



Gartner Says by 2019, 20 Percent of Interactions With Smartphones Will Take Place via VPAs

Many Mobile App Interfaces Will Become Subservants of VPAs

December 21, 2016 — Advances in various technologies will drive users to interact with their smartphones in more intuitive ways, said Gartner, Inc. Gartner predicts that, by 2019, 20 percent of all user interactions with the smartphone will take place via virtual personal assistants (VPAs). "The role of interactions will intensify through the growing popularity of VPAs among smartphone users and conversations made with smart machines," said Annette Zimmermann, research vice president at Gartner. Gartner's annual mobile apps survey conducted in the fourth quarter of 2016 among 3,021 consumers across three countries (U.S., U.K. and China) found that 42 percent of respondents in the U.S. and 32 percent in the U.K. used VPAs on their smartphones in the last three months. More than 37 percent of respondents (average across U.S. and U.K.) used a VPA at least one or more times a day. Apple's Siri and Google Now are currently the most widely used VPAs on smartphones. Fifty-four percent of U.K. and U.S. respondents used Siri in the last three months. Google Now is used by 41 percent of U.K. respondents and 48 percent of U.S. respondents. "VPAs' usage is bound to accelerate as they add many new features, including integration for business services, further language support and appear across more devices," said Jessica Ekholm, research director at Gartner. Gartner expects that, by 2019, VPAs will have changed the way users interact with devices and become universally accepted as part of everyday life. Today, VPAs are fulfilling simple tasks such as setting the alarm or retrieving information from the web, but in the near future these systems will be able to deliver more complex tasks such as completing a transaction based on past, present and predicted context. This trend is also intensified by the acceleration of conversational commerce, but voice is not the only UI for VPA use. In fact, Facebook Messenger is allowing users to interact with businesses to make purchases, chat with customer services and order Uber cars within the app. Moreover, Tencent's WeChat generates over \$1.1 billion in revenue by offering its 440 million users an all-in-one approach, letting them pay their bills, hail cabs and order products with a text. China represents the most mature market by far, where the increased dominance of messaging platforms is causing the traditional app market to stall. This trend is continuing to grow, not only among consumers but also among businesses or in the prosumer context. For example, Microsoft's integration of Cortana into Skype will allow users to chat with their VPA. Cortana will then facilitate the interaction with a third-party bot to get things done, such as a hotel or flight booking. "We expect AI, machine learning and VPAs to be one of the major strategic battlegrounds from 2017 onwards, and make many mobile apps fade and become subservants of VPAs," said Ms. Zimmermann. Voice and Gesture Become Increasingly Important Interfaces With a predicted installed base of about 7 billion personal devices, 1.3 billion wearables and 5.7 billion other consumer Internet of Things (IoT) endpoints by 2020, the majority of devices will be designed to function with minimal or zero touch. By 2020, Gartner predicts that zero-touch UIs will be available on 2 billion devices and IoT endpoints. "Interactions will move away from touchscreens and will increasingly make use of voice, ambient technology, biometrics, movement and gestures," said Ms. Zimmermann. "In this situation, apps using contextual information will become a crucial factor in user acceptance, as a voice-driven system's usability increases dramatically according to how much it knows about the user's surrounding environment. This is where device vendors' assets or partnerships in VPAs, natural language processing (NLP) and deep machine learning experts will matter." Gartner clients can read more in the reports: "Predicts 2017: Personal Devices" and "Competitive Landscape: Consumer Messaging App Providers, 2016." This research is part of the Gartner Special Report "Predicts 2017: Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way: A Gartner Trend Insight Report," a collection of research that focuses on predictions that allow companies to plan strategically for both expected and unexpected change. About Gartner Gartner, Inc. (NYSE: IT) is the world's leading information technology research and advisory company. 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