

For businesses, basic customer service should still be the priority

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In the twenty-first century, interactions with customers have taken a new shape, especially with the emergence of social media. Any single company today interacts with hundreds of target consumers directly, regardless of the industry nature. The nature of the interaction is also changing, with companies using third party social media managers, chatbots etc. But I'm afraid some of us might be derailing from basic customer service thumb rules, and in the process, forgetting the leveraging ability of customer service towards enhancing brand equity.

Customer Service sometimes supersedes product features and

price as a factor behind choosing a particular brand or company. It is the provision of service to customers before, during, and after a purchase. Whether the product is being sold in a digital channel or traditional, it interacts with target customers before purchase, during purchase and after purchase. When I am paying for something in my neighbourhood store, I have 3 options; pay in cash, pay via credit card and pay via Mobile Financial Services (MFS).

Often times I choose MFS just because it's the easiest. To pay

in cash, I have to bring out my wallet, pay and collect the changes and put it back in the wallet. To pay via card, I have to bring out my wallet, hand it over to the shopkeeper, he will process something, I have to enter the pin,

collect the receipt, put my card back in the wallet. But with MFS it's very easy; just open the app, scan a QR code and pay.

I once saw a nice advertisement on social media, about a two-door fridge from a certain brand. I found it interesting and wanted to check out the price. To my surprise, I found that there were thousands of comments asking about price, and the company representative replied to all of them, "please check our full product list & price in the link below". But it's a reputable brand, the price is supposed to be fixed, then why do I have to open another link? Why can't they just mention the price in the comment box? I gave up checking the price. My life can continue without knowing it.

One such example of service-oriented businesses are small tea stalls found almost in every office backyard. They usually make great sales because having a good cup of tea is priority

two, having a comfortable place for customers to relax and gossip is actually priority one. That's what they provide.

Many mobile phone brands are spending crores in advertising, making the competition grow with each passing day. But very few offer seamless customer service regarding warranty claim, parts replacement & pre-purchase experience facilities. More often than not, these are the key drivers behind purchase decisions, not the face of the celebrity endorser.

Marketers who work in Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), experience a quick boost in sales just by working on distribution, which is also a service in a way. No change in product features, no additional trade or distributor margin, just regular visits in shops by sales representatives and some in-store displays. These jobs won't make a marketing team 'creative', but the team will be 'effective'. Perhaps it's time we put effectiveness ahead of creativity for a while.

To summarise, the need for quality customer service prevails. Brands have to be with the customers at each stage of the buying cycle and provide good after-sales support. We marketers have to ensure proper service, which will generate higher sales and even will facilitate charging a further premium in the future.

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