



OMNICHANNEL MARKETING HUBS

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The omnichannel concept is defined as an integrated strategy of the different communication channels with the objective of strengthening the relationship between brands and customers by sharing and exchange information (Mimoun, et al., 2021). Information and communication technologies offer multiple ways of companies to interact in an effective way with its customers. In fact, customers will increasingly engage with brands, products or services looking for memorable experiences regardless of the communication channel. In a hyper-connected

and hyper-personalized context, the collection and interpretation of data generated at each touching point of the customer journey will be critical for companies. Consequently, omnichannel platforms should be designed with intelligent features and contextually focused on “knowing” and empowering customers as well as delivering effective solutions (Hsia, et al., 2020). Faced with this changeable and agile reality, where loyalty is increasingly challenging, omnichannel marketing hubs will continue to growth. For instance, in March 2021 the prestigious agency Verint launched the customer

engagement hub (Bucci, 2021). This platform is based on the latest advances in artificial intelligence to connect work, data and experience. The purpose is to develop lasting relationships, offering differentiated experiences for customers and employees, through efficient process of collecting and analysing interaction data at competitive costs for the company.

Another example is the BT Business and Public Sector, which is a retail division of the UK telecommunications company. In October 2021, BT launched the digital marketing hub (BT, 2021).

In practice, this BT product is a digital advertising platform that aims to offer digital tools for companies implement digital marketing campaigns. Thus, companies can create ads, apply and track omnichannel marketing campaigns from a single platform. BT highlights that this platform is designed to help mainly resource-poor companies to manage digital campaigns.

Microsoft (2021) also offers omnichannel engagement hub for Dynamics 365, which is a cloud-based intelligent service of information gathered across various engagement channels and the underlying business data. This service is modern, customizable and with high productivity, helping companies to instantly connect and interact with their customers through different channels. For instance, this service offers integrated communication

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tools, historical and real-time visibility and insights into operational efficiency, contextual customer identification, among other functionalities.

The challenge of these platforms is to collect and evaluate data from multiple contact sources with a continuous and integrated effort across a company's entire value chain (upstream and downstream).

It includes the monitoring of internal and external environment, through accurate and appropriate indicators in the most diverse business spheres. In fact, the stark reality in many companies is that they end up delivering a fragmented and disconnected customer experience.

So, in practice, omnichannel marketing hubs aggregate information from multiple touchpoints and then they turn it into actionable information, offering individual and effective solutions for companies. This trend gains relevance in the context of small and medium enterprise (SME), which generally suffers from scarce resources. Thus, omnichannel marketing hubs will help SMEs decide on where to spend marketing budget for the best return on investment.

A revolution is expected with the introduction of the 5G technology in the market, improving the mobility of the consumer and displaying more augmented and virtual realities. A new era of digital communication will

transform the relationship between the brands and the consumer and the customer experience will be enhanced. Therefore, omnichannel marketing hubs will be sources of marketing intelligence that allow for a unified interface with customers and operational efficiency gains.

The pace of today's market is vertiginous and uncertain which requires companies to be able to react quickly to constantly changing conditions. Only with marketing intelligence systems it is possible to take complex decisions with precision (Persis et al., 2021). Therefore, through a hub omnichannel system it is possible to create a unified interface of all possible channels inherent to the business and in any value chain operation. This system allows the contextual customer identification and integrated mentoring actions,

thus ensuring more efficient and customizable solutions.

The ability to analyse and act based on data is increasingly important for companies. A deep view of the company's context and access to strategic data and intelligence related to the company's business will help the company's performance in line with its market reality. Concretely, it increases the capacity for customer orientation, reading scenarios, identifying market niches, and new opportunities for partnerships and investments.

However, it is essential to consider some challenges, namely regarding the transparency of transactions and data protection, in order to increase trust and the quality of the relationship, for instance, using blockchain technology (Nguyen et al., 2021). In

addition, new skills and activities must be developed to be able to properly use these intelligence systems, such as the omnichannel marketing hubs.

In short, one of the first steps to evolve in this digital transformation scenario is to recognize the importance of strategic data analysis in the decision-making process.

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