B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events

In association with Kingpin

Global tech marketing trends

Insights and analysis from an exclusive survey on tech marketers from an exclusive research programme



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Introduction

Global tech marketing: Tracking the trailblazers



Joel Harrison,
editor-in-chief,
B2B Marketing

If there's one thing that we can be certain of in B2B marketing, it's that the tech industry is a trailblazer for everything that's new, interesting and innovative. More so than any other sector, tech companies are always fastest to recognise, explore, embrace and successfully deploy new techniques and technologies, and create learning and lessons for those elsewhere to follow. So for that reason, understanding developments in this sector, and how it influences the rest of B2B, has always been a key priority for us at B2B Marketing.

But the increasing global nature of technology is serving to make that challenge more acute and more urgent. World beating tech firms now originate from all over the globe, not just in Silicon Valley, and consequently best practice in B2B tech marketing is becoming similarly as diverse and fragmented, as companies with very different cultures address challenges and opportunities in both dramatically and subtly different ways.

In collaboration with specialist tech sector agency Kingpin, we wanted to understand just what these differences in tech marketing looked like around the world, where marketers were prioritising and – most importantly of all – what success looked like in different territories and regions. This study seeks to achieve just that: by polling marketers in each of the three major tech regions (AsiaPac, EMEA and North America), and comparing results, we've built up an intriguing picture of different attitudes and preferences around the world. We found the results fascinating and enlightening, once again highlighting the rich and nuanced tapestry that is B2B marketing.

For ease of access and reference, we've focused this report on the ten key findings, and have examined each one in detail. We hope you enjoy them.

Introduction

The future of tech marketing: Don't get caught up in the hype



Mirza Fur,
director and co-founder,
Kingpin

Just as the global technology market is changing – much less centred on Silicon Valley and a lot more diverse – so too is the business of B2B technology marketing. This means the future of tech marketing, and marketing in general, will be ever more complex and challenging. But these changes are also creating new opportunities for marketers.

In this fresh research from B2B Marketing, undertaken in association with Kingpin, we discover where some of those new opportunities and challenges lie across three different regions: AsiaPac, EMEA and North America. We see the emergence of a greater number of stakeholders, in a wider variety of roles and ranging across a much wider geographical spread. There's also the rise of new tools, tactics, channels and data points – all meaningful to the buying journey and increasingly at marketers' fingertips.

It's not always easy for marketers to make effective use of these technologies and strategies, but our research identifies ways in which they can maximise their potential for success.

First, it's important not to get caught up in the hype, and to give some trends more time to develop and prove their worth before leaping in.

Second, marketers should never lose focus on their core principles or their audience: These are fundamentals that should always guide us, no matter what.

Finally, as this research demonstrates, increasingly useful insights are available, and marketers need to take advantage of these, because others are certainly doing so.

There's a world of opportunity waiting for those who do it right. Enjoy discovering more in the following pages.

1. Tech marketers' biggest time drain is reporting

Reporting and analysis are by far the biggest drains on marketers' time, taking around a third of working hours consistently across all regions. This is significantly more than content management, the second most time-intensive task, which occupied 18% of marketers' working hours, and more than double that of data management in third place (occupying only 14% of marketers' time).

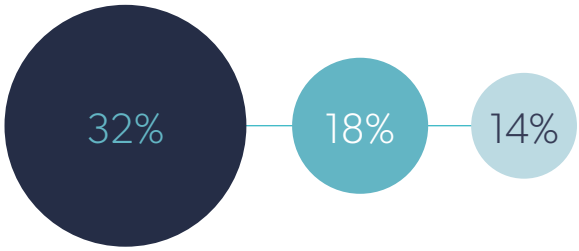
There were few regional anomalies in the response to this question. Event management took up 11% of marketers' time in NA (almost double that of other regions). While managing suppliers and internal communications were significantly more time-intensive issues for marketers in APAC than their contemporaries in EMEA and NA.

Analysis: Why is reporting so time-intensive?

Marketers have a great deal to report on. While technology has transformed and arguably revolutionised transparency on marketing effectiveness, it's also demanded marketers provide more and better data to the rest of the organisation, as well as provide more evidence for their decisions and to support budget allocation. Furthermore, the proliferation of reporting platforms means many marketers have to work with numerous technologies to pull together the required picture of activity or the necessary evidence.

This scenario is arguably fuel to the fire of AI-enabled martech platforms which promise to provide more of this data seamlessly, thereby freeing up marketers to get on with other, less laborious and potentially more value-adding activities.

What marketing function do you feel takes up most of your time?



32% – Marketing reports and analysis

18% – Content management, creation and localisation

14% – Data management, integration and analysis

The Kingpin View:
The right skills and tech are paramount

Attribution and measurement are top of the agenda for many of our clients, but without the right skills and technology, being able to connect datapoints and measure long-term campaign effectiveness can often prove time consuming and resource heavy.

As an agency, we constantly tackle this problem with our clients, through Argus, our own data/campaign management platform. Through a range of methods including retrospective deal analysis and touchpoint identification we can produce real views of purchasing journeys and ROI metrics.

2. Revenue generated is by far the most important metric for tech marketers

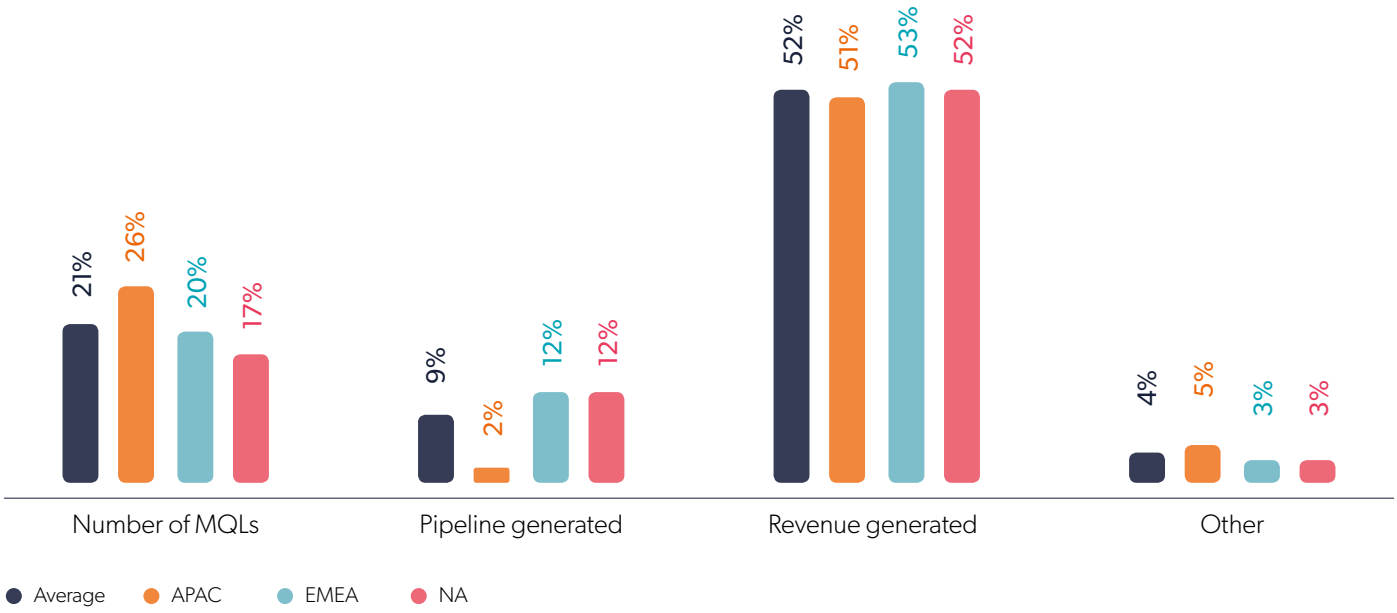
Although a number of different metrics are used by tech marketers in different regions, it's clear that revenue generated is consistently the most significant; 52% of marketers specify it as their most important metric. This data suggests revenue is deemed more than twice as important as the number of MQLs generated, and five times more important than pipeline. On this note, it's interesting to note MQLs are seen as correspondingly less significant in APAC than in EMEA or NA. While there are other metrics which are deemed as most significant in some organisations, these are very much in the minority, specified by less than 5% of respondents.

The Kingpin View: Sales and marketing alignment is essential for growth

It's interesting to see revenue is by far the most important metric for senior marketers. This adds to the theory that marketing and sales are becoming far more intertwined and effective alignment between the two is essential for business growth.

However, this can create its own challenge. Focus on revenue can lead to marketers losing sight of the buying journey, which often isn't linear but a combination of online and offline activities with multiple touchpoints and, more importantly, involve selling to human emotions.

'Most important' marketing metric



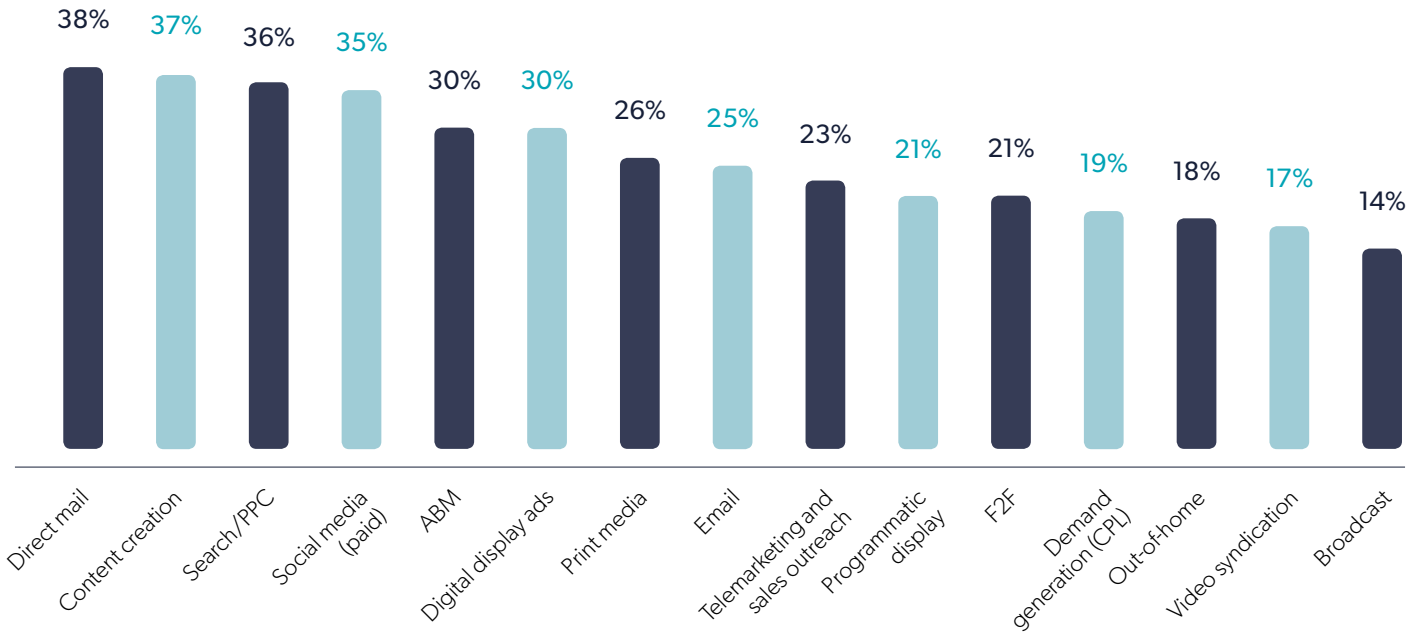
3. Both digital and traditional channels and techniques are still valid

Tech marketers in all regions are continuing to use a mix of both old and new channels and techniques, with some very traditional ones continuing have significant traction – in particular direct mail. However, other offline forms of marketing have fallen well down the pecking order when compared to digital alternatives – such as out-of-home and broadcast.

The data also contradicts the suggestion that inbound marketing is replacing outbound on a wholesale basis, with a mix of both forms found in the top five channels/techniques. Ranked fifth is ABM, which is arguably more outbound, although can certainly include elements of both.

Lastly, it's interesting to note that two of the more recently emerged and hotly tipped channels, programmatic display and video syndication, have yet to achieve prominence, both languishing in the bottom half of the list.

Intensive channel usage – average across all regions



These average figures bely some interesting regional variations – particularly when comparing preferences in APAC versus EMEA and NA. As the chart below shows, APAC uses traditional channels or techniques much less intensively than other regions – specifically print media, email, telemarketing and broadcast.

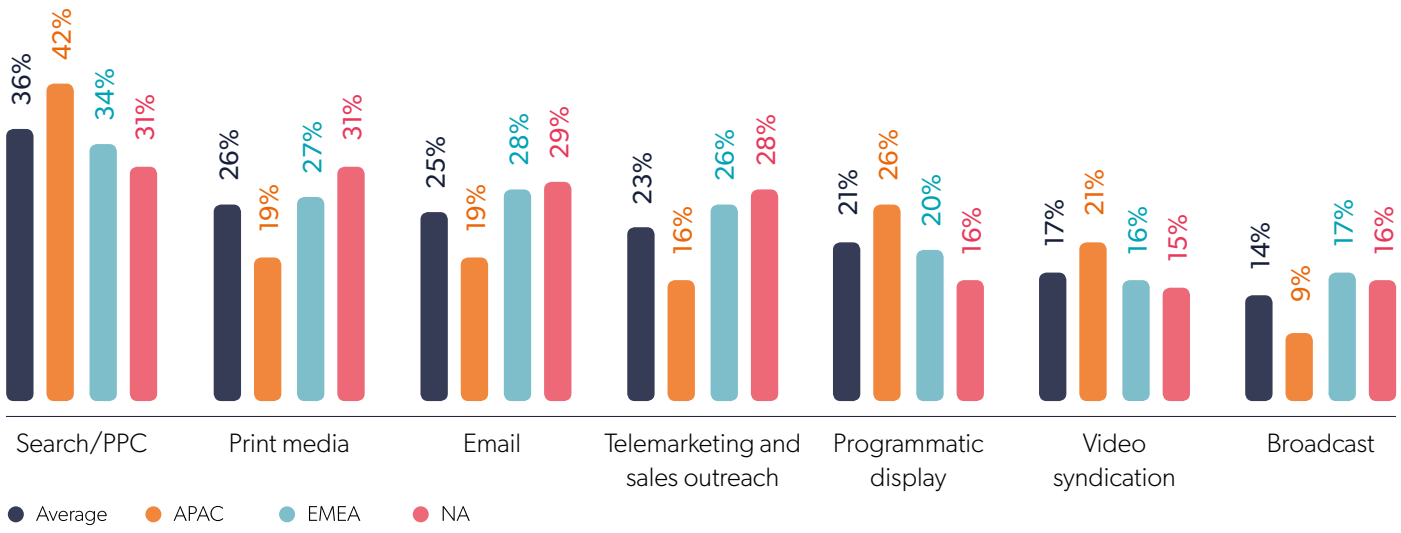
At the same time, tech marketers in APAC are more likely to intensively use digital channels – specifically search/PPC, programmatic display and video syndication.

Analysis: Why are traditional channels less developed in APAC and digital channels more aggressively used?

It's likely these markets have less historical baggage, both in terms of audience communication preferences and marketers' skillsets. Essentially, instead of following a linear development process, they've simply leapfrogged more traditional channels to adopt the emerging ones. It's also likely cultural differences in APAC markets make activities like telemarketing less socially acceptable, or even possible.

But the fact that belies this is the universal popularity of direct mail. The absence of historical data in this study makes it impossible to determine whether this is a resurgence, or whether mail has always been popular, but there may be a correlation between the universal popularity of ABM and the interest in direct mail.

Regional variations in intensively used channels



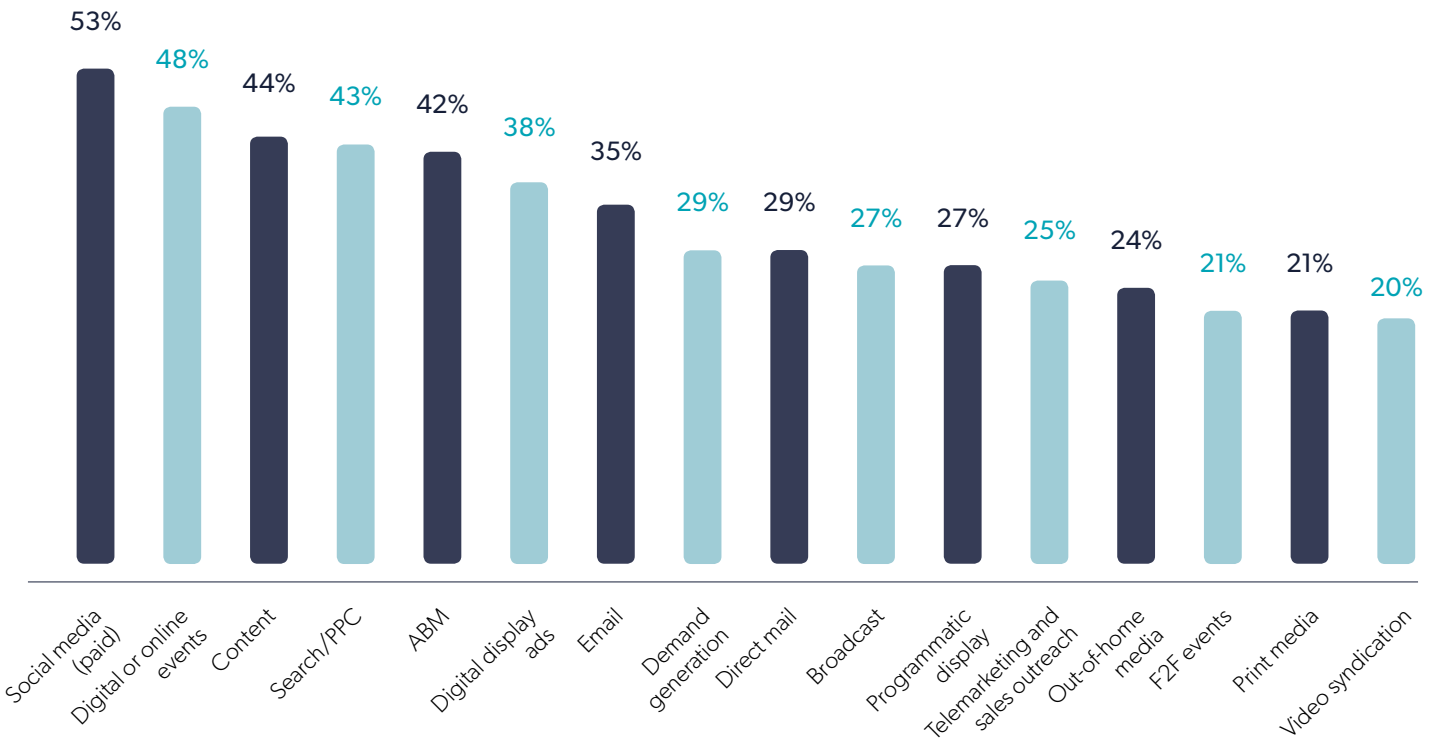
The Kingpin View: A welcome variety of media

These results are refreshing to see. In B2B, marketers often forget that ultimately, we are selling to people who are influenced from all types of media; their daily news feeds, the newspaper they read, and the day-to-day commuting journeys they take.

The challenge, however, is that some of these key channels are perceived to be seen as unmeasurable or require high investment. As time has gone on and the digital platforms have overtaken the "traditional" media, the targeting capabilities, tools and technologies being adopted by media owners in broadcast and outdoor have evolved enabling a much stronger level of measurement.

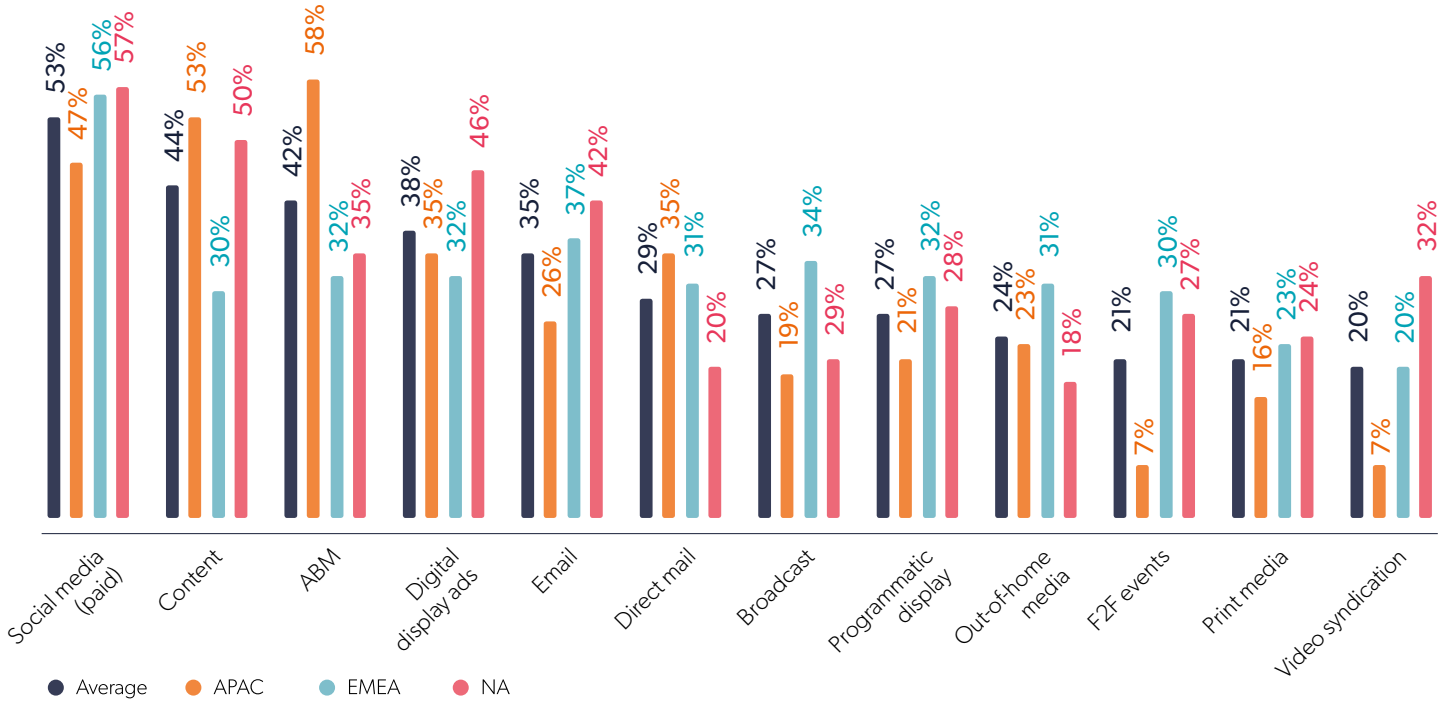
4. Paid social and digital events to benefit from largest increased spend

Increase channel or technique usage – average across all regions

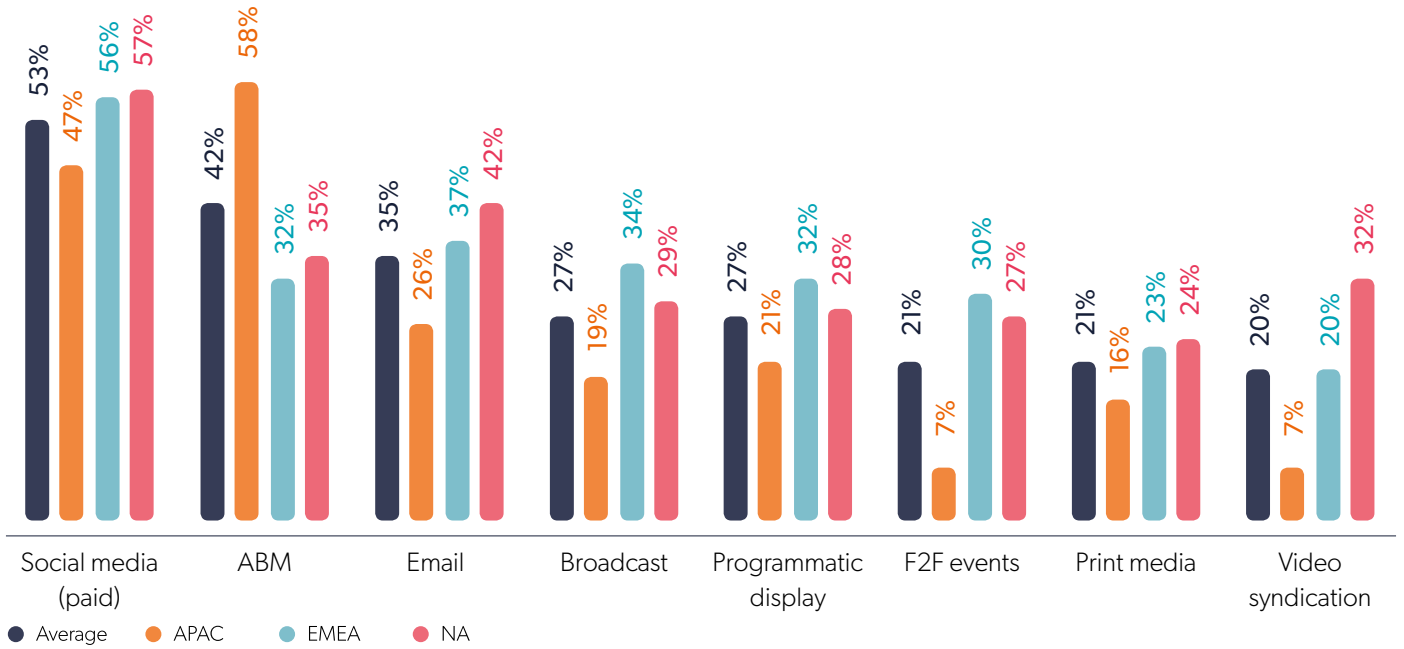


When asked about investment expectations for the next 12 months, the two biggest beneficiaries were paid social media and online events, followed closely by content, PPC and ABM (when the average global figures are examined). It's interesting to note that, with the exception of ABM, none of these channels are particularly new or novel – most are very well established marketing disciplines. Meanwhile, programmatic and video syndication (two more recent additions to the marketing firmament) appear set to be much less popular – although both will still see an increase. Perhaps most interestingly of all, email is still expected to perform strongly, despite the negative implications of GDPR and similar legislation around the world. Rumours of its demise have been greatly exaggerated.

Channel increase variation by region

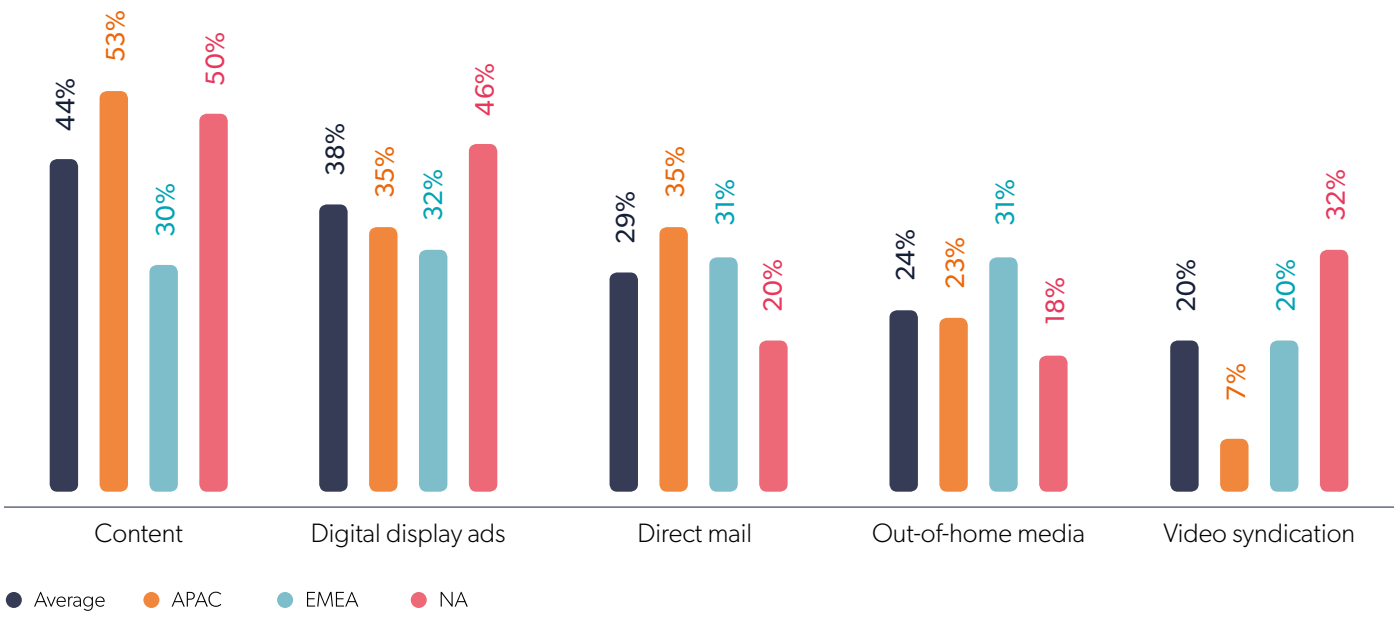


Tactic/channel increase – where APAC is the outlier



When regional data is compared, it's clear there are distinct variations, with some channels significantly more popular than others in some regions. For example, tech marketers in APAC expect to invest significantly more in ABM and content than their colleagues elsewhere, while marketers in NA will focus on digital display and video syndication in a far more prominent way than elsewhere.

Tactic/channel increase – where NA/EMEA is outlier



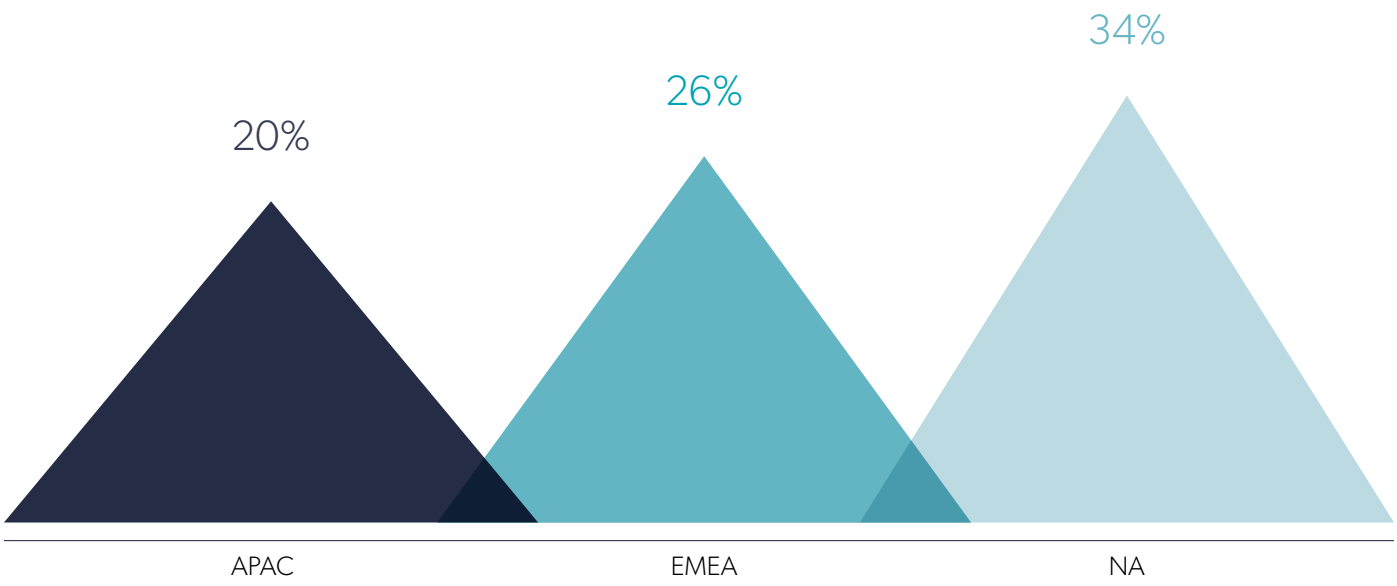
The Kingpin View: An integrated approach for NA marketers

This is quite an interesting perspective and could be due to budgets allocated to the NA market traditionally being larger than other regions – purely because of the size of the market.

This fact, coupled with a lesser complexity level of trying to market to audiences in multiple countries and languages, enable the NA marketer to create a much truer integrated approach to their marketing programmes than potentially an EMEA or APAC marketer trying to accommodate different markets and sales requirements. However, with the advent of more sophisticated levels of insights and technologies, there are ways that this can be addressed.

5. Tech marketers in North America are the most skilled professionals

Average marketing knowledge across all channels

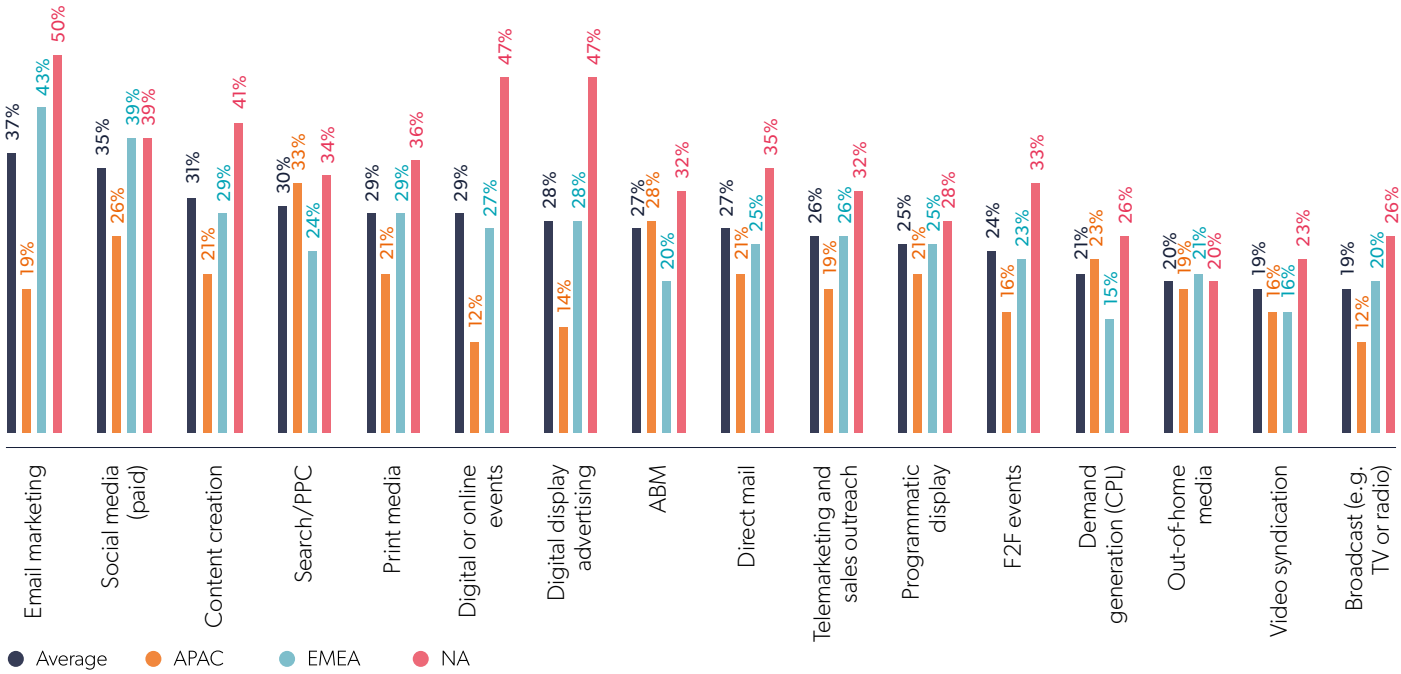


Tech marketers in North America have more confidence in their own skillsets and marketing knowledge than their colleagues in both EMEA and (especially) APAC. The above chart was created by taking the average level of knowledge (self-determined) by marketers for all the various channels, and then creating an average for the region.

As can be seen in the chart below, marketers in the US and Canada were more confident in their ability across every single channel than those in APAC, and in all but two than their colleagues in EMEA (paid social and out-of-home).

The reason for this may be two-fold: first, because the heartland of the global tech industry is North America, and therefore it has the longest track record and possibly the deepest skills base. Second, it's likely to be cultural, with marketers in North America more likely to overtly express confidence in their skills and competencies than those elsewhere.

Knowledge against different marketing channel/technique



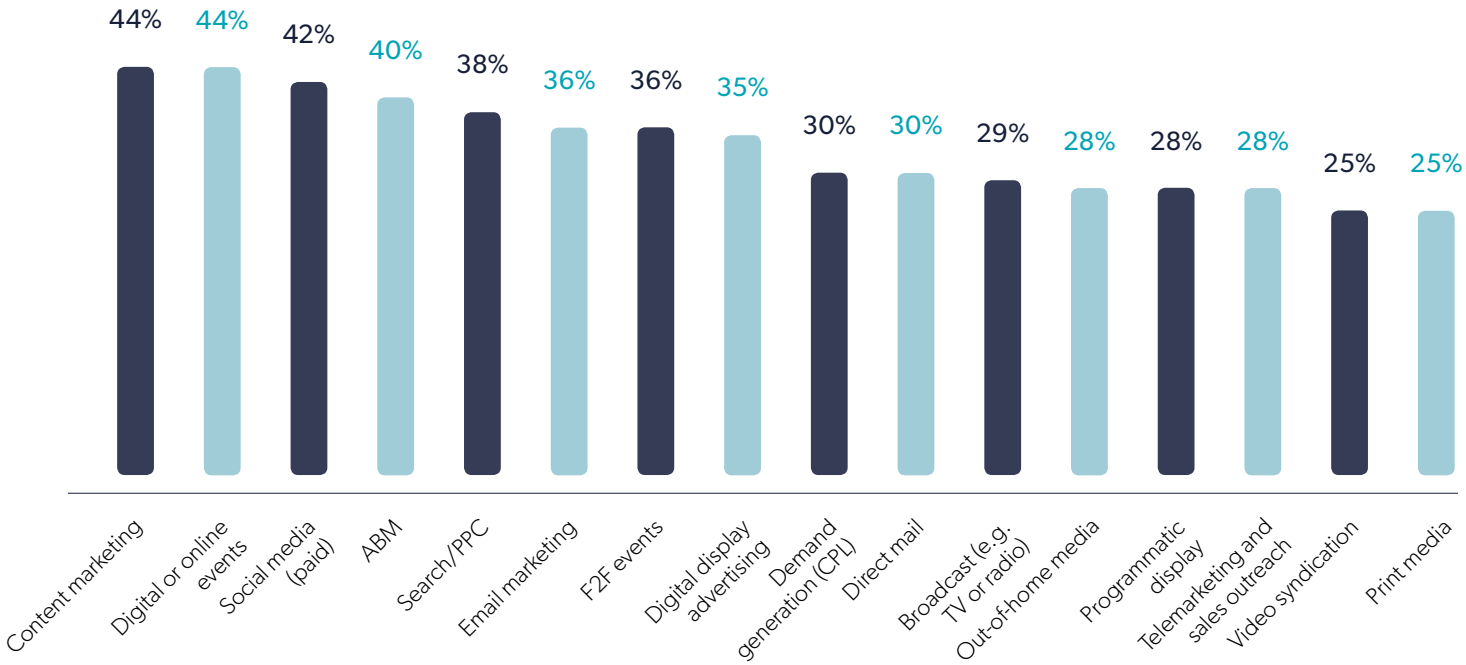
The Kingpin View: US-based market gives NA marketers the the edge

The maturity of the NA B2B market is ahead of the rest of the regions, predominantly due to the fact the majority of martech, adtech and vendors are US-based. This in turn leads to the fact that the marketer in the NA region has the pressure of potentially having to be much more up to speed than their counterparts in other parts of the globe.

This automatically will position the NA teams as the "pioneering" voice among their global colleagues around specific disciplines and tactics.

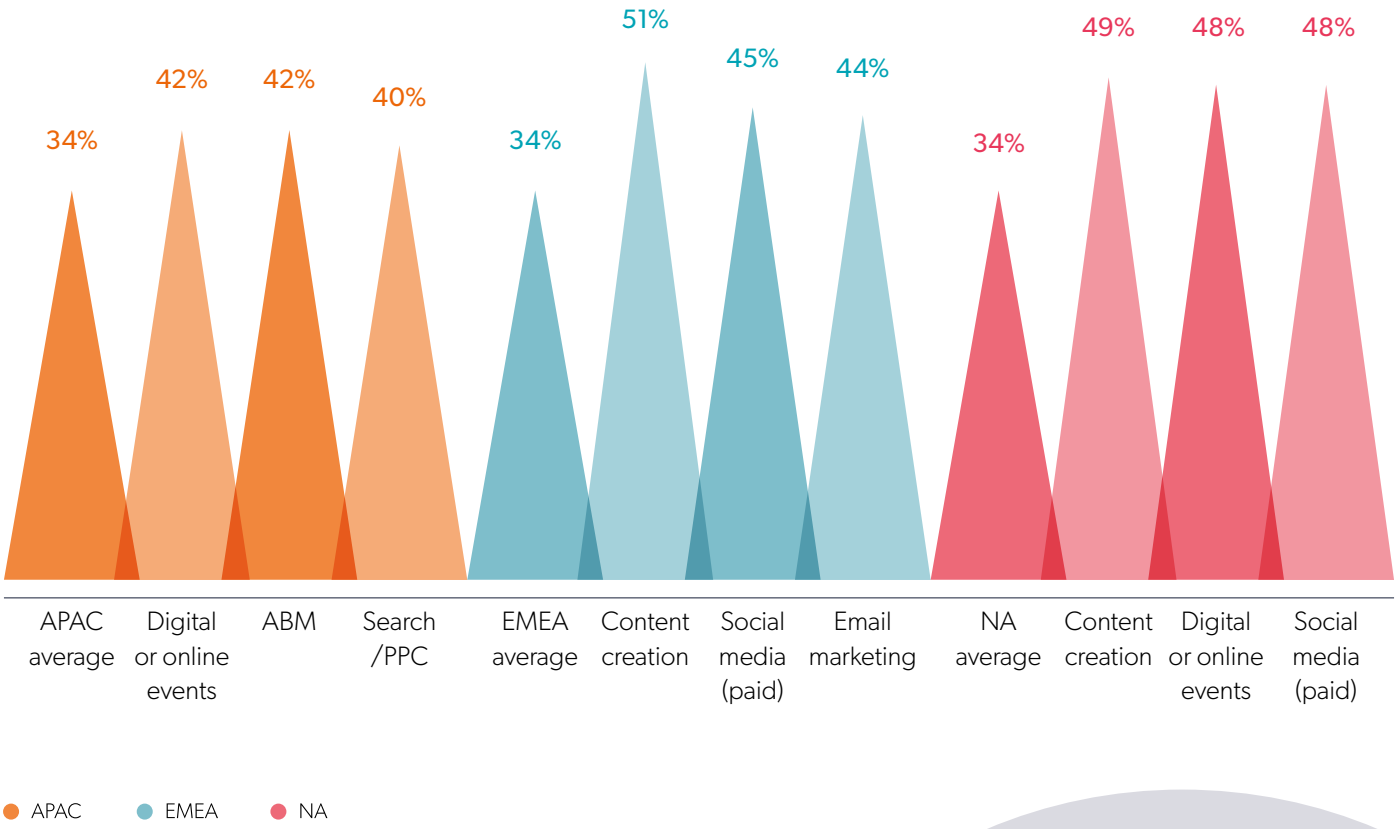
6. Content and digital events are most effective tech marketing channels

Most effective technique globally



Although marketers are upping their investment most aggressively in paid search, the most effective channels for tech marketers globally are content creation and digital events. Print media was found to be least effective.

Most effective channels by region



As ever, the picture was more complex when the individual regions were examined, with a focus on their top three channels. For example, content did not feature in the top three techniques in APAC, while email was deemed third most important in EMEA – despite all the disruption caused by GDPR in the last year. Meanwhile, marketers in APAC were most excited about ABM, possibly because the discipline is least developed in this region.

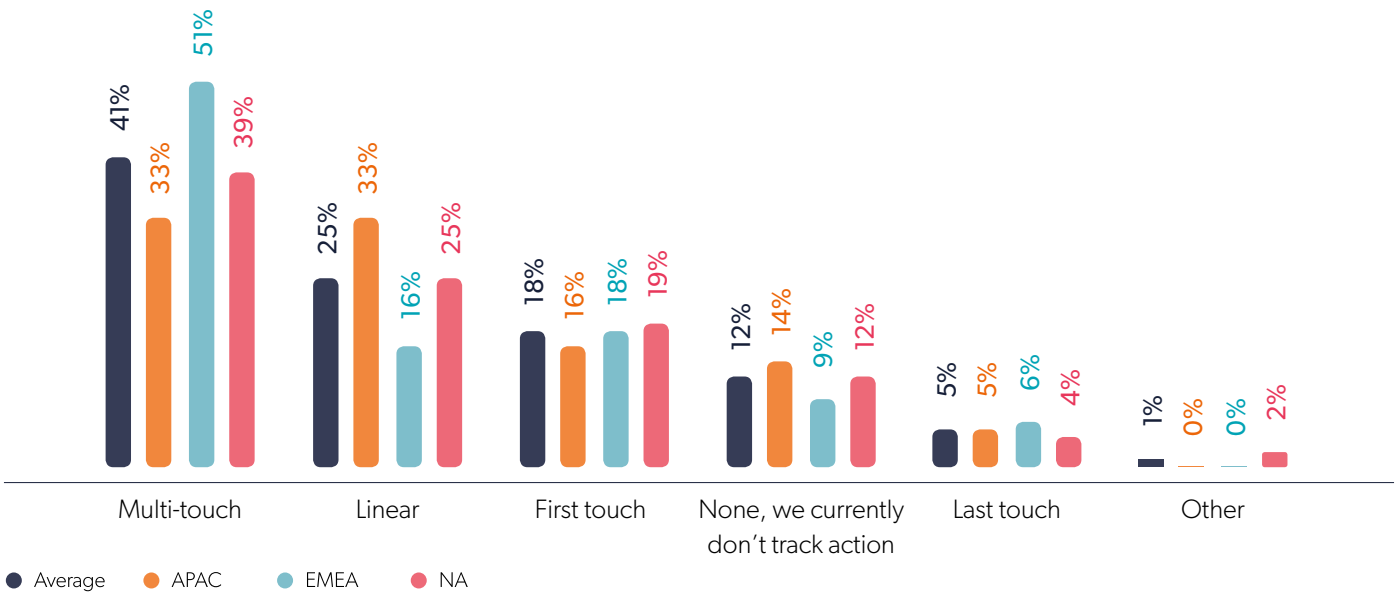
The Kingpin View: The right content creates desired outcomes

It's no surprise to see content marketing as the most effective technique across the board. Ultimately having the right content underpins all outbound marketing efforts, whether it's events, ABM, social, print or video.

Saying the right thing, in the right way at the right time, is always by far going to be the most effective method to generate desired outcomes. As a result, audience insights, intent-based data and market research are key to make sure any message/content that is being produced is relevant and poignant to the eyes of those we are trying to influence.

7. Multi-touch dominates attribution

Attribution globally in regions



There's a clear leaning towards multi-touch attribution among B2B tech marketers. Particularly in EMEA, it's used by 50% of respondents, as compared with 40% in NA and only 30% in APAC. By contrast, linear attribution is most popular in these two markets.

This is a clear and perhaps predictable reflection of the attribution challenge facing B2B marketers, wherein they are under pressure to provide analysis. But the combination of long sales cycles, complex decision-making units and engagement via a sales team and/or channel reseller, makes accurate and robust data extremely hard to come by. Hence marketers default to using wider, rather than narrower data sets in their attempt to demonstrate effectiveness.

The Kingpin View: Multi-touch joins the dots

Attribution is the ongoing challenge within any B2B marketer's day-to-day role. As more often than not we forget that ultimately we're selling to people who are used to bouncing between online and offline channels to evaluate and purchase their products/solutions, add in various stakeholders within the buying team, and different routes to sale i.e. partners/resellers and direct sales people. Plus you have a whole measurement challenge to deliver 100% accuracy. As a result, the multi-touch measurement approach provides a joining of the dots of the buying journey to get a deeper understanding.

8. Only 50% of tech marketers globally have implemented marketing automation

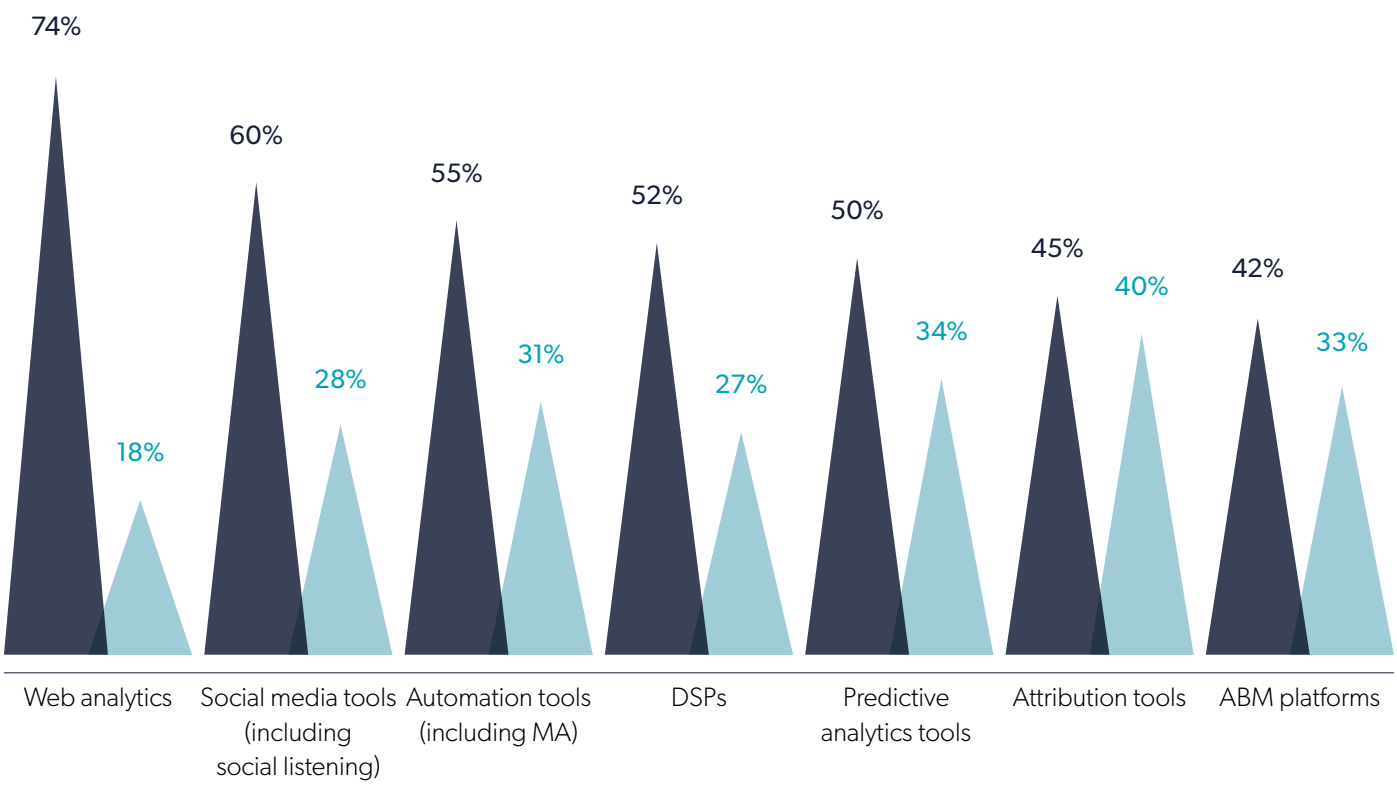
The chart below provides a broad perspective about which martech platforms marketers in tech firms have either implemented, or are currently evaluating. It's probably no surprise that web analytics is near universal in terms of deployment – given the easy access to Google Analytics, it's perhaps surprising that this tech isn't universal.

However, adoption of marketing automation remains lower, and this is surprising given the expectation of the ubiquitousness of this platform type within this sector.

It's widely regarded as 'table stakes' these days, and is often a kind of 'gateway tech'– the implementation of which can be game-changing for marketing teams giving them both the confidence and ability to use more tech. However, it's also noted for expensive and/or failed implementations.

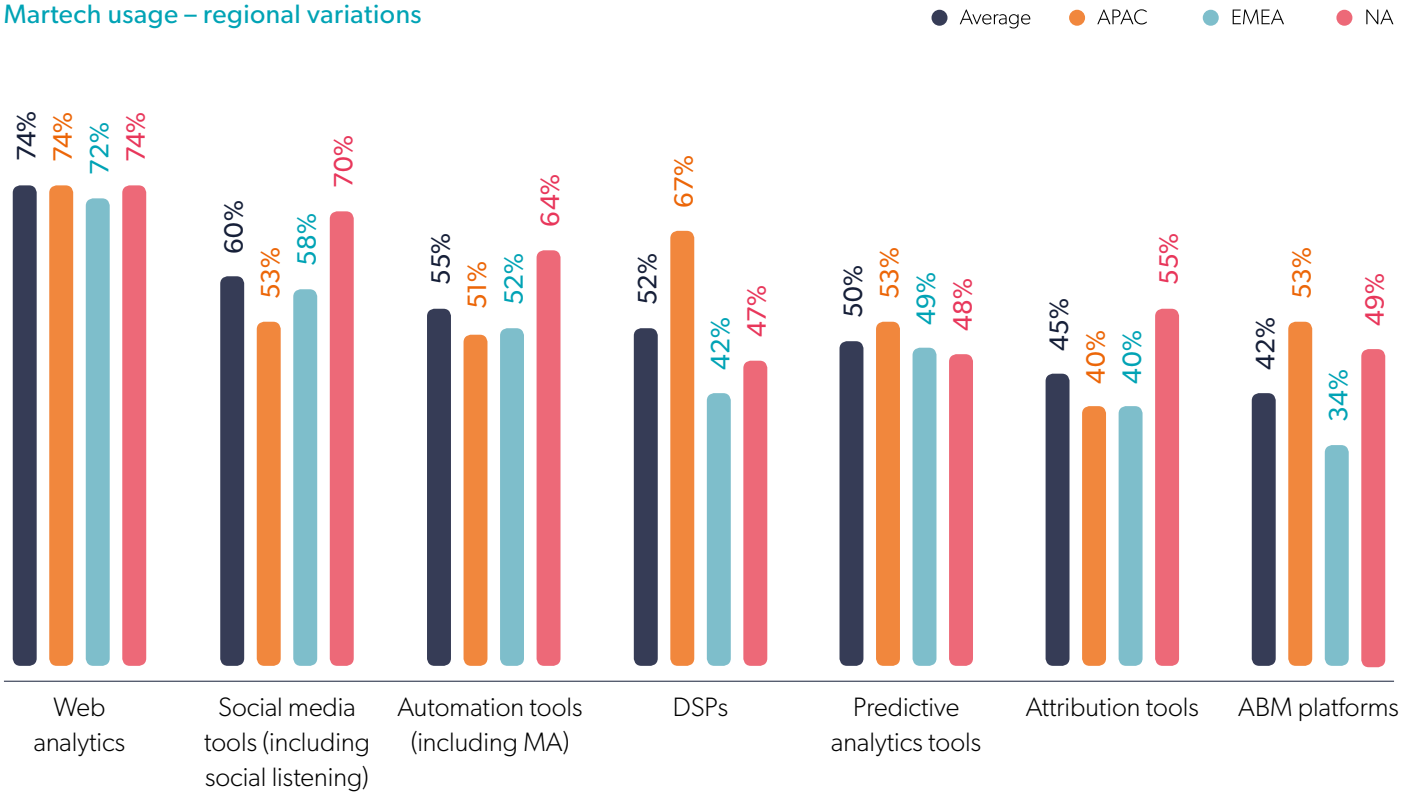
In terms of the installed martech base, it's smallest in terms of tech for ABM, which is a strong reflection of the general understanding and deployment of these techniques.

Martech adoption



When the usage of martech is viewed on a regional basis, some clear variations become apparent. In particular, it's clear social media listening tools, automation tools and attribution tools are significantly more popular in NA, while DSPs and ABM tech are more popular in APAC. This last point is surprising, given that ABM is least advanced in APAC (see page 18) and suggests a culture of more rapid tech adoption to address challenges or opportunities within this region than elsewhere. EMEA, meanwhile, appears to stick to a safe average on all tech categories.

Martech usage – regional variations

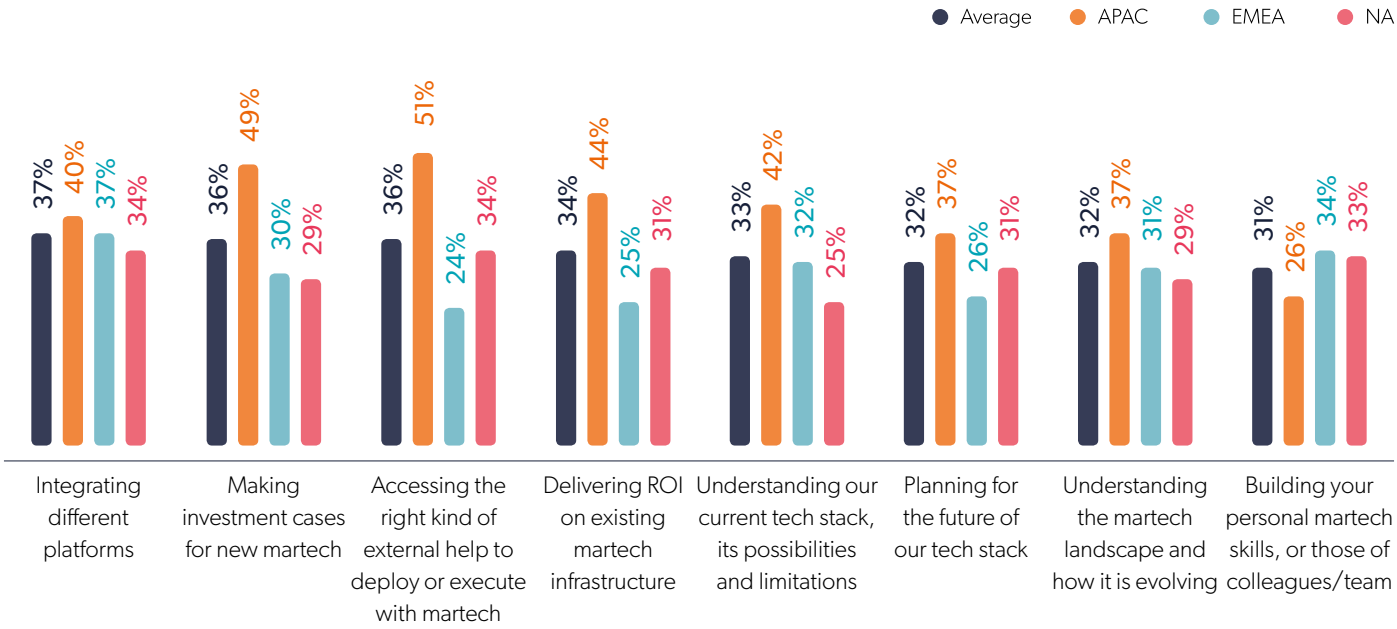


The Kingpin View: Tech isn't a panacea

Over the past few years technology seems to have been acquired as a 'silver bullet' to all marketing problems. Need attribution and nurture? Buy an automation tool. Need to understand messaging? Buy a social listening tool. Need to target organisations? Then deploy an ABM tool.

It's the latter one that's interesting. In APAC, ABM seems to be just starting out as a route to market (see page 18). It's clear organisations are evaluating and using the technology in the hope that it provides them with a solution to their current approach. If marketers accept that 'insight' is available and not just platinum leads that you need to call right there and then, there's a chance it might work.

9. Integration is the top martech challenge



It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone working in B2B that integration is, on average across all regions, the top martech-related challenge. Other challenges featuring prominently in this list were 'making investment cases' and 'accessing the right support' – again, both aspects which other marketers will readily recognise.

What's more interesting and notable about the response to this question was the extent that all bar one of the martech challenges listed were regarded as more acute in APAC than in the other regions. The biggest challenge in APAC was perceived to be accessing support for martech projects.

The Kingpin View: Integration is an attribution issue

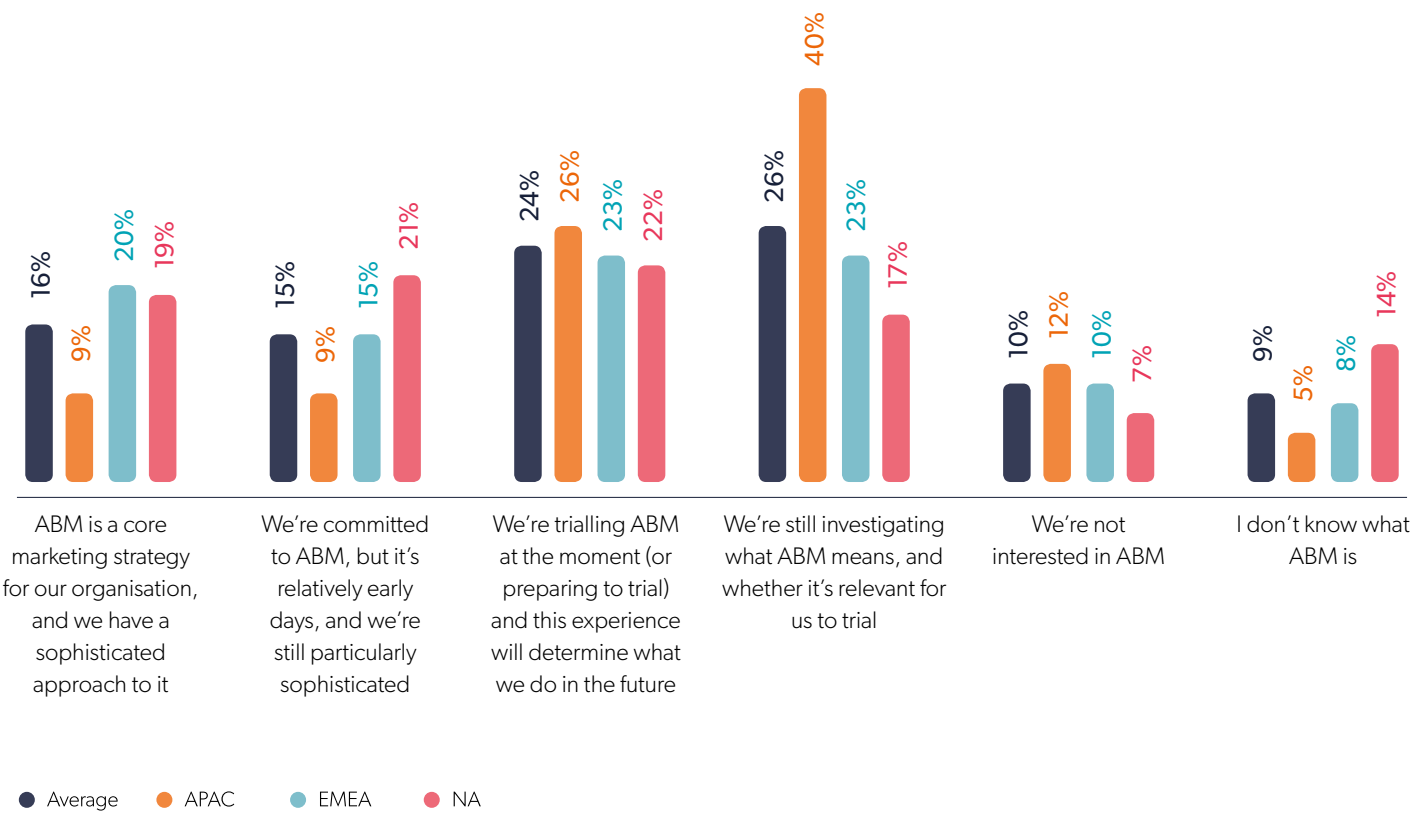
It is no surprise to discover integration is an issue here. With so many tools and so many touchpoints, we actually feel this is leaning towards an attribution issue again.

Integration from a marketers' point of view is about bringing together data points and telling a story. If you cannot bring that data into one place, you can't tell the story and putting together multiple databases is a struggle for anyone and can become complicated.

We think that starting with a sensible approach to attribution, maybe on a linear model helps. It means you at least focus on all the touches you can put together and build from there. This is easier in some ways in the enterprise market as you can analyse each opportunity in detail as the sales value is high. However it's a strategy most should focus on.

10. ABM remains an immature discipline

Attribution globally in regions

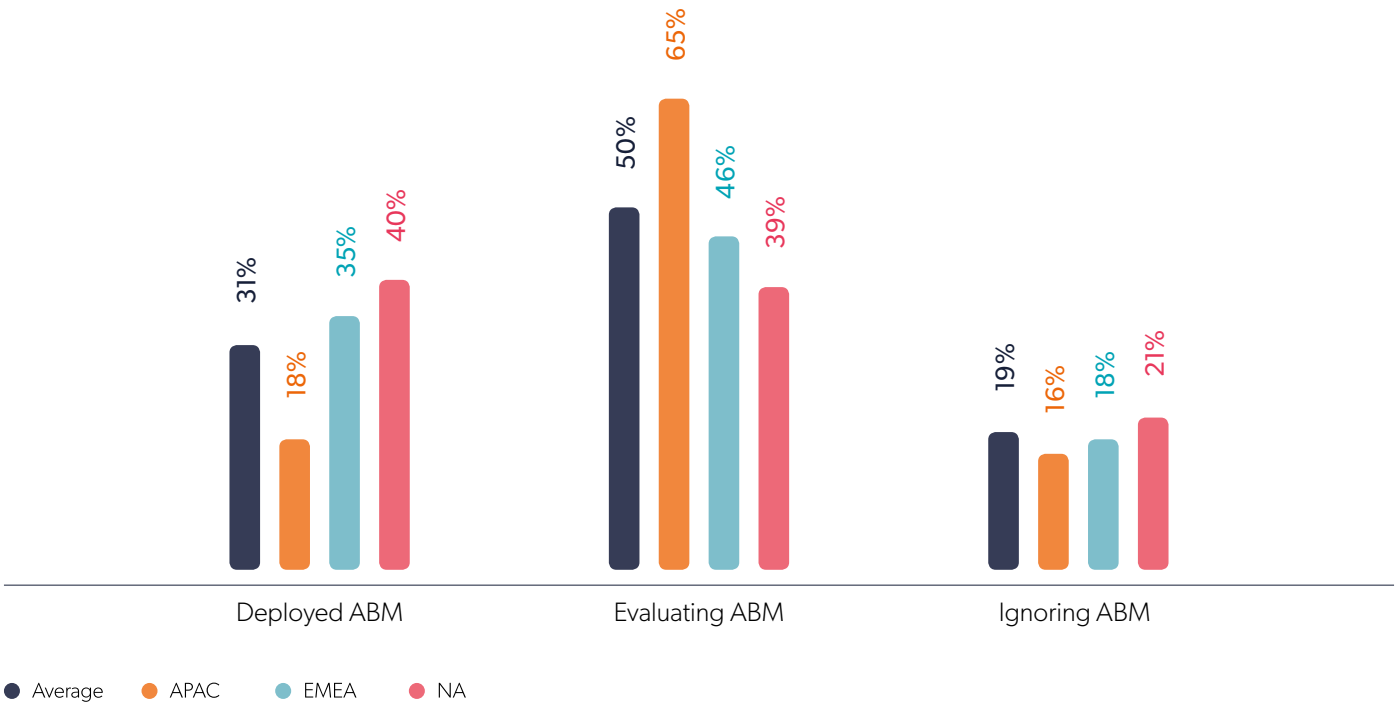


Despite the hype and bravado, it's clear from the response to this question that account-based marketing is still a long way from being a mainstream or mature discipline. Looking at the data across all regions, responses can be roughly split into three groups. Firstly, those who are actively using ABM – this makes up about 30% of respondents, although half of these are still relatively early in active ABM deployment. The second group are those who are still investigating or trialling ABM, with a view to understanding whether it's relevant to them. This group compromises 50% of respondents. The final portion are those who either are not interested, or who don't even know what ABM is, and this group amounts to 20% of respondents.

However, if the data is viewed on a regional basis, there's a clear polarity between APAC, where those actively committed to ABM falls to less than 20% of respondents, and in NA and EMEA, where it rises to nearly 40%. Similarly, the group of respondents who are currently investigating ABM rises to 65% in APAC, while it falls to more like 40% in the other regions.

It's also worth noting that ABM is a broad church, with significantly different types of activity falling under one umbrella i.e. so-called strategic and programmatic. There are different challenges inherent in becoming more mature in these various forms. For example, programmatic typically relies more heavily on technology from an earlier stage. This survey didn't seek to understand the variation in adoption of different types of ABM.

Three stages of ABM maturity



The Kingpin View: Focus on the objectives

The ABM conversation has been extremely interesting over the past few years, as to this day the interpretation and therefore the measurement of ABM strategies are still changing from marketer to marketer i.e. one-to-one versus one-to-many etc.

As a result of this, the results aren't surprising as there is a huge influx of platforms, partners and specialists all positioning a 'silver bullet' for ABM slightly differently from each other. In turn this leads marketers to a fair amount of evaluation and experimentation. The one key thing we always advise all our clients when discussing ABM initiatives is "what is the goal?".

About

B2B Marketing

Established more than 12 years ago, we are the number one go-to resource for B2B marketers across the globe.

Through our content hub and professional development services – including events, training and networking – B2B Marketing users are empowered with the tools, insight and inspiration they need.

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Things change fast in B2B. Just staying on top of the changes can be a full-time job. So, we do that job for you.

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About

Kingpin

Kingpin are the strategic marketing activation partner for B2B tech brands. We help B2B tech marketers harness data, AI and MarTech to identify audiences, map-out customer buying journeys, uncover in-market prospects and build and execute strategic, insight-driven marketing campaigns that engage, nurture and acquire business customers and partners.

We are more than just a service agency.

We are tech enthusiasts and data geeks. Consultants and friends. Transparent and honest.

We are Kingpin.

Interested in finding out how Kingpin can help your business grow?

Whether it's lead generation, brand awareness, ABM, PPC, content, audience mapping or simply some friendly advice and guidance, feel free to get in touch. We always love a chat.

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Kingpin

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computing Tech Marketing & Innovation Awards 2018 Winner B2B Tech Marketing Agency of the Year

computing Tech Marketing & Innovation Awards 2018 Winner Lead Generation Programme of the Year

The Drum Recommended

The Drum B2B Awards Finalist 2018

A selection of clients we work with

8x8, brightcove, ClickSoftware, COMMVAULT, CYLANCE, dynatrace, EPICOR, First Data., infor, LogRhythm, McAfee, Microsoft, Optimizely, proofpoint, Quest, SONICWALL, TREND MICRO, VEEAM, vmware, worldpay

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