

Beyond interaction: Generative AI in conversational marketing - foundations, developments, and future directions

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Abstract

This paper explores the integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in conversational marketing, transitioning from traditional marketing to interactive, customer-centric strategies. It examines the shift from one-way communication to dynamic, AI-driven interactions that personalize customer experiences. Central to this study is how Generative AI facilitates real-time, tailored dialogues between brands and customers, enhancing customer engagement and satisfaction. The paper also addresses the challenges and ethical considerations of using anthropomorphic AI in marketing, balancing human-like AI traits with user expectations. Additionally, it presents a novel framework that conceptualizes the combination of Generative AI and anthropomorphism in conversational marketing into four distinct quadrants, providing a comprehensive analysis of their potential interplay. Conclusively, it offers strategic insights for leveraging AI in marketing while adhering to ethical practices, highlighting the potential of Generative AI to transform customer engagement in the digital age. This research has two important consequences. Practically, it offers valuable insights and strategic recommendations for businesses aiming to integrate Generative AI into their conversational marketing practices effectively. Theoretically, it contributes to the academic discourse by highlighting the transformative role of Generative AI in marketing, suggesting avenues for future research in this rapidly evolving field. This study provides a brief overview of the evolving role of AI in modern marketing strategies, emphasizing the future potential and implications of AI-driven conversational marketing.

Keywords: Generative AI, Conversational Marketing, Digital Marketing, AI in Marketing, Customer Engagement

JEL codes: M30, M31, M39

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1. INTRODUCTION

The field of marketing has changed dramatically in recent years, particularly due to the rapid evolution of digital technologies and the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This paper expands into the world of conversational marketing, a paradigm shift away from traditional broadcast marketing and towards a more interactive, customer-centric approach. The integration of Generative AI, which has redefined the boundaries of customer engagement and interaction, is central to this transformation.

Historically, marketing strategies were primarily one-way, with businesses broadcasting content across various mediums and treating customers as passive recipients. Although effective in reaching large audiences, this approach lacked personalisation and interactive engagement. The rise of digital marketing, fuelled by the increasing number of social media platforms, has resulted in a major change, demanding a deeper strategy that appeals to the informed and interactive modern customer (Einhorn & Löffler, 2021; Pilelienè, Alsharif, & Alharbi, 2022; Babayev & Israfilzade, 2023).

Conversational marketing is becoming increasingly important in the current era, as it focuses on immediate and personalised interactions between brands and customers (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2019; Israfilzade, 2021; 2023b; Chandra, Shirish & Srivastava, 2022). This approach is to encourage a two-way dialogue with customers that relates on a personal level, rather than simply providing information. The incorporation of Generative AI into conversational marketing has changed the game, allowing for the creation of sophisticated, human-like interactions that go beyond simple transactional exchanges. These AI-powered interactions are not only more engaging, but they also allow for a more in-depth understanding of customer needs and preferences.

This paper aims to provide a concise definition and scope of conversational marketing, situating it within the broader context of digital and AI-driven marketing strategies. It will explore how conversational marketing leverages Generative

AI to create personalized, adaptive, and engaging customer experiences. The review is limited to the integration of AI in conversational marketing, specifically focusing on the role of Generative AI. It will not delve into traditional marketing strategies that lack an AI component or conversational aspect.

In addition, the paper investigates the concept of anthropomorphism in AI, examining how humanising AI can improve customer engagement while also discussing the ethical and practical challenges it presents (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007; Israfilzade, 2023a, 2023b). The future directions and strategies for Generative AI in conversational marketing are investigated, revealing how businesses can effectively navigate and leverage these advancements.

Nevertheless, as we enter this new era of marketing, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution, current state, and future potential of conversational marketing. It attempts to provide a strategic framework for businesses and researchers looking to harness the full potential of Generative AI in transforming customer interactions and experiences by examining the intersection of technology, customer engagement, and ethical considerations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Foundations of Conversational Marketing

Historically, the predominant strategy in marketing has been a broadcast approach, as outlined by Sinha & Singh (2018). This approach saw companies disseminating promotional content across various mediums like newspapers, television, radio, and early digital platforms, with customers mainly as passive recipients. Personalization and engagement on a one-to-one level were virtually non-existent in this model, although it allowed companies to reach vast audiences. However, the dawn of the digital age and the explosion of social media platforms heralded a significant transformation in marketing strategies, transitioning into what is now often termed Digital Marketing. Today's customers, more informed than ever before (Einhorn & Löffler, 2021; Pilelienè, Alsharif &

Alharbi, 2022), demand experiences that are not only personalized but also interactive (Babayev & Israfilzade, 2023), seeking two-way interactions where their inquiries and feedback are promptly addressed and valued.

Accompanied by this paradigm shift, new methodologies have emerged, with conversational marketing standing out as a key development (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2019; Israfilzade, 2021; 2023a; 2023b). This approach is a renaissance of the age-old tradition of personal, one-to-one interactions adapted for the digital era. Conversational marketing is about creating a dialogue with customers, offering a personalized and engaging experience vastly different from traditional marketing methods.

This paradigm shift resulted in the creation of new methods and strategies, one of which came to be known as conversational marketing (Israfilzade, 2021; 2023b). *Conversational marketing* emphasizes the significance of direct and meaningful discussions between firms and customers. The concept of “dialogue” is at the very core of what is referred to as “conversational marketing.” Even while it would appear obvious given its name, the relevance of this straightforward idea cannot be underestimated. This is especially true when compared to the context of traditional marketing methods, which tend to overload consumers with a wave of information, oftentimes without their request.

2.1.1. Historical Context and Evolution

The origins of conversational marketing can be traced back to the early days of commerce, where personal, one-on-one interactions were the cornerstone of business transactions. In traditional marketplaces, merchants and customers engage in direct dialogue, creating a personalized experience that influences purchasing decisions. This foundational principle of personal interaction has evolved and adapted with technological advancements and changes in consumer behaviour.

Interestingly, the development of these technological improvements did not occur immediately. It is necessary to take into consideration the contact that takes place between

humans and computers, which is referred to as Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) (Grudin, 2022), in order to comprehend the initial stages of conversational marketing. A phenomenon that has been around since the beginning of personal computing, HCI is a multidisciplinary field of research that investigates how people communicate with machines to enhance the technology experience, and more generally, communication between users (consumers) and computing devices.

Humans and virtual devices are moving towards natural language-based interfaces, such as the Conversational Interface (CI), which simulates talking to an “actual” person by speech or text (Kocaballi, Laranjo & Coiera, 2019). The use of natural language as a persuasive usability approach allows users to communicate with the device on their own terms rather than utilising a limited set of predefined ways (Zadrozny, 2000; Moore et al., 2017). The user asks natural-language queries in text-based, and voice-based discussions, and the conversational agent responds naturally. These systems use natural language dialogues with auditory or textual input to let individuals engage with non-human things (Zhang et al., 2018; Hussain, Ameri Sianaki & Ababneh, 2019). The conversational interface in business drives machines to communicate in a human manner, reflecting the context around us (Følstad & Brandtzaeg, 2017; Bavaresco et al., 2020; Jamil & Shahzadi, 2023).

Irrespective of the industry, whether it is business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) (Rėklaitis & Pilelienė, 2019), the ultimate customer is the individual who interacts with the company’s website or marketing through a conversational interface. Conversational interfaces represent the third major advancement in user interfaces, specifically in relation to Natural User Interfaces (NUIs) and User-Centered Programming (UCP) (Figure 1). According to the influential book “Brave NUI environment” (Wigdor & Wixon, 2011), the Command-Line Interfaces (CLI) were initially used to control early machines, but they were later replaced by Graphical User Interfaces (GUI) which utilise graphical displays and icons. This

transition occurred during the era of personal computers (Fernandez et al., 2016).

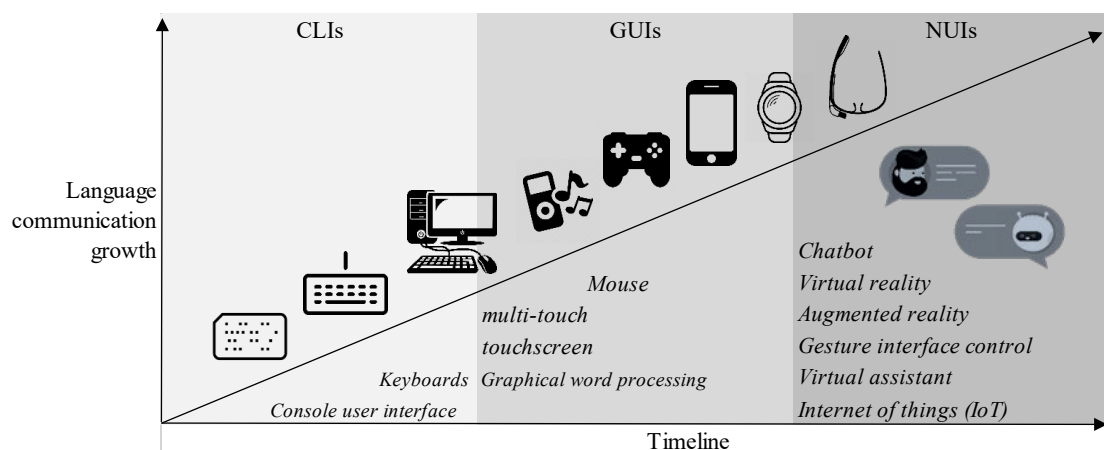
To create effective interface environments for customers, scientists and practitioners are required to be aware of changes in communication between humans and machines over time (Fitzpatrick, 2018; Xu, 2019; Becerik-Gerber, 2022). The idea of developing a computer – or, better yet, software – that can speak with people and provide the illusion of actual human relationships to individuals dates back to the 1950s, when Alan Turing debuted his groundbreaking “Imitation Game” (Alan, 1950). The goal of the “Turing test,” as it is more often known, is to determine whether a computer can give other individuals the impression that they (e.g., bots) are human.

Early instances of this type of programme include ELIZA at the MIT AI Laboratory in 1966. Through ELIZA, Joseph Weizenbaum (1966) demonstrated the potential for natural language information interchange between humans and computers. When answering, the machine assumed the role of a psychotherapist, searching a defined dictionary for terms. The initial “chatterbot” (Weizenbaum & McCarthy, 1977) established the foundation for chatterbots and bots throughout the next 50 years.

Before graphical user interfaces, textual and

natural interface technologies advanced rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Przegalinska (2019) and colleagues, some chatbot programmers believe they are encouraged to utilise techniques to deceive customers. They prioritised deceiving consumers over doing complicated natural language processing tests. The “Chinese Room” (Searle, 1980) asserts that a digital machine performing a programme cannot be considered “mindful,” “understood,” or “conscious.” This stimulation method is reminiscent of this notion. The cognitive power of profound natural languages will rapidly improve with the emergence of “conscious” structures.

In simple terms, a bot is a software program that automates certain tasks. Chatbots automate human interactions one-on-one (Mauldin, 1994, Gaetano & Diliberto, 2018; Jamil & Shahzadi, 2023). The conversational AI ecosystem encompasses voice bots (e.g. Siri, Google Now, Cortana, Alexa, Bixby, Alice) and text-based technologies on instant messaging platforms (e.g. Facebook, Telegram, WeChat, Skype) (Gaetano & Diliberto, 2018; Sheehan, Jin & Gottlieb, 2020; Dhandayuthapani, 2022; Pilelienė & Jucevičius, 2023). Chatbots, also known as conversational agents, may utilise advanced technology like natural-language processing, machine learning, and artificial intelligence.



CLIs - Command-Line Interfaces,
 GUIs - Graphical User Interfaces,
 NUIs - Natural User Interfaces

Figure 1. Evolution of User Interfaces.

Source: created by author

In the past 50 years, individuals have been using machines to communicate on their own terms, pointing, dragging, swapping, and tapping (Babayev & Israfilzade, 2023). By learning our language, computers can adapt and respond to messages (Cancel, Gerhardt & Devaney, 2019; Cheng & Jiang, 2021; Jamil & Shahzadi, 2023). Companies that thrive in interfaces may also meet their own standards and become more customer-centric. Companies aim to improve customer relationships and revenue by communicating with customers in their preferred language, anticipating their needs, and maximising touchpoints throughout their journey.

2.1.2. Basic Principles of Conversational Marketing

To have a complete understanding of what conversational marketing is all about, it is necessary to begin with a fundamental comprehension of the term at its most fundamental level. At this point, starting with 'conversation' is essential.

Cambridge English Dictionary (2023) defines *conversation* as *a talk between two or more people whose thoughts, feelings, and ideas are expressed, questions are asked and answered, or news and information are exchanged.*

However, academically speaking, Conversational marketing is an approach that prioritises customer engagement through interactive conversations in real-time. It focuses on creating meaningful dialogue with customers (Cancel & Gerhardt, 2019; Israfilzade, 2021; 2023b; Chandra, Shirish & Srivastava, 2022). Differentiating from conventional, one-directional marketing communications, the objective is to engage with customers by utilising the influence of dialogue to convey information, address inquiries, and gather feedback, thereby establishing more profound, individualised relationships with customers. Given the widespread usage of the digital era (Babayev & Israfilzade, 2023), it is unsurprising that most of these interactions occur on instant messaging platforms. These platforms serve as the contemporary benchmarks of online communication.

Hence, it is feasible to understand the precise components that make up conversational marketing. The current study provides an obvious definition of conversational marketing:

“Conversational marketing is a contemporary marketing approach that utilizes real-time, AI-enhanced, personalized one-to-one interactions across diverse channels to facilitate collaborative brand and product experiences, thereby strengthening customer relationships and enhancing overall customer experience.”

The revised definition was first presented in the research paper *“Conversational Marketing as a Framework for Customer Interaction”* authored by Israfilzade in 2021.

Conversational marketing, on the other hand, makes use of the potential of interactive dialogues to do more than just relay information; rather, it deeply engages customers by facilitating a dynamic exchange in which they move from being passive receivers to active participants. Interactions become more meaningful and personalised, and as a result, more engaging (Zhang et al., 2018; Shumanov & Johnson, 2021). This can be accomplished by tailoring conversations to the specific context of each individual customer. For instance, artificial intelligence chatbots are able to handle multiple customer conversations at the same time (Cheng & Jiang, 2021; Harbola, 2021; Chandra, Shirish & Srivastava, 2022), which enables them to provide instant responses and individualised experiences to a wider audience.

From this foundational understanding of conversation as a reciprocal and dynamic exchange, conversational marketing emerges as a sophisticated marketing approach. It transcends the traditional one-way dissemination of information, embodying instead a two-sided dialogue where interaction is key. Just as a conversation involves listening, responding, and adapting to the flow of dialogue, conversational marketing is built on similar principles.

According to the author (Israfilzade, 2021; 2023b), conversational marketing is an innovative and forward-thinking strategy that fundamentally revolves around eight key principles (Table 1)

that have been formulated specifically for the purpose of this research. To begin, it takes a customer-centric approach, which centres on

addressing customer needs and interests in order to provide a curated and individualised experience. It also highlights the importance of

Table 1. Key principles of conversational marketing

<i>Principles of Conversational Marketing</i>	Description
<i>Customer-Centric Engagement</i>	At the heart of conversational marketing is the principle of customer-centricity. This approach prioritizes the customer's needs, preferences, and feedback, ensuring that every interaction is tailored to the individual. It's about understanding the customer as a unique entity rather than a part of a broad market segment, thus fostering a deeper, more meaningful connection.
<i>Real-Time Interaction</i>	One of the defining features of conversational marketing is its emphasis on real-time communication. This immediacy mimics the natural flow of a human conversation, making interactions more dynamic and responsive. Whether through chatbots or live agents, the ability to engage customers instantly is crucial in building trust and maintaining their interest.
<i>Personalization</i>	Conversational marketing leverages data and insights to deliver personalized experiences. By analysing customer interactions, preferences, and behaviours, brands can customize their communication, making it relevant and appealing to each individual. This level of personalization goes beyond addressing a customer by name; it involves tailoring content, recommendations, and responses to align with specific customer needs and interests.
<i>Feedback and Adaptability</i>	Conversational marketing is an iterative process that relies heavily on customer feedback. It involves not only listening to what customers say but also adapting strategies based on this feedback. This continuous loop of feedback and adaptation helps businesses to stay relevant and responsive to changing customer needs and market trends.
<i>Omnichannel Presence</i>	This principle involves being present across multiple channels and platforms where customers are likely to engage. Whether it's social media, messaging apps, email, or a website, conversational marketing ensures a seamless and consistent experience across all these touchpoints. This omnichannel strategy allows customers to interact with a brand on their preferred platform, enhancing accessibility and convenience.
<i>Scalability and Automation</i>	While maintaining a personal touch, conversational marketing also embraces automation for scalability. Tools like AI-driven chatbots can handle a large volume of interactions simultaneously, ensuring efficiency without compromising the quality of engagement. This scalability is essential for managing large customer bases without losing the essence of personalized interaction.
<i>Contextual Understanding</i>	Effective conversational marketing requires a deep understanding of the context of each interaction. This means recognizing the customer's current position in the buying journey, their previous interactions with the brand, and their potential needs. Such contextual awareness enables more relevant and helpful conversations.
<i>Transparency and Trust</i>	Building trust is fundamental in conversational marketing. This involves being transparent about data usage, privacy policies, and the nature of AI-driven interactions. Clear communication about how customer data is used and protected helps in establishing trust and credibility.

Source: created by author

real-time engagement, which involves promptly interacting with customers to significantly improve both their level of satisfaction and their experience as a whole. In addition, this method of marketing encourages interactive dialogues, which helps to foster communication in both directions and active participation from customers, rather than limiting customers to the role of passive receivers of marketing messages.

The essence of conversational marketing is encapsulated in its core principles, each playing a pivotal role in forging deeper, more meaningful connections between brands and customers. Central to this approach is customer-centric engagement, where the focus shifts from broad market segments to individual customer needs, preferences, and feedback. This principle ensures that every interaction is uniquely tailored, recognizing each customer as a distinct entity with specific desires and concerns. This level of personalization, bolstered by data-driven insights, allows for the customization of communication, ensuring that each interaction is not only relevant but also resonates on a personal level. Personalization in conversational marketing goes beyond mere superficial adjustments; it's about aligning content, recommendations, and responses with the specific needs and interests of each customer. Such a strategy transforms the customer experience from a standard transaction to an engaging, personalized journey (Shumanov & Johnson, 2021).

Supporting these principles are the crucial aspects of real-time interaction, omnichannel presence (Pagani, Racat & Hofacker, 2019; Rheu et al., 2022), and the adaptability of the marketing strategy based on customer feedback. The emphasis on real-time communication mirrors the dynamics of natural human conversation (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2019), lending immediacy and responsiveness to customer interactions, whether through AI-driven chatbots or live agents. This immediacy is key to maintaining customer interest and building trust (Rheu et al., 2022). Furthermore, conversational marketing thrives on its omnichannel presence, ensuring a seamless experience across various platforms, from social media to email, aligning

with customers' preferred modes of interaction. This strategy is complemented by the continual adaptation of marketing tactics based on customer feedback, creating an iterative process that keeps businesses attuned to evolving customer needs and market trends (Babayev & Israfilzade, 2023). The integration of scalability and automation, alongside a deep contextual understanding of each interaction, further enhances the effectiveness of conversational marketing, making it a robust, responsive, and customer-centric approach. Lastly, the foundation of transparency and trust is paramount, with clear communication about data usage and privacy policies, reinforcing the credibility and reliability of brand-customer interactions.

2.2. The Role of AI in Conversational Marketing

Throughout the past few years, advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) approaches have provided a boost to powerful strategies, such as deep neural networks and machine learning. These techniques have also been utilised in the conversation, which has traditionally included Natural Language Understanding (NLU), Dialogue State Monitoring (DST), Natural Language Generation (NLG), and Natural Language Processing (NLP) in general (Wang & Yuan, 2016; Zhang et al., 2018; Hori et al., 2019; Hussain, Ameri Sianaki & Ababneh, 2019). Several papers have also been published that have utilised these techniques.

AI is not a phenomenon that emerged out of nowhere; in fact, the majority of its practical and methodological underlying structure has developed over the course of the past sixty years. In accordance with the records (McCarthy, Minsky, and Rochester, 1956), the official introduction of artificial intelligence was considered to have occurred during the "Dartmouth Conference" or "The Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence" in 1956.

However, an important aspect of this evolution is the increasing accessibility and affordability of AI technology. As AI becomes more mainstream, its adoption across various business sectors has surged, making sophisticated conversational marketing tools more readily available to a wider

range of businesses. This democratization of AI technology means that even small and medium-sized enterprises can now leverage advanced AI to enhance their customer interactions, a luxury that was previously available only to large corporations with substantial resources.

This level of proactive engagement was unimaginable in the early years of AI but is now becoming a reality, thanks to continuous advancements and the increasing integration of AI in everyday business processes. With AI becoming more affordable and widely adopted, its impact on conversational marketing is profound, offering businesses of all sizes the opportunity to engage with their customers in more meaningful, intelligent, and personalized ways.

2.2.1. Integration of Generative AI in Conversational Marketing

The field of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) marks a significant evolution in the broader landscape of AI technologies. Generative AI, distinct from traditional AI, focuses on creating new and original content, ranging from text and images to music and voices, based on the patterns it learns from existing data. This technology goes beyond mere data interpretation or response generation, as it involves the synthesis of novel outputs that can mimic human-like creativity and intuition.

Generative AI, a particular area of Artificial Intelligence, is revolutionising the domain of content creation through its advanced machine learning methodologies. This evolution signifies a notable deviation from traditional AI, which predominantly emphasised data analysis and decision-making, thereby enabling more creative applications in content creation (Goodfellow et al., 2014; Houde et al., 2020; Cheng & Jiang, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Generative artificial intelligence, in contrast to its traditional counterparts, extends its reach into the realm of creativity by producing a wide range of content responses that are specifically tailored to the interactions of users (Israfilzade, 2023b). Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), Variational Autoencoders (VAEs), and

Transformer-based models such as the GPT series from OpenAI are some of the models that are included in this category (Liu et al., 2023). GANs, for example, are very good at creating images that look like they were taken from real life, whereas GPT models are very good at producing text that is very similar to how humans write (Radford et al., 2019; Houde et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2023). Each of these models brings its own set of capabilities to the table.

Within the context of conversational marketing, the most obvious manifestation of generative artificial intelligence can be seen in the creation of sophisticated chatbots or virtual administrative assistants. In contrast to their rule-based counterparts (Cheng & Jiang, 2021), these chatbots powered by artificial intelligence are able to comprehend human input, learn from it, and respond to it in an unpredictable manner. In order to interpret customer inquiries, learn from previous interactions, and generate responses that are human-like in real-time, they make use of natural language processing and machine-learning techniques (Nuruzzaman & Hussain, 2018; Harbola, 2021; Ooi et al., 2023).

The integration of Generative AI into conversational marketing significantly transforms customer engagement, offering a multitude of benefits. It enhances the customer experience through personalized (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2019), relevant interactions, and ensures 24/7 availability, addressing inquiries anytime without the constraints of human operation hours. This technology scales personalization by analysing extensive customer data, providing tailored experiences more efficiently than human agents. Additionally, Generative AI proves to be a cost-effective solution, handling high volumes of interactions simultaneously, reducing operational costs, and minimizing human error (Budhwar et al., 2023). Its learning capability allows for continual improvement in service quality, with the system adapting and evolving from each interaction. Moreover, AI-driven insights equip businesses with data for informed decision-making, enhancing product and strategy development.

Importantly, Generative AI shifts the paradigm

from reactive to proactive customer service, initiating conversations and anticipating needs, thereby opening new avenues for engagement and marketing opportunities. This holistic enhancement of customer service and marketing strategies underscores Generative AI's growing indispensability in the modern business landscape.

When looking into the future, generative artificial intelligence has the potential to play a significant role in further transforming conversational marketing strategies. It is likely that as technology continues to advance, we will see the development of more sophisticated models that are able to handle more complicated conversations, comprehend the context with greater precision, and generate responses that are more pertinent and engaging. Generative artificial intelligence is also beginning to synergize with other technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), which promises to create more immersive and interactive conversational experiences (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Ooi et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the development of generative artificial intelligence brings with it a number of difficulties and ethical responsibilities. Concerns regarding data privacy, the transparency of AI mechanisms, and the possibility of AI-generated misinformation or deception must be addressed with the greatest of caution. To truly capitalise on the potential of generative artificial intelligence in conversational marketing, it will be essential to successfully navigate these challenges as we continue to advance further into this potentially exciting future.

2.3. Anthropomorphic Generative AI on Conversational Marketing

Anthropomorphism is a term that originates from the Greek words *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος), which means «human,» and *morphē*, which means “shape” or “form.” Together, these words form the basis of the term. In addition to the practice of attributing life to non-living things, which is referred to as animism, this term encompasses a wider range of interpretations. In order to engage in anthropomorphism, one must

go beyond the practice of describing actions, whether those actions are imagined or observed (Israfilzade, 2023b).

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have long observed that humans perceive nonhuman agents to be humanlike (Horowitz & Bekoff, 2007; Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007; Murphy, Gretzel, & Pesonen, 2019; Wan & Chen, 2021; Crolic et al., 2022; Makany et al., 2023). Anthropomorphic explanations have been questioned as to whether they have a proper place in scientific discourse and whether they can account for phenomena ranging from religious belief to successful marketing campaigns.

Anthropomorphizing non-human entities or objects involves empowering them with human-like characteristics, intentions, emotions, or behaviours (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007). The concept is fundamental to human cognition and is frequently unconscious (Guthrie, 1993). In artificial intelligence and conversational marketing, anthropomorphism is used to create conversational agents that feel human and improve user experience.

The humanization of AI through anthropomorphism brings several benefits to conversational marketing. Firstly, it enhances customer engagement by making interactions more natural and intuitive (Israfilzade, 2023a, 2023b). Customers are more likely to feel understood and valued when interacting with AI that can mirror human empathy and understanding. This leads to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as higher conversion rates. Additionally, anthropomorphic AI can handle sensitive customer service situations more effectively, providing responses that are empathetic and considerate.

Moreover, the learning and evolution capacity of Generative AI enables the creation of more personalized, relevant, and valuable dialogues. By amassing and analyzing data from user interactions, these AI systems can fine-tune their responses to better mirror human conversation patterns. This feature paves the way for more dynamic and robust dialogues, allowing marketers to engage customers in more

meaningful and impactful conversations.

However, there are also challenges associated with humanizing AI. One significant challenge is the ethical and psychological implications of AI that too closely resembles human behaviour (Israfilzade, 2023b). There is a fine line between creating AI that is relatable and creating AI that is deceptive in its level of human resemblance. This raises questions about user consent and the transparency of AI interactions. Another challenge is the technical complexity involved in creating sophisticated anthropomorphic AI. Developing AI systems that accurately interpret and respond to human emotions and nuances requires advanced technology and ongoing refinement, which can be resource-intensive.

Nevertheless, blending anthropomorphic design with Generative AI in conversational marketing is not without other hurdles. AI systems that closely imitate human conversation can potentially lead to *user dissonance* and *perceptions of deception*. Over-promising with anthropomorphic design can generate high user expectations, and any failure to meet these expectations can lead to dissatisfaction (Ciechanowski et al., 2019, Makany et al., 2023; Hu & Sun, 2023; Ooi et al., 2023).

It is critical to achieve an optimal balance in the use of anthropomorphism in conversational marketing. A comprehensive strategy that goes beyond simply providing AI systems with human-like characteristics is required. To avoid potential divergence or misrepresentation caused by exaggerated AI capabilities, conversational agent design and competencies must be aligned with user expectations. According to Jakesch et al. (2019), the use of anthropomorphized artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to improve interaction quality, increase user satisfaction, and enable a more efficient marketing strategy.

The primary challenge is striking a balance between incorporating desirable human-like characteristics and effectively managing user expectations about the AI system's capabilities. Excessive anthropomorphism can lead to the formation of unrealistic expectations, whereas insufficient anthropomorphism can result in

the AI appearing impersonal and mechanical (Israfilzade, 2023a; 2023b). As a result, effectively managing this delicate balance is critical for fully utilising the capabilities of Anthropomorphic Generative AI in the context of conversational marketing.

Moreover, there is the risk of over-reliance on AI for complex emotional interactions, which might be better handled by human agents. Balancing the use of anthropomorphic AI with human intervention is crucial to ensure that the AI enhances rather than detracts from the customer experience.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. Future Directions and Strategies for Generative AI in Conversational Marketing

The recent development of Generative AI stands as a pivotal force in the dynamic and ever-changing landscape of conversational marketing, poised to redefine how businesses interact and engage with their customers. The following section will go over the horizon of possibilities that this technology opens up. It aims to shed light on the paths and strategic approaches that businesses and researchers can take to fully realise the transformative power of Generative AI. This section will provide insights into how Generative AI can be optimally integrated into conversational marketing strategies, thus improving customer experiences, driving engagement, and shaping the future of digital interactions in the marketing domain.

3.1.1. Predicting the Future of Generative AI in Conversational Marketing

In the near future, AI is projected to become the backbone of marketing strategies, driven by its ability to analyze and synthesize data at unprecedented scales (Babayev & Israfilzade, 2023). Predictive analytics, powered by AI, will enable marketers to forecast consumer behaviour with high accuracy, facilitating the crafting of strategies that cater to future consumer demands. Therefore, Generative AI is poised to catalyze a paradigm shift in marketing practices. With its evolving capacity to create content that mirrors human creativity, Generative AI will enable

marketers to craft highly personalized narratives at scale (Shumanov & Johnson, 2021). The future will likely see these AI systems not only predict consumer behaviour but also dynamically generate marketing materials in real-time, such as personalized advertisements, written content, and interactive media. These advancements in Generative AI will also facilitate the development of deep learning models that can understand and adapt to cultural nuances and emotional undercurrents, making global campaigns more effective and resonant.

Generative AI is set to become a cornerstone of conversational marketing by providing advanced capabilities to simulate human-like conversations and generate content that is increasingly indistinguishable from that produced by humans. Looking forward, we can anticipate Generative AI to craft not just text but also voice and video content that can interactively engage consumers in a two-way dialogue, adapting to the consumer's responses in real-time and learning from each interaction to refine its communication approach.

The advancement of Generative AI is expected to revolutionize conversational marketing by enabling more nuanced and contextually rich interactions. For example, a customer interacting with an AI-powered chatbot could receive product recommendations that are not only based on their past purchases but also on their current mood, discerned from the sentiment of their messages. Generative AI could also create dynamic marketing campaigns, where the storyline evolves based on the customer's responses, providing a unique and engaging narrative for each user.

3.1.2. Emerging Technologies and Their Potential Impact

In the evolving landscape of conversational marketing, the integration of Generative AI with other emerging technologies is set to significantly enhance the way businesses engage with customers.

Enhanced data processing with edge computing. The integration of edge computing with Generative AI in conversational marketing can

lead to faster and more efficient data processing. This synergy allows real-time analysis and response generation, even in data-intensive scenarios. For instance, a retail brand can use edge computing to rapidly process customer inquiries and feedback received across various touchpoints, enabling their Generative AI system to provide instant, personalized conversation.

Voice technology integration. The incorporation of voice recognition and synthesis technologies will make conversational marketing more accessible and interactive, especially through mobile devices and smart speakers. Customers could engage in voice-based conversations with AI-powered systems for product inquiries, support, or even to complete purchases, all hands-free.

Seamless omnichannel integration. Generative AI will enable consistent and continuous customer experiences across multiple channels, from text and email to voice and messaging apps. A customer's conversation with a brand could transition smoothly from a website chatbot to a messaging app or email, with the AI maintaining the context across these platforms.

Predictive customer engagement. Leveraging predictive analytics, Generative AI can foresee customer needs and initiate proactive conversations, offering information or solutions even before the customer explicitly asks. An AI system might automatically send tips, reminders, or promotions based on the customer's purchase history or recent interactions, enhancing engagement and customer loyalty.

Advanced personalization through machine learning algorithms. Generative AI, powered by sophisticated machine learning models, can analyze large datasets to understand individual customer preferences and behaviour patterns. This leads to highly personalized marketing communications and suggestions. A travel company could use this technology to offer personalized travel recommendations based on a customer's previous bookings, searches, and preferences, all communicated through an AI-driven conversational agent.

Integration of ai with the internet of things.

Internet of Things (IoT) devices promise hyper-contextualized marketing opportunities, where consumer needs can be met almost instantaneously as devices communicate with marketing platforms to deliver a seamless consumer experience. The synergy between these technologies and AI will not only amplify the personalization capabilities of conversational marketing but also elevate the security and efficiency of these interactions.

Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality.

Emerging technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) will likely intertwine with Generative AI, creating immersive marketing experiences. For instance, a furniture retailer could use an AR-enabled chatbot that not only advises customers on furniture choices but also visualizes these choices in the customer's living space in real-time. Similarly, Generative AI could be used in VR settings to simulate a virtual shopping assistant, providing a highly personalized and interactive shopping experience.

As these technologies continue to advance, they will empower Generative AI to create more sophisticated and contextually aware marketing conversations, pushing the boundaries of how brands connect and converse with their audience. By focusing on these areas, businesses and researchers can harness the full potential of Generative AI in conversational marketing, creating more meaningful, efficient, and personalized customer interactions. As technology evolves, these applications are likely to become more sophisticated, further transforming the landscape of digital marketing.

3.1.3. Preparing for the Next Wave: Strategies and Recommendations

To navigate the upcoming advancements in Generative AI within conversational marketing, brands should consider several strategic actions. Firstly, investing in talent and infrastructure that support the integration of Generative AI will be essential. Secondly, establishing robust data governance and ethical guidelines will ensure that AI interactions remain transparent and

trustworthy. Marketers should also experiment with different AI modalities, like text, voice, and visual AI, to understand which approaches resonate best with different segments of their audience. Moreover, staying agile and receptive to consumer feedback will be key in refining AI-driven conversational strategies. Lastly, marketers must remain informed about the legal and social implications of utilizing AI in consumer interactions, ensuring that their strategies are not only effective but also responsible and aligned with societal values.

Nevertheless, to effectively leverage Generative AI in conversational marketing, brands should explore various scenarios and pilot projects. For example, they could test AI-driven personalized video messages as part of their email marketing campaigns, where the content of the video changes based on the customer's past interactions with the brand. Another scenario could involve integrating Generative AI with social media platforms to create interactive, narrative-driven campaigns that evolve based on user engagement.

In addition, brands should prepare for a future where Generative AI becomes a standard tool in marketing. This involves investing in AI training for marketing teams, ensuring data infrastructure can support AI applications, and staying abreast of ethical considerations in AI usage, such as ensuring transparency and avoiding biases in AI-generated content.

The potential scenarios for Generative AI in conversational marketing are vast and varied. From creating personalized shopping experiences to crafting interactive, evolving marketing narratives, Generative AI stands to significantly enhance the way brands interact with their customers. As these technologies continue to develop, they will offer brands unprecedented opportunities to engage with their audience in more meaningful, personalized, and effective ways.

Implications of Generative AI and Anthropomorphism Levels on Conversational Marketing. Applying the insights from the "Creating a Conversational Marketing Matrix

for Intersections of AI and Anthropomorphism” study (Israfilzade, 2023b) can offer valuable recommendations for both researchers and managers in the field of conversational marketing. Therefore, the matrix presents a strategic framework delineated into four quadrants, each quadrant in the matrix represents a unique blend of Generative AI and anthropomorphism, painting a complex picture of how various combinations affect conversational marketing tactics.

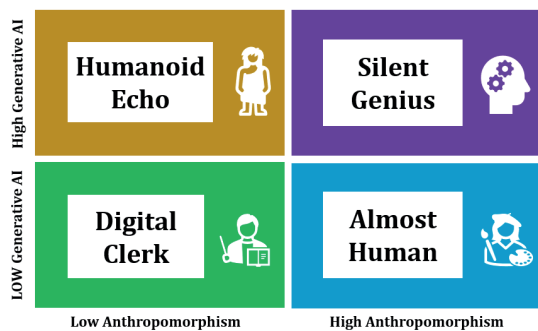


Figure 2. The Conversational Marketing Matrix: Intersections of AI and Anthropomorphism

Source: Israfilzade (2023b)

Here is a more detailed explanation of the four quadrants:

Digital Clerk (Low Generative AI & Low Anthropomorphism): This quadrant characterizes the most basic form of AI interaction within conversational marketing. Entities in this category function primarily as utilitarian tools, handling straightforward, rule-based tasks. They provide factual information without the embellishments of a personalized experience. While these digital assistants are efficient for simple, transactional customer interactions, they do not offer the nuanced engagement that comes with more advanced AI or anthropomorphic features.

Humanoid Echo (Low Generative AI & High Anthropomorphism): Here, the AI entities are designed to appear human-like, perhaps in avatars or through human-sounding names and personas, but their ability to generate content and responses is still relatively basic. They may echo preset dialogues or responses that can seem human on the surface but lack depth. While the high level of anthropomorphism

might initially attract and engage users, the limited conversational capabilities could lead to a disconnect, as the interaction might not live up to the human-like appearance.

Almost Human (High Generative AI & High Anthropomorphism): In this quadrant, AI systems are both advanced in content generation and highly anthropomorphized. They can conduct conversations that closely mimic human interactions, both in content and emotional intelligence, creating a more engaging user experience. However, the challenge here lies in balancing human-likeness without crossing into the uncanny valley, where the AI is so human-like that it becomes eerie or unsettling, potentially disconcerting users.

Silent Genius (High Generative AI & Low Anthropomorphism): This quadrant describes AI systems that are highly intelligent and capable of generating dynamic, contextually relevant, and personalized content, yet they do not have a strong human-like appearance or character. They are highly functional and can manage complex tasks and interactions effectively. The focus here is on capability rather than appearance, prioritizing function and efficiency over relatability.

To put it simply, for brands to successfully navigate the evolving landscape of Generative AI in conversational marketing, it is critical to focus on strategic infrastructure investments, adhere to ethical guidelines, and embrace diverse AI modalities, all while remaining attentive to consumer feedback. The “Conversational Marketing Matrix” provides a strategic framework for distinguishing the interaction between Generative AI and anthropomorphism, which is critical for developing effective and diverse marketing strategies in this dynamic field.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the evolution from traditional marketing strategies to the emergence and sophistication of conversational marketing, which has been reinforced by advancements in artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

In the field of conversational marketing, the inclusion of generative artificial intelligence has proven to be a game-changer, as it has enabled a previously unattainable level of personalisation, real-time interactions, and dynamic customer engagement. Consequently, this development represents a significant shift away from reactive customer engagement strategies and towards proactive ones.

This approach transforms the traditional one-way marketing communication into a dynamic two-way interaction, emphasizing customer-centric engagement, real-time response, personalization, and adaptability. It leverages omnichannel presence and automation for scalability, ensuring contextual understanding and maintaining transparency to build trust. This methodology marks a significant shift in marketing strategies, fostering deeper, more meaningful connections with customers.

The paper also discusses the ethical and psychological implications of artificial intelligence that closely resembles human behaviour, and it investigates the balance that must be struck between humanising artificial intelligence and maintaining transparency in customer interactions. Furthermore, the paper addresses the challenges that are involved in the process of developing sophisticated anthropomorphic AI systems, such as the ethical considerations and technical complexities that are involved in the process. The paper highlights the benefits of anthropomorphic AI in terms of improving user experience and engagement. In addition to this, it investigates methods that can be utilised to effectively manage the equilibrium that exists between human-like characteristics and user expectations in artificial intelligence systems.

Nevertheless, as AI becomes more sophisticated and human-like, ethical considerations come to the forefront. It's imperative to address potential issues such as user manipulation or over-reliance on AI for emotional support. Maintaining transparency about the use of AI in customer interactions is crucial. *Customers should be aware they are interacting with AI*, and their

consent and preferences must be respected in these interactions.

The future predicts AI as a key element in marketing, with its ability to create personalized, real-time content and understand cultural nuances. Emerging technologies like edge computing, voice technology, and AR/VR will further augment its impact, offering sophisticated, context-aware marketing conversations. Strategic recommendations include investing in AI infrastructure and talent, ethical AI usage, and exploring AI-driven marketing scenarios. The intersection of Generative AI and anthropomorphism in conversational marketing presents a nuanced matrix of strategies, balancing functionality and reliability in customer interactions.

Finally, conversational marketing, which employs generative artificial intelligence, represents a significant step forward in the way that businesses interact with their customers. As the industry continues to develop, it is essential to maintain a balance between the advancements in technology and ethical considerations. This will ensure that artificial intelligence (AI) contributes to the human element in marketing rather than taking away from it. The potential of this technology is enormous, and it promises to completely transform customer interactions by making them more personalised, efficient, and impactful. Nevertheless, in order to successfully navigate this environment, one must take a thoughtful approach, one in which innovation is paired with responsibility and a profound comprehension of the constantly evolving demands and expectations of the customer.

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