Is it all just hot air? A reality check on current marketing trends

Baden, February 17, 2022 – The software company BSI, together with the Swiss Marketing Forum, surveyed Swiss marketers about significant lead management and customer management trends. How customer-oriented are companies in Switzerland, what data do they rely on and which technical solutions do they use? Do they use Artificial Intelligence (AI)? Which skills do marketers need today? Here are the results of the mood barometer* at a glance.

1. A successful customer experience requires the right mindset

It appears that the respondents' companies are still taking a wide range of approaches when it comes to customer orientation. While about 32 percent of respondents said that the customer experience (CX) is at the core of their company's business model, another 32 percent identified it as a project on the department level. Ten percent reported that their company has a dedicated CX department. When asked what their companies need the most today to ensure a successful CX, a majority of respondents specified that they needed the right mindset for more customer orientation. This response was followed by the need for a CX strategy and a state-of-the-art Customer Relationship Management system. The respondents rated these factors as more important than using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to increase automation and the desire to have more data analysis specialists.

2. To date, companies have not used customer data much in AI applications

Around 75 percent of the marketers surveyed responded that they use customer master and/or contract data, and 71 stated the communication and purchase history. No less than 54 percent of respondents said they analyze their customers' online behavior for their work. Life event-related data like moving or getting married and customer interest data like an affinity to travel are not used much to date (20% and 17%, respectively).

"Whether it's getting married, having children or moving – major life changes and hobbies have a significant impact on purchase decisions, financial plans and the need for insurance, which is what makes this data so important for companies. But at the same time, it is still used far too little. And that's why marketers are clearly not capitalizing enough on its potential and are therefore not

meeting their customers' needs either," explained Zeno Hug, Customer Experience Expert and Partner Manager at BSI.

Companies use customer data mainly for the well-established marketing concepts of personas, audience and segmentation (86%), to improve customer journeys (59%) and to measure success (56%). In contrast, they hardly use customer data in AI applications that support marketing decisions.

3. Companies mostly use tools for advertising & promotion and have hardly used AI solutions to date

Marketing Technology (MarTech) drives corporate growth because technical solutions give companies the ability to design content, products and services to be particularly customer-oriented. The most popular tools among marketers include digital tools in the categories of Advertising & Promotion (63%), Content & Experience (56%) and Social & Relationship (51%). Project management tools and data management solutions, on the other hand, are used less frequently (32% and 27%).

Only 2 percent of those surveyed stated that they work in interdisciplinary teams that also comprise data scientists. A mere 12 percent are already working with AI solutions in marketing, although no fewer than 22 percent are currently exploring AI to gain some initial experience. 37 percent of respondents considered the lack of pertinent data to be the reason why they have not yet been able to use AI meaningfully in their work. 59 percent expressed that they lack the necessary expertise – which is not surprising with a topic like AI.

4. What marketers need: Agility, creativity and a digital mindset

Technology and customer expectations make the work of marketers exciting and challenging at the same time. Which skills are required to excel at complex tasks in a fragmented MarTech landscape? Almost uniformly, at more than 60 percent each, the respondents stated agility, creativity and a "digital mindset". Technology skills brought up the rear at 56 percent, while strategic thinking led the field at 71 percent.

"Today's successful marketer needs a broad skill set. But it's not about being able to do it all; it's about setting the right priorities, using the right technologies and developing and expanding the necessary skills across the entire team," said Gesa Rasch, VP Strategic Marketing at BSI, explaining the results.

The survey conceived by the Swiss Marketing Forum and BSI Business Systems Integration was conducted between September 10 and October 21, 2021. 41 marketing and communication managers participated in it.

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