

PERSPECTIVE

The Future of CX: Keeping Brand Relationships Human in the AI Revolution

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A Shifting CX Landscape

Let's face it, the relationship between brands and people is changing radically.

Generative AI and automated agents are increasingly stepping in as the middlemen in what used to be direct conversations. What started as basic chatbots has evolved into sophisticated AI systems that research products, compare options, and handle customer support without human involvement.

While this tech revolution promises convenience, it presents real challenges for brands who've spent years cultivating customer relationships.

Three Critical Challenges

01 — The Commoditization Trap

When AI becomes the go-to shopping companion, brands risk becoming just another option in a sea of sameness. If consumers ask AI assistants to purchase an item, where does a brand place the ad or show up? AI will likely shift brand loyalty from specific brands to the AI assistants they trust most.

Ask an AI agent to "find the best laptop for video editing." It'll likely focus on specs and price points, but will it convey how it feels to open a beautifully designed MacBook? Probably not. "70% of brand preference and choice is driven by emotional factors, which is something that most AI assistants simply don't understand or navigate effectively." (Gallup)

02 — The Broken Value Chain

More and more brand messages are getting lost in translation. Translation experts find that when brand messages pass through AI intermediaries, a significant portion of what makes brands special gets either completely dropped or significantly changed. One's brand voice – that special way your brand speaks to customers – can be particularly vulnerable.

03 — Cutting Out the Middleman

The biggest threat: brands becoming invisible while AI assistants own the customer relationship. Salesforce's Chief Scientist & Head of Salesforce AI Research, Silvio Savarese, puts it plainly when he says: "The future will not just be about using AI; it will be about creating and customizing agents that collaborate to understand and execute strategic tasks and decisions, both in personal and business contexts."

- 70% of consumers already prefer to use AI agents to purchase flight tickets and 59% would be comfortable letting agents purchase consumer electronics. Even 45% would do so with everyday grocery products. (Booking.com, DemandSage)

When someone says, "Hey, order more laundry detergent" without naming a brand, which one gets chosen? [Emerging research](#) show that when AI assistants are used, any preference for human recommendations vs. AI recommendations disappears. This isn't just missing a sale – it's potentially an extinction-level event.

Opportunity: A More Personal Brand-Customer Relationship

Here are a few easy ways one can support a broader customer engagement and retention strategy:

- 01 Create moments that matter that build emotional connection
- 02 Build brand-true AI to personalize all experiences
- 03 Optimize content for Gen AI Intermediaries

Conclusion

Be Human

Here's the beautiful irony: as AI handles more brand interactions, the human element becomes **more** valuable, not less. The brands that will thrive aren't those fighting technological change but those embracing it while doubling down on what makes us human – empathy, creativity, and authentic connection.

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John is Head of Strategy at MRM Germany, where he leads the agency's strategy teams across Berlin and Frankfurt. He partners closely with the leadership team to deliver transformative customer and brand experiences rooted in CRM, customer experience, commerce, and data-driven insights. With a focus on connecting creativity and technology, John helps brands build enduring relationships and realize long-term growth.



John Riley
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John Riley has over 15 years of experience in customer strategy, customer experience, and digital transformation. He has led multidisciplinary teams across strategy, research, insights, and technology to deliver large-scale transformation programs. His work spans industries and focuses on reimagining end-to-end customer journeys in ways that are both innovative and customer-centric. John has guided award-winning initiatives that improved digital engagement and strengthened brand relationships. He is recognized for bringing together data, design, and strategy to create measurable impact.

About MRM

MRM is a modern relationship marketing agency that builds enduring relationships between people and businesses.

MRM's core capabilities help grow relationship lifetime value, and span across CRM & Loyalty, Customer Experience, Commerce and MarTech, underpinned by Data & Analytics.

MRM operates in a borderless, integrated way, to allow for greater collaboration and velocity. MRM is part of McCann Worldgroup and the Interpublic Group of companies (NYSE: IPG), and spans 35 offices across North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific.

For more information, please visit www.mrm.com