



B2B

International

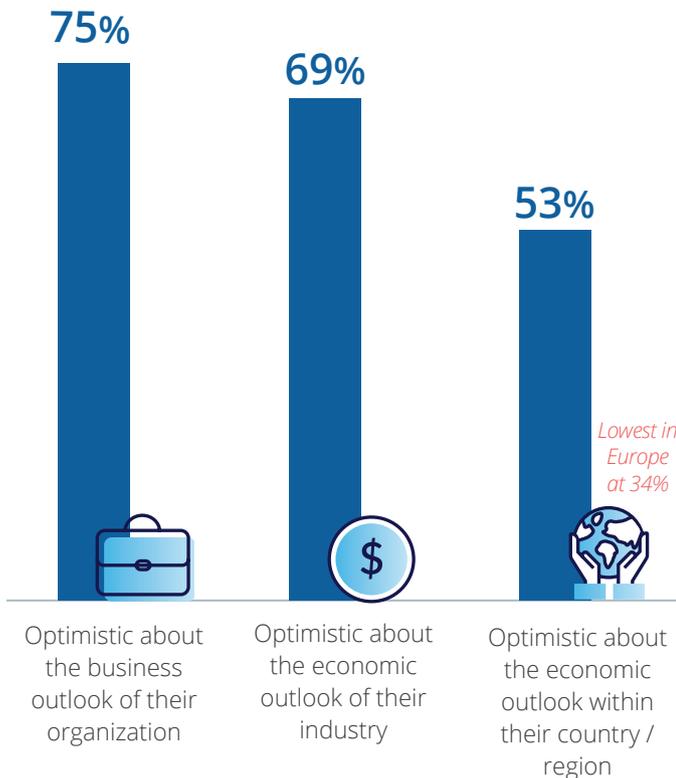
A Merkle Company

2021 B2B Marketing Monitor

A recent survey of B2B enterprises reveals what's on the minds of B2B marketing & strategy decision makers – currently and for the year ahead.

How They're Feeling

Overall, B2B decision makers are **optimistic**, especially about their business and industry:



As a result, emotions are positive about their industry, with the top 3 feelings indicating an eagerness to accept and overcome current challenges:

50% feel confident

"There is only going to be more technology innovation that will create more opportunities for employment and digital transformation." - **Tech**

43% feel determined

"In the midst of a global pandemic, the pharmaceutical industry is pivotal to regaining normality." - **Healthcare**

31% feel proud

"Despite the pandemic, construction has continued and been successful in adapting to the new way of working." - **Construction**

The Challenges They're Addressing

- The top 3 challenges being addressed this year are:



Delivering an excellent CX throughout the entire customer lifecycle;



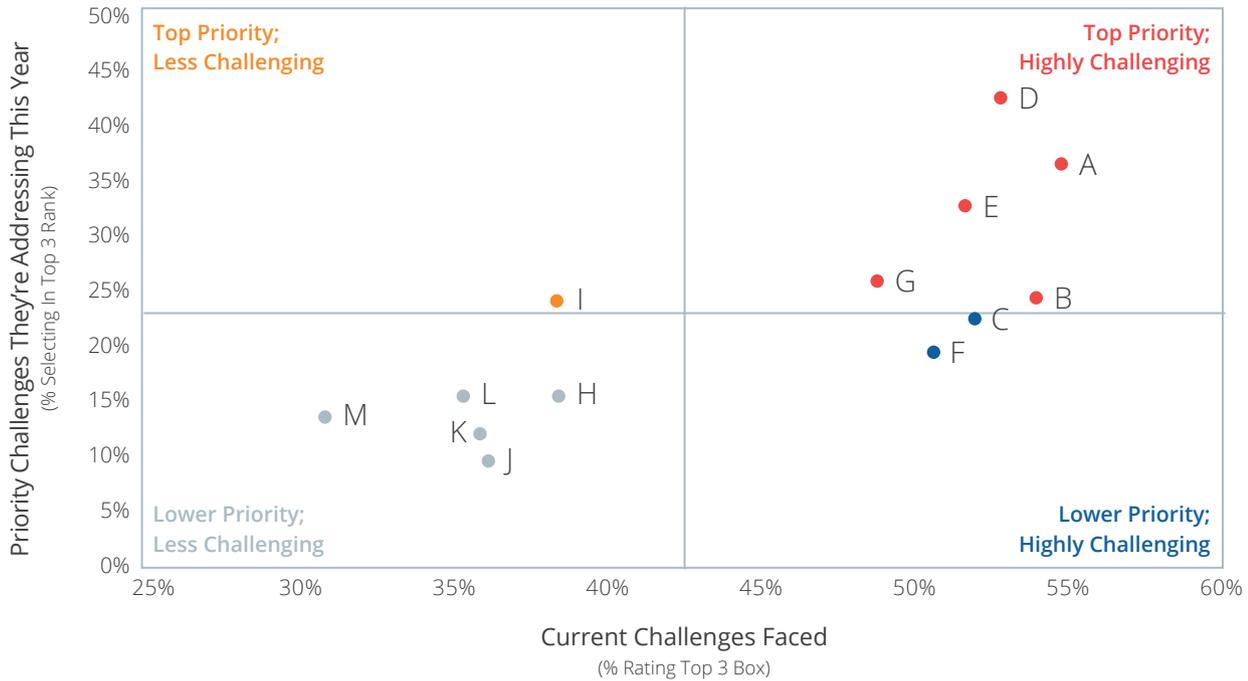
Building / strengthening customer relationships in a digital world;



Leveraging data to inform more efficient and optimized marketing programs.

- European brands are more focused on fostering a customer-centric culture across their organization.
- Knowledge-based verticals (e.g. IT / software / electronics; financial services; professional / business services, etc.) are more focused on connecting with customers on an emotional level to drive higher brand engagement.





Top priority challenges being addressed this year

D	Delivering an excellent CX throughout the entire customer lifecycle
A	Building / strengthening customer relationships in a digital world
E	Leveraging data to inform more efficient and optimized marketing programs
G	Directing marketing comms. and messaging in a more personalized and relevant way
B	Connecting with customers on an emotional level to drive higher brand engagement
I	Fostering a customer-centric culture across the organization

C	Evidencing ROI from marketing spend
F	Integrating disparate marketing technology platforms
L	Proving our commitment to environmental responsibility & sustainability improvements
M	Demonstrating our commitment to inclusion, diversity and equality
H	Establishing / improving our e-commerce offering
K	Making a societal impact and/or inspiring positive change in local communities
J	Reaching prospective customers post GDPR

Table sorted by prioritization

How They Rate Their Performance



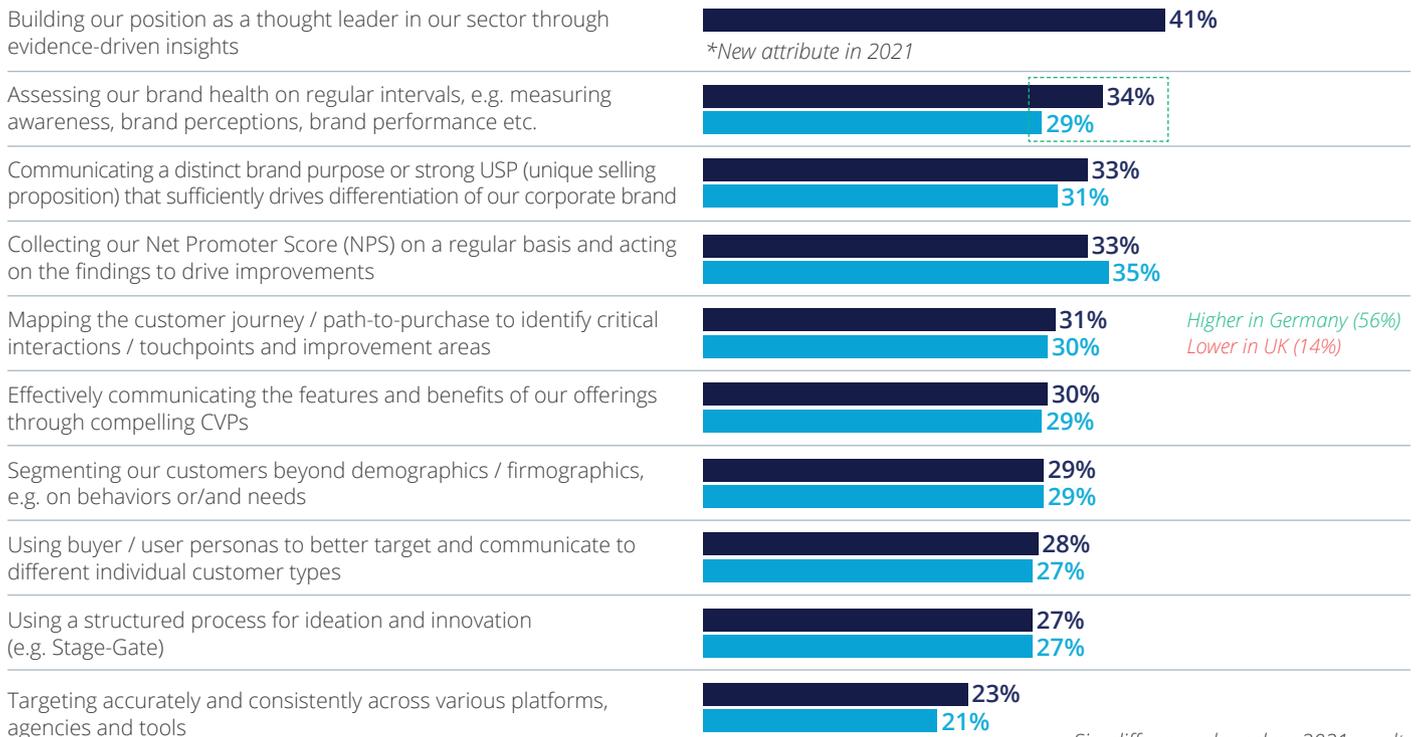
Overall performance is mediocre, indicating huge opportunity for B2B brands to overtake their competitors. Only around a quarter to a third of B2B brands rate themselves well across 9 of the 10 marketing practices tested.



Building a thought leader position is the highest performing practice with a 41% top 3 box score, potentially because this has become a priority strategy for this year.



Performance has remained stagnant between 2019 and 2021, with the exception of brand health tracking where a small improvement was made.



Sig. differences based on 2021 results

Chart shows the % scoring top 3 box (8, 9 or 10 out of 10)

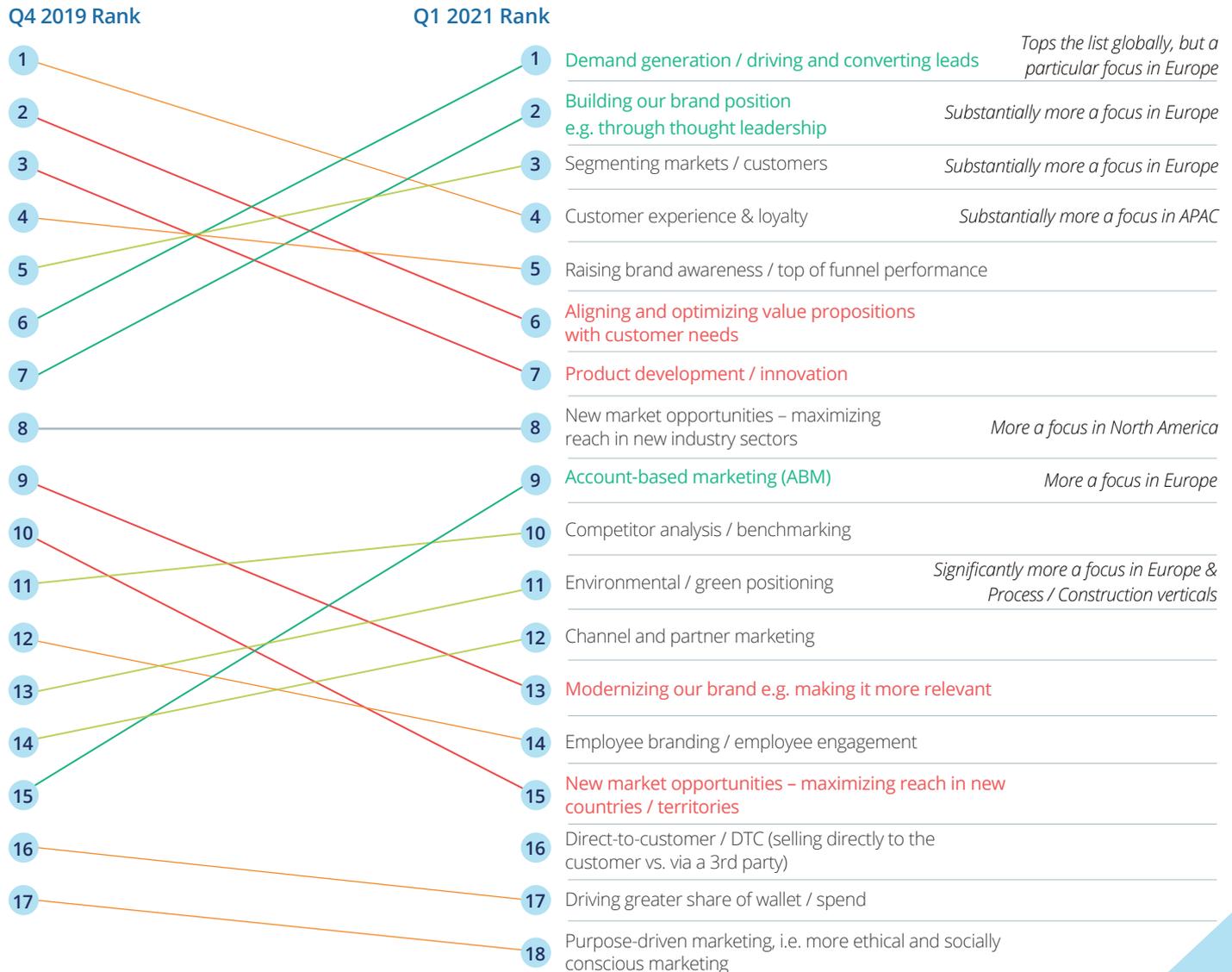
● 2021 (Q1)

● 2019 (Q4)

What They're Focusing On

While delivering an excellent customer experience throughout the entire customer lifecycle is the top priority challenge being addressed, **demand generation** and **building the brand position** have overtaken CX & loyalty as the **top marketing strategies of focus** this year.

Rank order of marketing strategies of focus



Influences On Their Marketing Strategies



The influence of 'Personalized marketing' has increased significantly since 2019, now ranking as the second most influential trend behind 'Deep insights into customers / stakeholders'.

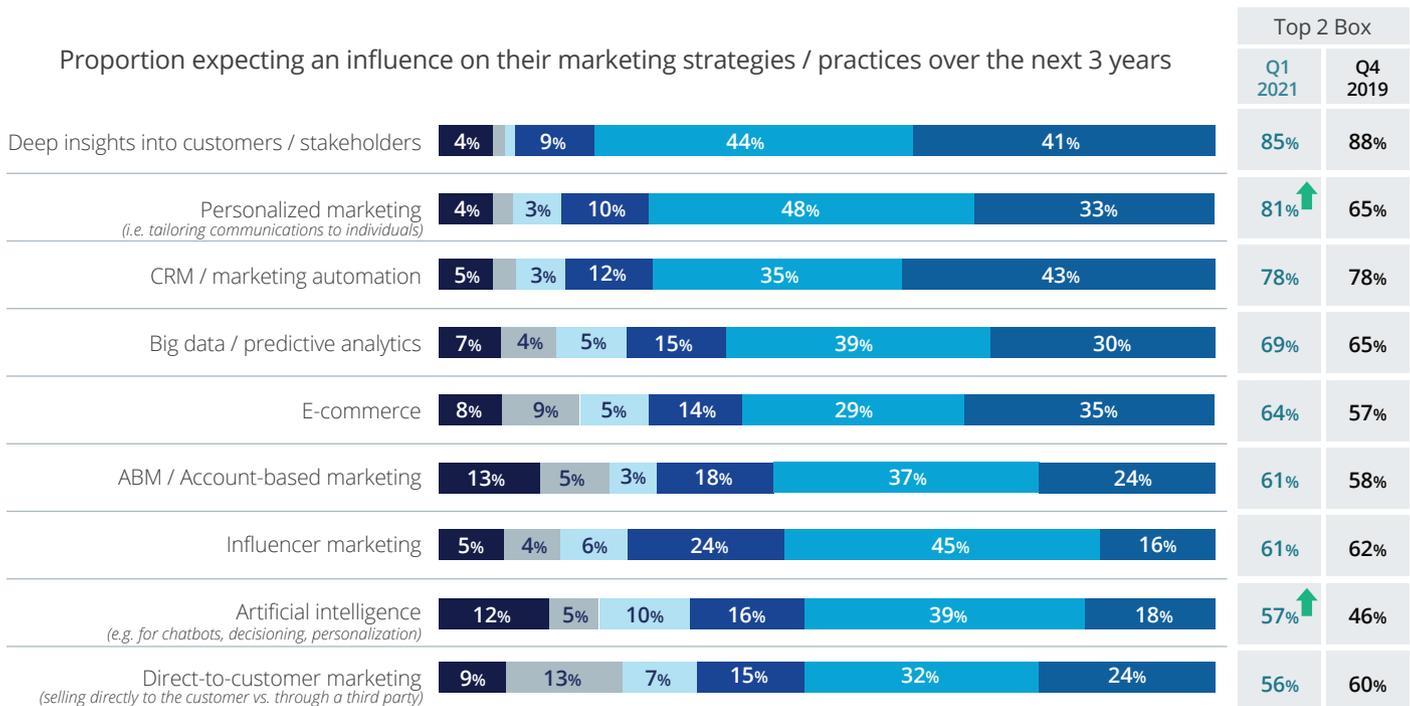


The influence of 'Direct-to-customer marketing' has decreased significantly in Europe (from 69% in 2019 to 51% this year), while increasing significantly in North America (from 50% to 62%).



Not surprisingly, the influence of 'E-commerce' is notably higher in the Trades & Services industry which includes retail (81% top 2 box score).

Proportion expecting an influence on their marketing strategies / practices over the next 3 years



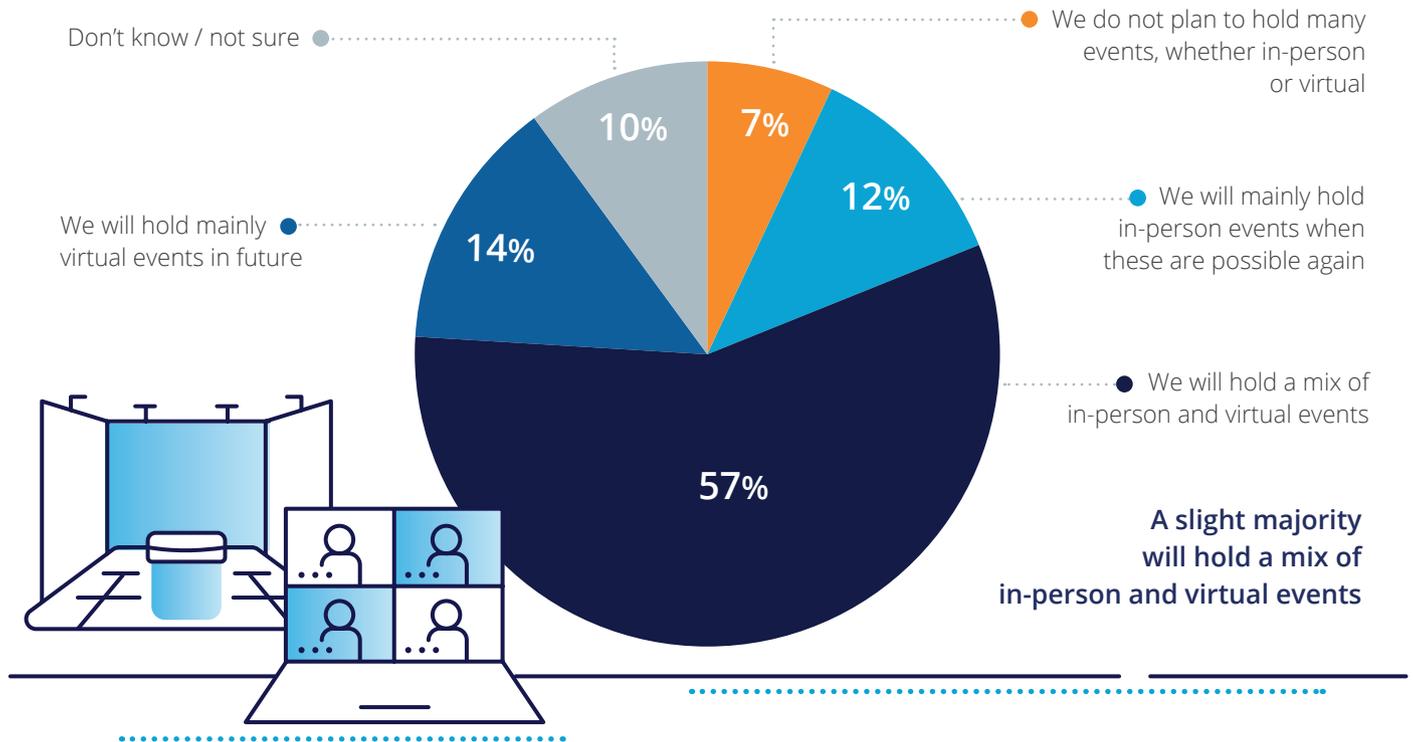
● Difficult To Say ● Not Applicable ● Not At All Influential ● Not Very Influential ● Somewhat Influential ● Significantly Influential

↑ ↓ shows statistically significant differences between Q4 2019 and Q1 2021

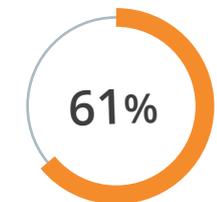
Top 2 Box

Plans For Virtual & In-Person Events

The vast majority will hold events with customers / prospects over the next 1-2 years:



The top 4 perceived challenges with organizing events:



Limited attention spans of audiences for virtual events



Fewer networking opportunities, particularly on a one-to-one basis



Competing for attention with a growing number of similar virtual events



Limited "wow" factor / attendee impact

About The Survey

The sample size comprised n=301 marketing, insight, CX and business strategy decision makers across brands serving B2B audiences.

The survey was designed, fielded and analyzed by the full service B2B market research firm, B2B International, Jan-March 2021. 62% of respondents were sourced through Merkle B2B databases; 38% through external panel.

The survey focused on large businesses with an average revenue of \$2.9 billion. Around 1 in 5 respondent organizations have a revenue over \$15 billion.



The geographic scope:

- 36% North America (predominantly US)
- 40% Europe (predominantly UK & Germany)
- 24% APAC (Singapore & Australia)



The industry breakdown:

- 60% Knowledge-based verticals (e.g. IT / software / electronics; financial services; professional / business services, etc.)
- 23% Process & construction verticals (predominantly manufacturing)
- 17% Trade & services verticals (e.g. retail; transportation; food & drink)





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Get In Touch

To learn more about how to strengthen your brand through strategic insights, connect with one of our experts:

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