

MARKETING

## Emotion is the key to CX differentiation: Forrester exec

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*Most important in the customer experience is the post-purchase engagement. Image credit: Narvar*

By SARAH JONES

NEW YORK Customer experience is about consumers' perceptions of their interactions with a brand, and their memories are largely tied to the emotions they feel throughout their journey.

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During LuxeCX/AMCX 2019 on Sept. 25, an executive from Forrester explained the importance of both storytelling and emotion in designing experiences that will illicit a positive response and spur customer loyalty. While marketers often focus on attracting customers and getting them to buy, the real connections and experiences often happen after the purchase.

"This is often the sin most committed by marketers, and marketers that are in positions of power in companies, because that's kind of the traditional view of marketing," said David Truog, vice president/research director for CX/UX at [Forrester](#).

"Not enlightened marketers, but the traditional view of marketing does tend to focus on discovering a brand, exploring and getting to the point of sale," he said. "And once you've made that sale, you move on to trying to acquire more customers.

"You need to focus on the entire lifecycle."

*LuxeCX/AMCX 2019 was produced by Luxury Daily and sister title American Marketer, with venue sponsor UBS*

### Emotional appeal

CX is tied to all interactions that customers have with a brand, from discovery and research through to purchase and after sales support. Most marketers tend to focus on the discovery and buying phases, with advertising, Web sites and store experiences designed to move consumers down the funnel.

However, the parts of the journey that follow a purchase are the most important. These include the points at which consumers actually use a product or service, when they might ask questions or talk to a brand.

In total, there could be hundreds of touchpoints at which a consumer engages with a brand, but what primarily sticks

with a customer is an average of their peak emotion, whether positive or negative, and the end of the experience.

Seemingly cognizant of this, Disney World and Ikea have both created experiences to uplift consumers at the end of their experiences, turning what could be a frustrating or mundane experience into something more positive.

As consumers head to their cars after a day in the theme park, Disney gives tram drivers notifications of where to stop in the lot, creating a surprising element of magic. Meanwhile, Ikea's register areas include a snack bar and offerings such as lingonberry jam to create a positive atmosphere.



*Ikea places a bistro near its checkout lines. Image credit: Ikea*

Other brands have found ways to heighten the emotions around an experience. For instance, the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal theme parks sends consumers who preorder their tickets information about the park, creating a sense of anticipation around the upcoming visit.

Emotion also comes ahead of effectiveness and ease in driving loyalty.

According to Mr. Truog, ease and efficacy of the customer experience are almost expected, making them necessary. However, emotions are what truly creates impressions and long-term customers.

Customers who say they are loyal are most apt to describe their interactions as making them feel appreciated, valued and happy, whereas negative emotions that prevent loyalty include annoyed, disappointed and frustrated.

While these are the general feelings that can help or hinder loyalty, the emotions will differ depending on what category the experience is in. For instance, automotive consumers typically want to feel confident rather than happy.

Strong negative emotions outweigh positive ones, and it can take five experiences that create positive emotions to recover from just one negative interaction.

Brands may also lose customers if the post purchase experience is frustrating.

The return experience has a significant impact on shopper loyalty, but a new report finds retailers are failing to live up to consumers' expectations for a seamless process.

According to research from Narvar, 31 percent of consumers who have a bad return experience at a new retailer will not return. Only 60 percent of shoppers rate their last return process as "easy," leaving room for improvement ([see story](#)).

Feelings are also nuanced, and Mr. Truog noted the brands should consider subtleties in consumers' reactions.

Marketers also need to think about the particular needs of their core client base and create experiences that

specifically address them.

Taking cues from storytelling structures, companies can consider their customer as the protagonist in a plot. The lead character is facing a problem, which launches an inciting event, and the brand can deliver a solution to that tension that is targeted and spurs emotions.



*The Sephora Studio concept store is a small, intimate experience. Image credit: Sephora*

For instance, storytelling around Sephora could center on a teen who feels intimidated by department store makeup counters but who finds in the retailer a place where she can be herself and play.

### CX impact

Having a positive customer experience is important, since it can translate to a company's bottom line. The amount of differentiation driven by CX depends on the industry, but if there are clear leaders and laggards in a category, the financial results reflect the divide more intensely.

Brands across sectors are struggling to raise their standards for innovative customer experiences and enhance their offerings and services.

According to Forrester's 2019 "U.S. Customer Experience Index," the majority of the highest-performing brands remained stagnant from 2018 to 2019. Brands must do more to improve customer experiences, as well as reach the ever-growing number of consumers who make purchases based on a brand's values.

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus was the only premium brand to score in the top 5 percent of index brands, ranking fourth overall with a customer experience score of 80.0 on a scale of 100 ([see story](#)).

None of the index brands achieved an excellent score, which Mr. Truog said provides an opportunity for those that do manage to raise their perception among consumers.

"The fact that the excellent column is empty means that if you can differentiate your customer experience and get into that excellent column, you're going to be way ahead of the pack and really stand out," Mr. Truog said.