

# *B2B MARKET* **MONITOR**





# *B2B MARKET MONITOR* **INTRODUCTION**

B2B marketing is an exciting place to be in 2023. Rising expectations, advances in technology and shifts in the decision-making unit mean a B2B marketer's job is now more complex, but also more interesting.

Once you layer on top the difficult macro-economic conditions many parts of the world are facing, the bar for success in 2023 has been set several notches higher than previous years.

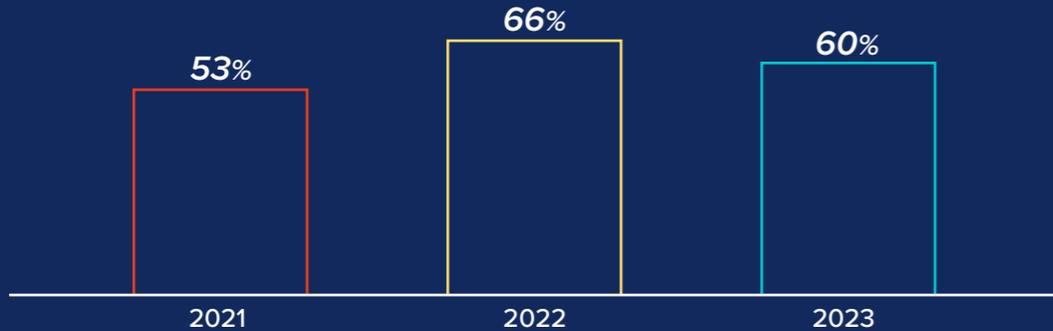
To rise to the challenge, B2B marketers need to rethink how they reach and engage their target audience. Creativity and innovation, fuelled by a relentless focus on understanding their customers and their market, is what will ultimately set the most successful marketers apart from the rest.

The 2023 B2B Market Monitor arms marketers with the latest insights and trends on what matters most to decision-makers, the challenges businesses are facing, and the opportunities to stand out in today's marketplace.

# HOW B2B DECISION MAKERS ARE FEELING

Although we've seen an understandable shift downwards in optimism about the economic outlook in their business and industry, B2B decision-makers are still more optimistic in 2023 than they were in 2021.

OPTIMISM ABOUT ECONOMIC OUTLOOK IN THEIR BUSINESS & INDUSTRY



## MOST OPTIMISTIC

 **64%**  
Enterprises

 **70%**  
Millennials

 **73%**  
North America

 **65%**  
APAC (esp China 82% & India 86%)

## LEAST OPTIMISTIC

 **55%**  
SMEs

 **53%**  
Boomers

 **43%**  
Gen X

 **44%**  
Europe (esp UK 40%)

## TOP EMOTIONS

 **51% (vs 50%)**  
Confident

 **34% (vs 31%)**  
Proud

 **33% (vs 43%)**  
Determined

When asked how they were feeling more generally about their industry, we found that B2B decision-makers are more positive than negative, although some still reported feeling concerned (24%) and overwhelmed (12%).

# THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES THEY ARE ADDRESSING IN 2023

The top strategic priorities for organizations in 2023 reflect the challenging macro-economic conditions many markets are facing.

Areas such as attracting and retaining employees (including employee wellbeing), achieving sustainability targets, and improving organizational resilience and management of risks have also increased in importance in 2023.



**#1 FINANCIAL STABILITY  
(INCLUDING REDUCING COSTS)**

↓  
MAINLY SMES,  
C-SUITE B2C



**#2 OPERATIONAL  
EFFICIENCY**

↓  
MAINLY  
MANUFACTURING



**#3 GROWTH (GREAT  
CX, NEW MARKETS,  
PRODUCT LAUNCHES)**

↓  
MAINLY  
MANUFACTURING, B2B



**#4 SPECIAL PROJECTS  
(DIGITALIZATION,  
ATTRACTING TALENT/  
RETENTION &  
SUSTAINABILITY)**

↓  
MAINLY ENTERPRISES,  
IT/TECH, FINANCIAL  
SERVICES

# THE RISING IMPORTANCE OF ECOMMERCE

As B2B buyer expectations continue to shift year after year, so to do their preferred methods of purchasing products and services for their business.

**53%**

state it takes far too long  
to make a purchase from  
most B2B suppliers

**53%**

expect to be able to buy  
all their products/services  
through an ecommerce  
platform

**48%**

prefer the speed and  
convenience of buying  
online as opposed to  
dealing with a person



# 2023 TOP MARKETING FOCUS

The top marketing focus for 2023 is customer experience and loyalty as organizations prioritize keeping hold of existing customers rather than looking for new customers.

When individual strategies are grouped into strategic themes, however, brand awareness and brand positioning came out as the biggest focus for marketers in 2023.

Value marketing, employer branding and demand generation saw significant jumps in importance over previous years, whereas segmentation, competitor analysis and exploring new market opportunities have fallen in importance.

*Top tip: Investing in your brand is an effective long-term strategy and organizations who have focused their efforts on brand building during previous recessions have experienced **30-40% incremental growth** post-recession.*

Rank order of marketing strategies of focus

2022 RANK

2023 RANK



# HOW B2B BRANDS RATE THEIR MARKETING PERFORMANCE

Despite B2B brands reporting improvements to their marketing performance on 8 of the 9 marketing practices included in the study, overall performance remains mediocre.

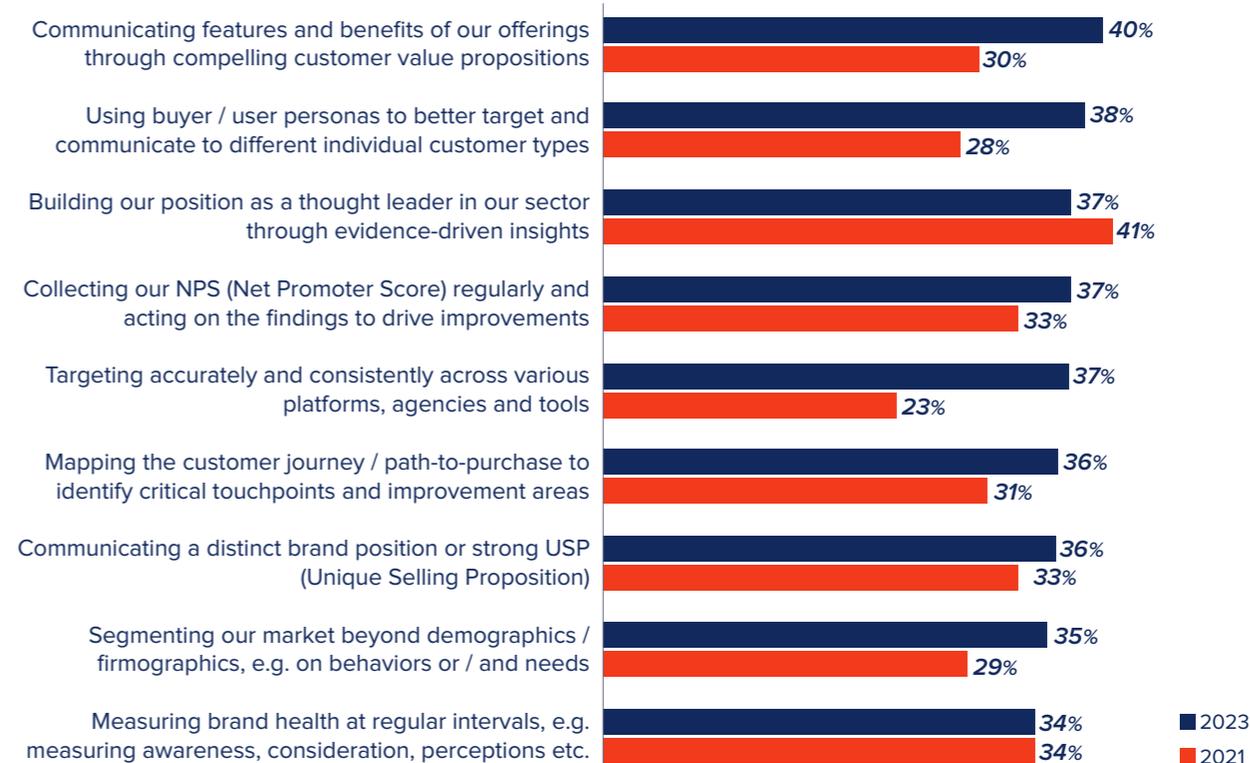
'Building a thought leader position' has slipped from the highest performing practice in previous years to third position in 2023.

Meanwhile, B2B brands reported significant performance improvements in 'Using buyer personas to better target and communicate', 'Targeting customers accurately across various platforms', and 'Effectively communicating features and benefits through compelling CVPs' that saw these marketing practices jump several places in the ranking.

As a result of performance improvements in other areas, 'Measuring brand health' has slipped to the bottom, despite B2B brands stating that their performance on this practice has remained the same compared to previous years.

*Further reading: To learn more about brand health research, we've created an interactive PDF to guide you through our approach to measuring brands and how we use the insights to drive strategic change in our clients' businesses. View using the following URL: [b2bint.nl/playbook](https://b2bint.nl/playbook)*

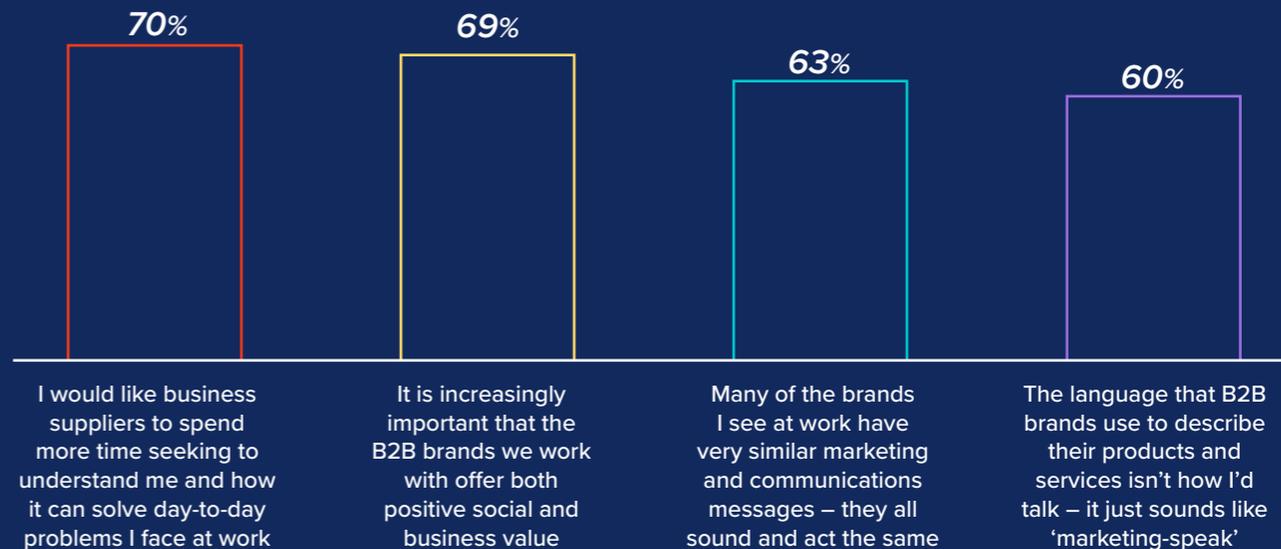
## EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING (% TOP 2 BOX)



# WHAT B2B BUYERS WANT FROM SUPPLIERS

To earn the attention of today's B2B buyers, organizations need to focus their efforts on listening to their customers, differentiating their messaging while avoiding 'marketing speak', and delivering positive social as well as business value.

## % AGREEING WITH BUSINESS SUPPLIER STATEMENTS



I would like business suppliers to spend more time seeking to understand me and how it can solve day-to-day problems I face at work

It is increasingly important that the B2B brands we work with offer both positive social and business value

Many of the brands I see at work have very similar marketing and communications messages – they all sound and act the same

The language that B2B brands use to describe their products and services isn't how I'd talk – it just sounds like 'marketing-speak'



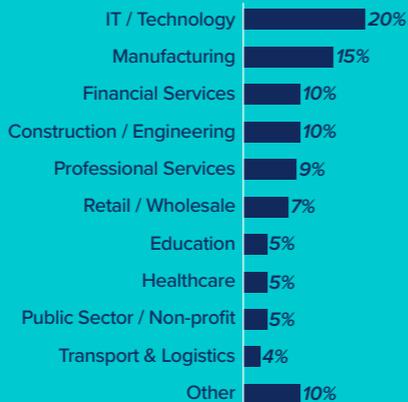
# ABOUT THE SURVEY

The sample size comprised of 3,600 global b2b buyers across EMEA (UK, France, Germany - 36%), North America (USA, Canada - 29%) and APAC (China, Japan, Singapore, Australia, India - 35%). The survey was carried out in early 2023 and was designed, fielded and analyzed by the full service B2B market research firm, B2B International.

## SIZE OF COMPANY

57% SME | 43% Enterprise

## VERTICALS



## ROLE



## Powering Progressive Business Experiences

### CREATIVE

Brand Experience  
Creative  
Content

### DATA

Strategy  
Architecture  
Augmentation

### COMMERCE

Experience Design  
Platform Integration  
Operations

### MEDIA

Strategy  
Planning & Activation  
Measurement

### TECHNOLOGY

Strategy / Consulting  
MarTech Design  
Implementation

### INSIGHT

Audience Analytics  
Research  
Consultancy

### AUTOMATION

Demand Generation  
Partner Integration  
Deployment / Managed Services





## GET IN TOUCH

Looking to power a progressive business experience in 2023? Visit the Merkle B2B website to learn more:

[www.merkle.com/b2b](http://www.merkle.com/b2b)

To learn more about how to strengthen your brand through strategic insights, visit B2B International's website:

[www.b2binternational.com](http://www.b2binternational.com)