

Consumer Views of Live Help Online 2012: **A Global Perspective**

A consumer research study commissioned by Oracle

March 2012





SURVEY BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2011, Oracle Retail commissioned a survey to look at consumers' preferences for connecting with companies using traditional and online customer service options, including:

- How consumers value Live Help, compared with other customer service methods
- Adoption levels for Live Help
- Adoption levels for social media and how consumers engage with companies there
- Expectations for live support and responses at social media sites

The survey also answers other questions:

- Do consumers place Live Help among their “go to” means of communication with products and services companies?
- What are consumers' preferences when they need to reach financial services, health care, communications or hospitality companies?
- How are consumers using social media as another communications channel and what do they expect from companies here?

This online study, conducted by an independent service, polled 3,111 consumers in 15 countries, aged 18 years and older. It analyzed their use of customer service channels including email and toll-free calls to customer service representatives, FAQ, Click-to-Call and Live Chat. The survey also gathered data about respondents' preferences for reaching providers in various industries such as financial services, health care, retail, communications and hospitality.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

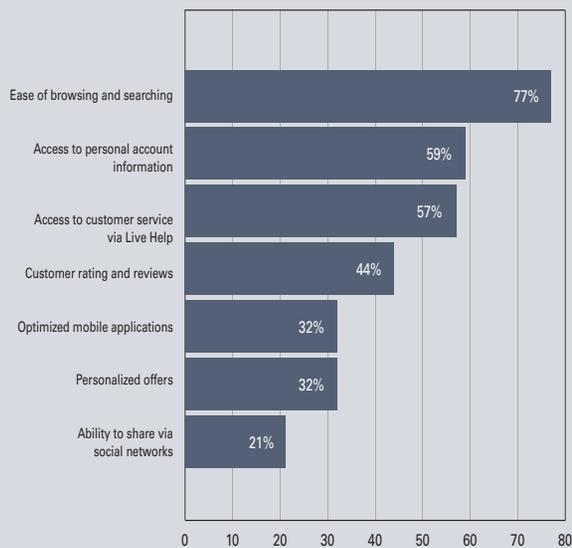
As consumers spend more time online shopping and managing banking, bills and more, they want easy access to service and support. When they need to ask a question or solve a problem, consumers worldwide said they prefer to get help online, ranking Live Help options like Live Chat and “Click-to-Call” second only to toll-free 800 numbers. In China and India, where consumers buy online more often than those in North America and Europe, online access to customer service is more popular than any other region in the world.

Expectations are high for online support at social media sites. While companies ramp up branding and special promotions on Facebook, consumers anticipate that customer service teams also are engaged and standing by. More than half of Twitter users expect a personal response within 2 hours of asking a question or posting a complaint and half of Facebook users expect a same-day response.

FOUR FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY INCLUDE:

- **The more frequently consumers go online, the more they want and value live online help.** Both Click-to-Call and Live Chat were ranked highly by consumers and ranked ahead of many other common Web site features.
- **Live Help, including Click-to-Call and Click-to-Chat, is among consumers’ top three choices for support.** Consumers’ first choice is in-person support followed by calling into an 800 number, but they have a strong preference for connecting with customer service using Live Help rather than other options like email response or online self-service.
- **Social media has been added to the list of consumer expectations for access to live support.** Consumers expect more than marketing and promotions at social media sites; they want direct access to product experts and service representatives.
- **Consumers prefer Live Help for specific reasons such as convenience and the ability to multitask rather than waiting on the phone.** Survey results suggest that the more consumers are online, the more comfortable they are communicating with companies there.

What is most important to you when you visit a Web site? (Select up to three)



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Worldwide, consumers are browsing and buying online more than ever. 80% of consumers research products online every week, up from 62% in 2009, and nearly 20% of consumers will buy online every week. The number skyrockets in China, where 10% make daily purchases and 57% said that they make an online purchase at least once a week – almost three times the average in most countries.

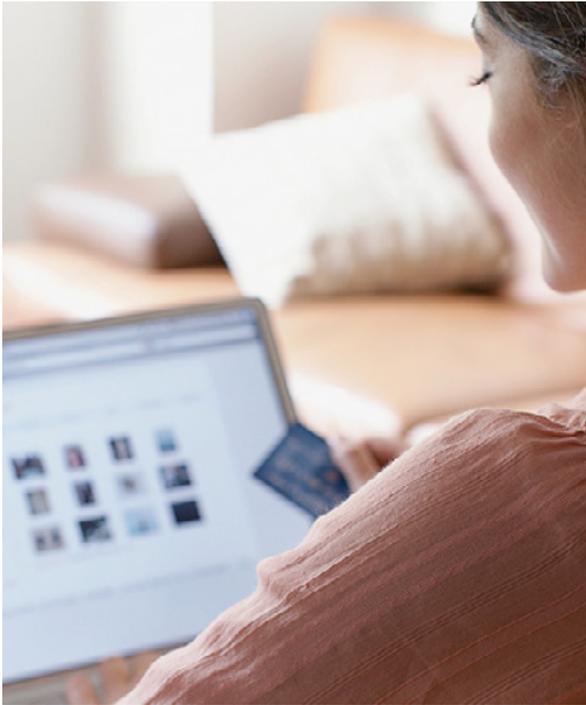
- 49% of consumers browse or research products online every day, up from 26% in 2009
- 90% of consumers browse online at least once a month, up from 78% in 2009
- In China, consumers outpace other regions as 76% of consumers browse or research online every day
- Across all regions, 77% said ease of browsing and search is among the most important features of a Web site followed by access to personal information (59%) and fast, easy access to customer support via Live Help (57%)
- Browsing becomes buying as 19% of consumers worldwide make at least one online purchase every week and 35% of consumers buy online every month
- Nearly 30% of consumers use Live Chat to interact with customer service and that number rises to 60% among consumers in China

When consumers are online, they want easy access to customer service representatives. Worldwide, nearly 30% of consumers have connected with customer service using Live Help options like Live Chat and Click-to-Call. 57% said that better access to customer service via Live Help is among the most important features they expect from a Web site, along with ease of browsing and searching products and access to personal account information. No industry is exempt. One in three consumers said they want to reach financial services and health care providers using Live Help online as well as in person and via 800 Numbers, compared with more than 40% that said they prefer Live Help for reaching communications service providers and travel and hospitality companies.

When asked which methods they have used to connect with customer support (select all that apply) and the benefits of each:

- 55% of consumers said they have used toll-free 800 Numbers to call customer service
- 50% have used Live Chat or Click-to-Call to interact with customer service representatives and this is fairly consistent across all types of products and services, including travel, retail, financial, communications and health care services
- 43% of consumers said they would prefer using Live Help to reach their communications service provider and 41% prefer it for travel and hospitality companies, compared with 35% who prefer Live Help for connecting with financial services and 33% for health care providers
- 38% said they prefer Live Chat because they can do other things while they are waiting for a response
- 34% said they use Live Chat when they want to save or print a copy of the conversation
- Why connect via phone? Most consumers (74%) said that they prefer a phone conversation when they want to be sure that the representative understands their question

As companies participate in social sites, customer service should be as involved as marketing. Social media has surpassed its beginnings as a marketing venue and become a critical channel for customer support. More than 40% of consumers using social sites such as Facebook value access to customer service and nearly one in three expect a company to provide direct access to customer support and product experts.



There are regional differences. In Latin America, where consumers said they browse and buy online more frequently, consumers expect companies to be more engaged in social media. 63% of Latin Americans expect companies to provide a Facebook page (vs. 46% worldwide), 31% expect a Twitter presence (vs. 17% worldwide) and 49% expect a company blog (vs. 29% worldwide). Only 7% did not have any social media expectations vs. 27% worldwide.

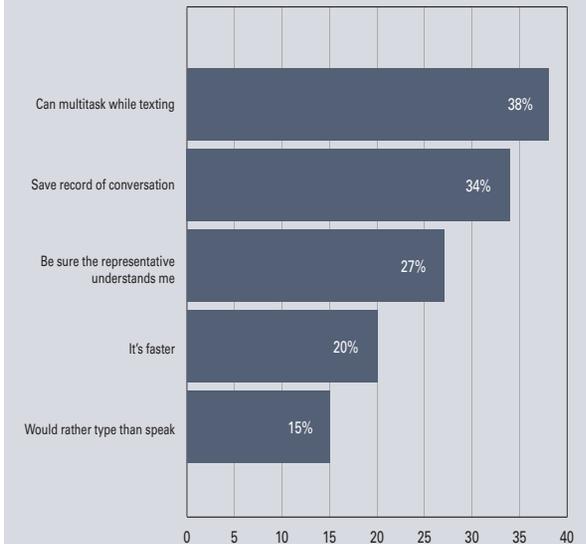
When asked which social media sites they use (select all that apply):

- 38% of women and 32% of men worldwide said they use Facebook, and in China, where the site is blocked in much of the country, 50% of survey respondents said that they use Facebook
- 11% of men and 9% of women said they use Twitter, and just 7% of men and 5% of women use LinkedIn

When asked what is most important when they visit a company’s social media site (select up to three):

- 62% go to social media sites for product news and information
- 56% of consumers age 18 to 34 go to social media sites for customer reviews, compared to 48% of consumers age 35 to 44 and less than 40% of those age 45 and older
- 43% said that a direct response to their questions is most important at a social media site and 31% expect the social media site to provide direct access to customer service representatives or product experts
- 32% go to social media for coupons and promotions

Why do you choose live (text) chat rather than a phone call?



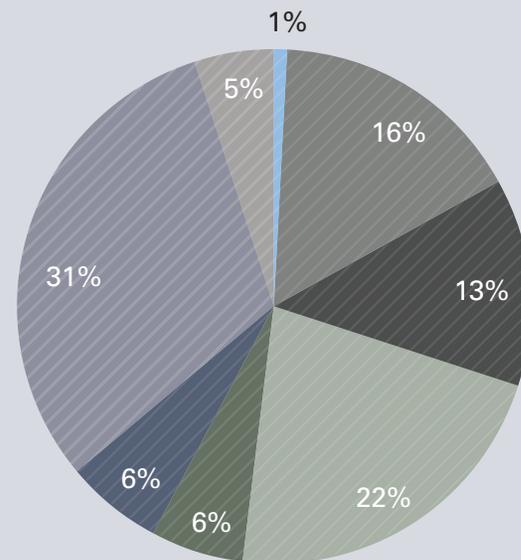
Much like an 800 Number or Live Help connection, consumers expect a timely response when they use social media to ask a question or post a complaint. More than half of consumers on Facebook expect a same-day response to questions and posts while 52% of consumers using Twitter expect a company to respond to within two hours. In other words, consumers anticipate that customer support is listening and participating in social media. This poses a challenge when social media programs are disconnected from customer-facing support teams.

When asked how quickly they expect companies to respond to a question or complaint on Facebook and Twitter:

- Across regions, 81% of Twitter users expect a same-day response to questions and complaints posted at the newsfeed
- 30% of Twitter users expect a response within 30 minutes, 22% expect a response within two hours and 29% expect a same-day response
- 29% of consumers on Facebook expect a response within two hours when they post a question at a company's page and 22% expect a same-day response

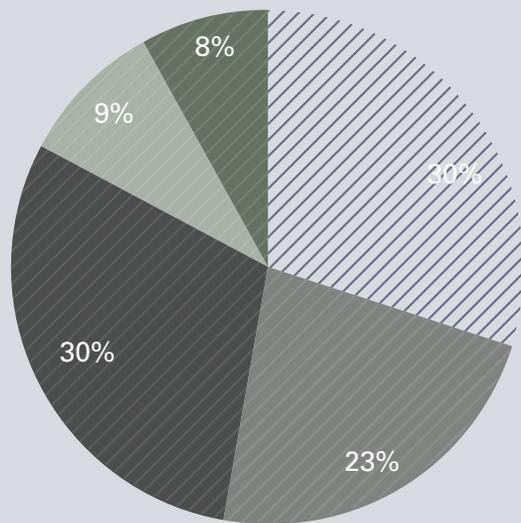
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How fast do you expect a company to respond when you ask a question or post a message at their Facebook page?



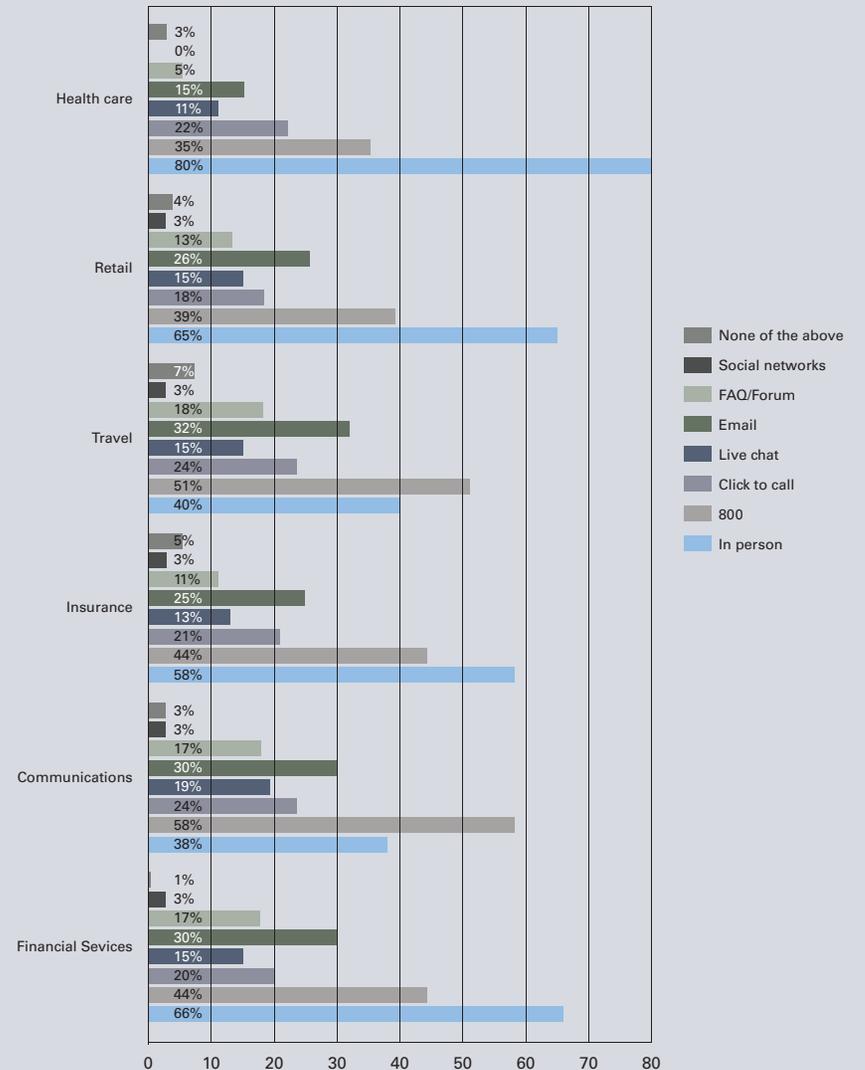
- Within 30 minutes
- Within 2 hours
- Same day
- Within 4 days
- I don't expect a response
- I don't post to company pages
- I don't use Facebook
- Other

How fast do you expect a response when you post a question or complaint via Twitter?



- Within 30 minutes
- Within 2 hours
- Same day
- Within 4 days
- I don't expect a response

How do you prefer to interact with customer support from each of these product or service providers?



Consumers in China spend more time online than their counterparts in other regions

CONSUMER VIEWS BY REGIONS

CONSUMER VIEWS IN CHINA

Consumers in China spend more time online than their counterparts in other regions, making it imperative that companies meet expectations for usability and response. Chinese consumers not only shop and buy online more often than consumers in other countries, they also are more likely to turn to online live support when they have questions, need advice or want to solve a problem.

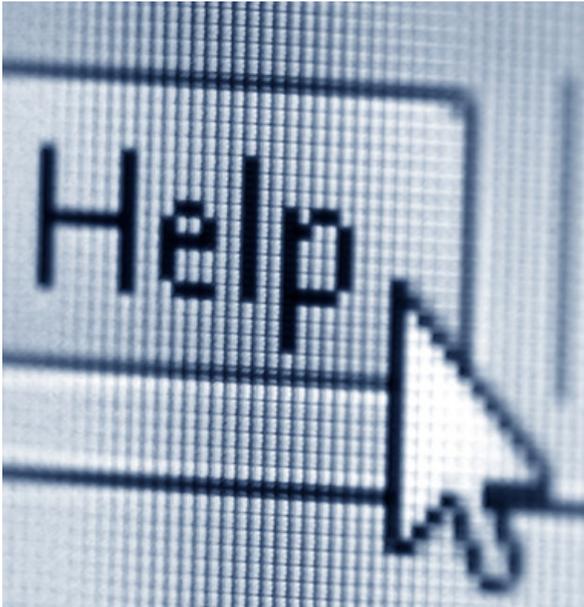
- 95% of consumers in China will browse or research products online at least once every week and 76% do so daily
- Browsing becomes buying as 75% make at least one purchase online every month (vs. 54% worldwide)
- More than twice as many consumers (60%) use Live Help online (vs 29% worldwide)

When asked what features they find most important at a Web site (select up to three):

- 92% of consumers in China said ease of browsing and searching products and information
- 88% said access to personal information
- 87% list Live Help among the three most important features of a Web site

Many social networks are blocked in China. However, consumers responding to this online survey said that they are very engaged in social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and Orkut, and they expect companies to be responsive to questions posed there.

- Of those that can access Facebook (which is blocked in much of the country), Facebook (49%) is the dominant social network for consumers located in China
- More consumers use Twitter (36%), Google+ (28%) and MySpace (26%) than in North America or Europe
- 51% expect companies to have a Facebook company page (vs. 46% worldwide)
- Among the top features that consumers in China expect to see at a company's social media site are customer reviews (67%), product information (62%) and direct response to questions (59%)
- Consumers in China are much more likely to lodge a complaint or leave a comment via social media (65% vs. 30% worldwide)
- 93% expect a response on Facebook the same day as their comment
- Twitter use in China is much higher with only 2% of consumers saying they don't use the service (vs. 53% worldwide)
- 89% of consumers in China using Twitter expect a reply within the same day they leave a comment or complaint



CONSUMER VIEWS IN MEXICO AND BRAZIL

Though Chinese consumers are online more frequently, consumers in Mexico and Brazil still outpace their peers in North America and Europe when it comes to using social media and browsing and buying products.

- 97% of consumers in Latin America rank “ease of searching and browsing” among the three most important aspects of their experience on a Web site
- 95% of consumers in Latin America rank Live Help among the most important features of a Web site (vs. 85% worldwide)
- 91% of consumers in Latin America rank access to personal information in the top three features
- More than 90% of consumers in Latin America search online for products weekly (vs. 81% worldwide) and 69% browse and research products daily (vs 49% worldwide)
- Nearly half (47%) of consumers in Latin America said they buy something online at least once every month
- Consumers in Latin America have a stronger preference for live support options, with 48% using Live Chat to engage with customer support (vs. 29% worldwide) and 26% using Click-to-Call

Consumers in Mexico and Brazil are more engaged in social media than their peers in North America and Europe and are more likely to expect customer support online.

- 84% of respondents in Latin America use Facebook and are more likely to use Twitter (43%) and Orkut (38%) than their peers worldwide
- Latin American consumers expect more from companies using social media than other countries, with 63% expecting a Facebook page (vs. 46% worldwide), 31% a Twitter presence (vs. 17% worldwide) and 49% expecting a company blog (vs. 29% worldwide). Only 7% did not have any social media expectations (vs. 27% worldwide)
- 57% of consumers in Latin America expect direct responses to their questions on social networks (vs. 43% worldwide)
- Consumers in Latin America are more comfortable posting customer service issues or complaints on social networks than other countries, with nearly half (49%) having done so already (vs. 30% worldwide)
- The majority (65%) of consumers in Latin America expect a response on Twitter the same day (vs. 38% worldwide)
- An even higher majority (77%) expect same day response on a company Facebook page (vs. 51% worldwide)

Europeans outpace consumers
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CONSUMER VIEWS IN EUROPE

Europeans outpace consumers in North America in their weekly online shopping. 78% of Europeans research products online weekly compared with 67% of U.S. and Canadian consumers, and 55% buy items online at least once each month compared with just 35% of their counterparts in North America. When they need direct help from customer service, here is what European consumers said they value:

- 59% of European consumers prefer to speak with customer service by phone, using an 800 Number or Click-to-Call
- Email and phone customer support are the preferred choices with 59% each
- As in North America, 94% of European consumers value search/ease of use over access to personal account information (85%) and Live Chat (81%) as the most important Web site features

Europeans have a strong presence on Facebook but they are less likely to share a complaint via the social site.

- 40% of Europeans expect companies to have a Facebook page
- Product information and peer reviews are the top two expectations for Europeans in social media channels
- Europeans are less likely to use social media channels to share a complaint with 34% surveyed stating they would never use social media to seek support or lodge a complaint
- 41% of Europeans expect a response from comments left on a company Facebook page within the same day



CONSUMER VIEWS IN NORTH AMERICA

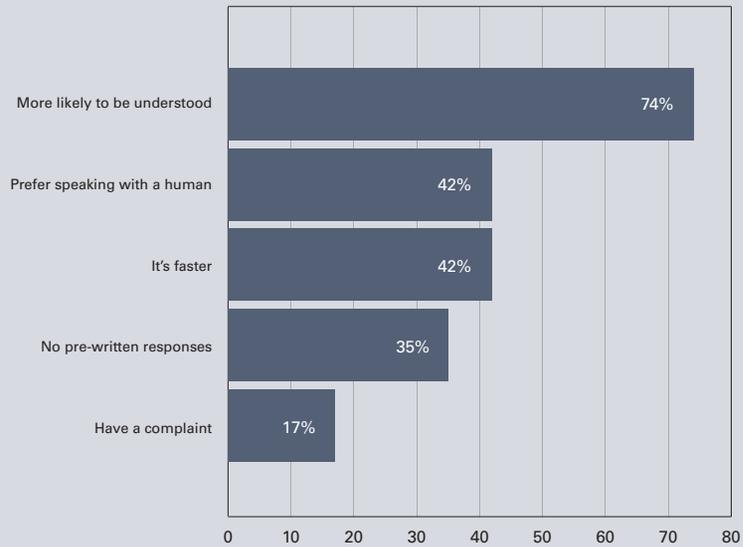
Though 67% of North American consumers are shopping online every week, they lag behind other regions such as Asia, where. The majority (67%) of North Americans are shopping online at least weekly with 35% purchasing products and services on a monthly basis. Once online, here is how U.S. and Canadian consumers prefer to engage with customer support:

- Live telephone support is the overwhelming preference for nearly all consumers in North America, with 71% using 800 Number call centers and 19% selecting Click-to-Call services
- Why live telephone support? 76% said that speaking live ensures they will be better understood and 56% said they just prefer to speak with a real person
- 84% of North American consumers find Live Help an important feature of a Web site ranking 3rd behind search/ease of use (93%) and the availability of personal information (86%)
- Multitasking and documentation were the top two reasons for North Americans using Live Chat but 30% said they never use this (vs. 18% worldwide)

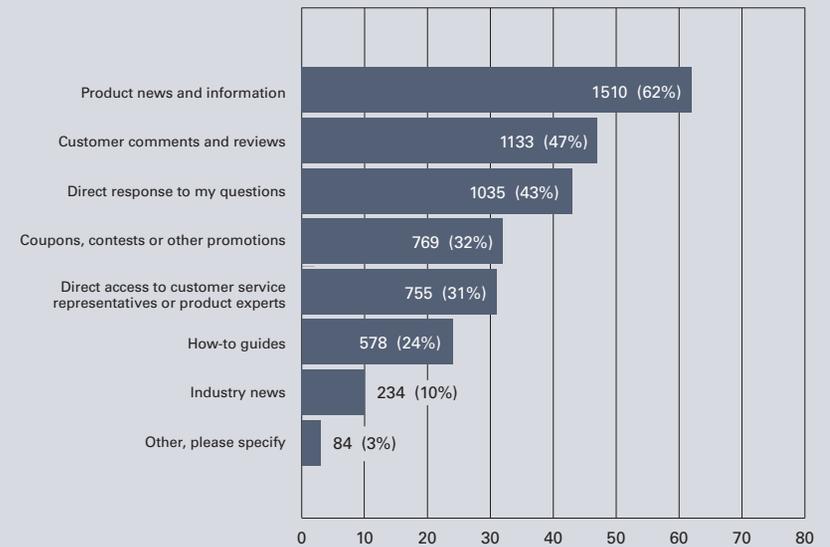
Social media is an opportunity and a responsibility for companies, as consumers gathering there fully expect companies to be ready to engage. Here is what North America consumers had to said about how companies should participate in social media:

- Facebook is the overwhelming favorite social network in North America consistent with the worldwide results but 46% do not expect companies to offer customer support on social networks (vs. 27% worldwide)
- Product information and promotions are the most important benefits of social networks with 30% expecting customer support services there (vs. 45% worldwide)
- Those who use Facebook expect a same-day response when they post a complaint or ask a question, placing pressure on companies to make sure their customer support teams are participating in social media
- Not everyone turns to social media for customer service. 40% of North Americans surveyed said they would never use social networks for customer support (vs. 27% worldwide)

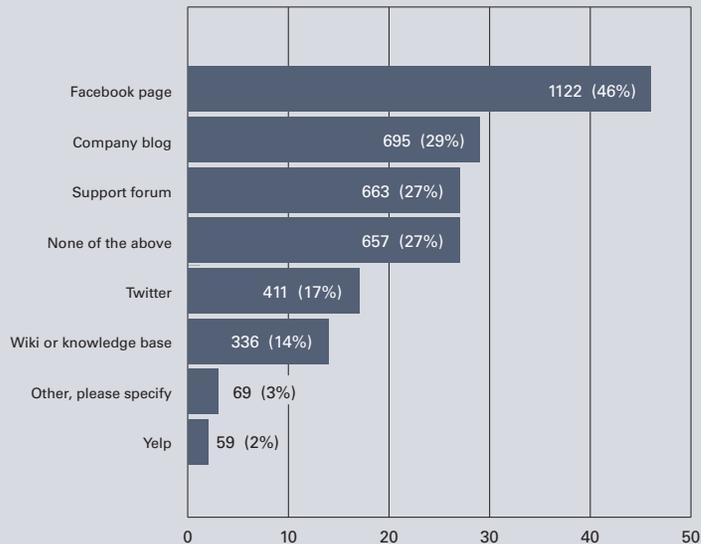
Why do you prefer to speak with a representative by phone, rather than using text chat?



What types of information are most important to you when connecting with brands via social media channels?



What social media services do you expect from a company for information and customer support?



METHODOLOGY

Responses to Oracle's cross-channel survey were generated from a pool of 3,111 consumers, age 18 and older, living in 15 countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, India, China, Australia, Mexico and Brazil. Survey consumers were profiled across more than 500 attributes, such as demographics, lifestyle, and behavioral characteristics. Consumers were further differentiated by characteristics such as browsing and purchasing frequency online, to ensure the sample represented was active on the Web. The study was commissioned by Oracle, and deployed by independent online market research firm, MarketTools, during the fourth quarter of 2011. This survey has an error rate of +/- 3% for each 1,000 consumers.

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