Artificial Intelligence Enabling Marketing Operations

CSS CORP

Re-inventing the B2C Marketing Landscape with Human-AI Partnerships

The idea of singularity, where all laws of physics cease to operate has been an exciting concept for astronomers and science fiction writers. The similar point of singularity also applies to all business functions where an innovation trigger nullifies the current laws and dynamics of organizational interactions.

With Artificial Intelligence, marketing may be approaching the point of singularity wherein the known principles of marketing do not apply. Marketing has moved from a cost function to a tech driven business unit. Gartner's Laura McLellan in her seminal blog predicted that CMOs would be spending more on technology than CIOs by 2017. Today, tech spend in marketing equals that of CIO's budget for IT[1].

The investment in technology is justified with influx of data. Human number crunching abilities are just not enough to make sense of the information overload. Artificial Intelligence is emerging as the lifesaver with its phenomenal abilities to read through terabytes of data, tinkering campaigns to match data sets, understanding queries, identifying hidden customer motives and more. Thanks to AI, marketers can go back to doing what they do best – create powerful ideas that can energize the brand and market.

AI in the Driver's Seat

There has been no dearth of data in marketing, but it existed in siloes preventing marketers to harness the power of a single version of truth. The proliferation of affordable analytics tools has spurred marketers to invest in data driven decision making. Today, CMOs are more invested in technology and are considered global information or data managers for marketing.

However, large majority of these tools and platforms crunch numbers in isolation and do not provide a holistic view of the entire market. AI can be instrumental in facilitating a unified information platform by integrating across platforms, tools, applications, and datasets. This can be a game changer for marketers with unlimited avenues of reach, conversion, and engagement.

In-fact, 55% of CMOs expect AI to have bigger impact on marketing than social media[2]. Global entertainment giants like Disney are tapping the AI frontier by training artificial neural networks that mimic human brains to understand the story lines that may appeal to their audiences[3]. Disney's decision to move away from mainstream characters to feature counterculture leads were based on their information gleaned from their digital data sets. Most recently, Nike's gamble to feature anthem-kneeling NFL player Colin Kaepernick paid off with online sales surging to a 31% in a week[4]. This executive decision was based on sound principles of market data, crunched through Nike's AI platform that showed its intended audience's sympathy for social justice causes like BLM.

Marketers are already excited by the emerging AI applications in conversational intelligence, haptics, holographic imagery, and semantic research. Artificial Intelligence is making its presence felt through machine learning, natural language processing, applied propensity models, and predictive customer service sets. However, some voices state that real life implementation of AI is only for the deep pockets.

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1 https://blogs.gartner.com/jake-sorofman/yes-cmos-will-likely-spend-more-on-technology-than-cios-by-2017/

2 https://www.webershandwick.com/news/global-consumers-are-seven-times-more-likely-to-see-a-positive-than-negativ/

3 https://www.saleshub.ca/blog/infographic-how-brands-are-using-artificial-intelligence-in-their-marketing

4 https://www.clickz.com/nikes-sales-soar-in-light-of-kaepernick-controversy

Re-imagining Smart Campaigns with AI

Google's Jerry Discheler[5], in his blog post unveiled the supernal Google AI capabilities that will re-imagine advertising campaigns. Google shopping ads offer high return of investment with 76.4% of ad spend on Google delivering over 85.3% of all paid search clicks in the US alone. In the UK, 82% of spend on Google delivers 87.9% of the clicks[6]. This dominance of Google will be further bolstered with AI powered Google Ads replacing human-PPC with automation of key areas such as campaign management, bidding, ad-creation and targeting. Marketers need to provide Google just 15 headlines and four description lines which will be combined to offer the best creative for conversion. Tomorrow's ads for the similar generic search term will vary based on the customer's emotional state, physical location, culture specification, and lifestyle.

AI for Maximizing your Reach

AI generated content and smart content curation capabilities are democratizing digital content access. Writing programs like "Wordsmith" can generate SEO-rich, targeted content in a jiffy and can be instantly published to get more clicks for your webpage. Wordsmith produced over a billion pieces of content in 2017 alone and has been extensively used by retail, e-commerce, financial services, media, and allied industries to achieve scale and reach for their marketing efforts[7].

Business content may or may not be written by a robot, but smart content curation is heavily dependent on AI. The popular Netflix recommendation system uses sophisticated machine learning algorithms to understand the customer's innate and expressed needs. So, Netflix customers find value in trusting the recommendation engine to lead them to show they really want to watch. Similarly, Tinder, the world's trusted matchmaker is employing AI for its "Super Like" and "Top Picks" feature. Of course, it kept the swiping customer closer to their soul mates but also has added over 3 million singles to the dating app till date[8].

5 https://www.blog.google/technology/ads/machine-learning-hands-advertisers/

6 https://www.adthena.com/insights/google-shopping-report/

7 https://thesiliconreview.com/magazines/automated-insights-inc-revolutionizing-content-generation-through-wordsmith/

8 https://techcrunch.com/2018/09/11/tinder-launches-its-curated-top-picks-feature-worldwide/

Facilitating Action – Chatbots, Robo-advisories

AI-led digital solutions are improving conversion rates and customer retention. New age propensity models can predict the stage in the customer buying journey and can personalize the content presentation to keep them interested. Predictive analytics are extensively used to understand the reasons for customer disengagement and AI led services can soon reach out with more personalized solutions, offers, and assistance. The best example is the dynamic emails that are triggered by analyzing buying and digital behaviours. The customer is always presented with email content that are specifically curated to reflect his/her buying journey.

Conversational intelligence or voice based interaction is another area that AI is making the biggest wave. Voice is not just an interface, but a personification of devices which is then mirrored on the brand. Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa, and the most recent Google Duplex are capable of carrying out almost seamless conversations. Conversational intelligence is extensively used in the BFSI sector to help customers navigate the loan management, insurance premium payments, or wealth advisories. With sophisticated algorithms, these Robo-advisors are able to provide the best price for loans, insurance premium calculation, or settle your tax returns. Voice assistants seem like a mainstay for fashion brands like Levis or hospitality providers like Hilton. These ubiquitous assistants' help customers find the right jeans, book a getaway, or even personalize the perfume.

The Road Ahead – Future Proofing with AI

A recent PWC survey reported 54% of business executives found the AI solutions have improved productivity and 59% found that the efficacy and accuracy of big data analytics was radically improved by AI platforms[9]. AI is fostering new business models for success where data is the decisive facilitator. The sheer diversity, influx and velocity of global information can only be handled through deep learning AI platforms. In the future, humans would input creative requirements in to AI platform which develops multiple simulations for implementation. Human partners would be free to choose the best one for implementation or add new data parameters to fine-tune the existing one. This would bring down costs and risks for decision making as it is based on sound data judgements. This human-AI collaborative model would be the optimal way to go in complex scenarios.

The marketing domain is no different, with AI becoming the natural ally for digitally focussed marketers. AI has already created its own space in the CMO's list. Over 85% of customer interaction in 2020 will be powered by Chatbots and Robo-assistants helping customers to understand, engage, buy and invest, their entire life around them. Next frontiers are tactile-rich-haptic AI which would bring in multi-sensory interactions to fruition. For the CMO, this is a data goldmine where in human creativity partnering with AI assisted delivery can create unique and personalized experiences for customers. As we go along, we will see greater democratization and adoption of AI-based solutions in our day to day activities.

9 https://www.pwc.lu/en/digital-services/docs/pwc-ai-predictions-2018-report.pdf

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Vivian Gomes heads Marketing and Inside Sales team and is responsible for driving the go-to-market strategy and execution for CSS Corp. With over 15 years of global marketing and business development experience across the IT/ITES sector. He has excelled in diverse organizational setups, right from startup and early stage growth to mature businesses.

Prior to CSS Corp, he has worked with organizations like Genpact and NIIT, where he led diverse teams to accomplish marketing, inside sales, product innovation and business development charters across the organization. He has also worked in startups like Cloud Lending Solutions, a Silicon Valley based Fintech startup, where he led the global marketing and scaled demand generation to build strong pipeline for the company.

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