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#### Chapter

# Emotional Intelligence and Customer Loyalty

Kenneth Lawrence Wanjau

#### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in fostering customer loyalty. The chapter begins by introducing the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) and some models of EI and its relevance in customer service. It highlights how businesses are increasingly recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence in building strong customer relationships. The chapter then delves into the key components of EI and its impact on customer loyalty. It discusses the concept of customer loyalty and subsequently provides an insight of how an entrepreneur can use the customer loyalty funnel to influence customer loyalty. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the significance of EI to an entrepreneur and encouraging businesses to prioritize its development as a key driver of customer loyalty. On the whole, this chapter aims to provide insights and practical guidance for entrepreneurs seeking to enhance customer loyalty through the cultivation of emotional intelligence.

**Keywords:** customer loyalty, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-confidence, self-regulation, social skills

#### 1. Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the fascinating relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and customer loyalty. As businesses strive to create exceptional customer experiences, understanding the impact of emotions on customer loyalty has become increasingly crucial. Emotional intelligence which is, the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions, plays a significant role in shaping customer perceptions, satisfaction, and ultimately, loyalty. By delving into the intricate connection between EI and customer loyalty, an entrepreneur can uncover valuable insights that can inform effective strategies for building and maintaining strong customer relationships.

#### 1.1 Definitions

To lay a solid foundation for our exploration, we begin by defining emotional intelligence and customer loyalty. I generally refer EI as the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, both in oneself and others, effectively. This chapter shall look at three definitions by various experts on the subject. Daniel Goleman, a renowned

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psychologist and author, defined emotional intelligence as; "The capacity for recognizing our feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions effectively in ourselves and in our relationships" ([1], p. 34).

Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, two prominent psychologists, defined emotional intelligence as "The ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" ([2], p. 189).

Lastly, Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, authors of the book "Emotional Intelligence 2.0," described emotional intelligence as "Your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships".

Customer loyalty, on the other hand, encompasses the commitment and demonstration of repeat business that customers demonstrate towards a brand or organization. It refers to the degree of commitment and attachment that customers have toward a particular brand, product, or company. It is characterized by customers advocating for the brand, making repeat purchases, and displaying a preference for the brand over competitors [3].

However, we shall look at three definitions of customer loyalty to better understand the subject: Kumar and Werner Reinartz, defined customer loyalty as; "A deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" ([4], p. 16).

In their research, Timothy L. Keiningham, Lerzan Aksoy, and Alexander Buoye defined customer loyalty as "The customer's willingness to continue patronizing a firm over time, engaging in positive word-of-mouth (WOM), and refraining from switching to competitors" ([5], p. 4).

Michael W. Johnson and Andreas Herrmann described customer loyalty as "The result of a customer's cumulative experience with a supplier, which leads to a commitment to continue purchasing from that supplier in the future" ([6], p. 3).

By understanding these core concepts, this chapter will delve deeper into demonstrating how EI influences customer loyalty.

# 2. Concept of emotional intelligence (EI)

The concept of EI forms the foundation of how emotional intelligence plays a significant role on how individuals perceive and interact with their own emotions and the emotions of others. Developing and honing these skills can lead to improved personal and professional relationships, enhanced decision-making, a greater overall well-being. The concept of EI can be described using different approaches;

To begin with, there is the self-awareness approach which is the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and values [1]. As defined by Goleman, self-aware individuals have a clear understanding of how their emotions impact their thoughts and behaviors and accurately assess their abilities for a realistic self-perception. By cultivating self-awareness, individuals can make more informed decisions, manage their emotions effectively, and build stronger relationships with others.

*Secondly*, there is self-regulation approach. This is the capacity to manage and control one's emotions, impulses, and reactions in different situations [7]. It involves

being able to adapt to changing circumstances, maintain composure in challenging situations, and avoid impulsive or destructive actions. Self-regulated individuals possess self-discipline can delay gratification in pursuit of long-term goals and are skilled at managing stress and maintaining a positive outlook. By practicing self-regulation, individuals can enhance their overall emotional well-being and make more thoughtful choices.

Additionally, we have the empathy approach. This is the capability to understand and share the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of others [8]. Empathetic individuals are attentive listeners who can accurately interpret nonverbal cues and demonstrate genuine concern for others' well-being. They are skilled at putting themselves in others' shoes and are sensitive to the needs and emotions of those around them. By cultivating empathy, individuals can build stronger relationships, foster effective communication, and contribute to a more compassionate and inclusive society.

Moreover, there is the social skills (communication, conflict resolution, collaboration, and leadership) approach. This is the aptitude to build and maintain positive relationships, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively with others [9]. Individuals with strong social skills are adept at building rapport, networking, and influencing others positively. They can navigate social situations with ease, adapt to diverse groups, and work well in teams. By developing social skills, individuals can enhance their interpersonal effectiveness, build strong networks, and thrive in various social and professional settings.

Finally, we have the motivation approach. This is the inner drive, desire, and determination to pursue and achieve goals, persist in the face of challenges, and maintain a positive outlook as one continually improves oneself [10]. Motivated individuals are passionate about their work and have a strong sense of purpose to: set challenging goals, take initiative, and demonstrate resilience in the face of setbacks.

# 3. Models of emotional intelligence

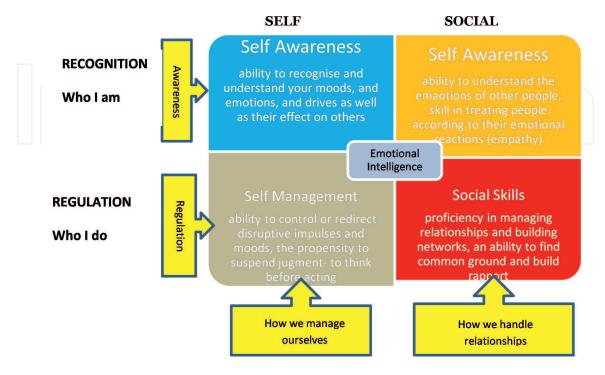
Emotional intelligence models help us achieve a better understanding of emotions, their impact on behavior, and how to effectively manage them. They provide frameworks and tools to assess and develop emotional intelligence skills, which can be applied in various areas of study and life. Studying EI models, helps in insights into our own emotions and those of others, improving our self-awareness, regulating our emotions, enhancing our empathy, and developing strong social skills. This understanding and development of emotional intelligence can lead to improved communication, stronger relationships, better decision-making, increased resilience, and overall well-being. Ultimately, understanding these models helps us cultivate emotional intelligence and apply it in practical ways to navigate the complexities of human emotions and interactions. There are various models of emotional intelligence which have been influential in the field of emotional intelligence and shape our understanding of the EI concept. They include;

i. *The Ability Model* of EI which was developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in the 1990s. This model focuses on the individual's capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. It emphasizes the cognitive aspects of emotional intelligence, such as accurately identifying emotions and effectively using them to guide thinking and behavior.

- ii. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) developed also in the late 90s by Petrides and Adrian Furnham. It is a self-report measure that assesses an individual's trait emotional intelligence, which refers to the person's emotional self-perception and understanding of others' emotions. This model focuses on the emotional aspects of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, empathy, and emotional management.
- iii. *Mixed Model* of EI, popularized by Daniel Goleman in the 90s. This Model was developed and popularized by Daniel Goleman in the mid-1990s. It combines elements of both the Ability Model of EI and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire. Goleman was motivated by the belief that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in personal and professional success [1, 7]. This model is a widely recognized and influential framework for understanding emotional intelligence. It consists of five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. This model consists of five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. It suggests that individuals who possess these qualities are more likely to excel in social interactions, understand others' emotions, and effectively manage relationships (**Figure 1**) [11].

The Mixed Model of EI offers several advantages over the other models when an entrepreneur would like to deal with employees and his/her customers.

First and foremost, the self-awareness component helps employees recognize and understand their own emotions or who I am- their moods, emotions, and drives as well as their effect on others (strengths, and weaknesses.) Self-awareness enables firm employees to better manage their emotions and respond appropriately to customer needs and concerns. By being aware of their emotional state, firm employees can provide a more empathetic and personalized customer experience, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.



**Figure 1.**The mixed model of EI by Daniel Goleman [7].

Following that, the self-regulation component of this Model emphasizes the importance of managing and controlling one's emotions- what I do (ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, the propensity to suspend judgment, to think before acting). Firm employees with strong self-regulation skills can effectively handle stressful or challenging customer interactions without letting their emotions negatively impact the customer experience. This ability to regulate his/her emotions helps create a positive and professional atmosphere, thus enhancing customer loyalty.

In addition, the empathy component of the Mixed Model is crucial in understanding and responding to customer emotions. This is recognizing who I am socially or the ability to understand the emotions of other people and skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. Empathetic firm employees can put themselves in the customer's shoes, showing genuine care and concern. This empathy allows them to tailor their approach, anticipate customer needs, and provide personalized solutions, ultimately fostering stronger customer loyalty.

Lastly, the social skills component highlights the importance of effective communication, relationship-building and collaboration. This is how we handle relationships, proficient in managing and building networks and finding common ground. This translates into firm employees establishing rapport with customers, actively listening to their concerns and effectively resolving any issues, thus contributing to positive customer interactions, leading to increased loyalty and repeat business.

Generally, the Mixed Mode of EI provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how emotional intelligence influences customer loyalty. By developing and nurturing its components, firms can create a customer-centric culture that fosters strong emotional connections and long-term loyalty.

Practical examples of applying this model in customer loyalty include sensitizing firm employees about emotional intelligence, encouraging firm employees to actively listen to customers, showing empathy in handling complaints and fostering a positive and supportive work environment. These practices can result in improved customer satisfaction, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

# 4. Elements of emotional intelligence

Renowned psychologist Daniel Goleman, states that, emotional intelligence consists of five key components. These elements help an individual to understand and manage his/her emotions, as well as understand and connect with others.

The first is *self-awareness*. This ideally is the ability to recognize, perceive, and understand one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and values. By being aware of your emotional triggers and how you respond to them, an entrepreneur or employee can better regulate his/her behavior when interacting with customers.

Secondly, there is *self-regulation or self-management*. This is the capacity to manage and control one's emotions, impulses, and reactions, allowing for thoughtful and appropriate responses in various situations [12]. Self-regulation creates a positive and professional environment for your customers. This will encourage customers to trust a firm's employees and management. The customers will feel appreciated in such an establishment since they are allowed to air their opinions on how things are being done in the organization.

Thirdly, we have *motivation*. This is the drive to set and achieve meaningful goals, as well as the ability to persevere in the face of challenges. By using your emotions to drive you towards your goals, an entrepreneur can create a sense of purpose and

passion that can be contagious to his/her customers. Motivation will lead to partner-ship between firm employees and customers hence leading to creativity and innovativeness. The entrepreneur will also continuously nourish his/her entrepreneurial passion so that the firm grows its market share, quality and product range.

Fourthly, there is *social awareness* or *empathy*. This is the skill and capacity to understand and share the emotions of others, demonstrating compassion and considering their perspectives [12]. By recognizing and understanding the emotions and perspectives of your customers, you can create a deeper connection with them.

Lastly, we have *social skills*, in other words, *effective communication*. This is the aptitude and skill to effectively build rapport, resolve conflicts, influence and maintain relationships, communicate effectively, collaborate, and navigate social situations with ease to inspire trust. An entrepreneur can develop and maintain positive relationships with his/her customers which will lead to creating a sense of loyalty and trust. Effective communication is an art that build or distort customer's attachment to a firm. For example, if a firm's employees are friendly, helpful by giving the right information and responsive to its customers, they (customers) are more likely to feel valued and appreciated. An emotional connection with customers leads to customer loyalty.

# 5. The concept of customer loyalty

The concept of customer loyalty has been around for a long time, but it's difficult to attribute it to a specific person or moment in history. It has evolved as businesses recognize the value of building strong relationships with their customers. This concept helps us understand the factors that contribute to customer satisfaction, repeat purchases, and long-term relationships with a brand or company. By understanding customer loyalty, we can identify strategies to enhance customer retention, increase customer lifetime value, and ultimately drive business growth.

The first concept is *customer satisfaction* which is ideally meeting or exceeding customer expectations and providing a positive experience [13]. Griffin refers to the overall evaluation of a customer's experience with a product or service. This is influenced by various factors such as product quality, customer service, and value for money. When customers are satisfied, they are more likely to repurchase, recommend the brand to others and exhibit loyalty.

The second concept is *trust and credibility*, which is about building trust with customers through consistent and reliable products or services [14]. Trust and credibility, as emphasized by Pearson play a crucial role in customer loyalty. It is built when customers have confidence in a brand's reliability, integrity, and ability to deliver on promises. Credibility, on the other hand, refers to the perceived expertise and competence of the brand. Both trust and credibility are closely linked to emotional intelligence.

Third is *relationship building* which is about developing strong and lasting relationships with customers through personalized interactions and effective communication [15]. Relationship building, as highlighted by Robinson and Etherington, is a key driver of customer loyalty. Building strong relationships involves developing a deep understanding of customers, actively listening to their needs, and providing personalized experiences.

In the fourth element, we have *customer engagement* which is encouraging active participation and involvement from customers through feedback, loyalty programs, and personalized offers [16]. Reichheld and Markey also refer customer engagement

to the level of involvement, interaction, and emotional connection customers have with a brand and argues that engaged customers are more likely to be loyal, provide feedback, and advocate for the brand.

Concluding the list is *brand loyalty* which is creating a strong emotional connection and attachment to a brand, leading to repeat purchases and advocacy [17]. Reichheld refers to the commitment and preference customers have for a particular brand which he argues is influenced by factors such as customer satisfaction, trust, and emotional connection intelligence (EI) plays a significant role in customer loyalty.

# 6. Role of emotional intelligence in business

Customer experience (CX) is key to any business globally. It can impact a customer's decision to return to your brand. An emotionally intelligent entrepreneur will communicate to his/her customers in a way that he/she do not destabilize their emotional state. He/she will creatively interact with a customer in a way that he/she attune to the customers emotions. This means he/she is better at perceiving and managing emotions in customer service. Entrepreneurs with a high EQ have known how to grow their businesses by applying it in the following ways;

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in business, allowing companies to gain a deeper understanding of their customers' needs, emotions, and preferences, which in turn enables them to provide a more personalized experience. This understanding empowers employees to anticipate and address customer requirements, ultimately resulting in more effective and targeted marketing strategies. This, in turn, fosters customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Besides, entrepreneurs who demonstrate empathy and understanding towards their customers forge stronger relationships, creating positive customer experiences that boost loyalty and advocacy. They go the extra mile to build an emotional connection between the consumer and their brand, laying the foundation for lasting customer loyalty.

Companies that prioritize emotional intelligence not only listen and respond to customer feedback but also cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. This approach motivates and inspires their teams to deliver superior customer experiences, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy. The ultimate goal is to create emotionally satisfying interactions that leave customers happy with their brand interactions.

Entrepreneurs with high emotional intelligence excel in managing customer complaints and conflicts, fostering accountability and responsibility within their teams. This proactive approach helps prevent customer churn, building trust and loyalty. Entrepreneurs who establish an emotional connection and a sense of belonging among customers can count on their return business, as customers feel truly valued.

Moreover, businesses that prioritize emotional intelligence create inclusive, diverse, transparent, and innovative cultures. This, in turn, results in the development of new products and services tailored to customer needs. Such an approach ensures a humane and authentic customer experience across all touchpoints, fostering trust and increasing customer loyalty and advocacy.

Emotional intelligence also contributes to a positive and supportive work environment, boosting employee satisfaction and productivity. Entrepreneurs who establish emotional connections with their employees inspire them to create content that evokes empathy and emotion. This content, often in the form of captivating,

interactive, and visually engaging digital experiences like videos, strengthens the meaningful connections between the business and its customers, ultimately leading to better customer service and increased customer loyalty.

## 7. Role of EI in understanding and meeting customer needs

Emotional intelligence enhances the understanding of customer needs by enabling businesses to:

Firstly, *Read Emotional Cues*—Emotional intelligence (EQ) helps businesses interpret nonverbal cues and emotional signals from customers [18]. Goleman explained that, through self-awareness, EQ helps an entrepreneur become more aware of his/her own emotions, which in turn allows his/her to recognize and understand the emotions of others (both internal and external customers). By understanding his/her emotional states, the entrepreneur can better empathize with and interpret the emotions of those around his/her.

Through *Empathy*—Emotional intelligence (EQ) enhances the entrepreneur's capacity for empathy, which is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. By putting him/herself in the customer's shoes, the entrepreneur can pick up customers emotional cues and respond appropriately.

Through *Nonverbal Communication*—Emotional intelligence (EQ) enables the entrepreneur to recognize and interpret nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice by the customer. These cues often provide valuable insights into customer's emotional state, helping the entrepreneur understand their needs and respond effectively.

Through *Social Awareness*—Emotional intelligence (EQ) enhances the entrepreneur's social awareness, allowing his/her to pick up on the emotional dynamics of a situation or group (internal and external customers). By being attuned to the emotions of others, the entrepreneur can navigate social interactions more effectively and respond in a way that meets the customer needs.

Hence, EI enables reading emotional cues by enhancing self-awareness, empathy, the interpretation of nonverbal communication, and social awareness. By honing these skills, the entrepreneur can better understand and meet the emotional needs of his/her customers, fostering stronger emotional connections and satisfaction.

Secondly, EI enables businesses to have personalized Customer Experiences. This is critical for customers to understand their emotions, preferences, and desires. This can be achieved through targeted marketing campaigns, customized product recommendations, and tailored customer support [19]. For example, a manufacturing brand uses emotional intelligence to analyze customer feedback and purchase history, allowing them to suggest personalized product combinations and offer exclusive discounts based on individual preferences.

Thirdly, EI helps resolve customer complaints. This is achieved through equipping customer service representatives with the skills to handle customer complaints effectively. By empathizing with customers, actively listening to their concerns, and offering timely solutions, businesses can turn negative experiences into positive ones, improving customer satisfaction and loyalty [20]. For example, a hotel chain trains its staff in emotional intelligence to handle guest complaints. By acknowledging the guest's emotions, addressing their concerns promptly, and offering a personalized gesture such as a complimentary upgrade, the hotel successfully resolves the issue and leaves a lasting positive impression.

Fourthly, EI helps in Building Brand Advocacy. This is achieved through creating strong emotional connections with customers, leading to brand advocacy. When customers feel understood, valued, and emotionally connected to a brand, they are more likely to recommend it to others and become loyal advocates [21]. For example, a learning institute focuses on emotional intelligence in its social media interactions. By actively engaging with customers, responding to their comments and messages empathetically, and sharing user-generated content, the institute builds a community of loyal brand advocates who promote their academic programmes.

By leveraging emotional intelligence, businesses can tailor their products, services, and interactions to meet customer needs effectively, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

# 8. Role of emotional intelligence in influencing customer loyalty

Emotional intelligence (EI) can play a significant role in influencing customer loyalty within the loyalty funnel. Businesses that demonstrate high emotional intelligence can create positive emotional experiences for their customers at various stages of the loyalty funnel, that is, awareness, consideration, purchase, satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy as shown in **Figure 2**.

The *Awareness* stage: by understanding customers' emotions and needs, businesses can create marketing messages that resonate with their target audience, generating positive emotional connections and increasing awareness.

The *Consideration* stage: emotional intelligence can help businesses understand customers' motivations, preferences, and emotional drivers. This understanding can inform personalized marketing efforts and enhance the likelihood of customers considering the brand.

The *Purchase* stage: businesses that exhibit emotional intelligence during the purchase stage can create a seamless and positive buying experience. This can involve empathetic customer service, clear communication, and addressing any potential emotional barriers or concerns.

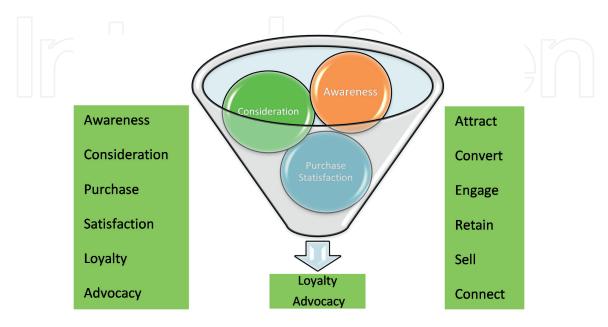


Figure 2.
Customer loyalty funnel.

The *Satisfaction* stage: emotional intelligence allows businesses to gauge and respond to customer emotions and satisfaction levels. By actively listening to feedback and addressing concerns, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction and foster loyalty.

The *Loyalty* stage: emotional intelligence helps businesses build strong emotional connections with customers, fostering loyalty. By understanding and meeting customers' emotional needs, businesses can create a sense of trust, belonging and loyalty.

The *Advocacy* stage: emotional intelligence can also influence customers to become brand advocates. By providing exceptional experiences, businesses can elicit positive emotions and encourage customers to share their positive experiences with others.

On the whole, emotional intelligence can enhance customer loyalty by creating positive emotional experiences, fostering trust, and building strong customer relationships throughout the loyalty funnel.

#### 9. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive exploration of how emotional intelligence (EI) significantly influences customer loyalty, with a focus on its impact across the loyalty funnel and the insights offered by the mixed EI model. From this discussion, we have probed into various aspects, including the fundamental concepts, core elements, and influential models of EI.

The theme has played the role of EI in establishing trust and emotional connections with customers, thus laying the foundation for enduring loyalty. From the illustrative examples, emotional intelligence can be harnessed effectively at different stages of the loyalty funnel, driving customers from awareness to advocacy.

In essence, emotional intelligence occurs as a critical factor in enhancing customer loyalty. It prepares businesses and entrepreneurs with the ability not only to comprehend and manage customer emotions but also to build the trust and credibility that underpin lasting relationships. It drives customer engagement, ensuring that interactions remain consistently positive, resulting in a robust background for long-term consumer loyalty.

Incorporating EI into your business model is, therefore, not just a strategic choice but also a commitment to cultivating meaningful connections and delivering excellent customer experiences that breed solid loyalty.

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