guest XM
by **Black Box** Intelligence

The Ultimate Guide to
Direct vs Indirect Restaurant Feedback

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Customers aren't shy about sharing feedback with the brands that they interact with. Every experience along the customer journey is an opportunity for a person to comment, complain, criticize, compliment, or even congratulate. Ignoring that feedback isn't an option – especially in today's operating environment.

For restaurants just starting to capture, analyze, and act on customer feedback, it's important to know that there are several different forms of feedback loops. And, that not all of these feedback loops are created equal.

In this guide, we'll explore direct and indirect feedback, how they are different from cross or multi-channel customer experience management and why an omni-channel feedback strategy actually delivers the insights restaurants need to operationalize their feedback data and take action fast.

Direct Feedback

What is Direct Feedback?

Direct feedback is customer input gathered by asking consumers what they think about a brand, product, customer service interaction, or other touchpoint along the customer journey. Another term often used to describe "Direct Feedback" is "Voice of the Customer" or "VOC" for short. Direct feedback is collected through dynamic survey tools that can automate the administration and delivery of surveys to collect and analyze feedback at scale.

Why is Direct Feedback Important?

Direct feedback is the first line of defense against customer attrition. Collecting, analyzing, and transforming direct feedback data into insights helps multi-unit restaurant brands uncover blind spots across customer interactions. These could be location-specific blind spots — they could be blind spots in the back-of-house, front-of-house, or among team leaders and managers — or they could be issues related to a product or a process that is impacting your frontline's ability to deliver the quality and consistency of service experience your customers expect.
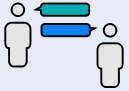
Direct Feedback

Captured through dynamic survey tools

Automates the admin and delivery of surveys

Collects and analyzes feedback at scale

Helps multi-unit restaurants uncover blind spots

What are Common Types of Direct Feedback?

Net Promoter Score (NPS)

A Net Promoter Score asks a powerful but straightforward question: "How likely is it that you would recommend [brand] to a friend or colleague?" A restaurant's NPS score reveals a customer's willingness to promote the brand and is an important leading indicator of future business and revenue growth.

Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) Score

A Customer Satisfaction Score is a metric commonly used to indicate how satisfied customers are with a restaurant's products, service levels, or overall experiences. The score is collected using customer satisfaction surveys that are strategically administered after an interaction along the customer journey. CSAT surveys are scored on a scale of 0% to 100% and are typically limited to only one or a few simple questions. The most common question is:

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with [product/service/experience] on a scale from [1-5]?

CSAT Scores are then aggregated over time to create a composite CSAT score — a number that is easy to keep track of if you're running your customer feedback program through a centralized platform. Companies often benchmark their CSAT Scores and then use the American Customer Satisfaction Index to get an idea of what is typical across their industry, sector, or segment.

Customer Effort Score (CES)

A Customer Effort Score (CES) is a measure of how easy or difficult a brand is to do business with. While this score is common among brands with contact centers, guest services, or help desks — this is another form of direct customer feedback that can be collected when and where it makes sense.

Indirect Feedback

What is Indirect Feedback?

Indirect feedback is customer feedback or input that the company did not solicit but is publicly available information accessed, collected, and analyzed alongside direct feedback to gain a more comprehensive view of the customer experience.

Why is Indirect Feedback Important?

Not surprisingly, indirect feedback is often more candid. Customers may feel more comfortable sharing their opinions on an experience when interacting with less formal channels like social media. Thankfully, those less formal channels can be mined by companies when the feedback is publicly available and used to get to the bottom of issues or even uncover yet undiscovered opportunities.
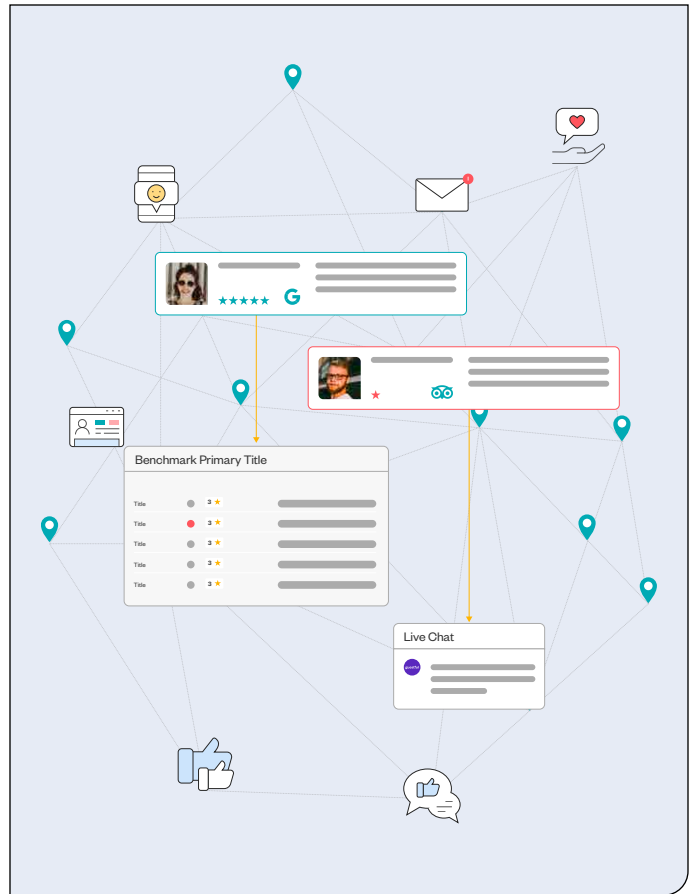
Which Channels Does Indirect Feedback Come From?

Mining for indirect feedback is more challenging than soliciting direct feedback from customers. Collecting indirect or unsolicited feedback requires intelligent VOC analytics software that leverages artificial intelligence to analyze human speech and then organizes the data into insights that can be operationalized. Indirect feedback is typically collected from three main sources or channels:

Service Interactions
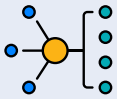
Service interactions are recorded from channels such as voice, email, chat, or other text or voice-to-text formats. A restaurant-specific VOC analytics solution takes that information — identifies trends — and turns the indirect feedback into performance data that can be correlated to other inputs, including survey results.

Social Media Posts, Comments, or Messages
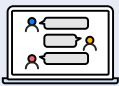
Modern analytics tools monitor social media to capture conversations about a brand or concept. It then turns this indirect feedback into data that can be used with other information to produce useful insights about the overall customer experience.

Verbatim Text

Freeform text fields provide some of the most valuable indirect feedback. They provide the "why" behind survey responses. Aggregating verbatim text and transforming it into useful data is a task analytics software can perform effectively at scale.

A Word of Caution on Indirect Feedback Collection

Because our industry is so unique, it's important to find a solution provider that understands the restaurant space so that they can collect and make sense of the data and information on your behalf. If the solution provider collects direct and indirect feedback — but lacks the proper governance to "translate" the speech into meaningful insights — you'll be stuck layering on other tools or hiring additional data analysts to transcribe and make the information meaningful.

Cross-Channel & Multi-Channel Customer Experience Management

Why are we talking about cross-channel and multi-channel customer experience management in a guide about direct and indirect feedback? Too often, the concepts are intertwined and confused as one broad strategy. While there is overlap between feedback collection and analysis — and they absolutely inform and even support each other's business objectives — the two are distinctly separate tactics.

Where does Cross Channel CX fit?

Cross-channel customer experience management is a term that used to be associated with a company's use of all of its channels in a seamless and consistent way to interact with customers. However, the term cross-channel customer experience is used more broadly to describe the use of all of the company's channels to effectively communicate and market to their customers and target audience.

A cross-channel customer experience can be a vehicle for administering surveys, soliciting feedback on social media, responding to positive or negative reviews online, and more.

What about Multi-Channel CX?

Multi-channel customer experience management has also become a less popular term when describing customer experience management. Like Cross-Channel, the term is more closely associated with marketing, communications, and digital advertising strategy. Here's simple way to distinguish the two:

- "Cross" = All Channels

- "Multi" = Some Channels

Cross Channel CX

This week	ASSIGNED TO	CHANNEL	STATUS	DUE DATE	LOCATION
Respond to Positive Review		G	Done	15 Dec	Mil St.
Respond to Negative Review		f	Overdue	30 Nov	Baxter
Respond to Positive Complaint			In progress	28 Dec	Distillery

Bentley Primm
Social Media and Brand Manager
Hi John! See customer review, could you please investigate?

Responding to positive or negative reviews online

"Cross" = **All** Channels

"Multi" = **Some** Channels
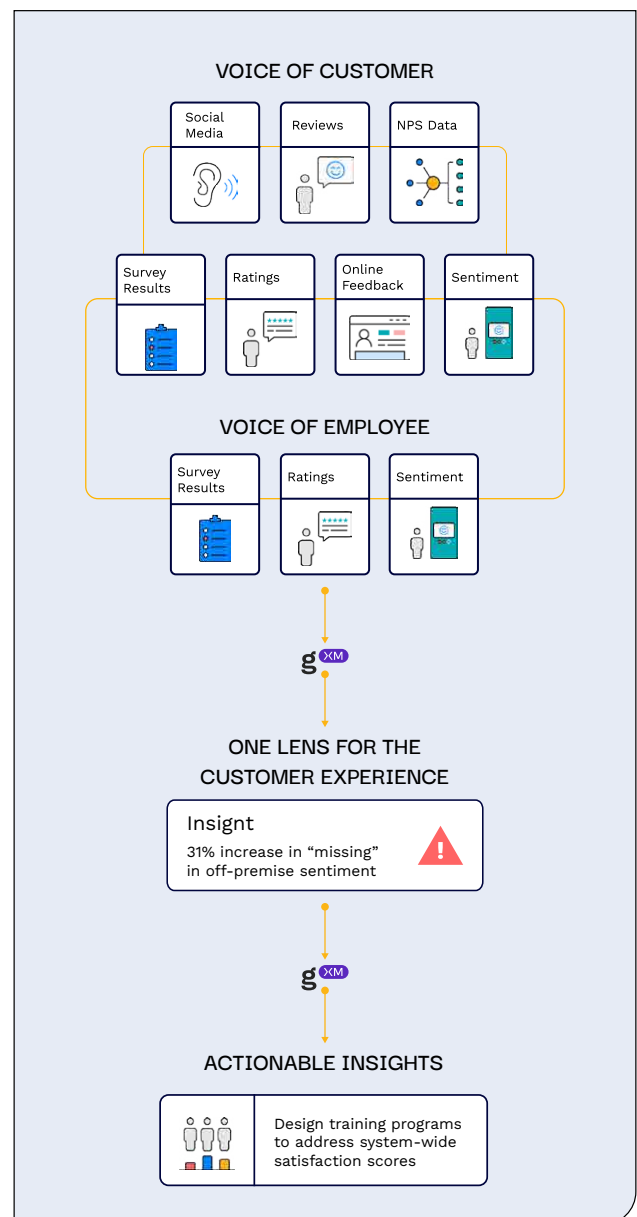
Omni-channel Feedback & Inferred Insights

What is Omni-channel Feedback?

Omni-channel feedback is the combination of direct and indirect feedback collected as part of a holistic voice of the customer and customer experience strategy.

An omni-channel CX strategy collects and analyzes customer feedback at every important touchpoint across the customer journey and turns that data into inferred insights that inform decisions, action, and strategy.

Why is omni-channel feedback and omni-channel CX important?

Omni-channel feedback is important for optimizing a restaurant's omni-channel customer experience (CX). The omni-channel CX represents what consumers encounter as they seamlessly move across channels while interacting with your restaurant brand. Typically, omni-channel CX relates to interactions that begin in one channel and finish in another.

VOICE OF CUSTOMER

Social Media | Reviews | NPS Data

Survey Results | Ratings | Online Feedback | Sentiment

VOICE OF EMPLOYEE

Survey Results | Ratings | Sentiment

ONE LENS FOR THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Insignt
31% increase in "missing" in off-premise sentiment

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Design training programs to address system-wide satisfaction scores

Use Cases for Implementing Omni-channel Feedback & Inferred Insights

EXAMPLE 1: FRENCH FRY "FAIL"

DIRECT FEEDBACK INPUT:
Customers complained via feedback surveys that their fries were not coming out at the same time as their main course.

INDIRECT FEEDBACK INPUT:
Comments on Twitter and Facebook confirmed the problem was not an isolated incident and that it was, in fact, occurring across a cross-section of locations around the country.

INFERRED INSIGHT:
On the surface, the french fry "fail" appeared to originate at either a service level or in the back-of-house.

OPERATIONAL INVESTIGATION:
After an investigation into FOH and BOH/Kitchen processes, operational field teams discovered that the way in which the brand served the fries — in a separate basket that needed to be washed and lined — was slowing down the process of plating and serving fries during peak hours.

ACTION:
Field operations made a company-wide change to the way fries were plated and served. Instead of serving fries in a separate basket that needed to be washed and lined, the brand opted to start serving fries on the main course plate. Direct and indirect feedback, as well as financial performance, was monitored to assess negative, neutral, or positive reaction to the change.

RESULTS:
In this hypothetical, the brand:
- Improved overall service levels and CSAT score by making a change and serving fries at the same time as the main course.
- Reduced process friction in the back-of-house.
- Reduced water usage by removing 100,000 french fry baskets that needed to be washed.
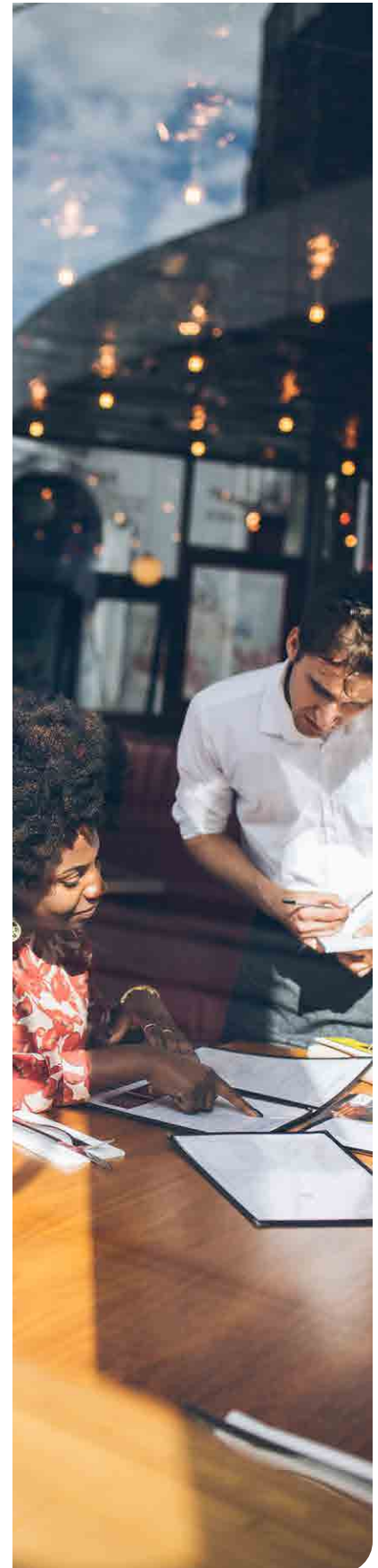
EXAMPLE 2: "BOGUS" BURGER CUSTOMIZATION

DIRECT FEEDBACK INPUT:

Customers complained via feedback surveys that when they ordered burgers, their meals took much longer to get to the table. While they appreciated the options and customization the menu provided, speed of service was an issue.

INDIRECT FEEDBACK INPUT:

Free form field text collected via surveys was assessed at scale using artificial intelligence analytics software. Sentiment on speed-of-service vs. burger customization was analyzed.

INFERRED INSIGHT:

Customization only provided a surface level perception of options and ultimately did not impact sales enough to justify the customized menu options.

OPERATIONAL INVESTIGATION:

After analyzing both direct and indirect feedback, the brand discovered that there were only certain ingredients that slowed down customized burgers. They also discovered that these items were not ordered enough or provided enough sales to risk the negative feedback on speed-of-service.

ACTION:

Field operations opted to reduce menu customization options for burgers – simplifying orders and supporting overall speed of service.

RESULTS:

In this hypothetical, the brand:

- Simplified operations
- Improved speed of service
- Improved order accuracy

How to Capture and Activate Omni-Channel Feedback Easily

Many restaurant brands rely on just one method of feedback (usually direct) and only leverage a few touch points across the customer journey to interact and solicit or uncover direct and indirect feedback. The reason most restaurant brands take a "less is more" approach is that, frankly, most companies are not equipped with the resources to effectively launch an omni-channel CX and feedback strategy. Whether it's not enough time, people, money, or urgency — there always seems to be a reason to hold back from expanding and scaling this mission-critical program.

Because developing and deploying an omni-channel CX and feedback strategy requires focus and effort — here are some steps to help you break down the silos, bring urgency to your omni-channel feedback program, and launch with the right people and solutions in place.

Turning Data Into Insights

Workforce Intelligence

34% 12% 61%

Action

Financial Intelligence

Get a 360-view of your sales and guest traffic

Steps to Launch With the Right People and Solutions

STEP 1: DEFINE THE PROBLEM(S)

Before you embark on an omni-channel CX strategy across your organization, it's crucial you define the problems, challenges, and impact to brand and business performance.

STEP 2: SECURE A C-LEVEL CHAMPION

Securing buy-in from your entire team is the next crucial step to drive your omni-channel feedback and CX strategy forward. Depending on the structure of your business, it may be necessary to begin with a champion at the executive level to lead the charge in implementing changes.

STEP 3: CREATE AN ALL-STAR OMNI-CHANNEL TEAM

Involving stakeholders from various departments such as marketing, operations, IT, UX, customer service, sales and fulfillment can also bring valuable perspectives and insights to the table. Collaborating as a team to establish goals and methods for an omni-channel approach will ensure everyone is on board with advocating for the process in their respective areas of influence.

STEP 4: BRING YOUR MEASUREMENT PROGRAMS TOGETHER

It's essential to unify all channels and their respective measurements onto a single platform. This can be achieved by using a service that consolidates website analytics, social media management, CRM and email systems, and customer contact centers into one cohesive view. If a service that supports all channels cannot be found, selecting one that can integrate with third-party systems through an API is a viable option. Adopting a platform specifically designed to support omni-channel business practices will establish a sturdy foundation for your strategy and facilitate the seamless transfer of siloed data and processes into the new centralized space.

STEP 5: START DOCUMENTING AND UNDERSTANDING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Adopting a journey-first approach means starting from the customer's perspective. Instead of dividing goals and projects based on organizational silos, this approach groups together elements that contribute to a single customer's experience. There are several common types of journeys for most restaurants, including ordering food, receiving it, and enjoying the dining experience. Including broader context such as why a customer chose your restaurant and their potential next steps is also essential. By taking a journey-first approach, you can ensure that every part of the customer experience is considered and optimized to create an exceptional dining experience.

Every Interaction Counts

Consumers are more demanding than ever before. And restaurants have to deliver on their expectations to stay competitive. Collecting direct and indirect feedback, inferring insights and operationalizing them is the solution to creating an incredible experience that fosters passionate fans, encourages loyalty, and increases real tangible results for restaurants that want to gain a competitive edge.

About GuestXM (powered by Black Box Intelligence)

Listen more, analyze it all, and uncover the insights you can act on with GuestXM by Black Box Intelligence — the first customer experience management platform purpose-built for the restaurant industry. Capture, collect, and act on omni-channel customer feedback and deliver incredible guest experiences — every time. Visit guestxm.com to discover what's possible.

Get Demo