# Understanding the Why Behind Consumer Digital Shopping Behaviors

R etail analysts are in near universal agreement that providing an excellent customer experience is vital to retailers' success in today's hypercompetitive marketplace. As the pandemic rocketed the growth of e-commerce forward by 10 years in three months, e-commerce became an even bigger part of that end-to-end experience. Even if the ultimate purchase ends up happening in-store, 63% of all shopping journeys now begin online. That makes the digital shopping experience mission-critical to the success of almost every retail business.

But retailers' considerable investments in the design and marketing of their digital shopping experiences can be brought to their knees when shoppers encounter points of friction, such as an image that won't load or a nonfunctional coupon code. That friction shows up in the form of low conversion rates, abandoned shopping carts and fewer return visits.

Unfortunately, many retailers lack true insight into the causes of these behaviors. While web analytics tell retailers where consumers came from and at what point they left, retailers often don't know what happened during that journey that could be driving the disappointing metrics, particularly if the last page they were on is not the single cause of that behavior.

Digital experience intelligence can reveal those gaps. By applying artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to granular data from customer visits, digital experience analytics not only reveals where and why issues occur, but also measures their business impact so retailers know where to direct their teams to make changes. Following proven best practices, retailers can discover where their digital shopping journeys break down and take action to fill the gaps and boost customer satisfaction, revenue and customer lifetime value.
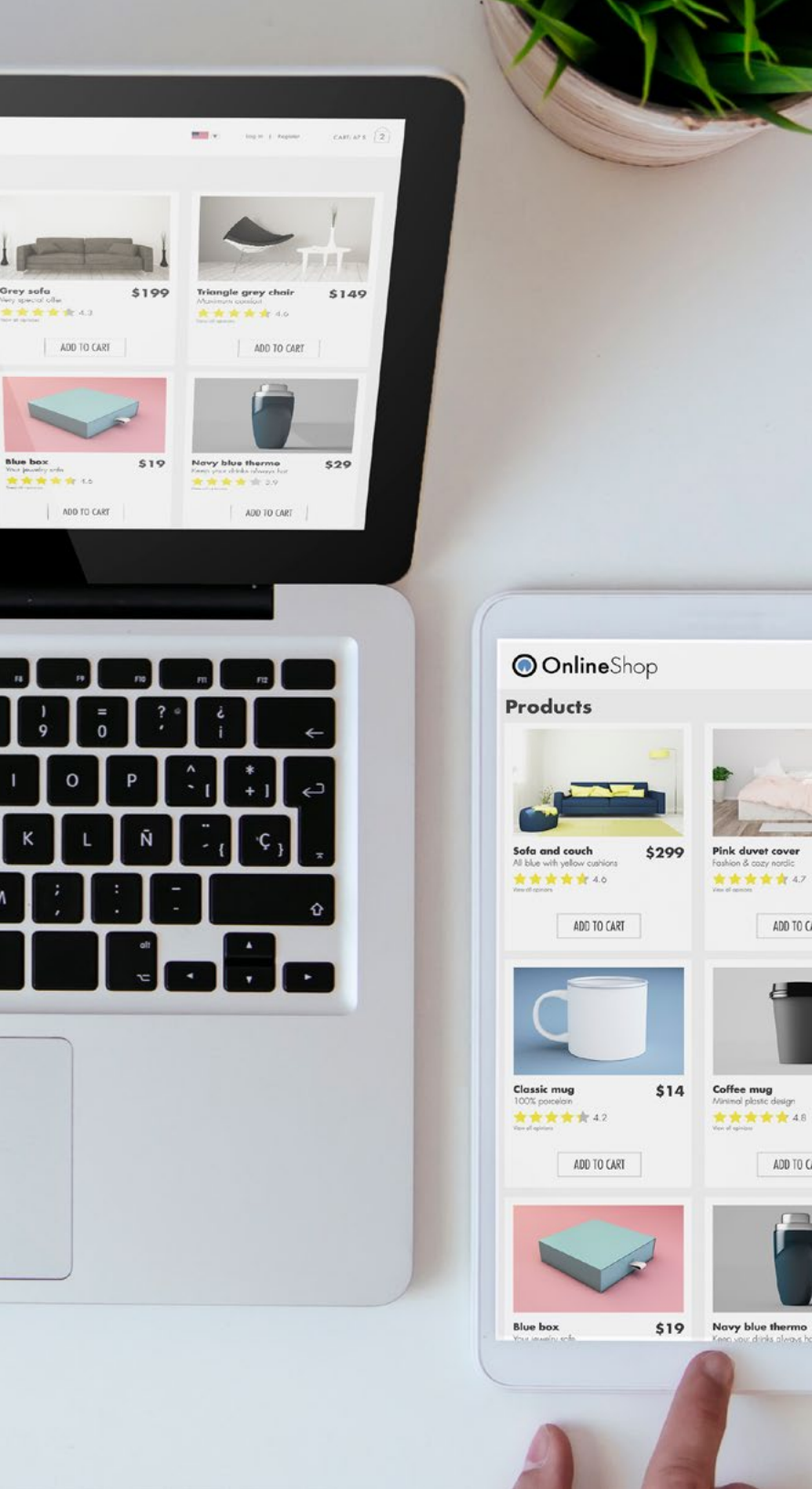
# The Essential Role of Customer Centricity

Retailers are well aware of the critical role of customer experience. Fully 64% are working on improving customer satisfaction scores or experience measures. They recognize that delivering on the promise of a seamless, unified customer experience requires scrutinizing every customer journey, removing any obstacles and innovating wherever possible to stand out from competitors that are just a click away.

"If a brand is unable to provide widespread ease of use — whether during the research, decision-making, checkout or delivery phases of the shopping process — a consumer will take their business elsewhere, and in the blink of an eye," according to RSR Research.

Gartner says CX has become so important that it now drives over two-thirds of customer loyalty, outperforming brand and price combined.

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# The Where and Why of Digital CX Gaps

Points of friction can occur anywhere in the digital shopping journey, and typically they fall into one of two categories: user-centered design issues and technical glitches. A site that isn't organized the way the customer expects it, or provides too much or too little information, can frustrate the shopper. Third-party integrations, such as store locators and payment platforms, and software bugs are common causes of technical errors. And then there are gaps in the flow across channels. For example, the digital expectations set around in-store pickup may not correlate to the experience at the physical store, such as failing to use similar signage and verbiage.

Small gaps in the user experience became chasms when online shopping surged during the pandemic. New customers not well versed in digital interactions with brands joined digital natives with elevated expectations to bog down site functionality. Priorities also shifted as demand for fast delivery spiked and retailers had to quickly provide new offerings, such as curbside pickup.

With new channels, such as social shopping adding to the complexity, it's more important than ever to map customer journeys and identify and remove obstacles that stop shoppers from converting into customers. Often, it's not just one friction point; it's the cumulative effect of multiple micro-moments of annoyance that reach a tipping point. Those can be the hardest to understand, yet they have the most effect on conversion rates.

The many nuances of digital experience are why it's so important to study a customer's entire journey and not macro-level metrics from web analytics, such as how they arrived at the site or when they clicked away. Retailers can't improve what they don't measure.

Because of this they need a way to see every click, scroll and tap throughout the customer journey, mine that data for insights on what is working well and what is not, and share those across the organization.

The most successful retailers turn digital experience analytics into transformational programs that infuse customer-centric thinking and processes into their organizations. By defining the strategy, key capabilities, governance model, business processes and technologies required to support a digital customer experience focus, they're ensuring that future enhancements to their digital shopping journeys elevate, and never detract, from CX.

# Best Practices for an Elevated Digital CX

The most effective way to optimize consumers' digital experience with a brand is to adopt proven best practices to identify and remove points of friction and build in elements of the digital journey that have proved effective at leading retailers. Many are enabled by a digital experience analytics platform dedicated to end-to-end capture and analysis of every customer journey.

**Best practices include:**

**Capture all digital customer sessions,** whether they're on the app, the web, social or another channel. Capturing 100% of customer sessions is the only way to understand how customer journeys intersect, to optimize AI to identify patterns versus one-off incidents to prioritize resources and to ensure all roles within the organization can access the data they need. When engineering or DevOps can see a pattern of errors, for example, it helps them direct their work to the biggest points of need. CX and marketing folks can use the same data to adjust messaging or the way information is delivered.

**Set up processes to make data actionable through continuous improvement.** Successfully infusing customer data and insights to ensure customer-centric decision-making across the organization requires setting up new workflows and processes. It's important that the new workflows are based on the future state rather than the way things are already done. Customer-centric workflows assign actions and responsibilities for the outputs of advanced tools, such as a digital experience analytics platform so the retailer can continually identify digital customer behaviors as they evolve, test and optimize the solution and then repeat that cycle.

**100%**

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**Leverage ML and AI to identify patterns.** AI and ML are key to taking customer-behavior analytics to the next level, detecting otherwise difficult-to-identify behaviors such as anomaly, engagement and struggle detection — difficulties customers encounter as they shop. ML algorithms help retailers understand the seasonality and expected variation of specific metrics. They can also automate the process of generating insights by comparing values over different time periods and then identifying the correlations between behaviors so retailers can predict and even shape them moving forward.

**Make metrics work for you.** In the world of data-driven retail, metrics are the star players. But a metric such as load time for an image doesn't clearly translate into the ultimate goal of giving the user experience journey more impact. Rather than shaping the business around the metrics available, it's important to start with the goal of continually enhancing CX and working backward to define the appropriate metrics, along with workflows to make them actionable. AI can also help identify new patterns or behaviors that should be tracked and measured to drive better customer experience.

**Use analytics to enhance A/B testing.** Testing and optimizing are important steps in good app and website design, to measure the success of one variant versus another in driving a target outcome. But what's missing from many A/B tests are insights into why one was better than another. By overlaying a variant over specific business flows, journeys or interaction maps and applying AI, retailers can gain insight into why a particular approach converted more shoppers. Those lessons can inform future design choices.

**Quantify points of friction to prioritize actions based on business impact.** Analyzing 100% of customers' digital sessions reveals a lot of insights and opportunities for improvement. But they do not all have equal impact. That's why it's important to assign a value to a given issue. For example, the customer encountered this error on the website, which prevented her from converting, resulting in a loss of revenue. Or this upsell offer did not display on mobile app sessions, preventing incremental revenue.

Robust analytics help retailers attribute financial value to the CX issues they discover so they can prioritize which ones to focus on. That's particularly helpful to receive in real time so teams can act fast to address the biggest issues and capture more revenue. Conversely, examining successful sessions and understanding their value provide examples of positive customer journeys to emulate. Research shows how effective digital enhancements can be; improving checkout design, for example, can drive an average 35.26% increase in the conversion rate for a large e-commerce site.

**35.26%**

Digital enhancements increase in the conversion rate for a large e-commerce site.

**Share digital CX data across the enterprise.** Many retail departments have their own specialized tools and analytics related to their work. Those geared to a marketer will look very different from what engineering or DevOps uses, for example. But that makes it hard to identify and solve CX problems.

A best practice used by CX leaders is to establish a business insights group that works cross-functionally with all these disciplines. This group is supported by a digital experience analytics platform they can all access to share and collaborate on CX. When the insights group uncovers an issue degrading a customer journey, marketing, engineering, CX, DevOps and other stakeholders can see a re-creation of the issue rather than trying to simulate it in a separate tool. Then they can collaborate on a solution in real time on a single, shared platform, speeding resolution and delivering a better CX to drive revenue sooner.

**Choose the right partner.** A digital experience analytics platform that can enable these best practices is a must to support continuous improvement of CX. But a great partner does more than that. First, they offer exceptional ease of use; it's simple for users to configure and use the platform for their specific needs without help, and they can collaborate with colleagues on the tool. A great platform has best practices built into the solution and bundles in professional services to optimize its use.

Second, it's a true platform rather than a tool, meaning it uses native integrations and open APIs to link seamlessly with other important apps and sources of data, such as customer support, trouble tickets and social media.

A third criteria is automatic tagging, so it doesn't take a team spending weeks tagging every part of the website or app to collect data before you can even start analyzing CX. Automatic tagging does this in minutes.

Finally, e-commerce involves sensitive data, even when anonymized, so robust security and compliance are a must: ISO certifications, GDPR, HIPAA, PCI compliance and more should be mandatory. Processes such as encryption, role-based masking, single-tenant environments and data anonymization offer extra protection customers will appreciate.

# It Pays to Understand Why

Customer shopping journeys have become a complex blend of digital and physical. The ability to rapidly analyze consumer behaviors, understand the whys behind them and then smooth out points of friction — without waiting months after the fact — is quickly becoming a core competency of 21st-century retail. By removing friction from digital shopping through a well-crafted digital experience analytics platform, retailers can increase conversions, reduce cart abandonment and lower support demand. In turn, this means greater customer satisfaction, increased revenue and higher customer lifetime value for the retailer.

**Click here to learn more about leveraging digital experience analytics to deliver a better CX.**

# GLASSBOX

Glassbox empowers organizations to create frictionless digital journeys for their customers.

Our digital experience analytics platform works in real time across mobile apps and websites to accelerate loyalty and growth. Through AI-driven visualization and analytics tools, Glassbox helps teams to prioritize customer experience and digital product enhancements from a single collaborative system. Teams across the organization, from ITand product management to marketing and compliance, can understand user struggles, visualize the customer journey and optimize every step. Hundreds of enterprises across multiple industries choose Glassbox for easy, secure and private cloud-based deployments.

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