

NINTH EDITION | 2025



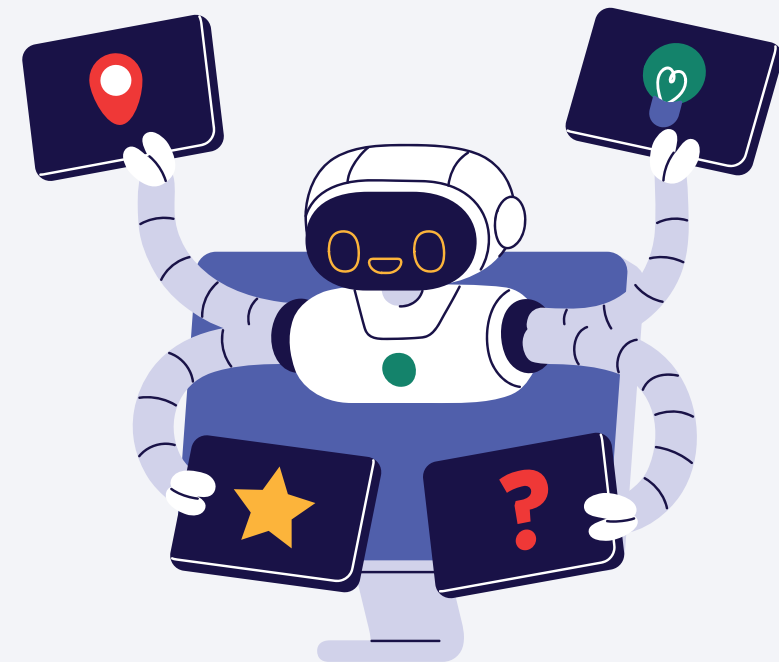
THE TRENDS SHAPING CX SUCCESS

THE STATE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN AUSTRALIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT BREAKDOWN

INTRODUCTION	3
KEY FINDINGS	4
CUSTOMER SERVICE PERCEPTIONS & PREFERENCES	
Perceptions of customer service excellence	6
What defines excellent customer service?	7
Customer service experience by industry	9
Preferred contact channels – complex and simple enquiries	10
CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCES	
Awareness & benefits of AI-powered customer service tools	13
State of customer experience delivery	15
Outcomes of negative customer experiences	16
Reasons for stopping or continuing purchasing after a negative experience	17
Impacts of negative and positive experiences	19
Sharing customer experiences	20
KEY TAKEAWAYS	22



2025 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TRACKING SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

CPM-Retail Safari's Annual Customer Experience Tracking Survey provides a comprehensive view of how Australian consumers perceive the state of customer experience today.

Now in its ninth edition, this report builds on a comprehensive dataset collected annually since 2016, providing a long-term perspective on the evolution of customer experience (CX). By analysing historical trends, we explore shifting consumer expectations, the key drivers of CX excellence, and the critical factors shaping the future of customer service.

This year's report examines consumer perceptions of customer experience quality, the elements that define service excellence, and the impact of poor customer experiences. We also examine the role of AI-powered chatbots, highlighting both their perceived benefits and their impact on human-led customer interactions.

Furthermore, we assess customer service performance across fourteen industries using our Customer Service Excellence (CSX) score, providing a benchmark for businesses looking to refine their CX strategies.

This report provides key insights and actionable takeaways to equip brands with the knowledge needed to enhance customer experience, foster loyalty, and stay ahead in an increasingly competitive landscape.

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

To undertake this year's research, we partnered with Swinburne University's CXI Research Group to conduct an online survey from December 5 to 9, 2024, with a sample size of 500 consumers representing the Australian population.

RESIDENTIAL LOCATION

NSW 27%	QLD 19%	WA 9%	ACT 3%
VIC 30%	SA 9%	TAS 4%	NT* 0%

*NT is excluded from this analysis due to insufficient sample size

GENDER

MALE 47%	FEMALE 52%
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*1% Other / Prefer not to answer

AGE

18-34 35%	35-54 35%	55+ 31%
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Note: The 2018 to 2024 State of Customer Experience surveys have been undertaken by the CXI Research Group at Swinburne University of Technology. The 2016 and 2017 surveys were undertaken by the ACRS Research Unit at Monash University.

KEY FINDINGS

DRIVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE

CUSTOMER SERVICE PERCEPTIONS

Customer service excellence perceptions in Australia remain **largely unchanged** over nine years, highlighting a **persistent gap** between **company efforts** and **consumer sentiment**.

WHAT MAKES FOR GREAT SERVICE?

Excellent customer service prioritises **accurate information**, **knowledgeable representatives**, and **consistent experiences**.

INDUSTRY CX PERFORMANCE RANKINGS

Food services and beauty & personal care lead CX, but clear improvement opportunities exist across all industries.

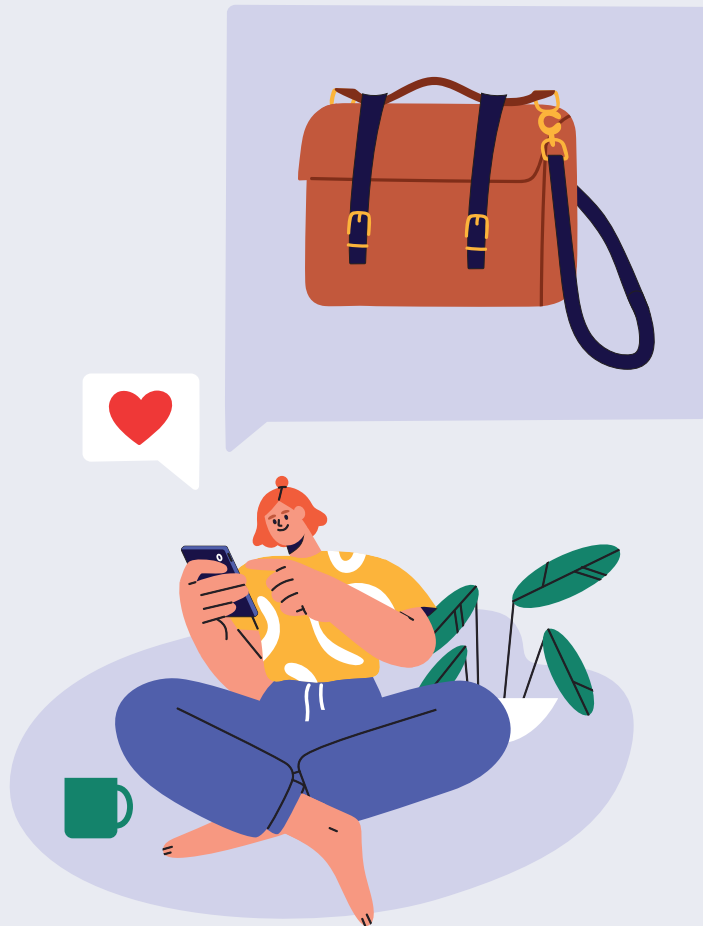
PREFERRED CONTACT CHANNELS

Human interaction remains essential for complex enquiries, with 77% preferring phone support, while self-service channels like company website/FAQ page is favoured for simpler queries (46%).



KEY FINDINGS

DRIVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE (CONT.)



AI SERVICE: AWARENESS & BENEFITS

Awareness of AI-powered customer service tools is strong (56%), with **24/7 service availability** viewed as the top benefit (67%).

OUTCOME OF NEGATIVE CX

A large majority (94%) of consumers stopped purchasing from at least one company after a negative experience.

POSITIVE/NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES IMPACT

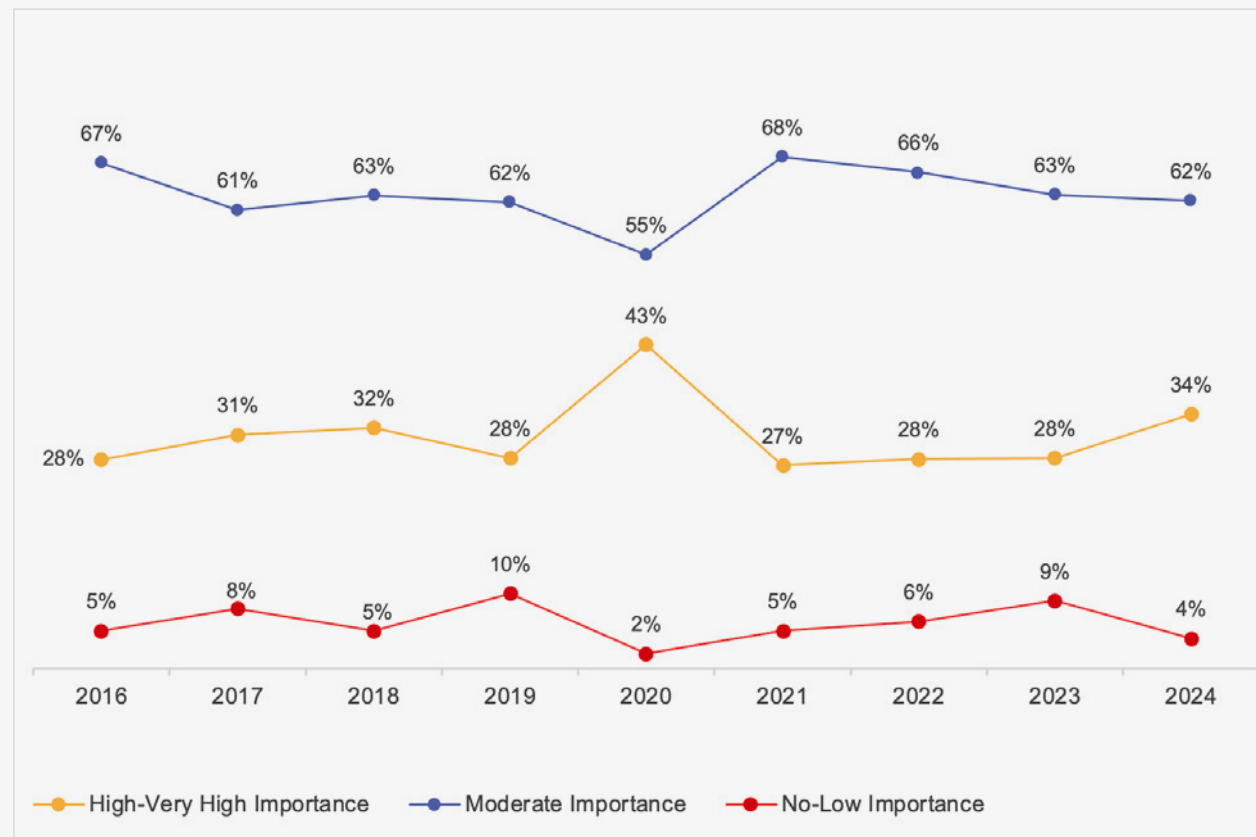
Positive experiences drive stronger consumer behaviour than negative experiences, with "Satisfaction" (70%) and "Repurchase" (69%) showing the highest influence.

WORD OF MOUTH

Australians remain highly active in sharing their customer service experiences, with a particular focus on negative ones (90%) vs. positive ones (76%).

PERCEPTIONS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Q: How much importance do you think companies place on delivering customer service excellence?



Note: Sample size= 500; Items measured on scale from 1 = Not important at all to 7 = Very high importance

KEY INSIGHTS

Perceptions of customer service excellence in Australia have remained largely unchanged over the past nine years, highlighting a consistent gap between company efforts and consumer sentiment.

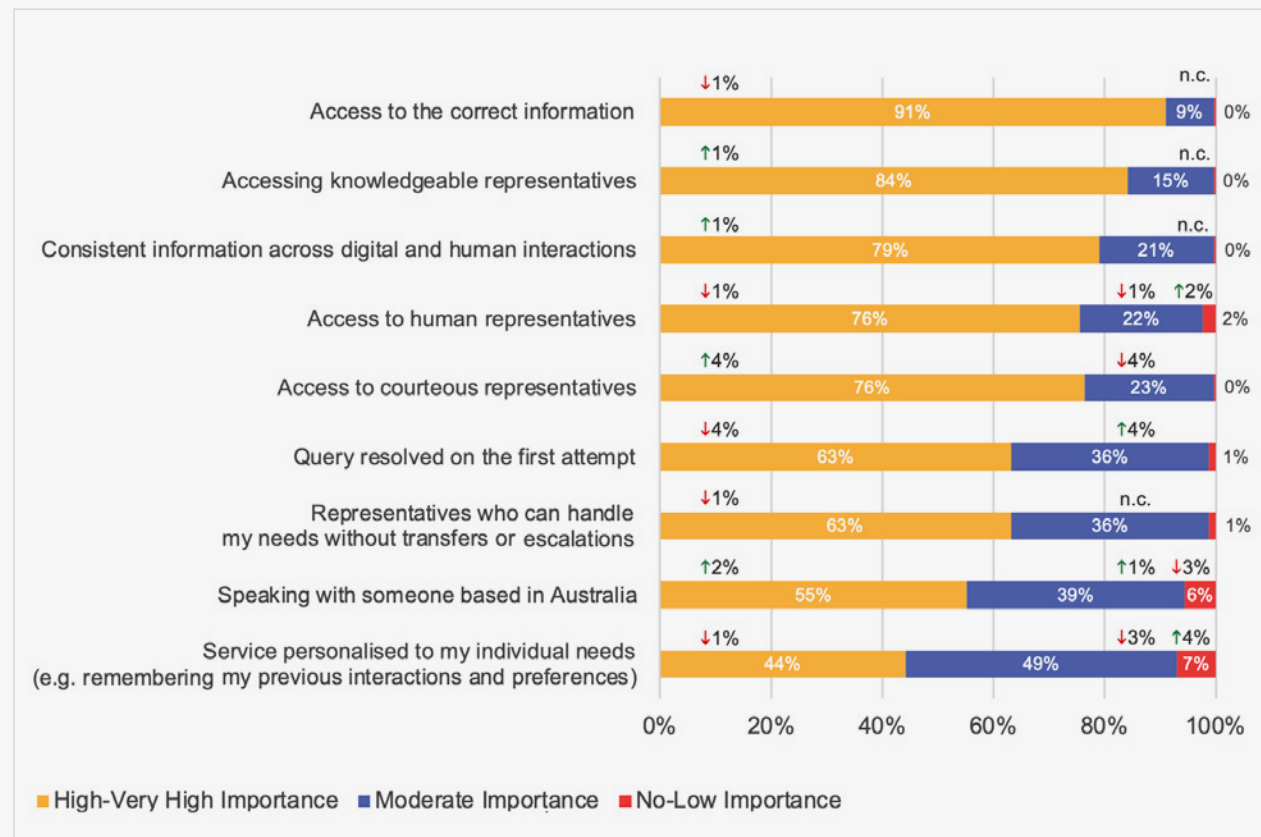
In 2024, **34% of consumers believed companies placed High-to-Very-High Importance** on service excellence, up from 28% in 2023. This is the strongest result since the pandemic peak of 43% in 2020, when businesses were recognised for enhancing their service, and represents a notable improvement over the long-term trend of 31%.

Despite this improved consumer view of customer service, **a majority (66%) of consumers continue to perceive that companies place No-to-Moderate Importance** on delivering great customer service. While this is an improved result over the 72% of consumers who felt this way in 2023, there remains significant opportunities for companies to improve how their customer service is perceived by Australian consumers.

By genuinely prioritising exceptional customer service, Australian brands have a substantial opportunity to differentiate themselves in the congested retail marketplace.

WHAT DEFINES EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Q: How important are the following factors in delivering excellent customer service?



Note: Sample size= 500; Items measured on scale from 1 = Not important at all to 7 = Extremely important.

KEY INSIGHTS

In 2024, access to correct information remains the most critical factor in delivering excellent customer service, with a remarkable 91% of consumers rating it as High-Very-High Importance.

This reaffirms the long-standing trend that shows **high-quality, accurate information is a cornerstone of customer experience excellence** in Australia.

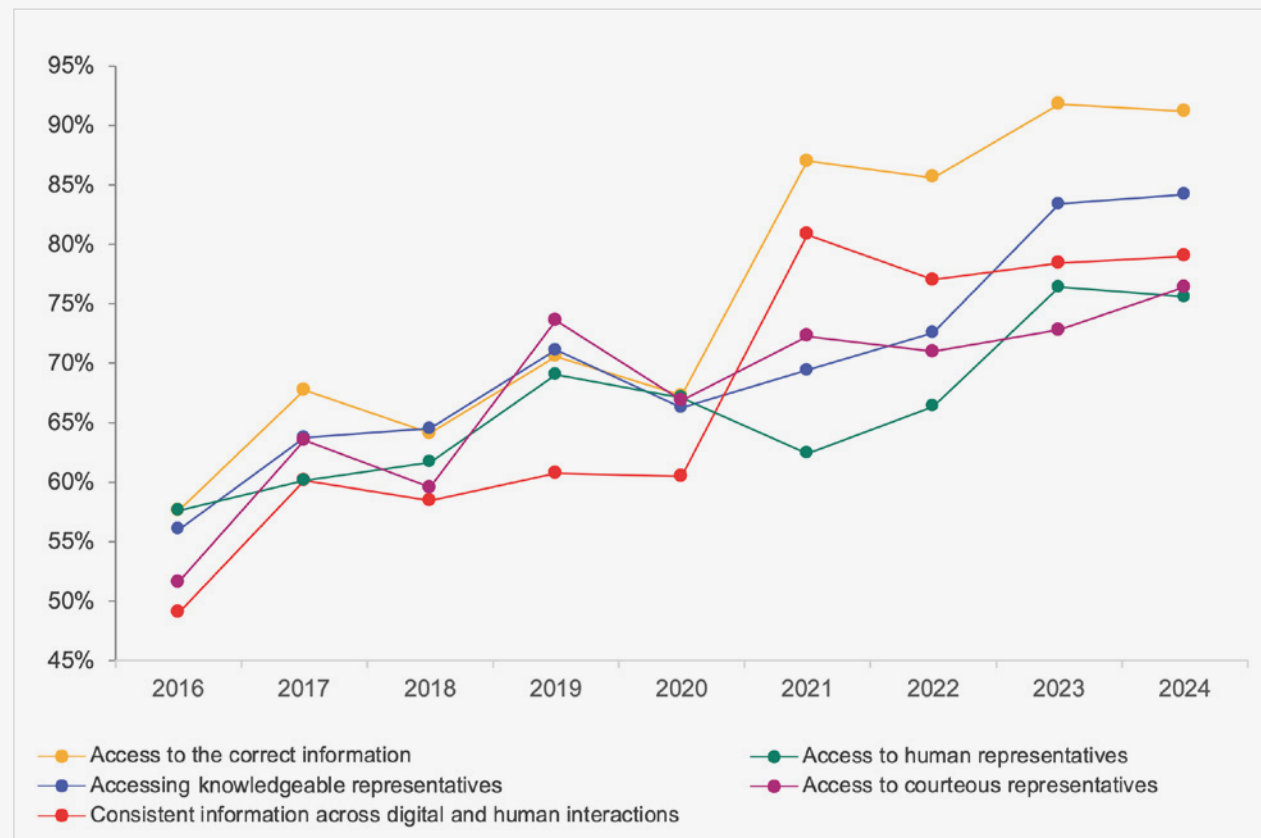
In a similar vein, **accessing knowledgeable representatives (84%) and maintaining consistent information across digital and human interactions (79%) continue to rank highly**, further reflecting consumers' prioritisation of reliable and accurate communication of information across all channels.

The emphasis on access to human (76%) and courteous representatives (76%) underlines the value of authentic, personable service.

Despite these trends for quality customer service interactions, having access to service personalised to a consumer's individual needs remains the lowest priority for consumers, with only 44% indicating High-Very High Importance. This aligns with last year's findings, demonstrating that while personalisation has its place, it is not a primary driver of customer service excellence.

TOP FACTORS OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

Q: How important are the following factors in delivering excellent customer service?



Note: Sample size= 500; Items measured on scale from 1 = Not important at all to 7 = Extremely important. Percentages shown based on the sum of respondents who rated High-Very High (Extremely) Importance

KEY INSIGHTS

Focusing on the top five-rated factors that make up excellent customer service in 2024, we see that the significant rise in customer service expectations that started in 2021 continues to be maintained.

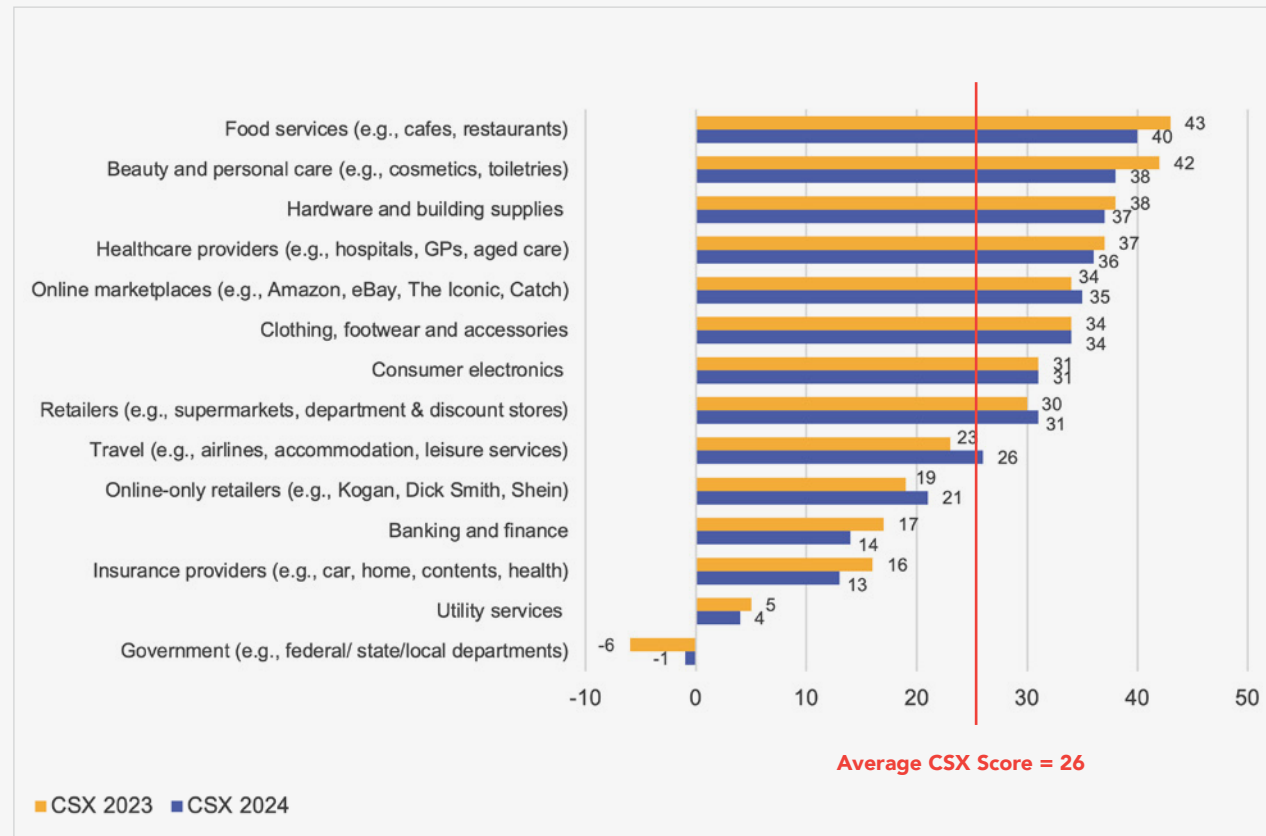
It is becoming increasingly apparent that, to some degree at least, Australian companies' efforts to maintain relationships with customers and facilitate purchases during COVID set a new baseline for consumer expectations – and these expectations are continuing to grow in importance.

Access to the correct information remains paramount, growing from 58% in 2016 to 91% in 2024. Other critical factors, including accessing knowledgeable representatives (84%) and consistent information across channels (79%), have also seen substantial growth. The average High-Very High Importance response across all nine surveyed factors increased from 53% in 2016 to 70% in 2024. For the top five, it is 81% in 2024.

This ongoing growth in consumers' service expectations demonstrates that **Australian consumers now expect service interactions to be not only accurate and efficient but also consistently human-centric**, reflecting a broader shift towards valuing authentic, informed, and seamless service experiences.

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE BY INDUSTRY

Q: Please rate your experiences with customer service over the past year for the following industries.



Note: Industries measured on a scale from 1 = Very Poor to 10 = Outstanding. Scores 1-4 categorised as Poor, 5-7 as Neutral and 8-10 as Excellent. Customer Service Excellence Score = The percentage of 'Poor' subtracted from the percentage of 'Excellent'. In this calculation, the Neutral percentage is not used. Customer Service Excellence Score: -100-0: Needs Improvement, 0-30: Good, 30-70: Great and 70-100: Excellent

KEY INSIGHTS

In 2024, the average Customer Service Excellence (CSX) score across industries in Australia remained steady at 26, reflecting a "Good" customer service performance overall.

Food services (40) and beauty & personal care (38) topped the rankings – though with a small reduction in their CSX scores over 2023's survey (-3 and -4 respectively). Hardware and building supplies were not far behind with a CSX score of 37.

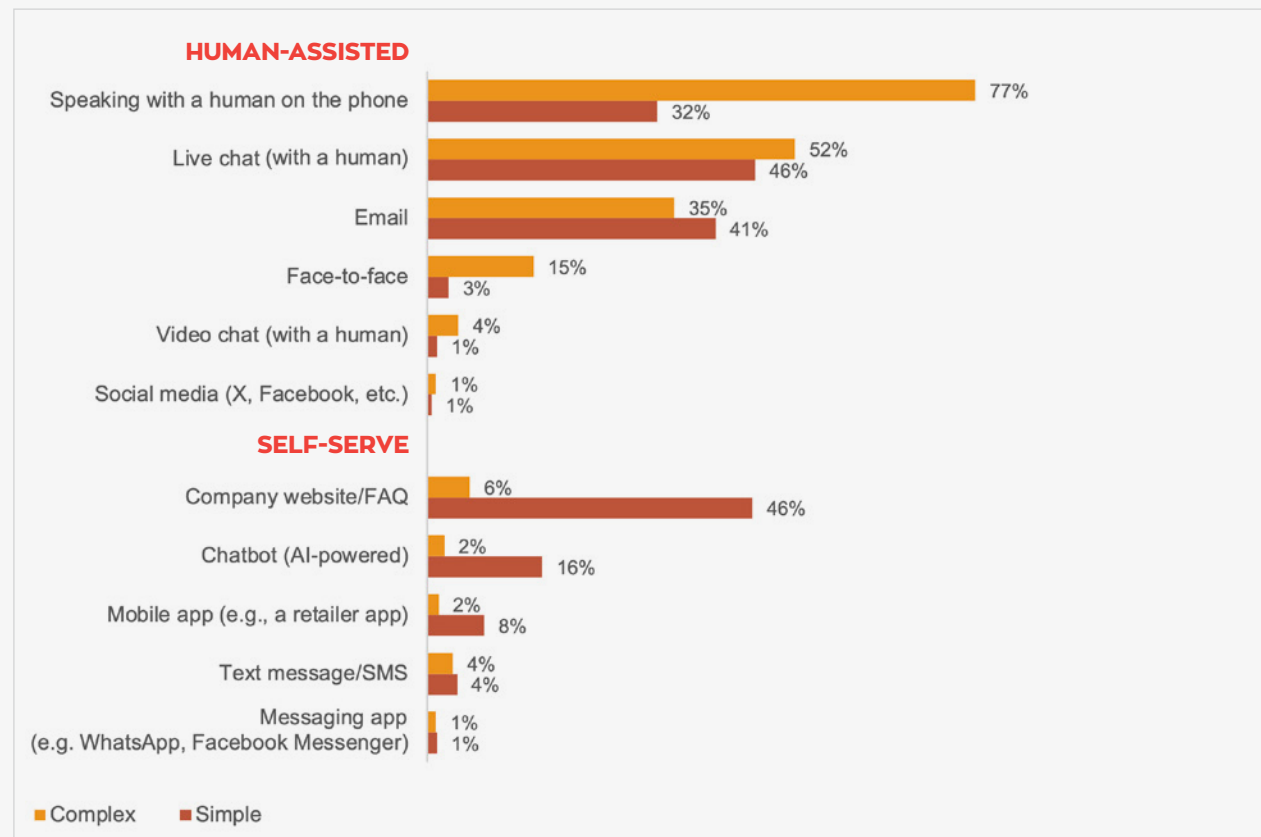
At the other end of the spectrum, **utility services (4) and government (-1) were once again the two lowest-ranked industries** based on customer service experience, showing that they continue to face significant challenges in delivering positive customer experiences. Notably, government was the biggest year-on-year improver, with its CSX score increasing by five points.

These CSX scores highlight that significant disparities in customer satisfaction remain evident across industries in Australia. While some industries deliver relatively strong service experiences, others are missing the mark. With no industries achieving "Great" or "Excellent" status, there is a clear opportunity for customer service improvement across the board.

CHANNEL PREFERENCES

SIMPLE VS. COMPLEX ENQUIRIES

Q: What are your preferred channels for contacting companies for complex and simple customer service enquiries? Please select your top two preferred channels for each type of enquiry.



Note: Sample size= 500; Messaging app (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger) data collected from 2024

KEY INSIGHTS

Australian consumers continue to demonstrate distinct preferences for customer service channels based on the complexity of their enquiries in 2024.

For complex enquiries, human interaction is strongly preferred, with consumers showing very little preference for using self-serve tools. **Speaking with a human on the phone remains the dominant preference**, with 77% of consumers preferring this channel. **Live chat (with a human) (52%) and email (35%) also rank highly for complex enquiries.** Interestingly, video chat with a human does not rank well for either complex or simple enquiries.

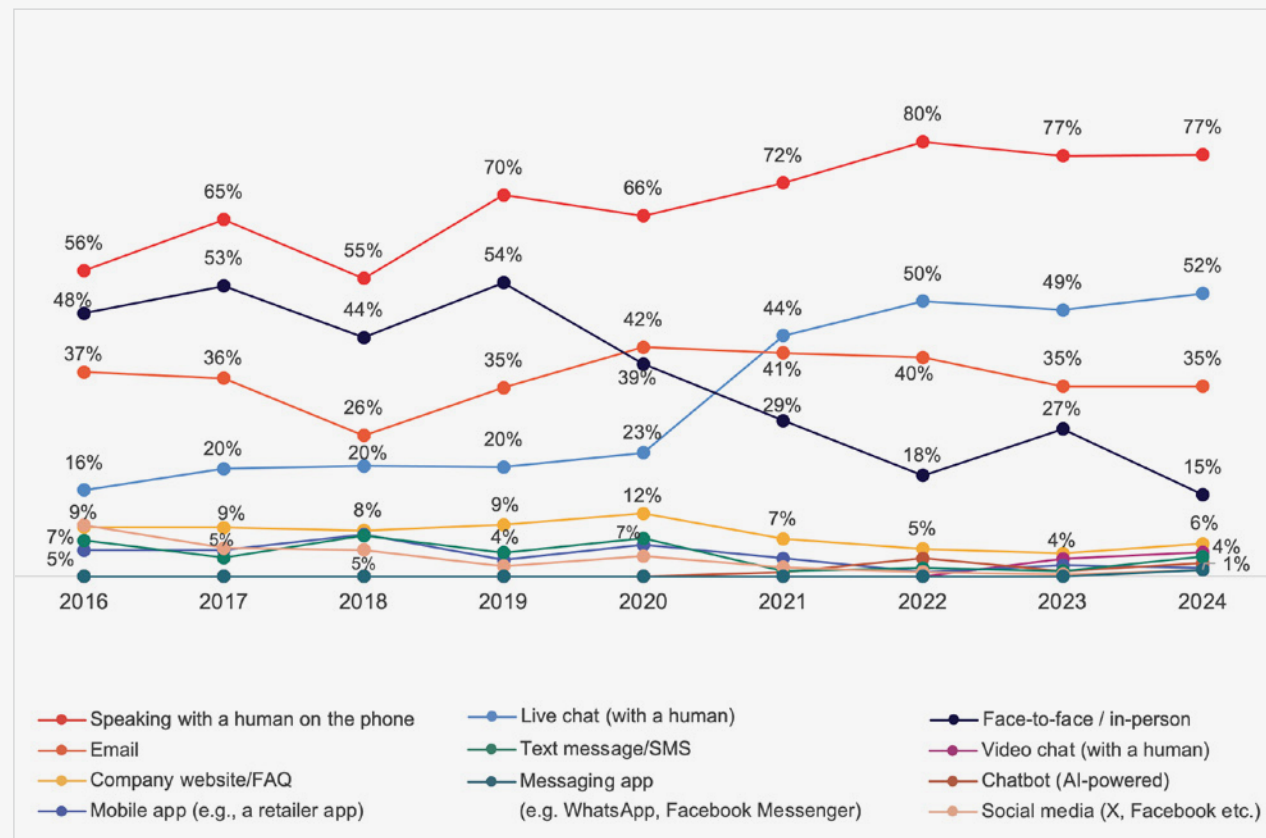
For simple enquiries, company websites/FAQs (46%) are the only self-service channel that consumers show a strong preference for, with chatbots (AI-powered) coming in a distant second at 16%. Human-assisted channels (live chat, email, phone) remain popular choices for simple enquiries.

These insights highlight a clear trend: while consumers are somewhat happy to use self-service tools, specifically company websites/FAQs, for straightforward enquiries, **human interaction remains important for simple enquiries and critical for managing more complex customer concerns.**

CHANNEL PREFERENCES

COMPLEX ENQUIRIES

Q: What are your preferred channels for contacting companies for complex customer service enquiries? Please select your top two preferred channels.



Note: Sample size= 500; Messaging app (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger) data collected from 2024

KEY INSIGHTS

Consumers in Australia continue to favour human-assisted channels for complex customer service enquiries in 2024.

Speaking with a human on the phone remains the top choice at 77%, consistent with last year and well above the long-term average of 69%, indicative of its growing popularity.

Live chat (with a human) has seen a significant increase in popularity, growing from just 16% in 2016 to 52% in 2024. This substantial rise indicates that consumers are perhaps becoming more comfortable with using live chat for complex issues as it becomes more ubiquitous.

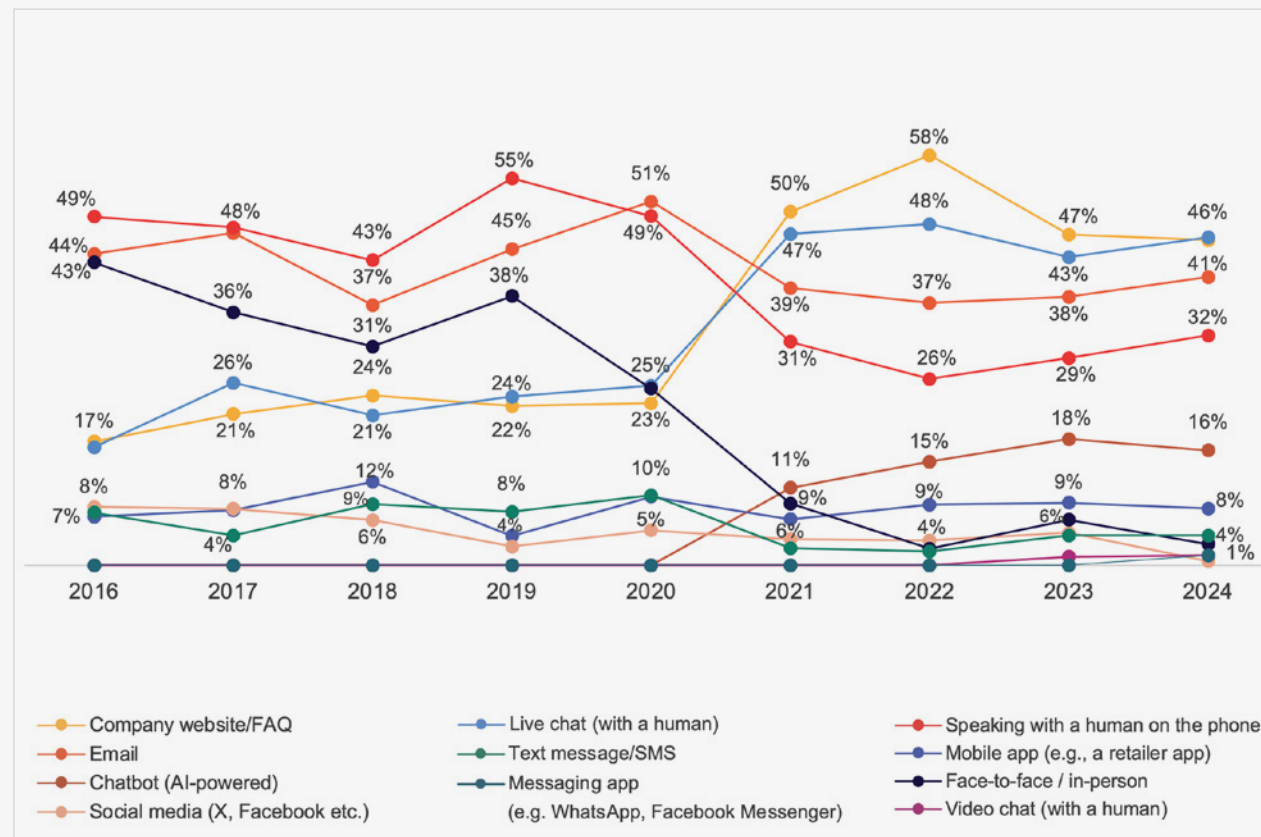
Notably, the preference for face-to-face interactions has continued to fall from 2016, dropping from 48% in 2016 to 15% in 2024 – the largest change among all channels over this period. This shift suggests that consumers increasingly prefer the convenience of speaking with a human over the phone, via live chat or by email, rather than having to allocate time to visit a physical location for support.

Self-service channels like company websites/FAQs (6%), mobile apps (2%), chatbots (2%), and social media (1%) remain the least preferred options for complex enquiries, highlighting the enduring importance of human interaction for complex customer service needs.

CHANNEL PREFERENCES

SIMPLE ENQUIRIES

Q: What are your preferred channels for contacting companies for simple customer service enquiries? Please select your top two preferred channels.



Note: Sample size= 500; Messaging app (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger) data collected from 2024

KEY INSIGHTS

Consumers continue to favour digital channels for simple customer service enquiries in 2024.

Company websites/FAQs and live chat (with a human) remain the top choices at 46%. Live chat (with a human) strengthened its appeal, rising from 43% in 2023 to 46% in 2024, demonstrating consumers' growing comfort with this interactive channel.

Email and speaking with a human on the phone also saw increased preference in 2024, up 3% to 41% and 32%, respectively.

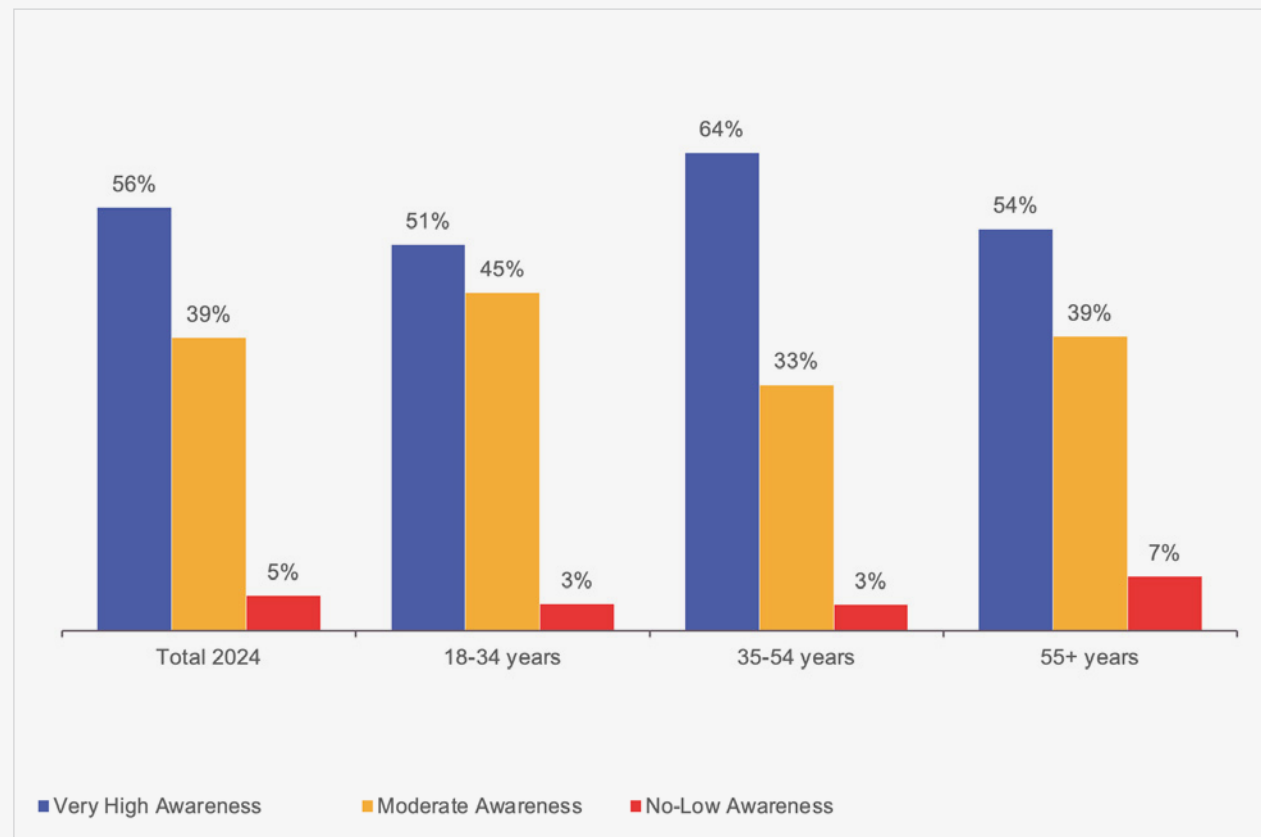
Face-to-face interactions experienced the steepest decline over the past nine years, plummeting from 43% in 2016 to just 3% in 2024 – highlighting the shift towards digital convenience for simple enquiries.

While chatbots (AI-powered) have shown increasing popularity in recent years and are the second-most preferred self-service channel in the 2024 survey, their growth in popularity appears to have plateaued since 2022. It remains to be seen whether the increasing sophistication of AI chatbots will lead to more consumers preferencing this channel for simple customer service enquiries.

Social media, video chat (with a human) and messaging apps continue to rank as the least preferred options for simple enquiries.

AWARENESS OF AI-POWERED CUSTOMER SERVICE TOOLS

Q: How aware are you of companies using AI-powered tools (e.g., chatbots or virtual assistants) for customer service in Australia?



Note: Sample size= 500; items measured on scale from 1= Not at all aware and 7= Very aware

KEY INSIGHTS

Awareness of AI-powered customer service tools in Australia is strong, with 56% of consumers indicating Very High Awareness.

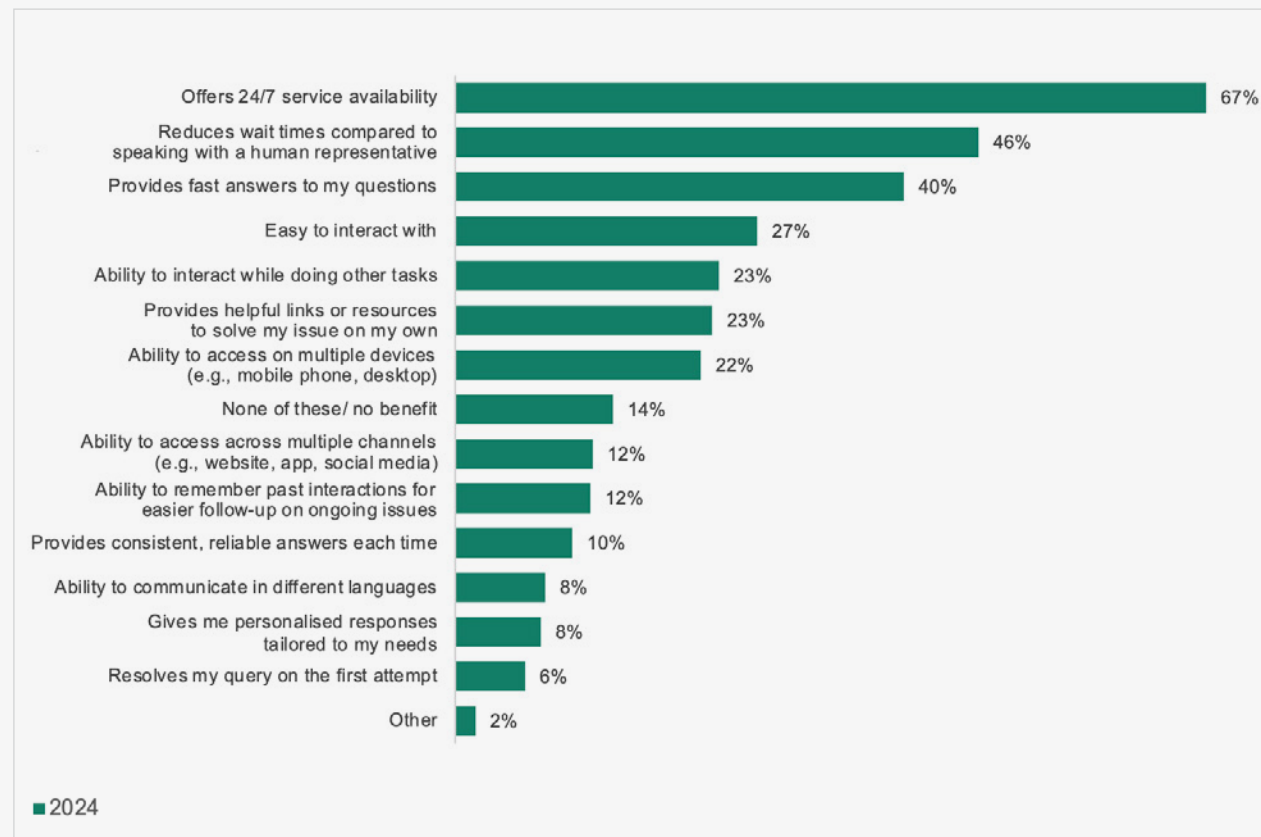
The data reveals generational differences in awareness levels:

- **The 35-54 age group leads with 64% Very High Awareness, indicating that this demographic has the greatest awareness of AI tools in customer service.**
- The 18-34 and 55+ age groups show comparable awareness, with 51% and 54% respectively in the very high category.
- Moderate awareness is most prominent among younger (45%) and older (39%) demographics, while only a small minority (3-7%) across all age groups exhibit low awareness.

These findings demonstrate a broad awareness of AI-powered tools in customer service, with middle-aged consumers leading the way in familiarity and engagement.

AI-POWERED CHATBOT CUSTOMER SERVICE BENEFITS

Q: What benefits do you experience when using AI-powered chatbots for customer service?



Note: Sample size= 500

KEY INSIGHTS

The key benefit consumers experience when using AI-powered chatbots for customer service is their 24/7 service availability, cited by 67% of respondents.

The second most recognised advantage is reduced wait times compared to speaking with a human representative (46%), followed by fast answers to questions (40%).

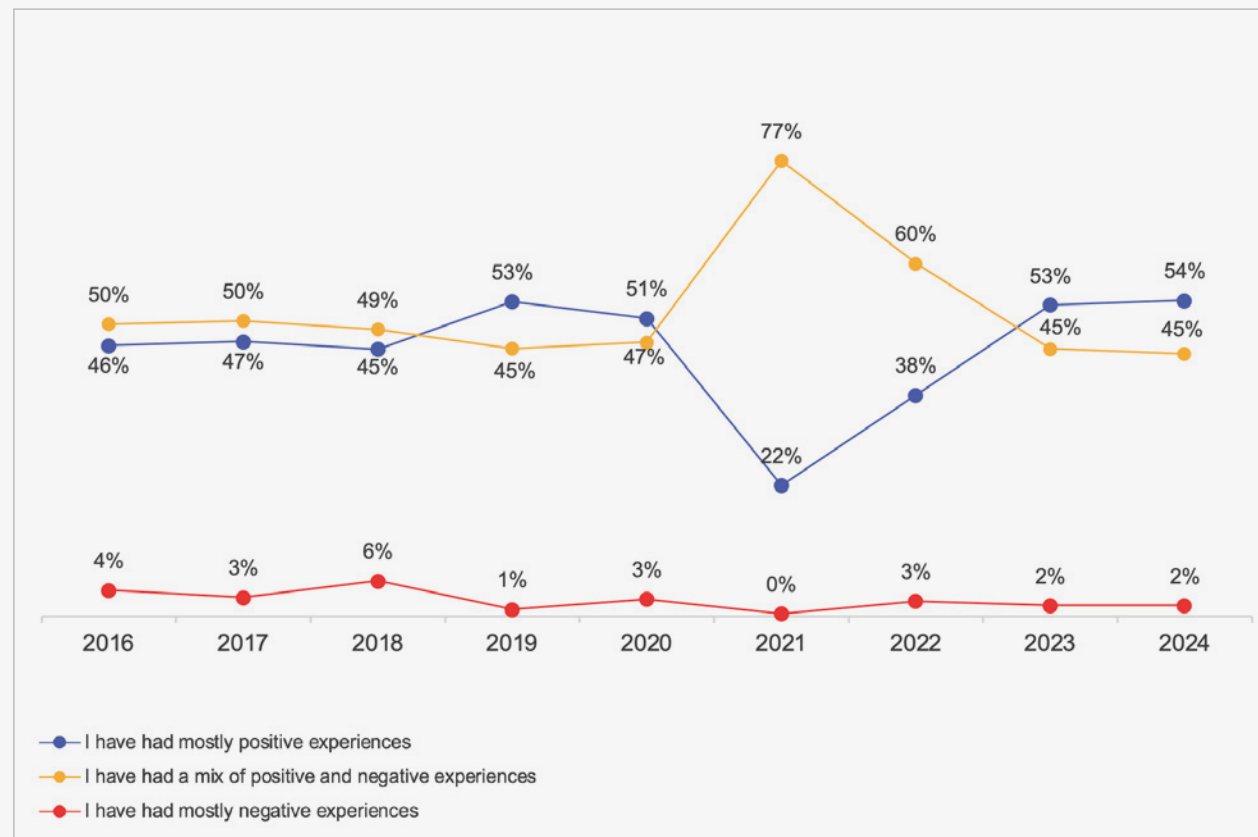
These perceived benefits are a clear indicator of **the value placed by Australian consumers on rapid, always-accessible customer support.**

Consumers also appreciate the ease of interaction (27%) and the ability to multitask while engaging with chatbots (23%). However, more personalised or advanced features, such as tailored responses (8%) and first-attempt issue resolution (6%), are not commonly cited.

Interestingly, **14% of respondents found no benefit when interacting with chatbots**, highlighting an opportunity for Australian companies to improve perceptions around the advantages and effectiveness of using AI-powered chatbots for customer service.

STATE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DELIVERY

Q: How would you describe your experiences purchasing products, services or visiting a store (online or offline) over the past year?



Note: Sample size= 500

KEY INSIGHTS

In 2024, customer experience delivery remained stable, with 54% of Australian consumers reporting mostly positive experiences.

When purchasing products and services in-store or online, the proportion of consumers having mixed experiences held steady at 45%, mirroring last year's results and aligning with the pre-pandemic average of 48%.

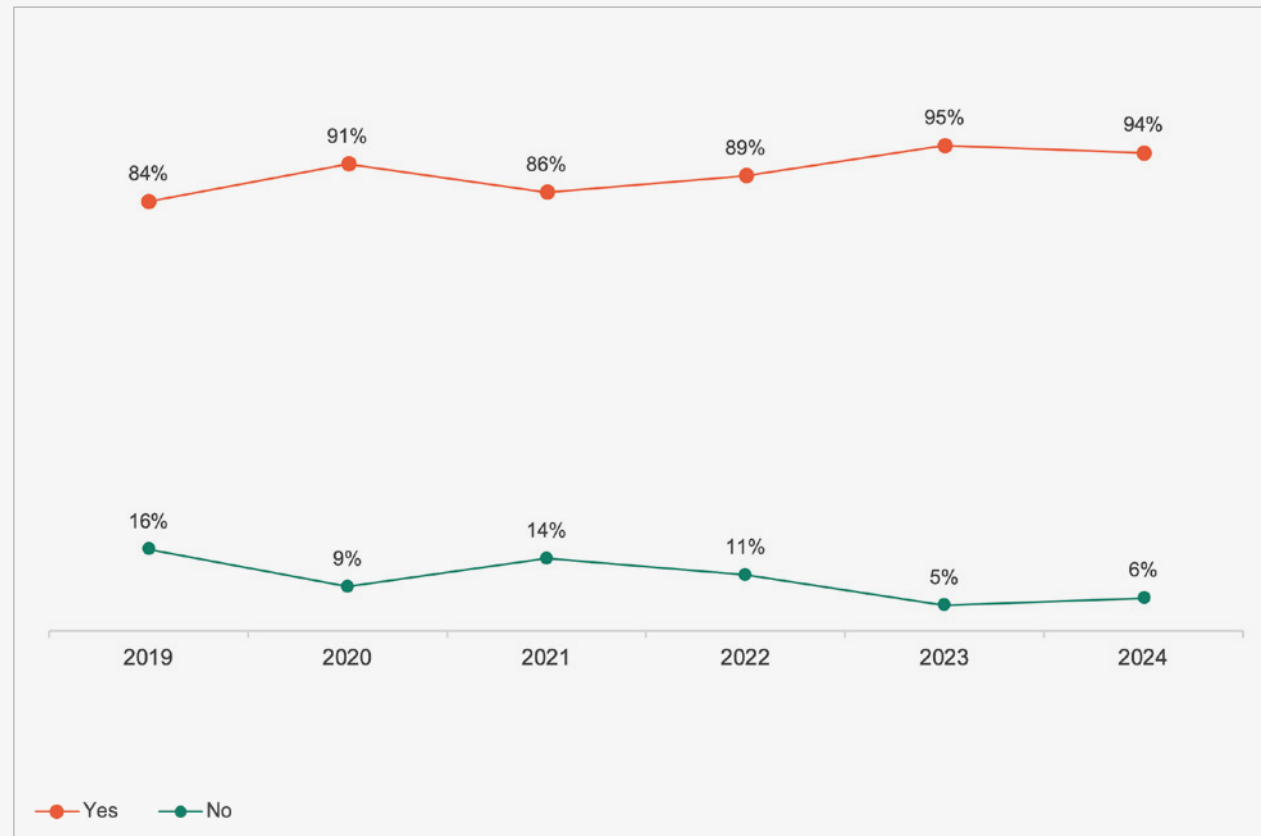
Notably, the proportion of consumers with mostly negative experiences remained low at 2%, consistent with the long-term average.

This recent consistency suggests that Australian **businesses have successfully stabilised customer experiences following the volatility of previous years.**

The sustained low rate of negative experiences may reflect the effectiveness of companies' CX strategies and their adaptability in meeting evolving consumer expectations.

OUTCOMES OF NEGATIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

Q: In relation to your negative experiences in the past year, have you stopped purchasing from a company?



Note: Sample size= 232

KEY INSIGHTS

A negative customer experience continues to influence consumer purchasing decisions strongly.

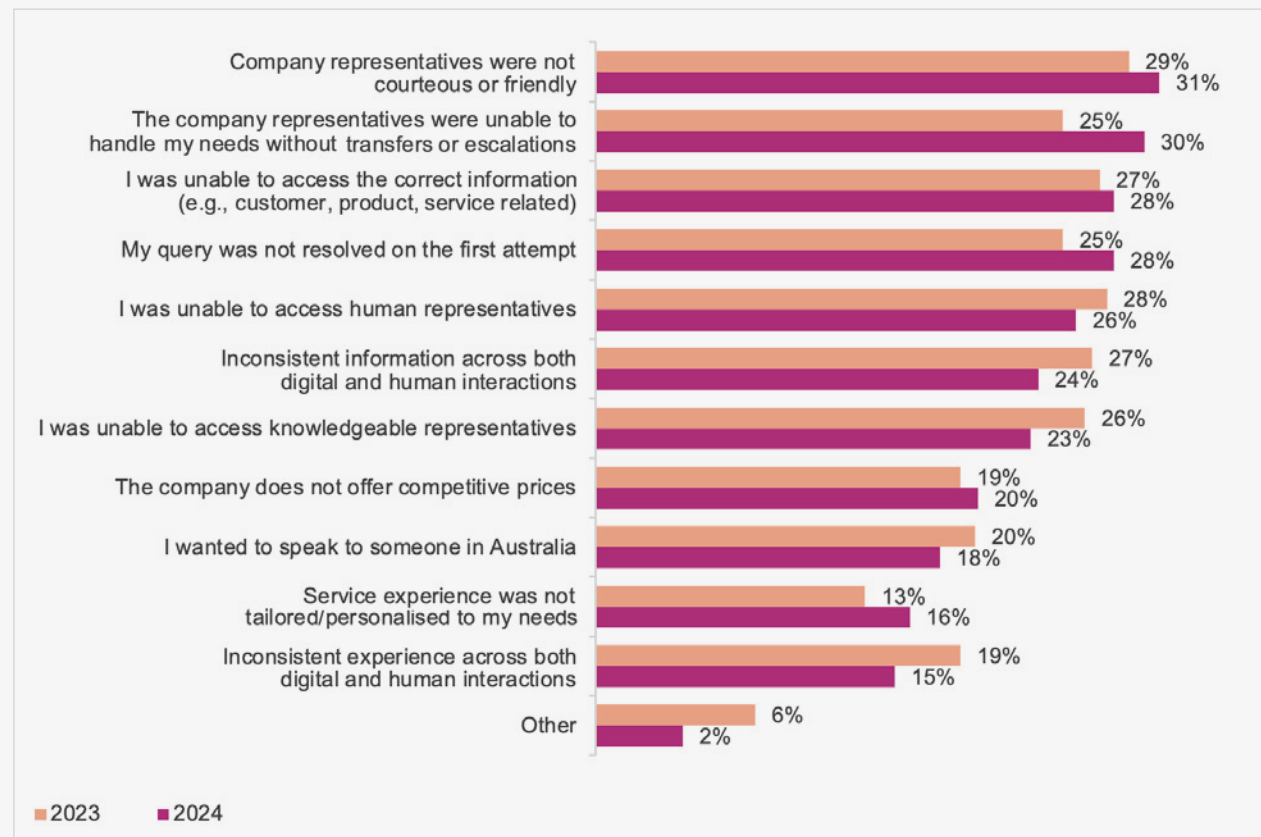
In 2024, **94% of consumers who had one or more negative customer service experiences stopped purchasing from at least one company.** This is a significant increase from 84% in 2019 and is consistent with other data in this survey that shows an upward trend in Australian consumers' customer service expectations.

The proportion of consumers who continued purchasing despite a negative experience has significantly declined, from 16% in 2019 to just 6% in 2024.

This data reinforces **the trend of a declining tolerance for poor customer service among Australian consumers**, highlighting the critical need for companies to prioritise positive customer experiences to maintain loyalty.

REASONS FOR STOPPING PURCHASING

Q: Why have you stopped purchasing from a company because of a negative experience?



Note: Sample size= 217

KEY INSIGHTS

The top reasons consumers cited for stopping purchasing from a company after a negative experience in 2024 were encountering unfriendly staff (31%, up 2% on 2023) and staff having difficulty handling enquiries without transfers or escalations (30%, up 5% on 2023).

Access to correct information (28%), prompt resolution of queries (28%) and an inability to access a human representative (26%) were also commonly cited reasons.

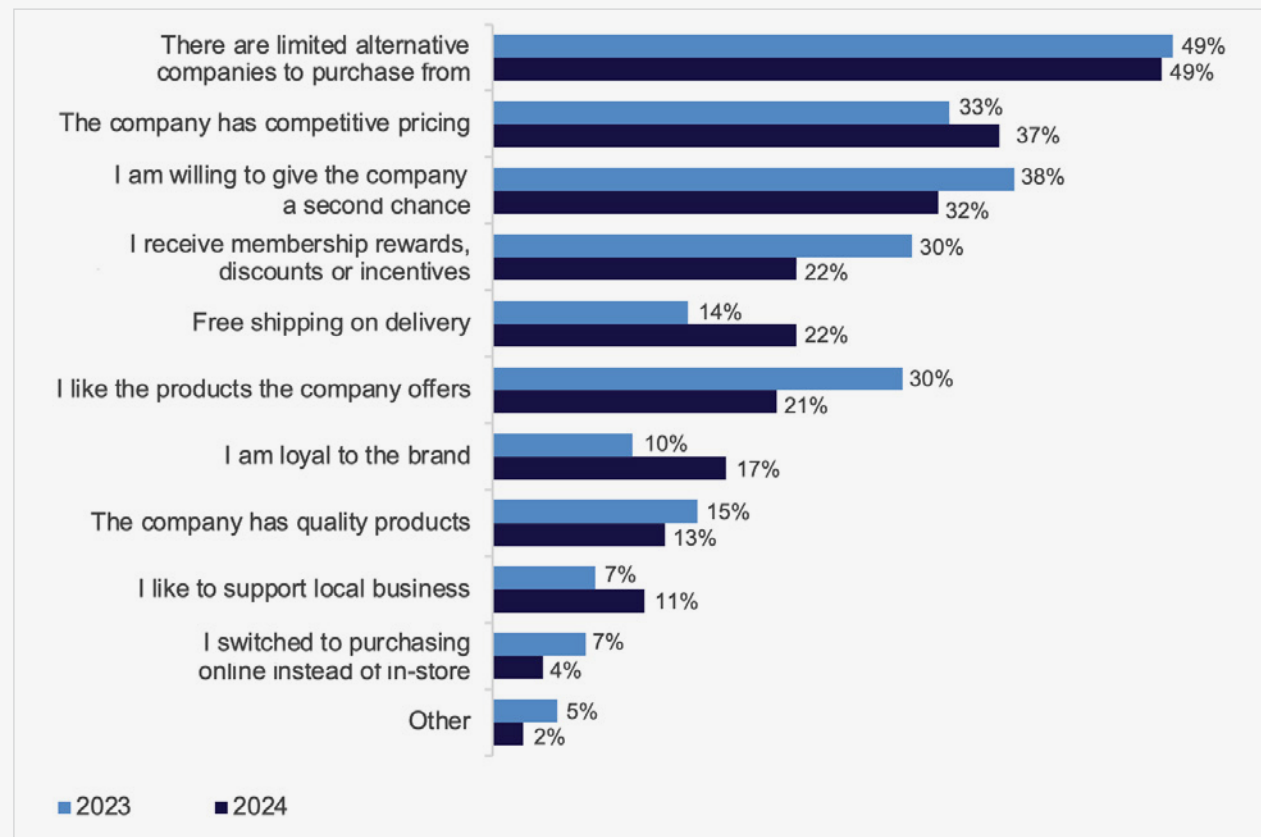
These findings highlight the **importance of having knowledgeable, well-trained staff on hand to interact with customers and provide a high-quality customer experience.** They also demonstrate the risk of customer churn when customer expectations are not met.

On a positive note, improvements were seen in reducing inconsistent experiences across digital and human interactions (-4%) and inconsistent information (-3%) from 2023 to 2024.

While progress is evident, businesses can benefit from increased attention to customer retention through continued enhancement of customer support and customer experiences. These are readily facilitated by well-trained, knowledgeable and friendly staff.

REASONS FOR CONTINUING PURCHASING

Q: Why have you continued purchasing from a company despite negative experience(s)?



Note: Sample size= 136

KEY INSIGHTS

A lack of viable alternatives remains the primary reason consumers continue purchasing from a company despite negative experiences, with 49% of respondents citing this in both 2023 and 2024. This indicates that limited competition can force consumers to stay with a brand even after poor experiences.

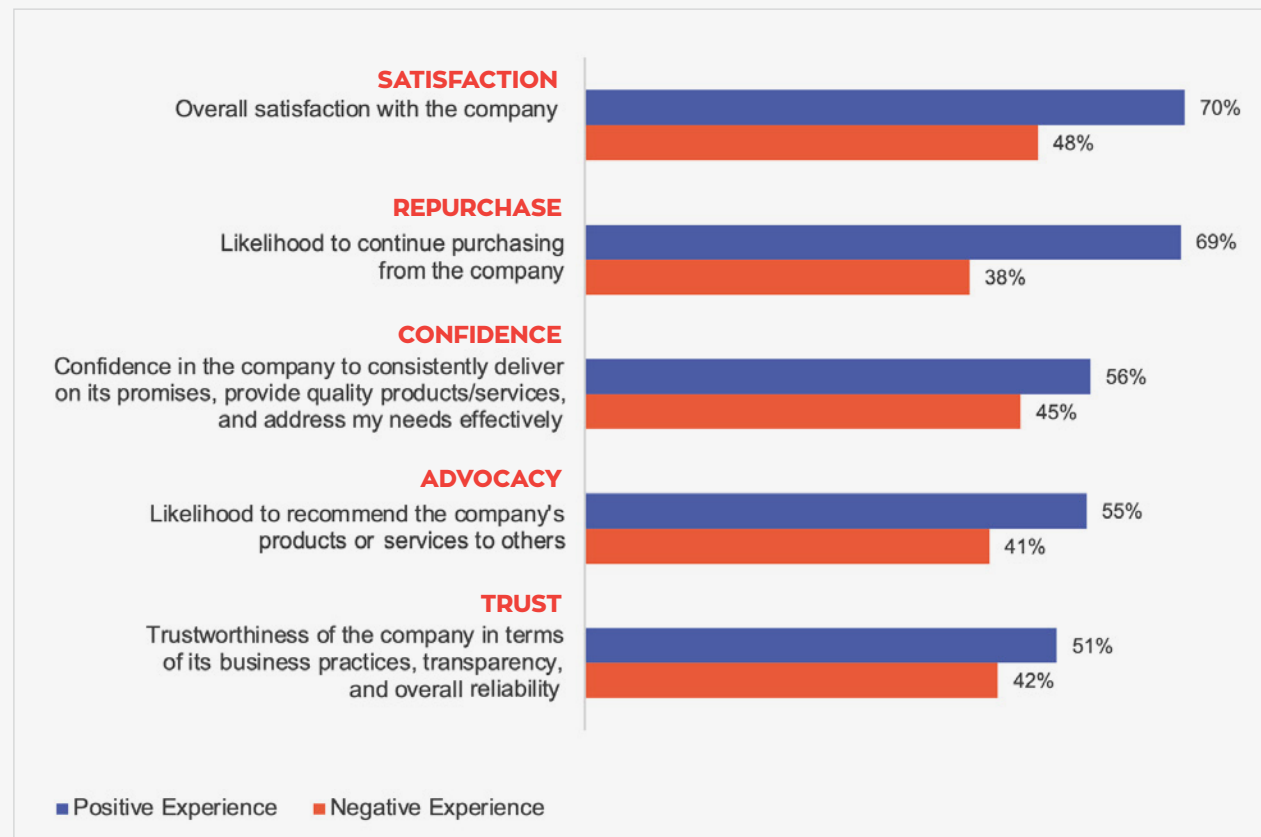
Competitive pricing has become a stronger factor in 2024, rising from 33% to 37%, making it **the second most important reason for maintaining purchases**. The willingness to give a company a second chance, while still a key factor, decreased from 38% to 32%, showing reduced consumer patience with companies that provide a poor customer experience.

Practical incentives like **free shipping on delivery saw a notable increase from 14% to 22%**, demonstrating how perceived savings can effectively retain customers. Brand loyalty also grew significantly, climbing from 10% to 17%, indicating that a strong connection with a brand can help retain customers despite past issues.

Liking a company's products declined sharply from 30% to 21%, suggesting that the product alone may not be enough to retain customers. Additionally, membership rewards, discounts, and incentives fell from 30% to 22%, highlighting that monetary rewards may be less effective at mitigating the effects of negative experiences.

IMPACTS OF POSITIVE VS. NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Q: To what degree have your positive or negative experiences influenced you in terms of the following factors?



Note: Positive experience sample size= 491 & Negative experience sample size= 232. Items measured on a scale from 1 = Not at all to 7 = To a great extent. Percentages shown based on the sum of respondents who rated High-Very High Influence.

KEY INSIGHTS

Positive experiences drive stronger consumer behaviour and sentiment than negative experiences across all key factors.

"Satisfaction" (70%) and "Repurchase" (69%) lead as the most influenced by positive interactions, emphasising the critical role of customer satisfaction in maintaining purchasing loyalty.

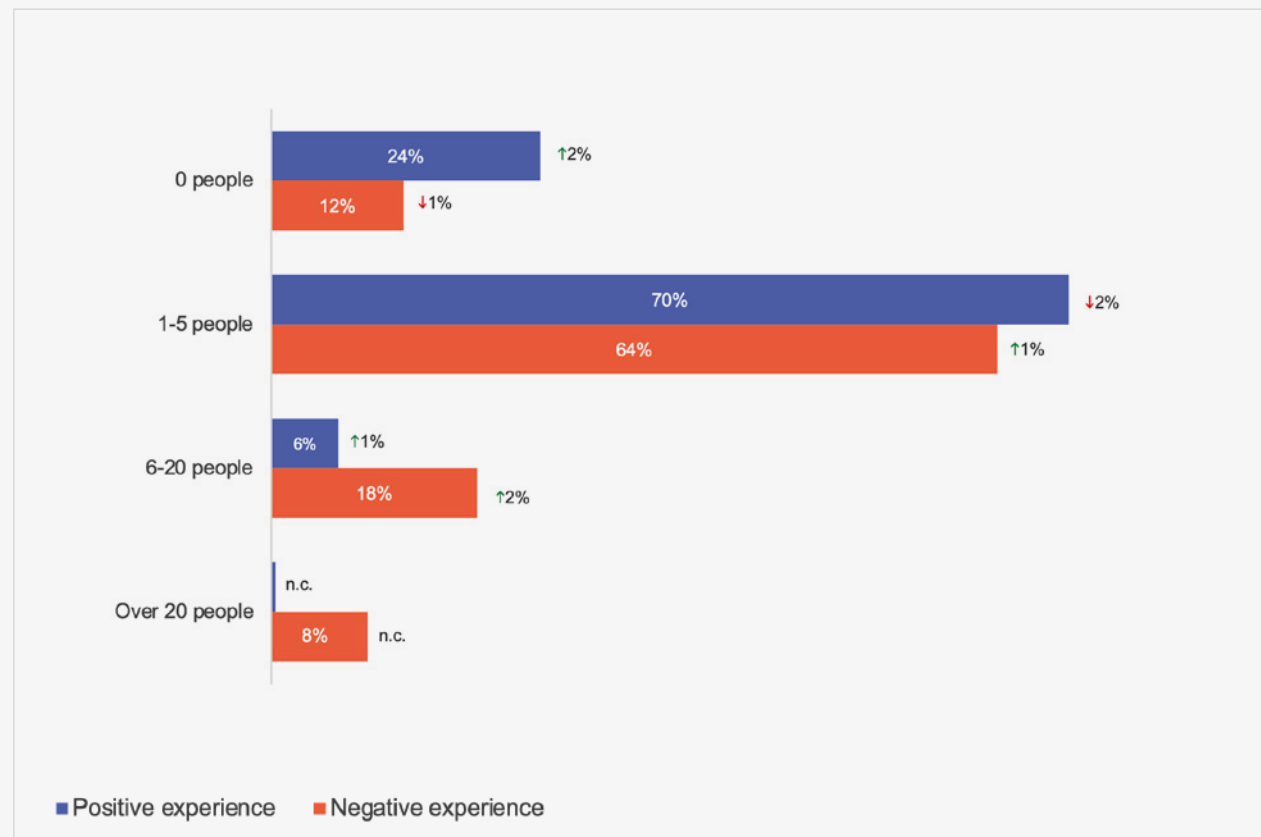
"Confidence" (56%) and "Advocacy" (55%) also benefit significantly from positive experiences, showing that satisfied customers are more likely to trust and recommend a company.

In contrast, **negative experiences have the greatest impact on "Satisfaction" (48%) and "Confidence" (45%),** highlighting the vulnerability of consumer perceptions when things go wrong.

Overall, delivering positive experiences is a powerful strategy for driving customer loyalty, advocacy, and sustained revenue growth, while mitigating the lasting damage of negative experiences.

SHARING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

Q: On average, how many people have you told about your positive or negative experiences?



Note: Sharing positive experience sample size= 491 & sharing negative experience sample size 232

KEY INSIGHTS

Australians remain highly active in sharing their customer service experiences, with negative experiences shared more frequently than positive ones.

Over the past year, 76% of consumers shared positive experiences with more than one person, while an even higher **90% shared negative experiences**.

A majority of respondents shared their experiences with 1-5 people, with 70% sharing positive and 64% sharing negative experience. Very few consumers shared their experiences with over 20 people. Negative experiences (8%) were still more likely to be widely shared (20+ people) than positive ones (0%).

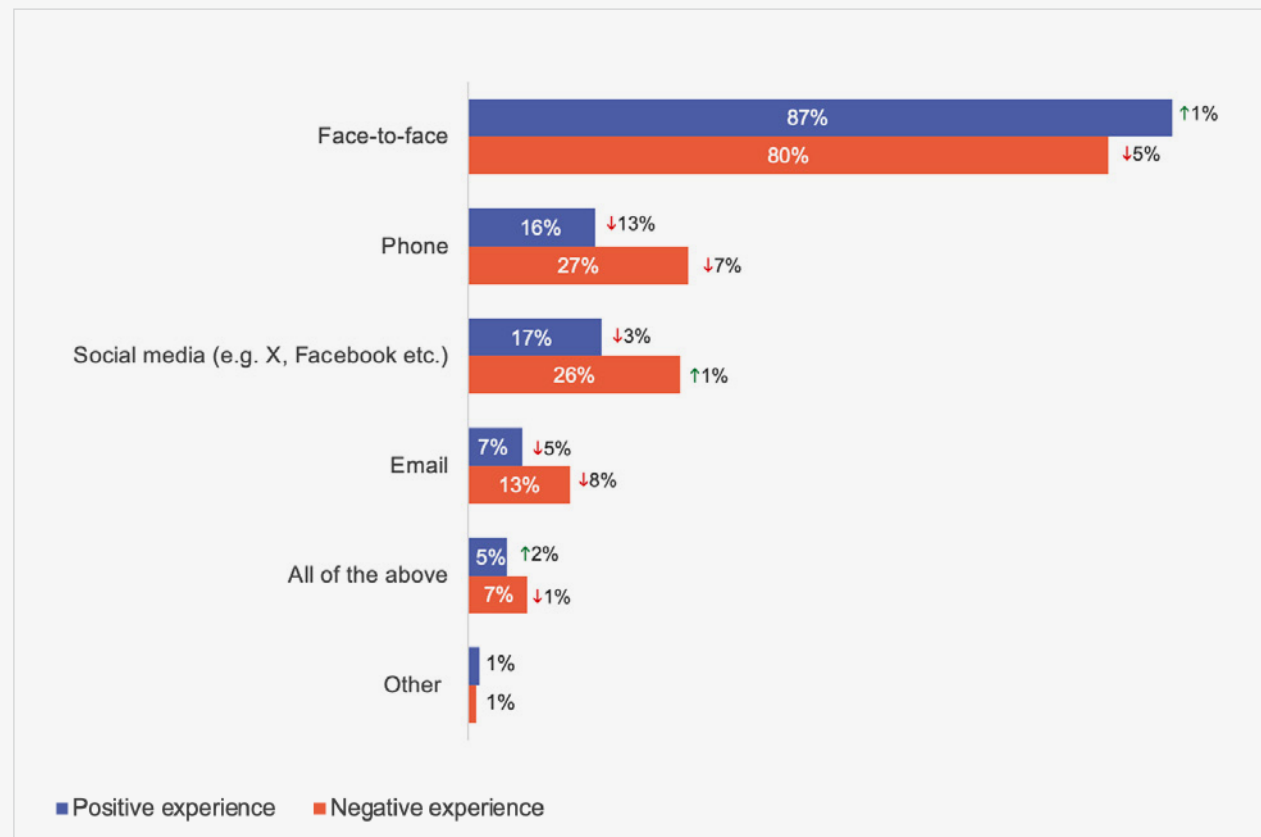
The 35-54 age group stands out as the most active in sharing customer experiences, with 95% sharing negative experiences and 78% sharing positive ones.

These findings highlight a trend of Australian consumers being highly active in sharing their customer service experiences, both positive and negative, emphasising the importance of consistently delivering positive customer interactions.

CHANNEL PREFERENCES

WHEN SHARING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

Q: When sharing your positive or negative experiences, how do you share your opinions?



Note: Sharing positive experience sample size= 328 & sharing negative experience sample size 205

KEY INSIGHTS

Consumers across all age groups continued to prefer in-person interactions when sharing both positive and negative customer experiences in 2024.

Face-to-face remains the dominant channel for sharing customer service experiences, with 87% of consumers sharing positive experiences and 80% sharing negative ones. While positive face-to-face sharing saw a slight increase (+1%), negative sharing declined by 5%.

The biggest shift occurred with phone sharing, where positive experiences dropped by 13% and negative experiences by 7%, showing a potential move away from phone interactions.

Social media saw a slight decline in positive sharing (-3%) but a modest increase in negative sharing (+1%). Email also experienced declines in both positive (-5%) and negative (-8%) experiences, highlighting an overall trend towards in-person sharing experiences.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

MEETING RISING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

With customer expectations continuing to rise, delivering excellent service needs to be a top priority for Australian brands. As consumers become increasingly discerning, achieving excellence in customer experience is crucial to building loyalty and standing out in a competitive market. The following key takeaways from the ninth edition of our survey report will help brands meet and exceed evolving customer expectations:



ELEVATING SERVICE TO MEET EXPECTATIONS

Australian consumers continue to hold increasingly high expectations for customer service. Despite a rise in the perception of service excellence in 2024, two-thirds of consumers still feel companies place no or moderate importance on service excellence. To close this gap, **brands need to prioritise excellent service across every customer interaction.**



THE HUMAN EDGE IN CX

Accessing knowledgeable representatives is crucial to delivering excellent customer service. Courteous and friendly staff are also vital, as unfriendly interactions were the top reason consumers stopped purchasing at a company in 2024. To drive customer service excellence, **brands must ensure that their customer-facing staff are well-trained, personable, and knowledgeable.**

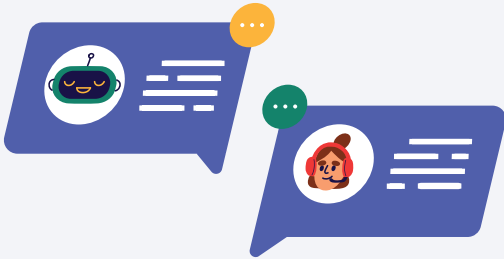
KEY TAKEAWAYS

TO IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE (CONT.)



POSITIVE EXPERIENCES DRIVE REPURCHASE

Delivering **positive customer experiences is a powerful strategy** for driving satisfaction and repurchasing decisions. Positive experiences also differentiate brands in competitive markets, fostering sustained revenue growth and long-term business success.



AI CHATBOTS: ALWAYS-ON, BUT ONE-SIZE-DOESN'T-FIT-ALL

AI-powered chatbots offer significant benefits, including 24/7 availability and reduced wait times for customers to have their enquiries dealt with. While they are the second-most preferred self-service channel for simple enquiries, consumers remain hesitant to use them for complex issues. Brands **should balance AI-driven efficiency with human-centric service** to meet and exceed customer expectations across all customer enquiries.



NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES DRIVE CUSTOMERS AWAY

A staggering 94% of Australian consumers stopped purchasing from at least one company in 2024 due to a negative customer service experience. This declining tolerance for poor service emphasises **the critical need for brands to prioritise positive, human-centric experiences** to maintain loyalty and avoid revenue loss.

INSIGHTS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

AUTHORS

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CPM AUSTRALIA

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE & INSIGHT (CXI) RESEARCH GROUP

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Working collaboratively with organisations to become experience-led through the combination of human insight and technological innovation. Achieving this through deep collaborations, guided by fundamental theory, knowledge and practice, including a range of methodologies and frameworks.



For further information visit:

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