

***DELIVER A MODERN  
DIGITAL CX: A GUIDE  
FOR MARKETING  
INNOVATORS***

Customer Experience Trends Report, Global Edition



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**No one fully understands the long-term effect COVID-19 will have on societies or regional economies. But the impact it's having on brands is becoming clearer by the day.**

Customer behaviors have shifted during the crisis and may not revert to pre-pandemic norms. [McKinsey](#) reports as many as 30% to 40% of U.S. consumers have switched brands or retailers, and the majority intend to continue their new shopping behavior. Many switchers seek better prices, but other motivators include product availability, quality and purpose.

The researchers also found e-commerce as a percentage of total retail sales remains about 35% above pre-pandemic levels.

With customer loyalty to brands low – and the cost of acquiring new customers high – marketers need to focus on creating and sustaining engagement with each and every customer. It's not enough to simply recreate previously existing processes as digital ones. They must actually reimagine some customer experiences (CX) altogether.



**Marketers must transform their CX in a fundamental, business-impacting way.** They can't afford to interact with customers the same way they did before the world changed.

What do these marketing innovators need to successfully retain customers and win new ones in today's dynamic marketplace?

### **/ Customer data**

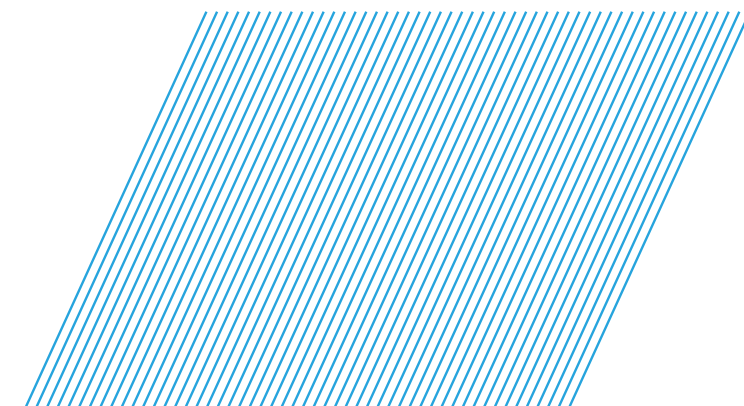
To better understand what makes an individual customer open an email, respond to an offer or otherwise engage with a brand, marketers need access to higher quality data. Going forward, most will need to rely on first-party data (the information that customers choose to provide) to help generate new content, new campaigns and an updated CX as browser companies phase out third-party cookies.

### **/ Content**

To create, test and deliver personalized digital experiences across channels in an efficient manner, marketers will need low-code or no-code tools. At its core, this innovative CX features rich content with compelling storytelling and brand consistency.

### **/ Privacy mindset**

To reduce the trust gap, marketers must continue tracking consumers' comfort levels about sharing personal information. They must also maintain respect for customer data privacy.



# ABOUT THE SURVEY

To gain a perspective on these topics through a global lens, we worked with Vanson Bourne to collect the views of 8,000 consumers and 800 marketers across Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States from July to August 2021. The survey explores shifts in marketing and consumer expectations about CX and privacy. As we examine these research findings and implications, we'll discuss how brands are adapting to the changing landscape and key lessons learned.

Please note that the global CX trends report we published in 2020 includes survey response data from participants in Mexico, while this report instead includes survey data from consumers and marketers in Brazil. In areas where we compare year-over-year trends, data from Mexico and Brazil are excluded.

**8,000**  
CONSUMERS

5



**800**  
MARKETERS

Section 1:

# ***ADAPT STRATEGIES TO WIN IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT***



**94%**

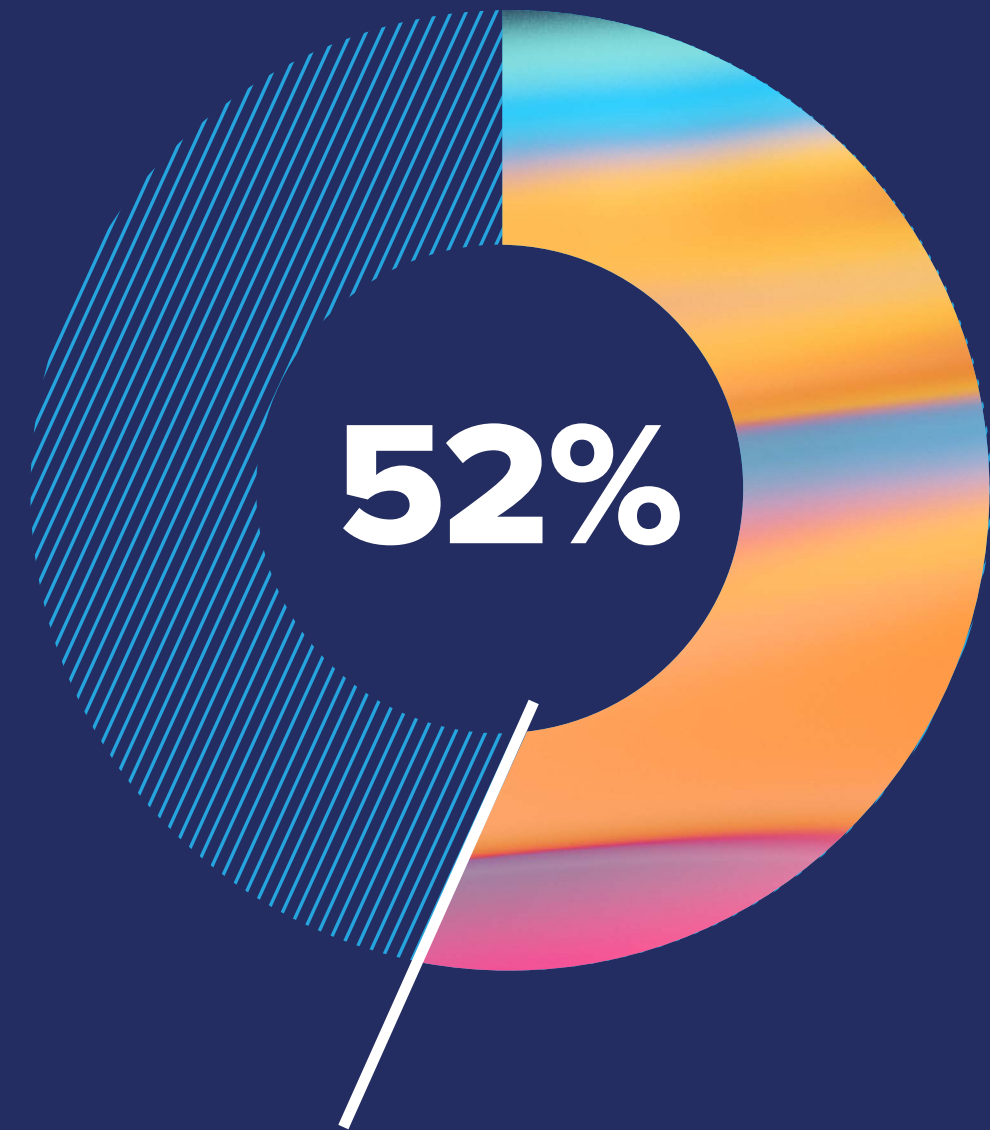
***OF MARKETERS REPORT THEIR ORGANIZATION CHANGED ITS DIGITAL CX STRATEGY OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS, PARTICULARLY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19.***

The pandemic isn't the only major disruption that brands must contend with. Customer journeys today involve an ever-increasing number of channels and devices. Companies are taking significant steps to stand out at a time when distinguishing themselves is harder than ever.

About half of marketers (52%) say their organization has prioritized making sure their branding remains consistent for customers in 2021 – an increase from Acquia's 2020 CX survey, which found 48% of respondents prioritized brand consistency. Their efforts are on point: 80% of consumers say they expect brands to have a consistent message and appearance across all their digital platforms.

The latest findings also indicate many brand teams (84%) feel pressure to deliver marketing content differently to attract attention when representing their offerings. And, on par with our 2020 results,

**49% of marketers have created more content for customer engagement to adapt to new customer behaviors.**

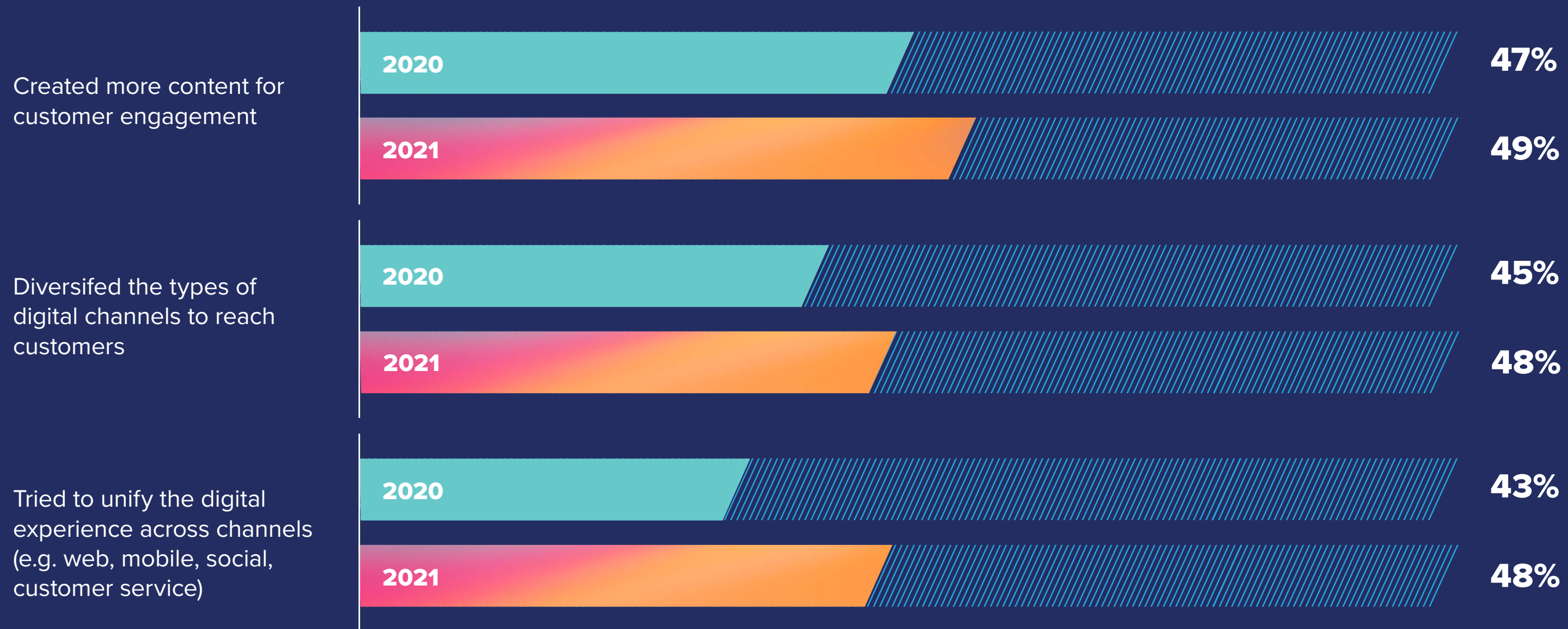


**SAY THEIR ORGANIZATION HAS PRIORITIZED MAKING SURE THEIR BRANDING REMAINS CONSISTENT FOR CUSTOMERS IN 2021.**



## THREE SAVVY STRATEGIES TO ADAPT TO NEW CUSTOMER BEHAVIORS ARE BECOMING MORE IMPORTANT TO MARKETERS.

The question asked in the survey was: **What changes has your organization made to your digital marketing strategy to adapt to new customer behaviors over the past 12 months?**





**Section 2:**

***EMERGING  
SOLUTIONS PUT  
CUSTOMER DATA  
AT MARKETERS'  
FINGERTIPS***

Brands continue to lay the right technology foundation for their digital CX, and they're being rewarded for their pursuits.

Nearly all marketers (96%) say their organization's return on investment for marketing tech tools has improved in the last year – a big jump from 85% in 2020. This latest upbeat finding is generally consistent across regions, organization size and industries, though it lags a bit for marketers in the public sector (87%).

### So, what are some of the top technologies marketers invested in over the past 18 months?

More than half (55%) of marketers say their organization has adopted a **digital experience platform (DXP)**. These relatively new tools, which

have both content management and customer data management capabilities, help brands offer customers a consistent, personalized experience across multiple channels.

- Adoption is fairly consistent across organization size, revenue and geography, although there are some notable exceptions. While 67% of marketers in Singapore report investing in a DXP, for example, the figure is much lower for respondents in the U.S. (50%) and Australia (51%).
- Industry usage is more varied. Only 44% of healthcare marketers report adopting a DXP, but the numbers are higher for sectors like insurance (63%); construction and property management (63%); and the broad category of media, leisure, hospitality and entertainment (59%).

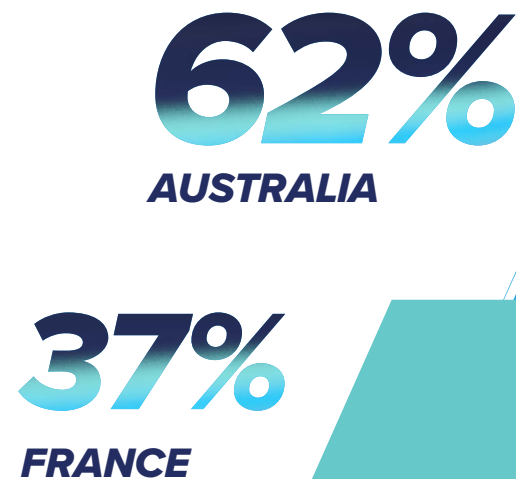
Exactly half of marketers say their organization adopted a **customer data platform (CDP)**. This technology, which can be used as a stand-alone product or within the context of a DXP, centralizes customer data from various systems and makes datasets accessible to anyone on a marketing team or elsewhere in the organization.

Some CDPs can also analyze the data to produce a range of valuable insights. Marketers could learn which types of promotions or content are effective with customers, for instance, and better understand trends in customer acquisition, buying behavior and loyalty.

There are significant regional variations in CDP adoption. While rates are lower in France (37%), for example, they're much higher in Australia (62%).

Just over half of marketers (53%) report that **their CDP solution** uses machine learning, and 45% say they plan to use one with this kind of enhanced intelligence.

**THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN CDP ADOPTION.**

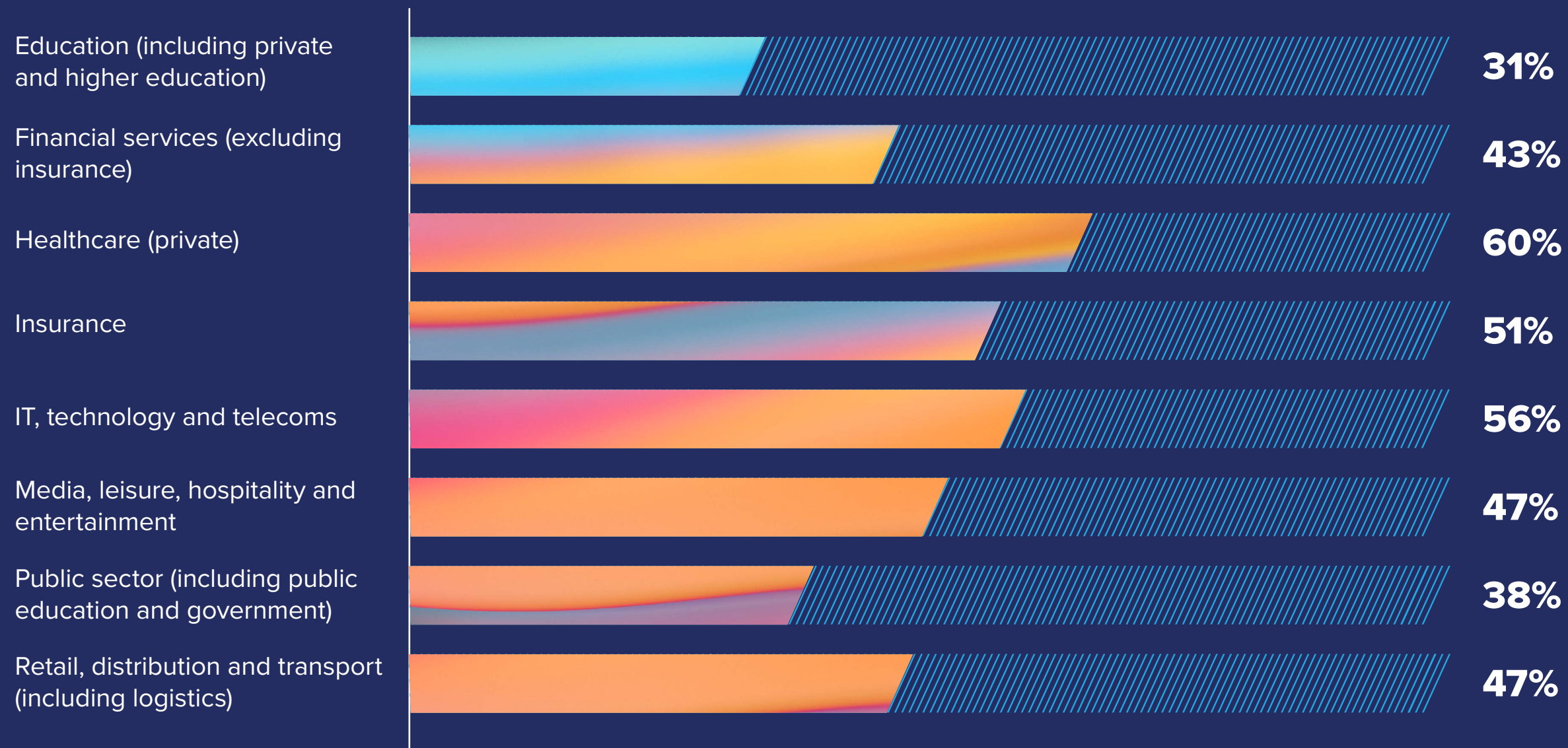


**50%**

**OF GLOBAL MARKETERS CITED A CUSTOMER DATA PLATFORM (CDP) AS A TECHNOLOGY THEIR ORGANIZATION ADOPTED IN THE LAST 18 MONTHS.**

## **45% OF GLOBAL MARKETERS CITED DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT (DAM) AS A TECHNOLOGY THEIR ORGANIZATION ADOPTED IN THE LAST 18 MONTHS.**

*Here is how the responses broke out by sector:*



Just as 45% of marketers say they adopted **digital asset management (DAM)** over the last year and a half, the same percentage report they adopted a **content management system (CMS)**.

Respondents aren't finished bulking up their marketing arsenal. A large majority anticipate modest – but real – increases in their CX tools budget in 2022.

- / 39% expect an increase of up to 5%, 40% anticipate a 5% to 10% increase and only 6% think their budgets will remain flat or decrease.
- / Organizations with global annual revenues of U.S. \$10,000 to \$10 million plan to see the smallest average budgetary increase (5.18%) while companies with revenues of \$100 million to \$500 million plan the largest rise (6.23%).
- / Expected budgetary changes are largely consistent across regions, though Brazilian marketers are slightly more optimistic, with plans to boost spending an average 7.21% compared to the global average of 6.02%.

**BRAZILIAN MARKETERS ARE SLIGHTLY MORE OPTIMISTIC, WITH PLANS TO BOOST SPENDING MORE THAN THE GLOBAL AVERAGE.**



Section 3:

***MANY  
ORGANIZATIONS  
STILL LACK THE  
RIGHT TOOLS  
TO DELIVER AN  
IDEAL CX***

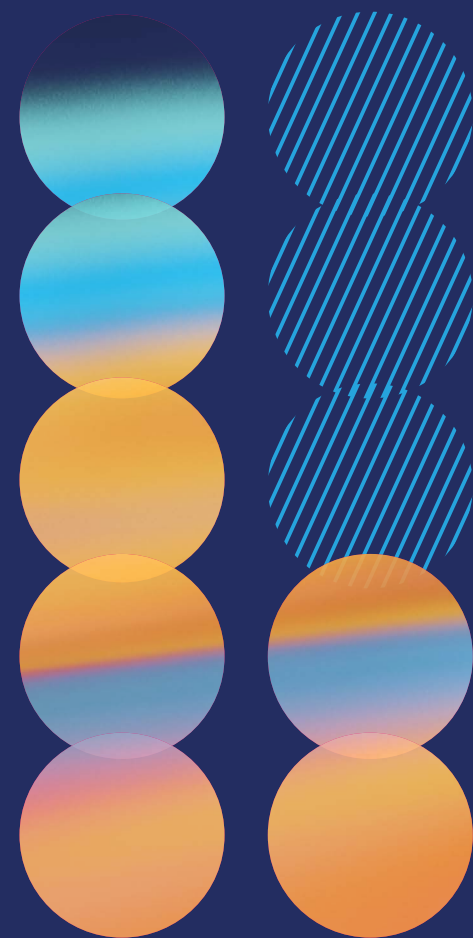


The improved ROI that marketers are achieving makes for a fantastic narrative, but unfortunately, it's not the whole story. Many respondents feel hamstrung by their marketing technology in four significant ways that could hinder their ability to attract and retain customers. The results suggest brand teams could be using better tools – including open solutions that enable easy integration into the martech stack.

**/ Two-thirds of marketers (67%) say their marketing tools hold them back from being innovative.** The highest concerns come from respondents in France (77%), the U.S. (76%) and Germany (74%). Charities and non-profits feel the most restricted compared to other industries (91%).

**/ Slightly more (73%) admit their martech keeps them from creating and delivering innovative or creative digital experiences for their customers.** The issue is more pronounced in sectors like healthcare (80%) as well as media, leisure, hospitality and entertainment (80%). Regionally, the challenge is larger for marketers in France (82%), the U.S. (80%) and Germany (79%) while smaller for their counterparts in Brazil (56%) and the U.K. (63%).





**MORE THAN 7 IN 10 MARKETERS  
(72%) REQUIRE HELP FROM  
TECHNOLOGISTS TO CREATE  
DIGITAL CX.**

- / An even higher number of marketers (83%) say they struggle to create content that can be rapidly released across all their digital platforms.** This inability is painful for two reasons: Nearly all marketers (95%) recognize the importance of creating consistent marketing content across all platforms. Also, it's increasingly necessary to have the agility to quickly deploy fresh content or change live campaigns to address fast-moving marketplace developments.
- / Lastly, there's the issue of relying on IT's assistance. More than 7 in 10 marketers (72%) require help from technologists to create digital CX.**

Needing to engage software developers or IT for building experiences like a microsite can slow the process. It can also take technical staff away from work they consider more challenging or professionally rewarding. Public sector marketers struggle the most with needing help; only 8% say they can create CX with little to no developer assistance. As for organizations, those with 3,000 or more employees are likely to have tools marketers can use all on their own since 37% say they don't require much IT intervention.



## Section 4:

# ***EMPLOY PERSONALIZATION TO BUILD AND SCALE ENGAGING DIGITAL CX***

Many marketers are using their solutions to inject personalization into digital experiences – and for good reason. Tailoring interactions and content across touchpoints upgrades the CX, builds meaningful connections with individuals and plants the seeds for increased loyalty.

More than a third of global brands (35%) have relied more on personalization in the past 12 months to adapt to new customer behaviors. The trend is more robust in Singapore (53%) and Australia (45%) while lower in Japan (27%) and Brazil (28%).

Yet, 58% of marketers in Japan and 59% of their counterparts in Brazil say they're seeing increased engagement with their brands as a result of implementing more personalization. Globally, 54% of marketers report personalization helps boost engagement.

## **INDUSTRIES THAT REPORT A HIGH CORRELATION BETWEEN THEIR PERSONALIZATION AND ENGAGEMENT INCLUDE:**

**66%**

Education

**56%**

Healthcare

**61%**

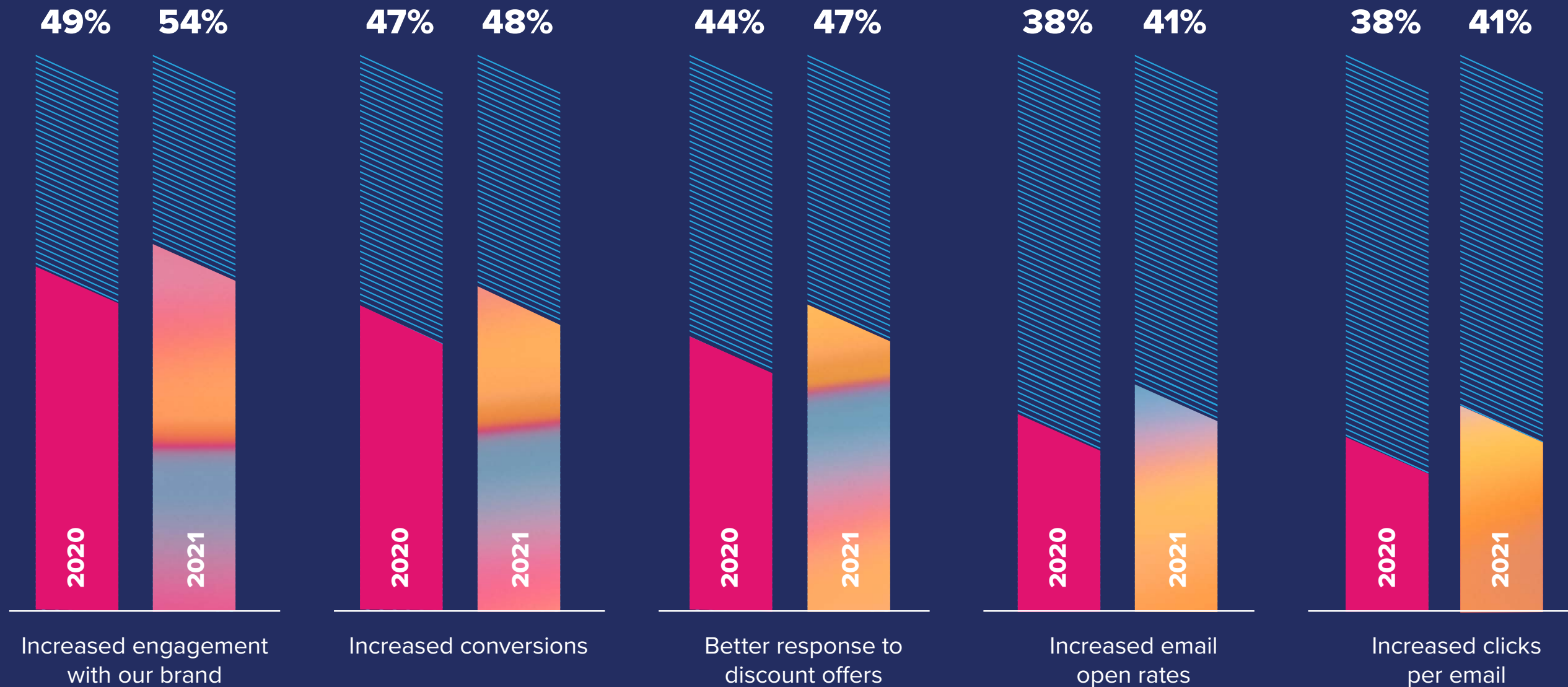
Insurance

**62%**

Technology

**WHEN COMPARED WITH 2020, PERSONALIZATION IS PROVING TO BE AN EVEN MORE USEFUL TOOL FOR ACCOMPLISHING MANY KEY GOALS THIS YEAR.**

The question asked in the survey was: **What improvements have you seen with customer engagement as a result of implementing more personalization?**



**Section 5:**

***HOW MARKETERS  
AND CONSUMERS  
VIEW PRIVACY AS  
THE COOKIELESS  
FUTURE EMERGES***

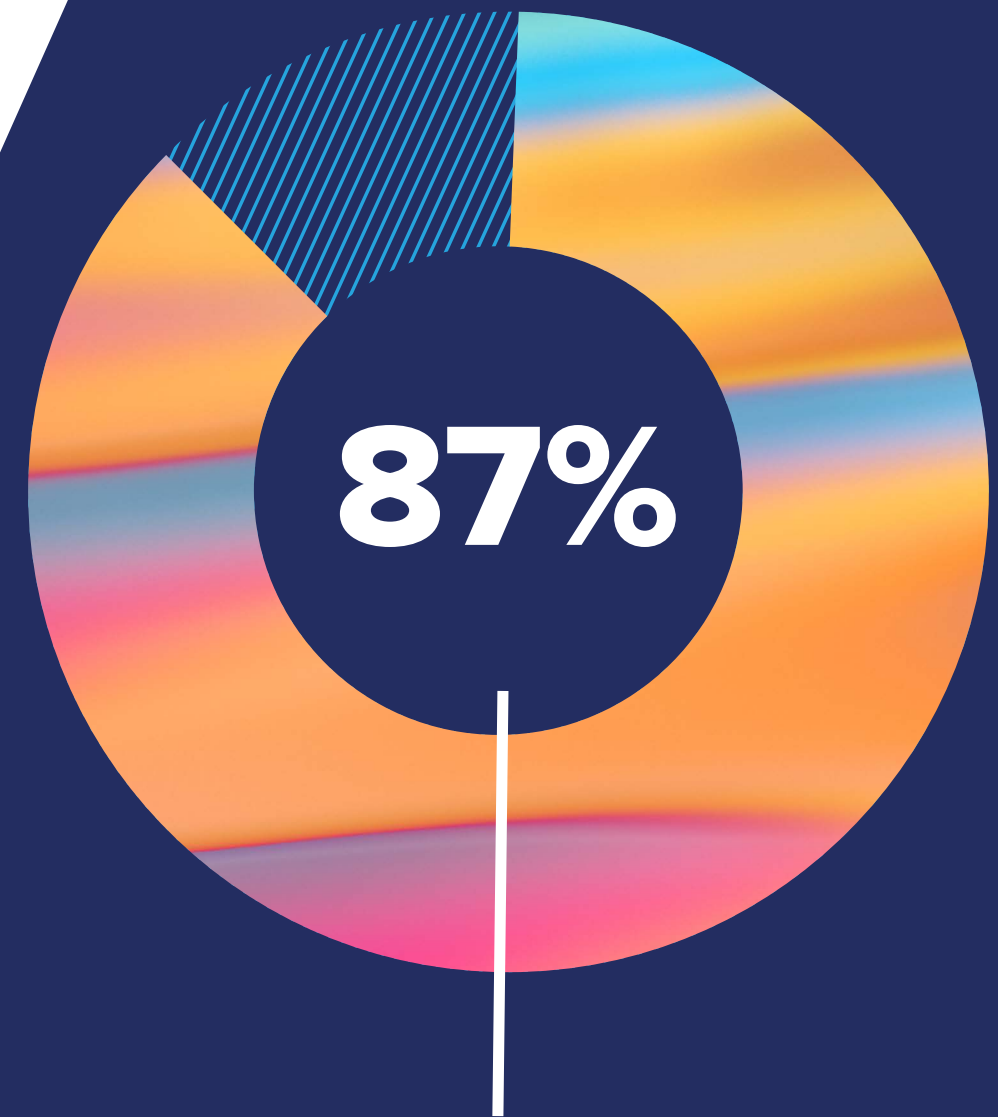


Of course, marketers need customer data to fuel personalization plays. Organizations have long relied on the third-party cookie to understand target audiences, but these identifiers will effectively die away when Google's Chrome stops supporting them in late 2023.

The truth is, strategies based on third-party data don't provide the value they once did, and marketers are moving on: 87% say their organization is fully prepared for the cookieless future. With multiple industry solutions vying to replace the capabilities of the tracking cookie, that future is still full of questions.

What *is* clearer to marketers is that using first-party data is the best way to create better digital experiences. This data is provided by customers as they interact across a company's website and other brand channels.

With first-party data more important than ever, 33% of marketers say the ability to gather enough data about consumer preferences to create compelling digital experiences has been particularly important for them over the past 18 months. That number is even higher (43%) for marketers in sectors such as charities and non-profits; insurance; and media, leisure, hospitality and entertainment.



**OF MARKETERS SAY THEIR ORGANIZATION IS FULLY PREPARED FOR THE COOKIELESS FUTURE.**



93%

***OF MARKETERS REPORT THAT  
GATHERING FIRST-PARTY DATA  
IS MORE IMPORTANT TO THEIR  
ORGANIZATION THAN IT WAS  
TWO YEARS AGO.***

In addition, nearly all marketers (95%) say consent-led personalization strategies garner more trust from consumers. To build and keep that trust, however, companies need to offer consumers a clear value for sharing their data as well as control over their information. Brand teams also need to be transparent about how they're using data and about obtaining consent. A large number of consumers (82%) say they receive marketing communication from brands they do not recall opting in for.

Marketers know they must safeguard the information they collect. Nearly all (99%) say their organization has established and follows policies designed to protect the privacy of their customers' data. In addition, 82% think their customers trust their company's use of their personal data more this year compared to last – a nearly 10 percentage point jump from Acquia's 2020 CX survey.

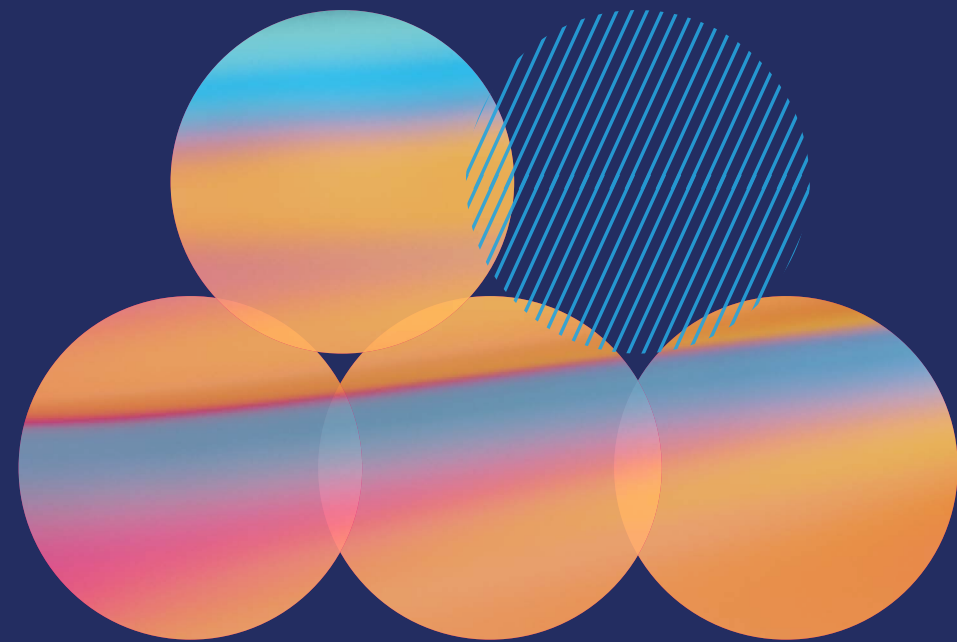
82%

**THINK THEIR CUSTOMERS TRUST THEIR COMPANY'S USE OF THEIR PERSONAL DATA MORE THIS YEAR**

+10

**THIS IS A 10 PERCENTAGE POINT JUMP FROM ACQUIA'S 2020 SURVEY**





***FOUR IN FIVE CONSUMERS  
(81%) BELIEVE THEIR DATA  
WILL BE MORE PRIVATE WHEN  
WEB BROWSERS PHASE OUT  
TRACKING COOKIES.***

Are marketers right about those customer perceptions? Unfortunately, a trust gap persists.

**As many as two in five (40%) global consumers do not trust that all brands will handle their personal data properly.**

Likewise, while slightly more consumers say they feel very comfortable giving brands their personal data in exchange for an improved experience compared to last year's respondents, the number is still dismally low: only 17% currently have that comfort level.

Consumers, meanwhile, aren't bemoaning the deprecation of the third-party cookie. Nearly 75% report being frustrated when brands suddenly appear to market to them because they searched online about the brand or a similar one. Four in five consumers (81%) believe their data will be more private when web browsers phase out tracking cookies.

**CONSUMERS ACROSS THE GLOBE HAVE VARYING PERSPECTIVES ABOUT SHARING PERSONAL DATA IN EXCHANGE FOR AN IMPROVED EXPERIENCE, WITH MORE AMERICANS AND BRAZILIANS SAYING THEY ARE “VERY COMFORTABLE” WITH THE IDEA.**

The question asked in the survey was: **How comfortable are you in giving brands your personal data in exchange for an improved experience** (such as perks like freebies or more personalized offers, etc.)?

**28%**

**U.S.**

**24%**

**BRAZIL**

**19%**

**U.K.**

**17%**

**FRANCE**

**14%**

**JAPAN**

**13%**

**AUSTRALIA**

**13%**

**GERMANY**

**13%**

**SINGAPORE**

# ***SUMMARY AND TAKEAWAYS***



Building a compelling, personalized CX has become table stakes for digital marketers, and many brands have improved their capabilities over the past year despite the challenges of living and working during a pandemic.

Yet, organizations are in different stages of their digital transformation journey. Many marketers still believe their technology is slowing their delivery of new digital experiences to customers. A large number also struggle to obtain enough first-party data to power their personalization efforts.

There's also still a wide gap between the trust marketers believe consumers have in brands' use of personal data and the trust consumers actually feel.

Marketers who recognize that a strong CX grows the bottom line need to take stock of their digital marketing tools and ask these important questions:

- // **Are your technologies designed for yesterday, or can you use them to meet the CX challenges of the day?**
- // **Do your current tools enable you to offer a consistent brand experience and deliver personalized content to every customer touchpoint?**
- // **Can you access and unify all first-party customer data regardless of the system housing it?**

// **Do you have low-code or no-code tools that empower you to build digital experiences without the help of technologists?**

// **Is your organization being transparent with customers about how it will use data they choose to share?**

Marketing innovators know the direction they need to go to deliver engaging CX. To get there, they must have a strategy for fully leveraging first-party customer data while respecting privacy, rapidly compose digital experiences that appeal to each individual customer and then deploy those experiences across channels.



# Acquia

ACQUIA.COM

## **ABOUT ACQUIA**

Acquia empowers the world's most ambitious brands to create digital customer experiences that matter. With open source Drupal at its core, the Acquia Digital Experience Platform (DXP) enables marketers, developers and IT operations teams at thousands of global organizations to rapidly compose and deploy digital products and services that engage customers, enhance conversions and help businesses stand out.

