

Editorial: *Marketers' Wisdom in Delivering What Customers Want*

It is known that the relationship between the consumer behavior and identity is a dynamic one, *individuals expressing who they are through consumer choices and behaviors, and attaching meanings to their behaviors* (showing, for example, the social group they identify with) which leads individuals to re-construct their identities, *consumers identities being constructed on fluid and subjective ideas, concepts and ethics*. (Papaoikonomou, Cascon-Pereira, and Rayan, 2016) Digital-self construction, for instance, relies unconsciously on lived experience and mediated experience, while digital environments allow for more open self-expressions. (Chen, 2016)

Digital transformation and customer digital experience

B2C or B2B Marketers are often surprised by the magnitude of different changes in customer behavior, despite the fact that they may anticipate frequent changes. To know how to adequately organize and interpret data about these frequent changes in a way that informs strategic marketing campaigns can be a valuable skill for marketers in today's always-connected world. There are a lot of realities (such as changeable buying behavior, channel and technology proliferation, data profusion etc.) marketers face today that necessitate transformation. (Conlon, 2016)

And as we live, for example, in the era of *Digital Darwinism* (defined in 2011 by Brian Solis - principal analyst at Altimeter Group, and author of the book "The End of Business as Usual" - as the evolution of consumer behavior when society and technology evolve faster than one's ability to adapt), there is also a need for *digital transformation* (defined by Solis as the realignment of, or new investment in technology, business models, and processes to create new value for customers and employees and more effectively compete in an ever- changing digital economy), *customer digital experience* often serving as a primary catalyst for driving change, (Solis, 2016) and offerings being improved via social feedback. (Bughin, 2015)

Focusing on building capabilities, and evolving with the new consumer decision journey

In February 2015 McKinsey's representatives underlined *significant progress in five dimensions of the practice of marketing globally: taking advantage of the science of data and research to uncover new insights; exploiting the power of marketing to enhance the substance (the products, services, and experiences) offered to customers; having a clear brand story that echoes through cyberspace; creating simplifiers within each organization; being faster to market than the competition*. (Gordon and Perrey, 2015) A month later, in March 2015, other McKinsey's representatives expressed their belief that executives today need to *prove considerable engagement focusing on building capabilities, and evolving with the customer*. (Hatami, McLellan, Plotkin and Schulze, 2015) In the same month, some of their colleagues argued that in order to transform marketing and sales capabilities to drive growth, executives should start by comparing their marketing and sales capabilities with best practice, measuring

both how much value is at stake in radically improving their marketing and sales performance, and *what is the ROI on their current capability investments*, enabling their companies to focus on building capabilities. (Delmulle, Grehan and Sagar, 2015) In October 2015, other McKinsey's representatives expressed their belief that *the so-called, in 2009, (Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik) "consumer decision journey"* (involving shoppers taking advantage of technology, and including a feedback loop, after purchase customers pressuring products to perform and brands to deliver, on an ongoing basis, a superior customer experience) *needs updating, and introduced* (considering also a survey of Association of National Advertisers - see Edelman and Heller, 2015) *"The new consumer decision journey"* (brands actively shaping this journey becoming itself the defining source of competitive advantage, automation streamlining this journey steps, proactive personalization using information about a customer to instantaneously customize the experience, contextual interaction using knowledge about where a customer is in a journey to deliver them to the next set of interactions, and journey innovation extending the interaction to new sources of value for both the customer and the brand), *hence the challenge of actively managing, measuring, and nurturing these new consumer decision journey so as to capture value.* (Edelman and Singer, 2015)

At the beginning of this year we received an email from "Ernan's Blog" suggestively entitled *"Chasm Remains Between What Customers Want and What Marketers Deliver"*, in which the reputed Ernan Roman (Ernan's Blog, Thu, January 28, 2016, 8:00 pm) showed that *marketers* must create tactics that define the brand message (not dilute it), considering the IBM Trend report "Listening to the Customer: 7 New Research Findings" which highlighted "a massive perception gap between how well businesses think they are marketing and the actual customer's experience," while *consumers* faced with a purchasing decision with a purchasing decision need to clearly and quickly understand brand advantage, and *brand identity needing to be in line with consumer values.*

An interesting coincidence was that one year before, in January 2015, a global study by The Economist Intelligence Unit has been published, sponsored by Marketo (there were surveyed 600 high-level marketing executives globally to assess their views on the future), this study revealing, among others, that in order to support the business *marketers* (each marketer quickly building on the knowledge that came before) *know they need to change to better, seeing the rise of disruptive competitors and new technologies, and identifying four trends:* a broader view of customer experience; metrics for revenue and engagement; the talent hunt; the ecosystem in the future. (The Economist Intelligence Unit, January 2015) In what concerns the European marketers, they acknowledge (there were surveyed 262 high-level marketers from Western Europe) the necessity of updating their skillsets to meet the changing needs of the business, beginning to take greater ownership of the customer experience and adopting aggressively the digital engagement and innovative technologies. (EIU-Marketo)

And paraphrasing T.S. Eliot (cited by Eric Bonabeau in Harvard Business Review), we strongly believe that it is marketers' duty in relation with their organizational culture to pay attention to not losing the wisdom in knowledge, and to not losing the knowledge in information.

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