

## **The art of experience: Cultivating Strong Relationships with customers in Contemporary Marketing**

In today's highly competitive landscape, where products and services are increasingly commoditised, customer experience (CX) has emerged as a crucial competitive differentiator. As consumers increasingly value unique and meaningful experiences over tangible product benefits, organisations must focus on delivering exceptional and personalised interactions. As there is no consensus on a single definition of CX, the definition from Bruce, Krolkowska and Rooney (2023: 690) was adopted, highlighting CX as a customer's accumulated response to the organisation's interactions.

While exploring the evolving concept of customer experience in marketing, its multidimensional nature, which includes cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social responses to internal and external stimuli, must be acknowledged. These dimensions of experiences may not be standard across different profile groupings. The latter was confirmed in several studies in various contexts, including tourism, banking and retail, both online and offline.

Integrating immersive technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming customer experiences. AI allows organisations to provide personalised experiences, anticipate demands and maximise engagement across various touchpoints. As personalising experiences becomes vital to cultivating strong customer relationships, companies must strategically prioritise CX to build loyalty, encourage advocacy and drive sustainable growth. Using either traditional methods, enhanced AI strategies or a combination of both, personalisation assists in creating deeper engagements and cultivating customer relationships. However, balancing technology with a human touch is important to ensure trust and authenticity in customer interactions.

Marketers must continue to adapt to the changing environment by integrating traditional strategies with technology to meet evolving customer expectations. An integrative framework focusing on providing memorable customer experiences while simultaneously developing and maintaining relationships with customers could assist marketers. Such a framework will focus on co-creating customer experience using AI and personalisation while being cognisant of the changing marketing environment.