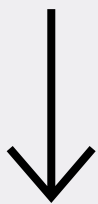


# What you'll find in this report

Sitecore surveyed hundreds of global marketing leaders across the US, Canada, UK, and Australia in December 2024. Representing industries including financial services, manufacturing, technology, and retail, these CMOs, VPs, and directors shared insights into:

- The strategic importance of websites and their direct impact on organizational revenue goals.
- Current website technology struggles to support revenue-driving initiatives, especially with scalability, integrations, and future-proof capabilities like personalization and AI.
- Emerging technology trends that optimize tech spending, boost agility, reduce costs, and drive innovation.

The Websites 2025 report highlights the path forward to optimize CMS investments and embrace future-ready solutions.





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1.0

Executive summary

The Websites 2025 report explores the current state and outlook for digital marketing, with a specific focus on the role of personalization, AI, and advanced analytics in website optimization. Key findings highlight the challenges and opportunities marketers face as they aim to enhance their digital strategies and drive business growth.

Overall, the report underscores the critical role of personalization and AI in driving future business success, while highlighting the challenges organizations must overcome to close the gap between ambition and execution.

1

Personalization as a top priority

Personalization is identified as the leading priority for marketers, with 92% emphasizing its importance in driving impactful business outcomes. However, a significant gap exists, as only 32% believe their CMS platforms currently support effective personalization.

3

Barriers to progress

Marketers are facing several obstacles in their efforts to optimize websites, including budget constraints, ROI challenges, and technical limitations. These barriers are particularly prominent in organizations with lower digital maturity, which struggle more than advanced organizations to overcome these challenges.

5

Investment priorities

Looking ahead, marketing executives are prioritizing investments in personalization, AI and generative AI optimization, and advanced analytics over the next three years. These investments are expected to drive business growth by improving customer engagement, conversions, and satisfaction. Notably, there is a gap in enthusiasm between executives and practitioners, with the latter being less likely to plan for AI investments.

2

AI and automation

AI is increasingly seen as a key driver for delivering personalized experiences, with 97% of executives prioritizing AI and automation for future website success. Despite this, only 18% of CMS platforms are equipped to leverage AI effectively, exposing a significant misalignment between leadership vision and operational readiness.

4

Digital maturity gap

The report finds a stark contrast in the digital maturity of organizations. Only 10% consider themselves experts, while nearly half are categorized as developing or novice. The less mature organizations are 196% more likely to face challenges with budget and ROI, and 203% more likely to encounter difficulties with implementation and technical expertise.

6

Shift to integrated experiences

The report concludes that the next evolution of CMS platforms will involve greater integration of personalization, AI, and advanced analytics. Marketing executives are focused on leveraging these technologies to create tailored experiences that will generate increased revenue and competitive differentiation. As organizations continue to mature digitally, the ability to address blockers and embrace these technologies will be crucial for sustained success.

2.0

Welcome to Websites 2025

Priorities and challenges for a new era of websites

Marketers are increasingly asked to do more with less—fewer resources and smaller budgets—while customers expect more, particularly in the form of personalized experiences across various channels.

As digital channels become the primary way customers interact with brands and online transactions continue to grow year on year, a company’s website has become its top revenue driver, placing even more pressure on marketers to deliver results.

However, marketers face significant challenges with current CMS technology, including issues with scalability, integration with broader tech stacks, and the ability to adopt new capabilities like personalization and AI.

These tech blockers are further complicated by budget constraints and the limited availability of technical expertise, making the situation even more challenging.

To succeed, marketers must rethink how they leverage their most valuable digital asset—their website. By addressing these obstacles directly, they can position themselves and their organizations for growth, even amid resource constraints and rising customer expectations.

→ 81%

81% of marketers said their website's primary goal is to drive revenue through lead generation, ecommerce sales, and brand awareness campaigns.

→ 54%

54% of marketers rate personalization extremely important to their website’s success, but only 5% rate their current CMS as supporting it extremely well.

→ 76%

76% of marketers cite budget constraints as the biggest barrier to advancing website capabilities, with 31% investing less than 5% of their marketing budget in web experience.



3.1

The primary objective of a website today is to drive organic revenue to the business

Websites have transformed into powerful tools for driving core business objectives, from generating leads to increasing brand awareness and supporting ecommerce sales. Serving as central hubs for omnichannel engagement, they integrate digital and physical touchpoints to deliver seamless user experiences. With evolving digital priorities, websites are now designed to scale, incorporating AI-driven capabilities, personalization, and advanced integration to meet diverse marketing goals.



Primary objectives for websites today →

Lead generation

44% of marketing practitioners and 47% of marketing executives said that the primary objective of their website is to drive lead generation.

Brand awareness

Brand awareness was identified as the second-highest priority for websites by 19% of marketing practitioners, while 14% of marketing executives ranked it as the third-most important objective.

Ecommerce sales

Ecommerce sales were ranked as the primary objective by 18% of marketing practitioners, placing it third overall, while 20% of marketing executives ranked it as the second-most important objective.



# 3.2

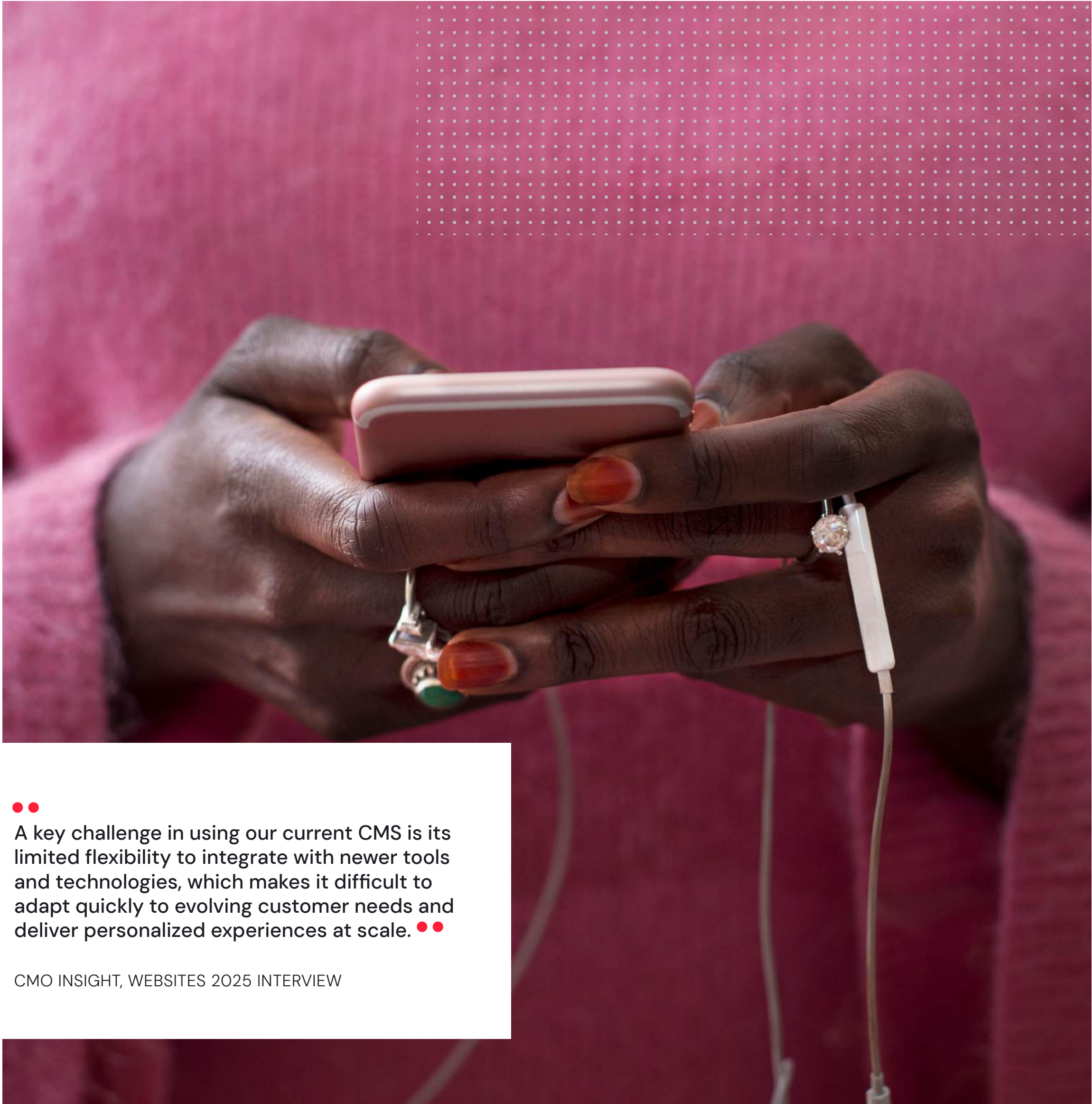
## Traditional website management technology doesn't cut it today

Websites are critical to business success, yet they remain underfunded and constrained by outdated technology. Despite their strategic importance, 58% of executives admit their websites only somewhat align with their primary objectives.

A majority—56% of marketing practitioners—said they rely on traditional platform CMS technology to manage their sites, limiting their ability to meet evolving customer expectations.

This misalignment is further compounded by underinvestment: 33% of marketing executives allocate less than 5% of their budget to their website, while 71% spend less than 10% on website technology and innovation. In contrast, marketing budgets often heavily favor digital advertising to drive demand, with an average of 40% allocated to paid media efforts.

As a result, only 16% of marketing executives feel their websites effectively support their primary revenue-driving objectives, leaving a significant gap in their ability to capitalize on personalized, omnichannel experiences that drive organic business growth.



●● A key challenge in using our current CMS is its limited flexibility to integrate with newer tools and technologies, which makes it difficult to adapt quickly to evolving customer needs and deliver personalized experiences at scale. ●●

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# 3.3

## Despite challenges with current sites, businesses still demand results

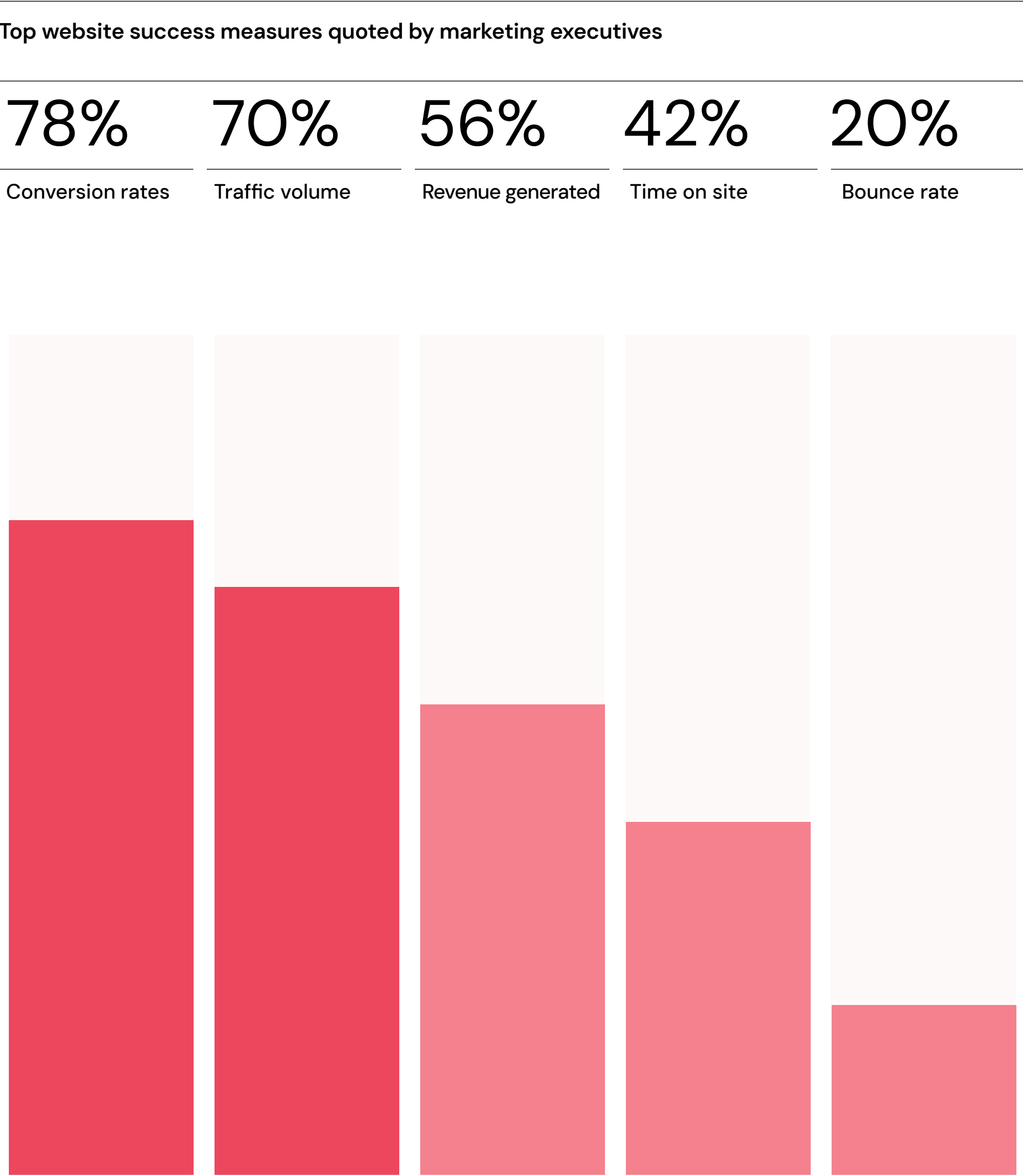
Even with minimal investment in web technologies and the limitations of traditional CMS platforms that fail to meet evolving customer experience expectations, businesses continue to demand results from their primary digital channel.

56% of marketing executives identified revenue generation as a key metric for evaluating website effectiveness. Additionally, 70% emphasized traffic volume, while 78% highlighted the importance of converting that traffic into tangible results as critical measures of success.

●●

Our website is clunky and lacks personalization, directly impacting conversions. ●●

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Q: What are the top metrics your organization uses to measure website success?

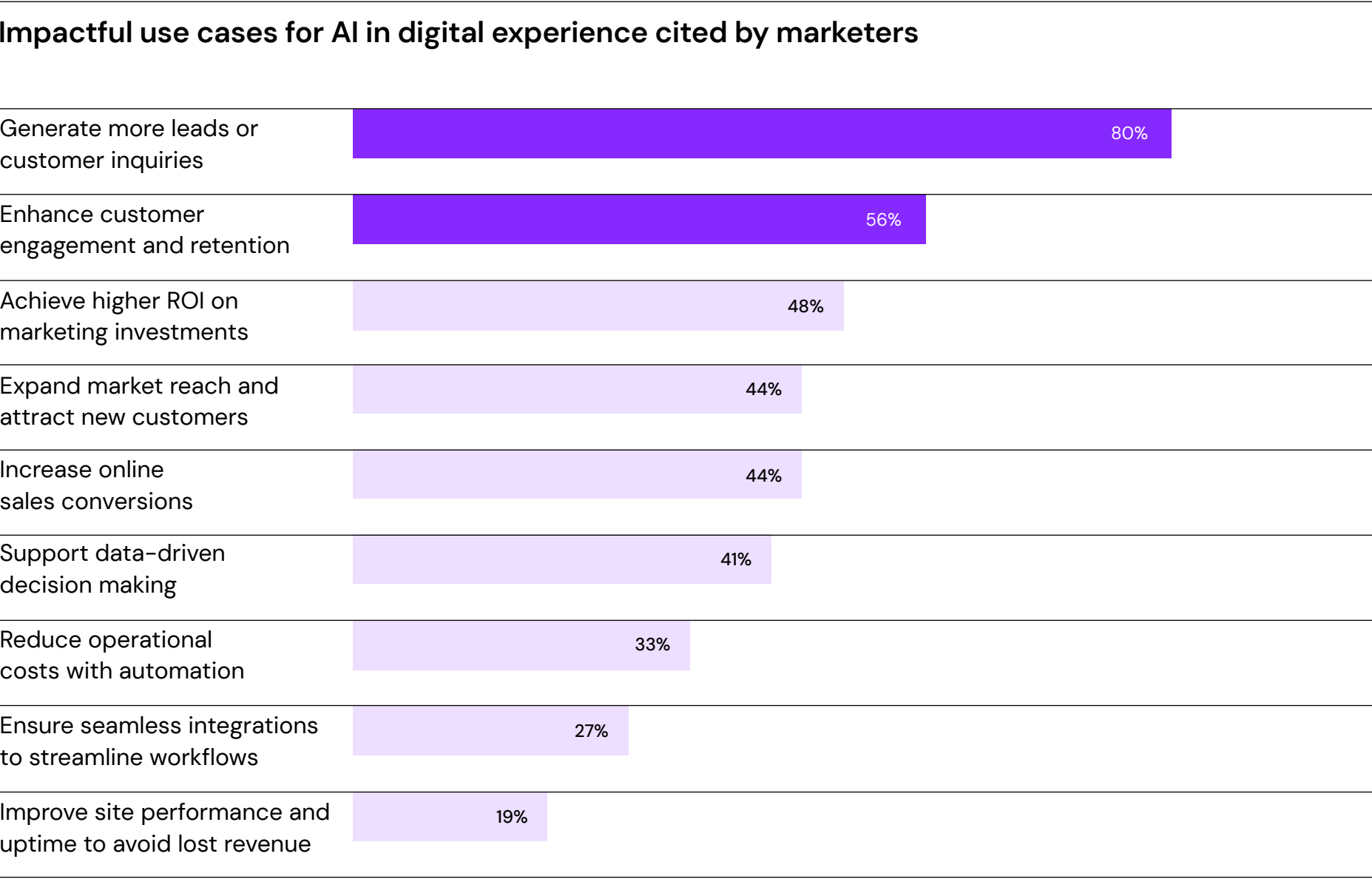
# 4.1

## Revenue generation is key, but current websites fall short

As highlighted in the previous chapter, over half of marketing executives surveyed cited revenue generation as a primary metric for assessing website effectiveness. Additionally, nearly three-quarters pointed to upstream metrics, such as traffic volume and conversion rates, that directly contribute to revenue outcomes.

When defining their website’s success in achieving this core objective, 80% emphasized increasing lead flow and customer inquiries, while 55% pointed to enhancing customer engagement and retention. This underscores the dual role of websites in driving new revenue and securing existing revenue by delivering seamless, engaging user experiences.

However, despite this focus on revenue generation, only 58% of marketing executives believe their current websites effectively support their primary revenue-driving goals, exposing a significant gap between expectations and reality due to major limitations with their current CMS.



It's old school because we manually post content and update sections. There is no integration or personalization and it's frustrating that we are technologically disadvantaged. It's hurting our conversion rates.

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Q: How do you define success when it comes to your website’s impact on revenue generation and operational efficiency?



# 4.2

## Seamless user experience is paramount for staying competitive in today's digital first world

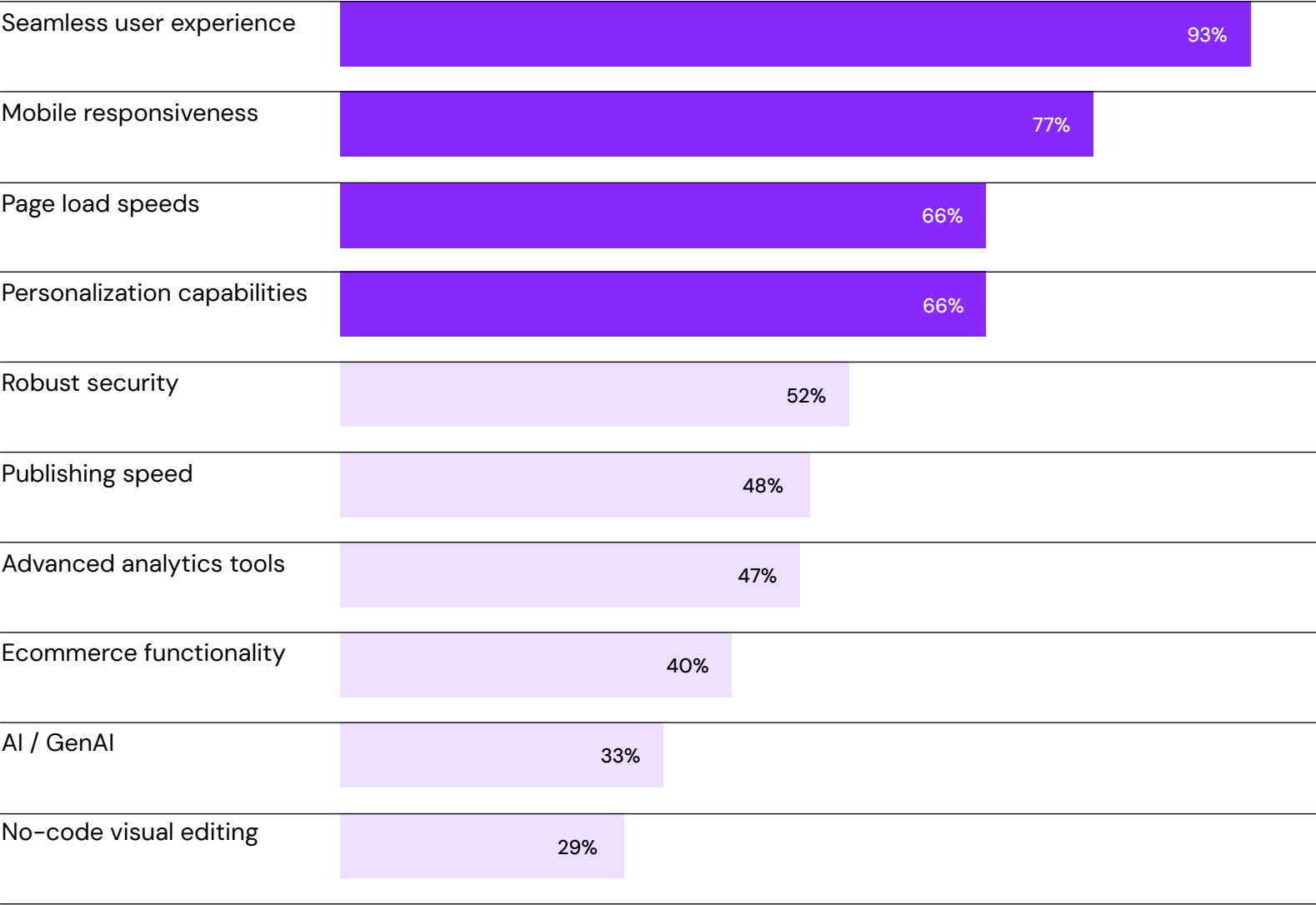
93% of marketing practitioners identified a seamless user experience as crucial for staying competitive in today's digital landscape. Mobile responsiveness followed with 77%, while page load speeds and personalization tied for third at 66%. Interestingly, 20% more respondents ranked personalization as the most important feature for website competitiveness compared to mobile responsiveness. These top three priorities underscore the importance marketers place on delivering superior customer experiences to drive revenue, highlighting the need for a CMS that supports fast, seamless, and personalized omnichannel experiences to succeed in the digital age.

●● The biggest challenge is our internal leadership understanding the need to keep pace in the competitive landscape. ●●

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2025 INTERVIEW

Q: Please rank the following website functionalities in the order you believe are most important for staying competitive in today's digital landscape.

Top catalysts for digital experience programs cited by marketers



93%

### Seamless user experience

93% of marketing practitioners identified a seamless user experience as an important website functionality for maintaining competitiveness in today's digital landscape, with 59% ranking it as the most important.

77%

### Mobile responsiveness

77% of marketing practitioners identified page load speeds as an important functionality for maintaining competitiveness in today's digital landscape, with 10% ranking it as the most important.

66%

### Page load and personalization

66% of marketing practitioners viewed both page load speeds and personalization as important for maintaining competitiveness, with 10% ranking page load speed as the most important functionality and 9% selecting personalization as their top priority.

# 4.3

## Seamless user experiences require seamless integrations and scalability

To deliver seamless, personalized omnichannel experiences quickly, website technologies must integrate effectively with other tools in the martech stack, such as customer data platforms (CDPs), customer relationship management (CRM) systems, account-based marketing (ABM) tools, and more.

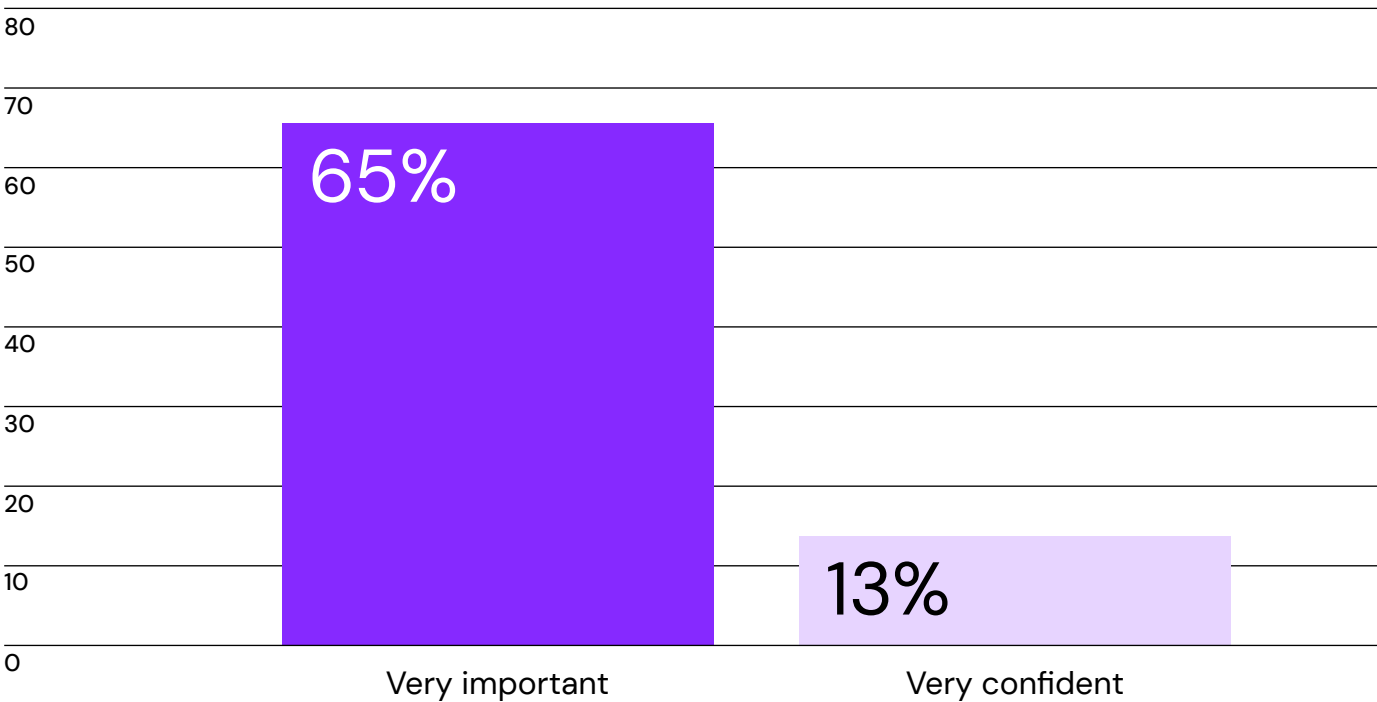
These technologies also need to scale on demand, ensuring high performance, fast page load speeds, and optimal uptime to avoid losing revenue to competitors due to a subpar digital experience.

While 65% of marketers recognize the importance of strong integrations and scalability, only 13% are very confident that their current CMS can scale and integrate with new technologies. This reveals a significant gap between marketers' expectations and the capabilities of their current tools.

Q: How important is it that your CMS seamlessly integrates with the rest of your tech stack and scales with audience demand?

Q: How confident are you in your current CMS's ability to scale and integrate with new technologies?

Average confidence gap for CMS integration and scalability



●● A key challenge in using our current CMS is its limited flexibility to integrate with newer tools and technologies, which makes it difficult to adapt quickly to evolving customer needs and deliver personalized experiences at scale. ●●

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# 4.4

## Key CMS limitations hindering marketing from driving seamless experiences

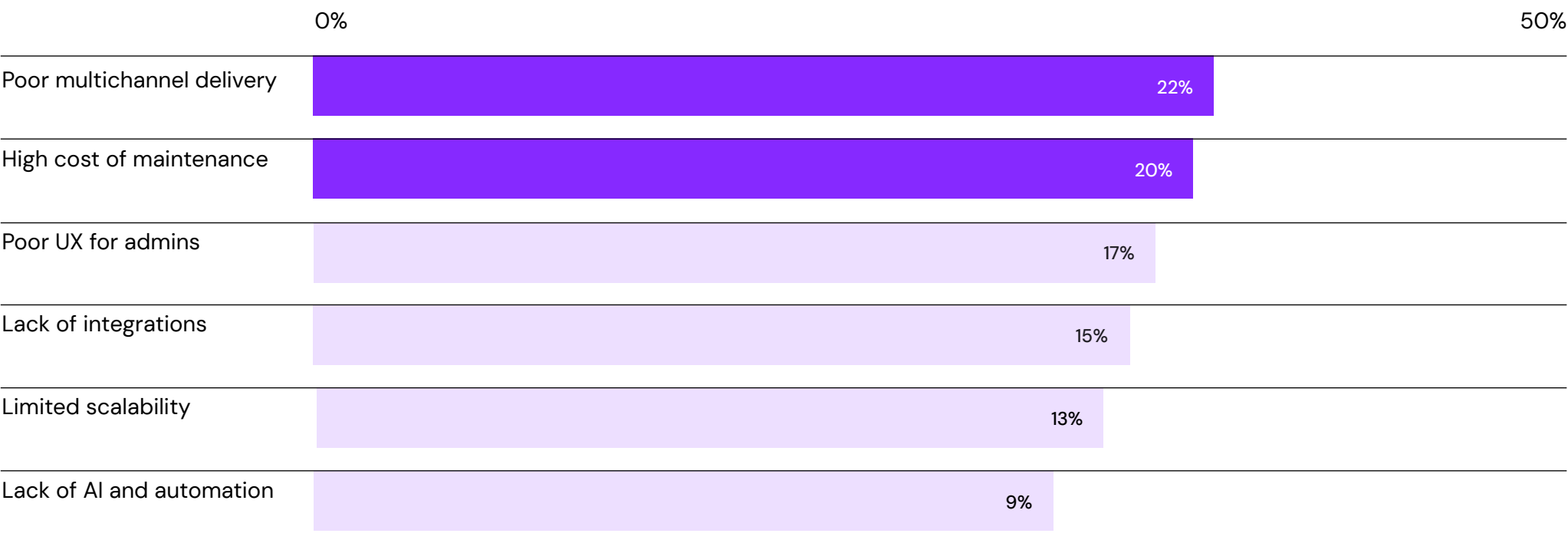
The limitations of marketers' current CMS capabilities go beyond the lack of seamless integrations and scalability to meet audience demand.

According to 22% of respondents, insufficient support for multichannel content delivery is the biggest limitation. Additionally, 20% cited the high cost of maintenance and 17% pointed to poor user experiences for administrators as significant barriers preventing marketers from reaching their goals with their current CMS. These challenges highlight the struggle marketers face in delivering the seamless, personalized user experiences necessary for driving engagement and conversions.

As marketers look to overcome these barriers, the growing importance of AI and personalization emerges as crucial factors in meeting evolving customer expectations and enhancing digital strategies.

Q: What is the biggest limitation of your current CMS?

Biggest limitations with current CMS cited by marketers



\*4% of respondents noted poor global implementation, lack of capabilities, and resource constraints



We've outgrown our home-grown CMS's ability to efficiently scale globally to meet the demands of site content localization and ability to update and publish quickly. It is also not built to integrate seamlessly with the rest of our CRM and other tech stacks.

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# 5.1

## Marketers see untapped potential in enhanced website personalization and content quality

Marketers are focusing on enhancing website personalization and content quality to drive better business outcomes. By prioritizing these improvements, they aim to deliver more targeted and engaging experiences that resonate with customers. Additionally, marketers are refining SEO strategies to further boost visibility and traffic.

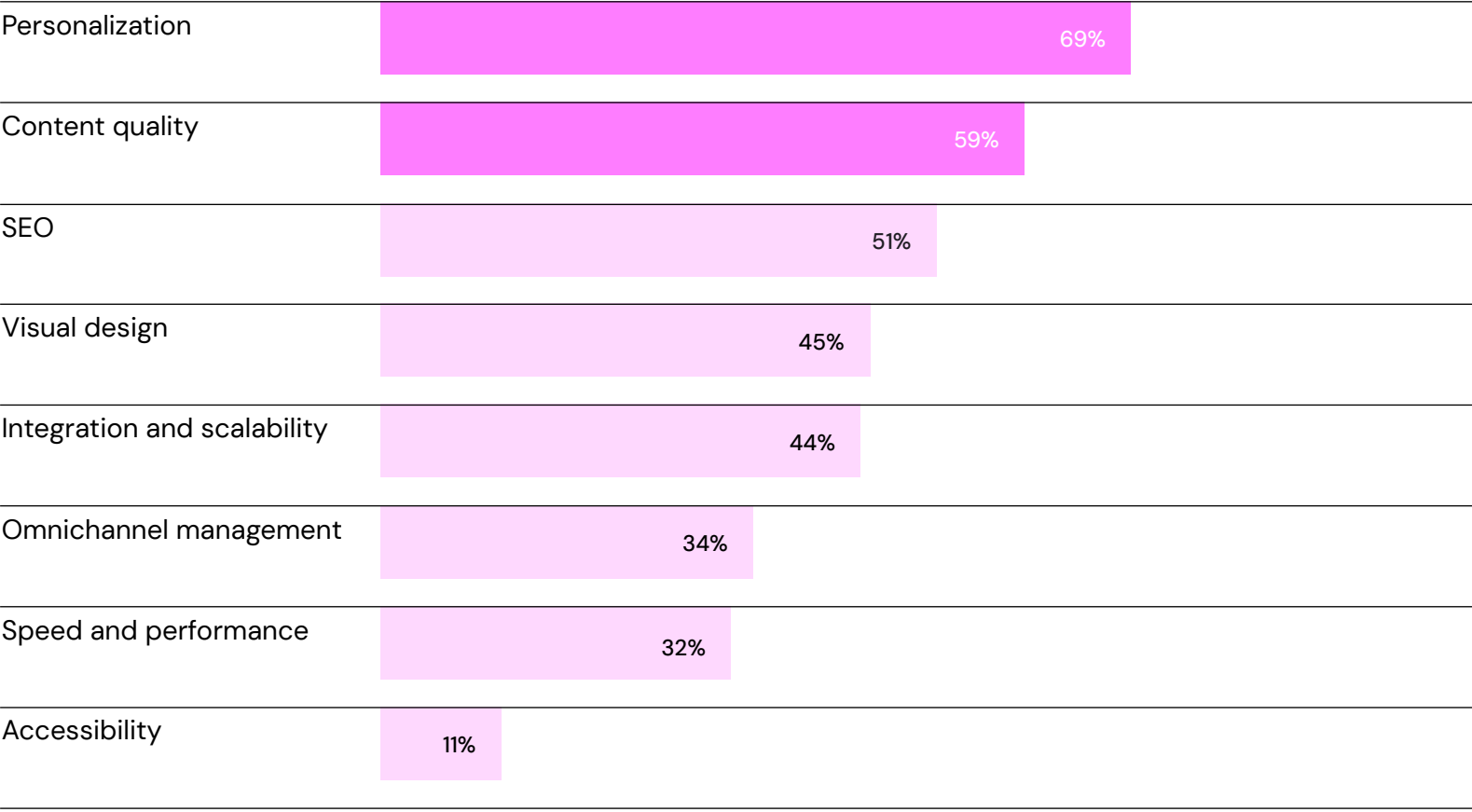
Together, these efforts are seen as crucial for increasing customer engagement, improving conversion rates, and ultimately achieving stronger business performance. These enhancements offer marketers the opportunity to unlock greater potential and create more impactful results.

I would like to have a platform that offers a seamless experience from content curation to execution.

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Q: Which of the following areas do you believe your website could most improve to generate better business outcomes?

Key areas for website improvement cited by marketers



69%

Personalization

Personalization stands out as the top-priority enhancement for marketing teams aiming to drive impactful business outcomes, with 69% of marketers emphasizing its importance.

59%

Content quality

Improving content quality ranks as the second-highest priority for marketing teams, with 59% emphasizing its importance in driving meaningful business outcomes.

51%

Search engine optimization

At 51%, enhancing SEO emerges as the third-highest priority for marketing teams striving to achieve impactful business results.



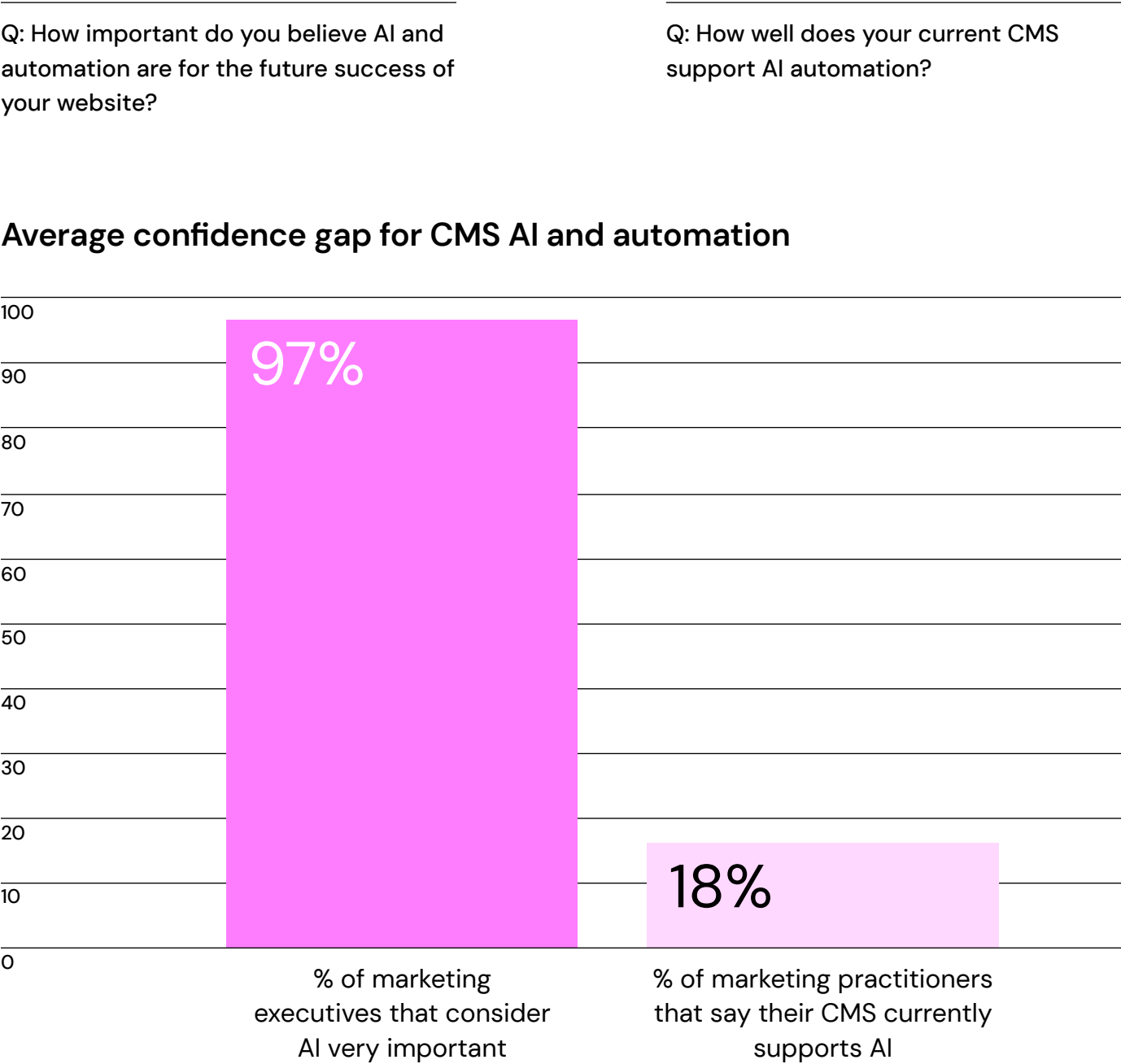
# 5.3

## AI is the future for driving personalized experiences, but most aren't ready

AI capabilities, including generative AI, are revolutionizing website functionality by enabling real-time personalization, predictive analytics, and automated content creation. These advancements streamline user journeys, boost engagement, and foster customer loyalty. AI-powered tools such as chatbots and virtual assistants further enhance user experiences by reducing friction and offering predictive assistance. However, ethical considerations—centered on privacy, consent, and trust—are critical for sustainable adoption.

A striking 97% of marketing executives surveyed identified AI and automation as critical to the future success of their websites. Yet only 18% of marketing practitioners reported that their platforms are currently equipped to support AI capabilities. Additionally, marketing executives were 28% more likely than practitioners to view AI as very or extremely important to their website's future.

This disparity reveals a significant misalignment: while executives prioritize AI's transformative potential, practitioners remain constrained by the limitations of current systems. Bridging this gap requires organizations to align their strategic priorities with operational capabilities, ensuring that both leadership vision and technical readiness converge to achieve shared goals in website effectiveness.



●● The growing importance and capabilities of AI will be essential to a website e.g., chatbots/virtual assistants, delivery of highly personalized content, etc. ●●

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# 5.4

## 86% of marketers want to leverage AI to hyper-personalize their brand's experiences

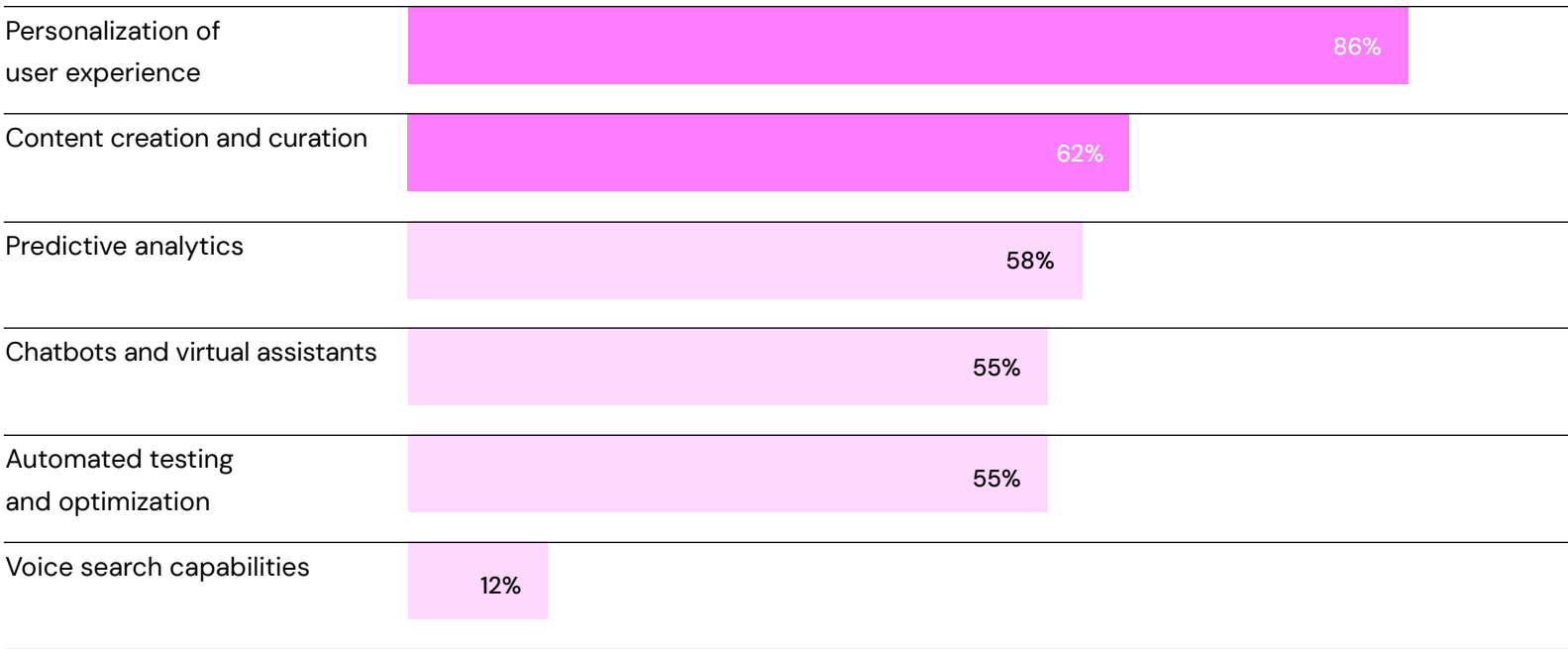
Creating hyper-personalized experiences that captivate your audience and drive conversions starts with content—delivering the right content, to the right audience, on the right channel, at the right time. Achieving this requires extensive planning, resources, scalability, and, crucially, a significant volume of content. Yet even with these in place, success hinges on having a robust mechanism to deliver that content in the most personalized and effective ways.

It's no surprise, then, that marketers identify personalization and content creation as the top priorities for integrating AI into their website strategies. Together, AI and personalization are critical to meeting customer expectations and driving business results, but barriers to advancing web capabilities often stand in the way.

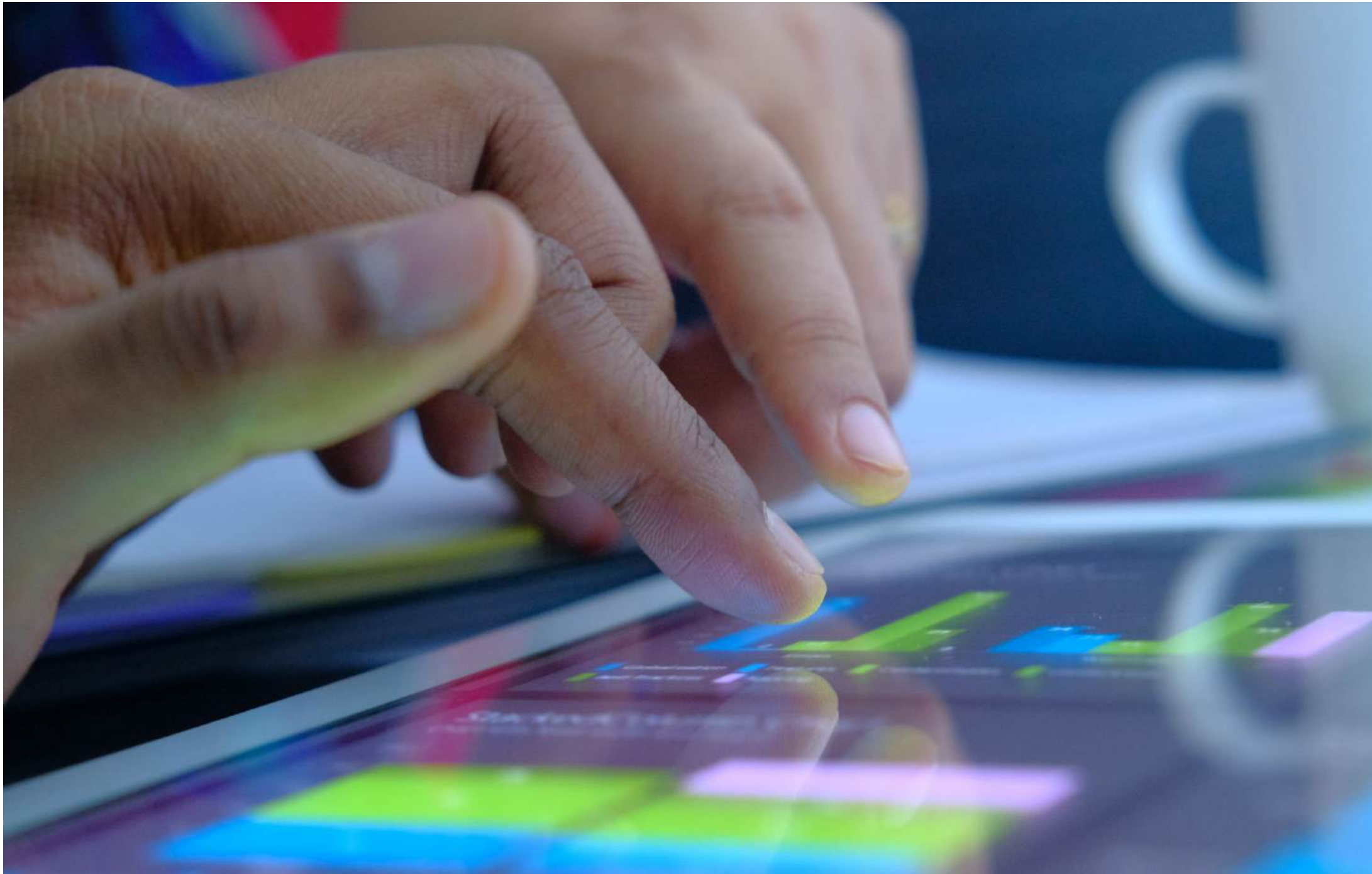
●● Hyper-personalization remains the biggest challenge, especially with a focus on promoting the right content to target potential customers and convert to leads. ●●

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Key areas for AI integration cited by marketers



Q: In which areas would you most like to see AI integrated into your website strategy over the next three years?





# 6.1

## Identifying changes to make is simple—overcoming hurdles is the real challenge

Despite recognizing the importance of enhancing their websites to deliver personalized, AI-driven, omnichannel experiences that drive conversions, businesses are struggling to close the gap between ambition and reality.

While 76% of marketers surveyed cite budget constraints as the primary barrier to improving website capabilities, an additional 32% also point to challenges proving ROI in these investments.

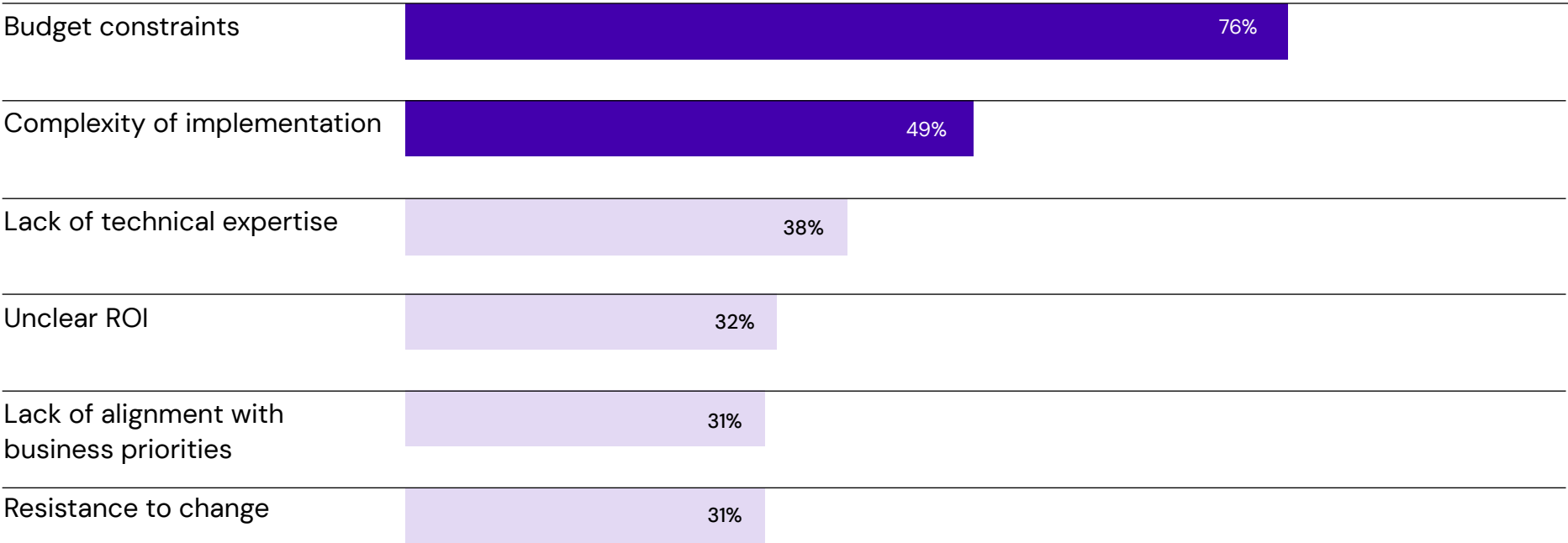
Additionally, nearly half of marketers highlight the complexity of implementation, while 38% identify a lack of technical expertise as other key obstacles hindering progress.

●● Budget constraints and unclear ROI have made it difficult to justify investment in new tools. ●●

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Q: What prevents your organization from investing in more advanced website capabilities?

Main blockers preventing website improvement cited by marketers



# 6.2

## Digital maturity levels significantly impact the hurdles organizations face

Not all organizations are equipped to fully embrace digital innovations, and as a result, they must address various blockers in different ways. The ability to move forward with digital transformation initiatives largely depends on an organization’s digital maturity.

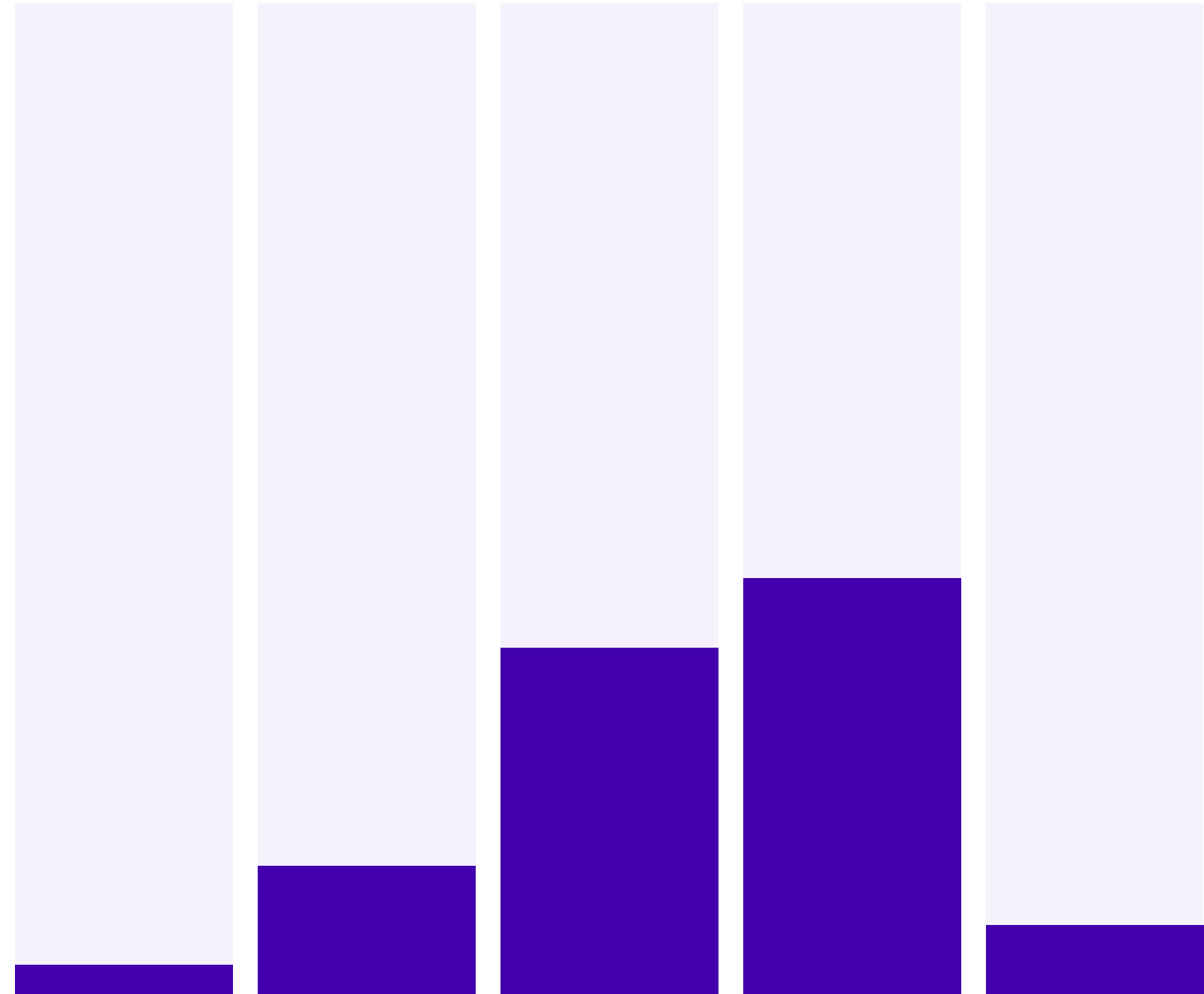
When we surveyed respondents about their organization’s level of digital maturity, we found that only 16% considered their organizations to be experts or advanced, while 49% ranked themselves as developing or novice, indicating lower digital maturity.

The data shows that no digital maturity group is free from blockers, though the expert group was the only cohort that did not cite organizational resistance to change as a barrier to investing in digital innovation. However, significant differences emerged between the less digitally mature group (novice and developing) and the more mature group (advanced and experts). The less mature group was 196% more likely to face challenges with budget and ROI compared to the more mature group. They were also 203% more likely to cite complexity of implementation and lack of technical expertise as blockers.

The gaps between novice and expert organizations are even more striking, with novices reporting 212% more budget or ROI challenges and 269% more difficulties with implementation complexity and technical expertise gaps than experts.

Self-identified organizational digital maturity cited by marketers

3%	13%	35%	42%	7%
Expert	Advanced	Competent	Developing	Novice



Q: How would you assess your organization’s current digital maturity?



# 7.1

## The next evolution for CMS includes personalization, AI, and advanced analytics

Despite challenges and gaps in digital maturity, marketing executives remain optimistic about the next three years, prioritizing investments in website innovation. Personalization, AI/GenAI optimization, and advanced analytics tools are at the top of their lists to drive business results.

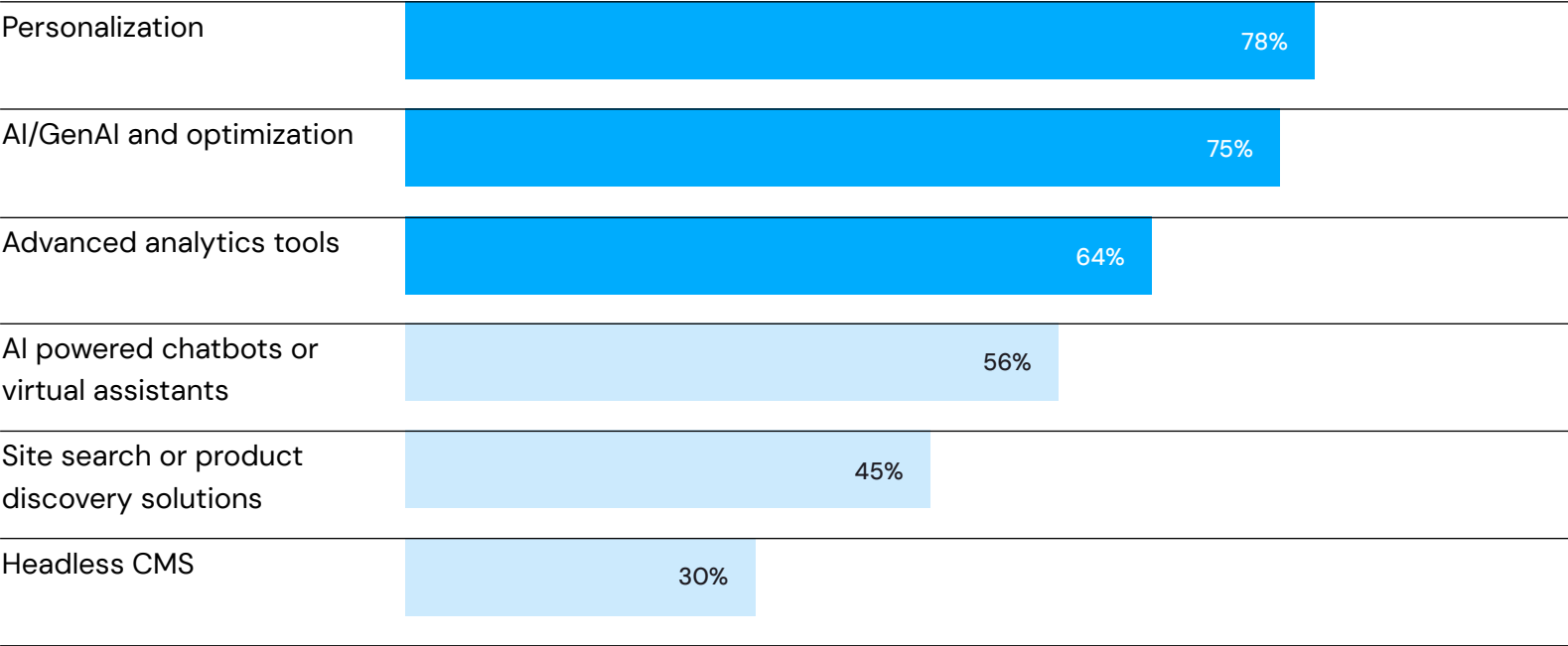
While marketing practitioners align with these priorities, they show less enthusiasm for AI, being 19% less likely than executives to plan investments in AI and GenAI optimization over the next three years.

●● We would like to see enhanced personalization features, seamless third-party integrations, and advanced analytics capabilities to track and optimize customer engagement and ROI effectively. ●●

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Q: Which of the following technologies are you planning to incorporate into your website strategy in the next 3 years?

Key areas for website investments in the next three years cited by marketing executives



78%

Personalization

78% of marketing executives plan to invest in website personalization over the next three years to improve business performance, signaling the growing importance of tailored user experiences to boost engagement, conversions, and customer satisfaction.

75%

AI/GenAI and optimization

While 75% of marketing executives plan to invest in AI for their websites in the next three years, only 61% of practitioners do, signaling a gap between leadership’s focus on AI’s growth potential and operational challenges in adoption and integration.

64%

Advanced analytics tools

Advanced analytics tools rank as the third highest investment priority for marketing executives in the next three years, signaling a growing emphasis on leveraging data to drive decisions and enhance website performance.

# 7.2

## Marketing executives plan to drive more awareness and revenue with their websites in the next three years

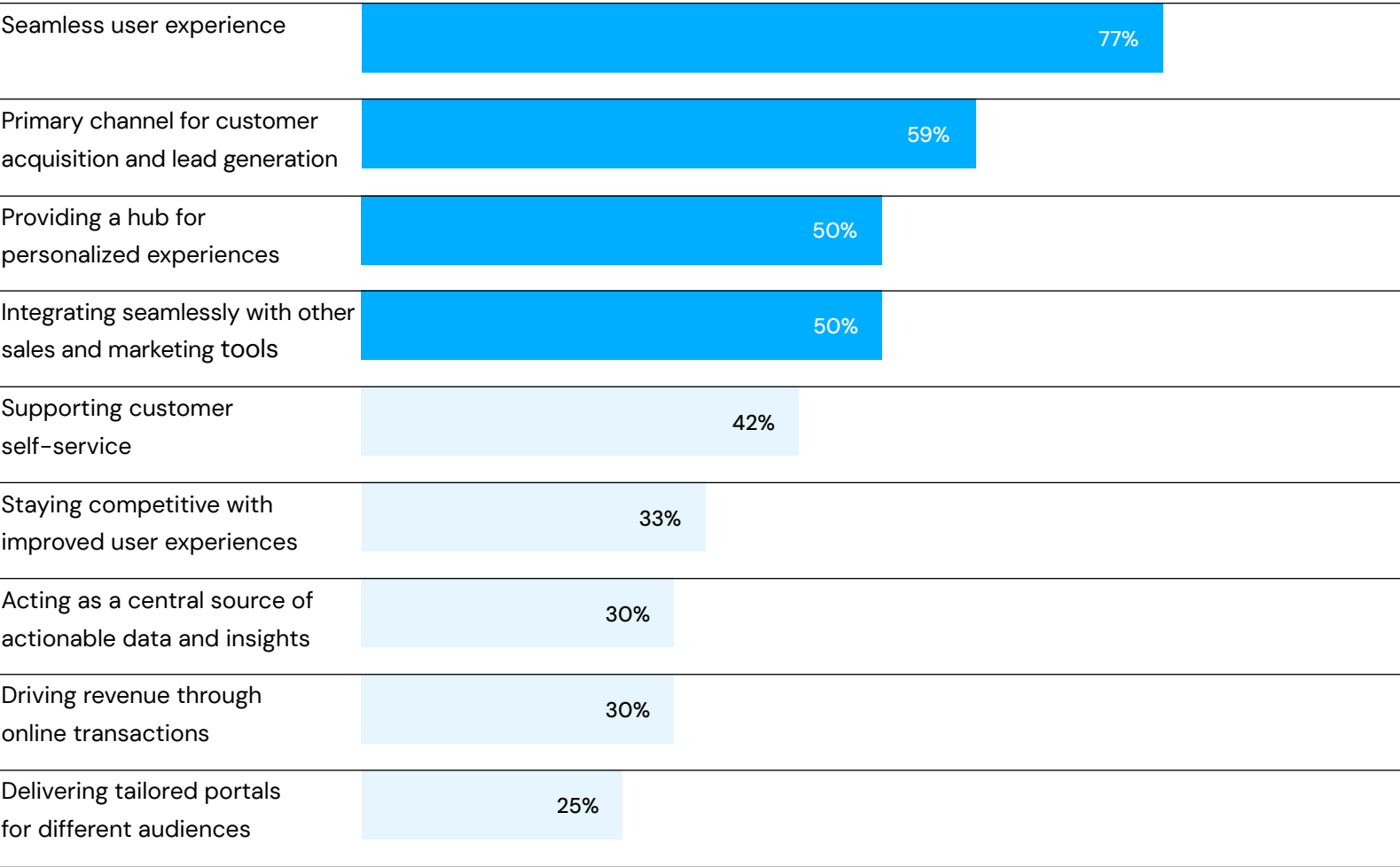
Lead generation continues to be a top priority for marketers heading into the next half of the decade, with an increased focus on driving converted revenue through personalized experiences.

These efforts will be further supported by enhanced brand awareness and seamless integrations between marketing and sales tools, which enable the creation of tailored portals that not only enhance self-service customer experiences but also reduce support inquiries and overall demand.

As a result, businesses can expect heightened competitiveness, with an emphasis on delivering superior user experiences that directly contribute to increased revenue through online transactions. These investments in personalization, integration, and self-service capabilities will drive significant ROI by boosting customer engagement, improving conversion rates and enhancing the bottom line.

These shifts underscore the broader movement toward websites that deliver more integrated experiences, supporting key priorities in the coming years while enabling iterative progress. This approach allows businesses to address existing constraints and consistently introduce incremental improvements for ongoing success, with a strong, adaptable CMS at its core.

Role of the website in three years as cited by marketing executives



Q: What role do you see your website playing in your overall digital strategy for the next three years?

●● Integration across the martech stack is another need – as marketing continues to rely on technology and data, the need to integrate multiple software to increase engagement and lead gen will be a top priority. ●●

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●● We would like to see more self-service capabilities to make our platforms more agile and to see integration of multi channels, personalization, the use of AI and frictionless ecommerce and CRM solutions. ●●

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●● I would like to see enhanced personalization features, seamless third-party integrations, and advanced analytics capabilities to track and optimize customer engagement and ROI effectively. ●●

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# 7.4

## Turning insight into action



We finish with 10 essential questions for your organization to reflect on as you shape and execute your unique vision for the future of your websites, driving your business success.

### 1 How mature is your organization's digital infrastructure?

Are you equipped with the necessary systems, processes, and expertise to support advanced personalization and AI-driven experiences? If not, what steps can you take to close the gap?

### 2 What are the biggest barriers to implementing AI and personalization in your digital strategy?

Is it a matter of budget, lack of technical expertise, or challenges proving ROI? How can you address these challenges to move forward with your plans?

### 3 How aligned are your marketing and IT teams in terms of digital strategy and capabilities?

Are there communication or resource gaps between leadership and operational teams that may hinder the adoption of AI and personalization technologies?

### 4 What investments in advanced analytics, AI, and personalization will yield the most value for your business?

How can you prioritize these investments to create the most impact in terms of customer engagement, conversions, and long-term growth?

### 5 How can you measure and track ROI on investments in digital transformation?

What metrics or KPIs can you put in place to ensure that your website's enhancements drive tangible business outcomes?

### 6 What are the potential ethical considerations of leveraging AI for personalization in your organization?

How will you address concerns around data privacy, consent, and trust to ensure sustainable and responsible use of AI in your digital experiences?

### 7 How can you align your digital maturity with your organizational goals?

What actions can you take to gradually advance your digital maturity and create a roadmap for continuous improvement in AI, personalization, and content strategies?

### 8 How are you planning to integrate marketing and sales tools for a more seamless customer journey?

What steps can you take to ensure your website supports self-service, personalized interactions, and aligns with sales efforts to drive higher conversions?

### 9 What is your strategy for scaling personalized, AI-driven experiences across all customer touchpoints?

How can you ensure consistency and relevance in personalized experiences across different channels, particularly as your website and CMS evolve?

### 10 Do you have a trusted technology partner you can rely on to support your digital success now and into the future?

Are you partnered with the right vendors, consultants, and systems integrators that have the right technology and experience to see you succeed in the next wave of innovation?