

Technology: Women like it simple

According to new consumer research unveiled by Jabra, one of the world leaders in innovative Bluetooth heads and speakerphone solutions, gender is the clear differentiator in terms of why consumers are making new technology purchases for office or personal use. From netbooks to MP3 players, the cellphone is no longer the only gadget equipped with Bluetooth functionality and the demand for hands-free accessories - including heads and speakerphones - is increasing.

The market research, conducted globally in collaboration with consulting firm McKinsey, revealed that while men currently represent the majority of Bluetooth accessory owners, women are on the move - and simplicity, convenience and design are key product traits that women look for in these accessories. Furthermore, women are a powerful purchasing group - they account for about 40% of consumer electronics spending, according to an estimate by research firm NPD Group.

Compared to men, who cited work and daily commutes as the primary impetus for purchasing a Bluetooth device, women cited more lifestyle-oriented reasons, like the ability to listen to music, multitask, perform recreational activities, and even participate in sports.

Female economy

"We live in a female-driven economy and industry research shows that women are more likely to drive household technology purchases," says Iman Lattouf, channel marketing manager - Middle East & Africa. "Women are at the forefront of our research and development process and we feel it's our mission to make products that are relevant to the female user experience.

"Specifically, products must be intuitive, aesthetically appealing, and most importantly life changing. It is necessary for the product to demonstrate how it improves some facet of life - even if it's as simple as video conferencing, web browsing, or driving with both hands on the wheel.

"Early adopters in the Bluetooth headset and speakerphone categories are not your typical role models for mainstream consumer adoption. These early adopters are mostly driven by occupation - take what is classified today as 'road warriors' for example, who were some of the first to shape the Bluetooth revolution.

Back to basics

As a company, we have re-evaluated our approach to research and development (R&D) and have gone back to the basics. Sometimes simpler is better, particularly when there is a degree of education that needs to take place around technology like DSP, A2DP, dual microphones and multi-use. With less than 10% of cell phone users using Bluetooth accessories, our focus is on making the products intuitive and the technology invisible."

"When developing technology products, you need to add that extra dimension and complexity to the design process that considers features with a broad appeal in order to be successful," said Jeanette Jensen, product manager, mobile division GN A/S.

The fast-paced technology industry has been slow to target women, because trade shows, marketing, and news coverage remains focused on a surplus of hardware features that appeal to men and not on practical utility, which the research suggests is more what women want.

"Focusing on features that are important to both genders - ease of use, simple but elegant, feature-rich design - are areas in the design process that have really evolved in the last couple of years," continued Jensen.

"We have found that women like technology but are more practical-minded when making a purchase - they think about

things like how it can help them in their daily life before they consider what features the product includes."

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