

'That changeroom experience was amazing,' said no one ever

 By [Kelly Summerfield](#)

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Customer service has been a hot topic for some time now.



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All you really want is for someone to smile at you and be friendly while doing his or her job. That's what customer service agents get paid to do, right? So why is it that they are still so unfriendly to customers? Why do they not do their job properly and go out of their way to make the customer's experience incredible?

Let's take the changeroom as an example. Waiting in line to try on clothes can be a tiresome process and the least the customer expects is a friendly employee and a clean change room. Is that too much to ask? Well, it shouldn't be.

Two mystery shoppers recently visited a major mall in the Pretoria region to put themselves in the customers' shoes and understand first-hand what they go through. The goal was to experience the level of service and satisfaction that the customer experiences. These mystery shoppers visited seven clothing stores that were recently listed as top speciality retail stores according to the South African Consumer Satisfaction Index.

Here's what the mystery shoppers found:

Out of the seven stores, only 42% of employees greeted the customer first and only 58% of employees on duty smiled. One of the stores had no monitoring of the changeroom, leaving the customer with no friendly face to greet him/her and no one to make sure that the change room is in an acceptable condition. The conditions of the fitting rooms were a bit of a mixed bag. Only 67% of the clothes hooks/rods were functional. This may sound nitty-gritty, but it is definitely not acceptable if you think about it. The general condition of the mirrors in the change room seemed to be acceptable. 86% of the change rooms visited had a clean mirror and 93% of the mirrors in the change room were without any faults. A staggering 64% of the fitting rooms were not clean. This ranged from dirty chairs and floors to clothes lying everywhere. This is not acceptable and management should take a hard look at the condition of their change rooms.

When leaving the changeroom, the focus shifted back to the satisfaction derived from interacting with the employee. 92% of employees did not ask the customer which items of clothing would be bought and only 16% of employees took the clothes that were going to be left. None of the employees took the clothes from the customer until they were asked what to do with the clothes.

Greater emphasis on customer satisfaction

Are these results acceptable? Well, only if you settle for being average and providing average service. The message is clear, greater emphasis should be placed on the satisfaction customers experience in the change room, regarding both the employees and the state of the changeroom. Management needs to realise and understand the importance that the changeroom plays in the customer's shopping experience and ultimately in the satisfaction that is experienced. The place

where you change your clothes should be kept clean at all times - it's called basic hygiene.

Management should hire and train employees to effectively manage the changeroom. A smile and clean changeroom costs nothing at the end of the day. But a frown and a dirty changeroom could be costly!

ABOUT KELLY SUMMERFIELD

Kelly Summerfield is a researcher in the Department of Marketing Management at the University of Pretoria. Visit bcommarketing.up.ac.za for more information on the research the Department of Marketing Management is doing.

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