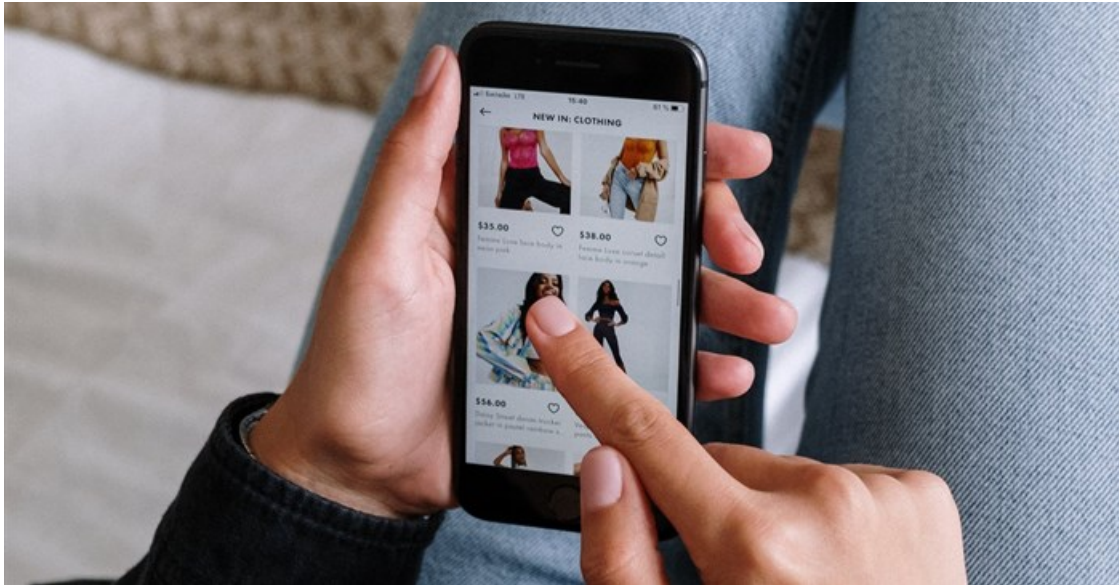


Pivoting to changing customer behaviours online

By  Linda Saunders

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As consumers spend more time online and adjust to digital transformation, their expectations of online interactions with brands are changing.



Source: © cottonbro [pexels](#)

How can businesses pivot and adapt to changing customer behaviours while maintaining a focus on excellence? While your company's strategy will be as unique as the business itself, the overarching answer is personalisation and service experiences.

1. Outside in thinking to deliver high-quality customer service

Taking on the role of the customer to deliver thoughtful and seamless customer experience increases the likelihood of a repeat purchase or interaction. In an era when change has become the new normal, customers are not only seeking more channels to communicate with businesses, but their overall customer service expectations are rising as well.

So, with customers expecting more and better, what factors contribute to exceptional customer service experiences? Personalisation, cross-departmental (and cross-channel) engagement, speed, and convenience all make the must-have list. Naturally, business leaders and strategists understand that continuously offering exceptional service, at scale and at speed, is no easy task.

However, businesses, both consumer-facing and business-to-business, are falling short of customer expectations.

In B2B relationships, sales reps are struggling as their customers believe that their priorities are pushing products over solutions, without an understanding of customers' unique experiences. Meanwhile, in B2C, even larger gaps exist between customer expectations and their perceived reality.

As customers struggle through uncharted and evolving circumstances, they expect the businesses they deal with to take account of their reality in their engagements.

2. Personalisation is key to credibility

Understanding your clients' individual needs, and doing so in an empathetic manner, must extend beyond one-on-one interactions between customers and your employees. And increasingly, customers are making more of the things they can do within a CRM.

As an example, suppose you own a car dealership and your customer has lost their job. Your company is aware of it - or, at least, one part of the business is aware of it, because the finance department contacted the customer and heard about the job loss after they missed a car payment.



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With a holistic view of your customer and empathy for their situation, your marketing department would be sure to avoid any outbound sales offers for upgrading their vehicle to a newer (and more expensive) model.

AI can help enable this type of integrated vision. Employees will, in theory, be assisted in making sound decisions and personalising the customer experience by AI, while still maintaining the high level of in-person care that customers have come to expect.

3. Convenience is still king

As organisations shift to digital business models, even the most established brands can falter if they fail to deliver the kind of digital convenience customers expect. Being present and responsive in each channel is key.

Along with existing channels, users are increasingly experimenting with emerging methods of interface simplification, such as contactless purchasing. Customers today want the most flexible shopping and delivery options possible.

They want to be able to buy online and pick up in store (BOPIS), have a variety of products delivered, hold virtual appointments, and use self-service options wherever possible.

4. Opportunity for business

This disparity between expectation and reality presents an incredible opportunity for businesses to evolve and deliver service excellence. Incredible experiences are created by meeting and exceeding the unique needs and wants of your customers.

This is the most compelling opportunity right now to differentiate your brand. Businesses that leverage data and insights on consumer behaviour to re-strategise for the new normal, putting digital at the forefront of their thinking, will be the ones that more than survive will in fact thrive.

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