

Why your brand needs to focus on customer experience

High contact and deep engagement CX, or customer experience, can offer a sustainable competitive advantage for firms that choose to invest in it



If Customer Experience (CX) is the nature and quality of interaction between the customer and the brand, some companies do a great job of it, others are mediocre and still others fare very poorly.

During the pandemic, the emphasis on CX got a boost, as two things happened to change the game. One, there was a large proportion of the population working from home. Two, the usage of digital interactions increased substantially. Many industries responded by training their sales staff extensively on digital sales and digital marketing. Some of these players

already had the appropriate digital assets in place to create a great customer experience but had not seen much traction in their usage till the pandemic happened.

Training on sales conversions and customer care handling on video calls, social media and on the telephone increased significantly. Both the customer and the company employee were novices at this in March 2020. But by June-July 2020, through a series of training interventions and workshops, the learning curve had accelerated and CX in sales activities, after-sales servicing and marketing on digital platforms had improved. By September, a commendable level of comfort was reached by both the customer and the employee.

Now, with Unlock 5.0 underway, the challenges in offering a purposeful CX have become three pronged: replicating or bettering the offline experience in the online world; using data extensively to have a deeper understanding of consumer behavior; and ensuring a seamless journey from discovery to transaction and post-sales experience. All of the above have to be done in the face of higher pressure on cost reduction given the battering that businesses received during the Covid lockdown.

CX is a customer's holistic perception of an experience with a brand. It is a cumulative phenomenon, a series of "moments of truth", adding or subtracting from the sum total feeling. CX is a philosophy. It is a way of life. It is the management of a customer's entire journey with a brand from a casual online or offline brand encounter to the moment of purchase, and later, consumption, fault fixing (in case something goes wrong), being part of the brand community (if there is one), and finally coming back for more (exhibiting brand loyalty), along with others in tow (brand advocacy).

High quality CX will result in higher cross selling and upselling opportunities, higher Customer Life Time Value outcomes, and lower opportunities for competitors to make inroads into the consumer's preferences. Many firms have already traversed some distance in successfully leveraging their vast data bases, consumer insights knowledge and training resources to prepare their customer-facing teams for delivering better quality CX. This will be a key

differentiator and an additional value layer over the product, price, place and promotion interventions that brand managers engage in order to win customers.

CX is never a quick-fix solution. Neither is it something a brand should outsource. It is an investment which will reap the benefits of customer loyalty and willingness to promote the brand in the medium to long term. Further, a brand needs to appreciate that employees will play an important role in CX for some time yet. The human touch will continue to be a success factor for many firms. Wherever automation is dominant or has replaced human interface, CX design, architecture and implementation must take care to offset the non-human nature of bots and AI assistants with empathetic and accurate customer interactions.

CX includes every touch point of a brand, from a URL to a video download, product display in an online or offline format store, ease of feedback form filling, responsiveness and empathy of customer care executives/bots who listen, consistent reliability of the product or service, the physical manifestations of the brand like service centres and retail outlets, and the assurance of a brand that does the “right” thing by its employees, by its customers and its multiple other stakeholders. Recently, we have all been tested as consumers and employees in this omni-platform consumer world in many ways. Everywhere the CX factor has played, and will continue to play, a significant role in brand differentiation wherever there is an obsession with crafting a perfect customer experience. High contact and deep engagement CX can offer a sustainable competitive advantage for firms that choose to invest in it.

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The article can be read online, [here](#).