

Shaping the Future of Digital Customer Experience



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We live in an age where online and super-connected businesses are not just a reality, but a normality. This climate provides touchpoints that were not considered 10 years ago, managing these can be a difficult task, but it is a critical one. The customer experience at any one of these touchpoints, be it first hand or a shared experience, will impact your business in some way.

Consider the numerous social media channels where your customers are free to discuss, compliment and criticise experiences they have with your company. The impression you leave on one customer, be it positive or negative, will likely lead to an opinion that is shared online.

Despite our best efforts in managing our social sentiment, this is only as effective as a cleaning up after a spillage, and like a spillage, the fact that it occurred in the first place cannot be undone.

With this in mind it is fair to say that the customer experience (CX) is important, but to start understanding it, we need to quantify it. Let's start with the customer journey, and this can be defined into several stages:

1. Awareness
2. Attention
3. Transaction

At stage one of this journey, you have the potential customers that are aware of your brand, they have seen the advertisements, heard about your products and services and are aware of your space in the market. Your interaction with this group is the product of your marketing and brand sentiment.

At stage two you have customers that are not only aware, but they have set their attention on you, with intent to make use of your products or services. They are now within the capture of your touchpoint engagement through researching and comparing your products and services.

Finally, at stage three you have the customers who have committed to purchase and are at a separate set of touchpoints, they are now interacting with your customer service functions. They have the potential to become your loyal customer base and peer promoters.

By nurturing customer interest and promoting customer satisfaction, you will naturally develop customers through this journey. In this simplified example, these are the measures of your CX. This presents a challenge for businesses where these functions are divided between teams or departments, as these are not perceptible to your customers, they only see your brand.

Let's have a look at how changes to the ways in which your customers interact, not only with you, but with each other, can be put to effective use once they are understood.

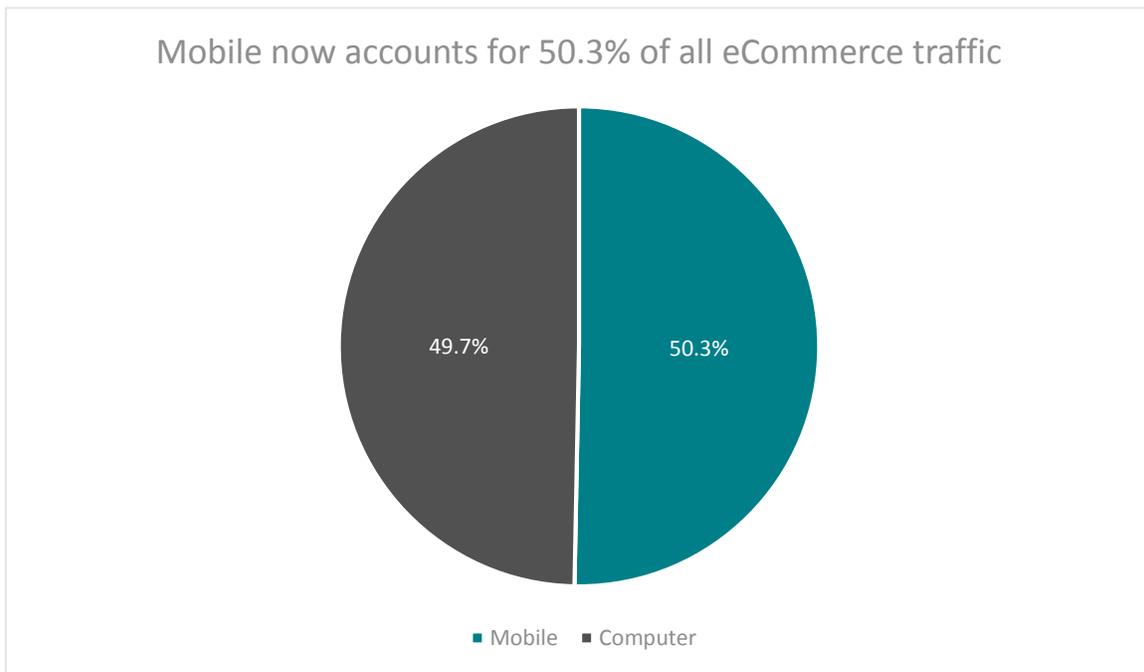
UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL CX

We know that eCommerce is a growing channel for retail sales, and figures from a study by RetailMeNot and the Centre for Retail Research show that online retail is expected to reach £52.25bn in 2015, which will account for over 15% of UK retail purchases.

To cater for this market demand, companies have invested in customer support functions. With the ongoing boom in usage rates of mobile technologies around the world, more companies are turning to omni-channel support to better manage and improve their CX through these growing touchpoints.

It is important at this stage to note the differentiation between omni-channel and multi-channel services. Multi-channel, by definition, is the use of multiple channels to engage with your customers. Omni-channel takes the use of multiple channels and incorporates the referencing of internal knowledge and strategies to align brand values, for a more seamless CX.

If we look at the eCommerce market place in general, Shopify published an interesting trend based on more than 100 000 platform users. In 2014, 33% of eCommerce sales are being placed through mobile devices, and 50.3% of eCommerce traffic was through a mobile device instead of a desktop PC.



This finding was echoed by results from Ipsos and PayPal, who published statistics that show mobile shopping is growing at nearly four times the rate of overall online spending in the UK.

But things are never that simple. Research by Liveperson concluded that 83% of online shoppers need support to complete a purchase. Whilst that may seem a little daunting on the face of it, when you consider the breadth of support available to customers, it's not unrealistic to conclude that most customers consult some form of support prior to committing to purchase.

To further quantify this need for support, Sythetix found that 75% of consumers think companies should make answers to all their common questions available via smartphones. This drives necessity for self service solutions that cater for prospective customers, assisting them through to transaction.

UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL CX

A study of 40 000 people in the UK by the Institute of Customer Service found that customer satisfaction in the UK has plunged to its lowest point since 2010. With the results from the research that we have already covered, one could argue that this demonstrates that the way in which companies service their customers has not maintained momentum with customer expectations.

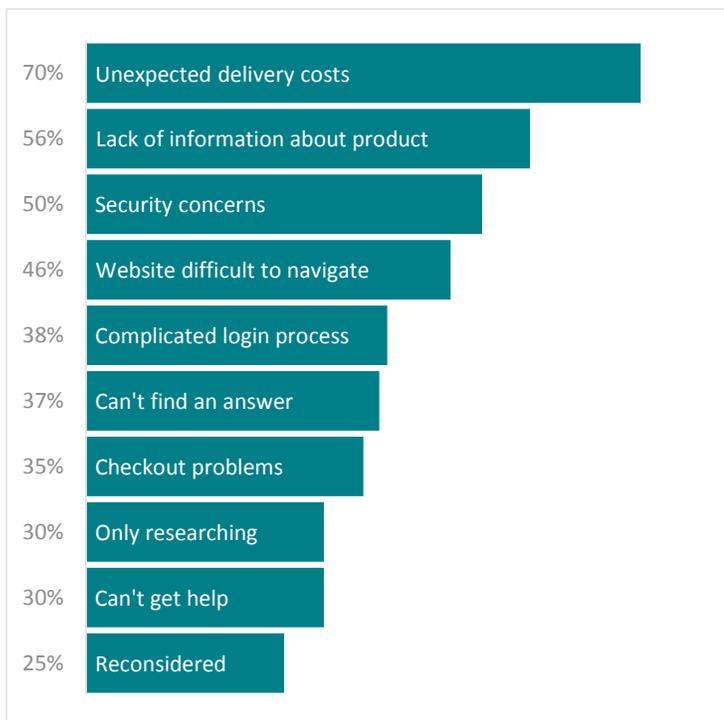
We can't blame them for this having this impression though, with the current reach of eCommerce where customers can place orders in a truly omni-channel environment, and they are unable to get support in the same manner.

Consider that you wanted to buy a pair of shoes, and asked the shop assistant if they have your size in stock. How would you feel if the assistant walked out of the store to the distribution centre some miles away to find out this information for you?

It is this disconnection of services in the multi-channel environment that negatively affects CX.

Let's have a look at the repercussions. In a survey conducted in 2011, American Express found that 78% of consumers have bailed on a transaction or not made an intended purchase because of a poor service experience. The customer was coerced from stage one of the journey we outlined earlier, so the advertising and promotion had done its task. They are now in stage two, they were considering purchase but the CX dissuaded them from proceeding. So the romance that brought them through the door was let down by what they discovered on the shop floor.

If we delve deeper into the reasons for cart abandonment, we can look at addressing the issues faced by this group of potential customers.



In this research by Liveperson we see that the main reason for cart abandonment was the customer being presented with an unexpected cost at the point of purchase. Arguably there are some factors within this survey that are outside of your control, but on the whole, a better CX that was more in line with the idea that enticed them, would have converted these potential customers.

This idea naturally leads into another finding by NewVoiceMedia; that 89% of customers switch brands once or twice a year. These are the customers from stage three of our model, they have purchased at least once, but something has driven them elsewhere. Now, you may want to argue that it could have been a price comparison that cannot be competed with.

Sadly, you may be mistaken.

Defaqto Research found that 55% of customers would pay *more* for a better CX.

SOLUTION

Let's define and elaborate on what a great CX entails by looking at the key frustrations that customers face during their interactions.

AVAILABILITY

As mentioned earlier about the inherent need for support during purchase, and the desire for availability of FAQs on smartphones, Forrester found that 45% of customers will abandon an online purchase if they can't quickly find answers to their questions. When it comes to retention, Accenture's research revealed 45% say that a better mobile service experience could have kept them from switching.

The availability of support can be addressed through providing omni-channel support functions to your customers, but availability is nothing without consistency.

CONSISTENCY

We have so far seen that consistency in multi-channel interactions make or break a CX. To put this into further context, research by [24]7 has revealed that 80% of customers say that companies do not have context on their last conversation, this resulted in customers having to repeat themselves to progress through the support channel, mirrored by Accenture's findings that 65% of customers were frustrated by inconsistent experiences across channels.

Inconsistency is a battle fought by omni-channel support. Implementation of omni-channel support software can centralise your interactions, creating a much more seamless CX.

PERSONALISATION

Consistency comes with a degree of personalisation, where we step up from treating an enquiry as a singular event, but as an event within that customer's relationship with our company. If we are mindful and reactive to a customer's preferences, future exchanges become easier for the customer and as a result, more pleasant.

Personalisation is not beyond the reach of most CMS systems, it is how we utilise customer habit data that sets us apart in this area.

CONTEXTUALISATION

We have seen that simply having context on a customer's previous interactions can improve CX by removing customer frustration. What if we could take this to another level? By having context of where the customer is on their journey and tailoring our support accordingly, what impact could that have on the CX?

This is not a pipe-dream, but something that is available today, and can truly re-shape support and self-service solutions.

SOCIAL

Customer trends when encountering a good CX can play strongly into our hands. If we consider the following statistics revealed by Zendesk, we can remind ourselves of the importance of providing a great CX from the very first touchpoint.

- 95% of customers share bad experiences with others
- 87% of customers share good experiences with others
- 54% of customers share bad experiences with 5+ people
- 33% of customers share good experiences with 5+ people

As we can see, the reach of bad experiences goes far beyond that of the good experiences.

SOLUTION

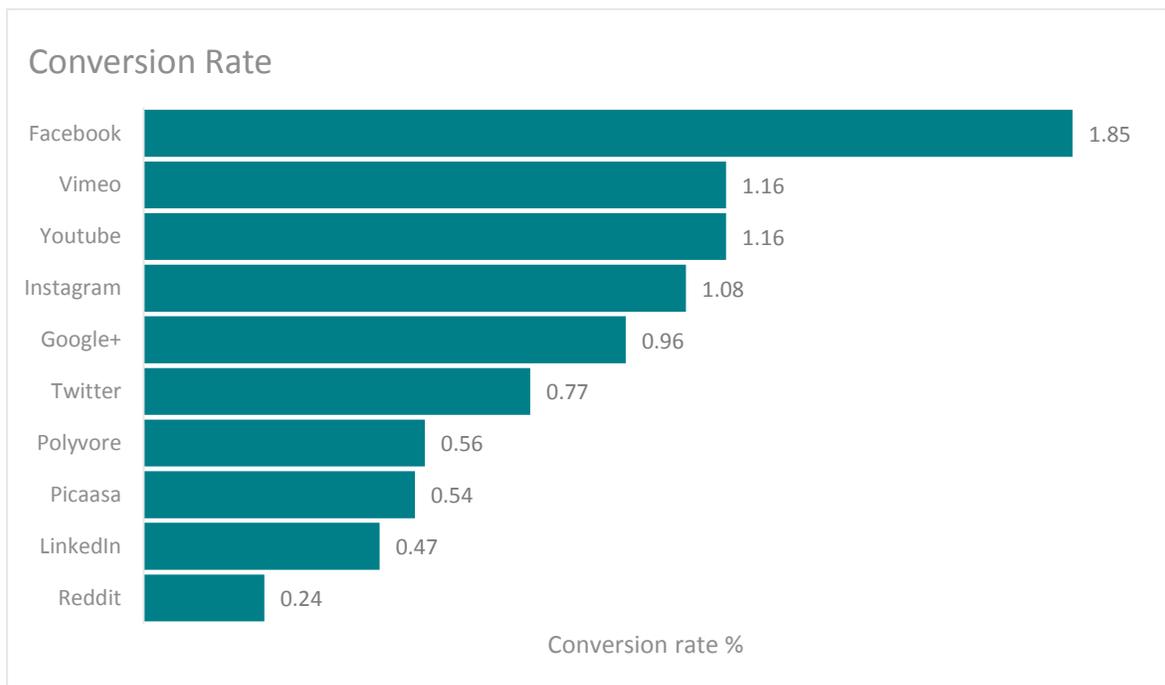
SOCIAL

The power of social media goes beyond sharing experiences, as Dimension Data found in their 2015 report, it is the first choice of Generation Y (16 to 34 year olds) over all other support channels. Below are the full results their research conducted of 717 contact centres.

WHICH CHANNELS ARE MOST POPULAR WITH YOUR AGE-PROFILED CUSTOMERS?

% of n	Internet / web chat	Social media	Electronic messaging	Smartphone application	Telephone	Don't know
Generation Y (born 1981-1999)	23.9 (1 st choice)	23.9 (1 st choice)	20.9 (3 rd choice)	19.1 (4 th choice)	12.3 (5 th choice)	43.5
Generation X (born 1961 – 1980)	20.6 (3 rd choice)	11.6 (4 th choice)	28.3 (2 nd choice)	11.0 (5 th choice)	28.5 (1 st choice)	41.8
Baby boomers (born 1945 – 1960)	7.4 (3 rd choice)	2.1 (5 th choice)	24.4 (2 nd choice)	2.6 (4 th choice)	63.5 (1 st choice)	41.8
Silent generation (born 1944)	1.8 (3 rd choice)	1.0 (4 th choice)	6.2 (2 nd choice)	0.6 (5 th choice)	90.4 (1 st choice)	43.4

But don't feel that you need to embark onto social media simply to support your customers. Shopify have revealed that an average of 85% of all orders from social media channels come through Facebook, and below is their report on the conversion rate stats of social media channels.



SOLUTION

THE GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

So what do the customers expect from a great CX, and what are their key metrics?

Liveperson's research uncovered the key elements of great online customer experiences. The key metric is time, which is understandable given the customer undoubtedly opted for eCommerce in an effort to save time spent visiting a bricks and mortar store.

Customers clearly appreciate the first call resolution concept, this is a byproduct of an efficient omni-channel support system, where the knowledge to assist customers is readily available to all teams that deal with customer queries.

Another interesting statistic is that 17% of customers want to go about their business without needing to speak to someone. In essence, this is the perceived nature of eCommerce, which again defines the need for an omni-channel self-service solution.



CONCLUSION

From the outset we have referenced a very simplistic customer journey, but understanding your specific customer journeys will take you a great way toward effectively improving your own CX.

We have defined some key metrics for measuring the effectiveness of your own CX, and through research, gained an insight into what your customers want from their digital experience.

We have delved deep into evolving ways in which customers interact with your company and with each other. We now understand their perceptions of CX and the impacts of positive and negative experiences and their social reach.

Omni-channel support systems are the best way of effectively managing your CX in a multi-channel environment, by providing a consistent and centralized brand voice.

We have also seen that customers value a self-service solution when engaging with eCommerce.

DISCLAIMER

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AUTHORS



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Richard is an experienced web designer, specialising in customer experience aspects of end user interface design. Drawing on his marketing, public relations and customer services experience and an understanding of customer expectations, Richard works to improve these areas for clients in numerous business sectors. He has now taken to spreading the word through the very channels he works around and helping companies to get the best from their digital outlets.



Dan Kurk, Head of Marketing

Dan is a time served expert of marketing strategy, with years of experience in helping companies to strengthen and evolve on their positions within their sectors. His work at CartAssist has seen the adoption of self-service and omni-channel solutions of numerous businesses to better cater to their customer need, while bolstering their brand voice and reputations. An advocate of new digital solutions, he is unquestionably a man with a plan (or two).

ABOUT CARTASSIST

CartAssist is the leading intelligent self-service engine delivering any answer to your customers in real time. CartAssist keeps your customers on site and is an essential part of any CX optimisation strategy.

We can offer a demonstration of how CartAssist will work for you;

- How CartAssist will look and feel on your site
- How it will integrate with your existing systems
- The potential for dynamic article content
- The insight CartAssist will give you through analytics

To learn more about improving your online customer journey with CartAssist, request a free CX assessment or to arrange a demo of CartAssist, contact a member of our team at hello@cartassist.co.uk. For a deeper insight into CartAssist, please visit us at www.cartassist.co.uk.