

Gartner Research

Use Gartner's Buy/Own/ Advocate Framework to Map Customer Journeys and Deliver Better Customer Experiences

Augie Ray, Leah Leachman

2 April 2024

Gartner[®]

Use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate Framework to Map Customer Journeys and Deliver Better Customer Experiences

2 April 2024 - ID G00752661 - 9 min read

FOUNDATIONAL This research is reviewed periodically for accuracy.

By Analyst(s): Augie Ray, Leah Leachman

Initiatives: Customer Experience

Knowing customers' desired end-to-end journeys helps organizations recognize how prospects become customers and customers become loyal advocates. Loyalty and customer relationship leaders can use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate Framework to build consensus for customer experience improvements.

Overview

Key Findings

- Organizations that map their customer journeys frequently miss the most powerful customer experience (CX) opportunities, because their map is abbreviated, incomplete and based on assumptions, rather than data.
- Effective CX journey mapping activities uncover the most effective ways to keep and grow customers and convert them into vocal advocates.

Recommendations

To improve your organization's customer experience:

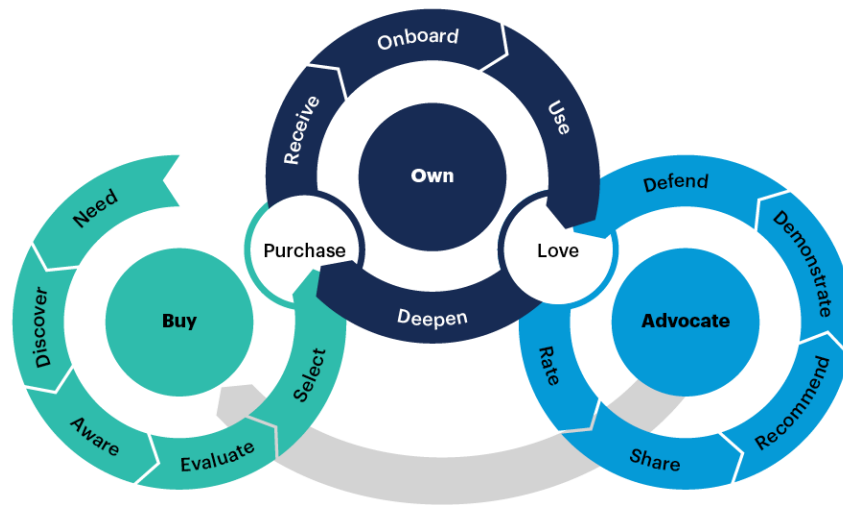
- Use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate customer journey framework as a guide to thoroughly explore the customer journey from beginning to end. Use data and research to understand the journey desired by customers.

- Develop persona-driven customer journey maps that span the end-to-end journey and improve focus on the two essential juncture points — purchase and love. Fail to deliver on purchase, and you do not earn a customer, but failing to deliver on love is what results in higher churn, lower loyalty and poor reputation.

For example, while many other quick-service restaurants seek to maximize seat turnover to improve revenue, Starbucks has long given attention to the CX, creating pleasant environments where customers linger. This strategy, including free Wi-Fi, wireless phone charging and mobile apps to speed ordering, has paid dividends. A decade ago, Starbucks grew to surpass Wendy's and Burger King as the third-largest restaurant chain, despite being outspent on advertising two to eight times by its competitors. ¹ And in 2021, when the pandemic challenged Starbucks' third place strategy, the brand focused on its loyalty program and improved its mobile platform. This created a surge in drive-through and mobile orders, and permitted Starbucks to retain the title of the world's most valuable restaurant brand for the fifth consecutive year. ²

To better attract and retain the customers your brand wants and turn them into business-driving champions, use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate journey framework (see Figure 1). This framework reflects that the goal of marketing is not to simply acquire customers, but to create strong, resilient relationships and greater word of mouth (WOM) that reaches and influences other customers. You cannot grow your brand if it suffers from a "leaky bucket," losing existing customers as fast as you can acquire new ones, and a strong journey framework can help you to find and plug those leaks.

Figure 1: The Buy/Own/Advocate Journey

The Buy/Own/Advocate Journey

Source: Gartner
752661_C

Gartner

Introduction

CX leaders must focus on the experiences that turn prospects into customers and customers into loyal advocates. This requires a customer-centric approach based on a solid understanding of the customer, balancing immediate brand benefits, such as sales, with leading indicators of success relating to the strength and quality of customer relationships.

Use the Buy/Own/Advocate Customer Journey Framework to Avoid Missteps That Harm Your CX Efforts

Customer journey maps are important tools for those seeking to improve their brand's CX. Journey maps capture customers' experiences, needs, perceptions and motivations in a way that identifies your greatest CX problems and opportunities (see Practical Steps to Turn Customer Journey Maps Into CX Opportunities and Actions).

Brands that fail to consider the comprehensive journey from beginning to end may miss the most powerful touchpoints, opportunities and outcomes. This results in a failure to identify key touchpoints, poor analysis of the root causes of CX issues and an inability to identify the most powerful opportunities. While considering the end-to-end journey, there are four common pitfalls that can be easily avoided with careful planning (see Table 1).

Table 1: Common Journey Mapping Pitfalls and Solutions

(Enlarged table in Appendix)

Customer Journey Mapping Pitfalls	Proposed Fixes
Beginning the customer journey too late can omit touchpoints where CX issues may originate, such as the stages when customers become aware of their need, begin research or discover the brand.	Begin your end-to-end customer journey maps before or at the moment when your customer becomes aware of their need for your product or service . Avoid starting your CX journey maps when customers click an ad, arrive at your website or enter your store.
Ending your journey map too early by focusing only on “path to purchase” or when the product is delivered neglects portions of the journey where your current customer relationships are strengthened.	End your map at the true end of the journey. Gartner research indicates journey maps are more effective at driving CX outcomes if they end when customers are appreciably satisfied or exhibit loyalty and advocacy behaviors.
Designing your journey map for a single channel reduces your strategy to a narrow and limited approach, rather than one that seeks to understand customers’ needs and drives sustainable growth and loyalty.	Identify customer needs or goals at every stage of the journey before pinpointing the proper or desired channels . An effective CX journey map will reveal what customers want and need at each stage and where your organization fails to meet those expectations (see Use a Customer-First, Channel-Second Strategy to Design Experiences That Drive Loyalty).
Omitting journey steps through the Advocate cycle ignores the power of WOM. Advocacy isn’t just one touchpoint, but many, typically moving from simpler and easier advocate behaviors (such as online ratings) to more difficult and time-consuming ones (such as offering case studies or defending the brand from criticism).	Recognize how customers can be invited to move from easier and less risky WOM behaviors to more meaningful and committed customer advocacy helps brands to recognize what customers need and how brands can trigger advocate behaviors (see Design Customer Experiences to Improve Brand Advocacy and Growth).

Source: Gartner (June 2021)

Use the Buy/Own/Advocate Framework to Map the Entire Customer Journey and Uncover Your Greatest CX Challenges and Opportunities

Use the Buy/Own/Advocate Framework to guide your journey mapping exercises and customize the framework to fit your industry, brand and key personas. Individual customer journeys are often not linear, but regardless of how someone arrives at any given step, your brand must be prepared to serve customer needs and help them to advance.

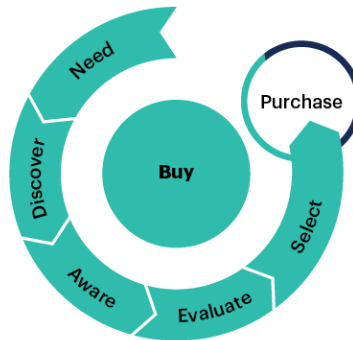
Before you begin, make sure you have the customer data and research you need, and convene a cross-functional group of employees to participate who are prepared to focus your journeys on key personas or needs-based segments (see [Ignition Guide to Building a Customer Experience Journey Map](#)). Once you have the right personas, data and participants, you can begin to understand the customer journey. The best approach isn’t to focus on specific channels or even touchpoints at first, but to understand what customers need and want and what moves them from one step to the next. Use your data and research to recognize where your organization is effective at moving the customer forward and where it fails to do so.

The Buy/Own/Advocate journey consists of three interdependent cycles with discrete stages.

Buy Cycle

The Buy cycle starts with a prospect not yet aware that your product or service exists and ends with that person completing a purchase and becoming a customer (see Figure 2). It includes the following steps:

- **Need:** Understand key segments and personas of your customers and prospects, including their needs and motivations, and what triggers interest to drive customer journey mapping and strategy development.
- **Discover:** Based on an understanding of your customers' discovery process, make unaware prospects cognizant of your brand using a combination of marketing tactics.
- **Aware:** Increase knowledge of the benefits your brand offers and help customers understand how your solutions meet their unique needs.
- **Evaluate:** Clearly communicate your point of difference using the criteria your customers most care about to increase their buying confidence.
- **Select:** Deliver tailored product or service recommendations to help customers identify the offering to best suit their needs.
- **Purchase:** Make it easy, safe and expedient for your customers to complete a transaction across relevant channels.

Figure 2: The Buy Cycle Moves Prospects to Become Customers**The Buy Cycle Moves Prospects to Become Customers**

Source: Gartner
752661_C

Gartner

Own Cycle

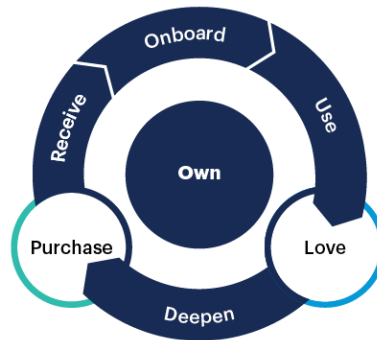
The Own cycle begins at the point of purchase and ends when your customers aren't merely satisfied with your product, but are in love with it, deepening the relationship with the brand (see Figure 3). If "love" isn't the proper word within your organization, you can label this step "strong brand affinity," but it won't alter the concept or the importance of recognizing what delivers customers to this stage in the journey. This cycle isn't finished until your brand creates a loyal customer, and an outcome doesn't happen unless your brand provides the features, products and services customers need and want. The Own cycle encompasses steps such as:

- **Receive:** Improve product or service delivery; give control to customers of where, when and how delivery occurs; and use the moment of delivery to immediately foster mutually beneficial engagement.
- **Onboard:** Begin to foster the postpurchase relationship by welcoming the new customers to your brand. Make them aware that your brand cares as much about them after purchase as before, and help them quickly and immediately derive the value they expect from your product or service.
- **Use:** Ensure your customer is satisfied and using your product in a way that permits your brand to deliver its full value. Be proactive, not just reactive, to customers' changing needs.

- **Love:** Move customers beyond modest satisfaction to substantial levels of satisfaction that deliver emotional connections with the brand. Identify and design the stories, services and experiences that will create affinity and encourage deeper, more-resilient bonds.
- **Deepen:** Nurture customers to attain stronger relationships. Protect their interests, earn their trust, provide more value, encourage greater loyalty and use your knowledge of existing customers to offer additional products and services that satisfy their needs and wants.

Figure 3: The Own Cycle Turns Customers Into Brand Loyalists

The Own Cycle Turns Customers Into Brand Loyalists



Source: Gartner
752661_C

Gartner

Advocate Cycle

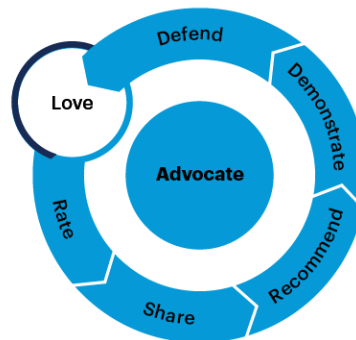
Not every loyal customer will become an advocate, which is why brand advocates are a precious asset that must be cultivated. When properly fostered and encouraged in the Advocate cycle, customers positively impact awareness, consideration and purchase for others. As a result, they willingly funnel prospects back into the Buy cycle (see Figure 4). Note that the Advocate cycle is a journey unto itself, moving from activities that are easy and riskless for customers (such as rating products) to engagement that requires more time and energy of the customer (such as demonstrating the product). Different activities in the Advocate cycle include:

- **Rate:** Secure ratings and reviews from your current customers and make them available to prospects where and when they are evaluating your solutions.

- **Share:** Encourage customers to share their positive brand experiences and referrals with friends, family and peers, rather than simply liking or retweeting your brand's social media posts.
- **Recommend:** Encourage your customers to endorse your brand, telling others why they should consider your products and services.
- **Demonstrate:** Create opportunities for customers to exhibit your product and service to others, either in person or via online sites like YouTube and TikTok. Find and curate similar unprompted user-generated content that lives in blogs or on other social sites.
- **Defend:** The highest form of brand advocacy is when loyal customers help to shield your brand from reputational issues.

Figure 4: The Advocate Cycle Shepherds Customers From Easier and Less Meaningful Advocacy Behaviors to More Powerful Drivers of Reputation and WOM

The Advocate Cycle Shepherds Customers From Easier and Less Meaningful Advocacy Behaviors to More Powerful Drivers of Reputation and WOM



Source: Gartner
752661_C

Gartner.

Analysis Evidence

¹ Starbucks Hits No. 3 Despite Limited Ad Spending, Ad Age.

² Starbucks' Grind Pays Off as It's Named Most Valuable Restaurant Brand for 5th Consecutive Year, Brand Directory.

³ Social-Media Battles, Massive Crowds, and Overworked Employees: Inside the Rise and Fall of Popeyes' Chicken Sandwich, Insider.

Document Revision History

Use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate Framework to Map Customer Journeys and Deliver Better Customer Experiences - 1 October 2019

Use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate Framework to Map Customer Journeys and Deliver Better Customer Experiences - 15 February 2018

Use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate Framework to Map Customer Journeys and Deliver Better Customer Experiences - 1 August 2016

Recommended by the Authors

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

How to Turn Persona-Driven Customer Journey Maps Into an Actionable, Cross-Functional CX Plan

Develop Archetypes to Ground Your Persona Research and Development

Where to Find Data to Inform Personas and Journey Maps

Toolkit: The Gartner Customer Experience Management Maturity Model for CMOs

© 2024 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. Gartner is a registered trademark of Gartner, Inc. and its affiliates. This publication may not be reproduced or distributed in any form without Gartner's prior written permission. It consists of the opinions of Gartner's research organization, which should not be construed as statements of fact. While the information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, Gartner disclaims all warranties as to the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of such information. Although Gartner research may address legal and financial issues, Gartner does not provide legal or investment advice and its research should not be construed or used as such. Your access and use of this publication are governed by [Gartner's Usage Policy](#). Gartner prides itself on its reputation for independence and objectivity. Its research is produced independently by its research organization without input or influence from any third party. For further information, see "[Guiding Principles on Independence and Objectivity](#)." Gartner research may not be used as input into or for the training or development of generative artificial intelligence, machine learning, algorithms, software, or related technologies.

Table 1: Common Journey Mapping Pitfalls and Solutions

Customer Journey Mapping Pitfalls	Proposed Fixes
Beginning the customer journey too late can omit touchpoints where CX issues may originate, such as the stages when customers become aware of their need, begin research or discover the brand.	Begin your end-to-end customer journey maps before or at the moment when your customer becomes aware of their need for your product or service . Avoid starting your CX journey maps when customers click an ad, arrive at your website or enter your store.
Ending your journey map too early by focusing only on “path to purchase” or when the product is delivered neglects portions of the journey where your current customer relationships are strengthened.	End your map at the true end of the journey . Gartner research indicates journey maps are more effective at driving CX outcomes if they end when customers are appreciably satisfied or exhibit loyalty and advocacy behaviors.
Designing your journey map for a single channel reduces your strategy to a narrow and limited approach, rather than one that seeks to understand customers’ needs and drives sustainable growth and loyalty.	Identify customer needs or goals at every stage of the journey before pinpointing the proper or desired channels . An effective CX journey map will reveal what customers want and need at each stage and where your organization fails to meet those expectations (see Use a Customer-First, Channel-Second Strategy to Design Experiences That Drive Loyalty).
Omitting journey steps through the Advocate cycle ignores the power of WOM. Advocacy isn’t just one touchpoint, but many, typically moving from simpler and easier advocate behaviors (such as online ratings) to more difficult and time-consuming ones (such as offering case studies or defending the brand from criticism).	Recognize how customers can be invited to move from easier and less risky WOM behaviors to more meaningful and committed customer advocacy helps brands to recognize what customers need and how brands can trigger advocate behaviors (see Design Customer Experiences to Improve Brand Advocacy and Growth).

Source: Gartner (June 2021)

Actionable, objective insight

Explore these additional complimentary resources and tools for marketing leaders:



Guide

CMOs: Time to Be More Customer-Centric

Drive loyalty and growth with an effective, sustainable CX strategy that strengthens customer relationships.

[Download Guide](#)



Webinar

Orchestrate High-Value B2B Buyer Engagement

Determine the types of interactions that your buyers find most valuable and take action to increase omnichannel B2B buyer value.

[Watch Webinar](#)



Tool

Gartner Marketing Budget & Efficiency Benchmark

Use this tool to optimize your spend and prioritize investments aligned to strategic priorities.

[Learn More](#)



Conference

Gartner Marketing Symposium/Xpo™

Discover key take-aways from the world's most important gathering of CMOs and marketing executives.

[Learn More](#)

Already a client?

Get access to even more resources in your client portal. [Log In](#)

Connect With Us

Get actionable, objective insight that drives smarter decisions and stronger performance on your mission-critical priorities. Contact us to become a client:

U.S.: 1 866 263 8917

International: +44 (0) 3301 628 476

[Become a Client](#)

Learn more about Gartner for Marketing Leaders

gartner.com/en/marketing

Stay connected to the latest insight

