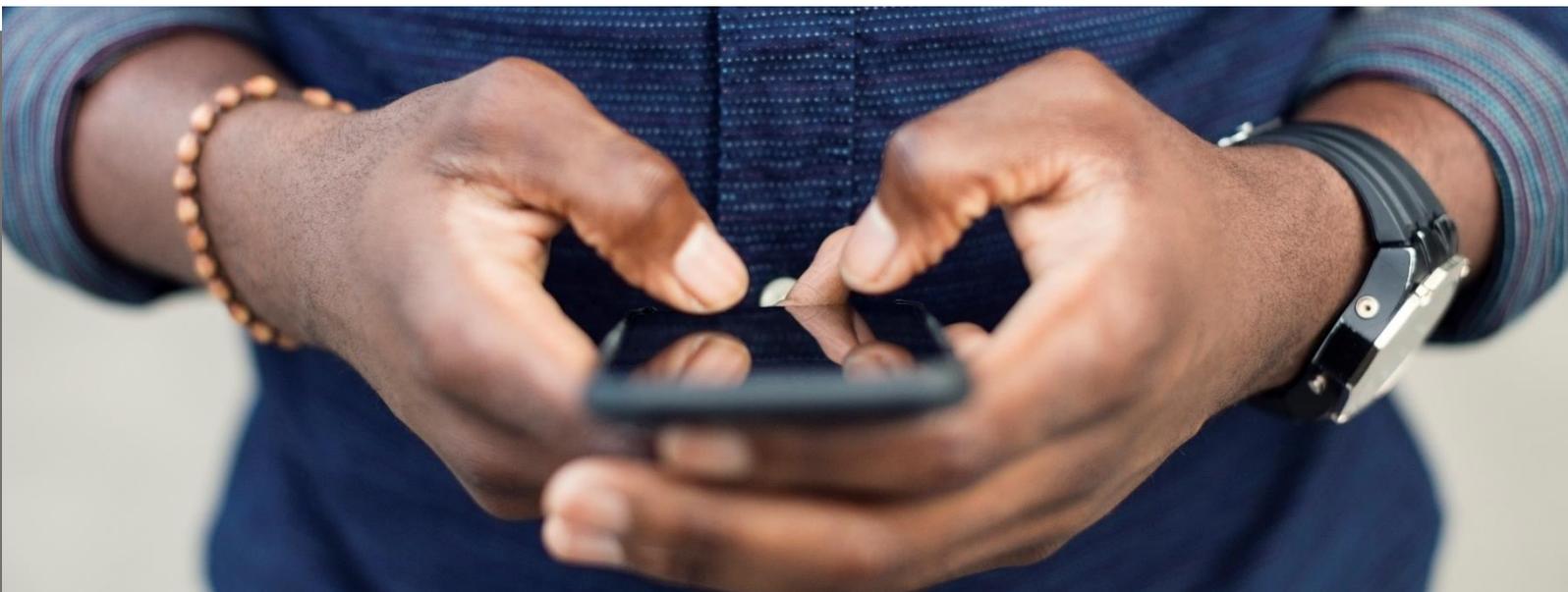


Unique Customer Experience in a Fragmented Omni- Channel Landscape

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In today's content and product-saturated marketplace, personalisation is key to standing apart from the competition. And though, this does not mean customers are considering personalisation necessarily as physical face to face conversations. Digital is key for buyers and decision makers in the fast paced buying process. This does not only go for B2C consumers but also in B2B digital orientation and decisioning have nowadays become the standard. In fact, B2B purchasers expect the same kind of personalisation and on-demand availability of products, information and advice as they are used to when shopping for their personal belongings. As digitalisation emerges, quantity of customer data soars but realising the true potential of an organisation's customer data often still is a hassle.

Digitalisation

Within the trend of personalisation, many organisations try to prepare for rising customer expectations. The need for 'digital transformation' urges within most companies and over the last decade many organisations performed preparations to serve these new demands. Early adaptors went first and second half of the second decade of this millennium the early majority followed. The coming decade the later majority will try to make the digital transformation part of their business models. Though, the question is how successful this transformation in personalisation and digital presence has appeared so far and how organisations can really succeed to create consistent communication over the entire customer journey.

The omni-channel effect

With the trends of personalisation and digital presence many organisations have attempted to optimally serve their customer needs and demands. Innovators and pioneers started of turning into omni-channel organisations. They started being present via whatever consumer convenient channel. Where in the early millennium presence was prominently based in local points of sales, nowadays companies interact with customers via websites, emails, online ads, call centres, chatbots and socials channels varying from LinkedIn to TikTok.

Fragmented customer data and experiences

A point of questioning is whether up to which extend becoming more omni-channel really contributed to attaining more success in personalisation, meeting customer expectations and realising flawless customer journeys.

The same trend of inserting more customer channels into the customer journey as well resulted into an uncontrolled customer applications landscape: both in the front-end and in the back-end. Next to digitalisation and personalisation, *data-driven* has turned into another fashion trend term. Not only more customer channels popping up to the surface of many organisations, the applications applied across these channels as well have become better and better to collect customer data.

However, this combination of a segregated customer omni-channel landscape with the quantity of data being collected as well results in data-silos across customer technology landscapes. These data-silo's impedes companies' ability to consistently communicate with their audience over its channels.



Organisations lack the ability to utilise information collected through the one customer channel throughout other channels. Becoming omni-channel with personalisation as a *holy grail* so at the same time threatens the ability to meet expected standards in personalisation and the customer journey.

Large minority owns a centralised customer view

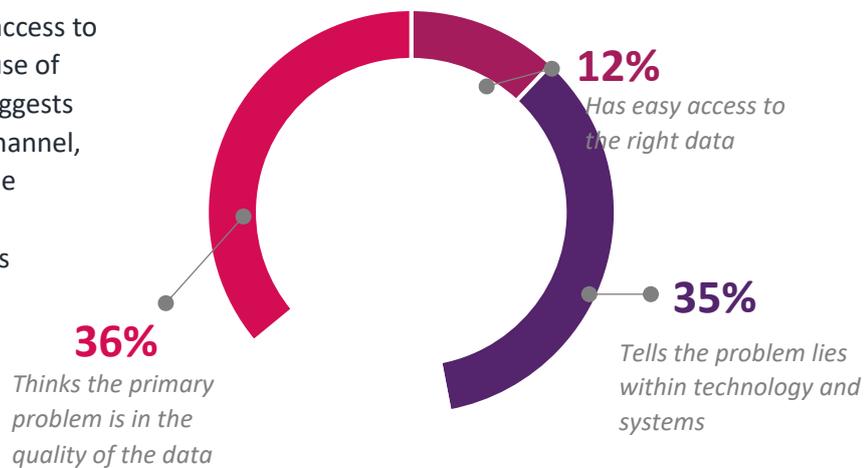
A finding illustrating this trend are the results of a survey of the Dutch authority DDMA amongst marketers in 2020 where only 20 percent of the respondents tells to have a centralised and up-to-date customer view. In 2017 and 2019, within the same survey 30 and 29 percent respectively indicated to have a centralised customer view¹. This indeed suggests a fragmented customer data landscape for marketers.



Data accessibility

Data and channel presence within the organisation doesn't seem to be the problem. Within the same survey of DDMA 73 percent of the respondents being a larger organisation tells to own nine or more marketing channels.

Though, at the same time only 12 percent of the responding marketers states to have easy access to the data and 35 percent thinks that the cause of that lies in technology and systems. This suggests that organisations have invested in omni-channel, but on the other hand struggle to realise the potential of their data because of a lack of accessibility and technical availability to this group.



Another 36 percent does not trust on the quality of its data. This fact can doubt the ability of these organisations to gather data in an intelligent and qualified manner.

Winning with personalisation

A survey of Segment amongst 1,008 American consumers of 18 years and older clearly illustrates the importance of personalisation for organisations².

The lack of personalisation is frustrating consumers. 71 percent of the respondents express some level of frustration when their shopping experience is impersonal. There's a lot to win for

¹ DDMA, 2020, Data Driven Marketing Onderzoek 2020.

² Segment, 2017, The 2017 State of Personalization Report.

organisations by acquiring the competency to personalise as 44 percent of the consumers say that they will likely turn into repeat buyers after a personalised experience with a particular company.

Not only personalisation would turn buyers more loyal, they would stimulate more sales too. Nearly half of the surveyed group, 49 percent, purchased a product that they did not initially intend to buy after they received a personalised recommendation from a brand. 40 percent tells to have purchased something more expensive and 85 percent were happy with their purchase.

An ecosystem to excel

In order to really bring customer experience to life, organisations should strive to realise a digital ecosystem for their customer channels. A digital ecosystem is a situation in which different group of information technology resources act as one single unit and interoperability is the key to its success. Though, service orchestration, delivery and monetisation as well as customer communication and data management across the entire ecosystem remain a big challenge for most organisations.

As soon as companies manage to let data flow amongst its applications and both customer channels, they start making steps in optimising customer experience. It has already been noted that accessibility to the data remains difficult for most marketers, yet good availability of customer information to all company's representatives over the customer journey should be key. Nowadays, still few organisations manage to smartly utilise their customer data.

Gallup Group's research confirms that customer data must be seen as strategic, telling that organisations that leverage customer behavioural insights outperform peers by 85 percent in sales growth and more than 25 percent in gross margin³. The return in profitability so certainly outperforms investments made. As a matter of fact, the investments of Netflix in user-data driven recommendations Netflix would result into \$ 1 billion in savings by the reduce of churn.



Yet, most organisations seem to be struggling as 60 percent of organisations states to have difficulties using their customer data to personalise. This inability to personalise already appears in simple things like personalisation in name and gender. Considering that it would cost five times more to attract a new customer than to retain an existing one, the investments made in a good customer data ecomanagement system are easily justified.

B2B procurement is evolving too

Expectations in personalisation are evolving in B2B environments too since the B2B buying process is moving digital as well. As consumers experience personalisation in their personal daily environment, they start demanding new standards in their professional life as well. Justin Shriber, VP Marketing at LinkedIn, in 2017 said:

"B2B buyers have slowly been conditioned to expect the same personalised treatment that they get while shopping on Amazon. They want to be approached with relevant offers at the right moments,

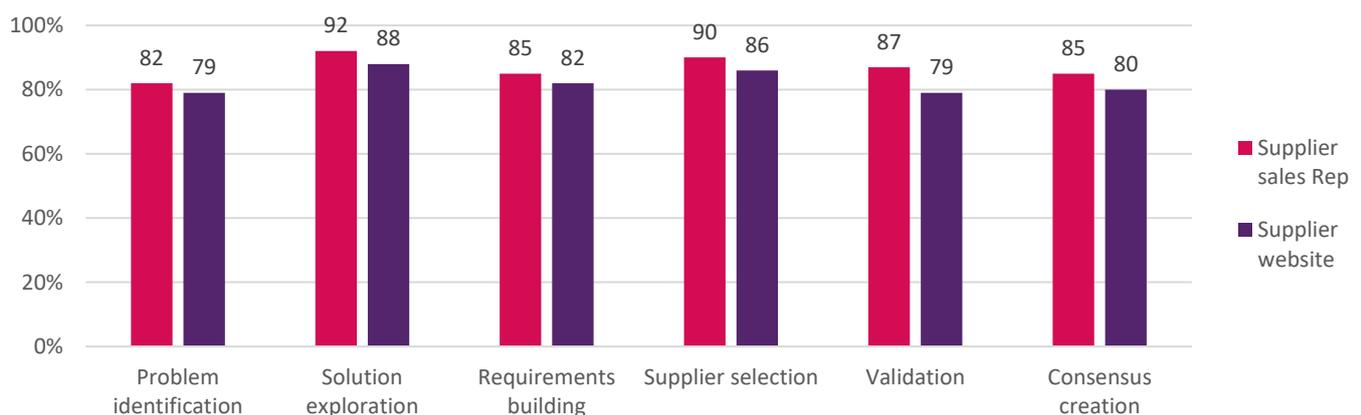
³ Gallup Group, The Next Discipline – Applying Behavioural Economics to Drive Growth and Profitability.

not when it's convenient for a sales rep. They have little to no patience for ill-timed, generic pitches."⁴.

The evolving demographics of the buyers and procurement group within organisations might confirm this belief. In 2014 Google surveyed 3,000 B2B researchers⁵, which brought to light a high paced change in the profile of these buyers. Back in 2012, there was a pretty even mix across age groups. In 2014, however, 18- to 34-year-olds accounted for almost half of all researchers, an increase of 70 percent. The increase in B2B researchers using smartphones over the purchase path was even more overwhelming with a growth of 91 percent between 2012 and 2014 demonstrating that they are using a diversity of channels. These numbers will have soared by 2021.

The expectations of the B2B buyer in all stages of his purchasing process should so not be underestimated. The B2B purchaser is becoming digital and is using a diversity of both online and offline channels for orientation during its journey. As a result, sales reps are no longer *the* channel to customers, but simply *a* channel. In each stage of the sales process there is a pretty equal preference for online and offline orientation; even in the final decisioning phases. This means that almost half of the signals of the buyer during its journey are out of sight of the seller's representatives. Covid-19 might have accelerated this trend exponentially over the last year⁶.

Proportion of buyers who used sales reps vs. website to complete job in buying process



This way touchpoints become segregated making it harder for the supplying organisation to personalise over the journey and to truly understand its customers. In fact, 46 percent of Chief Sales Officers surveyed in 2019 told that their biggest need in additional help is in challenges leveraging data and analytics to enhance commercial performance.

Getting started is the first step to improvement

As organisations are preparing for the digital age and over the last decade have begun inserting new channels and so applications, most company have become able to gather more and richer customer data. Of course, organisations are at different data-maturity levels. Yet, regardless of how far along a

⁴ Justin Shriber, 2017, How B2B Sellers Are Offering Personalization at Scale.
⁵ Think with Google, 2015, The Changing Face of B2B Marketing.
⁶ Gartner for Sales, 2019, CSO Update, The new B2B buying journey and its implication for sales.

company is in its process of transformation, virtually every organisation has valuable customer data assets that could be put to better and more active use.

Customer expectations are changing in pretty every industry, but owning the data opens up opportunities to engage with target audiences. Organisations should seek for software overlays to link data silo's over the different lines of business, making it available for use over the customer journey. As most teams already have inserted multiple types of channels over their customer journey to further drive personalisation the sense often is not in expanding channels.



Smarter use of yet available resources, systems and data allow teams to derive deeper and real customer insights, working towards a holistic customer profile. A centralised and openly accessible customer view over the business opens up opportunities as insights can be turned into actions, where the real value is being added over the customer journey. Integrating pertinent customer data and making it accessible across the business not only cuts down on duplicate information gathering and manual data entry, but can also lead to offering customers lower prices, greater convenience and better experiences.

The objective to reach a stage where companies own the perfect infrastructure of systems and technologies in place might be an utopia with the ever exponentially growing pace of technologic enhancements.

Smaller experiments like pilots offer valuable learning paths for business teams. Businesses launching smaller pilot initiatives gather rich experiences that can be scaled up over the larger organisation. When making their start, organisations should pose themselves the following questions for a bright start.

1. What customer data can we utilise and where does it reside?
2. What external data could we acquire and what third parties should we collaborate with to create data-driven value?
3. What skill sets and capabilities will we need and where can we find or develop them?

For each question, companies should carefully consider what they can realise with their own resources and where they reach out for external help.

A CDP to smoothly unify customer data

Customer Data Platforms represent an easy way to get started for most organisations. Customer Data Platforms (CDP) allow to easily connect to different customer data sources across an organisation's landscape. They are diverse from legacy line of business apps as they don't interrupt in most businesses' core processes allowing to make a quick start.

On the other hand CDP's are different from traditional big data analytics tool platforms as they are particularly shaped for the actual end user in the organisation. With other words, the in-house business analyst or marketer has the power to build his customer profiles autonomously based on the different data sources the CDP is connected to. These data sources can hold both internal and external data and can be kept in systems of different vendors.

This way business analysts and marketers acquire themselves a self-service solution to make steps forward in data driven customer centricity. Not only they help to realise a unique golden customer record over segregated customer data sources. They also allow to unveil unique customer characteristics and KPI's with calculations over combinations of transactional and behavioural information across various data silo's. More advanced CDP's allow access to predictive models varying from interest forecasting to churn scores. This way personalisation can be transformed from a reactive model to a proactive and real-time trigger based approach.

An common misconception is that CDP's are primarily aimed at marketers. As a matter of fact, good CDP's distinct themselves by their ability to infuse insights over other line of business apps in the landscape. For example they integrate with sales or customer service tools to provide them with unique insights that are derived from outside such applications. This way the CDP is being inserted adding value to different users, over different layers in the organisation to achieve optimal personalisation and create unique customer experiences.

About Intouch365

Intouch365 is the trusted advisor that guides organisations to innovate and to grow by bringing data and technology fully to life. By breaking down data silos we empower every organisation to unify and understand its customer data to harness insights that power personalised experiences and processes.

Intouch365 is a niche player exclusively focusing on consultancy on smart insights and customer centricity solutions that embed within the Microsoft domain. We deliver data driven solutions and support organisations to excel with our passion for technology. We focus on self-service tools that give end-users the authority to reach their goals in customer centricity and experience.

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