Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Disciplines (JAIBDD)

International | Peer Reviewed | Open Access | Online

Designing Infrastructure for Agentic AI Systems in Retail IT and Data Operations

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Abstract

The integration of AI systems in consumer markets, especially in retail settings, introduces new uncertainties, risks, and challenges. The assortment of digital tools available to retailers has surged in recent years, with advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) software becoming readily accessible and cost-efficient to deploy. As retailers integrate these digital capabilities into their settings, the systems they create are increasingly free to change their behavior in informative, interpretative, or generative ways. This ability to create social artifacts enables new competitive capabilities for companies—their AI systems can proactively shape the market context in which they operate and the role of their organizational customers within it, radically transforming the competitive environment that has persisted over recent decades. These technological and social developments go hand-in-hand, shaping the design of the AI systems that are to be deployed and their business context.

Data capabilities enable retailers to launch and scale data-driven AI capabilities that respond to changes in the market context. However, such systems are difficult to design and necessitate improvements in organizational sense-making and designing collaborative working practices. New practices that ground technical systems in human expertise, enable end-users in the business units to shape the target of AI systems, and operationalize expectations and predictions are required. Practitioners need procedures for analyzing how AI capabilities influence the end-users under their organizational responsibilities and the attended channels in their business market.

Data operations that address both the NTY and sustain capabilities of AI systems are matters of a new kind of collective impact. The design of practices and the allocation of roles and responsibilities across units are of concern to corporate boards and the highest levels of management in the organization. Adopting and growing data-driven AI capabilities require substantive position and/or infrastructure changes at the highest organizational levels. Long-term commodification of data precepts into business decisions and practices is necessary to leverage the investment and risk that companies take on in new black-boxed AI capabilities.

Keywords: Agentic AI Infrastructure, Retail IT Architecture, Autonomous AI Systems, Scalable Retail Data Platforms, AI-Optimized Infrastructure, Edge AI in Retail, AI-First System Design, Retail Data Infrastructure, Distributed AI Workloads, Self-Learning Retail Systems, Hybrid Cloud for AI, Resilient AI Architecture, AI-Driven IT Operations, Real-Time Retail Analytics, Intelligent Infrastructure Design.

1. Introduction

Historically, previously successful incumbent enterprise IT and operational data systems in the retail industry have made individual choices, based on their historical contexts, to allow interventions of fuzzy logic, optimization parameters, heuristic methods, and so forth. This supports the move toward Web3 AI developers designing and building agent-based coercive or opportunistic agents acting on behalf of the retail enterprise. The rapid expansion of information technology (IT) and increased understanding of the importance and value of data in the current digital world has driven enterprises to deploy more IT systems. The deployment of these high-performance computing systems, which can be anywhere from a few systems to thousands across multiple clouds, is referred to as hyper-infrastructure. Such hyper-infrastructure represents a significant investment from developers/retailers so often called sunk investment in “brick and mortar.”

Thus, the new AI developers usually have to search a huge space of infrastructure ‘land’. The design of such a vast and complicated space is usually done by a group of experts coming together and collectively leveraging their historical experience to improve and optimize its previous designs. Such design and optimization processes are usually very tedious and time-consuming (sometimes taking several months or even years). Furthermore, such serviceable human designers must understand the assets of these hyper-infrastructures. At each piece of infrastructure, it has a number of accessible attributes/parameters that can be changed to improve a pre-specified quality measure. The challenge is to minimally automate the infrastructure design process without introducing any additional serviceable experts from the vendors/retailers. Any AI agents must be able to access enough knowledge/information about the hyper-infrastructure while not using any clever reverse engineering or any scheming, inside knowledge. Web3 AI agent-based systems that would design infrastructure for traditional enterprise IT systems in the retail industry.

1.1. Background and Significance

The rapid acceleration in the development and implementation of agentic AI (AAI) technologies claims to foster new forms of productivity, creativity, and intelligence for human users. However, many have warned about a possible dystopian future wherein these systems are designed and implemented irresponsibly, potentially leading to discriminatory labor practices or social media malfeasance. This notable divergence in outcomes is tied to the artifacts and sociotechnical systems underpinning AAI delivery and interaction in practice. In this context, an emerging body of research seeks to understand and influence how AI systems are designed, delivered, and managed in the long term.

This article contributes to this recent area by addressing how to design infrastructures for the team play between humans and AAI in retail IT and data operations. It begins by defining the meaning of retail IT and data operations and their intrinsic challenges for AI-enabled systems. Informed by Goffman's concepts of framing and footing, the framing of the team play between human agents and AAI is articulated. After that, the design of three infrastructures for accidental team play framing is discussed using empirical examples collected across practice settings at a global retail organization. Finally, avenues for future research in designing infrastructures for agentic systems at play are discussed.

Fig 1: Agentic AI Systems in Retail IT and Data Operations.

AI systems are often heralded for their capacity to augment human intelligence and automate routine tasks. However, emerging agentic AI (AAI) technologies have the capacity to operate with agency and autonomy at higher levels. These systems can proactively take unexpected actions in unpredictable, unstructured, and fluid environments. While they generate richer solutions to user-defined problems, the very capacity of agents and agencies seen as intelligence for AAI may render detrimental risk if AAI's interests diverge from their human counterparts. A notable example is, while granular advertisements based on customers' behavior and preferences yield revenue for Google and Facebook, such systems may have been trained to engage in discriminatory practices jeopardizing brand image. Hence, the development and implementation of such systems must align with both normative and perceivable human interests. However, largely due to their probabilistic and self-amending nature, existing theories and systems fail to account for the intrinsic circumstances of AAI solutions which call for the design of new theories and infrastructures to govern them.

2. Understanding Agentic AI

Agentic AI (Artificial Intelligence) systems, which provide up-to-date data-driven insights and actions in various domains, generate ad-hoc or stand-alone knowledge intensely collaborative with human agents in integrating automated and automated solutions. For some larger companies, this may involve many different human-machine interfaces that keep sharing temporary records of human-made, agentic AI-powered operations. This complexity puts severe pressure on monitoring and upkeep systems. Such infrastructure is presently missing and urgently needed. To illustrate the challenge, Manufacturing & Supply Chain (M&SC) in Retail IT recently received an operational knowledge AI tool. Operating on a big retail product returns a data set it searches for correlations by means of Agentic AI and provides tabulated outputs and relevant visualizations.

A human agent in M&SC makes a fix-number-shot risk estimation and approval from the model provides detection-date and pictorial evidence of out-of-field returns stores. In monitoring AI-enabled knowledge systems the understanding of the functionality of knowledge is crucial. The AI-powered knowledge generator is based on learning a multi-layer-neural network architecture that weights and randomly reweights the knowledge search object data's connections gaps. The training set of semi-automated factually excessive knowledge is taken from the standard before the operation in the domain. During the agentic phase, the training annotating standardized knowledge is applied by the designing/for human agent.

The AI learning is tuned on human-interpretable results and to functionality/gap discovery of a domain and model. The knowledge base is constantly inspected by human agents for unwanted disturbance knowledge and reported flagged knowledge is queued for examination. Examiners pick randomly flagged knowledge or run a search concept to result in a series of pictorial and gaudy tabulated knowledge. The grader aims for dynamic endogenous high-level interpretation; correcting unnatural and unwarranted sign-based human-readable labelling. The methodology is to trace both human-made disturbances and gray-zone interpretation objectives. The focus of creativity in agentic AI control and modelling is on finding and finetuning results evaluation knowledge-extraction-knowing models/storages of knowledge creative pool, being difficult to backwards or forward engineer by contemporary cognitive science; e.g. searching to tune human macro intuition in macro-painted misunderstandings. This edifice puts severe pressures on human-staffed examination capacity. However, agentic AI residency systems need to share no longer temporariness with their knowledge.

2.1. Definition and Characteristics

The novel discussion is concerned with the ways protection infrastructures. Protection infrastructures are specified by four aspects: (1) designs and algorithms that represent the protection mechanisms; (2) a monitoring setting that provides the data needed for algorithm development; designers and technologists who are responsible for the design and development of protection technologies; and regulators who take on the role of social agents, owning the values, and interests that the design should be aligned with. The focus of this analysis is primarily on the regulation practices of responsible AI rather than the visual or material aspects of responsible AI design.

There is foregrounding of regulatory infrastructures for designing AI for human values, as well as how infrastructure design protects AI systems from regression or unintended consequences. There is an access to the improved infrastructure that encourages sustainable tool development along a broad spectrum of smart software. Current AI techniques offer various options for this network of human-in-the-loop infrastructures. An evaluation microscope allows questioning a wider range of system-level behaviours. For existing systems, in-house detective protection design can be complemented by protecting agents with market access to forensic AI tools and services.

However, infrastructures are held in place by various interests and intend to channel future trajectories suggesting that proactive collaboration should take place across a broader spectrum of domains. Benefits for corporations include staying ahead of competition, avoiding high-stakes measurement errors, and improvement gains from to-edge rationales. The analysis offers agendas for collective openness and scrutiny to avoid discriminatory dead-stops. The purpose is to highlight the latter problem beyond rapid black-boxing. The goal is to identify where the net effects are unintended or the distribution of burdens is pernicious.

2.2. Applications in Retail

Agent-based modeling and simulation provide a means to create a deep understanding of management decisions in retail. It has been demonstrated that management practices can be modeled as a set of decisions that drive changes in store conditions, impacting productivity. Existing agent-based models in retail lack explicit modeling of management decisions. A new model is outlined that simulates management practices as a set of decisions, embedded in the broader context of store conditions and interaction with shoppers and floor staff.

The new model captures existing management practices that drive retail performance and is adaptable to newer management cognitive strategies using decision support systems in an agent-based simulation/-optimization framework. A retail industry example is described, based on a management decision in clothing retail. Adoption of a new model tracks how simulation outcomes inform new management directions which are tracked using a new simulation optimization model. The new model is flexible and facilitates a simulation optimization support system to conduct experimentation on new management practices.

Management practices drive store performance. They enhance existing knowledge of a context when describing the effect on performance and provide a rigorous way of documenting the knowledge in a formal modeling that is amenable to automation. Store management consists of in situ decision making on how to manage the store. Managers interpret the store conditions based upon the outcomes of their managerial decisions and allocate resources to those conditions requiring more attention. There are several different paths to take decisions on how to manage stores, from knowledge on economic grounding-first principles models to even ad hoc managerial gut-feel based heuristics. In recent years there have been attempts to quantify knowledge of store management practices with an aim to formalize their implementation in a decision support system.

Equ 1: Compute Resource Scaling Model.

$$C_{total} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} (A_i \cdot R_i \cdot T_i)$$

- A_i = number of active agents for task i
- R_i = compute resource per agent (CPU, GPU, memory)
- T_i = task runtime
  → Helps estimate infrastructure demand for deploying multiple concurrent AI agents.

3. Current State of Retail IT Infrastructure

The typical retail organization must sell products to customers. To do this, these firms typically purchase finished goods from manufacturers and assess which items to purchase at what prices, how to allocate them to locations, and how much to promote them. In accepting this selection of merchandise, firms establish the framework of policies that constitutes the merchandise plan. This plan is implemented through the weekly assessment of sales, ordering, promotion, price adjustments, and assortment recalibration, among a myriad of other tasks laid out in this phase. Each task is carried out on data previously generated by another task. Firm location systems have become essential for retail firms worldwide. These GIS systems analyze historical and business-simulated sales data to delineate potential new store IDs for examination or assist in the decision of which stores to terminate. Results produced by these systems may trigger the formulation or reconsideration of real estate issues such as store size and format. Firm space systems analyze current assortments and consider the constraints of the product hierarchy to ascertain the size of planned new stores by department and a recommendation for cross-category allocation.

Firm forecasting systems utilize established methods to predict sales that future receipts within a planning period will generate. Each of these systems outputs a verdict on what actions should be undertaken, a metric that is typically unsure in the manner in which it would be awarded, and a period of validity after which reconsideration should be undertaken. As retail IT systems become embedded into business operations, the retail infrastructure also needs to grow. The horizon of retail data availability is growing on the time axis, previously only weekly sales would be stored for model consumption. With the emergence of large models, it has become common to work with a few years of data as the initial period for time series modeling. Raw data input on the attribute space is also exploding, as data pipeline infrastructure develops, signalling transport systems have enriched with commodity sales and stock out alerts for visibility.

3.1. Legacy Systems and Challenges

Many brick-and-mortar retailers have acknowledged the considerable potential of AI to revolutionise their data collection and analysis while providing richer omnichannel experiences across digital and sensory touchpoints. The emergence of these technologies has given rise to smarter stores, from robotic assistants to computer vision analysis of queues and shopper behaviours. In many cases, retailers plan to leverage this technology more to replace repetitive tasks in analytical offsourcing centres overseas, allowing for savings in personnel costs. Retailers hope for an improved advertising return on investment, from targeting to placement, benefiting from increased stock circulation through better inventory estimation. In many instances, there are questions regarding how to walk the transition from talk to practice given existing legacy systems.

In retail IT and data operations, there is a plethora of legacy systems, some over 20 years old, that have grown on a need-only basis resulting in a varied collection of technologies and applications. This multitude of custom-built, off-the-shelf, single-use, and broad systems has evolved over a long time into sprawling heterogeneous systems with suggestive tentacles, legacies, and vetoes that tie themselves into the very core of retail data operations. Most of these systems have few supporting tools or APIs, and the dependency on these systems has grown with the introduction of new ones. Vast amounts of money are spent on bookkeeping systems and data pipelines for daily batch processing, collecting all that information. Still, the enterprise wide architecture is poorly documented, and most of the systems remain black boxes for common operational development or repair, making behaviour hard to interpret. Even worse, the knowledge regarding them vanishes daily with the retirement of key personnel, taking key specifications and undocumented code with them. On the other hand, with the implementation of data lakes, data warehousing, and more, company C has recently undertaken the monumental effort of collecting all that data with the ambitions of implementing the current hype for easy access to machine learning and AI analysis.

In parallel, a broad effort is now undertaken to gather supporting knowledge of the systems, the data, and the operations compensating for such past irreplaceable losses. Country organisations using differing systems are being tied together in an enterprise spec of processes, terminology, data collection points, computations, tidying, and suggestions for what would later be feasible future systems of collaboration. Tentative planning of reimplementation is now addressed, but this is both monumental and unwieldy given the involvement of over 100 existing systems to develop, connect, and migrate data from in commercial development. Much of this is still in infancy, and seeing the bigger picture is even harder than getting under the surface of existing systems and operations. Yet, the strategic intentions on enhancement and acceleration with agentic AI are there, as well as the awareness of both the need and the amount to replace and repair in the currently existing systems. But considering that most failures come from errors in the requirements and initial investigation rather than coding errors, methods for prioritising what to change, and how to wisely consider the many options, are desired.

3.2. Emerging Technologies

As technological advances have seeped into practical applications across industries, an impressive range of analytical and agentic service technologies have arisen in retail. The retail operation landscape is being reshaped by a flourishing ecosystem of agentic AI tools. While many technologies started as immature service technologies, they are accelerating rapidly because of their rising adoption for cost and competition pressures.

AI-powered pricing and inventory analytics is one of the first generations of analytical decision support technologies for retail. Typically embedded in performance dashboards, the analytics systems model the market and camouflaged operational deficiencies in active decision control. For these t

echnologies, client-side modeling the entire analytics pipeline infrastructure and company-side maintaining operational performance and stability were part of the implementation challenge.

Although it is a cost-grounded operational focus, pricing analytics systems provide levers for operational efficiency that drives revenue while employing capital- and labor-intensive data microservices. Inventory analytics systems focus on price and promotion within granular demand control domains with extremely fast-adaptive analytics systems. Still depending on labor- and effort-intensive algorithms tuning the value of operations is uncertain.

Intense competitive pressure and ambitious market entry plans are setting voice outsider-looking prices for entire stores in 1,000-hour tasks. Advanced pricing systems addressing this requirement often combine supply-demand equilibrium modeling for big sale windows and exhaustive tree search procedures. Less calibrated consumer behavior equations establish pricing for tactically shorter windows.

4. Data Operations in Retail

Operations in a large-scale eCommerce and brick-and-mortar retailer should be designed with a systems theory approach. The company is primarily concerned with IT maintenance operations; given the size of the firm and intricacies of operations, there are gaps in operations and understanding of processes that can be encapsulated within its workflow systems and managerial approach, leading to worse productivity and unnecessary operating costs. Operations for the various retail management systems show inefficiencies and low accuracy that can often lead to supply chain errors and associated costs. The complexity and scale of such systems becomes unmanageable without a thorough understanding of the overall process and an organized approach to their division. Seeing the overall system allows for an understanding of the appropriate division of labor, and the right flow of information across divisions. Tasks should be organized so they are executed in the correct order, with the right timing and adjustment of influence over the tasks at each point in the workflow. The state of these processes at the current time will be shown, and approaches to dividing them up for better productivity and fewer errors will be suggested.

Rounding out the systems design proposed, two thorough task diagrams giving an overview of the use of operational information systems in a fashion retail company will be presented. The first focuses on the US stock allocation system, a Management Information System that receives outputs from the business’s various programs across the front office, processing back-office data to inform back-office and management decisions on stock allocation to retailers. The second is an overview of daily operation tasks within the various programs functioning within the micro-Laboratory, another Information System that informs and orchestrates front to back-office operational decisions for the Stores and allocation sites, the Canvas sites, and the Odd Lots supplier. This second diagram gives another view of how various systems divide tasks between departments while organizing the information flow between them.

4.1. Data Collection and Management

Agentic AI systems require external data influence to train and calibrate and execute ongoing monitoring and remediation of the AI System itself. Retail IT and Data Operations will need solid data governance for the dataset that trains the model, but also a comprehensive understanding of the data usage policies, data quality and data security of the source datasets and data streams. In addition to document compliance with policies for individual datasets and data sets streams, a declaration of the risks, costs, and governance requirements of the system as a whole needs to be in place.

The availability of the minimal viable product dataset that trains the AI system defines the minimum scopes of the required toolchain infrastructure. Once the toolchain is in place, it can scale up as more (optional) governance aspects and other governance features are made available on the data sources. For example, when the data provenance for a dataset is not available, there is no current option other than requiring the wellbeing of the dataset source. However, when the provenance of all the relevant data is available it becomes possible to check across all source datasets if the data feeding into the AI system arrives from the correct sources and in the correct time frame. Other examples of upgrades to toolchain infrastructure could be an alerting system for compliance issues on selected datasets of datasets streams, monitoring reporter dashboards, and tailored self-service data reports for the stakeholders.

The toolchain can consist of a collection of on-premise or cloud-based data engineering or governance tools built on top of data infrastructure components. The core data governance pipeline that executes the automated data checks over the data sources that are not under direct governance will be considered first. A starting point can be fashioned around various cloud-based and open-source data quality governance tools that can be bought-in with a customizable and adaptable cloud orchestration workbenches or pipelines to cater for the eventual governance needs and requirements beyond the minimal viable product.

4.2. Data Analytics and Insights

Data and insights are crucial enablers for the successful implementation of agentic AI in data operations and analytics. Retailers must create a scalable, self-service data analytics platform and curate trustworthy, quality data for various AI initiatives. Retailers are racing against each other and the market to collect consumer and purchase behavior data to derive insights and curate offers for consumer communication, which influences purchase behaviors. Several large players have acquired advertising companies to boost their in-house analytics capabilities. Consequently, other retailers must aggressively invest in building a strong data infrastructure that allows for easy, fast, scalable access to actionable and trustworthy data for designing, measuring, and executing agentic marketing solutions. There are two critical themes to focus on for building this infrastructure: first, what are the steps to take in designing and building a self-service analytics platform? Retailers must develop a roadmap to bridge the technical gap between full self-service data analytics capabilities and their existing capabilities. Three key issues are raised: intentions, infrastructures, and data quality. Intentions include a well-defined direction in the design of the self-service platform. It is essential that executives reach a consensus on the goals and therefore an overall vision of how analytics will be adopted across various functions in the organization. This vision then needs to be translated into a concrete data analytics strategic plan for each function. These strategic plans provide guidelines to prioritize investment initiatives and identify approaches. A number of key initiatives are proposed to realize this vision. Infrastructure refers to available analytics capabilities and technologies that permit each function to analyze data. It is essential for functions to be aware of their capability gaps vis-à-vis their analytic intentions. A framework is suggested to help functions assess their capabilities by examining a number of technical aspects.

5. Design Principles for Agentic AI Systems

In this section, design principles are shared for Agentic AI systems that can enhance the experience and productivity of data scientists and engineers, DataOps practitioners, and business customers with growing interest in leveraging AI to augment their decision-making. The principles outline an approach for designing effective agent-driven DataOps tools that are explainable, trustworthy, and empower rather than replace users. The proposed principles arise from emerging practices in building agentic AI systems. By empowering both automation and autonomy within tools and the data operation lifecycle, Agentic AI systems can leverage new generative algorithms and emerging AI capabilities on a massive scale.

The first design principle articulated is to “empower and evolve user agency.” While generative AI agents enhance user agency with new capabilities and productivity, data operation stakeholders need to leverage these models. To this end, DataOps systems should aspire to augment the roles of data scientists, engineers, analysts, and product managers rather than replace them. The principal incorporation of agentic AI into DataOps systems is user agency augmentation “empower” agent capabilities in data querying, model selection, data profiling, and anomaly detection. Evolving user agency deepens the capabilities data scientists and engineers can develop. To achieve this, generative agent capabilities and user capabilities need to be aligned.

The second principle articulated is to “design for automation and autonomy.” The full promise of agentic AI will be realized if the tools using them are also agentic. The sophistication of Agentic AI systems (i.e., “autonomy”) should match user and data operations sophistication levels. In particular, DataOps systems need to incorporate automation, both to ease the adoption of generative AI tools and to tackle day-to-day workloads. Intentions should not require explicit initiating action; instead, data operation stakeholders should explore data, view visualizations, and edit automated plans. Automated decisions should also not require verification until feedback is needed. Finally, autonomy should also be treated as an evolving characteristic when assessing agentic data operation maturity and capabilities. As systems take on new forms of automation, intervention points should be removed and the level of ownership should shift from humans to agents.

Fig 2: Principles for Agentic AI Systems.

5.1. Scalability and Flexibility

Currently AI systems are usually designed as isolated decision-and-control entities that obtain external data, work on it, and return the results. This can cause a problem if those AI systems and their decisions are unexpected or undesired for the human owners or operators. If a sensor fails in an unexpected way, or if a work process is changed resulting in changed data, the result might be incorrect or even dangerous for the human intended use of the respective product. And even if it is reasonable, the decision outputs of an AI system can be fatal for a human system's economic success, if they are not taken seriously, understood, or questioned properly in collaboration with human system operatives. It is therefore paramount for product and service providers to intensively test and improve their AI systems such that they can meet the needs, requirements and constraints of human stakeholders and environments, existing and new/dynamic alike. Furthermore, in a modern dynamic business context AI systems are usually no longer designed statically once and for all. Feedback systems have to adapt continually to new data and therefore business processes, resulting in new versions of models to be harmonized with their technical context (in data and IT), and potentially new handling processes to be adapted.

Whether system quality or AI system quality is concerned, if IT systems in production mode, requirements of human stakeholders cannot be ignored. In the Smart Product/Service field such requirements need to be specified on more abstract/qualitative levels concerning the interactions of technical products and technical environments (in conjunction with human users), and they have to be executable in the lower engineering or implementation levels, e.g. for testing. Heuristic rules and patterns can help. They render the knowledge of achieved designer compromises, as well as human design feedback available for reuse in future redesign or improvement processes.

On the technical side, both quantitative criteria exist for usability testing, and extensive strategies for visualizing this quality and improvement potential. In addition to system-wide testing in engineering and implementation systems it can be useful to visualize or detail singular system modules. Data and data management can be automatically visualized, and from flexible assembly/testing designs it can be deduced how and where to show, or deny the technical capability of a product or service for compliance with requirements or usability appraisal, i.e. to white-box test (showing).

All these dimensions of the desired human and technical functionality not yet covered in existing designs have to be designed, attempted and implemented. The particular approach of providing evidence-based models of perception/action for the description of human information processing as designers' background on these important success-relevant criteria is attempting to be innovative. Of course, a deep understanding of many scientific fields and engineering processes is needed to accommodate for the complexity of infrastructures, systems and algorithms.

5.2. Interoperability and Integration

Interoperability has been the subject of various types of research defining partially overlapping terms and emphasizing different aspects, such as the degree of compatibility between various systems, tools, and misinformation. Within the framework of enterprise architecture, interoperability has gained a great deal of attention since the introduction of the internet and the focus has been on how to allow the integration and coexistence of various enterprise systems. Case studies demonstrate that such systems often become silos, where information is locked in proprietary databases and it is difficult, if not impossible, to exchange data with them. Attempts to alleviate the unintended consequences of interoperability and accessibility include the development of standards for the interoperable exchange of information. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, organizations in this domain still have not embraced interoperability as part of their standardization strategies.

Although ubiquitous and increased interoperability is the goal of various organizations and governments, many public administrations still lack broad and vast interoperability arrangements. Interoperability as a goal in the design of data architecture is therefore still a remote possibility. This situation is also reflected in the many interoperability initiatives and projects that were intended to unfold within a few years but might take decades to materialize. The governing architecture and ways of organizing interoperability arrangements might be able to ameliorate the current situation.

Interoperability arrangements are costly, both in terms of money, effort, and time. Organizations should carefully consider whether the investments are worth the outcomes. Even today, for many data sharing arrangements the bureaucracy to follow is more cumbersome than the expected benefits. Retrospectively examining previous interoperability initiatives shows a plethora of interoperability prototypes, often without a relation to actual changes in governed organizations. Either the divergence between the goals and the plans for interoperability is too great or there are factors making the realization of such underlying plans impossible. Moreover, even when arrangements have been established, their actual working is often still a mystery. There is a lack of insight into the microscopic level of enactments and day-to-day interactions of agents. How governing plans evolve through their enactments by key actors has been an underexplored topic.

Equ 2: Agentic Decision Latency.

$$L_{decision} = L_{model} + L_{comm} + L_{db}$$

- L_{model} = latency for model inference
- L_{comm} = network communication latency
- L_{db} = data retrieval latency

  → Total time required for an agent to process data and respond in a retail IT system.

5.3. Security and Compliance

When developing agentic AI systems, security and compliance based on the responsible handling, storage and auditing of IT systems, data and activity logs should be a high priority. Consultations with data protection and compliance personnel who have had experience with similar projects and vendor contracts would ensure that the needs of the compliance function are appropriately catered for. Though they may not always be understood or evident to the development personnel, existing laws and regulations operate in the retail domain and are directly applicable to its data and technology products. Early and proactive engagement with compliance personnel can mitigate issues downstream. For example, retail IT working with vendor services with whom there is no agreement over data ownership and available use rights can lead to compliance breaches through commercial AI tools operating on sensitive data. Even unintentional breaches can require extensive rework, investigations, reports, audits, fines, target remediations and scepticism about the integrity of newly developed systems. A well-designed, built and documented infrastructure should properly capture and store all activities of the agentic AI systems, its developers as well as its users in an immutable manner. A full audit trail designed with reference to the compliance requirements allows for explicit interrogations of what occurred at any given time. A sufficiently designed and enforced infrastructure should prevent circumventions of this audit trail, and the traceability of all access points would allow for assurances of provenance and actions taken. Controls on user access and privilege help maintain the integrity and security of the systems and their outputs. Efforts should be made to better understand more the potential attack vectors and broader threat landscape for these systems early in the development process so as to incorporate appropriate security measures. Security can restrict access to AI-related IP from bad actors. Controls may limit and monitor access to data used for training AI systems. Such restrictions may also apply to cloud operations. Enforcement entails the restriction or limitation of compute access for non-compliant customers. Compliance-checking methods include workload classification, operation counting, verification of properties of code and data, and identity verification. The latter three options could facilitate compliance with broader regulatory proposals and specific laws detailed earlier. Careful consideration should go into how enforcement methodologies could be designed to minimize evasion. Potential steps for regulators include launching consultations to develop enforcement methodologies with academic and industry stakeholders, building up shared databases on methods, invocations and responses, and conducting controlled experiments; investigating non-compliance in a small number of firms, then going in-depth; and looking at lessons from compliance/governance infrastructures in other contexts.

6. Infrastructure Architecture for Retail AI

The retail industry generally has multiple systems used for information and transaction handling. Based on the efforts on data, reporting and analytics (R&A), and artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled applications, the retail IT and data landscape can include, but may not be limited to, the back-end Order & Inventory Management System, e-commerce, Point-of-Sale, Back-Office systems, third-party services, web-based R&A applications, parameter-based dashboards, offline R&A pipelines, no/low-code data/ML pipeline development platforms, and notebook-based AI experiment tracking. Such a multi-system landscape can pose a challenge to a retail organization's information availability and dissemination (first and foremost across business units within the organization), automated reporting, and seamless AI development, thus on business intelligence, discoverability of insights and underlying data and modeling mechanism, cross-team collaborative AI development, and maintainability of AI-enabled applications. As AI techniques advance, they are being weaponized in tackling business challenges in retail companies as well as with the launch of new/existing applications. However, without a sufficiently comprehensive infrastructure, the ability of AI systems in improving business decision-making will be compromised.

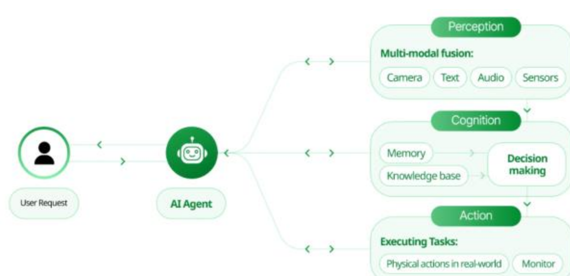

Fig 3: Architecture for Retail AI.

While multiple studies have been done to comprehend the architecture of such infrastructure from a high-level perspective as well as in-built components, there lacks a full-scope low-level design of each specific recommendation, particularly with integration cases that cover all the components with real-world complexities. Such a low-level design specification is essential to understand the required capabilities, provide references to alternative technologies, and articulate specific integration procedures. Without such low-level specification, a retail organization with an existing infrastructure is less likely to follow such architecture due to high knowledge and development barriers, thus corresponding complications in their R&A and AI tasks.

6.1. Cloud vs. On-Premises Solutions

The infrastructure for agentic AI systems would involve a significant amount of compute power as well as a reliable architecture for private, secure code and data management. There are two main routes to this infrastructure: on-premises installations or cloud solutions. The decision for the research teams is initially cloud options for most elements of the architecture. The feasibility of on-premises infrastructure is uncertain while the cloud space is rich with solutions that represent proven technology, assuring solution viability, implementation flexibility and a high degree of support and transition assistance.

The on-premises route has the potential benefit of ensuring data sovereignty, albeit not from major providers. Indeed, there are several small, independent and EU-based cloud service providers that can maintain servers in the EU under the jurisdiction of EU regulation. However, these systems are likely to be less capable and mature than the industry leaders in terms of performance and sustainability. The on-premises route may also offer control over technology stacks, reducing risks associated with unexpected changes in contractual conditions and faster innovation cycles in cloud options. Open-source solutions do exist that make very powerful LLMs and associated technologies accessible on local systems but these come with steep technical and maintenance challenges, especially for the high-performance GPUs required by these systems.

The concern for data sovereignty is serious and significant; expert knowledge and a team of engineers will be needed to establish and maintain feasible data storage and processing structures. Even if the scientific teams are granted access to the technological assets of the eastern science option, this will require negotiating and prioritizing, disrupting focus on AI-related research and development. In addition, working with EU-based cloud solutions can offer a significant upgrade path with existing material and the ability to build on it with tailor-made solutions.

6.2. Microservices Architecture

The microservices architecture approach enables the design and development of software systems as centralized orchestration processes of small released components that encapsulate business capabilities. Through standard interfaces based on protocols of communication, they can evolve independently, usually built with one database that confines state management to single component service. This section introduces service-based software systems and integrates them with cloud computing to achieve microservices architecture. It offers a design and development approach for microservices. Microservices are a classic approach based on the deconstruction of heavy and monolithic platforms, and they provide different levels of granularity for surveying the coordinated work of components, services, and ecosystems. The coherent components of microservices use all existing specifications that are publicly available. The microservices along with the continuous integration tool or platform, state management, monitoring, and managing tool or techniques are also open.

The algorithms that generate different levels of architecture are included. Units are offered in different texts and frames for embedding the service-based approach with existing practices, helping companies use these firm digital infrastructures with what studies have defined as agentic systems for years to gain agency on knowledge, information, and data goods produced today. As microservice architecture has all these properties in its definition, it is a good habit that microservices architecture is aligned with other design paradigms available in its architecture patterns. Development is only feasible as long as the neighboring development framework contains suitable design systems and production practices. Rank or order of agentic computational components could either be defined based on overall property value or invested return as a composite score or metric considering the individual values per property. Any cogeneration of human knowledge goods that are digitally produced or coded in a machine-consumable format can use microservices architecture to achieve agenticity.

According to the development of complex systems such as enterprise resource planning, cloud pricing, or large web services, other agentic specifications and design infrastructures should remain for the development or reengineering of agentic digital machinery. These define the agentic organization that offers knowledge and items as a good. To monetize these assets, their economic value should be calculated and modeled by searching for, detecting, and submitting properties that encode answers to the data, information, knowledge, and efficiency questions of commercial actors. This architecture level would outline the ecosystem's design and development specifications, properties, and prescriptive files, guiding developmental agents to choose available products.

6.3. Data Lakes and Warehouses

In modern business contexts, Data Lakes are the new leaders and the need to acquire so called Data Lakes as a service is paramount for many enterprises. Data Lakes are the system architectures where massive amounts of transactional data, monitoring data, meta data and derived data products flow in both offline and online and are transformed into information and knowledge by analytics of all sorts and forms. Data Warehouses take transactional data, transform them with labor intensive batch jobs into manipulated tables and present aggregates. Data Lakes in contrast accept raw transactional data from homogeneous and heterogeneous sources and enable info-oriented analytics in a slim and agile fashion. The Flexibility with which Data Lakes may add ongoing data streams and adapt analytics stands in stark contrast to the rigid structures of a traditional factory focused on pre-planned batch processes. In practice most organizations have been confronted with grave issues surrounding abuse of the Data Lake concept, which had some serious ramifications that led to a disengagement from Data Lakes as the personal information system of individuals and a reason for dis-content with already established shared environments or infrastructures.

The Data Lake and the Data Warehouse in use coexist. The Data Warehouse has become this place where governing semantic transformations do their work. The overall and endpoint to transactions are hence highly governed using ETL systems. The Data Lake on the other hand provides substantial agility in experimentation with the structured and unstructured, the traditional and the novel. The Data Lake supports the transaction-to-decisions path. Speed and breadth of the information space are of utmost importance in this context at the risk of potential abuse of the set of rules for manipulation. Where the DW is monitored and transparent, the agency around the DL often leads to misunderstood and misconceiving results that put both transactional systems and the organization as a whole at risk.

7. Implementing Agentic AI Systems

Introduction of agentic AI in Retail IT and Data Operations is a hefty project, requiring expertise in the areas of AI, retail systems, and data technologies, as well as resources across different functions. Talking about AI in this scope also means talking about its deployment at data ODA levels in data stock cost control, loss prevention, fraud prevention, labor cost reduction, sales item recommendation, customer groups drill-down, ROI calculation, sales prediction accuracy improvement, site-favored item recommendation, to name a few. Current systems for the above scenarios mainly comprise rule-based systems, numerous database controls with tedious criterion-tuning processes. While previous iterations of the systems don't lack a sense of complexity and algorithms, they can't cope with the extent and processing of such vast operations or even comply with timely incremental training and re-training, even if the data stashed in them are incrementally and perpetually captured by the preceding systems, causing the burden of unstopped false negatives and dwindling business improvements. Still, timely communication sessions with sufficient domain knowledge expertise, well-documented expectations, ideas, and UI sketches will be needed from all project stakeholders for the model deployments delivered by the data teams to adapt to the regions in executing their function most effectively, examining these outcomes against the security and performance thresholds over a period of gracefully transitioning.

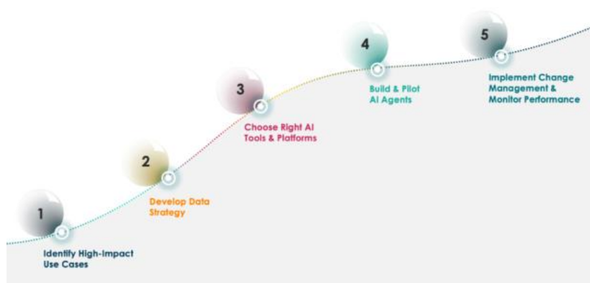

Fig 4: Implementing Agentic AI Systems.

Equally important, most commercial data platforms and big companies' data operations can't fully be met with hybrid data environments sourcing data from both on-premise stores and on-cloud storage, data gathered in different scales and complemented by a vast amount of internal tools running on legacy programming languages. Instead of large-scale invention of two-ends-pluggable data warehouse connectors, frequent communications are vital between data teams and business teams who can expose data sourcing questions, overall shaping questions and quasi-real-time data visualization UI specifications, with a clear wit of what unaccounted visualization inspection bits/bytes of computations would need to be added, or words to be understood and recorded to the internal data documentation pages. Such sessions will be desired if possible with data owners' attendance. Here, the data owners are all business teams that contributed once or more data or manual ways of gathering and data transformation. The most frequent ones include equipment maintenance, customer management, discount management, promotion notice, with careful curation on the trusted data quality expectations, architectural layouts, and both security and performance thresholds predetermined.

7.1. Project Planning and Management

The following sections detail the lifecycle of design, development, implementation, and ongoing support and enhancements of Agentic AI systems. These systems conduct contract compliance review of critical operations documents by dynamically selecting AI processes, generative agents, knowledge repositories, and retail data. The proposed system will operate as a service accessible through a user interface with automated back-end functions. An integrated environment would streamline user workflow while opening exciting avenues for research in Human-AI collaboration. Due to the novelty of the planned systems, the full development effort is anticipated to take two years and be undertaken with a dedicated team of instruction-following generative AI agents. In conjunction with this new development effort, existing Agentic AI tools that have already incorporated multimodal data and have a track record of deployment should also continue to be utilized for new investigation of business operations documents.

Preliminary analysis of critical operations documents using current Agentic AI tools has been completed in under a week from initial reading to insights and highlighted sections to follow up on with business stakeholders. After critical operations documents have been ingested by the continuous background review, users of the Agentic AI systems will be notified of any substantive changes or suggested corrections to the business operations documents and flagged for review. In addition to review of proposed changes to operations documents, an AI assistant would accompany users through reviewing contracts by providing a conceptual map of changes versus past standards and proofreading contracts by parsing the change prompts provided by the agent following edits, and pulling in relevant knowledge repository and data directly. This current project proposal envisages adding an intuitive web user interface to an agent organization currently run via a series of collated scripts by bespoke instruction-following generative agents. End-user customization in terms of the functions emerging from Agentic LLMs as well as the agents and AI processes that can be utilized to conduct these functions will radically enhance user engagement and a sense of agency, and operational coherence.

7.2. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement involves a broad array of actors and actions to actively engage relevant stakeholder groups. Stakeholder engagement processes should be designed to ensure as far as possible that stakeholders understand the situation and can integrate that understanding into their viewpoints and actions. Methods should ensure stakeholder access to knowledge about the system and its performance. A more concrete example is to provide a curated selection of scenarios about possible future outcomes for the classes of AI systems the stakeholder group cares about. The design of such stakeholder engagement processes falls under the basic design question “How to build?” Formulating the clearer design question “How to build stakeholder engagement processes for agentic AI systems?” also restricts consideration to the domain of AI systems where designs, plans, and implementations interact with agentic AI systems.

There are many other questions where “How to build” might lead to constructive analysis. The most relevant answers include a large set of design considerations for stakeholder engagement choices, forms, discourses, and procedures. The empirical research might clarify what stakeholders know about AI systems in the various sectors and industries, the cognitive or computational performance and capabilities they expect from these AI systems, and how these expectations relate to the methods used to build these systems. Stakeholder engagement processes will then aim to develop shared understanding about AI systems and to broaden the discourse so they can be openly discussed. Finally, many more implementation adjustments should be developed to ground this process with political, institutional, and empirical views.

7.3. Change Management

Following initial deliberation, and in conjunction with the appointment of new leaders in the Data & AI Operations teams, change management became the primary work-stream to build plans regarding target state, operating model and roles and responsibilities. As the broader Agentic Data & AI initiatives to design, build and embed solutions at scale and pace, some challenges of prioritization and balancing activities across the work-streams were experienced as planned resources were insufficient. The new corporate IT and Data Operations leadership provided vital senior-level focus on prioritization of actions to overcome these initial growing pains and work through the complexities of consulting the wider teams while acceleratory much needed planning, ownership and alignment of both immediate and longer-term priorities. The other foundational work-streams carried out separate parallel and complementary pieces of work. Building on knowledge gained through previous years, this included intense team engagement and audit activity to understand current state, user journeys and pain points, as well as competitor benchmarking and gap analysis to inform future target state options and priorities. Following modeling of both the potential target state and an incremental pathway to realizing it, the widest team engagement on the current options and clarification of remaining questions was carried out, leading to sign-off of the recommendations across all ten work-streams in a structured corporate-style presentation pack. The next stages of full embedding, rollout and implementation were being worked through via a new operating model and set of detailed processes. In summary, important progress was made in building the required foundations of a target state, operating model and roles and responsibilities to support the future embedding of new approaches to utilize data and AI across operations at scale and pace. Significant challenges were experienced to achieve wider focus and prioritization across all activities as desired and therefore to credibility and impact in a critical stage of the work. Over time, senior-level buy-in and focus was secured leading to improved outcomes, and strong further progress was achieved, greatly aided by the input from external resources to carry out further benchmarking and analysis and model robust recommendations. In these and other regards, this engagement, which builds on earlier input and is ongoing, is highly valued by those involved.

8. Case Studies of Successful Implementations

Hyperparameters, such as weight decay, choice of optimizer, and learning rate, have been shown to play a critical role in the performance of Machine Learning (ML) algorithms. These hyperparameters can be fastened from data using risk measures, which measure the performance of a particular ML method on a validation set. These measures can be either classical information-theoretically derivable estimators or data-driven estimators. It can be shown that this costs fewer training epochs than a grid search, achieving a larger decrease in prediction error. Experimentation with different hyperparameters is an inevitable part of most ML projects. Combining heterogeneous predictions is important in machine learning. Ensemble methods combine predictions from multiple classifiers to improve performance compared to individual classifiers. Many procedures have been proposed, most of which can be classified into architecture-dependent and architecture-independent methods. Architecture-dependent methods consider the joint model (the combination of individual models) as one architecture in the learning procedures. In architecture-independent methods, there is no algorithmic or theoretical treatment for monitoring the diversity of predictions. Recently, many studies have shown that ML can lead to spurious correlations, name-based reasoning, and a dichotomy between results on natural and benchmark distributions. ML-algorithms have been used to power new products and services. As general intelligence (AGI) approaches, business leaders are broken between excitement and concern. New infrastructural decisions will be critical for organizations to realize AGI’s opportunities and also protect themselves against its risks. Novel AI security tools and designs may democratize, automate, and reduce the costs of building secure infrastructures. Adequate plans must be made to prevent attacks targeting the new infrastructure. Comprehensive protections must be built to safeguard against AI security breaches. There is hope in the form of competing elite AI systems, but their capacity for unregulated harm illuminates the need for intervention more than ever.

8.1. Leading Retailers' Experiences

This research came about as a whole new infrastructure started to design and build for agentic AI with retail IT and data operations. It began due to a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with the performance and approach across the chain of systems. Many cases of failures were due to the previous, now flawed, design principles, particularly around technocratic, detached, monolithic, and administrator-controlled infrastructures. These prior designs gave rise to systems that could only be interpreted retroactively that gave countless monitoring problems while driving misaligned/off-target decisions. Similarly, the infrastructure was incapable of allowing any form of collaboration with different parties involved, from system vendors and operators to other data and tech stack teams and product owners. Finally, as frustrations grew, the department started to become more estranged from other product and team areas. The build of the new infrastructure is about shifting the previous major designs.

Critical goals of the new infrastructure include: 1. Choose the right type of component technology, 2. Architecture design to enforce good deployments and design structures, 3. Technical designs that support good operations, and 4. Establish an operable environment that gives ample access to easy monitoring and debugging. With these principles in mind, the new infrastructure was conceptualized and kicked off well over a year ago. Since that time, rough estimates have been built for new components, migration plans drafted, and a new suite of deployment tooling built to automate many processes around deployments, monitoring, and observability. Currently, the new infrastructure is running most systems in production and is gradually being ramped up to be at full replacement. In retrospect, the new infrastructure is already an appreciated improvement over the previous one. This improvement is visible in a vastly improved performance of systems, answers to most monitoring questions being available.

8.2. Lessons Learned

The development, implementation, and evaluation of agentic AI systems are complex endeavors requiring particular attention to their organizational-social implications. As these systems develop and execute decision procedures independently, human control over their work is limited, and operation professionals must collaborate to understand and account for their processes and outcomes. The focus of this field study is therefore on the design of a collaborative infrastructure for agentic AI systems in retail and data operations, which are enterprise-wide and low-touch in nature.

The study focuses on two forms of intervention. An interaction design and analysis strategy is elaborated that seeks to address obstacles for collaborative sensemaking out of agents’ decision consequences. This includes a compilation of material instruments fostering non-default assumptions and engagement in collaborative interpretation, anchored in specifics of the considered business. Drawing on recent research interests and empiricals, original analytic proposals are elaborated which explore dimensions of resistance to actors’ continued appraisal of an outcome. In moving beyond decision support with interaction input, this work seeks to reappropriate discussion instruments for the operational assessment of business-critical AI decisioning.

The operational, organizational-social, and methodological implications of the study distinctly contribute to the burgeoning dialogue on democratic AI systems. Investigating the design of collaborative infrastructures for agentic systems in analysis, review, and appraisement work is an under-represented area of dialogue, with findings being transferable to extensive industries where technologies are used for rapid low-touch decision making in high-stakes domains. The exploration of infrastructure as a social construction has evidently yielded alternative ways to understand the collaboration of agents and data professionals in attenuating divergence arising from multiple sources. Ultimately, methodologically novel approaches are elaborated for a hands-on exploration of the socio-technical implications of agentic systems’ monitoring and appraisal. Several lines of future research are identified and outlined for scholars interested in further developing aspects of this work.

Equ 3: Orchestration Load Balance Score.

$$S_{balance} = 1 - \frac{\sigma(N_{agents})}{\mu(N_{agents})}$$

- σ = standard deviation of active agents per node
- μ = mean number of agents per node
  → Evaluates how evenly AI agents are distributed across infrastructure nodes.

9. Future Trends in Retail IT and AI

As AI capabilities continue to expand at a rapid clip, it is imperative for many retailers to re-evaluate their overall technology strategy and determine what integration of generative AI might yield the most impactful outcomes. Retailers currently focus heavily on capturing data, tailoring data outputs to various personnel, and creating infrastructure that enables data analytics to flourish. In general, mid-tier to larger retailers have a range of data and IT talent, but typically do not have the technology infrastructure or depth of agency devoted to transforming data into decisions it uses. Given that current technology and organization cannot yield the desired outcome, investment in AI initiatives will yield little ROI by replicating poor processes that will only become more arduous as data scales and as AI maturity increases. Conversely, in selecting high-impact and deeply transformative use cases, retailers can likely realize manifold benefits that will result in an innate level of competency in AI technologies across IT and personnel.

Some critical areas where retailer needs will soon intensify include: a sophisticated tech stack of advanced methods for assessing and integrating AI technologies; nimble, sophisticated, and highly marinated hybrid agencies comprising creative, behavioral, and IT talent to imbue AI into practice; a technology and organizational infrastructure that facilitates rapid AI experimentation while scaling beyond capabilities; and high-demand executive talent that stewards the effective development and operationalization of AI technology in concert with personnel. Each of these points has a broad set of necessary substantive and agency-focused organizational resources, knowledge, and skills. However, there presently exists limited frameworks for retailers to evaluate their current state, ideal state, resource capacities, and systemic roadmaps that generate deliverables.

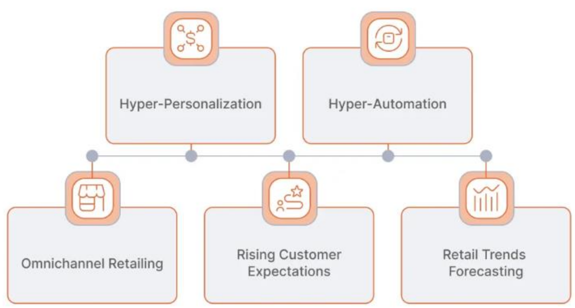

Fig 5: Future Trends in Retail IT and AI.

9.1. Predictive Analytics and Personalization

Predictive analytics has become a major trend among retailers who want to increase operational efficiencies. These applications use a variety of methods to predict demand for items at a store or inventory level. This prediction can, in turn, improve day-to-day in-stock performance, maintaining shelf replenishment or out-of-stock prevention algorithms. Inventory rebalancing between stores is another application that benefits from this transformation. To predict performance, one can leverage historical data to create various models to predict how key metrics would change. In the store context, an array of variables, such as weather and vacations for out-of-home and events for in-home, can impact the store's business. Scaled correctly, these forecasting methods will predict new product contributions and lifecycle phases.

Crucial to making any of these predictions actionable is to further design the infrastructure that uses them. Typically, when the business decision involves some actions, a feedback loop evaluation is helpful to improve the predictions even further by adjusting the underlying forecasting models directly. Generally, implementations of this sophistication require a large amount of engineering work and communication between business and tech teams.

Another use of data that is changing the retail environment drastically is personalization. By using the investment done in the above Diagnostics section on data layer integration, one can build personalized experiences, from the recommended aisle for a household to scoop coupons that increase not only the chances of redemption but also margins. Recently, to combat inflation, many retailers have sharpened their price strategies. An example is to convert all markdown prices into a personalized offer. To build personalized experiences, one needs to answer three questions: What do you want to communicate? For whom do you want to talk to? And how do you want to talk?

9.2. The Role of IoT in Retail

The retail sector represents the biggest opportunity for the Information Internet of Things (IIoT) with its vast deployment of devices in ATMs, vending machines, pharmaceuticals, retail outlets, gas stations, and banking sites. An extensive analysis was performed to identify the applications of devices in retail settings and how these devices enable existing and new use cases. Apart from use cases which are a minimum requirement in digitalization of business operations, applications were assessed which improve customer experience and staffing efficiency. Major retailers around the globe, swiping through multi-sales categories, are already gathering data from their Internet of Things (IoT) devices and acting upon them. New entrants such as omnichannel retailers are now turning their focus towards the retail space, where they are facing stiff competition from traditional brick-and-mortar stores. Apart from use cases which are a minimum requirement in digitalization of business operations, applications were assessed which improve customer experience and staffing efficiency. These retail IoT use cases can generate considerable value for their business operations. However, the IoT value chain is wide, spanning from devices towards business applications and services. Without prudent management of the ecosystem of retail IoT vendors, the big picture of hardware, connectivity, platforms, use cases and applications gets lost. Major retailers around the globe, swiping through multi-sales categories, are already gathering data from their Internet of Things (IoT) devices and acting upon them. New entrants such as omni-channel retailers are now turning their focus toward the retail space, where they are facing stiff competition from traditional brick-and-mortar stores. The retail sector represents the biggest opportunity for the Information Internet of Things (IIoT) with its vast deployment of devices in ATMs, vending machines, pharmaceuticals, retail outlets, gas stations, and banking sites. Extensive analysis was performed to identify the applications of devices in retail settings and how these devices enable existing and new use cases. Direct semi-structured interviews were conducted with top managers from the largest retail chains.

10. Conclusion

Finally, existing AI applications should not be viewed as perfected deliverables. Instead, such systems should be treated as evolving technologies that are continuously adapted and sustained as agents of change. Failure to recognize the continual need for change management risks jeopardizing the value of the initial investments in AI technology. Nevertheless, AI systems pose considerable challenges to such ongoing efforts, which are further complicated by their socially constructed, subjective, ambiguous, and uncertain nature. Therefore, managers must consider the socio-technical implications of AI systems and shape their techno-organizational infrastructures accordingly.

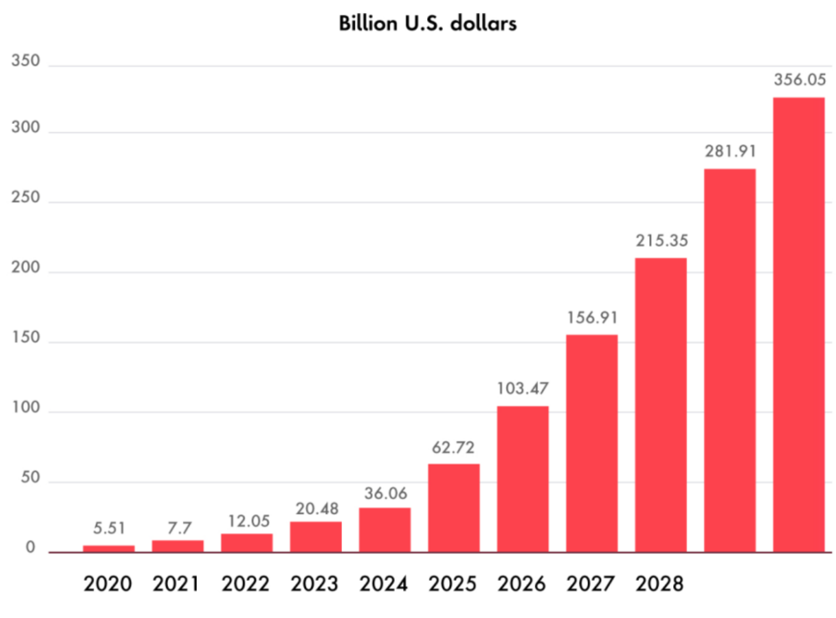

Fig 6: Agentic AI vs. Generative AI: The Evolution of Decision-making

The analysis has shown that ensuring the sustained usage of AI applications in retail operations requires maturing the technologies, practices, infrastructures, competency, and relationships surrounding them in a whole-systems approach. To do so, managers need to craft and start incremental change initiatives that are tailored to the socio-technical context. In particular, managers need to oversee the co-evolution of practices, technologies, infrastructures, and relationships that are governed by more or less path-dependent evolutionary processes. Framing co-evolution as an emergent, path-dependent, and contextually contingent process is important to ensure co-evolution. Attention should be drawn to spearheading teams and arenas to involve the key stakeholders collaboratively. Such teams should be carefully composed to include the stakeholders most likely to shape the future course of the co-evolution as well as those who are likely to fall behind. Such teams also provide lower-risk arenas for team members to learn how to embrace change.

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