

Trust and customer experience as important as products, study reveals

Salesforce has released the fifth edition of its *State of the Connected Customer* report, which unpacks insights on the new digital-first customer engagement landscape. For the study, information was sourced from nearly 17,000 consumers and business buyers across 29 countries, including 652 from South Africa.



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According to the findings, the importance of customer experience has hit an all-time high. Increasingly, customers consider whether their interactions with a company are easy and enjoyable. Eighty-eight percent of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products or services.

Great experiences provide an important bond between brands and customers, particularly as loyalty proves elusive. As consumers spend more time online, they gain access to an abundance of options, luring them away from tried and true favorites in favour of trying new alternatives.

SA insights

Below are some of the key South African insights from this year's *State of the Connected Customer* report:

A trust-based economy has emerged: As customers navigate a rapidly changing world, questions of trust, values, and

integrity are increasingly impacting their relationships with companies. Ninety five percent South African respondents believe trust becomes more important in times of change.

Digital acceleration is sparking demand for personalisation at scale: Customer engagement is decidedly digital-first, but brands are under pressure to merge online and offline interactions into a personalised experience as in-person interaction re-emerges. Eighty nine percent of South African respondents have purchased products in new ways since 2020.

New realities are testing brand loyalties: As priorities and behaviours shift, established brand loyalties are undergoing tests of strength. Seventy one percent of South African respondents have switched brands at least once in the past year.



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This new digital-first world has changed the norms of commerce, work, and everyday life, prompting customers and brands to re-establish how they connect. As customers continue to shift their preferred experiences with brands to online channels, brands must re-imagine digital-first experiences that engage customers in a way that is flexible, thoughtful, and provides a personal touch.

“In times of change, make customers’ needs and expectations your corporate north star,” noted Brian Solis, Salesforce global innovation evangelist. “By understanding which each individual customer – whether they be a consumer or a business buyer – needs, companies can earn, build, and maintain the ultimate currency of customer engagement: trust.”

View a breakdown of key insights from consumers and business buyers, including generation and country filters, in an interactive [Tableau dashboard](#).

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