servicenow

Out of touch? 80% of Singapore customers prefer to pick up the phone for help, but only 9% of businesses are making it a long-term priority

- *ServiceNow's customer experience survey reveals misalignment between customer preferences and executive priorities, estimated to cost businesses millions per year*
- *Fragmented systems continue to cause delays and add strain for service reps and customers alike, including in efforts to combat scams*

Singapore – 16 March 2026 – Singaporean customers may soon find it even harder to get hold of a human on the phone when seeking help, according to findings from the new Customer Experience Singapore survey commissioned by ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW), the AI control tower for business reinvention.

1,485 Singaporeans aged 18 and above took part in *The CX Shift: A study of customer expectations in the AI era*, conducted by ThoughtLab in 2025, to assess Singapore's state of service within the past year.

80% of customers said they preferred to call a service representative when they had to interact with an organisation, with Singaporeans spending more time trying to resolve issues on the phone than on any other channel. Yet only 9% of organisations plan to prioritise phone calls as a customer service channel over the next three years.

"Less investment in call centres does not have to result in degraded customer service," said CK Tan, APJ Innovation Officer, Singapore at ServiceNow. "But organisations must provide what customers want most of all: fast, effective, and empathetic support that makes them feel heard and understood."

Singaporean organisations tend to underestimate the importance of empathy in customer service interactions. Just 28% of executives perceived a lack of empathy caused their customers serious challenges, compared to nearly 1 in 2 (48%) customers who said it was one of their top frustrations.

This disconnect has real business consequences: 52% of customers said they would switch brands after slow or poor experiences, while 31% of organisations lost revenue and 52% suffered high customer churn as a result of poor customer service experiences.

The findings highlight the importance of aligning digital investments with actual customer preferences, even as Singaporean organisations plan further investments in light of the national $37b Research, Innovation, and Enterprise plan. According to the survey, businesses are most likely to spend the next three years prioritising digital-only channels like self-service portals, intelligent chatbots, and social media – despite most customers still preferring to talk to service reps on the phone or through a live online chat.

"Organisational priorities often favour new technologies rather than addressing what customers want and need right now, costing businesses dearly in wasted effort and lost loyalty," said Tan.

Humanity matters, from self-service to safety

The survey found that empathetic design matters even when customers choose not to talk to a human being. Although 83% of Singapore customers prefer to use self-service options like online portals and chatbots before they call a service rep, 47% feel that current chatbots don't understand their questions and concerns.

Unempathetic and inefficient customer experiences not only frustrate customers but also may lead them to favour faster yet less secure alternatives. When asked about identity verification checks to combat the rising threat of scams, 1 in 2 customers and 42% of service reps said such checks took too long.

“Singapore customers are pragmatic: they’ll use self-service, live chat, or the phone depending on what helps them resolve an issue fastest and with confidence,” said Tan. “But if such options are too slow, complicated, or unresponsive, the majority of customers will naturally look for alternatives with less friction – including those with fewer safeguards against threats like scams.”

The problem is the system – not the people

Fragmented systems continue to strain service reps’ time and attention, which can inadvertently limit their capacity to address customers’ issues with empathy and efficiency. The survey found that Singapore’s service representatives are required to use more than 4 different systems on average to work on customers’ cases, leaving them with just 35% of their time to directly address customer issues.

“Siloed systems, data, and processes have left many executives and service reps unable to gain a clear picture of what customers expect in different situations, hence the consistent misalignment between customers’ preferences and organisational priorities,” Tan commented.

AI offers substantial opportunity to improve customer experiences at scale, plus eliminate admin and empower reps. 60% of customers said AI had already improved their experience quality, while service representatives frequently said AI had helped reduce their admin burden (53%) and lower their stress levels (44%).

“In a digital-savvy market with plenty of choices, AI can help Singaporean organisations create experiences that are even more human, not less – but only a few have managed to use AI to build meaningful emotional connections with their customers,” said Tan. “That kind of consistent empathy at scale is only possible when leaders unify their systems, data, and people around a single clear view of what each customer needs at any given time. Those that get the foundations right will take market share off those that can’t or won’t.”

- ENDS -

Media contact:
For further information, please contact
mailto:servicenowsg@webershandwick.comservicenowsg@webershandwick.com

About the research
This research was commissioned by ServiceNow in partnership with ThoughtLab, a leading thought leadership and economic research firm, and was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252 standards. Between September and October 2025, the study surveyed 27,250 customers, 3,515 customer service representatives, and 3,900 executives across 18 countries and eight industries to understand how AI is reshaping customer experience.

About ServiceNow
ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW) is the AI control tower for business reinvention. The ServiceNow AI Platform integrates with any cloud, any model, and any data source to orchestrate how work flows across the enterprise. By unifying legacy systems, departmental tools, cloud applications, and AI agents, ServiceNow provides a single pane of glass that connects intelligence to execution across every corner of business. With more than 75 billion workflows running on the platform each year, ServiceNow helps organisations turn fragmented operations into coordinated, autonomous workflows that deliver measurable results. Learn how ServiceNow puts AI to work for people at www.servicenow.com.