

The future of marketing is AI, telepathy and psychological layers

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*The **Marketing** Society's annual conference featured a varied roster of speakers, from pop-philosopher **Alain de Botton** to Atom Bank's **Anthony Thomson** and AI expert Professor **Nick Bostrom**. The subjects covered were diverse, and yet some themes kept recurring. **Rebecca Coleman** sums up the day's trending topics.*

It's all me, me, me

When it comes to the contemporary consumer, it's all me, me, me, according to The Future Foundation's managing director **Maebh Quoirin**: 'They expect you to deliver it all, but then they want to take all the credit.'

They want **brands** that offer personal, rather than personalised. Your role as a marketer is to validate people's bragging rights and put them in the driving seat of their **brand** experience with you. 'Consumers desire control at all cost,' said **Quoirin**.

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This desire for autonomy is also crucial inside organisations said **Jeremy Darroch**, **CEO of Sky** and **Sir David Brailsford**, **general manager of Team Sky**, who took to the stage to put the 'i' back in team.

'Individuals, not teams, make things happen,' said **Darroch**. While **Brailsford** commented that if you ask people for perfection, they'll fight back. However, if you ask them for self-progression, they'll get fired up. It's all about putting them in control of their own destiny.

Telepathic branding

The future of personal **brand** interactions and experiences is set to become almost "telepathic" in its capabilities. This is the goal of Atom Bank, which is developing mobile tech that will allow the financial services newcomer to deliver hyper-personalised communications and offers.

"Our job should be to look at big data and predictive technology to know what consumers are

going to need even before they do," said Atom Bank founder **Anthony Thomson**. He added that becoming the world's first "telepathic bank" would be bolstered by tech yet to come of age, such as **innovations** controlled by brainwaves.

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The Future Foundation's **Quoirin** backed up this idea that consumers are on the hunt for **brands** that instinctively preempt their desires. This could become easier as AI tech takes off and people invite **digital** personal assistants into their homes. **Amazon's** Echo product is already on sale in the US, ready to sit in the corner of buyer's homes, listen in and answer their questions.

Meanwhile, **Amelia** is the next-gen of this tech with its empathic ability to detect tone and comprehend context.

HLMI (human level machine intelligence) is coming

AI was amplified beyond the **marketing** realm by **Oxford** Professor **Nick Bostrom**, who focused on its potential impact on the future of humanity. He pondered the idea that creating computers that can think and feel would logically be the final invention for the human race.

The even more frightening bit of foresight from **Bostrom** was the fact that when polled, top experts in the field of AI think that there is a 50% probability that we'll have achieved HLMI by 2024 and a 90% probability by 2070. The end is nigh?

The psychological layer

Plugging into the idea that the veneer of **advertising** has lost its sheen as consumers now know the tactics, it's time for **brands** to deliver on their psychological promises. Rather than just showing pictures of happy people using your products, consumers now want products and services that actually make them happy.

Philosophy guru **Alain de Botton's** School of Life mission to help people live better lives is now being transferred to the world of **brands** and **marketing**. "How do we commodify the things that push people's buttons?" he said. "If we get smart, we will make lots of money from commodifying people's psychological needs, rather than just the material."

De Botton let the audience in on the fact that he's been working closely with **AirBnB**, LinkedIn and an unnamed bank to develop a 'psychological layer' for their **brands**.

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He explained how **AirBnB CEO** Brian Chesky (who **de Botton** had never heard of) called him on a Sunday night and offered him a sum of money that made it 'impossible' for the

philosopher to accept a flight to **AirBnB**'s San Francisco HQ in a couple of days time. On arrival, Chesky told **de Botton** that the travel industry was a 'pile of shit' and enlisted his help to create travel experiences that live up to expectations.

De Botton said that we'll soon see the fruits of this collaboration when **AirBnB** launches 'psychological products' in the near future. These will include packages for couples looking to reignite their relationship, for example. Opposed to the cliched use of hearts, flowers and candles, this could include the introduction of an 'external threat', something that **de Botton** says is much more effective for romantic bonding.

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