



Shaping the Future of B2B Digital Commerce

B2B catalog



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 Buying group



Patricia Reed
Decision maker

Title
VP of technology

Group
Townsend

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Executive summary

The B2B commerce landscape is undergoing a seismic shift, driven by evolving customer expectations, giant strides in technology, and a fundamental transfer of power from seller to buyer. This report, produced by London Research in partnership with Adobe, explores the key trends and priorities shaping B2B digital commerce, providing insights for B2B companies seeking to develop their strategies and level up their capabilities.


This revolution in B2B commerce is being driven by several converging trends. B2B buyers now demand the seamless and personalised experiences they've come to expect in the B2C world. There is more emphasis on digital self-service, mobile-first digital experiences, and personalised pricing, content and customer journeys.

Based on a survey of more than 200 Europe-based B2B commerce leaders at large organisations, this report looks at how companies are prioritising operational efficiency, revenue growth, customer acquisition, and customer retention.


The research highlights the importance of technology integration – and unified data – as a prerequisite for success. Connecting ecommerce platforms with core business systems and adjacent technologies is key to better customer experiences and improved business performance.

The report also explores how AI-powered technology is playing a growing and varied role in powering B2B commerce, whether through enhanced product recommendations or the ability to scale asset production to power personalisation requirements.


However, significant challenges remain. Many established businesses struggle with legacy technology that stifles both integration and innovation. The research identifies a group of B2B commerce leaders and shines a spotlight on how they are outperforming mainstream organisations.




Isaac Tores
B2C buyer



ALTURA
Altura Breeze Home Router
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Nadia Chau
B2B buyer



ALTURA
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The research has found that:

-  Better integration is the foremost commerce-related priority, with around two-thirds (64%) of B2B companies saying that integration of ecommerce with existing systems is a 'high priority'.
-  Data security concerns (39%) and integration with other systems (38%) are the most prominent challenges for companies trying to adapt to changing B2B commerce trends.
-  B2B ecommerce leaders are two-and-a-half times more likely than mainstream companies to be carrying out advanced personalisation (54% vs. 22%).
-  Measuring the effectiveness of activities is the number one challenge for companies specifically in the context of personalising the B2B digital experience, an issue for 50% of companies.
-  More than two-thirds (70%) of leaders are using AI-powered search and navigation compared to just under half (49%) of mainstream companies. Leaders are also far more likely than mainstream companies to be using GenAI to create personalised product images or marketing assets (72% vs. 44%).
-  More than half (58%) of companies surveyed say that the average person in their ecommerce team could save at least five hours a week through use of AI technology.
-  B2B ecommerce leaders are two-and-a-half times as likely to be significantly increasing their investment in digital commerce over the next 12 months (64% vs. 26% for mainstream companies).

Methodology

This research is based on a survey of 225 B2B organisations across a range of sectors carried out in February 2025. All companies surveyed had annual revenues of at least £50 million, with respondents working across a range of business functions and based either in the UK, France or Germany. Two-thirds of respondents were either at director or C-suite level, and the remainder were senior managers. Please see the [Appendix](#) of the report for more information about the profile of respondents.

The trends and priorities driving B2B digital commerce growth

The world of B2B commerce is undergoing a profound transformation. In contrast to the complex nature of B2B products and sales, the main catalyst for this transformation can be summarised in simple terms. The increased ability to interact through digital channels has put the B2B customer firmly in the driving seat.



The scale of the B2B commerce market is staggering and often goes under the radar given the greater media prominence for consumer brands. According to the [International Trade Administration](#), the global B2B commerce market will be worth an estimated \$36 trillion by 2026, compared to \$5.2 trillion for B2C.


The analyst firm [Gartner](#) has predicted that 80% of B2B sales interactions will be digital by the end of 2025. The stakes for B2B organisations are therefore incredibly high when it comes to getting digital commerce right. For routine purchases and smaller orders, transactions now regularly take place online, and this is also increasingly becoming the case for higher-value transactions as well.

Adobe commissioned London Research to carry out a survey of more than 200 senior B2B leaders within European organisations to better understand the opportunities and challenges for companies looking to ramp up their digital capabilities.

We asked companies about the impact of various B2B trends on their business. The survey confirmed our hypothesis that increased digital self-service and post-sale interactions post-sale is a key trend influencing B2B commerce, with 60% of respondents describing the impact as 'major' (*Figure 1*).

Items quoted

Product name	Price	Stock	Qty	Actions
 AlturaPro Enterprise Network Switch	\$9,999	100K	1	Select ▾
 AlturaPro Enterprise Server Rack	\$29,999	25K	1	Select ▾

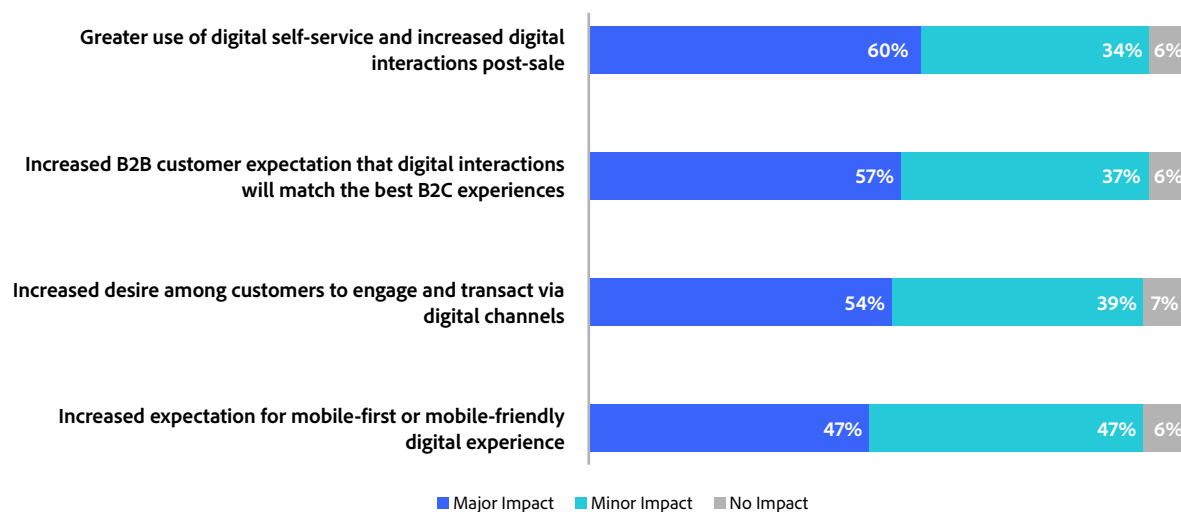


Leave a note to seller

Remove

Move to requisition list

Figure 1: How would you describe the impact of the following B2B trends on your business?



The rise of online portals, automated support and access to personalised pricing is a response to B2B buyers expecting the same level of convenience and efficiency they experience in their personal lives. The next most prominent trend is the expectation of B2B customers that interactions will match the best B2C experiences. Again, more than half (57%) report that the impact is major.

Similarly, it is clear from *Figure 1* that B2B customers increasingly want mobile-first or at least mobile-friendly experiences as part of their digital interactions. In this case, 54% of respondents report a major impact.

This is the backdrop against which B2B organisations need to develop their B2B digital capabilities while focusing on the overarching business objectives shown in *Figure 2*.

This chart shows that the top digital commerce strategic priority for B2B companies is operational efficiency, which 61% of surveyed companies are prioritising. This reflects a strong emphasis on streamlining processes, reducing costs and improving productivity through digital commerce.

Revenue growth, customer acquisition and customer retention (all at 56%) are also very much top-of-mind for survey respondents. This highlights the importance of a balanced approach that focuses on both acquiring new customers and retaining existing ones to drive revenue growth.

Brand building is the least prioritised area, with less than half (45%) of companies focusing on it. While still important and an indirect benefit of better B2B digital capabilities, this suggests that B2B companies are primarily focused on the more immediately tangible benefits of digital commerce, such as measurable efficiency improvements and revenue generation.

Figure 2: What are the main areas you are prioritising in your B2B digital commerce strategy?



What B2B commerce leaders are doing differently

An important strand of this research is an analysis of the differences between B2B ecommerce outperformers ('leaders') and mainstream companies. Leaders are classified as those who have significantly outperformed their competitors over the last 12 months (*Figure 3*).

These companies are significantly more likely to be focusing on revenue growth and customer acquisition, while mainstream companies are more preoccupied with operational efficiency and customer retention (*Figure 4*). Leaders have the right foundations in place for effective B2B commerce and are now focusing squarely on customer acquisition and growth.

Mainstream companies, meanwhile, are still addressing hygiene factor capabilities before they can double down on growth, with a focus on trying not to churn customers while they seek to get their digital offerings up to scratch.

Figure 3: Thinking about the last 12 months, how do you rate your company's ecommerce performance compared to other B2B companies?

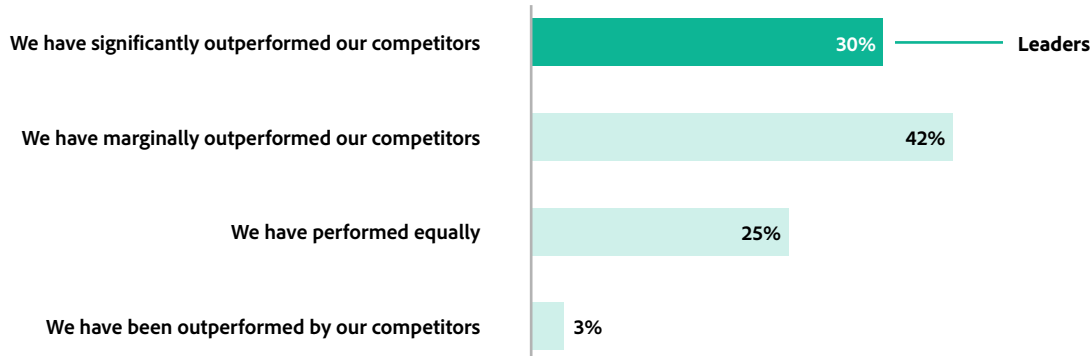
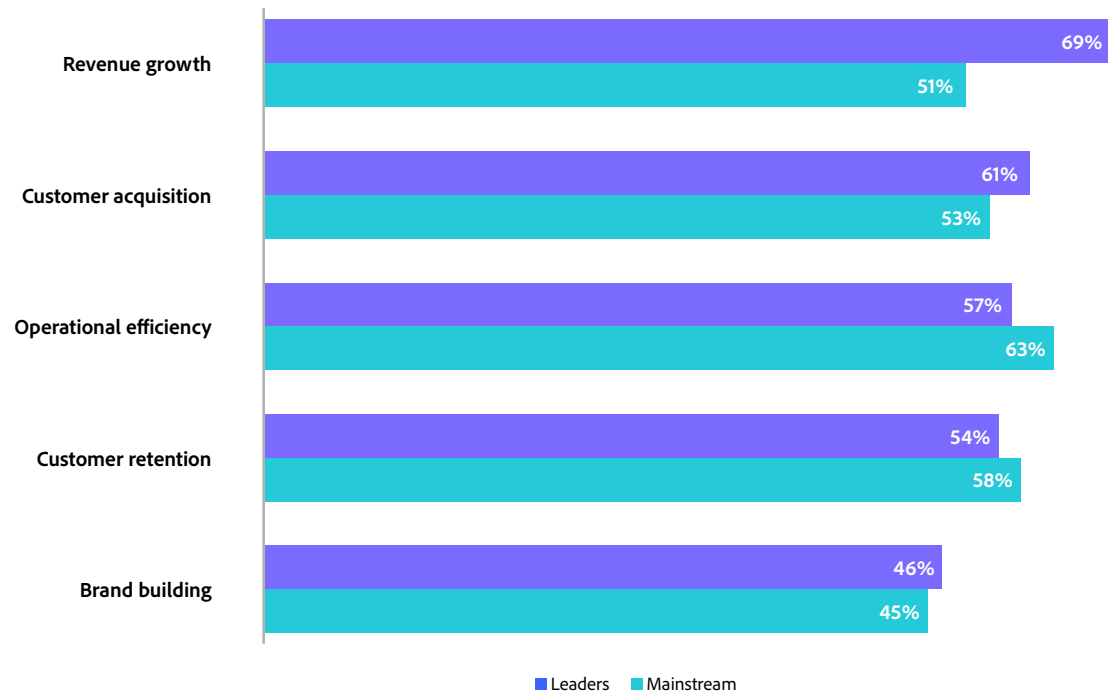


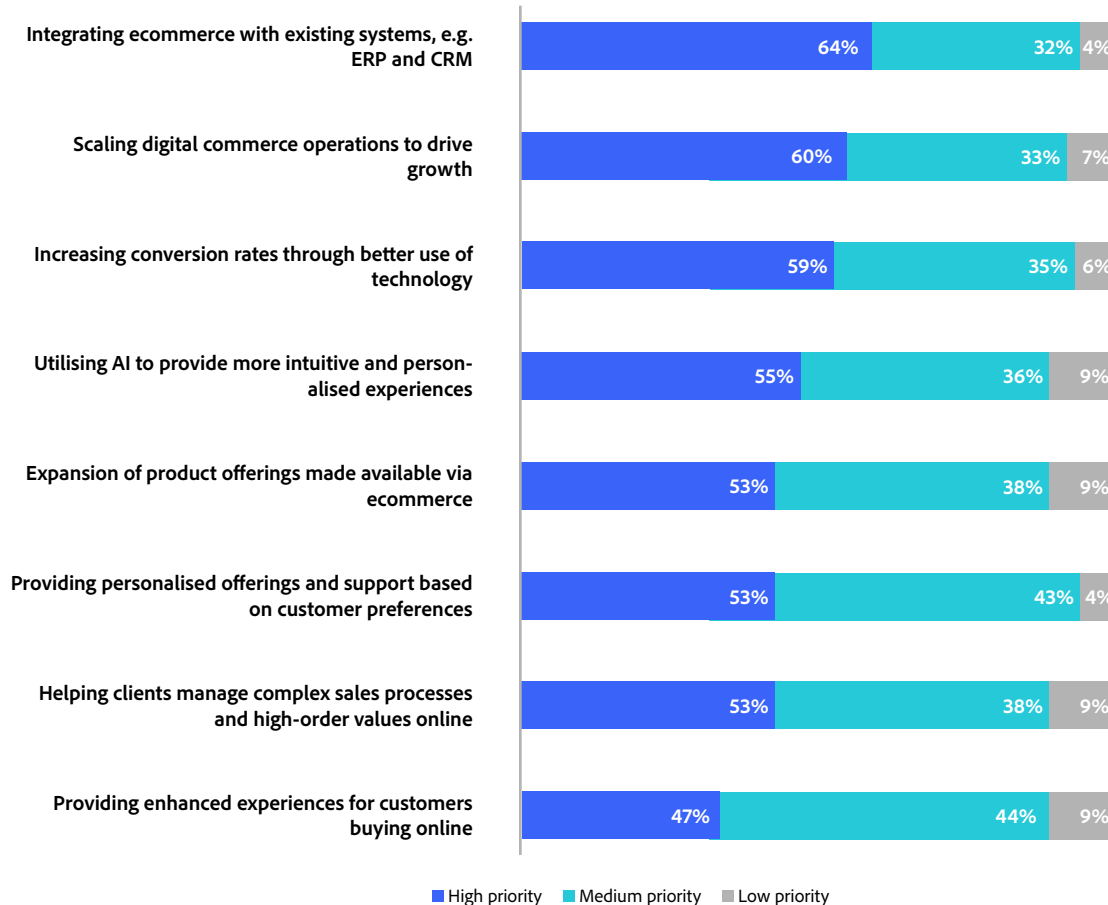
Figure 4: What are the main areas you are prioritising in your B2B digital commerce strategy? (Leaders vs. mainstream)



Objectives and challenges – why companies are focusing on better integration

Figure 5 shows the relative importance of different B2B commerce objectives for organisations we surveyed. Better integration is the highest-priority objective, with around two-thirds (64%) of B2B companies saying that integration of ecommerce with existing systems is a high priority (Figure 5).

Figure 5: How important are the following objectives for your organisation



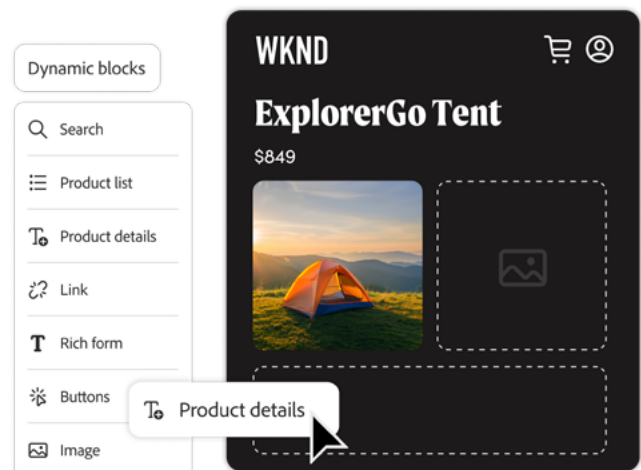
It is difficult to overstate the importance of effective integration in the world of commerce, and this is why there is such a trend for businesses to use agile and modular systems that can easily dovetail with other software to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The modern ecommerce platform needs to interact with a plethora of different tools and sources of data, including ERP for managing inventory, finance and supply chain operations, CRM for customer data and sales history, and CMS, PIM and DAM technology for website content, product information and digital assets.

Commerce technology needs to be seen in the context of B2B customer journeys that often involve interactions with other touchpoints including email, text messages or advertising on third-party websites. Commerce platforms therefore also need to integrate with email and marketing automation tools, as well as increasingly prevalent customer data platforms (CDPs) and on-site testing, optimisation and personalisation tools.

The next highest-priority objectives are 'scaling digital commerce operations to drive growth' (a high priority for 60%) and 'increasing conversion rates through better use of technology' (59%). In the case of the former objective, we saw in the last section how ecommerce leaders are focusing on revenue growth and customer acquisition, so it is no surprise that aspirational B2B companies are prioritising the digital technology and capabilities that are required to underpin this.

They may be looking to expand into new markets or reach new audiences, while also increasing conversion rates through more relevant and personalised experiences that increase the propensity of site visitors to make a transaction or to place an order. The use of AI for more intuitive and personalised experiences is also a high priority for more than half (55%) of companies surveyed, and this topic will be explored further in [Section 4](#).



The key challenges

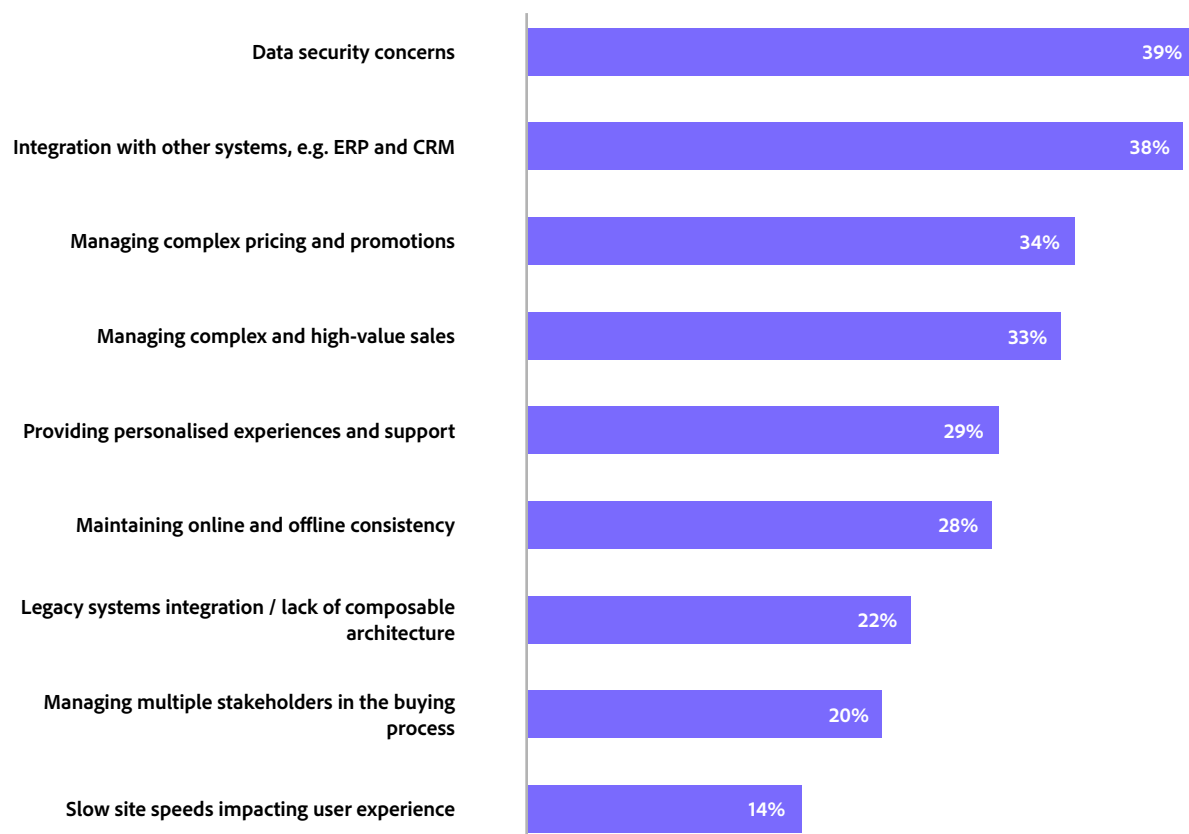
In terms of the greatest challenges adapting to changing B2B digital commerce trends, integration with other systems such as CRM and ERP is a close second to data security concerns (*Figure 6*).

Any company – whether B2B or B2C-focused – needs absolute confidence that it has a secure ecommerce platform infrastructure with regular updates, secure coding practices and regular security audits. Data breaches can badly damage reputation and lead to [significant financial losses](#). Digital commerce technology also needs to allow for appropriate levels of access control, user permissions and data encryption to protect sensitive information. Secure payment gateways and PCI DSS compliance ensure safe transactions, also helping companies to build trust, mitigate risks, and protect sensitive data in their ecommerce environment.

The complexity of B2B commerce is also evident from *Figure 6*, with a third of respondents saying that managing pricing and promotional complexity – and also managing complexity in high-value sales – are among their greatest challenges in adapting to changing B2B commerce trends.

Technology needs to be fit-for-purpose, with customers able to tailor products and solutions to their exact specifications, with pricing and product visualisation updating in real time without the need for manual intervention. This again comes back to integration, with digital commerce platforms integrating with pricing engines and ERP systems to generate accurate quotes quickly.

Figure 6: What are your greatest challenges in adapting to changing B2B digital commerce trends?



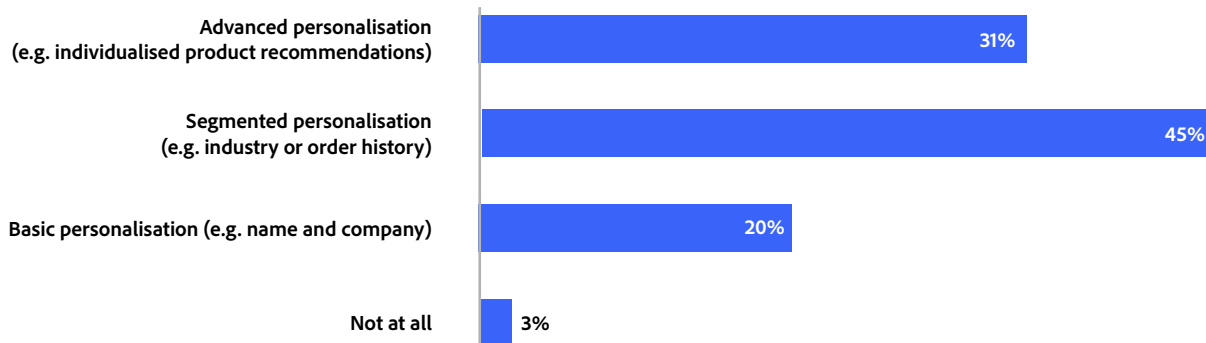
Methodology note: respondents could check up to three options

The B2B personalisation imperative

B2B companies historically reliant on offline engagement and personal connections for driving high-value sales are recognising the importance of digital interactions to complement and sometimes even replace these activities. The key to delivering effective online engagement is real-time personalisation so that any information and imagery being displayed is as relevant as possible to prospects and customers, and to the organisations they represent.

This research shows there is a strong correlation between commercial success and the ability to personalise customer engagement. Asked about the extent to which they are customising the digital experience for B2B ecommerce customers, a fifth of respondents (20%) are doing only very basic personalisation which might simply involve name-checking an individual or their business (*Figure 7*).

Figure 7: To what extent do you personalise the digital experience for your B2B ecommerce customers?

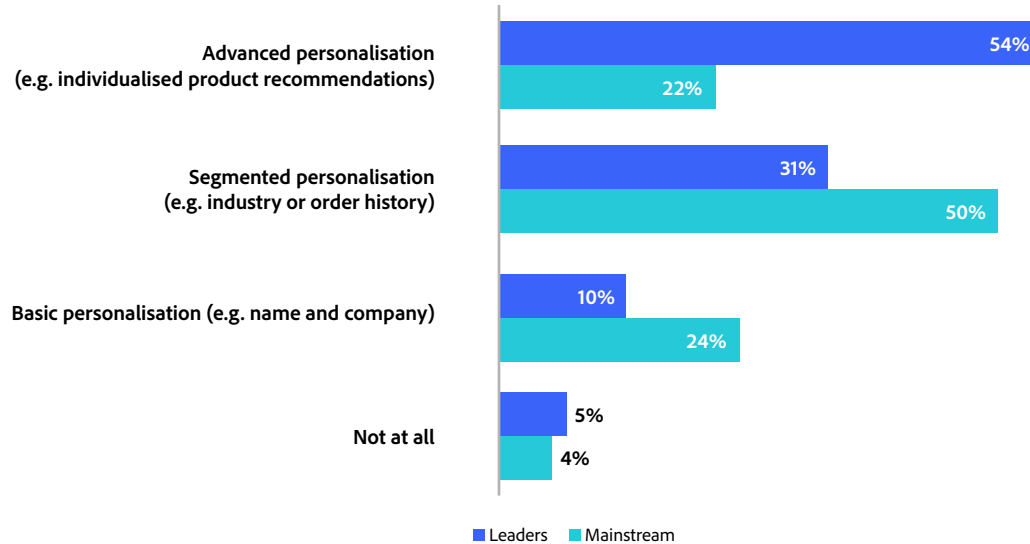


Companies are most likely to be personalising the experience based on segments such as industry or order history (45%). Only around a third of companies (31%) are carrying out 'advanced personalisation' which is characterised by product recommendations uniquely tailored for individuals.

While segmented personalisation is a step in the right direction, true personalisation involves looking at individual-level data which is beyond the capabilities of many organisations for a range of reasons.

B2B commerce leaders are two-and-a-half times more likely to be carrying out advanced personalisation than their mainstream counterparts (*Figure 8*).

Figure 8: To what extent do you personalise the digital experience for your B2B ecommerce customers? (Leaders vs. mainstream)



Overcoming barriers to B2B personalisation

The most significant challenges specifically in the context of B2B personalisation are shown in *Figure 9*. Many of these challenges relate explicitly to data, including lack of real-time data (40%) and lack of clean and accurate data (35%). These problems are often the consequence of data silos and integration issues which are a challenge for 31% of companies.

This frequently comes down to legacy ecommerce technology which doesn't connect effectively with other systems. Without real-time data capabilities it is difficult for companies to provide the truly personalised experience their customers are increasingly expecting. But the biggest personalisation challenge is measuring its effectiveness, something which half (50%) of companies describe as a challenge.

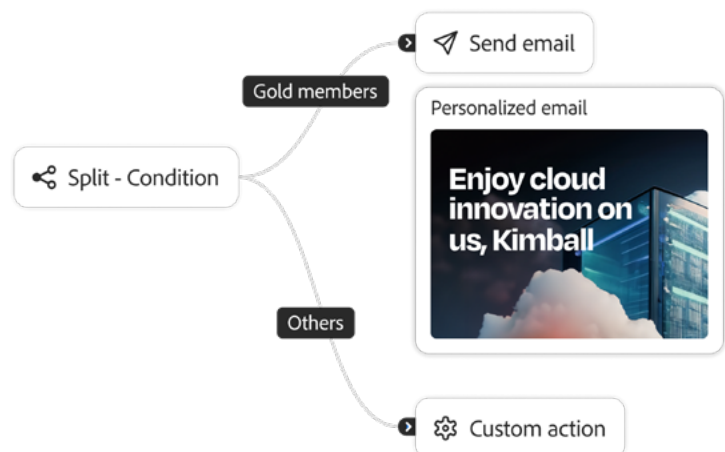
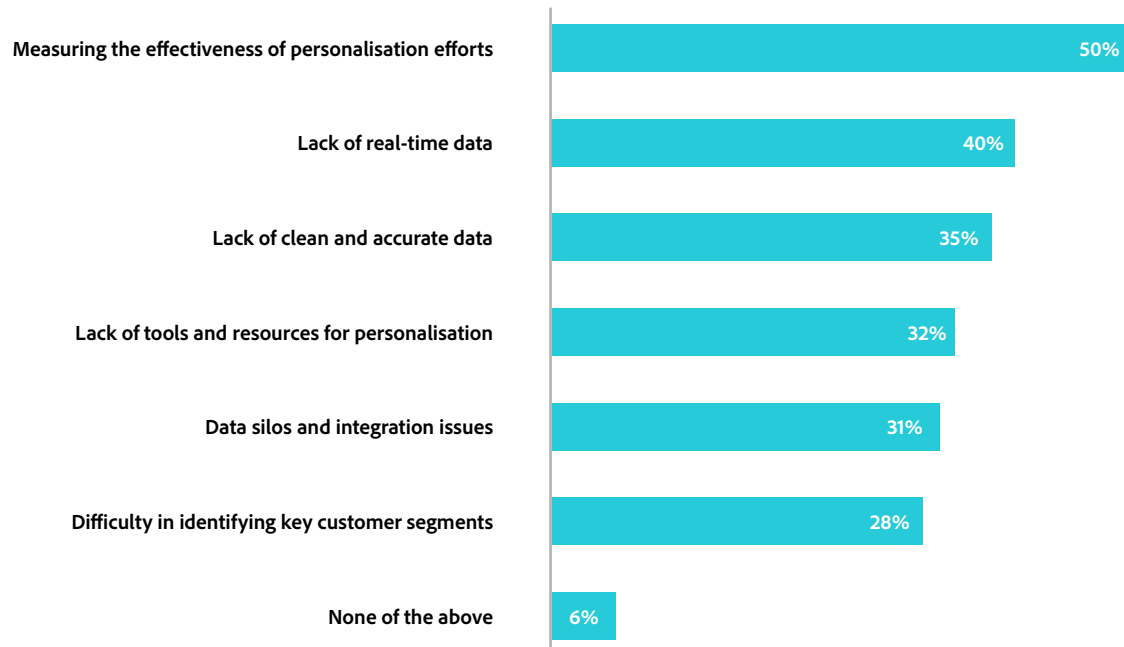


Figure 9: Which of the following are challenges when using data to personalise the B2B digital experience?



Effective measurement requires a strategic approach and a focus on relevant KPIs, including conversion rates and engagement metrics to help understand the true return on investment.

To successfully track user behaviour and measure the impact of personalised experiences, companies also need robust analytics and attribution tools incorporating data from different sources including website analytics, CRM and marketing automation platforms.

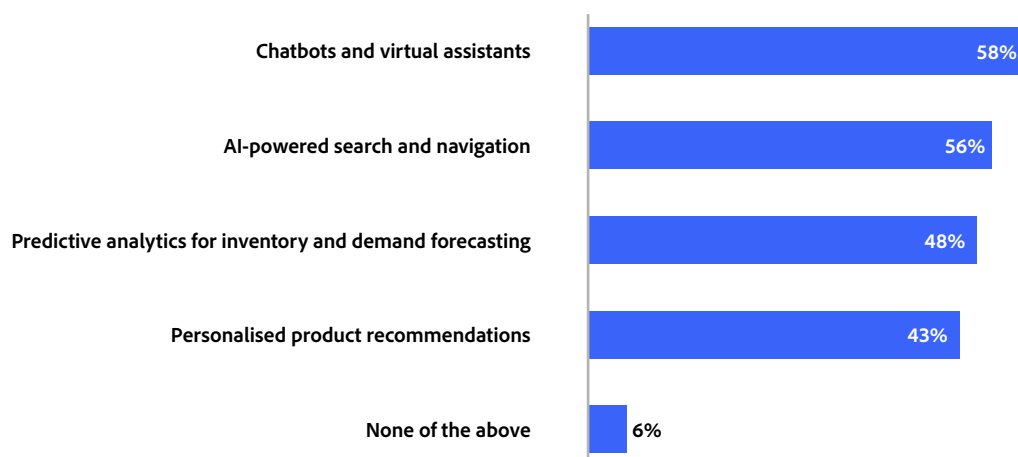
A/B or multivariate tests can be used to compare the performance of personalised experiences versus more generic ones, which can then lead to more experimentation and build confidence that investment in personalisation is worthwhile.

The business case for GenAI

Over the last few years AI and machine learning have become integral to the capabilities offered by digital commerce technology vendors, both for personalisation and other tools or activities such as chatbots and predictive analytics.

Figure 10 shows that chatbots and virtual assistants are the most common B2B digital commerce use case, cited by 58% of companies compared to 56% for AI-powered search and navigation.

Figure 10: How are you using AI to enhance the B2B customer experience and drive revenue growth through B2B digital commerce?



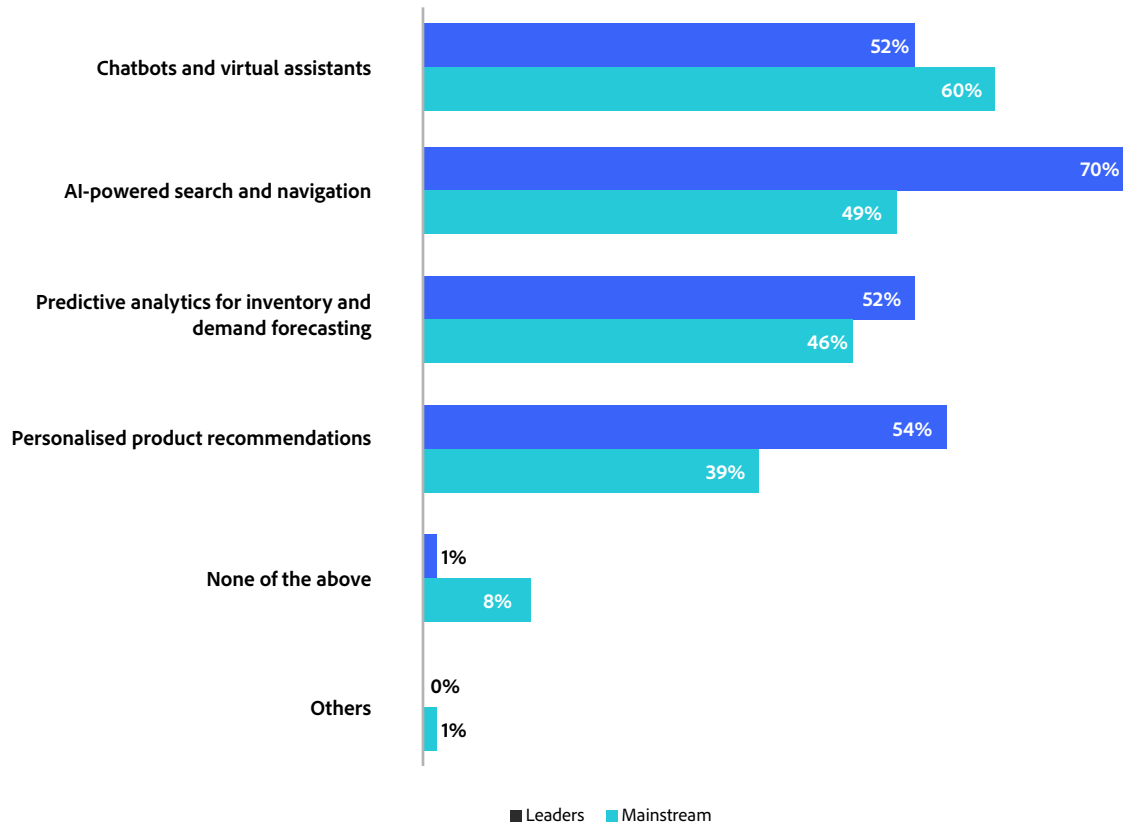
Just under half (48%) are using AI-powered predictive analytics for inventory and demand forecasting. AI algorithms can analyse vast datasets, including historical sales data, seasonal trends and economic indicators, allowing for more accurate predictions, better anticipation of customer needs and management of inventory.

But it is in the realms of enhanced product discovery capabilities such as search and navigation, and AI-powered recommendations, that leaders are most evidently stealing a march on mainstream companies as they seek to deliver on the promise of personalisation at scale.

More than two-thirds (70%) of leaders are using AI-powered search and navigation compared to just under half (49%) of mainstream companies, and the gap is almost as large for personalised product recommendations (54% vs. 39%).

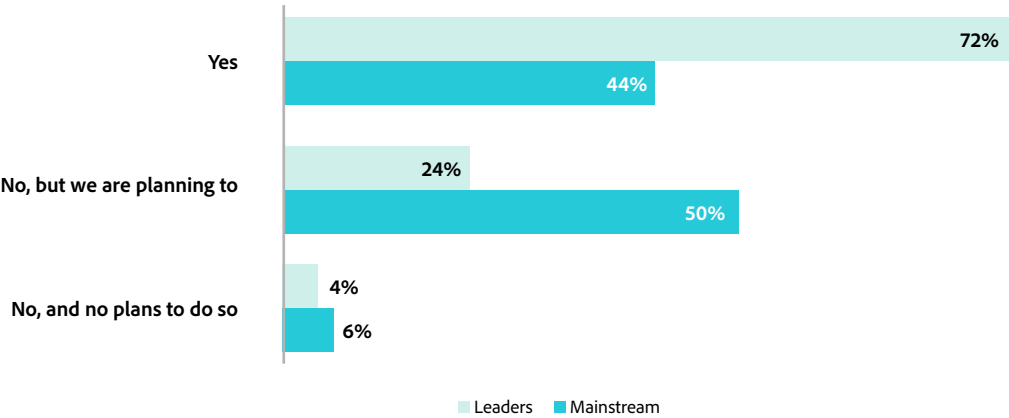
The use of GenAI for better product discovery has become widespread in the world of consumer retail where consumers are often overwhelmed by choice. The same technology is now increasingly being used by B2B companies who recognise that their prospects and customers expect a similarly relevant and filtered experience.

Figure 11: How are you using AI to enhance the B2B customer experience and drive revenue growth through B2B digital commerce? (Leaders vs. mainstream)



Leaders are also significantly more likely than mainstream companies to be using GenAI tools to generate personalised product images and marketing assets (72% vs. 44% for mainstream companies, *Figure 12*).

Figure 12: Do you use generative AI tools to create personalised product images or marketing assets? (Leaders vs. mainstream)



The ability to produce multiple variations of images and marketing assets has historically been a barrier for companies looking to scale up their personalisation efforts, with content supply chains creaking under the pressure of increased demand for seemingly infinite permutations of assets for different personas and segments.

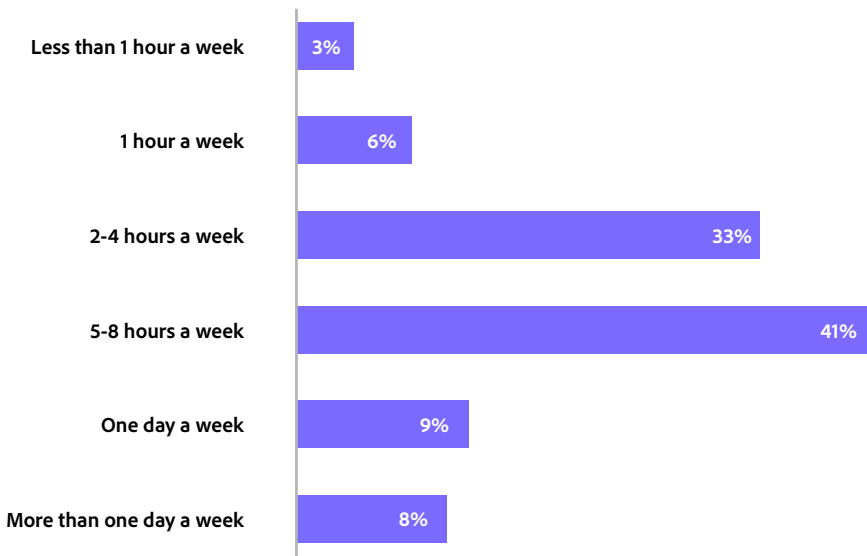
It is not an exaggeration to say that GenAI has revolutionised the ability to create multiple variations of product images tailored to specific company requirements, and also to the needs of the individual people making purchases on their companies' behalf.



Saving time

The vast majority (91%) of respondents say that the average person in their ecommerce team could save at least two hours a week through use of AI technology, and more than half (58%) say that the average person could save at least five hours a week (*Figure 13*).

Figure 13: How much time per week do you estimate the average person in your ecommerce team could save through use of AI technology?



This translates into huge time savings for B2B organisations who are effectively utilising this technology. To help illustrate the potential time savings, it follows that an ecommerce team with 10 full-time staff would in effect be gaining an extra full-time employee if each team member was saving just half a day per week.

The range of digital commerce capabilities that define success

Technology plays an increasingly vital role in driving B2B ecommerce growth and enabling digital transformation. *Figure 14* shows the extent to which B2B commerce companies regard a range of capabilities as critical for their success. The ability to scale across markets is seen as the most important factor, and this speaks to the importance of growth for companies across international and emerging markets at a time of uncertainty and stagnation within some of the world's most established economies.

Across the full range of capabilities, B2B leaders are far more likely to describe their capabilities as 'excellent', ranging from pricing or promotional capabilities and DAM integration to advanced shopping cart functionality and storefront customisation (*Figure 15*).

Catalogue management is regarded as an important or critical capability by 85% of respondents. B2B products often have intricate specifications, variations and technical details. Effective catalogue management ensures this complex data is accurately organised and presented. Maintaining consistent product information across multiple channels (including website, mobile marketplaces) is essential. Better catalogue management can help to eliminate discrepancies and to ensure a unified customer experience. As with nearly all the other capabilities listed, leaders are more than twice as likely to describe their technology for catalogue management as 'excellent' (48% vs. 19% for mainstream companies).

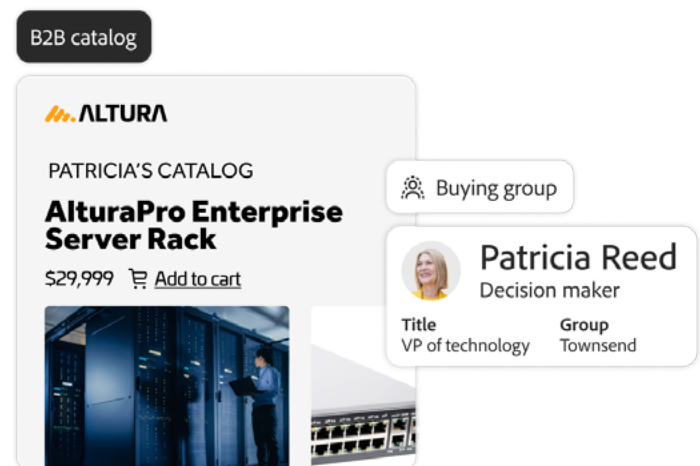


Figure 14: How important are the following digital commerce capabilities for the success of your B2B operations?

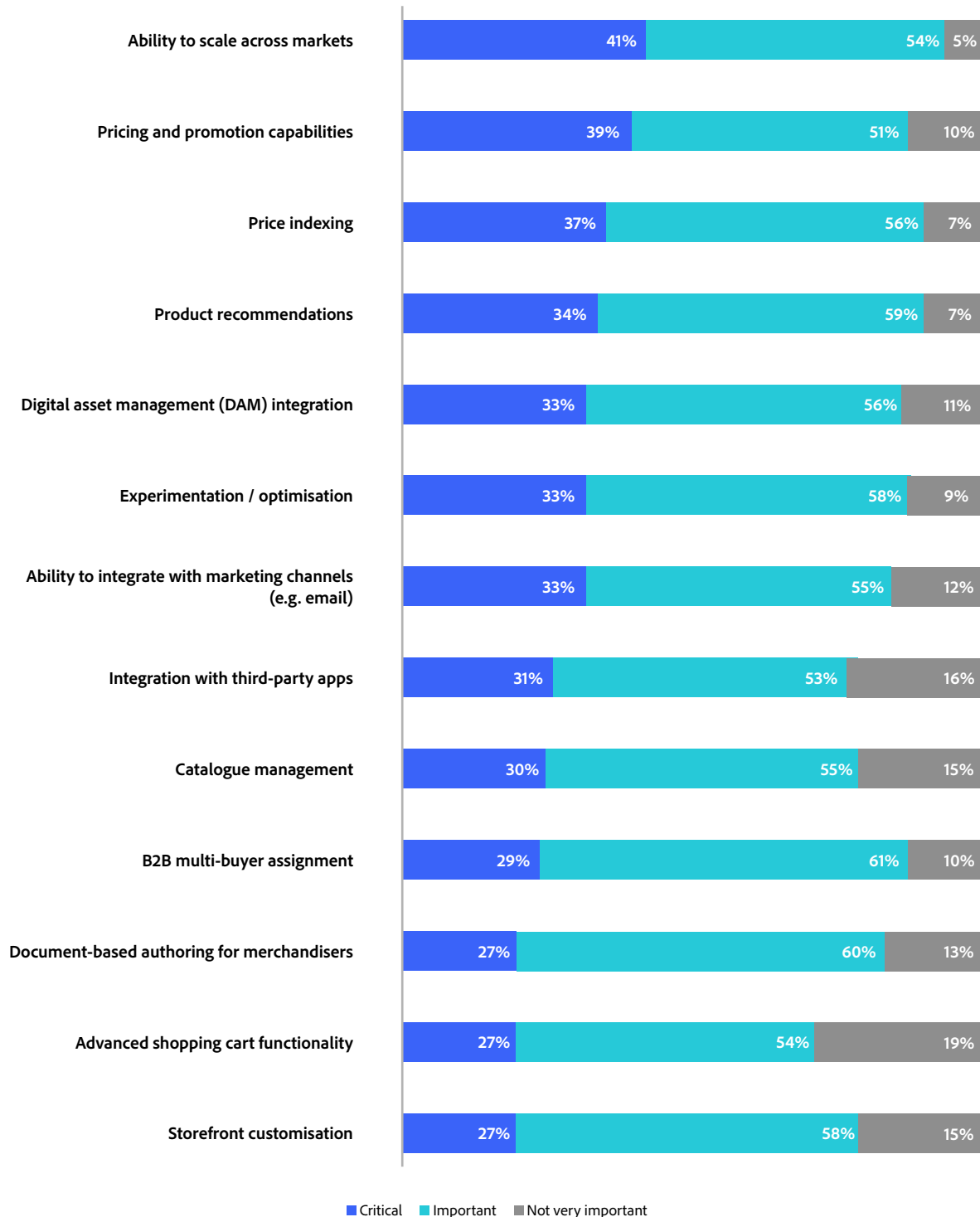
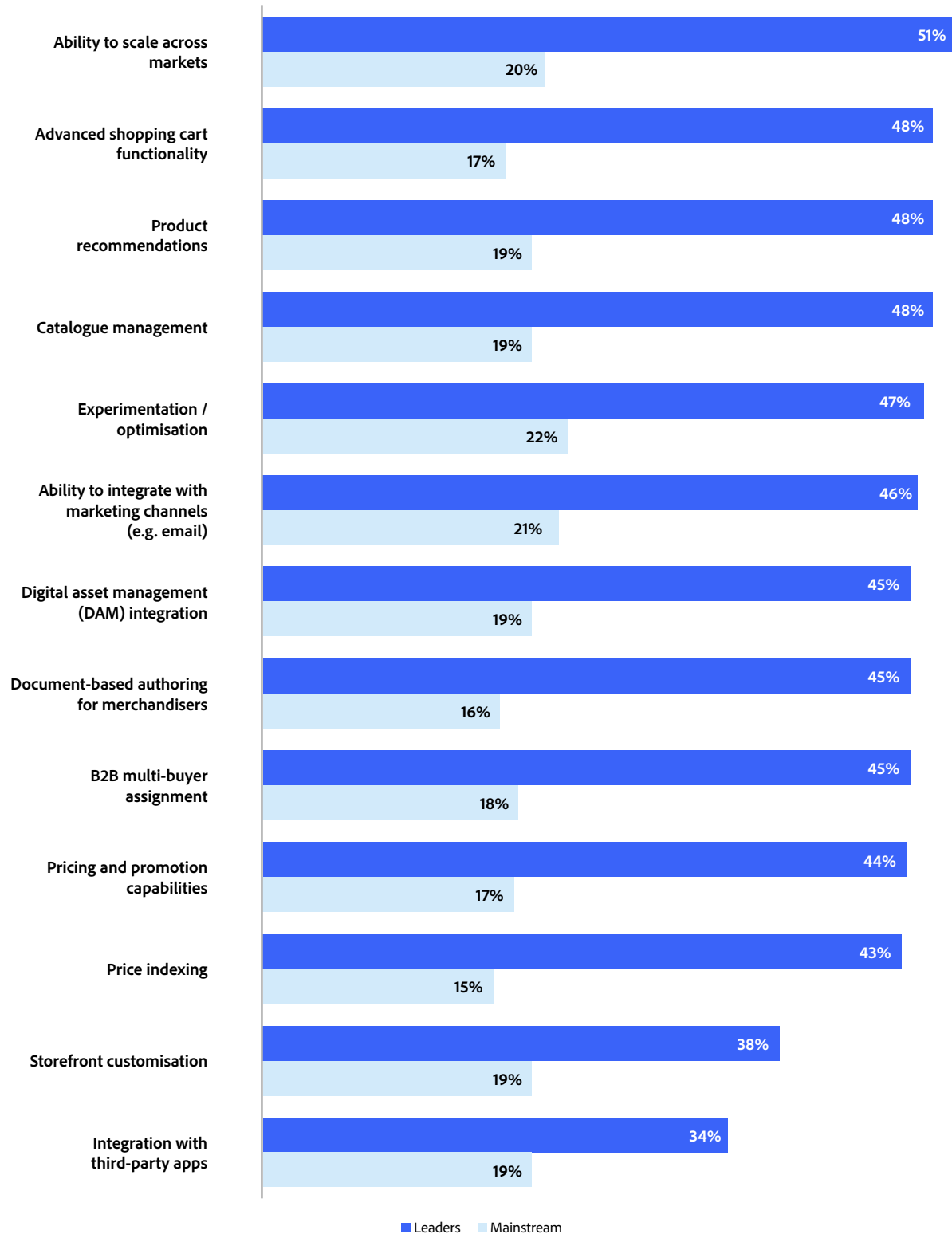


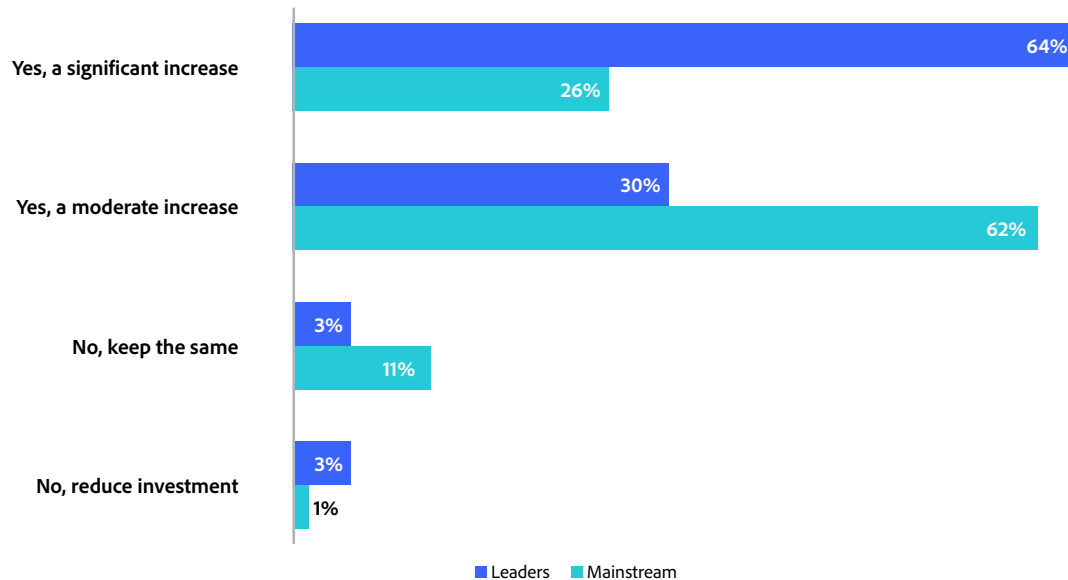
Figure 15: Proportion of respondents describing their digital commerce capabilities in these areas as 'excellent' (Leaders vs. mainstream)



Investing in success

Our research shows that B2B ecommerce leaders are also more than twice as likely to be significantly increasing their investment in digital commerce over the next 12 months (64%, vs. 26%, *Figure 16*). It is clear from *Figure 14* and *Figure 15* that there are multiple capabilities that need to be considered as part of what can become a complicated jigsaw puzzle.

Figure 16: Are you planning to increase your digital commerce investment over the next 12 months? (Leaders vs. mainstream)



But while investment in B2B digital commerce is undeniably important, it is crucial that companies with aspirations to become B2B digital commerce leaders don't make the classic mistake of embarking on an overly complex implementation that ultimately fails to deliver.

The trend of using cloud services, and SaaS, is showing that many companies are moving away from trying to be software development companies. It therefore makes sense to work with a vendor that offers a foundation of core commerce capabilities that facilitates the sharing of data across the technology stack.

The complexity of B2B commerce means integrations with complementary tools will inevitably be necessary, whether pricing, product recommendations or asset management tools. This is why it is important to choose a vendor with proven APIs to enable seamless connections with related technologies and platforms.

Concluding recommendations

- 1 Prioritise digital self-service and customer experience.** B2B organisations need to recognise that B2B buyers expect the same level of convenience and efficiency as in B2C experiences. In the B2B the stakes are even higher. Invest in user-friendly digital portals and storefronts, self-service features and personalised pricing and promotions to meet these expectations. Focus on a mobile-friendly approach to cater to buyers who increasingly research and transact via mobile devices.
- 2 Integrate systems for efficiency and data utilisation.** Prioritise the integration of your ecommerce platform with existing systems like ERP and CRM. This streamlines operations, breaks down data silos, and provides a holistic customer view. Integrated technology facilitates better business intelligence and data-driven insights to optimise processes, personalise experiences, and make informed business decisions, ultimately driving both customer satisfaction and revenue growth.
- 3 Embrace personalisation and AI for enhanced engagement.** Implement real-time personalisation to deliver content and experiences that are as relevant as possible. AI-powered tools such as chatbots, search and navigation, merchandising and product recommendations can enhance product discovery and engagement, leading to better customer experiences, better customer retention, and increased revenues. GenAI should also be harnessed to scale up the production of product images and other marketing assets required to deliver personalisation at scale.
- 4 Focus on agility and scalability.** Adopt a digital-first mindset that prioritises agility to respond swiftly to market changes and evolving customer needs. Implement modular systems and cloud-based solutions to ensure scalability and seamless integration with emerging technologies. This approach enables businesses to adapt, innovate, and maintain a competitive edge within the dynamic and competitive B2B landscape.
- 5 Balance digital investment with strategic vendor selection and implementation.** Your starting point should be a focus on a customer-centric approach, understanding the buying cycle to provide tailored offerings and exceptional service, fostering customer loyalty and driving long-term success. Then decide what technology is required to deliver this. While investing in digital commerce is crucial, avoid overly complex implementations which can take years to come to fruition. Prioritise vendors that provide a strong foundation of core ecommerce capabilities and also enable smooth connections with adjacent technologies and platforms as part of a composable architecture.

Appendix: Respondent profiles

Figure 17: In which European country are you based?

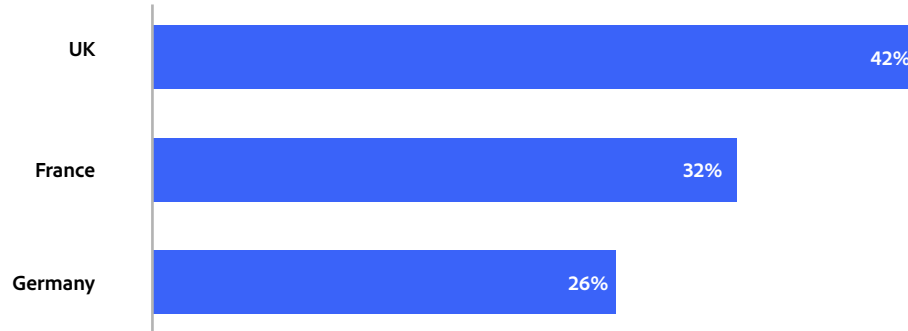


Figure 18: What is your level of seniority within the business?

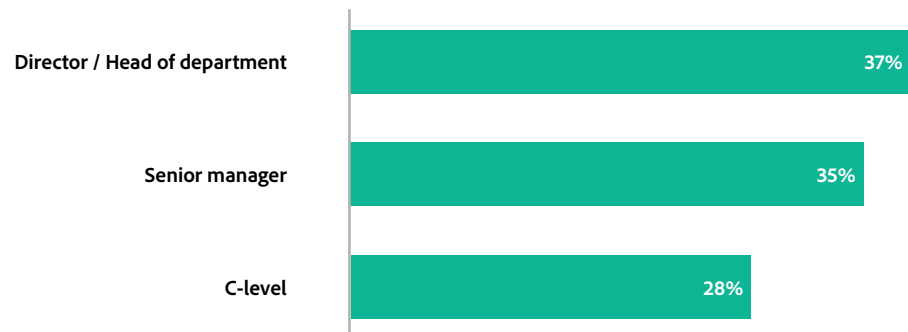


Figure 19: In which business sector does your organisation operate?

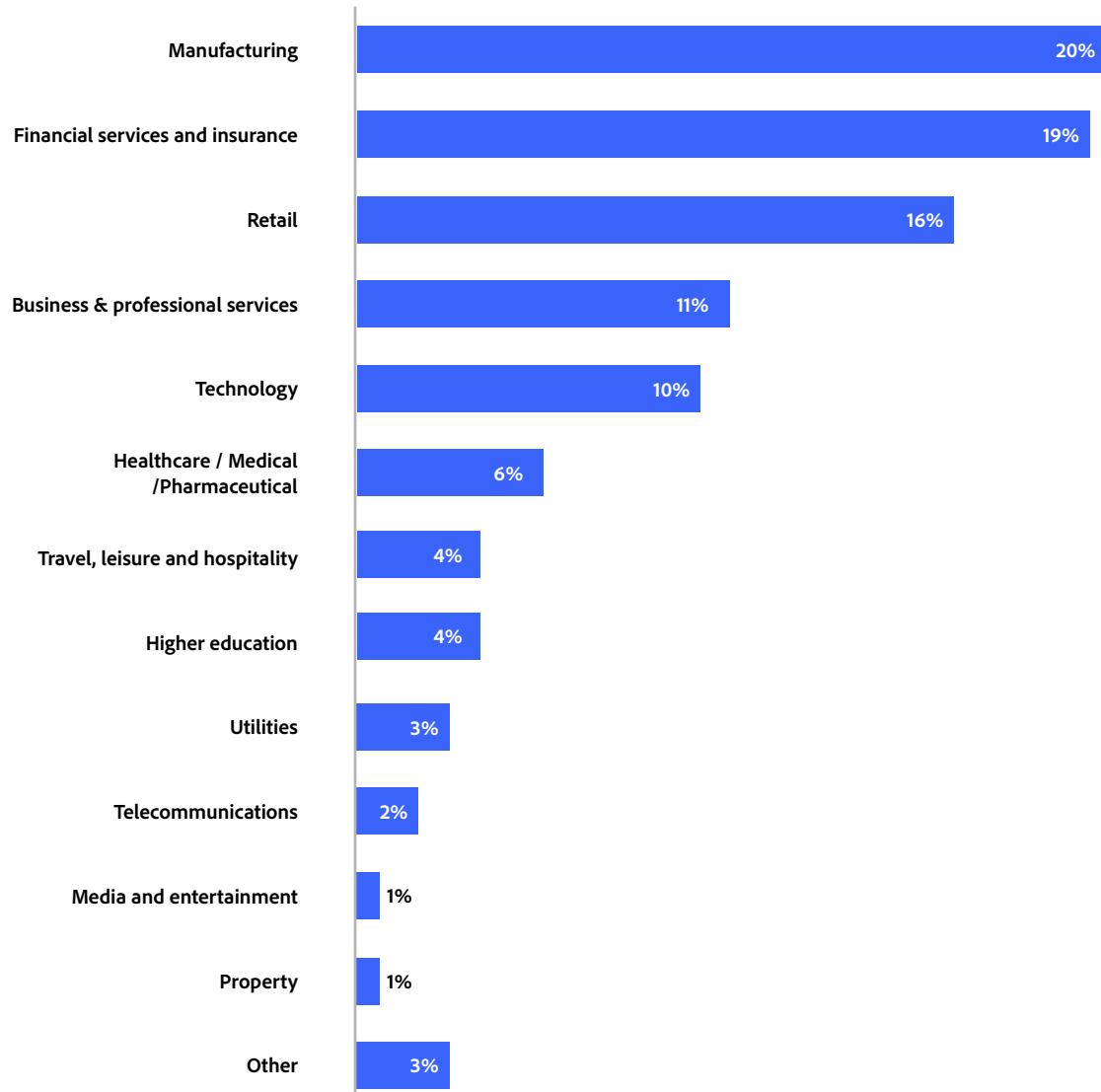


Figure 20: What job function do you work in?

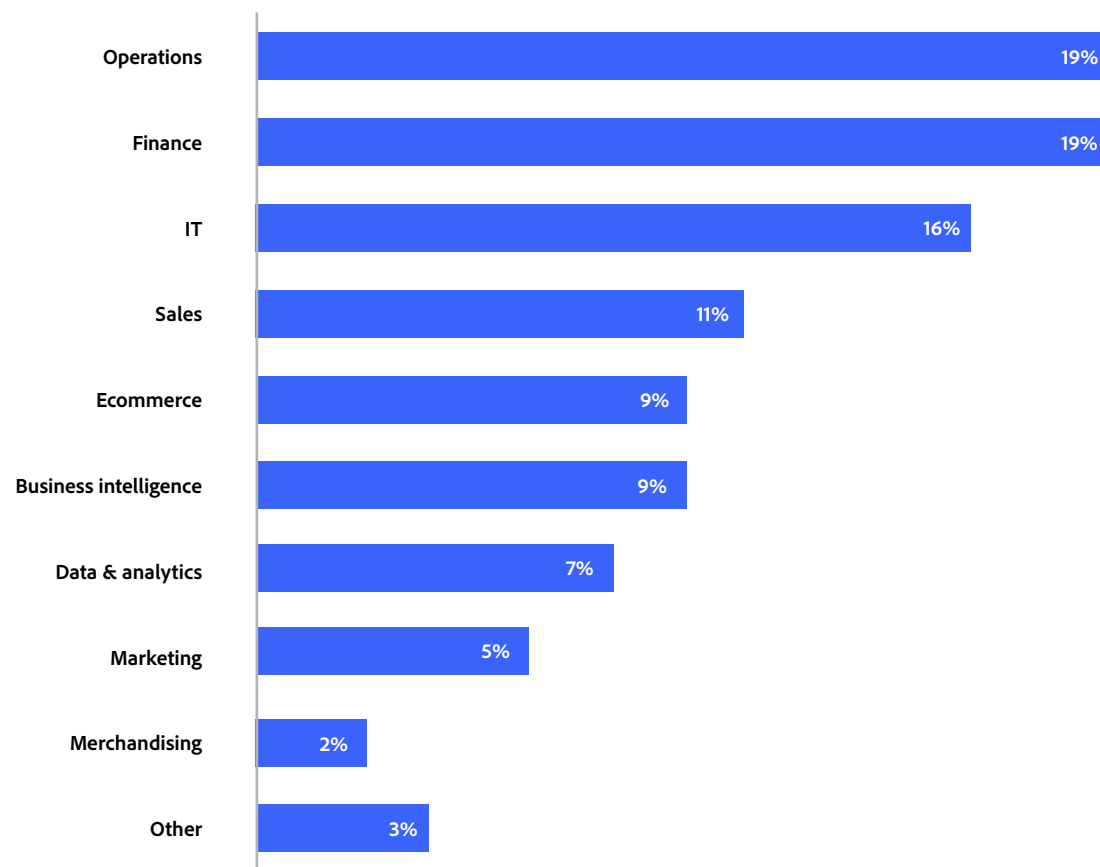


Figure 21: What is your annual company revenue?

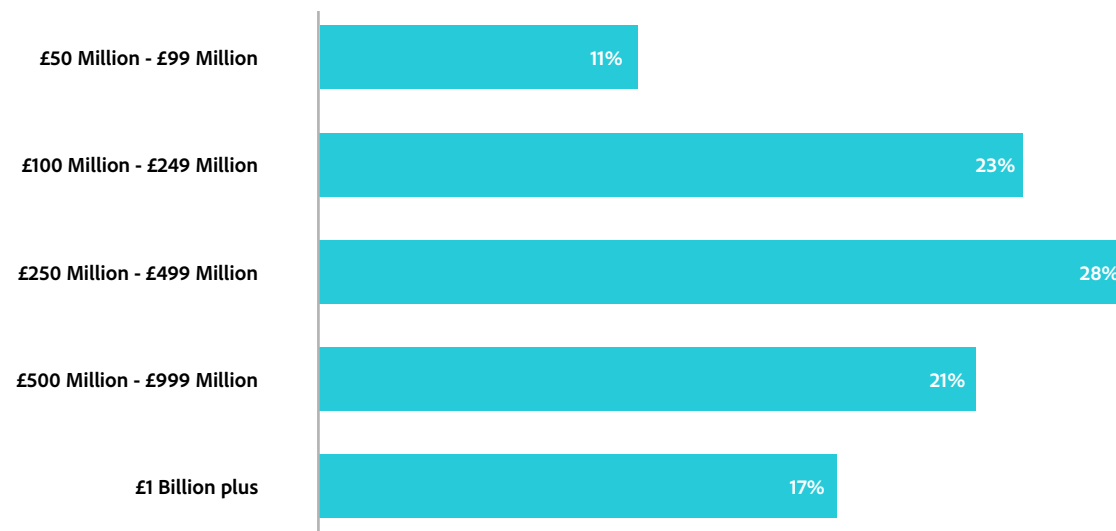
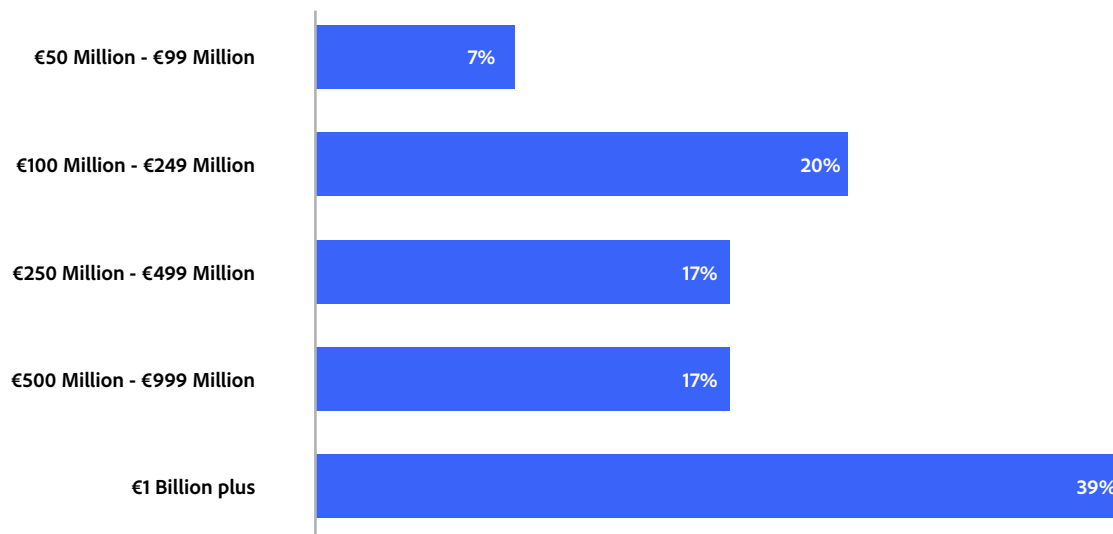


Figure 22: What is your annual company revenue?



About Adobe Commerce

Adobe Commerce is a composable ecommerce solution that lets you quickly create global, multi-brand B2C and B2B experiences — all from one cloud-native platform. Use it to deliver personalised, highly responsive shop front experiences that boost traffic, conversions and GMV.

<https://business.adobe.com/uk/products/magento/magento-commerce.html>



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<https://www.londonresearch.com/>



About the Author

Linus is Co-Founder of London Research and a renowned tech industry analyst who has spent more than 20 years producing content for industry giants such as Adobe.

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