

MARKETING

## Independence, intelligence driving consumer behavior in 2019

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Mobile's importance is only going to grow. Image credit: Pinterest

By SARAH JONES

Consumers today have more options and tools at their disposal to make decisions, leading to more empowered, knowledgeable choices.

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During a webinar presented by Euromonitor on Jan. 31, analysts laid out the 10 consumer trends for 2019, which were linked by common themes of mindfulness, digitization and discernment. The researcher notes that amid political upheaval, consumers are looking to take back control and make an impact.

"The world feels more out of control as we move into 2019," said Gina Westbrook, consumer trends director at **Euromonitor**. "So much political upheaval in developed markets, with fast totally unprecedented change in developing economies.

"Taking back control has been a catch phrase for some political movements, reflecting people's desire for more agency and self determination," she said. "Many of our 2019 global consumer trends are about trying to assert ourselves."

### Connected consumers

Euromonitor noted during the presentation that consumer spending is expected to grow across all regions, with Asia-Pacific seeing the sharpest uptick.

Particularly in emerging markets, it is imperative for brands to have a digital presence. Rural areas are seeing growth in the mobile Web, opening up opportunities for brands to reach consumers without needing to have a physical store.

Consumers are willing to spend to get services and purchases quicker, and they expect seamless experiences. Technology is also playing a role in simplifying their lives, as they use technology to order ahead or schedule appointments.

This desire for speed and streamlined consumption has also helped to drive the subscription market, as shoppers opt for periodic deliveries of fashion, food or beauty instead of taking the time to pick out items themselves.

Brands are also responding. For instance, Samsung has launched a connected refrigerator that enables consumers to see the contents of their fridge via video while they are out grocery shopping, preventing repeat trips to the store.

### *Samsung's connected fridge*

Consumers also have more tools at their disposal to research products heavily before making a purchase. Today, everyone is an expert, and brands and platforms are finding ways to connect like-minded individuals online to leverage their insights.

Sephora's Beauty Insider and social network Aliwangwang both offer this exchange, taking ecommerce conversation outside of the typical brand-consumer relationship.

Beyond consumption, digital mediums are impacting how consumers live their lives. Rather than isolating individuals, advances are actually allowing them to interact with others around the world.

For instance, consumers can take in a live spin class on a connected Peloton bicycle or see a concert with others while wearing an Oculus headset.

This rise of digitization has also led to a need for disconnecting. Instead of the fear of missing out, or FOMO, Euromonitor instead foresees the rise of JOMO, the joy of missing out.

Consumers will find ways to take time away from social media and the grind, whether it is solo travel or activities away from their phones.

Independence is also present in the growing trend toward living alone. Between the prevalence of divorced baby boomers and younger consumers eschewing marriage, households made up of single individuals are becoming more common.



*Consumers are more apt to live alone. Image credit: Riley Home*

These consumers tend to pick more sensible items for their homes, and they are also less apt to be loyal to particular brands. Independent living is creating an opportunity for products and experiences that make solo lifestyles more fulfilling.

Boomers in particular are staying in their own homes longer. This plays into a trend towards more age-agnosticism, in which consumers do not want to age traditionally.

Across all age groups, consumers are looking for ways to be able to feel and look their best for longer, without trying to appear younger than their age.

As consumers reject anti-aging wording, product development and marketing in beauty is catching on. For instance, Dior's Capture Youth line targets a younger demographic with preventative skincare.

### *Dior's Capture Youth*

### Mindful consumption

A number of Euromonitor's trends center on the environment and wellness.

For instance, the researcher finds that consumers are opting for simplified products and experiences that also offer exclusivity. This could mean locally produced food or eco-luxe glamping.

Marketplace Italic is indicative of this mindset, offering consumers unbranded luxury goods from factories that

make products for brands such as Gucci ([see story](#)).

Consumers are also mindful about how their purchases impact the planet. For instance, they are pushing brands to drop plastic or come up with greener alternatives for packaging and products.

Stella McCartney is aiming to prove that plastic is not fantastic in a push for a more sustainably derived eyewear collection. The brand's new bio-acetate eyewear incorporates materials made from wood pulp, a renewable resource that is biodegradable, rather than the typical petroleum-based acetate ([see story](#)).

Last year, Selfridges furthered its sustainability efforts by removing carbonated drinks in plastic bottles from its stores.

Part of its Project Ocean campaign, this latest move from the retailer follows other drink-related measures, including banning disposable water bottles and recycling coffee cups. Beyond boosting its own environmental impact, Selfridges is aiming to lead by example, hoping to inspire other stores to cut out plastic ([see story](#)).



*Selfridges is no longer selling plastic soda bottles. Image credit: Selfridges*

Supporting animal welfare, shoppers and brands have been opting out of materials such as leather, fur and feathers.

"[Consumers will] continue to be absolutely relentless in their demand for complete transparency to feed their need for this conscious consumerism," said Alison Angus, head of lifestyles research at Euromonitor. "Business absolutely must take steps to address these concerns.

"And yes, we know there are challenges and for some industries, it's particularly difficult," she said. "But at the end of the day, conscious consumers will pay a premium for products that sit with their more mindful and conscious values."

Consumers are also taking their health into their own hands. Rather than crash diets, they are opting for more mindful, long-term wellness.

Among the product categories on the rise as a result of this trend is the cannabis-derived CBD, which is popping up in everything from beauty to food as consumers turn to its medicinal properties.

"You need to use this consumer engagement to listen and learn," Ms. Westbrook said. "Consumers have the power.

"Business needs to work with that by making a genuine, two-way conversation," she said. "To respect, listen and give agency to people. Live your CSR policy, be authentic, don't preach.

"But most important, use the great new technological advances to ensure the path to purchase is clear, and simple and efficient."