

MARKETING

AI will augment humanity, not replace it: IBM

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Karolina Kurkova wearing the Marchesa x IBM Watson gown. Image credit: Marchesa

By JEN KING

NEW YORK The Internet has transformed what is possible, from taking photographs, producing content and even where we eat, but according to an IBM executive, this is only the tip of the iceberg for what comes next.

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Considered the defining invention of our lifetime, the Internet has given way to the development of mobile devices, IoT and blockchain solutions as well futuristic autonomous vehicles. Speaking at Ad:tech 2017 Nov. 1, an IBM executive delved into what is possible for marketers in the "cognitive era," where technologies will augment humanity, rather than replace it.

"We believe that connecting with consumers is no longer just about advertising," said Babs Rangaiah, executive partner of global marketing at IBM. "It might be ads, but it might also be utility, might be entertainment or content.

"You need to be able to engage and connect with your audiences in a way that does not unruffle advertising," he said. "Those experiences have to be made for mobile, have to be visually social and have to be personalized while leveraging data. That has to run to the commerce models of today."

Help from Watson

During Ad:Tech 2017's "Marketing in a cognitive era," Mr. Rangaiah presented examples that used artificial intelligence-powered IBM Watson to develop creative solutions to a slew of problems, ranging from health care to dissecting fashion trends.

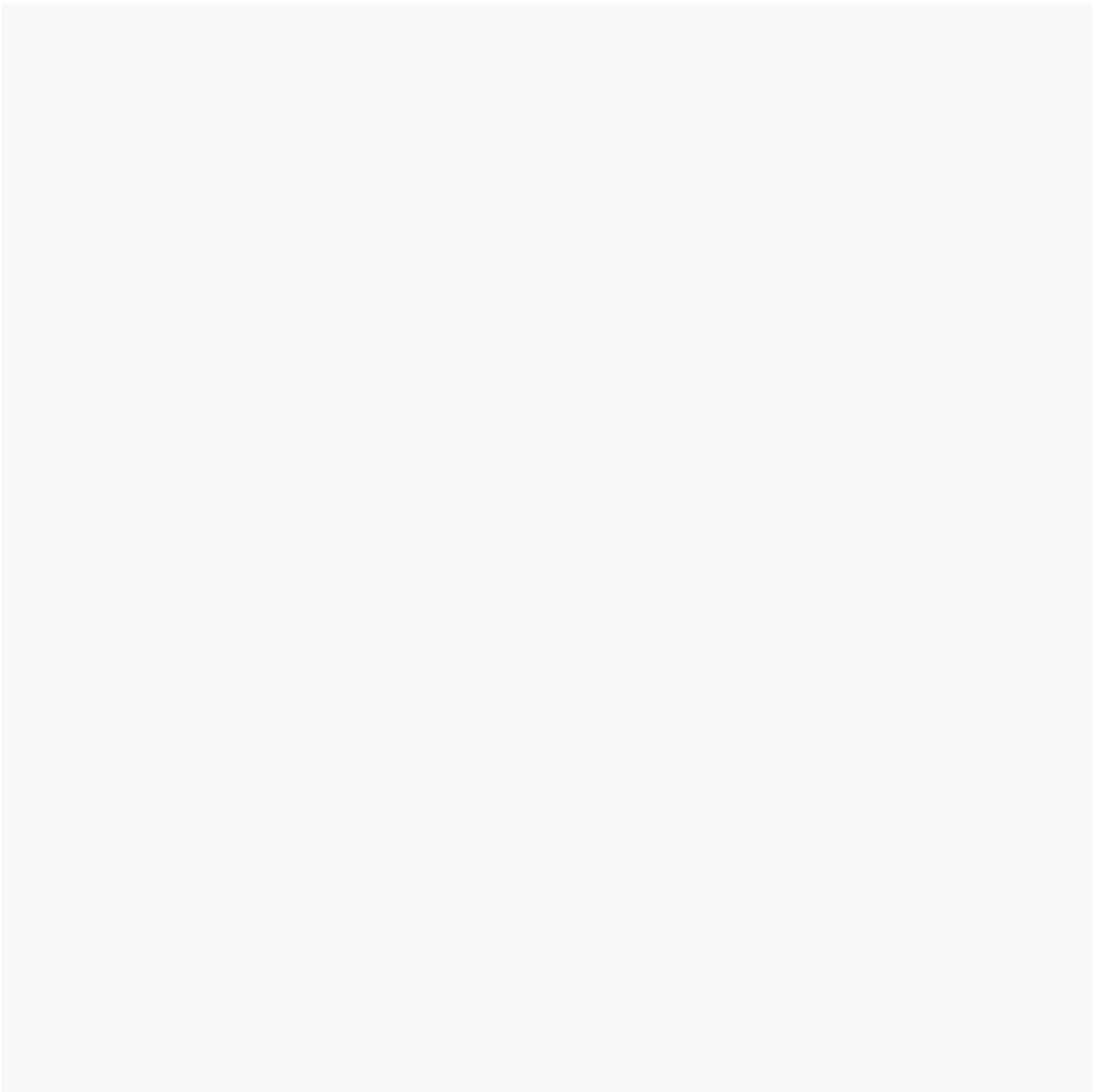
Through its use of Watson, IBM is able to approach the needs of its clients as a consultant, rather than a creative partner.

Mr. Rangaiah explained that the best approach to creating experiences is to develop projects that are made specifically for mobile, visually social, personalized and leverage data. These points converge to create a commerce model when applicable.

As an example of made for mobile, Mr. Rangaiah referenced IBM's partnership with The Masters professional golf tournament. Due to the high use of smartphones and tablets among primarily affluent, golf fans, The Masters wanted

to create a better mobile experience.

Unlike watching baseball or football, a golf spectator is unable to see the action at each green. To remedy this downside of watching golf, IBM placed IoT sensors on 18 trees around the 18 holes.



@thesergiogarcia will tee off with co-leader Justin Rose at 2:45pm in the final group of #themasters on Sunday. Gates open at 8am. Play begins at 10:05am.

A post shared by The Masters (@themasters) on Apr 8, 2017 at 4:59pm PDT

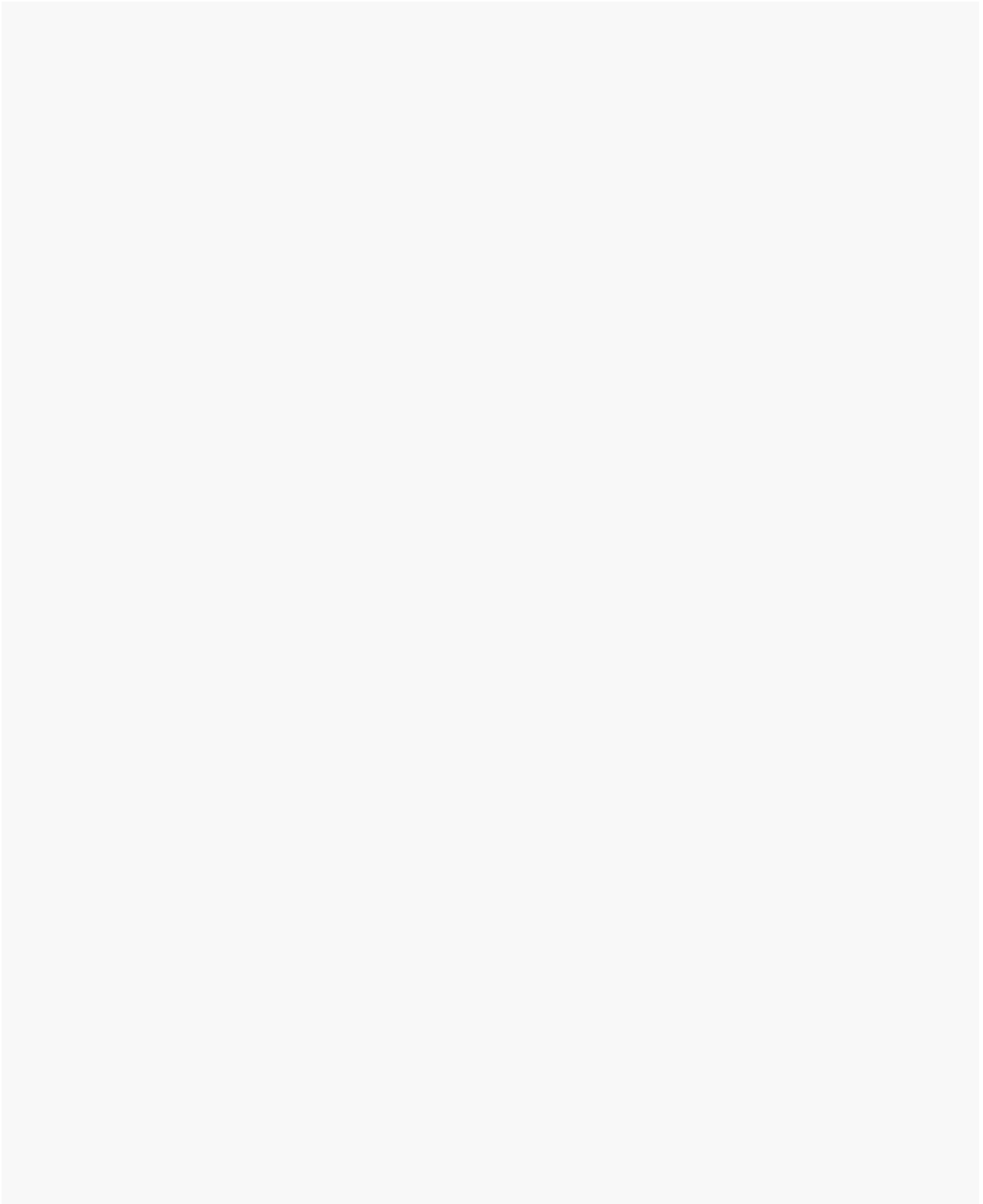
Doing so allowed a spectator to view a specific hole using his device, thus creating a personalized, social and made for mobile experience.

Similarly, IBM's work with automaker General Motors for 2018 and beyond will see Watson-powered navigation systems installed in new model vehicles. These navigation systems will be much more than an infotainment system, but will also create intuitive ways to interact with consumers.

A GM vehicle's navigation system, for instance, will include transactional elements to assist consumers in making a seamless, contactless purchase that also generates a revenue stream for a partner brand.

On the fashion front, IBM Watson teamed with Marchesa to design a gown for the 2016 Met Gala.

Considered the first cognitive dress, Watson analyzed popular trends in Paris, Milan and other fashionable centers to build a gown representative of the data found. Marchesa also fitted the gown with IoT sensors to track social media sentiments.



Last years #metgala featuring our #cognitivedress made with @ibm worn by the gorgeous @karolinakurkova!
#marchesa #ibm #manusxmachina @georginachapmanmarchesa @kerencraigmarchesa

A post shared by Marchesa (@marchesafashion) on May 1, 2017 at 12:29pm PDT

Artificial intelligence has also found a place in hospitality. IBM Watson and Hilton Worldwide recently launched a concierge pilot, a robot named Connie, after Conrad Hilton, to assist guests looking for advice or recommendations.

Rewrite the rules

Retailers and brands are beginning to place more stock in the ability of artificial intelligence to make marketing teams more efficient and lighten their workload.

Artificial Intelligence is on the rise behind-the-scenes at businesses across sectors, and a new Forrester report shows that the majority of companies believe that AI will shift their priorities from more high-level, strategic views and away from mundane workflows. This research was conducted by Forrester and commissioned by Emarsys, a marketing cloud company ([see story](#)).

IBM's Mr. Rangaiah emphasized that marketers should approach AI similar to how radio was embraced as vehicle of change in the 1920s.

Electronics maker RCA is credited with changing the radio landscape by broadcasting a boxing match, rather than sharing only news briefs. By reframing radio's use, RCA propelled the media industry to evolve through new ideas and concepts.

"There are incredible changes happening, and there have been changes happening in [the marketing] business for quite some time," IBM's Mr. Rangaiah said.

"It's a great time to be in the business, I think we're all in a positions to either write or rewrite the rules in a way that is totally innovative and could revolutionize aspects of the business," he said.

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