According to Gartner the smart wearables of the future are inconspicuous-- the analyst predicts 30% of such devices will be "completely unobtrusive to the eye" by 2017.

"Already, there are some interesting developments at the prototype stage that could pave the way for consumer wearables to blend seamlessly into their surroundings," Gartner says. "Smart contact lenses are one type in development. Another interesting wearable that is emerging is smart jewelry. There are around a dozen crowdfunded projects competing right now in this area, with sensors built into jewelry for communication alerts and emergency alarms."

Meanwhile "obtrusive" wearables currently on the market, such as smart glasses, will take cues from their more subtle peers and evolve into forms disguising their technological nature.

In other predictions for the wearables segment, Gartner projects head-mounted display (HMD) sales will reach 25 million by 2018, propelled by compelling virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) applications as well as HMDs in the form of "stylish, consumer-grade video eyeglasses." In the meantime biometric features (such as fingerprint scanning and facial, iris, voice and palm vein authentication) will feature heavily in wearable devices as means for coupling with smartphones.

Most interestingly, Gartner predicts over 30% of consumers in emerging markets will never own a Windows devices through 2017, as the smartphone will replace the PC as the internet-connected device of choice.

"The rise in smartphones and their subsequent drop in price means some users' first

smartphone will be purchased for $50 or less," the analyst concludes. "Their next-stage purchase may be to buy a larger screen device with better viewing and better functionality. In this case, the most likely device choice will be a phablet or tablet and not a PC, because of a familiarity with touchscreen input, interface and device mobility."

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