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Gartner for Marketers

**Use Gartner's Buy/
Own/Advocate
Framework to Map
Customer Journeys
and Deliver Better
Customer Experiences**

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Knowing end-to-end customer journeys helps customer experience leaders recognize how customers consider, buy, use and recommend products and services. Use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate framework to understand customers' desired journeys and identify ways to lift satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy.



Overview

Key Challenges

- Incomplete customer journey maps result in poor customer understanding, which undermines brands. Failure to recognize customers' desired end-to-end journeys undermines strategy, harms customer relationships and adversely impacts business results.
- In this era of customers who are empowered with always-on access and trusted word of mouth (WOM), outdated journey models that fail to consider the power of customer advocacy are a roadblock to understanding your most important customer experience (CX) opportunities.
- Marketers are challenged to effectively measure advocacy and loyalty. Many common measures of loyalty and advocacy rely on lagging behavior measures rather than the leading attitudinal metrics of customer perception and intent that can drive CX improvements.

Recommendations

To improve CX strategy and execution:

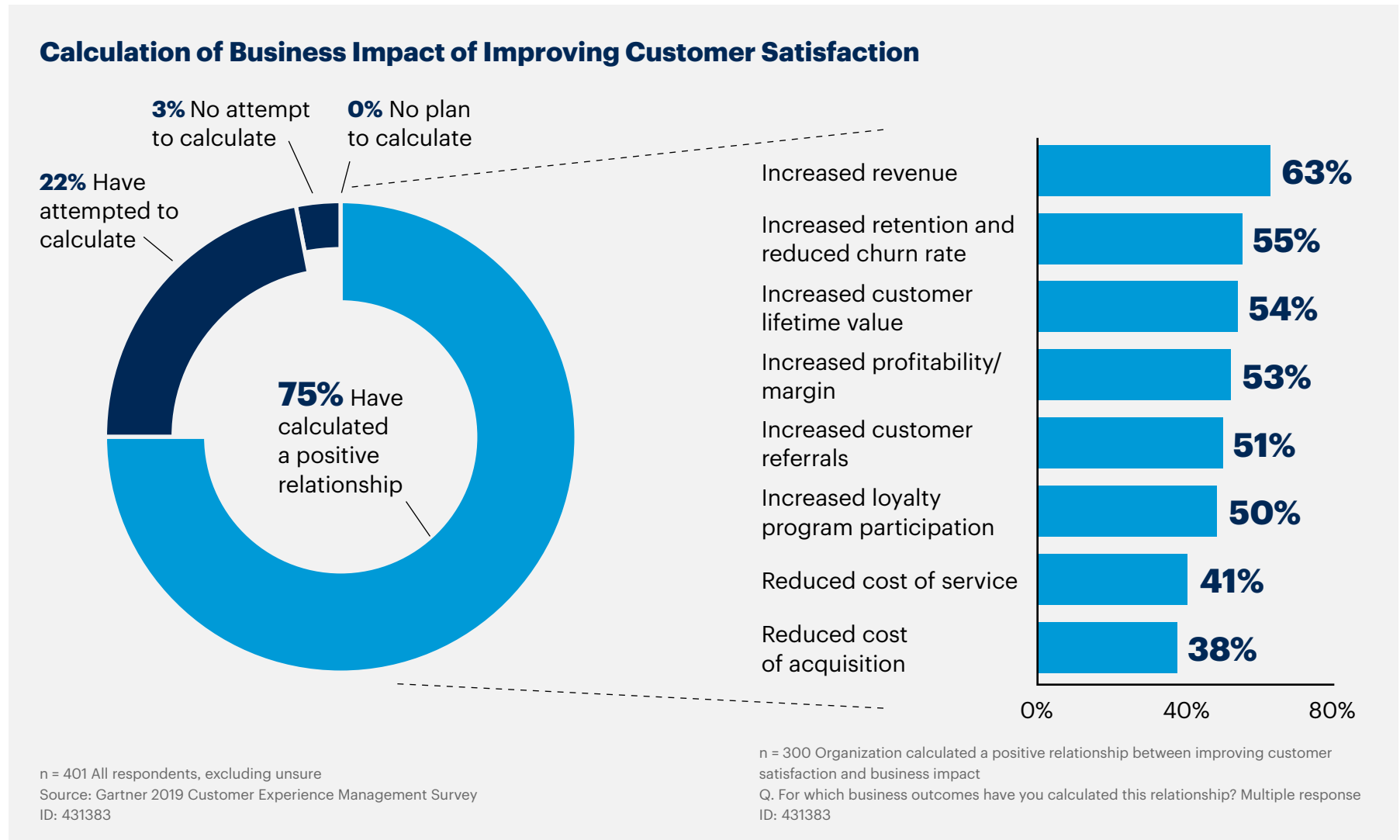
- Expand your view of the customer journey by beginning when customers perceive or are made aware of needs and ending when your customers are loyal, active advocates for your brand. Defining the entire customer journey improves your ability to uncover problems and opportunities you can address to improve CX results.
- Develop customer journey maps through all three cycles — buy, own and advocate — to improve focus on the two essential juncture points — purchase and love. These two points foster lasting, mutually beneficial relationships.
- Discard ineffectual metrics for loyalty and advocacy, such as repeat purchases and Facebook “likes.” Capture the most effective metrics to inform CX by identifying leading signs of customer intent and action, such as customer effort score, Net Promoter Score (NPS), churn rates and referral volume.

Introduction

CX leaders must focus on the experiences that turn prospects into customers and customers into loyal advocates (see Figure 1). This requires a customer-centric approach based on a solid understanding of the customer, balancing immediate brand benefits such as sales with leading indicators of success relating to the strength and quality of customer relationships. For example, while many other quick-service restaurants seek to maximize seat turnover to improve revenue, Starbucks has long given attention to the customer experience, creating pleasant environments where customers linger. This strategy, including free Wi-Fi, wireless phone charging and mobile apps to speed ordering, has paid dividends. Starbucks grew to surpass Wendy's and Burger King as the third-largest restaurant chain, despite being outspent on advertising from two to eight times by its competitors.¹

To better attract and retain the customers your brand wants and turn them into business-driving champions, use Gartner's Buy/Own/Advocate journey framework. This framework reflects that the goal of marketing is not to simply acquire customers, but to create strong, resilient relationships and greater word of mouth that reaches and influences other customers.

Figure 1. Business Impact of Improving Customer Satisfaction Journey



Analysis

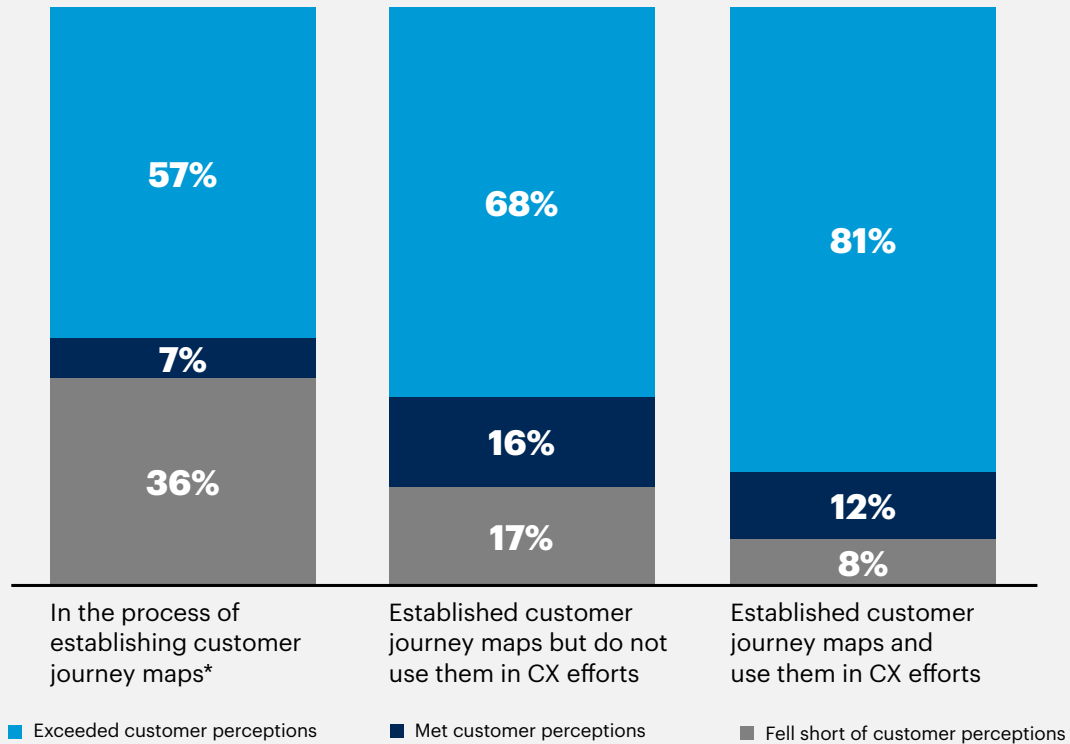
Avoid Problems That Limit Your Customer Experience Scope and Outcomes

Customer journey maps are important tools for those seeking to improve their brand's CX. Journey maps capture customers' experiences, needs, perceptions and processes in a way that identifies CX problems and opportunities (see ["Create Actionable, Insight-Driven Journey Maps"](#)).

Journey maps are important CX assets that deliver the results you are tasked to produce. In our 2019 CX Management Survey, 81% of brands that have and use journey maps say they exceeded customer perceptions. In comparison, of brands that reported they were still in the process of developing journey maps, just 57% report they exceeded customer expectations (see Figure 2 and ["2019 Customer Experience Management Study: Marketers Take More Control as CX Expectations and Budgets Rise"](#)).

Figure 2. Brands That Establish and Use Customer Journey Maps Are More Likely to Exceed Customer Perceptions

Link Between Using Customer Journey Maps and Exceeding Customer Perceptions



n = 370 Respondents with customer journey mapping

Source: Gartner 2019 Customer Experience in Marketing Survey

Q. To what degree your organization's customer experience efforts measurably improved customer perceptions over the last 12 months?

Q. Which best describes the role of customer journey maps in your organization's customer experience efforts?

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. *Small Sample Size

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Brands that fail to consider the comprehensive journey from beginning to end may miss the most powerful touchpoints, opportunities and outcomes. Three common problems include:

- **Beginning the journey map too late omits touchpoints where your CX issues originate.** By starting their journey maps at the point a customer engages a brand or evaluates its products/services, companies miss out on understanding key moments when customers become aware of need, begin research and discover the brand. One travel company believed it had thoroughly mapped its customers' journeys. After conducting an ethnographic study, it realized many problems began and could be resolved before their first identified touchpoint at the airport, such as that consumers didn't avail themselves of opportunities to check in beforehand and bypass frustrating check-in lines. By reframing its journey map, the travel company identified opportunities to solve CX issues well in advance of when those problems manifested.
- **Ending your journey map at acquisition or product usage neglects stages that deliver the strongest CX results for your brand.** It is common for journey maps to end at a stage where customers acquire or use the product or service. Our research indicates that companies are more likely to find their journey maps effective at driving CX outcomes if they end their maps later — at a specified satisfaction level or where customers exhibit loyalty and advocacy behaviors. Businesses with mature CX processes seek journeys that lead to higher customer satisfaction

levels and define the linkage between customer satisfaction and business outcomes (see [“Tailor Customer Experience Data and Metrics to Improve Customer Centricity, Drive Action and Validate Business Outcomes”](#)).

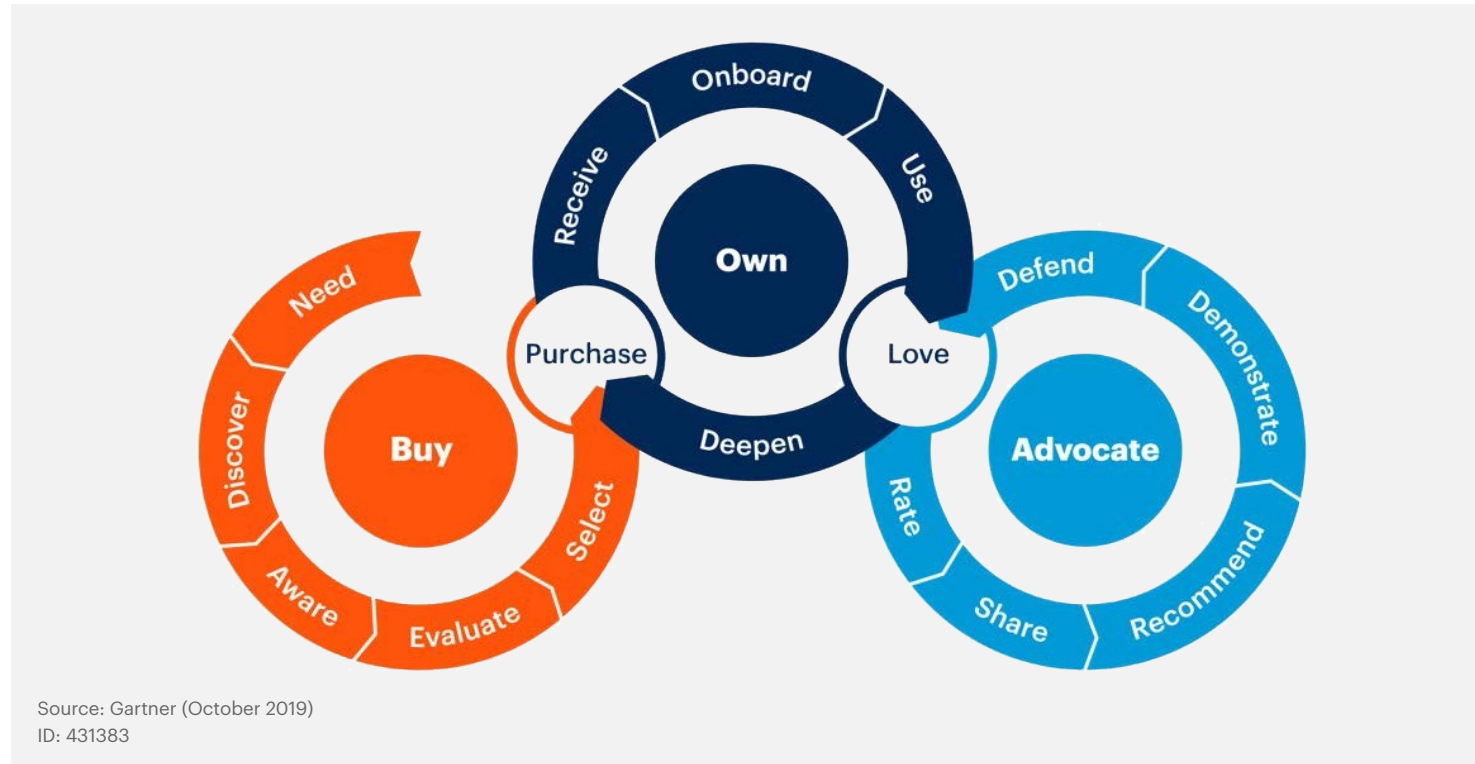
- **Omitting key journey steps through the Advocate cycle ignores the power of word of mouth.** Many journey maps altogether ignore touchpoints for advocacy, even though brands recognize the power of WOM and that customers are happy to recommend those brands that earn their support. Far too frequently, marketers develop journey maps that fail to consider the steps that turn happy customers into vocal advocates who lift reputation, drive awareness and increase purchase consideration. Other journey maps can treat customer advocacy as a single step rather than a journey unto itself, which helps customers move from easier and less risky WOM behaviors to more meaningful and committed customer advocacy.

Use the Buy/Own/Advocate framework as a guide to map your complete customer journeys, avoid journey mapping pitfalls and deliver strong, measurable results for your brand.

Identify Your Customers' Complete Buy/Own/Advocate Journey

Use the Buy/Own/Advocate framework to guide your journey mapping exercises and customize the framework to fit your industry, brand and key personas (see Figure 3). Individual customer journeys are often not linear, but regardless of how someone arrives at any given step your brand must be prepared to serve customer needs and help them to advance. Collect, aggregate and analyze data to ensure your journey map is based on sound objective insight (see [“Where CX Leaders Get Data to Inform Personas and Journey Maps”](#)).

Figure 3. The Buy/Own/Advocate Journey



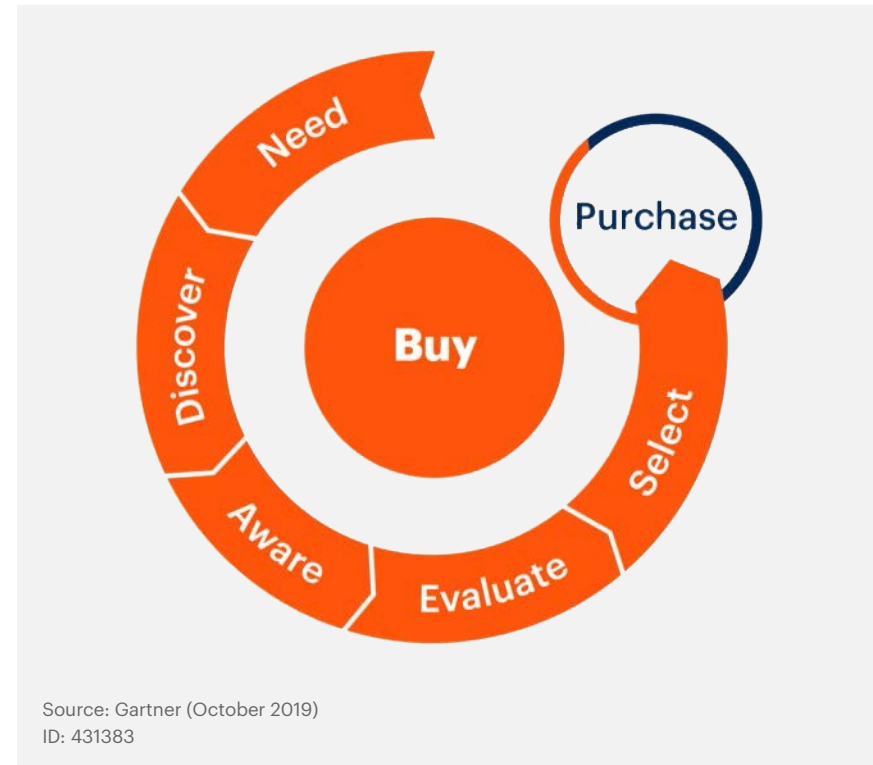
The Buy/Own/Advocate journey consists of three interdependent cycles with discrete stages.

Buy Cycle

The Buy cycle starts with a prospect not yet aware that your product or service exists and ends with that person completing a purchase and becoming a customer (see Figure 4). It includes the following steps:

- **Need:** Understand key segments and personas of your customers and prospects, including their needs and motivations, and what triggers interest to drive customer journey mapping and strategy development (see [“Integrate User Research and Testing Into Agile Processes to Improve Customer Experience and Products”](#)).
- **Discover:** Based on an understanding of your customers’ discovery process, make unaware prospects cognizant of your brand using a combination of marketing tactics.
- **Aware:** Increase knowledge of the benefits your brand offers and help customers understand how your solutions meet their unique needs.
- **Evaluate:** Clearly communicate your point of difference using the criteria your customers most care about to increase their buying confidence.
- **Select:** Deliver tailored product or service recommendations to help customers identify the offering to best suit their needs.
- **Purchase:** Make it easy, safe and expedient for your customers to complete a transaction across relevant channels.

Figure 4. The Buy Cycle Moves Prospects to Become Customers



Own Cycle

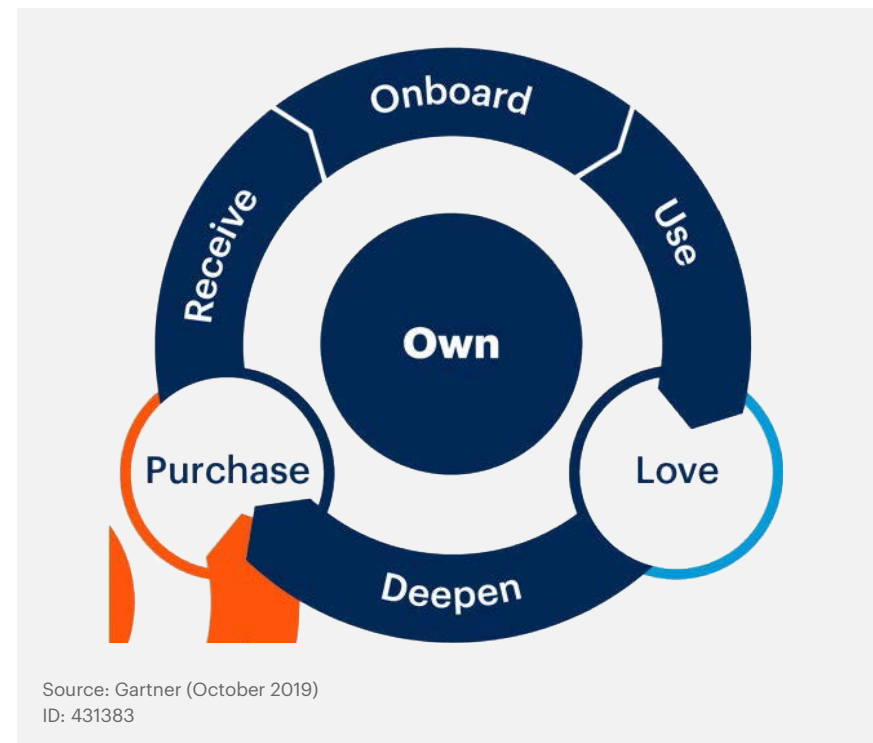
The Own cycle begins at the point of purchase and ends when your customers aren't merely satisfied with your product, but are in love with it, deepening the relationship with the brand (see Figure 5). This cycle isn't finished until your brand creates a loyal customer, and an outcome doesn't happen unless your brand provides the features, products and services customers need and want. The Own cycle encompasses steps such as:

- **Receive:** Improve product or service delivery, give control to customers of where, when and how delivery occurs, and use the moment of delivery to immediately foster mutually beneficial engagement (see [“8 Kinds of Experience Innovations That Build Loyalty”](#)).
- **Onboard:** Begin to foster the postpurchase relationship by welcoming the new customers to your brand. Make them aware that your brand cares as much about them after purchase as before, and help them quickly and immediately derive the value they expect from your product or service.
- **Use:** Ensure your customer is satisfied and using your product in a way that permits your brand to deliver its full value. Be proactive, not just reactive, to customers' changing needs (see [“Use Gartner's CX Pyramid to Uncover Innovative Customer Experiences That Create the Strongest Customer Relationships”](#)).
- **Love:** Move customers beyond modest satisfaction to substantial levels of satisfaction that deliver emotional connections with the brand (see [“How Much Customer](#)

[Satisfaction Is Enough to Foster Loyalty and Differentiate Your Brand?”](#)). Identify and design the stories, services and experiences that will create affinity and encourage deeper, more resilient bonds.

- **Deepen:** Nurture customers to attain stronger relationships. Protect their interests, earn their trust, provide more value, encourage greater loyalty and use your knowledge of existing customers to offer additional products and services that satisfy their needs and wants.

Figure 5. The Own Cycle Turns Customers Into Brand Loyalists

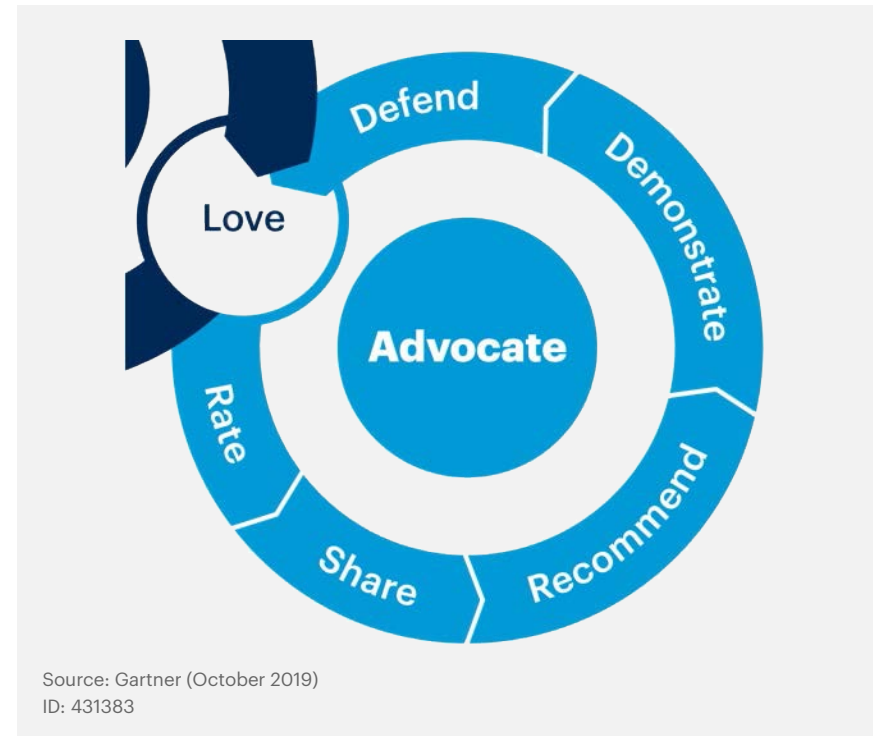


Advocate Cycle

Not every loyal customer will become an advocate, which is why brand advocates are a precious asset that must be cultivated with customer-centric strategies. When properly fostered and encouraged in the Advocate cycle, customers positively impact awareness, consideration and purchase for others. As a result, they willingly funnel prospects back into the Buy cycle (see Figure 6). Different activities in the Advocate cycle include:

- **Rate:** Secure ratings and reviews from your current customers and make them available to prospects where and when they are evaluating your solutions.
- **Share:** Encourage customers to share their positive brand experiences and referrals with friends, family and peers rather than simply liking or retweeting your brand's social media posts.
- **Recommend:** Encourage your customers to endorse your brand, telling others why they should consider your products and services.
- **Demonstrate:** Create opportunities for customers to exhibit your product and service to others, either in person or via online sites such as YouTube. Find and curate similar unprompted user-generated content that lives in blogs or on other social sites.
- **Defend:** The highest form of brand advocacy is when loyal customers help to shield your brand from reputational issues.

Figure 6. The Advocate Cycle Shepherds Customers From Easier and Less Meaningful Advocacy Behaviors to More Powerful Drivers of Reputation and WOM



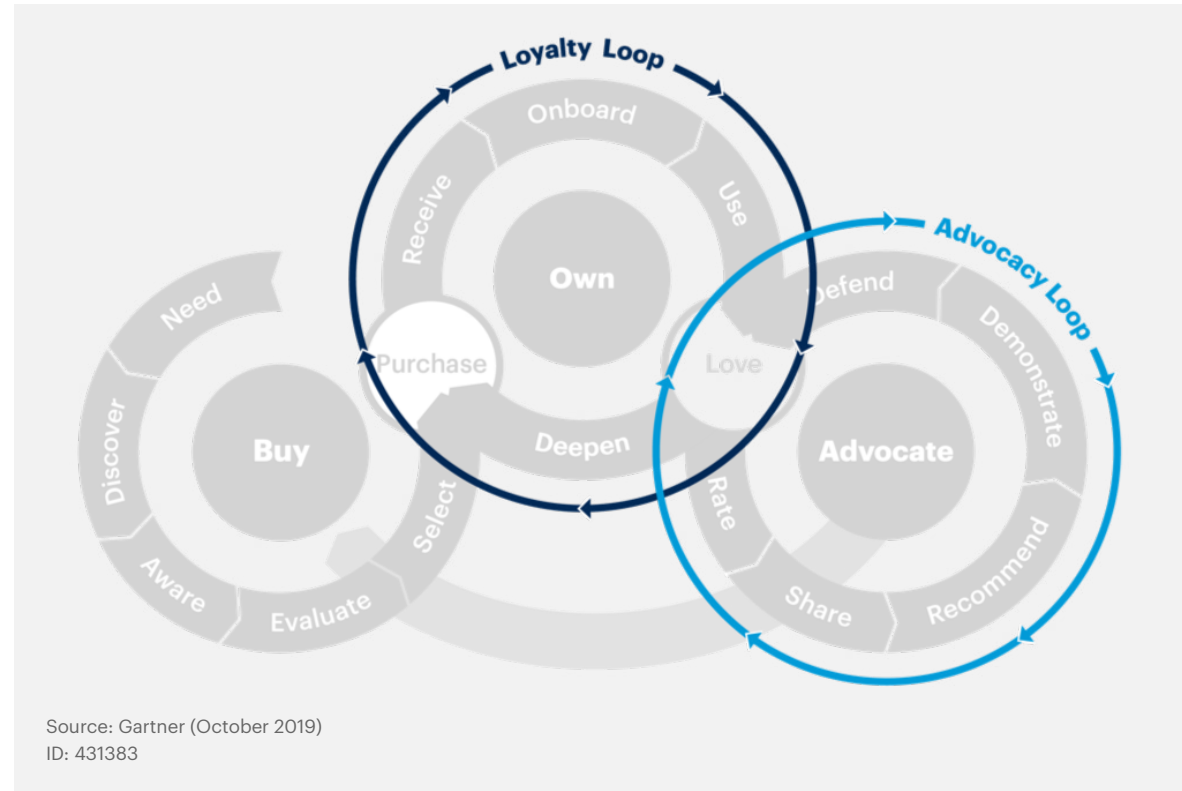
The three cycles connect to one another in two key stages: Purchase and Love (see Figure 3). If you map your customers' journeys through these three cycles, then don't just concentrate on what delivers purchases and satisfaction, but include what creates love, loyalty and advocacy. By doing so, you can identify the strongest opportunities that drive optimal CX, business and marketing results.

Use the Right Measures of Loyalty and Advocacy to Understand How Better Customer Experience Drives Business Outcomes

Although marketers traditionally focus on optimizing the Buy cycle and maximizing the number of prospects that reach the purchase stage, brands with the most effective CX practices focus equally or more so on delivering customers to the Love stage. The Love stage is where two powerful, self-sustaining and brand-building loops are launched (see Figure 7):

- **Loyalty loop:** Where customers deepen relationships, churn less and buy more goods and services more often.
- **Advocacy loop:** Where active advocates generate positive WOM, lifting reputation, trust, awareness, consideration, inbound web traffic and leads.

Figure 7. The Loyalty and Advocacy Loops Help Sustain and Grow Brands



Investing in CX strategies that deliver more loyalty and advocacy requires marketers to accurately measure these attributes. Unfortunately, the traditional set of marketing metrics fails to correctly gauge loyalty and advocacy, so new or different metrics are required.

Understand What Drives True Brand Loyalty

Marketers typically evaluate loyalty using transaction-based data, such as:

- Repeat sales or retention
- Loyalty program participation
- Churn rate

None of these measures completely captures the real and valuable sense of loyalty that customers feel for brands with the strongest CX. For example, repeat purchase can be the result of hygiene factors such as price, convenience or switching costs. Loyalty program participation can benefit brands in many ways, providing a way to collect and refresh first-party data and identify buying signals (see [“How to Minimize Your Marketing Data Dependence on Amazon, Facebook and Google”](#)). However, using loyalty program engagement as a proxy for true brand loyalty has limitations, since customers may demonstrate more affinity for points and offers than your brand or product (see [“Move Customers to Deeper Levels of Loyalty That Strengthen Brand Health”](#)).

Although churn rate is an effective way to measure loyalty, it is a lagging indicator that signifies what occurred in the past rather than predicting the future. It is best used to measure outcomes rather than to drive proactive solutions. One way to put churn rate to use in a CX or journey mapping process is to correlate churn with other inferred data points. Do this by identifying patterns associated with churn to create an early warning system for troubled customers and clients.

A better and more proactive way to measure loyalty is to balance behavioral and transactional key performance indicators (retention, increasing purchase volume, etc.) with attitudinal metrics that align to the true definition of loyalty, which is “a strong feeling of support or allegiance” This feeling is what most mature and successful CX programs seek to measure using methods such as:

- **Surveys that measure likelihood to repurchase.** Surveys help measure customer perception of intended actions, but can correlate with various brand engagement activities, such as loyalty programs, to measure their impact on driving loyalty intent (see [“Improve Response Quality and Rates Through Improved Survey Design”](#)).
- **Speech and text analytics of customer care interactions and open-ended survey questions.** These can uncover intent and emotion associated with the brand.

- **Inferred transactional and operational data.** These can be validated to learn what signals are associated with higher (or lower) churn rates. For example, analysis of your data may reveal that low product use in the onboarding touchpoint or specific sorts of complaints are particularly associated with higher churn in existing customers.

In addition to understanding the level of loyalty, it is important to know what factors drive customers to have stronger (and weaker) feelings of loyalty. Careful analysis of closed- and open-ended survey responses, and other forms of research such as customer interviews, can yield insights about what emotions, experiences and factors most correlate with greater fidelity to the brand. This same analysis can also determine what factors undermine and hurt brand loyalty (see [“Improving Your Customer Experience Drives High-Value Customer Advocacy”](#)). Use these to inform your journey mapping and CX strategies in a way that increases retention and share of wallet.

Reconsider How You Measure Brand Advocacy

Many marketers have adopted a set of metrics for advocacy that fails to capture the true definition of advocacy, which is “to support or promote.” Social media or advocacy dashboards count likes, retweets and pins, but those actions are often driven more by a desire to share a funny, inspirational or entertaining bit of content rather than to endorse your brand.

For example, in early 2013, Kmart launched a viral hit, “Ship My Pants,” on YouTube that customers shared frequently. Within the first week, the video was viewed 8 million times, but while the video was considered a viral hit, there is little evidence in terms of comparable store sales or foot traffic that this video impacted Kmart’s business results. Brands find that it is more valuable to listen and respond to customers and to encourage customers to engage with prospects than to have people share entertaining content (see [“Shaping the Customer Experience Through Website Features and Social Media”](#)). For example, in 2019, Popeyes famously leveraged enthusiasm for its new chicken sandwich to foster considerable WOM, and the social media buzz came from actual customer advocates. The result was a brief 103% increase of foot traffic to Popeyes’ locations.²

Smart marketers measure advocacy in ways that recognize customers’ intentions rather than simply tallying their actions. Methods to measure advocacy behavior include:

- Relationship and transactional surveys that measure NPS
- Participation in referral and advocacy programs
- Number and quality of online ratings
- Social media monitoring that gauges positive brand mentions, which in turn recommend, promote and defend the brand

Using metrics more closely associated with authentic loyalty and advocacy can drive greater CX outcomes. Poor measures of loyalty, such as repeat purchases, can furnish a false sense of security while better metrics that intuit customers’ feelings may reveal your loyal customers are actually unhappy and available to competitors. Likewise, poor methods for determining advocacy may suggest a high level of social media engagement, while improved metrics may find that customers enjoy your social media content but feel little interest to endorse your brand to others.

Customer experience leaders committed to improving their brand’s CX can boost outcomes by mapping the entire journey from the beginning to the end of the loyalty and advocacy loops and by realigning metrics to better reflect customers’ feelings and intentions. This combination of process, measurement and frameworks can help you to deliver the marketing and CX results your brand wants and needs.

Evidence

Primary research conducted with Gartner's marketing leader clients, along with secondary research of available CX and customer satisfaction studies.

Gartner 2019 Customer Experience Management Survey:

The purpose of this study was to explore how organizations are measuring CX and to validate how certain tools (such as personas and journey maps) are or are not driving value. The survey also sought to measure how expectations of and commitment to CX investments are changing and to gain understanding on how user research informs or helps CX. The research was conducted online during May 2019 and June 2019 among 401 respondents in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. from different industries. Respondents were required to be a leader or a member of the team responsible for CX and with involvement in customer experience programs and initiatives. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents came from organizations with \$1 billion or more in annual revenue. The respondents came from a variety of industries: financial services (56), high tech (56), manufacturing (51), consumer products (44), media (51), retail (58), healthcare providers (48) and travel and hospitality (37).

The survey was developed collaboratively by a team of Gartner analysts who follow marketing and was reviewed, tested and administered by Gartner's Research Data and Analytics team.

Note: Results of this study do not represent global findings or the market as a whole but are a simple average of results for the targeted countries, industries and company-size segments covered in this survey.

["The High Price of Customer Satisfaction."](#) MIT Sloan Management Review.

- 1 ["Starbucks Hits No. 3 Despite Limited Ad Spending."](#) Ad Age.
- 2 ["Social-Media Battles, Massive Crowds, and Overworked Employees: Inside the Rise and Fall of Popeyes' Chicken Sandwich."](#) Business Insider.

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