

# Creating a positive experience leads to positive outcomes all round

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Many businesses hold the view that satisfied customers spend more and are more loyal. However, Head of Customer, Employee and Reputation (CER) research at TNS South Africa, Richard Rice, says that there are far more layers to customer behaviour than simple satisfaction.



*Richard Rice*

Given the increasingly competitive nature of the market and the profound impact of the internet, the manner in which customers interact with businesses has changed. Relationships are more fragile and customer retention is becoming more challenging and costly. Consequently, Rice says, the customer experience is critical and a true measure of the customer experience must move beyond just satisfaction with the process.

Understanding the competitive context is critical because most companies measure their own customers' satisfaction with their service without accounting for customers' perceptions of competitors. Rice points out that this delivers a relatively incomplete view of the customer and ultimately does not help to explain their actual behaviour. Considering the competitive context as TNS does means that the customer experience can be measured relatively and consequently provides a predictive indicator of future behaviour.

Rice also points out that it is essential to understand individuals and their behaviour in their own context such as life situation and customer life cycle, as opposed to attempting to aggregate experiences across all customers. He states that the notion of average findings is somewhat flawed and his mission going forward as Head of CER at TNS South Africa is to move client conversations towards a greater understanding of individual experience considering the individual customer's context and the competitive environment.

Rice continues to explain that although a simplistic view of customer satisfaction is outdated, the overall customer experience is critical to business success. Even if companies are competing on price or product, the ability to choreograph the customer experience at every step of the interaction leads to a powerful business benefit. With 18 years in this business, there is no doubt that he is well qualified to make this claim and to lead TNS South Africa into assisting its clients to create the best experience for their customers.

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