



MMA WHITEPAPER

# Navigating the GenAI Landscape

A Practical Roadmap for Marketing Organizations

## Abstract

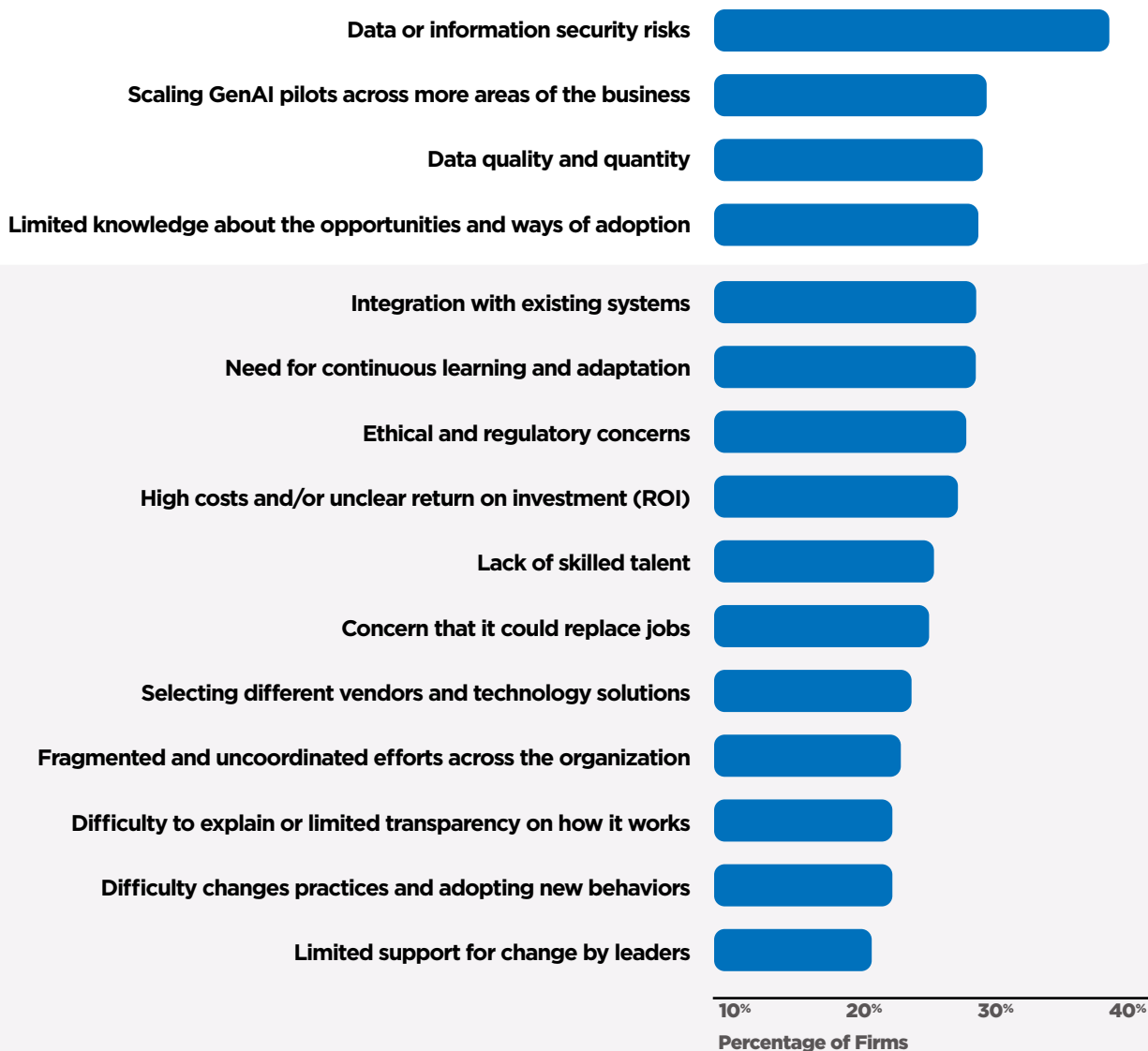
Generative AI (GenAI) may offer a transformative potential for marketing, but realizing this requires a strategic, organization-wide approach. This white paper, based on a comprehensive study conducted by the MMA/MarCaps partnership (n=521) and interviews with leading CMOs, explores the challenges and opportunities inherent in GenAI adoption. We introduce a strategic framework, the "Need-Case Map," to guide marketers in prioritizing investments, aligning initiatives with business objectives, and maximizing impact. Our research reveals key differentiators of leading firms, emphasizing the critical role of a need-case-driven approach, robust organizational capabilities, and a structured roadmap for navigating GenAI deployment.

## Introduction

The capacity of Generative AI to create diverse content formats — from text and images to code — is fundamentally reshaping the marketing industry. Despite the recognized potential, many organizations struggle to translate GenAI's promise into tangible business results, often relegating its use to tactical tasks rather than strategic initiatives. This confinement to "pilot purgatory" significantly limits the return on investment and hinders genuine organizational transformation. This white paper addresses the complexities of GenAI adoption, delves into the best practices employed by leading firms, and provides a strategic roadmap for leveraging GenAI's transformative power.

## Challenges in GenAI Adoption

**Figure 1: GenAI Adoption Challenges**



Three core challenges consistently impede organizations from effectively harnessing GenAI:

- **Scaling Pilot Projects:** While pilot programs offer valuable initial learning, a significant portion of organizations in our sample (34%) struggle to effectively scale successful tests into enterprise-wide solutions. The proliferation of unscaled pilots leads to fragmented efforts, diluted impact, and inefficient resource allocation. A structured process for evaluating, prioritizing, and scaling GenAI initiatives is essential to overcome this hurdle.
- **Navigating the Complex Landscape:** The rapid emergence of GenAI vendors and tools creates an often-bewildering array of choices. Marketers face difficulty in keeping pace with new developments and selecting optimal solutions that align with their specific needs and existing technology stacks. Clear guidance and structured evaluation frameworks are therefore essential to navigate this increasingly complex and dynamic landscape.
- **Data Security and Privacy Concerns:** Responsibly leveraging GenAI requires addressing legitimate data security and privacy concerns. The need for high-quality, diverse training data frequently clashes with the imperative to protect sensitive customer information and comply with evolving regulations. Establishing robust data governance frameworks, incorporating meticulous vendor selection processes, and implementing industry best practices for data anonymization and security are paramount. Furthermore, increased industry collaboration and data transparency can mitigate risks associated with GenAI experimentation by informing strategic choices before committing to full-scale implementations.

## Best Practices: The Path to GenAI Readiness

Organizations successfully harnessing GenAI's power consistently exhibit the following characteristics:

- **Proactive Leadership: A Need-Case-Driven Approach:** Leaders in GenAI adoption prioritize a strategic, problem-oriented approach. Rather than simply asking "what can this technology do?", they identify specific marketing challenges — "need cases" — that GenAI may uniquely and effectively address. This focuses investment on solving business problems instead of being driven by the capabilities of available technologies. For example, instead of a generic application of GenAI to "write blogs," a need-case approach targets the specific problem of "improving search ranking by generating optimized blog content." This need-case-driven strategy leads to more measurable ROI and faster integration within existing workflows, as evidenced by the proactive stances of CMOs like Ally's Andrea Brimmer and Choice Hotels' Noha Abdalla.
- **Building Organizational Capabilities:** Successful GenAI implementation requires strengthening five core organizational pillars:

- **Training and Education:** Equipping teams with the knowledge and skills to understand and leverage GenAI effectively is paramount. This may include workshops on prompt engineering, responsible AI practices and ethical considerations, and hands-on training with practical applications tailored to marketing functions. Establishing clear and consistent terminology further reduces implementation barriers and facilitates cross-functional collaboration.
- **Leadership Support and Incentives:** Demonstrating tangible management commitment is crucial. This goes beyond advocating for GenAI exploration to allocating appropriate resources, implementing clear incentive structures for teams adopting and adapting to new AI-driven workflows, and establishing transparent metrics for evaluating project success. This requires addressing potential financial and strategic constraints, adopting established rollout practices for organization-wide initiatives, and actively mitigating the risk of falling behind competitors.
- **Dedicated GenAI Teams:** Creating a central, cross-functional team of dedicated GenAI experts may enable focused knowledge building, streamlined project management, and coordinated collaboration with external technology and data partners. These teams could assist in effectively navigating vendor ecosystems, piloting early-stage solutions, ensuring the successful integration of solutions with existing technology infrastructures, and disseminating knowledge and insights across relevant business units.
- **Robust AI Infrastructure:** Investing in the necessary infrastructure, including data storage and processing capabilities like cloud platforms and data lakes, is fundamental for enabling GenAI initiatives. Capturing and organizing data at a granular level — moving beyond traditional inputs like budget and campaign type to encompass asset-level details such as content elements, visual attributes, and even the emotional tone of messaging — is essential for training effective GenAI models and driving meaningful outcomes. (See the Key Performance Inputs vs. Key Performance Indicators discussion).
- **Clear AI Strategy and Goals:** Developing a well-defined strategic vision for GenAI adoption with specific, measurable goals for individual business units and functions ensures alignment with broader marketing objectives and maximizes ROI. This involves clearly articulating which areas of the Need-Case Map (discussed below) will be prioritized, establishing specific objectives for cost reduction, quality improvement, or market disruption within those areas, and identifying key performance indicators to track progress.

## Preparing Your Organization for GenAI: Beyond KPIs to KPIs

Successfully integrating GenAI requires more than just adopting new technologies; it demands a fundamental shift in how marketing organizations think about data and measurement. Traditional marketing measurement focuses on Key Performance

Indicators (KPIs) — outputs and outcomes like website traffic, conversion rates, or brand awareness — to understand what happened. GenAI, however, necessitates a new focus on Key Performance Inputs (KPIs) — the granular data points that train the models. This shift may require organizations to capture, organize, and analyze data at a much finer level of detail than traditional marketing measurement typically demands.

**Figure 2: KPI vs. KPI: A Shift in Data Granularity**

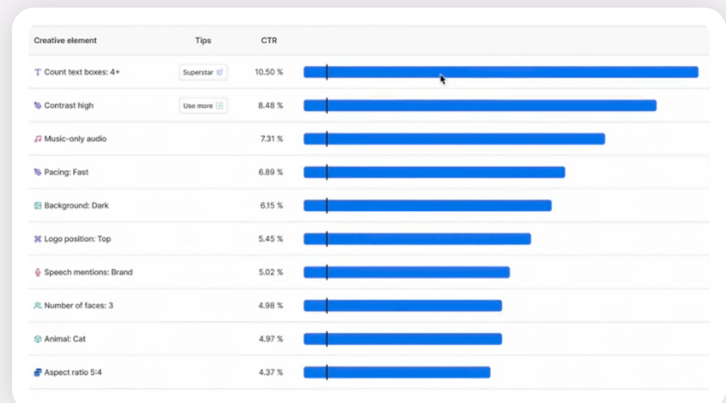
## Traditional Inputs

### Program Level

- Budget
- Time
- Platform
- Campaign Type
- Promotion
- Price
- Competitor actions
- Macroeconomy

## AI Inputs

### Asset Level



Source: memorable.io

Traditional marketing models often operate at a weekly or campaign level, considering inputs like budget, platform, campaign type, and competitor actions. GenAI models, however, thrive on asset-level data. This means capturing specific information about every piece of content, every image, every customer interaction — details like the number of text boxes in an ad, the color contrast in a visual, the emotional tone of a message, or the specific words used in a customer service chat.

**Successfully integrating GenAI requires more than just adopting new technologies; it demands a fundamental shift in how marketing organizations think about data and measurement.**

This shift in focus has several key implications for marketing organizations:

- **Data Capture and Management:** Organizations need to implement systems for capturing and organizing granular data related to all marketing activities. This may involve investing in new data capture tools, restructuring existing data warehouses, and developing clear data-governance frameworks.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Implementing effective KPI strategies necessitates close collaboration among marketing teams, data scientists, and technology teams.

Marketers need to clearly define the data points required to train effective GenAI models, data scientists need to develop appropriate data processing and analysis pipelines, and technology teams need to implement the necessary infrastructure for data capture, storage, and access.

- **Measurement and Analysis:** While KPIs remain important for evaluating the overall performance of marketing campaigns, new metrics and analysis techniques are required to assess the quality and effectiveness of GenAI models themselves. This may involve metrics related to model accuracy, bias detection, and the ability of models to generate desired outputs.

By proactively addressing these challenges and embracing the shift from KPIs to KPIs, marketing organizations can lay a strong foundation for GenAI success, ensuring their models are trained on high-quality data, their investments are aligned with strategic objectives, and their teams are empowered to leverage the transformative power of GenAI effectively. This proactive approach to data strategy may be a crucial differentiator of leading firms in the GenAI adoption race.

## The Need-Case Map: A Strategic Framework

The Need-Case Map provides a structured framework for navigating the expansive world of GenAI use cases and maximizing its impact on your organizational effectiveness. This framework aligns GenAI initiatives with core marketing value drivers and assigns specific "jobs" to AI, facilitating prioritization and measurable outcomes.

**Figure 3: GenAI Need-Case Map**

|                   |                  | Areas of Value → |          |            |           |             |           |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|----------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Jobs to Be Done ↓ |                  | Engagement       | Exchange | Experience | Knowledge | Operational | Strategic |
|                   | Reduce Costs     |                  |          |            |           |             |           |
|                   | Improve Quality  |                  |          |            |           |             |           |
|                   | Invent & Disrupt |                  |          |            |           |             |           |

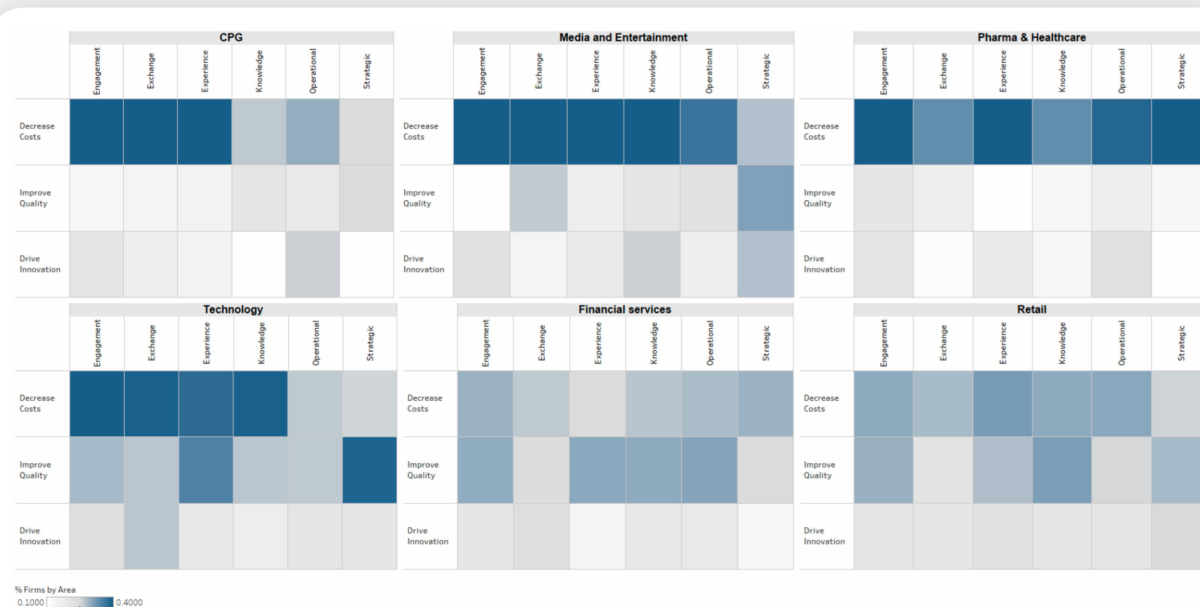
The Need-Case Map is a matrix organized along two axes:

- **Areas of Value (Horizontal Axis):** This axis categorizes GenAI applications based on their impact on six key areas where modern marketing organizations create value
  - **Engagement (External):** Building brand meaning, driving customer interaction, and fostering brand loyalty through content, social media, and other external channels.
  - **Experience (External):** Enhancing the customer journey, delivering seamless and personalized experiences, and improving customer satisfaction through optimized service delivery and personalized messaging.
  - **Exchange (External):** Driving conversions, optimizing performance marketing campaigns, and maximizing customer lifetime value through targeted advertising and personalized offers.
  - **Knowledge (Internal):** Generating valuable insights from market data, conducting competitive analysis, building predictive models, and uncovering unmet customer needs or emerging market trends.
  - **Operations (Internal):** Improving team performance and efficiency by automating workflows, optimizing processes, and enhancing collaboration within the marketing organization.
  - **Strategic (Internal):** Defining clear marketing strategies, identifying new growth opportunities, developing new product ideas, and assessing long-term market trends and competitive landscapes.
- **Jobs to Be Done (Vertical Axis):** This axis assigns specific objectives to GenAI initiatives, focusing on three primary "jobs":
  - **Reduce Costs:** Automating tasks, streamlining workflows, and optimizing resource allocation to achieve efficiency gains and cost savings across marketing operations. Speed increases are addressed in this category.
  - **Improve Quality:** Enhancing content quality, personalizing customer experiences, and optimizing campaign performance to achieve better outcomes and higher returns on marketing investments.
  - **Invent & Disrupt:** Driving innovation by developing new and creative marketing solutions, identifying and capitalizing on emerging market opportunities, and creating entirely new sources of value for the organization.

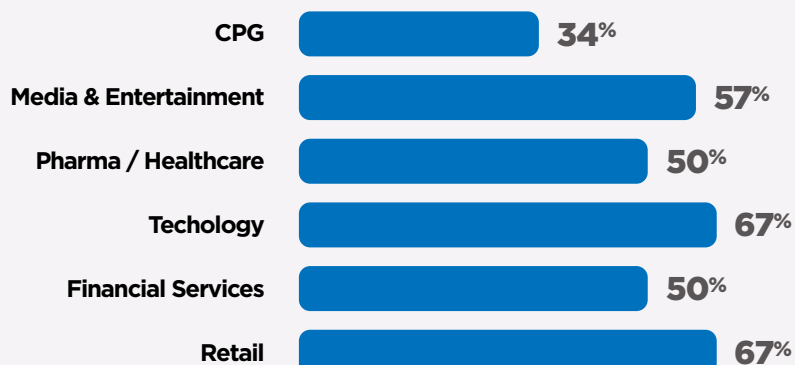
## Industry Benchmarks

MMA Global MarCaps partnered to fund a data collection with a research panel partner targeting marketing professionals. The recruitment of marketing professionals began with a larger initial set of responders (n=1,022) that were then screened for their “involvement with AI” to only collect from “Somewhat” or “Very” involved (n=521). Structured qualitative interviews with leading CMOs then explored the challenges and opportunities inherent in GenAI adoption. Within these data, we were able to examine seven industries to find significant variations in GenAI adoption and maturity, highlighting the influence of data access, industry challenges, strategic priorities, and organizational readiness; benchmarking against peers allows organizations to assess their relative position and tailor their GenAI strategies.

**Figure 4: GenAI Need-Case Adoption Heatmap**



**Figure 5: GenAI Adoption by Industry**



**Data as a Differentiator:** The "GenAI Adoption by Industry" chart demonstrates higher adoption in technology and retail, likely due to their richer first-party customer data, crucial for training effective GenAI models. CPG firms, often reliant on third-party data, may face challenges in developing customized GenAI solutions. This underscores the strategic importance of data acquisition and management for GenAI success. Those with limited first-party data should consider exploring alternatives like strategic partnerships and synthetic data.

**Strategic Focus:** Leading firms prioritize identifying specific "need cases" — business problems solvable by GenAI — rather than experimenting with generic "use cases." This alignment with business objectives ensures GenAI investments drive measurable impact.

**Untapped Potential:** The "GenAI Need-Case Adoption Heatmap" visualizes GenAI initiative distribution across different objectives (reduce costs, improve quality, invent and disrupt) and areas of marketing value creation (engagement, experience, exchange, knowledge, operations, strategy). A current emphasis on cost reduction, especially in external areas like engagement and exchange, suggests many are leveraging GenAI for quick wins in content generation, campaign optimization, and customer service automation. However, significant potential exists in utilizing GenAI for quality improvement and innovation, particularly within internal areas like knowledge creation, operations, and strategy. This suggests prioritizing exploration of underutilized areas, such as predictive modeling and new product development, for more transformative outcomes. For example, CPG firms could leverage the heatmap to identify strategic need cases within knowledge creation and strategy to potentially leapfrog competitors.

By understanding these benchmarks, CMOs can develop tailored GenAI roadmaps aligned with their specific needs and competitive landscape to maximize success and drive growth.

## Conclusion: From Promise to Practice

Generative AI offers transformative potential for marketing. A structured approach, guided by the Need-Case Map, empowers organizations to apply GenAI to existing workflows, prioritize initiatives, and unlock new growth. Realizing this potential requires proactive implementation and ongoing adaptation. CMOs should consider these key steps:

- **Assign clear ownership** for each area of value within the Need-Case Map (engagement, experience, exchange, strategy, operations, and knowledge) to drive focused GenAI exploration.
- **Identify "need cases" with measurable benefit targets** aligned to cost reduction, quality improvement, or disruptive innovation. This ensures strategic alignment and measurable ROI.

- **Prepare the organization by:**
  - Standardizing data inputs to effectively train GenAI models
  - Establishing a Marketing R&D function to manage GenAI adoption
  - Creating a Technology Board to facilitate pilot proposals and resource allocation

By fostering data-driven innovation and embracing these practices, CMOs can unlock GenAI's transformative power and position their organizations for future success.

## A Note on This Research and Authorship:

MarCaps and MMA Global collaborated to develop the research instrument and then fielded with a research panel partner. The sample was screened from n=1,022 down to n=521 marketing professionals that had at least some interaction with AI in their organizations. Researchers from MarCaps (Dr. Omar Rodriguez, Emory University and Dr. Sundar Bharadwaj, University of Georgia) analyzed the data and then presented the results at POSSIBLE in April 2024, and in an MMA Global Webinar in September 2024.

The PPT files and the recordings from those talks were then loaded into ChatGPT, and an **extremely** detailed prompt was engineered by MMA Global's Chief Prompt Engineer (Alec Foster, Cambridge University). The first draft of this White Paper was generated from the work of the authors, and an advanced ChatGPT prompt specifically engineered for the purposes of publishing this White Paper. MMA Global's Marketing Organization Structurer Think Tank (MOSTT) Program Director (Dr. Michael Pettiette, University of Houston-Downtown) then edited the document for accuracy and clarity prior to publication.



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