

Choosing Channels



How to select the most effective marketing channels

Your brand is every perception of every experience associated with your company – from using your website to speaking with a representative over the phone. Every single marketing channel you use is important. However, selecting the most effective marketing channels and getting the mix right is not as simple as it used to be.

The media channels that you choose to bring your marketing strategy to life are just as important as the messages that you communicate on these platforms. This is because each channel creates a unique customer experience – which impacts the extent to which your message resonates with your audience.

Today, there are an overwhelming number of digitally powered channels in the mix. Marketers can now connect with their customers using myriad platforms, from email and pay-per-click advertising to social media and video sharing services. And as new technologies emerge, these digital channels evolve. For example, AI capabilities such as machine learning and natural language processing can now make automated communication channels (like virtual assistants) more sophisticated.

However, while the number of media channel choices seems almost limitless, marketing budgets are not – and neither are customers' attention spans. With so much choice available on the market, the process of pinpointing the most effective engagement platforms is far more complex and overwhelming than it ever was.

Choosing Channels

Key points to consider

> Cost

Digital marketing channels have democratised both B2C and B2B communications, enabling businesses of all sizes to reach more customers, at a lower cost. Traditional marketing channels, on the other hand, can add immense value but are relatively expensive – so these need to be targeted wisely, after careful cost-benefit analysis.

> Data and insights

Brands can now gather information on their customers' digital interactions, transactions, preferences, interests and other behaviour patterns in a way that businesses have never been able to before. Beyond this, it's often necessary (certainly in case of B2B marketing) to augment the intelligence gathered via digital channels with insights that are garnered through real conversations with customers.

> Authenticity

Digital channels may allow you to personalise your communications at scale, but if you only engage via digital channels, there is a risk that your customers will lose touch with the human side of your business. For this reason, it makes sense to also include channels that allow you to cultivate personal connections with your most valued customers. Recent research found that more than a quarter (26%) of CMOs want to make their interactions more human ^[1]. Traditional "physical" marketing platforms such as events and live conversations over the phone are the ideal channels for interacting with customers on a personal level and cultivating authentic human connections with these individuals.

Research shows that blending digital and physical channels is best

Forrester's Customer Experience Index ^[2], which measures how effectively a business's CX strengthens the loyalty of its customers, has recently highlighted the importance of providing a multi-faceted customer experience that includes both digital and physical interactions. (These physical experiences include live conversations with customers, over the phone or in person.)

The study revealed that customers gain the most value from a hybrid experience, where both digital and physical channels are used. This blended approach has consistently outperformed purely digital or purely physical experiences – in terms of its ability to create more positive emotional outcomes, including helping more customers feel more "appreciated, confident, delighted, happy, respected and valued".

Choosing Channels

These positive emotional outcomes translate into tangible business benefits. A single point in improvement can yield hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue growth – providing a compelling reason for organisations to find the perfect balance between digital and physical channels.

Combining Channels: 5 Key Steps

It's clear that a mix of digital and physical customer experiences are required. But with so many channels to choose from, it's not that easy to get the balance right.

Here are some recommendations:

1. Let the customer guide you

A good way to begin is to think about your channels from your customers' perspective and not your own. By gaining an understanding of who your customers are and the types of interactions they prefer, you'll be better positioned to choose channels that are impactful.

Beyond knowing their preferences, also consider where your target audience is active; and which channels they are most receptive to from a marketing perspective. Individuals in more traditional sectors, for example, may be less active on digital channels and/or work in a culture that expects human contact. By contrast, individuals working in a fast-moving technology sectors may expect high levels of responsiveness and consistent experiences across their devices.

Be wary of generalisation, however. Use analytics and other research to build your understanding of your audience's activities, preferences and attitudes. When you delve deeper, you may find, for example, that C-suite decision makers in large organisations use email for most of their communication but are not receptive to marketing emails.

The more granular your understanding of your customers is, the more likely you'll be able to define your channel strategy according to cost-optimisation. If you know that certain higher value customers prefer conversing in person, it's worthwhile investing in physical channels for these priority accounts.

2. Combine carefully

A customer's experience is the sum of all the interactions they have with your brand, both digitally and physically. Your channels need to support each other and not just be single-purpose or sit in silos. This way, you'll be able to benefit from the "combinatorial effect" of your channel choices – where every platform supports the other to create an enhanced and frictionless customer experience.

Choosing Channels

Don't, for example, rely too heavily on automation and AI without human oversight and intervention. Automation can handle routine interactions while AI can handle complex data processing and analytics (or even combine with automation to create channels like chatbots, which can be used to handle a greater range of rule-based customer service tasks). However, let experienced and skilled humans deal with any interaction that requires emotional intelligence, rapport-building, human judgement, adaptability, strategic thinking and other uniquely human skills.

While synchronicity is important, be careful not to replicate the same experiences across every channel. Keep your core marketing message consistent but adjust it to suit the characteristics of each channel. For instance, if you have run an email campaign, you can't use the same copy in full length for your social media posts or online banner ads.

3. Be relevant

The channels you choose must be relevant to your customers, and represent your corporate identity. They must also be capable of communicating your message effectively. For example, is your proposition ideally suited to a visual presentation format, using an infographic or a simple video? Is there a lot of complexity, which is best communicated over the phone with an online demo? Or, is a direct mail piece with a sample going to make your brand stand out?

Each channel must reinforce your brand messages, values and personality – reassuring customers that they're making the right choice to be invested in a relationship with you.

4. Gather both data *and* insights

Technologies like AI can significantly ramp up your data gathering, processing and analytics capabilities – even going so far as to predict future customer behaviours. However, it's often advisable to complement this technology-driven intelligence with insights that are gathered through real, two-way conversations with your customers. When data and insights combine, you can paint a holistic picture of who your customers are, what motivates them, what challenges them and so forth.

The key takeaway here is that the channels you use shape the type of information you are able to gather. On one hand, digital channels provide you with access to a large volume of transactional and behavioural data. On the other hand, human-driven channels allow you to gather deeper insights that are shared in moments when customers feel comfortable enough to open up and really express what is on their minds. Together, these data sets and insights can power a truly effective communication strategy!

Choosing Channels

5. Measure and test

It's advisable to monitor, analyse and optimise the efficacy of every channel choice, on a regular basis. You can also use analytics to gain clarity on:

- The devices your customers are using
- The channels they prefer using for communications, information gathering, socialising and entertainment
- The times and days your customers are most active on these channels

As you measure and test, the information you uncover may encourage you to adjust your channel strategy. It's important to remain open-minded and be willing to test alternative channel choices – and adopt these if they work better than those you are currently invested in.

Connect and build trust

Finally, one of the most critical elements of every channel strategy is **trust**. Trust is the foundation of any human relationship, especially in business where time and money are invested in the relationship, and where decision-makers are asked to put their faith in you to help them meet their responsibilities and goals.

For example, the channels you use need to enable you to manage your customers' personal information fairly and comply with the relevant data protection regulations. Make sure that you are always transparent about how you're collecting and processing customer information. This will help you to establish your business as one that is honest and ethical.

Your channels must also enable you to build trust by making a meaningful connection at key points along the customer journey. This is where traditional channels, such as voice contact, can give you the power to forge authentic one-to-one connections with your valued customers, giving you an opportunity to establish rapport and build trust.

Since 1990, The Telemarketing Company has been helping its clients establish and maintain trust with valued prospects and customers. To discuss how we can help you enhance your customer experience through human interaction, get in touch today.

[1] Forrester, Rethink the Role of the CMO

[2] <https://www.forrester.com/Customer-Experience-Index-%28CX-Index%29>



Hopefully this article will have inspired you to think a bit more about telemarketing and the value it can bring to your business. For more information on our services visit our website, or give us a call to discuss your requirements and how The Telemarketing Company can help support your sales and marketing strategy.

The Telemarketing Company

26-27 Regency Square
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 2FH
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1273 765 000
www.ttmc.co.uk
info@ttmc.co.uk

Awards and Accreditations

