Understanding the Customer Journey in Technology Product Adoption: A Qualitative Study

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

Article type:
Original Research

How to cite this article:
Somjainuek, J., & Alcaraz, C.J. (2024). Understanding the Customer Journey in Technology Product Adoption: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Technology in Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management, 3*(3), 24-33.

A B S T R A C T

The objective of this study is to understand the customer journey in technology product adoption by exploring the experiences and perspectives of individuals who have recently adopted new technology products. This research aims to identify key themes and factors influencing the customer journey from initial awareness to ongoing engagement and retention, providing insights to enhance customer experiences and inform marketing strategies. This qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews with 20 participants selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation. Participants included individuals who had recently adopted technology products within the past six months. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo software, following an inductive approach to identify patterns and themes. The analysis revealed three main themes: Awareness and Decision-Making, First-Time Use and Learning, and Ongoing Engagement and Retention. Initial awareness was driven by advertising, social media, and word-of-mouth, while decision-making was influenced by peer recommendations, brand reputation, and price sensitivity. The first-time use phase highlighted the importance of intuitive design and support resources. Regular updates, community engagement, and product reliability emerged as critical factors in ongoing engagement and retention.

Participants valued seamless omnichannel experiences, personalized marketing efforts, and robust support systems. The study underscores the significance of personalized, seamless customer journeys in technology product adoption. Businesses should focus on integrating physical and digital touchpoints, leveraging AI for personalized experiences, and maintaining active user communities to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Addressing cultural nuances in global markets and managing digital signals effectively can further optimize the customer journey. These insights provide valuable guidance for businesses aiming to improve customer experiences and foster long-term engagement in the competitive technology market.

Keywords: Customer Journey, Technology Adoption, Qualitative Study, Omnichannel Experience, Personalization, Customer Engagement, User Experience, Marketing Strategies, Digital Signals, Global Markets.

Introduction

The concept of the customer journey has been extensively explored in various contexts, including retail, tourism, and digital marketing. In the retail sector, the shift towards omnichannel experiences has been a major focus (Silva et al., 2023). Alexander and Kent (2022) emphasize the importance of technology-enabled omnichannel customer experiences in retail stores, highlighting how seamless integration across multiple touchpoints can enhance customer satisfaction and drive sales (Alexander & Kent, 2022). Similarly, Hilken et al. (2018) discuss the role of augmented reality in creating immersive omnichannel experiences, suggesting that such technologies can bridge the gap between physical and digital shopping environments (Hilken et al., 2018).

In the context of tourism, Shen, Sotiriadis, and Zhang (2020) explore the influence of smart technologies on customer journeys within tourist attractions. Their findings indicate that smart technologies can enhance the overall visitor experience by providing personalized and context-aware information, thereby making the journey more engaging and memorable (Shen et al., 2020). This notion of embedding memorable experiences into the customer journey is also supported by Ayutthaya and Koomsap (2018), who argue that creating positive emotional connections with customers can lead to long-term loyalty and advocacy (Ayutthaya & Koomsap, 2018).

The digital environment has introduced new dimensions to the customer journey, particularly through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and personalization. Gao and Liu (2022) examine AI-enabled personalization in interactive marketing, noting that AI can tailor marketing efforts to individual customer preferences and behaviors, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of marketing communications (Gao & Liu, 2022). This personalized approach is essential in the contemporary customer journey, where consumers expect highly tailored experiences that cater to their unique needs and preferences (Sun et al., 2022).

The impact of digital signals on the customer journey is further explored by Schweidel et al. (2022), who discuss how consumer digital signals, such as online browsing behavior and social media interactions, can provide valuable insights into customer preferences and intentions (Schweidel et al., 2022). These insights can be leveraged to optimize the customer journey, ensuring that each touchpoint is aligned with the customer's expectations and needs.

The globalization of markets has added another layer of complexity to the customer journey. Nam and Kannan (2020) highlight the cross-cultural implications of evolving customer journeys, noting that cultural differences can significantly influence how customers perceive and interact with technology products (Nam & Kannan, 2020). The integration of technology into the customer journey is not limited to AI and digital signals. Emerging technologies such as blockchain and gamification also play a pivotal role. Singh et al. (2022) discuss the potential of blockchain technology in the fashion industry, suggesting that it can enhance transparency and traceability, thereby building customer trust. Similarly, Silva et al. (2023) propose a conceptual model for gamification in the customer journey, arguing that gamified experiences can increase customer engagement and satisfaction by making the journey more interactive and enjoyable (Singh et al., 2022).

Creating memorable shopping experiences is a key objective for businesses aiming to meet the needs of phygital customers—those who engage in both physical and digital interactions. Bonfanti et al. (2023) provide evidence from sporting goods stores, demonstrating that a well-orchestrated blend of physical and digital touchpoints can significantly enhance the customer experience (Bonfanti et al., 2023). This phygital approach is further elaborated by Mele and Spena (2021), who describe the architecture of the phygital customer journey as a dynamic interplay between systems of insights and systems of engagement (Mele & Spena, 2021).

Developing a comprehensive framework to improve the retail customer experience requires a deep understanding of the customer journey. Poorrezaei, Pich, and Resnick (2023) present a qualitative study exploring this journey, highlighting key touchpoints and pain points that influence customer satisfaction. Their findings suggest that a well-designed customer journey framework can enhance the overall customer experience by addressing these critical factors (Poorrezaei et al., 2023).

The implications of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the customer journey cannot be overlooked. Ngarmwongnoi et al. (2020) explore how eWOM adoption influences customer decisions, emphasizing the importance of online reviews and social media recommendations in shaping customer perceptions and behaviors. As consumers increasingly rely on digital sources for information, businesses must strategically manage their online presence to foster positive eWOM and influence the customer journey effectively (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020).

Rana et al. (2021) reinforce the significance of AI in reinforcing the customer journey, providing a review and research agenda that highlights future opportunities for leveraging AI to enhance customer experiences. Their work underscores the need for ongoing research to explore the full potential of AI in optimizing the customer journey across various industries (Rana et al., 2021).

The customer journey in technology product adoption is a multifaceted process influenced by a myriad of factors, including technological advancements, digital signals, cultural differences, and emerging technologies. By understanding these factors and their interplay, businesses can create more engaging, personalized, and satisfying customer experiences. This study aims to contribute to this understanding by providing qualitative insights into the customer journey, highlighting key themes and practical implications for enhancing the customer experience in the context of technology product adoption.

Methods and Materials

This study employs a qualitative research design to deeply understand the customer journey in technology product adoption. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for exploring complex phenomena in context, allowing for rich, detailed descriptions and insights into participants' experiences and perspectives.

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of individuals who have recently adopted new technology products. Criteria for inclusion included participants who have purchased and started using a technology product within the past six months. The final sample consisted of 20 participants, with a mix of demographics including age, gender, and professional background to capture a wide range of experiences and viewpoints.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which provided flexibility to explore participants' experiences in depth while maintaining consistency across interviews. An interview guide was developed based on existing literature and research questions, covering key aspects of the customer journey such as initial awareness, decision-making process, first-time use, and ongoing engagement with the technology product.

Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted either in person or via video conferencing, depending on the participant's preference and convenience. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The process of data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning no new themes or insights emerged from additional interviews. This point was determined through ongoing data analysis and discussion among the research team, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the customer journey.

The interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo software, which facilitated systematic coding and theme development. The analysis followed an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge from the data without imposing preconceived categories. The coding process involved several stages:

Initial Coding: Each transcript was read multiple times, and preliminary codes were assigned to segments of text that were relevant to the research questions.

Focused Coding: These initial codes were reviewed and refined into more specific categories, which were then compared across different transcripts to identify patterns and commonalities.

Theme Development: The categories were grouped into broader themes that captured the core aspects of the customer journey in technology product adoption.

Validation: To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted with a subset of participants, allowing them to review and comment on the identified themes and interpretations.

Findings and Results

The study involved 20 participants, selected to provide a diverse representation of individuals who have recently adopted new technology products. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 55 years, with an average age of 35. Gender distribution was balanced, with 10 males and 10 females participating in the study. Participants came from various professional backgrounds, including 6 from technology-related fields, 5 from education, 4 from healthcare, 3 from finance, and 2 from retail. The majority of participants (12) held at least a bachelor's degree, with 8 having completed postgraduate education. In terms of technology adoption experience, 15 participants had adopted multiple new technologies in the past year, while 5 were first-time adopters. This diverse demographic profile ensured a comprehensive understanding of the customer journey across different age groups, genders, professional backgrounds, and levels of technology adoption experience.

Table 1

The Results of Qualitative Analysis

Categories	Subcategories	Concepts
Awareness and Decision-Making	Initial Awareness	Advertising, Social Media, Word-of-Mouth
	Information Gathering	Online Reviews, Product Specifications, Expert Opinions
	Influences on Decision	Peer Recommendations, Brand Reputation, Price Sensitivity
	Comparison with Alternatives	Feature Comparison, Cost-Benefit Analysis, User Reviews
	Purchase Decision	Impulse Buying, Planned Purchase, Discounts and Offers
First-Time Use and Learning	Initial Setup	Unboxing Experience, Installation Process, User Manual Clarity
	Ease of Use	Intuitive Design, User Interface, Technical Support
	Learning Curve	Tutorial Availability, Help Resources, User Community
	Initial Satisfaction	Performance Expectations, Initial Impressions, Functionality
	Problem-Solving	Troubleshooting, Customer Service, Online Forums
Ongoing Engagement and Retention	Regular Use	Daily Integration, Feature Utilization, Routine Tasks
	Updates and Upgrades	Software Updates, Hardware Upgrades, New Features
	Community and Social Interaction	User Groups, Online Communities, Peer Support
	Long-term Satisfaction	Reliability, Continued Performance, Value for Money
	Brand Loyalty	Repeat Purchases, Brand Advocacy, Customer Trust
	Disengagement	Reduced Usage, Product Replacement, Switching to Competitors

Awareness and Decision-Making

Initial Awareness: Participants became aware of new technology products through various channels, including advertising, social media, and word-of-mouth. For example, one participant noted, "I first saw the ad on Instagram, and it caught my attention immediately." Others mentioned hearing about products from friends or family members who were early adopters.

Information Gathering: Once aware of a product, participants engaged in information gathering, primarily through online reviews, product specifications, and expert opinions. "I always read reviews on tech blogs before making a decision," said one interviewee. Detailed product specifications and expert opinions also played a significant role in shaping their perceptions and decisions.

Influences on Decision: Decision-making was influenced by peer recommendations, brand reputation, and price sensitivity. One participant stated, "My friend recommended this brand because of their good customer service, and that mattered a lot to me." Brand reputation and affordability were recurrent themes in shaping purchase decisions.

Comparison with Alternatives: Participants compared products with alternatives based on features, cost-benefit analysis, and user reviews. A respondent shared, "I spent a lot of time comparing features and reading user reviews on multiple websites before deciding." This thorough comparison process was crucial for ensuring the best choice was made.

Purchase Decision: The final purchase decision was driven by factors such as impulse buying, planned purchases, and available discounts or offers. "The discount was too good to pass up, so I bought it on the spot," one participant explained, highlighting the impact of promotional offers.

First-Time Use and Learning

Initial Setup: The initial setup experience varied, with some participants describing it as straightforward and others finding it challenging. "The unboxing and setup were really exciting, and the instructions were clear," one user mentioned, while another noted, "I had to call customer support because I got stuck during the installation."

Ease of Use: Ease of use was a significant factor, influenced by the product's intuitive design, user interface, and availability of technical support. "The interface was so user-friendly, I didn't need much help," one participant stated. However, those who encountered difficulties appreciated prompt technical support.

Learning Curve: The learning curve involved accessing tutorials, help resources, and engaging with the user community. A participant remarked, "The online tutorials were really helpful in getting me started." Help resources and active user communities provided additional support during the initial learning phase.

Initial Satisfaction: Initial satisfaction depended on meeting performance expectations, first impressions, and functionality. "It worked exactly as I expected, and I'm very satisfied," a participant shared, underscoring the importance of fulfilling initial expectations.

Problem-Solving: When problems arose, participants relied on troubleshooting guides, customer service, and online forums. "I found solutions to my issues on user forums more quickly than through official channels," one interviewee said, highlighting the value of community support.

Ongoing Engagement and Retention

Regular Use: Regular use patterns were established based on how well the product integrated into daily routines, feature utilization, and the execution of routine tasks. "It has become a part of my daily routine; I can't imagine not using it," one participant commented.

Updates and Upgrades: Participants valued regular software updates, hardware upgrades, and new features. "The regular updates keep the product fresh and add useful new features," said one user, indicating the importance of continual improvement.

Community and Social Interaction: Engaging with user groups, online communities, and peer support networks enhanced the user experience. "Being part of an online community has helped me learn new tips and tricks," a participant mentioned, highlighting the social aspect of technology use.

Long-Term Satisfaction: Long-term satisfaction was associated with the product's reliability, continued performance, and perceived value for money. "It's been reliable and continues to perform well, definitely worth the investment," one participant noted.

Brand Loyalty: Brand loyalty emerged from repeat purchases, brand advocacy, and customer trust. "I've bought several products from this brand because I trust their quality," shared a loyal customer, illustrating the result of positive long-term experiences.

Disengagement: Some participants experienced disengagement due to reduced usage, product replacement, or switching to competitors. "I found a better alternative and stopped using the old product," one participant explained, reflecting the dynamic nature of technology adoption.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a detailed exploration of the customer journey in technology product adoption, highlighting three main themes: Awareness and Decision-Making, First-Time Use and Learning, and Ongoing Engagement and Retention. Within these themes, several subcategories emerged, each revealing critical insights into the factors influencing customer behavior and experience.

Awareness and Decision-Making involved initial awareness, information gathering, influences on decision, comparison with alternatives, and the purchase decision. Participants reported becoming aware of products through advertising, social media, and word-of-mouth, with online reviews and expert opinions playing significant roles in their decision-making process. Influences such as peer recommendations, brand reputation, and price sensitivity were pivotal in shaping their final purchase decisions.

First-Time Use and Learning encompassed the initial setup, ease of use, learning curve, initial satisfaction, and problem-solving. Participants' experiences varied widely, with some finding the setup process straightforward and others encountering challenges. Ease of use, intuitive design, and available technical support were crucial for positive initial impressions. Learning was facilitated by tutorials and community support, while problem-solving often relied on customer service and online forums.

Ongoing Engagement and Retention included regular use, updates and upgrades, community and social interaction, long-term satisfaction, brand loyalty, and disengagement. Participants valued regular software updates and new features, engaging with user communities for support and tips. Long-term

satisfaction was tied to product reliability and continued performance, fostering brand loyalty. However, some participants experienced disengagement due to reduced usage or switching to competitors.

The results align with existing literature, highlighting the critical role of multi-channel touchpoints and personalized experiences in shaping the customer journey. Alexander and Kent (2022) underscore the importance of omnichannel experiences in retail, emphasizing that seamless integration across physical and digital channels enhances customer satisfaction. This is echoed in our findings, where participants reported the significant impact of various information sources on their awareness and decision-making processes (Alexander & Kent, 2022).

The role of personalized experiences, particularly through AI, was evident in our study. Gao and Liu (2022) highlight how AI-enabled personalization in interactive marketing can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of customer interactions. Participants in our study valued tailored recommendations and personalized marketing efforts, which influenced their purchase decisions and initial satisfaction with the product (Gao & Liu, 2022).

Our findings also support the concept of embedding memorable experiences into the customer journey, as discussed by Ayutthaya and Koomsap (2018). Participants reported that positive emotional connections, facilitated by intuitive design and effective support resources, contributed to their overall satisfaction and loyalty (Ayutthaya & Koomsap, 2018). This aligns with Bonfanti et al. (2023), who found that creating memorable shopping experiences is crucial for meeting the needs of phygital customers (Bonfanti et al., 2023).

The significance of community and social interaction in the ongoing engagement phase resonates with the findings of Mele and Spena (2021), who describe the dynamic interplay between systems of insights and systems of engagement in the phygital customer journey. Our participants frequently relied on user communities and online forums for problem-solving and continued engagement, illustrating the importance of social support networks (Mele & Spena, 2021).

Moreover, the impact of digital signals on the customer journey, as highlighted by Schweidel et al. (2022), was evident in our study. Participants' digital interactions, such as reading online reviews and participating in forums, significantly influenced their decision-making and ongoing engagement. This underscores the need for businesses to manage their online presence strategically to foster positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and enhance the customer experience (Schweidel et al., 2022).

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 20 participants, while sufficient for qualitative analysis, may not fully capture the diversity of experiences across different demographics and regions. Future research could benefit from larger and more varied samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability bias. Participants might have tailored their responses to align with perceived expectations or recalled their experiences inaccurately. Finally, the focus on semi-structured interviews may have limited the exploration of certain aspects of the customer journey that could emerge in other qualitative methods, such as focus groups or ethnographic studies.

Future research should aim to address the limitations identified in this study by incorporating larger and more diverse samples. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the customer journey over time, capturing how experiences and perceptions evolve from initial awareness to long-term engagement and potential disengagement. Additionally, exploring the impact of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality and blockchain, on the customer journey could offer valuable perspectives on future trends and developments. Singh et al. (2022) discuss the potential of blockchain in enhancing transparency and trust in the fashion industry, a concept that could be explored further in the context of technology product adoption (Singh et al., 2022). Comparative studies across different cultural contexts, as suggested by Nam and Kannan (2020), could also provide a richer understanding of how cultural factors influence the customer journey (Nam & Kannan, 2020).

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for businesses aiming to enhance the customer journey in technology product adoption. First, companies should invest in creating seamless omnichannel experiences that integrate physical and digital touchpoints, as emphasized by Alexander and Kent (2022) and Hilken et al. (2018). This includes ensuring that information is easily accessible across various platforms and providing consistent messaging and support (Alexander & Kent, 2022; Hilken et al., 2018). Personalization should be a key focus, leveraging AI to tailor marketing efforts and product recommendations to individual customer preferences, as highlighted by Gao and Liu (2022). Providing robust support resources, such as tutorials, customer service, and active user communities, can enhance the initial setup and learning phases, fostering positive first impressions and long-term satisfaction (Gao & Liu, 2022).

Businesses should also focus on maintaining regular updates and introducing new features to keep products relevant and engaging, as suggested by our participants and supported by the literature (Bonfanti et al., 2023; Mele & Spena, 2021). Managing digital signals effectively by encouraging positive eWOM and actively engaging with customer feedback on online platforms can significantly influence the customer journey, as discussed by Schweidel et al. (2022) and Ngarmwongnoi et al. (2020). Finally, understanding and addressing the cultural nuances in global markets, as highlighted by Nam and Kannan (2020), can help businesses tailor their strategies to meet the diverse needs of their international customer base (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020; Schweidel et al., 2022).

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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