

The ICG Marketing Survey 2025



Introduction

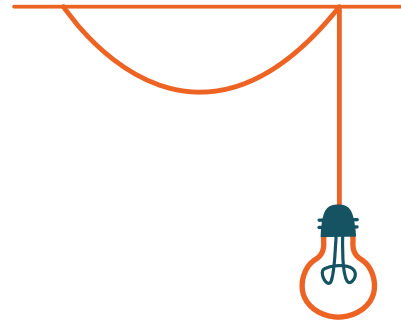
We're excited to present the fifth edition of the ICG Marketing Survey.

The results provide insights into the challenges businesses face, their marketing objectives and strategies, the role of marketing agencies and emerging trends such as sustainability and the use of AI in marketing.

Our annual survey reveals a consistent focus on core marketing activities, a growing awareness of economic headwinds and an increasing interest in leveraging digital tools and agency expertise to achieve business goals.

We hope you find our findings insightful.

How do you feel about 2025?

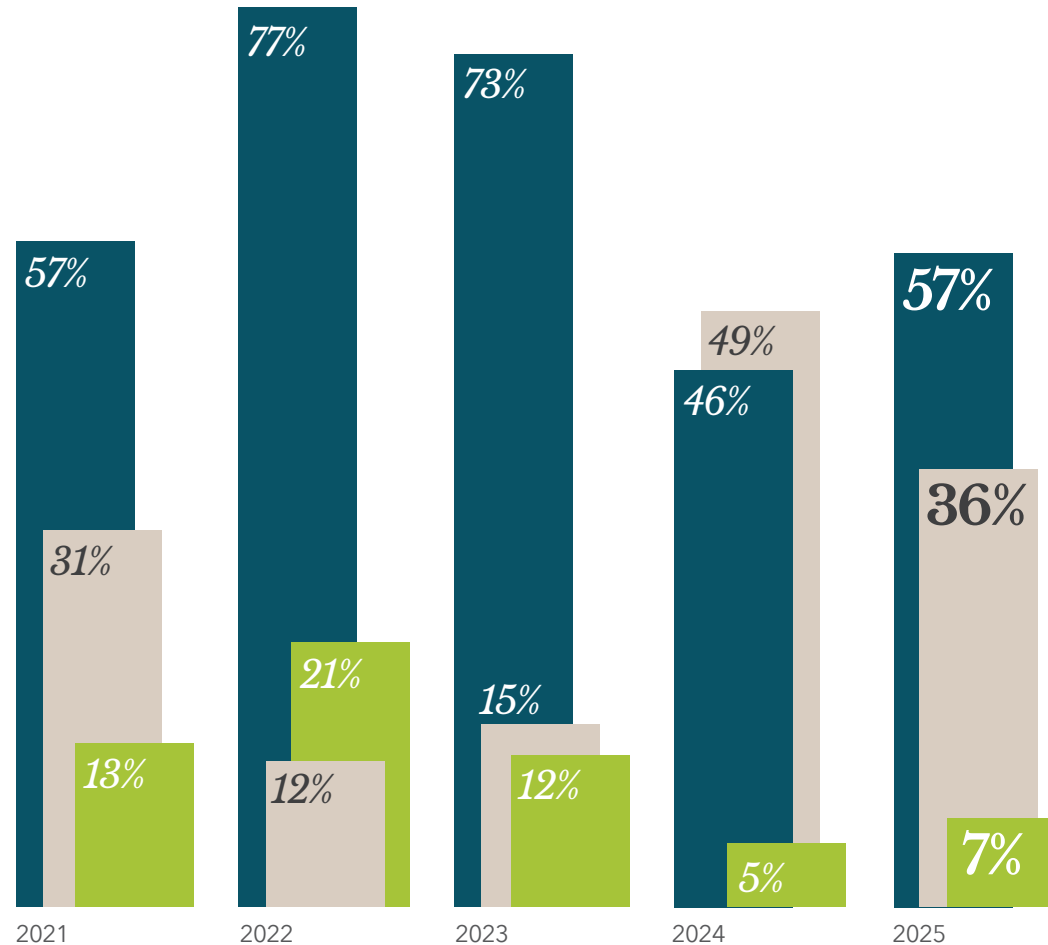


- Unsure
- Confident
- Very Confident

Confidence levels have varied significantly over the past five years.

Following the end of lockdowns in 2022, confidence rebounded, with 77% of respondents feeling optimistic. However, this dropped sharply to 46% in 2024, reflecting growing economic concerns.

Looking ahead to 2025, there is a slightly more positive outlook, with 57% of respondents expressing confidence.



11%
increase in 'Confident' respondents

2024 to 2025



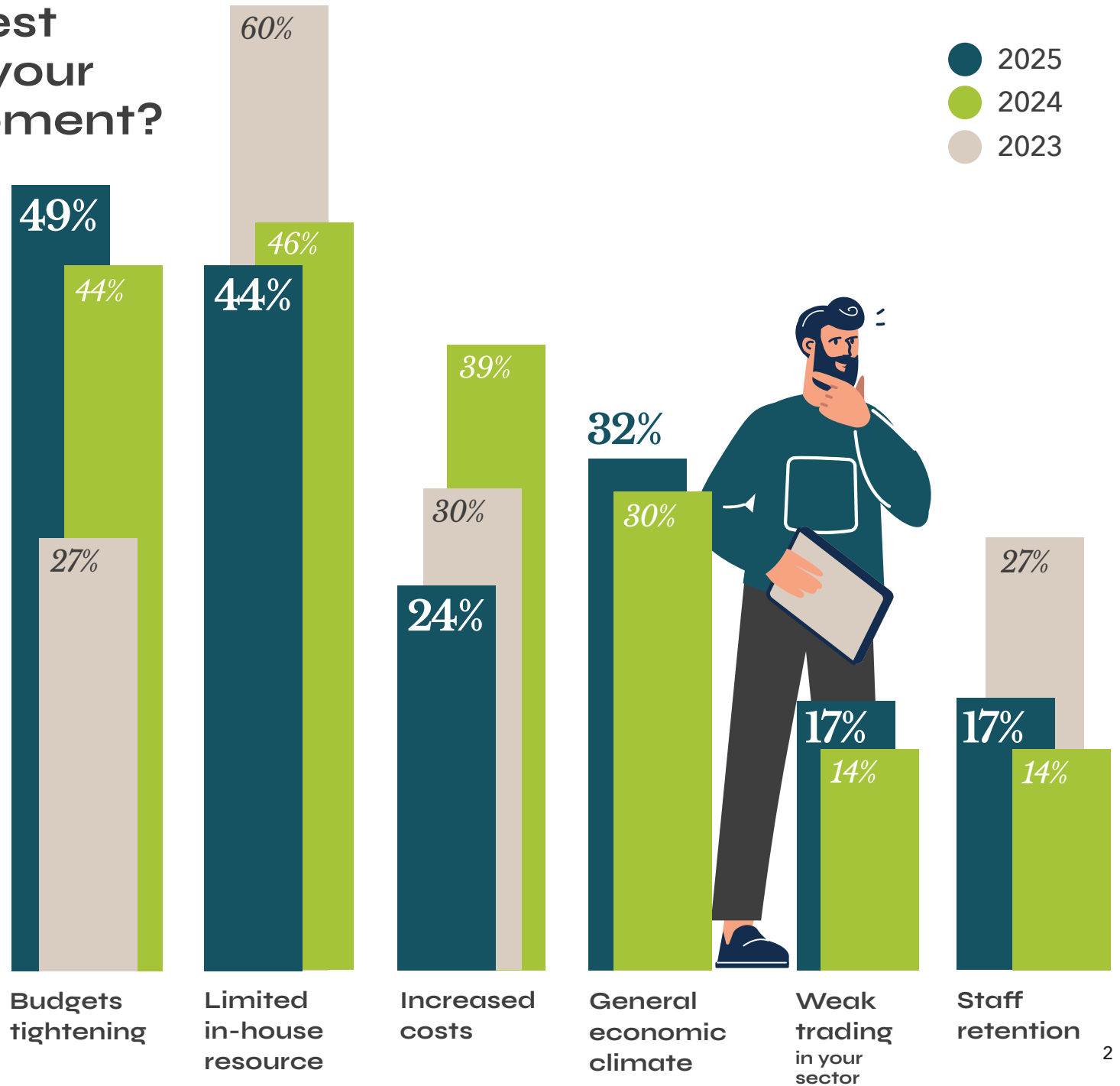
What are the biggest challenges facing your business at the moment?



Tightening budgets have consistently ranked as a top challenge across all survey periods, rising from just over a quarter to nearly half of all respondents in the past two years. While most businesses have developed stronger in-house capabilities, there remains a significant need for agency support.

Over time, concerns have shifted toward broader economic factors. What started as worries about increased costs has evolved into growing concerns about the general economic climate and a weak trading environment.

Additionally, specific challenges, such as regulatory changes, have highlighted sector-specific pressures faced by certain industries.

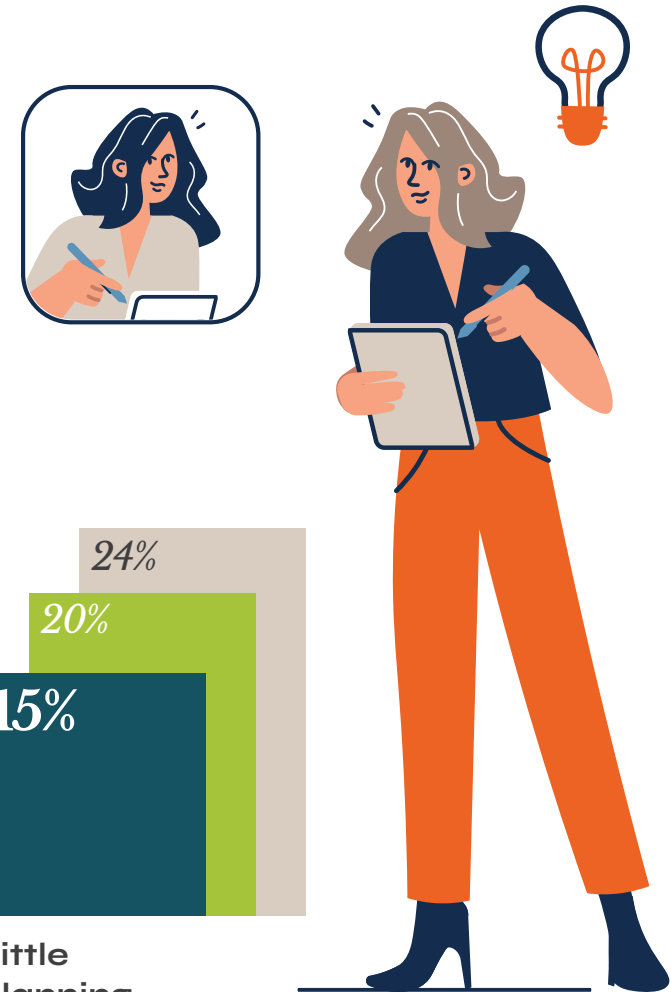
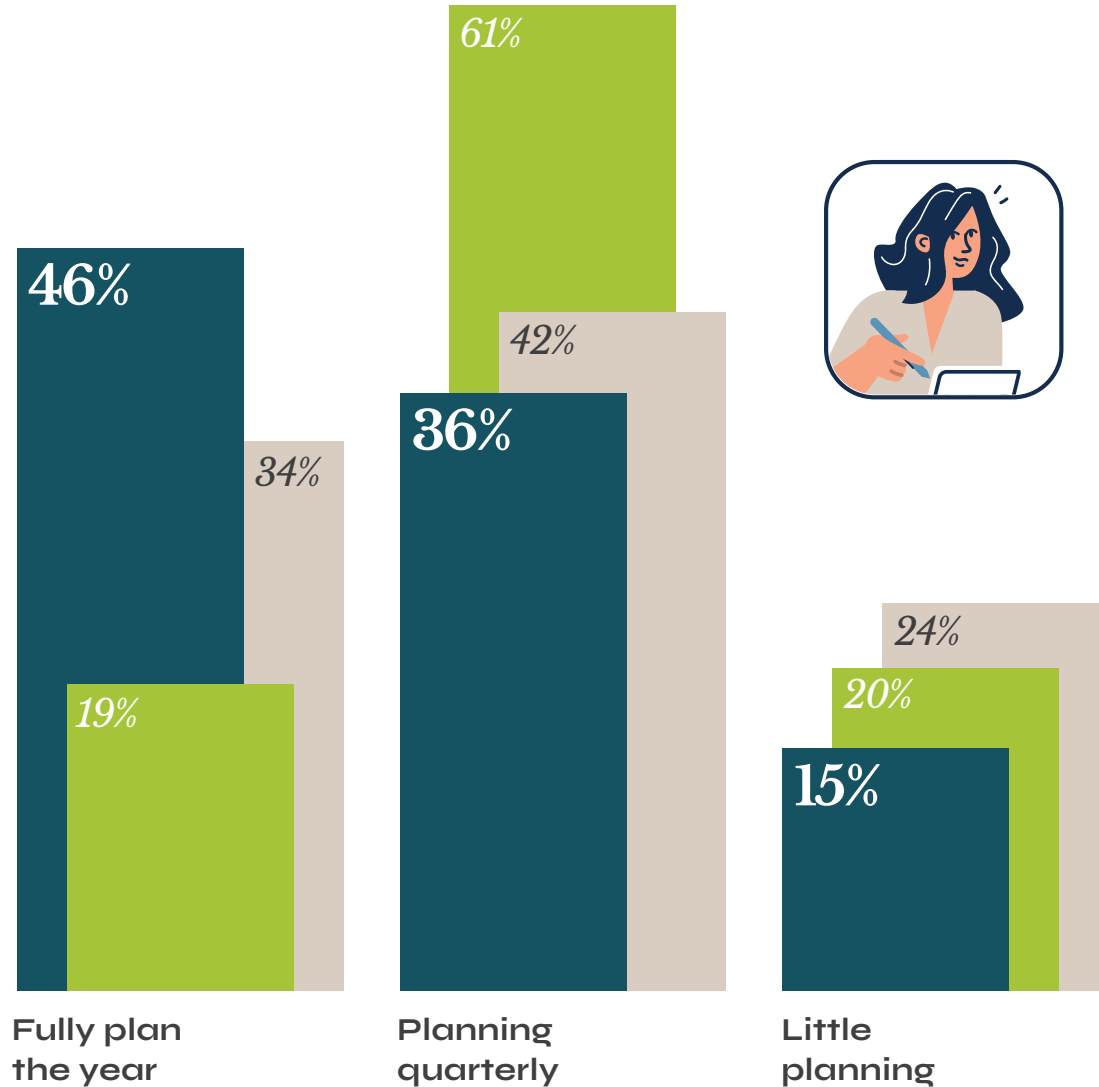


How much marketing planning are you doing in 2025?



The move to shorter-term planning in recent years reflected an uncertain economic environment, with rapidly changing market conditions. However, as confidence builds, it appears marketers are starting to feel more comfortable taking a broader view for the upcoming year, allowing them to plan more comprehensively.

The 46% of marketers planning to fully map out 2025 suggests a significant trend towards strategic foresight, enabling businesses to not only weather unexpected disruptions but also capitalise on emerging opportunities.

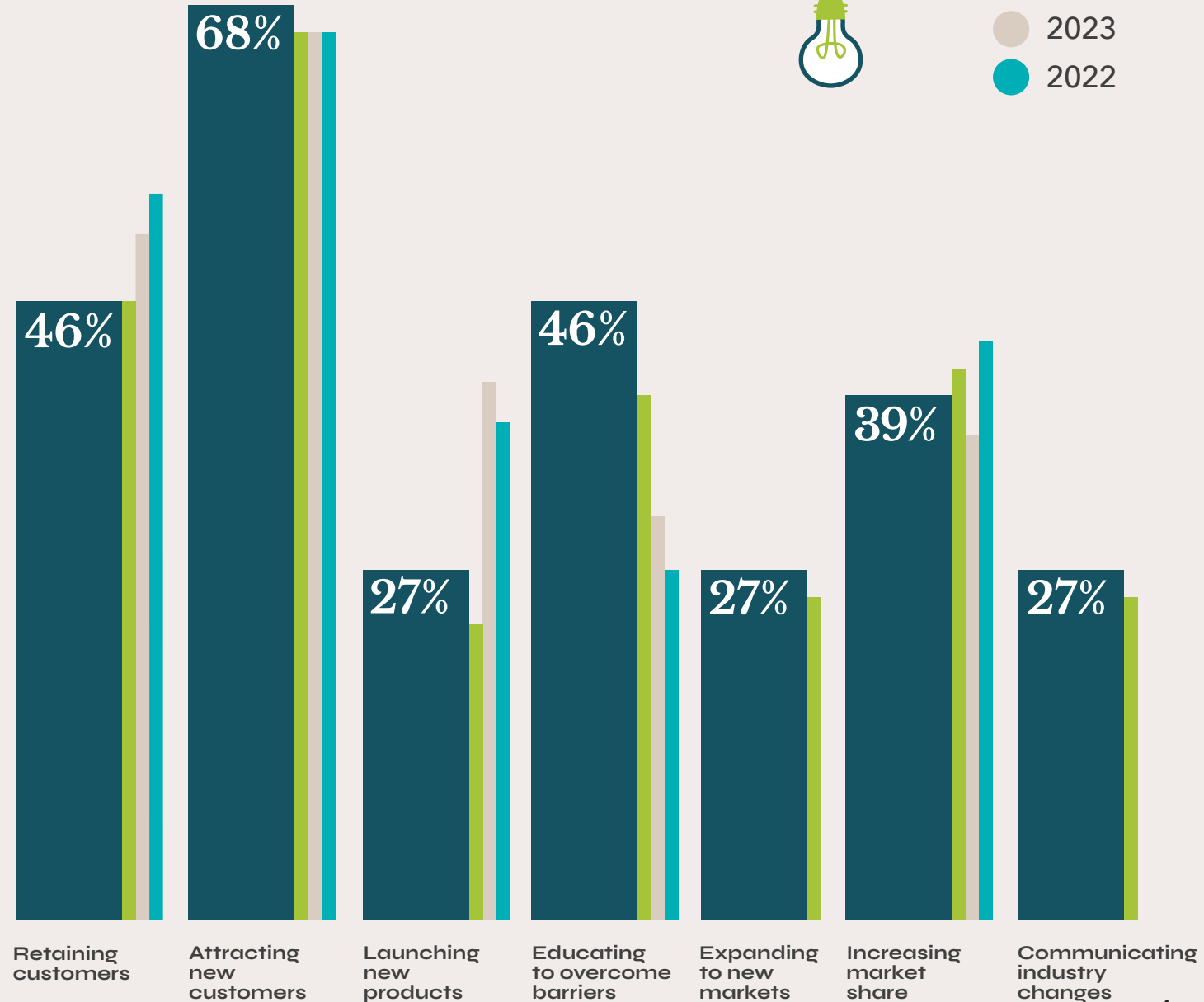


What are your main marketing goals and objectives in 2025?

Attracting new customers and retention have remained key priorities across all years and for 2025 these goals continue to be a focus. In fact, 68% of businesses are prioritising attracting new customers, while 46% are concentrating on retaining existing ones.

Providing strategic guidance and credible information is becoming increasingly crucial, as respondents look to communicate industry changes. The emphasis on education to overcome barriers has grown year over year, with nearly half (46%) of businesses highlighting its importance.

46%
look to educate customers to overcome barriers



What do you value most from an agency?

Marketers have consistently prioritised responsiveness and agility when choosing an agency, with 58% citing these qualities as their top requirement. This reflects a growing need for agencies to quickly adapt to changes in the market, respond to challenges as they arise and pivot strategies when necessary.

There is a strong demand for agencies to be proactive. Marketers increasingly value agencies that take initiative, anticipate needs and provide forward-thinking solutions. This trend highlights a shift

toward seeing agencies not just as service providers, but as strategic partners that contribute to the broader business goals.

Cost-effectiveness also remains an important consideration, though the emphasis on this requirement has remained relatively stable at 41%. While marketers continue to seek agencies that offer competitive pricing and value for money, our research suggests that marketers are willing to invest more in agencies that can deliver greater strategic value.



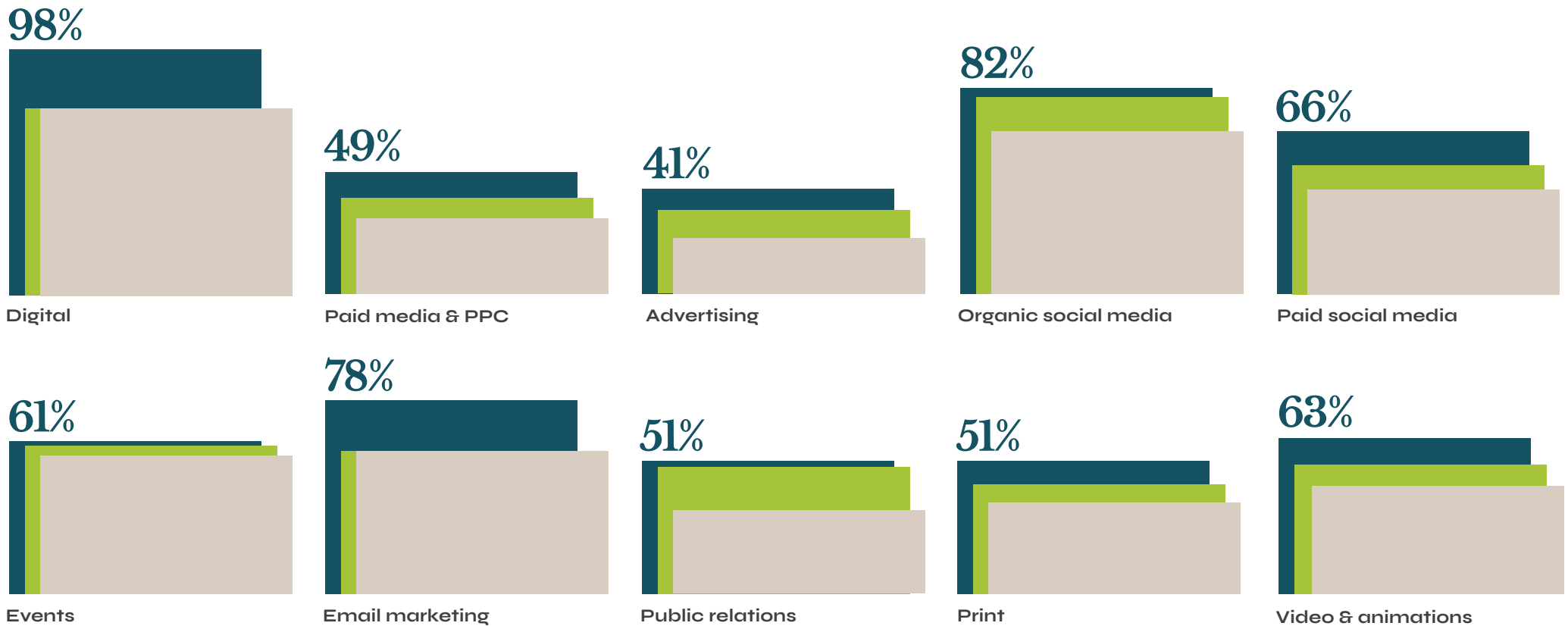
What core marketing tactics are you looking to use in the next 12 months?



Digital tactics have consistently been at the forefront of marketers' planned activities, with a majority of businesses recognising the importance of a strong online presence. A staggering 98% of respondents are planning to invest in enhancing their digital footprint. In addition, 82% of businesses are looking to leverage organic social media more heavily.

Paid media, particularly Pay-Per-Click (PPC), has also seen a steady rise, enabling businesses to target specific audiences with tailored ads and measurable results. 66% of respondents also plan to use paid social media.

Email marketing, a long-standing staple of digital marketing, is experiencing a significant uptick, with 78% of marketers planning to use email as a primary tool for engaging their audiences.



What social media platforms are you intending to invest in during 2025?

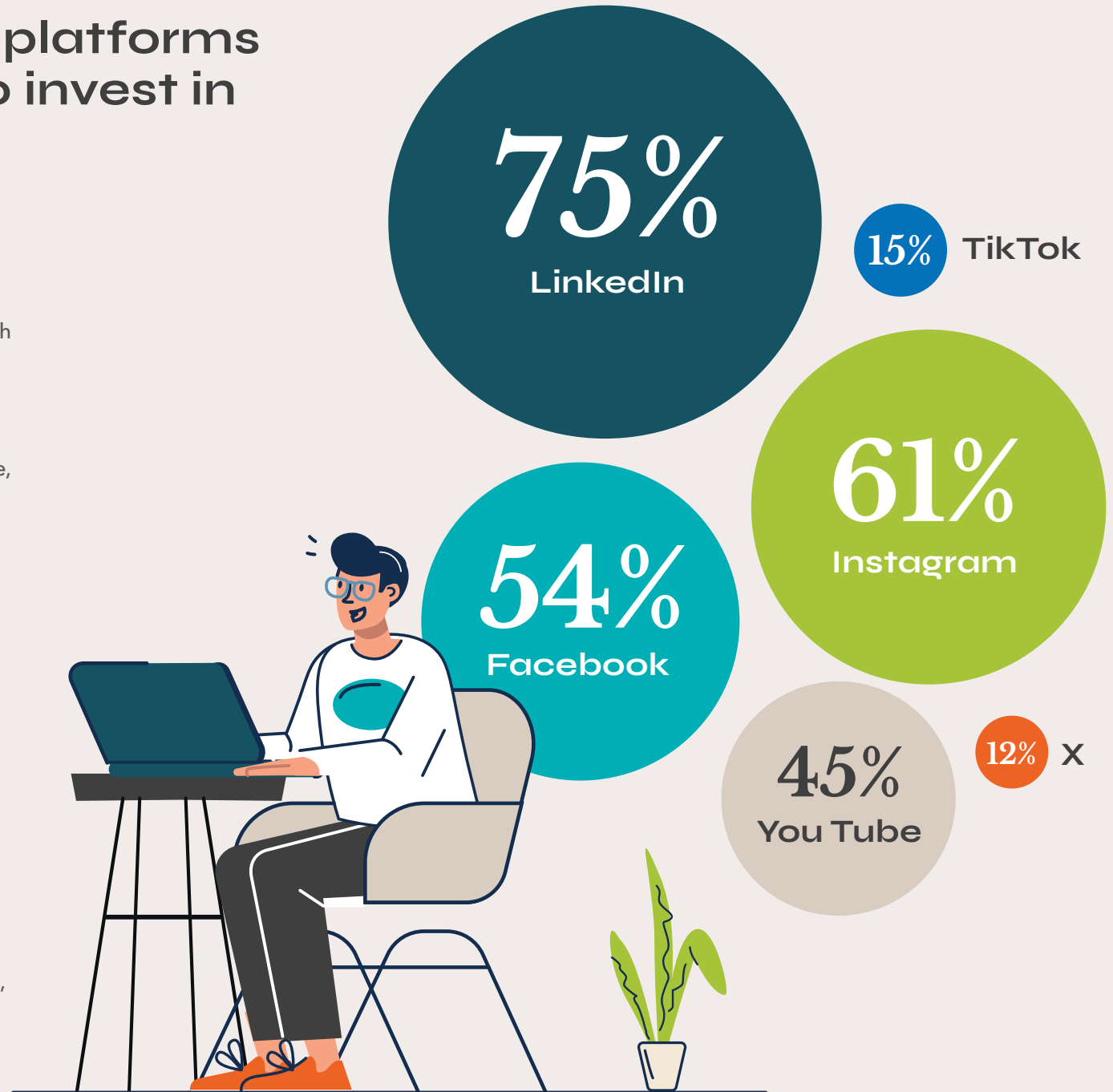
LinkedIn remains the top choice for B2B marketers, with 75% of respondents using it to build brand awareness, generate leads and cultivate business relationships.

Meta's platforms, with their large and diverse user base, are key for consumer-focused marketing. Facebook is leveraged for brand awareness and community engagement, while Instagram excels in engaging younger audiences, promoting lifestyle products and driving influencer marketing campaigns.

YouTube is utilised by nearly half of marketers, who view it as a powerful search engine, ideal for SEO, brand storytelling and product demonstrations.

While newer platforms like TikTok are gaining interest, only 15% of respondents plan to use it, indicating a more cautious approach.

X (formerly Twitter) registered just 12% of respondents, likely due to recent changes in its content policies, which may have impacted its appeal.



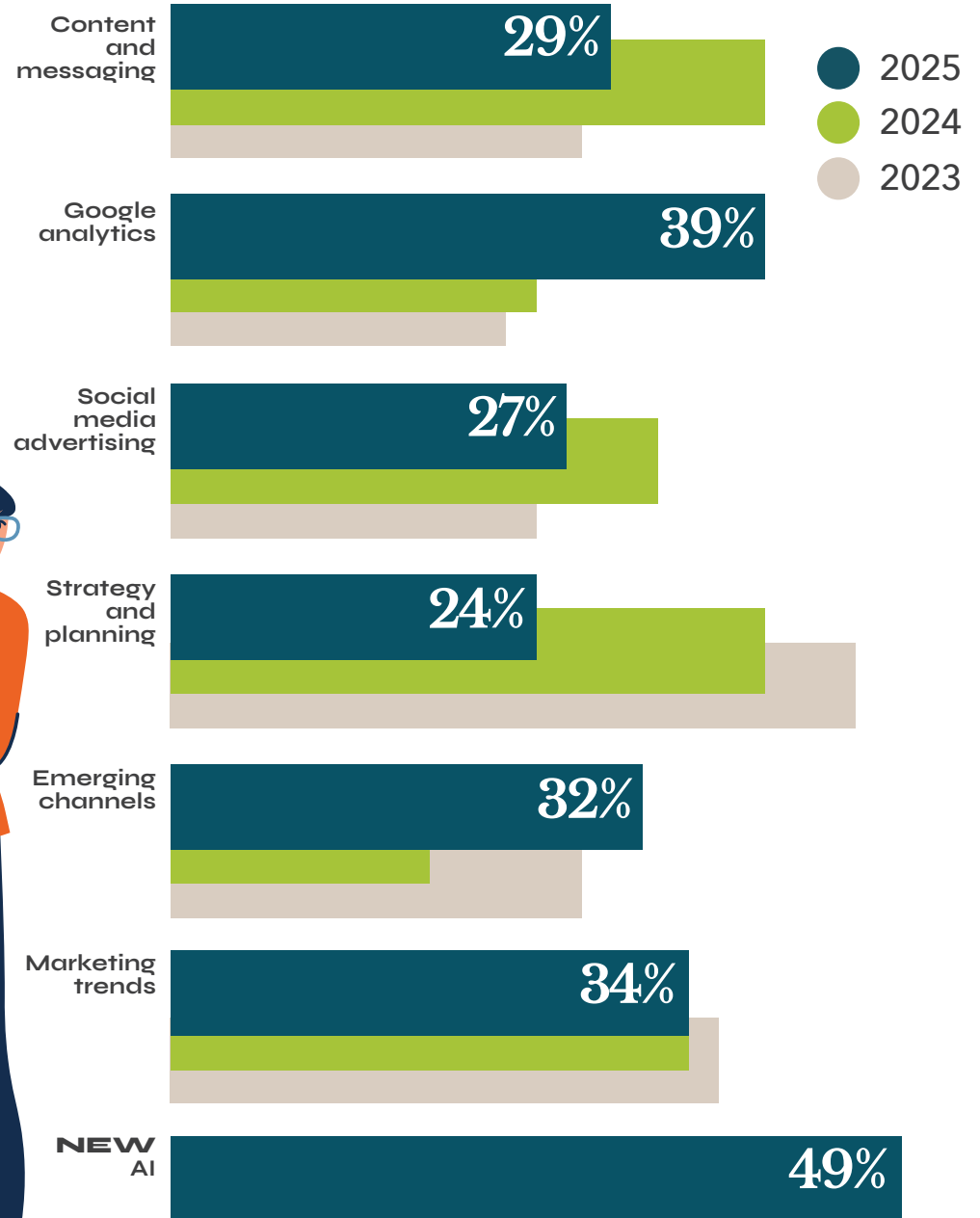
What areas of marketing would you like more advice and insights into?

AI stands out as a key area of interest, with almost half of respondents (49%) seeking insights in this field. This reflects the rapid evolution of the marketing landscape, with new AI tools being launched regularly.

There has also been a consistent demand for guidance on emerging channels and the latest marketing trends, as businesses look for more advice to stay ahead in a dynamic environment.

The recent Google GA4 update and its impact on performance have driven a significant increase in the number of respondents seeking advice in this area, highlighting the importance of staying up to date with key industry changes.

49%
seeking more insights and advice on AI tools



We know sustainability is increasingly important.

How can agencies help deliver your sustainable marketing strategy?

The significance of sustainability is clear, with over 50% of respondents seeking guidance on sustainability marketing messaging and how to avoid greenwashing.

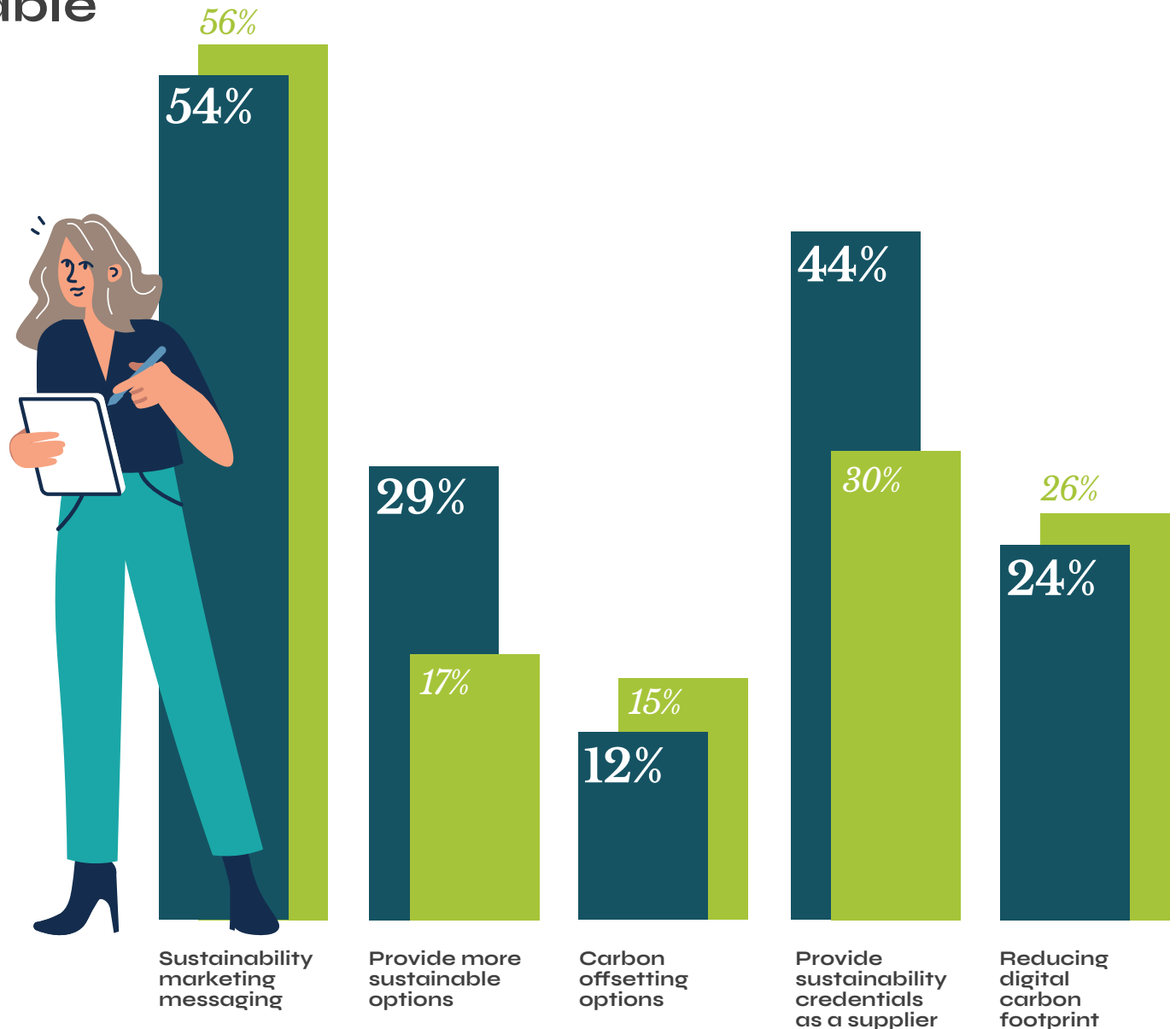
There is also a growing focus on sustainability across the entire supply chain, with a notable 14% increase in respondents asking their agencies to provide sustainability credentials.

At ICG, we are committed to sustainability through efforts to recycle, reuse and reduce consumption. Additionally, we offer practical solutions to help our clients showcase their sustainability initiatives effectively.

44%

want agencies to provide their sustainability credentials

● 2025
● 2024



AI and machine learning (ML) are increasingly being used in marketing activity.

Which, if any, AI tools do you use?

The adoption of AI tools across marketing channels has accelerated over the past year, with 73% of respondents using AI tools like ChatGPT or Gemini to assist with content generation and marketing ideas.

As AI capabilities continue to expand, we are seeing increased use of AI for tasks like image manipulation, design templates and content creation.

Interestingly, one AI tool showing a decline in usage is for data analysis. At ICG, we've found tools like Google's NotebookLM to be particularly effective in processing large volumes of data.



Content & marketing ideas (i.e. ChatGPT, Gemini)



I am not using AI tools



Data collection and analysis



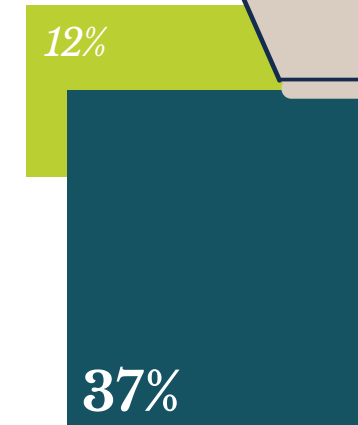
AI-powered chatbots



Image Generation AI (e.g. Midjourney, Photoshop Filters)



Creative (e.g. Canva)



Conclusion

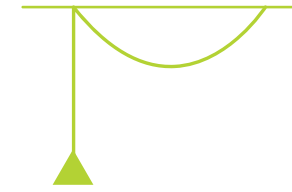
The ICG Marketing Survey 2025 paints a picture of a marketing landscape navigating cautious optimism amid ongoing economic challenges.

The survey underscores the critical role of digital marketing, the transformative potential of AI and the increasing importance of sustainability.

Businesses are looking for strategic and agile agency partners that can provide expertise in these evolving areas while demonstrating a proactive and responsive approach.

The emphasis on education to overcome barriers and the desire for deeper insights into emerging trends highlight a dynamic environment where staying informed and adaptable is crucial for success.

At ICG we pride ourselves on our partnerships with clients, providing up to date industry knowledge, cost-effective support and a sustainable approach.



46%

of marketers planning to fully map out the year

49%

Biggest challenge is budgets tightening

73%

of respondents using AI tools for content and marketing ideas

98%

of marketers using digital as core marketing channel

54%

of respondents seeking guidance on sustainability marketing messaging

58%

of respondents seek a responsive and agile agency



About ICG

ICG is an award-winning integrated agency based in Preston.

We are proud of what we achieve and accomplish. As a strategic marketing agency, clients benefit from our diversity, experience and capabilities to successfully meet their objectives.

Our full range of marketing services are matched by investment in industry leading tools and accreditations.

With 30 years under our belt, ICG was voted Digital and Marketing Business of the Year 2023 at the BIBAs (Be Inspired In Business Awards).



To find out more about ICG, and how we can help achieve your marketing goals, please call Simon Couchman on 01772 679 383 or simon@icg.agency



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