THE EVOLUTION OF AI IN MARKETING

2025

Research Created for Marketers

Ascend2
RESEARCH-BASED MARKETING

IN THIS REPORT...

PUT THIS CONTENT TO GOOD USE!

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT:

TIP #1: ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE by turning the charts and insights into your own content.

TIP #2: DISCOVER STRATEGIES, TACTICS AND TRENDS that are working for fellow marketers.

TIP #3: IMPROVE YOUR OWN STRATEGY by using data that is relevant to your business.

This Survey Summary Report is part of a series conducted in partnership with our participating Research Partners.

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METHODOLOGY

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of marketing strategies, tactics and the technology that drives them with a standardized online questionnaire and a proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing professionals and marketing research subscribers.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

N = 312 Marketing Decision-Makers

Primary Marketing Channel

B2B (Business-to-Business)	23%
B2C (Business-to-Consumer)	49%
B2B and B2C Equally	28%

Number of Employees

More than 500	19%
50 to 500	30%
Fewer than 50	51%

Primary role in company

Owner / Partner / C-Level	48%
Vice President / Director / Manager	33%
Non-Management Professional	19%

THE EVOLUTION OF AI IN MARKETING 2025

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the marketing landscape at an unprecedented pace, offering innovative solutions to enhance efficiency, creativity, and customer engagement. But there are also many questions regarding AI, including ethical concerns, privacy issues, trust in the outputs, and more.

The Evolution of AI in Marketing Survey seeks to uncover key insights into how marketing professionals plan to leverage AI to drive their strategies forward in 2025. This report serves as a resource to explore trends, benchmark your efforts, and navigate the ever-changing dynamics of AI-powered marketing.

Ascend2 and our Research Partners conducted the *Evolution of AI in Marketing Survey* on January 17-20, 2025. We thank the 312 marketing professionals who participated in the survey. We aim for you to use this research to plan and execute your 2025 marketing strategy.

Here are a few recent reports in the Ascend2 research library that address the use of AI in specific marketing disciplines:

- [The Future of the Martech Stack 2025](#)
- [Content Marketing and AI](#)
- [The State of Email and Automation 2024](#)

- [The Use of AI to Advance Personalization](#)
- Explore the [Ascend2 Research Library](#) for more topics

The Evolution of AI in Marketing 2025 Survey Summary Report represents the opinions of all the market segments responding to the survey. Our participating research partners report specific market segments separately and exclusively.
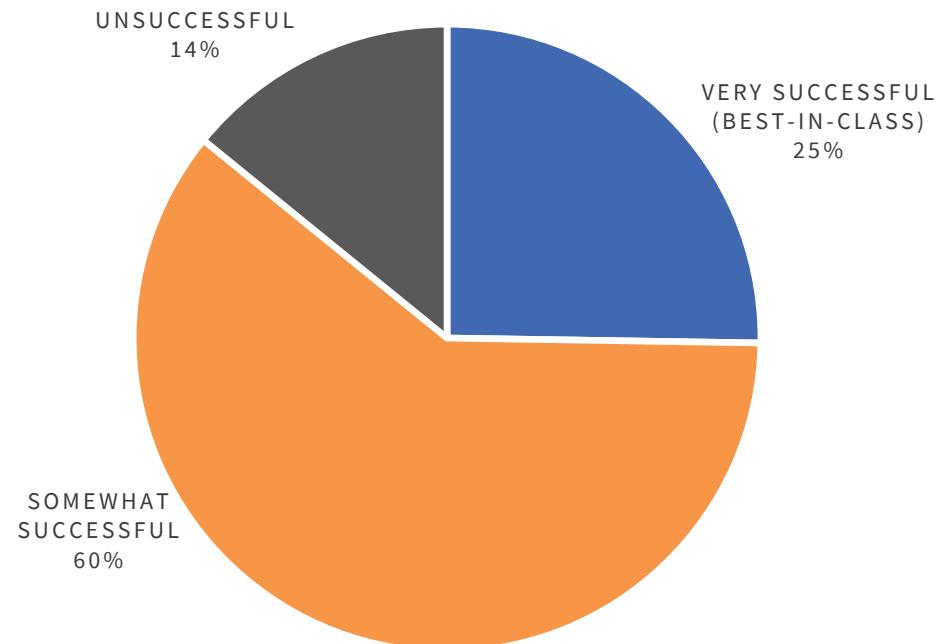
Enjoy the journey of discovery and learning this report offers, and may it assist you in using AI to enhance your marketing programs.

The Ascend2 Research Team

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SUCCESS IN THE USE OF AI FOR MARKETING

The data indicates that a substantial majority (85%) of marketing professionals find AI to be at least somewhat successful in achieving their marketing objectives, with 25% considering it best-in-class. However, 14% still struggle to see success, suggesting that while AI adoption is high, optimizing its effectiveness remains challenging for some organizations.
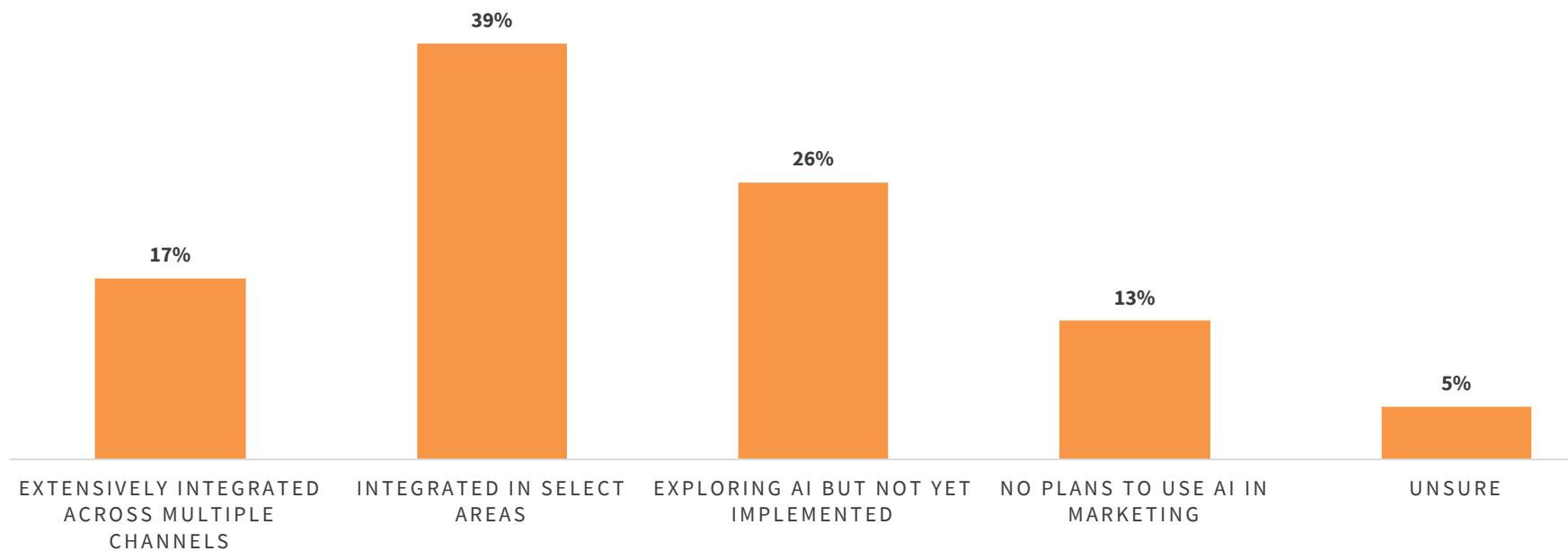
RATE THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF YOUR USE OF AI IN HELPING YOU ACHIEVE MARKETING OBJECTIVES.

UNSUCCESSFUL
14%

VERY SUCCESSFUL
(BEST-IN-CLASS)
25%

SOMEWHAT
SUCCESSFUL
60%

USE OF AI IN OVERALL MARKETING STRATEGY

AI adoption in marketing is progressing, with 56% of organizations integrating AI in select areas (39%) or extensively across multiple channels (17%). Meanwhile, 26% are actively exploring AI but have yet to implement it, indicating a strong interest but potential challenges in execution. However, 18% of respondents either have no plans to use AI (13%) or are unsure (5%), suggesting that barriers such as budget, expertise, or strategic alignment may hinder adoption for some organizations.

HOW HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION INCORPORATED AI INTO ITS MARKETING STRATEGY?

| Category	Percentage
EXTENSIVELY INTEGRATED ACROSS MULTIPLE CHANNELS	17%
INTEGRATED IN SELECT AREAS	39%
EXPLORING AI BUT NOT YET IMPLEMENTED	26%
NO PLANS TO USE AI IN MARKETING	13%
UNSURE	5%
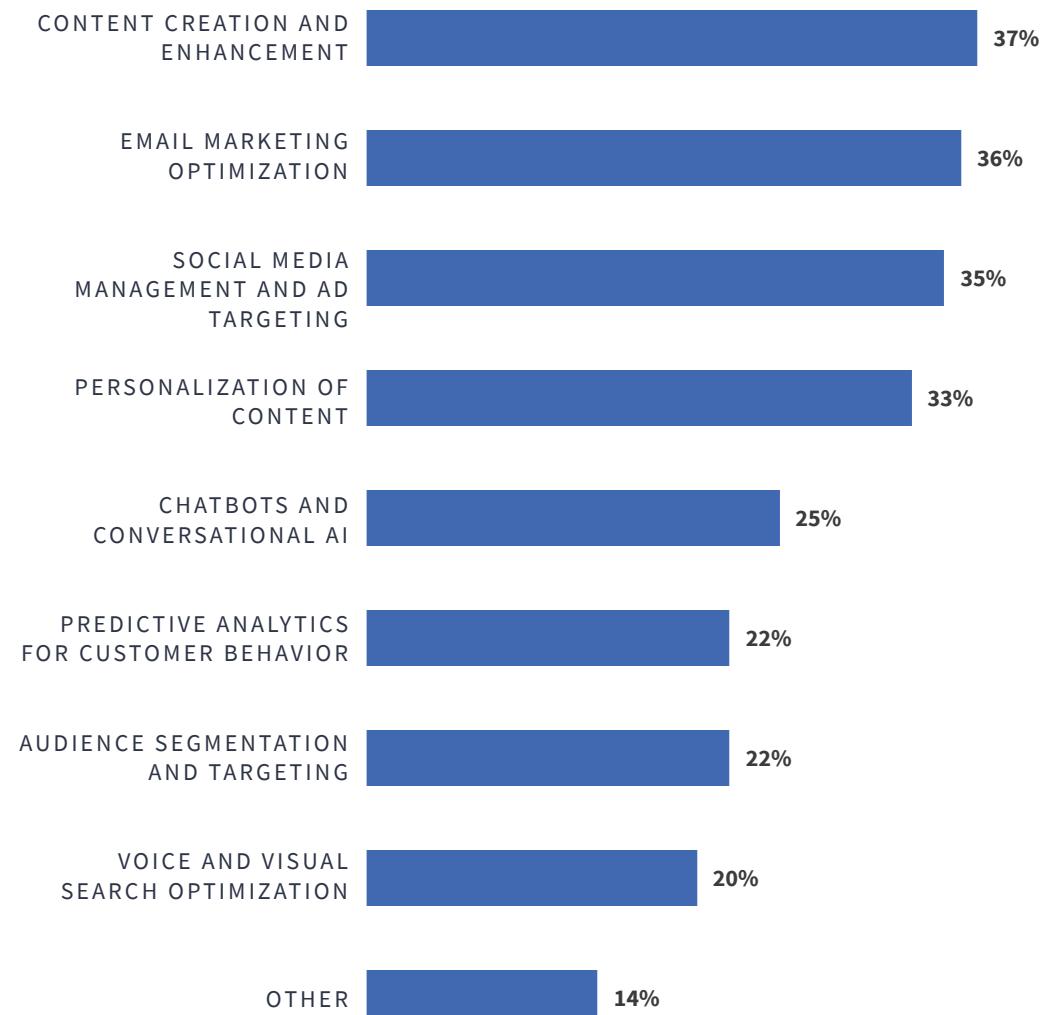
MOST EFFECTIVE AI TACTICS

The most effective AI-driven marketing tactics focus on enhancing content and communication, with content creation and enhancement (37%), email marketing optimization (36%), and social media management and ad targeting (35%) ranking as the top three strategies. Personalization of content (33%) and chatbots/conversational AI (25%) also demonstrate strong effectiveness, highlighting AI's role in improving customer engagement and automation.

Meanwhile, tactics like voice and visual search optimization (20%) and predictive analytics for customer behavior (22%) are less frequently cited, suggesting that while AI is widely used for content and ad optimization, some emerging technologies may still be in the early stages of adoption or impact.
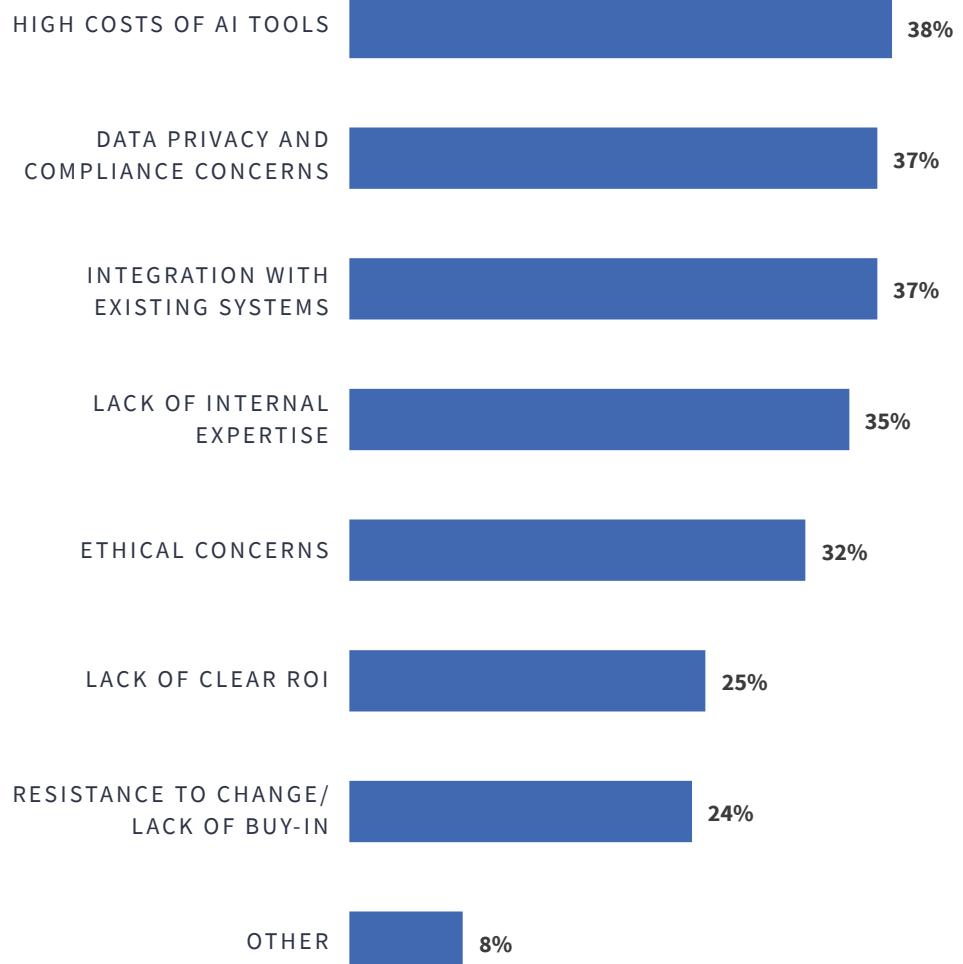
WHICH AI-DRIVEN MARKETING TACTICS HAVE BEEN MOST EFFECTIVE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Tactic	Percentage
CONTENT CREATION AND ENHANCEMENT	37%
EMAIL MARKETING OPTIMIZATION	36%
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND AD TARGETING	35%
PERSONALIZATION OF CONTENT	33%
CHATBOTS AND CONVERSATIONAL AI	25%
PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS FOR CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR	22%
AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION AND TARGETING	22%
VOICE AND VISUAL SEARCH OPTIMIZATION	20%
OTHER	14%

AI CHALLENGES

The biggest challenges in adopting AI for marketing revolve around cost, integration, and compliance, with the high costs of AI tools (38%), integration with existing systems (37%), and data privacy and compliance concerns (37%) ranking as the top obstacles. Additionally, the lack of internal expertise (35%) and ethical concerns (32%) highlight the need for more education, training, and ethical frameworks to support AI adoption. While resistance to change (24%) and unclear ROI (25%) are notable concerns, they appear less significant than structural and financial barriers, indicating that many organizations are willing to adopt AI but struggle with implementation complexities.
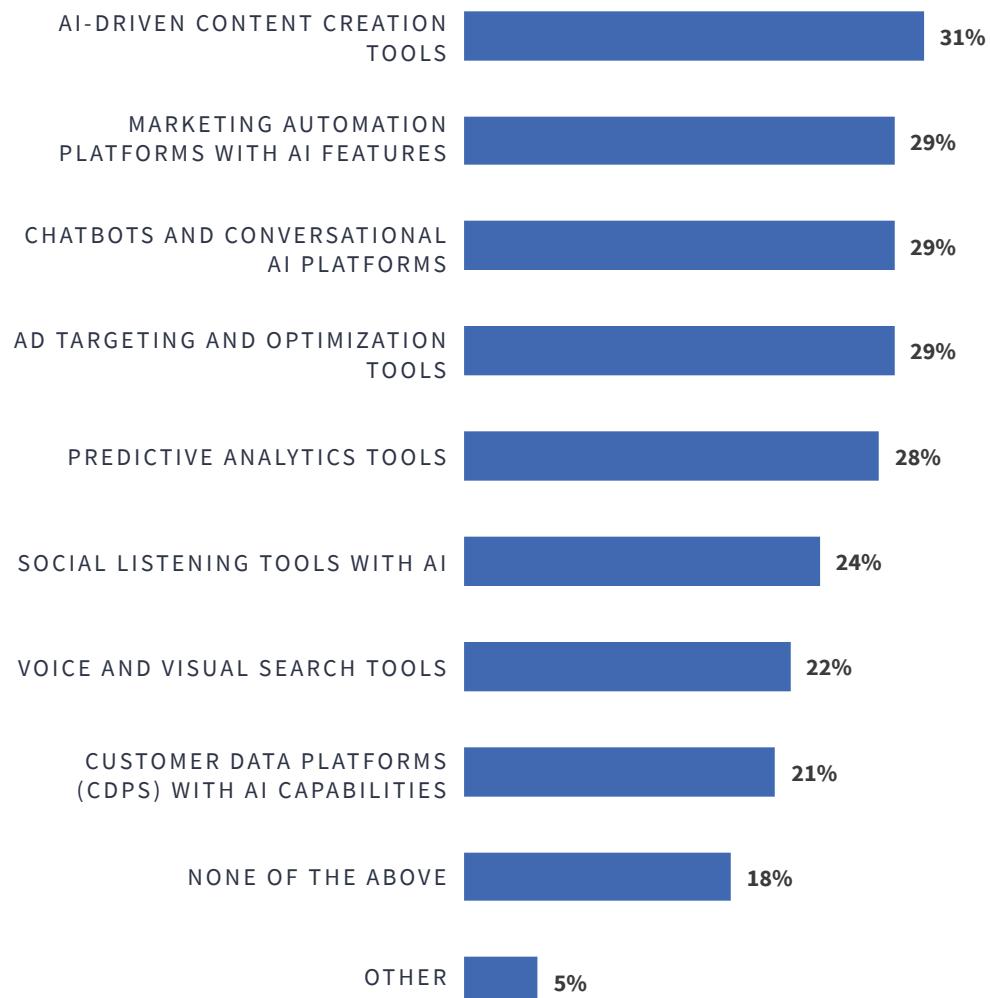
WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR TEAM FACES IN ADOPTING AI FOR MARKETING?

| Challenge	Percentage
HIGH COSTS OF AI TOOLS	38%
DATA PRIVACY AND COMPLIANCE CONCERNS	37%
INTEGRATION WITH EXISTING SYSTEMS	37%
LACK OF INTERNAL EXPERTISE	35%
ETHICAL CONCERNS	32%
LACK OF CLEAR ROI	25%
RESISTANCE TO CHANGE/ LACK OF BUY-IN	24%
OTHER	8%

AI TOOLS

AI-driven content creation tools (31%) lead the way in AI adoption for marketing, followed closely by ad targeting and optimization tools, chatbots, and marketing automation platforms (each at 29%). Predictive analytics (28%) and social listening tools (24%) are also widely used, indicating a strong emphasis on AI's ability to enhance personalization, automation, and audience insights. However, 18% of respondents report using none of these tools, suggesting that while AI is becoming a standard in marketing, a significant portion of organizations have yet to embrace its potential fully.

WHAT TYPES OF AI TOOLS DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION CURRENTLY USE FOR MARKETING?

|	
AI-DRIVEN CONTENT CREATION TOOLS	31%
MARKETING AUTOMATION PLATFORMS WITH AI FEATURES	29%
CHATBOTS AND CONVERSATIONAL AI PLATFORMS	29%
AD TARGETING AND OPTIMIZATION TOOLS	29%
PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS TOOLS	28%
SOCIAL LISTENING TOOLS WITH AI	24%
VOICE AND VISUAL SEARCH TOOLS	22%
CUSTOMER DATA PLATFORMS (CDPS) WITH AI CAPABILITIES	21%
NONE OF THE ABOVE	18%
OTHER	5%
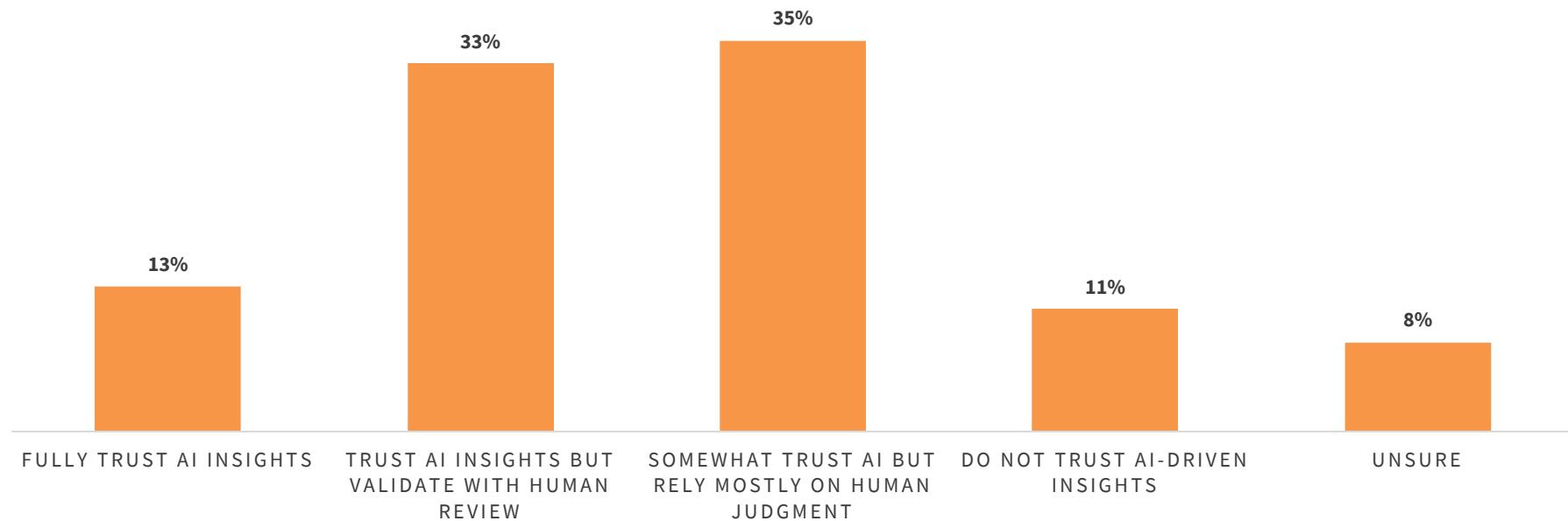
THE TRUST OF AI TO MAKE CRITICAL DECISIONS

Most marketers (68%) acknowledge the value of AI-driven insights but still rely on human judgment to some extent, with only 13% fully trusting AI. Meanwhile, 11% do not trust AI-driven insights, and 8% remain unsure, highlighting ongoing concerns about AI's reliability and the need for further validation and refinement of AI-generated recommendations.

Building Trust in AI. By implementing a human-in-the-loop approach, marketing professionals can build trust in AI insights, where AI-generated recommendations are consistently validated with human expertise and real-world testing. Additionally, increasing transparency by understanding how AI models analyze data, ensuring ethical data usage, and leveraging AI tools with explainable algorithms can help marketers gain confidence in AI-driven decision-making.
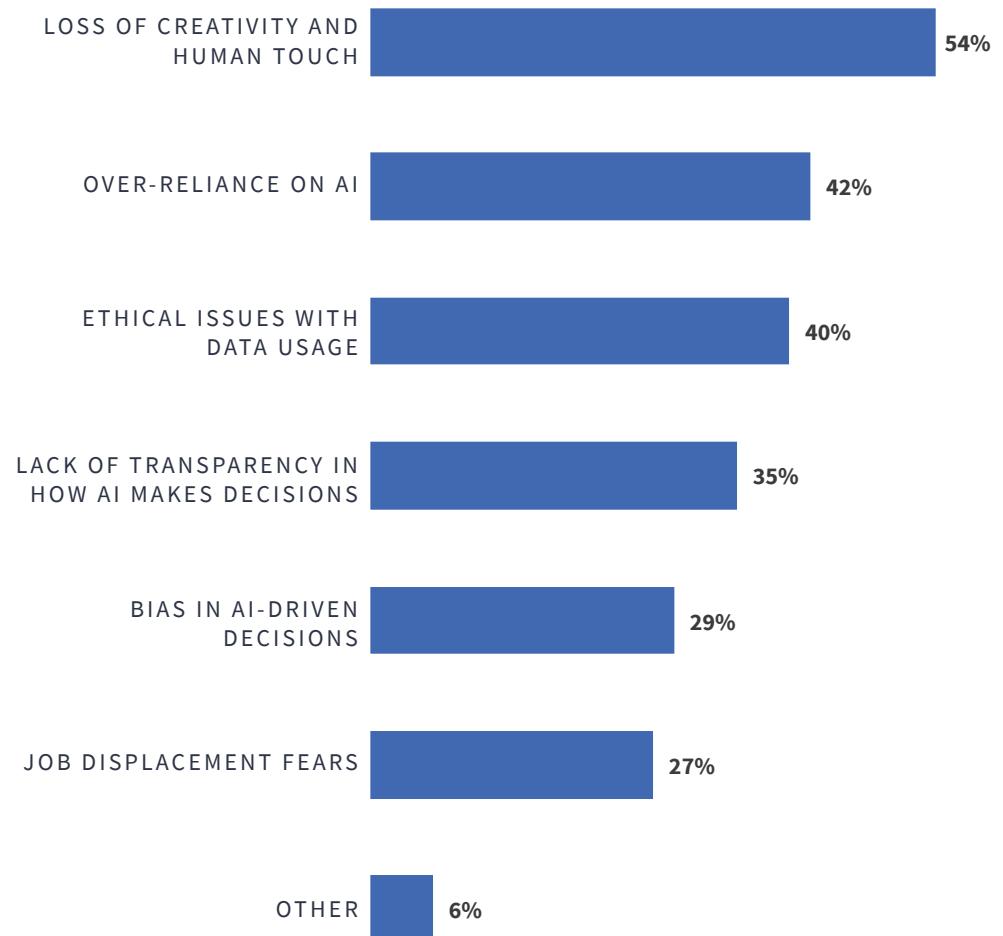
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU TRUST AI-DRIVEN INSIGHTS FOR DRIVING CRITICAL MARKETING DECISIONS?

FULLY TRUST AI INSIGHTS	TRUST AI INSIGHTS BUT VALIDATE WITH HUMAN REVIEW	SOMEWHAT TRUST AI BUT RELY MOSTLY ON HUMAN JUDGMENT	DO NOT TRUST AI-DRIVEN INSIGHTS	UNSURE
13%	33%	35%	11%	8%

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CONCERNS ABOUT USING AI

The top concern among marketers regarding AI adoption is the loss of creativity and human touch (54%), highlighting fears that AI may dilute originality and personal engagement in marketing efforts. Over-reliance on AI (42%) and ethical issues with data usage (40%) also rank highly, suggesting that while AI offers efficiency, marketers are wary of depending too much on automated processes and handling sensitive data responsibly. Additionally, concerns about bias in AI-driven decisions (29%) and lack of transparency in AI decision-making (35%) indicate that trust in AI remains a significant hurdle, requiring greater clarity and oversight in how AI systems operate.
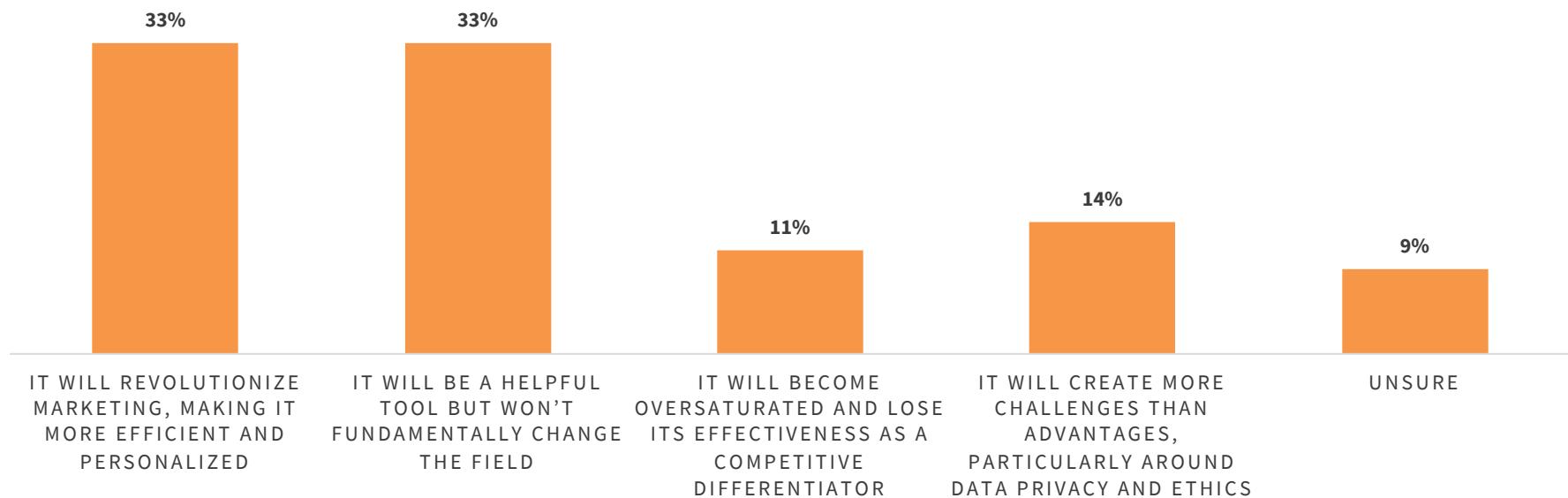
WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY CONCERNS ABOUT USING AI IN MARKETING?

Concern	Percentage
LOSS OF CREATIVITY AND HUMAN TOUCH	54%
OVER-RELIANCE ON AI	42%
ETHICAL ISSUES WITH DATA USAGE	40%
LACK OF TRANSPARENCY IN HOW AI MAKES DECISIONS	35%
BIAS IN AI-DRIVEN DECISIONS	29%
JOB DISPLACEMENT FEARS	27%
OTHER	6%

FUTURE IMPACT OF AI ON MARKETING

Marketers are split on AI's long-term impact, with 33% believing it will revolutionize marketing by enhancing efficiency and personalization. At the same time, an equal percentage see it as a helpful tool but not a transformative force. Meanwhile, concerns remain, as 14% expect AI to introduce more challenges than advantages, particularly around data privacy and ethics, and 11% fear oversaturation could diminish AI's effectiveness as a competitive differentiator.

HOW DO YOU BELIEVE AI WILL CHANGE MARKETING IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS?

| 33%	33%	11%	14%	9%
IT WILL REVOLUTIONIZE MARKETING, MAKING IT MORE EFFICIENT AND PERSONALIZED	IT WILL BE A HELPFUL TOOL BUT WON'T FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE FIELD	IT WILL BECOME OVERSATURATED AND LOSE ITS EFFECTIVENESS AS A COMPETITIVE DIFFERENTIATOR	IT WILL CREATE MORE CHALLENGES THAN ADVANTAGES, PARTICULARLY AROUND DATA PRIVACY AND ETHICS	UNSURE
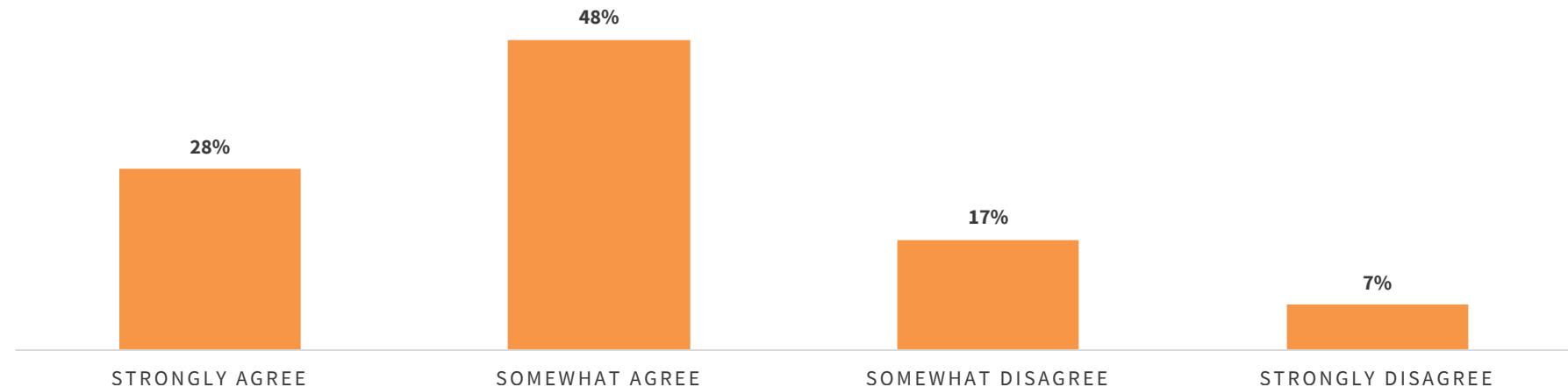
ADOPT OR DIE?

Most marketers (76%) agree that businesses failing to adopt AI in their marketing strategies will face a significant competitive disadvantage, with 28% strongly agreeing and 48% somewhat agreeing. However, 24% remain skeptical, suggesting that while AI is widely seen as a game-changer, some believe businesses can still compete effectively without full AI integration.

The Future is Bright for Marketing Professionals. Over the last five years, the role of marketing professionals has evolved dramatically, shifting from traditional campaign execution to data-driven decision-making, automation management, and AI-powered personalization. Marketers now analyze vast amounts of data, optimize omnichannel experiences, and leverage AI tools to enhance efficiency and customer engagement. As AI continues to reshape marketing in the next five years, embracing these changes will be essential—but just as marketers have adapted before, they will continue to thrive by blending technology with creativity, strategy, and human insight.

WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, BUSINESSES THAT FAIL TO ADOPT AI IN THEIR MARKETING STRATEGY WILL BE AT A SIGNIFICANT COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE.

28% STRONGLY AGREE | 48% SOMEWHAT AGREE | 17% SOMEWHAT DISAGREE | 7% STRONGLY DISAGREE

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CUSTOMIZED B2B RESEARCH
delivered to you with a plan to use it.

We find the right audience, ask the right questions, and gather insightful data to create useful and affordable research that will help you generate demand and increase engagement.

Join the industry powerhouses that use Ascend2 to create compelling research content that speaks to their audience.

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Don't just take it from us... Here's what some of our customers say.

"Ascend2 had the requisite knowledge, skills, and resources to achieve our weighty objectives. Further, the program was affordable (even for an early-stage startup), and the results to date are **already surpassing our ROI goals.**"

-David Crane, VP Marketing, Intentsify

"Ascend2 was a pleasure to work with and helped us to design a thoughtful survey that uncovered **truly actionable and noteworthy findings**. They work smart and fast and even helped to promote and place the research results at launch. Ascend2 is at the top of our list for future projects."

-Nick Olsson, CEO, Olsson Communications

"**The firm truly embeds itself into the research and data needs of your organization**...The team is communicative, easy to work with, and willing to partner in other ways to make sure the data story comes to life through content, comms, social and PR efforts.

-Jillian Ryan, Senior Director of Content Strategy, Brightcove

"Ascend2 research is esteemed in the marketplace, so even press contacts that you don't know will pick it up — and **Ascend2 rates allowed me to do more with my budget** (always a plus!). Adding an Ascend2 original research project is almost always part of my content strategy." Waynette Tubbs, Director, Content Marketing, Oracle

-Waynette Tubbs, Director, Content Marketing, Oracle

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