

Marketers' View

2019

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Customer Engagement



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/ Introduction

Welcome to the DMA's first examination of marketers' attitudes towards customer engagement.

Since 2016, we have been surveying consumers to discover how they feel about the attempts of brands to engage them, persuade them to buy and keep them coming back for more. Full results of the most recent consumer polls are available in the ['Acquisition and the Consumer Mindset'](#) and ['How to Win Trust and Loyalty'](#) reports.

This new study of over 200 marketers from all industries and business sizes provides the first comparison with the customer research. The result is fascinating food for thought about the differences between what brands deem successful customer engagement strategies and what consumers say engages them – or doesn't.

The data show us that marketers are potentially over-valuing the importance of some customer engagement channels, including social media, and missing what customers really want in others. They're also focusing heavily on price and offers when other factors can be even more effective in gaining customers' attention and loyalty.

For example, in a world where supermarkets are discussing reducing the number of product variants on shelves and technology is moving closer to making these decisions, consumers actually highlight 'choice' as a key to their customers.

Meanwhile, we have found that brands are guilty of concentrating most of their marketing efforts on features that don't overly enthrall consumers, such as being 'cool' and supporting their personal development, when actually what really matters to them is solid functionality of the product or service and a commitment to great corporate citizenship.

In a world where supermarkets are discussing reducing the number of product variants on shelves and technology (such as Amazon's Alexa) is moving closer to making these decisions for us, this research points to marketers potentially undervaluing the importance of 'choice' to their customers.

We also throw the spotlight on the brands marketers believe have winning customer engagement strategies. It's no surprise that omni-present ecommerce leader Amazon is picked as best of the bunch – but even now, marketers appear to be underestimating the brand's effect on consumers.

We attend to the differences between acquisition and retention campaigns, and consider what makes each a success in the eyes of consumers and marketers. Here again, marketing communications are largely focused on brand awareness, while customers are asking for more and clearer information.

Great customer engagement should result in loyalty. In turn, those returning customers want to be rewarded, and it's clear from the results that a surprising number of brands are ignoring loyalty programmes and the additional engagement on offer.

Overall, our survey of marketers provides deep insight into the current state of customer engagement and the challenges facing brands that are intent on making their communications even more eye-catching and effective. We hope this report helps you assess your efforts today and reset your agenda for greater engagement tomorrow.

Scott Logie
Chair of the DMA Customer Engagement Committee
MD at REaD Group Insight

/ Foreword - Pure360

On studying the results of this inaugural survey into marketers' attitudes towards customer engagement, it seems to me that there are two key takeaways: firstly, marketers have a generally good understanding of what their customers want and how they can better engage with them; secondly – and rather more importantly – 'generally good' is not enough given the current retail climate.

2018 was a challenging year for brands of all shapes and sizes. From large to small, high street to online, many have seen unsettled consumer confidence and dwindling loyalties translate to reduced revenues. As a result, getting customer engagement right has never been as great a priority as it is now – though while it's clear that marketers are aware of this, what's less clear is that they consistently know what the best way is of going about it.

One of the key areas that marketers are getting right is the value they place in email engagement. Email is still widely used and – more importantly – highly valued, and rightly so. Email marketing consistently emerges as a clear communicational preference for customers, as the report highlights with 54% of consumers saying they prefer to hear from new brands primarily via email and two thirds (66%) agreeing that email is useful for persuading them to continue doing business with a brand. What's clear is that customers still value email as a trusted channel for delivering useful materials in a convenient, timely manner.

However, marketers are perhaps guilty of overestimating the number of customers who value face-to-face brand engagement, with three-fifths assuming that face-to-face interaction was key for customers. The stats suggest otherwise – just 43% of customers prioritised face-to-face engagement as a relevant communication channel, ranking it fourth, where email came out on top with 64%. Moreover, with only 6% of customers suggesting that face-to-face engagement was a useful retention strategy, it seems clear that customers are becoming more and more used to shopping in an increasingly digital marketplace, with lots of independent, online-only brands to choose from. The message is clear – as long as brands continue to add value to their lives, customers don't feel the need to be physically present to feel engaged.

Needless to say, what this report demonstrates is that marketers absolutely need to understand their customers and their unique brand journeys. In the age of omni-channel, it's now more important than ever for marketers to adopt a single customer viewpoint when tracking the purchasing journey and subsequent brand engagement of a customer. Having the power to understand the range of different touchpoints an individual has with your brand throughout their customer lifecycle – and, crucially, which of these touchpoints translate into genuine engagement opportunities along the way – is vital to earning and retaining customers in 2019 and beyond.

Komal Helyer
Marketing Director at Pure360

/ Executive Summary

Email and social media dominate customer engagement: 68% of marketers use email for customer engagement and 62% use social. Only 30% use post and only 17% use messenger apps.

Channel disconnect between consumers and marketers: Marketers primarily use social media, email, face-to-face and online, but consumers like email, post, online and social media.

Use of channels isn't consistent with marketers' beliefs on customer trust: Marketers believe face-to-face is most trusted by consumers (53%), but a similar number (51%) think consumers trust postal campaigns. Despite this, email and face-to-face are prioritised over post, according to marketers.

Customer loyalty is deemed solid: Marketers believe customers show more brand loyalty for considered purchases (49%) than day-to-day purchases (40%). Some 42% think consumers are generally loyal to brands, shops and websites rather than seeking alternatives.

Marketers aren't placing enough faith in the power of deals: Just 39% believe customers change brands as a result of being presented with offers; 57% of consumers said they do this.

Trust is an issue: Around a third of marketers think consumers don't know which brands to trust, but nearly half (49%) of consumers admitted the same.

The Amazon effect is more pronounced than expected: 10% of marketers chose Amazon as the most engaging brand of the last 12 months, but the ecommerce company was selected by 14% of consumers. M&S, John Lewis and Sainsbury's (all 4%) also fared well among consumers.

Marketers are under-valuing certain engagement tactics: While marketers cite quality (48%), value for money (45%) and good customer service (40%) as reasons for customer engagement success, they over-estimate some brandbased values. Instead, consumers are most interested in CSR, alongside more functional and financial drivers.

Offers are still important, but it's time to offer more: Discounts, free delivery and free gifts or samples were seen by marketers as top tactics for both acquisition and retention campaigns, but consumers are open to a range of other ways to engage; ways which are being largely overlooked by brands.

Loyalty programmes are not universally offered: Just 49% of organisations currently offer loyalty programmes, despite 70% of marketers feeling customers enjoy and value rewards offered by such schemes. Again, consumers want more than points and discounts to feel they truly valued.

Hard metrics are winning out: Marketers tend to rely on quantifiable measurements, such as sales and customer retention rates, with fewer attempting to justify budgets using awareness ratings and media exposure.

Budget and giving customers face-to-face support are key challenges: When asked to list key issues of customer engagement, 44% said limited budget, 43% providing face-to-face interaction and 29% the complicated nature of understanding and reaching people.

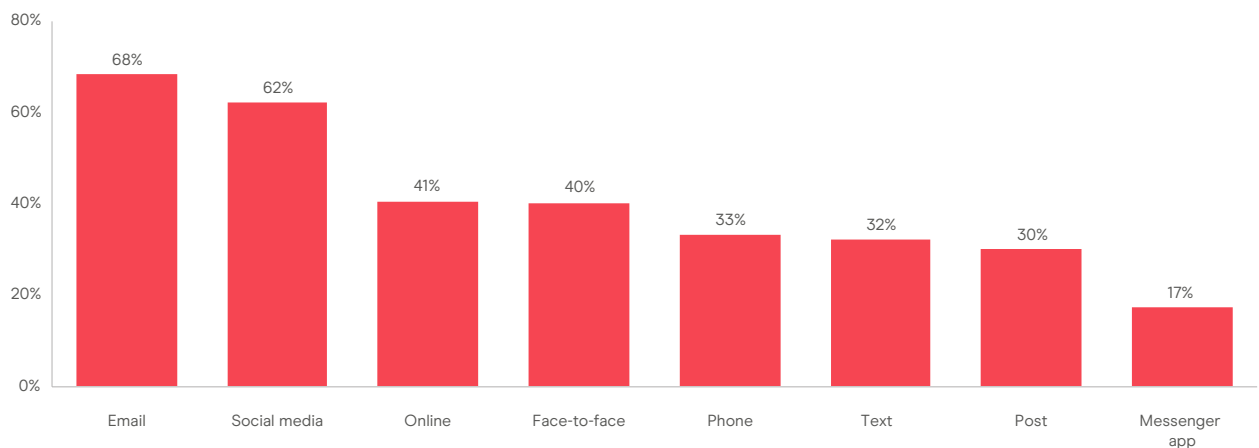
There is some confidence about future resources: While 25% of marketers expect costs to rise during the next 12 months, 32% believe they can also secure increased budget.

Ignore consumer awareness of data protection at your peril: On average, marketers believed just 41% of consumers had heard of the GDPR; but 90% of consumers said they were aware of it.

/ Channels of Engagement

When asked which channels marketers are currently using to engage their customers, two-thirds name email as the first-choice (68%). Social media was a close second (62%), well ahead of online engagement programmes (41%). Just behind online was face-to-face, with 40% of marketers recognising a sizeable proportion of consumers demand human contact. Messaging apps lagged behind all other channels (17%).

Thinking about your own organisation, which of the following channels do you currently use, either for customer acquisition or retention, as part of your customer engagement programme?



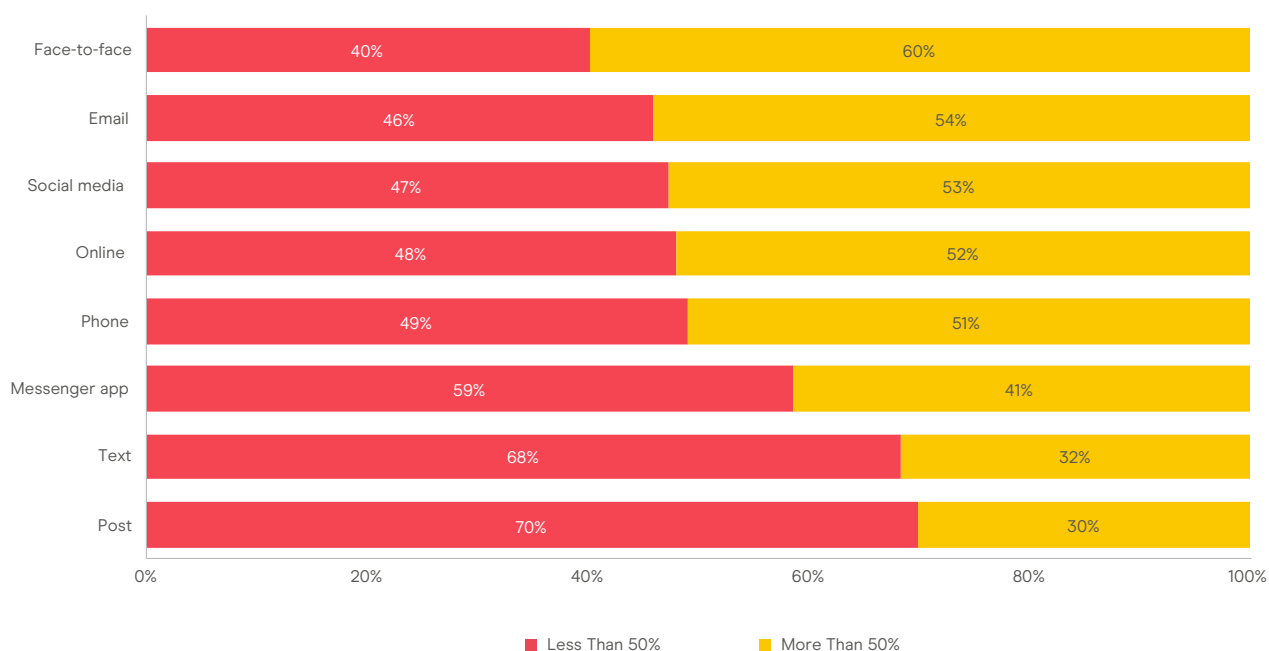
When thinking about channels used specifically to attract new customers, marketers over-valued the effect of social media. Some 28% of them rated social as one of their top two acquisition channels, ahead of email (18%), face-to-face (16%) and online (10%). Compare that with consumers, who said they prefer to hear from new brands primarily via email (54%), followed by post (33%), and only then via online and social media (both 14%).

Talking about retention strategies, social media also appears over-appreciated, and postal communication underappreciated. Once again, social was top for trying to keep customers: 22% of marketers picked it in their top two channels, ahead of email (18%), face-to-face (16%) and phone (14%). But while two thirds (66%) of consumers agreed that email was useful for persuading them to continue doing business with a brand, post (27%) shot up to second in their eyes, ahead of text messages (13%). Social (10%) was only the fifth-most popular channel, with face-to-face notably last (6%).

The latter result is interesting, because when marketers were subsequently asked which channels they thought were most relevant to consumers, face-to-face was placed first (60%), ahead of email (54%) and social (53%). Similar to their thoughts on loyalty, consumers were not as keen on the relevance of face-to-face

communication (43%), ranking it fourth behind email (64%), social media (50%) and post (49%). Overall, marketers recognised there are ways in which they can be more relevant, but there is work to be done to achieve relevance in the eyes of the consumer.

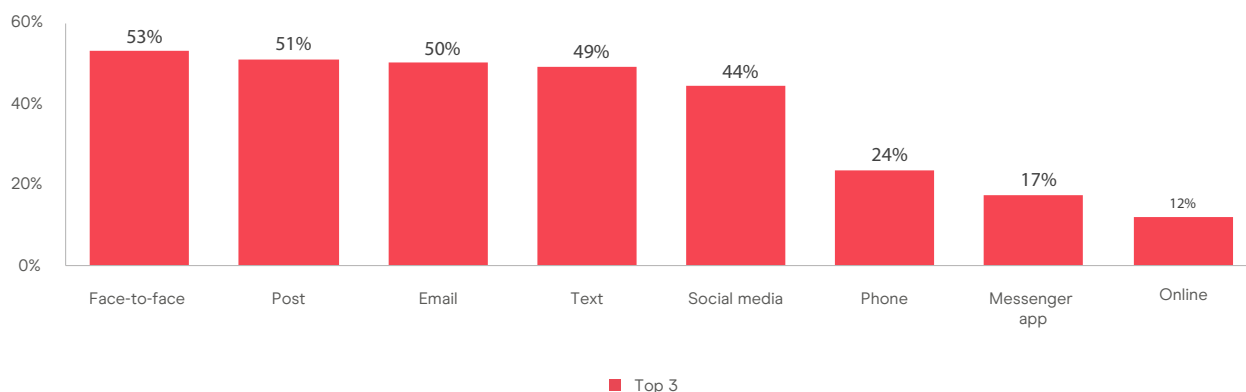
Thinking about the marketing messages you send to customers across various channels, how many of these do you believe to be relevant to individual customers?



Once again, mail was unpopular among marketers in the relevance stakes, but the data suggests they might be missing a trick, making for an intriguing response when marketers discussed consumers' trust in the channels available to them. Here, post was ranked second (appearing in 51% of marketers' top three choices) despite the majority of marketers shunning mail for campaigns. Post was just beaten by face-to-face (53%) but was ahead of email (50%).

Both phone (bottom three for 51% of marketers) and online (64%) were deemed relatively untrustworthy, despite their widespread use in campaigns. Marketers seem aware of potential concerns around 'nuisance' calls and wellpublicised issues around the transparency of online advertising. There was also a general uncertainty over the use of messenger apps in terms of acquisition and retention campaigns, as well as how trusted they are (32%). But this may change as apps develop, and consumers become more familiar with them and share their views on the use of them.

In general, which of these channels do you believe are most trusted by consumers?

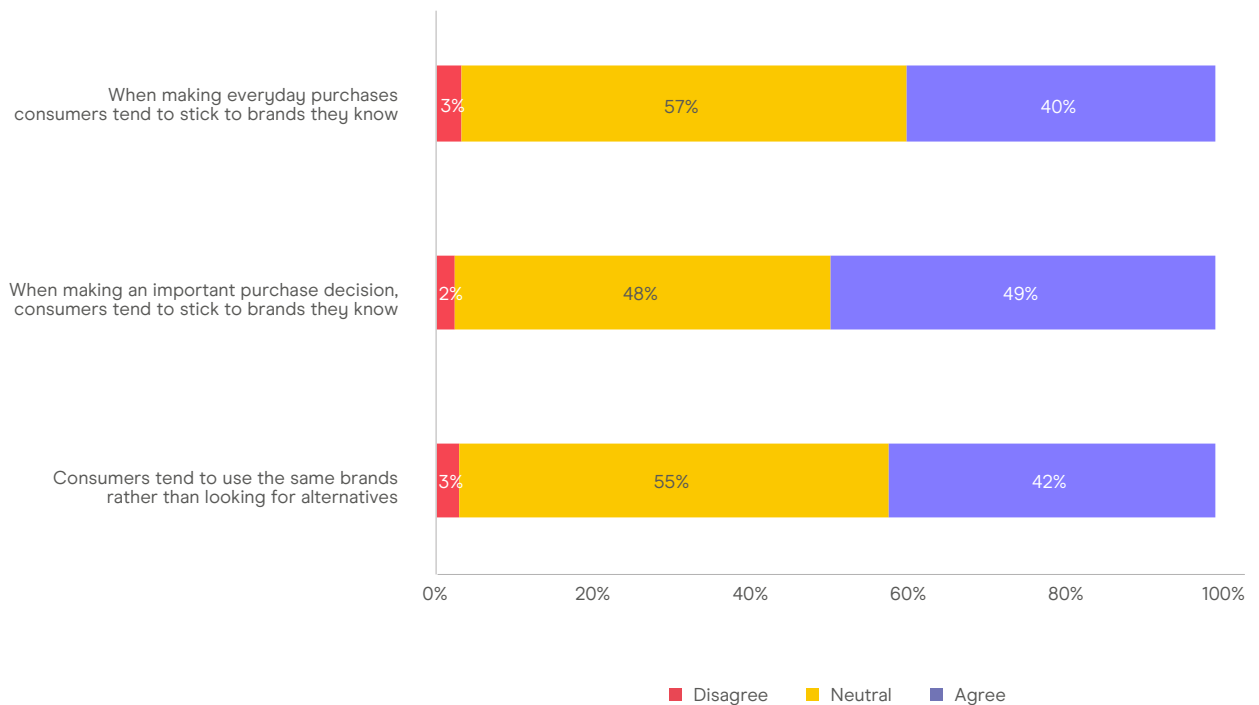


There is a disconnect between how marketers perceive consumers' loyalty and what consumers actually feel. Just 26% of marketers agreed with the statement, 'Consumers are less loyal to brands and companies now compared to a year ago', while well over a third (39%) of consumers agreed.

Meanwhile, 39% of marketers believed consumers would be persuaded to 'shop around' for new brands when presented with deals. A far greater proportion of consumers (57%) said they would be prompted to switch brands by an offer, suggesting marketers are under-estimating the power of deals to break brand loyalty. However, marketers' sentiments were closer to consumers' when asked how ending offers would affect loyalty: 30% of marketers and 40% of consumers said this would stop people buying from a brand.

Customers' loyalty split opinion across a range of considerations. While almost half (49%) of marketers thought consumers would stick to the same brand for 'important purchases', they believed people were more fickle for day-to-day transactions (40%). Furthermore, a minority of marketers (42%) considered consumers loyal overall, and tending to use the same brands, shops or websites rather than casting their net for alternatives.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

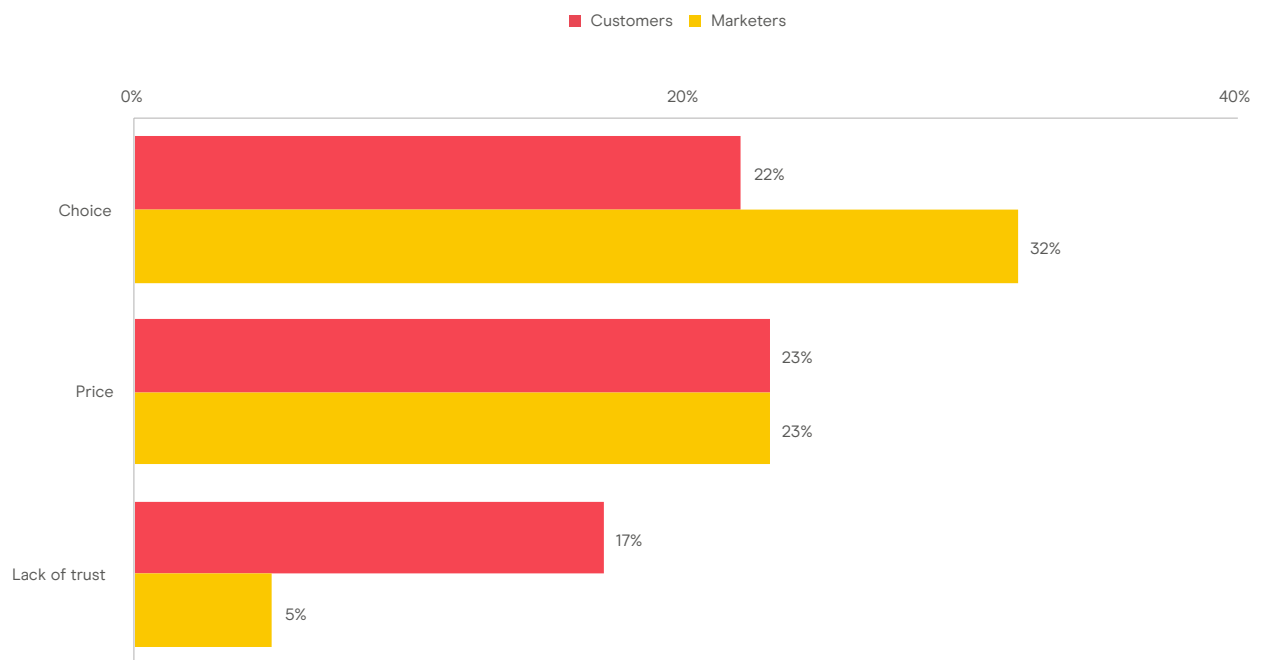


There is also some concern about this lack of loyalty, and many marketers believe it stems from poor levels of brand trust. Nearly a third (30%) said consumers don't know what makes a company or brand trustworthy and a similar proportion (32%) suggested consumers find it hard to trust marketing communications. This could correspond with our previous consumer research findings, where 49% of respondents admitted they didn't know which brands to trust.

One of the three main reasons for declining loyalty is a lack of trust – although it was ranked third behind 'choice' (more options and competition; new and imported products) and 'price' (deals) by both marketers and consumers. In fact, just 5% of marketers blamed lack of trust for falling loyalty, compared to 17% of consumers. This gulf suggests marketers may not be taking the issue of building trust seriously enough, with many preferring to contend that 'choice' (picked by 32% of marketers versus 22% of consumers) and 'price' (23% for both groups) are responsible for distrust.

Interestingly, there were several other reasons cited by marketers. Chief among these, stated by 13% of respondents, was new channels spurring people to shop around. An additional 10% blamed 'customer mindset' and their need for novelty, more choice and better products, driven by that increase in channels. Just 3% of marketers believed product or service quality was a factor and only 2% thought lack of rewards was important.

Why do you think consumers are less loyal to brands and companies now than they were a year ago?



/ Winning Brands

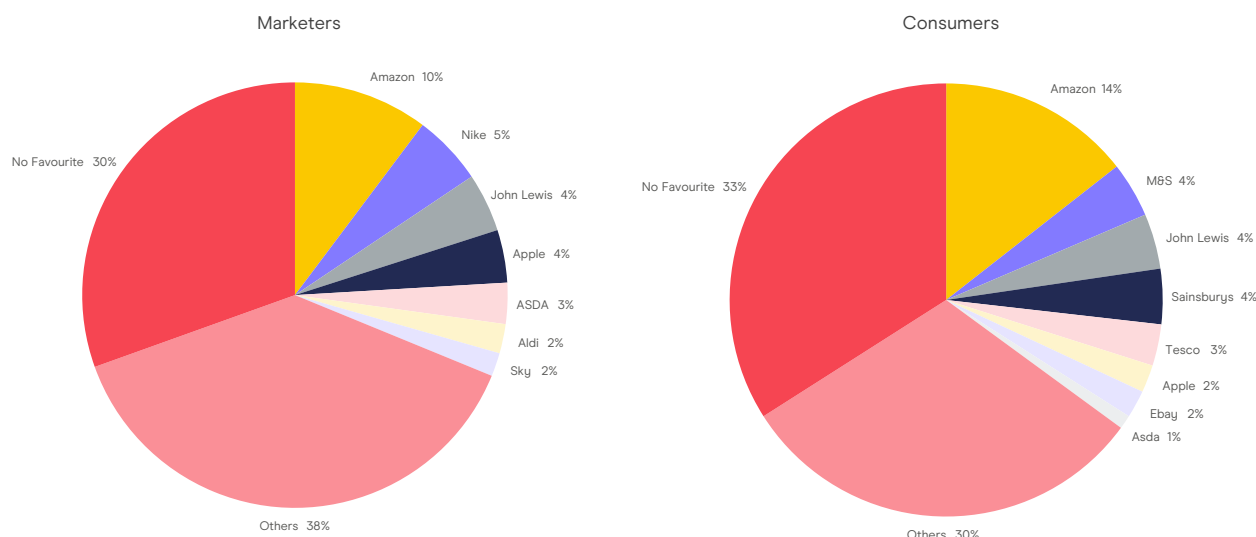
Like businesses, marketers are well aware of the effect Amazon is having on the industry. One in ten (10%) named the ecommerce giant as the most engaging brand they had seen in the last 12 months. However, that still fell short of the 14% of consumers who rated Amazon the best and most engaging brand.

Other favourites cited by both marketers and consumers were: John Lewis (ranked third by both groups, named by 4% of each); Apple (4% of marketers, 2% of consumers); and Asda (3% of marketers, 1% of consumers).

Several high-profile brands such as Nike and Sky appeared in marketers' top picks but weren't among consumers' main choices. It could be that marketing professionals choose brands due to industry awareness of their innovative customer engagement strategies – such as media coverage or winning industry awards. However, this doesn't appear to have translated into wider consumer interest yet.

The sheer number of brands named by consumers and marketers is characterised by the fragmented nature of responses. Amazon was the only brand to garner a double-digit percentage in either ranking, with a long tail (38%) of 'others' chosen by marketers and consumers (30%). Meanwhile, 33% of consumers and 30% of marketers couldn't name a favourite.

Think about customer engagement campaigns or strategies you've seen over the last year. In your opinion, which brand would you say did well/the best?



For their part, marketers believed the traditional elements of quality (48%), value for money (45%) and good customer service (40%) were the keys to top brands' success in engaging consumers. Reliability (39%) and ease of use (37%) followed.

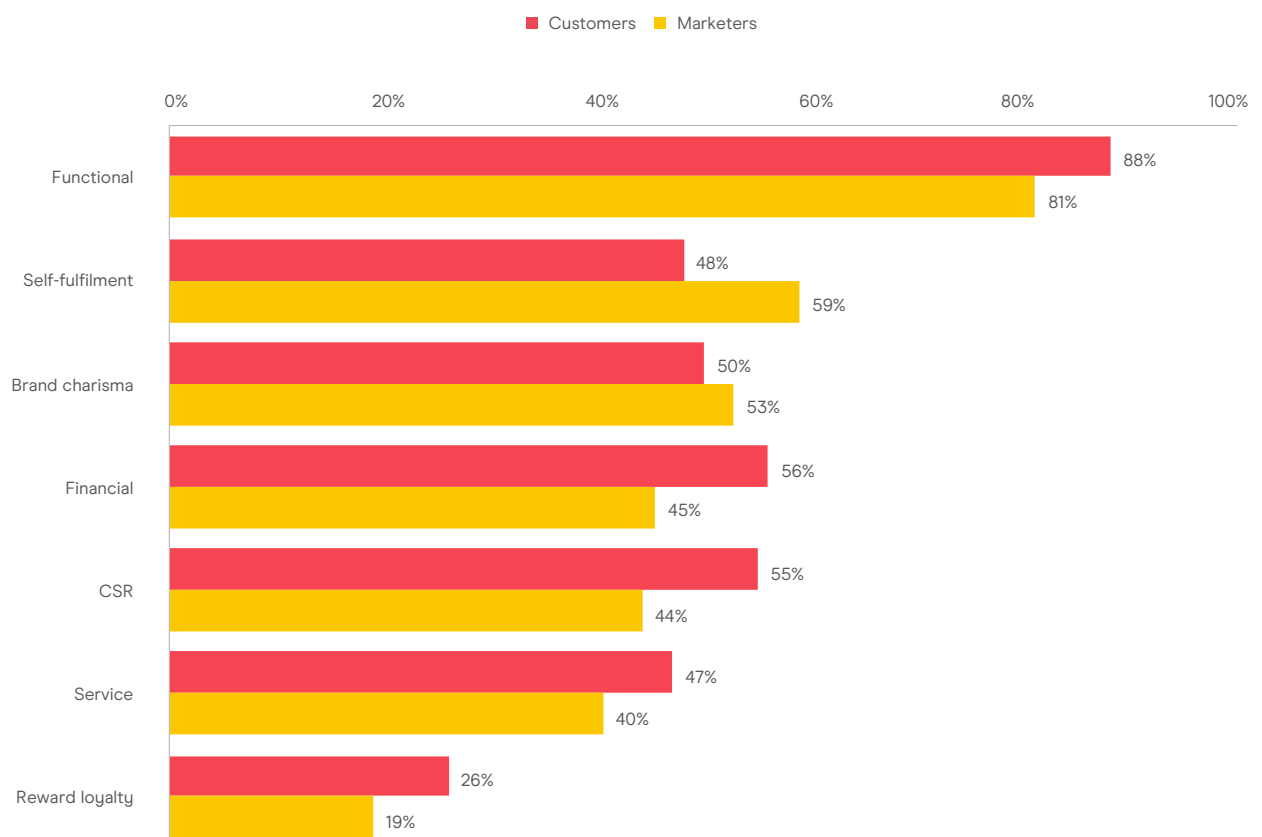
The first sense of brand over function appeared further down the list: having a good reputation was seen as important by 36% of marketers, fun and entertainment was chosen by 29%, and inspiration and new ideas by 28%.

Interestingly, just one in 10 (10%) believed acting in an environmentally responsible way is an important ingredient of brand success. Slightly more (16%) said helping a customer achieve their goals (e.g. weight loss or budgeting) was key, while 17% thought a brand demonstrating employee welfare was a crucial element.

We then compared marketers' and consumers' thoughts on successful brand attributes. Both groups (88% of customers and 81% of marketers) agreed that a 'functional-first' approach – ease of use, quality, reliability, convenient availability – boosts a brand's chance of success.

Marketers over-estimated brands' ability to help their customers with self-fulfilment targets and they also had a little more faith in 'brand charisma'. However, there were several areas where customers highlighted measures of success more than marketers. The widest splits were in financial/value for money, chosen by 56% of consumers but 45% of marketers, and CSR (55% to 44%). Rewarding loyalty was deemed the least important success factor by both customers (26%) and marketers (19%).

What is it about this brand that made you name them as doing customer engagement particularly well/the best?



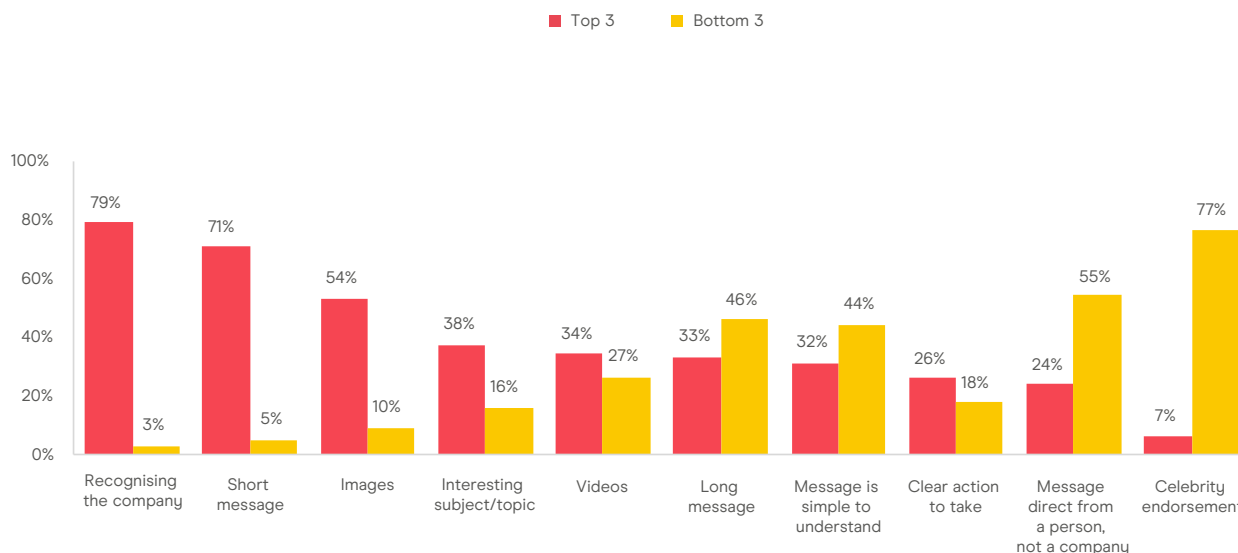
Overall, marketers must be careful not to pull the wrong value levers. There are some brand characteristics that consumers would clearly reward with custom if they were present: functionality, financial support and good citizenship. Consequently, marketers shouldn't only focus on the more intimate relationship between their brand and customers (charisma and self-fulfilment), but it's important they develop loyalty in the ways that are fundamental to customers too.

/ Engaging Content

From the marketers' point of view, brand recognition is the leading factor in boosting consumers' response to campaigns. The vast majority (79%) made this one of their top reasons for response, alongside the use of short messages (71%) – a recognition that consumers are surrounded by marketing messages and that media fragmentation has led to shorter attention spans. Use of campaign imagery (54%) and choosing interesting subjects (38%) were also seen as important.

In our previous research, consumers showed they hold similar beliefs about what would make them respond to marketing messages. Some 42% cited brand recognition as important. The second-most popular choice was slightly different, however, 38% said marketing that was simple to understand – as opposed to just short – was important in triggering a response. Only around a third of marketers (32%) agreed, but it's clear that they must consider the clarity of the campaign for consumers when choosing brief messages.

Thinking more about the customer engagement campaigns and the marketing messages you send to customers, which of the following are most effective in encouraging customers to respond?

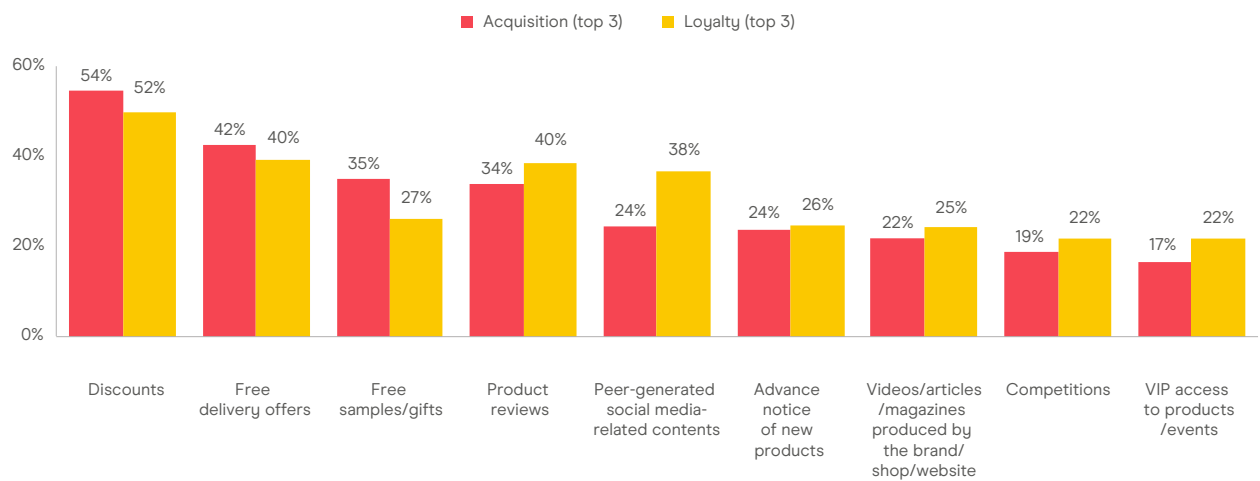


Both acquisition and retention campaigns are highly focused on offers. Discounts were the top tactic for picking up new customers (54%) and keeping them loyal (52%). Free delivery followed with 42% believing it was the most effective tactic for acquisition, 40% for retention. More freebies, in the form of samples and gifts, were chosen for 35% of acquisition campaigns, though only 27% of retention messaging.

Product reviews (40%) and peer-generated social media content (38%) were among other retention tactics deemed successful. This is important because brands would do well to recognise there are other ways of building loyalty that go beyond offers.

Previously, consumers have told us they also value user guides (22%), product update information (21%), a strong feedback mechanism and product reviews (both 15%), among other things.

Which of the following types of marketing messages are most effective in helping you achieve your campaign objectives?



/ Loyalty Programmes

We've already seen that loyalty rewards aren't considered particularly important by the majority of marketers and consumers when used specifically for engagement. This is potentially reflected in the 43% of marketers who told us their organisation does not have a loyalty scheme in place (a further 8% weren't sure either way). The proportions were roughly similar for both B2B and B2C organisations here too, which some may find surprising.

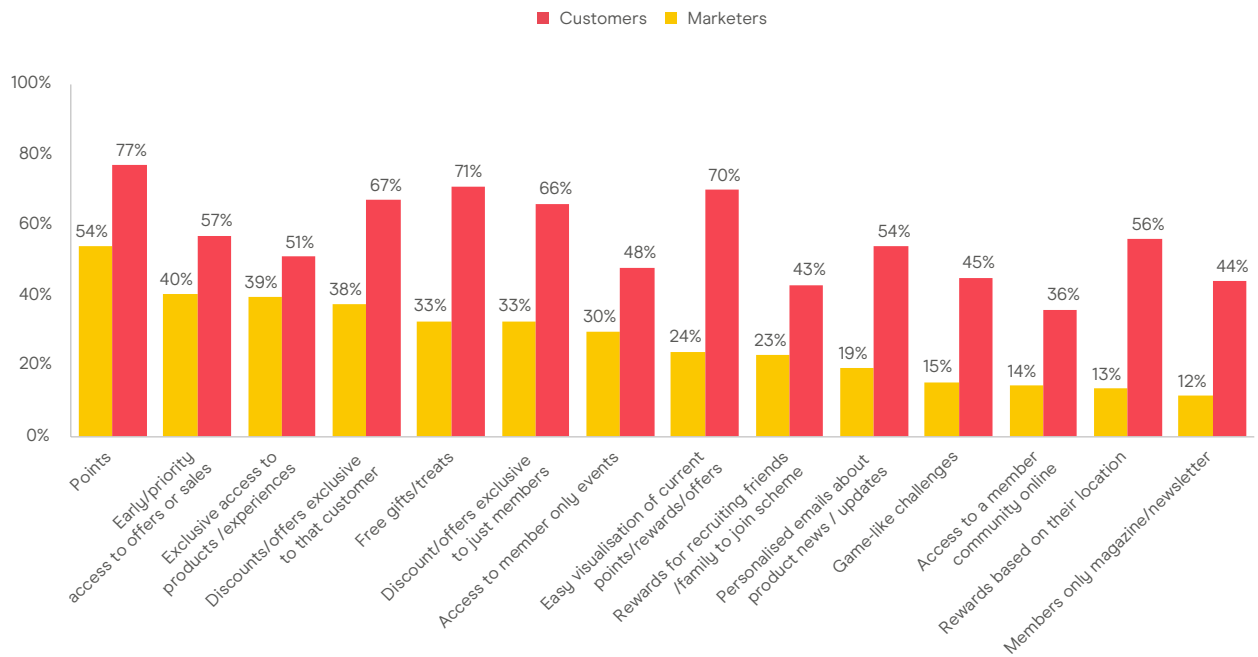
However, 70% of marketers did think their customers value the rewards offered by loyalty programmes. This almost perfectly matches the 69% of consumers who felt the same when polled in 2018 (although this showed a slight decline from 71% in 2017). More than two-thirds of customers (70%) also told us they would prefer personalised rather than general rewards.

Marketers and consumers were split on which benefits generate greater loyalty. Some 77% of consumers like being given points to use, but only 54% of marketers chose this type of reward as being the most effective. In fact, consumers were more enthusiastic about a range of benefits: priority access to sales (57% compared to 40% of marketers); exclusive member discounts (67% vs. 38%); and free gifts (71% vs. 33%).

There are some clear opportunities for marketers to tap into these preferences to better engage their loyal customers. There was a 46 percentage point gap between customers who wanted easier visualisation of their points balance and marketers who thought this was effective, a 43 percentage point gap for offering location-based rewards, a 35 percentage point gap in the desire for personalised product emails and a 30-point difference for gamification.

Paying heed and responding to these customers' needs and desires could make all the difference in boosting customer retention.

Which of these loyalty/rewards programme benefits are most effective in generating customer loyalty? (Compared to consumers that 'receive and value/would like to receive' these rewards)

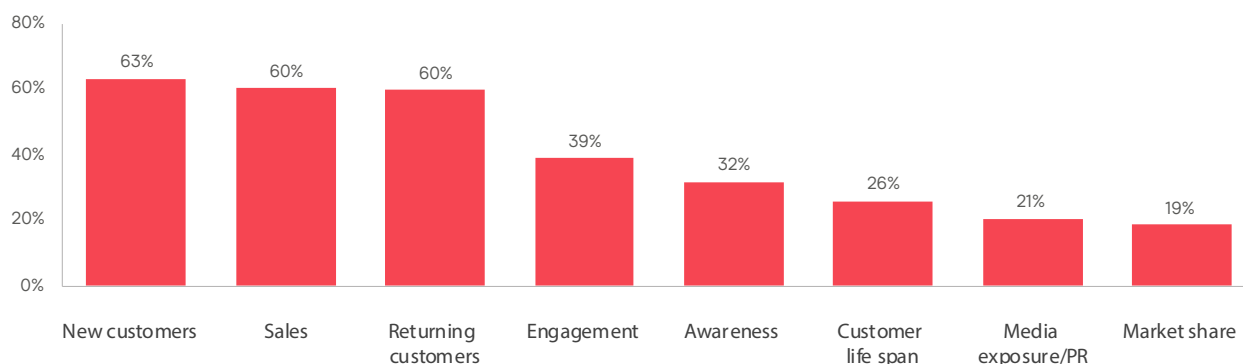


/ Campaign Evaluation

Data shows that marketers tend to gauge campaign effectiveness using more tangible and easier to measure metrics. Almost two-thirds (63%) use customer acquisition figures to evaluate campaigns, while sales and returning customers have been selected by 60%. The top three measures for B2C marketers were new customers, then sales, followed by returning customers. For B2B marketers the order was new customers, returning customers then sales.

'Softer' metrics of customer engagement campaigns were less frequently used. Indeed, 39% of marketers reported measuring their marketing campaign engagement, 32% the awareness and 21% the media exposure. A possible hypothesis behind this general attitude could be either low confidence with these metrics – they're complex to collect and calculate – or by the resistance from the organisations' boardroom. Hence, the greater focus on firmer calculations.

What are the key metrics you use to evaluate the effectiveness of your organisation's customer engagement programme?



Hard metrics were also preferred for loyalty programmes; 56% of marketers rated their schemes by increased sales, followed by membership numbers (38%) and database penetration (37%).

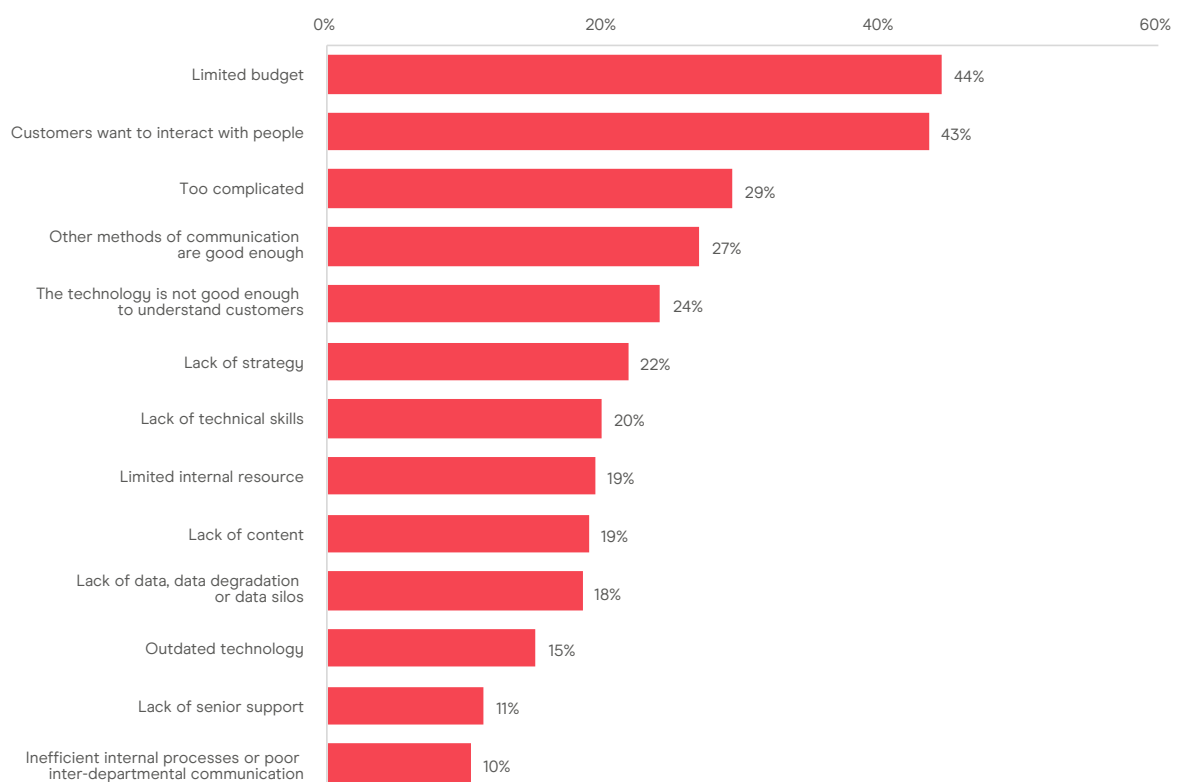
/ Challenges and Budgets

Looking to the immediate future, roughly the same proportion of marketers saw budget limitations (44%) and people's desire for human interaction (43%) as the main barriers to better customer engagement. The latter point was more pronounced by B2B marketers.

Others felt challenged by having the right tools for the job. Almost three in 10 (29%) suggested customer engagement was 'too complicated' to be successful and just under a quarter (24%) said the technology at their disposal was not giving them a good enough understanding of their customers.

However, they were more confident about the internal organisation of their company. Just 10% said interdepartmental communication would be a key challenge, only 11% highlighted a lack of senior support for customer engagement strategies and fewer than a fifth (18%) said data availability, integrity and structure were problems.

What are the most significant challenges to improving the customer engagement campaigns and the marketing messages you send to customers?



While a quarter of marketers were sure costs would rise in the subsequent 12 months, a bigger proportion (32%) were confident of securing additional budget for customer engagement, highlighting some positivity despite uncertainties in the wider UK economy surrounding Brexit.

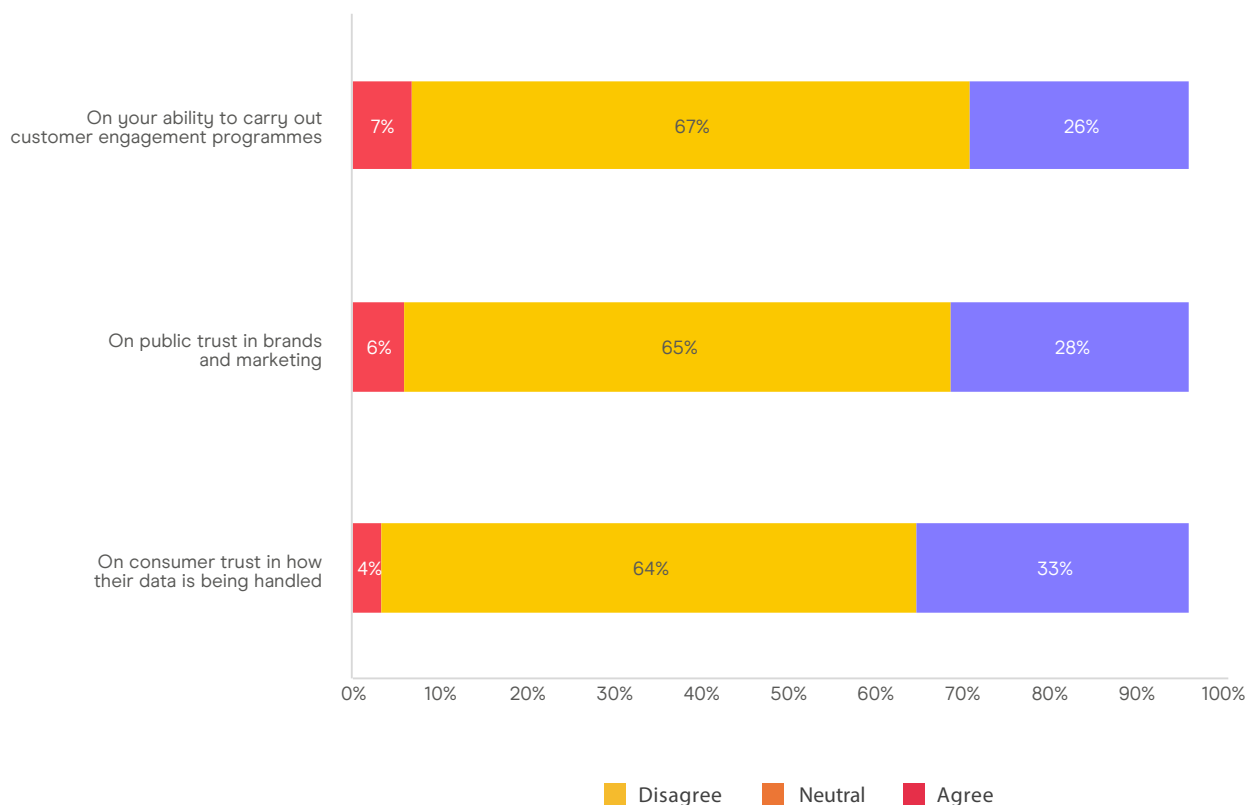
/ GDPR Effect

Marketers rate consumers' consciousness of the new data regulations much lower than the true level. According to marketers, around 41% of consumers know about the GDPR. However, in our previous study, 90% of consumers professed to being aware of the new data laws. Meaning marketers really should pay extra attention to how they discuss data with their customers, ensuring they are holding to the principles of accountability and transparency within the new legislation. Only then will brands earn the trust they need when it comes to consumers and their data.

For their own part, a majority of marketers said GDPR was making no impact on their customer engagement programmes, or on consumer trust. However, up to a third of marketers thought the new regulations were already having a positive effect on these factors.

More information on the effects of the GDPR and organisations' preparedness to implement and comply with the regulations can be found in the DMA's ['Data privacy – An Industry Perspective'](#) report, December 2018.

The GDPR came into force in May 2018. What impact have these new laws had on the following?



/ Methodology

'Customer Engagement – Marketers' View' is an initiative undertaken by the DMA in partnership with Pure 360 and the DMA's Customer Engagement Committee.

The research was conducted in November 2018 via an online survey of 228 UK marketers. Respondents represented a range of department types, sectors and career levels.

The data was collected and collated by Qualtrics, then analysed by the DMA Insight department. The report was written and designed by the DMA Insight department and in-house design team.

The survey consisted of a maximum of 35 questions. These questions were reviewed by the DMA, Pure 360 and the Research hub of the DMA Customer engagement committee to ensure relevance to the current state of the industry.

Of those answering the relevant question, 25% worked in B2B marketing, 27% in B2C, and 48% worked in both B2B and B2C. In addition, 42% were from senior positions, 30% from mid-level and 28% junior roles.

If you have any questions about the methodology used in the report, you can contact the DMA's research team via email: research@dma.org.uk.

/ About the DMA

The Data & Marketing Association (DMA) comprises the DMA, Institute of Data & Marketing (IDM) and DMA Talent.

We seek to guide and inspire industry leaders; to advance careers; and to nurture the next generation of aspiring marketers.

We champion the way things should be done, through a rich fusion of technology, diverse talent, creativity, insight – underpinned by our customer-focussed principles.

We set the standards marketers must meet in order to thrive, representing over 1,000 members drawn from the UK's data and marketing landscape.

By working responsibly, sustainably and creatively, together we will drive the data and marketing industry forward to meet the needs of people today and tomorrow.

www.dma.org.uk

/ About Pure360

Pure360 is a marketing technology company providing email and personalisation solutions for eCommerce. Put simply we help eCommerce and marketing professionals achieve better results.

Providing UK marketers with an unrivalled combination of a powerful, data-driven Marketing Personalisation Suite (Pure360 Marketing Suite) and an industry-leading Maturity Model we are focused on accelerating customer results across email, mobile, web and social.

We deliver best in class results for over 1,400 customers across the eCommerce, Retail and Travel sectors. Pure360 customers include Tetley, innocent, Park Holidays, Ultimo, Blue Bay, Patisserie Valerie and Wagamama.

Our Maturity Model delivered through our best practice framework and account managers, is proven to take brands through a marketing maturity journey; helping them to improve customer lifetime value, enhance their customer experiences and drive deeper brand engagement.



/ About the Campaign

We put the customer at the heart of everything we do – especially when it comes to our Customer Engagement campaign.

This campaign uses research and insight to help you maximise your engagement for the benefit of marketers and consumers alike.

If you build a rapport with your customers, and you have something they want, then they will buy from you again and again.

We want to know what builds this rapport. We know creativity, data and technology are factors, but we don't know how the interplay works.

This campaign aims to discover what makes brilliant engagement.

Check out our popular Marketer Email Tracker and Consumer Email Tracker, and explore our engaging infographics which are breaking down key ideas.

We also run events to encourage better Customer Engagement. Keep an eye on your emails, or visit our events page to book your spot.

Tap into DMA research, insights, thought leadership, and networking events on offer by visiting the DMA online and discover how you can get involved with and get the most out of our Customer Engagement campaign.

Better engagement means better business.

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