

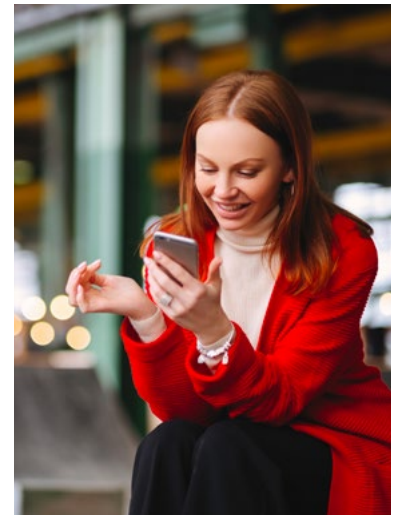
The rise of **messaging apps**, *Artificial Intelligence* and how it can **help your business**



Explore the popular
messaging apps
from around the
globe

Using messenger
platforms for your
business

The rise of
chatbots and
Artificial
Intelligence



Introduction

“Messaging apps now have more global users than traditional social networks.”

BI Intelligence
2015

With messaging, you can have the entire world at your fingertips, whether for personal use or for your business.

The first-ever electronic message in the popular sense, was sent in 1992 and contained the words “Merry Xmas”. It was an SMS, sent through UK satellites. Shortly after, in 1996, ICQ (‘I seek you’) was launched.

It was the first instant-messaging platform available for the public. From that moment on, messaging was born.

Over the years following online messaging helped to bridge long-distance relationships, it became a way to stay in touch with family and friends from all over the world.

What is messaging?

Instant Message
[in-stuh nt mes-ij]
noun

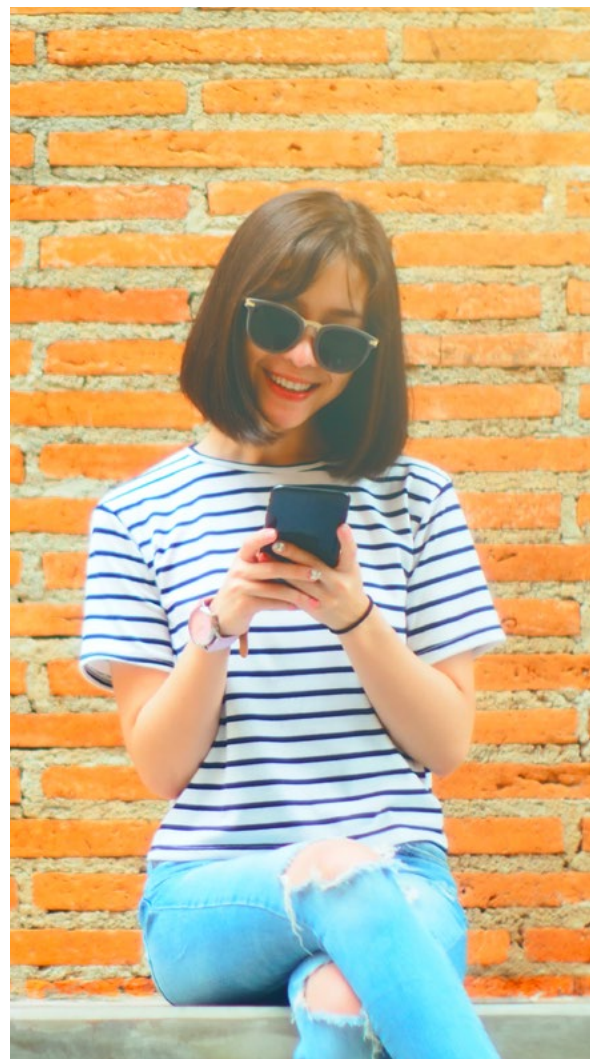
**An electronic
message sent
in real-time via
the Internet**

and therefore immediately available for display on the
recipient's screen.



Some of us will remember the time where you were hopelessly trying to squeeze a long story into a 180-character SMS text so it would just cost you 9 cents and not more. The introduction of instant messaging was a solution to that problem by offering a web-based alternative that didn't cost more money when you wanted to send more messages.

Over time with the adoption of faster internet connections, messaging apps became fully equipped multimedia hubs where you could share anything in the blink of an eye. We not only use it to chat with our friends anymore, but also to connect with companies, share documents, watch media, shop, pay and much more.





The key players

Where ICQ was the first instant messaging app available for the public, the full functionality, in the beginning, was merely sending a message to the person on the other end. It took the app another 2.5 years before it got more basic functionalities that we now cannot live without, such as chat history, user search, contact list and more. **2001 was the peak year of ICQ, it celebrated 100 Million registered users and welcomed around 100,000 new users every single day.**

There's certainly not one overall winner; one app that dominates the market.

Even though there are a few messaging platforms that are doing really well on a global level, they still have trouble penetrating into certain countries. On the other hand, there are apps that dominate certain countries, but are almost negligible in the rest of the world.



WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a free messaging and calling app, available for nearly everyone on the planet, irrespective of your phone's operating system. It is mostly used between families and friends to keep in touch, but since 2018 it is also available for businesses, allowing for easy interacting with customers.

- **1.6 billion active users** in more than 180 countries
- **3 million companies** use WhatsApp Business
- WhatsApp is banned in **12 countries**
- In **only 25 countries** around the world, WhatsApp is not the market leader
- 58% of users open WhatsApp **several times per day**, the average user opens it **more than 23 times a day**
- 55% of the users are **aged between 18 and 35**



Facebook Messenger

Facebook Messenger, or shortly "Messenger", is a chat platform that launched in 2011. Although it is owned by Facebook, what the majority of people don't know is that it can be used without owning a Facebook account. At its core, it started out as a texting app for both private and group conversations, including possibilities to share media, stickers and GIFs. But by allowing add-ons from third-party developers, Facebook Messenger really became feature-rich. Nowadays you can also send money, make voice and video calls, play games and connect with businesses - whether it is a bot or an actual person you're talking to.

- **1.3 billion** active users
- 11% of the world's population use Facebook Messenger on a **monthly basis**
- There are **300,000 chatbots** in use on Facebook Messenger ¹
- Facebook Messenger marketing has 10 to **80 times more engagement** than email marketing

¹ <https://mobilemonkey.com/blog/facebook-messenger-statistics-facebook-messenger-marketing>



WeChat

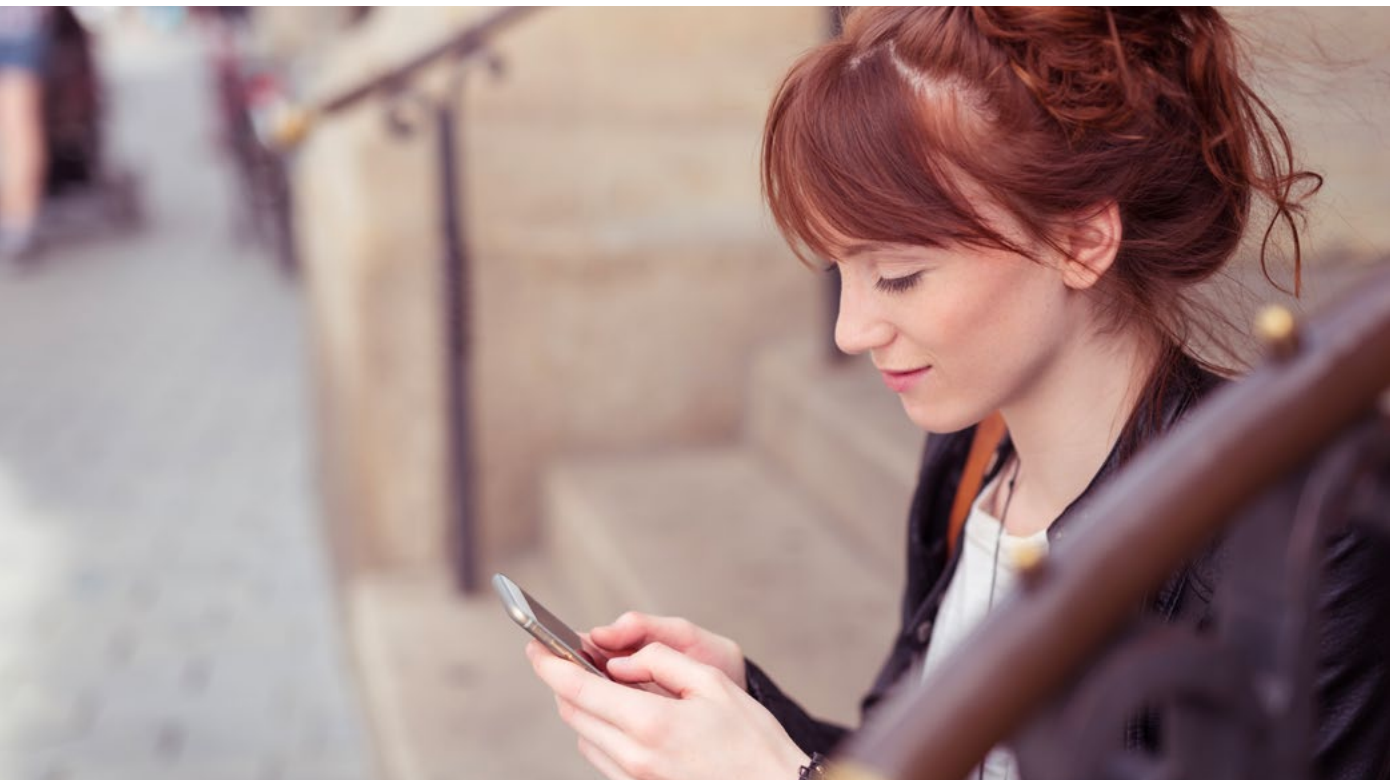
At its core, **WeChat is an instant messaging app**, but over the last few years, it has grown into a vast ecosystem of features from communications to shopping, gaming, banking, appointments and travel. It essentially allows you to do anything you'd want to do online and has the equivalent functions for many popular Western apps such as Slack, Tinder, Uber and other services.

- **1.1 billion** active users
- 60% of users open WeChat **10 times a day** and 1 in 5 users open it more than 50 times a day
- 85% of users are **aged 18-35**
- WeChat has **93% penetration** of smartphone users **in China's tier-one cities**
- Just over 1 in 6 (17%) of users spend **more than four hours a day** on the platform



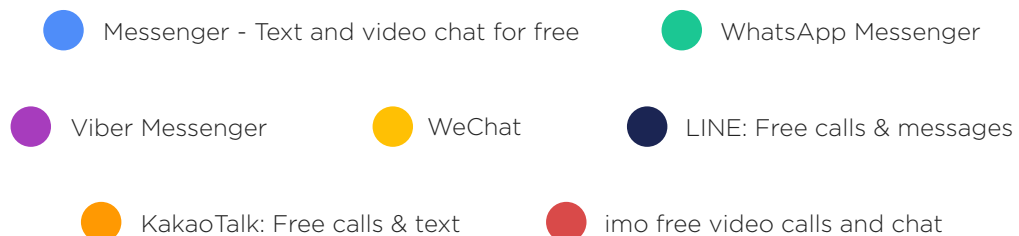
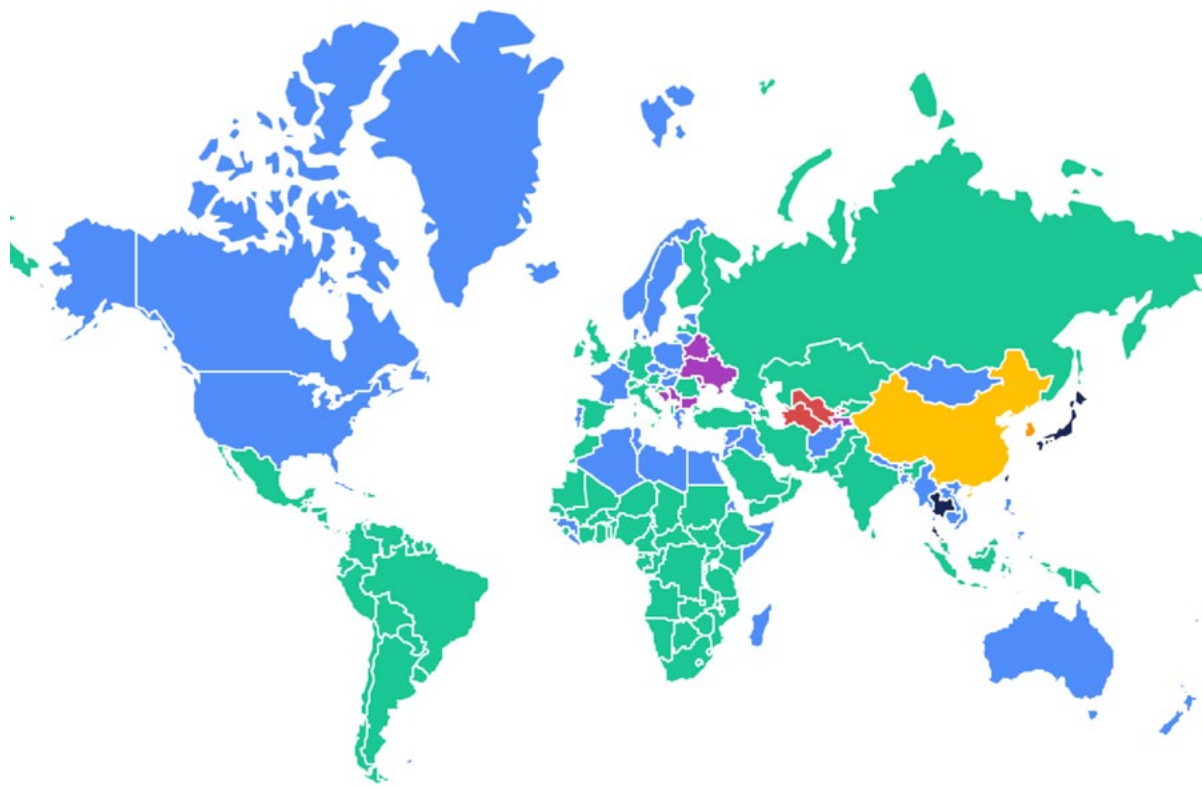
Viber, LINE, Snapchat, Kik, Telegram, IMO

Even though these are not the biggest players in the world, they still have a significant user audience. Among certain age groups, in certain locations and within specific communities, it's likely that one of these apps is the primary communication platform.



Most popular messaging app in every country

(Android App Data: December 2018)



¹ <https://www.similarweb.com/blog/mobile-messaging-app-map-january-2019>



Using messenger platforms for your business

Messaging has changed the way of communication. The numbers don't lie; messaging is hot. The potential for marketers to utilise this trend is immense.

Instant messaging enables businesses to develop

and nurture connections through a two-way relationship. This unique opportunity builds trust and it's more personal than engaging publicly on the brand's social media platform.



As has been shown, the majority of the chat platforms are used by young users, making it very important from a demographic point of view for brands to use these platforms.

It's a perfect time for a business to use message marketing to reach their audiences, collect leads and attract customers. To improve the connection with this target audience, it is extremely important for a business to adopt the use of chat apps.





Picking the right platform

Messenger marketing is no different from traditional marketing in one element: businesses need to pick their medium carefully. Selecting the messaging platform needs to be strategically considered before jumping in.

LOCATION

Not all messenger platforms are globally available, making it important for a business to pick a messaging platform that can be used by their target audience, enabling the business to connect with them.

Being based in Europe means that WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger should be considered when picking an app, but when a brand is based in China they should consider Telegram and WeChat. In the US the most popular platforms are WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Snapchat, and in Africa, they also use IMO and Telegram.

It's very different per region and this is important to take into account. Globally distributed companies should consider using different platforms to facilitate different markets.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND FEATURES

App selection varies on more than just location. The target audience's demographic is also important to consider. The age, interest and profession of an individual can change what app they use in their day-to-day messaging.

The features and nature of an app can also be decisive. Facebook Messenger is often used by clients when they need to reach out to their brand with queries about goods and services, whereas WhatsApp is mostly popular in private environment, sending media across to acquaintances. A big player in B2B communication is Skype, perfect for audio and video calls, conferences and screen sharing.

Even though research on location, demographics and features will help with selecting a messaging platform, messenger marketing should only be used when it benefits the customer and the company. The use of the platform should not harm the user nor the brand.

With GDPR rules in mind, thinking out the strategy before jumping in is important. Typically, the popular, well-established platforms are more trusted with the user. Explore all the possibilities and choose the right option. ¹

¹ <https://newsfeed.org/4-reasons-to-include-instant-messaging-in-your-marketing-strategy/>

Internal communication

Sharing documents, briefing your colleague, video calling with your client on the other side of the world, it has never been easier. Business communication and collaboration platforms allow for these simple but important tasks.

Without a Slack, Skype or Google Hangouts, businesses nowadays could not operate. It allows employees to work from home once in a while and in the meantime the company can outgrow its own physical borders by having clients and talent on the other side of the world. Everybody is just a conference call or chat away.



Customer Service

Growing your business is all about building trust and being helpful, loyal and having a personalised human touch. Customers are likely to reach out when they can use their own apps and channels.

A quick and personalised customer service results in maintaining a high customer satisfaction rate. Social media has helped brands move closer to this, but the rise of messaging as a customer service channel makes this even better. Customers appreciate when they can quickly reach out to brands by chatting via the apps they already use. They expect to engage in rich and asynchronous conversations, not having to call and waiting in a queue. Convenience is key.

70% of customers choose “message us” buttons over “call us”¹

79% of customers are more loyal to brands that are easy to contact²

For a business, it is important to stay on top of these conversations, and especially when service is offered on multiple channels it could quickly be overwhelming to manage. Business communication platforms offer a solution, allowing integration with other chat apps into one dashboard. Often it also includes for features like working together with other colleagues on incoming conversations, labelling chats, note-taking, archiving and tagging - making it easy for a business to keep a clear overview of all the conversations.

Examples of cloud communications platforms:

- www.smooch.io
- www.messagebird.com
- www.twilio.com
- www.intercom.com

¹⁻² <https://www.messengerpeople.com/customer-service-messaging-apps/>

Using chat for marketing

Including chat in your sales strategy has proven effective. Chat is no longer “just” a messaging app to reach out to acquaintances and especially WeChat and Facebook Messenger offer so much more beyond.

Chat should be included in a business’ strategy plan, delivering personalised content to your target audience. By distributing marketing material and running campaigns on a messaging platform, a business can potentially gain more engagement, brand awareness and interaction with their customers and potential clients.

Even though these channels are part of what’s known as **dark social** in that performance metrics and listening tools are unavailable, it can help with reaching a new audience by targeting them on the apps they already use and changing someone’s perception of the brand.

Newsletters are often static distributions, it’s a one-sided marketing channel. Sending out to many people at the same time, it disappears in someone’s mailbox, often even the bin, without it ever being opened. Messaging, on the other hand, can be very dynamic, creating rich and engaging “experiences” with the user.

The open and engagement rate is massively higher with chats than with marketing sent out through newsletters.

Marketing emails open rates: 15%

Messenger broadcasts open rates: 92% (6x higher)

Marketing emails click rates: 1.3%

Messenger broadcasts click rates: 11% (10x higher) ¹



¹ <https://rocketbots.io/blog/open-rates-facebook-messenger/>

**WE CREATED SVEN,
THE DOORMAN AT
THE PARTY.**



Absolut Vodka and their fake bouncer: Sven

A great example is the case of Absolut, which often is cited as the first-ever WhatsApp marketing campaign, appearing in 2013. Absolut, the leading brand of premium vodka, launched a new, limited-edition vodka line and hosted a party to promote it. It was not just another party, but one with an A-guestlist that everybody wanted to be part of.

They were giving away access invites to the party, you just had to convince the fictional, fearsome bouncer Sven. How? By chatting to him over WhatsApp. Only he wasn't easy to persuade, so users got really creative to convince him why they deserved access to the party.

It created a big buzz around the brand. Even though having the first-ever WhatsApp marketing campaign might have been part of the huge success, it did lead to 3 days of uninterrupted chats with customers. More than 1000 exclusive pieces of user-generated content like images, videos and audio files were created and sent to convince Absolut's bouncer Sven.^{1 2}

¹ <https://www.cm.com/blog/3-creative-uses-of-the-WhatsApp-business-solution-engagement-interaction/>

² <https://medium.com/@BrynFoweather/first-never-follows-a-svensational-WhatsApp-case-study-from-absolut-a1abe41237b6>

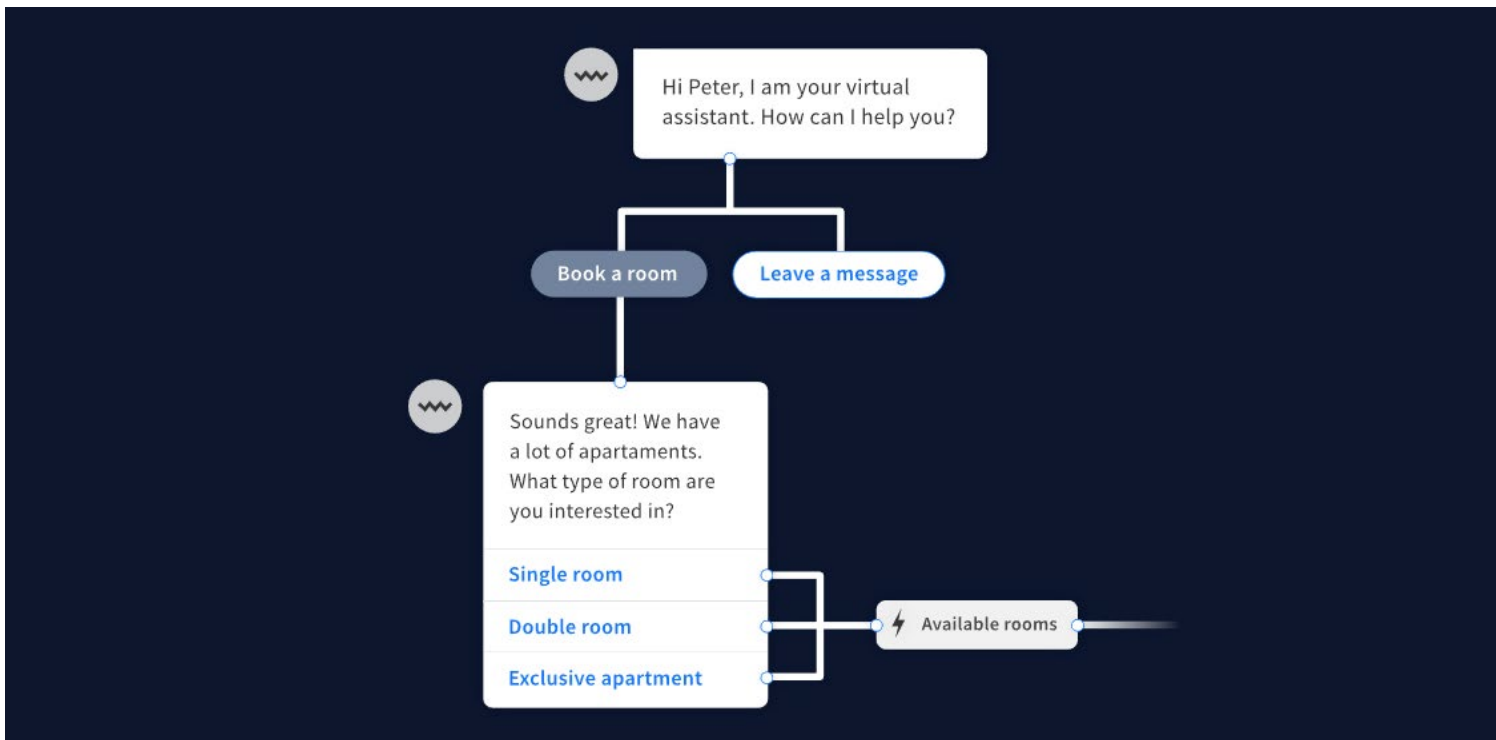
The rise of chatbots & AI

With technology and the growth of messaging apps and especially the younger generations' adoption of it, it's a no-brainer for brands to embrace messenger marketing to reach and interact with their target audience. But when it gives the user more frustration than service, you can lose face very quickly.

Customer experience is crucial,

making effective communications and a structured work process necessary to succeed. This is where artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots can come in very handy.

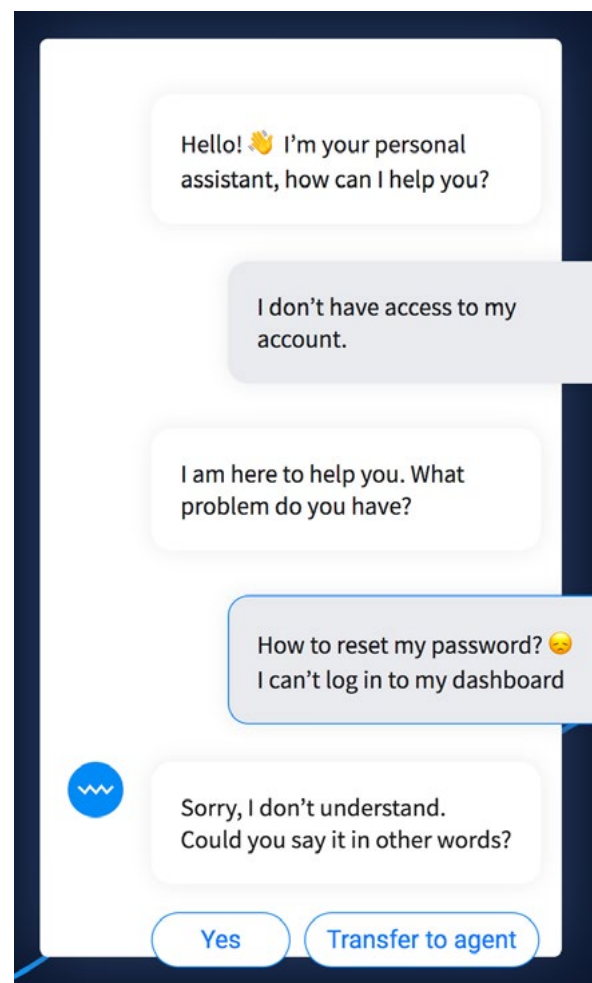
The usage of AI and bots in messaging is a new phase. The fact that only 300,000 bots are on Facebook whereas there are 1.6 billion monthly users is a fact you cannot ignore. Businesses have not been embracing chatbots just yet.



What is a chatbot?

A chatbot is a program that is designed to automatically reply and communicate with human users. The robot communicates through text messages and works off a script, put together by a human being. The bot scans any message sent to it for predefined keywords and automatically checks the script so that it can answer according to the rules created by the human.

This is the simplest form of a chatbot. It works with an if/then-script with rules for the bot. If the user asks x, the bot replies with y. And when the user asked a question without using a single keyword in this script, the rule could make the bot reply with "Sorry, I don't understand".^{1,2}



¹⁻² <https://www.chatbot.com/>

A chatbot makes life easier

CHATBOT AS A (SELF) SERVICE CHANNEL

Customer experience is crucial and even if a business would like to, nobody can be available for the customer 24/7... except for a chatbot. While employees are taking care of day to day tasks, the chatbot is always online and can service and scale your business in relation to your customer, replacing live chat, phone calls and endless emails.

When a user sends an email it might get lost in the inbox, resulting in a delayed reply that might take days. When calling, on average the user is listening to hold music for 7 minutes before they are assigned to a customer care agent.

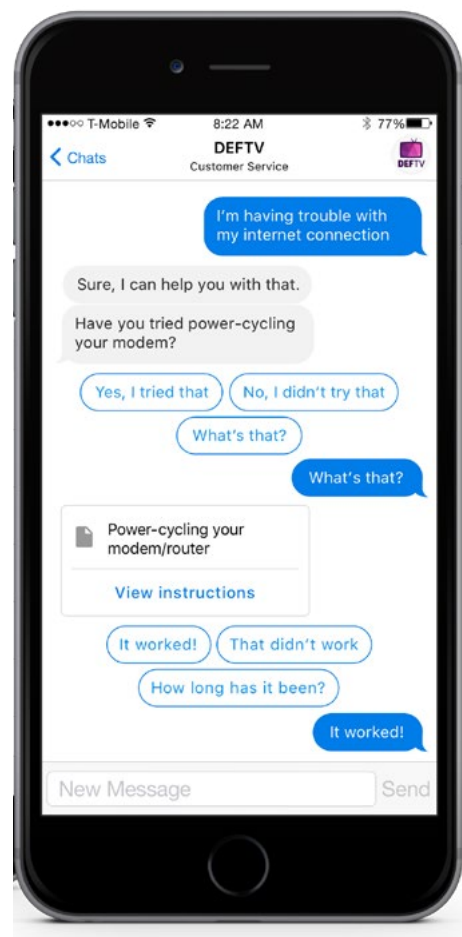
Most of the communications with customers can be replaced by chatbots. They reply instantly, service continuously, without the need for a lunch break because they never get tired. Gone are the days of endless waiting times, boring waiting music and sudden disconnections.

It doesn't matter when a user is reaching out in the middle of the night and whether it's just one or a hundred people at a time. The script is available, the bot is ready and the user can be serviced instantly, automating a lot of work. Being available 24/7 improves your service and saves your business a lot of money and time.

75% of internet users are adopting one or more messenger platforms.¹

Duncan Kavanagh

Insights Analyst & Writer at GlobalWebIndex



¹ <https://www.globalwebindex.com/hubfs/Downloads/Social-H2-2018-report.pdf>

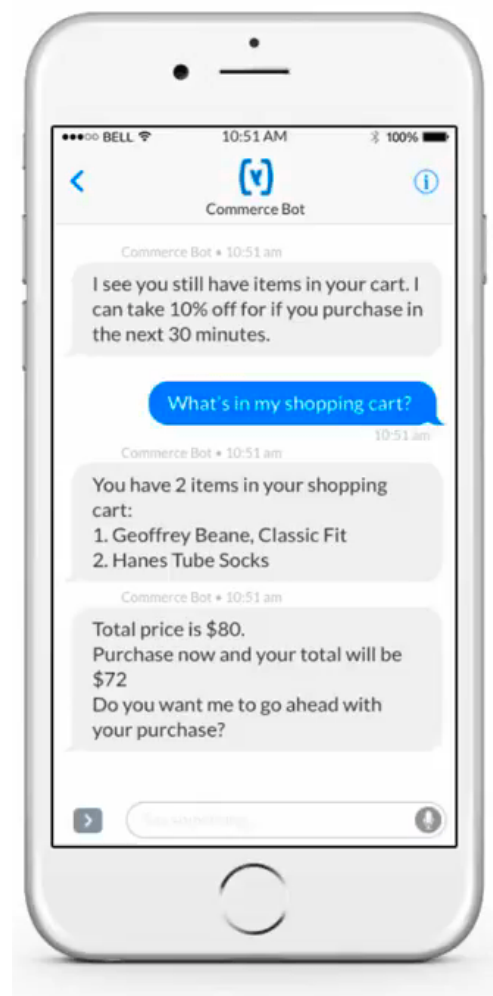


MESSAGING IN E-COMMERCE

During any customer journey, it's unavoidable that potential customers drop out of their user journey before converting.

A good way to get customers back in the funnel is by luring them back to the webshop through reminders by emails, for example by mentioning their favourite items are on sale or that there are some products left in the customer's cart.

As mentioned before, emails get lost and will end up in the bin before even being opened. Chat can be a perfect replacement, using communication apps and messaging platforms that customers already use, to reach them for sales. Personalise the message and distribute reminders by chat, without lifting a finger.¹



¹ <https://neilpatel.com/blog/facebook-messenger-to-sell-products/>

CASE STUDY/EXAMPLE: TRAVEL ASSISTANTS

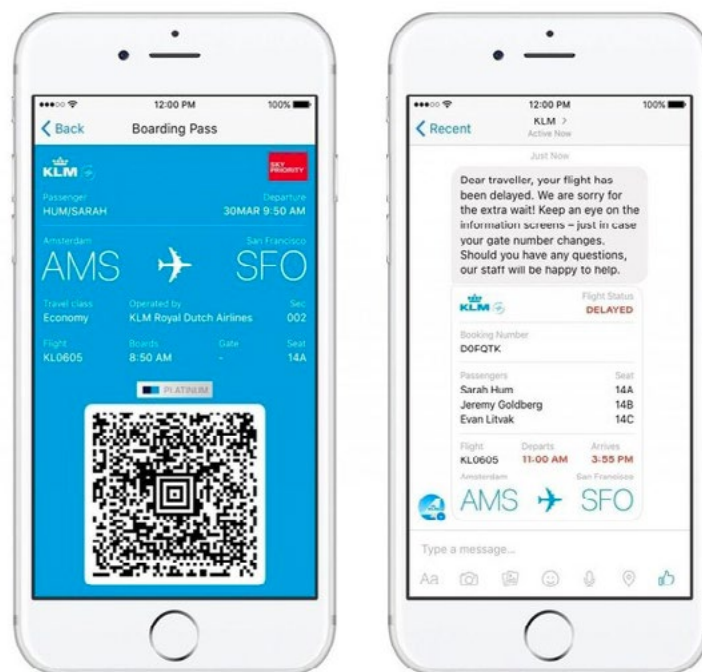
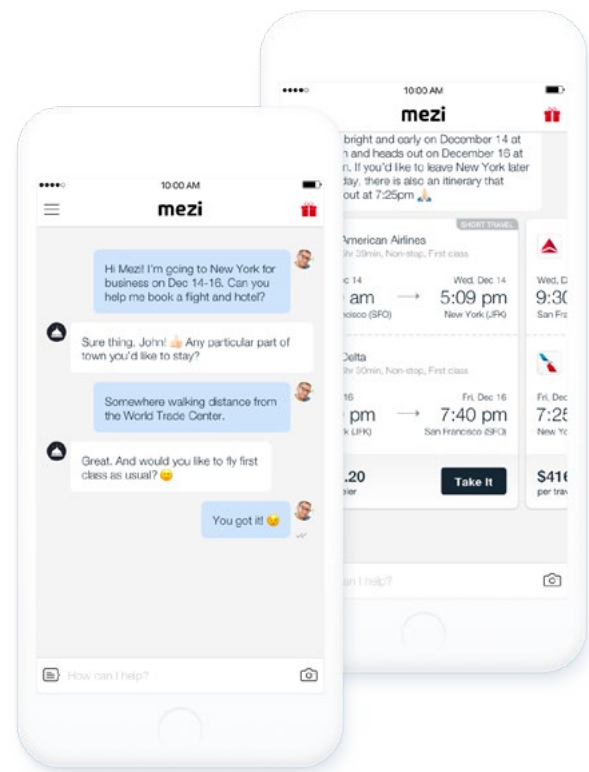
In the travel and tourism industry, automated assistants have been revolutionary.

People are searching for hours, even days, to find their dream holiday destination while taking into account pricing, good flights, and cockroach free hotels. The whole process is time-consuming and frustrates many.

The usage of chatbots in the travel and tourism industry is skyrocketing. The biggest names in the industry have embraced this technology and offer great services through it, providing a user-friendly and modern solution to the endless planning of an upcoming holiday trip.

Most of the travel bots are focused on being the personal travel assistant while planning the trip. Inspiring users in the search of a destination, finding flights and hotels, booking and managing it. Some bots even offer another level of assistance and will help the user exploring what they can experience at their destination.¹

A great example is KLM, the major airline carrier of the Netherlands. They built a bot for Facebook Messenger and Google Assistant, to inspire in finding a passenger's next destination, book a flight and offer guidance with packing your bags. It also offers updates of your booked flight throughout the journey, whether there's a gate change or a delay.²



¹ <https://mezi.com/>

² <https://medium.com/hijiffy/top-3-chatbots-that-are-changing-the-travel-industry-d325082c50b8>

The rise of Artificial Intelligence

When done right, a chatbot saves time and therefore money, especially when powered by AI. Businesses save money while earning money with bots that work for them 24/7, without needing a break.

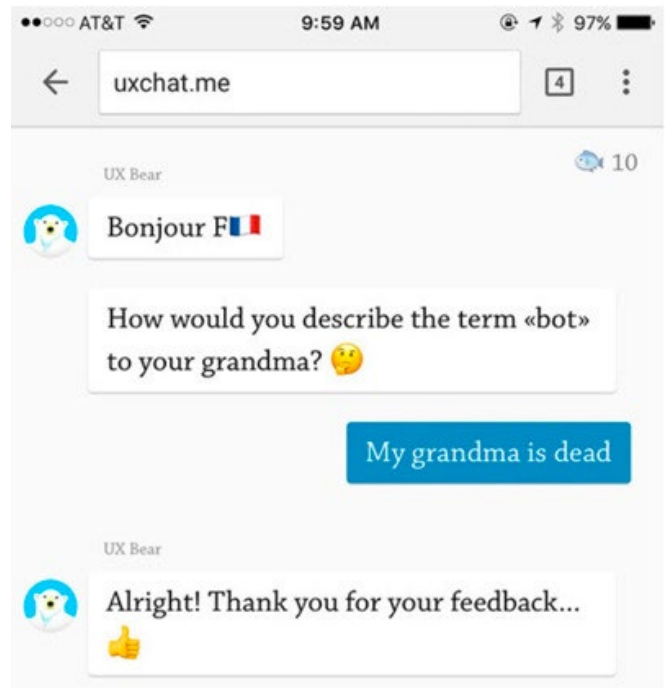
The better the script, the more tasks it can take over from human beings and the more time it will save. Even though the bots can handle a lot, sometimes the if/then- script, the simplest form of a chatbot, can be limiting.

AI-powered chatbots are the next advancement and can solve this problem. With machine learning and natural language processing, it will understand the user beyond their typed-in message.

An AI-powered bot will digest the conversation and learn from it, while also making it possible to respond in a natural, human way. It interprets complex languages, understands and remembers the context of a conversation and can also ask the users for more clarity.

It's self-learning and will get smarter every single day.

But even though bots have come a long way, sometimes technology gets it wrong. To analyse conversations, pick out bad examples and optimise your bot, a human check will be necessary.



¹ <https://mobilemonkey.com/blog/facebook-messenger-statistics-facebook-messenger-marketing>



Key takeaway

With billions of people using messaging apps, it's no longer a question whether brands should include it in their marketing strategies. In the foreseeable future, messaging apps will only continue to grow in popularity. Chat and messenger marketing is here for the long haul. It's time for brands who've not embraced messenger marketing yet to step up their game and get familiar with the tools and the marketing opportunities.

Contact us if you'd like to know more about messenger marketing, chatbots and AI and how to get the most out of it in your digital marketing strategies.

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Talk to us about your next marketing campaign



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