

How UBA brand members leverage Artificial Intelligence

↳ Learnings and recommendations from early adopters.



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"Through 12 use cases taken from discussions between marketing leaders, this document highlights how UBA brand members are currently implementing and using AI in the early stages. It provides both practical insights and recommendations to support brands with this technological change on key topics such as governance, brand equity, agency collaboration, communication asset production, etc. This document showcases once again the role of UBA in uniting brands, fostering peer-to-peer collaboration to build stronger brands."



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Introduction

01

AI and *governance*:
structured integration

02

AI and *regulation*:
building a framework
of *trust*

03

AI and *talent*:
a *driver* for *attractiveness*
and *engagement*

04

AI and *insourcing*:
moving towards
greater *independence*?

05

AI and *agencies*:
moving towards a *new*
collaboration model

06

AI and *marketing roles*:
change to *analysis and*
strategy

07

AI and the *local media*
ecosystem versus
global platforms

08

AI and *brand equity*:
ensuring *coherence*,
differentiation and
authenticity

09

AI and *communication*
assets: balance between
creation and *production*

10

AI and *targeting*:
efficiency and data control

11

AI and *insights*:
understanding and
interacting with consumers

12

AI and *new platforms*:
testing and integrating
new tools

Conclusion

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already integrated in the tools used every day by many marketers and brand managers. The opportunities are wide-ranging with content production, campaign automation, message customisation, predictive analysis, etc. But these opportunities bring challenges: how can we structure AI adoption in a company? What roles need to be redefined? How can we secure responsible and safe use of this technology? What new ways of collaborating with agencies are needed?

During two roundtables held in February 2025, 12 Belgian marketing leaders from various companies and sectors, which are UBA brand members with differing levels of AI maturity, shared their experiences, best practices and expectations. This document provides a summary of these discussions highlighting the main trends observed, challenges and recommendations to successfully integrate AI in marketing and brand management.

The goal is also to facilitate understanding of Artificial Intelligence and its use in marketing. While the prospects of AI may be viewed as a revolution similar to the arrival of the internet and mobile technology, they are built on principles and practices established over the past few years, especially in data management.

01

AI and governance: structured integration

Most advertisers have formed or are considering forming an AI board reporting to the CEO, which is tasked with overseeing and implementing AI use.

IT and legal departments play a key role in this process, requiring *close collaboration with marketing*. AI adoption requires a strategic approach and *cross-functional alignment* to ensure effective use in compliance with security, legal and ethical frameworks.

Opportunities

- ↳ Defining the business value for each AI project by adopting a standard approach (business case, ROI, etc.).
- ↳ Optimising decision-making through enhanced use of data and insights.
- ↳ Developing a sharing and learning culture on AI and new technology.

Challenges

- ↳ Ensuring mutual understanding between Marketing, IT and legal departments.
- ↳ Managing budget constraints in view of the costs of tools, licences and training needs (setting priorities).

↳ Recommendations

- Develop an AI board reporting to senior management and establishing cross-functional governance involving IT, marketing & legal.
- Centralise AI implementation costs.
- Select tools adapted to the company's specific needs and train teams on how to use them.
- Gradually define benchmarks to measure AI impact on productivity.

02

AI and regulation: building a framework of trust

Advertisers are prioritising establishing *clear internal guidelines* for AI use. Unregulated use presents risks: copyright issues, data leaks, algorithmic biases, etc. Strict governance and validation by IT and legal departments *are essential* to ensure reliable use in compliance with legal and ethical requirements. This is crucial to maintain the company's reputation and foster a *culture of trust, curiosity and openness* to innovation.

Opportunities

- ↳ Strengthening trust in AI tools through IT and legal validation.
- ↳ Ensuring responsible AI use by defining clear rules and raising team awareness.

Challenges

- ↳ Identifying and validating the most suitable AI tools while avoiding non-compliant solutions.
- ↳ Balancing innovation with compliance with current regulations.
- ↳ Preventing unchecked proliferation of AI solutions in the company.

↳ Recommendations

- Define clear internal guidelines for AI use in the form of specific rules or integrated in general corporate policies.
- Only authorise tools validated by IT and legal departments.
- Implement internal training and awareness campaigns to ensure controlled and responsible AI adoption.

03

AI and talent: a driver for attractiveness and engagement

Some advertisers highlight that while AI may cause employee concern, it can also act as a *tool* to attract and retain *talent*. Internal surveys conducted by advertisers sometimes reveal that senior employees are among the most receptive to adopting this technology which *challenges* common *stereotypes*.

Opportunities

- ↳ Fostering an innovation and entrepreneurship culture on marketing teams.
- ↳ Consolidating employee engagement through AI tools customised to their roles.
- ↳ Promoting the introduction of internal "AI champions" to support change and share best practices.

Challenges

- ↳ Managing fears relating to automation and career development.
- ↳ Ensuring a gradual skills upgrade on AI tools based on teams' needs and maturity.
- ↳ Avoiding unnecessary training or information overload when AI access is restricted.

↳ Recommendations

- Assess employees' affinity with AI and new technology via internal surveys.
- Create an internal AI ambassador network to support adoption and drive change.
- Organise practical training adapted to different AI use after tools are launched in the company.
- Position AI as a support tool rather than a substitute for human expertise.

04

AI and insourcing: moving towards greater independence?

With the rise of AI, some brands are *reevaluating* their *relationships* with agencies and considering insourcing some tasks that are currently outsourced. Content production and market research, in particular, could be significantly impacted by *generative AI*. These developments offer companies the opportunity to test *new approaches* while optimising resources. However, this transition raises strategic questions about the balance between insourcing and agency collaboration, depending on business priorities, internal resources and tasks assigned to them.

Opportunities

- ↳ Gaining independence in content production and marketing campaign management.
- ↳ Optimising costs by reducing spending on low-value output.
- ↳ Enhancing internal functions with enriched content capabilities.
- ↳ Speeding up processes by managing production timelines internally.

Challenges

- ↳ Developing internal expertise to effectively leverage these tools.
- ↳ Redefining roles in departments in a balanced manner.
- ↳ Clearly defining what should be insourced and what is best handled by agencies.

↳ Recommendations

- Identify tasks that can be effectively insourced via AI while upgrading strategic agency collaborations.
- Compare the costs and benefits of AI tools provided by agencies with in-house alternatives to determine the most effective and cost-efficient approach.
- Train internal teams to maximise AI tool use and ensure controlled adoption.

05

AI and agencies: moving towards a new collaboration model

The impact of AI on *advertiser-agency relationships* was a key topic of discussion. AI is *redefining agency roles*, especially in content production and campaign optimisation. Advertisers want to ensure their partners integrate AI effectively and transparently while *optimising costs*.

Opportunities

- ↳ Speeding up production and go-to-market with optimised AI workflows.
- ↳ Reducing costs on low-value tasks.
- ↳ Reassessing task allocation between agencies and advertisers to define a clear "scope of work".

Challenges

- ↳ Rebalancing agency resources to optimise production and adaptation focusing on brand strategy and key creative ideas.
- ↳ Ensuring transparency in how agencies use AI.

↳ Recommendations

- Encourage agencies to adopt a proactive and transparent approach to AI.
- Hold strategic discussions with agencies to clarify AI impact and optimise collaboration.
- Review remuneration models to increase the value of high-added-value tasks while cutting unnecessary tasks.

06

AI and marketing roles: change to analysis and strategy

Marketing functions are changing given the influence of AI, especially in *content creation* (text and visuals), *media planning* and *research*. Required skills are shifting towards analysis and strategy, necessitating role adjustments and training pathways. The challenge involves *integrating* these changes while preserving creativity and human expertise.

Opportunities

- ↳ Accelerating the analysis and use of marketing data for better decision-making.
- ↳ Adapting tactical plans in real-time using AI-generated insights.
- ↳ Shifting marketing skills toward more strategic and analytical roles.

Challenges

- ↳ Training teams on new working methods and AI tool use.
- ↳ Managing the risk of excessive automation, which may hinder creativity and originality in campaigns.
- ↳ Maintaining a balance between artificial intelligence and human expertise to ensure a differentiating approach.

↳ Recommendations

- Integrate prompt engineering training in internal development plans and create shared prompt libraries to optimise AI use.
- Plan ahead for changes in job roles, especially for media planners, who are moving towards more analytical and strategic tasks.
- Rethink the roles and tasks of marketing teams to integrate AI as a decision support tool rather than simply an execution tool.

07

AI and the local media ecosystem versus global platforms

Local media must adapt to the rise of global platforms that leverage AI to *optimise advertising* campaigns and capture an increasing share of *media investment*. In response to this competition, local players have the opportunity to develop *more transparent solutions* customised to market-specific needs.

Opportunities

- ↳ Improving campaign effectiveness with AI solutions adapted to local realities.
- ↳ Developing more transparent and controllable tools for advertisers.
- ↳ Leveraging local data more precisely and with greater relevance than global platforms.

Challenges

- ↳ Increased competition from global platforms benefiting from technological advantages and huge resources.
- ↳ Transparency regarding data and performance of local campaigns.
- ↳ Lag in data exploitation by some regional media outlets.

↳ Recommendations

- Encourage AI innovation by local media and ad networks to offer high-performance and differentiated solutions.
- Promote local actors to pool AI efforts and enhance competitiveness against global platforms.
- Explore local alternatives to big tech solutions to diversify media strategies.

08

AI and brand equity: ensuring coherence, differentiation and authenticity

AI brings new possibilities for consolidating brand identity, in particular through personalised conversational assistants and *customised creative tools*. However, poorly calibrated AI can alter public perception and create dissonance with the brand's values. Ensuring *alignment* between AI and brand identity is crucial to maintain trust and differentiation.

Opportunities

- ↳ Maintaining brand consistency by defining AI guidelines for tone, visual identity and personalised interaction.
- ↳ Optimising management of intellectual property rights for AI-generated content to protect brand assets.
- ↳ Creating interactive personalised experiences using brand bots and smart assistants to enhance consumer engagement.

↳ Recommendations

- Develop AI-specific guidelines to align AI use with brand identity and values.
- Protect the brand by ensuring AI respects its core principles.
- Internally test AI tools before integrating them in customer experiences to ensure alignment with brand positioning and tone.

Challenges

- ↳ Risk of diluting brand identity if AI tools generate generic or inappropriate content.
- ↳ Maintaining ethical and sustainable practices, including evaluating the carbon footprint of AI use.
- ↳ Striking a balance between innovation and brand values without excessive automation.

09

AI and communication assets: balance between creation and production

Advertisers clearly *differentiate* between content creation and production phases. AI is particularly effective in *optimising production* and asset adaptation. The objective is to use AI as a *productivity lever* without compromising campaign uniqueness.

Opportunities

- ↳ Speeding up and optimising production using generative AI, reducing content time-to-market.
- ↳ Reducing costs by enabling fast proof-of-concept creation and low-cost variations.
- ↳ Enhancing SEO and content structuring with automated optimisation.

Challenges

- ↳ Risk of overly standardised content impacting originality and brand identity.
- ↳ Need to distinguish between creation and production to prevent over-reliance on AI.
- ↳ Managing intellectual property rights for AI-generated content given unclear legal attributions.

↳ Recommendations

- Use AI as an optimisation and production tool while retaining ideation on human teams to preserve campaign authenticity.
- Implement human validation processes for AI-generated content.
- Secure use and ownership rights of AI-generated assets by defining clear usage rules.

10

AI and targeting: efficiency and data control

Global advertising platforms are significantly ahead in AI-driven *campaign targeting*. While these tools enable *enhanced personalisation* and optimisation, they also raise concerns about data control and algorithm transparency.

Opportunities

- ↳ Improving campaign performance through automated audience optimisation.
- ↳ Personalising messages based on consumer behaviour and preferences.
- ↳ Automating targeting, enabling marketing teams to focus on strategy, analysis and creation.

Challenges

- ↳ Algorithm opacity on ad platforms, making it difficult to analyse targeting criteria (black box effect).
- ↳ Dependence on global solutions with limited high-performance local alternatives.
- ↳ Compliance with data protection regulations (first-party and third-party data).

↳ Recommendations

- Use global platforms wisely and demand greater transparency on campaign optimisation criteria.
- Test local and European alternatives to diversify targeting sources.
- Develop a strong first-party data strategy to ensure effective and regulation-compliant targeting.

11

AI and insights: understanding and interacting with consumers

AI is *enhancing the way and the speed* with which brands understand their consumers by implementing AI analysis tools such as eye-tracking, facial coding, behavioural analytics and using synthetic data from synthetic respondents.

By using input from multiple information sources – such as social media, brand trackers, customer service reports and CRM interactions – AI also enables brands to stay closer to consumer needs, generate hypotheses and identify blind spots.

AI also *facilitates interaction automation*, for example, via chatbots. However, caution is needed to ensure a seamless customer experience and maintain high quality exchanges, balancing efficiency with a human touch.

Opportunities

- ↳ Improving customer segmentation and consumer profiling through AI-driven insights.
- ↳ Using synthetic data to augment real-world data in consumer research, reducing costs and accelerating insight collection.
- ↳ Generating real-time AI-synthesised reports from customer feedback for faster decision-making.
- ↳ Automating routine consumer interactions via AI chatbots, ensuring a smooth experience.

Challenges

- ↳ Ensuring reliability and representativeness of synthetic data, which still requires validation.
- ↳ Ensuring AI-generated interactions feel natural and enhance, rather than reduce, brand trust.
- ↳ Managing data privacy concerns and ensuring compliance with changing regulations.

↳ Recommendations

- Regularly review AI-driven insights to adjust segmentation and personalisation strategies.
- Test consumer market research conducted using synthetic respondents. This requires robust validation frameworks and on-going expert monitoring.
- Test automating the routine consumer interactions via AI chatbots, with human in the loop.

12

AI and new platforms: testing and integrating new tools

AI is speeding up *experimentation* of new platforms and tools, providing businesses with increased agility in their digital transformation.

Some industries are developing *custom AI solutions* to optimise their operations.

Opportunities

- ↳ Quickly identifying the most relevant emerging platforms.
- ↳ Improving integration between different AI agents for seamless collaboration between teams and agencies.
- ↳ Developing or configuring customised internal tools adapted to the company's specific needs.

↳ Recommendations

- Test AI solutions specific to the company's sector.
- Involve internal teams in new platform selection and evaluation.
- Maintain on-going AI monitoring to foresee trends.

Challenges

- ↳ Accurately assessing the real impact of new platforms.
- ↳ Avoiding scattered investment in immature or poorly adapted solutions.
- ↳ Developing adequate internal expertise to select the best innovations.

Conclusion

AI is fundamentally reshaping marketing. To fully capitalise on its benefits, brands need to structure governance, adjust agency relationships and ensure these tools align with their identity. The goal is not to adopt AI simply as a trend but to integrate it intelligently and methodically.

For those yet to take the plunge, it is advisable to start with a small-scale project with clearly measurable boundaries. This approach fosters trust, highlights benefits and provides insights adapted to the company, enabling the development of more ambitious projects in the future.

UBA will continue to represent advertisers' interests with associations such as UMA and ACC, as well as local media, to ensure AI contributes to balanced development in our ecosystem.

Thank you

We would like to sincerely thank all marketing leaders who took part in these roundtables for their time and sharing their use cases. We also extend our gratitude to Yves De Voeght, observer of the world of brands and media, for his moderation and contributions to this document.

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About UBA

UBA stands for 'United Brands Association' and is the Belgian association of and for brands. UBA represents the interests of brand builders and its mission is to create a creative, innovative and dynamic ecosystem that provides room for ambitious brands to grow sustainably. The UBA community consists of 384 companies, representing 1050 brands and more than 8000 advertisers.

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