

The brand promise chasm is widening for consumers

By  Chantel Botha

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At the end of every year I take out my crystal ball, dust it off and think about the future.



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I look at what I have witnessed in my corporate clients while doing numerous experience evaluations and redesigning hundreds of moments across customer journeys, and I wonder whether brands will become faster and more agile in the new year to try to catch up with consumers' ever-increasing expectations.

What do consumers want?

Across industries and products and channels, we have seen that the following experience attributes matter to consumers:

- Simplicity
- Speed
- Convenience
- Kindness
- Value for money

Brands must reframe their business

As brands, we really need to reframe that **now** we are all in the business of giving consumers time back and creating memories that are meaningful to **them**.

There are a few hurdles

However, there are a lot of things that get in the way of meeting, let alone exceeding, consumer expectations. For example:

- Old computer systems
- Archaic processes

- Stupid rules
- People who are not passionate about serving consumers
- A culture that does not empower people to serve customers with passion and purpose

The last one is the toughest to change.

But what will we see in terms of trends that drive consumer behaviour in 2019?

1. Consumers will have an **ever-increasing choice and a louder voice**.
2. Employee unhappiness and disengagement will escalate. People will increasingly **change jobs more frequently**. Rising attrition and recruitment costs will increase prices.
3. With large organisations looking at reducing costs through wide-scale automation, some skills will become irrelevant quickly, leading to **higher levels of unemployment**.
4. Leadership will come under pressure in terms of being agile, making decisions faster and **being courageous to disrupt and change** at a faster pace than ever before. Managers will become an extinct species in the next few years with the rise of courageous super leaders who will communicate well, wear their hearts on their sleeves and run businesses more like families.
5. **Robotics and voice activation** will continue to introduce convenience, give consumers instant feedback and release consumers from time-consuming tasks to enjoy more of life. This will raise expectations and put pressure on legacy service providers.
6. **Great design will rule**. With nearly every large consultancy having made some acquisition of service design or design thinking agencies during 2018, we will now start seeing more innovative and remarkable service and product design. The brands that engage with the best consumer design consultancies, with the most practical implementation strategy, will win the race in terms of share of the consumer's heart and attention, as well as beat everyone else in terms of time to market. Shipping ideas despite missing the mark on some, will become a trademark of brands that want to close the expectations chasm.

My advice is to critically evaluate your experiences today. Decide what will win the hearts, minds and attention of your consumers tomorrow and into the future. Get a strong team of alchemists on board to design remarkable, sustainable and practically implementable experiences for your customers. Implement fast and be open to feedback. Co-create agile experiences *with* your customers, *for* your customers!

ABOUT CHANTEL BOTHA

I'm Chantel Botha, the author of "The Customer Journey Mapping Field Guide" and the founder of BrandLove.

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