

Customers prefer text over video to provide service feedback, research finds

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At a time when one viral video can damage a business, some companies are turning to their own commenting platforms rather than letting social media be the main outlet for customer feedback. Only one wrinkle: in this context, customers appear to prefer writing a message rather than leaving a video.

In a recent study, more participants indicated they would likely leave written compliments or [complaints](#) about service on a restaurant-provided tablet powered by artificial intelligence. A video message option appeared to discourage leaving feedback.

With more [restaurants](#) and hotels turning to AI to enhance their service, the findings indicate that methods that require "low self-disclosure" would work better, meaning ones that don't require customers to provide very much identifiable information.

"Some restaurants and hotels actually ask customers to create video testimonials that they can share, but for general customers, it seems they feel more comfortable with low self-disclosure. This is probably because people still do not trust AI to that level," said lead author Ruiying Cai, a [researcher](#) in Washington State University's Carson College of Business.

With a lot of hype around AI technology, many people have misperceptions about what it can do, Cai pointed out, perhaps believing it is capable of a lot more than simply recording a message.

The study participants reported being concerned about what would be done with their information in all the scenarios, but this was heightened with the option to leave a video.

For the study, [published](#) in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Cai and her colleagues presented different online scenarios to a total of 439 people. The participants were first asked to imagine a restaurant where they had either good or bad service. Then they reported how willing they were to give the server compliments, or complaints, with either text or [video](#) on an AI-enabled tablet.

The researchers found that the participants were more willing to give feedback using text, whether positive or negative.

The scenarios also had participants receiving a theoretical immediate or delayed reward to provide feedback, namely a 5% discount of their current meal or a future one. For complaints, the reward timing did not appear to make much difference, which the authors said was not surprising as people tend to be more highly motivated to complain than compliment.

For compliments, the researchers found an interesting connection: with more participants choosing the delayed reward over the immediate one. This may indicate that giving the compliment itself is its own reward as it makes the giver feel good, Cai said.

"It's a good start to think about how to encourage customers to leave more compliments which could be very important for frontline employees. It could also be beneficial for the customers themselves," she said.

Even complaints are important to encourage, Cai added. As her [previous research](#) suggests, restaurants and hotels should make it easier for customers to complain to them directly rather than go elsewhere to air their grievances.

"There have been episodes when customers were not afraid of posting angry videos on their own [social media](#)," Cai said. "If restaurants and hotels can encourage customers to complain directly to them, then they may be able to recover and solve that service failure before it goes viral online."

More information: Ruiying Cai et al, Customers' intention to compliment and complain via AI-enabled platforms: A self-disclosure perspective, *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103628](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103628)

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