

THE CONNECTED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

CX defines brand success
for consumers today



ASIA-PACIFIC



INTRODUCTION

THE CONNECTED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

CX defines brand success for consumers today

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the ways in which people live. Lockdowns, remote working, concern for friends and family, juggling childcare, and uncertainty about the future have been challenging for all of us, but in different ways.

Between December 2020 and April 2021, we surveyed over 11,000 consumers in the US, Latin America, Europe and Asia-Pacific to better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their health, happiness, and social and professional interactions. Within Asia-Pacific, the sample covered more than 3,000 consumers in Australia, China, India, Japan and Singapore.

“The connected customer experience” explores how people’s feelings and expectations have changed over the course of the pandemic—and what that means for how companies engage with their customers.

It finds that people’s sense of connection with others has been deeply influenced by “pandemic life” and that they’re looking for empathy in digital and human interactions. And with survey respondents consistently saying companies are only as good as their service, it discovers that building trust and loyalty with consumers today requires a radical rethink of the customer experience.



CONTENTS

1. HUMAN CONNECTIONS [!]
IN CRISIS

2. HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND
THE CONNECTION DEFICIT

3. RETHINKING THE
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

4. CUSTOMER SERVICE
TODAY

The connected customer experience

HUMAN CONNECTIONS IN CRISIS





2 in 5 CONSUMERS

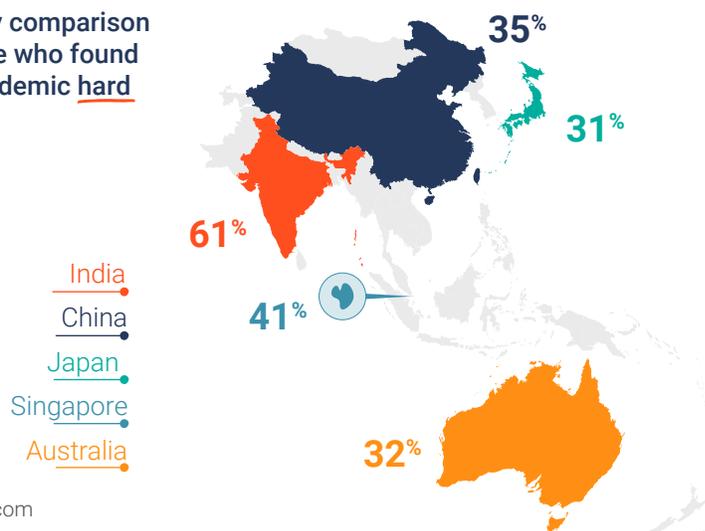
across Asia-Pacific has found the **pandemic** (39%) and **lockdowns to be hard**

Almost 40% of consumers in Asia-Pacific say the pandemic has been difficult for them—and that it has changed their life completely.

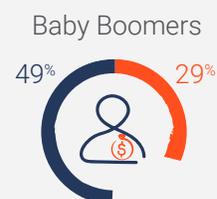
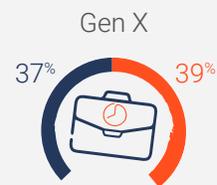
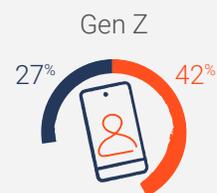
The impact has been felt most severely in India (61% reporting to have found it hard) followed by Singapore (41%). This survey was conducted while India was on the cusp of what would subsequently develop into a full-scale public health crisis, which is likely reflected in the data. Meanwhile, in April 2021, Singapore topped Bloomberg’s monthly Covid Resilience Ranking, having implemented strict border controls that allowed normal life to resume for its citizens and residents. Yet this data shows that the emotional toll of the pandemic was still high. Approximately 40% of Singapore’s residents are non-citizens; the long separation from family and friends abroad may have played a part in why survey respondents said they found the pandemic so hard.

Across the region, youth have felt the biggest effects of “pandemic life.” Some 45% of millennials and 42% of Gen Z respondents say the pandemic has been difficult and life changing. Yet, for a significant number of survey respondents, the pandemic has been neither hard nor life changing. Almost half of Baby Boomers report that this isn’t a particularly difficult time.

Country comparison of those who found the pandemic hard



A generational comparison of the pandemic impact



Found the pandemic hard
 Did not find the pandemic hard



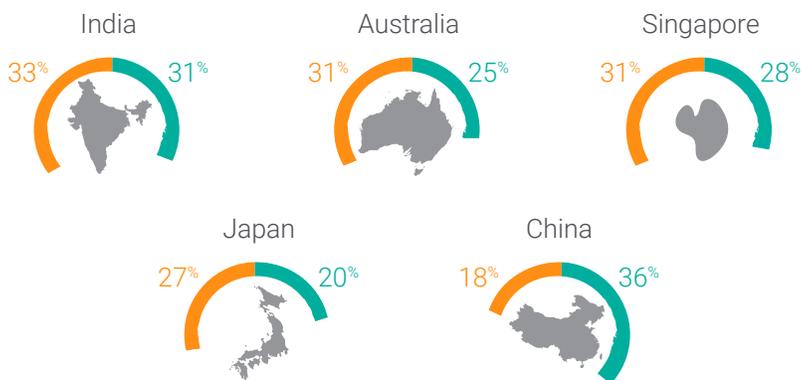
The stark divide in experiences is also reflected in a person's sense of connection to others.

This report finds a widespread sense of social isolation—29% of consumers in Asia-Pacific say they feel less connected to others since the start of the pandemic. Respondents from India reported the highest level of disconnection from others (33%), followed by Singapore (31%) and Australia (31%).

It wasn't all negative. Overall, 28% of Asia-Pacific respondents feel more connected to others since the start of the pandemic, which is higher than the global average (25%). And youth, who have found the pandemic hardest, also say they've used the time to forge closer human relationships.

COVID-19 seems to have emotionally affected respondents from China the least. Just 18% report feeling less connected to others (the lowest in the world). Indeed, more than one-third of respondents from China said they feel more connected to others than they did before the pandemic.

The feeling of connectivity varies across countries

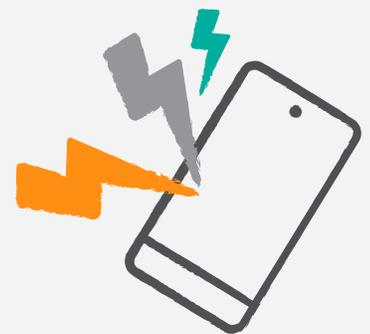


In Asia-Pacific, people are equally divided between the more and less connected

29%
Less connected

28%
More connected

43%
No change



KEY TAKEAWAYS



HUMAN CONNECTIONS IN CRISIS

DISRUPTION & DISLOCATION: With two in five consumers across Asia-Pacific saying lockdowns have been hard—and almost a third feeling less connected than before—it's clear there's a human connection crisis.

THE GREATEST TOLL: With the second highest number of cases globally as of April 2021, the social and emotional impact of COVID-19 on consumers in India is clear. Twice as many consumers have found the pandemic hard, compared to citizens in Japan or Australia. And people in India also feel less connected to others. China has the highest number of consumers who feel *more* connected to others, globally.

LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY: Despite having a reputation for being always-connected digital natives, Gen Z and millennial respondents were more likely than any other age group to say the pandemic has been difficult—and has changed their life. Ongoing uncertainty, restricted access to education, a lack of employment opportunities and other restrictions have impacted youth across all regions.

The connected customer experience

HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND THE CONNECTION DEFICIT





THE LESS CONNECTED

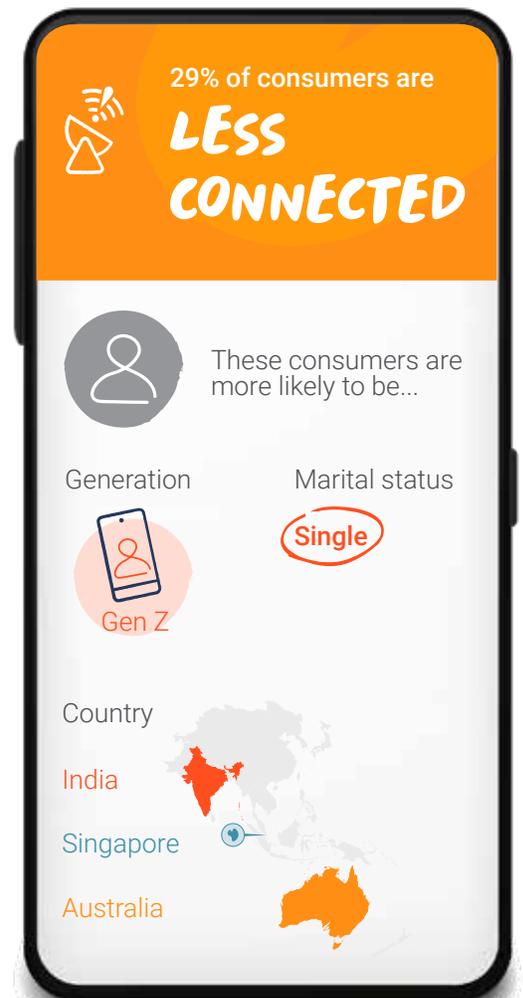
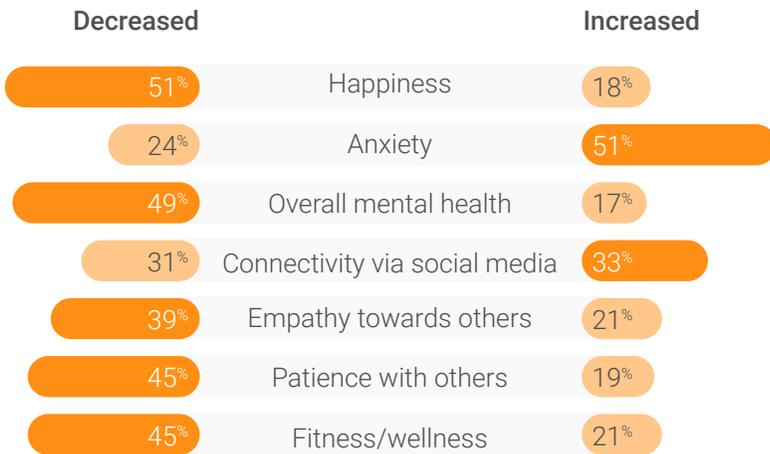
COVID-19 has created a new normal of social distancing, remote working, and separation from friends and family. This human connection deficit is taking a toll on happiness, health and well-being.

Consumers in Asia-Pacific who say they feel less connected to others also report being less happy, having higher levels of anxiety, feeling the toll on their mental health, and having lower levels of fitness and wellness. Their lack of connection has even caused them to have less patience and empathy when interacting with others.

1 in 3 PEOPLE

are feeling **less connected** than before the pandemic

How are the less connected feeling?





THE MORE CONNECTED

The 28% of consumers who are more connected to others feel the benefits across many areas of their lives.

They're typically happier, experiencing better mental health and improved fitness. And they have more patience and empathy for others.

While both groups of consumers reported surging anxiety, there was a less dramatic increase among those who felt more connected. Overall, this group is experiencing better mental and physical health now than before the pandemic.

COVID-19 has been a polarising experience for Gen Z respondents. Some 32% of Gen Z say they have become less connected to others, while the same proportion report becoming closer to other people as a result. Gen Z topped both of these categories, suggesting that they've had an intense experience that has affected them more strongly than other age groups.

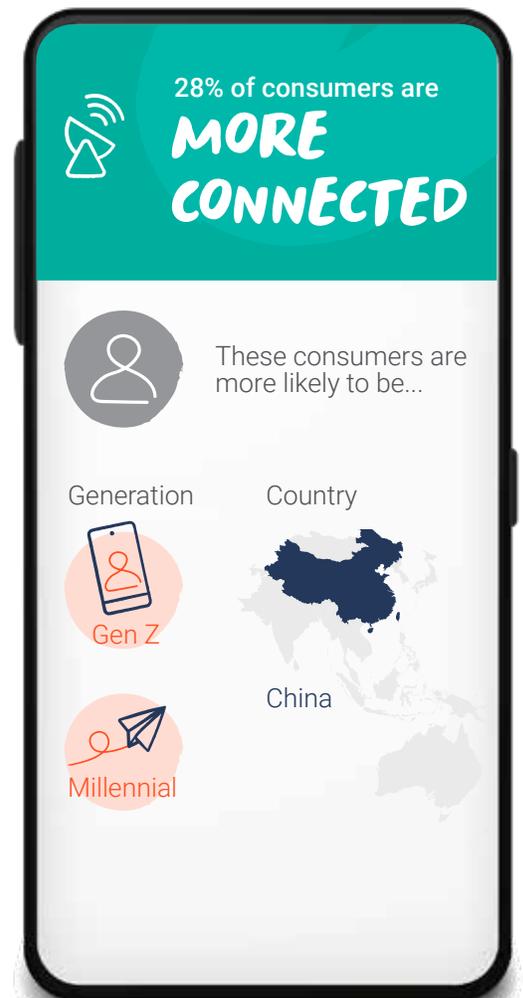
The impact of the pandemic on the lives of citizens varies by country. In China, consumers feel better in several areas of their lives compared to those living in other countries. They're more connected to others, more patient, happier, fitter and have better mental health than other respondents across the region.

How are the more connected feeling?

Decreased		Increased
16%	Happiness	50%
35%	Anxiety	32%
21%	Overall mental health	45%
19%	Connectivity via social media	41%
19%	Empathy towards others	40%
17%	Patience with others	46%
18%	Fitness/wellness	46%

1 in 4 PEOPLE

are feeling **more connected** than before the pandemic



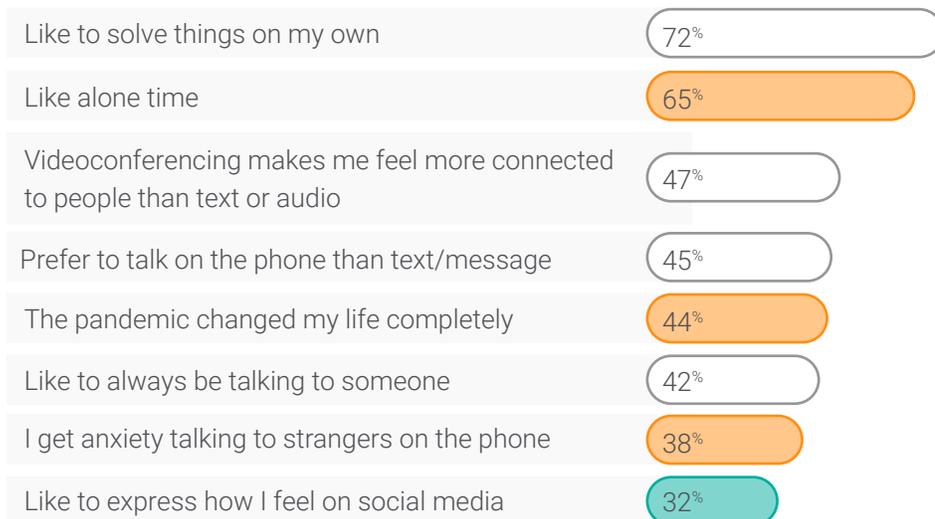


Digital interactions have replaced physical contact when trying to build human connections.

The more connected consumers, who also are younger, regularly turn to social media to bridge the gap of in-person interactions. They're on their phones—sharing experiences and looking for someone to talk to. Respondents who are less connected digitally, despite being naturally more independent, have found the pandemic to be even more isolating.



Overall



Data shown at overall level. Highlighted items represent where respective group was statistically higher in comparison

Significant difference shown by:

● Less connected
 ● More connected

Younger generations are more connected on social media since the start of the pandemic



34%
Gen Z



31%
Millennials



30%
Gen X

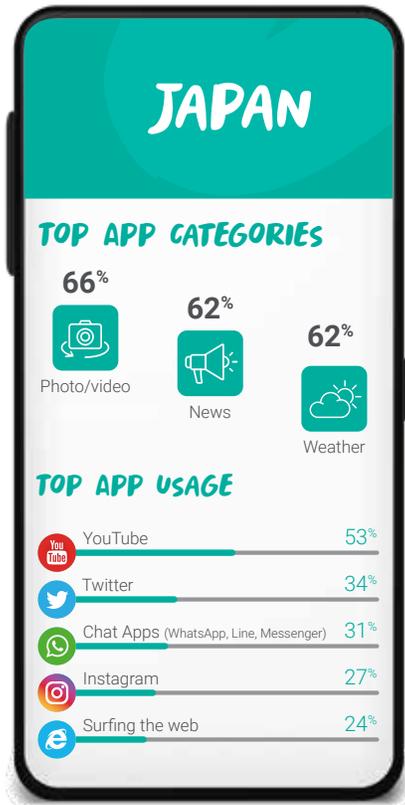


24%
Baby Boomers

During lockdowns, social media provided a meaningful sense of connection.

The survey shows that social media is most popular in India, followed by Singapore and China. Five out of six people in India report being highly connected on social channels. They also spend more time gaming, watching videos and chatting online. In India and Singapore, consumers also use messaging apps to connect with others more directly at a higher rate.

Compared with other regions, consumers in Asia-Pacific have been more focused on looking and feeling better—they spend relatively more time on shopping and health and fitness apps. China had the highest relative use of shopping apps of any country in the survey. Shopping apps were also popular in India and Japan.

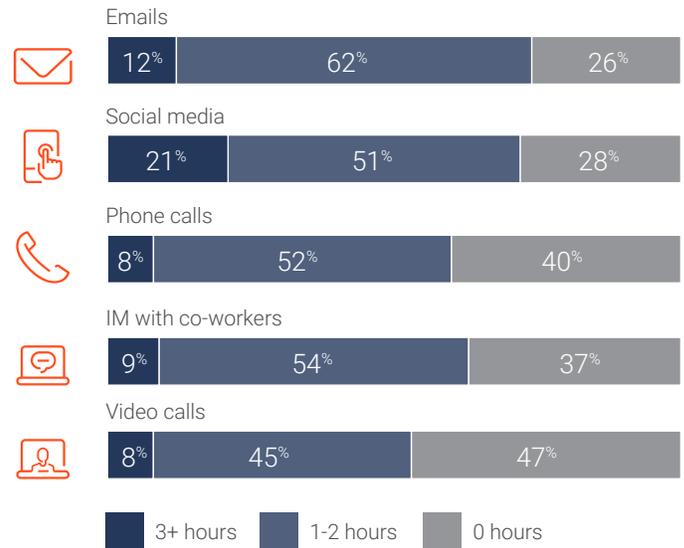


CONNECTIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE

The workplace serves as a built-in opportunity for connectivity, and most people spend more work hours per day on social media than on other communication channels.

WORKDAY ACTIVITIES

Time spent on digital interactions with others in the workplace



WHAT THE AVERAGE WORKDAY LOOKS LIKE:



On average, **Asia-Pacific** consumers

SPEND 5.8 HOURS

per day **interacting digitally** with others, slightly less than the global average of 6 hours

KEY TAKEAWAYS



HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND THE CONNECTION DEFICIT

CONNECTION IS KEY: Being disconnected from others affects all other areas of a citizen's well-being. The less connected respondents in Asia-Pacific also report being less happy, feeling more anxious, and experiencing poorer mental and physical health. Those who've been able to nurture human connections report these negative feelings at a much lower rate.

POLARISING EXPERIENCES: COVID-19 has been an intense experience for youth across Asia-Pacific. Almost half of millennials and Gen Z respondents across the region found pandemic life to be hard. While a large number of these respondents are feeling less connected to others as a result, the surprising finding is that Gen Z also has the highest proportion of people feeling more connected to others since the start of the pandemic. They're having more digital interactions than any other age group—and they're using the digital world to create positive experiences. The overall pandemic experience had less of an impact (good or bad) on Gen X and Baby Boomers.

CLICKS, LIKES AND SHARES: The digital world could actually help close the connection gap. More connected consumers gravitate to social media and chat apps, games and video streaming. The Netflix documentary "The Social Dilemma" suggested that the more digitally engaged we are, the less engaged we are with others. But our research shows that in a quarantined world, digital interaction plays a valuable role in closing the connection gap and allowing humans to engage with one another.

The connected customer experience

RETHINKING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE





DIGITAL INTERACTIONS

have replaced in-person experiences, with live chat and chatbots being the **fastest growing channels globally**



The pandemic has strictly curbed in-person interactions and digital interactions have taken their place.

While voice remains the most frequent channel for interacting with customer service, live webchat has grown in popularity during the pandemic and now more than two in five respondents use it.

Nearly one-third of consumers now use chatbots for interacting with customer service—the fastest growing channel in Asia-Pacific.

52%

of consumers in Asia-Pacific say they have mostly experienced **GOOD SERVICE** over the past year.

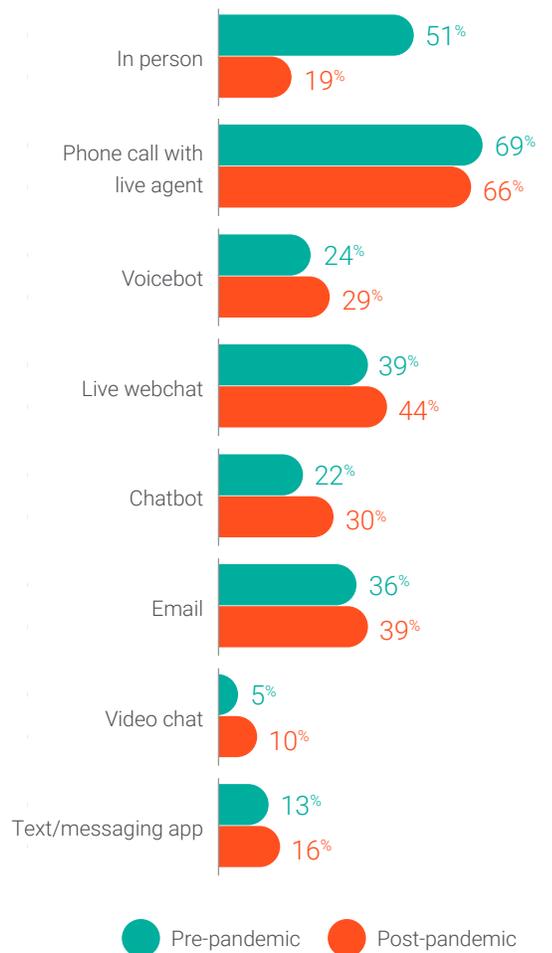
44%

of consumers in Asia-Pacific now use **LIVE CHAT** to interact with customer service (the second most frequently used channel).

100%

growth in use of **VIDEO CHAT** across the region.

Customer service channels used pre- and post-pandemic



In addition to changes in how consumers use digital platforms, they've also shifted how they interact with companies.

Consumers in Asia-Pacific contact customer service at a much higher rate than those in other regions. Some 42% contact customer service at least once a month, compared to just 16% in Europe. In Australia, China and Japan, about half of respondents say they contact customer service at least once a month. In India and Singapore that falls to about 30%, giving companies fewer opportunities to interact with their customers.

Almost two in three consumers across the region (63%) consider a company to only be as good as its customer service and a third (33%) say dealing with customer service is always a hassle.

For companies, understanding customer intent, making customer journeys seamless and intuitive, and providing an empathetic interaction have never been more important. And, while technology plays a critical role in enabling this efficiency, many consumers still prefer human-to-human interactions. In the Asia-Pacific region, one in six consumers has called customer service just to hear a human voice.

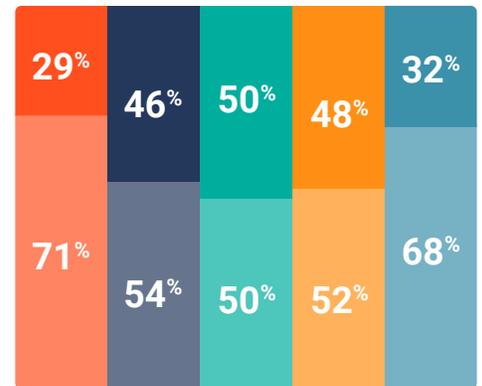
63%
OF CONSUMERS
across Asia-Pacific believe that a company is **only as good as its customer service**

1 in 6
CONSUMERS 

in Asia-Pacific has called customer service **just to hear a human voice**

CUSTOMER SERVICE USE IN THE PAST YEAR

At least once a month



Less than once a month



1 in 3
say dealing with customer service is always a **hassle**

How can companies remove the hassle and put each customer at the heart of the experience?

THROUGH EMPATHY, COMMUNICATION AND A CONNECTED EXPERIENCE.

1. PRIORITISE EMPATHY



The top priority for consumers in Asia-Pacific when interacting with customer service is for the employee to understand their needs, solve their problems completely and listen effectively.

Consumers in Australia and Japan strongly prioritise an empathetic experience over a fast resolution (44% prefer service from an agent who makes it clear they understand your situation, even if it takes longer to resolve the issue; 34% selected a fast, efficient solution). In China the reverse is true—50% said a fast, efficient solution—from a bot or human—is the most important criteria of an overall service experience.

 **58%**
OF CONSUMERS
across Asia-Pacific prefer an empathetic customer service experience to a speedy resolution

WHEN CONSUMERS WERE ASKED TO RANK IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE, EMPATHY AND SPEED ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT

1ST

- Service from an agent who makes it clear they understand your situation even if it takes longer to solve the issue.
- Fast, efficient resolution—it does not matter to me whether it's from a bot or a human as long as it is quick.

2ND

Personalised service that feels unique to my needs.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPATHY ARE THE MOST VALUED BY CONSUMERS WHEN IT COMES TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

Consumers want customer service employees to:

79%
Understand their needs

78%
Solve their problems completely

77%
Listen to them

75%
Respond quickly

74%
Value their time

71%
Provide consistent answers

2.

COMMUNICATE TO CONNECT, NOT JUST TO SELL



Today's consumers appreciate non-sales-related communications. Nearly 60% say this is a hallmark of great service. In China and India, four out of five consumers want companies to send them more non-sales-related communications; for example, fine-tuning a previously purchased product.

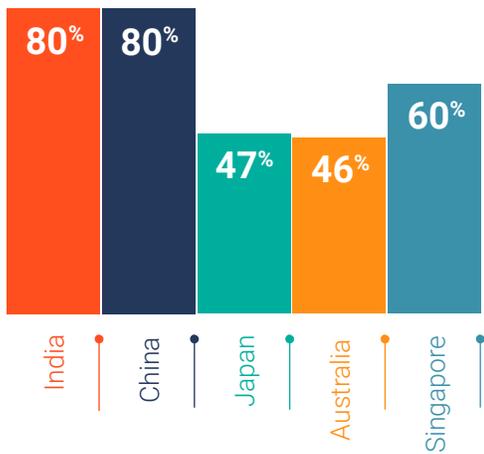
When asked what constitutes a phenomenal experience, respondents said it's being remembered and having the company anticipate the reason for the call (40%), followed by the company avoiding up-selling and focusing on the existing issue (37%).



60%

of companies recognised for excellent customer service **send non-sales-related communications**

Consumers who would welcome more non-sales-related communications



3.

ENABLE CONNECTED EXPERIENCES

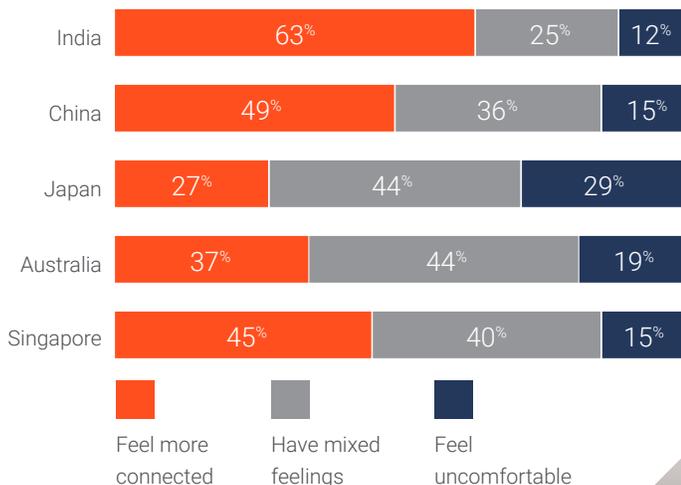
Using data effectively allows companies to provide more seamless customer experiences. This includes identifying who customers are and what their issues might be—and then proactively solving them or suggesting solutions. Then they can connect customers to the right person to help.

Overall, consumers feel positively about data collection that enhances their service. More than two-thirds of Asia-Pacific consumers say they received better service from companies that collected data. Across the region, 43% feel more connected to companies that remember them. Indian respondents were most likely to feel connected to companies that remember them (63%), compared to the Japanese who were most ambivalent about being remembered (27% said they felt more connected to those companies). Just 18% of consumers across the region feel uncomfortable about a company's use of data.

Still, data use and data privacy are areas of caution among consumers—they want to control how much data is shared in exchange for a more effortless experience. Some 75% of Asia-Pacific respondents say they exert some control over how their data is collected.

Millennials are broadly more comfortable than other demographics with having their data collected. Additionally, those who engage with customer service frequently are more likely to allow this type of data collection.

How do consumers feel about a company that remembers them?



2 in 3



CONSUMERS

feel that companies **collecting data** on their customers **improves** the service **experience**

The majority of consumers like to have some control over how their data is collected



11%
Always allow data to be collected

75%
Try to control data collection to some extent

14%
Never allow data to be collected

1 in 5

consumers in India **always allow** their data to be collected



KEY TAKEAWAYS



RETHINKING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

IT'S ALL ABOUT EMPATHY: The majority of customers in Asia-Pacific value empathy—feeling listened to, heard and understood—as much as they do a quick resolution to their issues. This has deep ramifications for customer experience organisations, from how they manage and incentivise employees to how they measure the success of a customer journey.

CX PROBLEMS PERSIST: Consumers have high expectations of service. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents say a company is only as good as its customer service. Yet, there's still a considerable gap to close. One in three consumers say that dealing with customer service is a hassle.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS—DIGITAL AND HUMAN: Digital connections help companies deliver great experiences. Two-thirds of consumers are happy to share their data if it improves the customer experience. And nearly 60% not only appreciate receiving non-sales-related communications, they also believe it's a hallmark of excellent service.

The connected customer experience

CUSTOMER SERVICE TODAY





Delivering the customer connection: When bots work best

Most consumers want to deal with a real person for complex issues. Bots and self-service options are beneficial for handling simple transactions.

A human customer service representative is preferred when there's an issue with a product or when a customer needs additional information on billing or a service feature. These are all areas where empathetic interactions can be essential to the resolution.

Bots and self-service options shine in dealing with smaller issues, such as requesting more information or getting account details.



TOP ISSUES WHERE A HUMAN REP IS MOST DESIRED

- Physical problem with a product or service
- Billing is inaccurate
- Technical issues (software, digital, online)
- Product replacement/return
- Delayed package or delivery problem
- Clarification of benefits or account features
- Internet outage
- Checking status of a claim



TOP ISSUES WHERE A BOT CAN HELP

- Make a payment
- Update account information
- Request information on a product
- Login issues (user name, password)
- Reservation or booking issue



Industries that are on the right track

Asia-Pacific's banks and financial institutions provide the best customer service, say survey respondents, but they still have work to do. Retailers, cellular providers, insurers and pharmacies are other industries that consumers identify as having good customer service. In China, Japan and Singapore, airlines made the top five, whereas in India, cable/internet companies were also more highly ranked than by respondents in other countries.



Bank/financial
39%



Retailers
25%



Cellular provider
23%



Insurance
19%



Pharmacy
19%

**BIG BRANDS MADE
A CUSTOMER
SERVICE COMEBACK**

74%

74% of the companies that consumers think have excellent customer experience are large national companies.

84%

84% of people rated these businesses with a satisfaction score between 8-10 (on a 10 point scale).

#1

Amazon was the most frequently mentioned company with excellent customer experiences across Asia-Pacific.

Patterns have shifted in the past year: in a [2019 Genesys™ Consumer study](#) 44% mentioned small businesses and only 27% mentioned large corporations as being service leaders.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

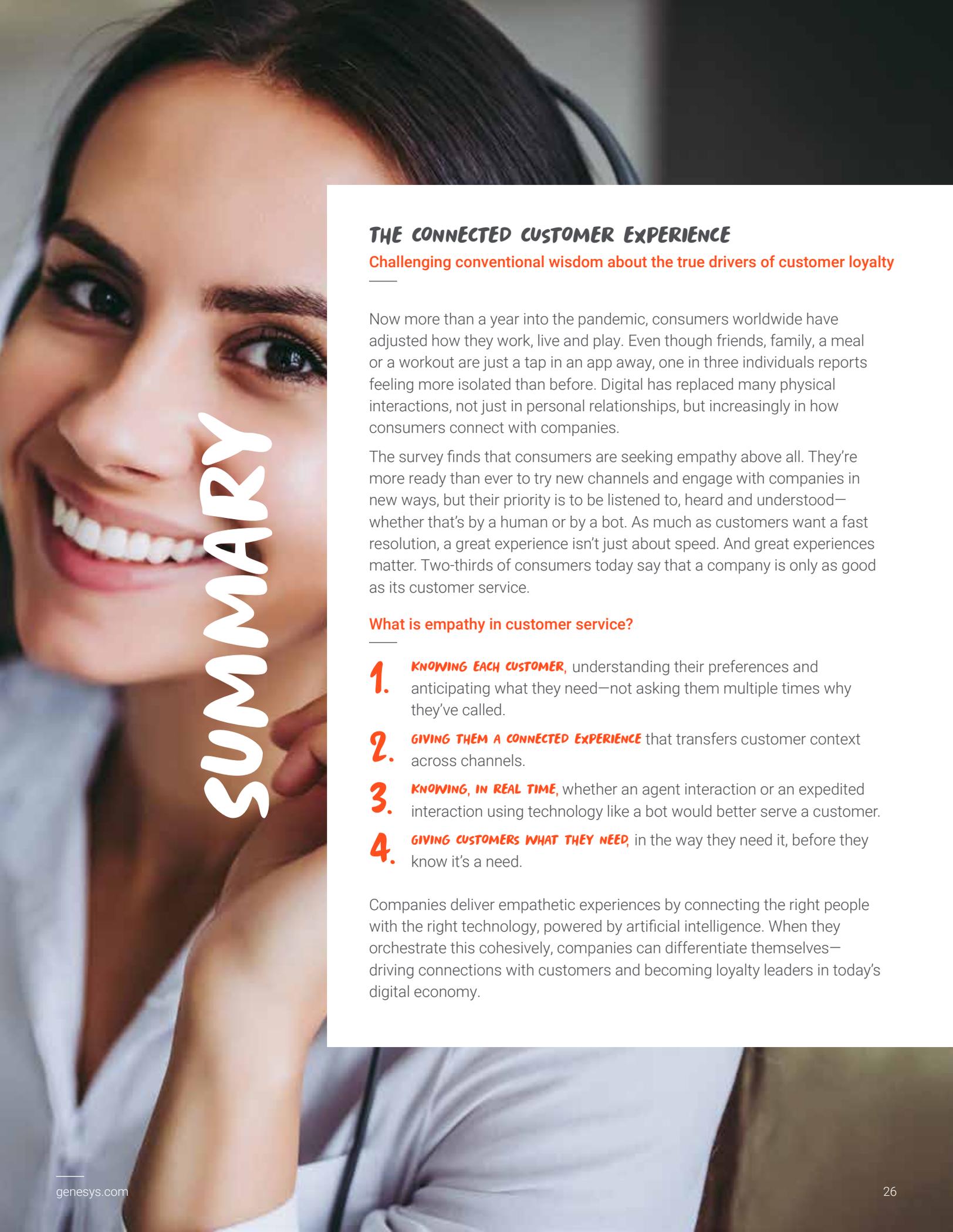


CUSTOMER SERVICE TODAY

HUMANS AND BOTS: Complex problems need humans to resolve them. And across the Asia-Pacific region, consumers still prefer talking on the phone. But they consider bots to be equally valuable in providing quick resolutions to basic issues, such as account updates, payments and status checks.

BANKS IN FRONT: Banks are cited by nearly 15% more respondents across the region than any other industry for providing the best customer experience. Other industries recognised in Asia-Pacific for their service are retailers, cellular providers, insurers and pharmacies.

BIG BRANDS RAISE THE GAME: In contrast to a 2019 Genesys consumer survey in which consumers named small and medium-size companies as service leaders, in this research large companies were cited as providing the best customer experiences (by 74% of respondents, up from 27%).



SUMMARY

THE CONNECTED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Challenging conventional wisdom about the true drivers of customer loyalty

Now more than a year into the pandemic, consumers worldwide have adjusted how they work, live and play. Even though friends, family, a meal or a workout are just a tap in an app away, one in three individuals reports feeling more isolated than before. Digital has replaced many physical interactions, not just in personal relationships, but increasingly in how consumers connect with companies.

The survey finds that consumers are seeking empathy above all. They're more ready than ever to try new channels and engage with companies in new ways, but their priority is to be listened to, heard and understood—whether that's by a human or by a bot. As much as customers want a fast resolution, a great experience isn't just about speed. And great experiences matter. Two-thirds of consumers today say that a company is only as good as its customer service.

What is empathy in customer service?

1. **KNOWING EACH CUSTOMER**, understanding their preferences and anticipating what they need—not asking them multiple times why they've called.
2. **GIVING THEM A CONNECTED EXPERIENCE** that transfers customer context across channels.
3. **KNOWING, IN REAL TIME**, whether an agent interaction or an expedited interaction using technology like a bot would better serve a customer.
4. **GIVING CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY NEED**, in the way they need it, before they know it's a need.

Companies deliver empathetic experiences by connecting the right people with the right technology, powered by artificial intelligence. When they orchestrate this cohesively, companies can differentiate themselves—driving connections with customers and becoming loyalty leaders in today's digital economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Savanta:

Informing + inspiring better decision making

Genesys partnered with Savanta, our trusted market research partner, to study the human connection.

Savanta conducted online research with 11,653 adults aged 18+ worldwide from December 2020 to April 2021. This included more than 3,008 adults aged 18+ across five countries in the Asia-Pacific region from January to April 2021.

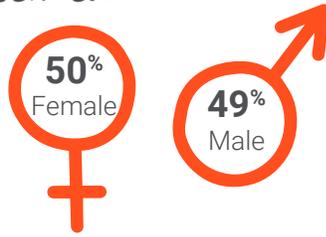
The audience is a representative sample of the general population by age, gender and region.

Savanta is a fast-growing data, market research, and advisory company. We inform and inspire our clients through powerful data, empowering technology and high-impact consulting. All designed to help our clients make better decisions and achieve faster progress.

savanta.com

DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER



AGE GROUPS



COUNTRY

