Synergistic CX

The Customer Experience Magazine

1 CX Breakthroughs
Expert Strategies and Standout CX Insights

2 Cross-Industry Patterns
The Common Drivers Behind Customer Satisfaction

3 Expert Vision
Perspectives Shaping the Future of CX

December 2025
Special Christmas Edition

A Year in Review

Navigating a Year of Change in Customer Experience

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

As we bring another remarkable year of Synergistic CX to a close, this special edition invites us to pause, reflect, and celebrate the work that moves our industry forward. When we launched this magazine, we set out with a clear ambition: to create a space where insight, evidence, and practice converge to advance the discipline of customer experience. This edition stands as a testament to that ambition, demonstrating how far the conversation has evolved and how much potential lies ahead.

We are honored to welcome back Jill Spencer – one of the most respected voices in our field and our very first guest. Her interview captures the essence of what CX truly represents: purposeful action, measurable impact, and trusted partnerships. Jill reminds us that the future of customer experience will not be defined by technology alone, but by clearly articulated objectives and the intelligent connection of data.

We also bring our 2025 year in review, revisiting the perspectives shared by Steven Di Pietro, Nabil Rizkallah, Kapel Malhotra, Daniel Cosgrove, Lina Schölin, and Andy Firth. We summarize the micro-industries we explored through the lens of online reviews: Flower Shops, Car Rental, Luxury Shoe Stores, Quick Service Restaurants, Bookstores, and Electronics Stores. Each revealed distinct behaviors, yet all reinforced a common message: Companies that meaningfully interpret customer signals and act with intention build the foundations for loyalty, resilience, and sustainable growth.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to our readers, partners, and contributors. Your engagement and feedback continue to shape this publication and strengthen the community we build together.

And while this edition marks the end of our second year, a new chapter is already taking form. Season 3 will arrive in January with new voices, new angles, and new possibilities for how we explore the intersection of data, technology, and human experience.

I wish you an excellent start to the New Year. May 2026 be a year defined by vision, intention, and impact.

Emil Tsankov
Issue Editor
Synergistic CX Magazine
Together with the CX Channel Team

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Steven illuminates how fusing broad sentiment and deep diagnostics reveals CX gaps, and why people, strategy, and execution must balance for success.

Explore the key insights Steven brought to our podcast, featured in the December '24 edition of Synergistic CX magazine.

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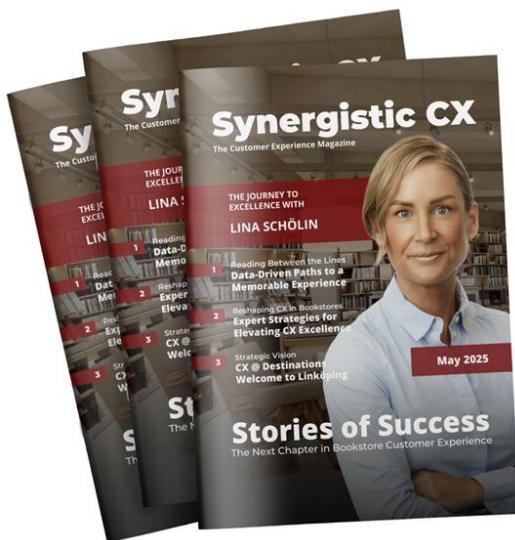- **OMNICHANNEL MASTERY: THE ART OF BLENDING DIGITAL AND IN-STORE EXPERIENCES**

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May 2025
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Featuring: Lina Schölin
CEO at
Better Business Sweden

READ MAGAZINE AT
www.cx-channel.com

June 2025
Industry: Electronics Stores

Featuring: Andy Firth
Head of Advisory & Analytics at
Ipsos UK

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www.cx-channel.com

Daniel blends objective and subjective CX methods and agile channel tactics for quick-service wins, and uses AI to turn data into real-time coaching.

Explore the key insights Daniel brought to our podcast, featured in the April '25 edition of Synergistic CX magazine.

- **AGILE CHANNELS AND QUICK WINS: MASTERING QSR CX COMPLEXITY**

- **FROM INTERACTION TO INSIGHT: AI'S TRANSFORMATIVE POWER IN CX**

- **THE DOUBLE LENS: OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CX MEASUREMENT**

DANIEL COSGROVE

Lina blends coaching leadership, workflow clarity, and tailored CX metrics to drive sustainable growth and long-term business impact.

Explore the key insights Lina brought to our podcast, featured in the May '25 edition of Synergistic CX magazine.

- **DATA TO DECISIONS: HOW TO TRANSLATE CX DATA INTO REAL IMPROVEMENTS**

- **JOURNEY BEYOND BORDERS: INTEGRATING CX ACROSS DESTINATIONS**

- **10 STEPS TO OMNICHANNEL EXCELLENCE: DESIGNING SEAMLESS JOURNEYS**

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Andy reveals how unified data, targeted recommendations, and actionable insights elevate CX and boost customer satisfaction.

Explore the key insights Andy brought to our podcast, featured in the June '25 edition of Synergistic CX magazine.

- **INSIGHT FUSION: MERGING MYSTERY SHOPPING WITH THE VOC**

- **PRODUCT RECOMMENDATION: OPTIMIZING SUGGESTIONS FOR HIGHER CONVERSIONS**

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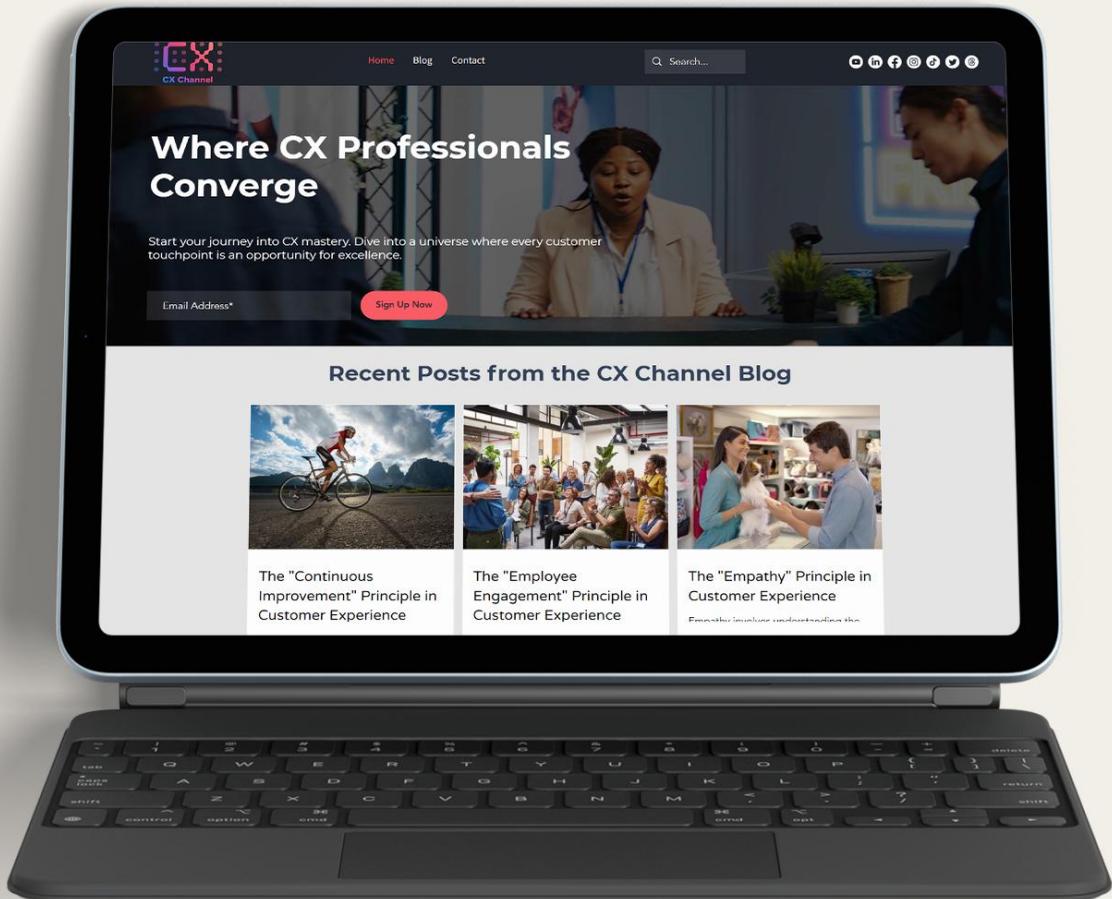**CX Channel**

Are you **ready** to embark on an extraordinary journey of discovery and inspiration in the realm of Customer Experience?
Explore **www.cx-channel.com** to uncover a wealth of expert knowledge, innovative approaches, and distinctive experiences!
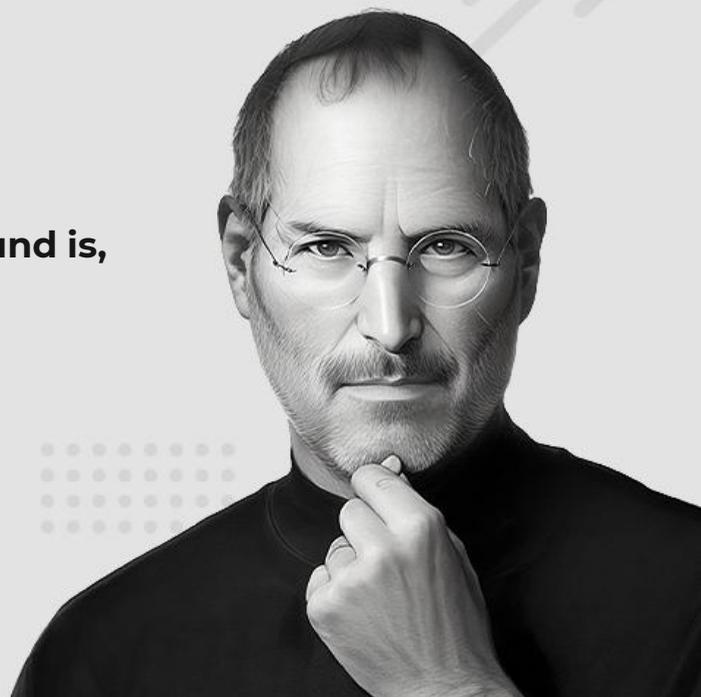
www.cx-channel.com

Where CX Professionals Converge

START WITH THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

"One of the things I've always found is, that you've got to start with the customer experience…"

- Steve Jobs -

Every era of business has its defining truths, and one of the most enduring is the idea that meaningful innovation begins not with the product, the process, or the technology - but with the customer experience. Steve Jobs famously articulated this principle, reminding leaders that true progress comes from understanding people first and building solutions around their needs, emotions, and expectations.

His perspective resonates more powerfully today than ever before, as organizations navigate increasingly complex customer journeys shaped by shifting behaviors, rising expectations, and competitive pressure.

Starting with the customer experience is not simply a mindset - it is the core engine of sustainable growth. It challenges businesses to look beyond surface-level metrics, to question assumptions, and to design their operations through the lens of real human experience. It demands clarity, curiosity, and a willingness to evaluate every interaction with honesty and precision.

This philosophy forms the foundation for modern CX excellence, where success is achieved by aligning internal processes with the external realities customers face - and by using insights to anticipate needs long before they are voiced.

SYNERGISTIC CX PROGRAM
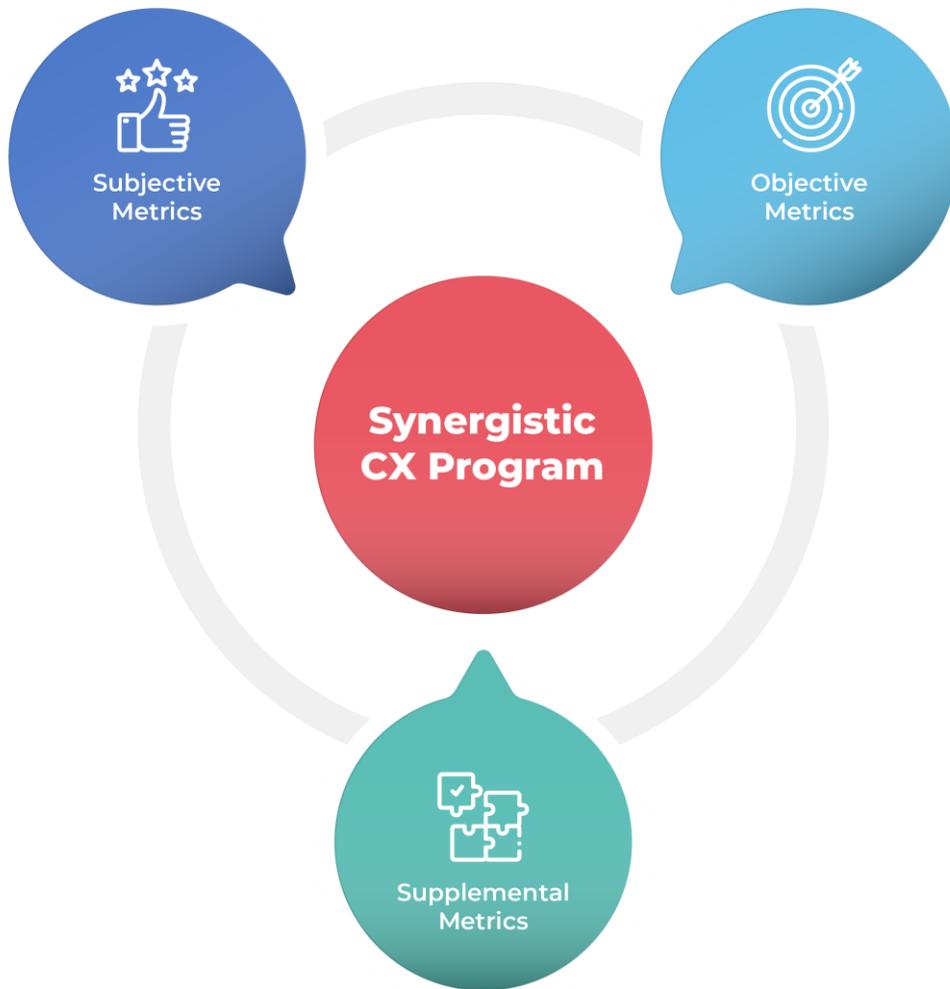
The Synergistic CX Program is built on a philosophy that advocates for a holistic approach to understanding and improving customer experience. This concept is rooted in the integration of subjective and objective metrics, along with supplemental data, to form a multi-faceted perspective of CX.

Rather than viewing customer experience through a single lens, the program unifies varied measurement streams into one cohesive and strategically aligned framework. This integration enables a deeper, more accurate understanding of how customers perceive, interact with, and are influenced by a business across the entire journey.

This integration enables a deeper, more accurate understanding of how customers perceive, interact with, and are influenced by a business across the entire journey.

In essence, the Synergistic CX Program is designed such that all its aspects work together in an integrated fashion to produce an outcome greater than the sum of each individual portion. It integrates various metrics, ensuring that the customer experience is viewed through multiple lenses. This allows businesses to craft strategies and initiatives that are both data-driven and emotionally attuned, ensuring that every customer interaction is optimized for both operational efficiency and emotional resonance.

SUBJECTIVE
Customer thoughts and feelings, subjective, and perceptual metrics

Online Customer Reviews and Ratings

Voice of the Customer (VoC) Surveys

OBJECTIVE
Quantifiable data, KPIs, tech-driven sensor data, and scored data points

Mystery Shop Evaluations

Sensor-Based / AI

Internal Quality & Process Evaluations

SUPPLEMENTAL
Retail performance, and employee-centric insights

Retail Operations

Employee Feedback

A fundamental strength of the program lies in the way it blends three measurement categories into a unified whole:

- **Subjective Metrics**, such as Online Reviews and Ratings and VoC Surveys, reveal customer perceptions, emotions, and expectations - offering rapid, scalable insight into how people feel about their experiences with the brand.
- **Objective Metrics**, including Mystery Shop Evaluations, Sensor-Based data capture, and Internal Quality and Process Evaluations, deliver precise, performance-based assessments of how consistently the business meets its standards, minimizing bias and providing factual accuracy.

- **Supplemental metrics**, such as Retail Operations data and Employee Feedback enrich understanding by exposing environmental conditions, behavioral patterns, and the perspectives of frontline employees.

The Synergistic CX Program is an essential component for businesses seeking to outperform competition, providing a comprehensive view of the customer experience and identifying areas for improvement. By leveraging the best of every measurement method and using the right tool for each objective, businesses can truly master and optimize their customer experience.
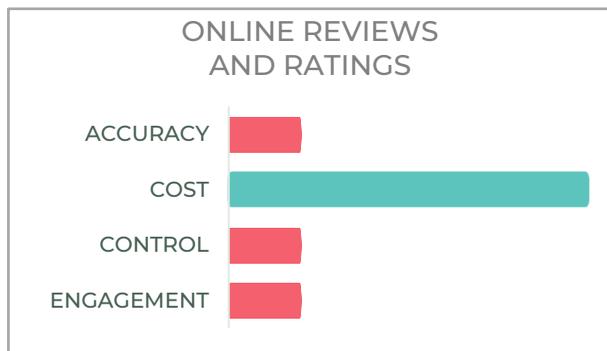
SYNERGISTIC CX PROGRAM:
THE OPTIMAL MIX OF MEASUREMENT METHODS

Objective and subjective CX measurement programs each bring distinct strengths, especially across the areas of accuracy, cost, control, and staff engagement.
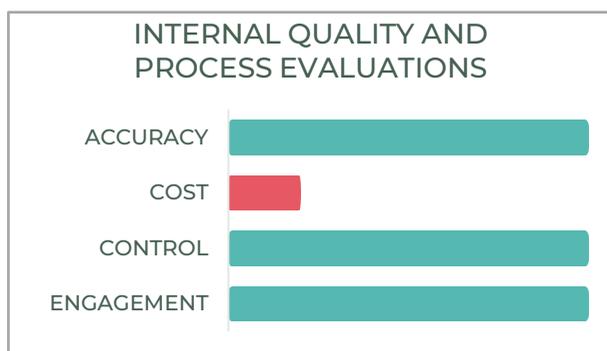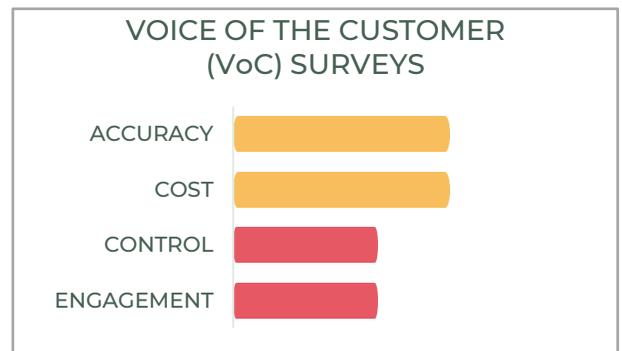
Objective methods – such as **Mystery Shop Evaluations** and **Internal Quality and Process Evaluations** – deliver high accuracy through structured data and neutral evaluation, while offering strong control over what is assessed and when. This precision also boosts engagement, as clear, reliable results can be tied directly to staff coaching and performance. These benefits come with higher cost, reflecting the resources needed to design, execute, and validate such rigorous programs.

Subjective methods, like **Online Reviews, Ratings**, and **VoC Surveys** – provide broad reach and fast, cost-effective customer insight, though with lower accuracy due to personal bias and variable detail. Because feedback is customer-initiated, businesses have less control over what is measured, limiting its use for staff engagement and performance management. Still, subjective methods capture emotional context that objective tools cannot.

Together, both approaches reveal different layers of the customer journey, and when combined, form a balanced, synergistic CX measurement strategy that blends perception with verified operational reality.

SUBJECTIVE

ONLINE REVIEWS AND RATINGS

- ACCURACY
- COST
- CONTROL
- ENGAGEMENT

VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VoC) SURVEYS

- ACCURACY
- COST
- CONTROL
- ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE

INTERNAL QUALITY AND PROCESS EVALUATIONS

- ACCURACY
- COST
- CONTROL
- ENGAGEMENT

MYSTERY SHOP EVALUATIONS

- ACCURACY
- COST
- CONTROL
- ENGAGEMENT

Star Ratings & Critical Review Response Time

"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).

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.

STAR RATINGS
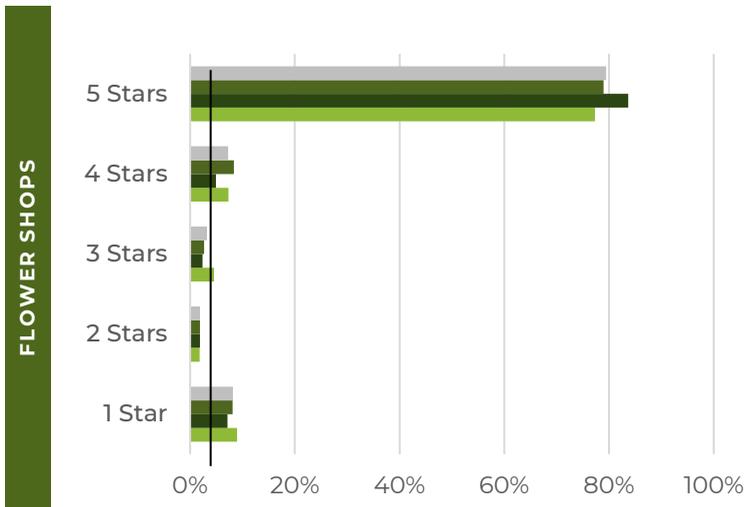
FLOWER SHOPS

The distribution of star ratings for flower shops reveals some minor regional differences, highlighting some variations in customer satisfaction across different geographic areas.

- Overall
- EMEA
- Americas
- APAC
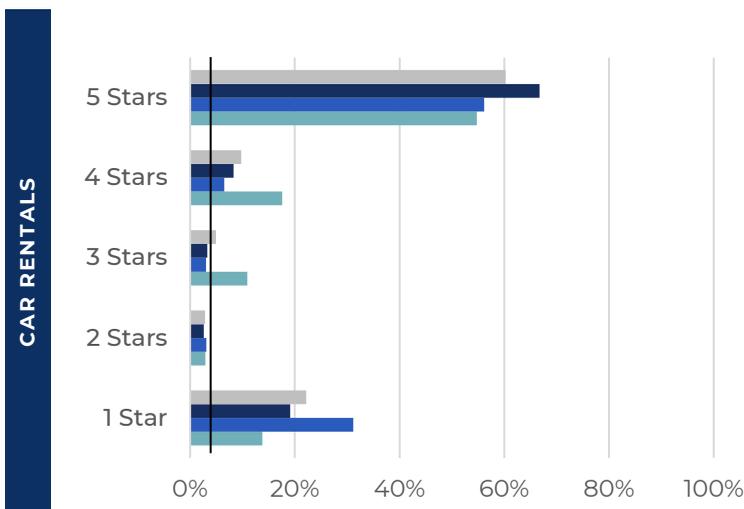
CAR RENTALS

The star rating distribution for car rental services highlights some notable regional differences, indicating variations in customer satisfaction across different geographic areas.

- Overall
- EMEA
- Americas
- APAC
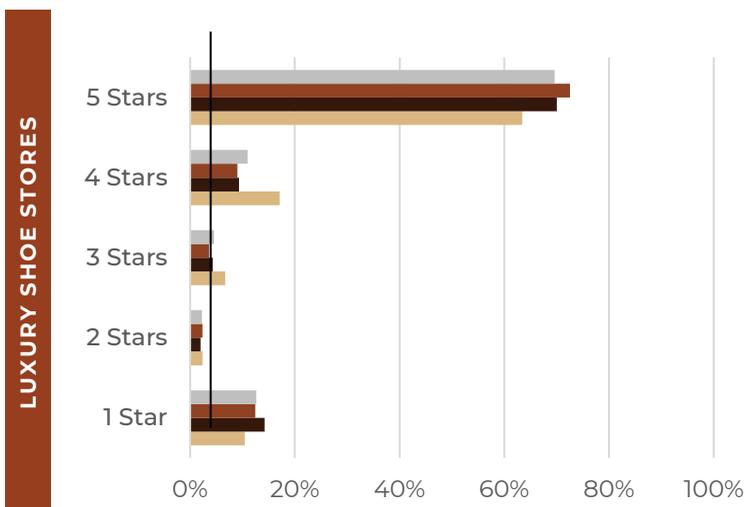
LUXURY SHOE STORES

The average rating for luxury shoe stores shows slight regional variations, suggesting a consistent level of customer satisfaction across different markets.

- Overall
- EMEA
- Americas
- APAC

The star rating distribution for Quick Service Restaurants highlights some notable regional differences, indicating variations in customer satisfaction across different geographic areas.

- Overall
- EMEA
- Americas
- APAC
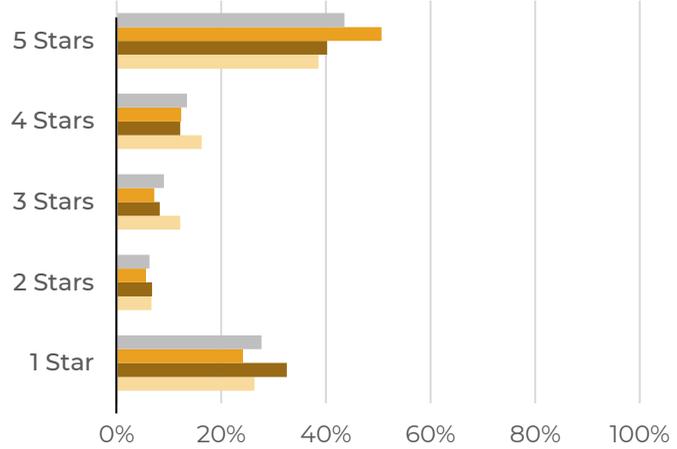
QSR

The distribution of bookstore star ratings reveals clear regional patterns, reflecting how customer satisfaction fluctuates across different geographic areas.

- Overall
- EMEA
- Americas
- APAC
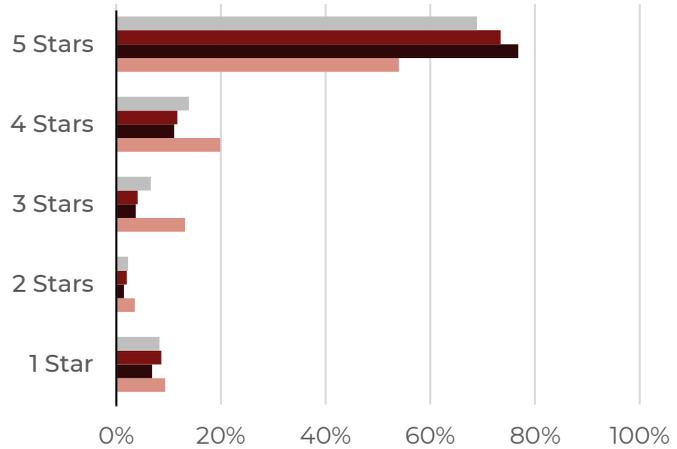
BOOKSTORES

The distribution of electronic stores ratings is relatively consistent across regions,. Mid-range two-star to four-star feedback fluctuation remains similarly modest.

- Overall
- EMEA
- Americas
- APAC

ELECTRONICS STORES

CRITICAL REVIEW RESPONSE TIME (CRRT)

FLOWER SHOPS
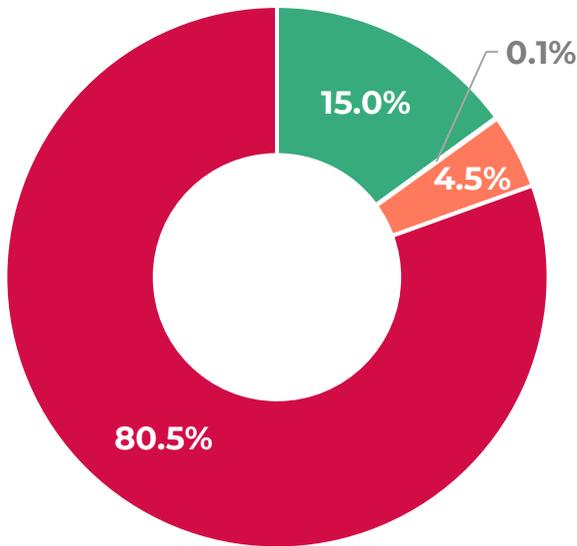
Responding to negative reviews in a timely manner can greatly boost customer retention. Our research reveals that approximately 80% of critical reviews go unanswered, pointing to a significant opportunity for improvement.

EMEA	13.5%	81.6%
Americas	20.7%	75.5%
APAC	13.7%	81.6%
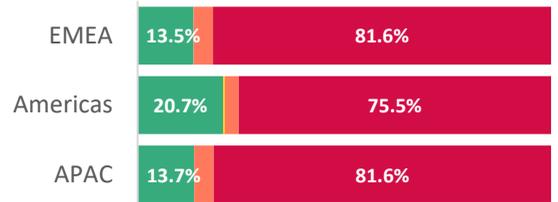
CAR RENTALS
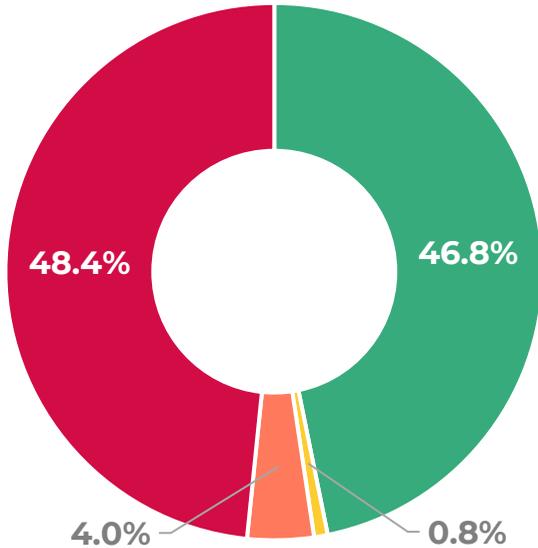
Addressing negative reviews promptly can significantly enhance customer satisfaction. Our study shows that nearly 50% of dissatisfied customers never receive a response, highlighting a missed chance to rebuild trust and improve service perceptions.
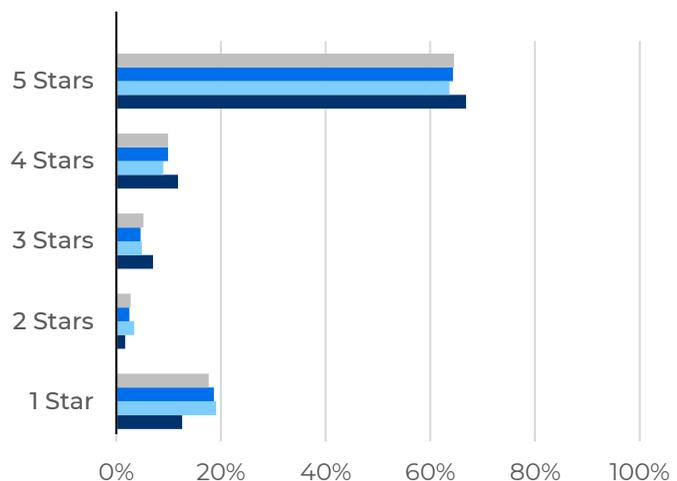
EMEA	37.5%	56.4%
Americas	59.9%	35.8%
APAC	27.2%	69.7%
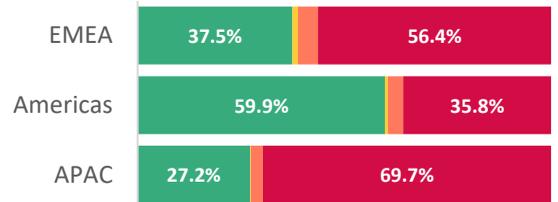
LUXURY SHOE STORES
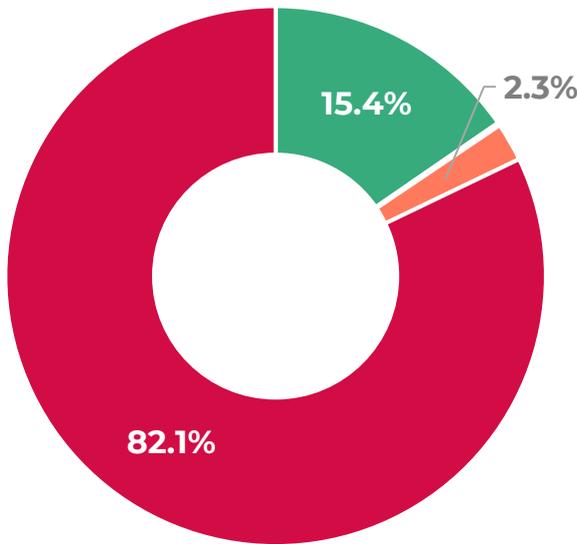
Effectively managing negative feedback is key to improving customer satisfaction. Our analysis reveals that a significant majority of negative reviews (more than 80% globally) remain unanswered, emphasizing the need for proactive engagement.

EMEA	10.8%	86.6%
Americas	24.0%	72.8%
APAC	8.3%	91.1%
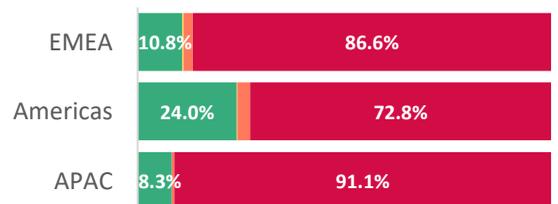
Quickly responding to negative feedback can greatly boost customer loyalty. Our findings reveal that nearly 84% of dissatisfied customers never hear back, missing a prime chance to restore trust and elevate service quality.

EMEA	19.3%	77.2%
Americas	8.4%	90.5%
APAC	15.9%	82.2%

QSR

14.0%
0.3%
1.8%
83.9%
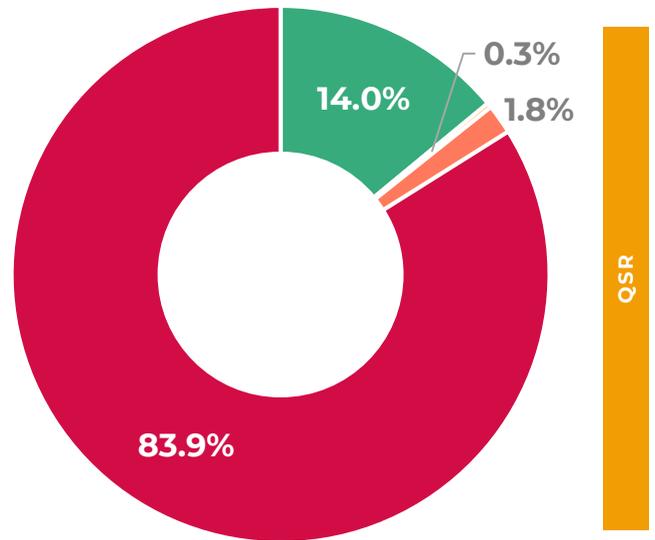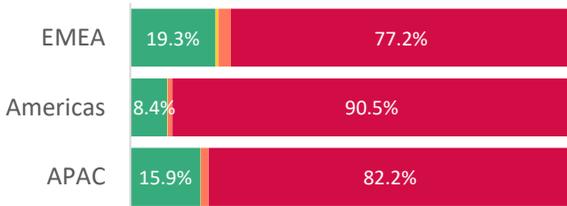
Timely follow-up on negative feedback is crucial for boosting satisfaction. Yet our study reveal that nearly 85% of customers with negative experiences never receive a response, underscoring a missed opportunity to elevate perceptions of service quality.

EMEA	15.8%	81.4%
Americas	10.3%	88.0%
APAC	12.6%	83.3%

BOOKSTORES

13.2%
0.3%
2.7%
83.8%
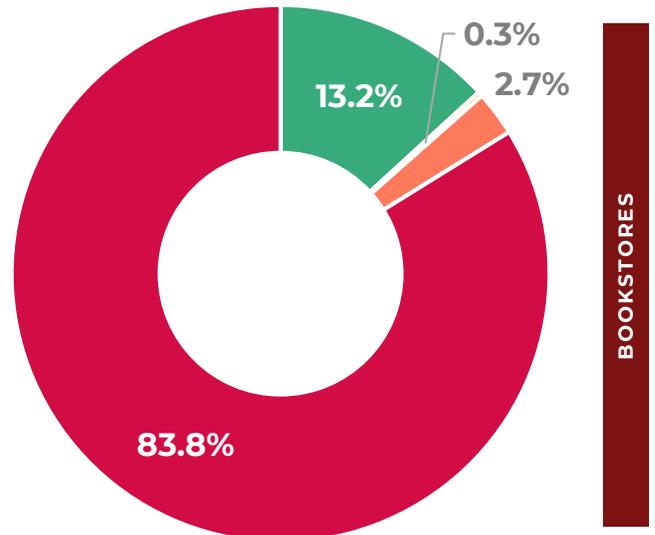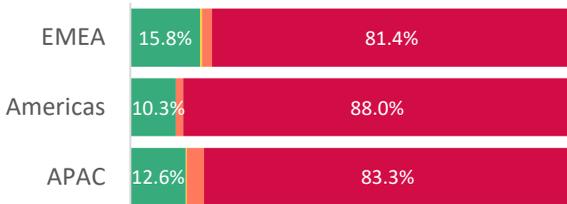
Timely follow-up on negative feedback is essential for restoring trust and driving loyalty. Yet our analysis shows that over 70% of customer complaints receive no acknowledgment, highlighting a major gap in service recovery efforts.

EMEA	30.9%	64.8%
Americas	23.9%	73.4%
APAC	15.3%	82.0%

ELECTRONICS STORES

25.6%
71.0%
0.8%
2.6%
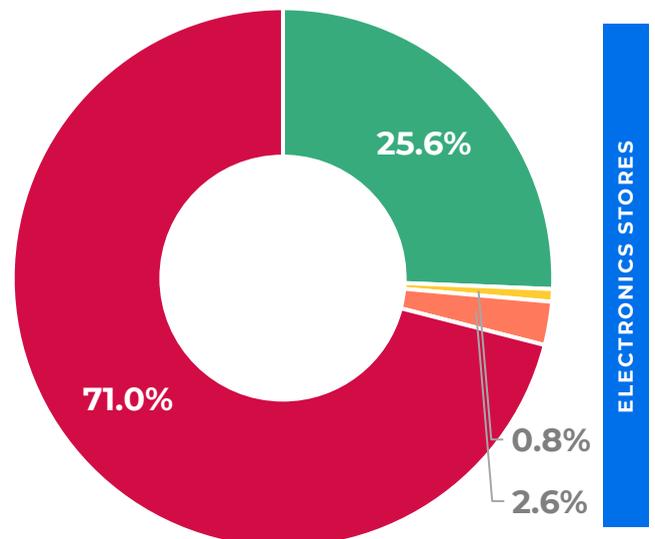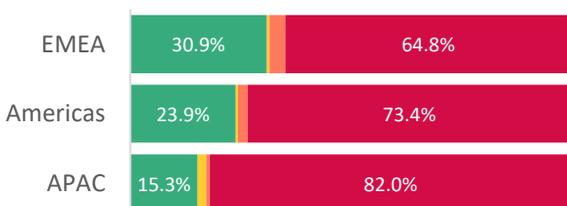
KEY
TAKEAWAYS

Star Ratings

Across the six micro-industries featured, average ratings remain strong, mostly ranging between 3.8 and 4.5, signaling generally positive customer sentiment.

Overall Pattern
Star ratings lean toward the higher end, especially in experience-led retail sectors, where scoring exceeds 4.2. Even more complex service categories stay above 3.3, indicating that dissatisfaction exists but at least is not dominant.

Differences & Improvement Opportunities
Regional variation is evident: EMEA leads overall, while the Americas post lower averages, particularly in service-intensive categories like car rentals and QSR. APAC sits in the middle, fluctuating by category. These gaps highlight opportunities to improve execution, strengthen staff consistency, and reduce operational variability.

Closing Insight
The data confirms a solid satisfaction base but also points to clear CX priorities: address regional performance gaps, reduce mid-tier outcomes signaling unmet expectations, and replicate behaviors seen in top-performing markets.

Critical Review Response Time

Across industries, a shared gap persists. Most critical reviews go unanswered, signaling weakness in service recovery.

Overall Pattern
Responses to dissatisfied customers remain low globally, leaving 70–85% of negative feedback unaddressed. Even sectors with better performance still miss opportunities to rebuild trust, indicating that proactive engagement is an underdeveloped capability across industries.

Differences & Improvement Opportunities
Response performance varies notably by region: the Americas perform better with responses to negative reviews, yet still perform below optimal levels. EMEA and APAC lag, with the highest share of ignored critical feedback. This highlights a need for stronger post-experience follow-up and more proactive engagement.

Closing Insight
The results reveal that while overall satisfaction is healthy, customers feel unheard when they voice concerns. Addressing negative reviews more consistently is a clear opportunity to strengthen trust, demonstrate accountability, and reinforce confidence in the experience.

Marketing Mix

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.

MARKETING MIX ELEMENTS

FLOWER SHOPS

Product 39.4%

People 26.0%

Process 13.4%

Place 10.1%
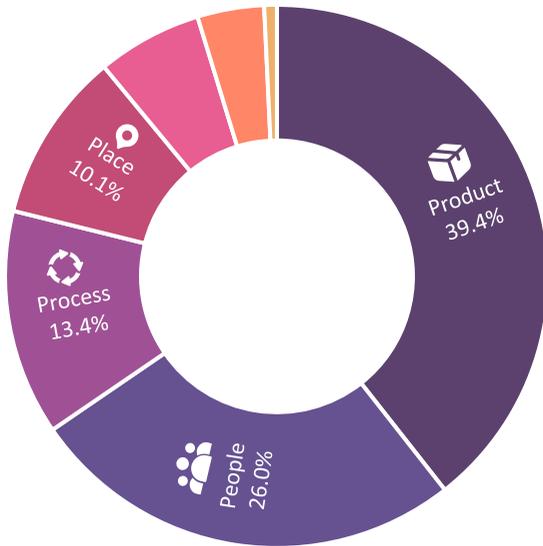
Insights derived from customer reviews highlight a strong focus on **Product, People, and Process**, which represent **almost 80%** of the analyzed elements. This emphasizes their vital impact on shaping customer satisfaction and overall experiences in flower shops.

In the flower shop sector, the **quality and diversity of floral assortments** are fundamental in shaping customer experiences. Additionally, the **expertise and friendly, attentive service** of florists, combined with **efficient order fulfillment** are crucial in leaving a lasting positive impression on customers.

CAR RENTALS

People 42.7%

Product 20.9%

Process 13.3%

Price 10.1%

Place 10.0%
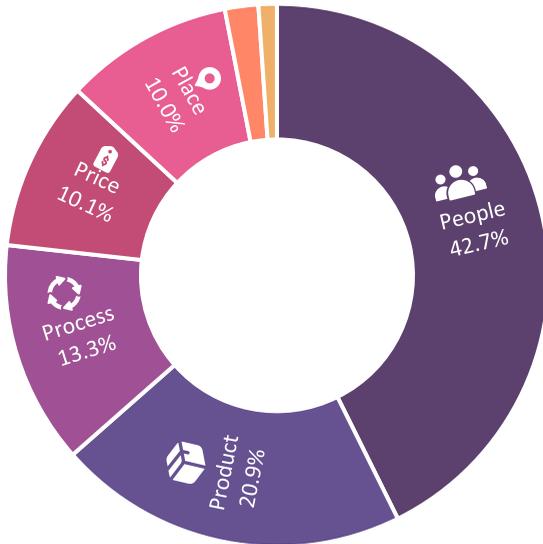
Insights from customer reviews reveal a significant emphasis on **People, Product, and Process**, which account for **nearly 80%** of the analyzed data. This underscores their critical role in shaping customer satisfaction and overall experiences in the car rentals.

In the car rental industry, the **attitude and expertise of rental agents** are the most significant factors influencing customer experiences. Additionally, the **quality and availability of vehicles**, along with **smooth processes** such as checkout and vehicle return, play a vital role in ensuring a positive and seamless customer journey.

LUXURY SHOE STORES

People 40.9%

Product 26.7%

Place 23.4%
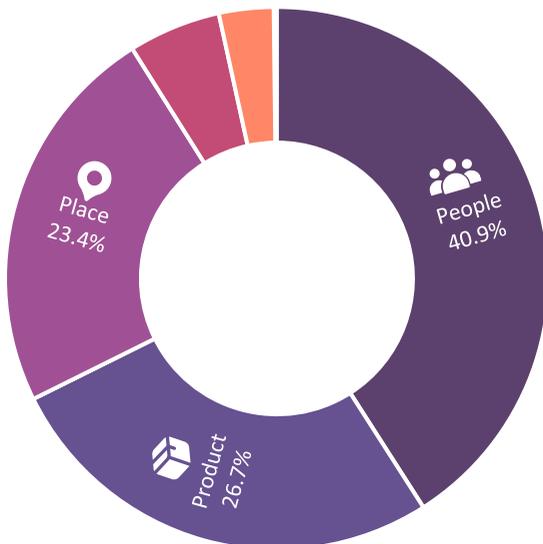
Customer reviews highlight the key impact of **People, Product, and Place**, which collectively represent **90%** of analyzed feedback. This reinforces their essential roles in influencing customer satisfaction and shaping the overall experience.

For luxury shoe stores, the customer experience is primarily shaped by the **attitude and expertise of sales personnel**, ensuring a high level of personalized service. Additionally, the **quality and diversity** of footwear play a crucial role in meeting customer expectations. A **well-designed store layout** and a **prime location** further enhance the shopping experience.

Insights from customer reviews indicate that over **80%** of feedback centers on **Product, People, and Place**, highlighting their vital role in shaping overall customer experiences in the quick service restaurant sector.

In the QSR industry, **product quality** and **staff service attitude** stand out as the biggest influencers of customer experiences. Additionally, a **variety of menu options**, a **streamlined service system** and the **restaurant atmosphere** play vital roles in ensuring a positive, seamless journey.

QSR

Product 37.4%
People 28.7%
Place 16.1%
Process 12.0%
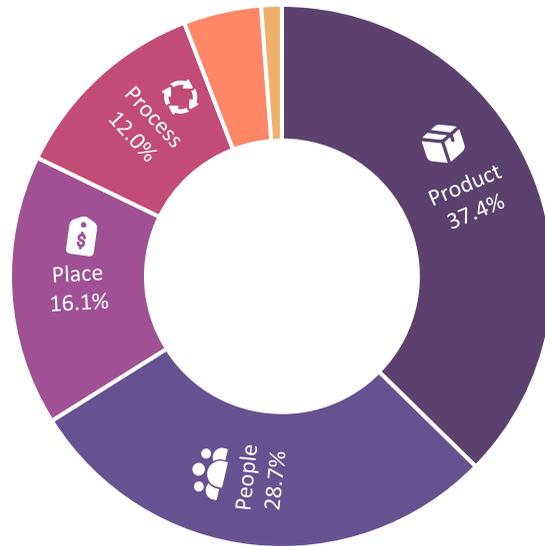
Customer review analysis highlights **People, Product, and Place** as the dominant factors, comprising over **85%** of all mentions. These factors are pivotal to reader satisfaction and memorable bookstore experiences.

In the bookstore sector, **the support and expertise of booksellers** are the most influential factors shaping customer experiences, together with the **breadth and stocked-guaranteed product selection**, as well as **inviting atmospheres** - from cozy reading nooks to vibrant event spaces. These factors ensure a positive reader journey.

BOOKSTORES

People 30.0%
Product 29.3%
Place 27.6%
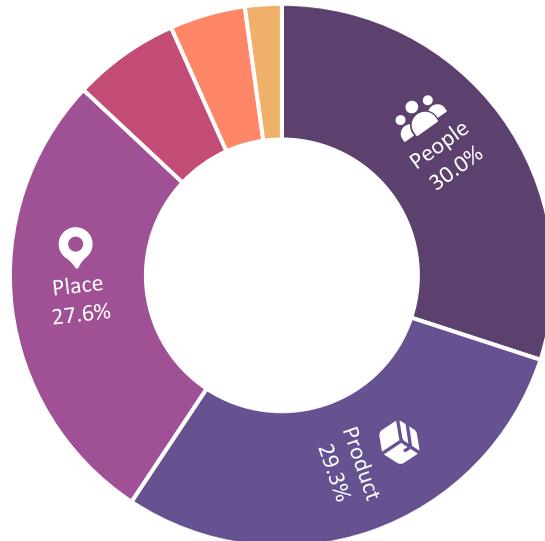
Customer feedback analysis highlights **People** which accounts for **50%** of all mentions, and shows that **People, Process, and Product** together comprise over **85%** of customer priorities. These factors are pivotal for customers taking their journey in electronic stores.

In electronics retail, **knowledgeable and friendly staff** are the most influential factors, alongside a **robust lineup of high-quality**, **readily available devices** and an **efficient after-sales support** process. Together, these pillars ensure a seamless, satisfying tech-shopping journey.

ELECTRONICS STORES

People 49.7%
Process 22.0%
Product 13.6%
Place 7.8%
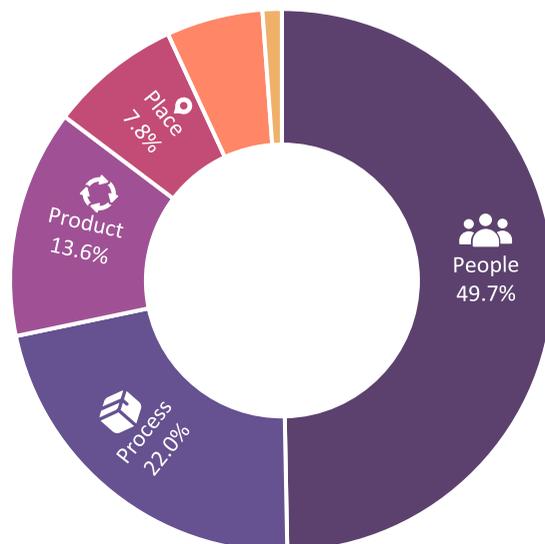
MARKETING MIX EXPERIENCES

FLOWER SHOPS
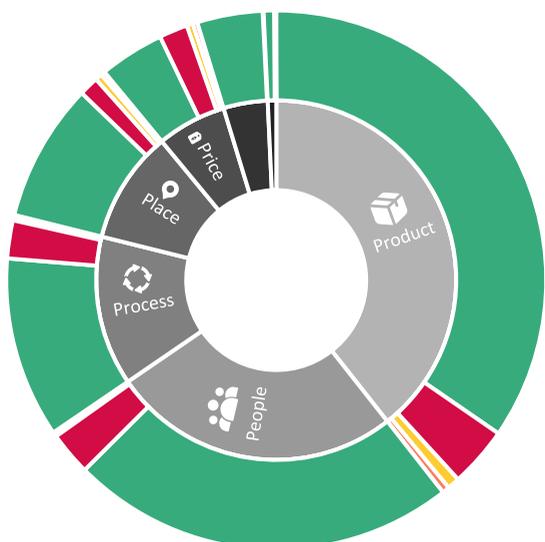
While flower shops generally perform well, a portion of the reviews - **around 11%**, indicate **areas for improvement within the Product, People, and Process** categories. Although not overwhelmingly critical, these insights point to opportunities for refining customer satisfaction in these key areas.

To address these, flower shops could focus on maintaining high-quality floral arrangements, providing ongoing training for florists to strengthen their expertise and customer interactions, and streamlining order fulfillment processes to improve efficiency.

CAR RENTALS
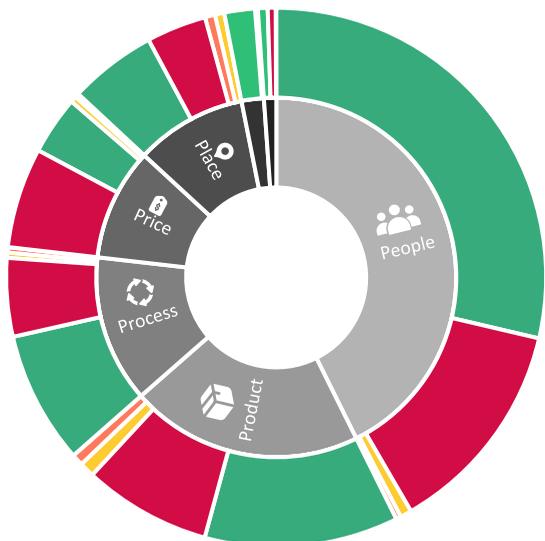
The performance in crucial areas like **People, Product, and Process** reveals significant challenges, with **over 30%** of reviews highlighting **negative experience**. The situation is even more concerning for **Price**, where **around 60%** of feedback is categorized as **critical**. These insights indicate substantial opportunities for improvement to address customer complaints.

To address these concerns, car rental companies should focus on providing greater pricing transparency to eliminate confusion and build trust. Simultaneously, training staff to enhance their expertise and knowledge, while supporting a broader variety and higher quality of vehicles, can reduce frustration.

LUXURY SHOE STORES
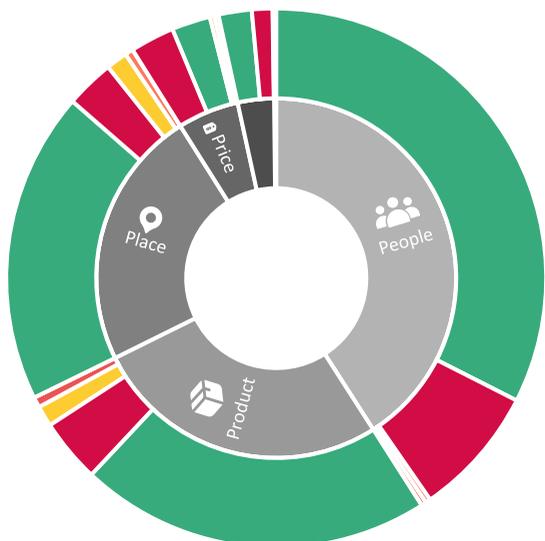
Performance in key areas such as **People, Product, and Process** reveals notable challenges, with approximately **16%** of customer reviews highlighting **negative experiences**. **Price** is an even greater concern, with **nearly 50%** of feedback categorized as **critical**. These insights indicate significant opportunities for luxury shoe retailers.

To address these issues, luxury shoe retailers should focus on pricing transparency to enhance trust and eliminate confusion. Investing in staff training to improve expertise and personalized service, while also ensuring a diverse selection of high-quality footwear, can reduce customer dissatisfaction.

Excellent   Fair   Attention   Critical

The scores for the QSR marketing mix reveal notable challenges. **Over 40%** of reviews highlight **negative experiences** in key areas such as **Product, People, and Place**, while **nearly 80% of feedback criticizes the Process** element. These insights point to significant opportunities for improvement to enhance overall customer satisfaction and loyalty.

To address these concerns, quick service restaurants should prioritize delivering consistently delicious meals and cultivating a positive staff attitude. At the same time, refining service system efficiency and upholding high cleanliness standards can help reduce customer frustration.
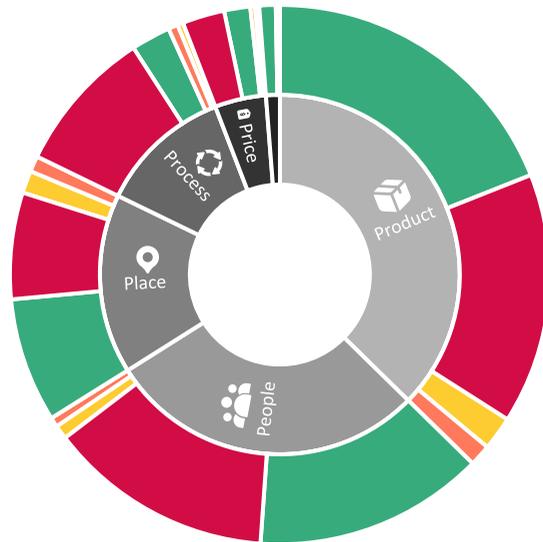
QSR

Performance across the cornerstone pillars - **People, Product, and Place** shows room for improvement, with more than **15%** of reviews flagging **negative experiences**. Even more critical is the **Process** pillar, where roughly **40% of feedback is negative**, underscoring the need to streamline operations.

Bookstores should invest in staff training to boost bookseller expertise, stock new, trendy titles, and refresh layouts with cozy nooks, clear signage, and dynamic displays to create a welcoming browsing experience. Streamlining operations, faster checkout, simpler online search, and transparent pricing will eliminate friction and build trust.
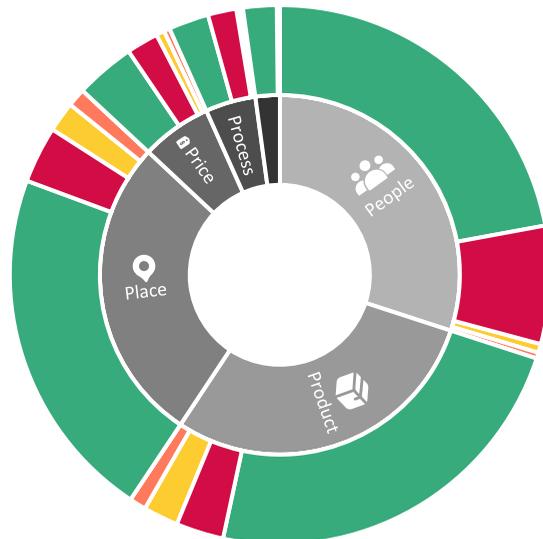
BOOKSTORES

Performance across the core 7Ps shows clear pain points: **People, Product, Place, and Price** each attract roughly **30% negative feedback**, but **Process** stands out with **nearly half** of all reviews expressing **dissatisfaction**, highlighting an urgent need to streamline operations and strengthen every touchpoint.

To turn these weaknesses into strengths, electronics retailers should invest in staff training and empower teams with product insights, optimize inventory, enhance store layouts with interactive demo zones, clarify pricing tiers, and elevate checkout and post-purchase workflows for fast, transparent service.
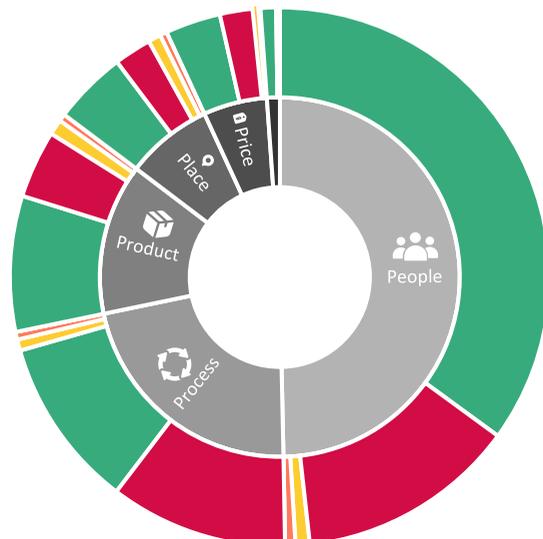
ELECTRONICS STORES

KEY
TAKEAWAYS

Marketing Mix Elements

Across all six industries, People stand out as the most influential driver of customer experience, followed by Product and Process, which together represent most customer feedback.

Overall Pattern

Customers place highest value on staff expertise, attitude, and service quality, reinforcing that human interaction shapes perceptions more than any other element. Product quality and Process efficiency also matter strongly, while Place plays a supporting role in shaping the experience context.

Differences & Improvement Opportunities

Industries differ in which pillar matters most: high-touch sectors emphasize people, while retail sectors lean heavily on product and availability. This highlights opportunities to fine-tune priorities - brands should anchor their CX strategy to the dominant pillars in their sector, while strengthening secondary ones such as process efficiency or ambience.

Closing Insight

People make the experience. Investing in staff expertise and consistency, supported by reliable products, clear pricing and efficient processes, offers the most direct pathway to boost satisfaction and perceived brand value.

Marketing Mix Experiences

Experience analysis shows that while strengths exist in each pillar, every industry faces notable pain points, particularly around process execution and pricing clarity.

Overall Pattern

Across industries, negative experience spikes commonly appear in Product, People, and Process, revealing inconsistency in execution. Process shortcomings are especially visible in service-driven sectors, while pricing dissatisfaction rises in categories with broader choice or perceived complexity.

Differences & Improvement Opportunities

Industries vary in scale and severity of issues—some sectors face concentrated pain around price transparency, others around staff capability or fulfilment flow. These gaps suggest actionable opportunities: train teams to strengthen expertise, streamline operational workflows, and improve transparency in how value is delivered.

Closing Insight

While core marketing mix pillars drive satisfaction, their weakest areas also fuel frustration. Converting these insights into targeted improvements will create more consistent and reliable customer experiences.

Customer Journey

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.

	FLOWER SHOPS	CAR RENTALS	LUXURY SHOE STORES
Awareness	**Need Identification and Exploration** Recognize need for flowers, begin searching for florists	**Need Identification and Exploration** Identify need for vehicle rental, start online search for car rental services	**Need Identification and Exploration** Recognize the need for new footwear, begin searching for options
Consideration	**Research Product Range (Online and Offline)** Visit florist shop or website, research options	**Research Rental Offerings (Online and Offline)** Compare car rental packages and offerings, visit the rental website or local agency	**Research Product Range (Online and Offline)** Visit shoe store or website to research products
Consideration	**Initial Greeting from Florist Staff** Be greeted and assisted by shop staff	**Greeting from Rental Agency Staff** Be welcomed and briefed on rental options by agency staff	**Greeting from Frontline Staff** Receive welcome and initial assistance from staff
Conversion	**Experience Flower Shop Ambience** Experience the store's atmosphere and layout	**Experience Rental Environment** Observe the cleanliness and organization of the rental location	**Experience Store Ambience** Engage with store environment, music, and visual merchandising
Conversion	**Product Range and Quality** Evaluate the freshness, variety of flowers	**Vehicle Selection and Customization** Choose a vehicle and add any additional rental options	**Product Variety and Quality** Browse through various shoe categories and brands, assess craftsmanship
Conversion	**Consultation with Florist** Get advice on flower combinations and arrangements	**Rental Terms Explanation** Review and understand rental agreement terms	**Sales Associate Consultation** Discuss shoe features, fit, and maintenance with sales associate
Conversion	**Custom Arrangement Creation** Witness arrangement being put together, make custom requests	**Pricing and Payment** Agree to the rental pricing and complete payment	**Shoe Fitting and Demo** Try on different shoes, observe mirror placements, walk in shoes to gauge comfort
Conversion	**Pricing and Payment** Conduct transaction, discuss pricing and delivery options	**Vehicle Pickup and Operation Briefing** Collect the rental car and receive instructions on features and operations	**Pricing and Payment** Complete the purchase, discuss payment options, enroll in loyalty programs
Retention	**Post-Purchase Engagement** Engage with care tips and feedback requests via follow-up contact	**Post-Rental Communication** Receive follow-up communication regarding rental experience	**Post-Purchase Communication** Respond to follow-up queries, engage with brand online
Retention	**Repeat Purchase** Return to the shop to buy more flowers or place new orders	**Loyalty Program Engagement** Engage with loyalty programs for future rental discounts	**Repeat Purchase** Take advantage of promotions and return for more purchases
Advocacy	**Word of Mouth and Loyalist Referrals** Share experiences, refer friends	**Word of Mouth and Loyalist Referrals** Recommend the rental service to others, share positive experiences	**Word of Mouth and Loyalist Referrals** Share positive experiences, recommend store to friends, participate in referral programs

QSR	BOOKSTORES	ELECTRONICS STORES	
Need Identification and Exploration Realize the need for a quick meal, start searching for QSR options	**Need Identification and Exploration** Recognizing the desire for a new read, researching book genres or specific titles	**Need Identification and Exploration** Realize the need for a new electronic device, research available options	**Awareness**
Review Menu Options (Online and Offline) Browse the restaurant's menu online or in-store, check for promotions	**Research Book Range (Online and Offline)** Visit the physical bookstore or browse online catalog	**Research Product Range (Online and Offline)** Compare devices online, visit the store to see products in person	**Consideration**
Greeting from Restaurant Staff Be greeted by staff upon entering the restaurant or placing an order	**Greeting from Bookstore Staff** Be greeted and receive assistance upon entering the bookstore or contacting online	**Welcome from Electronics Store Staff** Be greeted and assisted by knowledgeable staff	
Experience Restaurant Ambiance Experience the cleanliness and layout of the restaurant during the visit	**Experience Bookstore Environment** Absorb the atmosphere, including layout, book arrangement, and any reading areas	**Experience Electronics Store Ambience** Survey the store layout and product displays	
Order Placement and Customization Place an order at the counter or via a digital kiosk, customize menu items	**Book Availability and Variety** Evaluate the range and variety of books available	**Evaluation of Electronics and Gadgets** Examine and test various gadgets and electronics	**Conversion**
Interaction with Service Staff Interact with service staff while placing and receiving orders	**Engagement with the Staff** Engage with knowledgeable staff about book content, author backgrounds, and similar titles	**Consultation with Electronics Experts** Discuss features with the salesperson, get recommendations	
Payment and Loyalty Programs Complete the transaction and participate in loyalty programs if available	**Specialized Bookstore Services** Utilize services such as book orders, reservations, or membership clubs	**Purchase Terms and Services** Explore payment plans, warranties, and service packages	
Dining Experience and Food Quality Consume the meal at the restaurant or takeaway	**Pricing and Payment** Make purchasing decisions, inquire about price matching and return policies	**Payment and Pricing** Finalize purchase, choose payment method	
Feedback and Incentives for Next Visit Provide feedback through surveys, receive incentives for a future visit	**Post-Purchase Communication** Receive follow-up communication, provide feedback	**Post-Purchase Support and Updates** Seek product support, inquire about updates or issues	**Retention**
Seasonal Promotions and Menu Updates Engage with new menu launches and seasonal promotions	**Repeat Visit** Revisit the store for more books, ask about upcoming releases or store events	**Accessory and Upgrade Opportunities** Return for accessories, consider upgrades and trade-ins	
Word of Mouth and Loyalist Referrals Share positive experiences and recommend the restaurant to friends and family	**Word of Mouth and Loyalist Referrals** Recommend the bookstore to friends and family, post reviews, participate in referral programs	**Word of Mouth and Loyalist Referrals** Recommend the store to peers, write reviews	**Advocacy**

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

The scores across the flower shop journey indicate **strong positive** experiences in most of the stages, especially in **Product Range and Quality**, **Initial Greeting and Consultation with Florist**, as well as **Store Ambience**. However, **Payment and Pricing shows a notable drop** to fair, suggesting an area requiring attention.

The scores across the car rental customer journey indicate **significant challenges in most stages**. Particularly low scores are observed in **Rental Terms Explanation, Post-Rental Communication, and Pricing and Payment**, highlighting critical areas requiring immediate improvement.

The scores across the luxury shoe store customer journey reveal **key areas for improvement**. Notably, lower scores appear in **Greeting from Frontline Staff, Pricing and Payment, and Post-Purchase Communication**, indicating challenges in personalized service, transaction transparency, and follow-up engagement.

The QSR customer journey reveals **significant challenges at key stages** like **Conversion** and **Retention**. In particular, low scores for **Staff Interactions**, **Order Placement** and **Dining Experience**, as well as **Payment and Follow-up**, indicate critical areas that need prompt improvement to boost customer satisfaction.

The bookstore journey delivers a **mostly positive experience**, with the core conversion phase excelling thanks to **engaging ambiance**, **wide selections**, and **staff expertise**. However, these steps had varied feedback. The aspects that need immediate attention are **Bookstore Staff Greetings** and **Pricing and Payment**.

The electronics customer journey spotlights **two standout highs** – **Consultation with Experts** step and the **Advocacy stage**. At the **opposite end**, **Terms & Services and Post-Purchase Support** go down to the Attention band, signaling urgent need for improvement.

KEY
TAKEAWAYS

Customer Journey

Behind every purchase lies a storyline: customers recognize a need, explore possibilities, make decisions, and experience the outcome. Across the 6 industries featured, this journey unfolds through a similar sequence of stages.

Overall Pattern
All journeys reflects a 5-stage flow: awareness sparks interest, consideration - comparisons, conversion enables the decision, retention nurtures continuity, and advocacy appears when customers return or recommend. This pathway forms the backbone of how people move from curiosity to commitment.

Key Differences & Opportunities
The clearest variation occurs in the Conversion stage. Although customers in all industries reach a decision point, the steps they take differ. Some industries rely on consultation, others on product selection or customization, while some require clarity around terms or usage. These nuances show how different service interactions support commitment.

Closing Insight
Ultimately, customer journeys look remarkably similar across industries - the true distinction lies in how the sale moment is handled.

Moment of Truth

Evaluating the customer journey reveals where experiences exceed expectations - and where confidence breaks - highlighting the true "moments that matter" for each industry.

Overall Pattern
Most sectors demonstrate strong results early in the journey, particularly in research, environment, and initial interaction stages where product discovery and welcome impressions create momentum. Performance often lifts again in advocacy, showing customers are willing to recommend when the journey ends well.

Differences & Improvement Opportunities
The greatest fluctuations appear around conversion and retention performance, where unattended customer needs, hidden fees, or slow follow-through affect customer confidence. These pain points underline the need to refine service delivery according to customer expectations.

Closing Insight
Strengthening what happens after customers decide to buy is a critical success factor. Enhancing conversion and post-purchase interactions increases the likelihood of return behavior and reinforces brand equity.

The Marketing
Mix-Funnel Matrix

The Marketing Mix-Funnel Matrix (MFM) is a framework that analyzes CX data by integrating elements of the marketing mix (product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence) with stages of the customer journey / marketing funnel (awareness, consideration, conversion, retention, and advocacy.)

By mapping customer feedback to specific intersections within this matrix, businesses can identify root causes of negative experiences and implement targeted improvements.

THE MARKETING MIX-FUNNEL MATRIX (MFM)

FLOWER SHOPS

	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Retention	Advocacy
Product	0.48%	2.27%	27.50%	1.10%	0.07%
People	0.04%	19.88%	2.31%	0.33%	0.11%
Process	0.22%	5.46%	9.45%	4.50%	0.18%
Place	3.04%	0.33%	6.63%	0.22%	0.00%
Price	0.07%	0.81%	13.51%	0.37%	0.07%
Promotion	0.00%	0.00%	0.04%	0.15%	0.00%
Physical Evidence	0.07%	0.04%	0.59%	0.18%	0.00%

The MFM shows that **Product issues during the Conversion stage** generate the highest share of negative comments (**27.5%**), making it the most critical pain point in the **flower shop** journey. Notable concern also surfaces around **Price - Conversion** and **People - Consideration**, pointing to weaknesses in both pricing clarity and early staff interaction.

CAR RENTALS

	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Retention	Advocacy
People	0.08%	23.42%	6.77%	5.69%	0.67%
Product	0.24%	1.39%	18.99%	0.74%	0.12%
Process	0.04%	0.74%	9.13%	3.25%	0.02%
Price	0.03%	0.67%	14.95%	1.17%	0.07%
Place	0.79%	2.09%	7.05%	0.09%	0.03%
Physical Evidence	0.03%	0.09%	0.24%	0.75%	0.19%
Promotion	0.04%	0.04%	0.06%	0.07%	0.24%

Negative feedback peaks in the **Consideration** stage, where **People** factors account for **23.4%** of all **Car Rental** complaints, signaling that early staff interactions heavily influence customer decisions. Significant concerns also emerge during **Conversion**, particularly around **Price and Product**, pointing to pain points tied to cost transparency and vehicle suitability.

LUXURY SHOE STORES

	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Retention	Advocacy
People	0.00%	29.41%	16.18%	1.07%	0.00%
Product	0.00%	5.08%	15.64%	0.13%	0.00%
Place	1.60%	0.80%	11.36%	0.13%	0.00%
Price	0.13%	0.67%	13.50%	0.00%	0.00%
Process	0.00%	0.40%	2.67%	1.07%	0.00%
Promotion	0.00%	0.00%	0.13%	0.00%	0.00%
Physical Evidence	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Luxury Shoes data shows a clear concentration of dissatisfaction around the **People** element in the **Consideration** stage, which captures **29.4%** of total negative feedback. Further frustration appears across **People and Product** during **Conversion**, pointing to challenges with staff engagement and product fit during the moment of purchase.

	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Retention	Advocacy
Product	0.13%	2.84%	29.82%	0.23%	0.01%
People	0.01%	15.35%	13.31%	0.51%	0.01%
Place	1.40%	0.38%	11.34%	0.29%	0.01%
Process	0.09%	1.59%	14.78%	1.99%	0.07%
Price	0.02%	2.12%	2.70%	0.64%	0.00%
Promotion	0.02%	0.08%	0.02%	0.18%	0.07%
Physical Evidence	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

QSR results show that **Product** issues during **Conversion** account for the largest share of negative comments **(29.8%)**, making the ordering and food-handoff moment the key friction point. Additionally, **People** - **Consideration** and **Process** - **Conversion** highlight ongoing challenges with service speed and quality, and the welcoming from QSR staff.

	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Retention	Advocacy
People	0.01%	28.92%	12.38%	0.98%	0.15%
Product	0.10%	0.43%	15.28%	0.34%	0.01%
Place	1.26%	2.85%	14.67%	0.64%	0.01%
Price	0.01%	0.19%	10.98%	0.10%	0.07%
Process	0.04%	1.21%	7.67%	1.08%	0.09%
Promotion	0.06%	0.03%	0.21%	0.16%	0.06%
Physical Evidence	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

In **bookstores**, the **People** element during **Consideration** stands out sharply, accounting for **28.9%** of all complaints and highlighting the importance of helpful, attentive staff during browsing. **Conversion**-stage issues tied to **Product** and **Place** follow, revealing friction around book availability and variety, store layout, and overall navigation.

	Awareness	Consideration	Conversion	Retention	Advocacy
People	0.27%	22.44%	11.93%	5.33%	0.94%
Process	0.30%	2.10%	9.79%	20.16%	0.78%
Product	0.27%	2.21%	5.87%	4.12%	0.05%
Place	1.26%	0.67%	3.82%	1.08%	0.12%
Price	0.07%	0.45%	5.16%	0.37%	0.04%
Promotion	0.01%	0.05%	0.23%	0.04%	0.04%
Physical Evidence	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

The MFM shows that **People** factors in **Consideration** drive the most dissatisfaction **(22.4%)**, underscoring the importance of the staff consultation and assistance during the electronics store journey. Additionally, issues related to **People** - **Conversion** and **Process - Retention** highlight pain points around inconsistent service quality and post-purchase handling.

KEY
TAKEAWAYS

The Marketing Mix-Funnel Matrix (MFM)

The MFM reveals where customer experience weaknesses originate by connecting moments in the journey with the elements most responsible for dissatisfaction.

Overall Pattern

Across industries, negative feedback consistently concentrates around People, Product, and Process, especially when linked to decision-making stages where customers commit. This indicates that customers react most strongly when service interactions, product suitability, or operational clarity fall short at points where confidence is needed. Taken together, the pattern suggests that dissatisfaction is less about isolated issues and more about how well these core elements enable confidence at pivotal moments.

Differences & Improvement Opportunities

Where industries diverge is which of these elements drives friction at each stage. Some sectors experience People challenges during consideration, others face Product issues during purchase, while several encounter Process gaps in retention. These variations show that although the same themes recur, their impact surfaces at different points in the journey, creating industry-specific improvement priorities.

Closing Insight

Addressing the elements that break down at key journey moments - particularly around decision-making - will reduce friction, strengthen confidence, and elevate loyalty across industries.

Meet the Experts

Throughout the year, Synergistic CX welcomed six remarkable customer experience leaders, each bringing a unique perspective, shaped by their experience, hands-on expertise and strategic insight.

In this edition, we revisit one key topic from each expert - spotlighting the ideas, methods, and guiding principles that shaped our conversations and revealed what truly drives CX excellence. Together, their insights form a multifaceted view of the customer journey, from human connection to operational precision.

As a special guest of our Christmas edition, Jill Spencer adds an inspiring forward-looking perspective, offering a glimpse into the future of customer experience and the aspects that will shape the year ahead.

BALANCED CX STRATEGY:
THE T-SHAPED APPROACH TO CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The importance of combining subjective and objective measurements to create a balanced and effective approach to customer experience was vividly illustrated by Steven Di Pietro. He emphasized how these complementary methodologies can uncover actionable insights to improve business performance.

> *"The horizontal axis is your broad data, but it's shallow. The vertical axis is deeper, diagnostic data. You need both to create a complete picture of your customer experience."*
>
> **– Steven Di Pietro**

Steven introduced the concept of the "T-shaped" approach to CX measurement, emphasizing the synergy between broad, subjective data and deep, diagnostic insights. "*The horizontal axis gives you immediate access to a lot of data – reviews, ratings, and general feedback – and it's cheap compared to other methods*" he said. However, he noted that while this data is abundant, it often lacks the depth needed to uncover specific issues.

The vertical axis complements this by diving deeper into diagnostic tools like mystery shopping and audits. Steven elaborated, "*The vertical axis is deeper, diagnostic data, like mystery shopping. You need both to create a complete picture of your customer experience.*" This approach ensures businesses don't rely solely on surface-level sentiment but use it as a foundation for targeted exploration.

Steven highlighted the cost-effectiveness of starting with horizontal data, which allows businesses to identify general trends and potential problems quickly. "*The beauty of the horizontal axis is how easy it is to access and analyze - it's a great starting point*" he noted.

Photo credit: MSPA EA
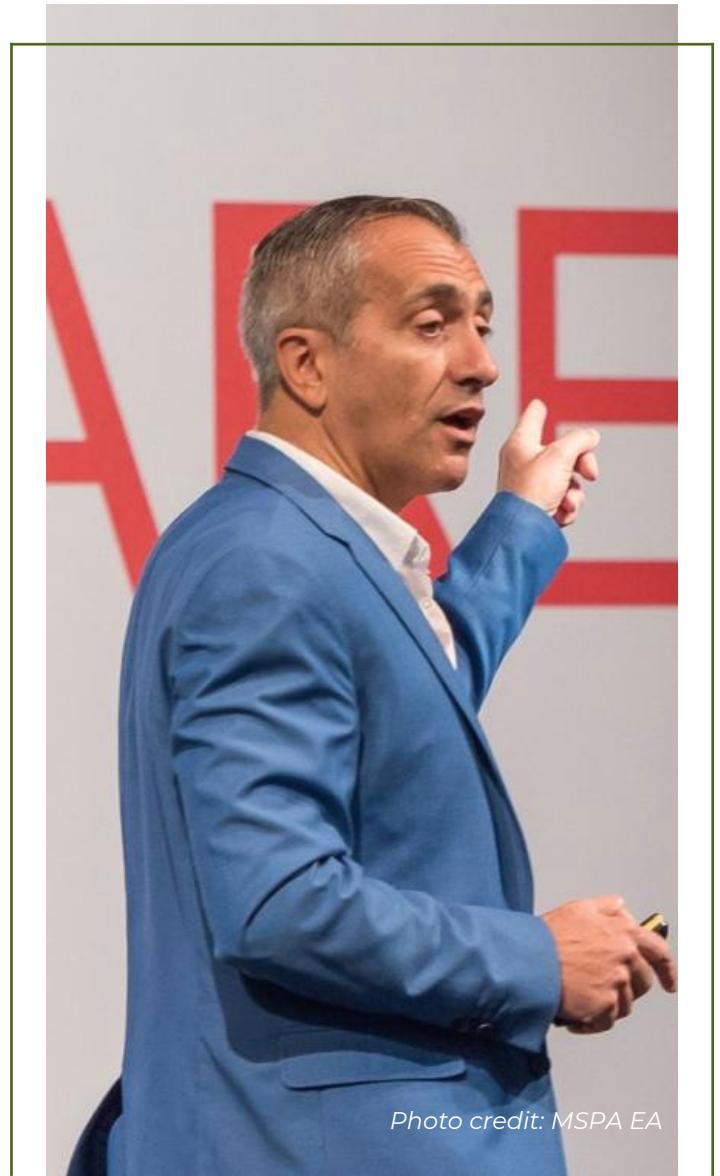
However, he cautioned that without the vertical axis, businesses risk addressing symptoms rather than the root causes of issues.

The vertical axis offers clarity and precision in diagnosing specific areas for improvement. "*The vertical measurements allow you to see where in the journey you're falling short. It's not about more data; it's about actionable depth.*" Steven explained. This combination of breadth and depth enables companies to align their resources effectively.

Ultimately, Steven underscored the need for both layers of insight to optimize customer experience strategies. "*When you balance broad data with deep diagnostics, you get the confidence to know you're measuring the right things and fixing what truly matters,*" he concluded. This balanced approach ensures businesses can deliver meaningful improvements while maintaining cost efficiency.

Industry Studies

Online Reviews

VoC Surveys

Mystery Shops

Internal Audits
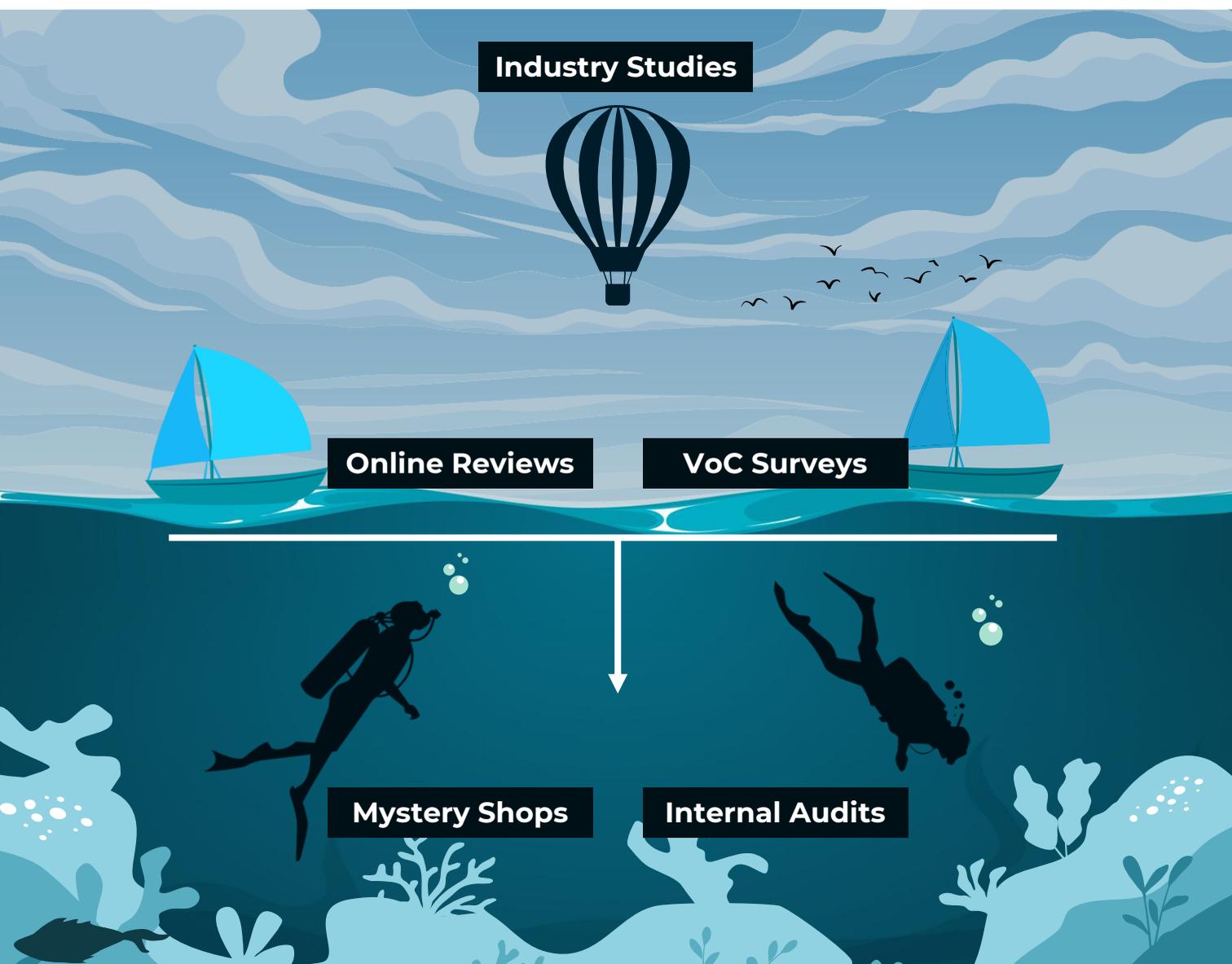
ELIMINATING FRICTION:
THE CORNERSTONE OF A SEAMLESS CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Friction in the customer journey, from lengthy processes to unclear terms, can significantly impact satisfaction. Nabil Rizkallah outlines how car rental companies can eliminate these barriers to create smoother and more enjoyable experiences.

"High friction comes from archaic processes – the [car rental] industry is waiting to be renewed."

– Nabil Rizkallah

Eliminating friction is a critical priority for the car rental industry as customers increasingly expect smooth and efficient experiences. According to Nabil Rizkallah, high friction remains one of the most significant challenges, often rooted in outdated systems and practices. "*High friction comes from archaic processes - the industry is waiting to be renewed*" he explained. The persistence of such inefficiencies highlights the urgent need for companies to redesign customer journeys to meet modern expectations.

Nabil provided an example of how these outdated processes manifest during a typical rental experience: "*Let's say you chose the car online, went to the place at 3:00 in the morning to the airport. After filling many requirements online, you go there, and they take 10 minutes to scan your driver's license and give you forms to fill. That's high friction.*" Even when customers take steps to expedite the process online, they are often met with delays and repetitive tasks at the physical rental location, frustrating their efforts for a seamless transaction.

Photo credit: MSPA EA

Another significant source of friction arises from poor service responsiveness and disempowered frontline staff. Nabil pointed out, "*The people you are interacting with usually are not empowered enough to solve any of your problems.*" Whether it involves a change in reservation, an issue with the vehicle or additional services like car seats, delays in resolution create unnecessary frustration. "*The ability to solve problems is clearly a pain point and a friction point for customers.*" he added.

Nabil also described how this friction stems from legacy systems and a lack of streamlined processes: "*What we're seeing is the friction of an old industry that would at some point need to rebuild itself completely.*" Companies still relying on manual systems are failing to meet the expectations of digitally-native customers. As he noted, "*This pipeline or this journey shows that somebody, somewhere, has to redesign the journey because customers are not happy with it.*"

By addressing these outdated practices, empowering staff to take decisive action, and redesigning customer journeys with modern tools and streamlined processes, car rental companies can significantly reduce friction.

AI-DRIVEN PRECISION:
THE ROLE OF SENSOR-BASED SOLUTIONS IN LUXURY RETAIL

Luxury retail is undergoing a transformation where AI-powered monitoring, automation, and real-time analytics are redefining customer experience. Kapel Malhotra explains how AI-driven insights are enhancing store efficiency, optimizing customer interactions, and eliminating blind spots in luxury retail operations.

"Using tailored customization, listening to trends, and connecting multiple data points will keep brands ahead of the game."

– Kapel Malhotra

Luxury retail is evolving rapidly, with AI-driven analytics, automated monitoring, and real-time insights redefining how brands engage with their customers. Kapel Malhotra sheds light on how AI is enhancing efficiency, improving customer interactions, and eliminating blind spots in luxury retail operations. "*Using tailored customization, listening to trends, and connecting multiple data points will keep brands ahead of the game.*"

AI is transforming luxury retail by integrating intelligent monitoring systems that provide deeper insights into customer behavior and operational efficiency. Kapel Malhotra explains how AI-driven activity recognition is revolutionizing store management. "*Our AI sits on existing CCTV cameras, performing activity recognition. It monitors when a store opens, whether pre-opening preparations are done, and if all operational tasks are completed before the first customer walks in.*" This level of automation ensures that luxury retailers maintain high service standards and operational readiness.

AI-powered analytics enhance decision-making by providing real-time insights into customer interactions. Kapel describes how AI enables retailers to track foot traffic patterns and footfalls-versus-conversion rates with greater accuracy. "*So, it's looking at 100 customers at a particular store and 20 have gone out with a bag. So, it's showing data that 80 people have *not* bought. Now, that's very critical information because you'd always have information of 20 buying, but you would not have information of 80 not buying.*" This data-driven approach allows luxury brands to refine their in-store experiences, ensuring that potential customers are not lost due to inefficiencies.

Another critical aspect of AI in luxury retail is its ability to nudge employees towards proactive engagement. Malhotra highlights a case where AI helped optimize staff allocation in a fast-food environment. "*If a queue is getting too long, the AI system nudges employees from different areas of the store to open more tills. So, now it's becoming like an intelligent system where the camera is not only capturing and you're doing a postmortem if something went wrong.*" By implementing AI-driven nudging systems, luxury retailers can ensure seamless customer service without requiring continuous human oversight.

Looking ahead, AI's role in luxury retail will continue to expand, offering brands unparalleled insights into customer preferences and operational efficiency. As Malhotra puts it, "*Luxury retail must embrace predictive personalization, tailor offerings in real time, and refine experiences continuously. AI provides the tools to make that possible, ensuring that every interaction meets the high expectations of luxury customers.*"

By embracing AI-driven insights, luxury retailers can create a seamless blend of personalization, efficiency, and innovation. These technologies not only refine customer engagement but also optimize in-store operations, ensuring that every touchpoint aligns with the expectations of high-end customers. As competition intensifies, brands that leverage AI for predictive analytics, real-time monitoring, and strategic decision-making will gain a competitive edge. The future of luxury retail lies in data-driven excellence, where AI empowers brands to craft experiences that are not just transactional, but truly exceptional.

THE DOUBLE LENS:
OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CX MEASUREMENT

A dual-lens CX strategy pairs mystery shopping data with customer feedback to answer both "are brand standards being followed?" and "how do guests really feel?" Daniel Cosgrove's approach combines these objective and subjective methods, which uncovers hidden gaps and pinpoints the most critical improvement areas, driving more effective, lasting experience enhancements.

> *"[Brands] pick one or the other…but they don't usually do both."*
>
> **– Daniel Cosgrove**

Relying solely on customer reviews creates a dangerous blind spot: brands assume high five-star ratings mean flawless execution, but they often ignore whether employees truly follow brand protocols. As Daniel points out, "*The problem that they miss a lot is the measurement piece in-between.*" Without an objective audit mechanism, gaps in critical procedures and service routines go unnoticed. Leadership sees satisfied guest responses and assumes standards are met, yet hidden process failures continue to compromise operational consistency and customer trust.

Mystery shopping provides the much-needed deep insight, testing employees against predefined operational criteria in real customer encounters. Daniel explains: "*So, you mystery shop them…you're mystery shopping [staff] to make sure they're doing what you're asking them to do.*" These secret evaluations offer a standardized benchmark - confirming whether upsell offers are presented, custom orders handled correctly, and compliance steps are executed uniformly across all locations.

Yet mystery shoppers, following a strict script, cannot capture the full emotional texture of genuine guest interactions - tone, warmth, and spontaneous feedback. Real customers provide that soft lens, revealing subtleties audits miss. Daniel vividly illustrates this contrast: "*If I would take a voice of the customer survey, I would say he's great, friendly, food was good, engaging. Would I come back? Yeah. Would I tell my friends? If I took a mystery shop, he would have failed. He never offered me a beer, and the place has brewhouse in its name! He never suggested an appetizer. And so, he would have failed miserably.*" Only by combining both methods can brands also detect when procedures are technically followed yet the overall experience still leaves guests underwhelmed.

Because budgets and resources are limited, especially in the margins of quick service restaurants, many companies feel compelled to choose between one method or the other. Daniel observes, "*They pick one or the other... but they don't usually do both.*" To bridge this gap cost-effectively, he recommends beginning with a small, targeted pilot: deploy mystery shopping at high-impact or underperforming locations, while simultaneously launching concise VoC surveys among corresponding customer segments. Analyzing where the two lenses diverge most sharply directs resources to the fixes that will yield the greatest ROI.

Over time, forward-thinking brands realize that integrating both approaches is essential for a complete view of CX performance. As Daniel notes, "*They find a way to do both and get it. If they're ambitious, like, you know, the client, Pollo Campero, who's going to be on later, we're doing everything - like every piece of*

drive-in, takeout, delivery, phone, every, every, every customer touchpoint is being measured. And then that data is being analyzed. And then against Voice of the Customer because they're super, super committed to that experience."

By fusing objective mystery shops with subjective customer feedback, QSR businesses gain both the "what" and the "why" behind performance gaps – enabling precise training updates, sharper operational improvements, and richer, more consistent guest experiences at every touchpoint.

10 STEPS TO OMNICHANNEL EXCELLENCE:
DESIGNING SEAMLESS JOURNEYS

Orchestrating seamless experiences across web, mobile, and in-store channels requires a disciplined framework. Without it, brands risk disconnected journeys and frustrated customers. Lina Schölin distills her research into a 10-step model that guides teams from defining core problems to embedding continuous optimization, ensuring every touchpoint contributes to a unified, omnichannel experience.

> *"I did a research paper on how retailers could increase their omnichannel customer experience. In short, it's a 10-step process model."*
>
> **– Lina Schölin**

Defining the challenges. "*Step 1 is to define what problem you are helping the customer solve. Step 2 is to research and understand your customers and define the key elements of their experience. What do they want to feel before, during and after. And define the optimal customer journey in each channel.*" Lina explains. This ensures every action addresses genuine customer needs and concrete business challenges.

Applying cross-channel use-cases. "*Step 3 – Identify customer needs in each channel through case studies and apply the elements that are similar to each channel.*" Lina adds. By examining real customer behaviors, teams identify universal experience elements.

Co-creating service blueprints. "*And then Step 4 is to build a customer journey, together with your employees, by using a service blueprint.*" Lina notes. Involving frontline staff ensures the designed processes are practical. This collaborative approach also empowers employees with a deeper understanding of each step, turning them into CX champions.

Setting standards and handling complaints. "*Step 5 is to form the common basis between, or to find a minimum level of, hygiene factors between the channels. And some factors will of course remain channel-specific.*" Lina points out. Establishing these baselines ensures that core service elements, like response times, branding consistency, and basic functionalities, are uniformly reliable across every touchpoint. "*And step 6 is about handling complaints, which should be a totally separate channel. And here we have the opportunity to turn a dissatisfied customer into an ambassador.*" Lina continues. By treating complaints as their own strategic pathway, organizations can recover trust swiftly and convert negative experiences into positive advocacy.

Leadership, Teams, and Continuous Measurement. "*Step 7 is implementation and requires commitment from top management. And it is my belief that step 8 is to have a dedicated Customer Experience Manager who brings together the overall picture across the different channels.*" Lina insists. Together, these steps ensure not only top-level endorsement but also a single point of accountability – aligning resources, driving cross-functional execution and keeping the omnichannel roadmap on course.

Empowering employees. "*And step 9 is about your employees. They are your brand, and they create the customer experience. Like in the bookstores. If you don't greet customers, they won't be satisfied. So regardless of channel, focus on recruitment, onboarding, and feedback for the employees so they can evolve and develop.*" Lina reminds. By investing in targeted training, clear role expectations and continuous feedback, organizations transform employees into proactive CX ambassadors, ensuring every interaction, from a friendly greeting to problem resolution, consistently reflects the brand promise.

Measuring and interacting. "*And the last step is where you measure your performance with the Voice-of-Customer and objective customer experience tools such as Mystery Shopping. Cross the data, find the synergies, and put the time to analyze and act. And foremost, communicate the KPIs internally to keep this alive and give constant feedback to the organization.*" Lina concludes. By blending qualitative insights with quantitative metrics, CX leaders can uncover patterns and prioritize continuous improvements, embedding a culture of data-driven excellence. This disciplined approach not only sharpens strategic focus but also empowers teams to make informed, customer-centric decisions at every level.

PRODUCT RECOMMENDATION:
## OPTIMIZING SUGGESTIONS FOR HIGHER CONVERSIONS

High-ticket electronics sales hinge on which products the staff recommend and whether anything negative is expressed, which can undermine purchase rates. Andy Firth illustrates that targeted mystery shopping audits of product recommendations expose these blind spots, revealing precise behaviors that, when corrected, can drive significant lifts in sales.

> *"If someone goes into a store and says I'm looking for a new TV... If the sales person recommends Brand A, that is likely to increase the chance of that sale being converted over a brand which is not recommended."*
>
> **– Andy Firth**

Highlighting the power of first impressions reveals their outsized influence on customer decisions. As Andy explains, "If someone goes into a store and says I'm looking for a new TV... If the sales person recommends Brand A, that is likely to increase the chance of that sale being converted over a brand which is not recommended." By homing in on this pivotal exchange, retailers can identify which recommendation and demo techniques most effectively convert interest into purchase, ensuring training resources focus on these high-impact moments.

Ensuring mystery-shop briefs mirror genuine customer needs guarantees unfiltered insights into associate behavior. "You've got to make sure that the shoppers are going in, they're meeting the profile of a typical buyer... and normally you wouldn't allow them to say, 'I'm looking for this brand.' You would leave it open," Andy advises. Recruiting shoppers whose demographics, intent, and budget match real in-store visitors uncovers hidden biases and highlights opportunities to refine briefing protocols and scripts, to align staff engagement with authentic customer expectations.
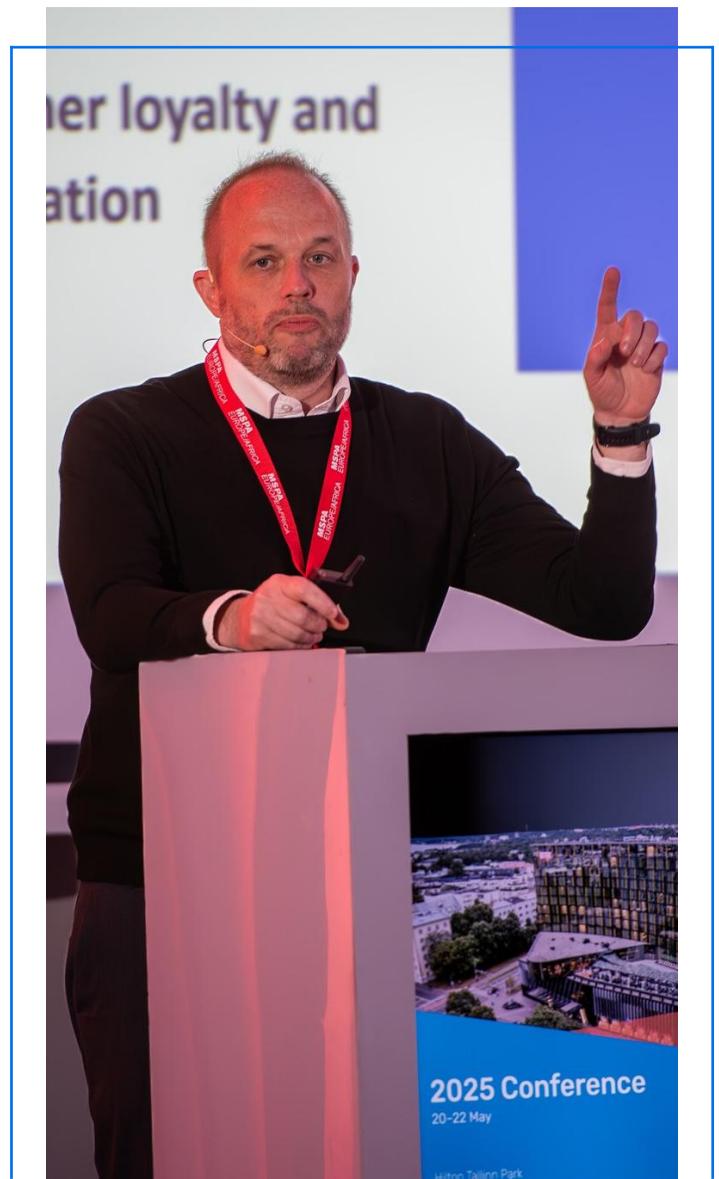
Treating product recommendation as its own audit module brings clarity and precision to coaching efforts. "This is what we would call product recommendation mystery shopping…" Andy explained. By dissecting each recommendation interaction – feature comparisons, demo depth, objection handling, and upsell prompts – retailers gather granular data on which conversational pivots resonate or create friction. These insights inform bespoke training modules, update scripting guidelines, and drive role-play exercises that amplify staff confidence and consistency across all device categories.

"Product recommendation is a specific type of mystery shopping requiring, where the assessment shines a light on specific behaviors," Andy emphasizes. *By elevating recommendation as its own KPI, retailers transform coaching from scattershot feedback into a precision tool – tracking progress in unified dashboards, holding teams to a clear standard, and celebrating improvements when conversion rates climb. Embedding recommendation excellence into the company culture ensures that every customer benefits from consistent, high-quality guidance.*

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MYSTERY SHOPPING PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

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MSPA is the representative Trade Association for companies involved in the Mystery Shopping industry. The Association operates on a regional basis worldwide, with chapters located in America, Europe/Africa and Asia/Pacific. Member companies unite as a common body for the purpose of strengthening the Mystery Shopping industry through combined efforts and actions.

OUR GOAL

Our goal is to improve and stimulate the acceptance, performance, reputation and use of Mystery Shopping services worldwide.

The primary goals of MSPA are to:
- Establish professional standards and ethics for the industry
- Educate providers, clients and shoppers to improve quality of service
- Improve the image of the industry through public relations and professional conduct
- Promote members to other industry associations and prospective clients

With over 450 member companies worldwide, our diverse membership includes marketing, research and merchandising companies, private investigation firms and training organisations as well as companies that specialise in using, supporting and providing Mystery Shopping services.

INTERESTED IN JOINING US?

Find out more www.mspa-ea.org

Or by contacting Nikky Alkemade Executive Director by email or phone:

Email: nikky@mspa-ea.org

Phone: +31-70-358 73 71

MSPA Europe/Africa
P.O. Box 82276
2508 EG The Hague
The Netherlands

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- Worldwide networking opportunities with industry experts
- Support with arbitration if conflicts arise with other members
- Annual EU/Africa conference attendance - discuss best practice with 250 other members from 50 countries across Europe and Africa
- Discounts on all worldwide MSPA conferences
- Access to education workshops and learning modules for your employees

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MSPA
MEMBER

FULL MEMBERSHIP

As a full member you'll have an unlimited opportunity to connect, learn and share with the industry leaders in Mystery Shopping techniques and working practices. Full membership costs € 550 per year and provides you with access to all the benefits that MSPA has to offer, including the members area of the website which contains useful features such as our Knowledge Centre, FAQ, Hints & Tips, 'Ask the Governor' Q&A and Jobs Board.

MSPA
CANDIDATE
MEMBER

CANDIDATE MEMBERSHIP

We recognise that some companies that are new to the Mystery Shopping industry still need our support to grow their client base. Therefore, we offer Candidate membership to companies that have been trading for less than 2 years but meet all other criteria, at a cost of € 325 er year. Candidate Members are encouraged to participate fully in MSPA activities and may progress to Full Membership in the future.

MSPA
ASSOCIATE MEMBER

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

MSPA offers Associate Membership to companies or individuals involved in the industry, but who don't directly offer Mystery Shopping services. Associate Members include technology vendors, academics, training companies, HR agencies and other companies that cooperate with or sell products/services to Mystery Shopping providers. This category of membership costs € 550 per Year.

All MSPA membership applicants need to provide proof that they operate professionally and with integrity before they are accepted into our organisation. More detailed information on member benefits and criteria for each membership category can be found on our website, however as a minimum you must be able to demonstrate:
- *A reputation for excellence in operation*
- *Agreement to abide by and to apply the MSPA Code of Professional Ethics*
- *Agreement to abide by and to apply the MSPA Code of Professional Standards*
- *Official proof of business existence (i.e. articles of incorporation, insurance records, or business license)*

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TIMELESS CX FOUNDATIONS:
DATA SYNERGY, FOCUS, TRUST, AND CLEAR OBJECTIVES

During the MSPA Asia/Pacific Conference in Tokyo, Jill Spencer emphasized the need for focus, connected data, and outcome-driven CX. She shared how programs become more powerful when organizations define clear objectives, layer multiple data sources, and use technology as an enabler. Her perspective underscores a shift toward purposeful measurement, trusted advisory relationships, and bringing CX's practical business value.

> *Building trusted advisor relationships, combined with clear objectives, is going to be the timeless solution in terms of success in our industry."*
>
> **– Jill Spencer**

Photo credit: MSPA EA

Jill's journey began on the retail floor, where mystery shopping became her first blueprint for elevating performance. "*I was on the receiving end of mystery shopping reports for many years… and I managed to increase my sales,*" she explained. "*I really wanted to work in this industry and swap sides, and became a provider of mystery shopping,*" Jill added. Her ability to convert insights into measurable results shaped her client-centric philosophy.

But CX today extends far beyond a single methodology. Jill noted that the most significant shift in recent years has been the move toward layered data ecosystems, where mystery shopping findings sit alongside online reviews, employee insights, and internal performance metrics. "*We don't just look at mystery shopping in isolation,*" she said. "*Everything is available within the same dashboard… and we can look at other data streams and make a very compelling argument for customer experience.*"

This synergy is not theoretical – it directly fuels ROI. Jill illustrated this with a case from a global sneaker retailer, her client at Proinsight UK. Initially, every evaluation

question held basic weight, but after several waves of data, one insight stood out: a single behavioral interaction – associates asking whether customers wanted to try shoes on – created measurable lifts in satisfaction, likelihood to return, and revenue growth. "*Just by looking at one question... we could see a huge increase in sales and return likelihood*," she said. The power came not from the question itself, but from correlating mystery shopping, sales, employee data, and customer reviews into one cohesive narrative.

A second example from the pet retail sector revealed another critical truth: improvement requires visibility across the entire customer journey, including areas not covered in-store. Review analysis exposed weaknesses in after-sales experience – areas competitors also struggled with. Mystery shopping targeted the gap, training was adapted, and subsequent review analytics confirmed measurable improvement. The result was less operational waste, stronger customer satisfaction, and a replicable model for journey-level optimization.

Beyond data, Jill spoke candidly about technology's role. Rather than viewing digital tools as solutions, she sees them as catalysts that provide synergy and speed. "*I don't see technology as the solution as much as the enabler*," she emphasized. By starting with clearly defined objectives – whether revenue growth, cost reduction, or brand equity improvement – companies can avoid the "noise" of overwhelming choices and direct technology toward outcomes that matter.

The most enduring theme Jill returned to was purpose. Many organizations, she noted, collect data without understanding what they want to achieve, resulting in fragmented insights and unclear direction. "I would urge everyone commissioning customer experience research to have an objective in mind," she explained.

This clarity, paired with "*building trusted advisor relationships,*" which she described as "*the timeless solution in terms of success in our industry,*" creates the foundation for meaningful CX transformation.

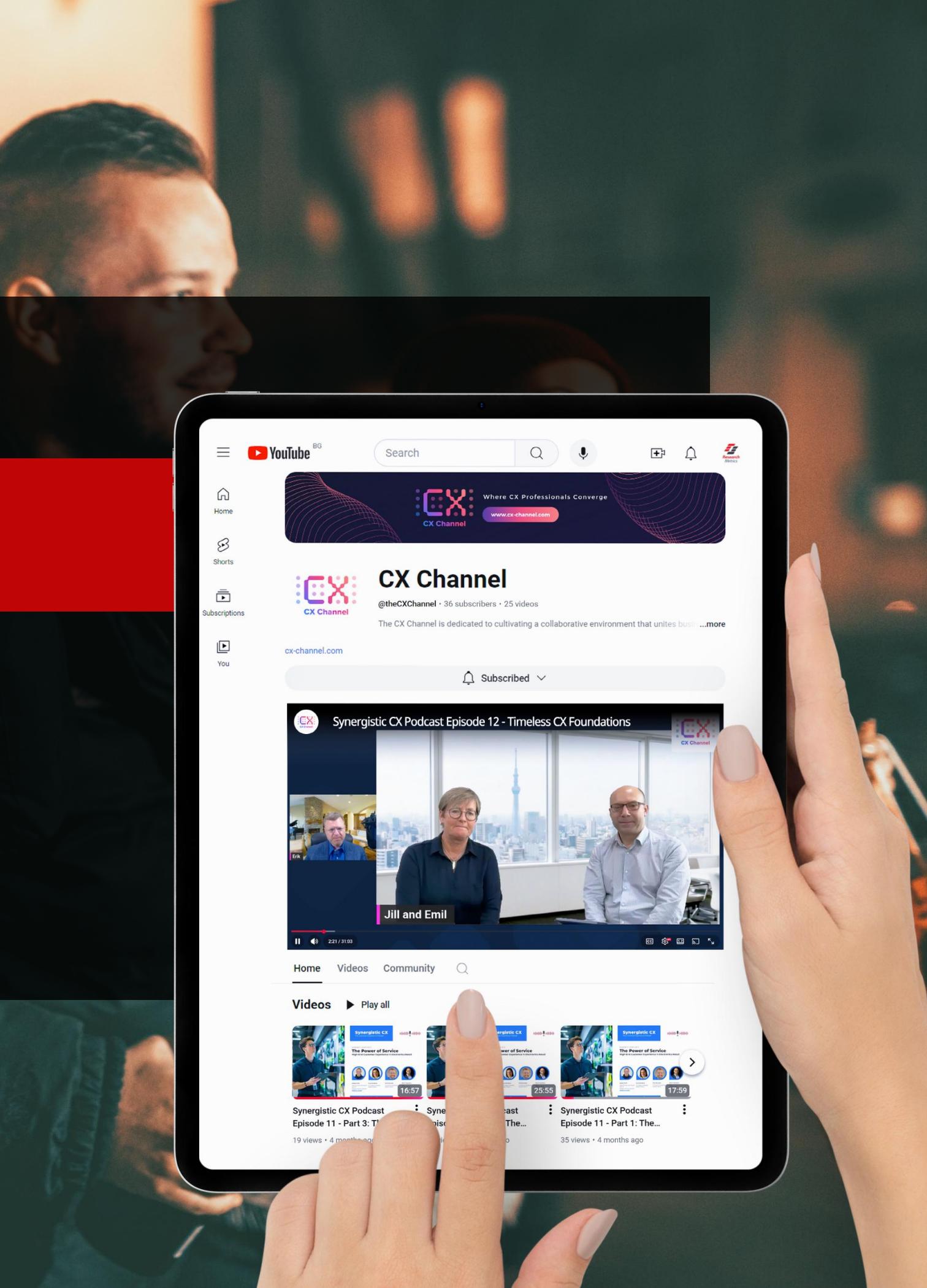As she concluded, the formula for long-term success remains elegantly simple:

Clear objectives.
Connected data.
Trusted partnerships.

These foundations, Jill affirmed, will continue to shape the future of CX, regardless of how rapidly technology evolves or how complex data ecosystems may become.

WATCH THE FULL PODCAST AT
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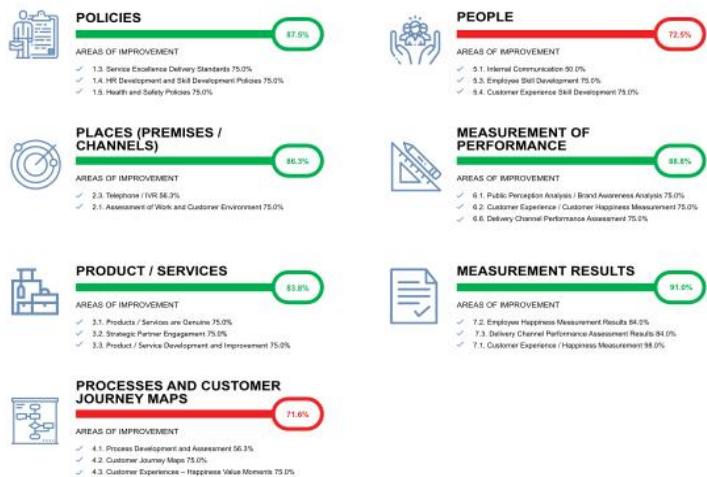
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81.4%

ASSESSMENT DATE
December 2018

ASSESSMENT TYPE
Certification Assessment

ASSESSOR
Simon Jackson
Olivia Peterson
Michael Dalton
Sarah Read

LOCATIONS
Bentalls Centre
Westfield
Oxford Street
Trafford Centre
Meadowhall

Liverpool One
WestQuay
Whitgift
Victoria Station
Trinity

POLICIES — 87.5%
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT
- 1.3. Service Excellence Delivery Standards 75.0%
- 1.4. HR Development and Skill Development Policies 75.0%
- 1.5. Health and Safety Policies 75.0%

PEOPLE — 72.5%
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT
- 5.1. Internal Communication 50.0%
- 5.3. Employee Skill Development 75.0%
- 9.4. Customer Experience Skill Development 75.0%

PLACES (PREMISES / CHANNELS) — 86.3%
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT
- 2.3. Telephone / IVR 56.3%
- 2.1. Assessment of Work and Customer Environment 75.0%

MEASUREMENT OF PERFORMANCE — 85.8%
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT
- 6.1. Public Perception Analysis / Brand Awareness Analysis 75.0%
- 6.2. Customer Experience / Customer Happiness Measurement 75.0%
- 6.6. Delivery Channel Performance Assessment 75.0%

PRODUCT / SERVICES — 83.8%
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT
- 3.1. Products / Services are Genuine 75.0%
- 3.2. Strategic Partner Engagement 75.0%
- 3.3. Product / Service Development and Improvement 75.0%

MEASUREMENT RESULTS — 91.0%
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT
- 7.2. Employee Happiness Measurement Results 84.0%
- 7.3. Delivery Channel Performance Assessment Results 84.0%
- 7.1. Customer Experience / Happiness Measurement 98.0%

PROCESSES AND CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPS — 71.6%
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT
- 4.1. Process Development and Assessment 56.3%
- 4.2. Customer Journey Maps 75.0%
- 4.3. Customer Experiences – Happiness Value Moments 75.0%

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