ACQUIA
EXPERIENCE DIGITAL FREEDOM

DELIVER THE CX THEY EXPECT

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TRENDS REPORT

Our Second Annual Customer Experience (CX) Survey Results

90% of customers believe when it comes to delivering a good customer experience, most brands fail to meet their expectations.

While this shouldn't shock marketers — roughly 94% agree with these customers — it should serve as a wake-up call. Brands have to do a lot better!

The good news is that customers make no secret of what they expect: a convenient, personalized experience. The data is crystal clear on this point.

We surveyed 6,613 respondents in total: 6,013 consumers (1,000 from Australia, 1,002 from France, 1,001 from Germany, 1,006 from Mexico, 1,001 from the United Kingdom and 1,003 from the United States) and 600 marketers (100 from Australia, 100 from France, 100 from Germany, 100 from Mexico, 100 from the UK and 100 from the U.S.). The consumers were all 18 and older and the sample is balanced by age and gender for each country. The marketers were directors and above from companies with annual revenue of $10 million or more. This survey was conducted online between July 15 and 26, 2019.

The Key Takeaways

Convenience and personalization go hand in hand.

Don't Over-Complicate CX!

Yes, customer experience matters. But this doesn't mean that brands need to fall over backwards trying to "surprise and delight" customers. **Customers want convenience, first and foremost.** Brands need to focus on delivering that. (After all, you have to meet expectations before you can exceed them.)

Personalize, Personalize, Personalize

Personalization is the key to convenience. The more brands personalize the customer experience, the more convenient and easy it becomes.

The payoff: **Customers will reward personalization with loyalty.**

"Open" Technology is Key

Consistently delivering **convenient, personalized experiences across all channels** requires technology that can readily access all the data personalization demands and flexibly support CX online, in-store, and everywhere else.

CX: What Do Customers Expect?

Only 10% of the customers we surveyed strongly agree that most brands meet their expectations for what they consider a "good experience." That puts 90% of customers on the fence… or worse!

The problem: 82% of marketers believe they *are* meeting customer expectations with regard to customer experience.
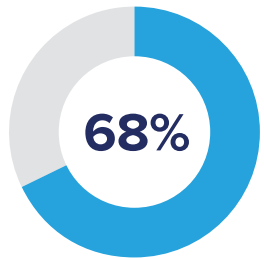
This gap between reality and perception calls for a closer look at reality. If marketers aren't meeting expectations, what exactly are these expectations?

Convenience and personalization go hand in hand.

Customers want convenience.
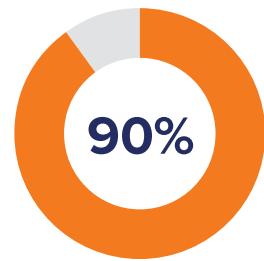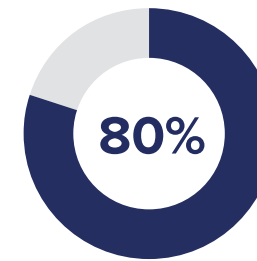
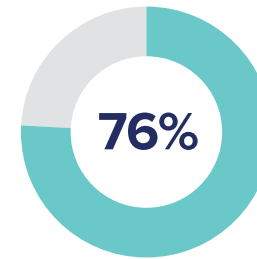**90%** say when they interact with a brand online, they want a convenient experience.

68% "My experience with brands online needs to be made easier."

Customers want greater personalization.

80% "I would be more loyal to a brand that showed they really understood me and what I was looking for."

76% "If a brand understands me at a personal level, I'm more likely to be loyal to them."

Brands are falling short:

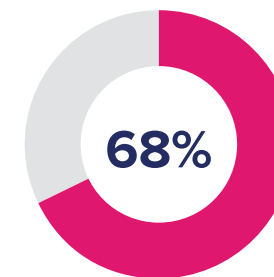**60%** say, "I often feel that brands who should know me, don't know me very well."

60% say, "Brands do not do a good job using my personal preferences to predict my needs."

66% say, "When I engage with businesses online, I feel like I am treated as any other generic customer, not as an individual with my own needs."
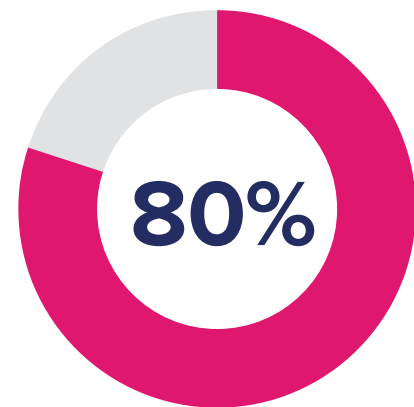
## Regular interactions can change this picture:

68% of customers say the brands they regularly interact with understand their preferences, provide what they are looking for and anticipate their needs.

significantly up from the 59% who said so last year.

Customers expect technology to have a positive impact on their experience with brands.

80%

"Technology should make my experiences with brands more valuable."

82%
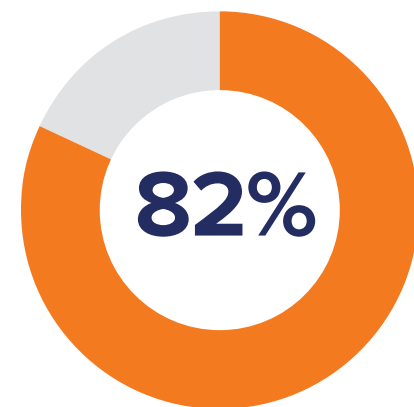
"Technology should make my online experiences with brands better."

We also heard this from customers when it comes to technology:

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53% say

I'm looking forward to artificial intelligence (AI) making interacting with brands a better experience.

44% say

I would consider engaging with a brand using voice assistance technology (i.e. Amazon Alexa, Google Home, Apple iHome)

It's worth noting that only 24% strongly disagreed with this statement, pointing to the growing acceptance of voice as a brand communication channel.

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The Bottom Line

There is no need to overcomplicate CX. Focus on delivering convenient, personalized experiences.

And while some customers might show enthusiasm for this or that new innovation (artificial intelligence, machine learning, voice, etc.), at the end of the day, it's not about particular technologies.

It's about using technologies to improve the customer experience.

How Can Brands Meet Customer Expectations?

Before we get into all the things marketers can do to meet customer expectations, let's pause to remember that failure to meet these expectations can have real costs.

63%

"I often abandon a brand for another when the online experience is poor."

72%

"I am loyal to certain brands, but as soon as I have a bad experience with them, I move on."

The key is convenience and the surest path to convenience is through personalization.

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The Data Conundrum

Customers want a more personal experience. Yes, that requires companies to collect personal data. At the same time, customers have conflicting feelings about their data and how it gets used.

When it comes to giving brands personal data in exchange for an improved experience, **half of the customers we surveyed (51%) say they are not comfortable doing that.**
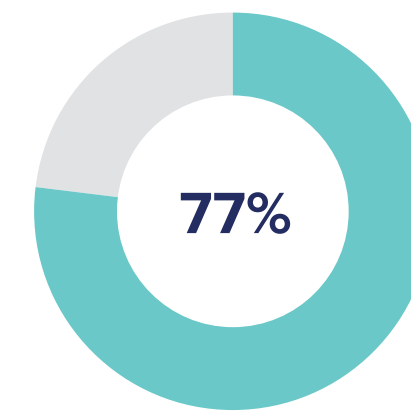
83%

"I wish there were stronger consumer data privacy laws in my country."

61%

are not confident that brands have their best interests in mind when they use, share and/or store their personal data.

A Selligent[1] white paper on digital marketing found that **only 20% of customers were willing to provide personal data to brands "upfront" for an improved experience.**

77%

"Brands should not be able to use my personal data to send me more marketing messages/ advertisements."

Similarly, Jebbit[2] found that it's actually clear value, not simply a better experience, that leads customers to trust brands **with their data.**

[1] https://www.selligent.com/resources/white-papers/digital-marketing-in-the-era-of-the-entitled-consumer/wpeceraus

[2] https://www.jebbit.com/consumer-data-trust-index

Marketers understand the critical role data plays in delivering great CX:

79%
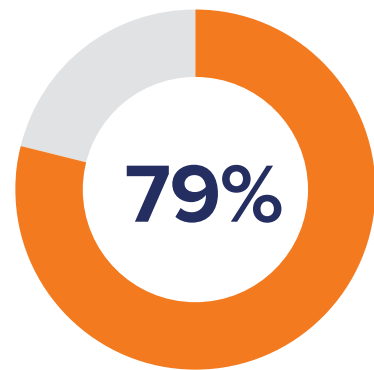
"At my organization, we have a way to capture customer data in real-time."

79%

"At my organization, we have a way to act on customer data with real-time insights and actions."

In contrast to what customers believe, marketers do have the customer's best interest at heart when using, sharing and storing personal data.

84% say

I consider customer security an essential part of my marketing and CX strategies.

83% say

The digital experiences my company/marketing team delivers to customers are compliant with the latest data regulations.

83% say

That personalization for customers and personalization for potential customers is part of their marketing strategy for the next 12 months.

Marketers are committed to personalization: 83% say that personalization for customers and personalization for potential customers is part of their marketing strategy for the next 12 months.

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Since Data Is Critical, It's Critical Brands Get It Right

Meeting customer expectations for personalized experiences while respecting customer wishes around data privacy requires brands to take a stand on transparency and control.

That is, brands must be super transparent about customer data. They need to clearly explain why they collect data, how exactly they will use it and how they will keep it secure. They also need to give customers control over their data. This means providing customers with access to it, allowing them to edit it and complying when a customer asks to be forgotten.

Technology to Tie It All Together

Customers expect marketers to use the right technology. At the same time, marketers understand that technology alone is no cure-all.

85%
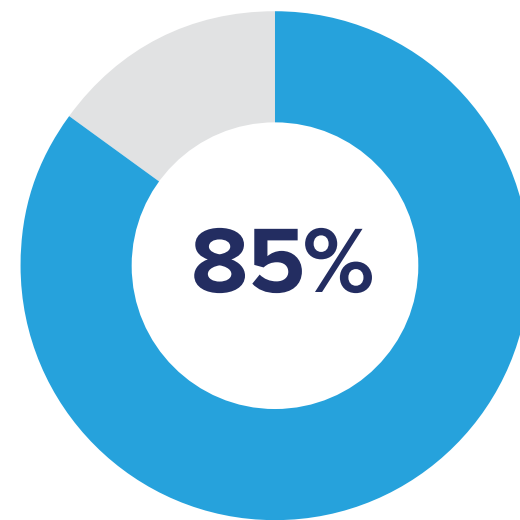
"A human touch is needed, in addition to technology, for a positive customer experience."

Customers are right there with them, pointing out that a misuse of technology will do exactly what they don't want!

75%
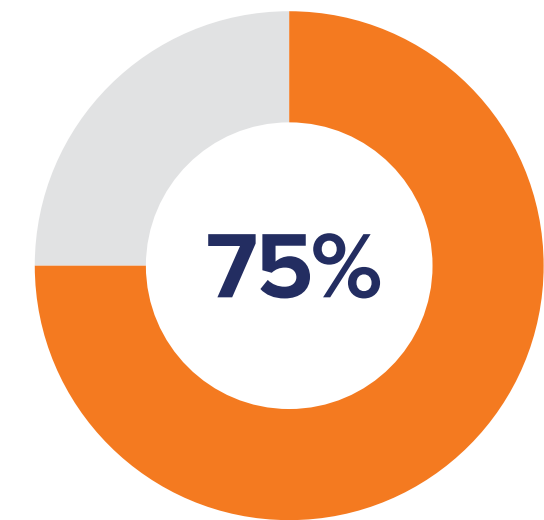
"The problem with automated experiences (interacting with technology instead of a real human) with brands is they are too impersonal."

(The 80% of marketers who say, "If we understood customer data better, we would be able to better automate part of the customer experience," should take this last data point to heart!)

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Unfortunately, half of marketers surveyed currently struggle when it comes to unleashing the power of technology.

49%

struggle when dealing with technology that is too complex to create good customer experiences.

57%

say technology has made it harder to offer customers personalized experiences.

51%

struggle with the speed at which they can bring new customer experiences to market.

48%

struggle to partner with IT in bringing new customer experiences to life.

While technology may be an unresolved pain point, marketers do have a vision for the technical ecosystem needed to achieve their customer experience goals.

80%

"Open web infrastructure will deliver on my company's security needs for delivering customer experiences."

78%

"I want my customer experience technology to be built on open source technology."

84%

"I need my various marketing technology solutions to work together to create one cohesive experience for the end customer."

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The Key to This Vision Is Openness

Marketing and CX technology needs to be open in principle (open source), open to integration (i.e., open APIs), open with regard to the data it can access and open to whatever new technologies or channels (e.g., AI and voice) may become central to the brand/customer interaction in the future. However, as marketers told us, many technology providers are not delivering what they need.

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62% say

While I want my various marketing technology solutions to work together, I'm unable to make that happen.

64% say

The marketing technologies at my organization are closed/do not have open APIs to connect me to other solutions.

68% say

The customer experience technology providers I work with have limitations.

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Of course, the answer to these problems is simple: Create marketing technology that is open at its core.

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Next Steps
for Marketers

STEP 1
Remember: CX equals convenient experience

90% of customers say they want convenience. 90% of customers say that brands do not meet their expectations for a good experience. To meet those expectations, brands need to prioritize convenience when designing customer interactions.

How convenient do you make things for customers?

How many actions do they need to repeat to get what they want?

How consistent is the experience from one channel to the next?

Identifying areas for improvement means close analysis of the customer experience as actually experienced by customers. Just assume that the experience you provide is not convenient enough. What will you do to make it better?

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STEP 2
Get serious
about personalization

Personalization is key to convenience. It's also key to making customers feel understood and appreciated. In other words, it's precisely what makes an experience "good." Personalization matters. It's time to invest in making it a living part of your customer experience strategy.

Are you collecting the personal data you need in a way that breeds trust?

Can you access and deploy this data when and where you need it?

Is your data secure and is your use of data compliant with the appropriate regulations and customer expectations?

Personalization requires data. If you can't collect, protect and deploy data efficiently and effectively, you can't personalize the customer experience. If you can't personalize the experience, it will never be "good."

STEP 3
Invest in
open technology

Convenience isn't a static state. Personalization isn't "set it and forget it." Expectations for convenience evolve. Personalization can always be refined.

How integrated are your martech and CX systems?

How hard is it to integrate new tools and solutions?

How adaptable is your stack to adopt new technologies as they emerge?

Because CX is dynamic, the technology that supports and drives your experience efforts needs to reflect that dynamism. It needs to be flexible, extensible and open. This means open in principle, open to integration, open with regard to the data it can access and open to emerging technologies or channels.

Marketers want open technology because they understand the complexity of customer needs and that the future is unpredictable. They want to be able to take advantage of innovations not only as they become available, but also as customers demand them.

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YOU CAN DO THIS

Customers have reasonable expectations and brands struggle to meet them. Of course, that doesn't mean brands should give up. Rather, it means that brands need a partner committed to supporting them as they strive to do what's best for their customers. They also need a partner with a vision for CX and how open technology can support it. Acquia is that partner.

TO FIND OUT MORE:
ACQUIA.COM/CX OR #ACQUIACX

ABOUT ACQUIA

Acquia is the open source digital experience company. We provide the world's most ambitious brands with technology that allows them to embrace innovation and create customer moments that matter. At Acquia, we believe in the power of community — giving our customers the freedom to build tomorrow on their terms.

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