

The opportunities of "Siri" to brands



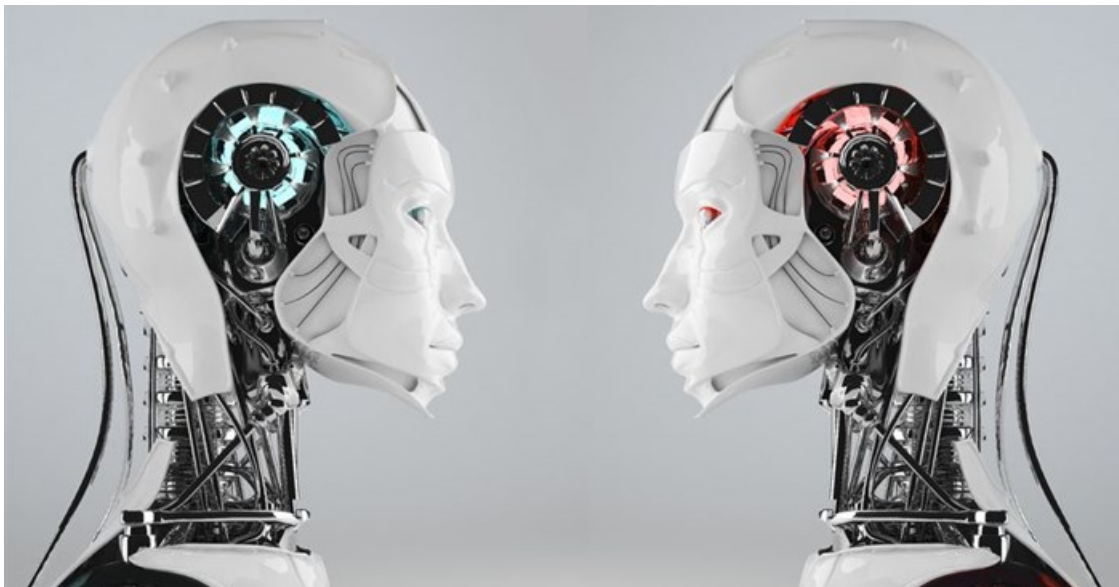
By [Audrey Naidoo](#)

20 Sep 2016

I should be jealous as my husband has a girlfriend called Siri. She helps him with directions, searches for information and plays his favourite music. But to be honest sometimes her voice impediments leaves us in stitches when I ask for "Sandton City" and she calls out "SinCity" (LOL). Siri has become a personal assistant in reducing down time and effort for most iPhone users.

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This got me thinking: what if brands had a "Siri"? A utility that will make our customers' lives simpler. I'm sure many of you have been following the most recent announcement from Apple, within iOS 10 upcoming iPhone and iPad operating system, you'll be able to control third-party app functions using the company's voice-activated assistant for the first time. Among the first apps to yield to Siri are big names like WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Pinterest. The new Siri commands centres around mobile payments, image search and messaging. Android phones have OK Google, similar to iOS. Microsoft has Cortana with a more sophisticated offering.



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Artificial intelligence is already on our doorsteps as we start to see the rise of ChatBots, Virtual Assistants and Personal Apps. The Assistant can easily process tasks that would have generally required several steps and a reasonable amount of time to get done. Conversational interfaces are going to become a norm in the near future. Absa has recently launched two new chat bots – Twitter Chatbanking as well as Facebook Chatbanking. What a great way to remove the "bank" out of banking and meet customers in their natural environments. This is an excellent way of showing the immersion of technology within the customer ecosystem. This is just the beginning as ChatBots further advance into conversational commerce.

[Conversational commerce](#) is a term coined by Uber's Chris Messina in 2015. It refers to the intersection of messaging apps and shopping. Meaning, the trend toward interacting with businesses through messaging and chat apps like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and WeChat.

What has led to this development? The growth and dependence on mobile devices have resulted in a natural progression to

a more fluid dialogue and transaction between brand and customer. The new pathways to the customer are driven by co-creation and no longer a push-pull relationship. It serves to eradicate boundaries and allows brands to be natural habitats within the consumer's personal space.

This new phenomenon is creating both challenges and opportunities for marketers. The future will be more inclusive, intuitive one-on-one marketing using analytics, consumer behaviour and data to steer the customer within the purchasing funnel. It becomes more complex as science will start to dictate art. It dictates that marketer, IT, design and digital sit around the table and understand the new blended customer pathways to purchasing. This inter-dependence is what's needed to make the future work. It involves plenty of experimentation. The good news is that no one has all the answers. We are all still finding our feet.

Watch out for the game-changer brands like Uber, Google, Apple and Facebook. They are pre-empting the near future when change happens at the speed of light. I would strongly recommend that marketing departments start to build agile teams who only focus their attention on this new phenomenon, so that they keep up and not be the ones who ask "What happened?". And to think Siri started this...:-) Watch this space!

ABOUT AUDREY NAIDOO

I am a professional marketer working with full experience in both traditional and digital marketing. In my current role within Absa, I am responsible for all things digital including influencing and managing the group digital media investment. Focus areas include optimisation of all campaigns, insights driven marketing, innovation and thought leadership. I am a publisher and really passionate about marketing in the future and enabling marketers to upskill and understand the environment we operate in. I freelance on a part-time basis.

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