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## **Socially Anxious on Social Media: Examining the Relationship Between Social Media Users' Level of Anxiety and Attitudes Toward Customer Service Channels**

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# **SOCIALLY ANXIOUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USERS' LEVEL OF SOCIAL ANXIETY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CUSTOMER SERVICE CHANNELS**

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Customer service is an integral part of a company's marketing strategy and one determinant of financial success. An important part of providing satisfactory customer service is understanding customers' attitudes toward customer service channels. Unfortunately, little is known about the attitudes of individuals with social anxiety toward customer service channels. Therefore, this thesis fills a gap in customer service research by examining the relationship between level of social anxiety and attitudes toward customer service channels. It especially focuses on the social media channel, as increased social media use has been observed among users with social anxiety. Since individuals with social anxiety find it difficult to interact with others, it was hypothesized that these consumers would have a positive attitude toward self-service and online live-assist customer service channels, including social media, and a negative attitude toward offline live-assist channels. Data were collected through an online survey of 97 respondents. Respondents' attitudes toward ten customer service channels were measured through the evaluation of the channels' ability to deliver on three important attributes of customer service, and their level of social anxiety was assessed using the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale. Multiple linear regression analyses and independent-samples t tests were run to test the hypotheses. The results revealed a statistically significant, positive linear relationship between level of social anxiety and attitude toward the self-service and online live-assist customer service channel types. The results did not reveal a statistically significant linear relationship between level of social anxiety and attitude toward the social media channel and offline live-assist customer service channel type. This topic should be further explored due to its implications for marketing practice.