IBM Watson for Retail

Personalizing customer engagement with conversational AI

Industry context

The retail industry faces disruption like never before. Online retail has not only increased competition; it has also encouraged new market entrants from other industries, who seek to establish direct relationships with consumers and engage with them on a more personal level.

Unless retailers can find new ways to add value by improving the customer experience, they risk losing customers to these new competitors.

Challenges

Shoppers today often struggle to find the information they need, or have to wait in line until a sales associate is available to answer their questions.

And although simple purchases may be easier online, more complex transactions such as product returns can leave shoppers uncertain how to get the support they need.

Increasing customer engagement will require greater investment in innovation. The IBM 2017 Customer Experience Index reveals that:

67% of retailers do not provide any means for shoppers to compare products in-store.

49% offer no access to additional product data.

61% do not provide online chat options.

Only 28% provide responsive help options 24/7.[1]

Solution

AI assistants have the potential to transform the retail experience both in-store and online.

Empowering sales associates

For example, AI Assistants can be used to augment the skills and knowledge of sales associates, empowering them to query customer information and make product comparisons and recommendations instantly.

This helps sales associates focus on providing an engaging, personalized service to customers.

Enabling customer self-service

Retailers can also give customers direct access to AI assistants via in-store kiosks or online chat facilities.

In effect, these AI assistants enable customers to interact with retailers' complex inventory management and pricing systems and serve themselves with the information they need, instead of having to wait for a sales associate to become available.

Benefits

Help customers find products more easily, increasing customer satisfaction and reducing wasted time and frustration

Provide real-time advice backed by relevant recommendations, increasing engagement and encouraging cross- and up-selling

Create step-by-step walkthroughs of routine workflows such as product returns, freeing sales associates to focus on higher-value tasks

Handle thousands of customer interactions simultaneously, helping to triage customer service when stores are busy

Empower sales associates, warehouse teams and managers to find information and make more informed decisions quickly

Contact us

For more information regarding this offering or any of our services, please contact your Watson SalesRepresentative or visit ibm.biz/watsonplatform-scheduler

Sources:

1. https://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/gbs/thoughtleadership/cxindex2017/

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