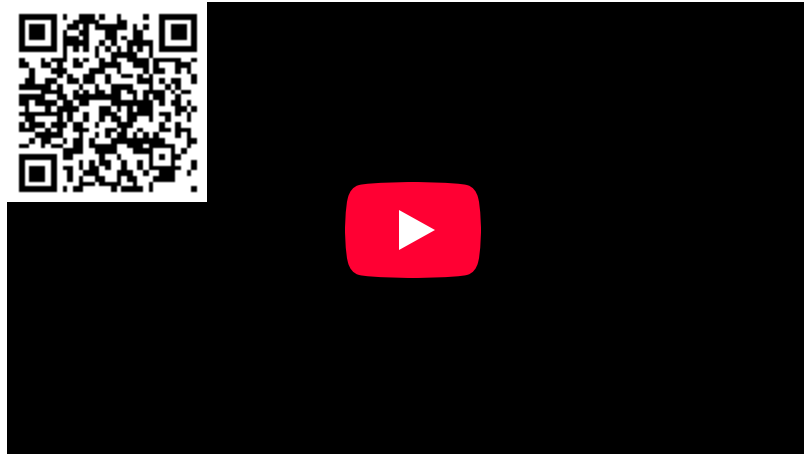


3.6: Customer Impressions and the Seamless Experience

Learning Objectives

- Describe what a customer would consider a seamless experience across channels

This is really funny. Watch it for a laugh-break from studying. Also, if you work in retail have you experienced any of these customers? Enjoy.



As you've seen throughout this chapter and in examining your own shopper behavior, consumers engage with companies through any number of channels—brick & mortar, social, .com, chat and more. Moreover, consumers want consistent, seamless, and collaborative interactions, optimized for whatever channel they've chosen. That is, consumers select the channel that is best for them at the time, making changes when there is interruption or when there is a better channel fit. As such, managing multi-channel or omni-channel marketing strategies means designing efficient channel transitions so that consumers do not feel they're engaged in episodic interactions but part of an on-going engagement.

Think again about the example we considered with the Starbucks app. The purchase of a cup of coffee is a low engagement activity. However, think about the effort that Starbucks has made to make that single transaction as seamless as possible. Yes, the majority of activities take place within a single channel, the app, but potential roadblocks like finding a store location or placing an order, have been removed. Further, stored payment information reduces the friction in processing the transaction.

The most effective firms are taking a similar approach, when considering how consumers navigate across and between channels. For example, airlines provide access to reservations from desktop, tablet, or phone. During the interface, consumers can update their frequent flyer information, change seats, or inquire about alternative flights. Changes made in one channel are reflected across the others. Further, after check-in, which can also be done across multiple media devices, consumers can elect to have boarding passes sent a number of ways—print at home, e-mail, text. E-mail and texted boarding passes can be saved on mobile devices for use at check-in, security, and boarding. For the consumer, there is seamlessness to the user experiences (UX), adding consistency and assuring service.

What makes this possible and pleasant for the consumer is that the firm's marketers have worked to understand the customer journey, identifying potential roadblocks, triggers and next steps in the decision flow. That is, these firms understand how customers move on the path to purchase. In doing so, they can identify and address potential "pain points" that inhibit customer service or transactions.

This process begins by understanding key activities or decision points in the path to purchase. Then, researching how consumers complete them, ask "Do they stay within a single channel, or do they need to transition to another, such as from app to website? From .com to store location?" More specifically,

- Are there specific activities that require transition from one channel to another? For example, if buying on-line and picking up in-store, does the retailer provide a confirmation number via text or e-mail that can be scanned from a mobile device? Or, does one need to print a hardcopy receipt?

- Is the experience optimized for the specific channel interface? That is, are content pieces and activities appropriate for changing usage contexts, like on the go vs. in-home, or technology, such as screen sizes or processing speed?
- Are there systemic roadblocks, which prevent shoppers from completing transactions or discourage them from using the tools in the future?

Many issues with the UX result from a lack of coordination, as existing infrastructure has been “patched” to accommodate new channels and technology. Often, investment is required to integrate fully new channels with system capabilities. But, the issues may not just be related to technology. Too often, teams are siloed, meaning that different organizations have responsibility for marketing, sales, and operations in a specific channel, not across all outlets. When this occurs, the largest channel, usually brick & mortar, receives the highest level of investment. The result is that emergent channels that are growing more quickly are routinely under-funded, potentially compromising the user experience across the whole ecosystem.

It’s critical to remember that consumers want accessibility. However, they are not willing to trade consistency and service for additional access. They require a seamless experience across channels.

Practice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/9162>

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