



Your primer to voice of the customer

What it is and how it fills the CX insight gap in 2021



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Voice of the Customer: The key to excellent CX

This is a customer's world — brands are just living in it.

Unfortunately, keeping up with today's connected customers presents a significant challenge for any brand.

As customers, our expectations are constantly evolving. What we experience with one brand impacts how we perceive our experiences with another. We seek easy experiences tailored to our needs, whether we're buying something or obtaining support. Otherwise, switching brands is just a few clicks away.

Voice of the Customer (VoC) helps brands not only better understand their customer experience — it helps them elevate it.

In this report, we look at what customer-centric brands need to know about VoC, so you can design empathetic experiences that stand out in your customers' eyes:

- What it is
- How to collect it
- How it fills crucial customer experience (CX) insight gaps



The reality
for brands in
an experience
driven world.



Customers want to do things their way

Today's customer is more connected than ever.

Technology has empowered them with unlimited information and options at their fingertips. Often, it can even feel like they know more about your offerings than you do.

They are increasingly omni-channel, seeking brands that can offer experiences that work best for them – not the other way around.

86% of CX professionals expect their organization to compete mostly based on CX in 2021.¹

But what does such an experience look like, exactly? What's the best way to adapt to shoppers' ever-evolving expectations and preferences? How can you best support them post-purchase to ensure high customer satisfaction, retention, and advocacy?

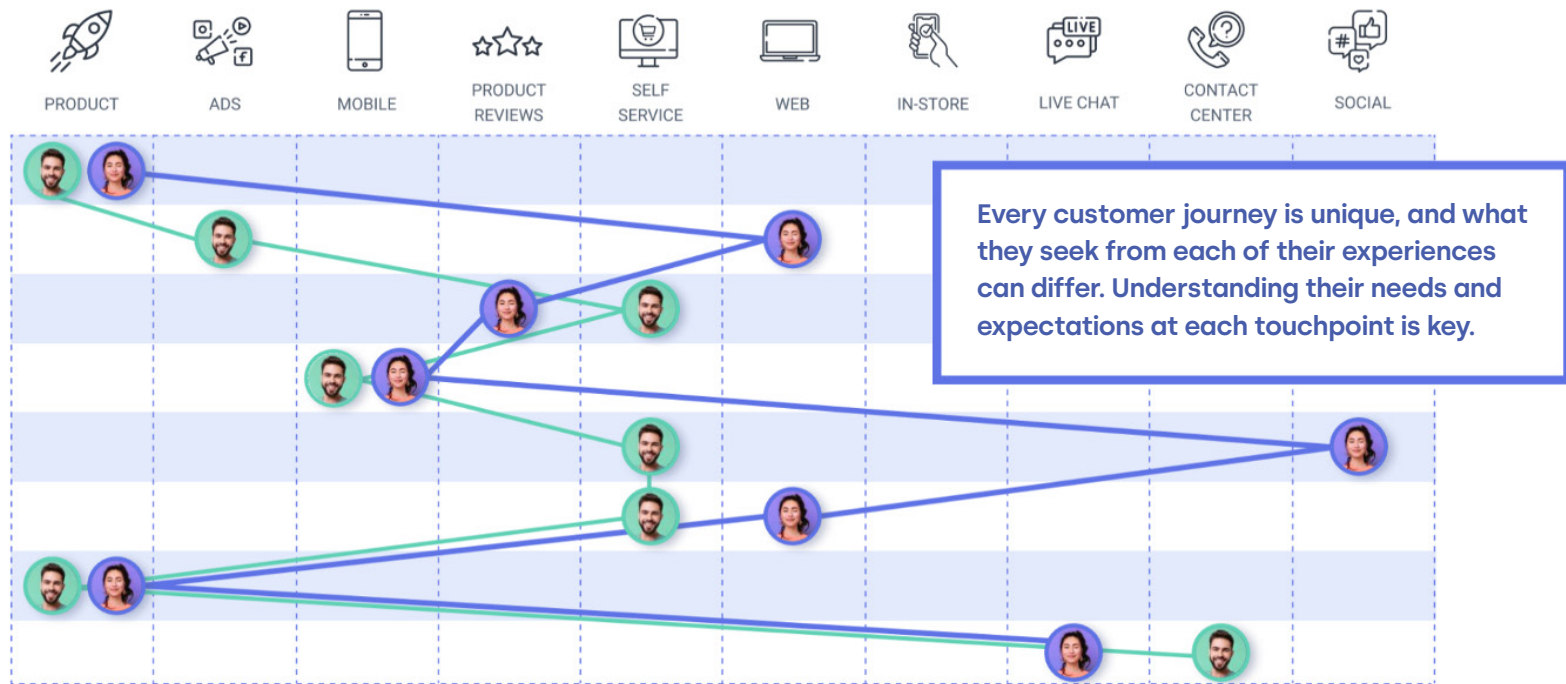
In a world where every experience counts and switching costs are at their lowest, these types of insights are gold.

32% of customers stop doing business with a brand they love after only one bad experience.²

¹ Gartner, 2019 Customer Experience Management Study. (Via Gartner Blog)

² PwC, Experience is Everything: Here's How To Get It Right, 2018.

Customer journeys are growing more complex



Brands struggle to keep up with evolving expectations

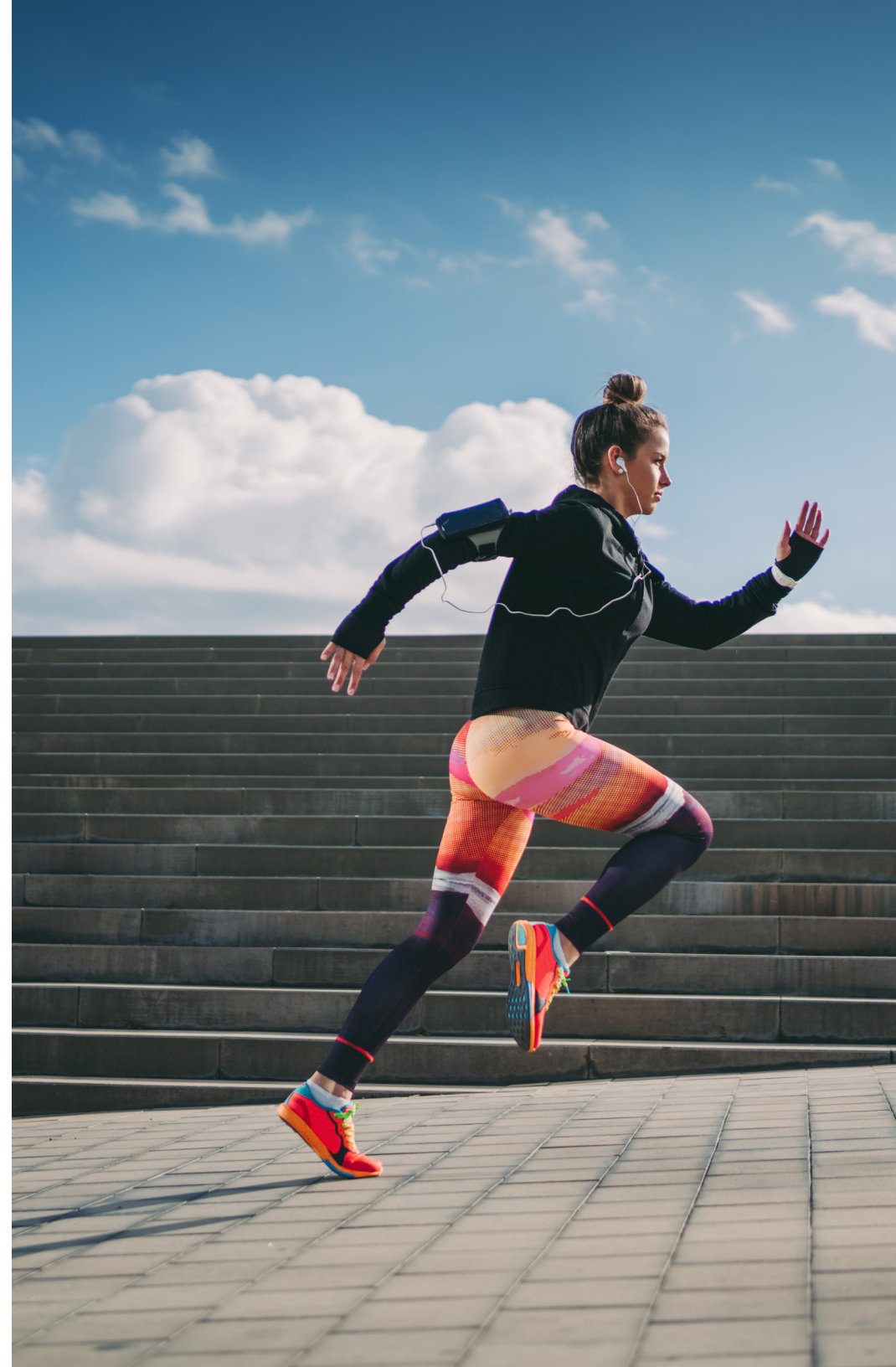
As time passes, customer expectations only continue to grow.

Brands are becoming more conscious of CX's impact (especially to their bottom line), and they're taking steps to improve it.

Are things improving? Multiple studies show that a disconnect still exists between customer expectations and brands' ability to meet them.

For example, one study by **Wunderman Thompson** found that while 42% of consumers believe seamless experiences across devices is a "top priority", only 11% of decision-makers see seamless omnichannel experiences as the most important factor when delivering quality experiences. At the same time, one study found that, **over \$35 billion is lost** every year in customer churn by US businesses due to avoidable CX issues.

To eliminate this customer experience gap, brands must continually seek ways to deliver the easy, convenient, and positive experiences customers crave.





What is a truly empathetic experience?

It's one that caters to a customer's expectations and preferences at every step of their journey, and doesn't ask them to adapt to your brand.

It's an experience that delivers the digital conveniences and the level of personalization they seek, one where they feel recognized and understood, and feel they can get support from your brand when they want, how they want.

Overcoming the insight gaps in your CX

CX is extremely complex. Designing great experiences? Even more so.

It requires not only a deep understanding of customer needs, expectations, and preferences at every stage of their journey – it also necessitates knowing how they perceive their experiences with your brand at each touchpoint, on all your channels.

Unfortunately, several factors can create a knowledge gap, standing in your way of delivering the best CX possible:

- Data sources that tell you what customers do, but not why
- Lack of real-time insights into how customers perceive their CX
- Disconnected customer insights initiatives and data silos
- Low visibility for stakeholders into targeted insights on which they can act

That is where a successful Voice of the Customer program comes in. We look at how in the next section.

What you need to know about Voice of the Customer (VoC)



Voice of the Customer defined

Voice of the Customer (VoC) is a research technique that involves engaging your customers, visitors, and prospects to better understand their needs, expectations, preferences, and experiences at key moments in the customer journey.

Feedback is typically collected right after a critical experience occurs while it's still in customers' minds, like an online purchase, an interaction with a customer service agent, or any website visit.

Although, VoC can enable you to collect feedback from your key audiences at any time, giving them a convenient way to share their thoughts, suggestions, and even praises.

By leveraging feedback from those who navigate your CX first-hand, VoC generates first-party insights to help marketers, customer care, commerce, and CX professionals optimize the experience at all touchpoints to deliver seamless customer journeys

The engagement spectrum

Measure on all your touchpoints



Mobile



Desktop



In-app



SMS



Social media



IVR



Email



On location

Another key piece in the CX insights puzzle

Tech advances have allowed customers to interact with their favorite brands in new ways. They have also empowered brands to understand these interactions on a deeper level.

From social media listening to web analytics, a marketer's toolbox is full of critical sources of first-party insights that shine a light on customers and their experiences.

Where does VoC fit? By helping you understand the motivations driving their experiences, and the context behind their perceptions of your CX - straight from the source.

In other words, by confirming the “why” behind the “what” of your customers' experiences.



VoC provides a powerful complement to existing marketing technologies on your way to painting a clearer picture of your CX.

Things VoC can tell you about your CX

(That other data sources can't)

Who is in a better position to tell you what your customers need, expect, prefer, and experience across their journey than your customers themselves?

Many data sources help us make educated guesses on what customers are thinking. However, many factors drive how customers perceive their experiences that these sources can fail to reveal.

VoC eliminates the need to impose our assumptions on why your customers do what they do, and how you can improve their experiences.

To the right are just some of the insights VoC helps confirm.

Visitor intent:

What exactly what they were hoping to accomplish?

Task completion:

Did they consider their experience successful (and why)?

Effort:

Did they consider their experience difficult?

Satisfaction:

Did they view their experience positively or negatively?

Next steps:

What is the outcome of their experience?

Advocacy:

Will they refer you to others based on their experience?

Purchase horizon:

How far along their buying journey are they?

Demographics:

How does CX differ between your target personas?

How VoC tackles your business objectives

The insights you get from VoC can help you tackle a variety of different business objectives. Here's how:



Business objectives

- Conversion optimization
- Website satisfaction and user experience (UX)
- Customer care and retention
- Marketing effectiveness
- Product optimization and management

How VoC helps

1. A continuous source of first-party insights
2. Collect both strategic and tactical insights
3. Give customers a louder voice at the decision table
4. Remove assumptions about customers' experiences
5. Identify friction points in unsuccessful experiences
6. Inform marketing campaigns and product requirements
7. Gauge the impact of campaigns on attracting desired audiences
8. Drive decisions leading to more seamless customer journeys
9. Create internal alignment on customers' need and expectations
10. Support a customer-centric culture within the organization

How to capture the Voice of the Customer

Not all engagement methods are created equal.

How and when you engage customers for their feedback impacts the type of feedback you get back. A well-rounded VoC program requires the right engagement methods for the kind of insights you're looking to obtain.

The engagement method you should use depends on your business need. However, leveraging a mix of these methods can help you understand key experiences and customer segments inside and

out. Most importantly, it can help identify both tactical insights you can act on today, and representative insights you can use to inform long-term strategies.

We take a closer look at these next, using a fictional brand looking to collect insights from their website visitors about their digital experiences.

Desired insight	Strategic	Tactical	Optimization
Type of feedback needed	Representative	Individual	Targeted
Engagement method needed	Random Active	Passive Persistent	Behavior-based
Suggested approach	Pre-post survey	Comment card	Triggered survey

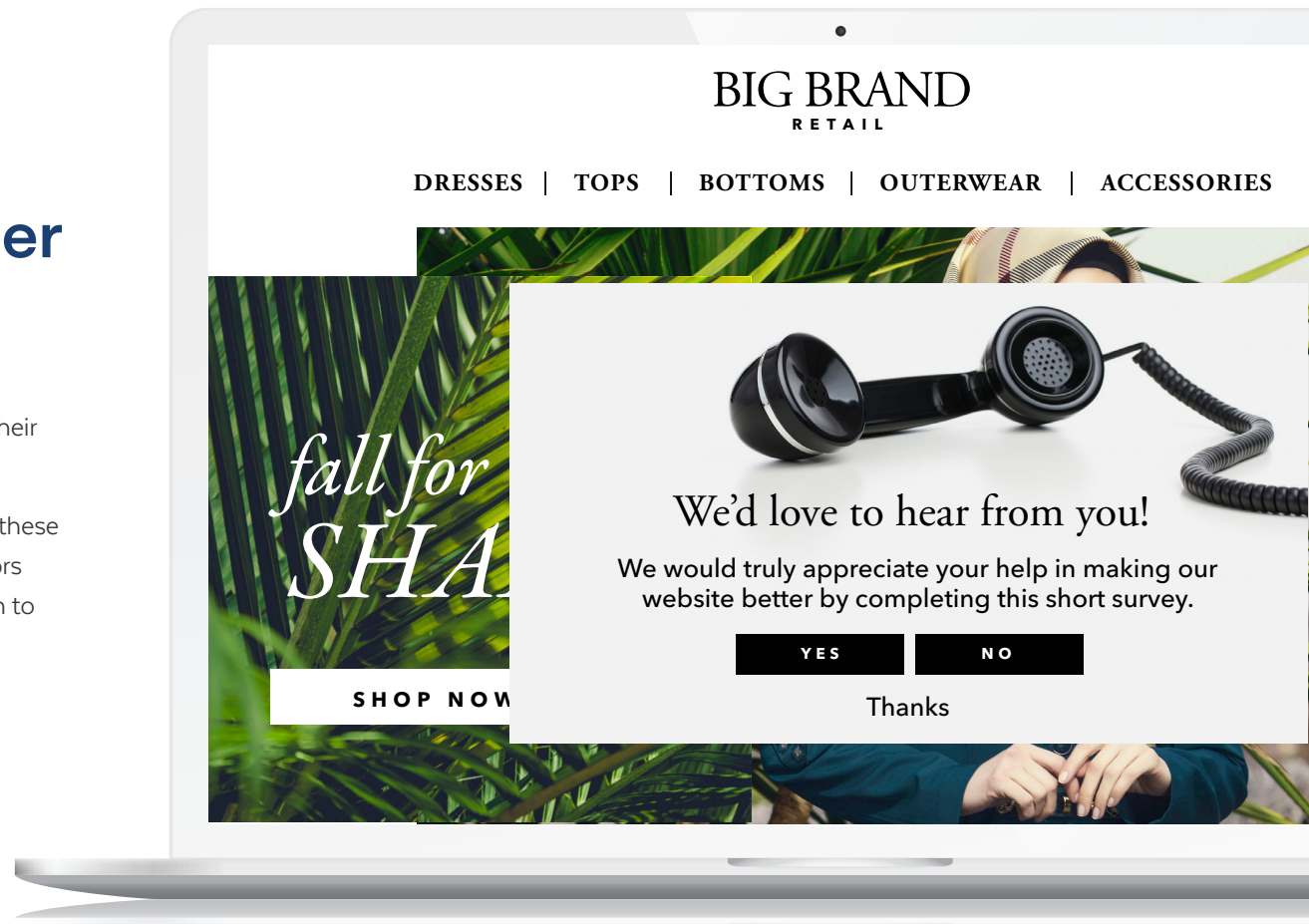
How to capture the Voice of the Customer

Desired insights: Strategic

Goal: Get a representative view of how all customers view their digital experience to help drive strategic decisions.

A Random Active solicitation method is ideal for collecting these insights. This can involve inviting a random sample of visitors upon arrival to your website or mobile app and asking them to complete a survey once they are done.

The insights generated are ideal for tracking KPIs over time, creating internal alignment, and driving strategic decisions.





How to capture the Voice of the Customer

Desired insights: Tactical

Goal: Detect quick fixes and remove friction points to improve the user experience.

A Passive Persistent approach is ideal for these targeted insights.

Also known as a comment card, visitors can often trigger these via Feedback buttons that appear throughout a visitor's session. For example, if they're experiencing an issue with your online shopping cart and want to flag it to your team. Real-time alerts can then be set up to alert key stakeholders so they can address it quickly.

Unlike the Random Active approach, this method is user-initiated. As such, the feedback collected tends to skew negatively and does not represent how all visitors feel about their experiences.

How to capture the Voice of the Customer

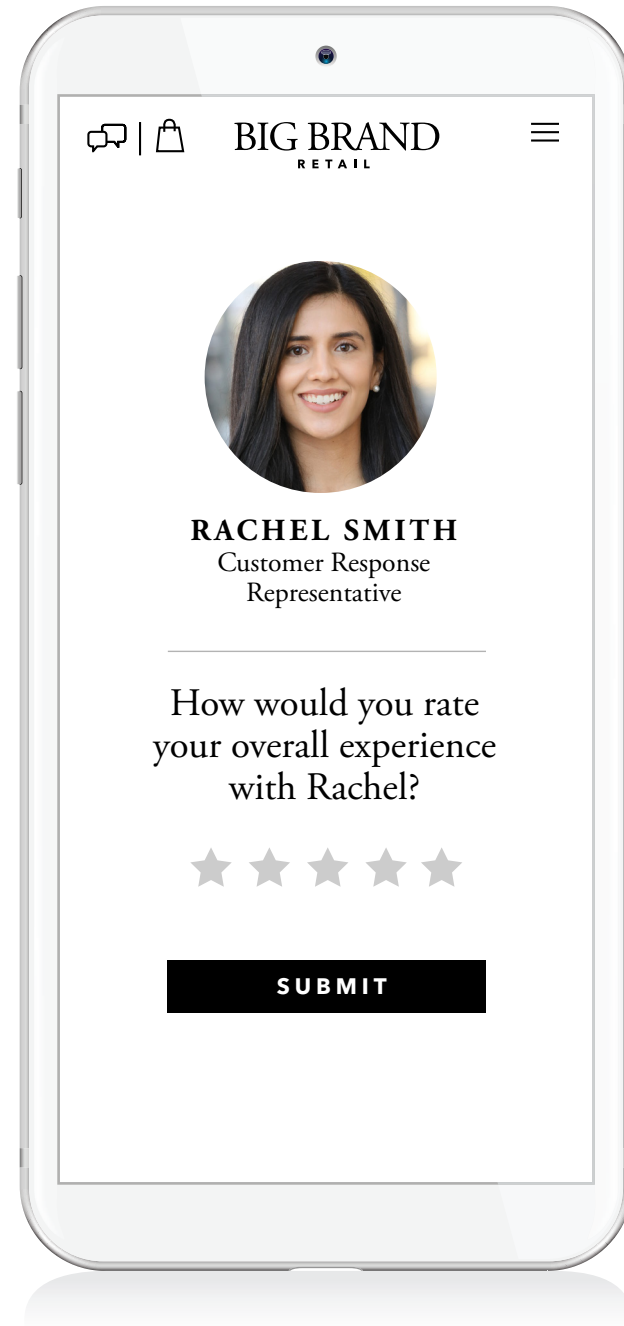
Desired insights: Optimization

Goal: Optimize specific aspects of the experience, or learn more about those coming to your digital properties via campaigns.

Leveraging invitation triggers ensures you engage only those who meet specific criteria and collect these targeted insights.

For example, triggering a survey only to those who come to a landing page through a paid social media ad or who interacted with a customer support agent. Email surveys sent only to those who completed a specific event also fall into this category.

This targeted engagement method helps ensure your research and insights are focused and relevant to your specific needs so that you can optimize the experience accordingly.



6 ways Voice of the Customer fills the CX insight gap

1. Add context to customer behavior

Insight gap: Many customer data sources, like web analytics and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools, show what customers do. However, these behavioral data sources have a blind spot - they often miss the context driving these behaviors.

That causes us to overlay our own opinions, experiences, and perspectives to fill this gap.

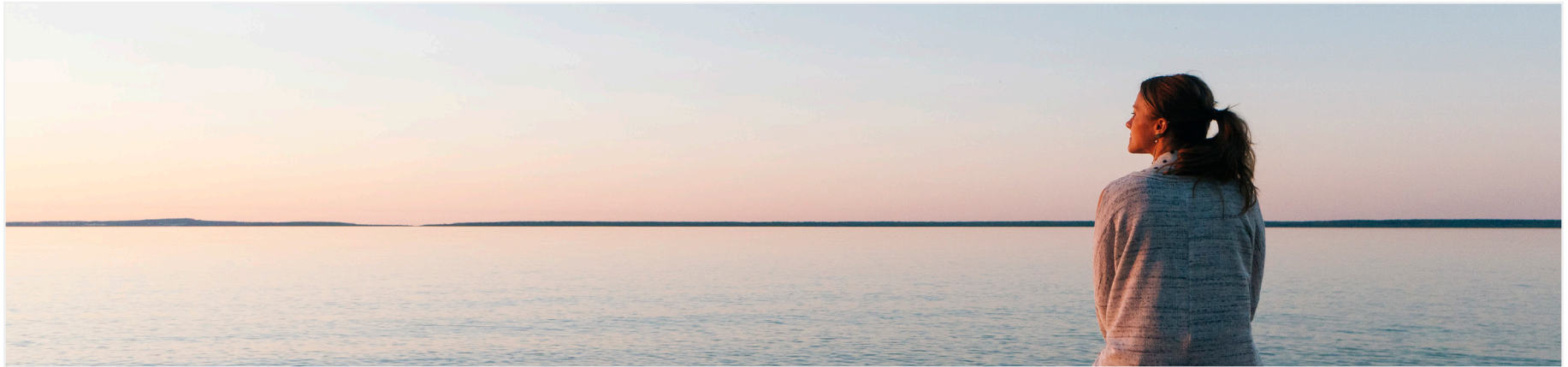
How VoC fills the gap

VoC provides the why behind the what of these behaviors, helping you truly understand customers' experiences.

Integrating VoC with other customer data sources opens up new segmentation capabilities to get even more from your existing tools and also shed light on experiences that could be optimized.

For example, while web analytics may show someone made a purchase (successful visit), VoC can confirm if they indeed felt their experience was an easy and enjoyable one, or that they would consider returning in the future.





2. Identify key trends and CX issues early

Insight gap: CX must constantly evolve along with customer expectations. However, these expectations are always in flux, making it difficult for brands to keep up with what their customers want and know how they can adapt quicker than the competition.

How VoC fills the gap

VoC not only helps you keep a finger on the pulse of what your customers need and expect from their experiences today; it also helps flag emerging trends early to help you adapt quickly and design great experiences.

Whereas third-party data sources and industry reports can shed light on emerging trends among consumers in general, VoC provides first-party insights about *your* customers, visitors, and prospects, in their own words.

Most importantly, in real-time.

3. Understand how CX fluctuates across the journey

Insight gap: Today, one poor experience can derail a customer journey with a brand, and push them to a competitor. Worse, it can make them want to share their horror stories with others, scaring away potential business.

Any barrier preventing a seamless journey from taking place presents a threat to how customers view their overall experience with a brand. Flagging these barriers early, and knowing how to eliminate them, is critical.

How VoC fills the gap

VoC not only helps gauge how your customers perceive their experiences across their journey - it also provides a way for them to identify barriers standing in their way. Most importantly, how you can eliminate them to help ensure seamless experiences.

Voice of the Customer can also provide persona-specific insights, which can be used to beef up customer journey maps using stated needs, expectations, preferences, and perceptions.

4. Flag experiences that need immediate attention

Insight gap: Bad experiences happen. How brands address them (and how quickly they do it) can sometimes be the difference between retaining and losing a customer. Not to mention, depending on how customers respond to these poor experiences, brand reputation may also be impacted.

Following up on key experiences, or “closing the customer feedback loop”, gives brands a chance to salvage them, turning bad experiences into good ones. However, being able to immediately identify these bad experiences in the first place presents a challenge by itself.

How VoC fills the gap

VoC helps identify these bad experiences when they happen. Having a structure to flag these experiences to key stakeholders so they can close the loop quickly is essential when brands have little room for error.

For example, using automated workflows to alert your customer success team when an experience meets specific criteria (e.g., low satisfaction rating, intended to buy but failed their task) can help them prioritize what experiences on which to focus, without manually sifting through customer feedback.





5. Gain deeper insights into post-purchase experiences

Insight gap: Easy and convenient experiences help turn first-time customers into repeat ones, and repeat customers into loyal brand advocates.

That requires a deep understanding of customers' post-purchase experiences. For example:

- How do they like using your offerings? What do they feel is missing?
- How do they feel about your support channels? Do they prefer using self-serve tools or interacting directly with an agent?
- What makes them want to stay with your brand? Is there anything that may prevent them from doing that?

How VoC fills the gap

VoC not only helps quantify your customers' post-purchase experiences, needs and expectations - it can also help root out the key drivers in their decision to promote your brand to others (or not).

At the same time, providing customers an easy way to share their experiences with you, and engaging customers from whom you haven't heard in a while for their feedback, helps show customers that you care about their experiences.

6. Keep key stakeholders on the same page

Insight gap: Managing CX is an organization-wide initiative. Customer-facing or not, every department plays a role in molding the experiences your brand delivers.

However, siloed customer insights initiatives can lead to a fragmented view of the customer experience, or mean that key stakeholders may not always have the latest insights to guide their efforts.

How VoC fills the gap

On top of centralizing all customer feedback efforts, a well-rounded VoC program can ensure the voice of your customers can carry throughout the organization. For example, real-time and targeted reporting for key stakeholders helps ensure they have the highest visibility on the latest insights.

With everyone on the same page about customers' expectations and how they perceive their experiences with your brand across their journey, nothing is left to interpretation, and prioritizing the next steps is much clearer.



The takeaway

Many customers are increasingly prioritizing experiences over all else. Yes, often even more than price.

Their journeys are becoming more complex and omni-channel. Their expectations for excellent experiences only continue to grow.

With switching costs for customers decreasing, brands can't afford to fall behind. Being able to understand what customers need and expect across their journeys, and to deliver experiences that are empathetic to these needs and expectations, is key to any company's success today.

In this way, Voice of the Customer provides something that is invaluable for any brand today: a glimpse into the minds of your customers.

By continuously listening to your customers and providing them an easy way to share their experiences, VoC helps you track and trend the impact of your current efforts, successfully tackle your specific business objectives, and most importantly, close key CX insight gaps to help you meet and exceed customers' evolving expectations.

About Emplifi

Emplifi is the leading unified CX platform that brings marketing, care and commerce together to help businesses close the customer experience gap. More than 7,000 brands, such as Delta Air Lines, Ford Motor Company and McDonalds, rely on Emplifi to provide their customers with outstanding experiences at every touchpoint.

For more information, visit emplifi.io

