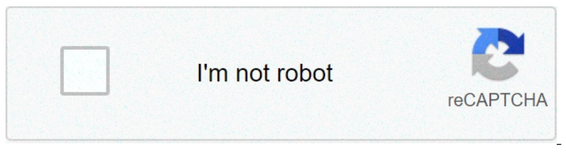

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TL;DR: Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are already widely used today – people just don’t realize it. HubSpot surveyed over 1,400 consumers globally about AI and found that: 63% of people don't realize they're already using AI technologies. Use of voice search has seriously increased, so SEO/SERP professionals need to take notice. Consumers are comfortable buying from a bot that provides customized service. People are very open to using AI-enabled bots for customer service, particularly for straightforward requests and questions. Table of Contents (8 minute read) AI technologies have captured the public imagination for decades (think HAL 9000, the Terminator, etc.), but many people don’t realize that they are already using AI technologies every single day. Perhaps it’s because we’ve been expecting to see a mind-blowing, sentient robot that talks and thinks like us. That may be reality in the future. But as of today, we’re surrounded by a plethora of incredibly sophisticated artificial intelligence tools that are designed to make all facets of modern life easier. (To get a better understanding of artificial intelligence, check out our primer that breaks down the core technologies available today.) For marketers, salespeople, and any professionals who operate online, these artificial intelligence tools have huge potential to improve their day-to-day functions, help them become more targeted and efficient in their day jobs, and allow their businesses to uncover customer trends that were impossible to sift through in the past. The possibilities are endless. And there’s huge appetite among the general public to use AI tools: 86% are interested in trying them out. Businesses that tap into that interest early can differentiate themselves, especially with respect to customer service.Want this chart? Click to download. This report will dive into three areas of AI technology innovation that will greatly impact the way consumers interact with businesses: Voice search Ecommerce Customer service We’ll end with some present-day product examples that speak to the breadth of AI’s impact on modern life. The Steady Growth of Voice Search Search assistants like Siri, Alexa, and Cortana are powered by natural language processing and speech recognition programs, making them AI tools. Since Apple introduced Siri in 2011, voice search capabilities are available on the 3.9 billion Apple, Android, and Windows devices worldwide. Because of its ubiquity, voice search is one of the most established AI-enabled technologies today. To get a sense of how people view AI today, our survey first focused on people’s perception of AI. When asked, just 37% of our respondents said they’d used an AI tool. But, through follow-up questions, we found that 63% of respondents who said they didn’t use AI technologies were actually using AI – they just didn't know voice search engines or programs like Siri are powered by AI. Thanks to simple, easy-to-use tools like voice search, AI has crept into widespread use without many realizing it. Want this chart? Click to download. Why This Matters To Businesses: In 2011, when Apple first released Siri, many people snickered at its inability to understand seemingly simple questions and give correct answers – a reviewer for Mashable wrote at the time: “Siri works just barely well enough for Apple to pull it off”. But in the years since, Apple, Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and countless other companies have released and refined their own voice-enabled AI assistants. People have noticed the improvements to Siri, Cortana, and Alexa and have regularly begun using them. Want this chart? Click to download. Our survey revealed 74% of all respondents have used voice search tools within the past month. We tracked daily usage of voice apps and found the rate of usage has increased a great deal just this year – since May daily use of voice search increased 27%. Why is that a big deal? This brisk change in search behavior worldwide has huge implications for SEO professionals whose job it is to make sure their business is found in the top of search results. As more people bypass the search screen by using voice search, the mechanics of search become completely different. Instead of a list of search options to choose from, the voice search tool gives only one option as a result and often with no attribution to the source of the result. This has significant impact on a small and growing business’s ability to attract people to its website and establish its brand. However, voice search also enables businesses to be more discoverable in local searches, so marketers need to set up their website and content to appear when someone seeks a local business. Want this chart? Click to download. People are also much happier with the quality of voice search results compared to six months ago. Siri was released in 2011 and over the last five years, people have learned how to ask questions to get the right result. At the same time, Apple has steadily improved Siri’s accuracy via machine learning. Now, the majority of people who use voice search are happy with the results. Want this chart? Click to download. In our sample, German, British, and Irish respondents were least happy with their voice search results. This is likely due to voice recognition systems having trouble deciphering regional accents and general localization issues with the technology. We expect satisfaction will trend up as engineers improve their products to better analyze different languages, dialects, and accents. Want this chart? Click to download. Consumers’ voice search behavior will directly impact the SEO priorities of B2C companies the most in the near future. That’s because people prefer using voice search at home or in their car, where they’re more likely to ask about personal topics rather than work-related topics. However, the taboo of asking questions out loud and in public will likely fade, just as people became accustomed to others talking on the phone via bluetooth headsets. Currently, 27% are comfortable using voice search at work, and 17% would use voice search in public areas. Want this chat? Click to download. Ecommerce Chatbots One of the fastest growing use cases for AI technology is ecommerce capabilities integrated within chatbots. The idea is to allow people to buy items through a chatbot that can provide personalized purchase recommendations. In our survey, 47% of respondents are open to buying items using a chatbot.Want this chart? Click to download. Chatbots leverage natural language processing to communicate with a human. The chatbot processes a buyer’s request and taps into machine learning to determine the best products or options to serve a user based on purchasing trends. If a buyer asks for snow boots, a bot can suggest the top-rated boots sold by the company. The bot can also recommend wool socks to go with the boots because it knows people who buy boots also purchase wool socks in past purchases. In the example below, Sam browses products from GoSun Stove, chooses the product he wants, and purchases it directly via the chatbot. Using the bot, Sam’s buying experience is simple, personalized, and seamless. Over 4 billion people worldwide actively use messaging apps. Chatbots typically sit natively on messaging applications, such as Slack, WhatsApp, Line, and Facebook Messenger. In line with our questions on chatbots, we wanted to know how comfortable consumers are with purchasing from a social network like Facebook instead of an ecommerce website. There’s a slight barrier to entry in the mind of the consumer who typically associates Facebook as a place to stay in touch with friends rather than a place to buy items. The majority of respondents don’t see social networks as a place for purchases … yet. As social networks, especially Facebook, command more of people’s time, there will be a natural enlargement of the sphere (see the uproar over Facebook’s foray into media, specifically video and news) and in time, people will become more comfortable with buying from brands through social media. It turns out, 37% would consider buying items on a social network instead of a company's website. Want this chart? Click to download. Why This Matters To Businesses: With an ecommerce bot powered by AI, businesses can have an always-on salesperson that can interact with customers on a one-to-many basis. On top of 24/7 availability, a sales bot exists on the world’s most popular social networks and messaging applications, making it ubiquitous. Ecommerce bots can offer personalized purchasing experiences to customers while expanding a business’s reach. The easiest win is for B2C companies that sell consumer goods with a straightforward, repeatable selling cycle. There are many companies like Springbot that build ecommerce bots for businesses, so there’s no need for individual companies to find a developer to build a homegrown system. As machine learning programs get smarter, it’s likely that ecommerce bots will be able to field much more complicated questions from potential buyers and help sell bigger offerings. AI-Enabled Customer Service There is huge potential for businesses both big and small to leverage AI’s natural language processing capabilities to better serve their customers and prospects. In the service sector, live chat has revolutionized service, with consumers finding it almost as preferable as live phone and email support – and HubSpot believes customer service bots are the next evolution. A service bot provides the shortest path for a website visitor to get the answer he or she seeks.Want this chart? Click to download. Here’s the concept: An AI-enabled bot sitting on a business’s website answers visitors’ questions on demand, such as: What’s your pricing? What’s your company phone number? Where is your office? The visitor gets a direct answer instead of having to click through the website navigation to find that information. When given the scenario, 57% of our respondents were interested in getting real-time answers from bots on a company website. This is the highest level of interest exhibited by our respondents for all of our bot scenarios across ecommerce and service.Want this chart? Click to download. Beyond information bots sitting on a company website, many are comfortable using AI-enabled technologies for more involved customer service requests. When we asked respondents if they had a preference for who should help them in a service setting, 40% didn't care if they're helped by a person or AI tool – good news for AI service companies. The most compelling use case is for simple customer service questions, such as changing a billing address, with openness to AI increasing to 53%. For more complicated cases that require multiple steps or involve more technical help, people prefer human assistance – in that case, openness drops to 26%. Want this chart? Click to download. Companies can avoid customer hesitation by complementing AI-enabled service programs with live service. If an AI service program can’t help the customer, the program can switch over to a live representative who can complete the request. The line between selling and service also disappears – an AI bot can both sell and handle customer service requests. As we continue Sam’s interaction with GoSun Stove, Sam sends a follow-up question after completing his purchase, and Matt, GoSun’s service representative, takes the lead in answering. Why This Matters To Businesses: As more people rely on their mobile devices to get things done, they’ll expect to do more on the go, including interacting with a business’s customer service representatives. The most successful businesses will be ones that operate where their customers already spend their time. Of our respondents, 55% are interested in using their personal messaging apps for customer service conversations (though German respondents are much less enthused about the idea). Just like a ecommerce bot, automated customer service bots are always on, operate on a one-to-many scale, and live on your website, in addition to being accessible from the most popular social networks and messaging applications to create delightful post-purchase experiences. AI technologies will bring on an age of instant, always available service.Want this chart? Click to download. Conclusion (AKA AI Gif Party) We laid out opportunities for businesses to leverage AI in customer service and ecommerce, but AI will impact nearly all facets of business and modern life. Many established technology companies like Google, Twitter, and Intel have been acquiring AI companies at rapid pace, anticipating the proliferation and widespread adoption of AI tools and services at both a consumer and business level. To highlight the breadth of AI’s impact on people’s daily lives, we’ll conclude with some real life examples of technologies available today. Their use cases span personal and business activities. AI can: Answer your doorSource: TechCrunch Control your light bulbs Source: Philips Help you find new and interesting flavor combinations Source: IBM Help your salespeople write better emails Source: HubSpot Drive you around town Source: Google Waymo Help your salespeople prospect and track potential new accounts Source: Growthbot Translate your conversations in real time Source: Microsoft Help you get stuff done faster by making software easier to use Source: Growthbot Help you avoid traffic collisions Source: Engadget Help doctors find treatments for cancer Source: IBM Research methodology HubSpot Research ran an online survey via a general population panel maintained by Survey Sampling International (SSI). 1,426 online consumers from Ireland, Germany, Mexico, Colombia, UK, and USA make up the sample. The survey was available in English, Spanish, and German, and was fielded in October and November 2016. This report contains links for HubSpot Content, Products, and Services. Originally published Jan 30, 2017 10:00:00 AM, updated December 11 2019 I think everyone agrees that artificial intelligence is a “game-changing technology”.For sure, it is still in the early stages of its development and current expectations are often set too high. Singularity—the point where artificial super-intelligence surpasses human intelligence—is still “relatively” far away.Yet, AI is already changing many fields of life and this change is only set to continue. This became very clear when I visited Japan again last week:The more frequent appearance of “Pepper”, the humanoid robot from Softbank Robotics, on the streets of Tokyo.Last week’s discussions with my Japanese friends and colleagues about artificial super-intelligence and artificial consciousness.The news about Softbank’s founder Masayoshi Son leading the way in investments in AI.There is simply no turning back.Everyone needs to understand artificial intelligence and integrate discussion about AI into their own particular area of expertise.But are we doing enough?When I attend conferences and events, I get the feeling that the answer to this question is: No, we aren’t doing enough.Let me explain by sharing my experience of conferences and other events.Conferences as a Unique Platform to Discuss AIIt is always great to speak at conferences.I love to engage with other participants and share my experiences and insights about the impact of the digital revolution on the world.Even in a digital age, the experience of having face-to-face engagement with an international audience adds tremendous value.This is particularly true when personal experiences are shared or predictions about the future are made. Such presentations can be inspiring and motivating, and cannot easily be replaced by other forms of communication.Conferences are a unique opportunity to make you think, encourage dialogue with other participants and spur creativity.Yet, my own recent experience of many conferences is disappointing. Most presenters continue to focus on traditional debates without paying attention to the challenges and opportunities created by new technology. Participants want to remain in their “comfort zone”, and that means focusing on the conventional issues.And when I say “traditional debates”, I mean very “traditional”. I attend many business and law related conferences, for instance, and if we built a time machine and travelled back ten or more years, the same issues would be under discussion. Very little would have changed.There are, of course, exceptions, but generally speaking the issues and arguments are settled, and all we get is a repeat performance. Even when “new technologies” are discussed, old models are used to frame the discussion, understand and explain their implementation and effects.For sure, this is a pity. It is a lost opportunity, because—even in a digital world—conferences have enormous potential to be a unique “platform” for engaging with the meaning and effects of important new technologies and their applications.This is particularly true for artificial intelligence.AI is Much More than “Just a Technology”AI is more than a “tool” that improves, for instance, manufacturing processes. It is more than the next step in compliance. It is more than a system to make predictions that facilitate action. It is probably even more than a disruptor of “knowledge work”, more generally.AI has the potential to transform every aspect of how we live, work and do businessThe more I think about it, the more I am convinced that AI will affect the way we “trust”.Who, what and how we trust are all being transformed as AI becomes more integrated into our everyday lives.This may sound a little far-fetched, but there are already many examples of how we increasingly place our trust in algorithms, software and computer code.We buy products, book accommodation, make reservations at restaurants based on reviews and recommendation algorithms. We trust Wikipedia to give us the correct information. When we ask Google a question we expect—and trust—that we receive the correct answer.We all may have some residual suspicion of big tech companies, but in our everyday lives we tend to put that scepticism to one side and “trust” in the technology.As such, we already live in a world of so-called “ubiquitous computing”.Computing is now embedded in all aspects of our everyday lives.Computer code provides the unseen and unnoticed “architecture” structuring our whole existence. We find a plethora of examples in our work, recreation, communication, consumption, travel, or education. All of these areas of life, as well as the choices associated with these activities, are increasingly organized by and around digital technologies.Think about how much of our lives is spent interacting with devices that are, at a deep level, operating digital code.Such interaction can be direct and proximate, varying from interacting with a smart phone or computer to—more distant—traveling to work on a subway system that is automated, in various ways.In both cases, it is computer code that makes the experience possible and computer code that, ultimately, provides the structure and choice associated with that experience.With products getting smarter and connected, it is easily to predict that we will only have more and more “trust” in machines.In fact, combined with other fast-moving technological developments in the areas of blockchain, IoT, sensors, autonomous driving and big data, it is only to be expected that AI will play a dominant role in our future lives.Special event for the “Nissan Intelligent Mobility” project in TokyoAnd there is no doubt, we will all trust AI. Everything is pointing in that direction.And this is where things become interesting and important.We Need More “Platforms” for Building “Trust”Can we really trust AI?Should we just let things run their course and accept the consequences?Most people I talk to tend to agree: “We shouldn’t just trust AI”.We should try to understand how AI is already affecting our lives. After all, the impact will be much more significant than the introduction of the Internet.In order to build trust in AI, we need to have detailed discussions at all levels (and not only among the AI specialists). We need to focus on what it means, how it is already affecting our lives and how it will affect our lives in the future.Recently, I have been thinking more and more about this. And whenever I am speaking at or attending a conference at home or abroad and AI is not on the agenda, I believe that we are missing an opportunity.After all, conferences are an excellent opportunity to start discussing the impact of AI on fields outside of “technology”.We have to ask questions about AI, understand how AI systems are trained, where the data is coming from, etc.In particular, we need to think about the values or “ethics” that structure how AI operates.For example, how do we want an autonomous car to react when confronted with an unavoidable accident? Should it minimize the loss of life, even if that means sacrificing the occupants of the car or should it prioritize the lives of the occupants at any cost? Alternatively, should the choice be a random one?Transparent, open and inclusive dialogue seems to be the best way to build real trust in the systems that will structure our lives in the future.So, What’s NextMy visit to Japan made very clear that we need open discussion and dialogue about artificial intelligence and the digital transformation, more generally.We should understand that AI will have a much broader impact than most of us realize. Particularly, policy makers and governments should encourage and participate in discussions about the meaning and effects of AI.It’s great to have conferences, but even if the topic is not even remotely linked to digital technology, we have to ask ourselves whether and how the topic will be affected by technology in the future.

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