

Rapid growth in use of social media for customer service by Chinese consumers

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BEIJING, CHINA: The use of social media for customer service by Chinese consumers has almost doubled in the last two years, as more and more turn to it as a viable alternative to the phone, research from Ovum has revealed.



According to a survey* by the independent telecoms analyst, 30% of Chinese consumers get in touch with customer service via social media to find an answer to their queries, up from just 17% two years ago.

In addition, the number of Chinese consumers seeking advice from customer service representatives via web chat and web self-service channels has increased significantly.

Two years ago less than 20% of consumers used web chat or web self-service to find information, whereas today more than 60% are using these channels. In fact, web chat and web self-service are the second most widely used channels today among Chinese consumers, with the most popular option being a direct call with a customer service representative.

'Use of social media for customer service will quickly catch up with web chat and web self-service channels'

Aphrodite Brinsmead, Ovum analyst and author of a new report** unveiling the research findings, commented: "We expect the use of social media for customer service will quickly catch up with web chat and web self-service channels. The number of Chinese consumers using social media for customer service today is already significantly higher than in the UK and US.

"In emerging contact centre markets such as China, consumers are keen to experiment with new forms of media. Contact centres must evolve with their customers, providing information via the web and responding to social queries on forums to ensure that customers receive accurate product and service information."

Ovum's survey found that the most popular uses of social media by Chinese consumers for customer service are discussion boards and forums. Out of those respondents using social media for customer service, more than 50% said they had started a discussion about a company in a forum while almost 50% said they had responded to someone's question. Meanwhile almost 50% have used social media as a channel to complain about bad service or a faulty product.

However, despite the high number of Chinese consumers using social media and a rapidly evolving web culture, Ovum's survey revealed that respondents still view a telephone call with a customer service representative as the best method when it comes to resolving an issue on the first attempt.

Brinsmead concluded: "Contact centres need to improve information across social media, blogs and forums so that customers are able to find answers to questions faster and with reduced effort."

**Ovum conducted a survey of Chinese consumers from November 2010 to January 2011 to gauge their attitudes on changes in customer service, frustrations with contact centres, channel preferences and social media usage.*

***Consumer Preferences in Customer Service: China*

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