

# Today's customer full of contradictions.

## “Compromise is not the best solution”

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Tracking **customer tensions** is a useful tool for understanding how customers implement their purchase decisions. In everyday life, customers constantly limit their consumption desires and aspirations according to their current capabilities. Typically, they would want prestigious brands, but they do not have enough money for them. They worry about it and consider whether they should make themselves happy at the cost of making a debt. No solution to such a situation is optimal for them – either they will be troubled by debt or unfulfilled desire. Both possibilities are bad for them, that is why they feel tense.

In our studies **we work with five current tensions**.

### Current tension 1: Sustainability vs. Comfort

In recent years, concerns about the state of environment have been rising especially among young people. Calls for pollution reduction, for reduction in consumption, for **sustainability** are associated with this. At the same time, young people are afraid that the emphasis on sustainability could lower the living standard of the whole society. Reducing consumption might increase unemployment and lower economic growth, which can also reduce funding of social and health care. In short, reduction of **comfort** at best – both theirs but also of other people. Thus, tensions are gradually increasing in people in relation to the purchase of new goods and services, because every choice can be followed by bad feeling.

*An example of how to overcome this tension is the [PREekoproud](#) electricity tariff from Pražská energetika. This tariff with its slogan “It saves crowns. Of trees.” disrupts the established scheme that sustainability must be paid extra. It promises the customer low price, and thus maintaining the existing comfort. Sustainability is then communicated in the number of saved trees that would be needed to remove carbon dioxide produced by coal power plants.*

### Current tension 2: Economy vs. Performance

Second current customer tension is linked to the choice between **economy** and performance. On one hand customers demand low consumption when it comes to cars and electricity for electrical appliances. At the same time, however, they reject the limitations associated with low consumption – low **performance**. This conflict is being bridged thanks to technological development that is constantly increasing the effectivity of engines and electrical appliances. Despite the more energetically effective cars and electrical appliances, the total energy consumption is rising though. Not only because customers are buying more and more cars and electrical appliances, but also because they prefer still bigger cars, fridges and televisions.

*Just few years ago, electric cars were considered to be economical but desperately slow with minimal range. Tesla completely changed this picture, when they offered the first mass-produced electric car that combines energy efficiency with stunning performance and solid range. Its Model 3 is getting close to the average customer when it comes to the price.*

### Current tension 3: Environment vs. Health

In the past, environment and health were separate topics. **Health** was related to increasing life expectancy and seen as a consequence of economic development and improved health care. Today, however, the issues of environment and health are increasingly overlapping. More and more customers are convinced that their health is more and more negatively affected by **environmental** pollution – both physical and mental health. The desire to take care of the environment is therefore also motivated by

concerns for one's own health. In this desire, however, customers encounter a number of barriers that they are not able to overcome – because it would reduce the comfort of their daily lives.

*Manufacturers are trying to help them in this when it comes to packaging, through the promise of their environmental friendliness. In particular, the fight against plastic packaging is a current hype. Therefore, the words 100% recyclable bottle began to appear on plastic bottles, whether for detergents or beverages. The material and technology remained the same, but customers were assured that plastic packaging may not be as harmful to the environment as they previously thought.*

#### Current tension 4: Well-Being vs. Joy

The fourth tension expresses the apprehension between the aspiration to live a healthy lifestyle and the need to enjoy something as well. It is true that not everything that is good for our health also makes us happy. And on the other hand, not everything that makes us happy is for the benefit of our health. Healthy living is currently associated with the concept of **well-being**, which includes not only physical and mental health, but also life balance, life fulfilment, happiness. The concept of well-being is associated with self-care, peace and serenity. In many ways, this is in contrast to the intense experiences associated with unbridled merriment, enjoyment of wild parties, which bring **joy** to life, even at the expense of a healthy lifestyle.

*Coca-Cola is an iconic drink associated with joy and festivity. It is a brand that promises a life full of experiences, time spent with other people, moments full of unrestrained energy. At the same time, it is a drink that definitely is not good for our body because it contains too many calories. For many years, efforts have been made to move it towards a healthy lifestyle, towards well-being. It turns out that this shift must in no way jeopardize its basic promise – the familiar taste and unrestrained joy*

#### Current tension 5: Authenticity vs. Instagram

Especially among the younger generations, we can see a growing distrust of traditional advertising. Young customers criticize its artificialness and insincerity, detachment from the real world, the absence of personal experience of the characters with the promoted product. They say that personal sharing of experiences with products and services is important for them – real people, real experiences, real stories, unadorned reality, **authenticity**. And this is what they find...on **Instagram**. On a social network that definitely does not portray the world as it is. It is a social network that depicts the world and life as we would like it to be.

*Instagram is receiving more and more attention in marketing departments, also because it requires a specific way of communication. Nike does not present an endless range of its products on Instagram, but it focuses on the presentation of sports successes, exceptional sports moments and inspiring athletes. All the people presented are real users of Nike products, both at the moment of success and during the laborious preparation for it. All of this works authentically and engages customers in communication and the relationship with the brand.*

#### Challenge for marketing

Finding solutions for these customer tensions is one of the challenges for current marketing. Experience shows that the best solution is usually not finding a compromise, such as offering a *reasonably prestigious brand at a reasonable price*, but one that offers customers a new perspective and **connects the incompatible**: *a prestigious brand at low price as it overcomes tension.*