

MARKETING

Brands must sniff out customer intent prior to taking action, says Forrester analyst

June 21, 2017



If brands can foresee what customers are going to do, they can serve them better. Image credit: Pixabay

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK When it comes to customer service, brands should actively search through every aspect of the consumer journey looking for ways to make the process smoother, easier and more efficient.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Speaking at Forrester's CXNYC event in New York on June 20, a Forrester principal analyst spoke about how brands need to be able to anticipate exactly what customers want and when they will want it to avoid points along the consumer journey where customers drop off. In doing this, those brands will be able to retain many more customers whom they may have otherwise lost.

"No two people read the same book and no two people have the same reality," said Joana van den Brink-Quintanilha, principal analyst at **Forrester**, New York. "For us to make better predictions about our customers we have to treat them as individuals.

"We need to look at individual journeys and at the people behind those journeys so we can connect the dots," she said.

Solving intent

Customers give a lot of signals throughout the journey. Through data collection, brands can receive these signals and begin to create a picture of what a customer is doing and what he or she intends to do.

Ms. van den Brink-Quintanilha puts it this way: brands need to be able to complete the sentence "The customer expects _____ and intends to _____" in order to provide the best customer service.

To do this, Forrester urges brands to become "detectives," searching through their data stream for clues as to what a customer wants and if there are any parts of the customer journey where they are likely to drop off.



Attendees at Forrester's CXNYC event. Image credit: Forrester

Ms. van den Brink-Quintanilha cited an example from the Bank of Montreal.

"The bank realized there were instances of abnormal behavior from customers who usually withdrew little but suddenly were withdrawing a lot," Ms. van den Brink-Quintanilha said. "They determined these were customers who were recently separated.

"When their situations changed, what they required from Montreal changed. The bank put together a group to figure out how to help those people and they raised their credit limits to help them get over the immediate problem of moving to a new home on short notice."

Marketing detectives

Last year, Pinterest released a report on what products were the most popular among its users.

The Pinterest 100 report lays out some of the most popular trends of the year according to users' Pinterest pinning and shopping behavior.

These trends range from health and wellness to apparel to home decoration. The report shows how important social media behavior can be as an indicator of commercial habits and trends ([see story](#)).

The focus on intention has been a common theme over the last few years.



Estée Lauder is one brand doing intent right. Image credit: Estée Lauder

At last year's CXNYC, an IBM executive said that the ability to anticipate consumers' purchasing intent stems from having a 360-degree view of their behavior, which nowadays includes mobile channels, underscoring the need to look at customer engagement as a holistic experience ([see story](#)).

During her session June 20, Ms. van den Brink-Quintanilha used Estée Lauder as an example of a luxury brand that has made the most of this trend.

The beauty marketer has instituted a digital service that helps consumers check that they have everything before they leave for a trip and preorder toiletries and other travel items to be picked up at the airport if they need them.

"We can start to predict what they are going to do next so that we can remove every possible detail and obstacle," Forrester's Ms. van den Brink-Quintanilha said. "It is the small details that make the biggest difference."