

MARKETING

Omnichannel engagement boosts purchase frequency: report

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Image courtesy of Bloomingdale's

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Media consumption habits may be shifting toward digital channels, but traditional media remains the way to reach the most consumers, according to research from Fluent.

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Around 40 percent of consumers recall seeing television, print or online advertisements, outpacing digital-centric marketing placements such as mobile applications or social media, which only reach around three in 10 consumers. However, even though digital marketing may not have the same reach as traditional channels, these channels deserve attention.

"Traditional channels remain important because they still exist and they are ubiquitous and continue to enjoy massive audience reach," said Jordan Cohen, CMO of Fluent, New York.

"Digital may be growing faster, but it is mostly additive in terms of how marketers can reach consumers," he said. "There doesn't need to be a 1:1 exchange of time-share per se, and essentially consumers are in touch with more marketers through more channels than ever."

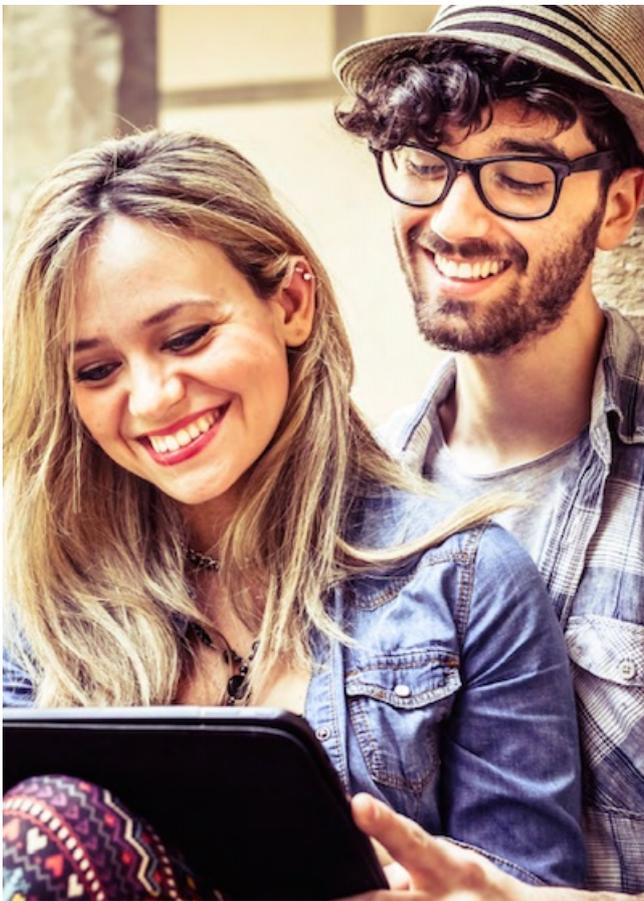
For its "**The Omnichannel Advantage**" report, Fluent surveyed 1,082 consumers in the United States.

Getting them in the door

Fluent asked consumers what marketing channels they have seen, followed or signed up for from brands.

Mobile notifications and email newsletters were tied, with 31 percent of respondents signed up, with mobile apps close behind at 30 percent. Of the social media platforms, consumers were most likely to follow brands on Facebook, with 29 percent saying they like a particular retailer.

Instagram and Twitter were the platforms where consumers were least likely to follow brands.



Social media allows brands to amplify their message on other channels

Social media requires consumers to opt-in, whereas advertising puts brand messaging in front of consumers whether they ask for it or not, which may account for the difference in number of eyes.

While it may be the most widespread channel, advertising works best when paired with additional points of engagement, as using more channels to reach a consumer raises the likelihood of making them a more frequent in-store shopper.

Consumers who engage with a brand via at least 10 channels are the most likely to say they shop in-store at least once a week, with 62 percent saying they make weekly visits compared to only 41 percent of those engaging on five to nine channels. Likewise, those who only interact with a brand on one to four channels make in-store purchases once a month or less.

The same correlation holds true for online purchases, with 49 percent of the 10 or more crowd buying from a retailer's Web site at least once per week.

As an example, social media works best at driving sales when paired with email. Twitter and Instagram may be the least adopted channels for consumers to follow brands, but those who engage on these social platforms are the most frequent purchasers.



Image courtesy of Printemps

Seventy-eight percent of those who receive emails and follow their favorite retailer on Twitter buy from the brand at least once a week. This percentage is highest out of any combination of email and another channel.

Twitter and Instagram in combination with email may lead to the highest rate of purchasing out of any channel, but Fluent suggests that Facebook offers more opportunity for brands, as consumers are more apt to follow their favorite retailer there.

"As our research found, nearly two-thirds of consumers who are reached by their favorite retailers across 10 or more channels say they shop with them at least once a week," Mr. Cohen said. "That number drops to 41 percent for those who are reached by fewer than 10 channels.

"So, the key advantage of connecting with consumers across as many channels as possible is that it works: they are more engaged and have a higher purchase frequency."

Better together

Traditional and digital need to balance each other, telling different parts of the same brand story.

Print media still holds a place in the luxury marketing mix, but its role is evolving as content marketing extends across more platforms, according to panelists at a Fordham Graduate Business School event.

Rather than being the primary place for brands to tell their stories, print serves as a special occasion, while digital content serves the purpose of engaging on a more consistent basis. Brands therefore need to find ways to reach consumers in both short-form and long-form content, making a three-second impression on a phone or telling a more extensive story in editorial ([see story](#)).

As luxury brands have taken their brands to more democratic channels such as social media, more options opened up for them to tell their stories to a wider audience.

Apparel and accessories marketers in the luxury sector reserve television advertising for accessible products such as fragrance, but Louis Vuitton's first commercial in 2012 signaled powerful branding opportunities on the channel.

Louis Vuitton dropped its first TV spot in November the year that was part of its L'Invitation au Voyage branding campaign while Ralph Lauren experimented with the medium through its first network sponsorship two months earlier. TV is certainly an expensive mass marketing channel, but fashion houses with a larger budget should not discount the branding power of TV ([see story](#)).

More recently, Stuart Weitzman aired its first television commercial for its footwear during MTV's Video Music Awards ([see story](#)).

"The key to any marketing plan is to buy or earn your way into media that reaches your target audience," Mr. Cohen said. "There are ways to do this across virtually every marketing channel.

"Our research just bears out the fact that having a presence in every marketing channel is beneficial, and in turn, that putting all your eggs into one, two or just a few baskets isn't as effective as being in all of them," he said. "There is a lot of talk on the digital side of the advertising industry about the importance of building 'customer journeys' when it comes to orchestrating an effective omnichannel marketing strategy, but at the end of the day, marketing is marketing, and omnichannel is really about adopting a ubiquity strategy and surrounding each customer or potential customer with your brand's message."

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