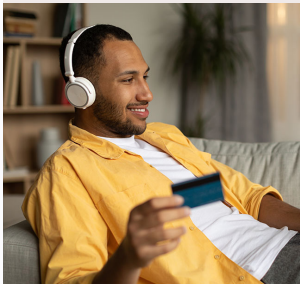


The Consumer Journey In The Digital Age

www.channelsight.com





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Introduction

According to recent research from Salesforce, 80% of consumers now consider their experience with a brand to be just as important as the products it sells. But as more devices, sales channels, social sites and advertising opportunities become available, it's harder and harder for brands to manage and control this experience.

While you can easily optimise a shopper's experience on your own website, this task becomes much trickier when you're working with multiple sites, apps and ad platforms - many of which are outside of your direct control. Yet, consumers still develop opinions about your brand based on the sum of all of these interactions.

To help you get a handle on the modern consumer journey, we're going to take a fresh look at it while keeping all the intricacies of the current eCommerce environment in mind.

Let's take a look at how the consumer journey has changed and how you can comprehensively map it out, accounting for the plethora of touchpoints now available to online shoppers.

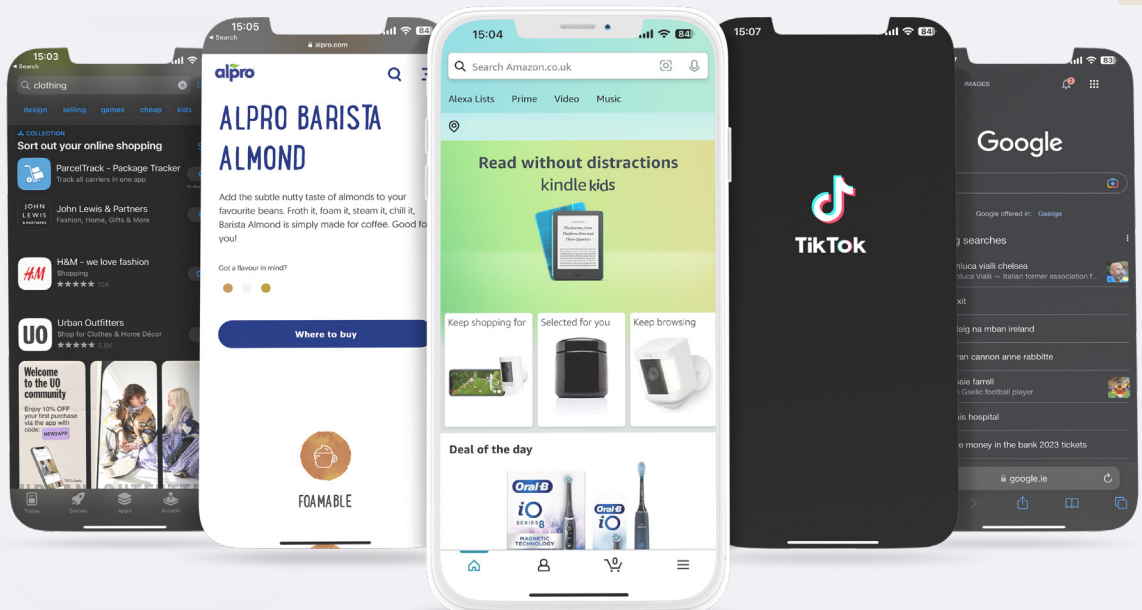


The Evolution Of The Consumer Journey

The consumer journey is the process that shoppers go through to become customers. When mapping it out, brands need to consider every interaction that a consumer can have with their business - from the first moment of awareness through to post-purchase communications.

This can be a difficult task for eCommerce brands as the number of digital touchpoints available to shoppers is growing every day. Interactions can happen on your website, your app, online marketplaces, retailer websites, social media, search engines, comparison websites and all the other channels that your brand has a presence on.

Brands also need to be mindful that these interactions can take place across a multitude of devices, including desktop, mobile and smart speakers. New disruptive technologies are coming to market all the time too.





Consumer Behaviour Is Changing

As technology evolves and the number of channels grows, consumer behaviour changes too. Here are some of the key ways this affects the consumer journey.



New Tools To Aid Decision Making



Reliable review sites and comparison sites are right at their fingertips. Then there's also cutting-edge technology like AR and VR, which can help them experience a product before they commit to buying it.

Product Research



Consumers can commence their journeys across more channels than ever before. So brands need to look beyond their own D2C store and manage their product information wherever consumers can do their research.

New Shopping Habits



The average consumer now has access to ten connected devices, with many of them being mobile which means people can shop while they're on the move.

Two-Way Interactions



Consumers can contact support, ask a question on social media, send a chat message, interact with a livestream or leave a review – all attributing to the consumers brand experts.



40%

Search Engines

38%

Amazon

35%

Other Marketplaces

27%

Social Media Sites

25%

Retailer Sites

21%

Website Of
Brand They Want

13%

Comparison Sites

13%

Mercado Libre

13%

Aggregator
/Delivery App

11%

Retailer's
Mobile App



Brands Are Dealing With A Fragmented Media Landscape

In the past, retailers could design a consumer journey for shoppers to follow. Now, consumers choose their own paths and brands need to do their best to build a presence on the channels that they choose to use.

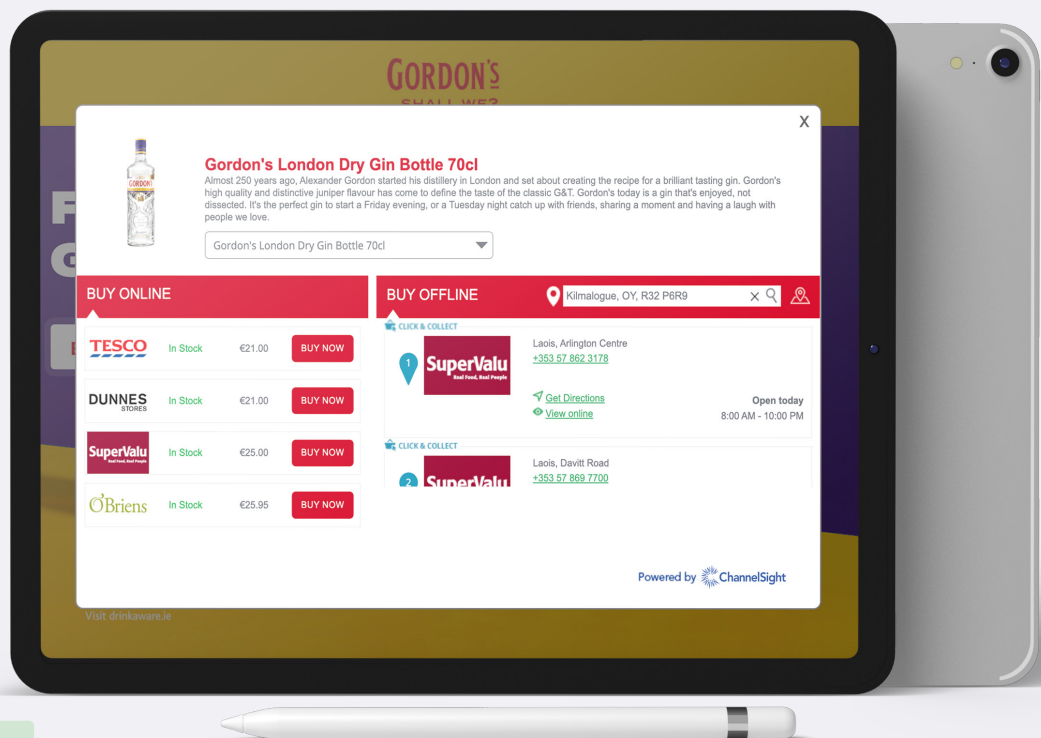
The customer journey can include such a wide variety of sales channels, ad types and content types. Brands are implementing omnichannel strategies to deal with this fragmented media landscape, however, this poses its own challenges.



The Consumer Journey Is No Longer Linear



Tracking The Consumer Journey Is Harder Than Ever





Stages Of The Ecommerce Consumer Journey

Every marketer is familiar with the four-stage sales funnel. It has been a cornerstone of marketing ever since it was invented way back in 1898. Its four stages provide a simple way to structure a consumer's path to conversion.

Designing a sales funnel is an essential part of every eCommerce marketing strategy. But you can also use this funnel as a high-level overview of your consumer journey. Setting out the touchpoints relevant to each stage of your marketing funnel is a great first step to mapping out your consumer journey in an orderly and logical way.

Let's take a look at the sales funnel that we're all familiar with, while also keeping the modern eCommerce journey and all of its omnichannel stages of the touchpoints in mind.





Awareness

At the top, or widest point, of the funnel is the awareness stage when consumers discover your brand for the first time.



Touchpoints That Build Awareness

There are dozens of potential touchpoints at this early stage. Remember that your marketing should be targeted toward a broad audience at this early stage.



Shorter Journeys Are Possible

At this initial stage, consumers might not be actively looking to purchase a product. To build awareness and establish trust, many brands focus on providing helpful or memorable content.



From Awareness To Advocacy

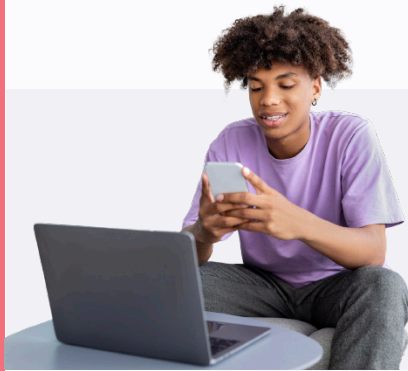
Social media allows consumers to jump straight to the advocacy stage of the funnel too. By creating shareable content, even consumers who haven't bought a product can become brand advocates.



Consideration

Once prospects are aware of your brand, it's time to build up their interest in your products.

At this point, shoppers assess whether or not a product is right for them, so they are likely to conduct some research on your website, marketplace product pages, search engines, comparison sites or review sites.



45% of online shoppers won't convert if the product information available is insufficient



Keeping Consumers On The Path To Conversion

Once shoppers have engaged with your brand, prevent them from searching Google, Amazon or other sites as alternatives are bound to appear.

Actionable Insights

A 'Where to Buy' solution can direct shoppers from your website or ad to your product pages on popular marketplace and retail sites.





Distracting Them From Competitors



While it's worrying that prospects can be so easily distracted in a digital environment, this also means that you have the opportunity to win over a competitor's prospective customers.

Re-Engaging Prospects

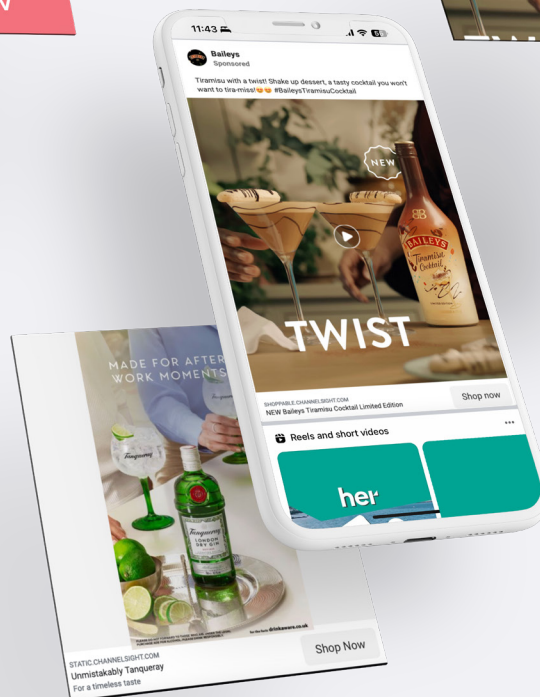


If shoppers do leave your product page or website, you can set up retargeting campaigns to connect with them once again.

Actionable Insights

A good idea is to direct resources toward improving your presence on third-party media sites, such as setting up profiles on review sites or create campaigns that encourage satisfied customers to write reviews.

Buy Now





Conversion

At this stage of the journey, consumers are ready to buy. Unfortunately, plenty of issues can still crop up and prevent conversion. This stage is all about cart optimisation and streamlining the path to payment.

Cart Optimisation Is Key



Highlight your returns policy, security badges, brand guarantees and any other information that will give consumers the confidence required to convert.

Add a chat option to your checkout to help shoppers with any questions or issues they may have. It's essential that brands optimise their checkout to support desktop, mobile and voice devices.

Consumers tend to abandon their online shopping carts for the following reasons:

- **Additional costs i.e. taxes or expensive shipping**
- **Compulsory create an account**
- **Slow shipping**
- **Complicated check out process**
- **User didn't trust the store with payment information**
- **Lack of payment options**



Checking Out On Third-Party Platforms



While brands don't have control over the checkout process on retailer websites, they can opt in for social shopping or use coupon codes to grow consumer retention.



Advocacy

Just because a consumer has converted doesn't mean the journey is over. Continued engagement can nurture repeat purchases, subscriptions and loyalty.



The Post-Purchase Experience

Once you've converted a new customer, you need to keep them engaged. Consider how you can add value to your customers' experience and build goodwill.



The Role Of Reviews And Ratings

Consumers are without question swayed by ratings and reviews, so it's worth having a strategy in place to encourage past customers to share positive reviews and ratings.

Actionable Insights

A Digital Shelf tool allows you to monitor your ratings and feedback across review sites and all the retail sites your products are sold on. You can then adjust your strategy and direct your resources to the channels that need more reviews or higher ratings.



55% of millennial consumers read reviews every time they buy something online.



Capitalising On Social Media Is Essential

User generated content is highly impactful and can start other prospects on their own journey with your brand.



Mapping The Modern Consumer Journey

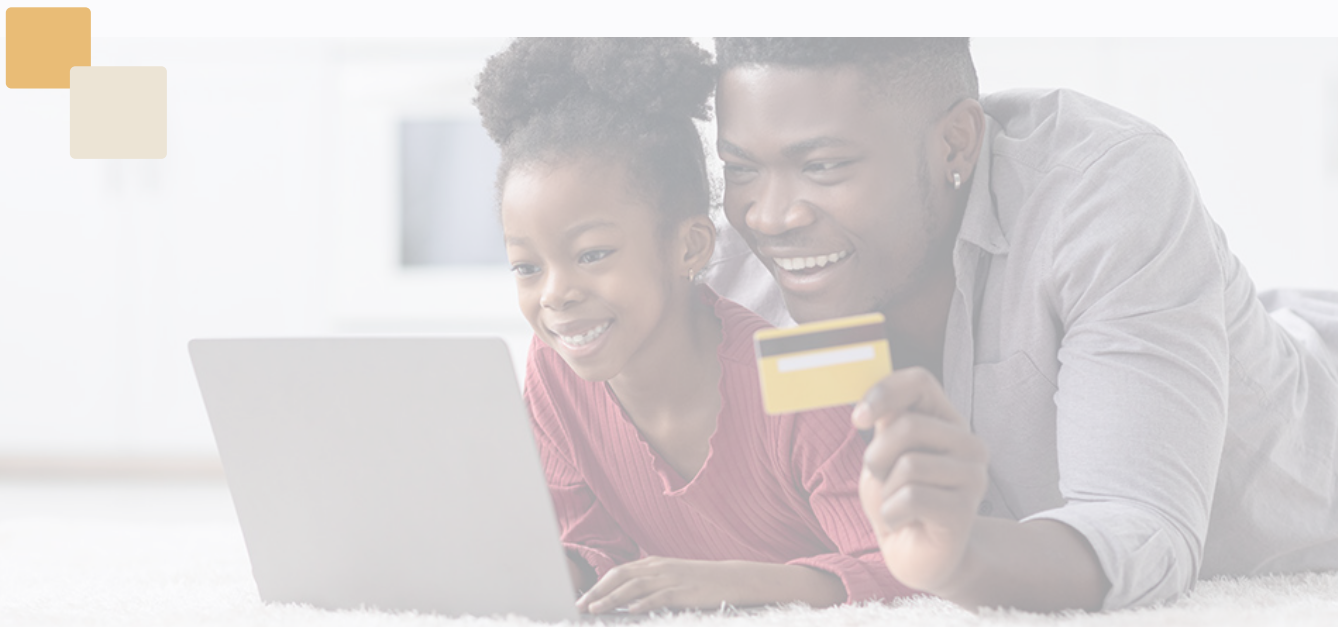
Consumer journey maps allow online brands to keep up with the changing needs, behaviour and journeys of their audience. While it's true that the modern consumer journey isn't always linear, mapping it out using the sales funnel as a structure will allow you to visualise and improve it.

Brands should tailor their content and marketing strategies to meet consumer expectations, paving the way for streamlined paths to purchase.

What Is A Customer Journey Map?

The customer journey visually outlines the steps someone can take to become a customer or advocate. It is much more detailed than a sales funnel and is uniquely linked to the needs and demographics of individual customer personas.

These maps show sample journeys that prospects can take. This provides marketers with a deeper understanding of the experiences of their shoppers. This, in turn, allows them to identify pain points and barriers to conversion which need to be addressed.





Mapping out your consumer journey should lead to more conversions, higher retention rates and a better marketing ROI. Here's the steps required to do it:

- 1 Set out your goals
- 2 Create buyer personas
- 3 Note all digital touchpoints
- 4 Give each persona an objective
- 5 Take the journey yourself
- 6 Map the journey
- 7 Account for non-linear journeys
- 8 Continuously update your maps

Set Out Your Goals



Before creating your map, it's recommended that you set out objectives to reach, problems to address or questions to answer, making your maps will be even more insightful.

Create Buyer Personas



Buyer personas can be diverse so you may need to create multiple buyer personas in order to capture the complexity of your audience.

Note All Digital Touchpoints



Create a list of potential touchpoints shoppers could use to interact with your brand during each stage of the sales funnel, highlighting what works best for your brand.

Actionable Insights

If you use a Where to Buy solution, you'll also be able to see which product pages and ads drive the most traffic to third-party retail sites



Give Each Persona An Objective



Consider what your persona would expect to find when setting out to reach this goal. It's essential to put yourself in the persona's position, settle into their mindset and empathise with their needs.

Take The Journey Yourself



This will help highlight ways to streamline the journey, as well as identify the impact external factors are having on it.

Actionable Insights

Pay particular attention to your website's checkout process, as this is easy to optimise, totally within your control and can hugely affect your D2C conversions.

Map The Journey



With so many potential touchpoints for shoppers to interact with, each consumer journey can be complicated. For this reason, they are best represented in a diagram.

Actionable Insights

Software sites like LucidChart and Qualtrics offer easy and user-friendly tools for mapping out the consumer journey in a visually appealing way.



Account For Non-Linear Journeys



You can test out these non-linear journeys by giving into distractions. If a persona clicks on a competitor's Amazon ad, will they find their way back to your brand's content?

Actionable Insights

It's a good idea to conduct journeys which start from a competitor touchpoint. This will highlight how your brand could disrupt their journeys.

Continuously Update Your Maps



Every time you map your journeys, you should implement improvements and solutions. Then, you'll need to map these journeys all over again to ensure they are working as intended and to look for further opportunities to improve.





Optimising the Consumer Journey

Once you've got your customer journey map in place, it's time to make some improvements.

Optimising the customer journey has always been an ongoing process. But this is truer now than ever before. That's because it now has lots of moving parts that can change in an instant.

Touchpoints are no longer static: competitors raise their ad bids, rankings fluctuate, ratings drop and, as mentioned, new channels come on stream every day. This means constant mapping and optimisation is required.

We've already mentioned lots of optimisation opportunities to watch out for throughout the four stages of the consumer journey, but here are some key actions that almost every eCommerce brand can take to improve their customer experience.

Streamline The Journey

Fewer steps along the consumer journey for a shopper will increase chance of conversion. Brands should try eliminate any unnecessary steps from their consumer journeys.

On your brand's website and app, be sure to offer guest checkout options and 'add to cart' buttons on your category pages. It's also wise to accommodate all device and search options. That could be voice search, mobile search or switching devices and keeping their cart saved to their account.



Personalise The Experience

eCommerce brands can personalise touchpoints on their own website by segmenting visitors and creating content tailored to each one. Moreover, showing product recommendations, unique remarketing emails or establishing a loyalty programme can further personalise the experience.

Actionable Insights

A Where to Buy solution to see what your customers have bought from retail partners. This kind of basket composition data allows brands to create bespoke product bundles and highly personalised product recommendations.





Use Contextual Advertising

Contextual advertising is when ads are served to a consumer based on the content of the web page they are viewing. It's about matching your ads with the content consumers are currently engaged with. This is a great way to personalise the customer experience while also respecting consumer privacy and help brands reach shoppers with the right message at the right time.

Keep Track Of Stock

Stock availability is often a forgotten about element of the consumer journey. But when something goes wrong, it can negatively impact the customer experience and bring the journey to an abrupt end. On marketplaces like Amazon, stockouts can affect your visibility in search results too.

Actionable Insights

Accurate forecasting and regular stock counts will help, while a Digital Shelf tool will keep track of stock levels across your entire retailer network in real-time.

In the event that you do run out of stock, you can also optimise the consumer journey by:

- **Allowing shoppers to sign up for restock alerts**
- **Hiding or deprioritising out-of-stock listings**
- **Adding visible out-of-stock stickers to your product pages**
- **Pausing any relevant product ads**
- **Linking to similar products so consumers can easily find an alternative**



Measuring Key Points In The Consumer Journey

Tracking and measuring interactions are a key part of the optimisation process. This is because it can tell marketers which journeys to optimise first. But, even more importantly, it tells marketers how to optimise them.

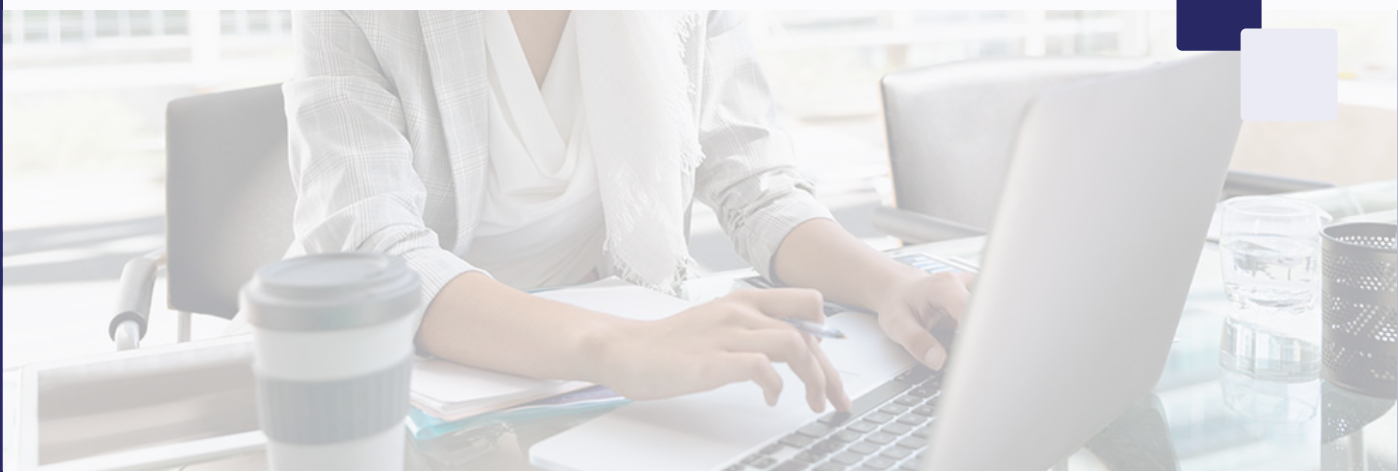
We already mentioned how brands can use Google Analytics to view the most common journeys that take place across your website and store apps. However, you can add other tools to your marketing stack to get a more complete view of the customer journey on your website - and beyond.

Heatmaps

Rather than making assumptions about your personas, you can use heat map tools and UX research to accurately track their actions and behaviour throughout each journey.

A/B Testing Tools

A/B testing can help perfect any aspect of your consumer journey, from the length of your ad text through to the placement of your website's CTAs.





CRM Data

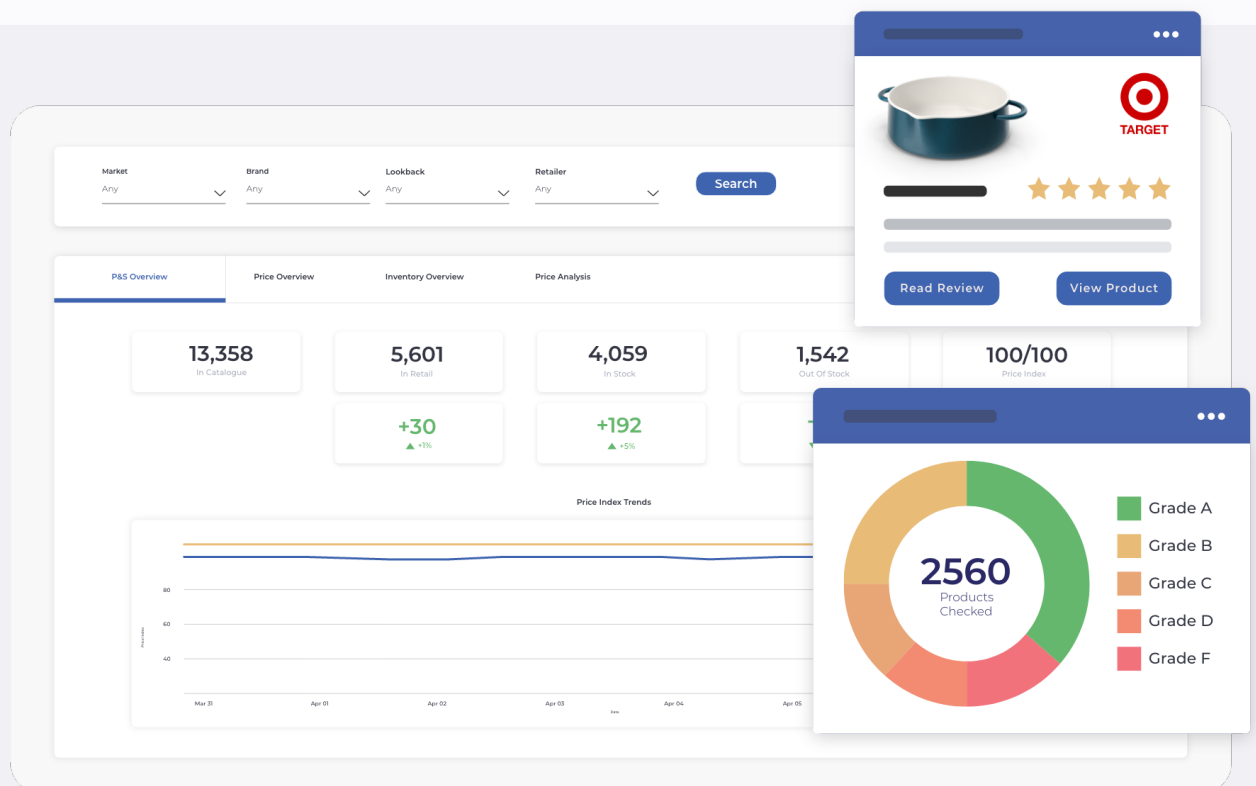
Assessing the interactions that your support team has with customers can tell you a lot about their experiences. Analysing feedback and support ticket trends, for example, will help you spot problems arising within the consumer journey.

Actionable Insights

Similarly, you should also monitor reviews for the same reason. Consider using ChannelSight's Digital Shelf tool to automatically analyse ratings and reviews across all your digital platforms.

UTM Tracking

Brands can add UTM tracking codes to the end of all the URLs they share in ads, social posts, push notifications, emails and elsewhere. This will allow them to track the behaviour of consumers from the moment they click a link right through to conversion.





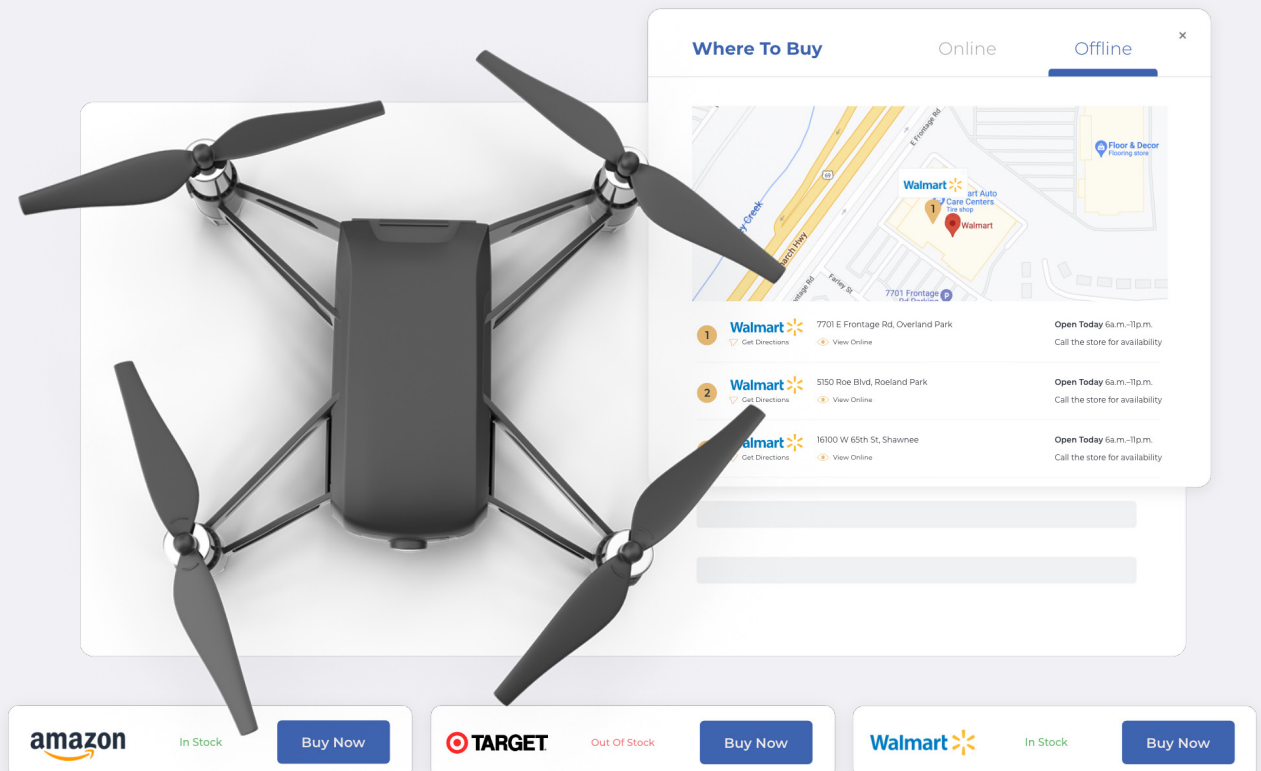
Amazon's New Tools

New tools like Amazon Attribution and the Amazon Marketing Cloud can provide users with a more complete view of the consumer journey. Amazon Attribution allows brands to track their Amazon marketing across a wide range of channels.

Where To Buy Analytics

With ChannelSight's Where to Buy solution, brands gain detailed insights into the consumer journey across multiple sales channels - without invading the privacy of their visitors.

Brands can see which retail sites and marketplaces visitors go to after viewing a product. They can also view basket composition data across these sales channels. This allows them to see which competitor SKUs are stealing away customers, as well as the products that shoppers buy at the same time as theirs





Key Takeaways

The modern consumer journey is continuously evolving, as is the behaviour of shoppers. But brands can still use traditional tools like sales funnels and journey maps to understand customer interactions. They just need to factor in the multitude of digital touchpoints that are now available to shoppers.

Every optimisation strategy will be completely different depending on the channels and technology that your brand uses to engage customers. However, you can be confident that you are creating the best experience possible if you consistently map, test and optimise your journeys.

If you can share the right messages at the right time, you'll please shoppers, boost conversions and improve your ROI. Research shows that optimising the consumer journey will improve the overall performance of a business too.



About ChannelSight

ChannelSight partners with the world's most successful retail brands, enabling them to maximize their online sales

Our software enables brands to provide an excellent customer experience, gather detailed insights and maintain a first-class brand.

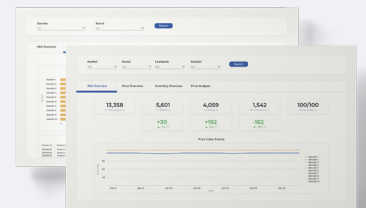
By taking a 'partnership first' approach with our clients, our dedicated brand performance team ensures we meet our objectives together.



Where To Buy



Shoppable Media



Digital Shelf

Request A Demo Today!

Contact Sales

tado°

“

ChannelSight has helped us become one of the most advanced companies in our area when it comes to online sales. There are not many smart home manufactures that provide such a state-of-the-art retail solution.

Jacob Reb
Head of Online Marketing
Tado