

Spotify's exploration of voice technology could benefit from user familiarity with voice commands in music apps

Article

Spotify is doubling down on voice control technology by adding voice integration to its mobile app and announcing a new piece of voice-controlled hardware. Last week, Spotify **silently** started rolling out a voice assistant in its iOS and Android mobile apps, **per** Engadget. By using the wake word “Hey Spotify,” users can pick songs and navigate through the Spotify app using their voice. Separately, the music streaming service started shipping a Spotify-equipped voice-controlled Bluetooth device for cars—with the uninspired unenthusiastic title “Car Thing”—to select subscribers, **per** The Verge. Car Thing, which appears tailored to older cars without a Spotify integration, functions as a Spotify remote, enabling the driver to access Spotify without using a phone.

These features are just the latest example of Spotify’s commitment to pursuing voice commands:

- **Spotify Voice:** The company **released** its first rudimentary voice-based search option on its mobile app in 2019.
- **Early Car Thing and Hey Spotify:** That same year, it started **testing** early versions of each offering, with the latter release primarily intended to study subscribers’ listening habits.
- **Voice-based ads:** In 2019, Spotify also **began** testing voice-enabled ads on mobile which would allow users to engage with ads using verbal commands.

Spotify’s interest in voice data transcends mobile voice assistants. Earlier this year, reports from the **BBC** and **Pitchfork** revealed Spotify had patented voice technology that would let it offer personalized recommendations based on data gleaned from user speech and background noise. The technology would reportedly allow Spotify to use speech recognition to determine a user’s age, gender, and emotional state—but it’s **unclear** whether this particular patent will ever make it to market. Elsewhere, Spotify has **hinted** at a future proprietary home speaker, and its recent **acquisition** of podcasting platform Megaphone suggests it may look to **monetize** voice data with ads.

Voice tech users already regularly engage with music apps via voice, which may help Spotify drive current feature adoption and reduce friction on future offerings. **According to** a 2020 Adobe survey of voice tech users conducted by Wakefield Research, 57% of respondents said they used voice commands for music apps daily. That response was tied with “texting or chat” as the second-highest voice command use case, trailing only “map or driving” by a single percentage point. That familiarity with using voice commands in music apps could help Spotify roll out upcoming voice-based features more seamlessly. That’s good news for

Spotify, which may look to capitalize on an expanding US voice assistant market poised to increase from 128 million voice assistant users in 2020 to 140.7 million by 2024, **per** eMarketer.

Types of Apps US Voice Tech Users Control Using Voice Commands, May 2020			
% of respondents			
	Use voice tech daily	Use voice tech less than daily	Total voice tech users
Map or driving	58%	48%	52%
Texting or chat	57%	47%	51%
Music apps	57%	38%	46%
Search	49%	41%	44%
Social media	40%	24%	31%
Email	37%	21%	28%
Streaming video	35%	20%	27%
Shopping	34%	16%	24%
Health or fitness	25%	12%	18%
Money-related	16%	8%	11%
Productivity	14%	7%	11%
Note: ages 18+ Source: Adobe, "Adobe XD Voice Survey 2020" conducted by Wakefield Research, Oct 27, 2020			
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