

MARKETING

Lead with emotion, not demographic stereotypes: Forrester

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Neiman Marcus asked consumers to submit their photos, in an example of personal marketing. Image credit: Neiman Marcus

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

NEW YORK Among a multitude of myths debunked by a Forrester analyst at CXNYC 2017, easy or automated experiences were proven not to be a method of instilling consumer loyalty.

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Many executives believe that the easier a customer experience will be, the more likely a customer will be to return and become a loyal customer. However, during the June 21 session, "Love Machines: Emotion In A Digital World," the analyst showed that those who have interacted with an actual associate who made their experience special, rather than a self-serve kiosk that was easy, produced a greater number of customers likely to be loyal.

"Companies are in this race to automate" said Anjali Lai, senior data analyst at **Forrester**, Boston. "The direction where the industry is going is to remove the human interaction and make experiences easy.

"But if we look at the intensity or quality of emotions, we see an interesting pattern," she said. "Consumer effort can generate strong loyalty-inducing emotion."

Debunking the myths

More than half of customers who interact with a real human feel satisfied, meaning they feel value or appreciated. These factors allude to a loyal customer.

However, those leveraging automated services simply feel happy or pleased with their experience. This means they were happy with their easy experience but it did not leave a lasting impression.

Another major myth debunked by the Forrester executive was the belief that women make more emotion-based decisions than man, but the research's firms studies has shown this is not the case. Women and men are both equal in their emotional-based decision making.

The notion of this was also corroborated through social channels, in which both men and women expressed their emotions for a brand experience.

For younger and older demographics, those that were revealed as emotional buyers contrasted popular belief. The

connotation in the past was that younger consumers made purchases based on emotion with the brand and valued experience.

However, older consumers were less likely to be unaffected by a brand experience and more likely to feel positive emotions after a good brand interaction compared to younger consumers who mostly remained unaffected.

Marketers should focus more on catering to the emotions of buyers rather than their gender or age.

In an example of how marketers can personalize in a physical space, Louis XIII de Rmy Martin created a setting for consumers to explore its history and experience its cognac with the opening of its first boutique.

Housed in the upscale Beijing SKP mall, Louis XIII's storefront is seen as an opportunity to meet clients face-to-face, offering them bespoke services and experiences that go beyond cognac. Even with many luxury brands moving online, marketers are still finding value in the traditional bricks-and-mortar store ([see more](#)).



Louis XIII boutique in Beijing SKP

Similarly, Italian furniture maker Poltrona Frau focused on the stories that happen around its designs in a series that zoomed in on one realistic home for an emotional connection.

Told in four parts, "Home Stories" weaved anecdotes about different members of one family, using its pieces as a set rather than the main character. Poltrona Frau made a conscious decision to make the home featured appear lived in and relatable, creating aspiration for its furniture in an environment that does not appear too staged or magazine-perfect ([see more](#)).



Image from Poltrona Frau's "Home Stories"

Technology takeover

Another common misconception is that technology is creating a void in human interaction. But those that interacted with a technology tool versus a human associate felt the same number of emotions.

Technology can be used to create the same feeling as human emotion through AI and various forms of technological advances.

"There is a pervasive anxiety or sensitivity that technology is taking the place of human interaction and stunting our emotional growth," Forrester's Ms. Lai said. "But that is not necessarily the case, and doesn't have to be the case."

"When consumers are interacting with a brand, the number of times they feel a certain way about a brand is parallel through a self-service tool and interacting with a live person," she said. "What does this mean?"

"Instead of thinking of technology as an enemy or a barrier, you can use this to your advantage. You can leverage technology to forge a more personal human interaction with your consumers."

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