Adobe

An Adobe report on the future of digital experiences.

And the steps to take to get there.

No longer business as usual.

When it comes to digital experiences, customer expectations are always evolving. And that means the stakes to meet and exceed those expectations are getting higher too.

To stay relevant, you need to do more than just keep pace—you need to think ahead, secure brand loyalty, and gain a competitive advantage. As we look to a future of innovative, immersive experiences, you can't rely on dated strategies and tech alone. After all, you can't solve tomorrow's problems with yesterday's tools.

In a recent global survey of more than 13,000 consumers and 4,250 marketing and customer experience (CX) pros, we evaluated consumer and business expectations of the future of experience in the digital age. By understanding where we're heading, you can start building strategies today that will set you up for success tomorrow—and long into the future.

Let's get to work.
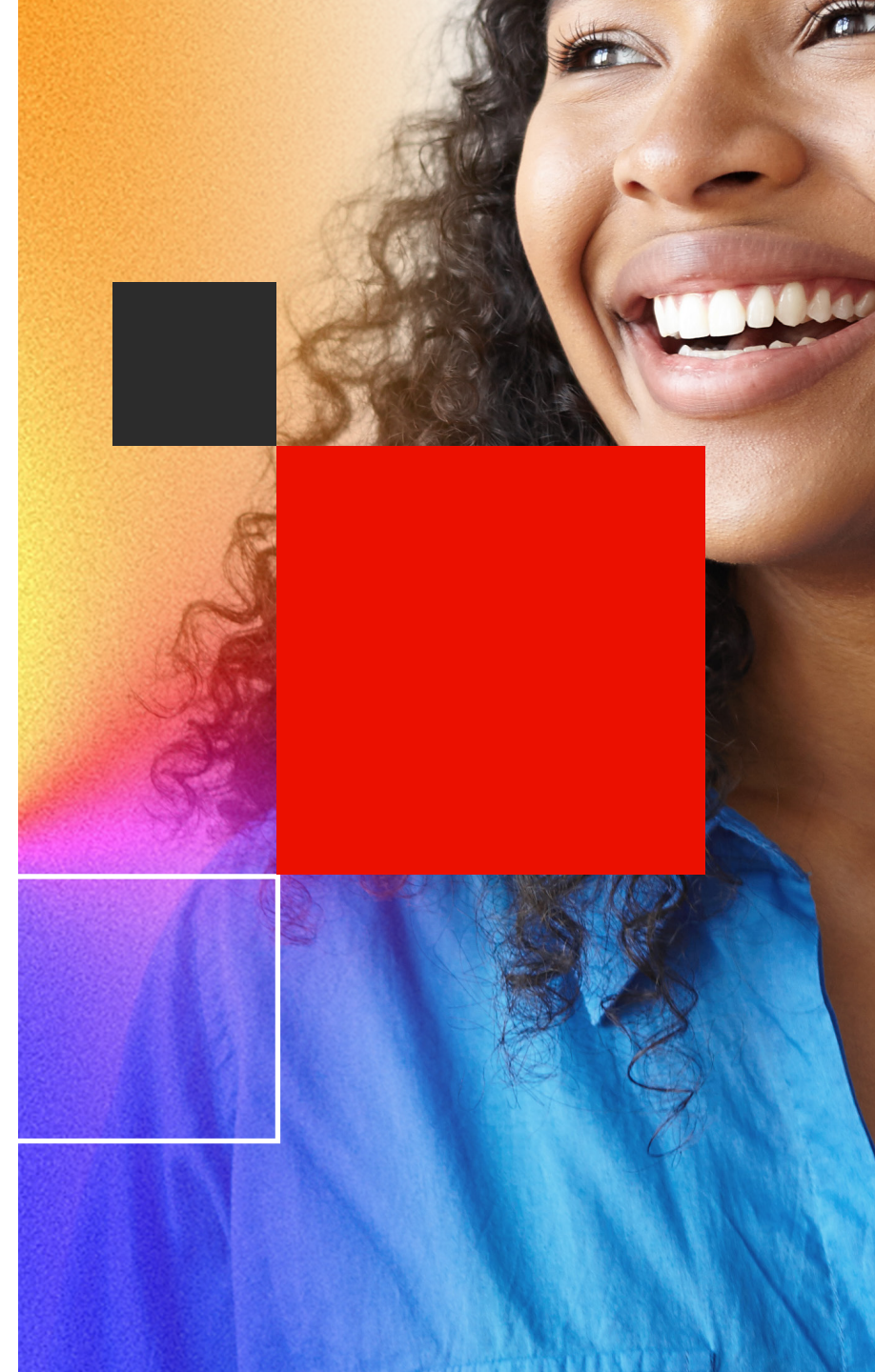
A high-level view of our key findings.

Before we get into the detailed findings, here are a few main takeaways to be aware of:

- Younger consumers have the highest bar for CX in the digital economy.

- Consumers and brands don't see eye to eye on the quality of CX.

- Brands aren't realising the full potential of data and digital tech to engage with customers.

- New experiences will be a major part of CX in the near future.

- Brands are ramping up efforts to bring more digital magic to CX.

- Consumers expect generative artificial intelligence (AI) to play a major role in improving CX.

- Marketers and CX pros are excited to use generative AI to improve CX.
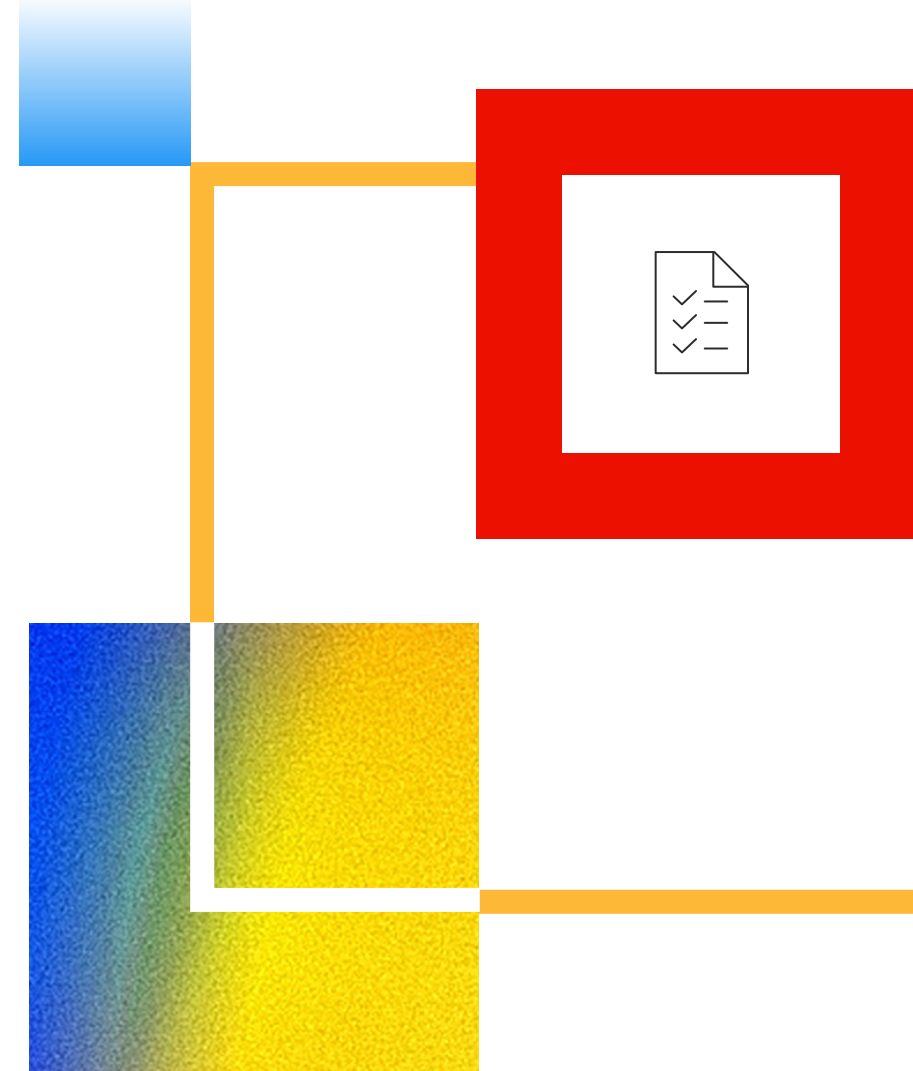
Welcome to the digital economy.

TRACK SHIPMENT
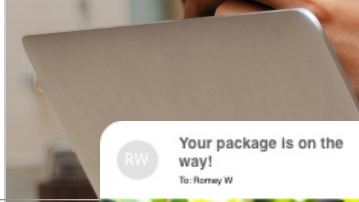
Your package is on the way!
To: Romey W

Dear Ruth,

Your latest order from Green Thumb is out for delivery!

The digital economy gives consumers convenience, creativity, and community.

Consumers ranked their favourite aspects of the digital economy:

51%

1. Convenience
From shopping to e-signing a contract, everyday activities are quicker and easier to navigate.

20%

2. Creativity
New tools and platforms allow for showcasing and even monetising creativity.

16%

3. Community
The ability to connect with brands and find new ways to learn and share ideas with like-minded people help improve people's sense of belonging.

Notably, Gen Z consumers ranked **creativity (32%)** and **convenience (31%)** nearly equally.

The digital economy is becoming a major part of most consumers' lives.

84% of consumers agree the digital economy plays a role in their lives, with more than half (53%) saying it plays a strong role.

18% of consumers agree that the digital economy is the economy.

USE CODE **BIRTHDAY**

Younger consumers—**66% of Gen Z** and **65% of millennials**—are much more likely to say that the digital economy plays a significant or dominant role in their lives.

The digital economy is where business is done—and it's changing customer expectations.

83% of companies say the digital economy is playing a major role in business.

15% say their business wouldn't exist without it.

50% say it plays a significant role.

18% say that the digital economy is the economy.

71% of marketers say their customers now expect much better experiences.

And the larger a company is, the higher their customers' expectations.

Trust is paramount.

- **76%** of consumers say trust is important when choosing where they do business.

  - And nearly **40%** say it's the most important factor.

- In a challenging economy, consumers rank trust as the number-one factor in choosing where they spend their money.

  - Followed by price, selection, and relevance.

- For Gen Z and millennials, trust significantly outranks every other factor when times are tough.

  - It leads second-place price by 13 percentile points (Gen Z) and 15 percentile points (millennials).

Younger consumers have the highest bar for customer experiences.

Gen Z and millennial consumers are aware of the data and technologies that brands have at their disposal. As a result, they're much more likely to expect personalised experiences:

- Nearly **60%** of Gen Z and more than half **53%**) of millennial consumers expect more personalised experiences.

- That's compared to just **39%** of consumers overall.
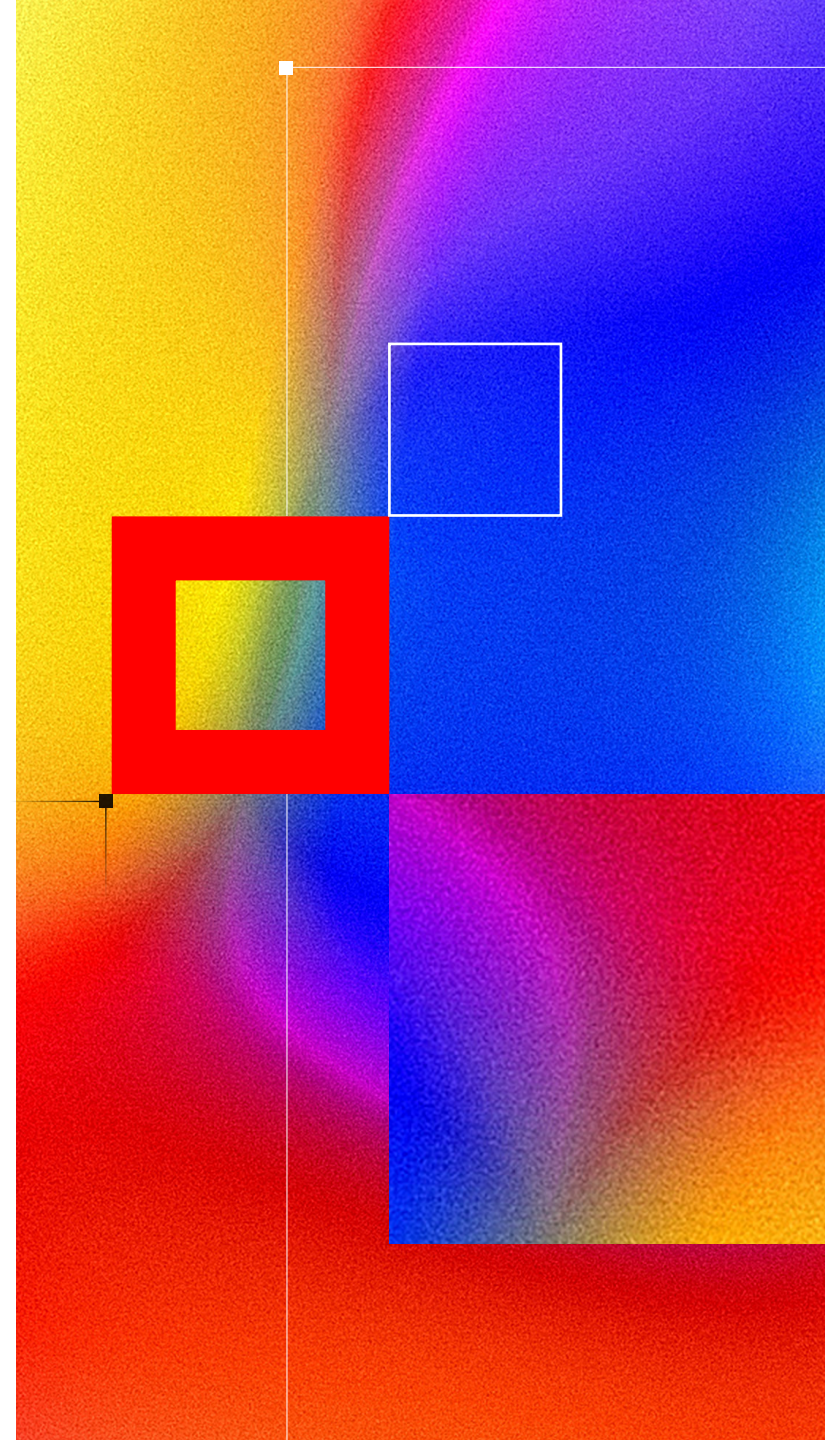
Brands and consumers aren't on the same page when it comes to CX quality.

Marketers vastly overestimate the quality of their customers' experience:

- **85%** say they're amazing and are impressed with their company's ability to keep up with rising expectations.

But there's a disconnect—only **63%** of consumers agree and say their customer experiences are amazing. Although that represents a healthy number, there's also room for improvement:

- **35%** of consumers say they rarely have a memorable experience.

One noteworthy insight is that younger consumers are more likely to say they're having amazing brand experiences:

- **66%** of Gen Z
- **71%** of millennials
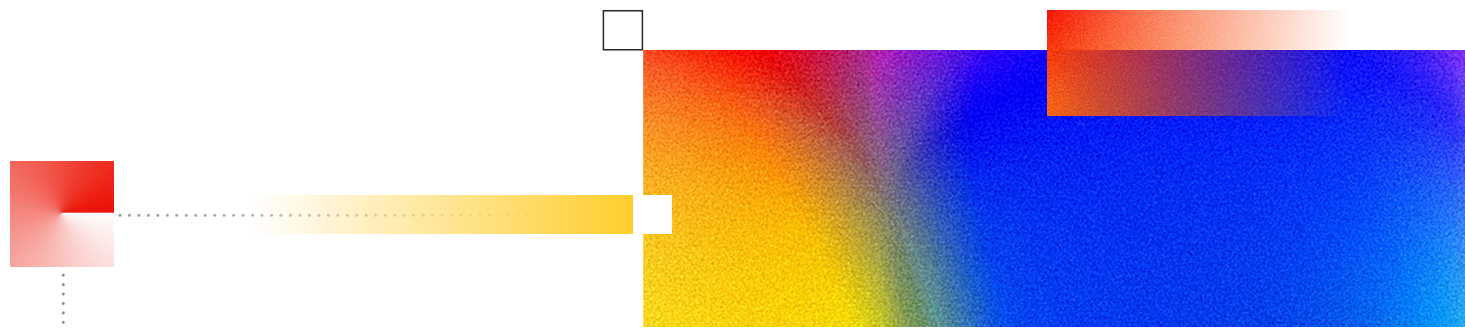
Digital technologies play a broad, important role in CX.

Consumers expect digital technologies at every corner:

- **85%** of consumers say that they play a role in their customer experiences.
  - And **40%** of consumers say they're an essential part of their experiences—both in person and online.
- **94%** of younger consumers say they play a role, and more than half say they play an essential role in CX.

And marketers absolutely agree:

- **98%** of marketers say they play a role in CX, with **69%** saying they're an essential part of their CX offerings, including in-person experiences.

As the economy experiences downturns, meeting customer expectations gets tougher.

- Half of consumers say that when the economy is down, they expect better brand experiences.

  - More than a quarter (**28%**) of consumers say their expectations are much higher when the economy weakens.

  - And only **14%** say they lower their expectations when economic conditions get worse.

- Gen Z and millennial consumers have even higher expectations in a struggling economy.

  - **65%** say their expectations are higher, with **35%** saying they're much higher.

There are more opportunities to work smarter and compete more effectively.

79%
of marketers say the digital economy is helping their business.

42%
say it's helping their company work smarter and more creatively.

37%
say it's supercharging their company's success and giving them a competitive advantage.

The potential of data and digital tech to engage with customers remains untapped.

54%

use data to help them understand when it's best to send a communication or which channel to use.

46%

use digital channels to communicate with prospective customers.

44%

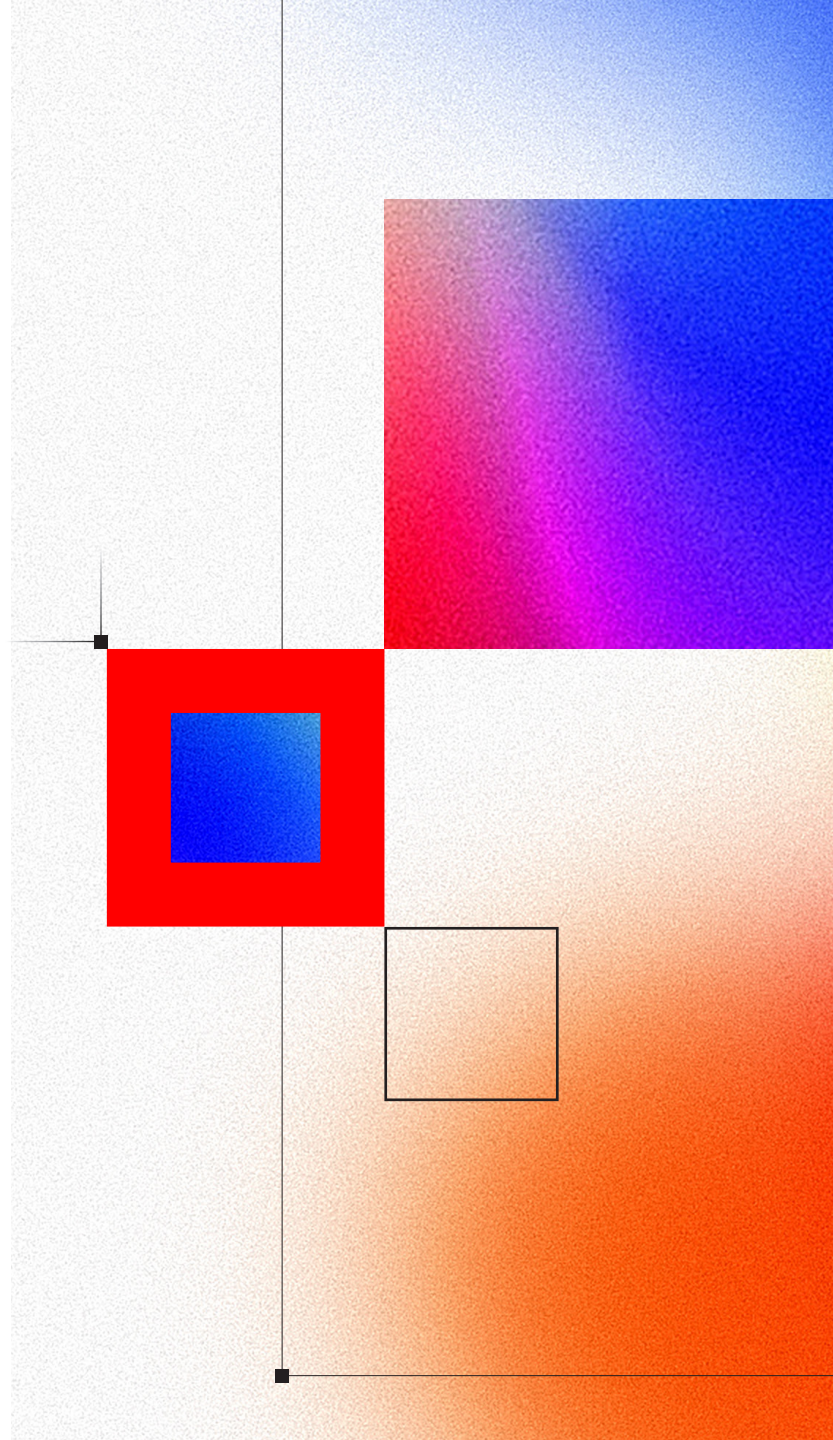use data to identify high-value prospects.

43%

use digital content to reach prospects.

43%

use digital technologies to identify upsell opportunities.

43%

use digital documents and e-signatures to accelerate deal closures.

Immersive experiences are the next frontier.

Digital isn't going anywhere, and Gen Z consumers (**71%**) say that in the next two years, they'll spend the large majority of their time shopping in online or virtual spaces—from online stores and marketplaces to social pages and immersive worlds.

Just **28%** say they'll be spending time in physical stores.
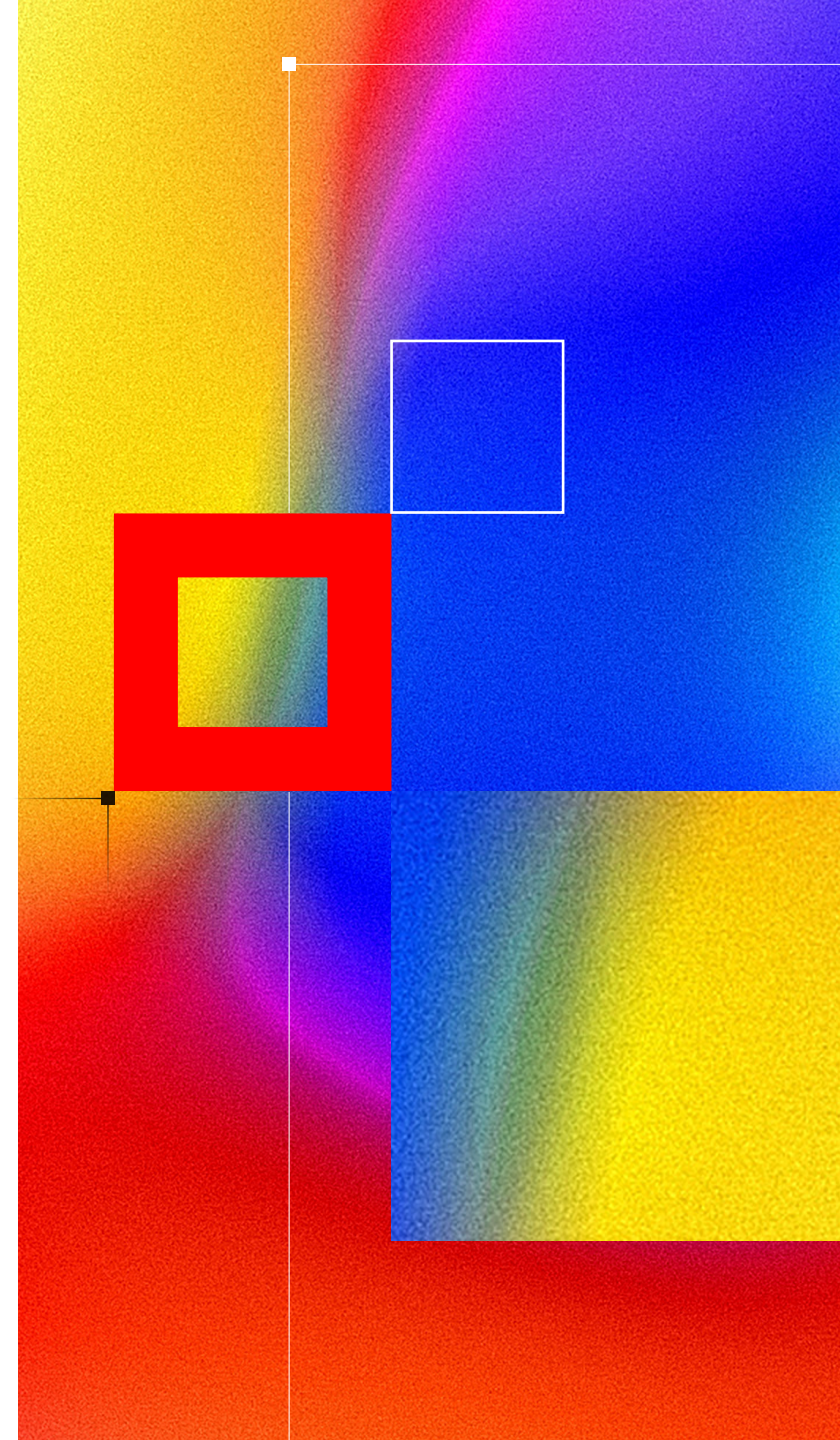
It's time to venture into new frontiers of experience.

PICKS FOR YOU

Total immersion is the CX of the future.

When it comes to the future, here's how consumers ranked what they're most excited about:

1

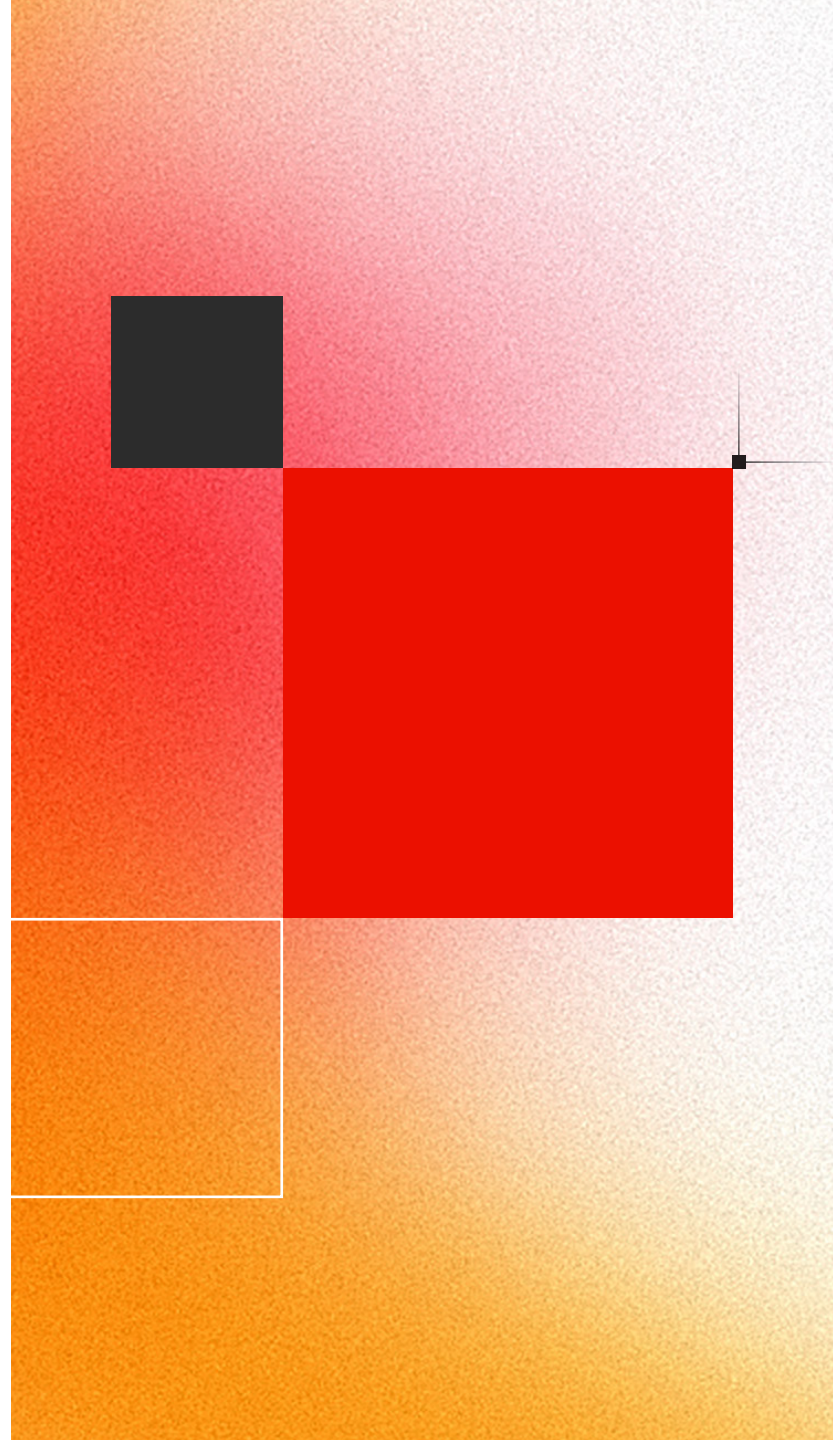Playing virtual games to win points or prizes from their favourite brands.

2

Building virtual products that can also be converted into a physical product.

3

Hanging out with friends in a virtual or immersive world.

4

Attending virtual or immersive events like concerts, fashion shows, and more.

New formats and methods will be a big part of CX.

Looking into the near future, two years from now, consumers expect brands to use new and emerging formats in their experiences:

3D images

76% of all consumers and **87% of Gen Z** expect to see 3D images of brands' products in their online stores.

Video

84% of all consumers and **90% of Gen Z consumers** expect to see videos of products.

AR/VR

76% of all consumers and **81% of Gen Z and millennial consumers** expect to experience products via augmented or virtual reality.

Virtual to physical

59% of all consumers and **72% of Gen Z** and **millennial consumers** expect the ability to build a digital product that can be converted into a physical one.

For example, they build a shoe online for their avatar, and then they can purchase that same shoe in physical form.

Brands are ready to bring more digital magic to their CX.

- **72%** will offer customers the ability to play virtual games to win points or prizes in the next two years.

- **76%** will empower customers to build virtual products that can be converted into physical products.

- **74%** will offer virtual or immersive events like concerts, fashion shows, or tradeshows.

- **72%** will offer VIP access to virtual experiences with influencers or celebrities.

- **71%** will offer customers virtual or immersive spaces to hang out with their friends.

- **74%** will use virtual tokens or credits like NFTs to trade for virtual or in-person products or experiences.

The rise of generative artificial intelligence.

Make an image of a unicorn and a cake at a kids party
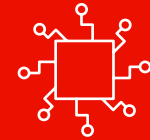
Consumers want companies to use generative AI responsibly to boost their business.

- **89% of consumers** say they want companies to use generative AI to improve the quality of their products and services—and to make work easier and more efficient for their customers.

- Only **11%** say companies should not use generative AI at all.

- Only **3% of Gen Z** and **6% of millennial consumers** say companies shouldn't use generative AI at all.
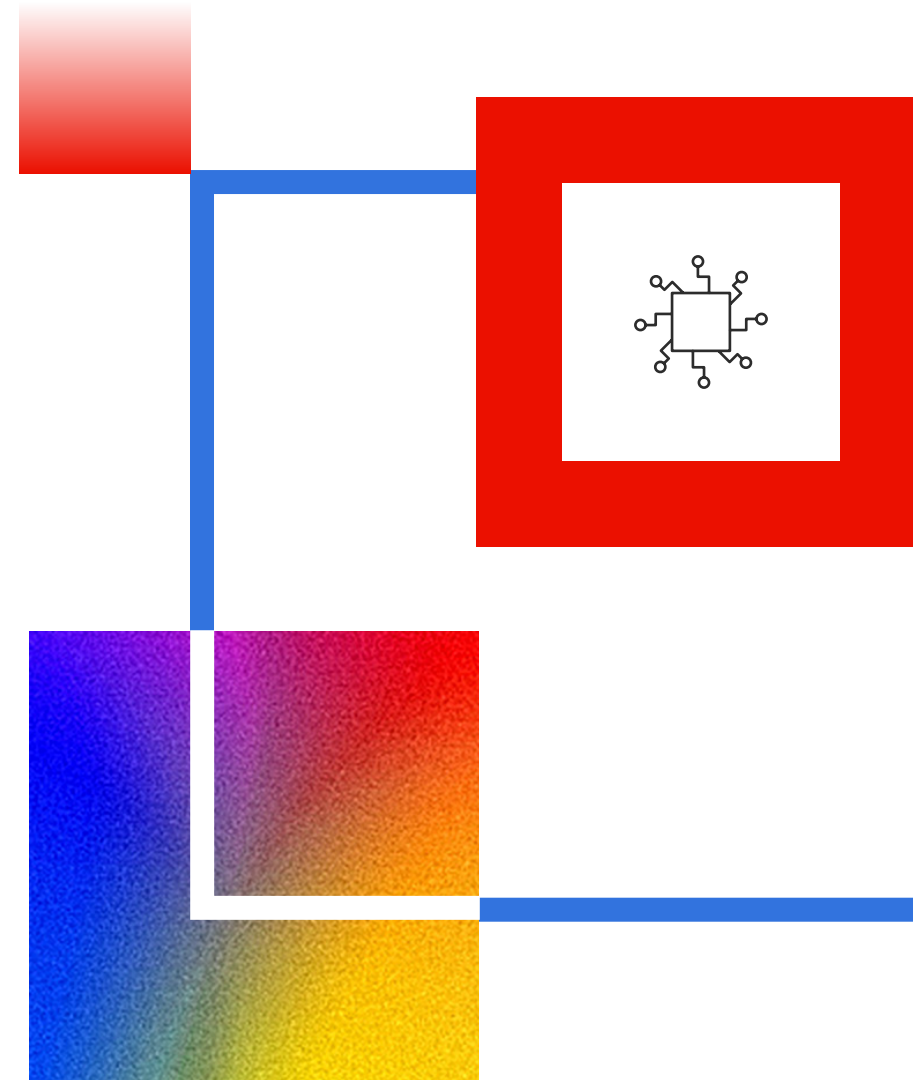
Consumers expect generative AI to improve CX and creativity.

72%
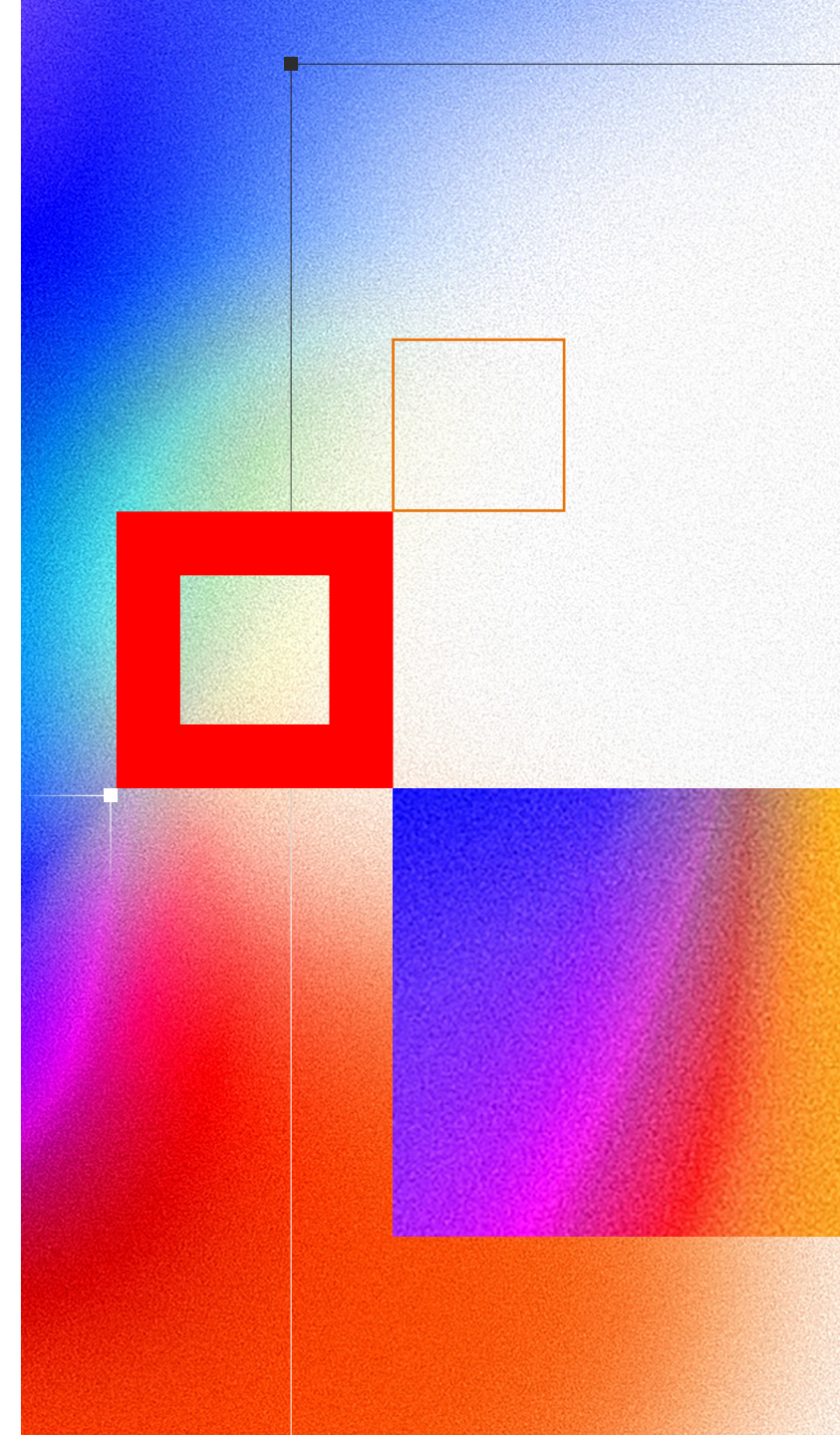of general consumers believe generative AI will improve their experiences.

83%
of Gen Z and 80% of millennial consumers say the same.

57%
of consumers believe it will enhance their creativity.

75%
of Gen Z consumers say it will make them more creative.

CX and marketing pros agree that generative AI has huge potential for the workplace.

Most companies agree that AI is having a positive impact on work:

- **72%** agree that it's a positive force in their work.

- **15%** call it a miracle.

- Only **4%** say it's unnecessary in their work.

They also see broad applications for generative AI in the workplace, ranking the following equally as the top most important way they can use it:

- To make work easier and more efficient.

- To improve the quality of products and services.

- To make their customers' experiences awesome.

There's a massive opportunity to boost marketing creativity with generative AI.

Marketers and CX pros are excited to use generative AI in these ways:

- Make experiences feel more relevant and helpful.
- Make more exciting and creative content.
- Make it easier for their customers to find what they want online.

They also believe it will be a huge boon to their work and for CX:

- **90%** say it will help them do better work, and 88% say it will help them do more work.
- **89%** say it will help them create more and better content.
- **89%** say it will help them reach the right customers.
- **89%** say it will help them better personalise customer experiences.
- **88%** say it will help them identify new customer journeys.

- **88%** say it will enhance their ability to use creative tools.
- **87%** say it will enhance their creativity.
- **88%** say it will help them identify new audiences.
- **83%** say it will help them with first drafts.
- **82%** say it will help them brainstorm.

Generative AI has broad, long-term benefits.

Marketing and CX pros rank their top three long-term benefits of generative AI:

1. **Improve the quality of their work.**

2. **Help them work faster.**

3. **Free up time for them to be more creative.**

Only 3% say it won't have an impact on their work.

And while they see broad application and value for emerging generative AI tools, their top three all involve content:

1. **Generate content faster.**

2. **Optimise content.**

3. **Generate more content.**

How to grow your business with experiences.

LIVE
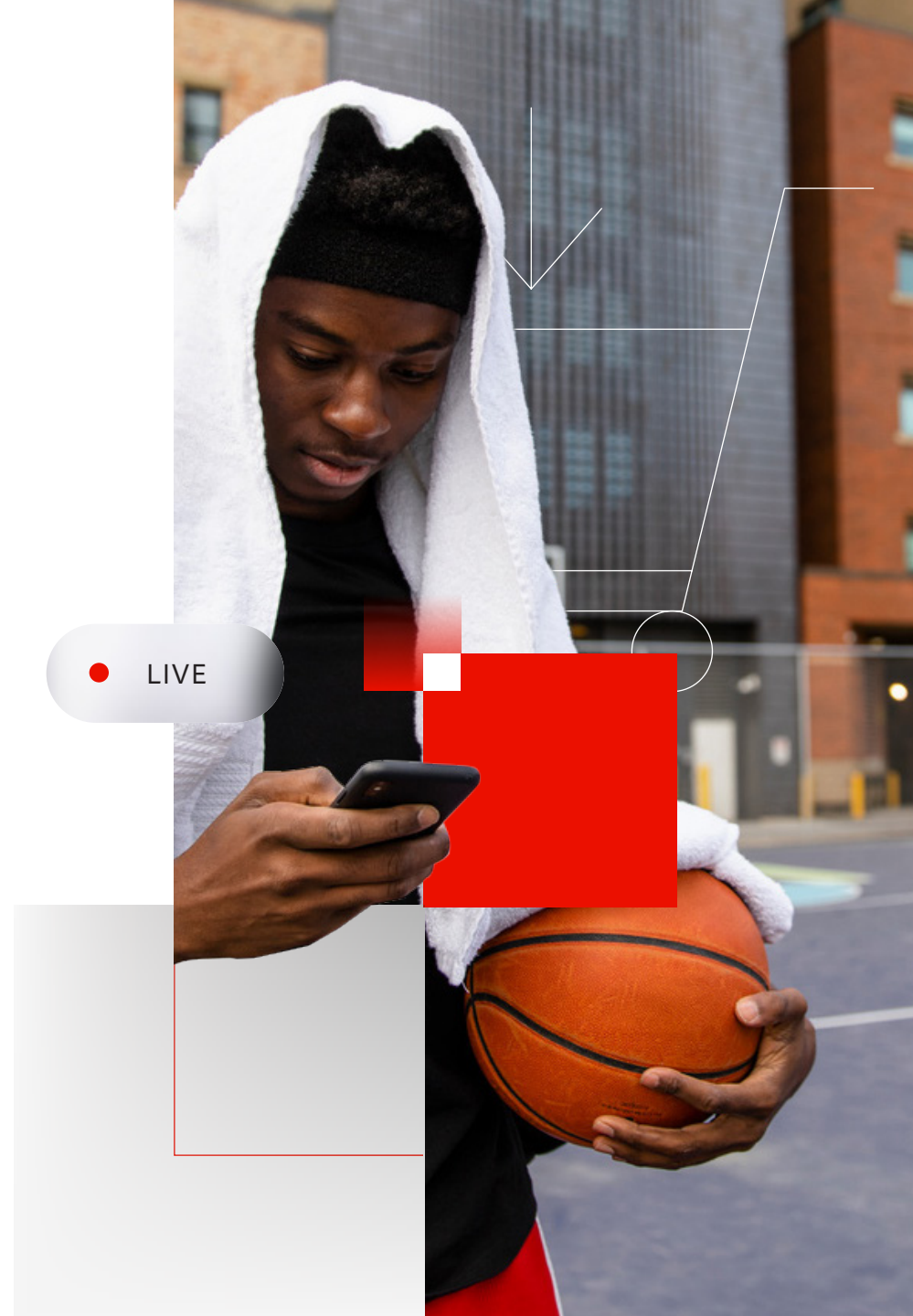
Unleash long-term success with Adobe.

As we look to the future, it's become clear that long-term business growth depends on how much you invest in your customer experiences. And based on our survey results, it's clear that there are five key pillars to keep in mind:

1. **Fuel experiences with data**. Make sure you have a comprehensive view of your customers' preferences, interests, and journeys so you can drive digital success.

2. **Explore experience frontiers.** It's time to start innovating and finding new ways for your brand to experiment with new ways to deliver experiences.

3. **Evaluate your content supply chain.** As new content types emerge, you need to equip your creatives and marketers to easily manage all your assets at scale.

4. **Build trust into every customer relationship.** Prioritise how you deliver on your brand promise, and ensure that every interaction with your customers builds trust.

5. **Seize the generative AI opportunity.** Start thinking about how your technologies and strategies can take advantage of the massive potential and value of AI.

The future of digital experiences is always evolving. Fortunately, we can keep you up to date on the latest trends and tactics—so you can make sure your brand is always one step ahead.

Learn more about the digital economy and how we can help you get on the fast track to results.

Get details

Methodology

Adobe partnered with Advanis to survey more than 13,000 consumers and 4,250 marketing and customer experience professionals globally. These marketing and CX pros included a mix of practitioners and leaders.

Our questionnaire was designed to look at digital experiences across multiple dimensions, including the digital economy, experience frontiers (channels and content), and artificial intelligence and generative AI.

The research focused on 19 countries:

- North America: The United States

- Europe: The United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Greenland

- Asia-Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia