Era of Alexa

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Abstract

The era of new technology rapidly started to grow in early 2000. The world began to develop and change rapidly. Some people called this period, the 21st century technological revolution. We can look at how many smartphones became available in the world. At the start of the 2000s, there were 740 million cell phones in the world. In 2020 there was 8 billion, meaning that there are more cell phones than people in the world. The major technological break happened in 2011, when Apple released Siri. Siri was designed to be a human’s friend. However, eleven years have passed, and a lot of people have lost their admiration for the new technological breakthrough.

The current world develops very fast and is considered to be very technologically advanced. In the recent years with the increasing level of busyness of people’s life, voice assistance became more and more popular. According to Raveh (2019), “For example, Microsoft Cortana had 133 million active users in 2016 [1] and Echo Dot was Amazon’s best-selling product between 2016 and 2018 [2]. Furthermore, 72 % of people who own a smart speaker say they often use their devices as part of their daily routine [3].”The era of voice assistance began on October 4, 2011, when Apple released Siri. Apple suggested to people that they could talk to Siri just like they would talk to a real person. “Talk to a Siri as you would to person”, suggested Apple. According to Natale Simone (2020), “The message was meant to inspire a sense of familiarity with the assistant. Apple suggested that everything was already in place to accommodate the new technology in everyday experience: users just needed to extend their conversational habits to the invisible interlocutor embedded in the phone.” After Siri was released, other companies also begin to develop and release their own voice assistants. That is how the world saw Alexa in 2016, Google Assistant in 2016, and Microsoft Cortana in 2016 (Microsoft Cortana is being discontinued now). Each assistant has it is own name that makes it more human and personal. The other interesting fact is that all Voice Assistants have female names and females’ voices. (Even though you can change voice to male, but by default it is a woman’s voice). According to Arthur, “To continue answering why are virtual assistant’s female and why is Siri female, 13.69% said female voices are portrayed as more sympathetic, helpful, and cordial. 3.02% said they bring more customer satisfaction. Lastly, 1.38% said they are easier to be agreeable with.”

While people are thinking that voice assistance makes their life easier there is more truth behind it. For this research paper, I will talk about Amazon’s Alexa, as it is considered to be one of the most popular voice assistants. I got concerned about this topic because of all the news I read about Alexa recently. One of the articles that I especially got concerned about, was from The Guardian. According to Lynsey, “In San Francisco, Shawn Kinnear claimed that his Echo activated itself and said cheerfully: “Every time I close my eyes, all I see is people dying.” In Portland, Oregon, a woman discovered that her Echo had taken it upon itself to send recordings of private conversations to one of her husband’s employees. In a statement, Amazon said that the Echo must have misheard the wake word, misheard a request to send a message, misheard a name in its contacts list and then misheard a confirmation to send the message, all during a conversation about hardwood floors.” This story raises a question what else Alexa listens to. Did Amazon create Alexa to help people with their busy life, or help themselves to know better about people?

Conclusion

Having so many new technologies definitely change us in some way. However, we need to remember that they also do not always have the best intentions.

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