Make It Personal

Why today's consumer refuses to be stereotyped

Contents

The emergence of a new consumer

Five thousand consumers in three countries across APAC have contributed their time and thinking to this research, participating in surveys conducted between August and September 2022. This includes Australia (n=2,000), India (n=2,000) and Singapore (n=1,000).

Their contributions highlight the changing mindsets, behaviours, and expectations of consumers and how brands must adapt to keep pace with emerging preferences. Adobe would like to thank everyone involved for their effort and insight.

Key insights

"Consumers across Asia Pacific already had elevated expectations of their brand experiences well before the events of the past two years. That bar has moved higher amid significant digital, social, and economic shifts.

The rate of change in the world around us is also raising the tempo of new and emerging consumer priorities and tastes. With change the only constant, consumers want brands to remain in lockstep with their fluctuating expectations and situations – which are distinctly different for every individual.

Our latest research reveals that in this environment, marketing leaders need new ways of thinking about consumers, including a break from outdated and inaccurate labels. While society has stratified people based on their age and broad demographic profile, the vast majority of consumers now say they want to be treated as individuals.

Among the thousands of consumers across the region we spoke to, it's evident that individuality is alive and well. But simply recognising this isn't enough. Brands must keep pace with evolving consumer preferences and habits as well.

Enter the dawn of today's *new* consumer. A customer segment with a population of one, made up of individuals who align to people with shared interests, not age, and who want brands to see and know them as multidimensional. Consumers who want personal brand interactions and are willing to become advocates in return. In fact, today *every* consumer is this consumer.

Our earlier Trust Report 2022 set the scene for this latest research. We found that trust between brands and consumers had become harder to earn and easier to lose. It also confirmed that personal experiences are a trust multiplier if done well. Trust rises with good personalisation and falls with bad; this is the bar for digital experience today.

Across Asia Pacific, customers are calling on brands to demonstrate that they know them, show them, and will help them in the moments that matter – not once, but all the time. To meet that standard, brands need to unlock preferences in real-time through customer data, and use it to deliver relevant interactions and content at the right moment. Scaling that across up to millions of customers is the next step.

It's no longer best practice to say you know your customers or rely on placing consumers into categories. Brands must prove it consistently over time, by delivering personalisation at scale, or risk losing even their most loyal customers."

Duncan Egan
Vice President of Marketing APAC, Adobe

At a glance: The emergence of today's new consumer

Rapid response to changing preferences an imperative

Customer behaviours, preferences, and tastes are changing all the time. Most people will leave their favourite brands if they can't keep up.

Rethinking the broad-brush generational approach

People want to be treated as individuals and look unfavourably upon brands that use assumptions and broad stereotypes to categorise them.

Consistent moments of magic outshine grand gestures

Consumers value consistent small moments that demonstrate empathy and show brands understand them, over one-off offers.

Consumers will back brands that know them

The majority of consumers are impressed by brands that keep pace with their individual interests and personal preferences, and will actively advocate for brands that get it right.

Lisa, 30s:

"I don't really think you can paint everyone with the same brush. Just because you form part of a certain generation doesn't mean you conform to that stereotype."

Deep dive: Aligning to a new consumer

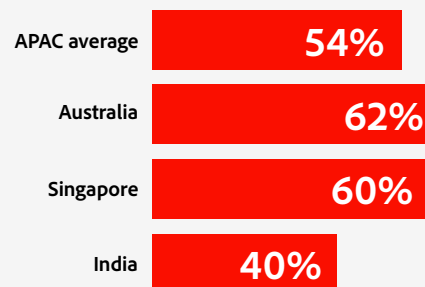## Rapid response to emerging preferences

It's an innately human trait to shift our interests and preferences often. Our collective experience over recent years and months has only added to that rate of change. Most consumers across Asia Pacific see themselves and their peer group differently from how they were pre-pandemic, **50%** say they have experienced the same rate of change over the past year, and **79%** have adjusted their preferences and tastes even further in the past three months.

Brands' ability to keep pace is also an expectation among two in three APAC consumers. When more than half **(54%)** of customers will switch from their favourite brands as their personal circumstances change, real-time visibility and delivering experiences in line with emerging preferences is vital to keeping even the most loyal customers on side.

People changing their tastes and preferences in the past three months

APAC average	79%
Australia	71%
Singapore	78%
India	88%
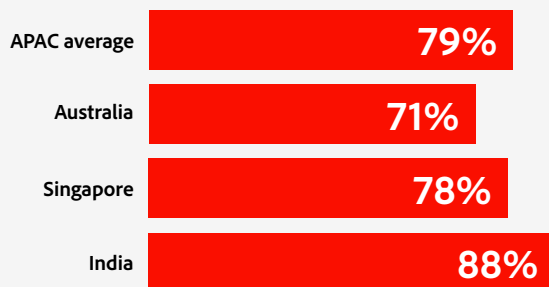
People changing their favourite brands as tastes and financial situation change

APAC average	54%
Australia	62%
Singapore	60%
India	40%

Tom, 50s:

"Demographics have become very blended. As a parent, I spend more time with my kids than with my friends. I speak more like my kids now."

Rethink the broad-brush generational approach

Across APAC, the categorisation of consumers by age group is well entrenched. However, the practice of assigning generational labels has divided consumers and called its relevance into question. Instead, three times as many APAC consumers feel closer to people who share their passions and interests **(62%)** than those of a similar demographic **(19%)**.

Moreover, the modern APAC customer demands that brands and society see, accept, and understand them as the individual they are right now. Almost nine in ten **(86%)** APAC consumers want to be seen and treated as individuals, and two-thirds think negatively about brands that make assumptions about them or use stereotypes.
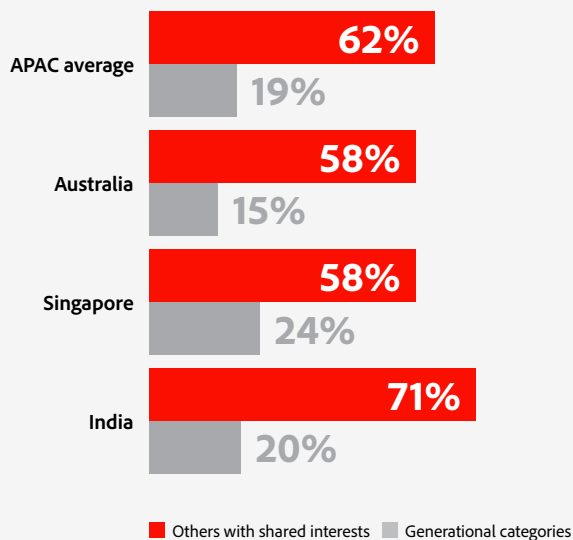
APAC customers want brands to respect their individuality, personal preferences, and the capacity to make their own choices. This brings the quality and consistency of the data that brands collect, and the personal customer experiences they deliver, into sharper focus.
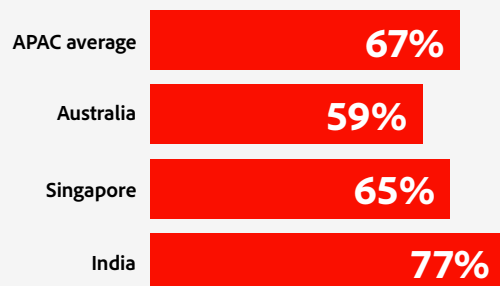
Tom, 50s:

"If you're talking about something I am interested in I don't really care about the demographic angle. It's about what I am interested in and what I relate to."

People who feel closer to those who share their interests irrespective of age

APAC average	62% / 19%
Australia	58% / 15%
Singapore	58% / 24%
India	71% / 20%

■ Others with shared interests ■ Generational categories

Negative perceptions of brands that make assumptions or categorise customers

APAC average	67%
Australia	59%
Singapore	65%
India	77%

Sasha, 20s:

"If I have a negative experience with a brand, I would be inclined to give it another go. But if it happens more than once or twice, then I am done with the brand. I would rather spend my money somewhere where I can get a good experience."
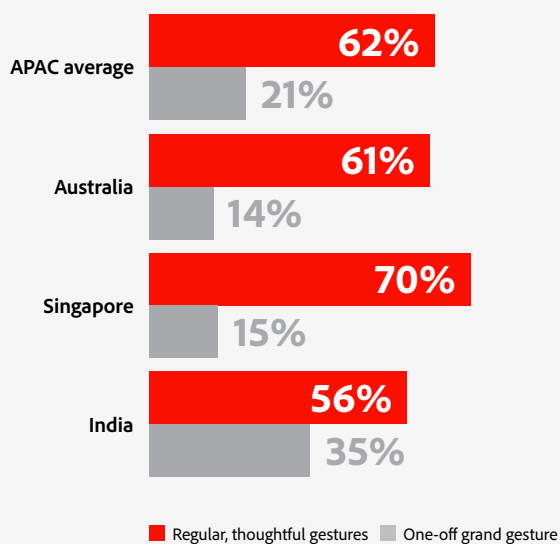
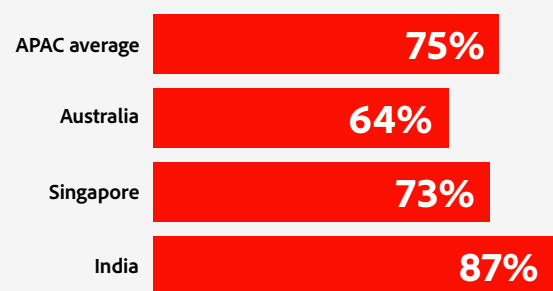# Consistent moments of magic outshine grand gestures

When was the last time a brand held your attention? Not just through big and showy gestures, but through consistently reminding you that they understand, and care about, your preferences. Our research shows that almost three times as many consumers **(62%)** would rather receive regular thoughtful gestures from brands based on their personal preferences and individual interests, than one-off offers **(21%)**. Brands that truly understand who their customer is in the moments that matter to them, will create meaningful connections that consistently forge long-term relationships built on trust.

Building trust through regularly meeting customer evolving preferences relies on a brand's ability to unlock real-time data-driven insights. As we have seen in previous research into trust between consumers and brands, three in four APAC customers are receptive to more personalised experiences and interactions and expect it in return for sharing their personal data and preferences.

Importance to building trusted relationships in the eyes of consumers

APAC average	62%	21%
Australia	61%	14%
Singapore	70%	15%
India	56%	35%

■ Regular, thoughtful gestures ■ One-off grand gesture

Consumers that expect personalised experiences in exchange for sharing data

|	
APAC average	75%
Australia	64%
Singapore	73%
India	87%

Jade, teenager:

"I don't think [brands] try to know me personally enough. When I shop with a brand that is super helpful and offering all the support that they can. I want to shop with them again."
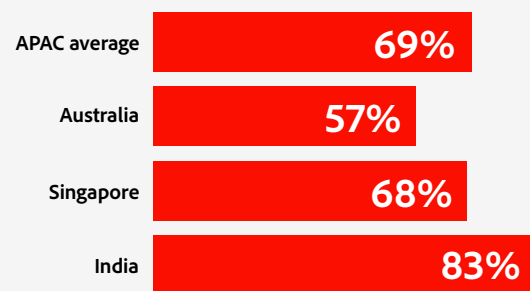
Consumers will back brands that know them

Many brands either don't have the capacity to collect customer information in real-time or may not have the capability to act on it. Given that **65%** of APAC consumers want brands to understand every aspect of their lives, it's crucial to have access to data that can help deliver experiences that leave the right impression. For example, two in three APAC consumers are impressed by brands that can interact with them in the moment with offers and content that reflect their current interests. On the other hand, we have already seen that basing these interactions on broad assumptions or inaccurate data can erode the trust brands work so hard to build.

Consumers are also clear that they are ready to support brands that can demonstrate they know them. Almost seven in 10 APAC consumers say they would be more likely to recommend or advocate for a brand that tailors the experience and interacts with them on their terms. If delivered consistently over time; this can also help to strengthen trust.

Consumers responding positively to real-time offers and content aligned to their interests

APAC average	67%
Australia	51%
Singapore	65%
India	86%
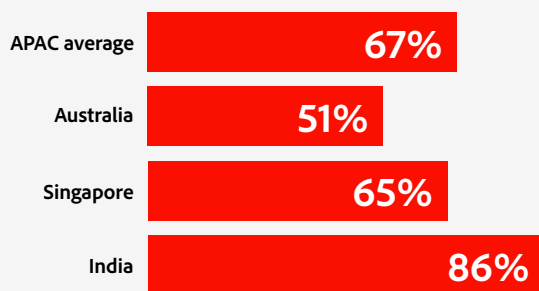
Consumers likely to recommend or advocate for a brand that shows they know them

APAC average	69%
Australia	57%
Singapore	68%
India	83%

Tom, 50s:

"Sometimes brands don't get me or what I need. The good brands are the ones that are just there. They just work and flow, like they are part of your life. If I believe in that brand and that brand holds the same values that I have, then I will be loyal to that brand."

Asia Pacific countries in focus

Australia

✕ Australians reject demographic stereotypes

Of the APAC countries analysed, Australians are the most likely to say that being classified by generation is not helpful or relevant today.

49% of Australians don't find aged-based demographic groups helpful or relevant compared with **29%** who do.

91% of Australians want to be treated as an individual, and **81%** feel comfortable being their authentic selves.

Four times as many Australians feel closer to people who share their interests **(58%)** than those in their generation **(15%)**.

⬈ Expecting experiences to evolve as tastes change

The vast majority of Australians have changed their preferences in recent months, and many are not convinced brands are keeping up.

71% of Australians have changed their tastes and preferences in the past three months.

One in two **(48%)** of Australians expect brands to know them completely and keep pace with their preferences

25% of Australians feel brands are not doing a good job at staying on top of their needs, and **52%** believe they're doing a moderate job.

☆ Brand loyalty harder to gain and maintain

Most Australians expect personalisation in their brand experiences and will leave even their favourite brands as their situations change.

59% think negatively of brands that use broad assumptions and stereotypes to engage them.

66% expect to receive more personalised experiences and interactions with them in the future if they share their data.

62% of Australians have changed their favourite brands as their tastes and financial situation has changed.

Singapore

Views on demographic stereotypes mixed

While more Singaporeans say generational stereotypes are relevant than not, most want to be treated as individuals and are more likely to align with others' interests than age.

88% of Singaporeans want to be treated as an individual, and **73%** feel comfortable being their authentic selves.

Just over twice as many Singaporeans feel closer to people who share their interests **(58%)** than those in their generation **(24%)**.

Almost two-thirds of Singaporeans **(65%)** think negatively of brands that interact with them based on broad or inaccurate assumptions.

Changing consumer tastes can impact brand loyalty

Most Singaporeans say that changing tastes and preferences can make them question their loyalty, and they expect brands to understand them and keep pace.

78% of Singaporeans have changed their tastes and preferences in the past three months.

60% of Singaporeans have changed their favourite brands as their tastes and financial situation has changed.

62% of Singaporeans want brands to understand every aspect of their lives.

Advocates for brands that personalise the experience

Singaporeans signal their advocacy for brands that tailor their interactions based on personal preferences in real time. They see consistency over time as a trust enabler.

70% of Singaporeans say regular thoughtful gestures based on their preferences can build trusted relationships.

65% of Singaporeans are impressed with brands that deliver real-time content and offers based on their preferences.

68% of Singaporeans will advocate for a brand that personalises content, offers and interactions with its customers.

India

Indian individuality alive and well

Majority of Indians see themselves changing and want to be treated as individuals.

80% of Indians want to be treated as an individual.

Just over three times as many Indians feel closer to people who share their interests **(71%)** than those in their generation **(20%)**.

Almost two-thirds of Indians **(77%)** think negatively of brands that interact with them based on broad or inaccurate assumptions.

Preferences and tastes are changing quickly

Most Indians admit they are different from a year ago and have adopted new preferences in recent months. They're the most likely among APAC countries to expect brands to keep up.

74% of Indians see themselves differently from how they did 12 months ago.

60% of Indians say they've changed tastes and preferences in the past 3 months.

87% of Indians expect brands to know them completely and keep pace with their preferences.

Elevated personalisation-based loyalty and advocacy

Indians think brands do a good job at keeping pace with changing preferences which might explain why they're less likely to leave their favourite brands as their situations change.

85% of Indians expect to receive more personalised experiences and interactions with them in the future if they share their data.

83% of Indians will advocate for a brand that personalises content for its customers.

55% of Indians have remained loyal to brands they love regardless of spending habits changing.

Time to make it personal

The digital economy continues to provide commercial opportunities for businesses around the world today, reaching $4 trillion in 2021, according to Adobe's Digital Economic Index (DEI). That makes digital experiences a powerful growth lever.

What Adobe's research and today's new consumer confirms is that certain aspects of competing in the digital economy and engaging with digital-first consumers are now an expectation, not an aspiration. The insights shared in this report come directly from your customers. They reveal how they view themselves and provide direction on what they want in exchange for their loyalty and affinity.

The big question for business and marketing leaders is how to meet and exceed these increasingly complex expectations. How do you track preferences, needs and customer journeys that are changing rapidly? How do you mobilise content and orchestrate experiences across a multitude of existing and emerging channels? Importantly, how do you empower your teams to treat every customer with the empathy they deserve, seeing and understanding them for the unique individual they are today?

Setting a new standard in experience

While personalisation is not new, the findings in this report and the emergence of today's new consumer, show that a new standard will define the future success of brands in the digital-first economy.

The ability to deliver **personalisation at scale needs to be the standard**. In other words, to achieve this standard, customers must receive relevant experiences, delivered in real-time, across every channel. This includes online, offline and in immersive experiences that continue to grow in prominence. And all this needs to scale to potentially **millions of customers**, in **milliseconds.**

But the route to achieving this new standard isn't always easy. Brands face many challenges, including:

- Reducing data silos and using data responsibly to create value for customers

- Creating and sharing content rapidly to deliver personalised interactions

- Connecting teams, channels, and touchpoints to deliver personalised experiences

- Having the capability to do all of this at scale

Here are our recommendations for overcoming these obstacles:

1. **Know your customers for the individual they are right now**

    The future of CX is more open than ever – a fast-moving, competitive frontier offering game-changing opportunity to those who move swiftly, with intent. If you don't have the most up-to-date view of your customer as the unique person they are today, you'll struggle to build trusted, ongoing, valuable relationships.

2. **Evolve as your customers change**

    By democratising the customer experience, business leaders can prioritise empathy and transform their organisation's ability to respond to signals from customers. This can underpin relevant, timely, and transparent dialogue with customers and strike a balance between leading the market and listening to what customers want.

    After all, a unique blend of tastes, situations, and experiences make up the fascinating and complex tapestry of a person's identity – and brands must be able to keep pace with these behaviours as they grow and evolve. Uniting data together, while respecting customer privacy and preferences, enables marketers to action it in real-time, seize the moment, and interact with their customers in a way that adds real-time value every time.

3. Create small moments of magic, quickly and consistently

The way to a consumer's heart is through consistent, thoughtful interactions that demonstrate empathy, while showing the brand has a deep understanding of who they are and what's relevant to them right now. Business leaders need to exploit the shrinking pool of third-party data intelligently to gain consented customer information and build direct relationships with customers through consistent moments of relevant and authentic magic.

A Real-Time Customer Data Platform can deliver those small moments of magic, consistently, enabling brands to capture customer information, make it immediately available and actionable to everyone that needs it, the moment it is captured.

What sets experience leaders apart?

To identify the best practices of brands that are personalising experiences at scale and delivering best-in-class experiences, Adobe has partnered with Forrester Consulting to develop a new *Personalisation at Scale* playbook. It reveals what leaders and best-in-class brands are doing and the implementation pathways. Among its rich findings, the report explores how experience leaders are:

- Achieving personalisation at scale across every channel, touchpoint, and interaction.

- Mastering new capabilities in data, content, and journey orchestration

- Coordinating multi-owner internal operating models that drive strategy and success

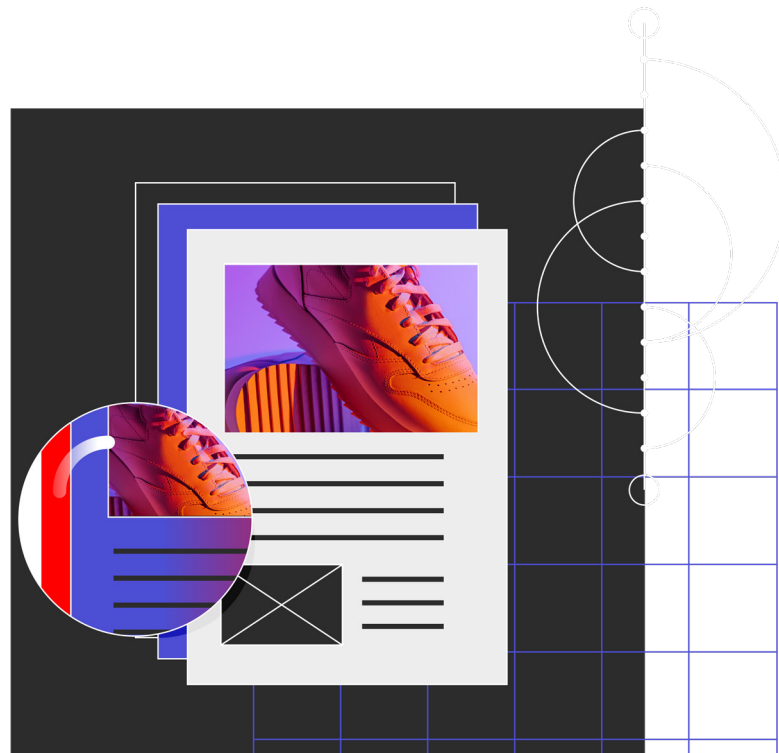To find our more, download your copy of the *Personalisation at Scale* report here.
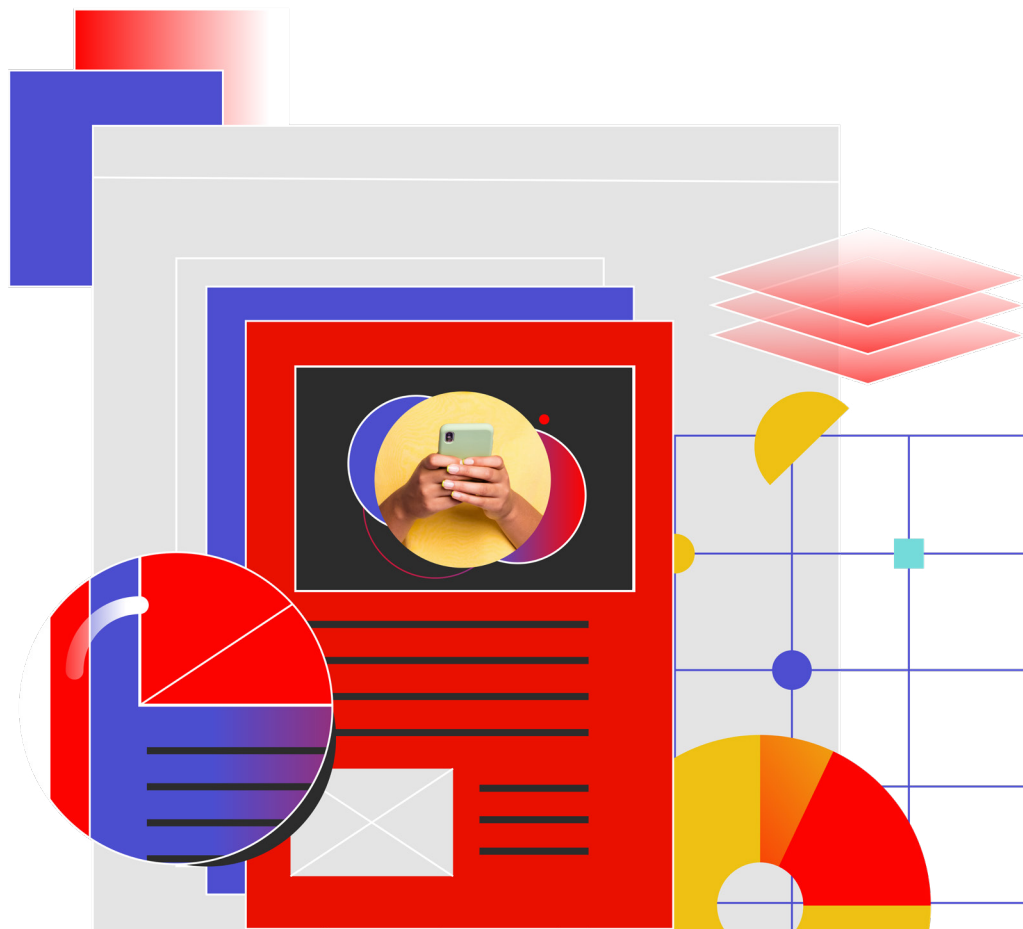
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