

Emotions takes the center stage in consumer behaviour



3 Lessons to your customers' hearts

According to Forrester, of the three factors driving customer loyalty – non-CX factors, Rational CX, and Emotional CX – Emotional CX is the primary influencer, stronger than the other two combined.

The role of emotion in buying behaviour has slowly elevated itself back on the center stage, to one of the top drivers in both acquisition and retention of customers' business. Humans are rational and emotional beings, so why this increasing focus on emotions?

Emotions in consumer buying behaviour have been part of the decision making for as long as we can remember. Back in the day, deals were concluded with handshakes, and this already hints at the role of emotion. The handshake symbolized trust and honour (not a tangible or rational sentiment). This was based on an intuitive, "gut" feeling of trustworthiness. And also it meant honour, to mean what you say.

Thinking about a time where store owners served customers personally by taking items off the shelf and handing it to the customer, knew everyone by name, weighed all the consumables, talked to everyone, etc. is almost unimaginable for the modern consumer where most things can be acquired without any human interaction – online, anonymous – you don't even have to sign for the transaction!

From houses to life partners, from education to holidays, all can be done online without human contact! A car can be purchased without ever setting foot in a dealership. Search for a vehicle on line, email interest, process payment or financing on line, and the vehicle can be delivered at an arranged place! No direct personal contact required.

Yet, our behavior reflects the deep need to feel a connection with the person serving you. We have never forfeited our desire to be valued and validated and we are expressing our needs in different ways.

Lesson 1 – Value me for choosing you

Consumers are spoilt for choice and that means that they can take business to a number of providers. We also know that the products battle to differentiate through features or benefits. A case in point is the luxury motor industry. Most of top brands provide the similar product features and benefits. Brands have to rely on other differentiators to gain or retain market share – strength of the brand name, reputation, service delivery and **customer experience!**

So herein lies the first lesson. To differentiate we need to appeal to the deep-rooted need for validation and acknowledgement of individual value. Consumers want to feel personally valued for their decision to choose one brand to the other. This means that brands have to make every customer FEEL valued. And it also means that the experience must be personal and resonate with the customer's values.

Lesson 2 – Honour your promise to me

When consumers buy products today, it is expected that it will do what it is supposed to do, in good condition, works and that they have not been misled in any way. So, when the product does not live up to these basic expectations, the trust is broken. If brands, provided with the opportunity to rectify the situation, fail to do so, broken trust is translated in many forms of behavior, such as attack (complaints), silent defection (talk with their feet) or amplified defection (social media activation).

And the lesson here is, keep your promise, because deep down, if you don't, it means that you do not value me (or my business). Back to validation of SELF!

Lesson 3 – It's actually all about me

We live in a time where the awareness of SELF is evident in terms such as mindfulness, conscious living etc. The focus on SELF is at an all time high and consumers articulate their need to be validated and valued in many ways. The ground swell of social media on some level echoes the desperate need to matter, to be heard! The generation of "selfies", Facebook etc. ultimately screams for the need to be seen, noticed and to matter!

In summary, validation of the SELF and choice, highlights the importance of emotions. Validation is a personal FEELING, an emotional response to engagement. In the battle for survival, brands that are able to re-engineer all engagement points with customers to appeal to the validation of SELF and choice, will be the successful ones.

There are many examples of successful brands who embody the ability of connecting to the

SELF and choice of the consumer, such as Harley Davidson, Starbucks, Apple... Brands who are able to make the consumer FEEL valued, appeal to the deep sense of validation of worth, will enjoy victory.

To short circuit the acquisition of customers, customer experience has stepped up to take its rightful place in business. No longer is it just about feeling satisfied, it is about the emotional experience – how customers feel, validation of choice and being valued that leads to brand loyalty and advocacy.

And here is the challenge... how do you know what experiences in your service delivery will strike a cord for your customers? What will make them feel valued and their choice of your product validated?

The first step is to understand customers' journey when dealing with your brand. What are the relevant touch points from a customer's perspective. In other words, looking from the outside-in. In this process, what customers expect, is important. To track and measure, customers have to be able to explain what happened during the engagement (the factual narrative), but more importantly, their emotional response. The combination of facts (their reality) and their emotions, provide insight into relevance and importance of reviewing service delivery.

What drives exceptional and memorable experiences?

Maya Angelou, American poet and performer, learned that “people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

The Consumer Psychology Lab is a [customer experience consultancy](#) with extensive know-how of measuring emotion. Our highly skilled psychologists interview customers about their experience and provide our clients with deep insights into consumers' experience and behaviour. We are also passionate about equipping companies with the most suitable CX tools and skills.