

The Whole-Brained Design Of Signature Moments

by Victor Milligan
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Human emotion is a primary driver of how people feel about brands and the extent to which those feelings — along with needs/wants — drive spend. This basic reality sits underneath customer experience (CX) initiatives, as one of CX's core objectives is to design experiences that evoke emotions that drive affinity and spend.

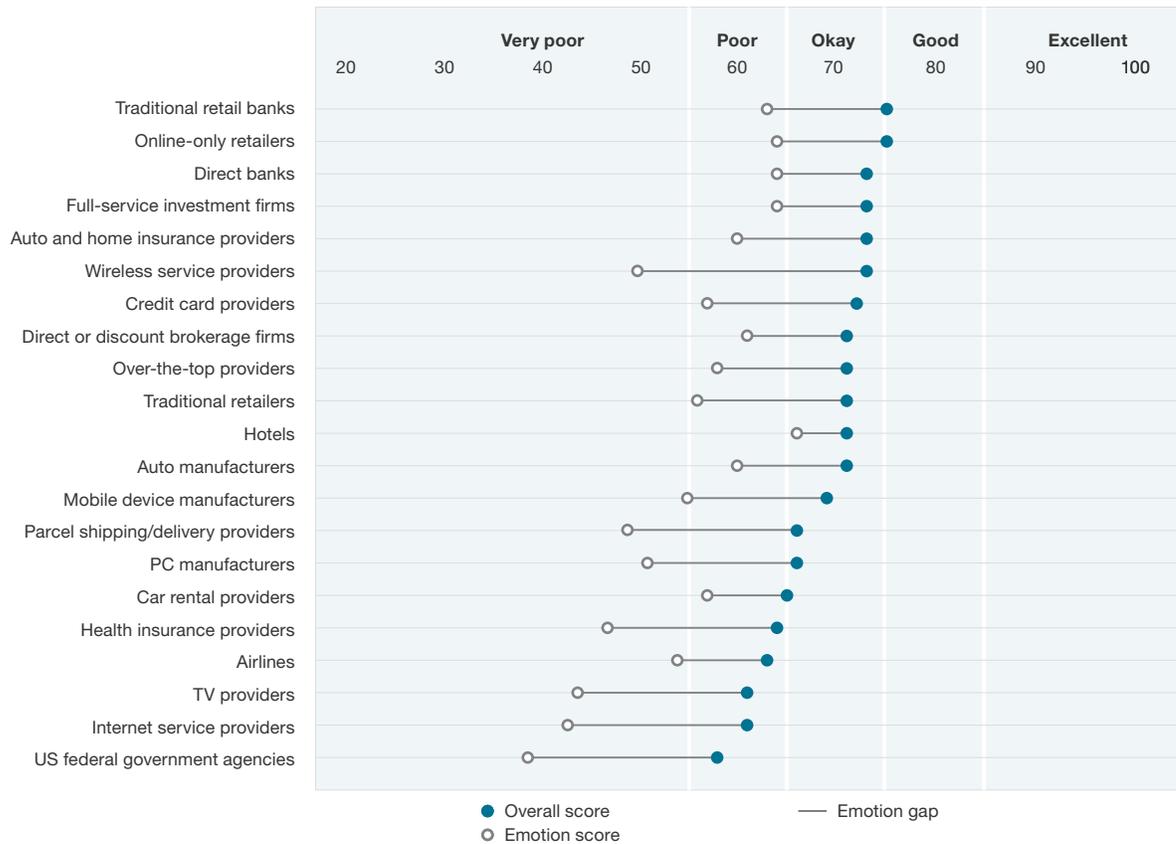
The Emotion Gap

Although the relationship between emotion and business outcomes is intuitive, Forrester's Customer Experience Index (CX Index™) data reveals that most firms have not yet baked emotion into how they analyze, design, and operationalize experiences.

CX Index scores are made up of two elements: customer experience quality (ease, effectiveness, and emotion) and customer loyalty (retention, enrichment, and advocacy). When we compared the overall industry benchmark score with the average emotion score in each industry in the CX Index, the data shows a common and troubling dynamic in how customers describe their experiences. Companies struggle to connect emotionally with their customers.

Quality	Ease
	Effectiveness
	Emotion
Loyalty	Retention
	Enrichment
	Advocacy

FIGURE 1 Companies Struggle To Make Customers Feel Good

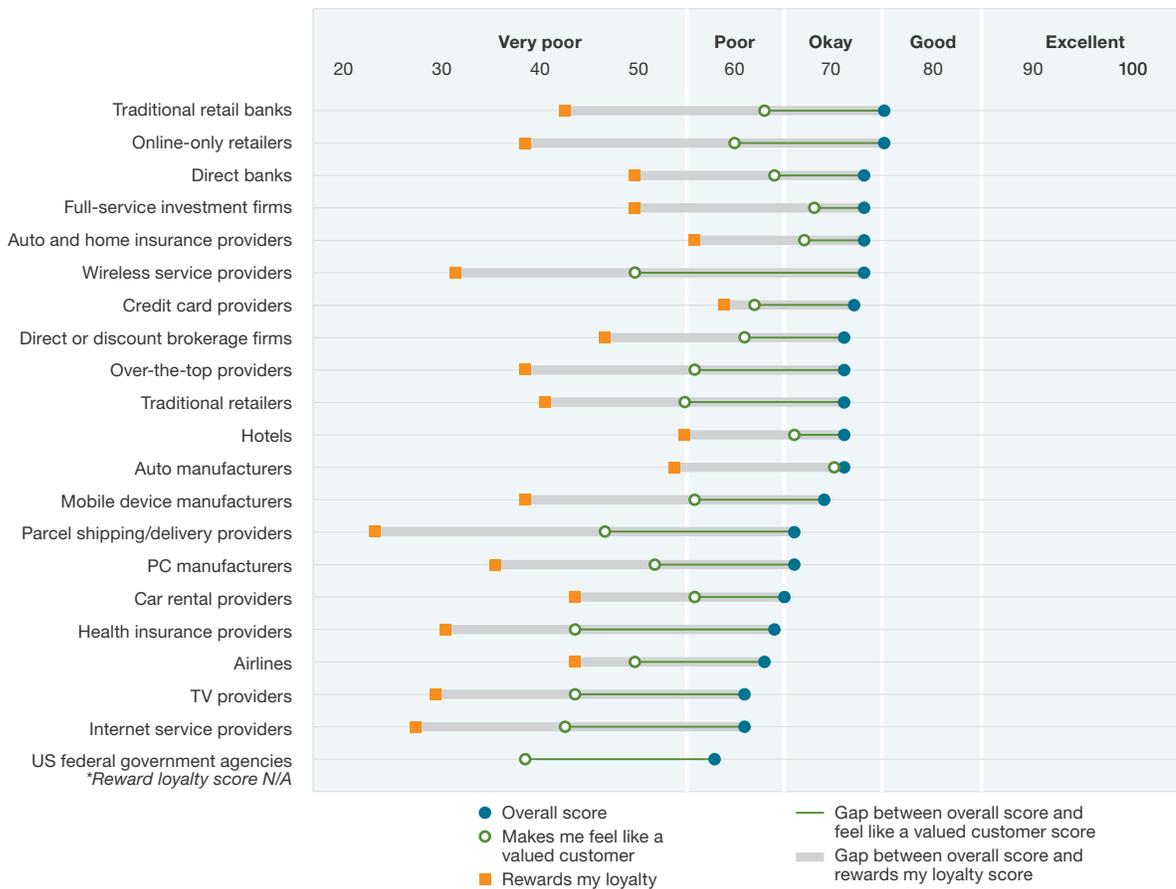


Source: Forrester’s Customer Experience Index Online Survey, US Consumers 2016

The results are not an indictment but a rational view of where companies are relative to understanding emotion and putting in place programs that effectively pull at the heartstrings of their customers. Firms are behind the eight ball in evoking emotions that can positively impact the P&L.

The challenge for customer experience professionals becomes clearer when we dig into two drivers of emotion. The drivers, “rewards my loyalty” and “makes me feel like a valued customer,” are included in the 2016 CX Index Online Survey. As we can see in Figure 2 below, there is a meaningful gap between the industry benchmark and the specific scores for the two drivers, suggesting at least two root causes of the “emotion gap.”

FIGURE 2 Companies Struggle to Make Customers Feel Valued and Rewarded



Source: Forrester’s Customer Experience Index Online Survey, US Consumers 2016

The gap highlights the question of how to design experiences that get at the emotional drivers of affinity and spend. The answer is in the moments that matter most to your customers.

Designing For Moments

Future journey mapping is the basic canvas for experience design, describing journeys that fulfill customers' expectations and aspirations and that also produce the intended top- and bottom-line results.

Research shows that humans rarely form emotional bonds from an aggregated set of experiences; instead, bonds are formed by specific moments that get above the noise of the day to make an impression. Moments, not journeys, win (or lose) the hearts, minds, and wallets of your customers.

The transition from looking at macro-level journeys to looking at micro-level moments is an important dynamic. It quickly brings to the fore three critical items: 1) the interrelated role of analytics and design; 2) the ability to discover and analyze moments that matter at the individual level; and 3) the ability to design moments that are authentic to the brand and compel customer loyalty.

Operationalizing Signature Moment Design

The combination of left (analytics) and right (design) brains is central to designing signature moments — experiences that evoke a deep connection to what is authentic and good about your brand and endure beyond that moment in time.

This whole-brain approach is a new frontier for many companies. Some of the tools this approach requires are:

- › Building or acquiring CX analytics: The CX team requires analytics that go well beyond customer satisfaction (CSAT) and Complement Net Promoter score (NPS) to be able to isolate how customers perceive and value specific touchpoints. To identify where exactly to design signature moments, CX professionals will need to understand how they stack up against competitors and where various touchpoints have different impact on customer acquisition, spend, or other performance measures.
- › Expanding and animating the voice of the customer (VoC): The combined analytics and design teams will need to empathize with customers — to get into their heads and hearts to understand where and how to design signature moments. VoC outputs are central to bringing customer voices to life and having them become tangible to support design. Some companies may need to expand VoC programs; some may simply need to make sure that VoC outputs are delivered to the joint team.
- › Fostering collaboration: Data scientists and designers are different in how they process information and solve challenges. But nonetheless, they must team up to create signature moments that move the needle. Forming and unleashing the combined power of analytics and design means formally bringing these teams together — and whenever possible, bring them together physically, not virtually, so that they understand and leverage their diversity of thought in a direct manner.

- › Implementing an agile, empathetic process: To keep the customer front and center, force teams to “walk in the customer’s shoes” using VoC inputs that bring color to quantitative analytic results and embed emotion in design processes. Teams should employ an iterative, agile approach that leverages techniques like daily standups to keep the teams apprised of priorities; use wireframing to enable teams to structure and see the problem the same way; apply constraint-based methods like spikes and timeboxes to focus the teams’ energy; and allow time for the teams to reflect on if and how signature-moment design works.

The next stage of CX is here. It combines the power of analytics and design to identify micro-interactions that can be delivered as signature moments. This next step of CX explicitly connects experience design to brand. Most importantly, by evoking emotions that fuel affinity and spend, it more directly connects CX investments with P&L gains.

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