

Editorial: *Adjusting to the New Reality on the Path to the Next Normal, Connecting to Customers, and Responding Appropriately to the Current Unprecedented Crisis*

There is no doubt that the new reality (emerging from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic) is the so-called by McKinsey & Company “The Next Normal”, McKinsey’s representatives highlighting the vital role of digital in today’s businesses, and the imperative of digitizing at speed and scale (McKinsey & Company, 2020). There is also no doubt that succeeding and thriving on the path to the Next Normal is depending on both learning the most, and doing at the required size to solve the unprecedented problems and promptly in the interests of the organizations’ customers and employees, considering changing customers’ behaviors and market conditions, retaining customers by being helpful and of value, building resilience (from the point of view of businesses, supply chains, employees, and relationships with customers), valorizing experimentation within the intensified competition, differentiating through adequate customers’, employees’, leaders’, and stakeholders’ experience, mixing remote and on-site working (ensuring extra support or training), and preparing for future crises (Swinscoe, 2020). Of course, working from home involves adequate asset tracking and management tools for organizations adjusting to this new reality (Aitchison, 2020).

There were truly lessons to learn from many brands which have continued to be both relevant, and helpful to their customers in these strange times we’re living in, providing evidence of assuming the particular attribute of informing, inspiring, reassuring, connecting to customers, and responding appropriately to the current unprecedented crisis, as demonstrated by the Chief Marketing Officer of Treasure Data, Tom Treanor, who drives the marketing strategy and execution for Treasure Data’s Customer Data Platform (CDP) solution (Treanor, 2020). On the other hand, a Podcast hosted by Martechcube (MTC) with Treanor revealed his opinion on the fact that *“One of the problems, it is that so many companies have data within various silos, but they really haven’t made the effort yet to pull that data together to unify their customer profile... they (marketers) don’t have to personalize everything all the time, they need to figure out what are the most important channels to personalize in and what are the most important things to tell that particular customer... So personalizing based on things not just like the top of the funnel, but also on product usage or replenishment or things like that”* (MTC News Desk, 2020).

It is worth mentioning within this framework the global research conducted by Untold Insights on behalf of Oracle Retail which revealed retailers’ need (beyond considering not only the blending of digital and physical experiences, but also the remaining of convenience as a priority for consumer decision-making) of both embracing mobile (as the new and leading point of sale), and creating adequate virtual store environments (flexible, engaging, and frictionless). This report also attracted the attention not only on the impact of the consumers’ negative experiences (such as out of stocks, limited product availability, extended shipping time, delay of goods), but also on the way of discovering new brands (Facebook, 65%; Instagram, 53%; YouTube, 49%; TikTok, 29%; Other social channels, 12%) or on the advantage of showing care

for customer safety, within the context in which safety is remaining the strong consumer choice driver (Oracle, 2020).

And continuing on this path of better connecting to customers, and responding appropriately to the current unprecedented crisis we consider important to underline some significant aspects, such as those disclosed by:

- MarketingExperiments with its parent company MECLABS Institute (having the largest library of scientifically rigorous digital marketing research and case studies in the world) which recommended the valuable essential tools & concepts used by the MarketingSherpa & MarketingExperiments Scientists with regard to both “How to Model Your Customer’s Mind” (MECLABS Institute, 2018), and “How to Create a Model of Your Customer’s Mind” opening the path to rigorously build the necessary predictive model of a company’s prospective customer’s decision process (Johnson, 2019);

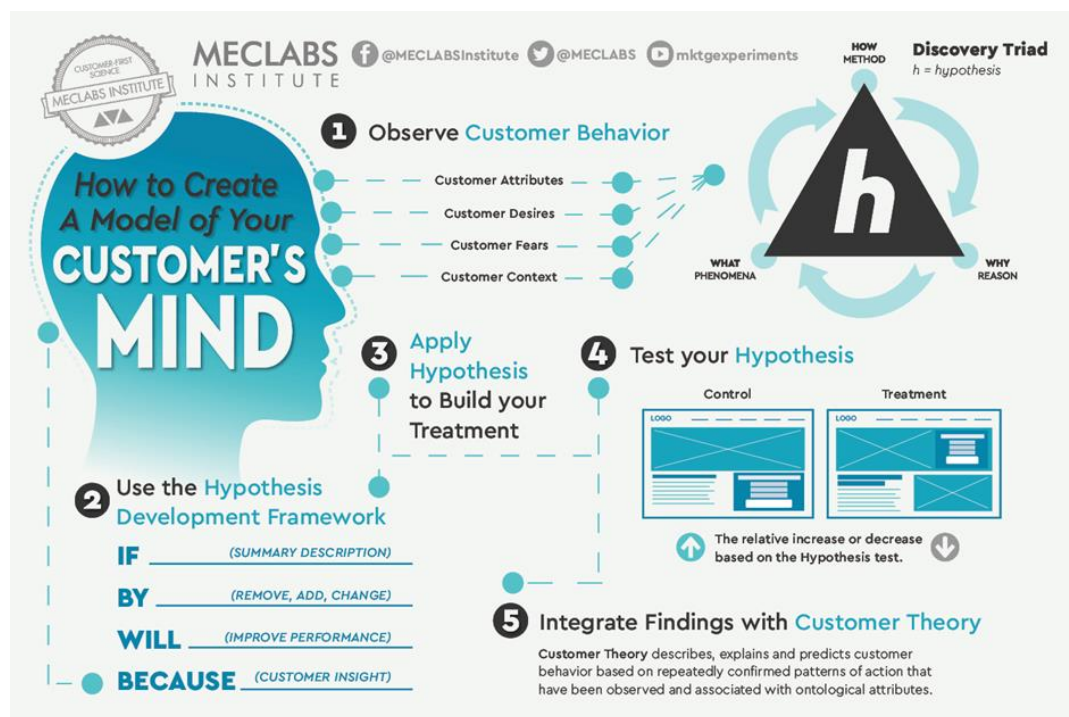


Figure no. 1: How to Create a Model of Your Customer’s Mind

Source: Johnson, 2019. How to Create a Model of Your Customer’s Mind, MarketingExperiments, Aug 21 (work cited)

- Martin Hill-Wilson (Customer Service, CX & AI Engagement Strategist - Chair, Keynotes & Masterclasses at the advisory and education service Brainfood), who showed in a summarized view both the prioritization for retention of consumers’ negative thoughts and feelings (because of the brain’s mandate to keep them out of harm’s way), and how the highlights of an event (from which consumers’ brains form memories) become a shortcut for consumers’ assessment of an entire series. What demonstrates that marketers need to train, track

and improve how each consumers' interaction ends, and confirming this way a better understanding that the emotive outcomes (more of consumers being conscious of their emotive state in anxious times) matter as much as the functional ones, the more so in the customer experience management approaches emotion still remains an unappreciated element despite its recognized role in customer loyalty (Hill-Wilson, 2020);



Figure no. 2: Emotive CX for Customer Interaction

Source: Hill-Wilson, 2020. *Emotive CX for Customer Interaction*, September 28 (work cited)

• J. Robert Rossman, Ph.D. (Professor and Dean Emeritus at the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University; co-author of “Recreation Programming: Designing, staging, and managing the delivery of leisure experiences”, presently in its 8th edition, and “Designing Experiences”, 2019), who highlighted that consumers’ perceived value of time spent (spending time being more important than spending money, in the experience economy) is a critical benchmark for the value proposition of companies’ offerings. He made reference to the new book “The Age of Experiences: Harnessing Happiness to Build a New Economy” (Hunnicut, 2020), where the author Benjamin Hunnicutt introduced the concept of the so-called “Intrinsically Motivated Productive Consumption” (IMPC, for which one is not paid), the provided (by intrinsically motivated participation in consumer’s experiences) rewards and emotive memories being those valued (Rossman, 2020).

But as the above mentioned new book was written and published just a little before the worldwide spread of COVID-19, we considered it useful to remind – also considering the recognized significant linkage between customer experience (CX), one hand and employee experience, the internal CX on the other hand – that going beyond the promotion of the behavior change with the help of extrinsic motivators (rewards or penalties, for instance, which are representing only half of the picture, being hard to sustain it over time), it is a real need to improve the so-called by psychologists intrinsic motivation, which is still the more neglected half of motivation, and involves satisfying a trio of inner needs so as to lead to sustained behavior change over time: autonomy (feeling of having a choice, mastery (competence mixed with the

right level of challenge and achievement) and connection, this last one having to do with “experiencing” (Ben-Hur and Kinley, 2016).

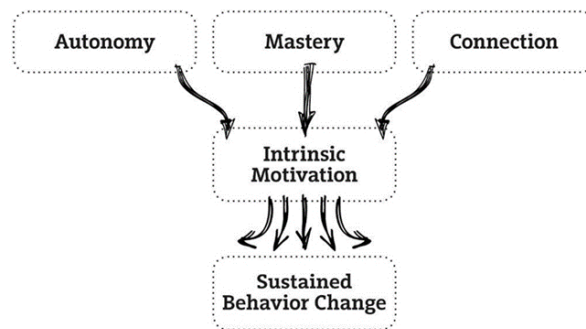


Figure no. 3: The three essential factors involved by the intrinsic motivation

Source: Ben-Hur and Kinley, 2016. *Intrinsic motivation: The missing piece in changing employee behaviour*, International Institute for Management Development (IMD), May (work cited)

Four month later, in September 2016 (as we shown in our HMM article entitled “Understanding Emotion and Connecting It to the Brand, and the Brand to Results” – Purcarea, 2017), a Forrester’s representative remembered that Forrester’s Customer Emotion Matrix (well-known as allowing a better understanding and quantifying of emotion by deeply examining both the nature of the emotion (negative through positive), and the intensity of the emotion), the point of start being the fact that: “emotion is the basic human build block for decisions and the primary factor in growing or losing affinity - and gaining or losing share-of-wallet” (Milligan, 2016). And just two years later, in December 2018 we pledged also in our HMM journal for “Competing on CX in the Digital Age by Working Deep, Focusing on Valuable Digital Activities and a Digital Culture Strategy specific to the Human-Machine Partnership” (Purcarea, 2018).

We express the conviction that adjusting to the new reality on the path to the Next Normal, connecting to customers, and responding appropriately to the new coronavirus crisis involves a better understanding of the Customer’s Mind, of the Emotive CX for Customer Interaction, of the IMPC concept, and of the three essential factors involved by intrinsic motivation, while focusing on valuable digital activities and a digital culture strategy specific to the human-machine partnership.

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