Maturity Model for Generative AI in Marketing

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Initiatives:Marketing Technology; Marketing Leadership and Strategy

As generative AI takes its place among other forms of AI with far-reaching, organizationwide impacts, CMOs must balance C-level strategy with operational, near-term focus. Use Gartner's GenAI in marketing maturity model to focus efforts on activities with the greatest business impact.

Overview

Key Findings

■ Nearly 80% of marketers expect a positive impact from AI and they view generative AI (GenAI) and other forms of AI as equally positive. Time and cost efficiency are the most widely reported benefits of GenAI.

■ Organizations that report a positive impact from GenAI allocate marketing budgets differently, with significantly higher portions for martech than those that report no such impact.

■ Marketing reports the highest level of GenAI utilization among corporate functions, with about one-third reporting current implementations, according to the Gartner Generative AI 2024 Planning Survey.

Recommendations

- Use Gartner's GenAI for marketing maturity model to identify your team's current level of sophistication. Include representatives from all marketing disciplines to evaluate each of the five components of maturity: strategy, data, tech, talent and leadership.

- Identify the goals and marketing use cases most likely to benefit from AI and seek ways to maximize its impact. Seek out low-risk, internal operational-focused opportunities if your AI for marketing maturity is relatively low (Level 1 or Level 2).

- Endeavor riskier use cases that hold the potential for even higher rewards as your maturity advances. Leverage examples of how major brands are using AI in their marketing and advertising strategies and tactics.

- Design purposeful next steps to improve the specific capabilities where your organization lacks the maturity to achieve identified goals. Do not skip levels — for example, going from a Level 2 to a Level 4 — because the attainment of one level is the necessary groundwork for moving to the next.

Strategic Planning Assumption

By 2027, 15% of enterprise organizations will have reached Level 5 in AI for marketing maturity and will control a disproportionate share of their respective markets.

Analysis

Introduction

Gartner's GenAI in marketing maturity model identifies five key objectives and maps use cases against them in terms of organizational maturity associated with their deployment. It also identifies key capabilities associated with each level of maturity, with typical use cases and metrics that reflect these capabilities.

The marketing objectives are based on those used in B2B Marketing Score and B2C Marketing Score self-evaluation tools, but are generalized for both. The goal is to encourage you to consider how GenAI can augment your marketing strategy and help you reach your business goals faster, not to create a separate GenAI strategy. The use cases can help you prioritize areas of focus for your team and also serve as a consistent framework to anchor the cross-functional conversations required to gain the funding and resources necessary for success. You can find more detail on the use cases, including business value and feasibility, in Generative AI Use-Case Comparison for Marketing.

Figure 1 illustrates a progression of use cases related to each objective through five levels of maturity.

Figure 1: Maturity Model Use Cases for Generative AI in Marketing

Maturity Model Use Cases for Generative AI in Marketing
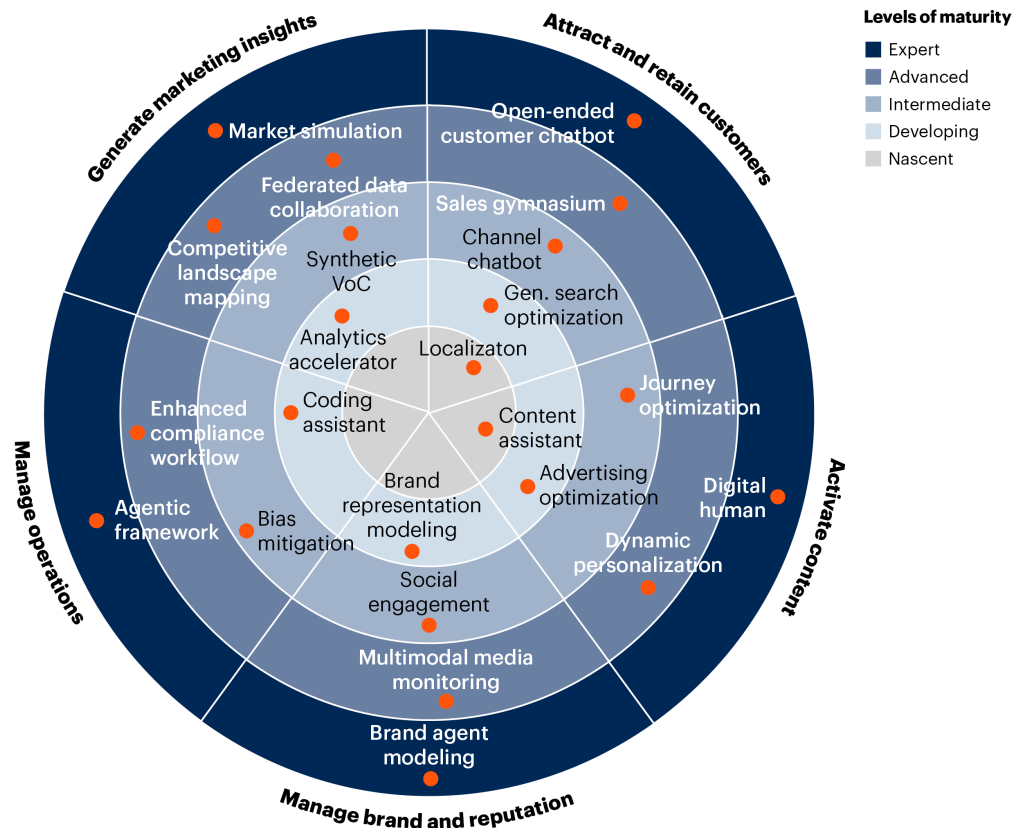
Source: Gartner
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Levels of maturity are generally associated with the GenAI adoption patterns that progress from basic, out-of-the-box functionality to tailored, transformational implementations. It's important to note that most organizations will benefit from a hybrid approach. For example, even expert teams using custom technology will continue to use out-of-the box productivity enhancing functionality as they mature. The same can be said for the continued need to support culture change, upskilling and to adjust operating models as the organization's adoption of GenAI increases. The following sections provide a more detailed analysis of typical conditions across each stage of the maturity model, including marketing's main focus, the state of data, technology and talent, and special considerations for trust and leadership.

Nascent Level

Organizations at the nascent stage often see no pressing need for new strategies or operations to accommodate AI.

- *Strategic Focus:* Level 1 organizations focus primarily on attracting and retaining customers with paid media and direct marketing, often outsourced through agencies. They often use GenAI embedded in enterprisewide applications such as office assistants. Their initial interest in GenAI for marketing is for **content assistants,** primarily focused on content generation for internal use, such as meeting summaries, proposal drafts and concept sketches. For organizations operating across regions, **localization** use cases offer attractive cost savings and expansion opportunities.

- *Data:* Level 1 organizations typically face long-standing data challenges. Many have not prioritized first-party data collection. Customer and product data required for personalization is typically siloed, its quality is uneven with ample redundancies, aging datasets, legacy formats and normalization issues. Such data is unusable with AI systems, although there are AI tools that can help with clean-up (see Magic Quadrant for Analytics and Business Intelligence Platforms). Budget negotiations for data remediation efforts with IT are on the table, but cost-benefit data is lacking.

- *Technology:* With strong encouragement from office productivity suite providers, pilots of basic embedded features from major cloud providers are often underway. Microsoft M365 Copilot or Google Gemini for Workspace are common in stage 1 trials. AI writing assistant software for copywriting and keyword SEO optimization may also be deployed by individual teams (see Innovation Insight: Generative AI in Automated Text Authoring). Legacy martech systems provide embedded AI features with unclear returns.

- *Talent:* Staff resistance and job replacement anxiety dampen enthusiasm for GenAI projects. Workers involved in pilots often lack training and fail to see the value in GenAI tools. Meanwhile, finance leaders are prone to evaluate AI investments based on potential cost savings from marketing headcount reductions.

■ *Trust:* Pilots and other adoption initiatives are encumbered by lengthy legal reviews and broad prohibitions against using unapproved tools. Public-facing tools like ChatGPT and Midjourney are often banned from corporate systems. Confidentiality and IP infringement top lists of legal concerns. Limited trust results in procurement reviews and amendments to agency and provider contracts to protect data rights and add indemnification clauses (see the "TrustOps" Innovation Profile in the Hype Cycle for Digital Marketing, 2024).

■ *Stakeholder Management*: Most organizations began their AI journey well before ChatGPT focused the market on GenAI's revolutionary possibilities. Many organizations may have had a long-standing AI council or leadership committee to make recommendations. Others, recognizing GenAI's disruptive nature, may have stood one up before making any moves toward adoption. Marketing is often excluded from these. Even where it's not, marketing participation is often marginal and subject to collaboration drag (e.g., too many meetings, too much feedback and unclear decision making; see CMOs: How to Succeed at Cross-Functional Collaboration for Growth). In some cases, marketing may have taken the lead in establishing an AI council, or has developed a marketing specific council, but struggles to gain buy-in from other organizational leaders.

Recommendations to Advance to Level 2

■ Focus on advancing organizational skills in basic prompting, editorial oversight, and use of GenAI as a tool to augment work. Present tangible opportunities for career advancement by leveraging GenAI capabilities for more menial tasks. Cultivate more advanced skills in prompt engineering, basic agent design and local expertise among more adept individuals.

■ Work with technology counterparts to implement use cases involving basic retrieval augmentation techniques (RAG) and API-level customization. Facilitate marketing participation in pilots for new enterprise GenAI applications.

■ Establish marketing's role on your organization's AI council and guide its focus toward high-growth, low-risk opportunities enabled by GenAI.

Developing Level

Organizations at the developing stage have initiated a process to evaluate the impact of GenAI and make longer-term investment recommendations. Marketing is usually included as a function likely to be affected, although its prominence in corporate priorities is highly variable. Most of the effort at this stage involves analyzing use cases and competitive case studies to determine priorities based on business impact, feasibility and competitive threats. Risk aversion remains a major challenge.
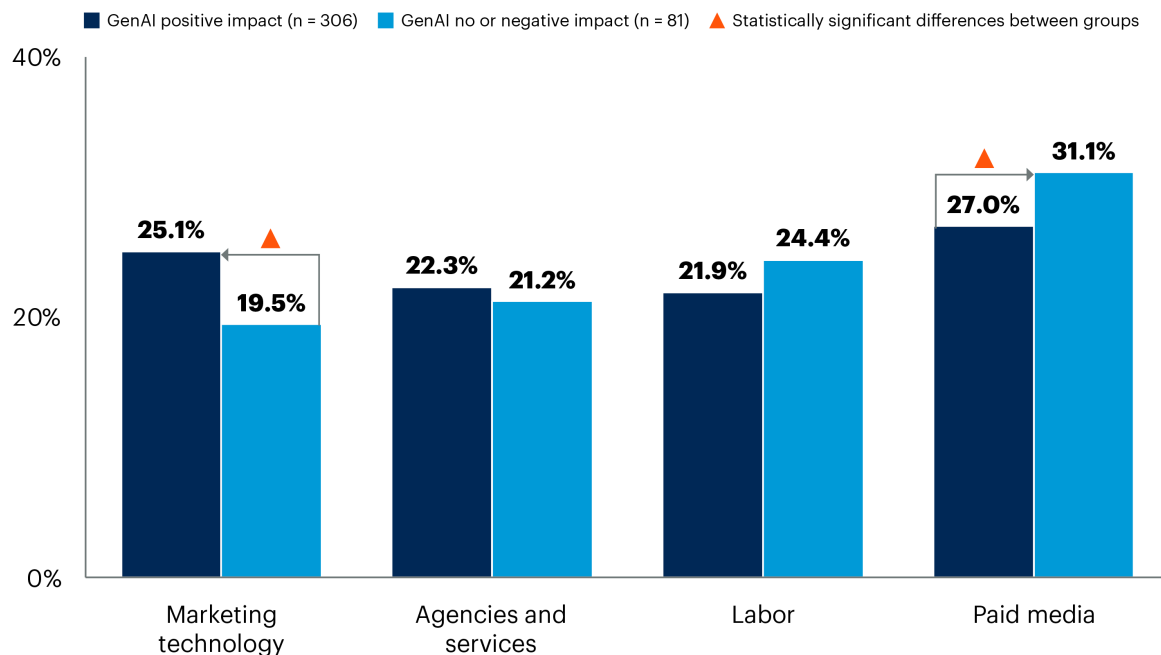
- *Strategic Focus:* Level 2 organizations begin to shift marketing budgets from strongly favoring paid media toward more balanced investments in martech and external support (see Figure 2). The interest in GenAI broadens to include composite AI solutions for **advertising optimization** and **generative search optimization, analytics accelerators** and **coding assistants. Brand representation modeling,** which supports the fine tuning of purpose-built foundation models to reflect the style, form, and rules of branded content, is a frequent focus (see How to Teach AI About Your Brand).

- *Data:* At Level 2, data deficiencies have been documented and remediation efforts are underway, often focused on the data that will drive specific use cases. Trials of RAG for GenAI have exposed data shortcomings. Analysis of data's role in enabling AI use cases has produced some reliable justifications for investment in data. Budget allocation may already be in place for adoption of a customer data platform or data collaboration environment for marketing (see Quick Answer: What Makes Data AI-Ready?).

- *Technology:* Off-the-shelf pilots move into production for a few key use cases. Productivity spikes are observed and documented, easing resistance to investment. A pipeline of technology evaluation projects begins to take shape. Marketing budgets shift allocation toward martech, although IT tends to lead AI adoption funding. GenAI capabilities are still primarily sourced as vendor products or through agencies with limited customization. Groups outside of marketing may be experimenting with internal development. This is mostly still ad hoc and self-initiated.

- *Talent:* Power users have developed high-leverage prompting skills and revised their work habits. These GenAI ambassadors are being leveraged to train and drive adoption among more reluctant users. New job role descriptions are developed and most marketing employees understand the changing requirements of their positions (e.g., going from copywriter to editor, or graphic artist to art director). New jobs (such as "AI creative technologist") are defined and sought, although filling them remains challenging.

- *Trust:* As part of an AI council, marketing has established a working relationship with risk and legal counterparts to develop balanced policies for AI usage and restrictions. A review process for projects is established. Model explainability and transparency around GenAI use is prioritized. TrustOps practices are formulated and tested (see What Marketing Can Teach the Enterprise About AI).

- *Stakeholder Management:* Marketing has now joined an enterprisewide AI council with established charter and working norms. The council approves balanced usage policies with buy-in from legal and IT. Marketing assigns a dedicated senior representative to focus AI, including GenAI, efforts on business needs. The council struggles with use-case prioritization, baseline metrics and forecasts. AI ethics concerns are raised frequently, but not formally addressed.

Figure 2: GenAI's Expected Impact on Marketing Investments

GenAI's Expected Impact on Marketing Investments
Mean percentage of marketing budget shown

■ GenAI positive impact (n = 306) ■ GenAI no or negative impact (n = 81) ▲ Statistically significant differences between groups

n varies, CMOs

Q. How is your 2024 total marketing expense budget being allocated to or spent on each of the following major resource categories?
Q. What level of impact do you expect (GenAI) to have on your 2024 marketing investment and strategy as compared to 2023?
Source: 2024 Gartner CMO Spend Survey
Note: The percentages for "others" category not shown.
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Recommendations to Advance to Level 3

■ Focus on tailoring RAG implementations for marketing programs such as channel chatbots, social engagement and synthetic voice of the customer (VoC). Promote your achievements of an augmented marketing workforce internally and externally.

■ Work with technology counterparts on optimizing RAG tools and creating differentiated marketing applications that may include fine-tuned models and journey optimization measures.

■ Expand marketing's remit in the AI council to address reputation-focused ethical guidelines, budgetary authority and sourcing policies. Where brands are global but marketing is mostly local, implement federated policies for use and learning of GenAI tools and techniques.

Intermediate Level

At the intermediate stage, GenAI is an integral part of marketing across a broad range of activities. Some marketing departments may have embraced AI years ago — before the advent of GenAI — but the explosion of new technologies is driving martech vendors and their customers down challenging upgrade-or-replacement paths. They may also have perceptions that past martech investments have failed to generate the returns expected. However, adoption of current generation platforms may also streamline the upgrade path by addressing fundamental data and deployment challenges common to AI adoption:

- *Strategic Focus:* As data becomes more accessible to GenAI through RAG, the most prevalent intermediate use cases include **channel chatbots** (for representatives and sales affiliates), **journey optimization** (based on analysis of recorded user-level activities), and **synthetic VoC** applications informed by data from primary market research and possibly enriched with third-party data. More operational use cases, such as **social engagement** that streamlines social marketing activities, and **bias mitigation** become more prominent in consumer-facing organizations (see A CMO's Guide to Implementing Generative AI).

- *Data:* In Level 3, critical datasets have been successfully adapted for use with AI and ML tools. Data-heavy use cases involving advanced customer segmentation and journey analytics are either being tested or in production. Data problems are still common, but there's a working process for identifying and correcting them.

- *Technology:* RAG-based internal chatbots for augmented analytics and sales support are being tested with mixed results. "Buy & adapt" becomes the preferred implementation strategy. Personalization use cases are delivering insights and performance gains. AI-enhanced workflows for processes such as language localization and compliance review show significant gains in productivity.

- *Talent:* Employee training and change management processes are in place to operationalize GenAI in content workflows, freeing creative talent to pursue more strategic activities. In-house and external agencies accelerate evaluation and adoption of new offerings. Anxiety has largely given way to enthusiasm, although attrition may be high among staff that can't adapt.

- *Trust:* TrustOps practices are being tested in discrete areas, with GenAI being inserted into workflows and operating models for activities like brand and risk compliance and brand monitoring. Local operators customize policies for their specific regions and social contexts. Marketing or communications works actively with risk and legal counterparts on threat detection and mitigation.

- *Stakeholder Management:* With significant input from marketing and other customer-facing business units, the AI council oversees customized app and model development. Marketing keeps the council focused on brand differentiation and customer experience as a key goal for development. New architectures and workflows place high demand on performance and cost structures.

Recommendations to Advance to Level 4

- Monitor and build scale in agent supervision and correction as GenAI begins to assume active roles in marketing operations. Look for more opportunities to streamline production processes and engage customers with personalized content at scale.

- Refine fine-tuned models and applications to enhance brand differentiation and campaign effectiveness. Work with partners and agencies to adopt and scale proprietary marketing capabilities. Continue to work with IT to enhance security and reliability of solutions.

- Build center of excellence resources and comprehensive training programs to scale expertise. Implement federated governance and risk mitigation with global policies and local leadership. Address cost and sustainability issues associated with growing adoption.

Advanced Level

Advanced organizations treat AI as a competitive differentiator and producer of corporate assets. They've been through multiple trials, many of which have failed but yielded important insights. Martech is typically managed through a federated model that centralizes key components, but also allows local divisions freedom to experiment and adapt. Longer-term business transformation projects are planned, with active input from marketing:

- *Strategic Focus:* Advanced organizations build on successful pilots to scale up GenAI-enhanced operations. At this stage, their adoption path becomes more specialized. Both B2B and B2C oriented organizations are likely to focus on **dynamic personalization** use cases to optimize digital experience for specific audiences. However, B2B marketing organizations are more likely to find value in using GenAI to support sales through **sales gymnasium** projects focused on shortening ramp-up times and improving close rates and win-loss ratios. B2C companies may put more effort behind **multimodal media monitoring** to optimize use of UGC and detect threats to brands. Organizations in regulated industries such as healthcare and financial services are likely to embrace **enhanced compliance workflow** to accelerate review-and-approval processes in support of higher volumes of content for personalization. **Competitive landscape mapping** offers strategic value to organizations in more mature brand sectors. **Federated data collaboration** is especially beneficial to organizations that sell indirectly through retail channels and support large media budgets for brand advertising (see Top Marketing Trends for 2024: AI for Privacy, Personalization and Influence).

- *Data:* By Level 4, enterprise data has been successfully adapted for RAG and advanced prompting and prompt engineering applications. Data stores and feeds have been optimized for analytic and operational use cases. Decision rights and accountability, particularly around customer data and brand IP, have been established. Fine-tuned content generation models and real-time activation are prevalent.

- *Technology:* Composable AI allows organizations to augment their existing applications with AI, through cloud APIs or other composable elements. This is now at the foundation of most enterprise applications. Development costs are giving way to rising operating costs, which are a major focus of concern at the advanced stage. Initial licensing models likely capped usage levels below thresholds needed for scale, creating new total cost of ownership challenges as metering kicks in for large campaigns and other projects. Multiple vendors and applications are being used in an effort to determine which models are most fit for purpose. Applications are being optimized to reduce compute overhead and redundancy. Legacy martech components are frequently retired.

- *Talent:* AI agent "actors" team with staff on specialized applications. Job role migration is well underway and critical specialist roles have been filled. Creative content now comes from all areas of the organization and marketing's function has moved from creating content variants to strategic oversight of brand and communication, and management of customer journeys. Marketing and communications may be merging due to increased asset visibility and consolidated workflows.

- *Trust:* TrustOps is now an operational requirement across organizational divisions and regions, although brand threats are an ongoing cat-and-mouse game for most organizations. Level 4 organizations constantly monitor customer and public trust factors and implement agile responses to detected anomalies. This includes a proactive approach to brand, and C-suite digital presence and collaboration with legal to ensure asset ownership in case of bad actors.

- *Stakeholder Management:* The CMO and marketing leaders now participate in AI-based business transformation initiatives across CX domains. Focus is on aligning the use of GenAI to growth and prioritizing use cases based on impact on enterprise objectives across business functions.

Recommendations to Advance to Level 5

- Expand data partnerships for targeting, measurement and insights. Leverage advanced capabilities to refine GenAI agents to take on more sophisticated tasks.

- Optimize cost and efficiency of custom models and operations. Expand abilities to test and evaluate innovative solutions unavailable in common tools. Use your organization's advanced status to recruit more talent and build enthusiasm within the current workforce.

- Explore opportunities to use GenAI advantages to expand into new markets and product areas that can yield high growth and differentiation. Secure market share by optimizing GenAI programs that deliver measurably customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy.

Expert Level

Organizations at the master level in GenAI for marketing are rare. The pace of evolution that AI — especially GenAI — has seen over the past few years makes it nearly impossible for an enterprise to achieve mastery. The combined impact of the broader set of AI tools and techniques with GenAI results in AI-first expert-level marketing teams. Smaller organizations might be more agile but tend to lack the data and resources to fully realize AI's emerging potential or grapple with its risks and deficiencies. Still, the principles of mastery are coming into view and provide a north star for organizations to navigate by:

- *Strategic Focus:* While GenAI commercial applications are still new enough that few organizations outside of the GenAI developers themselves have achieved expert status, those that have offer **open-ended customer chatbot** or **digital human** brand representatives. They may do **brand agent modeling** based on their own custom large language models (LLMs) that incorporate all aspects of the brand rather than just its visual representation. In operations, they're most likely to deploy **agentic framework,** which combines human and autonomous agent processes to streamline complex activities (see Innovation Insight: AI Agents). For insights, they use GenAI to construct multiagent **market simulation** use cases to simulate different market conditions, consumer behavior trends and supply chain scenarios to optimize marketing strategy.

- *Data:* Level 5 organizations use data collaboration ecosystems to enhance first-party data with data from partners and providers in a privacy-safe, customer-centric manner. Federated modeling projects are common and insights are shared across organizational boundaries. Multimodal custom brand models will support the ability to combine multiple types of data inputs and outputs in generative models, such as images, videos, audio, and text, and drive outputs that are brand compliant. These become the core assets of the organization that deliver consistency and creativity to all marketing activities.

- *Technology:* A combination of AI tools and techniques brings personalization to all customer interactions. This doesn't mean that chatbots have replaced humans in sales and service, but all customer-facing experiences are now outfitted with AI tools that facilitate seamless customer journeys and interactions, developed with marketing's leadership. As markets evolve, AI agents take on buyer and seller roles in emerging scenarios that marketing assists in envisioning. Master organizations embrace "build" approaches to most applications, having become adept at AI-assisted development (see Hype Cycle for Generative AI, 2024).

- *Talent:* Mastery of AI for marketing makes these rare organizations magnets for talent. Although developer talent may be hard to source due to an excess of demand over supply, creative and marketing strategy specialists adept with GenAI may be even more valuable to marketing organizations. The combination of capabilities and risk tolerance at master-level organizations attracts top talent looking to innovate. Partnerships with higher education create a farming system for upcoming talent. Apprenticeships and internships facilitate the on-boarding of next-generation marketing masters.

- *Trust:* Experts work with nonprofit standards, governing bodies, open-source developers, and industry, trade and sector organizations to develop and promote standards and laws governing content integrity and other strategic and ethical vulnerabilities. They share expertise and resources and are frequently cited as models for TrustOps adoption.

- *Stakeholder Management:* Outside of the AI council, marketing works closely with AI ethics, compliance and risk management counterparts within and beyond the organization to support fair and safe AI innovation on a day-to-day basis.

Evidence

Gartner Generative AI 2024 Planning Survey. This survey was conducted to examine generative AI's use-case implementation and impact by business function. The survey was conducted from September through November 2023. In total, 822 business executives who lead corporate functions outside IT and who indicated will begin or continue to implement Generative AI across the next 12 months qualified and participated. The research was collected via online surveys in English. The sample was equally split across the following eight corporate functions: finance; HR; marketing; sales; customer service; supply chain; procurement; and legal, risk and compliance. The sample mix by location was North America (n = 536), Europe (n = 176) and Asia/Pacific (n = 110). The sample mix by size was $50 million to less than $500 million (n = 119), $500 million to less than $1 billion (n = 129), $1 billion to less than $10 billion (n = 374) and $10 billion or more (n = 200). *Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.*

2024 Gartner CMO Spend Survey. This survey looked at top-line marketing budgets and aimed to identify how evolving customer journeys, C-suite pressures and cost challenges impact marketing's spending priorities and channel effectiveness. The research was conducted online from February through March 2024 among 395 respondents in North America (n = 200) and Europe (n = 195). Respondents were required to be involved in decisions pertaining to setting or influencing marketing strategy/planning and to aligning marketing budget/resources, and/or they were required to lead cross-functional programs and strategies with marketing. Seventy-four percent of the respondents came from organizations with $1 billion or more in annual revenue. Respondents came from a variety of industries: financial services (n = 46), insurance (n = 35), manufacturing (n = 48), consumer products (n = 32), media (n = 35), retail (n = 38), healthcare (n = 47), pharma (n = 37), IT and business services (n = 41), and travel and hospitality (n = 36). *Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.*

Document Revision History

Maturity Model for AI for Marketing - 13 August 2021

Recommended by the Authors

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

Generative AI Use-Case Comparison for Marketing

CMOs: How GenAI-Ready Is Your Marketing Talent?

Insights From the 2024 CMO Spend Survey

How to Pilot Generative AI to Support Marketing Strategy