ecosystems of these companies. Google technology is now integrated into more than 10,000 devices, across 1,600 brands, giving Google 'reach' of over 1B people on home and mobile devices. Relative newcomer Amazon's Alexa is integrated into over 100M devices.

For brands this poses an interesting opportunity to extend the value of their media and creative partnerships with Google, Microsoft and Amazon and move beyond 'advertising' into hardware. For example, an oil company could program its petrol station to be automatically routed from in-car satellite navigation; a beverage brand could ensure its products are the recommended drink in smart fridges; or an apparel brand could ensure its clothing products are highlighted in health trackers.

In 2019, hardware manufacturers will often work with more than one partner. At CES, [Whirlpool](#) had several brand, tech and commerce partnerships integrated into its smart KitchenAid devices – Google for voice input, Amazon for e-commerce, Walmart and Instacart as their 'physical' store partners – all linked from the recipes in their acquired [Yummly](#) app.

These integrations will allow brands to reach consumers in new and relevant places and

spaces, and prove a direct link between contextual awareness and transaction. This will potentially, usher in an era of loyalty and removal of choice. Brand conversations with these tech giants still need to start with media inventory and creative best practices but should now extend into discussions around their wider ecosystems. First-mover brands will benefit from gaining ownership of the first logo on the touch panel.



The Smart Home is the new store

The connected and smarter home products showcased at CES could do everything. From [FoldiMate](#), the much talked about robotic laundry folder, to more resilient technologies - like [Heatworks](#), which makes your home more efficient by using the natural conductivity of water as heat or Currant's Smart Wall Outlet, that analyzes power usage and makes recommendations on which devices to power off to save energy.

However, for brands, the implications of smart home go far beyond partnering with technologies to make the world a better place. To quote Unruly's Futurist Elena Corchero, "The Smart Home is the new store." The increasing amount of smart technologies in homes, could result in consumer memories becoming even more fragile to brands than they currently are today.

Many mainstream appliance companies had smart home booths set up to showcase their wide range of connected fridges and ovens (which have an increasingly accessible price point for consumers) as well as highlight all the integrated partnerships consumers could activate within their products. We also saw a few entrants this year allowing consumers to make any appliance smart(er)—with [FridgeCam](#), a camera attaches to your fridge and alerts you to when products are about to expire, eliminating food waste up to

50%. Combine that product with Amazon's Dash Wand and consumers are now able to operate in more of a "subscription" mindset based on the products they already have in their home as they run out.

As we have seen in e-commerce, subscription services are becoming increasingly popular with consumers. On Amazon, 60% of Prime members subscribe and save. As our homes become the store and subscription mindsets take over, brands will need to tailor their approach to communications. This might include providing advice, entertainment and even trial tactics to interrupt the consumer's journey and convert them to digitally savvy consumers.



Voice is forcing brands to speak up

Voice was omnipresent at CES 2019, but the conversation has shifted from smart speakers to integration. Google and Amazon (clearly emerging as victors) want to have voice everywhere and in everything, making it enticingly simple to integrate their AI driven voice assistants into any product, from [a toilet](#) to air travel.

With many nonsensical examples, the greatest impact is in either enabling or unlocking via a new input (i.e. when you need another pair of hands). [Intel](#) showcased its voice-activated PC commands ("Alexa, open a browser for me"), [wellness-themed connected homes](#) (which send an alert when elderly inhabitants fall), and [audio functionality in cars](#) (which enables consumers to book a restaurant from home and receive directions in their car). Importantly, these were all third-party use cases, powered by Google and Amazon.

Amazon is taking a more commerce-focused approach. Consumers can now activate Alexa via their phones or laptops to receive notifications and delivery updates. The company is also using its 100M+ device ecosystem to learn more about its consumers and offer them personalized

products. Increasingly Amazon is able to recommend the cheapest, best or its own brand – based on consumer desires.

Google continued its exponential growth in the voice space from last year, extending beyond speakers and to looking at more complex problems to solve – many of which use Google's huge data set and advanced AI.

Not to be forgotten, Samsung is still pushing Bixby - while not as popular as Google and Amazon at the show, Samsung's voice reach via mobile handsets is comparable to Apple's Siri, and is now being extended into smart fridges, washing machines, air conditioners, AI speakers and robotics.

Although many voice applications remain gimmicky, there is a strong commitment from leading tech brands to integrate and promote voice usage across their devices. Voice is unequivocally here and brands not considering a robust voice strategy are naïve. As a starting point for strategy, marketers need to ascertain how their brand is algorithmically optimized for voice assistants. Is their brand SEO'ed to be readily and logically recommended, referenced, suggested

and understood to consumers?

Secondly, marketers need to be clear as to how their brand identity translates into voice. Male or female? Accent? Tone? Pace? Personality? These elements will either deepen consumer engagement or alienate. Do you build a skill that is purely operational and functional, responding to user prompts with informational replies or do you build in quirky, witty tangential responses i.e. political views held by a fridge?

Thirdly, brands need to ask themselves how to work with the right voice partners to navigate the space in terms of content, media and tech? What is news now won't be in six months time. Brands need to stay ahead of the game. What may seem a niche opportunity now may will tip into common usage very soon.

Fueling Resilience

Gary Shapiro, President & CEO of the Consumer Technology Association proclaimed, "Our mission is to encourage and expose innovation that improves the human condition."

Resilience was the overarching theme for the 2019 show and a common thread across all impactful technology we saw at CES – whether that be about making people's lives better or changing people's lives entirely.

As the Consumer Technology Association's EVP Karen Chupka explains "We define resilience as the place where technologies are going to help keep the world healthy, safe, warm, powered, fed and secure." The role of tech is not to replace humans, but to empower us.

This year more than ever before, each product was met with questions around its accessibility, functionality and adoption, with purpose becoming a highlight instead of an afterthought. There were many notable partnerships and offerings featured in the Resilience Exhibit and Eureka Park areas that were focused on preparedness, response and recovery. For the companies striving to help make the world a better place, they should seek out opportunities to collaborate with innovators to support local governments and/or NGOs to address real world challenges, relevant to their business. Innovators,

entrepreneurs and local governments often need help with identifying the right technologies and solving implementation challenges. For marketers the by-product of successful collaborations can deliver natural opportunities to engage consumers in a profound way.

CNET's Brian Cooley sums it up best when he says that technology helps improve consumers lives – it makes things quicker, easier and eliminates barriers. Otherwise it's just technology.

Many will say that the technology seen at CES was incremental, rather than disruptive change. Only once our resilience is tested will we experience the impact of the most disruptive technology– something we hope will never happen, but one we're comforted people are preparing for.

Four standout products on a mission to improve the human condition:

Accessibility: [WeWALK](#), smart cane that detects obstacles and obstruction using vibration.

Safety: [LifeDoor](#), a simple product built and funded by firefighters that automatically closes your door when it hears your smoke alarm, helping save lives in the event of a fire.

Convenience: [Willow Breast Pump](#), a wearable pump that fits in a woman's regular bra, with no tubes or attachments.

Industry: [Wilkinson Baking Co.](#), a fully automated way to make bread, start to finish: it mixes, forms, proofs, bakes and cools bread all on its own.

ACTIONS FOR ADVERTISERS

1. Start planning your 5G strategy

The advent of 5G technology will send consumers' mobile media consumption through the roof. To reach them successfully, the smartest brands will be those prepped and ready to share engaging content and experiences from the off.

Working with your media agency, anticipate how 5G will change experiences for your target audiences and then plot how your brand can respond to these new habits. Think about the potential role AR and VR can play in your marcomms mix and go for it.

2. Activate your (brand) voice

If you haven't developed your voice strategy yet, you need to move fast. That means crafting your persona (literally, what do you sound like?), and optimizing your content to work for voice algorithms, not traditional SEO. You don't write as you talk, so your content might need a radical overhaul.

Don't forget, user journeys may cross devices – shifting from voice to keyboard, and from Siri to browser (for example, a user might ask Alexa for cinema listings then go to their desktop to book). So, consider the journey flow and optimize your content for multiple contexts and settings.

3. Power-up your partnerships

In a world of connected devices, brands now have opportunities to establish new partnerships with hardware providers, tech providers and more. In terms of hardware, if you are an FMCG brand, for example, imagine partnering with a fridge manufacturer to build a product with a built-in Amazon-style Dash button linked to your e-commerce store.

This is an untried space for most brands, so, to get it right, consider building a structure innovation program in your business to help you connect with new technology and hardware partners while managing the risk of trialling new ideas. Your media agency can advise you on how to get this right.

4. Try to make people's lives better

Brand purpose is becoming more and more important, and the most impactful technology of the next few years will go some way to improving the world we live in.

For your brand to remain relevant in these spaces, you need a clear – and sincere – reason for being.

If you're looking to activate your brand purpose, you should never forget that the primary goal of purpose-driven campaigns is to inspire change, not drive sales. That might sound counter-intuitive, but authenticity is key to building brand trust. To create change, you must first identify a problem associated with your cause and then think about how you can use media to solve this problem.



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