

I Know What You Want

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More and more products and services will anticipate what we need, giving brands a real chance to be a daily part of our lives. Welcome to the world of predictive design.

We've long known that Amazon can anticipate our desires. Just think about your last book purchase, which triggered an email with uncannily accurate suggestions for further reading.

Now the science of predictive design is becoming more widespread, as brands and media try to provide the information we need as individuals even before we think we need it.

One of the latest is Foursquare. Earlier this year, the most high-profile of the many online check-in services unveiled an app designed to help it become a suggestion service, using

data to suggest where users might like to go next. Check into a bar for cocktail hour, and it will tell you where other users have checked in for dinner.

Foursquare, of course, isn't the only service moving in this direction. Google Now uses weather conditions to recommend the best route to our next meeting. And it will suggest a gym – along with the schedule for our preferred class – when we travel, among many other capabilities (see box on Google Now).

Predictive design offer a new chance for brands to be a consumer companion and provide bespoke utility that will win brand loyalty. Some of these services might sound familiar to marketers with backgrounds in consumer analysis and direct marketing. What's different is that these messages can now be delivered in real time, with recommendations based on actual consumer behaviour.

Who do you want to share you data with?

Whether brands can do this depends on a number of factors, with the most important being trust.

While we know that banks and mobile telecom companies (along with Google, Facebook and Foursquare...) already have a lot of information about us, we also provide a significant amount of data to brands to which we don't pay much attention. Many apps, for example, require sign-in via Facebook or Twitter and ask us for access to data and contact lists. Sometimes, you either allow this access or are prevented from using the app. Have you ever read the T&Cs for any of these apps? I didn't think so. One brand that is trying to provide a useful value exchange is Financial Times. Give the [MyFT app](#) access to your calendar, and it will highlight important articles about the people and companies with whom you are about to meet.

Ultimately, the ability of brands to leverage these personal, predictive opportunities will come down to whether they promise enough utility for us to trust them with our data. Brands that fail to check either or both of these boxes won't get onto the playing field.

Q&A with Baris Gultekin, Director of Product Management, Google

Everything is increasingly connected and linked. Things connect seamlessly to people and to other things. As a result, data is shared. How does Google see this development and position itself, e.g. through Google Now? Will Google/Google Now connect with my fridge, scale or bin?

Google Now is about bringing you the information you need before you even ask. This sort of information is most useful when you're out on your mobile device. Still, we live in a multiscreen world, so we built Google Now with that in mind. If you search for a restaurant on your desktop computer, Google Now on your mobile device can show you how to get to that restaurant. If you are reading a news article on your tablet, Google Now might let you know on your phone if there's a related article available.

When things not only connect but also learn and respond, what does this mean for life as we know it?

At Google, we believe it's about freedom. Google Now is a great example of this: by bringing you just the right information at just the right time, you don't have to worry about being late for a meeting because of unexpected traffic, or having to dig through your email to pull up your boarding pass when you're at the airport.

Could Google Now potentially replace all the various internet destinations I go to now, like social networks, by always pulling in what's most relevant?

Consumers will always need search, and will always have questions they'll want to proactively ask. So even though Google Now can do quite a few things, there will always be reasons to explore the internet. Google Now and the Google Search app have been a really great starting place for me on my phone, but they don't replace the internet.

What are the opportunities for brands and advertising in this world of predictive design (and Google Now)?

Earlier this year we launched several new capabilities that integrate third-party data sources. For example, if you're in the market for a new house, Google Now and Zillow can now show you nearby open houses. Finding opportunities to make life easier for consumers is at the heart of predictive design; tools like Google Now can help serve up a wide variety of utility all in one place.

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