

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

Customer Experience Trends Report, UK Edition



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**03**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ▶**

**05**

**ABOUT THE SURVEY ▶**

**06**

**1. ADAPT STRATEGIES TO WIN IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT ▶**

**10**

**2. EMERGING SOLUTIONS PUT CUSTOMER DATA AT MARKETERS' FINGERTIPS ▶**

**13**

**3. MANY ORGANISATIONS STILL LACK THE RIGHT TOOLS TO DELIVER AN IDEAL CX ▶**

**16**

**4. EMPLOY PERSONALISATION TO BUILD AND SCALE ENGAGING DIGITAL CX ▶**

**19**

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

**25**

**SUMMARY AND TAKEAWAYS ▶**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Customer behaviours have shifted during the crisis and may not revert to pre-pandemic norms. [McKinsey](#) reports 41% of UK consumers have shopped in new places and 39% have tried a different brand. A majority of these switchers intend to maintain their new shopping behaviour, motivated by factors like convenience, better prices and a desire to support local businesses.

The researchers also found up to 92% of UK consumers who currently purchase online plan to continue after COVID-19 has subsided.

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. As noted in the global edition of this report, it's not enough to simply recreate previously existing processes as digital ones. They must actually reimagine some customer experiences (CX) altogether.



**UK 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**

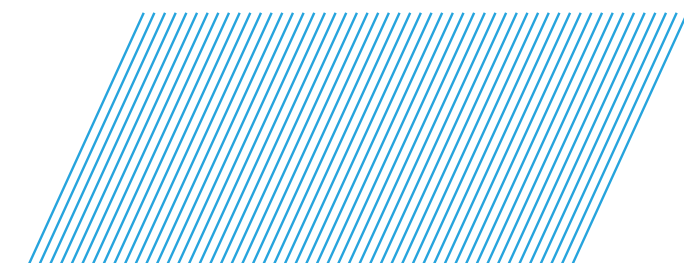
To better understand what makes an individual customer open an email, respond to an offer, or otherwise engage with a brand, marketers need access to higher quality data. Going forward, most will need to rely on first-party data (the information that customers choose to provide) to help generate new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

### **/ Content**

To create, test and deliver personalised 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. UK marketers continue to adopt marketing and CX tools, and a clear majority say their investments are paying off. Still, many report being limited by their martech in critical areas.

### **/ 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. With only 58% of UK consumers trusting that all brands will handle their personal data properly, marketers must work hard to convince audiences to share their information in exchange for an improved CX.



# 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. This report focuses on data from the UK, as well as comparisons to global and other regional results.

**8,000**  
CONSUMERS

5



**800**  
MARKETERS

Section 1:

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



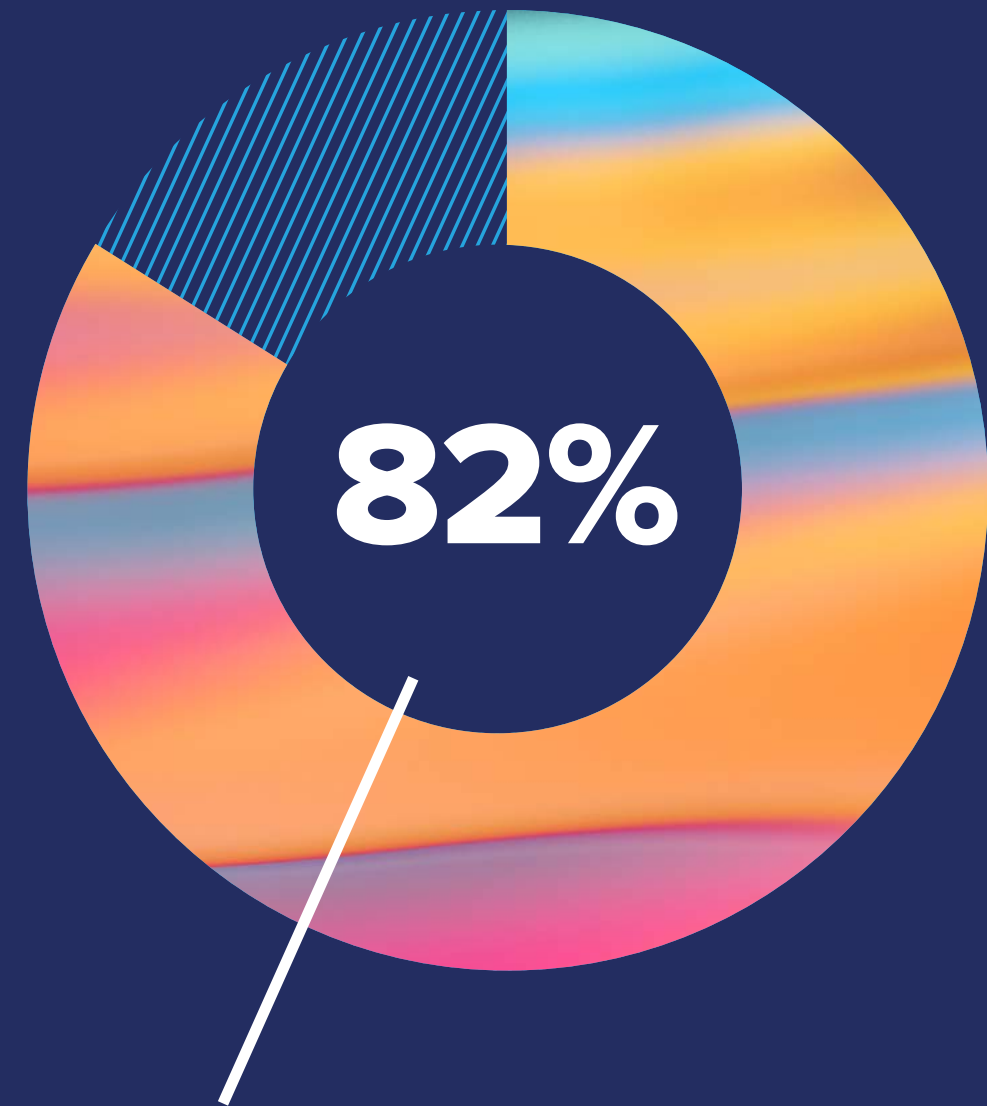
**99%**

***OF UK MARKETERS REPORT THEIR ORGANISATION 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 involve an ever-increasing number of channels and devices. UK companies are taking significant steps to stand out at a time when distinguishing themselves is harder than ever.

Nearly seven in 10 UK marketers (67%) say their organisation has prioritised making sure their branding remains consistent for customers in 2021, which is notably above the global average of 53%. Their efforts are on point: 82% of UK consumers say they expect brands to have a consistent message and appearance across all their digital platforms.

**The latest findings also indicate most brand teams (84%) feel pressure to deliver marketing content differently to attract attention when representing their offerings.**



**OF UK CONSUMERS SAY THEY EXPECT BRANDS TO HAVE A CONSISTENT MESSAGE AND APPEARANCE ACROSS ALL THEIR DIGITAL PLATFORMS.**



## The top tactics UK brands have used to adapt to new customer behaviours over the past 12 months are:





Section 2:

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

UK brands continue to lay the right technology foundation for their digital CX and are largely in line with global trends on adopting tools. They're being rewarded for their pursuits. A clear majority of UK marketers (96%) say their organisation's return on investment for marketing tech tools has improved in the last year – a big jump from 87% reported in Acquia's 2020 CX survey.

More than half (56%) of UK marketers say their organisation has adopted a **digital experience platform (DXP)**, compared to 55% globally. These relatively new tools, which have both content management and customer data management capabilities, help brands offer customers a consistent, personalised experience across multiple channels.

In addition, 54% of UK brands implemented a **customer data platform (CDP)**, compared to 50% globally. This technology, which can be used as a stand-alone product or within the context of a DXP, centralises customer data from various systems and makes datasets accessible to anyone on a marketing team or elsewhere in the organisation.

Some CDPs can also analyse 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 behaviour and loyalty.



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

Just under half of UK marketers (48%) report that their CDP solution uses machine learning, compared to 53% globally. Many others (49%) say they plan to use a CDP with this kind of enhanced intelligence, compared to 45% globally.

Meanwhile, 46% of UK marketers adopted **digital asset management (DAM)** software, and the same percentage implemented a **content management system (CMS)**, compared with 45% globally for both. Creatives use these foundational technologies to produce and deliver digital content assets to customers in ways that ensure brand consistency across multiple properties.

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

- 35% expect an increase of up to 5%, 44% anticipate a 5% to 10% increase, and only 9% think their budgets will remain flat or decrease.
- UK marketers plan to boost spending an average of 5.84% compared to the global average of 6.02%.



## Section 3:

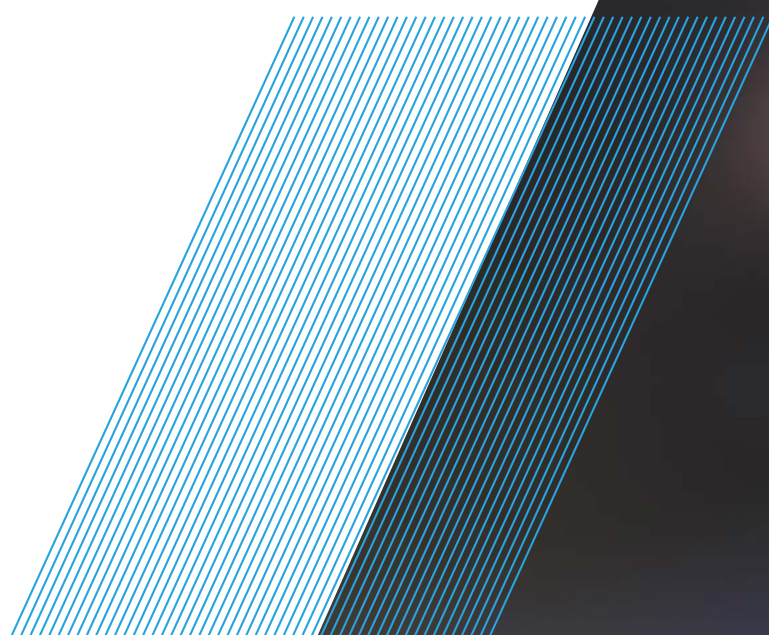
***MANY  
ORGANISATIONS  
STILL LACK THE  
RIGHT TOOLS  
TO DELIVER AN  
IDEAL CX***

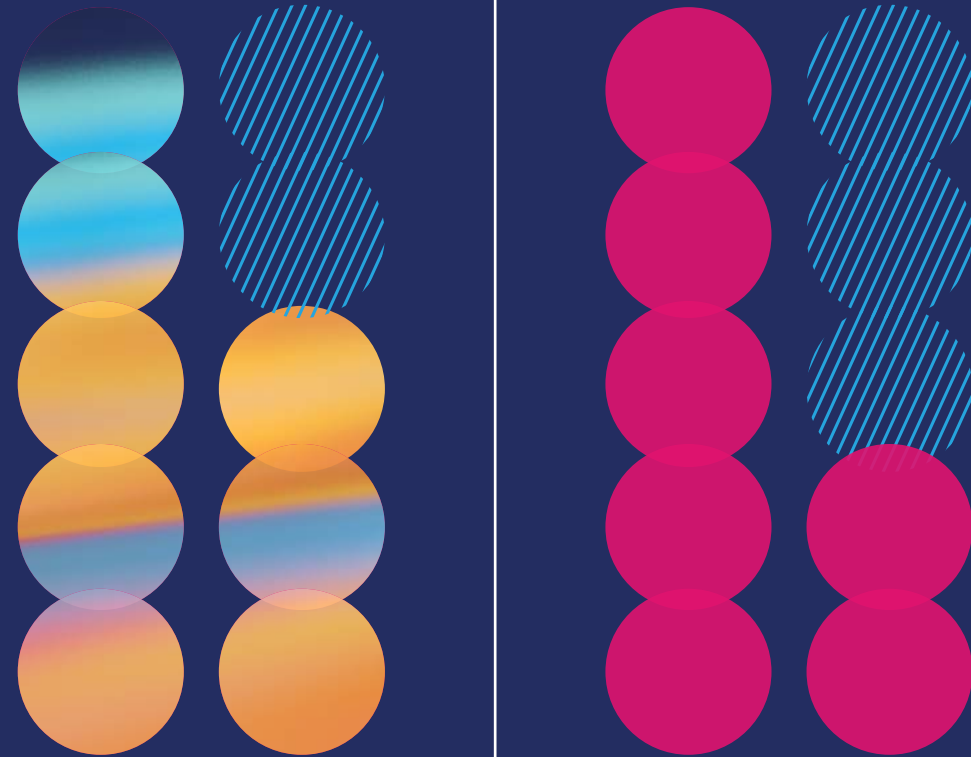


The improved ROI that UK marketers are achieving makes for a fantastic narrative, but unfortunately, it's not the whole story. Many respondents feel hamstrung by their marketing technology in ways that could hinder their ability to attract and retain customers.

While UK marketers aren't having as much trouble as their global peers in some areas, they're behind in others. Overall, the results suggest brand teams could be using better tools – including open solutions that enable easy integration into the martech stack.

- 58% of UK marketers say their marketing tools **hold them back from being innovative**, compared to 67% of their global peers.
- 63% of UK marketers admit their **martech keeps them from creating and delivering innovative or creative digital experiences for their customers**, compared to 73% of global marketers.





**MORE THAN 8 IN 10 (86%)  
REQUIRE HELP FROM  
TECHNOLOGISTS TO CREATE A  
DIGITAL CX, COMPARED TO 72%  
OF GLOBAL MARKETERS.**

**/** 86% of UK marketers say they **struggle to create content that can be rapidly released across all their digital platforms in one go**, compared to 83% of global marketers.

This inability is painful for two reasons: 96% of UK respondents recognise 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.

**/** 86% of UK marketers **require help from technologists to create a digital CX**, compared to 72% of global marketers. 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.



**Section 4:**

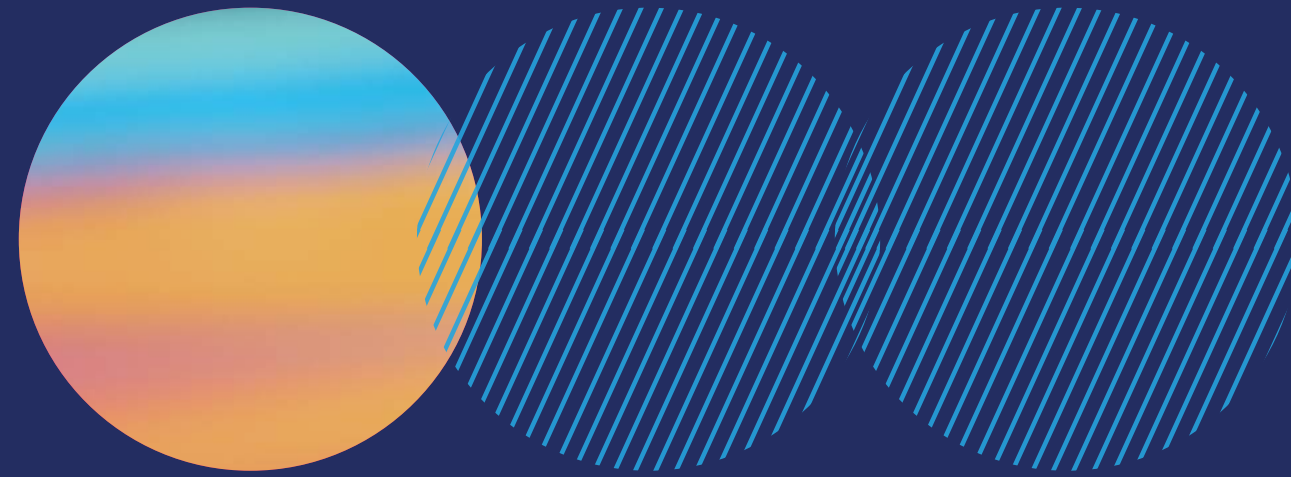
***EMPLOY  
PERSONALISATION  
TO BUILD AND  
SCALE ENGAGING  
DIGITAL CX***



Many marketers are using their solutions to inject personalisation 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.

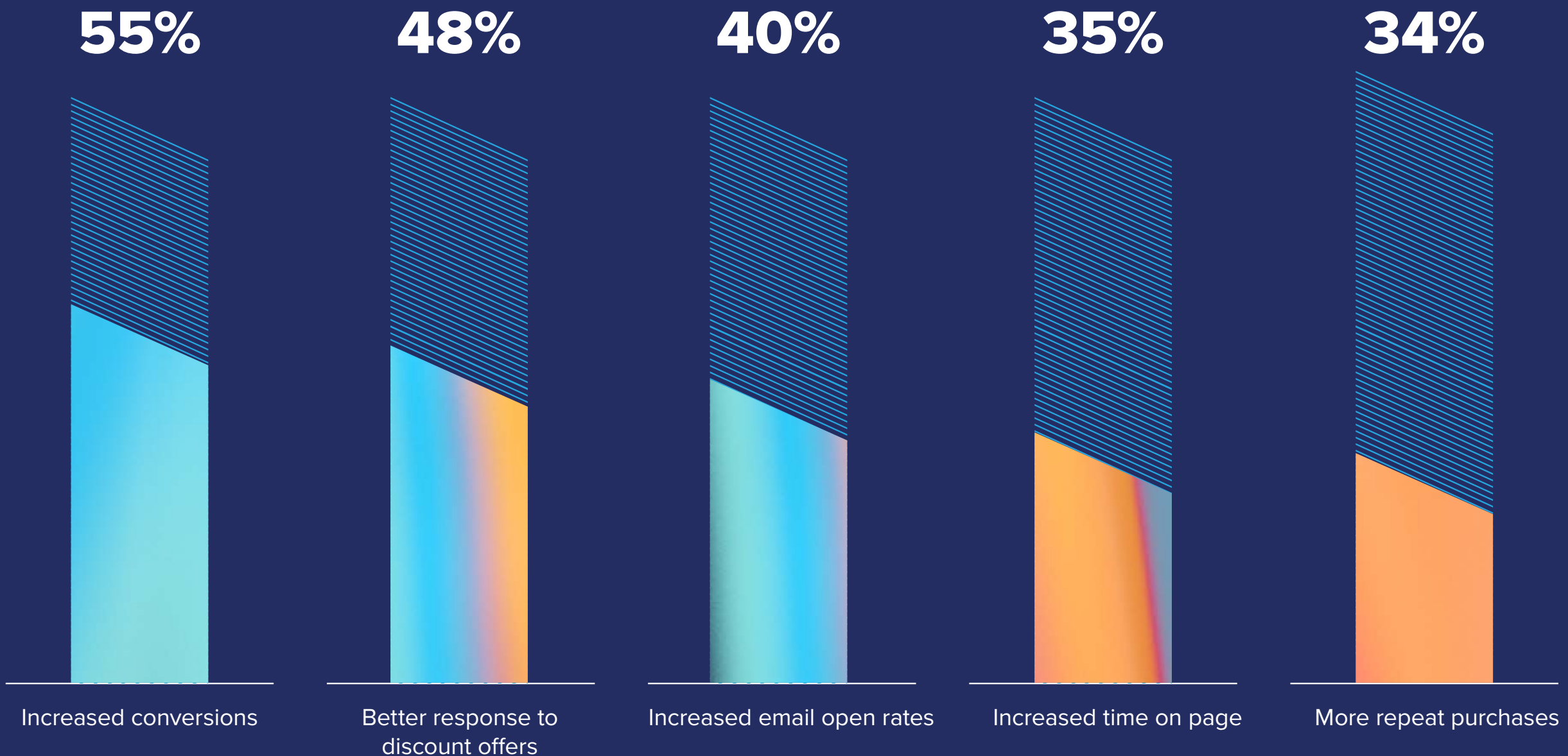
A third of UK brands (33%) have relied more on personalisation in the past 12 months to adapt to new customer behaviours, compared to 35% of global brands.



***A THIRD OF UK BRANDS (33%) HAVE RELIED MORE ON PERSONALISATION IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS TO ADAPT TO NEW CUSTOMER BEHAVIOURS, COMPARED TO 35% OF GLOBAL BRANDS.***

**62% OF UK MARKETERS SAY IMPLEMENTING MORE PERSONALISATION HAS BOOSTED ENGAGEMENT WITH THEIR BRAND IN 2021, UP SIGNIFICANTLY FROM 49% IN 2020.**

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



**Section 5:**

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

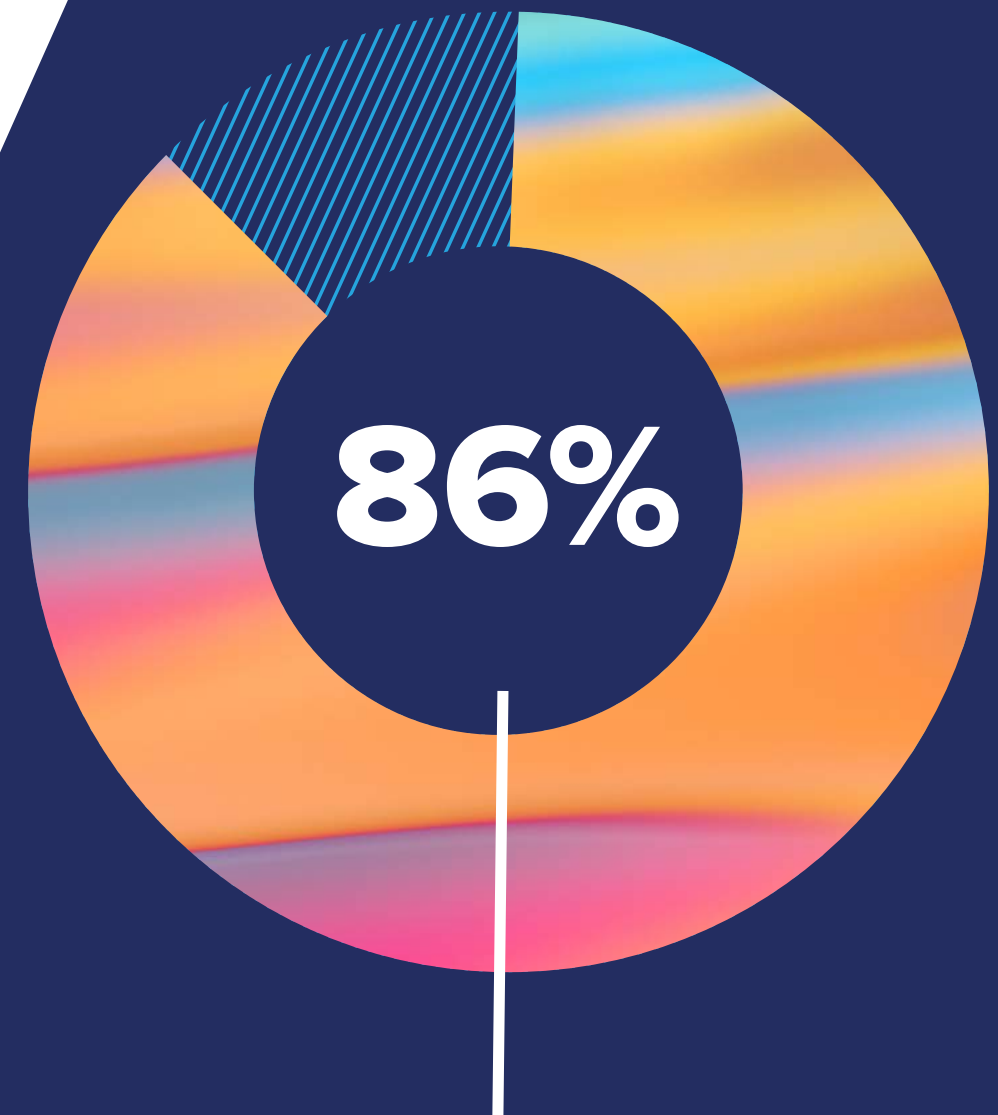


Of course, marketers need customer data to fuel personalisation plays. Organisations have long relied on the third-party cookie to understand target audiences, but these identifiers will effectively die away when Google's Chrome stops supporting them in late 2023.

The truth is, strategies based on third-party data don't provide the value they once did, and UK marketers are moving on: 86% say their organisation 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, 44% of UK 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.



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



**97%**

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

In addition, 95% of UK brands say consent-led personalisation 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 majority of UK consumers (87%) say they receive marketing communication from brands they do not recall opting in for.

UK marketers know they must safeguard the information they collect. Nearly all (99%) say their organisation has established and follows policies designed to protect the privacy of their customers' data. Globally, 99% of marketers say the same.

Eighty-three percent of global marketers also indicate that customers trust their company's use of their personal data more in 2021 compared to 2020. UK marketers are more optimistic with 87% assuming this to be true.

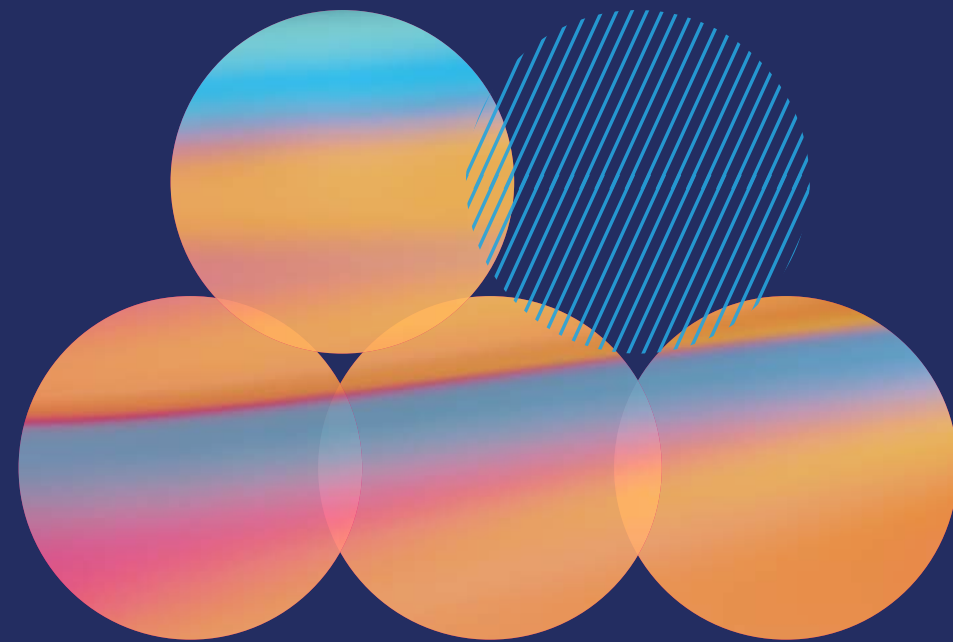
95%

**OF UK BRANDS SAY CONSENT-LED PERSONALISATION STRATEGIES GARNER MORE TRUST FROM CONSUMERS.**

**THE NUMBER OF UK MARKETERS WHO BELIEVE THEIR ORGANISATION IS EITHER TRUSTED SIGNIFICANTLY OR SLIGHTLY MORE INCREASED. IN 2021 IT WAS 87%, COMPARED WITH 68% IN 2020.**

The question asked in the survey was: **Do you think your customers trust your organisation's use of their personal data more or less in 2021 compared to 2020?**





**FOUR IN FIVE CONSUMERS  
(79%) REPORT BEING  
FRUSTRATED WHEN BRANDS  
SUDDENLY APPEAR TO  
MARKET TO THEM**

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

**Only 58% of UK consumers trust that all brands will handle their personal data properly, though that is slightly higher than their global peers (56%).**

It's also notable that the percentage of UK consumers who feel very comfortable giving brands their personal data in exchange for an improved experience has inched up.

While dismally low at 19% this year, it was only 11% last year.

UK consumers, meanwhile, aren't bemoaning the deprecation of the third-party cookie. Four in five consumers (79%) report being frustrated when brands suddenly appear to market to them because they searched online about the brand or a similar one. Likewise, 80% believe their data will be more private when web browsers phase out tracking cookies.



# ***SUMMARY AND TAKEAWAYS***



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

Yet, organisations are in different stages of their digital transformation journey. Many UK 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 personalisation 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. UK marketers who recognise 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 personalised 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 organisation 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.

# NOW, LET'S GET STARTED.

Brands need a partner committed to supporting them as they strive to do what's best for their customers. They also need a partner with a vision for CX and how open technology can support it. Learn why Acquia is that partner.

[LEARN MORE ▶](#)



# Acquia

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## **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 organisations to rapidly compose and deploy digital products and services that engage customers, enhance conversions and help businesses stand out.

