Omni-Channel Marketing

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Abstract:

Omni channel marketing is the integration and cooperation of the various channels organizations use to interact with consumers, with the goal of creating a consistent brand experience. This includes physical (e.g. stores) and digital channels (e.g. websites). The goal of an omnichannel marketing strategy is to create a convenient, seamless user experience for consumers that offers many opportunities for fulfillment. An omnichannel strategy may give consumers the chance to find and purchase online, in-store, or a combination thereof - such as "buy online and pick up in-store". Today, organizations across industries are leveraging omnichannel strategies, including healthcare, retail, finance, technology, and more.

Thanks to online channels, modern consumers have more options than ever and expect information in real-time. Omni channel marketing enables them to engage with brands on their own terms, leading to a better customer experience overall. It also gives a consumer privacy protection. These technologies present new challenges and opportunities for firms, which warrant further academic research. The identification of both recent developments in practice and promising avenues for future research. Omni channel marketing is the seamless integration of branding, messaging, and online and offline touch points as consumers move down the sales funnel, enabling a more impactful customer experience. Omnichannel marketing takes a consumer-centric view of marketing tactics. Consumers can now interact with brands on innumerable channels, from social media to customer service hotlines. An omnichannel approach ensures that the consumer has a positive, consistent experience on each channel.

Key words: omnichannel, brands, privacy, research.

Introduction:

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The more technology advances, the more it's integrated into our daily lives. The lines between what we do online and in real life have begun to blur. As people change their behaviors, marketers, salespeople, and customer support reps will need to react. Instead of thinking of a desktop experience, a mobile experience, a tablet experience, and an Apple Watch experience, we'll need to pursue one, holistic approach — an Omni-channel experience that customers can use whenever they want. In this post, we'll go over what Omni-channel means and how you can use omni-channel experiences to create profitable marketing, sales, and service strategies.

What's the Difference between Multichannels vs. Omni channel?

While omnichannel and multi-channel are both concepts based on the idea of engaging consumers across multiple platforms, they are not interchangeable. Multichannel looks at the specific channel and how the transaction will be completed there. Alternatively, omnichannel takes into account that the customer journey may span multiple channels - and looks at how to create the best experience as consumers move between them. Each interaction is a touchpoint on a path, leading to a conversion. Let's take a deeper look at the differences between the two:

Multichannel

Multichannel is much simpler in its intention, which is to distribute content and advertisements across various channels. A multichannel strategy makes an organization available to consumers online, in print, in-store, etc. The consumer can choose where they want to interact with the brand, however, content and engagements within these various channels are often very siloed. With this in mind, multichannel is more reflective of operations, reaching as many channels as appropriate, while omnichannel is more reflective of the overall customer experience.

Omni channel

Omni channel also makes brands accessible across online and offline channels, however, it goes a step further to ensure an integrated, seamless experience across each one. As consumers move across devices and online and offline platforms, transitions are seamless and messages are informed by prior encounters. An omnichannel approach enables organizations to truly take a consumer-centric approach that keeps the comprehensive customer journey top of mind.

The Benefits of Using an Omni channel Approach

Today, most brands will agree that an omnichannel approach can yield the best results. While implementing an omnichannel approach is far from simple, when done properly it offers a host of benefits. Today's consumers are accustomed to being bombarded with messaging from various brands, and as a result, they have become increasingly selective of which brands they choose to engage with.

Creating omnichannel customer engagements can act as a brand differentiator, bringing the following benefits:

- o **A Better User Experience** - Since omnichannel focuses on the individual experience across devices instead of the channel, the customer experience (CX) is better. By focusing on the customer instead of the platform, companies can drive more sales and better retention rates.

- o **Cohesive Brand Strategy & Identity** - Creating a seamless strategy across channels means building an easily identifiable brand image and tone. Organizations should base this image on core audience needs and values. By focusing on the overall experience and working within your brand guidelines to target each channel, you will have a more comprehensive brand strategy that will translate into increased loyalty and more targeted messaging.

- o **Increased Revenue -** An omnichannel approach encourages customers to engage with a brand across multiple touch points and channels. These increased, diverse engagements at each stage of the buyer's journey can help increase revenue, as research shows that customers that engage with multiple touchpoints tend to be 30 percent more valuable. This more targeted messaging also builds loyalty, making it more likely a customer will purchase from your brand again. Repeat customers on average contribute to 40 percent of revenue, despite being a smaller portion of your consumer base.

- o **Better Attribution Data** - Going truly omnichannel should not just extend to a user's experience with your brand, but with your data analytics as well. By tracking engagements across channels, brands get a better understanding of what the customer journey looks like, when and where consumers prefer to engage, and which campaigns have created the most value. All of this data can be put back into your strategy to build more targeted campaigns and optimize media spend.

Examples of Omni channel Marketing

When building an omnichannel strategy, take a look at these brands who have done so successfully:

1. Starbucks

Through its mobile rewards app, Starbucks is able to better integrate the mobile experience with the in-store one to put consumer convenience first. Users can reload their cards from their phone or desktop computer. By using the app to pay, they are rewarded with points that can be applied to a free coffee. Additionally, they can skip the morning line by ordering in advance.

2. Walgreens

Walgreens created a custom mobile app that makes it easier for customers to refill prescriptions, which they can then pickup in store. Their app also showcases store specific inventory making it easier for customers making a trip to decide which location they should visit.

3. Timberland

Timberland is combining the convenience of online with the experience of the in-person customer experience through the installation of near field communication (NFC) technology. Timberland created Touch walls in their store, which leads to further information on their shoes. Customers can then add these to their online shopping list or purchase in-store. In addition, Timberland utilizes a product recommendations engine to gain exposure to lesser-known products based on user preferences.

Industries Applying Omni channel Tactics

Omnichannel approaches have become popular across industries as consumers become more empowered, however, they are particularly prominent in these verticals:

- **Retail**: Retail in particular has faced drastic changes in today's omnichannel environment. With the ability to buy in-store or online and the emergence of social media and review sites, retail marketers need to centralize how consumers are interacting with their brand across a multitude of channels to ensure a positive outcome.

- **Healthcare**: Healthcare customers generally interact with many touchpoints across various providers, from hospitals, to primary care, to pharmaceuticals. By analyzing data around the customer journey and engagements, healthcare providers can better cater to individuals, providing them with data that matters most to them, while mitigating potential health risks.

- **Automotive**: Since cars are a long term investment, keeping top of mind and driving customer loyalty are big priorities for car dealerships and manufacturers. Today's advertisements may not yield the desired effects immediately, but if they engage current customers and interest prospects, they will impact sales down the line. However, the buying journey, even in automotive has changed with 80 percent of shoppers researching cars online first. Additionally, it is estimated that 4.5 million cars could be sold online only in 2020. Having an encompassing advertising strategy that engages with buyers across all touchpoints has become more vital than ever.

- **Financial Services:** The banking and financial services industry is shifting from a product-obsessed mindset to a more customer-centric view. As they do so, organizations

must consider how they can deliver personalized experiences that can gain insight into which of the various services and products would be the best fit for each user based on their personal preferences, wants, and needs.

Trends in Omni channel

As omnichannel becomes more popular, several trends have emerged that can help make these efforts more effective to improve consumer satisfaction and maximize marketing ROI. These include:

- o **Integration of In-Store and Online** - Many consumers are shopping online, only to pick up their purchases in-store. This could be to avoid searching for items in-store or to avoid delivery fees. Today's shoppers are expecting the ease of their online experience to be integrated with the in-store experience. Almost 70 percent of US shoppers expect a notification that their order is ready within 2 hours of ordering it online. When Destination XL realized this trend, they combined customer location data with inventory to help customers find what they were looking for online to pick it up in-store. Additionally, stores like Kohl's have created parking spots designed for shoppers who are picking up orders they made online.

- o **Focus on the Brand, Not the Channel** - As the Forrester Report: "Retailers are Starting to Reap the Rewards of Omni channel Commerce" notes, "Customers believe they are engaging with one unified brand or organization, regardless of the various touch points that they use. This means retailers must ensure the continuity of information and resources across digital and store touch points — or risk losing customers to competitors that do." Brands need to provide a consistent identity across channels with messages that resonate with the customer, regardless of platform.

- o **More Devices for One Purchase** - Customers are frequently beginning their journey on one device and making a purchase on another. However, many retailers are struggling to address this element of the customer journey, as it can be difficult to account for all cross-device interactions. Failing to account for this shift in trends could drastically impact your bottom line and media spend optimization efforts.

- o **Multiple Channels Mean Better Customers -** When tracked correctly, customers who visit your site across multiple devices tend to be better customers and spend an average of three to four times more than customers who only interact with a single channel.

The multi-channel experience is what most businesses invest in today. They have a website, blog, Face book, and Twitter. They use each of these platforms to engage and connect with customers. However, in most cases, the customer still lacks a seamless experience and consistent messaging across each of these channels.

An Omni-channel experience accounts for each platform and device a customer will use to interact with the company — and also creates an equally efficient and positive experience across all platforms.

Creating an Omni-channel experience is especially important in retail. Whether you have an Omni-channel retail strategy in place or not determines how much you will sell.

How to Build an Omni-Channel Marketing Campaign

An Omni-channel marketing strategy contains consistent messaging, visuals, and positioning statements across all channels, platforms, and devices. It creates a seamless brand experience for customers by ensuring that your brand is presented the same way from platform to platform.

Keep in mind that omni-channel marketing campaigns positively impact your sales and service departments, too. Why? By showing customers that you're on all of the channels and platforms they're on, they'll know to expect a similar experience for their shopping and customer service experiences.

1. Start with the basics: Your website and social media channels.

Creating an omni-channel experience is a slow process. You don't need to be everywhere all at once; you'll get there in time. Start with your website and social media channels and nail those down before moving on to other platforms. Ensure that you're posting consistently and engaging with users who reach out to you via those channels.

If you consistently engage with users on Instagram but don't answer on Face book, they'll notice. Focusing on one and neglecting the other will make your brand look inconsistent and unprofessional.

2. Create an app if needed.

Depending on your industry and product, you may not need to take this step. But if you sell consumer products or offer a SaaS tool — or could benefit from offering an app otherwise — consider creating an app.

If you're a small company, you can hire a freelance developer to create an app. Just be sure to have a legitimate reason for offering an app and to think through every functionality. Read this article to learn how to make an app and the steps you should take to do it successfully.

3. Seek to solve for the customer every step of the way.

When you add a new channel to your omni-channel strategy, do it to solve for the customer at every step of the way.

It's not just for your company to get more visibility or for you to make more sales — although those are definitely tangible benefits of establishing an Omni-channel strategy. But it's also about making sure your customer has an easy, issue-free experience. The goal of solving for your customers should inform your messaging in each channel and the way you engage with users on those channels.

4. Use the same messaging across channels, but beware of using boilerplate content.

To create a consistent experience, use the same messaging across channels. For instance, if you're running an ad on various social media platforms, you'll want that ad to have the same messaging. You can change the wording a bit, so long as the overall messaging is the same.

Be careful of overusing boilerplate content, however. You might run into duplicate issues that could lead to being penalized by search engines and social media platforms. Don't just copy and paste everything left and right. Instead of always using the same phrases, create a consistent brand voice that allows you to mix it up without looking inconsistent.

5. Give customers a device- and platform-appropriate CTA.

Every time you engage with customers on certain channels — whether it's on an ad, an organic post, a private message, a phone call, or an email — you should end the engagement with a CTA. That CTA should, of course, be device- and platform-appropriate.If you need some inspiration, you can find plenty of companies that have already implemented fantastic omni-channel user experiences. Let's take a look at them below.

Omni channel marketing examples

1. Disney
2. Virgin Atlantic
3. Bank of America
4. Oasis
5. REI
6. Starbucks
7. Chipotle
8. Timberland
9. Orvis

10. VIP.com

11. Sephora

12. Walgreens

13. Topshop

14. Pepperfry

15. Benefit Cosmetics

16. Amazon

17. Barnes & Noble

18. Google Chrome

19. Spotify

20. Apple

Conclusion:

The success of omnichannel marketing is very much dependent on understanding the customer and what all devices he uses frequently. It is different from the multi-channel strategy which ensures presence across media but not delivering a holistic experience.