



Good vibrations

What's in an "experience"?

Kearney Consumer Institute
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Brands increasingly compete for consumers' attention and dollars

“Experience”

emerges as a way to differentiate,
but it is easily misinterpreted

Experience is ill-defined



What is an **experience** (*noun*)?



Something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through



Direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge



An exciting or noteworthy event that one experiences firsthand



Synonyms: ***proficiency, happening, adventure, occurrence***



Consumers want experience from stores



A common business goal without much clarity

- ✓ Attentive customer service and clienteling?
- ✓ Technology?
- ✓ Events and displays?
- ✓ Pop-up shops?
- ✓ Entertainment?
- ✓ Connectivity between store and online?

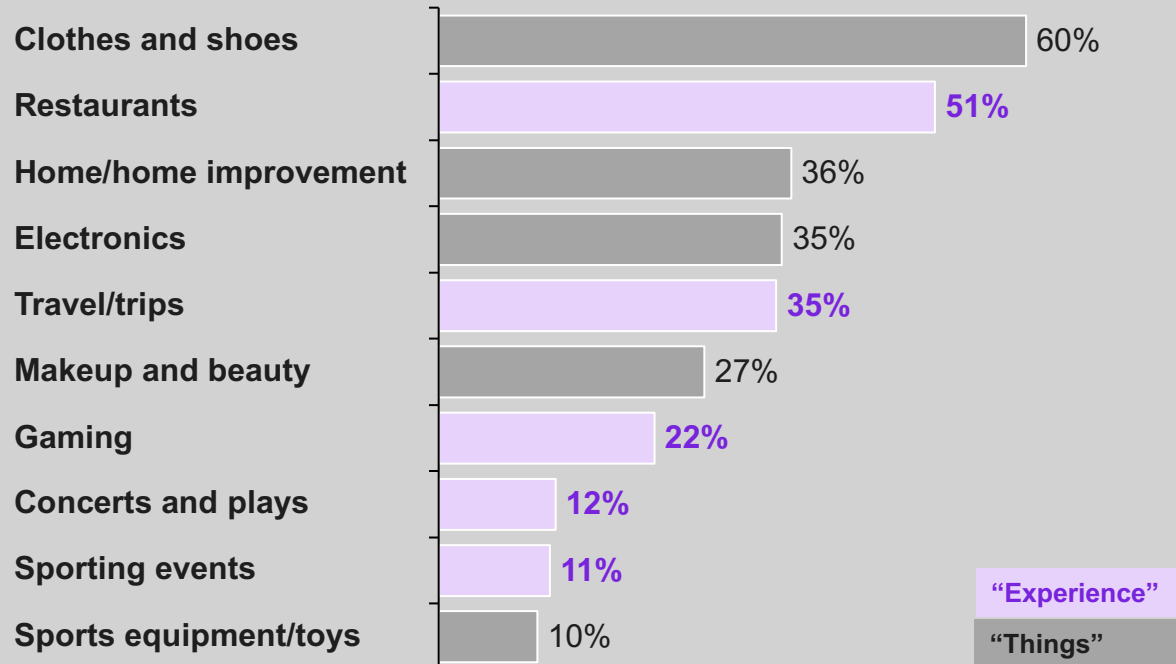
Experience is often conflated with entertainment and bells and whistles

Many things are experiences, including the everyday and seemingly mundane

What's a store you like shopping in and why?

Consumers like to spend on both experience and things (and experiences that involve things)

What do you like to spend on the most? Choose 3.



"[Brand A discount] because it's cheap, it has great brands, I can always count on there to find anything I need."

"I love shopping in [Brand B big box] because they have everything I could possibly need!"

"[Brand C grocery] cause the customer service is amazing and they always have a great selection."

"I love [Brand D] for groceries. The prices are good and their brand quality is comparable to the national brands if not better. The size of the store makes it easier to shop quickly."

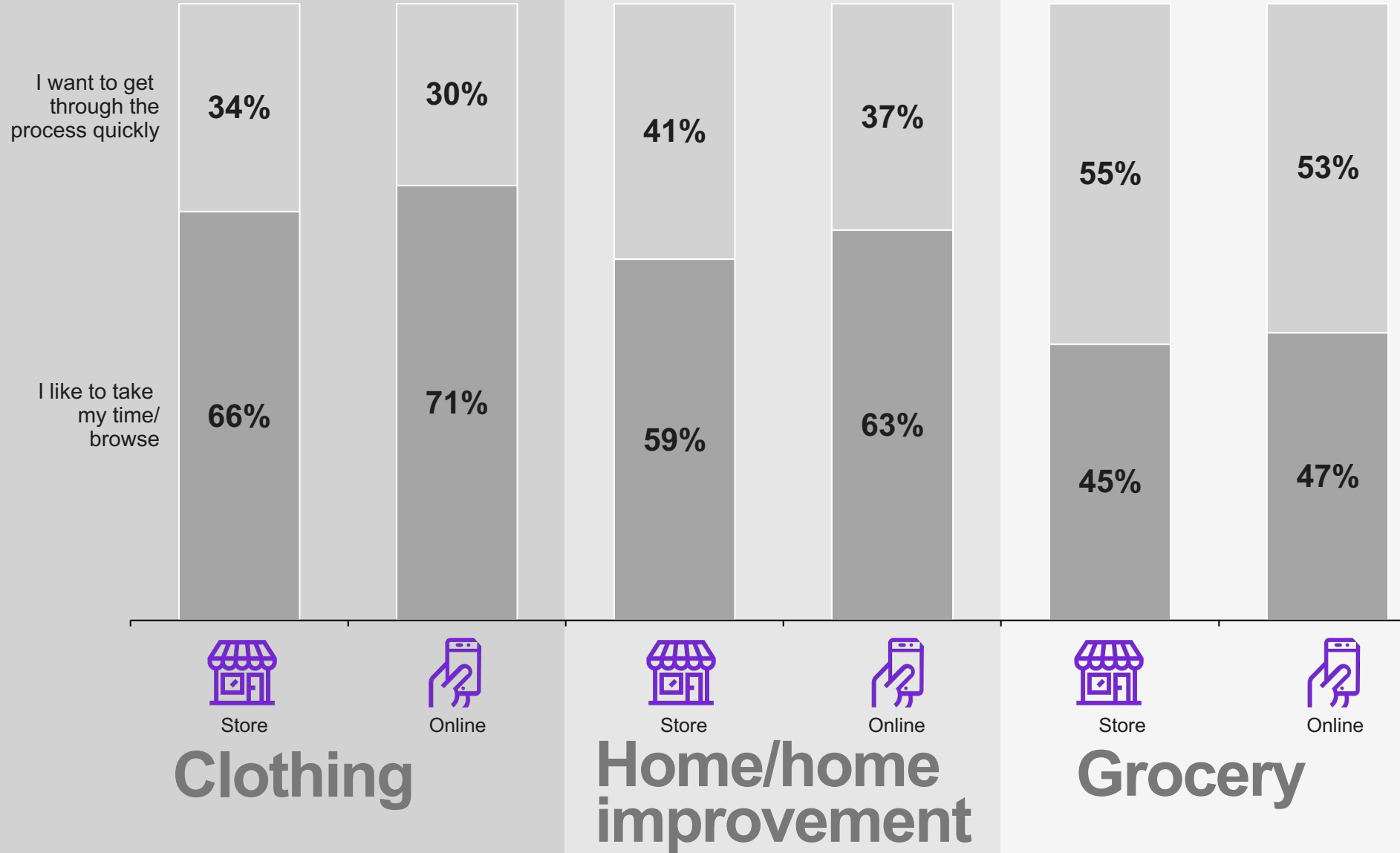
"I like shopping in [Brand E retailer] because I love their products. They also do a fantastic job with visual marketing and merchandising so I always want to buy something, even if I don't need it. I smells nice in the store and they have a great playlist but it's not so loud that I can't hear someone if speaking to them."



Experience can add friction



A good experience balances friction and time



Source: Kearney Consumer Institute – Experience Study, Nov 2023

Consumers want help... on their terms



63%



of consumers prefer a salesperson leave them alone (rather than greeting them/asking if they need help)

Yet...

80%



of consumers prefer a good customer service experience that takes longer (rather than a faster experience)

Experience can establish an emotional connection with consumers



Shopping helps consumers to feel seen, and provides an outlet or escape

71%

Agree shopping allows me to escape the stress of day-to-day life

69%

Agree shopping is a fun activity I do with friends or family

64%

Agree shopping helps me to feel more confident and secure

63%

Agree I use shopping to uplift my mental health

Given “experience” can be many things....

How can brands balance
the many components
of an **experience**?

Redefine experience by the consumer's end goal, rather than by elements

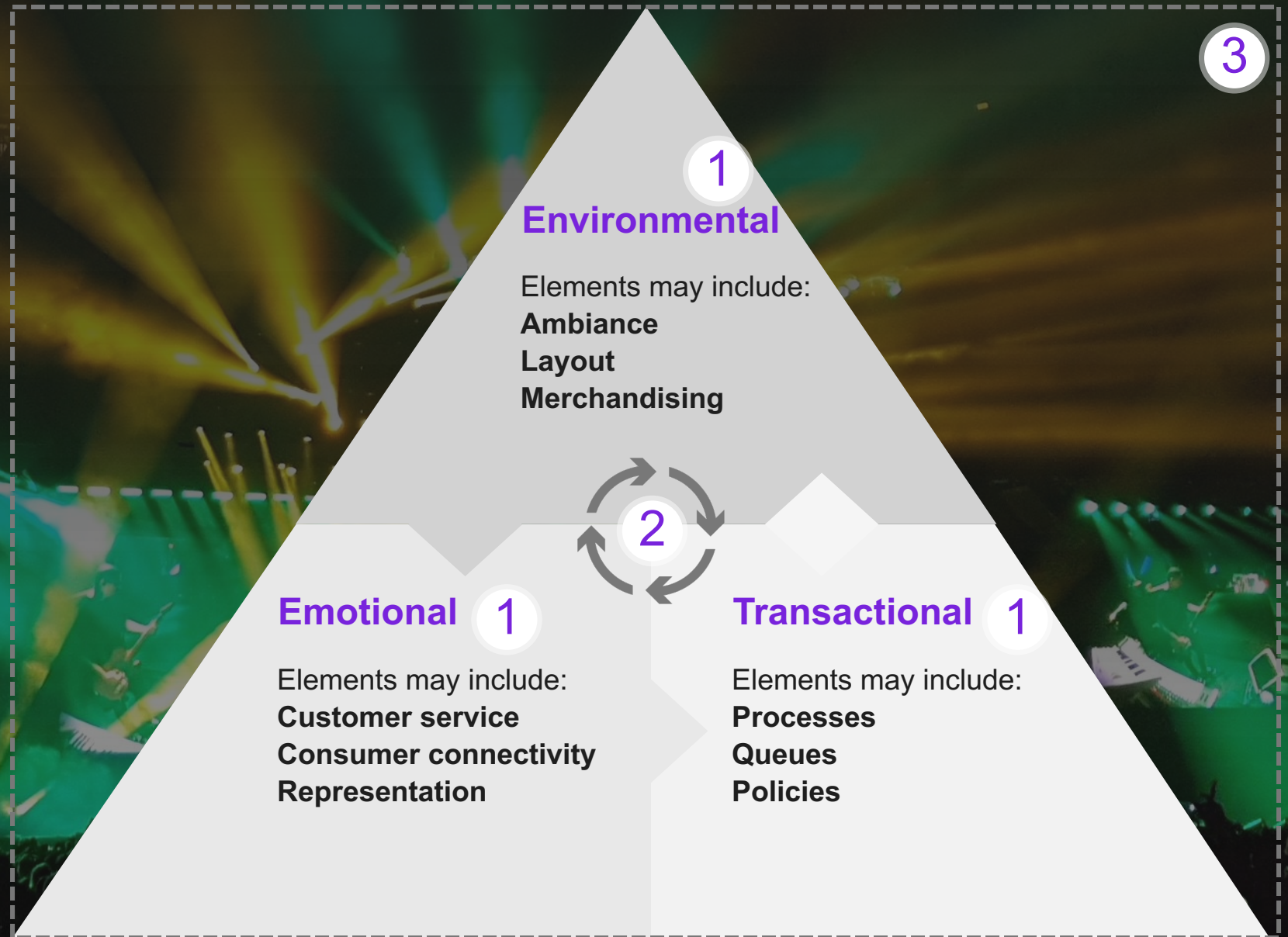
1 From:
Individual elements



2 To:
Connected elements



3 To:
Changed boundary



Evaluate the trade-offs across elements

Consider the trade-offs of experience choices



Inventory on the floor, such as in apparel or beauty, can make the transaction faster but the environment less tidy.



In the United States, many restaurants have proactive waitstaff attention (often to turn tables faster). In Europe, waiters step back for a self-paced experience.

Removing friction can impact the whole experience

Starbucks is expanding drive-thru locations and reconfiguring store counters to make pick-up more accessible.

It starts with an environment change, but it improves transaction efficiency and provides optionality and engagement.



It's not the journey, it's the destination

Diluted experience can spark product sales

A proliferation of services can lead to consumers questioning their value, including COVID-induced behavior changes.



Spas and salons with varying quality and consistency led to improved at-home hair dyeing and nailcare.

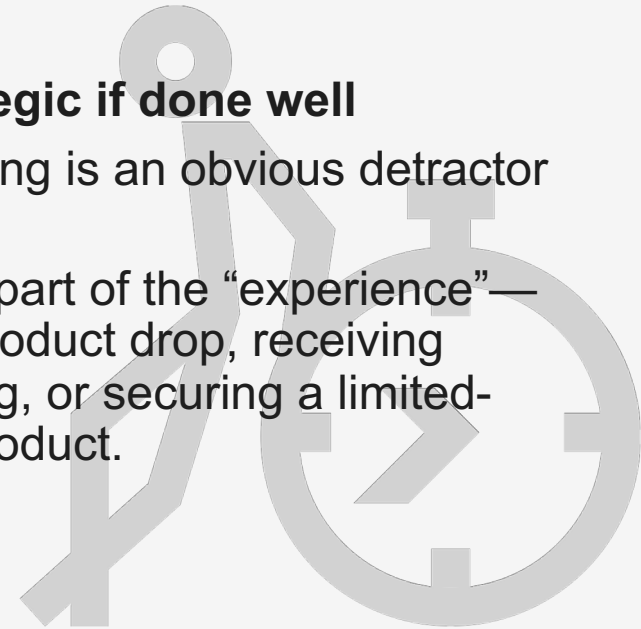


The growth of DIY shows and the challenge to find contractors leads to consumers taking on their own home improvement.

“Waiting” can be strategic if done well

In the wrong place, waiting is an obvious detractor from experience.

However, it can also be part of the “experience”—such as queuing for a product drop, receiving champagne while waiting, or securing a limited-edition or co-branded product.



Build connection through respect and familiarity



Consumers value feeling seen

The author of this report had a particularly positive experience with apparel retailer GANNI, which addressed a common concern for many people while shopping—size.

The associate focused on desired fit rather than “size” and the brand itself does not have size prominently featured on the label.

GANNI

Acknowledge consumers through representation

The razor category has been disrupted in recent years with brands that increase representation in product functionality, usage, and advertising.

Adaptive products, from one-handed cutting boards to easy-grip scissors, address specific needs while also often making for a better product experience overall.

Kearney Consumer Institute (KCI)



What is it?

Kearney think tank creating thoughtful, consumer-first content and perspectives, assessing existing and evolving consumer behaviors, needs, and decision-making



What does it do?

Advocates for the consumer

Challenges existing assumptions

Reframes to ask different questions

Generates conversation

Translates into action

KEARNEY

For further discussion, please contact:

Katie Thomas

Lead, Kearney Consumer Institute

katie.thomas@kearney.com

[Kearney Consumer Institute](#)

