

DISRUPTOR SERIES:
CHAPTER THREE

Emotion

Establishing emotional connections with customers:

What brands need to know



Webhelp

Think Human

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Data analysis within this whitepaper is based on specific and dated information commissioned by **Webhelp** from polling agency YouGov between 2018 and 2019.



Foreword: David Turner

CEO, Webhelp UK

India & South Africa

Great brands make us feel something. They're there where and when we need them. The best ones go further. They chat, share, understand, fix, reward and put people first.

“

To thrive in today's competitive landscape, it is obvious that brands must cultivate an emotional connection with their customers.

In the midst of the feelings brands inspire, how many of us really think about what we're buying and why?

An interesting question as apparently 95 percent* of our purchasing decisions take place in the subconscious mind, which is overseen by our emotions.

If we look specifically at research from the retail sector, it has been shown that customers who feel an emotional connection to a brand are far more valuable to that brand, spending twice as much than those just simply satisfied with the brand; they also have a 306% higher lifetime value, stay with a brand longer and recommend more**. To thrive in today's competitive landscape, it is therefore very obvious that brands must cultivate an emotional connection with their customers.

As part of this third chapter of the Webhelp Disruptor Series, we have once again commissioned research through polling experts YouGov. This time, we took a deep dive into the hot topic of 'emotional connection' and explored to what extent emotional connections exist between consumers and brands, what forms an emotional connection, and how people behave if they are emotionally connected to a brand.

While emotional connection can – and does – exist, it is not reported by all consumers. However, the extent to which our research revealed that emotional connection positively impacts consumer behaviours was hugely encouraging. People really do buy more, remain loyal and recommend more if they are emotionally connected to a brand. And it was no surprise to me to see just how crucial customer experience is to forming these highly profitable emotional connections...

And at a time when Webhelp has just launched its new brand vision of 'Making business more human', it was particularly interesting to see just how important being a 'human' brand is to consumers. Heartening reading indeed for us all at Webhelp – and no doubt other industry professionals who read this paper.

A word of caution however. As many brands undergo digital transformation, the focus on emotional connection – as well as 'human' brand attributes – must not be overlooked. Often, given the number of channels that can be used to communicate with customers, brands forget that connection is essentially 'human to human.' But if brands are unable to establish and maintain strong emotional bonds with customers they will most certainly get lost in the choppy seas of competition...

*[Harvard Business School](#)

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Introduction



Brands providing customer engagement services ignore the importance of emotional connection at their peril, as across all age groups, emotionally connected customers behave more positively towards brands.

Emotional connection is a hot topic. But how do brands get beyond the hype?

“Organisations tend to focus a lot of attention on executing short-term tactics that bring an immediate return on investment, but brands can gain bigger benefits when prioritising long-term strategies,” says Jo Causon, CEO at the Institute of Customer Service. She points out that “connections based on feelings last longer than those based on a transient need, resulting in loyalty that stays throughout the entire customer life-cycle.”

And, this loyalty can be strengthened by creating a brand identity that resonates with customers. As Chris Bryson, Global Analytics Director at Webhelp, who is heavily involved in the company’s work on emotional connection, says “Customers feel most emotionally connected with a brand when its value proposition aligns with their motivations and desires. For example, people who strongly wish to “stand out from the crowd,” or “feel a sense of belonging” will choose products or services that help them experience that specific feeling. By understanding consumer motivations and engagement expectations, brands can create customer experience that is in accordance with these, and ensure it’s consistent across every customer touch-point.”

To do this brands must invest in tailored insight and analysis, as Rebecca Price, Partner at creative communications consultancy, Frank, Bright & Abel, adds “The key emotional motivators driving consumer behaviour are unique to each brand and category. To identify what will work for their brand, marketers and customer experience professionals need to lean on data and analytics gleaned from consumers, social media listening or messaging analysis.”

Understanding how to leverage human brand attributes to cultivate emotional connection opens up vast potential for brands, as Polly Ashdown, Marketing and Communications Director, Webhelp UK, India & South Africa, points out: “Brands that really ‘get’ the importance of a human angle, look at making connections in the most human way possible.”



Brands that really ‘get’ the importance of a human angle, look at making connections in the most human way possible... ..They’re focused on building trust, anticipating customer needs, and giving customers the edge. They know that consistency is key to trust and credibility, and focus on the entire experience, rather than one element of the customer journey.

*Polly Ashdown,
Marketing & Communications
Director, Webhelp UK,
India & South Africa*

Emotion: at a glance

By “emotional connection to a brand”, we mean feelings that come together to form a bond between yourself and a particular brand. When you have an emotional connection to a brand, you feel positive feelings towards the brand above and beyond just ‘liking’ the brand, which means you would do one or more of the following:

1. Buy more products from that brand.
2. Feel less sensitive to pricing changes than you would towards other brands.
3. Pay more attention to communications from the brand (e.g. emails, adverts etc.)
4. Follow advice and recommendations more.
5. Develop a brand loyalty.
6. Recommend the brand to others.

Throughout this report we define emotional connection as above.



Introduction (cont)

“They’re less focused on the transaction – i.e. of selling the product or answering the question – they’re focused on building trust, anticipating customer needs, and giving customers the edge.”

“They know that consistency is key to trust and credibility, and focus on the entire experience, rather than one element of the customer journey.”

This is echoed by Webhelp’s people, who are at the heart of customer engagement. They reveal the importance of human values in building customer relationships. As an advisor points out: “Empathy shows we are human beings beyond the processes and ways of working.” This human first approach is reinforced by our team leaders, one of whom explains that: “Advisors do their best to not only help their customers, but get everything solved in a way that matters for them.” This is a core value for Webhelp, as Helen Murray, Chief Customer Solutions Officer - Webhelp UK, India and South Africa, reflects: “We do a human-centric job – with personalised contact on a daily basis. People are really at the heart of what we do.”

As David Turner emphasises, there are no short cuts to achieve this:

“The desire to have emotional connection to a brand has to be part of each company’s employee value proposition. The brand needs to have a strong vision, be worth working for, and appeal to customers, colleagues and shareholders. In the past, too much focus was placed on the latter, but today, the successful brands are able to articulate in a compelling and vibrant way, who they are and what they stand for. People aren’t looking for jobs any more, they’re looking for experiences. You need to take people on the journey.”

And as people are at the heart of customer experience, human interaction – and the art of conversation – are fundamental. As Webhelp’s founders, Olivier Duha and Frédéric Jousset explain: “We believe people connect best with people, and our emotional intelligence - together with our innovation is how we go the extra mile.”



We believe people connect best with people, and our emotional intelligence - together with our innovation is how we go the extra mile.

*Olivier Duha (R) and
Frédéric Jousset (L),
Webhelp Founders*





Viewpoint: Scott Logie, Chair of the DMA Customer Engagement Committee

Scott Logie, Customer Engagement Director, REaD Group and Chair of the DMA Customer Engagement Committee.

Scott is a data driven, direct marketing expert with experience across a range of business sectors. Scott has worked in data in marketing for more years than he cares to remember including roles in integrated marketing, financial and network services and technology solutions. As Chair of the DMA's Customer Engagement Committee, it's Scott's role to ensure the group gains value and contributes to the committee.

For the DMA's Customer Engagement Committee members, the topic of emotional connection is very important. As consumers we have emotions. We feel strongly about brands. It therefore makes sense that brands build on this.

However, 'connection' differs from brand to brand and it's not always straightforward to pinpoint the drivers.

Take a dating company for example. An emotional connection is actually what their customers are buying. There's an assumption that openness will be quite high, and that extroversion would be highly correlated with openness. However, in work we did at REaD for a leading dating agency, this was not the case for all customer segments. Rather than being driven by traditional demographics (age or gender for example) or personality traits, we found that segments are actually driven by behaviour and life-stage.

Emotional connection is key to loyalty. DMA Research reveals interesting similarities - and differences - regarding brand loyalty. All brands can have a 'functional loyalty' that's based on the right method, the right product or service and the right price. That's the baseline.

In financial services for example, unless you get the functional stuff right, there's no point in brands trying to tap into emotions. On the other hand, consumers are increasingly 'big' on ethics and morals in certain sectors, and some will actively seek out brands that treat people fairly and are concerned about the environment.

In terms of 'tactics', rewards don't play a big role in terms of loyalty to brands, with the exception of supermarkets, which is hardly surprising as we're well trained in terms of supermarket rewards.

However, even here there are some interesting findings. Financial services organisations typically don't offer rewards, yet in our research consumers stated that they would respond favourably to them.

This was echoed in the YouGov survey for Webhelp: Only 18% of respondents said that, based on the description given on page 4, they consider things like "if the brand gives me personalised rewards (e.g. birthday vouchers, discount codes, etc.)" when thinking about whether they are emotionally connected to a brand.





Top tips to create emotional connection

Viewpoint: Scott Logie (cont)

By far the biggest complaint in the DMA's survey was a 'lack of consistency'. Often consumers will get a campaign they're interested in, but when they respond it's a real "oh no" moment when they try to contact the brand via the website, on social, or by telephone and the experience doesn't follow suit. Customers are more demanding than ever, so ignore consistency at your peril...

It's worth noting that organisational structure can be a barrier to consistency – with siloed teams being the biggest challenge. Unless there's an executive sponsor or a key driver to change that, then brands will struggle.

Certain companies realise this; Santander, for example, is trying to unify across all their teams and consider the end to end customer journeys. However, by and large, not enough is being done.

To conclude, while it's possible to measure loyalty, the measurement of emotional connection has some way to go. Many brands don't know where to start, although some companies we work with analyse demographics and behaviours, overlaying data from Mention Me, a 'refer a friend' platform. It's not highly scientific, but it does give a measure of loyalty and recommendation.

The DMA's Customer Engagement Committee was put together to help brands reach and engage customers and develop customer loyalty across all channels. Its mantra is to combine data, technology and creativity to help brands dramatically improve their campaign results.

- 1** If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.
- 2** Before embarking on any initiative, define what success looks like.
- 3** Combine data, technology and creativity to understand consumers better.
- 4** When you have customer insights, consider:
 - Why would they be loyal?
 - What makes them loyal?
 - How do you build a relationship?
- 5** Never make assumptions on what drives emotional connection...

A brand's response will differ by sector, customer segment, and of course, individual brand.

Customers are more demanding than ever, so ignore consistency at your peril.



Scott Logie, Chair of the DMA Customer Engagement Committee

Viewpoint: John Leighton

Head of Customer Service

easyJet

Emotional connection is innately important to easyJet's brand positioning and it's come naturally. We're starting to really push the fact that we're a retailer, not an airline, and we recognise that as a retailer, we're retailing products that are extremely emotional.

So, as we've evolved it's happened, but our focus continues to strengthen; for instance, it's a foundation for our relationship with Webhelp.

Measurement of emotional connection isn't yet 'on point' in our industry. In fact, the way the customer service industry measures things – voice of the customer, customer satisfaction, customer effort, etc. – is actually quite linear.

We're doing some interesting work with Webhelp, powered by its business intelligence team, to understand when and how customers are coming in, why they're calling, what the true behavioural outcomes are – rather than customer-stated outcomes. This will be important in helping us understand the monetary value of emotional connection.

Measuring the monetary impact of emotional connection is much easier for a subscription model when you know your customer base and can see customer reaction to things that you 'tweak' – be it service innovation or pricing, for example.

Our own understanding of this will be helped by easyJet's launch of easyJet Holidays which will give us much greater insights into the links between personal motivators and what products our customers buy. As such, we'll be able to anticipate what people want from travel and facilitate that need. The product positioning and the sell will be easier as it's about offering things that will enhance what customers want – and what they're doing.

There are challenges however. Organisational silos – and even the way companies do things – can get in the way. Despite the industry lamenting it for decades, 'Service' is generally still a cost centre, whereas 'Sales' is a profit centre.



John Leighton is a leading light in customer experience with a track record of success delivering quality service channels. Currently focused on digital transformation, subscriber value based experience, and operating model development, John brings a wealth of strategic and operational leadership knowledge from his former roles at the Ooredoo Group and Qtel/Virgin.



We're doing some interesting work with Webhelp, powered by its business intelligence team, to understand when and how customers are coming in, why they're calling, what the true behavioural outcomes are.

Viewpoint: John Leighton (cont)

If you apply that to the airline industry today, this poses challenges. Why is the customer flying? Do they want/need bags? Do they have a new baby? This insight is across marketing, sales, AND customer service...

In terms of the human skills required to build emotional connection, we know that authenticity is key, and we are working internally and with Webhelp on how to make our customer experiences authentic.

We also know that advisor longevity is a key contributor to emotionally connected customers, and Webhelp is a strong force to be reckoned with in this area. For instance, advisor tenure in Cape Town has led to the highest levels of customer satisfaction across the entire company (easyJet estate).

To conclude, I would be remiss if I didn't confirm that data is essential to build emotional connections with customers. It's not just important to have it, but to actually use it purposefully to understand what's important to customers.

The future is about micro-segmentation based on expert use of data. By understanding who customers are, what pushes their buttons, and what their personal motivations for travel are, and combining this understanding with 'human' customer experience, we will be able to create strong bonds with specific customers. For example, at weekends they're a family customer, but during the week they're a business customer. Their wants and needs – and expectations – throughout the entire customer journey need to be treated differently.



By understanding who customers are, what pushes their buttons, and what their personal motivations for travel are, and combining this understanding with 'human' customer experience, we will be able to create strong bonds with specific customers.

John's Top tips

- **Consider how emotional relationships can be 'judged' or measured. The typical linear measures are often not the best predictors of customer behaviour.**
- **Look at emotional connection through the lens of monetisation. Where will the investment have the biggest impact?**
- **Do it before your competitors do!**



Viewpoint: Polly Ashdown

Marketing & Communications Director

Webhelp UK, India & South Africa

A driving force in 'Think Human' re-brand across the UK, SA and India, **Polly Ashdown** joined Webhelp in 2019 from Heriot-Watt University. With 20 years' experience in global financial services, outsourcing, asset management and higher education, she is passionate about the role of insight and empathy in building communications.

Net importance in Customer experience in creating an emotional connection

86% SPEED

Dealing with enquiries and issues quickly

76% CHOICE

Customers being able to choose their preferred methods of communication with the brand (e.g. email, social media, text etc.)

67% HUMANITY

The brand coming across as 'human' (e.g. responsive, friendly, thoughtful, considerate, personal etc.)

60%

PERSONALISATION
Giving a personalised experience every time a customer interacts with the brand

As the range of digital consumer platforms and devices multiply, customer relationships are increasingly being disrupted by digital communications. Used to getting what they want when they want it, customers now expect brands to interact with them across each touch-point consistently – and in line with their expectations.

The brands that are able to speak with customers – rather than at them – will create and reinforce emotional connection. As our new YouGov consumer research shows, the impact of brand humanity on consumer behaviour cannot be underestimated. And neither can the impact on measurable outcomes including spend, loyalty and advocacy.

But how important is this connection to the customer, and consequentially to brands? Overall, 40% of consumers report feeling an emotional connection to a brand, and this connection makes them behave in different ways towards the brand.

In fact, of those who said they feel an emotional connection to one or more brands, 54% of people are prepared to pay slightly more for products/services, 66% are more loyal to the brand, 55% are likely to purchase other products/services, 63% recommend the brand to family and friends, and 49% share experiences of the brand.

Revealingly, only 4% of customers reported that having an emotional connection to a brand would not make them behave in a particular way, when talking to friends and family.

And these results become all the more interesting when we look at the source of emotional connection. The top 5 ways in which people feel emotionally connected to a brand are: The overall customer experience (53%), The brand is easy to deal with (38%), The brand's values are similar to mine (34%), The quality of interactions with the brand (26%), The brand is 'human' (22%).

As we can see, customers reward brands who successfully demonstrate humanity with loyalty, advocacy, and their cash. If brands are perceived as 'human', customers are more likely to: Emotionally connect with the brand (net likely 56%), Go back to the brand repeatedly, rather than trying a different brand (net more likely 69%), Spend more money with the brand (net 'more likely' 61%), Recommend the brand to other people (net 'more likely' 67%).

Viewpoint: Polly Ashdown (cont)

People in the ABC1 (the three higher social and economic groups) bracket are more likely than C2DE (the three lower social and economic groups) respondents to take positive actions towards a brand because it feels 'human'.

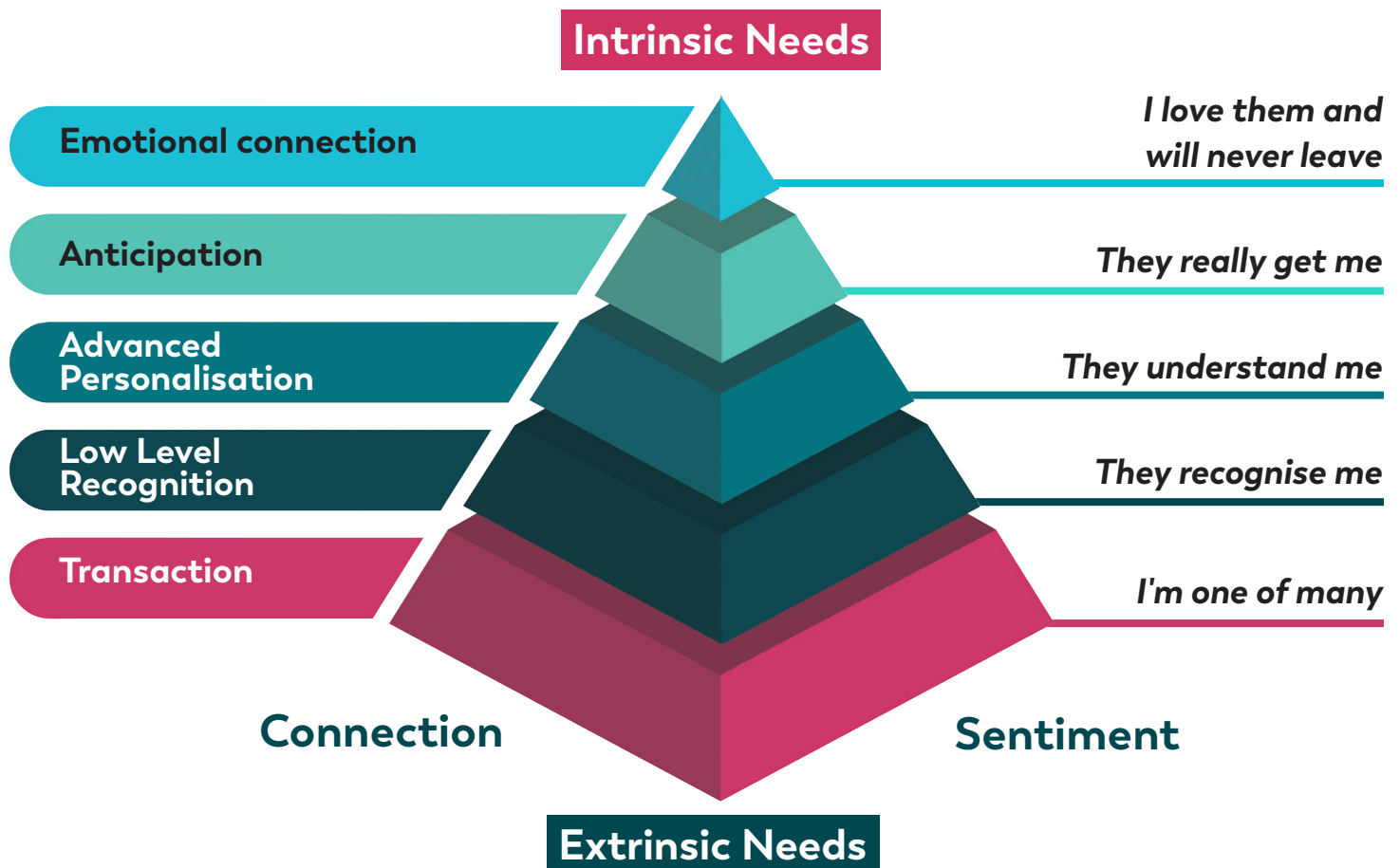
Brands therefore have an opportunity to leverage emotional connection as a powerful driver of positive behaviours with customers with disposable income.

Brands that really 'get' the importance of a human angle look at making connection in the most human way possible. They're less focused on the transaction – i.e. of selling the product, or answering the question – they're focused on building trust, anticipating customer needs, and giving customers the edge. They know that consistency is key to trust and

credibility, and focus on the entire experience, rather than one element of the customer journey.

In a nutshell, brands that are human are good at building relationships. They design customer experience from the customer's 'ideal' of a relationship, and with a good understanding of their motivations. Customer insight and analytics are key to making sure that everything – from messaging, the language and channels used – correspond to the customer's 'ideal'.

At Webhelp, we're using customer insight and analytics to create experiences that are human. While technology is inevitably core to customer experience, we always view technology from the standpoint of how it can augment the end to end experience and bring out the best in people.



Consider emotional connection as a hierarchy. Clearly, there are functional “transactional” things that need to ‘get done’, but there are experiences that need to happen in order to form emotional connection, and achieve the holy grail of loyalty and advocacy.

Q&A: Rebecca Price

Partner, Frank, Bright and Abel

A creative consultancy of communications specialists



Brand and communications specialist, **Rebecca Price**, with business partner Andrew Gibbs, launched creative communications consultancy Frank, Bright and Abel in 2013, following an extensive career including senior appointments as Managing Director at Lloyd Northover and Head of Brand at Radley Yeldar.

How can brands create emotional connections?

Without a clear brand purpose, that goes beyond practical product or service benefits, customers might not see any reasons to commit to a brand. A brand purpose focuses on the more emotional, social and ethical benefits the company stands for. As new generations become paying customers, we're seeing brand purpose become increasingly important in terms of creating meaningful emotional connections, as organisational purpose and values are key purchase decision factors.

Customers are self-informed and very savvy when it comes to making brand choices. To compete, brands need to make sure their purpose is compelling, and bring it to life in the competitive landscape and on key issues. Often, apart from the point of sale, customers experience a brand when they have questions or a problem that needs solving. This means that brands should think of their purpose in a wide context of great products, presence in the community, and very importantly, through the customer experience.

Brand purpose strengthens customer connection. When combined with brand values and all the other things that constitute a brand, this connection can be very powerful and lead to profitable customer behaviours.

How do you create a compelling brand purpose?

Core to defining a brand's purpose is a deep understanding of the customer. Today, that goes beyond traditional demographics and incorporates customer behaviours – and even ideologies.

Brands and customer relationships are based on emotion. Brands need to have authentic, 'on brand', two way conversations, and consider how those conversations will impact customer sentiment.

Purpose-driven brands need to have an ideology too. Before a brand can determine "why" it exists, it needs to determine what it stands for, and what it's willing to fight for. A strong brand evolves over time, and having a strong ideology provides the compass needed to remain consistent and likeable over time.

Brands and customer relationships are based on emotion. This means that brands need to have authentic, 'on brand', two way conversations, and consider how those conversations will impact customer sentiment.

How can brands help their people connect with customers?

To help employees represent the brand effectively to customers, employers are increasingly focusing on benchmarking, enhancing or recalibrating their employer brands. Employees live the brand through their behaviours, so helping them to understand and live the brand's purpose and values is vital – particularly in customer service environments. Employees essentially act as brand advocates, so the potential to positively impact customer perceptions through customer engagement is huge.

When developing our employer value proposition over the past year, we took the time to understand what is important to our people. We used insight and feedback from focus groups, manager interviews, and talking to our customer facing people. Not only are we attracting and retaining the right people, these insights, perspectives and viewpoints are allowing us to do great work for our clients.

Gillian Campbell, Chief People Officer UK Region & Director Global Engagement

Webhelp:

Think Human



This whitepaper with its clear focus on the importance of brands maintaining a human face and creating strong emotional connections with their customers, comes at a particularly relevant time for Webhelp as a company.

*Webhelp undertook a global re-brand in October 2019, to better reflect the company's people first values and core vision to **think human**.*

On the following two pages we offer some background on the Webhelp identity and vision for the future, plus some reflections from our people on what makes the Webhelp culture so special.

Webhelp is a partner across a range of services including customer experience solutions, social media moderation and payment services.

We are the European leader in our industry and aim for a global leadership position. As such, our skilled family of over 55,000 employees work in more than 140 locations in 36 countries. And as we expand, we continue to participate in ethical practices like impact sourcing and environmental strategies.

As a people-first company we share a passion for sustainable growth and have a game-changer mind-set. We invest in cutting-edge service capabilities and innovative new technologies, and hundreds of brands across the world trust our people, our culture and our ideas and technology.

As Webhelp Founders' Olivier Duha and Frédéric Jousset, explain:

"Webhelp's new vision of "making business more human" is founded strongly on our existing company culture, as well as the role enterprises play in society and the rising desire of consumers to create emotional connections with the brands they engage with. At Webhelp we truly believe if you focus on the person in front of you, suddenly everything comes alive. This holds for each connection built between a brand and a consumer, but just as strongly between employer and employee, client and provider."

"The importance of being a 'human brand' is highlighted in our YouGov research (see page 15), and is also core to Webhelp."

"On the following page we're delighted to share a selection of quotes from our people around the world, taken during our year-long re-branding initiative. Our teams' input and involvement was core to the new brand we're so proud to have today."



Webhelp Voices

Our people, our culture

This is what we do. It is taking care of people, but people in the whole holistic sense. We do not have employees. We have people. We do not have clients. We have people.

In here, it is more human, and folk are more genuine when they're talking to people.

We are a business built on people who listen, understand, learn and bring their human experience to the table.

4 years ago we wanted to become a technology-driven company. Today, we want to become anything but. We want to invest in the human dimension and in emotional intelligence.

Helping people that would call crying because they had no electricity, feeling people smile at the other end of the line...

What we are really aiming for with our clients is to create a very good partnership.

There are nice opportunities to make interactions fun, and make them enjoyable for customers.

Our value is our people... who can think out of the box.



Natural
Thoughtful
Honest
Humorous
Authentic
Responsive
Intelligence
Personal
Friendly

'Human' brand
attributes valued
by customers

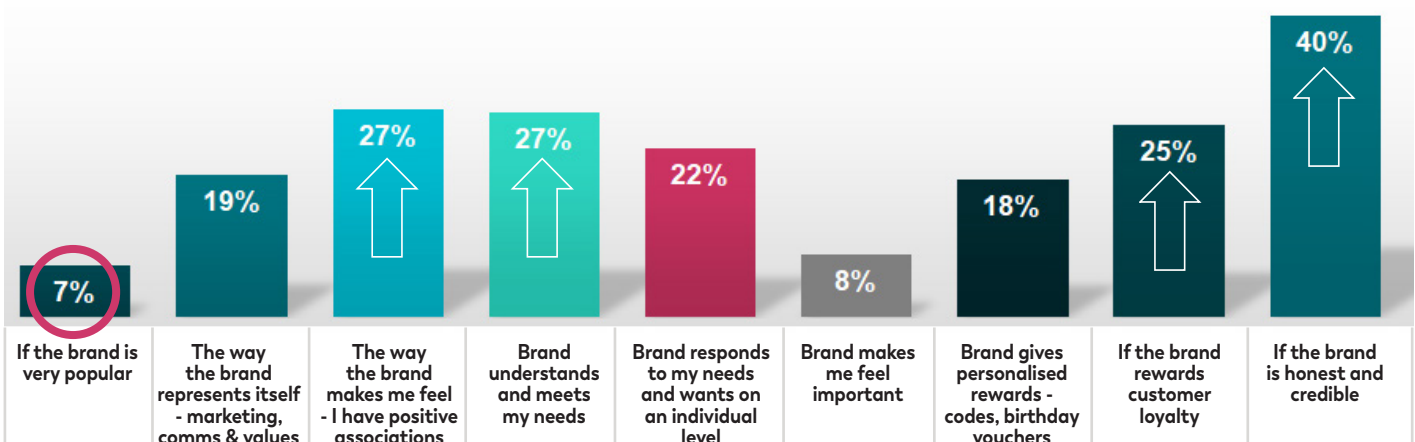
Webhelp & YouGov study:

Establishing emotional connections with customers

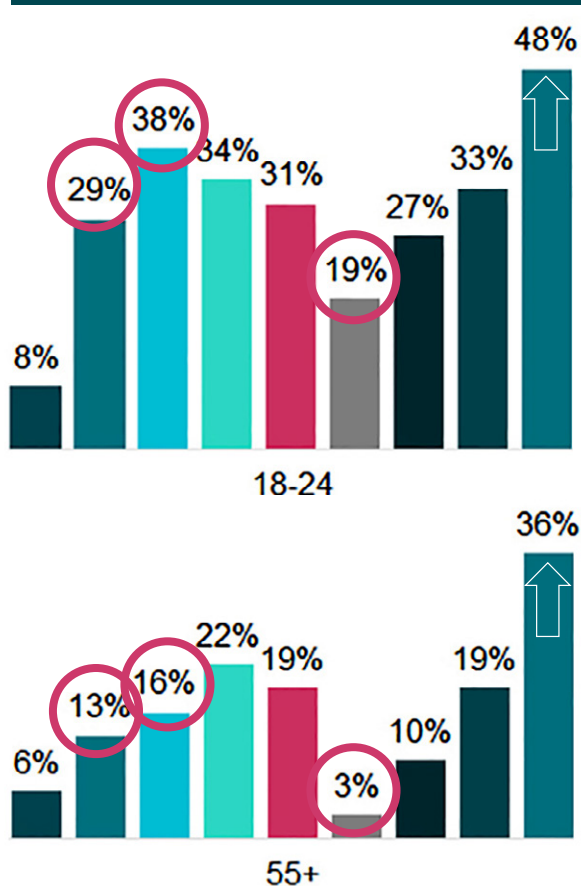
What brands need to know

Brands that demonstrate human qualities and satisfy personal motivators appear better positioned to create emotional connections with customers. Interestingly, brand popularity does not seem to have a significant impact on emotional connection.

What makes people feel emotionally connected to a brand?



Connection to a brand - Age variation



Similarities and differences within age groups.

While brand popularity is not a factor across all age groups, younger age groups are more likely to consider all factors more important than the oldest age bracket (55+).

And while all age groups have a similar pattern, it's interesting to note that younger age groups respond more favourably to "If the brand makes me feel important", "the way the brand makes me feel", and "the way the brand represents itself through marketing, communication and values."

The highest score across all age groups is "If the brand is honest and credible".

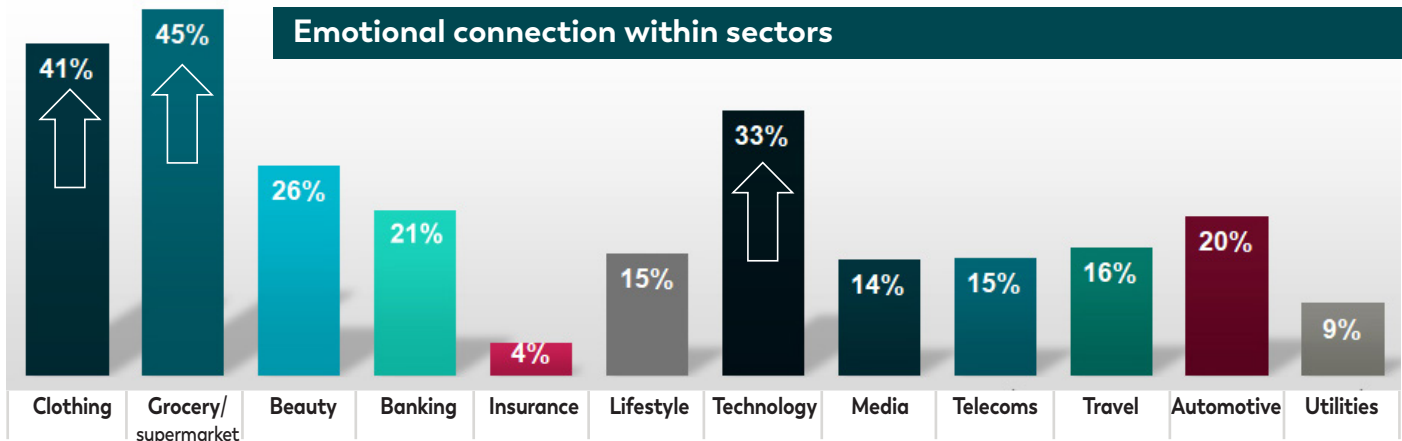
- If the brand is very popular
- The way the brand represents itself - marketing, comms & values
- The way the brand makes me feel - I have positive associations
- Brand understands and meets my needs
- Brand responds to my needs and wants on an individual level
- Brand makes me feel important
- Brand gives me personalised rewards - codes, birthday vouchers
- If the brand rewards customer loyalty
- If the brand is honest and credible

Webhelp & YouGov study (cont)

Clothing, grocery/supermarket, beauty & technology sectors scored highly with consumers reporting emotional connection.

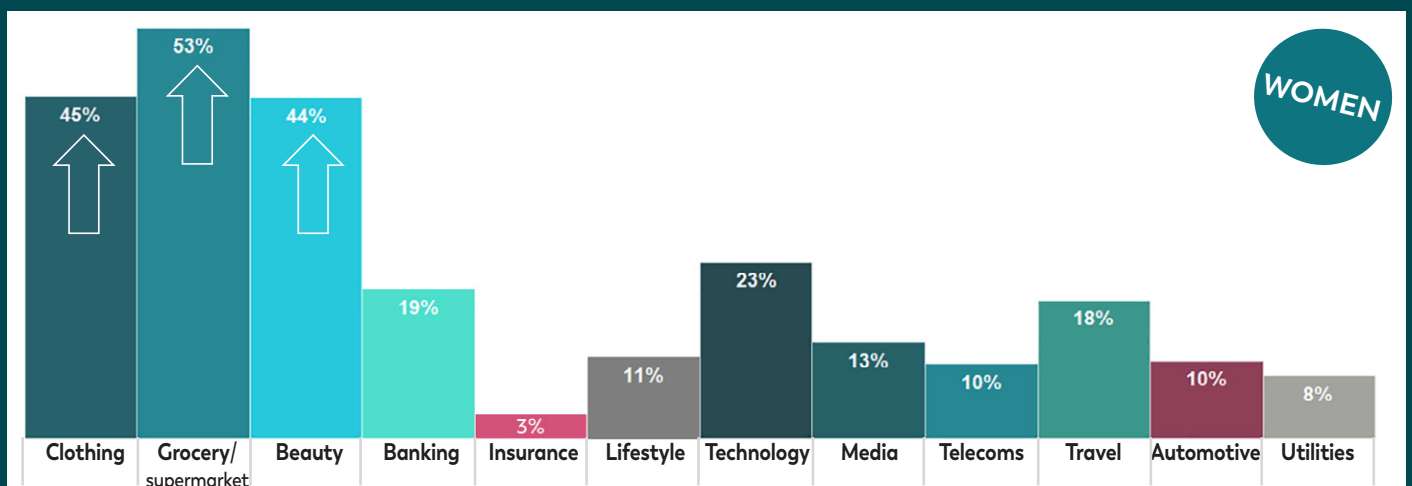
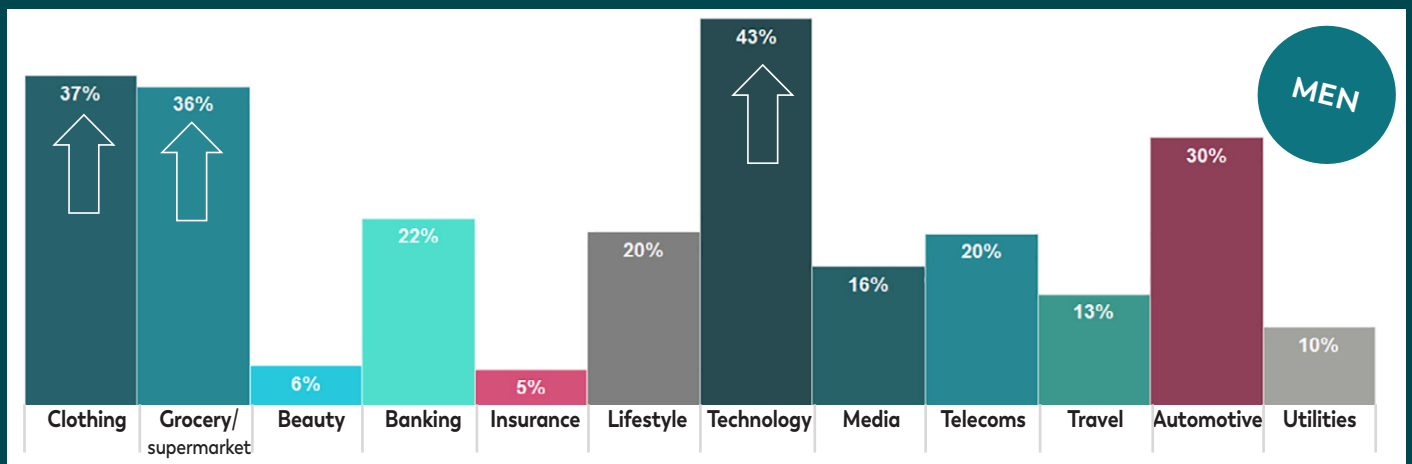
Banking performed relatively strongly, whereas Lifestyle, Media, Telecoms, Travel and Automotive reported modest levels of emotional connection. Insurance and Utilities ranked the lowest, perhaps a result of a myriad of price comparison sites and aggregators.

Emotional connection by sector follows a similar pattern. The stand-out response remained: **"If the brand is honest & credible"**. Popularity of the brand was still a low scorer, with some variance in itself through marketing, communication and values for insurance, lifestyle and media.



There are gender differences in emotional connection with brands in specific sectors.

Overall, women report having an emotional connection more frequently. Women are also much more likely to have an emotional connection with a clothing, grocery/supermarket or beauty brand, whereas men – perhaps unsurprisingly – report having an emotional connection with a technology or automotive brand more than women.



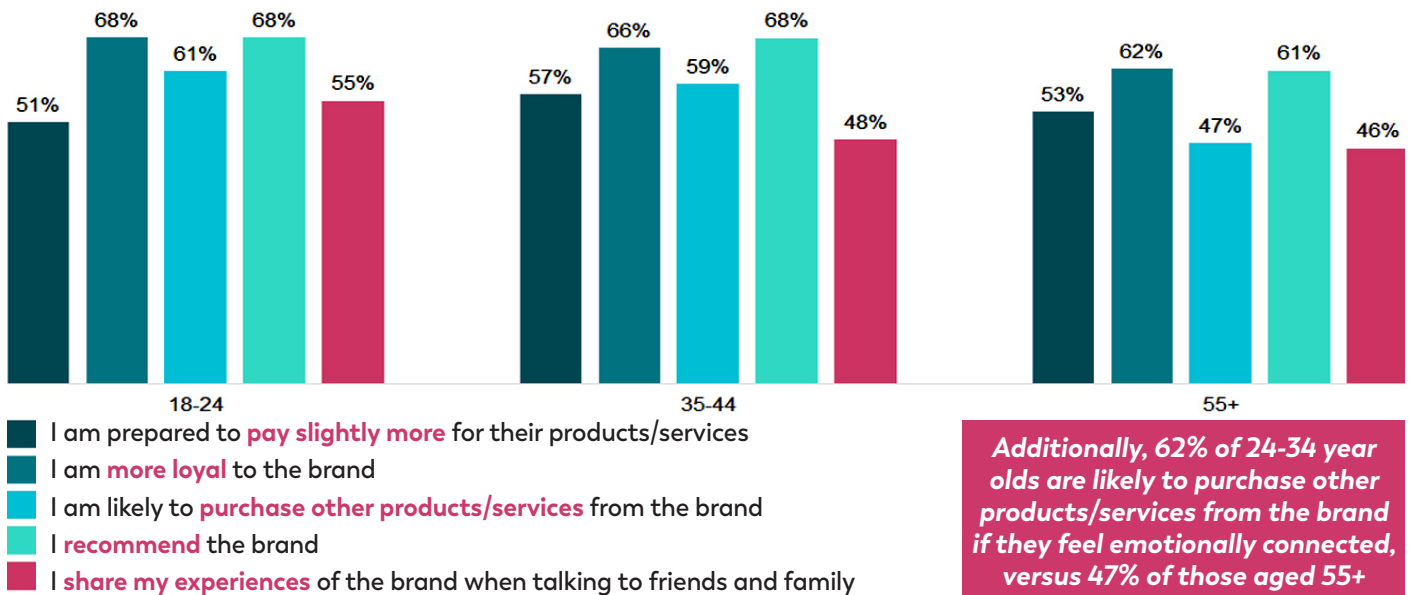
Webhelp & YouGov study (cont)

While all age groups report positive brand behaviours towards brands, when an emotional connection exists, there are significant differences.

Broadly speaking, all age groups behave more favourably than the 55+ age group. The most positive behaviours overall are: brand loyalty, recommendation, and a preparedness to pay slightly more for products/services.

Overall, regardless of age group, 55% that would be likely to purchase other products/ services, 54% would pay more, 63% would recommend and 66% would be more loyal as a result of emotional connection.

Top five behaviours resulting from emotional connection *



Additionally, 62% of 24-34 year olds are likely to purchase other products/services from the brand if they feel emotionally connected, versus 47% of those aged 55+

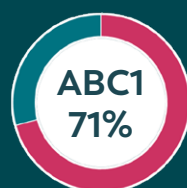
*Sample age groups chosen from full data to help give an at a glance view of the behavioural variation resulting from emotional connection.

Perhaps predictably, the 18-24 age group responded more favourably to if they would be more likely to 'share my experiences of the brand on social media' as a result of emotional connection, at 20%, than the 55+ age group which was only 6%.

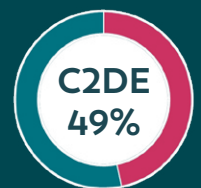
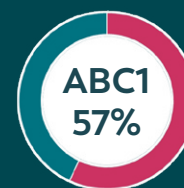
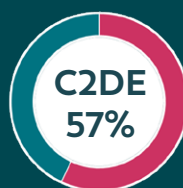


Positive behaviours towards brands are, without exception, more prevalent in the ABC1 grade

The largest variance between consumers in the ABC1 (the 3 higher social and economic groups) and C2DE (the 3 lower social and economic groups) brackets is between loyalty and payment.

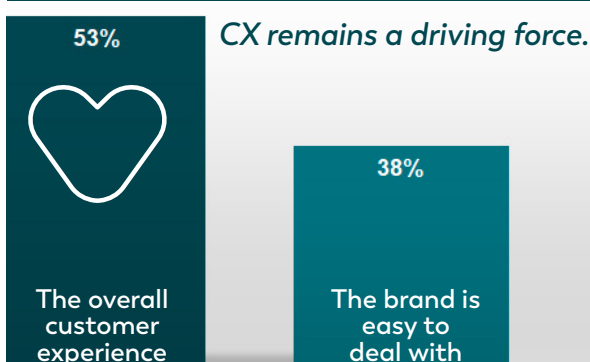


I am more loyal to the brand



I am prepared to pay slightly more

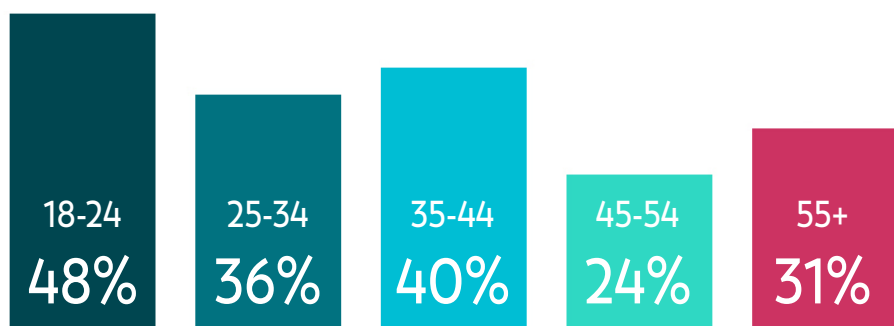
Top five sources of emotional connection



As well as being one of the top 5 sources of emotional connection, a brand being "human" was also considered important by over half of our respondents! (55%)

Webhelp & YouGov study (cont)

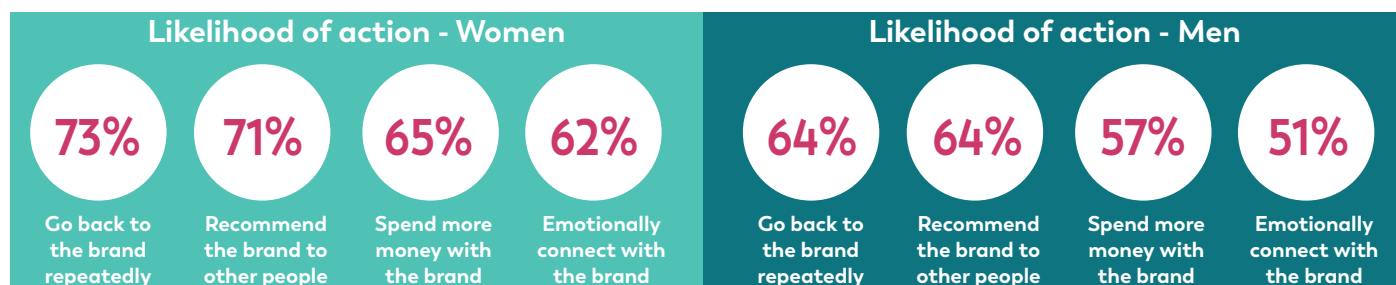
Age breakdown for "The brand's values are similar to mine" as a source of emotional connection. Note Gen Z peak!



Having a 'human' brand increases the likelihood* of taking positive actions towards the brand for a majority of respondents.

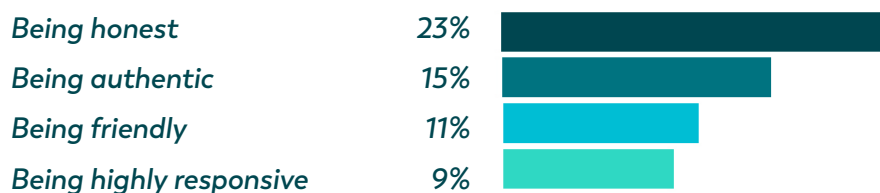
Women were statistically more likely to take actions as a result of the brand being human, particularly in the areas of brand loyalty and making connections, as shown below.

*Net: More likely



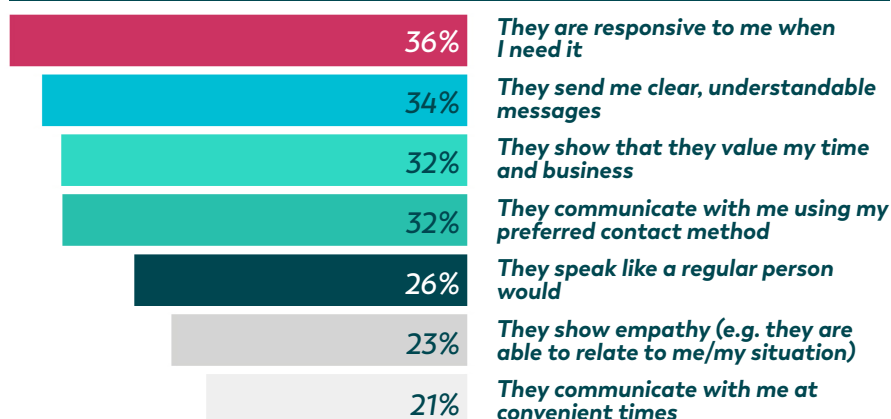
The results confirm the importance of humanity, responsiveness, a sense of being valued, and understanding in consumer/brand relationships. As CEO, David Turner explains: "At Webhelp, we use technology to augment human performance. We design and use technology to help advisors have great conversations, which build true connections. If a brand is overzealous in pushing people to lower cost channels, they'll lose the human emotion, and it's very difficult to 'win' it back once you've lost it."

The most important human attributes for a brand*



*when communicating with customers

Things important in order to ensure a positive experience



Brand values are an increasing motivator for customers – particularly millennials and Gen Z. But they're also a big motivator for business to business relationships. Take Webhelp, we're selective about which partners and clients we work with. We need to be able to embrace their values and want them to share ours. It's a two way thing."

David Turner, CEO, Webhelp UK, India & South Africa

Viewpoint: Dr. Guy Fielding

Social Psychologist &

Customer Experience Consultant



There is some basic psychology that sits right at the heart of emotional connection. Charles Osgood, right back in the 50s and 60s, developed the semantic differential theory, which has been used in the field of psychology for determining the attitudes and perceptions of a subject.

Essentially he was trying to work out how we understand the world around us, and had the notion that we'd all use similar 'discriminations'.

This led to a framework that suggests that we have 4 key distinctions when considering something. In very simple terms, these are:

- 1. Evaluation: do I like it or not?**
- 2. Potency: is it strong or weak?**
- 3. Activity: is it fast or slow?**
- 4. Familiarity: is it familiar or strange/unfamiliar?**

From this research, there were two key points. Firstly, about 50% of meaning consists of evaluation, i.e. 'I really like this mug'. Secondly, in evolutionary terms, for an organism to thrive, there's a basic assessment of 'can I eat it, or will it eat me?' which impacts whether we approach or avoid, like or dislike something. These are universal, whatever the culture, whatever the language. So, when brands are trying to create emotional connection, in essence, they want people to see them as liked, strong, active, and familiar.

Speaking and interacting with customers – i.e. customer service – is a huge opportunity to form positive distinctions that mean that brands are perceived as liked, strong, active, and familiar. Let's think about the role of communication, which is at the heart of customer service.

Guy Fielding is a Chartered Psychologist and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society specialising in interpersonal and organisational communication. He has spent much of his career applying this expertise to helping organisations improve their communication with their customers.

Food for thought!

Genuine, personal recommendations are the most powerful influence on customer future action, but often considered to be the least manageable bit of an organisation's marketing tool-kit.

According to the Institute of Customer Service, 24% of customers said their decision to use an organisation was influenced by information or advice from a friend or family member. The average customer satisfaction, by source of information or advice used, is highest for 'recommendation/advice from friends or family' (81.4 vs. UKCSI average of 77.1 – Index scores out of 100).

Viewpoint: Dr. Guy Fielding (cont)



Communication is an evolutionary triumph of humans. Genetically, we're not that different from chimps, but human language is special. By communicating we create, cooperate and coordinate. Because we do this, we create community and communion. And this is all about building and maintaining relationships. As humans, we build relationships because we may want to draw upon a relationship in the future and to build our own social capital.

This provides a useful context for brands as it shapes any given interaction with the customer, but let's look at what they should be doing to build relationships with customers:

People are influenced by specifics

Brand communications are generally linked to the overall purpose of the brand which is important, but customers need to know what is the impact of the brand on themselves. To a large extent we are media 'savvy'. We may see a TV ad and think 'that's clever, I like that', but we realise it's largely down to the quality of the ad agency. As consumers we interpret ads as 'this brand seems to want to be telling me that they're x, y and z', but it's not the organisation, it's the story they're trying to tell.

Brands need to think about how they authentically impact on how customers positively perceive them and behave towards them on a 'one on one' basis. This is where Customer Experience comes in.

People can be powerful advocates

When brands get point 1 right, and help people perceive them and behave positively towards them, they have to be prepared to produce this at scale. Each single interaction has the potential to be a 'case study' – a story one customer can tell many more.



Emotional connection needs to be situational

Emotional connection should be viewed as part of a bigger emotional context as people are much more strategic and situational than brands can often realise. For example, I love First Direct, but it doesn't feature in my emotional world every day. When I have a question, I want it answered in a way that's consistent with the emotional context that we've jointly built. If it does, then great, but if it doesn't deliver, it doesn't matter how much I love them. Get the basics right, make sure they're authentic and consistent. However, helping me meet a specific motivation I have – helping secure my children's financial future, for example, will trigger a strong emotional response that reinforces my bond with First Direct.

Communication is an evolutionary triumph of humans. Genetically, we're not that different from chimps, but human language is special.

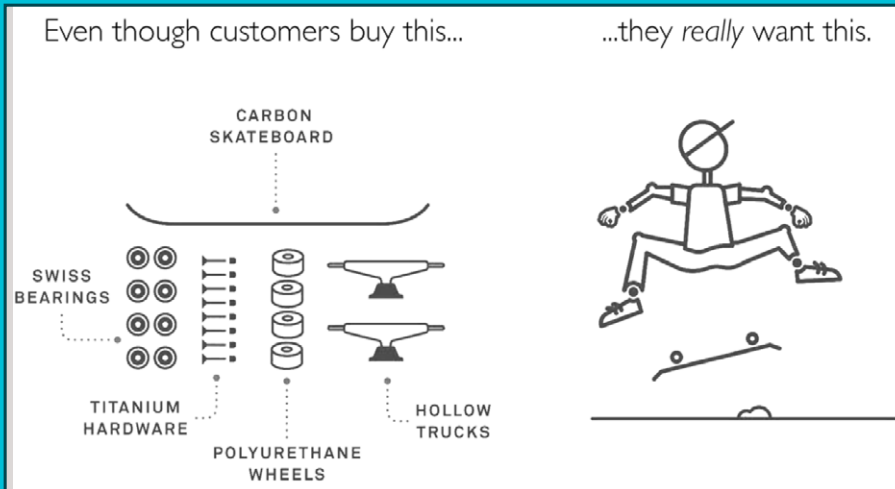


I think that this visual is an interesting case in point. Before looking cool, you need to get the basics right. A skateboarder is not going to look cool if the skateboard falls apart. But when it works well and he skates well, then he's more likely to share cool videos on social media. And other wannabe cool skateboarders are going to need that skateboard to look just as cool...

Viewpoint:

Dr. Guy Fielding

(cont)



intercom.com



On Emotion: David Turner

CEO, Webhelp UK, India & South Africa



People need to believe, which is easier to do when the brand has a strong purpose and values. A bond – or a genuine emotional connection - is more easily created and retained when these are conveyed by a person. Technology can be a powerful enabler, but it's really people that are key to emotional connections.

At all levels, it takes a myriad of connections to make a partnership successful. Together, these combine to make people think: “I want to work with you”, and “I forgive you when you get it wrong.” Friendships survive bust ups. It's the same for business relationships.

Creating emotional connections starts at the C-Suite.

Execs need the emotional intelligence – and to do what it takes – to build better customer experiences.

The customer journeys need to be understood. The employer value proposition is vital.



Q&A: Nicky Pharoah

Managing Director

The Learning Curve

*Emotional Intelligence is widely accepted to be an important skill for CX professionals. But why is it important and can it be taught? We asked **Nicky Pharoah**, an Organisational Development (OD) expert with extensive experience of psychotherapeutic application in the workplace to tell us more...*

Is emotional intelligence important in the workplace and when dealing with customers?

In a word: yes. Emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to have high performing teams, who are engaged with the brand they work for. They're able to create a climate of psychological safety, encourage better levels of engagement, and bring out creativity.

As well as being crucial for leaders, strong emotional intelligence is vital to engage customers. Customer advisors need to be able to manage customer emotions – and their own. If you can't manage your own emotions, you will run the risk of stopping listening as you activate the 'fear and flight' part of the brain and disconnect – and so do customers. And if brands can't understand customer emotions, they can't build customer engagement.

In my view, brands should want customers to emotionally connect so that they become 'fans' – I remember a while ago that O2 wanted a 'fandom'. But this is easier said than done as brands need to work hard to attract customers and earn their loyalty. If a customer doesn't feel valued at every touch-point, it has an impact on their trust of that brand. When people don't trust, they get overwhelmed by 'stuff' that they think is a detractor, and they can't make 'bonds'. Therefore, the experience at every touch-point needs to be thought through, and interactions with customers need to be emotionally intelligent. For instance, I consider that my time is valuable – so make it easy for me!

Is emotional intelligence an attribute or a skill?

I'm often asked this question. The truth is, it's part nature, part nurture. It's also fundamentally linked to the attitudes we have about ourselves and others. Different regions of the brain facilitate emotional intelligence; for instance, we can know what we should do, but sometimes don't put it into action, as this is managed by a different part of the brain.

Can emotional intelligence be taught?

Yes it can, but emotional intelligence really needs to be practiced. Neuroplasticity - the change in neural pathways and synapses that occurs due to certain factors, like behaviour – requires focus. But if I relate that to my world, as a therapist, you can only take people as far as they want to go. People need to want to change.

Change can be very hard for people as it's a lot of work – it's about allowing yourself to be 'vulnerable' which takes a lot of courage. But if you can become vulnerable, then being emotionally intelligent, or more emotionally intelligent, is possible. It's attitudes, habits and skills that can be acquired, developed and enhanced through practice, practice and practice!"



What advice would you give customer experience leaders to help people become more emotionally intelligent?

- *Tune into your feelings, be self-aware. If you can't pick up on and understand your own feelings, then you won't be able to pick up on or understand how others are feeling.*
- *Be a role model for emotional intelligence: cultivate it in yourself and inspire your teams and organisation.*
- *Recognise that emotional intelligence can be learnt, so invest in developing how to be more self-aware and aware of others. If this seems a bit 'soft' (actually it's the 'tough stuff'!), then remember that it really does correlate with high performance and positively impact the bottom line!*

In a recent survey* it was found that 92% of leaders that were emotionally intelligent had strong self-awareness. Self-awareness is the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts, or emotions do or don't align with your values and standards. Highly self-aware people can objectively evaluate themselves, manage their emotions, align their behaviours with their values, and understand how they are perceived by others. *Korn Ferry, Hay Research Group

**Did you
know?**

VIEWPOINT: Jo Causon

Chief Executive Officer

Institute of Customer Service

The Institute of Customer Service's 2019 Annual UK Customer Satisfaction Index (UKCSI) findings revealed that CX is failing for the third consecutive year - not by a lot - but we should be worried if this is left unchecked, particularly as there is direct correlation of above average CX and financial performance (c. 10% EBITDA).

It's a concern to anyone who cares not just about the customer experience industry, but the sustainability of organisations and the short and long term prospects for the UK economy.

In January of this year, we added 3 new factors to our Customer Satisfaction Index: emotional connections, Customer Ethos, and Ethics. And I'm glad we did - the most recent UKCSI revealed that the highest performing organisations deliver a consistent quality of experience to their customers but they also project an authentic customer ethos, emotional connection and ethical commitment.

This suggests to me that customer engagement excellence is the tangible expression of a brand's culture. In our experience, organisations that are great when it comes to a service-oriented culture typically have three characteristics. Firstly, there is a visible and sustained leadership commitment; secondly, employee engagement and development are recognised as core business assets; and thirdly, there is a coherent vision for, and unwavering focus on, excellence in everyday operational execution.

Jo Causon joined the Institute as its CEO in 2009, bringing a wealth of experience from the commercial sector, enabling her to put customer service at the heart of the Boardroom agenda. She has previously held director roles in brand and business consulting, policy development and research, and now focuses on demonstrating a clear link between employee engagement, customer service strategies and organisational performance.



Emotional connection for customers means 'I trust you', 'You make me feel reassured'. Neither of these are possible if the experience isn't where it needs to be.



VIEWPOINT: Jo Causon (cont)



Tech can be good. If you are driving a blended approach, it's important to make sure that technology is connected consistently across the channels.

The days of mass consumerism are gone. Experience is now paramount. If you don't deliver good experience, you don't get past the baseline. Without delivering a great customer experience, emotional connection simply isn't possible. Emotional connection for customers means 'I trust you', 'You make me feel reassured'. Neither of these are possible if the experience isn't where it needs to be. However, if you are a trusted brand, customers will do things like give you data and forgive mistakes.

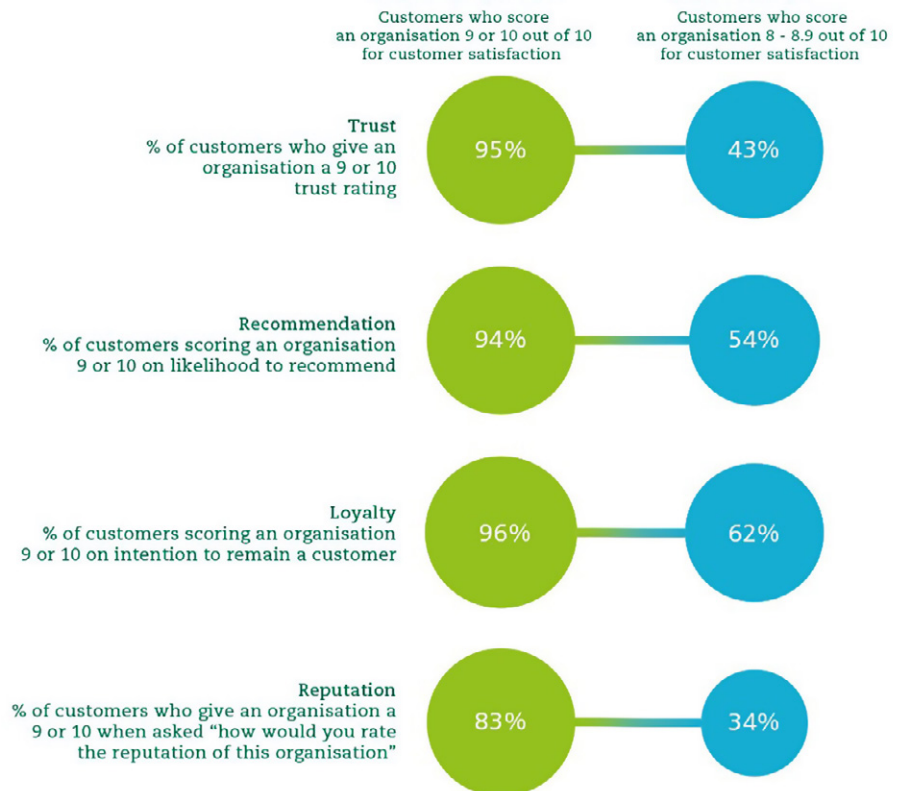
Achieving a 9 or 10 (out of 10) for customer satisfaction is linked to especially high levels of trust, recommendation, loyalty and reputation.

Unsurprisingly, bad experiences with organisations generate the strongest negative emotions when customers are going through a difficult time, with the top three emotions expressed being: Frustrated (38.7%), Annoyed (35%), and Stressed (32.4%).

How do you really want your customers to feel?

As always, I encourage brands to reflect on what differentiates their organisation from others, and to focus relentlessly on driving their service agenda. Experience, complaint handling, emotional connections, customer ethos, and ethics really are important, and performing well in these areas will help cut through complexity, focus on both short and long-term challenges, and enable a sustainable future.

The UKCSI (UK Customer Satisfaction Index) provides insight into the state of customer satisfaction in the UK for 13 key sectors. The UKCSI is published twice a year, in January and July. Find out more: www.instituteofcustomerservice.com



Jo's 'Top Tips' for creating positive customer emotions

- Understand which experiences are the most important to customers
- Provide information and advice to make it easier for customers to interact with your organisation
- Understand the contexts in which customers want fast, efficient service, or where they prefer to spend time and require personalised assistance
- Train people to manage their emotional intelligence and respond appropriately to powerful emotions in the context of customer experiences
- Ensure customers have the opportunity to speak to a person to access help when it is needed

A passionate game-changer in the world of CX, **Helen Murray** ensures that Webhelp puts the client at the heart of everything it does, by creating strategies to intelligently identify and inspire positive emotions in customers, and delivering solutions to help brands stand out. Before joining Webhelp UK in 2012, Helen worked with Verint for five years as Director of Consulting and is a former Director of BT Global Services.

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A final thought:

Helen Murray

Chief Customer Solutions Officer

Webhelp UK, India & South Africa



Managing and measuring what matters.

The research and expert viewpoints in this paper all confirm that emotional connection, when it exists, drives positive consumer behaviours.

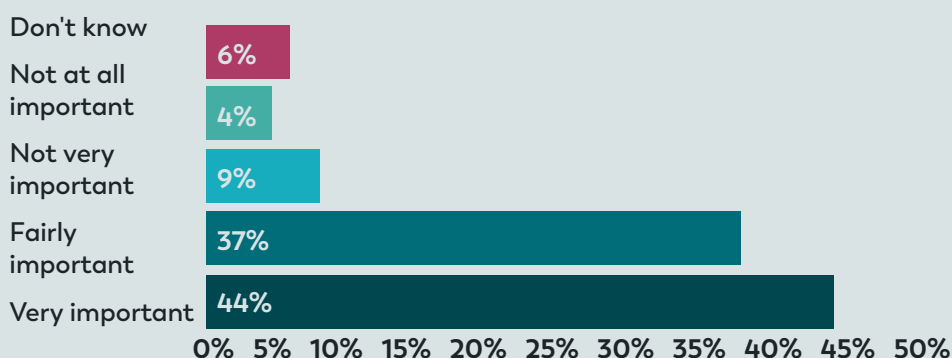
Yet customer satisfaction, which has long been the 'go to' metric for those trying to measure the impact of communication or experience on their customers and their behaviour, is too blunt an instrument to fully understand its actual value.

Customer experience is fast overtaking price and product as a key brand differentiator, and over 80% of organisations expect to compete mainly based on CX.* As our research revealed, the overall customer experience is the biggest source for emotional connection**, which, in turn, is linked to extremely positive behaviours towards brands. In short, the holy grail for all organisations today - increased spend, loyalty and recommendation - can be achieved when an emotional connection between brands and consumers exists, and 'human' CX holds the key.

As part of our 3+ year focus on emotional connection, Webhelp (in partnership with YouGov) previously surveyed 1,154 senior decision makers and asked them what they thought about the importance of developing an emotional connection with their customers. And although more than 80% of executives stated that this was important, less than 50% reported that their business was planning to do anything about it.

This is hardly surprising as although the theory is straightforward, in practice it requires capability, methodologies and experience to apply the right analytics to the relevant data sets to identify the significant emotional motivators.

How important is an Emotional Connection with your customer?



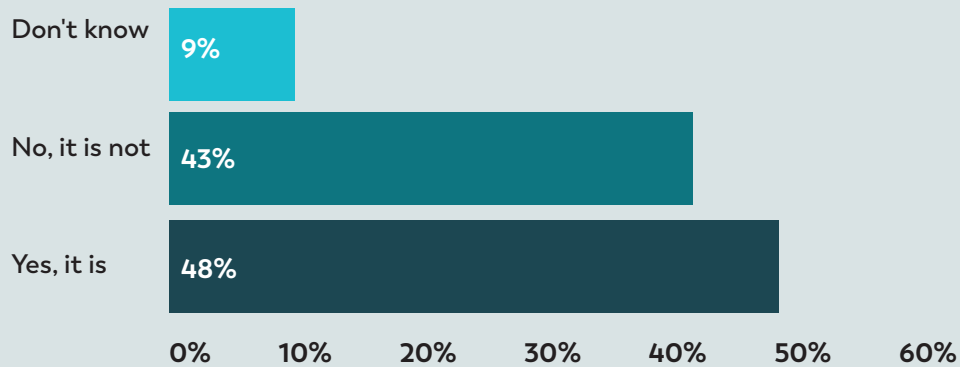
* [Gartner: Realizing the Benefits of Superior Customer Experience](#) ** The overall customer experience at 53%, was the top source of emotional connection for our survey's respondents.

Today's tools can provide near-infinite data points. When pulled from the right places and applied to the right framework, this data can help uncover new, and sometimes surprising insights on customers and their true emotions. Insights-driven strategy and execution are the key to creating campaigns that drive a sustainable emotional relationship with customers and generate tangible results.

Chris Bryson, Global Analytics Director, Webhelp

A final thought: Helen Murray (cont)

Is your business doing anything about addressing it (Emotional Connection)?



Businesses that drive complete customer satisfaction and customer behaviours and measure the results, improve their commercial outcomes. Advances in technology mean that we're able to analyse customer data, transactions and contacts much more effectively and quickly than ever before. This enables us to identify the motivators for emotional connection, and with further statistical modelling, to evidence the positive links between motivators and behaviours, and to quantify their current and potential value.

The final step requires operational expertise and experience to identify and implement the right strategies, channels and technologies – and 'human touch' – to create and reinforce emotional connection.

So, while it is heartening that the vast majority of businesses are conscious that emotional connection is something to strive for, it is rather worrying that not enough are taking steps to ensure that it is a core strategic objective. As our research – and the views from the experts in this paper – have indicated, customer experience (CX) is absolutely core to creating and reinforcing emotional connection and it's clear that brands who embrace this will be the stand out winners. For those that don't, it's likely that they will find it harder to compete.

In simple terms, if you don't care deeply about and anticipate your customers' wants and needs – even if customers are not aware of them themselves – then you can't expect that they will emotionally connect to your brand and buy and recommend your products and services. The sooner you make this the foundation of your CX strategy, the better your business will perform.

To conclude, throughout the world of Webhelp, it's absolutely clear that the future of CX is about managing and measuring what matters: emotional connections between brands and consumers. And we'd love to help you on the journey...

If you don't care deeply about and anticipate your customers' wants and needs, then you can't expect them to emotionally connect to your brand and buy and recommend your products and services.

DISRUPTOR SERIES:
CHAPTER THREE

Emotion

ukmarketing@webhelp.com
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Think Human