Today’s customer decision journey is so complex but AI can help

Myth: “The customer journey is not as complex as it’s made out to be.” One thing is for sure – the consumer decision journey is more complex than ever before. The average consumer now owns three to four devices and uses multiple online and offline channels throughout their shopping journeys. The game is changing as marketers turn to artificial intelligence, agencies and data to help them navigate new consumer behavior. Every marketer today needs to be addressing these challenges as the CDJ itself is disrupting the digital landscape.

For instance, consumers are increasingly turning to mobile devices throughout their journey to gather coupons, compare prices and read about products. Nearly 60% of shoppers research products and prices via mobile while in store and 87% of shoppers think brands need to build a more seamless shopping experience.

Consumers are also researching online and then converting in-store. In fact, according to a recent Harvard Business Review study, 73% of the shoppers studied used multiple channels throughout their journey. Consider these stats:

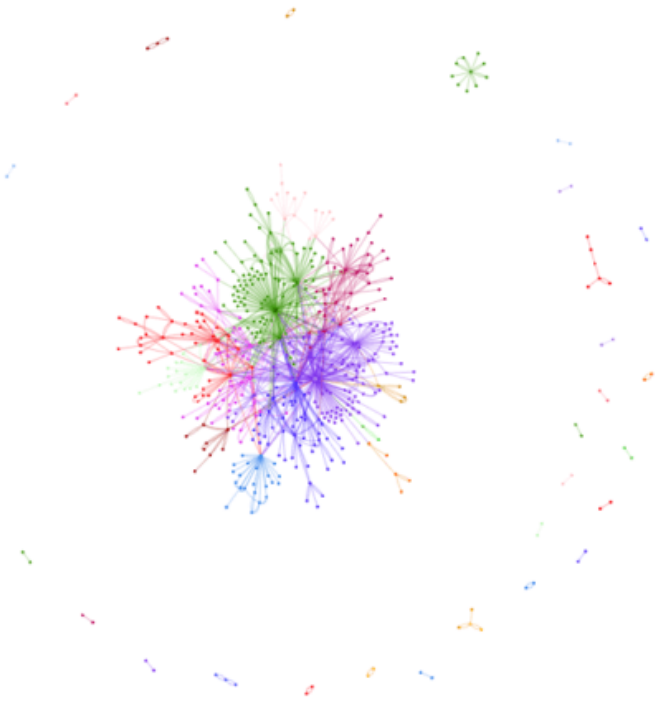
- 50% of shoppers expect to make a purchase online and pick up in-store.
- 71% of shoppers agree that it is important or very important to be able to view inventory information online for in-store products.
- 45% of shoppers in-store to be knowledgeable about online-only products.
- 87% of customers want a seamless experience and think brands need to put more effort into providing one.

- Nearly 60% of shoppers use their mobile phones to look up product information and prices in stores.

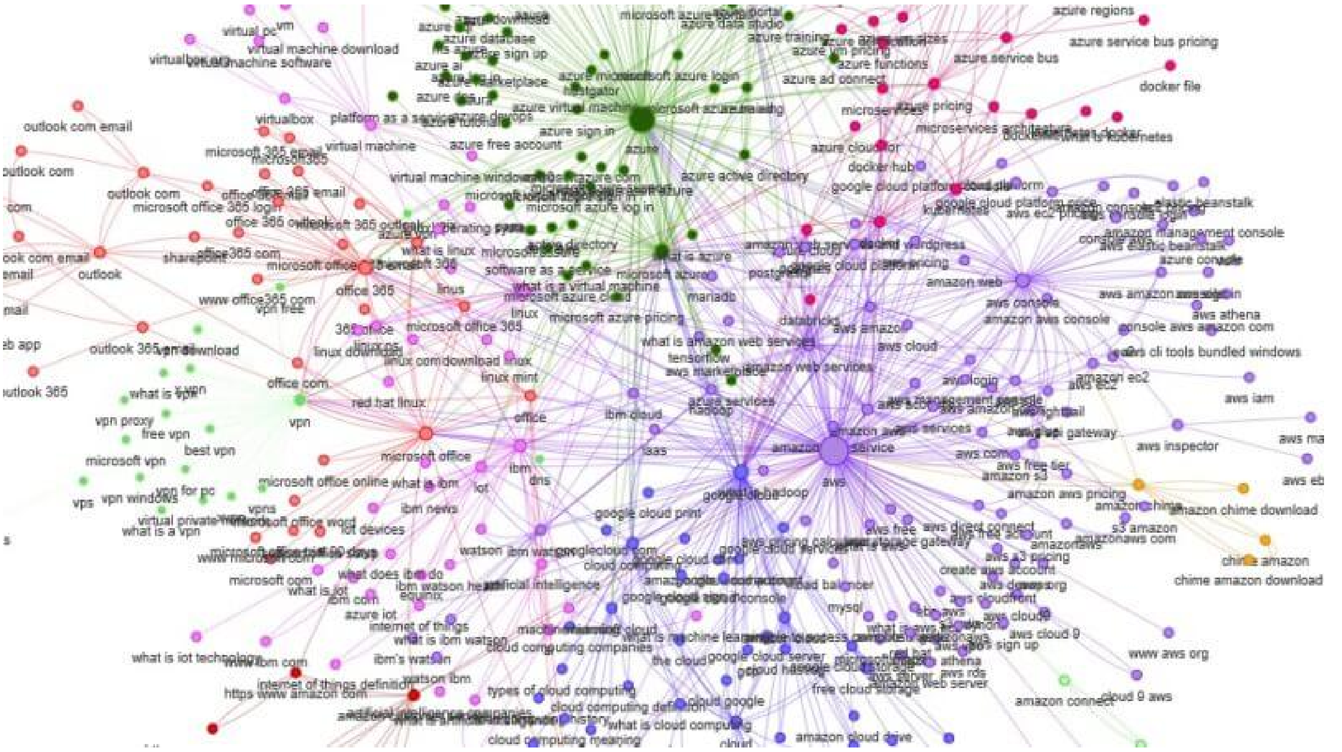
You can see from these stats, omnichannel is here to stay as consumers jump between devices and online/offline activity. To make things even more complicated, at any point, consumers could be on the verge of conversion on one device while receiving early-funnel messaging on another. Today's marketers must embrace omnichannel fundamentals, such as offering in-store pick-up online and optimizing mobile campaigns for a variety of KPIs such as downloads and views.

The new CDJ takes shape

While early marketing efforts and attribution models (first-click/last-click/linear/time decay) tended to oversimplify the CDJ, that is certainly no longer the case. The new CDJ has evolved to look less like a straight line and more like an intergalactic star with more data points than a single person could count. For example, this is an actual representation of just one data set of recent search queries on Bing related to "enterprise cloud software."



When zooming in, one can see the myriad of keyword searches in color-coded clusters.



AI is no longer an option, but a requirement for experiencing success with today’s CDJ.

Here are some tips for creating hyper-personalized touchpoints in modern journeys:

- Leverage cloud platforms and share data across all departments for greater customer insights.
- Bring together first-party and third-party data signals to create holistic views of the customer.
- Partner with technology providers and advertising platforms that can analyze the impact of online advertising to offline conversions.
- Focus less on a path-to-purchase and more on an evolved path-to-identity.
- Make all touchpoints shoppable (Instagram/chatbots/local inventory ads).

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