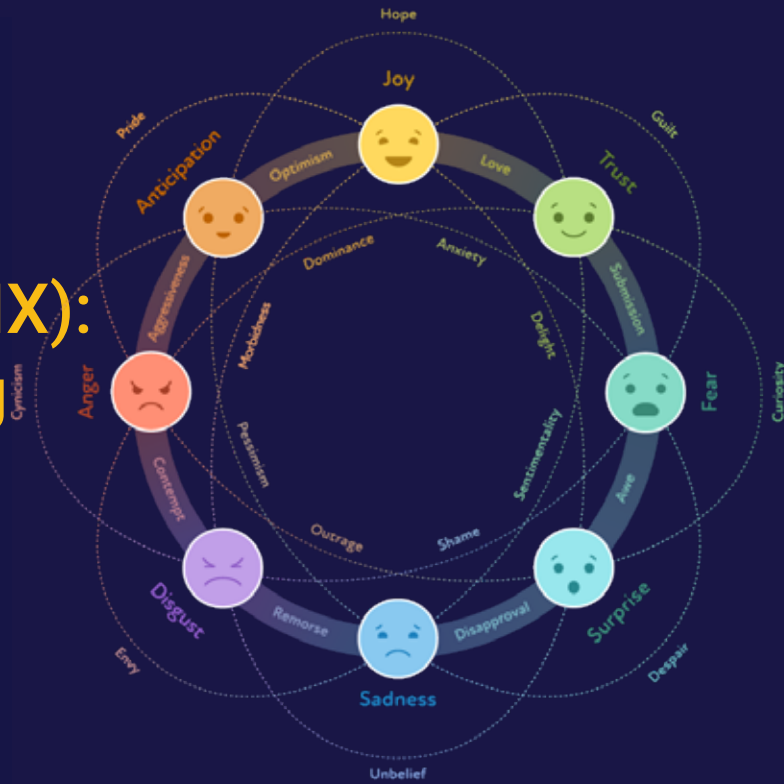


The Human Experience (HX): The Emotional track along the Customer Journey



The customer journey is a foundation for marketing in both B2B and B2C industries. It is a map that details the complete sum of experiences a customer goes through when interacting with your company and brand. It begins with how a customer becomes aware of your brand, interacts with your brand, and becomes loyal to and advocates for your brand. Instead of looking at just a part of a transaction or experience, the customer journey documents the full experience of being a customer. But what about the human experience (HX)?

Below are the five main parts of the customer journey, which are effected by HX.

1. Awareness: The customer has a need and becomes aware of your product or service.
2. Consideration: The customer considers what you offer versus what others provide.
3. Transaction: The customer decides to buy your offering.
4. Retention: The customer is pleased and continues to purchase from your brand.
5. Advocacy: The customer alerts others to your brand and how it is a great product or service.

Typically, when a marketer sits down to create their journey, they think of the problem that brought them to want their product. Sometimes, exploring the emotions behind the customer's problem is kept in mind, but the focus is often on physical ways to entice and retain customers. The customer's emotional journey is an imperative factor in making a purchase but often can be overlooked when creating marketing.



Awareness

Awareness is when a customer becomes, well, aware of your brand. There are many ways a company might strategize how this will happen. It could be social media, television and radio commercials, print or digital ads, a combination of all, or a myriad of other possibilities.

The pain point is often the center of awareness. It's usually the one part of the journey where more strategic thought is put into the emotional need for a product or service. People want a product because they have a need, often thought of as a problem that needs to be solved. You might be at a big box store to get toilet paper but leave with candles, shoes, gum, and a decorative basket. The thing is, those impulse purchases have an emotional basis. This is a great gift. These are cute. This is functional. This will help. If we focus on non-impulse purchases, we find that most people buy something because of a need. A pain point does not always need to be painful.

A person at this point is:

- Wanting, Needing, Desiring
 - I want a fan for the den. I need a present for my niece. I desire a new car
- Seeking, Determined, Inspired
 - I am going to seek out the right fan. I am determined to find the perfect present. My neighbor's car inspires me.

Of course, some purchases are not always under happy circumstances and bring out opposite emotions.

- Desperate, Panicked, Worried
 - I am desperate for a fan because it is 100 degrees. I am panicked because I need a present by tomorrow. I am worried because my car keeps breaking down.
- Annoyed, Perplexed, Distressed
 - I am annoyed because I am hot. I am perplexed as to what my niece wants. I am distressed over the cost of a car.

How does a customer feel when they become aware that your company has a product or solution?

- Curious, Eager, Intrigued
 - I am curious about this fan and if it will work in my den. I am eager to see if kids like this product. I am intrigued to do more research about this car.



Consideration

When your brand is on the radar, the tactical response is to showcase features. Great marketing will go beyond the bells and whistles and think about how a product or service will make someone feel. The emotions behind the decision-making process can be as important as the features of a product. Not all purchases will cause elation, but a positive feeling about a solution edges out the competition.

- Pleased, Delighted, Engaged
 - I am pleased this fan has three speeds and is the right color. I am delighted I found this spot-on gift. I am engaging with this car company because I like what it has to offer.

Transaction

Purchasing something can lead to a myriad of emotions. It can be a continuation of the feelings from consideration or escalation of those feelings; it can be mild indifference; it can even be remorseful. Every person has a different emotional response to making a purchase. Putting aside the purchase cost, there are many aspects involved in the psychology behind why we react to a purchase. It can include factors like income, age, cultural background, job type, personality, and type of purchase can be of influence.

- Contentment, Excited, Nervous
 - I am content with my new fan. I am excited to give this to my niece. I am nervous this car will also break down.


Retention

Once an individual decides to purchase from you, the journey is not over. From toothpaste to a new car, a brand's goal should be to retain an individual as a life-long customer. Toothpaste is a low-cost purchase but is purchased frequently. A car is a high-cost purchase, but brand loyalty can increase the likelihood of future purchases.

- Relaxed, Glad, Optimistic
 - I feel so relaxed now that I have this fan set-up. I am glad that my niece loved her present. I am optimistic about the life of my new car.

Of course, things may not go the way a customer planned.

- Agitated, Crushed, Enraged
 - I am agitated my new fan broke within a week. I am crushed that my niece thought the present was stupid. I am enraged a warning light came on in my car after three months.



When thinking about the happy versus distressed emotions above, unhappy emotions do not have to equal "all is lost" for a brand. Retention can be taking those unpleasant moments and emotions and providing an excellent human, or customer, experience. On the same token, a happy experience can go awry if a customer needs to interact with the brand again and has a less than desirable experience. Focusing on the human experience and weaving that into every interaction can right wrongs. If done correctly, a customer might advocate for your brand because you were willing to go above and beyond to fix a situation.

Advocacy

Brand advocacy is a coveted badge of honor for a brand. Advocacy is taking the loyalty a customer has for a brand and extending that into a positive action to promote said brand. This can be word of mouth, on social media, through advertisements, or other content.

- Pleased, Grateful, Triumphant
 - I am thrilled to have found this fan; it is the best one I have ever purchased. I am grateful because my niece was overjoyed. I feel triumphant that I finally found a great car and have had no issues.

The emotional journey of a customer is complicated and layered. It is an in-depth study of the emotional aspect of the human and customer experience. Understandably, marketers might not be able to put copious amounts of time behind an intensive emotional study. However, when strategizing the customer journey, it is important to at least think about the emotional journey at each step. It is especially important to strategize and pinpoint customer interaction moments. Humanizing the customer journey, from beginning to end, and sharing that with your team can help elevate your customer experience and turn individuals into happy advocates.