

The image features a dark background with a central, bright light source that creates a horizontal lens flare. The light transitions from a cool blue on the left to a warm yellow and orange on the right. Numerous small, glowing particles and rays emanate from the central point, giving it a dynamic, energetic feel. In the top left corner, the word "Deloitte." is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font. In the bottom left, there is a title and subtitle in white and green text.

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CMO Insights: **Trend 2**

The evolution of marketing leaders
in the technology renaissance

With technological advancement happening at an exponential rate, marketing leaders and their teams, like many others, are experiencing a profound transformation. While the fundamental components of the marketing mix remain, Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) that embrace digital transformation and adopt new technologies such as AI by integrating them into their marketing operations will sustain value creation. This also enables them to harness valuable data-driven insights into what is important today and what will be critical tomorrow. This evolution in roles and responsibilities is not just beneficial, but essential for delivering enhanced value and staying ahead in a dynamic market.

The role of marketing leaders continues to evolve, with today's changes dominated by technology, data and Generative AI (GenAI). In our second year of conducting the CMO Insights research, there have been some fascinating shifts in the mindset and operational approaches of marketing leaders as they adapt during this technological renaissance. This renaissance is characterised by groundbreaking innovations that are fundamentally transforming marketing strategies and practices. GenAI has revolutionised marketing capabilities and will transform marketing practices.

One area where this shift to focus on emerging technology is evident is the prioritisation of digital marketing as the biggest change to the role in the last year. The 2024 research highlights that the top three ranked role changes over the past five years are an increasing focus on digital marketing, the role becoming more data-driven, and a greater emphasis on analytics and the use of AI. This evidences just how much technology and data are becoming integral to the role of marketing leaders. Their roles are increasingly dependent on digital platforms and technologies to reach target audiences more effectively, with wider reach, lower costs, better targeting capabilities and measurable results.

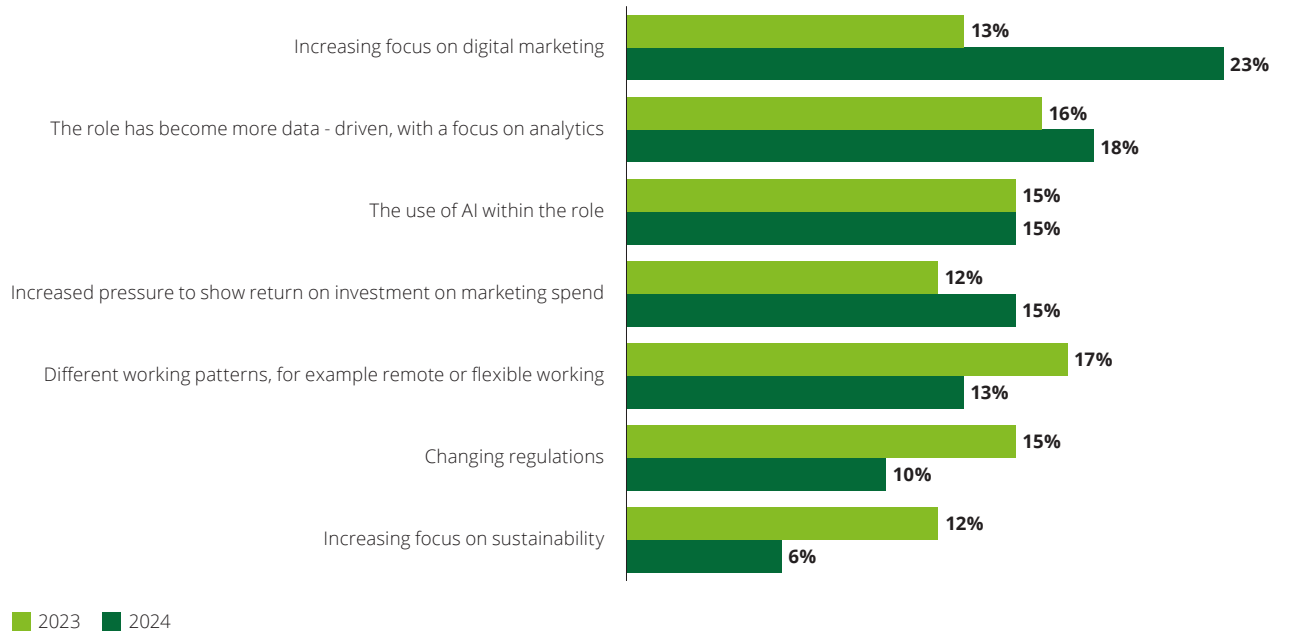


This year's findings indicate that flexible or remote working is no longer a primary focus for marketing leaders. Last year, this change was ranked first when respondents were asked about the most significant changes to the role over the past five years. However, now in our latest research findings, this role change has dropped to fifth place, with the top-ranked change now being an increased focus on digital marketing, which was ranked fifth in the previous year.

This shift may be attributed to the diminishing impact of the pandemic. In the UK, "flexible" jobs accounted for only 16.5 per cent of total vacancies advertised on a recruitment site in February 2024, a slight increase from 2019.¹ This data suggests that while flexible working remains an important aspect for marketing leaders, it is no longer the most pressing need.

An unexpected finding in this year's research emerged when marketing leaders were asked about the biggest changes to their roles over the past five years. Notably, the impact of changing regulations, which was ranked as the third most significant change in 2024, has dropped to sixth place in 2025. This shift is surprising given that organisations must navigate an increasingly complex global regulatory landscape

Figure 1: What do you think has been the biggest changes to your role over the past five years? (Rank top 3 with 1 being the biggest change)



Note: The rank frequency was determined by summing the total ranks for each option. Higher frequencies indicate higher ranking.

Source: Deloitte analysis, 2025

N (2023 CMO+SML) = 72, N (2024 CMO+SML) = 84

with jurisdictions moving at different speeds.² Despite this complexity, it appears that these regulatory changes have not significantly influenced the responsibilities or priorities of marketing leaders. This

suggests that marketing leaders have either adapted effectively to these regulatory changes or that other factors, such as technological advancements, have taken precedence in shaping their roles.

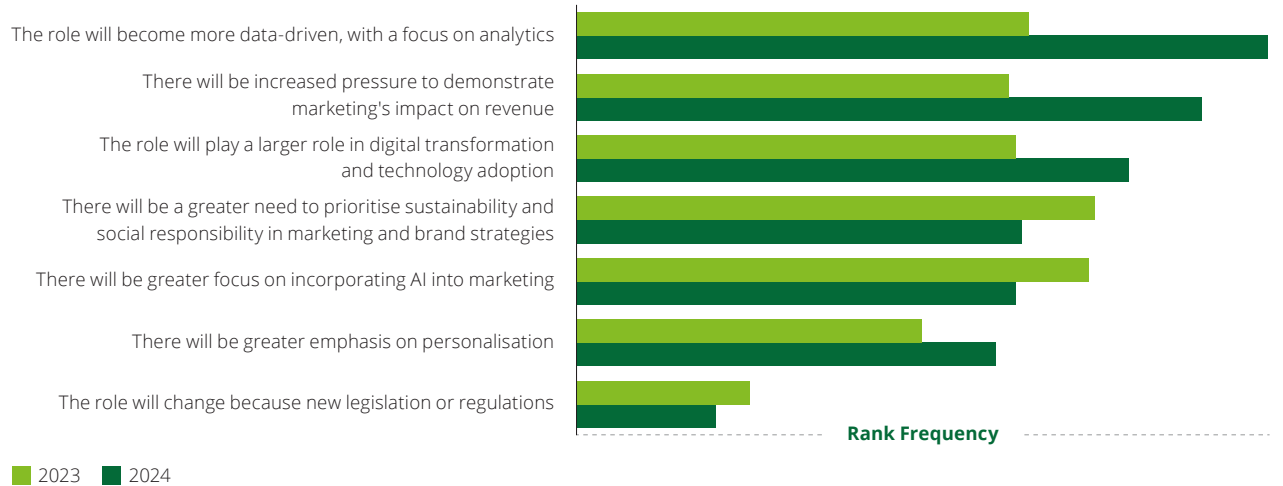
Evolving priorities of marketing leaders: Balancing data-driven decision making, revenue impact and sustainability

The perception of how marketing leaders' roles will change over the next two years contrasts sharply with their views from just a year ago. This indicates the rapid pace at which the responsibilities of marketing leaders are changing and the speed at which they must adapt. Last year, sustainability and social responsibilities in marketing were ranked as the top priority. However, in 2025 these aspects dropped to fourth place in terms of how marketing leaders perceive their roles will change over the next two years. This shift appears despite research suggesting business leaders are clear on the return on investment (ROI) from sustainability initiatives and a significant proportion of companies plan to increase their sustainability investments in 2025.³

Adding to this complexity, a recent CMO Spend Survey reveals the 2024 average budgets have fallen by 15 per cent, as CMOs pursue growth in the 'Era of Less'.⁴ This budget reduction further complicates the prioritisation of sustainability as marketing leaders must balance limited resources with the need to drive growth. Within the CMO community, there is a debate if sustainability as a market focus

is now a given and should be integrated seamlessly into all marketing efforts, while others contend that focusing on sustainability is too costly during tough economic times. It is essential to acknowledge both perspectives, recognising that while sustainability is a long-term commitment, immediate financial constraints may necessitate a strategic recalibration of priorities.

Figure 2: How do you perceive your role will change in the next two years? (Rank top 3 with 1 being the biggest change)



Note: The rank frequency was determined by summing the total ranks for each option. Higher frequencies indicate higher ranking.

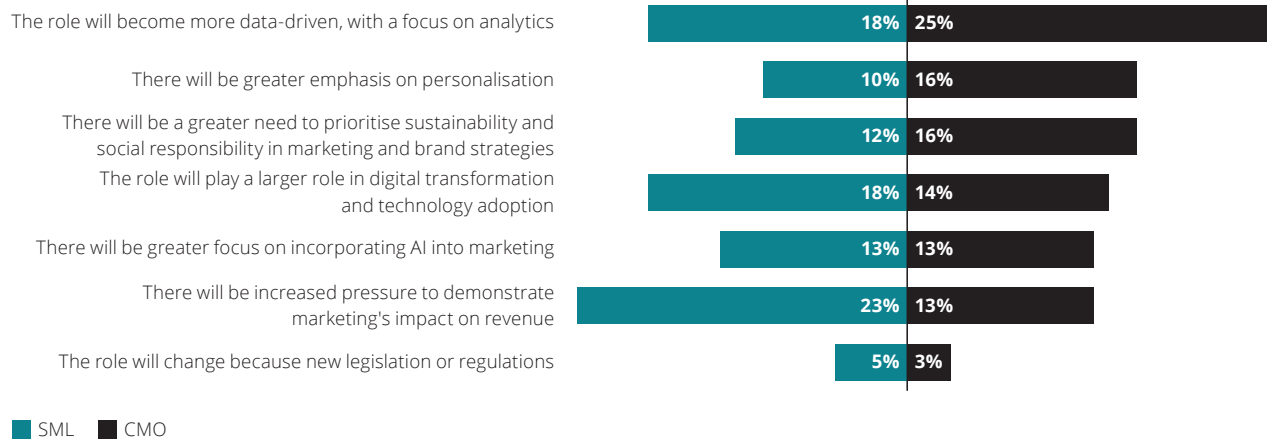
Source: Deloitte analysis, 2025

N (2023 CMO+SML) = 72, N (2024 CMO+SML) = 84

Another notable shift in this year's results is the focus on AI in marketing. AI was ranked second in 2024 but dropped to a surprising fifth place in the ranking of perceived changes in marketing leaders' roles over the next two years. This decline occurs even though the impact of AI remains significant, with a staggering three-quarters of leaders predicting that GenAI will lead to substantial or disruptive changes in their industries in the coming years.⁵ This suggests that while AI's potential is still recognised, there are other, more pressing matters that marketing leaders need to address. The urgency of these other priorities may be overshadowing the immediate focus on AI, even though its long-term impact is still anticipated to be significant.

Currently, marketing leaders are most focused on becoming more data-driven and analytical in their roles, followed closely by demonstrating marketing's impact on revenue. For CMOs, data and analytics are now the top-ranked perceived role change over the next two years. The emphasis on data analytics allows CMOs to move beyond instinct and assumptions, enabling them to base their decisions on concrete evidence. By collecting and analysing data from various sources such as customer interactions, social media, website traffic and sales

Figure 3: How do you perceive your role will change in the next two years? (Rank top 3 with 1 being the biggest change)

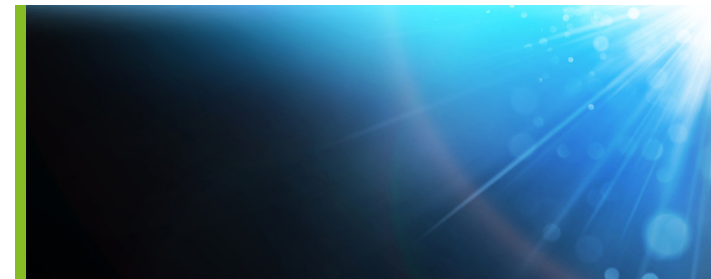


Note: The rank frequency was determined by summing the total ranks for each option. Higher frequencies indicate higher ranking.

Source: Deloitte analysis, 2025

N (CMO) = 34, N (SML) = 50

metrics, CMOs can uncover patterns, trends and correlations that inform their strategies.⁶ This data-driven approach is essential for CMOs as it provides an opportunity to create a new strategic direction for the organisation, fostering a truly data-driven firm where every decision is backed by data and there is a clear sense of direction in the organisation's marketing efforts.



In contrast, Senior Marketing Leaders (SMLs) are primarily focused on driving revenue through their marketing efforts and generating ROI for the business, followed by technology adoption and digital transformation of the business function. This highlights a clear difference in the approaches of CMOs and SMLs to their roles and responsibilities and distinguishes the end goals they are working towards. CMOs should communicate their priorities and achievements using insights harnessed from

data and analytics to SMLs to ensure that objectives are shared, and the impact is more achievable. By aligning their efforts and sharing insights, both CMOs and SMLs can work towards common goals, leveraging data-driven strategies to enhance their marketing effectiveness and drive business growth.

The evolving priorities of marketing leaders underscore the dynamic nature of their roles and the need for continuous adaptation. As they navigate

these changes, marketing leaders must balance immediate priorities with long-term strategic goals, ensuring that they remain agile and responsive to the ever-changing business landscape. By focusing on data-driven decision-making, demonstrating marketing's impact on revenue and maintaining a commitment to sustainability, marketing leaders can effectively steer their organisations towards sustained success.

AI innovation: Redefining marketing strategies and overcoming challenges

Marketing leaders are increasingly leveraging GenAI to enhance their operations. This year's research indicates that 58 per cent of marketing leaders identify "improving operational efficiency" as the biggest opportunity presented by GenAI, followed closely by "content creation" at 55 per cent. GenAI is being recognised as a transformative tool for operational efficiency, significantly enhancing speed and resource utilisation, enabling more agile processes, improving customer experiences and boosting employee satisfaction across various industries. Organisations that have already adopted GenAI are experiencing benefits such as improved operational efficiency, enhanced customer experience and increased sales.⁷

Figure 4: What do you see as the biggest opportunities of Generative AI for your role? (Select all that apply)



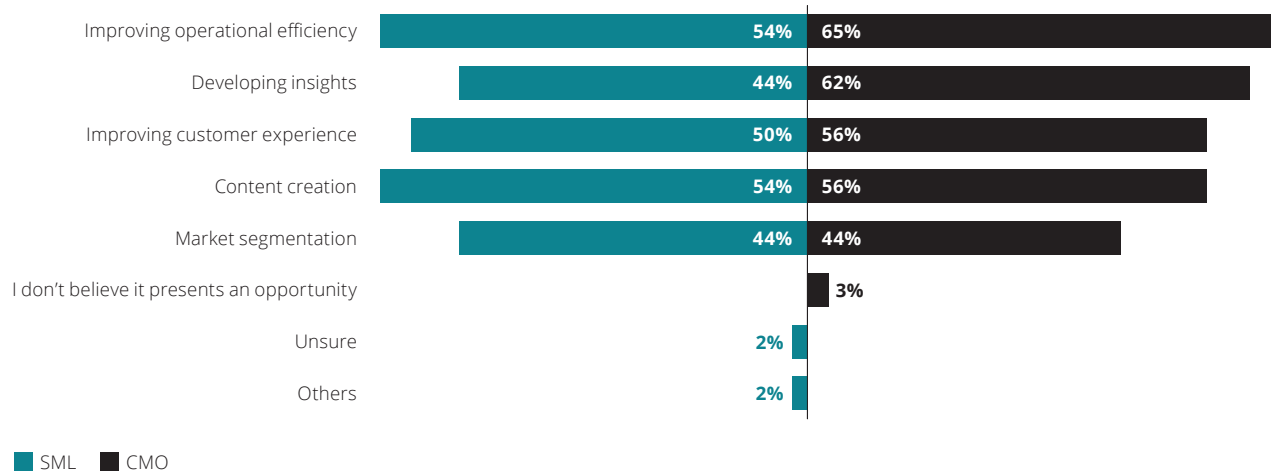
Note: The rank frequency was determined by summing the total ranks for each option. Higher frequencies indicate higher ranking.

Source: Deloitte analysis, 2025

N = 84 (CMO+SML)

For CMOs, 65 per cent believe that improving operational efficiency is the primary opportunity offered by GenAI, while 54 per cent of SMLs share this view. Additionally, 54 per cent of SMLs consider content generation as the biggest opportunity for GenAI. GenAI supports various types of content creation in marketing, including personalised email campaigns, social media posts, blog articles, video scripts and product descriptions. Previous research revealed the demand for marketing content grew by 1.5 times in 2023, yet marketing teams were only able to meet that demand 55 per cent of the time.⁸ Marketers leveraging GenAI can potentially stay ahead of this demand by using the technology to support higher quality, more personalised and greater volume of content, thereby enhancing employee productivity.

Figure 5: What do you see as the biggest opportunities of Generative AI for your role? (Select all that apply)



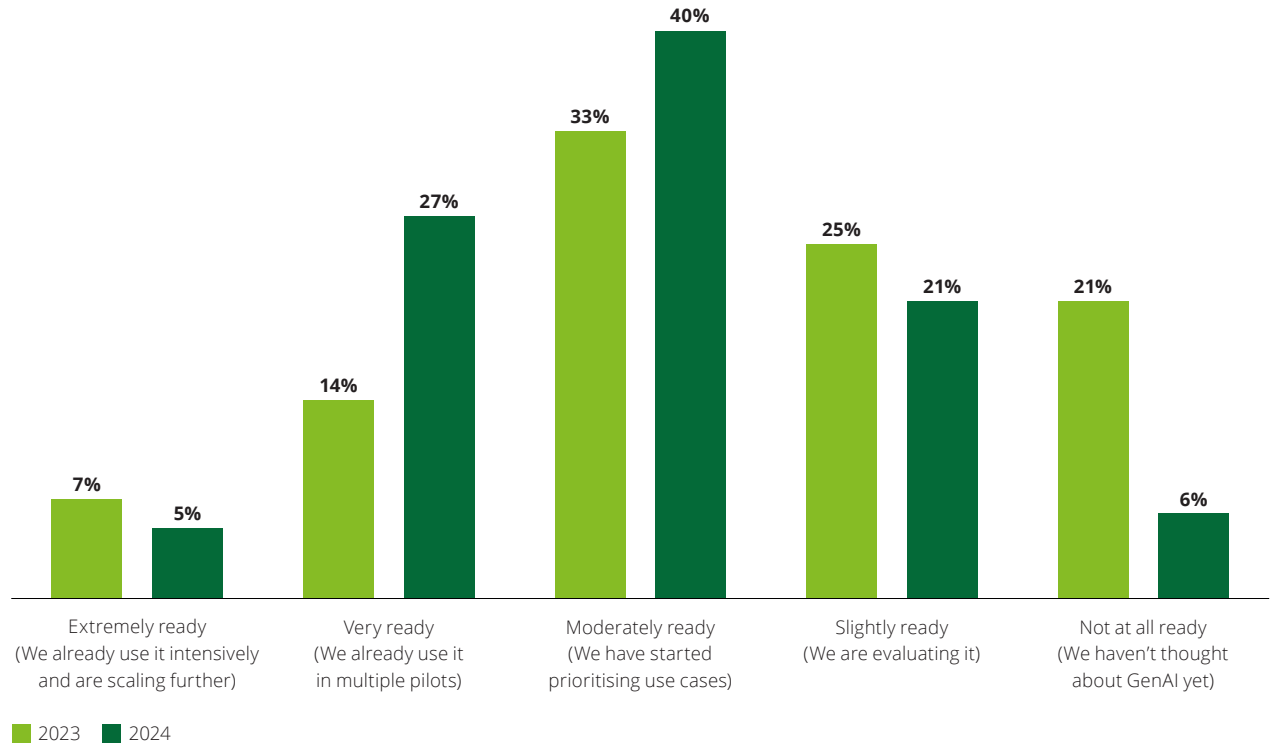
Source: Deloitte analysis, 2025

N (CMO) = 34, N (SML) = 50

The readiness of marketing leaders to adopt AI in marketing has significantly increased. Compared to last year, the readiness has risen by 15 percentage points, with 94 per cent of marketing leaders now slightly to extremely ready to adopt AI in marketing. Of these, one-third are either very or extremely ready, compared to a fifth the previous year. This indicates a growing appetite for AI among marketing leaders. Notably, the respondents who marked themselves as not at all ready has dropped by 15 percentage points (from 21% last year to 6% in 2024). This decrease can be attributed to increased awareness and understanding of AI technologies, as well as more accessible and user-friendly AI tools being available in the market.



Figure 6: How ready are you to take advantage of AI within marketing in your organisation?



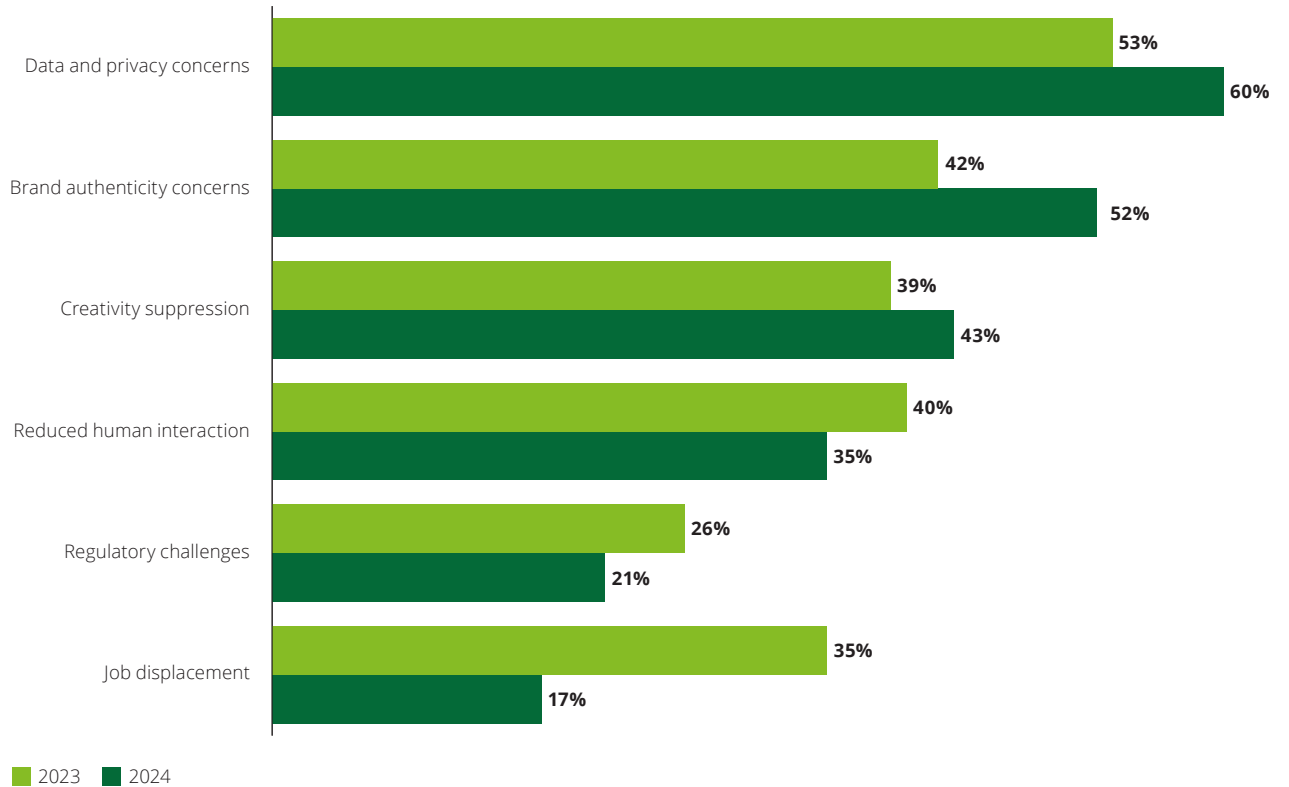
Source: Deloitte analysis, 2025

N (2023 CMO+SML) = 72, N (2024 CMO+SML) = 84

However, there are still concerns regarding the use of GenAI. Concerns about data and privacy are expressed by 60 per cent of respondents, an increase of 7 percentage points from last year. Another significant concern is brand authenticity, which has risen by a staggering 10 percentage points to 52 per cent this year. These concerns stem from several factors. AI-generated content can lack human touch and emotional nuance, leading to a disconnect with audiences. Consistency issues arise as GenAI may produce varying tones and styles. Ethical concerns about transparency and honesty can damage trust if customers feel deceived. Quality control and cultural sensitivity are challenging, risking inappropriate or low-quality content. Over-reliance on AI can also make brands seem impersonal and remove that sense of authenticity.

As AI use cases for marketers become increasingly prevalent, leaders who swiftly embrace these technologies position themselves to capitalise on the competitive advantages they offer. This year's survey underscores a clear message: marketing leaders must be adaptable to new technologies and leverage them to enhance both their own effectiveness and that of their teams.

Figure 7: What do you see as potentially negative consequences of the use of GenAI for your role? (Select all that apply)



Source: Deloitte analysis, 2025

N (2023 CMO+SML) = 72, N (2024 CMO+SML) = 84

Summary

A significant transformation in marketing leadership roles is being driven by the technological renaissance and characterised by the integration of digital marketing, data analytics and AI. CMOs must now integrate new and emerging tech into their marketing mix and strategies to drive sustainable growth. Marketing leaders must continuously adapt to stay competitive and effectively steer their organisations towards success in this era of groundbreaking technological advancements. It is more vital than ever to stay informed and understand the implications of emerging technology on their business and seek opportunities to use it to truly be successful – especially with the potential GenAI offers marketers.

Key Recommendations

• Embrace digital transformation

Marketing leaders should prioritise digital marketing strategies to reach target audiences more effectively. Leveraging digital platforms can provide wider reach, lower costs, better targeting capabilities and measurable results. By integrating digital tools, CMOs can enhance their marketing efforts and stay ahead in a competitive landscape.

• Leverage data and analytics

CMOs must adopt a data-driven approach to make informed decisions. Collecting and analysing data from various sources, such as customer interactions and sales metrics, can uncover valuable insights. This approach enables CMOs to create strategic directions backed by concrete evidence and foster a data-driven culture within their organisations.

• Integrate AI for operational efficiency

GenAI offers significant opportunities to improve operational efficiency and content creation. Marketing leaders should leverage AI to enhance speed, resource utilisation and customer experiences. CMOs can boost employee productivity and meet the growing demand for high-quality marketing content by adopting AI technologies.

• Maintain focus on sustainability

Despite shifting priorities, sustainability remains a crucial aspect of marketing leadership. CMOs should continue to align sustainability initiatives with broader business goals, demonstrating the ROI of these efforts. By maintaining a commitment to sustainability, marketing leaders can contribute to long-term business success and positive societal impact.

Endnotes

1. **Less Flexible Working in UK as Employers Offer Fewer Part Time and Remote Jobs** | Bloomberg, 2024.
2. **Regulatory Outlook 2024** | Deloitte UK, 2025.
3. **Why 2024 is the year sustainability develops a business case** | World Economic Forum, 2024.
4. **Gartner CMO Survey Reveals Marketing Budgets Have Dropped to 7.7% of Overall Company Revenue in 2024** | Gartner, 2024.
5. **The state of AI in early 2024** | McKinsey, 2024.
6. **Harnessing Analytics for Informed Decisions: A Guide for CMOs** | The Economic Times, 2023.
7. **2024 Generative AI in Organisations** | Capgemini, 2024.
8. **Generative AI's Transformation of Content Marketing** | Deloitte Digital, 2023.

Recognition and appreciation

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Acknowledgements: Thank you to Mark Beavers



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