Editorial

Think about how intelligent machines are transforming every aspect of our private and professional lives. We talk effortlessly to Alexa, Siri, or Google Home to do simple things like setting timers, playing our favorite music lists, or reading our to-do lists for the next day. Little chatboxes pop up on websites asking us whether we need some help finding our way around, while we ask ourselves whether it is a human or a machine that's "talking" to us. We make an appointment on the phone, not knowing whether we're talking to a human or Google Duplex, because the vocal features perfectly mimic how humans talk. Or think of algorithms "reading" our emotions from facial expressions, with China now already using AI-powered face detection for payment authorization or emotion recognition services to monitor (or control) the emotions of visitors in cinemas.

Welcome to a new era of marketing – an era in which the line between human and machine is blurring, and in which machines learn without human intervention. In this issue, we explore how machines learn from the digital footprints of consumers; how and to which extent machines are able to sell; and the nuances of when using machines might actually backfire and cause disengagement and frustration for consumers. And we discuss the broader questions of artificial intelligence: Can machines be moral? What makes you trust in the answer or prediction of an algorithm? Do we make ourselves vulnerable as individuals and as society if we trust too much?

We are excited to share with you the latest research on how AI is transforming the fabric of marketing – and ultimately, society. We hope you find both inspiration and food for thought on how to supercharge your organization, and on how AI is redefining the way we live.

Sincerely,

Christian Hildebrand

St. Gallen, July 2019