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Agility & Customer Empathy Big Business Priorities in 2021, Finds Adobe Digital Trends Report

New Delhi, India - 25 February 2021: As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to shape consumer behavior and the way brands market to them, [Adobe's 2021 Digital Trends Report](#) uncovered big shifts in 2021 business priorities in relation to the increasing focus on adaptability and agility, barriers to a great digital experience, and empathy as a driver of experience.

Conducted in partnership with Econsultancy, 2021 Digital Trends Report surveyed 13,000 marketing, advertising, e-commerce, creative, and IT professionals, working for both brands and agencies across the world, including India, Asia¹ and Australia and New Zealand (ANZ).

Nitin Singhal, Head, Digital Experience Business, Adobe India said, "The year 2020 saw a rapid acceleration in India's digital transformation journey, as we noticed trends and technologies that were years away from serious consideration quickly becoming top of the agenda. This led to a whole new set of challenges for businesses, including all-new all-digital customers with different buying behaviors, remote working, and wellbeing of employees and customers alike."

Adaptability and agility

Even as things start to normalise in 2021, there is a continual need for organisations to move away from siloed work cultures and tide over the market pressures through rapid innovation and product pivots. According to the research, executives in India (34%) reported their organisations as dynamic, collaborative and flexible amid the market changes, when compared with Asia (28%) and ANZ (27%) where they work environments were restricted by traditional hierarchies. 71% of executives surveyed in India agreed to their customers benefiting from great digital experiences.

Nitin added, "There's no doubt that business agility and digital maturity will continue to be a differentiator for businesses, even as we move towards a post-COVID economy."

Barriers to a great digital experience

While agility is critical in a changeable business environment and a core driver for customer experience and growth, according to the research, those surveyed from organisations across APAC reported three significant barriers that are hampering marketing and experience, namely legacy technology and systems

¹ Asia is defined as Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan.



(37% in India and Asia, 51% in ANZ), workflow issues (33% in India, 48% in Asia, 38% in ANZ), and a lack of digital skills and capabilities (24% in India, 43% in Asia, and 34% in ANZ).

The research found that 26% of those surveyed in India are using a cloud-based platform alongside other marketing data management systems, confirming a hybrid approach being adopted by many organisations.

“With accelerated digital adoption brought on by the pandemic, new technologies and effective data management tools are necessary for delivering enhanced customer experiences.” said **Dharmarajan K., Chief Product and Customer Experience Officer – Tata CLiQ**. “Tata CLiQ considers data as one of its ‘pillars of prosperity’. By leveraging data-driven insights, we’ve been able to deliver tailored customer experiences and improve management efficiencies. Moving forward, we believe the shift in customer buying behaviour will further encourage companies to prioritise their digital investments.”

Empathy is a driver of experience

As digital convenience becomes a commodity, empathy by brands will be a key differentiator for customer experience. Analysing and adapting to a customer’s emotional journey in this new world will be the next evolution of experience management. “Truly committing to customer experience as a growth lever will mean going beyond response and conversion rates, and instead digging into the motivations, frustrations and thinking of customers throughout the customer journey”, added Nitin.

However, most organisations are still a long way from authentically displaying digital empathy. Just over a third (37%) of Indian executives have significant insights into customer mindset, followed by 27% in ANZ and 19% in Asia. Drivers of purchase, friction points and attribution of how marketing actions relate to customer behaviour fare only marginally better. Interestingly, Indian executives are most likely to agree to having significant insight into drivers of loyalty (46%), journeys of new customers (44%) and attribution of how marketing actions relate to customer behaviour (40%).

For more insights on 2021 Digital Trends, see the full report [here](#).

About the Adobe and Econsultancy Digital Trends Report

This is the 11th annual Digital Trends Report from Adobe and Econsultancy, for which more than 13,000 marketing, ecommerce, creative and technology professionals around the world were surveyed.

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