



Drive a successful  
omnichannel strategy  
by mapping today's  
CPG customer journey





## Content

## Page No.

Overview	3
Guide to Customer Decision Journey Mapping	4
Turning Insights into Action	8
Conclusion	12
About SKIM	12

## Overview

**The continuously evolving eCommerce environment has disrupted established customer journey norms. To achieve category leadership, CPG brands can't afford to rely on outdated, pre-omnichannel shopper insights.**

Today's path to purchase is messy, complex, and easily disrupted by new options and inputs. We know there is a complicated web of touchpoints that differs from person to person and occasion to occasion. Visibility into that web can uncover opportunities for refining and optimizing customer acquisition, conversion and retention strategies for your brand.



**The omnichannel customer decision journey**

### Guide to Customer Decision Journey Mapping

First, you'll learn how to map today's CPG customer journeys across the entire omnichannel environment, revealing a complex world of intermingled touchpoints. The omnichannel environment includes all offline and online communication and sales channels within a category. The mapping exercise explains the role of each touchpoint, shows how they intersect, and reveals the triggers and barriers that create both risk and opportunity along the way.

### Turning Insights into Action

Next, we'll reveal best practices for ensuring that these consumer journey research insights become part of your organization's DNA, while giving internal brand stakeholders the tools to successfully test and implement omnichannel brand strategies. This is where we connect the cross-functional dots between strategy and activation, using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to gain insight into the "why" of consumer behavior and predict what's next.

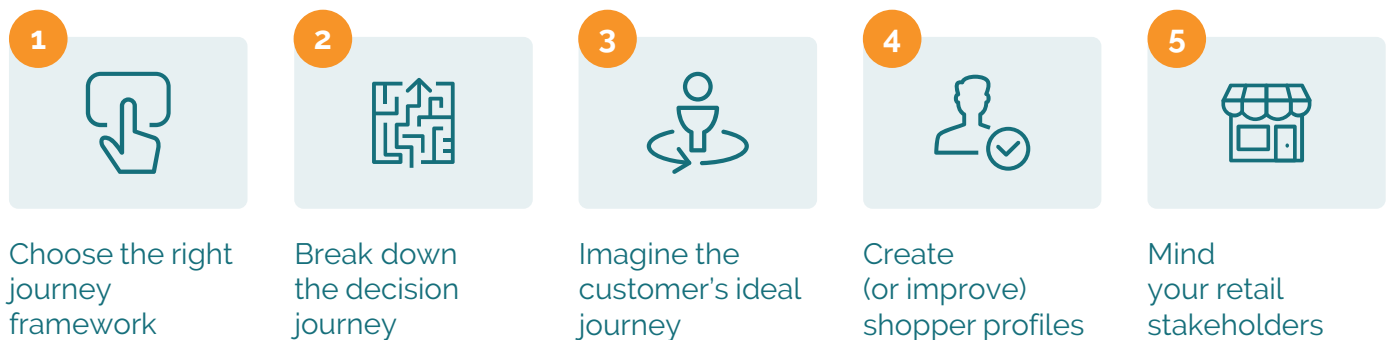
This whitepaper will guide you in mapping consumers' current decision journey across all touchpoints (**online and offline**) and will also provide tangible advice and tips on how to translate those newly acquired insights into successful omnichannel marketing strategies.



# Guide to Customer Decision Journey Mapping

Omnichannel optimization is a two-phased approach that begins outside the organization and ends inside the organization. After external research is conducted, the insights need to be internalized and actualized by internal stakeholders. We consider phase one (mapping the consumer journey) the discovery stage and phase two (turning insights into action) is where brands plan and activate marketing strategies that will drive omnichannel success.

To successfully discover your brand's true customer journey, we recommend a five-step process:

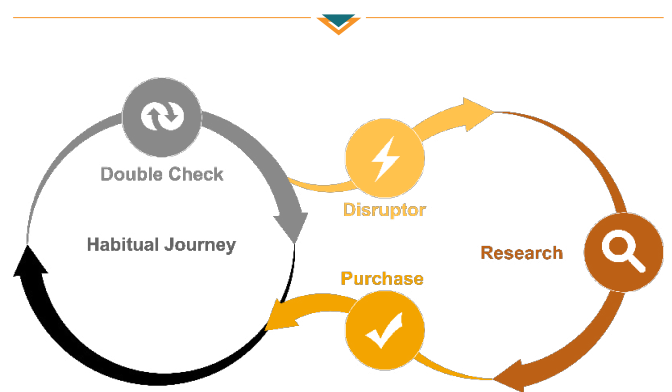


## 1 Choose the right journey framework

Decision journeys can vary significantly within a category thanks to a variety of factors. Think of the journey framework as the scaffolding upon which the decision journey is built. Before considering research methodologies, start by selecting the appropriate framework for the category and brand situation. At SKIM we have identified four frameworks, one of which is most applicable to CPG omnichannel categories: The (Disrupted) Habitual Journey.

The defining characteristic of the disrupted habitual journey is the shopping trigger. For example, you should consider if this is a routine reorder, or is the consumer choosing a different product? In general, a disrupted journey in which a consumer switches products presents an opportunity for your brand; it involves a certain level of active research and is therefore no longer low-involvement (a hallmark of habitual purchases).

That is not to say that CPG consumers aren't subject to influence during comparatively short habitual purchases. We call this "the double-check moment." Omnichannel shoppers display this pattern most clearly, as they can effortlessly "double-check" reviews and price comparisons. The habitual journey framework is most relevant when consumers make frequent purchases with relatively low involvement. A routine is established, but it can easily be disrupted if the cost of change is low.



The (Disrupted) Habitual Journey

## 2 Break down the decision journey

Now that you know what you want to focus on, you should partner with an insights partner, like SKIM, that is an expert in understanding and predicting decision behavior within the CPG category. They will employ an appropriate mix of research methodologies to best reveal all triggers, touchpoints, decision points and post-purchase engagement components hidden along the purchase journey. Each of these components should be thought of as an opportunity, a point when the habitual journey can be reinforced, or disrupted in favor of your brand.

Conversely, it's also a risk event during which a consumer might jump to a competitor. The point at which a journey can be positively or negatively affected is referred to as a decision point. Triggers launch the customer decision journey and can provide valuable context (e.g., "Why is the consumer shopping for this item?"), while touchpoints, decision points and post-purchase engagement drive the action.

For example, a typical CPG trigger might be "running low" on a particular product, but many different barriers can pop up along the way. Those barriers could be different for each shopper and every purchase experience. With the new insights uncovered, you'll be better equipped to understand not only which triggers and barriers might cause a detour, but how to ensure the journey results in a purchase for your brand.

Finally, post-purchase engagement presents opportunities to elevate the holistic consumer experience and plays an important role in influencing the future consideration set.

In this omnichannel world, consumers interact with a variety of touchpoints, such as different retail channels (online and offline), information-seeking activities and advertising. By breaking down the journey map, you can better understand the key touchpoints and the associated content in your category. Now you can prioritize which marketing programs can drive the best results.



Triggers, touchpoints and decision points should be thought of as an opportunity, a point when the habitual journey can be reinforced, or disrupted in favor of your brand.



Sample customer decision journey dashboard

### 3 Imagine the ideal customer journey

After the actual journey has been revealed, a lot can be learned from analyzing the gaps between the consumer's desired experience and their actual experience. By understanding the pain points and customer expectations of the end-to-end customer journey, brands can look beyond individual touchpoints to create a holistic and potentially improved customer experience.

We may even find that some touchpoints are unnecessary, redundant, or serve only to diminish the overall brand experience. For example, a customer may visit three or four retail websites for a routine purchase, gathering information about pricing, reviews or brand variants. But that doesn't mean they want to visit multiple sites for one purchase. So, we would recommend ways to streamline and simplify the experience, eliminating touchpoints that serve no useful purpose.

“  
Some touchpoints may be unnecessary, redundant, or serve only to diminish the overall brand experience.

Just because the journey research reveals an array of touchpoints doesn't mean each touchpoint warrants individual optimization. Finding ways to make the journey efficient and fulfilling for the shopper enables you to build strategies around that ideal journey.

### 4 Create (or improve) shopper profiles

Armed with the current and ideal consumer journey maps, you can more accurately answer the question - who is your shopper? And perhaps most importantly, how are they making purchases both online and offline?

If you have existing consumer segmentations, now you'll be able to enrich existing brand personas based on the information gathered to date. In this step you merge the shopper profile and the consumer decision journey to create more powerful marketing messaging and targeting.

This is also an opportunity to prioritize journey clusters and score each group based on economic potential to identify the top priorities for the organization.



“ By merging the shopper profile and the customer decision journey, you will create more powerful marketing messaging and targeting. ”

**JOURNEY PERSONA:**  
*Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. In dapibus velit ut sapien ultrices rutrum. Nunc tristique lobortis ligula, vitae tristique .*

 <b>34%</b>	 <b>71%</b> Between 25-44 years old	 <b>65%</b> Married or single with children	 <b>80%</b> Metro or suburban
 <b>69%</b>			

**Experience gaps and needs**

PROMINENT EXPERIENCE GAPS:

- **Feel like** Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, elit. In dapibus velit ut sapien ultrices (xx%)
- **I have difficulty finding**, vitae tristique (xx%)
- **Overwhelmed** by number of products (xx%)

TOP NEEDS:

- **Info on** Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur tristique (xx%)
- **I need** rutrum. Nunc tristique lobortis ligula, vitae tristique (xx%)
- **Always looking for more** Lorem ipsum dolor (xx%)

**Consumer behaviors**

 **YY%**  
Use category example products

**ZZ%**   
Use drops

 **XX%**  
Consulted WOM in past 12 mo.

**Purchasing routine**

**Avg. of x years of using product**

Brand 1 Brand 2 Brand 3

I purchase **one** (41%) or a **few select brands** (60%)

↓

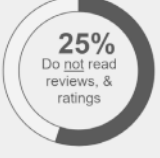
I purchase enough to **last 1-4 weeks** (73%)

↓

I have a **few products brands** that I typically buy (60%), rather than trying **diff. products** (35%)

**Info-seeking behavior**

Always follow rec of xxx	<b>62%</b>
Knowledgeable with lorem ipsum	<b>58%</b>
Lorem ipsum dolor	<b>55%</b>

 **25%**  
Do **not** read reviews, & ratings

Sample shopper profile

**5 Mind your retail stakeholders**

In a CPG world dominated by retailers - digital, brick-and-mortar, multichannel and pure-play - these middlemen play an integral role in your customer's journey. As you build and execute shopper marketing strategies to work in these different environments, you'll need to equip your retailer account and shopper marketing teams with insights and recommendations that help them engage key retail customers. Much like shopper personas, consider customizing a retailer-specific playbook that focuses on category level insights.

It's important to allow granular retailer and category-specific research design in mapping your consumer decision journey. Granular insights at the brand and sub-brand levels reveal strategic opportunities for your brand communication and portfolio decisions. Retailers don't care as much about a particular

brand's performance; it's all about category performance. Incremental benefits to your brand can't come at a cost to the retailer's overall category. Look for opportunities to help your retailers grow the category, not just your brand's share. In-store messaging, for example, should be evaluated in the context of the retail showroom/ digital space and competitor messaging.

“ Incremental benefits to your brand can't come at a cost to the retailer's overall category. ”

## Turning Insights into Action

After the consumer decision journey is established, the internal journey begins. The most successful CPG brand teams are those that manage to put omnichannel customer journey insights to work inside their organizations.

But how exactly do you do that? At SKIM, we believe the most successful omnichannel implementations drive transformation by employing the following seven strategies across eCommerce, retail, brick-and-mortar, brand, and marketing insights teams:

### 1 Socialize

### 2 Synthesize

### 3 Test and learn

### 4 Create eCommerce content guidelines

### 5 Explore an "online first" approach to pricing & portfolio management

### 6 Leverage emerging research techniques and data

### 7 Keep up with emerging shopping solutions

### 1 Socialize

How will you align cross-functional teams - internal and external, including retailers - around your omnichannel recommendations? Socializing research insights requires walking stakeholders through the customer journey so everyone can feel and embrace what it means to be a key player in that journey - and, not to mention, realize the scope of the challenge.

### 2 Synthesize

Now that you have everyone's attention, how do you encourage the absorption of customer decision insights? Experiential strategies for incorporating insights include:

- ▶ Cross-functional workshops, including qualitative and quantitative analyses to gain alignment, explore initial results, and activate teams
- ▶ Enabling efficient socialization with an interactive dashboard, in order to showcase a journey group at a glance, accurately estimate future potential and provide a deeper view of the respondents
- ▶ Exploring bite-size actionable insights along multiple phases of research
- ▶ Conveying granular data through brand, category and retailer-specific stories



### 3 Test and learn

One hallmark of omnichannel is its dynamism. The development of omnichannel strategies should fit the environment. Start small and conduct a rapid test-and-learn for new solutions. For example, if research shows a particular retailer would benefit from a tweak in website content, quickly develop and test the new approach and evaluate feedback in real time. A large-scale rollout takes time, and the risk is high, so it may be tough to get buy-in. Rapid testing of new eCommerce content, tonality, format, and images prevents the "analysis paralysis" that often accompanies big, disruptive ideas.



### 4 Create eCommerce content guidelines

As we know, digital consumers shop differently and as a result eCommerce content has different requirements for success than brick-and-mortar marketing content. We recommend you create, and test new content based on the learnings uncovered in the shopper journey, to develop eCommerce specific guidelines. These guidelines will direct online content, such as: product pages, category (i.e. search results) pages, pack images/mobile images, videos, secondary images and online naming conventions.

By publishing eCommerce content guidelines across the marketing organization, you will:

- ▶ Ensure a consistent and cohesive strategy across brands
- ▶ Increase efficiency in the creative and design process
- ▶ Save budget by decreasing the amount of ad hoc research conducted to test and learn online content
- ▶ Reinforce cross-channel optimization that speaks to both online and offline shoppers

“  
**Ensure eCommerce content guidelines are compliant with retailer image specifications.**

Consider mobile pack images as an example. By creating and testing variations of product 'hero' images, you'll be able to guide the brand teams on how to best serve up the most important selection criteria, how to treat call out text and which ideal image file sizes/weight will optimize load times. In addition, you'll need to ensure the eCommerce images are compliant with retailer-specific guidelines and their online specifications. Our recent CPG studies indicate that online-optimized pack images have the potential to lift sales by double digits.

## Visual Principles



1

### Focus on the product experience

To connect with your audience, they need to experience the product. To achieve this, the product experience and its related benefits rather than the product itself, should be the hero of our visual.



2

### Draw people into the narrative

Creating a sense of motion through dynamic imagery is key as people are programmed to subconsciously finish the motion display. Other ways to draw people into the narrative are by creating interactions (touch) with the product or giving the illusion of sound.



3

### Bring it to life by cueing senses

Bring to life what you want people to taste, feel and hear by triggering sensorial cues stored in memory. For example, an image of a flower to trigger the imagination of a scent or an ingredient to trigger fresh taste perceptions.



4

### Stay positive and respectful

Keep in mind what desired product experience we are bringing to life and who the audience is. This means using positive imagery to connect with positive aspirations and not use images that could be offensive in any way.

## 5 Explore an “online first” approach to pricing & portfolio management

Most brands have accumulated decades of institutional knowledge around brick-and-mortar pricing and portfolio management, but the online space is often lagging. With new insights around your brand’s shopper journey, you should design the product portfolio to address online challenges and opportunities – portfolio management need not be limited by physical distribution (i.e. the store shelf):

**eCommerce assortment:** Not being limited by physical shelf space creates an opportunity to increase the size of your product portfolio to address more needs of consumers and cover more usage occasions. Larger selections of products online will improve SEO results thanks to the product variety, paired with strategic naming conventions.

**Bundling:** Begin testing different product bundles to allow consumers to explore more of your product portfolio. This strategy is easier in eCommerce by eliminating the need to ship and coordinate across physical stores and fitting the bundle on shelves. By offering variety packs at a discount, you lower the bar for consumers to try new product varieties. Bundles can also help overcome shipping requirements. For example, if your product is “too inexpensive” to qualify for free shipping, a bundle can help achieve a reasonable cost per weight to make shipping more economical for the retailer.

**Subscription pricing:** Test various communications to determine which provide the most meaningful differentiation online. If your product is unique and recognizable enough, the competition’s online price point becomes less relevant, and consumers are more likely to search for your specific brand vs. the overall category. If you’re able to achieve this, the consumer may be more willing to opt for subscription pricing, resulting in convenience for the consumer and increasing brand loyalty.

## 6 Leverage emerging research techniques and data

If you’re not already doing so, we suggest you begin to leverage data technologies, including AI applications, from today’s digital world, including:

- Behavioral data such as social listening, digital behavior tracking, basket data (e.g., receipt data) and biometrics (e.g., eye-tracking)
- Contextual data such as in-the-moment mobile research and geo-fencing
- “Mobile first” research solutions for content testing, such as SKIM’s Unspoken™. This unique technology blends implicit research techniques with an engaging mobile interface. This “mobile first” research solution provides brands with insights on true consumer preferences

## 7 Keep up with emerging shopping solutions

Finally, the tools that facilitate omnichannel retail are evolving fast. From delivery systems to in-home devices and more, the omnichannel journey features many different vehicles. As a brand, you can’t afford to be left behind when new solutions take off. Emerging consumer technology requires brands to invest in foundational research to understand ever-evolving consumer behaviors and strike while the iron is hot.

## Conclusion

To excel in this new omnichannel environment, brand managers need to have a crystal-clear understanding of how the complicated web of online/offline channels influence and guide their customers' purchase decisions. The customer journey must be grounded in current research vs. outdated assumptions. This research will reveal the key decision points where you should focus on - from communication and content strategies, to retailer-specific eCommerce strategies.

When embarking on this research project, it's important to select a partner, like SKIM, that is an expert in understanding and predicting customer decision behavior specific to the CPG category. For over 40 years, the world's leading CPG brands have trusted SKIM to understand and influence the customer journey across all channels. When you partner with us for your customer journey project, we will assess how to:



**Attract**



**Connect**



**Convert**

SKIM will identify the purchase triggers, barriers to purchase and purchase drivers across the omnichannel environment and outline specific opportunities and recommendations for all of your internal stakeholders (branding, packaging, eCommerce, retail, digital content/search, etc.) SKIM will also identify the priority consumers based on behaviors and habits, and identify where their key touchpoints are, so you can attract attention, connect with them at the right time and with the right message, and ultimately drive conversion.

### About SKIM

SKIM is an insights-based consultancy helping leading companies thrive by understanding decision-making. We know how our changing environment influences decisions for consumers, healthcare and B2B professionals. We adapt research techniques to address this new reality. What sets SKIM apart is our combination of decision behavior expertise + rigorous choice-modeling roots + a thorough understanding of marketing challenges. The result? Practical recommendations that can help propel your business forward, online and offline.



Contact SKIM today and learn more about how we can help you to drive a successful omnichannel strategy by mapping today's CPG customer journey. Schedule a consultation to learn more.

[skimgroup.com/consultation](https://skimgroup.com/consultation)