

MARKETING'S OWN LAYER 8

FEAT. AI

A ZENSCIENCES MARKETING TREND REPORT 2023

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Preamble

In a year of splintered company performances marked by a volatile economic climate, the CMOs' mind space is preoccupied with quite a few things. Amidst tightened data privacy regulations, niche talent shortage, and an educated audience, remarkable marketing breakthroughs came up, which will now pave the way for 2023's marketing strategies and plans.

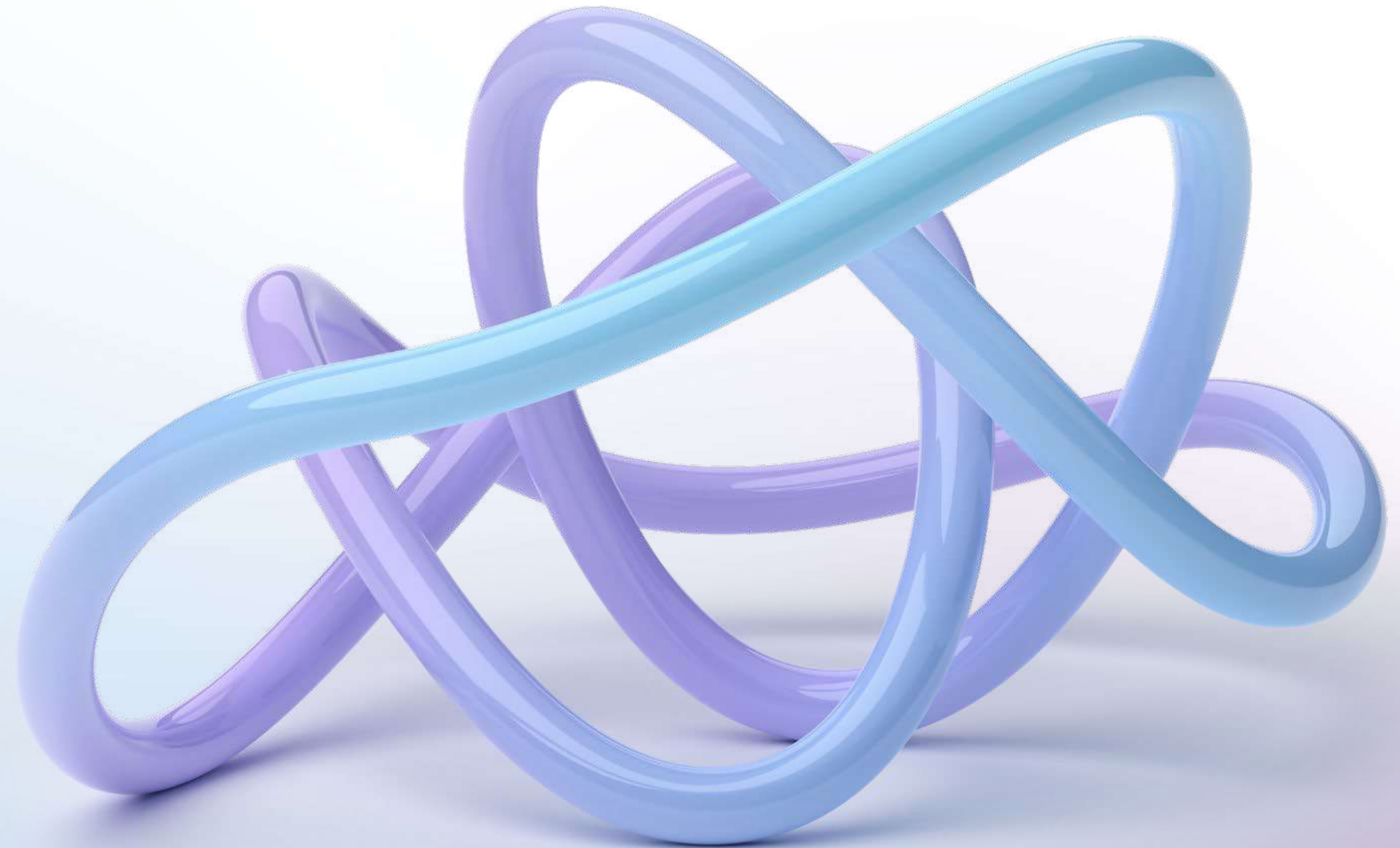


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Unmasking the new

Just when we thought we are recovering from the reverberations of a post-masked world, new economic disturbances and newer technologies, trends, and strategies unmask themselves, making marketing turn on its already spinning head.



Crises maketh people

As marketers were getting comfortable with the new world and its new purpose, recession reared its ugly head. Recent history tells us that a customer's mindset has been profoundly impacted by concerns of safety, health, convenience, and social responsibility. Corporates and brands who thrived not only understood, but also responded to this new-worldview shift. They became more purpose driven. Experience teaches us that while these will continue to be the main guiding factors, political unrest, economic downturns, and generational shifts will add more nuances that marketers will need to address.

Marketing is not a standalone gig

Marketing has undergone a transformation in recent times, with a greater emphasis on collaboration and coordination across teams and channels. This has given rise to new roles and disciplines, such as content marketing, influencer marketing, and customer experience management. These disciplines seek to create a holistic and positive experience for customers, leading to increased brand loyalty and success for companies. It is a testament to the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of the field of marketing.

Some trends, some classic.

The above could be fleeting trends and/or could have long-lasting business impacts.

For example: fear as a result of the pandemic may have been transitory; purpose, on the other hand, has become a permanent phenomenon.

Regardless of the nature of a trend or event, it is essential to take notice and consider its potential impact. Across the board, some buzzwords kept cropping up – including but not limited to pivoting, sales and marketing alignment, brand-value-based content, and influencer marketing – with new connotations and newer perspectives.

Technology takes the cake

We are no strangers to digital paraphernalia. From social media platforms, metaverse, AR, and VR and the opportunities thereof, to the conundrum of good data vs. bad data, technology has been shaping and will continue to shape the way that marketers approach customers and influence their ways of working. One thing that caught the trend of marketers and their buyers alike is AI.



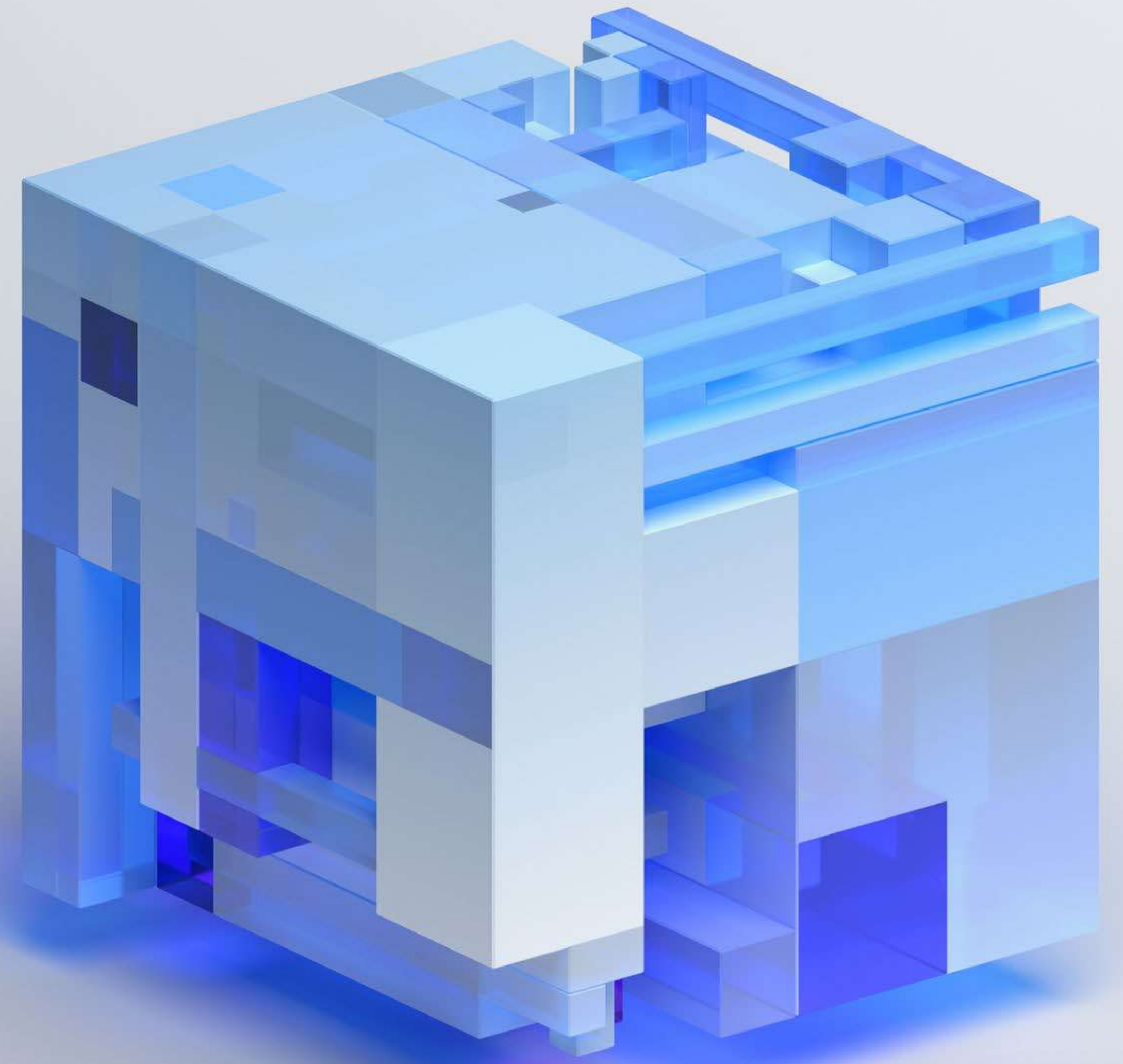
Say hello to artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence AI is one of those technologies which has historically been associated to that one key benchmark for taking human beings into the future. Interestingly, while it happens to be one of the most overused topics, it still manages to stay a 'buzzword' year after year.

However, it tends to get a bad rep. From lack of understanding to ethical concerns to fear of job security...well, you get the drift. Resist or accept, you definitely can't ignore it. In fact, as marketers you MUST not.

All things said and done, to survive in this evolving world of marketing, marketers need to stay true to their core – customer says what? Get distracted by the above without keeping them in mind and it's a rabbit hole. Customer journey mapping, customer data management, and customer service – how well you adapt these in light of new, old, and upgraded circumstances is how well you will thrive.

So, what does 2023 hold in store for CMOs, brands, and marketers?



SEO, SEO, WHERE ART THOU?

Brands and marketers are increasingly focusing on maximizing their SEO efforts to connect with customers and remain relevant. As they search for the most effective SEO strategy, it is important to understand the reasons behind this trend, the challenges that may arise, and how we can adjust our efforts in 2023.

The World of Data that governs digital marketing is headed one way – the direction our moral compass has always pointed. As for going back to the future, marketers do not have a time machine. But what we do have is... well data.

Searching for the perfect SEO strategy to make sense of an upended world, which in numbers looks like this:

- 70% of digital marketers believe that they can rely on SEO over pay-per-

click (PPC) in generating sales.

- While 94.74% of keywords get fewer than 10 monthly searches, 0.0008% of keywords get more than 100,000 monthly searches.

Laws, however, are not meant to be broken

Remember the whole Facebook-Cambridge Analytica incident³ and how people didn't quite like their data being misused? It's no surprise that after that, the European Union decided to step in and implement the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to make sure companies couldn't exploit personal information anymore.

Unrelated, but interesting fact: A first in India's legislative history, the bill uses 'her' and 'she' for an individual, irrespective of gender – a welcome populist and inclusive move.

The SEO impact

As the regulatory landscape shifts, it will be incumbent upon marketers to ensure that their data collection practices align with the new legal framework. It will no longer be acceptable to purchase e-mail lists, and opt-in e-mail marketing will likely become the standard. Protecting data on cloud servers and updating privacy policies on your website will become the lowest bar to clear.

Recently, India also stepped in with its new Digital Personal Protection Bill, 2022⁴, covering important aspects of the GDPR, but also taking into account things like ease of doing business and cross-border cooperation.

China follows a close regime with restrictions on cross-border data transfers. US addresses 'right to information,' while still playing catch-up with regulations regarding use, collection, and disclosure of data.

It is important to consider the benefits of having clear and transparent policies for collecting and using personal data, as well as the potential risks of non-compliance with data protection laws. Having clear and transparent policies and ensuring they are prominently displayed and easily accessible, can contribute to a positive user experience.

- A positive user experience can be a factor in ranking in search results, as search engines aim to provide users with the most relevant and useful results.
- This can help to prevent users from leaving a website due to concerns about their privacy, which can negatively impact the website's bounce rate.
- A high bounce rate can be a negative signal to search engines, as it may indicate that the website is not providing a good user experience.

Lost on a technicality

JavaScript (JS) is everywhere, and it has created quite the conundrum. Brands employ the use of JS to craft interactive and dynamic websites, elevating the user experience and potentially garnering favor from search engines. However, SEO experts have raised red flags regarding its impact on indexability, crawlability, and performance, which can negatively impact a website's visibility and ranking in search results.

A study by Onely⁵ reveals that “Google needs 9x more time to crawl JS than HTML.” Until Google addresses this issue and makes dynamic rendering a possibility, it falls upon us marketers to devise a workaround that is palatable to ‘search.’

The SEO impact

While we wait for Google to innovate something complex and simplify this in the future, we must currently resort to SEO hacks – using snapshots of HTML pages, descriptive and relevant page titles, meta descriptions, and URLs; structuring the content using header tags; using alt tags for images; and optimizing the loading speed – to get by.

Using HTML may be the simpler option for search engine optimization (SEO), but customer preferences have evolved. They want better-looking interfaces with enhanced user experience and journeys that lead to better engagement. Hence, branding considerations will take precedence and we will start shifting to better technologies. Consequently, SEO strategies should follow suit in their efforts.

Brands become the cookie monsters

In the sense that cookies are being eaten up. Apple has already blocked many third-party cookies with updates to its intelligent tracking prevention (ITP)⁶ feature. Google is resolving its timeline to remove third-party cookies from Chrome⁷ and reconfigure app-tracking in Android. While Google's Privacy Sandbox is poised to help businesses deliver targeted advertising, as well as maintain user privacy, how much will businesses actually gain from it is still uncertain.



The SEO impact

As a result, marketers will need to eventually stop relying on third-party cookies and instead focus more on acquiring first-party data. With consent. In the long run, this may be a more fruitful way of approaching customers as we move from a third-party (ethically and now legally questionable tactics) to first-party customer-approved data to improve the overall user experience.

AI + SEO

AI has left no stone unturned. As search engines start getting artificially intelligent, so must SEO strategies, naturally. From aiding in semantic analysis and keyword variations to recommending anchor text usage, AI and ML can be the perfect minion to your search engine spiders. It stands to reason that 52% of marketers plan to accelerate investment in AI-powered software or tools in order to understand consumer behavior and search patterns and improve their SEO strategies⁸.

In short, in these uncertain times, SEO might just become your ace in the hole, as marketing efforts shift from a push to a more pull tactic, making strategies more organic with greater focus on content and design.



EXPERIENCES NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE

The past that was

Remember the 1980s? A time when long hair and even bigger shoulder pads were all the rage? It was also the time the term 'experiential marketing' was coined, though the concept of it existed even decades ago. Think product demonstrations, in-store promotional events, even a simple test-drive of a car.

Marketing consultant, Bernard J. Jaworski defined it as "a strategy that focuses on helping consumers experience a brand rather than simply being told about it."



As the years have ticked by, brands have upped their game with increasingly sophisticated technologies and tactics to create immersive and interactive experiences for their customers with:

GREATER USE OF TECHNOLOGY:

From handing out brochures to interactive displays at events like trade shows, brands are increasingly using technology to enhance their experiential marketing efforts.

PERSONALIZATION: Take the example of the usage of VR to allow customers to try on clothes virtually and get a personalized fit.

INCREASED FOCUS ON STORYTELLING:

While product demonstrations and simulations are a big part of experiential marketing, brands are also focusing on using the latest technology to create a narrative around the brand's story.

Needless to say, the emphasis has shifted from simply demonstrating a product to creating a holistic and memorable brand experience.

Then came the masked horror of 2020

And everything came to a halt.

When the pandemic hit, experiential marketing was significantly impacted

as many events and in-person activities were either cancelled or had to be postponed. This included trade shows, conferences, product demonstrations, and other types of events that were traditionally used as platforms for experiential marketing.

Around 50-80% of the 2,500 B2B events conducted between March and May every year, were canceled⁹ in the year 2020 due to the pandemic.

In yet another survey – the UFI Global Exhibition Barometer – it was found that the number of respondents saying that everything was 'normal' from an events perspective, decreased from 85% in January 2020 to just 5-6%¹⁰ in April-June.

The present that became a gift

This led many companies to shift their focus away from offline experiential marketing and towards alternative strategies that could be executed safely and effectively in a virtual or remote setting.

- **Virtual events platforms:**

For conferences, networking events, launches, social gatherings, etc.

- **VR & AR:** Although not a new phenomenon at the time, the adoption of the same increased rapidly.

- **Interactive webinars:**

Workshops, AMAs, town halls - all moved to a virtual world.

CASE STUDY 1

One of the standout events was the Virtual Patagonia Music Festival, which featured live performances by musicians and bands from around the world. The festival was streamed on Patagonia's website and social media channels, and viewers could donate to environmental causes through the platform. The event was a success, with **over 50,000 people tuning in and over \$250,000 raised for environmental causes¹¹**.

Overall, Patagonia's Virtual Patagonia campaign was a great example of how a brand can adapt their experiential marketing efforts to a virtual setting, while still staying true to their values.

CASE STUDY 2

Remember the virtual trade show hosted by Cisco? The trade show, called Cisco Live, adopted the virtual format, given the circumstance.

It featured keynote speeches, product demonstrations, and networking opportunities for attendees. It also had interactive elements such as live Q&A sessions and virtual booths where attendees could chat with Cisco representatives and learn more about the company's products and services. The event was a success, with **over 50,000 attendees from over 150 countries participating¹²**.

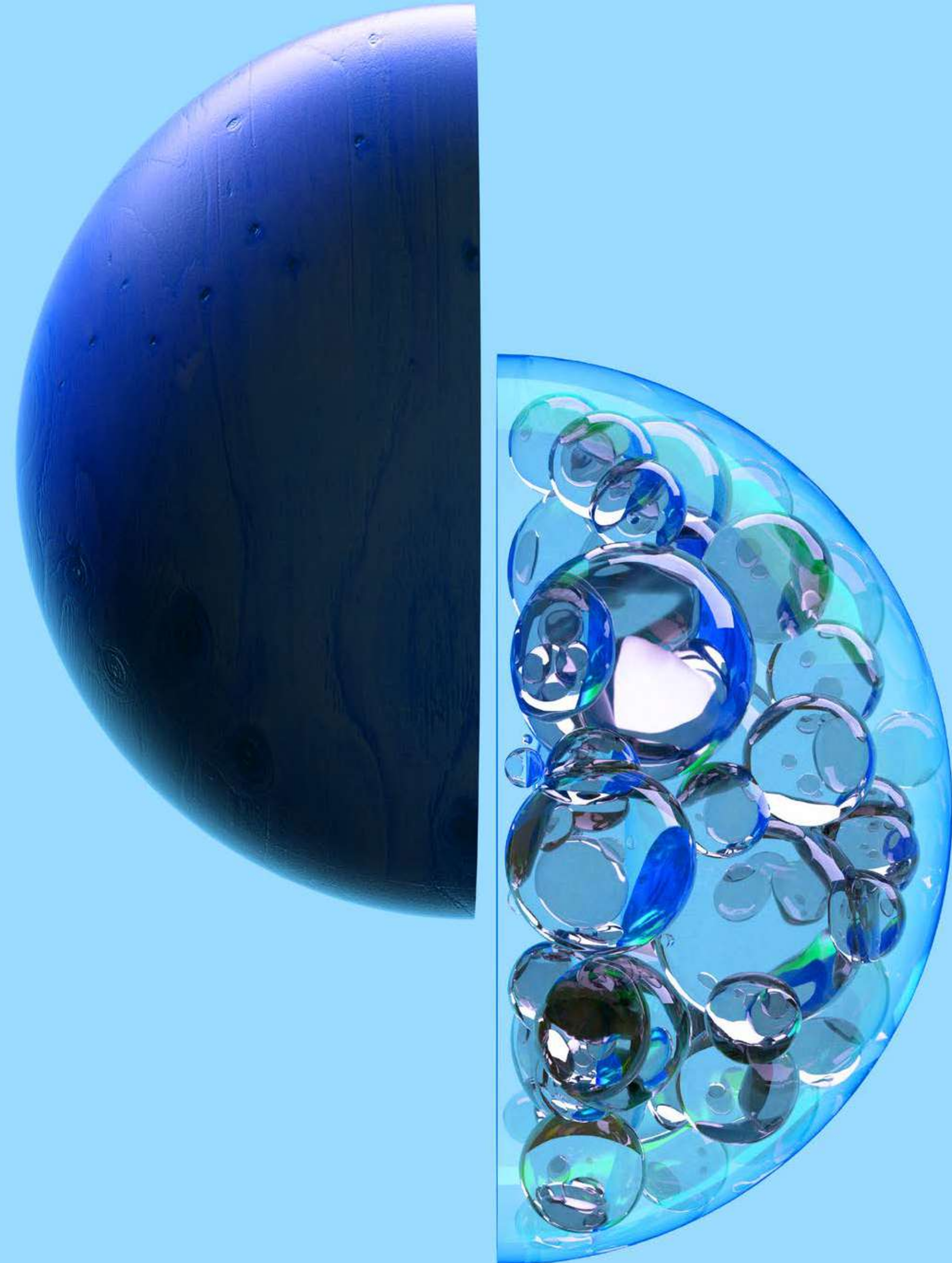
In addition to the live event, Cisco also offered a range of on-demand content and resources, such as educational videos and webinars, that attendees could access after the event.

This opened up a world of newer opportunities for brands and newer innovative ways to interact with people. The need for change inspired creativity and brands (well some of them at least) sprung to action and managed to communicate effectively with their customers.

The wheels have started to turn again. Jump back to 2023 to...

...The future that is

As the pandemic subsides and restrictions are lifted, how will we unmask newer strategies and tactics of experiential marketing? As data tells us, it is already making a comeback.



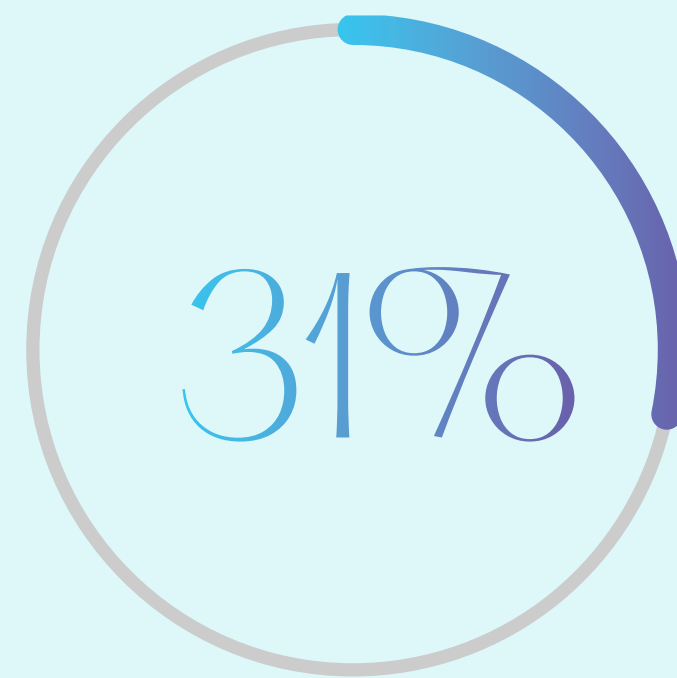
Effectiveness of live events as experiential marketing tools¹³



Businesses think live events provide opportunities for in-person connections



Over-performing businesses set to increase their live event budgets



Businesses think event marketing to be the most effective channel

Traditionally speaking, experiential marketing was known as ‘live marketing,’ or ‘on-ground marketing.’ But, with the newer technologies and a shift in customer mindset, experiential marketing now needs to evolve from physical to the non-physical, as customers demand and seek for experiences across all touchpoints. In fact, 60% of experiential marketers said that reaching out to non-physical attendees¹³ is crucial to an event’s success.

Though we were already making strides in this direction, the post-pandemic times have expedited our efforts. *You snooze, you lose.* With a polarized customer base now – one that wants to go out into the world and one that wants to stay connected, yet cocooned – it is not the case of either online or offline anymore, rather, the demand is of both.

Welcome to the world of omni-channel experiential marketing

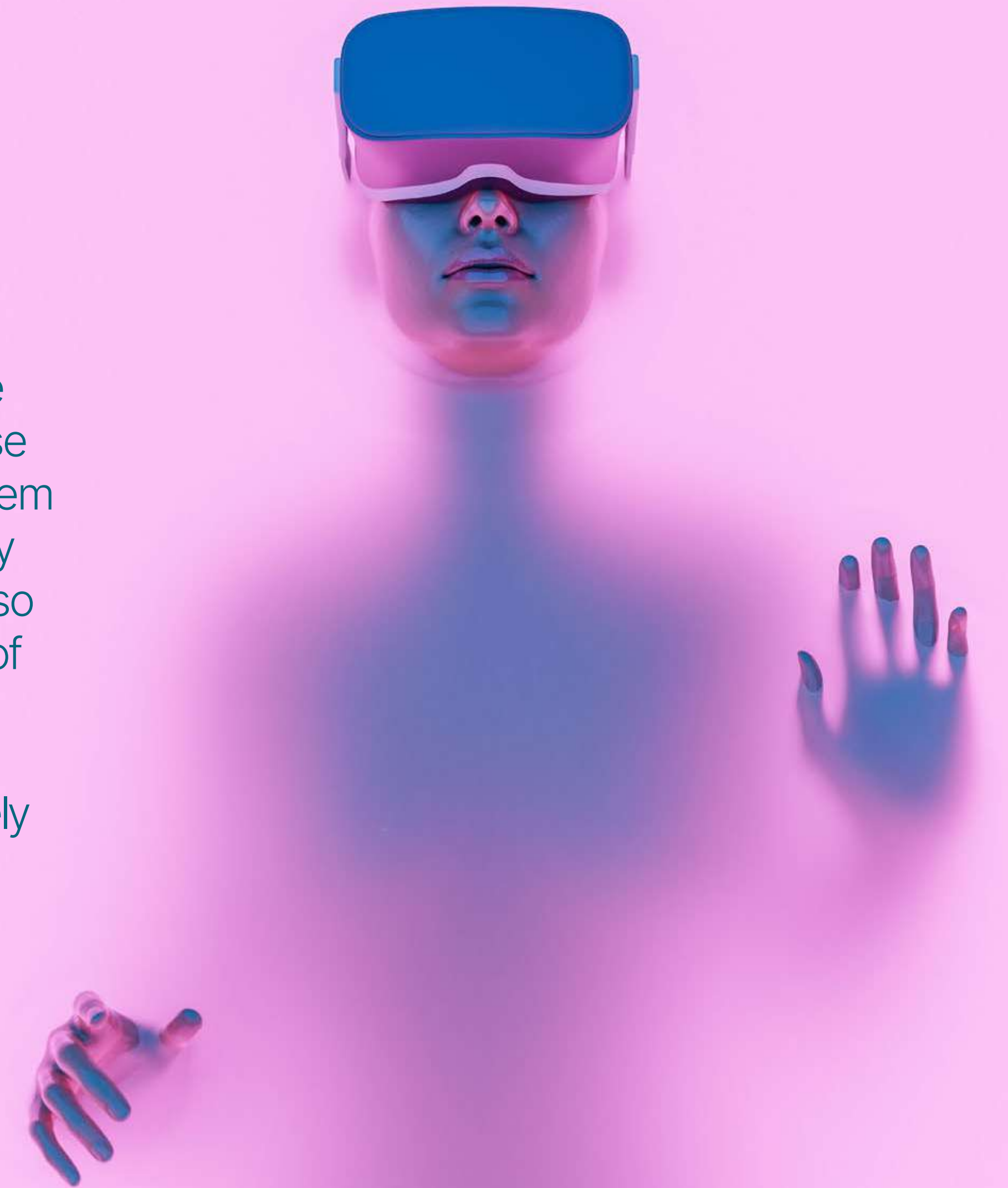
As marketers, the term omni-channel isn't alien to us. Different means, same goals. The experience should be cohesive for customers regardless of the platform or method they choose to use. And this time with even more stress on technology and platforms.

Take the M&M's flavor room¹⁴ in 2018 for instance: while social-media share-worthy and an effective campaign, it was limited in its use of technology. Fast-forward to 2022, and Tanishq created an experience center¹⁵ with LED screens, virtual try-ons as well as hand-gesture-activated actions. *Different means, same goals.* And one must roll with the times.

INCREASED USAGE OF AR/VR:

The use of AR and VR has significantly increased over time, as marketers have gained a greater understanding of these technologies and how to implement them effectively. Additionally, the accessibility and ease-of-use of AR and VR have also improved, leading to greater adoption of these technologies.

5G: As 5G networks become more widely available, the potential for experiential marketing campaigns that require high-bandwidth connections and real-time interactivity will increase, leading to supercharged user experiences.



BLOCKCHAIN: Blockchain technology could be used to create more transparent and secure experiential marketing campaigns, such as for tracking and verifying the authenticity of products or to create personalized rewards programs.

PERSONALIZED AVATARS: From product/service demonstrations to customization and customer service, avatars can create human-like and personal connections, leading to higher engagement with customers.

METaverse: Creating your brand's digital twin will give you ample opportunity to continuously engage with customers. With the potential of permanency, it can become your online experience center with virtual product demonstrations, virtual trade shows, virtual campaigns, and other virtual experiences. It has the added advantage of customers willing to share data with brands in exchange for a more personalized and immersive experience

The benefits that a brand can see far outweigh the investment in these technologies and tactic:

INCREASED ENGAGEMENT

New technologies = ▲ customer curiosity = ▲ engagement

WIDER REACH

Even those who couldn't make it can now make it

GREATER SCALABILITY

Reach more customers without incurring additional costs

EFFORTLESS INTEGRATION

Seamless experience across channels

EASY DATA

A treat for your customers means a cookie for you

CUSTOMIZATION

Data = personalization

ENHANCED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

From branding opportunities at events/sessions to creating own experience centers, offline simulations to interactive websites, experiential employer branding at campuses to onboarding of employees in your very own metaverse – there are plenty of opportunities and options for a brand to explore.

Essentially, for an effective **omni-channel experiential marketing** strategy to succeed, you must do all or either of the following:

REPLICATE

Networking events held on both offline premises and online platforms with near-similar experiences for the audience

EXTEND

Offline product simulations with follow-up experience on your website with, say, a QR code enablement or vice-versa

INTEGRATE

Offline establishments with interactive walls or online stores with virtual try-ons

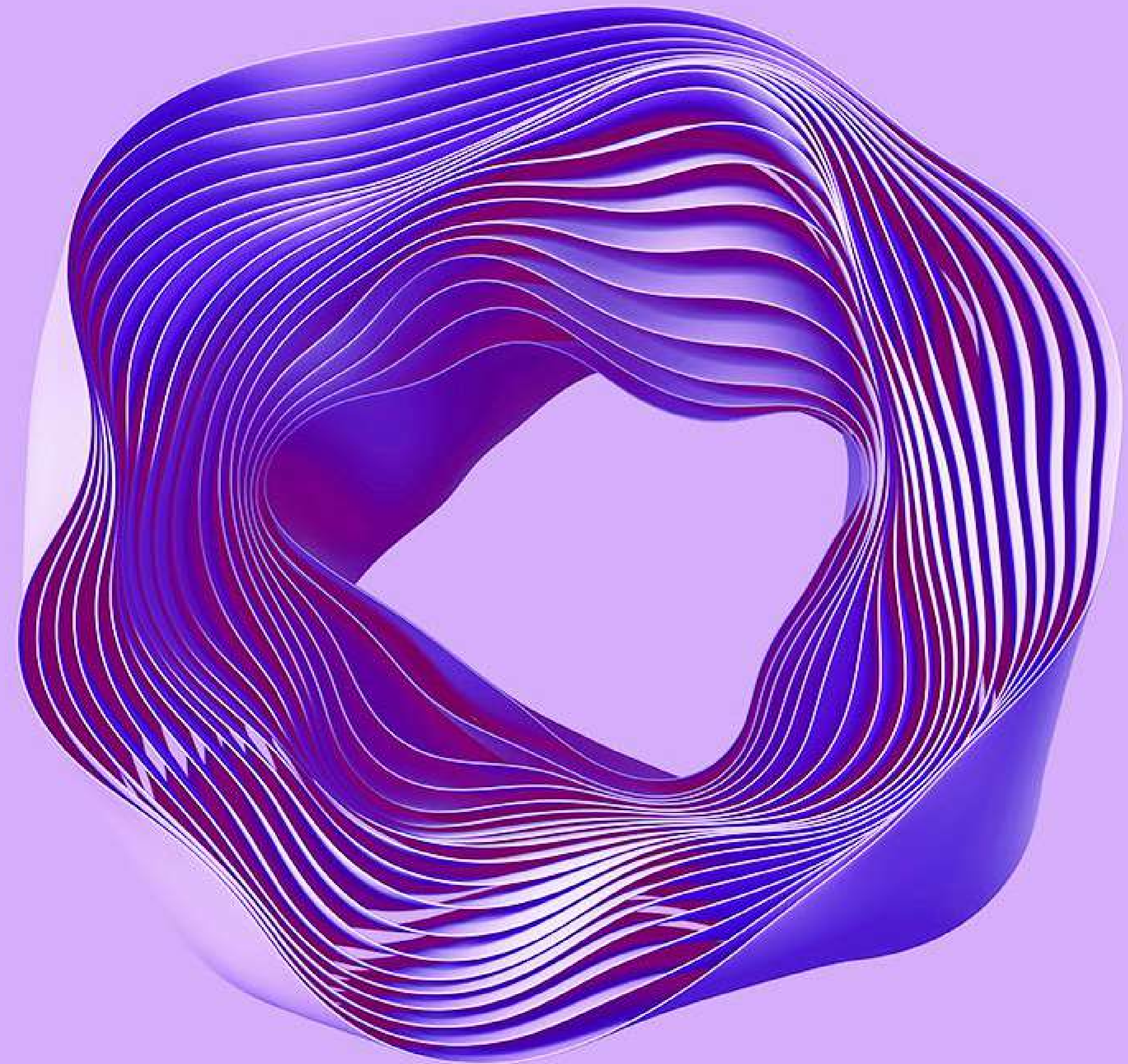
Lest, one gets confused between omni-channel and multi-channel experiences, it is important to remember that the former means a cohesive experience.

While you may have amazing campaigns and experiences running on different channels/platforms, unless they work together, it isn't an omni-channel experience.



AI + Experiential marketing

While experiential marketing guarantees to pique the curiosity of patrons and prospects alike, when clubbed with AI, the opportunities for marketers are endless. What gives experiential marketers an upper hand here is the fact that every user-facing interaction is already happening virtually. This opens newer nuances of data with more intrinsic information about their user base and a reflection of their own event, guiding futuristic strategies. While this is merely the data aspect of it, the role that AI plays in experiential marketing is thus far more crucial than any. For audiences located anywhere in the world, you can now create experiences that are personalized, secure, and democratized.



STEALING THE SHOW ONE VIDEO AT A TIME

Long long ago, marketers waited for Super Bowls every year to release one iconic ad film – one exorbitantly priced 30-second feature which would go on to become (or not) the talk-of-the-town till the next year. Yet again, these iconic videos were reserved only for consumer brands. But the explosive revolution brought about by smartphones and video editing apps has changed video creation and distribution forever.

Video experiences are evolving from a lean-back medium to something more pliable and interactive – creating a new canvas for marketers to paint and tell (sell) a story. In a research study, it was found that viewers were able to retain 95% of the message as



opposed to 10% who read about it¹⁶. Why won't B2B marketers not want to be in the center of all this action?

Off the linear path

INTERACTIVE VIDEOS ARE ON THE RISE

Remember Bandersnatch? As part of its science fiction anthology series Black Mirror 2, Netflix released the 'Choose Your Own Adventure'-styled movie in 2018. Bandersnatch gave viewers the option to choose between two actions at certain moments of the narrative and, thereby, determine the course of events in the film. This is not the only interactive movie in recent years. The following year, viewers got to make decisions for adventurer, Bear Grylls in You vs. Wild.

Interactive content is not limited to movies and TV series alone. They are now the second most effective video marketing strategies that teams use on social media, after funny posts.

According to Forrester, interactive videos get 36% more completion than linear videos¹⁷.

Why? Interactive videos open a whole new level of engagement and dialogue between your business and target audience.

And using interactive content doesn't mean you have to host it on a streaming site; it can be hosted directly on your brand's website, driving traffic to your most valuable marketing tool!

Interactive videos work smoothly with any video, long or short form. From a 45-minute webinar replay video to a short follow-up video for addressing questions after the webinar.



CASE STUDY 3

FedEx, the famous logistics enterprise, had built the FedEx Small Business Center as a resource that guides small entrepreneurs through the complicated process of starting a small business and navigating the shipping world. The resource center includes tons of data about freight shipping on both national and global scales. However, until recently, the site was extremely text-heavy, with over 900 static pages that was often difficult to navigate. FedEx, with the help of Ion, created an interactive experience using branched storytelling¹⁸ to walk business owners through the previously complicated process of freight classification and shipping.

(Deep)-fake it, till you make it

DEEPPFAKE VIDEOS CAN REDUCE THE PRODUCTION COST

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was the recent target of a new-generation cyberattack whereby a deepfake of Zelenskyy surfaced online ordering Ukrainian troops to surrender to Russia. While this news makes us wonder what happens if a deepfake of any influential person misinforming the masses is released, the technology underlying deepfakes is as ingenious as it gets with AI and machine learning²⁰.

Fortunately, the business world is now taking notes too and the answer to the security concerns is authorized deepfake, where the individual depicted in the video gives prior consent. Authorized deepfake technology can be used to create realistic-looking brand videos or images that are very difficult to distinguish from real people, and it has great potential for use in marketing and advertising. Think of the monetary and human resources you would save if you produce a new video on your laptop or PC without having to reshoot the entire content!

Do you remember Lay's Messi Messages campaign in 2021²¹? Users could create and send personalized and authorized videos from Messi in multiple languages using deepfake and prompt fellow fans to watch the game!

Clearly, there is immense potential for marketers to inch closer to their users – not to forget the cost savings – by employing authorized deepfake videos in enterprise business settings for employee training and development. Imagine these scenarios: a simple animated instructional video for an upskilling course, versus the virtual twin of a celebrity or a famous pioneer of that industry, donning the role of a professor. If you were already imagining the latter, then you know this is merely the beginning.

Breathing new life into video content

ANIMATE YOUR WAY INTO YOUR CUSTOMERS' VIDEO FEED

Part of videos' power for marketing, branding, and advertising is that viewers respond to the emotion of stories, voices, body language, and facial expressions. 2D character animations tap into some of that power. Realistic motion capture and 3D animations take it to a new level. Marketers are using motion capture for creating more realistic explainer videos, virtual office tours, product demonstrations, and interactive presentations, among others. But this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Quick trivia: Gollum (played by Andy Serkis) in 'Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King' was the first motion capture animation²³. The VFX team was able to bring a completely CG character to life for the first time, by using the physical movements and expressions of Serkis and adding visual effects on top.

Motion capture in enterprise marketing

Ahead of conversations around the Metaverse being a virtual place where the experience of working, playing, collaborating, and engaging can be done using avatars, Unreal has launched MetaHuman. An end-to-end framework, MetaHuman gives any creator the power to use highly realistic human characters in any way imaginable. It includes MetaHuman Creator, a free cloud-based app that enables the creation of fully rigged photorealistic digital humans in minutes. With more and more democratization of tools like this, videos that utilize human subjects – testimonials, explainers, product, and service offerings demos – can be enriched with real-time motion capture to create exciting XR and video content.

To paraphrase Jerry Maguire, 'Show us the ROI...'

For B2B marketing, the teaser is just out. As more and more viable video-based marketing campaigns make their rounds, we're bound for an epic show.

Before the curtain rises, marketers must introspect and have a few answers ready. This begins with identifying the opportunity, the right channel, and the perfect visual treatment that fits their purpose and justifies their investment. If the situation calls for it, they must retire the practice of creating static uni-directional videos. Instead, they can embrace new interaction design possibilities with new video formats. Brands that use these insights with a solid content strategy stand to benefit the most. Even though the metaphorical fruits of interactive and deepfake videos are ripe now, motion capture in the B2B context still has a long way to go. At this stage, it is better to implement the ideas that are permeated within the scope of your business and keep your eyes on the nascent trends.

AI + Video marketing

There's so much that human-built machines can do, and generating videos is the newest in the block(buster). Marketers can experiment with using the same content and rendering it into multiple formats for different channels. Your blog getting the right traction on one media, may be converted into a video within minutes and distributed to a different channel. Repurpose the same with intent assistance algorithms for a different audience altogether. But, fret not, as your human workforce is still not out of the equation; ideations still originate from prompt engineers and script writers who will play a major role in hand-holding AI into producing the results with not much lost in translation from concept to video.



CONTENT CAN NEVER BE DETHRONED

Where pixels disappear, words appear

The picture alone, without the written word, leaves half the story untold. There is no time like now, for marketers to understand the intricacies behind this adage, and put them into practice. Sensible content has, and will continue to remain, the lynchpin of a good marketing presence. But how sensibility is perceived and interpreted is what separates impactfully successful content

from the rest. An analysis of over 500,000 blogs and 200,000 tweets among other content revealed that 78% of the 15,000 marketers believed in a documented marketing approach²⁴.



What did companies do to succeed in content²³

78%

Have a documented content marketing strategy.

48%

Increased their paid content promotion budget.

60%

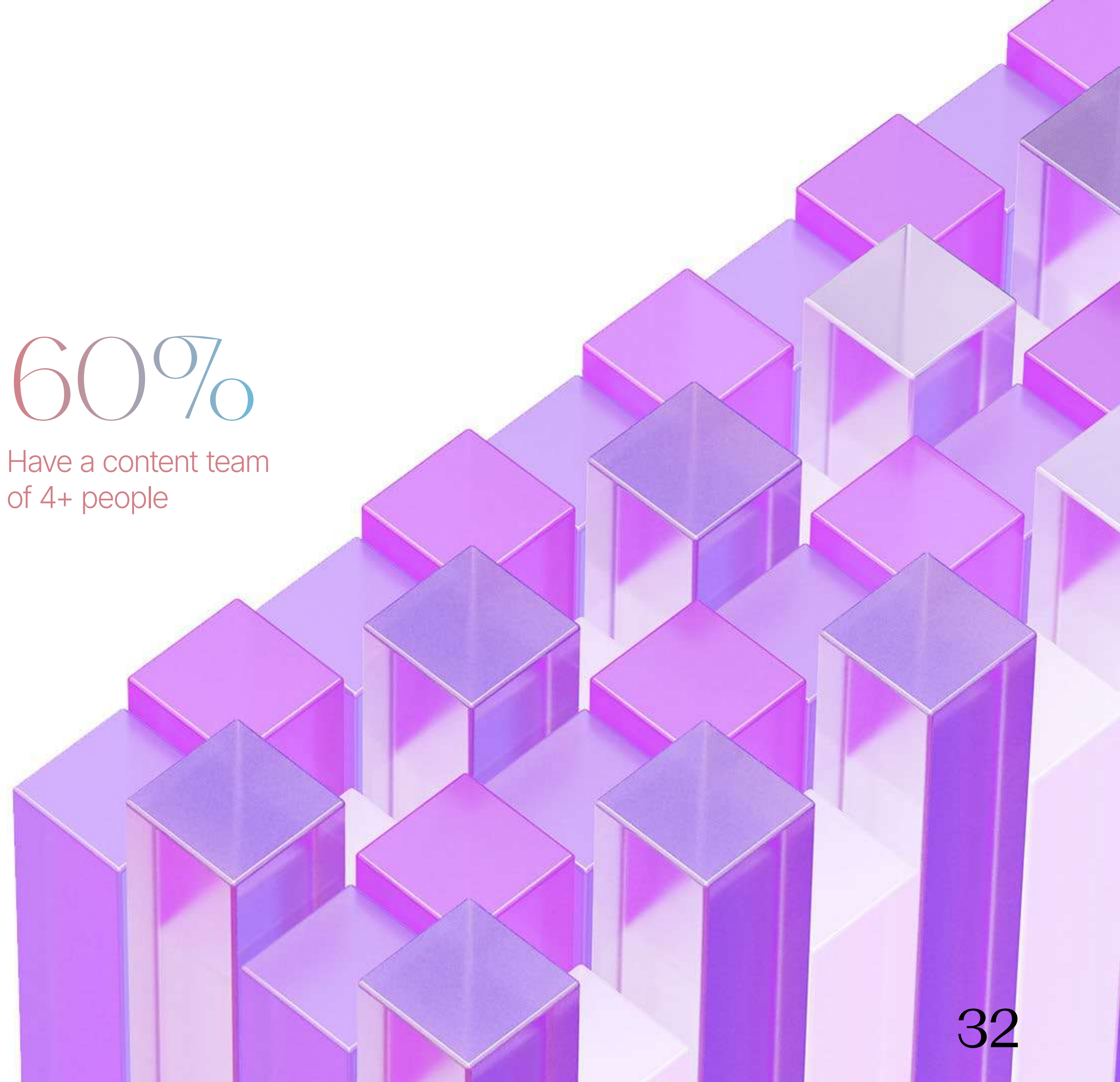
Have a content team of 4+ people

65%

Run content audits more than twice per year

78%

Spent over 10% of their marketing budget on content



Old news, but the user still dictates the content?

This puts strategy, purpose, and most importantly, the user at the top of every content marketer's agenda. As Google's Matthew Cutts, who was part of the SEO team, would say, **"What is good for the user is good for Google."** Defining and documenting the why, the who, the what, the where, and the how, will add meaningful impact to content in the age of digital deluge.

In fact, quality defeats quantity, according to **83% of marketers who believe in posting good content as opposed to frequent articles²⁴**. But like everything, content as we know it, is changing. While the thumb rule of strategizing content will remain your holy grail, these changing times will require new stencils and layers of a renewed approach.

AI to SEO: I see you and AI raise you

Since the birth of search engines, the term SEO and its organic nature has been a debatable topic. More so in recent times. SEO remains more organic than ever, with most marketers turning to the touted alternative, search engine marketing (SEM) – where paid efforts with an advertising intent go into the planning and execution. In SEM, businesses use pay-per-click (PPC) to generate a buzz and attract highly qualified traffic to their websites. It can also be argued that for brands that are determined to design infinite webpages – where all content gets appended on a single page – SEM triumphs over organic SEO. While there is no denying the targeted outcomes that SEM can bring, marketers must take into account the advent of intelligence. Intelligent users and intelligent machines.

With changing the game of content, search engines now have the ability to read between the lines, in its most literal sense. This is where strategy-led SEO planning is back in vogue.

Writing for the intelligent search engine

By being able to decipher the intent of a search keyword, AI-led search engines are beckoning marketers to write content based on what information users want.

It is interesting that this goes beyond plugging in keywords haphazardly into an existing piece. There is a lot that goes into building the content before writing it and marketers must make onerous efforts towards this.

Written by an intelligent non-human entity

That's not all. Just like how AI made inroads into the demand for information, so has it on the supply side of it.

The entrance of platforms like ChatGPT – which uses an auto-regressive language model to curate readable and optimized content – and Chinchilla, are just the beginning for AI-led content creation.

Long form is in it for the long haul

Presumed dead, long-form content across text, audio, and video, is very much in its neon of publicity. Twitter's CEO, Elon Musk, recently announced the rollout of long-form tweets, which will allow users to publish longer-than-usual and interconnected tweets as part of a single post²⁵. It is equally notable that search engines still have an indulgence for long-form content.

Before initial conversations with any vendor, decision-makers browse and read relevant articles to make a well-informed call on their purchase. According to a survey:

30% of respondents said they consume 1-3 articles

44% attested to reading over at least 3-5 articles

10% of them agreed to poring over more than 7 articles²⁶

Another incentive for long-form content is the argument that as marketers, we are not battling for reach, nor impressions; at least not anymore. Users or visitors already know what they want, and it's all about capturing their attention and giving

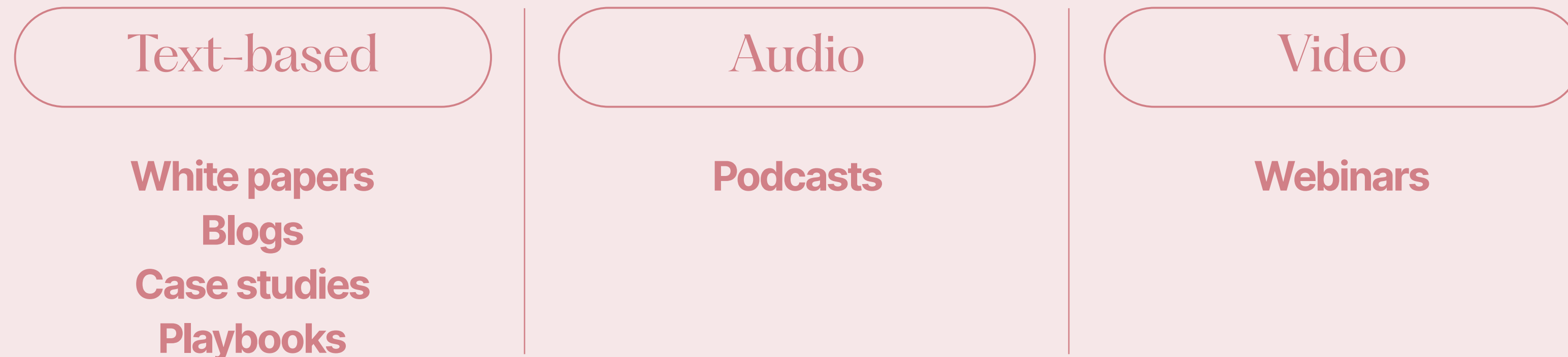
them a reason to listen²⁷. A reason that can be justified with an elucidated, illustrated, and sufficiently exhaustive article.

In all cases where the purchase process is complex and non-linear, and decision-makers must make a high-budget commitment, long-form content becomes pervasive and indispensable.

Especially in the case of B2B, where purchase decisions need to be backed by solid reasoning allowing no margin for assumption or trial-and-error practices, long-form content commands more authenticity and reliability. How?

It opens an opportunity for marketers to establish their thought leadership stance in a respective area, at the same time, subtly invite readers to their products or services through backlinks.

Almost as telling is the value-add that visitors gain and the trust and patronship that a brand accomplishes to create. It's an arbitrary opinion as to what kind of assets businesses call long form, and how long. The typical long-form content encompasses:



But this doesn't always have to be a mundane essay, or a monologue for that matter. Images and other graphical elements can go a long way in ensuring a visitor's attention span is accounted for.

Apart from the obvious visual relief that imagery can offer to long-form text-based

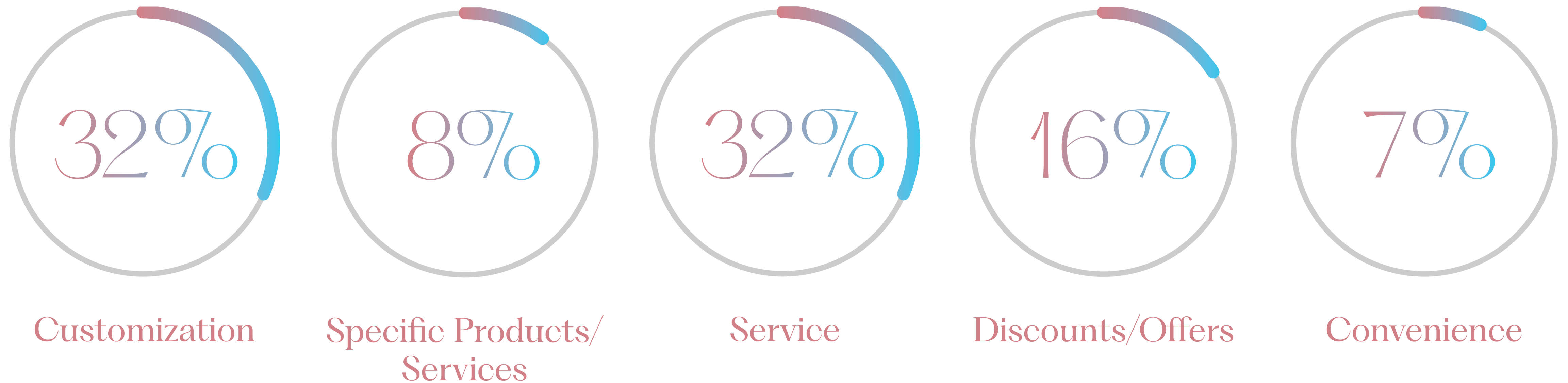
content, it helps in conquering a space for the piece of information in the reader's mind. A Researchgate study says that **only 10% of text-based content can be recalled by the average human after three days²⁸; on the other hand, 65% of the information conveyed through infographics can be retained after**

three days. However, visual elements need to be rightly and proportionately augmented with text copies. That balance while challenging is achievable, through – yes, you guessed it – a documented content strategy.

It's a small world, but a much bigger metaverse

In 2023, cookies won't work. Nor will a cookie-cutter approach. If there is one thing that businesses across the board would agree, it is that their customers want a personal touch. A study by McKinsey & Company states that **76% of consumers are frustrated with businesses that do not offer personalized experiences**²⁹.

Yet another survey sheds light on how consumers perceive personalization³⁰:

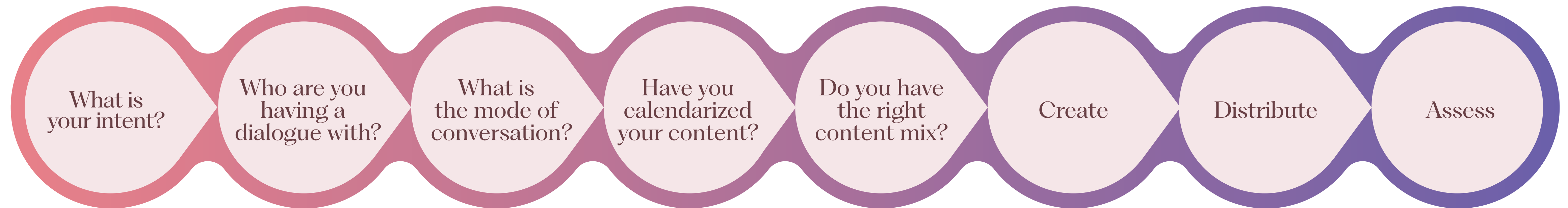


Regardless of personalization's connotation, it remains indelible that customers want conversations made just for them. Achieving the scale of this ambitious mass-personalization has for long been a practical challenge, owing to its logistical and computational limitations. Enter the metaverse.

While still in its infancy, metaverse promises a strong interest towards personal conversations – dialogues made for the segment of one – made possible with Web 3.0 (which is again, in its nascent conceptual phase). Underpinned by AI, along with XR, the metaverse can bring marketers' aspirations to life. VR gears have already entered the meeting

rooms, and it will only be a matter of time before webinars and videos follow suit and get real. As generations Z, alpha, and onwards, gradually form the lion's share of content consumers, the capacity to deliver reality-suspending experiences on the metaverse, will become the norm. While it is still a far-reaching reform, the way we see it is that the metaverse will open new charters for content marketers.

To gain a head start for when the rubber hits the road, marketers must prepare for translating linear content into material for the metaverse. To that end, they will need a bank of what has worked in the past and a solid rationale into why it works.



To sum up, the road ahead for content may be changing, albeit in a way that both challenges and pushes marketers to bring the best out of the written word. Come what may, it is abundantly clear that marketers must pay efforts towards documented content marketing, as they navigate through these exciting realities.

AI + Content marketing

We have discussed AI's role in SEO and in search engines in great detail; but what about the content in itself? ChatGPT secured 57 million users in its first month, with an estimated 10 million queries, every day³². By now, regular patrons of this application are on the consensus that it helps analyze large pieces of content and more importantly, in research. It is estimated that OpenAI, the company that developed ChatGPT will rake in a revenue of \$200 million by 2023 and \$1 billion by 2024³³. In the math of this, it will be interesting to see how this landscape pans out and what new entrants in this market will bring to elevate marketers' capacity.

Conclusion

Hook. Line. Measure.

Like Peter Drucker said and how the internet loves to quote him for it, 'you can't improve what you can't measure.' You simply can't. But for a long time now, businesses and understandably marketers, have resorted to different KPIs.

BUSINESS KPIS are metrics that a company uses to measure its overall performance and progress towards its goals. These can include financial metrics such as revenue, profit, and RoI, as well as non-financial metrics such as customer satisfaction, employee retention, and market share.

MARKETING KPIS on the other hand, are metrics that a company uses to measure the

effectiveness of its marketing efforts.

These can include metrics such as website traffic, lead generation, conversion rates, and social media engagement.

Marketing KPIs are typically focused on the customer journey and how well a company's marketing efforts are driving awareness, interest, and action from potential customers.

When all is said and done, business KPIs and marketing KPIs are related, as marketing activities are often a key driver of business performance. However, they are distinct, in that, business KPIs focus on the overall performance of the company, while marketing KPIs focus specifically on the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

BUT THAT IS CHANGING VIS-À-VIS THE RECESSION

The first thing that could potentially take a hit is the marketing function. Irrespective of B2B or B2C, what does the marketer need to do?

Or, are we looking at it wrong?

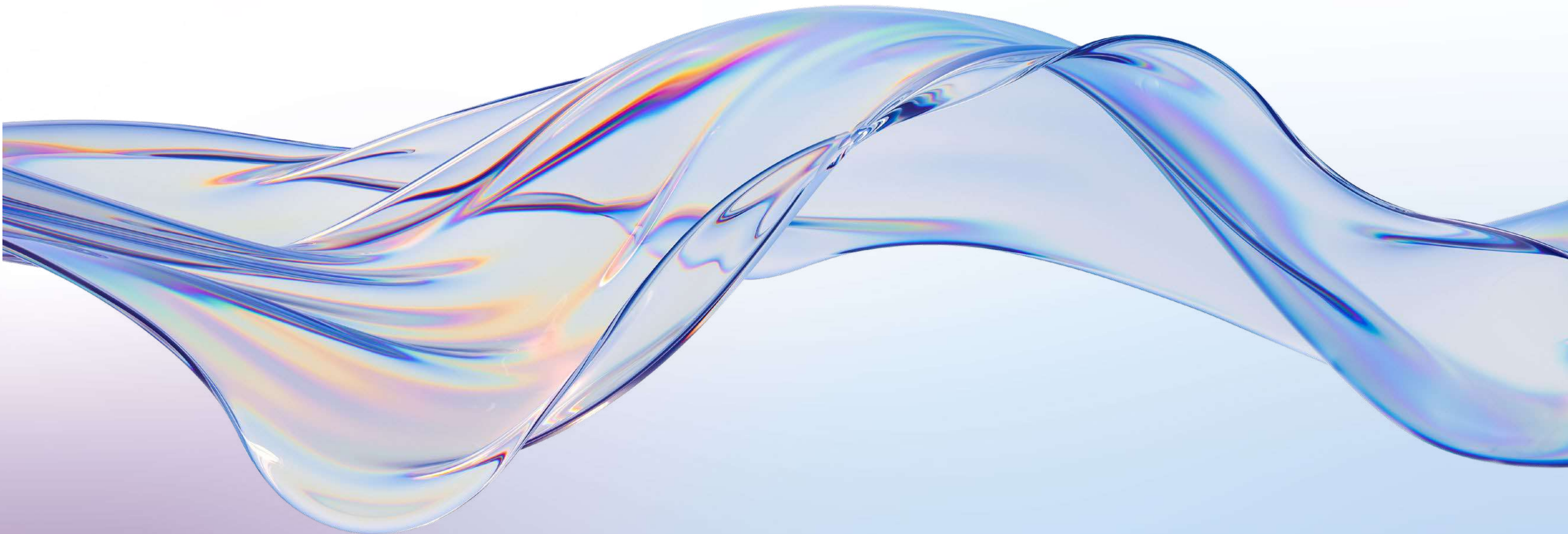
We saw it happen once during the pandemic. Once during the Financial Crisis. And as history tells us, during the Great Depression.

When all things turned bleak during the Great Depression, many businesses – from your regular mom-and-pop stores to giants – closed their shutters forever. But, not The Kellogg Company. At a time when everyone else perceived marketing as a money drainer, Kellogg believed and did just the opposite.

After doubling their ad spend and executing some phenomenal radio advertising, Kellogg's – as it is fondly known – increased their profits by 30%.

So, maybe, the solution is not in booting marketing after all, but rather evolving it. And it already has. Today, marketing is moving towards reining the overall performance of a company (as it should).

How can marketers and marketing teams gear up for this, so as to not become redundant? The answer, while arbitrary, has a simple formula, and it all ties back to measuring KPIs. Everything boils down to business owners wanting to know what they want, and trusting their process, and most importantly, their marketing teams, if we may.



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