

## **Human interaction remains a vital component of customer satisfaction for Singapore consumers, even in the 'digital age', Accenture Strategy Study Finds**

**SINGAPORE;** May 24, 2016 – Eighty-three percent of consumers in Singapore prefer human interaction over using digital channels to solve customer services issues, according to new research from Accenture (NYSE: ACN). The report also found that 68 percent of consumers have switched service providers in the past year due to poor customer service, with retailers, banks, and internet service providers being the worst offenders. In Singapore, the estimated cost of customers switching due to poor service is US\$26 billion.

The [Accenture Strategy](#) report, '[Digital Disconnect in Customer Engagement](#)', is based on the company's 11th annual [Global Consumer Pulse Research](#), which gauges the experiences and attitudes of 24,489 consumers around the world about marketing, sales and customer services. Some 350 consumers in Singapore were included in the sample.

"Companies have lost sight of the importance of human interaction and often make it too difficult for consumers to get the right level of help and service that they need," said Alison Kennedy, managing director, Asean, [Accenture Strategy](#). "Companies wrongly assume that their digital-only customers are their most profitable, and that customer service is a cost. Consequently, they over-invest in digital technologies and channels and lose their most profitable customers – multi-channel customers – who want experiences that cover both digital and traditional channels."

### **The importance of human connection in customer services**

Human interaction remains a vital component of customer satisfaction, even in the 'digital age'. Eighty-three percent of Singapore consumers prefer dealing with human beings over digital channels to solve customer services issues and get advice (76 percent). Another 47 percent of consumers say they are even willing to pay a higher price for goods and services if it ensures a better level of service.

Physical or in-store experiences are also highly valued amongst consumers. Some 57 percent agree that in-store service is the best channel for getting a tailored experience, and half (50 percent) say they are more willing to be sold new or upgraded products when receiving a face-to-face service compared to online. Another 39 percent say they would rather go to a store first than use digital channels to get advice on the best products and services.

"Singapore companies have reached a tipping point in their customer's digital intensity and need to rebalance their digital and traditional customer services investments if they want to improve loyalty, differentiate themselves and drive growth," said Kennedy. "Companies abandon the human connection at their own risk and are facing the need to rebuild it to deliver the varied and tailored outcomes that customers demand."

### **Improving customer experience**

The [Accenture Strategy report](#) reveals that there is huge room for improvement in the delivery of today's customer services. Seventy-six percent of consumers admit that it is frustrating dealing with a company that does not make it easy to do business with them. Another 74 percent expect customer service to be easier and more convenient, while 69 percent want it to be faster. Complaining on social media about poor customer experience is the norm for nearly half (47 percent) of consumers, who admit to taking to social channels in order to vent.

Once a provider loses a customer, 52 percent of consumers will not return. However, there are measures companies can take to hold on to them. Eighty-four percent of 'switchers' feel the company could have done something to retain them. About 81 percent report that if companies could provide customers with better live or in-person customer service, it would have impacted their decision to switch providers.

### **How leaders of customer services succeed**

Organisations that want to rebalance their digital and traditional customer service channels should look to:

1. **Put the human and physical elements back into customer services:** Companies should rethink their investment strategy to focus on delivering satisfying customer experiences – not methods of interaction – and ensure channel management approach delivers integrated experiences.
2. **Make it easy for customers to switch channels to get the experiences they want:** Build customer service channels that enable consumers to fluidly move from digital to human interaction to get the outcomes they desire.
3. **Root out toxicity:** Define and address the most toxic customer experiences across all channels. These experiences can directly impact profitability. Identify the experiences that have the greatest potential downside and leverage those insights to guide an investment strategy.
4. **Guarantee personal data security:** 87 percent of consumers say it is extremely important that companies protect the privacy of their personal information. By not selling or sharing customer data with other companies, and guaranteeing that safeguards are in place to protect it, consumers will be more willing to hand over personal information which can be leveraged to deliver better experiences.



Please visit [www.accenture.com/GlobalConsumerPulseResearch](http://www.accenture.com/GlobalConsumerPulseResearch) to read the full report. Join the conversation at [@AccentureStrat](https://twitter.com/AccentureStrat) #GCPR.

### **About the research**

Accenture Strategy's Global Consumer Pulse Research is an annual online research project that assesses customer attitudes towards marketing, sales and customer service practices and customers' behaviors in response to companies' practices. The 2015 survey includes online responses from 24,489 consumers in 33 countries: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, UAE, Thailand, South Korea, Singapore, Norway, Mexico, Malaysia, Ireland, South Africa, Russia, Argentina, Turkey, Poland, Philippines, Netherlands, Belgium, Czech Republic, India, Indonesia, France, Germany, Japan, China, Brazil, Spain, Canada, Australia, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States. Respondents were asked to evaluate their experiences of up to four industries out of 11 industry sectors: retail banking and financial services, wireless services providers, consumer goods retailers, gas and electric utility providers, consumer electronics manufacturers, property and casualty insurance providers, fixed service providers (excluding cable and satellite), healthcare providers, hotels and lodging, life insurance, and cable and satellite service providers. The survey was fielded in August and September 2015.

### **About Accenture**

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions – underpinned by the world's largest delivery network – Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With approximately 373,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com).

[Accenture Strategy](http://www.accenture.com/strategy) operates at the intersection of business and technology. We bring together our capabilities in business, technology, operations and function strategy to help our clients envision and execute industry-specific strategies that support enterprise wide transformation. Our focus on issues related to digital disruption, competitiveness, global operating models, talent and leadership help drive both efficiencies and growth. For more information, follow [@AccentureStrat](https://twitter.com/AccentureStrat) or visit [www.accenture.com/strategy](http://www.accenture.com/strategy).

###

### **Media Contacts:**

Hui Luen Lien  
Accenture  
+65 6410 8790  
[Hui.Luen.Lien@accenture.com](mailto:Hui.Luen.Lien@accenture.com)

Naomi Goh  
Burson-Marsteller for Accenture  
+65 6671 3247  
[Naomi.Goh@bm.com](mailto:Naomi.Goh@bm.com)