

# Phases of the Buyer Journey

How customers move from curiosity to loyalty — and what to do at every stage

## LESSON GOAL

By the end of this module, you will understand the distinct psychological stages customers move through online, how to adapt your content, messaging, and experience at each stage — and why positioning is the heart of everything that follows.

5 JOURNEY STAGES

STAGE PSYCHOLOGY

CONTENT BY STAGE

POSITIONING

MESSAGING BY ARCHETYPE

### Parts 1-6 · The 5 Stages

- Awareness — education and helpfulness
- Consideration — differentiation and confidence
- Purchase — friction reduction and reassurance
- Retention — experience and relationship
- Advocacy — emotional connection and identity

### Positioning & Messaging

- What positioning really means — and why it matters
- Weak vs. strong positioning — side by side
- Messaging across all 5 industry archetypes
- The Golden Rule: what stays consistent, what adapts

**Great marketing doesn't repeat the same message everywhere. It adapts to where the customer is.**

*The customer journey is about reducing uncertainty over time — not pushing toward a sale*

**The Thread:** This module connects directly to your funnel (2A), your archetypes (2B), your brief (2C), and your consumer behaviour knowledge (3A). Every stage of the buyer journey needs a different version of your positioning — same foundation, different emphasis.

# The 5-Stage Buyer Journey

Psychology, content, and platform fit at every stage — at a glance

Most purchases happen gradually. Before customers are ready to buy, subscribe, or commit, they move through several distinct psychological stages. At each stage their mindset, questions, fears, and expectations change completely.

<p><b>Awareness</b></p> <p><i>"I think I have a problem."</i></p> <p><b>MINDSET</b></p> <p>Exploration, confusion, curiosity — not looking for brands yet</p> <p><b>WHAT WORKS</b></p> <p>Educational articles, how-to videos, infographics, SEO content, social discovery</p> <p><b>PLATFORMS</b></p> <p>Google (informational), YouTube (explainers), Instagram/TikTok (emotional)</p>	<p><b>Consideration</b></p> <p><i>"Which solution?"</i></p> <p><b>MINDSET</b></p> <p>Evaluation, comparison, seeking confidence — comparing options carefully</p> <p><b>WHAT WORKS</b></p> <p>Comparison guides, demos, case studies, testimonials, FAQ, email nurture</p> <p><b>PLATFORMS</b></p> <p>YouTube (demos), Google (comparison), Website (trust), Email (reassurance)</p>	<p><b>Purchase</b></p> <p><i>"Am I ready?"</i></p> <p><b>MINDSET</b></p> <p>Close to action but hesitating — fear of wrong choice, complexity, regret</p> <p><b>WHAT WORKS</b></p> <p>Guarantees, transparent pricing, fast checkout, live chat, cart recovery, social proof</p> <p><b>PLATFORMS</b></p> <p>Landing page (CRO), Retargeting ads, Email (cart recovery)</p>	<p><b>Retention</b></p> <p><i>"Right decision?"</i></p> <p><b>MINDSET</b></p> <p>Post-purchase validation — seeking reassurance that they made the right choice</p> <p><b>WHAT WORKS</b></p> <p>Onboarding, tutorials, loyalty programs, proactive support, community building</p> <p><b>PLATFORMS</b></p> <p>Email (education), YouTube (advanced use), Private community</p>	<p><b>Advocacy</b></p> <p><i>"I trust them."</i></p> <p><b>MINDSET</b></p> <p>Identity and belonging — the brand reflects who they are and who they want to be</p> <p><b>WHAT WORKS</b></p> <p>Exceptional experience, emotional connection, referral programs, review requests</p> <p><b>PLATFORMS</b></p> <p>Word of mouth, UGC, reviews, referral links, community</p>
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**The Best Marketers Meet Customers Where They Are.** Not where the business wants them to be. At Awareness, pushing a sale creates distrust. At Purchase, educating instead of converting loses the customer. Stage awareness is not optional — it is the entire discipline.

**Why Customers Rarely Buy Immediately**

- They need to understand the problem first
- They need to reduce uncertainty at every step
- Trust is built gradually, not claimed instantly
- Each stage has a different emotional blocker

**What This Means for Your Strategy**

- Create content for every stage — not just conversion
- Match message format to stage psychology
- Don't abandon customers after purchase
- Engineer Advocacy — it doesn't happen by accident

# Awareness, Consideration & Purchase

The first three stages — from discovering a problem to committing to a solution

## 1 Awareness

"I think I have a problem."

EXPLORATION & CURIOSITY

### WHAT WORKS

Educational articles, how-to videos, infographics, SEO content, social discovery content

### PLATFORM FIT

Google (informational searches), YouTube (problem explanation), Instagram/TikTok (emotional awareness)

### KEY INSIGHT

Trust at this stage is built through helpfulness, not aggressive selling. The goal is to be the most useful resource — not the loudest advertiser.

## 2 Consideration

"Which solution should I choose?"

EVALUATION & COMPARISON

### WHAT WORKS

Comparison guides, detailed demos, case studies, testimonials, webinars, FAQ pages, email nurturing

### PLATFORM FIT

YouTube (deep reviews), Google (comparison searches), Website (trust signals + UX), Email (reassurance)

### KEY INSIGHT

Customers at this stage are not looking for information — they are looking for confidence. Your job is to reduce doubt, not increase feature lists.

## 3 Purchase

"Am I ready to commit?"

HESITATION & REASSURANCE

### WHAT WORKS

Guarantees, transparent pricing, fast simple checkout, live chat, cart recovery, social proof, limited-time offers (used carefully)

### PLATFORM FIT

Website/landing page (CRO), Retargeting ads (reminder + reassurance), Email (cart recovery)

### KEY INSIGHT

The final stage is often more about reducing anxiety than increasing excitement. The biggest barriers: fear of wrong choice, wasting money, or regret.

### THE PROGRESSION

Awareness builds **interest**. Consideration builds **confidence**. Purchase removes **anxiety**. Each stage has a completely different emotional job — and a completely different content strategy.

### MY NOTES

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# Retention, Advocacy & Positioning

The stages most businesses ignore — and the foundation that makes everything work

## 4 Retention

"Was this the right decision?"

RELATIONSHIP & EXPERIENCE

### WHAT WORKS

Onboarding, tutorials, loyalty programs, regular valuable communication, proactive support, community building

### PLATFORM FIT

Email (education + relationship), YouTube (advanced tutorials), Private communities (long-term engagement)

### KEY INSIGHT

Retention is where customer experience becomes more important than advertising. Retaining customers is almost always cheaper and more profitable than acquiring new ones.

## 5 Advocacy

"I trust this brand enough to recommend it."

IDENTITY & BELONGING

### WHAT CREATES IT

Exceptional consistent experience, emotional connection, feeling of identity and belonging, surprise and delight moments

### PLATFORM FIT

Word of mouth, UGC, referral programs, review requests, community, organic social sharing

### KEY INSIGHT

The strongest marketing often comes from happy customers, not paid campaigns. Advocacy is not luck — it is engineered through exceptional, consistent experience.

## POSITIONING — THE HEART OF EVERYTHING

### Why Positioning Matters More Than Any Tactic

No matter which platform you use, which stage of the journey you target, or which archetype you are — nothing matters more than clear, powerful positioning. You can have perfect targeting, great timing, and excellent creative — but if your positioning is weak or your message is generic, everything falls flat.

#### What Positioning Really Means

Positioning is how your customer perceives you in their mind — especially relative to competitors. It answers the question:

**"Why should I choose you instead of all the other options — including doing nothing?"**

#### Strong Positioning Is:

- Clear and specific — never generic
- Emotionally resonant with the target segment
- Difficult for competitors to copy
- Consistent across all touchpoints and stages

# Messaging Across the 5 Archetypes

Same discipline, completely different expression — messaging brings positioning to life

While positioning is the strategic foundation, messaging is how you communicate it through words, visuals, and experiences. Good messaging adapts depending on the journey stage — but great positioning stays consistent throughout.

## 1. IMPULSE ARCHETYPE — E.G. RED BULL

### "The drink that gives you wings"

Energetic, adventurous, rebellious. Focus on emotion and lifestyle, not ingredients. Messaging triggers aspiration and identity — not rational comparison.

## 2. HABIT / REPEAT ARCHETYPE — E.G. NESPRESSO

### "The easiest way to enjoy cafe-quality coffee at home every day"

Convenience + premium ritual. Emphasises simplicity, daily delight, and the pleasure of a reliable routine. Messaging reinforces habit formation and emotional comfort.

## 3. CONSIDERED ARCHETYPE — E.G. IKEA

### "Beautiful, functional furniture at prices everyone can afford"

Smart, democratic design and inspiration. Heavy use of comparison, lifestyle imagery, and clear value communication. Messaging empowers the customer to feel like a smart buyer.

## 4. HIGH-INVOLVEMENT ARCHETYPE — E.G. SALESFORCE / PREMIUM LAW FIRM

### "The most trusted partner for complex business challenges"

Authority, expertise, proven results. Case studies, data, and thought leadership dominate. Messaging reduces risk and builds trust slowly over a long consideration period.

## 5. ASPIRATION / PRESTIGE ARCHETYPE — E.G. ROLEX / APPLE

### "The symbol of success and timeless excellence"

Minimalist, aspirational, identity-driven. Focus on status, craftsmanship, and self-expression. Messaging rarely discusses features — it sells the version of yourself you become.

## THE GOLDEN RULE

### What Stays Consistent. What Adapts.

#### Always Stays Consistent

- Your core positioning and brand promise
- Your brand archetype and emotional role
- Your value proposition and key differentiator
- Your tone of voice and personality

#### Adapts by Stage & Platform

- Format — short video vs. long article vs. email
- Emphasis — problem awareness vs. comparison vs. reassurance
- Call to action — "Learn more" vs. "Compare" vs. "Buy now"
- Depth — surface discovery vs. detailed evaluation

# Key Takeaways

What to remember — and your fillable Journey Map is on the next page

## MODULE 3B — CORE LESSONS

- \* Customers move through distinct psychological stages — Awareness, Consideration, Purchase, Retention, Advocacy
- \* Each stage requires different content, messaging, trust signals, and calls to action
- \* Awareness = Education and helpfulness. Push too early and you destroy trust.
- \* Consideration = Differentiation and confidence. The goal is to reduce doubt, not increase feature lists.
- \* Purchase = Friction reduction and reassurance. Reduce anxiety, not just increase excitement.
- \* Retention = Experience and relationship. Cheaper and more profitable than constant acquisition.
- \* Advocacy = Emotional connection and identity. The strongest marketing comes from happy customers.
- \* Positioning is the heart of everything — clear, specific, differentiated, consistent across all stages.

### Practical Exercise

- 1 Choose one product or service
- 2 Map what the customer thinks, feels, and searches at each stage
- 3 Audit what content you currently offer at each stage
- 4 Identify the biggest gaps or friction points
- 5 Write or rewrite your positioning statement

### The Positioning Test

- Could this positioning apply to any of your 10 nearest competitors? If yes — it's not positioning, it's a description.
- Does it speak to a specific customer with a specific problem?
- Does it give a clear, differentiated reason to choose you?
- Could you build years of messaging on this foundation?

### MY REFLECTIONS & ACTION POINTS

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**Up Next — Module 3C:** Content Strategy & SEO Fundamentals. We go deep on how to create content that ranks, attracts the right audience at the right stage, and builds long-term organic growth that compounds over time.

AWARENESS

CONSIDERATION

PURCHASE

RETENTION

ADVOCACY

1 Awareness

"I have a problem"

Customer thinks / feels / searches:

Content I currently offer:

Gap or friction to fix:

2 Consideration

"Which solution?"

Customer thinks / feels / searches:

Content I currently offer:

Gap or friction to fix:

3 Purchase

"Am I ready?"

Customer thinks / feels / searches:

Content I currently offer:

Gap or friction to fix:

4 Retention

"Right decision?"

Customer thinks / feels / searches:

Content I currently offer:

Gap or friction to fix:

5 Advocacy

"I trust them"

Customer thinks / feels / searches:

Content I currently offer:

Gap or friction to fix:

MY POSITIONING STATEMENT Why should a customer choose me instead of all other options?"

My Positioning Statement

My Key Message (what stays consistent across all stages)