Article for member pack

**World Consumer Rights Day 2019:
*Four ways smart products could be better for consumers***

Today is World Consumer Rights Day. We mark the day every year as a means of raising global awareness about consumer rights and needs. This year’s theme is [Trusted Smart Products](https://www.consumersinternational.org/what-we-do/world-consumer-rights-day/trusted-smart-products/).

Smart products are revolutionising the way people communicate, learn and think around the world, but with digital innovation comes new challenges.

So how can smart devices work better for consumers?

**1: Accessibility – widening access for everyone**

Smart products are available in regions all over the world, but barriers including affordability still prevent billions of people from benefiting from their convenience and innovation. In Africa 1GB of data costs on average 18% of a person’s [monthly income](http://1e8q3q16vyc81g8l3h3md6q5f5e-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/A4AI-2017-Affordability-Report.pdf), pricing many people out of the market.

There are similar issues in Brazil, with many people in its most populated city, Sao Paulo unable to [afford internet](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/jan/11/a-game-of-patience-and-persistence-life-in-sao-paulo-internet-deserts). This prompted independent companies to deliver a service to those in the favelas, bypassing the major companies who previously refused to do so. Many vital services like further education applications have been digitised in Brazil making internet access a necessity for many.

By 2025, it is estimated that 91% of connections will be 3G or [4G](https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/The-Mobile-Economy-2018.pdf). This will provide wider access to mobile and mobile broadband services for [more people](https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/The-Mobile-Economy-Global-2018.pdf). However, a concerted, co-ordinated effort by governments, regulators and business must be made to ensure that the remaining offline population is connected to an open internet through affordable, high-quality connectivity.

**2: Safety – securing our devices**

it’s not just unsecure internet access which is a problem, devices with poor security build in can also be open to hacking.

A study by 25 international privacy regulators showed 59% of devices failed to adequately explain to customers how their personal information was collected, used [and disclosed](https://inform.tmforum.org/news/2016/09/60-iot-devices-falling-short-privacy-data-protection/).

In 2015, Consumer Reports found that smart TVs, the kind that connect to the internet, were collecting information on everything their owners watched. Consumers should know what data of theirs is being collected and have a reasonable amount of control [over it](https://www.consumerreports.org/privacy/consumer-reports-to-begin-evaluating-products-services-for-privacy-and-data-security/).

**3: Data – improving consumer control and respecting privacy**

With controversial data collection techniques becoming worldwide news in the last couple [of years](https://www.consumersinternational.org/news-resources/blog/posts/what-kind-of-tech-company-are-you/), World Consumer Rights Day is the chance to call for smart products that respect consumer privacy. A 2018 global consumer study revealed that 52% of users are more concerned about their online privacy compared to one [year ago](https://www.cigionline.org/internet-survey-2018).

So, what can tech companies and manufacturers do about it? One way would be giving consumers greater control over how their data is used and giving them clear and easy ways to update their privacy settings, so they can make their own choices.

But even when consumers can control privacy settings they often don’t know how. To address this Consumers International and the Internet Society’s #ConnectSMART campaign gives consumers [five simple steps](https://www.connect-smart.org/) to ensure that they better protect their data and stay secure when connecting devices to the internet.

**4: Transparency – providing clear information**

Very often online, websites will sell on users’ data without users having any idea that this [is happening](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/mar/03/terms-of-service-online-contracts-fine-print). And even when users are told about everything in the terms of service, they are often long and laborious reads, meaning users do not read important information.

Consumer organisation CHOICE calculated you could read a book in the time it took to read Kindle’s privacy policy, and it would take the average American 250 hours to read all their digital contracts for a year. It is clear that something needs to change if users are going to have all the information they need.

**Join the call for Trusted Smart Products**

This World Consumers Rights Day, it’s important to think about what consumers want and need from a connected world and how they can be put at the heart of the development of these digital products and services.

Visit the [Consumers International website](https://www.consumersinternational.org/what-we-do/world-consumer-rights-day/trusted-smart-products/) for more information.