



eCommerce shifts to voiceCommerce and the reality of science fiction

As computing power and affordability progress to the point where we can now talk to and be understood by computers, all people, not just the tech-savvy, can experience the future of technology. **Simon Stefanoff** says: think 'Alexa, Google, and Siri on the couch', as you interact with services by talking to a device in the comfort of your own home. And so science fiction becomes reality.

Powered by Artificial Intelligence, the next generation of Voice First interfaces offers customers an easy route to getting things done online. It will eventually usher in the age of vCommerce in which your voice is all you need to authorize payments for all manner of products and services.

Amazon started this revolution in 2014 with the release of the Amazon Echo smart speaker containing Alexa, the intelligent voice-controlled assistant.

Fast forward barely three years and Google, Microsoft, Apple, and Samsung are among those making significant investments in voice technology and releasing their own voice-based hardware and software.

The rapid growth of smart speakers has surprised the industry, with analysts constantly having to update their predictions as adoption accelerates. Chicago-based research agency CIRP recently updated their own estimates

after stronger than expected Q4 sales, to state that at the start of 2018 there were up to 45 Million of these devices in use globally.

Not to mention the estimated 400 Million smartphones which now have the voice-powered Google Assistant available, the same platform available on the Google Home. ➔

According to the November 2017 Deloitte Australian Mobile Consumer Survey, in Australia more and more of us are becoming aware of smartphone Voice Assist (41%), which has also increased by 41% since 2016 (although usage is yet to boost with the release of Google Home in June 2017), and Amazon Alexa earlier this year, we now have the chance to participate in the Voice First revolution.

Both Amazon and Google are working with car manufacturers, as well as a number of wearable manufacturers on initiatives that will ensure voice rapidly moves out of the home and into our cars, and thanks to developments in voice enabled headphones and earbuds, our ears. We'll be taking our voice assistants with us everywhere.

This will have an effect beyond the areas of eCommerce - Amazon's main reason for creating the Alexa assistant - and the playing of music, podcasts, and weather reports, three of the main uses in common across all smart speakers.

As people become familiar with these devices their expectations will rapidly change. Taking your phone out of your pocket, opening an app, scrolling, and clicking to find out the performance of your super fund seems awfully hard work after you have had the experience of achieving the same thing by simply talking and responding to a couple of questions. The expectation gap will become even more pronounced as these devices and systems get to know us, and use AI to suggest or predict the next action we will want to take.

Imagine asking your home voice assistant to tell you your utilities bill? Then through a simple conversation determining why your bill is so high, and guiding you to a plan better suited to your needs.

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Or after being discharged from a hospital, registering how you feel on a scale of 1 to 10 each day, with the device able to tell when you need to see a specialist and guiding you through the process to book an appointment.

When it comes to your super fund balance you can interrogate your home voice assistant and also ask about your performance over the past three months and the past three years. Then you can ask it to compare that to your peers and suggest any changes that it can recommend on that basis.

These scenarios no longer exist in the realms of science fiction, all of them are possible today and in fact the superannuation example has already been built on Deloitte's Digital Wealth Platform.



Simon Stefanoff is a Director in the Customer Experience practice of Deloitte Digital, and leads the Voice and Conversational UI team. He presented as a panellist at the ASFA 2017 conference. With more than 16 years' experience delivering innovative digital solutions for some of the largest consumer brands and financial organisations in Australia, United Kingdom and Europe, Simon has led strategic digital delivery and managed development teams for clients including British Airways, ING, Tesco, Credit Agricole, and departments of both the Australian and United Kingdom governments.

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