



# 11 key things consumers expect from their brand experiences today

A closer look at the vital impact of CX on US and UK consumers

“Over the last few years, customer experience has been growing in importance for business leaders. Today, it’s their top priority. Good CX is the difference between happy, loyal customers and one-time, dissatisfied customers. Companies who successfully implement a CX strategy achieve higher customer satisfaction rates, reduced customer churn and increased revenues.

So what does it mean to ensure good CX? Brands looking to build experiences that delight their customers need to start by listening and understanding what’s important to them. One thing’s for sure, a one-size-fits-all approach to CX will no longer cut it. Consumers have too many options to accept poor experiences from brands. As we move into 2022, it’s the brands that really cater to the needs of their customers that will see long-term success.”

**Shellie Vornhagen**  
CXO, Emplifi



## Introduction

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Much has been written about the importance of Customer Experience (CX). Consumers have more options at their fingertips than ever before. As a result, **CX has undoubtedly become the way most of them differentiate you from your competitors.**

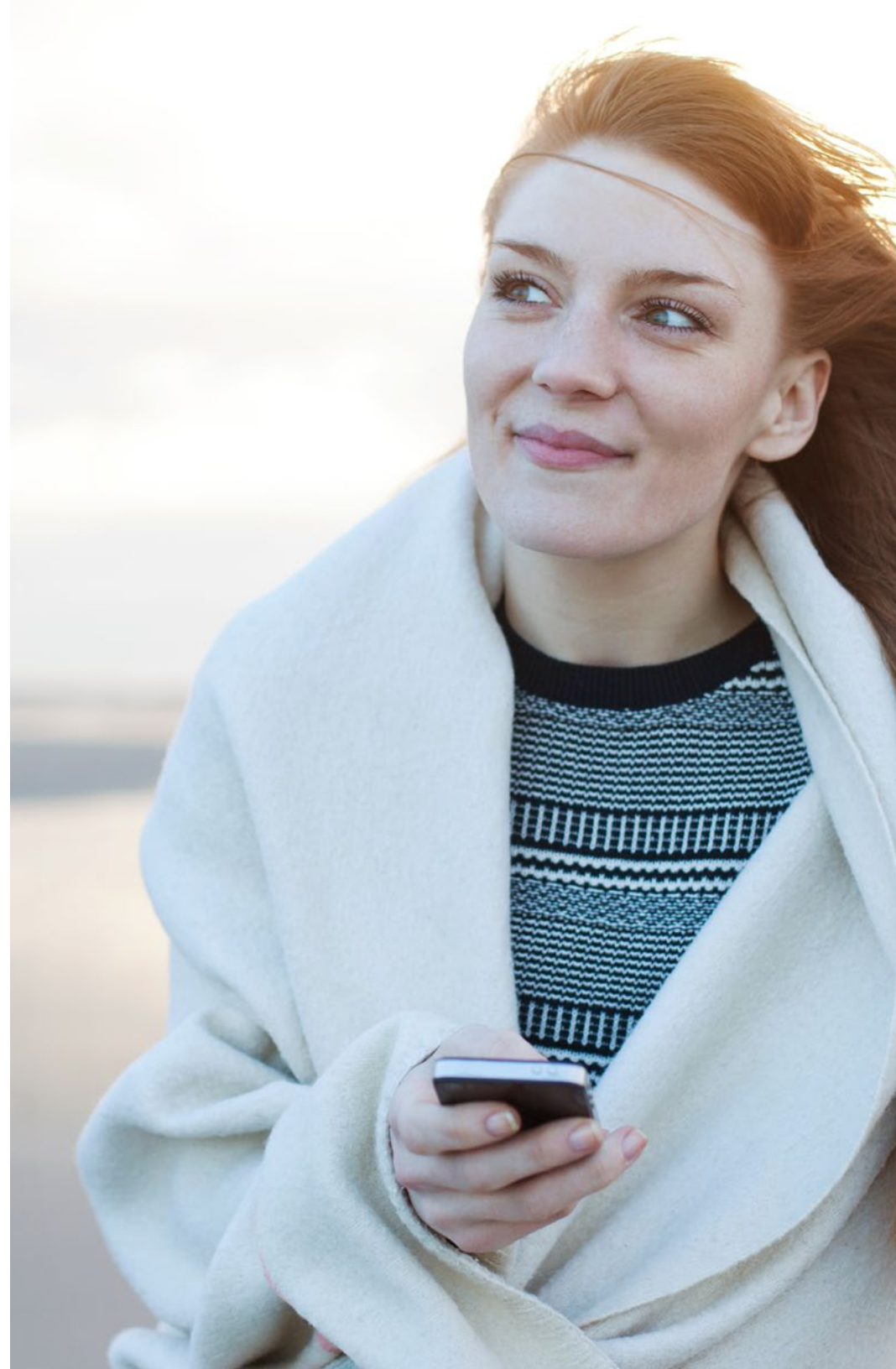
But just how much impact does each experience have on their decisions? What do they expect from their experiences with your brand, and how can you meet (or even exceed) those expectations? What do some consumers consider a minor inconvenience, but drives other consumers crazy?

No two customers are exactly the same. Taking a one-size-fits-all approach to your CX strategies is bound to fail. Understanding what your customers need and expect in different markets is a key step towards long-term CX success.

This report explores how consumer preferences and expectations align – and differ – in both the US and the UK, and highlights how brands can adapt their CX strategies to cater to these key markets.

The findings in this report are based on a November 2021 survey conducted by Harris Interactive and commissioned by Emplifi. Additional details are available in the Methodology section at the end of this report.

**Note: “Average” data represents the average of the US and UK figures shown.**



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# The impact of every customer experience



## 1 in 6 shoppers walk away from a purchase due to bad CX

Why do online shoppers leave without completing their purchases? Our survey shows that the customer experience plays a vital role.

**Almost 20% of US and UK consumers** say they usually (if not always) abandon a purchase **because of a single poor customer experience**. The rate rises above 50% (more so in the UK) when also including those who “sometimes” abandon their purchases.

As this data shows, there is very little room for error when it comes to checkout and purchase experience. With high-quality experiences making shoppers more likely to complete their purchases, brands can’t afford to cut corners.

Providing stronger in-purchase customer support and a faster, more efficient, and seamless checkout experience – among other improvements – can help brands reduce purchase abandonment rates.



**% who abandon their purchases due to a poor customer experience**

	Average	US	UK
<b>Always or usually</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Combined</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>59%</b>

Q. How often do you abandon a product purchase specifically because of a poor customer experience?



### % who give high importance to the following items when considering a new purchase

	Average	US	UK
Previous good customer experience with the brand	43%	46%	40%
Speed of availability/delivery	42%	47%	36%
A large selection of products	40%	43%	36%

Q: On a scale from 1 to 10, how important are the following when considering a new purchase. (% 9 and 10 ratings shown)

## Customers have a long memory when it comes to CX

Every experience matters! Not only do they impact today's purchases, but they affect future purchase decisions, too.

Having previously received a good experience with a brand was a top criteria for consumers in both markets when considering a new purchase.

**For UK consumers, it's #1.**

Speed of availability and delivery, as well as having a large selection of products were also rated as being very important among many consumers when making their purchase decisions.

This data suggests that US consumers may be more demanding than the UK market based on these criteria, assigning higher importance ratings to each consideration on the list.

With 4 in 10 consumers' future purchase decisions being impacted by their experiences with your brand today, it highlights the need for brands to continuously improve their CX strategies and efforts to deliver on consumers ever-growing expectations.

## Most consumers will pay a premium for superior customer experience

While previous experiences with a brand can impact a customer's choice to buy from a brand today, the promise of great experience can also entice shoppers to open their wallets wider.

**The allure of outstanding CX carried greater weight among US consumers across the board.**

Restaurant meals and vacations/holidays are especially likely to command a premium when it comes to high-quality customer experience.

This distinction may be explained because consumers are specifically searching for pleasurable experiences with these purchases, as opposed to when shopping for more practical items like cosmetics or cars.



**% who would pay at least 5% more if they knew they would receive outstanding CX**

	Average	US	UK
<b>Overall</b>	61%	65%	56%
<b>A restaurant meal</b>	70%	73%	66%
<b>A holiday/vacation</b>	65%	69%	61%
<b>A mobile phone</b>	58%	63%	52%
<b>A car</b>	56%	60%	51%
<b>A cosmetic item</b>	53%	58%	48%

Q: How much more would you be willing to pay for these products if you knew you would receive an outstanding customer experience?





**% who have left a brand to which they've been loyal in the past 12 months due to poor CX**

Average	US	UK
49%	53%	45%

Q. Have you left any brands you had previously been loyal to in the past 12 months due to poor customer experience?

## About half of customers surveyed recently left a brand due to poor CX

Disappointing experiences can not only derail purchases — they can make-or-break customer relationships. Even for brands that have spent years winning a customer's loyalty and trust.

Nearly half of UK consumers and more than half US consumers left a brand to which they were previously loyal, due to bad CX.

This highlights the harsh reality brands face today, and the critical need for continuous CX improvements.

With easy access to options and information at their fingertips, consumers have more power than ever before. To improve retention rates, brands must keep looking for ways to understand and elevate customers' needs and expectations throughout the customer journey.

Companies that settle for CX status quo will watch their customers leave for their competitors. Switching brands has never been easier.

## Subpar CX and low-quality products are equally harmful to brands

Poor product quality tops the list of complaints that lead US and UK consumers to abandon a brand. However, a negative customer experience can be just as damaging.

In both markets, product range, social responsibility, and brand image trailed far behind product quality and customer experience when it comes to brand loyalty.



### % who would leave a brand because of the following

	Average	US	UK
Poor product quality	64%	64%	64%
Poor customer experience	63%	63%	62%
Lack of social responsibility	36%	35%	36%
Limited product range	35%	38%	32%
Poor brand image	33%	36%	30%

Q. Which of these things would prompt you to leave a brand you had previously been loyal to? Please code all that apply.



% who would leave a brand after \_\_\_\_\_ experiences

	Average	US	UK
One	18%	15%	20%
Two or three	68%	66%	70%
Combined	86%	81%	90%

Q. How many instances of a poor customer experience would it take for you to leave a brand you had previously been loyal to?

## Each experience can have a massive impact on a brand's bottom line

The survey found that both US and UK consumers are highly sensitive to negative customer experiences, even when they are loyal to a brand.

**The large majority of consumers said they would switch to a competitor after three poor experiences or fewer.** UK consumers are slightly more likely to leave a brand (90%) than their US counterparts (81%).

Even more concerning is that 20% in the UK and 15% in the US are ready to abandon a brand after one single poor experience.

In other words, there is little to no margin for error when interacting with customers, even those previous loyal to your brand. The right CX improvements can help increase customer retention.

# What consumers expect from their experiences



## Rapid response times and around-the-clock customer service availability matter the most

US and UK consumers generally agree on what contributes the most toward a negative customer experience.

**Slow response time was rated as the leading contributor to a negative experience**, followed by a lack of 24/7 customer service support.

Interesting to note, UK consumers put far more emphasis on response times (42%) than on 24/7 customer service (19%), while the gap between these two factors was much smaller for US consumers.

The world is moving faster, and consumers expect their questions to be answered when and where they want them. Brands that can deliver on these ever-evolving expectations will win customer loyalty.



% who feel the following makes them feel negative about a brand

	Average	US	UK
<b>They do not respond to my messages quickly</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Their customer service isn't available 24/7</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>They don't share my values</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>They don't provide product and service recommendations</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>They don't ask for my feedback</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>11%</b>

Q. Here are some examples of poor customer experience you might have with a brand. Please rank these from 1-5 where 1 is most likely to make you feel negative about the brand through to 5 being least likely to do so. (Only those who rated "1" for the items above are shown)



How fast consumers expect a response from the brand when they post on one of its digital channels (e.g., website, social media)

	Average	US	UK
<b>Within 5 minutes</b>	9%	10%	8%
<b>Within an hour*</b>	52%	52%	53%

Q. How quickly do you expect a brand to respond to a message you have posted on one of its digital channels e.g. website, social media etc.?

*\*Combines those who answered "within 5 minutes", "within 30 minutes" and "within an hour"*

## The majority of consumers expect brands to respond within an hour

What does a "fast response time" look like to consumers? Expectations are similar in both the US and the UK.

More than half said a fast response is within one hour is expected. **But 1 in 10 consumers want a response in less than 5 minutes.**

Speed is not everything, though.

It's important to give customers what they need in as few interactions as possible. Labor-intensive workflows often make this challenging to achieve.

Investing in automated systems that enable customer service agents to quickly process incoming queries and messages, locate answers, and prepare responses will help brands progress toward this goal.

## Consumers want to communicate with brands on social media

Brands need to be ready and available to provide near-immediate support across multiple platforms.

**Social media** communication ranks highly across both markets, being the #1 preference among US consumers to communicate with brands. This channel ranks second among UK consumers, who said **email was their preferred communication method**.

Website contact forms had far less interest in both markets, with fewer than 10% in each market ranking them as a first choice.

Though there's some variation in channel preference, consumers clearly expect direct, personal interactions with brands. Understanding – and meeting – their preferences across the customer journey is essential for top-notch CX.



### Preferred way to communicate with brands

*% of consumers who ranked these #1 are shown*

	Average	US	UK
Social Media	22%	24%	20%
Visit a Physical Store	20%	22%	18%
Email	19%	15%	22%
Telephone	16%	18%	14%
Website Chat	16%	14%	18%
Contact Us Form	8%	8%	8%

Q. Nowadays, there are many different ways in which people can communicate with brands. Please rank these options from 1-6 where 1 is your preferred option and so on through to 6 being your least preferred option.

## CX on social media also plays an essential role for many digital shoppers



**% who rate receiving excellent social media customer service as being very important when making a purchase**

Average	US	UK
43%	49%	37%

Q. Please use this 10 point scale to tell us how important it is that you receive excellent social media customer service when making a purchase?

The role of social media in the customer journey is growing. Consumers who spend many hours a day on these channels turn to them to research, compare, and complete purchases. And they expect quick, efficient service.

**The quality of customer service provided through social media channels is also something consumers look for**, especially US consumers who were notably more likely than UK consumers to rate this as very important to their purchase experience.

Digital shoppers in the US and UK are likely to reward brands that can provide a more holistic, personalized experience. Having the right solutions in place is essential to empower social media managers and customer care agents to more effectively manage their social media community, and answer incoming questions promptly. For example, AI chatbots have been shown to help handle some of the more common questions promptly, and giving shoppers the ability to easily escalate to an agent helps ensure agents handle only the most complex cases.



## Many consumers want access to fully self-service options to resolve issues

Self-serve customer care options, ones where there is no direct live communication with a customer service agent to resolve an issue, are an essential part of a good customer experience for many consumers. These options are particularly popular among US consumers, with 39% ranking it as highly important, while 30% of UK consumers agreed.

Whether it is provided through an intuitive knowledge base or AI-driven chatbots, self-serve customer care combines several key ingredients that **today's consumers want: speed, availability, convenience, and strong support throughout the customer journey.**

To accommodate a range of consumer preferences, a hybrid model, that allows customers to escalate issues to a live agent at any time in the process, is recommended.



**% who find it very important to have a fully self-serve customer care option available to resolve their issues**

Average	US	UK
35%	39%	30%

Q. How important to you is it that a business provides a fully self-serve customer care option, meaning that there is no direct live communication with a customer service agent to resolve your issue?

The percentage of those who answered "9" or "10" on a scale from 1-10 are shown above.

## There is little room for error when it comes to CX

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Customer expectations are at an all-time high. Shoppers want to do what they want, when, where and how they want to do it. And they want everything to happen immediately. Standard business hours are a thing of the past.

A single experience can directly impact the bottom line, whether it be in the form of a failed purchase or a customer leaving to find a better experience elsewhere. Despite some subtle differences noted between US and UK consumers, speed and convenience are clearly the name of the game. Brands that cannot deliver on both of these risk falling behind.

CX includes anything and everything involved with each brand-customer interaction – from customer-facing employees to the people and processes behind-the-scenes. Brands must have the right tools, insights, and solutions in place to not only understand what customers expect at every stage of the customer journey, but to meet and exceed these expectations.

## Methodology and survey info

Emplifi commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct primary research to understand consumer sentiment and expectations around the customer experience.

The survey was conducted online in November 2021, and sampled social media users age 16-55 who are familiar with the concept of customer experience.

Geography	
US	1,064 responses
UK	1,035 responses

Are you...		
	US	UK
Male	50%	49%
Female	50%	49%
I identify in some other way	<1%	1%
I prefer not to answer	<1%	<1%

Age		
	US	UK
Gen X (Ages 41-55)	38%	41%
Millennials (Ages 25-40)	38%	39%
Gen Z (Ages 16-24)	23%	20%

# About Emplifi

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Emplifi is the leading unified CX platform that brings marketing, care and, commerce together to help businesses close the customer experience gap. More than 7,000 brands, such as Delta Air Lines, Ford Motor Company and McDonald's, rely on Emplifi to provide their customers with outstanding experiences at every touchpoint.

For more information, visit [emplifi.io](https://emplifi.io)

