

Customer experience management in the new normal

By [Ntombi Mhangwani](#)

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At home, online and ready to engage - this is the consumer in the new normal. During their prolonged time at home, consumers have become more willing and able to use digital methods of engagement and are constantly looking to be satisfied.



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As our [study](#) reveals, 71% of surveyed consumers are spending more time online during the crisis, and 76% expect this behaviour to continue post-crisis. Those who were already digital-savvy are increasing their use, while those who once resisted digital interactions such as e-commerce, mobile finance and video calls are emerging as digitally engaged customers.

The emergence of new digital customer profiles has become a mainstay, and will require ongoing analysis to maintain the right customer sales and service channel mix. Now more than ever, leaders need to organise their businesses with agility to follow the customer where they want to go in their experience journey.

Luckily, new technologies that are available today can help businesses transition to a cooperative experience and become a true partner to the customer, which will increasingly become a driver for success.

Customer experience has evolved into a partnership

Customers no longer purchase a product or service and walk away, they expect brands to listen to what they want, and expect to buy an experience from a brand. Businesses achieve increased sales by creating distinct, memorable experiences derived from the interaction of the staged experience or event and the individual consumer's state of mind. Customer experiences vary and are extremely personal, creating a lasting memory that consumers are more than happy to pay for.



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Although customer experience has been a dominant strategy for growth for many companies, delivering a brilliant experience is simply not good enough any more to maintain sustainable growth. According to our research, we see that the more a company focuses on customer experience (CX) alone, the less likely it is to achieve the highest levels of sustained growth. As much as 81% of brands experienced growth stagnation in their CX scores.

While delivering a great experience will still get you a long way, customers are looking for more: a purposeful interaction. It's not that consumers want less customisation, it is that they seek more ownership. Rather than just being on the receiving end of the experience, customers are looking for companies that view them as partners.

They increasingly expect brands to align with their own values, like sustainability, equality, transparency, and fair employment practices. In fact, companies who fail to take a stand on important societal issues will lose about 47% of consumers and about 17% of them never coming back.

Managing the customer journey

Businesses have had to rethink their operations models during the Covid-19 crisis, and most companies shifted work locations from physical to virtual, adding more flexibility to respond to customer needs. Work teams may consist of individuals with skills to address customer needs across the customer lifecycle or to take full issue ownership at certain lifecycle stages.

This will help simplify customer engagement as well as workforce operations. The disruption of the agent "journey" will mean that the management approach will shift from line management to relationship management as cross-functional teams operate across multiple locations.



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Every brand needs to be an experience brand

It starts with thinking about the entire CX and aligning your business processes and employees with this experience focus. Employees must be highly engaged and inspired by the future-led and sustainable purpose to go beyond marketing, sales,

and service. Any corporate investment in digital experiences will need to mirror new ways of living and working.

How long such customer behaviour will continue is unclear, but we do know there will be no return to the old ways of operating. As customers continue to “go” and “stay” digital, post-crisis expectations for digital experience will continue to rise.

Organisations need to prepare for the future of digital engagement versus digital transactions. The speed at which companies build and deploy these capabilities will become a source of competitive advantage and the degree to which they can sustain them will become a source of cost advantage.

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