



## IS THE CUSTOMER ALWAYS RIGHT?

### ARTICLE

**Whether** the customer is right or not seems to **depends on** which country you are in. The way we shop shows our relationships with other people and also the way we see ourselves.

**Recent** economic **hardship** in Europe has given customers more **power** as shops now have to **compete** more to win their **custom**. This has resulted in falling prices, **plenty of** special offers and a closer **examination** of what customer service really means.

It is said that America has excellent customer service. In restaurants, for example, waiters **compliment** you on your clothes and ask about your day. They then return to your table every ten minutes to make sure that you are happy with your meal.

Anyone who has waited more than 30 minutes for their meal in a restaurant might well **dream** of such service, but do we really want American style service? It is more a question of people from different countries wanting different types of customer service.

Older Chinese people are used to **haggling** when they go shopping. Even when buying clothes they might wait until the clothes are on sale, and then haggle until they get an even better price. If there is a small

**fault** with the product, an **even** lower price will be expected. These haggling **tactics** are **cultural** and certainly would not **work** in a shop in America or Europe.

Employees will provide better service if they are **treated** well by their company. As American sales and service personnel **rely on** their **commission** and tips, they have more **incentive** to provide better service to their customers. But is this fair?

Do we think it is fair to ask shop workers to work late evenings, weekends and 12-hour **shifts**? Does it agree with our picture of society? It might not be a **case of** "Is the customer always right?" but a case of "How much service is it fair to expect?"

### Whether (conjunction)

(used especially in reporting questions and expressing doubts) if, or not, e.g.

I wasn't sure whether you'd like it.

She asked me whether I was interested in working for her.

I'm wondering whether to have the fish or the beef.

I doubt whether it'll work.

I was merely questioning whether we have the money to fund such a project.

It all depends on whether or not she's got the time.

Anyway, it's a good story, whether or not it's true.

**depends (verb)**

is decided by or varies according to the stated thing, e.g.

Whether or not we go to Spain for our holiday depends on the cost.

[+ question word] I might go to the cinema tomorrow - it depends what time I get home from work.

**Recent (adjective)**

happening or starting from a short time ago, e.g.

Is that a recent photo?

Have you been following recent political events?

In recent times/years/months, etc. there has been an increase in the amount of violence on television.

**hardship (noun)**

(something which causes) difficult or unpleasant conditions of life, or an example of this, e.g.

The 1930s was a time of high unemployment and economic hardship in much of the United Kingdom.

**power (noun)**

ability to control people and events, e.g.

I've no power over him - he does what he wants to.

Once nicotine has you in its power, it's very difficult to stop smoking.

She has the power to charm any man she meets.

**compete (verb)**

try to be more successful than someone or something else, e.g.

It's difficult for a small supermarket to compete against/with the big supermarkets.

Both girls compete for their father's attention.

**custom (noun)**

the support given to a business, especially a shop, by the people who buy things or services from it, e.g.

Most of our custom comes from tourists nowadays.

If we don't give good service, people will take their custom elsewhere.

**plenty (adverb)**

(the state of having) enough or more than enough, or a large amount, e.g.

"Would you like some more wine?" "No thanks, I've had plenty."

Don't grab at the balloons, children - there are plenty for everyone.

We've got plenty of time before we need to leave for the airport.

They've always had plenty of money.

There's plenty to do here.

There's plenty more beer in the fridge.

**examination (noun)**

when someone looks at or considers something carefully in order to discover something, e.g.

I had to have a medical examination when I started my pension scheme.

The evidence is still under examination (= being examined).

I thought it was paint at first, but on closer examination I realised it was dried blood.

**compliment (verb)**

praise or express admiration for someone, e.g.

I was just complimenting Robert on his wonderful food.

I must compliment you on your handling of a very difficult situation.

**dream (verb)**

imagine something that you would like to happen:

I dream of living on a tropical island.

[+ that] He never dreamed that one day he would become President.

He's always dreamed of becoming rich.

**haggling (verb/gerund)**

attempting to decide on a price or conditions which are acceptable to the person selling the goods and the person buying them, usually by arguing, e.g.

It's traditional that you haggle over the price of things in the market.

We've almost come to an agreement. I just need to haggle a bit of the extras.



**even (adverb)**

used to emphasize a comparison, e.g.

The next 36 hours will be even colder with snow showers becoming more widespread.

Any devaluation of the dollar would make it even more difficult to keep inflation low.

She's even more beautiful in real life than on television.

**fault (noun)**

a broken part or weakness in a machine, product or system, e.g.

The car has a serious design fault.

I think the DVD player has got an electrical fault.

For all its faults, our transport system is still better than that in many other countries.

**tactics (noun)**

planned way of doing something, e.g.

These bomb attacks represent a change of tactics by the terrorists.

The team changed its tactics in the second half and won the match.

**cultural (adjective)**

relating to the habits, traditions and beliefs of a society, e.g.

Australia has its own cultural identity, which is very different from that of Britain.

In international business it is important to understand cultural differences.

**work (verb)**

be effective or successful, e.g.

Her idea for reorganizing the department will never work in practice.

The tablets will start to work in a few minutes.

Some people think I'm weird doing meditation, but it works for me and that's all that matters.

I like your plan. It might work.

**treated (verb)**

behaved towards someone or dealt with something in a particular way, e.g.

My parents treated us all the same when we were kids.

He treated his wife very badly.



It's wrong to treat animals as if they had no feelings.

My boss has always treated me well.

**rely on (phrasal verb)**

need a particular thing or the help and support of someone or something in order to continue, to work correctly, or to succeed, e.g.

[+ ing form of verb] The success of this project relies on everyone making an effort.

I rely on you for good advice.

[+ to infinitive] I'm relying on the garage to fix the car by tomorrow.

**commission (noun)**

a (system of) payment to someone who sells goods which is directly related to the amount of goods sold, e.g.

Is she paid a regular wage or is it on commission only?

She gets a 15% commission on every machine she sells.

**incentive (noun)**

something which encourages a person to do something, e.g.

Tax incentives have been very effective in encouraging people to save and invest more of their income.

[+ to infinitive] There is little incentive for people to leave their cars at home when public transport remains so expensive.

Bonus payments provide an incentive to work harder.

**shifts (noun)**

groups of workers who do a job for a period of time during the day or night, or the period of time itself, e.g.

As the night shift leave, the day shift arrive.

Are you on the night shift or the day shift (= Do you work during the night period or the day period)?

**a case of**

used when a situation is of a particular type, e.g.

She doesn't want to work full-time, it's a case of having to.