United Arab Emirates Banking Sentiment Index

June 2021

Contents

Introduction

Covid-19 has spurred an increased uptake in digital offerings around the globe. In particular, the ongoing crisis has highlighted the importance of digital transformation in financial services—especially for organizations operating in competitive markets, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

When it comes to customer support, many consumers have turned to digital channels, such as social media, to contact their banks for assistance. As they increasingly expect the same standard of service across all channels and providers, banks have had to rapidly innovate their customer service approach to better suit social media platforms.

This UAE banking sentiment index, conducted by KPMG in partnership with DataEQ, offers insight into how UAE banks are addressing customer concerns on social media.

From 1 October – 31 December 2020, 41,430 public Twitter mentions were collected about eight traditional banks and three digital banks. Traditional banks comprised: Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank; Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank; Commercial Bank of Dubai; Dubai Islamic Bank; Emirates NBD; First Abu Dhabi Bank; Mashreq Bank; and RAKBank. The digital banks were Liv Bank; Mashreq Neo; and Now Money.

A statistically relevant sample of these mentions was then analyzed to understand consumer concerns within the UAE retail banking sector in areas such as customer service, products, reputational risk and priority conversation.

We hope you find this consumer sentiment analysis insightful. If you would like to discuss this report in greater detail, please feel free to contact us.

Highlights

1. Positive sentiment towards brand-driven activities, such as adverts and CSR activities, masks operational issues for the industry.

– Of all brand channels, call centers received the most conversation, but had a largely negative Net Sentiment score.

– Customer complaints about call centers cited multiple attempts to reach their bank through this channel, without receiving help. In addition, they dealt with multiple customer service agents and follow-ups in order to receive a response.

– Mobile app was the fourth-most mentioned channel but had the least negative sentiment. Customers complimented the user-friendly nature of mobile apps and new updates. Customers reported using apps to send money to family, commented on how apps consumed low volumes of data, and that they enabled customers to avoid physical channels, such as ATMs and branches.

2. The issue of long turnaround (wait) time was at the core of most customer service complaints which mentioned call centers.

– Turnaround time was cited in approximately 30-50% of service queries for individual banks.

– This was followed by no response received and multiple contacts as key topics underpinning negative customer sentiment towards banks' customer service.

– Two banks performed above the industry average Net Sentiment for service conversation. Both used brand adverts to drive prospective customers to enquire about opening an account or obtaining a loan. These banks also had the lowest percentage of turnaround time complaints.

3. Customers expressed frustration on social media channels in more than half of conversations which contained a risk factor.

– Frustrations primarily related to mentions of account disputes and double charges.

– Those who filed complaints about fraudulent account activity do not believe they received sufficient support from banks.

– Customers actively dissuaded others from signing up for certain products or institutions. This poses a reputational risk to the bank and products mentioned.

4. There were low volumes of direct purchase intent or cancellation threats.

– Our findings suggest that instead of threatening to cancel or showing intent to purchase, UAE customers were more proactive about referring or dissuading others in order to compliment or complain about their bank.

– Personal loans drove 16.1% of conversations which contained a purchase intent.

– Poor turnaround time was cited in close to a third of conversations where customers were threatening to cancel a service or switch banks.

Banking sector overview

The last 12 months have been extremely challenging for both UAE consumers and the banking sector. Certain that the Covid-19 shock will continue to reverberate in 2021, banks are operating in an environment of low interest rates and profitability.

According to KPMG's UAE banking perspectives 2021 report, net profit for the top 10 UAE banks has dropped by 61% on average, compared with 2019[1]. This is attributable to the significant increase in the provision charge on loans, with banks expecting higher losses and customer defaults because of the pandemic. Net interest margin continues to be under pressure due to record-low interest rates, exacerbated by increased competition from incumbents, as well as new fully digital banks. However, banks' capital and liquidity position remain strong.

Despite expected growth from strategic events such as Expo 2020 and a recovering hydrocarbon sector, gross domestic product (GDP) is predicted to return to 2019 levels by 2022[2]. The UAE banking sector's recovery will likely be gradual in 2021, as banks' asset quality may deteriorate, and the cost of risk further increases. In addition, the Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) will gradually lift forbearance measures in the second half of 2021.

Accelerating digitalization
Based on current market performance, cost-reduction initiatives will be at the top of banks' agendas. Measures include reducing their physical footprints, relocating staff to lower cost areas, and leveraging opportunities offered by digitalization. The latter will also enable a reduction in turnaround times and improve customer experience.[3]

Banks will also accelerate implementation of digital solutions across wide-ranging services. As they respond to shifting customer needs and preferences for digital channels, organizations will refocus transformation programs around critical processes. With growing financial pressure and an increasingly competitive landscape, digital and data may well become a foundational enabler for banks' operating models and supply chains. A shift to digital processes will also lower barriers among customers looking to switch financial providers. It is therefore crucial to build trust and sustain value throughout customer experiences and interactions.

As banks navigate this new digital landscape, they will need to pivot and adapt to the changing environment to emerge stronger, post Covid-19. The need for well-defined and tested technology and cyber frameworks is critical for banks, as they strive for resilience.

Changing expectations
As the impact of Covid-19 continues to unfold, banks will need to rethink business and operating models, based on a new "future of work" paradigm. We are witnessing demographic changes and shifting societal norms—people are living longer, more women are participating in the workforce, greater flexibility and a focus on outcomes not hours—combined with rapid acceleration in technology. These factors will impact the future of financial services and automation of work—the future of the banking industry is going to be very different.

Additionally, consumers' attention to 'value for money' is the result of a fundamental change in purchase priorities that will continue for the foreseeable future. As customer behavior continues to evolve, banks will redefine segments and determine how to best realign their products and services to meet changing consumer profiles.

Shifting priorities
We also believe that it is a decisive moment for banks—a time to consider which areas of their portfolios are core to their business. Mergers and acquisitions (M&A), both in terms of divestment of non-core businesses and investment in core areas, will be key when optimizing product portfolios.

Finally, changing regulations, increasing cost pressures and a desire to simplify and standardize, collectively create a need for simpler (and fewer) products, easy-to-understand pricing and thoroughly enabled digital processes.

Banks would do well to focus on the outcomes of regulatory compliance processes, driving benefits that go beyond 'ticking the box'. A benefit of the current economic downturn is that it provides considerable new data on loss rates and customer behavior under stress conditions. Banks have an opportunity to harness this data to develop enhanced and more predictive risk models. In turn, output will generate more robust management information while also meeting regulatory requirements.

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1 UAE Banking Perspectives 2021, Link
2 Arabian Business: "UAE economy forecast to 'fully recover' in 2022 with 3.5% GDP growth", Link
3 UAE Banking Perspectives 2021, Link

DataEQ Crowd methodology

All sentiment scores contained within this report are verified by the DataEQ Crowd. The DataEQ Crowd is a proprietary crowdsourcing platform, comprising trained and vetted native language contributors from around the world, who rate and structure conversation data to ensure industry leading accuracy in English and Arabic.

Net Sentiment is one of DataEQ's key performance indicators and is calculated by scoring each data point as positive (1), neutral (0) or negative (-1). A score is then calculated by subtracting total negative conversation from the total positive conversation (Net Sentiment = positive conversation – negative conversation). To calculate percentage Net Sentiment, this score is divided by the total number of posts (positive, neutral and negative)

during that period. This results in a single score with which to measure sentiment.

Using this level of sentiment accuracy, DataEQ is able to establish how people feel while also unpacking the key drivers of behavior across a range of themes.

By equipping organizations with accurate social media sentiment and thematic analysis, they are able to make informed and strategic interventions from the millions of conversations online.
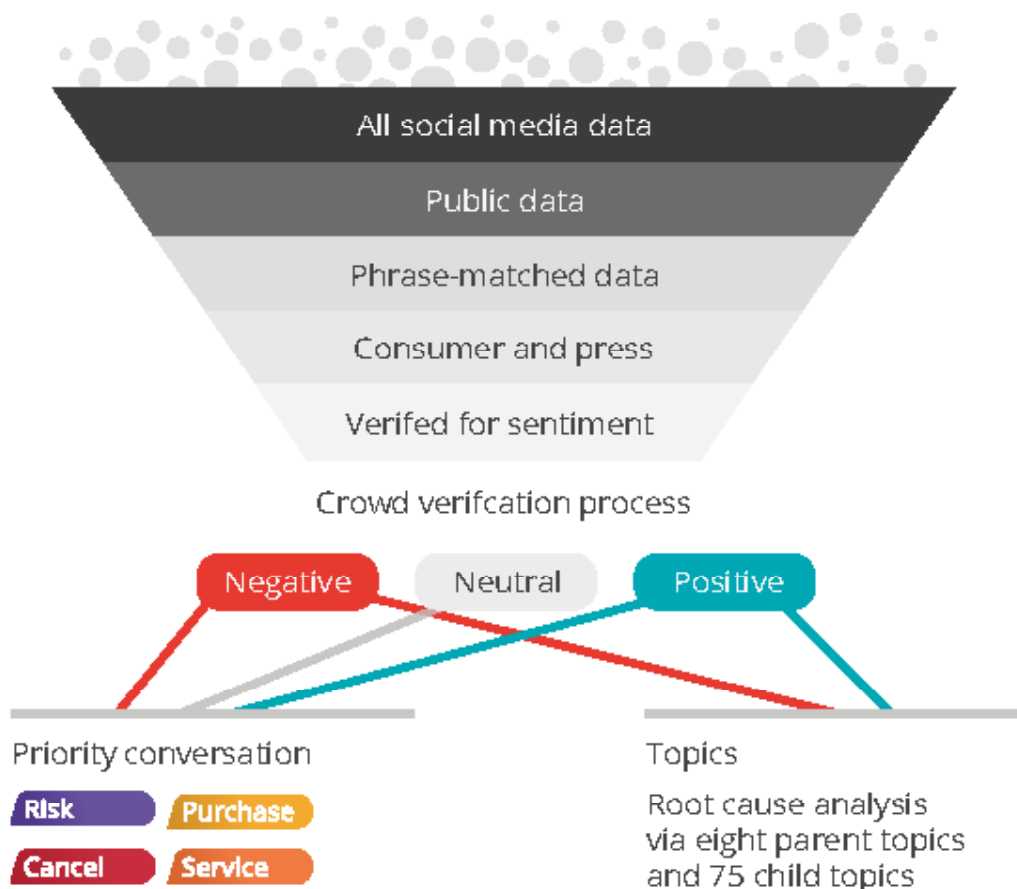
Topic analysis enables a granular understanding of the specific themes driving consumer sentiment.

A sample of 10,751 sentiment-bearing mentions (positive and negative, excluding neutral) were sent to the Crowd, who identified which of the 75 pre-defined banking topics were contained in each mention.
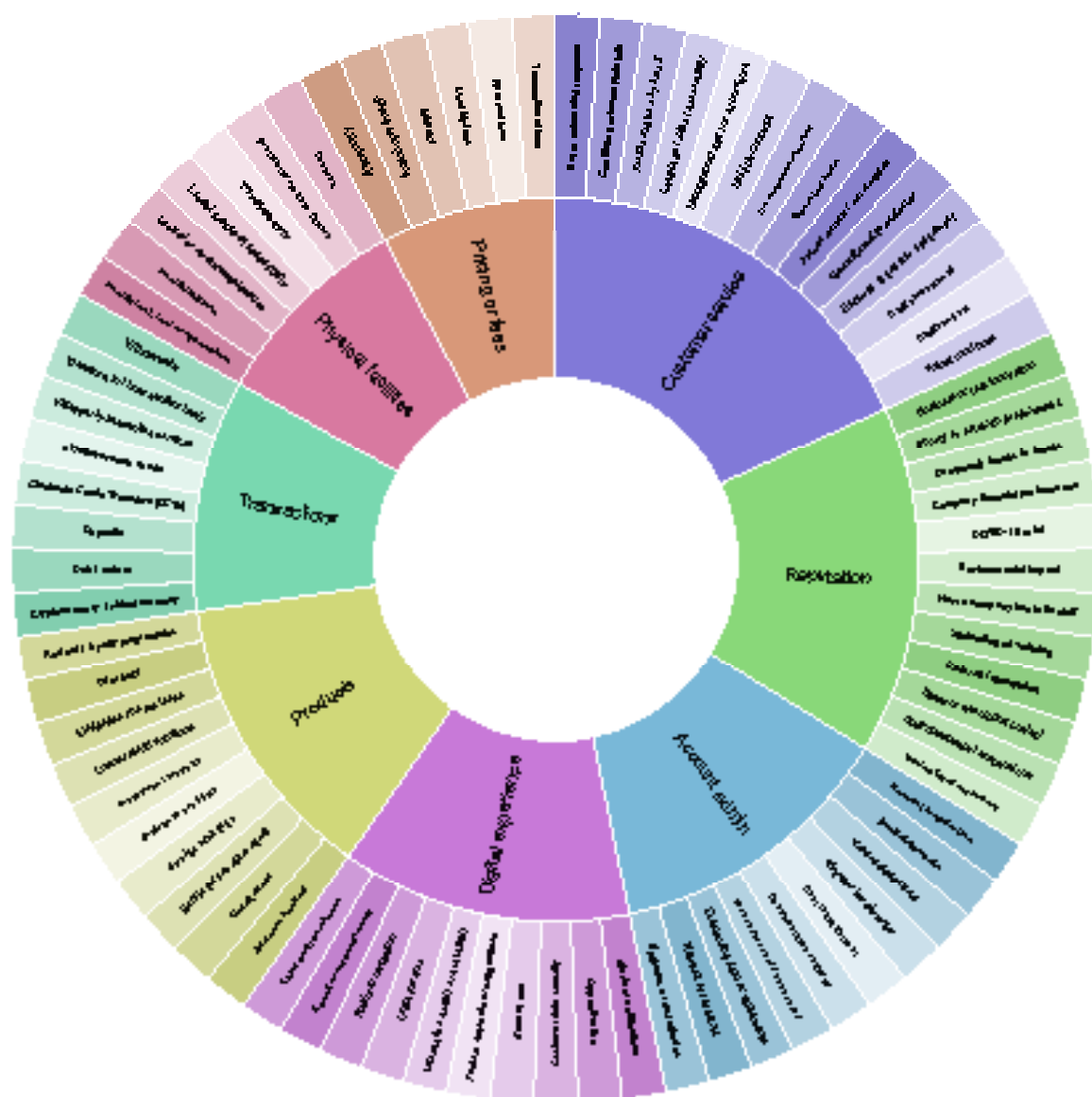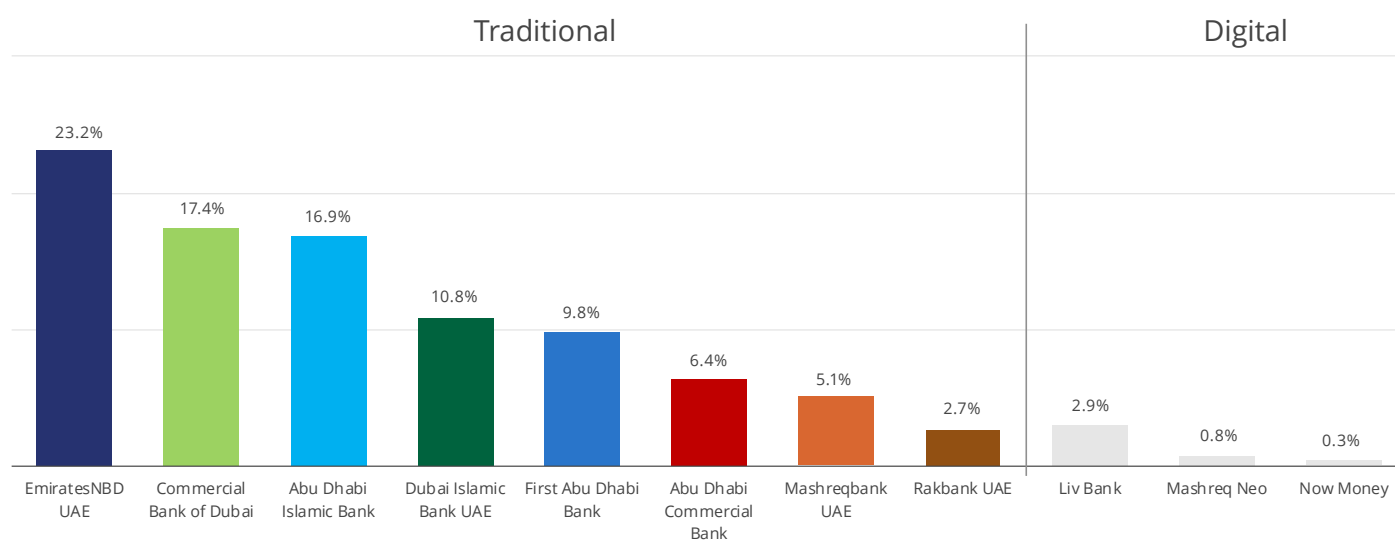

For more details see report methodology

Industry overview

Traditional banks saw the majority of social media conversation

Out of the 11 banks analyzed, Emirates NBD had the largest share of voice on social media, followed by the Commercial Bank of Dubai. This figure includes public tweets by brands, consumers and media accounts.


Traditional	Digital

EmiratesNBD UAE	Commercial Bank of Dubai	Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank	Dubai Islamic Bank UAE	First Abu Dhabi Bank	Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank	Mashreqbank UAE	Rakbank UAE	Liv Bank	Mashreq Neo	Now Money
23.2%	17.4%	16.9%	10.8%	9.8%	6.4%	5.1%	2.7%	2.9%	0.8%	0.3%

Share of voice on social media across the UAE banking industry

Customer sentiment towards products and services masked by brand-driven conversations

Across the banking industry in the UAE, the study found that brand-driven conversations tend to mask operational issues. This is because reputational conversations—the brand's own campaigns, CSR activities and media pieces—tend to be far more positive than operational conversations, which typically come from customers, about their experiences with products and services.
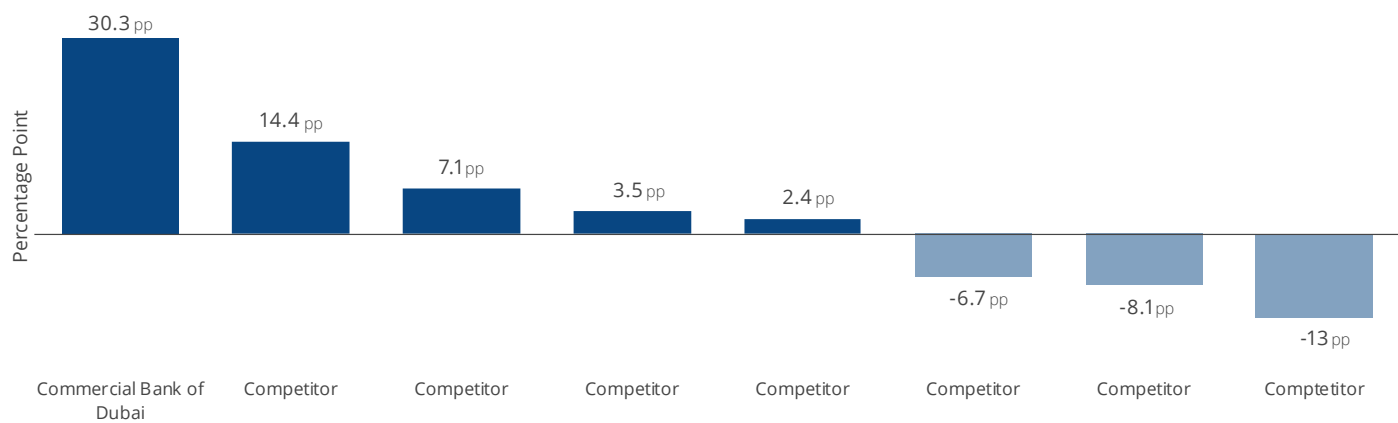
DataEQ's Net Sentiment analysis takes this positive bias of reputational conversation into consideration in order to generate an accurate account of customers' negative experiences with banks.

Overall Net Sentiment
-37.5%

Operational Net Sentiment
-70.6%

Reputational Net Sentiment
-3.7%
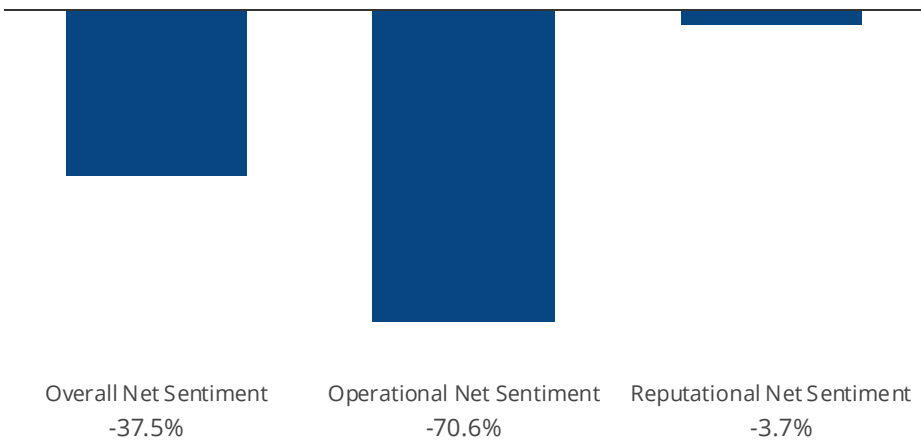
Overall Net Sentiment for traditional banks

Commercial Bank of Dubai was the top performer compared to the industry aggregate for Net Sentiment.

Each bank's sentiment ranking is defined by the percentage difference compared to the industry aggregate. The industry aggregate for traditional banks is -37.5%.

30.3 pp

14.4 pp

7.1 pp

3.5 pp

2.4 pp

-6.7 pp

-8.1 pp

-13 pp

Percentage Point

Commercial Bank of Dubai | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Comptetitor

Net Sentiment of traditional banks in relation to industry aggregate

Raising the bar: Customer experience in UAE retail banking

The UAE's banking sector is highly competitive, with several locally established and international retail and wholesale banks. The nature of the market, combined with generalized product and service offerings, has compelled banks to differentiate themselves on the promise of customer experience (CX) and digital banking. In addition, the pandemic has led to a rapid increase in the adoption of digital channels. As a result, banks in the UAE are focused on providing a broad, frictionless, and personalized customer journey through online channels.

Leading from the front

The UAE's retail banks are increasingly embracing customer-led transformation, harnessing digital technologies in new and innovative ways. According to KPMG's 2020 UAE customer excellence experience report, the financial services sector (along with the utilities sector) has seen the largest increase in focus on customer experience. The top three performers were HSBC, Emirates NBD and Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank.[4]

A common theme among top-performing banks has been augmenting customer touch points with innovative technology to improve customers' banking experience. For instance, Emirates NBD has focused on accelerating its digital capabilities, including artificial intelligence and machine learning. This has led to simplified customer processes. For example, customers can open a new account in minutes or use an interactive teller machine which allows completion of most transactions without the need to visit a branch.[5]

Banks have been focused on creating an integrated and effortless digital customer experience, without human intervention—the main objective being to reduce turnaround time. Many have digitized complex processes and wide-ranging customer journeys, cutting across front, middle and back offices. These journeys are driven by business rules, triggers and events on the back end. The result is an intuitive and self-guiding user experience for front-end channels, such as mobile applications and web portals.

Prioritizing the customer experience

The UAE market is witnessing revolutionary changes with respect to digital banking. Organizations are prioritizing the improvement of customer convenience, service delivery and innovation. Shifts in banking include locally established banks launching digital spinoffs targeted at technologically savvy and younger users, such as LIV by Emirates NBD and Mashreq Neo by Mashreq Bank.[6] On the other hand, recent announcements of digital-only banks such as Zand, Dubai-based YAP and Abu Dhabi-based ADQ neobank, indicate a push towards digitization. This potentially elevates customer experience whilst driving operational efficiencies for banks to balance their cost-to-income ratio.

Banks should therefore strive to become distinguishable by the degree to which their customer experience efforts are integrated and connected. The boundaries between front and back offices are blurring and banks are becoming closer to their customers, driven to innovate by the insights they gain. Customer-centric banks today are structuring their operations in new and exciting ways. They are seeing customer experience as a source of commercial value: not just a differentiator versus competition, but a mechanism for potential superior profitability.

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4   2020 UAE Customer Experience Excellence report, Link
5   2020 UAE Customer Experience Excellence report, Link

6   Wamda: The slow rise of neobanking in the Middle East, Link

Customer experience

Customer service was the biggest cause for complaints

Of the eight broad themes analyzed by DataEQ, customer service complaints were the most significant driver of conversation, making up 57.2% of industry conversation.

The percentages below represent the contribution of each of the eight 'broad' topics to overall topic conversation. Sentiment is the proportion of positive and negative sentiment for each topic[1].

	% OF CONVERSATION	NEGATIVE	POSITIVE
Customer service	57.2%	92.3%	7.7%
Reputation	21.8%	74.4%	24.1%
Products	21.2%	90.3%	9.7%
Account admin	14.3%	98.4%	1.5%
Digital experience	10.7%	87.0%	14.7%
Transactions	5.9%	96.3%	3.2%
Pricing or fees	3.6%	91.4%	8.5%
Physical facilities	2.7%	90.0%	10.0%

Topics driving conversation on social media

Top drivers of service complaints spoke to a need for improved responsiveness in the industry

To ascertain the main drivers of customer complaints across the UAE banking industry, DataEQ analyzed co-occurrence. This entails examination of the topics that were most commonly spoken about in relation to customer complaints.

1. The reputation topic here is defined as how the brand is being perceived (positively or negatively) in relation to the following subtitles: business or technological innovation; CSI activities; comparison of brands to competitors or other industries; company financial performance; Covid-19 relief efforts; environment impact; how a company greats it staff; misleading advertising; referral/dissuasions from one consumer to another; spam or unsolicited contact; staff dismissals, suspensions or retrenchment; and valuing loyal customers.

Turnaround time was the largest pain point for customers

As can be seen in the chart below, the issue of long turnaround (wait) time was at the core of most (43.8%) customer service complaints. This likely drove reports of no response being received (22.4%) and the issue of dealing with multiple customer service agents (9.5%) in order to get assistance. These drivers speak to a general need for improved customer service responsiveness within the industry.

Driver	Percentage
Turnaround time	43.8%
No response received	22.4%
Multiple contacts	9.5%
Comparing brands to brands	8.8%
Placed on hold	7.9%
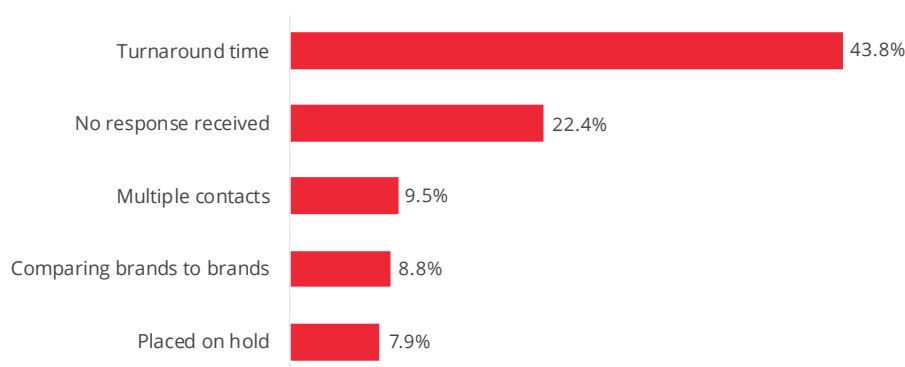
Top drivers of service complaints for UAE banks

In addition to turnaround time, loans and staff conduct were common themes cited in negative service conversation. This stemmed from complaints related to poor customer treatment from staff officials and complaints from customers who felt misled by the bank's loan offers.

Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank received the highest Net Sentiment within the service segment of conversation

Bank	Net Sentiment
Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank	23.4%
Competitor	3.7%
Competitor	-0.7%
Competitor	-3.7%
Competitor	-5.7%
Competitor	-8.0%
Competitor	-12.5%
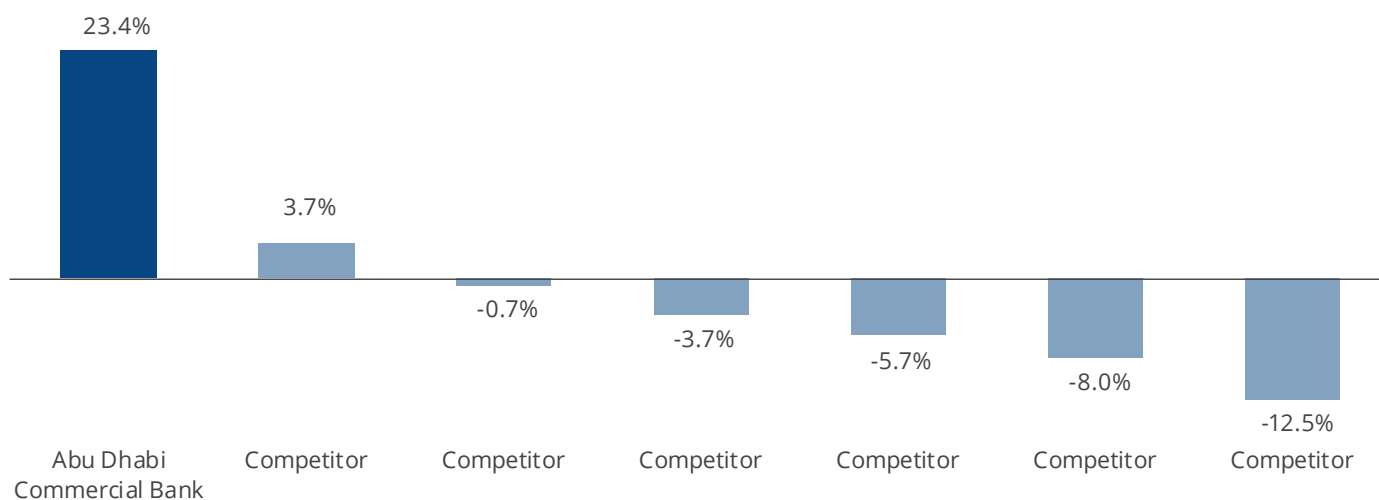
Net Sentiment towards service

Each bank's sentiment ranking is defined by the percentage difference compared to the aggregate. The industry aggregate for service conversation is -72.3%.

The top performer's advertising drove prospective customers to enquire about opening an account or obtaining a loan. The bank used creative video adverts to draw attention to their products which was well received.

The second-best performer had the lowest percentage of turnaround time complaints. This, combined with brand campaigns that highlighted the affordability of bank fees and charges, resulted in its relatively competitive performance.

Call centers and physical branches were customers' primary service touchpoints

Of all the available channels of communication, call centers were mentioned most frequently (51.8%) with the highest levels of negative sentiment(-84.8%) on social media. The channel mentioned second-most frequently was physical branches.
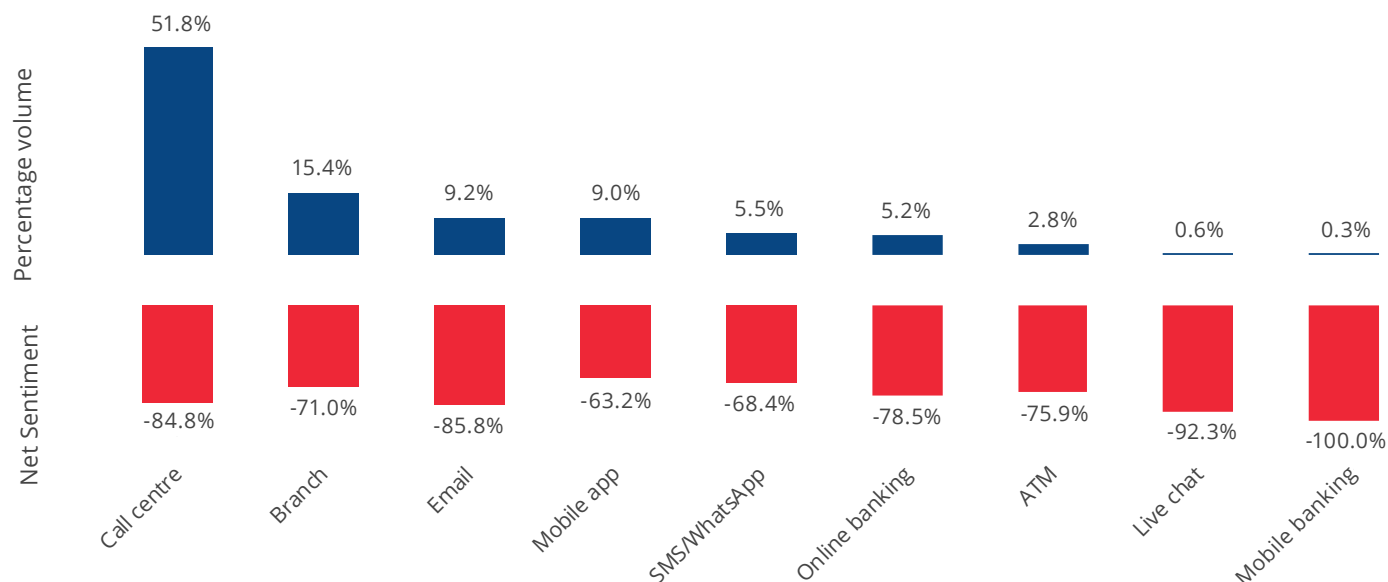
Volume and Net Sentiment of social media conversation around channels of communication

Customers complaining about call centers cited multiple attempts to reach this channel without receiving assistance. In addition, many mentioned having to deal with multiple customer service agents and follow-ups in order to get a response.

Interestingly, while "mobile app" was the fourth-most mentioned channel, it had the least negative sentiment. Banking customers—many of whom reported using apps to send money to family—complimented their user-friendliness and the positive impact of updates. Customers also said that apps used low volumes of data and reduced the need to access physical channels such as ATMs and branches. Again, this became key during the Covid-19 pandemic, when people were trying to social distance themselves.

Half of all online conversation about banks required a response

One in every two online mentions in the UAE banking industry posed a risk or consisted of a service request, an acquisition opportunity or a cancellation threat. Any of these should be considered as requiring a response from the bank.

This, however, means that almost half of all online conversation about the banks was noise for social customer service teams, hindering their ability to prioritize the mentions which did warrant a reply.

Nevertheless, conversations which contained a service query had the highest contribution to priority conversation. This is consistent with the finding that customer service complaints were the most significant driver of conversation.

The adjacent chart displays the distribution of priority conversation, indicating the overlap across the risk, purchase, cancel and service (RPCS) tags. Percentages indicate RPCS conversation as a percentage of total verified conversation for the industry.

All purchase and cancel mentions co-occur with service mentions, whereas some risk mentions fell outside of the service category. More analysis on this is covered in the risk section of this report.

51.3%
RPCS
conversation

48.7%
Other conversation

Service
49.0%

Purchase
1.3%

Cancel
1.8%

Risk
8.6%
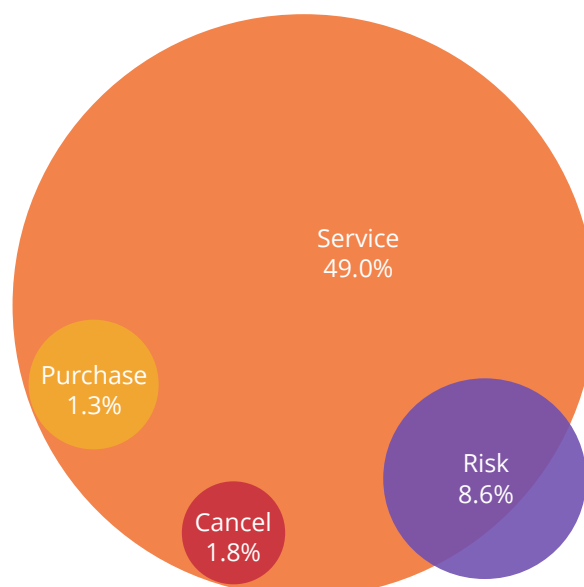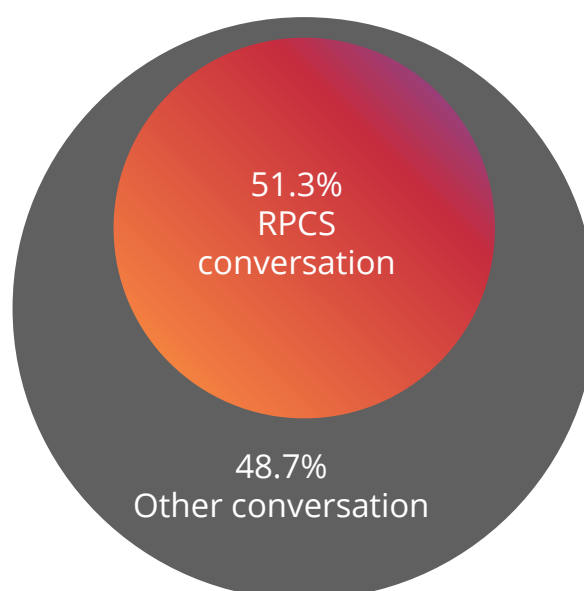
Banks do not respond to over a third of priority conversations and take an average of 13 hours to respond to conversations

Although the industry performed relatively well responding to direct conversation mentions, indirect conversation was not adequately dealt with. Out of the four categories of priority conversations, risk mentions received the lowest response rate for both direct and indirect mentions.

	Distribution		Response rate		Response time
Risk	11.6%		52.9%		13h
Purchase	1.4%		77.0%		12h
Cancel	3.8%		66.7%		12h
Service	83.2%		66.6%		15h
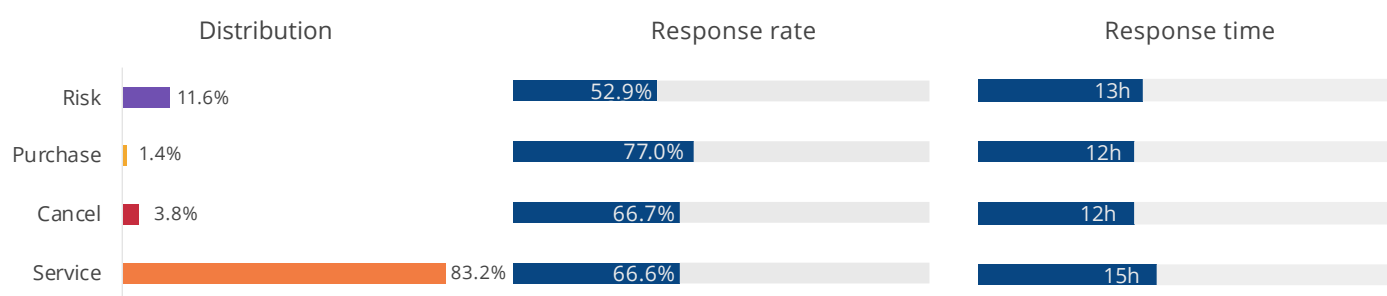
Industry response rate and time to priority conversations

The above chart shows the industry's response rate and time for mentions that were tagged with priority conversation categories—risk, purchase, cancel and service—and not the total verified conversation. The data is further segmented into direct conversation (the bank's handle is mentioned) and indirect conversation (the bank is mentioned without including the official handle).

Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank performed best in terms of response rate and time

88.3%

Industry 55.2%

| Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor |

Response rate per bank

Industry 16.6 hrs

0.6

| Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor | Competitor |
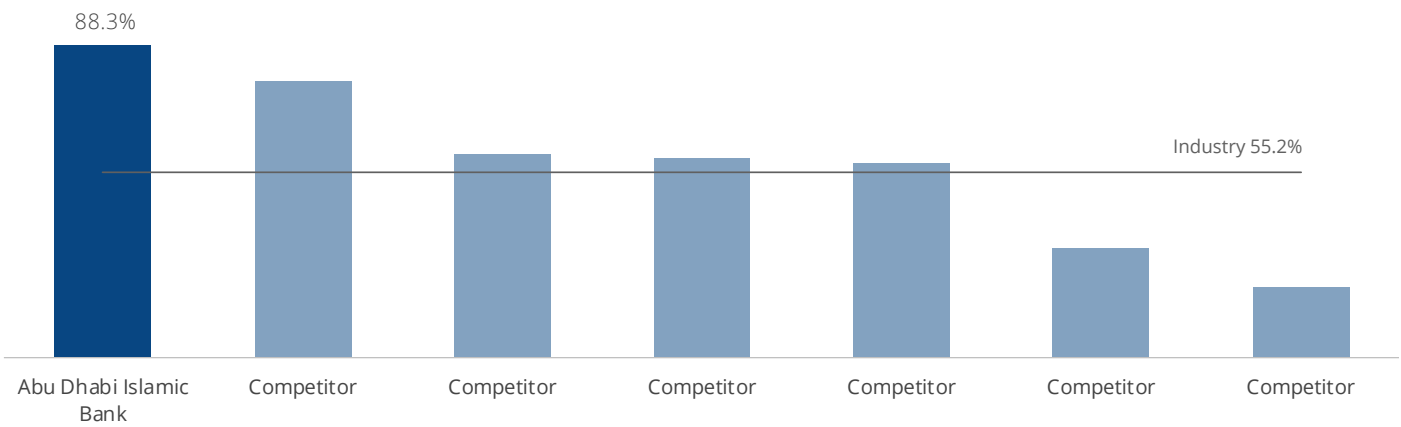
Response time per bank

The data used to calculate response rates and times was consumer conversation only. Consumer replies to posts by the banks, as well as consumer reshares, were excluded from analysis.

Consumer protection as a long-term investment

This year, the CBUAE moved to strengthen consumer protection in the financial services sector. The new Consumer Protection Regulation remakes the relationship between banks and their customers.[7] It aims to ensure that consumers receive the information required to make sound decisions, are not subject to unfair or deceptive practices, and have access to recourse mechanisms to resolve complaints and disputes.

Consumer protection to improve transparency and trust

The new regulation is broad in scope and has far-reaching implications. Product development, terms of service, and customer experience throughout the sales and product life cycle are several of the areas affected. Some banks may therefore require a fundamental reorganization of their consumer protection practices in order to comply with the new regulations.

Even before this regulation was released, many UAE-based banks understood that mutual trust and confidence are cornerstones of sustainable growth and success in the banking industry. Sound consumer protection practices help banks foster such relationships with customers through transparent pricing and disclosures, effective complaint and dispute resolution processes and responsible promotion and sale of financial products and/or services.

In response to recent events and the industry's ongoing digital transformation, consumers are demanding even greater commitment to transparency from banks. Future uncertainty, potential job losses and pay cuts brought about by Covid-19 have disrupted the financial plans of millions of consumers. Even as the economy recovers, many remain risk-averse and have drastically changed how they live, spend and save. Effective consumer protection practices that elicit trust are a competitive advantage in such an environment. A June 2020 KPMG survey, for example, found that retail banking consumers considered trust in a brand and personal safety as important as value for money when selecting a bank.

Consumer protection as a competitive advantage

Covid-19 has also accelerated the shift towards digital banking. Digital banking has clear benefits: lower costs, innovative products and the ability to reach new customer segments. However, digitalization sometimes comes at the expense of reduced confidence-building interactions between banking staff and their customers. Consequently, a reputation for strong consumer protection practices is even more critical to a bank's long-term success and, if done correctly, can become a valuable competitive edge.[8]

The Consumer Protection Regulation recognizes these trends, and ultimately it will increase consumers' confidence and strengthen the banking system. Regardless of regulations, however, banks should understand that failure to invest in sound consumer protection practices today will lead to an erosion of consumer and shareholder value in the future. On the other hand, modernizing and improving consumer protection practices will provide a competitive edge and facilitate future growth.

This means that consumer protection should form part of a bank's strategy, be addressed at the board level and cascaded down to all functions and operations. The associated costs of building an effective consumer protection framework is a long-term investment and a driver of business transformation, rather than a compliance cost.

8   UAE Banking Perspectives 2021, Link

7   Clyde & Co: UAE Central Bank establishes a new data protection regime for financial institutions, Link

Risk

Out of the four categories of priority conversations, risk mentions received the lowest response rate for both direct and indirect mentions. Of all verified conversations, 8.6% of consumer mentions contained at least one risk factor.
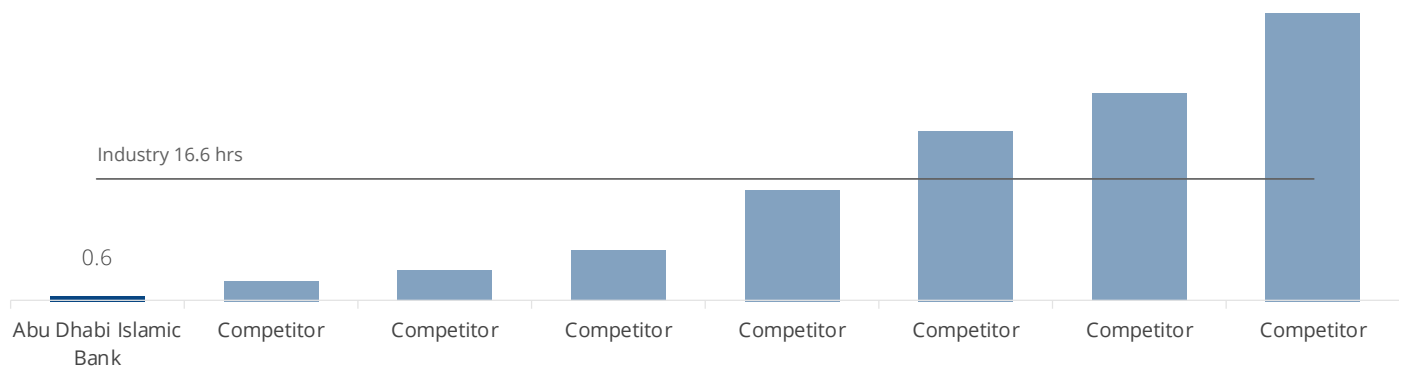
Category	Percentage
Perception of business conduct	44.4%
Protests or boycotts	22.9%
Downtime	10.6%
Fraud reports	8.4%
Health, safety and security	7.5%
Threatening legal or regulatory action	4.3%
Discrimination	1.9%

■ Percentage of total risk volume
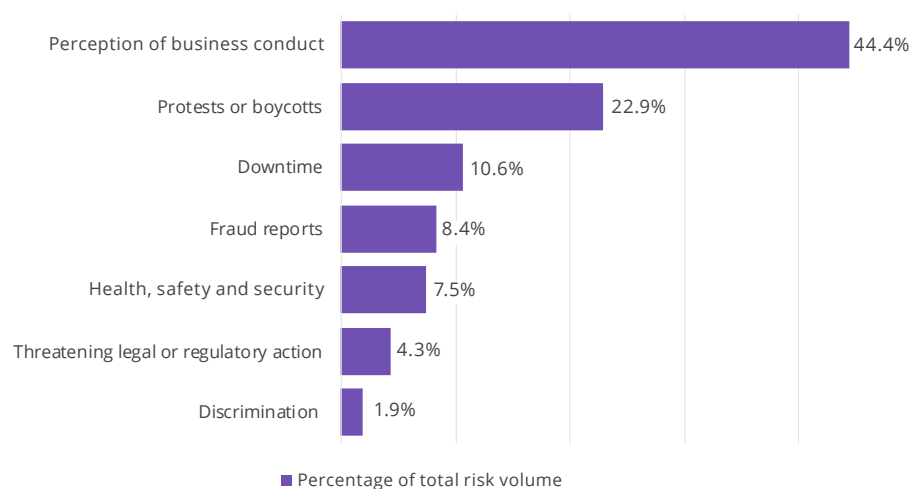
Biggest risk drivers across the industry

Half of all risk conversations expressed frustrations over disputes and charges

Customers reached out to the banks when they suspected fraudulent activity on their accounts and claimed that the assistance received was inadequate. This and other service-related issues led to customers dissuading others from opening accounts with specific banks or boycotting their products.

Customers were more proactive about referring or dissuading others in order to compliment or complain about their bank

Some customers warned each other about receiving incomplete information during subscription processes and actively dissuaded others from signing up for certain products or institutions. This poses a reputational risk to the bank and products mentioned.
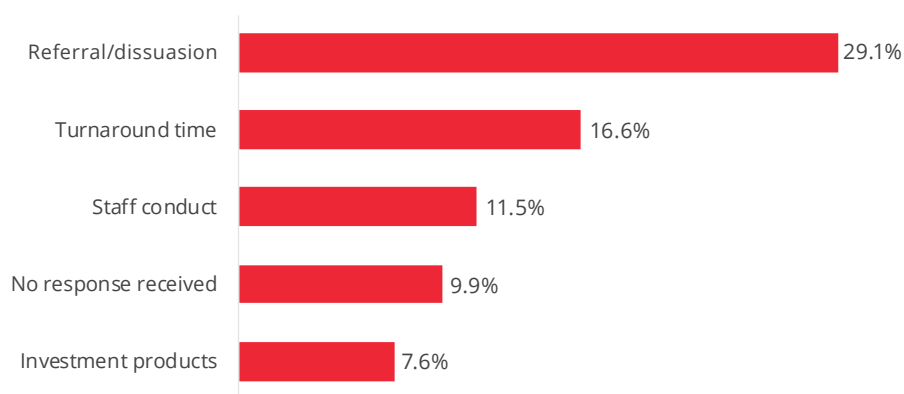
Topics most prevalent in risk conversation

Turnaround time, a major pain point, also posed a reputational risk for banks, with slow resolution of customer service-related issues driving discontent. In addition, customers also warned each other of poor service.

When it came to staff conduct, some consumers complained that bank representatives were unfriendly or unhelpful. Investment products also featured as a concern among consumers. Most mentions related to incomplete information.
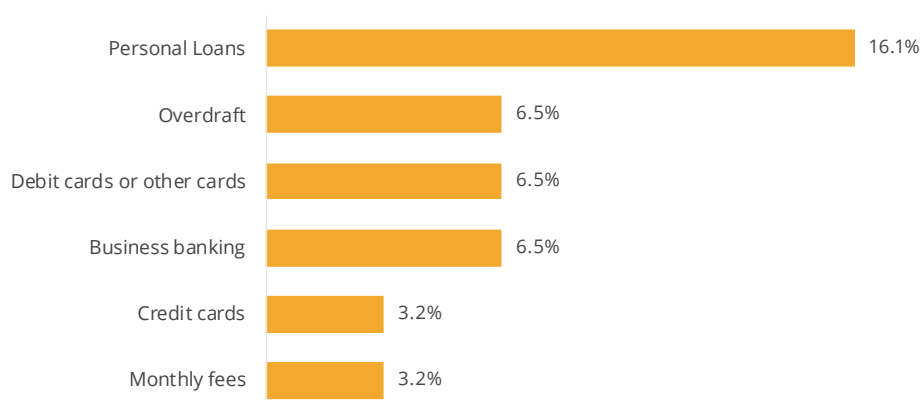
Customer acquisition and churn

Of all verified conversations, 1.3% of consumer mentions contained potential purchase intent of a product or service from a bank.

Personal loans made up almost a sixth of purchase conversation

The product in highest demand was personal loans, which drove 16.1% of the industry's purchase conversation. Demand for this product on social media was connected to consumers' queries about banks' requirements to take out a personal loan.

Overdraft and business banking were prevalent topics in purchase conversation, while requests for a credit card or questions around monthly fees were the least mentioned.
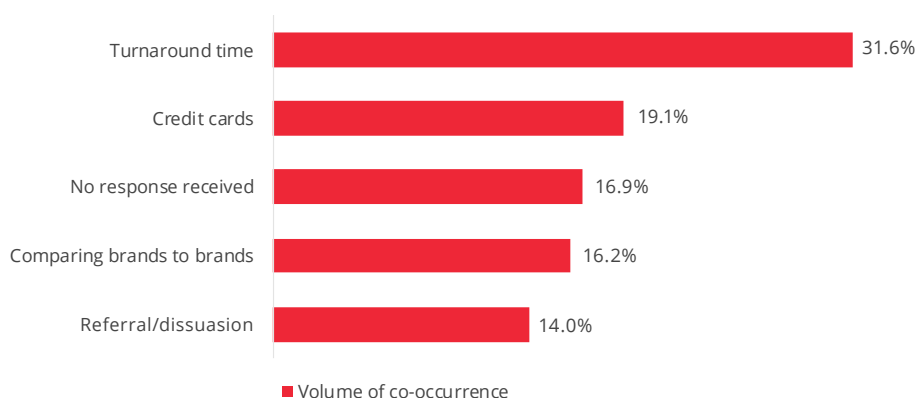
While consumers showed interest in purchasing these services or products, some banks' slow turnaround times and low response rates may have impacted the onboarding of new clients.

Product	Percentage
Personal Loans	16.1%
Overdraft	6.5%
Debit cards or other cards	6.5%
Business banking	6.5%
Credit cards	3.2%
Monthly fees	3.2%

Products driving purchase mentions

Poor turnaround time was cited in close to a third of all cancel conversation

One out of 25 dissatisfied consumers threatened to cancel services or switch to another bank. Poor turnaround time by the banks to address customer issues was the primary reason for customers stating they were going to leave the bank or cancel services.

Driver	Percentage
Turnaround time	31.6%
Credit cards	19.1%
No response received	16.9%
Comparing brands to brands	16.2%
Referral/dissuasion	14.0%

■ Volume of co-occurrence

Top drivers of cancellation threats

Conclusion

In a challenging year for retail banking, social media has become a popular customer service channel. The platform was commonly used for both service delivery and as a source of information for products and services. Banks must ensure that their social media customer service teams are trained and resourced to deal with the increase in requests, identifying and responding in a timely and professional manner.

The findings of this study illustrate that UAE banks are not currently meeting customer expectations. Rather than making direct purchase enquiries or threatening to cancel publicly on social media, however, it seems customers use dissuasions and referrals as a tool to express their sentiment towards providers.

Alleged fraudulent account activity also appears to be an industry-wide issue. Customers report receiving insufficient support when trying to deal with these issues. Again, lack of help has prompted customers to warn each other about incomplete information around subscription processes. In turn, this negatively impacts the banks' reputation and the products mentioned.

Going forward, new regulations will mean that banks have more than their reputation to worry about when it comes to poor complaint management. For example, the CBUAE's Consumer Protection Regulation will forms the foundation of the new Financial Consumer Protection Regulatory Framework (FCPRF).

In addition to covering areas such as disclosure and transparency, institutional oversight, market conduct, business conduct and the protection of consumer data and privacy, the Principles-Based Regulation promises an independent and fair complaint resolution mechanism in order to receive and address consumer complaints.

These new regulatory requirements will likely serve as an impetus for change in an industry which could be doing more to address a considerable volume of important customer interactions on social media.

To ensure regulatory compliance, the industry needs to elevate the importance of social media as a channel for customer service, on par with other channels such as call centers. In addition, it is necessary to ensure the teams addressing social media conversation have the processes and resources in place to deal with customer complaints and measure the success of new interventions.

Report methodology

1. Data collection and sentiment analysis

DataEQ retrieved 39,685 public tweets mentioning the UAE's major traditional banks, in terms of social media presence, for the period from 1 October - 31 December 2020.

The banks analyzed were Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, Commercial Bank of Dubai, Dubai Islamic Bank, Emirates NBD, First Abu Dhabi Bank, Mashreq Bank UAE and RAKBank.

For the same period, 1,745 tweets mentioning three digital banks—Liv Bank, Mashreq Neo and Now Money—were also collected.

To carry out sentiment analysis with a 95% confidence level and an overall 0.85% margin of error, a random sample of 10,751 of these mentions were processed through DataEQ's Crowd for evaluation and verification. Mentions were assigned sentiment scores of positive, negative or neutral.
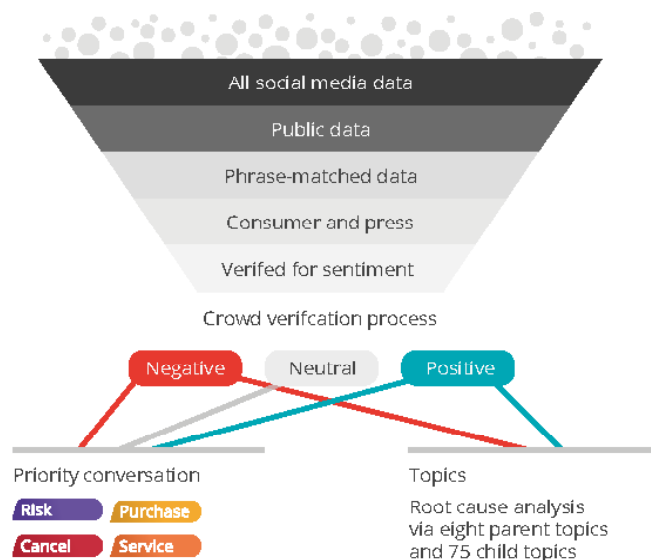

2. Topic analysis

Topic analysis enables a granular understanding of the specific themes driving consumer sentiment.

A sample of 10,751 sentiment-bearing mentions (positive and negative, excluding neutral) were sent to the Crowd, who identified which of the 75 pre-defined banking topics were contained in each mention.

Eight broad themes encompass the 75 pre-defined topics. The broad themes are: customer service, reputation, digital experience, physical facilities, products, account admin, transactions, and pricing or fees.

Mentions can be assigned multiple broad themes and subtopics, which allows for a more granular analysis of issues influencing consumer sentiment.
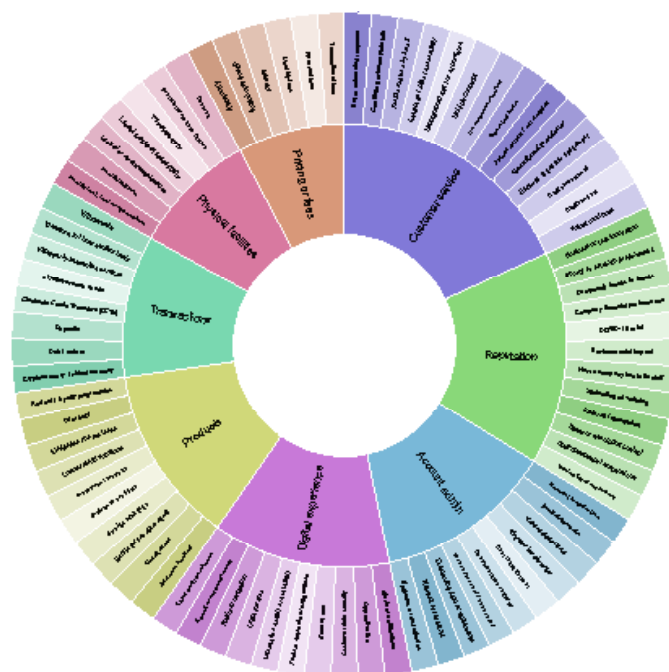
3. Customer experience and priority conversations

After topics segmentation, we further analyze the data for customer experience and priority conversations. By applying four priority tags (RPCS), DataEQ identified and analyzed the conversations to assess:

– Reputational or operational risk (R)

– Acquisition opportunities (P)

– Retention improvement or churn risk reduction (C)

– Customer service delivery (S)

DataEQ also assessed at what point in the customer journey and about which channel these customer sentiments are being expressed.
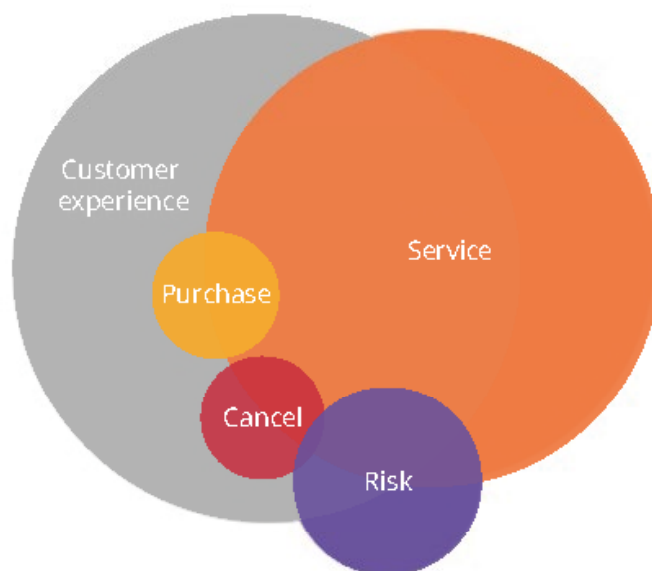
4. Sampling by brand

Bank	Volume of mentions	Sentiment verification	Verified CX	Margin of error
Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank	2 758	1 029	640	0.85%
Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank	7 292	1 729	966	0.85%
Commercial Bank of Dubai	7 457	446	50	0.85%
Dubai Islamic Bank	4 206	1 213	775	0.85%
Emirates NBD	10 012	2 119	1 104	0.85%
First Abu Dhabi Bank	4 655	1 560	759	0.85%
Mashreq Bank	2 184	876	271	0.85%
RakBank	1 152	647	N/A	0.85%
Liv Bank	1 265	491	N/A	0.85%
Mashreq Neo	327	180	N/A	0.85%
Now Money	146	97	N/A	0.85%

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