

Voice Commerce's Growing Pains

Reordering may bump up voice commerce usage

ARTICLE |

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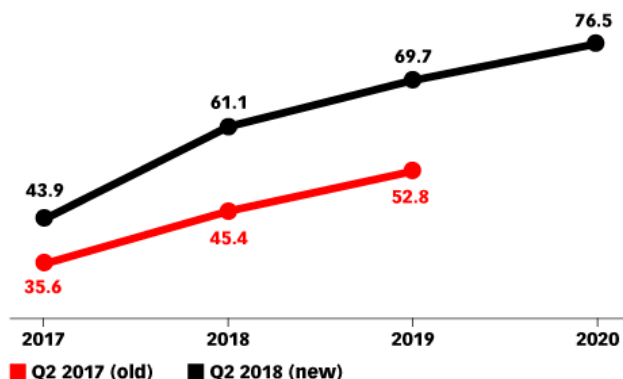
Technology publisher The Information rattled the digital sector with a report suggesting that the vast majority of smart speaker owners have not used the devices to make a purchase, and the few who had tried voice-controlled shopping were unlikely to do it again.

Citing unnamed sources, [The Information reported](#) that only 2% of consumers who own an Alexa-enabled device have used it to make a purchase. Of that group, it said, 90% didn't try again.

The downbeat outlook for voice commerce stands in fairly sharp contrast to the rapid adoption of smart speakers. According to eMarketer's estimates, the number of smart speaker users in the US will reach 76.5 million in 2020, up from 43.9 million in 2017. Adoption has been so rapid, eMarketer sharply revised its estimate upward in April.

US Smart Speaker Users, 2017-2020

millions



Note: individuals of any age who use a smart speaker at least once per month

Source: eMarketer, April 2018

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Estimates of voice buying activity vary, but a variety of sources have found considerably higher levels than reported in The Information. Estimates over the past 18 months have ranged as high as 50% and up.

Usage may rise quickly thanks to reordering since a lot of buying activity on Amazon Echo centers on replenishing previously ordered—and importantly, known—items like shampoo or paper towels.

Comparative Estimates: US Smart Speaker Owners Who Have Made a Purchase via Their Smart Speaker, 2017 & 2018

% of respondents

	2017	2018
Delineate, March 2018	-	54%
Fluent, March 2018	-	27%
Voicebot, Rain and Pullstring, March 2018	-	26%
OC&C Strategy, Feb 2018	51%	-
Localytics*, Feb 2018	49%	-
NPR and Edison Research**, Jan 2018	44%	-
Google and Peerless Insights***, Aug 2017	44%	-
Morning Consult, Sep 2017	33%	-
comScore, March 2018	30%	-

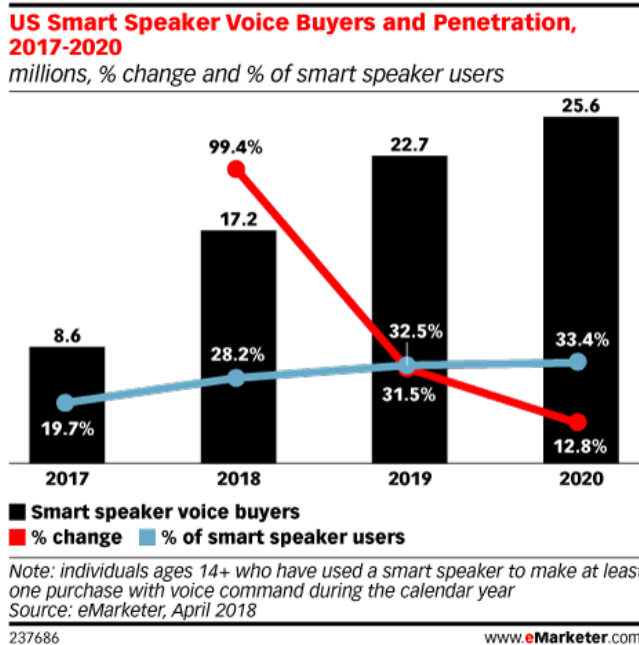
Note: ages 18+; ever made a purchase; *made a purchase 2-10 times; **ordered a new item they had not purchased before/reordered an item; ***at least once a week

Source: various, as noted, Aug 2017-March 2018

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By the end of 2018, eMarketer estimates there will be 17.2 million US smart speaker voice buyers, making up 28.2% of US smart speaker users.



“We think that since this is a new activity, a lot of the usage will skew towards the holiday shopping season when shopping activity is high, and many more are likely to try out different modes of shopping,” said Shelleen Shum, eMarketer’s forecasting director.

“Sales of the Echo products during **this year’s Prime Day** were also particularly strong. We think many new owners will try out purchasing products/services using Alexa by the end of the year,” she added.