Here are six artificial intelligence tools for retail stores

Retail specialists from the Tec's Faculty of Excellence program talked to business owners about technology at Tec Guadalajara.
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Carlos González

At **Tec Guadalajara**, **Dhruv Grewal and Anne Roggeveen**, distinguished visiting professors in **retail and marketing** from the Tec's School of Business and its **Retail Center**, shared the latest findings on **retail** and its integration with technologies such as **artificial intelligence (AI).**

They did so during the seminar ***"Rethinking the Physical Store and the Purpose of Technology: Current Management Challenges***," co-organized by the Tec's **EGADE Business School,** in which they **talked with business owners and industry leaders.**

The **aim** of the event with Grewal and Roggeveen, who are also researchers at **Babson College** (a renowned American university for entrepreneurship), was to

strengthen research and training in the retail industry.

Professor Dhruv Grewal is also part of the **Faculty of Excellence** initiative, which aims to attract professors with outstanding credentials and **international recognition** to the Tec.

Both specialists talked to business owners in the region. Photo: Carlos González.

Customizing the shopping experience

Anne Roggeveen pointed out that **customizing the shopping experience** is key and listed three types:

- ***By the retailer -*** *where technology is used to provide automated and customized recommendations.*
- ***By the customer*** *– in which the consumer customizes the purchase, for example, by using a refill station (for refills of food, candy, or beverages).*

- ***Co-created by both -*** *the above elements are blended to generate a new and unique product or experience for each consumer.*

"*Physical stores allow us to customize the shopping experience or a product more closely to the consumer's personal needs,"* she said.

Based on her research, in which she interviewed retail experts from around the world, she listed other reasons in addition to **customization** that drive consumers to visit the physical store:

- ***Discovery -*** *consumers like to make discoveries during the shopping experience with the support of technology, employees, or the product itself.*
- ***Convenience -*** *accessible, timely stores and products*
- ***Shoppingtainment -*** *entertaining interactions with the brand or shop, which may or may not be product-related.*
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  "Physical stores make it possible to customize the shopping experience or a product" - Anne Roggeveen.

How can technology help?

Dhruv Grewal divides technology into **four categories**: **employee enhancement, employee efficiency, consumer enhancement, and consumer efficiency**.

"*AI will take targeting to another level according to the type of consumer*," he said. These are the six technological tools mentioned by Grewal that are trending in terms of their application in **retail** strategies:

The screen shows one of the technologies that Grewal demonstrated: The robot associate. Photo: Carlos González.

1. Magic Mirror

This visual technology consists of a module or box with a **person-sized screen** that captures people's images with a camera. It is an **interactive** touchscreen which assists in customer management.

Consumers can use it to try on garments in different colors or check the catalog, sizes, types, etc.

"*While customer-enhancing technology results in more **efficient shopping**, they also enhance and create a **better customer experience,**"* said the specialist.

This allows retailers' apps **to maximize the in-store experience and accessibility** while providing **digital interactions in physical shopping** environments and increasing **in-store communications**.

"AI will take targeting to another level according to the type of consumer." - Dhruv Grewal

2. Robot associates

Grewal explains that these robots are not necessarily humanoid but almost the size of a real person, **performing the role** of an **employee in the shop.**

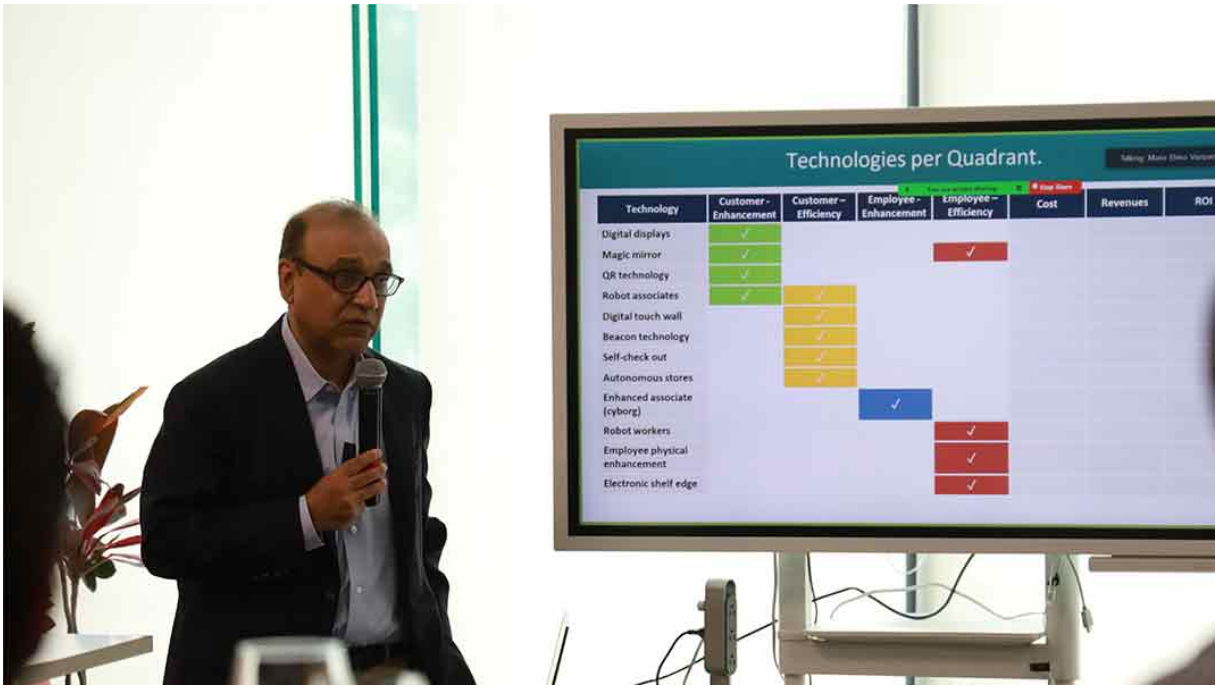
They can **walk the aisles with customers**, guide them through the product, make complementary suggestions, and direct them to the correct shelf, among other functions.

These have a display which provides information to consumers in a visual way and gives them access to menus, catalogs, or product categories.

3. QR codes

The professor said that this strategy includes using **QR** (**quick response**) codes found on the label or directly stuck onto the product. When read with a cellphone, they allow customers to access extra, detailed information, promotions, or coupons.

AI technologies will take targeting to another level, said the specialist. Photo: Carlos Gonzalez.



4. Digital touch walls

These are **large, wall-mounted interactive displays** with information about a brand or section of the store, which Grewal says **increase efficiency** by eliminating obstacles and inconveniences.

Grewal also says they "*improve the **effective browsing** of shop inventories and **better understanding of the products** at checkout*."

5. Enhanced associate Cyborg

This **wearable** technology is described as a head-worn device that allows information to be viewed on a mini-display near the eye, increasing the materials available and **personalizing information** to help **employees to improve their sales skills**.

6. Electronic Shelf Edge

This is an established trend in some countries. Traditional printed labeling is scrapped and replaced by small digital devices the size of a label placed on the shelf edge.

This allows for more **accurate and faster price changes**, reduces the margin of error for manual or printed labeling, and **allows more product data** to be displayed.

Both talks were given at the Tec's Guadalajara campus. Photo: Carlos Gonzalez.

Boosting retail updates

Dhruv Grewal and Anne Roggeveen's visit to Tec Guadalajara included various **training and refresher activities for local retail business owners, students, and researchers** from the School of Business and the **Retail Center**.

Faculty of Excellence members enhance the Tec's learning experiences by **sharing cutting-edge knowledge** and participating in projects with students, faculty, researchers, and other partners.

The **Retail Center** promotes **retail** development **in Mexico** by training **professionals specialized in the area**, implementing programs for executives, and conducting consultancy and research activities.

"*At the **Retail Center**, we're **designing technological mentoring** for the industry, strengthened by our accumulated knowledge and existing value partnerships,*" said **María Elena Vázquez, National Dean** of the School of Business.

She invited people to subscribe to the center's information *"to be updated on these new services that will **strengthen their decision-making**, supported by our faculty,"* she concluded.

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