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Use your brand to supercharge your CX

How to align brand and customer experience for maximum impact

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Combining CX and BX – what's behind the buzz?

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During 2020 and 2021, we've seen an increase in discussion and thought around the relationship between BX and CX, and growing interest from business leaders in how it can benefit their bottom line.

Intuitively, more and more senior managers are noting that the areas of BX and CX are siloed, and that connecting them up has many advantages. It's well-established that CX can be used to gain an edge. But companies are now recognizing that they can go further, tapping into the emotion that their brand is able to evoke in order to win over a customer.

The connection helps them to prioritize the aspects of CX that shape perceptions and generate demand, and focus investments on these key levers, creating a coherent brand experience that reinforces who they want to be and how they want to show up.

Why now? The trend can be traced to a rapid shift in consumer preferences. Consumers are making decisions based on their experiences across a multitude of touchpoints, from corporate culture to tweets to TV ads, and comparison has never been easier. Loyalty is no longer the default position, and these days even your longest-standing customers can't help but shop around for the best deals.

ONLY
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Despite this new paradigm only 28% of leaders in marketing, brand or CX have processes in place to ensure that brand strategy feeds into CX design and delivery. Those who are exploring the trend are ahead of the curve.

The prospect of combining BX with CX within your organization may seem daunting. However, with the right approach and expert support, it's more than possible. Read on for analysis, tips and insights on uniting BX with CX from our Senior XM Scientist, Franck Sarrazit.

Q&A: The value of combining CX and BX

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What is brand experience, and how does it differ from CX?

Before we can talk about the interplay between brand experience and customer experience, we need to be clear about the definitions of both, and the differences between them.

Both brand experience and customer experience deal with how the customer or consumer thinks and feels about you. But where customer experience is about interactions between you and your customer, brand experience deals with how the consumer perceives you within a wider market.

Brand Experience

**\ 'brand ik-'spir-ē-ən(t)s **

The feelings, reactions, and ideas that result from the direct or indirect exposure to any branded/brand-medicated interaction influencing a future purchase decision.

The strength of these thoughts and emotions contributes to how highly a consumer values your brand. Whenever people have choices between one brand and another, they make decisions based on the value they place on each one. Brand experience is at the core of what makes a brand more valuable to people.

How should we think about the brand association network?

We might think of a brand in terms of discrete elements like campaigns, slogans, interactions or events. But in fact, a brand is the sum total of all of these things and more. A brand is a network of associations in people's minds, made up of all the touchpoints where they noticed or interacted with a brand.

Within that associative network is a lot of richness and complexity, and a lot of positive emotion. A wealth of positive associations in the consumer's mind is what builds that sense of the brand being more valuable – what makes it somebody's preferred choice. The art of brand experience management is cultivating the positive network so that consumers are more likely to choose you over your competitors.

What makes a good brand experience?

In today's brand-saturated world, we have thousands of brand interactions, many of them so fleeting and unimportant that we forget them instantly. The ones that stick with us are those that carry the promise of reward. But rather than deciding which ones to prioritize, we should be asking ourselves how these touchpoints connect to form the network of positive associations. Because it's the strength of that positive network that determines how much a customer or consumer values you when they have a purchase decision to make.

Consistent positive experiences help build a strong associative network that's linked to the expectation of reward. That's the power of brand experience.

To sum up, the experiences we're looking to create are:

+ Positive

+ Reward-associated

+ Consistent over time

What's changed recently is the fact that many consumers don't distinguish between CX and BX touchpoints anymore. A negative call center experience nowadays can lead to a tarnished reputation and an impact on the brand.

What value can BX add to a CX program?

Theory aside, what likely matters most to your organization is whether combining CX and BX will deliver more benefits than CX or BX alone. The answer is a definite yes.

Great CX is critical for retaining customers, but going further to think about the experience in the context of your brand can be even more powerful. Aligning your CX so that it fulfills your brand promise helps make sure your consumers know what they're getting into, avoiding any perception of a "bait and switch" when things don't match up.

CX can help elevate your brand , too, highlighting which areas of the customer experience have the most potential to differentiate the brand from competitors. For example, Zappos' outstanding service and return policy has become a core part of its brand. Analyzing your customer experience interactions through a brand lens can help you answer key questions, like whether you're expending energy on areas that don't materially affect how your customer feels, or whether CX interactions are remembered. Then there are the functional areas that don't create a wow-factor when things run smoothly, but have the potential to destroy your brand if they fail.

Connecting different aspects of your experience management (customer, brand, product, employee) gives you a wider perspective, allowing you to see how different activities impact on the system as a whole and how changes in one area act as levers on another. Understanding these interdependencies between seemingly separate areas can lead you to 'aha' moments you might otherwise never have reached.

Questions that can be answered by connecting BX and CX programs:

Are you spending energy fixing something that doesn't make people feel any different about your brand, about the service you're bringing to market?

Are CX interactions remembered? Many remain functional and nondescript, i.e., forgotten quickly

Which CX interactions have little upside impact on brand strength but can destroy it if they fail?

How can you combine your CX and BX programs?

Conceptually, you may be sold on the idea of combining CX and BX. But in reality, it may seem daunting to embark in a new strategic direction, especially with many stakeholders across your organization. Fortunately, there are things you can do right now that will take you closer to your goal, and they don't have to be overly complex.

+ Bring your CX and BX metrics into a single view Even if the operations themselves are still siloed, there is value in bringing all of the metrics together in a dedicated space where you can see potential relationships and begin to develop and test out hypotheses about what works. For instance, you could view brand metrics in the context of major customer experience moments, such as post-sale, post-delivery and post-service. Understanding how each moment adds to or detracts from brand health can help you influence future purchasing behavior.

+ Create a bridge between BX and CX measurement Begin bringing elements of CX into your BX measurement and vice versa. For example, add BX-informed questions, such as 'how positive do you feel about the brand?' to your CX surveys and listening posts.

+ **Work incrementally** Take small steps. Working on small, attainable goals will help you begin to explore the relationship between your brand and your customer experience, and lay the groundwork for you to eventually understand the causality of improving brand and customer experiences overall.

Learn more about Qualtrics BrandXM

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Customer story: 4-H

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4-H is the largest youth development organization in the US, empowering around 6 million young people with critical life skills every year.

What was the problem?

4H needed to expand brand awareness beyond its traditional remit of agricultural science and rural communities, working within the finite resources of a non-profit.

What was the solution?

To make its resources work harder, 4-H aligned brand and consumer experience, using the best-in-class Qualtrics platform to uncover insights and evolve its strategy.

They uncovered a lag between brand perception and CX offering, and a need to increase visibility of the STEM offering, as well as surfacing requirements for online learning.

What were the results?

Over the course of a year, 4-H achieved:

22%
boost in brand awareness among new audiences

35%
increase in marketing efficiency

12%
increase in online community membership

407%
increase in unique visitor traffic to the online learning platform
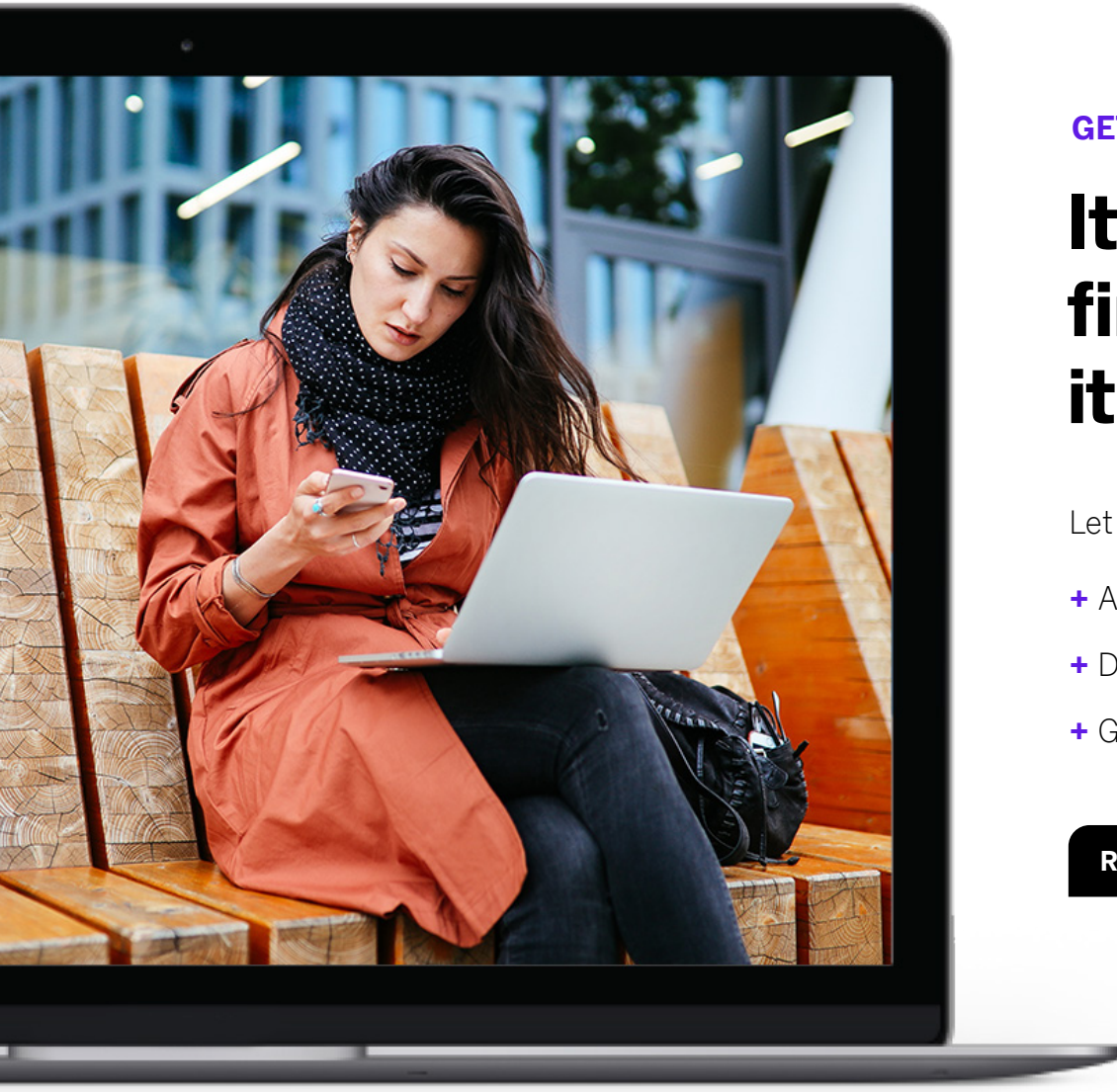
What next?

"

Our goal really is to delight our learners, no matter no matter what age, and help them discover their passions through positive learning experiences. Working with Brand XM is helping us to do it,"

Danelle Sabatier,
VP Digital Strategy, 4-H

GET STARTED

It's all connected – find out how, and use it to grow

Let us walk you through how Brand XM can help you:

+ Accelerate customer acquisition

+ Drive increased market share

+ Get a holistic view of your brand's performance

REQUEST DEMO