Future Gazing

Trends Forecast 2016

Industries today are judged by their ability to anticipate and meet consumers not where they have already arrived but where they might be moving. Lifetimes of products, platforms, services, even attention spans are getting shorter by the day and in such dynamic scenarios one cannot risk missing out on the next big wave, or a ripple for that matter. In light of such dramatic changes in the consumer landscape, how can industries gear-up for the future?

Here are the eight stories we are betting on. What about you?
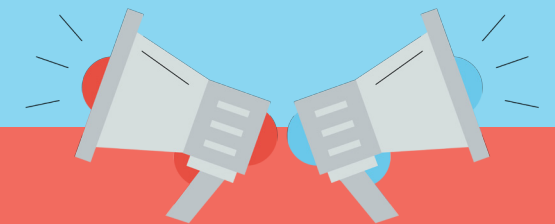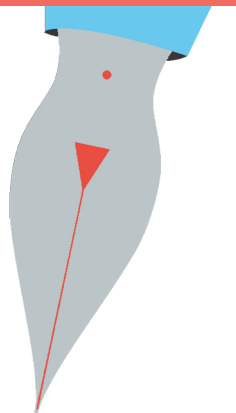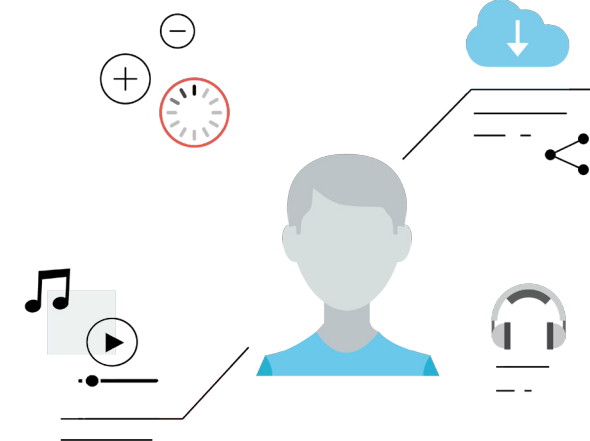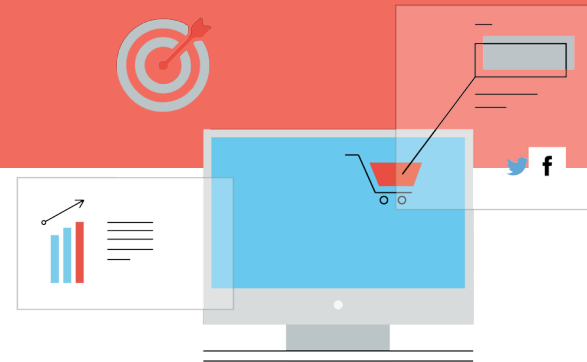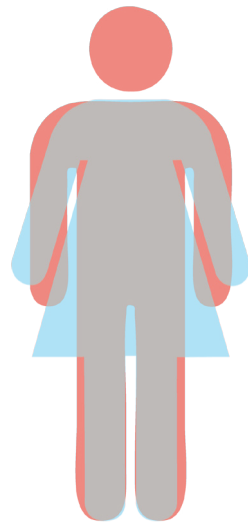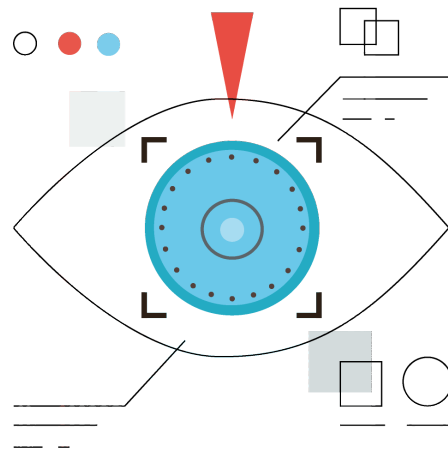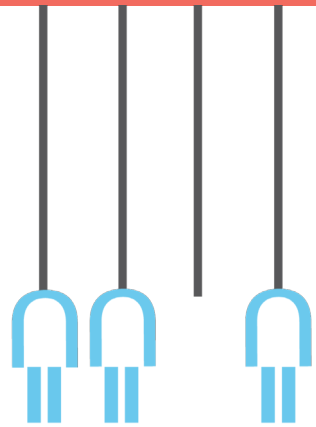
Back to 'you'
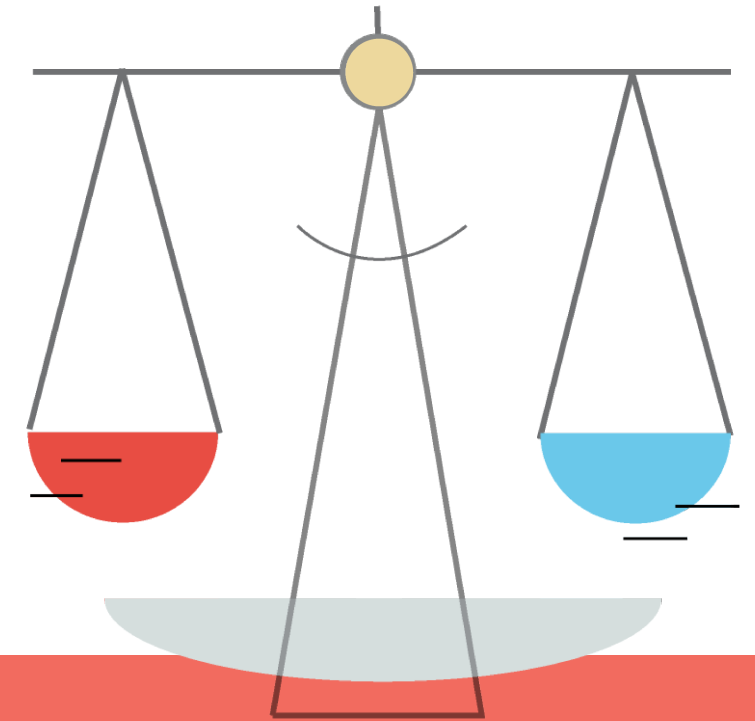
Balance is the new achievement

Chaotic, 'always on toes' lives, excess of choices and information overload is becoming paralyzing and is forcing people to pause and reflect on their own lifestyles. Boundaries between emotional and physical wellbeing are blurring; people are no more aiming to lead a 'disease-free' life but achieve a 'balanced' ideal of healthy mind and body.

Until recently there had been a huge focus on harnessing the health benefits of specific natural ingredients and low processing in food, today however, this is moving forward to a deeper understanding of the benefits of simple food preparations, ingredients, and practices. Similarly, there has been a move from rigorous personal training programs to more personalized health measures that are woven into exciting products and often tech-enabled services.

In times to come, we will see emergence of wellness centers and wellness hotels that will get 'wellness bells' ringing with their holistic 'healing treatments' and curated menus, eco bars, and new age fitness studios respectively. Furthermore, homes will be designed in a sophisticated, well curated fashion to echo this emerging trend. Millennials will have similar expectations from professional environments- 'happiness' will be a top priority and choices be governed by the lives that they want to lead than what has always been a norm.

'Decluttering' will be in focus- what doesn't add value will make its way to the bin; not just the tangible things but also habits and choices.

Getting 'real'
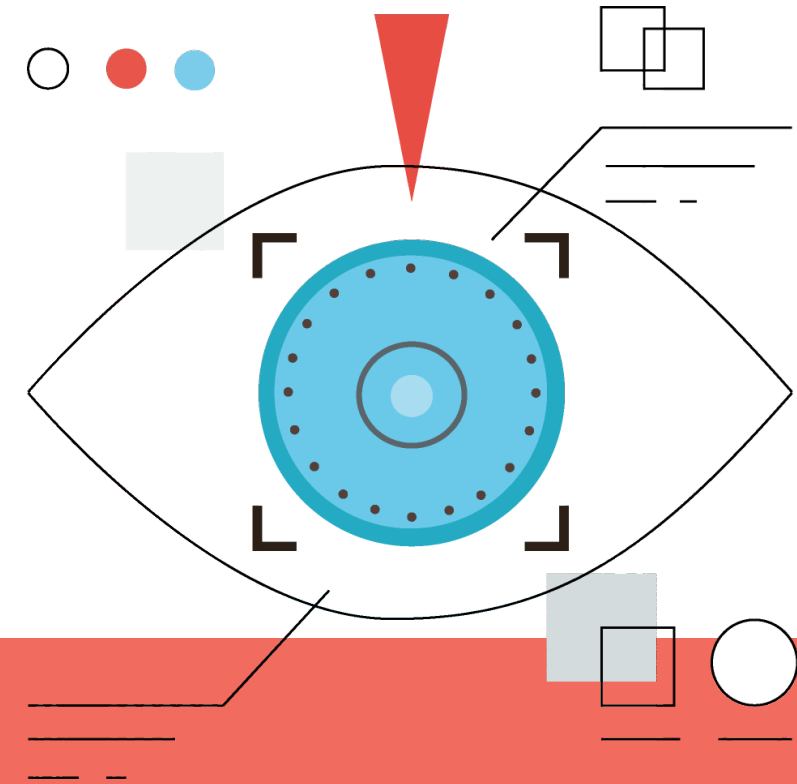
It's been a decade long journey for augmented and virtual reality, and 2016 will prove to be a tuning point. Importance of screens, including smartphones, will diminish and AR and VR will be on everyone's minds. No longer a vision of far flung future, AR and VR are poised to become mainstream and will reinvent everything for consumers- from how we play, work, drive, share, engage, get entertained, shop, collaborate or conduct business.

We may not yet see these technologies going mainstream, but soon we will see them unfold with big product launches across product categories. With heavy investments coming from global tech giants, devices, products, and machines are in for an exponential evolution and growth. Some of the concepts will no longer remain stuffs of sci-fi movies, or gimmicky marketing; companies have already begun mobilizing for these technologies, powering this boom further.

Consumers are increasingly seeking deeper, meaningful, interactive, and uninterrupted experiences. With ongoing advances in AR and VR technologies, both big and small players across industries will finally be able to meet these expectations. It will not take tech savvy early adopters or huge investments to experience these technologies; instead, we will soon see many consumers acquiring and trying out these products and offerings at their homes and workplaces.

Taboo no more
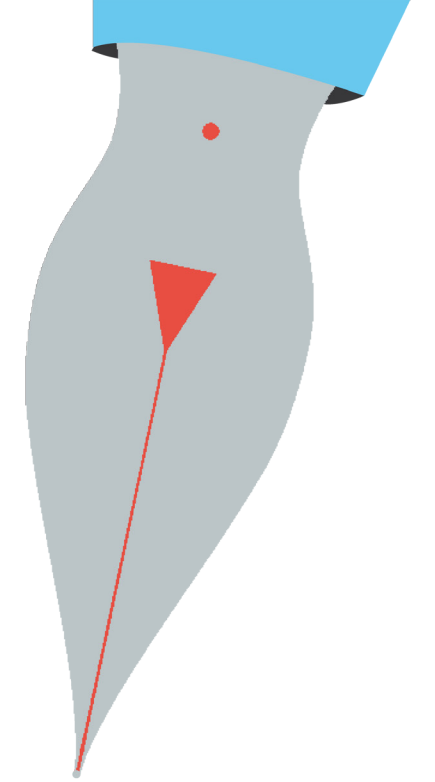
From fights for basic equality rights to touching the taboo topics, we have come a long way when it comes to feminist agendas. There is a new wave of feminism where people have started questioning the frenzied pseudo- feminist ideas that kept emerging from time to time.

Aspects of femininity that were earlier 'not-spoken-of' are now being brought to forefront.

Menstruation, body hair, feminine hygiene, and various other aspects of femininity and dated cultural beliefs are no more being discussed behind closed doors but are getting shared openly, debated, even protested in some cases on various media platforms. Bloggers, Instagrammers, and even regular people are hitting these agendas though social media, taking-on these taboos like never before. Masses are also not behind and are awakening to this movement by bringing little changes in their own homes or taking to the streets for larger issues, marking the beginning of a revolution.

There is a new-redefined feminist wave in offing- one that is not only condemning but also raising consciousness, awareness towards issues like equal pay, body image etc that are relevant to current times.

Big.little
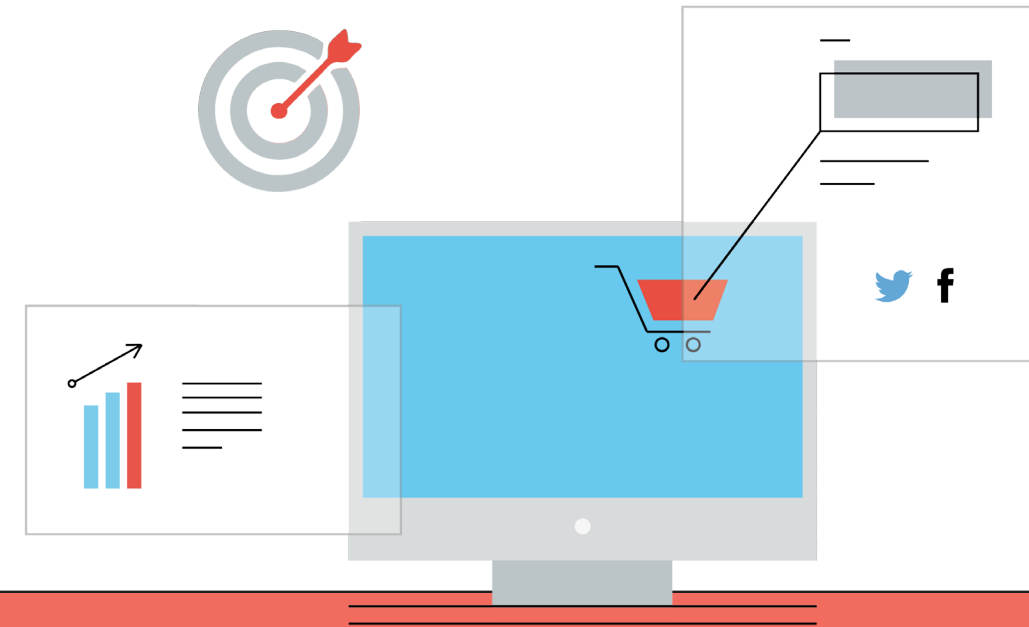
The future of marketing

Technology is no more aiding life, it is defining it. With merits that technology brings, factors like 'privacy' have taken a backseat and people are willing to give away all information- private and otherwise- in exchange of seamless, smooth experiences.

Marketers and brands have all kinds of data about consumers available with them. Not only are they collecting this data from endlessly growing number of digital channels- both social and mobile, but they also have access to network and device data. While it has greatly helped marketers to understand the consumer behaviors better and allowed them to device new digital and marketing strategies, we need to be prepared for times where our devices will start making decisions for us.

Will non-human marketing over-power human to human or device to human marketing? Technology providers will need to start thinking about this as we move into the future.

The tolerance debate
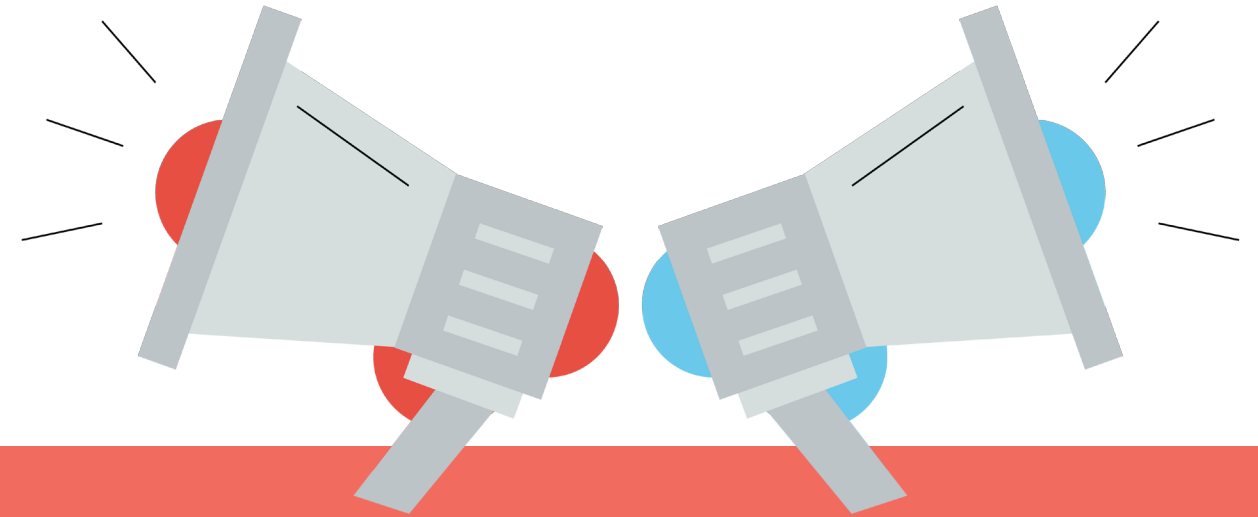
Are we, are we not?

Our society is witnessing a general impatience; even for things that are meant to be taken in a casual light.

Where social media has enabled a free flow and exchange of ideas, it has almost become a norm for matters/ opinions to be put out there in open, contextualized in multiple ways and being blown out of proportion. Not everything is about religion either. Freedom of speech is being exploited- from burning down movie posters and books, to banishing personalities in the name of 'hurting sentiments', to open letters and newsroom debates, to protests and mob lynching, to returning rewards- so much is happening and being witnessed by all.

On one hand there is talk of economic growth and future forward outlook, on the other the country is haggling over issues of religion, sexual identities, political views, individual choices. If this continues, we as a nation are heading for a 'disagreeable' loss.

This extremist behavior is giving rise to an awakening amongst people to look beyond these gibberish noises and question the very ethics and validity of these debates.

Go Stream!
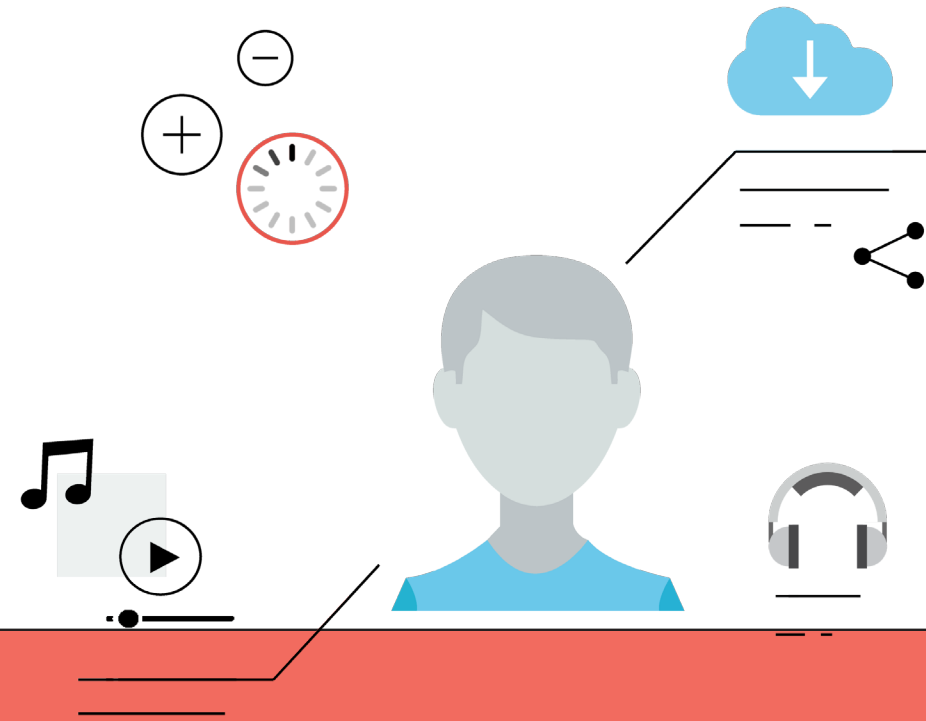
Appointment viewing meets dead end

Internet is changing the world and the current generations are growing up with their own tech-influenced native behaviors. On-the-go lifestyles, short attention spans, rapidly altering choices are impacting every aspect of our lives, including the modes and mediums of entertainment.

With Apple TV, Comcast, Netflix etc gaining momentum in India, traditional media platforms like cable TV, trips to the cinemas, music channels have been disrupted. Content is flowing seamlessly across platforms and screens. Media viewership has changed from an everyday family event to a solo activity, turning every day collective viewing into occasional family events. People are no longer willing or bound to block the slots for their favorite TV series, instead they expect to watch whatever, whenever, and wherever they wish.

At some point, however, with so many new platforms and ever expanding amount of video content, this mushrooming ecosystem will need to be simplified. Unless there is a rise of another breakthrough disruption.

Un-gendered
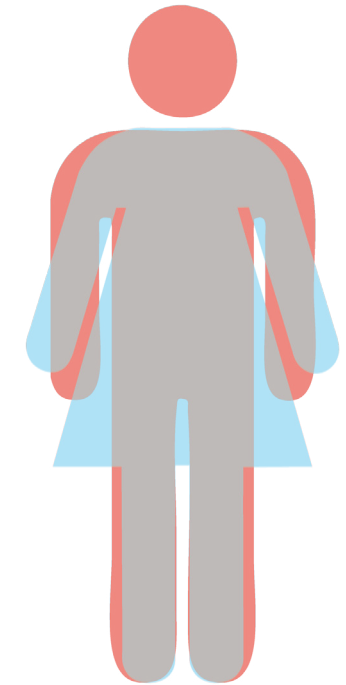
**Gender boundaries are slowly blurring**

The current generation has a progressive outlook towards gender neutrality and one is no more bound by the rigid walls of demarcated territories.

Gender specific messages are being questioned and a progressive outlook is surfacing- right from product usages, to aesthetic choices, to the division of roles and responsibilities. People are conscious of their choices and are demanding a blurring of gender lines in both online and offline stores. Alongside the more obvious tech devices, consumer products, and androgynous fashion, a gradual shift can also be observed in the classification and display of kids' products.

The growing sentiment is gaining momentum and has started reflecting in thought-provoking marketing campaigns by different brands which talk about evolving gender roles. Retailers and manufacturers are heeding to these changes in consumer sentiments and are starting to re-think their strategies.

With such marketing approaches more and more people will get exposed to this thought and will be willing to open-up to adapting gender neutral products and lifestyles.

Cruising Solo
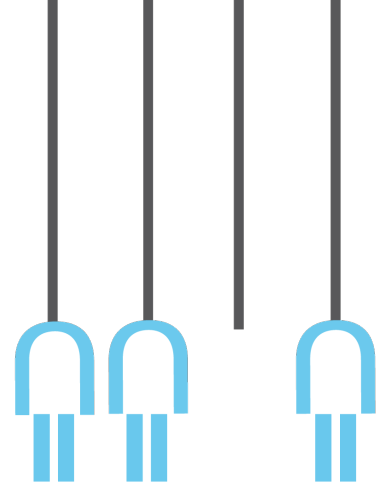
Back the flock off!

With changing lifestyles and demographics, one no longer seeks a 'forced' sense of conformation to traditional familial boundaries, perceptions or ideals. One is willing to explore or express oneself by engaging in solo pursuits driven by individual interests and choices, without necessarily seeking companionship. Additionally, with communication aids being at hand, the definition of 'alone' is merely restricted to being physically distant.

Individuals are now seen to be open to the idea of gifting themselves a 'piece' of time, space, product or experience which they strongly desire. While earlier, these solo explorations were perceived to be stemming from 'loneliness' or 'self-centeredness', society is now celebrating the idea of solo-hood.

With a spurt in products and services targeting this burgeoning consumer segment- single serve food packs, clever solo restaurant seating, single traveller hotel rooms, micro-living apartments to name a few- we have already started noticing the manifestations of this trend. Going ahead, marketers will have a bigger part to play. Companies will have to envision newer ways of responding to this consumer sentiment by equipping the intentional singletons with service propositions that can lighten their burden and enhance their solo-experiences.

Research Domains:

• Consumer Research & Ethnography
• New Product Innovation
• India Entry / Emerging Markets Strategy
• Trend Research and Forecasting
• Service Design
• Branding & Strategy
• User Experience Design
• New Packaging Innovation
• Usability Testing & Design Validation

This report is created by Tata Elxsi's Research & Strategy team.

Tata Elxsi's approach to research draws from over a decade of work, in which it has developed its own systemic and user-centered approach to research and innovation. Our research processes focus on uncovering latent needs, understanding user patterns, behaviours, expectations and desires in order to innovate in strategic business, service, product and system solutions.

The research and insights team is equipped with strong knowledge and experience, which allows us to look at the research and innovation objectives much more holistically and analyze research data seamlessly. This enables us to constantly help organizations make sense of the local users' lifestyles, their cultural and socio-economic scenarios, as well as their needs and preferences.

As a part of our research practice, we have worked with organizations towards identifying opportunities for innovation and design for both global and local markets, decoding environments and scenarios, tracking trends, proposing product and service strategies among others.

For more information, please visit www.tataelxsi.com/consumer-research&strategy or write to us at info@tataelxsi.com

TATA ELXSI
engineering creativity