

Big Data is watching - embrace the benefits

By [Wynand Smit](#)

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Consumers are getting wise to brand activities - but it's not as simple as they may assume. After several unsolicited calls in the course of a couple of days, people start to wonder which of the brands they have dealt with has sold their details on as a list to contact centres.



Source: IT News Africa

While those databases do exist, it's more likely that the very activities of those people, are what drives the marketing activity that surrounds them.

Calls, online searches, emails, social media activity: all of these may contribute to that vast pool of information termed big data. This data is used to generate customer profiles based on their habits. When using technology and supporting systems or processes to correctly apply sophisticated variables to big data, it can lead to a seamless, improved customer service. When done poorly, it may alienate existing and potential customers.

A customer profile may contain information about online shopping preferences (what kinds of products, what days of the month the purchases are made and for how much, or even what kinds of products are browsed). This, in turn, can cause data-driven technology on websites to make content it selects as more relevant to you more prominent.

You may even notice that products you previously viewed online appear as adverts alongside a news article you are

reading – a classic retargeting online advertising strategy used by online retailers. But it's important to remember that customer behavioural data plays a significant role in helping a company improve the products, and services on offer to the market – all of which are more closely aligned to an individual consumer's needs and interests.

Customer data can also be used in a contact centre environment to improve service levels. If the company's systems support it, complaints on other channels (such as social media) could be automatically added to a customer profile, ensuring that the customer's entire interaction history with the company (across multiple channels) is documented and available to the contact centre agent who handles the call.

This serves to enhance the customer experience, since reducing time spent on having to gather information and then repeating it while on calls can create frustration for customers. All the information will also be available to the agent in a single place, which means a higher probability of a speedier resolution to the query.

So it's not so much that customers' details are being sold on a long list of paper, but that their lives are being documented – a process which has become easier in a digital age. Naturally, companies want to protect the private information that belongs to their customers, and it's also information they'd prefer to keep from their competitors, so security and respecting a customer's privacy is essential in the world of big data.

The goal is improved customer experience, through a process of optimised efficiency and productivity. This leads to customer loyalty as well as profitability, so having poor processes working badly off big data doesn't make sense for any company with a strategy for growth. Big data shouldn't be used for its own sake, but only if it is contributing to an improved business model for the company and the customer alike.

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