



Martin Robbins
General Manager

At CPM, Martin helps convert client needs, business realities and new technologies into meaningful and differentiated programs and customer-growth strategies. His longstanding clients benefit from our contact centre's excellence in customer service and sales delivery. Whether working at executive level or directly motivating frontline staff, Martin consistently delivers exceptional customer experience, operational effectiveness and employee engagement, which results in revenue growth.

About CPM Australia Contact Centre

We bring energy and passion to help our clients win customers and sell more products. Our significant contact-centre expertise is a key driver in helping Australian companies increase sales, provide service excellence and, most importantly, help build lasting connections with their customers. Having contact centres right here in Australia, staffed by people who understand what it means to live and work here, enables us to cover all time zones and to focus solely on serving the needs of the Australian consumer.

CPM

Nearly 80 per cent of customers tell more people about a negative experience than a positive one

Today's consumers are faced with more choices than ever when considering how they want to reach a brand. They're more digitally connected, socially networked and better informed than ever before.



HOW DO CUSTOMERS FEEL ABOUT THE STATE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA?

Consumers are saying it's still so hard to navigate and resolve customer-service issues. The growing number of touchpoints has had the negative effect of widening the gap between brands and consumers.

To understand these concerns better, and how customers feel about the state of customer service in Australia, CPM Australia partnered with the Australian Consumer Retail and Services (ACRS) Omnibus Tracker to explore these challenges. The *State of Customer Service in Australia Report* reveals critical gaps between customer-service expectations of excellence, ease and accessibility, and the disappointing realities of a lack of consistency and response.

Today's brands and retailers know full well they face enormous challenges in activating their brands in the face of an overcrowded marketplace with an increasingly empowered customer. As custodians of leading Australian brands, we invest in up-to-date research to keep a close eye on the changing consumer landscape to develop a greater understanding of Australians' expectations of their customer-service experiences and channel preferences.

The research suggests that Australians' tolerance for fragmented experiences is lower than ever. Most customers today expect that every new interaction with a particular

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organisation – by phone, internet, webchat, social media – will be personalised and occur in the context of the other. The study confirms that customers' expectations are higher, they're more empowered by social sharing, and are more willing to end their shopping relationship with those brands or retailers that don't meet their needs.

When asked to share a buying experience within the past three months – either in-store or online – more than half of the customers responded that they'd had a mix of experiences. Those respondents aged 18-34 years recorded the most negative experiences at eight per cent, while those aged 35-54 had the most mixed experiences, at 58 per cent. Among the most satisfied were the older segment (aged 55-74) who recorded the most positive interactions at 56 per cent.

These statistics are consistent with the latest research into consumer behaviour. As consumers have adapted to the convenience of online shopping, they're expecting their shopping

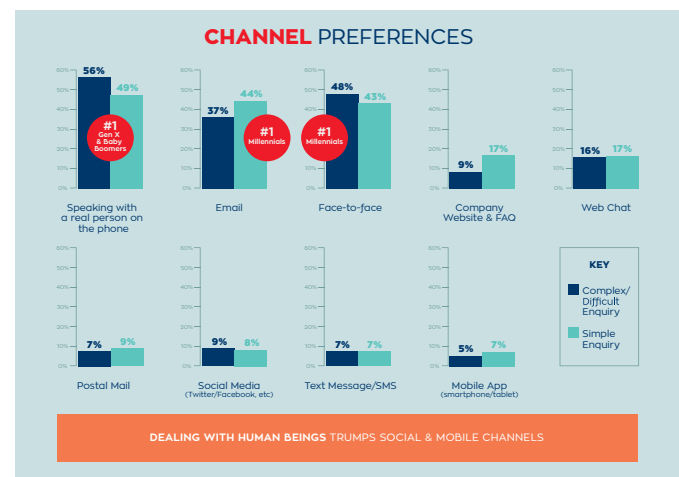
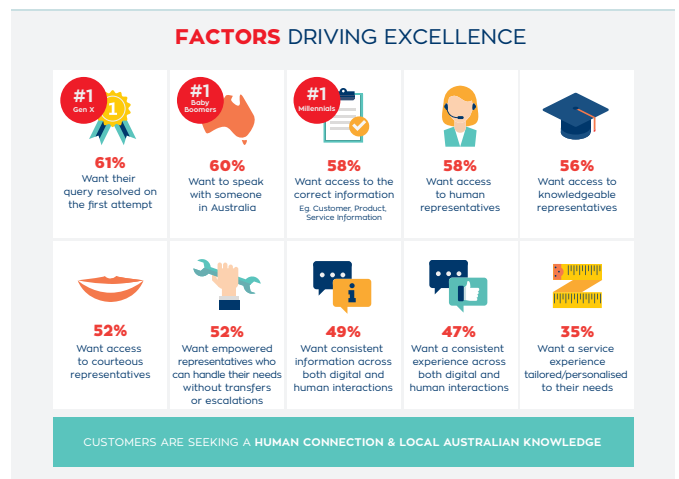
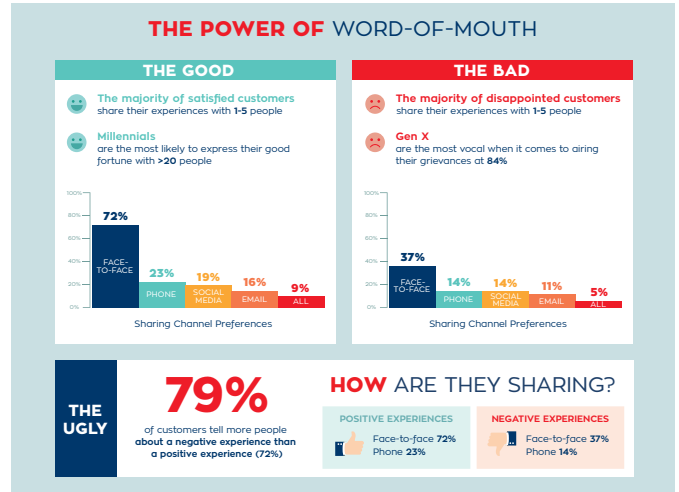
experiences to be consistent with their e-commerce habits.

The research also reinforces the power of word of mouth as the most popular channel. It reveals that the majority of disappointed consumers share their customer-service experiences with one to five people. Seventy-nine per cent of people who had a negative experience will air their grievances with friends. By contrast, 72 per cent of people who had a positive experience will tell their friends about it. The ever-social millennials said they will express their good fortune to more than 20 people.

It's been a longstanding belief that recommendations from friends and family amount to the most influential channel over all other forms of marketing. Yet, if consumers value word of mouth and marketers believe it's effective, why aren't brand owners concentrating on it?

The problem is that, for the past few years, brands and retailers have focused more on 'collecting' instead of 'connecting' directly with customers. In other words, brands can get too caught up in collecting social-media fans, while forgetting to actually connect with them. Having 100 really passionate fans who love your brand or product is much better than having 10,000 'fans' who've signed up just on the off chance of winning a new gadget.

The survey also reveals some costly



realisations. More than one third (34 per cent) of customers surveyed have stopped shopping at a company in the past year due to a poor customer-service experience. In terms of generations, Baby Boomers are the most tolerant and likely to be loyal, repeating customers, whereas those in Generation X are the most likely to abandon further relationships or purchases.

In today's competitive markets, brands can't afford to lose sales due to poor customer service. This research confirms that customer-service stories spread widely – especially bad ones – and in our experience, you're typically judged by your resolution and not the initial issue. The quality and immediacy of contact, response and resolution of complaints or queries cannot be underestimated in a world where consumers are less brand loyal and where social media and word of mouth can make or break brands.

In an age when technology dominates our lives, the research also shows that dealing with human beings trumps social and mobile channels. Across all the age groups, 61 per cent said an important factor in good customer-service experience was getting the query resolved at the first attempt, and 60 per cent valued speaking with someone in Australia. A connection with a human being and having a quality conversation are more meaningful to people and create a more powerful customer experience.

The study also suggests social-media and mobile channels will not solve customer-service queries. For both simple and complex inquiries, customers said they would prefer to speak to a real person. Their top-three preferred communication channels were: speaking with a real person on the phone, followed by face-to-face communication (in store) and, in third place, communication by email. The study confirms that not only are customers seeking a human connection, but also local Australian knowledge.

The research reminds us that customer experience is not a one-time event, and that every single interaction is going to be different. It also tells us that people want to engage with companies in a way that is familiar to them and that, to trust the brand, they want choice and a human touch. Evidently, traditional channels are still relevant to people in Australia, so part of the solution lies in getting the right balance between the human and digital touch, and understanding consumers' needs better.

Companies that deliver on their brand promise and design solutions around how their customers work, live and connect with the world around them, will be the ones who stay on top.

We partnered with the ACRS Shopper Tracker – Wave 14 via an online survey with a sample size of 500 shoppers representing the Australian population. ●