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Kicking the digital front door open

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The challenges of the past year made providing digital experiences a must, whether your organization needed a way to serve its customers or see its patients. A new study by OnePoll pulled insights from 11 countries – from the US to Australia – to explore the enduring impact on people's attitudes towards digital technology. It found a world ready for smarter, faster, more secure experiences that retain a vital human touch.

Over the last 18 months, organizations of every kind—from global enterprises to healthcare providers—leaned into technology to help them deliver their services. Brands began serving more customers through their digital channels. Physicians became used to delivering patient care via video calls.

But as we've all become increasingly reliant on digital technology, how have our feelings towards it changed? And what opportunities might our new attitudes and expectations create?

Recently, OnePoll conducted an international [survey](#) of 10,000 people, exploring humanity's changing relationship with digital technology and experiences. They reached out to 1,000 respondents in each of the following countries: US, UK, Australia, Germany, France, Belgium, and The Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Spain, and Mexico.

Here's what was discovered:

Tech-savviness has soared post-pandemic, but we still want the personal touch

The majority of consumers (58%) believe that, even after the pandemic, they'll have more digital interactions than they did previously. One reason for this perception may be that the quality of the experiences they've found online is equivalent or even better than those available face to face.

Sixty-six percent reported having a "good" or "excellent" experience using online customer services in the past 12 months for tasks they might previously have chosen to complete in person.

Digging into why these experiences had been positive, the most common answers were as follows:

- My issue was resolved (48%)
- It was convenient (46%)
- It was fast (45%)

These results should reassure organizations looking to double down on digital experiences post-pandemic and deliver the speed and convenience that consumers value so highly.

For many, this will mean introducing new opportunities for customer self-service with the help of messaging, more sophisticated virtual assistants and IVRs. But brands must also build effective bridges between self-service and live agent interactions—so the human touch is always there for those who need it, whenever they need it. After all, the desire to "speak to a 'real' human" was still among the most common reasons respondents gave for preferring one channel to another.

Consumers are placing more trust in digital technology

Consumers and patients embraced digital technologies over the past year with increasing comfort and trust.

Forty-seven percent of adults feel more comfortable using their smartphones to access accounts than they did before the pandemic, for example. What's more, 50% feel more comfortable using biometrics to authenticate themselves, and two in five (38%) now identify biometrics as their authentication method of choice.

But even as confidence in digital channels ramps up, brands must take care to develop an integrated approach to service delivery; while 51% of adults now prefer using a company's app or website to complete tasks such as banking, 52% still prefer to ask a company a question over the phone.

Ultimately, customers want quick and effective conversations when calling a brand or messaging its chatbot. The smartest organizations will take advantage of the increased trust in biometrics to provide seamless, secure authentication and personalized experiences.

Patients are ready for digital healthcare

The past year has had an equally profound effect on attitudes to digital healthcare. The survey found that over a fifth (22%) of patients have turned away from face-to-face appointments as their preferred way of receiving medical advice.

More than two-fifths (42%) of patients are now comfortable accessing medical advice and treatment remotely. Of these, 16% are "very comfortable."

Most patients are also open to greater use of AI in healthcare:

- 57% are comfortable or very comfortable with AI-powered technology being used to securely record patient-doctor interactions and produce clinical documentation
- 55% would be open to their doctor using AI to produce clinical documentation instead of using hand-written notes

When asked why, 57% highlighted the potential to speed up appointments, 41% said they believed it would help their doctor focus on the diagnosis, while 37% said it would lead to more accurate and detailed medical information.

Over the course of the pandemic, healthcare organizations have been forced to transform the way they deliver patient services. The research suggests there's no going back. Digital appointments have quickly become a part of everyday life for patients, and expectations around healthcare delivery have evolved.

Patients aren't just open to smarter, tech-enabled services; they're ready to actively choose those services

if they reduce appointment time or allow practitioners to focus on diagnosis and treatment. This gives healthcare providers a clear mandate to embrace modern, AI-powered technologies with the potential to improve experiences for patients and clinicians alike.

Some healthcare organizations already realize the potential of AI to modernize their “digital front doors”—and Nuance is proud to be helping them do it.

Methodology

The online survey, conducted by OnePoll, was carried out between 21/04/2021-07/05/2021 and polled 10,000 consumers across UK, US, France, Germany, Australia, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands and Mexico.

OnePoll is a survey-led marketing research company specializing in online and mobile polling. It is a member of ESOMAR (European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research) and all OnePoll researchers are members of the MRS (Market Research Society), meaning that all its research projects are checked for compliance with the MRS code of conduct.

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About Brenda Hodge

Brenda leads all aspects of Nuance's marketing function working to develop the go-to-market approach, building the Nuance brand to drive growth, and expanding client relationships to increase loyalty. She joined Nuance from Optum where she most recently served as Chief Marketing Officer for the Provider Market segment. Brenda's career spans multinational sales and marketing leadership roles at companies such as GloStream, Allscripts/Misys Healthcare Systems, and SAS Institute.

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