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9 in 10 Business Leaders Say Customers are Now Digital First, According to Adobe Digital Trends

Customers' digital expectations continue to rise; businesses must fast-track digital projects; personalisation at scale critical to success in digital age

LONDON, UK – 31st January 2022 – Adobe today announced the 2022 Digital Trends report, new research showing how thousands of seasoned professionals are reacting, evolving and succeeding amid significant disruption and opportunity. The report finds pandemic-driven changes to online consumer behaviours are not only here to stay but will continue – and accelerate – as we head into 2022, suggesting businesses must fast-track digital projects, or risk falling behind the competition.

Among the key findings:

- 89% of UK business leaders say customer expectations are now digital-first.
- A similar percentage (87%) say customers will continue to expect more digitally-led experiences during 2022 and beyond.
- Three-quarters (76%) of UK companies report a surge in the use of digital channels by existing customers.

“The last two years have fundamentally changed online behaviour and expectations, rewiring customers to be digital-first,” said Alvaro Del Pozo, Vice President of International Marketing, Adobe. “For any digital business, the ability to personalise every experience across any channel is what builds long-lasting trusted relationships with customers - the ability to do this at scale, is the business imperative for 2022 and beyond.”

Companies must fast-track digital change, or risk falling behind competitors

According to the report, the vast majority (84%) of businesses saw the emergence of new customer journeys over the past 18 months, with customers expected to permanently adopt the digital-first shopping behaviours they embraced during the early stages of the pandemic – such as click and collect services or virtual changing rooms.

However, the research also uncovered a gap between customer expectation and brand confidence to actually deliver these digital-first experiences. When asked to rank their organisation's digital customer experience, only a small number of marketers said it is 'ahead of customer expectations' (12%), while over a quarter admit they lag behind the competition (28%).

To address these challenges, 42% of business leaders say they plan to improve the consistency of their customer experience across all channels, with more than half planning to increase spend on customer data technology (54%) and customer experience management systems (52%).

Winning customer trust vital to success in 2022

With third-party cookies becoming less relevant, businesses are looking at new and improved ways to earn vital trust with their digital customers, with responsible use of first-party data emerging as critical to building stronger, long-lasting relationships.



Those businesses who possess robust first-party data strategies are reaping the rewards, with nearly three-quarters (70%) of UK marketers considering themselves effective at using first-party data for personalised customer experiences.

Unlocking new levels of agility

Agility is critical to achieving personalised customer experiences at scale, together with the ability to have one view of the customer by bringing together numerous customer data sets. However, the research shows many businesses recognise they are still falling behind. Sizable percentages of marketers admit their organisation is only 'average' at sharing data across teams (42%) and are either 'weak' or 'very weak' (20%). This leaves a huge opportunity for brands to do more to have one view of the customer to deliver personalised experiences across any channel.

The skills gap remains

To achieve personalisation at scale, practitioners and business leaders are aware that the right skills are essential. The report reveals nearly 8 in 10 (77%) of UK business leaders are concerned about their employees having the skills necessary to deliver the compelling digital experiences customers expect. To address the skills gap, more than half say they will be investing in acquiring the right customer experience and digital talent, as well as training, to make their teams more successful this year (54%).

You can download the full 2022 Digital Trends report [here](#).

About the research

Based on the responses of nearly 10,000 global marketers, IT professionals, and business leaders, the Digital Trends Report highlights the changing attitudes towards creating stand-out digital experiences, pinpointing areas of focus to stay competitive and thrive during 2022 and beyond. For the UK, 2,004 marketers and business leaders. 1,575 of the sample are client-side marketers and 429 executives, at agencies, consultancies, and marketing technology/services vendors.

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