



# Make It Personal

Why today's consumer refuses to be stereotyped



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## **Make It Personal**

6,000 consumers in three countries across EMEA have contributed their time and thinking to this research, participating in surveys conducted between August and September 2022. Their contributions shine new light on the changing demands of consumers and how the marketing discipline needs to adapt to meet them.

Adobe would like to thank everyone involved for their effort and insight.

# Introduction



“

From the moment we're born, we're placed into categories – whether that's due to our age, background, or even personality types. But the human mind is infinitely more complex than these sweeping categories would have us think. From month to month and year by year, our habits and expectations subtly, and often irreversibly, alter and shift.

Over the past two-plus years the only constant has been change. The shift to digital has been unprecedented and consumers have high expectations for the brands they engage with. They judge each brand against their best experiences – anything less is not good enough. Consumers expect brands to see them for the unique individual they are today. Not yesterday, last week, or one year ago – but today. This is a human truth and a huge opportunity for brands to stay relevant and build trust with customers in the digital economy. Brands now have the capability for two-way communication with customers – allowing them to grow alongside their customers and truly get to the heart of their evolving needs, interests, and habits.

Timely, relevant, useful, empathetic, connected. These are the foundations for experiences that demonstrate to our customers that we truly know and respect them, that they can trust us – delivered in the moment, in real time, to every customer across every channel. All this to as many as millions of customers in milliseconds. This is the bar for digital experience today. It is what your customers rightfully expect. And it is what builds mutual trust – something that has never been more important.

At Adobe, our mission is to change the world through digital experiences. We want to shake the reliance on generational labels assigned to age cohorts, that suggest shared values and behaviours, and are often used by brands to try and reach their audiences. Our Make It Personal research asked over 6,000 people across Europe for their honest opinions on generational labels, their usefulness and relevance, and the impact this has on the brands they choose to buy from. Encouragingly, we're right at the dawn of this cultural era. There's a significant opportunity for brands to build their capabilities to deliver against these new expectations – powered by data and applied in real time, with experiences that are scaled and personalised to grow and evolve alongside your customers. If you are serious about declaring your business as truly customer-centric, then this must become the new lens through which you view your customers."

**Alvaro Del Pozo**

Vice President of International Marketing, Adobe

# At a glance: Introducing Make It Personal

## **Rethink the broad-brush generational approach**

- people no longer find the stereotypes assigned to them by broad age categories relevant or useful.

## **Celebrate customer individuality and identity**

- consumers feel closer to brands that understand them, demonstrate empathy, engage with their passions and interests, and treat them as an individual – irrespective of their age group.

## **Small moments of magic outshine grandstand gestures**

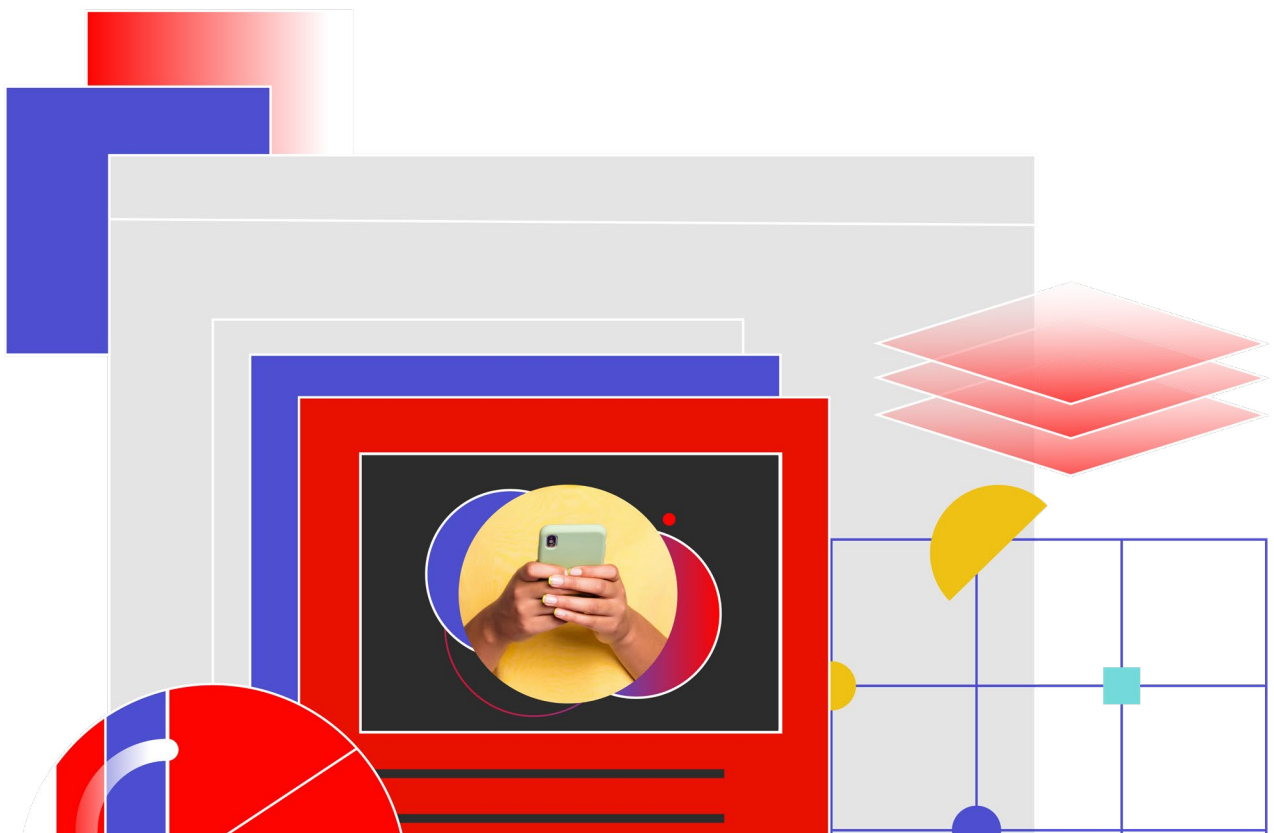
- consumers value consistent small moments that demonstrate empathy and show brands understand them, over one-off offers.

## **The only constant is change**

- customer behaviours, preferences, and tastes change all the time, and at pace – and people are unimpressed by brands that can't match their growth.

## **Consumers want more, now**

- the majority of consumers say brands aren't good, or are inconsistent, at keeping up with their personal preferences.



# Expert perspective



“ This study shows that generational labels are next to useless as a basis for delivering the targeted services or products that today's consumer expects. We may enjoy similar cultural references to people who grew up at the same time as us, but fundamentally people increasingly expect everyone – whether it's their peers, policymakers or brands they interact with – to recognise, understand, and respond to their individual behaviour and preferences in-the-moment.”

**Professor Bobby Duffy**

Professor of Public Policy at Kings College London and a leading authority on demographic analysis

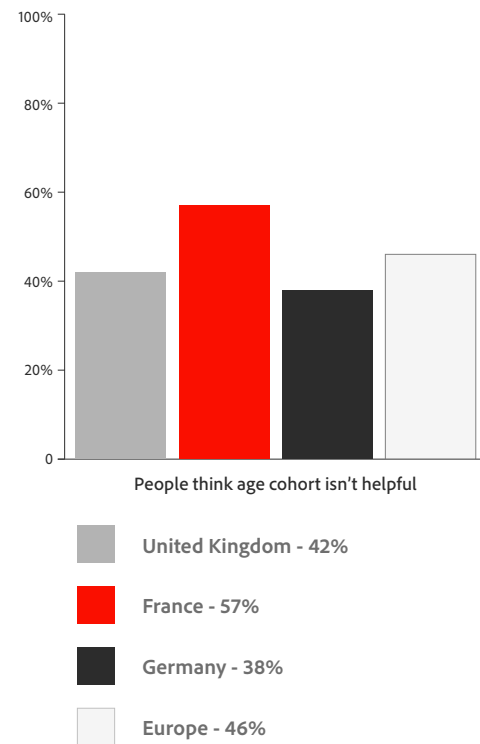


# What does the research tell us?

## 1. Rethink the broad-brush generational approach

Humans have a wonderful talent for subverting our expectations. The assumption that your personality is prescribed by the decade in which you're born is outdated. Today, more than ever, people are embracing their authentic selves and aren't afraid to lean-into their passions, however unconventional or unexpected.

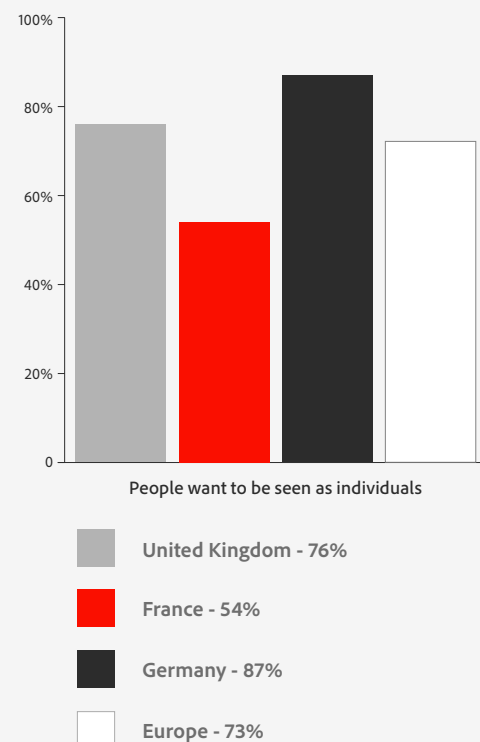
Our research shows more people think being labelled by their age cohort isn't helpful or relevant (42%) than those that do (31%). Customers want brands to respect their capacity to make choices for themselves, to enable them to explore their interests without restriction. Brands should be there to facilitate and guide, not dictate and control based on an arbitrary age category.



## 2. Celebrate customer individuality and identity

The modern customer demands that brands and society see, accept, and understand them for the individual they are **right now**. Over three-quarters (76%) of people want to be seen as individuals while a quarter (24%) say they either don't fit many, or any, of the stereotypes associated with their age group.

It is time to stop making broad assumptions about groups of people, and start treating everyone as individuals. This will be powered by the quality and consistency of the data that brands collect, and the customer experience they deliver.

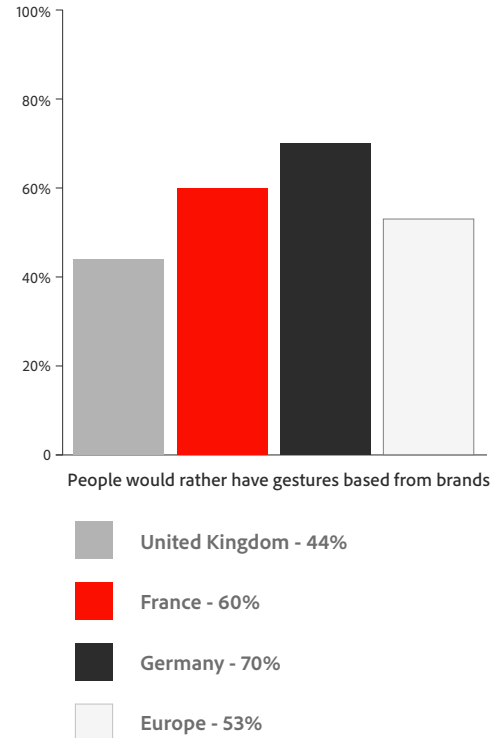




### 3. Small moments of magic outshine grandstand gestures

When was the last time a brand made you feel special? And not big and showy gestures, but consistent moments of small magic. Our research shows that twice as many consumers (44%) would rather receive regular thoughtful gestures from brands based on their interests than one-off offers (21%).

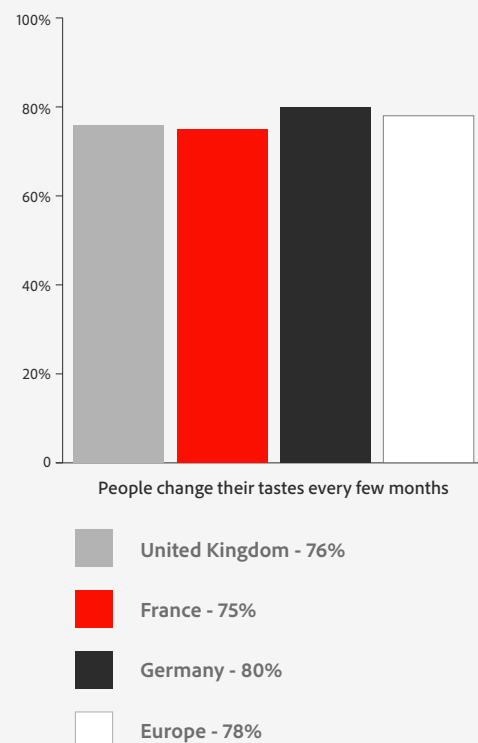
Brands that truly understand who their customer is **in the moment** can create the small moments of connection, consistently, that forge long-term relationships built on trust. For example, automatically reserving that pair of shoes you've been after for months when they come into stock in your size, or letting you know about a secret gig near your office from the band you've been listening to for the past few weeks.



### 4. The only constant is change

When it comes to who their customers are, brands should expect change, and expect it constantly. Over three-quarters (76%) of consumers change their tastes every few months, and are unimpressed by brands that can't keep up. Meanwhile, 40% say they see themselves as very different to how they were 12 months ago.

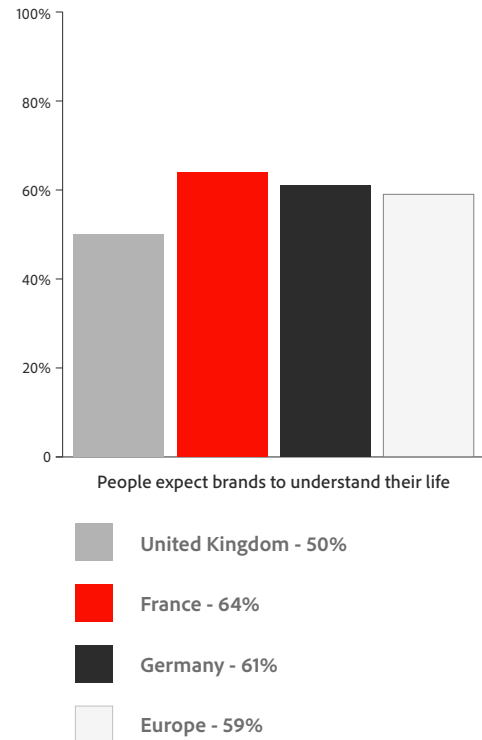
As humans, we change opinions and preferences often. Based on current, up-to-date information, brands can respond and deliver experiences that are in-line with their customers' current tastes and interests.



## 5. Consumers want more, now

Many brands either don't have the capacity to collect customer information in real time, or they don't have the capability to act on it. Two thirds of people say brands are not doing well, or are inconsistent at keeping up with their personal preferences (68%) – with just one in 10 consumers (11%) saying brands are doing well.

Every time a brand interacts with a customer based on old or inaccurate data, they risk delivering an experience that misses the mark. In isolation, any single minor misstep won't turn your customers away from your brand for good – but each time they occur, it creates a little more distance between brand and customer, chipping away at the trust you've worked so hard to build.





# Time to get personal

The digital economy continues to drive growth for businesses around the world today. In fact, this *digital-first economy* is projected to reach one trillion dollars in the U.S. alone.

*The Make It Personal* report signals the dawn of a new age in the digital economy and it is time to get personal. The insights shared in the report come directly from your customers on how they view themselves, and what they expect from you. It's forming the basis of a stronger cultural movement towards individuality and identity.

The big question for you, as business leaders, is how can you meet and exceed these increasingly complex expectations? How do you create that valued two-way communication flow with customers? How do you align and empower your teams to treat each and every customer with the empathy they deserve, seeing and understanding them for the unique person they are today?

## Setting a new standard in experience

As business leaders, we all know personalisation itself is not new. But, what the findings of *the Make It Personal report* clearly show is that, moving forwards, our success as brands in the digital-first economy will be defined by a new standard.

That is, the ability to achieve personalisation at scale. In other words, delivering these relevant experiences in real time for every customer on every channel, both online and offline, including the immersive experiences that continue to grow in prominence. All this to as many as millions of customers in milliseconds.

But the route to achieving this new standard isn't always easy. Brands face many challenges, including:

- Connecting data silos
- Ensuring data governance and privacy
- Sharing content that delivers personalised experiences
- Connecting experiences across every channel
- Knowing how to do all of this at scale.

Here are our recommendations for overcoming these obstacles:

## 1. Get to know your customers for the individual they are, right now

The future of CX is more open than ever – a fast-moving, competitive frontier offering game-changing opportunity to those who move swiftly, with intent. If you don't have the most up-to-date view of

## 2. Recognise that your customers change, and ensure you grow with them

Democratising the customer experience means business leaders lead with empathy and transform their organisation's ability to respond to signals from customers – guiding it towards a timely, transparent dialogue, and balancing leading the market, with being led by it.

After all, a unique blend of tastes, situations, and experiences make up the fascinating and complex tapestry of a person's identity – and brands must be able to keep pace with these behaviours as they grow and evolve. Uniting data together, while respecting customer privacy and preferences, enables marketers to action it in real-time, seize the moment, and interact with their customers in a way that adds real-time value every time.

## 3. Focus on creating small moments of magic, quickly and consistently

The way to a consumer's heart is through consistent, thoughtful interactions that demonstrate empathy, while showing the brand has a deep understanding of who they are and what's relevant to them right now. Business leaders need to exploit the shrinking pool of third-party data intelligently to gain consented customer information and build direct relationships with customers through consistent moments of relevant and authentic magic.

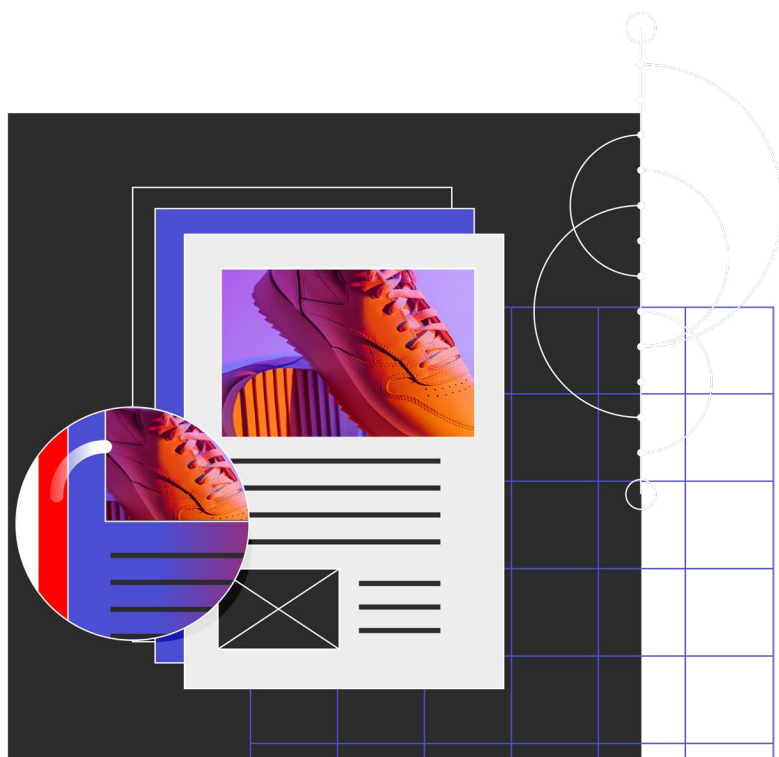
A Real-Time Customer Data Platform can deliver those small moments of magic, consistently, enabling brands to capture customer information, make it immediately available and actionable to everyone that needs it, the moment it is captured.

# For more information

And to explore what Adobe Experience Cloud can do to help you engage with each of your customers, personally, at scale.

Visit: <https://business.adobe.com/uk/>

**Get details**



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