

The background of the entire page is a dark blue gradient. It features a series of concentric, slightly irregular blue circles that create a ripple effect, suggesting sound waves. A bright, glowing blue waveform, similar to an audio signal, runs horizontally across the middle of the image, with its peaks and valleys creating a sense of movement and energy.

iab.

Advertising's Interactive Audio Future

October 2025

During his company's Q1 2025 Earnings Call on April 30th of this year, Meta Platforms Co-founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg made an increasingly common but nevertheless remarkable observation about the all-encompassing role of technology in our day-to-day lives.

Referring to the enormous levels of investment that he has directed towards the development of Meta AI, Zuckerberg told Meta shareholders, **"I think that we're all going to have an AI that we talk to throughout the day..."** and I think this will be one of the most important and valuable services that has ever been created."¹

Although it's impossible to know what the specific, long term contributions of Meta AI, OpenAI's ChatGPT, and other generative AI platforms will be to advertisers over time, the value already bursting out of AI has been so easy to see and imagine that it has, of course, launched a great deal of commentary and guidance about what comes next, much of it grounded in a vision of continuous chats with our AI of choice.



Indeed, as IAB's Collin Colburn and Caroline Giegerich recently explained in a [jointly authored blog post](#) about the future of commerce amidst the rise of personalized, AI powered shopping agents, that future will belong to those who master the art of presenting information and brand stories that enter "directly into conversations, presented as helpful suggestions, not interruptions."

This conversational relationship with technology – and the rapid growth of spoken word interactions that the trajectory of voice-enabled AI suggests is on the horizon – will be the focus of this paper.

Audio's Expanding Role in an AI-Driven World



When thinking about the cultural and commercial ramifications of the AI mediated lifestyle that companies like Meta envision, it doesn't take a crystal ball to predict the tremendous scale of the impact that this societal shift will have upon the ways in which human beings produce, consume, and interact with all forms of media and advertising.

As will be discussed below, a major reason for this is the essence of audio itself. As the medium most closely aligned with conversation, the very nature of audio — the rubric through which human speech and listening flows — suggests that audio-based communication will become central to our AI interactions.

Another important reason audio may play a more central role in our conversations with AI is the emotional and psychological impact that these intrinsic characteristics of audio have on media consumers, which positions audio well as a brand storytelling tool amidst the societal shifts underway.

Closing Gaps & Preparing for the Future of Audio Advertising & Measurement

This ability to tell brand stories at a high level and the resulting ability to deliver benchmark-beating returns for advertisers has been a major focus of the IAB Media Center over the past year, during which time we have published two previous papers that have endeavored to tell a story of audio itself.

[In the first of these papers](#), released in October 2024, we told the story of audio's underappreciated role on brand and agency media plans and of how important it is to close the longstanding consumption-investment gap that exists between the extraordinary amount of time consumers spend with audio and the percentage of media budgets that advertisers allocate to it.

[In the second of these papers](#), released this June, we told the story of audio's historic underrepresentation in Media Mix Models and what audio publishers and advertisers can do to ensure audio's visibility in MMM and dramatically improve their ability to prove out the full funnel returns to be found in the medium.

Taken together, those two papers have set the stage for this paper's focus on what's next for audio as we quicken our step into the era of agentic AI – an era defined by natural language processing and fluid voice interactions. This new era is one in which audio is not only a powerful and measurable media channel but also an actual *interface* for AI enabled information discovery that will play a vital role in powering AI interactions in the first place.

Getting Audio & Podcasting on the Media Plan:

A Guide for Mutual Success

iab.



iab.

Measuring Digital Audio in Media Mix Models

A Beginner's Guide

A History of Interactive Audio Advertising

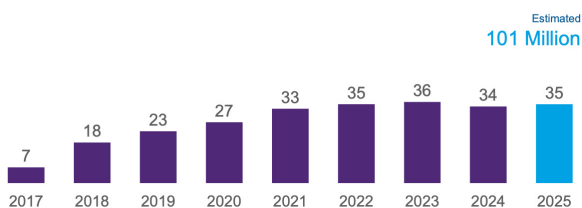
Dating back to November of 2014 when Amazon's Echo smart speaker was first launched, there has been a sharp albeit recently plateaued rise in the use of smart speakers, including a 400% increase in ownership from 2017 to 2023.² As a result, today there are more than **100 Million individual owners** of smart

speakers², with approximately 130 million total smart speakers from a variety of manufacturers including Amazon, Google, and Apple currently in use in the U.S.³

During this time, the ability to add interactive elements to advertisements delivered on Smart Speakers and other devices led to an emergence of "dialogue advertising"⁴ that enabled consumers to interact with otherwise traditional advertisements, and the early returns were excellent.

Smart Speaker Ownership

TOTAL U.S. POPULATION 12+
% OWNING A SMART SPEAKER



Working with advertising partners including KFC, Unilver, and Acura, for instance, Pandora found that these user-initiated advertising interactions produced a **"say-through-rate" that was up to 10 times higher than the click-through-rates** for display advertising and that they also produced nearly 8% higher ad recall over control groups.⁵

This kind of strong engagement in the test campaigns being run at the time was further established once Amazon rolled out its interactive advertising capabilities that let listeners set a reminder about a product or service, request more information, or add it to an Amazon shopping cart using Amazon's AI assistant Alexa.

Early interactive audio ads produced a **"say-through-rate" up to 10 times higher than click-through-rates for display.**



BLUEAIR

- 45.3% new-to-brand detail page views
- 94% higher add-to-cart rate than the 2024 Blueair average add-to-cart rate
- 36% more efficient cost per add-to-cart than the 2024 Blueair average

As will be discussed in more detail below, **it is imperative for advertisers to lean into the imminent convergence** of fully conversational AI with this existing interactive infrastructure, but it's also vitally important to understand how engaging the existing infrastructure already is.

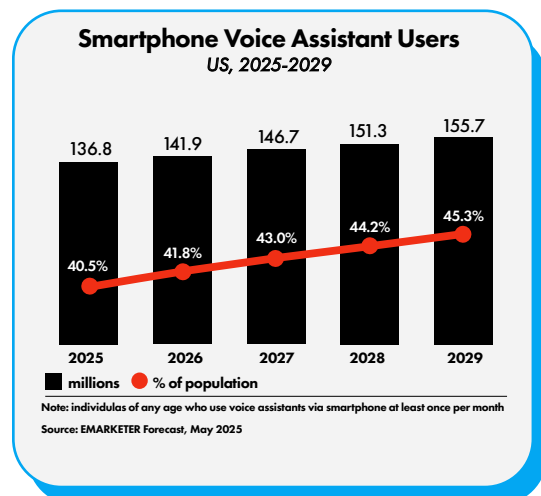
In a recent interactive campaign [highlighted on the Amazon Ads blog](#), for instance, the air purification company Blue Air was able to drive add-to-cart rates that were **94% higher** than its 2024 average, **lower its cost-per-add by 36%**, and prompt **new-to-brand customers** to access the detail page about its Blue Pure 211 i Max air purifier **at a rate of 45.3%**.⁶

Transitioning To a Fully Interactive Future

Starting with Google Voice Search's debut in 2008, the **adoption of voice assistants has rapidly and exponentially increased.**

Although not yet conversational, Google Voice Search represented a seminal moment in the history of our interactions with technology by enabling users to speak a search term or query aloud, and this was soon followed by the rise of additional assistants such as Siri, Alexa, and Google's own Google Assistant that are in widespread use today.

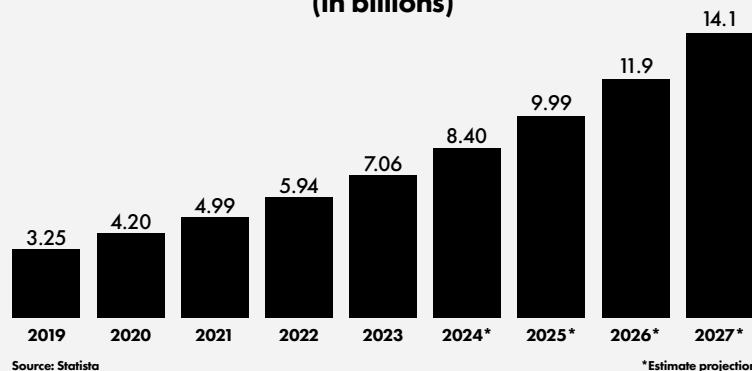
In each case, these assistants became steadily more conversational in nature until the late 2022 arrival of OpenAI's ChatGPT assistant that has ushered in the current era of fully interactive search activity.



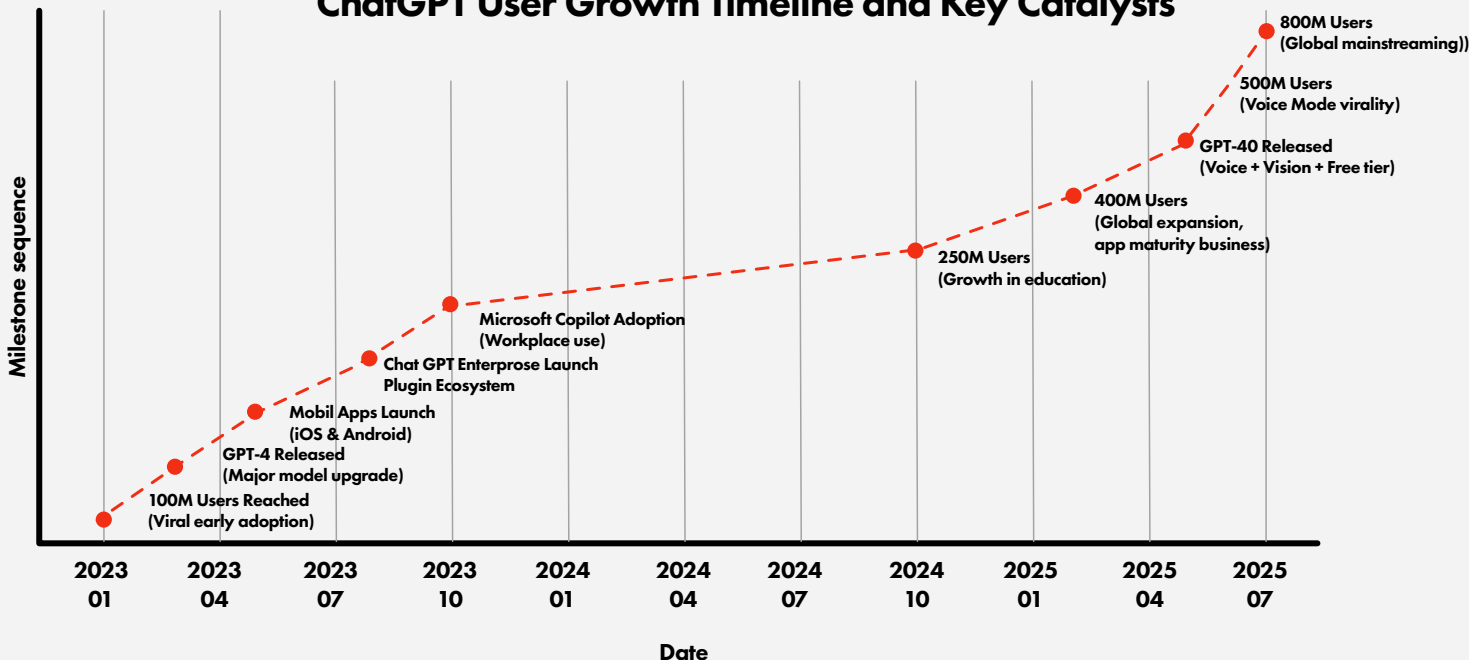
Since ChatGPT's release, the speed of voice assistant adoption has created a veritable sonic boom of voice enabled interaction with AI, to the tune of nearly 140 million installations on U.S. smartphones alone⁷, an additional 91 million on Smart Speakers⁸, and **nearly 10 billion installations on the full spectrum of internet connected devices around the world** as of this year.⁹

When looking at ChatGPT's trajectory, for instance, we can trace its almost incomprehensibly steep arc from a level of 100 million users in January of 2023 – when it was already the fastest internet product to reach that usage milestone¹⁰ – to one that 3rd party estimates suggest is now approaching 1 billion users after **a single year quadrupling** from 100 million to 400 million and **another doubling** from there to 800 million users in the five short months between March and August of this year.¹¹

**Digital Voice Assistants Worldwide
(in billions)**



ChatGPT User Growth Timeline and Key Catalysts



The Evolution of Interactive Audio Advertising

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
Limited Reach, Prescriptive	Improving Performance	AI Assistants, Proactive & Contextual
Interactive ads, support scripted prompts only	Growing adoption due to	AI Assistants, become commerce-ready as trusted services
Say, "Alexa, send me more info"	Alexa, add to cart	Personalized offers "Would you like to hear some options on sale?"
		Conversational product search "I found 3 choices under \$150. Shall we compare?"

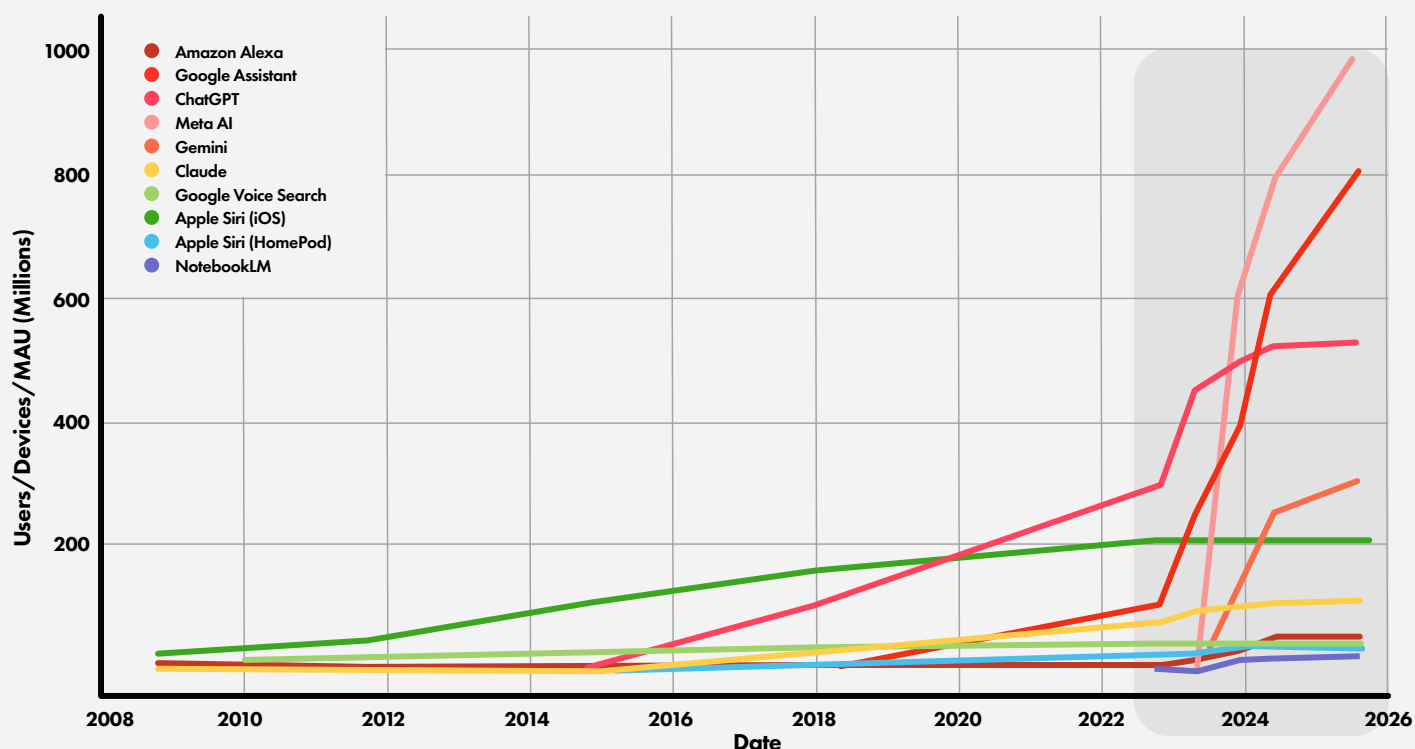
Still not impressed?

How about a look at Meta AI then.

As with ChatGPT, Meta AI has also been on an epic tear through the voice assistant universe. Based on its automatic integration with other Meta apps like Facebook, Instagram, and, Meta's Ray-Ban glasses, more than 2 million of which have already been sold following a tripling of sales in the first half of 2025, it **has already crossed the 1 billion user threshold.**^{12, 13}

With this level of user adoption added to the billions of other voice assistants in use around the world, the stage is set for audio's ascendance as both a medium and advertising vehicle in the months and years to come.

Growth Over Time: Voice Assistants and GenAI Platforms (2008-2025)



Year	Assistant	Platform	Notable Firsts
2008	Google Voice Search	Mobile browsers/apps	First voice search on mobile
2010	Siri (independent)	iOS app	First natural-language assistant
2011	Siri (Apple)	iPhone 4S	First OS-integrated assistant
2014	Alexa (Amazon)	Echo smart speaker	First home-based voice assistant
2016	Google Assistant	Google Pixel / Home	First context-aware assistant
2017	Bixby (Samsung)	Galaxy S8	Phone/device integration focus
2018	Siri (HomePod)	HomePod smart speaker	Siri moves to smart speaker form
2022	ChatGPT (OpenAI)	Multi-platform LLM Agent	First widely adopted LLM-powered conversational assistant
2023	Claude (Anthropic)	Multi-platform LLM Agent	AI-driven, privacy first design
2023	Perplexity AI	Multi-platform LLM Agent	Voice + text based conversational text assistant
2023	Bard – Gemini (Google)	Multi-platform LLM Agent	Evolved from Bard into Gemini brand for chat, search, and assistant
2024	NotebookLM (Google)	Multi-platform LLM Agent	Source-grounded research assistant using user documents
2024	Siri with Apple Intelligence	Upgrade	LLM-based, on-device personalization and app control (iOS 18)
2024-25	Gemini Assistant (Google)	Multi-platform LLM Agent	Gemini LLM integrated across Android, Pixel, and Nest devices
2025	Alexa+ (Amazon)	Multi-platform LLM Agent	LLM-powered proactive agent, memory, routines, context awareness

Advertising Dystopia ... or Conversational Shopping Nirvana?

In November of 2023, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman [went on an episode of the New York Times' excellent Hard Fork podcast](#) and said, "One of the reasons I think people like ChatGPT, even if they can't articulate it, is we don't do ads."¹⁴

Altman's remarks came in answer to a question from one of Hard Fork's co-hosts, Casey Newton, who wanted to know Altman's thoughts about the future of the ad supported internet in a world where GenAI may make it harder for publishers to monetize their content.

When Altman continued, he worried that **"ads plus AI can get a little dystopic"**, but neither he nor anyone else in Silicon Valley has said that advertising won't be a part of our conversations with AI, which will need every ounce of revenue possible to pay stratospheric computing and energy costs.¹⁵

What they are saying – and doing (OpenAI itself has already rolled out [customized, natural language shopping recommendations](#) and signed a deal with Shopify to [incorporate native shopping features](#)) – instead sounds a lot more like an **entirely new approach to marketing** in which ads will be a very important part of our conversations with AI.

To cite just one example of this new approach and its implications for audio advertising, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy highlighted his company's intention to invest heavily in AI powered, interactive advertising experiences on Amazon's Q2 2025 earnings call.

Speaking about a **"delightful shopping experience that will keep getting better"** that Amazon's newly upgraded, GenAI powered Alexa+ digital assistant creates for consumers, Jassy added, **"I think over time, there will be opportunities, as people are engaging in more multi-turn conversations, to have advertising play a role to help people find discovery."**¹⁶



Reimagining Advertising for the Conversational Future

A key theme of the [Getting Audio & Podcasting on the Media Plan Guide](#) mentioned above is the incredible usage rate and influence of audio content for shoppers during the daytime hours when most purchases are made. As a study that was cited in the guide showed, **70% of respondents consumed audio during peak purchase hours, with 53% saying that they had taken an action while listening to audio** as they were shopping in a store or eating in a restaurant.¹⁷

This **all-day companionship** of audio during peak shopping hours is just one of many data points shared in the guide that describes the special ability of audio ads to influence purchasing decisions that are now increasingly being made in conversation with Generative AI.

Now the question becomes, **what can advertisers do to leverage that level of companionship** as voice-enabled AI assistants come to sound like trusted friends giving highly informed word of mouth recommendations about any product or service in existence.



Especially for those with understandable concerns about potential privacy violations or the ability of AI to fabricate responses in response to information requests, this is a question that may be answered cautiously at first, but, with the drive towards audio enabled product discovery proceeding at warp speed, the time to plan for audio conversations with AI is now.

Voice Shopping is Getting Loud

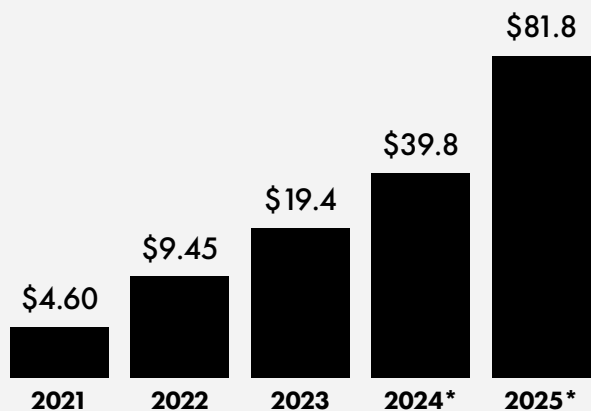
Consider, for instance, the trajectory of voice commerce upon which a new kind of interactive audio advertising strategy could be built.

Even before the advent of conversational AI, voice-assisted shopping already accounted for **\$4.6 Billion** in 2021 worldwide sales revenue, and this year that number is expect to climb to **\$81.8 Billion**, representing a **1,700% increase and 105.4% Compound Annual Growth Rate** over that time.⁹

What's more, the parent category of conversational shopping (combining AI and live chat alongside simple voice queries) has followed a similarly jaw dropping trajectory, **predicted to rise 1,053% from \$41 Billion in '21 to a projected \$473 Billion in 2026, nearly 30% of which is already coming from voice-only interactions.**⁹

All told, "conversational commerce" is projected to tip the scales at more than **\$1 Trillion** by 2028, and with **74% of consumers already using voice-based AI to complete at least some part of a retail buying transaction** with a conversational voice assistant⁹, the implications for delivering the right ad to the right person at the right time using audio are profound.

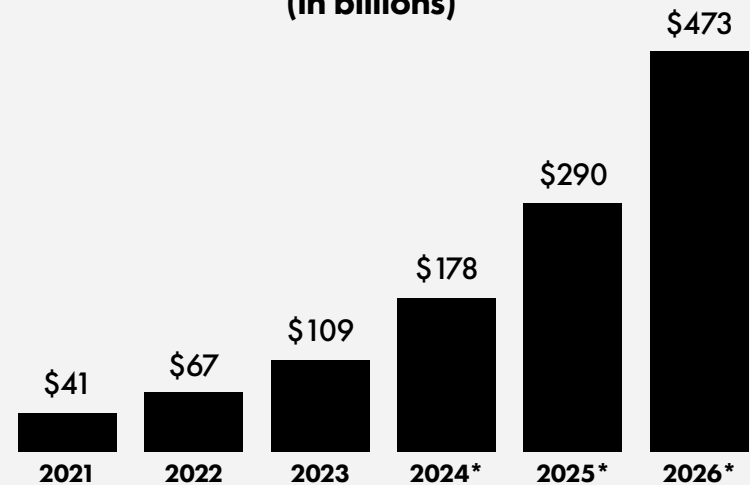
Voice Shopping Revenue Worldwide (in billions)



Source: Statista

* Estimate projection

Conversational Shopping Revenue Worldwide (in billions)



Source: Statista

* Estimate projection

Leading the Conversation

With the level of voice enabled shopping described above already playing out, the runway towards highly relevant, personalized audio advertising that resonates with and feels useful to consumers in an interactive form seems endless.

To borrow Altman's view, the most successful marketers will prioritize the development of "tasteful"¹⁹ and relevant interactive advertising messages that meet Colburn and Giegerich's standard of being helpful and non-interruptive, but let's imagine for a minute what this might sound like.

Consider the following scenario involving a fictional consumer whose current shopping interests may or may not closely align with those of this paper's author.

In the case of this consumer, we are listening to someone who has an interest in getting back to a past and hopefully future experience of bicycle riding, making a much higher priority of doing so without falling and breaking his neck than he might have made during his bike riding sojourns of yore.

Now imagine this consumer speaking aloud these words with his AI of choice:



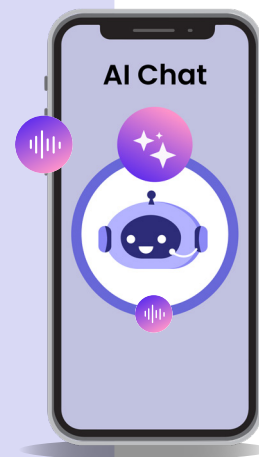
I'm a middle aged man living in the New Jersey suburbs who would like to get back to bike riding after many years of not riding.

I used to do quite a bit of trail riding, but it's been a long time, and I'm not really looking to replicate my previous experience.

Now what I'm looking for is something safe and comfortable that I can use to ease back in and mostly to enjoy a hybrid of simply riding around my neighborhood streets and doing some light trail riding on nearby trails.

Mostly I think I'm looking for something with a very comfortable seat and easy overall experience that lets me ride without too much fatigue while cycling off and on for a few hours over a weekend.

What do you think?



This question could have been posed to Alexa+ via a smart speaker or connected car dashboard, ChatGPT via Bluetooth headphones or desktop computer, Meta AI via phone or Ray-Ban glasses, or to any of the other agents listed above with any of the billions of other devices on which they have all been installed. Regardless of how it was posed, however, the universality of quality shopping data that AI powered chat assistants can deliver at the speed of conversation is immediately apparent.

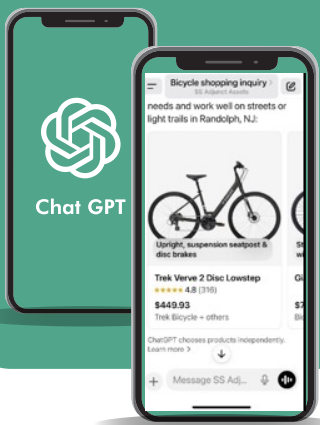
From Alexa+:

"Based on your needs **for comfortable neighborhood rides and light trail use**, I've found some great options. The top result is a Viribus Hybrid Bike with 28-inch wheels and 7 speeds. This bike combines features of both road and city bikes, which could be **perfect for your mix of street and light trail riding**. It has 700c tires for smooth rides, and aluminum frame for durability, and disc brakes for reliable stopping power ..."



From ChatGPT:

"Great! Let's start by highlighting a few models that might suit your needs. For example, the Trek Verve series is **often recommended for comfort-focused riders**. It has an upright geometry and a cushy saddle, making it **easy on your back and shoulders**. It also has slightly wider tires for stability on both pavement and well-maintained trails...."

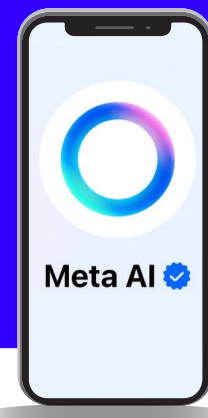


From Meta AI:

"Given your terrain and riding style, I'd recommend checking out **hybrid or comfort bikes**. They're designed for on-road riding with some capability for light trails, and they often feature **comfortable seating, upright riding positions, and versatile gearing** ..."

Given everything that you just said, which of the bikes you've already recommended do you think might most closely fit the bill?

"Between the Specialized Sirrus and the Trek FX, I think the Specialized Sirrus **might be a great fit for you**. It's a hybrid bike that's designed for comfort and versatility, with a focus on on-road riding and some capability for light trails. The Sirrus has a **comfortable riding position, with an upright handlebar** and a supportive seat ... That being said, it's always a good idea to test ride a bike before buying to make sure it's the right fit for you."



Each of those voice interactions was, of course, initiated by our (sort of) fictional shopper. For brands seeking success amidst the meteoric ascent of AI, however, the substance of those interactions can - and should - be just as easily replicated via **advertiser-initiated** voice interactions that deliver the same utility and relevance **at the same speed and fluidity of conversation** with which that interaction occurred.

Brands Need to Start Talking to Their Customers the Way Their Customers Talk to Their AI

The new world in which all us live – where there are more voice enabled AI agents than there are people on the planet and where conversational shopping is on a \$1 Trillion trajectory – is one in which **advertisers must be present in audio form** because using our voice to learn what we want to learn is the fastest and most direct way to do so.

The information gathering chats above about comfortable, hybrid bikes took approximately **one minute each** and yielded a level of detail and useful recommendations that would have required more effort and taken much longer to assemble via search engine or direct research on company websites. All done in a simple conversational fashion that mirrored the same kind of conversation that the consumer might have had with a human cycling enthusiast.

The point here isn't that he couldn't have found what he was looking for via other means or that he might not visit company websites or speak with knowledgeable humans as he zeroes in on his bike of choice because he may very well do so. The top of funnel awareness born of his simple conversation with AI, however, has already promoted a high level of brand discovery for the bikes he was presented in an extremely short period of time.



- **OVER 1 BILLION VOICE SEARCHES ARE PERFORMED EVERY MONTH.**

- **93% OF CONSUMERS ARE SATISFIED WITH THEIR VOICE ASSISTANTS.**

- **75% OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE EXPECTED TO OWN SMART SPEAKER DEVICES BY 2025.**

- **65% OF 25-49-YEAR-OLDS SPEAK TO THEIR VOICE-ENABLED DEVICES AT LEAST ONCE PER DAY.**

- **65% OF PEOPLE WHO OWN AN AMAZON ECHO OR GOOGLE HOME CAN'T IMAGINE GOING BACK TO THE DAYS BEFORE THEY HAD A SMART SPEAKER.**

How can advertisers take advantage of this? One way will be to lean into new, fully conversational ad experiences that take existing interactive audio CTA's to the next level by inviting consumers to ask not just for a follow up email but to have a chat in the moment about a product or service of interest. Another could be serving a traditional 30-second streaming spot to known high value customers who are logged into their favorite music platform while running errands at a peak shopping time of day to plant the seeds for subsequent interaction and conversion.

Whatever the tactic, as the bicycle chat above demonstrates, the technology exists to enable highly personalized, two-way conversations with consumers who are engaged in voice enabled AI product discovery. The time to make sure you're ready to speak back is now.

Sources: CapitalOne Shopping, 2025
Invoca, 2025

Join the Industry Conversation

One of the things we're learning about the adoption and integration of AI into our lives is that, like so many other things we're unfamiliar with at first, our comfort and usage levels grow rapidly once we begin to actually interact with it and learn how to use it.

In the case of voice based commerce, the evidence of our growing comfort and trust is rapidly advancing not only for AI usage and conversation as a whole but also for use in advertising.

In a recent study evaluating consumer sentiment about the reliability of ads produced by AI, for instance, more than 60% of smart speaker, smart device, and connected car dashboard owners said they found such advertising reliable vs. only 18% of all U.S. adults.²¹

As this trust in AI continues to grow, and as the ease, speed, and simplicity of natural language conversations with our AI agents of choice is further established as a routine part of our lives, addressing – and interacting with – consumers using ads of either human or AI invention in the native form of spoken word audio will be essential to brand success.

To make sure we lock arms as a community to properly plan for this future, IAB will continue to facilitate collaboration of all advertising stakeholders where audio is concerned. There are many touchpoints, including the IAB Audio Committee and numerous other committees, working groups, and professional development forums where you can lean in and join these efforts, and we invite you to do so by emailing media-center@iab.com.

End Notes

1. [Meta Platforms, Inc. First Quarter 2025 Results Conference Call, April 30th, 2025](#)
2. [Infinite Dial, Edison Research, 2025](#)
3. [CIRP & Voicebot studies suggesting 1.3 – 1.5 smart speakers per U.S. household](#)
4. [Ads That Want You To Talk Back, built in, March, 2020](#)
5. [Voice Ads ready for prime time, instreamatic/Medium, March 2021](#)
6. [Interactive audio ads powered by generative AI drive new customer consideration for Blueair, Amazon Ads, 2025](#)
7. [Smartphone Voice Assistant Users, eMarketer, 2025](#)
8. [Voice Search Statistics By Devices, SEO, Usage And Marketing, Electro IQ, 2025](#)
9. [Voice Shopping Statistics, CapitalOne Shopping Research, 2025](#)
10. [ChatGPT sets record for fastest-growing user base, Reuters, 2023](#)
11. [ChatGPT Statistics & Total Users \(2025\): DAU & MAU Data, Demandsage, 2025](#)
12. [Meta's Ray-Bans have sold 2 million pairs, The Verge, 2025](#)
13. [EssilorLuxottica earnings boost illustrates growth potential for Meta's smartglasses, MarketWatch, 2025](#)
14. [\(Yet Another\) Emergency Pod: Sam Altman is Back, New York Times, 2023](#)
15. ["Why Does OpenAI Need So Much Money?", New York Times, December, 2024](#)
16. [Amazon CEO wants to put ads in your Alexa+ conversations, TechCrunch, 2025](#)
17. [Mobility of Audio Study, SiriusXM Media, Publicis, and Edison Research, 2024 \(SXM, Edison, Publicis\)](#)
18. [Your Brain on Podcasts, Neurolab/Wonderly – 2019](#)
19. ["OpenAI upgrades ChatGPT search with shopping features", Tech Crunch, 2025](#)
20. [Kantar Interactive Ads context lab study, US, March 7th-March 23th 2024](#)
21. [Iris Flex's AI Gap Study Reveals U.S. Consumers Are Embracing Voice Interaction Over Touch When Engaging with AI, 2025](#)
22. [Shopify integration could turn ChatGPT into a shopping tool, eMarketer, 2025 \](#)

Expert Opinion

"Natural language voice interactions are transforming how brands connect with customers in personalized listening moments. At Amazon Ads, we're seeing this evolution firsthand through our Interactive Audio Ads, which enable listeners to engage with brands using simple voice commands through Alexa-enabled devices. These interactive experiences create a direct path to action – whether adding products to cart, requesting more information, or setting reminders – all through the power of voice.

As voice technology advances, we anticipate these interactions becoming more conversational and nuanced, unlocking commercial intent in more subtle ways. For example, while a listener is following driving directions or seeking local attraction information, natural language interactions can create seamless opportunities for brand engagement. Our data shows these interactive formats are highly effective, with Amazon Interactive Audio Ads observing 2.2x greater unaided brand awareness than standard audio ads²⁰ and 91% of surveyed Alexa users taking action after hearing an interactive ad.²⁰

Audio ads present unique and diverse opportunities for advertisers to engage with audiences. Branded voice assistants help consumers take action more efficiently, while offering advertisers a clear presence, similar to premium placements in traditional media. In other cases, voice experiences focused on specific topics might include multiple brands working together to provide complete solutions - like when planning a trip, you might get advice that combines information from airlines, hotels, and local tour companies. As we continue to innovate in this space, we're focused on creating experiences that deliver genuine utility for customers while providing the clear brand attribution that advertisers need."

Nikhil Nilakantan, *Director & GM, Devices,*
Audio & Podcast Advertising, Amazon Ads