

Acquia
EXPERIENCE DIGITAL FREEDOM

**DELIVER
THE CX
THEY EXPECT**

**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TRENDS REPORT
(UK EDITION)**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UK consumers have rising expectations for digital experiences. As top-tier brands offer personalized and convenient experiences that raise the stakes, many UK brands fail to deliver at the same level.

From online customer support to making digital purchases, every interaction must be personalized and convenient. Yet according to a recent survey, nearly half of UK consumers aren't happy with the customer experiences that brands offer.

Yet as many brands continue to improve their customer experience, UK consumers are crystal clear about what they want: personalised, convenient experiences. This is true globally — but strongly underpins the experiences of marketers and consumers in the United Kingdom. UK marketers continue to evolve in the way they view the CX, becoming more confident in what customers need and developing a clearer technology roadmap to get there.



ABOUT THE SURVEY

In order to understand the CX landscape that brands operate in today, we surveyed over

6,000

consumers and

600

marketers globally.

This original research uncovered gaps in today's CX, as well as highlighted critical strategies that help brands stand out and meet consumer expectations at every stage of the buying journey. In this piece, we take a deep dive into the specific insights gathered from UK respondents, which included 1,001 consumers and 100 marketers.

KEY INSIGHTS TO OBSERVE:

Technology is key to delivering the personalised, convenient experiences consumers want; most UK consumers are optimistic that technology can improve their experiences. It's important to get the basics of your digital CX right before investing in cutting-edge technology.

UK audiences want personalisation and convenience, but they're deeply concerned about how their personal data is collected and used. Many want tougher data privacy regulations beyond GDPR and are wary of a brand's storage, use, or need for their personal data in exchange for better brand experiences.

UK marketers have become more adept year-over-year at leveraging technology for their CX. Yet many still struggle with integration, provider limitations and seamless communication. Many are turning to open technologies to achieve their goals in the year ahead.



As we explore these UK research findings and perspectives, we'll recommend ways that brands can overcome CX barriers and stand out in the market by homing in on three areas: **customer needs, data management and technology solutions.**

1. UK CONSUMERS WANT BRANDS TO OFFER MORE PERSONALISED, CONVENIENT CX

Despite all the attention that the customer experience receives, brands still struggle to deliver the CX UK consumers want. Missing the mark can have dire consequences for both loyalty and profit.

Overall, 48 percent of UK consumers said that brands fail to meet their expectations for a customer experience, and 61 percent feel that brands' overall marketing is ineffective. However, UK consumers offer clear insight into where the customer experience breaks down: convenience and personalisation.

Of the consumers who were surveyed, 93 percent expect a convenient experience when they engage with brands online. Scale matters: 68 percent of UK adults interact with brands online at least once per week.

Every digital interaction that goes poorly can send buyers to the competition: over two-thirds of UK consumers (68 percent) often abandon a brand for another when the online experience is poor.

Convenience and personalisation in the spotlight:



of UK consumers consider brands behind the times with how they interact with customers both online and offline.

Digging deeper, there are fundamental areas where the customer experience can be improved. UK consumers want personalised experiences targeted to their needs and showing that they're valued as customers, with 81 percent of customers saying that automated experiences with brands are too impersonal.

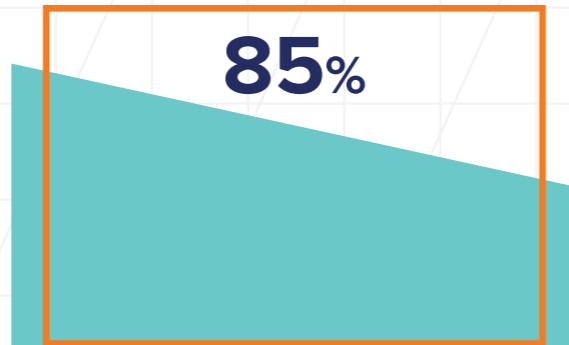
Brands are also failing to leverage the data they have to anticipate needs and personalise interactions. Almost three-quarters of UK consumers (72 percent) say when they engage with businesses online, they feel like they are treated as another generic customer, not as an individual with their own preferences and needs.

Convenience can also be improved. Two-thirds (65 percent) of UK consumers say their experience with brands online needs to be made easier. There's been progress in some key areas; for example, less than two in five UK consumers say it's hard to find information online.

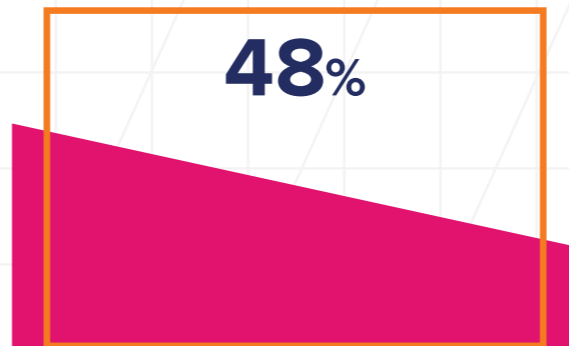
Yet, problem areas still remain with 40 percent of UK customers having experienced issues when accessing brand websites, 31 percent noting that they've found websites to be slow, glitchy, or down entirely and still others remarking that brands are slow to respond. While these numbers show year-over-year improvement from last year's survey, there's still significant ground for continued growth.

There's still a performance gap in CX.

UK marketers have demanding expectations in their interactions with other brands, but they may be overly optimistic about their own performance. Of the marketers surveyed, 85 percent were confident that they are meeting customer expectations. Contrasted with the fact that nearly half of customers are dissatisfied, there's clearly a CX performance gap.



85% of marketers think they are meeting expectations,



yet over 48% of customers aren't satisfied.

For UK brands, this raises three critical questions:

Is your CX a “convenient experience?”

Does your brand offer personalised digital experiences?

Does your marketing team have a realistic view of the quality of customer experience you're offering? How satisfied are your customers, really?

2. THE DATA CONUNDRUM: BALANCING PERSONALISATION AND DATA PRIVACY

A successful CX is a personalised CX, and a strong data strategy is the cornerstone of making that happen. UK consumers are clear that personalisation is essential to keeping their loyalty — and all too often, brands fail to deliver.



EMBRACE PERSONALISATION TO REACH UK AUDIENCES

81%

say the problem with automated experiences with brands is that they are too impersonal

72%

of UK consumers say that when they engage with businesses online, they feel like they are treated as another generic customer, not as an individual

63%

of consumers say that brands do a poor job of using personal preferences to anticipate their needs



However, “the trust gap” identified in last year’s report remains a critical issue. In order to deliver personalisation at scale, brands need access to data. UK consumers have strong feelings about the way their personal data should be protected and managed. Despite tighter regulations such as GDPR, 79 percent of UK consumers want even stronger privacy regulations in place in their country.

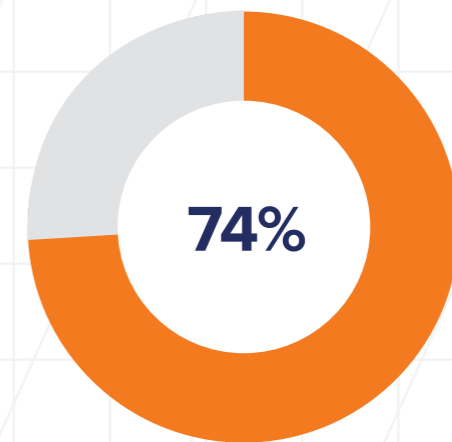
Overall, UK consumers are slightly less comfortable this year than they were last year in sharing personal data for brand experiences, with 50 percent of them being comfortable exchanging personal data with brands.

Some of the discomfort comes from a lack of transparency. UK consumers worry about brand intentions: 62 percent are not confident that brands have their best interests in mind when they use, share and/or store their personal data.

Some discomfort may be rooted in how the data will be used.

In fact, 77 percent of UK consumers don’t believe that their data should be used by brands to target them with more ads or marketing. There’s also room to improve communication about how consent to collect data and how it will be used is communicated.

Whether due to a lack of clarity or the way they’re presented,



of UK consumers find the “opt-in” and “accept” options used on websites to collect their data to be frustrating.

HOW CAN MARKETERS OVERCOME THIS DATA CONUNDRUM?

First, marketers are aware of the increasingly contentious landscape around data collection. Just three in five say they believe customers are comfortable providing personal data in exchange for an improved experience — a sharp decrease from last year. There are several steps brands are taking to bridge the gap.

Marketers are beginning by communicating their commitment to customer security:



Almost nine in ten marketers say their company is prepared to deliver on the latest data regulations, while 85 percent say the digital experiences their company delivers to customers are compliant with the latest data regulations.

UK firms take compliance seriously. Providing customers with insights into your data management and security practices can help alleviate anxiety. Focusing on stronger personalisation and the connection to data may also help.



Of the UK marketers surveyed, 65 percent said that customers want the greater levels of personalisation that they currently deliver — a steep drop from 87 percent who agreed last year. It's important to assess whether your current levels of personalisation really are serving your market, or if there's an opportunity to open lines of communication there.

UK marketers intend to continue investing in personalisation technology: 87 percent focussed on current customers and 84 percent adding personalisation capabilities targeting prospective buyers. As brands deepen personalisation capabilities, underscoring those investments and how they improve individualised, convenient experiences becomes critical to helping consumers grasp the value of sharing their data.

Finally, ensure that you clearly communicate what data you're collecting and how it's being used: 57 percent of customers say they are uncomfortable with brands knowing things about them when they didn't know they had that information.

79%

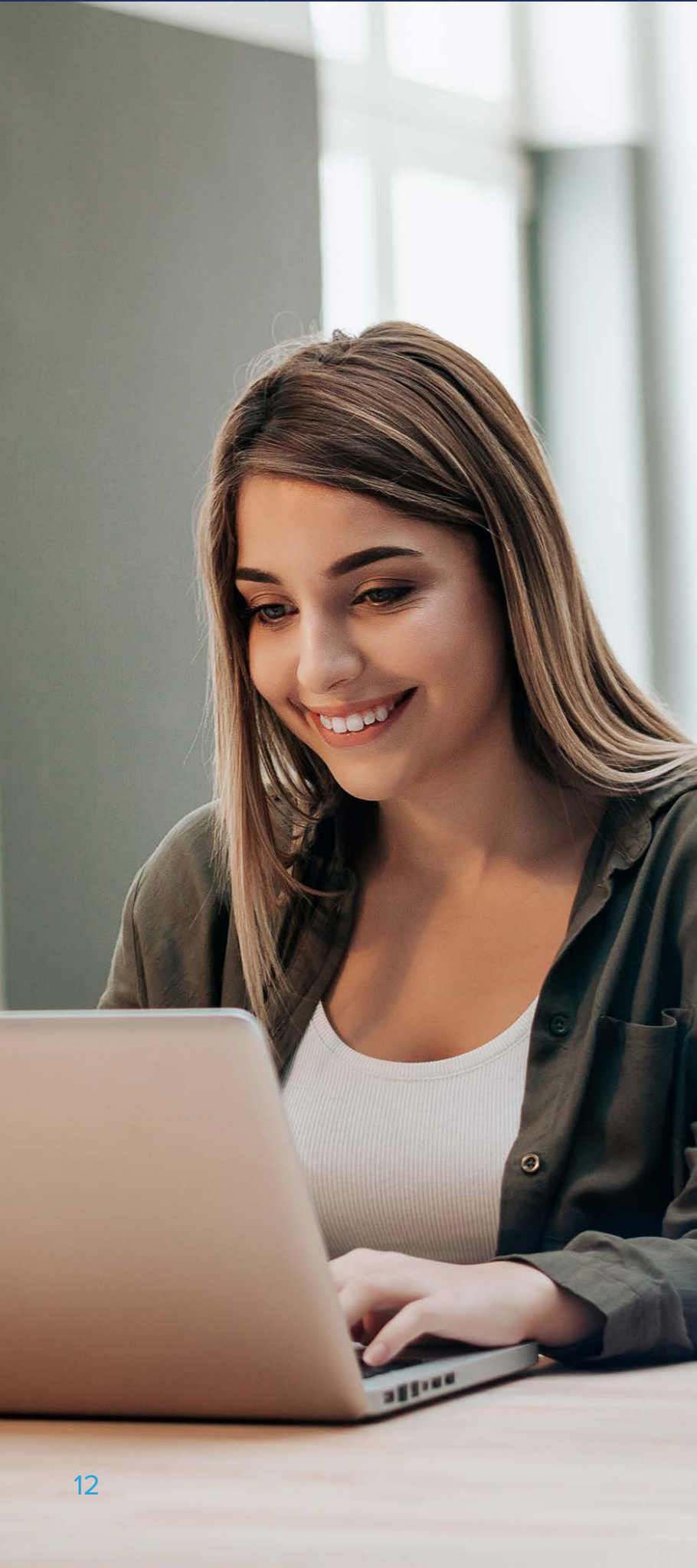
of UK consumers want stronger privacy regulations in place in their country. As marketers continue to work toward the personalised, convenient experiences customers crave, data management is essential.

87%

Over half of UK marketers strongly agree — and 87% agree overall — that security is an essential component of their CX.

While UK consumers want a more personalised experience, they're uncomfortable with the current state of the data landscape. Marketers are aware, and they can make important strides by striving for clarity on what data is being collected, how it's being used, and what steps they're taking to secure customer information.



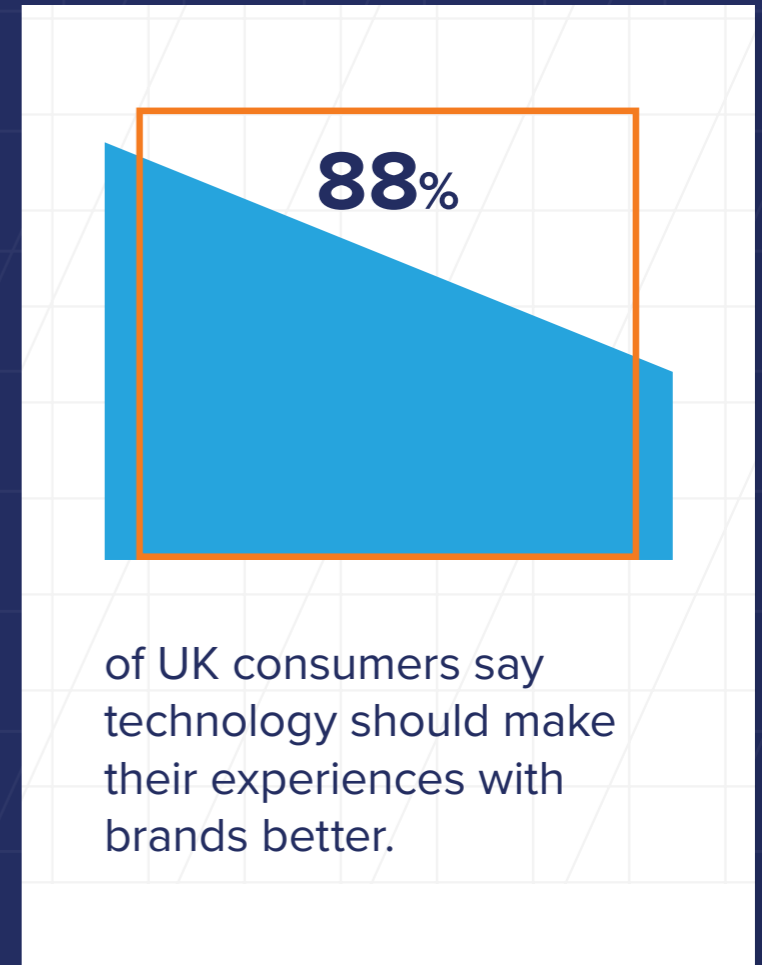


3. POWER CONVENIENCE AND PERSONALISATION THROUGH OPEN TECHNOLOGY

Brands are turning to technology tools to deliver a better CX.

For brands serving UK customers, there are two core considerations. First, customers are more interested in technology that improves personalisation and convenience than innovative technologies without a proven value proposition.

Second, it's important that brands remember that convenience isn't static, and personalisation continues to evolve. Integrated customer experience platforms that provide real-time insights, a holistic customer view and flex to drive a dynamic CX are critical.



UK consumers remain optimistic that technology plays a key role in helping brands deliver the CX they want, with 88 percent saying they believe technology will improve brand experiences and 86 percent saying technology should make their experiences more valuable. Marketers are even more optimistic.

As outlined above, the biggest focus areas for technological improvements are enhancing personalisation or improving convenience. For example, 65 percent of UK consumers feel their interactions with brands online should be easier.

However, there's a disconnect in certain areas that suggest marketers and customers aren't totally in alignment. Take AI-driven brand interactions, for example: 72 percent of marketers say they are looking forward to AI making interacting with brands a better experience, compared with just 44 percent of UK customers.

GETTING YOUR DIGITAL EXPERIENCE RIGHT IS CRITICAL:

68%

of UK consumers will abandon a brand after a poor online experience.

Just implementing CX technology isn't enough — it's important to be strategic about the role of data and personalisation in how technology is rolled out. At this point, 81 percent of UK consumers feel that automated brand experiences are too impersonal.

Marketers agree — almost nine out of ten say a human touch is needed, in addition to technology, for a positive customer experience.

While technology has the capability to improve the speed, convenience and personalisation brands offer to customers, UK marketers often struggle to capture those wins.

Marketers are happier overall, but challenges with vendors and technologies remain:

CALIBRATING CUSTOMER/ BRAND INTERACTION

While 65 percent of UK consumers say brands interact with them about the right amount, half also say it's hard to interact with a brand online. Two-thirds of UK consumers note the brands they work with provide different or inconsistent experiences across different channels.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES REPRESENT A MIXED OPPORTUNITY:

While marketers are excited about the possibility of artificial intelligence to scale their CX, less than half of UK consumers agree. However, 46 percent of consumers are willing to explore brand interactions through voice-based devices.

COHESION AND CONNECTIVITY REMAIN KEY ISSUES:

4/5

Four in five UK marketers want their various marketing technology solutions to work together to create one cohesive experience for the end customers.

58%

Some progress is happening there, but overall, it remains a pain point as 58 percent want their various marketing technology solutions to work together, but they are unable to make that happen.



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TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE DATA MANAGEMENT IS IN-DEMAND:

In the UK, 84 percent of marketers believe that if they better understood customer data, they could better automate the customer experience. Yet 64 percent of UK marketers struggle with data that's captured in multiple systems and is siloed.

COMPLEXITY HINDERS INNOVATION

One-quarter of marketers use between one and three marketing technology vendors, while one in five say their organisation relies on between seven and ten vendors. Supporting communication between solutions, as well as managing around individual vendor's limitations, adds complexity and hinders innovation around marketing technology.



Almost three in five UK marketers are struggling with the speed they can bring new customer experiences to market.

As UK marketers explore CX technology solutions, it's important to align investments with what customers really want — and make sure that customer experience platforms are offering the personalisation, convenience and connectivity today's audiences demand.

Moving towards open source technologies is a roadmap many marketers are exploring to scale their CX and improve communication.

Two-thirds of UK marketers (66 percent) say their marketing technologies are closed or do not have open APIs to connect them to other solutions. That creates limitations on customisations and prioritising features based on customer needs. As a result, 80 percent of UK marketers want their customer experience technology to be built on open source technology going forward.

LEARNING BY EXAMPLE

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



CUSTOMER: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

LOCATION: UK

BACKGROUND

The [London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine](#) (LSHTM) is a world-leading centre for health research and postgraduate education. Founded in 1899, the university's mission is to improve health around the globe through the pursuit of excellence in research, postgraduate teaching and advanced training in public health and tropical medicine.

CHALLENGE

To drive engagement with prospective students, investors, staff and alumni, LSHTM needed to align its digital strategy more closely with its high-calibre reputation. This meant delivering an intuitive user experience that enabled every audience to find the information that matters, fast.

“From a user point of view, the website looked old-fashioned, it was difficult to find the information you wanted quickly, and much of the content was out of date,” LSHTM’s Chief Information Officer Jon Faulkner said. “From a management point of view, it was difficult to make sure that we had a regular stream of relevant content and maintain the website,

SOLUTION

Higher education institutions not only depend on digital to increase brand awareness, but also to help drive student applications and further research opportunities. However, an outdated CMS prevented LSHTM from building engaging experiences for users that inspired action. In addition to conflicting and inconsistent navigation

patterns, the old site lacked a unified content strategy, which resulted in a stale experience for prospective students, faculty and donors.

Internal teams were also burdened by a laborious content authoring experience. LSHTM needed to provide a flexible design and technology framework to improve the efficiency of its digital team. LSHTM knew its website wasn’t making the grade, so it asked Acquia and digital agency [Domain7](#) to build an engaging experience for all audiences with Drupal 8 and Acquia Cloud.



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RESULTS

Through an emphasis on [design thinking](#), Domain7 helped LSHTM kick off the development by talking to real users to inform site design and implementing a test-and-learn approach.

This allowed LSHTM to build a flagship site with Drupal 8 that makes it easy for internal teams to build intuitive and premium experiences for users. After consolidating its technical systems on Acquia Cloud, the team at LSHTM was empowered to focus on creating meaningful experiences for users, instead of worrying about website maintenance and reliability.

LSHTM's experience with Acquia and Domain7 also transformed how the university is looking to integrate digital into its programming moving forward. In addition to a new flagship site, LSHTM is investing in a new intranet, building a technology service desk for students and implementing augmented reality in its laboratories.

“Domain7 and Acquia have the right credentials in terms of infrastructure, people, skill set and support to help us solve these issues. We now have clear objectives, outcome-driven comms and status updates and so far, Domain7 and Acquia are delivering beyond expectations in terms of design and development,” Faulkner said.



“

The entire team are professional, responsive, adaptive and innovative — and I'd recommend them to anybody looking to execute their digital strategies more effectively.”

— Jon Faulkner, CIO, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Delivering a winning customer experience to UK consumers is possible, by focussing on three key areas:

1. IMPROVE YOUR CX BY GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT:

The first step in delivering a CX that keeps customers coming back time and again is getting the basics right. UK consumers want a simple, convenient, personalised experience.

That's especially true as part of digital interactions, and over half of UK consumers say that brands are behind the times in how they interact with customers online. Audit your current digital footprint and look for ways to deliver streamlined, efficient experiences for tasks that are most important to your customers. The flash and impact of more innovative technologies can come later, after core investments are made.

2. PERSONALISATION DEMANDS CREATE A DATA CONUNDRUM:

2020 is the year of the personalised customer experience. UK consumers want to be recognised as individuals across platforms in their interactions with brands. Yet, in order to deliver that, brands need access to data.

Marketers are confident in their ability to deliver secure customer experiences, but mistrust amongst UK consumers remains high. Just half of UK consumers are comfortable providing their data in exchange for brand experiences, and three-fifths have concerns about the security and intentions of brands handling their data.

Even with GDPR in place, over three-quarters of UK consumers want stronger data privacy regulations. For brands, there's an imperative to focus on delivering secure experiences at every point in the customer journey.

Your data policy isn't just critical to delivering personalisation — it's essential to have transparent communication, easy-to-understand opt-ins and subscribes, and a point of contact if consumers have concerns about their data.

3. LEVERAGE OPEN-SOURCE TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR STRATEGIES:

Marketers are increasingly confident in their ability to understand and deliver a strong CX. But there's a gap between how well marketers believe their brands are doing and the perception of UK consumers. Technology can bridge this chasm.

Moving forward, marketers are looking towards open source CX solutions and investments as a way to achieve deeper integration, smoother communication and the personalisation and convenience features UK consumers demand.

Delivering a top customer experience is no small challenge — and in today's landscape, high expectations and data concerns leave little room for error. Marketers have a clear roadmap for how to focus on their CX in the year ahead.

Consumers want convenient, personalised experiences that relate to a brand's core value proposition. By focussing on understanding customer needs, creating a plan to securely and transparently leverage essential data, and implementing holistic technology to provide real-time integrated support, brands can take significant steps forward to deliver a winning CX.

UK marketers want customer experience technology solutions that integrate and offer expansive features, but

58%

are unable to make that happen and

71%

feel that their current technology providers have limitations.

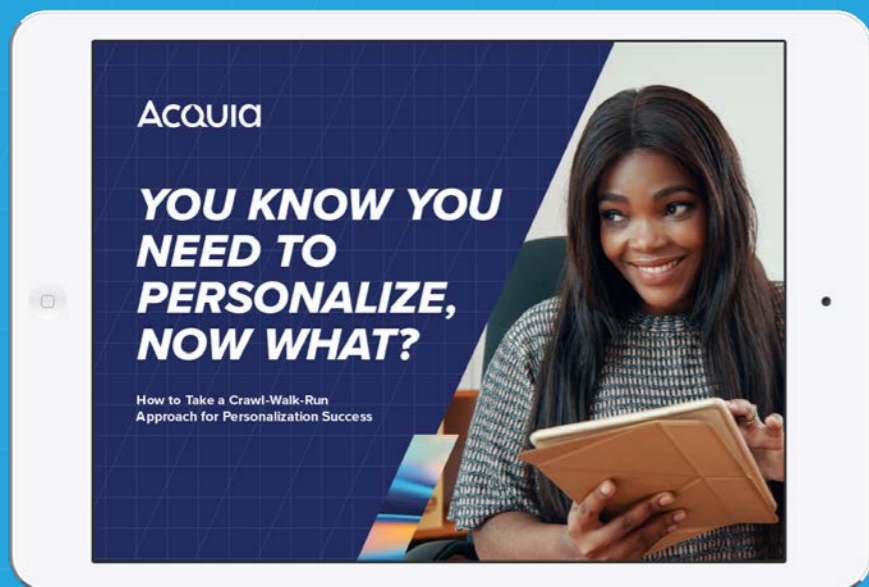
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Every business wants to deliver more personalised messaging and experiences for their customers. But how do you know whether the resources you invest in it will be worth the reward? To find out more, download your copy of the [global report](#).

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

Delivering customised customer experiences has been shown to improve website engagement metrics and increase conversion rates. If you'd like to learn more, download your copy of the Acquia eBook today:

“YOU KNOW YOU NEED TO PERSONALIZE, NOW WHAT?”



ACCESS NOW

ABOUT ACQUIA

Acquia is the open source digital experience company. We provide the world's most ambitious brands with technology that allows them to embrace innovation and create customer moments that matter. At Acquia, we believe in the power of community — giving our customers the freedom to build tomorrow on their terms.



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