



# What Singapore Consumers Really Want: **Seamless Experiences**

Toku Singapore Consumer Engagement Report 2022



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# Introduction

A recent survey\* we ran with 1,000 consumers in Singapore showed that customers' preferences in interacting with brands are shifting rapidly. More than ever, consumers expect seamless, effortless customer experiences (CX) underpinned by smooth, connected communication methods.

The fact is that as we enter a post-pandemic environment, customers perceive more proactive service standards and personalised interactions as a given. To support this demand, organisations must evolve their communication channels. But doing so effectively requires better understanding of the ongoing shift in customers' communication method preferences.

Our survey results reveal some striking insights that will help customer support and CX leaders get a real feel for what

consumers really want in an interaction. CX is no longer a nice-to-have option. It is vital to organisational success, and when done right, can be a truly impactful business differentiator. Armed with the valuable insights in this report, we hope decision-makers can revisit and rewrite their CX playbooks to build better customer experiences.



The fact is that as we enter a post-pandemic environment, customers perceive more proactive service standards and personalised interactions as a given. To support this demand, organisations must evolve their communication channels. But doing so effectively requires better understanding of the ongoing shift in customers' communication method preferences.

\*Toku commissioned an independent market research firm to conduct an online survey amongst a random sample of 1,000 Singaporean consumers, i.e., including Singapore citizens, permanent residents, and foreigners in Singapore, who are well represented in the overall population split. The study's margin of error is +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level.

# Fact #1: Faster responses win the day

But just how fast should a customer response be? And how long does the average customer expect an interaction to last?

Our survey revealed that when it comes to customer support over the phone, Singapore consumers expect a response under 5 minutes on the phone, with the call not exceeding an average duration of 8 minutes.

Perhaps this is not entirely surprising given that by the time a customer reaches the customer support hotline, they are often frustrated given that they have already spent some amount of time searching for an answer on the company's FAQ page, or troubleshooting the issue themselves on online forums or Google.

All the more reason for organisations to

respond to customer queries fast, and ease frustrations with an effective resolution.



## Consumer expectations on phone support

Expect response time

**<5**  
minutes

Length of call

**<8**  
minutes



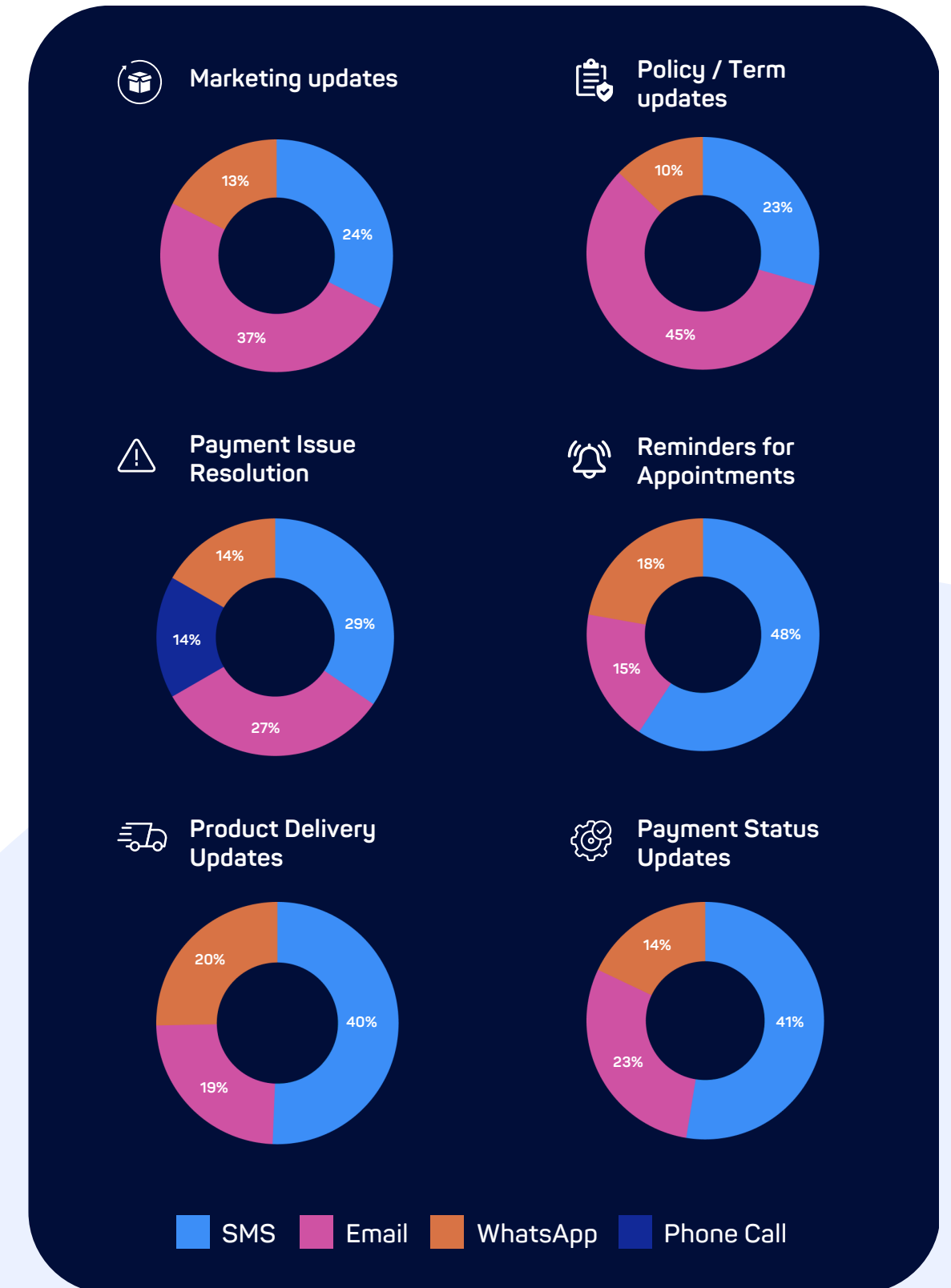
# Fact #2: Consumers prefer phone calls to resolve payment issues

In most situations, Singapore consumers favour commonly used asynchronous communication channels - modes that do not depend on any schedule, and there might be delays between senders initiating messages, and recipients responding, e.g., SMS, email, WhatsApp, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Synchronous channels on the other hand, use real-time interactions scheduled on established communication sessions without restrictions, e.g., phone call, live chat, etc.

However, for certain use cases like payment issue resolution, we found that 14% of consumers prefer a phone call (one of the synchronous communication channels). Importantly, this number is on par with that for WhatsApp.

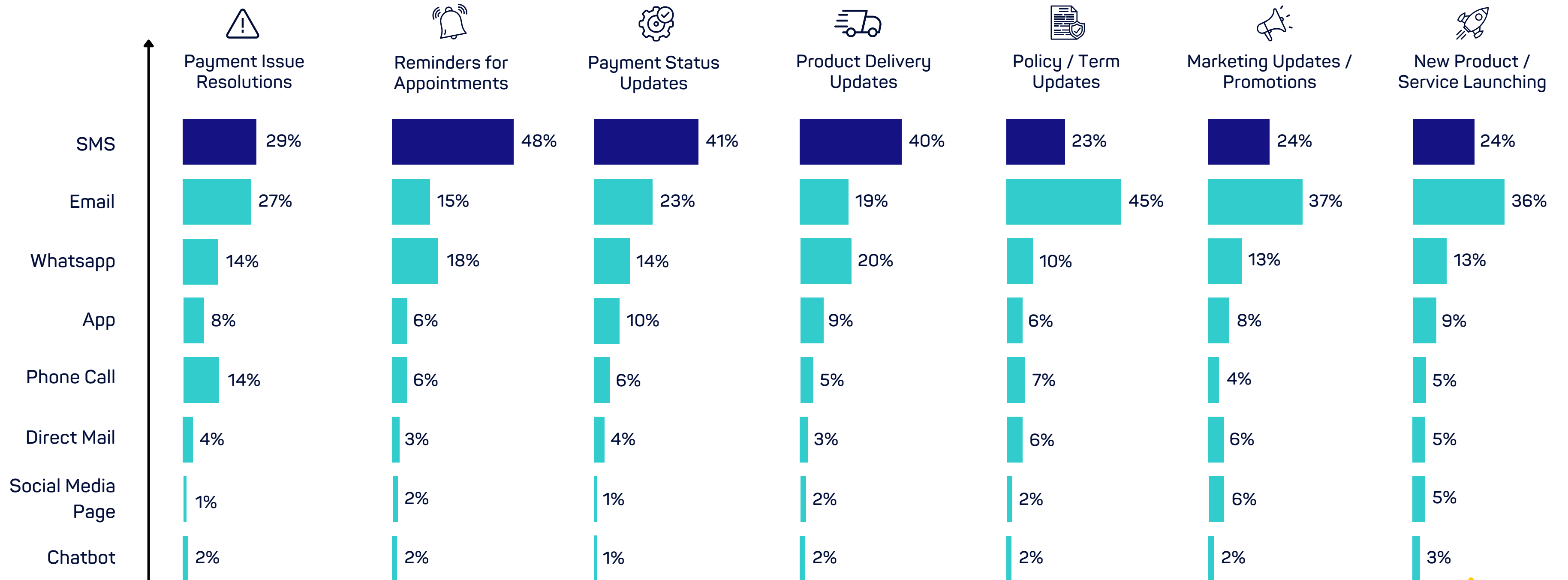
## Top 3 preferred channels for communication



<sup>1</sup> Understanding the differences and the advantages of synchronous vs. asynchronous  
<https://www.techtarget.com/searchapparchitecture/tip/Synchronous-vs-asynchronous-communication-The-differences>

## Preferred Communication Channels based on Type of Information

The Most Preferred Communication Channel





## Fact #2: Consumers prefer phone calls to resolve payment issues

This is why understanding your customers' actual channel preferences for different scenarios is so crucial. It can be tempting for businesses to look at overall communication preferences veering towards messaging channels, and neglect their voice channels. However, businesses often can see higher ROI from customer interactions over phone calls as opposed to messaging because customers tend to prefer the human-to-human voice aspect of a phone call.

So even though messaging is more popular than ever and organisations are eager to add this channel to their operations, our data highlights the need to balance this with voice channel communications.

### Balance synchronous & asynchronous channels with the right tech

Toku Contact Centre is a Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) solution that helps businesses build seamless customer experiences by balancing their synchronous and asynchronous channels on a single platform. If streamlining your customer operations and getting more ROI out of your voice communication channel is a priority, you will love Toku Contact Centre.

[Discover more →](#)

### Top reasons why consumers choose to call

**54%** want to seek clarifications immediately

**52%** want to resolve issues more quickly

**48%** want to get the most relevant information

**47%** prefer to talk to a human

# Fact #3: There's more to voice communication than just having a phone number

We've established the need to have a well-rounded, omnichannel communication strategy that factors in voice communication along with other popular channels including messaging and Email. However, as our study suggests, it's not enough to just have a phone number and call it a day.

## 1. Customers dislike phone calls that use IVR

Many enterprises have added IVR (Interactive Voice Response) menus to their phone support in order to leverage automation in their customer service.

However, our study reveals one of the top reasons customers dislike phone calls is the need to listen and follow automatic instructions in IVR menus (43%).

We believe complicated IVR menus with too many options often cause frustration. To limit the complexity and reduce the burden on customers, a good rule of thumb is to limit your IVR to a maximum of five options per menu, and no more than five menus before a user finds what they need.<sup>2</sup>

# 43%



of consumers dislike getting on the phone because they need to listen & follow automatic instructions.



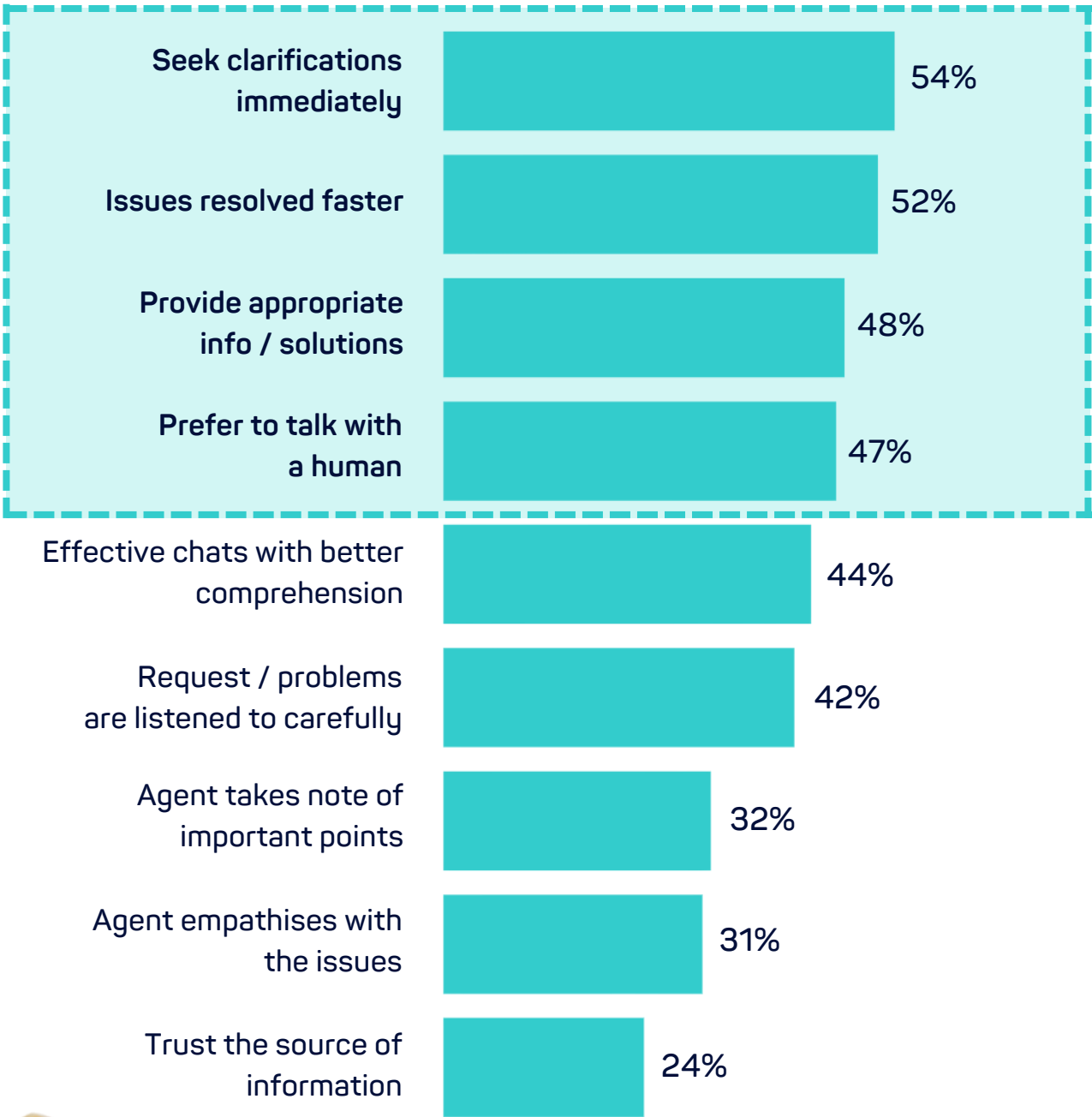
<sup>2</sup> 6 Tips On Making Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Work For Your SMB  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/centurylink/2017/02/23/6-tips-on-making-interactive-voice-response-ivr-work-for-your-smb>



Why Customers Dislike Phone Calls



Why Customers Like Phone Calls



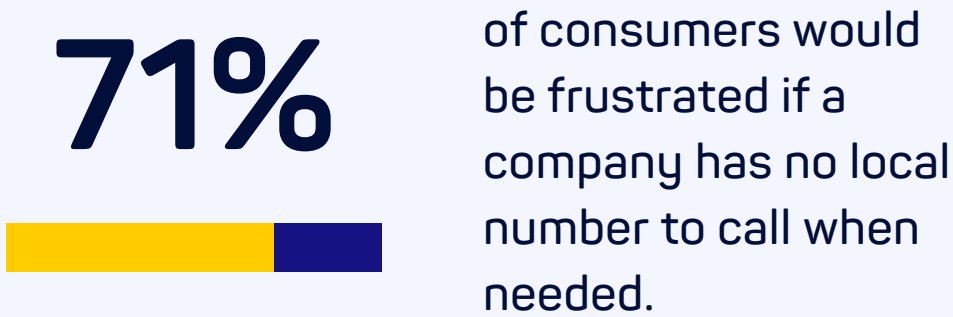
Fact #3: There’s more to voice communication than just having a phone number

2. Having a local phone number matters

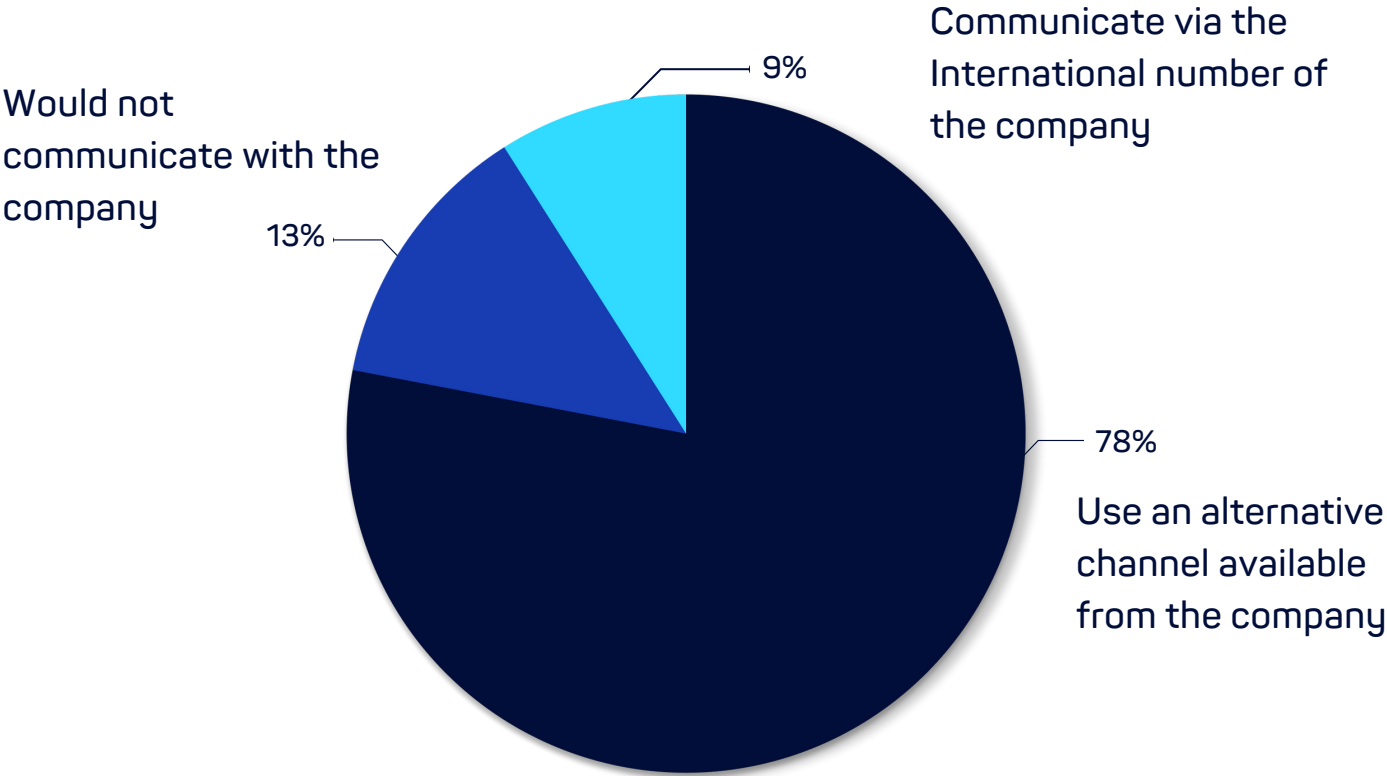
Keeping a local number available for customers to call might seem like a trivial detail when running a complex customer communications operation. However, we discovered that if a government agency or private company does not have a local phone number, 41% of consumers would be frustrated, and 30% extremely frustrated.

That’s not all though. When faced with no local number to call, 78% reported they would look for an alternative communication channel, while 13% would not pursue any communication with the company.

Once again, we see the need for robust availability of communication options that help customers experience a seamless journey with a brand.



Next action if no local number to call



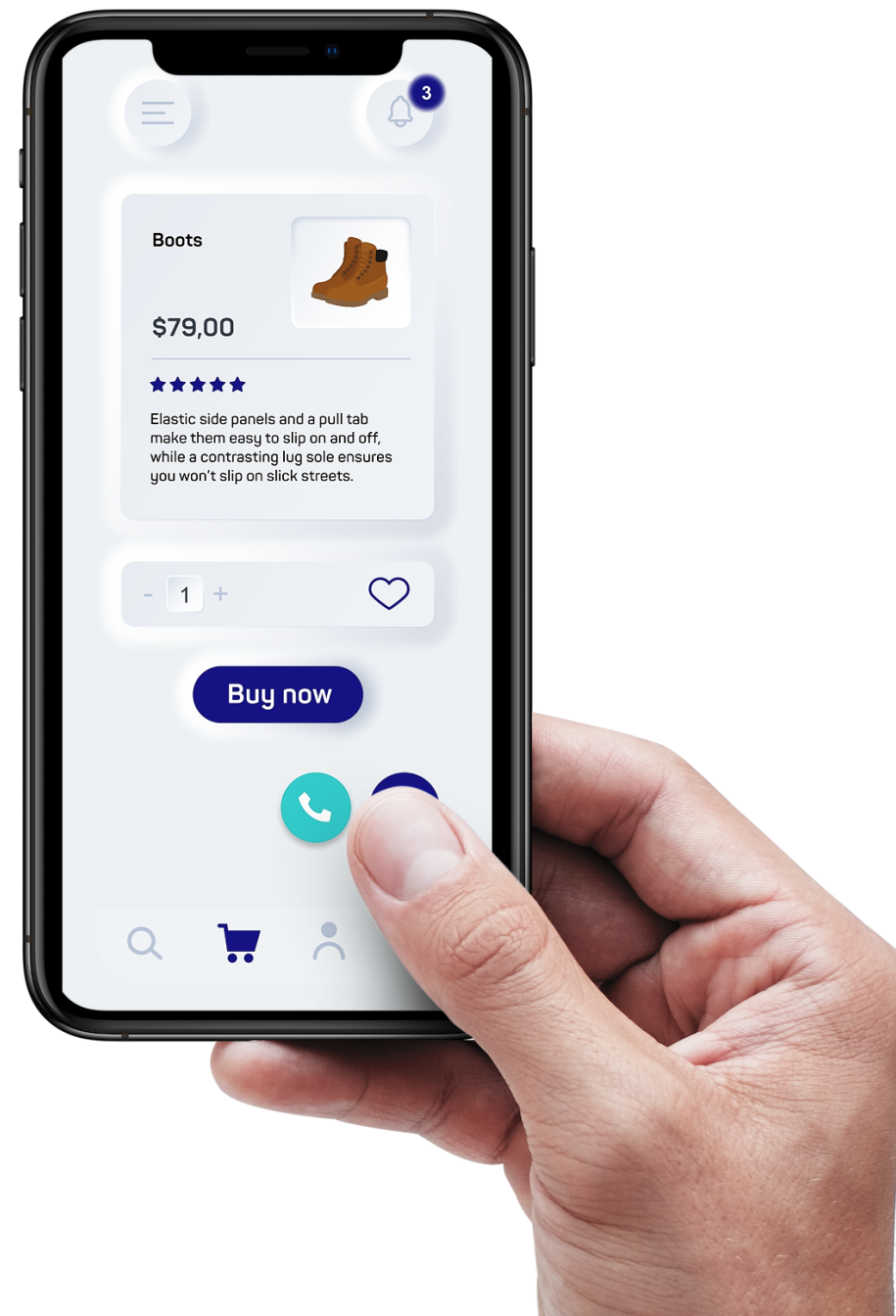


## Fact #4: In-app communication is in

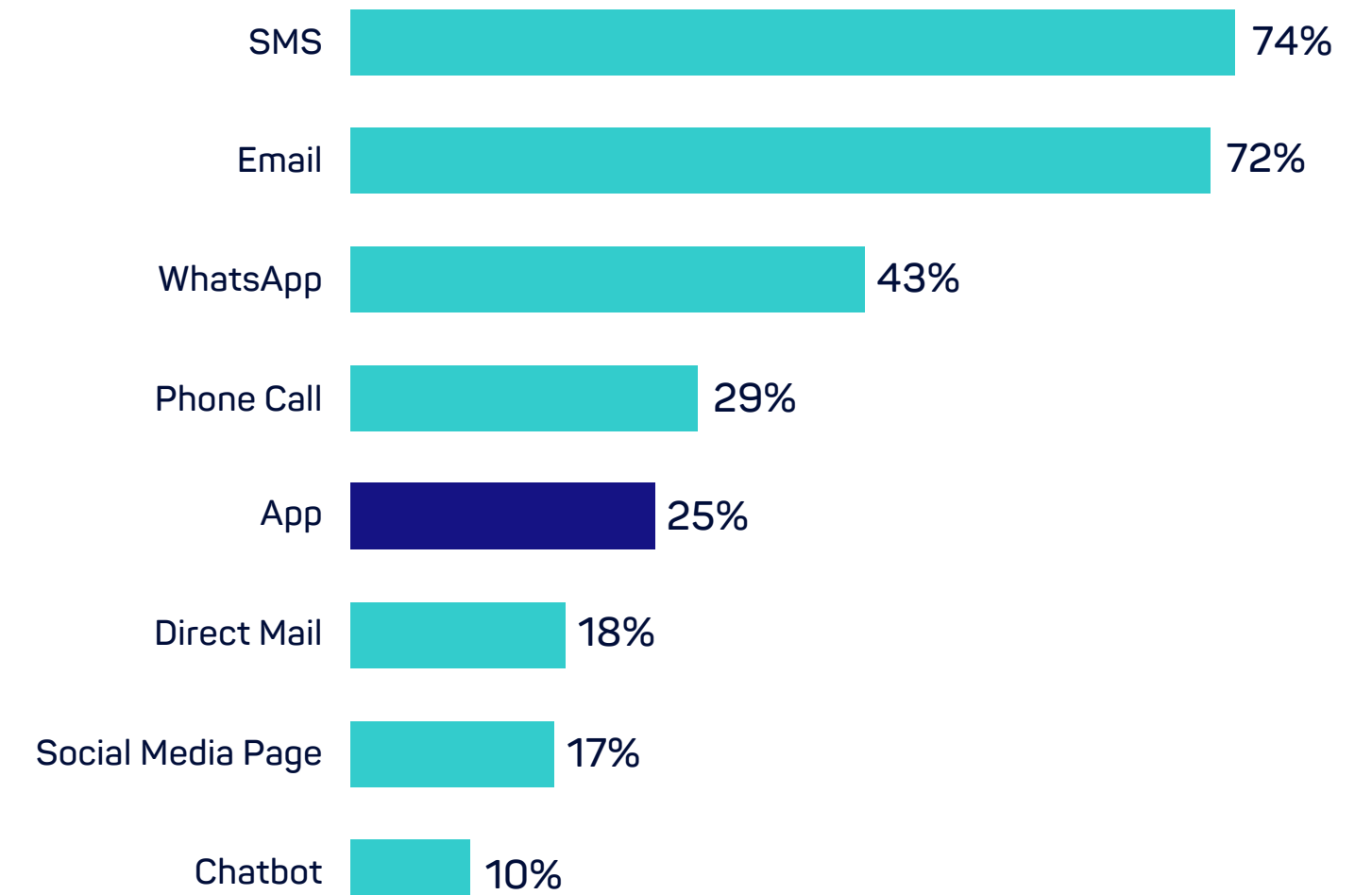
Many start-ups, enterprises, and government ministries are taking their first tentative steps to develop mobile apps that provide a better user experience. This has led many organisations to realise the benefits of controlling the customer experience by keeping customer communications within the app as much as possible.

But do consumers really prefer the in-app communication experience? Our research certainly suggests so.

Singapore consumers ranked in-app communications in fifth place after SMS, Email, WhatsApp and Phone Call, in order of preference.



### Singapore Consumers' Preferred Communication Channels



## Fact #4: In-app communication is in

### 1. Majority of customers prefer in-app communications

Furthermore, our study found that 67% of Singapore consumers prefer communicating within the app environment for getting further information or resolving issues, as opposed to outside the app.

This is unsurprising because in-app communication is known to be direct, and hence time efficient and hassle-free. A well-developed app can accommodate various needs and multimedia for better reference and follow-up. Furthermore, because app-embedded communications eliminate the need for a user to exit the app, find a contact number, and call outside the app, it is a great way to reduce customer effort and create a seamless experience for users.

### 2. Not having a comprehensive app is a turn-off

No surprises here. The main reason (45%) why consumers do not use a brand's app to communicate with the company is because of the lack of information or communication features within the app itself.

A well-thought-out app provides enough details and comprehensive features to keep users continuously engaged on the platform for maximum retention. The goal here should be to enhance the overall customer experience by providing relevant, and easily accessible information and communication features within the app so that users get what they need all in one place.

67%



Prefer to communicate in-app to obtain more information or resolve issues, but...

45%



Say they don't communicate in-app because the functions are not available

## Fact #4: In-app communication is in

### 3. In-app communication boosts information accessibility and consumer trust

Picture this: You have a pressing problem that needs immediate resolution – such as a lost item on your last ride-share. Which would you prefer – hunting down the ride-sharing app business contact number and calling them, or a phone call to a customer support agent directly embedded within the app itself?

Chances are, you’d pick the in-app option simply because it is available immediately in front of you. Consumers seem to think so too, with 40% preferring in-app communications

because it's more time-efficient, 38% because it's easy to refer to all information in one place, and 37% because there's no need to switch communication channels.

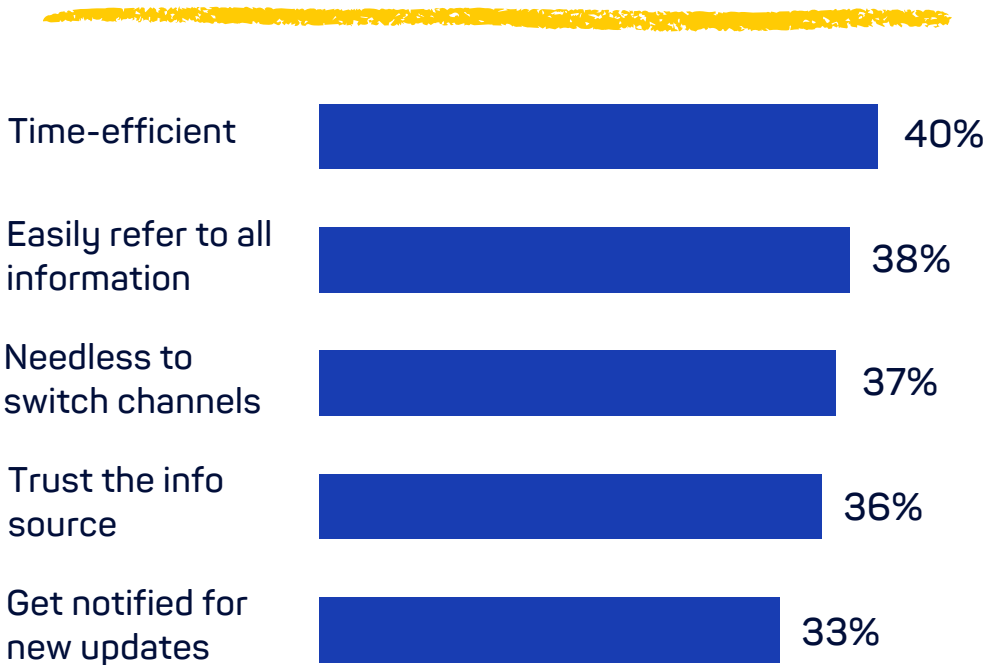
We also discovered trust is an important factor in consumers' preference for in-app communications, with 36% of consumers reporting they trust the channel as an information source. This could be because the app is perceived to be 'owned' by the business, which elevates the level of trust that the call being made through the app is not a scam call.<sup>3</sup>

### Communication APIs and SDK

Using Toku’s Communication APIs and SDK solution, Gojek - a well-known e-hailing service - solved 90% of their reported lost & found cases without agent intervention.

[Learn more →](#)

### Why Consumers Prefer In-app Communications



<sup>3</sup> Elevating Customer Experience in Logistics: 5 CPaaS and CCaaS Use Cases that Deliver the Goods  
<https://toku.co/blog/elevating-customer-experience-in-logistics-5-cpaas-and-ccaas-use-cases-that-deliver-the-goods/>

# Fact #5: SMS is still an effective global messaging channel

SMS is a rapid, reliable, and effective way to reach out to and connect with your customers.

Some reports have shown that SMS open and response rates can be as high as 98% and 45%, respectively. This is much higher than corresponding figures of 20% and 6% for email.<sup>4</sup>

By combining SMS with the power of automation – i.e. automatically triggered SMS responses and campaigns – it's possible for enterprises to create a highly engaging, and seamless experience for

both customer support as well as marketing.

But what exactly do customers expect to receive in their SMS?

## 1. SMS is a preferred channel for updates needing immediate attention

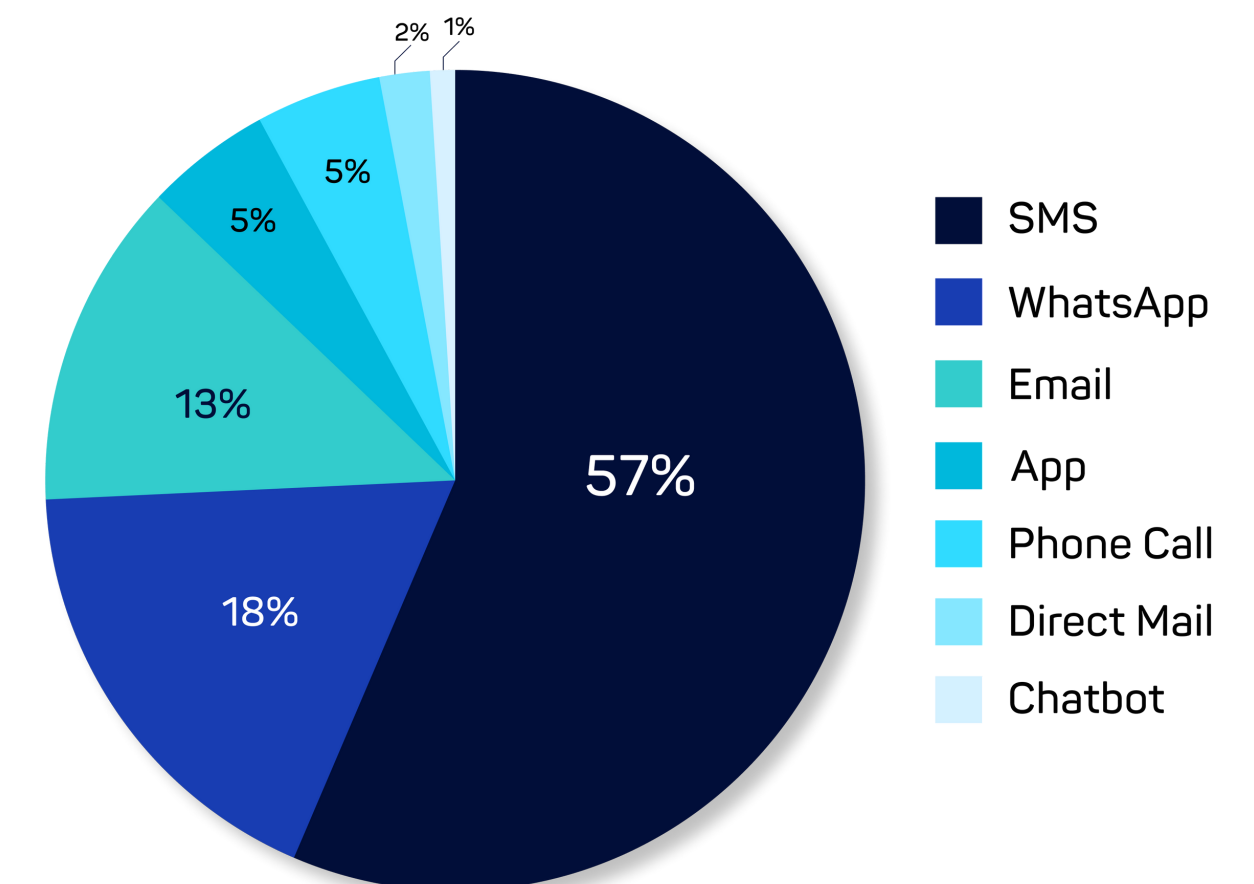
Our study found that 57% of Singapore consumers would prefer to receive reminders via SMS. This dovetails well with another finding in our research: 1/3 of Singapore consumers are likely to miss appointments without reminders.

# 33%



of consumers are likely to miss an appointment without a reminder

## Most preferred channel for reminders



<sup>4</sup> The Future of Sales Follow-Ups: Text Messages  
<https://www.gartner.com/en/digital-markets/insights/the-future-of-sales-follow-ups-text-messages>



## Fact #5: SMS is still and effective global messaging channel

### 2. What sort of updates do consumers prefer to get via SMS?

Diving deeper into the types of information consumers prefer to receive in their SMS, our survey respondents ranked 'Reminders for appointments' first, followed by 'Updates on product delivery', 'Updates on payment status', and 'Updates on refund process'.

We observe the above updates fall into the 'important; engage immediately' category from a consumer's perspective. Perhaps the reason why consumers prefer SMS for urgent updates, is because it fits the concise nature of these updates which tend to be short and precise. For richer contextual details, Email and WhatsApp

channels might be preferred as they can accommodate content with more detail and non-textual content formats like images and video.

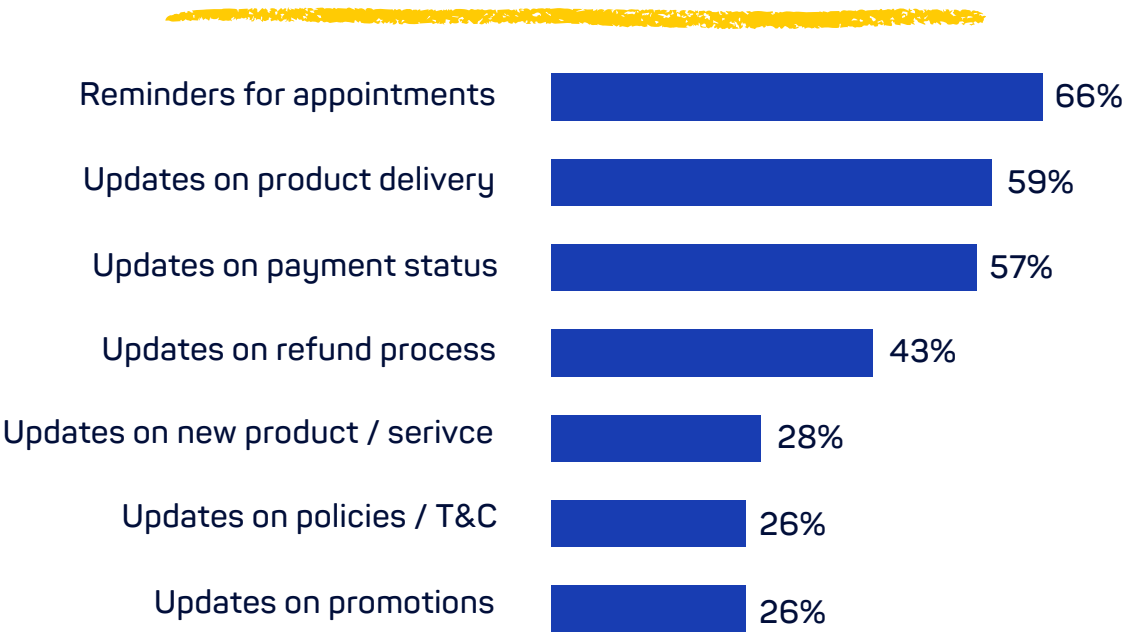
Another important factor is the reliable nature of SMS. Even though there are many other asynchronous channels like WhatsApp and email, SMS is the only one that does not rely on data connectivity to deliver a message. As long as a user has a handphone connected to a telephone network, they will be able to receive SMS reliably even if they are located in an area with poor data coverage.

**Lenskart made their SMS campaign 15% more cost effective with Toku**

Using Toku SMS Campaign Manager, Lenskart - an omnichannel direct-to-consumer eyewear retailer enjoys more peace of mind with their SMS channel being protected against phishing threats, on top of higher SMS delivery rates.

**Learn more →**

### What information types customers prefer to receive in SMS



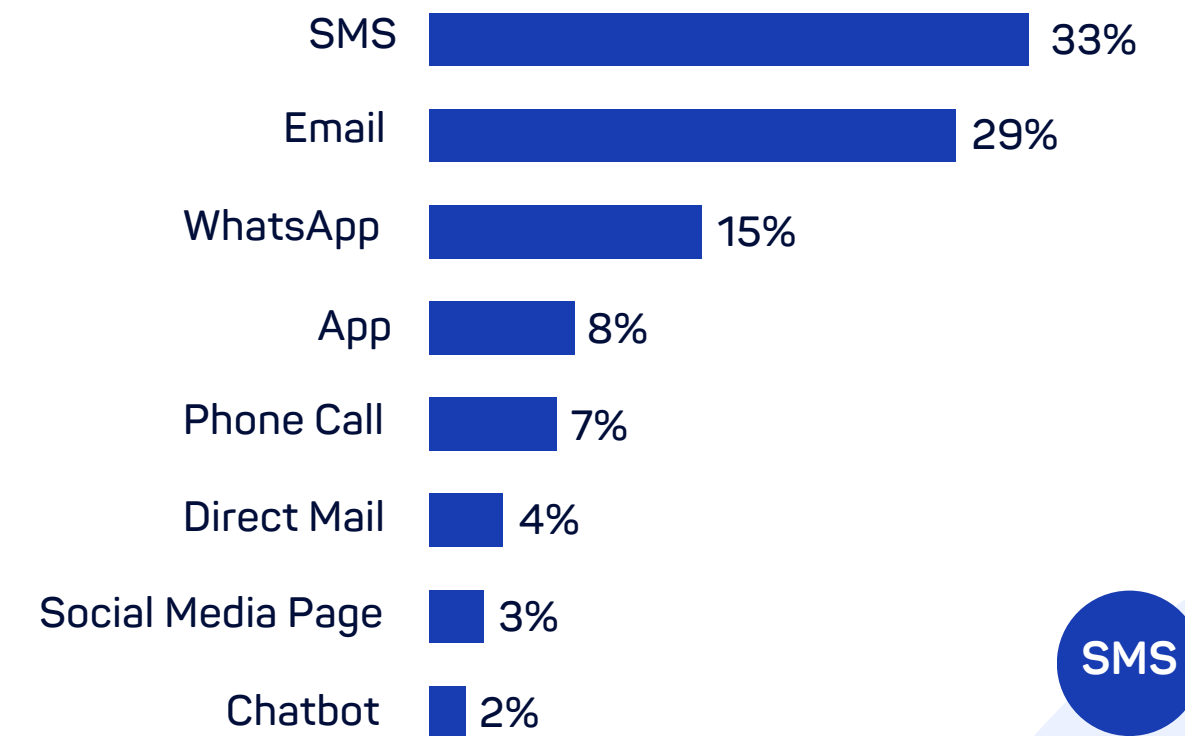
## Fact #6: Chatbots are the least popular communication channel

Many enterprises are eager to use chatbots as an effective way to scale customer support for less complex and repetitive enquiries without waiting for a live agent to serve, especially during peak hours.

However, in our study, Singapore consumers ranked Chatbots as their least preferred communication channel with private companies (2%). Respondents cited 'Low level of understanding of the message', 'Low information clarity', and 'Takes time to provide recommendations' as the main reasons for their aversion to chatbots.

The weak reception to chatbots points to a greater need for complementing the channel with live agents over a phone call or message. The goal should be to build a smooth customer journey that allows the chatbot to hand over an interaction to an agent seamlessly when a query gets too complex for it to handle.

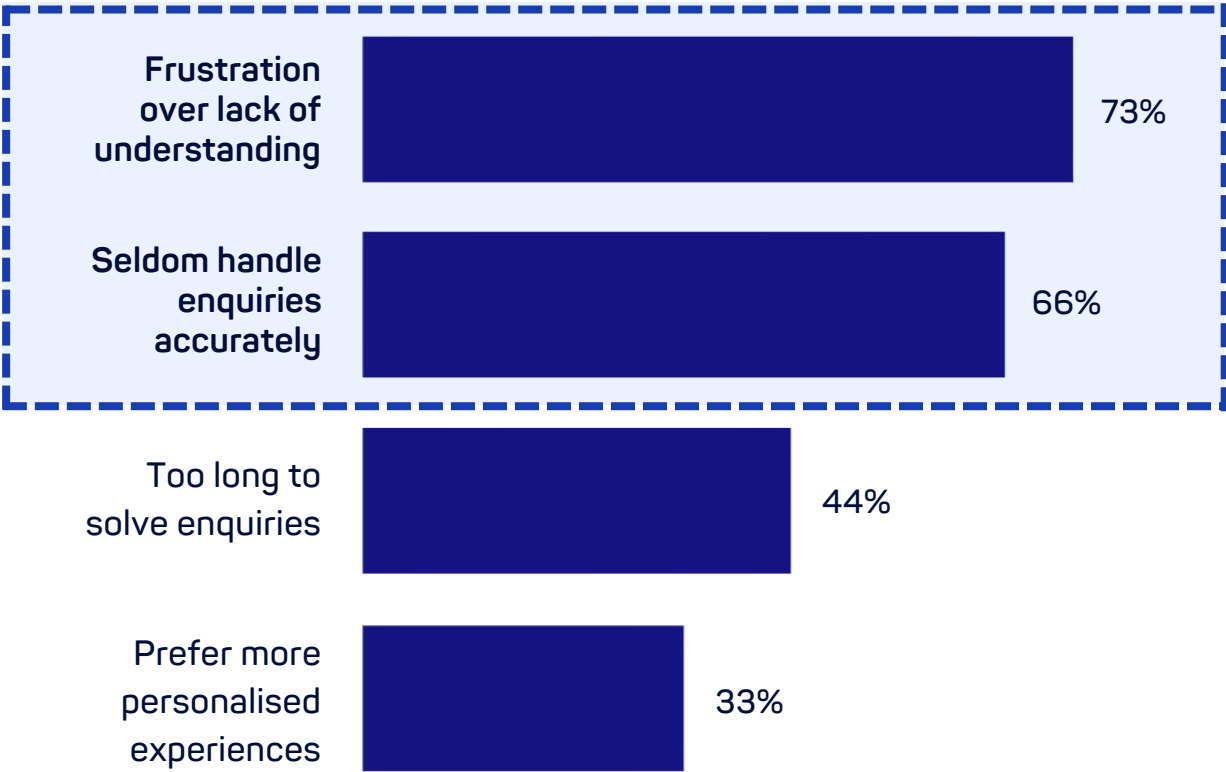
Consumers' most preferred channel of communication



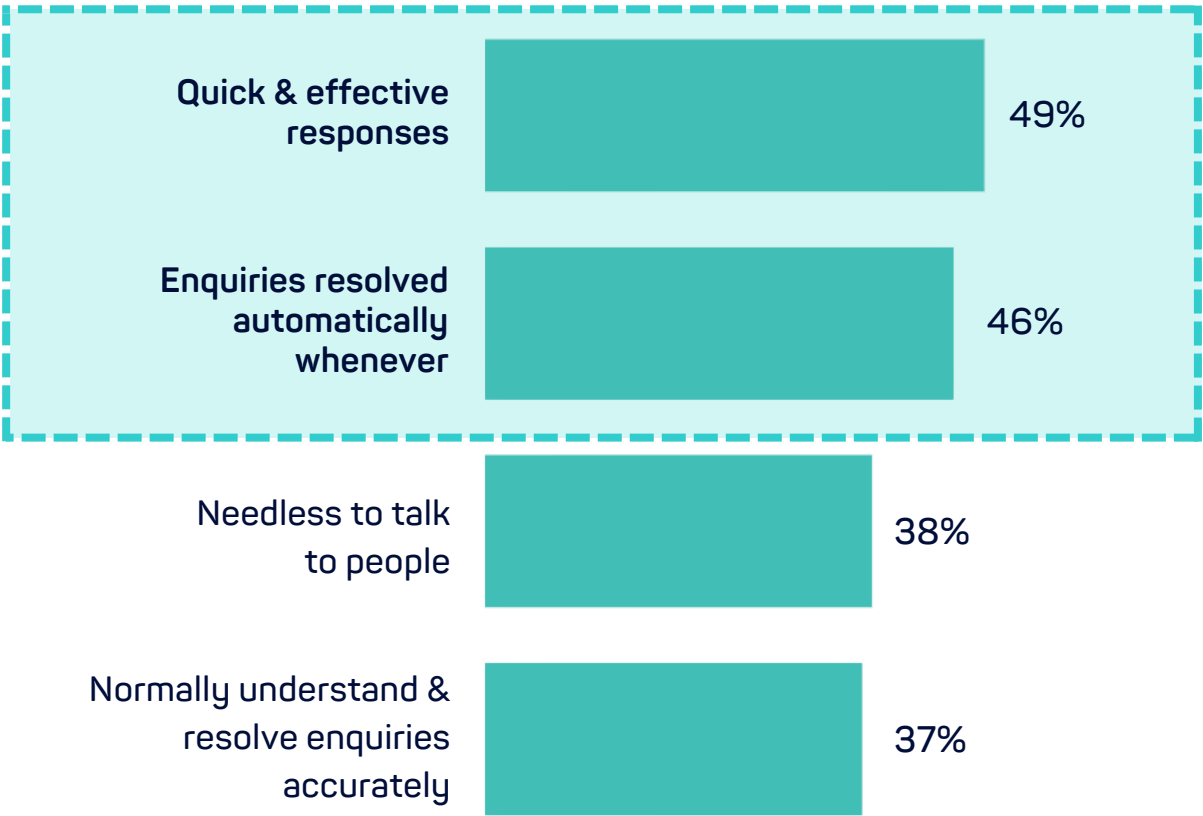
SMS

Fact #6: Chatbots are the least popular communication channel

Why customers avoid using chatbots



Why customers prefer using chatbots



# Fact #7: Consumers respond in different ways to scam calls and SMS

No study on consumer engagement behaviour in 2022 would be complete without addressing the 800-pound gorilla in the room – scam calls and SMS.

In Singapore, scams via phone calls or SMS continue to rise with overall scam cases in the country spiking to over 23,000 cases in 2021.<sup>5</sup> Despite some efforts from brands, there is still some work to do. While some results were in line with expectations, we found a few striking insights that paint a different picture of how consumers are really responding to the barrage of scam calls and SMS.

## 1. The majority of Singapore consumers respond to scam calls while only a minority respond to scam SMS

Unsurprisingly, almost 90% of Singapore consumers have received

scam calls. However, what's more interesting is that 75% continue to pick up scam calls. This is a considerably large number, given there is generally more awareness of scam calls thanks to extensive coverage of them in the mainstream media.

As for SMS, it is no surprise that a minority of just 15% have tapped a link in a scam SMS, given the prominent case of a local bank's customers losing millions to an SMS phishing scam. What is unexpected is how vulnerable one is after tapping through a link in a scam SMS. A whopping 40% of those who tapped reported experiencing monetary loss!

We believe this points to a lack of awareness of the risks of tapping on links in an SMS.

### CALLS

87%

received a scam call

75%

picked up a scam call

10%

suffered monetary loss as a result

### SMS

48%

clicked a link in an SMS

15%

clicked a link in a scam SMS

6%

suffered monetary loss as a result

n=1000

<sup>5</sup> Spike in scams drives up Singapore's overall crime levels in 2021  
<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/crime-levels-scams-rise-2021-2501736>





# Fact #7: Consumers respond in different ways to scam calls and SMS

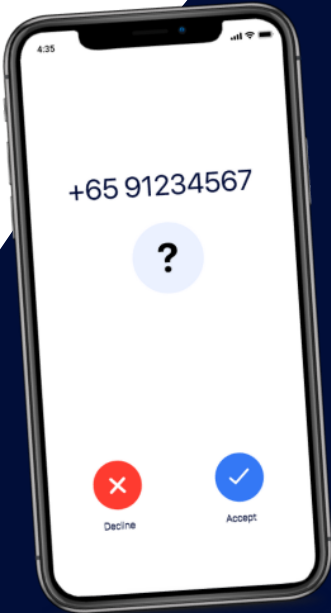
## 2. Consumers don't respond to unrecognised numbers with country codes

In general, most Singapore consumers would be unlikely to pick up a call with an unknown

number. Fear of scams unsurprisingly emerged as the top reason for this (67%). But we dived deeper and found amongst unrecognised calls, certain kinds of phone numbers performed worse than others.

For example, 73% of respondents are unlikely to pick up a call from an unknown international number. Clearly, consumers perceive calls from international numbers as less trustworthy. This has implications if a business is conducting outreach calls for surveys, promotions, and sales.

Having a local number will give an advantage as it's more likely to be answered.



### CALLS

**67%**  
Afraid of scams

**40%**  
Lack of trust on the source

**41%**  
To prevent hacking activities

**42%**  
Not interested

### SMS

**68%**  
Afraid of scams

**47%**  
Lack of trust on the source

**43%**  
To prevent hacking activities

**38%**  
Not interested



## Fact #7: Consumers respond in different ways to scam calls and SMS

But that's not the whole story! We also found that 59% of Singapore consumers are not willing to pick up a local call if there is the +65 country code! In the past, having +65 in front of the number was enough to convince someone it was a legitimate local phone number. In 2022, this is no longer the case. Scammers have evolved to spoofing numbers that show up with Singapore's country code, "+65", so customers have in turn grown more wary of picking up a call with the code.<sup>6</sup>

**The implication:** To ensure customers trust that your phone calls are not fraudulent, it is best to ensure your contact centre is serviced by a licensed operator. This way, the +65 code will not appear on calls made from your call centre, which will in turn improve pick-up rates.

### Scam-proof your customer communications with Toku

Toku is recognised by IMDA as a Tier 1 Aggregator and is compliant with all IMDA requirements, including with respect to anti-spoofing protocols for protected SMS. Furthermore, by being the first telco service provider in Singapore and Southeast Asia to join the global AB Handshake Community, Toku is leading the way to ensure that all voice traffic exchanges in our network are protected from major types of voice fraud.

[Learn more →](#)

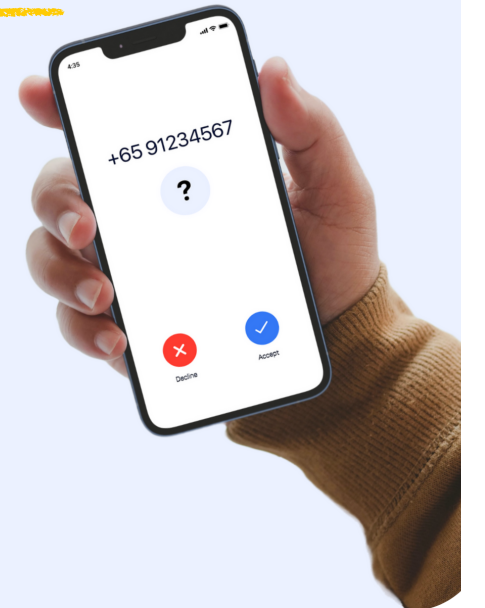
### Majority will not answer call with country codes

59%

not willing to pick up a call if there is a country code

73%

won't be likely to pick up a call from an international unknown number



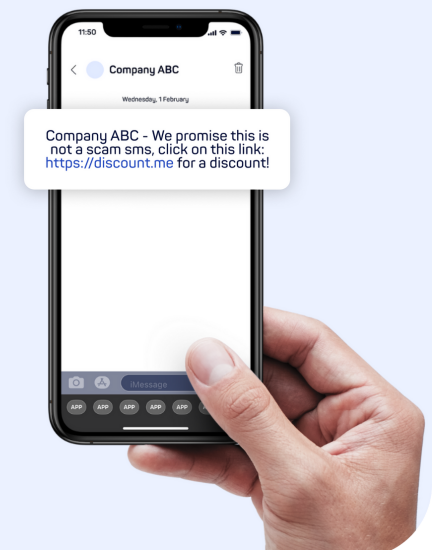
### Majority do not respond to both local and international SMS

63%

likely to respond to an SMS from a local number

73%

likely to respond to an international SMS



<sup>6</sup> If so many people think +65 calls are from scammers, why do some businesses still use them?  
<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/scam-call-overseas-plus-65-businesses-imda-2663341>

# Conclusion

We've attempted to cover as many communication channels as possible in this study on consumer engagement. And as expected, customers are shifting their behaviour in different ways on different channels.

However, we decided to look beyond the changes happening on different channels, and discovered a common underlying motivation driving these shifts: consumers are seeking seamless customer experiences regardless of which channel they use.

In other words, customers want a smooth, low-effort experience in an interaction.





Perhaps the most telling indicator of this is how our study found that 2/3 of Singapore consumers expect companies to keep track of previous reminders, email addresses and phone numbers to facilitate efficient future communication. On top of this, consumers prefer to have no more than 2 diversions in any communication.

We believe the desire for seamless customer experiences is strong, and is a sticky trend for the foreseeable future. Brands and organisations that act now to rewrite their CX playbooks and build seamless customer experiences will stand the test of time and leave their competition in the dust.

Consumers expectations for a seamless experience

**Over 60%**

expect companies to

-  send reminders for appointments
-  remember their email address for communications
-  provide a local phone number for enquiries
-  keep a history of their previous interactions

**Max 2**

touchpoints are expected for any enquiry

SMS







Discover how Toku can help you turn every  
customer conversation into a seamless  
experience.

[toku.co](https://toku.co)