

For Retailers, Digital Transformation Hinges on Customer Experience

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A ccording to the annual digital trends study by [Econsultancy](#) and [Adobe](#), retailers worldwide who were surveyed at the end of 2017 and into 2018 plan to put a great deal of effort into omnichannel marketing and customer experience this year.

The two most exciting opportunities cited by retailers for 2018 were optimizing the customer experience (23%) and data-driven marketing focusing on individuals (19%). These were the top opportunities cited by all sectors surveyed, but more retailers were in agreement.

The two areas where other sectors had far more excitement than retailers were creating compelling content for digital experiences (14% vs. 7%) and using video to increase brand engagement (9% vs. 4%). It is also likely that retailers are already on top of content, visuals and video as merchandising and selling tools.

Looking back, most retailers also said optimizing the customer experience was the biggest opportunity last year (18%). Social marketing turned out to be the next biggest opportunity in 2017 (16%), but that fell in importance for 2018. It also appears that retailers have a better grip on mobile this year. The number of retailers who said understanding how mobile users research and buy products will be

very important for digital marketing over the next few years shrunk considerably between 2017 and 2018 (79% vs. 62%). Using offline data to optimize online experience as well as using online data to enhance offline channels have both grown in priority.

When asked by Econsultancy and Adobe about digital-specific priorities for 2018, targeting and personalization was at the top for 34% of retailers in North America and Europe. (Retailers in Asia-Pacific had much more interest in social media engagement.) Worldwide, 61% of retailers planned to increase their budgets for personalization in 2018, up from 57% in 2017.

Based on a number of studies released since January, personalization has emerged as one of the biggest retail themes for 2018. It was the **top customer engagement priority** for retailers polled by **BRP (Boston Retail Partners)**, and it was a **top strategic priority** for retailers surveyed by **IHL Group** and **RIS News**.