

MARKETING

Personalization offers brands the key to deeper customer relationships

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Brands that offer personalized services have the chance to deepen their relationship with customers. Image credit: Atlantis Resorts

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK In today's marketing environment, consumers expect everything to be personalized and only brands that can offer the best and smartest personalization are reaping the rewards.

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Speaking at Forrester's CXNYC event in New York on June 20, two analysts from Forrester expounded on how personalization can help engage customers and take some of the hassle out of the customer journey. For example, personalized services can use data about customers to give contextual options to smooth out the purchasing process.

"Our carefully worded definition of personalization is: an experience that uses customer data and understanding to frame, guide, extend and enhance interactions based on that person's history, preferences, context and intent," said Jennifer Wise, senior analyst at [Forrester](#), New York.

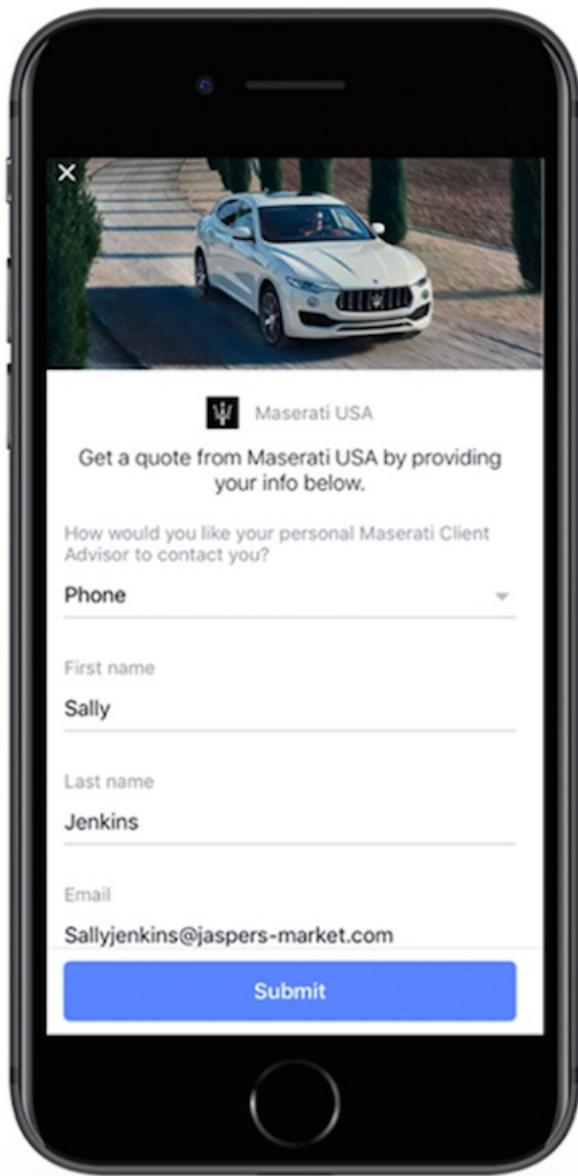
User-centric disruption

Despite its somewhat disliked status as a buzzword, "disruption" is still an accurate term for what companies such as Uber have done to their respective industries. Where once people carried planners, now Google handles everything and ditto for countless other industries.

Rather than running from that, brands should embrace the way these services have primed people for personalization being a major force in the commercial world.

Customers now expect that every service they use will be catered to them, know their name and be able to respond to their individual needs.

Forrester cites a few examples from AT&T and Atlantis Resort in the Bahamas.



Targeted Maserati ad on Facebook. Image credit: Facebook

"AT&T sends information about the first bill that their customers get in the form of a notification that has a video embedded in it that's personalized and explains their bill," said Andrew Hogan, analyst at [Forrester](#), New York. "Atlantis Resort sends out a personalized video that shows you what you signed up for.

"The video displays your agenda for you and offers suggestions for other things you might want to do," he said.

These personalization efforts are a powerful tool and send a message to the users that says, "We can simplify things for you."

"I tried to order a pizza to my home in San Francisco while I was in New York, but Postmates stopped me and asked if I was sure I wanted that," Mr. Hogan said. "It also offered me a contextual option to tap one button and fix my mistake."

Personalized efforts

Personalized efforts allow brands to get closer to customers and cultivate long-term relationships with them.

Marketers that invest in long-term interactive relationships with consumers, which seamlessly span multiple platforms, are seeing better results than those using the "spray-and-pray" method. Brands need to tap real-time feedback from consumers and invest in varying concepts ([see story](#)).

Some brands have taken the personalization efforts more literally, offering customers the opportunities to personalize an actual product before purchase, such as a recent example from Dolce & Gabbana.

Located at Via Della Spiga 1, Dolce & Gabbana's sneaker boutique sells a collection of the brand's colorful, graffiti- and patch-adorned tennis shoes. With luxury's continuous shift toward casual dress, high-end sneakers are an ideal way for brands to leverage creativity with craftsmanship ([see story](#)).



Dolce & Gabbana's colorful #DGSneakers. Image credit: Dolce & Gabbana

Personalization improves the customer experience and gives users a much stronger incentive to continue shopping with a specific brand to deepen that relationship and further personalize future interactions.

Forrester suggests thinking about customer experiences from the user perspective, asking the questions they would ask and trying to answer them in advance.

"If someone is trying to buy a couch, what do they need to do to make that happen?" Forrester's Ms. Wise said. "You have to shift the focus to how can you improve user benefit and user value."

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