THE FOUNDATION

The customer-led growth consultancy

The Human Experience Advantage

How organisations turn being more human into a competitive advantage

April 2026

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Introduction

Some organisations seem to earn customer decisions more easily than others. Customers choose them, stay with them, come back to them. Not because they have the most distinctive brand. Not because they have the best product. But because of how they behave.

At The Foundation, we've spent more than 25 years helping organisations earn more customer decisions in their favour. In that time, one question has surfaced again and again: what actually separates the organisations customers keep choosing from the ones they leave? We've observed it in research, heard it in the stories leaders tell, and seen it play out across category after category. The answer always comes back to something deceptively simple. Being more human.

When writing The Human Experience, I explored the idea that organisations grow when they behave in ways that customers instinctively value – being accessible, consistent, flexible, proactive, respectful, responsible and straightforward. In other words, the kind of behaviours that we'd use to describe a person we trust, someone we like to spend time with, who makes us feel valued and important. But how much do those behaviours actually influence customer decisions? Which of them matter most? And what can organisations do about it?

To find out, we asked 5,300 people to rate 277 brands across 24 sectors against these human behaviours. The results confirmed what we believed – and surprised us in equal measure.

This report sets out what we discovered.

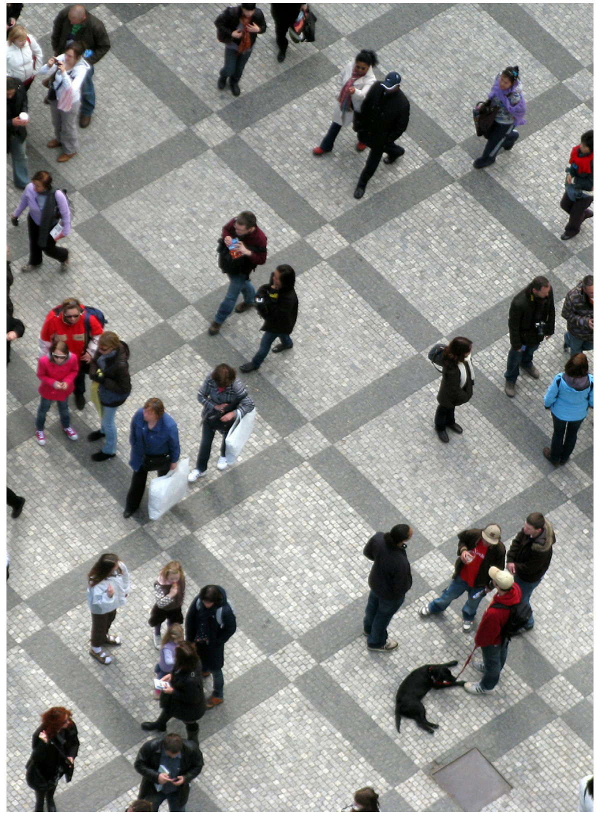
John Sills
Managing Partner

What we did

To test the idea of the human advantage at scale, The Foundation conducted a nationally representative survey of 5,300 UK adults in January 2026. Each respondent rated 15 brands against seven organisational behaviours, yielding around 285 ratings per brand. The research covered 277 brands across 24 sectors – from supermarkets and airlines to public services and water companies.

But this wasn't standard satisfaction research. Rather than asking people how much they liked a brand, we measured something more meaningful: behavioural impression. The overall pattern of how a brand is perceived to behave. We then connected those behaviour ratings to actual brand consideration using multiple regression analysis – a statistical technique that identifies what genuinely influences decisions, not just what people say matters.

That distinction turns out to be important. What people say they value and what actually influences their choices are not always the same thing. Our methodology was designed to reveal the gap – the behavioural realities that aren't visible through satisfaction scores, NPS dashboards or journey maps, because those tools report outcomes, not behaviours.



5,300 customers

277 brands

24 sectors

The Seven Behaviours

When writing The Human Experience, John Sills set out to understand what separates the organisations customers keep choosing from the ones they quietly leave. The answer, across sector after sector, came back to seven ways of behaving – things an organisation either does or doesn't do, consistently or inconsistently, in ways that customers notice even when they're not consciously looking.

Accessible

Easy to get in touch with. Responsive when a customer contacts you. Having visible leadership and transparent ways of working.

Consistent

Customer reality matches the brand promise. The experience is the same in whichever way the customer chooses to interact – in person, online, via an app, on the phone – and the whole relationship is as good as it was at the beginning.

Flexible

Knowing when to stand in front of the rules. Adapting to different people and situations. Allowing customers curated choice.

Proactive

Doing the work for customers. Identifying and resolving potential problems. Answering the next question before it's asked.

Respectful

Conscious of the customer's time. Being respectful of them as an individual. Showing humility when called for.

Responsible

Taking ownership of the experience and its problems. Helping achieve the customer's desired outcome. Caring for your customer's wellbeing.

Straightforward

Providing certainty of what's going to happen and when. Speaking in jargon-free, human language. Creating an adult-to-adult relationship.

The Big Finding

70% of brand consideration is explained by the seven organisational behaviours. That number holds consistently across every demographic group and category we tested.

It's a finding that deserves some careful thought, not because price, product, service, or brand investment don't matter. They do. But what this data suggests is that how your organisation behaves, across everything it does, matters far more than any single element of your offer. The question isn't whether your product is good or your price is right. It's whether all of it adds up to an organisation that behaves in a way customers want to deal with.

That total experience, captured in the seven behaviours, accounts for 70% of this decision. Demographics, the characteristics of who your customer actually is, contribute just 4.9%. The sector you operate in adds only 1.8%. In other words, segmenting your audience more finely or benchmarking your category won't move you far. Behaving better will.

The behaviours aren't a replacement for the other things in your business. They're the shape those things take in a customer's mind. And improving that shape is, by some distance, the most powerful thing you can do.

70%

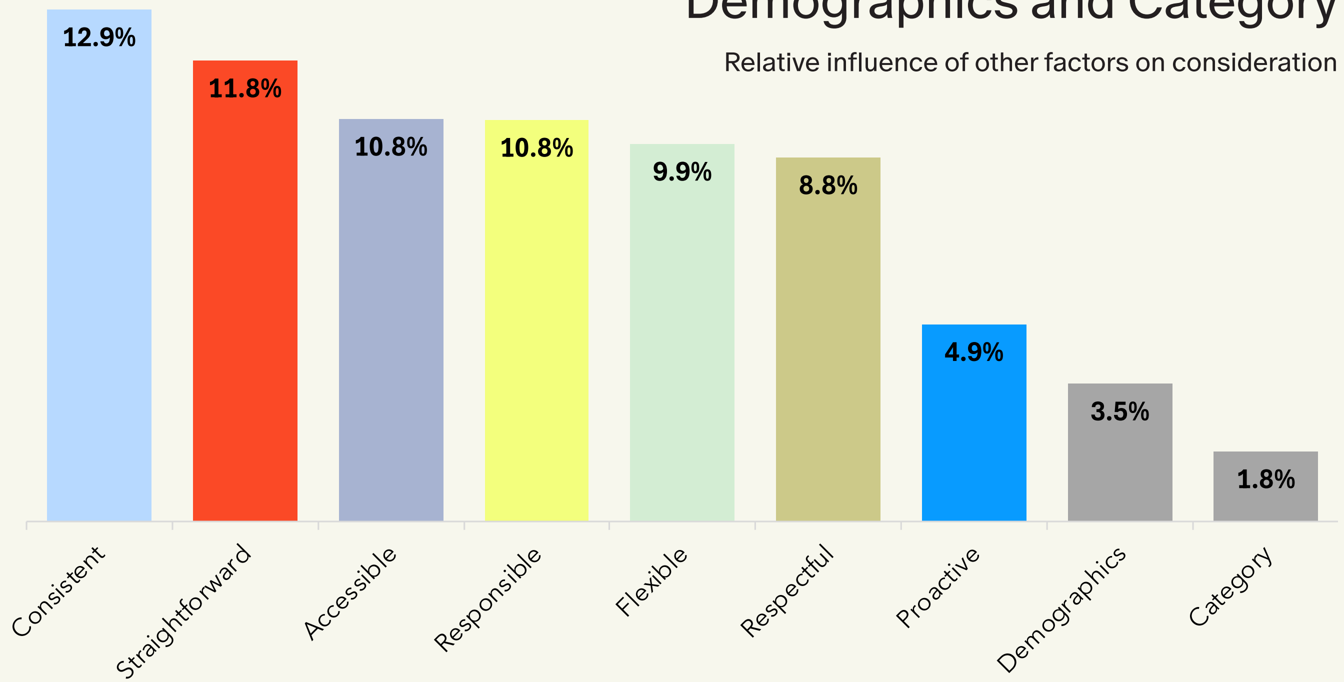
of brand consideration is explained by the seven organisational behaviours

WHAT THIS MEANS

How you behave matters more than who you target

Seven Behaviours
Importance Rankings with Demographics and Category

Relative influence of other factors on consideration



Q12 - And OVERALL, how likely would you be to consider using this company? Sample: 5003 UK Nationally Representative Adults aged 16+

Source: © The Foundation Seven Key Behaviours Quantitative Research February 2026

The Belief Gap Behind the Behaviour Gap

We now know that consistency is the strongest predictor of brand consideration. And honestly, it's not surprising. But it does raise a question that's harder to answer. If being consistent is this important in earning customers' decisions and so revenue, and it's pretty obviously so, why do so many organisations struggle to provide it?

Operational complexity – outsourced delivery, staff turnover, thin margins – makes consistency genuinely hard. But it doesn't fully explain the pattern, because some organisations in structurally difficult categories manage it anyway, while others with every structural advantage do not.

The more honest explanation is that consistency isn't primarily an operational problem. It's a belief problem.

The brands that lead this study – Tesco, Boots, Greggs, Nationwide – share something harder to copy than processes or scale. Being good for customers appears to be a settled question for them, not one priority competing against others. It's simply how they make decisions.

Conspicuously absent from the top twenty are the likes of Apple, Virgin and Google – brands more commonly associated with customer experience excellence. The lesson isn't that they're failing. It's that ambitious promises make the gap more visible when delivery falls short.

In The Customer Copernicus, Seán Meehan and I argue that most organisations are fundamentally self-interested – they start with what suits the business and push it outward, rather than starting with the customer and working back. That outside-in shift is less a strategic choice than a cultural one, built slowly and surprisingly easy to lose.

The organisations that sustain it are those where enough people have seen, often enough, that doing right by the customer works for the business too – until it stops being a priority to manage and becomes simply the way things are done.

For any senior leader who has approved a customer-centricity strategy, or a campaign built around the idea of putting customers first, without asking with genuine rigour whether the culture, the incentive structures, the operational priorities and the everyday decision-making of the organisation are oriented in the same direction as the words – the insight in this report is worth taking seriously.

Charlie Dawson
Founding Partner

The Order of Influence

When we broke down that 70% across the seven behaviours, a clear hierarchy emerged, and it wasn't the one we would have predicted.

Consistency wins — by a clear margin

Consistency is the single biggest influence on brand consideration, accounting for **12.9%** of the total. It beat every other behaviour, including the ones that typically attract the most investment and attention.

What does Consistency mean in practice? It's not about being unchanging or unadventurous. It's about alignment: between what you say and what you deliver. Between the experience on your website and the experience in your branch. Between how you treat a customer when they first join and how you treat them three years in. It's the behaviour that says – reliably, across every touchpoint – 'we are who we say we are.'

Why does this matter so much right now? We are living through a period defined by economic uncertainty, institutional distrust, and constant digital noise. In that context, predictability is a form of safety. Customers aren't primarily looking for brands that surprise and delight them. They're looking for brands they can rely on. Consistency reduces fear. It says: 'I know what I'm getting. I won't be caught out'.

Consistency is the single most influential behaviour – whether the customer experience matches the brand promise across time and channels

The ‘winning’ brands aren’t the ones you expect

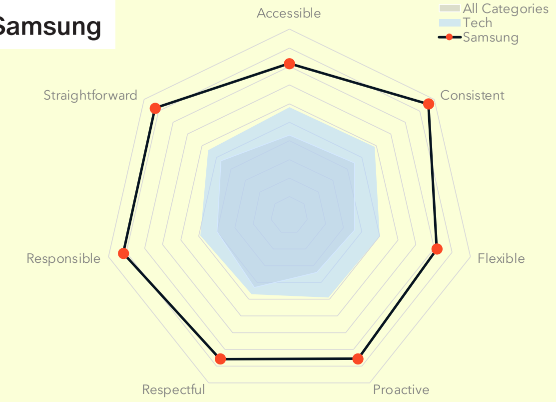
It isn’t Apple, Google, or even Virgin.

The brands that scored highest in our research are:

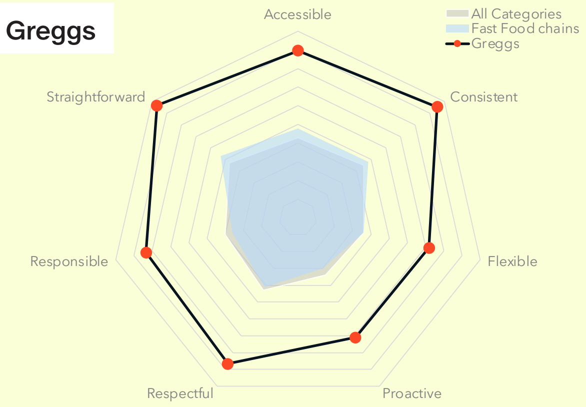
1. Macmillan
2. Tesco
3. Cancer Research UK
4. Boots
5. Samsung
6. Greggs
7. Nationwide Building Society
8. Visa
9. Lidl
10. British Heart Foundation

A result that speaks volumes. These are not the brands that typically feature in conversations about customer experience innovation. They are the brands that turn up, reliably, in the same way, every time. That, it turns out, is harder to achieve – and more valuable – than most leaders realise.

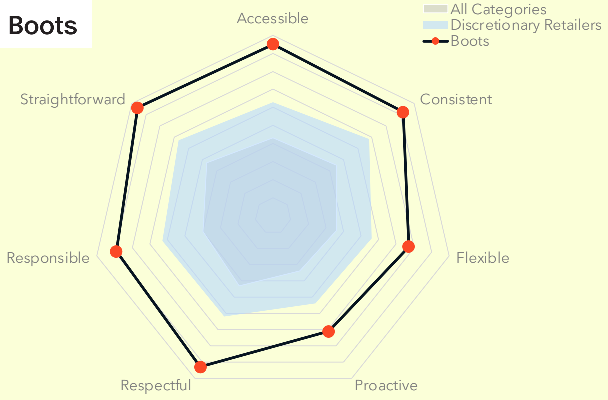
Samsung



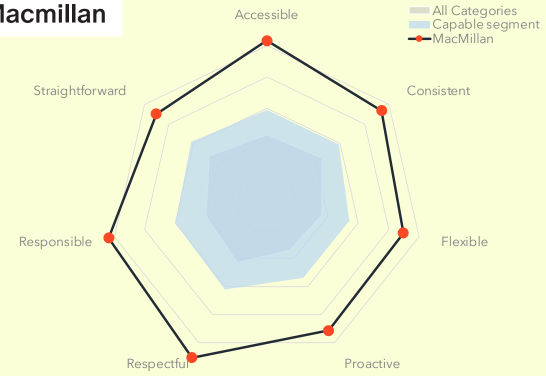
Greggs



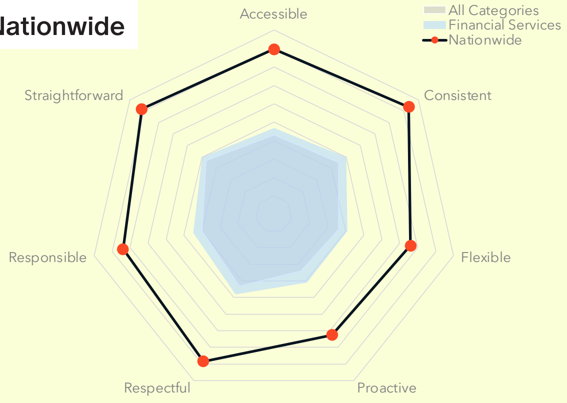
Boots



Macmillan



Nationwide



Straightforward: clarity as a competitive advantage

Straightforward came close second, at 11.8%. In a world of subscription clutter, price complexity, terms and conditions fatigue, and algorithmic opacity, clarity has become commercially powerful. Customers are tired. When mental bandwidth is scarce the brands that are easy to understand earn disproportionate loyalty.

Being Straightforward means speaking in human language, being transparent about what’s going to happen and when, and creating an adult-to-adult relationship with customers. It means not hiding the important things in small print, not making cancellation harder than sign-up, and not communicating in ways that serve the organisation’s interests at the expense of the customer’s understanding.

Accessible and Responsible: fairness and availability matter

Accessible (10.8%) and Responsible (10.8%) are in equal third place, and their proximity reflects something culturally important. In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, customers are sensitised to fairness. They notice shrinkflation, hidden fees, and the sense that a company is managing them rather than serving them. Responsibility, in this context, for customers, is not purpose theatre; it’s organisations not taking advantage of me.

Accessibility matters for similar reasons. When people need to get in touch, they need to be able to. The brands that are hardest to reach when something goes wrong pay a lasting reputational price – not just for the failure itself, but for what the inaccessibility signals about how much the organisation cares.

Proactive: admired, but risky

This is the finding that will surprise most people: Proactive comes last, at just 4.9%.

On the face of it, this seems counterintuitive. Proactivity – anticipating needs, solving problems before customers have to ask – is the behaviour that generates the most excitement in customer experience conversations. Yet it has less influence on consideration than any other behaviour.

The most likely explanation is context. We live in a world of push notifications, AI-generated recommendations, and auto-renewals. In that environment, proactivity can tip into intrusiveness. Customers aren’t sure whether it’s being done in their interest or the organisation’s. If the foundation of trust – consistency and clarity – isn’t in place first, proactivity feels presumptuous rather than helpful.

The lesson here isn’t that proactivity is unimportant. It’s that it’s additive, not foundational. You need to get the basics right first.

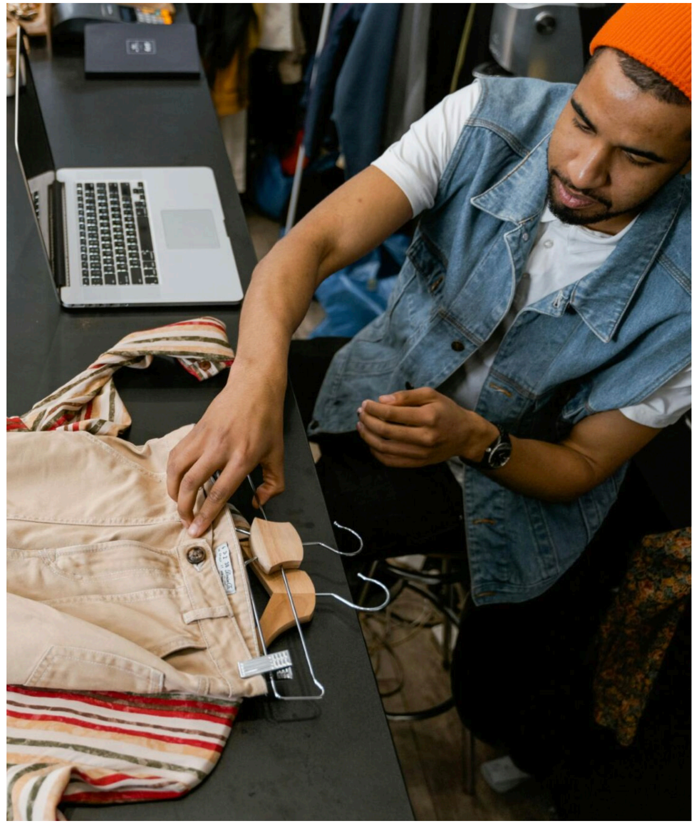
What Customers Say vs What Actually Earns Their Decisions

One of the most instructive revelations of this research was the gap between stated importance and actual influence.

When we asked respondents to rank the seven behaviours in order of importance, Straightforward and Responsible ranked top – people are conscious of wanting clarity and fairness. Proactive, meanwhile, generated genuine enthusiasm; many customers said they valued the idea of an organisation that anticipated their needs.

But stated preference and actual influence don't always tell the same story. When we ran the regression analysis - looking at what genuinely predicted whether someone would consider a brand - Consistency emerged as the dominant influencer, outranking behaviours that had scored higher in stated importance. Proactivity, despite its appeal in principle, had little measurable effect on consideration. Customers may admire it, but at this moment, it doesn't materially shift their choices.

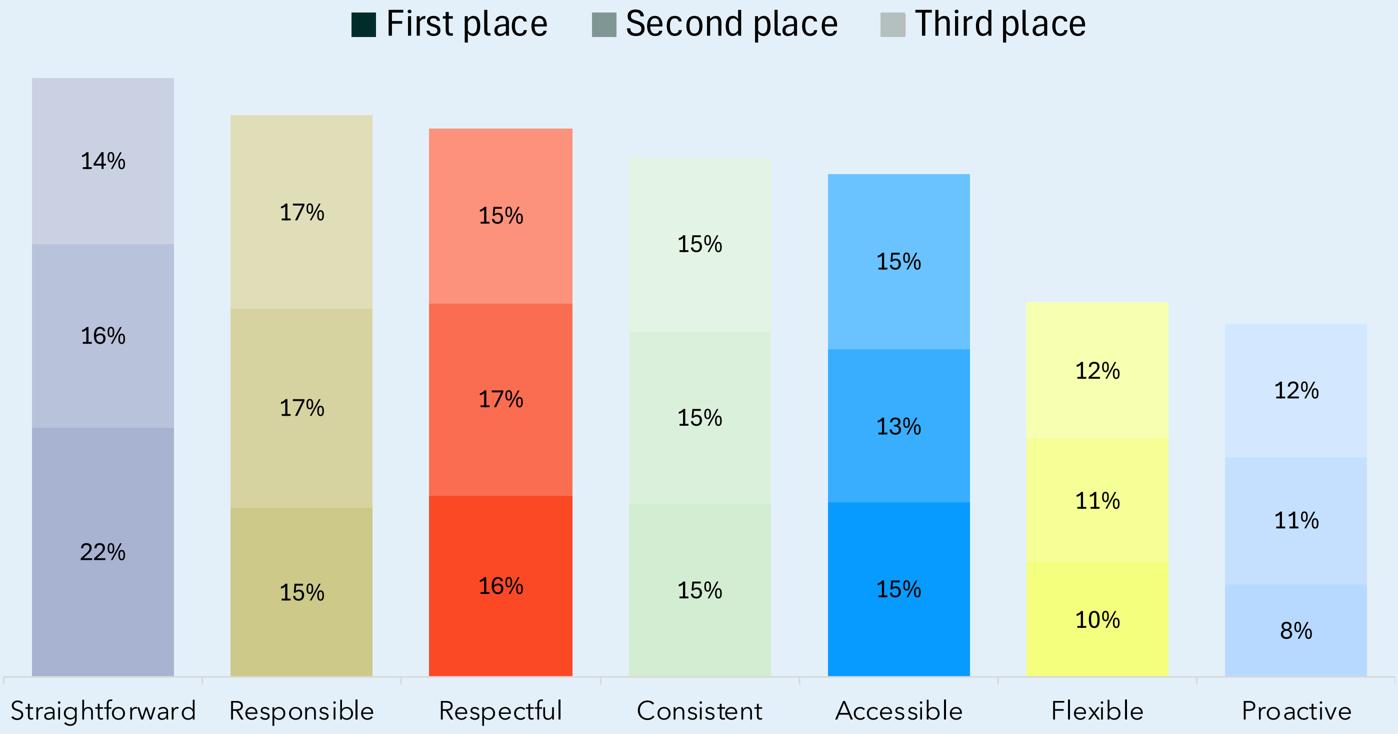
This is a well-documented phenomenon in behavioural science, but it remains one of the most underappreciated risks in customer research. What customers say they want and what influences their actual choices can be significantly different. Organisations that design purely around stated preferences – particularly those that over-invest in proactive features while leaving consistency unaddressed – may be optimising for the wrong thing.



WHAT THIS MEANS

What customers say matters isn't always what influences consideration

The Say-Do Gap
Customers didn't rank Consistency highly, yet it dominated actual behavioural influence



The behaviour that respondents choose most frequently as the most important when choosing whether or not to use an organisation is **Straightforward** (22%) and more than half (52%) placed it in their top three.

Responsible (49%) is the second-placed need in the top three rankings with **Respectful** in third place (48%. However, **Respectful** is the second-placed need in the top rankings (16%) ahead of **Responsible**, **Consistent** and **Accessible** (all 15%).

Why More Insight Doesn't Make You More Human

Anna Miley
Partner

"When did you last have a conversation with someone you weren't trying to get something from?"

The honest answer, for most organisations, is almost never. Surveys, segmentation, personas, however well-intentioned, the underlying orientation is extractive. The customer is a resource to be understood, mapped and converted. The organisation stays at the centre of the picture.

This is where something goes wrong.

Because 'understanding your customer' is still fundamentally an inside-out activity. You are the observer. They are the observed. And however sophisticated your insight, you're still looking at the world from your own vantage point, trying to see customers clearly enough to get what you want from them.

What this study suggests is that the behaviours customers value most aren't the product of sophisticated targeting. They're the product of organisations that have genuinely reoriented themselves – that have stopped asking "how do we reach this customer?" and started asking "how do we behave in ways that people find trustworthy and easy to deal with?"

That shift sounds subtle. It isn't. Behaving like a human organisation is a fundamentally different project from understanding your human audience. One is about what you do. The other is about what you know.

The organisations that score highest here might not have the most sophisticated insight functions. They tend to be the ones where something more fundamental has shifted – where the whole organisation has genuinely internalised what it feels like to be a customer, and built its operations and decisions around that reality rather than its own commercial logic.

You can't segment your way to that. You have to actually become it.

The Brands that Actually Lead

Before the research, many people would have expected the familiar names to dominate the rankings. Apple for its product experience. Google for its innovation culture. Virgin for its customer-first reputation. These are the brands that tend to lead conversations about customer experience.

They don't lead our rankings.

Instead, the top-performing brands across the seven behaviours are Boots, Greggs, Tesco, Nationwide, Samsung and the charity Macmillan. Brands that are, in many cases, unremarkable by design. Brands that turn up reliably, deliver what they promise, and don't ask their customers to admire them, just to trust them.

This is a significant finding, and an uncomfortable one for organisations that have built their customer experience strategy around aspiration. The brands customers actually choose, at scale, are the ones they can rely on. Reliability, it turns out, is a form of excellence.

The sector-level findings reinforce this. Supermarkets and discretionary retailers both outperform the all-category average across every behaviour, because their consistency is higher and their straightforwardness more dependable. Low-cost airlines and delivery companies, by contrast, sit below the average on almost every measure – a reflection of the gap between what they promise and what customers experience.

Why 'boring' can be good for business

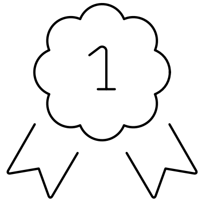
Most organisations assume they win by being more innovative or distinctive. This report finds something different.

Customers don't choose in workshops or focus groups. They choose in the real world, quickly, with limited attention and competing demands. Under those conditions, people rely on instinct rather than careful evaluation - they're not searching for the optimal option, but for something that feels safe and good enough. Behavioural scientists call this "satisficing."

Seen through that lens, the behaviours that drive consideration make perfect sense. Consistency reduces uncertainty. Straightforwardness reduces cognitive effort. Accessibility reduces friction. Together, they lower the mental cost of choosing a brand, and make it easier for a customer to say yes.

Competitive advantage, then, isn't just about being more appealing. It's about being easier to choose. That means focusing less on adding more and instead on removing what gets in the way.

Alex Frisby, Director



You don't have to be aspirational to win – you have to be dependable

A Shift in How Customers Choose

To understand why this order of influence makes sense, it is helpful to consider the broader context in which customers make decisions.

For much of the past two decades, the dominant mode of consumption was aspirational. Customers chose brands, in part, as expressions of identity. Brand affinity was something to wear or display. The brands that captured imagination – and investment – were the ones that made customers feel something.

That's changing. We are now in an era of risk-managed consumption. Customers are not primarily choosing brands to express who they are. They're choosing to avoid hassle, avoid regret, and reduce mental load. The question is no longer 'does this brand make me feel good?' It's 'can I trust this brand not to let me down?'

In uncertain, overloaded environments – where economic pressure is real, institutional trust is low, and the cognitive cost of navigating digital life is high – customers prioritise stability over novelty. Clarity over ambition. Reliability over excitement.

This isn't a permanent shift. Customer expectations will evolve. But right now, the organisations that are earning the most consideration are the ones that have understood this moment and responded to it – not with more innovation or more aspiration, but with more consistency and more clarity.

Customers choose certainty in an uncertain world

We live in a period of profound and accelerating change. The VUCA world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity that defined the late 20th century has given way to something more acute - a world that is Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, and Incomprehensible (BANI). Chaos and fracturing rather than just instability.

It's unsurprising, therefore, that customers are looking for consistency and straightforwardness. These may sound like modest ambitions, but that's precisely the point. Customers already have enough uncertainty in their lives. What they want from the organisations they deal with is stability.

Delivering this means designing experiences to reduce dismay, creating predictability, reducing information overload and eliminating decision fatigue before investing in moments of delight.

View your organisation from where your customers stand. Stay close to how they really feel. Experience what they do and understand what's important – this will give you the insight needed to create the consistency and straightforwardness that will earn customers' decisions.

Claudia Bhugra-Schmid, Director

Your Behavioural Fingerprint

Every organisation has a behavioural pattern, or fingerprint. Not the one written in strategy documents or promoted in brand campaigns, but the one customers actually experience, across channels and moments. We call this the Behavioural Fingerprint – a distinctive pattern of strengths, gaps and inconsistencies created by how your organisation behaves across real interactions, channels and decisions.

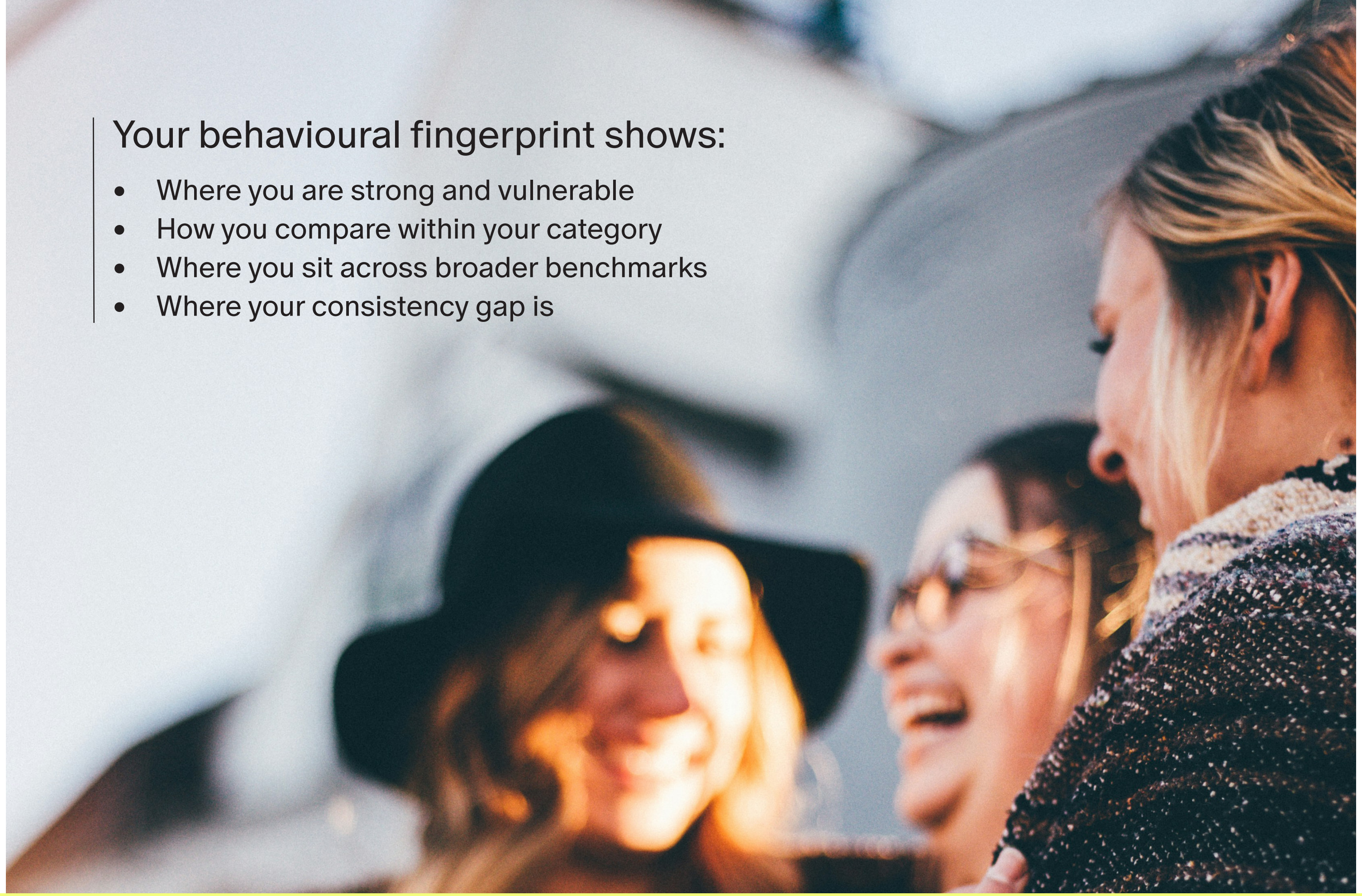
The Fingerprint surfaces the issues that satisfaction scores, NPS dashboards and journey maps tend to miss, because those tools report outcomes. It shows the behaviours underneath, where you are strong and vulnerable:

- Where your behaviour aligns with your intent – the areas where customers consistently experience what you promise
- Where friction, inconsistency or misalignment is eroding trust, consideration, and ultimately growth
- Where your organisation sits relative to competitors and the wider expectation landscape, shaped by every brand your customers interact with

Across the 277 brands in our research, two distinct fingerprint patterns emerge, and both can work when it comes to gaining the human advantage.

Your behavioural fingerprint shows:

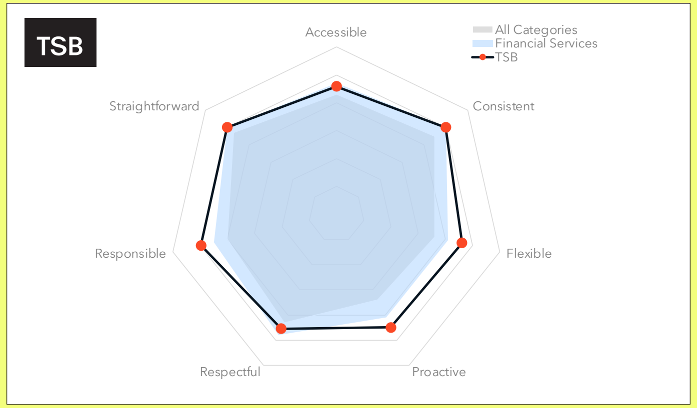
- Where you are strong and vulnerable
- How you compare within your category
- Where you sit across broader benchmarks
- Where your consistency gap is

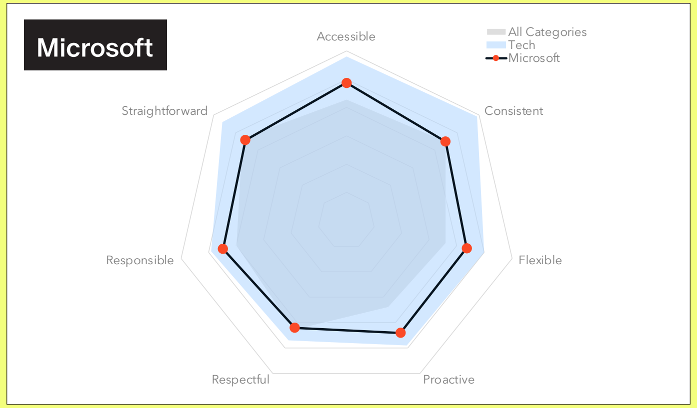


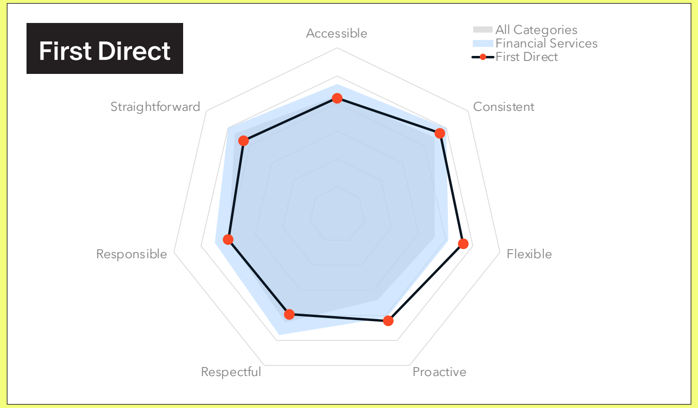
Steady Brands

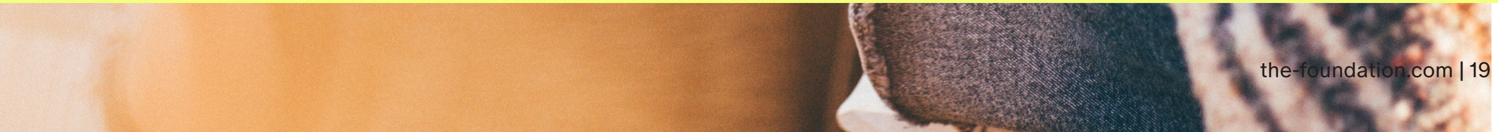
Perform within a tight range across all seven behaviours, no standout weaknesses, but no dramatic spikes either.

Examples of Steady brands include TSB, Microsoft and First Direct. Each holds a consistent level across every dimension. These brands win by being reliably solid at everything. Customers know what they will get, and that predictability is itself a form of trust.







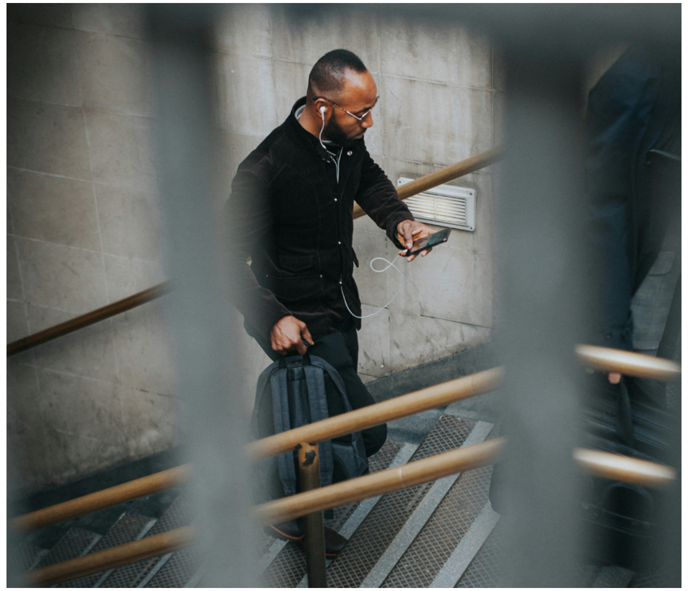


Spiky Brands

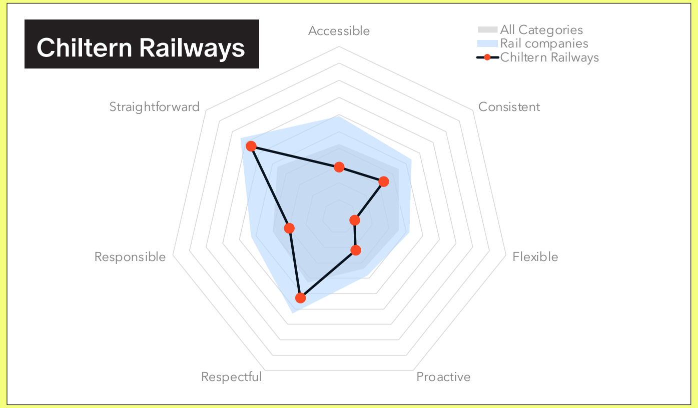
Have a more textured fingerprint, scoring notably high on one or two behaviours while lower on others.

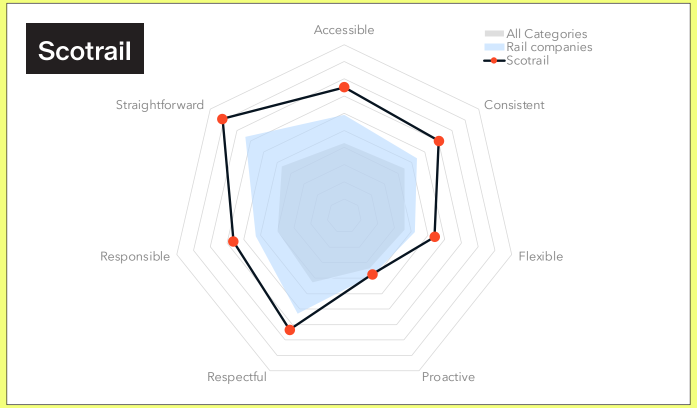
Example Spiky Brands include Chiltern Railways, which scores very highly on Straightforward (3.76) but considerably lower on Flexible (3.19). Scotrail follows a similar pattern. Customers of these brands have a clear sense of what the organisation is good at, and they accept the areas of relative weakness. These brands win by being distinctively brilliant at something.

Both are legitimate strategies. What doesn't work is being neither: having no distinctive strength and an inconsistent pattern on the behaviours that matter most. A brand that claims to be reliable and transparent, but delivers unevenly on both, earns the worst of both worlds.



> Steady vs Spiky is a real strategic choice. You can win by being reliably solid, or by being brilliant at something distinctive. What you can't do is be inconsistent.





How do you measure consistency?

Charlie Sim
Partner

Satisfaction scores, NPS, customer recommendations – we have an abundance of ways to measure the customer, but none of these traditional measurements help us understand whether the experience people get reliably matches the one we promised – across channels, over time, or when things go wrong.

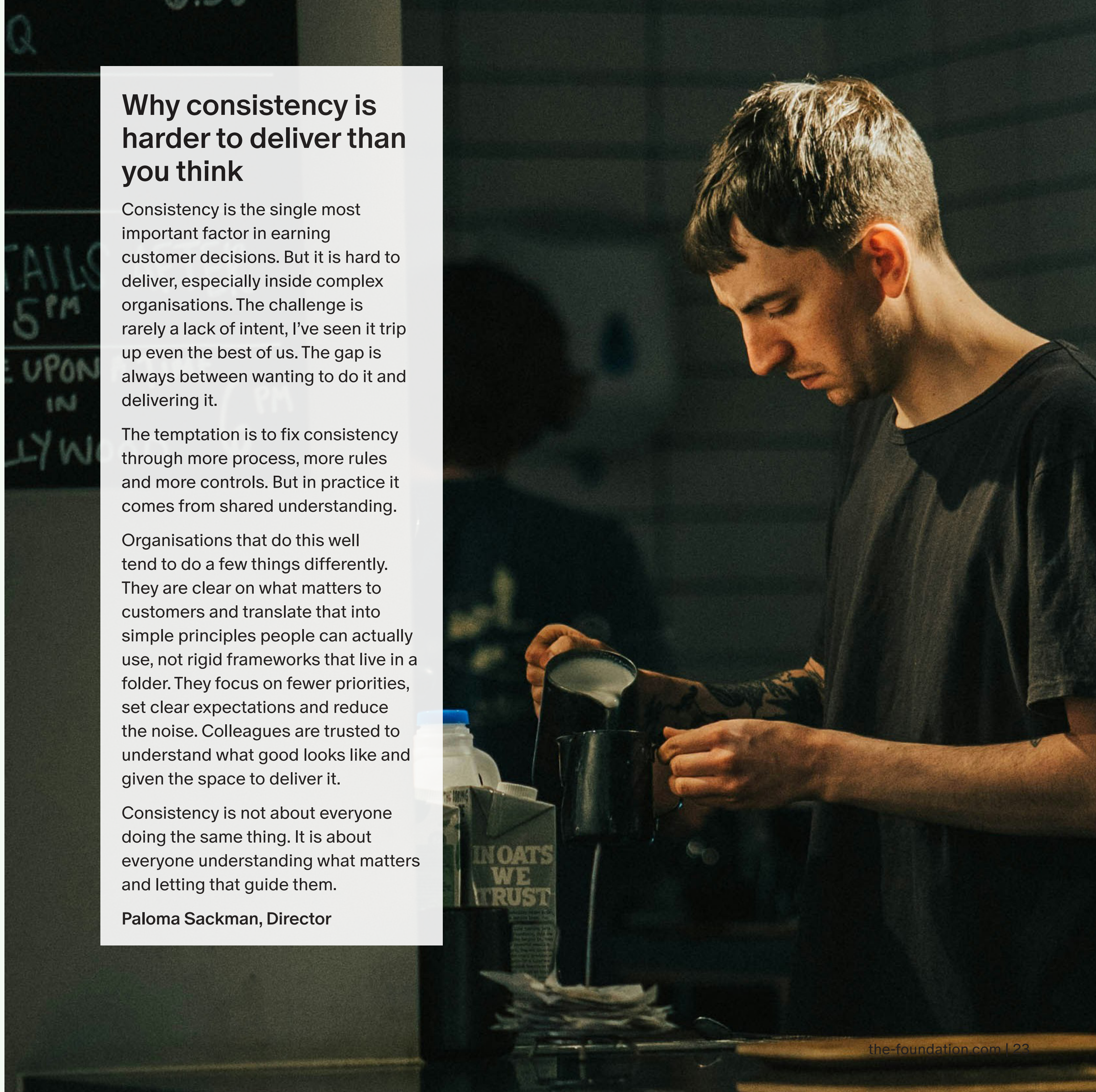
Most organisations don't measure consistency, because most customer measurement is built around what they think of you, not behaviours. You find out something went wrong when a score drops or a customer leaves, but by then the causes are already in the past. You've got a number to report but you don't have anything to manage.

There's a deeper problem too. Consistency can only really be judged over time and across multiple touchpoints. It's a feature of the whole relationship, not any single interaction. But most customer surveys measure the moment, not the pattern. And it's the pattern that people are actually weighing up when they decide whether to stay or go.

If the behaviour that most influences consideration is one that most measurement systems can't adequately track, organisations are effectively flying blind on the thing that matters most.

The fix isn't starting from scratch. It's asking a better question – not "how satisfied are customers?" but "are we consistently delivering on the specific promises we've made, at the moments that matter most?"

That question connects measurement to behaviour, behaviour to operations, and operations to commercial outcomes. A satisfaction score, however carefully built, can't do that.



Why consistency is harder to deliver than you think

Consistency is the single most important factor in earning customer decisions. But it is hard to deliver, especially inside complex organisations. The challenge is rarely a lack of intent, I've seen it trip up even the best of us. The gap is always between wanting to do it and delivering it.

The temptation is to fix consistency through more process, more rules and more controls. But in practice it comes from shared understanding.

Organisations that do this well tend to do a few things differently. They are clear on what matters to customers and translate that into simple principles people can actually use, not rigid frameworks that live in a folder. They focus on fewer priorities, set clear expectations and reduce the noise. Colleagues are trusted to understand what good looks like and given the space to deliver it.

Consistency is not about everyone doing the same thing. It is about everyone understanding what matters and letting that guide them.

Paloma Sackman, Director

Where Brands Actually Stand

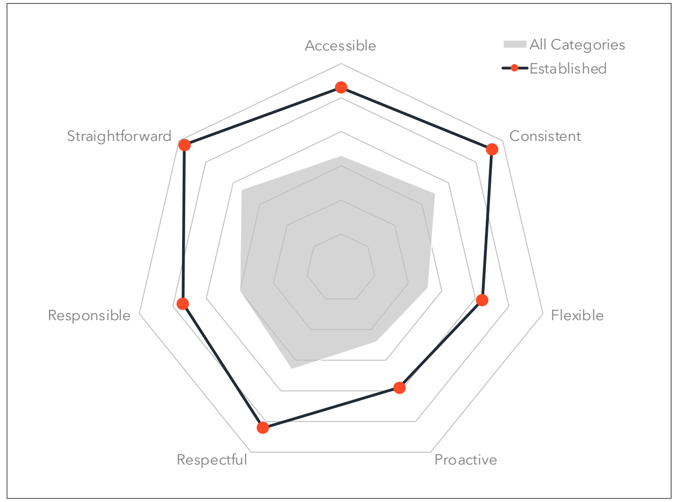
Knowing your pattern is the start, but the power comes when you see not just your own pattern, but where it places you – and whether your strengths are in the places that influence consideration most.

Not every brand sits in the same position, and not every brand faces the same challenge. But patterns emerge when you look across all 277 brands in the study. More useful than a simple ranking, these patterns reveal where a brand's strengths actually sit, and whether those strengths are in the places that matter most.

We've grouped the brands involved in the survey into four archetypes using two dimensions. The first is overall performance – whether a brand scores above or below the population average across all seven behaviours. The second is alignment – whether Consistent scores higher than Proactive in a brand's relative profile, or the other way around.

That second dimension matters because it maps directly onto what the survey revealed – that Consistency is the single biggest influence on consideration, while Proactivity is the weakest. A brand where Consistent leads Proactive is, in effect, stronger where it counts. One where Proactive leads Consistent may be investing in the visible at the expense of the foundational.

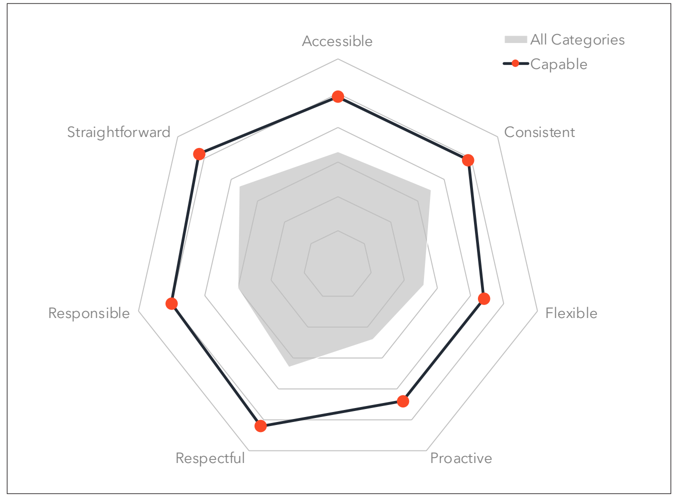
Established



Established: High overall performance, with Consistent stronger than Proactive in their profile. These brands have the fundamentals right and are delivering them at scale. Customers know what they're getting, trust that they'll get it, and keep coming back. The risk for brands in this group is complacency - consistency is harder to maintain than it looks, and the gap between promise and reality has a tendency to gradually widen over time. The priority is to protect what's working, keep measuring it honestly, and resist the temptation to chase novelty at the expense of reliability.

Established brands include Boots, John Lewis and Shell

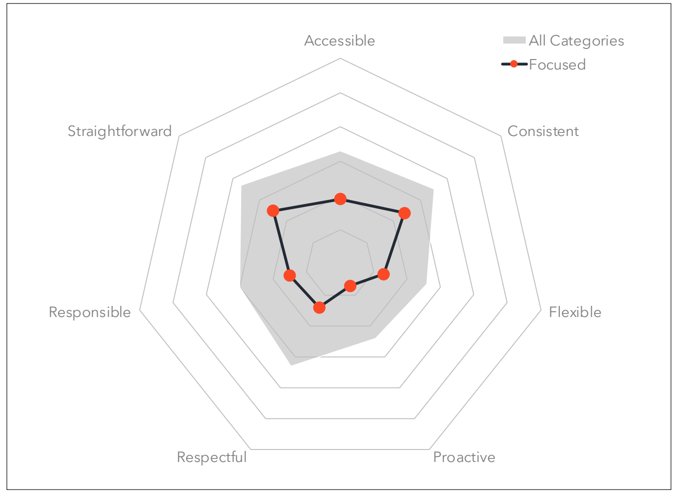
Capable



Capable: High overall performance, but with Proactive relatively stronger than Consistent in their profile. These brands are genuinely good, customers rate them well and they're doing many things right. But there is a subtle misalignment in where their strength sits. Proactivity generates enthusiasm and visibility; it's the behaviour customers talk about and that organisations tend to invest in. Consistency is less celebrated, and easier to let slip. Brands in this group should ask whether their internal investment and attention reflects the true order of influence - and whether the things that are making them look good today are the same things that will keep customers choosing them tomorrow.

Brands here include Amazon, Aviva and Apple

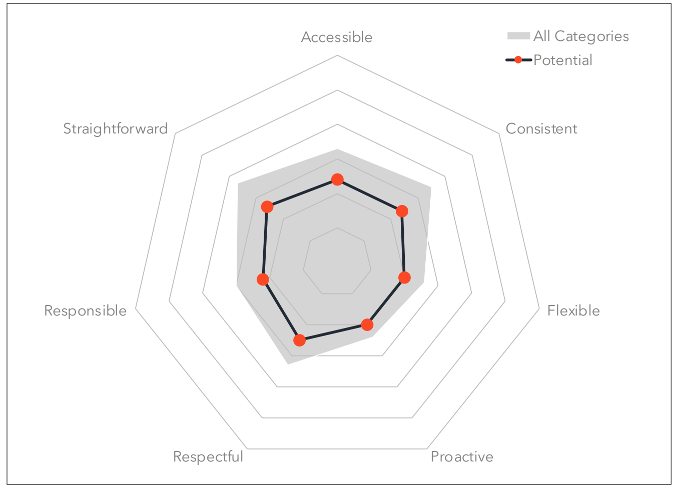
Focused



Focused: Below the overall average, but with Consistent still stronger than Proactive in their profile. These brands understand the right hierarchy, they're not chasing the wrong things, but they haven't yet found a way to deliver on it at sufficient scale or across enough touchpoints to move their overall position. That's actually an encouraging place to be. The strategic question isn't what to focus on, it's how to close the gap between intention and experience. Operational consistency, clearer communication, and tighter alignment between what the brand promises and what customers actually encounter are where the effort should go.

Examples of Focused brands include McDonalds, Thames Water and RyanAir

Potential



Potential: Below the overall average, and with Proactive relatively stronger than Consistent. This is the most common position in the study — and the most important one to understand clearly, because it describes brands that may be working hard without working on the right things. The effort and investment is there but if it's flowing towards proactive features, personalisation, and anticipating needs before the foundation of consistency and clarity is in place, it will generate less commercial return than it should. The priority here is sequencing: establish what you reliably deliver, and making sure customers experience it that way every time, and build from there.

Brands in this category include: Vinted, Saga and Evri

A full list of surveyed brands by archetype can be found in the appendix. Q5-Q11. How well would you say this company performs on each of these criteria? Sample: 5003 UK Nationally Representative Adults aged 16+ Source: © The Foundation Seven Key Behaviours Quantitative Research

What this Means for Leaders

The research carries several implications for senior leaders who want their organisations to be more customer-led.

Start with the gap between your promise and your reality

Consistency is the strongest influencer of consideration, and it's fundamentally a question of alignment. Most organisations have articulated what they stand for. The question is whether customers experience it. The gap between stated promise and lived experience is where brand value erodes, quietly and persistently. Leaders who understand their behavioural fingerprint - the actual pattern of behaviours customers experience across every touchpoint – are in a far stronger position to close that gap.

Don't mistake the exciting for the important

Proactivity is the most talked-about behaviour in customer experience circles. It's also has the least influence on consideration in our research. This doesn't mean proactivity is irrelevant – but it should prompt leaders to ask whether their investments are sequenced correctly. Addressing consistency and clarity will almost always generate more commercial return than investing in proactive features that customers aren't sure they want.

> The leadership question isn't just "are we delivering consistently?" it's "are we clear enough, aligned enough, and structured well enough for consistency to be possible?"
>
> The top 5 brands win on fundamentals not fantasy. They are clear about what they promise, and they deliver on it every time. Expectation and experience are tightly matched.

See the whole organisation, not just the experience

The seven behaviours are organisational behaviours – not marketing messages or service design principles. They cut across operations, communications, product design, and leadership. Improving Straightforwardness is a commitment to changing how the organisation actually talks to its customers. Improving Consistency ensures your systems, incentives, and culture reliably deliver the same quality of experience, everywhere, every time.

Understand who you're really competing with

Customer expectations are formed across every experience they have, from every organisation they interact with. The benchmark isn't your nearest competitor. It's the best experience your customer has had recently – in any sector. This raises the bar significantly, and it's why sector-level comparisons can give a false sense of security. Being the best delivery company in the UK still means performing below average against all categories.

The outside-in view is not optional

Leaders naturally see their organisations from the inside out – through the lens of processes, departments, and decisions. Customers experience them from the outside in, as a single, holistic pattern of behaviour. The organisations that consistently perform best are those that have found ways to genuinely understand what that outside-in view looks like, who understand their behavioural fingerprint – not through filtered data or sanitised satisfaction scores, but through direct, honest exposure to the reality their customers live in.

When you try to win at everything, you don't win at anything

Consistency turns out to be the strongest driver of brand consideration, and also the behaviour organisations struggle with most. Usually the reason given is operational, but in my experience it's strategic. Most organisations struggle to be consistent because they're trying to do too much at once – chasing multiple segments at the same time, copying whichever competitor is having a good year, bolting on new propositions before they've got the existing ones right. Focus gets diluted, and with it any real ability to build a reputation for something in particular. The organisations that win pick one or two things they want to be known for, and commit to delivering them across every interaction with a customer, every time. That takes saying no to things, and leaving money on the table, which most commercial organisations aren't very good at. The ones that are, earn customer decisions rather than chasing them.

Alexei Hartley, Director

Moving from insight to action

An organisation's behavioural fingerprint identifies where to focus attention and action. Once the pattern of behaviour and root causes are understood, leaders can ensure strategy, proposition and priorities are aligned so they reinforce the behaviours that matter most. The crunch points - where delivery breaks down - can be identified and the customer journey and touchpoints redeisgned, and finally, the systems, training and measurements can be embedded to sustain consistency over time.

Conclusion

All of this starts with genuinely understanding your Behavioural Fingerprint. It allows you to see your consistency gap clearly, prioritise the behaviours that drive growth over the ones that generate internal noise, and align teams around a common behavioural ambition so that strategy, proposition and delivery reinforce each other. For leaders prepared to act on what it reveals, it becomes a foundation for stronger, more sustainable customer-led growth.

About The Foundation

For more than 25 years, we've helped ambitious leaders and organisations create true customer-led success, partnering with them to create strategies that earn more customer decisions, and design propositions and experiences that keep people choosing them.

About this Research

The Foundation Seven Behaviours Quantitative Research was conducted in January 2026 by The Foundation, using an online self-completion questionnaire programmed and managed through Structural Thinking.

5,303 UK nationally representative adults aged 16+ were surveyed. Each respondent rated 15 brands across seven organisational behaviours, yielding a target of 285 ratings per brand. 277 brands were evaluated across 24 sectors. Brand consideration was measured using a single-item question, and multiple regression analysis was used to model the relative influence of the seven behaviours and other factors on consideration.

Appendix: Top 100 Organisations

1. Macmillan
2. Tesco
3. Cancer Research UK
4. Boots
5. Samsung
6. Greggs
7. Nationwide Building Society
8. Visa
9. Lidl
10. British Heart Foundation
11. AA
12. PayPal
13. British Red Cross
14. Marks & Spencer
15. Amazon
16. Battersea Dog and Cats Home
17. Aldi
18. Argos
19. Premier Inn
20. Booking.com
21. Emirates
22. National Trust
23. RAC
24. Sainsbury's
25. St John Ambulance
26. West Midlands
27. Google
28. Next
29. Scotrail
30. Holland and Barrett
31. John Lewis & Partners
32. Mastercard
33. British Airways
34. WWF
35. Ikea
36. Asda
37. Greater Anglia
38. Screwfix
39. RSPCA
40. BMW
41. Great Northern Trains
42. Northumbrian Water
43. Morrisons
44. Halfords
45. Transport for London (TfL)
46. East Midlands Railway
47. Toyota
48. Jet2 Holidays
49. LNER
50. Iceland
51. Severn Trent Water
52. Nissan
53. Superdrug
54. Currys
55. Green Flag
56. Disney
57. Waitrose
58. Pets at Home
59. Ford
60. B&Q
61. Holiday Inn/Holiday Inn Express
62. Amazon Fresh/Amazon Flex
63. Santander
64. Southwestern Railway
65. Jet2
66. British Airways Holidays
67. UNICEF
68. Kia
69. Hyundai
70. Oxfam
71. Miller and Carter
72. Avanti West Coast
73. Travelodge
74. Eurostar
75. Octopus Energy
76. Save The Children
77. TK Maxx
78. JLR
79. Center Parcs
80. Halifax
81. H&M
82. Primark
83. Hilton Hotels
84. Expedia
85. VW
86. Costa Coffee
87. Moneybox
88. HSBC
89. Uniqlo
90. English Heritage
91. National Express
92. Tesco Mobile
93. Aviva
94. Co-op Food
95. Southeastern
96. NHS
97. London Gatwick Airport
98. Edinburgh Airport
99. Ebay
100. United Utilities

Appendix: Top 3 Organisations in each Sector

Airports
Edinburgh Airport
London Gatwick Airport
Glasgow Aiport

Automotive
AA
BMW
RAC

Broadband Providers
Sky Broadband
BT Broadband
Hyperoptic

Café Chains
Costa Coffee
Caffe Nero
Coffee #1

Charities
Macmillan
Cancer Research
British Heart Foundation

Delivery Companies
Royal Mail/Parcel Force
UPS
TNT

Discretionary Retailers
Boots
Amazon
Argos

Energy Companies
Octopus Energy
Utility Warehouse
Good Energy

Fast Food Chains
Greggs
Domino's Pizza
McDonalds

Financial Services
Nationwide
Building Society
Visa
PayPal

Food and Beverage Chains
Miller and Carter
Wetherspoons
Nandos

Food Delivery
Amazon Fresh/Amazon Flex
Hello Fresh
Gusto

Gyms
Nuffield Health
Pure Gym
The Gym Group

Hotel Chains
Premier Inn
Holiday Inn/Holiday Inn Express
Travelodge

Insurance Providers
Aviva
Bupa
Admiral Group

Leisure Providers
National Trust
Disney
Center Parcs

Low Cost Airlines
Jet2
TUI Airways
Easyjet

Major Clothing Retailers
Marks & Spencer
Next
TK Maxx

Mobile Phone Providers
Tesco Mobile
O2
Vodafone

Other Transport
Eurostar
National Express
Bolt

Pension Providers
Royal London
Pension Bee
Standard Life

Premium Airlines
Emirates
British Airways
Virgin

Public Services
NHS
DVLA
HMRC

Rail Companies
West Midlands
Scotrail
Greater Anglia

Supermarkets
Tesco
Lidl
Aldi

Tech
Samsung
Microsoft
Google

Travel Agents/Booking Companies
Booking.com
Jet2 Holidays
British Airways Holidays

Water Companies
Northumbrian Water
Severn Trent Water
United Utilities

Appendix: All Organisations Surveyed

AA
Accor
Admiral Group
Aegon
Aer Lingus
AirBnB
AJ Bell
Aldi
Amazon
Amazon Fresh/Amazon Flex
AMEX
Anglian Water
Apple
Argos
Asda
ASOS
Avanti West Coast
Aviva
AXA UK
B&Q
Barclays
Battersea Dog and Cats Home
Best Western
Better gyms
Birmingham Airport
BMW
Bolt
Boohoo
Booking.com
Boots
BP
Bristol Airport
British Airways
British Airways Holidays
British Gas
British Heart Foundation
British Red Cross
BT Broadband
BT Mobile
Budgens
Bupa
Burger King
Caffe Nero
Cancer Research UK
Cazoo
Center Parcs
Chiltern Railways
Cinch
Co-op Food
Coffee #1
Costa Coffee
Currys
David Lloyd Leisure
Deliveroo
Department of Work & Pensions
Direct Line Group
Disney
Domino's Pizza
DPD
DVLA
E.ON Next
East Midlands Railway
Easyjet
easyjetHolidays
Ebay
Ecotricity
EDF Energy
Edinburgh Airport
EE
EE Broadband
Emirates
English Heritage
Esure
Eurostar
Evri
Expedia
Facebook
Fidelity Pensions
First Direct
Five Guys
Ford
FreeNow
Gails Bakery
Getir
giffgaff
Glasgow Aiport
Good Energy
Google
Great Northern Trains
Greater Anglia
Green Flag
Greene King
Greggs
Gusto
GWR
H&M
Halfords
Halifax
Hargreaves Lansdown
Harvester
Hays Travel
Hello Fresh
Hilton Hotels
HMRC
Holiday Inn/Holiday Inn Express
Holland and Barrett
Homebase
Homeprotect
HSBC
Hyperoptic
Hyundai
Iceland
Ikea
Interactive Investor
JD Gyms
JD Sports
Jet2
Jet2 Holidays
JLR
John Lewis & Partners
Just
Just Eat
KFC
Kia
Kuoni UK
Lastminute.com
Lebara
Legal & General
Leon
Lidl
Lloyds
LNER
London Gatwick Airport
London Heathrow Airport
London Luton Airport
London Stanstead
LoveHolidays
LV= Liverpool Victoria
Macmillan
Malmasion
Manchester Airport
Marks & Spencer
Marriot International
Mastercard
Matalan
McDonalds
Merlin Entertainment (Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Legoland)
Metro Bank
Microsoft
Miller and Carter
Moneybox
Monzo
Morrisons
Nandos
National Express
National Trust
Nationwide Building Society
NatWest
New Look
Next
NHS
Nissan
Northern Trains
Northumbrian Water
NOW Broadband
Nuffield Health
O2
Octopus Energy
OnTheBeach
OVO Energy
Oxfam
P&O
PayPal
Pension Bee
Pets at Home
Pizza Express
Premier Inn
Pret a Manger
Primark
Prudential
Pure Gym
RAC
Radisson Hotel Group
RBS
Revolut
River Island
Royal London
Royal Mail/Parcel Force
RSPCA
Ryanair
Saga
Sainsbury's
Samsung
Santander
Save The Children
Scotrail
Scottish Power
Scottish Widows
Screwfix
Severn Trent Water
Shein
Shell
Shell Energy
Sky Broadband
Sky Mobile
Smarty

Appendix: All Organisations Surveyed

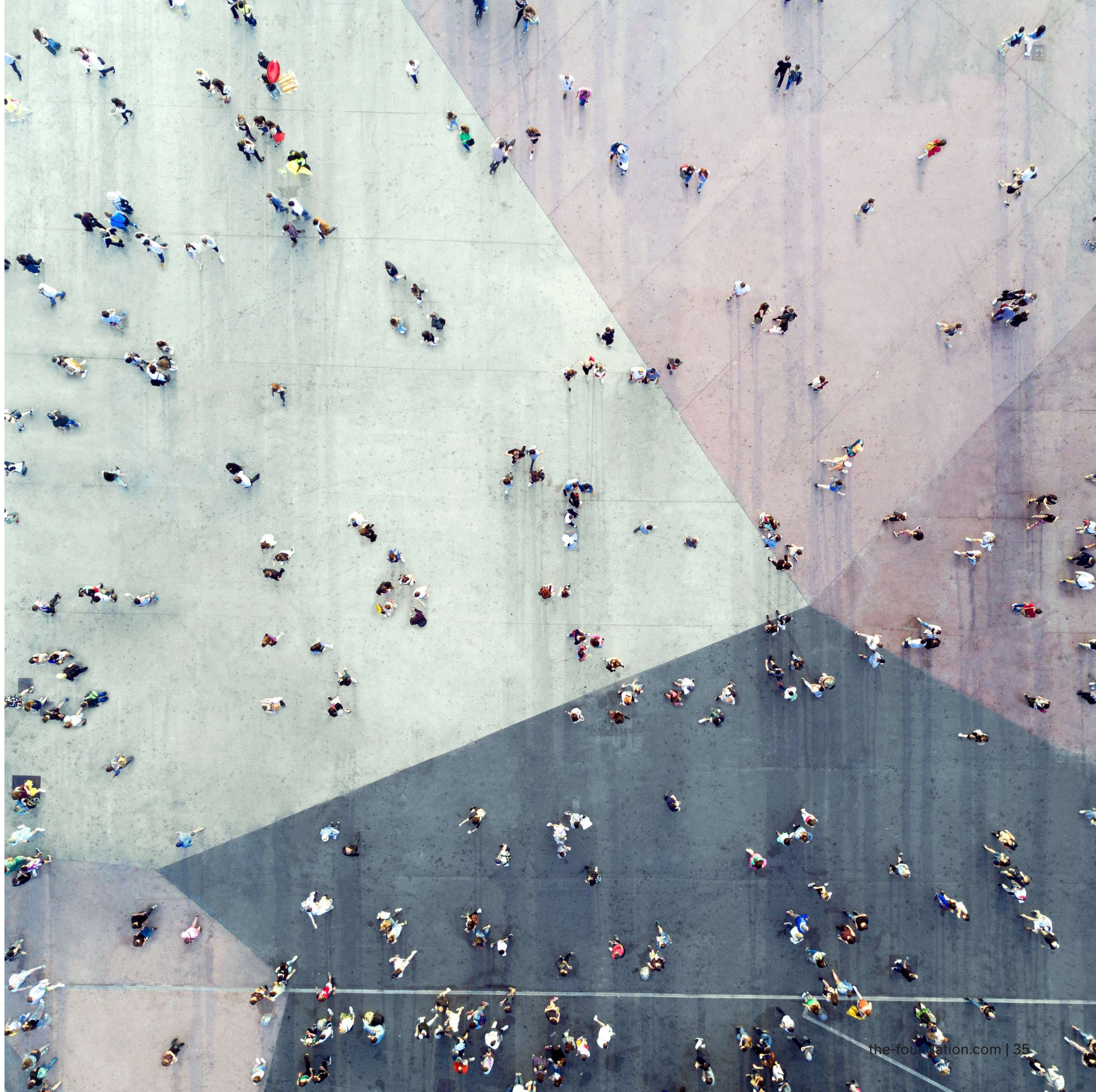
South East Water
South West Water
Southeastern
Southern
Southern Water
Southwestern Railway
Spar
Sports Direct
St John Ambulance
Standard Life
Starbucks
Starling
Subway
Superdrug
Taco Bell
Talk Talk
Tesco
Tesco Mobile
Tesla
TGI Fridays
Thames Water
The Co-operative Travel
The Gym Group
Thomas Cook
Three
TK Maxx
TNT
Toby Carvery
Toyota
Trailfinders
Trainline
Transport for London (TfL)
Travelodge
True Potential
TSB
TUI
TUI Airways
Uber
Uber Eats
UNICEF
Uniqlo
United Utilities
UPS
Utility Warehouse
Village Hotels
Vinted
Virgin
Virgin Media
Virgin Money
Visa
Vitality
Vodafone
Vodafone Broadband
Voxi
VW
Wagamama
Waitrose
Welsh Water
Wessex Water
West Midlands Railway
Wetherspoons
Wickes
Wizz Air
WWF
Yodel
Yorkshire Water
Zara
Zizzi
Zurich UK

Get in touch for your Human Experience Advantage Analysis

If you want to know how you compare on what actually earns customers' decisions:

- Are you ahead or falling behind?
- Which behaviours are costing you customers?
- Where is your biggest opportunity for growth?

We'll show you how your organisation and/or category performs using real customer evidence. Email **hello@the-foundation.com**



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