

Redefining customer experience online



Dubai, Jul 14, 2020 (Issuewire.com) - Consumer behaviour has undergone a massive shift over the past few months, and online shopping – in the region and globally – has been unprecedentedly high. As retail businesses are rethinking and strategising to adapt to a changing business environment, the RetailME webinar on July 7, 2020, focused on ‘redefining online customer experience’.

“At the heart of retail is the customer; and positive customer experience (CX) translates to revenue, loyalty and brand equity. Keeping this in mind and staying true to RetailME’s mission to share retail knowledge and intelligence, we were delighted to bring together veteran retailers who are championing CX,” says Justina Eitzinger, COO, Images RetailME.

Adding on, moderator Katia Kachan, general manager, Brandquad states, “The omnichannel customer journey in the post-digital transformation era is complex; it can only be managed by putting customer data in the centre of retail business models. Thanks to advanced analytics tools, companies can and must provide customers with authentic personalised experiences at scale. This mass-personalisation can be a key competitive advantage in 2020, challenging companies’ ability to manage customer data and use it to deliver unique experiences in real-time.”

Gaining customer loyalty online

The most exciting business opportunity in 2020 is CX, Kachan cites referring to an Adobe report. “Companies that focus on building CX can reduce churn rate and increase revenues, leading to higher profits. An Oracle study indicates that 74% of senior executives believe that CX impacts a customer’s willingness to be a loyal advocate of a brand.”

The key question is, what drives consumer loyalty online?

Our poll indicated that the top three factors driving consumer loyalty online are competitive pricing (79%); consistent and reliable delivery (73%); and a variety of products (64%).

Nader Amiri, the founder of El Grocer, highlights the importance of competitive pricing. “As a marketplace, we follow the same-store pricing model, which immediately removes a barrier to purchase on the part of the consumer as s/he can purchase a product online at the same price as in the store. while availing doorstep delivery.

“Understanding the shopper journey is the starting point, which helps us to build loyalty over time, through the constant evolution of products and creating an easy navigation path. For instance, we enable customers to search for their complete grocery shopping list on El Grocer at one go. Service is also crucial to gain customer loyalty,” he adds.

“Customers value prompt delivery and reliable timelines,” agrees Gustavo Smidt, chief product officer, Namshi.com. “Loyalty comes from great experience that users can’t wait to come back. It’s not only through point collection or a reward programme. Data should be leveraged to understand where users struggle and then match their expectations to surprise them.”

Moving over to product variety that’s also crucial in delivering a great CX, Leena Khalil, co-founder, Mumzworld.com dwells on a pertinent question: “Do we have the right product that helps a mom at every step of her journey? At Mumzworld.com, we take pride at curating a rich selection with 250,000 products sourced globally. Alongside variety, since we deal with parents, building trust is crucial at multiple levels – be that products, payments or delivery.”

“We are always experimenting with new ways to gain customer loyalty. For instance, we closely monitor social media to include popular posts by our customers in Faces’ marketing initiatives. This helps us to create loyal ambassadors while leveraging user-generated content,” adds Nick Vinckier, head of growth for luxury beauty brand Faces, part of Chalhoub Group.

What drives customers away

The top three reasons for negative CX online, as our poll indicated, include long delivery timelines (30%), product description mismatch (23%) and low quality of website/mobile app (20%).

“Delivery was chaotic during the COVID-19 lockdown; even more challenging in KSA than in the UAE,” admits Vinckier. “What goes a long way is having a strong and trustworthy relationship with customers. In our case, we were upfront and honest with our customers about the delay in delivery timelines, and they understood.”

“We have a great last-mile team, which ensures swift delivery. If online is to take a share of offline retail, alongside delivery, it must be better in terms of offering a wide product selection, convenience and

pricing,” adds Smidt.

Improving omnichannel CX

Over the past decade, the number of companies investing in omnichannel CX has jumped from 20% in 2012 to over 80% in 2020, shares Kachan referring to a PwC report. “According to an Adobe study, companies with a strong omnichannel customer engagement strategy tend to enjoy 10% year-on-year growth, 10% increase in the average order value and 20% increase in close rate.”

When Mumzworld launched almost a decade ago, the tools and expertise to apply global solutions to the local consumer were limited. The consumer too wasn’t ready to shop online, Khalil states. “But we have seen a big shift in the past five years as people became familiar with online shopping. As the consumer evolved, we also introduced more personalisation. Importantly, we focus on unique customer needs to enhance CX.”

On its part, Faces has leveraged technology to scale very quickly, especially during the lockdown, strengthening its online channel, while optimising the offline experience. “COVID-19 has been a great accelerator. We launched Faces.com in Kuwait in seven days; followed by Egypt and Qatar – all within a month. The Chalhoub Group went into a ‘start-up mode’ to quickly respond to consumer demand amid challenging times. We will launch our mobile app very soon, as we see maximum searches happening predominantly on the App Store in the GCC,” shares Vinckier.

But the web experience can’t be compromised while creating a mobile-first approach, Smidt cautions.

Amiri feels trust plays a crucial role in improving CX, which strengthens by having the right partners on the platform. “Pre-COVID, 65-70% of customers would opt to pay by card on delivery. Post-COVID, we launched online payments immediately. Thus, innovating to meet the new customer needs.”

“Our challenge will be to deal with the new situation with a proper understanding of the new customer behaviour,” Vinckier adds. “If there was a big need for omnichannel retail, this trend would only continue, and we’ve to invest more to build channel-agnostic CX.”

“Amidst a lot of uncertainty, we have to understand the user and adapt to their needs and the situation very quickly. Every crisis brings with it an opportunity, and at Namshi, we expect to grow as more consumers are shopping online,” Smith states.

Kachan summarises the 3Cs to create a tremendous omnichannel CX – being consistent, compelling and candid.

About IMAGES RetailME

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industry.

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Source : Images RetailME

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