

Alexa - “I am sad - tell  
me a joke”

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By Jane Hogg

# Smart Speakers

Various devices on the market and two dominate - Alexa, Echo/Dot & Google Nest

Voice led searching and streaming of media/music; links to other devices in the home; remote drop in communication and digital assistance with various tasks.

24% of people in UK own a smart speaker and it's predicted to be 16% year on year growth. (You Gov, 2018)

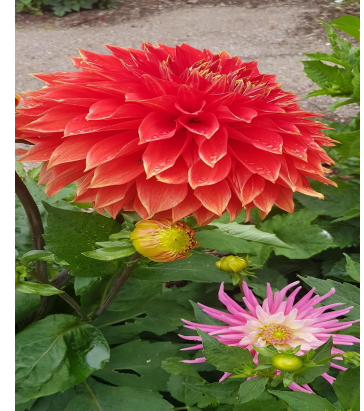
Market is still growing as big tech companies “bundle” devices and use them as loss leaders to cement their relationship with customers and also retention as part of subscription services.

# Opportunities

1. **Prompting of tasks** – timers and schedules for simple tasks (medication, reminders for other personal tasks that can be forgotten (Dementia))
2. **Development of skills that need to be learnt or refreshed-** teeth cleaning or sequencing
3. Automation frees us up to spend more time undertaking more complex/caring tasks, hobbies and leisure time.



**Alexa,  
how old  
am I?**



# ..a few more.

5. **Dropin “ communication - can support with monitoring and communiation**
6. Access to wide range of **media/music/knowledge**
7. Convenience of voice control is more accessible to all and is being used with people who have limited vocabulary/sounds

# Challenges

1. **Wi-fi connection required** - access to benefits reliant on ability to afford digital connection in a home.
2. **Links to a large multi-nationals**  
(Amazon/Google) - are they responsible with the data they gather ?
3. Communication is not all one way - Alexa listens too. Uncomfortable for some people.



..there is a few more.

4. **Over reliance on voice activation searching** – could we lose the ability to research and source information from a variety of places or become more comfortable with Alexa than “phone a friend”
5. No matter how practical or empathetic **Alexa has limitation** - can it offer empathy, love or kindness.
6. **Security fears are one barrier to adoption.** Of the concerns people have about smart appliances, **hacking/cyber-attacks** come out on top, with 39% of non-owners saying this. (You Gov 2018)

# How to address the challenges

**User education (Digital Literacy)** – awareness of how to use securely, challenge out of the box “plug and play” and range of sources for support.

**Legitimate or trusted partners to support adoption of certain functions** “Age Concern Apps” and links to trusted information sites (NHS/Samaritans)

**Legislation** - would we buy a washing machine that always washed on very hot ?

# In my opinion..

Practical support in home environment is helpful – cooking, solving arguments, entertaining and also schedules and reminders. Social Care support in demand as population ages. Smart tech can help.

A tool and not a replacement for people, human connection, love and friendship.

**BUT** always switch it off at night, check your settings AND

Don't drop in on Echo when you are on holiday – you scare the pants off your kids!



