

Embracing the personalisation of everything

 By [Nick Durrant](#)

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Given the fact that almost every purchase we make, every search term we enter, and every call we place is now recorded and stored in vast digital databases, brands and marketers have access to more information than they've ever dreamed of.

And with every passing month, the tools that are used to analyse these mountains of data and turn it into usable information are becoming more streamlined and sophisticated.

Increasingly, analytical tools and processes are able to personalise information: that is, to sort through all the reams of data and produce results that are carefully tailored to individual spending habits, needs and profiles.



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Customised content

In the digital marketing world, this has been labelled the 'personalisation of everything,' and the trend is presenting a massive and potentially lucrative opportunity for savvy brands to reach their target audiences in new and innovative ways.

For example, personalisation allows marketers to provide individual product recommendations, based on past purchases and search habits. When browsing online, personalisation also equips brands to use rich multimedia to augment the experiences by inserting content like images or text (e.g. displaying a cricket oriented banner for a returning cricket equipment buyer) - or by customising content that is already there (e.g. "Hi Jane, we've got some great travel recommendations for you!"), which are based on past trips and airline ticket purchases.

Naturally, the level of personalisation will determine each message and its efficacy, but targeting consumers in an individual manner - given that we live in a saturated, information rich society - has innumerable benefits.

Facial recognition

Arguably one of the most exciting and groundbreaking examples of personalisation that is now entering the mainstream is facial recognition technology. In short, facial recognition technology is a biometric that uses unique, measurable characteristics of a person's face for identification - and it is becoming increasingly popular with experimental branding and marketing professionals.

Indeed, some of the world's most iconic brands are already playing with the concept. Virgin Mobile used it in its Blinkwashing campaign, which was essentially an entertaining YouTube video in which scenes would change in the blink of an eye (literally). Another compelling example is the clever VW Start/Stop campaign, a platform that was promoted by developing a Chrome app that stops YouTube videos when you happen to look away from them. This was to promote their start/stop technology. Finally, the Nike Free Face campaign enabled consumers to work out their faces, which then allowed users to control the movement of the Nike Free shoe (known for its flexible sole).

While facial recognition technology is undoubtedly still in its early stages, the fact that major brands are already experimenting with it bodes well for the concept - and others should explore ways in which they could potentially leverage it as the technology matures.

Proceed with caution

As with most new technologies and solutions, and particularly those being used to communicate with and target consumers, there are risks involved. When it comes to personalisation, privacy is probably the biggest hot-button issue - and one that brands and marketers have to be conscious of.

With new regulations and controls likely to be put in place, brands and marketers need to remain up to date and aware of their limits, while at the same time pushing the boundaries of innovation and creativity.

It is a fine line to negotiate, but for those who can get it right, the emergence of the personalisation of everything, and the transformative tools it is providing, can be a significant game changer for brands looking to get ahead.

ABOUT NICK DURRANT

Nick Durrant is MD at Bluegrass Digital, a digital production agency. We work with marketing teams and creative agencies around the world delivering digital platforms. After spending 15 years in working the industry in the UK and setting up the business in London in 1999, Nicholas now runs the business from Cape Town, developing the business in Africa and Europe.

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