

IMPRESSION

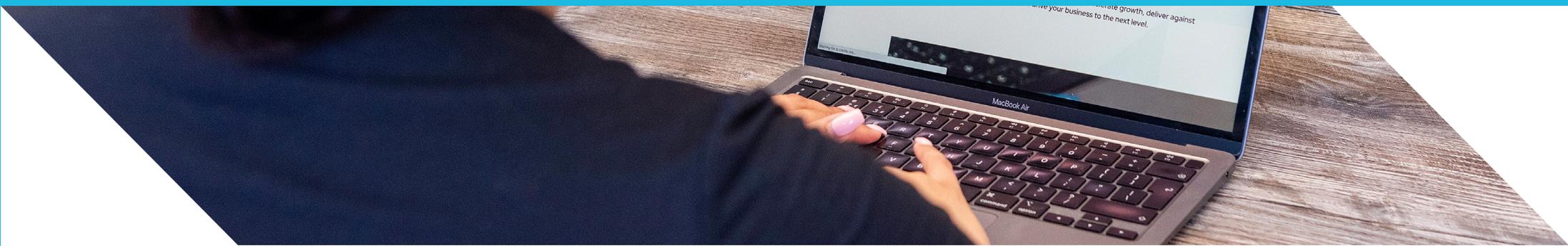
THE MARKETING LANDSCAPE IN 2025



Towards the end of 2024, we surveyed 900+ marketing professionals to understand what the marketing landscape might look like for businesses in 2025. We gathered responses from a mix of levels, from middle management to C-Level executives, in different-sized companies across various industries, including automotive, FMCG, fashion, professional services and more.

This report shares our findings and allows you to benchmark your brand and see how you compare to those of a similar size. Gain insights into:

- ➔ The biggest business challenges marketers anticipate facing
- ➔ The marketing activities that are predicted to drive the most revenue
- ➔ The areas in which additional investments will be made
- ➔ How marketers are measuring the success of their efforts



85%

of businesses expect revenue growth

61%

expect to increase their marketing budget

49%

plan to grow their internal marketing team

43%

anticipate increased competition will be their biggest business challenge

33%

find it difficult to find the right expertise for their teams

45%

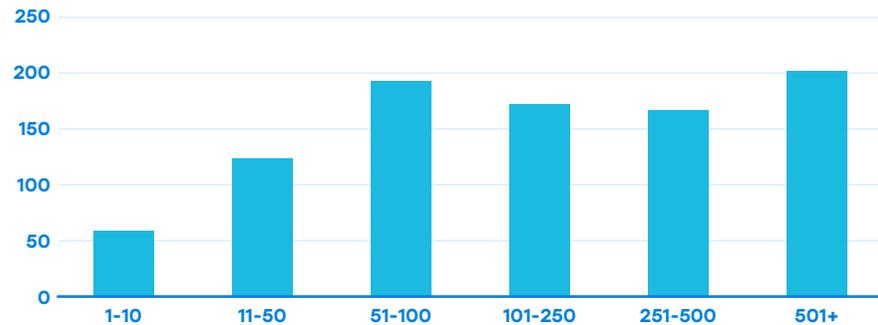
will increase their investment in AI & Automation

Who did we survey?

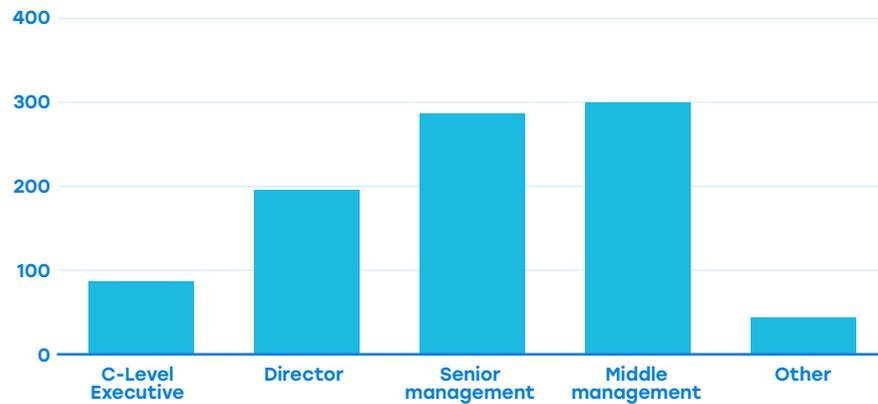
Survey data was collected from over 900 individuals working in 'Marketing and Sales' and 'Advertising' roles between October 2024 and January 2025.

Respondents are UK-based.

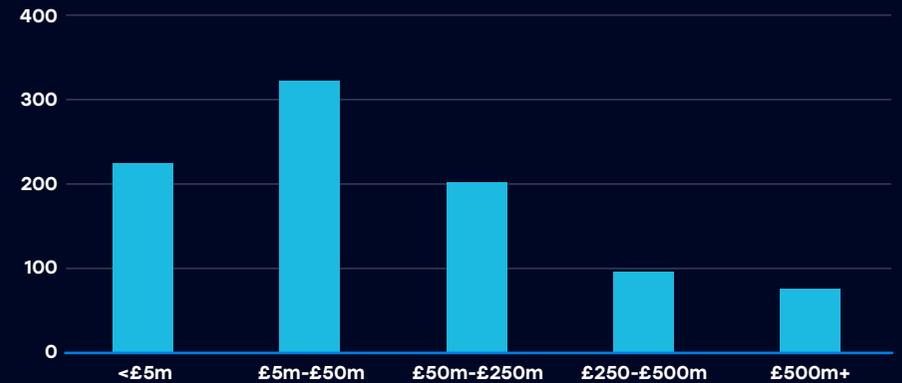
BUSINESS SIZE BY HEADCOUNT



ROLE IN BUSINESS



BUSINESS SIZE BY REVENUE



INDUSTRY SECTORS

Automotive	Business services	Education
Energy	Fashion	Financial services and fintech
FMCG	Health and fitness	Homeware and home improvement
Hospitality and events	Marketing and advertising	Not for profit and charity
Professional services	Travel and tourism	Technology
Other	Respondees that chose 'other' for industries included retail, maritime, construction, sports, telecom, and art dealership.	

Executive Summary

2025 is set to be a year where businesses must rethink how they approach marketing to stay ahead.

According to our survey, increased competition, inflation, and rising advertising costs will remain major challenges, with shifts in consumer behaviour adding to the complexity. These findings underline the importance of looking forward - not just relying on past data or standard practices.

The reality is that the strategies that worked in the past may not cut it anymore. A brand which isn't innovating right now, will see their performance stagnate at best.

AI, while a valuable contributor to efficiency and skill, is levelling the playing field, further increasing levels of quality competition. To gain an edge, brands will need to embrace experimentation and reject "best practice" thinking. We can expect:

→ **Radical Creativity** – A move towards distinctive, disruptive

and humorous creative styles that break away from the AI-generated sameness that will gradually begin to dominate.

→ **Interrogating "Black Box" Advertising** – With trust in automated platforms being questioned, marketers will seek alternative ways to regain control as they allocate their budgets.

→ **A Shift Into Organic** – As advertising costs rise, smart brands will pivot toward growth strategies that rely on organic growth, likely deeper investments in social, content and community-building.

Optimistically, 85% of businesses expect revenue growth in 2025, with 61% planning to increase marketing budgets. However, the split in budget priorities - brand awareness, conversion, or retention - reflects the uncertainty we see in how to best

drive this growth. This could signify a broader trend toward brands hedging their bets rather than committing to a singular focus. So once more - measurement is at the forefront for 2025. Expect to hear more and more about the "gold standard" of multi-touch attribution, incrementality testing and media mix modelling. I won't labour on that here...

In summary, 2025 will favour the brave: those willing to challenge norms, test new strategies, and find unique ways to connect with audiences in an ever-crowded online sphere. The brands that thrive will be the ones that innovate - not just in tools or tactics but in the mindset they bring to their marketing efforts.

I wish you all - sincerely - the best of luck!

– **LIAM WADE**

Performance Director at Impression



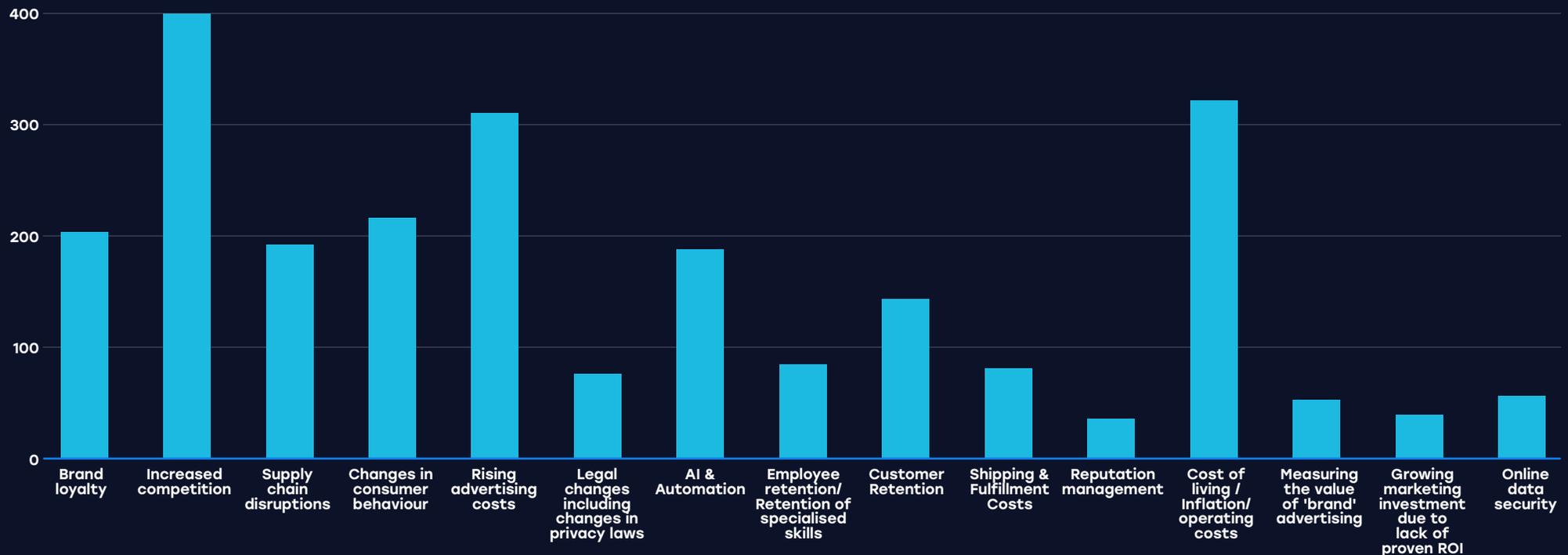
Increased competition is front of mind alongside advertising costs and inflation

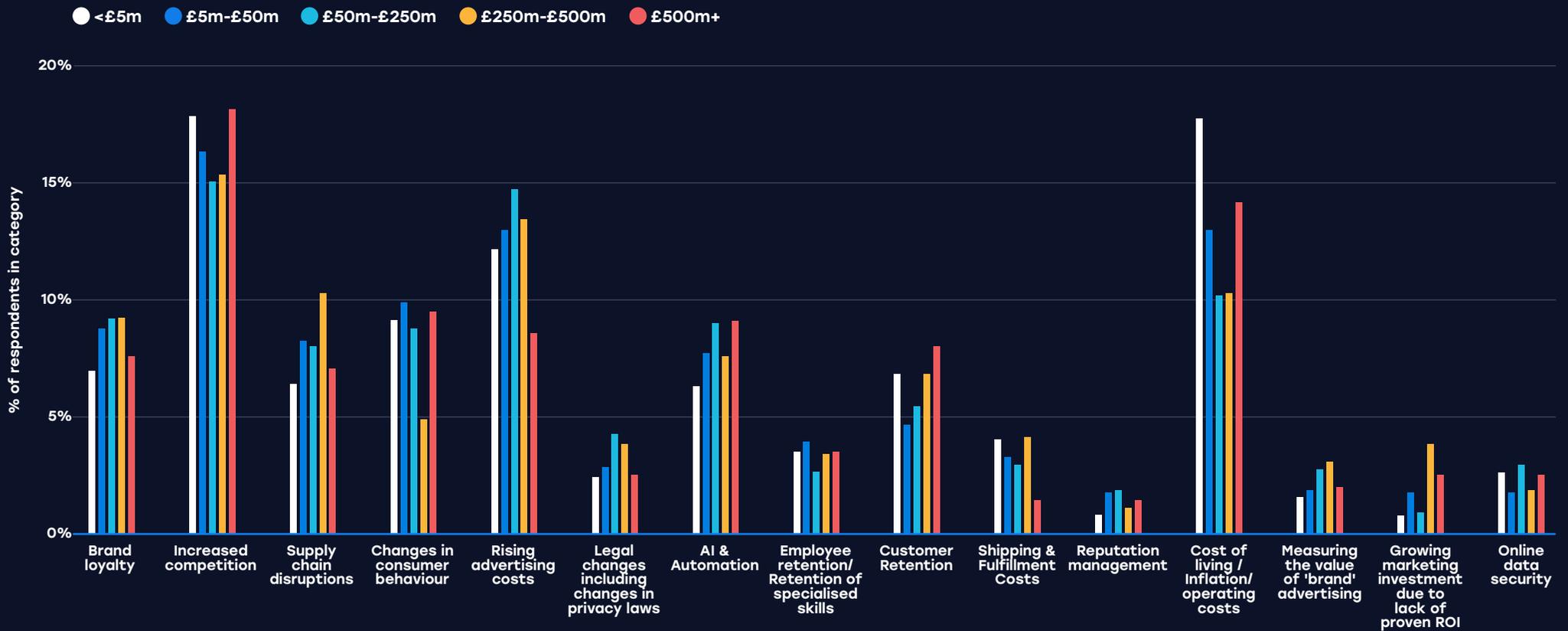
We asked our respondents to reflect on the biggest challenges their business faced in 2024 and what they anticipate these could be in 2025.

The majority said that increased competition alongside rising advertising costs and cost of living / inflation were the biggest challenges and will remain a top concern in 2025. Changes in consumer behaviour and brand loyalty are also front of mind.

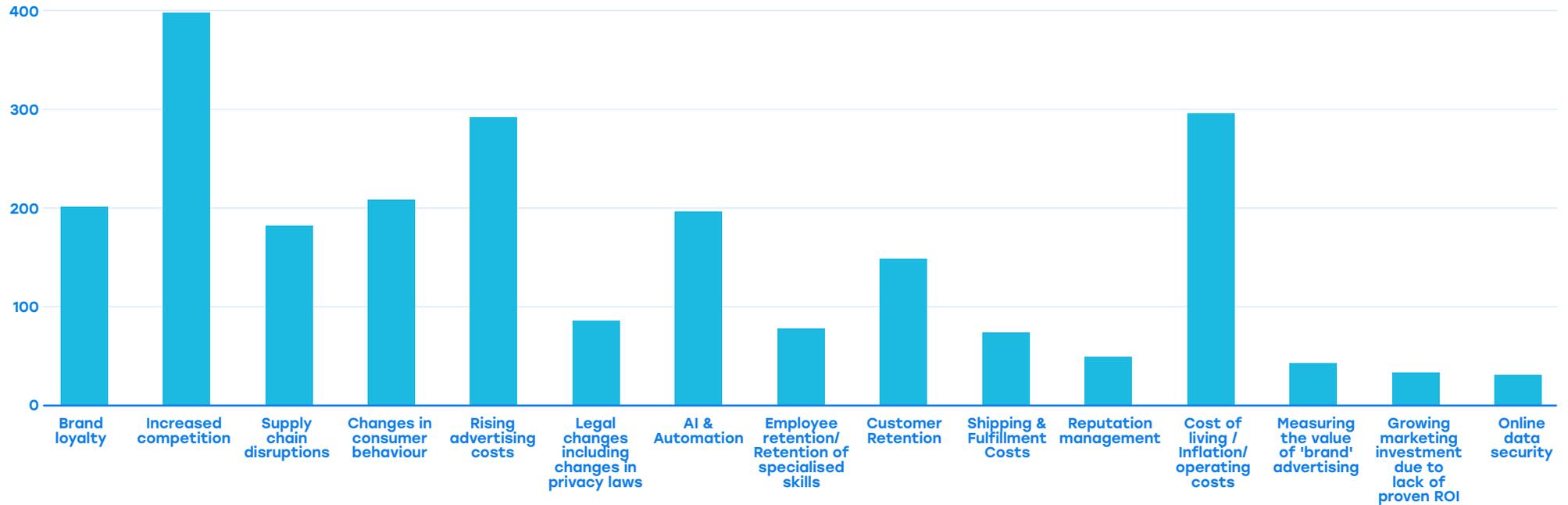
WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR BUSINESS FACED IN 2024?*

*Respondents were asked to choose up to three.





WHAT DO YOU ANTICIPATE WILL BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOUR BUSINESS FACES IN 2025?*

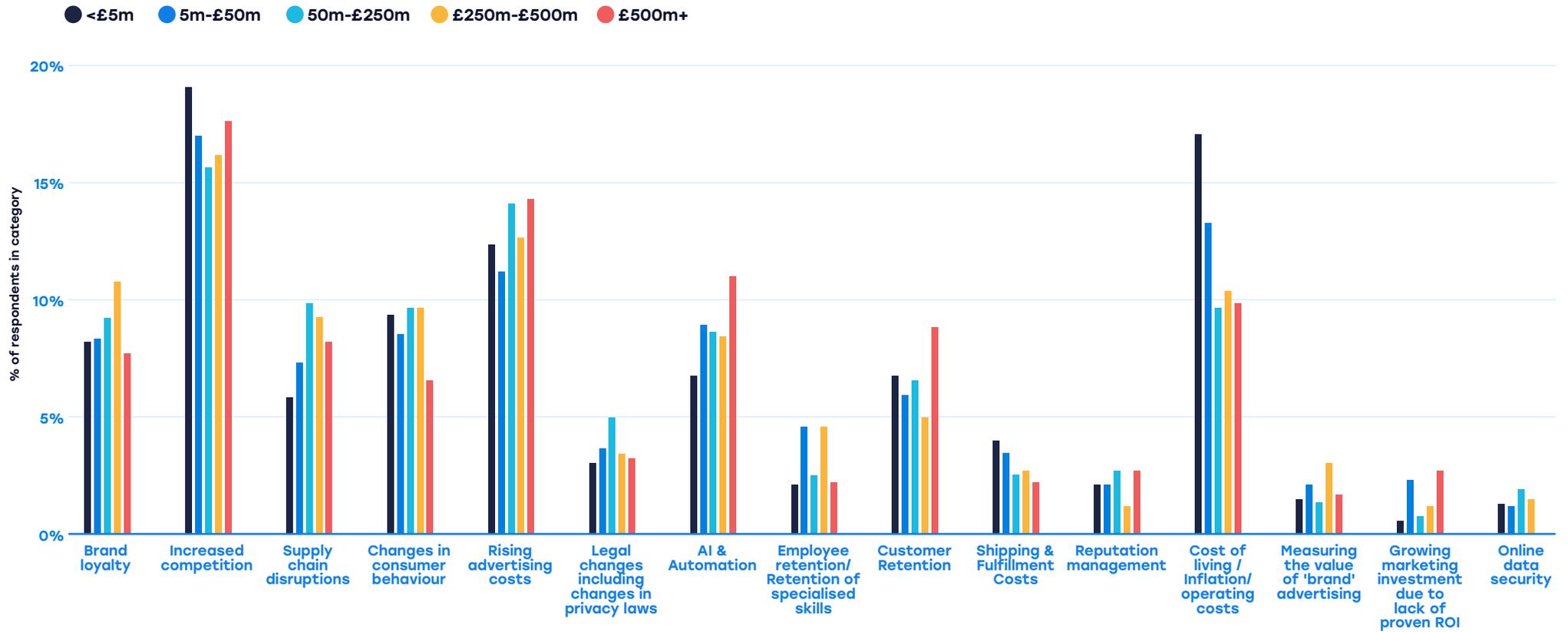


*Respondents were asked to select up to three



CHARLIE NORLEDGE
Head of SEO
Performance

"As advertising costs continue to rise due to competition, organic search is an essential channel in your marketing mix. While SEO can take a long time to get off the ground, once you are in a place with a strong ongoing strategy, you can offset these rising advertising costs by generating unpaid traffic towards your website."





“There’s a cyclical nature to some of the factors described here and it’s absolutely correct that these are likely to continue over the coming years. With AI technology powering most campaign formats across all digital channels, more advertisers are entering the field, all with the same technology at their fingertips, which results in higher advertising costs and it becomes harder to differentiate between brand strategies.

Cost of living challenges drive consumers to search for deals more, meaning there’s a fight for visibility at the point of sale.

Advertisers will need to focus on driving efficiency of course, but also thinking outside the box in how this can be delivered and how to stand out in a crowded market. Most advertisers are activating their campaigns using the same in-platform technology - how can your creative, targeting or even KPI strategy help you to stand out?”



YASMIN BURCHILL
Head of PPC



“It’s not a surprise to see some recurring themes year-on-year in where the industry sees its biggest challenges. Mixed confidence in the UK economy’s impact on business this year means some are cautious about how audiences will respond and how that will affect their business results. The brands that will thrive in 2025 are the ones that focus on getting more from their spend - but that doesn’t always mean race-to-the-bottom efficiency; it means ensuring your investment is working as hard as it possibly can and is doing the right job for the business.

Are you testing enough? Are you using the right evidence to justify spend? Brands that stay curious and open to experimentation will be the ones that deliver the most meaningful results for the business".

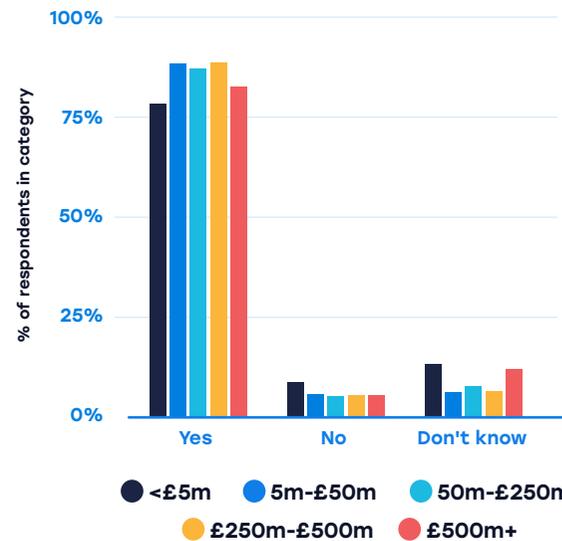
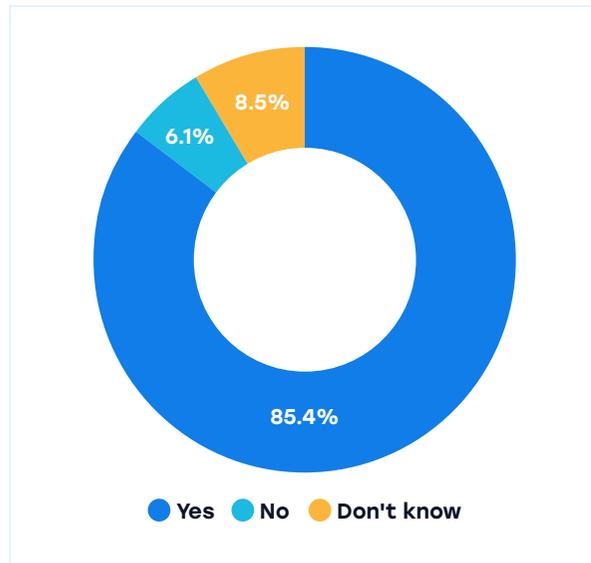


CLAIRE ELSWORTH
Strategy Director

9 out of 10 marketers predict revenue growth in 2025

Despite the challenges brought by the tough economic landscape, 85% of marketers said that they expect their business to grow in 2025. With this number increasing from 73% in last year's survey, it's looking optimistic across the board, with those operating within the £250m-£500m and £5m-£50m revenue brackets set to see the most growth.

DO YOU EXPECT YOUR BUSINESS TO GROW IN TERMS OF REVENUE IN 2025?



“Despite mixed economic confidence over the past few months, optimism seems to be on the up. The crucial watch-out will be where businesses predict that revenue growth coming from - is it from an increase in customer base due to increased overall consumer confidence? Will it be from increased loyalty - tougher if competition is also increasing? Or is it due to changes to product pricing? All three (and more beyond) will need a different approach to marketing success to deliver on the growth expectations so marketers will need to have their strategic approach to solving for this in place as early as possible.”



CLAIRE ELSWORTH
Strategy Director

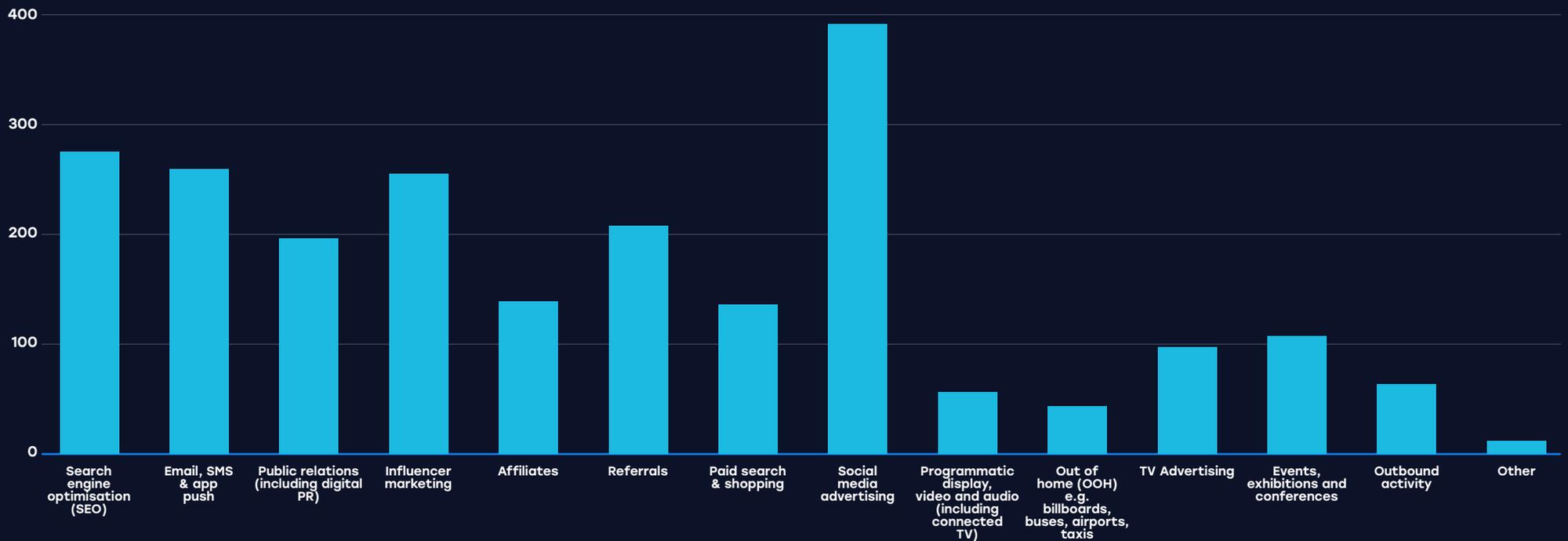
Social Media Advertising and SEO recognised as the biggest revenue drivers

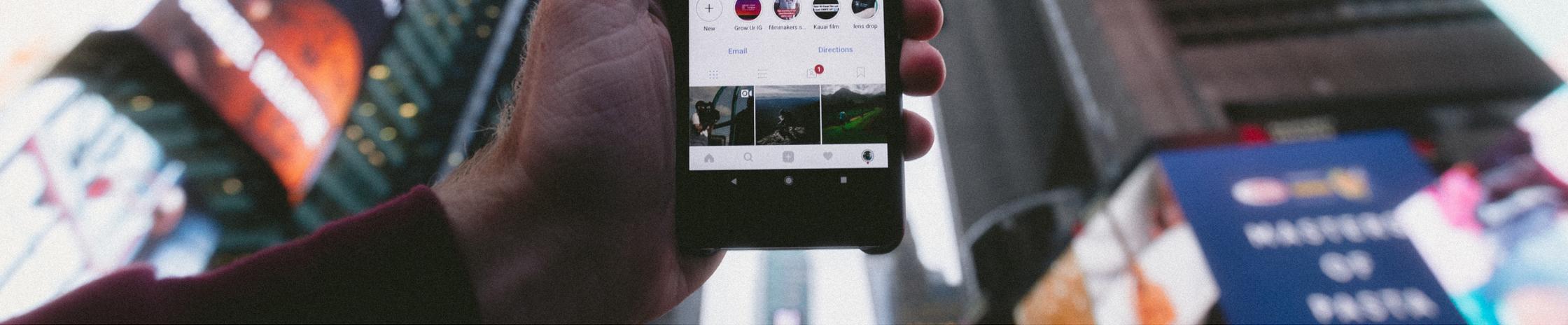
To understand what's driving this predicted growth, we asked which marketing activities drove the most revenue in 2024, and whether this is set to change for the year ahead.

Social Media Advertising, SEO and Email marketing were the top voted and for 2025, this is set to remain the same but with increased optimism in Email, Influencer Marketing and Referrals.

WHICH ACTIVITIES DROVE THE MOST REVENUE FOR YOUR BUSINESS IN 2024?*

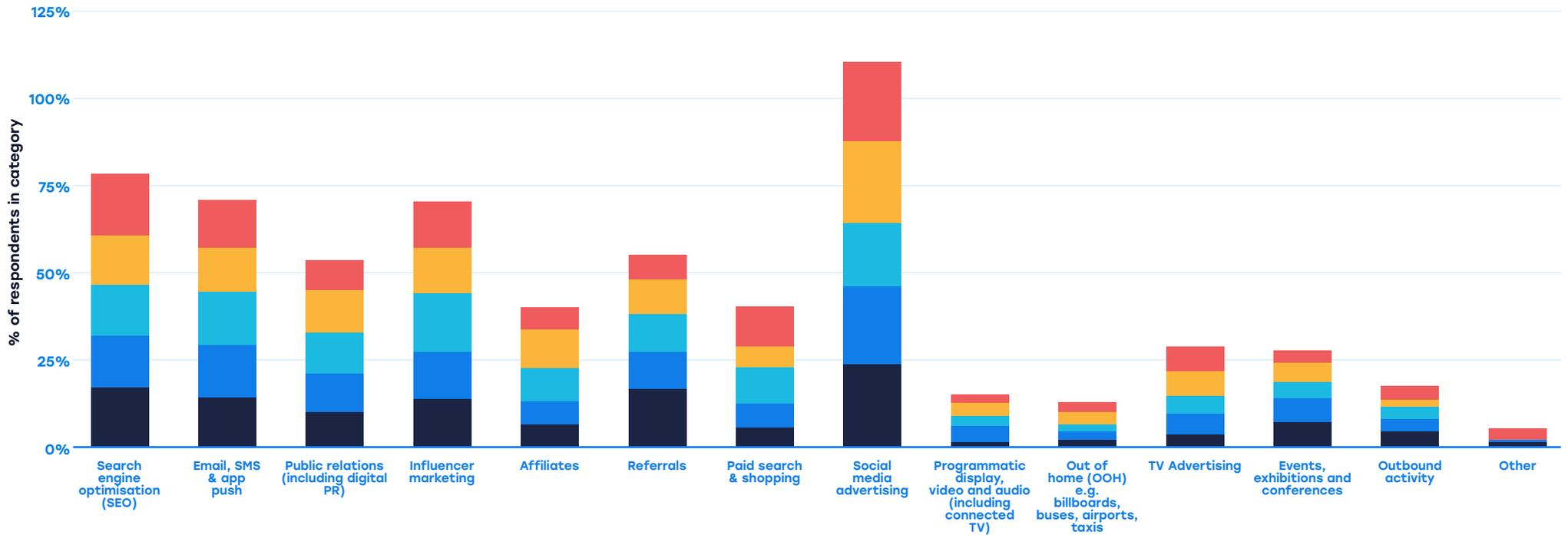
*Respondents were asked to select up to three





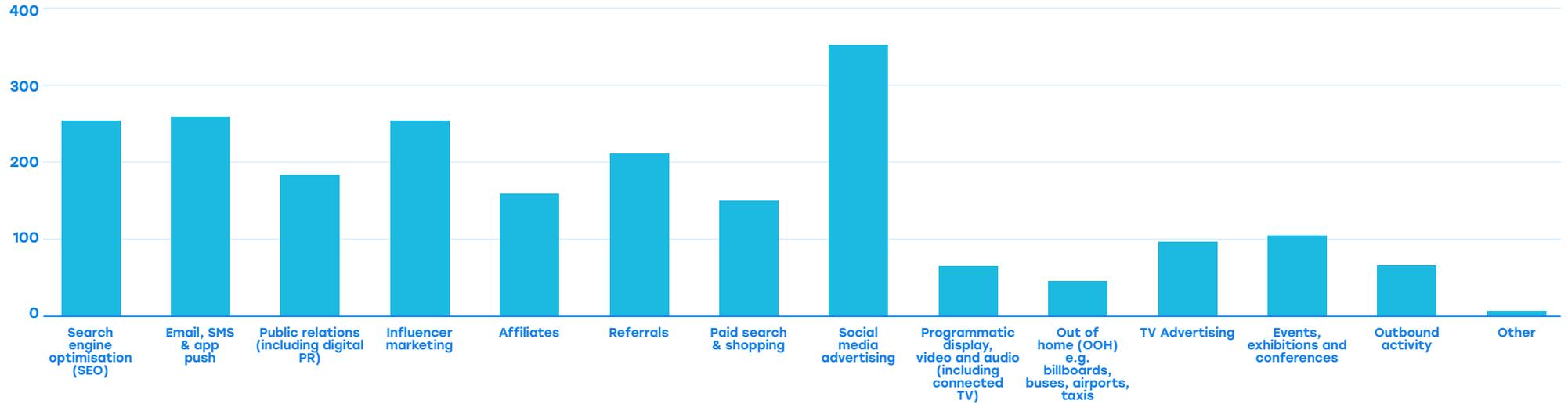
● <£5m
 ● £5m-£50m
 ● £50m-£250m
 ● £250m-£500m
 ● £500m-£1bn

*Respondents were asked to select up to three

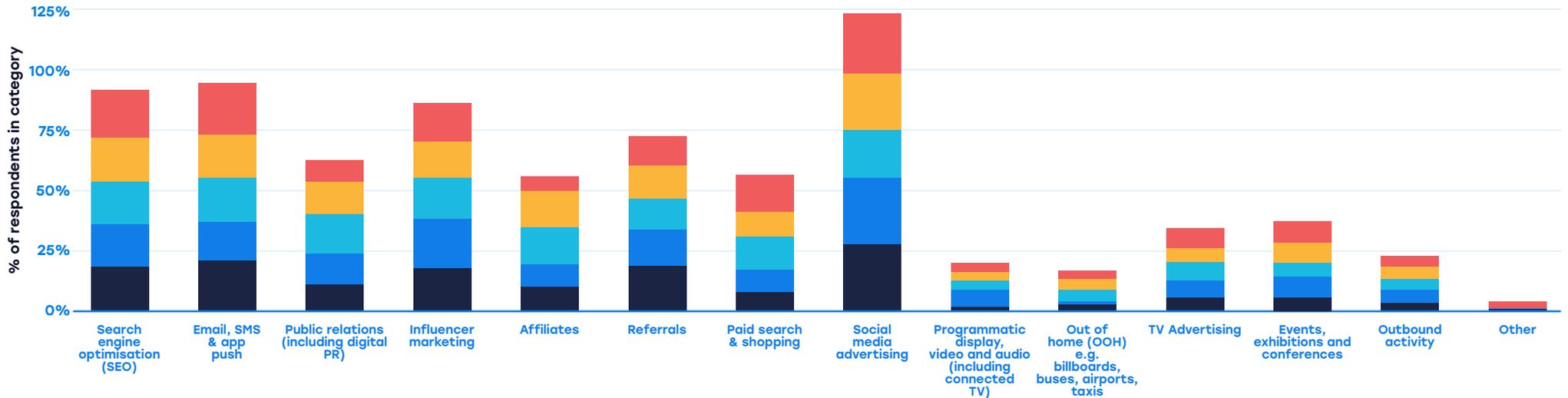


WHICH CHANNELS DO YOU PREDICT WILL DRIVE THE MOST REVENUE IN 2025*

*Respondents were asked to select up to three



● <£5m
 ● £5m-£50m
 ● £50m-£250m
 ● £250m-£500m
 ● £500m-£1bn



“Interesting to see that upper funnel channels like influencer and paid social rank highly in our data. This increased optimism is in spite of these channels being tricky to measure. However, the era of last-click dominance is waning! More brands are aware of the pitfalls of being blinkered by bottom-of-funnel data - with increased user privacy and signal-based and modelled attribution as opposed to last-click dominance. Through testing, I've seen brands unlock more knowledge than ever before and this has given us the confidence to scale spend and ambitions”



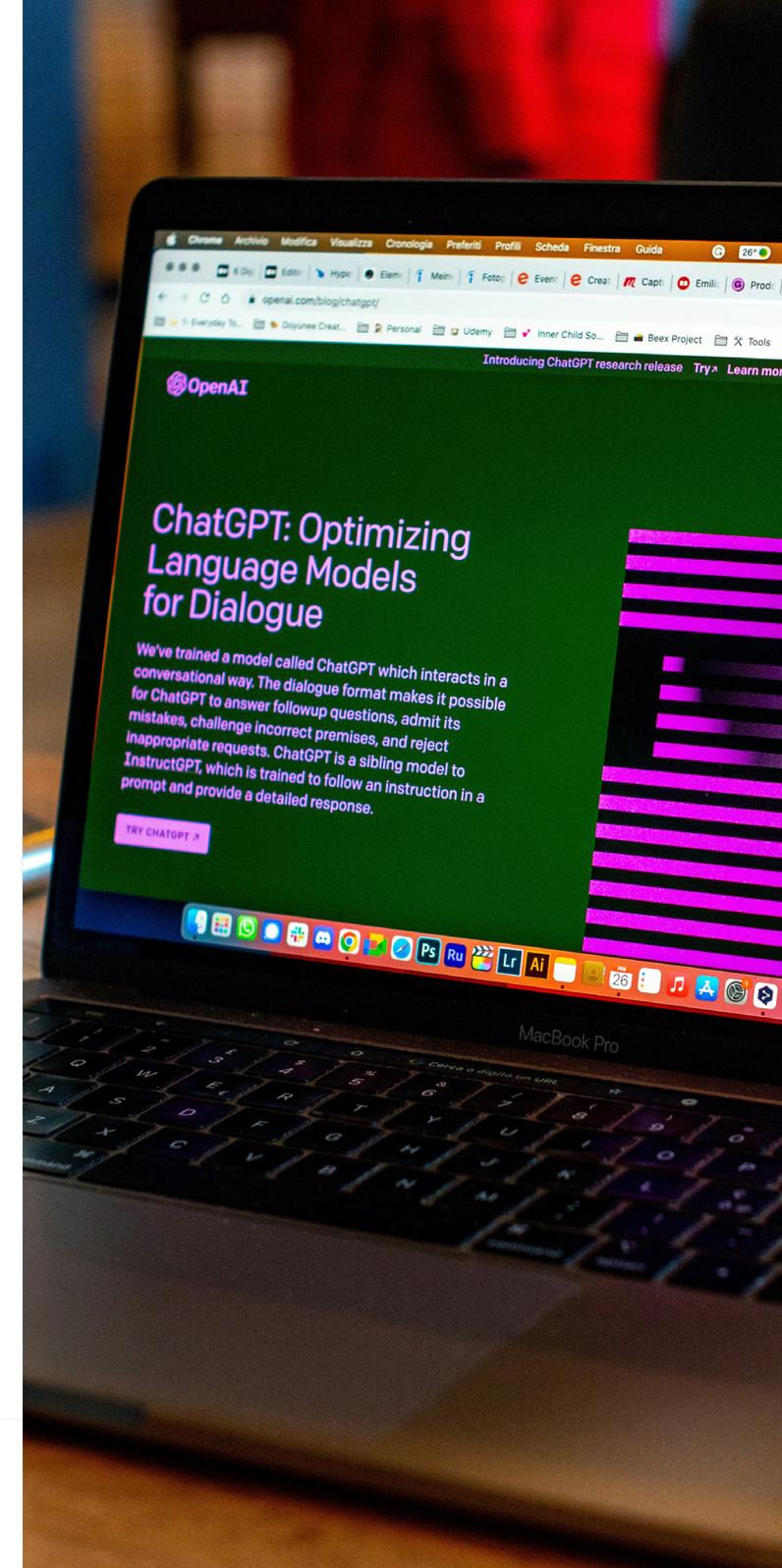
AMY STAMPER
Head of Paid Social

“SEO is going through a unique time at the moment where users have more choices than ever when trying to find answers to their problems. With the rise of ChatGPT, people will be less inclined to 'Google it' and instead use AI.”

As SEO is changing in this way it's no surprise that businesses are looking to invest in the channel so they can be supported throughout this challenging time. Google's search engine market share dropped below 90% for the last months of 2024 so we're starting to see this take effect. Rather than being scared of this change as marketers, we can embrace it and start measuring our traffic from LLMs to understand what types of content work well for users.”



CHARLIE NORLEDGE
Head of SEO Performance



Marketing budgets are on the rise

It's positive that the majority of businesses across all revenue brackets are set to increase their marketing budget in 2025, this response is quite an increase from last year's survey data which stated 47% of marketers would grow their budgets in 2024.

61%
will increase

12%
will decrease

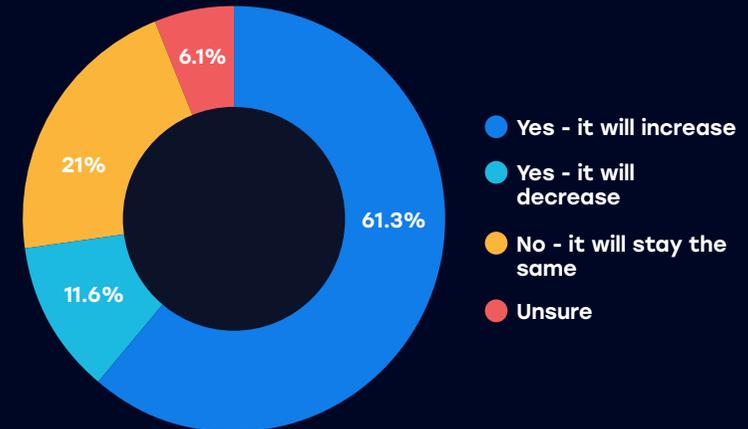
21%
will stay the same

"1 in 3 marketers does not expect their budgets to increase in 2025. Despite this, optimism is up. We are an ever optimistic bunch but I hope this optimism is rooted in evidence and testing rather than hopefulness.."



ADAM BLY
Head of Growth

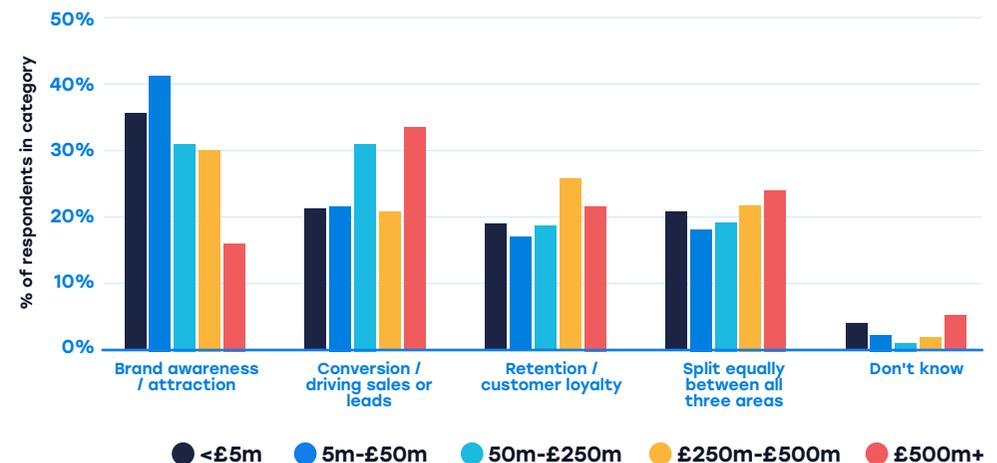
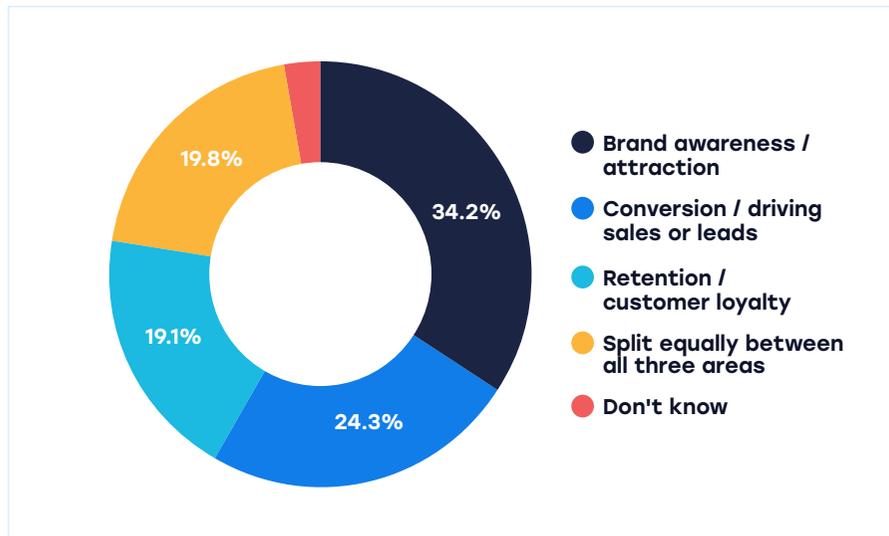
DO YOU EXPECT YOUR MARKETING BUDGET TO CHANGE IN 2025 COMPARED TO 2024?



Next, we asked how marketing budgets would be spent...

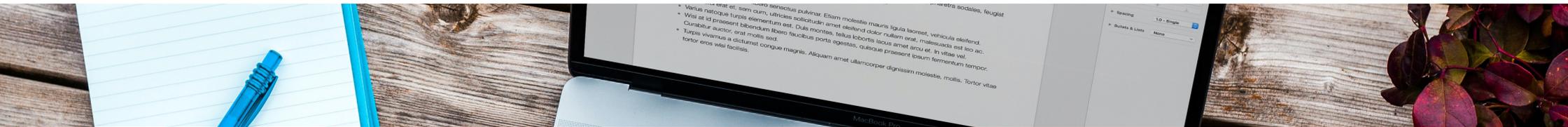
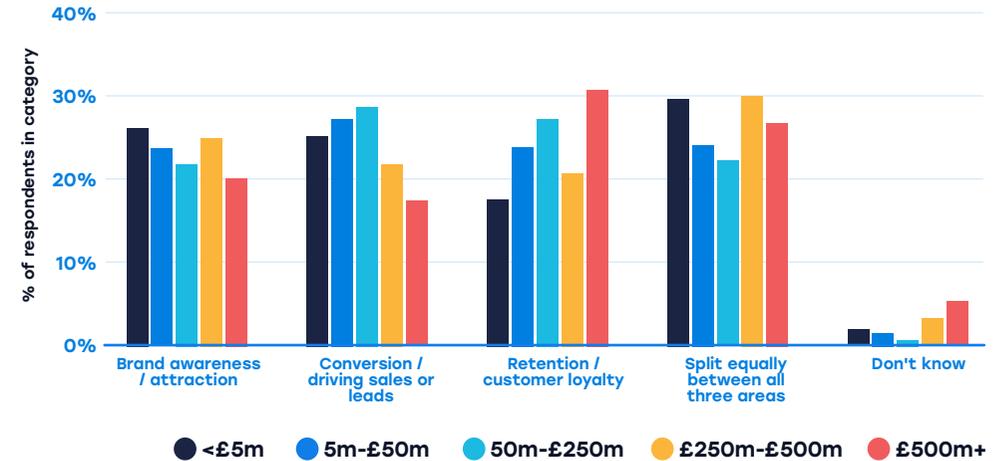
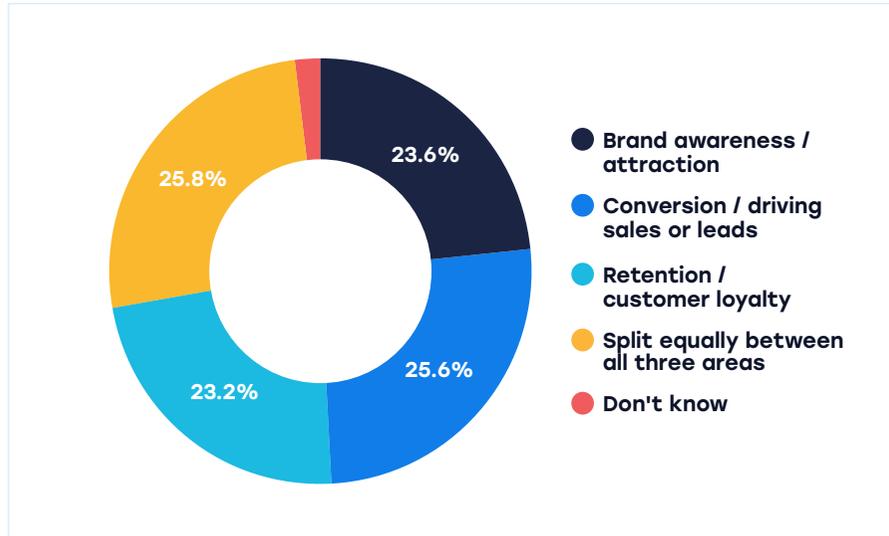
Marketers split over where to invest their budget

We thought, based on last year's survey results, that most businesses would allocate the majority of their budget to conversion-based activities but this year's data tells a different story. It turns out that most marketers (34%) focused their efforts on brand awareness activity instead.



And while businesses turning over less than £5m and those between £5-50m in revenue will allocate more of their budget to brand-building, those turning over £500m+ will invest more in activity that drives direct sales.

IN WHICH AREA WILL YOU INVEST THE MOST MARKETING BUDGET IN 2025?



CLAIRE ELSWORTH
Strategy Director

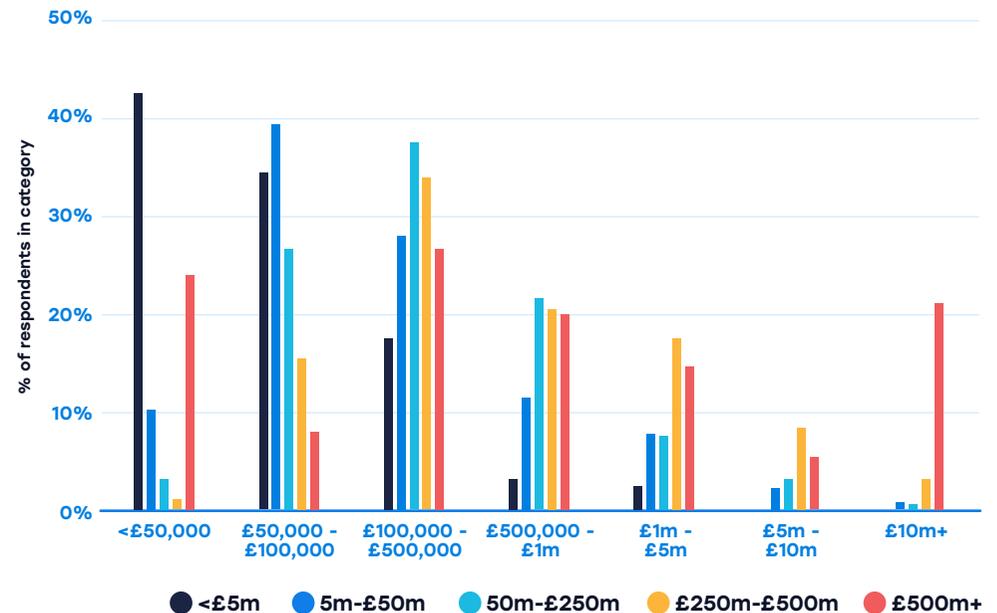
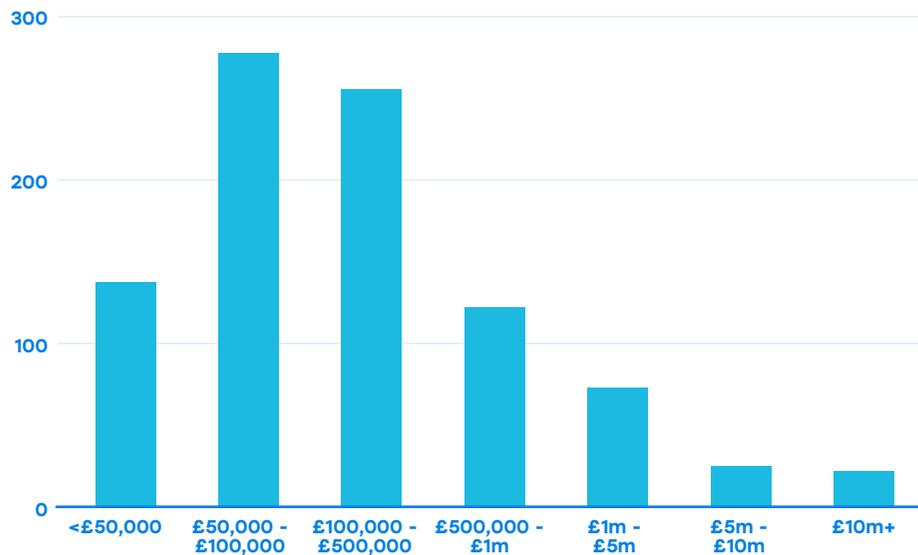
“Striking the right balance about where to prioritise investment is always going to be a moveable feast. Despite what some corners the industry believe, there is no “ideal” ratio to aim for - it’s about understanding what your audience needs and how your business and your marketing delivers against it. Crucially, though, a measured approach which speaks to all of the customer journey, rather than focusing on just brand, or just conversion (or even just loyalty) will be important in ensuring a balance between short-term wins and a long-term, future-proofed marketing plan.”

Expected marketing budgets to range between £100,000 and £500,000

We asked respondents what their marketing budgets will be for the next 12 months and found the median value is set to be between £100,000 and £500,000, which represents the middle point of the data set, meaning that half of the businesses have marketing budgets below this amount and half have budgets above it.

£500,000 to £1m is the average budget bracket, however, this can be significantly influenced by a few businesses with exceptionally high budgets.

WHAT IS YOUR MARKETING BUDGET GOING TO BE FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

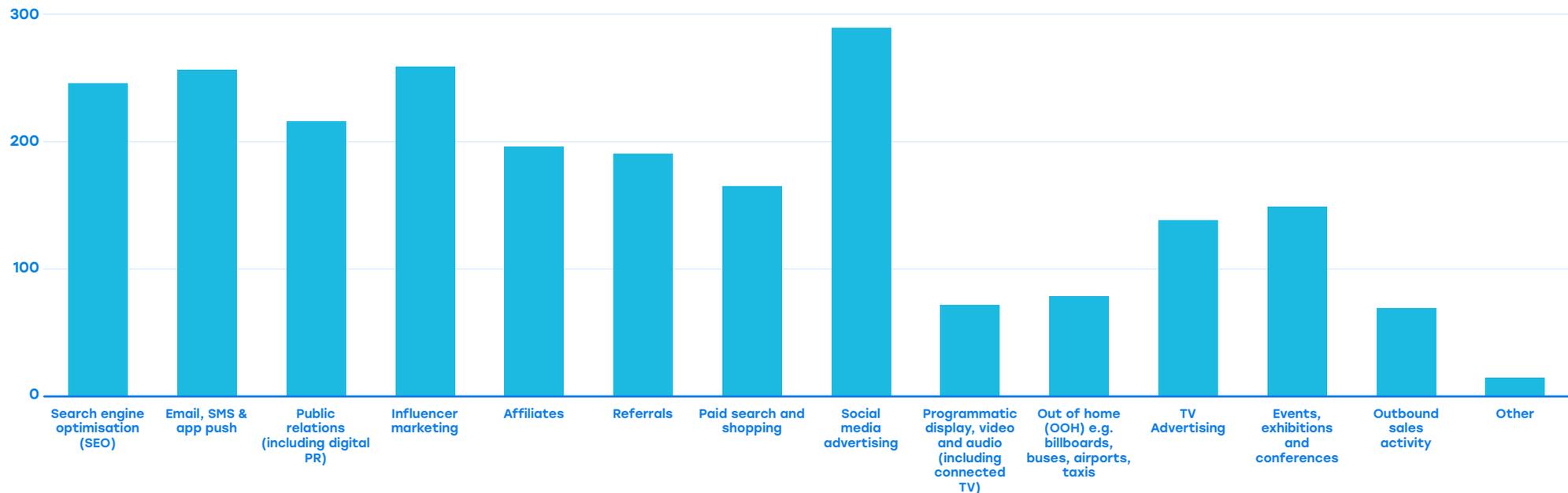


Investment in Paid Social, SEO and Email & App Push will increase

Reflecting on what channels are anticipated to drive the most revenue in the next 12 months, it's no surprise that Search Engine Optimisation and Paid Social Advertising channels are expected to receive increased investment. However, it is expected that brands will be looking to increase investment in other organic and paid channels too, including Influencer Marketing and PR.

DO YOU EXPECT TO INCREASE YOUR INVESTMENT IN ANY OF THESE MARKETING ACTIVITIES IN 2025?*

*Respondents were asked to choose all that apply.

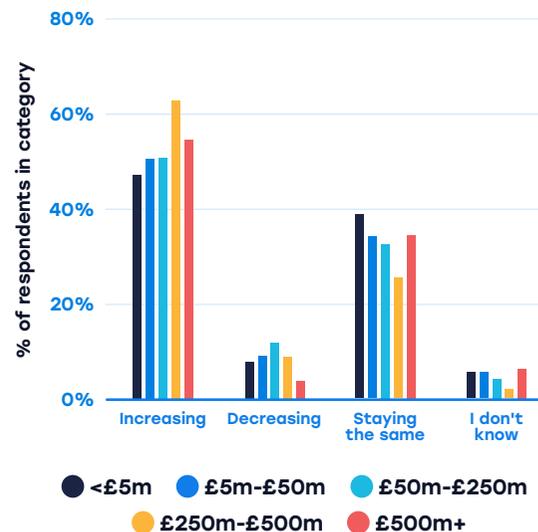
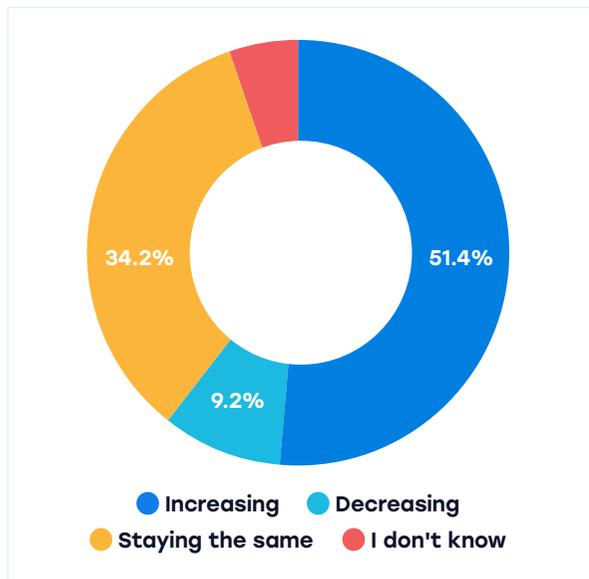


In addition, marketers are looking to increase their investment in creative assets, marketing technology and analytics. Find out more on pages [19](#) and [32](#).

Creative is key when it comes to performance marketing

Compared to 2024, the majority (51%) of brands will increase their investment in creative assets for performance marketing channels by up to 12%, with those turning over between £50m-£500m increasing investment more than others. 16% of survey respondents will decrease their investment in 2024.

IS YOUR INVESTMENT INTO CREATIVE ASSETS FOR PERFORMANCE MARKETING CHANNELS INCREASING OR DECREASING IN 2025 VS 2024?



“Performance marketing is only as strong as the creative that fuels it. But just increasing spend or overall volume of assets isn’t enough—brands need to ensure their creative is working as hard as possible. That means an always on approach to experimentation, testing, iteration, and refinement based on real audience engagement. I think the industry is broadly moving away from a singular focus on high-production, broadcast style advertising content, and much more towards a platform-first approach, but if you’re not measuring the impact of your creative efforts beyond surface-level metrics, you’re missing a big opportunity to optimise and drive better results. It’s important to remember that innovation and the impact which comes from consistency are not mutually exclusive - the most meaningful results will come from an iterative approach to a clear brand story which is designed to work across all marketing channels.”

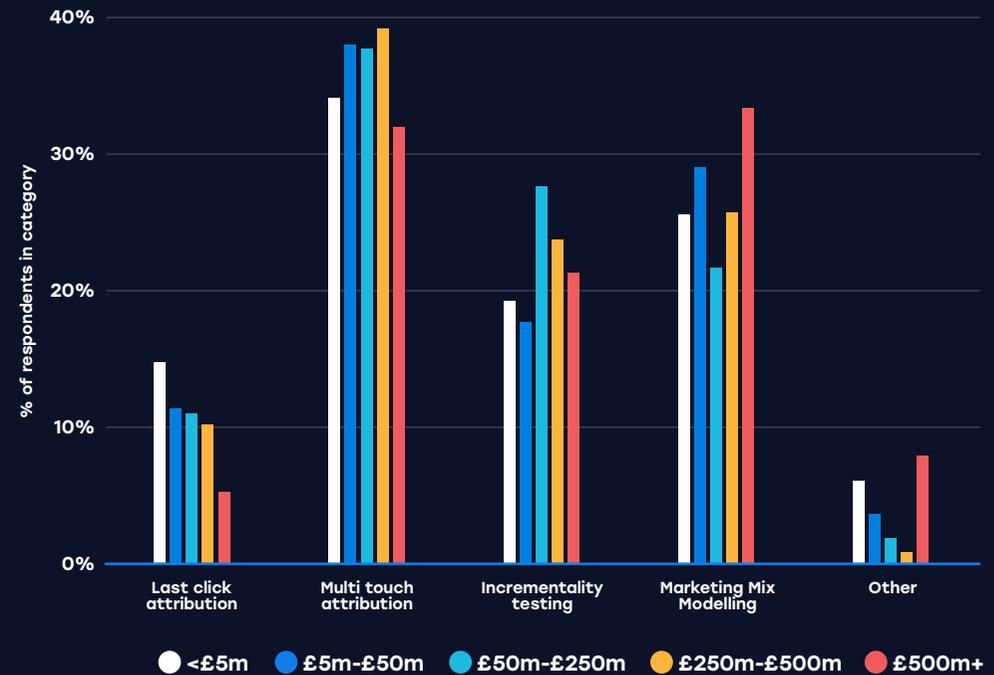
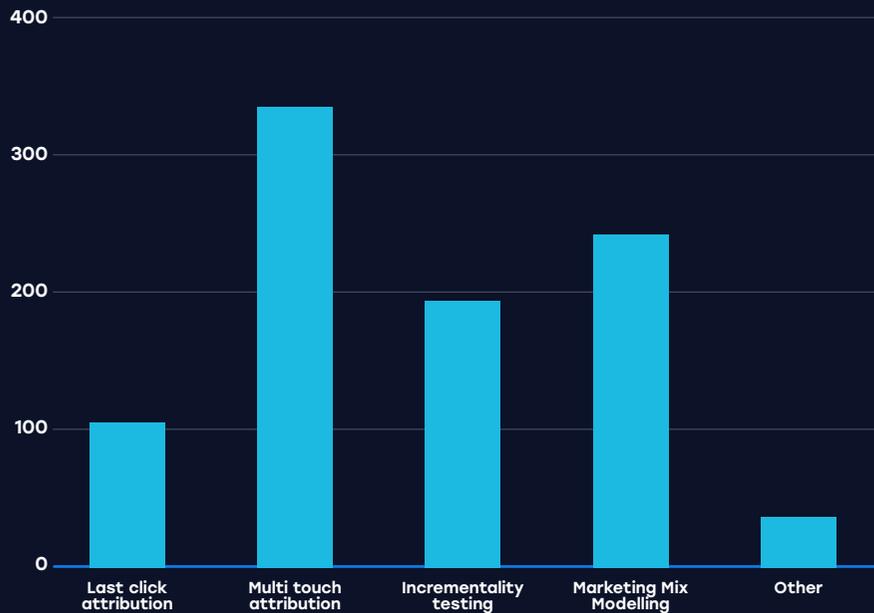


CLAIRE ELSWORTH
Strategy Director

Multi-touch attribution models lead marketing effectiveness measurement

We wanted to understand the methods marketers are using to prove and improve their marketing investments. According to our data, the top voted approaches include multi-touch attribution, followed by marketing mix modelling.

IS YOUR BUSINESS USING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING TOOLS AND TACTICS TO PROVE AND IMPROVE THE VALUE OF YOUR MARKETING INVESTMENT?



“Incrementality Testing is really the missing outcome here. Multi-touch attribution is a completely understandable winner, but it is also one of the most challenged if it's being taken as gospel and without other evidence.

Our preferred approach is triangulation of the trio of measurement, the trio being; incrementality testing, marketing mix modelling, and multi-touch attribution.

The most powerful results in media measurement and optimisation are actually incrementality tests, as these are the only causal measure that can test through a controlled trial whether media is having an impact on sales.

Marketing mix modelling is a correlative study, but modern models can take into account and honour the results of incrementality tests, making the combination of methodologies extremely robust.

Where multi-touch attribution has captured our attention over the past couple of decades is in its granularity, which unfortunately other marketing measurements typically don't offer. However via careful planning, the testing and modelling process can isolate particular digital campaigns based on their objectives and therefore the multi-touch attribution results can be given credit proportionally -- this approach describes triangulation of digital media measurement.

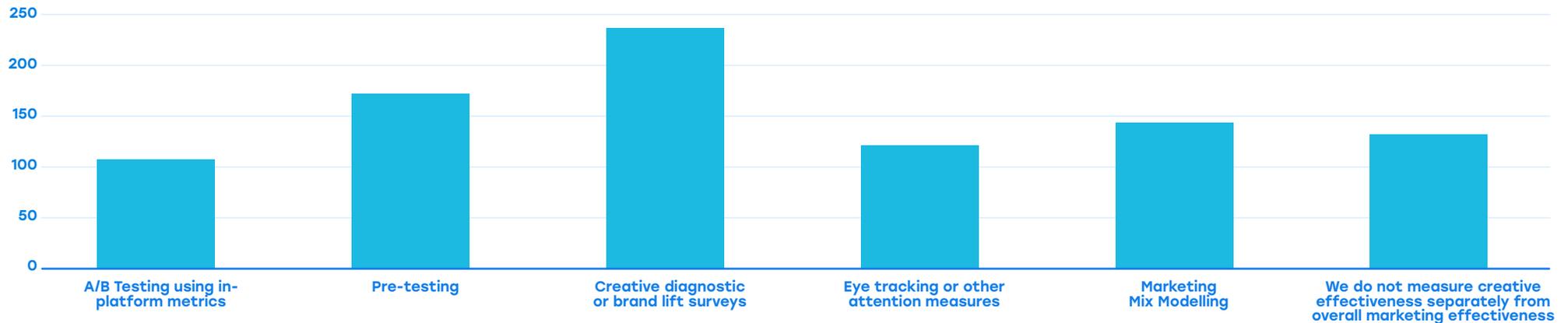


AARON DICKS
Technology Director

Creative diagnostic & brand lift surveys lead creative measurement

When asked how they measure performance creative, 26% of marketers use creative diagnostic or brand lift surveys. Diagnostic surveys test recall, clarity, emotion, and persuasion early in a campaign, while brand lift surveys assess awareness, recall, favourability, and purchase intent. Both help optimise campaigns for better results.

HOW ARE YOU MEASURING CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS?



CLAIRE ELSWORTH
Strategy Director

“It’s refreshing to see over a quarter of marketers taking creative performance measurement seriously - at least beyond the surface-level media metrics; while those have their place, they don’t tell the full story. Advanced measurement, whether it’s creative diagnostics, brand lift studies, incrementality testing or emotional resonance, gives you a clearer picture of how your creative is truly landing with your audience, and what its likely impact is going to be at scale. If you’re not already exploring these methods, it’s worth considering how they could help you make more informed creative decisions.”

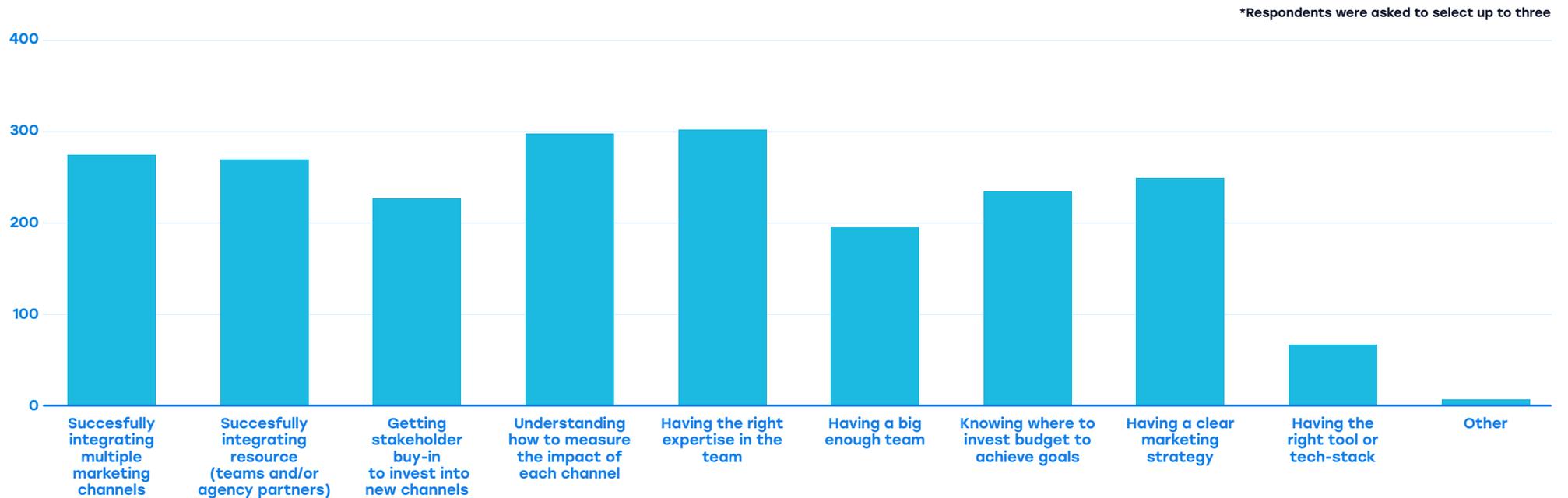
Marketers struggle to find the right expertise for their teams

We asked respondents what top challenges they face when it comes to planning and executing their marketing activity. The biggest concerns were:

33% struggle to find the right expertise for their teams

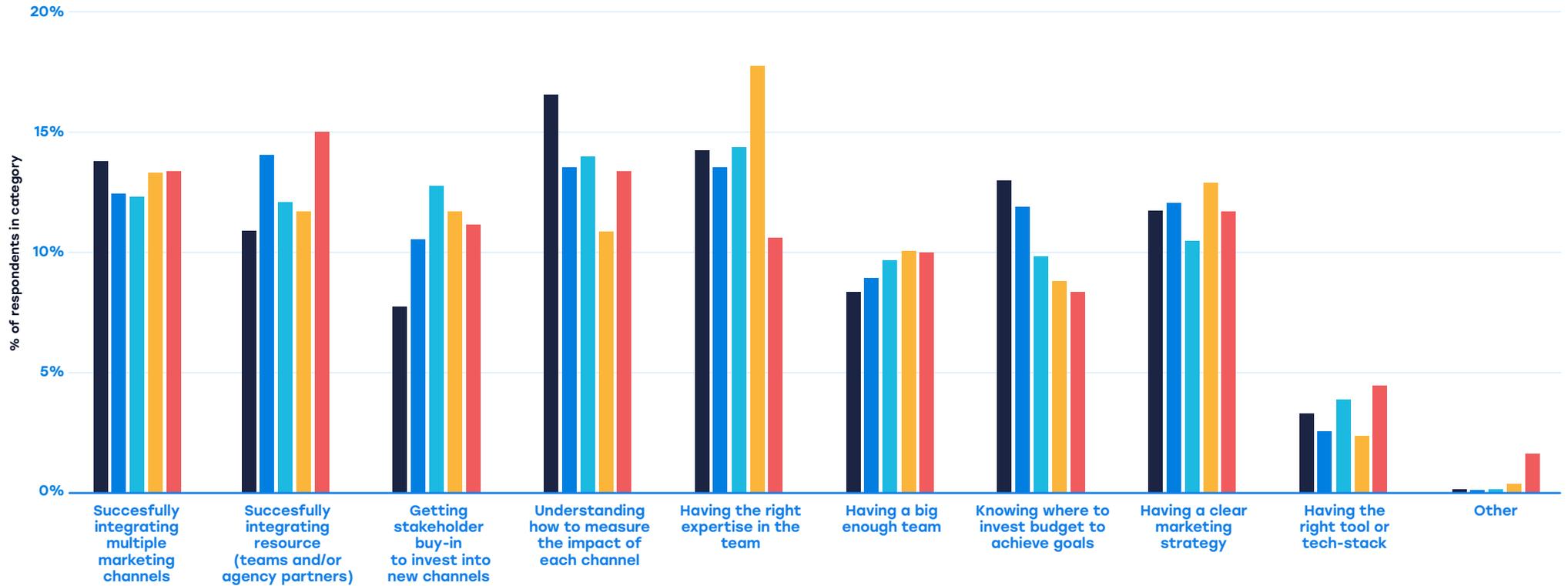
32% are unsure how to measure the impact of each marketing channel

30% struggle to successfully integrate multiple marketing channels



● <£5m ● 5m-£50m ● 50m-£250m ● £250m-£500m ● £500m+

*Respondents were asked to select up to three



CLAIRE ELSWORTH
Strategy Director

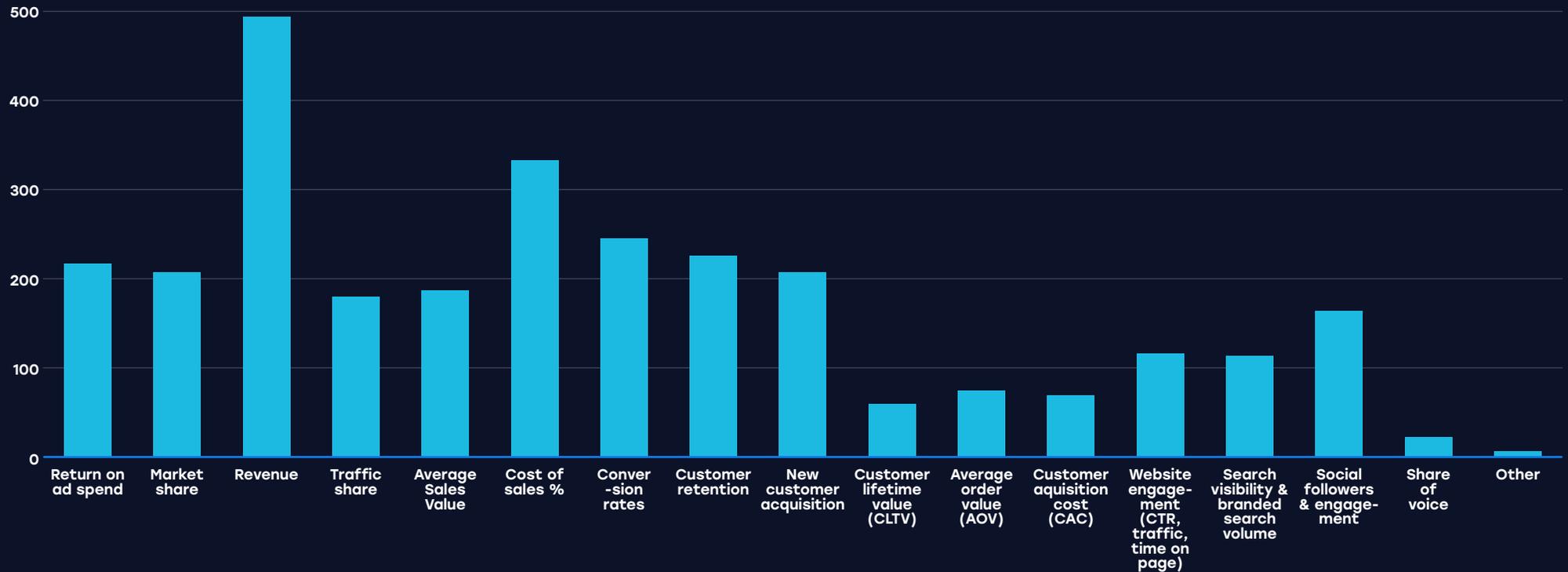
“The common theme across all these challenges is clarity. Without a clear KPI framework, it’s easy to lose sight of what success actually looks like. A strong, holistic approach separates strategic and tactical KPIs, ensuring there’s a direct line between marketing efforts and business objectives across every stage of the potential journey your audience takes to becoming your customer. This then makes it easier to build a plan which is working harmoniously, and ensuring all marketing efforts are aligned to a shared goal. Holistic planning and robust measurement go hand in hand and mean your experts stand a much better chance of delivering success for the business.”

Revenue and cost of sales are the most popular measures of marketing success

According to our data, the most popular metrics to measure marketing success are revenue, cost of sales and conversion rate. However, across different revenue brackets, several other metrics are also monitored, including; market share, customer retention, and Social followers engagement.

HOW WILL YOU MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS IN 2025?*

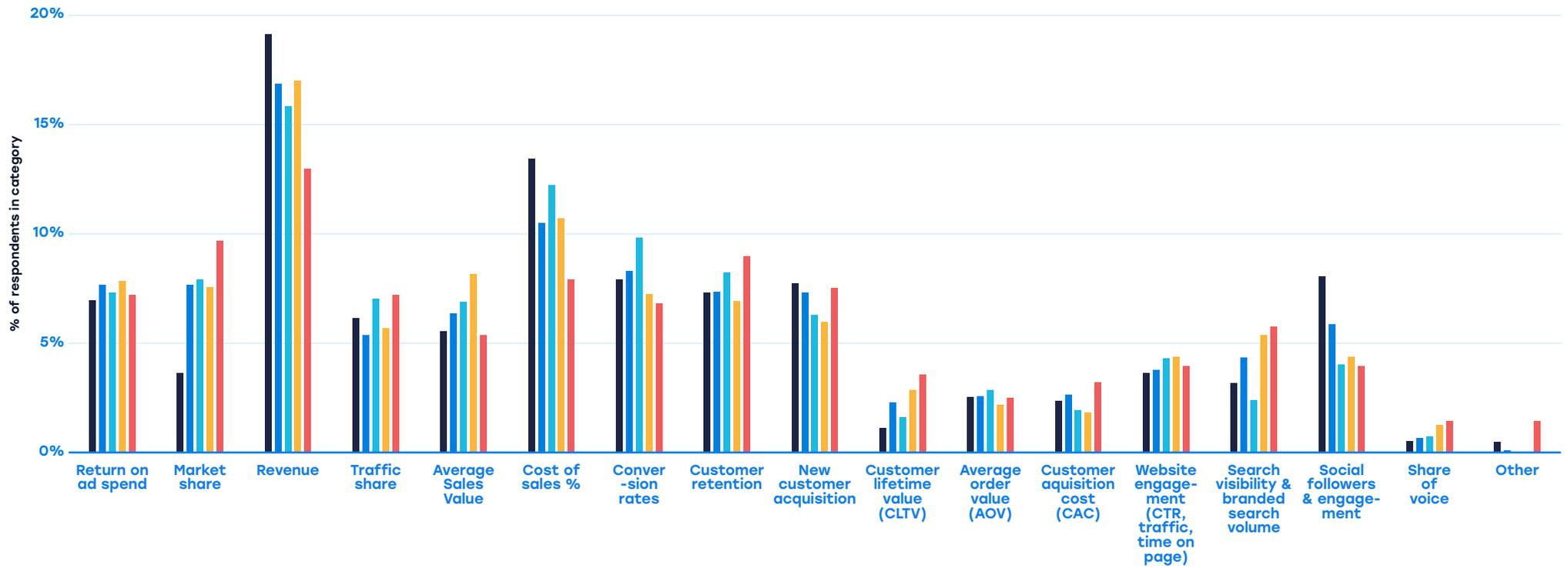
*Respondents were asked to select up to three





● <£5m
 ● 5m-£50m
 ● 50m-£250m
 ● £250m-£500m
 ● £500m+

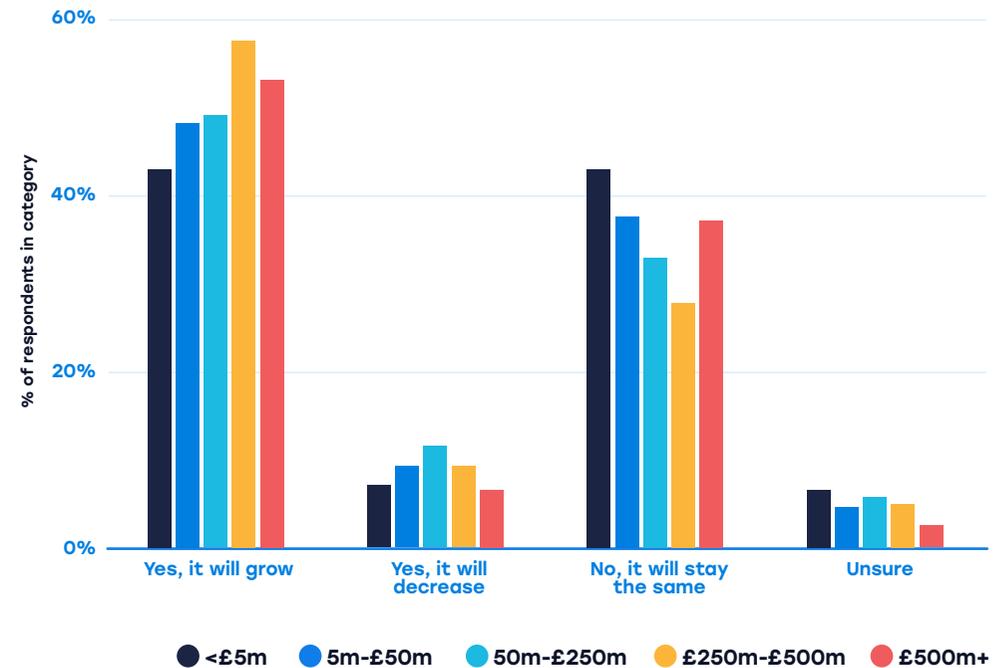
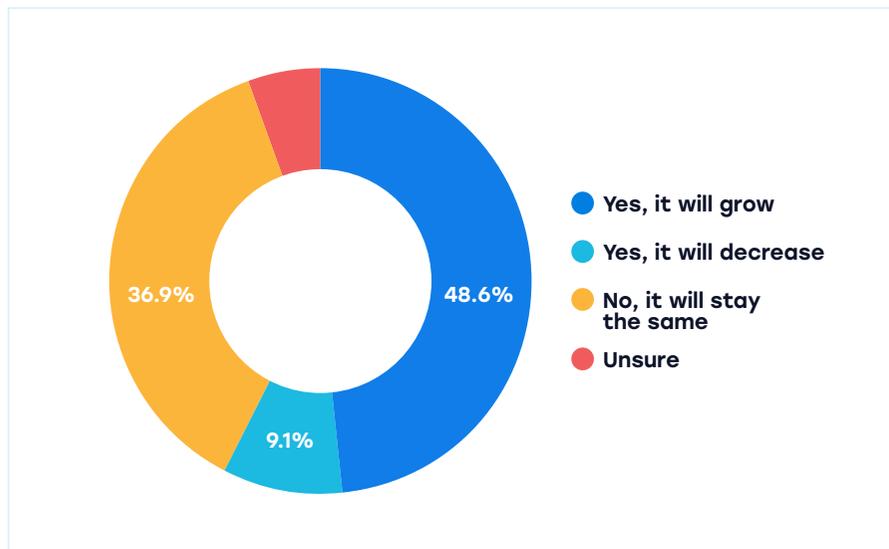
*Respondents were asked to select up to three



Most businesses will increase their internal team size

When asked if businesses are planning to increase the size of their internal marketing teams, just under half (49%) said it will grow. 37% of respondent said it would stay the same. Revenue brackets above £50m said they are more likely to grow whilst those under that amount say it will stay the same.

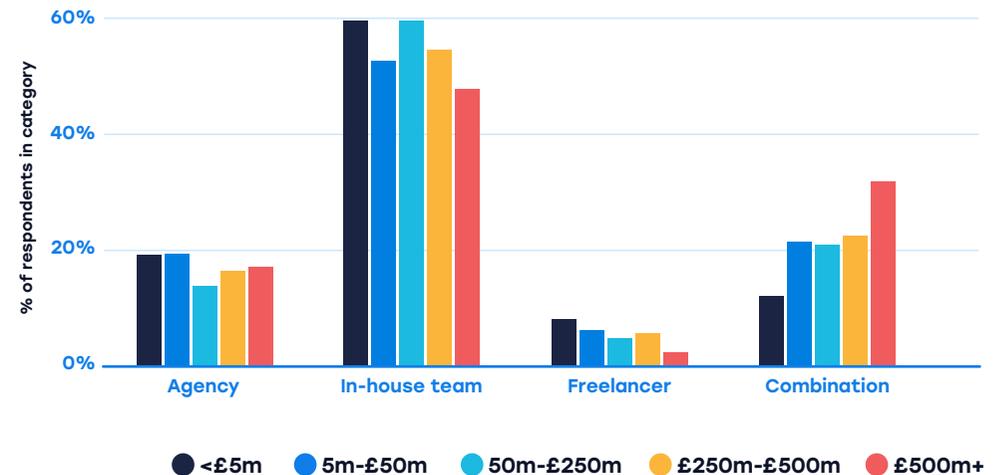
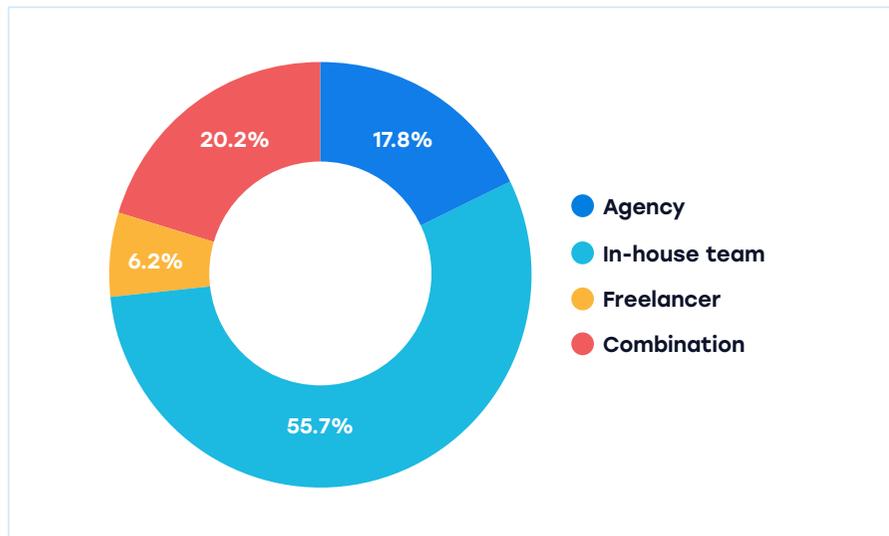
DO YOU EXPECT THE SIZE OF YOUR INTERNAL MARKETING TEAM TO CHANGE IN 2025?



6 out of 10 marketers say they will keep marketing in-house

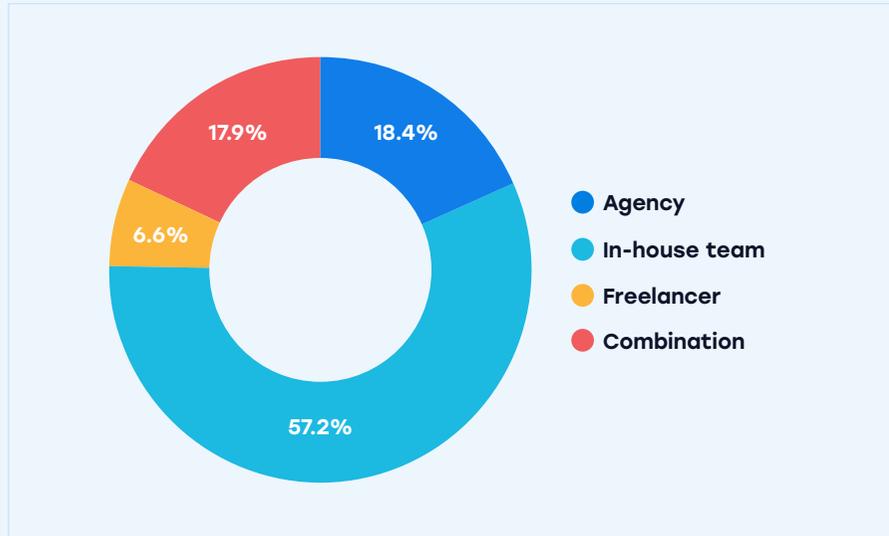
As the marketing landscape changes, more and more businesses are looking to conduct their marketing activities in-house instead of leveraging support from agencies and freelancers. This correlates with most businesses are looking to grow their internal marketing teams in 2025.

HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO DELIVER YOUR MARKETING ACTIVITY IN 2025?



Compared to 2024, the reliance on internal teams has decrease slightly. In addition, more will opt to deliver their activity via a combination of internal and external support, particularly businesses turning over £500m+ revenue.

HOW DID YOU DELIVER YOUR MARKETING ACTIVITY IN 2024?



MIKEY EMERY
Commercial Director

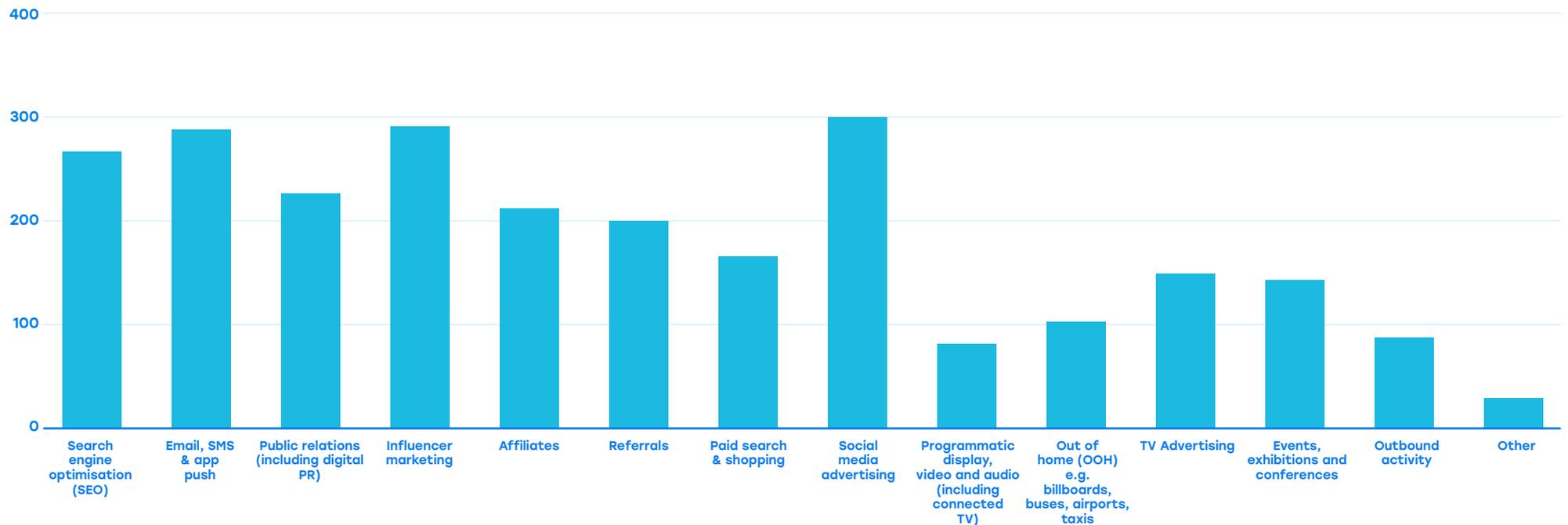
“The shift towards in-housing reflects the growing accessibility of performance marketing talent, with brands benefiting from deeper internal expertise to deliver what we now consider routine digital marketing activity. However, the brands that achieve real, sustained growth are those that go beyond best practices—leveraging the very best technology, talent, and strategic insight that agencies provide. The most successful businesses will be those that strike the right balance between in-house capabilities and external expertise to drive performance at scale.”

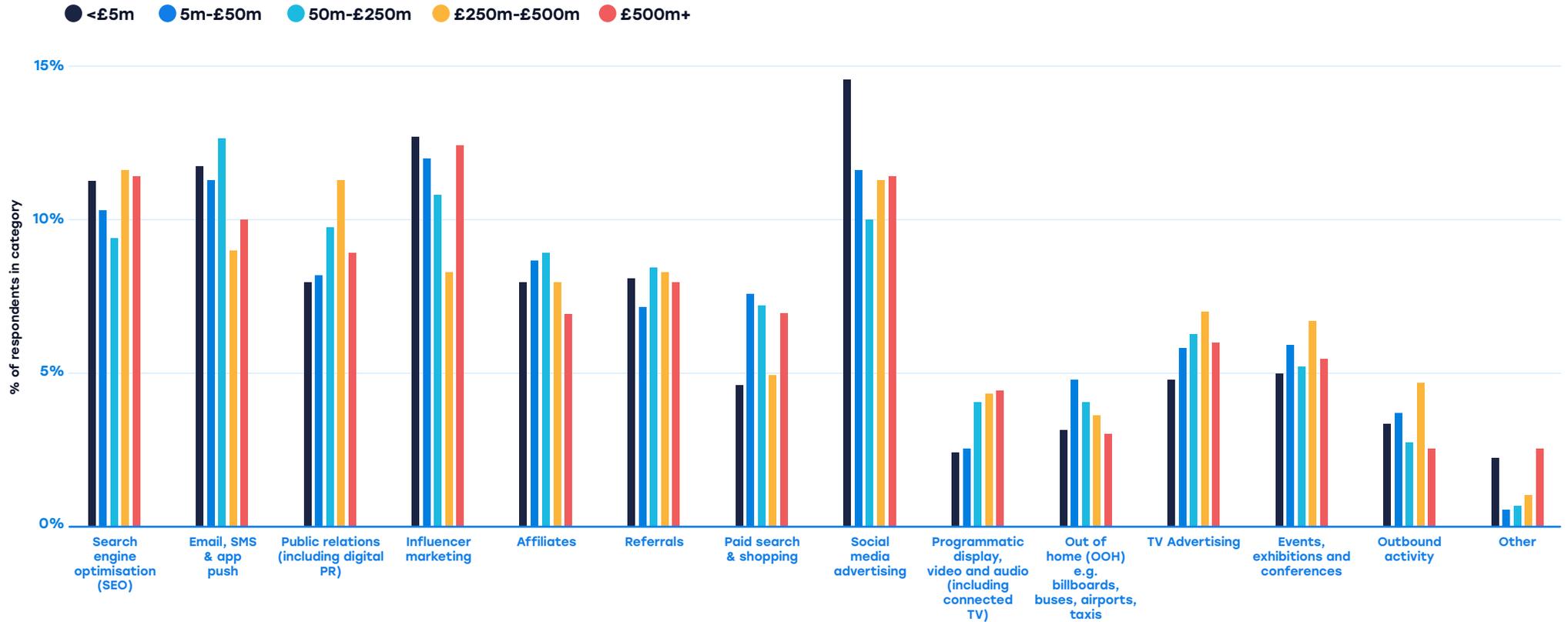
Paid Social and Influencer marketing activity will be outsourced

Of those that will appoint external marketing resources in 2025, we asked which activities they anticipate outsourcing and a range of paid and organic tactics topped the list.

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO WORK WITH EXTERNAL MARKETING RESOURCE IN 2025, WHICH ACTIVITIES DO YOU ANTICIPATE YOU WILL OUTSOURCE?*

*Respondents were asked to select all that apply





CHARLIE NORLEDGE
Head of SEO Performance

“Paid social, influencer and SEO should not work in a silo, so investing across these channels makes sense. When these channels work together on a campaign, you can maximise your marketing spending by getting the most out of each channel:

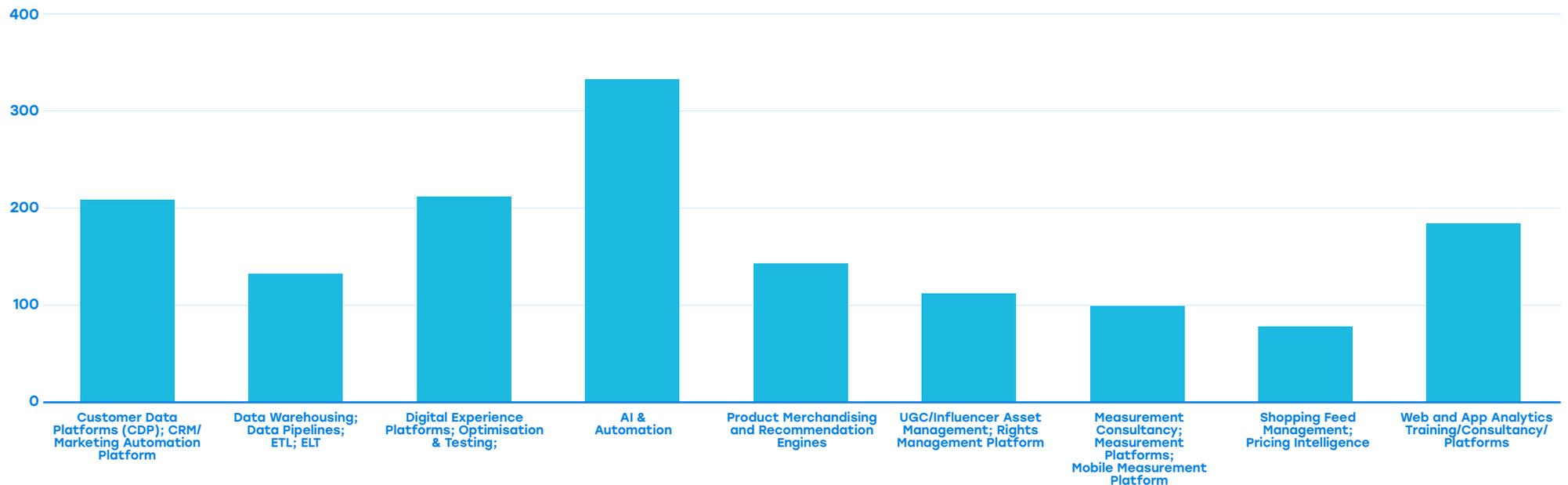
- Influencer marketing can build backlinks which in turn drives SEO growth
- Social teams are great at knowing what works with their audiences; having them assist with your SEO content can be a great start to any campaign
- SEO keyword research can help social media teams understand what terms to use for their campaigns.”

Brands are set to invest in AI and Digital Experience technologies

To understand brands' digital maturity journeys, we asked where they expect to see their biggest marketing technology investments in the next 12 months. The majority of marketers expect to invest in AI & Automation and Digital Experience technologies. This is closely followed by Customer Data Platforms.

By investing in Digital Experience platforms, brands would be able to run UX and CRO testing, to better understand and make changes to increase conversions.

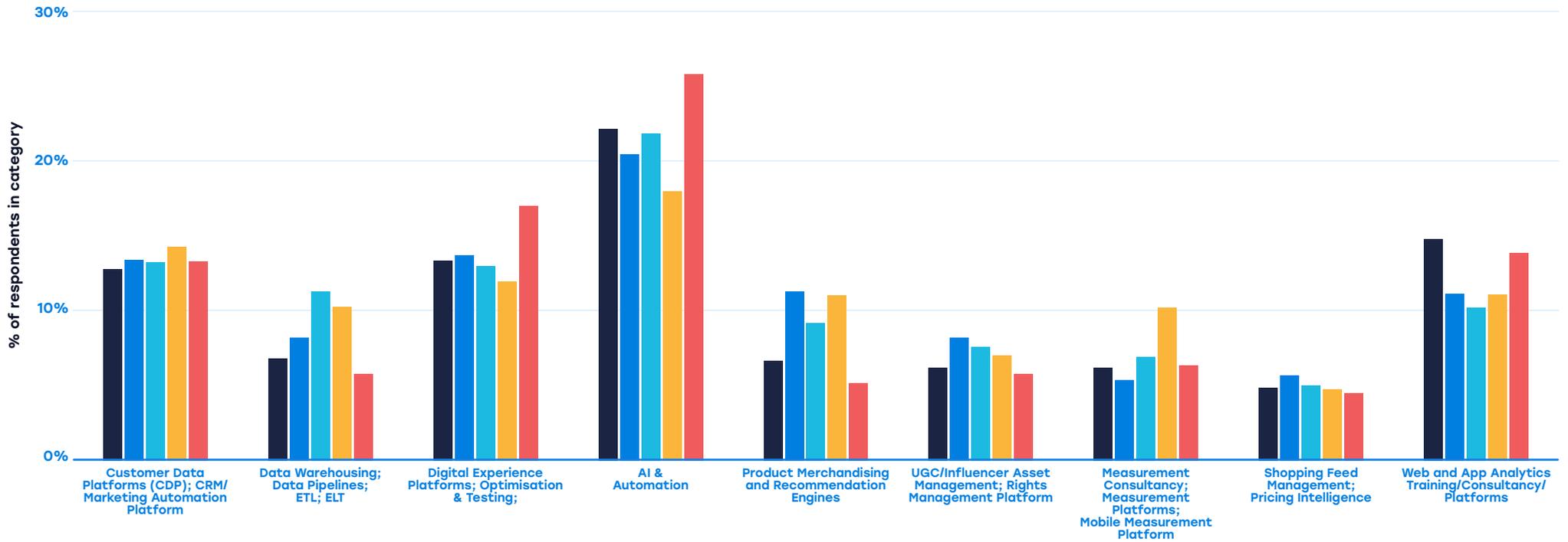
WHERE DO YOU EXPECT TO SEE YOUR BIGGEST MARKETING TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS*

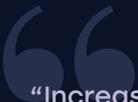


*Respondents were asked to select up to three



● <£5m
 ● £5m-£50m
 ● £50m-£250m
 ● £250m-£500m
 ● £500m-£1bn
 ● £1bn+





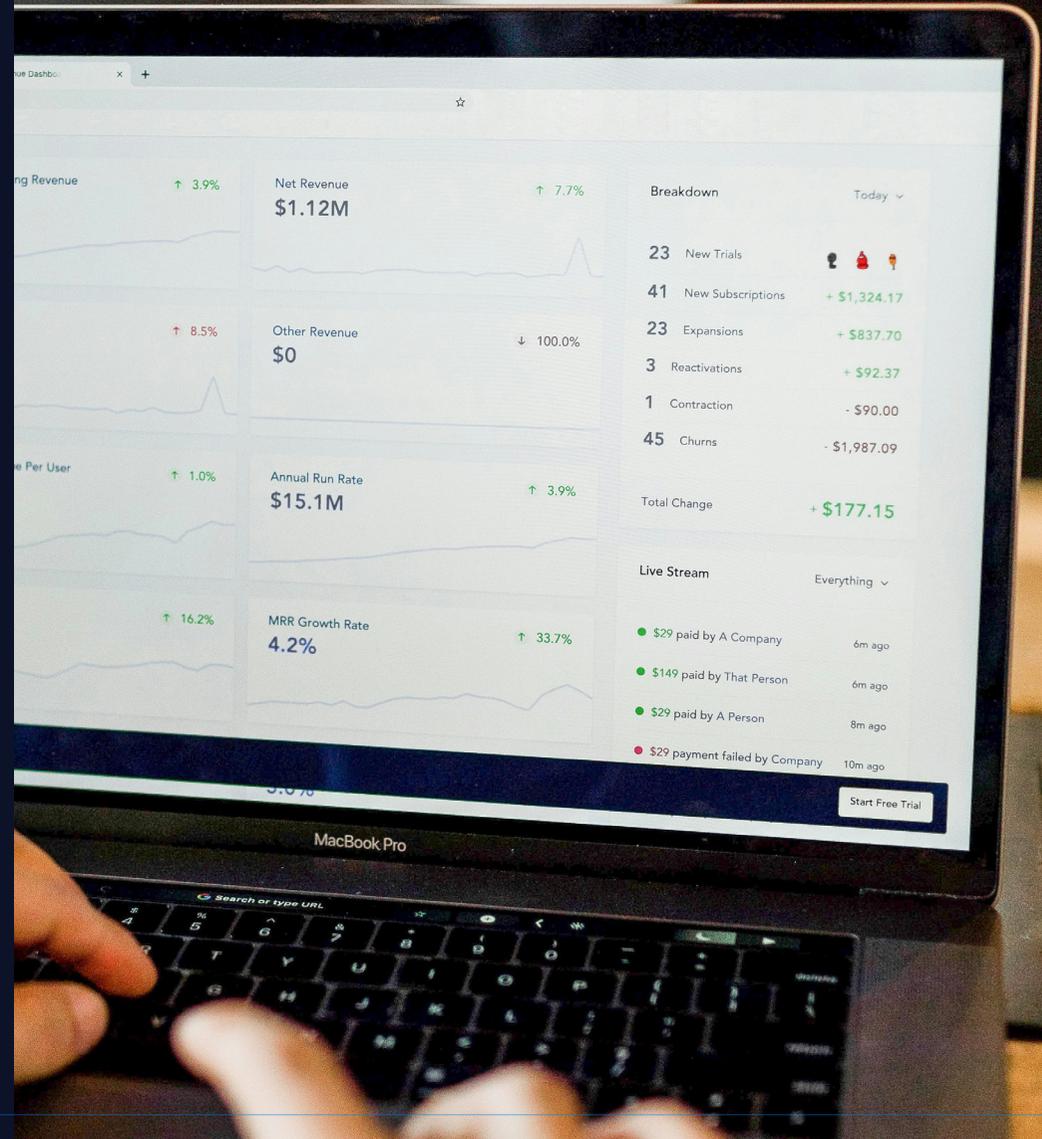
“Increased investments in automation and technology to support customer centricity in marketing completely matches my expectations - and I expect these topics to overlap significantly, too. For too long, we have been perhaps over-focused on acquisition marketing, leaving growth on the table when it comes to customer experience design and customer loyalty marketing.

I expect to see more personalisation driven by machine learning/ AI platforms, such as content recommendations across media sites and basket and upsell recommendations across ecommerce. I also expect to see increased discussion in propensity modelling being put to use in real-time across site behaviour analysis informing advertising audiences, and propensity modelling being used in customer lifetime value modelling for CRM - for just in time churn prevention, for example.

Customer Data Platforms - for those who don't yet have one - is the single source of truth which can record centrally all prospect and customer interactions, campaign touchpoints, ePOS, and even offline activity. This data can then be segmented to assist with audience creation, predictions, reporting and further campaign activation. Particularly for retail and marketplace brands, CDPs in my opinion are a must for 2025 and beyond.”



AARON DICKS
Technology Director

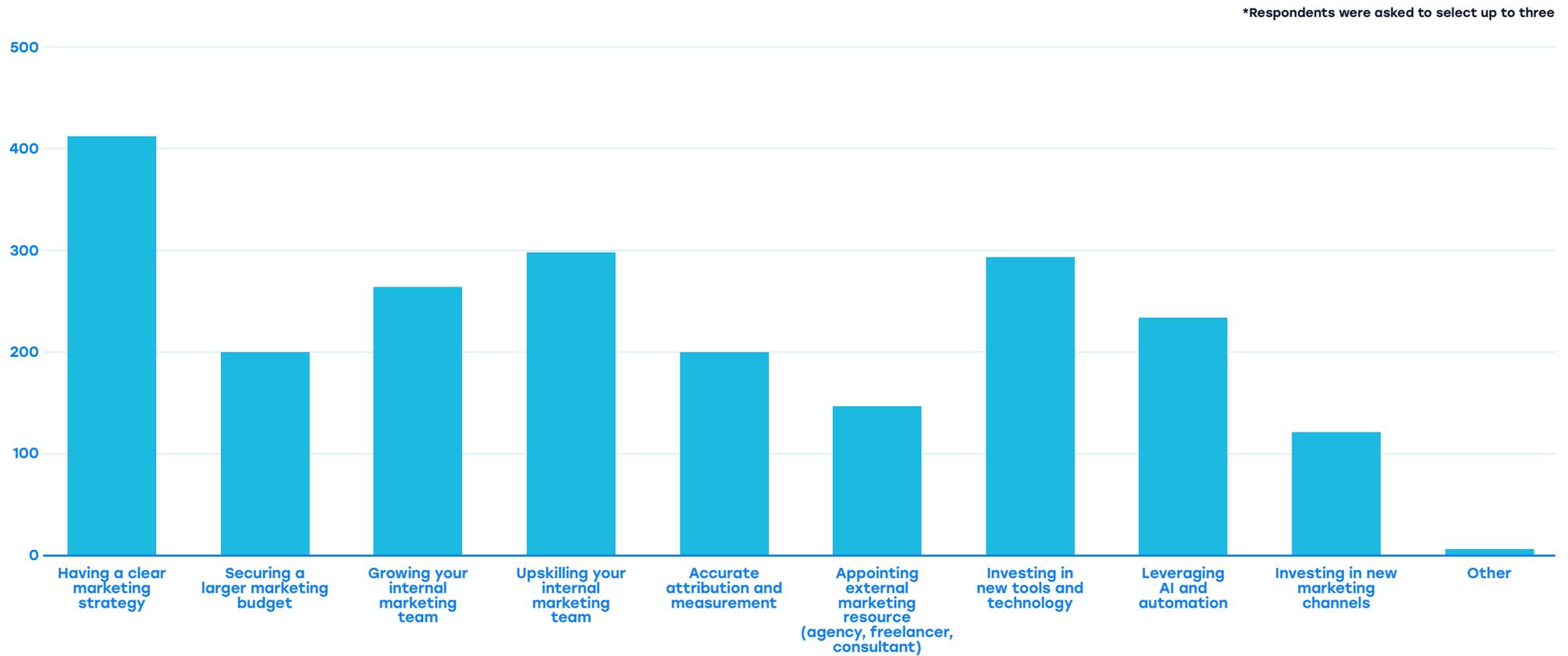


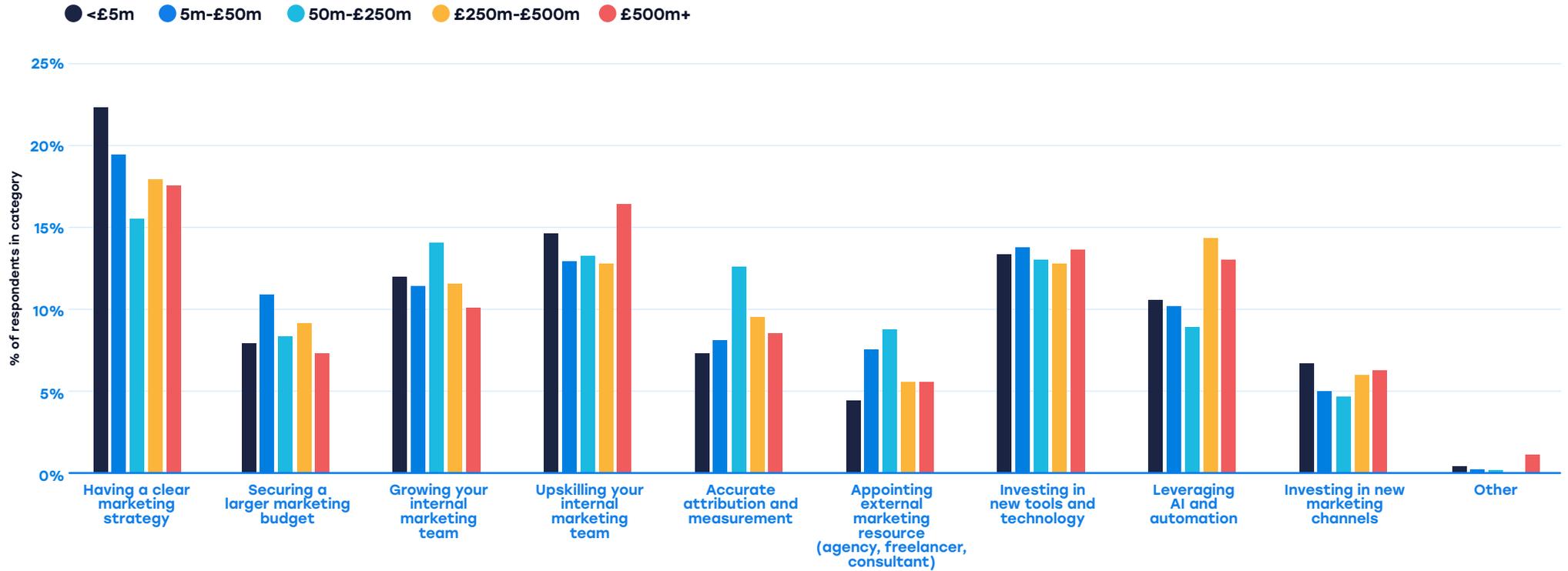
The key to success in 2025

45% agree that success will be linked to having a clear marketing strategy

32% believe it will be down to upskilling their marketing teams

32% think that investing in new tools and technology will help unlock success





CLAIRE ELSWORTH
Strategy Director

“In an industry which moves as fast and gets as swept up in trends as ours does, it’s more important than ever to ground ourselves in a clear, concise strategy which acts as the platform to our success and which guides all of our decisions. Of course, it’s not just about setting and forgetting; it’s about ensuring our strategic approach remains relevant as platforms evolve and consumer expectations shift. Upskilling is an ongoing effort, empowering our teams to adapt to new challenges and engage the right expertise, rather than just keeping pace. And when it comes to technology, it’s easy to invest in the latest trend du jour, but marketers must ask themselves what problem they’re really trying to solve and how it helps the business deliver against its objectives.”

Contact us for help
setting your digital strategy



IN 2025 & BEYOND

hello@impressiondigital.com

NOTTINGHAM

Fothergill House,
16 King Street,
Nottingham, NG1 2AS

LONDON

Runway East Borough
Market, 20 St Thomas
St, London, SE1 9RS

MANCHESTER

Colony, 1 Silk Street,
Ancoats, Manchester
M4 6LZ

IMPRESSION