

Online enablers create customer touchpoints along various aspects of the brand marketing funnel. While most brands have their own assets across the entire spectrum of the marketing funnel, the objective of this feature is to give an overview of online enablers who can bring incremental touchpoints for your brand.

The marketing funnel starts with the Discovery of the brand by a prospective customer, followed by the brand's ability to influence the customer's decision. After purchase, the brand provides any support as demanded by the customer. With these data points your brand can deploy predictive analytics to retain existing customers. Depending upon the customer's experience with the first four touchpoints, the customer may become a channel for advocacy of your brand. As a marketing professional it is useful to understand the online enablers' landscape and deploy them tactfully.

E-Commerce Aggregators: Websites like Flipkart, Myntra, Jabong, Amazon, etc, aggregate your products via a marketplace or warehousing model. Submitting detailed product information to these portals can influence a customer's decision, but it does not get you direct access to the customer. This is because the objectives of the portal and your brand are misaligned. The portal would like your customer to buy from the portal, thereby generating commission

Smartphones and tablets have changed the way people shop. Today, it is all about having top of mind recall for your brand and the market dynamics make it imperative for your brand to be 'seen' online in real time. **Abhishek Dadoo, founder-Shoffr.com** shares how best you can generate interest for your brand using the online enablers.



ONLINE ENABLERS

CREATE NEW CUSTOMER TOUCHPOINTS FOR YOUR BRAND

revenues for the portal. In any case, e-commerce aggregators provide visibility all across India, even where your brand cannot physically reach the customer.

Search Engines: For your brand's digital assets to get discovered by a customer on Google, Yahoo or Bing,

it is imperative you get your Search Engine Optimization and content strategy right. However, the search engine does not support you across the marketing funnel. As such, optimizing your digital assets to take the customer through the rest of the journey is purely the onus of the brand.

Daily Deal Websites: GroupOn, TimesDeal, etc. are much like e-commerce aggregators facilitating discovery and influencing decision making. They do not facilitate direct contact with the customer until after the purchase decision is made and the customer comes to your store to redeem the offer. However, the element of brand advocacy is highly pronounced in the case of daily deals websites. Most daily deal websites have a group discount feature where the deal is only unlocked if a predefined



number of people purchase the deal in advance. As such, every interested customer shares the deal with their social network in order to reach the critical mass for the deal to be unlocked for their personal consumption.

Social Media: They play across most segments of the marketing funnel. Since predictive analytics data resides only in the brand's internal databases, social media channels would not have access to that information. Allowing brands to get discovered via advertising and advocacy by existing fans and followers, Facebook Pages and Twitter handles make a great medium for influencing customer decision and provide customer support. A word of caution—with the social media frenzy these days, identifying signals from genuine customers versus fake social media accounts is becoming increasingly difficult. After all its easy to deploy click farms when an email-id forms the only basis of opening new accounts on social media networks.

Webrooming Apps: Just like social media, location aware webrooming apps, like Shoffr, also play across most segments of the marketing funnel. There are two key differences however. Firstly the unique identifier for a customer on webrooming apps is their verified mobile number. This drastically reduces the number of fake users on a mobile app's network. Secondly, mobile apps are location aware. This allows a touch-point with your customer just as he is making a decision to buy from a nearby store. This online touch-point leading to offline conversion is unique to mobile apps only. Furthermore, customer support and advocacy happens on a real-time basis. For example, a mobile app can intimate a store manager of an onlooking customer and the store manager can request a direct contact with the customer in real-time. Also, when an on-looker advocates a brand with her nearby friends, the likelihood of friends converging at the store or taking interest in the brand is significantly higher than traditional social media share. The next

Online Enablers	Discovery	Decision	Support	Predictive Analytics	Advocacy
E-Commerce Aggregators	✓	✓			✓
Search Engines	✓				
Daily Deal Websites	✓	✓			✓
Social Media	✓	✓	✓		✓
Web-rooming Location Aware Mobile App	✓	✓	✓		✓
Online Directories	✓		✓		
Credit Card Companies	✓	✓			
Loyalty Management Companies			✓	✓	

* The logos used in this representation are symbolid

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step in evolution of webrooming apps is accepting mobile payments on behalf of the offline retailer.

Online Directories: JustDial is a great way to get discovered by nearby customers. However, your brand's influence over the customer remains marginal in this scenario. While your brand gets a lead to the customer in real-time, in the absence is content related to the brand, the customer is left hanging without adequate knowledge to make an informed decision about your brand. Hence the onus of managing any future relationships with the customer is left entirely to the brand.

Credit Card Companies: Visa, MasterCard—and Amex—they all have their deal directories, which they send

even so often to their users. While this limits the proliferation of your communication to a broader user base, it does have a captive audience who can be influenced to buy from your store using their credit cards. In of itself, neither do credit card companies provide a direction interaction channel with the customer, nor do they facilitate brand advocacy by the customer post sale.

Loyalty Management Companies: Salesforce, Capillary Technologies and Aimia are some companies that come to mind when you think about loyalty and data analytics for existing customers. They integrate with the retailer's Enterprise Resource Management software, provide predictive analytics, and can help the retailer launch targeted campaigns for their existing customer base. However, getting discovered by new customers and viral advocacy is not in their domain. Customer support and analytics are critical in lowering customer retention costs for retailers and hence loyalty management companies fill an important gap in a retailer's marketing funnel.

Every brand has their own short, medium, and long term strategy for leveraging all or some of the enablers mentioned above. Before making a decision, brands ought to perform a cost-benefit analysis and figure out if the brand's objectives are aligned with those of the enabler. **IR**