

# Digital Customer Experience Study 2020

Are UK companies  
meeting changing  
customer needs?

eptica

An  Enghouse Company

◆ Introduction and Infographic .....	3
◆ 5 Key Findings .....	6
◆ Findings by Channel .....	9
◆ Consistency and Channel Choice .....	14
◆ Sector Breakdown .....	17
◆ Takeaways .....	23
◆ Conclusion .....	24

Digital channels are now a vital part of the customer relationship, across every sector. They give consumers greater choice, whatever their demographic, and enable them to find fast, accurate answers wherever they are in the customer journey.

Companies therefore have to deliver on these changing customer needs – but the 2020 Digital Customer Experience Study from Eptica, an Enghouse Company, shows that many are simply failing to do so. They are not delivering the performance that consumers demand, on the channels they want to use.

The Study combined real-world evaluation of the digital customer service provided by top UK companies with consumer research into expectations around channel choice (including telephone) and speed of response. Repeating studies carried out since 2011, the 50 companies tested spanned the fashion retail, food and drink, travel, insurance and banking sectors. **Research was carried out in February 2020.**

The findings were stark. Overall, companies could only successfully answer 64% of all routine questions asked on the web, email, Twitter and Facebook - a drop of 5% since 2019. This fall mirrors wider trends – the Institute of Customer Service's latest UK Customer Satisfaction Index (UKCSI) found that satisfaction is at its lowest level since July 2015<sup>1</sup>.

**While 5% may feel like a small drop it hides deeper issues. For example, 21 companies performed worse than 2019 on the web, reversing a long-term trend of improvement on the channel.**

**More importantly businesses are not meeting customer needs around choice.** The consumer research identified four key channels that they wanted to use across the customer journey (the web, email, telephone and chat), yet there seems to be a mismatch with what they are offered. For example, while 41% of consumers said they wanted to use email when complaining, just 34% of companies successfully answered on the channel. At the same time the biggest improvement came on Twitter (where performance improved from 45% up to 59%), despite under 10% of consumers choosing it for any part of the customer journey.

Companies are also failing to meet consumer needs on speed- 61% want a reply to email within 2 hours yet just 18% of businesses achieved this. In fact, the average response time was over 41 hours, with one travel company taking 15 days to reply!

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Institute of Customer Service



### ON A CHANNEL BY CHANNEL BASIS:

- Four out of five sectors worsened on the web, with the sole improver (fashion) only moving up by 1%.
- The email channel continued to shrink in availability (64% down to 52%) although accuracy improved amongst those that offered it, with 34% of all companies answering successfully. Businesses may be switching off email because they want to deflect consumers to voice or self-service but they need to ensure they are meeting customer needs and giving them choice.
- Twitter was the only channel to improve, answering 59% of queries, while Facebook remained static on 57%. However, neither channel is popular with consumers, meaning that resources allocated to social media may be better deployed elsewhere.
- On a positive note, chat is now mainstream – a third of companies (32%) had it available when tested, up from a quarter (26%) in 2019.

The stakes are high when it comes to digital customer service – previous Eptica research has shown that failing to meet customer expectations around speed, accuracy and ease of providing answers will cause consumers to leave<sup>1</sup>, while the Institute of Customer Service estimates that poor service costs the UK economy £33 billion every year.

The positive news is that while performance has dropped, the issues identified in the study can be overcome. After all, if one company in a sector can respond to a query quickly on a channel, there's no reason that others can't. If a business can respond on one channel, they should be able to answer the same question equally well in terms of speed and accuracy on others. The 2020 Digital CX Study therefore includes a section on best practice to help businesses deliver the right levels of performance, across the channels that matter to consumers.

Poor service  
costs the UK economy

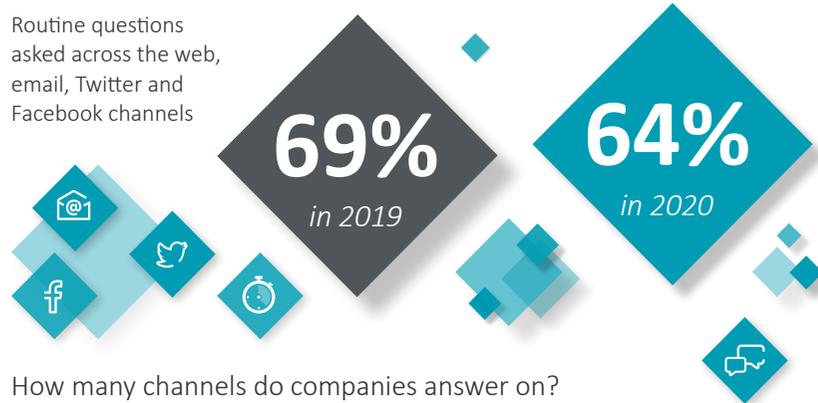
**£33bn**

*every year*

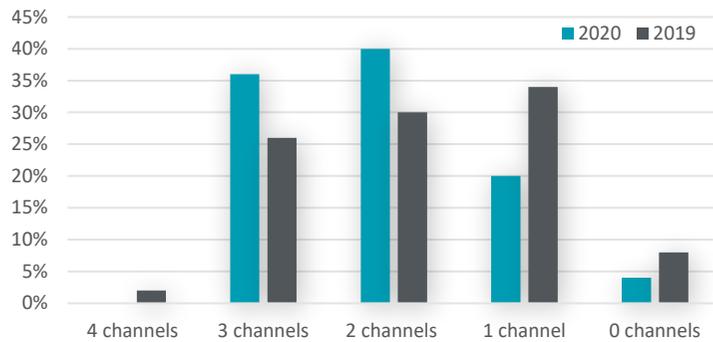
<sup>1</sup> Source: Eptica Digital Trust Study

### How good are UK brands at answering customer questions?

Routine questions asked across the web, email, Twitter and Facebook channels



### How many channels do companies answer on?



### Consumer expectations for 5 minutes

<b>52%</b>	Want calls answered within 5 minutes
<b>48%</b>	Will end a chat session if their issue has not been dealt within 5 minutes
<b>40%</b>	Will leave a website if they don't find information after 5 minutes
<b>37%</b>	Will leave a phone call after 5 minutes if their problem has not been solved
<b>28%</b>	Expect a response on Twitter in 5 minutes
<b>25%</b>	Expect a response on Facebook in 5 minutes
<b>16%</b>	Want their email answered fully in 5 minutes

### Speed by sector

CHANNEL	AVERAGE	FASTEST	SLOWEST
Email	41 hours and 36 minutes	7 minutes	15 days, 2 hours and 51 minutes
Twitter	1 hour and 36 minutes	1 minutes	25 hours and 29 minutes
Facebook	36 minutes	2 minutes	4 hours and 19 minutes

### Demographic snapshot



### Comparing sectors for customer service: 2020 vs. (2019)

SECTOR	EMAIL	WEB	TWITTER	FACEBOOK	TOTAL
Fashion	▼ 30% (55%)	▲ 84% (83%)	► 50% (50%)	▲ 60% (50%)	▼ 56% (60%)
Food & Drink	▼ 70% (80%)	▼ 72% (80%)	▲ 70% (25%)	▲ 60% (50%)	▲ 68% (60%)
Insurance	▼ 15% (20%)	▼ 36% (55%)	▲ 50% (45%)	▲ 70% (65%)	▼ 43% (46%)
Travel	▲ 45% (30%)	▼ 72% (75%)	▲ 55% (25%)	▼ 40% (75%)	▲ 53% (51%)
Banking	▲ 10% (0%)	▼ 76% (84%)	▼ 70% (80%)	▲ 55% (45%)	▲ 53% (52%)
Overall	▼ 34% (37%)	▼ 68% (75%)	▲ 59% (57%)	► 57% (57%)	▲ 64% (60%)

## KEY FINDINGS



Overall, analysis of the 2020 Digital CX Study highlights 5 key points:

### 1. COMPANIES ARE STRUGGLING TO IMPROVE

Over the last five years overall customer service performance has improved – for example in 2011 companies successfully provided answers to 50% of queries on the web, rising to 75% in 2019. In 2020 this upward trend stuttered and for some channels and sectors fell, with overall performance across the web, email and social media, dropping from 69% to 64%.

42% of companies performed worse, while 40% stayed the same – just 18% improved. Given that the same companies are being asked the same routine questions (such as about deliveries or how to change a booking), this points to a drop in available resources allocated to the right areas in the face of increasing volumes and rising customer expectations.

### 2. DIS-INTEGRATION BETWEEN CHANNELS

Customers want to be able to move between channels seamlessly and expect similar levels of performance on each. For example, over half (52%) want a telephone call answered in five minutes – exactly the same number are willing to wait the same length of time for a chat session to begin.

Companies need to provide service where customers are, delivering consistent answers however they choose to make contact. Yet when asked the same question on email, Facebook, Twitter and chat, no companies were able to answer on all four of these channels. Just over a third (36%) responded on three, and 20% only answered on one channel – hardly the multichannel approach that consumers expect.

### 3. CHAT IS NOW A KEY CHANNEL

One of the key positives of the 2020 research was chat taking its place as a mainstream channel. Consumers increasingly see it as a digital alternative to voice, giving them the opportunity for a real-time conversation without needing to pick up the phone. For example, 25% said they wanted to use chat to solve a routine problem, almost identical to the 26% that preferred to call. Further demonstrating this, consumers have similar expectations on how long they are willing to wait to be answered or to have their query resolved.

Companies recognise the importance of chat – and the efficiency it brings to their operations, with the channel being cheaper than the telephone. Chat also offers advantages for particular parts of the customer journey as it is easy to share information and links, co-browse with consumers and provides a full audit trail of the conversation.

32% of businesses had chat available on their website when tested, up from 26% in 2019. Given that 42% said that they offered it, many are clearly still switching it off when resources are tight, showing that there remains room for improvement.



#### 4. DEMOGRAPHICS MATTER – BUT THERE ARE SOME SURPRISES

As part of the consumer research the Study drilled down into how expectations around speed and channel choice vary by age and sex. Some findings were not new – for example, the 55+ age group was the most likely to pick up the phone, with 16-24 year olds the least likely to call.

However, this doesn't tell the whole story. While they like the phone, over half (51%) of the 55+ category were happy to use the web to research information, and they are also the most impatient group, wanting faster than average answers in seven out of eight parts of the customer journey. The phone-shy 16-24 year olds are the most likely group to ask questions via email when researching potential purchases, while men were happier to use social media than women to make contact with businesses.

All of these findings highlight the importance of researching your customer base in order to identify what matters to them most and then taking action to meet their expectations.

#### 5. IMPROVEMENTS ARE POSSIBLE

Companies receive a growing volume of queries, across more and more channels. Customer expectations and the complexity of their questions are both rising. It is therefore easy for businesses to feel overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge.

However, on the positive side there are no issues highlighted in the research that cannot be solved. For example, a lack of consistency (just 12% gave the same responses on email, Facebook and Twitter) and differences in speed between channels (one insurer responded to the same question in 9 minutes on Facebook and 13 minutes on Twitter, yet took 59 hours to answer on email), can be remedied by breaking down silos and ensuring better knowledge sharing. Adopting best practice online and benchmarking performance against rivals will deliver improvements- in most sectors the best scored 10/10 and worst 6/10 when answering questions on their websites. Improvements are possible, and are vital if businesses are to engage and retain increasingly fickle consumers.



## FINDINGS BY CHANNEL



## WEB SELF-SERVICE

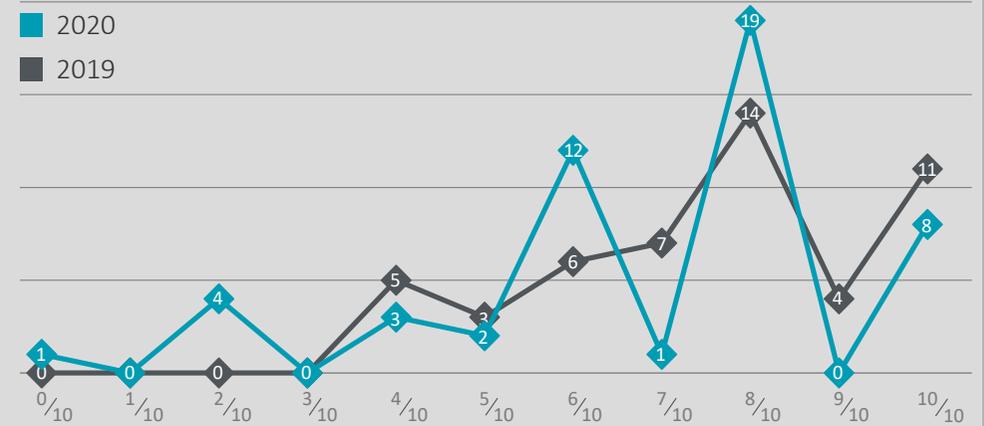
Has the long run of improvement online ended? The percentage of questions successfully answered dropped from 75% to 68% (in 2017 it was 59%), despite broadly the same companies being asked the same questions year-on-year.

80% of sectors (4 out of 5) worsened and insurance saw a dramatic drop. While it was already the lowest performing sector, it fell from 55% to 36% (a drop of 19%). Given it also saw a major decrease in email availability this will lead to greater pressure on the voice channel as people move to the phone. While this could be part of overall business strategy, it is an expensive way of responding to routine queries. Even in insurance there was a major range of responses- two companies scored 60%, while four scored just 20%.

This polarisation can be seen across all sectors. Just 18% of companies have improved their scores and 42% worsened. More people are getting a perfect 10 (16% vs 11% in 2019) but more are delivering average performance, with 20% scoring 5 or less (against 16% in 2019).

Fashion was the top sector, but even it saw only a 1% improvement in its average score. Supporting the idea that performance is plateauing, with some poorer performers improving, most sectors showed a smaller spread of scores – for example they ranged from 10 down to 6 in fashion, food and banking. Insurance showed the same gap (but between a high of 6 and a low of 2). The biggest range was in travel where two companies scored 10, another 0!

Scores out of ten on web (total 50 companies)

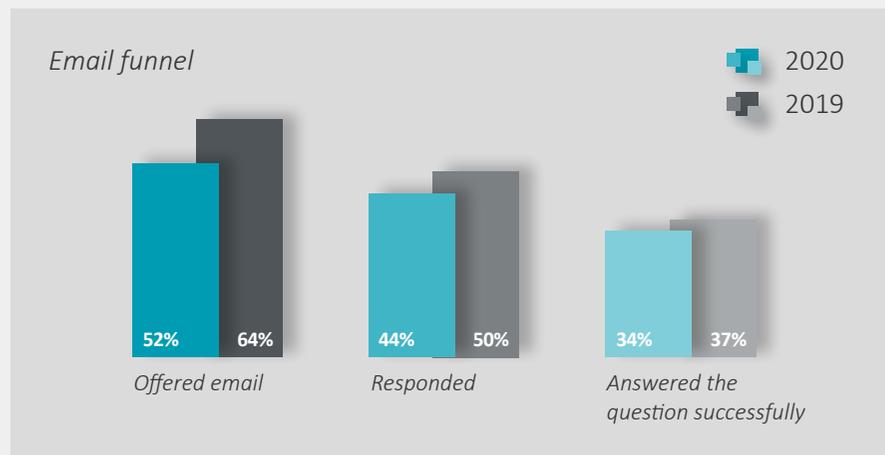


## EMAIL

As the channel choice research demonstrates consumers like email. However, operating email can be expensive, with an average cost of £3.89 per interaction compared to virtually nothing for the web, according to Contact Babel<sup>1</sup>. This means that companies often want to deflect queries - either to low-cost channels (self-service) or sales channels such as voice, particularly in the case of insurance.

Demonstrating this, just over half (52%) of companies offered email, down from 64% in 2019 and a high of 70% in 2017. Particular sectors saw big falls – one bank offered email, compared to three in 2019, and two insurers provided the channel against three in 2019.

However on the positive side, if the company did offer email, the likelihood of getting a response and an accurate answer actually increased. While overall just 34% of companies responded successfully (down from 37%), this was 65% of those who offered email (compared to 58% in 2019).



<sup>1</sup> Source: Contact Babel The UK Contact Centre Decision-Maker's Guide 2019-20

Even some poor sectors had improved. In 2019 no bank answered successfully on email, despite three companies offering it and two responding. In 2020 only one bank may have provided email, but at least it provided a helpful response!

The average answer time for email has risen from 37 hours 59 minutes in 2019 to an enormous 41 hours 36 minutes. However, these figures are distorted by two 'outliers' in travel who responded in 15 days and 10 days respectively. Other companies answered in just 7 minutes. Showing a lack of integration one of these two outliers actually answered the same question on 2 minutes on Twitter and 3 minutes on chat!

Without them the average response time is a much more respectable 17 hours 37 minutes. In fact, 28% of companies answered within six hours, up from 20% in 2019, reinforcing the fact that if email was available, performance was improving.

However, given consumer demands for speed, some SLAs seem unreasonable. For example, one airline said they'd respond within 28 days, while another gave 14 days as a target. While both managed to hit their targets it still took them 15 and 5 days respectively. By that time most consumers would have moved to alternative channels. A question for businesses is whether these generous SLAs hold back providing faster responses and improved performance?

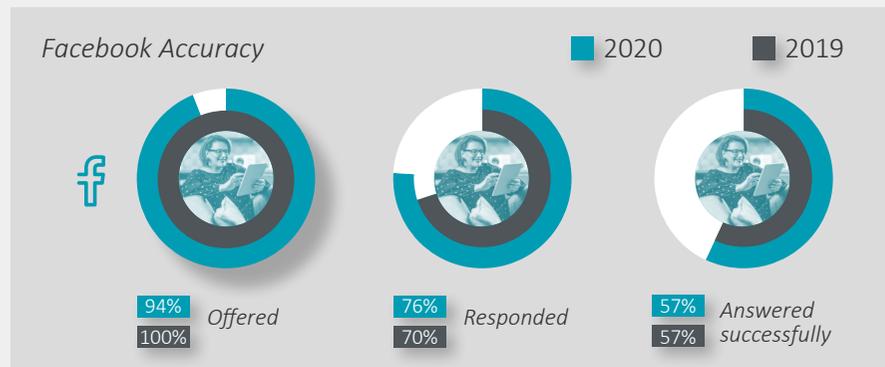
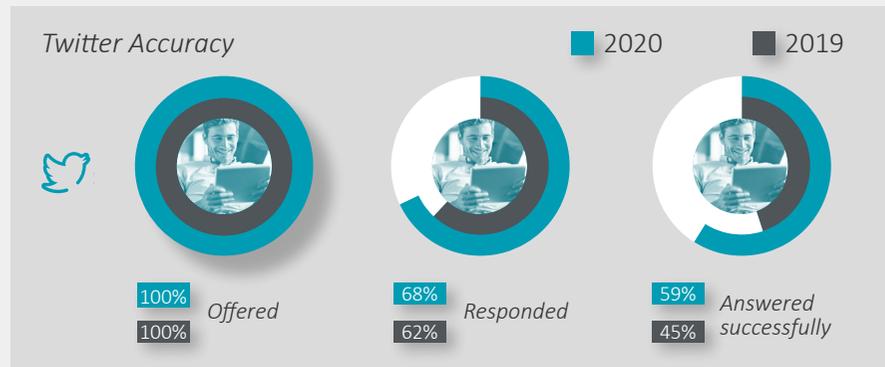
Performance in two sectors improved in terms of accuracy, although one of these was travel where the average speed plummeted from 19 hours 35 minutes to 6 days 5 hours 4 minutes. The strongest sector was still food and drink (scoring 70%), but this saw a year-on-year drop of 10%. Banking remained the worst sector, though as detailed above this improved from 0% to 10% in terms of successful answers.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Amidst overall drops in performance Twitter was the big success story this year- improving from 45% to 59%. Facebook remained stable at 57%.

Demonstrating the spread of these channels, all have Twitter, but just 94% of companies offer the ability to message them via Facebook (down from 100%). However accuracy is still an issue as the graphic shows – are there issues with creating and sharing the knowledge required for frontline staff to respond successfully on social media?



### TWITTER PERFORMANCE TAKES FLIGHT

Speed on Twitter has improved, as outliers have got better, meaning the overall time range shrank. For example, one fashion company replied in 2019 in 49 hours and this year took just 3 minutes to answer. The fastest Twitter response was just 2 minutes with the slowest being 4 hours 19 minutes, compared to 50 hours in 2019. This helped the overall average fall from 4 hours 53 minutes to just over half an hour (33 minutes 44 seconds).

The good news is that this means customer expectations are being met- 50% of consumers said they want a response in 30 minutes, something that half of businesses achieved.

### FACEBOOK FLATLINES

By contrast to improvements on Twitter both accuracy and response rates were static on Facebook. While the average response time of 1 hour 56 minutes was considerably faster than last year's 3 hours 24 minutes it was still slower than Twitter. Is this because outstanding queries on Facebook are less visible and consequently don't attract wider attention/shares?

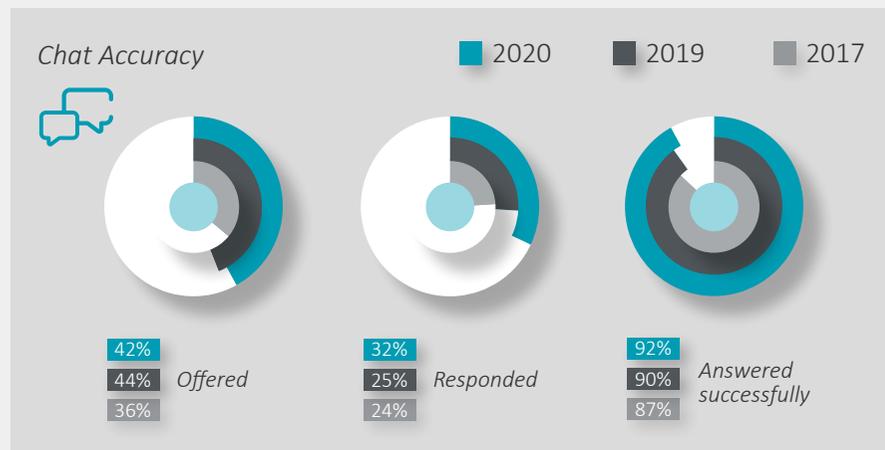
There were also a greater number of laggards than on Twitter- one food and drink company took 25 hours 29 minutes to respond (yet answered a tweet in 3 minutes). By contrast seven other food and drink companies replied within a minute! As with Twitter, customer expectations are being met- 50% of consumers said they wanted a response in 30 minutes, a target that half of companies hit.



## CHAT

Over the past five years chat has moved from being an additional extra to a central part of the channel mix. Consumers are familiar with how chat operates and understand the benefits it delivers – in the channel choice research it was consistently in the top four channels across the entire customer journey.

Evaluation of chat within previous studies showed a lack of resource dedicated to the channel, demonstrated by many companies switching it off when they were too busy or limiting its use solely to customers. In 2020 it feels that this has changed, with nearly a third (32%) of all companies having it working when evaluated, up from 26% last year. While fewer companies offer it (42% vs 44%) those that do are more likely to resource it adequately.



Accuracy also improved from 90% to 92% and the average chat session time reduced from 6 minutes 14s in 2019 to 4 minutes 26s this year.

Many companies have experimented with chatbots, and this year saw the first visible use of them, with two fashion retailers clearly routing queries to a chatbot in the first instance. However, the experience for each was very different. While neither could deal with a routine query asking about ethical sourcing policies one smoothly escalated to a human agent who answered the query. The other kept going round in circles as its understanding seemed to be based on keyword searches, meaning it kept providing links to other policies and had no escalation path to a human.

This shows the need for the use of AI, particularly Natural Language Processing, and a comprehensive knowledge base for companies looking to deploy chatbots if they – and their customers – are to gain their benefits in terms of speed and efficiency.



## CONSISTENCY & CHANNEL CHOICE



## CONSISTENCY

Despite the need to be consistent across every channel, most companies are still failing to deliver, frustrating consumers and adding to their own costs. Showing this no businesses answered on the four channels of email, Twitter, Facebook and chat.

38% of businesses were completely inconsistent i.e. no answers matched on more than one channel. While this is an improvement from 2019 when the figure was 58%, less than a quarter (22%) were consistent across three channels.

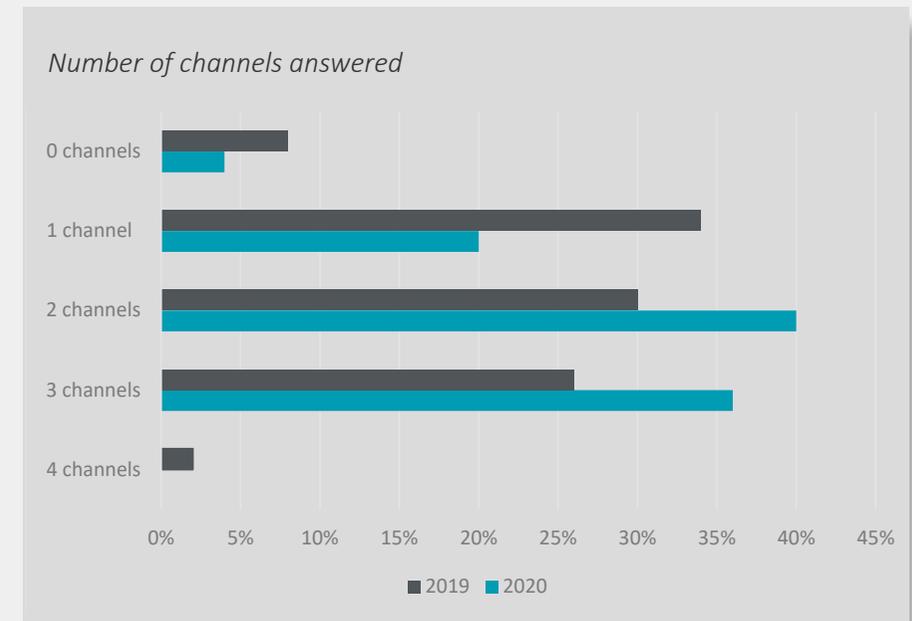
One airline gave three separate answers on Twitter, Facebook and chat while another responded on Twitter in 2 minutes, failed to answer at all on Facebook and then took over 15 days to reply on email. Just one bank answered on email, yet eight answered the same question when asked on Twitter, demonstrating a lack of knowledge sharing across each business.

Many companies in the same sector are unable to match the performance of their peers – despite being asked exactly the same question:

- Travel – email answers ranged from 24 minutes to 15 days
- Banking – Facebook responses spanned 4 minutes to 18 hours 31 minutes
- Food & Drink – Twitter answers varied from 3 minutes to 3 hours 6 minutes

Additionally, greater resources seem to be spent on some channels- for example, fashion scored 84% on the web, 60% on Facebook but just 30% on email and 50% on Twitter. Consistency varied by sector- 30% of fashion retailers were consistent across three channels, but 40% were completely inconsistent, showing a silo-based approach to knowledge.

While companies are responding on more channels, cross-referencing the results with the consumer research shows that businesses aren't necessarily focusing on the right ones for their customers – with many more responding on Twitter and Facebook than email or chat.



## CHANNEL CHOICE

To give a complete picture of the state of digital customer service, the Study compared actual performance against consumer preferences for channel choice across the customer journey.

This highlights four key findings:

### 1. FOUR CHANNELS (EMAIL, WEB, VOICE AND CHAT) DOMINATE CONSUMER PREFERENCES

However, many companies are performing poorly on email and less than 50% offer chat. Yet, by contrast they are doing well on social media. Are resources in the right place?

### 2. CHANNEL USE VARIES ACROSS THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Consumers use different channels dependent on their needs. The Digital CX Study shows some major gaps between performance and consumer preferences, although there is some variance between demographics:

- 41% of consumers want to use the web (web score 68%)
- 27% want to use chat to chase up an order (32% actual score)
- 41% want to use email to make a complaint (actual score 34%)
- 10% want to use Facebook to give feedback (57% actual score)
- 8% want to use Twitter to chase up an order (59% actual score)

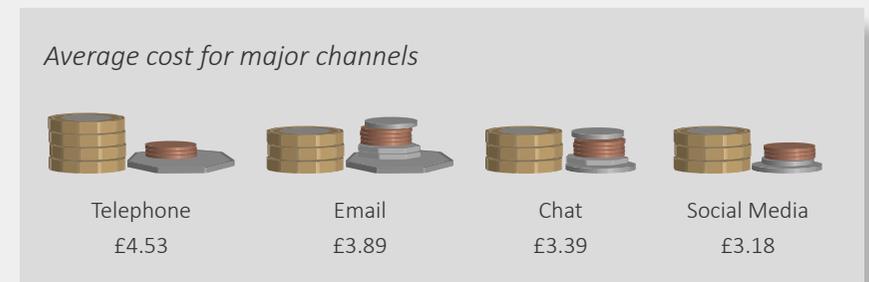
### 3. CONSUMERS ARE UNWILLING TO WAIT FOR ANSWERS

For example, 52% want their call answered in 5 minutes and 40% will leave a website if they can't find the right information in the same timeframe. On some channels their needs are being met (such as chat, Twitter and Facebook) but on email they are not. 61% want a reply to email within 2 hours and just 18% achieved that.

### 4. DEMOGRAPHICS ARE A FACTOR

Depending on your customer base, the channel mix does vary. For example, 45-54 year olds are the most likely to use chat, while the 35-44 year old demographic is least likely to use the web. All of this means that brands need to ensure they have the right channels in place for their current and target customers if they are going to thrive.

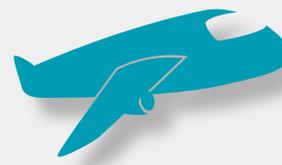
Channel choice also has a financial implication – as research from Contact Babel<sup>1</sup> demonstrates there are major cost differences between major channels:



For a more detailed look at these results, download the [Eptica Channel Choice Best Practice Guide](#).

<sup>1</sup> Source: Contact Babel The UK Contact Centre Decision-Maker's Guide 2019-20

## SECTOR BREAKDOWN



FASHION  
RETAILERS



COMPANIES SURVEYED (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

- ASOS
- Debenhams
- H&M
- JD Sports
- Marks and Spencer
- New Look
- Next
- River Island
- Sports Direct
- Top Shop

**Sample question:**

Do you have an ethical sourcing policy? If so where can I find details?

Highest score #questions answered successfully



Lowest score



30%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



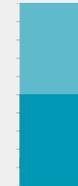
7 minutes

SLOWEST



1 hour and  
4 minutes

50%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



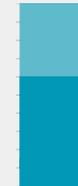
3 minutes

SLOWEST



4 hours and  
19 minutes

60%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



2 minutes

SLOWEST



1 hour and  
59 minutes

70%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



AVAILABILITY



7 advertised web chat but only 4 made it available at time of evaluation

FOOD & DRINK



COMPANIES SURVEYED (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

- Asda
- Co-operative Food
- Iceland
- Laithwaites
- Majestic Wines
- Morrisons
- Ocado
- Sainsbury's
- Tesco
- Waitrose

**Sample question:**

I have an allergy. How can I check the ingredients of a product? Do you have a list of products unsuitable for specific allergies?

Highest score #questions answered successfully



Lowest score



70%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



1 hour and  
35 minutes

SLOWEST



1 day, 8 hours  
21 minutes

70%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



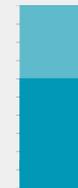
3 minutes

SLOWEST



3 hours and  
6 minutes

60%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



1 minute

SLOWEST



1 day, 1 hour  
29 minutes

100%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



AVAILABILITY



2 advertised web chat, both were available at time of evaluation

# INSURANCE



Highest score #questions answered successfully



Lowest score



## COMPANIES SURVEYED (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

- Admiral
- Aviva
- Axa
- Churchill
- Direct Line
- Esure
- Legal & General
- Liverpool Victoria
- More Than
- NFU Mutual

### Sample question:

Do you offer a loyalty discount if I take out more than one type of insurance policy with you? If so, how much is it?

15%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



23 hours and  
57 minutes

SLOWEST



1 day, 11 hours  
7 minutes

50%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



5 minutes

SLOWEST



23 minutes

70%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



4 minutes

SLOWEST



4 hours and  
38 minutes

88%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



AVAILABILITY



5 advertised web chat but only 4 made it available at time of evaluation

TRAVEL



COMPANIES SURVEYED (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

- British Airways
- Easy Jet
- Flybe\*
- Hays Travel
- Jet2
- Kuoni
- Ryanair
- Trailfinders
- TUI
- Virgin Holidays

**Sample question:**

Can I change my booking, and if so, how do I do this?



Highest score #questions answered successfully



Lowest score



45%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



24 minutes

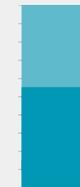
SLOWEST



15 days, 2  
hours, 51  
minutes



55%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



2 minutes

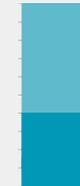
SLOWEST



1 hour and  
29 minutes



40%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



1 minute

SLOWEST



2 hours and  
31 minutes



100%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



AVAILABILITY



4 advertised web chat but only 3 made it available at time of evaluation

\* Research undertaken in February 2020 before Flybe entered administration

BANKING



COMPANIES SURVEYED (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):

- Barclays
- First Direct
- Halifax
- HSBC
- Lloyds
- Metro Bank
- Natwest
- Nationwide
- Santander
- TSB

**Sample question:**

What do I do if my debit card is blocked whilst I am abroad?  
Is there a number I can call?

Highest score #questions answered successfully



Lowest score



10%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



4 hours and  
48 minutes

SLOWEST



4 hours and  
48 minutes

70%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



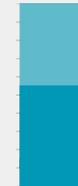
2 minutes

SLOWEST



28 minutes

55%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



FASTEST



4 minutes

SLOWEST



18 hours and  
31 minutes

100%  
questions  
answered  
successfully



AVAILABILITY



4 advertised web chat but only 2 made it available  
at time of evaluation

## TAKEAWAYS

### 1. LISTEN TO MEET RISING EXPECTATIONS

Customers want channel choice, fast answers and accurate responses, whatever their demographic or the type of company they are dealing with. Companies therefore need to understand these expectations and deliver on them if they want to win and retain their business. This starts by listening to them, such as through Voice of the Customer programs, researching their needs and acting on the insight these activities uncover.

### 2. BREAK DOWN SILOS TO ENABLE MULTICHANNEL SERVICE

Companies are still not delivering true, consistent multichannel service, with many focusing on a subset of channels and neglecting others that consumers value. The positive news is that this can be remedied if companies break down silos between channels and teams and share information and resources through a centralised, self-learning knowledge base. This not only improves the experience, but also increases efficiency and lowers costs.

### 3. FOCUS ON IMPROVING EMAIL

Many companies struggle to respond effectively on email despite customer demand for the channel. While some businesses may want to deflect incoming emails to other channels (such as the phone or self-service), it is vital to provide a seamless experience, particularly in competitive industries. Therefore business must look at how they can use technology to better support agents dealing with email queries (such as through AI and Natural Language Processing within routing and templates) in order to bring down costs and increase efficiency and consistency.

### 4. DEFLECT WHERE YOU CAN

Whatever their demographic group, consumers are increasingly happy to use the web for many categories of queries. Given the negligible cost of self-service this also allows resources to be better deployed, providing companies ensure self-service delivers on customer needs and successfully answers their queries. Therefore, businesses should make it visible and easy to access and use AI to help deliver the right answers. They need to analyse incoming questions to give greater insight into customer needs and to spot areas where they can improve or add new content.

### 5. INTEGRATE FOR A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE

Customers want companies to value their time and to be able to switch channels during a conversation. Consequently, businesses should make it simple to move from channel to channel, particularly when it comes to escalating from automated responses (self-service, chatbots) to a live agent, avoiding the need for consumers to repeat themselves or start the process again.



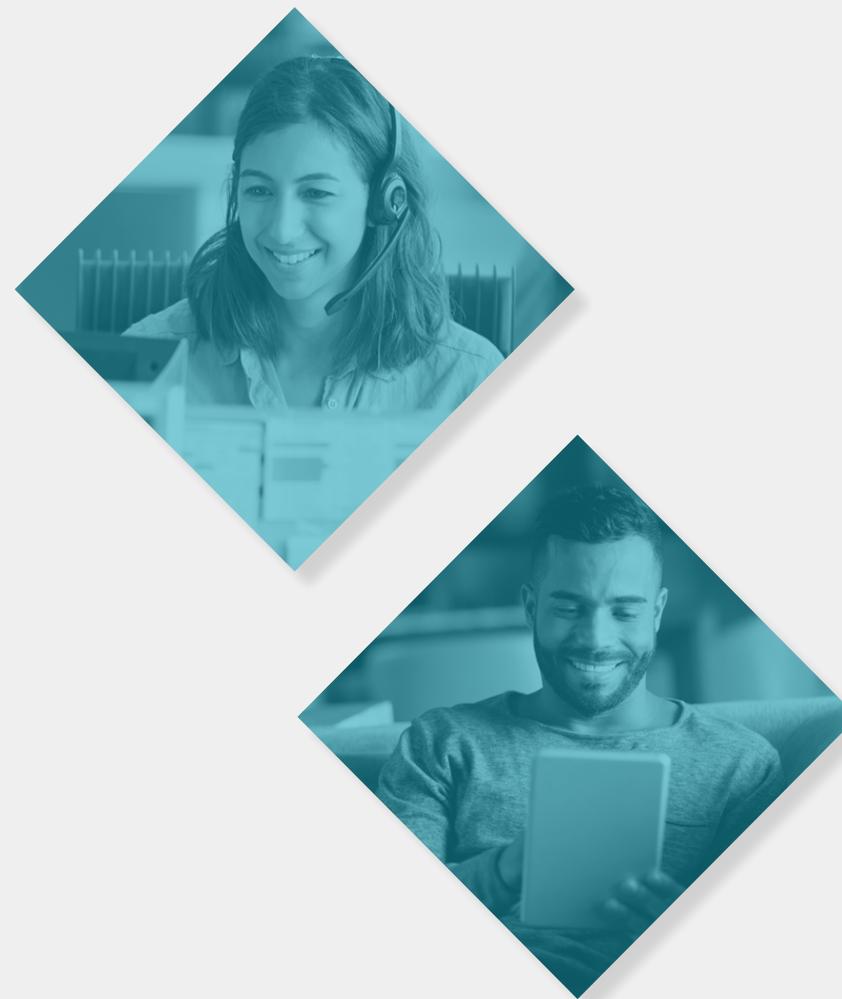
## CONCLUSION

Overall, UK consumers want choice and speed when it comes to customer service- but many companies are failing to deliver. Performance in the 2020 UK Digital CX Study has dropped and companies seem to be going backwards in many areas – just 64% of routine queries were answered successfully, with many companies seemingly struggling to cope.

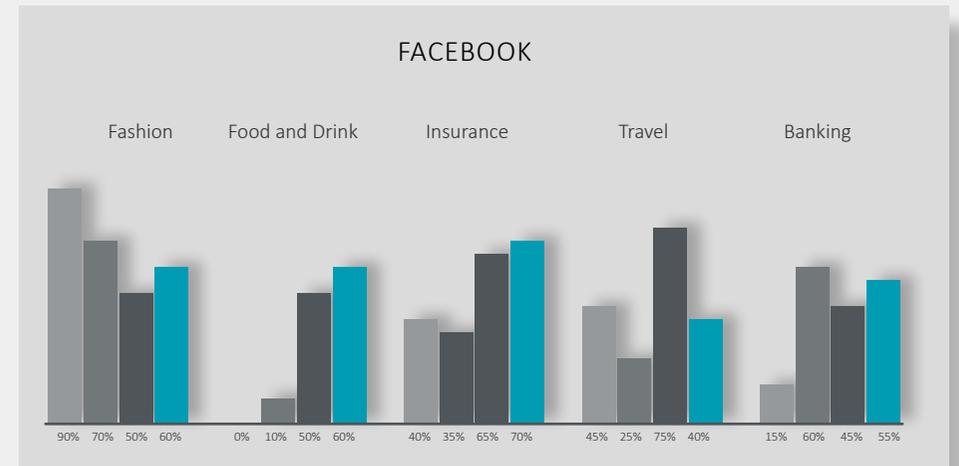
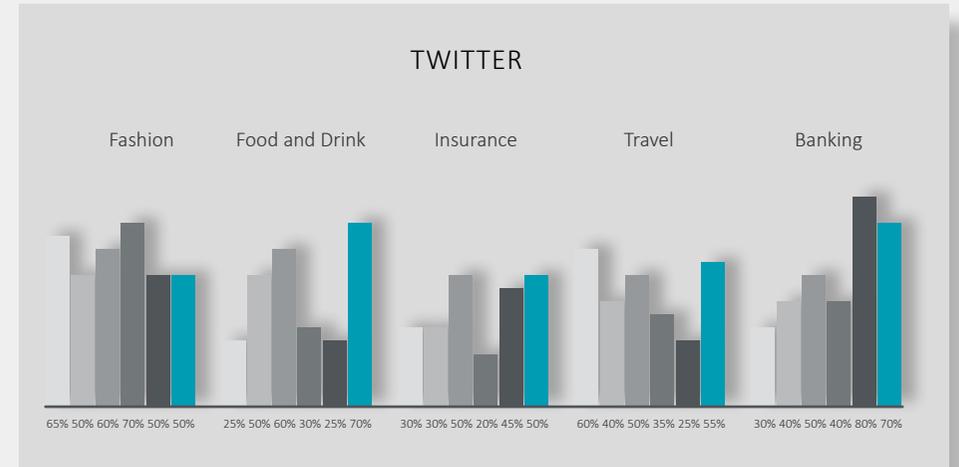
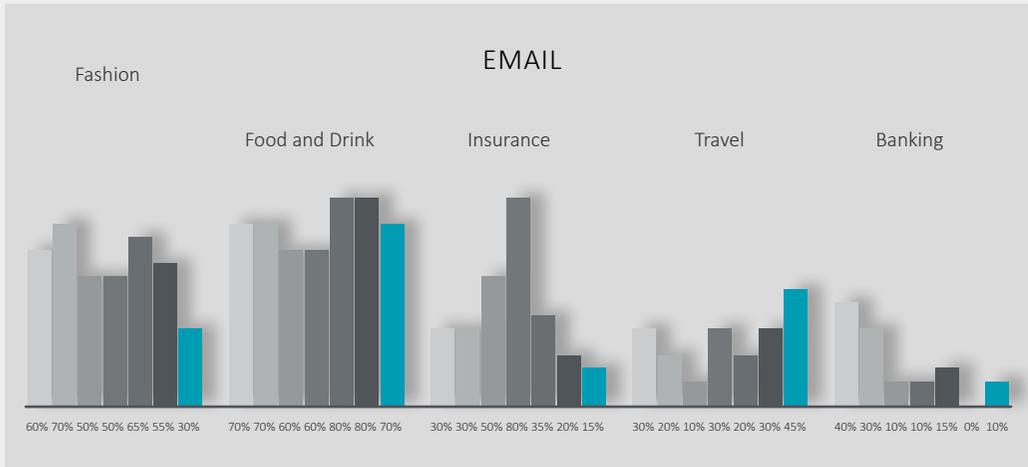
There seems to be a mismatch between the channels customers prefer (such as email) and those that companies are dedicating resources too (for example Twitter and Facebook). Email was a particular issue. Out of 100 companies only 34 successfully answered on the channel – the lowest number since 2015. Are resources in the correct place?

On the positive side chat is now moving into the mainstream, benefiting both consumers and companies that offer it. However, overall there are still big differences between best and worst- even in particular sectors. For example, one insurer answered 89% of questions across five channels (web, email, Twitter, Facebook and chat) yet another scored just 11% when asked the same queries.

To succeed in a world of changing customer expectations companies need to focus their efforts and take a holistic view – ensuring they are on the right channels for their customers, sharing knowledge and resources to deliver consistency and speed, using technology to support agents and deflect queries where possible, but making the escalation process seamless and obvious. Only then will they deliver the improvements required to turnaround the overall drop in customer service across the UK.



2012 2013 2015 2016 2017 2019 2020



## METHODOLOGY

The 2020 Digital CX Study evaluated the customer service capabilities of 50 leading UK brands in five ways – through the web, email, Twitter, Facebook and chat. Sectors evaluated were banking, insurance, travel, food and drink and fashion retail. Research was completed in February 2020.

The aim was to replicate the actual consumer experience to provide effective, meaningful results across each channel:

- Visit each website and look for answers for each of the five sector-specific questions
- Send 1 sector-specific question via email, Twitter and company Facebook page
- Record if channel unavailable and measure length of time to receive a response
- Check if response answered the question- score 1 for a complete answer, 0 for not found or ½ for partial answer
- Visit each website, search for chat option. If available start chat session and ask sector specific question
- Time the session from initiation of conversation to end
- Time the session from initiation of conversation to end
- Compare the answers received via Twitter, Facebook and chat and email. Were they consistent?

Additionally, a demographically balanced sample of 1,000 consumers were surveyed online to understand their channel preferences across the customer journey, including expectations around speed of response.



## ABOUT EPTICA & ENGHOUSE INTERACTIVE

Eptica specialises in intelligent platforms that enable companies to place digital customer engagement at the heart of their strategy, driving excellent customer experience and deeper insight to create value across all operations.

Specialising in Natural Language Processing (NLP), Eptica makes the best use of AI and cognitive technologies for CX to help build trust between people and organisations:



### AUTOMATED CONVERSATIONS

Help your customers help themselves: automate simple queries and free up agents to handle more complex interactions.



### AUGMENTED AGENTS

Bring together technology and human emotional intelligence to deliver the most relevant and personalised responses.



### CUSTOMER INTELLIGENCE

Convert digital conversations into actionable insights that advance CX and add value to your business.

**eptica**

An  Enghouse Company

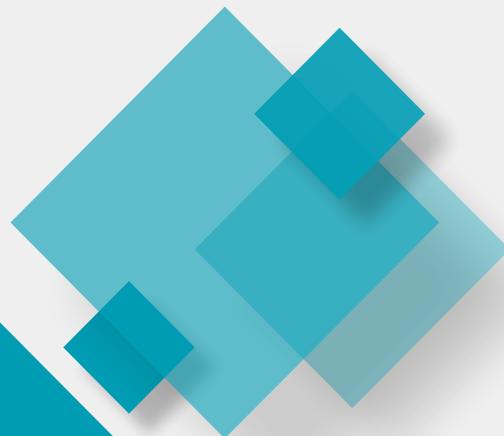
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Eptica is part of Enghouse Interactive, a leading global provider of contact centre software and service solutions that deliver enhanced customer service and transform the contact centre from a cost centre into a powerful growth engine, including:



### OMNI-CHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS

Shift seamlessly between multiple customer interactions via audio, video, email, SMS, mobile, web chat and social media channels, all captured and archived in one place, without losing any data or conversation flow.



### SELF-SERVICE, AI & BOTS

IVR, chatbots, enhanced consoles, knowledge bases, portals, voice biometrics and authentication ensure compliance while enhancing the customer experience.



### CALL RECORDING & QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Call Recording (always-on & on-demand, multi-site) and screen recording modules, full indexing for quick omni-channel data searching, agent evaluation and training tools.



### INTEGRATIONS

Integrates Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Customer Telephony Interaction (CTI) and third-party applications, so they can communicate and interact with one another.



### ATTENDANT CONSOLE

Industry-leading attendant call routing and processing functionality that simplifies call flow management in complex.