

Synergistic CX

The Customer Experience Magazine

THE ROAD TO EXCELLENT
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH

**JULIE
ANTHONY**

1 The Data Story
**Revealing the Moments
Worth Getting Right**

2 Industry Perspective
**Building Trust Through
Knowledge and Readiness**

3 Looking Ahead
**The Role of Consistency
in Driving Repeat Business**

June 2026

The Confidence Engine

How Expertise Powers Reliable Customer Experiences

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

This month's theme, The Confidence Engine, explores the drivers of trust, consistency, and operational excellence in the car parts and accessories industry.

The edition features a global study powered by Aspect-Based Sentiment Analysis, examining nearly 30,000 customer reviews worldwide. The findings reveal an industry where customer experience is shaped less by products, price, or promotions and more by the quality of human interaction, operational discipline, and the ability to deliver confidence.

Customers arrive with a problem to solve. Frontline employees therefore become far more than sales associates, they become advisors, problem solvers, and trusted guides. When expertise is present, confidence forms quickly. When it is missing, even minor failures can significantly impact the customer experience. The industry's greatest strength and its greatest vulnerability ultimately reside in the same place: its people.

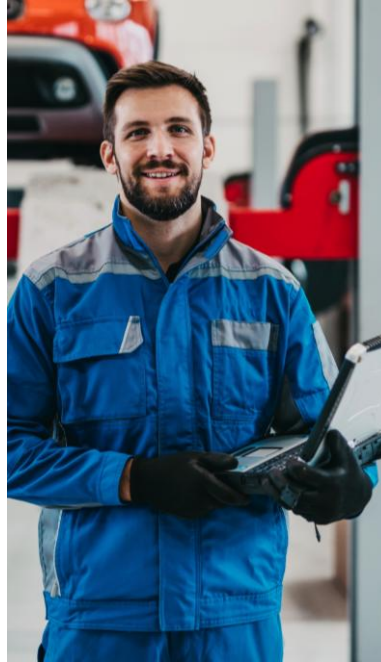
Our guest expert, Julie Anthony, Founder & CEO of Shoppers Confidential, brings a clear perspective on consistency across multi-location brands. Her view of mystery shopping as a "pre-online review warning system" reinforces an important point: leaders need objective visibility before small frontline failures become public reputation risks.

This issue also includes a case study on franchising, showing why customer experience cannot be managed through corporate dashboards alone. In distributed networks, loyalty is shaped by what happens at the counter: staff engagement, operational discipline, coaching, and the ability to turn compliance into consistent customer confidence.

We also explore value perception, focused measurement, frontline coaching, and the research industry's next chapter following the MSPA Europe/Africa Conference in Alicante.

Emil Tsankov
CEO of Research Metrics
Together with the CX Channel Team

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PREVIOUSLY ON SYNERGISTIC CX

Our May edition explores the fashion retail sector through the lens of customer confidence, examining the moments that influence decisions before, during, and after purchase. Together with Abdel Wahab Chaoui, Co-Founder and Associate Director of C&O Marketing, the issue looks beyond individual transactions to understand how products, people, processes, and the wider retail environment shape customer perceptions. The findings show where confidence is reinforced, where friction emerges, and how organizations can use customer insight, operational discipline, and continuous listening to create stronger relationships, more resilient brands, and long-term commercial success.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ABDEL WAHAB CHAOUI

THE EXCELLENCE PERSPECTIVE: TURNING CUSTOMERS INTO FRIENDS

Customer experience becomes stronger when interactions are built on trust rather than transactions. Helping customers make confident decisions, understanding their needs, and creating genuine human connections turns routine service into lasting loyalty.

CONNECTING THE DOTS: BUILDING ACTIONABLE CX INTELLIGENCE

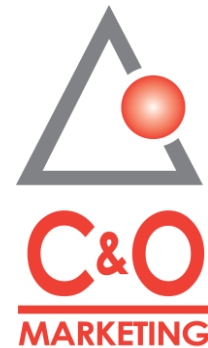
The value of CX research lies in connecting different data sources and turning the insights from it into decisions. Blending customer feedback with operational data helps organizations identify and address root causes and drive meaningful improvement.

THE SHARED EXPERIENCE: FASHION BRANDS INSIDE RETAIL ECOSYSTEMS

Fashion brands do not operate in isolation. Their performance is closely connected to the retail environment around them, where positioning, atmosphere, and customer traffic patterns help shape perception long before shoppers enter the store.



ABDEL WAHAB CHAOUI, Co-founder and Associate Director of C&O Marketing



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PODCAST REACTIONS FROM THE CX CHANNEL TEAM

Our May podcast edition, dedicated to fashion retail, explored an industry shaped by constant change: evolving customer expectations, seasonal collections, store execution, pricing pressures, service interactions, and shifting market dynamics. In his conversation with the CX Channel Team, Abdel Wahab Chaoui highlighted the importance of a structured research approach. From clearly defining objectives and selecting the right methodologies to designing effective surveys, interpreting findings, and transforming insights into action. He demonstrated how meaningful decisions are built. The edition reinforced a key message: in fashion retail, market research is not a supporting activity. It is a strategic discipline for monitoring relevance, improving execution, and helping brands respond to customers with precision.



EMIL TSANKOV

“Strong decisions require strong evidence. Abdel’s perspective is valuable because it connects customer experience with research discipline. In a sector where preferences shift quickly, brands need more than isolated signals. They need clear objectives, reliable measurement, and actionable insights to understand where value is created and where improvement is needed.”

CEO & Co-founder
Research Metrics



CRISTIANI OLIVEIRA

“What stands out in Abdel’s perspective is his view of fashion retail as a living ecosystem. Customer expectations, store dynamics, product relevance, and market trends are constantly evolving. This makes continuous measurement essential, helping leaders understand not only what customers experience, but how expectations are changing over time.”

CX Strategy Ambassador
Research Metrics



ERIK BROOKS

“One point that resonated is Abdel’s emphasis on defining the research objective before collecting data. Many organizations invest in surveys and feedback programs but struggle to generate meaningful outcomes because the purpose is unclear. Good research starts with the right question. When that foundation exists, insights become far more useful and actionable.”

Vice President
Research Metrics

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INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT:

The Confidence Engine

How Expertise Powers
Reliable Customer Experiences

INTRODUCTION

The car parts and accessories industry operates in an environment where urgency, reliability, and technical certainty shape nearly every customer decision. Customers rarely enter a store simply to browse, they arrive looking for solutions to specific problems, often under time pressure and with little tolerance for mistakes. Whether replacing a failed component or searching for compatible accessories, customers expect fast answers, accurate recommendations, and reassurance that the selected product will work correctly for their vehicle. As a result, the journey is shaped less by impulse and more by trust, clarity, and confidence in the expertise provided.

In this environment, the role of the store team becomes one of the industry's strongest differentiators. Customers depend heavily on staff knowledge, communication, and the ability to simplify complex decisions without creating additional confusion or pressure. Product catalogs continue to expand, compatibility requirements become more detailed, and customers increasingly rely on knowledgeable support to navigate choices efficiently and confidently.

At the same time, expectations continue to rise around operational speed and reliability. Customers expect parts to be available when needed, order fulfillment to be accurate, and support processes such as returns or warranty handling to run smoothly. Even relatively small disruptions – unavailable inventory, incorrect fitment or delayed orders – can quickly weaken trust and interrupt the customer experience.

Yet within these challenges lies one of the industry's strongest opportunities. Retailers that successfully combine expertise, operational consistency, and customer-focused support create experiences built on trust – the foundation that drives repeat business, long-term loyalty, and stronger customer advocacy.

This edition takes a closer look at the customer experience realities shaping the car parts and accessories industry and the pressures influencing customer decisions across the journey. In a category where purchases are often urgent, technical, and highly dependent on trust, the experience extends far beyond the product itself. Speed of support, guidance, product availability, and consistency all play a critical. In this issue, we will:

- **Understand Digital Influence**
Explore how online reviews, digital presence, customer engagement, and brand reputation shape trust, influence purchasing decisions, and affect how automotive retailers attract and retain customers.
- **Reveal the Moments That Shape Trust**
Identify the interactions and operational touchpoints that have the strongest impact on customer perception, satisfaction, and long-term preference.
- **Break Down the Marketing Mix**
Examine how people, products, processes, pricing, promotions, store environment, and accessibility contribute to the overall customer experience and influence customer sentiment.
- **Analyze the Customer Journey**
Follow the complete experience across research, consultation, product selection, purchase, and post-purchase support to uncover where friction disrupts the journey and where confidence is reinforced.
- **Examine the Industry's Opportunities**
Review how faster fulfillment, stronger expertise, connected channels, and customer-focused service strategies are helping automotive retailers create more dependable and competitive experiences.

INDUSTRY STUDY SAMPLE

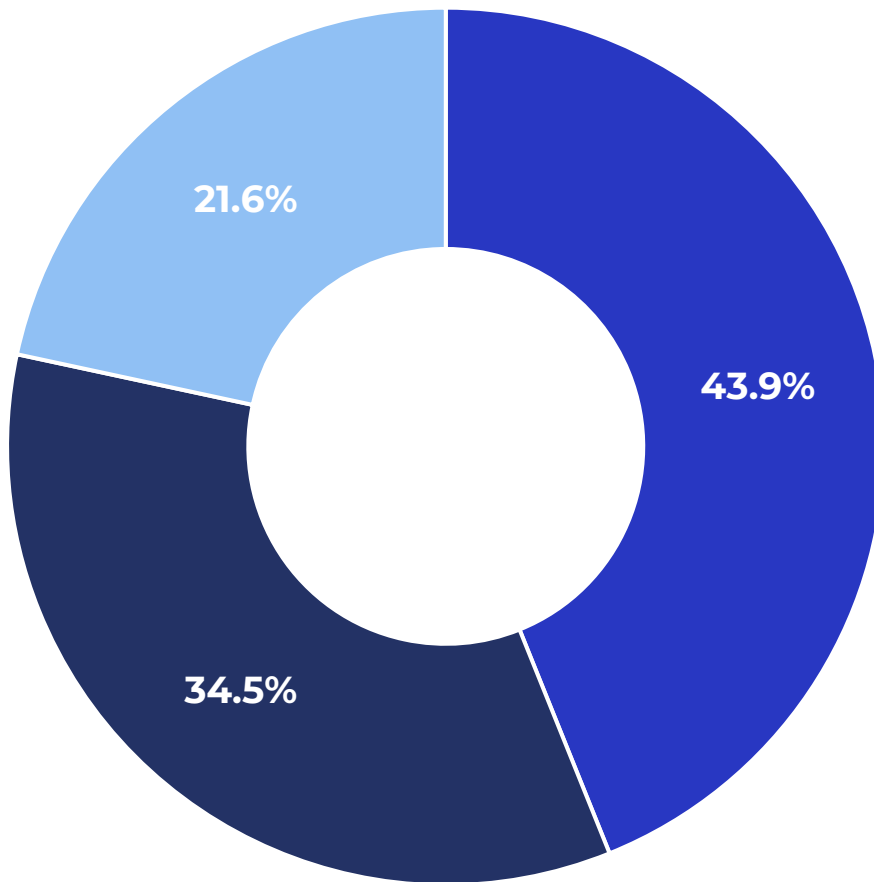
The study sample serves as the basis of the analysis, outlining the places included in the research. The main parameters of the sample include:

- Number of Places **2307**
- Confidence Level **99.50%**
- Margin of Error **2.50%**
- Number of Reviews **27,282**

Our sample's worldwide geographic structure is separated into three primary zones: the Americas, APAC (Asia-Pacific), and EMEA (Europe, the Middle East, and Africa). Each zone is further broken down into specific regions, as visualized here.

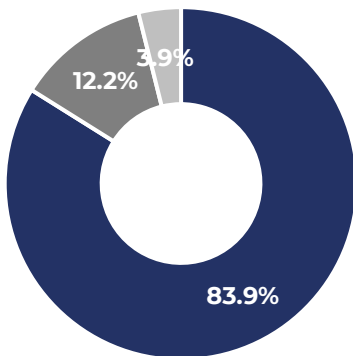
The global sample is primarily driven by EMEA, accounting for the largest share at 43.9%, followed by the Americas with 34.5%, while APAC contributes 21.6% of the overall dataset.

GLOBAL



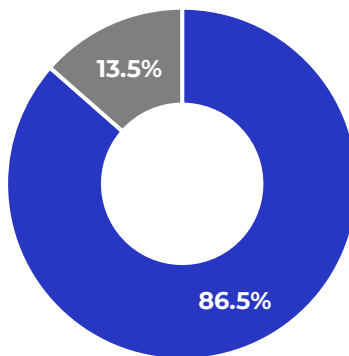
■ EMEA ■ AMERICAS ■ APAC

EMEA



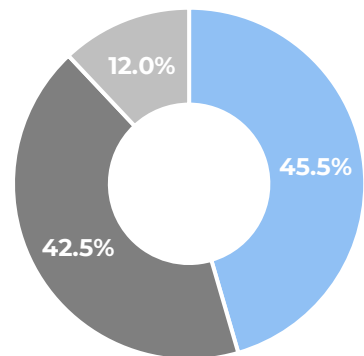
■ Europe
■ Africa
■ Middle East

AMERICAS



■ North America
■ Latin America

APAC



■ East Asia
■ Central and South Asia
■ Oceania

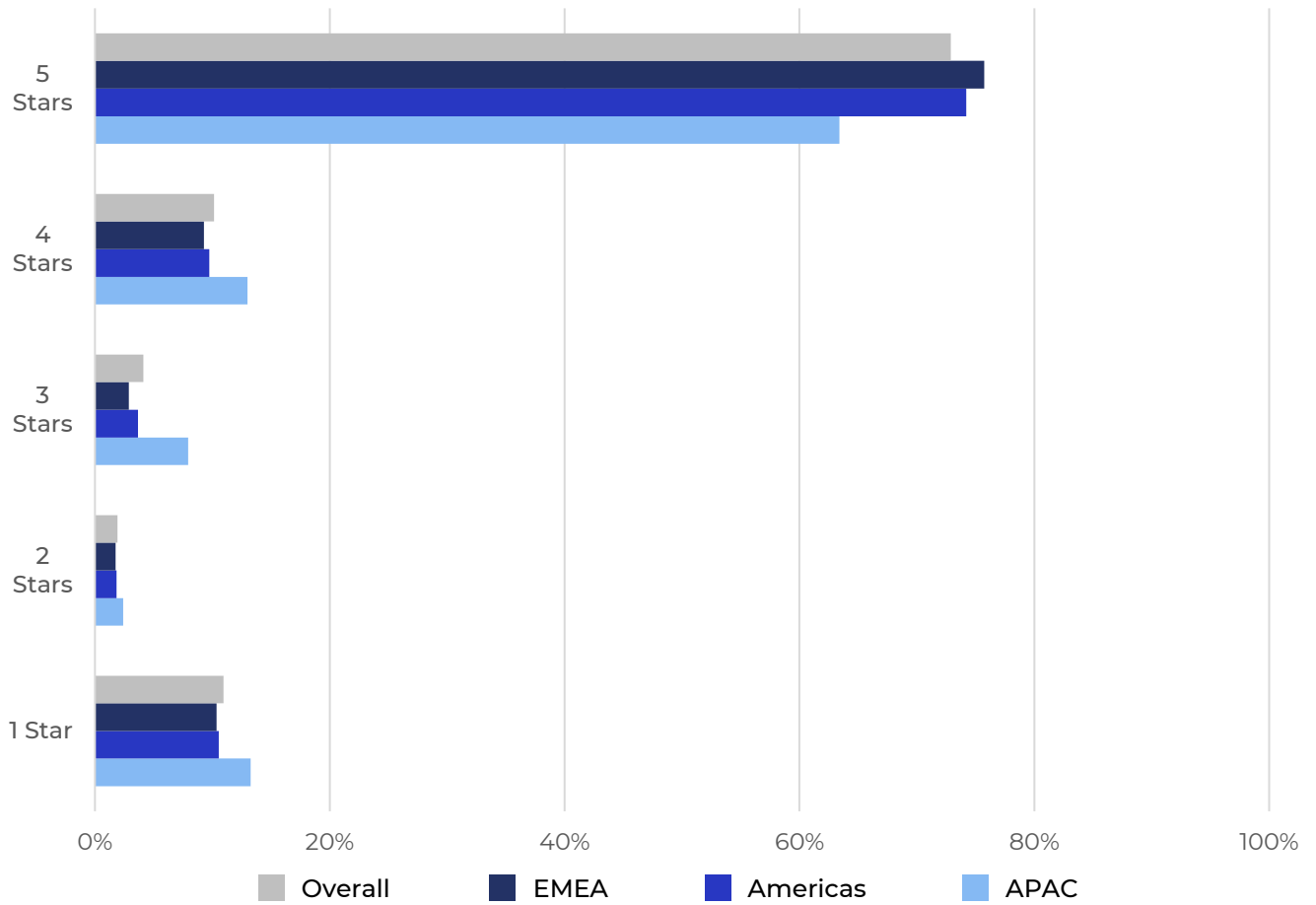
STAR RATINGS

Five-star reviews strongly shape the overall perception of car parts and accessories stores, representing nearly **three-quarters** of all feedback **globally**. **EMEA** leads with the highest share of top ratings at **75.7%**, followed by the **Americas** at **74.2%**, while **APAC** records a lower but still dominant **63.0%**. Lower and mid-tier ratings remain comparatively limited across regions. APAC shows a slightly higher concentration of one-star reviews, pointing to greater variability in customer experiences.

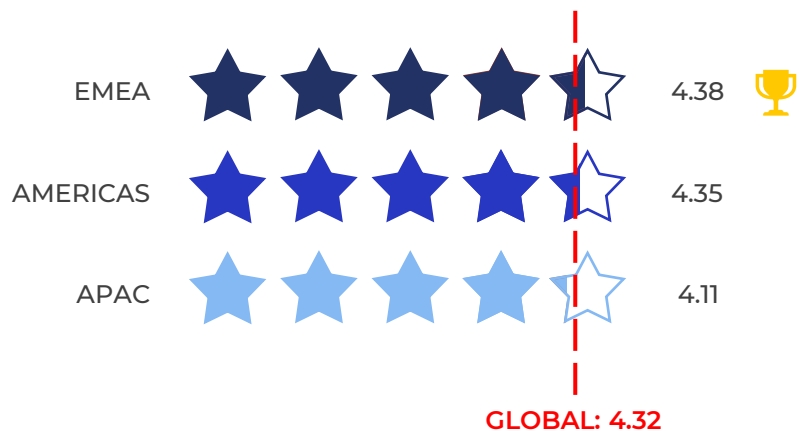
Regional averages remain relatively close, with **EMEA** achieving the **strongest overall score** at **4.38**, narrowly ahead of the **Americas** at **4.35**. **APAC** follows at **4.11**, while the **global average** reaches **4.32**, highlighting a broadly positive customer perception across the industry.

"Star ratings" in online reviews and ratings are a system that allows customers to evaluate a product, service, or business on a scale, typically from one to five stars. Each star represents a level of satisfaction, with one star being the lowest (very dissatisfied) and five stars being the highest (very satisfied).

STAR RATINGS DISTRIBUTION



AVERAGE STAR RATING



CRITICAL REVIEW RESPONSE TIME (CRRT)

Critical review response rates within the car parts and accessories industry continue to reveal a major follow-up gap, with unanswered feedback dominating across the sector. **Globally, 71.7% of negative reviews receive no response**, while 25.4% are addressed within 24 hours, reflecting partial, but still inconsistent engagement with dissatisfied customers.

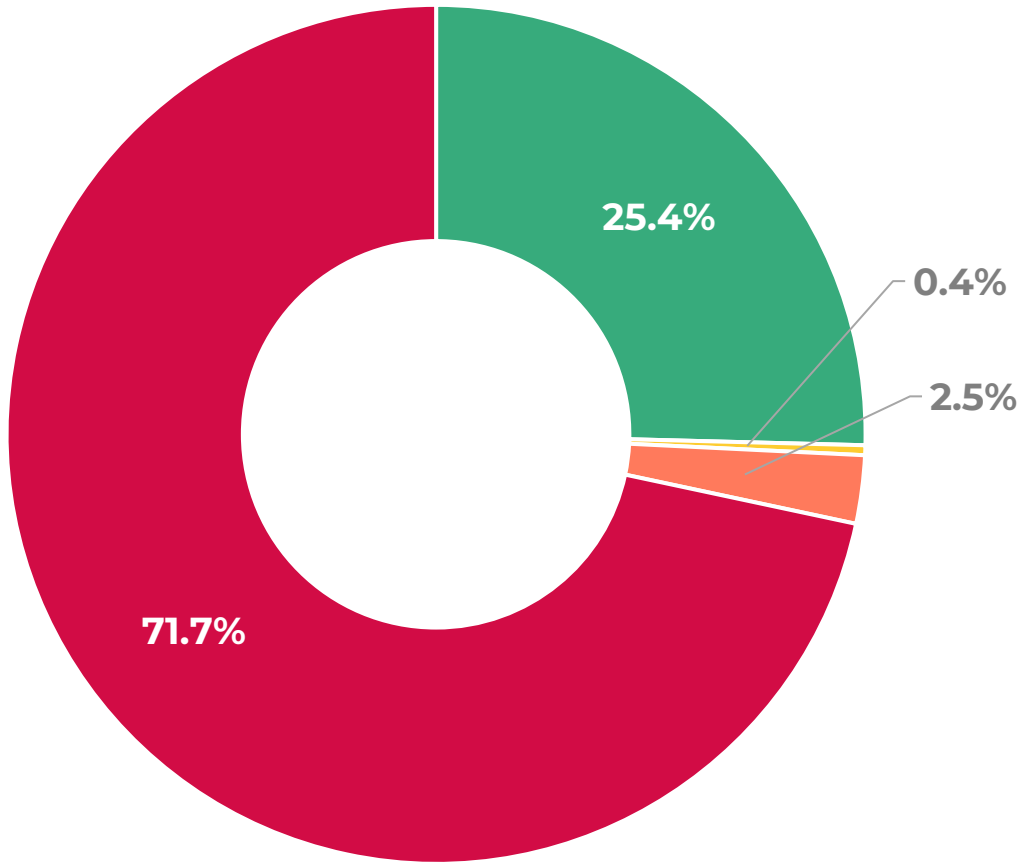
Regional results vary significantly. **APAC** records **the highest share of unanswered reviews** at **89.6%**, followed by **EMEA** at **78.0%**, while the **Americas** deliver the strongest response performance, with **38.0%** addressed within 24h. Overall, the findings reinforce the need for faster and more consistent recovery practices.

The **Critical Review Response Time (CRRT)** KPI measures how quickly a business responds to critical reviews – those with a rating of **1 or 2 stars**. This KPI is key in customer relationship management, as it reflects the business's dedication to addressing customer complaints and issues promptly.

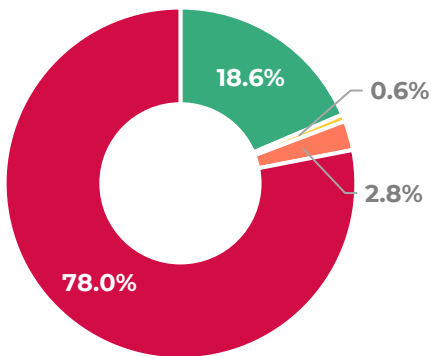
CRRT KPI bands:

- **Excellent**: within 24 hours
- **Fair**: within 72 hours
- **Attention**: more than 72 hours
- **Critical: Not Responded**

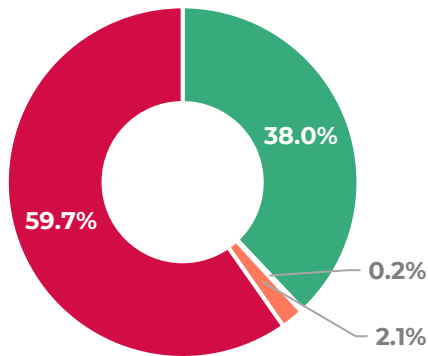
GLOBAL



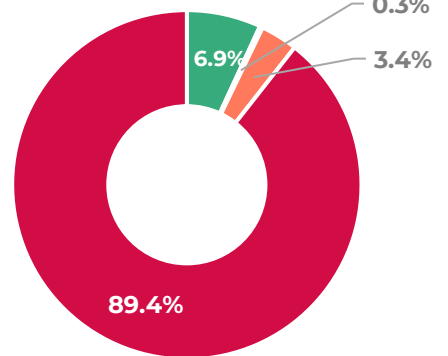
EMEA



AMERICAS



APAC



■ Excellent ■ Fair ■ Attention ■ Critical

REVIEWS WITH COMMENTS VS RATING-ONLY

Detailed customer feedback leads to higher response activity within the car parts and accessories industry, although major gaps in follow-up still remain. Globally, **69.1% of reviews containing comments** receive **no response**, while **unanswered rating-only reviews** rise sharply to **85.2%**.

Similar patterns appear across all regions. **APAC** reports the largest share of **unanswered commented reviews** at **87.5%**, followed by **EMEA** at **75.8%**, whereas the **Americas demonstrate stronger engagement** levels. Overall, providing additional context through written feedback still results in limited improvement in response behavior.

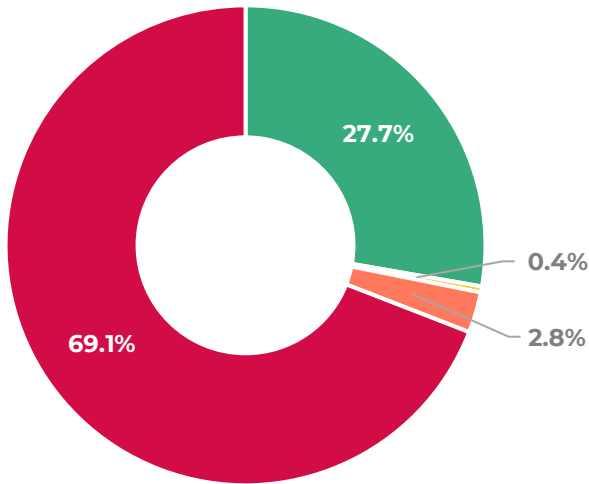
Reviews with Comments: These are the reviews where customers provide written feedback along with their rating. These provide context and a chance to address specific concerns.

Rating-only Reviews: These are reviews where the customer only leaves a star rating without any additional comments or details.

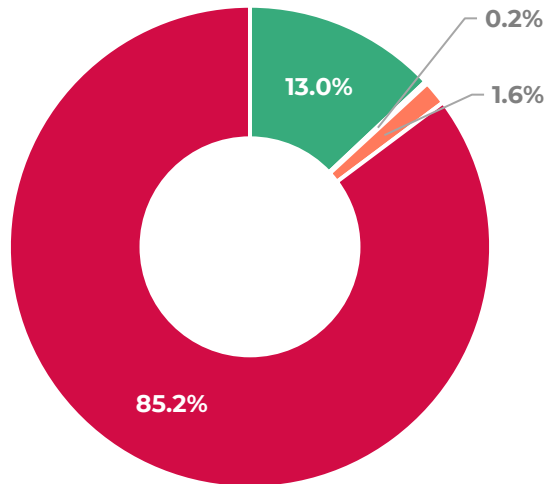
CRRT KPI bands:

- **Excellent:** within 24 hours
- **Fair:** within 72 hours
- **Attention:** more than 72 hours
- **Critical: Not Responded**

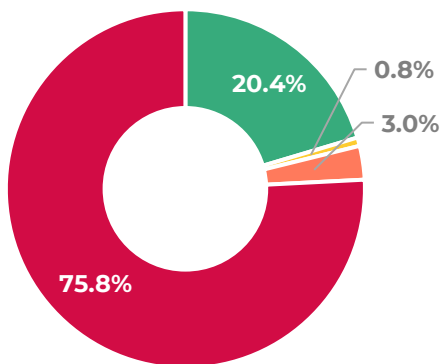
CRRT: REVIEWS WITH COMMENTS



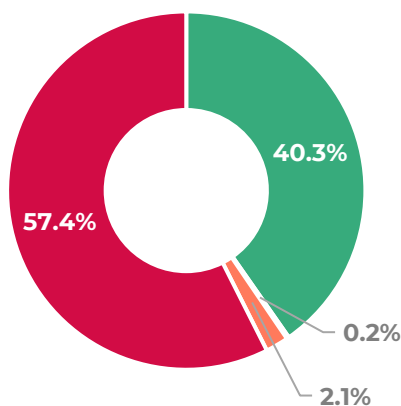
CRRT: REVIEWS WITH RATING-ONLY



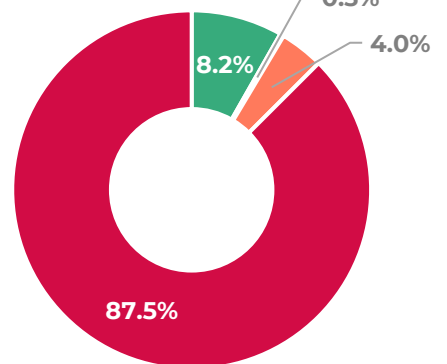
EMEA



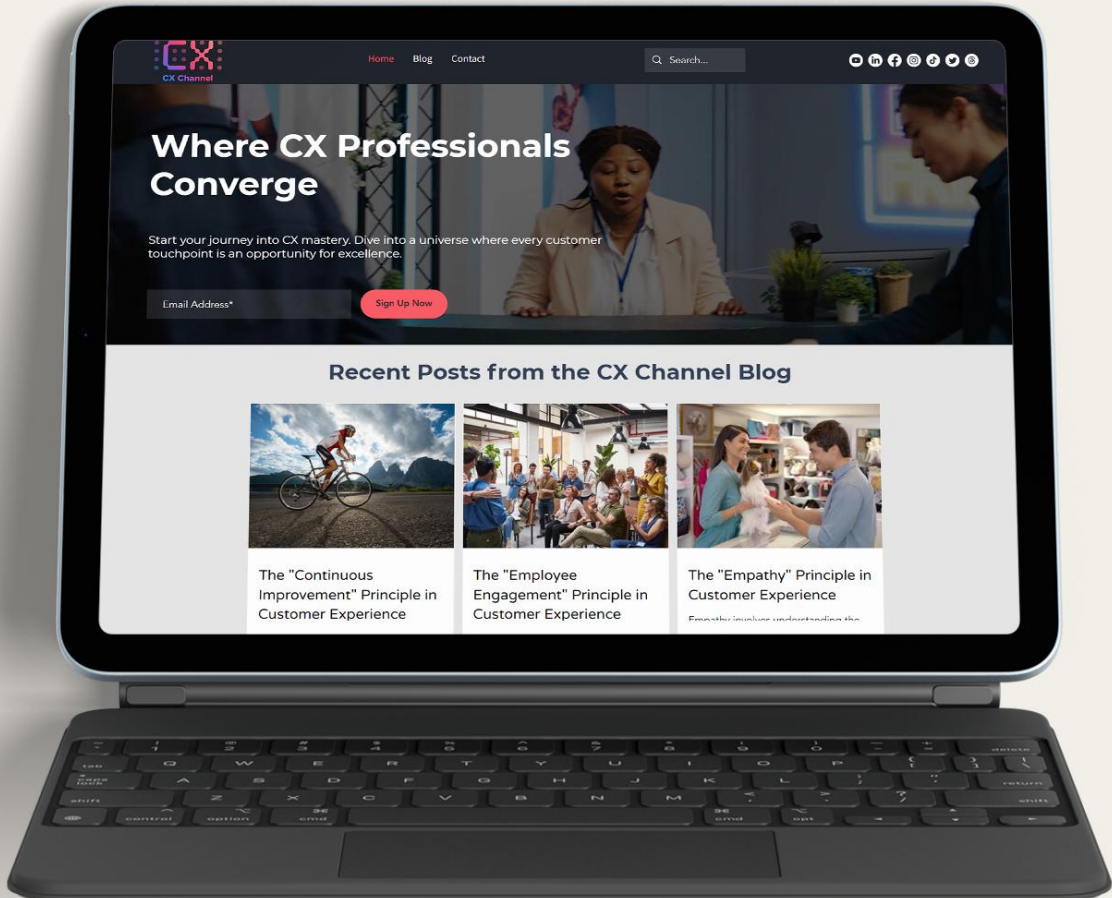
AMERICAS



APAC



■ Excellent
 ■ Fair
 ■ Attention
 ■ Critical



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Car Parts and Accessories: **Marketing Mix**

In this section, we explore customer feedback through the framework of the 7P marketing mix, examining how experience perception distributes across key business elements. The analysis highlights the areas customers engage with most frequently, where expectations are strongest, and which parts of the journey have the greatest influence on the overall customer experience.

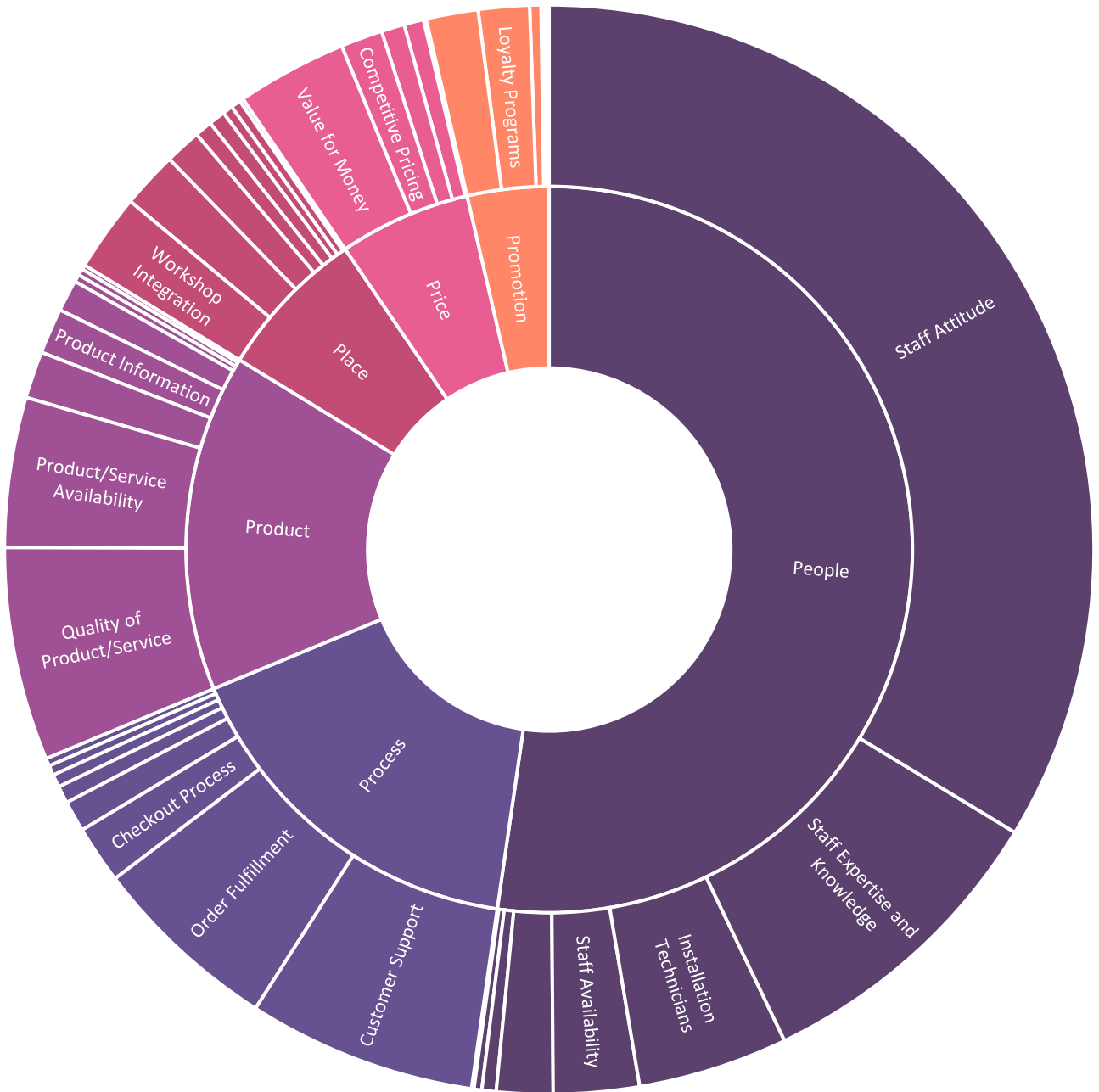
The section also examines the balance of the sentiment across the different marketing mix elements, revealing how customers emotionally respond to various aspects of the experience. By combining customer attention levels with sentiment distribution, the analysis provides a broader view of where businesses create value successfully and where gaps in the customer journey remain visible.

MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS

What Do Customers Talk [Care] About?

Customer feedback within the car parts and accessories industry is overwhelmingly centered around **People**, which alone generates **52%** of all mentions. Together with **Process (16%)** and **Product (15%)**, these three elements generate **83% of the total feedback volume**. The results emphasize how heavily the customer experience relies on **staff expertise and support**, followed by the efficiency of operational processes and the availability and quality of products. In comparison, the remaining Marketing Mix elements contribute far less to shaping overall customer perception.

The 7P Marketing Mix is an extended version of the traditional 4P concept. It includes the following seven elements: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. This model provides a more comprehensive framework for businesses to evaluate and improve their marketing strategies.



Explore the top 5 features within each marketing mix element on the next page. ►

MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS AND FEATURES

Which Details Do Customers Prioritize?

What matters most to customers in the car parts and accessories sector is interaction with the staff. **Staff Attitude alone** represents **33.7%** of all feedback, followed by **Staff Expertise and Knowledge (9.2%)** and **Customer Support (6.8%)**, highlighting the importance of guidance, responsiveness, and trust throughout the journey. Beyond the human element, customers also place strong emphasis on **Quality of Product/Service (6.3%)**, **Product/Service Availability (4.4%)**, and **Order Fulfillment (5.6%)**, reinforcing the need for dependable products delivered through efficient and reliable processes.

Customers value experiences that simplify decisions and reduce uncertainty. Helpful staff interactions, product knowledge, and responsive support strongly influence customer confidence throughout the journey. At the same time, product quality, availability, and efficient order fulfillment reinforce reliability and help create a smoother purchase experience.

Customers also respond strongly to operational consistency and convenience. Fast product access, dependable fulfillment, and clear support processes strengthen reliability in an often urgent, problem-driven industry. When expertise, availability, and execution work together effectively, the experience becomes more efficient, reassuring, and trustworthy.

MARKETING MIX ELEMENT	MARKETING MIX ELEMENT FEATURE	% OF THE MARKETING MIX	
People	▶ Staff Attitude	33.68%	95.4% of People
	▶ Staff Expertise and Knowledge	9.20%	
	Installation Technicians	4.45%	
	Staff Availability	2.55%	
	Other	2.40%	
Process	▶ Customer Support	6.78%	91.3% of Process
	▶ Order Fulfillment	5.61%	
	Checkout Process	1.72%	
	Installation Scheduling	0.92%	
	Other	1.43%	
Product	▶ Quality of Product/Service	6.33%	90.0% of Product
	Product/Service Availability	4.44%	
	Auto Parts and Accessories Range	1.39%	
	Product Information	1.35%	
	Other	1.49%	
Place	Workshop Integration	2.29%	82.3% of Place
	Environment and Ambiance	1.68%	
	Venue Location	1.07%	
	Cleanliness and Organization	0.52%	
	Other	1.19%	
Price	Value for Money	3.27%	98.4% of Price
	Competitive Pricing	1.24%	
	Price	0.69%	
	Clear Pricing	0.58%	
	Other	0.09%	
Promotion	Community Engagement	1.54%	96.3% of Promotion
	Loyalty Programs	1.52%	
	Discounts and Offers	0.33%	
	In-Store Promotions	0.11%	
	Other	0.14%	

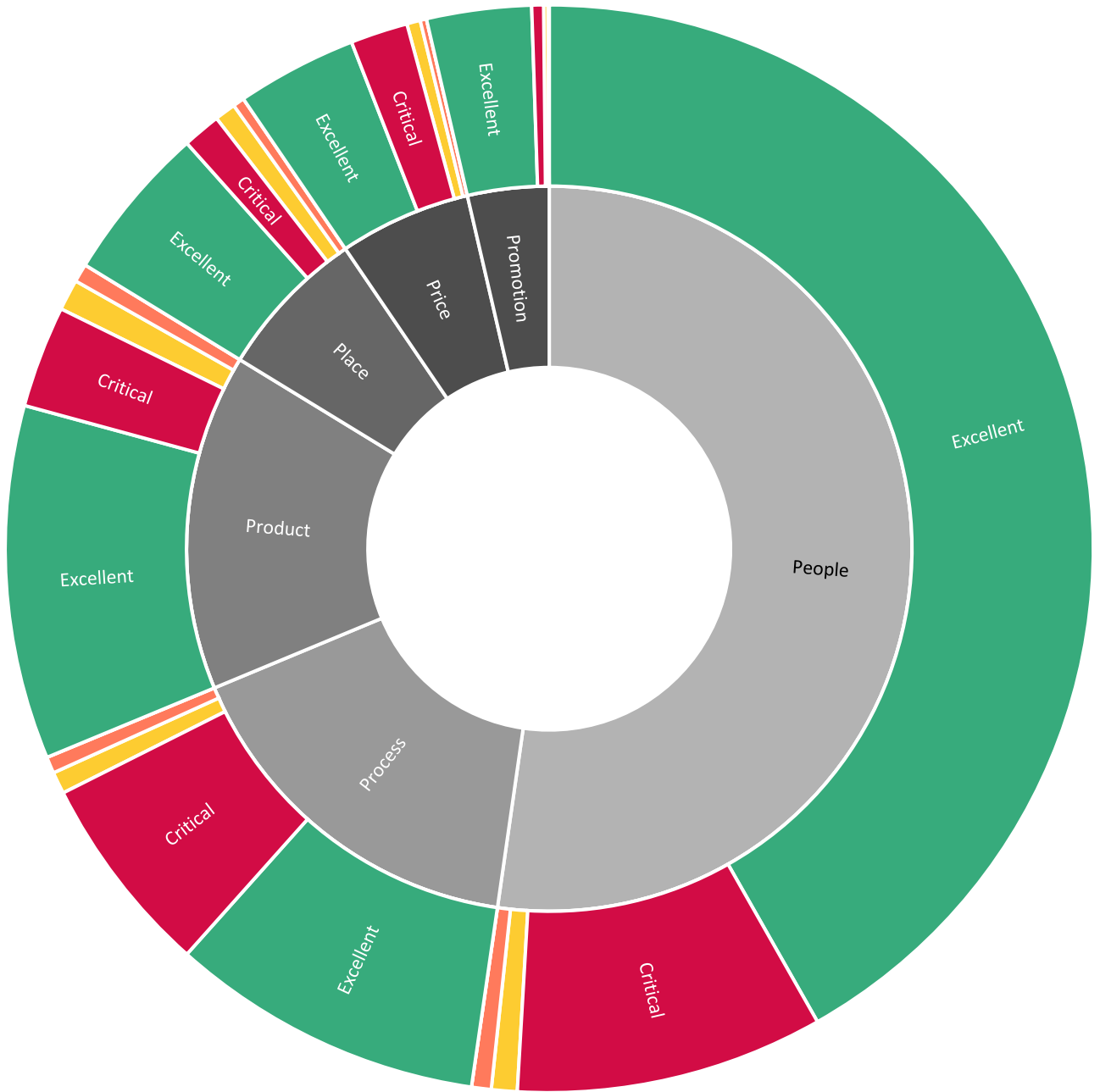
MARKETING MIX EXPERIENCES

Understanding Customer Sentiments, Thoughts, and Feelings

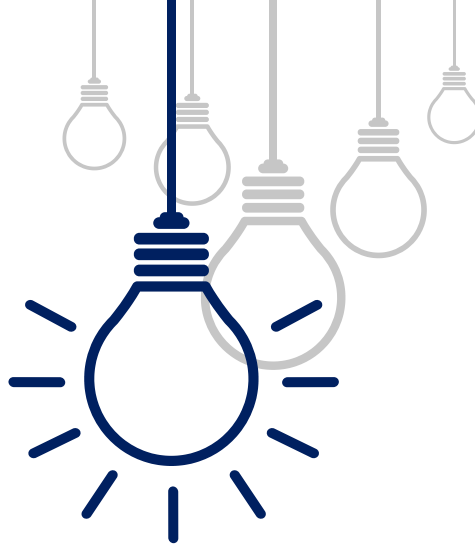
Customer sentiment across the car parts and accessories sector highlights a strong link between the importance of the elements and the risk of dissatisfaction they carry. The three most influential elements – **People, Process, and Product** – generate **85% of all critical feedback**, while **People** alone contribute **43% of all negative mentions**. This indicates that the touchpoints shaping customer trust most strongly are also the ones where service failures become most visible. At the same time, **Process** stands out as the most vulnerable element overall, with **36%** of all **Process-related** feedback classified as critical.

Overall sentiment remains predominantly positive, with critical feedback accounting for 21% of the total. Positive perceptions are driven largely by knowledgeable staff support, dependable products, and smooth operational execution throughout the customer journey.

Critical sentiment reveals the areas where customer expectations break down most noticeably. People-related feedback highlights issues with communication and support quality, while Process concerns are tied more closely to fulfillment and execution. Product criticism focuses mainly on quality, availability, and confidence in the proposed solution.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Customer experience in the car parts and accessories sector is shaped by expertise, operational reliability, and the ability to reduce uncertainty during urgent and technical purchase decisions. Customers depend heavily on knowledgeable support, dependable fulfillment, and clear post-purchase handling, making consistency across the journey critical to maintaining trust.



Respond Before Trust Erodes

More than 70% of critical reviews receive no response, exposing a major recovery gap. The findings highlight the need for more proactive engagement, faster recovery practices, and stronger follow-up consistency when handling dissatisfied customers.



Reduce Risk in the Core Drivers

The three most influential elements: generate 85% of all critical feedback, with People alone contributing with 43%. This shows that the areas attracting the strongest customer attention also carry the highest operational and reputational risk when execution weakens.



Turn Expertise Into Confidence

Customer feedback centers around People (52%), followed by Process (16%) and Product (15%), together generating 83% of all mentions. Staff attitude, technical knowledge, and fulfillment reliability strongly influence purchase confidence.



Eliminate Operational Friction

Process carries the highest share of critical sentiment at 36%, highlighting issues in fulfillment, checkout, scheduling, and issue handling. Customers expect faster and more accurate execution, especially during urgent purchases.

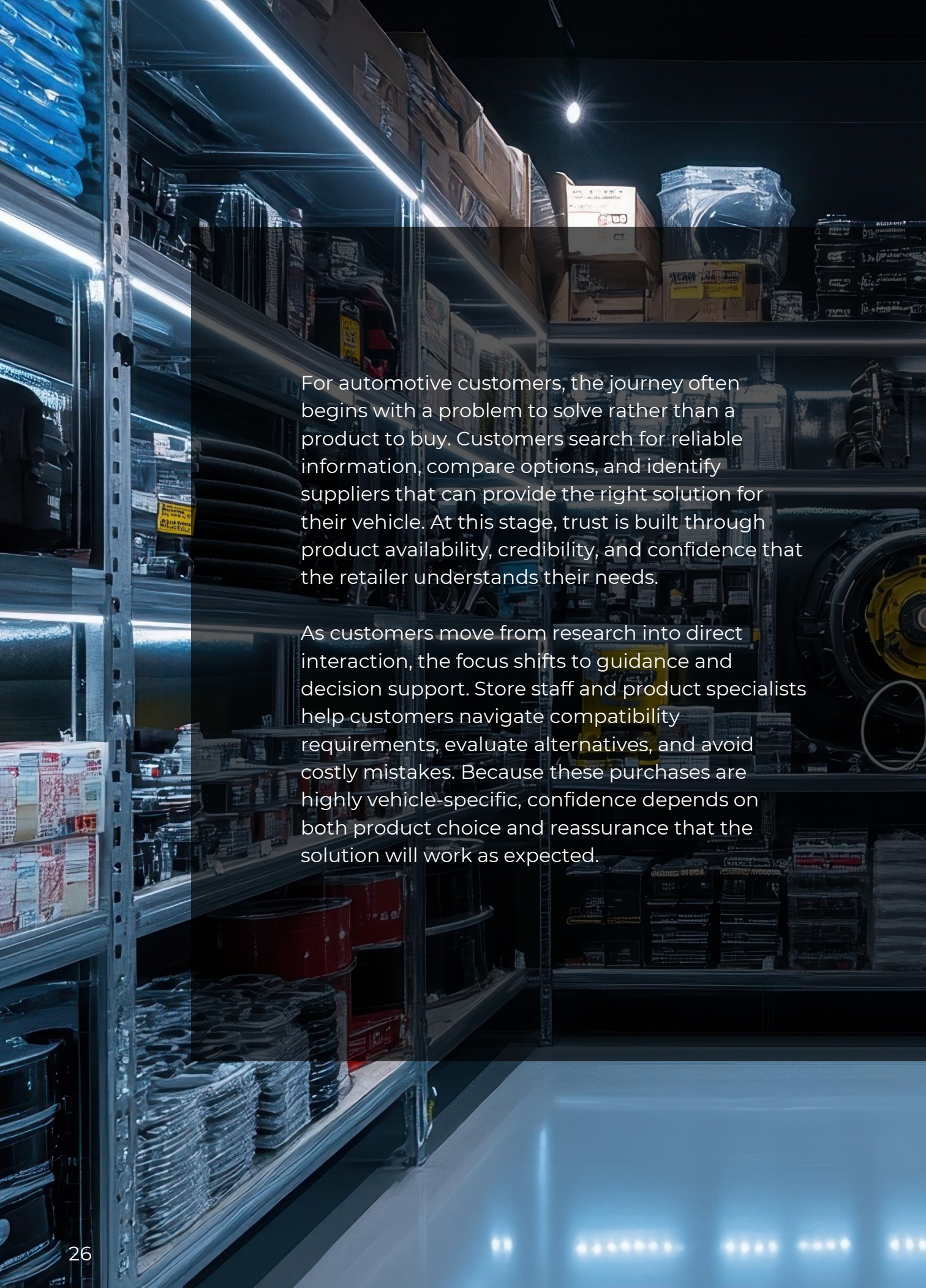
By improving expertise, operational consistency, and customer follow-up, automotive retailers can reduce friction, strengthen trust, and create more dependable customer experiences.



Car Parts and Accessories: **Customer Journey**

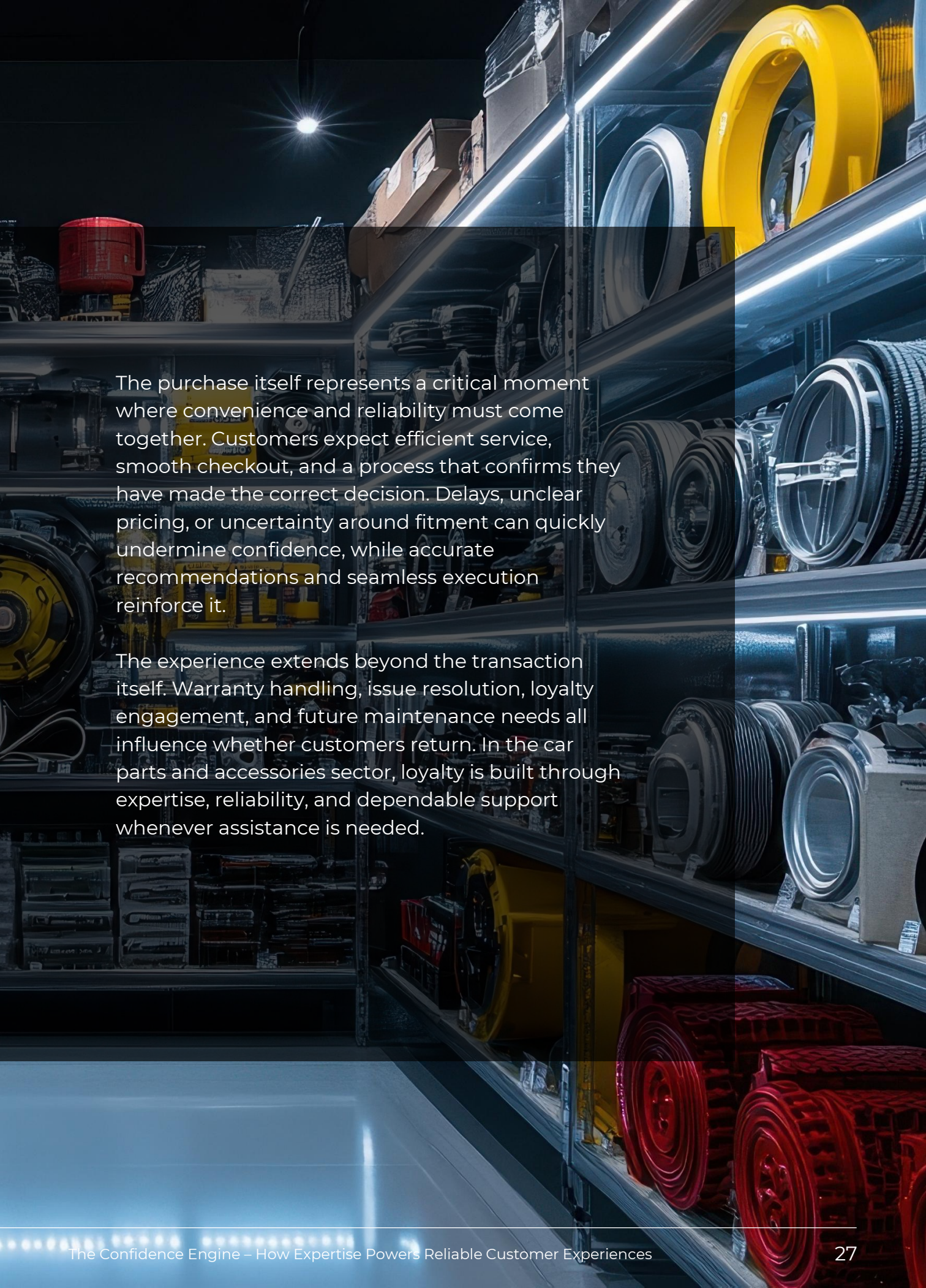
Purchasing car parts and accessories is often driven by urgency, reliability, and the need to make the correct decision quickly. Customers move through a journey of researching compatibility, comparing options, seeking guidance, and evaluating whether a product will solve a specific need for their vehicle. Throughout the process, confidence is shaped by the clarity of information, quality of support, and ease of finding the right solution.

This section maps the key stages of the customer journey – from need recognition and product research to in-store interaction, part selection, purchase, and post-purchase support. Across these moments, customers encounter touchpoints that influence trust, convenience, and certainty, creating opportunities for retailers to reduce friction, simplify decisions, and strengthen long-term customer relationships.



For automotive customers, the journey often begins with a problem to solve rather than a product to buy. Customers search for reliable information, compare options, and identify suppliers that can provide the right solution for their vehicle. At this stage, trust is built through product availability, credibility, and confidence that the retailer understands their needs.

As customers move from research into direct interaction, the focus shifts to guidance and decision support. Store staff and product specialists help customers navigate compatibility requirements, evaluate alternatives, and avoid costly mistakes. Because these purchases are highly vehicle-specific, confidence depends on both product choice and reassurance that the solution will work as expected.



The purchase itself represents a critical moment where convenience and reliability must come together. Customers expect efficient service, smooth checkout, and a process that confirms they have made the correct decision. Delays, unclear pricing, or uncertainty around fitment can quickly undermine confidence, while accurate recommendations and seamless execution reinforce it.

The experience extends beyond the transaction itself. Warranty handling, issue resolution, loyalty engagement, and future maintenance needs all influence whether customers return. In the car parts and accessories sector, loyalty is built through expertise, reliability, and dependable support whenever assistance is needed.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP: CAR PARTS

In this analysis, we examine a typical **5-stage** Customer Journey Map that includes **11 distinct steps** reflecting the evolution of the customer experience.

The Customer Journey refers to the various stages a customer goes through while interacting with a company or brand – from the initial contact to the eventual purchase, and beyond.

The Customer Journey Map is a visual diagram that shows the Customer Journey. The Customer Journey Map helps businesses understand and analyze their customers' experiences, identify pain points, uncover opportunities for improvement and ultimately enhance the overall customer experience.

Awareness

Becomes aware of a brand, product, or service

Consideration

Researches and evaluates potential solutions

Conversion

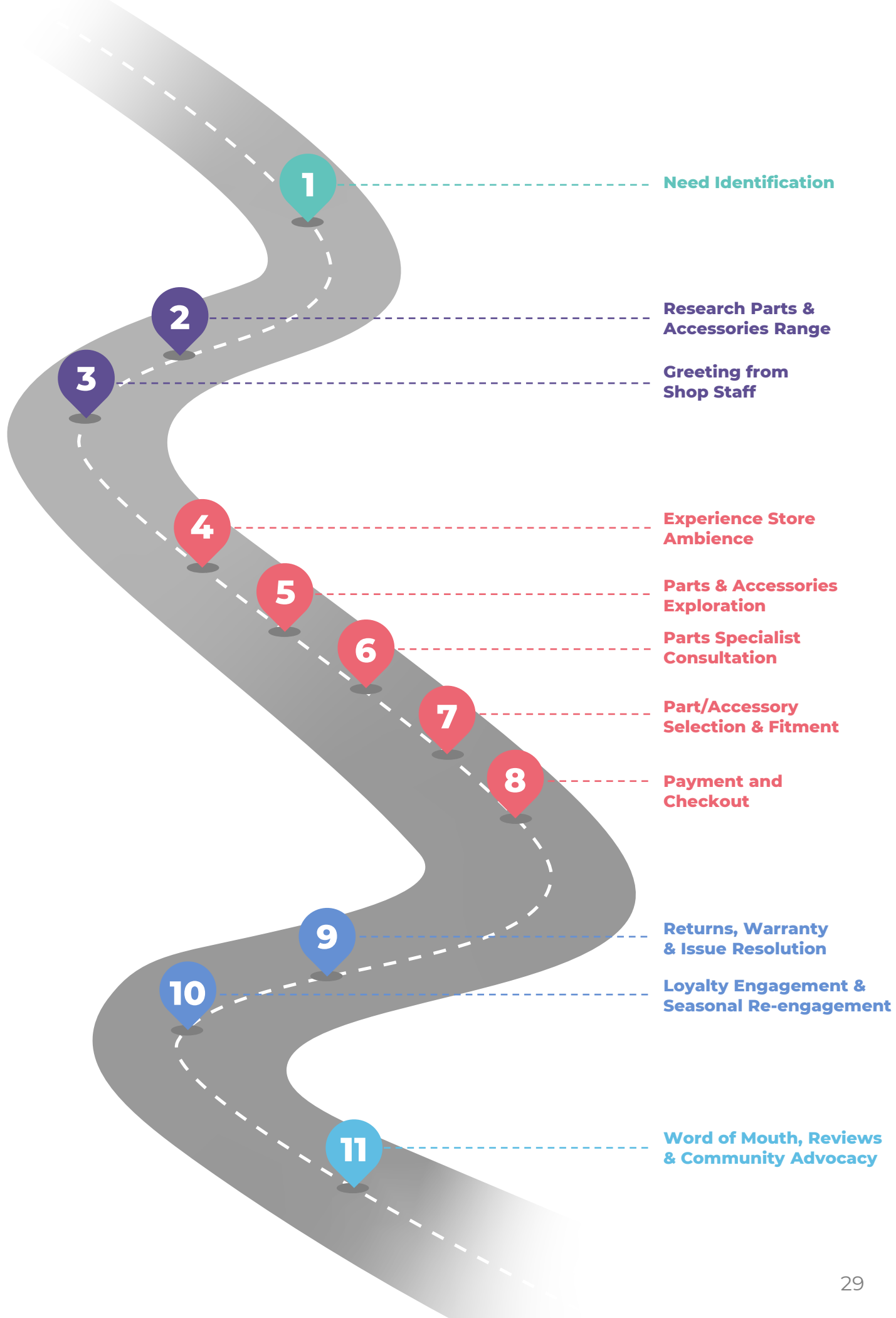
Chooses a product or service and makes a purchase

Retention

Delivery, use, additional purchases of product or service

Advocacy

Advocates, shares the positive experience with others



CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP: CAR PARTS













































The car parts and accessories journey progresses through five key stages that reflect how customers move from identifying a vehicle need to building long-term loyalty:

- **Awareness**
- **Consideration**
- **Conversion**
- **Retention**
- **Advocacy**

Each stage reflects a different phase of the car parts customer journey – from recognizing a vehicle need and researching options to selecting the right solution, completing the purchase, and returning for future needs.

Along the way, customers encounter touchpoints that influence confidence in both the retailer and the product: online information, specialist consultations, product availability, checkout, warranty support, and loyalty communications.

These moments give retailers opportunities to build trust through expertise, clear communication, product availability, and reliable execution. When each stage works together smoothly, customers gain confidence in both the solution they choose and the retailer behind it.

Awareness	<p>Need Identification</p> <p>Customer recognizes a need for a specific car part, accessory or maintenance product</p>	 Automotive forums	 Social media	 Word-of-mouth	<p>Identify a reliable shop that stocks the right parts and accessories for their vehicle</p>	 CSAT
Consideration	<p>Research Parts & Accessories Range</p> <p>Customer browses the shop's online catalog or visits in-store</p>	 Website product listings	 In-store displays	 Staff interaction	<p>Evaluate whether the shop carries the right parts for their vehicle</p>	 CES
	<p>Greeting from Shop Staff</p> <p>Customer makes first direct contact with shop staff</p>	 Store entrance	 Phone calls	 Live chat	<p>Feel acknowledged and welcomed</p>	 CES
	<p>Experience Store Ambience</p> <p>Customer engages with the shop environment</p>	 Store layout	 Cleanliness	 Product organization	<p>Feel confident the shop is credible, well-organized, and capable of meeting their needs</p>	 CSAT
Conversion	<p>Parts & Accessories Exploration</p> <p>Customer explores the available range of parts and accessories</p>	 Aisle displays	 Product demonstrations	 Comparison brochures	<p>Identify the specific part or accessory that best meets their needs and budget</p>	 CSAT
	<p>Parts Specialist Consultation</p> <p>Customer engages in a detailed exchange with a knowledgeable parts specialist</p>	 In-person consultation	 Phone	 Live chat	<p>Receive expert, vehicle-specific guidance that confirms their choice</p>	 CSAT
	<p>Part/Accessory Selection & Fitment</p> <p>Customer receives the selected part or accessory, and (if offered) has it test-fitted, or prepared for installation</p>	 Service counter	 Installation service area	 Packaging	<p>Experience the core value: take possession of a part that fits correctly and works as expected</p>	 CSAT
	<p>Payment and Checkout</p> <p>Customer reviews final pricing and completes the purchase</p>	 Checkout counter	 POS system	 Mobile payment	<p>Complete the transaction efficiently and confidently</p>	 CES
	<p>Returns, Warranty & Issue Resolution</p> <p>Customer contacts the shop because a part doesn't fit, arrived defective, failed within warranty, or needs installation help</p>	 Warranty desk	 Email	 In-store technical support	<p>Get the problem resolved fairly and quickly, without friction or blame</p>	 CSAT
Retention	<p>Loyalty Engagement & Seasonal Re-engagement</p> <p>Customer redeems loyalty points, responds to seasonal offers, and receives personalized reminders</p>	 Loyalty app or card	 Email newsletter	 In-store loyalty signage	<p>Get genuine value from the loyalty program and receive relevant offers</p>	 CSAT
	<p>Word of Mouth, Reviews & Community Advocacy</p> <p>Satisfied customer shares their positive experience with their network</p>	 Social platforms	 Referral program	 Community events	<p>Help fellow car owners make good decisions based on their experience</p>	 NPS
Advocacy						

CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGES

Awareness

The Awareness stage starts when customers identify a need related to vehicle maintenance, repair, replacement, or performance improvement, and start looking for a suitable solution.

Consideration

During Consideration, customers compare alternatives based on compatibility, availability, technical requirements, pricing, and confidence that the retailer can provide the right solution.

Conversion

The Conversion stage marks the shift from evaluation to purchase, as customers engage directly with the retailer to validate their choice and complete the transaction. Through store interaction, specialist advice, product exploration, compatibility confirmation, and checkout, customers assess whether expectations match reality. Technical expertise, product availability, and operational efficiency become essential in helping customers move forward with confidence and certainty.

Retention

The Retention stage reflects whether the retailer continues to deliver value after the purchase through dependable support, issue resolution, and ongoing engagement that encourages future business.

Advocacy

Advocacy emerges when customers develop enough trust in the retailer's expertise, product quality, and service reliability to actively recommend the business to others.

Initial interest is often triggered through social channels, recommendations, and maintenance-related discussions, where customers begin identifying potential solutions for their vehicle needs.

Customers explore product catalogs, compare alternatives, and evaluate whether a retailer can meet their requirements. Product information, inventory availability, and early interactions all contribute to building purchase confidence.

At the Conversion stage, customers engage directly with products, specialists, and service teams while confirming compatibility and suitability for their vehicle. They assess product quality, technical recommendations, pricing, and purchase convenience before committing to a decision. Accurate guidance, dependable stock availability, and efficient execution help reduce risk and uncertainty. When these elements come together effectively, customers gain confidence that they have selected the right solution.

The relationship continues through warranty support, issue handling, loyalty initiatives, and future vehicle needs. Consistent service and reliable assistance help strengthen confidence and increase the likelihood of repeat purchases.

Reviews and referrals influence how future customers perceive the retailer. Positive experiences with expertise, reliability, and support strengthen reputation and encourage recommendations.

SUMMARY

The car parts and accessories journey is built around a sequence of practical decisions where accuracy, reliability, and confidence play a central role. From recognizing a vehicle need and evaluating alternatives to receiving expert guidance, completing a purchase, and seeking support afterward, every stage contributes to how customers judge the overall experience. Early impressions are influenced by credibility, product availability, and information quality, while later interactions determine whether trust is reinforced.

Throughout the journey, customers assess both the solution and the support surrounding it. Technical expertise, compatibility assurance, fulfillment reliability, checkout efficiency, and post-purchase assistance all contribute to the perception of dependability. Moments of uncertainty can quickly disrupt confidence, while clear guidance and consistent execution strengthen it.

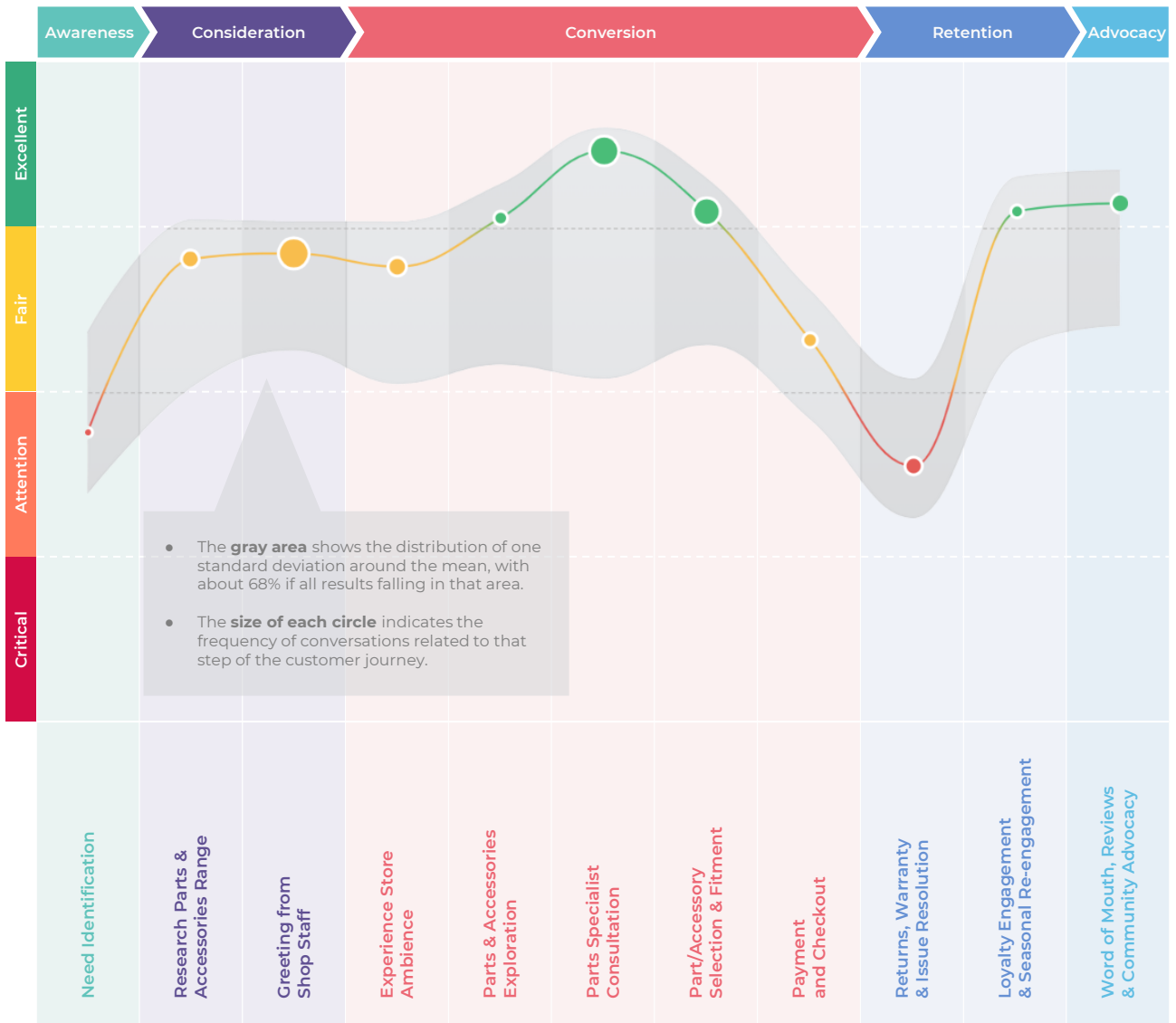
Lasting customer preference is created through dependable performance across the entire experience. Reliable products, knowledgeable assistance, and responsive support encourage customers to return, deepen trust, and recommend the retailer when future vehicle needs arise.

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

The car parts and accessories journey begins with moderate sentiment, indicating that first impressions are not yet fully reinforced by the experience. The **strongest results** emerge during the core decision-making stages, where **Product Exploration**, **Consultation with Specialist**, and **Part Selection & Fitment** generate the **highest sentiment**. These moments build trust through knowledgeable guidance, product clarity, and reassurance that the correct solution is being selected. At the same time, **noticeable declines** appear around **Payment & Checkout**, with the sharpest drop occurring during **Returns, Warranty & Issue Resolution**, where operational friction and support challenges begin to weaken the overall experience continuity.

The chart illustrates customer sentiment during the various phases of the Customer Journey. Areas shaded in the graph denote the standard deviation from the average, highlighting the degree of variability at each step and signifying the need for more precise measurement techniques.

The circles on the graph correspond to the frequency of specific elements noted at each phase, with larger circles indicating steps with more frequently cited attributes. This visualization aids in identifying which areas to prioritize for strategic focus.



SENTIMENT BANDS

Excellent	0.5 to 1.0
Fair	between 0.0 and 0.5
Attention	0.0 to -0.5 (excluded)
Critical	-0.5 to -1.0

CASE IN POINT

Aspect-Based Sentiment Analysis (ABSA) is particularly effective for analyzing online reviews and ratings by providing detailed, aspect-specific insights.

A customer review may read:



I was looking for brake pads for my car and found this store after comparing a few online options. They had a good selection, and the staff quickly helped me identify the correct part for my vehicle. The specialist was knowledgeable and explained the differences between the available options, which made the decision easy. Unfortunately, the checkout process was a pain, and during installation I discovered an issue with one part I purchased. The warranty process was really slow and they didn't communicate with me much, I had to constantly follow up. It left me frustrated after what had initially been a very positive experience.

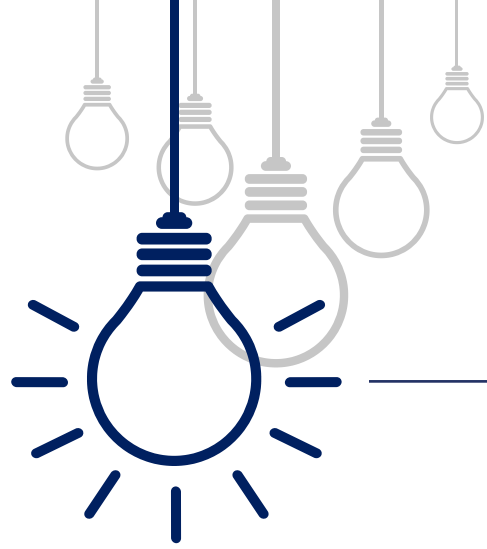
Aspect	Modifier	Sentiment
Product Availability & Range	Good Selection	Positive
Specialist Consultation	Knowledgeable, Helpful	Positive
Part Compatibility & Fitment	Correct Part Identified	Positive
Payment & Checkout	Longer Than Expected	Negative
Warranty Process	Slow, Limited Communication	Negative
Issue Resolution	Frustrated	Negative

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Aspect-Based Sentiment Analysis (ABSA) excels in extracting deeper insights from customer interactions by categorizing aspects of the product, service, or experience being reviewed. It then evaluates the modifying words or phrases in the review, assigning them a sentiment polarity – positive, neutral, or negative – to gauge customer opinions.

ABSA is not, however, without some limitations. Notably, complexity in language and expression: people who frequently employ idioms, sarcasm, or metaphors can pose difficulties for accurate interpretation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



The customer journey in the car parts and accessories sector is shaped by urgency, technical uncertainty, and the need for dependable guidance. Customers move through the journey seeking reassurance that the selected solution is correct, available, and supported by reliable execution.



Strengthen Early Confidence

The experience begins with moderate sentiment, showing that first impressions and initial engagement are not fully reinforcing customer trust. Stronger discovery experiences and clearer assistance can help reduce uncertainty earlier in the journey.



Reduce Checkout Friction

Sentiment declines during Payment & Checkout, where operational slowdowns, pricing concerns, and process inefficiencies begin to interrupt the experience. Faster execution and clearer communication are essential to maintaining momentum.



Lead Through Expert Guidance

The highest sentiment appears during Product Exploration, Consultation, and Part Selection & Fitment. Customers respond most positively to knowledgeable support, clear recommendations, and technical reassurance throughout decision-making.



Resolve Issues Faster

The sharpest drop appears during Returns, Warranty & Issue Resolution, where unresolved problems and weak follow-up damage trust most strongly. Faster recovery practices and smoother issue handling are critical to preserving customer confidence.

By improving guidance, reducing friction, and strengthening post-purchase support, automotive retailers can create journeys that feel more reliable, consistent, and reassuring from the first interaction, resulting in long-term loyalty.

MEET THE EXPERT



Meet the experts featured in our podcast series. Discover their backgrounds, unique perspectives, and invaluable contributions to the field of Customer Experience.

JULIE ANTHONY

Julie Anthony is the Founder & CEO of Shoppers Confidential, an intelligence company that helps brands understand what customers are actually experiencing across their locations.

With more than 20 years in customer experience and operational insight, Julie's work is grounded in a clear belief: brands are built, or weakened, through thousands of everyday frontline moments. She often describes mystery shopping as a "pre-online review warning system," giving organizations the opportunity to identify issues before they become public reputation risks.

Julie combines customer insight, operational discipline, and a strong focus on consistency to help brands strengthen trust, protect reputation, and improve business performance. For her, customer experience is not a soft skill. It is a revenue strategy.

Beyond her work in CX, Julie brings the same curiosity and energy to life. She is an avid traveler with only one continent left to visit (Antarctica) and a long list of adventurous experiences behind her, including parasailing, paragliding, skydiving, and even taking off and landing a plane. She describes herself as a "controlled danger junkie": always open to the next challenge, preferably with a waiver and a safety briefing.



THE CONSISTENCY ADVANTAGE: TURNING CUSTOMERS INTO FANS



In the car parts and accessories industry, where purchases depend on trust and necessity, customer experience excellence is built through consistent execution rather than isolated moments. For Julie Anthony, the true measure of success is a brand's ability to turn everyday transactions into lasting loyalty, with consistency ultimately driving both customer advocacy and business performance.

“Customer experience excellence is making your customers fans of your brand, and that all starts with consistency.”

– **Julie Anthony**

For Julie Anthony, the goal of customer experience is not simply satisfaction, but advocacy. As she puts it, *“Customer experience excellence is making your customers fans of your brand, and that all starts with consistency.”* That single statement reframes the purpose of a CX program. The objective is not to create one exceptional visit, but to deliver an experience that customers can trust every time. In an industry where buyers often feel uncertain about technical decisions, consistency becomes the foundation of confidence and loyalty.

The challenge, however, is that consistency rarely happens by accident, particularly across networks of independently operated locations. Julie notes that *“Head offices take a lot of time and put a lot of energy into creating a tried, tested and true process.”* Designing the right processes requires significant investment, but that investment delivers value only when those standards are consistently executed. The gap between the intended experience and the delivered experience is where customer loyalty is either strengthened or lost, and without objective measurement, that gap often remains invisible to the business.

Measurement is what turns consistency from an aspiration into a manageable business discipline. Julie explains how mystery shopping complements online feedback: *“We’ll complement the online review with mystery shopping, so you can actually dive into it, identify trends and inconsistencies, and know what needs to be actioned and what to duplicate.”* Reviews may indicate that a problem exists, but structured measurement reveals where it occurs, how frequently it happens, and which behaviors require attention. This gives leaders the confidence to reinforce successful practices while addressing the areas where standards begin to slip.

Ultimately, the value of consistency extends throughout the organization. Julie emphasizes the role measurement plays in creating leadership visibility: *“It gives the head office the visibility to understand how to coach their management.”* Consistency becomes a connected system: leadership defines the standard, measurement reveals the reality, managers coach against the gaps, and frontline teams deliver the experience that transforms a one-time customer into a loyal advocate of the brand.



LEAD BY COACHING: BUILDING A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Insight is only as valuable as the action it inspires. Brands can collect endless customer feedback data, yet nothing changes until findings become better experiences. Julie observes that organizations that improve consistently treat every result as an opportunity to learn and improve, helping teams get better with each cycle. Continuous improvement begins when measurement becomes team coaching and development.

“You should be coaching them, not policing them.”

– **Julie Anthony**

What a leader does with a result matters more than the result itself. Julie Anthony's guiding principle is simple: *“You should be coaching them, not policing them.”* A score handled this way is never the end of the measurement cycle but the beginning of a conversation about how performance can improve. The distinction is critical. A team that is measured learns where it stands. A team that is coached learns how to get better, and only the latter creates progress.

Acting on insight is ultimately a human process rather than a reporting exercise. Data identifies where improvement is possible, but people close the gap, and they do so only when they stay engaged with the experience of their customers. Julie is direct about the cost of losing that engagement: *“Once people feel policed, they stop listening, they stop learning, and you go nowhere.”* Continuous improvement depends on continuous learning, and learning requires willingness. Programs that keep teams curious and motivated continue to evolve. Those that do not eventually stall, regardless of the quality of their data.





The way results are communicated often determines whether action follows. Julie's discipline is to deliver even difficult findings in a way that encourages improvement: *"Whatever you need to share with your team, share it in a positive way. A negative review or a difficult result is not the end of the world; it is something to learn from."* When framed as a lesson, a disappointing result becomes something a team can address. Expectations remain high, and problems are not ignored, but the conversation shifts from judgment to improvement. That shift is what keeps people engaged and willing to act.

Improvement also accelerates when teams learn from success, not only from what falls short. Julie builds recognition into the process itself: *"You move on, you learn – you move forward, and of course, celebrate successes."* Celebrating a win is another form of coaching.

It helps teams understand which behaviors produced positive outcomes so they can repeat them intentionally rather than by chance. Each success becomes a proven practice, and a collection of proven practices gradually raises the standard of performance.

Sustained over time, this approach changes how the measurement is perceived. As teams act on their results and see stronger business outcomes alongside better customer experiences, data stops feeling like head office's report card and becomes a practical tool for improvement. Julie sees this clearly from the operator's perspective: *"For the franchise, it's a really good visibility tool."*

When teams take ownership of their insights, improvement continues long after any individual review, score, or reporting cycle has ended.



START WITH THE WHY: BUILDING FOCUSED CX PROGRAMS THAT DELIVER VALUE

Before measuring anything, organizations must answer a more important question: why does this metric matter? Julie Anthony emphasizes that a CX program creates value only when every question serves a clear purpose and connects to a business outcome. Understanding why each question exists – and what improvement should achieve – turns measurement into a strategic growth tool rather than a data collection exercise.

"If a question doesn't correlate to the return on investment, why is it even in the program?"

– **Julie Anthony**



Most customer experience surveys contain questions that nobody can fully justify. They were added years ago, copied from a template, or included simply because they seemed useful at the time. Julie challenges each measurement point with a single test: *"If a question doesn't correlate to the return on investment, why is it even in the program?"* A question earns its place only when the insight it produces helps move the business toward outcomes it truly values – revenue growth, stronger loyalty, improved reputation, or increased retention. Every question becomes a lever influencing the results that matter most.

Julie points to a case study where the connection between a single behavior and revenue was unmistakable: *"If the question is do they try to upsell or add a complimentary item, and the answer is no, you're potentially losing the additional revenue."* A greeting, an upsell, or a closing question can each be linked to their impact on the top or bottom line. Once that connection becomes visible, a question is no longer a matter of preference; it becomes a proven driver of business performance, and improving it becomes a direct path to growth.

Knowing which questions truly drive results allows organizations to cut out the noise. As Julie explains, *“Remove the questions that don’t add to the correlations.”* Rather than relying on assumptions, the data reveals which measures influence outcomes and which simply create complexity. What remains is a leaner, more effective program that is easier to act on, easier to train against, and more closely aligned with the outcomes the business wants to achieve.

What this discipline ultimately produces is focus, and focus is what turns insight into value. *“One to three things – never do more than three things.”* Julie highlighted. A handful of high-impact priorities, each with a clear line to business results, gives teams something they can genuinely master. Concentrate attention on

the few metrics that drive revenue, retention, and reputation, and the whole operation lifts. That is the real payoff of starting with the why - a program that not just collects data, but steadily delivers growth, loyalty, and a more valuable experience for every customer.

The real value of customer experience measurement becomes clear when behaviors are translated into business outcomes. *“Because you missed those points, you actually missed this much top line and that much bottom line.”* This is the language executives understand and act upon. Connecting behaviors to business outcomes transforms measurement from an operational expense into a strategic investment.



A benchmark study by Kyla Broughton, Shoppers Confidential



THE TRANSACTIONAL PROXY

How Ground-Floor Visibility Transforms Franchise Compliance Into Long-Term Customer Loyalty

1. INTRODUCTION: THE FRANCHISOR'S CORPORATE BLIND SPOT

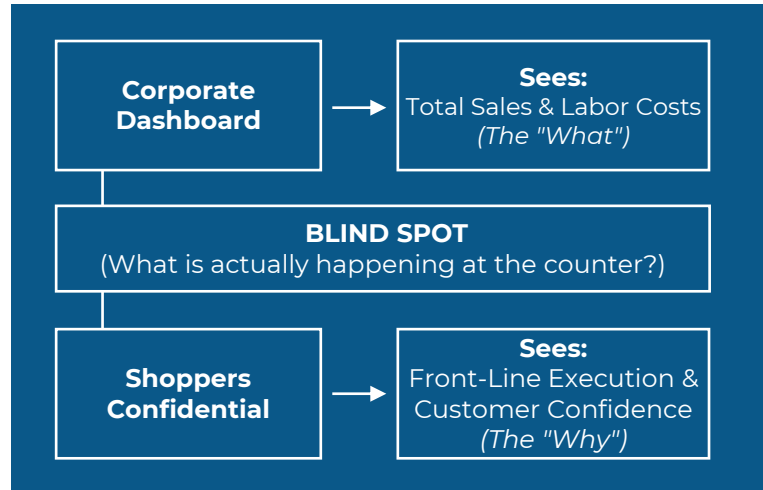
Every multi-unit franchisor shares a common, critical mission: protecting national brand consistency across a distributed network of independently owned locations. When a consumer walks into a franchise branch, they expect a seamless experience - the same product quality, the same environment, and the same customer service, regardless of geography.

Maintaining this standard is incredibly difficult in today's economy. Small-business operators face intense financial pressures, including climbing food costs and rising labor lines. According to tracking data from Restaurants Canada, 81% of hospitality operators report lower profit margins today than in previous benchmark years.

To protect their investments, franchisors naturally look to digital dashboards. They track daily sales, inventory turnover, and labor percentages.

However, numbers on a financial statement hide a significant **operational blind spot**.

Financial data can show you what a store's sales numbers are, but it can never explain why those numbers are happening. A spreadsheet cannot see the front-line behaviors, unhelpful employee attitudes, or minor operational drops that slowly drive customers away.



To give franchisors total clarity, **Shoppers Confidential** analyzed **5,384 independent store evaluations** conducted across Canada. This study looks across five distinct, anonymized franchise concepts to show how corporate leaders can look past the balance sheet to build a stable, resilient brand culture.



2. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BRIDGE: CONNECTING BINARY RULES TO CUSTOMER EMOTION

A cornerstone of the **Shoppers Confidential** methodology is our reliance on strict, binary "yes or no" questions rather than vague customer opinions. However, our data reveals that these simple operational checkboxes directly influence customer emotions and brand trust.

In the customer journey, the first contact point acts as a **"Decision Bridge."** When a team member executes a fundamental milestone, such as greeting a guest within 15 seconds, it creates an immediate emotional shift:

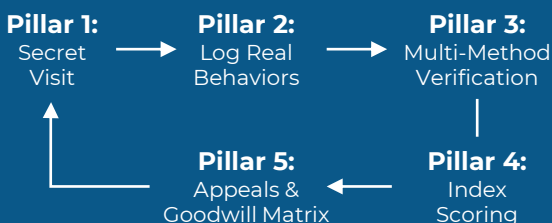
- **Replacing Consumer Anxiety with Comfort:** In a fast-casual environment, a fast, smiling greeting eliminates a customer's hidden hesitation about wait times, service speed, and order accuracy.
- **Building Brand Trust:** When a front-line team member speaks confidently about the menu, explains spice levels, or proactively points out a valid discount coupon, the customer feels emotionally secure. They trust that they are receiving maximum value and an accurate order.
- **Creating "Moments Worth Sharing":** Operational precision signals to the customer that the franchise is well-managed. This turns a routine transaction into an unforgettable experience, building the consumer confidence required to generate lifelong loyalty.

3. THE FOUR-PILLAR APPROACH: CREATING A WINDOW INTO STORE REALITIES

To give franchisors total clarity, Shoppers Confidential uses a structured, four-pillar approach to operational excellence.

This framework bypasses corporate blind spots and provides a transparent look at daily store realities through an organized, continuous loop:

- **Pillar 1: Anonymous On-Location Interceptions.** Certified field evaluators from Shoppers Confidential visit the franchise location acting as ordinary guests. They monitor store realities during peak rushes and slow shifts to observe how the business runs when corporate isn't in the room.
- **Pillar 2: Binary Milestone Logging.** Evaluators log clear, verifiable behaviors. They avoid subjective opinions and focus on concrete facts: Was the guest acknowledged within 15 seconds? Did the team member use standard branding? Was the facility clean?
- **Pillar 3: Verification & The Multi-Methodology Approach.** To ensure absolute accuracy, our system relies on a multi-methodology approach. We combine on-site human observations with hard transactional data by cross-referencing field reports with uploaded receipts, timestamps, and real-time speed of service measurements. This multi-methodology approach guarantees that the final insights are completely bulletproof and validated from multiple angles.
- **Pillar 4: Operational Indexing.** The system processes these multi-method indicators into a final 100-point composite Operational Compliance Score, giving corporate leaders an instant, reliable look at store health.



4. IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGIES FOR DISTRIBUTED BRAND MANAGEMENT

Successfully scaling an operational tracking program across independent small-business owners requires an intentional, multi-tiered deployment methodology:

- **Phase I: Asset and Environment Audit**
We establish an operational baseline by verifying that the facility's physical environment is functioning correctly. This includes evaluating menu board functionality, lighting, display stock levels, and overall property cleanliness.
- **Phase II: Isolating the "Front-Line Engagement Prompt"**
We identify a single, highly measurable team action at the point of sale to serve as a proxy for total shift discipline. Depending on the brand, this might be a natural menu upgrade suggestion or the proactive presentation of a promotional coupon structure.
- **Phase III: Continuous Randomized Tracking**
Evaluations are scattered randomly across morning, afternoon, and late-night shifts. This prevents store teams from temporarily adjusting their behaviors for expected corporate inspections.
- **Phase IV: Actionable Coaching Dashboards**
The field insights are formatted into easy-to-read regional portals, allowing franchisors to spot network-wide operational patterns and deploy corporate support resources where they are needed most.

5. CULTIVATING STAKEHOLDER GOODWILL: TURNING COMPLIANCE INTO COLLABORATION

The primary bottleneck in any franchise-wide operational rollout is operator pushback. Independent franchise owners frequently reject corporate tracking programs, viewing them as aggressive "gotcha" tools designed to enforce strict corporate control or justify penalties.

To completely remove this friction and build genuine alignment, **Shoppers Confidential** introduced the **Empowered Store Appeals and Corrective Action Program**.

When an evaluation flags an operational issue, such as an unstocked beverage display, a dirty counter space, or an incorrect uniform standard, the franchisee is not simply handed an unchangeable point deduction. The platform opens a 24-hour collaborative dialogue channel. This allows the local operator to provide real-time operational context, document extenuating local circumstances, or upload a verified **Corrective Action Record** showing that the issue was permanently corrected within 24 hours.



6. RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI): UNLOCKING THE CUSTOMER LIFETIME VALUE

Analysis of the **Shoppers Confidential** master database provides definitive proof: a franchise location's attention to front-line customer engagement directly predicts its overall operational compliance and customer retention scores.

The Global Quality Lift Matrix

We compared store shifts where front-line employees remained passive (did not offer an upsell or mention standard promotions) against shifts where staff actively executed core customer engagement milestones:

Front-Line Staff Behavior	Total Audited Shifts	Average Total Store Score
Passive Staff (No Engagement Prompt)	1,352 Shifts	85.07%
Engaged Staff (Active Engagement Prompt)	4,032 Shifts	94.68%
The Quality Lift Delta		+9.61% Systemic Improvement

Protecting the Lifetime Value: The Intent-to-Return Metric

Franchisors often wonder if mystery shopping drives long-term commercial value or simply protects the current transaction size. The data provides a clear answer.

In our Concept Eta (Asian Fast-Casual Noodle Network) tracking data, customer **Intent-to-Return metrics grew by a direct 10%** when staff transitioned from passive order-taking to active customer engagement (moving from a baseline average of 4.14 up to an elite 4.55 on the store's customer retention index).

When costs are high, a 10% lift in return intent dramatically extends the lifetime value of the customer. It costs significantly less to retain an existing guest than to acquire a new one.

By ensuring consistent front-line engagement, **Shoppers Confidential** helps franchise networks secure recurring revenue lines and expand local market share without relying on expensive outward marketing campaigns.

7. ACTIONABLE INSIGHT PROFILES FROM THE FIELD

Profile 1: The Multi-Tiered "Execution Curve"

The dataset from our fast-casual noodle network (Concept Eta) shows that front-line engagement isn't a standalone metric; it represents a linear model of overall store discipline.

- **Tier 1: Passive Cashiers.** Shifts where the register staff remained entirely passive resulted in a baseline operational score of **80.41%**.
- **Tier 2: Basic Engagement.** Shifts where employees made a basic beverage add-on prompt saw the store compliance score climb to **88.44%**.
- **Tier 3: Elite Engagement.** Shifts where employees actively recommended premium sides (like spring rolls or onion cakes) surged to an overall compliance score of **91.81%**.

The Takeaway for Franchisors: Front-line engagement is a direct reflection of store management. As teams are coached to move from basic transaction processing to active menu recommendations, their overall operational discipline scales upward across the entire facility.

Profile 2: The Downstream Cost of Localized Service Drift (Concept Gamma)

An analysis of a multi-unit territory within our pizza delivery network (Concept Gamma) highlights the operational risks of the corporate blind spot.

Across randomized evaluations where operators proactively suggested valid coupons and menu discounts, the stores achieved an elite average compliance rating of **93.94%**, with a median score hitting a perfect **100%**. Conversely, across shifts where employees omitted these value-driven steps, the total score collapsed to **77.10%**.

Our field insights proved that this regression was never confined to a single missed interaction. On shifts where employees forgot to engage guests with promotional structures, they also consistently failed to maintain lobby cleanliness, suffered from higher rates of order inaccuracy, and experienced severe drops in customer intent-to-return metrics. Proactive employee engagement at the counter was the definitive boundary line between operational excellence and location-wide neglect.

8. STRATEGIC CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF DISTRIBUTED NETWORK CONTROL

The data gathered from nearly 5,400 store evaluations points to a simple truth for modern franchisors: operational compliance, brand quality preservation, and unit-level revenue growth are not competing priorities; they are reflections of the exact same behavior.

Franchise organizations that partner with **Shoppers Confidential** to implement interactive, appeal-supported tracking frameworks move past old-school enforcement models. They build deep institutional trust with their independent operators, cultivate bottom-up operational accountability, and systematically protect unit-level gross margins in a challenging economic environment.

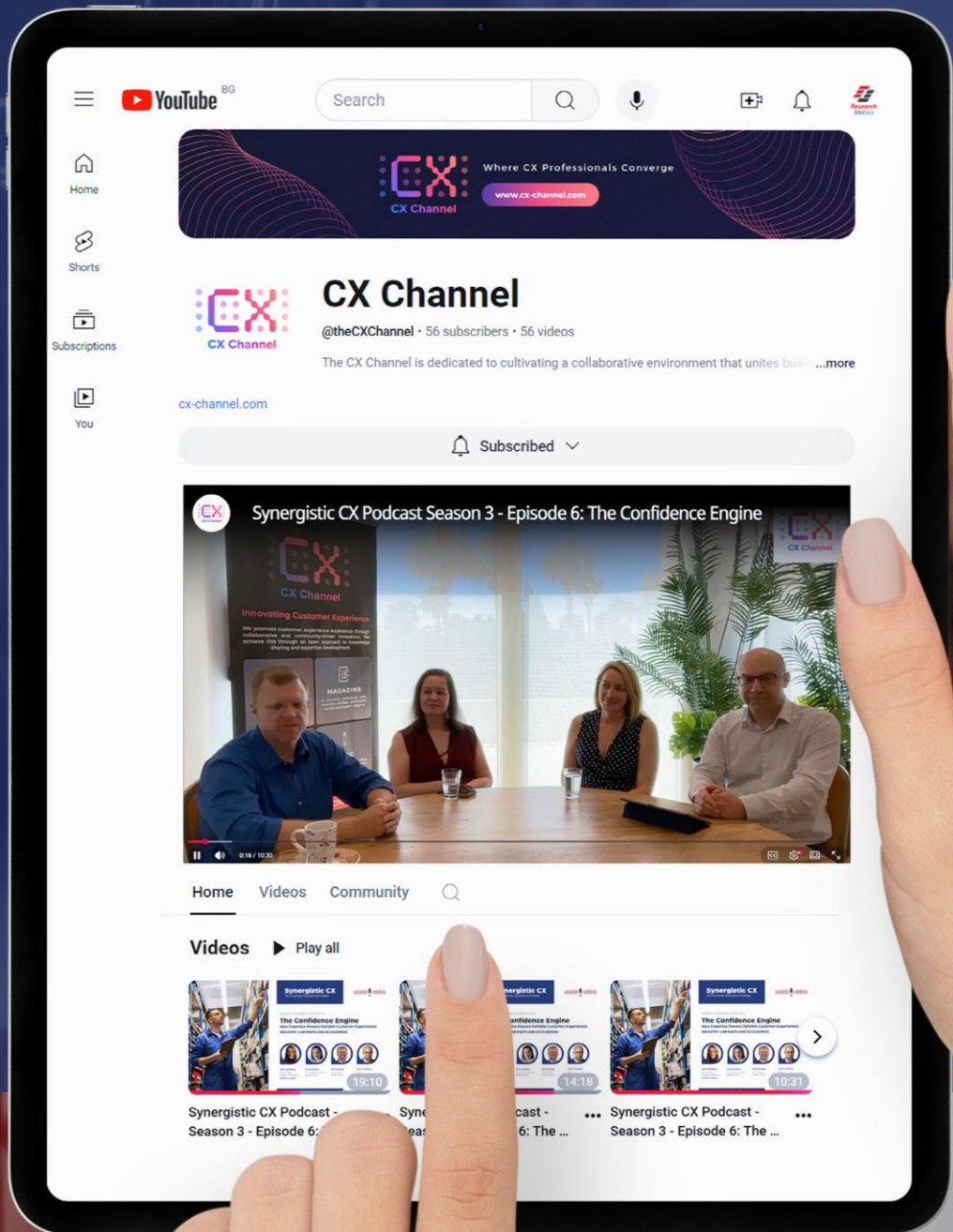
A Special Operations Benchmark Study by Kyla Broughton, Shoppers Confidential

Based on 5,300+ Comprehensive Network Evaluations (June 2025-June 2026)



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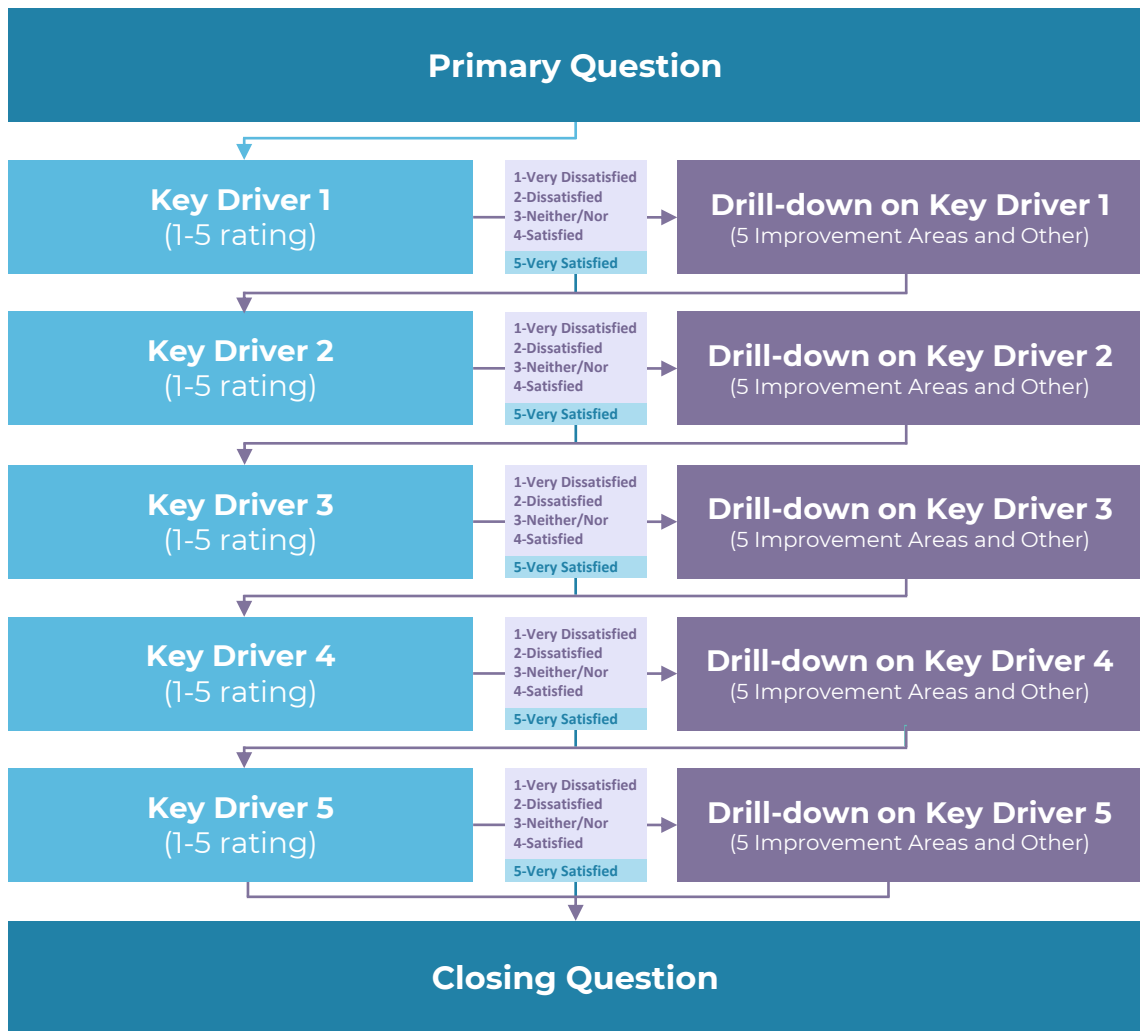
Creating a Starter VoC Survey

Customer feedback in the car parts and accessories sector is closely tied to moments that influence trust, certainty, and ease. A well-structured VoC survey helps identify where expectations begin to break down, which interactions create frustration, and where operational or service-related friction becomes most visible. By collecting feedback across key touchpoints, businesses can better understand the factors shaping the overall customer experience.

This section introduces how to create a practical starter VoC survey for car parts and accessories stores by developing concise questions around the areas that matter most to customers and generate the strongest critical sentiment. Combined with a simple satisfaction scale, the survey helps identify improvement opportunities across the journey and the interactions that most strongly influence customer decisions.

CREATING A STARTER VOC SURVEY

A starter VoC survey can be created by harnessing insights from customer sentiments, thoughts, and feelings expressed in their online reviews and **focusing on the topics customers discuss most frequently.**



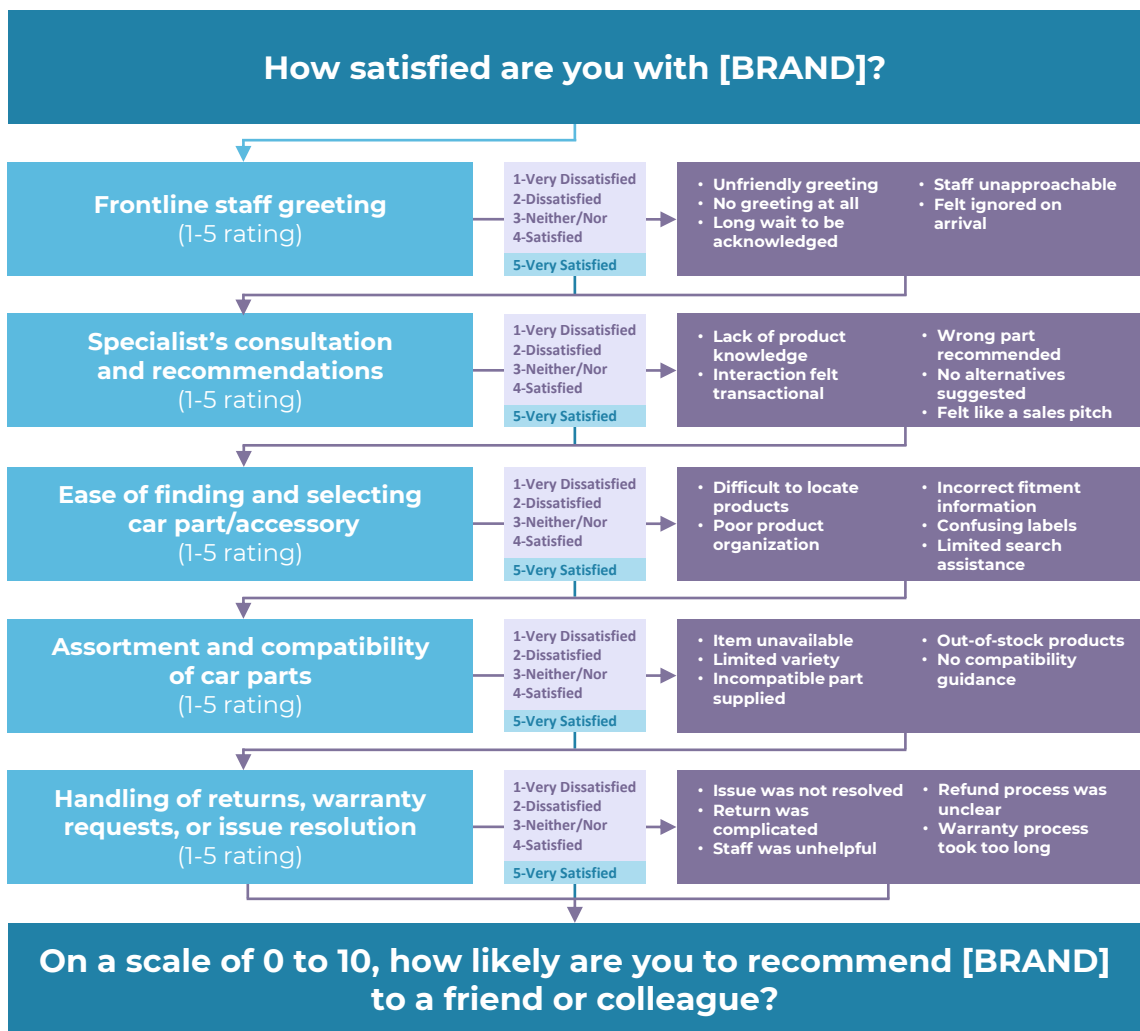
Primary Question: The starting point of the survey, setting the general direction and context. It gathers a quick overall snapshot on the customer's opinion of the brand, company, or product.

Closing Question: The final question posed to the respondent. This can capture valuable insights that might not otherwise fit the general format/structure of the survey.

KEY DRIVER AND DRILL-DOWN QUESTIONS

Primary Question: Rate “How satisfied are you with [BRAND]” on a scale from 1 ('Very Dissatisfied') to 5 ('Very Satisfied')

Closing Question: Evaluate customer retention and advocacy potential, gaining insights into the customer experience.

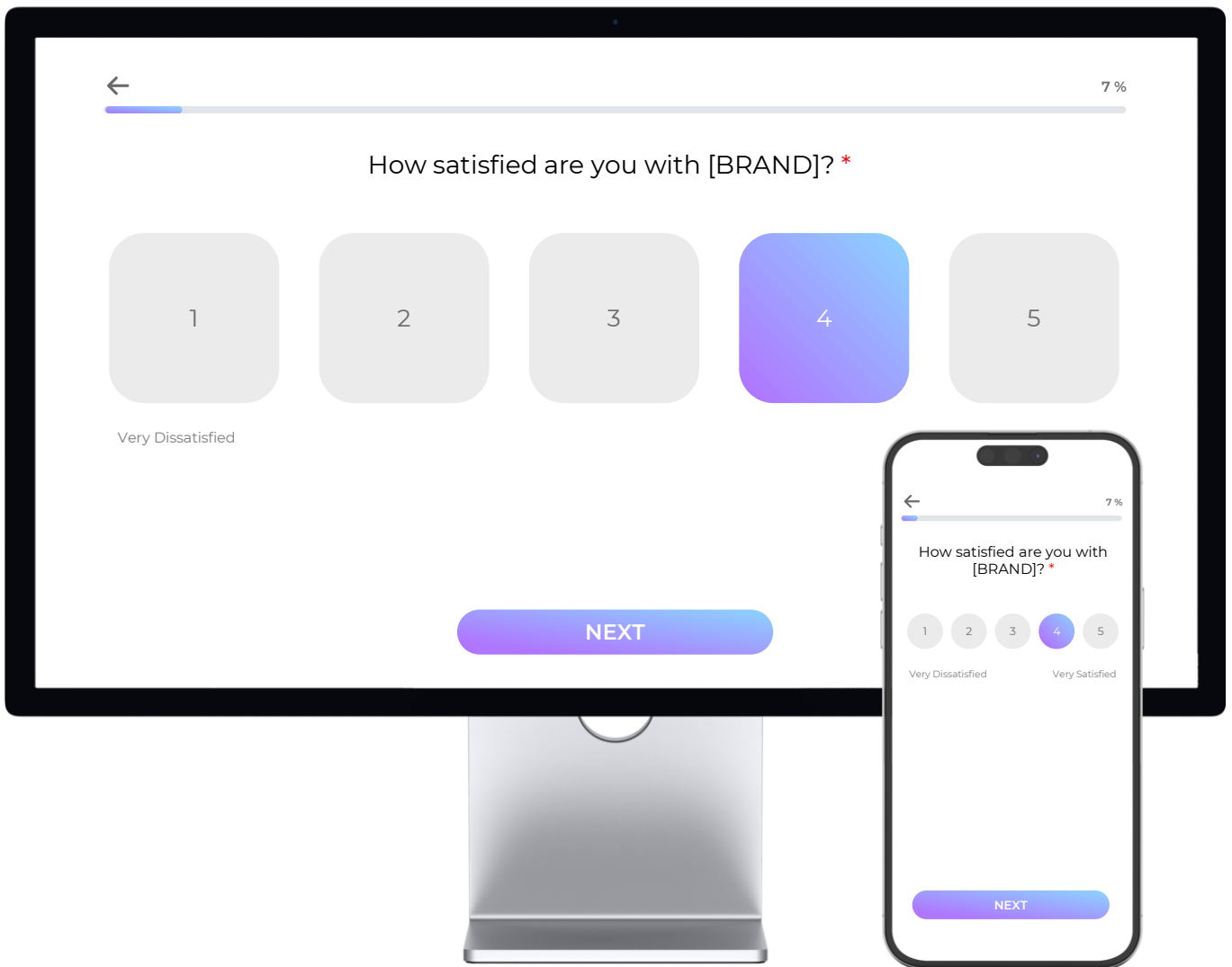


Key Driver Question: Used to assess user satisfaction on the top 5 critical industry topics using a 1-5 scale.

Drill-Down Questions: Respondents not fully satisfied identify their top dissatisfaction factors.

A STARTER VOC SURVEY FOR CAR PARTS AND ACCESSORIES

Creating a starter Voice of the Customer (VoC) survey based on insights from online customer reviews ensures that the survey is relevant and focused on actual customer experiences. This approach leads to higher engagement and response rates, as it addresses the issues and trends that matter most to customers. Such a survey provides valuable data for prioritizing business strategies and improving customer satisfaction.



← 15 %

How satisfied were you with the FRONTLINE STAFF GREETING?*

1 2 3 4 5

Very Dissatisfied Very Satisfied

NEXT

← 23 %

What part of the "FRONTLINE STAFF GREETING" fell short?*

Unfriendly greeting

No greeting at all

Long wait to be acknowledged

Staff unapproachable

Felt ignored on arrival

Other

NEXT

← 46 %

How satisfied were you with the SPECIALIST'S CONSULTATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS?*

1 2 3 4 5

Very Dissatisfied Very Satisfied

NEXT

← 53 %

What part of "SPECIALIST'S CONSULTATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS" fell short?*

Lack of product knowledge

Interaction felt transactional

Wrong part recommended

No alternatives suggested

Felt like a sales pitch

Other

NEXT

← 30 %

How satisfied were you with the EASE OF FINDING AND SELECTING CAR PART/ACCESSORY?*

1 2 3 4 5

Very Dissatisfied Very Satisfied

NEXT

← 38 %

What part of "EASE OF FINDING AND SELECTING CAR PART/ACCESSORY" fell short?*

Difficult to locate products

Poor product organization

Incorrect fitment information

Confusing labels

Limited search assistance

Other

NEXT

← 76 %

How satisfied were you with the ASSORTMENT AND COMPATIBILITY OF CAR PARTS?*

1 2 3 4 5

Very Dissatisfied Very Satisfied

NEXT

← 84 %

What part of the "ASSORTMENT AND COMPATIBILITY OF CAR PARTS" fell short?*

Item unavailable

Limited variety

Incompatible part supplied

Out-of-stock products

No compatibility guidance

Other

NEXT

← 76 %

How satisfied were you with the HANDLING OF RETURNS, WARRANTY REQUESTS, OR ISSUE RESOLUTION?*

1 2 3 4 5

Very Dissatisfied Very Satisfied

NEXT

← 84 %

What part of the "HANDLING OF RETURNS, WARRANTY REQUESTS, OR ISSUE RESOLUTION" fell short?*

Issue was not resolved

Return was complicated

Staff was unhelpful

Refund process was unclear

Warranty process took too long

Other

NEXT

← 92 %

On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend [BRAND] to a friend or colleague?*

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not likely at all Extremely likely

NEXT

VoC SURVEY NEXT STEPS

In this 'starter' VoC survey, we selected the top five key driver questions based on what customers talk about and frequently mention in negative aspects in their online reviews. The drill-down questions were chosen following the same principle.

The VoC Survey Process

	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Retention	Advocacy
People	0.32%	21.06%	13.75%	4.98%	2.74%
Process	0.35%	5.19%	9.88%	10.81%	1.84%
Product	1.32%	2.42%	6.36%	3.49%	0.59%
Price	0.04%	2.30%	4.59%	0.82%	0.23%
Place	0.54%	0.41%	4.00%	0.25%	0.12%
Promotion	0.08%	0.08%	0.17%	0.88%	0.42%
Physical Evidence	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Step 1: Data Analysis

We begin by analyzing online reviews and ratings to create a customer response score matrix. The Marketing Mix-Funnel matrix highlights how different Marketing Mix Elements perform across various Customer Journey Stages.

Step 2: Identify Critical Areas

From the Marketing-Mix Funnel, we identify the top five areas showing the most critical feedback, based on their online reviews and ratings scores.

Step 3: Key Drivers

These areas are selected for deeper examination in the VoC survey. They are converted to questions, following the pattern "How satisfied were you with...", used to assess user satisfaction using a 1-5 scale.

Step 4: Key Driver Details

For each key driver, additional questions are designed and visualized if the driver is scored with a 4 or lower. This direct questioning helps to drill down into the exact reasons behind customer negative experiences.

Step 5: Data Collection

The VoC survey is distributed and data is collected.

Step 6: Actionable Insights

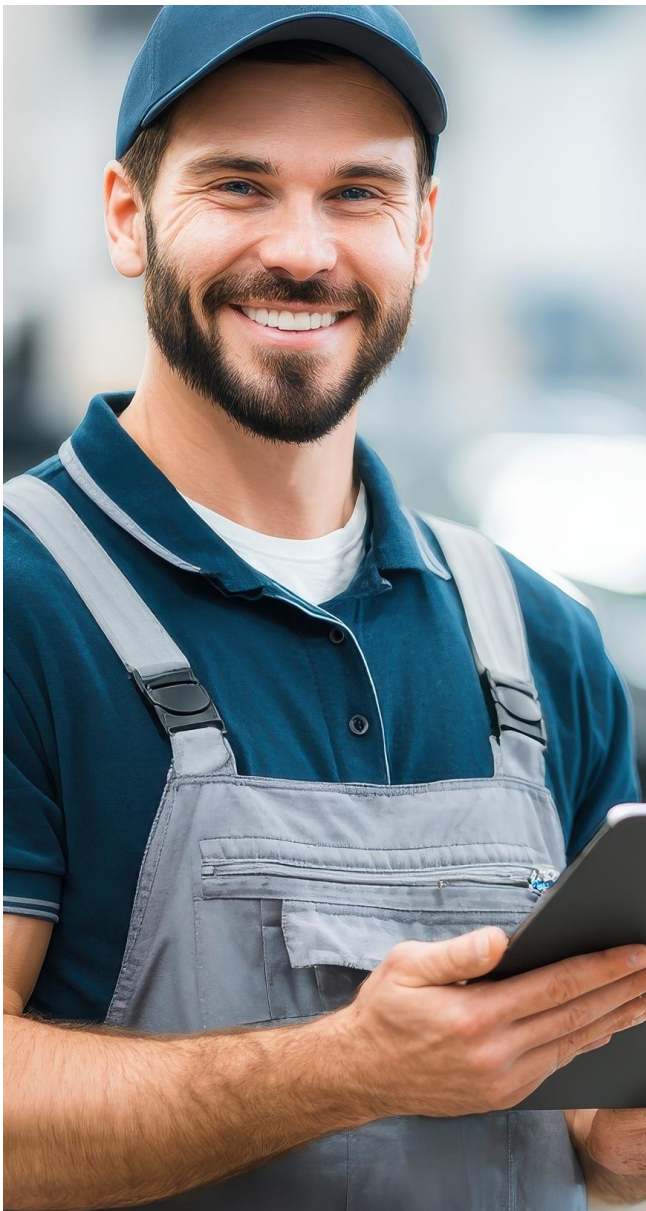
The collected data reveals specific aspects that negatively affect the overall customer perception of the brand. With this detailed insight, the company can directly target improvements in the critical areas to enhance the customer experience and improve brand reputation.

NOTE: It is up to the CX professional to selectively fine-tune and adjust the key drivers and appropriate drill-down questions, considering the specific needs and objectives of the business.

FRONTLINE STAFF GREETING

First impressions in a car parts store shape whether customers feel confident they'll get the right help. A prompt, attentive greeting signals expertise and readiness. When staff fail to acknowledge customers on arrival, it creates uncertainty and sets a negative tone for the rest of the visit.

The top 5 key driver details, followed by an additional 10, offer detailed insight into areas where the **FRONTLINE STAFF GREETING** key driver may fall short.



Top 5 Key Driver Details

- Unfriendly greeting
- No greeting at all
- Long wait to be acknowledged
- Staff unapproachable
- Felt ignored on arrival

Additional Key Driver Details

- Staff too busy to greet
- No eye contact
- Abrupt tone
- Greeted only after asking
- Too many customers, no help
- Distracted staff
- No offer to assist
- Inconsistent attention
- Staff socializing instead
- Unwelcoming atmosphere

SPECIALIST'S CONSULTATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Choosing the right part often demands expert guidance. Customers rely on specialists to ask the right questions, understand their vehicle, and offer honest, tailored advice. Poor consultation leads to wrong purchases, wasted trips, and eroded trust in the retailer's technical credibility.

The top 5 key driver details, followed by an additional 10, offer detailed insight into areas where the **SPECIALIST'S CONSULTATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS** key driver may fall short.

Top 5 Key Driver Details

- Lack of product knowledge
- Interaction felt transactional
- Wrong part recommended
- No alternatives suggested
- Felt like a sales pitch

Additional Key Driver Details

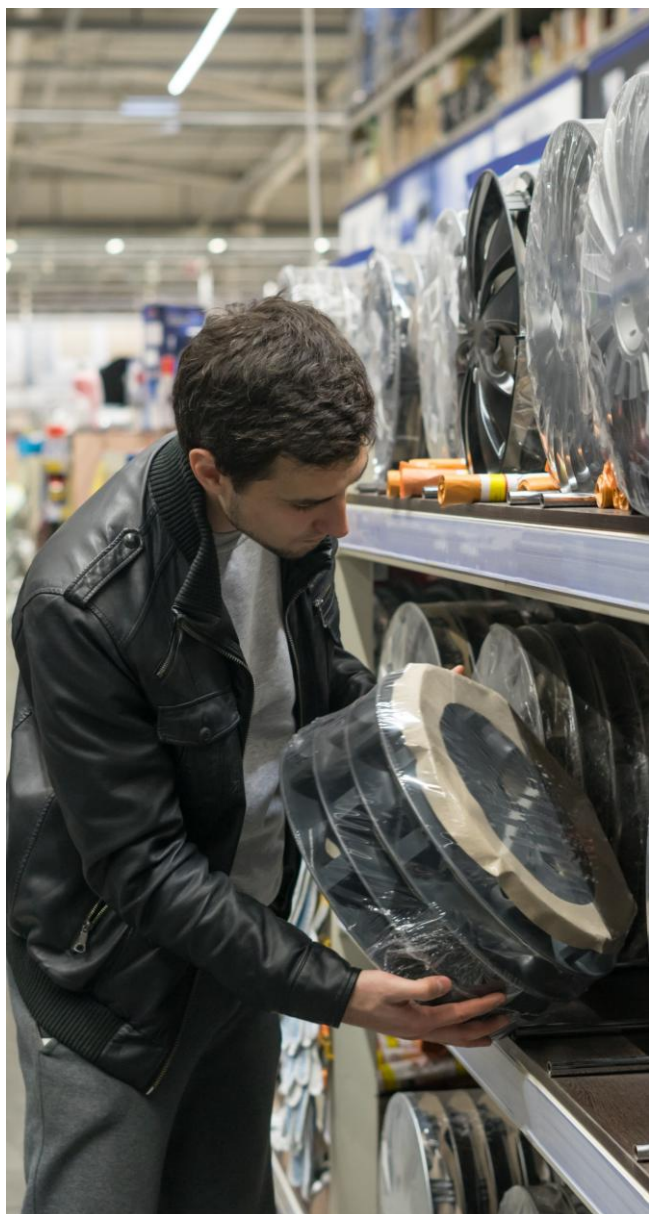
- Compatibility not checked
- Generic advice given
- No active listening
- Budget ignored
- Couldn't explain differences
- Unsure and didn't escalate
- Installation advice missing
- No follow-up questions asked
- Inquiry passed without resolution
- Rude or impatient staff



EASE OF FINDING AND SELECTING CAR PART/ACCESSORY

Locating the correct part quickly is critical, especially for customers with limited mechanical knowledge. Poor layout, weak signage, or unreliable stock tools turn a simple task into a frustrating search. When navigation fails, customers lose time and confidence – and often leave empty-handed.

The top 5 key driver details, followed by an additional 10, offer detailed insight into areas where the **EASE OF FINDING AND SELECTING CAR PART/ACCESSORY** key driver may fall short.



Top 5 Key Driver Details

- Difficult to locate products
- Poor product organization
- Incorrect fitment information
- Confusing labels
- Limited search assistance

Additional Key Driver Details

- Catalog hard to use
- No compatibility info
- Mixed product placement
- Kiosk out of order
- Descriptions too vague
- No staff assistance
- Too many similar products
- Brand info hard to find
- No aisle or section signage
- Inaccurate stock information

ASSORTMENT AND COMPATIBILITY OF CAR PARTS AND ACCESSORIES

Carrying the right range of parts is only half the challenge – every part must also fit the customer's specific vehicle. Customers expect not just broad product choice, but accurate compatibility information that prevents costly mistakes. When assortment gaps or fitment errors occur, trust is quickly lost and customers are unlikely to return.

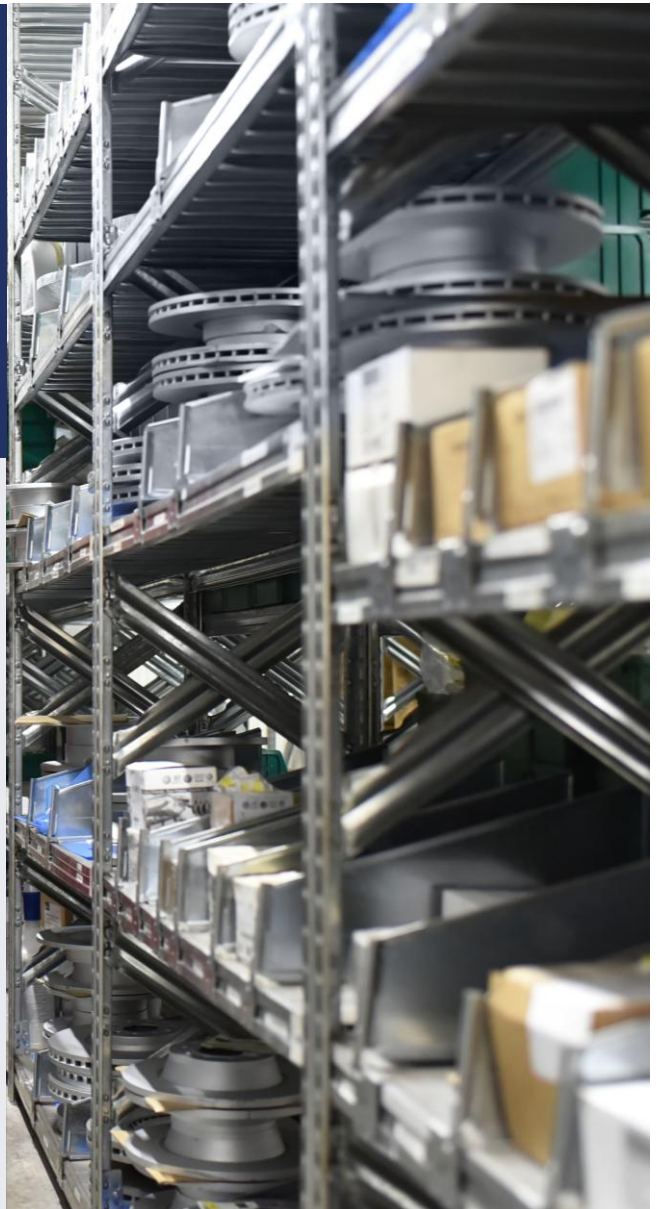
The top 5 key driver details, followed by an additional 10, offer detailed insight into areas where the **ASSORTMENT AND COMPATIBILITY OF CAR PARTS AND ACCESSORIES** key driver may fall short.

Top 5 Key Driver Details

- Item unavailable
- Limited variety
- Incompatible part supplied
- Out-of-stock products
- No compatibility guidance

Additional Key Driver Details

- Few budget-friendly options
- Inconsistent stock levels
- High-demand items missing
- Limited choice for my vehicle
- New model parts unavailable
- Limited premium options
- Special order too slow
- Seasonal items not available
- EV/hybrid parts not carried
- Limited stock for older models



HANDLING OF RETURNS, WARRANTY REQUESTS, OR ISSUE RESOLUTION

How problems are resolved defines long-term loyalty. In car parts retail, incorrect fitment and product faults are not uncommon – customers need a fair, fast process to address this reality. A difficult return or refused warranty claim can permanently damage trust, even after an otherwise positive experience.

The top 5 key driver details, followed by an additional 10, offer detailed insight into areas where the **HANDLING OF RETURNS, WARRANTY REQUESTS, OR ISSUE RESOLUTION** key driver may fall short.



Top 5 Key Driver Details

- Issue was not resolved
- Return was complicated
- Staff was unhelpful
- Refund process was unclear
- Warranty process took too long

Additional Key Driver Details

- Excessive proof required
- Staff had no authority
- Conflicting information
- No follow-up provided
- Exchange process complicated
- Warranty terms not explained
- Felt blamed as customer
- Online vs in-store policy differed
- Unsatisfactory outcome
- Refund took too long



BEYOND THE STARTER TWO MORE KEY DRIVERS

Two moments that often go unexamined are how **effortlessly customers can research the right part or accessory**, and how **smoothly the pricing and checkout experience unfolds**. In the car parts and accessories sector, both touchpoints carry real commercial consequences, influencing purchase confidence at the start of the decision journey and the lasting impression formed at its close.

Friction during the research phase – whether through missing compatibility data, poor product descriptions, or an unreliable search tool – leaves customers second-guessing their choices before they even reach the shelf. At the other end of the visit, pricing inconsistencies or a slow and disorganized checkout can quickly erode the goodwill built during the rest of the experience.

Getting these two moments right means customers reach the checkout informed and leave feeling treated fairly. Done well, they reduce doubt, build trust, and encourage repeat visits.

EASE OF RESEARCHING PARTS AND ACCESSORIES BEFORE VISIT

Before making a purchase, customers need reliable tools and accurate information to identify the right product for their vehicle. Easy access to specs, compatibility data, and detailed product descriptions makes the research process straightforward. When these resources fall short, customers lose confidence and are more likely to go to a competitor.

The top 5 key driver details, followed by an additional 10, offer insight into areas where the **EASE OF RESEARCHING PARTS AND ACCESSORIES BEFORE VISIT** key driver may fall short.



Top 5 Key Driver Details

- Limited product information
- No vehicle compatibility tool
- Hard to compare products
- Online and in-store range differed
- Outdated or incomplete catalog

Additional Key Driver Details

- Technical specs missing
- No product demo available
- Search tool hard to use
- Filter options too limited
- Poor product descriptions
- Reviews hard to find
- Range poorly categorized
- Researched item not in stock
- Website hard to navigate
- No fitment guide available

PRICING AND CHECKOUT EXPERIENCE

Pricing transparency and a smooth checkout are both essential to closing a visit on a positive note. Customers need confidence that they are paying a fair price and that the process is fast and hassle-free. Unexpected costs, unclear pricing, or a slow checkout experience can quickly undermine an otherwise satisfying visit.

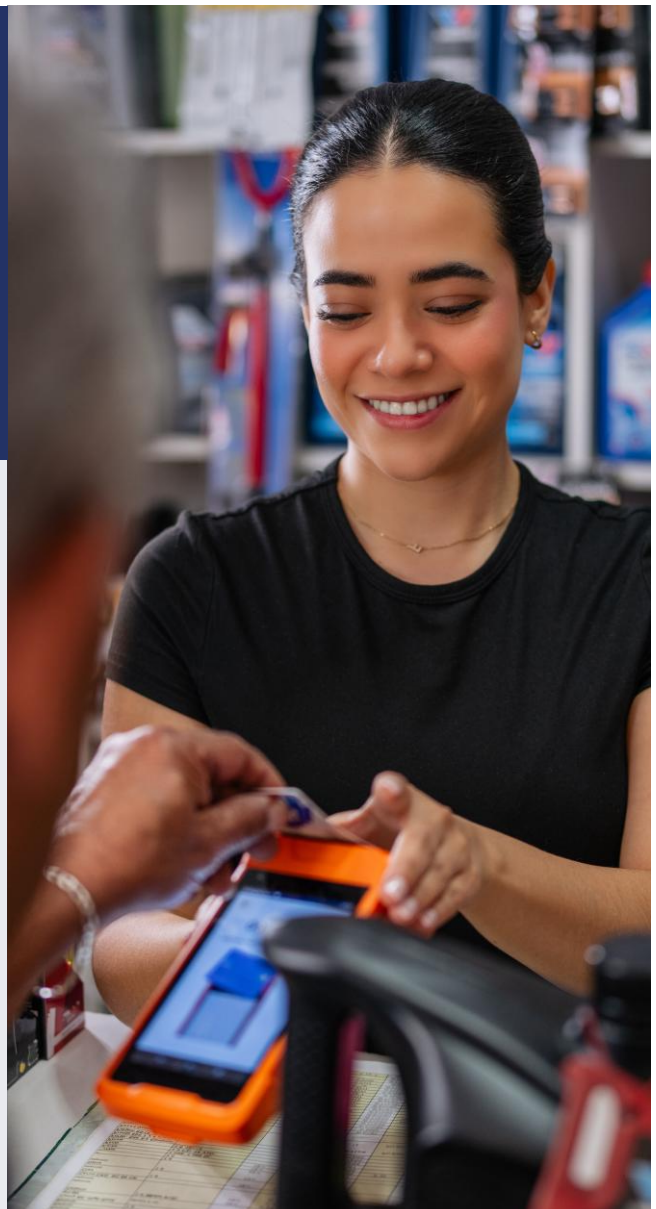
The top 5 key driver details, followed by an additional 10, offer insight into areas where the **PRICING AND CHECKOUT EXPERIENCE** key driver may fall short.

Top 5 Key Driver Details

- Unhelpful/Inattentive staff
- Unexpected costs at checkout
- Long waiting time
- Limited payment options
- Poor value for money

Additional Key Driver Details

- Price differed from shelf label
- Uncompetitive pricing
- Discount not honored
- Slow service
- Wrong item added to bill
- Items not packed carefully
- Loyalty points not applied
- No contactless payment available
- No digital receipt option
- Online price differs than in-store



PRINCIPLES OF CX: VALUE PERCEPTION



PRICE CARRIES A PROMISE

Why value perception, clear positioning, and consistent delivery matter more than being the lowest price.

Price is often viewed as a commercial decision. In customer experience, it is also a promise. It shapes expectations about value, service, quality, convenience, or expertise before the experience even begins. A lower price may signal simplicity and accessibility, while a higher price may suggest greater support, protection, or exclusivity. Neither approach is inherently better. Both succeed when the proposition is clear and delivery remains consistent.

Problems emerge when price, promise, and experience fall out of alignment. The strongest pricing strategy is not always the lowest price. Price fairness is less about cost and more about whether customers feel they received appropriate value for what they paid.

Many customer experience failures stem not from pricing itself, but from mismatched expectations. A brand promises more than it delivers. A budget offer hides limitations. A premium experience feels ordinary. A promotion creates confusion instead of clarity. Customers respond not to the price, but to the gap between the promise and reality.

VALUE PERCEPTION IS AN ONGOING PROCESS

Customers rarely evaluate price only at the moment of payment. Their perception is built across the journey and continues afterwards.

This month's Synergistic CX study on car parts and accessories stores exemplifies the impact of the final in-store interaction. The strongest sentiment appears when customers receive guidance, explore products, and select the right part or accessory. Sentiment then declines during payment and checkout, where price fairness and value perception become the primary drivers of negative feedback.

Checkout service becomes a reality check and a judgement point. It is where customers decide whether the experience they received matches the cost they are being asked to accept. If confidence has been built earlier in the journey, payment can reinforce trust. If the customer reaches checkout with doubts, unclear information or unexpected costs, price becomes a source of friction.

“Quality in a product or service is not what the supplier puts in. It is what the customer gets out and is willing to pay for.”

- Peter Drucker -



THE PRICING PROBLEM IS OFTEN A COMMUNICATION PROBLEM

Many brands underestimate how strongly communication influences price perception. Customers do not always want the cheapest option; they want to understand the value behind it: what is included, what is optional, and what are the alternatives. When the rationale behind pricing is clear, customers are far more likely to perceive the price as fair.

A rental car company may advertise an attractive daily rate, but unclear insurance terms, extra fees, fuel policies, or deposit requirements can quickly make the experience feel unfair. Similarly, an automotive retailer may recommend a higher-quality part, but if the differences in fit, durability, warranty, or performance are not clearly explained, the recommendation can feel more like upselling than genuine advice.

The challenge is not what customers pay, but whether they can recognize the value they receive in return.

GOOD / BETTER / BEST HELPS CUSTOMERS CHOOSE

One of the most practical ways to improve value perception is to offer structured choice. In retail, tiered pricing gives customers a clear decision framework. It allows them to choose based on budget, urgency, risk tolerance, and desired level of service.

In automotive retail, such structure might include a basic compatible part, a mid-range alternative with stronger durability, and a premium option with extended warranty or better performance. The customer does not need a technical lecture. They need a simple explanation of what changes between the options and which option is the best fit.

Effective choice architecture is not about directing customers toward a particular option. It is about helping them understand the value behind each alternative and make an informed decision with confidence.

BUDGET BRANDS CAN STILL OFFER PREMIUM UPGRADES

A budget position does not mean every customer wants only the lowest price.

Even in value-driven categories, some customers are willing to pay more for certainty, speed, convenience, or reassurance. A budget car parts retailer can offer an accessible product range while also providing optional fitment checks, installation support, or extended warranty. The key point is coherence.

A budget brand can offer premium upgrades, but it should not make the basic experience feel deliberately incomplete. The base promise must still be delivered well. Premium upgrades should create additional value. They should not compensate for a weak core experience.

POSITIONING DEFINES WHAT CUSTOMERS EXPECT

Pricing only works when the brand knows what it stands for.

A brand that competes on affordability must be disciplined about simplicity, transparency, and operational efficiency. Its promise should not be inflated beyond what the model can deliver. A brand that competes on expertise must make that expertise visible through knowledgeable staff, clear explanations, and strong follow-through. A brand that competes on convenience must remove friction from the journey, especially at the moments where customers are most likely to feel pressure or uncertainty. And a brand that competes for premium/exclusivity must deliver on that in a seamless, effortless way.

The customer experience gap often appears when the organization has not made these choices clearly. It may want to sound premium while operating like a budget brand. It may want to compete on price while promising personalized service.

Customers notice these contradictions in the experience. The strongest brands do not try to be everything to everyone. They define the value proposition, communicate honestly, and deliver consistently.

PRICING SHOULD BE MEASURED AS CX

Pricing decisions are usually evaluated through margin, revenue, conversion, discounts, and competitor benchmarking. Those indicators matter, but they do not show how customers experience the price.

Leaders also need to understand:

- Do customers understand what is included?
- Can they explain the difference between available options?
- Do staff communicate value clearly and consistently?
- Do premium upgrades feel useful or forced?
- Are promotions transparent?
- Does the final price match the expectation created earlier?
- Do customers leave feeling they made the right decision?

Customer experience measurement helps organizations understand how customers perceive value. Mystery shopping evaluates how pricing and recommendations are communicated, audits assess consistency across locations, and VoC programs reveal where customers feel reassured, confused, or pressured. Online reviews further expose recurring concerns around fairness, transparency, and value perception.

For multi-location and franchise brands, this challenge is amplified. Pricing conversations often vary from one location to another. Some teams build trust, while others create confusion or unnecessary pressure. Without objective measurement, leaders cannot easily identify where the brand promise is being strengthened or weakened.

THE VALUE PERCEPTION PRINCIPLE

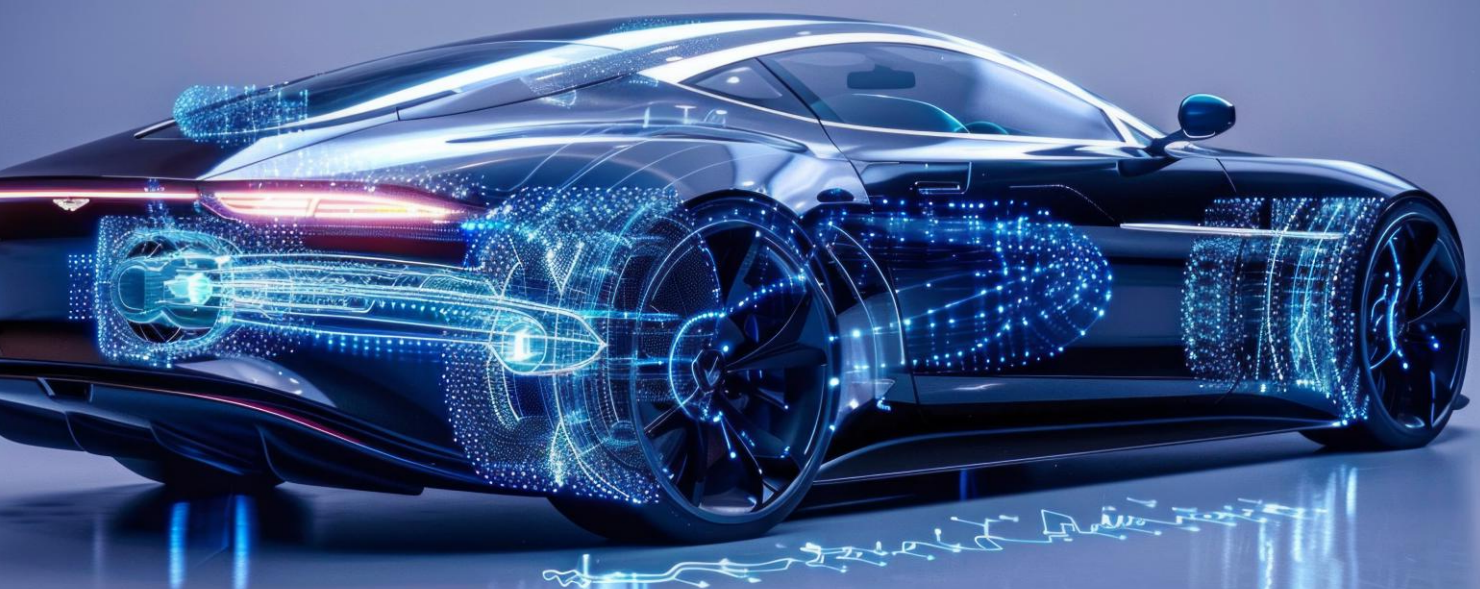
Pricing is one of the ways customers judge whether a brand keeps its promise. Its importance goes far beyond being competitive in the market.

- A low price without clarity can feel risky.
- A high price without delivery can feel unfair.
- A forced upgrade without explanation can feel opportunistic.
- A promotion without transparency can feel misleading.
- A clear offer, honestly communicated and consistently delivered, can strengthen trust.

The principle is simple: price must match the brand value proposition.

FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

- 1. Start with positioning, not price**
Define what the brand is promising: affordability, expertise, speed, quality, reassurance, exclusivity, or a specific combination of these. Pricing should reflect that promise.
- 2. Give customers structured choices**
Use good / better / best options to help customers select according to budget, urgency, risk, and desired level of support.
- 3. Make upgrades visibly valuable**
Premium options should add clear benefits such as convenience, durability, speed, protection, or expert support. They should not make the basic offer feel incomplete.
- 4. Align communication across the journey**
Advertising, website information, consultation by staff, promotions, policies, and invoices must tell the same story.
- 5. Measure price fairness as part of CX**
Use mystery shopping, audits, Voice of Customer programs, and online review analysis to understand whether pricing reinforces confidence or creates friction.





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NIKE

**WHEN BRAND ARCHITECTURE
TURNS CHOICE INTO VALUE**

How Nike creates a value system customers understand



Nike is not a simple growth story today. It is something more relevant for business leaders: a case of brand architecture under pressure. In fiscal year 2025, NIKE, Inc. reported revenue of \$46.3 billion, down 10% on a reported basis. In Q3 fiscal year 2026, revenue reached \$11.3 billion, flat on a reported basis and down 3% currency-neutral. These figures make the case very realistic. Nike is not immune to competition, pricing pressure, changing consumer behavior, or the need to renew product momentum. But it remains one of the most recognizable brand systems in global sport and lifestyle.

Its strength is not only in the products it sells or the prices it can command. Its strength lies in the structure behind the brand: a system that connects performance, lifestyle, athlete credibility, cultural relevance, customization, membership, innovation, promotions, and retail experience into one coherent identity.

Nike does not serve one type of customer, one budget level, or one purchase motivation. Nike speaks to professional athletes, everyday runners, soccer/football fans, basketball players, sneaker collectors, young consumers, families, loyal members, and people who simply want to wear a brand associated with movement, ambition, and sport.

The remarkable part is that these audiences do not all enter the brand through the same door. Nike gives them different entry points while keeping the brand recognizable.

That is where architecture becomes customer experience.

Access Without Dilution

A strong brand system allows customers to participate at different levels without weakening the brand. Nike can offer accessible products for everyday use while maintaining aspiration at the premium end of the portfolio. One customer may enter through a basic training T-shirt, a pair of everyday sneakers, a children's product, or a seasonal promotion. Another may engage through performance footwear, a signature athlete line, a limited release, or a customized product.

These are different levels of participation, but they are not disconnected. The accessible product opens the door. The performance product reinforces technical credibility. The lifestyle product strengthens cultural relevance. The signature product connects the customer to an athlete story. The limited edition creates scarcity. The customized product gives personal ownership.

This is where many brands lose clarity. They expand the range, but the offer becomes confusing. They introduce multiple price points, but customers do not understand the role of each one. They launch promotions, but over time the promotion becomes the most visible value.

Nike's lesson is that access and aspiration can coexist when each layer has a clear role.



Performance as the Center of Gravity

Nike's architecture begins with sport. Even when the brand operates heavily in lifestyle and culture, its credibility is still rooted in performance. Running, football, basketball, training, tennis, and other sport categories give the brand a technical foundation. The performance layer gives substance to the broader brand story.

A running shoe is not positioned like a lifestyle sneaker. A basketball signature line carries a different meaning from a basic training

product. Each category has its own customer logic, but each one still connects back to athletic performance, movement, and ambition. The customer does not need to be a professional athlete to understand the association. The sport origin supports the lifestyle expansion.

Brand architecture needs a center of gravity. Without it, expansion becomes fragmentation. With it, a brand can stretch into new categories while still feeling recognizable.



Athletes Turn Products Into Stories

Nike's athlete partnerships are often discussed as marketing assets. They are more than that.

They are part of the brand architecture.

Michael Jordan remains the clearest example. Jordan Brand is not only an endorsement legacy; it is a product, cultural, and business architecture of its own. It connects basketball performance, design, aspiration, nostalgia, street culture, and community into a system that continues to evolve decades after Michael Jordan's playing career.

LeBron James brings another layer: longevity, excellence, and basketball leadership across generations. Serena Williams extends the brand into dominance, resilience, and influence beyond tennis. Cristiano Ronaldo gives Nike the strongest individual soccer/football association.

In 2026, Ronaldo's relevance is especially powerful. At 41, he enters the World Cup as the tournament's oldest outfield player and makes his sixth appearance on the world stage. Although Portugal's national team equipment is no longer supplied by Nike, Ronaldo's individual association keeps the brand visible through one of football's most recognized figures at one of sport's largest global moments.

Other Nike athletes connect the brand to different sports, audiences, countries, and cultural contexts. Together, these partnerships give products meaning. They connect performance with story, aspiration, discipline, identity, and emotion.

A signature shoe or athlete-led campaign is not only a product endorsement. It helps customers understand what the product represents.





Culture Extends the Brand Beyond Sport

Nike's architecture works because it understands that sport does not live only in stadiums, gyms, and training plans. Sport lives in culture.

Soccer/football shirts become identity markers. Sneakers become part of fashion. Running communities become social spaces. Basketball shoes become cultural references. Limited releases become moments of attention. Collaborations connect sport with design, music, streetwear, and youth culture.

In 2026, this cultural reach appeared in an unexpected way when Pope Leo XIV was seen wearing white Nike sneakers in images from a Vatican-produced documentary. It was not a formal brand moment and should not be treated as an endorsement. But the public reaction showed something important: Nike products are embedded deeply enough in everyday culture to become a topic of conversation even in highly traditional contexts. The product carries meaning beyond its original category.

Participation, Scarcity, and Personal Relevance

Nike's membership ecosystem, exclusive access, limited releases, and customization add another layer to the system: participation.

Customers do not only buy products. They gain access to launches, benefits, communities, and moments that feel specific to the brand. This creates belonging, especially when access is connected to product desirability, cultural relevance, or sport identity.

Nike By You adds a more personal dimension. Customization changes the customer's relationship with the product because the customer becomes involved in the creation process. Choosing colors, materials, and details gives the product a sense of ownership.

This increases perceived value because the product carries the customer's own choices. Exclusivity and customization are powerful when they are credible. Used poorly, scarcity can feel artificial and personalization can become unnecessary complexity. Used well, they give customers a stronger reason to engage.

Promotions Should Serve the Brand, Not Define It

Nike is also strong in promotions, but promotions do not define the brand. Promotions can create access, reward loyalty, move seasonal products, and bring price-sensitive customers into the brand. But if promotions become the main reason customers buy, the brand loses pricing credibility and trains the market to wait.

Nike is better protected because promotions sit inside a wider structure. The brand has performance credibility, athlete partnerships, category depth, product innovation, customization, membership, and cultural relevance. A discount may attract the customer, but it is not the only reason the brand matters. For other brands, this is a practical warning. Promotions should support the architecture, not replace it.

When customers understand the brand's value, promotions can feel like an opportunity. When they do not, promotions become the brand's identity.

Innovation Keeps the System Alive

A strong architecture cannot remain static. Nike's heritage gives it trust, but heritage alone is not enough. Customers may respect the past, but they buy what feels relevant today. Innovation keeps the brand current across performance, materials, comfort, design, digital experience, and product storytelling.

In a competitive market, new challengers can gain attention quickly. Consumer preferences shift, communities move, performance expectations evolve, digital journeys reshape how customers interact, discover, compare, and buy. Nike's structure gives it many tools, but those tools need constant renewal.

Brand architecture does not guarantee permanent momentum. It gives the organization a system through which momentum can be rebuilt. It creates multiple engines of relevance, but each one must continue to be supported by product quality, communication discipline, customer understanding, and execution.



The Lesson for CX Leaders

Nike's excellence is not simply that it sells at different price points. Many brands do that. Nike's excellence lies in the way it gives different price points, categories, and customer motivations.

An accessible product opens the door.
A performance product builds credibility.
An athlete partnership creates aspiration.
A lifestyle collection extends cultural relevance.
A limited release creates energy. A customized product gives personal ownership. Innovation keeps the system alive.

This architecture is a complex ecosystem, and customers should not be left to decode the brand by themselves. Nike demonstrates that a brand can serve different audiences without becoming fragmented when each layer has a clear role and a credible connection to the core identity.

Nike's ecosystem reinforces a simple point: when a brand operates across multiple categories, channels, countries, and customer communities, experience cannot be managed through isolated feedback or broad assumptions. Market research becomes essential to understand how different customers define value, what drives engagement in each context, and where the brand promise is being strengthened or weakened. A data-driven CX strategy is what turns complexity into clarity.

What Nike Teaches Us About Brand Architecture

1. Access and aspiration can coexist

A brand can serve broader audiences without weakening premium appeal when each product level has a clear role.

2. Performance gives the brand credibility

Even when Nike operates in lifestyle and culture, sport remains the foundation that gives the brand authority.

3. Athlete partnerships create meaning

The strongest partnerships do more than generate visibility. They connect products to aspiration, identity, and emotional relevance.

4. Culture expands relevance

Nike extends beyond sport by connecting products to fashion, community, youth culture, and moments of collective attention.

5. Customization increases ownership

Nike By You strengthens emotional value by allowing customers to participate in the creation of the product.

6. Promotions should serve the brand, not define it

Discounts can create access, but they should not become the main reason customers buy.

7. Innovation keeps heritage current

A long history creates trust, but ongoing innovation keeps the brand relevant.



FROM DATA TO DIRECTION

THE INDUSTRY'S NEXT CHAPTER

*CX Channel at the
MSPA Europe/Africa Conference in Alicante*



In May, the mystery shopping and customer experience research community gathered in Alicante, Spain, for the MSPA Europe/Africa Conference, celebrating the association's 25th anniversary. With more than 200 delegates from 30 countries, the event was more than a milestone celebration. Under the leadership of Andy Firth, President of MSPA EA, the event was a clear signal of an industry in transformation.

As usual, the CX Channel team had a strong presence, joining conversations that moved well beyond traditional measurement. Across the conference, one message appeared consistently: clients do not need more disconnected data.

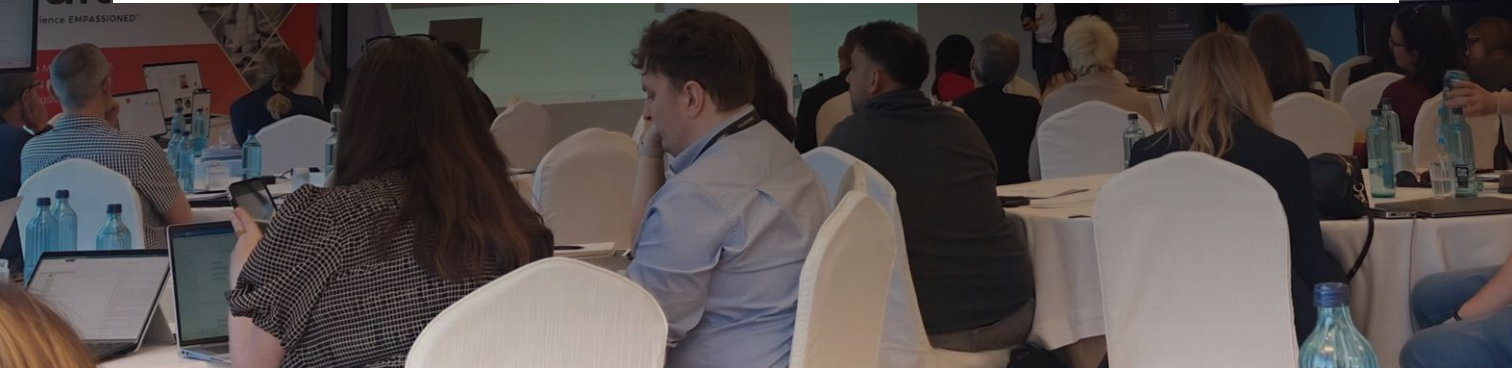
They need integrated solutions that help them understand what is happening, decide what matters, and, above all, act with confidence.

For many years, the industry has been built around the credibility of measurement: mystery shopping visits, audits, customer surveys, dashboards, benchmarks, and reports. Those foundations remain essential. But the conversation in Alicante showed that expectations have changed. Reporting is no longer enough. Clients want partners who can connect insight with operations, training, technology, governance, and measurable business improvement.



FUSION 2026

OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR TODAY, STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR TOMORROW



The transformation was already visible the day before the official conference, when Research Metrics hosted its annual client event. Each year, this gathering creates space for Research Metrics to meet in person with clients and partners from around the world, exchange priorities, and discuss the future of the CX ecosystem.

This year's theme, **Fusion – Operational Priorities for Today. Strategic Direction for Tomorrow**, captured the tone of the day.

The morning focused on practical implementation: what can be used now, what is coming in the immediate roadmap, and how technology can improve operational efficiency, quality, fraud prevention, reporting, analytics, fieldwork, and daily execution.

Topics included Shopmetrics CX, UX improvements, CX Analytics, AI Quality Control Automation, data integrity, ID verification, suspicious activity detection, operational workflow improvements, custom dashboards, online review workflows, API integrations, and mobile enhancements.

The afternoon shifted from operational delivery to strategic direction. Research Metrics presented its roadmap for Q4 and beyond, including AI across the CX Suite, compliance, knowledge management, survey building, analytics, Mystery Calling Evaluations, Call Center Evaluations, Photo Audits, VOC Surveys, Dataverse, and the broader role of local AI in helping organizations scale faster and safer.

There was also a preview of the new chapter of the CX Channel, reserved for those present at the event and soon to be revealed to the entire community.

What made Fusion especially relevant was the client exchange. The message was clear: the industry is not waiting for transformation. It is already living it, and moving fast. The differentiator now is the ability to channel that speed into disciplined, structured progress.



NOW, NEXT, AND THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY

EMIL TSANKOV

During the conference, Emil Tsankov, CEO of Research Metrics, joined the **TECH PANEL – Now, Next and the Future**, where participants examined how technology is reshaping the sector.

The discussion was notably pragmatic. While some of the broader promises made around AI globally have not fully materialized over the past year, the panel recognized that major changes have already taken place in how data is processed, interpreted, and operationalized. The opportunity is no longer only about adopting the latest release. It is about using existing capabilities better.

One of the strongest points discussed was how to aggregate productivity gains that are often spread across different functions. AI may improve quality control, reporting, workflow automation, analytics, field operations, and knowledge management, but strategic value only becomes visible when these gains are connected across the organization.



The panel also highlighted the importance of employee upskilling. Organizations cannot benefit fully from AI if teams do not understand how to use the tools already available. A new working structure is emerging, with new responsibilities, new roles, and new expectations around data, automation, quality, and decision-making. The knowledge gap among leaders represents a risk that needs to be addressed urgently.

Cybersecurity, privacy, and AI ethics were also central to the discussion. The underlying message was consistent with the wider conference: technology is powerful, but it must be governed. It is not enough to automate faster. AI must be used responsibly, integrated effectively, and designed to help people work better.

RESPONSIBLE AI AS A GOVERNANCE PRIORITY

CRISTIANI OLIVEIRA



Cristiani Oliveira, CX Strategy Ambassador at Research Metrics and former MSPA Europe/Africa President, delivered a keynote on **Responsible AI: Leadership & Governance** – Scaling Intelligence Without Scaling Risk. The presentation placed AI ethics firmly in the domain of leadership, arguing that responsible AI is not only a moral debate – it is a governance responsibility.

The keynote addressed a critical gap: AI capability is scaling faster than governance maturity. As organizations accelerate experimentation with automation, generative AI, and agentic AI, the risks also become more complex. Cristiani emphasized that if AI scales faster than governance, risk scales faster than revenue. For an industry built on trust, compliance, data quality, and the evaluation of human behavior, this is not a secondary issue. It is central to future relevance.

A key part of the keynote focused on the EU AI Act and its implications for mystery shopping and customer experience research. Cristiani argued that the industry must treat its data with particular care because mystery shopping evaluates people, interprets behavior, influences decisions, and can affect revenue.

The message was both cautionary and constructive. Responsible AI does not mean slowing innovation. It means building the conditions for innovation to scale safely. That includes vendor selection discipline, data protection, documentation, accountability, human validation, decision thresholds, training, and clear governance processes. In an industry where operational excellence is built on trust, AI governance may define who leads the next chapter.

FROM INSIGHT TO IMPACT

EMMA HARTE, CEO OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS/OPTIMUM RESULTS

Emma Harte, CEO of Customer Perceptions/Optimum Results in Ireland, delivered **Elevating the Conversation: From Insight to Impact**. Her message directly addressed one of the strongest themes of the conference: clients do not have a data problem. They have an action problem.

Emma challenged the industry to move beyond the assumption that more measurement automatically creates better customer experience. Insight, she argued, only matters when it changes what people do on a Monday morning. The failure point is often not data collection or reporting. It is the gap between insight and consistent behavior.

Her presentation reframed operational excellence as a leadership and capability challenge. The path she presented moved from measurement to prioritization, capability, behavior, and performance. That progression matters because customer experience does not improve through dashboards alone. It improves when leaders define the right behaviors, train teams, coach consistently, measure progress, and reinforce what matters.

Emma's work also underscored a fundamental shift in the role of the CX partner. The industry is moving beyond soft-skills training and siloed reporting toward a more integrated capability ecosystem. This ecosystem spans service excellence, business acumen, performance management, leadership development, compliance, continuous improvement, employee insights, training needs analysis, and AI governance. To drive meaningful impact, CX research must be embedded within the client's operating system.



THE RE-EXPERIENCE SCORE

LÊ THỊ THƯƠNG, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL AT SYCA / SOI.PRO

Lê Thị Thương, Deputy Director General at SYCA / SOI.Pro in Vietnam, presented **The Re-Experience Score: The Missing Link Between Operational Delivery, Experience and Behavior**. Her presentation addressed the limitations of traditional metrics and introduced a framework designed to connect operational delivery, customer memory, and future behavior.

The session began with a powerful paradox: satisfaction does not necessarily equate to loyalty. Drawing on the CX Vietnam Report 2025, the presentation showed how relatively high satisfaction scores can coexist with much lower loyalty rates. This challenges organizations to look beyond whether customers say they are satisfied and ask a more strategic question: what does this experience make the customer want to do next?

The Re-Experience Score, or RXS, measures the ability of an experience to stay in the customer's memory and influence future behavior. Its four dimensions are consistency, memorability, emotional connection, and behavioral impact. This reframing is important because customers do not act only on what they experienced. They act on what they remember.

The practical application showed how mystery shopping can evolve when operational observation, customer perception, emotional response, and behavioral intention are connected. For the industry, this points to a more advanced role for CX research: not simply describing what happened, but understanding whether the experience was strong enough to influence future choice, advocacy, and loyalty.



FROM GREET TO GREAT

STEFaan VANDROOGENBROEK



Stefaan Vandroogenbroek, CEO of Multi-Value, presented **From Greet to Great: Turning Mystery Shopping into a Movement for Operational Excellence**. His session focused on a practical question many organizations still struggle with: once the data is collected, what do we do with it?

Stefaan's approach centered on operational excellence through three A's: awareness, ability, and action. Awareness means understanding what is really happening and identifying strengths and growth opportunities. Ability means equipping people with the skills, tools, and guidance to improve. Action means turning knowledge into consistent habits on the floor.

His D.R.I.V.E. framework – Differentiate, Retain, Integrate, Value, Educate – showed how CX insights can become more than reports. Data needs to be made visible and tangible. Teams need to be informed, involved, and inspired. Customer experience must be integrated into daily briefings, coaching moments, internal communication, and management routines.

The presentation also emphasized recognition, training, and embedding standards. Stefaan's message was strongly aligned with the conference's broader direction: the industry must help clients move from knowing to doing. The value of mystery shopping is not only in measuring the experience. It is in helping organizations turn desired behaviors into everyday practice.

THE COMMON THREAD: CLIENTS WANT INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

Across the conference, the strongest common thread was clear: the industry is moving from measurement to integration.

Emma Harte spoke about turning insight into behavior. Stefaan Vandroogenbroek showed how data must be embedded into daily routines. Tamsin Palmer challenged the industry to move from cost per visit to value per decision. Lê Thị Thương connected operational delivery with memory and future behavior. Cristiani Oliveira emphasized that AI must scale with governance, not ahead of it.

Together, these perspectives point to the same conclusion. The future of the industry is not only about collecting better data. It is about helping clients create better systems. It means moving from reports to routines, from dashboards to decisions, from insight to capability, and from measurement to business impact.

For the CX Channel, this is precisely why the Alicante conference resonated with our methodology and strategy. It showed an industry that understands its heritage but is not trapped by it. Mystery shopping remains relevant because objective measurement remains essential. Nevertheless, the next stage will be defined by how effectively that measurement connects to operations, technology, governance, and growth.

As MSPA Europe/Africa celebrated **25 years**, the message from Alicante was about the next operating model for customer experience research.

The industry is no longer being asked only to observe the experience.

It is being asked to actively improve it.

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