Personalizing the customer experience:

The key to shaping the future of service providers

Introduction to the customer experience of the new age telcos

The world is continuously changing at a rapid pace, and the global pandemic has reaffirmed this! There is and will be an increasing need for enterprises to be 'digital' and 'customer experience' will be a key pillar for being 'sustainably' digital. The telecommunication industry is no exception. The success of the telecommunication business will be dependent on the experience it provides at every point of interaction. The famous American novelist Ernest Hemmingway once said 'I love to listen. I have learnt a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen.' Likewise, it is imperative for the telcos to 'listen' carefully, 'listen' to everything, and 'act' on it. The ones, who are not willing to listen, will simply perish.

The advent of 5G, Cloud, IoT, and AI, has expedited the aspirations of communication providers to become Digital Service Providers (DSPs). While continuing to provide connectivity, they also provide efficient business services to their customers. Now, who are these customers? They are not only the common people but also numerous businesses of every size. The B2B customers will form a sizable revenue chunk for the DSPs as compared to the traditional B2C segment. From workspace solutions to managed networks to insights as a service, DSPs will have a non-linear growth in terms of their offerings. This means that the DSPs must also compete with digitally native enterprises like Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon etc, who have already eaten a part of their pie, especially in the communication space! To thrive in this space, DSPs need to be agile, embrace technological advances and deliver a superior customer experience.

Gartner.

According to Gartner, "Despite a mandate to create a differentiated and innovative customer experience(CX) strategy that will drive business growth, over 70% of CX leaders struggle to design projects that increase customer loyalty and achieve results".

This whitepaper elaborates on the paradigm shift in customer interactions and the three key imperatives to create a unique strategy and reimagine customer experience for the DSPs.

The paradigm shift in CX with evolving customer expectations

Let's start by breaking down the term 'experience'. For a telco customer, experience occurs at various levels like network-led experience, billing experience, customer care/contact center experience, experience at various channels of interaction i.e., mobile, website, digital or physical store, and last but not the least, the value adds.

Customer Experience

Customer Experience is a Combination of 4 Factors

Network LED Quality Experience

Billing Experience

Contact Centre Experience

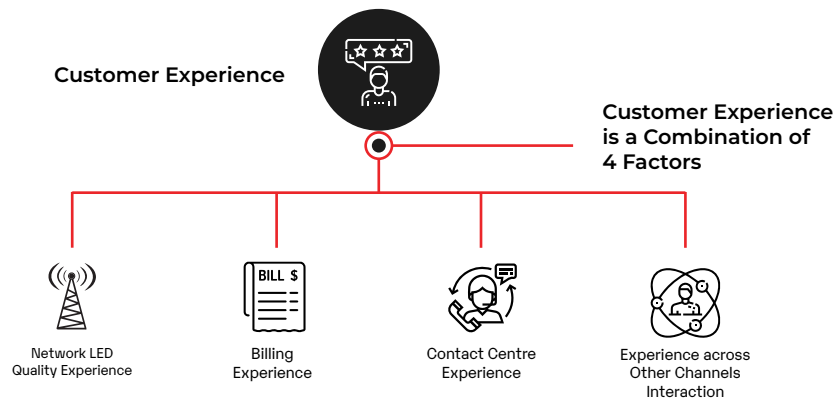Experience across Other Channels Interaction

Fig 1: Factors defining the telco customer experience

Likewise, the term customer also includes internal customers i.e., various functions within the organization (e.g., customer care, reporting functions, HR, Finance, etc.) and the 'non-paying' customers like the Wi-Fi users at airports, trains, etc. Hence, the DSPs have to collect data from all these systems of interactions and records to derive patterns and meanings to help define the experience.

Over the years, the customer's expectations have also changed. They do not want a generalized experience and want it to be hyper-personalized and heavily context-sensitive.

With more and more disruptive players crowding the communication space, DSPs must be innovative. There is a paradigm shift in the way competing entities interact with their customers and represent themselves. As a result, experience, self-service, and hyper-personalization will be increasingly critical not only to ensure customer loyalty but also to make the customers your brand ambassadors and influencers i.e., improving Net Promoter Score (NPS).

The paradigm shift

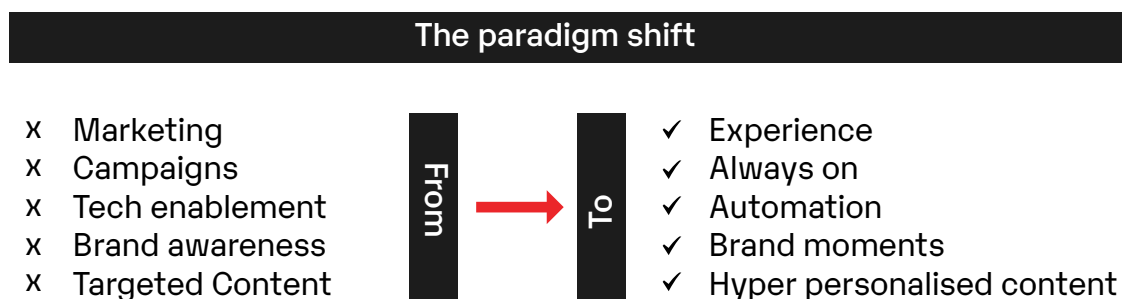| From		To
x Marketing		✓ Experience
x Campaigns	→	✓ Always on
x Tech enablement		✓ Automation
x Brand awareness		✓ Brand moments
x Targeted Content		✓ Hyper personalised content

Fig 2: A paradigm shift in customer interactions

While we appreciate the problem, what is it that the DSPs need to do to get into the 'zone'? Here is what we think are the key imperatives to reimagine the telco customer experience.

The three key imperatives to reimagine CX

1.   Develop a Customer Data Platform (CDP) - trust data and nothing else

All the four threads of the customer experience must be tied together to get the best view of the customer. To achieve this, you need a Customer Data Platform (CDP). The CDP enables you to build your customer profiles by integrating data from a variety of first, second, and third-party sources (e.g., CRM, Digital marketing platform, transactional systems, web forms, emails, social media, websites, and digital storefront behavioral data).
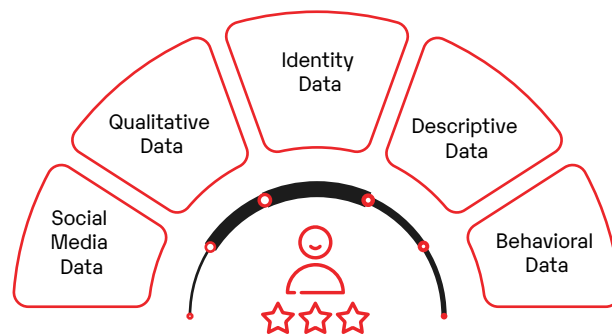

Fig 3: Different sources of data to build customer profiles

DSPs collect and structure real-time data into individual, centralized customer profiles. This data can be used by other applications, for example, for running marketing campaigns. As there is a large volume of data coming from disparate sources, both structured and unstructured, DSPs need to quickly adopt scalable mechanisms like the cloud to host it, manage it and make it available for use. CDPs are vital in achieving a 360-degree view of a customer by enabling customer behavior analysis, constructing identity graphs, household relationships, and helping to unify cross-channel marketing efforts. The CDPs will need both, streaming and batch-based data ingestion mechanisms, and will need to comply with all standard data management requirements i.e., data governance, data quality, and data privacy.

In this context, it is important to understand the type of data that makes up the CDP. For most CDPs, the customer data comes in the form of first-party data, i.e., the data collected directly from the customer by the company and only used for the company's marketing. Third-party data is user data that companies might purchase and/or share with other businesses. Given how often third-party data changes hands, it's hard to determine if it was collected with consent. Hence, it is better to use first-party data since it is more trusted and will provide more accuracy. CDPs will need to access this data from several databases and combine the information to make the best use of it.

2. Map the customer journey across all channels of interactions to predict the customer expectations

If you place the customer at the center of your business, you will need to start building the various journey maps for all types of customers across different business lines, and most importantly, visualize these journey maps. It is recommended to analyze what a customer might expect at each stage of this journey and accordingly, how to either enhance the customer's expectation or disrupt their thought process with a completely new paradigm of experience. There can be several KPIs to measure customer behavior and customer expectation across all journey milestones or stages. However, mapping out numerous customer journeys across different buyer personas can be quite challenging and time-consuming, if done manually. It is, thus, imperative to adopt proper software solutions to automate this process.

Know Me	Offer Right Choices	Sign me Up	Keep Me Informed	Help Me Makes a Decision	Help Me Start Up	Close Transaction
• Customer Details • Location Details • KCI Preferences	• Tech Check • Credit Check • Right Product Offering	• Engineeer Appointment • CPE Delivery Details • Payment Details • Contact E-Sign • Order Placed	• Key Process Milestone • CPE Delivery Tracking • Engineer Visit Tracking • Activation Date	• Change Appointment • Cancel order	• Test on Completion • Demo & Service Handover • AR App for Setup	• Initiate Billing • Close Order

Fig 4: Customer expectations mapped across journey milestones

Machine Learning (ML) can be a significant contributor in dynamically segmenting the customers and analyzing their sentiments at certain key points of interaction (e.g., contact center or social media). It also helps in recommending actions, predicting the right time to make an upsell or cross-sell offer and most importantly, capturing customer preferences. Service providers will need to apply analytics and ML at a scale not only to experiment with these models but also to operationalize with an acceptable level of prediction accuracy.

Gartner.

ML allows product owners and digital analysts to deep dive into specific struggles. The objective is to empower the CX stakeholders to understand what their users experience in real-time without hypothesizing the cause. This can be achieved by making associated session replays immediately visible for each struggle.

3.   Act on the insights, at the right time

Insights, if not leveraged and acted upon at the right time, becomes stale and historical and will not deliver any ROI. The CDP and the journey analyzer mechanisms must be integrated with the various channels of customer interactions. i.e., contact center, virtual agents, mobile apps on customer devices, virtual agents, digital storefronts, physical stores, and social media.
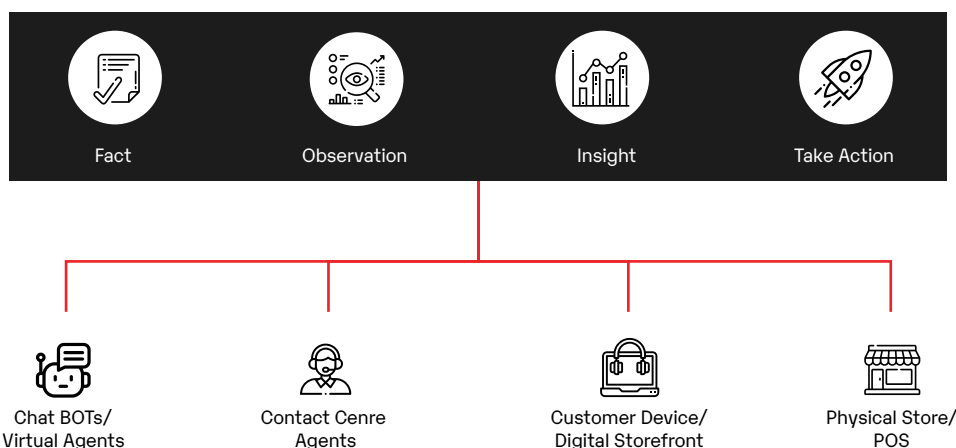

Fact   Observation   Insight   Take Action

Chat BOTs/   Contact Cenre   Customer Device/   Physical Store/
Virtual Agents   Agents   Digital Storefront   POS

Fig 5: Integrating insights with channels of customer interactions

The objective should be to resolve a customer query, issue and make product/service recommendations, while they are still 'in' the conversation. That not only enhances the customer experience significantly but also improves the service operations and the campaign's effectiveness. DSPs can embrace RPA, AI-led automation, Chatbots, or virtual agents to reduce human intervention, speed up the processes and most importantly, reduce the overall turn-around time and chances of any opportunity loss. This can be achieved with API or microservice-based integration which allows the actionable insights to be fed into the action engines like the Chatbots, virtual agents etc. This integration mechanism will be cruial to join the dots between the insights and action engines and to take action on the insights in a timely and contextual manner.

The future belongs to DSPs who are ready to reimagine CX

Customer behaviors and expectations continue to evolve, and DSPs will need to respond accordingly to maintain customer loyalty and NPS. Hence, DSPs need to focus on delivering a personalized CX that is most relevant to each customer across channels and journeys. Further, the DSPs need to strategize and implement the three key imperatives, as discussed above, to reimagine customer experience and meet their ever-evolving expectations.

Listen → **Analyze Customer Expectations** → **Act on insights**

Predictive
Segmentation
Multi-channel & Data
Clever ID & Cross-device Tracking

Digital Channel

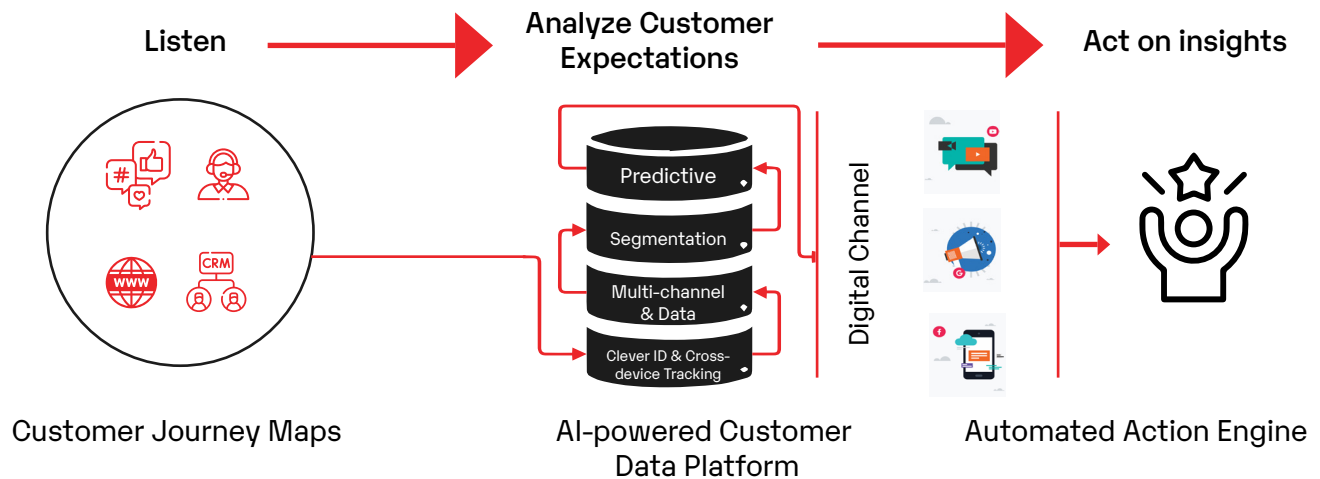Customer Journey Maps   AI-powered Customer Data Platform   Automated Action Engine

Fig 6: Reimagining CX with 3 key imperatives

Reimagining CX will be a mandate for the DSPs. Sustainable experience is possible with the adoption of the right layers like cloud, data engineering, data management, ML, AI, intelligent automation, and virtual agents. These technologies enable the DSPs to offer personalized experiences and interactions across channels throughout the customer's journey.

Prodapt has helped several DSPs across the geographies in their customer experience enhancement journey, by leveraging the imperatives elaborated in this whitepaper along with the power of Cloud, Data, and AI.

Already, the most forward-thinking DSPs worldwide have started reimagining their customer experience

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AI/ML-powered CX and marketing strategy improved campaign ROI by 5X & customer retention by 30%

A leading LatAm DSP faced challenges in improving customer retention and controlling voluntary churn using traditional marketing techniques. Prodapt's ML-based uplift modeling delivered predictive action-oriented insights on potential churners to act on the right time, which resulted in improved marketing campaign ROI by 5X and customer retention by 30%

Digital experience transformation with Mobile First approach improved sales conversion by 20-30%

A leading DSP in North America was challenged with legacy infrastructure, rigid IT systems and lengthy operational workloads. Prodapt's Customer Data Platform, Mobile First approach and unified customer portals for residential and enterprise customers, resulted in improved sales conversion rate by 20-30% and customer delight

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About Prodapt

Prodapt has a singular focus on the Connectedness vertical. Prodapt partners with the leading creators of our hyper-connected world. Prodapt's customers range from telecom operators, digital / multi-service providers (D/MSPs), technology and digital platform companies in the business of connectedness.

Prodapt builds, integrates, and operates solutions enabling next-generation technologies and innovations. Prodapt services global leaders including AT&T, Verizon, CenturyLink, Adtran, Vodafone, Liberty Global, Windstream, Virgin Media, Rogers, Deutsche Telekom among many others. Prodapt's customers today help more than a billion people and five billion devices stay connected.

Prodapt has offices in the North America, Europe, Latam, India, and Africa. It is part of the 120-year-old business conglomerate, The Jhaver Group, which employs over 22,000 people across 64+ locations globally.

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