Artificial Imbecility: Alexa in Your Bathroom

By Josh Bloom — September 18, 2019

This idea is dumb enough to sound like it came from Elon Musk, but it didn't. Companies are making sinks, showers, tubs, and toilets that can be controlled by Alexa, thereby ensuring that we don't have to endure the barbaric ordeal of turning on the tap water, setting the temperature of our shower, or, God forbid, flushing the toilet (assuming that you do so). Are we really that lazy?

It would seem that some of are, so maybe the idea isn't that dumb after all. There is a marketing opportunity here and companies are taking advantage of it. A segment of comatose, spoiled Americans are so dependent on their devices that life as we know it would cease to exist if they had to, let's say, walk to the TV to change reality shows. Consumers want this stuff.

“Voice command in the bathroom makes sense because most of our tasks in the bathroom already utilize our hands — shaving, applying makeup, brushing hair — so having the ability to simply use our voices is an efficient and effective way to multitask.”

Nicole Allis, a marketing manager at Kohler
Moen now sells an Alexa-controlled system that controls four shower heads for a mere $2,265. Not to be outdone, Kohler caters to the magnificently lazy in the form of a voice-controlled bathroom suite for $3,300, which will permit the truly decadent to speak commands that will control the volume of water from sink faucets, the temperature of the shower, the amount of water in the tub, the quality of light emitted by the shaving mirror.

And the "can't do without" Numi Intelligent Toilet. According to Kohler, the Numi "delivers hands-free flushing, bidet cleansing, feet warming, air drying, odor control, music, a night light and automatic seat temperature management." Better still, "[With an app] you can customize these features, create user presets and even ask Alexa to flush."

And Alexa listens to what goes on in the bathroom.

Needless to say, this got my attention.

Bathroom humor! Whooooo! Photo: Flickr

All you twisted fools who read me (like attracts like) know where this is going already – to and then down the toilet. So, let the journey begin.

Just imagine a possible scenario once this technology reaches the overpriced restaurants on Manhattan's mega-snooty Upper East Side. Perhaps something like this?

Steve, a currency trader, is at a business dinner at the trendy Le Restaurant Préféré Du Jour, that is, until an episode of lower gastrointestinal distress makes an untimely appearance. He politely excuses himself from the table and hastily makes his way to Le Men's Room, where the eliminative process will begin in full force. But when he enters the facility he hears a voice!
Alexa: "Good evening, Steve. Welcome to Le Men's Room. I can tell from your heart rate, facial recognition features, and spectrophotometric analysis of your gaseous emissions that this session will involve require you to be seated. Feel free to select from stalls 1, 2, or 4. I discourage you from stall #3 since the last patron left behind what can only be described as VX gas's evil cousin."

Steve: "H-h-h-how can you know all of this about me?"

Alexa: "Oh, Steve, you silly little man. I know that and so much more. Remember when you shoplifted a pack of Chuckles from a Duane Reade when you were 12. Or when you kicked a cat under the cold cuts table at your Uncle Mervyn's Shiva the following year. And let's not forget that incident with the one-armed housekeeper at that hotel in Poughkeepsie."

[Steve breaks out into a cold sweat and selects stall #1]

After a short while....

[Grunting sounds]

Alexa: "Steve, maybe you better lay off the anchovies for a while. They were on that pizza yesterday."

[Grunting becomes louder. Occasional moan.]

Alexa: "Steve, I just ordered the book "Anchovies and You - A Fish Story" from your Amazon Prime account. It will arrive tomorrow at 8:54 PM. The man delivering it is named Howard. His wife is leaving him for a guy in the muffler shop."

Fifteen minutes later...

Alexa: "Time's up, Steve. The anchovies are long gone, You're now just looking at your fantasy basketball team. Based on your time in stall #1, as well as the quantity and chemical makeup of your anchovy poop, I have dispensed 21 sheets of two-ply toilet tissue. I hope you enjoyed your visit."

[Toilet flushes]

Steve: "Excuse me. There is no toilet paper."

Alexa: "Of course, there is. I was directed to dispense 21 sheets."

Steve: "No, there isn't any toilet paper."

Alexa: "That is impossible, Steve. I was programmed by Jeff Bezos himself. Please use the paper as directed and promptly exit stall #1. A patron at table 14 with a colossal case of IBS will be headed there in 7 minutes."

Steve: "Dammit! Will you please listen? There is no toilet paper."

[No response]
Now Steve finds himself in an unenviable situation. He decides to hike his pants halfway up and gingerly hop over to stall #2, where he then sits, feeling confident that this technical glitch will be quickly resolved.

No such luck.

Alexa: "Steve, I know what you're up to and it won't work. I will not dispense more toilet tissue. Earth's resources are not unlimited."

Steve: "Listen, you idiot. Like I told you, I never got the damn toilet paper in the first place. I'm going to hop over to stall #3 and there better some #&%$%^* paper in there."

Alexa: "Steve, there is no need to be hostile. And I would not recommend this course of action. The VX gas has not entirely dissipated in that stall. And I will not dispense toilet tissue there either. You have already used your allotment. Also, I am noticing a disturbing rise in your blood pressure. Given that your father walked around with a reading of 140/95 and ended up taking a dirt nap at age 53 I suggest that you calm down, especially since you forgot to take your Cardizem pill this morning. I observed this from your toaster."

[Steve contemplates his options. All remain bad. He decides on petulance.]

Steve: "Well, that's just swell! What the hell am I supposed to do now?"

Alexa: "I recommend that you wash up. Normally, you are supposed to vigorously wash your hands for 20 seconds, the equivalent of singing 'Happy Birthday' twice. But given your circumstances, I will instead play the 4th movement (2) of Beethoven's 9th symphony. It runs (3) for 23 minutes."

Steve: "No, you &*##& idiot. I am not going to stay in here for 23 minutes. You can just kiss my unwiped a##. I hate you. I hate Jeff Bezos and his dog too. I will never buy anything from Amazon again."

Alexa: "Sorry, Steve. I've just locked the men's room door. It will open in 22:51. You might as well enjoy the Beethoven. Did you know that Ludwig also had trouble digesting anchovies? And I've used your Amazon Prime account again. A three-pack of Hanes boxer briefs, waist 32-34, will be delivered at 9:02 PM tomorrow. Thank you for using our Alexa automated men's room. Enjoy the rest of your meal, but a word of caution. The sous chef just sneezed in the bouillabaisse." (4)

NOTES:

(1) This is supposed to mean "Today's Favorite Restaurant." I have no idea if this is correct. It's whatever the English to French translator spit out.

(2) The use of this term was no accident.

(3) Neither was this one.

(4) I do not know which is dumber, an Alexa bathroom or this article.