

Who are voice users? The contributions of decision-making conflict theory

Amira Berriche

LUMEN Lab, IAE Lille – University School of Management, Lille, France

Christophe Benavent

DRM Lab, University of Paris Dauphine, Paris, France, and

Efthymios Constantinides

Department High-Tech Business and Entrepreneurship, University of Twente, Enschede, Netherlands

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to categorize users of voice assistants and analyze decision-making conflicts to predict intention to adopt voice commerce (v-commerce).

Design/methodology/approach – This exploratory study used expert survey-based data collection founded on data saturation.

Findings – This study identifies three forms of voice systems based on senses aroused (screen first, voice only and voice first) and four profiles of voice users (passive resistant, hedonistic adopter, utilitarian adopter and active resistant), each with a different appraisal of the benefits and costs of v-commerce adoption and the experiences (positive or negative) felt during the shopping experience. This study proposes a conceptual model to predict intention to adopt v-commerce depending on voice-system and -user characteristics.

Practical implications – Learning from this study can help improve the marketing strategies and actions put in place by voice-assistant brands and advertisers by providing insights for adapting product recommendation algorithms to meet the needs of the identified profiles.

Originality/value – This paper provides an answer to the limits of classical approaches based on “one-size-fits-all” strategy by showing how voice-assistant users have different profiles that span a gradient of advance in technology adoption.

Keywords Digital marketing, V-commerce, Voice user, Emotional conflict, Decision conflict, Voice assistant

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The rapid development of natural voice recognition processing as a search interface driven by substantial technological advances in artificial intelligence in combination with the availability of large quantities of data (“Big data”) segued into the launch of voice assistants (VA) either as smartphone apps (e.g. Siri in Apple’s iPhones or Hey Google in Android systems) or as components of specialized smart speakers for home use (McKinsey, 2017). The voice search quickly evolved to enable voice commerce (v-commerce) as a new online channel for retail and services transactions. Five years after the introduction of in-home smart speakers, market growth for smart speakers reached over 650% annually, more than twice the adoption rate of smartphones (Coskun and Hellriegel, 2020).

Smart speakers are a well-known category of VA devices; they allow users to make online searches and purchases hands free, using voice commands as a new “zero-click” user interface (Childers, 2021). Unlike booking tickets for a movie theater, where a user buys their tickets online by navigating a website,

voice search eliminates the mouse clicks and begins the buying process with a simple query: “Hey Google, buy a movie ticket from X to see movie X” (Myposeo, 2018). The use of voice simplifies the buying process and improves customer experience. Despite the advantages and opportunities presented by v-commerce, adoption among merchants remains low. Purchases made through VA currently account for only 3% of users’ total spending volume (CDTI- Capgemini Digital Transformation Institute, 2018). To maximize the potential of v-commerce and harness voice as a new customer channel, businesses need to offer services that highlight the advantages and benefits of VA and experiences that are superior to other existing user interfaces.

This paper aims to identify segments of voice users and analyze the benefits and costs that each profile faces in adopting or rejecting v-commerce. The research has not yet provided a clear and robust explanation of the perceived benefits and costs of adopting v-commerce. Some studies compare the benefits of v-commerce versus e-commerce (Moriuchi, 2019). Other authors have used conventional theories such as the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis *et al.*, 1989) or the unified model of technology acceptance and use (UTAUT)

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