



Public relations contacts
Tanvi Maheshwary
Adobe
tmaheshw@adobe.com

Rishabh Arya
20:20MSL
rishabh.arya@2020msl.com

Adobe Survey: Young consumers drive growth in digital document use and e-signatures

India — 28 January 2021 — New research from Adobe has found that young people are driving the growth in digital document use and e-signatures, while increases were seen across all generations as many people e-signed for the first time in 2020.

As businesses, governments and consumers around the world embrace digital productivity, Adobe Digital Insights surveyed 4,000 consumers, including over 1,000 from Asia Pacific (APAC), about how they used e-signatures following the onset of COVID-19. The key takeaways: e-signatures are having a big moment, especially among young consumers; document security important to all generations; and there's no going back in the year ahead.

Pandemic turbo-charges e-signature adoption, especially amongst Millennials

Prior to 2020, e-signatures had started to gain some traction in APAC, but this grew exponentially last year.

Over three quarters of APAC respondents (76 percent) said they e-signed more documents in the last six months of 2020 compared to late 2019 and early 2020, with adoption highest among Millennials (61 percent). More than half of APAC respondents (53 percent) said they signed for the first time last year, mostly because they had not been offered the option in the past. India had the highest proportion of respondents (62 percent) who said they e-signed for the first time in 2020.

Insurance policies (43 percent) and healthcare registration (38 percent) were among the most common documents to be e-signed in APAC. While business contracts were the most popular type of document to be e-signed in India (77 percent), it was less common to e-sign them in Singapore (57 percent). In Australia, legal agreements had the highest instance of e-signing (76 percent) whereas it was the least popular type of document to e-sign in India (49 percent). Insurance policies and renewal contracts were by far the most popular document to sign digitally in Singapore (81 percent).



“The global pandemic changed what it means to be productive,” said **Girish Balachandran, Director, Digital Media, Adobe India**. “While the shift from paper to digital has been underway since PDF was introduced more than 30 years ago, 2020 was a tipping point. Digital documents have become the currency of business productivity – the centerpiece for how businesses, governments and consumers communicate, collaborate and transact, thereby setting the agenda for the future economy.”

Girish further added, “COVID-19 has brought new urgency to keeping businesses afloat, and we have made it our mission to support their resilience and reimagine how work gets done in the future.”

Methods of e-signing vary but security key to all generations

The way respondents e-sign varies between APAC markets. In Australia, the most common method of e-signing consists of typing a name or initials (58 percent) whereas in India (58 percent) and Singapore (54 percent) most respondents uploaded a signature image they had saved on their computer. Across the region, the markets agreed that checking a box was not deemed an acceptable method for e-signing. In Australia, accepting an e-signature created for you also has lower acceptability and is infrequently used.

The pandemic pushed one third of APAC respondents (34 percent) to exclusively store their data digitally. Additionally, just as many (36 percent) saved documents both digitally and physically, and indicated feeling safer for having a digital backup of physical documents. Most digital documents were stored on computer or cloud, with cloud storage being most common among Generation Z (65 percent).

While signing and storage methods vary, security features are important to APAC participants across all generations. More than two thirds (71 percent) expect documents to be password protected and over half (57 percent) think documents require 2-factor authorisation.

Digital documents and e-signatures are here to stay

The vast majority of APAC respondents agreed that e-signatures are convenient (92 percent), secure (80 percent) and legally binding (86 percent) and that they intend to continue using them post-pandemic (84 percent). Millennials in particular are most satisfied with the options currently offered and would like to see e-sign used more widely.

With around four fifths of APAC respondents reporting their wish for companies (82 percent) and governments (78 percent) to offer more documents with digital signatures, there is an opportunity for the public and private sector to improve citizen and customer experience through adoption of digital workflows.

As the pandemic fades into history, many of the digital changes it introduced and accelerated will remain. Nonetheless, there are opportunities to innovate how companies manage and sign documents. Majority of APAC respondents (73 percent) believe that companies lacking e-signature options are behind in the times. And globally, fewer than 47 percent of survey respondents believe that e-signature technology is advanced today.

With e-signatures rising to become the standard, there’s now a big expectation that this technology is here to stay, and it is now up to organisations to keep up.



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