# The $260 Billion Dollar Friction Problem Businesses Don’t Know They Have

Modern technology has made our lives better, but it has also raised expectations for how we engage with our favorite brands. Today, customers are adept at navigating digital experiences and expect frictionless customer and end user experiences, such as easy navigation in-app and across your site, effortless checkout processes, and protection of their sensitive data and personal information. In addition to changing expectations around engagement, buyer behavior is shifting, too:

Research shows that 75% of customers carry out purchases on their mobile devices.[1] This shift, in tandem with the rise in popularity of messaging, underscores how important it is for businesses to build mobile-first, conversational shopping experiences that reflect how modern buyers want to engage with brands.

Another catalyst for evolving customer preferences? The shift to remote work and the way in which events like the COVID-19 pandemic have made us more reliant on digital goods and services than ever before. It’s essentially a perfect storm of rapid digital adoption combined with an explosion in demand for real-time communication with friends, family and the brands they love.

[1] “Mobile Commerce Sales in 2021,” Oberlo, 2021

## So, what does this mean for business?

**It's simple:**
Businesses must acknowledge the shift in power to the consumer and start removing barriers to browsing, purchase, and customer communication. But that's often easier said than done, and the reality is that many businesses are struggling to keep up with this new emphasis on a frictionless customer experience. And the projected opportunity cost of friction for e-commerce businesses in the US is $260 billion.[2]

But how can businesses start the process of transformation and get closer to their customers? By removing friction from the buyer journey. Keep reading to find out how.

[2] "44 Cart Abandonment Rate Statistics," Baymard Institute, December 2020

# Buyer Friction:
# What it is and Why You Need to Eliminate from Every Stage of the Buyer Journey

Buyer friction is an invisible barrier between your customer and the outcome you want to drive as a business. Say, for example, someone lands on your site to make a purchase—awesome, right? Totally. So they add something to their cart, and go to checkout, but before they can do that, your site asks them to create an account just to make a purchase. Even though you, the business, might view this as a means to an end, it's a point of friction for the buyer. All they want to do is purchase their item, not go through a multi-step account creation process.

In this scenario, the right solution—the one that removes the friction—is to let the buyer checkout without creating an account first and, at the end of the purchase process, prompt them to open an account by using their billing info, email address and other details captured to populate the new account. While this is just one example, there are numerous other opportunities to help reduce friction throughout the entire customer journey. For example, friction often presents itself in subtle ways before buyers even think about making a purchase.

**Here are some additional examples of friction:**

1. Lengthy load times for critical pages on your website (homepage, checkout, etc.)
2. Confusing website navigation
3. No way to reach out for instant customer support or, related, customer support that doesn't feel like a two-way conversation (more on that later)

***Tl;dr:**, the more steps consumers have to take to complete a transaction or get information they need, the more opportunities there are for friction to occur.*

**But why is addressing buyer friction so critical for business?**

To put it simply, it's affecting your business's bottom line. From browsing to purchase and beyond, friction throws obstacles in the way of your customer's journey to the promised land, whether that's a purchase or some other point of conversion. That's why, in this age of instant gratification, it's imperative that you take steps necessary to remove it across the journey.

In the section that follows, we'll dial how to take action to help remove friction across the customer journey.

# Removing Buyer Friction Across the Customer Journey

**Friction occurs during four distinct stages in the customer journey: discovery, consideration, purchase and post-purchase. Let's identify how it typically manifests itself and what you can do to remove it.**

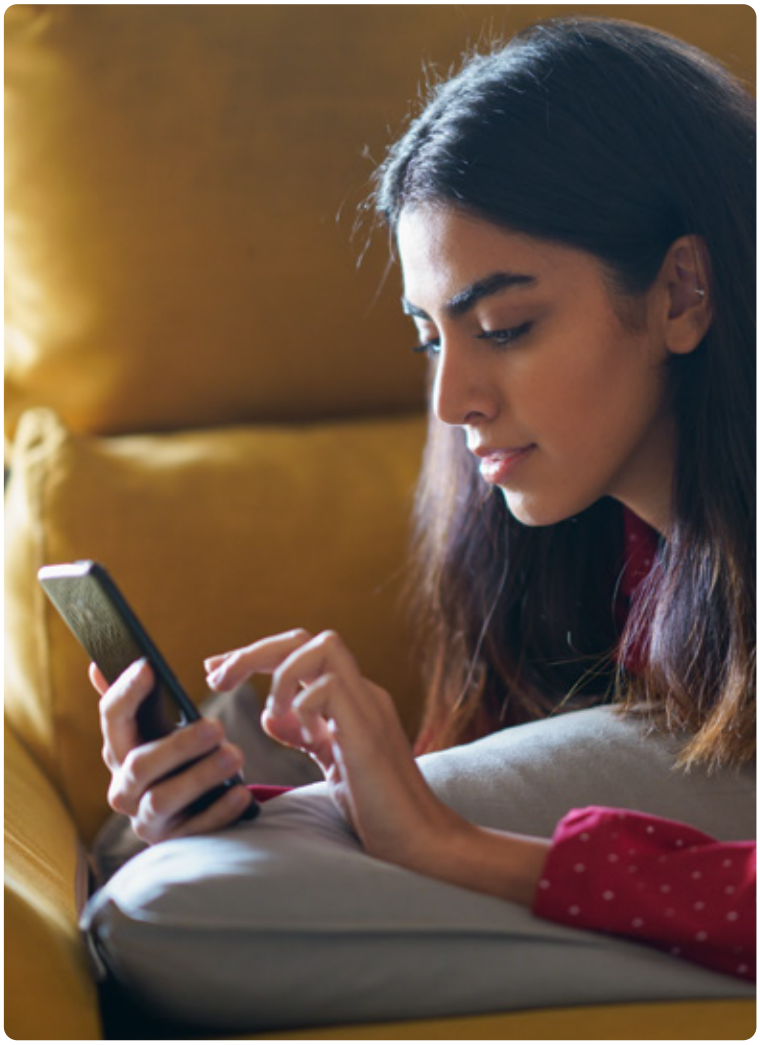
## Discovery → Consideration → Purchase → Post-purchase

During the discovery stage, a customer is learning about your brand and products. They're doing their research and informing themselves *before* making the decision to purchase.

The most common pain points in the discovery stage occur in two categories: inspiration and browsing. Customers can't discover a product that they don't know exists or buy what they can't find. With targeted paid advertisements and other marketing activities that help raise awareness, you can connect people to a two-way conversation with your businesses and help reduce the friction during this stage in two key ways:

1. **Browsing:** As a business, you're already using paid ads and organic social to help drive awareness of your product in the market. But what if a click on one of those ads sent people to a curated collection of products to browse versus a static landing page? To help reduce friction in the customer journey, bridge the gap between discovery and consideration by connecting your paid ads to conversational experiences.

2. **Inspiration:** Prompt people to opt into messages through WhatsApp so you can provide inspiration for when, where, and how to use your product. Provide product recommendations via Multi-product messages that are appropriate for the discovery stage of the customer journey.



Discovery → **Consideration** → Purchase → Post-purchase

After discovering your brand and products, shoppers will enter the consideration stage of the customer journey. It's during this stage where the customer is pondering whether or not to make a purchase. More than likely, they'll do things like compare your brand to others, look for specific products or info on your site, and maybe even reach out for more information. During the consideration phase, think about how you can draw the buyer deeper into the funnel—and increase the odds they'll come back to make a purchase by embedding ways to opt into conversational outreach from your brand. Wondering what this looks like? Here are some ideas:

1. Avoid abandonment. Oftentimes, shoppers will add items to their cart and never checkout. Safeguard against cart abandonment by making it easy for buyers to find their way back. Think about embedding an opt-in up front to receive additional conversational outreach through a solution like WhatsApp. Once a buyer has opted in, you can send high quality, proactive messages through WhatsApp to win them back and make a purchase.

2. Send personalized recommendations. Make timely and relevant product suggestions based off of previous activity or purchases via WhatsApp messages. With WhatsApp, you can also surface a list of curated items via conversation, making it easier to come back to your site and make a purchase.

3. Make it easy to get support and info. Be there when buyers want your help. Use WhatsApp to configure bot flows that address commonly asked questions about return policies, shipping and more. Configure bot flows to connect with additional support as needed.

Discovery → Consideration → **Purchase** → Post-purchase

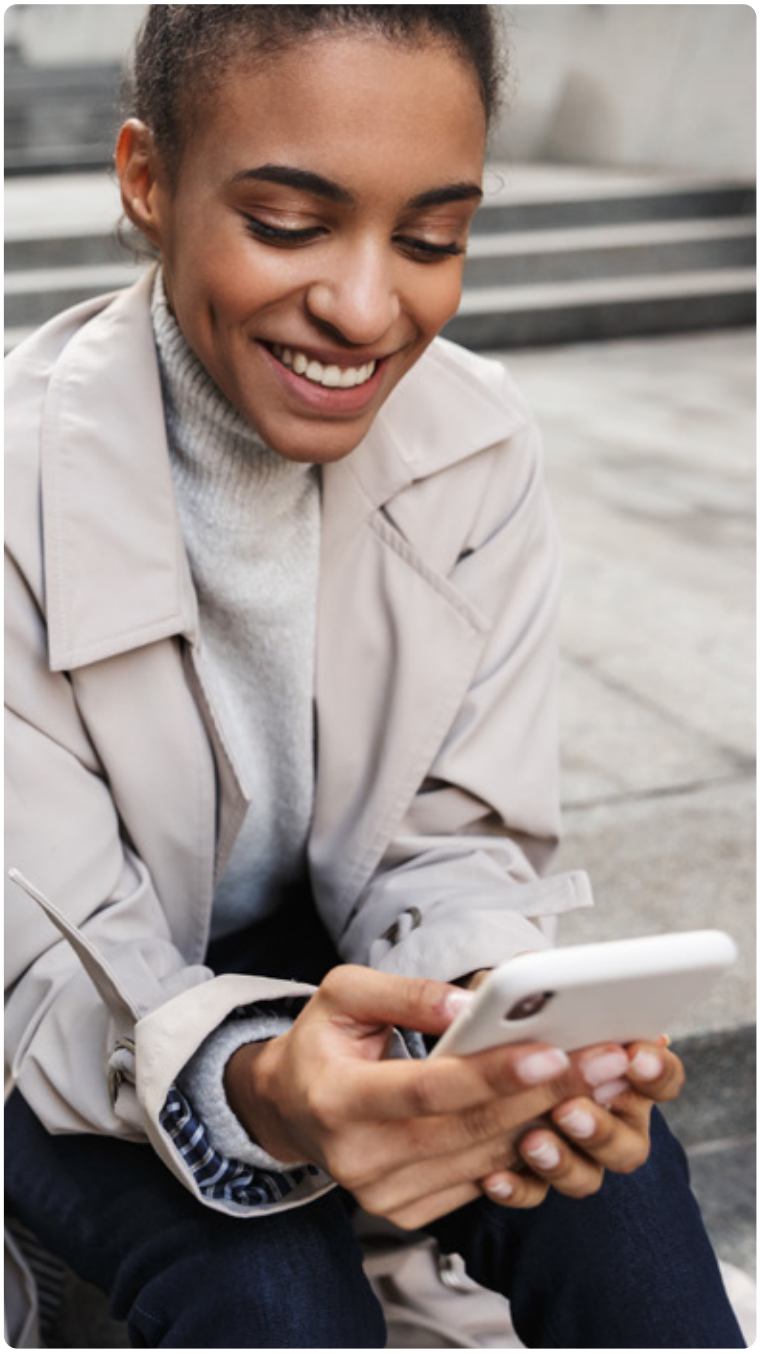
In the purchase stage, customers have already located the products they want and now they need to checkout. Inefficient payment systems, form fill errors, and transaction failures can result in a clunky purchase. In fact, more than 80% of online shoppers have abandoned their shopping cart because of site errors like these.[3]

To alleviate these pain points, businesses need to really examine the checkout process to identify areas of improvement. The path to purchase should ask for only necessary info on forms with an uncomplicated process to input payment information. WhatsApp can help businesses out here, too, by using conversations to help accelerate the purchase process.

1. Businesses can send customers a link to their external payment page, which can be pre-populated with the customer's cart and info, supercharging the checkout process and driving conversions.

2. Speed up the process by allowing your customers to save their preferred form of payment on file. With simple messages confirming key details, your business can process a transaction without requiring your customer to fill out a payment form each time.

[3] "2020 Ecommerce Stat Report," SaleCycle, October 2020



Discovery → Consideration → Purchase → **Post-purchase**

Once buyers reach the final stage of the customer journey, they're now waiting for their purchased products to be delivered. During the post-purchase stage, consumers expect status updates and rapid fulfillment on their orders. Any impediments to that is friction and could result in customers canceling orders and switching to a competitor due to poor customer service.

**So, what can you do to drive post-purchase happiness?**

1. Send your customers messages when their order is shipped and include any relevant tracking numbers or delivery information.

2. Make it easy for people to get what they want. Sometimes you do everything right as a business, but a product doesn't meet someone's expectations. Instead of making your customer jump through hoops, remove the friction from the process by sharing return details through a bot flow and give them the info they need to process a return right from a conversation. With WhatsApp List Messages, you can provide all the available options to customers, allowing for a cleaner and easier user experience than email or text.

Over the years, more and more consumers are turning to their mobile devices for every aspect of their lives, including to make a purchase. In fact, 72.9% of all retail e-commerce is expected to be generated via mobile devices, up from 58.9% in 2017.[4] This steady increase as well as the $260 billion projected opportunity cost of friction for e-commerce businesses paint a clear picture: your business must work to close the gap between what your customers expect, and the buying experience you're providing for them right now.

Invest in conversational messaging to ensure that consumers have relevant information about your brand and products, receive personalized recommendations and prompts as well as a speedy path to purchase and fulfillment, all on their mobile devices. Taking these steps will help remove friction and provide the best experience for your customer base.

[4] "Global mobile retail commerce sales share 2016-2021," Statista, October 2021