

Quarterly
Digital
Intelligence
Briefing



Digital Trends 2015



in association with **Adobe**

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1

Foreword by Adobe

Welcome to the 2015 Digital Trends report, which Econsultancy has published in partnership with Adobe. This is the fourth year we have run this survey as part of the Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing series and we are delighted that this year we have smashed the record in terms of the number of businesses taking part.

More than 6,000 business professionals with an interest in digital business took part in this year's survey. We thank you for the data and insights which have helped to inform our annual round-up on the trends which really matter.

Here at Adobe, we are delighted to see customer experience (CX) increasingly taking centre stage as more companies realise that this is crucial not just for differentiation against competitors, but increasingly for survival in an unforgiving business world.

Customer experience is seen as the stand-out imperative for 2015 and beyond, with 22% saying it is the single most exciting opportunity this year. There is now daylight between CX and **content marketing**, which is still undoubtedly in the ascendancy but some distance behind with 15% of the vote.

As has been identified by Econsultancy analysts in the report, other areas of focus such as **data-driven business**, **personalisation**, **mobile** and **cross-channel marketing** are all vitally important for business success in their own right but their roles are ultimately subordinate to an organisation's over-arching efforts to ensure that the customer experience is a good one.

Strategy and **culture** are widely identified in all corners of the world as the most important building blocks for a successfully integrated customer experience across an increasing number of customer touch points.

The importance of technology, data and skills should not be under-estimated, but the right direction from the top of the business and a conducive business environment are fundamental to success. A well thought-out approach is becoming even more important in a world where mobile devices and even wearable technology mean that the digital and physical worlds are no longer separate.

Another highlight of the report is the emergence of **targeting and personalisation** (30%) as the highest digital-related priority area, narrowly ahead of **content optimisation** (29%) which has also climbed up the pecking order. The technology has long been available for marketers to target optimised content at website prospects and customers across the right mix of channels in a way which is timely and highly relevant to their implicit and explicit needs.

In the context of the innovation adoption curve, 2014 was the year when the early majority of marketers joined the early adopters in embracing areas such as personalisation and content optimisation. This year may well be the year when the late majority start to prioritise these areas as well. Make sure you're not behind the curve!



Mark Phibbs
VP, EMEA
Marketing,
Adobe

2

Introduction and review of 2014

More than 6,000 marketing, digital and ecommerce professionals around the world took part in this year's Digital Trends survey¹, giving us the richest pool of data we have ever had for a survey aimed at business professionals.

We have endeavoured to make this Digital Trends 2015 briefing as global as possible, highlighting where appropriate any key differences between North America, Europe and Asia. These are the regions where we had the most participants, but many of the trends highlighted in the report are as relevant in Brazil or South Africa as they are for the US, UK or China.

Each year, dozens of respected industry commentators give their opinion on the trends we can expect during the year ahead, with varying degrees of accuracy and insight. What we believe differentiates our own perspective on the year ahead is the grounding that this research has in primary data from those in the engine rooms of business.

While the research is forward-looking, it is also intentionally anchored to the realities of the present day, and based on the experience of marketers across thousands of companies a wide range of business sectors across the worlds of both B2B and B2C. It is about trends which are attainable in the here and now, rather than future-gazing into a world where driverless cars abound and delivery of our post by drones is the rule and not the exception.

Before we look at the key trends for the year ahead, it is worth comparing what marketers said a year ago with what actually transpired. Customer experience (CX) emerged as the most exciting opportunity for the year, just ahead of mobile and with content marketing third in the pecking order.

For this year's survey we asked marketers which opportunity, with the benefit of hindsight had actually turned out to be the most exciting during 2014. As *Figure 1*, next page, shows, the field was more evenly spread than had been predicted with only one percentage point separating four areas of focus, namely customer experience, content marketing, mobile and social.

Social, which perhaps some marketers had started to dismiss as yesterday's news or at least regard as 'business as usual', turned out to be a much bigger deal and more exciting than predicted.

As well as customer experience, other areas which turned out retrospectively to have been over-indexed a year ago included multichannel campaign management, personalisation and big data. These are all themes explored in the report, with this year's data suggesting that their time has now come.

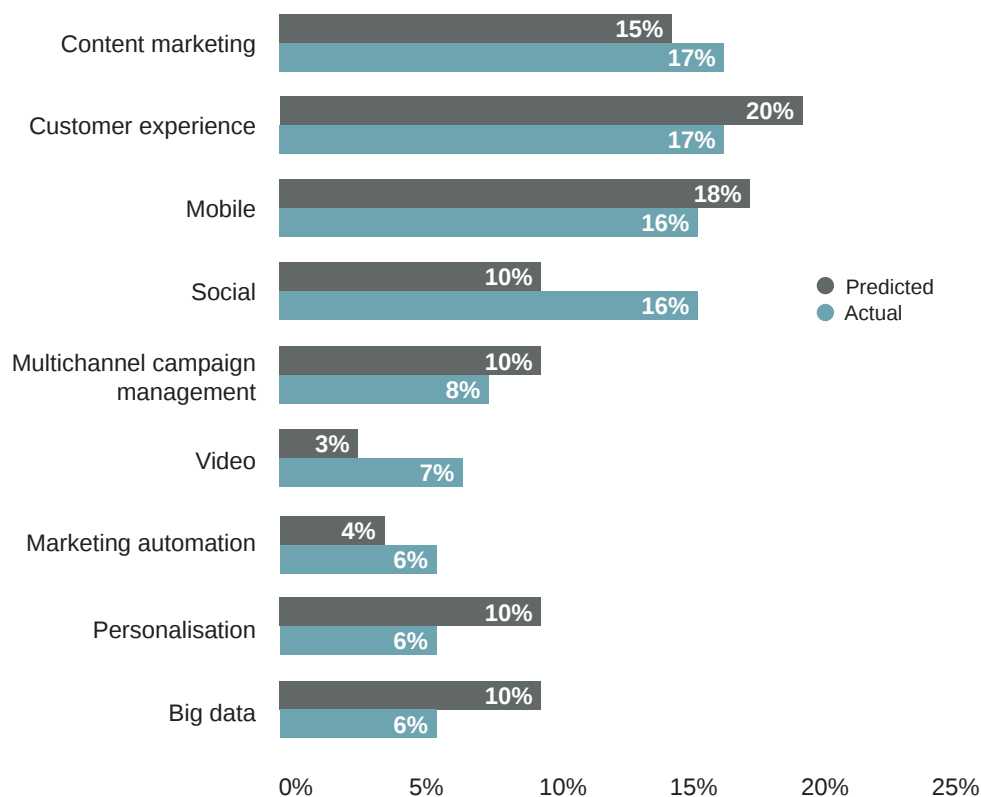
¹ See appendix for details about methodology and profile of respondents.

The nature of marketing has exploded



Company respondents

Figure 1: Last year's most exciting opportunity: predicted versus actual



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents 2015: 2,543
Respondents 2014: 980

Note: The 2014 survey question was 'Which one area is the single most exciting opportunity for your organisation in 2014?'
The 2015 survey question was 'Thinking about 2014, which of the following turned out to be the biggest opportunity?'

As 2015 gets under way, it is clear that the opportunities for marketers have never been greater. According to Scott Brinker, author of the Chief Marketing Technologist Blog: *"The nature of marketing has exploded from an ancillary communications function to the Grand Central Station of customer experience."*

It is the increasingly digital nature of the world that has been the catalyst for propelling marketing into an even more elevated role within the organisation, and it is unusual now for digital marketing to be treated as its own silo.

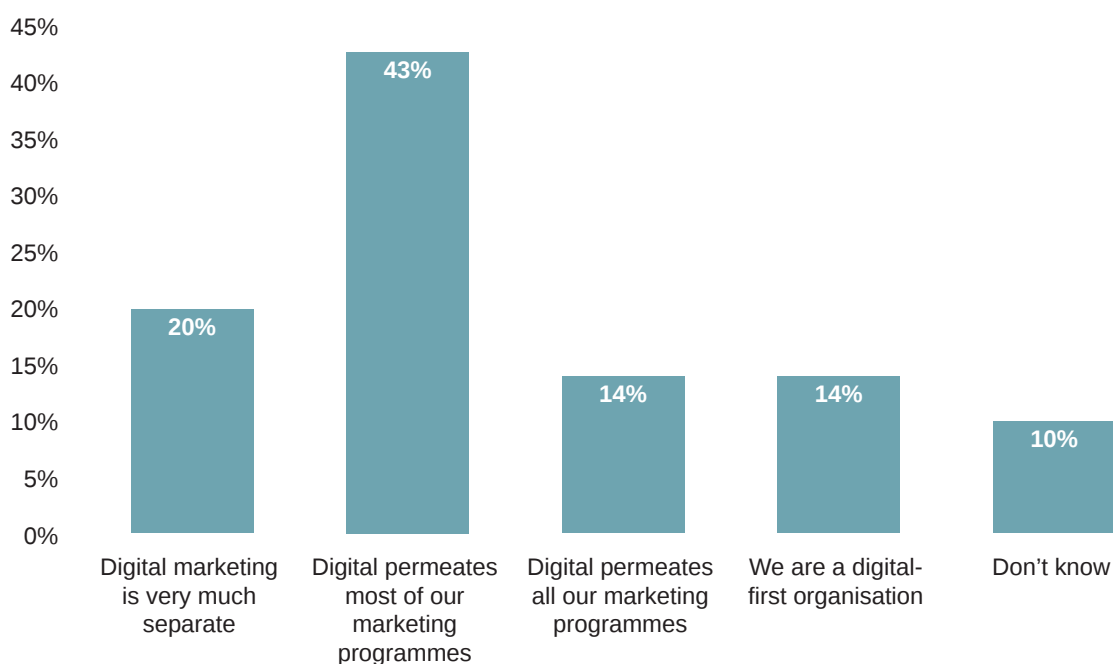




Only a fifth of companies say that digital sits separately

Company respondents

Figure 2: To what extent does digital permeate your own organisation's marketing activities?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,245

Asked the extent to which digital permeates their own marketing activities, only a fifth (20%) of responding organisations say that digital sits separately (*Figure 2*). While this is positive news, only 14% say that digital 'permeates all their marketing programmes' and the same small proportion describe themselves as 'digital-first'. Survey respondents are most likely to say that 'digital permeates most of their marketing programmes' (43%).

It is also encouraging that marketers will embrace experimentation in 2015, rather than just doing more of the same. The proportion of respondents who say they will be 'experimenting heavily with digital over the next year' has increased from 64% last year to 69% this year (*Figure 3*, next page).

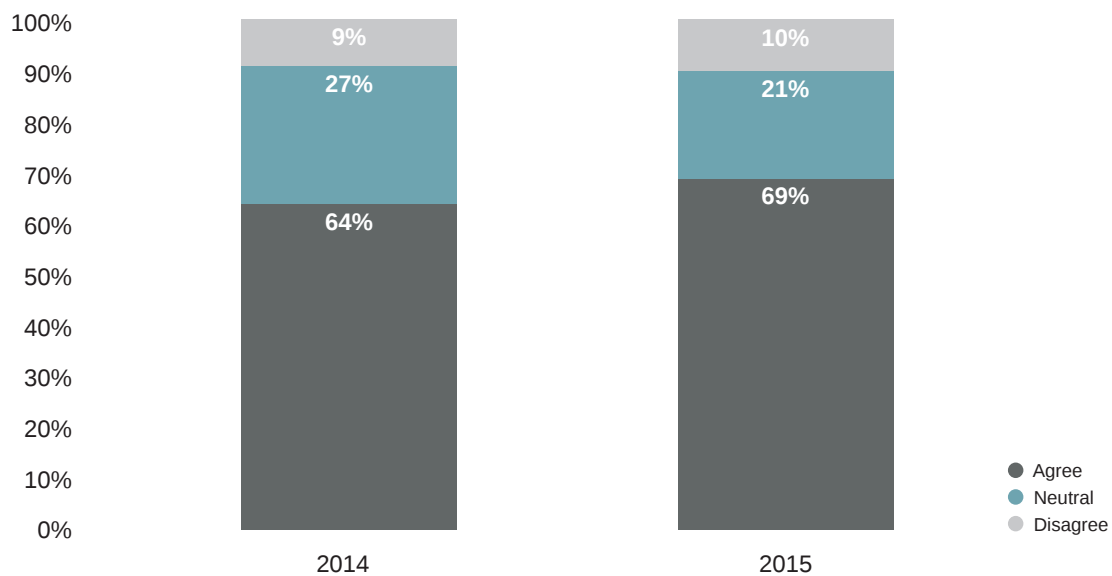
The tag cloud on the next page, with the size of words indicating the frequency of mentions, highlights the key areas in which organisations plan to experiment most heavily in the coming year. Social, mobile, content and personalisation were most commonly cited by survey respondents.

Marketers will embrace experimentation in 2015



Company respondents

Figure 3: 'We are going to be experimenting heavily with digital next year'



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents 2015: 2,364
Respondents 2014: 917

Company respondents

Figure 4: In which areas are you going to be experimenting most heavily in the coming year?



3

Customer experience in the ascendancy

It is no secret that customer experience has emerged as a key priority for many organisations over the last few years. The emphasis on CX coincides with rising consumer expectations, which has led brands to focus on customer satisfaction or even delight at every touch point in an attempt to foster loyalty.

This idealistic state that companies are aspiring to reach certainly has its executional challenges. Businesses are marrying together datasets, technological infrastructures and operations, often for the first time, in order to provide the perfect experience for consumers.

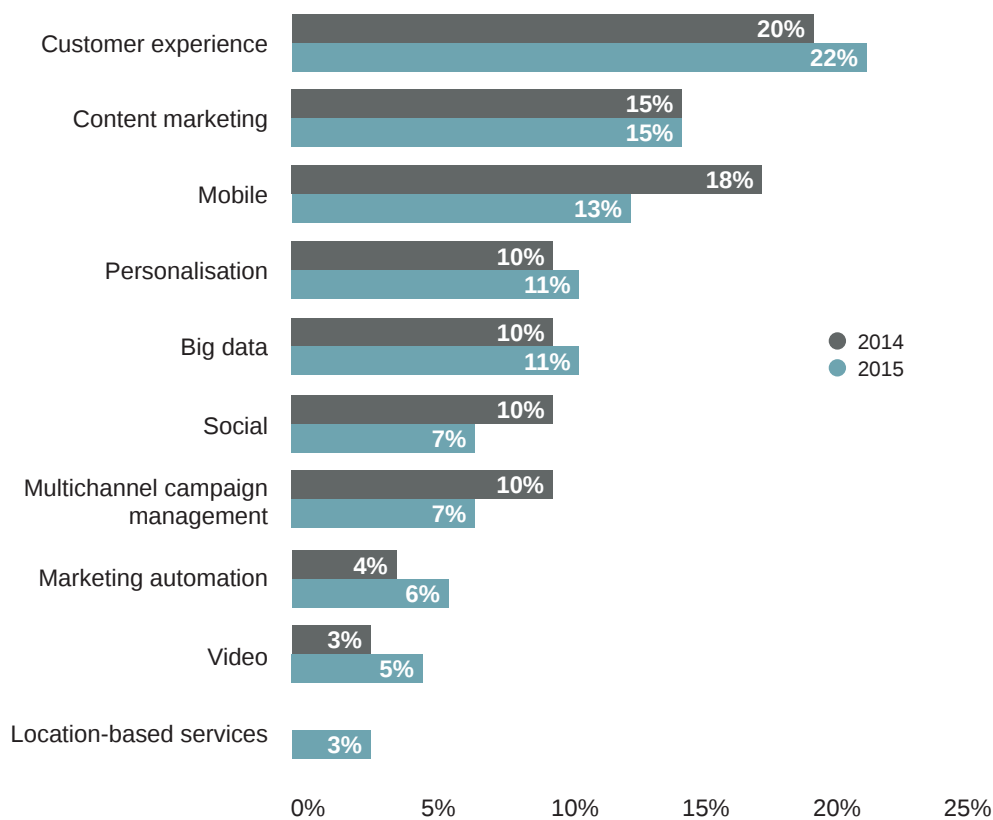
While organisations are aware of the opportunities afforded by a customer-focused approach, not all of them are able to capitalise on this, as CX is one of the areas where the anticipated opportunity was outstripped by reality in 2014.

However, this has not deterred organisations from remaining optimistic about the impact customer experience can have. In fact, responding companies are even more excited, as 22% of client-side organisations view it as the most exciting opportunity, an increase of two percentage points since last year.



Company respondents

Figure 5: Single most exciting opportunity – 2015 vs 2014



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents 2014: 980
Respondents 2015: 2,543

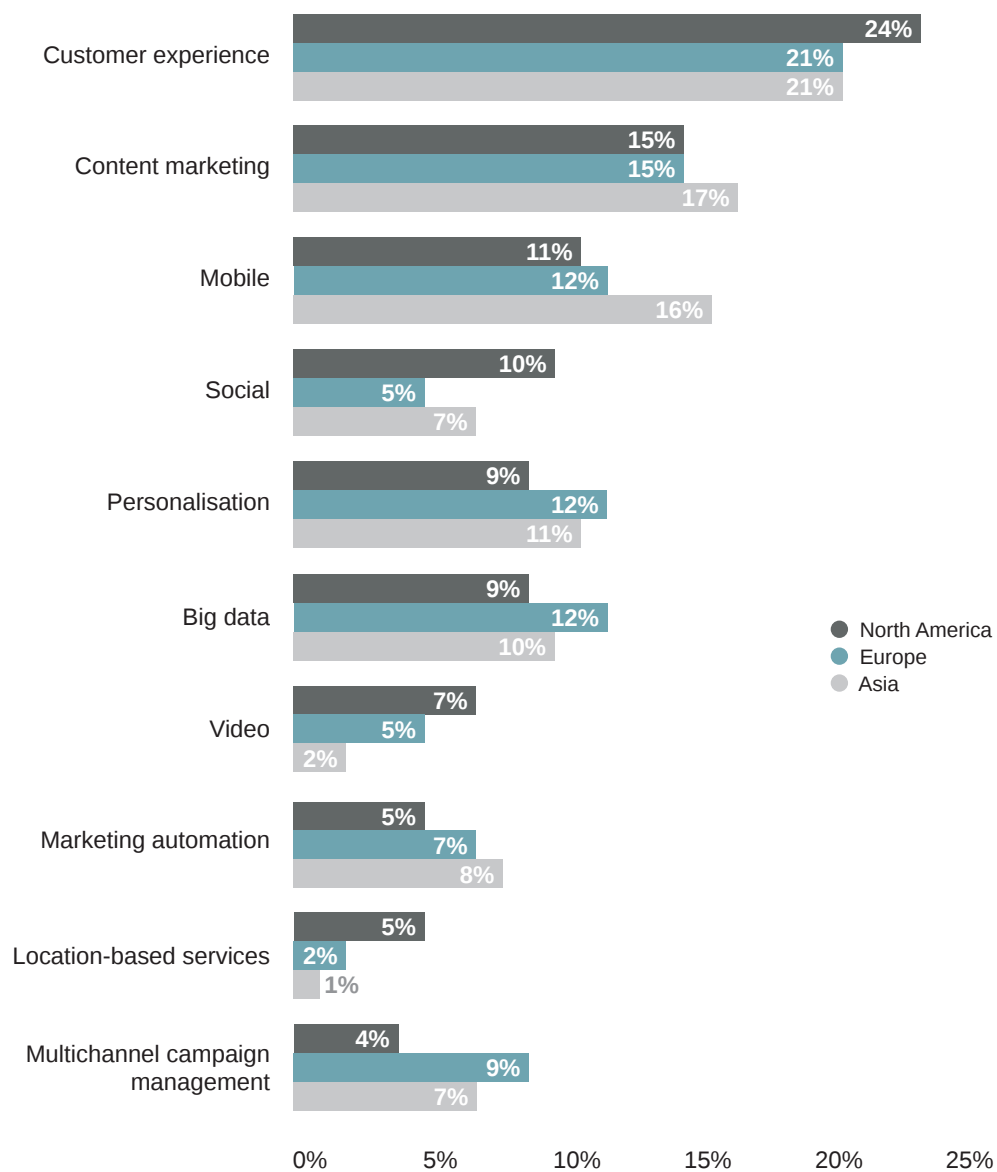
Customer experience as a theme has increased the gap between itself and the next most exciting opportunity, from being two percentage points ahead of mobile last year, to a more pronounced seven percentage point lead over content marketing which is in second place in 2015. While customer experience may not have provided the types of opportunities that some companies anticipated last year, the expectation appears

to be that this is the year where efforts in this area will begin to crystallise.

Not only is the excitement around customer experience increasing, it is also not region-specific. As illustrated on the following page, respondents from North America, Europe and Asia were all most likely to perceive CX as the opportunity providing the most possibilities for their organisations.

Company respondents

Figure 6: Single most exciting opportunity – regional comparison



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

North American respondents: 847
European respondents: 1,119
Asian respondents: 384

Creating an excellent customer experience is a complex process



Despite the varying maturities and consumer habits that are bound to exist on a regional basis, the criticality of customer centricity has remained consistent. The challenge is for organisations worldwide to create memorable experiences that also make a difference to the bottom line.

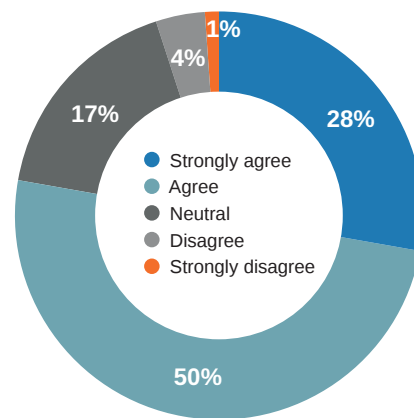
Further evidence of the ubiquitous focus on customer experience can be found in *Figure 7*. More than three-quarters (78%) of company respondents are attempting to differentiate through CX, with 28% strongly agreeing with the statement. In comparison, only 5% of companies are not trying to use customer experience as a point of differentiation.

It is clear that the coming year will see plenty of activity in this area. Organisations have spent considerable time getting their respective houses in order. The next step for many is execution; pulling together mobile, content, data and the various other building blocks and deploying them in a harmonious fashion.

Creating an excellent customer experience is a complex process, but the respondents' enthusiasm and dedication to using it as a point of differentiation bodes well. Companies have committed to customer experience for the long term. This is critical, as a commitment to customer experience means a commitment to a structured, long-term view on delighting the customer.

Company respondents

Figure 7: 'We try to differentiate through customer experience'



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly
Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,363

'Everything needs to be about the customer experience. Everything else just represents tools that can be used to achieve that goal.'

Survey respondent

4 Driving a CX-friendly culture

The challenges of creating a great customer experience extend from the tactical to the strategic, from remaking processes to encouraging innovation and from building new skills to integrating an array of technologies.

Simply put, customer experience isn't simple.

For many organisations, the goal of turning customer experience (CX) into a competitive advantage means recreating themselves. That's because the customer's experience is the result of every part of the company working together, or failing to. Decisions made in finance and human resources can have just as much impact as those in marketing and product teams.

This interconnection is one reason that a cultural shift should underlie any strategic priority around CX. It's not easy to get hundreds or thousands of employees to realign their thinking, but it's essential if the shift to the customer is genuine.



- Perhaps the most powerful element of culture is the potential for **unity**. When teams or entire companies are unified around a vision, it energises them and can counteract some of the normal tensions between departments.
- In a business environment where there are far more options for how to spend time and money than the ability to follow through, nothing is more useful than focus. When the organisation begins to share a **common perspective** that the customer experience drives growth, it focuses everything from budgets to daily priorities.
- Declaring that CX will be a defining organisational characteristic is a choice that means prioritising customer-centric qualities over other business goals. As this permeates the organisation, this new direction can galvanise **innovation**. In a business, creativity is often at its best (or most useful) when it's given context and boundaries. The move to build a great CX opens the door for creativity in every team and at every level.

The five-year plan...

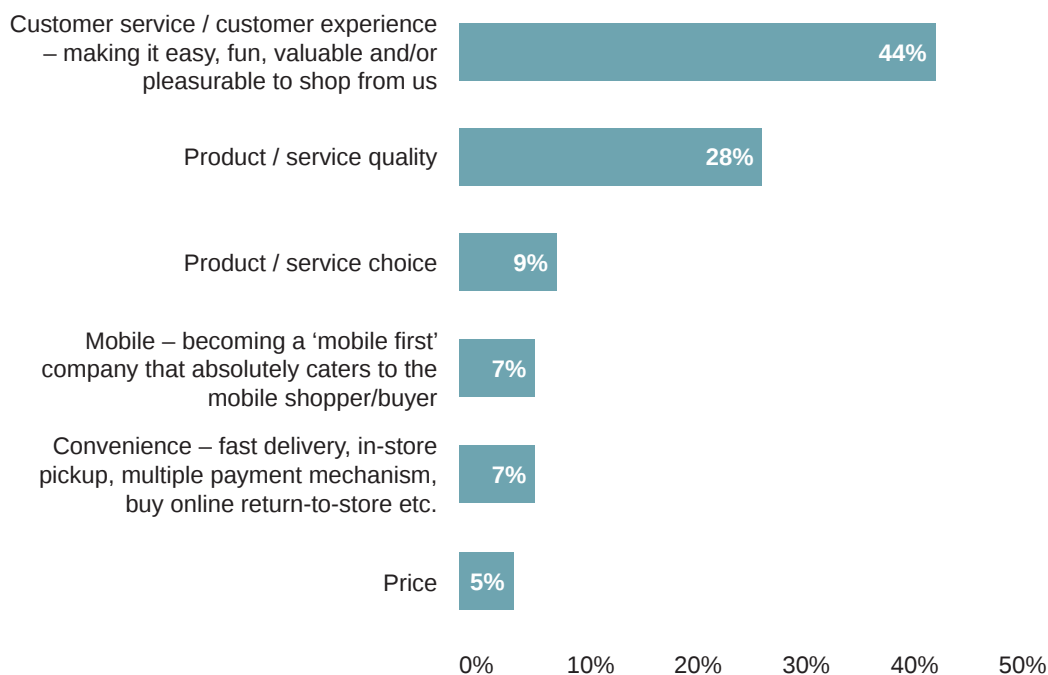
How important is CX? Thousands of companies tell us that it's the number one way they hope to differentiate themselves over the next five years. The product and service commoditisation in many sectors means that while offerings must be competitive, they're less likely to be a competitive advantage. Even starker is the end of the price war; only 5% of respondents see themselves as being able to set themselves apart with their pricing strategies.

Only 5% of responding companies can differentiate on price



Company respondents

Figure 8: Over the next five years, what is the primary way your organisation will seek to differentiate itself from competitors?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,146

Experience starts with strategy and culture

Strategy is the easy part. As challenging as it is to discover and define corporate direction, strategy is a malleable set of ideas that depends on the buy-in of a relatively small group of people.

It's within the context of culture that strategy becomes practice. Its success or failure depends on whether the wider audience of employees, partners and other stakeholders understand and support it.



Redefining culture

A cross-team approach – building a truly customer-centric enterprise means working together. It's not simply a marketing initiative. Product, finance, customer service, sales, marketing and management have to work together. The good news is that a cross-team approach that transcends the silos of the past is a powerful and more efficient way to work.² The bad news is that it's very hard work to change internal structures.

Realignment through incentives – at the heart of any effective transition is using financial and other incentives to reset priorities. For example, this might mean a simple redefinition of how bonuses are calculated to include a

customer satisfaction component. But, it could also be using a more sophisticated set of goals around cross-team co-operation and customer evaluation.

Supporting experimentation and understanding failure – a great customer experience combines existing best practices with new discoveries and innovations. One of the hardest challenges for some organisations to overcome is to make experimentation a part of the culture. Risk and failure-averse companies actually risk failure when they don't embrace a vigorous campaign of experiments in the name of superior customer experience.

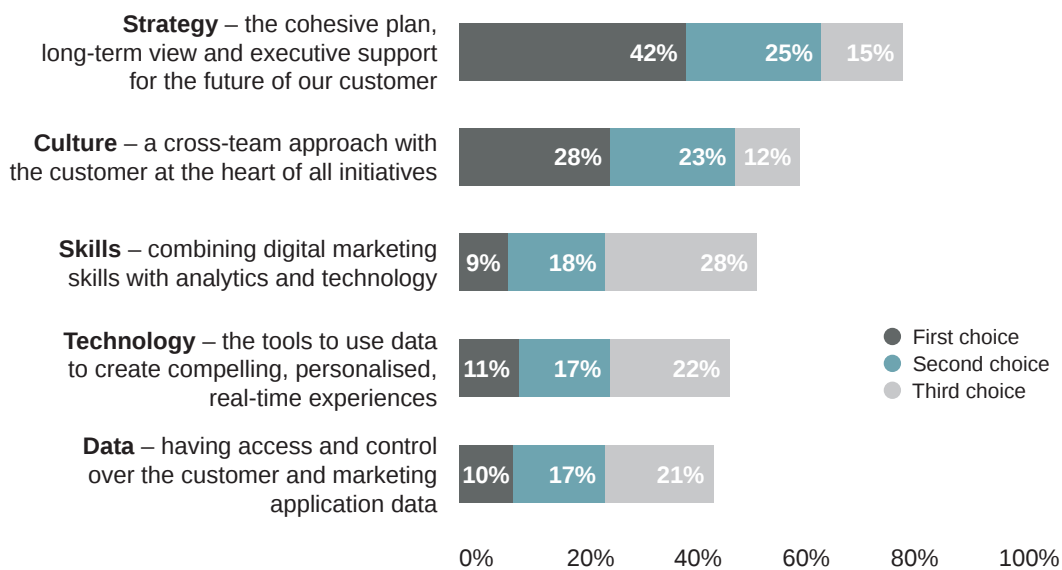
² Leading a Digital Marketing Evolution, Econsultancy, 2014 – <https://econsultancy.com/reports/leading-a-digital-marketing-evolution>

Companies should first focus on getting the basics



Company respondents

Figure 9: Please rank the importance of these areas as building blocks for building a brilliant customer experience.



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,158

Everything is part of CX. From the moment a prospect sees an ad the customer experience has begun and it doesn't end until the relationship does.

Although *Figure 9* shows organisational priorities around CX, it doesn't draw a line between what's important and what isn't. Everything is important, but some are differentiators while others are simply part of the new cost of doing business.

Elements of the CX with the potential to separate a brand from its competitors:

- *Personalisation* depends on technology, but it is human insight that moves it beyond the algorithms relating products and people. Great personalisation can be

fundamental to relevance, while bad personalisation feels intrusive and unnecessary.

- *Value* is an expression of cost and benefit. The benefits to a customer are a mix of what they get and how they perceive it, which is why marketing has to be both the voice of the customer to the enterprise, and the voice of the enterprise to the customer.
- Making an experience *fun* or *fulfilling* is a challenge and only 7% cite it as their path to differentiation (*Figure 10*). It's powerful for those that can connect brand with experience in ways that delight customers³ but most companies should first focus on getting the basics just right.

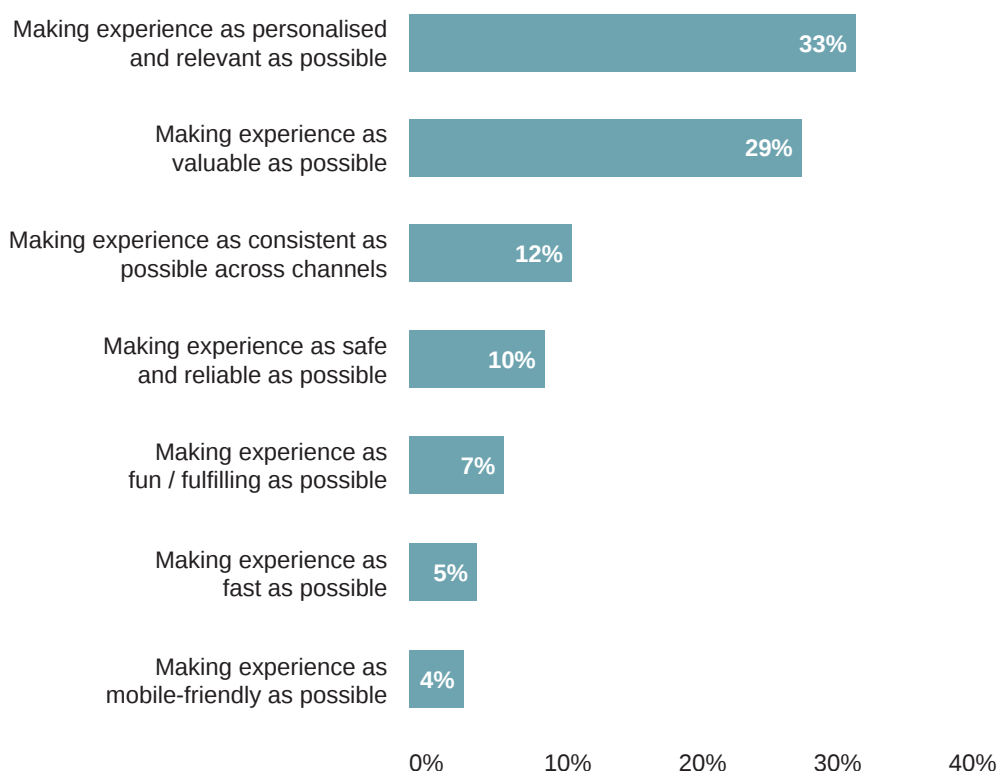
³ Winning Hearts in Real Time, Econsultancy, 2014 – <https://econsultancy.com/reports/winning-hearts-in-real-time>



The growth in visitors and buyers is forcing every digital marketing team to be mobile-ready

Company respondents

Figure 10: Where does your organisation place the highest emphasis in terms of improving the customer experience?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,143

Fundamentals for every CX-focused company:

- Customers want to know what to expect. *Consistency* in experience should go far enough to make them feel safe and to fulfil on expectations set in other media. At the same time, every medium has its unique traits. A mobile site should be simple and useful above all, which should be balanced with overall brand consistency.
- *Safety* and *speed* are the first steps of customer experience. Digital customers who are concerned for their data will never buy, nor will they return if they find the experience slow or awkward.
- Similarly, while *mobile* can be a differentiator today, marketers looking at the future recognise that it won't be one for long. The growth in visitors and buyers is forcing every digital marketing team to be mobile-ready.

5

According to the Adobe 'Digital Roadblock' survey of marketers carried out in early 2014, personalisation ranks as the most important capability in regard to future marketing efforts.⁴ This comes as no surprise when taking into consideration the strong commercial case for personalisation. Separate research carried out by Econsultancy in association with Adobe revealed that on average, businesses personalising the customer experience report a 14% uplift in sales.⁵

This briefing is further proof that personalisation has indeed become top-of-mind for companies aiming to improve the customer experience.

Figure 11 on the following page shows a pecking order for different digital disciplines, with *targeting and personalisation* emerging as the top priority for the year ahead (having jumped from third place in 2014) and *content optimisation* following closely behind at 29%.



⁴ Digital Roadblock: Marketers struggle to reinvent themselves, Adobe, 2014 – <http://www.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/solutions/digital-marketing/pdfs/adobe-digital-roadblock-survey.pdf>

⁵ Why Marketing Should Be Personal, Econsultancy, 2014 – <https://econsultancy.com/reports/quarterly-digital-intelligence-briefing-why-marketing-should-be-personal/>

Company respondents

Figure 11: Which three digital-related areas are the top priorities for your organisation in 2015?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,748

Further analysis of the data revealed that B2B marketers are closing the gap on those working in B2C. B2C marketers are 18% more likely than their B2B counterparts to be focusing their efforts on targeting and personalisation, whereas in 2014 they were 55% more likely than B2B marketers to say the same.

Another key trend for 2015 is the way that businesses are now thinking of personalisation across the whole customer journey rather than in a particular marketing silo.

Two in five (38%) organisations agree that omnichannel personalisation will become a reality in 2015, with respondents being 65% more likely to agree than disagree with this statement (*Figure 12*). Compared to their US counterparts, Asia-based organisations are 75% more likely to agree with this.

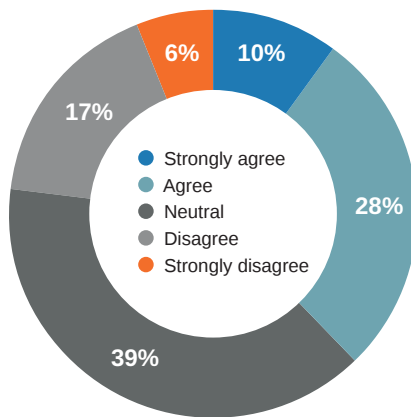
Joining up data across channels (which in turn leads to better use of data) is a prerequisite of effective personalisation and will be key in supporting this omnichannel vision, but only 12% consider it a priority for the year ahead (*Figure 11*). We explore data-related trends in more detail in [Section 8](#).

Personalisation sets us apart, cuts through clutter

Survey respondent

Company respondents

Figure 12: 'Omnichannel personalisation will become a reality in 2015'



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,362

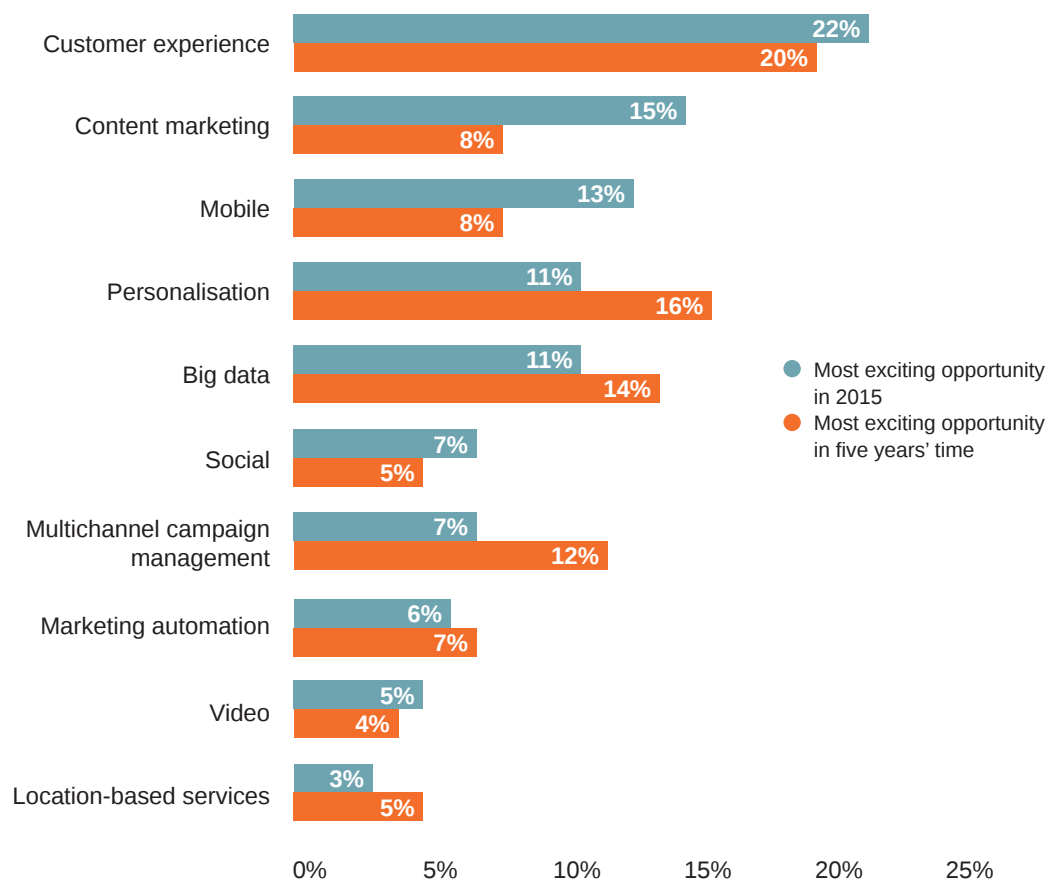
The customer has always been in charge, brands have just been slow to accept that. There is a shift happening from brand experience to customer experience and personalisation will be the driving force of this.

Survey respondent



Company respondents

Figure 13: Most exciting opportunity – 2015 vs ‘five years’ time



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,543

As part of this research we also asked marketers to give their view on the most exciting opportunity in five years' time from the survey (which was carried out in December 2014).

The chart above compares the results for 2015 and for 2019, showing that *customer experience* will continue to be the most exciting opportunity in the medium to long term.

Customer experience will continue to be the most exciting opportunity



Personalisation is one of the opportunities that will be more exciting to marketers in 2019 than in 2015, alongside big data, multichannel campaign management, marketing automation and location-based services.

As seen in *Figure 11*, multichannel campaign management is a 2015 priority for just over a fifth (22%) of organisations, but only 7% consider it the most exciting opportunity. Encouragingly, this is due to change in five years' time, as 71% more marketers expect it to become the most exciting opportunity for their organisations in 2019 than in 2015 (*Figure 13*).

As mobile is gaining scale, it becomes more important to offer a multichannel customer experience to users through personalisation and targeting on different platforms/channels.

Survey respondent



Personalisation relates to customer experience. When you give people exactly what they need and when they need it, they are going to love you.

Survey respondent

6

Geo-targeting signposts a new era in mobile

By virtue of being a part of the buzzword-happy, innovative and early adopter world that most digital marketers exist in, it seems mobile as a theme is in the unfortunate position of being too old to be new, while also being too new to be old.

Nobody needs to run to its defence (like email for instance), yet as technology continues to advance and seemingly more exciting opportunities appear on the horizon, it is easy to assume that mobile is less important than it's been in previous years. Not so, even though the signs for inertia towards mobile have already begun.

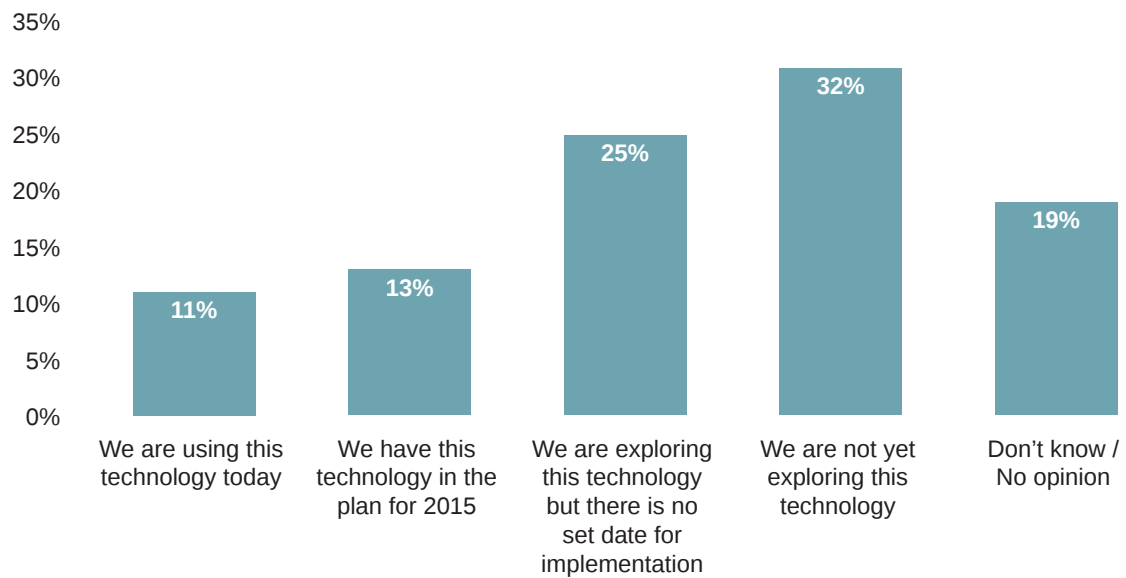
As illustrated in *Figure 5*, companies are significantly less likely to label mobile as the most exciting opportunity of the year than in 2014. While the potential impact customer experience and content marketing cannot be disputed, mobile is in many cases the conduit that enables many other initiatives.

Despite 'the year of mobile' being firmly in the past, we all know that smartphone and tablet adoption continue to fundamentally change how brands engage with customers. In order to make the most of it in today's environment, mobile should be a core competence that can be built upon, rather than a standalone special feature.



Company respondents

Figure 14: What best describes your approach to geo-targeting technology used for delivering location-based notifications (e.g. iBeacons)?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 874

The development of geo-targeting technology is a perfect example of this. Apple's introduction of iBeacons in late 2013 propelled geo-targeting technology into consciousness⁶, encouraging business to make more use of the Bluetooth Low

Energy (BLE) peripheral. However, despite the benefits, only 11% of responding companies with retail outlets are currently using the technology, with a further 13% planning on using geo-targeting technology in the next 12 months.

⁶ <https://econsultancy.com/blog/63478-ibeacons-what-are-they-and-why-should-marketers-care/>



It is important to realise that mobile's relevance has actually increased, even if the excitement around it has dipped

Despite the clear business case for retail businesses, they are surprisingly less likely to be using geo-targeting technology than those in other business sectors (Table 1, below). Financial services and insurance organisations are more than

twice as likely as their retail counterparts to be using geo-targeting technology (17% vs 8%), with travel and hospitality, consumer goods and telecom organisations also more likely to be utilising this.

Company respondents

Table 1: Approach to geo-targeting technology by sector

	Using today	In the plan for 2015	Exploring, but no set date for implementation	Not yet exploring
Consumer Goods	18%	18%	33%	31%
Financial Services and Insurance	17%	7%	37%	39%
Retail / Mail Order (including online retail)	8%	27%	40%	26%
Telecoms	23%	20%	30%	27%
Travel & Hospitality	10%	17%	33%	40%

Geo-targeting technology is clearly on the radar for many retail businesses, as two out of every five (40%) retail respondents are currently exploring the technology, and justifiably so. When utilised correctly, its implementation can increase sales value per customer, retention and brand loyalty without retail staff doing a single thing. However, it is also clear that this opportunity to engage and upsell consumers, while beacons are the catalyst, would not be possible without the proliferation and intimacy of mobile.

With many of the new innovations in digital marketing centred on developing intimate relationships with the customer, it is important to realise that mobile's relevance has actually increased, even if the excitement around it has dipped. In order to truly maximise opportunities around customer experience, personalisation and geo-targeting technology, mobile should be seen as business as usual, rather than an optional capability.

Smartphones and tablets have become fundamental parts of the lives of consumers on a global scale. If the same is not true of all attempts to reach and interact with them, how will consumers perceive your marketing efforts?

7

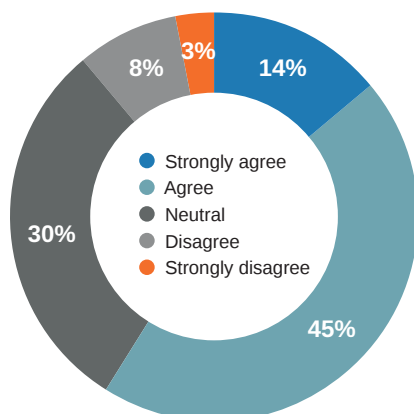
Marketers join up the channels

Cross-channel, multichannel and omnichannel are all terms that have been around for several years now and reflect marketers' priority for their strategies, campaigns, customer experience and customer journeys to span channels and devices. **Section 5** revealed that two in five (38%) marketers believe that their personalisation strategies will become omnichannel in 2015 (*Figure 12*), and *Figure 15* below shows that cross-channel is a key priority generally within marketing disciplines.

Almost 60% of respondents agree that cross-channel marketing will be a key focus for them in 2015. Further analysis of the data revealed that respondents in North America were slightly less likely to see cross-channel marketing as a focus; 50% agreed, compared to 62% and 65% in Europe and Asia respectively.

Company respondents

Figure 15: 'Cross-channel marketing will be a key focus for us in 2015'



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

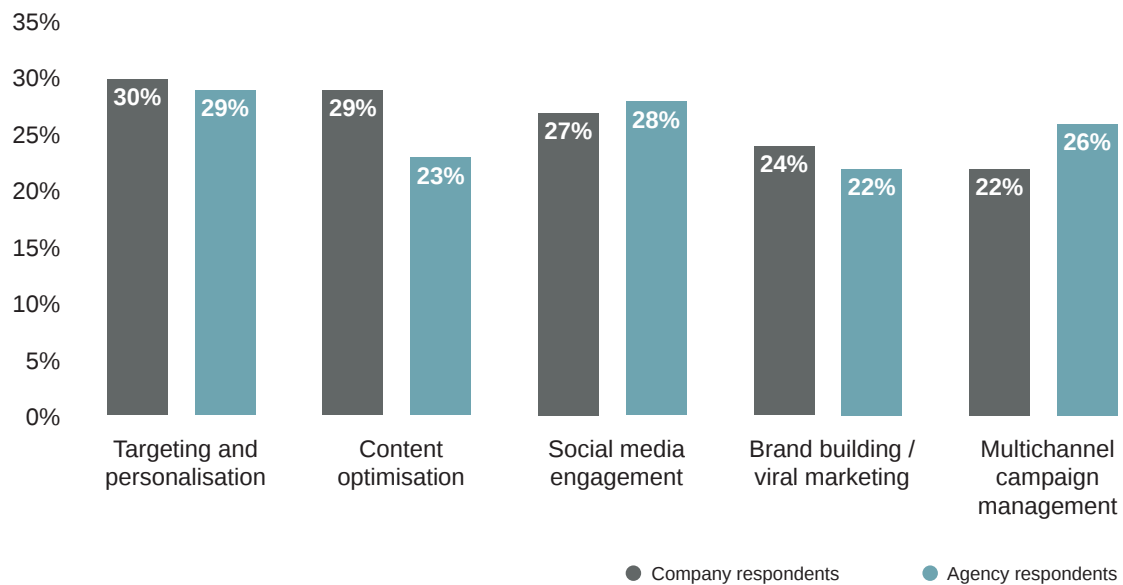
Respondents: 2,358

As has already been highlighted, effective cross-channel marketing, and particularly its measurement, relies on the ability to join up data across online and offline, and to be able to track customers across channels too. However, only 12% consider this one of their top three priorities (*Figure 11*), and it appears measurement of offline in terms of ROI is a major challenge for companies (*Figure 19*), which is an additional hindrance when pushing for joined-up marketing offline and online.



Company respondents

Figure 16: Which three digital-related areas are the top priorities for your organisation / clients in 2015?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Company respondents: 2,748
Agency respondents: 2,371

Figure 16 shows the top digital-related priorities for companies and agencies for 2015, narrowing down the much longer list shown in Figure 11 above. Multichannel campaign management is particularly prominent for agency respondents, indicating that they can see the strong potential for clients who can successfully join up their marketing.

For client-side marketers, multichannel marketing is also very much on the radar though not quite as high on the agenda as personalisation which has emerged a key trend in the digital marketing industry in recent months, reflected by nearly third of company respondents selecting it as a top priority for 2015 (Figure 16).

The chart also shows a discrepancy between companies and agencies for content optimisation, which is in the top three 2015 priorities for 29% of companies, but only selected by 23% of agencies.

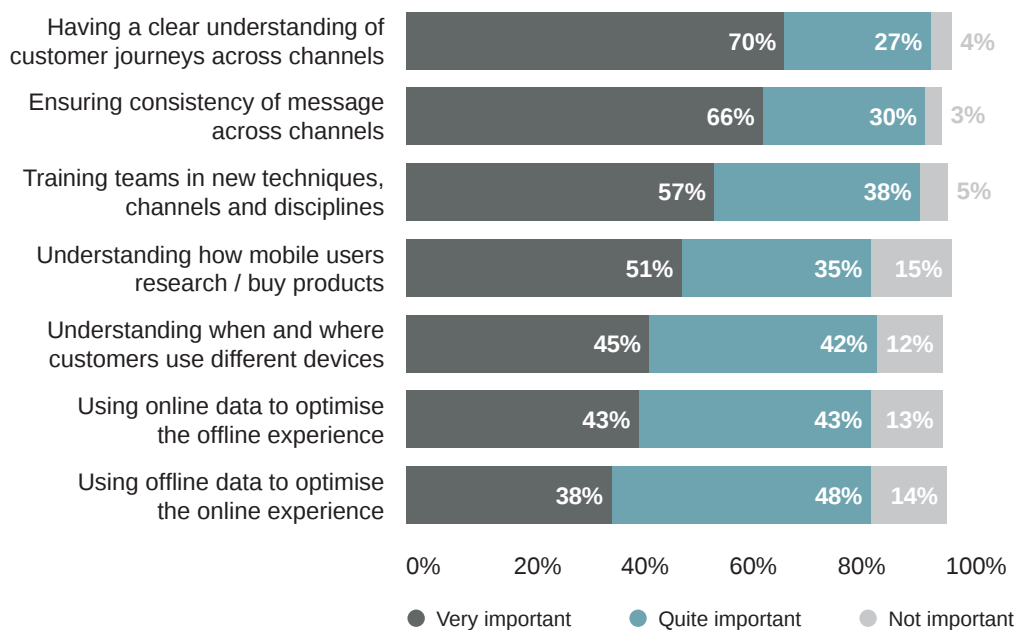
Content optimisation also saw a significant difference in the responses from B2B and B2C respondents. Almost 40% of B2B marketers selected content optimisation as a top priority for 2015, compared to only 24% of B2C marketers. This may reflect the trend within B2B marketing towards inbound marketing, producing content to gain leads, which creates more of a need for content optimisation than outbound marketing.

Almost 40% of B2B marketers selected content optimisation as a top priority for 2015



Company respondents

Figure 17: How important will the following be for your digital marketing over the next few years?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 2,192

Awareness of the importance of tracking customers across channels is evident in *Figure 17*. A significant 70% of companies cited *having a clear understanding of customer journeys across channels* as very important, with almost the same proportion seeing the *consistency of message* as very important. With consistency of experience across channels and devices an increasing expectation among consumers, understanding their journey to purchase has become essential for optimising the experience throughout.

When split by geography, the results again reflected a tendency for respondents in North America to show less of a focus on understanding cross-channel journeys. Three-quarters (76%) of respondents in both Europe and Asia saw understanding the customer journey across channels as very important, compared to 59% in North America; a difference of 17 percentage points.

It is encouraging to see that more than half of marketers understand the need for their teams to be trained in *new techniques, channels and disciplines*. A pain point experienced by marketers that has been reflected in Econsultancy reports and voiced at roundtables in recent years has been a skills shortage in the use of emerging technologies and strategies, presenting a barrier to their use. This is clearly being met in 2015 with increased training programmes to ensure that progress is not hindered by a lack of skills.

Less encouraging is the fact that only 38% see using *offline data to optimise the online experience* as being very important over the

next few years. This is somewhat surprising, given the focus that many marketers have on a seamless, omnichannel customer journey. The emergence of retailers using tactics like emailing online receipts and an increased prevalence of loyalty cards over the last 12 months has indicated a push towards combining offline and online data.

However, the results in *Figure 17* could have been swayed by pureplay online businesses, and also by the fact that the ability to combine offline and online data, and use them to complement each other, is still a fairly new and complex strategy, which the majority of companies have only just begun to attempt.



8

Data-driven marketing: from catchphrase to treasure trove

Although data has long been heralded to be a core component of a digital marketer's toolbox and some companies have been making significant strides in this area, *joining up online and offline data* will be a top-three priority during the next 12 months for only 12% of companies surveyed (*Figure 11*).

Additionally, in five years' time, big data will be an exciting opportunity for 14% of organisations, only marginally more than in 2015 (11%), as seen in *Figure 13*.

It's worth noting that European companies are seemingly playing catch-up, as they're twice as likely as their US counterparts to view big data as an exciting opportunity in five years' time.

Is data-driven marketing becoming business as usual or is it still an untapped opportunity? The chart on the next page sheds some light by uncovering key resourcing and infrastructure deficiencies. Under two-fifths (37%) of respondents indicate they have a good infrastructure in place to collect the data they need, while a similar proportion (38%) say they have the analysts they need to make sense of their data.

Further analysis revealed that organisations in the media, telecom and technology sectors are best positioned to adopt a data-driven approach to marketing, with two in five indicating they have a good infrastructure for data collection and a similar proportion saying they have the analysts they need. This compares to less than a third in many sectors.

Scarce analytical resources seem to plague European and US companies more than those based in Asia. Compared to their Asian counterparts, companies based in Europe and the US are nearly twice as likely to suggest that they don't have the analysts they need to make sense of their data.

A key theme emerging from the feedback we received in response to our open-ended questions is that most companies sit on heaps of data, but being able to turn all their data into actionable insights is something that few have been able to master.

Legacy systems are typically the first to be blamed when it comes to an inability to adopt a data-driven approach to marketing, but in-company struggles often run deeper than that. Technology can only do so much and it only becomes effective if there's a collaborative structure in place and solid processes that can support an organisation's data collection and integration. In one respondent's words, it all boils down to *"invigorating a single culture across the organisation which allows experimentation and understands the beneficial implications of data-driven marketing"*.

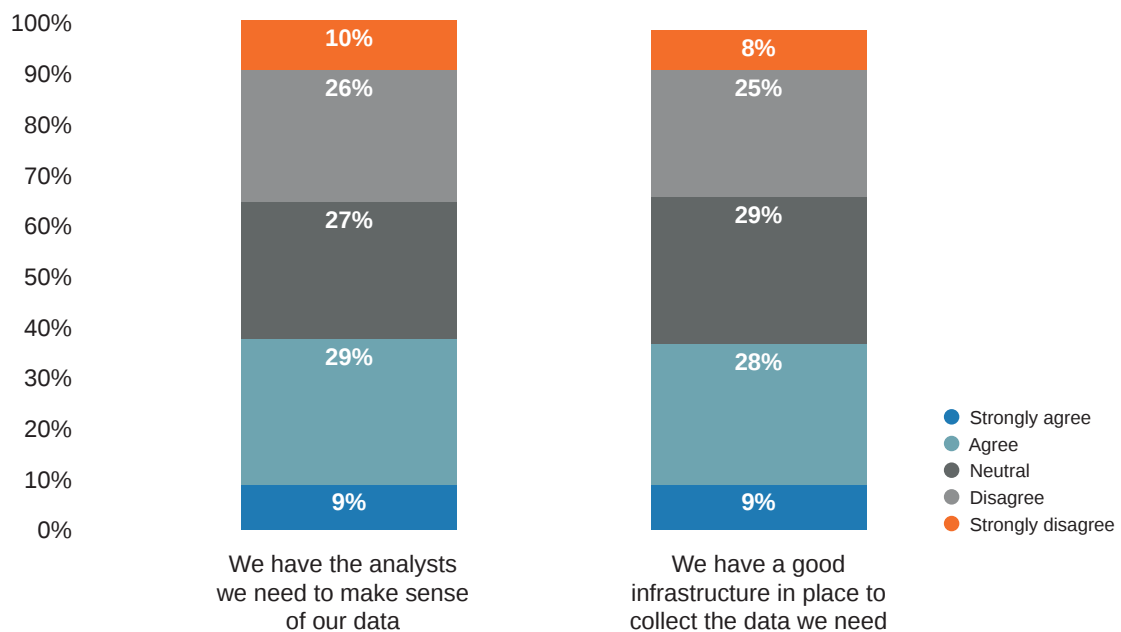
The consensus is that last year was mostly a 'toe-dipping' exercise in terms of data, whereas 2015 will be more about understanding how insights can be derived from existing information and how data can inform digital strategies.

While 'big data' has mostly been used for tactical reasons, I believe that in 2015 we will see its predictive capabilities being used for strategic work.

Survey respondent

Company respondents

Figure 18: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



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Respondents: 2,368

“Clients have embraced ‘big data’ in so far as they are getting their data collection and storage sorted, and some even have decent reporting frameworks, but I expect them to start to leverage data in more powerful and sophisticated ways moving forward.”

Survey respondent

“Our business model would benefit from the economies of scale that result from big data. There is a huge untapped potential for us.”

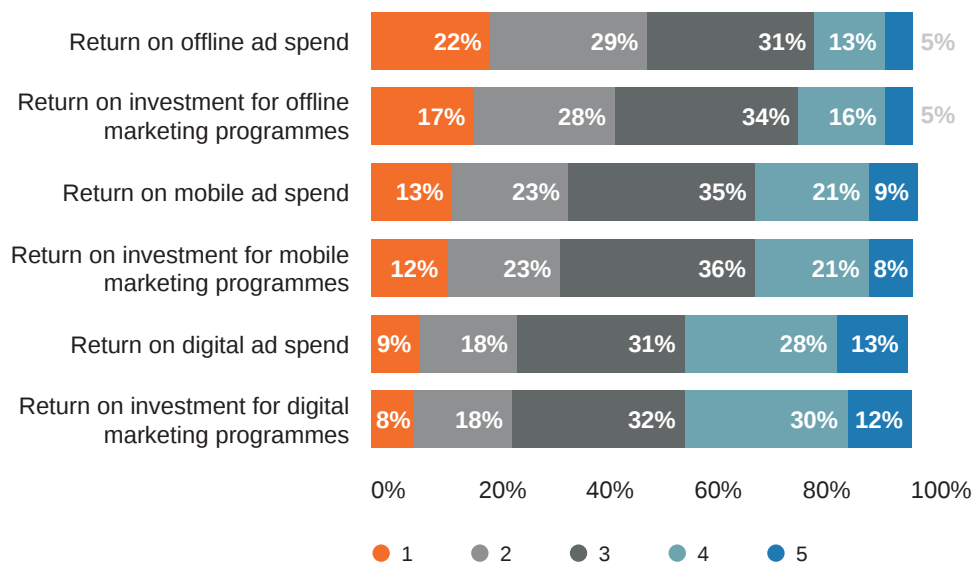
Survey respondent

9

Companies continue to grapple with ROI measurement

Company respondents

Figure 19: On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is 'Not at all confident' and 5 is 'Extremely confident', how confident are you in your organisation's ability to measure the following?



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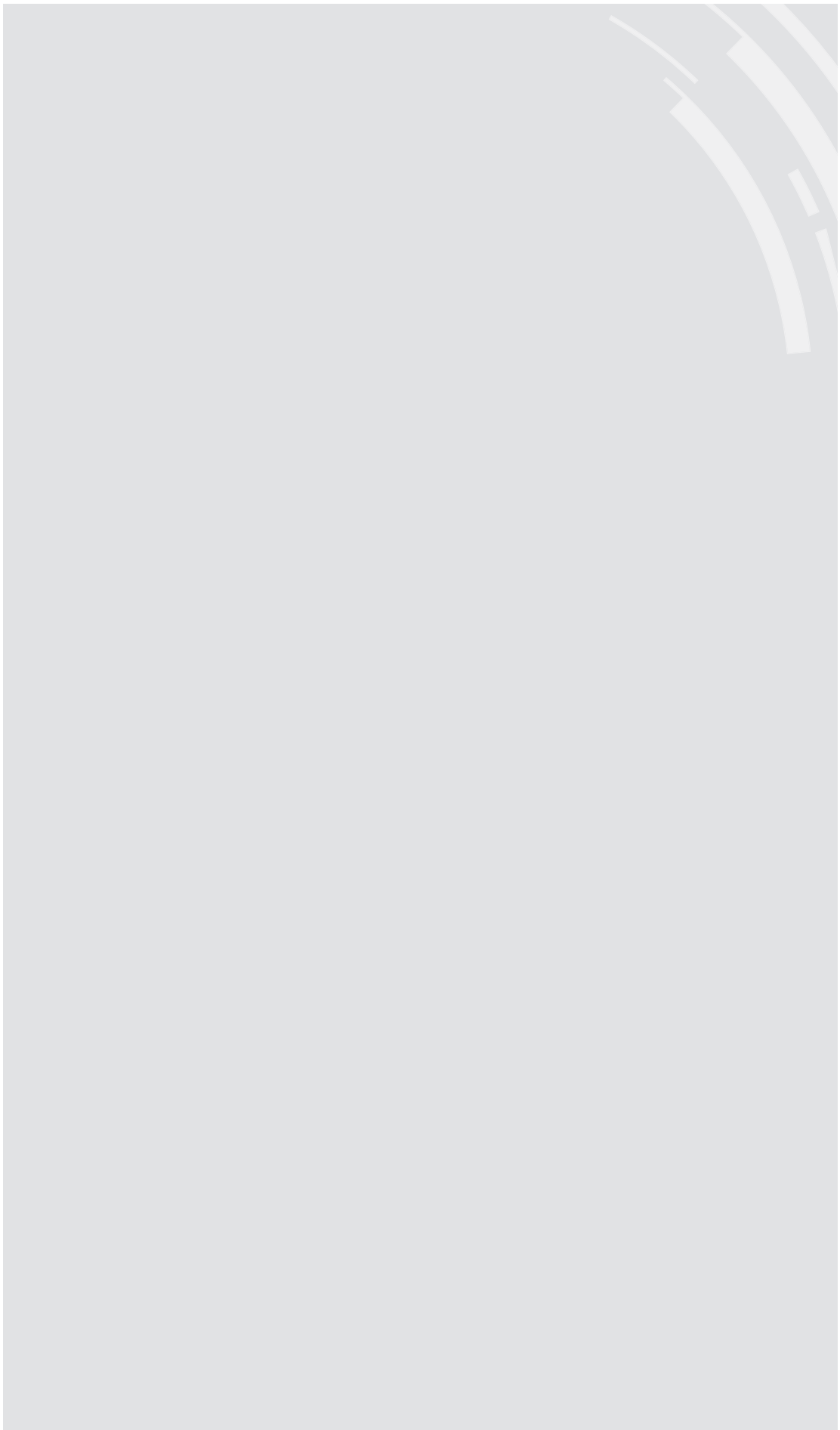
Respondents: 1,894

Measurability is a marketing imperative, whether it's customer behaviour, campaign engagement, or, arguably most importantly, return on investment. With the customer journey increasingly complex, and influencing touch points difficult to distinguish, let alone credit appropriately, measurement of ROI from different channels can suffer.

Figure 19 reflects the difficulty in tracking the impact of advertising across channels, both offline and online. Offline ad spend is understandably the most difficult to measure returns on, as reflected in almost a quarter (22%) of respondents saying they are 'not at all confident' in their ability to measure it. Confidence in digital ad

spend and digital marketing programmes is highest; 41% and 42% of respondents respectively said they were 'confident' in measuring the ROI for these.

The ability to track consumers offline to online and across devices is a challenge that has been met head-on by technology vendors in the past year, who are attempting to overcome the issue it presents to marketers. With an increased ability to measure behaviour comes an increased ability to measure ROI, and it appears marketers are seeing the rewards of tracking technology improvements. Almost 80% agreed with the statement: 'Our marketing activity will be more measurable in 2015'.



10

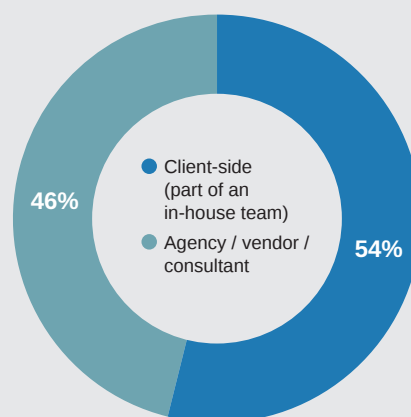
Appendix – Respondent Profiles

This Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing is based on an online survey of over 6,000 marketing, digital and ecommerce professionals, carried out between November 2014 and January 2015.

A total of 6,333 respondents took part in the survey, including 54% who are client-side marketing professionals and 46% from the supply-side (including agency marketers, consultants and those working for technology vendors or other service providers).

The following charts provide further details on the profile of survey respondents.

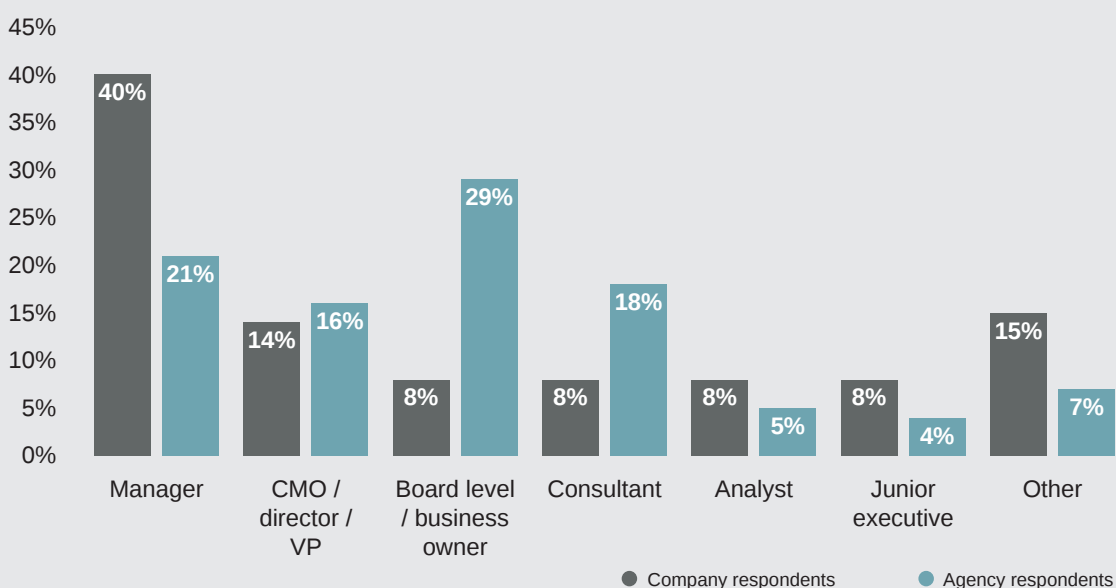
Figure 20: Which of the following best describes your company or role?



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Respondents: 6,333

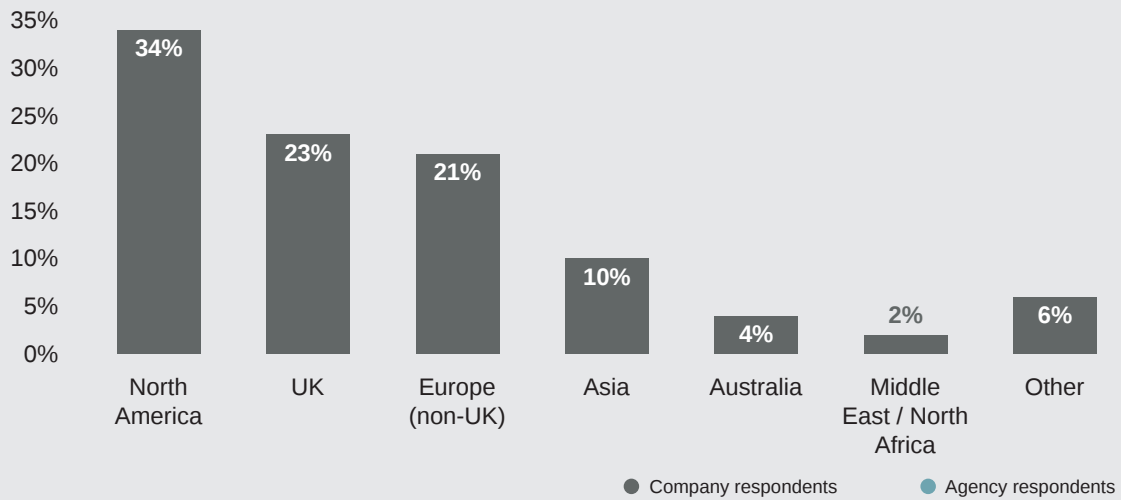
Figure 21: What best describes your job role?



Econsultancy / Adobe Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Respondents: 3,163

Figure 22: In which country / region are you (personally) based?

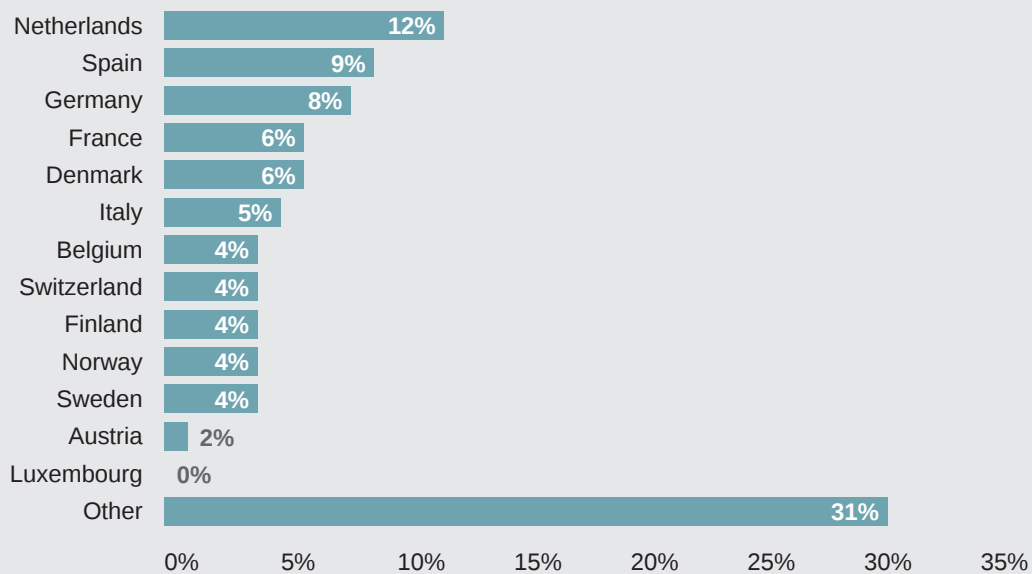


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Respondents: 5,943

Respondents based in Europe (non-UK)

Figure 23: In which of the following countries are you based?

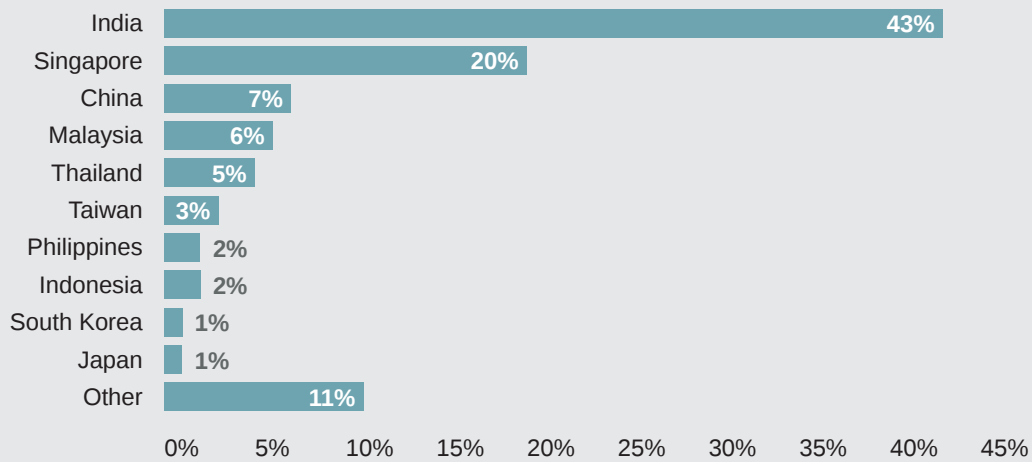


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Respondents: 1,218

Respondents based in Asia

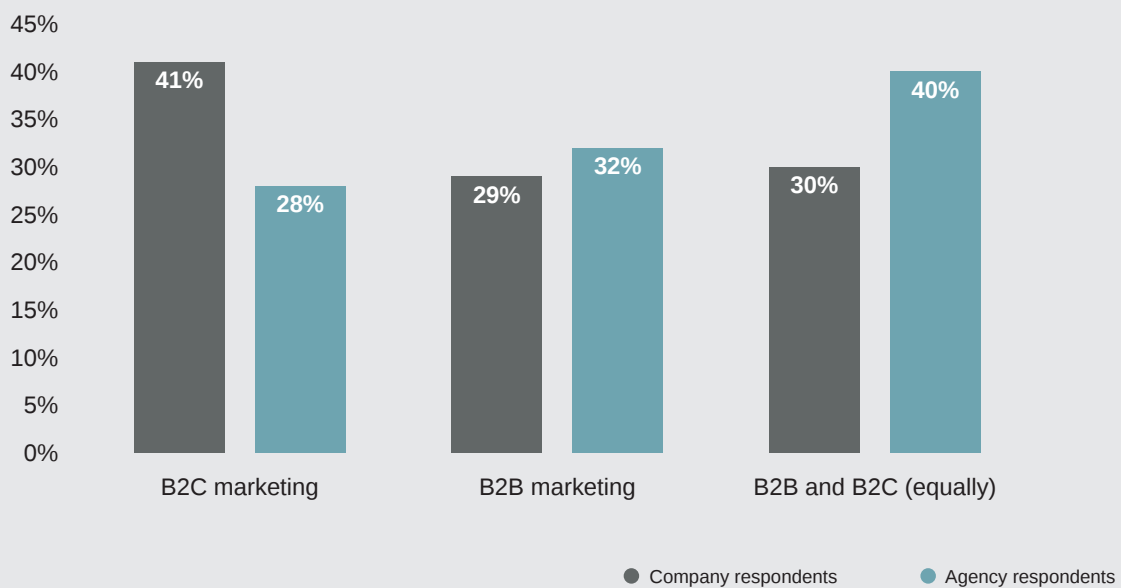
Figure 24: In which of the following countries are you based?



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Respondents: 591

Figure 25: Are you more focused on B2B or B2C marketing?

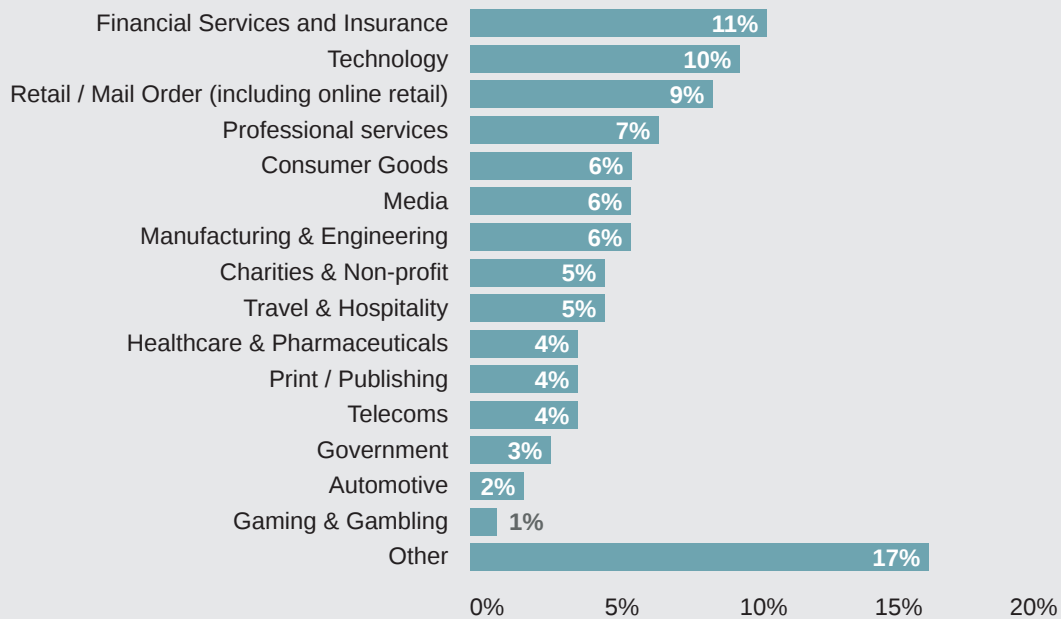


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Company respondents: 3,008
Agency respondents: 2,642

Company respondents

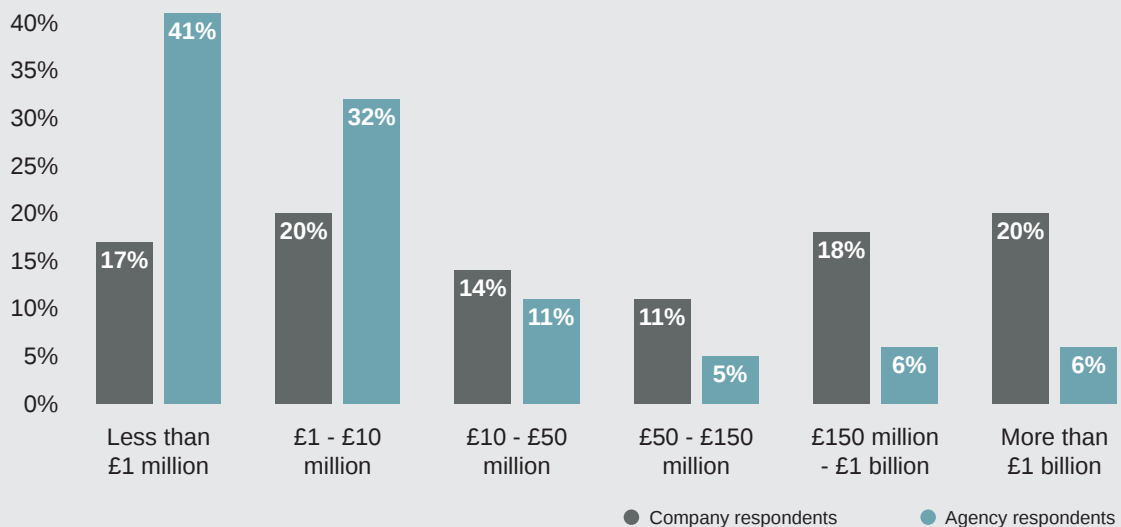
Figure 26: In which business sector is your organisation?



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Respondents: 3,016

Figure 27: What is your annual company turnover?



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Company respondents: 2,088
Agency respondents: 1,688



Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Digital Trends 2015



in association with **Adobe**



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