

Target, Best Buy Top Social Charts

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Target, Best Buy and JC Penney are among the major companies perceived as making the most effective use of social media as a customer service tool, according to a study.

Conversocial, the specialist customer services provider, commissioned Liel Leibovitz, an assistant professor of communications at New York University, to poll 589 adults regarding their social media experience with 38 firms in eight sectors.

Target was named by participants as the multi-category retailer with the strongest credentials here, bettering Walmart in second and Costco in third.

Safeway occupied the same position for supermarkets, out-performing Shoprite and Supervalu. Subway, McDonald's and 7-Eleven took the top three spots when it came to dining.

Best Buy, the electronics retailer, has been an early adopter of many social media strategies, as shown by its innovative customer service "Twelpforce" on Twitter. It was also recognised as leading the electronics sector, ahead of Apple and Dell.

JCPenney assumed such a status in the apparel segment, beating off competition from GAP and Nordstrom. Walgreens headed the charts for drug stores, trailed by CVS and Rite Aid.

Turning to banks, Bank of America claimed the honours, with Citi in second and Chase in third. Verizon was the pre-eminent telecoms group, trumping AT&T and Comcast.

However, 55% of respondents that had interacted with companies on social media described their experience as either "disappointing" or "mediocre", versus 45% rating it "great" or "good".

When engaging with brand owners in this way, 16.6% of the panel would expect a response within ten minutes, and 13.1% anticipated a reply arriving in less than an hour.

Another 29.2% believed no longer than eight hours should elapse before a company representative got in touch, and 41.1% pegged this timeframe at no more than a day.

More broadly, the report revealed that 20.9% of shoppers had contacted brands on social media using their mobile phones while still in stores.

"While traditionally consumers are rarely satisfied completely with customer service, fast and efficient social customer service can quickly change the old paradigm and create a viral effect of consumers actually praising rather than vilifying companies," Joshua March, CEO of Conversocial, said.

Data sourced from Daily Mail; additional content by Warc staff

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