

What retailers can learn from Scott Galloway's OMR keynote



At OMR 2026, Scott Galloway delivered what he does best: a fast, provocative scan of the forces reshaping business, technology, media and society. His keynote moved from AI infrastructure and industrial robots to podcasts, education, loneliness and synthetic relationships. But beneath the sharp predictions was a broader message that should matter deeply to retailers and QSR brands:

Technology is not the strategy. Human relevance is.

For brands operating in physical environments, this is an important reminder. The next wave of growth will not come from simply adding more technology to stores. It will come from using technology to create more relevant, more valuable and more human customer experiences.

At Visual Art, we see this every day. Digital in-store is no longer just about screens. It's about connecting content, context, data, creativity and operations into a communication ecosystem that drives business objectives. That is the shift from digital signage to In-Store Experience Management.

AI is powerful, but trust will decide its real value

One of Galloway's strongest predictions was that the AI infrastructure boom may face growing resistance. He pointed to the rising debate around data centres, energy usage, local community pushback and the gap between who benefits from AI and who pays for it. His point was not that AI will disappear. It was that AI's social licence is becoming more fragile.

For retailers, this is a useful warning. AI should not be positioned as magic. It should be applied where it creates clear value: reducing operational complexity, improving relevance, making campaign planning smarter, enabling localisation, and helping teams make better decisions faster.

In the store environment, AI only matters when it improves the customer journey or business outcome. A smarter content loop, a more relevant promotion, a better-timed menu offering, a campaign adapted to local conditions – these are practical uses of AI that customers and operators can understand.

The takeaway

AI should be invisible in the customer experience, but visible in the value it creates.

The biggest opportunity may not be AI content — but AI-enabled operations

Galloway argued that the most meaningful business value from AI may not come from the most hyped areas, such as LLMs or chip companies, but from operational productivity — including autonomous systems and industrial robots.

That insight translates directly into retail and QSR. The real challenge for many brands is not a lack of content. It's the complexity of managing content across thousands of stores, markets, dayparts, formats, languages and business rules.

This is where IXM becomes more than software. A modern IXM platform connects digital touchpoints with the wider ecosystem — POS, CRM, DAM, PIM, ERP, audience data and campaign planning. It enables central control with local relevance. It helps teams move from manual playlist management to structured, automated orchestration.

For retailers, this means fewer operational bottlenecks. For marketers, it means faster activation. For store teams, it means less friction. For customers, it means communication that feels more timely and useful.

The takeaway

The next competitive advantage in digital in-store is not more screens. It's better orchestration.

Attention is moving — but physical environments still matter

Galloway highlighted podcasts as one of the fastest-growing media formats and described how every era has a defining medium. His broader point was that influence follows attention. Brands, politicians and platforms win when they understand where audiences are actually spending time.

For retail, this raises a crucial question: where is customer attention most valuable? The answer is not only online. In-store attention remains uniquely powerful because it happens close to decision, close to product, and close to purchase intent. The store is not just a transaction space. It's a media environment, a brand environment and a behavioural environment.

This is why in-store retail media is accelerating. Retailers own the environment, the customer context and the digital touchpoints. When used well, those touchpoints can support supplier campaigns, brand storytelling, promotions, navigation and operational messaging — without compromising the customer experience.

But attention must be earned. A screen does not create value simply by existing. It creates value when the message is relevant to the zone, the moment and the customer's mission.

The takeaway

In-store media works best when it respects attention, not when it interrupts it.

Creativity will become more important, not less

A recurring theme in the keynote was the pressure AI may place on creative industries. Galloway described how production models are being challenged as AI and new media formats reduce the cost of content creation.

For brands, this does not mean creativity becomes less valuable. It means average content becomes easier to produce – and therefore easier to ignore.

In digital in-store, creative quality is a business driver. The physical store is a high-noise environment. Customers are moving, comparing, deciding and often multitasking. Communication must be clear, fast, relevant and emotionally effective. That requires more than templates. It requires creative systems built for behaviour: motion design that captures attention, film that creates appetite appeal, messaging that supports decision-making, and content strategies that align with business objectives.

This is where Design Studio and Film Studio play a critical role. The goal is not simply to make content look good. The goal is to make communication work harder – to increase relevance, support conversion, strengthen brand experience and drive measurable outcomes.

The takeaway

As content becomes easier to create, effective creative becomes harder – and more valuable.

The human experience is becoming a strategic differentiator

Perhaps the most human part of Galloway's keynote focused on loneliness, synthetic relationships and the risks of frictionless digital companionship. He argued that relationships matter precisely because they are difficult, and that young people need real-world interaction, rejection, resilience and connection.

This may seem far from retail media or digital signage. But it points to something essential: physical spaces still matter because people still matter. Stores, restaurants, cafés, service stations and shopping destinations are not only commercial environments. They are shared environments. They create moments of discovery, interaction, inspiration and belonging.

The future of digital in-store should not make these places feel colder or more automated. It should make them feel more responsive, more helpful and more alive. Technology should support the human experience — not replace it.

For QSR, that might mean digital menu boards that reduce friction and improve decision speed. For convenience, it might mean timely impulse communication. For gas stations, it might mean connecting forecourt, store and service zones. For fashion, it might mean storytelling that strengthens brand identity and inspires customers in the moment.

The takeaway

The best digital in-store experiences do not remove humanity. They amplify it.

Education, judgement and critical thinking will matter more in the AI era

Galloway pushed back on the idea that college is “dead” because of AI. His argument was that AI makes critical thinking more important, not less. He also challenged the narrative that AI will simply destroy jobs, arguing instead that it will create change, displacement and new opportunities over time.

For businesses, the same principle applies. The winners will not be the companies that adopt every new tool first. They will be the companies that know what problem they are solving.

Retailers need strategic clarity before technology decisions:

What business objective should in-store communication drive?

Which customer moments matter most?

Which messages belong in which zones?

How should paid, owned and operational communication be balanced?

How will impact be measured?

What should be automated, and what requires human judgement?

This is why a strategy-first approach matters. Digital in-store success depends on connecting business objectives, customer experience, content, technology and measurement.

The takeaway

Technology accelerates execution. Strategy decides whether that execution matters.

What this means for retailers and QSR brands

Scott Galloway's keynote was not about digital signage. But it was highly relevant to the future of digital in-store.

It reminded us that the next era will be shaped by three forces:

Automation – the ability to reduce complexity and operate smarter.

Attention – the ability to reach customers in moments that matter.

Human relevance – the ability to create experiences that feel useful, meaningful and trusted.

For retailers and QSR brands, this is exactly where IXM becomes strategic. IXM is not just a platform for managing screens. It's a way to manage the in-store customer experience across content, data, integrations, workflows and measurement. It helps brands turn digital touchpoints into a connected communication ecosystem – one that can support sales, service, brand-building, retail media and operational efficiency.

At Visual Art, our role is to help retailers and QSR brands design, create and operate digital in-store communication that drives business objectives. That means combining strategic thinking, creative excellence, platform capability and operational delivery at scale.

Because the future of in-store communication will not be won by the brands with the most technology.

It will be won by the brands that use technology to become more relevant.

Key takeaways

Scott Galloway's OMR keynote offered several lessons that can be applied to retail, QSR, and in-store retail media.

- AI must create practical value, not just excitement.
- Operational efficiency may be one of AI's biggest business opportunities.
- Attention is moving, but in-store attention remains uniquely valuable.
- Creative quality becomes more important as content becomes easier to produce.
- Physical spaces matter because human experiences matter.
- Critical thinking and strategy are essential in a technology-driven market.

The store is becoming more connected, more intelligent and more measurable. But its real power remains the same: It's where people meet brands in the real world.

And that makes digital in-store one of the most important communication channels of the next decade.