



AI in B2B Marketing Report: Lessons from the frontline.

B2B Marketers share their existing AI strategies and outline their priorities for the future.



Introduction

In B2B marketing the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is prompting a profound shift in what we create and how we work. In this report, Realm B2B presents an insightful exploration into the integration, challenges, and burgeoning potential of AI from the perspective of the B2B marketer.

Derived from a comprehensive survey and in-depth interviews with senior marketing professionals, this seeks to reveal a nuanced understanding of how AI is being leveraged by B2B marketers today, the hurdles they face, and the opportunities they foresee. From the tangible impacts of AI on design and campaign management to its strategic implications for market analysis and customer engagement, this report delves into the core of AI's role in redefining B2B marketing practices.

It's certainly true that some companies are much further ahead than others. Enterprises that have access to AI and ML engineers as part of their existing products and services are going beyond industry-wide tools and implementing gamechanging internal projects. Others have just dipped their feet into the water and are cautiously piloting Gen AI in their content creation.

Critically, this research demonstrates that the ambitious companies pioneering AI integration will outshine those left behind. At Realm, we're committed to setting our clients up for future success, providing innovative frameworks, versioning techniques, and best practices for AI activation across all channels and platforms.

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What you'll learn in this report:

In 2024, Realm conducted a comprehensive survey with 125 B2B marketers to delve into their current use of artificial intelligence (AI), the challenges they aim to address, and the various opportunities they've encountered.

To gain a more nuanced understanding, we followed up with in-depth, confidential one-hour interviews with 38 senior B2B marketing professionals. These discussions focused on their specific motivations for incorporating AI, the practical applications they've found most effective, and real-world anecdotes about the successes they have celebrated and the stumbling blocks that they learned from.

This report is designed to offer insights into the impact of AI on your industry contemporaries and to outline potential strategies for navigating the future of AI in B2B marketing

Chapter 1

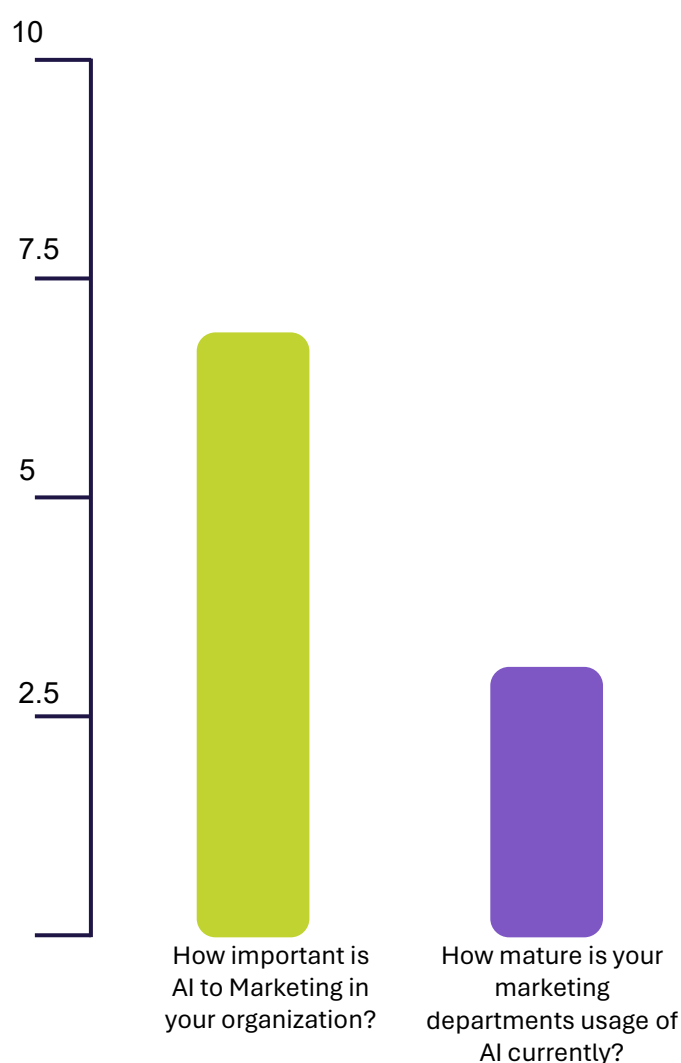
The current dynamics between B2B marketers and AI

There is a 40% gap between the importance of AI to B2B marketing departments and their current maturity level.



AI has already woven itself into the fabric of most B2B businesses, integrating into products and services before being considered by marketing departments. But the game changed in 2023 with the rapid rise of Generative AI, igniting a rapid and pivotal shift in the lives of B2B marketers. This isn't just another trend; it's a transformative wave that's reshaping our industry. Embracing this shift is essential and those who get in the driving seat stand to navigate their companies towards significant competitive advantages in the next one to five years.

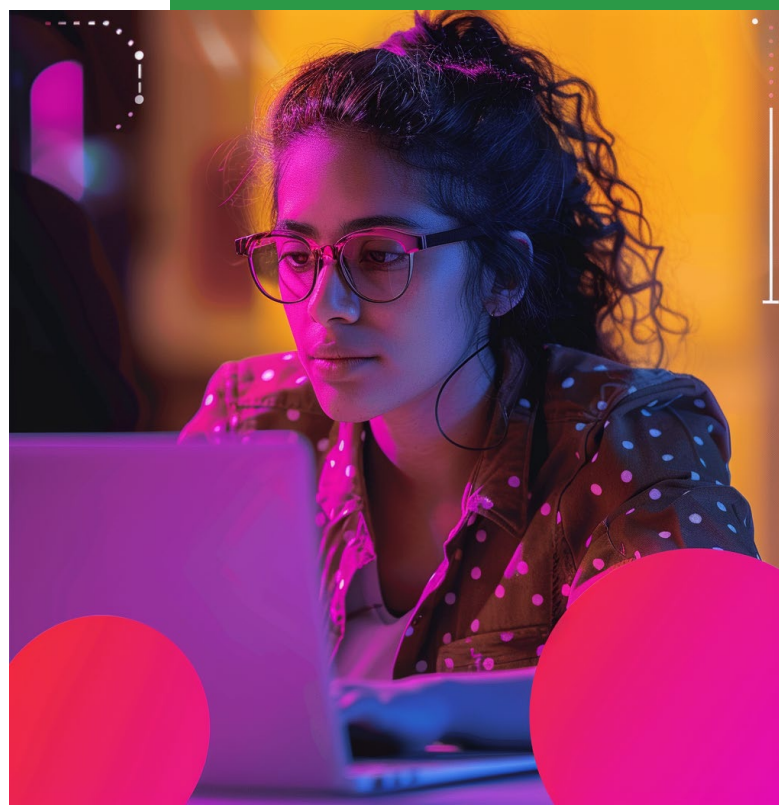
Chart 1: The importance of AI in B2B marketing compared to the maturity of AI in those same departments



Currently, B2B marketers acknowledge AI's relevance, assigning it a solid 7 out of 10 in terms of importance within their organizations. This speaks volumes about its perceived value, and anecdotal evidence suggests that any undervaluation stems not from its lack of potential, but distraction from the overwhelming array of other tasks marketers must manage.

However, when it comes to how marketing departments are utilizing AI, there's a striking discrepancy. The maturity level averages a much lower 3 out of 10, signaling a considerable gap between the recognized opportunity and comprehension of AI's potential utility in everyday tasks.

On a personal level, marketers feel relatively informed about AI, rating their understanding at a 6 out of 10. This self-assessment likely stems from AI's ubiquity in daily life and the wealth of media coverage around it. Yet, translating this general awareness into actionable workplace strategies proves to be a challenge. Marketers aren't intimidated by transformational change—it's the industry's bread and butter, after all. The challenge lies in accessible education. The aptitude for effective prompt engineering for example, a critical skill in the era of AI, scores an average of 3.5 out of 10 among marketers



66%

Of B2B Marketers are experiencing FOMO and are concerned that other companies may be further ahead in leveraging AI

With the speed of AI's evolution and its cross-generational impact, many find themselves without ready access to expertise, internal or external. 66% of B2B marketers have FOMO and are concerned that other companies may be further ahead in leveraging AI.

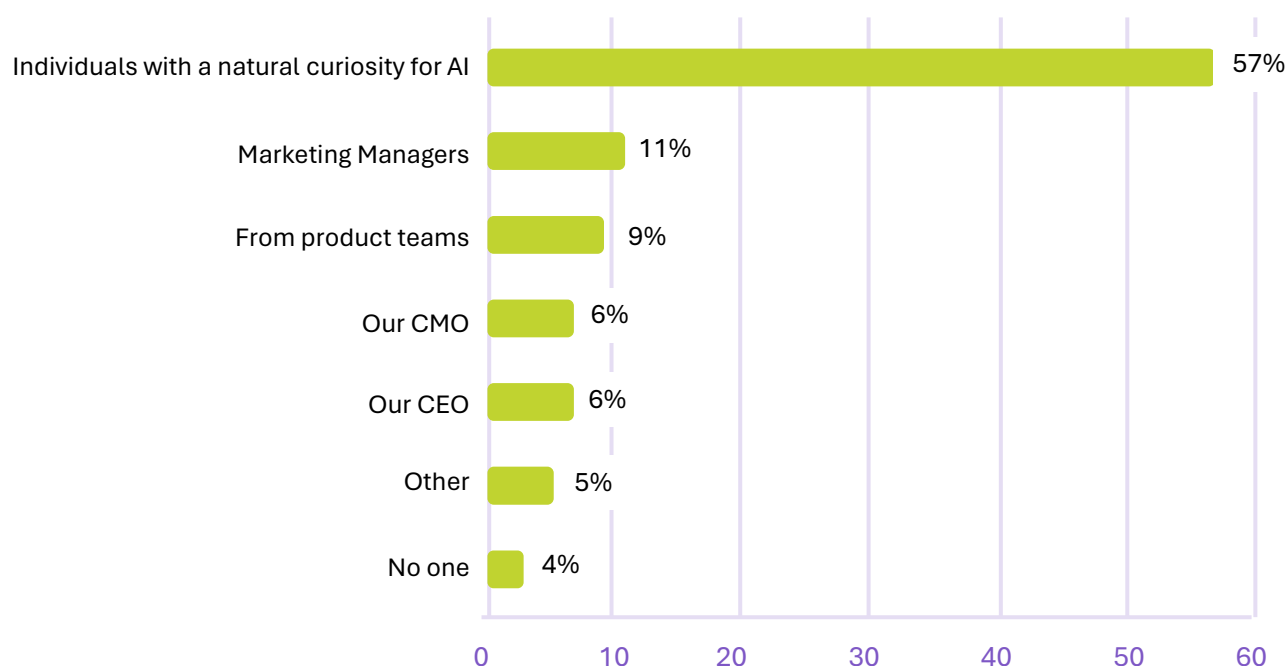
It's a collective race to upskill, with the knowledge that navigating this wave is a communal journey for the industry.

AI adoption in B2B marketing departments is a multifaceted movement, with the driving force often coming from within the ranks. A significant 56% of departments report that colleagues are driven by an innate curiosity about AI, and they are spearheading problem-solving initiatives within their teams.

This trend transcends company size; it's not any more likely for CXOs in large corporations to define these projects, than for standout employees who make pivotal connections between current marketing hurdles and the potential of internal products to help solve them. Similarly, in mid-sized and smaller businesses, the push towards embracing AI is equally likely to originate from visionary leadership as it is from the grassroots level.

It's a clear signal that regardless of the size of the organization, most companies are still building processes and frameworks around AI deployment. Most organizations in verticals with more risk management (Financial Services, Industrial and Healthcare for example) are still adopting a wait and see policy.

Chart 2: **Who is driving the current usage of AI in your marketing team?**



Chapter 2

What marketers are doing right now, including examples

75% of B2B enterprises are already integrating AI into their product offerings, however only 21% are harnessing AI to develop tools or capabilities dedicated to enhancing marketing functions.



The B2B sector thrives on innovation and the ability to solve complex problems, often using resources readily available within their own organization. AI has been integral to B2B services for some time, powering everything from customer intent analysis to digital twin technologies.

Impressively, three-quarters of B2B enterprises are already integrating AI into their offerings, with 78% actively developing or enhancing AI functionalities for their products and services. Moreover, there is a growing demand for specialized roles, evidenced by the 6% of businesses currently looking to employ prompt engineers to collaborate with marketing departments.

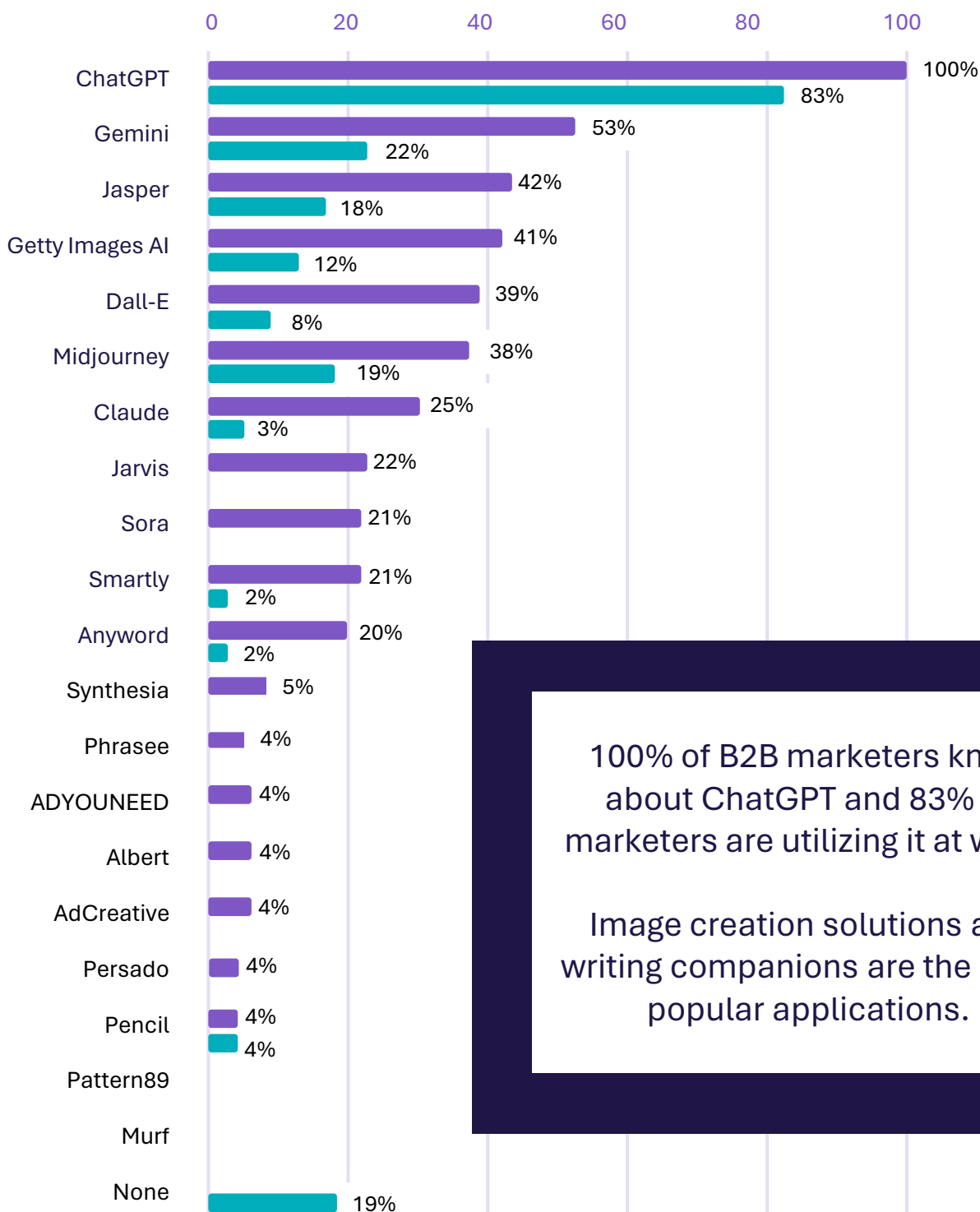


Yet, this wave of innovation has only just started to ripple through marketing teams specifically. Only 21% are harnessing AI to develop tools or capabilities dedicated to enhancing marketing functions compared to the majority who are using third party Gen AI platforms.

This presents a stark contrast and an immense opportunity for growth. As the sector recognizes the potential of AI in marketing, the push for adoption and skill development in this area will unlock new levels of efficiency and creativity in strategy formulation and execution.

Third-party generative AI platforms are certainly beginning to capture the interest of marketers, who are starting to explore the potential of these tools - particularly in the fields of content creation and versioning. Yet there is a noticeable air of confusion regarding the specific functions and capabilities of each platform, especially as this landscape continues to rapidly expand.

Chart 3: Awareness vs. Usage of Third-Party Gen AI Platforms

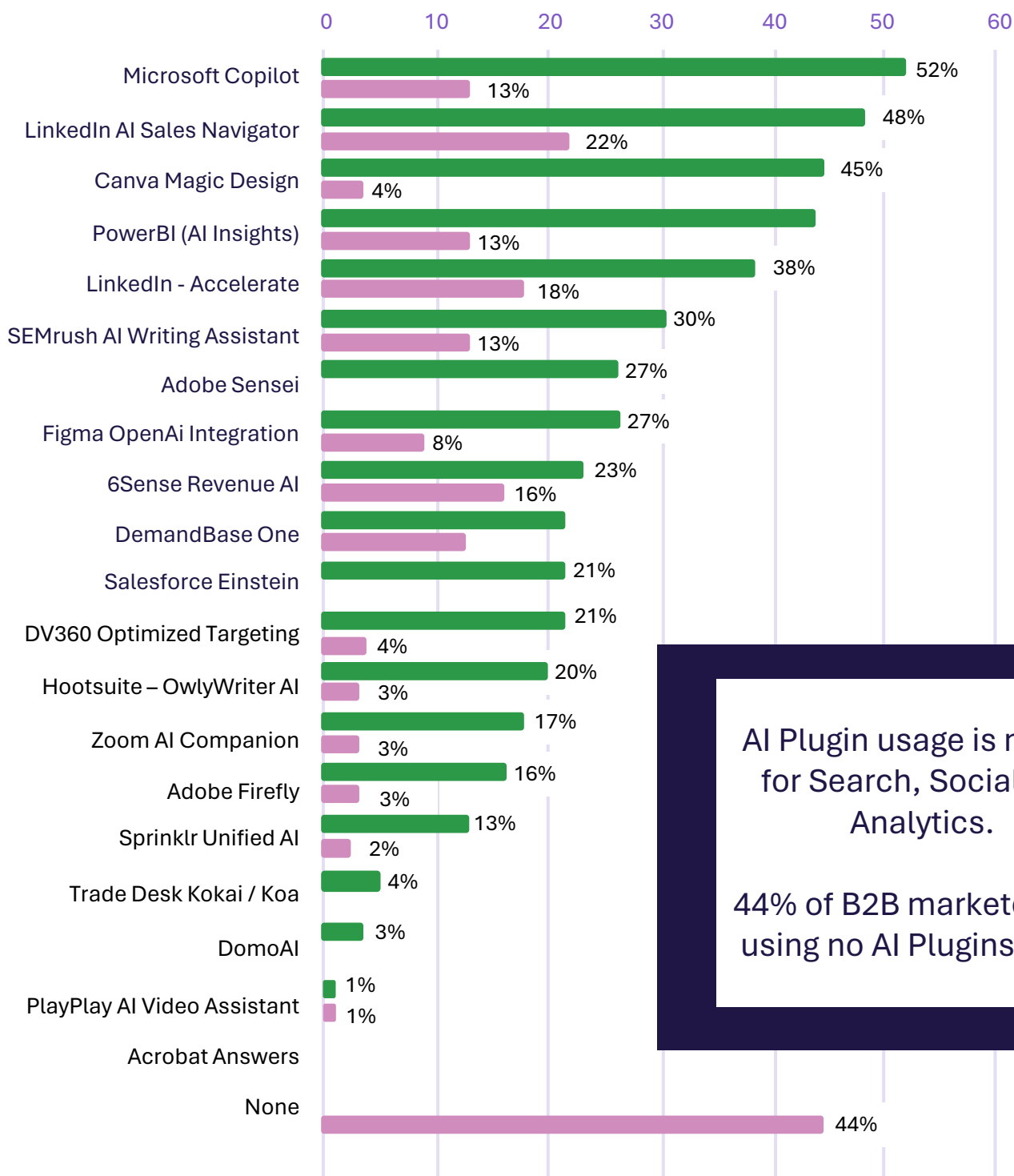


100% of B2B marketers know about ChatGPT and 83% of marketers are utilizing it at work.

Image creation solutions and writing companions are the most popular applications.

Besides standalone platforms, many existing marketing tools have enhanced their features with AI capabilities for marketers to utilize. The usage shown in the chart below suggests significant activity, yet marketers indicate that this is mostly exploratory for now. They are using this period to experiment with AI as they establish more permanent workflows and strategies.

Chart 4: Awareness vs. Usage of AI Plugins



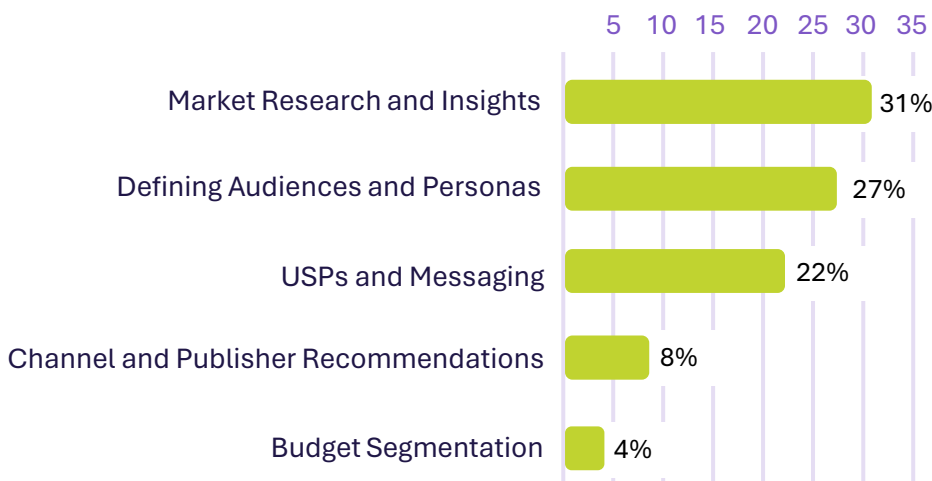
AI Plugin usage is mainly for Search, Social and Analytics.

44% of B2B marketers are using no AI Plugins at all.

One of the most remarkable aspects of generative AI is its ubiquity, raising the question of how one should prioritize its use when it can enhance and support activities across the complete planning cycle.

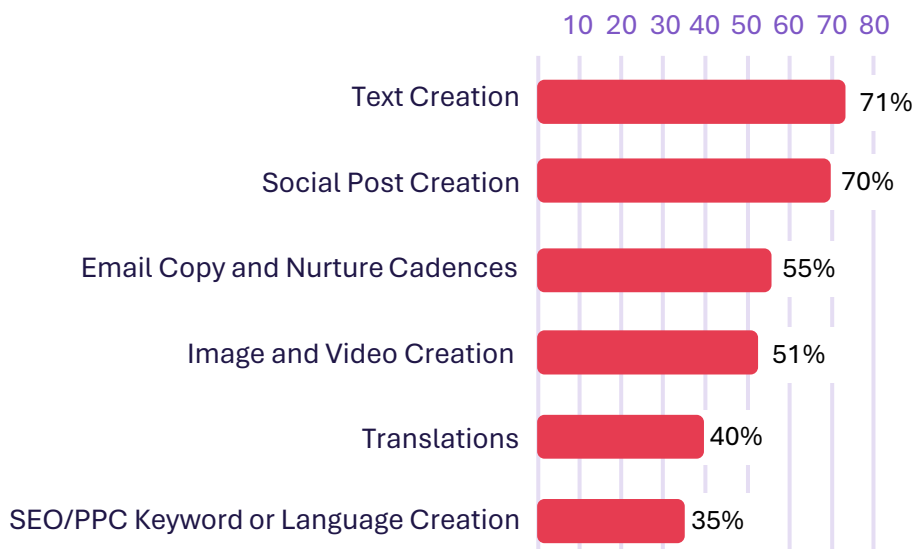
B2B Marketers are testing the waters according to their immediate need now with 52% of total usage being in Design, 25% in Activation, 14% in Planning and 9% in Reporting. A further breakdown of the specific use cases in each area is in the charts below.

Planning



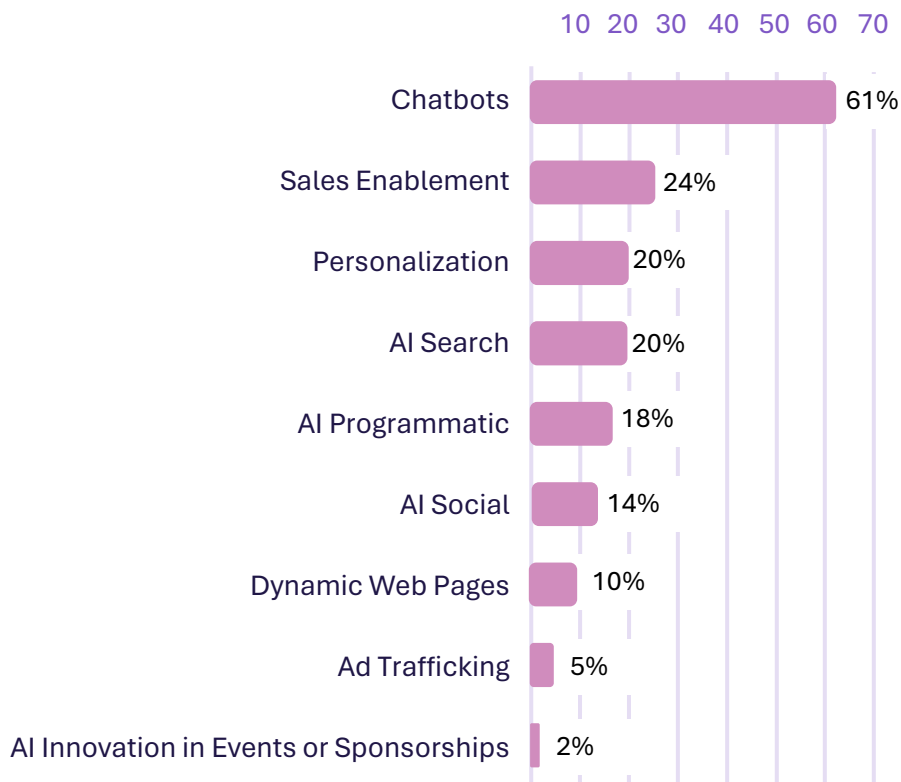
14% of total use is in Planning, and most of that focuses on Insights and Audience Research.

Design



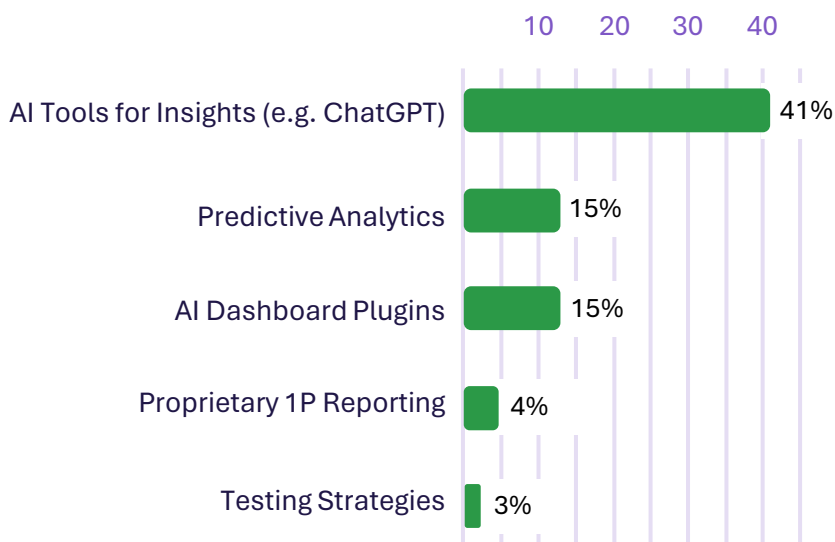
The most usage (52%) is in Design, with Text creation being more soundly leveraged than imagery at this stage.

Activation



25% of AI usage falls into Activation. The current priority is down-funnel with 61% of marketers using AI Chatbots and 24% using AI in Sales Enablement.

Reporting



So far only 9% of Marketers are confident enough to be using AI in Reporting. Most that are use general tools (e.g. ChatGPT) to analyze standard reports. 4% of companies are building their own internal AI reporting.

B2B marketers find a variety of compelling uses for AI, with some being more advanced in their adoption than others. However, all are doing *something*, indicating that AI is here to stay.



Please provide an example of how you have successfully leveraged AI at your company in the last few months*:

“We have utilized AI in translation to scale the volume of web pages translated in a shorter amount of time. Our learnings proved that prompt engineering is key to output. We saved 75% of design time in image retouching utilizing AI. Instead of localized photoshoots, we are utilizing a tool to find localized, regionally relevant images.

We have decreased writing time dramatically by utilizing tools for activation content, outlines, and briefs, but more as starting points.”

“Translation to 3 different languages is now much less costly and fast.”

“Implementation of a chatbot Conversational AI feature increased # of conversations, increased conversation lengths by 52%, decreased unqualified conversations by 8%.”

“Writing email marketing cadences, summarising long articles.”

“Using a tool for PR news summary and alerts, then using it to figure out who to pitch the story to, it helps with the pitch as well to personalize it to the journalist based on their last several articles. First time I have seen an entire marketing workflow done by AI.”

“We created our own tool to dynamically assess our strategy, the results, and where it's blocked. So that we can unlock strategic workstreams faster rather than wait until the end of the quarter.”

“Predictive insights on target accounts, Chatbot built for our prospects.”

“Copy creation, insight generation from recorded calls or conversations with prospects and customers.”

“Mostly on the design side including ideation, first draft content creation, first-pass translation, and light image creation.”

Chapter 3

Future forward – the top opportunities that marketers identify

Immediate AI opportunities are dictated by marketers' urgent needs, with increased productivity, efficiencies, and a quicker time to market remaining their top priorities.



AI adoption among marketers is currently sporadic, largely due to the intense pressure they face to perform amidst budget efficiencies and leaner teams. Instead of downsizing staff, marketing departments aim to enhance efficiency and productivity from within, identifying these areas as immediate opportunities for improvement. Conversely, 83% of marketers are not effectively measuring the efficiency or increased productivity that their AI tools are providing.

Notably, marketers in the Industrial and Manufacturing sectors prioritize monitoring their market reputation closely. They confront challenges from activists and the rapid spread of misinformation, which can swiftly impact perceptions of their operations.

Rank your top opportunities for AI in B2B Marketing



Although Reporting and Analytics is the area where AI is currently underutilized by marketers, it also holds a significant potential for opportunity and growth.

Looking forward, marketers are setting their sights on enhancing their capabilities in diagnostic and predictive modeling within the next year. This focus reflects a collective ambition to not only interpret past performance more accurately but also to anticipate future trends with greater precision. By prioritizing these areas, marketers are acknowledging the transformative impact that advanced AI-driven analytics can have on their strategies, decision-making processes, and ultimately, their success in a competitive marketplace.



Which strategic areas do you believe are the highest priority for AI to solve for currently?*

“I think AI in reporting is the highest area as the sheer amount of disparate data is hard to process in our current lens or ways of working.”

“Better reporting focusing on insights rather than just getting the metrics right. I want to know if the data matches the anecdotes!”

“I'm hoping that it can ultimately enable better funnel diagnostics including predictive recommendations.”

“Reporting for sure, and better defining segments and Personas.”

“Attaching revenue predictability models to priority audience segments and using intelligence to define and manage the channels, designs and messaging most likely to deliver those predictions.”

“Budget management and planning! It takes up too much of our time to be constantly figuring out where our money is best spent for impact.”

“Reporting: Predictive Analytics (e.g. churn probability, predicted purchase, LTV) + assisted Forecasting and budgeting.”

It's also clear that marketers are on a constant quest for market and audience insights, to deliver campaigns that provide them with a tangible competitive edge in the market. This pursuit of innovation and effectiveness is fundamental in B2B, as enterprises continually pushing the boundaries of traditional marketing techniques to stand out in the crowd.

At Realm, this mission is central to our approach. We harness the power of AI frameworks and tools, integrating them with genuine B2B expertise to create impactful experiences. Our commitment is to the development of campaigns that not only meet the modern market's demands but exceed them.



Which strategic areas do you believe are the highest priority for AI to solve for currently?*

“Strategic context analysis (What's happening in and outside of the company in real-time to optimize the strategy).”

“Audience planning and market insights. I need to increase our speed to respond to what's going on for our buyers. We are a big ship that's slow to turn, every single day counts.”

“Creative personalization as it is seen as low hanging fruit.”

“Personalization! We really have to get better at that.”

“Defining audiences and personas. What will resonate the most with potential buyers and how can we map product usage to that?”

“Automating what is being done, so we can focus on nuance, strategy and execution.”

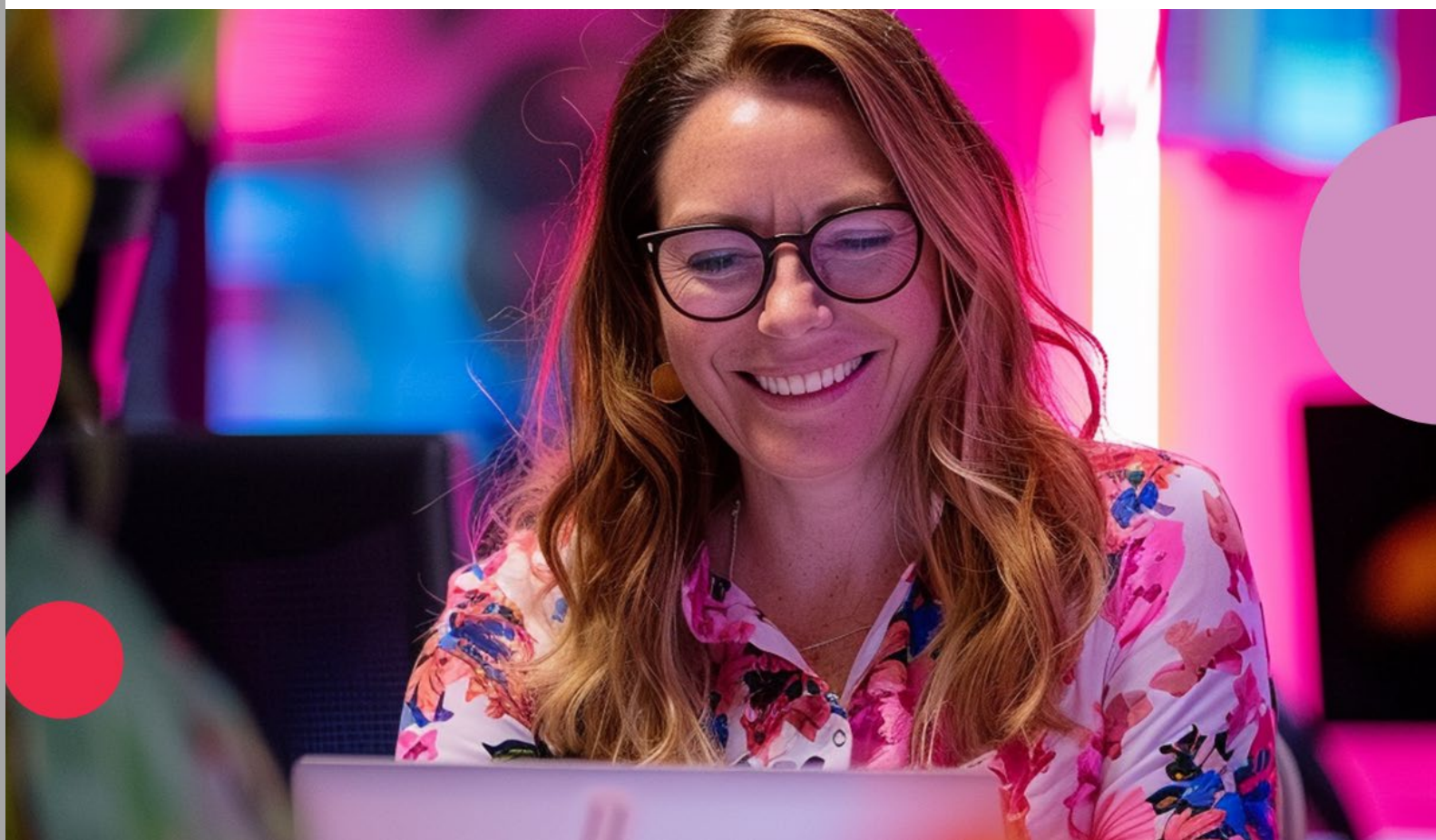
“Social post creation and content repurposing.”

“Understanding where are competitors are showing up so that we can see what to do about that. Where do we join a watering hole, and where do we need to stand out?”

Chapter 4

Managing AI challenges: today and on the horizon

100% of marketers believe the skillsets in their departments will need to change quickly in the next 2-3 years, at the same time they feel a real lack of available training or leadership in AI for B2B.



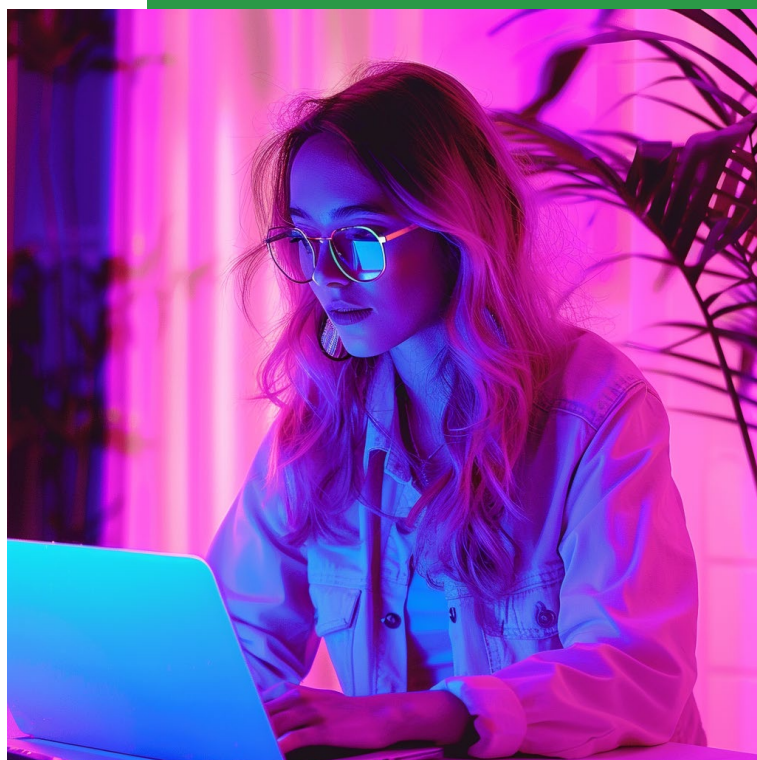
B2B marketers are bracing for a significant shift, with AI expected to transform their field within the next 2-3 years, ranking its potential for disruption at a solid 8 out of 10. Amidst this change, 65% believe AI could replace some marketing roles, yet there's a complete universal agreement that it will also create a demand for new skill sets over the same time period.

Rank your top challenges for AI in B2B Marketing

- 1 Lack of training or understanding of AI tools within the team
- 2 Loss of authenticity and brand/tone of voice
- 3 Data Privacy: confidential information being leaked via GenAI tools
- 4 Brand differentiation: AI prompts generating similar content for B2B companies
- 5 Licencing and ownership concerns: understanding who owns the content from GenAI tools
- 6 A black box approach and lack of clarity in how a response is designed by AI tools
- 7 Lack of working processes around AI usage in B2B Marketing
- 9 Ethics and bias issues
- 9 Relevance concerns: AI tools are trained on a wide data set so are not expert in B2B specifically
- 10 Hampering creativity and over-reliance on AI insights

Marketers face a slew of challenges as AI's role in their teams grows rapidly. At the forefront is a significant knowledge gap in AI training and understanding. But that's not the only concern.

Other issues which closely match their complexity, cover everything from preserving a distinctive brand voice and ensuring differentiation, to addressing privacy issues and data ownership. Marketers are ranking these based on their immediate internal challenges more than a holistic view of how AI could fit into their company.



23%

Of B2B Marketers have created some form of AI Council

Challenges like campaign creativity, bias prevention, and output relevance might be lower on the list - not because they're unimportant, but because logistical and legal hurdles take precedence.

Marketers unanimously agree: ethics and creativity are crucial. Yet, these come into play only after determining the basic feasibility of using a tool. That is their current focus, and 23% have created an AI Council to investigate it.



Please provide an example of how you have successfully leveraged AI at your company in the last few months*:

“Inability to pull insightful commentary from raw data - needs a ton of context, which doesn't necessarily allow for time savings.”

“Consistency and integration- different tools for different jobs so different data points.”

“Need to have a dedicated trial to prevent data leakage. Onboarding a vendor for a trial is lengthy.”

“Lack of integration with existing technologies – Poor understanding of brand tone - Response being too generic concern over saying the same as other vendors in the space.”

“Quality and relevance of ad copy + black box of audience targeting on LinkedIn campaigns. Hard to understand what the AI is truly using for campaign goal set up on DemandBase.”

“People do not look in detail at what AI spits out. Some have published incorrect content.”

“People are scared, like really scared. Which is weird.”

“Any outputs need to be thoroughly reviewed by an expert human to ensure that language, tone, brand, and facts are correct and suitable for use.”

“It's still relatively easy to detect AI-generated content. Tools are prone to "hallucinations" which can be a real challenge.”

“ChatGPT can be quite generic, so we created our own version for internal use based on Azure's AI services.”

“A challenge we experienced was around being curious on my team with larger conversations happening at the corporate level. I was able to get my key team member on the AI Council to help de-silo the efforts and create a governance document for the company.”

“Lack of trust in predictive outcomes, lack of humanised aspect matching tone of voice to design, copy, etc.”

“Lots of opinions + minimal practical knowledge = cycles of distraction.”

Conclusion

It's clear that AI is not just a fleeting trend but a cornerstone of future marketing strategies. The gap between the excitement for AI's potential and its actual application within marketing departments underscores a critical opportunity for growth and innovation.

Amidst budget constraints and the drive for efficiency, AI emerges as a key player for marketers aiming to elevate their strategies and operational effectiveness.

This exploration has uncovered a vibrant landscape of AI adoption, highlighting AI's diverse applications, from automating design processes to refining campaign activations and beyond. Yet, as marketers increasingly rely on AI, the need for enhanced skills and understanding of these technologies becomes paramount. Challenges such as ensuring ethical AI use, maintaining brand integrity, and seamlessly integrating AI with existing systems and frameworks are top of mind for B2B marketers. These hurdles, while significant, present an opportunity for strategic development and alignment with evolving market demands.

Realm is at the forefront of navigating these challenges, offering expertise and innovative frameworks that harness the power of AI in B2B marketing specifically. Our agency is uniquely positioned to help you leverage AI, not just to overcome hurdles but to redefine what's possible in your marketing efforts. By partnering with Realm, you're choosing a path of continuous learning, efficiency, and strategic advantage in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

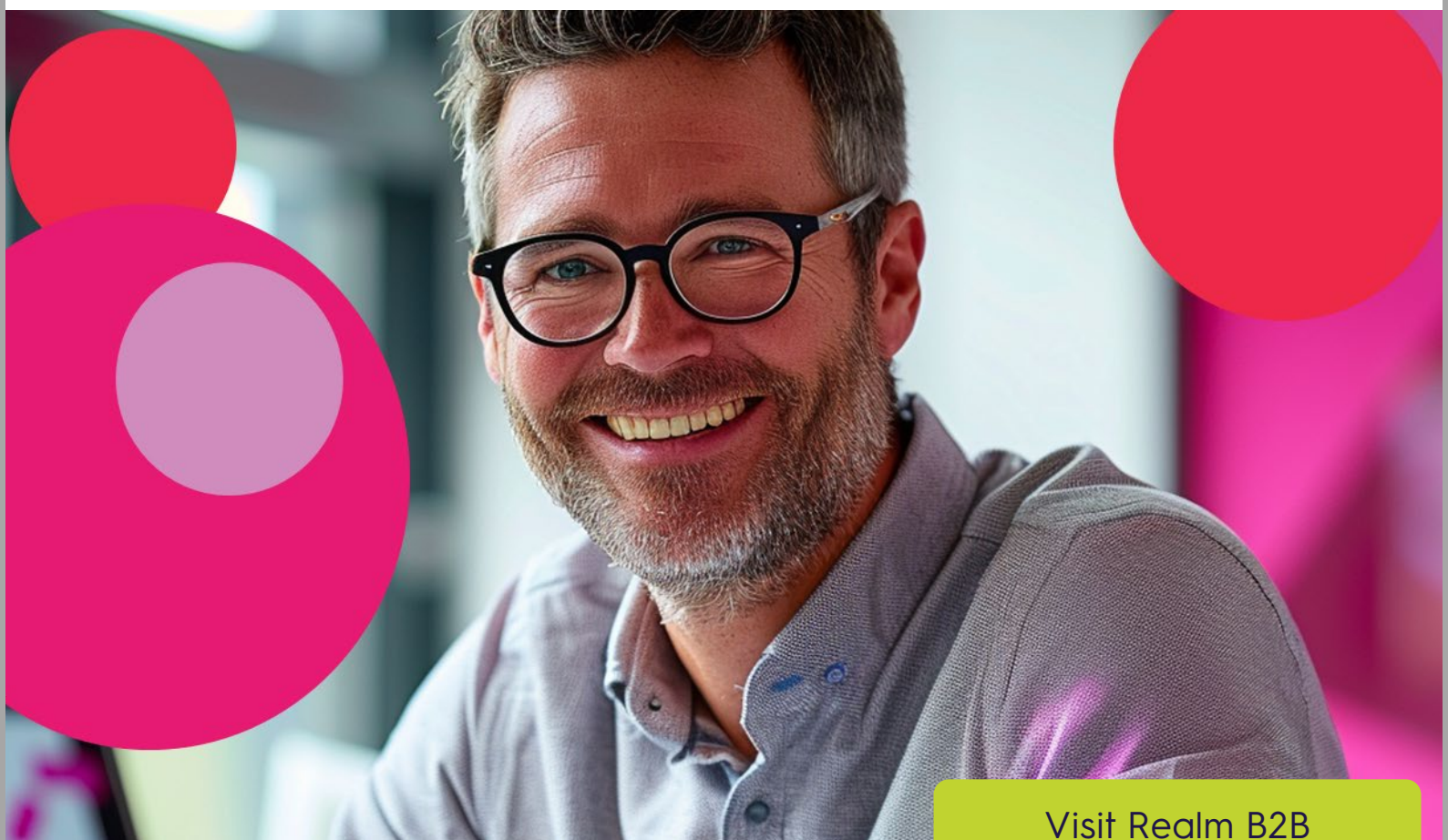


Methodology

Quantitative research: 30-question questionnaire with 125 B2B marketers. 13% are marketing managers, 47% are marketing directors, 18% are VP/SVP and 22% are CMOs. 21% of companies are under 250 employees, 13% are companies 250-999 employees, 34% are companies sized 1000-4999 employees and 32% are 5000+. In terms of regional remit 57% have global responsibility, 30% have North America only and 13% have EMEA only. Sectors included Technology, FinServ, Healthcare, Media and Industrial/Manufacturing.

Qualitative Research: 38 one-hour interviews with decision-makers who also participated in the quantitative research. All interviews were candid and confidential, therefore all and any and all identity has been deliberately removed.

The research took place between January 22 and March 29, 2024.



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