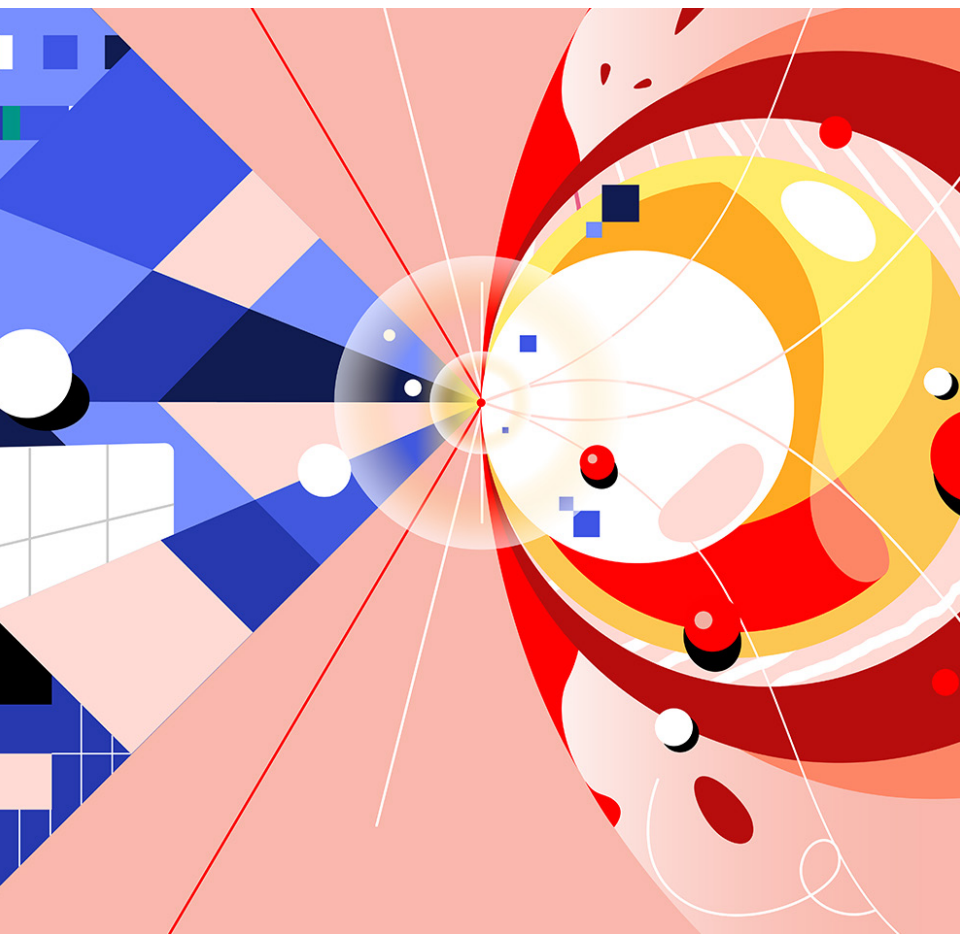




The future of marketing is creative.

How creativity can give purpose to intelligence—
and transform your business into an experience powerhouse.



In 2009, the average person consumed nearly 34GB of information daily [according to researchers at the University of California-San Diego](#). Over the last decade years, we've added content and channels in an exponential fashion. Twitter feeds, TikTok videos, Instagram stories, WhatsApp messages, Slack channels—all continually refreshing, all begging for our attention. In a world where terabytes have replaced gigabytes, 34GB sounds like a digital detox.

As it makes us smarter, all this information can make us slower. As insights sharpen, we can often be paralyzed by an infinite set of customer data. For modern marketers, every conversation about artificial intelligence and machine learning includes the realization that we're drowning in data—just look at this [mind-blowing infographic](#) by marketing technology blogger Scott Brinker.

Experts have even come up with names for the condition—"infobesity," "infoxication," "information anxiety disorder." All that said, there's hope. And it comes from a trusted—if forgotten—source: humans and their endless capacity for creative problem solving.

An internet minute

[In 2019, a single minute on the internet](#) included the following:



694,444 hours
of content streamed on Netflix



347,222 users
scrolled Instagram



2.1 million Snaps
created on Snapchat



1 million
Twitch viewers online



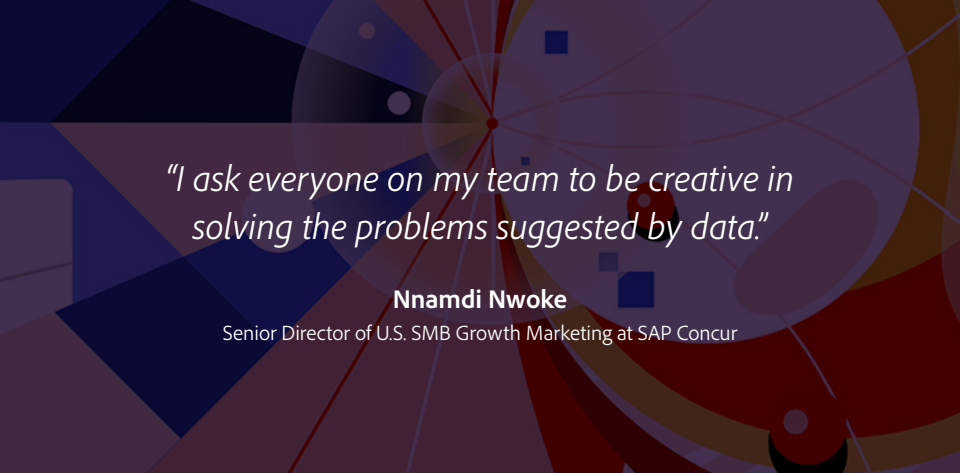
188 million
emails sent

Source: Visual Capitalist

To help us understand this new landscape, we surveyed more than 5,000 consumers and almost 2,000 marketers globally. The results—shared throughout this article—confirm the challenge most face every day.

For example, Nnamdi Nwoke, senior director of U.S. SMB growth marketing at SAP Concur, doesn't have to check his phone to know what waits. There'll be emails, status reports, analytics dashboards, social media tallies, sales figures, industry newsletters, and probably a few animated GIFs.

Nnamdi—a creative thinker who grew up drawing comic books and started his career as a designer—manages the overload as well as anyone.



"I ask everyone on my team to be creative in solving the problems suggested by data."

Nnamdi Nwoke

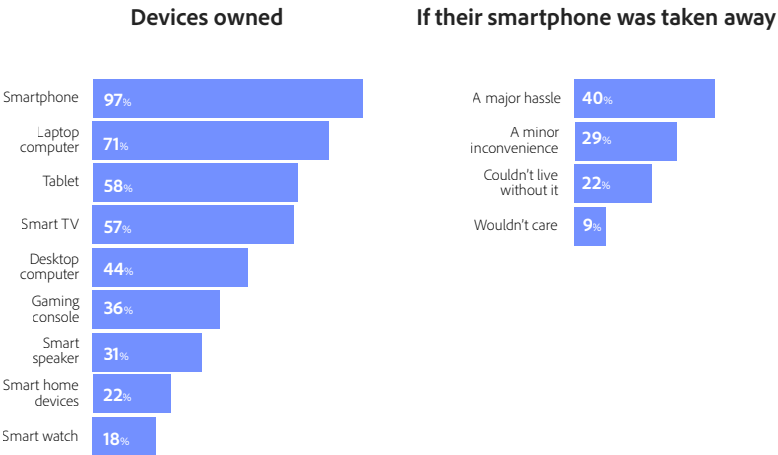
Senior Director of U.S. SMB Growth Marketing at SAP Concur

He's developed a system to prioritize, digest, and respond—but still spends two or three hours each day working to understand the waves of data that crash on his desk. There's just so much information.

Like most of us, Nnamdi worries about the impact of so much information. He turns off his emails and blocks his calendar to help guard his time and to focus on the relationship between data and his KPIs. Beyond that, he stresses the value of creativity. "I ask everyone on my team to be creative in solving the problems suggested by data," he explains. "Before every meeting, I want to know that my team has connected with other departments and gone past their own skills and opinions."

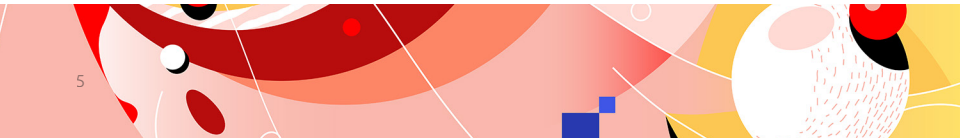
*People are attached to all sorts of devices.
More than 60% of U.S. consumers say
that not having a smartphone would be a
major disruption to their lifestyle.*

While the robots and the algorithms amass quantities of information that would blow the minds of data analysts from two generations ago, it's human creativity that will save the day. Creativity gives purpose to intelligence. It absorbs data and then uncovers insights. Creativity powers transformation. And transformation yields impactful and sustainable experiences for your customers.



Source: Adobe and Advanis

It's time to reconsider. It's time to find the common ground between the overwhelming data of the digital age and the wide-eyed imagination of creators, makers, and dreamers.





Information, intelligence, and ingenuity

Common ground between data and creativity is not as uncommon as you might think. For example, in March 2019, two unlikely speakers addressed a room of tech-savvy innovators—agents [Nyssa Straatveit](#) and [Jacob Eastham of the Central Intelligence Agency](#). Surprisingly, their topic was not intelligence, but creativity. Following recent assessments that the agency was suffering from a failure of imagination, the intelligence community has implemented creativity-focused training methods. In some exercises, teams embrace the inner wolf—wandering literally and figuratively in the dark and the unknown—and in others, they ask WoMBAT (or What Might Be All The...?) questions before developing strategies and plans.

The CIA learned what every business needs to know: information alone is not intelligence. Without the creativity to make data actionable, information has negligible impact. The world's most complicated spreadsheet, deepest database, or most stunning data visualization is not going to change your business. And it certainly won't deliver the rich experiences your customers crave.

While machine learning and AI can automate repetitive and mundane tasks, the insights you need come from the full spectrum of intelligence and a seamless integration with creativity.

Data and creativity have always been two sides of the same coin. DaVinci studied art along with physics. And Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata is not just a piano piece—it's a mathematical expression.

Your ability to leverage AI while employing soft skills (empathy, teamwork, problem solving) is key to moving beyond information and developing an intelligence practice built on creativity. Forward-thinking organizations might even consider the [rise of the chief intelligence officer](#)—and a shift in CIO responsibilities.





The sweet spot

Becoming a true experience business requires finding the sweet spot where data unleashes human creativity like never before. It's more than cohabitation or even collaboration. When you see intelligence as the fuel for creativity—and creativity as the power behind transformation—then you'll start to discover the opportunity to connect with your audiences through unique, impactful, and meaningful customer experiences.

"Leaders have to encourage and elevate creative thinking. It's not enough to have a culture that tolerates creativity. Every meeting is an opportunity to reject the status quo—and we have to endorse creative problem solving and require it from our teams."

Sarah Kennedy Ellis

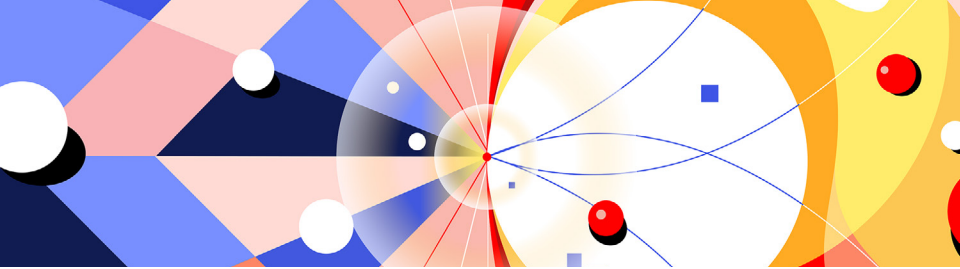
VP of Global Marketing, Adobe

Netflix knows what we watch, when we watch it, and how many times we scrolled through the entire catalog without watching anything—gathering more viewing and interaction data than any content producer in history. Over the last decade, while being coy about the exact data they've

gathered, Netflix has made no secret of the fact that it employs intelligence (artificial, emotional, and analytical fused together) to determine how it will approach future programming decisions. The assumption has always been that Netflix was developing content in a data-driven lab, with analytically engineered shows and movies. That's not the case. Not exactly, anyway.

Instead, [Netflix uses intelligence](#) to feed the creative process—greenlighting shows to meet the unique tastes of niche audiences. It's a liberating model, one in which auteur-level filmmakers are empowered to take creative risks because Netflix knows that it can pinpoint the corresponding audience. In this sense, Netflix operates at the very convergence of creativity and intelligence, serving as a matchmaker between writers, directors, actors, artists, comics, and other creatives—and the audiences looking for their new favorite binge-watch.

It's the creative work—otherworldly sci-fi, Oscar-nominated drama, heart-thumping rom-com—that gives purpose to the mountain of data delivered by every scroll and click on the Netflix platform. It's a perfect and nearly infinite cycle of intelligence and creativity.



Embrace the shift (EQ + AI)

When we talk about creativity as an integral part of becoming an experience business, it's important to remember that we're not talking about a singular customer experience but shifts, evolutions, and transformations in every part of your business.

This isn't a marketing initiative. It's an everything initiative.

So, while AI and machine learning handle automation at a speed and scale impossible for humans, emotional intelligence (EQ) gives context and nuance where computers fail. EQ covers a broad and sometimes difficult-to-define set of skills: empathy, understanding, observation, listening, intuition, teamwork, and—above all else—creative problem solving. There's nothing more important to creating an experience business than closing the gap between hard and soft intelligence.

Nowhere is the necessity of blending EQ and AI clearer than at the National Center for Exploited and Missing Children. At NCMEC, creative problem-solving is essential to reuniting children with families. It's an environment where time is a crucial, limited resource. More than two million images and videos move through the NCMEC asset management system each month—a number that demands automated solutions along with creative firepower. As terabytes of vital information travel between a diverse range of partners,

forensic artists use cutting-edge Adobe Photoshop tools and filters to provide age-enhanced profiles of missing children.

Top skills for success in 2025

- 1

Creativity
- 2

Teamwork
- 3

Social media
- 4

Customer experience
- 5

Analytics

Source: Adobe and Advanis

It's [a comprehensive approach](#) that marries information management, emotional intelligence and creativity. "It's been transformative," said Gavin Portnoy, vice president of strategic advancement and partnerships at NCMEC. "By taking advantage of every digital channel available, we can communicate messages about missing and exploited children on a much wider scale."

As a result of the shift to embrace AI, EQ, and creativity—and the implementation of new tools and platforms—NCMEC reduced website bounce rates by 75 percent, doubled traffic to donation pages, developed new prevention programs, and most importantly, furthered their mission to reunite children with families.



Dig deeper in the data

Business today and tomorrow

We asked 400 marketers to tell us about their organizations.

In some ways, things seem to be going well. For example:

94% say they're outperforming or holding steady with the competition.

45% believe their organization prioritizes both transactional and lifetime value.

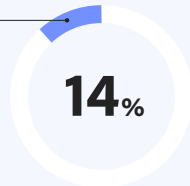
89% say their content creation and delivery are well aligned.

71% agree that their team has the skills needed to be effective marketers in 2025.

But there are a few red flags that really suggest the need for alignment between creativity and intelligence.

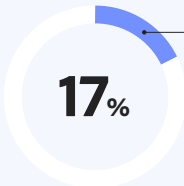
Digitally mature

Only **14%** claim their companies are fully digitally mature.

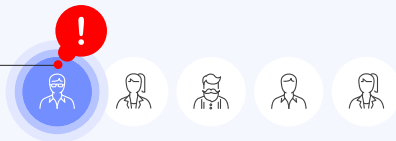


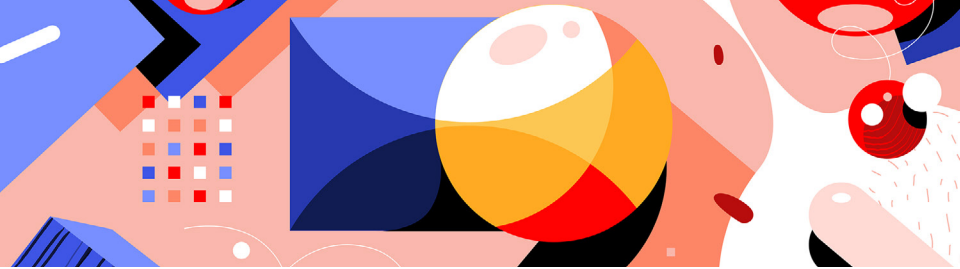
Not digitally mature

While **17%** claim to have no maturity at all.



1 in 5 don't think their company is effective in marketing to Millennials or Gen Z.





Be the change

To give purpose to intelligence through creativity, to leverage EQ and AI equally, and to transform your businesses into an experience powerhouse—things will have to change. And change comes with challenges. Especially at scale and at speed. But it's possible—if you can maintain your focus, align your teams, and utilize the right tools. This may be more than a marketing challenge, but marketing can lead the way. Here are five steps to guide you:

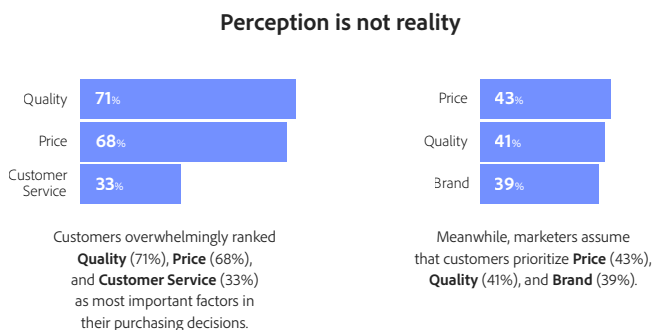
1

PLAN

Use data to unlock customer insights

Five years ago, 24 Hour Fitness found themselves caught in the middle of a renewed health and wellness revolution. New data-rich and home-friendly competitors like Peloton had joined the fray while economy-level gyms like Planet Fitness were offering memberships for \$20/month. Instead of jumping into a land war on both fronts, 24 Hour Fitness brought the fight back to their own turf—redefining the fitness experience for their 4 million members.

Utilizing a holistic strategy across email, kiosks, apps, geo-targeted social, TV, and more, 24 Hour Fitness was able to develop deeper and more personalized profiles for each of their users. They matched location data with fitness interests to suggest workouts and classes while the 24GO application banked thousands of hours of unique fitness content to meet the on-demand needs and whims of members anytime and anyplace. A 360-degree understanding—and anticipation—of each 24 Hour Fitness member’s journey has helped connect more than half their base to the 24GO app, with a projected conversion of 85 percent in the next year.



Source: Adobe and Advanis

With younger audiences, especially Millennials and Gen Z, who spend so much of their lives online, it's easier and easier to pinpoint the channels that matter and the influences that drive purchase. Break down your perceptions. Gather data from every available source. Talk to customers in person. Learn what they love and don't be afraid to feel their pain. It's impossible to overstate the importance of empathy in modern marketing strategies. Once you understand what they want, meet them whenever and wherever they are with content and experiences to enhance their journey.



Only 31% of marketers strongly agree that they are effective at marketing to Millennial and Gen Z customers

Source: Adobe and Advanis

Three things customers value most in a brand



1. Quality



2. Honesty



3. Trust

Source: Adobe and Advanis

2

CREATE

Breed loyalty with meaningful, relevant, and shareable content

Fan engagement across professional sports has undergone a revolution in the last 15 years. Armed with more choices, more channels, more access, and more data than ever before, fans can now follow their favorite players around the clock and around the world. For the PGA, this shift means that every fan interaction is an endlessly customizable journey—especially in the digital world. Instead of being locked into a single stream of content, the PGA can build personalized highlight packages around fan favorites—players, courses, events, and even specific courses.

"Constraint breeds creativity."

Sarah Kennedy Ellis

VP of Global Marketing, Adobe

Top three emerging technologies



1. Personalization



2. Marketing Content



3. Video

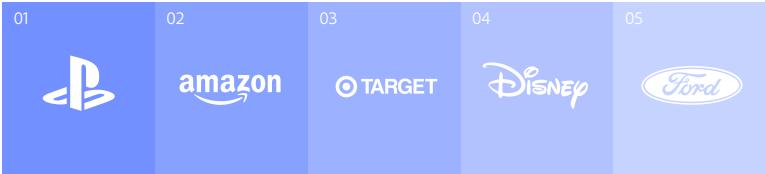
Source: Adobe and Advanis

While this is wonderful for fans, it creates a monumental challenge for the content creators (and distributors) at the PGA. But careful audience segmentation—along with an efficient and creative workflow—means that the PGA can find the sweet spot between automation and personalization. The result: a feed of highlight videos tailored directly to the individual interests and preferences of golf fans around the world. Fans never miss their favorites, and the PGA leverages intelligence to creatively deepen the connection between professionals and their followers.

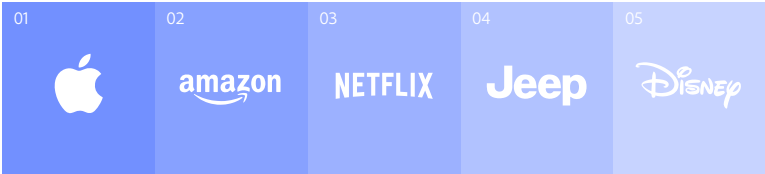
Brand connection

According to [a recent Brand Intimacy survey](#), emotional connection to brands varies widely from generation to generation.

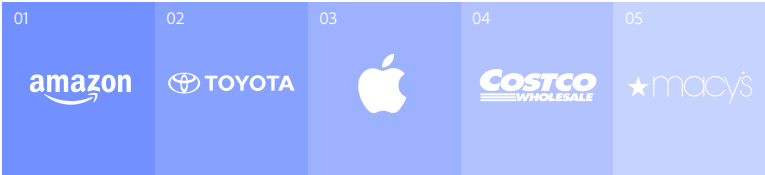
Top five brands of **Gen Z / Millennials**



Top five brands of **Gen X**



Top five brands of **Boomers**



Source: Brand Intimacy, Market Watch

3

ENGAGE

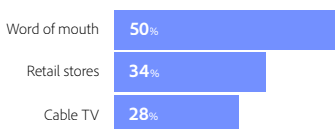
Forge deep connections on- and off-line

To engage customers at every point of their journey, [Home Depot unified all their customer data into a single customer profile](#). Ranjeet Bhosale, director of online analytics and business intelligence at Home Depot, explains, "Instead of separating metrics from online and offline channels, we focus our attention on capturing everything including website activity, in-store sales, call center volume, return volume, order cancelations, and much more, thus enabling us to make the best decisions to improve the shopper experience across all touchpoints."

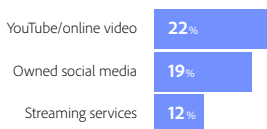
Customers are able to merge digital, physical, and even virtual experiences. They can utilize visual, voice, and predictive search to find products online, then determine in-store availability, complete their purchase, and pick up in-store. Most importantly, Home Depot engages customers in the same way that they see the shopping experience—erasing the line between ecommerce and in-store experience. It's a trend that only looks to continue, as nearly 50 percent of e-commerce orders are picked up at a Home Depot store.

Alignment with the consumer

How consumers learn about products:



How marketers plan to reach consumers:



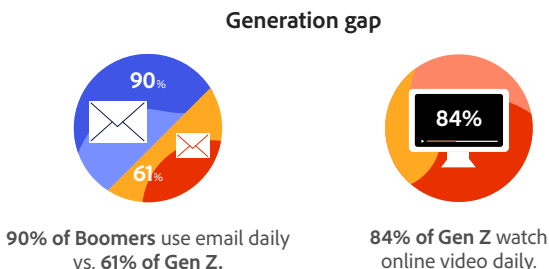
Source: Adobe and Advanis

4

CONVERT

Make conversion as easy and intuitive as possible

[Sprint](#) is racing forward in one of the most competitive landscapes around, facing off against other big wireless carriers like Verizon Wireless and AT&T. They realized that to stand out, they needed to truly understand their customers—and boost their conversion rates for orders, sales, and new customers. To achieve this goal, Sprint tied their marketing and creative tools—complete with AI technology—into a single ecosystem. Now, they get a 360-degree view of their customers, which they can use to create personalized experiences for each customer that improve conversion rates across the board.

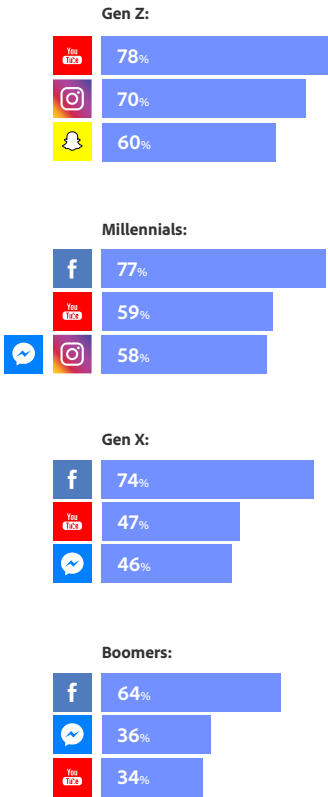


Source: Adobe and Advanis

“There was a 22 percent increase in order conversion rate,” says Aditi Kulkarni, digital UX manager at Sprint. Sprint also saw an increase of 14 percent in the conversion rate of brand-new customers, a 16 percent increase in add-to-cart conversion, and a 4 percent increase in time spent on site. “So, regarding customer experience, people actually want to be here, they want to explore more, and do more, because it’s easier. A more compelling site has led to a decrease of 12 percent in the bounce rate.

Facebook is the most popular social media site among Millennials and older generations while Gen Z prefer YouTube and Instagram.

Which social channels your target generation is using



Source: Adobe and Advanis

5

OPTIMIZE

Never stop improving the customer experience

For more than a decade, [Disney has invested in big data applications](#), resulting in a series of innovations that shape customer experience across the entire Disney landscape. The most progressive is a dramatic evolution of the often-tedious effort to gather audience feedback on films still in production. Where teams would have gathered individual survey responses, they now rely on Affective AI to analyze human emotion gathered through audience-facing cameras during preview screenings. With more than 5,000 data points per person, computers can analyze the information in ways that would be impossible for humans. Armed with that intelligence, Disney's artists and filmmakers can iterate and improve their work to guarantee a thrilling movie experience for audiences around the world.

The future of marketing technology



Micro-moments
(58%)



**Location-based/
geo-fencing**
(60%)



**Predictive and
augmented analytics**
(58%)

Source: Adobe and Advanis

Dig deeper in the data

The how and why of consumer behavior

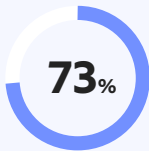
We surveyed 1,300 consumers to better understand how they saw their relationship to brands. They told us some interesting things about how and why they buy.

What really matters

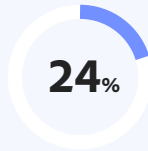
Whether buying from, staying loyal to, or deciding to leave a brand, survey respondents consistently chose these as their primary motivation:

Quality • Price • Customer service

The value of value



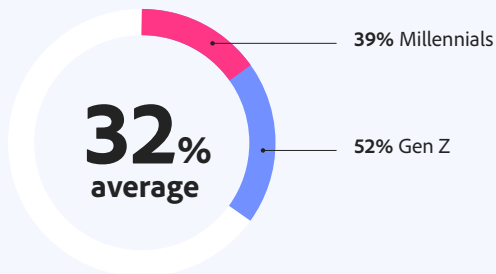
claim they consider a company's values when purchasing.



said they'd pay more just to support such a brand.

The value shift

We asked, "would you only shop with brands aligned with your values?" The percentage of respondents **who agreed** increased with each new generation.

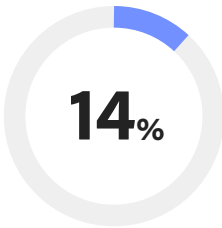


Source: Adobe and Advanis



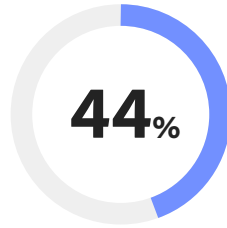
Experience the future

We're drowning in data and spreadsheets, paralyzed with infobesity, infoxicated. At times, it feels impossible to craft meaningful engagements with customers in a splintered media landscape. But now you can see the surface.



Only 14% of marketers report advanced digital maturity:

- Data and content integration
- Automation
- Best practices
- Strong technical skills



44% of U.S. marketers say content creation and delivery are aligned.

Source: Adobe and Advanis

The truth is that a new pathway has already opened up—a shift that realigns and reunites creativity and intelligence. It's an evolution, a revolution, and everything in between. It's big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automation—but it's also none of those things. The truth is that creativity will shape the future of marketing. It won't happen in a vacuum. It won't be Don Draper and a Kodak carousel—nor will it be a room full of IBM computers.

It will be the full spectrum of intelligence feeding creativity. Creativity giving purpose to actionable insights, empowering organizational transformation and driving impactful, relevant experiences.

And you'll be the one who makes it happen.

Learn more about how the marketers of the future are elevating creativity, giving purpose to intelligence, and transforming customer experience.

Learn more

Methodology

The bulk of the data in this article came from two surveys we conducted.

Adobe Marketing in 2025 (U.S. Results)

The survey

- 1,307 US adults 18 or older with a mobile device.
- Conducted online between January 16–24, 2020.

The people

Age

Gen Z	1996 or later	5%
Millennials	1977–1995	32%
Gen X	1965–1976	22%
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	37%
Traditionalists	1945 or earlier	4%

Income

Under 10K	5%
\$10K–\$29,9K	13%
\$30K–\$49,9K	15%
\$50K–\$69,9K	16%
\$70K–\$99,9K	19%
\$100K–\$249,9K	28%
\$250K+	4%

Education

High school or less	16%
Some college	30%
College graduate	34%
Post-graduate	19%

Adobe Marketer in 2025 Business Survey (U.S. Results)

The survey

- 402 full-time marketers who managed a team.
- Conducted online between January 13–14, 2020.

Organizations

Media and entertainment	12%
Manufacturing	11%
Advertising or consulting agency	9%
Healthcare / life sciences	9%
Retail and consumer goods	9%
Other	9%
Automotive	8%
Education	8%
Technology (B2B and B2C)	7%
Professional services	6%
Financial services and insurance	6%
Travel and hospitality	3%
Government / military	2%

People

Marketing	39%
Advertising	25%
Other	11%
Sales	10%
Design or creative services	5%
Product management	4%
Consulting	3%
C-suite / executive	2%

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