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BRIDGING THE REAL AND DIGITAL WORLDS:

THE CASE FOR OMNICHANNEL STRATEGIES



NAVIGATING TODAY'S FRAGMENTED WORLD

The explosion in the number of customer touchpoints in recent years has revolutionised the realm of sales and marketing. A whole range of digital platforms, including social media, websites, online marketplaces, and mobile applications, are key locations of brand experience - in addition to traditional channels like brick-and-mortar stores and call centres. This creates endless opportunities for brands to understand customers better, improve customer engagement, and develop advocates among their customer base. Many businesses are recognising that there is a need for transformation in order to keep up with this changing landscape – enter omnichannel sales and marketing.

UNIFYING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Frost & Sullivan states that omnichannel is about achieving

“seamless and effortless, high-quality customer experiences that occur within and between contact channels.”¹

However, this straightforward concept is often difficult to achieve. Substantial planning goes into crafting and implementing a successful omnichannel strategy. As a first step, businesses need to distinguish between omnichannel and multichannel strategies. While multichannel involves operating various sales and marketing channels – such as social media platforms and brick-and-mortar stores – in isolation, omnichannel emphasises operating them in connection with one another in order to meet the customer’s needs. This can take many forms, including setting up the brand’s digital presence, integrating brand elements across offline and online channels, and tracking customer journeys across devices to personalise offerings.

Moreover, it is worth noting that although the spotlight often falls on sales and marketing, omnichannel also encompasses a broad range of functions, including operations, finance, fulfilment and supply chain, which all work together to create a seamless experience for the customer.

1. DeSalles, M. (2015). Moving From Multi-Channel To Omni-Channel Customer Engagement: Intelligent Interaction Analytics Are The Foundation. [online] Frost & Sullivan | Digital Transformation. Available at: <http://digitaltransformation.frost.com/expert-insights/viewpoints/moving-multi-channel-omni-channel-customer-engagement-intelligent-interaction-analytics-are-foundation/>.





IT'S A GUIDING PHILOSOPHY, NOT A FORMULA

The vast array of prescriptions surrounding omnichannel retailing can often make it seem like an overwhelming task for a business looking to make the shift from traditional to digital marketing. However, omnichannel is best understood as a guiding philosophy rather than a one-size-fits-all formula. At the very heart of the concept is a focus on the customer. The various channels work in tandem to create an immersive, integrated and consistent experience for the customer. We have painted a picture of what a successful omnichannel consumer journey can look like below, using the example of the region's most successful startups - Anothersole.



AN OMNICHANNEL JOURNEY WITH ANOTHERSOLE

The concept of omnichannel only truly springs to life when we look at real-life examples of brands who have blazed the trail ahead. Anothersole is a successful shoes retailer in Singapore that relies heavily on digital marketing, user-generated content and an online presence to reach and retain an international customer base.

Here, we trace the steps of a fictional customer, Jenny, as she travels along a seamless omnichannel path to purchase.

USER PROFILE

Name: Jenny

Description:

Busy professional and fashion enthusiast who values quality, convenience, and believes in doing good for society

Age: 26

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Human resources executive

Daily Internet Usage: 10 hours



1. Sees an influencer's Instagram ad. Comes across an influencer's Instagram ad for Anothersole. Stylish, modern and minimalistic, the brand's aesthetic appeals to Jenny. User-generated photos by previous buyers also show the shoes to be a wearable and versatile everyday option.



2. Receives targeted ads on Instagram and Facebook throughout the next week. However, having a busy week at work, Jenny doesn't have the time to visit the website to check out the recommended shoes.



3. Visits online store during the weekend. The brand founders' interview that emphasises doing good through its profits resonates with her; the shoes become even more attractive.



4. Abandons cart. Convinced of the shoes' quality, Jenny creates an account and adds a pair of shoes to her cart, but hesitates to check out because of the hefty price tag.



5. Receives cart abandonment email. A few days later, she receives an email from Anothersole reminding her of her purchase and offering a 10% discount code. The email displays other customers' positive reviews



6. Visits pop-up store. The email doesn't entirely convince Jenny, but she can't shake the idea of purchasing the shoes. The brand's Instagram Story highlights a pop-up store happening over the weekend, so Jenny pays a visit down to try the shoes on for herself.



7. Makes purchase online.. Satisfied with the quality, she returns to the website and makes a purchase using the 10% discount code.



8. Requests for an exchange. Receiving her shoes, she realises that she has ordered the wrong colour. After an email to the customer service, Anothersole arranges for a courier to pick up and re-deliver the shoes at no additional cost.

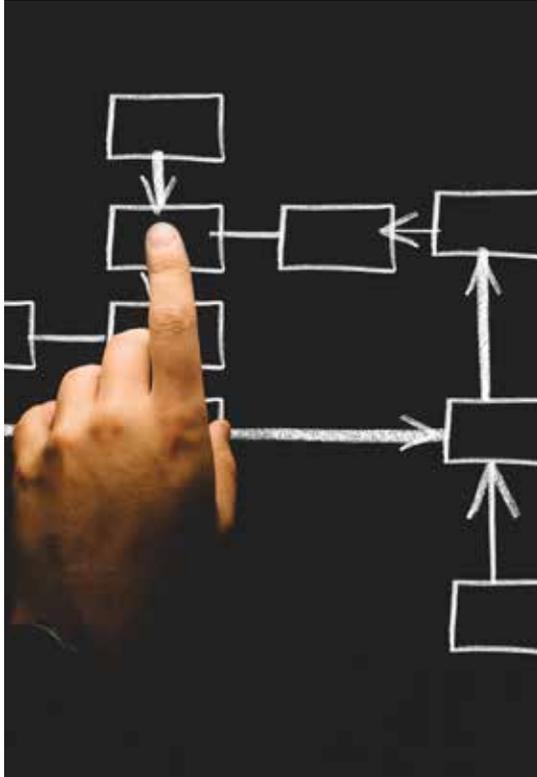


9. Leaves positive customer reviews. After the second delivery, Jenny is prompted through email to leave a review on the online store, which she gladly does. She also shares an Instagram Story of her new purchase with her friends.



10. Receives newsletter on new arrivals. After a few weeks, Jenny is alerted through email of new arrivals on the online store.





EXPLORING THE ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES OF OMNICHANNEL

The story of Jenny is but one of many other success stories of brands connecting with customers through a well-calibrated omnichannel strategy. Despite encountering a variety of obstacles in her path to purchase, Jenny is still able to enjoy a seamless and fuss-free buying experience - thanks to the brand's wellintegrated omnichannel strategy.

Being able to be present at all the touchpoints of customers' daily life in this way a intimate and integrated way has helped brands to break new grounds in customer engagement. Yet, all these new opportunities hinge on digital literacy - brands need to have a deep understanding of what digital is and how to maximise its possibilities.

Are the possibilities of omnichannel relevant to all markets? In our second report in this series, we answer these questions in greater detail by looking at retailers' tactics in Southeast Asia - one of the world's most dynamic and digitally savvy e-commerce markets.

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