

Voice-assisted AI is becoming smarter, but consumers have higher expectations

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When Huan Chen started researching how consumers think about and perceive artificial intelligence in marketing communications, she was surprised at a major finding: They understand marketing and think it's unavoidable today.

"Marketing companies and organizations will take advantage of new technology," said Chen, and consumers understand that, just like they now have no or low expectations of privacy. "They know these kinds of devices can cache data all the time, (and) if you buy this device, you know you sacrifice your privacy."

Chen, an associate professor in the Department of Advertising, with Telecommunication Professor Sylvia Chan-Olmsted and graduate students Julia Kim and Irene Sanabria, recorded 20 consumers using AI devices and then conducted in-depth interviews to gauge their perspective. Her findings are presented in the paper "Consumers' Perception on Artificial Intelligence Applications in Marketing Communication."

Most people have a general understanding of

[artificial intelligence](#) used in devices like Amazon's Alexa and Google Home, Chen said. In comparing AI to humans, "they think of AI as smart and intelligent but not as sophisticated or complicated enough. Even though they communicate and interact with AI, they still don't think AI can do complicated or sophisticated tasks. They think human beings still need to do that kind of task."

Some people wish AI devices could master more functions to help them with their daily lives, Chen said. For now, how they are using voice-assisted AI focuses on five aspects:

- **Function:** Consumers understand and appreciate the various functions AI can offer, like "Alexa, play music" or "Find a recipe."
- **Communication:** "Consumers have a love/hate relationship with AI," she said. "They are frustrated, especially if the [device](#) couldn't recognize what they are talking about."
- **Adaptation:** How does AI adapt to users during communications and interactions, and vice versa? "The voice-assisted devices using AI have become smarter and smarter to know users better. At the same time, human beings also adjust and change. One man figured out a way to give an order, to talk to Alexa to make that [communication](#) more effective. That's a mutual adaptation."
- **People are cautious about their relationships with AI.**
- **Privacy:** Privacy is still an issue, Chen said, but not as much as it once was. Technology may be desensitizing some people, who now think their data is being collected everywhere, all the time. Others "do not think they are so important that people will do something with the data."

Beyond thinking that AI in marketing communication is unavoidable today, consumers in

this study also do not think such communication is powerful or effective enough to influence their attitude or behaviors, Chen said. "They do not ask AI or Alexa for product or branding information. They use it to get more general information, like to find a restaurant. They don't typically ask it if they want to buy new clothes, a bike, a car; they would go to the computer to search. They want to see pictures and they do not know the source and if it is reliable and trustworthy."

Chen said industry professionals can use this information and technology "to promote and connect better with consumers. For [media companies](#): How do you make technology do a better job to connect with consumers emotionally? ... How do you make AI more human-like? Consumers still think it's a machine and cannot do a complicated or sophisticated job."

Trust is part of that answer. Because consumers do not know where Alexa gets her information from, they doubt it. "You have to make sure [consumers](#) think AI devices could offer them trustworthy information if they want them to make purchases and correlated behaviors."

More information:

[www.jou.ufl.edu/research/cjc-a ... jmc-conference-2020/](http://www.jou.ufl.edu/research/cjc-a...jmc-conference-2020/)

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