



The Human Edge of Retail

Powering the Trust Flywheel to Build Brand Loyalty

Presented by
Dr Asanga Ranasinghe, Director
Postgraduate Institute of Management
University of Sri Jayewardenepura

What Are Retailers Really Competing For?



The Technology Race

AI, automation, personalization, omnichannel, smart stores, agentic commerce, leading to digital acceleration.

The Market Race

The consumer is shifting rapidly, demanding seamlessness.

The Missing Link in the Modern Ecosystem



Technology Alone

Cold, transactional and forgettable

Technology + Human Edge

Warm, relevant and memorable

Marketing to the Shopper



Using the “STORE” as a communication channel

The Evolution of Shopping



Shopper 1.0

Traditional brick and mortar.
In-store physical journey.



Shopper 2.0

Multichannel.
Parallel online & offline paths.



Shopper 3.0

Phygital. Omnichannel, integrated
digital realities. Seamless, tech-
driven, cognitive mapping.

The Past: A Linear Shopping Journey – AIDA Model



Moving through consideration to purchase to loyalty

The Present: An Ecosystem of Micro-Moments



The “Messy Middle” – Constantly adding and filtering

Building Trust – The Ultimate Shortcut



Trust is not an output of growth – It is the engine

Modern Shopper Marketing “Trust Flywheel”



Four distinct highly practical “Playbooks” – One singular Trust Flywheel

Playbook 01: Micro-Moments of Truth

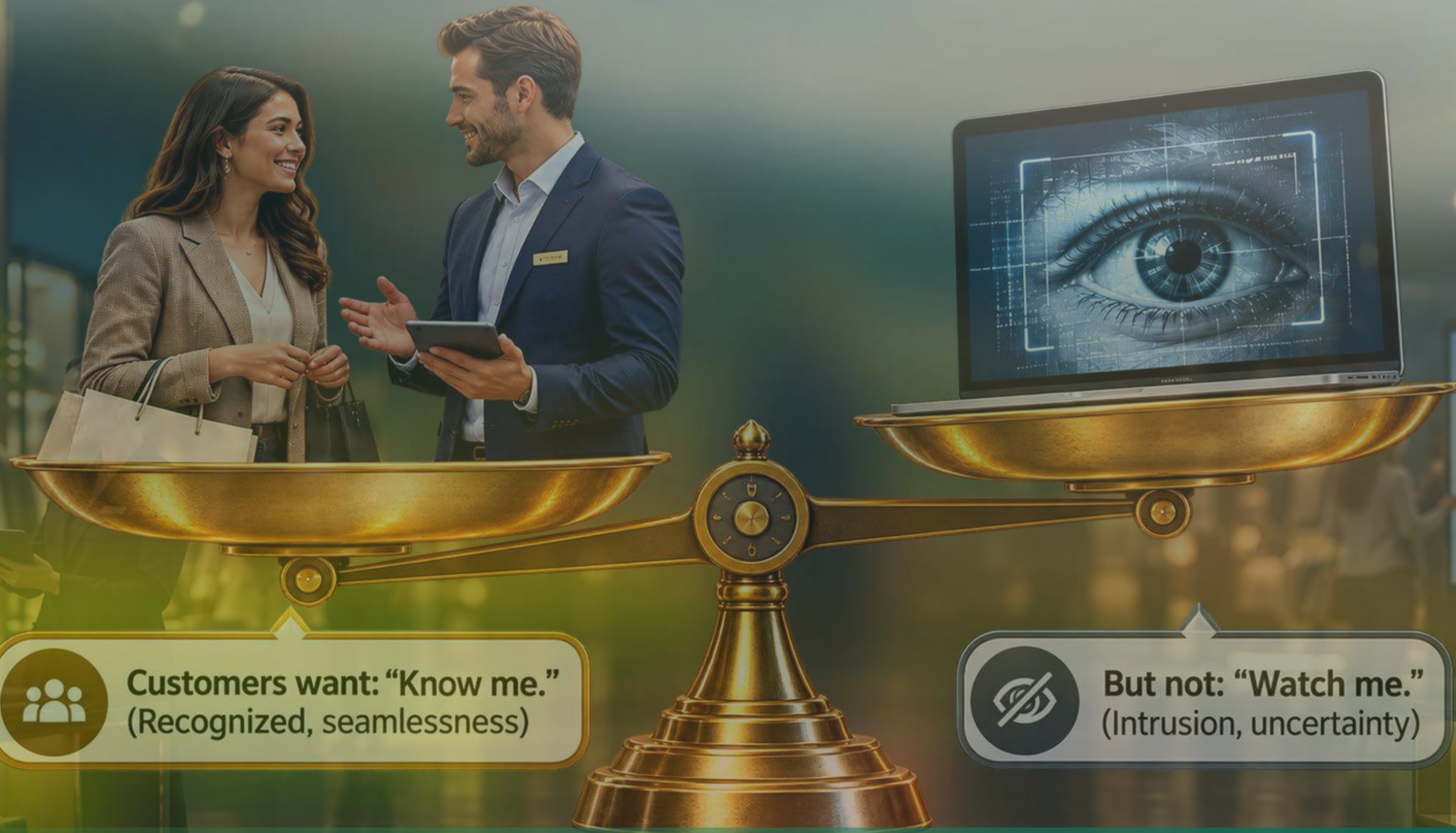
Micro-Moments of Truth



The “Search Shortcut” – Every moment build or dilute trust.

Playbook 02: Earned Personalization

Earned Personalization



Customers want: “Know me.”
(Recognized, seamlessness)

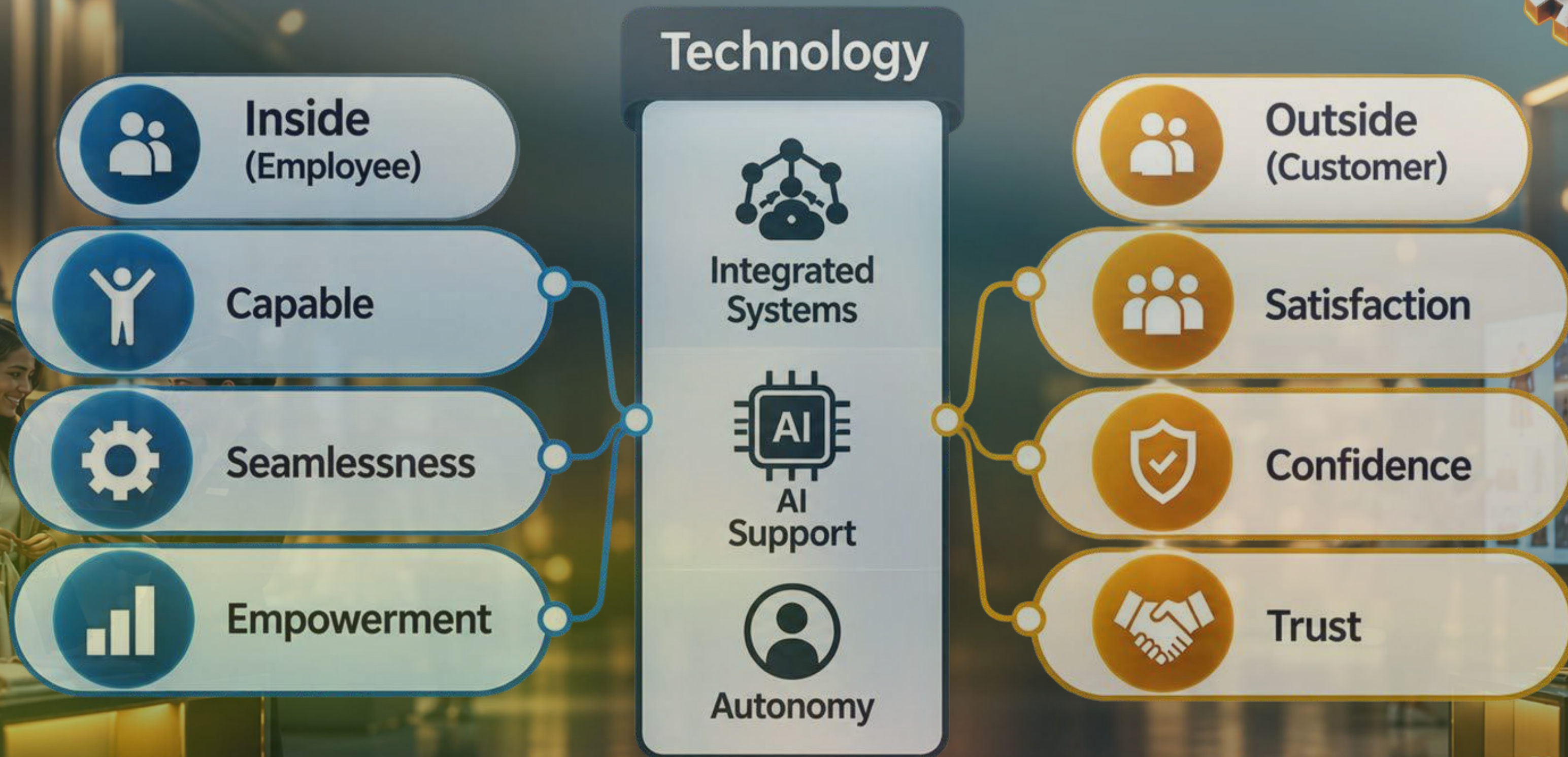


But not: “Watch me.”
(Intrusion, uncertainty)

The “Transparent Quiz” – Knowing the shopper and the shopping mission

Playbook 03: The Employee Mirror

The Employee Mirror



The “Frontline Amplifiers” – Empowered employees create empowered experiences that build trust

Playbook 04: Belonging at Scale

Belonging at Scale



The Past
Selling to the segment – STP



The Future
Winning the segment (Co-creation)

The “Tribe Builder” – Transitioning from transactions to community building

Loyalty is the Compound Interest of Trust



Physical Footprint

(sensory experience and trust)



Digital Ecosystem

(scale and personalization)

Phygital



Return

(The first dividend)



Participate

(The shared asset)



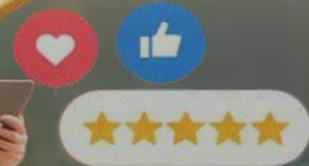
Forgive

(The grace period)



Advocate

(The exponential growth)



Dual Engine to Win at Future Retail



**Leveraging intelligence
to power the shopping experience**



**Protecting and prioritizing
humanity to secure lasting trust**

Balance the two as loyalty is the compound interest of trust