Instant Referrals: How To Turn Existing Customers Into Your

Customer experience

connected to businesses and their products. Customers are now instant product experts due to various digital outlets and form their own opinions on how and

Customer experience (sometimes abbreviated to CX) refers to the cognitive, affective, sensory, and behavioral responses of a customer during all stages of the consumption process including pre-purchase, consumption, and post-purchase.

Different dimensions of customer experience include senses, emotions, feelings, perceptions, cognitive evaluations, involvement, memories, as well as spiritual components, and behavioral intentions. The pre-consumption anticipation experience can be described as the amount of pleasure or displeasure received from savoring future events, while the remembered experience is related to a recollection of memories about previous events and experiences of a product or service.

Network effect

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In economics, a network effect (also called network externality or demand-side economies of scale) is the phenomenon by which the value or utility a user derives from a good or service depends on the number of users of compatible products. Network effects are typically positive feedback systems, resulting in users deriving more and more value from a product as more users join the same network. The adoption of a product by an additional user can be broken into two effects: an increase in the value to all other users (total effect) and also the enhancement of other non-users' motivation for using the product (marginal effect).

Network effects can be direct or indirect. Direct network effects arise when a given user's utility increases with the number of other users of the same product or technology, meaning that adoption of a product by different users is complementary. This effect is separate from effects related to price, such as a benefit to existing users resulting from price decreases as more users join. Direct network effects can be seen with social networking services, including Twitter, Facebook, Airbnb, Uber, and LinkedIn; telecommunications devices like the telephone; and instant messaging services such as MSN, AIM or QQ. Indirect (or cross-group) network effects arise when there are "at least two different customer groups that are interdependent, and the utility of at least one group grows as the other group(s) grow". For example, hardware may become more valuable to consumers with the growth of compatible software.

Network effects are commonly mistaken for economies of scale, which describe decreasing average production costs in relation to the total volume of units produced. Economies of scale are a common phenomenon in traditional industries such as manufacturing, whereas network effects are most prevalent in new economy industries, particularly information and communication technologies. Network effects are the demand side counterpart of economies of scale, as they function by increasing a customer's willingness to pay due rather than decreasing the supplier's average cost.

Upon reaching critical mass, a bandwagon effect can result. As the network continues to become more valuable with each new adopter, more people are incentivised to adopt, resulting in a positive feedback loop. Multiple equilibria and a market monopoly are two key potential outcomes in markets that exhibit network effects. Consumer expectations are key in determining which outcomes will result.

Touchpoint

potential customers, the satisfactory results of purchase and the retention of previous customers. Pre-purchase experiences of a customer are in relation to their

In marketing, a touchpoint describes any instance where a consumer interacts with a business organization's brand or image. This can include traditional advertising, and company owned resources such as a website, as well as public exposure, and personal recommendations.

AOL

provided a dial-up Internet service to millions of Americans and pioneered instant messaging and chat rooms with AOL Instant Messenger (AIM). In 1998, AOL purchased

AOL (formerly a company known as AOL Inc. and originally known as America Online) is an American web portal and online service provider based in New York City, and a brand marketed by Yahoo! Inc.

The service traces its history to an online service known as PlayNET. PlayNET licensed its software to Quantum Link (Q-Link), which went online in November 1985. A new IBM PC client was launched in 1988, and eventually renamed as America Online in 1989. AOL grew to become the largest online service, displacing established players like CompuServe and The Source. By 1995, AOL had about three million active users.

AOL was at one point the most recognized brand on the Web in the United States. AOL once provided a dial-up Internet service to millions of Americans and pioneered instant messaging and chat rooms with AOL Instant Messenger (AIM). In 1998, AOL purchased Netscape for US$4.2 billion. By 2000, AOL was providing internet service to over 20 million consumers, dominating the market of Internet service providers (ISPs). In 2001, at the height of its popularity, it purchased the media conglomerate Time Warner in the largest merger in US history. AOL shrank rapidly thereafter, partly due to the decline of dial-up and rise of broadband.

AOL was spun off from Time Warner in 2009, with Tim Armstrong appointed the new CEO. Under his leadership, the company invested in media brands and advertising technologies. In 2015, AOL was acquired by Verizon Communications for $4.4 billion, and was merged with Yahoo! the following year after the latter was also acquired by Verizon. In 2021, Verizon announced it would sell Yahoo and thus AOL to private equity firm Apollo Global Management for $5 billion.

Starbucks

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Starbucks Corporation is an American multinational chain of coffeehouses and roastery reserves headquartered in Seattle, Washington. It was founded in 1971 by Jerry Baldwin, Zev Siegl, and Gordon Bowker at Seattle's Pike Place Market initially as a coffee bean wholesaler. Starbucks was converted into a coffee shop serving espresso-based drinks under the ownership of Howard Schultz, who was chief executive officer from 1986 to 2000 and led the aggressive expansion of the franchise across the West Coast of the United States.

As of November 2022, the company had 35,711 stores in 80 countries, 15,873 of which were located in the United States. Of Starbucks' U.S.-based stores, over 8,900 are company-operated, while the remainder are licensed. It is the world's largest coffeehouse chain. The company is ranked 120th on the Fortune 500 and

303rd on the Forbes Global 2000, as of 2022.

The rise of the second wave of coffee culture is generally attributed to Starbucks, which introduced a wider variety of coffee experiences. Starbucks serves hot and cold drinks, whole-bean coffee, micro-ground instant coffee, espresso, caffe latte, full and loose-leaf teas, juices, Frappuccino beverages, pastries, and snacks. Some offerings are seasonal or specific to the locality of the store. Depending on the country, most locations provide free Wi-Fi Internet access. The company has been subject to multiple controversies related to its business practices. Conversely, its franchise has commanded substantial brand loyalty, market share, and company value.

Brand

may target their advertisements to new customers rather than to existing customers. Overall, a brand has the ability to strengthen brand equity by using

A brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that distinguishes one seller's goods or service from those of other sellers. Brands are used in business, marketing, and advertising for recognition and, importantly, to create and store value as brand equity for the object identified, to the benefit of the brand's customers, its owners and shareholders. Brand names are sometimes distinguished from generic or store brands.

The practice of branding—in the original literal sense of marking by burning—is thought to have begun with the ancient Egyptians, who are known to have engaged in livestock branding and branded slaves as early as 2,700 BCE. Branding was used to differentiate one person's cattle from another's by means of a distinctive symbol burned into the animal's skin with a hot branding iron. If a person stole any of the cattle, anyone else who saw the symbol could deduce the actual owner. The term has been extended to mean a strategic personality for a product or company, so that "brand" now suggests the values and promises that a consumer may perceive and buy into. Over time, the practice of branding objects extended to a broader range of packaging and goods offered for sale including oil, wine, cosmetics, and fish sauce and, in the 21st century, extends even further into services (such as legal, financial and medical), political parties and people's stage names.

In the modern era, the concept of branding has expanded to include deployment by a manager of the marketing and communication techniques and tools that help to distinguish a company or products from competitors, aiming to create a lasting impression in the minds of customers. The key components that form a brand's toolbox include a brand's identity, personality, product design, brand communication (such as by logos and trademarks), brand awareness, brand loyalty, and various branding (brand management) strategies. Many companies believe that there is often little to differentiate between several types of products in the 21st century, hence branding is among a few remaining forms of product differentiation.

Brand equity is the measurable totality of a brand's worth and is validated by observing the effectiveness of these branding components. When a customer is familiar with a brand or favors it incomparably over its competitors, a corporation has reached a high level of brand equity. Brand owners manage their brands carefully to create shareholder value. Brand valuation is a management technique that ascribes a monetary value to a brand.

Google Voice

provides a U.S. phone number to Google Account customers in the U.S. and Google Workspace (G Suite by October 2020) customers in Canada, Denmark, France

Google Voice is a telephone service that provides a U.S. phone number to Google Account customers in the U.S. and Google Workspace (G Suite by October 2020) customers in Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the contiguous United States. It is used for call forwarding and voicemail services, voice and text messaging, as well as U.S. and international calls. Calls are forwarded to the phone number that each user must configure in the account web portal. Users can answer and receive calls on any of the phones configured to ring in the web portal. While answering a call, the user can switch between the configured phones. Subscribers in the United States can make outgoing calls to domestic and international destinations. The service is configured and maintained by users in a web-based application, similar in style to Google's email service Gmail, or Android and iOS applications on smartphones or tablets.

Google Voice currently provides free PC-to-phone calling within the United States and Canada, and PC-to-PC voice and video calling worldwide between users of the Google+ Hangouts browser plugin (available for Windows, Intel-based Mac OS X, and Linux). Almost all domestic and outbound calls to the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) and Canada are currently free from the U.S. and Canada, and $0.01 per minute from everywhere else. International calls are billed according to a schedule posted on the Google Voice website.

Many other Google Voice services—such as voicemail, free text messaging, call history, call screening, blocking of unwanted calls, and voice transcription to text of voicemail messages—are also available to U.S. residents. Voicemails, missed call notifications, and/or text messages can optionally be forwarded to an email account of the user's choice. Additionally, text messages can be sent and received via the familiar email or IM interface by reading and writing text messages in numbers in Google Talk respectively (PC-to-Phone texting).

Brand ambassador

Customers Brand Ambassadors: Social Media Examiner". Retrieved 2021-04-23. Fuggetta, Rob (2012). Brand Advocates: Turning Enthusiastic Customers into

A brand ambassador (sometimes also called a corporate ambassador) is a person paid by an organization or company to represent its brand in a positive light, helping to increase brand awareness and sales. The brand ambassador is meant to embody the corporate identity in appearance, demeanor, values and ethics. The key element of brand ambassadors is their ability to use promotional strategies that will strengthen the customer-product-service relationship, influence a large audience to buy and consume more.

Predominantly, a brand ambassador is known as a positive spokesperson, an opinion leader or a community influencer, appointed as an internal or external agent to boost product or service sales and create brand awareness. Today, "brand ambassador" as a term has expanded beyond celebrity branding to self-branding or personal brand management. Professional figures, such as good-will and non-profit ambassadors, promotional models, testimonials and brand advocates have formed as an extension of the same concept, taking into account the requirements of every company.

The term brand ambassador loosely refers to a marketing activity which covers all types of event staff, varying between trade show hosts, in-store promotional members and street teams. The job of a brand ambassador has typically been held by a celebrity or a public figure given free goods or paid for their endorsement, now a brand ambassador can be anyone who has knowledge or can identify certain needs of the brand. The brand ambassador's job is to drive results through communication tools either publicly, such as social media, or privately including emails, messaging and further one-to-one channels.

Consumer behaviour

provider/retailer) in order to retain customers, minimise customer defections, and strengthen loyalty bonds with existing customers. Broadly there are two

Consumer behaviour is the study of individuals, groups, or organisations and all activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services. It encompasses how the consumer's emotions, attitudes, and preferences affect buying behaviour, and how external cues—such as visual prompts, auditory signals, or tactile (haptic) feedback—can shape those responses. Consumer behaviour emerged in the 1940–1950s as a distinct sub-discipline of marketing, but has become an interdisciplinary social science that blends elements from psychology, sociology, social anthropology, anthropology, ethnography, ethnology, marketing, and economics (especially behavioural economics).

The study of consumer behaviour formally investigates individual qualities such as demographics, personality lifestyles, and behavioural variables (like usage rates, usage occasion, loyalty, brand advocacy, and willingness to provide referrals), in an attempt to understand people's wants and consumption patterns. Consumer behaviour also investigates on the influences on the consumer, from social groups such as family, friends, sports, and reference groups, to society in general (brand-influencers, opinion leaders).

Due to the unpredictability of consumer behavior, marketers and researchers use ethnography, consumer neuroscience, and machine learning, along with customer relationship management (CRM) databases, to analyze customer patterns. The extensive data from these databases allows for a detailed examination of factors influencing customer loyalty, re-purchase intentions, and other behaviors like providing referrals and becoming brand advocates. Additionally, these databases aid in market segmentation, particularly behavioral segmentation, enabling the creation of highly targeted and personalized marketing strategies.

Skype

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Skype () was a proprietary telecommunications application operated by Skype Technologies, a division of Microsoft, best known for IP-based videotelephony, videoconferencing and voice calls. It also had instant messaging, file transfer, debit-based calls to landline and mobile telephones (over traditional telephone networks), and other features. It was available on various desktop, mobile, and video game console platforms.

Skype was created by Niklas Zennström, Janus Friis, and four Estonian developers, and first released in August 2003. In September 2005, eBay acquired it for $2.6 billion. In September 2009, Silver Lake, Andreessen Horowitz, and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board bought 65% of Skype for $1.9 billion from eBay, valuing the business at $2.92 billion. In May 2011, Microsoft bought Skype for $8.5 billion and used it to replace its own Windows Live Messenger. As of 2011, most of the development team and 44% of all the division's employees were in Tallinn and Tartu, Estonia.

Skype originally featured a hybrid peer-to-peer and client–server system. It became entirely powered by Microsoft-operated supernodes in May 2012; in 2017, it changed from a peer-to-peer service to a centralized Azure-based service. In February 2023, it was used by 36 million people each day.

The service was retired on 5 May 2025; its website now refers users to Microsoft Teams.

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