

RETAIL

Language of future is language of machines

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Pepper stands at 4-feet tall, can tell stories and help guests with a slew of inquiries. Image credit: Mandarin Oriental

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

LISBON, Portugal In the future, interactions with retailers and brands could likely be handled through an artificial intelligence bot, causing disruption for luxury.

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During the session "The Future Language of Luxury" at the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference on April 18, a futurist predicted that AI will be extremely integrated in the human race's future. However, it will be more about how humans work with AI, rather than machines taking over.

"AI is the medium, the shared language between us and the machines," said [Sophie Hackford](#), futurist.

"In the past we used to have to give machines step-by-step instructions, but today we're developing digital systems that learn for themselves," she said. "The excitement about AI is about finding ways to solve things we don't know how to solve. I think for those problems we can't find the answer to, we can use AI to help us solve."

Future with machines

As the world barrels towards the future and technologies converge, luxury marketers need to stop thinking about how to innovate on top of their traditional strategies but develop completely new ones.

Artificial intelligence is changing the way consumers interact with brands and retailers, and in the future it could be the only way they do so.



Sophie Hackford at the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference. Image courtesy of Cond Nast

Ms. Hackford believes that each individual will have his or her own personal assistant in virtual form, which will go out in the world to do customers' bidding.

For instance, the bot will handle all convenience shopping and determine what customers need and when.

But this poses a problem for luxury, as AI is powerful at handling a broad spectrum of tasks, but it cannot go deep. Luxury is all about making a deep connection with customers.

While many believe that artificial intelligence could be the downfall of the human race, for the most part Ms. Hackford does not agree.

There are large gaps in artificial intelligence that will never be able to compare to human capability.

But there are many things that AI can help with that the human mind could never accomplish. AI should be used to help solve questions that cannot be answered, and it may even be able to determine the origins of the universe.



Sophie Hackford at the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference. Image courtesy of Cond Nast

Brands should be leveraging the value of AI, which can help give the answers needed that arise from data mining.

AI is widely accessible to all brands, as there is no need to develop an in-house team since so many consultants are available.

Additional insight

Fashion and technology are two seemingly disparate fields that are increasingly converging, leading to the creation of innovative garments that serve functional purposes.

According to Fashionbi's "Innovation In Fashion-Tech Products" report, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is ushering in new technologies that can be applied to fashion design and production to meet consumer demand for connectivity. While tech-infused fashion has not yet seen widespread implementation, some early adopters show the potential of smart apparel and accessories ([see more](#)).

In an era of fast fashion, latching onto trends quickly is key to successful apparel designs, but could AI designers make fast fashion even faster?

Amazon is reportedly working on machine learning technology that can analyze what makes an outfit stylish and theoretically create entirely new designs along those lines. With this potential in mind, artificial intelligence could be a key factor in the future of fashion design ([see more](#)).

"I think a new language will emerge as we talk to the machines," Ms. Hackford said. "But with new technology, there will be things to work out.

"As Amazon can go indefinitely broad, it can't go deep," she said. "Luxury of course requires a much deeper experience for the customer."

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