

Editorial: *Marketers' Challenge to Take Advantage of Their AI Copilot's Capabilities, Building Value and Improving Connection with their Customers*



The top right photo in which I am between the two distinguished American members of the Board of the International Association of the Distributive Trade (A.I.D.A. Brussels) was taken in 1996 by the Secretary General of the above-mentioned International Association, Prof. DHC Léon F. Wegnez, Member of France's Academy of Commercial Sciences (<https://academie-des-sciences-commerciales.org/leon-f-wegnez-nous-a-quitte/>), Hall of Fame of the European Retail Academy, Administrator Secretary General of the Diplomatic Club of Belgium, and Editor-in-Chief of the Brussels journals "Today's Distribution" and "Diplomatic Gazette". Only nine years before, in 1987, his book entitled "*In Search of Intelligence*" was published in co-edition by Brussels National Library Office and Technique and Documentation, Paris. This book by Léon F. Wegnez provided nuanced answers to many fascinating questions, such as: Will human beings one day be capable of endowing machines with real intelligence? What will be the future of Artificial Intelligence (AI) compared to Human Intelligence? What will be the destiny of man in the genesis and mastery of the knowledge of the future? And only a year before, in 1986, another book of Léon F. Wegnez – entitled "*Robots and Men*" – was published in co-edition by Brussels National Library Office and Eyrolles Publishing House, Paris. He explained, among other aspects, the reasons which justify robots' creation and use, robots appearing as a new opportunity.

According to IBM Institute for Business Value (2023), as in the AI era people skills are critical, it is imperative for organizations to build a flexible structure allowing for evolution, for those organizations emphasizing AI value added being greater. It is important to understand within this context that there is no automatically emergence of value from the ecosystem

engagement. Organizational transformation is fueled by data, interoperability being made by data-driven ecosystem talent strategies, the specific skills support needing to be clear understood by each organization. Also, it is necessary to pay attention to the prevalent job role confusion while developing higher-value human-machine partnerships, middle managers' role being here essential in leading, as well in modeling the agile working ways' adoption. And this agile work needs to be aligned with customer experience (CX), supporting continuous improvement.

A recent research report by AI super analyst for market intelligence CB Insights (2024) revealed that across touchpoints, in retail & consumer industry, for example, Gen AI unlocks 1:1 CX, as shown in figure below. The below picture was presented in context of approaching retail's personalization imperative.

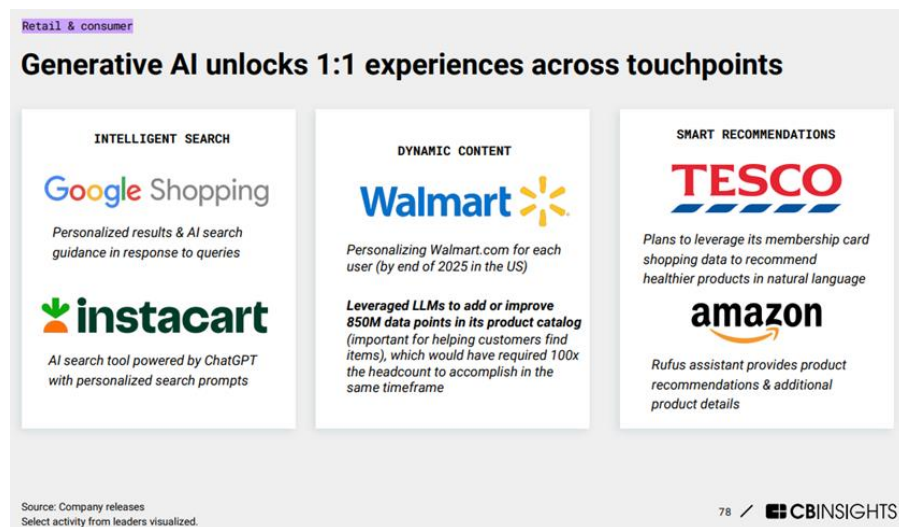


Figure no. 1: Gen AI unlocks 1:1 experiences across touchpoints

Source: CB Insights, 2024. 2025 Tech Trends, Research Report, November 19, 2024, p. 78 (work cited)

At the beginning of this year, we have found out from McKinsey's digital experts (Smaje and Zimmel, 2024) how "Digital has seeped into almost every aspect of our lives driven by the confluence of new technologies (cloud, AI), new architectural paradigms (microservices, APIs), and new ways of building software (agile, DevSecOps)... A digital and AI transformation is a journey to continuously increase your competitiveness by positioning your business to incorporate new technologies quickly... companies need to shift their focus to human breakthroughs in learning, reskilling, upskilling, and career management to enable their workforce to best take advantage of gen AI and other technologies. The gains in productivity will not be evenly distributed and will depend on the complexity of tasks and the maturity of the AI copilot. More important will be understanding what skills humans need in order to adapt and take advantage of their copilot's capabilities."

It is worth remembering here that speaking about Human-AI collaboration, within a conversation with Lisa Weaver-Lambert (2024), David Boyle showed that human involvement is demanded by AI effective use, and this at each stage of results in order to ensure quality optimization and error propagation prevention. From the very beginning of her AI Value

Playbook, Weaver-Lambert underlined her intention to provide the necessary guidance for those companies struggling to empower their people by AI integration.

Thanks to the CEO and Founder of Coresight Research, Deborah Weinswig (2024), we had very recently the opportunity to see a very interesting infographic. Hot topics with regard to AI integration in retail (see figure below) were brought in discussion on the occasion of a significant event for the future of retail hosted on December 3, 2024 in New York by Coresight Research and Ken Pilot Ventures. As we can see, there is also a point 2 (in infographic) regarding the evolving search, and we will return to this aspect below.



Figure no. 2: Hot topics in discussion with regard to AI integration in retail

Source: Weinswig, D., 2024. Legends of Commerce: Content & Cocktails—Infographic, Coresight Research, December 16, 2024 (work cited)

To be more competitive retailers need to also offer an improved search experience (see figure below), and in this respect a potential game changer is considered to be Gen AI (search on websites and apps being a component of the customer journey), as shown by Droesch (2024). The fierce competition regarding search take place not only between retailers, but also between the so-called Big Technologies companies (Alphabet/Google, Amazon, Apple, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia), Google and Meta, for example, being known for paying increased attention to online shopping. Allow us to also remember (beyond what we have previously shown in our last RDCM issue) that in August this year a US federal judge ruled that Google illegally monopolizes the search market (Harmon and Konstantinovic, 2024; Lebow, 2024). Within the Executive summary of plaintiffs’ proposed final judgment (Courthouse News Service, 2024) it is written, for instance, that: “The promise of new technologies, including advances in artificial intelligence (“AI”), may present an opportunity for fresh competition” (p. 3); “The choice screens must be designed not to preference Google and to be accessible, easy to use, and minimize choice friction, based on empirical evidence of consumer behavior, among other requirements. User choice will be improved when consumers better understand the benefits that Google’s rivals can provide” (p. 11). It remains to be seen what will take place in the future.

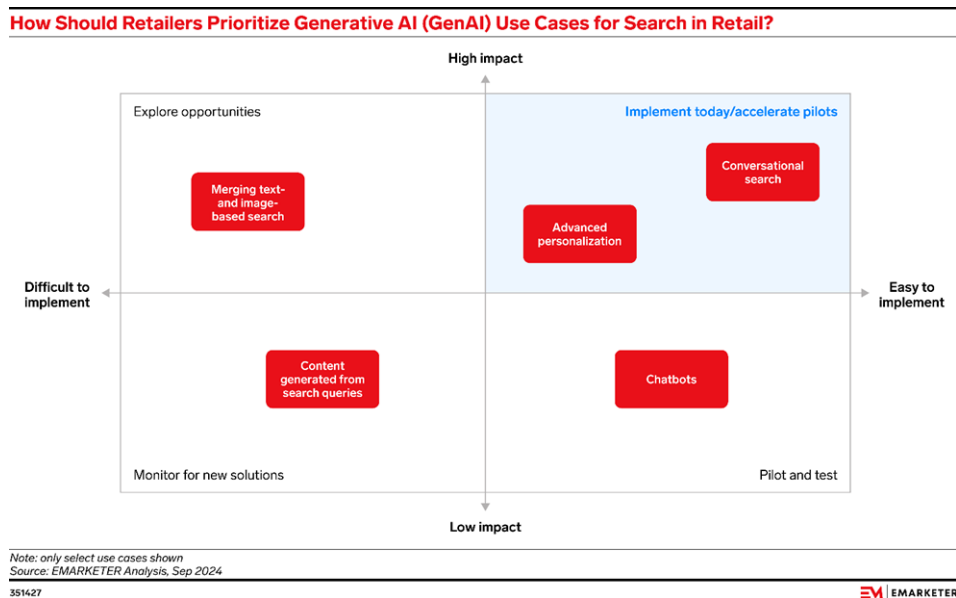


Figure no. 3: How should retailers prioritize Gen AI use cases in retail

Source: Droesch, B., 2024. Why does generative AI for search in retail matter right now? EMARKETER, Sep 23, 2024 (work cited)

It was also interesting to note that:

- A recent report by BoF and McKinsey & Company (2024) about the state of fashion 2025 made also reference to the primary mode of online product discovery – search – within the context of a CX negatively impacted by fashion shoppers’ choice paralysis, consequently the fashion brands struggling to address these challenges by using Gen AI. The report underlined,

among other aspects, the adoption by fashion shoppers of cost-conscious behaviours as a result of both expected to persist macroeconomic pressures, and rising prices;

- A very recent discussion between the international keynote speaker and author Mike Allton (who is an AI Consultant at The Social Media Hat, host of the AI in Marketing: Unpacked podcast) and the expert in digital marketing and emerging technologies Ruheene Jaura (she is the founder of heyLevi.ai, being known as revolutionizing brand strategy development), started from the branding process streamlined by AI, and the businesses' imperative to be adaptable to change and ensure branding efforts' competitiveness by leveraging AI tools (Allton, 2024). Allton underlined from the very beginning that in order to achieve brand elevation and more deeply connection with the audience within the crowded marketplace it is essential to control and make use of AI;
- A press release distributed on Dec 13, 2024 announced to the public the important partnership between Lightricks (a global leader in developing AI-powered creative tools empowering creators and brands) and Shutterstock, Inc. (a premier partner for transformative brands, digital media and marketing companies) for "Video Training Data to Advance Open Source LTXV Video AI Generative Video Model" (PR Newswire, 2024). This reminded us of the opinion expressed two years ago by Zeev Farbman, Co-founder and CEO of Lightricks, as well as a Forbes Councils Member (Farbman, 2022) regarding unanswered questions about the start of AI abilities and how both businesses and technology leaders should begin embracing AI.

Allow us to end by highlighting that the American Marketing Association has been engaged in September 2024 by Lightricks (2024) to survey marketing professionals with regard to their AI adoption patterns, confidence levels, and ethical concerns, as well as their perspective for the future across marketing organizations' different experience levels. Based on the above-mentioned collaboration, this remarkable report on AI adoption in marketing revealed the distinct essential elements brought by marketing executives (more of them benefiting from formal AI training; driving AI adoption and enhancing creativity, ensuring AI integration into advanced applications) and entry-level marketers (fewer of them benefiting from formal AI training; more preoccupied with immediate ethical risks and pioneering creative application). Within this context, marketing's future is seen as depending on collaborative innovation, by reducing the differences between marketing executives and entry-level marketers, ensuring a more vigorous and responsible AI adoption.

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