

Consumer Insights

Australians want their paper bills and statements



THE CONSUMER'S
RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Remember the saying ‘the customer is always right’? It appears that Australian banks, telcos and service providers have mixed up the message. The push for customers to move to e-billing and digital statements is being made with little, if any, regard for customer preference. An interesting position in a consumer-savvy market.

Findings of a national survey (Toluna, 2021) indicate that a majority of Australians are resistant to being unwillingly moved to online communications, and unhappy that it is now their responsibility to print valued documents. Many consumers would like to continue receiving printed bills or statements. Some require paper communications from companies due to a lack of reliable internet access, and others prefer them because they provide a permanent record of important documents.

Australian consumers are resistant to being unwillingly moved to online communications:

- 53% per cent find paper bills and statements better for record keeping than electronic bills and statements.
- 74% believe that consumers should have the right to choose how they receive communications (printed or electronically)

Research has found cynicism among Australian consumers presented with environmental claims linked with encouragements to stop receiving paper bills and statements:

- 49% of consumers receiving environmental claims like ‘Go Paperless, Save The Trees’, or ‘Get your bills online, it’s better for the environment’, from companies believe that they are doing so to save costs, rather than sustainable goals.

Paper and print remain Australia’s preferred communication channel:

- Print retains higher trust levels than digital and is linked to higher levels of comprehension, financial literacy and recall than digital channels.
- Results of a survey of Australian University Students revealed a strong preference for reading in print due to concerns regarding eye strain, usability, ability to focus, and cost.
- Older cohorts carry a higher readership across established media channels than digital media channels.

Policymakers should recognise that paper-based information is still preferred by many consumers and often receives more attention. Consumers also value and wish to retain the flexibility of both postal and electronic communications.

We live in an increasingly digital world, where paper and electronic communications co-exist and often are complementary. Communication strategies must recognise this and allow for citizen choice. Paper-based documentation can bring many tangible benefits, and its preference by many consumers must be at the forefront of any digital planning.

Sources:

1. Toluna, 2021.
2. NewsPoll, SkyNews, accessed 6th February 2023.
3. Educational Research Review, 2018.