



 **W N D Y R**

# **Abundant Journeys and Fractured Futures**

A Framework For Re-Imagining The Future Of Customer Experience

**By Lisa Talia Moretti**



## About the Author

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Lisa is an Associate Lecturer and researcher at Goldsmiths College and a visiting teacher at Cardiff University where she teaches MSc Management of Innovation and MA International Public Relations and Global Communication students respectively. Her teaching area of expertise is Digital Research Methods.

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**Behaviour is  
motivation that  
has been  
filtered through  
opportunity.**

**Clay Shirky**

Cognitive Surplus; Creativity and  
Generosity in a Connected Age (2010)



## 01

# Introduction

We live in a world filled to the brim with choice. While this has certainly helped to deliver products and services that feel more personalised, the ever constant introduction of new technologies, shifting demands and changing expectations has left the world of customer experience in frankly, a bit of a mess.

While study after study shows that people want a more seamless experience across devices, platforms and their online and offline lives, the same studies also show how the majority of brands and businesses are failing to meet this expectation.

This paper would like to propose a new framework for reimagining the future of customer experience by discussing what we believe to be the four key sociological issues that arise when brand, meets customers, meets technology: Trust, The Expectation Gap, Personalisation versus Randomness and The Understanding of Output.

This paper is positioned at all businesses struggling to understand and map the forces at play across the abundant number of customer journeys that are being taken every day. One thing is certain, the future is fractured.



# Trust

Trust is essential to life because, quite simply, we cannot control everything. As a result, the act of trusting contains an element of risk because control is removed from our own hands and placed into a system that whilst being invisible, is believed in and not questioned... until it breaks.

Trust therefore emerges in situations when “there is a need to develop expectations towards the outcome of events,” and also so that we can function in the daily social interactions that pervade human life.<sup>2</sup> We don’t know every driver on the road, but we trust that each of them has a licence and so we climb into our cars and drive. Similarly, we don’t know every person who posts a piece of content online, but that doesn’t mean we don’t trust what we read, watch and listen to online.

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So how do people come to trust a piece of information they discover online? Research shows that trust in online information sources is made up of three parts:<sup>3</sup>

- 1 A trusted search engine, which is almost always Google.
- 2 A personal bias towards a selection of online markers that indicate to that individual that the information they are reading can be trusted. I have termed these online markers that indicate trustworthiness, “trust markers.”
- 3 How an individual engages with ideas of trust in a more holistic and organic way, their unique trust personality so to speak. That is to say if they are more or less likely to give their trust easily to others in their day-to-day ‘offline’ world.

Although the research discovered twenty trust markers, not one research participant mentioned all twenty markers. Most individuals clustered the markers into groups of two to five according to what they felt were the most tell-tale signs of trusted information. Individuals are therefore prone to bias when selecting what trust markers to use.

<sup>2</sup> Quandt, T. (2012). ‘What’s left of trust in a network society? An evolutionary model and critical discussion of trust and societal communication’, *European Journal of Communication*, 27(1), 7– 21.

<sup>3</sup> Moretti, LT.(2012). ‘Just Trust Me: A study of online trust markers’. <http://justtrustme.org.uk/findings/>

## The top five trust markers are as follows: <sup>4</sup>

- 1 Information appears on **other sites**.
- 2 The information is associated with a **recognisable brand**.
- 3 **Content** appears well-written with no spelling and grammar mistakes.  
Content also features stylistic traits associated with the genre of information. For example: academic journals use references, are associated with a university and have a bibliography attached.
- 4 The **author of the content** can be validated as a trusted source: they are associated with a trusted organisation, they have a positive 'Google' presence and their content can be corroborated with information found on other websites.
- 5 The information appears on an '**official**' **website**. That is, the website represents the digital 'home' of a well-established and trusted source of information. The word 'official' was most often referred to when talking about international companies, educational institutions or websites with strong ties to government.

The process of determining whether you can trust a piece of information you find online therefore boils down to one-part machine (search engine), one-part culture (a bias towards a selection of trust markers) and one-part human nature (personality). Only one of those parts can be programmed. The other two have to be learned, understood and strategically responded to.

At the end of 2015, Parse.ly published data that showed that more traffic was being driven to news and media sites from Facebook than from Google. <sup>5</sup> This statistic created a tremendous wave amongst those interested in information discovery on the web. Our customer journeys are increasingly starting in a social network and not with a search engine; take heed of this.

As our Internet lives become more social, the places and spaces, platforms and apps that people consume content on will change and therefore so too will the next generation of trust markers. Invest the time and man-power in learning and unlearning, discovering and uncovering the details of what your audience is really looking at, or rather, looking for.

Understanding the elements that make up a journey towards trusted information is essential to establishing, and part of maintaining, a trusted relationship with your customers online (remember, this is likely to be the place that they discover you for the very first time and have the most regular contact with you – through the content you publish and the presence you craft for your business online). However, fostering and maintaining that trust is the difficult part; this is where business ethics enter the arena. The only marker you can use to identify the lack thereof is how long it takes before you can't stand to look at yourself in the mirror.

**Be a decent human, the world is watching.**

<sup>4</sup> For a full list of all 20 trust markers, please see Appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Buzzsumo.com (2015). 'Facebook v Google: Is Facebook winning the content discovery war?' <http://bit.ly/1MPEtIR>

# The Expectation Gap

Something very interesting starts to emerge when you spend time researching people's relationship with technology. You start to discover quite quickly that the relationship between technological ability and human expectation is a positive one. So, as technology allows for more complex tasks to be undertaken in a more simplistic way, people using technology expect even greater complexity from their tools and devices.

One research participant recently wished for an AR weight-loss app that could show him his predicted future self if he followed a strict diet and exercise regime as a way to motivate him to continue making the right lifestyle choices. Another wished for technology to be embedded in her clothing so it could be smarter and adapt to the world around her. Lastly, another participant wished for her jewellery to warn her when she was spending too much time in shopping malls and could sense that she was getting overly eager to spend money that she should be saving.

Get the picture? Take the last example for instance. Wearable technology can track steps and heartbeat. It can tell you how far you ran. Wearable technology, like Ringly<sup>6</sup> and Vinaya<sup>7</sup>, can even act as an invisible technical bubble that protects you from the daily deluge of notifications you get from your inbox, phone apps and social networks. But wearable technology cannot act as a predictive behaviour and modification tool.

Depending on who you are, the wishes stated by research participants may sound either like challenges to tackle or the stuff science fiction is made of. While for now the above statements may seem like fantasies, they are good working examples demonstrating the expectations held by the general public. And you can see how high they are. They are expecting a lot from your business.

With the limited, and sometimes, zero ability to meet consumer expectations, how does a business in the 21st century try to narrow the expectation gap and give people a valuable and satisfying digital experience? Time and again, the research throws up the same finding: focus on providing helpful, practical, personal and/ or progressive experiences. To do this requires taking a meaningful, needs-based approach to the creation of experiences. And to be good at this, you will need to ultimately have empathy embedded into all parts of your business.

"What need do people have that this product/service/information is helping to fulfil?"

**If you can't easily answer that question, don't launch.**

<sup>6</sup> <https://ringly.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.vinaya.com/>

# Personalisation versus Serendipity

We've moved into rather a strange time with regards to our demand for information. After the complete lack of access to information, the invention of the printing press in 1452 heralded an era of give-me-more-more-more information. Then came the arrival of web 2.0, when we were given a bottomless-Internet. We responded with a craving for quality control. A desire to have access to better tools to not only stem the flow of information but to improve the quality of what we were receiving too.

As a result, many of us have handed quantity and therefore implicitly, quality, control over to algorithms. Those secret, unknowing lines of code that govern recommender systems and search listings and determine what we read and see. In many ways, algorithms have become the gatekeepers to what knowledge we can gain access to on the web; a real danger for the everyday person, many of whom are unaware this is happening.

While personalisation is valuable and even at times appreciated, at a certain level it starts to become a problem by limiting options, curtailing natural serendipity from occurring and even coming across as annoying at best, or worse, creepy. Over the years, a number of research participants have remarked at the continued struggle of finding a recommendation engine that contains a list of suggestions that are all relevant and liked.

If concerns around preventing randomness from occurring fall into the camp of 'soft' metrics that make you scoff, then perhaps it's worth thinking about the tension between personalisation and serendipity this way: as an individual's needs change, if the technology you're using isn't able to adapt, you risk becoming irrelevant. And that's exactly the strategy you want to adopt if you want to lose customers.

If you are committed to adapting and rolling with the punches (or in this case, swipes and clicks), then you have naturally embraced serendipity. Serendipity isn't just about giving people a greater selection of options or giving them a different list of things to choose from. Serendipity is about igniting the feeling of possibility that very often leaves people feeling empowered, not overwhelmed, by the options laid out before them. Serendipity is tantamount to discovery, and the ruthless pursuit of great ideas - essentially the process that often leads to an explosion of creativity - is the building block upon which progress is established. Erasing serendipity through over-personalisation is the opposite of taking a needs-based approach to experience. Curiosity is fundamental to the human experience.



A business that is embracing adaptability and serendipity is Quartz.<sup>8</sup> At the Internet Age Media Weekend 2016, Zach Seward, Vice President of Product and Executive Editor stood up and told the audience that Quartz is “a guide to the new global economy for business people who are excited about change.” You don’t hear very many people being able to describe their business in such a succinct and engaging way. Seward also told the audience that at Quartz they have a different internal-facing statement that not only describes what they do, but drives what they do.

And with that, the words “Quartz is an API” flashed up on the screen behind him.

The reason that internal statement is so powerful is because it has the ability to mobilise everyone at Quartz – literally and figuratively – because what lies at the center of this media organisation is a brand that has the opportunity to go out and be in multiple places at once. That is a fundamental shift in thinking about what a business has the ability and capability to do, create and initiate.

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# The Understanding of Output

What do you imagine when you hear or read the word ‘data’ or ‘database’? For many, visions of a spreadsheet, a computer or perhaps even someone who looks like an accountant-type comes to mind. You certainly don’t imagine art installations and projects involving balloons, crayons, ceramics and string.

However, that’s exactly what Domestic Data Streamers<sup>9</sup> do.

Domestic Data Streamers create meaningful connections between information and people by transforming what we believe data ‘output’ looks like. Not only are they blurring the lines even further between data and art, and knowledge and experience but they are leading the charge in an important education revolution; giving data meaning.

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While having advanced knowledge regarding the inputs computers require is important, being able to interpret the outputs is just as essential. Coding is only one half of what makes up digital literacy; understanding and knowing how to use or execute on the results is the other. However, if the recent obsession with learning how to code and teaching all children how to code is to be read into, then it would be fair to say that the world has gone quite mad on only 50% of the computer literacy required to have a deeply meaningful conversation with the machines that we will live and work with in our future lives. This is concerning to say the least.

<sup>8</sup> <http://qz.com/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://domesticstreamers.com/>

Exactly one year after introducing coding classes in the UK, Python overtook French as the most popular language taught in primary schools.<sup>10</sup> This could be an indication that the next generation are likely to have a more sophisticated knowledge of how computers work and, consequently, embark on a more meaningful relationship with technology in the future.

But as the outputs produced by these emerging technologies become more complex, like starting to measure emotion, multiple interpretations start to become a possibility. When this happens, the kind of education we're currently focused on will be forced to shift into a new direction; helping consumers understand the meaning of the data that is on display.

But this deeper meaning and understanding of data – this new relationship we will be required to have with one's and zero's – doesn't only have consequences for how a business engages with consumers, it has a knock-on effect for businesses too.

Without taking urgent steps now to start seeing the data you collect through new eyes, you risk not seeing the people behind the patterns in your data. Bring in a sociologist, anthropologist or psychologist and have them sit side-by-side while your data analysts review the data you've collected from your digital collateral.

The story that will be relayed back to you will be infinitely more colourful. **Remember, data is just data until you give it meaning.** A fresh perspective is always on-trend.



<sup>10</sup> Coding in the classroom: Python overtakes French as most popular 'language' in primary schools, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/coding-uk-classroom-python-overtakes-french-most-popular-language-primary-schools-1517491>

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**We will need completely  
redefine the consumer  
journey. One thing we  
know for sure is that  
there will need to be a  
consistent emotional and  
intellectual tone of voice.”**

**Pete Trainor**

CEO and Founder of Nexus

# Working Towards A New Customer Experience Framework

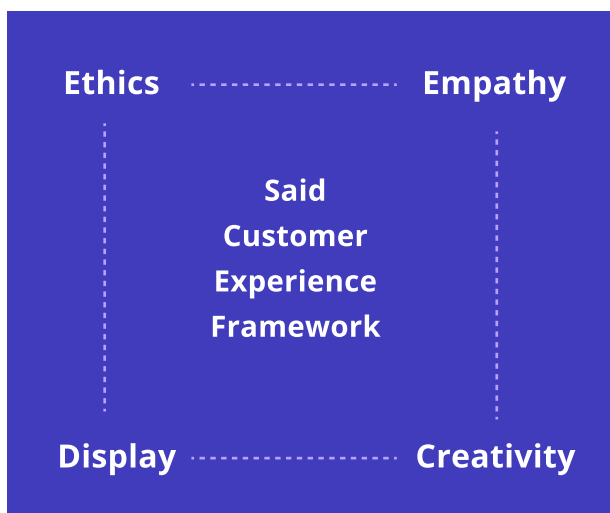
With the introduction of emerging technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial intelligence, plus the number of sources and screens a sole individual is now active on, the world of customer experience is becoming spectacularly complex. However, the frameworks we establish to govern customer experiences don't have to be.

The SAID Customer Experience Framework is solution-driven around the four key sociological issues that arise when brands, customers and technology meet: **Trust, The Expectation Gap, Personalisation versus Randomness** and **The Understanding of Output**.

The framework's four parts are each accompanied by a purpose statement:

- 1 ETHICS; **lead ethically**
- 2 EMPATHY; **create empathetically**
- 3 CREATIVITY; **strive for creativity**
- 4 DISPLAY; **display mindfully**

Ruthlessly paired back, we believe that this approach to customer experience is future-proof to the technological changes that await because its acutely human-centric design favours human truths over trends.



# Appendix

Full list of trust markers (in no particular order):

- 1 **Design and presentation** of the website.
- 2 Recommended by **teachers and parents**.
- 3 Recommended by **friends**.
- 4 Content appears on an **official website**.
- 5 URL's ending in **.org or .edu are most trusted**.
- 6 Content has **strong ties with social media** websites, eg. Facebook Like buttons, Twitter Tweet buttons, LinkedIn Share buttons.
- 7 **Strong community presence** in the form of forum or blog comments.
- 8 Information **appears on other websites**.
- 9 There is **verifiable data or proof** to back up the facts. This could take the form of images, video or statistical evidence.
- 10 Content appears on a **trusted media website**.
- 11 **Contact information** is present.
- 12 **Information can be edited** so that if it's wrong, someone will correct it.
- 13 Content appears on website of/is authored by a **recognisable and trusted** brand.
- 14 Content consistently appears to be **spelling and grammar mistake free** and features **stylistic traits associated with the genre** of information.
- 15 **Recognisable names and authors** are mentioned or can be searched for in which case their Google presence is perceived to be a trustworthy and positive one.
- 16 Presence of just the **right amount of adverts** is preferable.
- 17 Use **background knowledge** to determine if information is trustworthy.
- 18 The timestamp and date of the information is **current and relevant**.
- 19 Websites **respecting user privacy** are perceived by some to be more trustworthy.
- 20 The **use of virus software** to determine if website is **trustworthy** or not.





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**We're translating sociological  
research into a curriculum that will equip  
businesses and employees with critical  
thinking and creativity skills for the future.**

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