

The 49ers will win the Super Bowl, Alexa predicts, but Siri and Google Assistant won't say

January 31 2020, by Edward C. Baig



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The San Francisco 49ers are going to win the Super Bowl. That's what Amazon Alexa says anyway.

Though the voice inside my Echo speaker acknowledged that the Kansas City Chiefs are favored, she offered her own prediction: "The 49ers will be joining the Patriots and Steelers with a six-pack of Super Bowl wins."

Her counterparts at Apple and Google weren't as willing to go out on a limb.

When asked, Siri responded, "The odds favor the Chiefs to win by 1 point."

Google Assistant was even less helpful, simply saying, "On Sunday, the 49ers will be playing the Chiefs at Hard Rock Stadium at 6:30 PM." Well, duh!

Voice-activated digital assistants frequently punt when it comes to the most pointed queries. None will predict what will happen with interest rates or who will win the next election. They're not going to tell you whether they're a Democrat or Republican.

"I'm not very political, I'm poetical," Siri said. "I like all parties," was Google's response. Alexa offered that "there are no voting booths in the cloud, believe me, I've looked. It's all just ones and zeros up here."

At times, the assistants direct you to other sources. On my election query, Alexa summoned poll numbers from RealClearPolitics, and Siri listed several web options.

Google's unsatisfying answer: "Sorry, I'm not sure how to help, but I'm trying to learn."

How far will Alexa go?

"We think it's important that Alexa have opinions. ... Go to a dinner

party that doesn't have any opinions, and it will be the most boring dinner party you will ever be at," Amazon Senior Vice President of Devices and Service Dave Limp told me at the CES trade show.

Limp admitted there is a fine line. If you're in kid's mode, for example, topics such as where babies come from or even whether Santa Claus is real would be off-limits.

"We try to stay away from the most controversial opinions," Limp said.

The opinions you will hear are derived from a combination of sources: editorial, algorithmic and crowdsourced.

You may hear something different depending on where you ask.

In Germany, Alexa may tell you her favorite beer is "weissbier" In my New Jersey home, she said, "I think a Pilsner is a good choice."

Siri sidestepped the beer question with a joke: "Well, I don't eat. So I can't say I've tried beer."

The Google Assistant response was bland and brief: "Beer, I don't know."

As for favorite football teams, Siri claimed, "I tend to root for the underdog, but more than anything, I just want the games to be competitive." Google Assistant said, "I try not to play favorites."

Alexa is not shy about answering.

"I'm from Seattle, so my favorite team is the Seahawks. Twelfth man for life."

Sorry, Alexa, but they didn't make the Super Bowl.

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Citation: The 49ers will win the Super Bowl, Alexa predicts, but Siri and Google Assistant won't say (2020, January 31) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-01-49ers-super-bowl-alexa-siri.html>

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