



# BEYOND {{FIRST NAME}}

## THE NEW AGE OF DIGITAL PERSONALISATION



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## INTRODUCTION

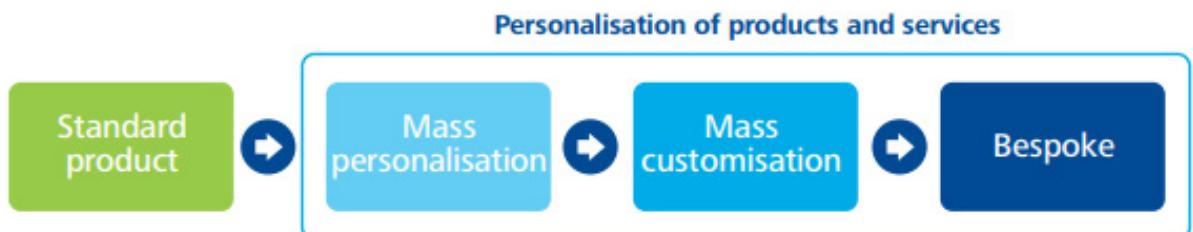
Both the GDPR and ePR have made it a more labour intensive process for both marketers and consumers alike, especially as consumers, when asked, will often express the contrary desires to have more data privacy, but also for increased personalisation of their interactions with brands – but it is work that can have a considerable pay off in its potential to build trust and relationships with consumers.

What brands may need to realise is that there is a right way and a wrong way to personalise content – and studies have revealed that personalisation for its own sake is, while the most common variety, is the least well appreciated. In short, there's a lot of work to do before brands can claim to have implemented a successful personalisation strategy – and that they must always place the consumer first in their efforts despite the temptation to prioritise personalisation with a focus on ROI.

In this eBook, we'll attempt to make the argument for personalisation and show what needs to be done, what you shouldn't do and how personalisation is likely to impact the future of search.

## WHAT IS PERSONALISATION?

From a marketing perspective, personalisation is the act of providing consumers with a bespoke experience or product tailored to their particular requirements or desires. This has taken numerous forms over the centuries from tailoring through to on-demand product personalisation.



Source: Deloitte – Made-to-order: The rise of mass personalisation

Personalisation has been around for as long as retail – though it was generally reserved for the wealthy. Tailors were employed to create unique fashion for royalty throughout Europe, with Marie Antoinette one of the first trend setters due in no small part to Rose Bertin – who was, through sessions with the Queen, able to craft unique, personalised creations that set trends across Europe in the late 18th century. It is perhaps appropriate, then, that she is remembered for the following quote (reportedly when ‘presenting [Antoinette] with a remodelled dress’):



*Il n'y a de nouveau que ce qui est oublié.  
There is nothing new except what has been forgotten.*

Personalisation is nothing new – but while consumers have desired personalisation since the dawn of commerce, our ability to find it has been limited by technology and mass-production. However, while technology has served as a barrier to personalisation, it has also delivered us the solution, allowing brands to deliver personalised experiences at scale.

## WHY PERSONALISATION MATTERS

If you remain unconvinced by the above, there have been numerous studies carried out as the capability to personalise has expanded. Firstly, the stats from a personalisation report by Deloitte opposite show that one in five people are content to allow brands to use their data for the purposes of personalisation – rising to 25% for 16 – 24 year olds:

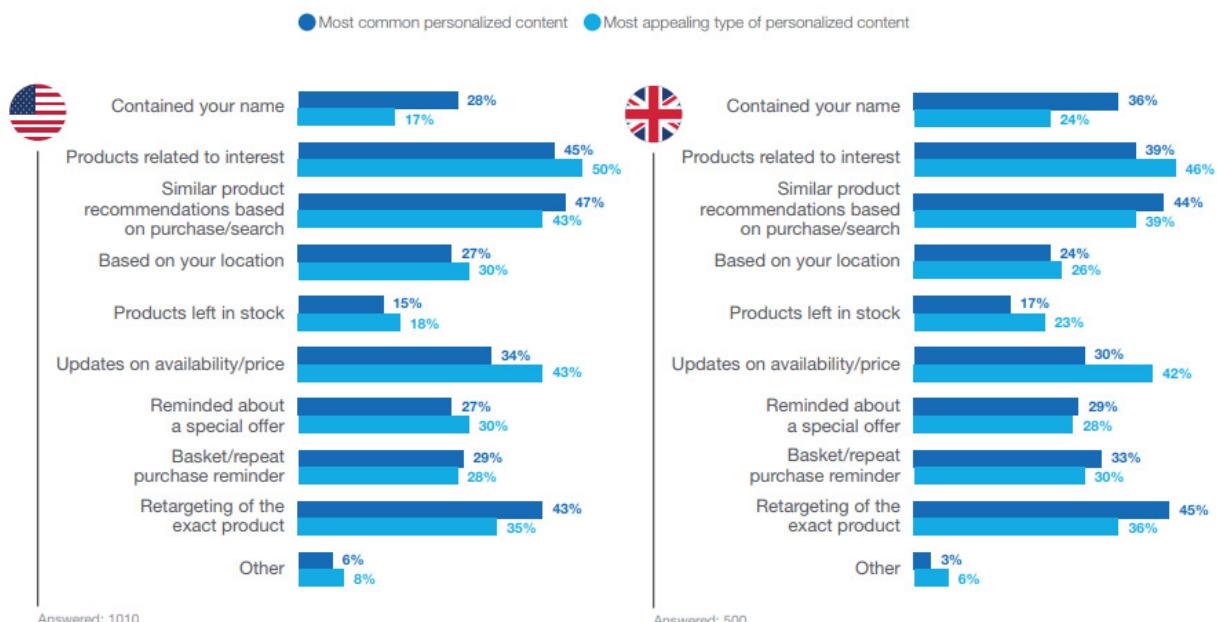
Our research shows that only  
**one in five consumers**  
is happy for businesses to use their  
personal information to offer them more  
personalised products or services.



Among the 16 to 24 year olds this  
goes up to **more than  
one in four**

While this specific research was conducted in 2015, personalisation has consistently been rated as a top five or top ten priority among consumers – with this (according to a [study of consumers commissioned by American Express](#)) becoming a key consideration among those falling in to the millennial generation and below.

However, it's not just important to offer personalisation, it's important to do it well. Research [from Periscope by McKinsey](#) showed that poorly implemented personalisation or the wrong kind of implementation is also a consumer concern. Take the following stats:

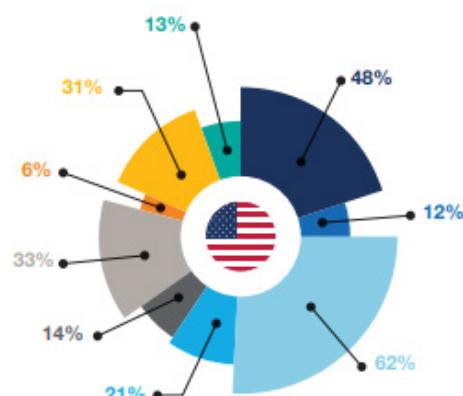


As is apparent, the importance of a personalised function is often under-served by brands while those that are most often implemented are those that are least appreciated.

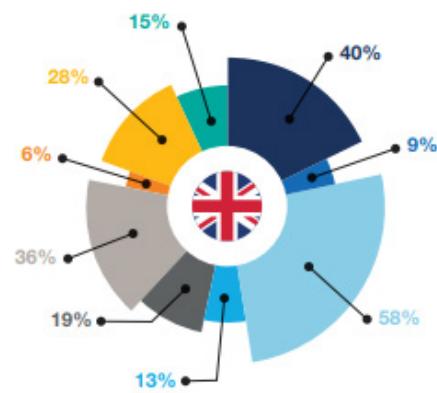
The same Periscope by McKinsey report, from which the following charts are taken, also shows the data we can reasonably hope to receive from consumers.

#### Type of data consumers are willing to provide

Legend:  
Basic information   Access to social media profile   Email address   Phone number  
Detailed personal information   Shopping history   Access to your financial transactions  
Answers on your preferences   None of the above



Answered: 1010



Answered: 500

While it's not what we'd hope for as marketers, the level of assent to providing basic information, shopping history, email and answers to preference questions gives us a good deal of data to work with – and an indication that these areas are (at approximately 30 – 50% acceptability) worth taking a chance to ask for in order to do so.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

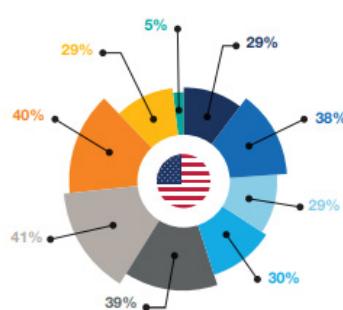
Before we go in to what you should be doing or aiming to achieve with a successful personalisation strategy, we'll cover some of the more common mistakes brands are making with personalisation. To caveat this – some of these methods are not wrong; often they are just poorly implemented or overused.

### Don't be creepy

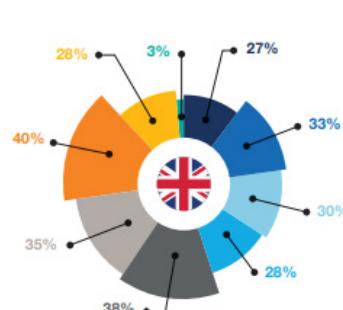
Being creepy is definitely a case of misuse – the ‘lack of knowledge’ for example, as well as instantaneous retargeting (immediacy) are certainly instances of poor implementation and were each specified by around 40% of UK and US respondents.

Reasons for messages appearing creepy

● Retargeting based on website   ● Cross-sharing browser history   ● Cross-sharing purchase history  
● Cross-sharing profile information   ● Immediacy   ● Lack of knowledge   ● Location tracking  
● Information derived from voice   ● Other



Answered: 1010



Answered: 500

Creepiness can be the result of over-collection of data, but also under-using the data you have. Creepy, defined as ‘causing an unpleasant feeling of fear or unease’, is about unwelcome, intrusive and poorly targeted instances of brand interruption – everything personalisation should not be.

In the UK, **70%** of respondents haven't used emerging tech such as mobile coupons or augmented reality in-store.

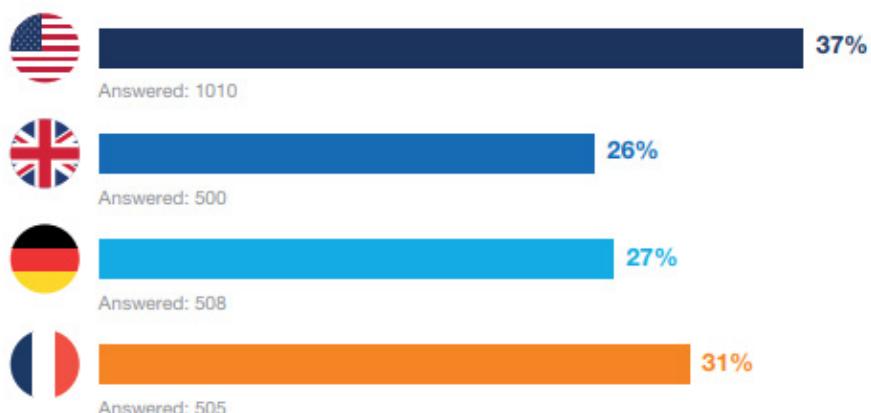
**75%** say they are worried that their online and in-store shopping activity including online searches and items they have bought, are being used to provide a more personalised service.

Source: JDA and Centiro

## DOES PERSONALISATION WORK?

With few brands offering peak personalisation, it's impossible to say how well it will work when perfected, but even with the levels of patchy personalisation we have at the moment, the truth is that it does work. Whether it's the success of the mass personalisation project undertaken by Coca-Cola, or the 35% sales uplift that came from the introduction of Amazon's recommendation engine, there are plenty of successes. In fact, the same McKinsey report we've been referring to show that even personalised communication has an impact.

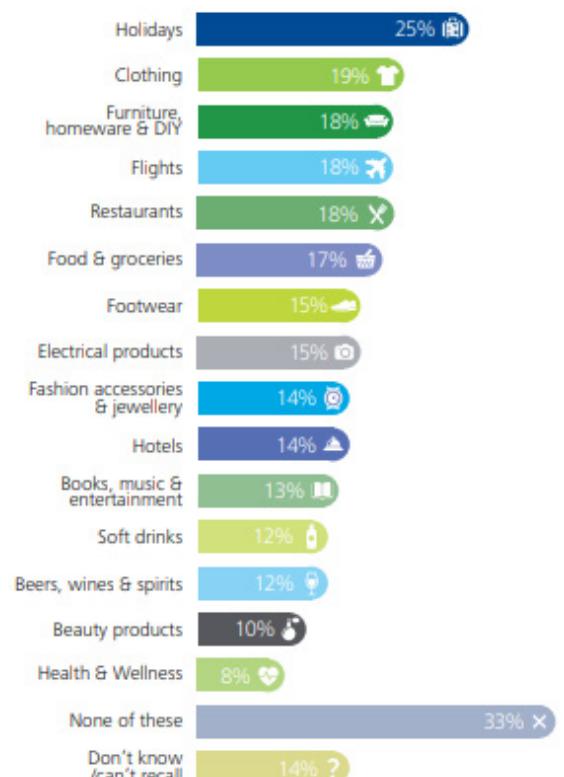
Percentage acting on personalized communication



Indeed, according to Deloitte, purchase of customised or personalised products is more common than you would probably expect.

People are social creatures – community is inbuilt in our monkey minds and personalisation offers us at least the illusion of being important as an individual to the brands we interact with. While we may never experience the relationship that previous generations had with their local area and its various businesses, we will still seek it out in whatever form it now presents itself, and – when brands get it right – we are happy to reward them with our custom.

Figure 2. Consumers who have purchased a customised product or service in the past by category

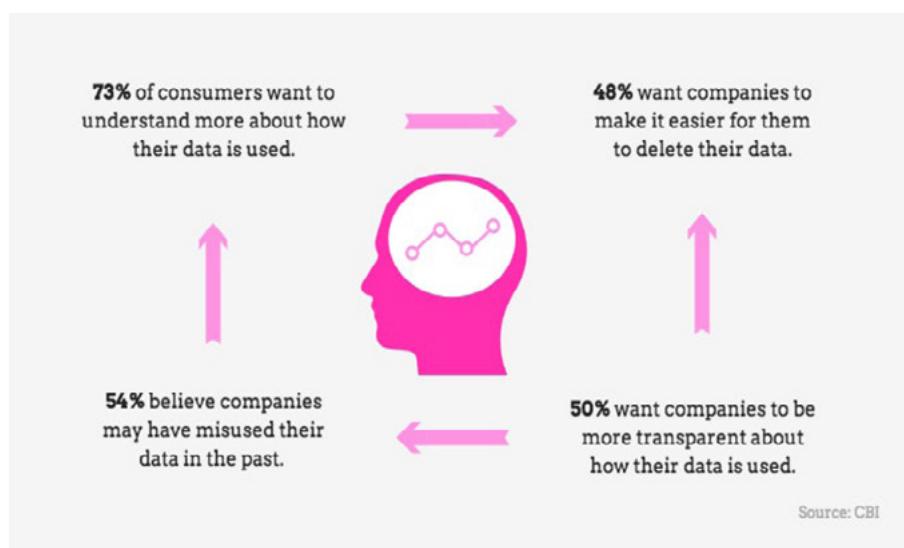


Base: All GB adults 16+ (n=1,560)  
Source: Deloitte research (June 2015)

## HOW AND WHERE TO USE PERSONALISATION

The answer to most personalisation questions – at least in the digital sphere – is data. This is, of course, a tricky area for brands to get in to, especially when getting it wrong seems to infuriate people more than not trying at all. However, the key to procuring and using data from consumers is to create a sense of trust.

Don't take more than you need, give consumers options on the levels of personalisation available and the data you require to achieve it, and take every measure necessary to protect that data.



Some consumers may opt out – in fact, it may be a majority – but the ones that do will be happier consumers for it.



In this same vein, allow consumers to feedback on elements that are subject to personalisation – like the thumbs up option on Netflix. While many brands will not be able to afford the complex algorithms that power Amazon and Netflix – with even licences for Adobe Experience Cloud coming in at mid-six-figures – but there are things that brands can do to personalise their experience from data gathering alone and cookie use.

## HOW TO USE PERSONALISATION

While the ePrivacy Regulation (ePR) and GDPR have no-doubt placed a burden on both brands and consumers (who have to implement or accept/opt-out of the cookie pop ups), the key to personalisation in a privacy conscious new era (especially as California brings in its own GDPR adjacent legislation) is transparency. Show the value of the results of your data collection – not to you the brand, but to them the consumer – and if there is no value to them, then you shouldn't be doing it.

This goes for programmatic advertising and retargeting, too – which is currently struggling under the weight of GDPR following a special ICO report released targeting the sector's apparent flouting of GDPR regulations.

The way to use personalisation as things progress is going to be a negotiation similar to the way brands calculate content strategies – while ads are almost exclusively tailored to benefit the advertiser, their content has to address specific consumer interests to represent value for investment and also drive sales. Similar decisions will need to be made in the new age of personalisation. Brands can no longer hope to simply prod consumers with a reminder of their existence from time to time – they need to be creating personalisation strategies that appeal to consumer interests and actively seek to solve sticking points in their buyer journey.

## WHERE TO USE PERSONALISATION

Where to use personalisation is going to largely depend on your brand and its offering, but the first place to start should be with a survey of your consumers. Then find out where the pressure points are in the journey through your website. Do journeys consistently follow a type or one of several types of journey – is there any way you can shorten this through personalisation?

For example, if a consumer consistently buys one type of product on your site – is there an argument to be made to surface those products as they enter the site? Or is it possible for your site to offer a personalised dashboard of options for your consumers – surfacing primarily products and services that best suit their needs?

It could also be possible for fashion brands to show appropriate sizes and, in that respect, populate the site's product images dependent on the sizes that consumers have bought previously, or for bricks and mortar stores to personalise based on geolocation signals.

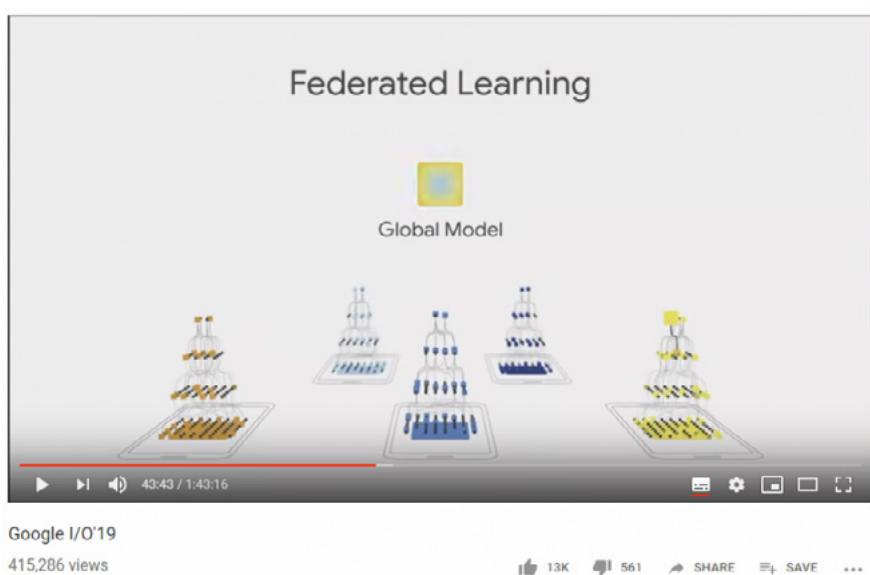
Essentially, while there are endless options, what we need to do is put the consumer first in all instances – making the changes that best suit them, rather than attempting to personalise to increase immediate profitability, we need to aim to build relationships by offering the best possible personalised UX and grow profitability through length of relationship.

## FUTURE OF PERSONALISATION

Personalisation is going to increase – while data is definitely an issue for personalisation in the short to mid-term, there are potential privacy focused methods of data collection and modelling such as Google’s ‘Federated Learning’ project which pulls the learning from a user without the data.

As we have stated elsewhere, the technology that is currently in development at large tech companies and universities represent a next step in the integration of technology in to our lives. While smart speakers have reached 50% population adoption in the US faster than even the mobile phone, what we are about to see is a wave of genuinely useful digital assistants in the palm of our hand.

The computing power of the current generation of phone is more than capable of supporting the federated learning method – wherein a user’s device is given the learning model, and then all of the learnings (but no actual user information) is uploaded and used to educate the next iteration of the global model – which is downloaded to the user’s phone for the process to begin again.



While this has not been – yet – mentioned in relation to the personalisation of user UI across the web, the possibilities of this to allow personalisation without the need for data collection are clear. What it will depend on is whether the tech companies begin to license such technology to brands – allowing them to offer personalised experiences based on federated learning rather than direct observation.

With the increase in computing power combined with a number of open source ML modelling options (including Google’s own TensorFlow), brands will be able to create their own ML (or license one) that will interact with such a federated learning program to offer personalised experiences to consumers without requiring their data – only their input and interaction, in effect becoming predictive and responsive more than personalised.

## CONCLUSION

Personalisation is difficult – not only are the regulations tightening around data collection, but consumers are increasingly reluctant to trust brands to keep their information safe or use it well. At the same time, demand for and expectations of personalisation are increasing. This leaves brands in what may seem like a ‘rock or a hard place’ situation, but it needn’t be that way.

There are ways and means for brands to ethically collect and transparently use the data of their consumers to offer a better experience that will lead to a lasting and profitable relationship with the brand. Unfortunately, it’s going to take a change in how we approach data collection and the way we seek consent for it.

Brands looking to successfully execute personalisation strategies need to ensure they:

- Collect data transparently
- Be transparent about the way they use it
- Make the case for the benefit such personalisation can offer the consumer
- Make opting in and out of data collection and retention as easy as possible
- Use personalisation to make user experience better, not just to increase revenue
- Give the consumer a way to feedback on and influence personalisation
- Offer levels of personalisation



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## ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year and Digital Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

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