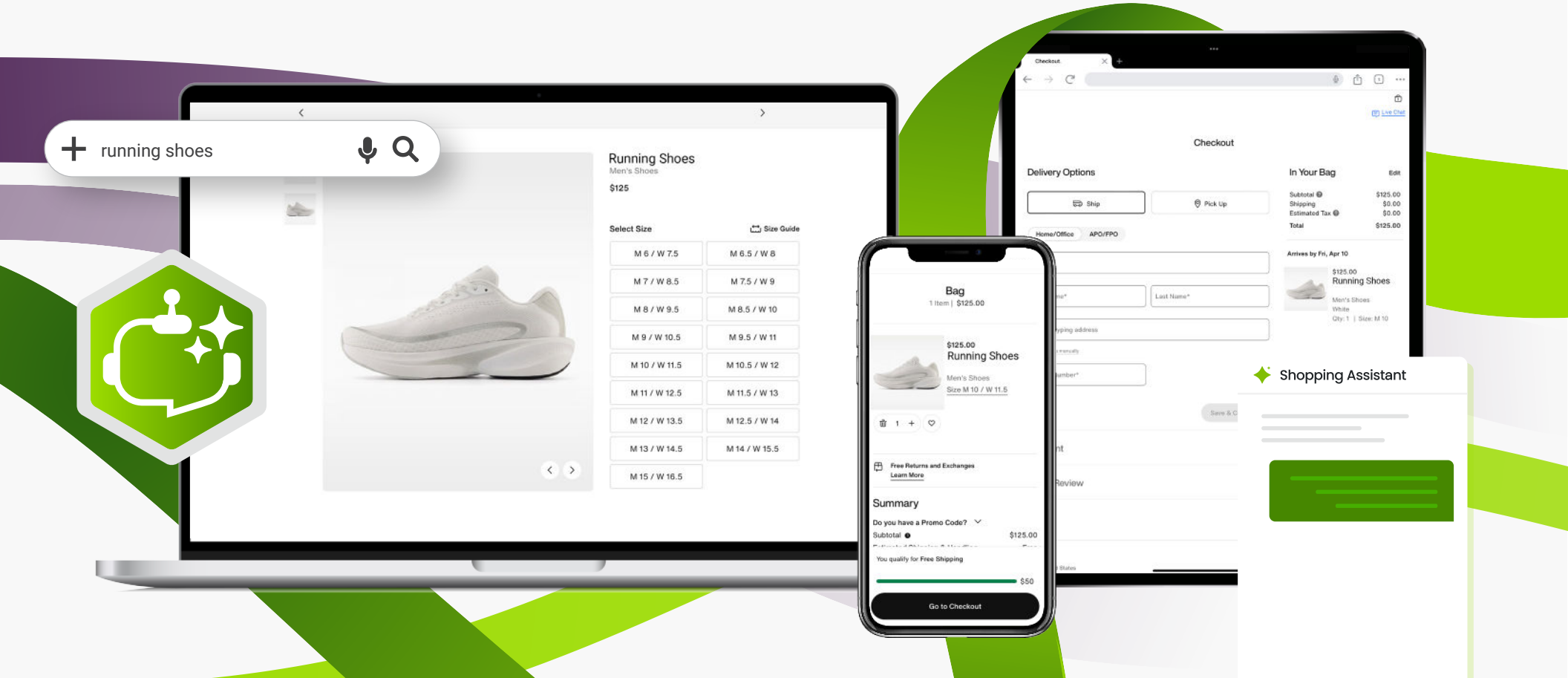
CONVIVA

STATE OF DIGITAL EXPERIENCE REPORT

67% of Digital Consumers Defy the Traditional Purchase Journey

New data from Conviva reveals that the funnel model used in product analytics tools describes a journey that fewer than 1 in 3 consumers actually take — and that this pattern holds across industries.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most of the purchase journey is invisible to the analytics tools built to measure it

Conviva's extensive analysis of digital sessions across e-commerce and travel booking sites finds that **67% of consumers follow non-linear purchase paths** — looping between search and product pages, revisiting carts across multiple sessions, and spreading decisions over days. Traditional product analytics cannot see these events that exist outside of the pre-defined funnel.

The report leverages **stateful pattern analytics**, Conviva's methodology for mapping how consumers actually behave online. Unlike traditional product analytics, which counts heads at each stage and treats backward movement as abandonment, pattern analytics maps the full arc of a consumer journey: preserving loops, re-entry points, and cross-session depth as signals rather than stripping them as noise. It is this approach that makes the patterns below visible — and that reveals how conventional analytics tools have been systematically misreading the majority of consumers.

Key Insights

INSIGHT 01 — SCALE

67% of consumers take non-linear paths to purchase

INSIGHT 02 — LOOPS SIGNAL INTENT

19% conversion rate for consumers with 3+ search loops

INSIGHT 03 — CART "ABANDONMENT"

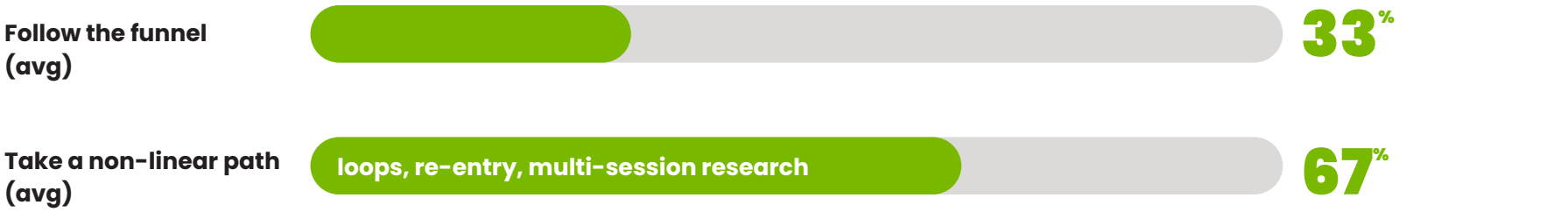
40% conversion rate for shoppers with 5+ cart visits

INSIGHT 04 — DEPTH DRIVES CONVERSION

19% conversion rate for deep product content viewers

of digital consumers do not follow the straight-line purchase path that product analytics assumes

Across sessions, an average of just 33% of consumers followed a sequential, straight-line path to purchase. The 67% who didn't follow a straight-line path took routes that funnel-based tools cannot capture: iterative search loops, mid-funnel re-entry, multi-session consideration arcs, repeated cart or checkout visits, and cross-session research. These consumers are not only the majority — they are disproportionately the most likely to convert.



E-COMMERCE RETAIL

35% Follow the funnel

65% Non-linear

TRAVEL BOOKING

30% Follow the funnel

70% Non-linear

FINDING 01

Non-Linear Behavior is the Norm, Not the Exception

Across all sessions spanning e-commerce and travel, iterative, looping, and multi-session behavior dominated the paths of consumers who converted. The pattern held in both datasets independently.

THE INSIGHT

Two in three digital consumers loop, revisit, and research across sessions before buying. And across two completely unrelated industries — e-commerce and travel booking — the pattern is nearly identical. That consistency is what makes this finding structural rather than anecdotal. **The funnel doesn't describe the exception; it describes the minority.**

CROSS-INDUSTRY VALIDATION — THE SAME PATTERN IN TWO UNRELATED SECTORS

The ~5-point difference between e-commerce (65%) and travel booking (70%) is directionally consistent with the higher complexity of travel purchase decisions — flight dates, passenger counts, payment gateway friction, and multi-day consideration windows. That the non-linear majority holds in both sectors, independently, makes the finding structural rather than sector-specific.

Key Stats:

49%

of converting e-commerce sessions contain a return-to-search loop

3.5×

average searches per completed travel booking

Non-linear travel bookers initiate checkout 2× on average before confirming

65%

of e-commerce cart sessions loop back to product browsing

After their most recent cart visit — cart used as a staging area

36%

of travel bookers require multiple sessions

Averaging 4.25 days between first search and confirmed booking

50%

of travel users who reach the payment page never click purchase

The majority abandon after seeing the full price — and loop back to re-search

3.5×

average cart revisits per e-commerce shopper

The cart is a research tool, not a checkout queue

"The finding is consistent across two sectors with fundamentally different products, price points, and purchase cycles. The funnel is more than a simplification — it is a misrepresentation of how consumers actually behave." *— Keith Zubchevich, CEO, Conviva*

FINDING 02–06

Five Behaviors That Reveal How Consumers Actually Shop

Each finding below shows a pattern of real consumer behavior that funnel-based analytics tools are built to ignore.

THE INSIGHT

Every finding below shares the same structure: a behavior that traditional product analytics labels as drop-off, abandonment, or low engagement. These are, in fact, the defining characteristic of the highest-converting consumers in the data. **These aren't edge cases — they are the dominant patterns of buyers**. The problem isn't the consumers. It's the model used to understand them.

FINDING 02

of converting sessions include a Return-to-Search Loop — and the more loops, the higher the conversion rate

Nearly half of all buyers iterate between product pages and search or browse results before committing. Critically, conversion rate scales monotonically with loop depth: shoppers who run 1 search loop convert at 13%; those with 2 loops at 16%; and those with 3 or more loops at 19%. In a traditional funnel, these backward movements are recorded as drop-offs. In reality they are the primary behavior of the highest-intent buyers in the data.

FINDING 03

conversion rate for shoppers who visit the cart 5+ times — the highest "abandoners" are often the best buyers

Shoppers who visit the cart once convert at 23%. Those who visit 5 or more times — the cohort that traditional product analytics classifies as highest-abandonment — convert at 40%. This is not counter-intuitive; it is the logical result of considering a cart not as a one-visit checkout queue but as a multi-session staging and comparison tool. Optimizing to reduce cart "abandonment" in this cohort would actively harm revenue.

FINDING 04

of cart sessions loop back to product browsing after their most recent cart visit

Nearly two-thirds of shoppers who visit the cart do not proceed toward checkout — they return to browse. Traditional product analytics labels these sessions as cart abandonment. Stateful Pattern Analytics reveals they are active, mid-consideration research trips, with 59% of cart visitors viewing their cart more than once in a single session and 17% viewing it five or more times.

FINDING 05

conversion uplift for consumers who engage deeply with product content — depth signals intent, not indecision

Product page depth is monotonically correlated with conversion:

- 1–5 pages: 3.5% CVR
- 6–15 pages: 7% CVR
- 16–30 pages: 13% CVR
- 31+ pages: 19% CVR

Engagement with detailed product specifications alone drives a 3.5× uplift (13% vs 3.5% baseline). In session-bounce-rate terms, these are "low-engagement" users. In outcome terms, they are the most likely buyers in that cohort.

FINDING 06

Consumers manage parallel consideration layers simultaneously — across sessions, devices, and features — that funnels cannot see

Engagement features — wishlists, saved items, favorites, price alerts — generate significantly more activity than transactional events like add-to-cart. Yet these signals are functionally invisible to traditional product analytics, which only tracks stage progression. Consumers simultaneously manage long-term aspiration lists alongside active short-term consideration sets, and these two layers interact across sessions and devices in ways that cannot be reconstructed from a single-session funnel view.

Key Implication — Wrong Model

Traditional product analytics is not measuring the wrong metrics — it is measuring the wrong journey

The core issue is not data quality or tool sophistication. It is that traditional product analytics is designed to measure a linear process, and the majority of real purchase journeys are not linear. Improving funnel tools does not solve this problem. A fundamentally different analytics model — one that maps sequences, loops, depth, and multi-session arcs — is required to see what is actually happening.

FINDING 07

Four Non-Linear Journey Patterns Found Across Both Industries

These patterns emerged independently across e-commerce and travel. None follow a traditional funnel path. All are high-intent — and all are misread by traditional product analytics.

THE INSIGHT

These four journey types aren't just personality profiles — they describe the actual paths that drove revenue in our dataset. None follow a straight-line funnel. **All are systematically misclassified by conventional analytics** as low-engagement, abandoned, or indeterminate. Recognizing them is the first step to serving them correctly.

THE ITERATIVE RESEARCHER

Highest-converting journey type

Loops repeatedly between discovery and evaluation — search results to product or flight pages and back — before committing. Each additional loop increases conversion probability. This is the dominant buying pattern across both industries, accounting for nearly half of all converting sessions in e-commerce and producing 3.5 average searches per confirmed booking in travel. Funnel models record each loop as a drop-off.

THE MULTI-SESSION PLANNER

Days-long consideration arc

Spreads research across multiple sessions over days or weeks. In travel, 36% of converters required multiple sessions — returning an average of 4.25 days after their first search. In e-commerce, cart revisit patterns confirm the same dynamic: consumers return repeatedly before committing. These journeys are structurally invisible to session-level analytics.

THE ACTIVE CONSIDERER

Highest cart-to-order rate

Uses staging mechanisms — carts, saved items, wishlists — as active decision tools rather than checkout queues, revisiting and adjusting repeatedly. Cart visit frequency is positively correlated with conversion: the more often a consumer returns to their cart or saved list, the more likely they are to buy. Traditional product analytics classifies this pattern as abandonment.

THE INTENT-LED ARRIVER

2–3× average conversion rate

Arrives having already completed research externally — via AI search tools, comparison sites, or social recommendations — and enters mid-funnel or directly at the product or booking page. Decisive, low-browse behavior with conversion rates 2–3× organic search averages. A growing cohort as AI-powered shopping research expands. Last-click attribution systematically misclassifies this journey.

FINDING 08

Conversion Signals Only Stateful Pattern Analytics Can Surface

Every signal below requires path-level, sequence-aware analysis. None are measurable with funnel stage counts.

THE INSIGHT

These aren't obscure edge cases — they are some of the highest-converting segments in our dataset, representing substantial shares of total revenue. **Each one is invisible to traditional product analytics**. Stateful Pattern Analytics surfaces them by preserving the full sequence and context of each journey.

Behavioral Signal	CVR	vs Site Avg	Why Traditional Analytics Misses This
5+ cart views in a session	**40%**	**54× avg**	Counted as abandoned sessions — not identified as high-intent cohort
3+ search-to-product-page loops	**19%**	**25× avg**	"Back" navigation is stripped as noise, not recorded as intent signal
Deep product content engagement (specs, reviews)	**13%**	**3.5× baseline**	In-page engagement depth requires event-sequence analysis
AI search referral (ChatGPT, Perplexity)	**4–7%**	**Up to 3× organic**	Last-click attribution collapse this signal into "direct" or "referral"
Promotional category entry + BNPL	**9%**	**58% above card avg**	Requires full session context to correlate entry path with checkout method
1 search loop (vs zero loops)	**13%**	**17× avg**	Loop behavior requires path sequencing — inaccessible to stage-based funnel models

The pattern across every high-conversion signal in this dataset

Every conversion signal above requires understanding the sequence, depth, and context of a consumer's journey — not just which funnel stage they reached. Traditional product analytics counts heads at tollgates. Stateful Pattern Analytics maps the road. These are not comparable tools measuring the same thing at different quality levels. They represent fundamentally different models of how people shop online — and the data shows only one of those models reflects reality.

IMPLICATIONS

Three Things Product Analytics Gets Wrong at Scale

THE INSIGHT

If 67% of consumers are non-linear, and traditional product analytics treats non-linear behavior as drop-off, then the core assumptions driving product decisions are systematically wrong. **The error doesn't stay isolated — it compounds across every decision those tools inform.** Feature prioritization, UX investment, campaign attribution, and checkout optimization are all downstream of metrics that misread the majority.

ASSUMPTION #1 — WRONG

"High cart abandonment signals low purchase intent"

The cohort that traditional product analytics labels highest-abandonment — shoppers with 5 or more cart visits — converts at 40% CVR — nearly double the rate of first-time cart visitors, and multiples above the session average. Interventions targeting these users to "recover" them risk disrupting the most likely buyers in that cohort. Cart abandonment, as measured by funnel tools, is not a reliable signal of low intent. It is, in many cases, the opposite.

ASSUMPTION #2 — WRONG

"High page views and long sessions indicate low engagement"

Every additional product page view increases conversion rate. Every additional search loop increases conversion rate. Across both datasets, every additional product view and every additional search loop increased conversion rate. In traditional session metrics, these consumers register as low-engagement. In outcome terms, they are the most engaged and most likely to buy. Optimizing for shorter sessions or fewer page views moves directly against conversion.

ASSUMPTION #3 — WRONG

"Optimize for the average session to improve overall CVR"

The highest-volume session paths in this dataset are zero-CVR single-page bounces — direct ad landings, homepage exits, search abandonment. These dominate average-session metrics. Converting sessions are almost exclusively multi-step, iterative, looping journeys. Product decisions evaluated against average-session data are being evaluated against the behavior of the population least likely to buy.

COMPOUNDING EFFECT

The majority being mis-measured compounds across every decision these tools inform

Feature prioritization, UX investment, campaign attribution, checkout optimization, and personalization are all downstream of funnel metrics. When those metrics systematically misrepresent 67% of consumers — treating their high-intent behavior as low-intent signal — every decision informed by those metrics is skewed in the same direction. The error is not isolated. It compounds.

CONCLUSION

The funnel was always a simplification. The data now shows it has become a liability.

Across sessions spanning two independent datasets — e-commerce and travel booking — Conviva's analysis finds that the purchase funnel describes a journey only 33% of consumers actually take. The other 67% behave in ways that funnel-based analytics is structurally unable to capture. Two different industries. The same structural finding.

This cross-industry consistency matters. It means the non-linear majority is not a quirk of a particular product category or audience. It is a feature of how people make considered purchase decisions online — and it holds whether they are buying a sofa or a flight. Modern consumers loop, compare, stage, and research across sessions and devices. They revisit consideration lists, backtrack from checkout, re-search after seeing prices, and spread decisions across days. None of this behavior is visible to a funnel.

Stateful Pattern Analytics — Conviva's approach to mapping sequences, depth, loops, and cross-session arcs — is the only methodology that can see the 67%, attribute their intent accurately, and inform decisions based on what consumers actually do rather than what the model assumes they do.

About the Research

This report aggregates findings from two independent Conviva Digital Product Insights (DPI) analyses, each conducted using the Nexa natural language analytics interface on separate client datasets. All session data was collected via full-census, client-side telemetry — no sampling was applied to either dataset.

DATASET 1 — E-COMMERCE

7-day window, March 2026. Product page sessions and engagement events analyzed.

DATASET 2 — TRAVEL BOOKING

30-day window, February–March 2026. Major travel booking platform. Full funnel from flight search through booking confirmation.

PATH METHODOLOGY

Sequential path-sequence analysis

Ordered event sequences with loops and repetitions preserved as signal, not stripped as noise. Linear path defined as completing each funnel stage in sequence within a single session without backward navigation. Non-linear = any deviation: loops, re-entry, repeated stages, or multi-session completion.

BOT EXCLUSION

Human-only traffic isolated in both datasets

Automated sessions excluded via behavior-pattern and device-frequency analysis in both datasets independently. CVR and path figures reported on human-filtered traffic.

AGGREGATION METHOD

Simple average of two independent measurements

The 33% / 67% headline figure is the mean of (35.1%, 30.5%). Combined session volume is the sum of both datasets.

** Analysis timeframe: E-commerce dataset covers a 7-day window in March 2026; travel dataset covers a 30-day window spanning February–March 2026.*

ABOUT CONVIVA

Conviva is the digital intelligence platform for apps, websites, and AI agents — connecting real consumer interactions to real business outcomes. Unlike traditional analytics tools that track events and funnels, Conviva maps the full sequence of consumer behavior over time, surfacing the patterns that predict revenue, retention, and risk. With full-census, client-side telemetry and Stateful Pattern Analytics, Conviva sees what session-based and funnel-based tools cannot.

Learn more at conviva.ai and follow the company on LinkedIn.