



THE TIME IS NOW: A ROADMAP FOR THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY TO PIVOT TO DIGITAL

As a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, the automotive industry is experiencing unprecedented challenges on a global scale. Production was temporarily at a standstill, people are unwilling to visit dealers, and media consumption increases.

In addition, consumers have become very comfortable with digital ways of doing things, which, even after the crisis has passed, will become a permanent feature of many buying cycles.

So while this time poses major questions and challenges for the automotive industry, it's also the time for the breakthrough of a long-awaited digital innovation: online car sales. There's no doubt that original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and dealers need to prepare for a growing online market. Even before the crisis, two thirds of potential customers were already prepared to purchase a new or used car completely online (MHP, 2018: Online Car Sales 2018).

In any case, the majority of customer journeys already start with gathering information online, fully self-motivated and without a dealer's assistance. And this trend has been given added momentum by the Covid-19 outbreak.

So, how can OEMs build trust with their customers online? What are the success factors for a memorable and differentiated digital experience? And what does the optimum online sales process look like?

The Digital Customer Journey

The basis for the customer journey are the five key stages of the classic buying cycle: awareness, information gathering, configuration/selection consultation, purchase and retention. At each stage, there are different touchpoints with the OEM or the dealer in order to satisfy specific customer needs. Naturally, the aim at each stage is to increase customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy. And to truly differentiate the brand. Traditionally, almost all of these touchpoints had a physical element, supported by digital plat-



forms. But now, that dependency needs to be flipped on its head, with digital as the channel of choice. A car is a significant purchase and we know that customers are channel-sensitive and expect meaningful, personalised support at each phase of the customer journey once they get in touch with the OEM or the dealer-independent of time, place and media.

	AWARENESS	INFORMATION GATHERING	CONFIGURATION/ SELECTION CONSULTATION		PURCHASE		RETENTION
Phase	Digital Engagement	Virtual Engagement & Configuration	Dedicated Cross- Channel Assistance	Personal Driving Experience	Exclusive & Custom Offer	Ongoing Engagement prior to Handover	Enhanced Experience Through In-Car Assistance
Physical Digital	•	•	•	•	•		•
Contact	Social Media Website	Website, live store, VR salesroom, phone and video telephony, live chat	Website, phone and video telephony, chatbot, FAQ bot, live chat	Website, phone, messenger, SMS, chatbot, live chat, test drive management	Website, phone and video telephony, live chat, co-browsing, digital signature	App, personalised videos, push notification, self-service	Phone and video telephony, live chat, push notification, self-service

AWARENESS



Phase 1: Digital Engagement

Many OEMs and dealers use social media to drive awareness and differentiate their brand, through their own channels or through third party automotive platforms, which often use video as the primary media, reaching millions of potential customers. Social media is also the perfect tool for continuous engagement and building trust with customers. In addition to the positive marketing effect of presenting new models, OEMs and dealers need to make better use of the two-way communication functions, like chat, to really interact with customers and express their brand personality. This way, many questions can be answered directly, and to a broad audience. Moreover, any feedback can be utilised to improve products and services.

Meeting the customers' expectations

- Getting informed by the latest news
- Engage in an interactive way
- Two-way communication

Contact channels

- Social media, like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn, DriveTribe, Instagram etc.
- Website

Main tasks for customer service

- Assessing which media is best to get in touch
- Processing all social media interactions,
 e.g. answering and commenting on posts
 by media experts

INFORMATION GATHERING



Phase 2: Virtual Engagement & Configuration

Videos and virtual descriptions on websites are a good place to help customers find the information they need. In addition, video consulting, a more digital and comprehensive service, could be offered too. Through a virtual reality salesroom presented on the website or by video telephony, customers can be connected to a live store agent or preferred dealer, who presents the car and the features directly. This way, an exclusive and tailored sales presentation can be seamlessly combined with modern digital technologies.

Meeting the customers' expectations

- Real-time communication with brand experts
- Online live store presentations to close the gap between virtual and real experience of the car

Contact channels

- Website
- Live store, VR salesroom
- Phone and video telephony
- Live chat

- Helping customers to find the information they need
- Guided online tour introducing the car and its main features
- Identification and documentation of leads

CONFIGURATION/SELECTION CONSULTATION



Phase 3: Dedicated
Cross-Channel Assistance

Once the potential customer has gathered information and made a (pre)selection of models, the online car configurator becomes an integral and important part of the customer journey. With realistic simulations of parts and features, the customer gets a comprehensive overview of the design and the associated cost of the car. But unfortunately, the important connection between the customer and the dealer is often lost during this step. This phase is the key to a successful deal closure, so focus must be on personalised communication, in order to create customer engagement, satisfaction and loyalty. At the first stage, chatbots, live chats or video telephony can support the configuration and offer help if queries arise. After that, individual dealers and specialists could join the configuration session to help the customer select and tailor the right features. Finally, the dealers' show room or dealer independent pop-up stores can help to connect the digital experience with a physical option.

Meeting the customers' expectations

- Fast response times for short-term questions
- On demand and personalised advice through all phases of the configuration
- Extended explanation of content through direct contact with sales advisors

Contact channels

- Website
- Phone and video telephony
- Chatbot, FAQ bot
- Live chat

- Give online sales advice during the configuration
- Provide product specialists to assist during the configuration
- Link to show rooms or pop-up store management





Phase 4: Personal Driving Experience

While more and more people can imagine buying a car online, for most people the test drive is still essential for the buying decision. Therefore, OEMs need to bridge the online-offline gap that a physical test drive brings. In other words, OEMs need to create a seamlessly integrated test drive experience. As part of this, appointments can be arranged online via different channels, supported by the OEM/dealer or self-service. In order to reduce the physical presence at a dealership, online identification can be included on the platform. A car delivery service completes the seamless (and contactless) test drive experience for the customer.

Meeting the customers' expectations

- Scheduling of a test drive at any time and from any device
- Reduction of effort and expenditure of time by using the self service for identification
- Increasing convenience through a delivery service

Contact channels

- Website
- Phone
- Messenger, SMS
- Chatbot
- Life chat
- Test drive management

- Setting up an online test drive booking system
- Managing appointments via different channels, self service
- Implementing an online verification process
- Coordination of the car delivery
- Follow up after test drives



PURCHASE



Phase 5: Exclusive and Custom Offer

This step is comparable to the car configuration phase, but the big difference is the conclusion of the contract. What is seemingly a simple click on a purchase button often has a direct impact on the customer's emotions – especially for such a significant financial commitment. It's therefore essential to support and guide this phase closely. Above all, the customer needs to feel comfortable, secure and well informed, to seal the transaction for the dealer. To create these feelings, it's crucial to offer the customer's preferred communications channel and to provide comprehensive personal support during the sales process. This can be done by chat, phone or video telephony, including co-browsing. Furthermore, the contract signing can also take place with a digital signature process.

Meeting the customers' expectations

- Communication via preferred channel
- Personal support via video and cobrowsing
- Online contract conclusion without any paperwork

Contact channels

- Website
- Phone and video telephony
- Live chat
- Co-browsing
- Digital signature

Main tasks for customer service

- Supporting and guiding the customer closely trough the buying process, in real time
- Giving video and online advice
- Implementation of a digital signature process, including real time quality check



After finalising the purchase, the customer journey is nowhere near finished! Hopefully, it's just the beginning of many years of loyal brand engagement and advocacy. Therefore, it's important to maximize the customer's excitement and reinforce brand loyalty even before the car is actually delivered. Personalised videos are an easy, but very impressive, tool to provide information for the customer at this point. A video of the production process, an update on the features of the new car or just a picture of the car with the delivery date is highly appreciated by the customer. Media can also be used to inform and introduce the customer to potential future communication channels, like an App.

Meeting the customers' expectations

- Continuous status updates on the car production and delivery
- Information about car features and its usage
- Creating a feeling of anticipation

Contact channels

- App
- Personalised videos
- Push notification
- Self-service

- Maximise the customer's excitement
- Reinforce brand loyalty
- Give regular updates about the production process
- Provide information on the delivery status



RETENTION



Phase 7: Enhanced Experience Through In-Car Assistance

Finally, the car is delivered and the customer is delighted. Now is the time to offer additional services and it's crucial to remain in contact. Simply being there for the customer via his or her preferred communication channels or proactively follow up on customer satisfaction pays off. Connected car features can help to support this experience with updates, news or assistance. Additionally, damage assessment can bring value to the customer. Offering on-site repair services with seamless appointment scheduling helps to increase customer satisfaction, even in situations when the car is damaged.

Meeting the customers' expectations

- Continuous support via the preferred channels
- Additional after sales services

Contact channels

- Phone and video telephony
- Live chat
- Push notification
- Self-service

- Offer additional services
- Follow up on customer experience
- Support the customer with updates, news or assistance
- Damage assessment
- Digital engineering
- Link to smart repair management

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ABOUT MAJOREL

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