

Online Customer Support and Feedback

Unit: Fashion Merchandising

Problem Area: Promotion

Lesson: Online Customer Support and Feedback

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Summarize online customer service expectations and needs.**
- 2 Summarize methods to meet online customer service expectations and needs.**

- **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

E-unit(s) corresponding to this lesson plan. CAERT, Inc. <http://www.mycaert.com>.

Charlton, Graham. "21 Ways Online Retailers Can Improve Customer Retention Rates," *Econsultancy.com*. Accessed Jan. 22, 2019. <https://www.econsultancy.com/21-ways-online-retailers-can-improve-customer-retention-rates/>.

Forer, Laura. "What Online Shoppers Want—and How You Can Provide It [Infographic]," *MarketingProfs.com*. Accessed Jan. 22, 2019. <https://www.marketingprofs.com/chirp/2018/40164/what-online-shoppers-want-and-how-you-can-provide-it-infographic>.

Hawlk, Kali. "7 Retailers Who Are Embracing Modern Customer Service," *Shopify.com*. Accessed Jan. 22, 2019. <https://www.shopify.com/retail/7-retailers-who-are-embracing-modern-customer-service>.

Henkel, Regina. "10 Most Important Trends in Online Fashion Retail," *FashionUnited.com*. Accessed Jan. 22, 2019. <https://www.fashionunited.uk/news/business/10-most-important-trends-in-online-fashion-retail/2018060129971>.



Walker, Tommy. "Omni-Channel Retailing: What Is Omni-Channel Commerce, Really?" *Shopify.com*. Accessed Jan. 22, 2019. <https://www.shopify.com/enterprise/omni-channel-retailing-commerce-what>.

"What Shoppers Want From the Online Experience: 3 Insights," *MarketingCharts.com*. Accessed Jan. 22, 2019. <https://www.marketingcharts.com/industries/retail-and-e-commerce-83523>.

■ **Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
- ✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
- ✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
- ✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
- ✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
- ✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ **Key Terms.** The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

- autofill
- cart abandonment
- influencer
- millennial
- omnichannel
- touchpoint

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

Share these statistics from the Neil Patel article, "Fastest Way to Lose Customers," at <https://neilpatel.com/blog/retaining-customers/>. "71% of consumers have ended their relationship with a company due to poor customer service. Globally, the average value of a lost customer is \$243. \$83 billion is the cost of poor customer service in the U.S."

CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Summarize online customer service expectations and needs.

Anticipated Problem: What are the expectations and needs of online customers?

- I. Consumers expect an effortless, personalized shopping experience. **Omnichannel** is the integration of all online and offline purchasing experiences. 72% of customers use multiple channels to purchase products. (Source: Shopify, 2018; see Resource section of this lesson) During the purchasing process, also referred to as the customer journey, there are many times a potential customer decides if they will complete a purchase. Determining their expectations and needs during these times is crucial in closing the sale and gaining the loyalty of the customer.
- A. TOUCHPOINTS: Because customers have specific touchpoints during the shopping experience, companies can gather information throughout. A **touchpoint** is any time a consumer interacts with a brand during the buying process. Three interaction times can take place: before, during, and after the purchase.
 1. Before Purchase:
 - a. Social media
 - b. Ratings/reviews/testimonials
 - c. Marketing/advertising
 2. During Purchase:
 - a. Brick and mortar storefront
 - b. Website/app
 - c. Online or in-person salesperson
 3. After Purchase:
 - a. Follow-up emails
 - b. User-generated content (UGC) referrals/recommendations
 - c. Online or in-person customer service
- B. CUSTOMER SERVICE: By gathering data during all three touchpoint times, companies can better determine customer requirements for online customer service. The current trends in online client support and feedback require companies to regularly update their customer's preferences to reflect their personal shopping habits. For example:
 1. Eighty-two percent of U.S. millennials need companies to provide a personalized online shopping experience for them to feel satisfied. (Source: Forer, 2018; See the Resource section of this lesson) A **millennial** is a person born between the 1980s through early 2000s. They want to be able to view content and purchase seamlessly.

2. Over 75% of online shoppers expect to have images and descriptions that clearly represent the product. (Source: MarketingCharts, 2018; See the Resource section of this lesson)
3. When customer needs are unmet, businesses stand to lose billions of dollars. Not only does it cost significantly more to entice a new buyer than to retain a current customer, brand loyalty has not been established so they are less likely to be repeat purchasers. The biggest complaints among online shoppers are hassles with the checkout process and paying for shipping. Online consumers also want a straightforward, free return policy.
4. It should be noted however, that even though there are trends for online customer needs, with so many different types of online retailers and consumers, best practice for determining online customers' needs and expectations is to ask them directly. Not only will the consumer feel valued, the information will be up-to-date and relevant to the target audience.

Teaching Strategy: Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM-A to further students' understanding of online customer/client expectations and needs. Lead a class discussion about students' expectations when shopping online. After the discussion, ask students to rank their top five expectations then turn to a partner and have them exchange answers. Lastly, ask students to brainstorm ideas on how companies can gather data about customer needs and expectations.

Objective 2: Summarize methods to meet online customer service expectations and needs.

Anticipated Problem: What methods are used to meet online customer service expectations and needs?

- II. Meeting Expectations, Needs, and Feedback: Once customer service requirements are known, a company can determine how to meet those needs. Many different methods can be used before, during, or after the buying process. Because omnichannel is one of the most prominent trends in retail, companies may also offer in-store pick up of items purchased online, mobile phone apps that allow a consumer to look up product information while shopping online or in a store, and a social media site that offers reviews of the product through UGC. The following are common expectations with possible methods used to meet the needs of the customer/client.
 - A. PERSONALIZATION: The majority, 96% in fact, of marketing agents say that personalization helps build relationships with their customers. And 88% state they see an increase in business when personalization has been used. (Source: 12 Stats That Prove Why Personalization is so Important at <https://econsultancy.com/12-stats-that-prove-why-personalisation-is-so-important/>) Companies use several methods to provide personalization to customers. Methods to deliver personalization include:

1. Customer Name in Email: It could be as simple as using the customer's name in an email. Although customers are demanding an ever-increasing form of personalization, so just using a customer's name is becoming less and less effective. A customer would not only want to be addressed by their name, they would want offers within the email to reflect their individual preferences.
 2. Personalized Sale Offers: Using data about a person to provide personalized sale offers is another option. This personalization could be in the form of a birthday discount, special offer on a brand the customer has bought before, or making clothing item suggestions based on customer preferences.
- B. ACCURATE PRODUCT REPRESENTATION: When a potential customer views a product on a website they expect to receive the exact item they purchased. Customers want to see in-focus, color-correct photos of the item. Methods to create accurate product representations include:
1. Multiple Angles: Customers are more likely to purchase an item if they are able to see multiple angles of the same item. Companies are using interactive images to help fulfill this client expectation. When viewing a product, a customer would have the ability to click on the item to rotate it, change the color or zoom in for a closer look.
 2. Product Description: Customers also expect a detailed product description to give all relevant information. A company must ensure that the descriptions are accurate. The description may include color options, sizing information, fabric content, and washing instruction. Many customers return items because it was not what they expected. By providing detailed, precise product information companies not only increase initial sales, they decrease returns.
- C. USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC): UGC is one of the biggest influences when making a purchase. "User-generated content is 20% more influential than any other type of media when it comes to influencing millennial purchases. 93% of millennial consumers find UGC to be helpful when making a purchasing decision. 71% feel more comfortable buying a product after researching user-generated reviews." (Source: Tintup website at <https://www.tintup.com/blog/38-mind-blowing-stats-effectiveness-user-generated-content/>) Because UGC is so important, a company must examine their methods to provide customer service in this area carefully. Often there is a standard response that is sent out right away and then a more detailed response once the customer service team has reviewed the UGC. The initial feedback could simply be an acknowledgment of the issue; "Thank you for contacting us. We appreciate your business and are looking into the matter. We will follow up with you shortly." The follow-up feedback should address the issue directly. Content is spread quickly and most customers expect a resolution to their issue within 30 minutes. Methods to elicit UGC include:
1. Social Media: A company can use social media to provide customer service. Social media offers many opportunities for customers to express their opinions. More value is given to an influencer-created *YouTube* video showcasing a particular brand than to a video created by the company itself. An **influencer** is a person who promotes items or persuades others to purchase items. A company can encourage an influencer by providing free products and promo-

- tions. A company can use UGC on *INSTAGRAM* by liking and sharing the posts of customers who post about their products. They should also respond to any UGC that is posted on the company's social media sites.
2. **Brand Loyalty:** Brand loyalty can increase dramatically if a customer reads a positive review left by another customer. A customer is looking for reassurance that someone else has had a positive experience with the company. They may also be looking to gain information such as sizing accuracy. If a potential customer wants to buy a pair of shoes and usually wears a size seven, they may read the reviews from other customers to see if those customers thought the shoes ran true to size. Since a customer is more likely to keep an item they have purchased if it fits properly, this type of UGC is important in decreasing returns.
- D. **FREE SHIPPING AND RETURNS:** 77% of online shoppers stated that they abandoned their cart due to shipping fees. (Source: Marketing Charts, 2018; See Resource section of this lesson) **Cart abandonment** is selecting items to purchase from an online store but leaving the site before finalizing the sale. One method for companies to consider is to offer free shipping once the total sale reaches a certain amount. This also encourages potential customers to buy more. Methods to deliver free shipping and returns include:
1. **Free Returns:** Companies, such as Macy's, offer free returns by printing a mailing label, attaching it to a package containing the merchandise, then dropping it off at any UPS locations. They also allow for items purchased online to be returned in the store.
 2. **Obvious Visual Indicates Free Returns:** If a company decides to offer free shipping and returns it should be visually prominent so the customer knows they are receiving this service. *New York & Company* does this well by stating "*FREE 2-Day Shipping & Free Returns*" directly under the purchase button for each item.
- E. **HASSLE-FREE CHECKOUT PROCESS:** Clients would rather not create an account in order to check out or, if they must, it needs to be a very quick process. 60% of online shoppers abandoned their cart because they had to create an account (Source: Marketing Charts, 2018; See Resource section of this lesson) Creating the account allows companies to gather customer information, but if this leads to cart abandonment then it does not actually benefit the company. Methods for a hassle-free checkout process include:
1. **Autofill:** The use of autofill can help expedite the purchasing process. **Autofill** is information, such as name, address, email, or credit card number that is automatically inserted into an order form. Also, if this information can be gathered and saved the customer's buying experiences will be even quicker the next time.
 2. **Easy Navigation:** Making the checkout process easy to navigate, by giving clearly written directions, visual cues, and auditory prompts, is essential. For example, when purchasing on *INSTAGRAM*, a potential customer is shown an arrow with the word 'purchase.' The action is intuitive and takes the user to the

website of the product. This allows an easy transition from seeing a product to purchasing a product.

- F. 24/7-AVAILABILITY: With customers all over the world able to access a website to make a purchase, customer service must be offered around the clock. Local service teams may be needed to provide assistance. Or a company may have one service location that is staffed in different shifts to accommodate customers at any time. Methods to deliver 24/7-availability include:
1. Customer Service Staff: Customer service personnel must have extensive product knowledge and the autonomy to assist a customer without having to refer to someone else. Customers expect a friendly and knowledgeable customer service representative who can answer their questions in a timely manner.
 2. Quick Response: Emails and chat services may also be used. Customers must have the feeling of quick response when there are purchasing issues. For example, any email sent by a customer needs an automatic yet personalized response. That response should be sent immediately with follow up as soon as possible. Live chat is more effective than emails in providing customer satisfaction. 92% of customers feel satisfied with their experience using live chat while only 85% feel the same way using email. (Source: Forbes website article, “It’s Alive: Why Live Chat Is So Important For Brands,” at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2016/08/10/its-alive-why-live-chat-is-so-important-for-brands/>) Nordstrom is one of many companies that offer its customers a live chat option that is always available.

Teaching Strategy: Many techniques can be used to help students master this objective. Use VM-B to further students’ understanding of Omnichannel and the methods used to meet online customer/client expectations and needs. Ask students to take out their list of five expectations from the first objective. In groups of four have students share their expectations with each other. Remind students of the definition of omnichannel. Next, ask each group to list all the channels involved or that could be involved in the expectations listed. Then brainstorm ideas on how a company could provide support and feedback to meet the expectations. Lastly, have students write their ideas on the board. Use the students’ ideas to lead a discussion about different methods to meet online customer/client expectations and needs. Assign LS-A.

■ **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. If a textbook is being used, questions at the ends of chapters may also be included in the Review/Summary.

■ **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.

- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

Part One: Matching

1. e
2. d
3. f
4. a
5. b
6. c

Part Two: Completion

1. personalized
2. brand
3. billions
4. shipping
5. returns
6. influencer
7. autonomy
8. emails

Part Three: Short Answer

Omnichannel is the integration of all online and offline purchasing experiences. Because omnichannel is one of the most prominent trends in retail, companies may also offer in-store pick up of items purchased online, mobile phone apps that allow a consumer to look up product information while shopping online or in a store and a social media site that offers reviews of the product through UGC.

Online Customer Support and Feedback

► Part One: Matching

Instructions: Match the term with the correct definition.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| a. autofill | d. millennial |
| b. cart abandonment | e. omnichannel |
| c. influencer | f. touchpoint |

- _____ 1. The integration of all online and offline purchasing experiences
- _____ 2. A person born between the 1980s through early 2000s
- _____ 3. Any time a consumer interacts with a brand during the buying process
- _____ 4. Information, such as name, address, email, or credit card number that is automatically inserted into an order form
- _____ 5. Selecting items to purchase from an online store but leaving the site before finalizing the sale
- _____ 6. A person who promotes items or persuades others to purchase items

► Part Two: Completion

Instructions: Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.

- 1. Consumers expect an effortless, _____ shopping experience.
- 2. Meeting customer expectations and needs during online shopping helps create _____ loyalty from a customer.



3. When customer needs are not met, business stand to lose _____ of dollars.
4. The biggest complaints among online shoppers are hassles with the checkout process and paying for _____.
5. By providing detailed, precise product information companies not only increase initial sales, they decrease _____.
6. Companies can encourage a/an _____ by providing them with free products and promotions.
7. Customer service personal must have extensive product knowledge and the _____ to assist a customer without having to refer to someone else.
8. Live chat is more effective than _____ in providing customer satisfaction.

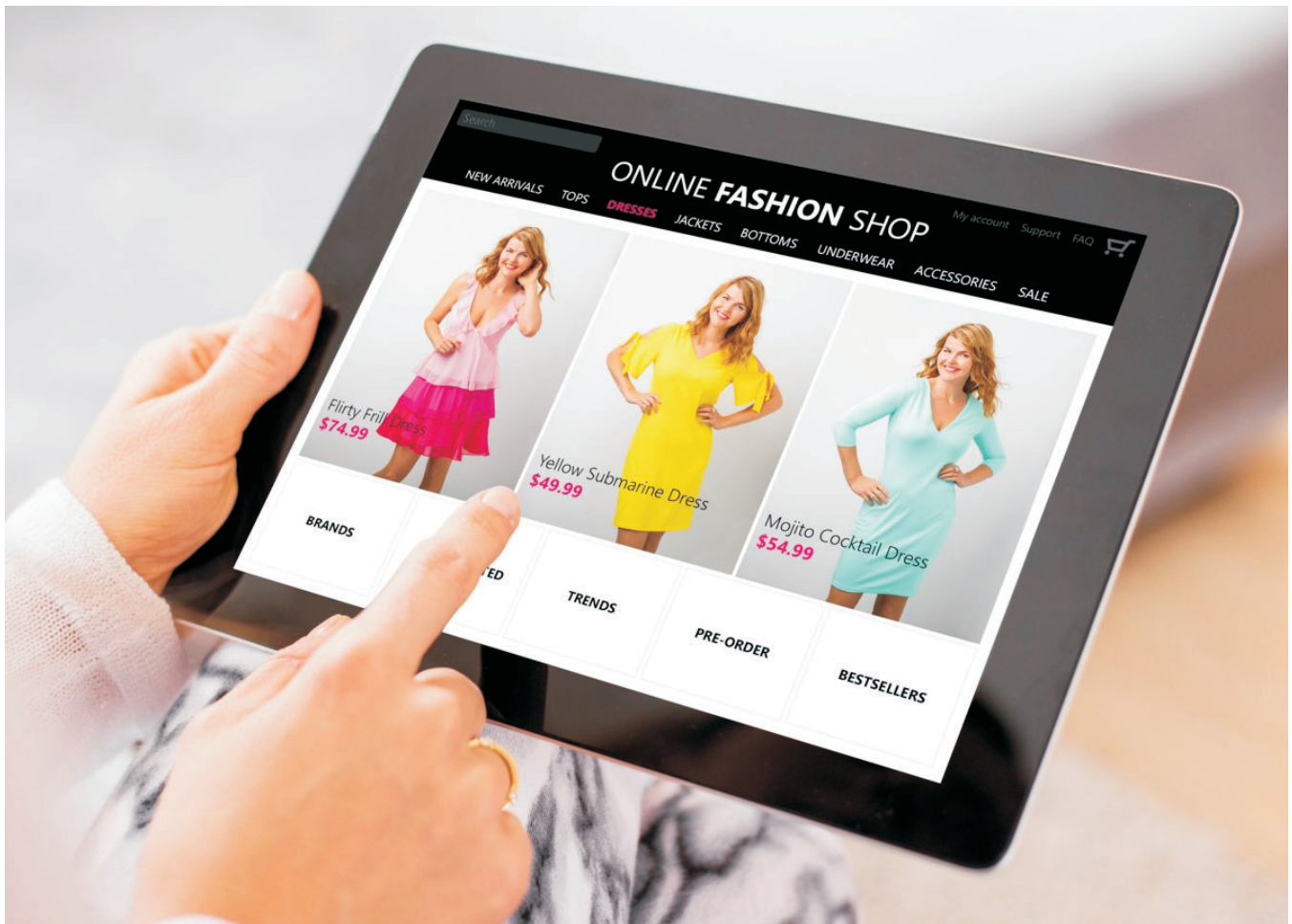
► Part Three: Short Answer

Instructions: Answer the following.

Describe an omnichannel experience.

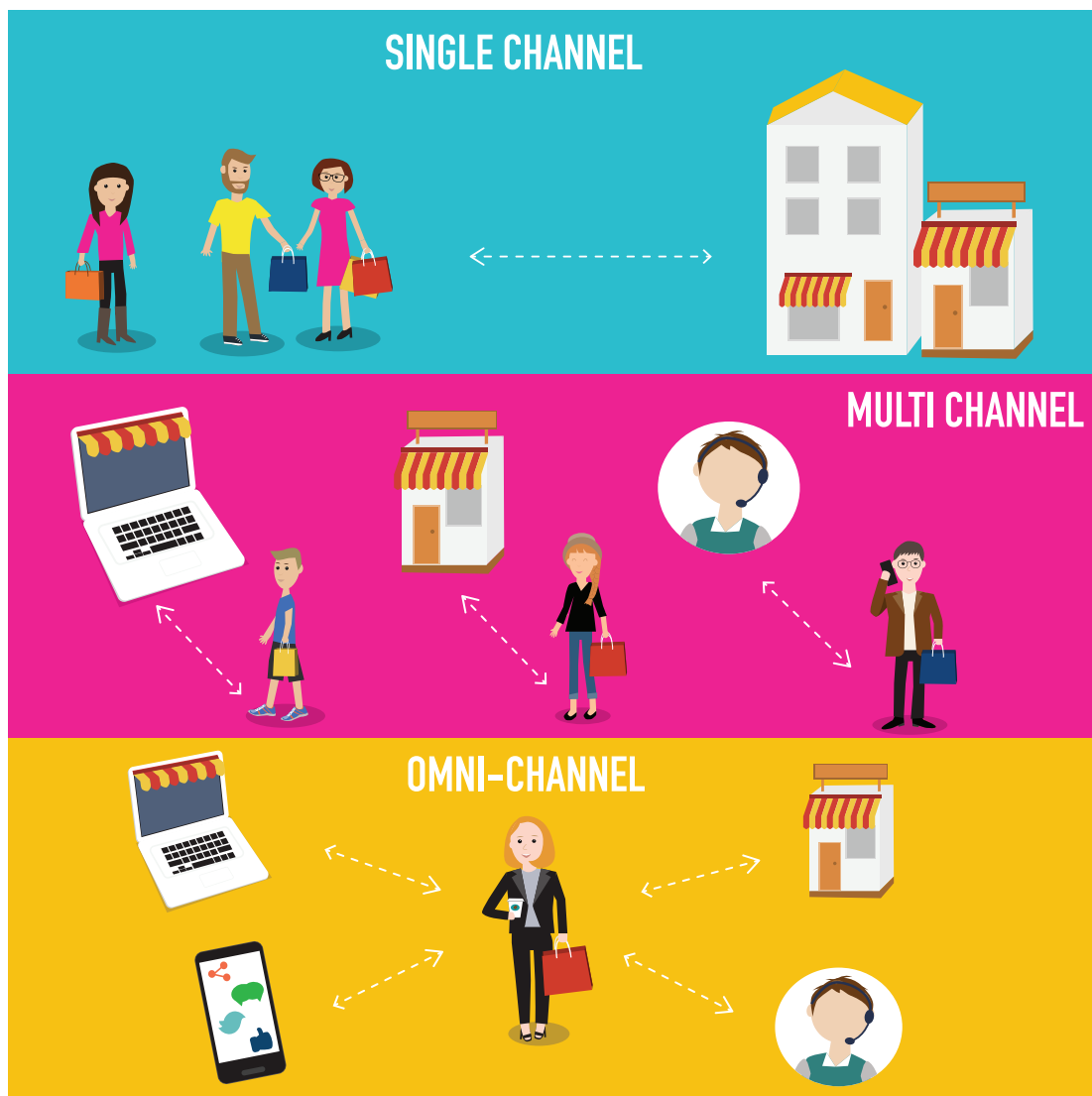
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Consumers expect an effortless, personalized online shopping experience. Determining their expectations and needs is crucial in closing the sale and gaining the loyalty of the customer.



OMNICHANNEL

Omnichannel is one of the most prominent trends in retail: the integration of all online and offline purchasing experiences. Companies may offer in-store pick up of items purchased online, mobile phone apps that allow a consumer to look up product information while shopping online or in a store and a social media site that offers reviews of the product through UGC.



Analyze Customer Service Methods

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to analyze two retail companies' customer service methods.

Objectives

1. Choose two retail companies that offer online shopping.
2. Analyze the customer service methods for both companies using the Analysis Chart.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ device with Internet access

Procedure

1. Search the Internet to find two retail companies for which you will analyze their customer service methods.
2. Study the personalization, accurate product representation, user generated content (UGC), free shipping and returns, hassle-free checkout process, 24/7 availability of each retailer.
3. Next, complete the Customer Service Methods: ANALYSIS CHART using the information you learned while studying the retail companies.



Customer Service Methods: ANALYSIS CHART		
Criteria	Retailer #1: _____	Retailer #2: _____
Personalization: • What methods are used? • In what ways does the company make the customer feel personally valued?		
Accurate Product Representation: • Are images in focus and relevant? • Do descriptions accurately describe the product?		
User Generated Content (UGC): • Does the company highlight UGC? • Is a strong social media presence from customers obvious?		
Free Shipping And Returns: • Does the company offer free shipping and returns? • Is this service visually prominent?		
Hassle-Free Checkout Process: • Does the company offer an intuitive way to purchase products? • Do they require a potential customer set up an account in order to purchase?		
24/7 Availability: • Is customer service always available? • Does the store offer several ways to contact the company?		

4. Write a summary paragraph comparing (alike) and contrasting (different) the customer service methods of each retail company.

5. Turn your completed lab sheet, chart, and summary paragraph in to your instructor.