



Demanding Digital: Utilities in focus

Taking the utilities sector from 'average' to digital leaders

Consumers have relatively few interactions with their utilities provider compared with those in other industries such as retail, financial services or the public sector. Our research shows that every interaction counts, irrelevant of frequency; especially when it comes to providing digital services.

Utilities companies provide essential services that we can't live without. Water, gas and electric are perceived to be silent services that most people think little of until for some reason their access is restricted. Consumers' interactions with utilities in the most part are limited to checking their bill once in a while and shopping around for a better deal. This infrequency makes it even more important that it is as straight forward and as enjoyable as possible - those interactions count. Digital services play an important role in this, not only improving customer experience but also potentially saving suppliers money through increased efficiency.

To understand exactly what consumers think about the digital services currently provided by utilities companies, we asked 3,150 individuals across the UK about their experiences. We wanted to know how these interactions compared with other industries and crucially, what makes them disengage from the digital experience provided to them. This direct feedback allows us to draw some conclusions around how best utilities companies can interact digitally with customers.

A combination of regulatory fines and negative stories in the media has led many to believe utilities companies are underperforming. But our research found that 37% said their experience was 'good' or 'outstanding'. This is only half a percent below the average across all sectors we surveyed, which includes retail and financial services. In fact, only 3% rated their experience as 'very poor'. Regardless of what else impacts customer service, clearly digital services are on the right path.

Respondents are clear about what they want from digital services. Just under half (46%) want a simpler, cleaner experience and 39% want upgrades to make things faster for them. Rounding out the top three is improved stability (27%). Consumers want the basics of the digital experience to be right first, but this is unsurprising as over half (52%) said they have had to abandon a digital service without completing what they need to do. With such infrequent interaction between utilities providers and consumers, making sure the few that do take place are successful is critical.



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What are consumers really looking for when it comes to their digital experiences of the utilities sector?

46% want a **simpler and cleaner** experience



39% would like the digital service to make things **faster** for them



27% want an **upgrade to the stability** of the digital service



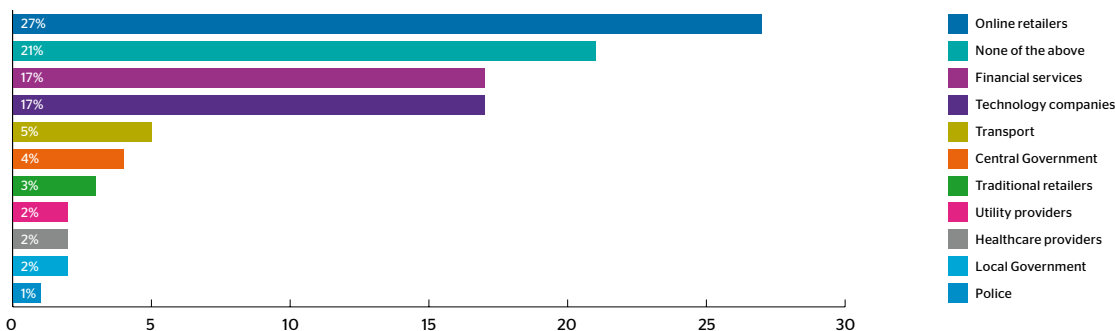
Over half (53%) of consumers are open to the idea of trying new digital services from utilities providers. But even more exciting than this, is that this willingness is equally spread across all age ranges. Those over 35 are actually more open to new digital services than those 16-34.

Those **over 35** are **most open to trying new digital services** from utilities providers (55%)



Could do better.

Which of the following sectors do you feel is setting the bar for digital services in the UK?



Once the basics are right, consumers are open to the idea of earning loyalty benefits (22%) and a tailored service that remembers who they are (18%). But as utilities companies build on core services, one issue that stands in the way is trust. When asked which organisation they would trust with their entire digital life, a utilities organisation did not feature. First, by a long way was 'my bank'. This might be surprising given recent economic issues but there is no doubt that when it comes to getting the basics

right and providing a simple and effective service, the transactional side of the banks are meeting the demands of the consumer. As services converge - just think of Amazon now taking a share of the grocery market - utilities need to think about how to gain the level of trust consumers have with banks and which partnerships might be suitable.

Utilities providers are at an interesting point. They are keeping up with the crowd when it comes to digital services, but arguably

behind when it comes to overall customer experience. Consumers are open to trying new digital services from utility providers but they have to be implemented with the user at the heart of them. This means getting the basics right first and only then applying the extras. Getting this right will mean rising above the crowd and standing strong in what will only become a more competitive landscape.