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THE NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING AND MOBILE MARKETING TRENDS

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Abstract. *The article explores how mobile devices reshape consumer behavior and challenge the traditional marketing funnel. Based on research from BCG, McKinsey, and others, it outlines the new, non-linear consumer journey shaped by streaming, scrolling, searching, and shopping behaviors. Mobile apps and AI play a crucial role in personalizing experiences, enabling brands to engage users at key moments. Marketers must adapt strategies to reflect real-time behaviors, fragmented attention, and dynamic digital touchpoints.*

Key words: *mobile marketing, consumer journey, marketing funnel, behavior, brands, users.*

Introduction

A consumer journey traditionally consists of six core stages: awareness, acquisition, onboarding, engagement, retention, and advocacy. At each of these points, individuals interact with a brand through various channels and touchpoints. The quality and relevance of these interactions play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and determining long-term loyalty [1]. In the mobile-first era, these brand-consumer encounters are increasingly mediated by smartphones, apps, and personalized digital content. As consumer behaviour evolves in response to technological trends and shifting expectations, mobile marketing must adapt to create more intuitive, timely, and meaningful engagement across the entire decision-making process.

Main text

Mobile applications play a crucial role in how consumers interact with brands in a digital ecosystem. According to Data.ai's "Mobile App Trends 2024" report [2], mobile users spend over 5 hours per day in apps, which has made apps the primary environment for content consumption, social interaction, and commerce. This deep integration into daily routines creates unique engagement patterns: micro-moments of interaction, short attention spans, and high expectations for speed and personalization. For marketers, this means the mobile app is not just a channel, but a behavioral interface that can capture intent, analyze preferences, and drive conversion in real time.



Brands that succeed in aligning app functionality with user expectations - such as seamless onboarding, intuitive navigation, and timely notifications - are more likely to build long-term loyalty and drive repeat purchases [2].

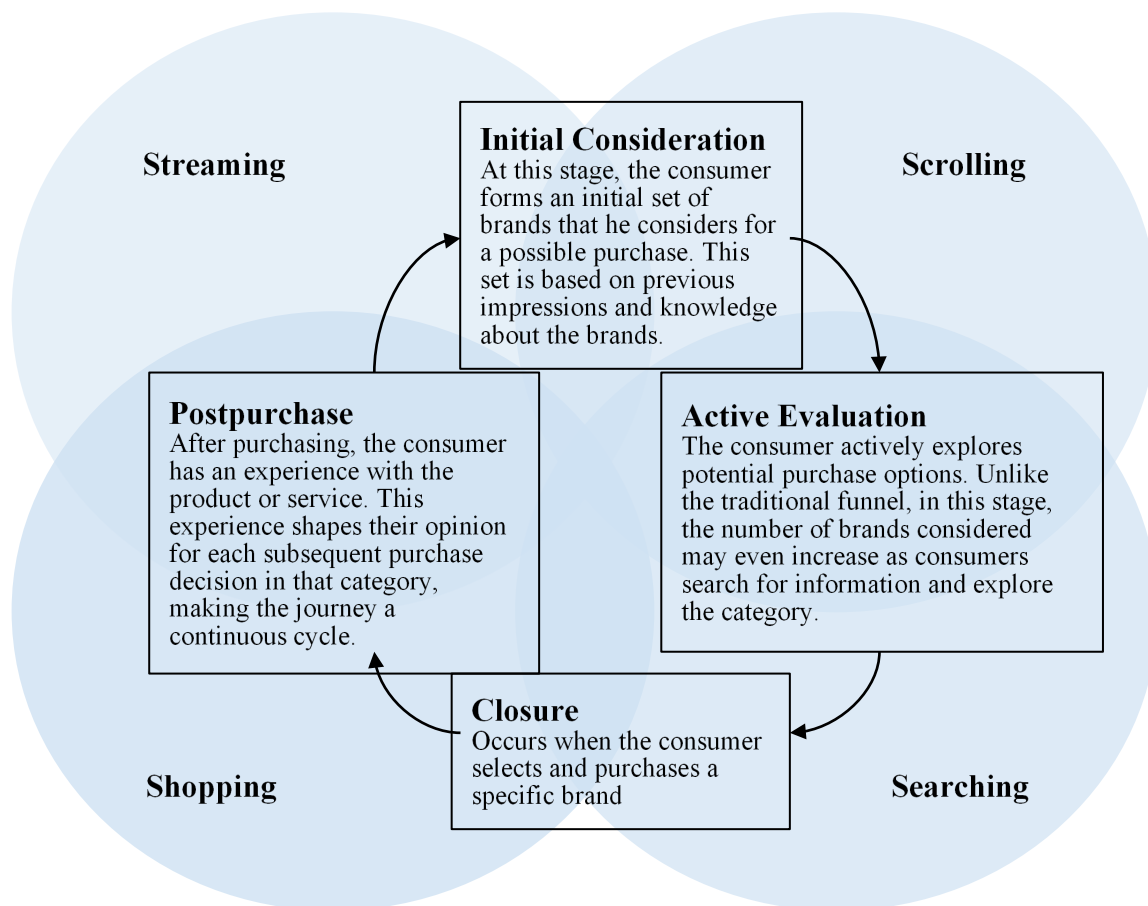
The widespread integration of mobile devices into daily routines has transformed how consumers interact with brands. As a result, traditional marketing funnels are no longer sufficient and must be reimagined to reflect the dynamics of mobile-first behaviour. According to a study by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) [3], the modern consumer journey increasingly resembles a continuous cycle of the "four Ss": streaming, scrolling, searching, and shopping. In this new landscape, marketers must abandon outdated linear approaches and adopt more flexible, adaptive models that align with real-time mobile usage. Delivering relevant content precisely when users seek it - often via smartphone - is now critical, and the use of artificial intelligence plays a central role in mapping these nonlinear journeys and personalizing engagement across touchpoints [3].

A deeper understanding of contemporary consumer behaviour in the digital environment begins with the rethinking of traditional decision-making models. One of the most influential frameworks in this regard is McKinsey's "Consumer Decision Journey" [4], which redefines purchasing not as a linear sequence but as a cyclical process. This model identifies four interconnected stages: initial consideration, active evaluation, the moment of purchase, and the post-purchase experience. The increasing accessibility of digital tools and platforms means that consumers actively seek brand-related information and rely on peer feedback to validate their choices. As a result, brands must ensure meaningful engagement across all touchpoints, with particular emphasis on nurturing loyalty through positive post-purchase experiences [4].

The Boston Consulting Group article "It's Time for Marketers to Move Beyond the Linear Funnel" [3] outlines four key behavioral models of modern consumers that reshape how they interact with brands. These models - Streaming, Scrolling, Searching, and Shopping - are not linear stages but interconnected activities occurring throughout the consumer journey. The Streaming model reflects the constant consumption of video and audio content that shapes user preferences and brand perceptions. Scrolling refers



to the passive discovery of content, including ads and reviews, while navigating social media feeds - a process that sparks interest in new products and services. In the Searching model, consumers proactively seek additional information when a specific need arises, making this phase critical for influencing purchase decisions. Shopping, no longer a final step, represents a continuous loop where consumers expect convenience, personalization, and ongoing brand support after purchase [3]. These models often overlap and require marketers to move away from linear funnels, embracing more dynamic and adaptive strategies that align with actual user behavior (pic 1).



Picture 1 - The Interaction Between Key Behavioral Models and the Modern Consumer Journey

A source: adopted [3, 4]

The success of mobile apps depends largely on how effectively they remove frictions and enhance user motivation. One of the key motivators driving app



engagement is convenience - users expect speed, intuitive navigation, and quick access to value. In high-performing apps, onboarding is frictionless, and core features are easy to reach within seconds. Another strong motivator is personalization; apps that adapt content or experiences based on user behavior tend to see higher retention rates [2].

On the other hand, several common frictions reduce app stickiness. Nielsen Norman Group highlights poor user experience (UX) as a leading cause of abandonment: cluttered interfaces, unclear icons, or too many steps in a task flow all hinder engagement. Additionally, privacy concerns remain a barrier, particularly in categories dealing with health, finance, or personal data. Users are increasingly cautious about data collection, and apps that lack transparency or fail to establish trust lose users quickly. Another critical factor is performance reliability. Apps that lag, crash, or consume excessive battery are likely to be deleted after just one use. To minimize such risks, brands must invest in ongoing performance testing and UX research. Ultimately, aligning app design with user expectations for speed, clarity, and security is essential to sustaining engagement in a highly competitive mobile environment [2, 5].

It is important to mention that artificial intelligence has significantly transformed mobile marketing by enabling real-time personalization and predictive consumer modeling. AI systems can now analyze vast volumes of behavioral data - location, scroll behavior, session length, purchase history - to deliver hyper-targeted content or offers. As reported by Harvard Business Review, leading companies increasingly use AI not only to react to user behavior but to anticipate needs before they are expressed, thus creating anticipatory experiences that feel intuitive and relevant. This predictive approach reshapes the customer journey by minimizing friction, enhancing decision-making, and reinforcing brand preference. For mobile marketers, AI becomes not just a tool for automation but a core element in creating meaningful, data-driven interactions across the consumer lifecycle [2, 5].

To remain competitive in the era of mobile-first consumer behavior, marketers must rethink traditional funnel strategies and adopt an agile, consumer-centric approach. This involves embracing non-linear decision paths, investing in omnichannel



touchpoints, and prioritizing data ethics in personalization efforts. According to BCG, successful brands will not only integrate streaming, scrolling, searching, and shopping behaviors into one fluid strategy, but will also empower consumers to move seamlessly between inspiration and action. Moreover, marketers should develop measurement frameworks that reflect real-time engagement rather than static stages of the funnel. As user behavior becomes more dynamic and data-driven, the winning marketing teams will be those that respond with speed, empathy, and strategic precision [3, 4].

Summary and conclusions

Have been considered that the consumer journey is no longer linear but continuous and dynamic, shaped by behaviors like streaming, scrolling, searching, and shopping. Marketers must move beyond static funnels and design strategies that reflect real-time, multi-touchpoint interactions. Mobile apps and artificial intelligence are central tools in understanding and influencing modern consumer behavior. Apps provide behavioral data, while AI enables predictive personalization, allowing brands to meet users with relevant offers and content when it matters most. To stay competitive, marketers must build adaptive, cross-platform strategies, focus on personalized experiences, and redefine success metrics based on engagement, loyalty, and long-term relationship value rather than isolated conversions or impressions.

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Abstract. *In today's digital landscape, mobile devices have become central to how consumers interact with brands, fundamentally transforming traditional marketing models. This article examines the evolution of the consumer journey within the mobile marketing environment, drawing on insights from leading sources including Boston Consulting Group (BCG), McKinsey, Think with Google, Harvard Business Review, and Data.ai. The linear marketing funnel is no longer sufficient to describe consumer behavior. Instead, consumers move through a dynamic and non-linear cycle characterized by four interrelated behaviors — Streaming, Scrolling, Searching, and Shopping — as identified by BCG. These behaviors do not follow a fixed sequence and may occur simultaneously, requiring brands to be agile and responsive across all touchpoints.*

McKinsey's Consumer Decision Journey framework further redefines the purchase process as cyclical, where the post-purchase stage plays a vital role in generating loyalty and advocacy. Digital tools enable consumers to seek information, compare options, and validate choices instantly, placing pressure on brands to deliver relevant, real-time value. Mobile applications, as shown in the Mobile App Trends 2024 report, are at the core of digital engagement. With users spending hours daily in app environments, successful mobile experiences must combine speed, personalization, and seamless usability. AI technologies enhance these experiences by enabling predictive personalization and optimizing customer journey mapping.

Overall, the article emphasizes the strategic necessity for marketers to adapt to mobile-first behaviors. To succeed, brands must integrate mobile technologies and AI, embrace non-linear user journeys, and design personalized, context-aware marketing strategies that respond to the real-time needs of connected consumers.



CONTENTS

Economy and trade

- | | |
|--|----|
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-004
EXPORT OF UKRAINIAN GRAIN: LOGISTICAL ASPECT
<i>Hyrych S.V., Vasylyshyna O.V.</i> | 3 |
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-011
ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXPENDITURE ESTIMATES OF BUDGETARY INSTITUTIONS AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT
<i>Kopchykova I.V., Kudyenko O.M.</i> | 10 |
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-015
MANAGEMENT OF A COMPANY'S CURRENT ASSETS IN ENSURING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
<i>Babych L.M., Levkovets N.P.</i> | 18 |
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-020
DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE BETWEEN UKRAINE AND THE EU IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
<i>Vlasenko I.G., Ternova A.S.</i> | 24 |
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-022
THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC FINANCIAL LITERACY ON THE REAL ESTATE MARKET IN THE USA AND UKRAINE
<i>Vlasova M.</i> | 34 |
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-027
THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF NATIONAL ECONOMY SUSTAINABILITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE
<i>Sarychev V.I., Kopanychuk K.O.</i> | 46 |
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-040
THEORETICAL BASIS OF HUMAN CAPITAL RENEWAL IN THE ECONOMIC SECURITY SYSTEM
<i>Bykova A.L., Kopanychuk B.</i> | 56 |
| https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-045
INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE RESTORATION OF RURAL AREAS AFTER ARMED CONFLICTS: LESSONS FOR UKRAINE
<i>Kachula S.V., Lastovchenko P.V.</i> | 67 |



https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-051	79
THE ROLE OF DIGITALIZATION IN FORMATION THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY OF AN ENTERPRISE	
<i>Havrikova A.V., Svyntarenko T.I., Samodryga Y.V.</i>	
https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-055	86
REGULATORY AND ANALYTICAL SUPPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF SMALL BUSINESS ENTITIES AND ITS IMPACT ON THE STRUCTURE OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING	
<i>Yurchenko O.</i>	
https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-058	94
DECENTRALIZATION AS AN EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FOR REGULATING INVESTMENTS IN THE EU AND UKRAINE	
<i>Kiriiienko S. O.</i>	
https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-059	105
ECOLOGICAL INITIATIVES OF BUSINESS AS A FACTOR FOR GROWTH OF ITS COMPETITIVENESS	
<i>Pyrtko S. A.</i>	
https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-061	114
STRUCTURE AND STATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGH-TECHNOLOGY SECTOR OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY OF UKRAINE	
<i>Kulik A.V., Zhyvolovich A.A.</i>	
https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-063	128
CURRENT TRENDS IN MANAGEMENT PSYCHOLOGY IN INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES	
<i>Maliukina A.O.</i>	
https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-066	146
STRATEGIC VECTOR OF UKRAINE'S CUSTOMS POLICY IN CONDITIONS OF INSTABILITY	
<i>Chorna T. O.</i>	
https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-074	158
IMPACT ANALYSIS OF E-COMMERCE ON ECONOMIC PROCESSES	
<i>Makhanets B.O.</i>	

Management and marketing

https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-006	166
STRATEGY AND PRICING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPANIES IN THE CONDITIONS OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY	
<i>Matrosova L. M., Kononenko Ya. V.</i>	



- <https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-007> 180
STRATEGIC MARKETING VECTOR OF SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE
PROJECTS IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY OF DIGITAL ERA
Kononenko Ya. V.
- <https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-023> 192
ECO E-COMMERCE: REBOOTING ONLINE BUSINESS FOR A
GREENER FUTURE
Mazan M.
- <https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-037> 207
MARKETING STRATEGIES OF INFLUENCE ON CONSUMERS
IN THE INDUSTRY IT
Danyliuk O., Zaburmekha Y., Zamazii O.
- <https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-052> 223
PERCEPTION MARKETING: HOW MARKET SATURATION
INFLUENCES CREATIVITY AND THE FORMAT OF
CONSUMER COMMUNICATION
Voloshko L.
- <https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-053> 233
INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
PERMANENT MAKEUP BASED ON TECHNIQUE
IMPROVEMENT AND CLIENT SUPPORT
Yakovenko I.
- <https://www.sworldjournal.com/index.php/swj/article/view/swj31-03-075> 244
THE NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: CONSUMER DECISION-
MAKING AND MOBILE MARKETING TRENDS
Rashchenko A.



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