AI-Enabled Marketing

How AI is Elevating Customer Engagement in the Middle East

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Methodology

Martechvibe, in collaboration with Braze, presents AI-Enabled Marketing: How AI is Elevating Customer Engagement in the Middle East, an in-depth analysis of the state of AI in the region and the rise of Generative AI investments for better customer engagement.

To provide data-driven insights, a survey was conducted with 220 professionals across key functions, including marketing, growth, analytics, technology, customer care, and customer experience. Participants ranged from C-suite executives and department heads to directors, senior managers, and managers.

Respondents represented industries such as retail, ecommerce, travel, hospitality, media, and entertainment across the United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt. Additionally, the study includes perspectives from senior marketing, growth, customer experience, and technology leaders for strategic input.

This report provides a comprehensive view of how brands in the Middle East are evolving their AI strategies to meet modern customer expectations and foster stronger relationships.

Editor's Note

The Middle East is ahead of the global average when it comes to eagerness to embrace the potential of new technologies as a means to revolutionise personalised customer interactions. There's a palpable sense of optimism with a healthy dose of cautiousness.

At last, it seems we have the tools to tackle the long-standing challenge of delivering truly individualised experiences at scale, a promise made by many brands – but delivered by too few. AI is undeniably compelling, offering the possibility of creating hyper-targeted, contextually relevant interactions in real-time

Yet, as is often the case with transformative technology, the reality of implementation has also been met with headwinds.

A significant hurdle remains: the lack of adequate understanding of how these systems can truly work within an individual business. Old problems in data quality and foundations still persist, and enterprises will need to get their house in order for new technologies to perform at their full potential.

A new breed of marketing leaders, with the skills to work seamlessly with predictive, generative and agentic AI as part of the team, will soon find themselves at the forefront. For now, these businesses rely heavily on tech companies as guides.

Are technology players ready to be the transformation leaders and help close the skills and understanding gaps in organisations?

Yolande D'Mello
Senior Editor
Martechvibe

Top Insights

100% of businesses prefer purchasing off-the-shelf AI solutions, and **62%** are open to outsourcing AI-driven customer engagement entirely.

This highlights a strong preference for ready-made AI tools over in-house development and underscores the growing reliance on technology partners for AI implementation.

57% of businesses have already integrated GenAI into customer conversations, while **32%** are in the planning phase.

This underscores the growing momentum of AI-driven engagement in the region.

67% believe GenAI-driven interactions will significantly enhance customer engagement.

This reinforces the strong business confidence in AI's potential to transform customer interactions.

Challenges

62% of businesses cite unclear ROI or business impact as a key hurdle.

This underscores the financial challenges companies face in scaling AI-driven customer engagement.

50% struggle with real-time data processing.

This obstacle impacts AI performance as the models require a strong data infrastructure and integration for insights and personalisations.

55% of organisations point to the high cost of AI implementation as a barrier.

While businesses recognise the transformative potential of AI, many struggle to justify the initial investment required for advanced AI models, infrastructure upgrades, and integration with existing systems.

Introduction

Generative AI (GenAI) will forever be a classic example of a highly disruptive technological movement that revolutionised the business industry and the global economy.

It refers to a type of artificial intelligence that can create new content—like text, images, or code—based on patterns it has learned from existing data. Unlike traditional AI, which is focused on recognising or classifying data, Generative AI can produce original outputs, making it a powerful tool for creativity, and automation across industries.

Since late 2022, the public release of large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT marked a turning point, making GenAI widely accessible beyond specialised use cases. While GenAI had existed in enterprise applications,this moment brought its capabilities, such as text generation, summarisation, and context-aware interaction.

And with this integration of more advanced Generative AI models, we now enter the era of Customer Communication 2.0, where AI-powered engagements that combine Generative AI with predictive and agentic capabilities are no longer reactive but proactive, fluid, and deeply intuitive.

With AI-driven engagement that provides real-time product recommendations to enhance brand trust, AI is shifting from reactive automation to predictive and highly relevant engagement.

While there is mass excitement about the advancements in AI, there are still hurdles in implementing this technology and realising its potential. The report's findings indicate that while Middle East enterprises recognise the transformative potential of AI, many remain cautious in their investment approach. The conversation, however, has shifted from whether businesses should integrate AI to how they can do so effectively, ethically, and at scale.

This report provides an analysis of the current state of AI in the region, key challenges, and strategic frameworks—equipping businesses with the knowledge to harness its full potential in shaping customer interactions.

The Turning Point— AI's Defining Moment

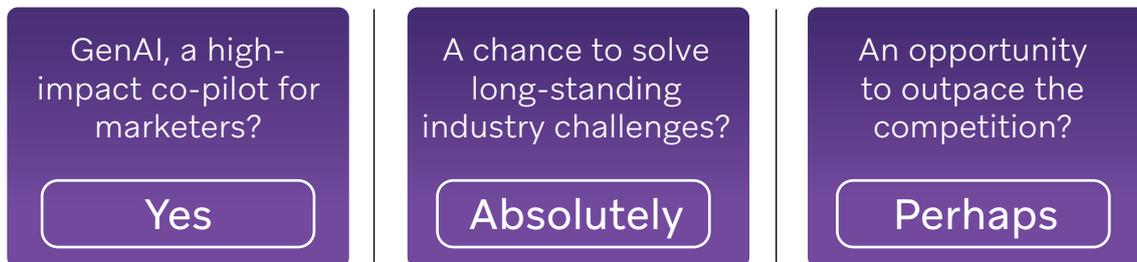For years, AI was a promise of future potential. Today, it's a business imperative.

AI is now moving to the centre of customer and business strategy. Its new frontier is not just about what it can automate but about what it can enable, from personalised experiences to predictive insights, and from creative content generation to strategic decision-making.

This marks a turning point for businesses—not just in technology adoption, but in mindset.

AI Integrations for Truly Relevant Customer Engagement

32% are in the planning phase, actively preparing for deployment.

11% have yet to take steps towards adoption.

GenAI, a high-impact co-pilot for marketers?	A chance to solve long-standing industry challenges?	An opportunity to outpace the competition?
Yes	Absolutely	Perhaps

But the true power of AI lies not just in its ability to automate but in its capacity to redefine the power for personalisation within engagement.

However, with great opportunity comes great complexity.

- Where do Middle East enterprises stand in this race
- What challenges must they overcome
- How mature are their existing AI capabilities

But before we can look ahead, we must first look at where we stand.

AI is advancing rapidly in the region, bringing a surge of innovation, efficiency, and customer engagement. The UAE artificial intelligence market size was valued at USD 3.47 billion in 2023 and is projected to grow at a CAGR of 43.9% between 2024 and 2030.

Government Winds in AI Sails

Considering the different stages of AI maturity in the industry, it's important to acknowledge government support. Their AI strategies, regulatory frameworks, and large-scale digital transformation initiatives are helping shape a business ecosystem where AI-driven engagement is encouraged and actively supported.

The UAE's National AI Strategy 2031 and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 acknowledge AI as a key economic and technological transformation driver. AI research centres and regulatory sandboxes place the Middle East in a comfortable position to scale. Additionally, AI governance frameworks, such as the UAE's Data Protection Law and Saudi Arabia's Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL), are shaping the ethical deployment of AI technologies.

AI Governance and Data Best Practices

Ensure AI models follow predefined data protocols.	Create standardisation policies to improve security and reduce operational costs.	Appoint an AI governance council to oversee model performance and ethical considerations.	Integrate legal teams to manage emerging AI-related regulatory challenges.

Despite strong governmental backing, businesses still face critical challenges in implementing AI capabilities that align with customer expectations.

"

To ensure genuine insights are not influenced, keep the data and insights independent, and then the subsequent analysis will come in. Each component should be treated separately. Otherwise, we fall into the trap of bias, trying to find what we want in the data rather than really looking at the data and the insights as they stand.

- Jacqueline El Boghdadi
Chief Marketing Officer
ADNOC Distribution

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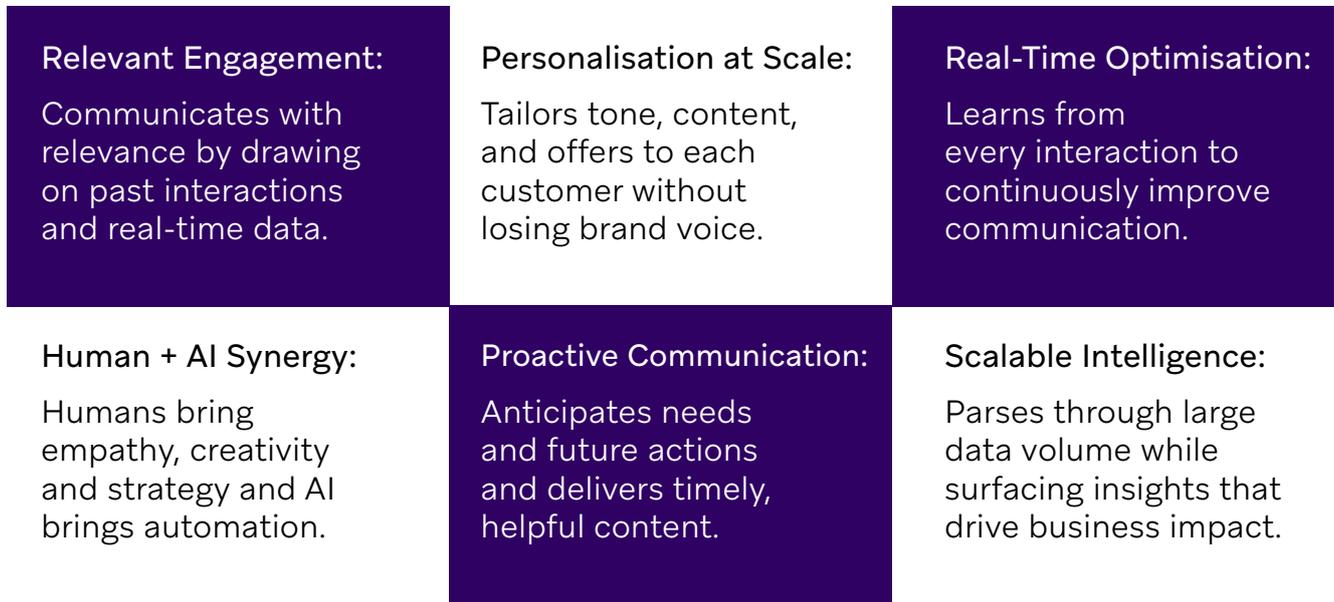### Metrics to Measure The Impact of AI-Driven Initiatives on Customer Engagement

The metric mix depends on the initiative, whether it replaces the current process or if it is a new implementation. In each case, we go in with an understanding of the expected outcome. If it is an existing initiative where the legacy process is being replaced by AI, then we look for incrementality in pre-defined KPIs over the existing benchmark. If it's a new initiative, we outline the KPIs that we will look for to measure the success of the implementation.

For example, when we were looking to enhance our in-store clienteling solution, one KPI we were tracking was the ratio of product recommendations to the number of customer trials. If trials increased visibly from the existing benchmark, it could be attributed to improved recommendations through AI.

- Sanjeev Nichani
Head - CRM and Loyalty
Apparel Group

ENTER: AI-Powered Customer Engagement (Smart, Scalable, and Personalised AI)

Relevant Engagement:

Communicates with relevance by drawing on past interactions and real-time data.

Personalisation at Scale:

Tailors tone, content, and offers to each customer without losing brand voice.

Real-Time Optimisation:

Learns from every interaction to continuously improve communication.

Human + AI Synergy:

Humans bring empathy, creativity and strategy and AI brings automation.

Proactive Communication:

Anticipates needs and future actions and delivers timely, helpful content.

Scalable Intelligence:

Parses through large data volume while surfacing insights that drive business impact.

1. AI-driven personalisation → Increases brand loyalty → Higher CLV

2. AI Automation → Higher customer satisfaction → Lower churn

3. Predictive AI engagement → Reduces support costs → Increases customer retention

Organisations must rethink how they deploy AI and not look at it just as a tool for automation. It's imperative to view it as a driver of intelligent, relevant, and predictive customer engagement

To unlock full potential, brands must:

- **Find the right AI technologies** by investing in expertise, infrastructure, and real-time processing capabilities.
- **Shift AI from automation to predictive engagement** and create more meaningful customer interactions.
- **Develop AI strategies that are customer-centric** and not just operationally efficient.

At a time when customer expectations are increasingly ambitious, and in a region that thrives on innovation, Middle East businesses can leverage to fulfil expectations. Ultimately, as AI-powered customer engagement unfolds, the brands that uses AI to create more personalised experiences will define the future of customer engagement.
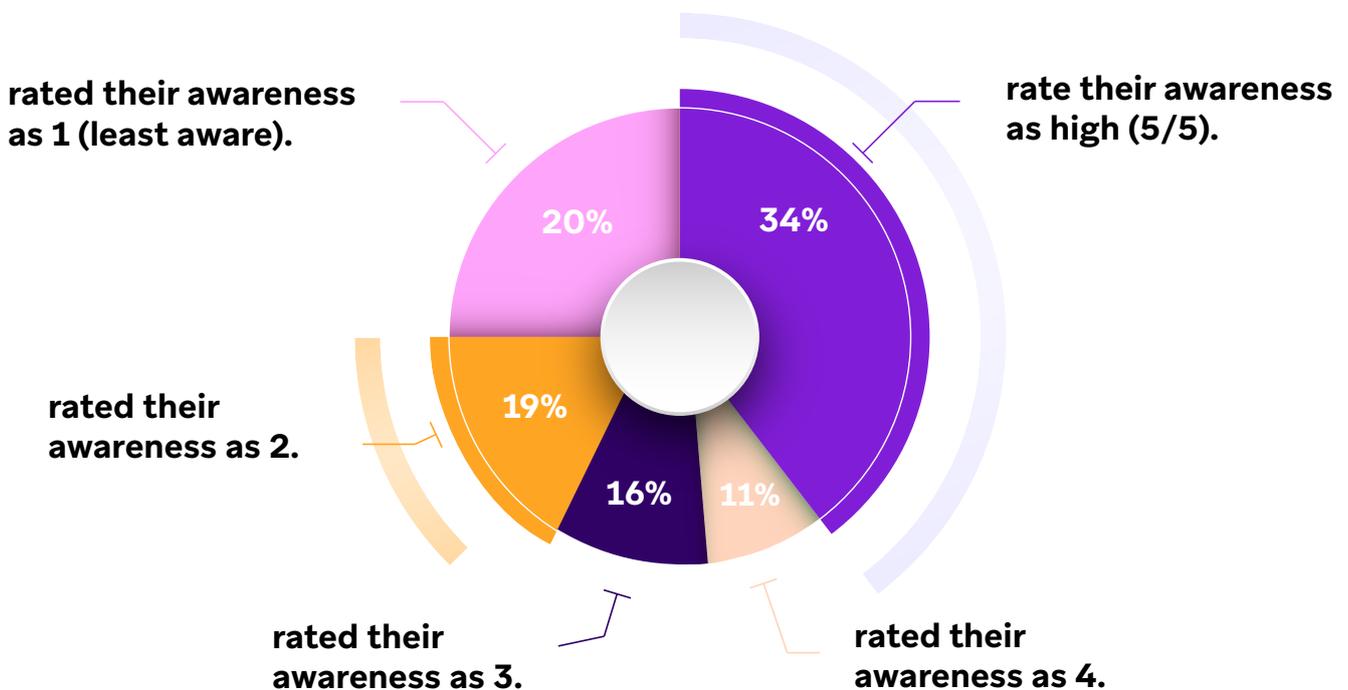
It's a Predictive Engagement Engine

AI-powered interactions are no longer confined to rigid scripts. With advances in generative and predictive models, customer engagement has become fluid, and deeply personalised. From making recommendations to predicting the next best action, AI is redefining how brands engage across every touchpoint in the customer journey.
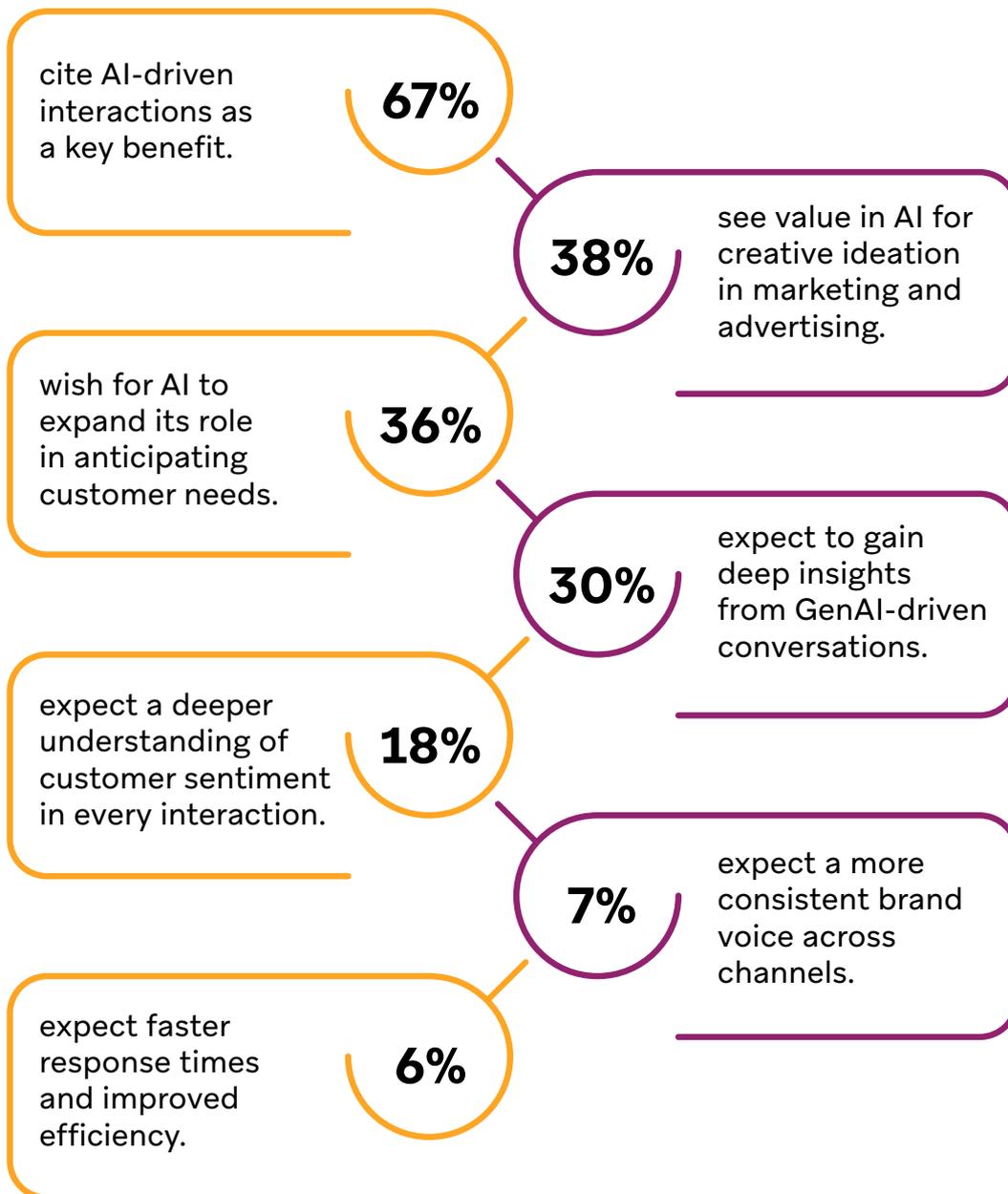
Traditional automation systems were effective for handling repetitive tasks but often lacked the agility, creativity, and contextual intelligence required for meaningful, real-time engagement. Now, with broader AI capabilities, including generative, predictive and agentic, brands are evolving from static automation to dynamic interaction.

While GenAI adoption is accelerating, awareness levels vary:

rated their awareness as 1 (least aware).

rate their awareness as high (5/5).

rated their awareness as 2.

20%

34%

19%

16%

11%

rated their awareness as 3.

rated their awareness as 4.

While many businesses understand the potential, others are still grappling with AI implementation and benefits.

What Brands Expect from GenAI for Customer Conversations

67% cite AI-driven interactions as a key benefit.

38% see value in AI for creative ideation in marketing and advertising.

36% wish for AI to expand its role in anticipating customer needs.

30% expect to gain deep insights from GenAI-driven conversations.

18% expect a deeper understanding of customer sentiment in every interaction.

7% expect a more consistent brand voice across channels.

6% expect faster response times and improved efficiency.

In essence, AI is no longer just answering questions but shaping the entire customer journey.
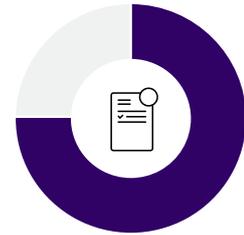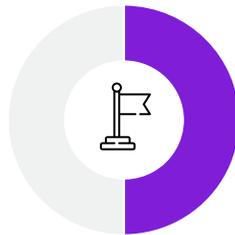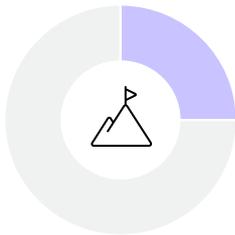
AI Tools Are Brands' Digital Right Hands

Modern AI tools are systems that perceive their environment, make decisions, and then take action autonomously to achieve a specific goal. They deliver adaptive, intelligent, and relevant interactions; it's far beyond what rule-based systems could do. These agents continuously learn from every conversation, adjusting tone, style, and recommendations based on context and customer feedback. The result: seamless, multilingual support across channels that feels both human and helpful.
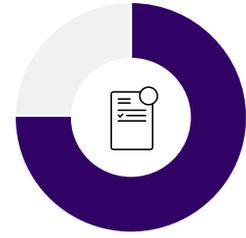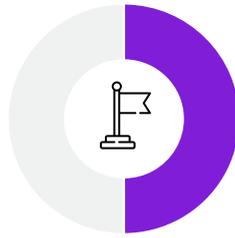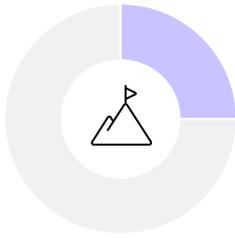
Benefits Include:
- Advanced natural language understanding (NLU)
- Balanced rule-based and creative response generation
- Real-time personalisation
- Adaptive learning and improvement
- AI-assisted planning and decision-making
- Multimodal capabilities (e.g., text, speech, image recognition)

Case Study 1

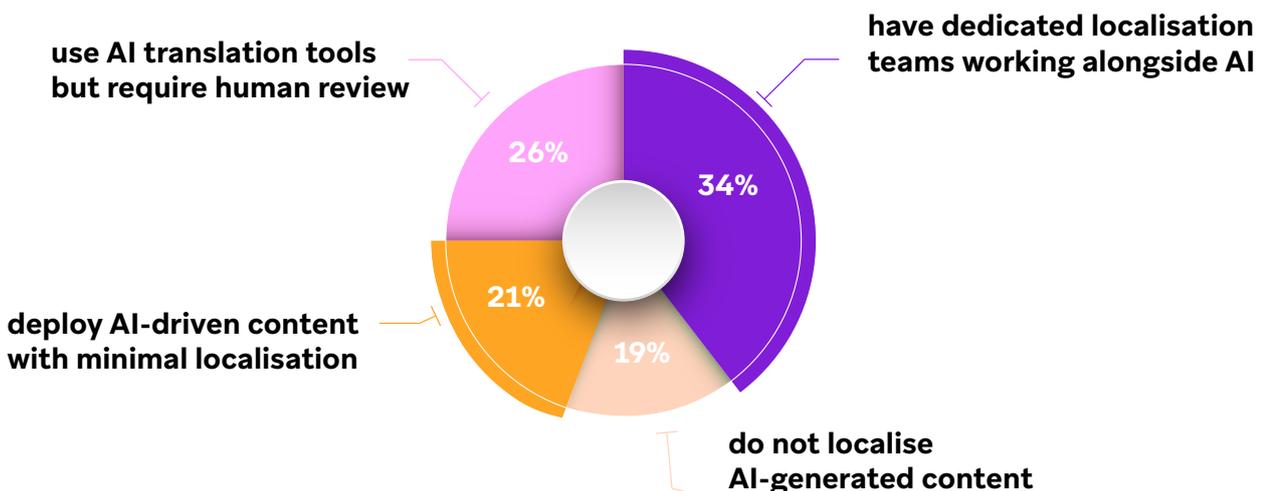| CHALLENGE	GOAL	RESULTS
KoRo, an online retailer, wanted to enhance customer engagement and increase purchase rates by delivering highly personalised product recommendations at scale.	Leverage AI Item Recommendations from Braze to provide tailored suggestions based on individual preferences. The predictive AI tool would optimise the onboarding experience and drive higher conversions.	• 3X increase in purchase rates through AI-powered recommendations. • Improved customer experience by offering relevant products from a catalogue of over 1,000 items. • Enhanced personalisation, strengthening customer connections and engagement.

Case Study 2

CHALLENGE	GOAL	RESULTS
Foodora, a food delivery platform, needed to improve customer engagement & retention by delivering highly relevant, personalised communications that drive orders and brand loyalty.	Utilise AI-driven automation and personalisation to send tailored offers, recommendations, and messaging based on individual customer behaviour and preferences.	• 3.6X increase in purchases per user through personalised customer interactions. • 15% uplift in conversion rates by optimising engagement strategies. • Stronger customer loyalty through relevant, timely offers that resonate with user preferences.

Using AI to Speak The Customer's Language

Effective customer engagement requires real-time understanding of not just language but cultural nuance, intent, and expectations. Brands investing in AI-driven localisation, the process of adapting digital content, software, or products for specific target markets and audiences using AI, are seeing gains in trust and relevance. Yet their approaches vary:

use AI translation tools but require human review — 26%

have dedicated localisation teams working alongside AI — 34%

deploy AI-driven content with minimal localisation — 21%

do not localise AI-generated content — 19%

Intelligent technology is not just about translating words—it's about real-time understanding of context, intent, and cultural expectations. Businesses leveraging AI for localisation can expect:

- **Accuracy:** AI can fine-tune responses based on region-specific dialects like Aramaic, Persian, Najdi Arabic, and Gulf Arabic.
- **Personalised engagement:** AI-driven interactions can dynamically adjust tone, formality, and phrasing to match cultural norms.
- **Seamless multilingual support:** Real-time AI translation can ensure consistent brand messaging across audiences.

With dedicated teams and AI-powered tools working together, brands can elevate customer engagement and ensure that every conversation—in Arabic, English, or other regional languages and dialects—feels authentic, natural, and culturally aligned.

"

Etihad Cargo understands the importance of localisation. As part of our organisational transformation, we established four distinct regions to be closer to our customers, enabling a deeper understanding of their unique requirements and preferences. This structure helps us tailor AI-driven solutions to reflect regional expectations, ensuring communication is always relevant and culturally appropriate.

Language preferences, cultural sensitivities, and local communication styles should be considered at every stage of development. My advice is to listen to your customers and continuously refine your AI solutions based on their feedback. Empathy and cultural awareness are just as important as technology. By combining both, brands can deliver meaningful customer interactions that truly resonate across regions.

- Lubna AlLaham
Senior Manager Customer Experience
Etihad

As brands continue their AI journeys, the challenge is no longer whether they should integrate AI but how to address the universal challenges and use it as a true competitive advantage.

There are Five Major Roadblocks

AI usage is scaling and the challenges are becoming more evident in reality. Many companies are navigating uncharted waters, excited by AI's potential but struggling with its implementation.

The Achilles Heel?
While ambition is high, readiness, as discussed in previous chapters, remains inconsistent. Many businesses face infrastructure, governance, and risk management gaps, preventing them from being fully confident.

This has become a true **Achilles heel**—a vulnerability at the very point where many hoped to gain a competitive advantage.

AI Integrations for Truly Relevant Customer Engagement

34% cited AI's inability to provide proactive support before issues arise.

33% stated that AI struggles with context retention across long conversations.

30% pointed to AI's struggle in understanding nuanced customer intent.

21% found delivering a seamless omnichannel experience challenging.

16% mentioned integration with the existing brand strategy as a limitation.

7% cited real-time decision-making as a limitation.

5% stated AI struggles with industry-specific knowledge & terminology.

3% pointed to AI struggling with complex customer issues.

"

What's Fueling the AI Expertise Gap?

Knowledge Gap: The field is still new and lacks expert skills in resources .

Upskilling Costs: Time and resources required to train existing teams.

Information Silos: Fragmented collaboration across departments.

Rapid Technological Change: Difficulty staying aligned with updates.

Budgets: Securing budget and prioritisation for long-term upskilling initiatives.

Retention Risks: Skilled employees can shift if they are offered higher incentives.

- Amr Mahmoud
 Data and Analytics Manager
Americana Restaurants

The Five Roadblocks

1. AI's Struggle with Context and Human-like Interactions

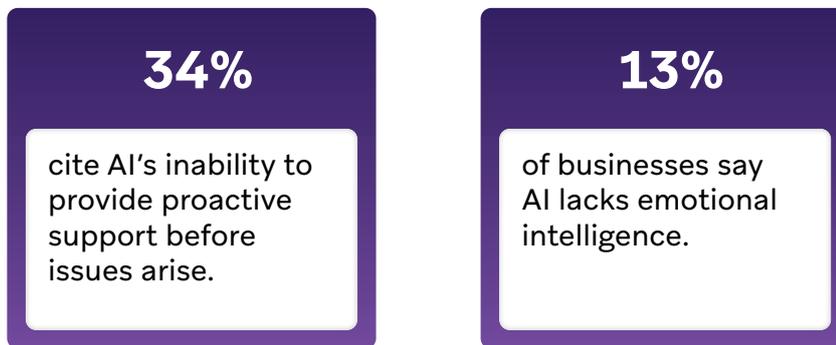|	
33%	**30%**
say AI struggle with context retention across long conversations.	report AI fails to understand nuanced customer intent.

While AI-powered conversations improve, businesses report that GenAI still lacks proper human-like understanding. Customers expect AI to follow multi-step conversations, but many AI models still respond in isolated fragments, leading to annoying, disconnected experiences.

TRY THIS:
• Deploy AI models with short-term memory or long-context capabilities.
• Train models using real customer interaction data to improve nuance.
• Design hybrid workflows where humans step in at contextual drop-offs.

2. The Emotional Intelligence Gap

34%

cite AI's inability to provide proactive support before issues arise.

13%

of businesses say AI lacks emotional intelligence.

Beyond context, AI is also struggling to 'read the room.' Customers don't just want answers—they want understanding. Whether it's a complaint, inquiry, or request, AI's inability to detect urgency, frustration, or dissatisfaction makes interactions feel robotic rather than friendly.

TRY THIS:
• Use sentiment analysis to adjust tone and escalation logic.
• Layer AI with customer profile data to personalise based on history.
• Conduct regular audits for tone, empathy, and perceived helpfulness.

3. The Seamless Omnichannel Experience Challenge

21%

say AI struggles to deliver a seamless omnichannel experience.

22%

report ineffective AI-to-human handoff, creating friction in customer journeys.

Customers engage across a mix of platforms—web, app, social, voice, and in-store—and they expect consistency. But most AI systems operate in silos, lacking a unified understanding of the customer journey. This leads to repeated information, poor transitions between channels, and a degraded experience.

Disconnected platforms not only reduce CX performance but also erode customer trust. Without a connected architecture, even the most intelligent AI can feel disjointed.

TRY THIS:
• Build a unified customer engagement platform (CEP) as AI's foundation.
• Ensure AI systems have access to real-time, omnichannel interaction history.
• Integrate AI workflows directly into CRM, helpdesk, and martech systems to ensure continuity.

4. The Complexity of AI Integration with Existing Processes

36%
say AI is difficult to integrate into their tech stack.

46%
cite cross-departmental coordination issues.

16%
say AI doesn't integrate well with their existing brand strategy.

Beyond customer interactions, many businesses struggle with AI's operational fit. AI is not a standalone solution. It must integrate with CRM systems, customer data platforms, and brand messaging strategies. Yet, for 36% of organisations, this remains a significant challenge.

TRY THIS:
• Involve brand and marketing teams early in the AI development process
• Align AI with business objectives and content that adheres to brand guidelines
• Adopt flexible AI integration models

5. The ROI Challenge: Measuring What Happens

55%
say AI implementation is too expensive.

62%
say AI ROI is unclear, making investment hard to justify.

The biggest barrier to adoption is uncertainty. Many businesses struggle to draw a clear line between AI investment and measurable outcomes.

TRY THIS:
• Define business-specific AI KPIs tied to customer experience and revenue impact.
• Use ROI frameworks like Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) vs. Value-Delivered to benchmark effectiveness.
• Track AI-driven gains such as increased self-service, reduced churn, or faster conversion cycles.

> When evaluating which customer interaction touchpoints are best suited for AI integration, marketers should map the entire customer journey. This means identifying every point where customers engage with the brand—from initial awareness to post-purchase support—and then addressing each touchpoint's current performance and potential for enhancement if needed. The key criteria are volume and repetitiveness, data availability and quality, customer expectations for personalisation and speed, integration complexity and infrastructure readiness, and finally, the impact on customer experience and business outcomes.

- Umar Khan
Marketing Director
Emaar

The ROI Factor: Why Measuring GenAI is Harder than Traditional AI

Traditional AI had a straightforward ROI, but GenAI's impact is far more complex. Its value lies in personalisation, engagement, and revenue uplift, metrics that are harder to quantify with traditional business models.

To make GenAI investments sustainable, businesses must look beyond automation and cost savings and adopt a broader measurement framework that captures customer engagement, brand impact, and revenue influence.

The AI Cost-Benefit Framework (TCO vs. ROI)

Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) vs. Return on Investment (ROI). AI adoption requires upfront investment but generates long-term cost efficiency and revenue gains. conversion cycles.

AI Application:

- **TCO Considerations**: AI licensing, cloud computing costs, model training.
- **ROI Considerations**: Reduction in workload, increased time on strategy higher engagement-driven conversions.

Formula: ROI = (Benefits Achieved – AI Costs) / AI Costs

The Balanced Scorecard Approach for AI ROI

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) approach measures financial and non-financial AI impact, covering efficiency, experience, and long-term business value.

AI Application:

- **Financial Impac**t: AI cost savings, revenue from AI-driven recommendations.
- **Customer Experience**: Sentiment scores, engagement rates, personalisation effectiveness.
- **Process Efficiency**: Faster response times, resolution rates, automation impact.
- **AI Scalability & Governance**: Compliance, training costs, adaptability across departments.

> Scaling GenAI presents key challenges, including data accuracy, seamless integration, privacy compliance, and resource demands.
>
> At Bayut, we prioritise high-quality, bias-free data to ensure tools like TruEstimate and BayutGPT deliver precise, trustworthy insights. We rely on engagement with these tools to determine how well they're working, depending on consumers' and clients' frequency of usage.
>
> Smooth integration with existing systems, such as CRMs and listing platforms, is crucial to maintaining platform efficiency. Additionally, AI requires significant investment in infrastructure, making cost-effectiveness a key consideration.
>
> Data privacy and regulatory compliance are essential, ensuring AI-driven features handle user data transparently and securely. Finally, user trust and adoption remain central—we focus on educating stakeholders to maximise AI's value while keeping human expertise at the core of decision-making.

- Sahar Khan
Vice President Marketing & Communications
Bayut

The key to AI success lies in shifting the conversation from 'How do we implement AI?' to 'How do we truly make it work for our business?' The companies that solve these roadblocks will not only future-proof their AI investments but also redefine the customer experience.

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Beyond ROI: AI's True Value Lies in Experience and Efficiency

In the next 2–3 years, most industries will fully adopt AI in some shape or form. At that stage, ROI will no longer be the right measure; instead, improvement in customer experience and employee efficiency will be the key indicators of success.

- Hema Subramanian
Head of Digital I Performance Marketing
for H&M & Victoria's Secret
Alshaya Group
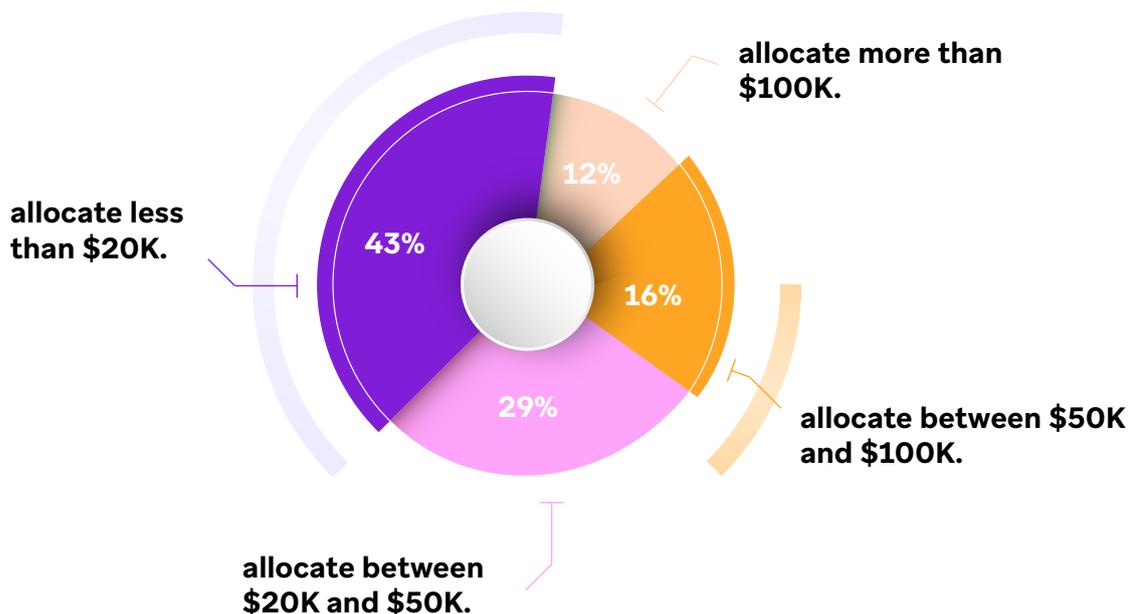
AI as A 'Core Business Enabler'

The rise of Generative AI marks a fundamental shift in how businesses view AI. It's not a supporting function but a core business enabler that drives smarter, more personalised, and revenue-focused customer engagement.

"

With great (GenAI) power comes great responsibility, and organisations would need to invest significantly not just in AI tools and their capabilities, but in governance, data protection, regulations, and all other safeguards that uphold security, objectivity, and transparency. Over the next ten years, with the exponential advancement in AI, we will increasingly see more robust use cases.
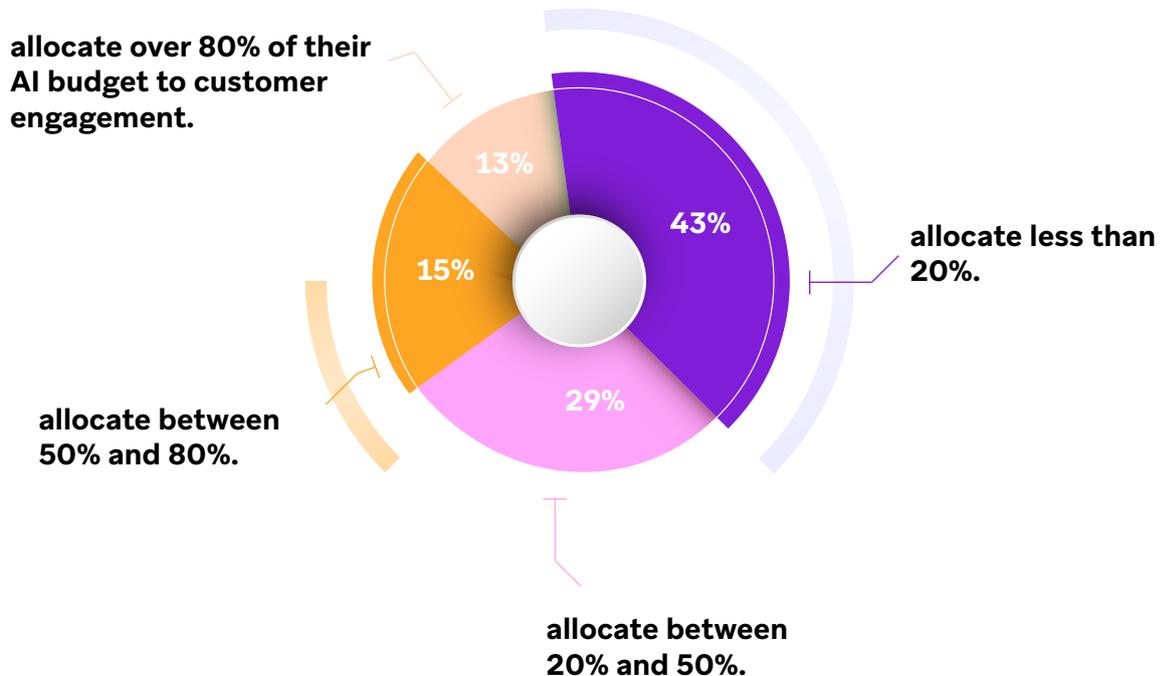
- Anuja Shah
Head of Strategy & IT, Middle East
Zurich Insurance

Current GenAI Investment

allocate more than $100K.

allocate less than $20K.

12%

43%

16%

29%

allocate between $50K and $100K.

allocate between $20K and $50K.

Despite broad industry interest, most organisations are still in early investment stages. However, leading enterprises are breaking ahead, using AI to differentiate and accelerate transformation.

GenAI Allocation for Customer Engagement

allocate over 80% of their AI budget to customer engagement.

13%

43%

allocate less than 20%.

15%

29%

allocate between 50% and 80%.

allocate between 20% and 50%.

Despite AI's potential to enhance customer engagement and brands' investment expectations, only 13% of companies are heavily prioritising AI-driven CX improvements (80%+ of their AI budget). Instead, most brands split their investment between customer engagement and operational AI—with automation, backend processing, and data management also receiving significant funding.

Are we deploying AI just for automation, or are we using it to create more meaningful, revenue-driving customer relationships?

Shift from AI as a 'support tool' to AI as a 'core business enabler'

While AI adoption is growing, most businesses are still in the early investment phase. Forty-three percent of organisations allocate less than $20K for GenAI, indicating a cautious, measured approach. However, with 12% of enterprises investing over $100K, it's clear that leading brands are accelerating AI-driven transformation to differentiate themselves.

AI investment will likely follow patterns seen in other global regions as the market matures. In the US, AI startups have secured over $70 billion in funding, and in China, over $6.5 billion. While the Middle East currently trails behind, regional AI investments are multiplying, positioning businesses to compete in the next wave of digital transformation.

Larger enterprises, in particular, are increasing AI budgets to unlock higher efficiency and measurable business outcomes from their AI-driven customer engagement strategies.

They must ask the right questions:
• What does it cost to serve a customer today?
• What investment is required to transition to Customer Communication 2.0?
• How do we measure AI's financial impact beyond cost savings?

There is enthusiasm in the Middle East, but one of the biggest gaps in AI investment today is the link between customer experience (CX) improvements and financial outcomes. Many organisations track CX performance, but only some connect AI-driven customer interactions directly to revenue growth or operational efficiency. There is a need for AI investment strategies beyond technology that focus on tangible business value.
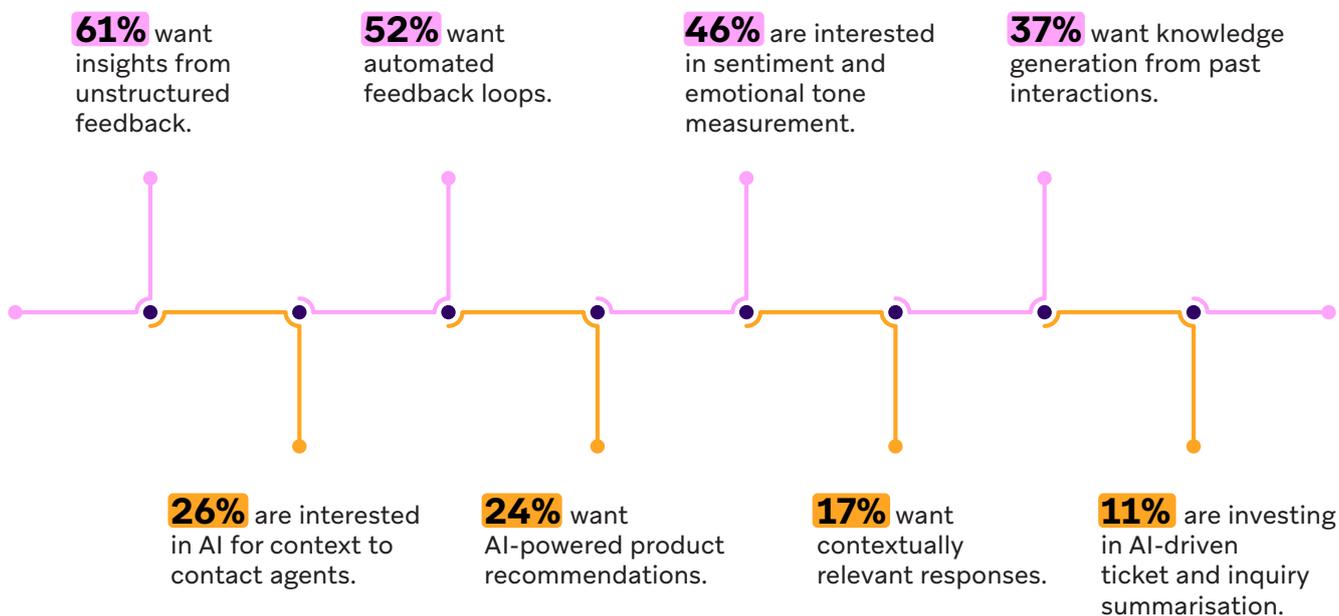
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Many companies partake in free-to-use learning models, and while these models have their many advantages, the major disadvantage for brands that use their basic versions is simply that they are used by select individuals within the organisation and not as an organisation itself. The main point to be considered is that a brand's marketing division needs a marketing-based AI tool and not just a mainstream learning or language model.

• Invest in enterprise solutions for AI products to ensure that the model stays consistent with the brand's identity and voice.

• Set up a brand folder within that product, creating a rule that all output must conform to the brand guidelines, ethics & strategy stored within that folder.

• Ensure that every major stakeholder in the organisation, including the marketing and creative teams, has unlimited user access and cross-functional communication integrated within that tool.

• Host regular and recurrent training to ensure all users are aligned on strategy, vision, prompts, and output checks.

• Always remember Jidoka: All AI models and their output should be supervised and monitored by humans. It would be risky to dispatch AI output as communications without human intervention for a thorough check first.

• Always incorporate customer feedback to understand how the audiences are reacting to it. Of course, ad dashboards can give a fairly comprehensive overview of how content performs; however, the changing algorithms of certain social platforms may provide more insights into real, organic engagement.

- **Teresa Coutinho**
Marketing Manager
Musafir.com

AI Integrations for Truly Relevant Customer Engagement

61% want insights from unstructured feedback.

52% want automated feedback loops.

46% are interested in sentiment and emotional tone measurement.

37% want knowledge generation from past interactions.

26% are interested in AI for context to contact agents.

24% want AI-powered product recommendations.

17% want contextually relevant responses.

11% are investing in AI-driven ticket and inquiry summarisation.

Companies are shifting their focus from basic automation (handling routine queries) to AI-driven intelligence. The high demand for insight extraction (61%) and sentiment analysis (46%) highlights that businesses want AI to respond to customers and learn, adapt, and refine engagement strategies.

This marks a critical stage where AI doesn't just answer questions, it understands emotions, anticipates needs, and continuously improves interactions.

Checklist for AI Investment & Strategy

✓ Define AI priorities—CX, automation, analytics, or a combination?

✓ Balance cost vs. impact—invest in AI that drives measurable value.

✓ Evaluate AI vendors strategically—off-the-shelf vs. custom solutions.

✓ Align AI with business goals—ensure AI enhances customer journeys.

✓ Invest in continuous learning—AI models require ongoing training and updates.

Build or Buy?

100% Prefer Off-The-Shelf AI Solutions ...

It's an overwhelming but justifiable preference. The demand for off-the-shelf AI solutions signals a strategic shift toward speed, scalability, and ease of implementation.

How Else are Companies Working with Tech Partners?

62%	35%	29%
are outsourcing AI-driven customer engagement entirely.	are engaging in co-development or pilot programmes.	are customising AI models for specific business needs.

The data clearly shows that businesses prefer ready-made AI solutions over in-house development. With 100% purchasing off-the-shelf AI tools and 62% fully outsourcing AI-driven customer engagement, it's evident that businesses are prioritising speed and scalability over building AI models from scratch.

How to Choose the Right AI Partner?

✓ **Customisation Capabilities** → Can the AI be tailored to brand-specific needs?

✓ **Data Security & Compliance** → Does the provider meet regional privacy standards?

✓ **Omnichannel Integration** → Can the AI work across all customer engagement touchpoints?

✓ **Scalability & Future-Proofing** → Is the AI adaptable as business needs evolve?

> Engaging in an external auditing process and assessment can provide validation that helps build trust with customers, employees, and the broader community. A third-party organisation should conduct this auditing independently, and they should certify the AI system to be non-biased or non-discriminatory.

- Dr Jassim Haji
President
Artificial Intelligence Society

The Final Question
The Responsibility of Tech Partners

The race toward AI-powered customer engagement is well underway. Brands have made their move—investing, experimenting, and scaling their AI initiatives. But as the demand for AI-enabled customer questions accelerates, one question remains: Are tech partners ready to deliver?

The future of AI-driven engagement doesn't rest solely on those who adopt it. It will be shaped by those who build it, refine it, and push its boundaries.

What AI Partners Must Bring to the Table

✓ Expertise in AI-enabled marketing and AI model fine-tuning.

✓ Advanced optimisation personalisation tools.

✓ Seamless integration with existing CRM and CX platforms.

The spotlight is now on the solution providers and technology leaders. Will they rise to the occasion? Will they step beyond transactional solutions and become the architects of the next-generation AI experience?

Now, the world watches as technology partners take their next step.

Appetite for AI-Enabled Solutions

- Sharif Kotb
Vice President Sales GCC
Braze

The rise of AI offers Middle Eastern businesses a unique opportunity to redefine customer experiences and build deeper brand loyalty. With ambitious national strategies such as Saudi Vision 2030 and the UAE's AI Strategy 2031 accelerating digital transformation, the region is well-positioned to lead the world in customer engagement innovation.

At the core of this next wave of engagement innovation is the BrazeAI Decisioning Studio, which utilises a collection of agentic AI decisioning capabilities. Integrated seamlessly with BrazeAI™, the Studio empowers brands to create experiences that make one-to-one decisions for every customer experience while adhering to marketer-defined parameters to mitigate risk. These agents experiment continuously and never stop learning to deliver personalised, relevant, and adaptive interactions at scale, ultimately optimising team performance across key business metrics.

And the results speak for themselves. Kayo Sports, Australia's leading sports streaming app, achieved a 14% increase in subscriptions and a 105% increase in cross-sells by engaging each subscriber with personalised content and recommendations across multiple devices and channels. By leveraging Braze and BrazeAI Decisioning Studio™, Kayo built 1:1 relationships at scale, boosting loyalty and lifetime value with a diverse audience.

Our research shows that the appetite for AI-enabled solutions is strong too: 100% of surveyed businesses[1] prefer off-the-shelf offerings, and 62% fully outsource their AI needs due to time and resource constraints[2]. However, 30% expressed concerns about AI's struggle to understand nuanced customer intent, and 5% stated that AI struggles with industry-specific knowledge and terminology[3]. This underscores the urgency for both brands and solution providers to innovate quickly.

To truly succeed, brands must be cognizant of customer journeys, identify where AI adds the most value, and expand how they measure ROI. While earlier AI models could be evaluated on cost savings or query volumes, today's AI demands more sophisticated upstream metrics that capture its impact on engagement, retention, and monetisation. At Braze, we're committed to helping brands rise to this challenge and driving significant innovation in AI-powered customer engagement. The question is no longer whether brands have the appetite for this next generation of AI, but whether they have the imagination to harness its full potential. Will you join us?

Source: 1- The Martechvibe report research, under the Editors note in the 'top insights' section

2- Build or Buy section

3- under 'The Achilles Heel' section