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New Breed of Digital-First Customer Emerges, as Revealed by Adobe's 2021 Digital Trends

02 February 2021, LONDON, UK – The events of 2020 have prompted the emergence of a new breed of digital-first, experience-driven customer, as revealed by [Adobe's 2021 Digital Trends](#). The report also reveals several highlights that help inform digital marketing priorities and investment decisions as brands look to engage audiences whose expectations have changed exponentially over the past 12 months.

The 11th edition of the Digital Trends report, in partnership with Econsultancy, surveyed over 13,000 marketing and IT professionals across the world to understand the widespread business impact of 2020 on all sectors, and their priorities for 2021 and beyond.

New wave of digital-first customers

The pandemic signalled the meteoric rise of the digital-first customer, with 44% of respondents from Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) noticing an increase in new customers they were previously unaware of. These customers' buying habits have shifted online, bringing with them a whole new level of expectation for the experiences they receive from brands, one that is more considered, authentic, and personalised.

The report shows that as well as being increasingly digital-first, this new breed of customer also displays unpredictable buyer behaviour and is more willing to take their business elsewhere.

- **Digital-first:** 64% of EMEA brands experienced 'unusual' growth in customer demand across digital.
- **Unpredictable behaviour:** Half of brands in EMEA (47%) say existing customers have exhibited new buying patterns, including changes to average basket sizes and new product interests.
- **Willing to move:** 30% of respondents in EMEA also report that customers are now less loyal to products or brands, meaning brands need to work harder to attract and retain buyers.

Speed-to-insight is key

The key to understanding this new breed of digital-first and experience-driven customer relies on a brand's ability to quickly and accurately capture and transform data that customers share into actionable insights.

The research, however, exposes a gap between ambition and capability, with only 24% of EMEA respondents rating their ability to gather accurate insights and ability to action them rapidly, as 'very strong'.

Encouragingly, there is a direct link between 'speed-to-insight' and a more focused marketing spend – those who are digitally mature and possess lightning-quick insight gathering typically enjoy increases to their marketing (50%), acquisition (52%), and retention budgets (44%).

Customer experience separates wheat from chaff

When it comes to engaging with this new breed of customer and leveraging the wealth of potential insight available, a sophisticated, integrated customer experience (CX) continues to allow brands to outperform competitors.



In fact, over 71% of brands in EMEA said they were three times more likely to have 'significantly outperformed' their sectors when it comes to digital experiences, compared to brands with a less sophisticated CX approach.

Moreover, companies possessing strong analytics functions (i.e. insight into new journeys and marketing attribution) are over twice as likely to boast customers who are positive about their digital experiences when compared to businesses with lower levels of insight (71% vs 31%).

However, there is still a long way to go when it comes to realising the potential of a top-class customer experience, with 59% of EMEA respondents admitting they would become frustrated if they were to experience their own brand's CX.

Empathy to become customer experience's most valuable trait

The report also revealed that analysing and adapting to a customer's journey represents another key focus area for 2021. Consideration of customers motivations and challenges was front and centre for many brands during the pandemic, yet only one-in-five EMEA companies say they possess 'significant insight' into people's mindsets or friction points during the customer journey.

Friction points occur when a decision or action needs to be taken, which can evoke anything from anxiety and concern, to hope and excitement. The ability to understand the areas of friction, throughout the customer experience, will enable brands to connect with their audiences on a deeper level.

"The events of 2020 have accelerated digital transformation," said Alvaro Del Pozo, Vice President of International Marketing at Adobe. "Trends and technology that were years away from serious consideration are now at the top of the agenda, as businesses grapple with the same challenges: remote working, new all-digital customers and managing employee and customer well-being. As a result, in this new era, digital has become the norm and this will continue to be the case well after the pandemic. Digital can no longer just be a component of marketing, customer service or product, it has to be treated as a core driver of customer experience and business growth."

You can download the full *2021 Digital Trends* 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.

About Adobe

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