

Excellent customer service, not price, wins over consumers

A snap poll has revealed that customers are not basing their purchasing decisions on price alone but excellent customer service, with better products/services are on a par with price, in joint second place, when it comes to importance.



Source: © Anaw at sudchanham [123rf](#) Customer empathy and good service are still more likely to sway shoppers than having the lowest price tag, snap poll finds

These results are from a snap poll conducted last week by nlightencx, a South African customer experience agency, among its client base.

“Given the lack of economic confidence and price rises for just about everything, we wouldn’t have been surprised if our clients told us that they are basing every purchasing decision on price,” says nlightencx CEO Nathalie Schooling.

“Instead, what we found is that ‘it all comes down to price’ was only listed by 22% of respondents as their decisive factor. ‘Great customer experience’ came out tops (56%), with ‘better products/services’ also listed by 22% of respondents.”

What this tells businesses, Schooling believes, is that a knee-jerk strategy based on internal cost-cutting and the lowest possible price point is unlikely to deliver the expected results.

“Of course, consumers are looking for a good deal and we can expect them to be more fickle than usual when it comes to

customer loyalty and being willing to switch products and suppliers.

“But consumers are savvy enough to know that ‘good deal’ and ‘lowest price’ are seldom the same thing,” she adds.



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Michael Hanly 20 Jun 2023



The bottom line is customer empathy

The bottom line, Schooling explains, is that businesses need to have empathy; to recognise the current price-consciousness in the market, while understanding that modern consumers are often unwilling to trade low price for an inferior product offering and a bad customer experience.

“It is a basket of expectations. Get any one of them wrong and customer loyalty goes out the window – more so now than in good times,” Schooling says.

Rapidly eroding customer loyalty is borne out by international research.

Salesforce, a global customer relationship management software company, published a 29-country study last year entitled *State of the Connected Customer*, which found that 71% of consumers had switched brands at least once in the preceding 12 months “as priorities, lifestyles, or financial situations changed”.

Of these, nearly half made the change because of customer service, while nearly 60% did so because of product quality.

And almost 90% (the highest total since 2018) believed the experience a company provides is as important as its products or services.



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Overreliance on technology is short-sighted

Writing in *Forbes* business magazine, contributor Brian Solis, a digital anthropologist and futurist, agrees that empathy is vital.

He refers specifically to ‘digital empathy, which he defines as “the ability to humanise customer behaviours, preferences and aspirations through the connection between human-centred data, insights, and the meaningful customer engagement powered by those insights”.

Schooling concurs, warning that an over-reliance on technology – particularly as businesses look to trim staffing costs – can be the antithesis of a good customer experience.

“Right now, AI is all the rage and, yes, it has its place. But beware corporate South Africa ... real human interaction will usually trump the bots,” she says.

“Empathy through tech – use it sparingly and responsibly. Understand that people need to be heard and their queries seen to. If your bot can’t do that effectively, then don’t even go there,” she urges.



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Tips for service excellence and customer loyalty

Schooling offers the following tips to businesses looking to deliver customer experience excellence and retain client loyalty:

1. Empathise

Consumers are uncertain and they're hurting. Take some time to talk to your clients and understand what they are going through. See how you can adjust their plans or contracts to suit their financial situation at this time.

2. Communicate your intentions

Take this empathy and include it in all your communication so that your client knows that you are behind them.

3. Walk the walk

People will pick up on meaningless slogans and empty marketing promises and use them against you. Make meaningful and deliverable undertakings.

4. Meet your client where they are at

Communicate via the channels that work best for them – not the cheapest and easiest for you.

5. Don't get too caught up in automated CX

Not when your customer is so vulnerable. Also remember that automated CX is easily replicated by your competitors, eroding any point of competitive difference.

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