

# VOICE



BMC GLOBAL SERVICES

One of the most anticipated tech innovations for the immediate future is voice assistants- with Amazon, Apple and Google all racing to integrate their respective AI-powered voice assistants into every household and mobile available.

Emerging devices always provide marketers with new territory to explore as well as the creation of new strategies and marketing methods.

As more households' purchase and use voice assistants, brands must leverage these devices to their advantage and ensure that they are creating unforgettable experiences for their consumers.

## Why is voice so important?

We exist in a time where consumers demand an unforgettable and seamless experience and are instantly turned off by anything time consuming.

The attraction to voice is undeniable. It is fast, informative and allows the consumer to multi-task. Knowing this, it is very important for brands to utilise the capabilities of voice content to give the customer the experience that they demand.

# How brands can use voice

Brands and publishers are placing a lot of thought into their audio specific content. The wide variety of new voice related opportunities are leading to new methods of customer engagement and potentially new channels of revenues for brands.

According to Google, around 20% of search queries on mobile devices are voice searches. Consumers are using voice to search products, get directions and create reminders. As more time is spent on mobile, brands of all sizes must seize this opportunity to optimise voice search to enhance their customer experience.

The growth of the voice market is evident with a Juniper research report predicting that revenues from smart audio devices will grow from an estimated £1.9bn in 2017 to over £7.5bn by 2022. The same report also predicts that the average selling price of the devices will decline over 20%-most likely due to the advancements in technology.

These statistics provide insight into why all the major technology providers are investing in the development and improvement of these intelligent digital assistants. Currently leading the market is the Amazon Echo - thanks to lower pricing and a very well crafted marketing strategy. However, it is highly likely that their dominance will deteriorate over the next five years as major audio brands like Sonos introduce their own smart audio speakers.

Voice platforms offer brands- across all industries- with a great opportunity to provide another dimension to their marketing and customer service efforts.

## 1) Lucrative advertising deals

Publishers are extremely bullish on voice assistants like Alexa and Google Assistant- due to the opportunity to secure lucrative brand sponsorship deals with top brands.

Eyeballs on social media platforms are hard to attract due to the increased competition and reduced barriers to entry. However, ears are still up for grabs and this presents a fantastic opportunity for brands to cement their authority across all voice platforms. Brands need to be careful though; they need to make sure they don't sacrifice the user experience to enhance revenue.

Leading the way...

CNBC are leading the way by putting a strong focus on securing audio sponsorship deals with advertisers in the next couple of months. The company have placed more emphasis on the creation of voice content and have seen the number of listeners double since January.

## 2) Creation of loyalty forming experiences

Voice assistants add a human element to the customer experience, with consumers developing a relationship with the voice assistant. The strength of AI analytics allows brands to assess the tone and sentiment in the user's voice, thus providing an insight into the likes and dislikes of the consumer. Brands can utilise this data to provide their customers with a truly personalised and adaptive experience.

## 3) Replacing mobile apps

Mobile apps are a time consuming experience. The consumer has to log in to the app every time they want to find out certain information. Voice assistants could eventually replace a large number of information based mobile apps. This may be a bank balance or loyalty points held for a brand. Brands could then use the voice assistants to offer products that they think their consumers are interested in based on the data collected.

## 4) Customer service in an instant

Voice platforms such as Amazon Echo, offer brands a new dimension to engage with their audience. Advances in artificial intelligence have levelled the playing field and

allowed smaller businesses to utilise this technology to better engage with their customers.

Creating a bot- using AI- allows brands to engage in a conversation with their customers and answer any questions that the customer may have in an instant.

Failure to provide instant solutions to the consumer will cause them to jump to another brand that makes them feel valued.

The power of AI-enabled voice analytics allows brands to adapt their customer service to each consumer. For instance, if the customer is speaking in an aggressive tone, brands can assess whether the consumer should be offered a better deal, or an interaction with an actual customer service representative.

## Voice assistance in industry

### E-commerce

Commerce within voice platforms is largely untapped but there is great potential for brands to provide their customers with a seamless experience when purchasing a product. Traditionally, to purchase a product you would have to walk to the shop, pick up the product, pay at the cashier and then take the product home. Commerce-voice integrated products will now allow consumers to order by voice and sit back whilst the product is delivered by a third party logistics partner.

According to 'Walker Sands 2017 Future of Retail Study', 19% of US consumers surveyed have made a voice purchase through Amazon Echo or another digital home assistant and 33% plan to over the next year.

Another report by Linc & Rakuten discovered that companies that sold consumer products via Echo, saw an 60% upsell rate- therefore suggesting that using voice platforms increased brand loyalty.

Both these studies clearly highlight the incredible opportunity for online retailers. Amazon are clearly leading the voice-commerce wave due to their dominating presence in both voice and e-commerce markets. The easiest way for a consumer to make a purchase via a voice platform is to ask Alexa to place an order to be shipped from Amazon.

Voice doesn't just provide a great opportunity for powerhouse brands like Amazon. It also provides small online retailers with a platform to increase customer loyalty and number of sales. However, it must be remembered that retail is a highly visual space and voice alone will not grow a commerce business.

For everyday, repeatable items such as groceries- we will likely see more and more consumers use home assistants to place their usual orders. Whilst for more unique and luxurious items, voice will have to be integrated with mobile and desktop solutions.

## Toolkit: Voysis

Voysis helps smaller brands integrate voice into their e-commerce business.

Voysis is a holistic voice AI platform that's ideal for high-performing ecommerce owners. A voice-driven, natural language interface helps consumers search for items, as well as helping ecommerce brands shore up inventory.

Voysis is still in the early days of development but their mission is to provide all brands with the opportunity to integrate voice into their online store.

They will be soon launching their first product- Voysis Commerce- which will provide brands with a streamlined and automated solution.

## Content ideas for brands

Here are a few examples of how brands of all sizes have utilised voice.

### 1) Content for Alexa/Google Home

The major selling point of voice technology is the time it saves the consumer. Therefore, brands have a great opportunity to play off this selling point to provide their customers with easily consumed, high value content.

It is important to remember that the content produced via voice platforms should not be directly selling a product but rather used to engage an audience on a consistent basis. Brands often make the mistake of thinking that all content produced has to be directly related to the product being sold. This couldn't be further from the truth!

Brands should work backward from the behavioural patterns of their customer when creating content across all platforms- and the same rule applies when creating content for voice platforms. Brands should think about why consumers engage with their brand and what their interests are. These insights should then form the basis of their voice content strategy.

For instance if a male grooming brand is targeting 18-25 year old males then they could produce a daily style tip for their audience to listen to whilst they are getting ready for the day ahead. Alternatively, the brand could also produce a morning digest of the latest sporting headlines- if their consumers are typically interested in sports.

There is no doubt that we will eventually exist in a world where the vast majority of households own a voice assistant device- such as Alexa. This presents brands a great opportunity to gain a presence in every household.

## 2) Podcast

Podcasts have seen a resurgence over the last couple of years and are being used by brands across all industries to provide high quality value to their audience. Nearly a quarter of all Americans listened to podcasts regularly in 2017, rising from 21% in 2016 to 24% a year later.

Research conducted on podcasts found that new listeners are likely to become regular listeners. Bridge ratings found that year over year, light podcast listeners (one show per week) are more likely to increase their consumption than they are to drop off or even remain the same.

With these kind of retention and engagement rates it is hard to ignore the power of podcasting.

It is very interesting to see the various different formats of podcasting being utilised by brands. Traditionally, podcasts would be full 30 minute- hourlong shows. However, now we are noticing a number of brands breaking down bite size chapters of audio that are ideal for sharing across social media.

British men's magazine GQ launched their first podcast in October, last year. GQ work very closely with podcast platform, Entale to encourage people to share the podcast. The platform divides the podcast into chapters named after each conversation topic, thus allowing users to skip to the parts they're most interested in.

## Problems associated with voice content

1) The flip side to producing content for smart speakers is that brands have to create voice specific content, in addition to the content they have already produced for the various social media platforms. This will require time, resources and the tailoring the content to optimise the voice platform being used.

2) Another hurdle brands will have to overcome when producing voice specific content is the promotion of their content. Unlike content that is shared across social media- you cannot make voice content go viral. Therefore, brands should be promoting their voice specific content across social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

3) One of the biggest problems for brands creating voice specific content is learning how to monetize their audience via the incorporation of branded content.

Amazon have placed strict rules limiting third party promotions- which have subsequently limited publishers' ability to generate revenue from advertising. This move by Amazon has forced publishers to be creative with the way in which they integrate third party brands into their content. Huff Post, promoted ABC drama, American Crime by creating daily questions around the drama, into its quizzes.

It is also very important to remember that one of the main reasons why consumers have taken to voice is because of the convenience of consuming audio content.

Consumers do not want to spend large amounts of time listening to adverts. Brands must remember this when creating audio specific content.

## Case study: Domino's pizza

Domino's pizza has been allowing customers order pizza through voice-controlled devices such as Alexa. Domino's debuted the voice feature at the end of July, last year and is a progression from the Easy Orders feature (introduced in 2013).

The pizza chain sees voice as a vehicle for simplifying the order process and wants to emulate the success of Amazon's one click purchase.

The immediate focus is to grow direct sales from voice-controlled devices. However, as the number of users using the voice platforms increases then there will be a significant number of brand partnerships opportunities available.

## Resources to help you:

### Amazon skills

A 'skill' is essentially an app for the Amazon Echo. They are activated by Alexa and let the Echo access a variety of useful websites or services. A consumer can access a skill by browsing the options in the Alexa app and clicking enable on the ones you want.

Any brand can create a skill. There is already a huge library of over 10,000 available from huge, global brands such as The Guardian.

Create an account on AWS to create an Amazon Skill.

Follow the 'build a skill' tutorial for more information

### Toolkit: Storyline

Storyline allows individuals with no coding experience to reach their audience using Alexa. The software is designed to be very simple and can be used to create either a custom skill or a flash briefing. The best news is that the software is currently free to use.