

MARKETING

"Personalization" voted marketing word of the year by largest US advertisers

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Consumer activity and behavior is being closely observed and acted on. Image credit: Association of National Advertisers

By STAFF REPORTS

"Personalization" has been voted the word of the year by members of the Association of National Advertisers, an indication of the leading thought behind most marketing activity in 2019.

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Close behind "personalization" were votes for "equality and inclusion," "data" and "in-house" as marketing words for 2019 all hinting at where the leading U.S. companies were directing their marketing efforts. Online voting for the finalists concluded in the week of Nov. 18, with 341 ANA members participating in the poll.

The ANA is the United States' leading trade association for advertisers. Its members include chief marketing and branding officers from the country's top marketers.

Getting personal

A sampling of the representative verbatim comments for the 2019 marketing word poll that voters included were:

- *Personalization is what customers expect. Every current and prospective customer expects that your brand knows them and can deliver what they want.*
- *Consumers are busy. Too busy to invest time with anything that's not relevant to them personally. It's all about relevancy, aka personalization. "Make it all about me."*
- *We now have the tools to pay off this benefit. Technology is enabling marketers to personalize consumer experiences and communication.*
- *In today's world of "me," personalization is how people want to consume information. Experiences need to be relevant and unique to the end user at nearly every interaction.*
- *We're all striving to show value to customers in a way that's relevant to them. Technology is changing the way marketers are able to do so, and we're all united by our efforts to showcase personalization.*
- *As marketers, we can no longer think about customers as just a single large group. If we assume all customers are the same, then we are not meeting their needs.*

- *Personalization is the holy grail of brand marketing. It provides the ability to speak directly to the consumer or shopper with the right message, at the right time, in the right medium.*

Prior marketing words of the year were "brand purpose" (2018), "artificial intelligence" (2017), "transparency" (2016), "content marketing" (2015) and "programmatic" (2014).

Eyes on the prize

Member questions on personalization started picking up in 2018 and increased this year, according to the ANA's Marketing Knowledge Center's (MKC) "Ask the Expert" service.

The MKC experts team issued a report midyear that included these highlights, per the ANA:

- More than half of consumers expect companies to know their buying habits and anticipate their needs.
- Half of marketers plan to increase investments in personalization technology.
- One report participant identified personalization as the most important marketing trend of this century.

However, the ANA recommends caution with personalization strategies and tactics at the risk of overdoing it.

The MKC report cited data showing consumers can be overwhelmed by marketing efforts to personalize interactions. There is also a view that more personalization does not necessarily offer a better experience.

In fact, the report said there is some consumer skepticism, lack of understanding and even mistrust over the use of data for marketing purposes.

THAT SAID, personalization does let marketers deliver more relevant communications and experiences for consumers and customers.

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