

2015 Customer Experience Trends Report

An Executive Summary



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Executive Summary: 2015 Customer Experience Trends

InMoment’s market insights team recently asked consumers and brands the same set of questions to find out how each group ranked various aspects of the customer experience (CX). They were also invited to share their own thoughts and comments on the 2015 CX landscape as they see it.

We heard back from 644 consumers and 131 brand representatives in total. Of the consumers, 569 also shared comments. From the brands, 49 did.

The Six CX Trends Considered

Feeling Trumps Function

Brand differentiation will be more a result of relationships and the customer experience than of product features or selection.

Mobile First

Ensuring 24/7 mobile support to address increasing mobile consumer habits.

More Reliable Online Reviews

Companies helping consumers see better peer information about purchasing decisions by supporting verified online reviews.

The Final Rankings

RANKING	CONSUMERS	BRANDS	AVERAGE	DISPARITY
Feeling Trumps Function	5	3 [†]	4	2
Mobile First	6	3 [†]	4.5	3
More Reliable Online Reviews	2	6	4	4
Personalized Experience	4	1	2.5	3
Shorter Surveys, More Listening	1	2	1.5	1
Transparency	3	5	4	2

† Indicates a tie

MEET THE PANEL

644 Consumers

- 85% in U.S.
- 15% in Canada
- 52% female
- 48% male
- 95% have degrees or technical training
- 1 in 4 are single
- 2 in 3 are married or in a domestic partnership
- 2 in 3 have a household income of \$50K+

131 Brands

- 58% located in U.S.
- 18% located in Canada
- 24% internationally based
- 32% are CX professionals
- 18% are ops professional
- 15% are sales or marketing professionals
- 8% hold contact center or customer service positions
- 27% other, such as finance, IT, and HR

Personalized Experience

Brands using consumer information to better personalize messages and promotions.

Shorter Surveys, More Listening

Shorter feedback surveys. Customers sharing stories in their own words. Better use of social, voice, and mobile channels.

Transparency

Keeping customers informed on the ways their feedback is being used.

Findings from the Consumer Side

An Orderly Story from the Customer Point of View

Perhaps unsurprisingly, customer survey responses tell a consistent story that starts with their voice at the top and follows the ideal customer feedback process to a T.

CONSUMERS WANT TO FEEL VALUED BY BRANDS.

- **This was easily the most common theme in customer comments.** 1 in 3 consumers either explicitly stated the importance of feeling valued or mentioned the importance of specific acts that show respect.
- **Consumers Want a Reciprocal Relationship with Brands.** To consumers, feeling valued is as important as getting value. Consumers don't want to just consume; they want to provide, as well.

In comments mentioning the word "value,"

51.6% used it in the receiving sense, while 48.4% used it in the giving (or being valued) sense.

"As a customer I want to feel that I am getting value from the service or product."

vs.

"I like to know that my opinion is valued and will be used."

Comments included under "feeling valued"

COMMENT THEME	COMMENT COUNT (of 569)
Valued	57
Acknowledged	52
Heard	43
Rewarded	26
Authenticity	20
Total Comments	198/569 (34.8%)

Other words used to describe how they want to feel or be treated: "Never ignored" "Like a person" "Respected" "An important part of business" "Appreciated" "Cared about" "Courtesy" "Dignity"

In comments mentioning the word "help,"

46.7% used it in the receiving sense, while 53.3% used it in the giving sense.

"A well staffed and knowledgeable team that know the products and are happy to help."

vs.

"Hope to help the company move towards a better product or different products."

- **Feeling Valued: An Expectation and a Motivation.** 1 in 10 consumers commented on self-validating and altruistic motives for offering feedback, i.e., desires to express themselves, usually in an effort to make a difference.

"What is most important to me about my customer experience is feeling valued."

"I just like my voice to be heard."

"I like having my opinion heard and seeing product evolve due to feedback from customers like me."

"The feeling of being heard and hopefully helping to make a difference [is important]."

"I just like to know that my opinion matters."

- When asked to mark all contributing factors in their decision to leave feedback, 4 in 5 selected "I enjoy offering my feedback and making a difference," with 2 in 5 marking it as the primary reason (40.49%).

CONSUMERS FEEL VALUED WHEN THEY FEEL HEARD.

- In comments expressing how brands can make them feel valued, consumers most frequently mentioned being “heard.” From within those comments, consumers shared 3 key ways you can show them you are listening.

3 Ways to Show Customers You Are Listening to Their Feedback

1. **Inform** them upfront on what you plan to do with their feedback.

Feedback with purpose

“I’d like to know that the information in the survey is useful. Maybe if there was an upfront comment stating something like ‘We are interested in your opinion because...’ or something to that effect.”

2. **Acknowledge** that you have received their feedback—humanly, personally, authentically—both during and after the survey process.

Show you’re listening

“I like to get feedback or acknowledgement that my opinion was received.”

“It would be nice to not only be acknowledged, but to receive some feedback regarding the suggestion or comment.”

3. **Make changes** based on incoming feedback. Let customers see the difference they’re making. Communicate those changes.

Take action. Give credit.

“It would be nice if companies let us know what changes they’ve made in response to customer comments.”

“Implement the suggestion or comment. I don’t want inaction. I want to know that something is being done and quickly.”

- **In line with their comments, consumers ranked “shorter surveys, more listening” as their #1 CX trend for 2015.**

- 1 in 3 consumers rated it #1
- 70% of consumers rated it in their top 3
- Not only did consumers rate “shorter surveys, more listening” as their most important trend for 2015, they doubled down on it in their comments.

1 in 5 comments talked about the need for more concise, more clear, more relevant survey questioning.

Key words describing survey improvements: “Clarity” “Ease” “Straight to the point” “Tailored” “Specific” “Personalized” “Relevant” “Comments”

Customers are not satisfied with an approximation of their opinion

“Ask a few questions; don’t waste my time; don’t use marketing jargon; reward me when I’m done.”

“Ability to leave as short or as long of a review as I want.”

“[A survey should be] fast and easy to complete, with relevant questions that relate to the customer experience.”

“Sometimes the surveys are all multiple choice and no room for comments. I don’t have a problem with this unless the choices don’t truly express my opinion. Then there should be a place to write comments.”

CONCLUSION

Voice of Customer (VoC) in 2015 is more than an exercise in collecting insights; it’s an opportunity to strengthen loyal customer relationships and deliver key elements of your differentiated customer experience.

Navigating the Shifting Sands of the Corporate Side

Disparity and Polarity from Different Stages of Maturity

On the whole, brands did not find as much agreement between themselves as consumers did. Their story, while less unified, is still instructive—especially as it corresponds to consumer opinion.

BRANDS START WITH THE END IN MIND

Whereas consumers painted a very orderly picture that starts with their voice and builds toward a better customer experience, brands showed their tendency to start with the end in mind: They want to focus first on their desired outcome and work backwards to solve it.

- At the top, brands tempered their own perspective with that of their customers. Their top two picks were closely contested and show good focus on (1) what brands are trying to accomplish and (2) how to get there.

#1 “personalized experience” 32.8%

#2 “shorter surveys, more listening” 30.53%

- The #1 and #2 picks for consumers were separated by 9.78 percentage points, whereas brands' #1 and #2 were separated only by 2.29 percentage points. On one hand, brands are showing appreciation for both perspectives. On the other hand, brands are showing far less unity in their prioritization of trends than consumers”

- **Caution: Don't Put the Cart Before the Horse.** The real danger that comes from placing focus on the end goal first is that it can lead companies to skip steps, trying to create a personalized experience without building the necessary relationship of trust beforehand.

MIXED EMOTIONS ON RELIABLE REVIEWS

This particular trend was a very close second for consumers. For brands, however, it fell to last place. It was not without its supporters, though. In fact, it was a very divisive issue for brands.

- **1 in 5 brand representatives actually voted it in the #1 position**, which would have been good enough for #3 overall—except that 1 in 4 placed it in the #6 position. There was very little middle ground on this polarizing topic.

- Maybe this shouldn't be a surprise. Online review sites have long been [mired in controversy](#). Plenty of brands have been burned by them and would rather they just went away. But we all know they won't.

- [So, what's to be done?](#) The advice we'll continue to preach is to listen to your customers. If you're not prioritizing brand-level support or transparent use of verified online reviews, we urge you to rethink according to the orderly consumer story in this report.

- Consumers appeared to have little trouble uniting in its high ranking. By vote, it was the clear #2 and did not suffer from a large swell of last-place votes. In fact, it had the fewest number of last-place votes of any trend in the consumer survey.

A LITTLE UNITY AT LAST: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Again, there was little consensus to be found among brand comments on what unnamed trends might deserve a mention on our 2015 list—but one dark horse did emerge, and it's a good one.

- While most comments were unable to find someone to second their motion, “employee engagement” was on the minds of six different respondents. That may not sound like a lot, but it was 12.25%, or nearly 1 in 8 responses. Nothing else garnered more than half that amount of support.
- Brands don't always think alike, but when they do, they remember that the service-profit chain starts with internal service quality. Any company listening to the voice of the customer ought to also be listening to the voice of their employees—and in much the same way. The two go hand in hand, no matter what year it is.

CONCLUSION

When focusing on the end goal of “personalized experiences,” brands need to first ensure they are actively listening to customers. Only then will they truly understand customer preferences and have their trust, so personalization truly seems personal—not invasive.

InMoment™ is a cloud-based customer experience (CX) optimization platform that gives companies the ability to listen to and engage with their customers to improve business results through better experiences. Through its Experience Hub™, InMoment provides Voice of Customer (VoC), Social Reviews & Advocacy, and Employee Engagement technology, as well as strategic guidance and tactical instruction, support, and services, to 350 brands across 25 industries in 128 countries. The company is the leading VoC vendor for the food services, retail, and contact center industries, with deep domain expertise in B2B, healthcare, hospitality, and numerous others.