



egta insight

VOICE: KEY INSIGHTS FOR MEDIA COMPANIES INTO AN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

After the alarm clock chimes, you find yourself sitting at the breakfast table, asking Alexa for the latest news and your favourite radio station. While driving to work, your car informs you about the upcoming traffic jam. Siri orders your pizza during lunch, and when you get home in the evening, you ask your TV to put on your favourite show.

As voice experiences increasingly permeate our daily lives, it is becoming clearer to advertisers that voice is tech's giant next leap – transforming the way brands reach their customers, offering a brand-new channel in the marketing mix.

Voice does not only offer opportunities for advertisers, it also opens up a wide range of possibilities for TV and radio companies, and their sales houses – to enrich user experiences, unveil new products, provide voice-activated branded content, and more.

With this publication, the egta team hopes to provide you with an extensive overview of this emerging technology and inspire you to consider the opportunities it brings for media owner and their sales house.

The first chapter of this Insight provides an introduction to voice, the underlying technology and the possibilities and challenges it currently faces. The second chapter provides an overview of the voice landscape, the leading players and platforms, and the different devices which comprise the voice ecosystem.

The various options on how to create a voice experience, and the different scenarios available today are featured in the third part, and an extensive overview of recent use cases from the radio and TV industry are provided in the fourth chapter, together with various ways of monetising voice technology.

The final chapter digs deeper into what is next for this new field and provides a glimpse into the future of voice.

We hope that this overview, together with the insightful use cases, will inspire the readers in their endeavours when it comes to voice, and we wish you plenty of reading pleasure.

The egta team

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CHAPTER 01:
AN INTRODUCTION
TO VOICE

1.1. Alexa, what is Voice?

“Just what do you think you’re doing, Dave?” - Science fiction fans will no doubt remember HAL, the sentient computer assistant who played a crucial role in Stanley Kubrick’s masterpiece 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. While only a few years ago talking to a computer seemed like something otherworldly, it is now a reality thanks to the many advancements in voice recognition, machine learning and smart speaker technology, paired with intelligent personal assistants.

The voice concept refers to any interaction that allows you to control a computer device using natural language. It is an umbrella term for the entire universe where voice - rather than a keyboard - is the primary input that drives the experience. This can take various forms: asking Apple’s Siri on your smartphone to search the web, ordering pizza via your Google Home smart speaker, asking your in-car assistant about traffic while driving to work, or selecting your favourite TV show with your voice-enhanced remote control.

Voice experiences represent a brand-new channel for advertisers and brands to reach consumers. After the creation of the worldwide web in the 1990s, the arrival of social media as of 2007 and the advent of smartphones in recent years, the emergence of voice is now the fourth major shift in consumer behaviour in the past 30 years.



“We are now witnessing a new shift in computing: the move from a mobile-first to an AI-first world.”

[Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google](#)

Voice is well underway to become the first point of contact for consumer attention. Instead of competing for eyeballs, brands and advertisers will now be competing for their ears.¹

1.2. How does it work?

Voice assistants leverage two specific branches of artificial intelligence: voice recognition and natural language processing (NLP). When a user utters a command to a smart speaker, the voice recognition part recognises the sound waves and converts them into written words. The NLP part then takes those words and processes the commands they contain.

Both voice recognition and NLP have existed for quite a while, but thanks to machine learning and neural networks, they are changing fundamentally. With millions of voice samples and their corresponding words at its disposal, neural networks can now learn to create the underlying software that turn voice commands into written text.

1.3. Types of Voice experiences

While voice experiences can take many forms, they can essentially be categorised in 3 ways:

- **Voice-Only:** experiences that have voice as the only input and output. Amazon Echo Dot and Google Home are generally considered as voice only although technically they are not because of their small visual cues (like the light ring on the Echo Dot)
- **Voice-First** is when an interaction relies primarily, but not exclusively, on voice for the input and output. Examples would be Amazon Echo Show or Google Nest Hub.
- **Voice-Added:** in these experiences, voice is not the primary method for input or output, but instead is used as an option for assisting with input. Voice-to-text on mobile is a typical example of this.¹

1.4. Why use Voice user interfaces?

Given the expertise with which even the youngest person can rattle away at a keyboard or swiftly swipe their way through sites and apps, what is the added value of having another mode of communication on top of that?

Voice has several significant advantages.

- **Speed:** a recent Stanford study³ showed that voice-to-text is three times faster than typing on your phone, even when one accounts for the time it takes to make corrections.
- **Hands-free:** in some instances, such as driving or cooking, speaking is much more practical and safer, than typing, swiping or tapping.
- **Intuitiveness:** Talking comes naturally to everyone, even before we’re able to read or write. So rather than a new interface, voice technology is the oldest interface around. Even users who are less familiar with this new type of technology can reply naturally.
- **Empathy:** The tone of a message (sarcasm, anger, joy, ...) can sometimes be hard to judge in an e-mail or text message. Unlike the written word, voice includes tone, volume, intonation and pace of speech - conveying a great deal of information.

However, voice is not always the appropriate medium for users.

- **Public spaces:** in the humdrum environment of an open-plan office space for example, filled with sounds and talking people - who would a computer listen to, and would it even hear anyone?
- **Discomfort speaking to a computer:** not everyone feels comfortable speaking aloud to a device, even when it is in private.
- **Some users prefer texting:** as many people

already spend plenty of time typing on their mobile or computer, they consider this their normal mode and might pick this way of interacting over voice.

- **Privacy:** people are understandably sensitive about disclosing health issues or sensitive information about their bank, aloud on a train ride into work. It’s not only a matter of privacy when users say something to the voice interface, but also the consideration of what information your voice user interface can say out loud.²

1.5. What are brands doing with voice?

How can companies or brands benefit from the advances in this new field that is taking over the globe? There are already several ways in which brands communicate with their consumers:

- **Utility with personality:** through voice, brands can combine utility and personality. A good example is Sony Music, which developed a bedtime story application, using the voice of Paloma Faith, one of their well-known recording artists.
- **Generate awareness:** Voice can increase brand awareness and inform users about new products, as was the case with Nike, which created a voice app which allowed TV viewers to order a pair of sneakers featured during a basketball game.
- **Facilitate transactions:** Tesco Voice technology can facilitate transactions and make purchases easier- purchasing groceries via voice/screen. Domino’s Pizza: *repeat my order from last time* enables you to renew your last order... Voice can also facilitate the pre-and post-purchase stages.
- **Personalised service:** Voice can replicate the personalised service you would get from an

in-store experience. H&M launched its *HOME Stylist* - one of the first voice applications to be released within the interior segment. The voice gift guide which aims to inspire customers to find the perfect holiday gift will suggest options - depending on who you are gifting, price range and personal style.

- **Product integration:** rather than launching a standalone application, brands can integrate voice within their existing products, such as Ford with its in-car voice application, Bose in its headphones or LG within its TV sets.
- **Operational efficiency:** Voice technology can increase efficiency. *Voiteq*, for example, is a global provider of voice-directed work solutions - allowing employees in the warehouse to manage stock more efficiently. Another example is Alexa for Business - which enables services beyond the consumer home - such as the booking of meeting rooms.⁴

1.6. What are the current challenges that brands have with voice?

While it is clear that voice holds vast potential, several challenges within this growing industry must also be acknowledged.

Firstly, **the technological challenges:** voice is still lacking contextual awareness. It is possible to ascertain whether a user is using voice through mobile or a smart speaker, but for voice to reach its full potential a deeper understanding of the context in which the user is operating is needed. Another technological problem to tackle is natural language understanding. Currently, voice technology can understand 95% of what is being said, but there are still many languages where this needs to be improved upon. And lastly - emotional intelligence. While the most complicated tasks can be understood,

the technology is still struggling to understand a specific emotion or what a user is feeling at the moment in time.

Secondly, **the ecosystem:** as more and more new devices are added to the voice ecosystem, brands will need to continually update their applications to keep up with advancements in technology and the different devices available on the market.

Thirdly, an expanding ecosystem also means that consumer privacy becomes paramount. Consumers need to be confident that their data and privacy are handled in a compliant and transparent manner, and brands will need to consider this with regards to the development and strategy of their voice apps.

One of the most challenging aspects of voice currently is **the discoverability** of applications. Consumers who've downloaded an app on their mobile and haven't used it in a while will remember it when they swipe through their phone. Voice has no such memory triggers.

Making consumers aware of an application requires marketing investments to promote the app - via digital channels, non-digital channels, marketing messages on the product itself (such as a sticker) or voice app reviews sites.

Lastly, there is the challenge of finding where the return on investment lies in launching a voice application. This can be the gathering of specific data which competitors without an app, do not have access to. It can also be building expertise in emerging tech, or finding a new source of revenue via in-app purchases.

1.7. Why companies need a voice strategy

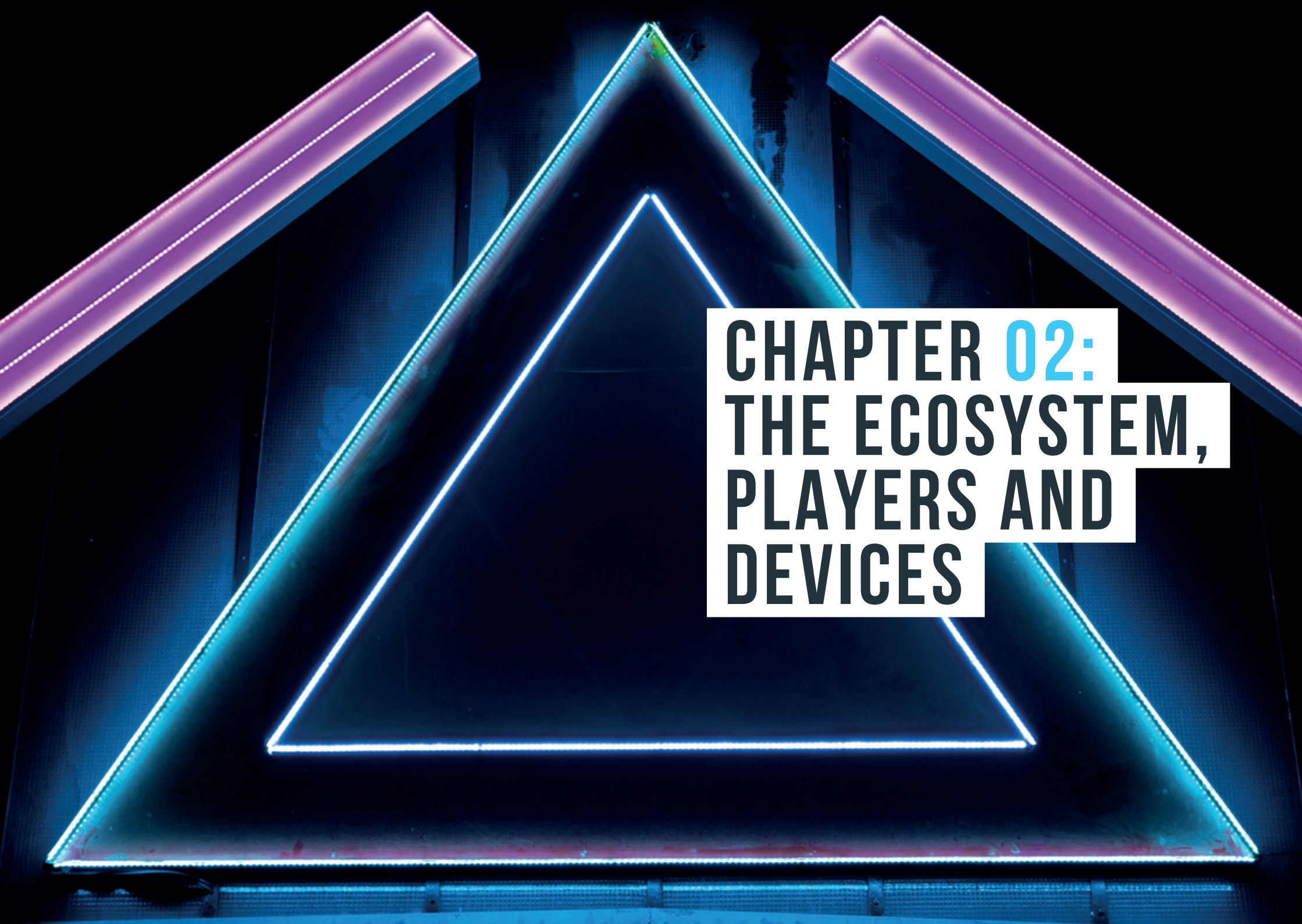
Much like the internet in the 90s, voice technology represents a vast ocean of potential and possibilities. As voice assistants become



more context-driven thanks to advancements in artificial intelligence, they will become more proactive rather than just reactive, evolving from a conversational FAQ to a genuinely interactive assistant which improves consumers' lives.

With increasing consumer adoption of voice, and still a limited amount of content in the voice ecosystem, there is a massive opportunity for companies. Companies who are starting to test voice-first technology now and learn what works and what doesn't for their business will be ahead of the curve - building up expertise, data, touchpoints and revenue streams.

As smart speakers and voice increasingly permeate our daily lives, it won't be long before every company is expected to own and manage its voice-first presence and capabilities, much like every company is expected to own and control their web presence and capabilities.



CHAPTER 02:
**THE ECOSYSTEM,
PLAYERS AND
DEVICES**

The world of voice-enabling technology and voice assistants comprises numerous players, small and large. Initially developed and instituted by the large technology companies, the scene today is active with a flurry of companies across the value chain, from hardware and software development to the creation of skills, apps, content, ads and monetisation strategies.

In its simplest form, the ecosystem can be portrayed as three groups of core players. First, the *Big tech companies* such as Apple, Amazon, Google and Samsung have all constructed voice-infrastructure with hardware, software building blocks and platforms. The second group consists of companies that have either built voice-enabling software independent of the big tech platforms or those who build apps, skills, tasks and other voice-enabling means on top of the big tech infrastructure. The third group of companies then specialises in the distribution and monetisation of voice tech. This group includes a wide array of companies, including the leading tech players, making use of voice for the end-user.

2.1. Main players

2.1.1. The Big tech companies

Amazon, Apple, Google and Samsung have all introduced their own branded voice assistant on their respective smartphones, smart speakers and on other devices. By ferociously pushing voice-enabled products onto the market, the tech giants are the true enablers of today's voice technology. In addition to having their voice assistants installed on their own devices, the assistants are available on devices from a multitude of other incumbent players in the home media and electronics industry, such as Sonos and Bang & Olufsen.

2.1.2. Other tech companies

While the big tech companies have built software on top of their own devices and others, smaller but well-known players have developed independent software. Soundhound, the audio and speech recognition company, developed Houndify, a voice search and assistant app. Mozilla, the creator of the Firefox web browser, established a crowdsourcing initiative to build multilingual, open voice datasets. The Russian tech search engine giant Yandex built Alice, its voice assistant, and recently added it to its smart TV platform. Others, such as Voice Apps, build and publish skills on top of highly penetrated platforms that are open to third-parties like Alexa. More companies and a flurry of start-up companies have entered the space in recent years, developing software and apps for voice.

2.1.3. Distribution and monetisation

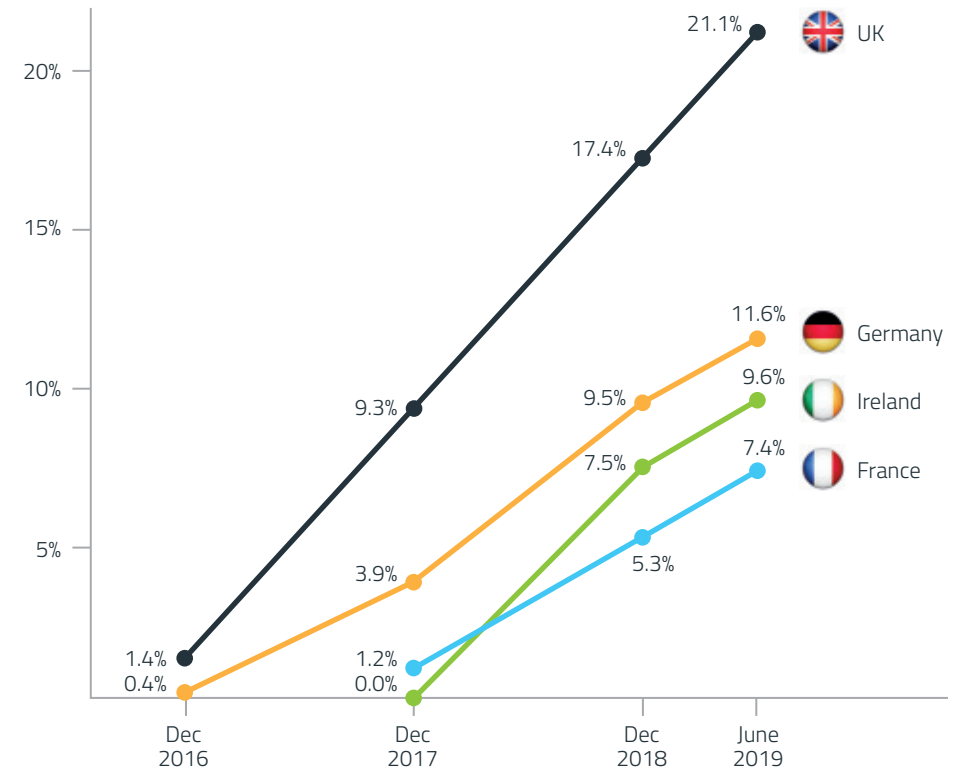
With so many possibilities arising from voice technology, different companies have incorporated an ability to make use of it. From monetisation and data measurement to consulting and brand-focused utilisation, these companies promote, assist and distribute voice tech to consumers. For the purpose of this publication, voice tech for brands and publishers is of particular interest. Read more about how different companies have utilised voice [here](#).

2.2. Enabling devices

2.2.1. Smart speakers

Although not the most widely spread voice-enabling device, smart speakers have become the main appliance accelerating the use of voice. Major tech companies, such as Amazon, Google and Apple, compete with other smaller and medium-sized players, selling smart speakers with embedded voice assistance technology. Experts have described the popularity of

FIGURE 01: SMART SPEAKER HOUSEHOLD PENETRATION BY EU COUNTRY



Source: Over 20% of UK Households Have Smart Speakers while Germany Passes 10% and Ireland Approaches That Milestone, [voicebot.ai - Strategy Analytics, October 2019; URL](#).

smart speakers as *a catalyst for voice adoption*, referring to the fact that the devices are the first to significantly penetrate the use of voice AI within the home.

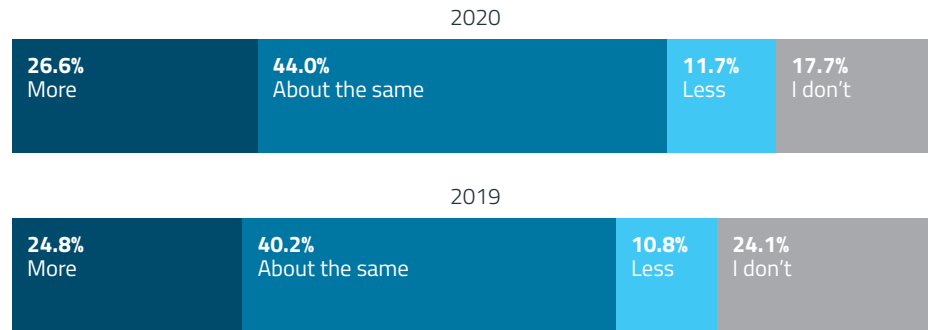
2.2.2. Smartphones and tablets

Early developers of voice technology like to point out that the tech has been around for a long time, long before smart speaker penetration started spiking across developed markets such as the US and the UK. And these early birds are correct: Siri, Apple's voice assistant,

US FACTS:

- Over **one-third of adults in the U.S. have a smart speaker** in their home, or nearly 90 million adults.⁵
- About **50% say they use the devices daily**.
- See Figure 01 for European figures.

FIGURE 02: USE OF VOICE ON SMARTPHONES AFTER PURCHASING A SMART SPEAKER



Source: Voicebot.ai, Smart Speaker Consumer Adoption Report, Executive Summary, April 2020.

was released as early as 2010 and integrated into new iPhones, the 4S, a year later. Alexa, currently the leading digital voice assistant in terms of installed base, was introduced in late 2015. Google Assistant debuted in 2016 and has been available in Android devices since 2017. A growing number of smartphone owners are using voice, after becoming familiar with it via smart speakers. With a large portion of smartphones using voice, advertisers and agencies have started utilising the phones as a two-way communication tool.

► See Figure 02 for use of voice on Smartphones.

2.2.3 Smart display

Smart display devices rely on both touchscreens and voice commands. Multi-modal devices such as Amazon Echo Show and Google Home Hub, made to control smart home devices and other tablet-tasks, are examples from the smart display category.

2.2.4. Hearables

Headphones of all kinds support voice assistance. Apple AirPods, Amazon Earbuds, Samsung Galaxy Buds and Google's Pixel

Buds make use of voice without any screen and many other sounds system & headphone manufacturers such as Bose and Sennheiser sell sophisticated headphones with instant voice assistant access.

2.2.5. Wearables

Wearables' popularity continues to grow, with the smart watches and fitness trackers spearheading the mass adoption. Other gadgets such as smart glasses and even smart clothing continue to be developed and launched to the market, often with voice assistant technology built in.

2.2.6. In-auto

Driving is arguably one of the activities that lends itself most easily to the use of voice. Make a phone call, ask for directions, send a text and play radio stations are some of the most practical use cases already popular by drivers. Tech companies and vehicle manufacturers alike have targeted the in-car experience for voice, facilitating voice recognition within the car. More than half of all new cars sold in 2020 have voice-enabling technology, in addition to the Bluetooth connectivity available in most newer



models. With car manufacturers and specialised in-car suppliers added to the mix of the original developers and suppliers, the segment of in-car voice AI can be considered a stand-alone ecosystem, existing in parallel to the main one.

2.2.7. Voice AI phone-bots

To the dismay of some, phonenumber operators have employed speech recognition AI capable of recognising, interpreting and responding to human speech in natural ways.⁶ This particular use-case of the technology has been implemented to replace human-powered call centres or to improve customer service via voice.

2.2.8. IoT devices and smart appliances

The entry of smart speakers into people's homes has paved the way for other voice-controlled smart home devices. Light bulbs, thermostats, camera equipment, vacuum cleaners, televisions and holistic home-kits

that enable full control of smart devices within the home are only some of the devices available today. While not all of these devices, e.g. robot vacuums, are necessarily of interest to broadcasters and advertisers, the variety demonstrates how swiftly the technology is being adopted to different use-cases.

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CHAPTER 03:
**MAIN PRACTICAL
APPLICATIONS**

3.1. Creating skills or apps for voice

It is essential to understand that every platform has a different name for their voice applications. Amazon has opted for “Skills”, while Google goes for “Actions”, and Samsung chooses “Capsules”.

Amazon and Google’s developer platforms – *Alexa Skills Kit* (ASK) and *Actions on Google* – offer a comprehensive collection of tools, documentation, APIs and code samples to make skill-building and functionality development straightforward for those eager to build and launch their voice application.

The *Alexa Skills Kit* supports building different types of skills – either customised or using pre-built templates. The various skills include:

- **Custom Skills:** a skill that can handle just about any request. This can be: looking up information from a web service or integrating with a web service to order something (order a car from Uber, order a pizza from Domino’s Pizza or play Interactive games).
- **Smart Home Skills:** a skill that lets a user control and query cloud-enabled smart home devices such as lights, door locks, cameras, thermostats, and smart TVs. Examples are turning on the lights or changing the room temperature.
- **Video Skills:** a skill that lets a user control cloud-enabled video service. This can be playing a movie or fast-forwarding video content.
- **Flash Briefing Skills:** a skill that provides original content for a customer’s flash briefing. Flash briefings are audio pieces that are usually topical and ephemeral, and almost always short. They range from news to inspirational quotes to finance tips.

- **Music Skills:** a skill that enables users to select, listen to, and control audio content streamed through an Alexa-enabled device.⁷

Actions on Google lets developers create software to extend the functionality of Google Assistant, Google’s virtual personal assistant, across more than 1 billion devices, including smart speakers, phones, cars, TVs, headphones, and more.

As is the case with Amazon, Google provides several pre-built Actions – in a vast range of categories: *Communications* (e.g. starting a video call), *Finance* (e.g. getting stock quotes), *Food and Drink* (e.g. ordering a menu item), *Games, Health and Fitness* (e.g. getting health stats), *Productivity* (e.g. creating lists), *Shopping* (e.g. getting offers), *Social* (e.g. creating a social media posting), *Transportation* (e.g. getting a taxi reservation), *Travel* (e.g. completing a flight reservation).⁸

Amazon and Google have both made what could be a very complicated process accessible. Currently, Google has more reach via mobile and speakers combined – and extends this competitive edge to developers thanks to a set of well documented APIs and development kits. As creators of services have the most opportunity to benefit from voice applications, which can drive traffic to their content, Google Assistant could be more compelling for these creators.⁹



“Choose something the user was going to do anyway – and make it easier for them.”

[Marcus Duffy – Head of design, Apadmi](#)

3.1.1. The development processes

The development of a voice skill often starts like any other digital project – defining goals and users and the specifications the project in question will require. Traditionally, a digital project would then move into the design of a blueprint to translate user journeys into a visual interface. This is where voice projects begin to differ.

User journeys are instead translated into ‘flows’, mapping out how a user will navigate through the voice experience. These will be refined throughout the planning stage. During script development, the actual words the assistants will say, and the potential anticipated responses from users will be defined. This process is referred to as *conversation design* – the design of natural, two-way interaction between a user and a system (via voice or text) based on the principles of human-to-human conversation.

The testing phase of a voice development project is essential. With no visual menu or content options to fall back on (like a website or an app), a voice project can quickly fail. Developers can test a voice project as they go along with Amazon and Google’s built-in text-based simulators.

After the testing phase, the next step towards going live is certification. This is a review of the skill, conducted by all of the major developer platforms. Certification time is typically five days for Amazon and around three days for Google. It is essential to build this time into the project timeline, especially as it is common for first-time skill developers to have their first submission rejected with feedback, requiring changes before resubmission.¹⁰

3.1.2. Third-Party Voice Builders

Much like the app industry, as voice gains traction, third-party tools started popping up in an attempt to alleviate the load on developers, allowing them to build a voice application once and deploy twice (or more).

Within today’s voice ecosystem, there are several commercial tools available for prototyping voice interfaces. Two such systems are **Voiceflow** and **Botsociety**.

Voiceflow offers a simple and powerful drag-and-drop interface for designing voice interactions for both the Alexa and Google Assistant platforms. Users can drag various action and control blocks onto a canvas and link them together to build complex conversational flows.

Relevant pieces of information that a user provides during a conversation with the voice skill can be captured as a variable for reference later in the conversation. For multimodal devices with a screen, the tool also allows users to design *visual cards*, which display an image and corresponding text to accompany the voice interface’s reply. While Voiceflow describes itself as a tool to visually design, prototype and publish Alexa Skills and Google Actions without writing code, users also have the option of introducing custom code elements into their design.

Voiceflow allows for external integrations, which makes it possible to call a third-party API or database to retrieve additional information. The tool offers a low barrier to entry, but considerable room to build elaborate interactions for those with a programming background.

The second example of a similar dialogue management system is **Botsociety**. Like Voiceflow, it is intended as a cross-platform



conversational authoring tool - not only for voice interactions but also bots for chat-based platforms as well (e.g. Slack, Facebook Messenger).

Botsociety also supports branching conversational flows, which can be visualised as a flowchart. One distinguishing feature of this tool is that it supports multi-party conversation. Often voice assistants are used in group contexts such as with family or friends. Despite these use patterns, most voice prototyping systems have a strict one-to-one conversation model between a single user and a voice assistant. By contrast, Botsociety allows for multiple users and bot personas within a design. While support for voice identity recognition in multi-user conversation is not yet available within the technical architecture of skills for the Google Assistant and Alexa, the tool offers a practical means for designers to prototype a genre of voice interaction that may

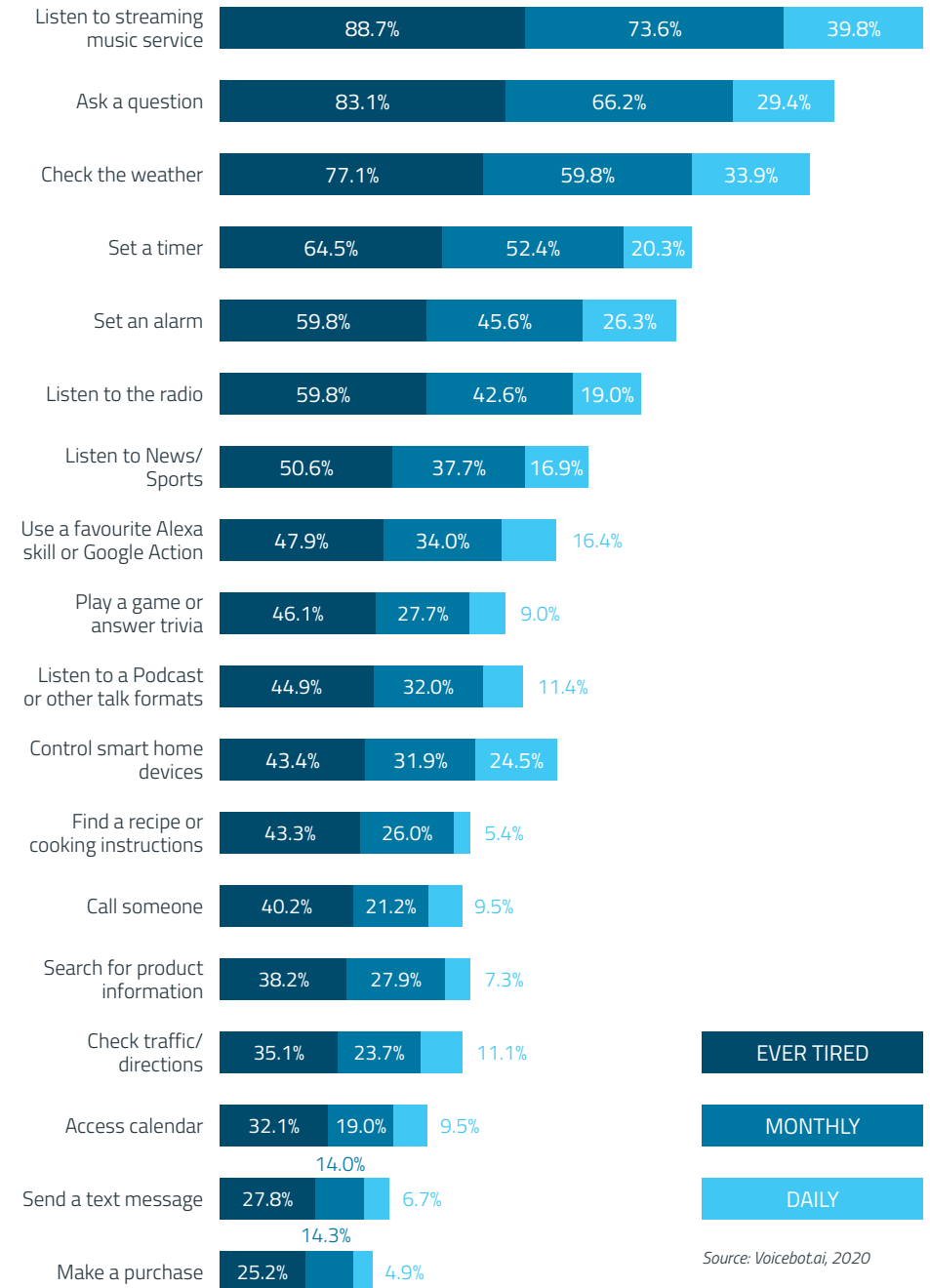
be feasible in the near future.¹¹

3.2. Most common use cases for smart speakers

When it comes to the usage of their smart speakers, consumers appear remarkably consistent. A survey from Voicebot's *Smart Speaker Consumer Adoption Report 2020* shows that among 1000 US adults, listening to a streaming music service was the most common use case that device owners had "ever tried" - equally so when it comes to their monthly and daily active use.

"Ask a question" comes in second for "ever tried" and monthly active usage but was in a third place after "check the weather" for daily use. Timers and alarms held down the fifth and sixth place. The consistency among users is apparent, as this top five smart speakers use cases remains identical to both 2018 and 2019.

FIGURE 03: SMART SPEAKER USE CASE FREQUENCY (JANUARY 2020)



Source: Voicebot.ai, 2020

► See Figure 03 for the smart speaker use frequency.

While asking questions or checking the weather remain in the top five, it is notable that both are down from the previous years. This may suggest that voice users are not getting the quality they want when asking their smart speaker questions – receiving increasingly more default answers from sites such as Wikipedia or Yelp, rather than quality content. The decline in users asking about the weather might indicate that there are strong alternatives on web and mobile in these categories.

Using smart speakers for news and sports information increased with 7% for “ever tried,” 9% for monthly active, and about 3.5% for daily active users. Podcasting rose nearly 5% with regards to “ever tried” and monthly active users.

Audio entertainment is also seeing an upward trend. Listening to the radio on smart speakers is up about 4% for “ever tried” and 2% for “monthly active users,” but showed a 2% decline from 2019 when it comes to daily active users.

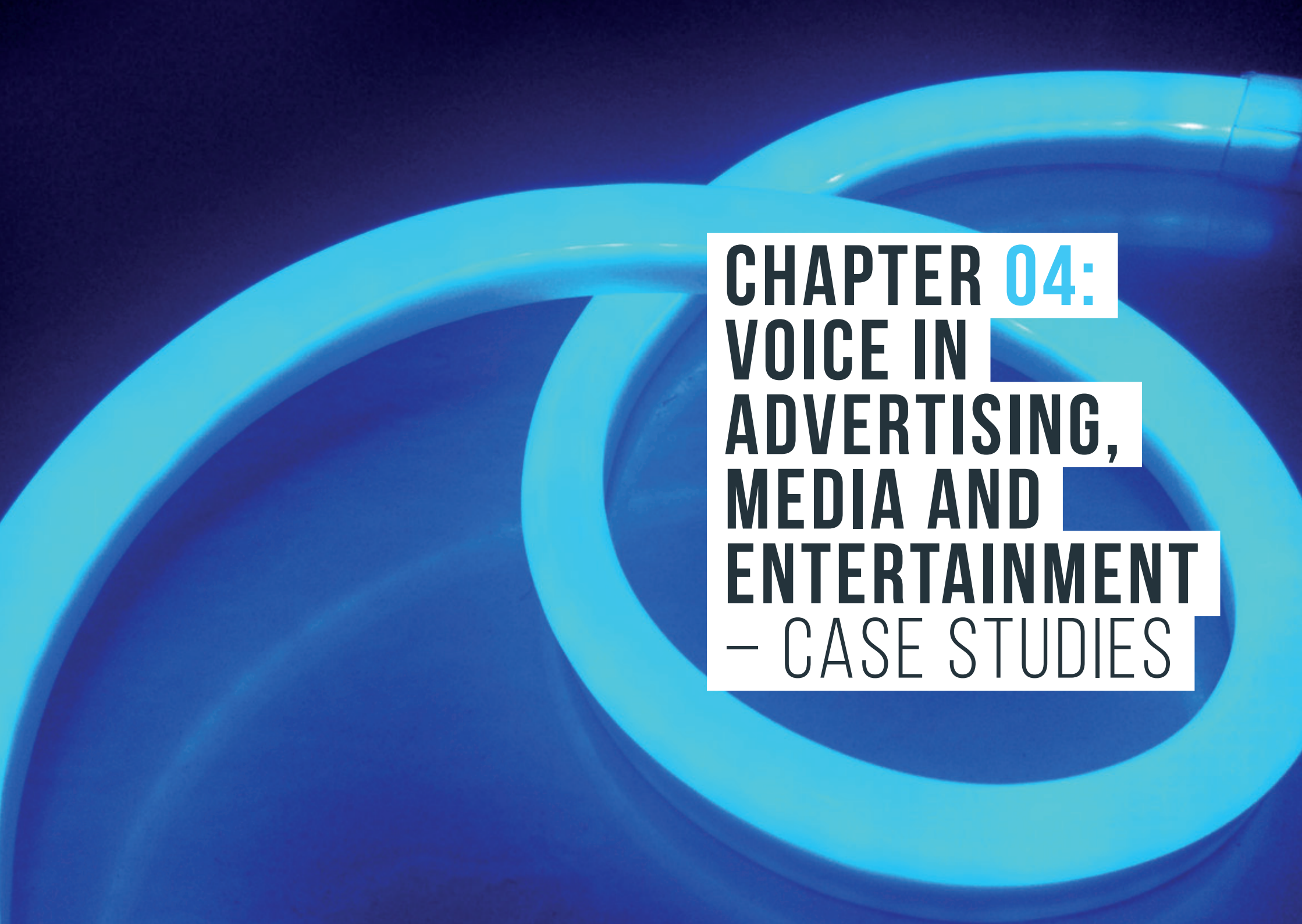
Only 48% of smart speaker owners claimed they had used third-party voice apps. Despite the lack of growth in the percentage of use for third-party voice apps, there is some good news for developers. First, the fact that the market grew significantly. So, maintaining a share of trial translates into more overall users simply because the audience is expanding. The data also show that smart speaker owners that try third-party voice apps are trying more of them and using more on a monthly active basis.¹²



“Because [smart speakers] are fun and easy to use, we now have social audio. We have people actually listening in groups, as families and friends. We haven’t had that in some time.”

[Tom Webster, Vice President of Strategy, Edison Research](#)



The background features a dark blue gradient with several overlapping, glowing circular bands in shades of cyan and light blue. These bands create a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized globe or a complex geometric pattern.

CHAPTER 04:
VOICE IN
ADVERTISING,
MEDIA AND
ENTERTAINMENT
– CASE STUDIES

In this part of the publication you can find concrete examples and cases studies of voice skills (for Alexa) and actions (for Google assistant) developed by TV and radio broadcasters and sales houses, as well as by the brands themselves. We focus on Amazon and Google since they are the market leaders.

In **Part 01** we focus on monetisation opportunities and use cases around:

- Voice advertising
- Voice shopping
- Voice-enabled product sampling
- Voice-activated branded content/podcasts
- Custom voice for brands
- Interactive voice-enabled campaigns

In **Part 02** you can find examples of voice strategies of several broadcasters as well as examples of voice skills and actions developed by media companies for **audience engagement and audience acquisition**. These range from skills for radio, quizzes, games, interactive stories to skills for kids and parents.

PART 01: VOICE MONETISATION. ADVERTISING AND VOICE-COMMERCE

4.1. Voice advertising – the unique position of radio and streaming

The main hurdle in monetising voice advertising is that Amazon and Google do not directly sell advertising on their assistants and don't allow ads through most third-party voice apps. Both platforms recognise that a custom Alexa skill or Google Action developed by a brand may include promotional material but don't allow for Alexa or Google Assistant themselves to be used as advertising channels. Brands are therefore left with only "organic" ways of generating customer awareness, such as building Alexa skills around the brand itself or brand-related/sponsored activities and experiences that serve as voice gateways to the brand.

There are however some exceptions, advertising spots are still delivered during Alexa flash briefings and via music streaming services including radio actions and skills. This puts radio and music streaming in a unique position, they can ad-serve targeted audio ads that include a phrase prompting the user to interact with their voice assistant. These could be campaigns where the user is prompted to ask for a sample, get more information about the brand or directly purchase a product. You can find examples of such voice activated campaigns in the [chapter below](#).

A way around the restrictions on advertising put in place by Google and Amazon is to offer interactive voice ads on other platforms such as mobile. You can see the case study later in this [chapter](#).

In the future, Alexa and Google Assistant could very well become the newest advertising platforms. Advertising could come in a variety of forms, from allowing In-Skill Ads, to Amazon charging brands to advertise through Alexa's Q&A feature. For now, Amazon has claimed¹³ they do not plan to integrate advertising in Alexa. One reason for this reluctance may be that users do not seem to be ready for their virtual assistant to serve them advertising. When Google inserted a promotion for Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* movie launch within information about that user's day in 2017 they faced a big backlash¹⁴ and promptly stopped.

There is however a big potential in voice advertising. A 2020 American research study found that voice-enabled ads score higher among participants than other ad formats, including display banner ads, video ads and audio ads with banners.¹⁵ Consumers surveyed showed high interest in the two-way dialogues enabled by the use of voice compared to other forms of audio or video ads, creating opportunities for advertisers to reach their audiences by new means. For smart speaker ads specifically, other studies have demonstrated how consumers find smart speaker ads to be less intrusive than ads on other major formats of TV, print, online and social media.¹⁶ Radio broadcasters are therefore in a unique position to serve these ads within their streams and target the smart speaker users.

4.1.1. Voice-Activated ads on TV

a. Nike sneaker drop on primetime TV

In 2019 Nike together with R/GA and RAIN, introduced a real-time voice activated sale on a new sneaker model during an NBA basketball game.¹⁷ The campaign was developed for Google Assistant and went on to earn three Cannes Lion awards. At half-time, more than 2 million viewers were prompted to "Ask Nike" via

Google Assistant for the opportunity to buy the Nike Adapt BB ahead of its release date, and a chance at a free pair. The shoes ended up being sold out in just 6 minutes.

Similarly, Reebok launched a limited edition of their Club C sneaker.¹⁸ As part of the product promotion, 50 people had the chance to win a pair by signing up via Amazon and Google Home. All participants had to ask Alexa or Google to "open Reebok Sneaker Drop" and then follow the prompts which included providing basic information such as their age and email.

b. Voice activated ads on NBCU's Peacock

NBC Universal's new Peacock streaming service has been testing interactive advertising via voice-enabled remote controls since August 2020.¹⁹ These interactive ads offer viewers a chance to ask for information and special deals with the microphone on their remote. The brands featured in these ads included Coors, Target, and Unilever. For example, during an ad for Unilever's Suave soap brand, viewers who said "Save with Suave" would get a \$5 gift card. NBC calls this format an "on command" ad. The service is currently available for viewers with Comcast's Voice Remote-equipped X1 and Xfinity Flex. Peacock's experiments are part of an arrangement with a handful of sponsors to work out the best approach for the platform as it evolves.

4.1.2. Interactive voice-enabled audio campaigns – Instreamatic case study

[Instreamatic](#) is a voice dialogue platform that enables spoken-word conversation between brands and consumers on mobile platforms. The company provides an end-to-end solution for managing, measuring and monetising voice-enabled advertising including a programmatic Voice Ad Exchange to assist clients with advertising sales. Their technology can be deployed on any sound-enabled mobile app

including on-demand music, radio streaming, podcasting, fitness, gaming, video, messaging and many more.

Using voice AI technology and new audio marketing strategies brings new opportunities to online audio advertising: an interactive and flexible user experience for listeners, greater relevance and impact of ad communication for advertisers, and a 'voice click' to track and attribute campaign effectiveness for media owners.

The biggest obstacle in digital audio marketing is the "engagement challenge" in a screen-free and hands-free environment, such as driving or listening to radio while your phone is in your pocket, or while using wireless headphones. A very effective solution to this problem is voice-enabled ad technology. When interactive advertising comes on, users are in control and can ask to hear more details, skip an ad, call a company, and apply a variety of other target actions that align with marketers' goals. This offers a great opportunity for radios to turn their advertising spots into interactive ones while making the most of voice control technology



“When you look at Generation Z and Millennial behaviors, the implication of all this technology is that we’ve moved from a touch world to a voice world, where voice has become the new touch. It’s really bringing the sexy back to audio advertising.”

[Susan Panico, SVP Strategic Solutions, Pandora](#)

and solving the “click problem”.

For advertisers, any voice response means that the ad message was delivered and acknowledged. Every interaction is measured and shared in real-time reporting. Data is then available for marketers to gain insights about how consumers feel about a product, enabling A/B testing and analysis. This in turn drives better creative and targeting.

Listeners benefit from a better user experience with short interactive ads and the ability to skip them if they are not relevant.

Finally, media owners benefit from four to six times the uplift in CPM, better fill rate and greater user ad experience.²⁰

a. Instreamatic.ai and GPM Radio

To illustrate the potential of the technology, the Russian radio holding Gazprom-media radio (GPM Radio) cooperated with technology provider Instreamatic and deployed voice-enabled campaigns on their online radio streaming service, *101.ru*. They started running voice-activated campaigns in December 2017 and while representing only 1% of impressions, these ads brought in 10% of the total revenue within the digital audio segment for the given month.

The results showed that 70% of microphones were activated, four out of ten users reacted to voice-enabled ads and 9% agreed to “know more” and visited the client’s website. This is a vastly higher percentage than the average click-through rate for banner ads (around 0.05%)²¹ or CTR for video ads (around 0.26%)²².

On average, voice-enabled ads were seven times more expensive than digital audio ads.

GPM received very positive reactions to the technology and campaigns. They also use the technology for the promotion of their own activities.



b. Instreamatic and Pandora

The US streaming service Pandora has been experimenting with interactive voice ads developed by Instreamatic on some of its mobile users who use Voice Mode – a smart voice assistant that lets listeners navigate the action with verbal commands. The ads facilitate verbal interactions between the user and the brand through vocal calls-to-action. The idea is that they fit neatly into Voice Mode’s screenless, voice-first experience.²³

A voice actor name drops the brand, then informs the listener that “this is a new kind of ad, one you can talk to.” The voice then teases some information that’s unlocked only through a verbal “yes” – a recommendation, a joke, anything to get the listener to answer out loud in the affirmative. In many cases, a “yes” from the listener will prompt brands to re-target them with follow-up ads, which may steer them toward a firmer call-to-action. Saying “no” will

alert brands that the user is not interested. Currently, the ads only encourage listeners to reply with a simple “yes” or “no.” But the technology that powers them is capable of much more. Instreamatic’s AI is able to measure the granularity of the user’s response. One listener could reply to an ad by saying “No thanks, not today;” for example, while another listener might offer a very negative response. Instreamatic’s AI can spot – and sort – the difference. This data may be useful for brands deciding when, or if, to re-target listeners with subsequent ads. Whereas the technology is able to hold a back and forth conversation, for now the spots are limited to prompt Yes or No answers to educate users about the new technology and get them used to talking back to advertising.²⁴

Interactive voice ads introduce new metrics. For example, a “say-through rate,” can capture verbal engagement, both positive and negative, which excites advertisers who want a fresh

way to reach consumers – and measure the effectiveness of that reach.

4.2. Voice shopping

4.2.1. Amazon

Both Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant can be used to buy items online. Brands, however, need to be careful to educate users to ask for a specific product. If a user asks “Alexa, order me toilet paper,” the voice assistant defaults to a suggestion based on their past Amazon purchases. If the user never ordered toilet paper, Alexa will recommend one or two Amazon Prime products through an algorithm. That’s why brands encourage shoppers to say, “Alexa, order me Cheerios,” instead of “Order me cereal.”

In the case of Cheerios, General Mills went as far as trying to hack the Amazon algorithm around Prime day.²⁵ They designed a special promotion giving away a free box of *Honey Nut Cheerios* to anyone who ordered over 40 USD on Amazon. Millions of shoppers added the free cereals to their shopping cart thus establishing a purchase history. Next time they asked “Alexa, order me cereal” Alexa would recommend Cheerios to the cart. This example shows that brands need to ensure that their product descriptions are relevant and easily categorised, and match up with how people request those products on smart speakers.

Most goods available through Amazon Prime and sold by Amazon directly are available for voice shopping²⁶, but goods from third-party sellers are not available through Alexa voice shopping at this time. At the moment, only shoppers in the US, UK, [Canada](#), [Australia](#) and [India](#) can access and enjoy Amazon Alexa shopping. According to the Amazon site, shopping appears on the list of “Unsupported features for all [“International Version”](#) devices.” Therefore, shoppers can use the feature to

create shopping lists but will have to complete orders manually to get the items.

Third party skills on Alexa can have the [in-skill purchasing feature](#) but it is only for digital products (special features, extra content or subscription), so not applicable to most consumer products.

4.2.2. Google

Google Assistant voice shopping works thanks to [Google Express](#). Express is comparable to Amazon Prime and is Google’s online shopping service. With thanks to Google Express, [Google Shopping Actions](#) is the programme that lets retailers display their products on Google platforms. These platforms offer customers an opportunity to shop through Google Assistant and Google Home, as well as through the Google Express mobile app and Google Search.

Shopping on Google Home using Google Assistant was previously only available in the US but in June 2020 Google launched a voice-based grocery shopping service with Carrefour



“The continued rise of voice commerce, specifically non-obvious ways voice removes pinch points in the customer journey. Voice commerce doesn’t always have to be at the last mile of the transaction but can have a very valuable part to play in the customer decision journey influencing the transaction.”

[Charles Cadbury, CEO, Say-it-Now](#)

in France.²⁷ Users need to connect their Google Assistant to a Carrefour account and then open the voice app by saying “Ok Google, I want to do my shopping.” Google’s Voice Match feature identifies who is talking, and opens up the relevant shopping cart. Users can then add products either by specifying the brand or simply stating the category like milk and the voice assistant will decide what to add based on the user’s Carrefour shopping history, in the same manner as Amazon does. Google Assistant compiles the final list, but to actually purchase the items, the user has to switch to the Carrefour website to confirm it is what they want and set up the delivery time and method. The aim is for this process to eventually become a fully voice-based service. Google has just begun testing a programme²⁸ that uses Voice Match technology to allow people to buy products solely using their voice. Voice Match’s security is a crucial facet of Google’s voice shopping system, not only for compliance with Europe’s GDPR privacy rules but to assure people that their personal data won’t be retained.

4.3. Voice-enabled product sampling and delivery

4.3.1. RMS radio case studies – PiCK UP! and AXE

RMS, the leading German private audio marketer, recently rolled out an innovative format that offers users the opportunity to receive a sample of a new FMCG product via a smart speaker skill. RMS used this voice ad format in a campaign for a new hazelnut flavoured PiCK UP! chocolate bar by Bahlsen. The online audio campaign for PiCK UP! advertised the skill encouraging listeners to ask for the sample. Listeners who were interested registered via voice and received their trial package, consisting of two bars with hazelnut cream, at their home. In addition, the testers were asked about their product

experience. The audio campaigns were targeted to smart speaker users via RMS’s DMP allowing the client to choose a specific target group and target them without unnecessary wastage.²⁹

The campaign reached more than 624 thousand unique listeners, and the listen through rate was above average – more than 95%. The campaign received very positive feedback, 76% of the testers consented to receive further communications from PiCK UP! The follow-up survey was used as an additional means of communicating with the testers a pleasing 36% of the testers took part in the survey. 97% thought that the ability to order a sample via voice command was excellent and 59% said it was very likely that they would purchase the product.³⁰

In a similar fashion, RMS together with Mindshare designed a campaign for Unilever and their new AXE shower gel³¹ fragrance. The campaign included 5000 samples and was accompanied by social media campaign that targeted young men 16 to 29 using smart speakers. The campaign delivered around 3.5 million ad impressions (pre-stream and in-stream) and testers were also asked about their experience. The results showed great levels of activation and a positive effect on brand image and positioning. The survey revealed positive feedback from the listeners – 62% found the audio spot for the campaign good to very good, 62% said it is very likely they will purchase the product, 97% said the ordering via a voice command was very good and 99% said they would take part in a similar sample campaign again.

This kind of voice interaction could also be used for market research, to ask users their opinion about a brand or a campaign in an interactive way. RMS developed such a skill that they now offer to brands. The spot prompts the user to say “kurz gefragt” which then launches the

questionnaire skill, guiding the user by a custom voice through sets of questions. This kind of campaign can be specifically targeted at those users who already heard the campaign.

► See [interview](#) with Frank Bachér, Director Digital Media, RMS Germany on page 52.

4.3.2. Send me a sample

Several brands decided to partner with the UK-based company [Send Me a Sample](#) which specialises in voice interactive campaigns for product trials. Users have to register with *Send Me a Sample* to be able to receive the product, otherwise Google Action or Alexa skill guides them through a registration process. Once registered with one brand, a consumer can access other brand offers through *Send Me a Sample* without additional steps.

DKNY³² used *Send Me a Sample* to offer perfume samples along with a coupon for a free gift at the online store. Bacardi³³ was offering rum samples. They targeted consumers over 18 who have previously expressed interest in the brand through advertisements on Facebook, Instagram. They also used influencers with the slogan “The next round is on us”. Consumers who choose to get a free rum sample were also a rich target market for Bacardi. They actively chose to engage with the brand which is far more indicative of continued interest than a click of a mouse or a tap on a smartphone.

Nutella³⁴ offered samples using *Send Me a Sample* in 2019. In 2020 they decided to go a different route and launched the new Nutella Creations³⁵ Alexa skill which includes recipes and guides for using Nutella in a variety of breakfast menus. It also comes with four memory games to help people remember things about the spread, especially kids.

There are some downsides to sample campaigns like the ones outlined above.

According to voicebot.ai³⁶, the samples can run out very quickly, leading to user frustration in not receiving the promised sample. To give an example, Coca-Cola³⁷ made a promotional deal with Amazon that allowed users to ask Alexa to send them a free sample of the new Coca-Cola Energy. This was a part of the launch campaign of the new energy drink that included a Super Bowl commercial. The company ran out of the free samples before the ad even aired. In Australia, the campaign for Coke’s personalised bottles didn’t rely on limited supplies so it didn’t have the same issue.

4.3.3. Spotify’s sample campaign during lockdown

Spotify³⁸ also worked with *Send me a Sample* for the voice activated spots for Nars, a cosmetic brand. The new campaign started in June 2020 and was targeting British people stuck at home during the COVID-19 lockdown when sample handouts were not possible in the traditional way. The ad played on Spotify’s free streaming service on both Amazon and Google smart speakers. The ads end with the suggestion that the listener ask Alexa or Google Assistant for a free sample of blush, lipstick, or mascara to be delivered to their home. This is a different approach than Axe’s campaign on Spotify in 2019 where a spot would end with a suggestion to play a curated playlist designed by the brand.

4.3.4. Mercedes Benz case by RMS Austria

Product sampling doesn’t always have to be in the form of a literal product sample. RMS Austria developed a “Smart Speaker Special” offer combining the voice-based call-to-action with the reach of radio and online audio. The company targeted relevant Alexa users with a Mercedes-Benz³⁹ campaign that also ran on radio and online audio in Autumn 2019. Audio spots prompted the listeners to activate the Mercedes-Benz test drive skill. Once activated,



users indicated their phone number and received an activation SMS for the test drive. The skill proved to be very popular with the users, during the six-week campaign period, the direct response was 625 open sessions by 369 unique customers and 113 text messages were sent for a test drive appointment. Both the client and the agency were happy with the results.

4.3.5. Bauer Media – interactive radio ads for Audi

Bauer Media UK cooperated with AdTonos, a programmatic audio advertising platform to deliver interactive voice adverts on Absolute Radio, Kiss Radio and Magic Radio via smart speakers as of December 2020. The campaign was run by AdTonos utilising its *YoursTruly* technology, in partnership with Octave and Omnicom Media Group’s PHD, delivered the ads on behalf of Audi across commercial radio stations in the UK for the first time. An ad

featuring an interaction trigger is inserted into an ad break, once broadcast, listeners can react to the ad with a simple voice command to engage the voice assistant and complete a desired action before being returned to the live radio station. Listeners could easily book test drives for the Audi’s latest model through voice-activation on their smart speakers. The campaign also harnessed intelligent geolocation technology to help listeners select their nearest dealership. AdTonos believes that by allowing advertisers to dynamically insert interactive ads in live radio content, the tool paves the way for instant, two-way communication that will not only increase conversions, but also forge stronger links between advertisers and valuable radio audiences.⁴⁰

4.3.6. Oreo Mysterious flavour

Boosting awareness and interest of customers via voice campaign works well also for FMCG brands like Oreo⁴¹ that was launching a new

mysterious flavour. A new Oreo skill was built into Alexa, and didn't need to be downloaded separately. Alexa responded to the question "What's new with OREO?" with news and information about the cookie brand, including special announcements. The skill was launched on the same day as the new Mystery Oreo flavour contest. Alexa offered clues about the mystery flavour if asked. The voice assistant was just one facet of a much bigger promotional campaign. In addition to the news and contest, Alexa device owners could ask the voice assistant to order different kinds of Oreo packages. Alexa would add the Oreo order to the customer's Amazon shopping cart and push a notification to the customer about the order. Telling the voice assistant to "checkout Oreos" would complete the order for delivery based on their Amazon settings. For Amazon, the Oreo skill is another step toward Alexa being the major hub for information and commerce.

4.3.7. Delivery by voice

Voice assistants can also be used to order the delivery of products to the users. For example [Drinkies](#) by Heineken makes it possible to turn Google Assistant into a virtual bartender, with a range of Heineken products arriving within an hour. People living in those places where Heineken can deliver beer can register for the app, then simply say "Hey Google, talk to Drinkies" and be guided through placing the order. Similarly, the restaurant chain Chipotle⁴² in the US offers a skill on Alexa that once connected to a Chipotle Rewards profile, the user just has to ask Alexa to tell Chipotle to order their favourite for pickup or delivery. This speeds up the process for users that have their favourite go-to order. The reorder-only rule isn't unique to Chipotle. Alexa only allows favourites to be ordered through the Starbucks and Seamless skills, for instance.

Google embraced the delivery space when

it started enabling users to order food from Google Assistant⁴³ without opening delivery apps or websites. Major delivery apps like DoorDash, Postmates, Delivery.com, Slice, and ChowNow all joined the platform right away, giving Google access to thousands of restaurant delivery services. Google also offers Google Express which enable product search, purchase, and delivery from dozens of national retailers.

Flower delivery company Interflora⁴⁴ launched the first voice commerce Alexa skill in the UK. The skill allows people to buy and send flowers through the voice assistant, using Amazon Pay to conduct transactions by voice. The skill goes beyond simple ordering, it also makes recommendations based on the occasion and time of delivery. Users can state the preferred colour and type of flowers. If the skill is used on a smart display like the Echo Show, the user can see what the bouquet will look like on the screen. The skill can also recommend a message or transcribe it.

4.4. Voice-activated branded content and podcasts

4.4.1. RMS case study – combining online radio and voice-activated branded content⁴⁵

[RMS](#), the leading German private audio marketer, joined forces with agency [mediascale](#) to deploy a new native advertising format for smart speakers – "[Voice enabled content](#)". The concept is rather simple and offers radio listeners a new level of interaction with audio content. While listening to their favourite radio station on a smart-speaker, listeners will hear an audio teaser for special content. The listener then has a choice: either to ignore the audio spot and continue listening to the radio programme, or to activate the branded content (special interviews) with a simple voice command. The listener has the option to return to the current radio programme at any time by voice command

or to continue listening to the branded content in full. In this format, audio combines the advantages of being a sales medium with the capability of targeted brand building. The user is in control of the advertising they receive.

A field trial with three brands from different industries was carried out in the third and fourth quarters of 2019 on selected radio stations commercialised by RMS. The brands participating were a bank, a car brand (MINI) and a sports betting provider ([ODDSET](#)). All branded content interviews were distributed over three time-shifted, 14-day sequences. It started in May, continued in July, August and September and ended in October.

The branded content was designed as a new interview format that does not bore listeners, but provides valuable background information and personal anecdotes from the partners. In elaborate interviews, a story arc was created that would keep the listeners entertained so that they listen actively until the end.

Once the listener activates the branded content by voice command, a voice greets him, thanks him for activating the skill and announces the interview. A prominent radio moderator then speaks to a brand ambassador about an interesting topic, for example sports betting or investments. The ambassadors not only give practical tips on their respective topics in a relaxed and dynamic manner, but also reveal personal anecdotes. With this mix of information and entertainment, listeners no longer have the feeling of consuming conventional advertising, but content of real added-value. The results were extremely high with listen-through rates up to 97%.

The results showed a very positive effect on brand image, in particular brand sympathy as well as "closeness" and "attraction". The majority of the audience also found the new format to be

innovative (for instance, 60% for [the ODDSET case](#)). As mentioned, the listen through rates of the branded podcasts were also very high – 97% percent for the bank and 87% for ODDSET. The ODDSET case study is shortlisted for the [German Media Prize 2020](#).

4.4.2. NPR's voice landing pages

NPR in the US developed a similar ad format specifically for smart speakers called [voice landing pages](#). Users hear a 15s post-roll on smart-speaker placements that prompts them to hear the full branded content (called [Brand Soundscape](#) – also potentially developed by NPR for the brand) in a seamless, interactive experience. Another example of their special ad formats are [visual newscast post-roll](#) that serve a 15s post-roll on smart devices with screens such as Echo Show.

4.4.3. Audio brand experiences

One media publisher that has taken full advantage of their streaming service to get around monetizing their experience on Alexa and Google Assistant is Pandora. Pandora previously let advertisers buy across "connected home" devices as a whole, but has now broken out targets such as game consoles and smart TVs in addition to the voice assistants – allowing brands more control of where their ads will be placed and adapt the creative accordingly.⁴⁶ An early case coming from Pandora's device-specific targeting program we mentioned that allows advertisers to target specifically users of smart speakers is the [National Cattlemen's Beef Association](#). They're using smart speaker voice ads on both Alexa and Google Assistant to promote their voice experience, [Chuck](#). In doing this, they're assuring their call-to-action can be completed on the same device and removing friction by making everything voice-enabled. While this program allows for more control over where and when the brand's voice ad is being



played, there is still a need to go through a third-party publisher to be heard.⁴⁷

British alcoholic beverage company Diageo used their popular website [The Bar](#) as an inspiration for their Alexa skill on Echo Show. To promote a new whiskey brand Talisker, the company launched a skill called *Talisker Tasting Experience*.⁴⁸ Users were taken on an “audio journey” to learn more about three whiskeys under the brand. The skill acted as a personal bartender that recommends cocktail recipes and teaches mixologist techniques

A similar recommendation skill was also deployed directly in-store. The Mars Agency launched the *Bottle Genius powered by Smart AisleSM*⁴⁹, skill for Alexa which provides a personalised, voice-powered customer assistant to [help shoppers](#) decide which bottle in the whiskey aisle to choose. By answering basic directional questions, such as current favourite, purchase occasion or desire to try something new, customers are given three curated whiskey recommendations along with helpful tasting information, and an opportunity to learn more about the brands.

4.5. Custom voice for brands

Amazon has started⁵⁰ offering help to companies that want a unique voice for their Alexa skills. The new *Brand Voice* feature comes through Amazon Polly, the part of Amazon Web Services (AWS) that turns text into human-like speech. KFC Canada’s Alexa skill now speaks in a voice designed to sound like Colonel Sanders, while the National Australia Bank’s Alexa skill speaks Australian English like a local. Amazon helps clients design a custom voice for their brand based on recording sessions with an actor. Amazon’s deep learning tech then teaches Alexa how to speak like the actors.

PART 02: VOICE FOR AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT. VOICE SKILLS AND ACTIONS DEVELOPED BY BROADCASTERS

In this chapter you will find examples of skills and actions developed by TV and radio broadcasters as an inspiration for the possibilities this new platform offers to engage and attract audiences.

4.6. Radio voice skills and actions

4.6.1. The importance of radio stations’ own skills and actions

A lot of radio brands are currently represented on smart speakers via aggregators such as TuneIn, but a radio brand should develop a custom skill or action of their own to own its invocation name, branding, user experience and eventually monetisation. It is important to actively promote one’s brand and guide the broadcast audience on how users can find a radio brand on a smart speaker, to form a habit to listen to radio not only on broadcast but also to easily find it on smart speakers. Otherwise, listeners will find an alternative as the current offer is literally unlimited.

Some broadcasters aggressively educate their audiences on how to listen to their programming on smart speakers – iHeartMedia and NPR in the US in particular. Syndicated host Dave Ramsey has devoted a how-to [web page](#) on this topic and [NPR](#) created a brief, concise video explaining how to ask your smart speaker to “play NPR.” One case of a radio group in the US promoting its Alexa skill on air showed a 5.4 time increase in unique users during a six week long on-air campaign. An important thing

for discoverability is the user rating for the skill or action, broadcasters should therefore encourage users to rate their skills.

When developing a skill there are also possibilities to create a custom intro that plays just before the radio stream starts, that can be used to cross promote shows and podcasts.

Beyond making broadcast streams available and educating listeners on how to access them, the next step is getting the things the media brand is best known for onto voice platforms in easily accessible ways. Re-packaging content into a voice experience may mean making the entire morning show available on demand – or bite-sized pieces of it like the news bulletins or popular segments. Radio can swipe a page from the late-night TV show playbook and make its best morning show bits available on demand on smart speakers.⁵¹ Other ideas include exclusive content like extended interviews, skill related to a popular personality, a quiz or a game. The important thing to keep in mind that on smart speakers the experience is one-on-one so the content needs to be adapted from broadcasting to narrowcasting providing the individual listener with an on-demand voice experience.

4.6.2. BR Media voice strategy

BR Media is German public broadcaster from Bavaria, part of national public broadcaster ARD. They have a dedicated team within the company that oversees voice activities and projects. Their voice strategy developed over time from news to radio streams to podcasts and new experiments.

As a first step, BR Media developed various news skills for regional news, general news, sports and stock exchange (which proved to be more popular than expected). Next were the skills for radio stations, at first, individual skills for main stations were launched but later brought all together into one system for the

whole ARD. This allowed the broadcaster to bypass TuneIn and have independent streams. ARD's size and position as a public broadcaster helped in negotiations with the voice platforms.

BR Media also dipped into podcasts and developed skills for their most popular ones. As a next step, they looked more closely into the audience on smart speakers, who uses the devices and why. Parent with children were identified as a group that uses voice platforms often also thanks to the big popularity of BR Media's bedtime story skill, which has 365 short bedtime stories for children. It is an extension of a regular radio programme and a trendy skill. To build on this idea, BR Media took the famous cartoon character Pumuckl from original radio plays and TV show and developed a skill that plays poems from Pumuckl and also can play podcast episodes of the original radio plays.

Learnings from these projects include the need to think of a clear naming to optimise for voice search and invest in marketing to help discoverability. BR Media sees voice as an essential platform to reach and engage audiences and will be further developing their voice offer.

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Learnings from these projects include the need to think of a clear naming to optimise for voice search and invest in marketing to help discoverability. BR Media sees voice as an essential platform to reach and engage audiences and will be further developing their voice offer.

4.6.3. NPR voice strategy

Figuring out ways to take advantage of the interactive capabilities of voice-activated devices is a critical component of NPR's smart speaker strategy. NPR successfully launched [NPR skill](#) as an entry-point into their member stations' live streams and an [NPR One skill](#) that extends the popular mobile app experience to voice platforms. In 2019 NPR wanted to make a localised, on-demand version of signature show *Morning Edition*⁵² available for voice platforms. This was no small feat. *Morning Edition* is designed to be a mix of national and local stories. To digitally reproduce a faithful version of the programme with local segments included, would involve creating 300 or so versions of Morning Edition at any given time. They finally found a solution thanks to OmnyStudio technology. NPR leveraged the technology and algorithms behind its NPR One smartphone app to create local and national blends of content for smart speakers that allow listeners to pause stories and skip those they don't want to hear. The Morning Edition skill was however shut down in October 2020. When listeners say "Alexa, play Morning Edition," they now hear a message that it is no longer available and are redirected to the live Member station stream.

Perhaps the best NPR use of interactivity to date is the interactive quiz it built for popular weekend show ["Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me!"](#) that challenges listeners' knowledge of news and quirky headlines. And now, as more smart speakers come equipped with a screen, the network is working to bring visual elements to

its content. In morning drive, NPR produces an edited [visual version of its newscast](#) that adds video clips and still images to provide a pictorial treatment of the stories.⁵³

4.6.4. Bauer Media UK – skills for all stations

At the beginning of 2018 Bauer Media in the UK launched Alexa skills for all of its radio brands, starting with its national radio brands including *KISS*, *Magic Radio* and *Absolute Radio*. The skills are built to be as intuitive as possible, tailored to consumer behaviour and aim to optimise the listening experience for Bauer audiences based on an intelligent use of data. For example, many Absolute Radio listeners listen to the Absolute Radio decades stations, such as *Absolute Radio 80s* and *Absolute Radio 90s*. Now they can shift through the decade stations just by voice command – such as saying, "Alexa, next". Additionally, listeners can use the Alexa voice interface to switch stations, or prompt other interactions including: "Alexa, ask Absolute 80s what's playing?", "Alexa, ask Key 103 who is on air?", "Alexa, previous" which will open the last station channel played. Bauer also planned to make more on-demand content available on Alexa, such as podcasts, bringing the same functionalities available on its apps to its Alexa skills.

4.6.5. Custom voice assistant Beeb by BBC

BBC began supporting Alexa in the UK back in 2017 because they recognised voice will likely be a big part of the future of media. They experimented with Alexa skills for both adults and children and expanded to Google Assistant and outside the UK as well.

Among the services and skills BBC launched was an interactive news service allowing users to ask for specific news reports from the BBC and customise their news bulletins. Listeners can also ask for various flash briefings from news, sports, business and listen live to all BBC

radio stations and play all of BBC's on-demand content, including programmes, podcasts and music mixes.

In Summer 2019, BBC announced it would go beyond just creating content suitable for voice interactive experiences and create a new voice assistant "Beeb". The name is based on one of the common nicknames for BBC.

Beeb is more than just a custom voice assistant; it is BBC's internal conversational engine that can enable a custom assistant deployed through desktop and mobile apps as well as support the many voice assistants that want access to BBC content. The purpose of developing an assistant is to offer richer functionality than general consumer platforms since they limit the functionalities of third-parties. BBC also has control over privacy and use of data which is a big concern. On top of that, Beeb is built to recognise regional accents that other assistants struggled with and therefore be more inclusive to all Britons. Beeb's voice is male and goes against the trend of female voiced assistants.⁵⁴

BBC isn't looking to replace the Alexa and Google Assistant ecosystems; the same backend will also serve queries coming from their Amazon Alexa skills and Google Actions. The Beeb is designed to better serve those voice platforms, other services provided by automakers and app providers, and BBC's own digital properties. The broadcaster also has no plans to launch a physical device for the software, but plans



"It's in our charter to innovate and find new connections with audiences."

[Mukul Devichand,](#)
[Executive editor of voice, BBC](#)

to make it available across smart speakers, mobiles, and TVs.

Beeb was developed entirely on top of Microsoft Azure AI services. Everything from natural language processing to natural language generation was sourced from Microsoft. BBC complemented this with internally developed tools it uses today to manage the distribution, management, and access to content.

Beeb launched⁵⁵ in beta in June 2020 with a number of current and future capabilities that are available as demonstrations. A core feature is easy access to radio, podcasts, and other audio programming via voice request. Another is BBC programme information. Users can ask about specific shows, on-air talent, and when new shows will air or be available. There is also an "Update Me" personal update feature that offers news and information customised for the users' interests.

Beeb is also extending interactions with popular shows by enabling users to get facts and other insights directly from the show talent.

Beeb is at the moment still in beta testing phase and should be rolling out to general public in upcoming months.⁵⁶

4.7. Flash briefings

Amazon offers the option of creating a flash briefing skill to provide Alexa customers with news headlines and other short content. Typically, a flash briefing becomes a part of a customer's daily routine. It provides a quick overview of news and other content such as comedy, interviews, and lists and can be customised by the user. Many news outlets and publishers like BBC, NPR, CNN and ESPN offer flash briefings and it can also be a great opportunity for radio to offer to its listeners the news and updates they are used to from their favourite station. For example the flash briefing



from [Radio Rai](#) is very well rated by the users.

Flash briefings are also available for talk shows like The Daily Show with Trevor Noah⁵⁷ with daily new snippets from the Comedy Central late night talk show or [The Tonight Show](#) Starring Jimmy Fallon allowing users to listen to Jimmy's nightly monologue.

Google also allows similar news features. They partnered⁵⁸ with iHeart Radio in the US. By simply saying, "Hey Google, play me the news", any Google Assistant-enabled phone or smart speaker can deliver its users the news of the day. From there, "Your News Update," powered by iHeartRadio will deliver a mix of short news stories that are automatically packaged together based on a user's specific interests, location, user history and preferences as well as the top news stories of the day. As part of the new integration, iHeartMedia is providing users with some of the latest news stories from local iHeartRadio news stations across the U.S.

4.8. Voice assistant as an event and radio host

The progress of AI and synthetic voices can lead to human DJs and hosts to be soon replaced by machines. The idea of being able to synthetically sample and recreate people's voices could have a profound effect on voice talent as moderators and DJs would no longer be needed.

There are already experiments taking place. On the Russian market two major companies have smart speakers and voice assistants - Yandex with their voice assistant Alice and Mail with their voice assistant Marusya. Gazprom Media Radio cooperates with both and their stations are available on both speakers. On top of that GPM Radio integrated the voice assistant Alice from Yandex into several of their projects. Alice was the [host of a live music concert](#) 80s Disco, moderating the event, presenting the musicians, cheering up the audience and joking around. The

audience loved it, based on their response.

As a part of other project, Alice hosted the online radio station Like FM for two months during the confinement period. She moderated with her own sense of humour and also voiced the weather, introduced new music and shared her thoughts on air.

4.9. Skills and actions for kids

4.9.1. Kid skills and actions by broadcasters

Smart speakers have an appeal to kids, and therefore to parents who are bringing Alexa devices into their homes. “Eight in ten parents say these devices have made it easier to entertain their children, and nearly 90% say their children enjoy Smart Speakers,” according to NPR’s summary⁵⁹ of 2018 [The Smart Audio Report](#).

Children’s radio station Fun Kids was the launch partner⁶⁰ of the first Alexa skills built specifically for kids in the UK. Alexa for kids gives parents a layer of control over how their children use the Amazon Echo range of smart speakers, white listing and promoting approved apps. Fun Kids listeners can stream the radio station and ask Alexa questions about what’s currently playing on-air. For every family who has enabled Kid Skills the request to “Play Fun Kids” will be delivered directly by the skill, rather than using a third-party aggregator like Tuneln.

Similarly, in the U.S. iHeartRadio was the default live music provider for Alexa children’s products for the *Echo Dot Kids Edition* and the Amazon kids skill in Alexa.⁶¹

BBC launched a dedicated [skill for kids](#) that includes games from popular *CBeebies* shows and characters, musical playlists, stories read by special guests and calming sounds to help little ones relax. The games let children help presenter Justin Fletcher find Little Monster in

a game of hide and seek, by identifying different sounds. They can learn dance steps and sing along to songs about animals and dinosaurs, with *Andy’s Adventure Dance Party* and answer quiz questions with *Go Jetter’s Glitchy Facts*.

Similarly, *Sesame Street* developed a skill for kids⁶², a friendly, welcoming, and safe place where kids can learn, play, and meet new friends. When a young user says, “Alexa, open Sesame Street,” Alexa asks whether he or she wants to call Elmo about letters or play hide-and-seek. When the child chooses to call Elmo about the letter of the day, Elmo answers and shares the reason he likes that letter as well as several words that start with that letter. This exercise helps develop the child’s early literacy skills. The hide-and-seek guessing game taps into the child’s critical thinking. Alexa again calls Elmo, who is hiding at a secret location. When Elmo answers, he plays an audio clip that hints at the location and asks the child to guess where he is from two choices. For example, Elmo might play the sound of seagulls and crashing waves, then ask the user to select between a firehouse and a beach. They collaborated with RAIN agency to develop the skill.

a. Bedtime stories

Antenne Bayer in Germany developed a [skill](#) for parents and children where kids can become the heroes in their very personal bedtime story. Each episode lasts fifteen minutes and tells stories of a lively monkey. The monkey’s name is chosen by the children. They cooperated with a children’s book author on developing the stories for the skill and involved station’s voices as well.

Disney took a different approach and cooperated with Google to bring storybooks to life. When reading out loud, the user can select *Disney Little Golden Books*, in turn Google Home will add sound effects and soundtracks to accompany

the story as it is read aloud. The new feature uses voice recognition to be able to tell when a reader has skipped ahead or gone back, and adjust the sound effects accordingly.⁶³

4.9.2. Kid skills and actions by brands

Advertisers are also looking into developing skills and activations for children. For example Gimlet developed a branded podcast *Chompers* that is also available on Alexa as a skill that is sponsored by Oral B and helps kid brush their teeth via fun jokes, riddles, stories, fun facts, silly songs and more.⁶⁴

General Mills is also experimenting with voice. Their Lucky Charms mascot, Lucky the Leprechaun is asking kids to help save magic by using Alexa and Google Assistant as gateways to a free interactive audio story called [Lucky’s Magical Mission](#). Children can explore the entire extended Lucky Charms universe through the eight charm lands, each representing one of the marshmallow shapes in the cereal. The story is also available in the form of a podcast, although it becomes linear, without the interactive element in that case. This is actually the second Lucky Charms voice app this year. For Saint Patrick’s Day, the company debuted an interactive choose-your-own-adventure story called *The Story of Lucky Charms*.

4.10. Quizzes and games

[Song duel](#) by Antenne Bayern in Germany lets listeners guess the right tracks from over 3,000 songs. There are three modes – training for solo users, party mode for groups of friends and online duel that allows them to play against unknown players from all over the world. Antenne Bayern integrated their successful quiz app called *Schlaubayer* onto Amazon Echo – the skill includes thousands of trivia questions about Bavaria posed by Alexa. With eight thousand questions across eleven

categories, the users can enjoy up to 40 hours of game time.

Sony Music UK launched a new quiz skill for Amazon Alexa called *Number One Fan* with daily quiz questions hosted by the subject of the questions – musicians and artists. Listeners will have a chance at winning exclusive prizes. The first star to appear on the skill was popular performer Tom Walker. The quiz only had one question a day and covered facts about Walker’s music, his early life, and his touring career. After 30 days of questions by Walker, participants were part of a raffle for prizes. Walker was chosen to be first for the quiz as part of the promotion for his new single.⁶⁵

Game shows like [Jeopardy](#) in the US are made available via an Alexa skill to audiences so that they can respond just like the contestants on the show. The skill delivers extra clues. In the case of Jeopardy there is also a premium subscription version of the skill, available for free to Amazon Prime subscribers or by paying \$1.99 per month for non-prime users. The premium feature allows users to get six extra clues per day and the ability to play previous day’s games that were missed. Before that, *Jeopardy!* skill users could only play six clues and if they missed a day, they couldn’t make up the games.⁶⁶

4.10.1. Jokes from celebrities

Amazon premiered the format of celebrity responding to users’ command “tell me a joke,” when they signed up US talk show host Jimmy Fallon for a month. Alexa would then introduce her “friend Jimmy” who would tell the jokes to users.⁶⁷ In a new German version, Amazon exclusively partnered with the comedian and celebrity Barbara Schöneberger⁶⁸ who will be telling jokes to German Alexa users. This also ties in with a new skill for her radio station and a podcast. Those are produced by radio sales house Regiocast and weekend segment of

her show is also broadcast on traditional radio stations from Regiocast's portfolio. This allows for great cross-platform promotion of the online content and the voice skills.

4.11. Voting in competitions

On the occasion of the 2017 iHeartRadio Music Awards, iHeart in the US partnered with Google Home and allowed users to cast their vote for the category of Most Powerful Female Voice.⁶⁹ By simply saying, "OK Google, start iHeartRadio Awards voting," the device launched the new app, which was voiced by Ryan Seacrest. He walked users through the process of casting their vote for one of the six candidates. The winner of this category was specifically determined solely based on votes cast through Google Home. This initiative was a great way to promote the availability of the new app and encouraging listeners to engage with voice assistants to access iHeart platforms via these devices.

4.12. Interactive story experiences

4.12.1. Original creations

BR media in Germany launched Day X, an interactive radio play with a post-apocalyptic theme where the listeners make choices and influence the storyline. Overall, there are fourteen possible endings. The skill was developed together with EarReality, a company that focuses on voice storytelling. The whole audio experience lasts between 15 and 40 minutes and is available on Alexa, Google assistant and desktop.⁷⁰

4.12.2. Voice extensions of TV series

There are multiple examples of existing TV series that developed skills and actions for fans to be able to engage with the world of the series and immerse themselves in the story. They

mostly serve as a promotion for new series and as an extension to engage viewers with exclusive content.

A very sophisticated audio experience on smart speaker is *Westworld: The Maze*⁷¹ which is an Amazon Alexa skill that leads users on an interactive story taking place in the Westworld TV series universe. The choices the players make determine what happens next, and how the story turns out. The developers used the scriptwriters and the same actors as for the show which meant that the experience was true to the TV show. The skill offered 2 hours of unique game play and won 14 awards including the Grand Prix in Radio and Audio at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

Other TV shows like *Mr. Robot*⁷² followed suit and developed interactive stories taking place within the world of the show. Fans of the show can participate in a mind-bending narrative journey inspired by the Mr. Robot storylines of season 2 and 3. This skill was developed in cooperation with company Earplay. The company also cooperated with Amazon for a skill for their Amazon Prime series "[Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan](#)", an escape room style interactive story set in the world of the series. Similarly, Netflix created a Google Action to promote the second season of their sci-fi show *Stranger Things*, which featured characters from the show and a side story splitting from the main TV series giving fans of the show exclusive content to access via the Google Assistant.⁷³

Channel 4 in the UK developed a special skill for their series *Humans – The Human Test*⁷⁴ which brought the show's storyline to life by determining whether a user is human or 'synth' through a series of questions and answers. The broader marketing campaign was delivered by *The National Synth Detection Unit*, a fictional government department, encouraging the public to take the test through a series of ads



across TV, social media and radio played using a voice-activated assistant. Having taken the test and discovered their true identity, users were directed to a special NSDU website, which hosts synth and human profiles, more information about the NSDU, and the season 3 trailer.

4.13. Cooking and recipes

[BBC Good Food](#) launched a very popular cooking skill that allows users to search among 11 thousand recipes by category, ingredients, diet type or time. The skill also guides users through the recipe step-by-step so that they can enjoy hands free cooking and no more greasy screens.⁷⁵

Radio companies also experiment with recipes within their radio skills, German station [BAYERN 3](#) for example allows listeners to ask for the daily recipe the popular moderator is cooking with the command: "Alexa, ask BAYERN 3 what am I cooking today?"



CHAPTER 05:
SUMMARY AND
WHAT'S NEXT

Demonstrated by the many use cases in the previous chapter, today's voice-driven initiatives are innovative and creative. However, voice assistants are still in their early days, particularly for advertising, media and entertainment purposes. Most commonly used voice commands tend to be for practical purposes such as turning on music, hearing the weather report or set timers. While all these commands demonstrate the practicality and efficiency of voice commands, they only give an idea of how the technology can be utilised in the future for commercial purposes.

In the shorter term, it is safe to predict that ever more companies will introduce actions and skills on top of their current products as well as launch new voice products and services, either by building their own voice assistant or, more commonly, by creating Alexa skills and Google Actions to add voice features to products or utilise voice for advertising and shopping.

5.1. In-house voice assistants

An example of an independent, in-house project is BBC's voice assistant, *Beeb*. The public BBC launched the beta of its voice assistant in mid-2020. While today Beeb only has a limited selection of features, the developer's vision is ambitious and includes experiments with new programmes, features and experiences beyond accessing BBC radio, music, podcasts, news and weather across its apps and services by voice commands.

Another indicator of voice development independent of the large tech companies is Instreamatic's Voice Mode assistant, currently employed by Pandora. As demonstrated [here](#), current voice ads are only steered by simple "yes" or "no" replies. Still, the technology is already capable of much more granularity, including the ability to realise the tone of the response and act accordingly.

Although independent voice assistants are arguably more expensive and add complexity to the development process, they do provide benefits. Data ownership and liberty of functionality, which in the case of Alexa and Google Assistant is constrained by rules and guidelines, are key factors we believe will prove important in the future, ensuring that stand-alone voice assistants will co-exist with the leading platforms in the future.

5.2. The dominant assistants

When assessing the vast possibilities of voice assistants, it is important to realise how the most popular platforms, Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, are built around the two tech giants' respective core competencies. For instance, voice shopping via Alexa is purposely built for products available on Amazon. As discussed in the [previous chapter](#), some companies have tried to exploit the voice algorithm by steering specific voice commands to their product line.

Google's emphasis is less on voice shopping than Amazon's, although the service is enabled thanks to Google Express – the company's alternative to Amazon Prime. Google has also teamed up with supermarkets such as Carrefour in France to enable voice-based grocery shopping. Innovative companies directing sales via Alexa, Google and own platforms by voice command will without a doubt accelerate, as retailers want to make their products visible and readily available to consumers.

Market trends show how companies will overwhelmingly opt for launching voice-enabled services and content on the large platforms of Alexa and Google Assistant. Aside from voice shopping, the [previous chapter](#) on use cases gives examples of how brands and media companies are creating voice-enabled content by unlocking voting, quizzes & games

as well as optimising the user experience with voice assistants, launching unique voices for their Alexa skills, giving out free product samples or test drives, and activating home-delivery. Over 100 thousand Alexa skills have been developed and the number grows at a fast pace. Although there are regional differences, where the English-speaking market is by far the most developed today, language replication and the continued push by tech giants of their voice platforms will ensure the worldwide spread of voice assistants.

5.3. A *voice-everywhere* future?

The exercise of longer-term predictions for voice is in no sense an easy one. Current projects and the pace of development is promising and has already reached a level where voice assistants have proven themselves useful. They are, in other words, here to stay. But the crystal ball is still murky detailing if a *voice-everywhere* future will be reached, as many voice enthusiasts predict. Whether we will live in a world where people rely on their voice, the most natural way of human communication, to control everything from TV sets to vacuum cleaners, do grocery shopping and online purchases, ask for directions or even steer their vehicles, is uncertain. There are not only technological obstacles to overcome; wide market acceptance is necessary, where vital issues such as privacy concerns need to be tackled.

Nonetheless, it is evident from the most recent use cases that voice for advertising and media has a bright future. Within its current capabilities, the use of voice will grow as another mean of communicating and reaching customers. Early adopters play an essential role in educating the market and exhibiting how voice can effectively be employed, paving the way for other brands to implement voice initiatives. Eventually, as the use of voice commands grows, it will become

a necessity for media companies and other companies alike to develop custom skills and actions to make themselves available, enable branding, improve user experience and exploit monetisation opportunities.



INTERVIEW WITH FRANK BACHÉR, DIRECTOR DIGITAL MEDIA, RMS GERMANY

egta: *RMS has recently developed several innovative voice-enabled advertising campaigns, can you share your company's strategy for voice? How are you approaching this new ecosystem and what are your goals in this area?*

Frank Bachér: With voice we develop new digital advertising formats with a high inventory value. In fact, our product developments in recent years, such as Audio DMP, dynamic creatives or voice advertising, have led to a significant increase in e-CPMs. These new advertising possibilities also offer RMS the opportunity to address new industries and customers, e.g. in the field of e-commerce. Voice advertising is one of the most exciting innovation topics and increases the attractiveness of the audio genre.

With voice advertising, audio turns into a one hundred percent digital medium. Due to the feedback channel, audio – just like digital display or video advertising – can make the direct success of a campaign measurable, e.g. in online sales or lead generation. Speech – the most direct and natural form of communication – leads to high engagement rates in voice enabled ad campaigns. Users are particularly enthusiastic about the convenience of controlling things via voice because it is very simple, intuitive and practical.

The aim of RMS is to offer voice advertising across the entire digital portfolio. At present, we can already address users of smart speakers for voice advertising via our DMP targeting. In the future, we also want to reach users via smartphones with interactive voice campaigns. Thereby we will significantly increase the reach of voice enabled ad campaigns.

egta: *What were the biggest challenges you had to overcome when putting your voice strategy in place?*

FB: Currently, voice enabled ad campaigns are conducted via smart speakers. Here, the targeting of smart speakers via an audio DMP has helped us to focus the campaigns on the intelligent speakers. The next step is to enable the campaign to be controlled via smartphone.

However, the playout of voice advertising on smartphones requires the installation of a specific SDK (Software Development Kit) on the senders' side. In addition, the sender must set up a function that enables the listener to share his or her microphone within the sender app. This is the only way for the user to speak via the sender app and interact with a voice enabled ad campaign. We are currently working on suitable solutions for this.

egta: *What advice would you give to other sales houses eager to start with voice?*

FB: Marketing professionals should develop editorial applications that encourage users to interact with the sender app by voice in an

entertaining and creative way at an early stage. In addition, the selection of a technology provider for voice advertising, such as Instreamatic, and the implementation of the necessary technology to run voice enabled ad campaigns plays a crucial role. It is also advisable to set up initial test cases with customers or agencies right at the start in order to better assess campaign performance and identify potential for optimisation.

egta: *How did the clients react to your new voice ad formats? What was the feedback from the market?*

FB: This year, we ran a "Voice Enabled Sampling"-campaign with biscuit manufacturer Bahlsen and the PiCK UP! brand. The campaign to launch a new PiCK UP! variety showed how popular this new type of interactive audio advertising is with the target group. In a connected user survey, 97 percent of the participants stated that they like or very much like the smart speaker sampling campaign. From the point of view of marketing managers, however, such campaigns are not only attractive in terms of branding, but also because they enable them to send product samples to interested users in a targeted manner and without wastage, thus achieving a high activation potential. For example, 59 percent of the surveyed consumers who ordered a PiCK UP! sample stated that they would also buy the biscuit bar. A further 64 percent stated that they would recommend it to others.

For RMS, interactive advertising via smart speaker is a logical consequence of the changing audio habits of the users. As a leading audio marketer, of course it matters that our offering takes place where the target groups have an open ear for brands and their messages. With the digital transformation, classic radio has developed into a multi-channel channel in which smart speakers play an increasingly important

role. The cooperation with Bahlsen has shown that the innovative campaign mechanics attract attention and are well received: the listen-through-rate of the audio spot reached a total of 96 percent.

egta: *What are the next steps in your voice strategy? How do you see the future of voice in combination with radio/audio?*

FB: The success of digital advertising is, apart from the increasing use of digital offers, especially for advertisers, the feedback channel capability of the medium. This enables the generation of a direct response and is fully measurable up to the point of sale. With Voice Advertising, audio can also offer this feedback channel for the first time and is therefore in no way inferior to other digital channels. Voice will become one of the biggest drivers for digital audio, applying to both the use and marketing of digital audio offers.



“With voice advertising, audio turns into a one hundred percent digital medium. Due to the feedback channel, audio – just like digital display or video advertising – can make the direct success of a campaign measurable, e.g. in online sales or lead generation.”

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