



THE STATE OF MARKETING 2025 | REPORT

An Examination of Digital Marketing's Future:
Assessing Digital Maturity and the Emergence of the
'AI-Assisted Marketer'

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

01

THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing is inherently complex and is expected to become even more intricate as new technologies and platforms continue to emerge. Currently, one of the main challenges for marketers is determining the best ways to leverage AI to enhance their digital marketing efforts. To assist marketers and businesses in navigating this complexity, we have identified seven essential pillars of digital marketing that are critical for future success.

In this research report, which is based on a survey of 1500 respondents, we evaluate the current and future digital marketing capabilities of businesses across these pillars. Notably, we have included a new section focused on MarTech and AI adoption to highlight trends in managing digital marketing and technology. The report offers intriguing insights, revealing significant variations in the adoption of various AI techniques that can support the role of the 'AI-assisted marketer'.

MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS:

- **Strategic Approach:** A significant number of organizations employ a strategic approach to digital marketing; however, it is noteworthy that just over one-third (38%) have not adopted such practices.
- **Capability Benchmark:** An evaluation of business capabilities across the seven pillars of digital marketing revealed that most enterprises possess limited capabilities, often scoring either a 1 (Initial) or a 2 (Managed) on a five-point scale, with an average score of 2.4. Many respondents expressed a desire for substantial improvements, indicating their intention to achieve a digital maturity level of 3 or higher by the conclusion of 2025.
- **Barriers to Increasing Digital Maturity:** The primary obstacle to enhancing digital maturity is a deficiency in human resources, as acknowledged by 40% of respondents. This is followed by insufficient investment in the integration of platforms, which was identified by 23% of participants.
- **Evaluation Techniques:** Slightly more than half of the surveyed businesses utilize fundamental evaluation methodologies such as digital marketing dashboards, defined marketing source codes, and digital experience assessments. Conversely, approximately half of the organizations do not employ these core techniques, and a majority are neglecting advanced methodologies such as Net Promoter Score (NPS), customer panels, and media attribution.
- **Continuous Optimization:** The adoption of a structured, continuous

testing program is relatively rare. Most organizations are failing to leverage digital insights for the systematic testing, learning, and enhancement of the effectiveness of digital media, experiences, content, and messaging. Only about 15% of respondents indicated that they maintain such a continuous program.

- **Media Effectiveness:** The most highly regarded channels include organic search, email marketing, marketing automation, content marketing, and organic social media.
- **Digital Experience Management:** Over 50% of respondents rated their mastery in managing websites and/or applications at level 1 or 2. The utilization of AI-driven website personalization remains surprisingly low across various sectors, at just 22%.
- **Digital Content Development:** With 63% of businesses operating at levels 1 or 2 in the current maturity assessment, it is evident that many organizations could take more proactive measures by establishing a content marketing strategy and a systematic process for evaluating and enhancing content effectiveness.
- **Generative AI Utilization:** The adoption of Generative AI has witnessed substantial growth since the previous survey, with approximately two-thirds of businesses either using it or planning to implement it. It is noteworthy that nearly half of the organizations are employing it to support planning, analysis, and reporting, yet many are still not fully capitalizing on its potential. Only 17% have formulated an AI governance policy outlining the guidelines for appropriate Generative AI usage, although there is a consensus among many that such a policy is necessary.

- **Digital Messaging Capabilities:** Despite the widespread implementation of email marketing automation, the majority of businesses rated their capabilities in this area as notably low.
- **MarTech Stacks:** Only 11% of businesses possess a well-defined Marketing Technology (MarTech) stack, which is an alarmingly small proportion. Additionally, 50% of respondents acknowledged that they do not have a structured methodology for selecting MarTech solutions.

BENCHMARK WITH THE 7 PILLARS OF EFFECTIVE MODERN MARKETING					
	1. Initial	2. Managed	3. Defined	4. Quantified	5. Optimized
1. Marketing and brand strategy	Outline business and marketing plan.	Detailed annual marketing plan. No brand plan or long-term vision.	Longer-term marketing and brand plans.	Digitally aligned integrated strategy and roadmap.	Agile business and brand strategy.
2. Digital marketing strategy	No dedicated strategy.	Outline digital plan with priority activities.	Defined annual plan and digital initiative roadmap.	90-day optimization approach.	Agile strategic approach.
3. Data and Insight	No digital KPIs or Analytics customization.	Main volume goals defined and analytics customized.	Quality goals defined. Marketing dashboards. Ad hoc customer.	Value goals defined. Use Attribution models.	Lifetime value KPIs. Predictive analytics.
4. Digital media	No plan to increase Reach. No campaign process.	Outline acquisition plan. No search, social media or PR plans or forecasts.	Detailed acquisition plan with targets forecast. Campaign process.	Integrated online and offline media plans.	Media optimized for ROI and customer lifetime value.
5. Content marketing strategy	No strategy to encourage interactions and leads.	Limited content marketing assets.	Full lifecycle content marketing strategy and assets.	Content marketing ROI define.	Content portfolio optimized.
6. Digital experience	No plan to increase Interactions, Conversion or Engagement.	Personas and journey maps defined. Ad hoc website tests.	Regular simple tests and customer feedback. Simple personalization.	Full structured CRO experiment programme. Advanced personalization.	AI-based personalization and optimization.
7. Digital messaging	Basic email promotions and newsletters.	Simple welcome strategy.	Contact automation plan across RACE.	Full lifecycle automation. Conversational messaging.	AI-optimized contact strategy.
Limited planning Basic planning Competitive planning Advanced planning Agile planning					

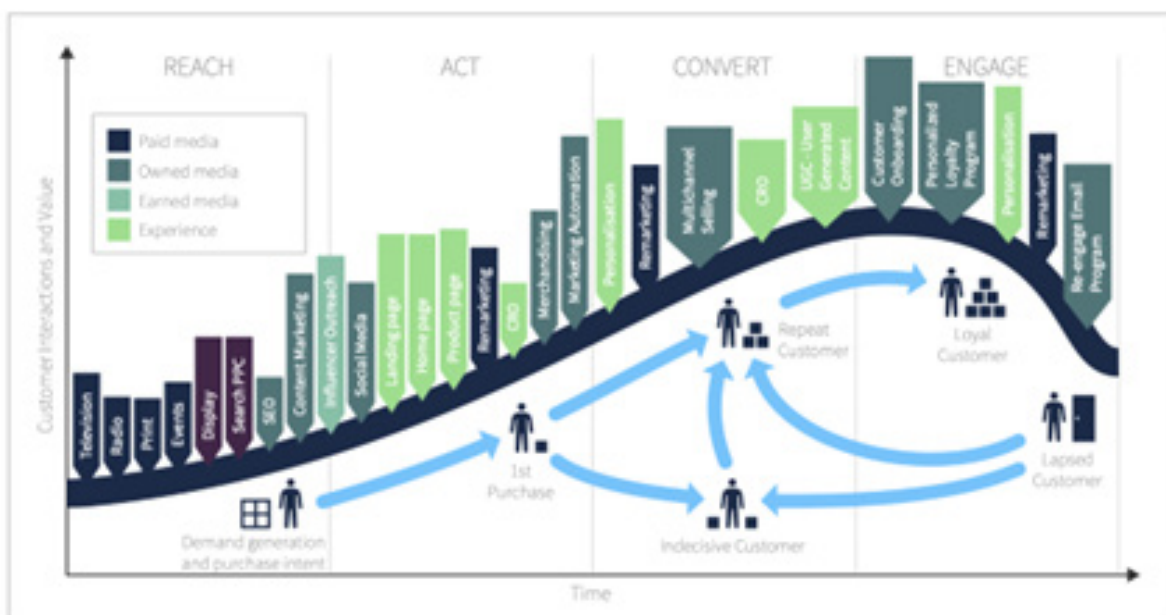
INTRODUCTION

The pillars of effective marketing

Digital marketing is inherently complex, and with the continuous emergence of new platforms, it is poised to become increasingly intricate in the future. The rapid adoption of tools such as Open AI ChatGPT and Google's AI Overviews serves as pertinent examples of this evolution.

Marketers must also navigate the complexity inherent in the multitude of channels that require monitoring within analytics frameworks, including organic and paid search, social media, display advertising, and email marketing.

The visualization of the B2B customer lifecycle by Wildnet Technologies illustrates the potential for leveraging various digital marketing channels to stimulate lead generation, nurture prospects, and facilitate purchasing decisions. Furthermore, it underscores the challenge of managing perpetually active marketing initiatives that demand continuous attention to optimize conversions amidst intense competition.



THE 7 PILLARS OF DIGITAL MARKETING

The complexity of digital marketing necessitates a review of key areas of marketing investment and the success factors that contribute to achieving returns on that investment. To streamline this process, seven pillars of digital marketing have been defined, identified as crucial for future success. This research includes an examination of how these activities are managed, incorporating insights from marketers to provide a comprehensive perspective on the future of digital marketing, applicable to various types of businesses.

In the research, marketers were asked to evaluate their capabilities and the use of AI across these pillars, which are designed to achieve specific objectives.

- **Marketing and Brand Strategy:** Aligning digital marketing investments with business and marketing strategies is essential, particularly in larger organizations. This integration helps prevent digital activities from existing in isolation.
- **Digital Marketing Strategy:** Due to the complexity and importance of digital marketing for future success, it necessitates a dedicated plan that outlines objectives, strategies, and implementation methods. This plan often encompasses investment in communications, personnel, and marketing technology, leading many larger organizations to initiate digital transformation programs.
- **Data, Insight, and Evaluation:** Best practices involve defining targets for digital contributions to the business and establishing success metrics, such as digital marketing dashboards. Enhancing customer insight quality and the marketing technology needed for data collection and analysis is also critical.
- **Media:** There is a growing emphasis on customer acquisition through the integration of digital with traditional paid, owned, and earned media.

- **Content Marketing:** The development of quality content is important for enhancing the effectiveness of digital media, user experience, and messaging. Dedicated plans and control processes for content marketing can support various modern marketing activities.
- **Experience:** A continuous focus on improving customer journeys across websites, mobile applications, offline touchpoints, and relevant mixed reality innovations is essential for engaging potential customers and converting interest into leads and sales.
- **Messaging:** Engaging and persuading audiences through direct or “conversational” communication channels—such as email, mobile notifications, and chat—remains effective. Structured approaches to automated, personalized, and campaign messaging can enhance their effectiveness.

Research aim and methodology

- At Wildnet Technologies we believe that successful marketers look beyond chasing every latest technology innovation, instead developing a more strategic, yet agile, data-driven approach based on optimizing communications for key customer touchpoints. So, in this research we wanted to go beyond reviewing the digital marketing tactics deployed and explore the strategic approaches businesses take to manage the transformation needed to improve the commercial contribution of digital marketing integrated with all marketing activities.
- To assist marketers and businesses in navigating the complexities of the digital landscape, we have identified seven essential pillars of digital marketing that are critical for achieving future success. This research report, which is based on a comprehensive survey of 1,500 respondents, examines the current and prospective digital marketing capabilities of businesses across these pillars. Furthermore, the report includes a new section dedicated to the adoption of marketing technology (MarTech) and artificial intelligence (AI), aimed at highlighting trends in the management of digital marketing and technology.

ABOUT WILDNET TECHNOLOGIES

Welcome to Wildnet Technologies: Your Gateway to Advanced Digital Marketing and IT Outsourcing Services. With a track record of 17+ years in the industry, we've successfully delivered 660+ Projects, Saved 60% for US Clients and 40% for domestic clients while deploying 8000+ resources, and 350+ manpower!

We provide,

- Digital Marketing services to domestic clients via best-in-class SEO (SEO, Ecommerce SEO, Local SEO, Link Building, Guest posting, SMO, ASO), PPC, SMM, Programmatic ads, and more.
- White Label services via top-notch white label SEO, white label PPC, white label Guest Posting, white label Web Development, and more for marketing agencies in the UK, USA, and more.
- Design and Development Services, we excel at creating custom application development that's precisely tailored to meet your unique requirements. Rely on us for complete solutions that include customized web and mobile applications, SaaS products, AI-enabled product development, and continuous maintenance.
- IT Staffing Services (Staff Augmentation), we take pride in providing highly skilled developer resources within 48 hours. Our minimum requirement of 5+ years (exp) ensures that you get the best talent for your projects, whether in the domestic or foreign market.

Connect with us @ <https://www.wildnettechnologies.com/> and build or revamp the organization of your dreams!

SURVEY RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Marketing and brand strategy

- In light of the increasing significance of digital marketing for various organizations, it is imperative to adopt a strategic approach. This ensures that digital marketing initiatives are appropriately prioritized, cost-effective, and seamlessly integrated with the overarching marketing and brand strategy. A straightforward criterion for assessing the presence of a strategic approach is the existence of a clearly defined digital marketing plan.
- It is noteworthy that approximately 42% of businesses lack a formal digital marketing strategy while simultaneously engaging in digital marketing activities. Over the course of more than fifteen years of research into the adoption of strategic planning, it has been observed that the proportion of organizations without a structured approach has remained relatively constant. This indicates the presence of significant barriers to the integration of strategic planning within organizations.

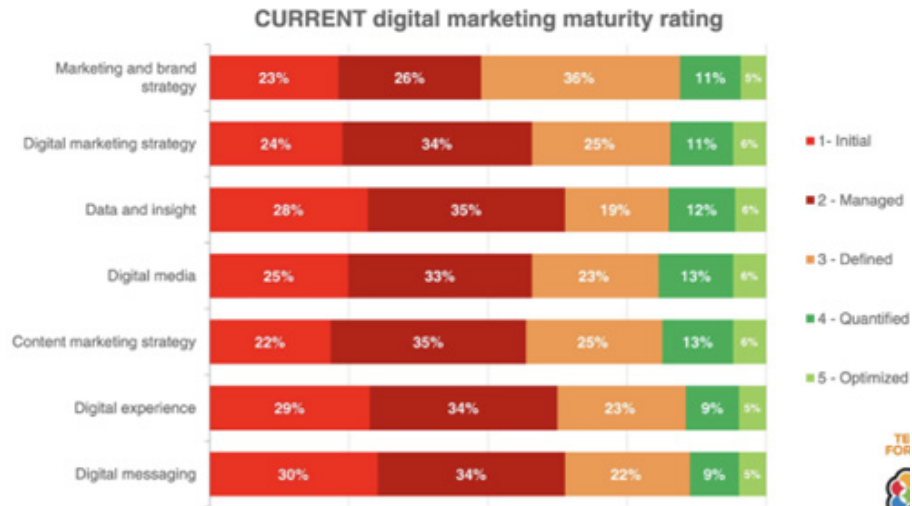
Does your organization have a clearly-defined digital marketing strategy?



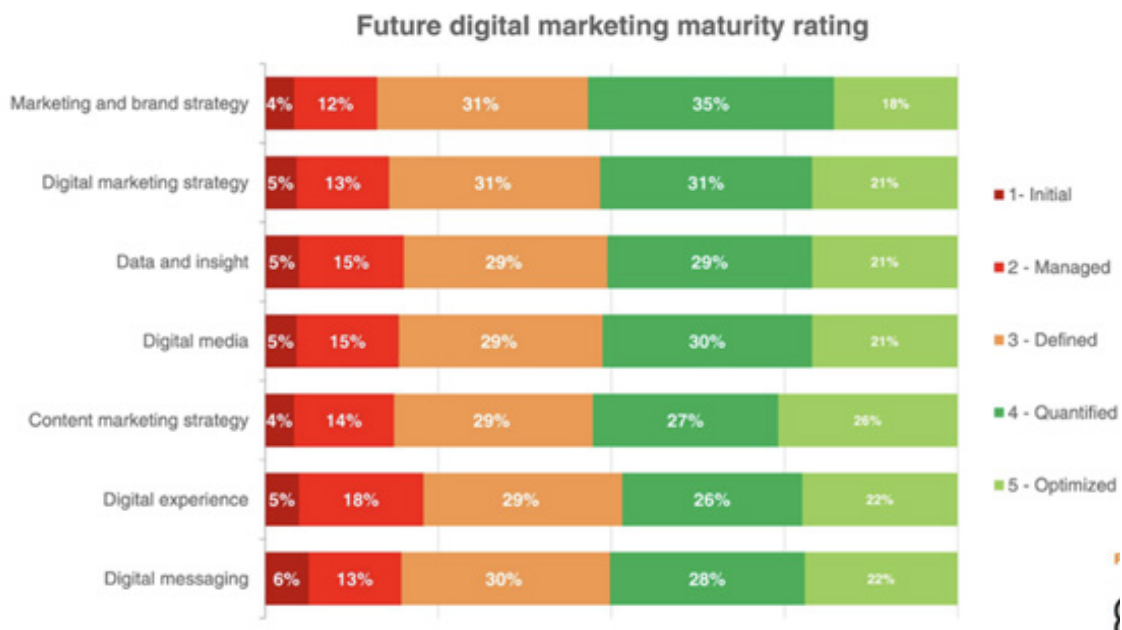
- On a positive note, it is encouraging that more than half of businesses have established a strategic framework for their marketing efforts. The ultimate objective should ideally be to adopt an integrated approach; however, it can be practical, particularly for larger organizations, to first develop a dedicated digital strategy. This initial focus can facilitate the justification for increased investment in digital marketing prior to its eventual integration into a broader strategic framework.

2. Digital marketing strategy and governance

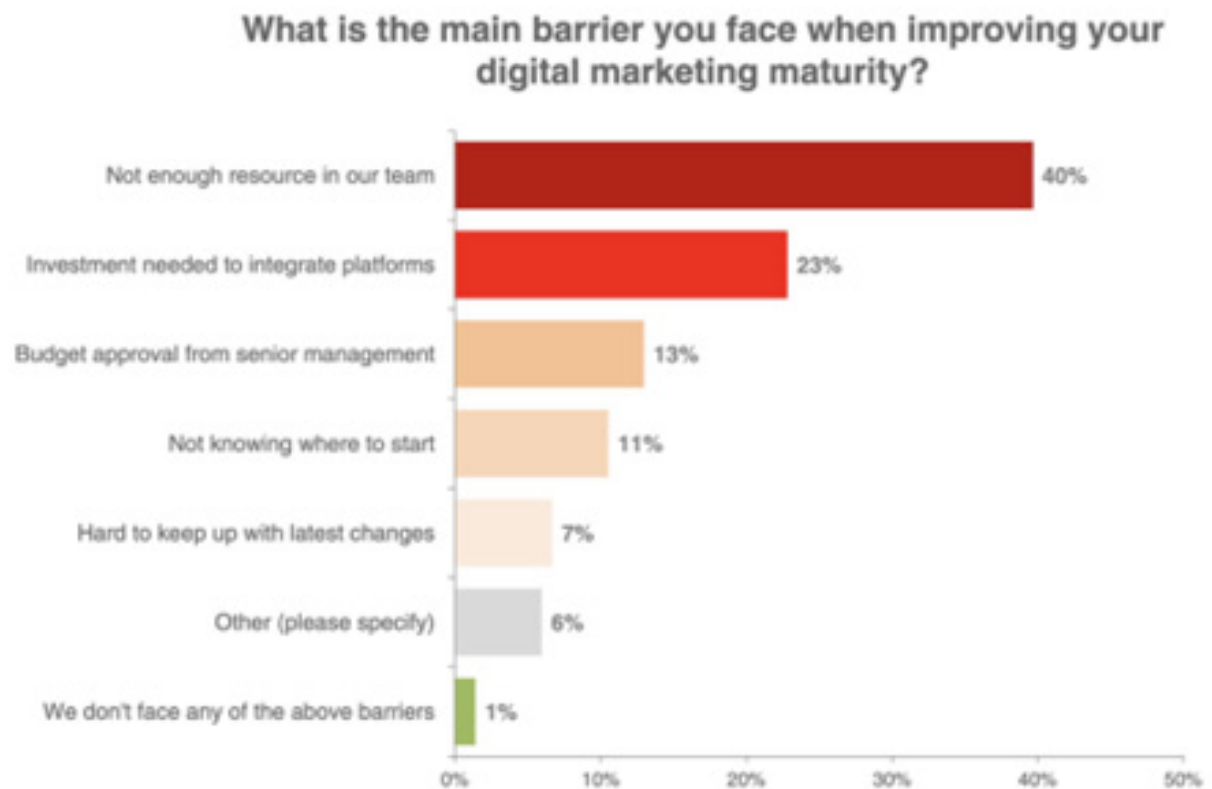
- The extent to which companies can harness the potential of digital channels is contingent upon their possession of the appropriate capabilities necessary to manage all relevant digital touchpoints. The capabilities associated with the seven pillars of marketing success may be assessed for various businesses on a scale from one (low maturity) to five (maximum maturity) utilizing the digital maturity benchmark evaluation presented in the Executive Summary (p. 4) of this report.
- Data derived from our survey indicates that, across all pillars, approximately fifty percent of businesses are classified at lower maturity levels of one to two, with an average rating of 2.4. This observation highlights a substantial opportunity for improvement within these organizations.
- For small and medium-sized enterprises with constrained resources, we propose that a maturity level of three serves as a suitable benchmark to enhance competitive positioning. Conversely, for organizations that derive significant digital contributions where online leads and sales are critical to their success, it is recommended that maturity levels of four and five be pursued, contingent upon a compelling case for investment being established.



- To assess how businesses intend to enhance their capabilities in the future, we requested respondents to conduct a similar analysis for the year 2025. The significant disparity observed between the two charts indicates that many enterprises operating at levels 1 and 2 recognize the necessity for improvement in their capabilities and are planning to make investments to attain a higher level in the upcoming year.



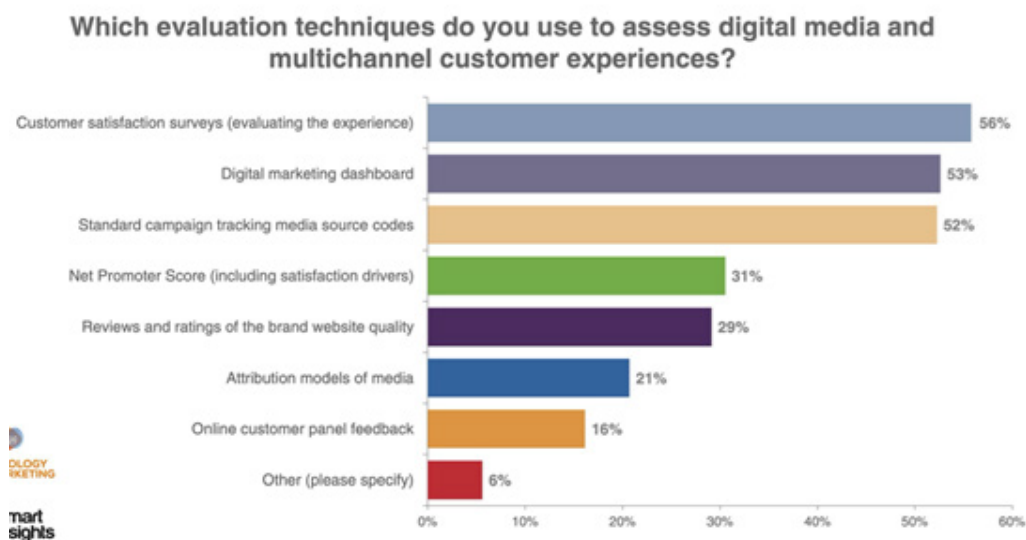
- Naturally, it is human nature to strive for improvement; however, many businesses may face barriers that hinder significant progress. To identify these challenges, we inquired about the main obstacles that could limit advancements in digital maturity. We specifically asked about the single most important barrier to highlight the most significant challenges.



- You can see that insufficient people resources is clearly the biggest barrier, followed by investment into integrating platforms. This suggests a need to gain buy-in from budget- holders. Plus, despite advances in AI, human resources are still needed to plan, manage, and optimize the complex always-on lifecycle and campaign digital communications we highlighted in the Introduction of this report.

3. Data, insight, forecasting and evaluation

- Wildnet Technologies utilizes an insight-based, data-driven approach to enhance digital maturity by leveraging insights derived from digital analytics and research on digital experiences. The RACE Growth System is employed to establish targets for leads, sales, and profitability, which are informed by detailed forecasts based on channel conversion models. To assess the adoption of data-driven approaches among businesses, a survey was conducted regarding various evaluation techniques for measuring digital media and multichannel experiences.



- Just over half of businesses are utilizing fundamental evaluation techniques, including digital marketing dashboards, defined marketing source codes, and digital experience assessments. This indicates that approximately half of businesses are not employing these core techniques, resulting in a significant number missing out on additional useful methods such as Net Promoter Score (NPS), customer panels, and media attribution.

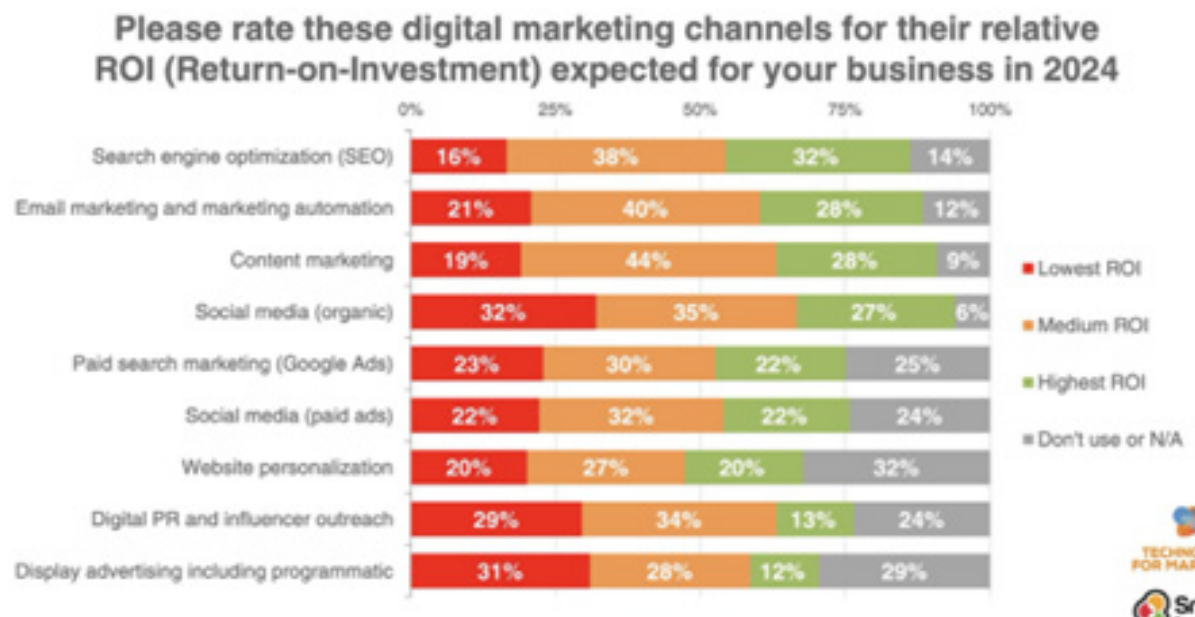
- To evaluate the extent to which insights are employed for testing, learning, and improving the effectiveness of digital media, experiences, content, and messaging, marketers were asked to categorize their testing approaches for each area. The level of testing appears to be consistent across all four pillars.



- The primary observation derived from this chart is that the implementation of a continuous and structured testing program is relatively infrequent, notwithstanding the frequently highlighted advantages of digital media being “the most measurable.” Commendations are due to the fewer than 20% of companies that have established a continuous program, as well as to the approximately 50% of organizations that engage in testing at least on an occasional basis.

4. Digital media

- There exists a diverse array of digital platforms available for reaching and engaging audiences; however, it is imperative to streamline these options when formulating a media strategy. This approach enables the identification of primary channels, which can then be assessed through Google Analytics by utilizing various values of utm_medium.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of different marketing channels, we conducted a survey asking marketers to assess these channels across three categories of return on investment (ROI). The resulting analysis was organized by the channels that received the highest ROI ratings.
- The survey results indicate that businesses rate organic search, email marketing, marketing automation, content marketing, and social media as the most effective strategies, underscoring the continued relevance of inbound marketing. In addition, paid media approaches, including paid search and paid social media, are not far behind, with approximately fifty percent of businesses reporting a high or medium

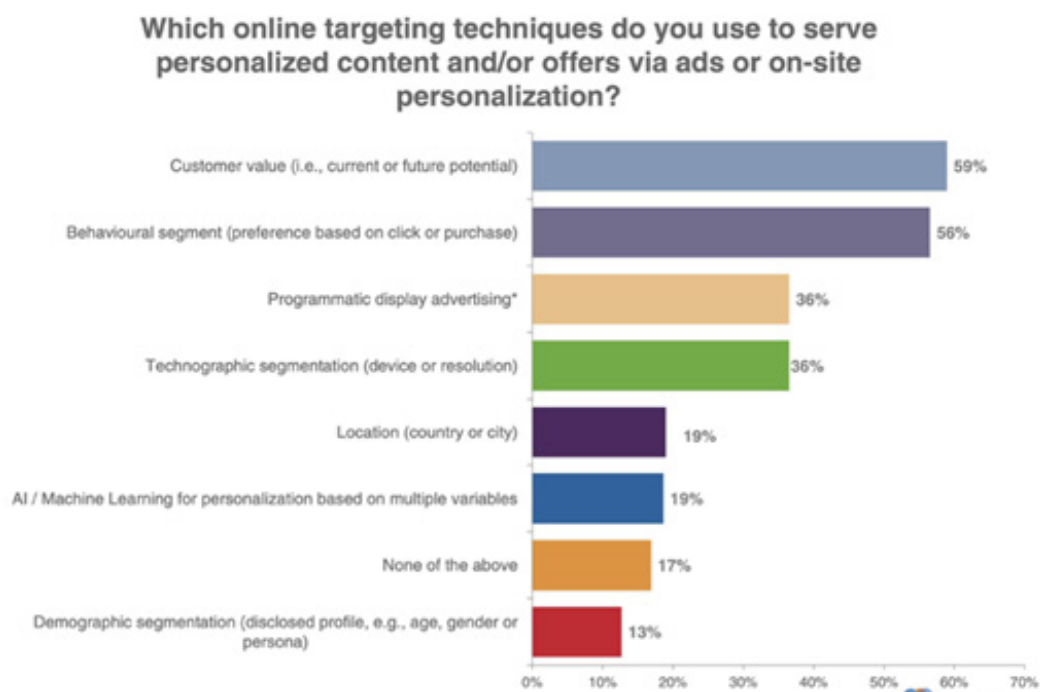


- return on investment (ROI) from these methods. Conversely, digital public relations and display advertising demonstrate the lowest ROI; however, these channels remain essential for brands targeting markets characterized by low levels of search intent or where social media engagement presents challenges.

5. Digital experiences

- The current maturity of managing websites and applications has been rated at levels 1 or 2 by more than 50% of respondents, indicating that many businesses require significant improvement in this area. This observation is further supported by the assessment of continuous optimization, which revealed that approximately half of the businesses surveyed do not engage in any form of website testing.
- The prior evaluation of marketing channels included website personalization, which is not strictly classified as a channel. It is somewhat unexpected that website personalization received a relatively low rating in the previous analysis, potentially due to the high costs associated with the necessary marketing technology to implement it effectively. For the purposes of measurement, it may be beneficial to consider the website as a distinct channel. For instance, at Wildnet Technologies, we utilize conversational marketing tools such as Intercom and OptInMonster to engage with audiences and present our templates for marketers. The measurement of these interactions is integrated into Google Analytics 4, enabling us to analyze how engagement with these channels influences the customer journey toward purchase.

- To obtain further insights on personalization and additional methods for delivering more relevant messages throughout customer journeys, we inquired of participants regarding the techniques they employ. Fundamental targeting based on segmentation factors, including demographics, location, behavior, and value, is widely adopted. In contrast, the use of AI-based targeting was surprisingly low, with only 19% of respondents indicating its application.



6. Content marketing

- We have identified content marketing as a fundamental element of effective digital marketing, as it serves to cohesively integrate and enhance all digital strategies. Thus, it is imperative to adopt a proactive approach to managing content as a valuable resource and asset within the organization. Consequently, it is essential to allocate sufficient resources to assess content effectiveness throughout the

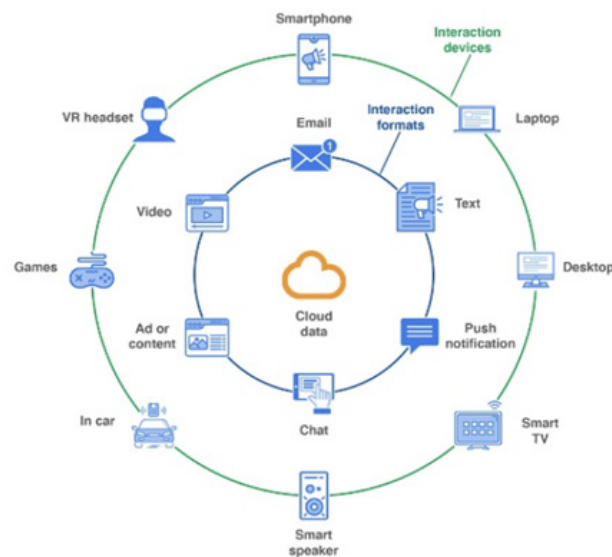
journey, prioritize initiatives, and offer recommendations for future content enhancements. Given that 57% of businesses are categorized at levels 1 or 2 according to the current maturity assessment, this indicates that numerous organizations have the potential to adopt a more proactive stance by developing a comprehensive content marketing strategy and implementing a systematic process for evaluating and improving content effectiveness.

- Moreover, as many businesses explore the use of Generative AI, particularly large language models such as GPT for content creation, we have included an analysis of the applications of Generative AI in the concluding section of this report.

7. Messaging

- Digital messaging techniques are significant tools for brands, enabling direct interaction with individuals to provide personalized communications informed by insights regarding individual customers or groups with similar characteristics. These insights are typically stored in the cloud or within various databases of a company. The accompanying visual encapsulates the diverse array of online messaging techniques available for audience engagement.
- Email marketing continues to be an essential channel, with the Radicati Group projecting that the global number of email users, encompassing both business and consumer segments, will increase from over 4.3 billion in 2023 to over 4.8 billion by 2027. They underscore that email remains the most widespread form of electronic communication for both business and consumer users, positioning it as a critical technique alongside mobile text messaging, push notifications, and other emerging communication formats.

- The efficacy of email marketing and other messaging strategies, such as mobile push notifications, relies significantly on the marketing technology that integrates various systems, including web profiling and email tracking. The increasing adoption of Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) among larger enterprises highlights the growing importance of collecting insights regarding the customer journey, which can be leveraged to deliver more relevant and targeted communications while adhering to privacy regulations.

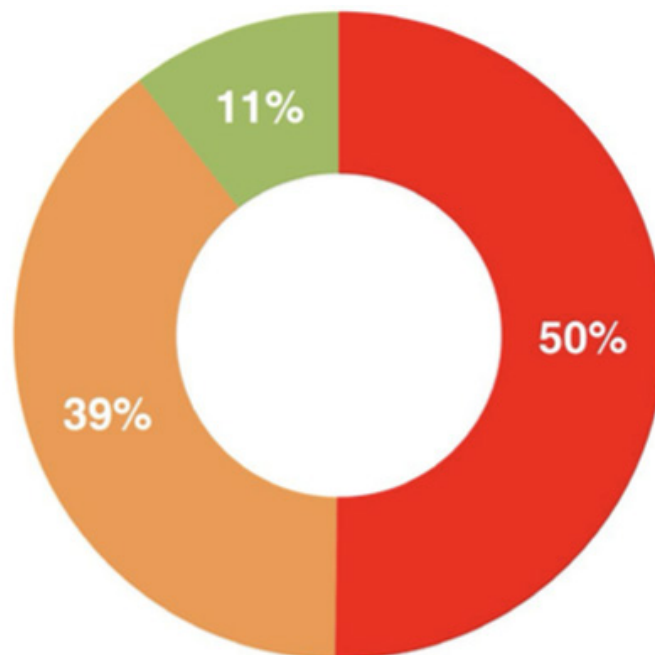


8. MarTech stacks and AI adoption by businesses

- Achieving success in messaging, media, and digital experiences necessitates the careful selection of the optimal marketing technology to establish an effective MarTech stack. Our MarTech infographic delineates potential tools available for the management of lifecycle marketing activities.
- The selection of the most pertinent MarTech presents a significant challenge due to the overwhelming array of options available to support various stages of the customer lifecycle and the practical difficulties associated with integrating insights from each tool.

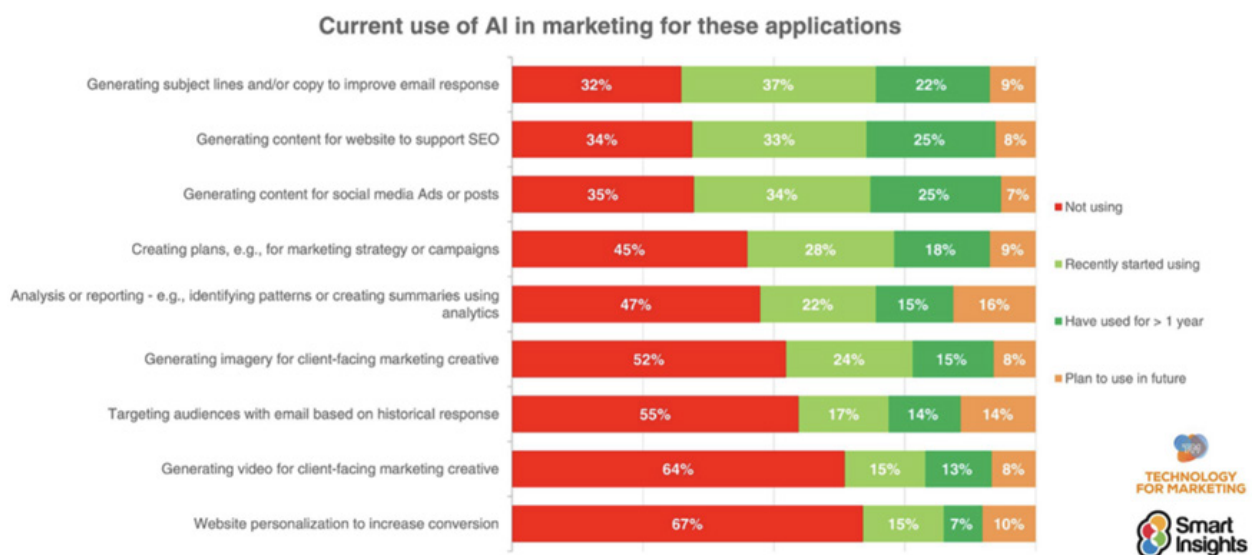
Additionally, consideration must be given to achieving Return on Marketing Technology (RoMT) investment.

- Within our research, we did not evaluate specific MarTech solutions; instead, we inquired about the clarity of the respondents' approaches to selecting MarTech. The findings revealed that a mere 11% of businesses possess a well-defined MarTech stack, which is a remarkably small proportion. This statistic is perhaps unsurprising given the plethora of constantly evolving MarTech Software as a Service (SaaS) options.



- We don't have a structured approach to selecting and integrating MarTech
- We have significant gaps in our ideal MarTech stack
- Our MarTech stack is well-defined and we review opportunities to refine

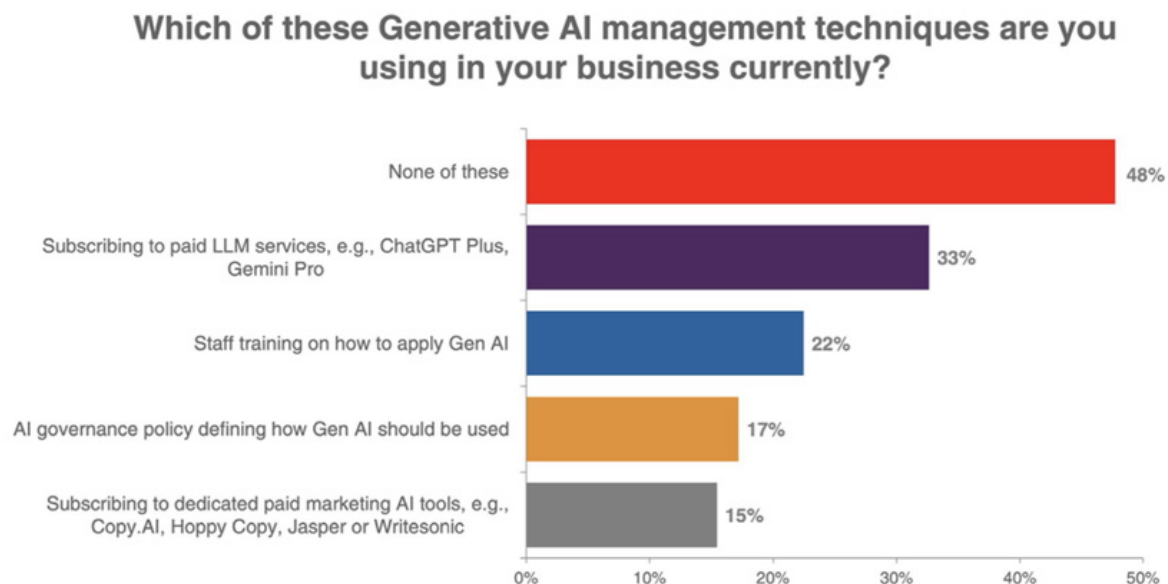
- In this report, we explored a wide range of applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing, highlighting its potential to augment the capabilities of the 'AI-assisted marketer' in various capacities beyond Generative AI for copywriting. Notably, the most prevalent applications of AI pertain to supporting copywriting for email marketing, organic search, and social media, with over half of the respondents utilizing it for these purposes.



- The subsequent most favored applications involve the creation of strategic plans, analysis, and reporting. The utilization of Generative AI and video content trails slightly, potentially indicating either insufficient quality or a preference for collaboration with established suppliers.
- We recommend our resource, the AI for Marketing Learning Path, which offers both strategic insights and practical guidance on utilizing AI for copywriting. This resource includes numerous examples of templated prompting methodologies that can be implemented in ChatGPT.

The widespread adoption of AI necessitates addressing essential questions regarding its management and oversight. For instance:

- How is the copy tailored to align with the brand's tone of voice, such as through the use of Custom Instructions in ChatGPT?
 - Who is responsible for verifying the quality of the copy, and what criteria are deemed acceptable?
 - What tools are provided for this purpose?
 - Is there an established governance policy to review these activities?
- In this year's report, we also examined the management practices employed for Generative AI. One-third of businesses have subscribed to paid services, indicating that organizations recognize the advantages of such services, which offer enhanced functionality and more advanced Large Language Models. Conversely, the use of dedicated AI services for marketing remains relatively uncommon, at approximately 15%.
 - The application of training and the development of a governance policy are also infrequent. We assert that it is crucial for businesses of all sizes to establish a comprehensive document that outlines the processes, tools, and best practices associated with AI usage to ensure effective communication.



SUMMARY

The realm of digital marketing is renowned for its dynamic nature, characterized by rapid transformations and constant innovations. With an influx of new platforms and advanced AI tools entering the market, it is clear that the pace of change is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future. To maintain a competitive edge and ensure the success of your business, it is essential to dedicate time to developing a comprehensive and strategic marketing plan. This approach will enable you to fully leverage the myriad opportunities available to foster growth and address the ever-changing preferences and expectations of your customers.

While building a robust MarTech (marketing technology) stack is instrumental in facilitating a seamless omnichannel experience for your customers, this survey underscores a critical insight: the importance of investing in human resources. The expertise and creativity that skilled marketing professionals bring to the table are invaluable, not only now but also for navigating the future landscape of digital marketing. Their ability to interpret data, craft compelling messages, and connect with audiences on a deeper level cannot be overlooked in our technology-driven age. We trust that this report has provided you with valuable insights to evaluate your current marketing initiatives and to identify key areas where you can strategically allocate time and resources to enhance your business operations.

At Wildnet Technologies, we pride ourselves on our extensive array of resources and expertise designed to support you in developing a robust digital marketing strategy. We can assist you in optimizing your marketing tactics, elevating your team's skill set, and ultimately driving sustainable growth for your business in this ever-evolving digital landscape.



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