

Over the last two decade, Artificial intelligence (AI) has become embedded in every aspect of our society and lives. What do we Really Need To Know About AI In 2023?

Hello and welcome to Mrigashira, a podcast that communicates with communicators. This episode is brought to you in association with Digitales. I am Namita Ramani Sharma, your host for this episode.

Our guest today will break down the facts for us if platforms like chat GPT and many more will be a Double-Edged Sword for marketing and communication Industry? We will also get to know about his interesting globetrotting journey today. Tune in to hear the fascinating marketing and communication insights from our guest for this episode Mr. Chetan Krishnamoorthy, Vice President, Marketing and Communications, APAC, IBM.

You started your journey at Tera Recon Inc in US, where you were dealing with AI (2007). All through your career journey, you have been connected to technology, cloud, enterprise, I would like to know your views on the buzz word like AI and chat GTP reinventing the way companies communicate with its stakeholders. What will all probably go through a big shift from your perspective? Will it allow us to create news, or we have a long way to go?

Great, now, thank you Namita. First of all really appreciate you having me here. Look, I mean, if you if you look at AI, I think the key successful adoption implementation of anything artificial intelligence, or, you know, data analytic right? And how obviously plays assisting in augmenting what all of us do. So I think that's the fundamental design point for a lot of the AI solutions that, you know, I have come across and that we work on, right; it's always about augmented intelligence folks do their job better, easier, faster, and so on. Right, that's the that's the whole purpose that is to augment, you know, you know, work.

Now, if you look at, essentially how some of these solutions have obviously evolved we started seeing a lot of application of AI initially, in things like conversational agents or virtual agents, right. plays a big role for us as, as marketers or communicators, right? It's about how do you kind of reach engage with customers 24 by seven, be able to obviously handle initially things like frequently asked questions, for example, right, let's say you have an organization that obviously has a series of products, and your clients, for example, want to discover these products, this becomes a really very good entry point for clients to come and ask some of the information on these products it's available 24/7, for example, you could, you know, get a series of information about these things, and already be aware of what the organization can provide in terms of products, solutions and services. Right. So that I think, is obviously a very good use case study, and you will see this, you know, Asia Pacific, you'll see more countries and things like that, right? That definitely is one. Now, the other interesting thing for us, I think, as you know, marketers and communicators is also to look at what is the right thing to do for an end client, right? Because the design for any solution AI, you know, non AI is always around the clients, you got to put the clients at the center of the journey. And that hasn't changed, right, that the fundamental design point. Now, it all starts with empathy, right? You got to empathize with the client, what he or she is actually feeling as they go through the journey with an organization, right, it could be a buying journey, it could be a solution journey, it could be an implementation journey, whatever the journey is for the for the client, right? So you got to put the client at the center, that it all starts with looking at what are the clients feeling? What are they saying, what are they doing? What are they thinking, and when you do that, data, essentially then becomes the basis for design. And if you start many of your solutions

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designed this way, then technologies like you said, like AI, data analytics, and many other such, you know, what I call our sponsor, exponential technologies fit to solve that purpose, which is essentially to make sure that you can do the best for the client. That's, that's the fundamental premise for all the design, right? That's where I think solutions start from and I don't see this any different for, you know, building AI solutions, for example. Now, how does this help, right? For example, if you have a client coming into the organization, and they've worked with you before, and if you have enough insight on certain things that he or she will be interested in, as they're engaging with you, that becomes a very, very powerful tool for obviously, the agents and the employees to engage the client on with a lot more confidence. And here again, AI can play a big role. Data Analytics can play a big role, because it can help you and determine what is the next best action or the next best offer for a particular client. He or she coming into the you know, organization into the journey, either in store or online or both, you know, to be able to deliver that, you know, what I call a very personalized experience for the client, right. And I think technologies like AI and analytics, again, help to make the experiences personalized, and to equip the, you know, employees, for example, to make better decisions as they engage, you know, the clients, right? These are examples, right. I mean, there are also examples where technologies like AI and analytics have been applied to look at emerging trends, for example, so that you can bring in products and solutions that are relevant to the market, versus bringing in a lot of things that may or may not be relevant at that point of time, at least, it'll give you more confidence in some of the decision making that you're, you know, that you're undertaking. So these are some of the spaces where I see obviously, you know, AI solutions, AI powered solutions, analytics, Power Solutions, you know, going on now another dimension, which is an interesting dimension, because he talked about, you know, many other technologies, the key, you know, limiter is still data security and governance, right. because as an organization, if you're working for a bank, an insurance company, or a technology company, or any company, for that matter, while you're doing all of these things, you still have to take care of data security, you got to take care of how you protect your data, you got to make sure that everything that you do from end to end is obviously secure. And there is governance built around it. Even here. In some cases, obviously, you know, even cybersecurity AI plays a big role, right? To handle threats, for example, like proactive threat handling, and things like that, then the governance layer helps protect all of this so that your client is comfortable interacting with you, you know, as an organization, that's pretty much kind of that I look at this today,

Namita Sharma 06:47

a different perspective altogether. Right. So, like, you've already mentioned that, you know, the center should be the customer, and what sort of behavior what sort of feeling what sort of understanding, do they have the brand? So you worked in India as well, you worked on the other parts of Asia as well. What do you think differs from the customer base in India and the rest of the Asia? So you could just throw some light on that?

Chethan Krishna Murthy 07:12

Yeah, look, I think, I think the key? It's a good it's a good question. By the way, I mean, you know, especially for me growing up, obviously, and going to college, for example, in India, and obviously, I'm from I am from Bangalore, and I think for us, if you look at the if you look at any country, for that matter, first of all, I think that the general philosophy for design, in many cases needs to be a customer one design, right? Because you got to look at every customer individually, he or she. And the challenge

here is you need to be able to do this in scale. Now, if you look at India, as a market itself, the fact that it's such a diverse market, there are so many different languages, obviously, that, that, you know, people speak in, depending on which state you're in, there is so much of adoption of technology, there is so much of application of technology, and you also have a base that's constantly getting educated, skilled, and obviously, entering the workforce, there's a lot of aspirational, you know, need in terms of buying new products and new solutions, right. And there is access, right. So if you look at India as a market, just because of the nature of the diversity, you got to somehow find specific areas that you want to engage in, right? For example, if you want to do a language, you know, pivot on a particular, you know, product set, you have to go all in with that means that everything that you do in terms of how your web pages look like how your mobile experiences look like, even if you're building AI solutions, you know, local languages, all of that becomes very, very, very important. And add to this, the fact that the number of folks that you have to obviously talk to multiplies exponentially when you obviously come into India, you also have to have the scale in terms of being able to serve the needs of so many clients at once, while being able to differentiate with specific sets, you know, in terms of language, as I said, in terms of, you know, buying groups, the student groups, all of that comes into picture, right. So it is obviously complex, when you look at it both in a b2b setting, and in a b2c setting, right? That's the one thing I would say. Whereas in markets where there is a lot more uniformity in terms of languages spoken, in terms of adoption of technology, for example, I'm not saying it's easy, but at least it takes away some dimension of complexity that you will have to probably deal and when you come into a market like India, right, so you got a deal again, start with, you know, what are you in it for, what are the big bets that you're willing to make? And How deep are you willing to go in terms of investing on this whole journey, like starting all the way from digital you know, up to supply chain for example, and fulfillment and, and how you engage? That be a very thought through strategy and how deep You know, you want to go to right? And even, you know many things, right? Like, obviously the product fit as well, like, you know, how much customizations do you have to do in some cases to make it relevant to the local market? All of that, I think, is obviously a lot more magnified. I think when you come into a diverse market like India, that's how I look at it.

Namita Sharma 10:17

How is it different from the rest of the countries in Asia? Yeah, so

Chethan Krishna Murthy 10:21

look, I mean, if you look at some of the other countries in Asia, if you get into ASEAN, as I say, it's a region, it's not, it's not a country, it's obviously a region. But even here, you will see something very, very similar, right. I mean, there are similarities in terms of, you know, the language sets, the fact that, you know, people speak different languages, there are different levels of maturities, in terms of technology adoption, and things like that. So there, I think you will end up doing something very, very similar, the only difference would be the, the kind of areas that you want to work on might be different. For example, India might have a certain priority, for example, say on payments in digital banking. But if you go into some of the other countries, you might see a different set of things that they're working on, for example, API economy might be a big focus, or sustainability, for example, may be a big focus, right. So that's the one thing that you will kind of notice, there'll be similarities in scale and diversity, but then you'll end up seeing that the problems or the areas to focus on end up being a lot more different. But I think, in some ways, if you're worked on some of these regions, you can parallels. And you can

also use certain things that you draw from working with folks in those countries and use those actually to scale, right, which is where I think we as marketers and communicators come in, because then you can actually understand what's happening in market one, a certain thing worked in market, one, and you can take that and say, I feel that there's opportunity for this to work in Market, because I see certain things that actually match the model that I built for myself in market one, right. So that's the other big opportunity that you get when you, you know, end up working across, you know, some of these some of these markets, like there are diversities, there are differences, you can find certain commonalities to people, I would say,

Namita Sharma 12:04

Wow, interesting my next question is this all of this whole changing scenario of new skill adoption, like the role of communication and marketing professional is also changing with a whole fragmented customer segments? And, you know, a whole of customization? So what do you think us skills that are required to lead the marketing and communication for any organization? Like just to be updated? Yes, all your upskilling yourself. So what are the skills that you think would be relevant for these two?

Chethan Krishna Murthy 12:33

absolutely. And I think I think this again, I think, as you rightly said, it comes to building the right kind of mental models for that discipline, as you enter, like, you know, like, in this case, it's marketing and communications, I generally look at this as, you know, two connected skill sets, right? it's, you can look at it as soft skills, and what are more hard skills or functional skills, in terms of the new age, you know, skills that you have to develop from a soft skills perspective, which I'll start first, which I think is critical, I think you've got to be able to, you know, *collaborate*. When I say collaborate, you got to be able to think about connecting the dots. For example, if I'm a social, you know, professional, my expertise happens to be social media, do I have the interest, the understanding, and the temperament to be able to think through as to how this will impact the funnel of marketing, all the way from, you know, building awareness to actually closing the opportunity to have the understanding, for example, as to how does this connect to all of that? And can I be a part of the process, I think becomes one. And that comes down to having, like I said, that right temperament, having the right kind of collaboration skills, the right kind of communication skills, I think that I think has become more and more critical, right? You cannot work in silos anymore, you got to look at this end to end by being expert in your area, right, which basically goes back to the notion of the T shaped skilled, and some people use that you got to be deep, but you got to understand and be able to connect, so that I think is one, you know, connecting the dots is definitely one. And the second one, I think in this is basically able to empathize with each other, right? Because there are different parts of the funnel, which might operate at different speeds, you know, essentially, because of various constraints, right, because of, you know, creation of content because of process, there are so many levers to how fast the funnel can operate. And the key is to be able to empathize with each other. And handle, flow accordingly, I think is a very important skill. And the third one, I think, is stakeholder management. I don't even know if that's the right word. I think it's more stakeholder partnership in the new age, as marketing becomes more and more a growth function. Now, you know, as you will see that a lot more of that is coming out. You got to be able to partner with the stakeholders, whether it's your sales team, whether it's your ecosystem, whether it's your technical sales team in an organization's whether it's their customer success, how do you partner with all of them? I think it becomes a very important thing. So, I would say empathy, being able to kind of

collaborate and, you know, work together and be able to connect the dots, I think are the threes, you know, I feel emerging and strong soft skills that are needed.

On the on the hard skill side, I think the ability to understand a business problem, I think it's more relevant than ever, like, you can the campaign, you can understand how to do PR and social and brand all of that. But do you understand the business and you understand what moves the business in a country, I think is a very important skill. Like, you need to be able to understand how the ecosystems are set up, you know, the incentives that are there for the organization and the clarity that I think is one. And the second one, I think, is if you're a product or a technology company, you need to be able to have enough understanding and depth of products and solutions. And you should be confident articulate this, I think in front of, say, clients and ecosystem of partners, right. So that becomes you developing a little bit more depth on tech and solutions. And the third one, I think, is on data, I think, be able to look at data, in terms of what does it mean, and also how it connects, it goes back to the same thing, right? It's like looking at a map. If I look at a piece of the map, obviously, it'll give me certain information. But if I can zoom back out and look at the overall grid, it will give me a lot more detail because it also tells me how things are connected to each other. Right? And how do I get to that end state, which comes from business understanding, Because to me the skills of developing our campaign, the skills of, you know, building this whole digital journey and stuff like that exist quite a bit. And you'll continue to sharpen it, but you augment with these skills like business understanding, being able to connect, and being able to understand data, and be able to apply this back to improve the funnel, I think is a very, very critical skill, because you have to do more, with less to be a growth driver to the organization. And I think that's where it comes from. That's how I look at it.

Namita Sharma 17:09

Wow, interesting. You've summed it so well, I think the PR professionals be an accountant have the last question I have for you is, what do you think are the sustainability, right? You said that it's a buzzword, and a lot of people are basically keeping an eye on it becoming more serious about it. So, what do you think a marketer could do apart from basically creating a narrative around it? Can we basically accept or implement any sort of practices to be more sustainable when it comes to our marketing practices?

Chethan Krishna Murthy 17:47

Oh, absolutely. Right. I think your question, I think it goes, you know, two-fold.

Chethan Krishna Murthy 17:57

One is the obviously the organization itself, you know, adopting sustainability practices, right? That definitely is one and to us, right? It also starts with, how do you take some of these things, to the market, and be able to talk to the clients, or end users? First of all, about how we as an organization can be a part of those sustainable goals. Right, that is one dimension, which we'll talk about in the second dimension is, how do we kind of bring in certain practices that obviously are sustainable in terms of being able to go and apply and deploy this in the market? Right, there are two to this, I would say, right. So to me, the first thing is, you know, if, if the product set itself that you have, you are obviously talking about this from a sustainability perspective, it could be for example, reduction of, power consumption in some cases, right, like, can I talk and I can I help you reduce, for example, the

energy consumption that's actually happening? That's definitely, you know, one that comes in from a product perspective, can I help you in terms of being able to uncover reporting, in terms of, you know, sustainability perspective, that becomes 1/3, could be talking about, you know, from a consulting perspective, can I come with the organization and can identify areas where they can actually go and work with and be able to make that impact is a third one, right? So these are all, you know, things that you can actually talk to your clients and be able to connect a story and help them with certain imperatives that are important. Now, from a marketing perspective, I do think there are many, many opportunities, right, for example, instead of printing collaterals and materials, can you actually shift some of that to QR code? For example? Interesting and can you elaborate some of that. So some really simple things that you can do, right. And you can also obviously use material that's obviously recyclable. So cycle building actually get into some of these events and actually contribute towards, you know, making sure that you are part of that sustainability event, for example, needs to use sustainable, you know, materials, for example, in terms of whatever is, you know, you leveraged in some of those programs and minimize as possible, right, the third dimension to this, I think it's a lot more on, you know, brand building as well, right. Because, you know, depending on the organization, and how you work with some of these causes, and genuinely so, because your product speaks to it, the way you go to market speaks to it. And then you're working with agencies and with partners to be a part of certain causes that actually make a difference to the environment to make a difference to the people, I think it's a third dimension. And you will see, obviously, you know, the clean drives, for example, that, you know, folks are a part of, you will see people actually going in and taking out plastic from the ocean, which I think is a very, very, very big imperative. And there are partnerships, there are solutions that obviously are leveraged to do some of these things in terms of identifying terms of collection and things like that, that becomes your third lever, because then it becomes very genuine, because you're connecting all the three, because your product set is speaking to that language, and genuinely so helping the clients. When you show up externally, you're doing this consciously, and you're even speaking to you being a sustainable organization and practicing it, just as one example. And the third one is the partnerships and how your employees engage and drive to the same cause. I think all three of them connect. And, I think you can actually make an impact and a push towards in one, one single direction. And I think the last dimension that I'll add, and I think this is a little bit, you know, off from the question of sustainability, I think the other piece is also about skilling and awareness, right? Because it's an organization, if you play that part in the broader community, in equipping the broader community with awareness, being able to partner with schools and universities and things like that, that I think can have a propounding impact. Because as these folks enter the workforce, they are already trained in terms what this means and why this is so important, then I think all four dimensions end up connecting in one direction can make a genuine impact on society and on the people. That's how I look at it.

Namita Sharma 22:33

That makes sense. Interesting. Yeah, of course. So thank you so much for joining us. It was just lovely, an insightful talking to you. And of course, we'll invite you for the future report cultures well, we already have to discuss.