

Roundtable in
association with

PERSONALISATION

How retailers are getting personal with shoppers

Retail Week's roundtable in association with Monetate explored how retailers should tackle personalisation

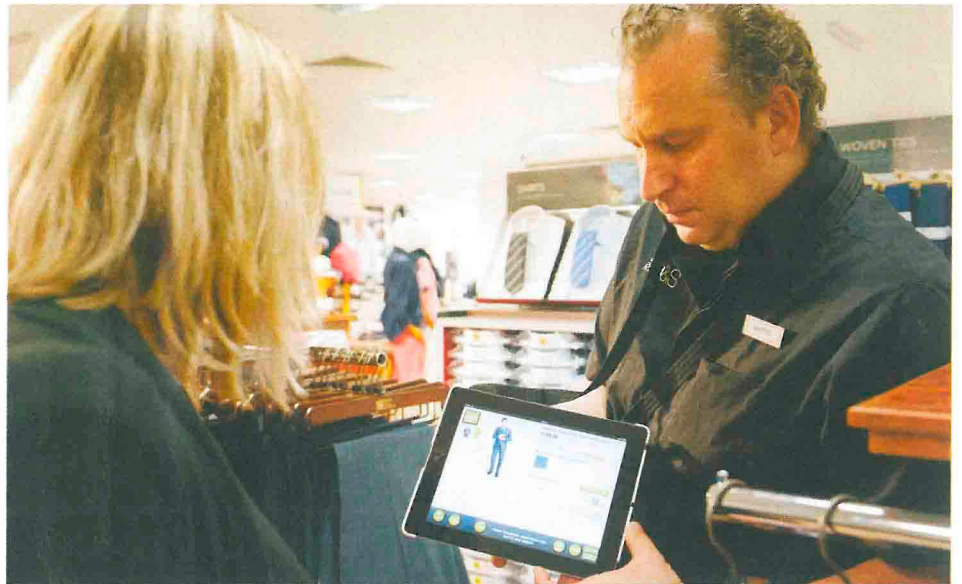
Retail leaders gathered in London earlier this month to discuss a report published by *Retail Week* and *Drapers* reviewing retailer executives' views on tackling the increasingly important need to get personal with shoppers.

Kicking off the debate, Monetate EMEA director of client solutions Alex Henry told participants that he believes the UK market is ready for personalisation. He said because customer expectations are higher than ever, the experience must be seamless across all channels. Any personalisation strategy should begin with the retailer defining what personalisation needs to look like for their customers.

"Everyone has a different definition," said Henry. "When most people talk about personalisation they often mean product recommendations. Some might have sent out some segmented emails, or have done some A/B testing, but only a tiny percentage are looking at the whole experience.

"Personalisation is a huge growth opportunity and can make an immediate impact. If you're not doing personalisation by the end of 2015 you're too far behind."

Retail representatives around the table agreed with Henry, and many outlined the challenges preventing them from following



the personalisation route. Legacy systems, difficulties in linking the online and in-store shopping experiences and buy-in from senior executives within their business were all factors cited as barriers to offering a truly personalised service.

The way in which retailers should offer a personalised service both in-store and online was a recurring theme throughout the discussion.

Henry pointed out that in-store customer service and clienteling is alien to a whole generation brought up shopping online. "That generation has been brought up avoiding interaction with a salesperson. People in-store are there to add value to your experience. We

are therefore seeing the really good adopters of personalisation trying to educate that younger generation online by asking the kinds of questions staff would instinctively ask in-store like 'How can I help you?'," he said.

"Shops do this well but didn't take this approach online. Now everyone's paying the price in-store, but this year we're going to see a shift."

Henry believes the UK market gets the concept of personalisation, but is doing it in isolation, for example, product recommendations or email marketing, but not as part of an integrated approach.

He said: "The US overall is less advanced in personalisation, although they do website optimisation well. Aspirational brands in the US like Macy's are leading the change, with its ultra-personal experience and digital personalisation proposition based on loyalty card data.

"[Continental] Europe is culturally two years behind in adoption of personalisation technology. European retailers are still having the same privacy debates we had several years ago."

Henry closed the discussion by advising the retailers present that the market expects personalisation and that the real leaders have moved on from personalising sales to personalising the whole experience, including service. "Focusing on sales personalisation is easy. The difficult part is retaining and serving those customers."

Results from the report's survey of top executives

