Consumers Still Prefer Humans Over Chatbots

And for some tasks, they prefer to be self-sufficient

ARTICLE

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As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes more embedded in everyday experiences, it's logical to assume that consumers are growing more comfortable with it.

But are they *really*?

While consumers may be open to chatbots in theory, many still prefer to interact with a human customer service agent. In fact, in Usabilla's August 2018 survey, more than half of US internet users (55%) said they prefer live help.
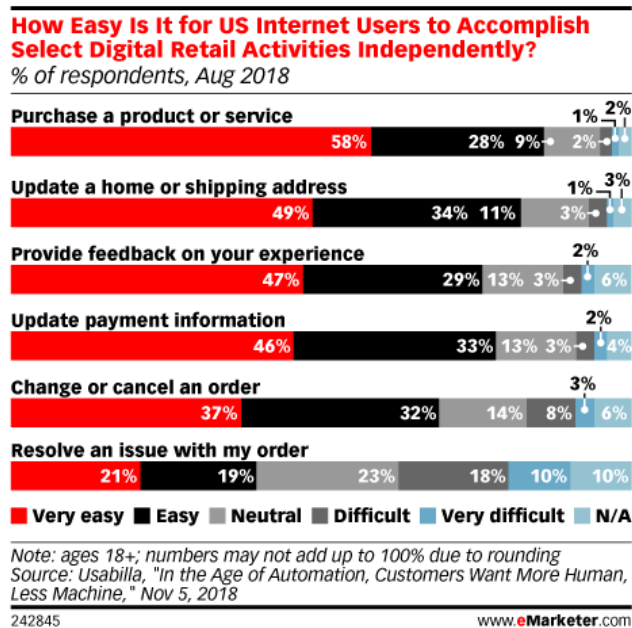
What's more, 46% said they would prefer interacting with a human even if a chatbot saved them 10 minutes. Interestingly, this preference was strongest among Gen Z (60%) and millennials (50%), despite younger generations having the reputation of preferring text to voice.

Much of the resistance stems from the perception that that chatbots can't help with complex problems. In Usabilla's study, 36% of respondents said they would choose a chatbot over a human for simple requests only. Similarly, a separate survey from UJET found that many respondents (58%) said chatbots weren't as effective as they could be.

There's also the fact that most consumers like to be self-sufficient, and don't necessarily want to depend on chatbots or customer service agents.

According to Usabilla, for retail specifically, the leading tasks internet users expect to be able to do on their own are changing an address (75%), updating payment info (72%), changing or canceling an order (68%) and providing feedback (65%). Resolving an issue with an order was the task with the lowest expectation for being able to handle it alone (27%).

Experience clearly fuels expectations. When asked about the ease of conducting some of these same tasks, 86% said buying a product online is easy, 83% said updating their address was easy, while 40% said resolving an order issue is easy; 28% said it was difficult to solve a problem with an order.

How Easy Is It for US Internet Users to Accomplish Select Digital Retail Activities Independently?
% of respondents, Aug 2018

	Very easy	Easy	Neutral	Difficult	Very difficult	N/A
Purchase a product or service	58%	28%	9%	2%	1%	2%
Update a home or shipping address	49%	34%	11%	3%	1%	3%
Provide feedback on your experience	47%	29%	13%	3%	2%	6%
Update payment information	46%	33%	13%	3%	2%	4%
Change or cancel an order	37%	32%	14%	8%	3%	6%
Resolve an issue with my order	21%	19%	23%	18%	10%	10%

Note: ages 18+; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: Usabilla, "In the Age of Automation, Customers Want More Human, Less Machine," Nov 5, 2018

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Good news: Across industries including retail, 87% reported satisfaction with the ability to solve their own issues on a brand's website, according to Usabilla.

And despite this DIY spirit and a preference for human help over chatbots, many consumers like to see options. Per UJET, 63% of

millennials, 62% of Gen Xers and 45% of boomers prefer brands that at least offer online chat resolution.