

New research suggests organisations should embrace new messaging culture

Organisations that fail to adapt to the new messaging culture risk falling behind and losing customers, that's according to new international research from BT and Cisco.



Image credit: Alok Sharma - [Pexels](#).

The research, [The Digital Customer 2017 – Chat, tap, talk: eight key trends to transform your digital customer experience](#), is based on an independent survey of 5,000 consumers across South Africa, Belgium, China, Germany, the Netherlands, India, Singapore, the UK and the US. Its findings suggest that a growing number of consumers internationally find it easier to deal with organisations via messaging and social media, a trend driven by a surge in their personal use of apps such as WhatsApp. The trend is particularly clear in China, where 37% of respondents said that they use the messaging app WeChat for customer service.

The research found that almost half (48%) of respondents get frustrated if text-based “chat” is not available when dealing with organisations, while 70% of those aged 18-34 years said they are sourcing more and more of their products and services via social media.



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Instant response

Overall, 58% of respondents said they get a quicker, more instant response when using messaging compared with the phone, while 37% said they would choose to contact an organisation via Facebook or Twitter if they had a problem which needed solving urgently. 46% of South African respondents think it would really add value if they could speak to an agent on a social media platform compared to the 30% global average.

When asked how they would like to receive support from an organisation while accessing its services online – for example, while using an organisation’s app or researching a product on its webpage – 65% of respondents said that they prefer to use webchat, up from 45 per cent in 2015.

With more than three quarters of consumers (76%) saying that they buy more from companies that are easy to do business with, the findings suggest that organisations should upgrade their contact centre capabilities to support messaging and social media to help drive business growth.

Despite the growing trend for messaging and social media, consumers’ use of dedicated customer service phone lines fell only gradually between 2010 and 2017. 31% of respondents in the UK and US said they had called a contact centre within the last two weeks, compared with 38% in a similar study seven years ago and 43% of respondents aged between 16-34 years said that they still want the option to call.

Option to talk

In South Africa, however, 82% of local respondents say that it generally takes too long to get through to contact centres (compared to the 76% global average), and 70% agree that it would add immense value if organisations made it cheaper to call them from a mobile phone. 85% of local respondents say they prefer self-service options as this puts them in control to manage their time and costs.

Andrew Small, vice president, unified communications and CRM, Global Services, BT, said: “While ‘typing’ to request customer support is increasingly popular; the research shows that people still want the option to ‘talk’. This creates a challenge for contact centre operators as they now need a technology platform that can handle both the evolving mix of apps that customers wish to use and traditional service channels such as the phone.”

“Cloud contact centre platforms are ideally placed to help. They can be deployed as a single package delivering voice, video and messaging-based customer service together with operational tools for recording and call and agent management. They’re hosted in the cloud, creating the flexibility to manage peaks and troughs in demand. They can integrate data from other business systems, which is vital for consistency in customer service. Finally, they include recording, which is essential for good service and regulatory compliance.”

Tom Puorro, VP/GM, Unified Communications Technology Group, Cisco, said: “We live in a world where customers will change providers if an app is slow or it takes too many clicks to get a question answered. This research underscores that consumer-facing organisations need an integrated omni-channel strategy to be successful. Such a strategy will help them engage, innovate and be proactive to improve sales.”