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Customer Centricity

Part 2: Designing for Customer Needs
Where and When It Matters Most

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This second installment in Level5 Strategy’s three-part series provides insight into how organizations can deliver a transformational customer experience by effectively designing customer journeys that align with key drivers and their brand’s market-facing promise. The brands that consistently keep their promise by delivering an exceptional customer experience will realize greater returns than those who don’t.

The customer is always right. The customer has always been right and will continue to always be right...but why wait for them tell us what right is?

Surely, you’ve heard this before; however, in a marketplace where customer experience expectations continue to rapidly evolve, this perspective is too reactive. Why wait for customers to tell you what they expected or how you’ve let them down? Wouldn’t it be better to have a clear understanding of what your customers expect throughout their end-to-end journey, and where along this journey these needs are most critical?

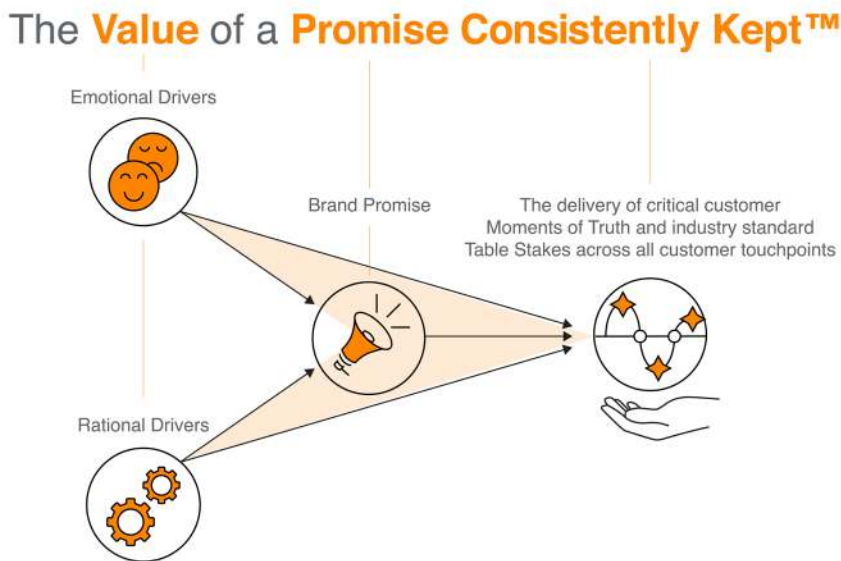
Our **first paper** in this three-part *Customer Centricity* series introduced our perspective on “Moments of Truth”, the interaction points where customer needs and expectations matter most. We outlined our core philosophy around (and against) the “*irrationality of delight*”, the process by which organizations overextend their resources by trying to delight customers at all stages and touchpoints. We also introduced our “*squares and circles*” thinking, which helps

organizations connect key processes and accountabilities to interactions across the customer journey, with a particular focus on customers’ most critical Moments of Truth and Pain Points.

At Level5 Strategy, we view brands as the Value of a Promise Consistently Kept™. Successful brands align their promise to customers’ key drivers to establish customer intimacy and a strong reputation. In this paper, we will explore how organizations can determine their customers’ rational and emotional drivers – or motivators of purchase/donation intent, loyalty, and recommendation – when interacting with their brand, and the customer journey touchpoints where these expectations matter most. A clear understanding of these drivers, and where they manifest most powerfully, also helps brands focus more of their resources on Moments of Truth.

Connecting these dots will ultimately help organizations drive towards true customer centricity – first by understanding the links between these customer wants and needs and the promise the brand is making to the market, and then by enabling the company to focus their efforts to sustainably deliver against these expectations at the most important times.

Figure 1: The Components of the Value of a Promise Consistently Kept™



1. A Closer Look: Rational and Emotional Drivers of Choice

Through years of engagement and research, we've found that customer decisions are driven equally by rational 'gets' and emotional 'feels' – i.e., joy, simplicity, comfort, status, frustration, etc. – at readily identifiable moments when choosing a product or service. Many customer journey practitioners, however, only focus on rational drivers: the functional benefits a customer receives. Focusing only on what a customer is getting in each interaction limits a company's focus to only half of the picture (see Defining Rational "gets" and Emotional "feels").

All customer decisions – whether B2B, B2C, Donor to Charity, or Citizen to Government Agency – are grounded in both the rational and emotional sides of the coin. Moreover, the rational and emotional drivers within a journey are clearly

and directly linked to each other and help, within the context of the brand promise, to reinforce the overall customer experience.

Quantitative research is the most effective way to determine your brand's key drivers. However, many market researchers struggle to quantify the emotional side of the equation; typical research often only focuses on the rational side of the coin. At Level5 Strategy, we sometimes use a proprietary tool called **BrandMap™** to crack this code, help clients understand the full spectrum of rational and emotional drivers, and identify which drivers are statistically linked to increased loyalty or purchase intent amongst any stakeholder group.

By exploring rational and emotional drivers together, we build a comprehensive view of

customers' wants and needs and, knowing these, help build strong and meaningful reputations by better connecting their promise and product/service delivery with their target customers' drivers. Regardless of the approach or tool used, market research is critical to building a robust set of data and insights, which can then be further honed and carefully considered relative to other competitive and market factors.

Brands have their own unique rational and emotional drivers. To illustrate this, consider the differences between Blackberry and Apple a few years ago (see *Figure 2*). Rationally, Blackberry users get security, a keyboard, but no games; the phone is more of a business-focused device. Emotionally, Blackberry users are not focused on feeling trendy, but likely do prefer feeling

Defining Rational "gets" and Emotional "feels"

Rational drivers (i.e., what a customer "gets") are the functional requirements that a customer believes they need to get from engaging with a product or service. These drivers reflect the set of customer expectations for the category overall ("table stakes"), as well as from your brand. Interestingly, these rational drivers are not just what customers say they want. Hidden drivers (low stated importance) are statistically derived and have been shown to be mathematically important in the purchase and/or loyalty decision.



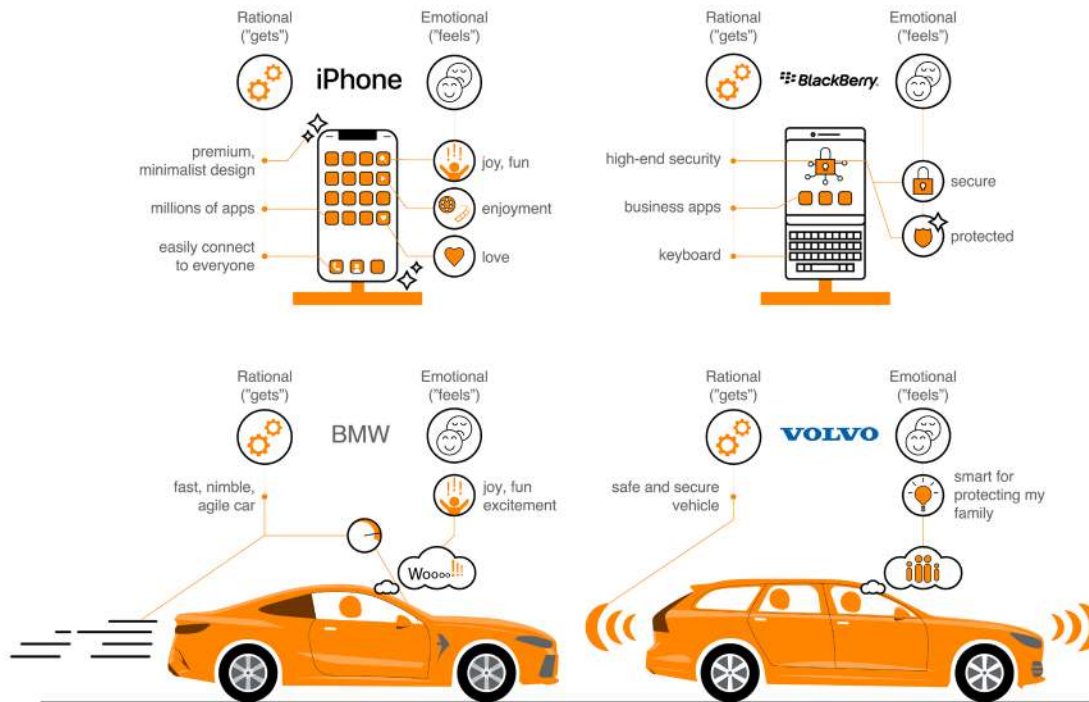
Emotional drivers are the softer, squishier side of the equation. However, just because they are "softer" does not make them any less important. In fact, in many categories they are equally, or more important to a customer's purchase or loyalty decision than rational drivers. Emotional drivers are what a customer feels when interacting with your product or service. Again, they start with common category-wide "table stakes" but also include what is uniquely special about your brand in particular, and the emotional sense customers have (or want to have) when interacting with your brand.

professional and secure in their choice. Now compare that with the drivers expressed by an Apple iPhone user. Rationally, they get a product that is well-designed, user-friendly, is fun to use (they get games!), allows for easy connections, and delivers a consistent experience across devices. Emotionally, they feel trendy, enjoy using the product (and the broader Apple experience) and love the sense of feeling 'cool' by walking around with the latest device.

All organizations need to stand for something – it could be “fast and efficient”, “most trusted”, “exclusive and premium” or any variant in between – but the common, underlying thread of all effective and consistently kept brand promises is that they are underpinned by a clearly understood and uniquely delivered set of customer “gets and feels”.

“The rational and emotional drivers within a journey are clearly and directly linked to each other and help, within the context of the brand promise, to reinforce the overall customer experience.”

Figure 2: What do I “get” and “feel” when I interact with this brand



2. A Closer Look: Moments of Truth and Where Drivers Come to Life

Successful organizations avoid the “irrationality of delight” by focusing on delivering the Moments of Truth in the journey that need to be “out of this world amazing” over those “table stakes” touchpoints where good enough is simply good enough. This distinction may differ at different parts of the journey for each customer. The key is ensuring that focus is given to the interactions that matter most *for most customers*. Focus is honed by designing carefully considered actions that enhance the desired drivers via the right channels to the right customers.

Volvo and BMW (see *Figure 2*) further exemplify how important these decision drivers manifest at different steps along the journey. These are two brands that not only have different rational and emotional drivers of choice and loyalty, but bring the drivers to life in different ways at different points along the customer journey. Volvo’s delivery of a safe and secure promise to its customers is particularly important during the consideration phase of the customer lifecycle. BMW’s key ‘gets and feels’ – a fast, exciting car that is fun to drive – manifest more in the driving experience, or later in the customer journey.

To understand where these moments occur in your brand’s customer journey, multiple methods can be used – these vary depending on the nuances of a given organization. Regardless, we believe that the best approach involves

“Under delivering on Moments of Truth can cost you the customer altogether. Elsewhere along the journey, delivering table stakes will be enough and over-achieving on them won’t drive any additional benefits that the customer truly cares about.”

mining insight both internally and externally; collecting end-user feedback through research and gathering internal feedback from those that understand your customer best – your front-line employees. Bringing these sources together is the best way to paint a clear picture of where these moments are (see *Home Improvement Retailer*).

Brands that win on customer experience, understand where in the journey the majority of rational and emotional brand drivers come to life, and then design the experience that accentuates these attributes in the right way, through the right channel and at the right time. What does this mean in practical terms? Once the journey is understood – which drivers are most closely connected to the brand, which touchpoints are the key Moments of Truth, etc. – an organization can better assess the importance and impact

to the customer and the business of meeting or exceeding these key expectations.

That said, organizations are always facing difficult choices in terms of how to best deploy resources to deliver against the varied objectives of the business. Priorities will often compete during this decision-making process, however, a clear understanding of the rational and emotional drivers, linked to the Moments of Truth, can be helpful when arbitrating decisions on where to focus investment and time on both large and small scales. We will delve deeper into this prioritization methodology, as well as other perspectives on how to orchestrate delivery of changes through the journey in our next paper in this series.

Example: Home Improvement Retailer and Discovering a Key Segment Pain Point

Understanding key segments and their current experience was critical for one home improvement retailer we worked with. Although the retailer prided itself on the in-store browsing and community experience they provide, the company discovered that one of their largest and most critical customer groups was one that put extra importance on their time, primarily due to their professional commitments. Their day-to-day commitments typically drove their behavior. Through dissecting this segment’s needs further, we uncovered that they highly valued efficient service and experience. They would happily spend more time in store when they had it, but they needed to know that when time crunched, they could get in and out quickly.

A key pain point that was discovered through this work was cashier lines. This segment often did a quick review of line ups prior to shopping – if deemed too long, they would move to their next preferred store. This insight was new for the client as many of their other customers preferred to spend time browsing and line ups were not an issue. This detailed understanding of a key segment pain point could only be garnered through deep customer insight gathering, which then allowed for segment specific solutions to be considered.



Reaching Out and Understanding What Matters Most

T rue customer centricity cannot be achieved without a deep understanding of what really matters to your customers and when and where they expect these wants and needs to be delivered. This is critical to ensure a strong link between these expectations and your overall brand promise, and to see how effectively you are consistently keeping that promise.

However, knowing all this isn't enough to deliver a truly differentiated customer experience.

One must also determine where you have gaps to close, enhance or repair, and the impact and resourcing needed to do so. Only then, can an organization sensibly prioritize and commit to investing in and delivering on the critical customer moments.

In our [final installment](#) in this three-part series, we will bring these ideas together and share our perspectives on how brands can better deploy their resources and prioritize journey

points, to more consistently keep their promise. We will also outline how to measure and manage progress towards exceeding these expectations, where customers believe they matter most.

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