Ekimetrics.

'Quiet AI'
The Invisible Touch
in Luxury and Beauty

| chapter 2

**Optimizing behind the scenes.
Elevating the in-store experience.**

Summary

Introduction

The luxury and beauty sector is at a turning point.

Reference points are shifting. Markets are being reshaped. Growth is normalizing. Maisons must reinvent themselves without betraying their essence. Yesterday's balances no longer hold: more informed, more engaged consumers are redefining the rules—and the very notion of value.

They no longer settle for a product, however flawless it may be. They expect an experience, an emotion, and consistency between what a brand promises and what it delivers. Every interaction becomes proof of value. In a context of sustained price increases, Maisons must now justify service quality, journey fluidity, and relationship relevance.

Luxury is no longer just owned. It is experienced.

Yet this experience is not shaped solely on the surface. It relies on an invisible, often underestimated mechanism: a Maison's ability to orchestrate operations, teams, data, and decision-making with the same rigor as its brand discourse. Brand equity is no longer shaped only by image or storytelling, but by executional coherence—how the promise is delivered across the entire customer journey.

In our first white paper, *'Quiet AI' The Invisible Touch in Luxury and Beauty*, we explored this very dimension: AI dedicated to transforming the sector's backstage operations—where planning, steering, and operational performance take place. This second edition extends the reflection to a new frontier: the customer experience, online and in-store, now powered by agentic AI.

Built on generative AI and intelligent back-office orchestration, agentic AI aligns brand promise with on-the-ground reality. Embedded in business processes and daily workflows, it orchestrates luxury and beauty retail from end to end— enhancing connections, smoothing journeys, and amplifying differentiation, without ever replacing humans.

Our conviction: agentic AI opens a new path where technology becomes a discreet yet structural pillar of the brand. An AI that amplifies human expertise and the art of selling, making every interaction more precise, smoother, and more meaningful. A silent but key transformation, explored through three lenses: sector shifts, operational roadblocks, and the potential of augmented retail.

> ***Agentic AI refers to a form of integrated, proactive artificial intelligence** that operates in a near-autonomous manner within business workflows to augment human capabilities. It takes shape through AI agents—software entities able to observe, reason, and act in context. Unlike traditional AI systems, these agents do not merely automate tasks: they connect and orchestrate multiple environments—CRM, ERP, HRIS, inventory management, supply chain management—to intelligently steer critical processes end to end.

Part 1 • An ever-changing sector, caught between rising customer expectations and a strong need for differentiation

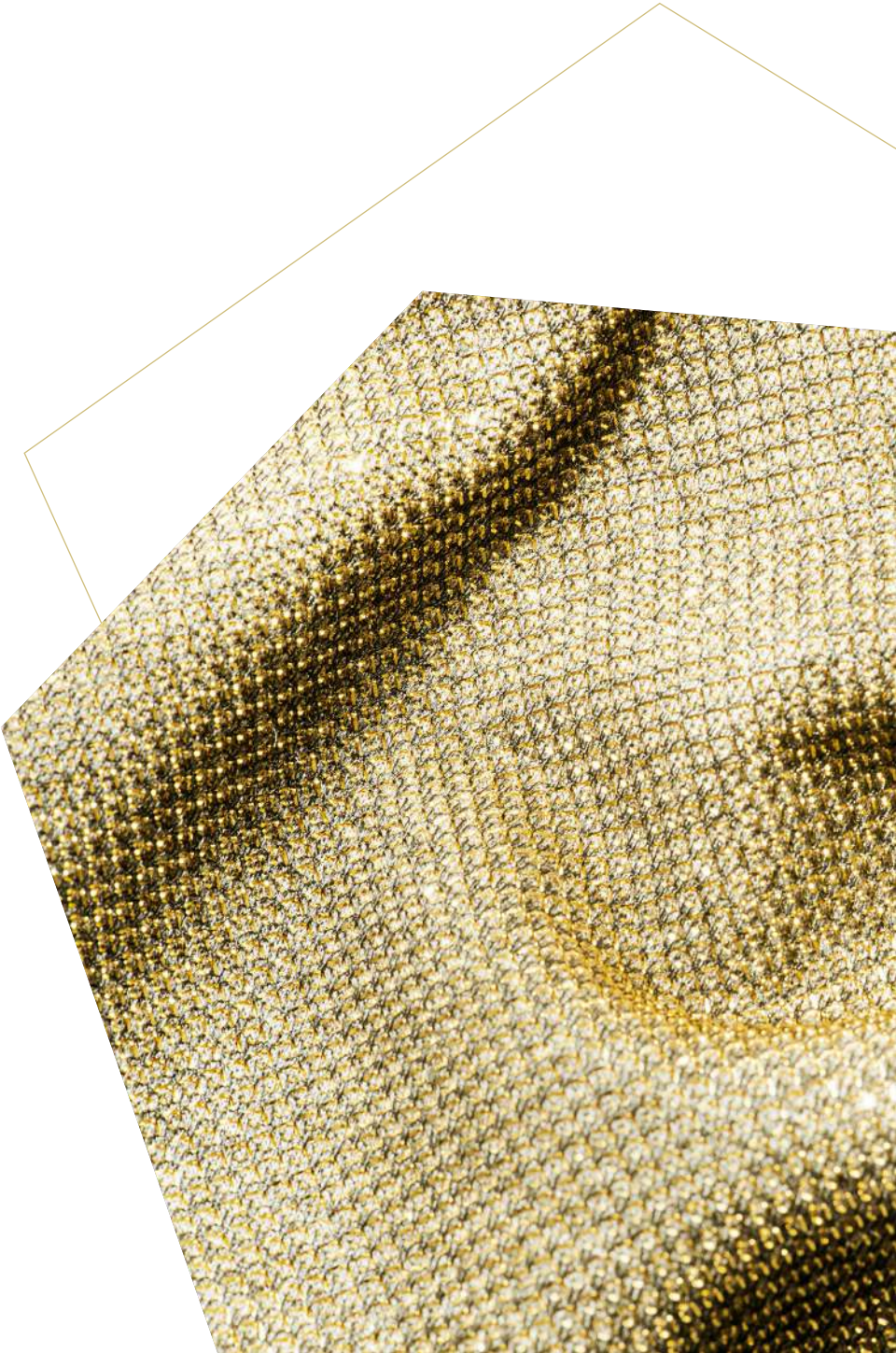In both luxury and beauty retail, emotion has always been central to the promise: a bottle, a texture, artisanal craftsmanship—these tangible symbols of excellence were once enough to express value and rarity. Today, that balance has shifted. As consumers become more demanding and markets become increasingly volatile, differentiation no longer lies solely in the product but also in the experience. What sets a Maison apart today is its ability to build connection, create meaning, and embody the coherence of its universe at every touchpoint.

From a product-led model to an experience-led model: The new paradigm of luxury and beauty retail

Luxury and beauty brands are no longer desirable only for what they show, but for what they make customers feel throughout the journey. Three key dynamics illustrate this shift toward a model where the emotion experienced takes precedence over the item owned.

1 The end of automatic growth: when value must be experienced

After several years of post-Covid momentum, key growth engines—China and the United States in particular—are slowing. As growth normalizes, rates return to pre-crisis levels[1]. At the same time, luxury brands have continued to pursue aggressive price increases: between 2019 and 2023, price hikes accounted for over 80% of sector growth, with some iconic categories seeing prices rise by 50% to 100% in four years[2]. This strategy is now reaching its limits. In 2024, global luxury spending declined by 1% to 3%[3], a reality check for a sector where successive increases have hit a ceiling and are curbing aspirational demand[4]. The era of automatic growth is over. The era of perceived value has begun.

[1] In the range of 3–5% (versus 8% for cosmetics and 9% for the luxury sector). See white paper: *'Quiet AI' The Invisible Touch in Luxury and Beauty*, Ekimetrics, May 2025.

[2] Source: *The State of Luxury 2025 Report*, McKinsey & Company, January 2025.

[3] Source: *Luxury in Transition: Securing Future Growth*, Bain & Company, January 2025

[4] Source: *The State of Luxury 2025 Report*, McKinsey & Company, January 2025.

Customers now expect price increases to translate into stronger felt value, higher perceived quality, and an experience worthy of the investment. Price is no longer just the cost of a product—it is the price of service, attention, and connection. For the Maisons, this creates a new imperative: to re-enchant every interaction so that price genuinely reflects experienced value.

2 New touchpoints are reshaping how people buy

Product discovery no longer happens only in physical luxury temples or e-commerce sites, but in hybrid environments: social commerce, live shopping, immersive platforms. In China, Douyin—the local TikTok—has become much more than a social network: it is an entire ecosystem where marketing, recommendations, and transactions converge. In 2024, commerce generated via Douyin grew by over 30%, surpassing $500 billion and making the platform one of the world's three largest online marketplaces[5]. This model is now scaling globally: TikTok Shop itself is adopting this convergence between entertainment, discovery, and transaction, redefining the rules of digital commerce. For luxury and beauty brands, these new touchpoints are both opportunities and challenges: how do you maintain brand coherence in a continuous commercial flow? Differentiation is no longer only in the product but in orchestration—how the brand embodies its narrative and expertise at every moment of the journey.

3 Care and wellness: toward a more expert, interpersonal experience

In beauty retail, demand is shifting toward promises that are rooted in care and well-being. Consumers seek expert, personalized, almost medical-grade experiences: skin diagnostics, routines tailored to an environment or lifestyle, outcome tracking. This quest for wellness is transforming the relationship into long-term guidance built on trust. This evolution elevates solutions that combine human expertise with interpretable technology: intelligent diagnostics, virtual try-ons, and augmented prescriptions. The goal is not to replace advice, but to deepen and refine it—a principle at the heart of the Quiet AI philosophy.

[5] Source: *Douyin Is the Hottest Upstart eCommerce Marketplace Right Now*, ECDB, March 2025.

Acknowledged, understood, valued customers: Connection as the new luxury of experience

If experience has redefined perceived value, connection has now become its beating heart. In a world where journeys are multiplying and interactions are accelerating, true luxury no longer lies in product rarity, but in the quality of the attention paid to each customer. Being acknowledged, understood, and genuinely considered is now the foundation of loyalty.

1 The community effect outweighs the novelty effect

For Gen Z and Gen Alpha, purchasing is no longer an individual act; it is a way to express identity and belong to a community that shares the same culture and codes. Loyalty is no longer built through exclusivity, but through identification[6].

The example of Rhode, the beauty brand founded by Hailey Bieber, illustrates this shift. With only a handful of SKUs, the brand has built a community-driven empire valued at over one billion dollars. No major product innovation, no massive campaigns—its success rests on tone consistency, the strength of connection, and cultural relevance[7]. Less about assortment, more about the accuracy of experience.

2 Digital technology is now enriching the in-store experience

The customer journey has expanded across online and offline touchpoints. The store is no longer the sole emotional anchor, but one step in an ongoing relationship. Online experiences—through content, storytelling, conversation, and service—prepare and extend the in-store moment. Conversely, the quality of human interaction in-store reinforces the credibility of the digital narrative.

This continuity requires a much higher level of orchestration. Retail teams must navigate a growing number of tools, systems, and KPIs. The risk is clear: energy is absorbed by logistics and coordination, at the expense of face-to-face customer interaction.A shared need is emerging behind this operational

reality: restoring meaning, seamlessness, and coherence—for both sales associates and customers. As journeys become fully omnichannel, Maisons need solutions capable of reconnecting usage, simplifying processes, and supporting human expertise without diluting it.

➜   **Experience cannot be declared—but it can be orchestrated. Between rising emotional expectations on the customer side and increasing operational complexity on the brand side, agentic AI opens a new path: intelligent, contextual, seamless orchestration. Next, we explore how AI agents can concretely help Maisons forecast better, allocate smarter, and serve more effectively—reconciling what is visible with what is invisible, performance with desirability.**

[6] Source: *How Gen Z is reshaping the future of Luxury*, 20something.be, March 2025 and *Elf Beauty rachète Rhode : quand la génération Z bouscule les codes de la beauté*, Profession bien-être, June 2025.

[7] Source: *The Rise of Rhode: 7 Marketing Lessons for Entrepreneurs*, Forbes, May 2025.

Part 2 • Between online and offline: What is still preventing a seamless customer experience?

The luxury and beauty sector has invested heavily in digital transformation: unified CRMs, premium e-commerce platforms, and advanced data analysis. Yet on the ground, customer experience is still too often fragmented. Between online and offline, the promised continuity still struggles to materialize. Brands have all the levers—data, tools, talent—but orchestration is lacking. Processes pile up, teams become overloaded, and perceived value erodes. This is where agentic AI, aligned with the Quiet AI philosophy, can play a decisive role: reconnecting flows, easing friction, and giving time, clarity, and coherence back to teams.

1 **Personalization: progress online, friction in-store**

➡ **Digital personalization is progressing, but in-store execution remains rudimentary**

Online, experiences have become increasingly refined through dynamic recommendations, tailored messaging, and personalized diagnostics. E-commerce platforms and CRMs already enable seamless relationships, capable of anticipating customer needs. But at the retail level, this precision often stops at the store entrance. At the point of sale, personalization still relies heavily on the individual talent and experience of sales associates. Teams spend a significant share of their time on low-value tasks—inventory checks, staffing schedules, deliveries, reporting—at the expense of the art of selling. These activities are essential to operations, but they do not nurture customer emotion. AI can now streamline these operational tasks without altering the human role. Embedded into existing tools, an agentic AI can prepare customer appointments, suggest priority actions, or generate contextual daily briefings. The objective is clear: freeing up time to create connections, attentiveness, and showcasing expertise.

➡ **More complex distribution models in beauty retail**

The beauty sector illustrates these coordination challenges particularly well. Most sales occur through third-party retailers, such as Sephora or Boots, far more than through brand-owned stores. In these third-party distribution networks,

Maisons do not have control over the teams, the selling conditions, or how expertise is embodied day to day. How do you motivate, train, and support advisors who are not brand employees?

Agentic AI can provide a shared foundation: embedded training modules, real-time product recommendations, and automated reporting on in-store activations. It ensures a consistent experience, even within a distributed ecosystem.

and the connection more coherent. Here, AI is becoming a lever of "augmentation": helping teams prepare, advise, and deliver expertise—without ever replacing the human connection.

➡ **The promise is clear: to streamline the experience without weakening the human dimension. For AI to deliver on this promise, it must integrate seamlessly into everyday gestures and help teams steer, anticipate, and tell the story better.**

2 In-store teams under pressure

➡ Finer forecasting for better service

In luxury retail, sales targets are often set globally, without being meaningfully translated at the team or store level. Yet delivering an exceptional experience requires granular forecasting—by category, sales associate, day, and season. Agentic AI can help break down these objectives into realistic targets by integrating exogenous variables such as tourist flows, weather, peak periods, or local events. The result: the right people, in the right places, at the right time (see use case on the following page).

➡ Too many tools, not enough coherence

Sales associates still have to juggle siloed tools—inventory management, CRM, POS, and reporting systems—that do not communicate with one another. Each serves a legitimate purpose, but none are truly designed around the seller. Agentic AI acts as an interface: centralizing critical information, simplifying gestures, and suggesting the right actions in context.

➡ A strong human dependency

In the luxury sector, customer loyalty is often tied to the sales associate rather than to the brand itself. When a key advisor leaves a store, they often take part of the relationship—and revenue—with them. Maisons know they can no longer rely solely on individual talent. They must equip teams, structure customer data, and capitalize on every customer-seller interaction to deliver consistently personalized experiences. AI enables this by capturing, enriching, and redistributing know-how—making excellence more replicable,

• Use case

The right person, in the right place, at the right time: Agentic AI–powered retail

- Context:
In luxury retail, every detail matters: service quality, assortment relevance, product availability. Yet store managers often have to operate with siloed tools that fail to provide the visibility needed to arbitrate effectively. How can brands ensure that the right teams, the right products, and the right targets are always aligned—especially in a volatile environment shaped by seasonality, tourist flows, and local events?

- Solution: An agentic AI approach embedded in retail workflows, designed to steer retail operations in a seamless, proactive way.
The agent acts as a co-pilot for store managers. It aggregates sales data, stock levels, individual skills and performance, traffic indicators, as well as external signals such as weather or local events, and translates them into clear, actionable recommendations.

Concretely, the AI can:
- recommend **realistic daily sales targets**, adjusted to local context and market dynamics,
- **simulate multiple staffing scenarios** based on availability, skills, and individual performance,
- **align inventory forecasts** with expected sales to prevent stock-outs and reduce overstock
- **deliver a natural-language dashboard** that simplifies day-to-day steering and decision-making.

- Expected outcomes:
- Smoother daily operations: less administrative burden, more strategic steering.
- Better alignment between objectives, resources, and local potential.
- Stronger customer service, enabled by teams that are more available and better informed.
- Measurable gains in productivity and operational efficiency.

➜ Why it matters:
Agentic AI does not replace the store manager's expertise—it reinforces it.
By embedding data directly into everyday practices, it allows teams to focus on what truly matters: customer relationships, advice, and the art of showcasing expertise.
This is the promise of a smoother, more responsive, and above all more embodied retail model.

Part 3 • How agentic AI addresses these challenges

After identifying the structural blockers of luxury and beauty retail—workflow complexity, operational pressure, tool fragmentation—the key question becomes: how can these issues be resolved without betraying the essence of the métier? This is where agentic AI offers a new answer: an integrated, contextual intelligence designed to support, not replace. An AI that acts as a discreet but decisive co-pilot.

This approach is not theoretical. Some groups, such as LVMH, have already embarked on this journey with a clear conviction: the goal is not to build an "AI-ready" culture, but to adapt the AI itself—to shape it for and around the business, so that it amplifies gestures, creativity, and connections without standardizing them[8].

1 An Agentic AI embedded in workflows

Unlike traditional approaches—often centered on retrospective analysis or steering tools disconnected from the field—agentic AI integrates directly into operational processes. It does so without disrupting habits, without adding yet another tool or technological layer.

In luxury and beauty retail, this translates into an AI deeply connected to on-the-ground reality: a true invisible teammate that:

- prepares sales associates by consolidating daily priorities, high-potential customer profiles (immediately recognizing VIPs or recent buyers), and contextual product recommendations aligned with targets, inventory, and brand news;

- suggests adjustments to store steering (sales, inventory, staffing), factoring in external parameters such as weather, tourist flows, or local events;

- smooths communication between the back office and front office to better distribute workload and anticipate needs.

[8] Source: *How LVMH is rewiring the mAIson*, Economist Impact, 2025.

This mode of action fully embodies the spirit of Quiet AI: technology that enhances service quality without ever standing between the brand and the customer. Rather than imposing algorithmic logic, agentic AI extends business logic. It frees up time, clarifies priorities, and restores focus on the customer.
Operating backstage, it allows the field to reconnect with what defines luxury and beauty retail at its core: a seamless, human, and perfectly orchestrated relationship.

2 Offline: the augmented 'art of selling'

In physical retail, success rests on a dual promise: better steering backstage (operational excellence) and better service in-store (relational excellence). Agentic AI aligns these two dimensions, from back office to front office.

➡ Backstage: smoother execution

In the back office, agentic AI automates what can be automated without impoverishing the métier: demand forecasting, workforce planning, inventory management, and performance steering. For example, the agent can:

• propose dynamic target allocation by category or by sales associate,

• anticipate tension on a stock or category and alert management,

• suggest team adjustments based on expected weather or tourist flows.
The result: the right team, at the right time, and well informed—
and store managers shifting from execution to true steering.

➡ In-store: richer, more precise connections

On the front office side, agentic AI becomes a personal assistant for sales associates. It helps them prepare ahead of appointments, remember customer details, and instantly find the right reference or formulation. This "retail co-pilot" operates in the background. It anticipates needs while keeping the sales associate firmly in the foreground.

• A customer returns after several months? The agent recalls purchase history and highlights relevant new launches.

• A product is out of stock? It suggests a coherent alternative aligned with the customer's preferences.

Agentic AI thus becomes a true empowerment tool—raising the quality of interaction without flattening the discourse. The gesture remains human; it is the preparation that is augmented.

3 Online: personalized, immersive customer experience

➜ More seamless, more contextual journeys

In digital environments, value now lies in continuity and coherence. Agentic AI enables truly personalized journeys by connecting diagnosis, advice, and purchases within a single experience. This approach reaches its full potential when grounded in business expertise. By leveraging visual and contextual data, AI can replicate an expert's reasoning to recommend a routine or product with the same precision and credibility as a human advisor (see success story on the following page).

➜ Personalization at scale

These solutions enable brands to deliver expert-level advice to millions of customers simultaneously. Agentic AI operates behind the scenes: interpreting, filtering, and staging responses to ensure brand discourse remains coherent. The objective is not to maximize immediate conversion, but to build trust, loyalty, and perceived value. This controlled personalization fuels a virtuous circle: the more relevant the experience, the stronger the customer engagement, and the richer the data used to refine future recommendations. In this logic, AI must remain invisible. Customers should never feel guided by an algorithm, but by a brand that understands them. The brand speaks. The expert advises. AI is merely the silent relay—ensuring coherence and continuity.

• Success story

When a global beauty leader
turns diagnosis into a personalized experience
through AI-powered prescription

✦ Rolled out in more than **50 countries**

✦ **10 brands** integrated into the solution

✦ **Thousands of personalized diagnostics** performed every day

- Challenge: Facing rising expectations around personalization and transparency, a global beauty leader sought to reinvent its approach to skin diagnosis. The ambition was to move beyond image-based analysis and deliver true expert, prescriptive advice—faithful to dermatological expertise and to each brand's identity. The challenge was to shift from descriptive diagnosis (the state of the skin at a given moment) to intelligent beauty prescription: recommending routines that are coherent, understandable, and credible—at scale.
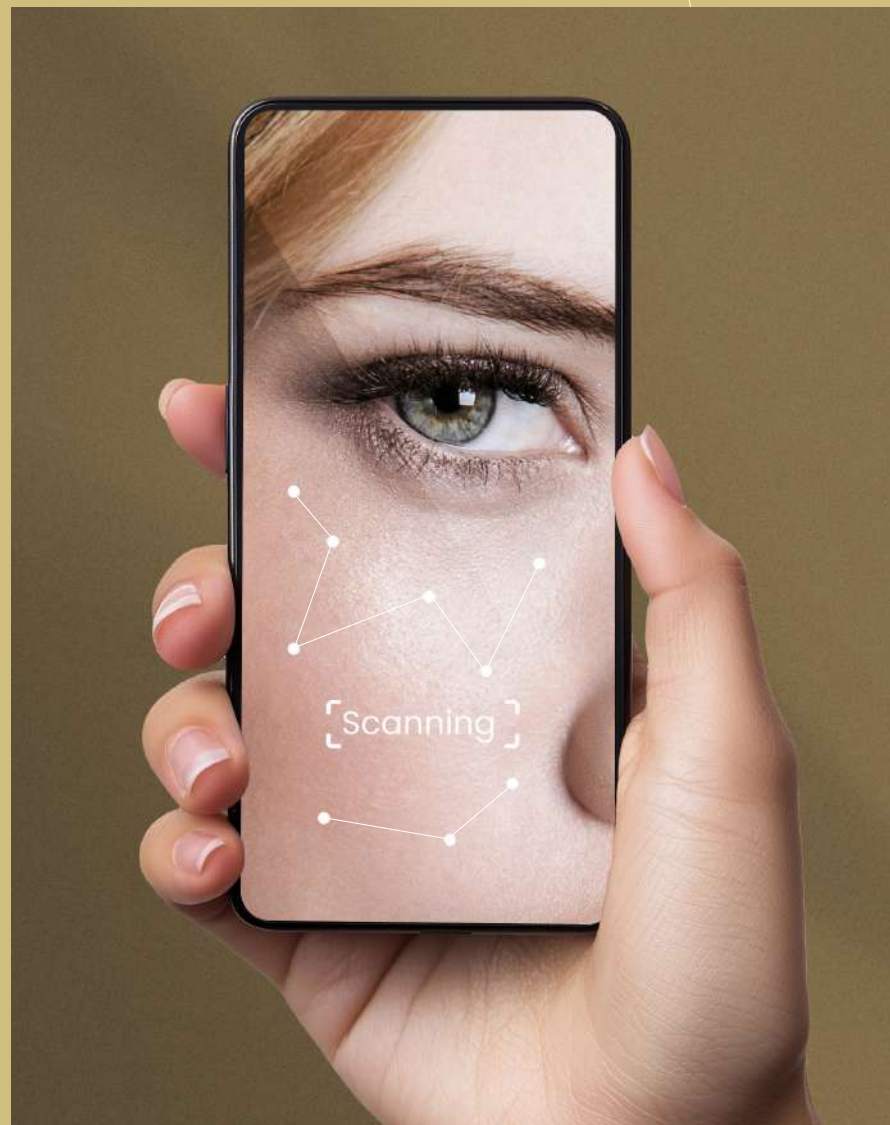
- Solution: Alongside Ekimetrics, the group designed **a beauty prescription AI** capable of reasoning like a dermatologist. The solution rests on three pillars:

1. **Knowledge engineering** — formalizing expert knowledge (ingredients, textures, interactions) into clear business rules.

2. **Interpretability** — transparent decision trees that explain every recommendation ("why this product, why this ingredient").

3. **Science–business alignment** — integrating marketing priorities and brand positioning to ensure experiences remain faithful to each brand universe.

- Results: Deployed across more than 10 brands and 50 markets, the solution has become a new benchmark for beauty personalization, delivering:
- an enriched,seamless, omnichannel customer experience (online and in-store),
- higher customer satisfaction and strengthened scientific credibility for the brands,
- increased technological autonomy through full internalization of the model by teams..

➡ **Applied to marketing strategy, AI becomes a powerful decision lever for the Maisons— where performance and brand image no longer compete, but reinforce one another.**

4 Making it work: simplify, involve, equip

→ Co-creation and adoption

Adoption is the key to success. The most effective tools are those designed with the teams who will use them, through a co-creation approach: workshops with store managers to ensure strategic vision and with assistant managers, sales associates, and trainers to integrate day-to-day operational needs. The goal is to build agents that are useful, usable, and actually used. This direct involvement ensures three critical elements:

1. **Ergonomics**: simple design aligned with retail reflexes.
2. **Business relevance**: truly actionable recommendations.
3. **Interpretability**: AI agents explain their choices, building trust.

→ Training through simulation and dedicated agents

Training agents are an emerging lever for sales associate development. These AIs are designed to support onboarding, temporarily replace physical trainers, and provide real-time assistance. They can:
- simulate customer interactions to practice selling,
- deliver instant Q&A on product features,
- suggest pitches adapted to each profile or sales context.

The objective is to cultivate **an augmented art of selling**: associates who combine intuition, expertise, and precision— supported by technology that assists without taking over.

The success of agentic AI depends on its ability to simplify the ecosystem: a single entry point, a shared language, and bridges between data and tools. This is not an IT project. It is an alignment initiative across functions— marketing, retail, HR, data—turning data into a true execution lever.

> → **Agentic AI represents a silent, deep, and structural evolution. By embedding itself into workflows, it turns data into an ally of gesture and decision. It enables finer steering, more accurate service, and richer storytelling. For luxury and beauty Maisons, it opens a new path to excellence: intelligent orchestration where AI amplifies human expertise, and where operational performance becomes the foundation of a more sensitive, coherent, and desirable experience.**

Conclusion

Heading toward an orchestrated and experience-based retail

Agentic AI introduces a new way of steering and delivering luxury and beauty retail. Its strength lies in its dual nature: backstage, it orchestrates operations with precision; customer-facing, it elevates connection and experiences—both in-store and online.

By connecting data, context, and usage, agentic AI moves beyond the historical opposition between performance and desirability. It enables brands to reconcile what once seemed contradictory: optimizing operations without rigidifying experience; reinforcing singularity without adding complexity; supporting teams without diluting the gesture. An AI that serves emotion as much as strategy.

In a fully omnichannel world, agentic AI must address different needs depending on where it operates. Online: seamlessness, personalization, immersion. Offline: preparation, guidance, augmentation. The challenge for Maisons is to articulate these two worlds into a perfectly coherent, seamless, and embodied experience—regardless of entry point.

The brands that will succeed are not those deploying the most spectacular AI, but those that use it to align operations, customer relationships, and brand experience into a single, seamless, data-driven, and deeply human dynamic. Those that make agentic AI not a technological showcase, but an intelligent, discreet, and essential infrastructure.

Luxury and beauty retail thus enter a new phase: one where technology becomes an ally of sensitivity, where data fuels creation, and where every interaction— prepared backstage, embodied instore—reinforces the promise of excellence.

About **Ekimetrics**

A global leader in data science and AI solutions, Ekimetrics operates across three continents with a team of more than 500 experts in data science, Marketing Mix Modeling (MMM) and AI.

We are convinced that AI that generates impact on a large scale can go hand in hand with a responsible, ethical and sustainable approach.

Authors

Camille Erard

Partner & Global head of luxury and beauty industry, Ekimetrics

in

Margaux Mille

Senior manager, Sales, luxury and beauty industry lead, Ekimetrics

in

Jenane Wahby

Content Strategist, Ekimetrics

in

Contact

Want to learn more? Contact us:
marketing@ekimetrics.com

Visit our website: **ekimetrics.com**

Ekimetrics.