

# Customers Need A Reason To Remember You

Use Strategically Placed Signature Moments To Create Memories

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## Customers Are Unlikely To Remember Their Experience With You

Report Excerpt

It doesn't matter how impeccable a brand's customer experience (CX) delivery was, how friendly the customer service reps were, or how seamless the omnichannel experience might have been — customers most likely won't remember much of it. In fact, a growing body of research shows that people do not remember most of their experiences with much accuracy at all.<sup>1</sup> The fact of the matter is that customers:

- › **Have two selves — an experiencing self and a remembering self.**

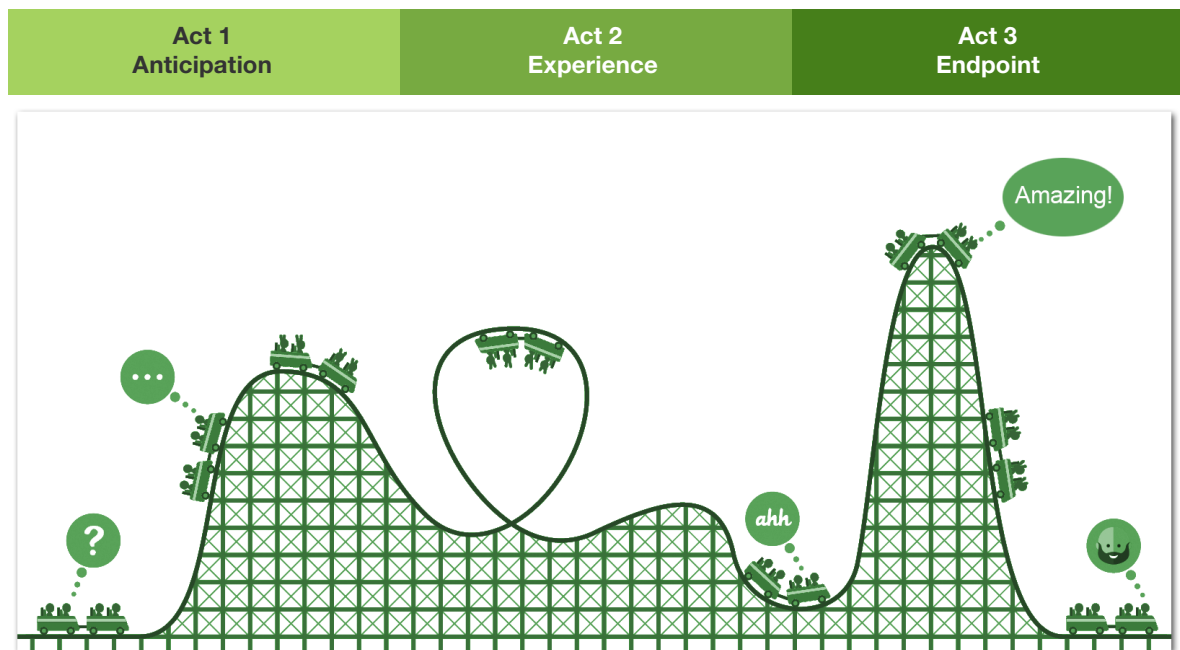
Nobel laureate and father of behavioral economics Daniel Kahneman postulated that human beings have two operating systems: the experiencing self and the remembering self.<sup>2</sup> In the moment, the experiencing self is the “customer” who lives in the present and has an experience with a product or a service; the remembering self is the customer who records and stores the experience to memory as a story. When customers make future buying decisions, they consult the remembering self and make choices and recommendations, whether accurate or not, based on the remembering self's interpretation of that story.

- › **Shed distracting details and reconstruct memories to favor their own narrative.** As information moves from working memory to long-term memory, extraneous details are often lost in order to more efficiently encode the information into meaningful long-term memories.<sup>3</sup> When a person recalls a past experience, they often fill in any blanks with partially true or even false information that best fits their narrative of the experience.<sup>4</sup> For example, a customer may falsely inflate the length of time they were on hold because they felt that the customer service rep was unfriendly — even if the wait time was no longer than for other, similar calls. This creates a problem for brands hoping to retroactively capture rich, actionable feedback from customers.

## Three-Act Customer Journeys Offer Opportunities To Build Memories

Studies in psychology and behavioral economics support the idea that the order of events and the emotional saliency of those events play an important role in determining how customers evaluate and remember their experiences with a brand. For the purposes of CX design, we can divide the customer journey into three acts to understand how and where to engage customers to anticipate their needs, serve those needs, and meaningfully connect with them during their journey with the brand (see Figure 1).<sup>5</sup>

**FIGURE 1:** Customer Journeys Have Three Acts In Which To Build Memories



Source: Adapted from Salesforce Trailhead

## Act 1: Set The Stage With Anticipatory CX

Anticipation evokes more emotion than retrospection.<sup>6</sup> We are all actively attending to our future plans and experiences — which can explain why consumers are more psychologically oriented to the future than the past.<sup>7</sup> While the memory value generated during anticipation is lower than in the second and third acts, anticipation offers the greatest opportunity to influence expectations of the experience and build positive emotional currency that can carry through the experience and thereafter.

- › **Gamification is a powerful approach to drive upfront anticipation.**<sup>8</sup> Drip-feeding customers progressively more value in sequential steps or over increasing levels stokes the brain's anticipatory reward system to become excited and engaged. US insurer Prudential has taken to gamifying otherwise mundane pen-and-paper retirement planning exercises to create an anticipatory play with its Map My Retirement app.<sup>9</sup> The app visually guides users through the kind of life they anticipate having once they reach retirement age, using playful pictures to make the goal more vivid.
- › **Extended reality also fuels anticipation.** As the utility of new technology like augmented reality (AR), virtual reality, and extended reality gets better and better, companies can also apply it to propel anticipation. Take the home loan process: A consumer may spend months or years researching and saving money to make a down payment on a home, but banks have long failed to capitalize on this emotion-rich prepurchase scenario. Commonwealth Bank, one of Australia's largest lenders, set out to drive mortgage leads and engage consumers earlier in the home-buying process by offering more value through AR.<sup>10</sup> The proposition aimed to complement the expertise of agents with online information such as listings, prices, photos, and data on comparable homes to help customers better “see” themselves in a new home loan.

## Act 2: Minimize Negative Peaks With Customers During The Experience

There's a saying about CX measurement: If you want your CX metrics to go up, don't do anything wrong and do a few things exceptionally well. While that's easier said than done, there is some truth to the statement — especially during the actual delivery of the experience. Brands should recognize that in Act 2:

- › **A customer journey might trend toward high quality but still not be memorable.** Customers use the highest positive or negative peak, the last interaction, and the general trend of an experience to judge it.<sup>11</sup> IKEA is one company that maintains an overall high-quality experience that trends positively throughout the in-store journey — but in the absence of a surprise or emotionally evocative interactions, there's a good chance that the long line at the cash register is the only thing the customer will clearly remember.

- › **It's critical to minimize the height of any negative peaks.** JetBlue recently announced perks on its flights between Boston and New York: free coffee, free wine and beer, and free Wi-Fi. While these may not stand out as surprisingly differentiating “signature moments,” they do show a commitment by JetBlue to maintain a high-quality in-flight experience during Act 2.<sup>12</sup> However, while it's important for brands to take positive actions to ensure quality, it's arguably more important that they quickly minimize the impact of any negative CX. JetBlue shines here as well: It has earned a reputation for solving passenger problems quickly via its clever and responsive social media customer commitment team.<sup>13</sup>

## Act 3: Make The Endpoint Interaction The Most Memorable

The importance of the endpoint cannot be overstated; it's well established that the end effect alone has a stronger influence on customer perceptions of service experiences than either anticipation or surprise.<sup>14</sup> No matter how many delightful “wow” experiences you've baked into your customer journey, the delights are as good as forgotten if that journey doesn't end well.

- › **The last interaction needs to be a personal connection.** Companies must recognize that the end of the customer journey represents the single best opportunity to connect with the customer, rectify any mistakes, or otherwise drive return business. The last interaction needs to be genuine, personalized, and evocative. A standout story of endpoint versus mid-experience prioritization comes from Uber in Australia. A customer realized they had forgotten a very special umbrella in the car; unable to track down the driver, the customer contacted Uber and explained the situation. An Uber back-office staff member took it upon herself to track down the driver and retrieve the umbrella. She then carefully boxed up and returned the umbrella to the customer with a personalized note that said “We apologize for the inconvenience. Here's your umbrella back. Thank you for letting us give you a ride.”
- › **Treat the endpoint like a celebration.** Similar to the afterparty at a wedding, the endpoint interaction should elevate emotions almost as if it were a celebration of achievement. The final act can even prompt repeat business if brands introduce the right emotional triggers to create a long-lasting happy memory.

## Signature Moments Evoke The Emotions That Generate Memories

People protect memories of positive experiences like assets, often holding onto small keepsakes that help recall a special memory long after the event is past.<sup>15</sup> Whether it's a ticket stub, a souvenir, a picture, or a mental footnote, companies can help embed memorable moments in the minds of customers through the careful placement and design of signature moments. Forrester defines “signature moments” as memorably crafted and branded microinteractions that deliver delight and value to customers in an often subtle yet definitively recognizable way.<sup>16</sup> Brands should understand that:

- › **All signature moments are not created (emotionally) equal.** In 2016, when New York City got hit with some of the coldest, snowiest weather on record, staff at the W Hotel Union Square quietly switched the ubiquitous coffeepot for one filled with hot cocoa and set out a basket of hot marshmallows. The result: A large, nostalgic crowd of guests sat in a circle in the lobby telling stories and waiting out the storm. Most often, the very best signature moments are the result of low-cost guerrilla tactics by a few empathetic employees — showing how important it is to cultivate an employee culture that encourages emotion-smart opportunism.
- › **Endpoint giveaways make great memorable takeaways.** A token of appreciation at the end of an experience goes a long way toward embedding long-term positive memories for customers. The retailer lululemon provides an iconic red logo shopper bag emblazoned with the company manifesto; over the years, it has become so popular with customers that the company spokeswoman once said: “There is no greater delight than watching guests being almost as excited to get a new shopper (bag) as they are to get a new pair of groove pants.”<sup>17</sup>

## Recommendations

### Embed Emotionally Rich Memories With Signature Moments

Strategically placed signature moments offer a powerful way to personalize, surprise, and delight customers at key intersections along the customer journey. Some additional advice to keep in mind:

- › **Leverage anticipatory design to your advantage.** Anticipatory design is a growing subfocus of user experience design that leverages predictive analytics to reduce what psychologists call “cognitive load.”<sup>18</sup> Essentially, designers use anticipatory design to minimize the decision-making or thought-provoking effort required from people to use a new product, navigate a new service, or otherwise reduce the upfront input needed to engage in a new experience.<sup>19</sup> For example, Facebook’s geolocation service connects you to friends participating in an event nearby that you might be interested in based on your recent activity, and Google Now and Waze anticipate the time needed to get to your next meeting based on traffic patterns (see Figure 2).
- › **Move your more evocative signature moments to the end of the journey.** Brands should recognize the importance of the endpoint experience and consider moving the most evocative or value-generating interactions to the end of the experience. For example, to celebrate Australia Day, Qantas Airways put Tim-Tam chocolates on top of passengers’ bags at baggage claim as a welcome-home gift after they landed.<sup>20</sup>
- › **Less is more when it comes to signature moments.** When strategically embedding signature moments into the customer journey, be careful not to go overboard by inserting too many — or you risk diluting their utility and value.

**FIGURE 2:** Google Now Predicts User Behaviors And Makes Real-Time Service Suggestions



Source: Google

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Memories of past experiences don't match reality. People don't remember every detail of an experience. See the Forrester report "[Understanding The Impact Of Emotion On Customer Experience.](#)"
- <sup>2</sup> Source: "The riddle of experience vs. memory," TED, February 2010 ([https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel\\_kahneman\\_the\\_riddle\\_of\\_experience\\_vs\\_memory?language=en#t-1183856](https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kahneman_the_riddle_of_experience_vs_memory?language=en#t-1183856)).
- <sup>3</sup> Source: "How does short-term memory work in relation to long-term memory? Are short-term daily memories somehow transferred to long-term storage while we sleep?" Scientific American (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/experts-short-term-memory-to-long-term/>).
- <sup>4</sup> By some estimates, 95% of human thought occurs subconsciously, including many of the motivations that drive day-to-day behaviors. So when CX pros ask customers why they behaved a certain way, people are often unaware of the real reasons and fabricate explanations and, worse, believe them. See the Forrester report "[Build Real Customer Understanding.](#)"
- <sup>5</sup> At its core, the practice of service design borrows from the human-centered and iterative elements of design thinking and applies them across a service journey of sequential interactions. CX pros may recognize that this practice has overlaps with customer journey mapping, experience design, and CX ecosystem mapping approaches. This report highlights the merits of a more disciplined and holistic approach to service design and provides some best practices. See the Forrester report "[Five Things CX Pros Should Know About Service Design.](#)"
- <sup>6</sup> Source: Leaf Van Boven and Laurence Ashworth, "Looking Forward, Looking Back: Anticipation Is More Evocative Than Retrospection," Journal of Experimental Psychology, 2007 (<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbXxsZWfmdmFuYm92ZW58Z3g6ZjJkMDc5MWVmYzlkNGVh>).
- <sup>7</sup> Source: Joanne Kane, Leaf Van Boven, and A. Peter McGraw, "Prototypical prospection: future events are more prototypically represented and simulated than past events," European Journal of Social Psychology, Wiley Online Library, March 13, 2012 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ejsp.1866/abstract>).
- <sup>8</sup> Source: Gabe Zichermann and Christopher Cunningham, Gamification by Design: Implementing Game Mechanics in Web and Mobile Apps, O'Reilly Media, 2011.
- <sup>9</sup> Source: "Map My Retirement," Prudential (<https://www.prudential.com/personal/insights/tools/where-to-retire>).
- <sup>10</sup> Commonwealth Bank of Australia is generating 1% of its overall mortgage leads by using mobile AR within a homebuyer's research application to enhance its home-buying service. See the Forrester report "[Case Study: Home Buying With Mobile Augmented Reality.](#)"
- <sup>11</sup> Source: Michael J. Dixon, Ph.D., Liana Victorino, Ph.D., and Robert J. Kwortnick, Ph.D., "Surprise, Anticipation, And Sequence Effects In The Design Of Experiential Services," Aix-Marseille Graduate School of Management ([https://iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/sites/iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/files/49\\_dixon\\_surprise\\_rev.pdf](https://iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/sites/iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/files/49_dixon_surprise_rev.pdf)).
- <sup>12</sup> Assess whether the proposed microinteraction is like a literal signature: unique to your company and not easily replicated by others in the market. Appraise whether there is any chance that customers might confuse it with another brand, product, or service. See the Forrester report "[Differentiate Your Customer Experience With Signature Moments.](#)"
- <sup>13</sup> Source: Lindsay Kolowich, "Delighting People in 140 Characters: An Inside Look at JetBlue's Customer Service Success," HubSpot blog, July 28, 2014 (<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/jetblue-customer-service-twitter#sm.0000jkytpbktye78v xv26joyygd2i>).
- <sup>14</sup> Source: Michael J. Dixon, Ph.D., Liana Victorino, Ph.D., and Robert J. Kwortnick, Ph.D., "Surprise, Anticipation, And Sequence Effects In The Design Of Experiential Services," Aix-Marseille Graduate School of Management ([https://iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/sites/iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/files/49\\_dixon\\_surprise\\_rev.pdf](https://iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/sites/iae-aix.univ-amu.fr/files/49_dixon_surprise_rev.pdf)).



<sup>15</sup>Source: Gal Zauberman, Rebecca K Ratner, and B. Kyu Kim, "Memories as Assets: Strategic Memory Protection in Choice over Time," *Journal of Consumer Research*, February 2009 (<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.710.2212&rep=rep1&type=pdf>).

<sup>16</sup>Customer experience can be thought of as the series of interactions a customer has along a given journey with a brand. The holistic brand experience looks at the sum of these interactions; in contrast, each interaction is made up of a series of microinteractions where companies have opportunities to differentiate their customer experiences. These small-scale opportunities, when carefully tied back to the brand, give birth to what Forrester calls "signature moments." See the Forrester report "[Differentiate Your Customer Experience With Signature Moments](#)."

<sup>17</sup>Source: lululemon (<http://static.lululemon.com/community/blog/all-about-that-red-bag/>).

<sup>18</sup>Source: Dr. Graham Cooper, "Research into Cognitive Load Theory and Instructional Design at UNSW," UNSW, December 1998 (<http://dwb4.unl.edu/Diss/Cooper/UNSW.htm>).

<sup>19</sup>Source: Laura Busche, "What You Need To Know About Anticipatory Design," *Smashing Magazine*, September 10, 2015 (<https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2015/09/anticipatory-design/>).

<sup>20</sup>Source: "Qantas Passengers are met with a Tim Tam surprise at baggage collection," *News.com.au*, January 26, 2015 (<http://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/qantas-passengers-are-met-with-a-tim-tam-surprise-at-baggage-collection/news-story/44cf8255eac71480543e49124da16167>).



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