

# For Customer Experience, Consumers Prefer People to Bots

As long as the people are knowledgeable and pleasant

## ARTICLE |

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**T**echnology may be changing the customer experience, but many consumers still want a human interaction, even as tech continues to improve.

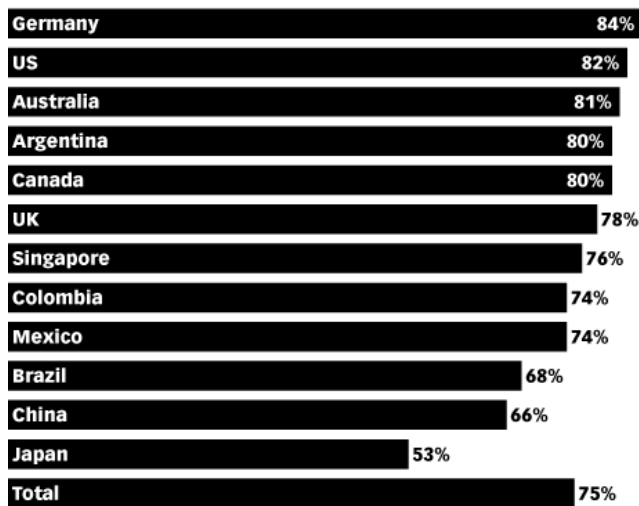
That's what PwC found when it surveyed 4,000 US internet users ages 13 and older, as well as 11,000 internet users ages 18 and older in countries including Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Mexico and the UK.

More than eight in 10 US respondents said that even as technology improves, they will want to interact with a real person. And that sentiment was nearly the same across the other countries polled—although people in China, Brazil and Japan were less likely to agree.

US internet were also less inclined to think that once technology becomes more advanced, we won't need humans for great customer experiences. A majority (55%) strongly disagreed with that statement, compared with a global average of 43%.

## Internet Users in Select Countries Who Will Want to Interact with a Real Person More as Technology Improves, Jan 2018

% of respondents



Note: US ages 13+; all other countries ages 18+  
Source: PwC, "Experience is everything: Here's how to get it right," March 26, 2018

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In a separate October 2017 study from [PointSource](#), US internet users were asked about 22 situations—many customer service- and shopping-related—where they might need assistance. There were only six circumstances for which they preferred a chatbot over a human, and most just barely.

Indeed, human interaction was strongly favored for resolving problems after making a purchase: Some 80% of respondents said they preferred it. By contrast, 12% said they'd rather have the help of a chatbot, while another 8% had no preference. Similarly, 71% of internet users wanted a real person to help answer questions while shopping in-store. Just 14% said they wanted a chatbot to do so.

But while many consumers prefer human help when it comes to customer experience, a poor shopping experience can change their entire perspective. According to the PwC survey, 17% of US internet users said they would stop interacting with a beloved brand after one bad experience. That number jumps to around a third for respondents outside the US, and to nearly half in Latin America, specifically.

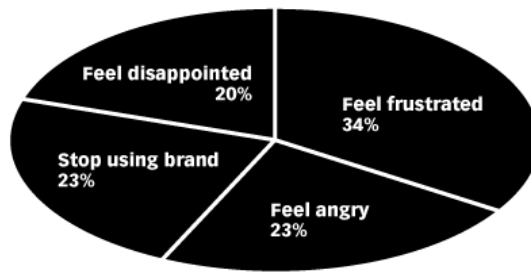
This mirrors findings from a December 2017 InMoment survey, which showed that the primary way US internet users reacted to a negative

brand experience was simply feeling frustration (34%). Fewer said they would stop using a brand (23%). The leading factor that contributed to a negative brand experience was very human, however. Close to three-fourths cited poor staff interaction, whether that was being too slow, not knowledgeable or just unpleasant.

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**Primary Way in Which US Internet Users React to Negative Brand Experiences, Dec 2017**

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+

Source: InMoment, "2018 CX Trends Report: What Brands Should Know About Creating Memorable Experiences," Feb 21, 2018

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These are nearly identical elements—speed, convenience, knowledgeable help and friendly service—mentioned as core to a positive customer experience by close to 80% of US consumers in PwC's survey.

For retailers, this means they need to get the balance right and use automation that truly meets users' needs. When consumers say they prefer people over bots, there's an assumption that humans will be more helpful. And yet, staff interaction, across channels, is where the customer experience is made or broken for many.