

# Some Consumers Have Yet to Warm Up to Customer Service Channels

Article



It's been established that **consumers aren't crazy about chatbots for customer service** needs. But according to a new study, consumers aren't enamored with any other customer service

channel either.

And thanks to a recent [Wall Street Journal article](#) exposing retailers' use of a customer lifetime value (CLV) score to provide better (or worse) service, **consumers' impressions** might be clouded even further.

According to a May 2018 survey by consulting firm [Northridge Group](#), no customer service channels were considered easy to use by a majority of US internet users. But phone (48%) and online chat (47%) were the most satisfactory.

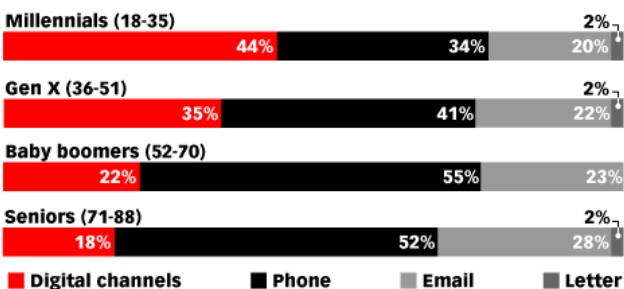
And despite the rise of digital customer service assistance, whether self-serve FAQs or artificially intelligent bots, on average, speaking on the phone is still the most popular way to connect with customer service for dealing with payment or billing issues (56%), resolving a problem (54%) and making account changes (43%).

These analog attitudes are changing, though. The number of consumers citing the phone as their preferred channel slipped from 49% in 2015 to 43% this year. Phone is also losing its edge as the fastest channel, dropping from 65% to 54% over the same time period.

This shift is being driven in part by younger consumers. Millennials were the only age group to prefer digital means (44%) over phone (34%). Embracing digital channels declined with age while the silent generation had a higher preference for email than other cohorts.

#### What Channel Do US Internet Users Prefer to Use for Addressing Customer Service Issues?

% of respondents, by generation, May 2018



Source: The Northridge Group, "State of Customer Service Experience 2018"; eMarketer calculations, Oct 16, 2018

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Digital channel usage is also increasing because more businesses are offering these options. Preference for web self-service grew 25% and online chat grew 21% in the past four years, yet newer channels appear to be experiencing growing pains. Two-thirds said they had

trouble finding answers on websites, and an additional two-thirds didn't consider text messaging easy to use.

There is also a disconnect between how well companies think they are doing vs. customer experience in reality. Across the board, executives gave higher marks to the ease of using customer service channels than customers did. Both rated phone the highest but only 48% of consumers said calling a customer service rep was easy while 75% of executives thought that was the case.