STATE OF THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the world shifted to virtual-led experiences in 2020, we saw customer journeys drastically shift to digital channels in response. In 2021, many businesses continued this trend, finding sophisticated ways to stand out in a digital-first world. Methods employed ranged from smart notifications to more applications of voice, SMS and email—but those were just the tip of the iceberg.

In this State of the Customer Journey 2022, our annual report detailing trends in the customer journey and customer engagement landscape, we'll share the top takeaways and trends observed from over **10 billion journey interactions** and over 1.8 billion intelligent calls and messages in 2021. We'll break down the most popular use cases and channels from 2021, as well as the impactful data points for each industry covered.

The data analyzed in this report only represents data from customer journey interaction platforms and digital channels, but our analysis is informed by decades of expertise across additional customer engagement channels and offerings spanning CSG's entire solution portfolio.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY PREDICTIONS IN 2022

"Good enough" is no longer good enough when it comes to customer journeys. What's driving that? Partly, it's an elite few brands that are raising the customer experience (CX) bar high for every company, regardless of industry.

Here's the catch, though: **the bar isn't rising the same height for everyone**. Some industries face a greater risk of disruption than others. Often, it's because they now find themselves in direct competition with the elites (e.g., grocery vs. eCommerce giants). Or they provide a function or journey that, to a consumer, looks pretty similar to one where an elite is absolutely crushing it. ("I love how X brand does this: why can't my pharmacy do it, too?")

Your customers' journeys are the ones most ripe for transformation this year. That's why we paid special attention to how journey orchestration trends shifted across industries in 2021, and we offer recommendations on which digital channels and journey orchestration use cases will help these brands differentiate their experiences this year.

2022 will push some brands further than others to reinvent how they engage customers, and in ways that include the recommendations in this report. Necessity, after all, is the mother of invention.

Best regards,

Eric Carrasquilla
SVP, Digital Engagement Solutions, CSG

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SMART NOTIFICATIONS TOP THE CHARTS
Smart notifications represented more than 50 percent of total journey customer interactions (5.2 billion) in 2021, spanning proactive and reactive notifications for order status, upsell and more. (To learn more about smart notifications,).

VOICE AND SMS VOLUMES INCREASE YoY
Inbound and outbound voice and text message usage increased by almost 300 percent year over year, indicating the importance of these proven methods as part of a broader channel mix.

THE EMAIL RENAISSANCE ENTERS FULL SWING
With email dominating as the most-used channel for different use cases, brands must consider how to leverage this channel for notifications, retention campaigns and more.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY INTERACTIONS RISE ACROSS INDUSTRIES
Telecom companies and financial services firms led with the number of communication channels used. Retailers used fewer channels on average while still seeing increased interaction volume.

HOW WE DEFINE INTERACTIONS

For our purposes, an interaction is defined as any communication or decision made regarding a specific individual customer that goes through our API. This is usually an email sent, a webpage visit analyzed or some other communication between brand and customer. It can also include making the decision not to send a message when it is inappropriate to do so. The 10 billion interactions often generate far more than 10 billion communications.

For example, one interaction could be placing a customer into a campaign that then sends five emails over the next three weeks or suppresses the number of messages sent based on customer communication preferences.

These interactions represent digital and in-person touchpoints captured by our digital engagement solutions. While this report focuses on digital interactions, print and mail remain effective channels for customer journey management as well, especially when paired with journey orchestration and other digital tools. Interactions across other channels are similar in that they represent a customer behavior that drives proactive (or real-time) communications.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

This report is based on customer journey interactions triggered in CSG journey orchestration solutions from January through December 2021. Overall, we accounted for over 10.2 billion customer journey interactions for our global client base. Where we didn't have exact interaction counts due to privacy regulations, we worked with our customer success teams to derive an approximation based on historical customer journey interaction data from clients.

New this year, CSG is supplementing our digital customer journey orchestration data with data from our voice and messaging channels. This voice and messaging data only covers interactions in the United States, but provides a view of other exciting ways we help connect our clients with their customers. In addition to the 1.8 billion interactions this adds to our analysis, future reports will also include trends and data from other digital channels, as well as print and mail.

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TOP CUSTOMER JOURNEYS

As data trends change from year to year, our classification of journey uses has also shifted. In 2020 and 2021, our report emphasized a model that centered on acquisition, engagement and customer service. This year, we have shifted our use case definitions from the general categories we used in past years to more specific use cases.

Most notably, by separating "smart notifications" from "personalized engagement for retention," we are able to highlight how much of retention is simply letting customers know the right information at the right time. The section that follows details each of the use cases, sharing their definitions, a key data highlight from that use case, the value this use case brings and a few example applications.

In 2021, the top customer journey use cases in order of popularity were:

1. **Smart Notifications *NEW***

2. **Personalized Onboarding**

3. **Digital Customer Service *NEW***

4. **Intelligent Acquisition and Lead Management**

5. **Personalized Engagement for Retention**

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1. SMART NOTIFICATIONS

Definition
Smart notifications are automated messages sent to customers in real time and over a variety of digital channels. Using customer behavior data, an intelligent decisioning engine determines the ideal moment and channel for delivering these messages to each customer.

Data Highlights
Smart notifications accounted for over 50 percent of customer journey interactions in 2021 (5.2 billion). Smart notifications tracked were almost exclusively via email, followed by in-store notifications.

Smart Notifications Channel Mix

OTHER
2%

IN-STORE
13%

EMAIL
85%
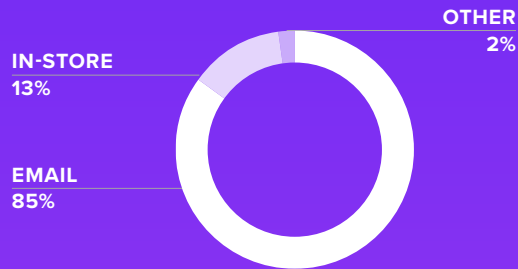
Applications and Value
Smart notifications can help drive interactions to digital, propel desired customer action, increase operational efficiency and build trusted customer relationships. Companies use smart notifications for order reminders, service appointments, workflow alerts, problem/issue alerts, payment reminders and compliance/adherence.

Opportunity
Leverage journey orchestration to provide predictive, proactive and personalized message in context in any channel.

2. PERSONALIZED ONBOARDING

Definition
Personalized journeys for onboarding are customer journeys that are coordinated to guide customers through their first 30-90 days after an initial purchase. This includes messaging around welcoming the customer, calibrating their preferences, supporting their initial use of the product, and customer care.

Data Highlights
Email was the most popular channel for onboarding, accounting for 55 percent of tracked customer journey interactions, followed by social media with 37 percent of interactions.

Value and Applications
Companies use personalized onboarding to quickly connect with customers about new services and educate customers on how to use them. Applications include welcome messages, video demos/explainers and follow-up messages to get the most out of a product or service.

Opportunity
Leverage advanced analytics around behavior to recommend next best actions for onboarding.
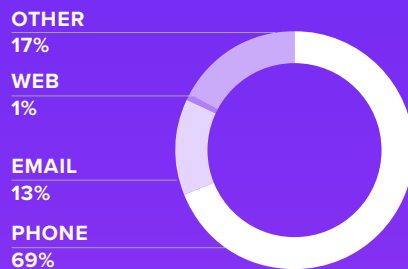
3. DIGITAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

Definition
Digital customer service consists of personalized interactions related to account maintenance, product support and other needs of existing customers. These interactions use a customer's profile and history to understand their intent and streamline the experience.

Data Highlights
This use case was most prominent in the financial services industry, with phone as the dominant channel, followed by email.

Digital Customer Service Channel Mix

OTHER
17%

WEB
1%

EMAIL
13%

PHONE
69%

Applications and Value
Digital customer service helps enable flexible service solutions, operate as the virtual front line, quickly address customer needs and improve agent experiences. Applications include intelligent IVR, predictive agent routing, context-based agent assist, conversational AI, kiosks and call simulation to ensure quality.

Opportunity
Cut down contact center volumes and increase speed to customer satisfaction by prompting the agent with behavioral information to guide next steps.

4. INTELLIGENT ACQUISITION AND LEAD MANAGEMENT

Definition
This use case comprises omnichannel messaging that guides the customer through the sales funnel to make a purchase. An intelligent decisioning engine determines, in real time, which message to send a customer over which digital channel based on the customer's behavior data.

Data Highlights
Email was the primary customer journey interaction channel (60 percent), followed by web and then phone. This reverses the past two years of trends, where email accounted for a far smaller percentage of intelligent acquisition journeys.

Intelligent Acquisition Journeys Channel Mix

Channel	2019	2020	2021
Web	77%	70%	32%
Ad	10%	13%	N/A
Email	8%	10%	60%
Phone	N/A	N/A	5%
Other	5%	7%	3%

Value and Applications
Companies can use intelligent acquisition and lead management to reduce acquisition costs with automation, quickly capitalize on customer interest and capture only the right leads. Applications include targeted real-time offers when a customer is in market and cross-platform integrations with CRM and communication channels like social media and print and mail.

Opportunity
Leverage AI to learn behaviors about these new customers, then promote personalized messages and web pages to drive additional purchases.
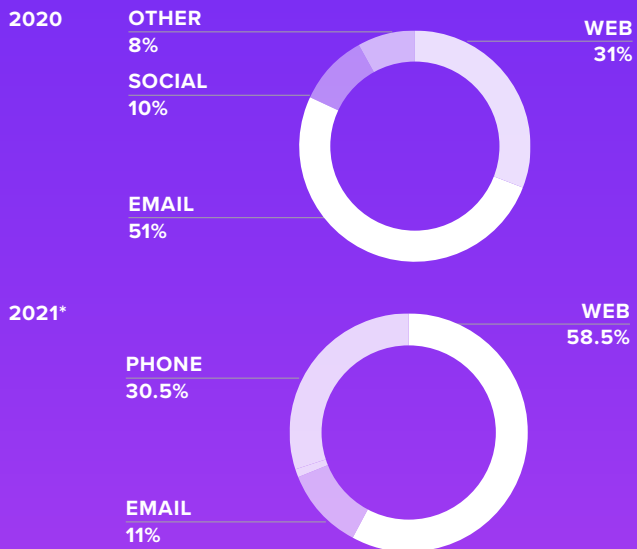
5. PERSONALIZED ENGAGEMENT FOR RETENTION

Description
This use case covers proactive messaging designed to engage customers who are at risk of churning, often by using personalized offers to reinforce brand loyalty.

Data Highlights
Web was the most popular customer journey interaction channel for personalized engagement for retention (59 percent), followed by phone and then email. Web was surpassed by email in 2020 but returned to the top spot in 2021 interactions, signifying companies are engaging returning customers when they visit their site.

Engagement for Retention Channel Mix, 2020 vs. 2021

2020
- OTHER 8%
- SOCIAL 10%
- WEB 31%
- EMAIL 51%

2021*
- WEB 58.5%
- PHONE 30.5%
- EMAIL 11%

*Interactions on other channels accounted for 0.015 percent of interactions.

Value and Applications
Companies can use personalized engagement for retention to proactively detect at-risk customers, identify the best "save" treatments based on context, coordinate save actions to reduce backfire and automatically engage on digital channels to reduce churn. Applications include discounts on cross-sell/upsell, reminders/prompts on underutilized features, problem/issue alerts, promo roll-offs and referral programs.

Opportunity
Rather than overwhelming existing customers with irrelevant messages, suppress certain communications to make sure the right messages get to the right customers at the right time.

No matter which use case a business identifies as their top priority, they can tackle it with customer journey management. While the use cases described above are not exhaustive, they do cover the most commonly used journeys we have orchestrated or planned in the past decade of customer journey orchestration work.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY CHANNEL PERFORMANCE

OVERVIEW

Which channels do your customers use most regularly? Perhaps your business sends emails, delivers SMS notifications, interacts with customers in-store, sends customized bills and other mail, offers kiosks as a payment method or receives web traffic. In each of these cases, a customer has interacted with your brand. Even if the customer doesn't know it, each of these interactions is part of their journey.

By analyzing customer journey interactions in 2021, we identified that while many channels are at play for customer journeys, only a few dominate businesses communications by volume. Over 90 percent of all customer journey interactions took place across just four channels.

Share of interactions by channel in 2021

Channel	% of customer journey interactions
Email	63%
Phone (voice and SMS)	12%
Social	10%
In-Store	7%
Web	2%
Other	6%

This isn't to say that other channels aren't relevant. While email, web or phone interactions can quickly reach high volumes, some other channels can deliver contextual communications at just the right time but require far fewer messages.

The most important consideration for any business is that they reach customers where they are. In the pages to come, we explore the most impactful channels for customer journeys.

CHANNEL DEFINITION

Channels are the communication delivery methods used to engage with customers. These include online channels like web and social, as well as offline channels like voice and SMS, and even in-store interactions.
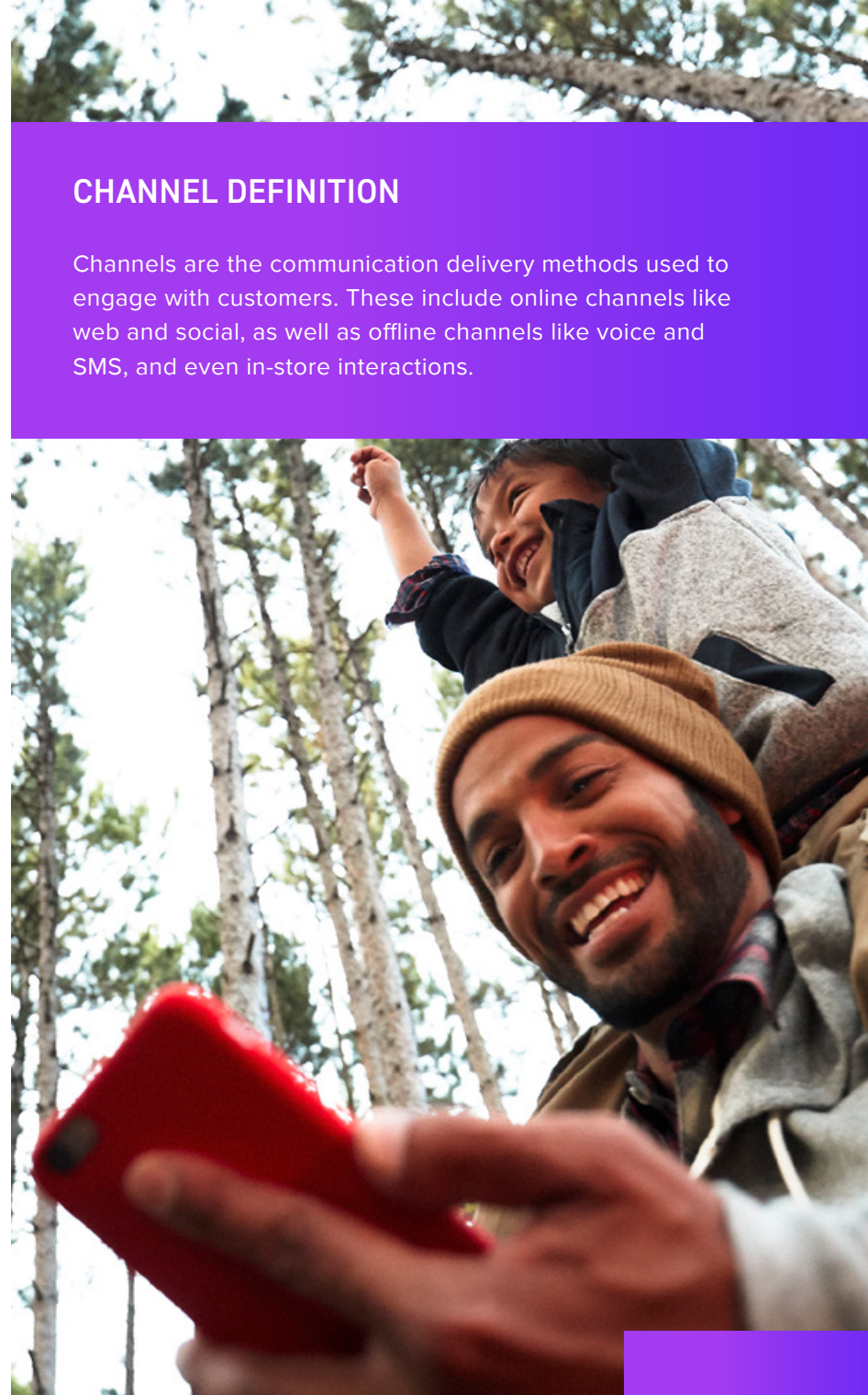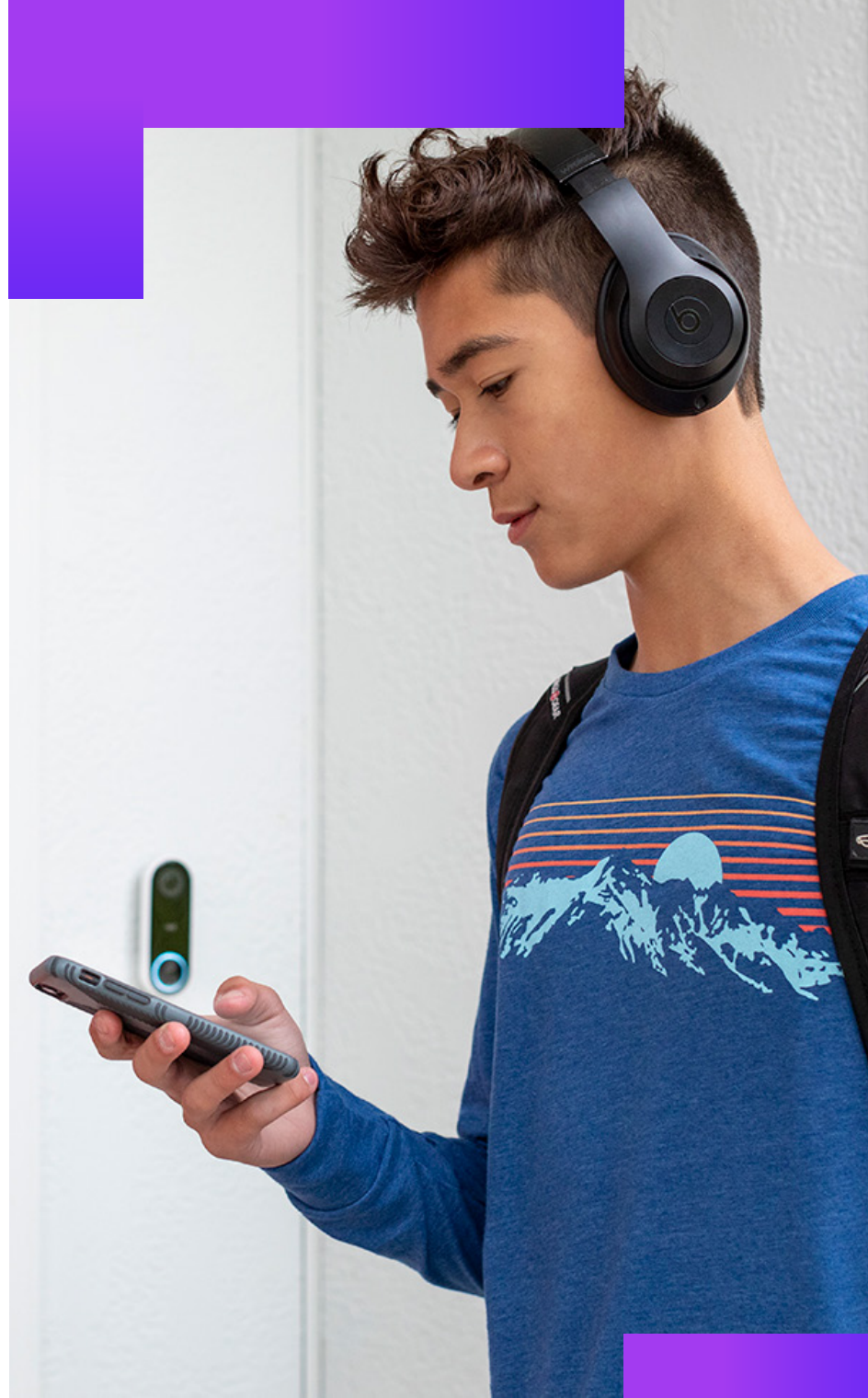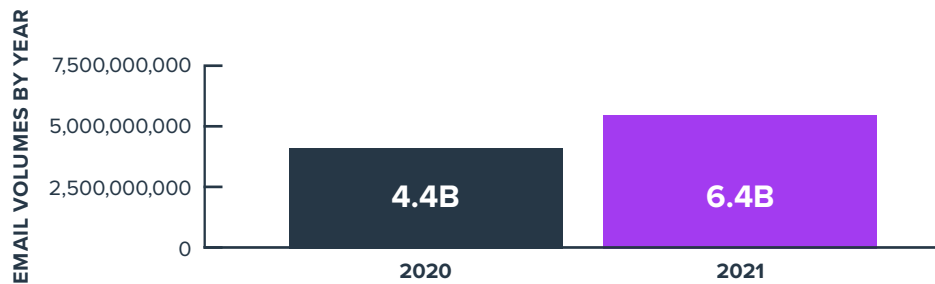
EMAIL

Despite the rumors heard year after year, email is not dead. In fact, we saw email communications revitalized in 2021. Not only was email the top channel for three out of five top use cases, **but 2021 email volumes were 145 percent higher than 2020 email volumes**.

Email is the foundation for many businesses' marketing, customer experience and customer journey efforts. In 2021, email evolved away from fitting the binary of either blanket mass communications or reactive messaging. Instead, email became even more part of proactive, personalized engagement, smarter notifications and truly intelligent acquisition efforts.

It should be no surprise that email sees high volumes, given its reliability, low cost, scalability and low technical requirements for personalization. With these advantages in mind, email thrives most when it is a medium for interactive conversations.

The scale of email is an indicator of both the inherent challenge of breaking through the noise in consumers' inboxes and the relative ease of high-volume communications across this channel. As we explore other channels, consider how your existing email communications can be more powerful when integrated with interactions elsewhere.

EMAIL VOLUMES BY YEAR

Year	Volume
2020	4.4B
2021	6.4B

VOICE

When we took a deep dive into our intelligent voice conversation data, we saw total call counts triple from 2020 to 2021 (529 million to 1.5 billion). We also saw several use cases for intelligent messaging over voice break away from the pack.

IVR calls saw significant growth over the past year, increasing over 1,400 percent. However, while total calls increased, the average call time decreased by almost two-thirds year over year, from one minute and 43 seconds to just 35 seconds. That means that customers were able to resolve their problems faster and that callers were less likely to transfer directly to call center agents, instead opting to self-serve in the IVR.

AVERAGE IVR CALL TIME

2020	2021
1:43	**0:35**

Along with IVR, notification calls saw an uptick over the past year, with a 270 percent increase in total notification calls (appointment and delivery notifications) compared to 2020. The number of minutes per notification call increased by a matter of seconds (42 to 45 seconds), signaling longer notifications are being listened to the entire way through compared to previous years.

PHONE

While email volumes were extremely high in the past year, phone was the second-most popular channel for journey interactions, especially within the financial services industry. In fact, many industries leverage phone interactions to deliver better results across both voice and SMS conversations.

A major driver of phone's popularity is the ability for intelligent interactive voice response (IVR) systems to offer customers more self-service options. In tandem with journey management, these interactive responses can more accurately interpret customer intent, often by incorporating conversational AI. In 2021, this made phone a more reliable channel for delivering quick, convenient service (without necessarily growing contact center queues)—and one that companies were more likely to encourage customers to use.

In this section, we're enhancing our customer journey data with an intelligent voice and SMS data set (U.S. only). While the phone channel for customer journey interactions is only categorized as phone in general, SMS and voice are split out in this data set.

SMS

A second part of our supplemental phone channel data set covers intelligent SMS messaging. Like voice, SMS saw a big increase in adoption from 2020 to 2021, with **SMS message volume more than tripling year over year**.

YOY NOTIFICATION VOLUME INCREASE

Voice	SMS
270%	**950%**
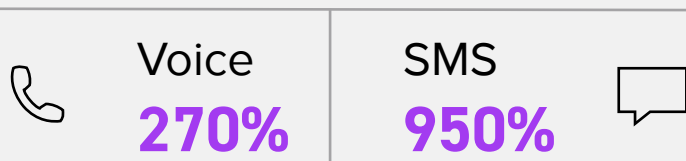
In 2021, notifications were the primary use case for SMS. While voice notifications increased by around 270 percent, SMS notifications (for appointments and delivery) saw an increase of 950 percent year over year. In particular, SMS delivery notifications increased almost 1,100 percent in 2021. As businesses adapt to quickly notify consumers, whether it is to confirm delivery or provide fraud alert notifications, it will soon become a requirement to compete.

Another significant use case for SMS was collections texts, which increased 139 percent YoY, likely due to the lower barrier to respond provided by SMS.

Over either voice or SMS, the phone channel is particularly impactful because it has significant economies of scale. For both voice and SMS use cases, the higher volumes of communications, the lower cost per call or message became. This indicates not only the power, but importance of scale in the phone channel.

There is another significant factor for the phone channel when it comes to journey orchestration and customer engagement: it has a much higher immediacy than almost any other channel. Where email and even social media messages often wait until people check them, most consumers look at incoming call or text alerts immediately. In fact, other studies have shown that 90 percent of text messages are read within three minutes of people receiving them.

In summary, the efficiency of these automated inbound and outbound voice and SMS interactions make them a powerful tool for businesses communicating with customers at scale.

WEB

While email accounted for the vast majority of customer journey interactions across industries (6.4 billion), web was the only channel used across every industry. The web channel remains dominant for the personalized engagement for retention use case, accounting for over 59 percent of customer journey interactions.

This is in line with previous years, where web held a steady first or second ranking in terms of share of interactions for this use case. While the web channel has decreased in relative volume from previous years, there is still significant investment in web as a way to deliver personalized experiences for retention and digital customer service.

In particular, web benefits from the significant flexibility it offers. While an email or SMS message is static, web experiences can be interactive and dynamic. Though this comes at the cost of more lead time for such experiences to be designed, the ability to track web activity with great precision means that future journeys can be even more impactful as you collect data on a customer's profile.

Web also remains a popular channel because of its ability to provide more information in one place, to personalize content and experience to customers' needs and its inherent flexibility over other channels. For example, in retail, if you frequently buy red clothes, then online ads and the default color option for clothes will be red. For telecom, advertising upsell options rather than services the customer already owns can increase interest in those add-ons specifically.

However, with third-party cookies on track to be phased out next year by leading web players like Google, companies will need a way to leverage their owned, first-party data in personalizing interactions.

SOCIAL

Social media has had ups and downs as a customer journey channel over the years. In 2021, it was predominantly used in the retail industry, particularly aligning with the personalized engagement for onboarding use case. This is largely because onboarding consumers often requires many steps, and the ability to reach individuals when they are socializing online creates additional opportunities to keep them on track.

While social usage was up 5 percent year over year, this is largely a reflection of the intelligence behind the social channel rather than a decrease in interest. As journey orchestration becomes more sophisticated, fewer social messages need to be sent to achieve the same results.

As customers sign up for new services, they can get recommendations through social. In some markets, particularly South America and Asia-Pacific, social media apps are a primary method of communication—even more so than websites, email or SMS. With customers adopting more digital channels, social serves as another available channel in companies' channel mix, and is an essential component of omnichannel journeys.

IN-STORE

Despite the difficulty that the pandemic has created for in-store interactions since 2020, they are still a core part of the customer journey. As storefronts reopened in 2021, customers returned to retailers more readily than they had before. That may be why over **7 percent of the journey interactions we tracked in 2021 were in-store** (and at-store, when customers parked outside to have their order brought out).

A key reason for this retail store rebound was companies building journey intelligence into their buy online, pick up in-store (BOPIS) experiences. By connecting their digital and analog experiences, brands leveraged the power of the digital world in person. It's even possible for brands to secure more customer purchases after their initial purchase, by providing customers with an incentive to buy additional items as they check in on iPads or other devices.

Beyond curbside pick-up and BOPIS, brands can also benefit from smart couponing, instant deals and other experiences where an app is used to augment the experience in real time (e.g., an augmented reality layout of a grocery store that can point customers to certain items based on their location).

Stores can also connect physical and digital interactions with kiosks. While traditional kiosk experiences have been growing steadily, the power of customer journey orchestration is certain to take these to the next level.

Just because a company's customers are offline doesn't mean they can't interact with them. Many shoppers use offline and digital channels in tandem, particularly when buying luxury items like wedding dresses or appliances. By storing customer data in a customer data platform (CDP) and tracking their preferences, brands can meet customers with personalized offers in-store or even at the moment of purchase.

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A NOTE ON OTHER CHANNELS

We highlighted data from five channels in this section, but by no means are they the only ones that matter in customer journeys. Every business is different, so being "wherever your customers are" can require a unique channel mix. We recommend that brands map and orchestrate interactions in these other key channels as well.

Print and Mail
Even as companies have been working for years to migrate more customers to digital documents, the majority of consumers still prefer to receive common communications, like billing statements, in the mail. Look for ways to integrate print communications in customers' digital journeys. For example, if an important email notification bounces or goes unopened after a set number of days, journey orchestration can trigger a print mailing to ensure it's received. Use cases such as these are especially helpful in financial services, where notification requirements abound.

Conversational AI
More and more companies are employing customer-facing virtual assistants, chatbots and other forms of conversational AI to automate customer service or support. While companies often deploy conversational AI to increase self-service and reduce inbound call volume, some of these solutions can also gather voice of the customer and other data to help companies extract insights from the journeys where they're deployed. Tracking frequently asked questions, for instance, can help identify trending customer pain points.

Self-Service Kiosks
If your business deploys self-service kiosks that customers use to pay bills, make purchases or handle other actions, consider capturing those interactions in your digital customer journeys, as well. Kiosk interactions can yield insights related to which customers tend to frequent brick-and-mortar locations, and how those visits fit within their preferred channel mix.

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JOURNEY INSIGHTS BY INDUSTRY

While each channel has its place in an omnichannel customer journey, the specific needs for each business will vary. One of the key indicators of which channels are most crucial to orchestrate can be industry, because brands within a given industry often have similar challenges and opportunities.

For instance, the insurance and financial services industries used the most channels on average (3.0 and 2.8, respectively), while retailers used the fewest (2.2). Insurers and financial institutions need to collect payments, notify customers of fraud and modify account statuses after purchases have been made, which can require more outreach channels. Retailers, on the other hand, collect payment immediately and may rely less on channels like phone to connect with customers.
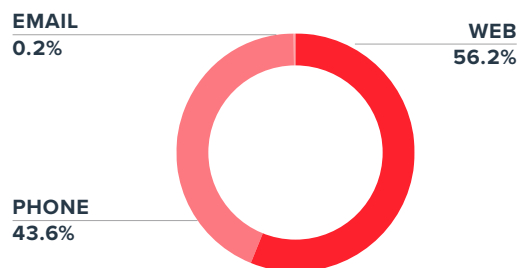
In this section, we explore how telecom companies, financial services institutions and retailers can make the most of their customer journey efforts, and share some of the trends those industries have seen over the past year.

Channel Share by Industry

Legend: Email, Phone, Web, Social, In-Store

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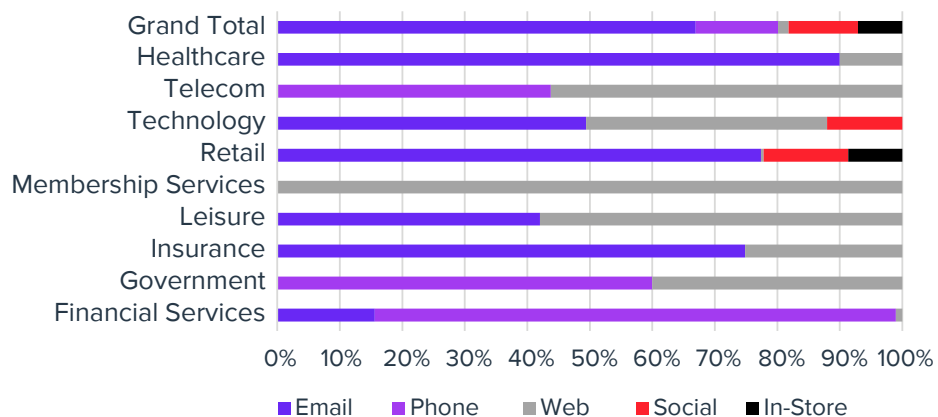
TELECOM

Telecom Top Channel Breakdown

EMAIL
0.2%

WEB
56.2%

PHONE
43.6%

In 2021, phone and web were the main channels used by telecom companies, accounting for almost virtually all customer journey interactions we tracked. That said, telecom companies are a step ahead of other industries in terms of channels used, using about 36 percent more channels to reach customers than average.

While many telecom companies use a wide variety of channels, it should be no surprise that phone and web were the top choices, given that bill pay and issue resolution are some of the top reasons customers interact with their telecom provider.

When a customer's service is interrupted, the first stop is often the website. When bills come due, the web or phone is the most frequent channel at play. We categorized these interactions as personalized engagement for retention and digital customer service.

Telecom companies can use journey technology to prepare the call center with context clues to speed up the transaction and highlight potential issues before customers ever raise them. Some telecom companies are also implementing tools that quickly and easily show bill changes from month to month, driving more web interactions while cutting in on inbound calls to agents. This saves both parties time and effort.

While not tracked in this report, companies have also seen success leveraging print and digital tactics together to reinforce bill communications and see improved customer engagement. Seventy-five percent of customers who receive paper bills and statements review them.

Because telecom companies have long-term relationships with their customers, it's important to make interactions intuitive and add value. Taking advantage of digital elements like QR codes, SMS short codes, kiosks and augmented reality on printed statements can help eliminate bill confusion, ensure timely payment and make the total billing experience more dynamic across all channels.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Top Channel Share

WEB
2.8%
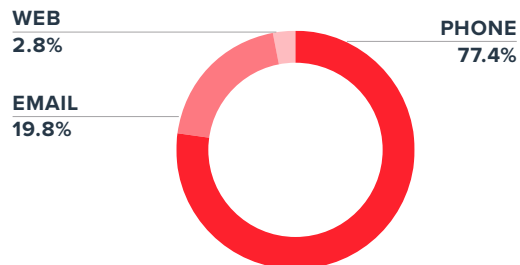
EMAIL
19.8%

PHONE
77.4%

Financial services institutions saw significant interactions take place over the phone, followed by email and web interactions. Financial services clients used 40 percent more channels in their journeys than the average company (though they predominantly used the three channels mentioned).

Why is the phone so important for financial services? Often, IVR solutions are built with journey logic as well as artificial intelligence, guiding customers through different call paths based on the responses they type in or say out loud. Email backs up phone with proactive follow-up, as well as transactional confirmations and marketing communications. The journeys underway in financial services institutions tend to center around personalized journeys for retention and digital customer service, with some intelligent acquisition journeys making appearances as well. In financial services, digital customer service included collections, fraud monitoring and alerts, bill pay, loan applications and website customization for cross-sell opportunities. Intelligent acquisition journeys were some of the most web- and email-focused, since these require communicating the potential value of increasing the share of wallet under the institutions' purview.

One of the best places for financial services institutions to start with journey management is by automating interactions around routine questions like account balance and transaction status. By automating interactions on the most-used channel (phone), financial services institutions can reduce operational costs and improve the customer experience.

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RETAIL

Retail Channel Share

IN-STORE			WEB
8.6%			0.5%
SOCIAL			EMAIL
13.5%			77.4%
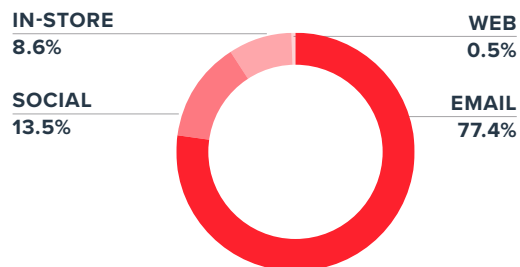
As shoppers returned to stores and continued to spend in 2021, the retail industry continued to dominate the journey orchestration space by sheer volume of interactions. While email was by far the most used channel, in-store interactions and social channel interactions also came into play. Each of these is a significant part of the retail customer experience.

While the trend in all industries is towards more conversational, personalized and engagement-oriented journeys, retail remains an area where transactional messaging continues to hold sway and see significant success. With digital notifications like "Your order is ready" made smarter by including the potential for upsell ("Consider this item with your next order"), it should be no surprise that brands are continuing to invest in making their existing transactional messaging more intelligent. Another way retailers have invested in customer engagement is by connecting their kiosks and BOPIS systems with email, web, virtual assistants, conversational AI or social channels. All of this shows customers that the retailer knows who their customers are and that they take their consumer desires seriously.

For retail, almost any use case can see success, but often the easiest place to start is with making reactive emails or social messaging smarter. The best journeys take those more transactional messages and then begin to add more value. One example of this is for onboarding. For products that benefit from initial explanations of how to use them, brands can proactively send customers messages on preferred channels about how to get the most out of a product.

A NOTE ON OTHER INDUSTRIES

Our data set included industries outside of those covered in the previous section. However, the journey interaction numbers were dominated by retail, financial services and telecom, as these industries have more mature deployments of journey management. These industries can also require more regular customer communications over time.

However, a strong customer relationship is foundational to any industry, and healthcare, quick service restaurants and other industries are starting to realize that these tools can significantly impact customer and patient experience.

While these industries have not yet achieved the volumes seen in the three main industries (for example, retail has more transactional messages like order confirmations and coupons occurring hourly or daily), this doesn't mean that other industries don't benefit from journey management—far from it. Better customer engagement is not bound by industry, and every customer or patient can benefit from personalized, proactive experiences.

CX MATURITY: HOW DOES YOUR BUSINESS STACK UP?

It goes without saying: not every business has the same level of customer journey capabilities. As you've been reading through this report, you've likely noted how your business is deploying some, all or none of the customer journey use cases we've highlighted. With that in mind, let's pause to think about where your business's CX maturity level lies, and where it can grow next. Which of the three categories below best describes your business?

Level 1: Transactional Experience
You're able to regularly communicate with customers over multiple channels—but are so far unable to automate these interactions or offer two-way communication (e.g., sending SMS with option to reply "YES" or "STOP"). You're collecting first- and third-party customer data that could help you predict and personalize customer interactions, but you're generally unable to extract insights from this data to do so.

Level 2: Customer-Driven Experience
You've made strategic improvements to CX, like using AI to automate processes or journey orchestration to personalize customer touchpoints—but not both, and ROI remains an issue with many of these improvements. CX is an enterprise-wide priority for your business, but employee experience (EX) isn't sufficiently addressed or connected to CX initiatives.

Level 3: Total Experience
Your business has implemented strategies and solutions that are improving CX and EX simultaneously. These may include using conversational AI to streamline contact center operations or journey orchestration to personalize customer notifications using up-to-the-minute data. Your next challenges: (1) staying adaptable to rising customer expectations and (2) scaling your successes across your enterprise.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2022 AND BEYOND

SUPERCHARGE YOUR NOTIFICATIONS WITH MORE PERSONALIZATION

Notifications could be easily dismissed as transactional interactions, but there's a prime opportunity to turn a transactional communication into an actual monetary transaction, resulting in more loyal customers and true advocates for your brand.

Given the popularity of the notification use case in 2021, you need to make sure you're getting the most out of each interaction and delivering the best next experience with proactive notifications for your offers, discounts, upsells and more.

For brands with longer customer lifecycles and deeper engagement journeys, smart notifications have a role to play as well. By creating more personalized communications that reach customers on their preferred channels, you can demonstrate that you truly know what each customer needs in their relationship with your brand.

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FIND THE CHANNELS THAT WORK FOR YOUR BUSINESS

As seen in this report, different industries rely on different numbers and mixes of channels. While email is the most popular channel measured in our report, channels like voice, SMS and even physical channels like print and mail and kiosks have significant benefits as well. Pair the immediacy of phone with the scale of email for a one-two punch, or step up your web experience with live updates based on conversations on the phone or email channels.

Also consider adding automation to your channels to support interactions at scale. For instance, with the phone channel, you can add conversational AI to voice or SMS to guide a customer to the appropriate resolution in a more natural way vs. a preset picklist of options.

In addition, the print channel can be used to reinforce important messages. This proven channel can have a big impact on customer engagement, as 86 percent of consumers believe they should have a choice between print and digital touchpoints.

No matter what channels you use, make sure that you meet customers where they are and where they want to meet you. By delivering the right message to the right person at the right time, any brand can make their customer experience truly exceptional.

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SCALE UP FOR SUCCESS

Often, the processes of beginning journey orchestration can seem daunting and confusing, but by homing in on a first use case, you can make the job easier.

Don't start with too big of a project—instead, find a use case that works for your business and grow from there. If you're getting started with customer journeys, consider smart notifications for common processes like a new order or an appointment reminder. As you scale up, it becomes more cost-effective to find a provider that has pre-built journeys so you can start delivering ROI ASAP.

While it can be tempting to try to orchestrate everything, connect everything and use everything from day one, the best way to start is small. By starting small, you gain the option to build momentum and buy-in across the organization. As you grow, you can also take advantage of a journey service catalog to quickly start with pre-built flows for onboarding, upsell, customer service and more.

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USE MICRO-MOMENTS TO INCREASE LOYALTY

Many companies have become experienced in leveraging micro-moments for customer acquisition. When a customer goes to their smartphone or an app to check a notification, it's easy to push a notification or advertise a deal. But this is also a powerful approach for keeping your customer engaged throughout the customer lifecycle.

Sending a customer a link to their rewards point balance in a moment they're likely to check, for example, might seem like a small gesture, but it's a big deal when you make a customer feel you "get them" in helpful ways.

These micro-moments truly help your become "sticky" in the minds of your customers, especially if you can help shape a new routine for them. Find ways to identify their patterns of behavior and orchestrate appropriately. You may be surprised by how much difference this can make in your customers' engagement.

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ASK FOR HELP

As we've covered in this report, there is already a world of customer journeys to explore. If you aren't sure where to start, if you need to get your data ready for automation or if you want to work with the world's leading customer journey experts, don't be afraid to ask for help.

These projects require buy in across your organization, your existing tools and ideally a top-notch, end-to-end customer engagement platform. One place to start getting answers is by looking at the SPARK Matrix™ report for Customer Journey Analytics, which show how vendors stack up in the customer journey analytics space and highlights opportunities for companies to do more with their data.

If you'd rather jump to talking to the experts directly, CSG's customer engagement practitioners and thought leaders can help answer any questions you may have.

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CONCLUSION

As journey tracking becomes more sophisticated, companies will need to augment journeys with data and build stronger connections to all parts of their business. To deliver the best experiences possible, retain customers, inspire loyalty, eliminate backfire scenarios and win back customers who churn, brands need to make customer experience the heart of how they do business.

Our data this year shows that while the channel mix, use cases and challenges may differ by industry, every company can benefit from a smart, customer-centric journey approach. In 2022, more brands will leave behind formulaic marketing and CX efforts to adopt bold new approaches to deliver exceptional experiences. Because of the increased importance of customer engagement, CSG will be releasing an additional report later this year that includes not only the digital interactions included in this report, but data from our entire suite of customer engagement solutions that will account for an additional 2 billion global customer interactions.

And ultimately, providing the best experiences isn't a checkbox on a list—it's an ongoing process. Improving your customer experience is a journey, not a destination—and you don't have to go it alone.

ABOUT CSG

CSG is a leader in innovative customer engagement, revenue management and payments solutions that make ordinary customer experiences extraordinary. Our cloud-first architecture and customer-obsessed mindset help companies around the world launch new digital services, expand into new markets, and create dynamic experiences that capture new customers and build brand loyalty. For over 40 years, CSG's technologies and people have helped some of the world's most recognizable brands solve their toughest business challenges and evolve to meet the demands of today's digital economy with future-ready solutions that drive exceptional customer experiences. With more than 5,000 employees in over 20 countries, CSG is the trusted technology provider for leading global brands in telecommunications, retail, financial services, and healthcare. Our solutions deliver real world outcomes to more than 900 customers in over 120 countries.

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