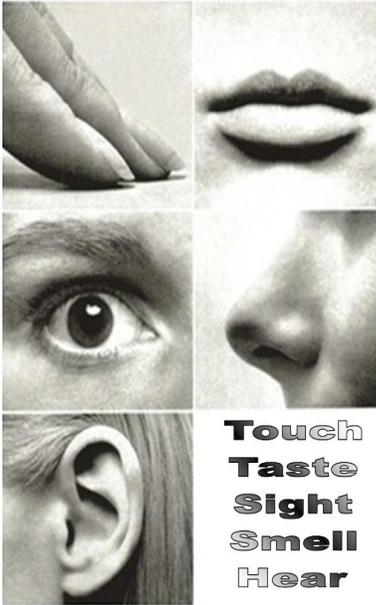


CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

The Senses and Satisfaction



What's the experience you're delivering to your customers? You've probably investigated it. But how broad was your review? Unfortunately most audits of customer satisfaction or experience focus on tangible product qualities and observable service elements; they're conventional, "inside the box" reviews. These audits rarely delve into such "touchy-feely" issues as feelings, sounds and smells. Many colleagues, in fact, will argue that these aesthetics don't even matter!

But if you are willing to accept that customer retention, share of wallet, and positive word of mouth are all driven by a conscious and/or sub-conscious **calculation of value**, then any bit of sensory input may be critical and can matter. The value equation depicts how customers determine which brand or company to buy, visit or use. The customer aggregates all experiential components and divides by the cost. The brand, product or service delivering the greatest supply of the most valued components is the favored alternative.

But What to Count as an Experiential Component?

Recently a British firm, Immedia PLC, commissioned a study of British consumers' attitudes toward store ambiance. Their findings dramatically portray the impact of non-traditional sensory experiences. The study reported that:

- 73% percent of customers noticed the music playing in stores.
- Of that group, 40% claimed that they stay longer in a shop/store if the music is 'well-chosen' for the retail environment.
- Conversely, 40% say they spend less time if they feel the music isn't suitable.
- 49% said they have stayed longer in shops when they liked the music.
- Half left a shop because they didn't like what was playing or because they considered it annoying.
- Overall **25% of all British shoppers said they would be less likely to return to a store if they didn't like the music they'd previously experienced there.**

Is It Only Sound that Matters?

While this study related only to retail and only to in-store music, it's probably not a stretch to consider what customers 'hear' in other environments. How's that sound track loop that plays while your customers are on hold? Does it energize them or put them to sleep? Do your printed, collateral materials feel "impressive" and substantial, complimenting the quality of service you offer. Or for that matter, does the smell of cleaning fluids affront guests entering their hotel rooms unlike the welcoming fragrance used by properties like the Borgata Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City drawing them back again and again.

The **total customer experience** is much more than just some buzzwords. Understanding what customers expect, what is important to them, and how they rate what you are providing through every experiential component of their experience isn't simple, but it is critically important. Neither traditional customer satisfaction surveys nor Net Promoter questions provide the kind of information you require to set improvement priorities. To learn how to *optimize* your customers' experience contact:

vavra@customerexperiencepartners.com or pruden@customerexperiencepartners.com.

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DOUG PRUDEN-TERRY VAVRA

P.O. Box 574
Allendale, NJ 07401
Phone: 203-655-0090

Unsubscribe: unsubscribe@customerexperiencepartners.com

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