

VOICE SEARCH MARKETING AS A FRONTIER FOR CONSUMER MARKETING

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Abstract: This article examines the impact of voice commerce and voice search marketing in the digital economy. It explores the benefits and challenges of these emerging technologies, providing insights on how businesses can leverage them to stay ahead.

Keywords: digital economy, voice commerce, voice search, voice search marketing.

Voice search marketing is a new frontier for consumer marketing that has gained significant traction in recent years. With the rise of smart speakers, and voice assistants like Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and Apple Siri worldwide, Baidu in China, and Yandex Alisa, VK Marusia, and Sber Salute in Russia, voice search has become an integral part of how consumers interact with technology.

The purpose of this research is to give an overview of

the current state of voice search marketing and the key opportunities that it presents to companies and marketing experts.

Voice search or voice-enabled search can be defined as the technology that uses speech recognition and natural language processing for search on the internet. These searches involve certain interactions that allow the software to clarify the user's request. In this way, users can easily obtain precise responses from search engines adjusted to the result they expect that, in addition, can be read back to the user by the voice assistant.

To use voice search, the user needs to have a voice assistant. The most used devices for voice assistance are smartphones, but others include TVs, computers, speakers, and even cars.

Google Assistant is installed on the greatest number of devices, more than a billion, most of them smartphones [2]. As a consequence, it is the most-used voice assistant with more than 500 million MAUs [3]. It is integrated with the most used search engine Google. Google Assistant can recognize different voice profiles and understand who is speaking, adapting responses to each user.

Three reasons behind this technology make it so

attractive. The first is that using voice search is 3.7 times faster than typing [10]. While writing you can type 38 to 40 words per minute, using voice search this number increases to 110-150 words per minute. Secondly, voice search is fundamental in searches carried out from mobile phones. About 60% of the users have at least once used voice search on their smartphones. And finally, voice search is more convenient. More than half of the respondents to the study conducted by Stone Temple stated that that's the reason they use voice search – so they don't have to write [10].

As a concept, voice search marketing involves optimizing content and advertising for voice-based search queries. In this regard, voice search marketing is similar to the already-developed discipline of search engine optimization (SEO). However, the structure of user requests between the two differ. Voice search marketing is based on using natural language keywords and phrases that consumers are likely to use when speaking to their devices. It also involves creating content that is easily digestible and conversational, as opposed to traditional keyword-stuffed content made with text and visuals.

The primary application of voice search marketing is voice commerce. Voice consultants become a new platform for company-user interaction and a new way for consumers to

make purchases. Therefore, the key benefit of voice search marketing for e-commerce companies is its potential to drive sales and revenue.

Voice commerce is a booming market. According to data by Statista, the global voice commerce market has grown from 4.6 billion US dollars to 19.4 between 2021 and 2023 [1]. This is more than 400 percent growth in just two years, caused by the increasing opportunities for voice assistants to purchase items, especially through smartphones and smart devices in the home. According to National Public Media's Smart Audio Report, 57% of US users utilize voice search every day [9] and only 27% of them made Voice-Assistant Payments indicating a high potential for growth of voice commerce within voice assistant's usage.

Unlike search engines, consumers are most likely to use voice control when they're otherwise occupied: while cooking, driving, or watching TV. Voice search not only provides an alternative to smartphones and PCs as a medium for sales, but expands the limits when, or rather where, the consumers can interact with the Internet. Voice search stats from a survey by Perficient claim around 64% of the people surveyed used voice commands while they were driving [5]. This allows consumers to make purchases without taking their hands off the steering

wheel.

One of the key benefits of voice search marketing is its ability to provide a more personalized experience for consumers. By using data and analytics to understand consumer behavior and preferences, marketers can tailor their messaging and advertising to better meet the needs of their target audience.

Unlike the SEO with well-defined boundaries between the search and the website, with voice assistance, the border differs depending on the platform. For example, to make a purchase entirely with the Google voice assistant following the Google Shopping algorithms, you need to live in the continental U.S. Otherwise, the voice assistant will provide you with old-school search results that are defined by constantly evolving search algorithms.

To understand how the company can promote its products or services with voice assistants, let's review Marusia and Sber Salute platforms available for Russian companies. These assistants never had a full-fledged search engine, but instead included multiple functions through a single interface that can be extended by companies to sell their products and services. For example, Benzuber has developed a skill for Marusia that allows users to pay for refueling at gas stations without going to the cashier.

Any company can integrate its systems with Marusia by VK. For that, it needs to create a Skill at VK for Developers platform that includes the trigger phrase users will need to say to interact with your application. Then, the Use Case is as follows:

1. The user says a phrase to call the skill.
2. Having received and recognized the expression, the Marusia sends a request to the Company's Backend.
3. The Backend responds to a request from Marusia's server.

Together with the request, Marusia provides a lot of useful information about the user's device and his account on the social network VK. Most of the users will be authorized with their accounts allowing the company to personalize responses.

On the other hand, Salute by Sber provides better integration with the most used consumer bank in Russia – so a lot more customers will have wallets with money ready to be spent. With the RUGPT-3 underlying model, it allows companies to process far more complicated queries with less investment in development [7].

As Sber puts it: “Now, imagine our service as a seasoned camping gear sales expert. When you ask this expert

for a "four-person tent", they don't just think about the number of people. They recall your past preferences, understand your typical camping conditions, and consider your overall needs. For instance, you've mentioned before that you frequently camp in rainy areas. The expert might recommend a six-person, water-resistant tent.” [4]

However, no new technology comes without challenges. For voice search marketing challenges include the lack of a visual interface and the need to optimize for voice search algorithms.

One of the biggest challenges is the lack of a visual interface, which means that businesses must rely solely on audio cues to engage with consumers. This requires a different approach to content creation and advertising, as businesses must focus on creating compelling audio content that captures the attention of their target audience.

Lack of visual content makes it hard to sell goods and services customers are not confident in. We can easily imagine ordering a delivery of familiar brands of coffee and milk from local delivery or the new iPhone to replace a previous one, but not a dress or a piece of furniture.

Voice assistance platforms try to overcome this challenge by taking the best from both worlds and developing

chat-based clients that would allow users to see visual content before making the final decision to purchase while retaining voice interaction capabilities.

Unlike SEO, where a single website is indexed by a plethora of search engines, with voice search the trend appears to be that companies will have to proactively integrate their websites and backend IT systems with each voice assistance platform they want to target.

Then the challenge is the need to optimize the content for different voice search and voice interaction algorithms, which can be complex and constantly evolving. This requires a deep understanding of how voice search works and how to optimize content for specific devices and platforms which leads to higher IT costs that SMEs can't afford.

As this opens a potential market, we can predict that marketplaces or IT companies would provide intermediary IT products to allow sales of goods by SMEs to voice assistant users. For now, only Yandex Alisa can make purchases from affiliated marketplace Yandex Market [12]. Similar integration is now developing between Ozon and VK Marusia [6].

Finally, there is also the challenge of privacy and security. With voice assistants constantly listening for commands, there is a risk that sensitive information could be

intercepted or misused. This is a major obstacle to growing technology adaptation as 66% of US consumers don't have a smart speaker due to privacy concerns [8]. Businesses must take steps to ensure that their voice search marketing strategies are secure and compliant with relevant regulations that we expect to evolve as the technology matures. At the same time, some groups of consumers will reject the usage of home-based voice assistants for a long time.

Overall, voice search marketing is a promising frontier for consumer marketing that offers significant opportunities for businesses to engage with their target audience in new and innovative ways. As technology continues to evolve, it will be interesting to see how voice search marketing evolves alongside it.

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