



**campaign**

# Branding and Marketing in the New Abnormal

How has COVID-19 shifted marketing KPIs and budgets?

October 2020



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# 01 | WHY ARE WE DOING THIS SURVEY NOW?

*“COVID-19 has not only disrupted businesses globally but also shed light on future-readiness of brands and marketers to drive growth in the new abnormal. The survey findings portray a clear gap between their business goals and the tools they leverage to achieve them. In a post-pandemic environment, it is vital for brands to quickly realign objectives, measure effectiveness and lead through digital transformation.”*

Karthik Venkatakrisnan,

Regional Leader, Marketing and Consumer Intelligence, GfK Asia

As the world continues to grapple with the coronavirus, the global health crisis is also forcing marketing leaders to contend with shifting KPIs and shrinking budgets.

This survey – conducted amidst the pandemic – took a litmus test of a time when pre-COVID-19 priorities were still fresh in the minds of executives, but they were also needing to adapt to the economic impact brought about by the pandemic.

This report clearly shows that priorities have been upended as marketers strive to make sense of the ‘new abnormal’. For some, driving short-term sales has become an urgent priority. For others, KPIs have shifted to longer-term goals such as digital transformation – and as part of that – gaining a fuller view of the customer journey.

These challenges are compounded by the fact that many marketers are still struggling with measurement - both what to measure and how best to do it. Couple this with the need to maximize marketing ROI across the board and marketers are in a situation that necessitates an ever more careful planning of spend, channels and budget.

## THE SURVEY

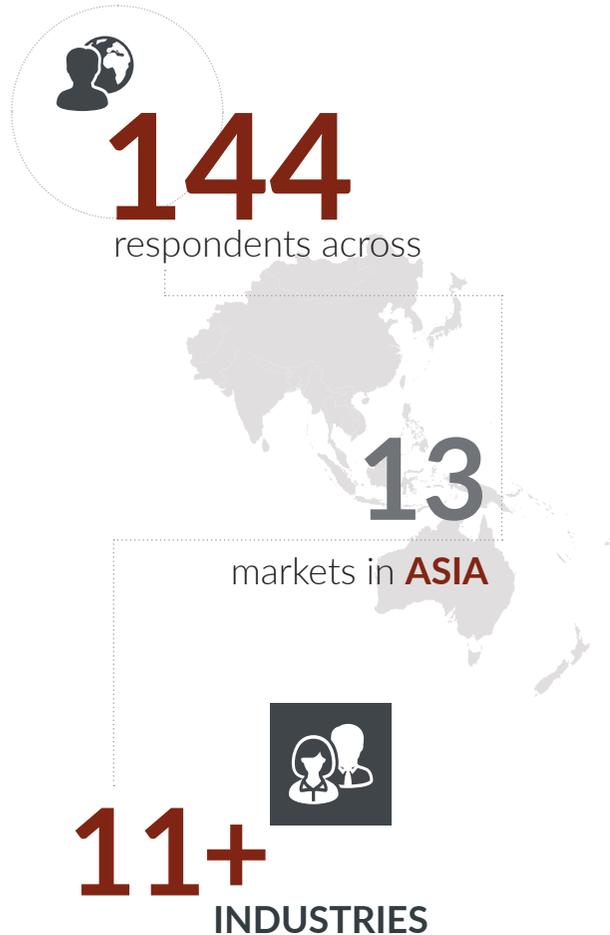
With the above in mind, *Campaign Asia* partnered with GfK for a survey, **Branding and Marketing in the New Abnormal**, to gain a better understanding of shifting marketing priorities and budgets.

The questions we asked were primarily focused around four areas:

- A. What are marketers’ priorities
- B. How is marketing effectiveness being measured
- C. How have budgets shifted during COVID-19
- D. How has COVID-19 changed the way marketers engage with consumers



## Survey background



*“Marketing leaders need to contend with shifting KPIs, shrinking budgets and in some cases, a recalibration of entire marketing funnels”*

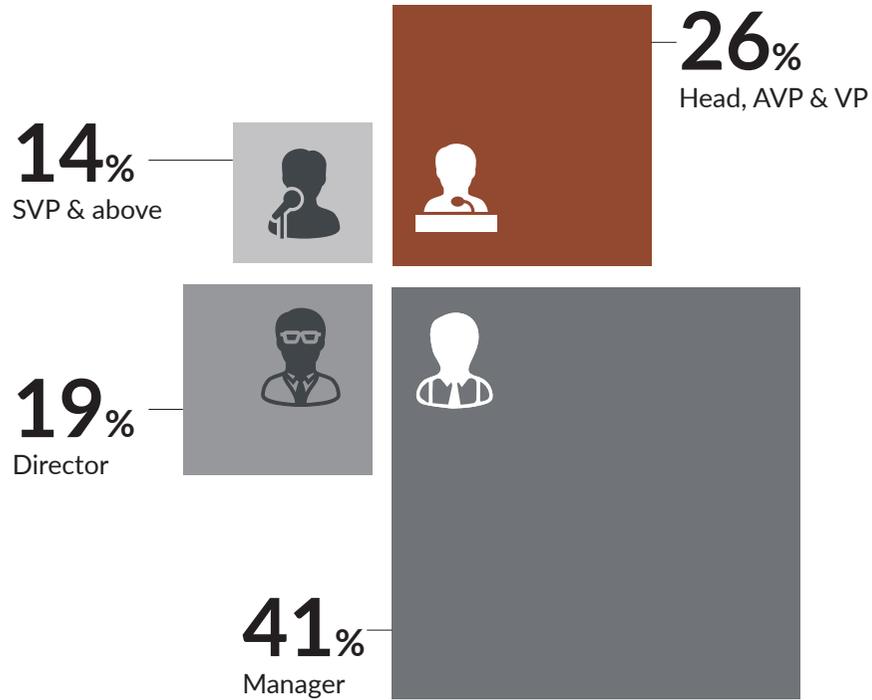


From July 27 to September 3 2020, we surveyed 144 brand marketers across Asia. They included directors, VPs and managers from 13 countries, encompassing China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. 11+ industries, including automobile, financial services, retail, tech/telecommunications, FMCG, travel, healthcare and the media, are represented.

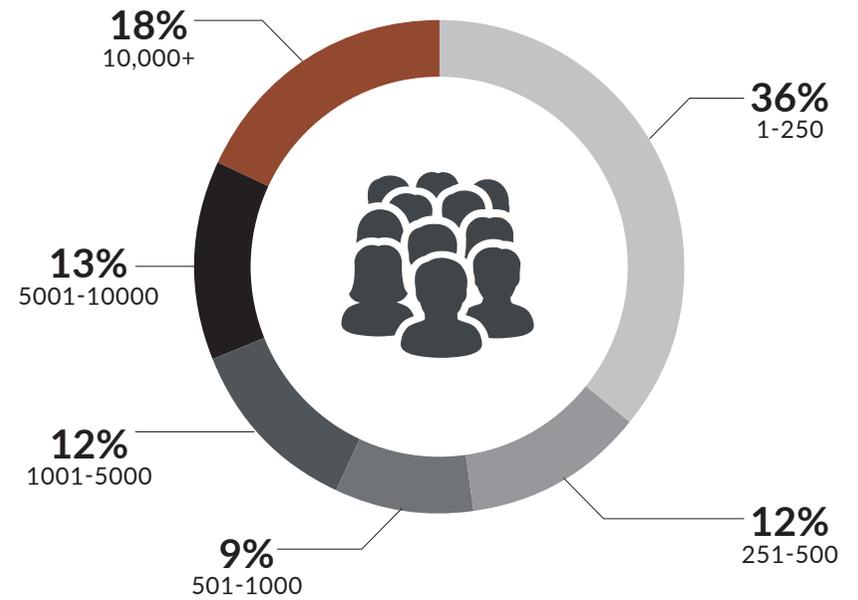
### THE GOAL

With this survey, our goal is two-fold: **to get a better understanding of how marketing priorities and budgets are shifting, and to allow marketers to benchmark themselves against their fellow colleagues.** We do not encourage a one-size-fits-all approach and any analysis coming out of the report should be used as a guide, instead of a be-all and end-all solution.

**Job titles**



**How many employees are in your organization worldwide?**



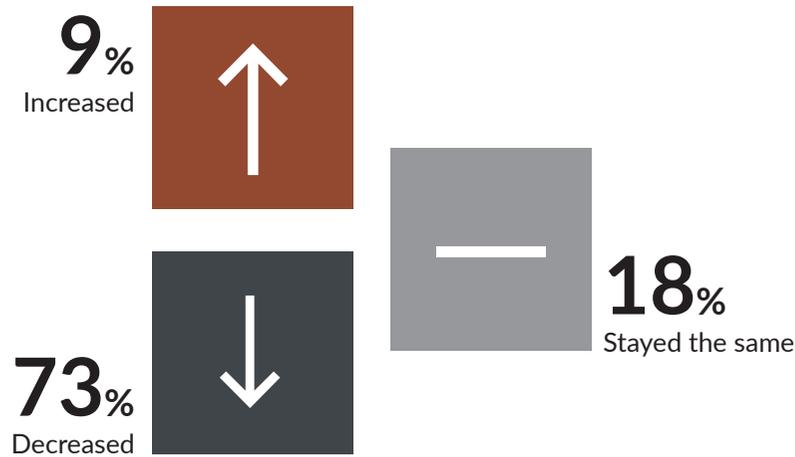
A high-angle, close-up photograph of a business meeting. Several people's hands and forearms are visible, resting on a dark wooden table. In the foreground, a person's hand is pointing at a document in a binder that features several colorful pie charts. Another person's hand is holding a white sheet of paper with a faint diagram. The background is bright and out of focus, suggesting a window with natural light. The overall tone is professional and collaborative.

02

THE NEW REALITY:  
THE ART OF DOING  
MORE WITH LESS

Of the marketing leads we have talked to in the past few months, most – if not all – say that COVID-19 has upturned not only priorities and budgets, but the way they arrive at these priorities and budgets. This is also reflected in *Campaign Asia* and GfK's *Branding and Marketing in the New Abnormal* report.

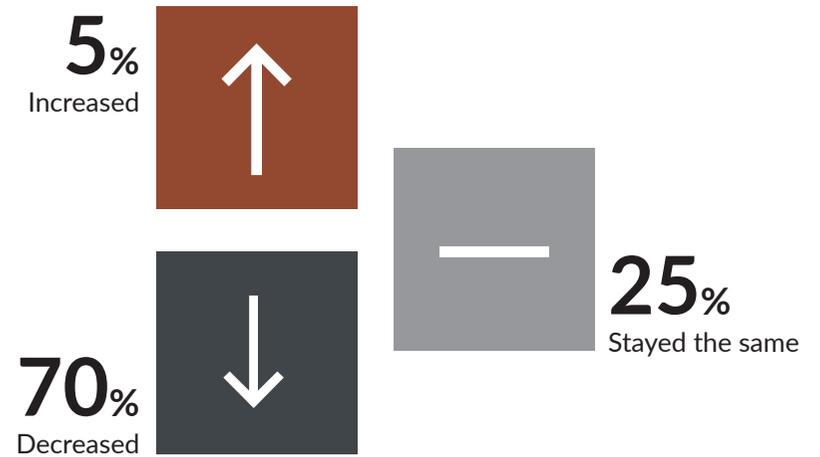
### How has your overall marketing budget changed since COVID-19?



### BUDGETS HAVE DECREASED...UNSURPRISINGLY

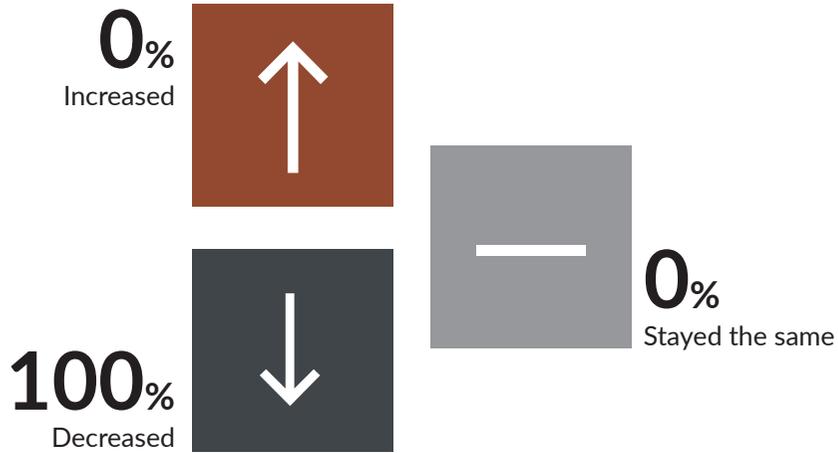
We asked how overall marketing budgets have shifted post-COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, a huge majority (73%) say that budgets have decreased, with those in FMCG and healthcare hit hardest.

### Financial services

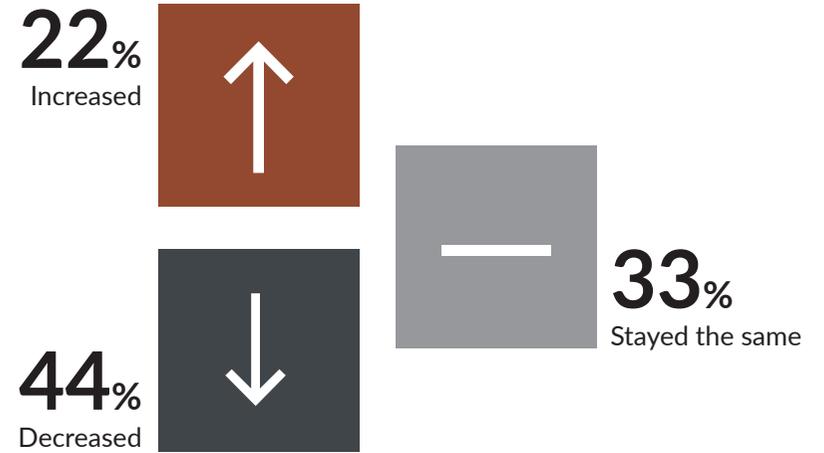


## How has your overall marketing budget changed since COVID-19?

### FMCG

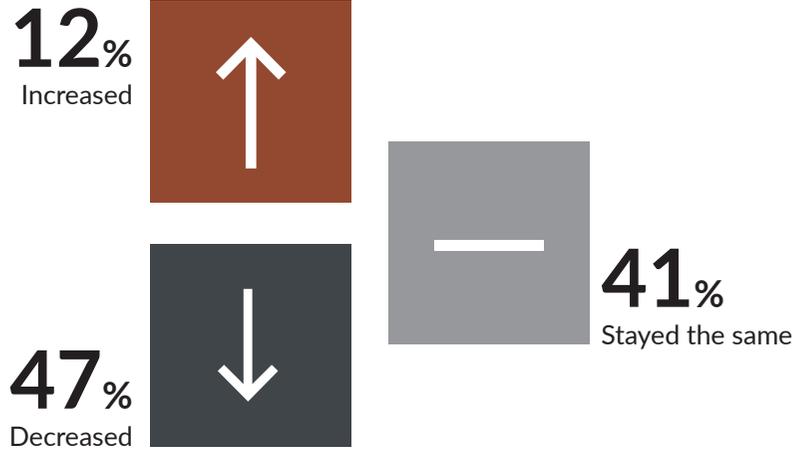


### Retail

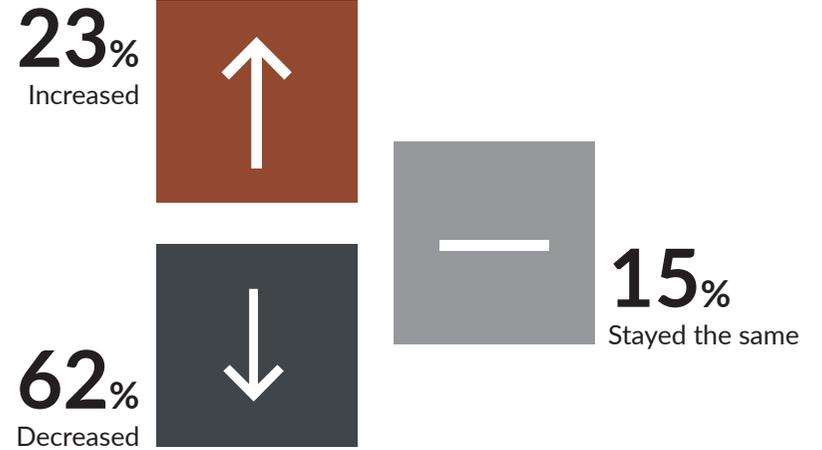


## How has your overall marketing budget changed since COVID-19?

### Tech/Telecommunications



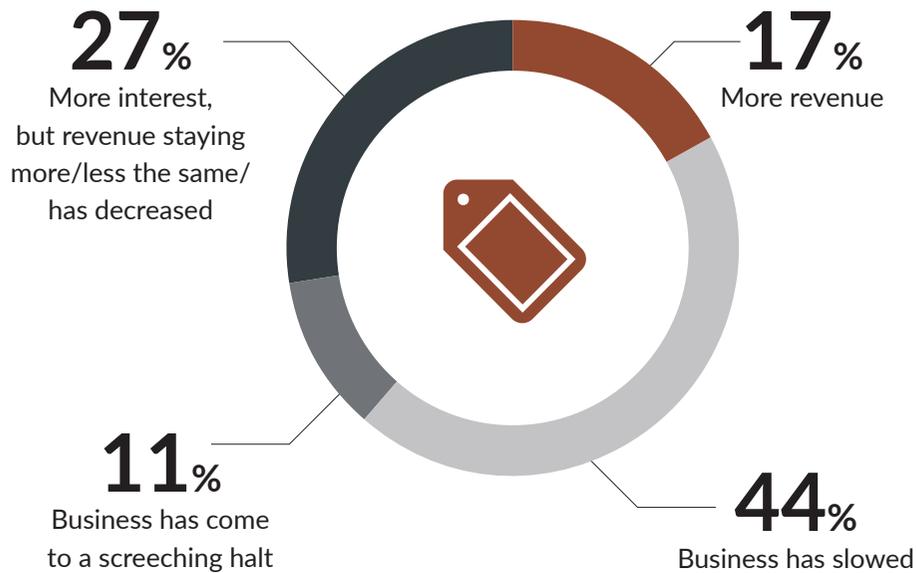
### Manufacturing



We also asked respondents how COVID-19 has affected their business. A majority (56%) say that business has slowed or come to a screeching halt.

Diving into individual industries, retail is hit hardest, with 80% saying that business has slowed, and 10% saying that it has come to a screeching halt, followed by automotive and consumer durable, with 100% saying business has slowed. This is a new reality

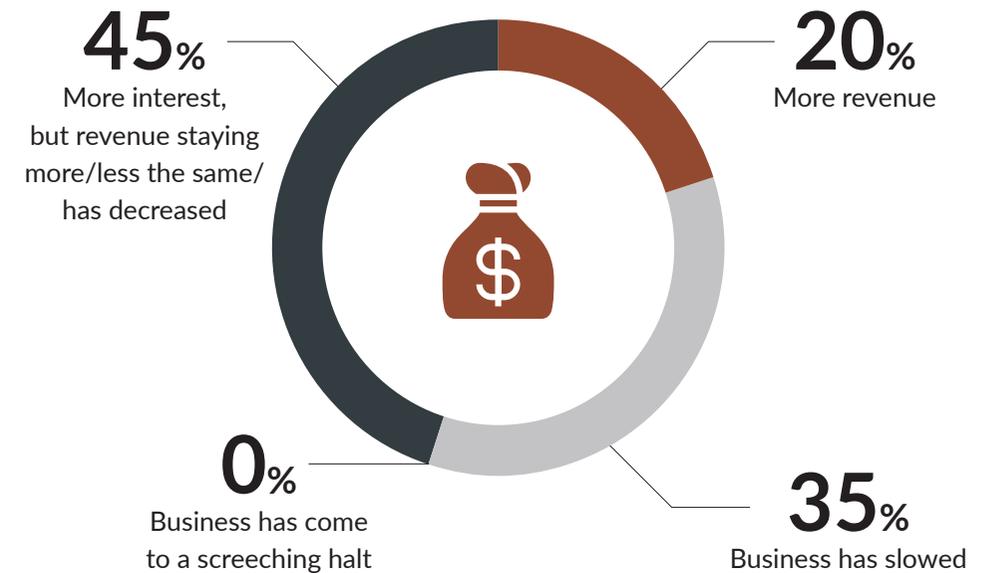
### To what extent has COVID-19 disrupted the category/ies your brand is present in?



facing many marketers — according to a [WARC study](#), global ad spend is set to fall by 8.1%.

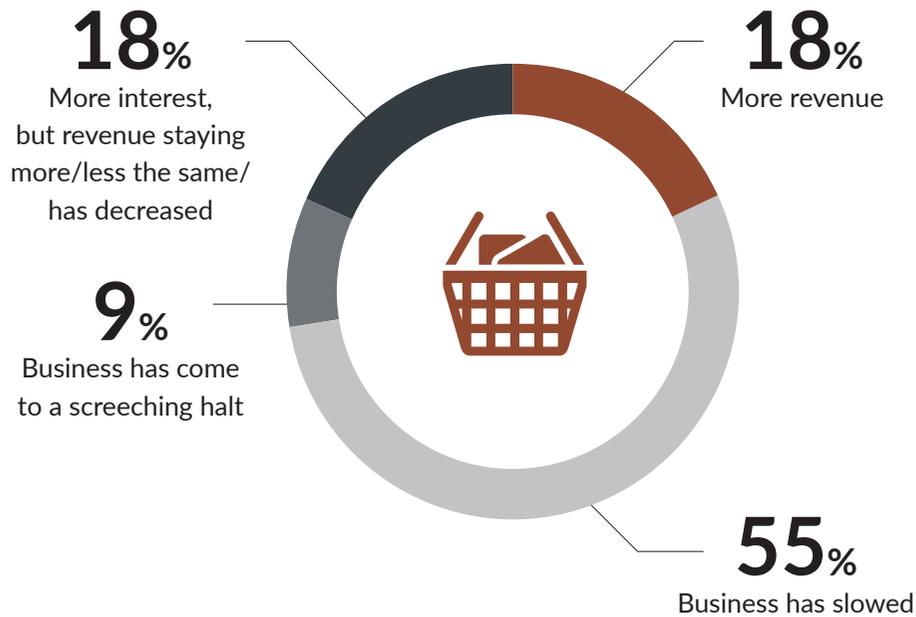
If we compare the figures for budgets and impact on business, it's immediately apparent that a greater percentage say budgets have decreased than those who say business has slowed or come to a screening halt.

### Financial services

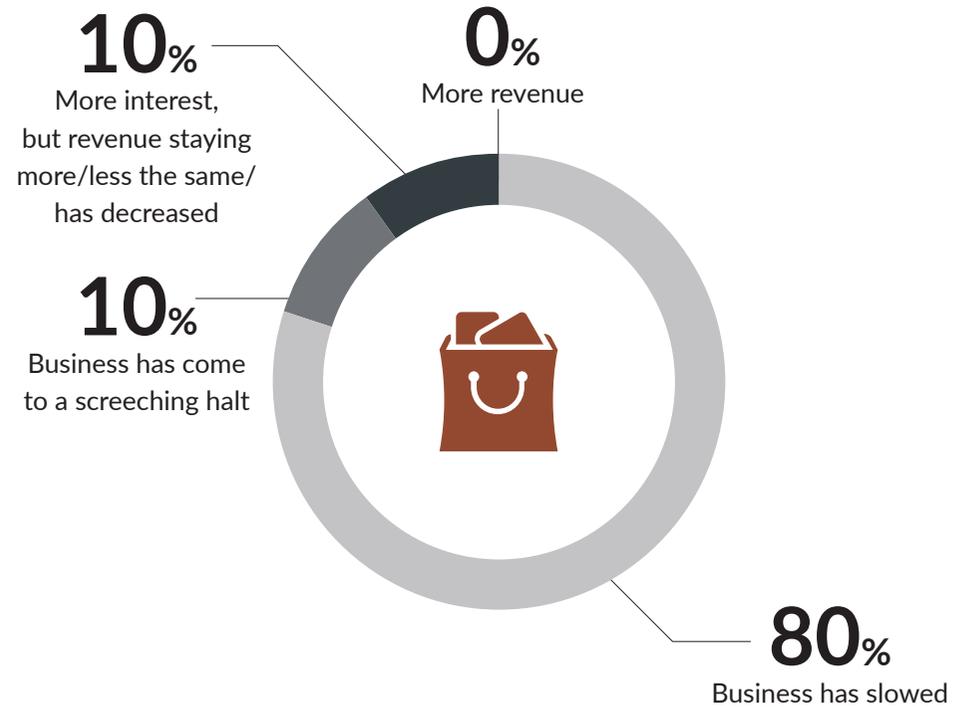


To what extent has COVID-19 disrupted the category/ies your brand is present in?

FMCG

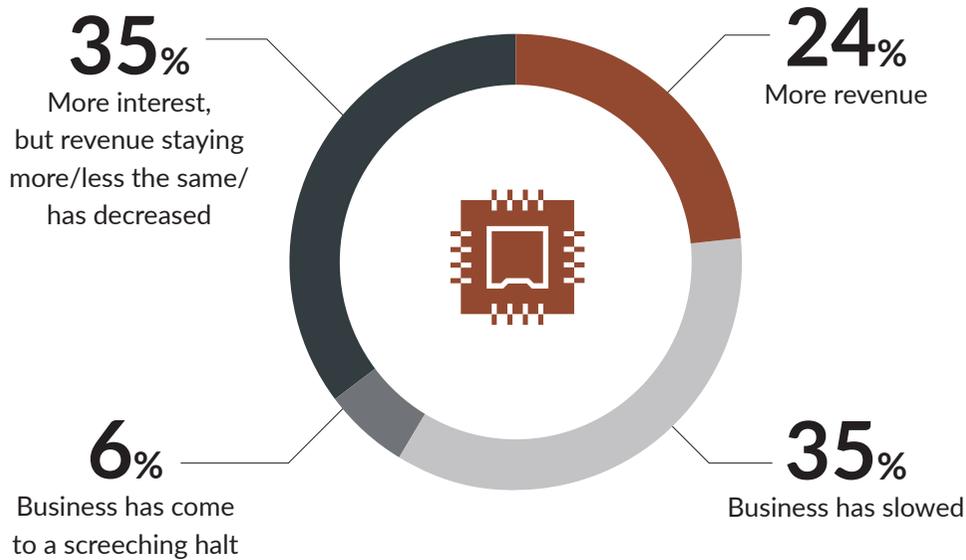


Retail

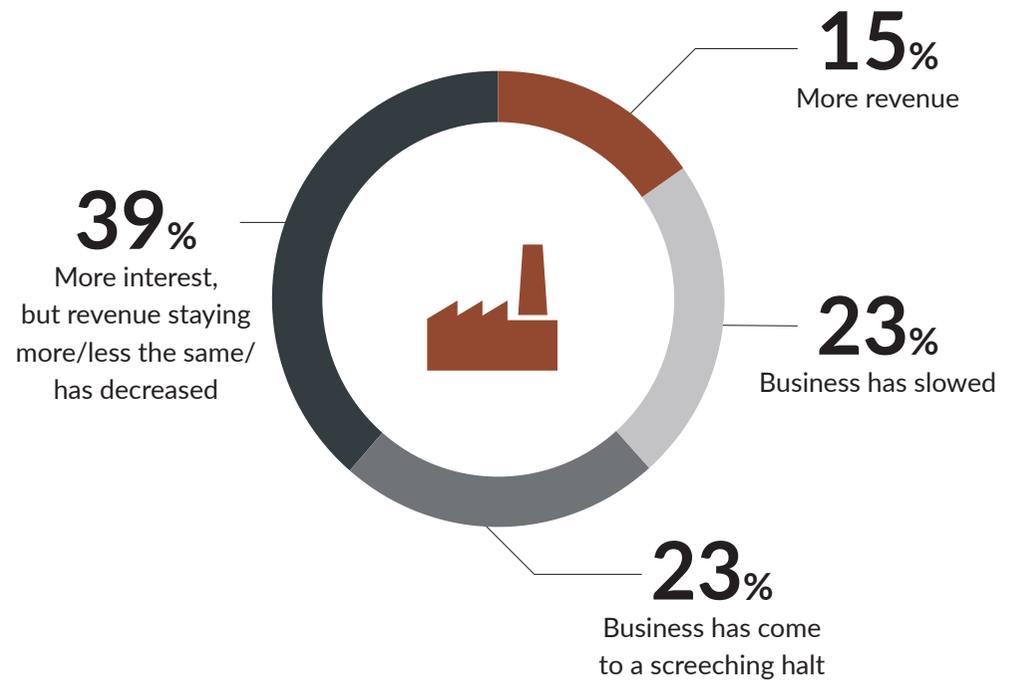


To what extent has COVID-19 disrupted the category/ies your brand is present in?

Tech/Telecommunication



Manufacturing



For those who have experienced budget cuts and yet are still doing business, and thus, needing to continuously engage with consumers, the challenge is: how to do more with less? Before that question can be answered, we need to consider how marketing priorities have changed.



03

MARKETING PRIORITIES & KPIs:  
WHAT KEEPS MARKETERS UP  
AT NIGHT?

# KPIs PRE-COVID-19



*“Pre-COVID-19, driving sales was top of mind. Post-pandemic, the need to maximize marketing ROI has increased for marketers across the board”*

Respondents were asked to rank their KPIs (from ‘1’ to ‘5’) when running marketing campaigns pre-COVID-19. Taken as a consolidated ranking, driving sales came out significantly ahead as the top-ranked answer. Maximizing ROI and driving leads yielded similar scores, while driving brand equity and long-term brand building came out with the same score.

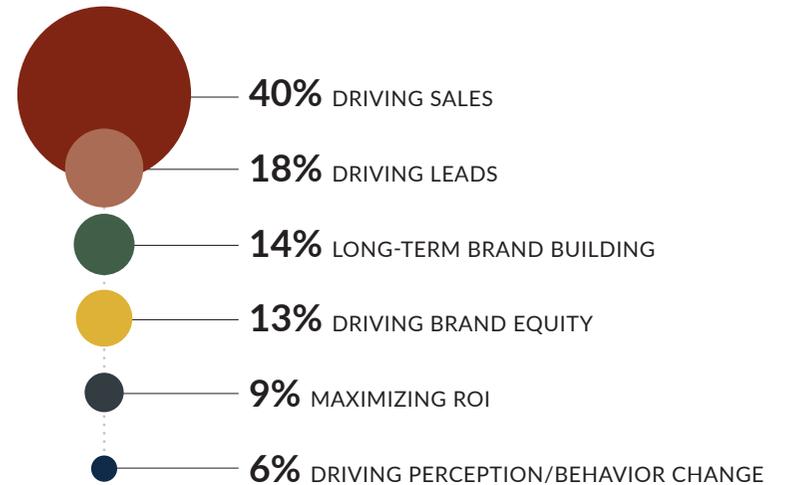
When we look at the data another way – where we only consider the ‘1’ ranking – driving sales and leads still score highly, but we see maximizing ROI drop to the fifth most-selected option, coming behind driving brand equity and long-term brand building. While many respondents ranked maximizing ROI as one of their top three answers, fewer ranked it as their top answer – other concerns were more important pre-COVID-19.

## What were your KPIs when you ran marketing campaigns pre-COVID-19?

CONSOLIDATED RANKINGS



TOP RANKING



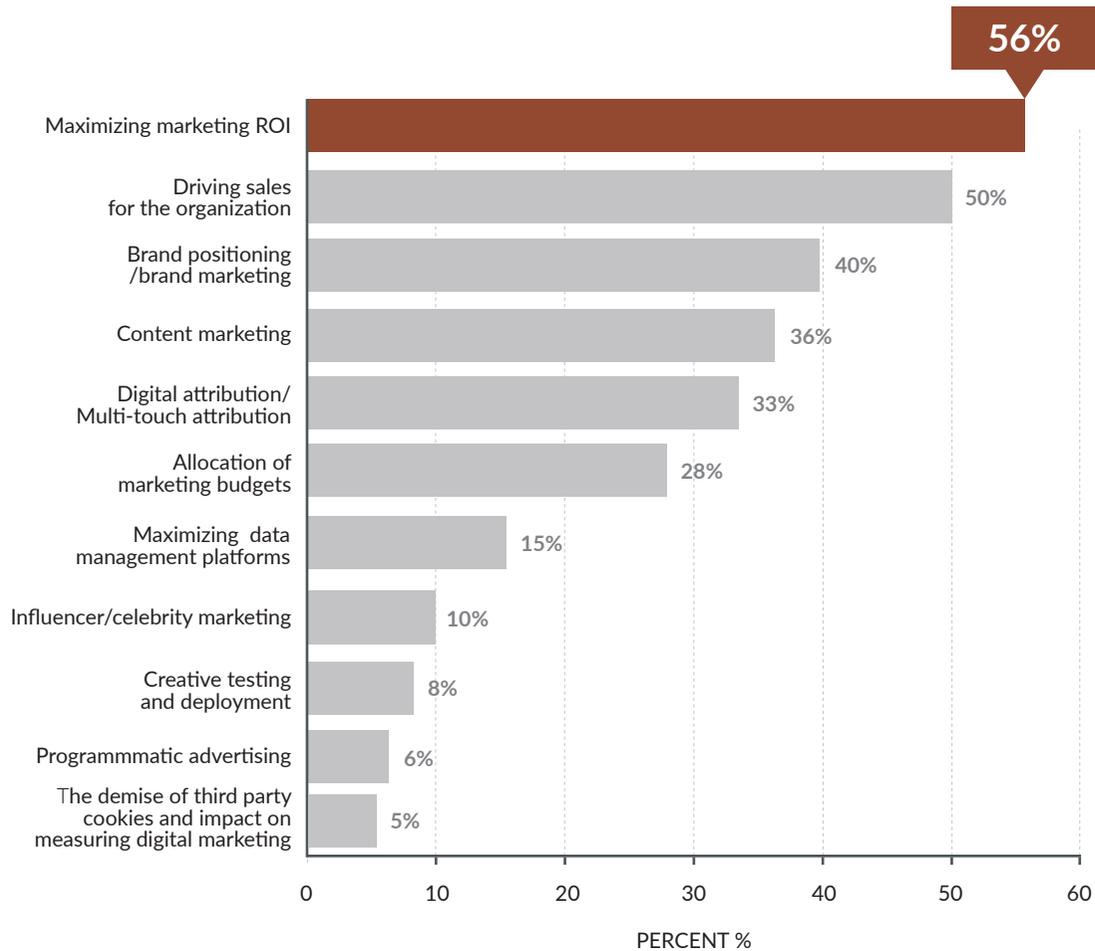
Fast forward to marketers' top priorities at the time of this survey launch and it's quite a different story. The number one priority for marketers today? Maximizing marketing ROI.

**MAXIMIZING MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT TOPIC FOR MARKETERS, FOLLOWED BY SALES.**

Pre-COVID-19, driving sales was top of mind. Post-pandemic, the need to maximize marketing ROI has increased for marketers across the board. This speaks to putting a finer emphasis on making sure that money is doing more – or, as mentioned previously, doing more with less, given shrinking budgets.



**What are the most important topics for you right now as a marketer?**



## KPIs POST-COVID-19

Looking at marketers' KPIs post-COVID-19, a focus on short-term sales (54%) and a shift towards ROI maximization (37%) again rank highly, but there is also a departure from pre-COVID-19, in the form of digital transformation objectives being seen as an increasingly important KPI (56%). This shift was reflected in freeform answers around how KPI measurement has changed, with respondents indicating a 'shift to purely digital tactics' and a 'shift to online business'. Indeed, as online sales from changing consumer preferences continue to grow, we can expect this need to focus on digital transformation (and in-hand, measurement) to continue.

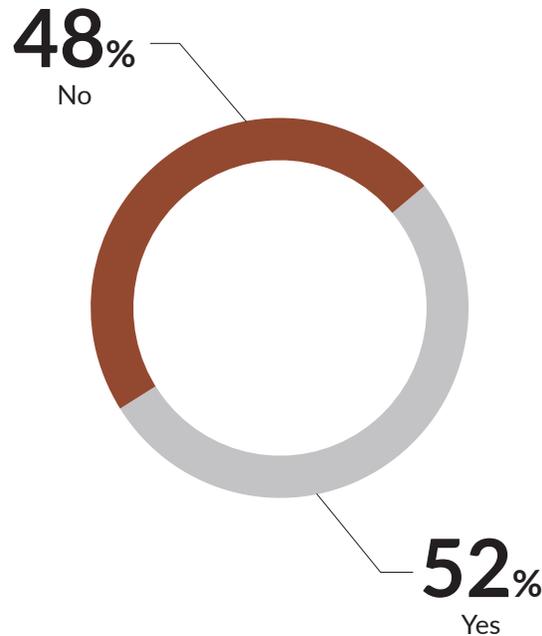
While KPIs may not have changed, their form has. Marketers' desire to move towards digital reflects the need to focus on internal and external channel tracking, measurement and effectiveness.

## BALANCING LONG-TERM VS. SHORT-TERM

We asked marketers to indicate whether they see their budgets moving away from activities that drive short term ROI towards long-term brand and reputation building. Over half (52%) agreed that they are. This split was close – 48% still answered that they're not shifting budgets towards long-term activities.

## Do you see budgets shift away from activities that drive short term ROI to long term brand and reputation building?

52% say they'll shift budgets from short-term ROI to long-term brand building and reputation building



Likely, budget decreases have meant that marketers are spending on short-term activities, or saving budget where they can, meaning that when the crisis ends they can re-emerge to refocus spending on long-term brand building activities.

From the conversations that *Campaign Asia* has had with CMOs since the pandemic began, driving immediate ROI, sales and scrutinizing marketing spend are key priorities.

While long-term brand building and a focus on the customer are areas where brands can look to drive value, marketers need to weather the storm of the crisis first.





04

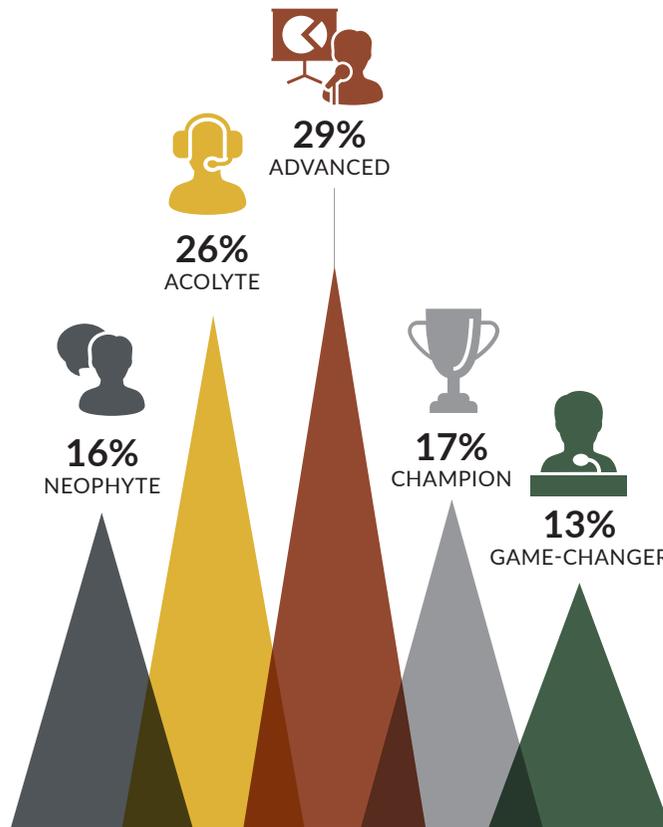
MARKETING MEASUREMENT:  
WHAT TOOLS ARE BEING  
USED TO OPTIMIZE  
MARKETING ROI?

While digital marketing has led to the rise of more data-driven measurement tools in the last decade, measuring media reach or virality of social posts remain popular measurement methods. We were interested to find out how APAC marketers were measuring their marketing campaigns. The questions we asked revolved around both self-perception – how sophisticated do marketers feel they are in their measurement journey – and reality – what are marketers actually using to measure their campaigns.

### SELF-PERCEPTION

We ask respondents to rate their own level of marketing effectiveness. As seen from the chart, a tidy 30% say they are either ‘game-changers’ or ‘champions’, with 13% giving themselves the highest score. A small majority of ‘game-changers’ and ‘champions’ are from tech and telecommunications, manufacturing and travel industries – which is interesting, if we compare this with how they’re measuring marketing effectiveness in the following pages.

## How would you best describe your organization when it comes to measuring marketing effectiveness?



- Neophyte - just started or not using it to influence any decisions
- Acolyte - regularly measures to report and diagnose marketing performance
- Advanced - selectively measures, diagnose and optimize marketing performance
- Champion - Marketing decisions are regularly data-driven and based on measurement/optimization. Proven business growth from marketing optimization
- Game-changer - Pervasive culture of marketing effectiveness measurement. All business decisions are data-driven. Industry leading practices and thought leader

The freeform answers are a bit more ambivalent.

Over 72% note they're dissatisfied with the way marketing effectiveness is being measured. While some say their data isn't integrated enough, others say they're facing a HR shortage, or that their measurement journey is still in its infancy. Yet, there are also those who say they're measuring 'too much' and neglecting the creative aspect of marketing.

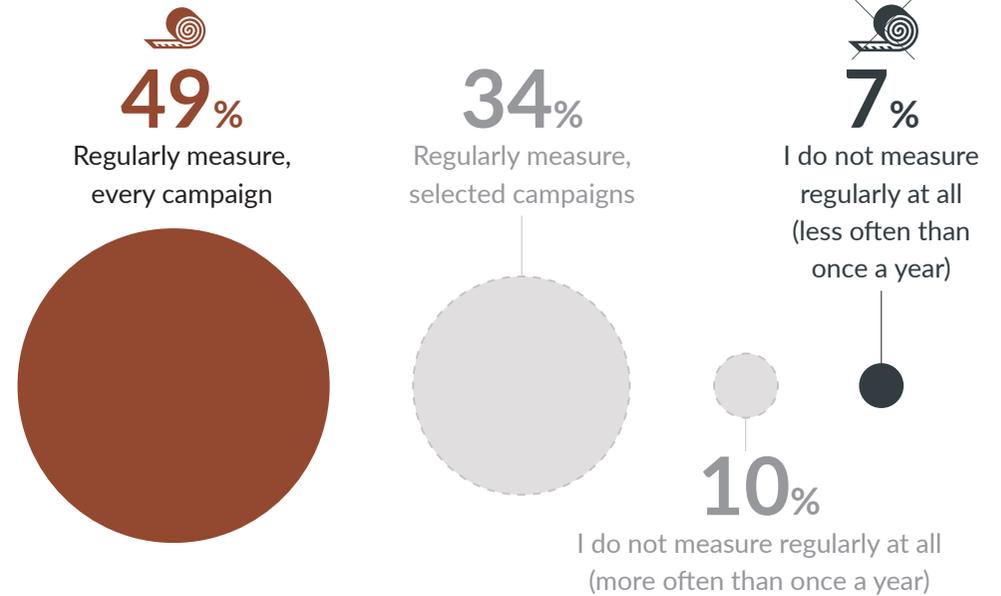
### Do you see any problems in the way that marketing effectiveness in your organization is currently measured?

- "There is too much measurement, and as a result, the room for creativity has gone down. This is affecting brand positioning"
- "Integration between measuring tools"
- "We find it difficult to develop the right model for performance measurements"
- "Marketing is decentralised. Need to pull data together to generate better insights"
- "We don't measure brand equity"
- "With COVID-19, budgets are shrinking, and we've had to scale down some of our campaigns. The problem is, with brand lift surveys, you need a big enough sample size"
- "We focus on conversions, less on engagement and lead generation"

### WHAT ARE MARKETERS ACTUALLY DOING IN REALITY?

One out of two marketers say they measure every one of their campaigns, and 35% say they measure selected campaigns. The 7% who say 'they don't measure regularly at all' come from a small mix of industries, with travel and manufacturing dominating.

### How often do you measure marketing effectiveness?



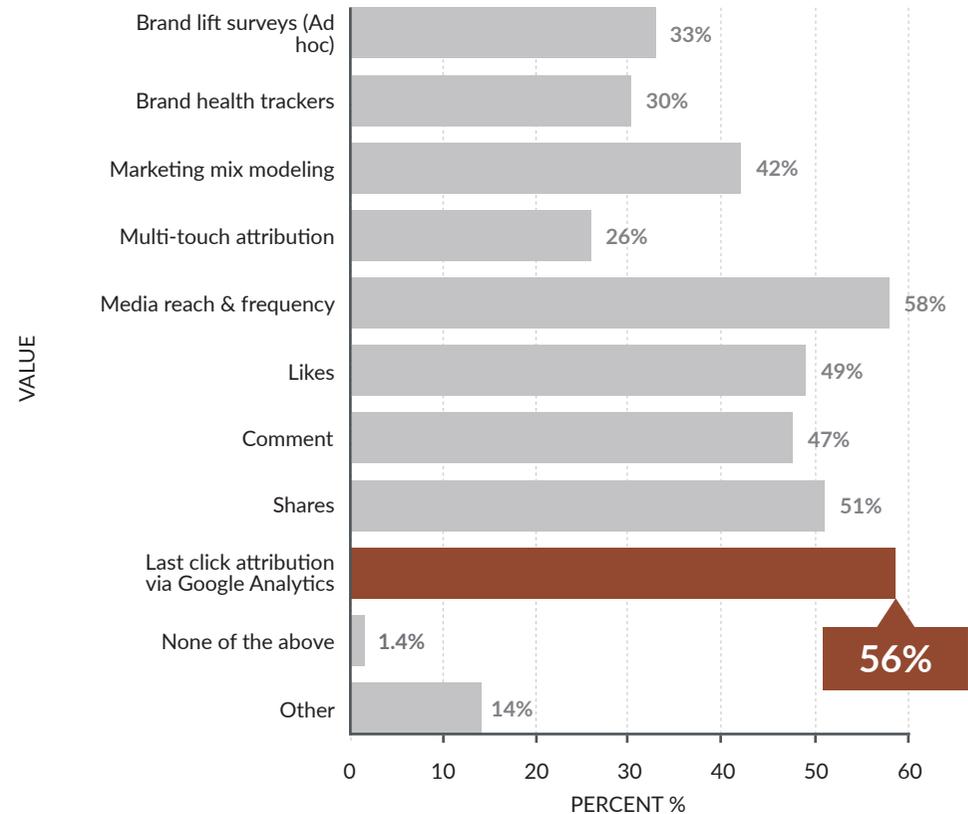
Aside from frequency, we also asked brands what tools they use to measure marketing effectiveness. Here, last click attribution via Google Analytics (58%) comes out on top.

As a measurement tool, last click attribution via Google Analytics first became popular during the 1990s, with the rise of digital marketing. Yet, it isn't without its limitations – by only tracking the last touchpoint that consumers interact with, it doesn't present an accurate picture of just what the customer journey was like – in other words, what happened that led the customer to that point. As a result, there has been a move away from the method in recent years – though the survey suggests that it remains a popular method among brand marketers in APAC.



*“Nearly one out of two marketers say they measure every one of their campaigns”*

## What methods do you use to measure marketing effectiveness?



*“Retail respondents rely quite heavily on media reach and frequency, likes, shares and comments, and less on more actionable tools such as marketing mix modeling and multi-touch attribution”*

On the other hand, the last few years have seen the rise of more data-driven measurement tools, including multi-touch attribution models, marketing mix modeling, brand lift surveys and brand health trackers. The results for this is a mixed bag — an encouraging 42% say they use marketing mix modeling, but only 33% say they utilize brand lift surveys. The numbers for brand health trackers and multi-touch attribution are even lower — at 30% and 26% respectively.

So what are marketers using to measure their marketing campaigns — aside from last click attribution via Google Analytics that is?

Media reach & frequency and shares come in second (58%) and third (51%) on the chart. Does this suggest that respondents are hoping to increase high-level awareness — instead of necessarily wanting to drive leads — or that APAC marketers are still more familiar with more traditional methods of measurements?

## FINANCE MARKETERS MEASURE THE MOST

If we do an industry spilt, those in financial services use data-driven measurement tools more than other industries. They also tend to leverage

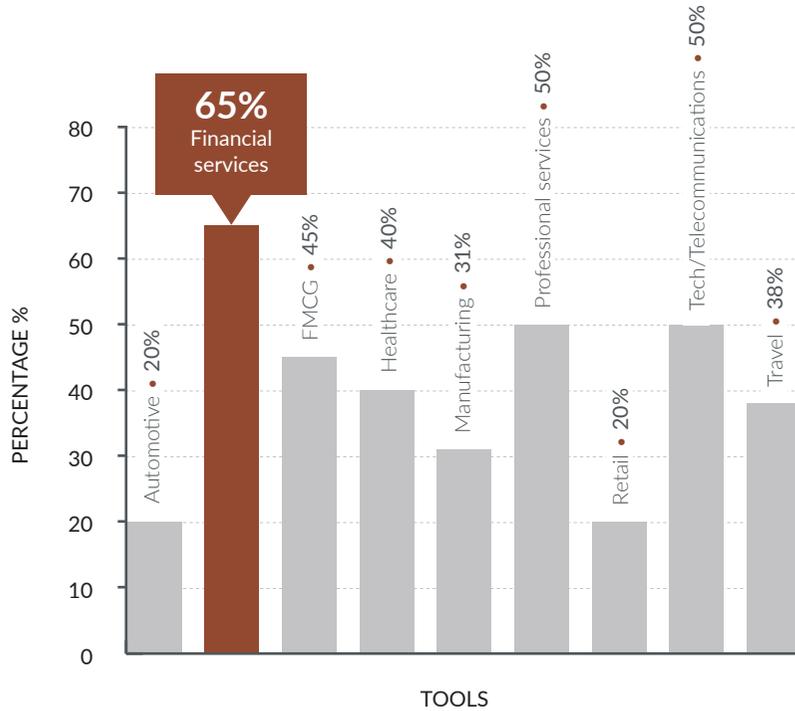


more measurement tools, in part perhaps due to bigger budgets. 65% say they use marketing mix modeling, compared to 50% in tech/telecommunications and 20% in retail; and 70% say they use multi-touch attribution, compared to 40% in tech/telecommunications and 30% in retail, suggesting perhaps they are under more pressure to prove attribution.

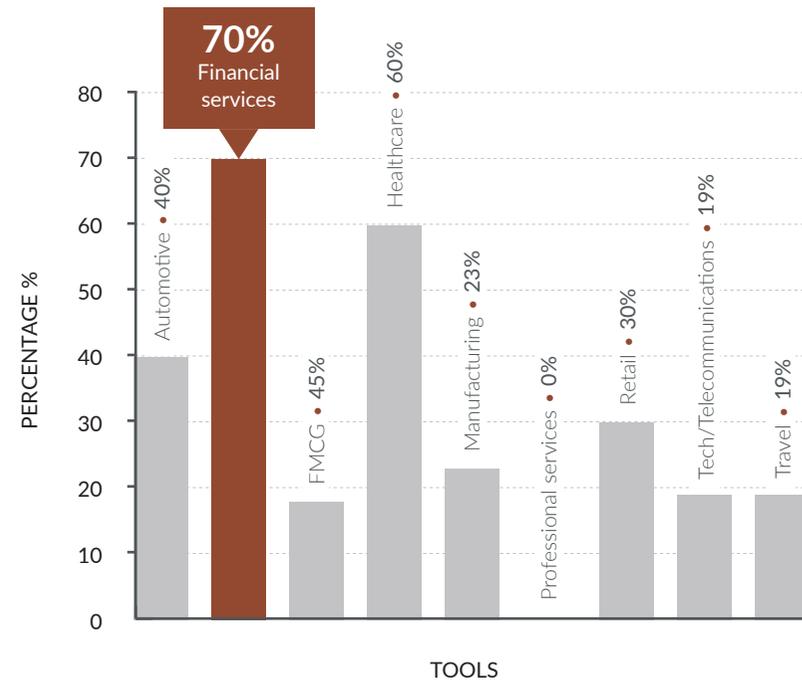
On the opposite end of the spectrum is retail, where respondents rely quite heavily on media reach and frequency, likes, shares and comments, and less on more actionable tools such as marketing mix modeling and multi-touch attribution. Does this suggest that PR and word-of-mouth still reigns in the industry? It would be interesting to see if the prolonged period of lockdown — which has undoubtedly driven a lot of shoppers online - might motivate retail marketers to set up more data-driven marketing measurement methods.

## Are some industries more adept at measurement?

### Marketing mix modeling

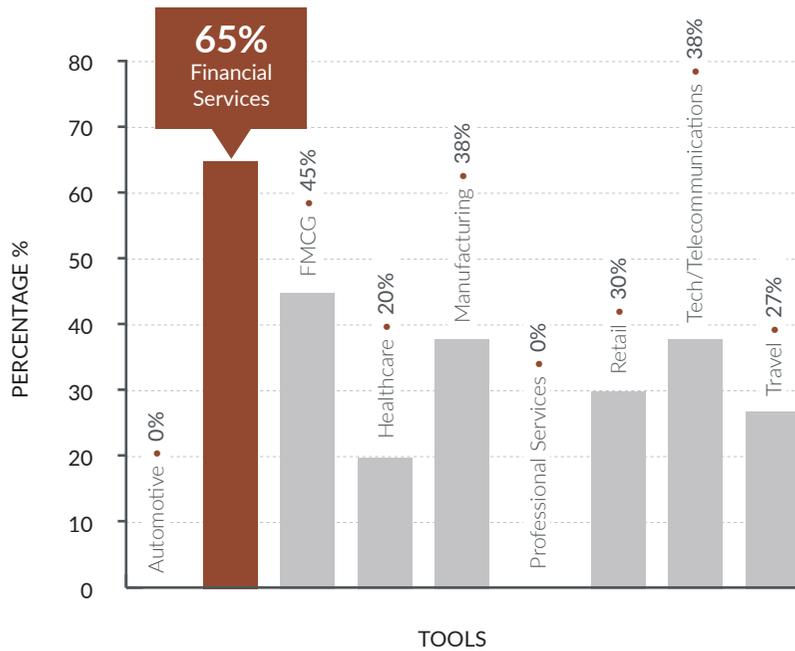


### Multi-touch attribution

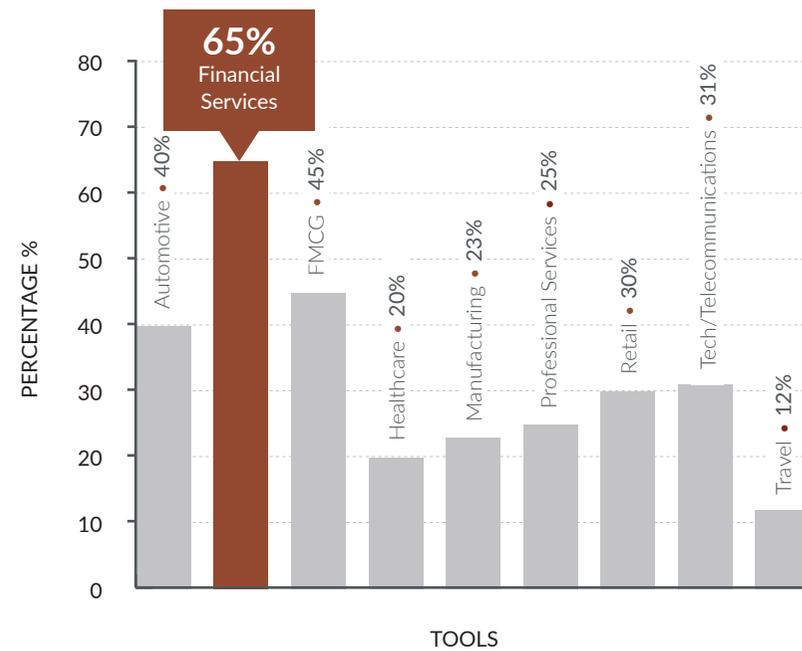


## Are some industries more adept at measurement?

### Brand lift surveys



### Brand health trackers



## IS THERE A GAP BETWEEN WHAT MARKETERS WANT TO ACHIEVE & WHAT THEY ARE DOING?

We have seen what marketers' current marketing priorities are, and how they measure effectiveness. How do those two elements relate to each other and what can they tell us about the relationship between practice and business goals? Is there a discrepancy between what marketers measure and their KPIs? Comparing these two sets of statistics offers a revealing insight into how successful marketers are at measuring effectiveness and where gaps present themselves.

## THE GAP BETWEEN MEASUREMENT AND MAXIMIZING MARKETING ROI

82% of respondents state that they regularly measure their marketing campaigns. 56% of respondents' top current priority is maximizing marketing ROI.

To maximize marketing ROI, marketers need to know exactly what their marketing dollars are going towards.



It stands to reason that marketers will turn to methods that would allow them to better identify not only where their consumers are – but how they're reacting to the brand.

When we looked at the relationship between those who cite maximizing marketing ROI as their most important priority and what those individuals measure, a clear gap arises.

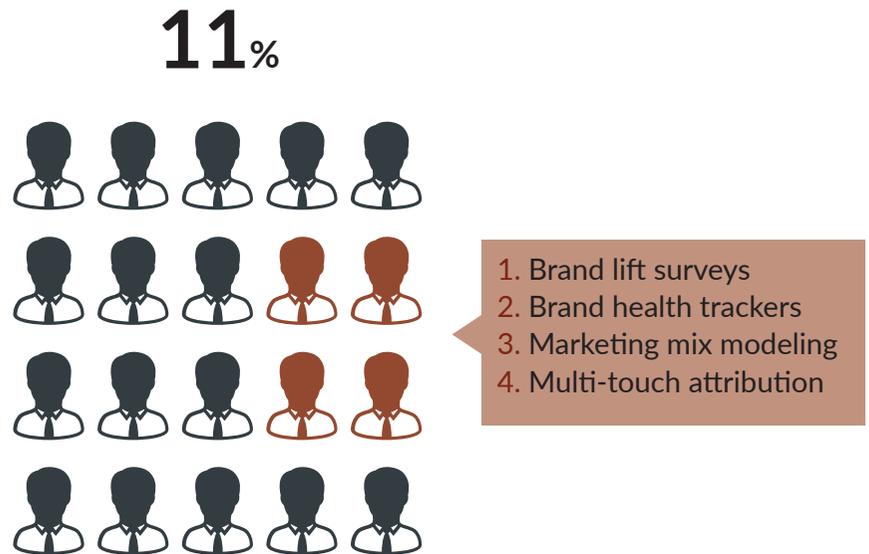
56% say maximizing ROI is a key priority yet only 43% have in place marketing mix modeling, and 28% have in place multi-touch attribution.



Of the 56% who say maximizing ROI is a key priority, less than half are using data-driven measurement tools



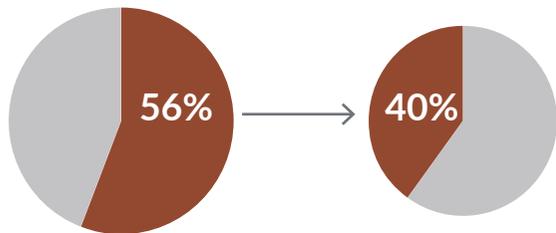
Only 11% of respondents whose focus is maximizing ROI use all four methods below



### THE GAP BETWEEN MEASUREMENT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AS AN OBJECTIVE POST-COVID-19

We have already seen how digital transformation has become a top priority for marketers since the pandemic began. However, we again see a measurement gap between those who state that digital transformation is a top priority and those who use marketing mix modeling as a way to measure marketing effectiveness. The majority of respondents have digital transformation set as a goal post-COVID-19. Yet, marketing mix modeling – which should function as a transformative tool – are being underutilized.

**Of the 56% of respondents who state digital transformation as an objective post-COVID-19, only 40% have marketing mix modeling in place**

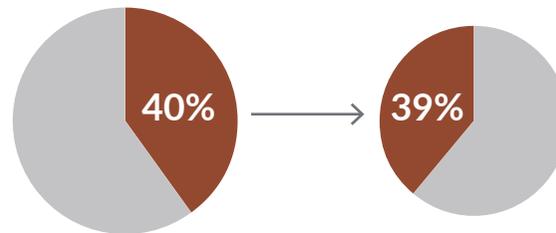


### THE GAP BETWEEN MEASUREMENT AND BRAND RELEVANCE

Brand positioning is the third most important current priority for the brand marketers that we surveyed. Yet, of those who say it is a top priority, only 39% are leveraging brand health trackers. A majority still rely on media reach and frequency, and shares, likes and comments.

While ‘reach’ can be one kind of measurement, it is perhaps not all-encompassing enough. Only by leveraging brand health trackers, which is a more strategic way of measuring consumer response along the value chain, can marketers gain a fuller view of

**Of the 40% of respondents who indicate that brand positioning is a current top priority, only 39% are leveraging brand health trackers**



their brand relevance – whether it is as intended, and to what extent it impacts brand value and equity.

### REVENUE + ITS RELATION TO MEASUREMENT

We asked respondents to indicate to what extent COVID-19 has disrupted the category that their brand is present in. On the whole, business has slowed or come to a screeching halt for the majority of respondents, as discussed in chapter one.

But for some...revenue has increased. We wanted to understand if there was a link between the type of measurement tactics employed by marketers and revenue growth during the pandemic.

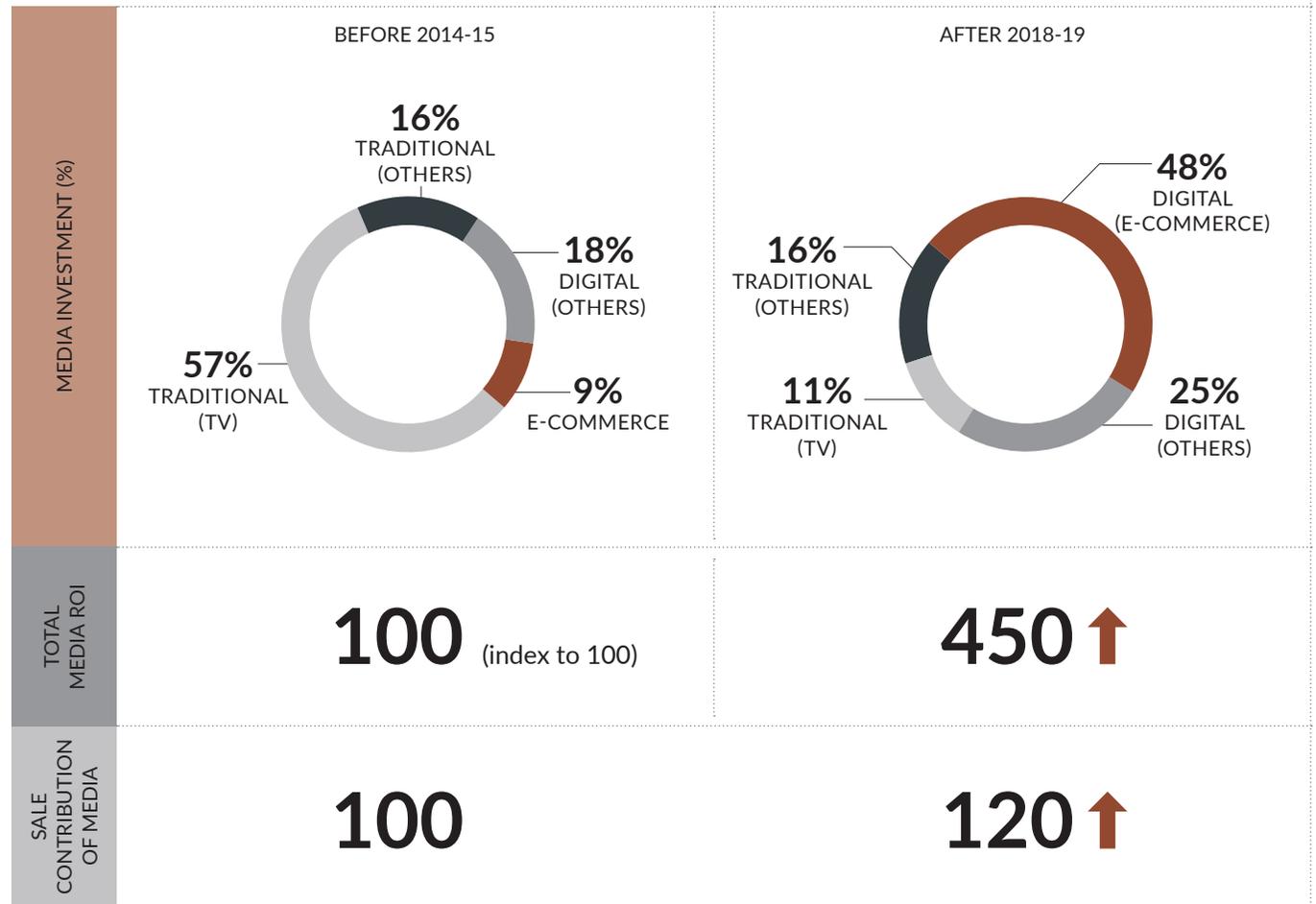
We found that during this period, the best method (if ‘best’ is measured by revenue growth post-pandemic) is when marketers take a holistic approach to marketing measurement. All of the 17% of respondents who note that there is ‘more revenue’ during this period employ a mix of digitally-led methods such as marketing mix modeling and multi-touch attribution and other measurements such like media reach & frequency, likes, shares and comments.

Beyond the survey, marketing mix modeling are also becoming more and more popular, as the demand for accountability rises.

# SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT: MARKETING MIX MODELING IN ACTION

A client in the domestic appliance industry enlisted GfK's help to improve marketing effectiveness. Upon leveraging marketing mix modeling, GfK recommended that the client shift media investment away from traditional media such as TV towards e-commerce. This resulted in a 3.5X increase in total media ROI between 2016 and 2018-2019.

GfK provided marketing mix modeling recommendations in 2016, resulting in a digital-centric media investment strategy.





05

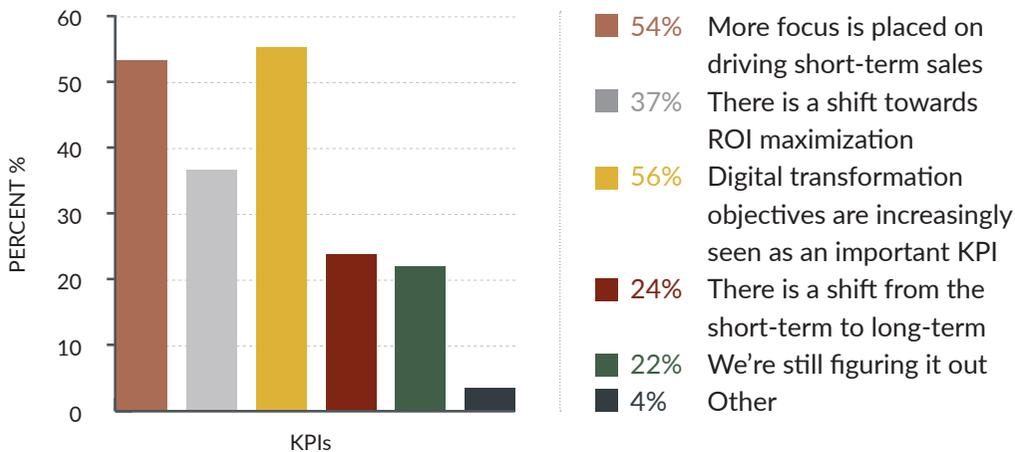
COVID-19:  
REFOCUSING MARKETING  
PRIORITIES & GOALS

The triple demand on marketers – driving sales, maximising marketing ROI and building long-term brand equity – in the face of decreasing budgets appears to have accelerated digital transformation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a majority say ‘digital transformation objectives are increasingly seen as a KPI’ (56%) when asked what their key priorities are right now.

This acceleration is evidenced by the shift towards more digitally-oriented forms of customer engagement.

### In what ways has COVID-19 changed the way you measure KPIs?

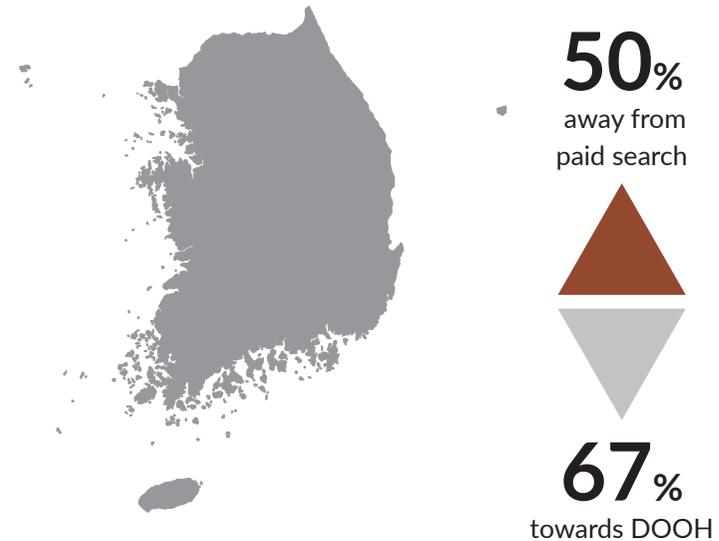


We asked marketers whether they have shifted budgets towards/away from various channels during COVID-19.

While, on a whole, the commonly selected answer is ‘no change’, budgets are generally shifting away from more traditional channels such as trade marketing, OOH and print towards digital channels, including paid search, social media and mobile.

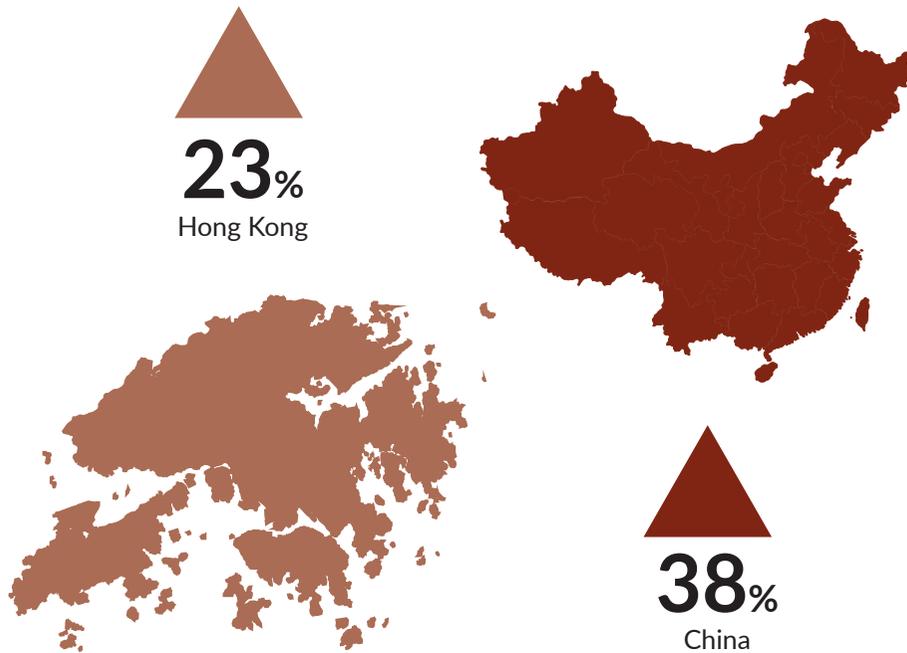
South Korea is an outlier when it comes to above. While other regions are shifting away from DOOH and towards paid search, South Korea is moving away from paid search and towards DOOH.

### South Korea



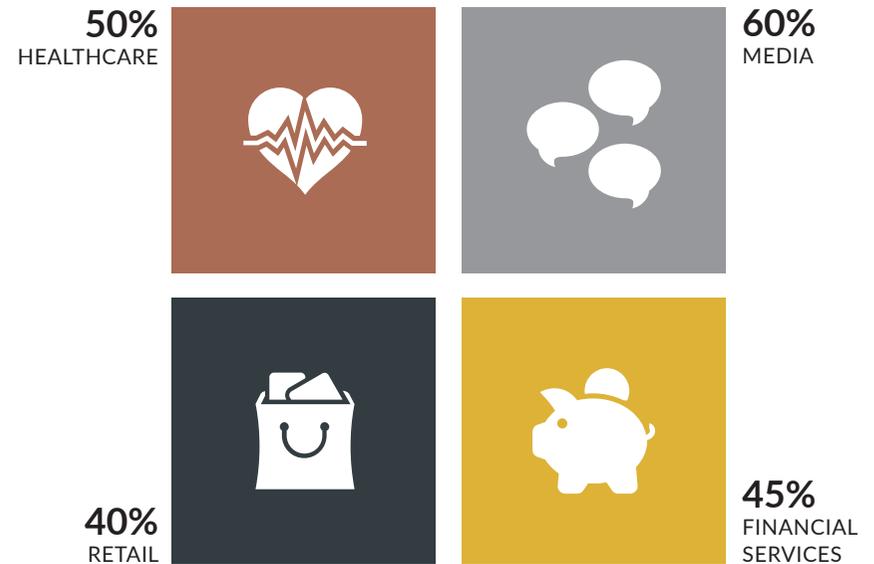
It is also interesting to see how quickly, perhaps, COVID-19 recovery rates reflect budget shifts for live activations. Generally, budgets are shifting away from live activations – with the exceptions of China and Hong Kong. The survey was done from late July to early September, when the number of cases in Hong Kong and China had gone down.

### Live activations



Those in healthcare, financial services, media and retail are shifting budgets towards PR more than other industries. While PR has always been important for the healthcare industry, its rising importance among media and retail professionals reflects the need to create trust or protect reputations in an era of misinformation.

### Industries that are shifting spend towards PR

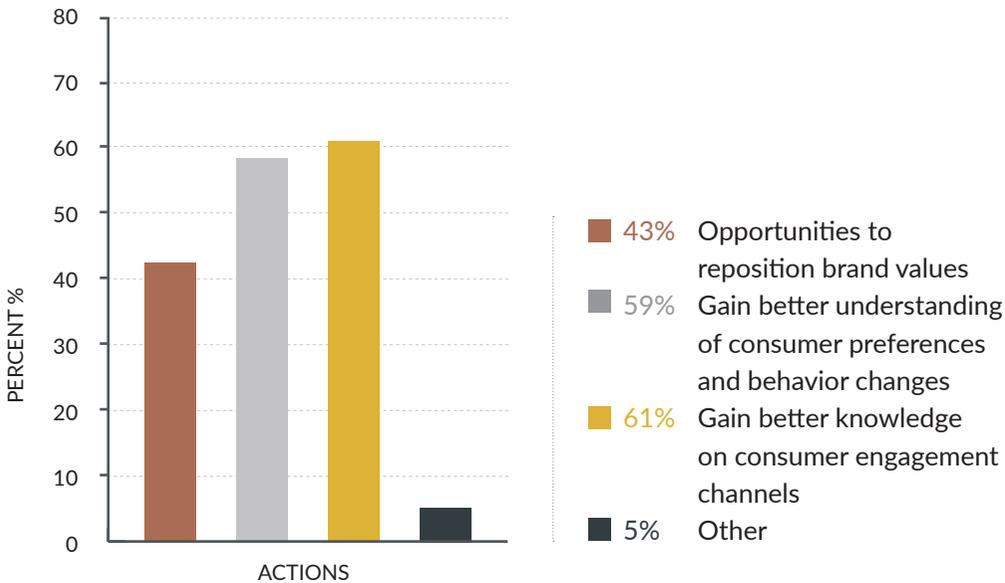


We also asked what actions marketers plan to take in the next six months.

61% say they plan to gain better knowledge on consumer engagements, while 59% say they plan to gain better understanding of consumer preferences and behaviour change.

As consumers have shifted, marketers also have to take a step back, gain an understanding of new consumer channels, and recalibrate engagement strategies.

### What actions do you plan to take in the next 6 months?



One thing that also stands out is that while 40% say the allocation of budgets is a key concern, 42% within this group have no data-driven measurement tools in place.

It will be interesting to see if COVID-19 will accelerate the shift towards more actionable measurement tools such as marketing mix modeling and brand health trackers – not only because consumers have shifted online but they perhaps provide more strategic ways of measurements, allowing the maximization of marketing ROI in the long-run.

### What are your key learnings emerging from this crisis?





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HOW SHOULD MARKETERS  
FUTURE-PROOF THEIR  
STRATEGIES?

Since the pandemic began, marketing budgets are continually being squeezed and marketing spend is under the microscope.

From the *Branding and Marketing in the New Abnormal* survey, we find that only one in two regularly measure marketing effectiveness – and even fewer are using the strategically-driven measurement tools.

Compounding these challenges are budget cuts and the persisting economic impact of COVID-19. Marketers are also having to navigate a new lockdown reality, with many moving their marketing budgets from off- to on-line channels.

In order for marketers to hit their top priorities – driving short-term sales, maximizing marketing ROI and long-term brand building – they not only need to leverage the right channels to engage with consumers, but also measurement tools that would allow them to more strategically measure their campaigns.

Having a holistic framework and approach to maximizing marketing ROI and brand measurement will ensure alignment, modernization of techniques and responsiveness to short-term business changes while keeping in view long-term priorities.

## What you should have in your COVID-19-proof marketing toolbox?

- 1 **Transformative tools:** measurement is important; equally important is selecting the right tools to help teams generate actionable insights.
- 2 **A varied toolbox:** as the survey says, respondents who take a holistic approach to measurement and engagement experience the most growth.
- 3 **Agile mindset:** only by being flexible in resource planning and measurement will strategies be able to evolve with fast-changing times. For example, GfK's tools provide simulations to facilitate scenario planning so that marketers are prepared for all types of situations.

## Where are you in your marketing journey?



Are you ready to revolutionize how marketing effectiveness and brand value can be measured for your organization? Get in touch with [a GfK consultant](#).

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## About GfK. Growth from Knowledge

For over 85 years, we have earned the trust of our clients around the world by solving critical business questions in their decision-making process around consumers, markets, brands and media. Our reliable data and insights, together with advanced AI capabilities, have revolutionized access to real-time actionable recommendations that drive marketing, sales and organizational effectiveness of our clients and partners. That's how we promise and deliver "Growth from Knowledge".

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## About Campaign Asia-Pacific

*Campaign Asia* is a leading business media brand that provides insights into the fastest-growing and most exciting communications market in the world. We serve elites in the marketing, advertising and media communities — those that are pushing creative advertising and communications to new boundaries, redefining brand experiences through multiple touchpoints, both on and offline.

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## About Content Lab

Content Lab is the branded content unit of *Campaign Asia*. We pull together our team of expert editors, marketers, designers, digital, data and event specialists to elevate your brand messaging and connect you with your target audience. Sitting between the commercial and editorial sides of the business, our team works with clients to help them reach their customers efficiently and effectively — with a measurable return on investment.



**campaign**