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Emotions drive purchase decisions, not logic: Forrester

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Consumers emotions have a significant impact on their behavior

By KAY SORIN

NEW YORK – Emotions are an essential element of the consumer experience that brands must address to establish meaningful connections, according to an analyst June 16 at Forrester's Forum for Customer Experience Professionals: "CXNYC 2015."

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While consumers might think their decision-making is based on reason, most often it is heavily influenced by subconscious emotional factors that they are unaware of. Tapping into these emotions can allow brands to create more positive experiences, and leveraging them can form lasting relationships.

"There is a lot of research across disciplines showing that human beings aren't as logical as we'd like to think," said Anjali Lai, analyst at **Forrester Research**, Cambridge, MA. "We see ourselves as rational decision makers, but that's only because we're not even conscious of how emotion is driving our behavior.

"Results from Forrester's CXi show that emotion is often the primary factor influencing customer loyalty. Emotion is often the strongest driver of customer retention, enrichment and advocacy."

Emotional impact

Forrester's research shows that emotions have a large impact on how consumers view their interactions with brands. Brands can establish lasting connections with consumers by using experiences to create positive emotions.



Louis Vuitton's flagship store in New York

Three primary strategies can be used to make experiences as meaningful as possible for the consumer. First, brands should emphasize moments that are naturally most emotional for consumers.

Certain key moments have been shown to be especially emotional for consumers, in particular the conclusion of an experience. Consumers are more likely to remember interactions that occur at the end of an experience than the experience overall.

Second, brands can control the environment to enhance sentimental value and the context in which consumers engage with the product.



Burberry caters to consumers in its Regent Street store

The interactions themselves may be less important than the manner in which they are handled. For example, a brand can deliver unwanted news in a caring and sensitive way that consumers appreciate.

Third, brands should attempt to connect with the consumer on a personal level.

It is important to keep in mind that humans are more sensitive to negative experiences compared to positive ones. Consumers are more likely to notice negative experiences and feel more strongly about them.

Consequently, it is more beneficial for a brand to strive to minimize negative experiences than introduce potentially positive ones. Consumers are hypersensitive, and one bad interaction might affect their perception of a brand for years to come.



Salesperson assists consumers at Dior

Feeling good

Brands looking to improve consumers' experiences must first understand the emotions that influence these interactions. As technology redefines what it means to compete, brands will need to have a scientific understanding of the factors that lead to success in consumer experiences, according to a principal analyst last year at Forrester's Forum for Customer Experience Professionals East: "Why Good Is Not Good Enough."

During "The making of a great customer experience" keynote, the principal analyst shared data and tips from Forrester's 2014 CXi research report. The report looked at how consumer experiences are judged and was meant to help brands understand what it means to compete at an elite level in 2014 ([see story](#)).

Technology can increasingly be used to improve relationships and help brands establish better connections with consumers. While retail has evolved with additional sales channels, the black book of client information has remained largely unchanged, according to an executive from Boston Retail Partners at the Luxury Insights Summit 2015 April 29.

Providing a high-quality shopping experience requires knowledge of a consumer's wants and needs, which can be aided and supported by technology. Centralizing consumer information and implementing systems that can recognize them across channels makes

for a more consistent, agile purchase journey ([see story](#)).

Final Take

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