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ACSI: Customer Satisfaction for E-Business Rises as Facebook Gains; Google Loses Some Luster and News Websites Fall

*Strong Debut for Instagram; Pinterest and YouTube Improve;
NYTimes.com and FOXNews.com Tie for Reader Satisfaction*

ANN ARBOR, Mich., (July 28, 2015) – Customers are more satisfied with e-business as social media hits its stride, according to new data from the [American Customer Satisfaction Index \(ACSI\)](#). Only a year ago, social media ranked among the worst industries in the Index, but now climbs 4.2 percent to a score of 74 on ACSI’s 100-point scale, overtaking Internet news and opinion websites (-1.4% to 73). Meanwhile, customer satisfaction with search engines and information websites is down 5.0 percent to 76.

“Today’s consumers practically live on their smartphones, and mobile compatibility is increasingly important to customer satisfaction,” said Claes Fornell, ACSI Chairman and founder. “Social media has made strides in improving the mobile experience, particularly through mobile apps that can be optimized by operating system to ensure better compatibility with various screen sizes.”

The ACSI report, which is based on 5,400 customer surveys collected in the second quarter of 2015, is available for free download at www.theacsi.org/news-and-resources/customer-satisfaction-reports/reports-2015/acsi-e-business-report-2015.

Facebook Posts Strong Gain Among Social Media Sites

Facebook registers the most improvement in the social media category, soaring 12 percent to an ACSI score of 75, ahead of the industry average. Its stock is also up more than 15 percent since the start of the year, and shares have returned more than 35 percent to investors over the past 12 months.

“The social media platform is an important channel for news organizations, and consumers are increasingly turning to Facebook and social networks for news updates,” says ACSI Director David VanAmburg. “So perhaps it’s no surprise that social media now scores as highly as news and opinion sites in terms of providing fresh content and up-to-the-minute information, and Facebook outranks the websites of many of the largest news organizations for customer satisfaction.”

Leading the industry for a second year in a row, social bookmarking site Pinterest continues to improve with a 3 percent increase to an ACSI score of 78. In second place, Wikipedia rebounds 4 percent to an ACSI score of 77. The online encyclopedia leads the category for ease of

navigation and site performance, but has yet to fully recover from a fall in user satisfaction a year ago.

Instagram makes its first appearance in the Index with an ACSI score of 76. The mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking site leads the category for ease of use on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Meanwhile, YouTube leaps 4 percent to 76, and viewing time is up 60 percent.

Google+ is up 6 percent to 75, but users are no longer more satisfied with Google's social networking site than they are with Facebook. Meanwhile, Twitter reaches its highest ACSI score to date, rising 3 percent to 71. In the opposite direction, the average of "all other" social media sites, including Reddit and Snapchat, drops 3 percent to 71. Near the bottom of the category, microblogging platform Tumblr posts its first ACSI score at 69. LinkedIn remains at the bottom despite a 1 percent uptick to 68.

ACSI data suggest that social media users are more satisfied with privacy protection – or at least less concerned – than they were a year ago. Also, users seem more accepting of advertising year-over-year and relative to other e-business websites.

Google Exceeds Other Search Engines Despite Slip

Customer satisfaction with search engines and information websites slides 5.0 percent to 76, reversing last year's gain. The decrease is due in large part to a drop for the company that defines the category. Google remains the undisputed leader despite receding 6 percent to 78, and its market share, at 64.4 percent, is still more than double its nearest competitor.

Mobile searches now exceed those from desktop, but the rise of the mobile platform has proved slightly more difficult for search engines than for social media or news and opinion websites.

"Most website content was created for the desktop browser first, but as consumers continue to shift more of their Internet activity to mobile devices, companies need to optimize for different screen sizes, mobile browsers and operating systems," says VanAmburg. "While social media and news and opinion websites are usually available through an app, there is no guarantee that the websites listed in mobile search results will be compatible with mobile devices."

After Google, the race for second place intensifies with only 3 points separating Bing, AOL, MSN and Yahoo! The aggregate score for smaller niche-like search engines is down 3 percent to 75. Yahoo! climbs 6 percent to 75, while MSN is up 1 percent to 74. AOL ties MSN after a 6 percent gain. Bing gains in market share but slips in user satisfaction, down 1 percent to 72. New ACSI entrants About.com (71) and Answers.com (67) make up the category's bottom.

NYTimes.com Overhaul Boosts Reader Satisfaction, Site Shares Lead with FoxNews.com

User satisfaction with news and opinion websites dips 1.4 percent to an ACSI score of 73. Stagnant at 76, FOXNews.com no longer holds the advantage over NYTimes.com, which jumps 4 percent to 76 following its largest website redesign in seven years.

USATODAY.com, which tied FOXNews.com for the lead among individual sites last year, is down 3 percent to 74 and now ties ABCNews.com (unchanged). MSNBC.com is up 3 percent to 75, while CNN.com gains 4 percent to match the industry average (73). The aggregate score of all other, smaller outlets plummets 6 percent to 72, losing its edge from a year ago. The Huffington Post inches up 1 percent to 71.

“According to users, news websites are falling behind social media in a number of key areas,” says Fornell. “Not only are people looking to social media instead of news for fresh content, but news and opinion websites are the lowest-ranked e-business sites in terms of ease of use on mobile and tablet devices. Interestingly, consumers find advertising more intrusive on news and opinion websites than they do on social media, perhaps because it’s more difficult to disguise advertising as content on a news and opinion website.”

In addition to company and industry customer satisfaction scores, the ACSI measures critical elements of the e-business experience that influence user satisfaction. These customer experience benchmarks include ease of navigation, site performance, freshness of content, device compatibility, advertising and privacy.

The chart that follows shows the benchmark leaders in social media, news & opinion, and search engine & information websites.

The [ACSI E-Business Report 2015](#) provides industry-level benchmarks across all three industry categories.

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2015 ACSI Customer Experience Benchmark Leaders

	Social Media	Search Engines & Information	News & Opinion
Ease of navigation	Wikipedia	Google	FOXNews.com
Site performance	Google+ Wikipedia	Google	FOXNews.com NYTimes.com
Variety of services and information	Pinterest Wikipedia	Google	NYTimes.com
Freshness of content	Instagram Pinterest	Google	NYTimes.com
Speed and reliability of video clips	Google+ Instagram	Google Bing	NYTimes.com
Ease of using the site on different devices	Instagram	Google	NYTimes.com
Amount of ads on site	Pinterest	Google	NYTimes.com
Privacy	Pinterest	Not Measured	Not Measured

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About ACSI

The [American Customer Satisfaction Index \(ACSI\)](#) is a national economic indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of products and services available to household consumers in the United States. The ACSI uses data from interviews with roughly 70,000 customers annually as inputs to an econometric model for analyzing customer satisfaction with more than 300 companies in 43 industries and 10 economic sectors, including various services of federal and local government agencies.

ACSI results are released throughout the year, with all measures reported on a scale of 0 to 100. ACSI data have proven to be strongly related to a number of essential indicators of micro and macroeconomic performance. For example, firms with higher levels of customer satisfaction tend to have higher earnings and stock returns relative to competitors. Stock portfolios based on companies that show strong performance in ACSI deliver excess returns in up markets as well as down markets. At the macro level, customer satisfaction has been shown to be predictive of both consumer spending and GDP growth.

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