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# The Smart Speaker Revolution

*How Smart Speakers are  
Leading Their Way Through  
Search.*



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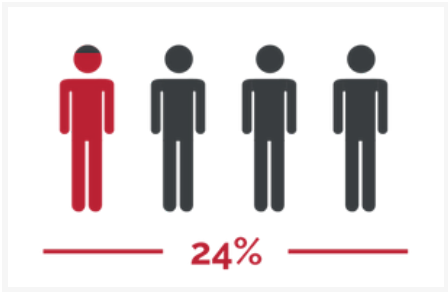
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## Introduction

Digital marketing is an industry always in flux. As digital trends change and new devices roll out to the public, marketers must adjust paid and organic search campaigns to compensate for changes in how consumers search and on which devices those searches are conducted.



The latest trend making waves focuses on the adoption of smart speakers. Some **24% of American households** (53 million people) now own a smart speaker such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home. More impressive than that, this feat of market penetration has occurred in just over 2 years.

Chart 1: Number of U.S. smart speaker owners.



To top this all off, it is predicted that the **smart speaker industry will increase to US\$7billion in 2019** making it the market's fastest growing device.

 **2019**  
**USD\$7Billion**

With so many smart speakers in use across the United States, digital marketers have to adjust online marketing campaigns to the new reality of consumer search. Understanding how online advertising works with smart speakers is vital to remaining visible and relevant as search behavior changes.

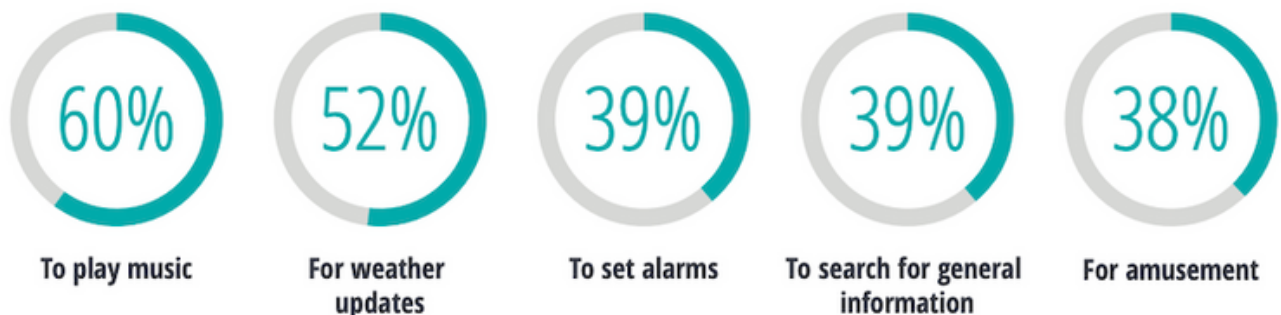


## “Hey Alexa, look up stats on Smart Speakers”

On average, people who own smart speakers rank it as their 7th most daily used device where 56% of owners say they use theirs on a daily basis. People use their smart speakers to **play music, get weather updates, and search for general information**. And, **39% of people use their smart speakers for online search** - that's roughly 20 million people who actively use their smart speaker to browse the web.

### Smart speakers are most often used to listen to music—just like dumb speakers

Top five applications of smart speakers, selected markets, 2018



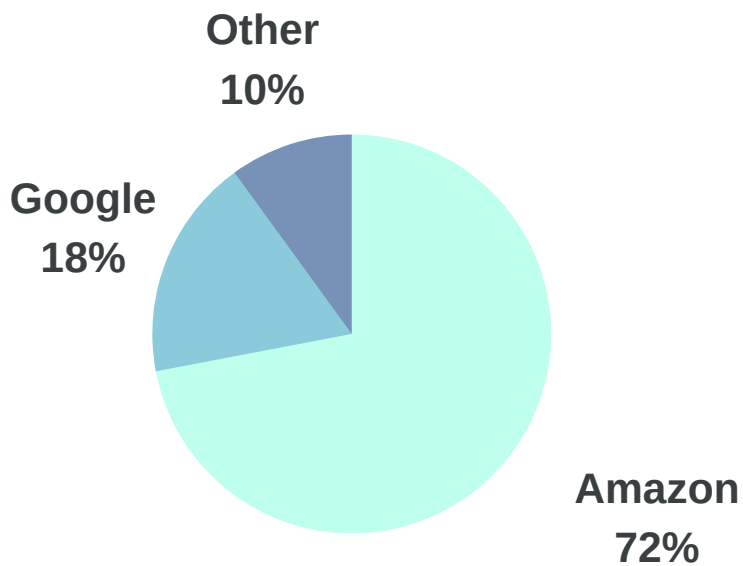


Chart 2: Smart Speaker Market Share

Amazon currently dominates the smart speaker industry representing a combined **72% of smart speaker devices** between its Echo (36%), Echo Dot (32%), and other Echo-branded (4%) devices. Google's Home (9%), Home Mini (9%), and Home Max (1%) account for roughly 18% of the overall market, and other smart speaker brands (ie Apple) cover the remaining 10%. This breakdown is important because it tells you indirectly which search engines are used most in voice searches on smart speakers.

## Which Search Engines are Used Most?

To understand the impact of the search engines used most frequently by smart speakers, it is important to understand the market penetration of each brand of smart speaker. All Amazon and Microsoft voice searches (Cortana) are powered by Bing, while Google and Apple use Google as the search engine of choice. This means that the vast majority of voice searches are actually being conducted via Bing's search engine. While most digital marketing content is optimized for Google, the same cannot often be said of Bing optimization.



# Do Search Results Differ Across Search Engines?

When it comes to voice searches on smart speakers, the use of differing search engines has an impact on the search results served up to the user. This is a result of the different technological and operational capability levels of Google and Bing. To date, Google remains the dominant global search engine with an estimated **77% of the global search market**. Bing, on the other hand, has just an 8% market share. However, each of these search engines operates a little differently when it comes to voice search.

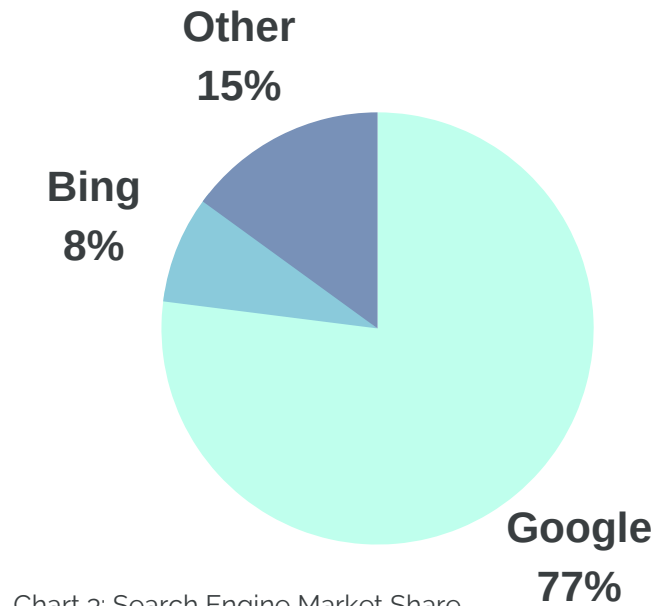
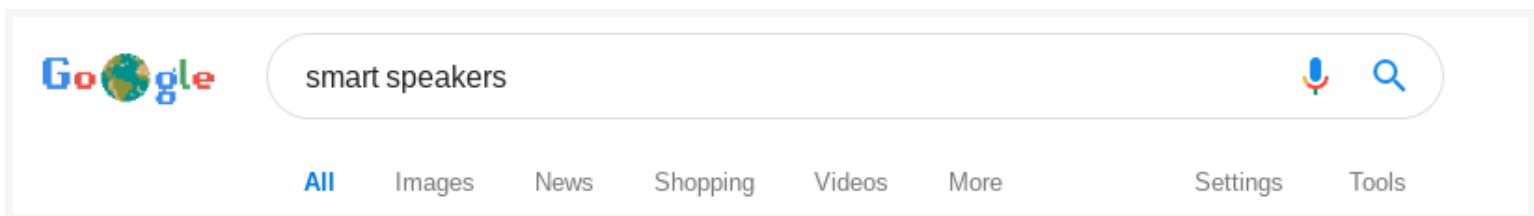
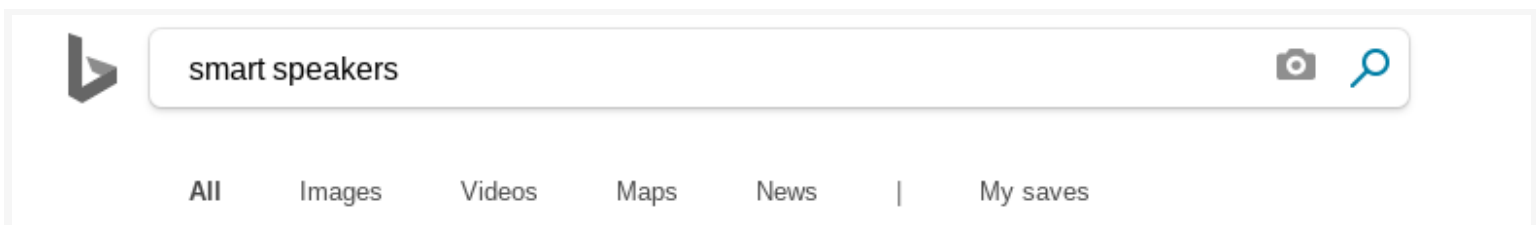


Chart 3: Search Engine Market Share

Google's voice search technology excels at recognizing the context of a voice query and in terms of voice recognition. The latter is important because it means that **Google's voice searches better understand the individual owner of a smart speaker** and can lean on its learned behavior patterns to offer results that are more contextually relevant to the individual.



Bing, on the other hand, excels at speech recognition and has a very low word error rate of just 5.1%. **This means that voice searches conducted on Amazon smart speakers have a higher rate of accuracy when it comes to understanding the exact words in a user's search query.**





# Voice Search and Voice Commands

Voice search on smart speakers involves the use of different commands than traditional text searches on desktop, laptop, and mobile devices. When consumers type in search queries they tend to use short keyword phrases which rarely involve a natural language flow such as one would use in a conversation. Voice searches involve the use of conversational tones with long-tail keywords and are almost always in the form of questions. The most common question phrases include what/who, how, when, and where.



**"Ok Google, where is Torres del Paine located?"**

**"Alexa, what kind of food do koalas eat?"**

**"Hi Cortana, who won the Stanley Cup?"**

**"Hey Siri, find a plumbing store near me?"**

**Of particular interest to digital marketers is the insight that the question type offers on the customer's journey to purchase.** For example, customers asking questions that start with what or who are often in the beginning stages of their search. As these questions progress from how to where in nature, the degree of intent to purchase increases. On a final note regarding voice search queries, smart speakers hear a mixture of commands falling into two major categories when it comes to delivering search results. These queries are used to find "local guides" or "facts and information." More importantly, smart speakers deliver results differently. Typed search queries deliver a list of results that customers can read and choose from. Smart speakers typically return just one answer: the featured snippet that appears first in search results.

## **Consider the following example.**

*A customer asking "what's the difference between marble and quartz counter tops?" is most likely just beginning a search to gather information as part of a kitchen remodel project.*

*A customer asking "where can I buy quartz counter tops in Minneapolis?" or inquiring about the hours of a particular home improvement store is much closer to a point of sale.*

*The latter question signals that the research phase is complete. The user is ready to buy and wants to know where that next action can be taken.*

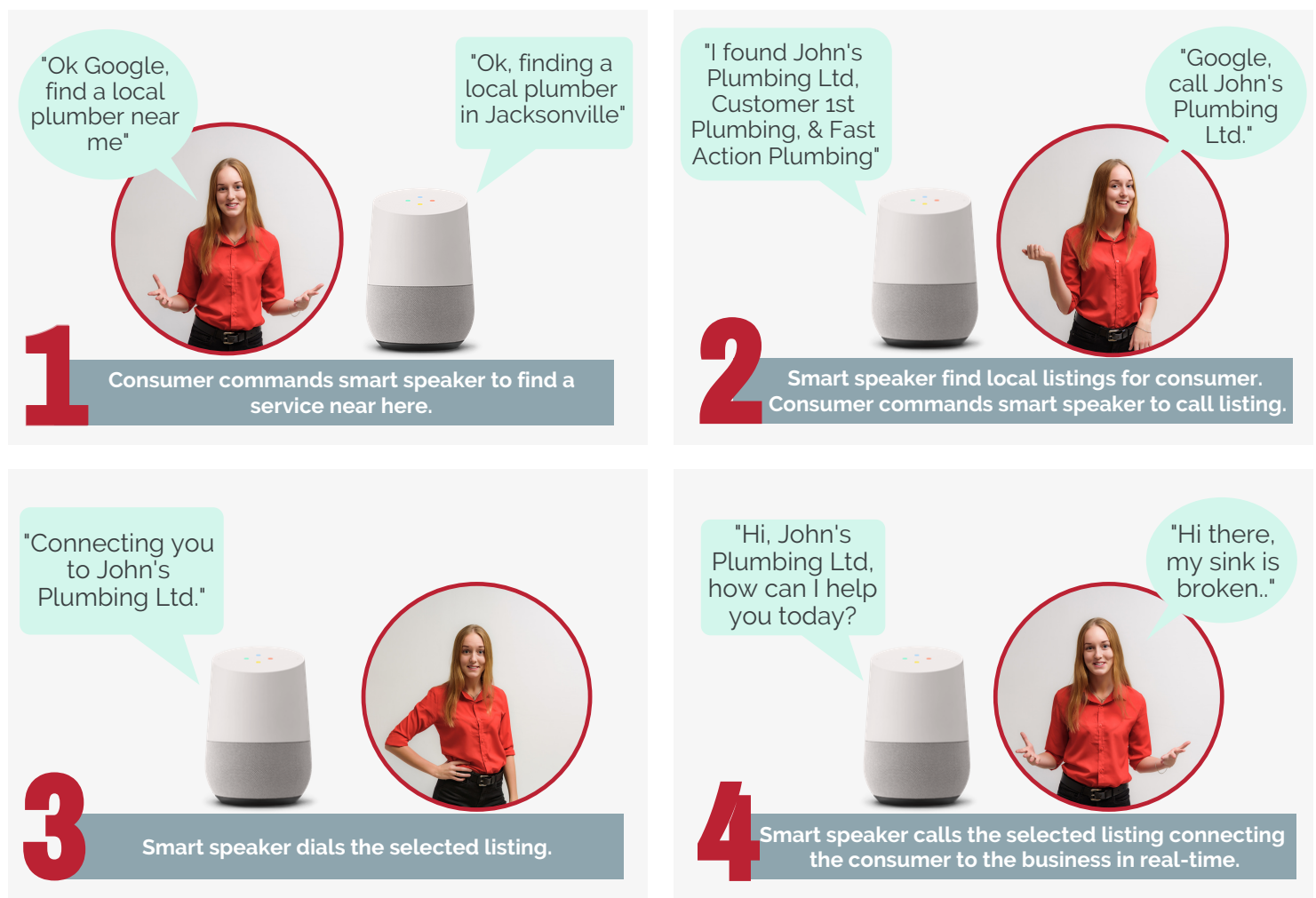
**So what's the major take away here? Make sure your business listing ranks in the featured snippet on whatever search engine you are using.**



# How Consumers Call From Smart Speakers

When a consumer asks their smart speaker to find a local plumber or restaurants near them, it's likely that they'll want to connect with the business to inquire about more information. As the smart speaker selects one of the top organic search results, the user can decide if they'd like to call the business by simply commanding the speaker to "call business". Once the command is made, the user will be connected to the business in real-time. Depending on the smart speaker, the call can be made directly through the smart speaker or the user can switch the call to their mobile phone if the smart speaker app is installed.

## Smart Speaker Customer Journey



# The Impact on Paid vs. Organic

As of 2019, paid search has been held out of smart speakers by the major players, Amazon and Google. The reason these two influencers in the industry have shied away from paid search so far is that both Amazon and Google view paid ads on smart speakers as being far more intrusive. While viewers can easily decide to close a paid ad on a desktop or mobile device, there's no button to push to skip the remainder of an ad or close it from view on smart speakers -- yet.

SEO, linking within a website, the quality and relevance of content all contribute to a field known as organic search. These are natural tactics used by digital marketers to boost brand visibility in search results. How then is organic search impacted by voice search on smart speakers? Well, as alluded to above, search results on smart speakers provide users with featured snippets of short, rich content that is the most valuable. As such, creating relevant content with the best keywords keeps a brand higher in SERPs and increases the odds of that content being presented to users in their smart speaker searches.

## Tips for voice optimized content:

- ✓ Always include a meta description
- ✓ Add featured snippet text
- ✓ Implement speakable schema
- ✓ Use longtail keywords in your content
- ✓ Analyze search behavior to deliver
- ✓ relevant content to your audience

## How Can You Optimize Ads for Voice Search?

Voice search on smart speakers is changing the way digital marketers optimize ads and content for SERPs. There are several ways that marketers should adjust to optimize ads, but the following three offer a great starting point for voice search optimization:

1

### Focus on Questions:

Users aren't just asking their smart speakers about keywords, they are using natural conversation to ask in-depth questions.



"Food koalas eat"



"What kind of food does a koalas eat?"





# 2

## Answer those Questions

Look into questions on your Google My Business Questions and Answers section or inquiries made by users on consumer review sites to determine the typical questions consumers are asking. You can then focus on creating content that answers those questions.



**"Eucalyptus plants make great house plants."**



**"Koalas mainly eat eucalyptus which is a durable plant making it a great option for a house plant."**

# 3

## Optimize Business Listings

As mentioned earlier in this eBook, customers often ask who/what, how, when, and where questions. The simple step of optimizing your business listings online with clean content and an accurate name, address, and phone number for the brand.



**Plumbing California**



**Joe's Plumbing  
325 Plumbing Way  
Santa Monica, CA  
1-800-PLU-MBIN**

## Best Practices for Voice Search on Smart Speakers

In order to keep up in the world of voice search on smart speakers, it's important to focus on two major areas. First and foremost, remember that users are interacting differently. Short keywords and keyword phrases are not common in voice search. Users ask far more complex questions using natural language and long-tail keywords when using voice search. Secondly, it's time to start thinking local. 22% of consumers are using voice search to find local information. Whether they're looking for restaurants with a certain cuisine nearby or the hours of a doctor's office, voice search is heavily focused on local content.



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