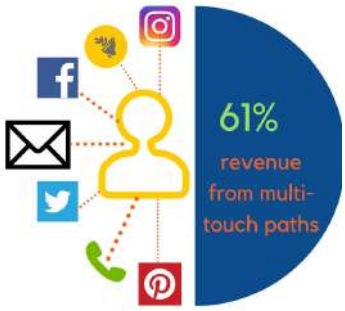
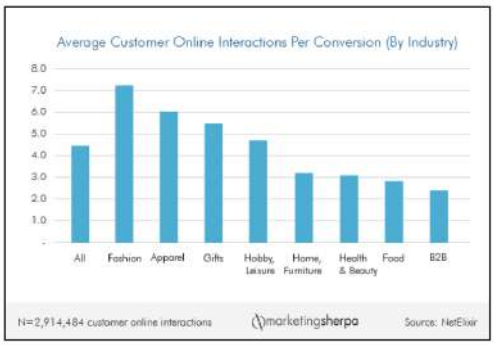
Right Marketing Channel for each stage of Customer Journey.

Today's digitally savvy shopper is engaged, empowered and mobile.



This means that critical interactions in a customer's conversion path can happen literally anywhere---across communication channels over several visits.

"According to the NetElixir research report, 61% of revenue came from multi-touch conversion paths".

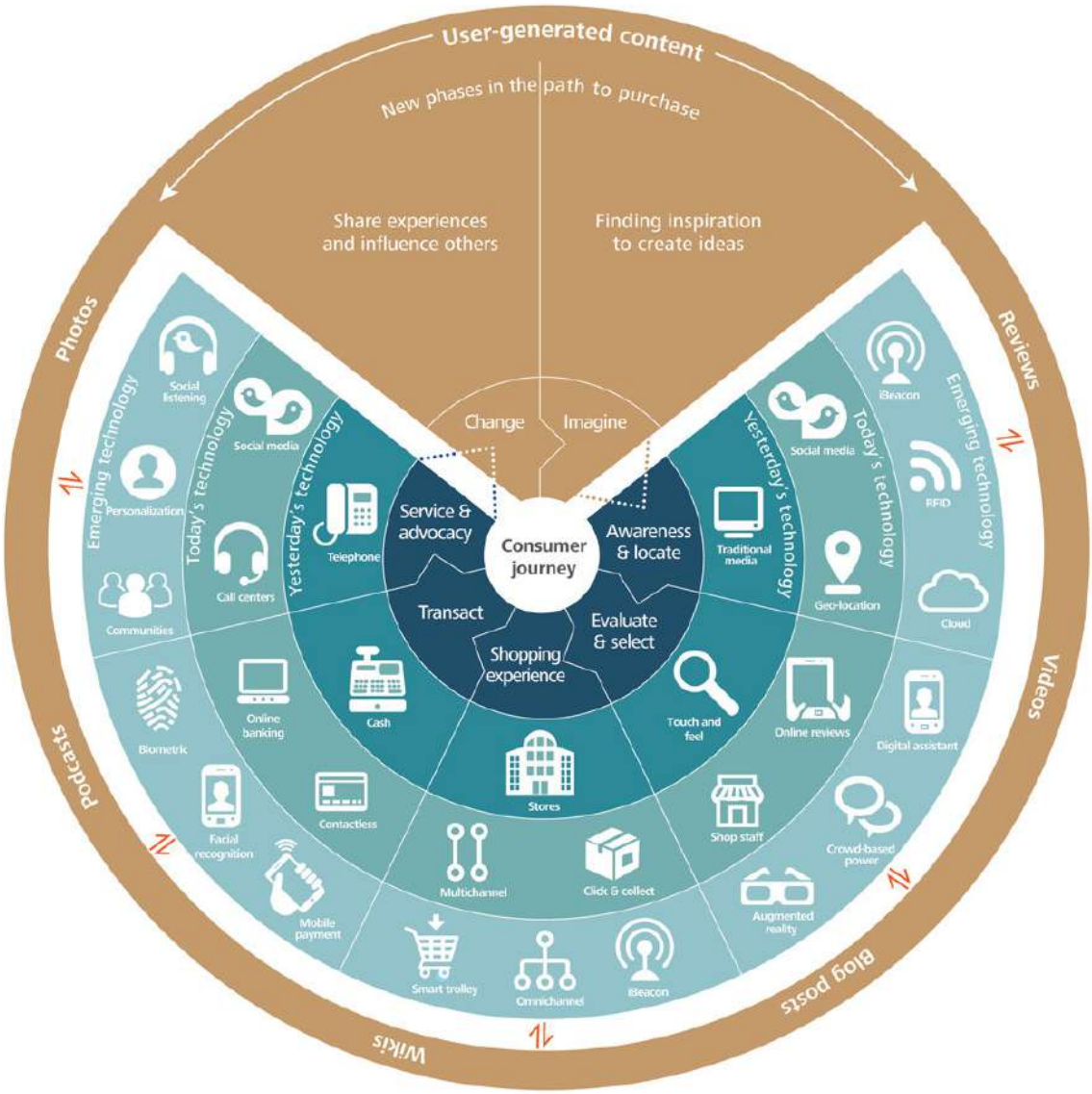


The number of interactions that happen before a conversion has been increasing steadily across touch points. It's variation across industries can be seen in fig 2. The consumers are expecting a superior and consistent experience across these touchpoints in the conversion path.

With the price equalized and the playground level, the only competitive advantage for marketers will be the quality of the shopping experience. Marketers across the spectrum, must strive to deliver remarkable, compelling and delightful shopping experiences that exceed customer's expectations and keep them coming back for more. *"According to Forbes, by 2020 Customer Experience will overtake Price as the Key Differentiator".*

To craft these amazing brand experiences and plan for the most effective interactions across channels, marketers must first delve into the customer's actual buying journey or the most natural progression. Subsequently they should plan for the most effective interactions across channels. The interactions will have to be automated in a way that the experience is scalable while not compromising on personalization and delight factors.

To do this, organizations should ideally have the right tools to view and understand the complete customer journey and his actions. Then only they can plan the interactions and automate them. However, to get started, a few basic stages in the buyer's journey can be a guiding point to craft a winning strategy. Here we are eliciting a few stages roughly seen across ecommerce industry.



Source: "The growing power of consumers," The Deloitte Consumer Review,12 Deloitte LLP.

BUYING STAGES

AWARENESS

This is the stage when a prospective customer is beginning to notice your brand. It is most commonly achieved by promotions on Social Media with content and Advertising campaigns. At this stage it is important to create curiosity in the prospective customer's mind and pique her interest enough to make her click and go to the store.

"According to a Deloitte study, almost 47% of millennial consumers admitted that a company's social media posts influence their buying decision."

CONSIDERATION

This is the stage where the prospective customer lands on the store's website and makes herself familiar. She tries to explore the offerings and conduct a thorough recce. She will do preliminary research including pricing, product descriptions, other hot selling items, reviews from other shoppers etc.

"According to a study by Adweek, 81% of shoppers conducted thorough research online before making a purchase."

In this phase, the first time shopper on your store behaves differently than the returning one. So their experience has to be crafted differently.

The new customer takes longer to decide before a purchase, orders fewer items, is more skeptical of the quality of products and shipping, abandons a cart easily and seeks social proof before making a buying decision.

The returning customer however is much more confident of your brand and spends time viewing products across categories. She abandons a cart based on price/preference and also adds products to a wishlist. Reviews are important to her at the final stage of buying but in the initial stages she is happy to go with her own judgement. While the customers are familiarizing, they are psychologically inclined to be curious and seek information. This is the right time to ask for their contact information in a non-intrusive way and feed their curiosity by delivering what they are seeking. For instance, a fashion brand could highlight the latest collection or send out the latest trends or style tips.

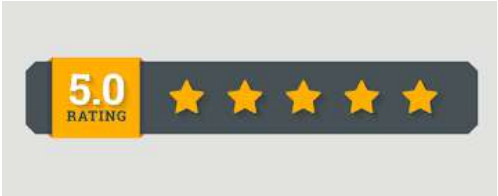
PREFERENCE

Prospective Customer, after doing her research across your store and checking out a few other stores, develops a certain preference for the site she wishes to buy from. Providing and communicating any extra value at this stage can really have an impact on her decision. This is the ripe time for marketers to focus on any extra perks, discounts or free shipping, to significantly increase the chances of a complete purchase. These discounts, especially free shipping, appeals to a customer only when they are in the right phase of buying. Psychologically, the word "free" implies no risk or downside. So it works as a reassurance and 'another reason' to buy.

"According to Wall Street Journal, consumers are four to five times more likely to make a purchase from you, if you offer free shipping."

PURCHASE

This is the final stage when the prospective customer ultimately decides to buy. She has chosen what she wants and shall click through the entire checkout funnel. However, as a first time shoppers she might need some more reassurance to make it through. This reassurance can be exhibited in a variety of ways---- reviews, testimonials, quality certifications, free returns, post-sales services. *"According to a BrightLocal survey, 90 percent of consumers read up to 10 reviews before they feel that they can trust a business."* If you don't display the reviews on your website, you are guaranteed to lose a few sales.

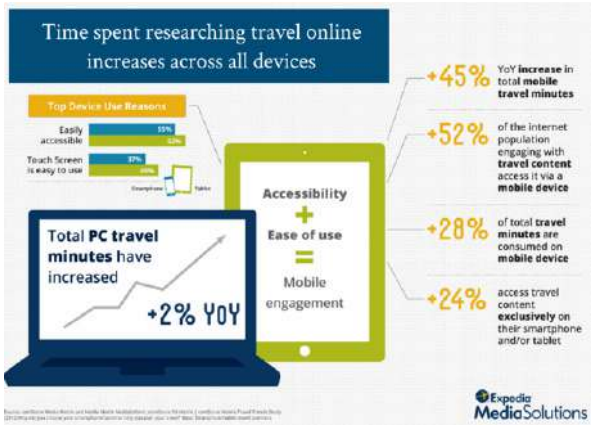


LOYALTY

Once a purchase has been made, the customer tends to feel a connection with the brand and experience a slight surge of loyalty towards it. This is the favourable moment for a business to convert a purchaser into a loyalist by delighting them. A delighted customer is a powerhouse of word-of-mouth promotion. encouraging others to choose your site too. So at this stage, showing a brand-connect gesture like a thank you message, request for a share on social media or a review about their buying experience can go a long way in creating that communication thread with the customer. Companies like Zappos have been able to generate 75% of their sales from repeat customers, simply due to the customer experience which generated tremendous brand loyalty.

Travel Industry

This industry has seen significant change in behavior of retail customers for search, booking and sharing of experiences.



In the latest travel advisory report from Webtrends, we find out consumers actually research travel from an average of **6.5 devices and websites!** And according to this other study by Expedia Media Solutions, published in 2013, we see research for travel is increasing across all devices, with an obvious spike on tablets and smartphones in particular

Key Trends

From various studies, we identified 4 key trends that are highly prevalent

1. The increasing use of online channels for search and booking.

2. The use of multiple devices during the research and booking process.

3. The growing popularity of social media to share experiences — and the use of these as objective input in the travel research and decision-making process.

4. The increasing relevance of loyalty programs.

Behaviour of Travel Industry Shoppers

Source: Google Consumer Barometer, 2014–15
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The consumers in emerging economies and developed economies behave differently. The emerging economies have seen a tremendous increase in the number of searches and bookings done on mobile, accounting for nearly 19% of all bookings in India. Whereas the developed economies have seen a slower progression as majority of bookings are still done on a desktop or some on a tablet.

Choosing the right channels for each stage

Awareness Stage

This is the most important stage for the travel industry as search is the biggest contributor here. An extensive use of Social Media and SEM tactics is the proven recipe for success in the domain. Social media allows travel companies to reach the right audience and build a community around common themes. Influencing customers and getting instant feedback has never been easier.

As per World Travel Monitor, IPK International 2013, more than 50% of travelers are using social media in some way to influence their decisions about their next vacation destination.

Consideration Stage

This stage is all about being on the brand's property, be it website or mobile app, and finding the information needed in the shortest time with a good price deal.

Here is the recipe we recommend:

- Pop-Up with a 10% off discount on the current category being viewed.
- Carousel Banner to show running promos/best-selling promos on another category.
- Inline Banners to show what others had to say about your brand, connected with Social Media. Possibly showcase a sample itinerary based on 'things to do' at that destination.
- Adopting a vernacularisation strategy for promoting offers in specific geographic regions also boosts the engagement onsite.

Preference Stage

This stage is about keeping the attention and offering perks to keep that attention.

Here is our suggestion:

- Sticky Bar to show phone number for on-call assistance or no cancellation fees.
- Live Chat to answer queries that are not otherwise addressed.
- Email with personalized recommendations/Itineraries
- Pop Up to capture Loyalty Membership details and then give a discount code accordingly.
- SMS/Push Notification highlighting benefits available for use due to Loyalty membership.

Purchase Stage

This stage is the altar of Travel Booking and sees maximum drop off. So we are giving some recipes for saving customers from dropping off.

Situation: Customer is on the checkout page but no activity
Engagement:
• Timer Sticky Bar/Pop-Up: Show time based deals
• Browser Push Notification: Snippet of time based deal

Situation: Customer tries to exit from checkout page without completing checkout
Engagement:
• Exit Intent pop-up with relevant deal

Situation: Payment successful
Engagement:
• Browser Push Notification: Thanks for your purchase
• Pull Out Tab: Show cross category relevant deals
• Pop-Up: Upsell within same category
• Email: Thanks for your purchase, include all details.

Loyalty Stage

Situation: Post purchase but Pre Experience
Engagement:
• Pre Travel reminders and alerts on Mobile Push Notifications
• Pre Travel essential information collated in a single Email
• Pre Travel essential information collated in an SMS
• Pre Travel cross sell products from other relevant categories via Browser Push Notification
• Pre Travel 'Just in Time' deals shared via Mobile Push Notifications
• Pre Travel exclusive offers based on Loyalty Membership/Bank used for payment.

Situation: Post purchase and Post Experience

Engagement:

• Post Travel request for feedback/review on Email

• Post Travel request for tagging/feedback on Social Media, via Mobile Push Notification.

• Post Travel, share brief snippets of information about New Destination/ Weekend GetAway, based on the last destination of the customer for one-way travel or city of origin of journey for two-way travel on Browser Push Notifications/Mobile Push Notifications

• Post any engagement with Browser Push or Mobile Push, share detailed information about New Destination along with a suggested itinerary, on Email including a coupon to induce for purchase.

Betaout's Marketing Channel Vs Funnel Matrix

TRAVEL INDUSTRY					
	AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	PREFERENCE	PURCHASE	LOYALTY
Social Media+ SEM	★★★★★	★★			★★
On-Site Marketing	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	
Email Marketing	★★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★
SMS Marketing	★		★	★	★★★
Push Notifications	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★
Live Chat		★	★★★★★	★★	★

FASHION INDUSTRY

The landscape of Fashion Industry across the world is changing rapidly. Shopping is now social and the stores are all online. Amidst these shifting tides, the industry has seen emergence of retailers of all sizes and niche shops too. The consumer's expectations not only include fresh designs but also rich relevant experiences across touch points. To stay afloat in this highly competitive environment, E-commerce marketers must break away from the traditional advertising mindset to engage at a more personal level with their customers.

Since customers engage across a variety of channels, devices and locations, it has become imperative to adapt the marketing strategy to these changes. Reaching the customer with a relevant message at the right time has become crucial to engage them and make a sale.

Here we have identified a few channels that are relevant at different stages in the buying journey of a customer.

Choosing the right channels for each stage

AWARENESS STAGE

All buying is social. Truer words have never been spoken for the Fashion Industry. **Social Media**, especially the more 'visual channels' like **Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook** can be key drivers in creating awareness about your store whether you sell clothing, shoes, lingerie, make-up etc. Stores like Victoria's Secret, Huckberry and Sephora have built entire business lines via effective use of social media.

CONSIDERATION STAGE

This stage is crucial for a fashion buyer as they are in an exploration frame of mind. The buyer is looking out for the latest collections, new designs, exclusive deals and also for any insider tips or trends. They respond to different cues—some are given in the image below.

Here is the recipe we recommend:
Attracting curious shoppers with an engaging voice.

- A **Sticky Bar** to show any ongoing offers like free delivery, exclusive launches etc.
- A **Pull Out Tab** can be used to showcase targeted bestselling products, hence humanizing the purchase decision journey by directly helping them understand what's the latest.
- A **Browser Push Subscription** to ask for their permission for Notifications.
- An **Exit Intent Pop-Up** that ask for an email ID to usher them into your brand's membership club, before they try to leave the site.
- Send them a **Welcome Email** as soon as they give you the email ID.

PREFERENCE STAGE

After doing a thorough search on a few other sites too, the buyer has developed a certain preference for a particular store. Giving them the 'velvet rope or exclusive' treatment at this stage will possibly be rewarded with a purchase and hopefully a repeat purchase too. Showcasing any extra value at this stage can really have an impact on her decision. This is the ripe time for marketers to focus on any extra perks, discounts or free shipping, to significantly increase the chances of a complete purchase in a limited time.

Here is the recipe we recommend:

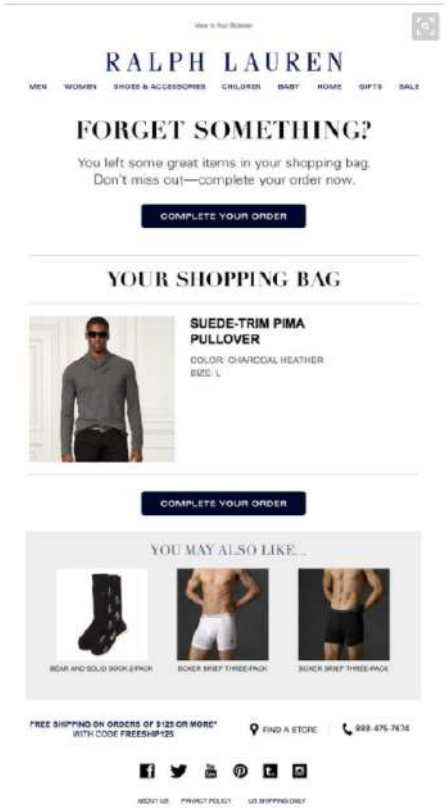
Focus on extra perks, time sensitive deals
- **On-Site Timer Sticky Bar** with a time sensitive deal valid only for the next 2 hours or so.
- **Browser Push Notification** before the deal ends, to create urgency.
- **Email** about previously viewed items

PURCHASE STAGE

This is the time to guide the buyer safely and comfortably to the end of the checkout funnel. However, this industry falls prey to cart abandonment very easily. Research indicates that nearly 70% carts are abandoned. So the purchase stage becomes a crucial one to master.

This is what we recommend

• **Onsite Marketing**: Testimonials from other buyers, Quality assurance information or Free Returns offers must be prominently displayed.
• **Live Chat** on the site would help the customer address any final concerns, mostly ranging from delivery dates to special packaging etc. Solving these minor issues at the initial stage helps to minimize the chances of cart abandonment right away.
• If the customer still abandons their cart, then it's time to address them in a way to recover the cart. This could include
• **Browser Push Notification** to take them back to their cart
• **Cart Recovery Email** with images and prices of the products in their cart and a prominent CTA. Another sequence of a Cart Recovery Email could include a unique discount code or an added free sample or reduced shipping costs.
• If the consumer does not engage with these channels then she can be targeted with advertisements on social media, showing products that are the same or similar to the ones in her cart.



LOYALTY STAGE

This post purchase stage sets the ground for the next purchase that the consumer could potentially make and also to generate good w.o.m. publicity for your brand. This means you have to give her an opportunity to recognize the wonderful experience and then possibly share this.

We recommend using the following methods

- **Post Purchase Thank You SMS** firmly indicates that the order is confirmed and they can feel the trust.
- **Post Purchase Thank You Email** to thank her. If you are selling a product that is complicated to use or can have different styling options, this mailer can double up as the style guide(apparel) /instruction manual (Cosmetics) /care manual (Shoes). This creates feelings of delight due to the purchase and excitement to receive and begin using the products.
- **Review/Rate Us Mailer:** If the customer has seen the previous mail then they may be ready to give you a good review or talk about your brand on social media. This emailer can serve the purpose if you include a review link as well as your brand's social icons. Incentivizing customer to share this on social media could work very well for certain brands.

Betaout Marketing Channel Vs Funnel Matrix

FASHION INDUSTRY					
	AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	PREFERENCE	PURCHASE	LOYALTY
Social Media+ SEM	★★★★★	★★			★★
On-Site Marketing	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★
Email Marketing	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
SMS Marketing			★★	★	★★★★
Push Notifications	★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★
Live Chat	★	★	★	★★	

CONCLUSION

Marketers have always been in the know of the ongoing changes in the way customers behave, research and then buy products, in the digital economy. As the consumer decision making evolves, marketers must keep pace by modifying their communication strategy. Reaching out to customers at the right time, giving them the information and support they need, via the right channel in a personalized and experiential form will be the true driver of success.

ABOUT BETAOUT

Betaout is the All-in-One E-Commerce Marketing Software, helping companies analyse the behaviour of their customers, segment them and then communicate with them over 7 different channels. This helps in sending relevant marketing message to the right customer, hence improving ROI and and lowering marketing costs with data-driven decisions. For more information, log on to: **WWW.BETAOUT.COM**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ishita Sharma is the Content Marketing Manager at Betaout's Noida Office. She wrote this article after researching with Betaout's clientele across geographies and in different industries.

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