

The omnichannel customer service gap

November 2013



Executive Summary

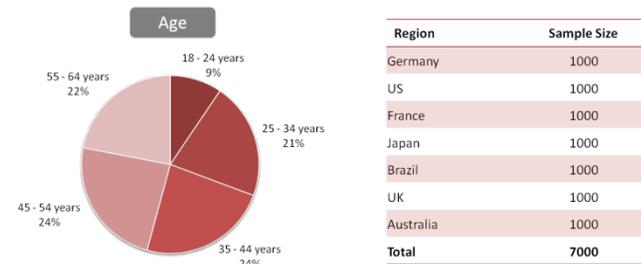
The rapid growth of digital over the past ten years has created an environment where consumers are more in control and brand savvy than ever. The future is omnichannel, where providing a seamless and consistent brand experience regardless of the technology or method of communication consumers choose to use is critical to customer engagement and competitive success.

Many brands are now focusing their attention on developing omnichannel sales strategies, which from a customer perspective only represents part of their brand journey. Customer service is a key part of the brand experience and can ultimately make or break a customer relationship. The number of customer service channels, including virtual agents, screen sharing, SMS, social media, and click-to-chat, has created unprecedented choice from a brand and customer perspective but creates significant challenges in terms of providing a truly integrated brand experience.

Zendesk, a leading provider of customer service solutions, commissioned Loudhouse to explore customer service attitudes and behaviours amongst 7,000 consumers in seven countries (see Figure A), to identify trends and help develop omnichannel strategies moving forward.

The research finds that consumers perceive brands to be putting more effort into creating a seamless and consistent customer experience for sales than they do for customer service. Furthermore, as expectations for customer service continue to evolve, brands are found to be struggling to keep up and customers are falling back on using the phone as their primary contact method if response and resolution times prove to be unsatisfactory. The younger the customer, the more likely they are to complain and the more demanding they are of brands to deliver real-time and self-service support options. Finally, getting customer service right creates a virtuous circle; happy customers spend more and are valuable brand ambassadors and repeat customers, in turn giving a better return on the investment required.

Figure A: Research Sample



Research Methodology

7,000 online shoppers were surveyed during August 2013. Research was conducted by Loudhouse, an independent research agency based in London.

Key findings from the research include:

The omnichannel customer service gap

- Two thirds (67%) of online shoppers have made purchases in the past six months that have involved multiple channels
- 73% think brands pay more attention to generating sales across multiple channels than they do to providing an integrated customer service experience
- 69% believe expectations for customer service are increasing year-on-year
- 37% now expect to be able to contact the same customer service representative regardless of which channel they use and 47% expect to be able to return goods / purchases through a different channel than the purchase channel
- Just 7% are extremely satisfied that brands provide a seamless, integrated, and consistent customer service experience across channels

Customer service behaviours

- Shoppers fall into three categories – 23% are less tolerant of problems with products / services than others, whilst 60% have an average level of tolerance and 17% are more tolerant of problems with products / services than others
- In the past six months, consumers have tried to resolve a query by calling customer services (54%), emailing customer services (48%), using online self-service portals (27%) or going in store (26%)
- More than half (53%) think it is important for them to resolve their own product / service problems rather than rely on customer service representatives – this rises to 60% amongst those aged between 18 and 34, falling to 44% amongst those aged 55-64

Fallback to “failsafe” phone

- Speed of response (89%), speed of resolution (89%), and friendliness of representative (82%) are seen as the most important aspects of the customer service experience, regardless of channel
- Resolution expectations vary by channel – 59% expect resolution within 30 minutes when contacting customer services by phone, 52% expect to get resolution within a day via social media, and 75% expect resolution within a day via email
- When an email goes unanswered, 71% would then call; when social media goes unanswered, 55% would then call; and when the phone goes unanswered, 54% would try to call again
- Only 52% rate speed of response as good or excellent, with similar ratings for speed of

resolution (51%)

- 45% say they will try any channel open to them and wait as long as it takes to get their query resolved

Moving forwards – joined up customer services

- 64% expect to receive real-time assistance regardless of the customer service channel they use
- 78% say a company's reputation for customer service is important to them when choosing to buy from a particular brand
- 75% of respondents would return to a company with excellent service and 56% would recommend it to family and friends
- 33% will spend more with a brand if they receive excellent customer service
- 87% think brands need to work harder to create a seamless experience for customers

The research finds that the use of phone-based customer service is not decreasing, even as use of text-based and social channels has increased. In part, this is due to growing frustrations with brands in terms of their response times with alternative channels and the disjointed customer experience that consumers now often face. Retailers may still be finding their feet in developing omnichannel strategies. However, a focus predominantly on securing sales across multiple channels whilst overlooking the customer service element will only serve to erode reputations and revenues in the long term.

The omnichannel customer service gap

Where once a consumer went to the high street, found what they were looking for and paid for it there and then, occasionally visiting more than one shop to compare prices for big ticket items, today that same consumer is likely to use several different channels – perhaps visit a shop, go online, look at catalogues, and pick up a phone to talk to someone in a call centre – before making the purchase. Indeed, *Figure 1* shows that two-thirds (67%) of online shoppers made a purchase in the past six months that involved multiple channels.

But it appears that efforts to clinch a sale are not matched by efforts to keep the customer happy as 73% of shoppers believe brands pay more attention to generating sales across multiple channels than they do to providing a seamless customer service (*see Figure 2*). As such, nearly nine out of ten (87%) say brands need to work harder to create a seamless experience for customers.

The challenge for brands is that 69% of respondents believe expectations for customer service are increasing year on year (*see Figure 2*), which suggests they will need to devote more effort and more resources to improving customer service if they are not to see their reputation and even their bottom line damaged. Indeed, the research showed big increases in the numbers of people expecting to use each method of resolution in the coming twelve months. Those prepared to go in-store nearly doubled to 49%, while the number prepared to call or email customers services rose to 69% and 62% respectively.

Worryingly, however, only 7% of consumers say they are extremely satisfied with a seamless, integrated, and consistent service across all channels. Disconnected service channels may have once been an inconvenience for shoppers, but both the increase in expectation and use of customer services has made the issues unavoidable. Over a third (37%) expect to be able to contact the same customer service representative regardless of which channel they use, with a further half (47%) expecting to be able to return goods or purchases through a different channel than the one purchased from. After making a purchase online, resources must therefore be in place to support the after sale *across all channels*.

Figure 1: % making purchases that involve multiple channels in the last six months



Figure 2: Attitudes to customer service



Customer service behaviours

Use of customer services varies significantly by industry sector. Amongst customers who have used the relevant provider, over half contact online retailers (54%); banks, insurance, and other financial service providers (53%); and in-store retailers (51%) with customer service issues.

When it comes to their propensity to complain or raise issues with brands, the research found that shoppers fall into three distinct categories – 23% are less tolerant of problems with products / services than others, whilst 60% have an average level of tolerance and 17% are more tolerant of problems with products / services than others (see Figure 3).

The Japanese are the most tolerant nation, with only 8% falling into the impatient category and 45% classed as tolerant, while the Brazilians are the least patient with two in every five (40%) multichannel shoppers classified as impatient and only 8% as tolerant.

When a customer does have a problem, they will use a number of methods of resolution including a phone call to customer services, email, online self-service portals, and visiting the store. In the past six months, the most popular method was to put a call into customer services (54%), followed by emailing customer services (48%), and using online self-service portals (27%) (see Figure 4). One in four (26%) go directly to the store to resolve a problem.

However, in their quest to resolve an issues as soon as possible, over half (53%) think that it is important for them to resolve their own product problems rather than rely on customer service representatives. Whilst only 44% of 55-64 year olds think it is important to resolve their own problems, this jumps to 60% amongst the less patient 18-34 year olds. Chiming with their impatient nature, the Brazilians are the most likely to want to retain ownership of the problem resolution process, with 65% preferring to resolve their own issues rather than leave it to a customer service representative.

Figure 3: Likelihood to contact customer services relative to others

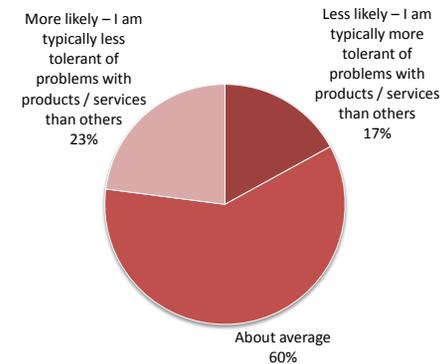
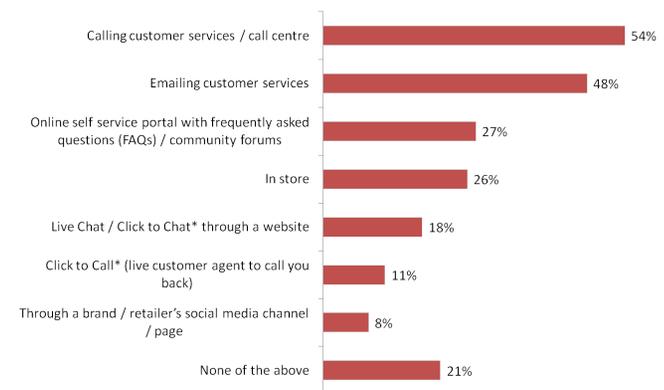


Figure 4: Customer service channel use in the last six months



Fall back to “failsafe” phone

Brands are keen to invest in all channels in order to secure sales and grow. But from a customer perspective, the sale is only part of their brand journey. Good customer service is key to securing their return and goodwill, with speed of response (89%) and resolution (89%) ranking the most important aspects of the customer service experience along with having a friendly representative (82%).

Interestingly, consumers have very different expectations for resolution from the different customer service channels (see Figure 5). For example, they believe the phone will achieve the quickest result, with nearly three in five (59%) expecting resolution within 30 minutes, while only half (52%) expect social media to bring a result within a day. This explains why the phone remains the most popular service channel, with 54% using it for their first contact, despite the proliferation of service channels. Indeed, when an email is unanswered, 71% will then phone; when social media is unanswered, 55% will then phone, and if the phone is unanswered, 54% will try to call again.

Critically, however, there is a huge gap between expectation and delivery, with only half of respondents believing that brands are “good” or “excellent” when it comes to speed of response (52%) and resolution (51%)(see Figure 6). Under half (48%) are satisfied that companies use a logical and effective process when solving their problems, something that becomes even more important when multiple channels are involved.

When it comes to getting a response, the French are the least patient, with 73% expecting resolution within 30 minutes. The Japanese are the most patient, with 50% expecting resolution within 30 minutes. However, the Brazilians are the most persistent, with 62% saying they will try any channel and wait as long as it takes to resolve the query. Only 24% of Japanese will take this approach. Perseverance is strong amongst shoppers and is something that varies by age. Nearly half (45%) say they will try any channel open to them and wait as long as it takes to get their query resolved. In terms of age groups, the older the consumer, the more patience they have. Of those aged 18-24, 41% say they are more likely to be persistent, against 48% of 55-64 year olds.

Figure 5: Customer service response time expectations and cross-channel behaviour

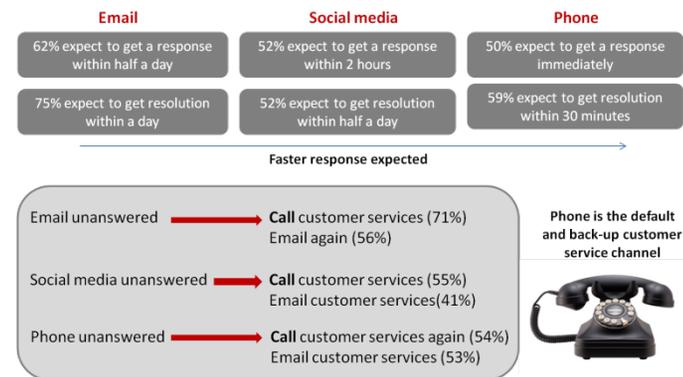


Figure 6: Satisfaction with brands on customer service performance



Moving forward – joined up customer services

Given the impatient nature of the omnichannel shopper, it is clear that customers want instant service. According to the research, 64% of respondents expect real-time assistance regardless of which service channel they use (see Figure 7), with 73% of the French expecting it, 70% of Brazilians, but only 45% of Japanese.

Although brands are increasingly investing in an omnichannel approach to customers, they risk wasting that investment if they don't get the service levels right across all service channels. Indeed, brands who forgo after-sale support in place of immediate sales may be doing more harm than they think. Three quarters (78%) say a company's reputation for service matters when they are choosing to buy products or services, and a third (36%) will tell family and friends when they have a poor experience, while just over one in ten (12%) will use social media to spread the bad word. This suggests brands are missing a trick because 75% of respondents would return to a company with excellent service and 56% would recommend it to family and friends (see Figure 8).

However, attitudes can vary considerably by country. In Brazil, reputation carries a far greater weight than in Germany, with 92% of Brazilians taking it into account when buying something, compared to just over half (57%) in Germany. Brazilians are also twice as likely as Germans to share with friends and family any bad experience, although similar numbers would use a company again (Brazil 78%; Germany 71%) after receiving excellent service, or would recommend it (Brazil 64%; Germany 59%).

The research makes it clear that brands are failing to match consumer expectations as 87% think they need to work harder to create a seamless customer experience. Some companies are clearly already aware of the shortfall and are trying to address it. Indeed, the way ahead may be along the lines of September's tie-up in the U.K. between catalogue merchant Argos and eBay for a click-and-collect scheme, where consumers can buy on eBay and then choose to pick up the items at their nearest Argos store. Such tie-ins, which are likely to become more commonplace, serve to illustrate the increasingly blurred lines between sales and customer services and the need for brands to rethink how they can ultimately best serve the customer. When brands get it right, though, the rewards are significant with one in three (33%) shoppers admitting they spend more when customer service is excellent.

Figure 7: Customer service expectations

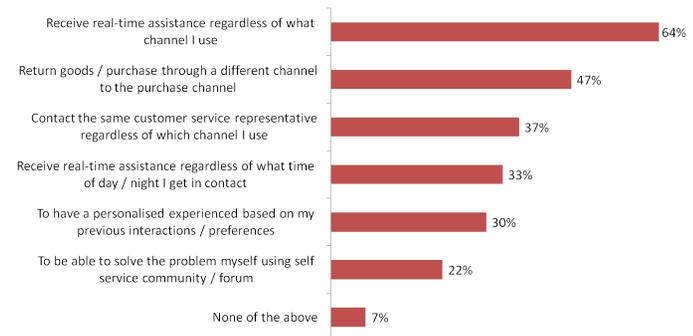
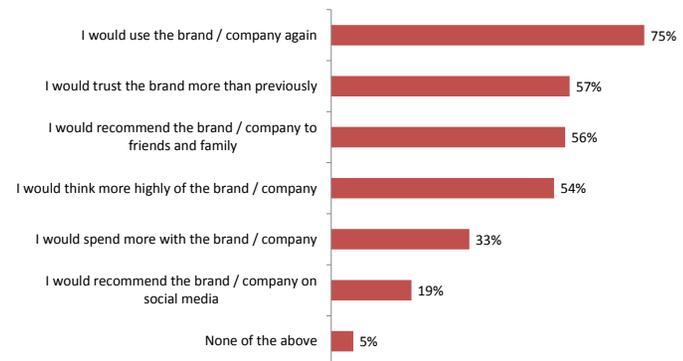


Figure 8: Impact of good customer service



Conclusion

In the last couple of years, brands have increasingly focused on developing omnichannel sales strategies. These strategies though, in some cases, have resulted in customers feeling more neglected than ever, particularly when it comes to customer service, believing all too often that brands are failing to match the effort they put into sales with that they invest in service.

Despite some variation between regions, consumers have a very clear idea about what they expect from brands in terms of customer service, and the vast majority feel let down as brands fail to meet these expectations. Given that the rewards for getting it right include higher spend, improved customer loyalty, and the cultivation of valuable brand ambassadors, it is surprising that brands are not making more of an effort to satisfy their customers in this field. With the younger demographic being particularly demanding in terms of real-time and self-service customer service options, it is clear that the gap between expectations and performance will become wider if left unchecked.

Call centres and voice solutions look set to stay with customers still demanding them and reverting to the “failsafe phone” when alternative channels fail to satisfy. The focus needs to be on increasing the speed of response and complaint resolution, as well as providing a single point of contact, regardless of channel. Offering a choice of customer service methods is fruitless if they are not properly integrated and brands are unable to access “a single view of the customer” at every sales and customer service touchpoint.

Fundamentally businesses must work harder to create a seamless service experience for customers. The customer journey doesn’t simply stop at the checkout, but carries on for many years to come.

Germany

Despite an apparent apathy towards resolving issues with their purchases, German shoppers expect a very high standard when it comes to customer service. Customers in Germany are less likely to want to 'engage' with a brand, but instead, expect an integrated and unified approach to customer services.

The use of multiple platforms when making a purchase is particularly strong in Germany. Over the last six months, three quarters (75%) of shoppers have bought a product or service involving multiple channels, the highest seen across Europe. Only Brazil has a greater propensity to use multiple channels when choosing to make a purchase (86%). German customers are aligned with the rest of the globe in their use of customer services, yet they are more likely to have contacted an online retailer within the last six months (62%), when compared to their European neighbours (48% and 41% in France and the U.K., respectively). However, when it comes to resolving an issue, shoppers' emotions are somewhat measured, passive almost, with two thirds (66%) admitting they are neither accepting nor intolerant of problems with products or services (see Figure 9). As such, German customers are content with contacting a company and letting them resolve a problem on their behalf. Just 42% believe it is more important to resolve their own problems than rely on a customer services rep.

Nevertheless, German standards are high and this is reflected in their expectation of customer service quality. Both speed of response (88%) and resolution (89%) are important to customers, yet the deficit in delivering these is most noticeable in Germany. Under half (44%) believe response times are either "good" or "excellent", with a further 42% feeling the same way about the time taken to resolve a problem. Their lack of emotional attachment to the problem, combined with their high service expectation, means customers are not willing to wait around. Indeed, just 38% will try any channel and wait as long as it takes to resolve a query.

Engagement with brands is controlled as shoppers seek to conduct basic transactions. If customers receive excellent customer service, only 25% will spend more money with that brand in the future (see Figure 10). Further still, 59% believe being rewarded for purchases, feedback, and referrals is important to them, compared to a global average of 66%. German shoppers, instead, expect a simple, unified approach to customer service. Image is not a priority for customers, with 57% thinking a company's reputation for customer is important to them when choosing to buy from them, compared to a global average of 78%. Instead, over half (53%) expect to be able to return goods via a different channel from the one purchased from.

Figure 9: Likelihood to contact customer services relative to others

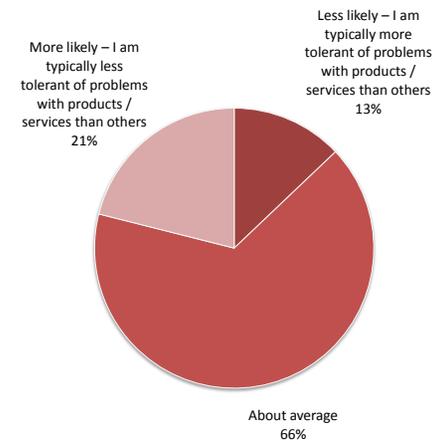
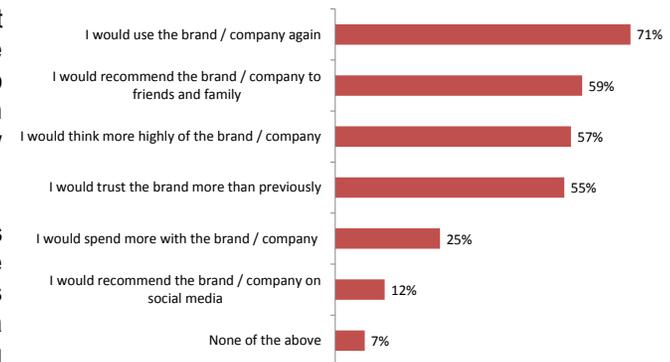


Figure 10: Impact of excellent customer service



United States

Customers' expectation for fast and simple customer service in the U.S. is no different from the rest of the globe. Yet brands must be aware that the level of engagement is notably higher in the U.S. On top of receiving a good quality service, U.S. shoppers expect to be rewarded for the loyalty they show to companies.

U.S. shoppers are less likely to use a variety of channels when looking to make a purchase. However, over half (51%, compared to the global average of 67%) of customers still admit to using different platforms before deciding on a purchase. Despite the majority of U.S. shoppers making purchases with a wide range of providers, shoppers are less likely to engage with customer services compared to other countries. Amongst customers who have made a purchase with that provider, just 46% have approached banks, 45% online retailers, and 36% fixed or mobile operators with customer service issues (see Figure 11).

Nevertheless, the level of service customers expect is no different. 71% say expectations for customer service is increasing year-on-year. As such, the quality of service is imperative in the U.S. As with the rest of the globe, both speed of response (88%) and resolution (88%) are important to customers. Yet providers need to go further to ensure they are meeting this high expectation. Only half believe brands are "good" or "excellent" at delivering speed of response (50%) and resolution (51%).

U.S. customers, despite using a variety of channels to contact customer services, have a stronger preference towards using telephone calls to resolve their queries. As such their expectation of this channel is unparalleled to other regions. Nearly two thirds (65%) of shoppers expect an issue to be resolved within 30 minutes when contacting customer services by phone. Only in Brazil and France, countries characterised by demanding customers, is expectation greater (68% and 73% respectively). Such is the reliance on phone that it is more likely to act as a 'failsafe' if other channels fail to deliver in resolving shoppers' queries. Customers will revert back to phone if both email (74%, see Figure 12) and social media (58%) fail to deliver. In return for receiving great customer service, customers are more likely return to that company and spend more (37%, compared to a global average of 33%). Further still, 71% admit that being rewarded for purchases, feedback, and referrals is important to them. As such, brand image and perception are two important ingredients for U.S. consumers. 84%, compared to global average of 78%, think a company's reputation for customer service is important to them when choosing to make purchases.

Figure 11: Use of customer services in last six months

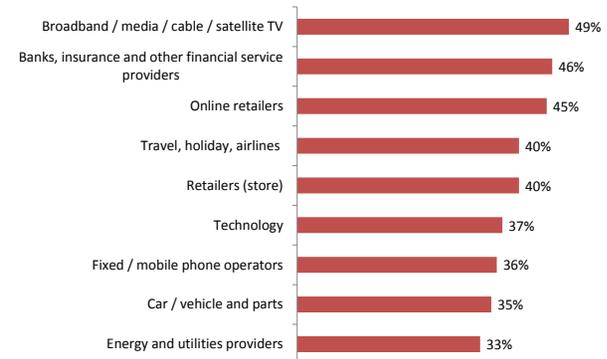
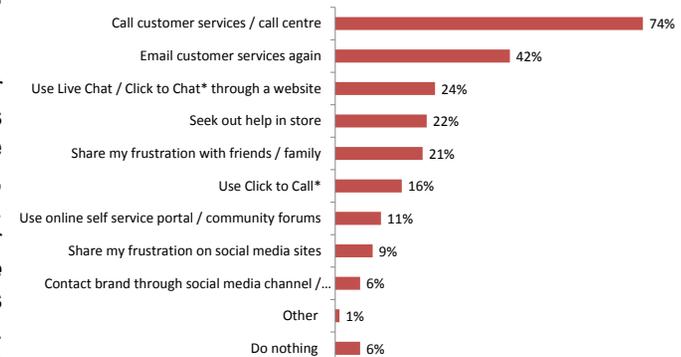


Figure 12: Reaction to unanswered emails



France

French shoppers expect their issues to be resolved as quickly as possible regardless of what channel they use. The need for joined up services is more evident in France, where the implications of failing to deliver this could lead to negative experiences being shared with others.

Compared to other regions, within Europe in particular, France has a higher propensity to contact customer services to address their problems. Over the last six months 62% of customers have approached banks, with a further 67% contacting fixed or mobile operators. As with the rest of the globe, both phone (56%) and email (51%) are the most preferred methods, yet there is a slight reluctance to use self-service portals (20%) in resolving their query. However, customer empowerment is still important in France. Indeed, nearly two thirds (64%) believe it is more important to resolve their own problems than rely on a rep.

With a tendency to resolve their own issues, customers expect action from customer services as quickly as possible. 73% expect real-time assistance regardless of which channel they use. Further still, not only do they expect a response instantly, but they also expect their problem to be resolved on the spot. 60% expect a response immediately on the phone, with 73% expecting the problem to be resolved within 30 minutes (*see Figure 13*). Similarly with email, two thirds (68%) expect a response within half a day, with a further 88% expecting the problem to be resolved within a day.

In an attempt to get their problem resolved, nearly half (49%) will try any channel available to them and wait as long as it takes to get the issue resolved. Yet in doing so 48%, compared to an average of 37%, expect to be able to contact the same service rep regardless of the channel used. In their search for a quick and effortless answer, French customers will use every available resource available to them. As such, the need for a joined up and integrated service is significant.

The impact of failing to provide a seamless and integrated experience can be damaging and is something that brands should take into account. 41% of consumers, the highest seen in Europe (27% and 35% in the Germany and the U.K. respectively), will share negative comments with their friends and family if they experience bad customer service (*see Figure 14*). A further one in ten (9%) will share negative customer service experiences with peers via social media. However, amongst customers who are positive or loyal to a brand, they expect something in return. Indeed, 73% say being rewarded for purchases, feedback, and referrals is important to them, the highest seen in Europe (compared to 59% and 61% in Germany and the U.K., respectively).

Figure 13: Response expectations to phone

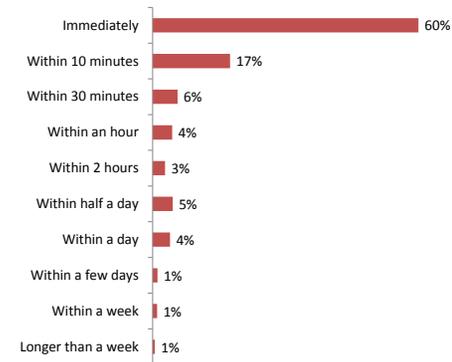
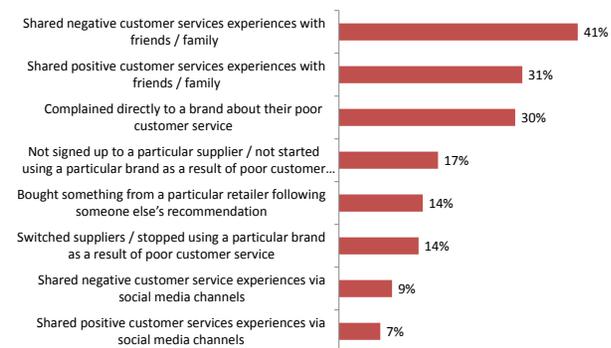


Figure 14: Sharing customer service experiences



Japan

Japan is a country characterised by tolerance. Whilst it may appear that shoppers have low expectations, this is far from the case. Shoppers are willing to accept how they do business with brands, but this doesn't necessarily translate into emotional engagement with companies.

Other than engaging online retailers, Japanese customers are less likely to approach providers with customer services issues. Compared to the global average of 51%, just over one in three shoppers (36%) have contacted fixed or mobile operators regarding customer service issues. Furthermore, only 31% have engaged broadband or media companies regarding a problem with their product or service, compared to an average of 51%. Japan, in particular, is highly tolerant when it comes to dealing with issues with their purchases. Nearly half of customers (45%) admit they are typically more accepting of problems with product or services than others (see Figure 15). This contrasts sharply with the global average of 17%. As such, both demand and expectation from customer services is somewhat measured compared to other regions. Compared to the global average of 69%, only half (57%) consider expectations for customer services to be increasing year-on-year. Appetite for using channels further in the future is marginal, yet Japanese customers are more likely to opt for self-service options when resolving a problem. Over half (52%) would be willing to use self-service portals over the course of the next twelve months in order to get their query resolved.

While it would be unfair to say that Japanese shoppers are content with the level of customer service they receive, the customer service deficit is less notable here. The importance of response (88%) and timely resolution (85%) are in line with the rest of the globe, yet the majority are satisfied with the speed of these factors (59% deemed both either "good" or "excellent") (see Figure 16). Japan's relative satisfaction with speed of response can be associated with the country's generally higher level of tolerance. Only 30% expect a response immediately when using their phone, compared to the global average of 50%. Further still, 56% expect their problem resolved over email within a day, compared to the global average of 75%. Whether Japanese shoppers are happier or resigned to the fact that the level of service will always be the same, their appetite for change is limited. Just one in four (23%) expect to be able to return goods or purchases via a different channel, with a further 31% expecting to be able to contact the same service rep regardless of the channel they use. While they appear to be happy with the status quo, Japanese customers are emotionally disenfranchised with brands. Only a third of shoppers (33%) would recommend a company to their friends or family after receiving excellent customer service. Further still, under half (46%) believe being rewarded for purchases, feedback, and referrals is important to them, compared to a global average of 66%.

Figure 15: Likelihood to contact customer services relative to others

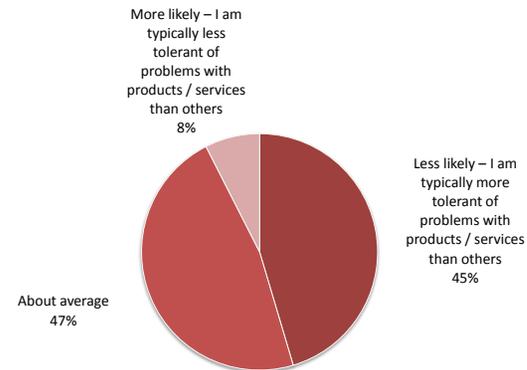


Figure 16: Customer service performance



Brazil

Consumers in Brazil are significantly more intolerant of product or service issues than the rest of the globe. Shoppers expect a timely resolution to their issues, and omnichannel shopping is becoming commonplace in Brazil. The need to provide a unified customer service is especially marked with Brazil.

The use of multiple channels in completing a purchase is higher in Brazil. Be it researching in store or buying online, 86% have made purchases involving different platforms in the last six months. Interaction with customer services is particularly high in Brazil, with fixed or mobile providers (82%) and broadband or media companies (80%) being the most approached providers over the last six months. A further 76% have contacted online retailers with customer service issues.

Conversely to Japan, Brazilian consumers are highly impatient. 40% admit to being typically less tolerant of problems with products and services compared to others (see Figure 17). Only 8% believe they are “accepting”. As such, the standard expected is high; 79% say expectations for customer services are increasing year-on-year. With widespread and frequent use of customer services and shoppers displaying low levels of tolerance, expectations over the time taken to respond and resolve an issue are unparalleled. 80% would like a response within half a day when contacting a company via email, with a further 90% expecting the problem to be resolved within 24 hours. Expectations are particularly high with social media, with 79% wanting a response within two hours.

Despite the high benchmark set over the response and resolution time, brands appear to be delivering a high standard. The customer service deficit is minimal in Brazil, with satisfaction over the speed of response (81%) and resolution (82%) either “good” or “excellent” (see Figure 18). However, in their pursuit of resolving a problem as quickly as possible, 62% will try any channel available to them, significantly higher than the global average (45%). As such, the need for an integrated and seamless customer service experience is vital in Brazil. Over half (52%) expect to be able to return purchases via a different channel than the one bought from. However, 83% believe brands pay more attention to generating sales across different channels than providing an integrated customer service experience. The rewards for better servicing Brazilian consumers are great; 64% will recommend a brand to a friend or family member, with a further 44% likely to spend more money in future, if they receive excellent customer service. However, the costs of failing to deliver customer service are high too. Over half (54%) will share negative customer service experiences with friends and family, a significant rise from the global average of 36%.

Figure 17: Likelihood to contact customer services relative to others

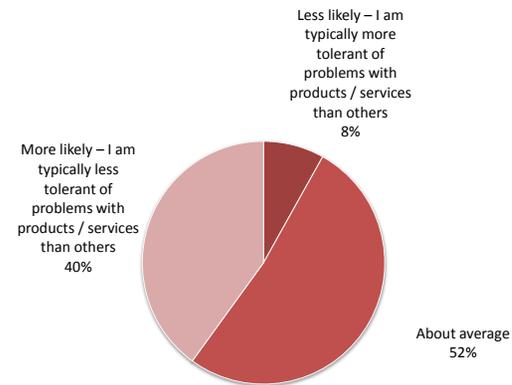
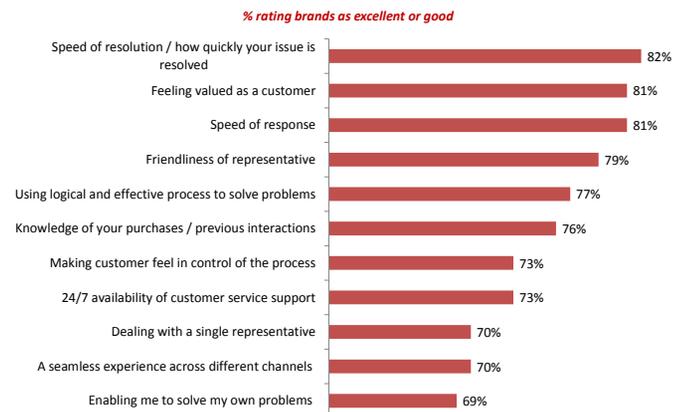


Figure 18: Customer service performance

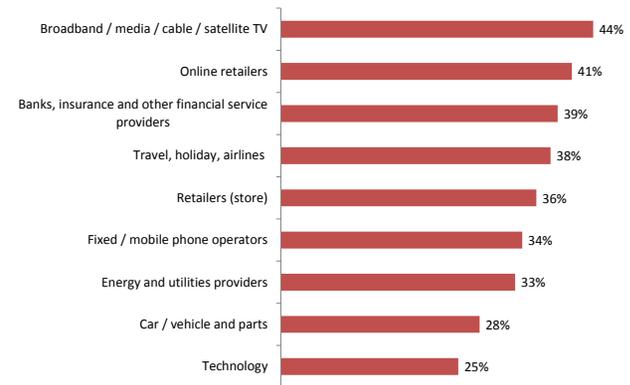


United Kingdom

The U.K. expects the highest level of customer service across Europe. While U.K. shoppers may appear “unforgiving” in the way they engage with brands, part of this attitude can be explained by their impatient nature. U.K. customers, however, are likely to reward brands that simplify their service and resolve problems with minimum hassle.

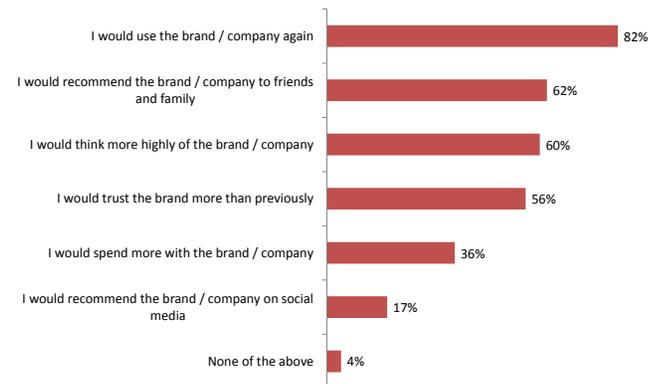
U.K. consumers appear more reluctant to engage with customer services than other nations, with only a minority contacting broadband or media providers (44%), online retailers (41%), and banks (39%) within the last six months (see Figure 19). Yet this doesn't mean expectation for unrivalled customer service is reduced. In fact, demand for great customer service is increasing year-on-year, with 72% saying expectations for customer service is increasing over time, the highest seen across Europe. U.K. customers become impatient if their needs are not met. 27%, the highest in Europe, describe themselves as less tolerant than other people when it comes to resolving a customer service issue. As with most of the world, calling is the most popular method used to contact customer services (54%) over the last six months, yet email, a close second (53%), is set to become the most popular channel within the next twelve months (74%).

Figure 19: Use of customer services in last six months



The customer service deficit is greater in the U.K., with just one in three shoppers rating the speed of response (35%) and resolution (36%) as “good” or “excellent”. With this in mind, brands should look to support email as part of their integrated customer service in the future. Over half of customers (54%) will try any channel available to them and wait as long as it takes to resolve a query. Indeed, 71% will revert to using their phone if the use of email fails to resolve a problem. Given the relatively high impatience amongst U.K. shoppers, the need for an integrated customer service is critical. Yet it appears that companies are failing to deliver on this much needed unified service. 80%, significantly higher than both France (65%) and Germany (67%), believe brands focus more on generating sales through their channels rather than providing a integrated and seamless user experience.

Figure 20: Impact of excellent customer service



Rather than just appeasing customers in the immediate short-term and satisfying their impatient nature, brands must recognise the lasting impact of fast, simple, and friendly customer service. The vast majority of U.K. shoppers (82%) after receiving exceptional customer service would use that company again, with a further 62% recommending a company to a friend or family (see Figure 20). Therefore the immediate cost of having to join up the customer service experience is likely to be outweighed by the benefits of happy, satisfied, and, importantly, loyal customers.

Australia

Australians typify the modern day omnichannel shopper. Consumers expect a fast and simple customer service experience, yet disconnected channels only serve to slow the resolution of problems down. Inevitably shoppers become frustrated and disengaged with brands.

After using the phone (59%), Australians are most likely to email (53%) customer services with an issue or problem (see Figure 21). However, outside the “core methods”, customers are likely to try other channels. One in three (33%), compared to the global average of 27%, have used self-service portals in the last six months, with a further 21% using live chat tools.

Irrespective of the channel chosen by customers, use of key methods is set to increase over the next twelve months as both expectation and demand grows. Two thirds (66%) are likely to contact a brand via email, with a further 57% likely to address their problems directly in-store. Further still, if the use of email fails to deliver a result, three in four shoppers (75%) will fall back to the ‘failsafe’ phone. Such is the varied and multiple use of different channels, particularly in Australia, that the need for a joined up and integrated service is evident. Australia is no exception to the rest of globe in its expectations for a quick, simple and logical approach to customer service. Indeed, the vast majority believe speed of response (88%) and resolution (89%), and the use of effective processes (84%) are important to the customer service experience. Yet a disconnected, detached, and dispersed service will only serve to undermine these values important to customers.

Whilst shoppers demand both a quick and simple service, they also expect brands to have a single view of the customer no matter which channel they use. Over half (54%) expect to be able to return goods via a different channel to the one used to purchase, with a further 43% expecting to be able to contact the same rep regardless of the channel used (compared to the global average of 37%). However, as with other nations across the globe, Australians believe brands need to go further to turn this vision into a credible reality. As it stands, 79% believe brands pay more attention to increasing sales through their different channels, rather than focusing on a joined up customer service. Similar to Brazilian customers, Australians appear sensitive to the quality of service they receive. On the one hand, shoppers will punish brands for bad customer service, with 44% sharing negative experiences with friends and family and 13% sharing on social media. Yet the rewards are there for businesses willing to invest in a simple, seamless, and unified user experience. 82% will use a brand again, with a further 41% prepared to spend more money with a company (compared to a global average of 33%), if they receive excellent customer service (see Figure 22).

Figure 21: Channels used to resolve queries

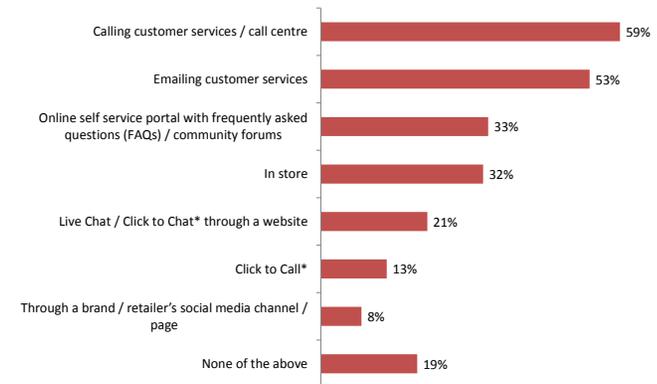


Figure 22: Impact of excellent customer service

