Utilities Getting Formula Right for Basic Digital Tasks, but Miss on Complex Interactions, J.D. Power Finds

Only Half of Utility Customers Able to Find All Information They Need on Utility Websites and Apps

TROY, Mich.: 24 Feb. 2021 — Utility websites continue to struggle when it comes to delivering a satisfying digital experience. According to the J.D. Power 2021 Utility Digital Experience Study,SM released today, utility mobile apps and websites have shown they can deliver on basic tasks as the world transitions to digital-first customer engagement models, but more in-depth functions—such as research on energy-saving information or updating service—continue to present major challenges.

Now in its fourth year, the study assesses how customers interact with their utility website and mobile app as well as with the online social, email, chat and text functions offered by the 36 largest electric, natural gas and water utilities in the United States.

“The move toward large-scale digital transformation during the past year has been a blessing and a curse for utilities,” said Jon Sundberg, senior digital manager at J.D. Power. “While customers are far more receptive to mobile apps and websites from their service providers, their expectations are also much higher. Utilities are performing well when it comes to helping their customers handle basic functions, but when it comes to the more complex tasks that many customers now expect to execute online, many utilities are falling short.”

Following are some of the key findings of the 2021 study:

- **Utilities struggle to deliver on complex digital functions:** Utilities perform well when it comes to supporting basic customer engagement functions digitally, such as making payments, easy log-in processes and reviewing account information. However, customer satisfaction decreases considerably when poor processes to complete more complex tasks such as viewing consumption history, researching energy-saving information and updating service are provided.

- **Half of customers can’t find the information they need:** Nearly half (48%) of utility customers say they were unable to find the information they were looking for on their utility’s website or app. This resulted in them turning to online chat, the phone, social media, text messages or email to resolve their issue.

- **Wide gap in digital experience performance:** While the overall customer satisfaction score in this year’s study shows an upward trend of 3 points (on a 1,000-point scale), the performance of individual utilities shows a stark dichotomy, with 13 of the 36 utilities evaluated logging double-digit improvements in overall satisfaction while six utilities show double-digit declines.

The 2021 Utility Digital Experience Study is based on evaluations from 8,508 customers of the 36 largest electric, natural gas and water utilities in the United States. To be included in the study, utilities must serve 1,250,000 or more customers. The study was fielded from November 2020 through January 2021.

To view the online press release, please visit http://www.jdpower.com/pr-id/2021013.

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