

JULY 19

# VOICE SEARCH A VIABLE MARKETING TOOL?

DELVE INTO THE NEXT FRONTIER OF  
MARKETING BY UNDERSTANDING THE  
UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF VOICE SEO AND  
HOW YOUR BUSINESS CAN CAPITALISE ON  
IT

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last two decades humanity has seen unparalleled growth in every industry, however what has remained an underlying constant is how we search for information. Since 1997 the vast database of google has been open for public perusal, until 5 years ago most searches on the platform resulted in the display of the coveted “blue links”, recently however we have seen the increased display of the “answer box”. This new means of responding to organic searches is placing a far greater importance on voice search engine optimised sources like websites or podcasts rather than the traditional SEO optimised sources. In addition with over 50% of Australians being classified as early adopters of the early majority when it comes to embracing new technologies, it is paramount that voice SEO is delved into by marketers. This slow but gradual change for responding to searches in tandem with the development of virtual voice assistants like Siri, Bixby and Alexa and the amount of smart phone users being close to 2.5 billion, highlights a clear trend that this paradigm shifts needs marketers to question themselves and their methodologies.

This report will aim to provide a brief market analysis of search engine optimisation covering information from the ground up. It will then provide an impact analysis which highlights how voice search engine optimisation can impact your firm. Finally this paper puts forth some strategies that will be used to give your firm a competitive advantage if voice SEO is implemented on your platform. Overall this paper aims to highlight how marketers they can take advantage of voice and aid their clients to optimize their platforms and take advantage of voice search as it takes off in the coming years.

This report was prepared with the assistance of students of the University of New South Wales, with Practera.com funded by the University.

# MARKET ANALYSIS

Whilst print marketing has been the stock standard for over three quarters of a century, the fruits of its labour are no longer as enticing as the digital marketing strategies being implemented. This is due to one fundamental reason, which is that digital marketing allows clients to target their niche customer base instead of trying a one size fits all solution. Thus digital marketing clients determine the real intention of its customers and appropriately target them through using traditional SEO and Voice SEO techniques.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results<sup>1</sup>. It is a common practice used by marketing firms to ensure that their clients are attracting people from the search engine results page (SERP's) who are genuinely interested in their product and that there are many of them. This method has several pro and cons associated with it.

Pros of SEO	Cons of SEO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SEO delivers a continuous flow of free and targeted traffic.</li><li>- SEO generates traffic that have a good chance of converting. The search engine journal reported that leads generated by SEO can go as high as 14.6% close rate which is a lot better than the 1.7% close rate you can generate from email marketing or print advertising.</li><li>- SEO targets visitors instead of getting a lot of general traffic that has little interest in your services or products. You can target the right audience, who are more willing to use your services or buy your products.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SEO usually take long time to achieve a good ROI (return on investment), as it can take time to implement effectively on the back end of a website. In essence if it takes a long time to generate substantial results from your SEO efforts, then it will also take a long time to achieve a good ROI from all your efforts.</li><li>- SEO has no guarantee for results (especially 1st page ranking). SEO provides no immediate guarantee that you will land in the first pages of search results using the keywords you are targeting for.</li></ul>

Whilst the above is the base of SEO and what is currently used, this paper will from now focus mainly on Voice SEO and its impacts.

Voice search is a speech recognition technology that allows users to search by saying terms aloud rather than typing them into a search field<sup>2</sup>. This means of search is being widely used with 46% of voice search users look for a local business daily<sup>3</sup>, indicating that there is a large market to be tapped into. However the other very large

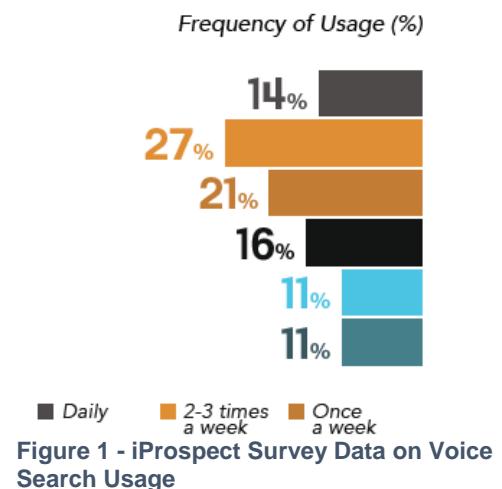
benefit to their means of search is that if an originally non voice source like a podcast can be converted by google AI to a transcript put on a website and that website be SEO for voice search than those results can too be included. This is a big part of Google's plan for the next decade.

## “Podcasts will show up in Google Search as a “first-class citizen” alongside the text, image, and video results you are used to seeing”

The above is bold statement stated in an interview with Pacific Content and Google's Podcast Product Manager Zack Weeden, which gives us glimpse into the future that is already being written for Voice SEO. This also subtly provides firms with a guide to slowly start using podcasts in their marketing arsenal.

However since Voice SEO is not really being used full fledged the google analytics data behind it is not very accurate thus we have taken data from various business surveys and consulting firms to provide a brief scope on where voice search is at the moment. In terms of that statistics there are two key factors that are of interest, firstly how many people are or intend to use voice search within a given time frame. Secondly how they speak to their device when using voice search.

The survey, 'Consumer Intelligence Series: Prepare for the voice revolution' conducted by PwC in 2018 highlight that 93% of their survey group “were very satisfied with their voice assistants”. In addition a corresponding white paper 'The future is voice activated' by iProspect (Figure 1) gives a more in-depth breakdown of usage by time period, which closely reflects the results from the PwC survey.



However what is more intriguing is that a study from SeoClarity which utilises a data set from helping over 2500 clients, indicated that nearly, almost 20% of all voice search queries are triggered by a set of 25 keywords. these consist mainly of question words like “how” or “what”<sup>4</sup>. This indicates to us that consumers have conversations with their devices and the best way to use Voice SEO might be to have websites be structured in terms of FAQ's or simple answers to common questions.

Thus it is evident that the voice market is slowly growing in the shadows and with over 55% of households are expected to own a smart device that has voice interaction capabilities by 2022 and with over 2.5 billion people to own a smart phone by 2019, it is paramount that marketers begin looking into this field of Voice SEO as its disruption is part of a revolution to come.

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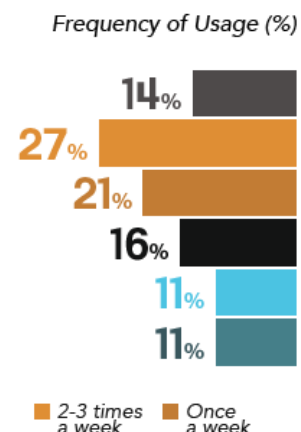


Figure 2 - iProspect Survey Data on Voice Search Usage

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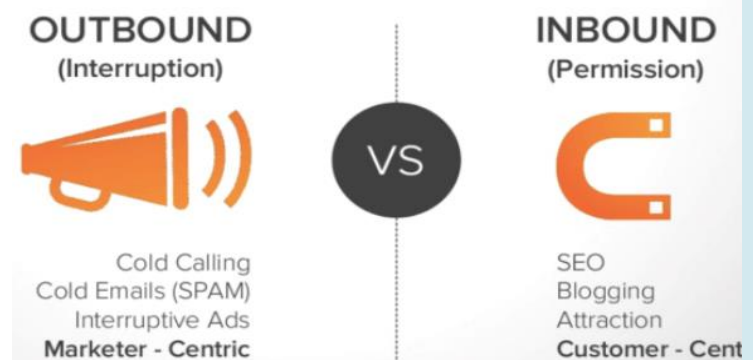
# IMPACT ANALYSIS

Whilst voice SEO is a growing field, it is pointless to explore unless a competitive advantage can be attained for both clients and a marketing firm. These competitive advantages can be quantified for clients as there is observed data but the advantage for the firm will be based both on its internal figures and its relative market position, thus to explore a firm's position we will break it down briefly through the five variables that impact its competitive advantage. Thus, providing an overall impact of Voice SEO for both sides clients and marketers who use Voice SEO as a tool.

## PERSPECTIVE OF A CLIENT

If your website is optimised for voice search then there are several key benefits that are noticed.

The website becomes extremely customer centric, since voice search is based on optimising a website to answer common questions individuals may have in a simple manner, it often involves re-structuring the website so the contents and the flow are as simple to use and interpret. This in addition to being optimised for voice also becomes a strong inbound marketing tool where by



customers are drawn into the service or product you offer even more, as the content created for voice optimisation needs to be simple to understand and convenient. This is because when the website is made customer centric, the content can better feature on search results This is a secondary effect of Voice SEO but is very powerful, with currently 54% of organic leads<sup>5</sup> being brought through inbound marketing for firms who are NOT Voice SEO optimised.

**“Businesses will no longer be vying for a place on page one, but rather for the top result every time, for every search term” – Digital Marketing Institute**

If a website is optimised for Voice SEO and has some medium like a podcast or a book that is relevant to a product your firm offers, then google AI will transcript that podcast, making it searchable for all the terms in there, providing a wide search base for which you can be found, ensuring that your page is hopefully appearing at the top of most relevant searches each time.

Another key benefit is that Voice SEO drives more traffic to your website if correctly optimised. When a typical voice query is entered into google for example “how to optimise my laptop”, we get a screen like the ones on the right, Voice SEO can not only show snippets which is the top box but recommend further possible questions below the answer box. Thus, even if your website doesn’t directly answer a query but is related, traffic can easily be diverted to it. Thus, being optimised for Voice SEO does not only improve chances of being found in the answer box but also referred in the possible questions sections.

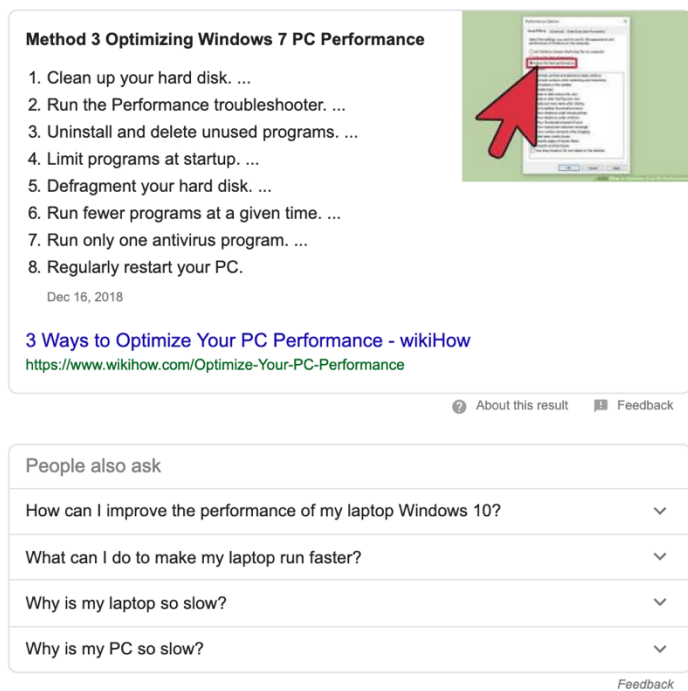


Figure 2 - Google Search Results

Finally, a lucrative benefit of ensuring your website is optimised for Voice SEO is convenience. In many conservative markets like Australia adoption of new technologies takes time but once consumers know they improve their lives, then these technologies do take off. This is the case with Voice SEO, the data on the right from iProspect highlights that, convenience plays a big role in using voice if a website offers that convenience through being optimised for Voice SEO than it is more likely that the clicks to the website will be higher.

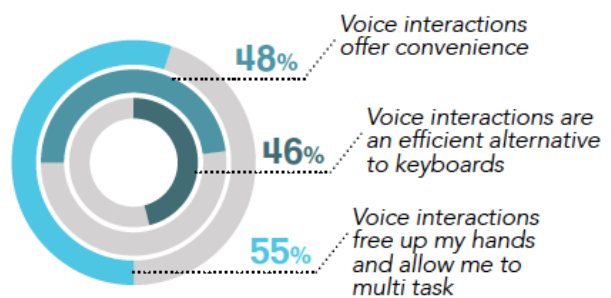


Figure 3 - iProspect Survey Results – Why people use voice search and

## PERSPECTIVE OF A FIRM

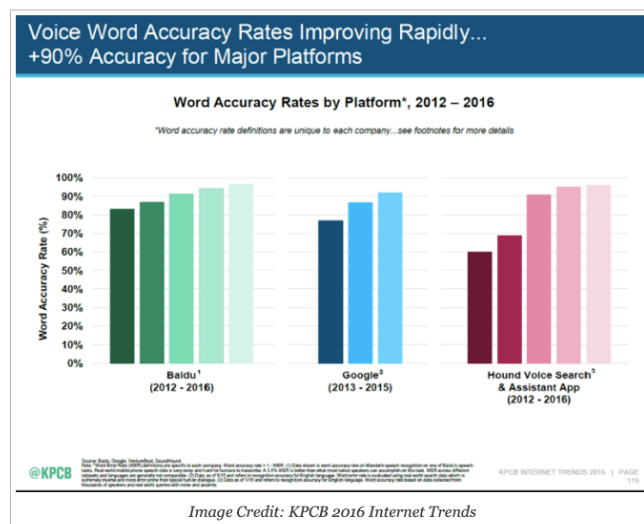
To give a holistic impact of Voice SEO on the firm we looked at five different variables that impacts the competitiveness of adoption into voice search by many firms. This gives an insight into potential profitability due to a change or adoption in strategy.

1. First variables is competitive rivalry, a consideration of the potential companies that have already become first movers into the Voice SEO activation for their clients. Examples of companies that have already started



adopting voice search optimisation in their services include international agencies such as WebFX to even domestic agencies in Australia. If your firms market share remains with businesses in Sydney then this is definitely a first mover advantage for your firm.

2. The second variable is the bargaining power of suppliers. The current voice assistants in the market that assist with voice searches are Google Assistant, Amazon’s Alexa, Apple’s Siri and Microsoft Cortana. With four suppliers of these voice searches currently dominating the market, the bargaining power of suppliers is extremely high.
3. The third variable is the bargaining power of buyers, this force considers if customers would accept the service given or looks for an alternative. In this case since such few firms offer Voice SEO the bargaining power of buyers is low.
4. The fourth variable is the availability of substitute goods, in this unique case the only substitute for voice is regular searching via typing. At current stage, most people are still using “text search” rather than “voice search”, however, it is expected that 50% of all searches will be voice research by 2020. Whilst the threat of voice search is high now over time as accuracy improves the threat will decrease, evident as transcription accuracy is improving across all major platforms.



5. The fifth variable is the threat of new entrants. While Voice SEO isn’t a very saturated market, it has the potential to be as consumers start switching their preferences. This is already evident as nearly 50% of searches will be voice by 2020. Marketing agencies will take advantage of this growth

## FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

The financial perspective of Voice SEO is hard to quantify at this stage, some companies charge between \$300-\$900 to optimise per page but this may not be the norm, therefore to get an accurate quote there are many other factors in play when implementing Voice SEO. Since this is a metric that is determined through internal procedures the price of the investment should be as well. Thus, with the large number of variables in play the we believe the amount invested or charged should be up to the firm itself and not this report.

# CONCLUSION

In conclusion through this report we have not only looked at what SEO is but how it is an ever evolving concept, as SEO is always looking for a new way to target a new market using all means of communication at its disposal this includes voice. We address the current landscape of digital marketing which has very little use SEO voice but we notice that there are huge plans behind the scenes to make this mainstream form of search. We consider how SEO voice will impact clients and marketing firms by delving into the competitive landscape and determine that yes there is competitive edge to be gained by utilising SEO voice when presenting a marketing strategy, as there are so few firms in using this practice and it can really ensure that your website is being found in all types of search. Finally we discuss how websites can be optimised and highlight that it is all about appealing human language and placing customer convenience before all else.

Overall the future of SEO voice is bright but now is the time to join this hidden trend and set up your firm to tackle the next generation of disruption in SEO head on and set your firm up with a competitive advantage for both the short and long term.