

## Voicing Your Brand: What Screenless Technology Means for the Future of User Experience Design

In 2011, Apple introduced Siri as the first-ever voice assistant technology to reach the hands of the average consumer. Since then, both Amazon and Google have followed suit, producing their own smart speakers and voice user interfaces (VUI) that respond to vocal requests and conversational questions from their users. These products have become so successful that nearly 43% of millennial consumers have bought a voice-based device this year alone [1], and according to a recent article in AdWeek, nearly 55% of all American homes will possess a smart speaker or assistant by 2022 [2].

While these devices have already shaken the world of interface design substantially, the popularity of this technology **means that more changes lie ahead, especially for marketing and user experience professionals.**

In the past, consumers wanted their open-ended searches to produce a list of available options to choose from, allowing users to eliminate choices as they scrolled and read through the alternatives. Now, however, the general attitude towards browsing has changed, and today's **millennials** seek efficient, accurate answers, without having to wade through pages of information that doesn't tell them exactly what they want to know.

By posing a question out-loud to their smart speaker, however, these users **hope to receive a concise response that fulfills their needs immediately.** They no longer have to scroll through links or paragraphs of text in search of "the" answer, but rather, they can rely on Alexa or Siri or the Google Assistant to provide them with accurate results in a conversational manner.

### **No screens, no visuals, no touchpoints--only voices.**

However, because voice assistants are solely conversational, the process of "branding" has taken on a whole new meaning, with tons of research that has only just begun to identify the various ways that marketers can optimize their sales and retention rates on this vocal platform.

Marketing and advertising have historically relied on visual cues to compel and understand their consumers, using images, color schemes, and memorable copy to leave users with a specific impression of the company's brand or personality. **The advent of voice assistants, however, completely eliminates all visuals from the search process, instead communicating the brand through an auditory "voice."** That voice needs to be personable, friendly, *and* intuitive, with high contextual intelligence and tonal recognition abilities that make the smart speaker both entertaining and indispensable.

### **Contextual understanding is key.**

In order to achieve this goal, voice assistants must understand the context of their users' questions, whether the user is asking to play music, inquiring about the weather in a certain region, or seeking information on a product that they might buy later down the road. If the user *does* show signs of an interest in buying a product, VUIs should even be able to identify where the potential buyer is in the purchasing journey, based on keywords or phrases the user employs when talking to the device.

Marketers hoping to adapt their brand to this kind of contextual understanding-and-answering model should turn to social media spaces like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook and search for mentions of their company both with and without their handle [2]. **Once they understand the types of users they are reaching via voice assistants (and what questions these users are asking), marketing strategists can further enhance their brand “voice” and provide a better user experience to their consumers.**

### **Individual recommendations will help your brand.**

Although these technological advancements are exciting and--to an extent--revolutionary, as of now, most smart speakers and voice assistants are only used for streaming music, changing lights, and answering fun, simple questions out loud. Other voice apps that are available on Amazon Echo and Google Home are virtually ignored, with few to no users even utilizing the available technology at its full capacity. **Once VUIs are able to deliver a more seamless experience to every individual speaking to the device, however, the possibilities for user experience designers and marketers to reach their target audience will be endless.**

UX is all about prioritizing consumer's needs, and voice assistants have already demonstrated that they're able to deliver. Though the exact development of smart speakers and voice-activated technology is still uncertain, the implications for the marketing world are noteworthy. Start paying attention and creating your brand's voice now to get ahead of the curve.

**Sources:** [1] <https://www.usertesting.com/blog/the-screen-is-dead/>

[2] <https://www.adweek.com/digital/how-marketing-through-voice-technology-will-put-savvy-brands-ahead-of-the-curve/>

[3] <https://clearbridgemobile.com/7-key-predictions-for-the-future-of-voice-assistants-and-ai/>

[4] <https://voicebot.ai/2017/07/14/timeline-voice-assistants-short-history-voice-revolution/>