



Public relations contact

Cristina Fletcher
Adobe
cfletcher@adobe.com

Media Alert: New research shows Australia and New Zealand brands are falling behind employee generative AI adoption

- Only 3 in 10 brands in Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) have adopted generative AI, compared to almost 7 in 10 employees claiming to have used generative AI in marketing campaigns
- Same report finds brands are failing to prioritise factors that drive consumer trust and spending: data security, sustainability and accessibility

Sydney, Australia — 14 December, 2023 — Almost all brands across Australia and New Zealand (99%) are prioritising customer experiences to drive growth, but many are challenged by reduced budgets, according to new research from Adobe. Most organisations are cutting their marketing and customer experience budgets – 26% have already done so and 30% will in the next 12 months.

In response, brands are seeking to drive efficiencies by deploying technology solutions that improve workflows (65%) and generative AI (45%). However, the research suggests that formal business rollouts of generative AI lag well behind employee usage.

In the workplace, 68% of ANZ employees said they had already used generative AI in marketing and customer experience campaigns. That includes 30% who have used large language models or conversational AI, 24% using text-to-image generators, and 17% using both. This is contrasted by only 31% of respondents saying the company they work for currently uses generative AI tools.

For ANZ consumers, the most widely held attitude towards brands' use of generative AI is concern about ethical implications (31%), while almost one in four recognise adoption is necessary to remain competitive.

"Consumers are alert to the importance of responsible generative AI usage, and organisations must be more vigilant than ever to maintain trust. Employees are bringing AI tools into the workplace faster than official roll-outs, raising the real possibility of unchecked usage and shadow AI solutions," said Katrina Troughton, Vice President and Managing Director, Adobe Australia and New Zealand.

"This highlights the need for strong ethical and legal guardrails to ensure brands meet their obligations and customer expectations. With many brands still planning their adoption pathway, having in-built safeguards and controls within existing technologies can help bridge any governance gap."

ANZ brands fail to prioritise factors that drive trust and spending: data security, sustainability and accessibility

Adobe's research found that in a challenging economic environment, brand trust is a key determining factor for consumer spending. More than one in three (38%) of ANZ consumers said they are more likely to stay loyal to brands they trust, and 29% are more likely to spend more with the brands they trust.

The number one factor in building consumer trust is keeping data safe and using it in line with customers' expectations. This is followed by paying employees and suppliers fairly, offering low prices and accessible customer experiences. These factors are also likely to increase the amount a customer spends with a brand.

Conversely, 89% of consumers say they will decrease spending with brands that don't keep their data safe, including 50% that will refuse to spend at all. An inaccessible experience that doesn't support the needs of people with disabilities will also prompt 86% to spend less, while 77% will cut spending if a brand doesn't comply with sustainability regulations and requirements.

Despite its impact on consumer spending choices, 49% of ANZ brands don't see data safety as important to attracting and retaining customers. For accessible and sustainable products and services, that number rises to 51% and 58%, respectively.

"As brand trust plays an even greater role in consumer spending decisions and loyalty, meeting emerging preferences is crucial. While data security issues continue to be consumers' top dealbreaker when it comes to a sale, equitable access and sustainability obligations are not far behind," said Troughton.

About the research

The research is derived from an online survey of more than 16,113 consumers and 4,250 marketing and customer experience professionals globally. The survey, conducted by Advanis, was in the field in May 2023. The Australia and New Zealand analysis comprises a sample of 505 consumer respondents and 142 marketing and customer experience professionals.

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