

ACCENTURE POWERFUL MINDS

PODCAST EPISODE 5

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

Hyper-personalisation - it's all about you

Abbie

Hello and welcome to the fifth and final episode of 'Accenture Powerful Minds' podcast. My name's Abbie and I'm a Managing Director in Accenture. To round off the series I am joined by...

Nsikan

Nsikan, I'm an analyst at Accenture

Abbie

...And...

Tom

Tom, I'm also an analyst

Abbie

... two of our graduates, about hyper-personalization, something that seems to be growing exponentially in recent years, but often isn't given the attention it deserves. Let's get the ball rolling, Tom; when it comes to marketing, how personal is too personal?

Tom

That's a really interesting question Abbie. I think when personalization, especially hyper-personalization, becomes something that people notice, that's when it becomes potentially too much.

What are your thoughts on that?

Nsikan

No I fully agree Tom. You'll be looking at the most random top, or something, and as soon as you go to Instagram there's a slew of adverts.

Abbie

Yeah, I had a similar experience to that one with mattresses recently. It's not something you buy that regularly – looking for mattresses. And then, suddenly, everywhere I turned there were mattresses in every feed. It's disappeared now but at some point I was thinking, 'ok, obviously I've bought my mattress now, it's not a purchase I'm going to do regularly.' So I think there's a lack of intelligence sometimes in how hyper-personalization is just picked up and used. Do you think that the intelligence aspect of it is going to improve? What do you think is going to make that more, kind of, palatable for people?

Tom

Yeah, so I think the big challenge around the intelligence aspect of it is really getting your data into a place that you can actually activate it and utilise it correctly. I think a lot of brands want to, kind of, jump the gun with things like hyper-personalization. They want to make sure that they are meeting customers at every possible touchpoint, instead of actually focussing on the touchpoints that would be the most valuable for their brand and actually deliver on-brand messaging.

Nsikan

Just to build on that. I think, possibly, what brands need to do is give the consumer the time to make that connection themselves. So rather

than feeding the next touchpoint directly to the consumer it's like, 'ok, we've noticed that you've got this. We want you to make the connection between what you've bought and what we think you're going to buy by yourself' – as opposed to shoving it down your throat. So I think, just to build on what Tom was saying, there needs to be that naturalised journey as it were.

Abbie

Do you think that demographics have a role to play in that? Traditionally demographics have been quite rigid and in this world, where hyper-personalization should be incredibly flexible and obviously tailored to the individual, do you think demographics need to flex or be different in order to make that possible?

Nsikan

Yeah absolutely. I think the old school way of separating demographics into race, area, gender, socio-economic class and so forth, needs to change to consider your mindset in whatever economic journey you're on, and how all those factors interplay with the different aspects of your personality, because many of these demographics aren't a monolith right? One really cool thing from the Fjord Trends was how... the trend around...

Abbie

... inclusivity paradox...

Nsikan

...yes but the idea that the fashion market, the Muslim women's fashion market hasn't been broken into yet. It's a massive opportunity but because Muslims aren't homogenous as a people: and then you go into black Muslims and Muslims that live in different parts of the world you need to consider what is at the forefront of their buying decision.

So Abbie you mentioned the inclusivity paradox. Could you go into what that means a little bit more.

Abbie

Yep! So the inclusivity paradox was one of the Fjord Trends for 2019. And it really talks to this idea that a lot of brands, a lot of companies, really aspire to hyper-personalization, having like

a one-to-one relationship. And in order to do that they are using data, they are using predictive technologies etc. But actually in doing so, because, what's happened is, they are still relying on quite old school segmentation, they haven't quite got the algorithmic power yet to be able to really, in a nuanced way, really understand the needs of an individual. It's quite clunky. So quite often in trying to be inclusive they are also excluding, so an example is: the female Muslim fashion market is really barely tapped into because at the moment segmentation doesn't really allow for that level of understanding of the needs of those particular individuals. And the other part of the paradox is that, because we are all segmented, we are not allowed to be nuanced. So actually, we might fall within an obvious segment but as human beings we are kind of flipping between segments all the time and that's the idea of mindsets. So actually, mindsets is much more, it's kind of an interim solution because, until we have the ability to really do this technologically, mindsets is more of a qualitative approach to understand what humans need in a moment. So, you know, our aspirations, our needs and our beliefs change from day to day, we're not static.

To build on that mindsets thought because I think that's a really interesting one. So Tom, what do you think will enable mindsets, at least in the interim period, where I think artificial intelligence needs to catch up with our expectation, what do you think mindsets can do and what role can they play in this kind of gap that we're experiencing now?

Tom

To your earlier question around whether brands are going to get better at this – and I think they are. As they learn to utilise the plethora of different data sources that are now available and I think that really ties in to the mindset piece because brands are now working with agencies that doing really really smart things around looking at conversations online, that go beyond social listening. So now they can look at things like Instagram posts. So they can actually analyse images and pull out certain cultural nuances around those images and then bring that back to brands and say, you know, the person based on these demographics you are t

argeting in this place is very different to the person with perhaps the exact same demographical make up in another place. But because those nuances were before hidden in online content brands didn't really consider them. So I think that'll be an interesting step once brands can actually look at that.

Nsikan

It's a bit strange. So you post something on Instagram and then you don't own that image anymore and then that's now being passed on to the brand.

Abbie

And how we're all participating in somebody else's brand.

Nsikan

Tom did you have any examples around this?

Tom

In terms of hyper-personalization and maybe where it's done wrong? There's an example of where a large US retailer were using an algorithm to basically inform what kind of flyers and content they sent, via direct mail, to some of their customers. And in one of the cases where this maybe went a bit too far and they were lacking the sensitivity around the topic was: they started sending baby clothes and pregnancy related offers to a teenage girl whose father actually didn't know she was pregnant yet. So I suppose that was probably quite an awkward conversation and just shows how this, sometimes when you're looking at the data so much, you might forget about the human on the other side of it.

Abbie

Building on that topic of data being almost too cold on its own and it needing human intervention, if you like. I've been wondering about the impact of and the worries around algorithmic bias. Nsikan what are your thoughts on that and do you have any ideas around what we can do, what we should be doing to counteract that?

Nsikan

I saw a really interesting example where an algorithm was built – you know hand dispensers

in the loo? So it didn't notice a black person's hand but if you put a piece of tissue paper it gave you the soap. So I think that's an obvious bias that's there and I think one of the things that will be quite instrumental in building around those biases to have people from the different segments building part of the solution and giving their lived experiences and how that interacts with what the designers are trying to solve.

Abbie

What can we do to break this echo chamber that we have in that tech world?

Tom

So I think there are a few different challenges at the moment around this. I think one of the biggest ones is the culture that exists in Silicon Valley, where a lot of these algorithms are built. I think there's something there around, where these companies will realise that maybe we need more diverse creators and builders of these solutions. So I think that's one of the things that people building them need to potentially change and potentially diversify.

So Nsikan, how did your background lead you to working in hyper-personalization?

Nsikan

So I studied medical genetics. There was a big segment around pharmaco-genetics, which is the study of how your DNA interplays with your medical treatment. And then I went to work for an advertising firm and looked at behavioural science. So I guess it's just always been continuing in that journey of: ok, I'm an individual, I see these experiences, I have these experiences and how do we use tech to tailor these experiences?

Tom

Abbie, in terms of your day to day work and your work with clients, what role does hyper-personalization play in terms of the conversations you're currently having?

Abbie

Just a bit of background I think just to answer that, if I may indulge myself? So I come from a design background and I think design has a big role to play, actually, in solving some of these



problems because it brings the human into the equation. My big passion area is bringing the human into the equation. So how do we humanise technology? I think that's really what drives me and obviously hyper-personalization at the moment, the technology isn't quite there and it's not quite human enough. And I think clients are struggling just to get to a base line where they can even start to properly activate hyper-personalization. So in that gap where the technology is not quite there yet, they don't quite know what to do with their data. They've got data and they're looking at it like, 'help! Help me decide what to do with my data'. I think there's a big role for design to play in really just painting the picture of what the future could like and helping them get there using things like mindsets. And behavioural science has a big role to play in mindsets obviously. And then equally I think we have a role, as designers, to sit side by side with the technologies. Artificial Intelligence on its own is not really going to meet its potential if it doesn't include human input and equally humans can be enhanced by artificial intelligence.

Tom

Sadly that brings the episode and the entire podcast series to a close. Thank you to everyone for listening. Thank you Nsikan and Abbie for turning up today and sharing your thoughts on hyper-personalization. And to everyone who has contributed to what has really been a very insightful series. Of course, if you want to learn more about the tech trends that are changing the world you can by heading to our website. As ever, you can keep the conversation going on our social media channels and, if you want to work with us and play a part in shaping the future, head to our website to find out where you can apply your powerful mind.

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