

# Visualize the Customer Journey

*By Fiona Manzella*



## What is the Customer Journey?

As a shopper, you might drive, walk, or catch a bus over to the mall or the store of your choice (probably after looking up the best prices and promotions for the purchase you have in mind). You may grab a coffee and then start leisurely perusing your favorite stores, or you might run right to your destination retailer to grab the product and head back home.

Preferences and constraints — from schedules, to product availability, brand loyalty, prior research, and current promotions — all affect the paths shoppers take to find the products they want. Brick-and-mortar retailers, however, can see almost none of those factors and are still tasked with delivering a great experience for customers from the moment they enter the store to the moment they leave. Armed with little contextual data, retailers must ensure a successful customer journey both for their shoppers and their bottom line.

So how can they make it happen?

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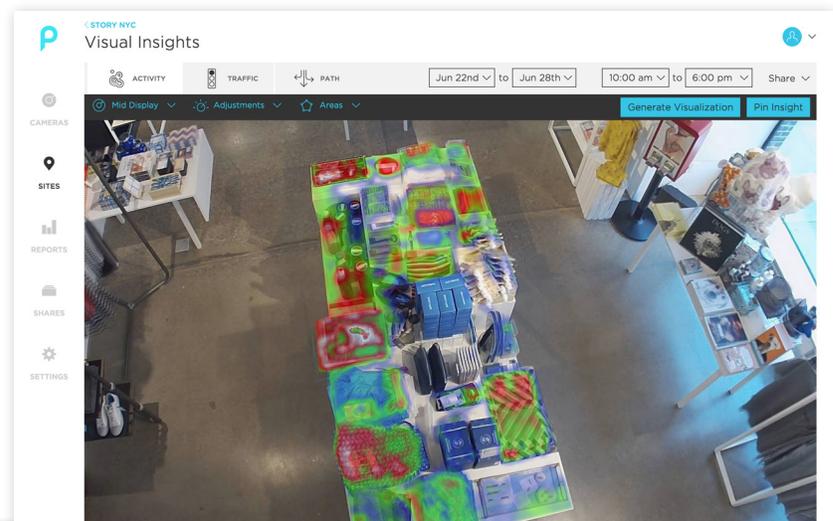
## 1 Do a Deep Dive

Retailers might not be able to see where their customers come from, but they know where they enter the store. With this in mind, grocery chains are quick to place the staples at the back of the store, out of customer eyesight and far from the entrance, ensuring that every customer who picks up their milk and eggs also experiences every product the store has to offer on their way. Similarly, department stores are known for placing their cosmetics offerings near the entrance — where the perfect location helps them generate up to an incredible 70% of department store sales.<sup>1</sup> How can other retailers ensure the same traffic optimization happens in their brick-and-mortar environments?

For boutiques and department stores alike, traffic metrics can be invaluable when it comes to improving customer flow throughout their whole space. For multi-floor stores, where entry counting can help Operations teams understand conversion, area counting that compares traffic levels on each floor and in every department can help determine the impact of campaigns and promotions on traffic across every part of the store. Worried that only 30% of your customers make it to the back of your store or the second floor? With area counting, you can improve traffic flow by pinpointing the highest conversion product zones and shifting those items to less trafficked areas.

## 2 Every Area Counts

The in-store customer journey isn't just about getting shoppers to visit the back of your retail space — it's about getting them to visit all of it. With rent prices continuing to rise for brick-and-mortar retailers,<sup>2</sup> it's essential that no square foot of your store goes to waste. But conversion data falls short here, so how can retailers tell where their customers spend time?

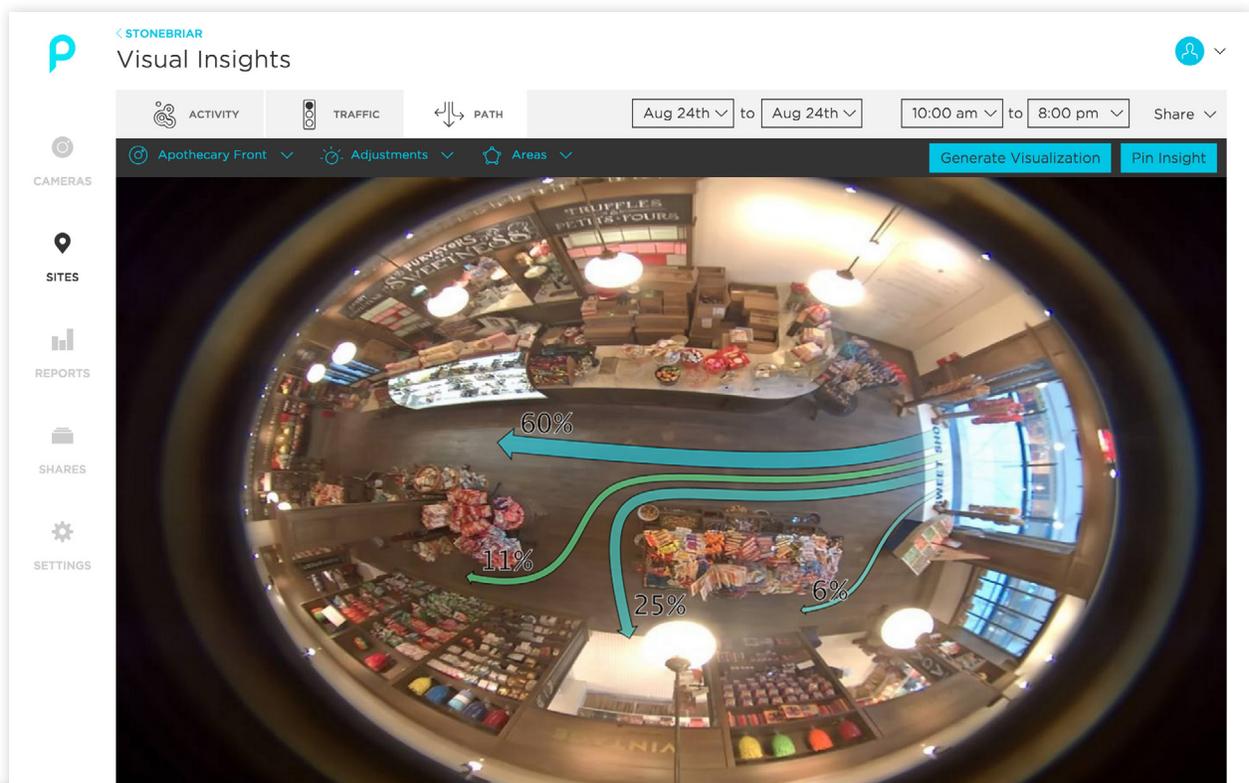


Using visual analytics in your stores (shown above), you can set up heatmaps that show you the displays and products that customers engage with most — and what parts of your store don't see any traffic. By using heatmaps to A/B test customer engagement with different product layouts, retailers can draw traffic to unvisited parts of the store and ensure their merchandising makes optimal use of their space.

### 3 See Every Store

What works well for customers visiting one store may not — and probably won't — work for all your locations. A Target Express® built in a busy city center attracts a very different customer base than a Super Target® built in the suburbs. But layouts don't often reflect these differences, and stores lose sales from customers who don't experience everything they have to offer.<sup>3</sup> The ability to simply look into every one of your stores and see customer patterns provides a clear advantage for identifying what works and what doesn't.

The first step is to be able to see every one of your store layouts, in high definition, remotely. The second is to overlay pathmaps (shown below) that illustrate how customers move through your store — where they turn, where they go straight, and how they move around different displays. Suddenly you have instant access to a real-time A/B testing tool, enabling every one of your stores to perfect a merchandising pattern that's uniquely suited to making the most of the customer journey.



1 "Why Cosmetics Rule the 1st Floor of Department Stores." *The Chosun Ilbo (English Edition): Daily News from Korea*. 30 Jan. 2010. Web. 7 Dec. 2015.

2 Popovec, Jennifer. "Retail Landlords Keep Pushing Rents Up." *National Real Estate Investor*. 8 Oct. 2015. Web. 7 Dec. 2015.

3 Kendall, Graham. "The Science That Makes Us Spend More in Supermarkets, and Feel Good While We Do It." *Phys.org. The Conversation*, 5 Mar. 2014. Web. 21 Dec. 2015.



There's a lot of contextual data retailers may never know about the paths their customers take before they enter the store — but that doesn't have to stop them from perfecting the customer journey. By improving their understanding of how shoppers experience their space, brick-and-mortar stores can ensure that they're using every square foot to improve the customer experience and increase sales. All you need is the data to get started.

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