



Mindtree

A Larsen & Toubro Group Company

# Stages in the Customer Journey

A Travel Industry Use Case

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# 1. Introduction

A digital marketer's technology toolkit can be overwhelming. As you manage your customers' journeys, whether they are anonymous users or loyal customers, there are several variables that can add additional complexity. Your customers interact with you on multiple channels and devices and therefore, building effective strategies, comprehensive customer profiles, creating segments, analyzing online customer behavior and running appropriate campaigns can often inundate you.

Technology vendors add to this complexity and there is often a panoply of tools that you need to use. In our experience, having worked with several Mindtree customers, we have observed that there are several distinct stages in a customer journey. It would be helpful to think of your customer journeys in terms of these stages.

In this paper, therefore, we discuss four stages common in customer journeys. We use a broad travel industry use case and consider its relevance for each stage respectively. For each stage, we describe what the functional building blocks are and the technology that can be used to build them.

We have taken an example customer journey for a fictitious travel company. However, the stages and concepts explained here can be extrapolated to any domain or vertical.



## 2. Stages in Customer Journey Mapping

In this section, we will break down the customer journey into four stages and explain key functional and technical blocks relevant to each stage.

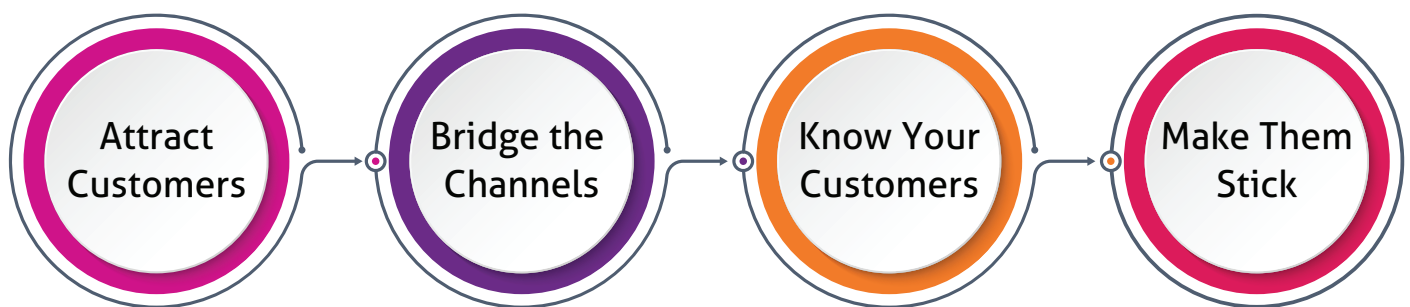


Figure : Stages in Customer Journey

## 2.1 Attracting Customers to Your Business

Carla runs a google search and comes across MyTravelPortal.com. She clicks on an ad that offers discounted packages to holiday destinations. This takes her to a landing page that shows all the packages for destinations in North America.

She remembers seeing a Facebook post about this site on her colleague Deborah's wall too. She bookmarks it and later in the evening, comes back to the site and starts reading up about different packaged trips as well as about places. MyTravelPortal has excellent and inspiring travelogues about different destinations, apart from having some cool packages.

### 2.1.1 Functional Description

The first important step in a customer journey is to understand how visitors are finding your business and then attracting them to your digital channels. Visitors can come to a website or mobile app from many sources, organically or inorganically, via search results, referrals, paid advertisements, social media or email campaigns.

The key functionality relevant for this stage is:

#### **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

SEO plays a prominent role in terms of bringing the users to the destination. Following SEO best practices are easy, as well as immensely helpful in driving leads for your channels.

#### **Marketing Campaigns**

While SEO is a good foundation to get traffic organically, you need to build upon this and undertake Email Marketing, Search engine marketing (SEM) as well as Social Media Marketing (SMM). These let you run paid promotions and campaigns on search engines, display partners as well as social media sites such as Facebook.

#### **Landing Pages**

Having inspiring, attractive content on the landing page will ensure the visitor spends some time on the site.

Landing pages are part of the website, but are specially built for a goal such as generating leads. As the name suggests, your users 'land' on these pages as a result of an email, social media or even SEO marketing campaign. The actions taken by the visitor on the landing page help determine the advertiser's conversion rate.

#### **Reports and Metrics**

It is important to track metrics and analyze reports that help you understand what the main channels for user acquisition are. These reports will also help make spending decisions and allocating advertising budgets for most effective channel.

### 2.1.2 Technology and Tools

#### **Landing Pages**

You can use your existing web site systems (e.g., a Web CMS) for creating and managing landing pages. Several digital marketing tools, such as Adobe Campaign also provide landing page management capabilities. The advantage of using landing page management capabilities from digital marketing tools is that you can carry out sophisticated A/B or multi-variate testing and optimize content appropriately.

## Marketing Campaigns

Another way to reach your users (or prospects) is through marketing campaigns using email, social media and messaging.

The key categories of tools used for marketing campaigns, which includes a few vendor examples are:

**Campaign Management:** Adobe Campaign, Oracle Responsys and Eloqua, Salesforce

**Social Media Marketing:** Hootsuite, HubSpot

**AdTech:** AdRoll, Google Doubleclick, Sizmek, Quantcast, Adobe Media Optimizer

**Marketing Automation:** Adobe Campaigns, Eloqua, Marketo

**Social Media Monitoring:** Radian6 (now part of Salesforce), Adobe Social Analytics, Oracle SRM

Please note, the above is not a comprehensive or recommended list. These are just some examples that Mindtree's customers have been using.

## Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

In general, SEO specialists look at keyword analytics, recommended keywords, gap analysis on keyword searching, content matching and competitor research to build an SEO strategy and implement it. Post that, a continuous check and optimization needs to be executed.

## Reporting and Metrics

There are several tools to analyze user behavior, monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) or carry out other types of analytics. Google Analytics is the most common tool for web analytics, but there are several alternatives, with varying focus areas. Examples include Adobe Analytics, ThoughtSpot, SAS, Tableau and several others.



## 2.2 Bridge the channels - From Multi-Channel to Omni-Channel Marketing

On her desktop, Carla does some research on the flights available between New York to Los Angeles for a specific date, with a few filters like non-stop flights and late morning-only flights. Having liked an offer that suits her needs, she goes ahead to check how much it will cost her. However, she leaves the site without getting into the steps for booking. On the way to her office, she checks her mobile and strangely, she starts seeing ads about the same flight she was checking out earlier, with offers.

Later, when she logs back into MyTravelPortal website, she sees a special offer for the same resort she had enquired about on Facebook.

It is important to provide continuity in experience when the customer moves from the desktop web to mobile app or from one channel to another. For example, if Carla starts booking on a desktop and then moves to a mobile - the information she already filled up in desktop should remain filled in the app also. Also, the contents or offers which she was seeing on web should be available on the app, unless they are app-only offers.

## 2.2.1 Functional Description

Customers interact with you across multiple channels and devices.

In this mobile-first, or sometimes mobile-only world, there are several use cases when users access your services via alternate channels. Therefore, it is important to plan for a multi-channel experience, gradually scaling up to a full omnichannel experience.

A recent Mindtree survey identified website, phone, in-store, and mobile apps as the key channels for researching travel purchase.

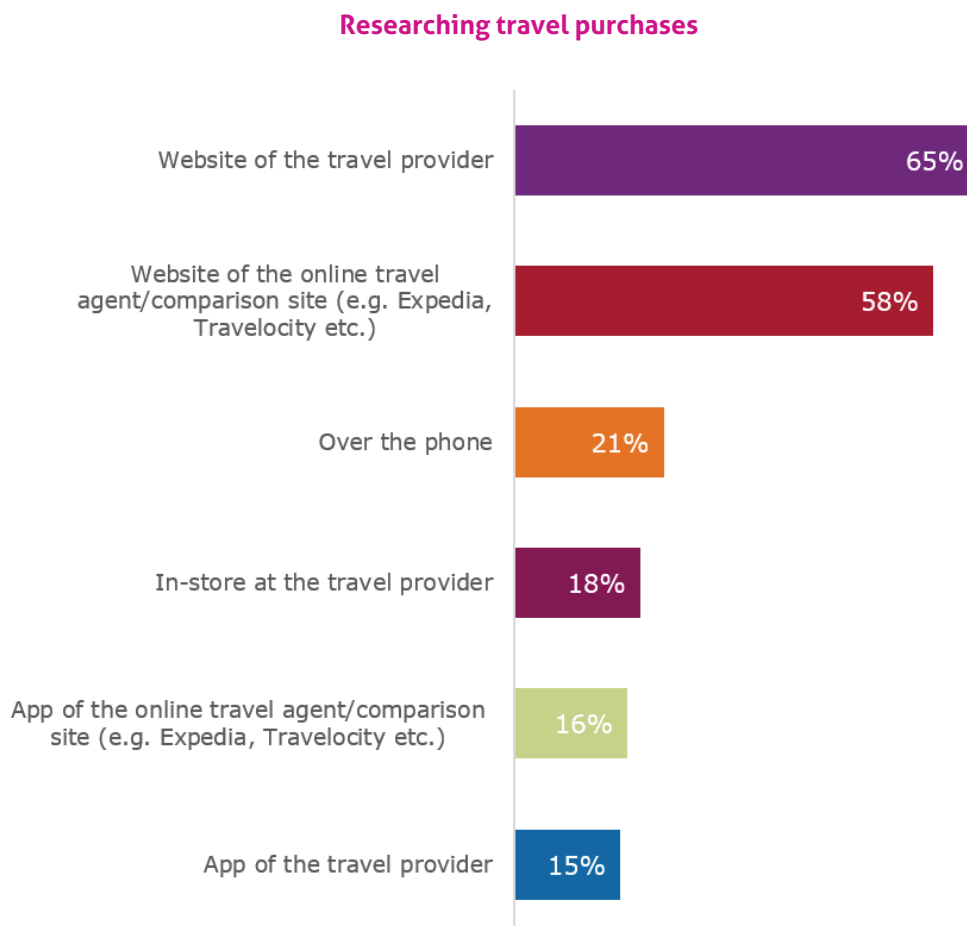
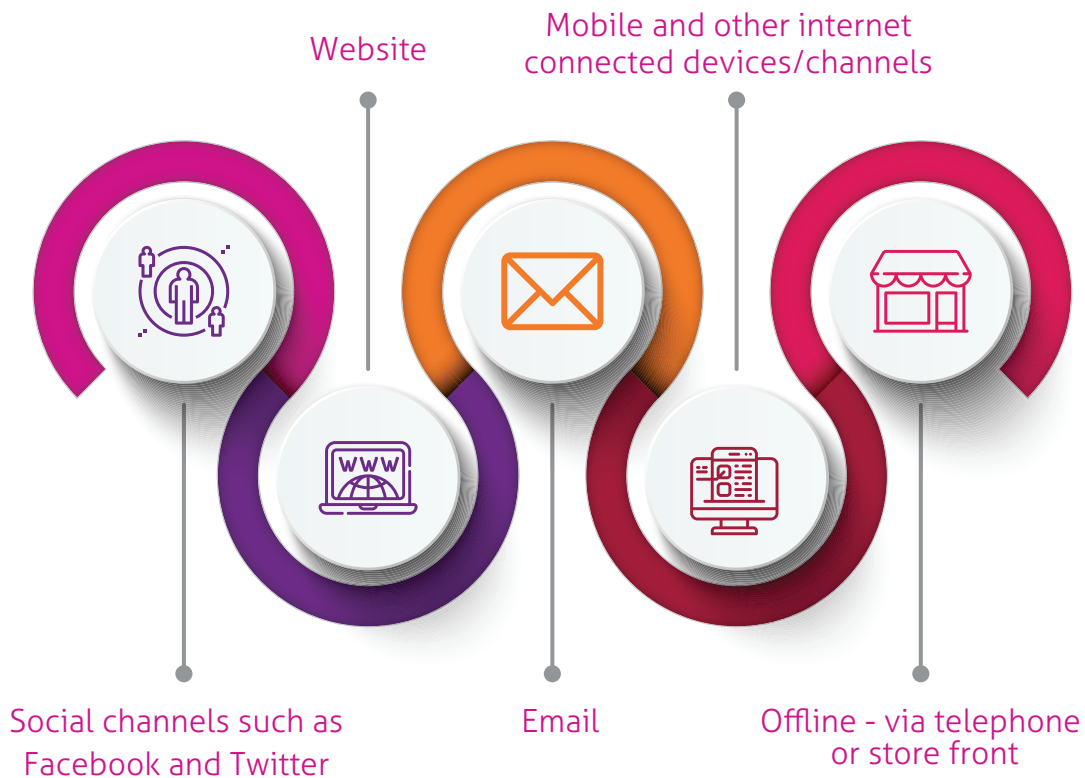


Figure :“How do you typically research travel purchases (e.g. tickets, reservations, bookings etc.)?”, asked to all respondents (2000)

As a result, it is important to stitch together a unified customer profile based on interactions across several channels - both online and offline. Customers can interact with you via several channels such as:



Therefore, you need to be able to identify a customer across these different channels and then stitch together a unified profile of every customer with details of his/ her interactions across multiple channels.

## 2.2.2 Technology and Tools

For any program that require unification of customer data and then reaching out to them, the three key systems are:

- Customer Data Platform (CDP)
- Data Management Platform (DMP)
- Journey Orchestration

These platforms integrate data from several platforms to create a unified profile of customers, apart from orchestrating customer journeys across multiple channels. They typically work with other enterprise technologies like Master Data Management (MDM), Product Information Management, Data Warehouse, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and different Marketing/Campaign Management applications.

CDPs focus on marketing use cases, whereas DMPs focus on advertising use cases.

CDPs work across all the aspects of marketing such as personalization, marketing automation, and campaigns, whereas a DMP focuses primarily on advertising and helps agencies to improve the ad-targeting.

Journey orchestration engines allow you to create, manage and automate customer journeys mapping across multiple channels and devices.

Adobe provides Adobe Audience Manager and a few other data management tools. There are also several third party DMPs such as Oracle BlueKai, Salesforce DMP and others.

Examples of CDPs include Lytics, mParticle, NGData and others.

Several CDPs and marketing campaign platforms provide journey orchestration capabilities. However, there are many stand-alone journey orchestration tools such as Relay42, Thunderhead, Kitewheel, Pointlist and Usermind.

## 2.3 Know your customer and what drives them

Carla has been checking out holiday packages for more than a week now. Based on her browsing over this past week, MyTravelPortal shows her new holiday packages for North American countries. Carla has a pet cat and she's also shown hotel and resorts that are pet-friendly. In addition, since Carla likes to read reviews of each package or hotel, MyTravelPortal.com prominently displays reviews on her dashboard.

### 2.3.1 Functional Description

A recent Mindtree survey showed that customers are willing to pay a premium for offers that are more contextual and relevant to them.

Customers that have paid a premium and are willing to do so in future.

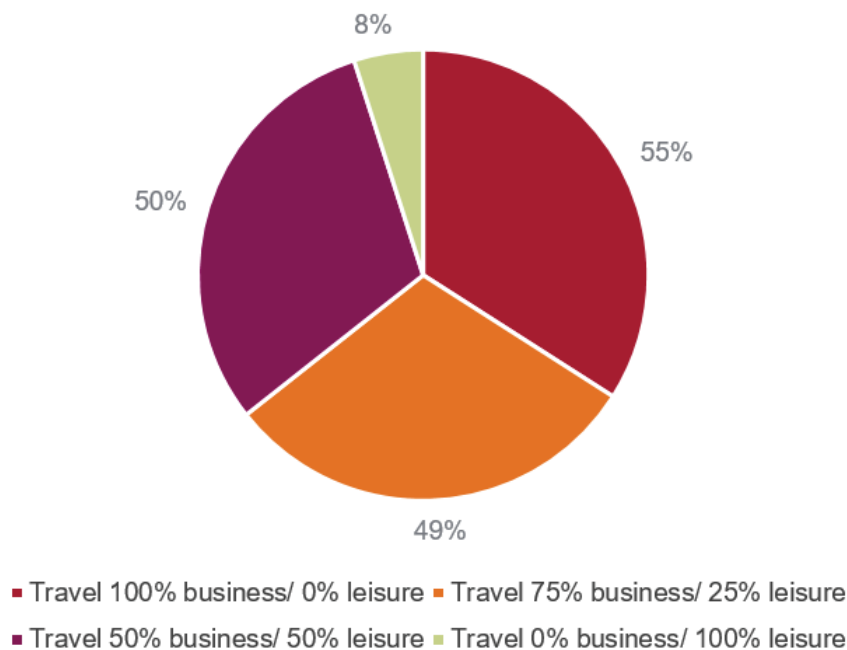


Figure :Have you ever paid a premium (i.e. more than normal price) for offers that are more contextual and relevant from travel providers?  
Source: Mindtree Customer Survey

#### Make offers contextual and relevant?

Analytics and personalization are key to making your offers contextual and relevant. In order to do that, you need access to data about users.

#### Data Ingestion and aggregation

At a high level, there are two kinds of data that can help:

- **Enterprise Data:** The most important source of customer data is enterprise-related such as existing CRM systems. These systems have data related to demographics, contacts, transactions, complaints and other aspects. This is your own data, and also the most correct.
- **External Data:** You can enrich your enterprise data with external data that you can often get from your partners, as well as marketplace or data exchanges.



You can use analytics on this data to perform analysis like:

- Analyzing online behavior through web analytics or app analytics
- Analyzing offline behavior through campaign analytics
- Analysis of social channel data via social media monitoring
- Machine Learning-based profile enrichment
- Propensity algorithms to understand user behavior and 'intentions'
- Psychometric personality analysis
- Sentiment analysis



### Data cleansing and Segmentation

All this data is brought into a repository (e.g., a data lake or even a CDP), where it is cleansed, standardized, de-duped and so on, and then passed onto other systems for creating unified profile, segments and recommendations.

### Personalization

The segmentation and recommendation data are loaded into the personalization engine. Real-time segment data can also be accessible through APIs for real time personalization.

## 2.3.2 Technology and Tools

### Segmentation and Personalization

Many content management systems (CMS) offer capabilities such as a rules editor and content spots that can be used to personalize content. You can use external recommendation engines such as Certona and Richrelevance. These engines provide personalization capabilities based on user activity, browsing behavior or buying pattern.

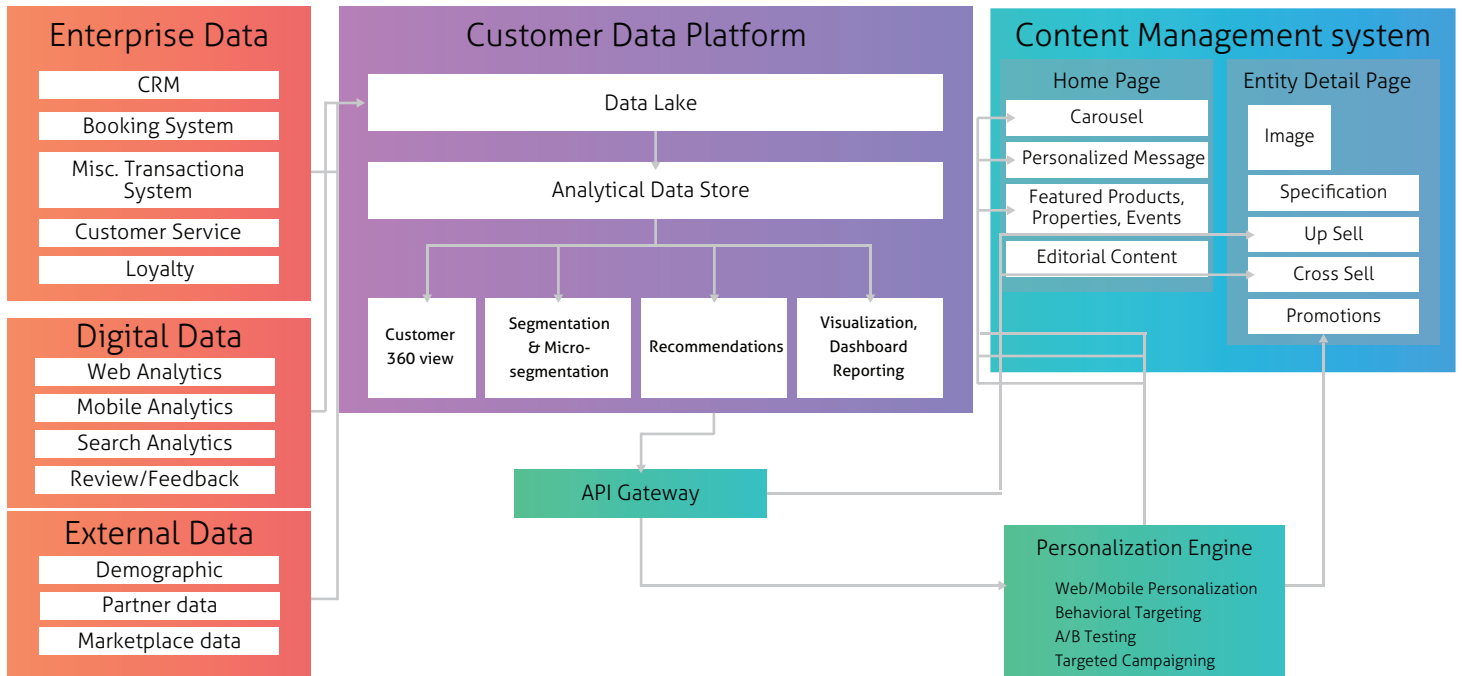
### Analytics

There are several analytics tools that can help with different facets of understanding your customers better.

**Adobe Analytics** provides sophisticated capabilities for customer analytics. It offers web and predictive analytics, attribution and several other capabilities. Almost all other digital marketing tools also provide built-in analytics capabilities. However, depending on the type of tool, the focus of analytics can be different. E.g., social media analytics tools provide analytics related to social media postings and can provide useful data about sentiment analysis.

There are several tools for analyzing user behavior, monitoring KPIs or carry out other types of analytics. Google Analytics is the most common tool for web analytics, but there are several alternatives, with varying focus areas. Examples include Adobe Analytics, ThoughtSpot, SAS, Tableau and several others.

The diagram below shows some of the components described so far:



## 2.4 Make Them Stick

Carla receives an email telling her about a kid-friendly trip to Los Angeles to enjoy the summer vacation. Again, during her research period - she receives inspiring destination stories which help her know more about places she might want to visit. She is also sent additional information and personalized content via mailers, showcasing what other mothers like her booked for the summer vacation.

She also gets notifications reminding her to complete the booking to avail more exciting offers. Once she's finally booked the trip, she starts to receive relevant offers for services she might need - such as hotel or cars. She also receives a couple of upgrade offers.

MyTravelPortal.com has recently launched their own loyalty program. She isn't a member yet, so MyTravelPortal.com targets her site visits with benefits of the program and some new offers for loyalty members.

Finally, when she completes her journey, she provides her feedback and review of all the services (hotel, car) she used. It was easy to share these reviews on social media as well. As a 'Thank You' gesture, MyTravelPortal.com offers her a gift voucher that she can use for her next journey

## 2.4.1. Functional Description

Now that you've managed to convert an anonymous visitor into a paying customer, it is important to ensure that you retain him/ her for future business. Or to put it in another way, you need to make your business sticky and make it a habit for your customers.

Loyalty marketing is an approach to marketing, based on strategic management, in which a business focuses on growing and retaining existing customers through incentives - marketing efforts designed to entice customers to make recurring purchases from a specific business.

As a business, you want to see every customer of yours at the most matured relationship stage, where he/she is happy to advocate your product and service to others. Every individual is a powerful social influencer in their own periphery and in today's hyper-connected environment, this is truer than ever.

As a business, you can create an advocacy platform with varying rewards, propose encouraging benefits for referral programs, inspire users to share their stories and promote them in such a way that the user feels empowered and wants to go the extra mile for you.

## 2.4.2. Technology and Tools

Loyalty management is a key technology here - several categories of digital marketing platforms offer loyalty management as an additional feature. As an example, SessionM, which is a CDP vendor, also provides loyalty management capabilities.

What you need additionally is to ensure that there is better integration and coordination between your existing tools. More importantly, you need to have a well-defined strategy in place that allows you to make the best use of technology to ensure stickiness.

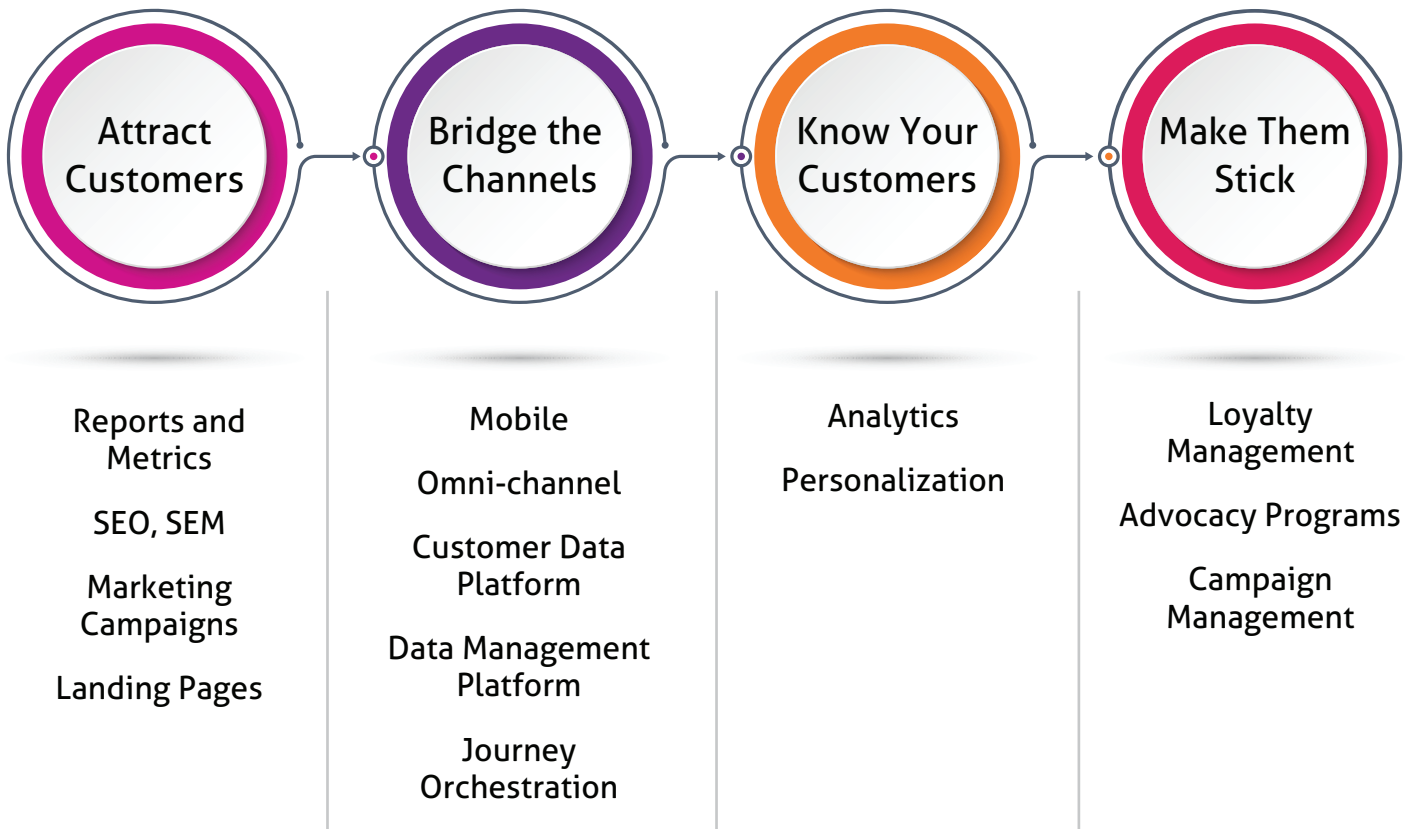
## 3. Conclusion

Managing the customer journey is not trivial and requires a lot of effort to constantly inspire and engage with users throughout their journey, starting from being an anonymous user to being an advocate for you.

Your customers interact with you on multiple channels and devices and therefore, building effective strategies, comprehensive customer profiles, creating segments, analyzing customer behavior and running appropriate campaigns can often overwhelm you.

In our experience, having worked with several Mindtree customers, we have observed that it can be helpful to break customer journeys into multiple stages.

The figure below shows four different stages that we have discussed, along with key technology blocks relevant to them. Do note that there will always be an overlap, and you will also often use several other tools for any stage.



## About Mindtree

Mindtree [NSE: MINDTREE] is a global technology consulting and services company, helping enterprises marry scale with agility to achieve competitive advantage. "Born digital," in 1999 and now a Larsen & Toubro Group Company, Mindtree applies its deep domain knowledge to 300+ enterprise client engagements to break down silos, make sense of digital complexity and bring new initiatives to market faster. We enable IT to move at the speed of business, leveraging emerging technologies and the efficiencies of Continuous Delivery to spur business innovation. Operating in 18 countries and over 40 offices across the world, we're consistently regarded as one of the best places to work, embodied every day by our winning culture made up of over 21,000 entrepreneurial, collaborative and dedicated "Mindtree Minds."