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# JOURNEY MAPPING: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR BRAND

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## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SCENARIOS

A customer tries your new goat milk hand cream and loves the product so much they come back, often to buy for their friends. After a few months of shopping frequently with you at the farmers market, you stop seeing them.

You sell two varieties of honey at several local farm stores in your area. One variety sells well, frequently selling out; sales for the other, however, remain sluggish. You would like to know why customers prefer one variety over the other.

After hearing great reviews about your cheddar cheese from a close friend, a customer tries your product. You later learn they stopped buying your product after their first purchase. You wonder why.

You just opened your farm for your first Fall Fun Fest! You are excited about this new venture and the visitors it will bring to your farm. On opening day, you hear from multiple visitors who express frustrations finding your location. You want to make it easier for visitors to find you.

The situations described above can be perplexing, leaving you struggling to understand why, and maybe even questioning the products you offer. Finding answers and gaining a better understanding of what your customers are thinking can be tough, and thinking through the challenges you are having with customers can feel daunting.

Thankfully, there is a tool you can use to help you better understand your customers' experiences with your products and identify some possible "pain points" along their journey with your products. That tool is known as Customer Journey Mapping.

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING: THE BASICS

Customer Journey Mapping is a marketing tool that can help you gain a complete understanding of customers' shopping patterns and preferences by charting interactions customers have with your brand across the pre-purchase purchase, and post-purchase stages. This tool can help you identify areas for improving the customer experience and enable you to conduct precise and personalized marketing, enhancing customer communication and fostering increased customer loyalty and retention.

Using the customer journey map as a framework, you can follow your customers' footsteps as they interact with your brand. This tool can be very useful to small business owners, including farmers, directly marketing products and experiences to consumers by providing the opportunity to connect with consumers, build empathy, and foster relationships ultimately creating customer loyalty. The mapping process can help you:

- acquire customers,
- retain customers, and
- grow with your customers.

### CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING

A marketing tool that can help you gain a comprehensive understanding of customers' shopping patterns and preferences by charting interactions across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING: FIVE STEPS

Customer journey mapping follows your customer as they move through their experiences with your brand from awareness of your product to consideration, decision, use, and loyalty and advocacy. The journey mapping process follows these 5 steps:

1. **Defining Your Objective** – Every journey needs a destination. What do you hope to achieve by understanding your customers' experience? Do you want to boost sales? Build brand loyalty? Enhance customer satisfaction? Having a clear objective will guide your mapping.
2. **Creating Your Customer Persona** – Think about your customer, the person you want to target to achieve your objective. Create a detailed picture of your customer – their interests, needs, shopping habits. Think of them as a friend you're excited to show your farm or business.
3. **Charting the Touchpoints** – Think about all the opportunities you have to "touch" or interact with the customer. Some touchpoints could include on-farm stores, farm tours, billboards, flyers, social media, emails, newsletters, product packaging, store associates, etc. The chart on the next page outlines possible touchpoints you have with customers both on and off your farm.
4. **Walking in Your Customers' Shoes** – Using the customer persona you created in step two, put yourself in their shoes and map the journey of their experiences. Use your knowledge of your customers (and some imagination) to walk through what and how your customer is doing, thinking and feeling on each step of their journey with your product and other touchpoints. You can use the template included at the end of the publication to help you.
5. **Identifying Pain Points and Resolutions** – Think about each point of your customers' journey with your product. What are some problem spots? Where do the challenges lie? Where might your customer experience frustrations or disappointments? Develop some actionable strategies to resolve the pain points.

| Examples of Customer Touch Points by Shopping Channel | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Channel** | **Touchpoint** |
| **Farm Controlled** | **Physical Location** | On-farm agritourism<br>On-farm store<br>Billboard<br>Flyer<br>Farm-operated local store outside farm |
| | **Online** | Farm website<br>Email newsletter<br>Paid advertisement |
| | **Social Media** | Instagram<br>Facebook<br>YouTube<br>Pinterest<br>LinkedIn<br>X (*formerly Twitter*)<br>TikTok<br>Paid advertisement |
| **Third Party** | **Corporate-Owned Grocers (e.g., Kroger)** | Store display<br>Social media<br>Weekly ad<br>Product package<br>Sales associate<br>Email newsletter |
| | **Specialty Grocers (e.g., Whole Foods Market)** | Social display<br>Social media<br>Email<br>Weekly ad<br>Product package<br>Sales associate |
| | **Local Co-Op Grocers** | Social display<br>Social media<br>Email<br>Weekly ad<br>Product package<br>Sales associate |
| | **Privately Owned Local Stores** | Social display<br>Social media<br>Email<br>Weekly ad<br>Product package<br>Sales associate |
| | **Farmers Market** | Website<br>Guide brochure<br>Social media<br>Market booth |
| | **Other Online Touchpoints** | Tennessee Department of Agriculture database<br>Personal blogs<br>Organic search engine<br>Paid search engine<br>Word of mouth |

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING: AN EXAMPLE

Let's look at the example to see how customer journey mapping could help you better understand your customers.

Consider the following scenario:

> After discovering your cheese from a billboard advertisement, Emily, a new customer, tries your product. You later learn she stopped buying your product after her first purchase. You wonder why.

We can use the five steps presented earlier to work through the customer journey mapping process.

1. **Define Your Objective** – In the example above, your objective is to understand the reasons the customer stopped buying your cheddar cheese after their first purchase.
2. **Create Your Customer Persona** – Using knowledge of your customers, we can help to create a persona of the customer you are trying to understand. For the example above, we have named our customer "Emily." We envision her as a middle-aged female who is interested in supporting local agriculture and understanding more about her food. While she wants to support local farmers, she is also constrained in grocery shopping by time and her budget.
3. **Chart the Touchpoints** – Using the touchpoints chart as a guide, you can identify all the places your brand interacts with the customer. Keep in mind that touchpoints can be physical or digital. Touchpoints in this example would include the billboard advertisement and the store where the customer purchased the product.
4. **Walk in Your Customers' Shoes** – Using the template below, you are able to walk with Emily or follow her journey as she learns about, shops for, purchases, uses, and evaluates your cheddar cheese.
5. **Identify Pain Points and Resolutions** – Using the template and the steps along Emily's journey, you are able to brainstorm or think through some of the possible challenges that might have led Emily no longer purchase the cheddar cheese. For each of the challenges, brainstorm some possible resolutions.

| | Awareness | Consideration | Decision | Use | Loyalty & Advocacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Customer Actions** | Discovering a local farm cheese brand through billboard advertising | Looking for pepper jack cheese for her son's birthday party | Discovering the local farm brand from billboard advertising in a store | Eating the local farm brand cheese | Trying several more cheese<br>Stopping buying the local brand cheese<br>Starting purchasing cheese from Costco for everyday use |
| **Touchpoints** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Customer Thinking** | Became interested in the new local cheese brand from billboard advertising | Specialty grocers offer high-quality dairy products<br>Desire to experiment with gourmet cheese for a special occasion | Favor less processed dairy products<br>Recalled a local farm brand after seeing it on a billboard advertisement | Not much difference between the local and the generic brand cheese | Cheese is altered, so food origin and processing doesn't matter much<br>Given the choice between similar cheese products, I would consider price |
| **Customer Feeling** | **Curious**<br>"When we first got here, we were looking.. just trying out different things." | **Adventurous**<br>"Somebody was having burgers for their birthday, and I was like, 'okay, I'm gonna buy a fancy cheese.' It was a [special] occasion." | **Excited**<br>"It was Whole Foods [Market™]. There was the cheese [from a local farm] there." | "There's not much cheese I don't like.. I don't remember [any differences]."<br>**Unimpressed** | "I stopped buying because there's an abundance of other options... if given the choice between similar [cheese] products, it would probably come down to price."<br>**Pragmatic** |

The Customer Journey Map you created for "Emily" can help you understand possible reasons why Emily does not continue purchasing your cheese. As you go through the process, you discover some reasons including:

**Emily is faithfully committed to buying local food, and this motivation is mainly rooted in her interest in family health. For this reason, nutritional values and processing information are very influential in her decision makings. She does a lot of research about food online.**

**However, due to family commitments, Emily does not have a lot of time. Additionally, she has a limited budget for grocery spending. She is very selective when she chooses local food products and brands, which tend to be more expensive.**

**Given Emily's price consciousness, Emily has determined your cheddar cheese is too expensive and not much different in nutritional value and taste. She decided to buy a cheaper brand of cheese since she couldn't justify paying more for local cheese brands.**

Based on the challenges you identified, you brainstorm some possible solutions including highlighting the unique aspects of your product.

## CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING: YOUR TURN

Customer Journey Mapping is a tool you can use to think about your customers' journey with your product in a guided, organized fashion. This tool can help you better understand your touchpoints or interactions with your customers pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase.

Apply customer journey mapping to your own operations. As you do, keep the following in mind:

**Use the five steps**: Always begin by thinking through the five steps discussed above. You can also use the table at the end of the publication to guide you.

**Let it guide you**: Let the Customer Journey Mapping tool serve as your guide. The Customer Journey Mapping tool is designed to help you think about your customer and their interactions with your product. Don't worry about putting down the "right" answer or filling out all of the table. The power of the tool is in getting you to think through each part of the customer journey.

**Ask questions**: Ask yourself questions as you go through each part of the customer journey. These questions can help you think about all that your customer is experiencing and encountering in their journey with your product.

**Revisit and Revise**: Your Customer Journey Map is a "living" document. As you make changes to your business or as new questions arise, go back, revisit, and/ or revise your journey map.

**Keep the Customer First** – Use the Customer Journey Map as a tool to help you keep your customer top of mind. If you feel like you are losing focus on your customer, go back to the Customer Journey Map.

The more you use Customer Journey Mapping, the more comfortable you will become with the process. Keep following the process and revisiting the Customer Journey Map steps. In time, you will find the Customer Journey Map to be an effective (and easy) tool to use for understanding, engaging, and retaining customers.

| CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING STEPS | NOTES |
| --- | --- |
| **Define Your Objective** | |
| **Create Your Customer Persona** | |
| **Chart the Touchpoints** | |
| **Walk in Your Customers' Shoes** | |
| **Identify Pain Points and Resolutions** | |

## Customer Journey Map Template

## Customer Persona _____

| | AWARENESS | CONSIDERATION | DECISION | USE | LOYALTY & ADVOCACY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Customer Actions** | | | | | |
| **Touchpoints** | | | | | |
| **Customer Thinking** | | | | | |
| **Customer Feeling** | | | | | |



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