

RETHINKING BRAND STRATEGY WITH TECHNOLOGY AND DATA



INTRODUCTION

Enhancing brand strategy and execution with data and technology

The role of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) has changed. According to our CMO Playbook 90% of CMOs now have some levels of responsibilities for business strategy and its tactical execution. Furthermore, nearly three quarters of CMOs say they have some level of responsibility for data and technology.¹

Every Chief Marketing Officer wants to increase brand equity by living up to the brand's value proposition. But what does this mean? We believe that brands need to be relevant and appealing at both emotional and rational levels. To do so requires a solid target group understanding as the foundation of everything. Knowing your target audience, shoppers and consumers is an asset far beyond today's in vogue personas (although these are a great quick fix when data is missing). Building on this understanding makes it possible to form relevant messages and solutions (content, products and services) to maximize the customer experience (CX), for example through best-in-class hyper-personalization.

In this opinion paper, we look at the critical role of data in developing and operationalizing brand strategies with a combination of brand tactics and activities, along with deep customer knowledge. We will discuss how rich quality data and advanced analytics have the potential to help shape, deliver, control, and optimize thoughtful brand strategies. Our Brand Management offering is part of an overall Connected Marketing Offering, which consists a complete offering set covering the whole Marketing Ecosystem.²

The need for data insights

Several reasons have brought data insights in brand communications to the fore. First, the digital user base entering the online space more regularly has expanded. Second, the time spent online in the interactions triggered has increased. For example, accelerated by the global pandemic, 'silver surfers' (digital users above the age of 50) have been spending more time online than ever before. In April 2020, just after the first lockdowns began to kick in, the over-65s spent 94% more on home supermarket deliveries than they did in the same month the previous year.³

Alongside this digital user perspective, growth in enabling technology, and the willingness to use it. has increased, allowing better CX and tracking, pushing the volume of data collected. Additionally, the ability to build actionable insights from complex data sets has accelerated, thanks to AI and machine learning. This creates momentum as people see the benefit of giving away their data once they feel they are "heard", understood in the way they are approached with content and offers, and that their data privacy and preferences are respected. Organizations able to capture this data themselves will be well placed to offset the impact of third-party cookies coming to an end.

In the following pages, we look at the kind of data companies are collecting — and why. We offer our perspective on how to build a datadriven brand strategy and provide use cases from the FMCG industry. And we observe that, with more digitally skilled employees in the workplace, the stage is set for organizations to use data and analytics to reimagine their marketing operations.

This is one in a series of opinion pieces exploring the challenges and opportunities faced by CMOs in the context of customer activation, content marketing, brand management, marketing technology (MarTech) and marketing organization.

Read the other opinion pieces **here**.

WHY DOES DATA MATTER TO YOUR BRAND STRATEGY?

Which of your customer segments is the most valuable? What are their pain points and the perceived benefits of using your products and services? How are your customers talking about you on social media and does this resonate with your brand image?

Your brand identity and brand positioning help you to design your products and services to build a distinctive image within your target market. When you leverage data and analytics to define brand identity and positioning, you are better placed to ensure that this positioning is working, and the brand image is in line with your brand identity. A combination of brand research (e.g., social data and business analytics) and brand performance measurement (e.g., monitoring perception, in the sense of behavioral science) gives you the data you need to better understand your audience, shoppers, and consumers through effective analytics.

Customer segmentation and targeting aided by AI

With the right digital tools and the right data, you can segment the market and customer groups more efficiently. You can evaluate segment attractiveness and target the most valuable segments and audience groups with the most effective marketing programs. One of the hottest trends currently is hyperpersonalization, which leverages real-time data and artificial intelligence to deliver the most relevant content and services, as well as products. Using predictive modelling processes, it is also possible to predict and improve conversion rates (based on clickstreamdata and machine learning techniques).

By knowing what your customers are buying, feeling, and talking about, you can better personalize your marketing and delight them with what they want right now. You'll be able to observe brand-consumer interactions and how their expectations are evolving, or whether there are any brand shortcomings. The main benefit is increased relevance which is extremely difficult to establish under nowaday's low-involvement-circumstances. This is a marketing opportunity few companies can afford to ignore. That's especially the case in a world where customer loyalty is hard to gain and all too easy to lose.

Data — from challenge to opportunity

While some organizations have been using data and analytics in this way to shape customer experience and brand activities for many years, developing a brand strategy around customer and campaign insights is easier said than done for many others. In recent research,⁴ 75% of UK marketers said their businesses could identify fewer than 20% of customers who visited their website, and 38% could identify less than 10%.

People are spending more and more time in the digital space, transacting via a growing number of channels (not just Facebook, but new social media networks, like audio chat Clubhouse), and dramatically increasing the amount of data in circulation. Yet this volume (and the corresponding marketing tech) can be overwhelming and CMOs, CDOs and CTOs often struggle to choose between building digital business platforms in-house or buying them off the shelf — the all too familiar 'make or buy' question concerning software and data platforms. Bringing onboard new digital talent to help smooth this process is a good place to start. We have seen examples of young digital natives sitting down with senior executives to share their understanding of the power and reach of digital channels.

As data continues to proliferate, those companies that take a more behavioral scientific approach will be able to use strategic insights regarding customers, competitors, markets, etc., to create truly consumer-centric and data-based strategies. Currently, it is largely the tech companies and big social media platforms and startups, as well as FMCG and automotive players, that are leading the way in this area. At the same time, while there is clearly an opportunity to be seized, caution needs to be exercised in terms of information being misused, as the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal showed.



ADVANCING THE ROLE OF DATA SCIENCE

Tackling the data challenge with data science will bring substantial benefits for brand strategy and execution. However, unlocking the potential can be complicated. It is often still a case of simply fixing the basics. Here different internal data silos are cleaned and merged to provide a more consistent view of existing data. In addition to well-known data legacy issues, marketers have invested in multiple marketing technology platforms without taking the time to integrate everything with the current data, technology and strategy construct. This creates even more confusion with new data silos, new KPIs and even partly new terms and tactics — they need to fix the basics and eliminate all blind spots.

Furthermore, best insights should be built on a combination of first-, second-, and third-party data. This means that multiple data sources must be combined to see the bigger picture and generate "one truth" — a 360-degree view. Here data mesh as an enabler for organizational and technical standardized data storage comes into play.

Addressing walled gardens with ecosystems

Alongside the important ambition to own the best data, large tech players such as Google, Facebook and Amazon are pushing a walled garden approach, where they keep their data in a closed ecosystem and only allow it to be analyzed with their tools. With no sign of these walled gardens becoming open ecosystems any time soon, companies will need to adapt the way they generate and share consumer insights in this complex marketing landscape. This has undoubtedly become even more important as we move into a cookie-less future. In the first instance, firms need to think about how to gather more and more personal data. This has seen many organizations creating their own loyalty programs, branded platforms, and marketplaces. Here they interact with their customers multiple times a day, learning more about their preferences. Initially content, product and service suggestions are fairly generic, but over time the profiling, targeting and activities become more precise.

Moving beyond these perhaps rather obvious actions, firms should be aware that they need to change their operating model more broadly and deeply than they might think. They must change roles, responsibilities, and ways of working both internally and with regards to agencies and other external partners. This means they need to organize their marketing departments in an agile way and generate and use the insights in a broader ecosystem. Here, agencies and consultancies have to become part of the solution as they are to a large extend part of the marketing department's value chain, and reliance on the tech giants' data is minimized with use of owned first-party data.

Analyze data to respond rapidly to change

Additionally, the way data analysis and insight generation take place needs to change. To date, many organizations fail to analyze data regularly, missing the opportunity to react quickly in a rapidly changing environment. Often, in larger companies, a broad and deep data analysis only takes place during the marketing planning process once a year. In contrast, startups typically use data more regularly, enabling them to anticipate trends more quickly and react with the most relevant

products. As well as moving away from once-a-year or once-a-month data analysis, companies need to get rid of a large amount of unconnected static reports and move towards a modern reporting system. This should use data visualization and dashboard tools that allow them to comment and discuss stats to turn them into relevant and actionable insights. It's important that these insights and dashboard become part of the daily routine. Therefore, one has to create a data driven marketing decision process, even on a weekly basis. We call this "business rituals".

So, how can CMOs embed data science at the heart of their brand strategies and what benefit will it bring? You first need to capture data at every single step of the customer journey with your brand before going on to analyze it and then strategize with it. The ultimate goal is to build a better brand strategy and — as we will see — some organizations are more advanced in their analytics maturity than most.



DATA ANALYTICS MATURITY LEVELS AND THEIR BRAND IMPACT

Even before the internet and highend technology emerged to track and analyze data, we were beginning to see excellent brand strategy and execution. Steve Jobs once said "people don't know what they want until you show it to them. That's why I never rely on market research."

Let's be realistic, however. Even though I admire Steve Jobs and his lifetime achievements, I must partially disagree with the above statement. It is true, that disruption and real innovation have hardly ever been achieved by asking people what they want. However, the biggest part of a marketer's job is to manage or optimize the business, rather than reinvent it. Here customer centricity is key, which strongly builds on qualitative and quantitative feedback. The extent to which marketers can extract, collect, aggregate, and analyze data to generate insights, makes a real difference.

The maturity level of data analytics determines if companies can achieve a competitive advantage from it. There are five key stages in the adoption and use of data⁵ or data fluency. (see 'data maturity' pyramid on the following page) Each stage has its own focus and particular barriers to overcome. Additionally, they build on each other:

Stage 1 maturity level – collecting relevant data

The first stage is to collect relevant data about consumers, shoppers, and audiences. Here companies need to ensure solid data selection and integration. In the best case, companies can collect first-party data directly throughout the channels and touchpoints they own and manage. Most of the time, they can rely on data from registered users, for instance, from their loyalty program or newsletter campaigns (email addresses, purchase histories, and shown behaviors). Using second-party data (other companies' first-party data) is also common practice. Here companies often buy data from market research companies or social media platforms for better insights and (re)targeting opportunities.

Buying third-party data (second-party data from multiple sources aggregated by another firm) is also common practice when special data or a large amount of data is needed. In general, first-party data is the best because it is clear how the tracking takes place and the data is free. A good mix of first, second- and third-party data allows both precision and scale. For brand strategy, this would mean combining first-party data from own digital marketing and e-commerce activities with second- and third-party data from market research institutes, social media platforms, publishers, etc.

Explanation		Technical barriers to overcome
Integration of data science into some areas of the business. Machine learning models start making decisions without human oversight in some business areas	Analytics Integration	Creation of data science as a service capabilities, system control mechanisms and fallback capabilities
Advanced machine learning models that make decisions with human oversight	Advanced Analytics	Selection and training of relevant models with upskilling of the organization
Analyzing data to create first basic insights	Analytic Insights	Setting-up the analytics operating model starting the transformation
Aggregation of data into a consistent data base	Data Aggregation	Cleaning and combining data into one consistent data cube
Collection of solid 1st, 2nd, 3rd party data	Data Collection	Selection and integration of data
Data analytics maturity stages		

Stage 2 maturity level – aggregating data

In the second stage, companies need to aggregate the data to build a consistent data cube. Many companies have built multiple databases over the years due to different organizational structures and providers and are now struggling with the legacy they've created. Here, cleaning and combining data into one consistent data cube is often the problem. To understand audiences completely, companies need to create unique identifiers and link them with each interaction initially stored in different databases. Additionally, they keep track of the data sets, to ensure data remains up to date. Gradually, additional data can be integrated, be it first-party data or second- or third-party data.

Facebook is one of the best collectors and aggregators of data. By offering partners a Facebook login mechanism, Facebook owns the authentication data and can track the use of third-party services.

Stage 3 maturity level – generating analyticsbased insights

In the third stage, companies use data to generate descriptive insights. Here, human expertise is complemented with analytical insights. Firms can create management reports and dashboards, which can be used to create and test new hypotheses. Analysts often work with a hypothesis that is tested by slicing and dicing the data cube to get a more holistic understanding and drill-downs to deep dive into certain topics. This way of working is still common, especially in the area of online marketing and e-commerce, with regards to tactics and management.

By continuously analyzing the data to generate insights to use them in customized tactics and activities, organizations can increase their marketing impact. Through better data and technology, they can create and enrich customer segments. As Capgemini has highlighted in a previous report, better segmentation drives improved brand metrics, customer experience metrics as well as up-selling and cross-selling potential.⁶ Through big data and digital technologies, hyper-personalization is on its way,⁷ which brings us to stages 4 and 5.



Stage 4 maturity level – advanced analytics using machine learning

In the fourth stage, companies use advanced machine learning models that make decisions with human oversight. At this level, data scientists work hand in hand with the marketing and sales departments to ensure customer and centricity are combined with an informed and agile organization.

As marketers strive for meaningful and lasting one-to-one relationships, making the most out of every interaction is key. Mastering customer journeys over multiple touchpoints with relevant content and offers can only be achieved with best-inclass data, technology, strategy, and execution. Customers expect brands to know them at a more personalized level, to provide them with relevant content, products, and services even more conveniently.

To meet customers' expectations, marketers need to be able to break down large audiences into specific customer data profiles by applying machine learning models that reveal individual customer preferences and attitudes. Deep learning can detect patterns that humans are not able to extract, which can be used by analysts to generate additional insights. Based on more precise profiles, marketers can customize communication and offer tactics and activities. Through continuous interaction, analytics, insights, and insight-driven execution, models become more accurate.

Stage 5 maturity level – integrating analytics for optimum results

In the fifth stage, we can see the rise of integrated analytics. Marketing activities are supported by machine learning models that are partly autonomous to make decisions without immediate human oversight. Even though this might sound scary to some people, there are already multiple examples of this today:

- Recommendation engines show relevant content, products and services based on preferences and past purchases.
- Real-time-pricing engines and assortment forecasting engines ensure maximum profits through price-elasticity-based decisions.
- Yield management pricing is standard with airlines today.
- Programmatic advertising uses automated technology media buying.

Capgemini and partners, such as Adobe, Google, and Salesforce, have helped clients succeed with solutions at this level of maturity in the areas of integrated marketing, data and analytics, asset management and content, e-commerce, and cloud solutions.⁸

Where are you on the maturity path?

The above offers a glimpse of the art of the possible when it comes to the use of data science as an essential part of brand strategy. Currently, however, only a few companies have reached stage 5 of maturity, with some more traditional companies yet to move beyond level 1 or 2.

But data isn't going anywhere fast. Indeed, with many organizations stating that Covid-19 accelerated digital business models, even more digital data is being (or will be) generated. As an illustration of this growth, 33% of UK marketers responding to a broader European survey of digital marketing strategies in February 2021⁹ said that they provided a personalized experience on their websites, with a further 13% looking to do so this year. While currently, 25% were using dynamic content on their websites, more than half were planning to introduce it in 2021.

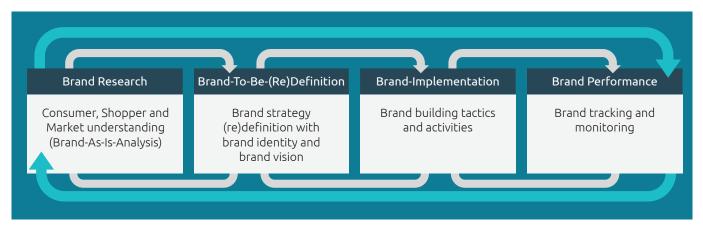
DATA AND TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN BRAND STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

After firms have improved their data maturity, they are able to build on a solid data foundation to build, track and improve their brand strand strategy. We see these brand strategies as a long-term plan to align meaning, appearance, and experience to increase brand value. How? By defining a brand promise with a clear differentiating value proposition delivered with consistency, setting the course for communicative and commercial success. A compelling brand strategy should be built on the competencies of a company vs. other companies within the competitive landscape. It is especially important to address target group needs with the right brand platform.

Every brand strategy is built on solid brand research where consumer, shopper, and market understanding is generated. After this, the brand strategy definition envisions where the brand needs to be in the future. Here brand targets are set (in line with overall business goals) and a long-term plan is developed to reach the targets. Alongside defining the brand purpose, vision, mission and values, the brand identity is defined.

The next step is the implementation of that brand strategy and its conversion into brand-building tactics and activity plans. After that everything is launched to create impact and to test how it all performs.

Each of these steps is interlinked, with multiple interactions between the phases ensuring a balance of both strategic and execution perspectives. Additionally, the brand planning cycle repeats every year, although it would be even better every 3 or 6 months to ensure everything is on track in a disruptive, highly complex environment. Planning is also driven by a firm's omnichannel excellence ambitions.





Crafting a brand strategy

In all of this, traditional brand strategy craftsmanship and brand building basics remain relevant, while the use of data and technologies has accelerated and are now real game changers. Established brand strategy frameworks (as Aaker's brand identity/vision model) also retain their relevance. However, digitization leads to more fact-based brand strategies allowing real-time feedback. For marketers, this means that even though they can create more concrete brand strategies in the first place, they can slightly modify strategies as soon as they see that initial brand strategy assumptions have changed.

Marketers can also experiment more. When companies are entering new markets and just need to rely on second- and third-party data, they can create minimum viable strategies, tactics, and activities to test and improve prototypes while they are entering the markets in question. This more pragmatic approach needs to transform into a more solid process (as per the previously mentioned brand strategy and execution cycle).

In addition to defining the "what to do" companies need to consider the "how to do" by thinking about smart ways to move from data to insights. In each of the above-mentioned steps to crafting implementing and measuring brand strategy, companies need to define which kind of data, from which sources, needs to be analyzed. Add to this what tools and methods they need and what kind of deliverables and results they're looking for.

The following deep dive into every phase of the brand planning and execution cycle aims to answer these questions.

Step 1: Brand research

Brand research needs to generate a 360° brand-as-is analysis. A consumer, shopper, and audience understanding is relevant for later segmenting, targeting, and positioning activities. Additionally, companies need to understand market trends, along with competitor and retailer dynamics to anticipate them against competitive strategies and tactics. A deeper consumer and shopper understanding can be generated through exploratory research, for instance traditionally through personal one-on-one interviews or focus groups (either stationary or online). Newer methods include online and mobile research.

Looking at different approaches to brand research, we see several models and outcomes:

- Surveys with open-ended questions and interaction options (triggered by prototypes, such as click dummies).
- Descriptive research helps to describe and quantify certain areas of interest (market segments, attitudes, purchasing patterns, etc.).
- First-party data can be analyzed and visualized with data analytics tools. Additionally, second- and third-party data is used (for instance from market research institutes, media planning companies, etc.) to describe consumers, shoppers, and audiences.
- Explanatory research can help to explain how a particular phenomenon works (for instance

through ethnographic product usage research or shop-along research).

• Neuroscientific and eyetracking technologies can be used to generate insights about consumption, media usage, and shopping patterns.

Unilever partnered with Capgemini to rapidly build and scale the People Data Center (PDC), a data-driven social and business analytics capability that delivers unprecedented insights at speed.¹⁰ The PDC brings together the world's largest data sets, advanced in-house machine learning tools, deep category understanding, powerful analytics, and compelling insights – see below.



Data-driven insights at Unilever

Unilever has enabled a data-driven approach to previously complex decision-making. Its People Data Center has been deployed across 27 markets to all key brands and categories at Unilever. As a result, Unilever has seen significant uplifts in marketing ROI, and a major reduction in external research costs.

Today, Capgemini and Unilever offer PDC-related services to other companies, too:

- Consumer trends as-a-service identifies emerging consumer behaviors and attitudes, and help brands to capitalize on the opportunities that these changes present.
- Products as-a-service provides deep consumer insights into products (including competitor analysis).
- Channel evolution as-a-service creates insights for sellin strategies, social-commerce insights, and omnichannel engagement analysis.
- Different analyses allow engagement with consumers and communities more effectively by mining user-generated content to inform messages and content.

Step 2: brand-tobe (re)definition

After the brand research, the brandto-be definition starts with goals (and KPIs) as well as long-term plans. Most of the time, we are talking about an update or a redefinition of an expected to-be-state of a brand rather than a completely new brand launch. Furthermore, many companies have created their brand-building approaches over the years, which they want to keep, but would like to modernize (for instance through growth hacking ideas and agile marketing organization topics). One example is at Nestlé – see right.¹¹

Alongside enhancing brand-building approaches, companies have various options to use data and tools for strategy development. To support clients, we recommend being clear about the firm's overall business ambitions and goals. Based on this foundation, it will be easier to define the role of marketing and brand building to fulfill ambitions and goals. While this agenda-setting should take place in the best case before the brand research to set a better research scope, it is also possible to work in parallel with or after the brand research.

Here, the starting point is assessing current data sources and data types as well as existing research inputs (studies, market data from Nielsen, IRI, GFK, and co.) and outputs (reports, dashboards, research presentations, etc.) in order to understand where potential knowledge and insights gaps could be. These gaps are then compared with the organization's ambitions (and a potential Insight Generation Target Operation Model), to create an insight generation and transformation roadmap. Part of this roadmap includes answers to data and tool questions.

FMCG Industry Example

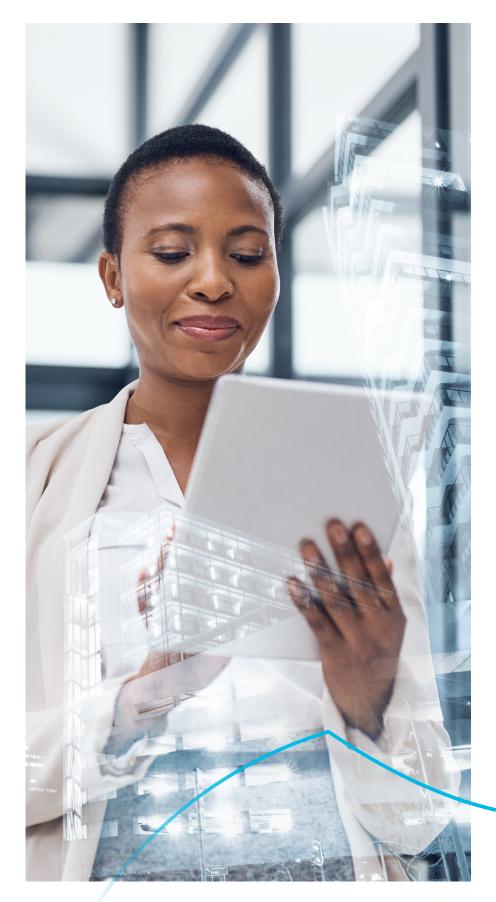
The Nestlé Digital Acceleration Team (DAT) enhanced Nestlé's brand strategy methodology (Brand Building The Nestlé Way) by supporting brands with digital assessments, methodologies, and best practices. A big focus area was social listening and social media strategy. Additionally, the DAT helped to analyze consumers, shoppers, competitors to support brand building and innovation processes.

At Capgemini we have defined overall business ambitions and goals and the role of marketing and brand building multiple times. Here we also take the company and brand purpose into consideration.

Step 3 – brand implementation

After the brand strategy development, the implementation phase begins. Here, brand strategies are operationalized into tactics and a brand-building activity plan. As brand building needs to be in a mode of constant test, learn and optimize, practical learnings will help to improve brand strategies and brand researching. In the brand implementation phase, insights and ideas become a reality and companies can engage with their audiences, consumers, and shoppers.

Marketers can now better understand the impact of their activities. In particular, digital activities have the benefit of real-time feedback and allow excellent tracking at relatively low cost. Moreover, digital tools enable hyperpersonalized content, products, and services, which helps to build brands.



Step 4 – brand performance measurement

Brand performance measurement is crucial to ensure all brand-building activities have the relevant expected impact. By this I mean that they are in line with strategies and tactics, are measurable with selected KPIs, and trigger positive feedback from audiences.

This does not mean that classical brand measurements are no longer relevant. Brand health tracking reports with marketing funnel and image ratings twice a year remain important. Also, advertisement tests (as brand activation tracking) are relevant. However, classical brand measurements should be enhanced with more data sources, real-time data, and appealing easy-to-use reports and dashboards.

NEXT STEPS ON THE BRAND STRATEGY JOURNEY

Getting your brand strategy right can reap huge dividends. According to a recent 2021 report, the revenue growth of the most relevant brands outperformed the S&P 500 average revenue growth by 230% and EBIT growth by 1,040% over the past 10 years.¹² With data-driven brand strategies, CMOs can be true enablers of this growth, providing a real-time view of how the company is perceived, driving brand equity, building brand communities, and delivering the company purpose.

As another paper in this series elaborates, investing in the right marketing technology (MarTech) is an important step in bringing the brand strategy to life. In its Top 10 Data and Analytics Trends 2021,¹³ Gartner states that "automated, conversational, mobile and dynamically generated insights customized to a user's needs and delivered to their point of consumption will shift the insight knowledge from a handful of data experts to anyone in the organization".

This is an exciting yet complex time to be a CMO. New relationships are being forged, for example with leading social media players and other external partners. Existing relationships are being reshaped between marketing and multiple internal functions, as well as with external agencies. And at the heart of these relationships sits data.

We believe that the winners will be those who can make use of data to flex their brand strategies and experience on the fly, in real-time, while staying true to their brands' core values. Unless CMOs think about their brand strategies in terms of data, it will be game over for their brands.

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- 10 Unilever partnered with Capgemini to rapidly build and scale the People Data Centre, a data-driven approach to marketing | CapgeminiInvent | Open Mic | The Drum
- 11 https://www.media-marketing.com/en/interview/nestle-strategic-building-of-brands-creativity-and-discipline-are-the-key-to-success/
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As a Consultant, Marketing Director and CDO, he has already successfully accompanied major international marketing and sales transformations.

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