

The Marketing Funnel

In the game Chutes & Ladders, children journey through a colorful array of chutes and ladders to victory. Marketing professionals play a game of their own, also imagined as a journey from start to finish. For marketers, this game takes place through funnels, which help marketers visualize the journey consumers take when purchasing a product. This lesson explains the concept of marketing funnels and the marketer's role in guiding consumers on this journey.

The marketing funnel divides the consumer journey into stages, from initial awareness of a broad range of products to consideration of a smaller group to final purchase of a single product.

The concept of the marketing funnel is more than a century old. Variations exist, but, in general, all funnels trace a journey in which consumers narrow down product choices from many to one.

A marketer intervenes at certain points in the journey to attract the consumer's attention, secure a purchase, and (the marketer hopes) create brand loyalty. These touch points or moments of contact between marketer and consumer are different and depend on the stage at which the marketer tries to reach the consumer.

Mass-market advertising in online, television, and print media can create enough awareness so that consumers include a marketer's product in the initial group of products they consider. Later in the funnel, targeted advertising (texts, email, personalized mailers) and incentives (coupons, rewards programs) may be more effective as consumers weigh their choices.