

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

Consumer electronics sector's Top 10 2017 headlines

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Brikk's iPhone X plays into the phone's luxury target. Image courtesy of Brikk

By STAFF REPORTS

The consumer electronics sector was marked by two major developments in 2017: the collapse of British high-end smartphone manufacturer Vertu and the introduction of Apple's luxury device, the iPhone X.

The collapse of Vertu signaled that the idea of a luxury smartphone is a difficult one to sustain when most luxury consumers just buy the newest iPhone anyway. But Apple's iPhone X, an unapologetically luxury smartphone, shows that there may still be life in that idea and its competitors will have to adapt.

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Here are the top 10 articles on the consumer electronic market from this past year:



Mot Hennessy Champagnes stand with Amazon Alexa. Image credit: Mot Hennessy

Mot Hennessy teaches Alexa to be a Champagne connoisseur

Mot Hennessy USA has developed a "Bottles and Bubbles" skill for Amazon's virtual assistant Alexa to educate consumers about Champagne at home.

A number of brands and retailers have created skills for Amazon Alexa as a way to tap into the artificial intelligence

trend by curating digital-enabled experiences. Mot Hennessy, the spirits division of luxury goods group LVMH, has been boosting its digital touchpoints recently as discovery and purchases are now more apt to happen via an electronic device.

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Brikk's iPhone X plays into the phone's luxury target. Image courtesy of Brikk

Brikk elevates iPhone X's \$1K price tag with premium models

Luxury technology maker Brikk is turning Apple's newly announced iPhone X into a greater status symbol by outfitting the devices in precious materials.

The Lux iPhone X product line includes models in 24-carat yellow gold, 18-carat rose gold and platinum, with options to add diamonds to the device. Cell phones and other digital devices have turned from utilitarian objects to pieces more closely related to fashion or jewelry as a number of luxury players have entered the field.

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The victory was announced at Apple's keynote event Sept. 12. Image credit: Apple

Apple Watch surpasses Rolex as most-popular watch globally

Apple's anticipated event Sept. 12 showed that the consumer electronics maker is continuing to be a threat to luxury, with both a new ultra-premium model of iPhone and the announcement that Apple Watch has surpassed Rolex as the most-popular timepiece in the world.

The new iPhone model is significantly more powerful with a host of new features and designs and a price point that seems targeted towards a more luxury crowd. Along with its triumph over traditional watchmakers such as Rolex, luxury brands should be wary of Apple's growing influence with the ultra rich.

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Virtual reality at LVMH's Luxury Lab during Viva Technology in 2016. Image credit: LVMH

Software and technology Luxury Memo special report

The luxury business has been slow to adopt new digital initiatives, but with technology opening up opportunities for exciting new experiences and affluent behavior constantly shifting, software and technological solutions are now being embraced by brands to create new meaning to high-end.

Innovation in software and technology is influencing a wide range of factors for luxury brands and retailers, including connecting to consumers, business operations and product development. Personalization, privacy and a wow-factor are just a few of the strategies needed as part of an effective luxury business in today's digital-focused market, using tools such as augmented reality, virtual reality, 3D printing, social media and the Internet of Things to either sink or swim.

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Vertu recently had all of its assets liquidated. Image credit: Vertu

Vertu's failure is a cautionary tale for luxury electronics

In July, British luxury smartphone manufacturer Vertu closed its doors, signaling the dangerous road for luxury brands that seek to enter the world of consumer electronics.

Brands from across the luxury world have been partnering with electronics manufacturers or releasing their own electronics, but the dangers of the field are clear. Luxury brands frequently just do not have the resources or know-how to compete with the likes of Apple and Google in this field.

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The Montblanc Summit smartwatch. Image credit: Montblanc

Smartwatches have promising future: Connected Intelligence

While the smartwatch industry was slower to take on than previously expected, disruption from these devices may still occur as adoption rates are steadily increasing.

According to latest "WEAR Report Industry Overview and Forecast" from NPD's Connected Intelligence, there has been a 1.5 percent increase in individuals above the age of 18 who own a smartwatch compared to six months ago. The report forecasts that there will be a 60 percent growth in smartwatch owners by the fourth quarter of next year.

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Tonino Lamborghini is owned by automaker Lamborghini. Image credit: Tonino Lamborghini

Tonino Lamborghini inks deals with Harrods, UAE's Levant for retail partnership

Italian consumer electronics brand Tonino Lamborghini has launched its latest smartphone model, Alpha-One, at exclusive retail partners in the United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates.

In the U.K., the Alpha-One smartphone will be sold exclusively at London department store Harrods, while in the UAE, the mobile device will be distributed by Dasan Networks at a number of retail partners. Tonino Lamborghini's latest launch comes at a time when the high-end smartphone market is facing struggles as consumers are more interested in devices produced directly by Apple and Google.

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The Turing Appassionato phone comes with an AI concierge called Sir Alan. Image credit: Turing Robotics

Turing launches AI-powered, concierge-equipped smartphone

Turing Robotic Industries, a San Francisco-based company focused on mobile technology, is releasing a new high-end smartphone that comes with a built-in concierge service.

Turing's smartphone is called Appassionato, meaning "enthusiast" in Italian, as well as being a play on words with the word "app." Appassionato's main selling point however is an on-board digital concierge named Sir Alan who, Turing boasts, can assist in managing every part of an owner's life.

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Beoplay's H4 headphones. Image credit: Bang & Olufsen

B&O Play seeks broader US presence through Best Buy

Danish consumer electronics manufacturer Bang & Olufsen's contemporary marque B&O Play is linking with retailer Best Buy to grow its visibility in the United States market.

On Aug. 6, the brand began retailing a selection of its products in Best Buy stores as well as a full assortment online. With more than 1,500 stores across all 50 states, Best Buy offers Bang & Olufsen a large audience of potential new customers.

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Kylie Jenner for Balmain x Beats by Dr. Dre headphones. Image credit: Balmain

Balmain, Beats collaboration speaks to millennials' intertwining of music and fashion

French fashion house Balmain is celebrating its creative director's love of music with a Beats by Dr. Dre headphone collaboration.

Balmain's collaboration with the Apple-owned headphone brand includes its signature over-the-ear Studio Wireless and the gym-ready Powerbeats3 Wireless earbuds. The product unveil was timed with Balmain's July 19 opening of its West Coast flagship at 8421 Melrose Place in Los Angeles, where the brand will host a star-studded affair later today.

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