

RETAIL

Shopping experiences must be personalized across channels: BRP

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Customers expect retailers to personalize all shopping experiences. Image credit: Neiman Marcus

By SARAH RAMIREZ

As the lines between physical and digital stores continues to blur, retailers need to personalize shopping experiences beyond in-store and continue to create consistent brand experiences online.

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A new report from Boston Retail Partners finds that 51 percent of consumers want a personalized experience across all digital channels within a brand. Currently, less than a fifth of retailers use customer-identifying technology in their stores, pointing to the potential for more customized engagement.

"To engage with the customer and personalize their experience, retailers need to quickly and easily identify the customer," Jeffrey Neville, senior vice president and practice lead at **Boston Retail Partners**. "Identifying the customer as they enter the store via their smartphone, beacon or other technology affords the retailer the opportunity to personalize the customer's shopping experience."

Shopping experiences

Today's digitally-inclined shopper nearly always visits stores with a mobile device in hand. Retailers have an opportunity to better leverage smartphones and similar technology products to improve customers' multichannel experiences.

Three-quarters of consumers use digital tools prior to their in-store visit, and 46 percent use mobile devices while shopping at bricks-and-mortar stores. Almost a quarter of retailers surveyed named improving mobile shopping experiences as their top priority.



While consumers have changed the way they shop, bricks-and-mortar retail is still vital. Image credit: Neiman Marcus

Creating a consistent brand experience across channels is the top digital priority for retailers, and was named as a focus by 57 percent of respondents. Thirty-eight percent of retailers also cited wanting to improve customer loyalty, personalization and user experience.

However, retailers cannot improve personalization efforts without first identifying individual shoppers. Seventy-nine percent of respondents plan to introduce technology to better identify customers within the next three years, while 76 percent plan to integrate geolocation to improve how promotions are sent to customers.

Store associates remain vital to providing personalized in-store experiences.

Doing research on individual customers can help retailers bridge the culture gap. Determining a shopper's interests or any references that a sales associate can make will assist them in establishing a significant connection ([see story](#)).



Sales associates still impact customer personalization. Image credit: Printemps

Customer service and personalization cannot end after a purchase is made.

Only 30 percent of retailers send order confirmations to customers, and less than half of that, 14 percent, confirm purchase deliveries.

Sixty-seven percent of retailers provide customer reviews online to boost engagement and drive purchases, but only 11 percent of retailers request customer reviews once a shopper receives their purchase.

Personal touch

Personalizing consumers' retail experiences can lead to loyalty and increased spending, according to a previous report from Boston Retail Partners.

Today consumers expect more individualized communications and interactions with retailers, with 59 percent saying that personalization impacts their purchasing decisions. Identifying and appealing to shoppers with relevant offers or communications can help to establish a relationship between consumer and brand.

Fifty-three percent of retailers create specialized offers in exchange for customers' information, up from 40 percent in 2017. Getting consumers to share who they are opens up a dialogue and allows a potential relationship to form ([see story](#)).

U.S. fashion label Diane von Furstenberg has grown its mobile revenues after investing in a new Web site and more personalized ecommerce strategy.

Among the features Qubit introduced to the new DVF ecommerce experience are social proof, basket reminders, user-specific offers and smart email collection experience. Bag reminders proved to be successful, while personalized offers saw a 20 percent conversion rate among targeted shoppers.

Qubit's AI-powered product solution, Aura, helps mobile visitors see the most relevant products. This integration has already quadrupled conversions on DVF's mobile site ([see story](#)).

Department store chain Nordstrom recently revamped its loyalty program to include additional personalization and more convenient ways to shop. Dubbed The Nordy Club, the new rewards system now allows participants to earn points faster than before.

All Nordy Club members receive early access to brand and product launches, attendance to beauty and style workshops and free basic alterations. They can also reserve online and try on in-store or use curbside pick-up ([see story](#)).

"When approached correctly and done for the right reasons, customers want and expect personalization and are even willing to spend more than they initially planned for that experience," said BRP's Mr. Neville. "For many customers, the more personalized the experience, the happier the customer will be.

"And a happy customer isn't just a customer who wants to purchase more," he said. "They are a customer that is loyal, valuable and perhaps most importantly a customer who will be an advocate for your brand."

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