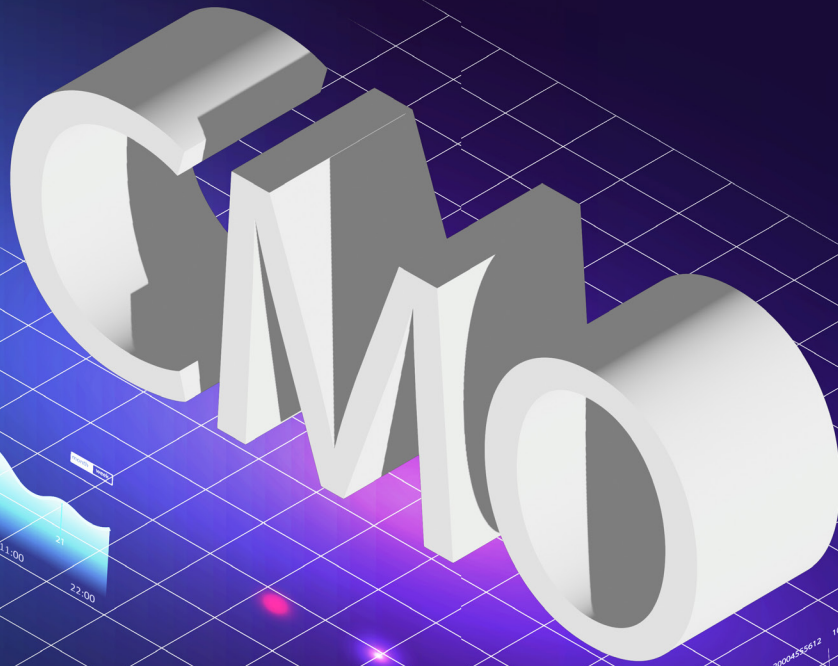
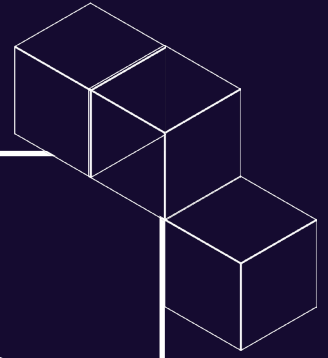


UNLIMITED

CMO BAROMETER 2023



THE *REAL* AGENDA
FOR THE YEAR AHEAD



THE CHALLENGE FACING TODAY'S CMOs

The UK finds itself on a macroeconomic rollercoaster with no end in sight. Against a backdrop of seismic social, economic, and political shifts, those charged with leading the marketing for brands may well be considering a trade-off about where to focus their time and energy to best weather the storm.

To that end, UNLIMITED surveyed some of the UK's marketing elite across all manner of industries to shine a light on what makes CMOs tick. What we came across is a community that reports an ever-increasing load and an ever-expanding remit. From digital to CX, creativity to loyalty, data to behavioural science, CMO docket appear filled to the brim.

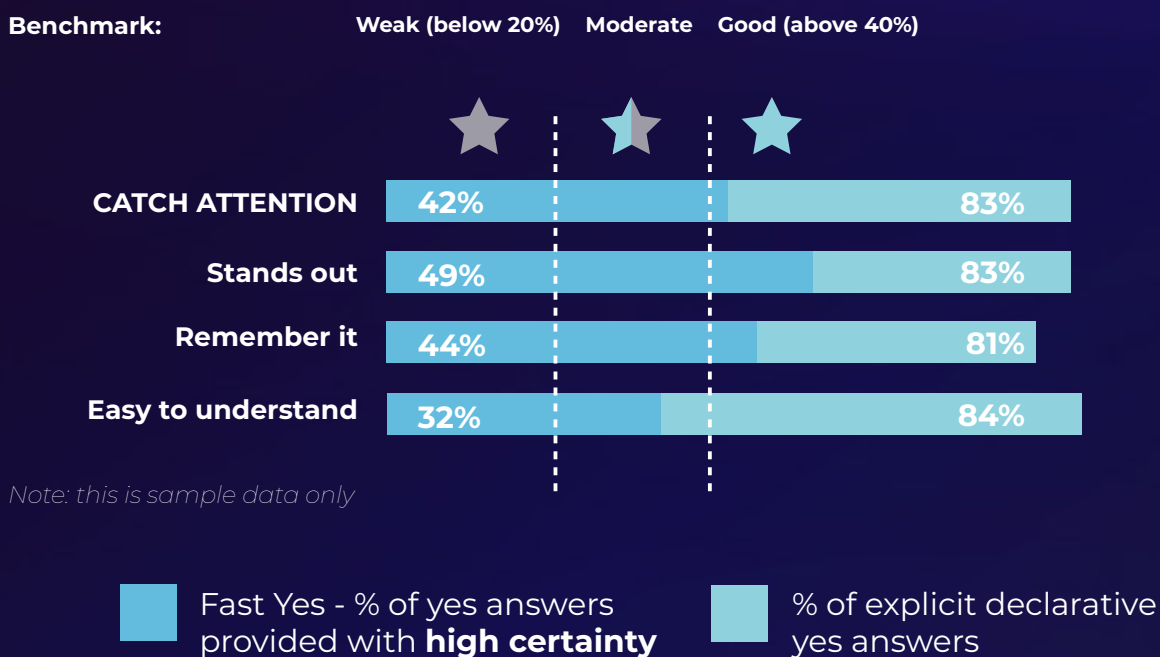
But applying a subconscious research technique within our study told a different story. The true 2023 CMO agenda is much less expansive and focused squarely on the 'central pillars' of digital and creativity, with many other areas seemingly taking a back seat. Do CMOs have bigger ambitions than what they'll be able to deliver on, hampered by the 2023 landscape? Could they be paying lip-service to areas like CX, sustainability, and behavioural science? And, more importantly, why might this be?

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN OF THE CMO COMMUNITY

To delve below the surface of what this community truly thinks and feels, we applied a neuroscience technique to the study, measuring the strength of subconscious conviction within the CMOs' responses. In other words - the degree to which they truly believe in the priorities they stated.

This Reaction Time Testing technique literally calculates how fast respondents say 'yes' to a stimulus or a question. Benchmarked across hundreds of studies, a strong implicit response scores more than 40%, which represents the upper quartile or 75th percentile of the overall responses.

The diagram below shares an example to show this in action, where Reaction Time Testing has been used to test stimulus such as an Ad or Concept. At face value, the research responses show on the right hand side really strong above 80% scores against all criteria. On the left hand side, the implicit scores present a more nuanced picture - the implicit scores greater than 40% show this stimulus performed very well on 'stands out', 'remember it' and 'catch attention', but below the 'good' threshold of 40% on its ease of understanding.

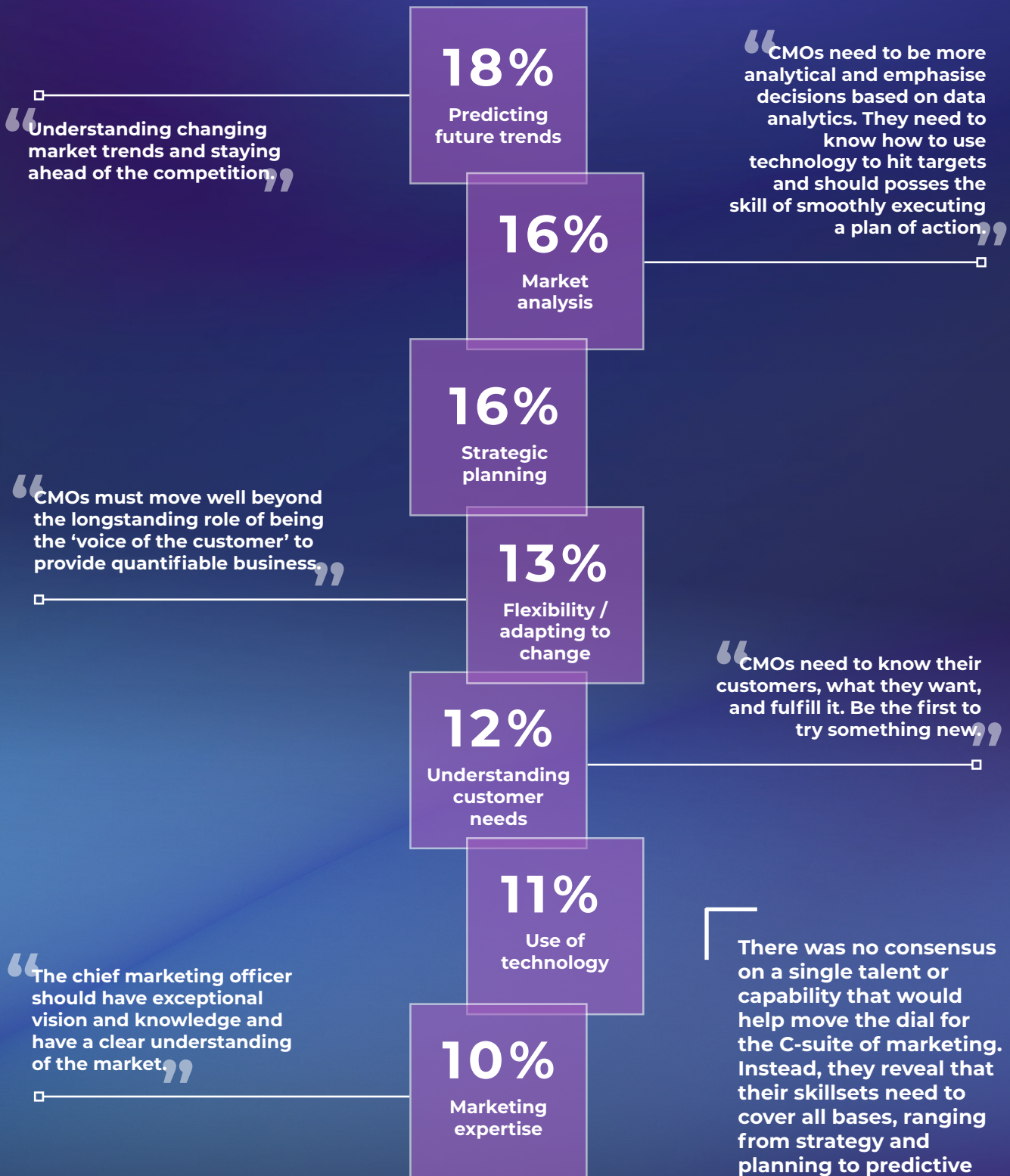


Enhancing our CMO Barometer with subconscious testing means that you get an all-access pass into how this community is responding to and preparing for future-facing challenges and opportunities. Curious to dive into the CMO subconscious?

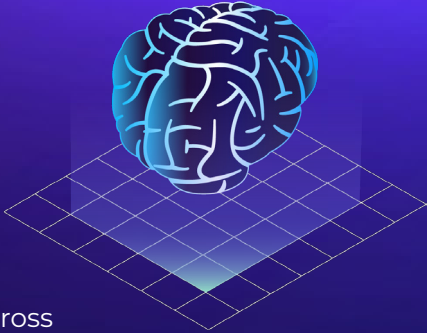
Read on to discover the insights behind the numbers - starting with what the C-suite of marketing thinks is their key skill or capability.

THERE IS NO SINGLE SUPERPOWER

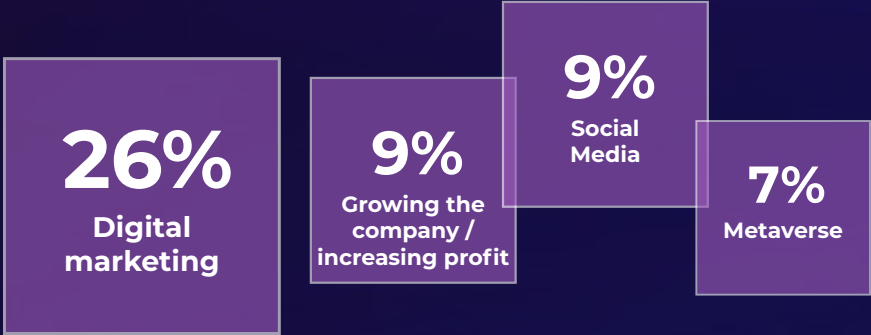
Clear and present was the sense that the role of the CMO is constantly evolving, and the range of skills required to succeed is wide and complex. We asked CMOs what they felt was the one superpower they needed most to succeed...



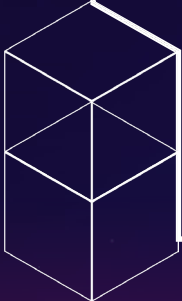
DIGITAL ON THE BRAIN



Despite painting a picture of breadth and depth for their ever-increasing scope, CMOs indicated a narrowing of priorities, with digital as the standout leader across the board. This was further reinforced in our international partner Serviceplan’s pan-European **CMO Barometer study**. When asked to predict the “single hottest topic” of 2023, a much higher proportion of UK respondents opted for “digital marketing” than any other factor.



Q: In your opinion, what will be THE hot topic for marketing in 2023 and why?



HEAR WHAT THE CMOs HAD TO SAY...

“

“In 2023, digital marketing will dominate our world due to its time and money-saving benefits.”

”

“

“Digital marketing and data analytics will be the hot topic for marketing in 2023. The recent crises of the pandemic and war have transformed most of the business from traditional to digital.”

”

“

“The continued surge towards search and digital marketing – if you do not engage then you lose ground.”

”

“

“Digital marketing, or intelligent marketing, is the trend and direction of future development.”

”

“

“With the growth of industry competition, digital marketing is a necessary means for differentiation.”

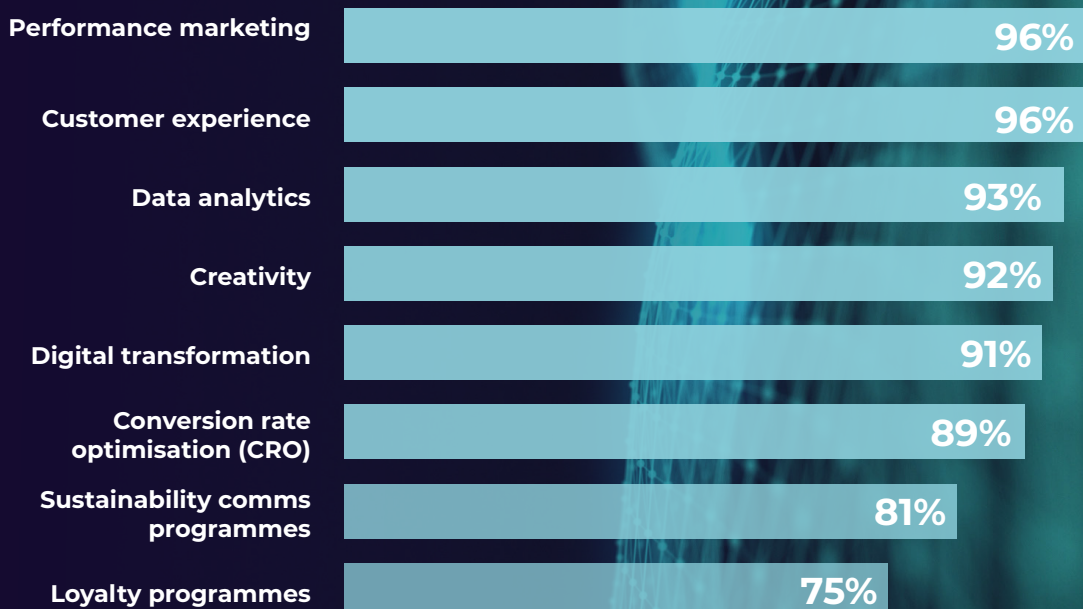
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THE RACE TO DIGITAL

While it's true that the broad term appears to contain multitudes, it's still telling that so many more CMOs opted for "digital marketing" above even growth and profit. This points to a strong belief that some form of digital conversation will continue to dominate boardrooms and agendas in 2023 and beyond.

As the battle to tech-enable brands continues across sectors and industries, the sprint to build the most efficient and optimised digital machine seems to occupy the minds of CMOs first and foremost. In our study, over 90% of respondents stated that they had five key priorities: performance marketing, CX, data analytics, creativity, and digital transformation.

IS THIS A PRIORITY FOR YOUR COMPANY?

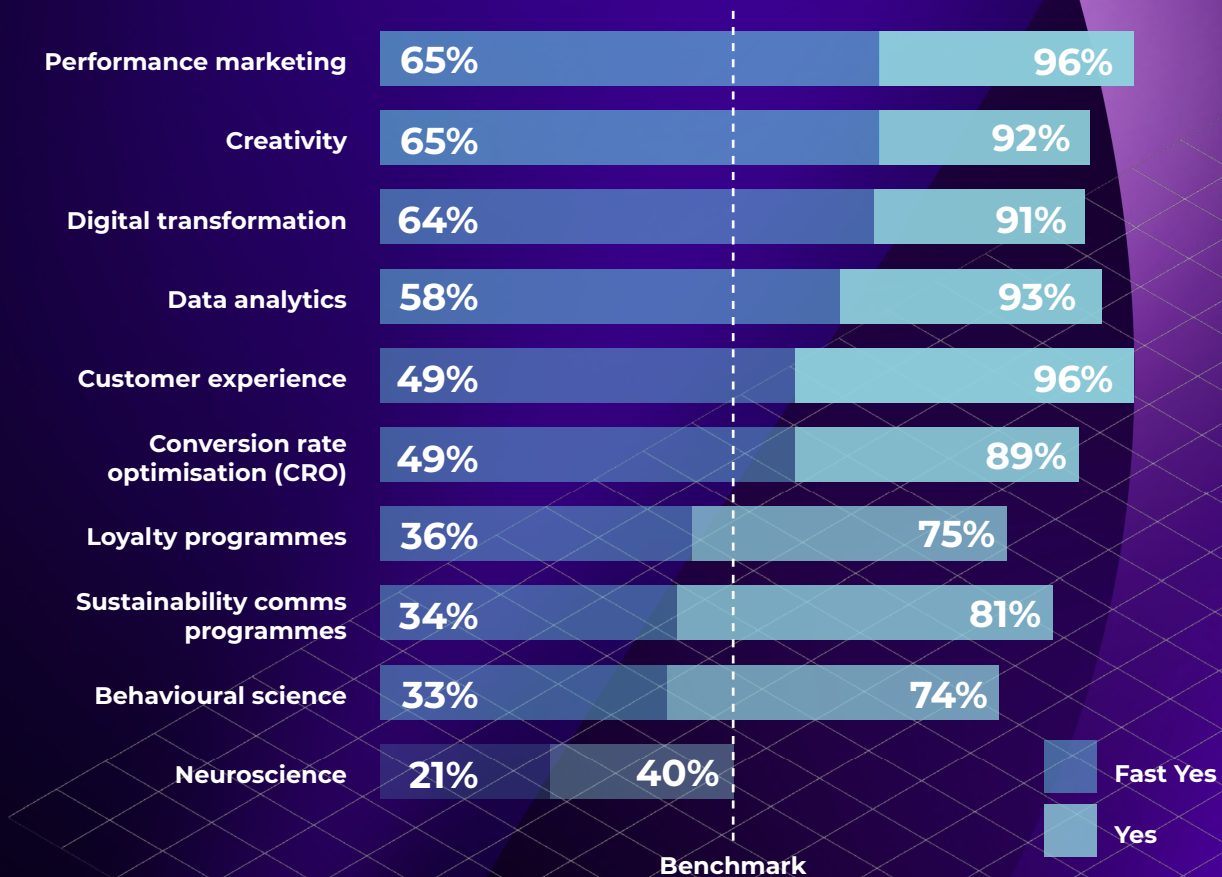


More than half of these speak to digital marketing in one way or another. The expectation on technology to be the silver bullet, the beginning and end of the conversion journey, shines through in these findings. But what happens when we use subconscious testing?

UNPICKING THE TRUE CMO AGENDA

When applying our Reaction Time Testing lens to the data, the true set of priorities changes. Only performance marketing, digital transformation, and creativity remain highly ranked as highest company priorities, scoring greater than 60% on the 'Fast Yes' analysis. Not only do CMOs say the above are primary concerns, they also genuinely believe this with extreme levels of conviction, showing that their true areas of focus are much more narrow than outwardly reported.

IS THIS A PRIORITY FOR YOUR COMPANY? (WITH REACTION TIME TESTING)



It appears that CMOs will fall back on familiar ground in the year ahead, concentrating on building blocks for short-term performance and longer-term brand impact – and who can blame them? After all, a mix of digital and creativity has been a well-trodden route for many brands in the past.

At the same time, marketing leaders collectively overstate brand priority for sustainability comms programmes, CX and data analytics, suggesting that they may be tightening their docket to only the core essentials.

The shift in hierarchy that we witness when using subconscious testing begs the question: what's really driving the CMO agenda in 2023? Are we perhaps experiencing a period of brand conservatism, or skills gap for innovation? Read on to find out.

FOUR KEY INSIGHTS FOR CMOs TO MAXIMISE PERFORMANCE

Delving further into the real CMO agenda for the year ahead, it's important to get to the bottom of the 'why' as well as the 'what'. As such, we wanted to help you understand where the gaps and opportunities lie for brands to capitalise on going forward. Below are some key points to consider in your planning:

1

DIGITAL IS CRITICAL, BUT ALSO UBIQUITOUS

2

CREATIVITY AS A VEHICLE FOR CONVERSION



3

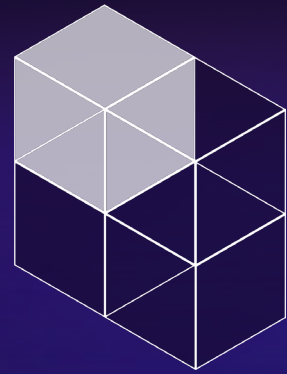
MACRO FACTORS HINDERING CMO AMBITIONS

4

THE RESEARCH SCIENCES GAP

1

DIGITAL IS CRITICAL, BUT ALSO UBIQUITOUS



CMOs appear to see the digital machine as the be-all and end-all of improved conversion. In fact, a hefty 90% of participants stated that they were using automation tools to improve their return on investment – data science, analytics, CRM, digital platforms and martech are most commonly named among techniques.

The race to wholesale digital enablement is ongoing, with the C-suite of marketing pooling most of their focus and resources into tech.

AUTOMATION

Net mentions of data science + automation + analytics + digital platforms & martech + CRM

90%

CX

Net mentions of CX + personalisation + CRM + digital platforms

75%

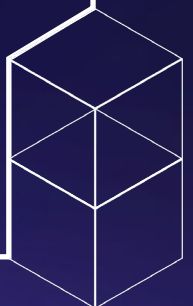
INSIGHTS

Net mentions of customer satisfaction + customer insights + behavioural science + neuro

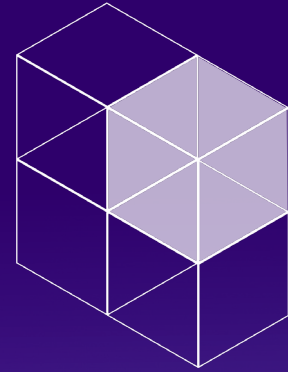
67%

No matter which tool, technique, or definition of “digital marketing” they may subscribe to, there’s no doubt that senior execs are overwhelmingly looking at performance and business impact from a tech point of view. But is this singular vision going to cost them opportunities in the long run?

Considering the sheer pace at which brands are chasing digitalisation, sooner rather than later we will arrive at a stage where digital capabilities reach a level playing field across companies and industries. At this point, we will see reduced competitiveness as these kinds of credentials will no longer be a valid differentiator. And this is exactly where other paths to performance will shine.



CREATIVITY AS A VEHICLE FOR CONVERSION



Our study shows that while maintaining their razor-sharp focus on the development of their digital proficiencies and tech stacks, CMOs are also signalling that a less tangible, far more abstract concern is drawing their attention. 92% of CMOs (65% with high conviction) named creativity a top priority. Elsewhere, over 80% agreed that it drives overall performance.

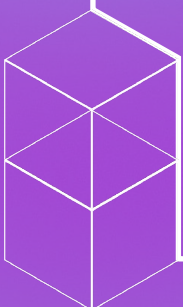
We believe creativity has a significant impact on our marketing performance



Despite this, only 40% of the executives we spoke to stated that they're using creativity as a technique for ROI. There is clearly a bit of a disconnect here. While CMOs are aware of its importance, they're not quite unleashing its full business potential. Creativity is not getting the same level of scrutiny or investment as the digital side of the business, meaning that it cannot deliver on the bottom line as effectively.

As the race to digital begins to plateau, creativity will be the pillar on which a brand will rise or fall. Taking the current challenge faced by B2B marketing as an example, let creativity die and your well-constructed machine will churn out the same homogenised, optimised outputs that never touch or truly impact the human consumer.

Say it louder for those in the back – the time is now to nurture creativity to the extent that it will speak to conversion.



THE PURSUIT OF CREATIVITY

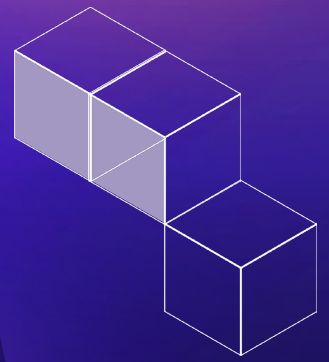
Creativity needs to be nourished if it is to influence brands' bottom lines. At UNLIMITED, we've found that more and more brands are turning to us for our unique blend of insight and creativity, fuelled to success by deeper human insight.

But what exactly do we mean by a deeper human-led insight? Our Human Understanding Lab draw on their blend of expertise in neuro-, behavioural and data science to understand what's at the heart of human emotion, motivation, and decision-making.

In today's low attention economy, it's vital to optimise every element of your creative – examining not just what consumers think, but how they feel and respond. Driven by neuroscience, our Creative Connection solution optimises creative assets by focusing on the three key areas that our Human Understanding Lab experts deem the most powerful for effective comms:



In order to power creativity and land their brand campaigns, CMOs need to mobilise their teams to start using human insight. Putting your creative to the test with the help of the Human Understanding Lab is one way to do just that. See for yourself!



USING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING AS ROCKET FUEL

UNLIMITED has helped a whole host of clients take their creativity to the next level by applying neuro- and behavioural science techniques. Let's take our award-winning work for Freesat, the UK's biggest subscription-free satellite TV platform, as an example.

In a market saturated with longer-established household names, Freesat were looking to challenge perceptions that they were a downgrade, 'budget' choice. We recognised this as a truly unique and powerful opportunity to position the brand as the gateway to a freedom of entertainment without the monthly bills.



Harnessing the power of **emotion** and **motivation**, the Human Understanding Lab worked with TMW UNLIMITED to develop a campaign centred on a 'reappraisal' story inviting viewers to 'Live Life Free'. Two adorable crab characters, Ossi & Pod, uncover a whole world of free entertainment just above their heads.

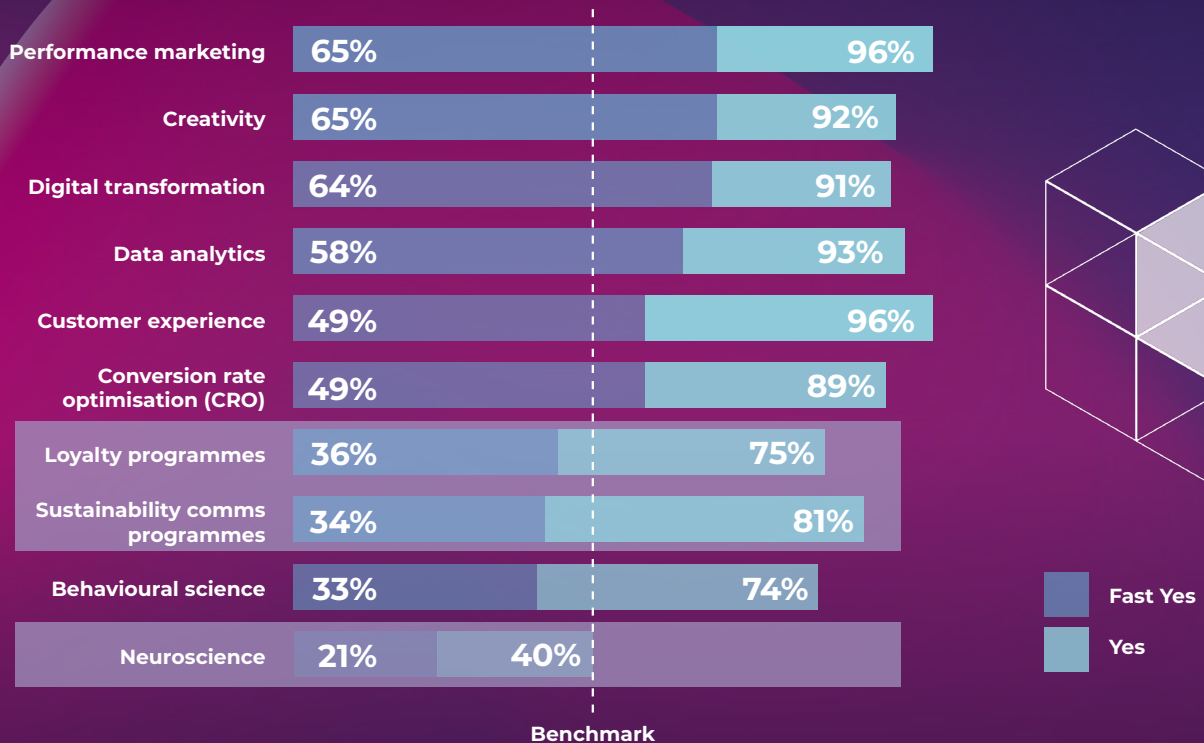
The Human Understanding Lab was involved throughout the creative and campaign development. Our **Creative Connection** tool combined neuro facial coding with Reaction Time Testing to explore how effectively our output was capturing attention, stimulating emotion and creating moment-to-moment desired responses.

Another string to the Human Understanding Lab's bow, we utilised **Decision Drivers** to elevate the messaging. Using advanced statistical techniques, we were able to map the optimum combination of messages that resonated with the audience – helping to deliver the right messaging every step of the way.

Through our Human Understanding approach, we avoided a TV-first strategy and instead created a campaign platform that works seamlessly across every channel.

MACRO FACTORS HINDERING CMO AMBITIONS

As macroeconomic conditions and budget pressures begin to make their mark, CMOs will naturally narrow their focus on the bottom line. As evidenced in our research, this is already resulting in more specialist areas, such as neuroscience and loyalty programmes, slipping in priority.



Straitened economics could also be the reason why so many CMOs appear to be paying lip-service to areas they would like to prioritise but are unable to for 2023. A shining example of this is sustainability. When asked about their levels of engagement with a number of sustainability initiatives, two thirds of respondents stated that they were already addressing these.

At the same time, sustainability comms programmes placed at the lower end of UK marketing leaders' priority lists. While 81% of survey participants indicated this to be a main concern, only 34% believed it implicitly – a notion backed up by Serviceplan's CMO study, where sustainability was rated lowest in the UK when compared with other European nations.

So, might sustainability be just a surface-level issue for CMOs? Or, in the same way that it did during the COVID pandemic, will sustainability take a back seat due to the economic downturn? While the majority of CMOs believe that their brands have this issue in hand, our subconscious testing shows that there is clearly a gap here. But where there are gaps, there are opportunities.

THE RESEARCH SCIENCES GAP

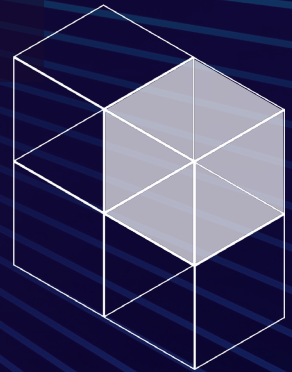
Neuro- and behavioural sciences are currently being underutilised. Both place last on the list of priorities for the year ahead, a stance bolstered even further when looking at the low level of implicit agreement among senior marketing execs. Meanwhile, 27% of CMOs admit to not using neuroscience in their initiatives at all.

Even so, both are the key to understanding and ultimately guiding human decision-making, as well as unlocking creativity. This is where UNLIMITED can help. Integrated across all our connected capabilities, our Human Understanding Lab injects value, insights, and science into client briefs to solve challenges, define strategy and drive performance across increasingly complex customer journeys.

From developing and testing ads that resonate with audiences emotionally, to validating strategic propositions across target markets; we've found that with seasoned experts at the helm, research sciences can be used as the wind in the sails of brands looking to push conversion.

“

Keeping a balance of head vs heart (or science vs art). You need to understand how to get the right info out of your data (good data analysts and scientists by your side!)



WEATHERING THE STORM WITH A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH



As the rate of instability in the UK continues to accelerate, brands of all shapes and sizes have a steep hill to climb. The C-suite of marketing will have to turn their attention to new, innovative pursuits to ensure conversion. The modern CMO may have to take a step back from depending solely on digital; they will need to not only understand the necessity for creativity, but also the routes to cultivating it to reach its full business potential.

Brands' approaches will need to be comprehensive, considering all bases and manner of opportunities as they struggle with limiting economic circumstances.

DRIVING MORE IMPACTFUL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

79% of study participants report that CX is their number one technique for improving business performance, but it is also the least prioritised area in practice and most likely to be run in-house. So, is there an opportunity here that CMOs are not currently realising?

We consider CX from the human perspective – shining a light on what really makes people tick, how they react to different sensory experiences, and how emotions influence decision-making and actions. This way, we can make sure that CX is optimised to the extent that it will impact conversion – a necessity for marketing leaders with a dire economic future looming.

RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN DECISION-MAKING

The CMOs we surveyed seem to already have at least a partial awareness of this, with 88% acknowledging that an insight into human motivation is key to developing strategy. Our Human Understanding Lab places the human at the core of everything we do to deliver better business outcomes.

Deeper human understanding isn't the result of intuition or assumption. We get it by applying the latest evidence-based techniques to understand the here and now, and consider the emotional and rational response of consumers across brand strategies, tactics and communications. If they are to succeed in a fragmented, low-attention digital landscape, brands must look to optimise the human experience. Throw macroeconomic uncertainty into the mix and CMOs should ensure that human insight is at the heart of any step they take.

A WORD FROM LEADING MARKETING MINDS

The study results speak for themselves, but you don't have to take just our word for it! In order to get to the 'why' behind the survey responses, UNLIMITED recently hosted a panel discussion with marketing experts from a range of top brands.

Able to be hosted by TMW UNLIMITED's CEO Chris Mellish, we welcomed Weight Watchers' Tony Miller, Vodafone's Natalie Sylvester, and Barratt Developments' Jeremy Hipkiss to offer us their take on what is making CMOs tick going into the new year, and why. Read on for a few choice highlights.

“
Creativity is what is going to unlock that emotional connection and bring people in. Once you've captured attention, you can lay out the benefits of your product or service and get those people to stay. So, investing in creative and the right imagery and messaging, as well as test and learn, is really important. It's never going to be one message that works all the time. It's going to be iterative and change as seasons, economics, and people's ideas change. Insight is going to be a key driver in helping to build creativity, but I would argue that creativity does help you deliver strong ROI if you've got the right tools in place to be able to measure it.”



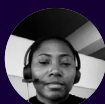
Tony Miller
CMO & VP of Growth & Performance
WW.com

“
We do have to be careful to not get totally fixated on automation and tech to drive ROI. After all, something has to go into the automation in terms of content, and that is difficult to capture in a truly automated way and actually needs as much emphasis. It's the content and messaging that will prompt a reaction from the consumer and impact what your objectives are.”

Jeremy Hipkiss
Group Customer & Change Director
Barratt Developments



“
Neuroscience or implicit Reaction Time Testing are really important techniques that I don't think brands tap into enough. That may be because the value isn't as tangible to see. If you were to run a promo you see the impact almost instantly, but finessing the language of a communication is not necessarily something that you'll see the effects of in an obvious way. You'd have to measure the impact over a longer period. But we've had great success with this – using implicit testing to build some really strong creative that drove powerful results.”



Natalie Sylvester
Head of Marketing Comms & Base Engagement
Vodafone

HERE TO LEND A HAND

We're here to help make your brand a beacon in the oncoming storm, supporting you to capitalise on every gap and opportunity that may not yet be on your radar. With deep expertise across research, planning, and creativity, UNLIMITED can guide you at every stage of developing, refining, and implementing your strategy, whilst ensuring consistency at all your consumer touchpoints.

Please get in touch with our experts for more information:



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