



# State of Conversation 2021

How leading brands leverage  
voice of the customer to  
accelerate their growth



# About Talkwalker and Trustpilot



Talkwalker is an enterprise listening company helping the world's largest brands to drive revenue by activating the voice of their customers.

- 9 offices worldwide: San Francisco, New York, Frankfurt, Luxembourg (HQ), Paris, Singapore, Tokyo, Milan, London
- A team of over 400 experts
- 1/3 engineers & data scientists
- Leaders in AI

## Leading global brands that trust us



Trustpilot is an open-to-all review platform where consumers are heard by businesses, and where businesses can earn consumer trust.

We make it easy for every business to collect and respond to reviews, and turn their brand trust into more traffic, sales, and revenue.

With over 480,000 businesses reviewed and 1.1 trillion ratings and reviews displayed in Google annually, companies use Trustpilot to establish credibility and improve their reputation.

## Used by global leaders to build trust



# Table of Contents

Executive summary

Introduction

Survey research design & methodology

1. Global findings

2. Monitoring conversations

3. Regional findings

4. Industry zoom

Conclusion: The age of  
conversational intelligence

Annex: Country profiles

Helpful resources for  
data-driven professionals

# Executive summary:

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way brands and consumers interact, altering expectations on both sides. Companies that want to survive this shift will need to rely on intelligence from consumer conversations to adapt to the new normal. Here are the five key takeaways from our State of Conversation 2021 report, based on the answers of 1000+ survey respondents, 50+ expert quotes, and social listening research.

## 5 key takeaways from the State of Conversation 2021

### #1 Humanize customer engagement to optimize customer experiences

82% of respondents reported changes in the importance of consumer and customer conversations for their brand since the start of the pandemic. While COVID-19 has boosted digital interactions, consumers have been looking for more human contact & support in their brand experiences.

### #2 Technology & digital transformation will be a must to adapt to the new normal

The large majority of our survey respondents reported that brand, market and consumer intelligence were very important to their organization - yet most of them ranked the data maturity of their brand lower on a 1 to 10 scale. Yet digital transformation and technologies such as artificial intelligence will be key in 2021 to make sense of negative and positive conversations about your brand, your competitors or your industry, forcing CMOs to look at more efficient processes & workflows, such as a unified platform to monitor all channels

### #3 Speed to insights becomes critical to understand changing consumer demands

With 50% of respondents confirming that access to insights from consumer conversations are limited to a specific department within their organization, there is clearly still some way to go in terms of data democratization. It is time for organizations to break down their information silos and let customer intelligence flow from all channels: social media, reviews, market research, live chat transcripts,... - so that teams can quickly access new trends, optimize their marketing efforts, and create truly customer-centric experiences.

### #4 More than ever, the customer is calling the shots

Customer, customer, customer.... We've seen that word in all the comments collected from our expert networks when creating this report. Brands want to hear the customer voice, which explains why we've seen customer reviews and call center data most frequently cited in the top 5 conversation channels for brands.

### #5 From social listening to conversational intelligence

Social listening is only the beginning of the equation if you're looking to predict consumer trends and create innovative experiences for your customers. Data-driven brands are now looking at much more than social media trends: they analyze conversations at scale on a single platform, no matter where they happen: product review sites, forums, call centers, traditional market research... to extract what we call [conversational intelligence](#).



# Executive summary:

Brands need to shift the way in which they rely on consumer conversations, but for this to happen there must be an evaluation process first. We have come up with a set of questions that every CMO or Marketing Director should review after reading this report to take the correct measures to prepare their team to make every decision consumer-driven.

## How do you make your team more conversation-driven? 4 strategic questions to get your team to the next stage of data maturity

### How is my team collecting consumer conversations right now?

- Which channels do we currently listen to?
- Which other channels should we incorporate?
- From which sources are we collecting the data?

### What is my team's main struggle with regard to analyzing data from conversations?

- Does my team have enough information to draw insights from?
- Is everyone in the team adequately skilled to extract intelligence from conversations?
- Are we analyzing data to the level of depth that is required?

### How is my team leveraging this information to drive decision-making?

- What is the main way in which we leverage this information?
- For which use cases are we not using consumer considerations?
- What opportunities did we miss by not leveraging consumer conversations?

### What can I do to improve my team's data savviness?

- Has my team received training to improve their data-related skills?
- What additional learning tools or publications does my team have access to?
- Is the data available to everyone within my team?

# Introduction

## Why are consumer conversations critical for brands?

When we talk about conversation, we're of course talking about online chatter - social media, blogs, news sites, reviews, forums... but it doesn't stop there. What's often ignored, forgotten, or siloed in different departments, is customer conversation - call center transcripts, market research, emails, etc. - all the different channels by which customer feedback enters an organization.

In a world where consumers are looking for more than mere product and services, the most successful brands must be able to create **customer-centric experiences** by understanding consumers, spotting trends, and unveiling new risks and opportunities based on all these sources of data.

To protect their reputation, and keep growing their business, data-driven companies must go beyond social listening and have a unified view of their brand, market and consumers across their organization. To survive and flourish, brands must invest in conversational intelligence.

In this report, we'll present results from a survey of 1000+ marketing, PR and consumer insights professionals on the importance of consumer and customer conversations for data-driven brands.

The State of

Conversation

***Not only are online conversations critical to make short-term decisions by reacting to an ever changing world of temporary lockdowns and changing societal rules, but it's become a fundamental base to plan business for the mid-term and to predict long-term effects of the pandemic on future consumer behavior.***

*Tiankai Feng, Global Director, Voice of Consumer Analytics  
adidas*



# Introduction

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers have turned up the volume. They're telling brands what they want. How they want them to behave.

**Brands must adapt, or get left behind.**

Many brands - tuning into consumers in their moment of need - have recognized and acknowledged the importance of conversations. They've modified their marketing strategies.

The more you learn about consumers, the easier it is to connect with them. Solve their problems. Share content with them that they're looking for. Create the products and services they're asking for. Help them.

**Conversational insights will inform your future strategies** - marketing, content, social media, product development, PR, paid advertising - your entire business strategy.

On top of an extensive survey, our State of Conversation 2021 Report highlights five industries that have leveraged conversations to better their strategies, improve their marketing content, and develop new products.

## Now is the time to turn to conversational intelligence

Conversational analysis - across the board - gives you the full picture.





# Survey research design & methodology

## Sampling

Australia & New Zealand

Japan

East Asia (includes China, Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan)

Southeast Asia (includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)

South Asia (includes India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka)

Middle East and Africa

DACH region (includes Austria, Germany, Switzerland)

Northern Europe (includes UK & Nordics)

FRBELUX (includes France, Belgium, Luxembourg)

Southern Europe (includes Italy, Spain, Portugal)

Latin America

United States and Canada

Age: 18+

All nationalities, all countries

## Methodology

Online interviews via SurveyMonkey, as well as

Talkwalker's and Trustpilot's database

Structured quantitative questionnaires

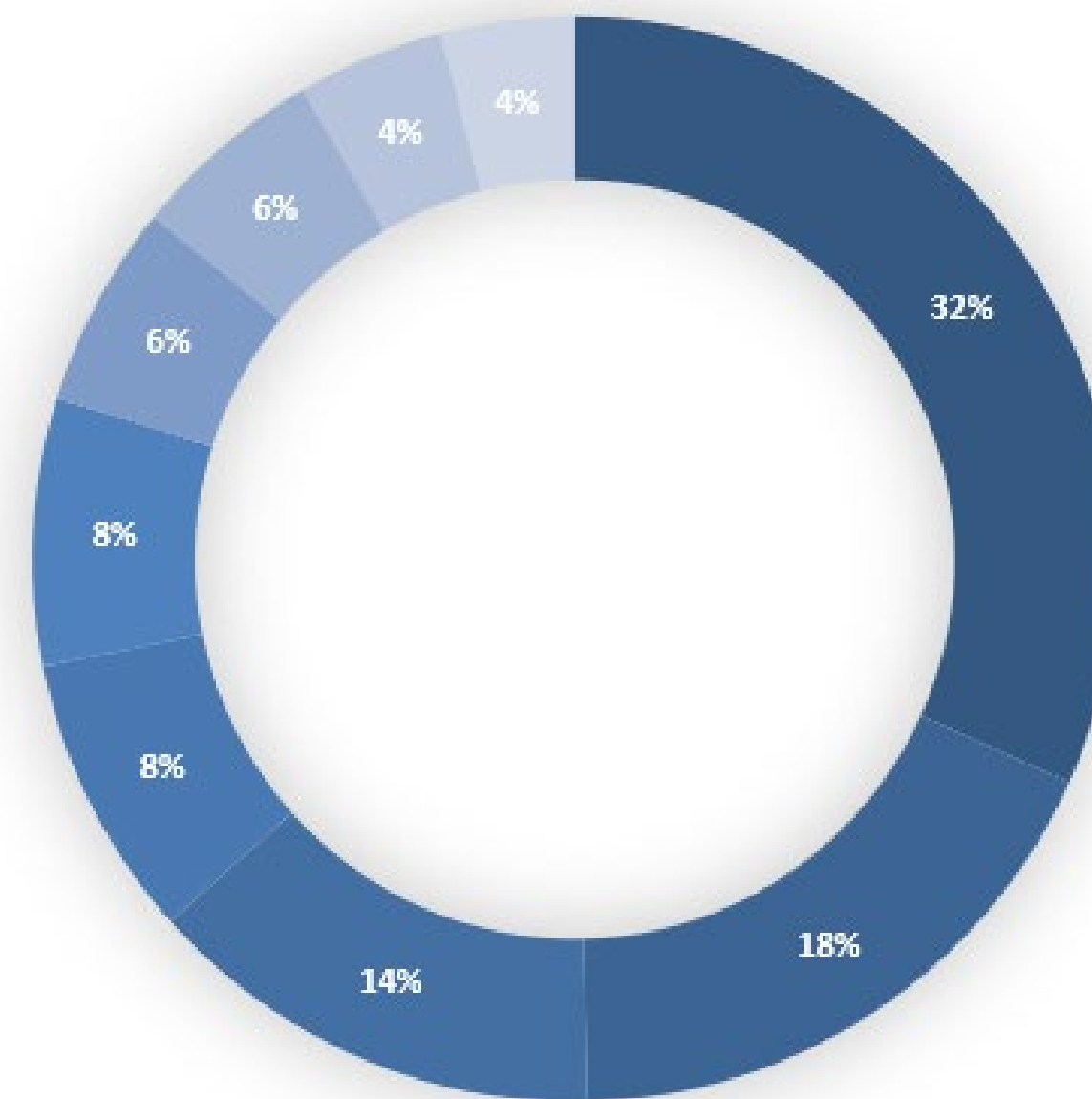
Verbatims from respondents featured throughout report, with their consent

All fieldwork was conducted between Jan 1, 2021

- Feb 5, 2021

# 1,000+

## respondents

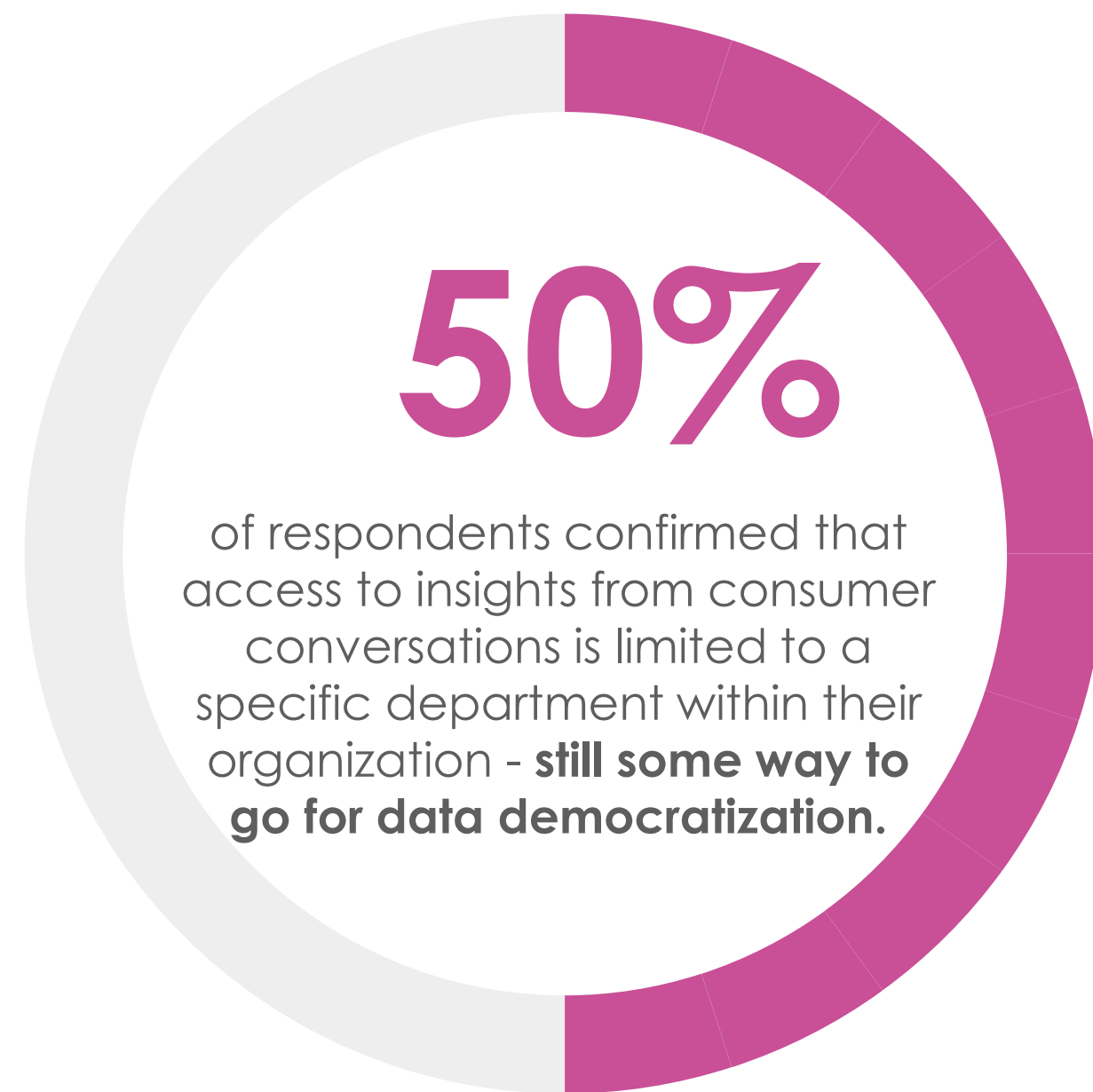
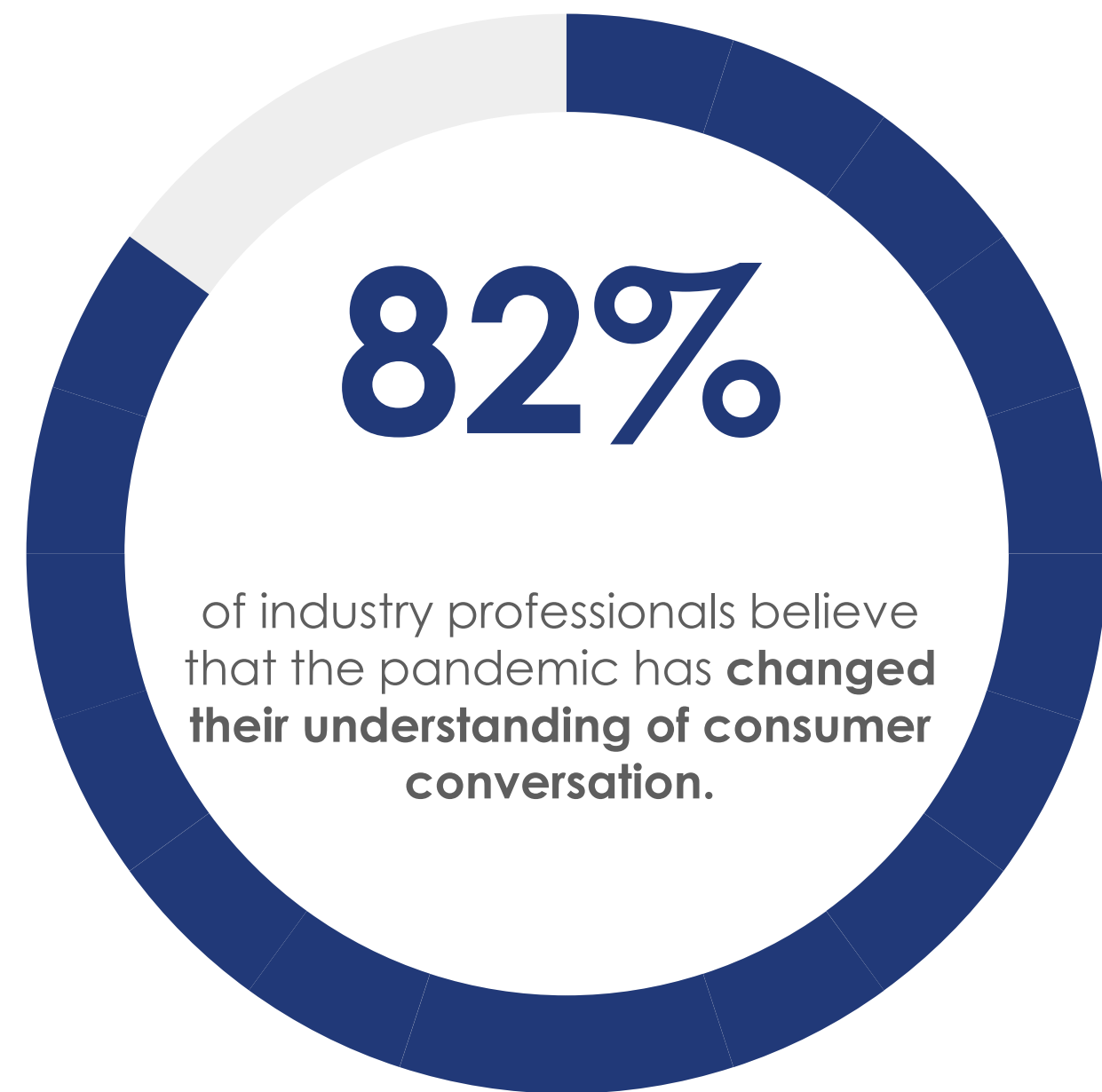


- Customer Experience/Client Servicing/Customer Service
- Marketing/Digital Marketing
- CEO/Founder/C-Suite
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- IT/Operations
- Product /Product Marketing
- Insights/Analytics/Market Knowledge
- Social Media/Community Management
- PR/Communications/Corporate Affairs



# 1. Global findings

The importance of the COVID-19 pandemic, and missed opportunities in terms of unified monitoring & data democratization



# 1. Global findings



**“The pandemic has increased the need of our customers to be taken care of, with human support despite the digital interfaces.”**

*Bruce Hoang, Director of digital communication channels and data, Orange France*



**“The need for external data sources is more important than ever to understand the market, the customer and the context.”**

*Jonny Bentwood, Global Head of Data and Analytics, Golin*



**“We used social data to get a better sense of the 'new normal'. Technology & digital transformation will play a huge role in enabling survival of individual and businesses in the new normal stages, pressuring brands & categories to adapt.”**

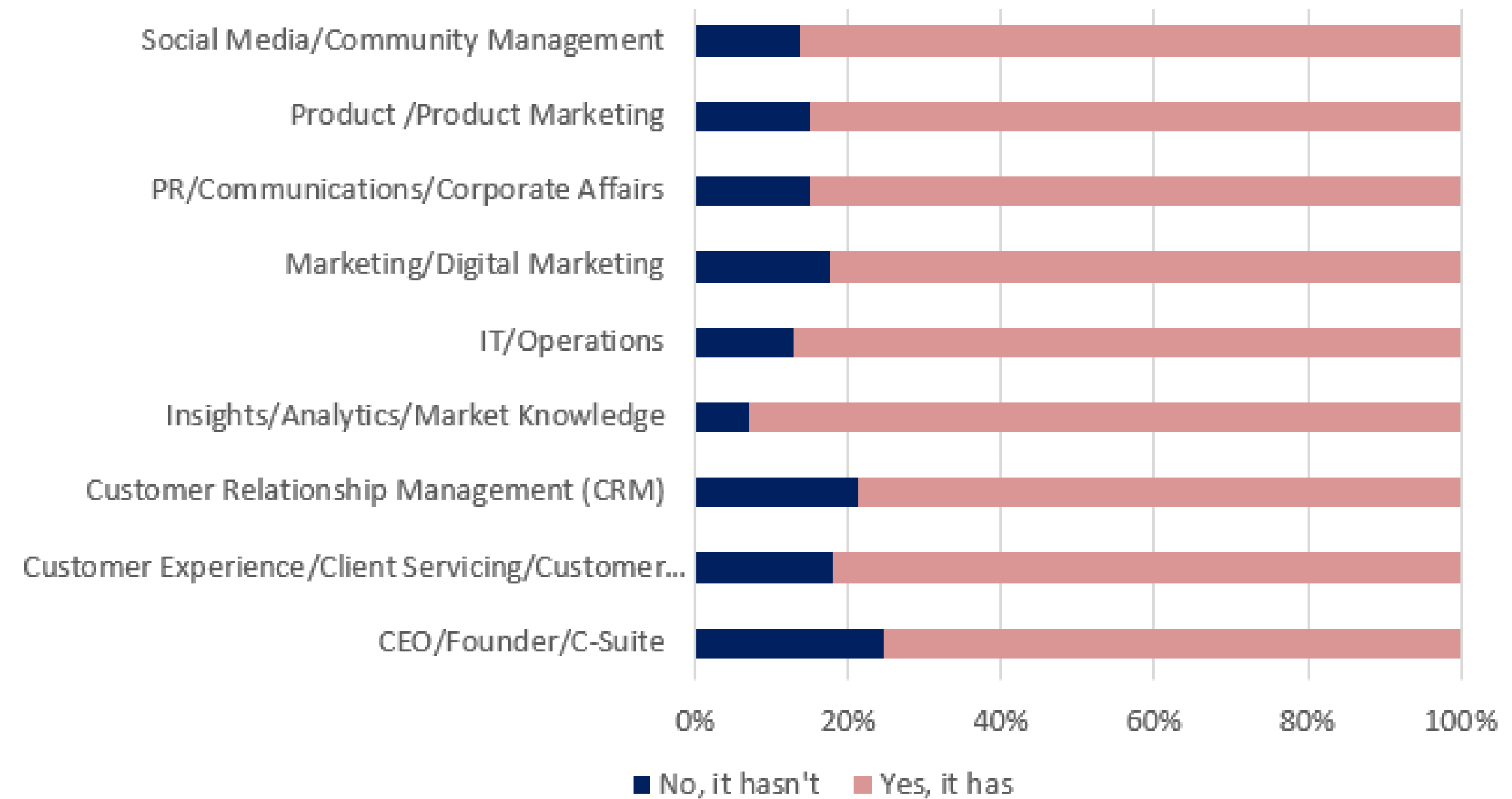
*Vartika Malaviya Hali, Executive Director, Global Strategic Alliances & New Verticals, Consumer Intelligence, NielsenIQ*

## COVID-19 disrupts consumer intelligence

### Key takeaway:

The pandemic has brought consumer conversations to the forefront. In order to survive the coming years, brands will need to quickly identify the best ways to analyze conversations at scale and inject the subsequent insights in each and every department of the organization to optimize their respective strategies.

## Has the pandemic affected the Understanding of consumer conversation?



Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?



The State of

Conversation

## In the words of experts



*"If we've learned one thing from 2020 and COVID-19, it's that consumers are demanding brands make changes and go a step further. This means that monitoring consumer conversations is crucial for brands. It means they have to go beyond social media, blogs, review sites, and go offline. Brands must gather data from a variety of sources or risk having only half of the story."*

Rachel Gallagher, Digital Lead  
[Drury](#)

*"A review is just word-of-mouth, with shelf life. And in a world where everything has been turned upside down, that word-of-mouth is critical to consumer buying patterns. And it's perhaps even more crucial as a source of insights for businesses hungry to understand what matters to customers NOW."*

Jay Baer, CPAE, Founder,  
[Convince & Convert](#)



*"Conversations play a crucial role in a company's brand awareness. Whether it's from your prospects, customers or the media, it's important for PR pros to monitor what's being said and by who to fully understand how their brand is being perceived. In today's 24/7 news cycle any conversation can be amplified in seconds. If your team has early insights they can take swift action to change company positioning and communication."*

Greg Galant, CEO  
[Muck Rack](#)

*"Social networks are the diaries - public rather than secret - of our daily life; Google is the trusted friend to whom we entrust the most inconvenient questions; Amazon, Booking and TripAdvisor are the virtual places where we express our discontent or satisfaction. Conversations are gold mines for brands, both in the analysis phase and in lead generation and loyalty activities."*

Ludovica de Luca, Copywriter, Content Manager e  
Social Media Manager



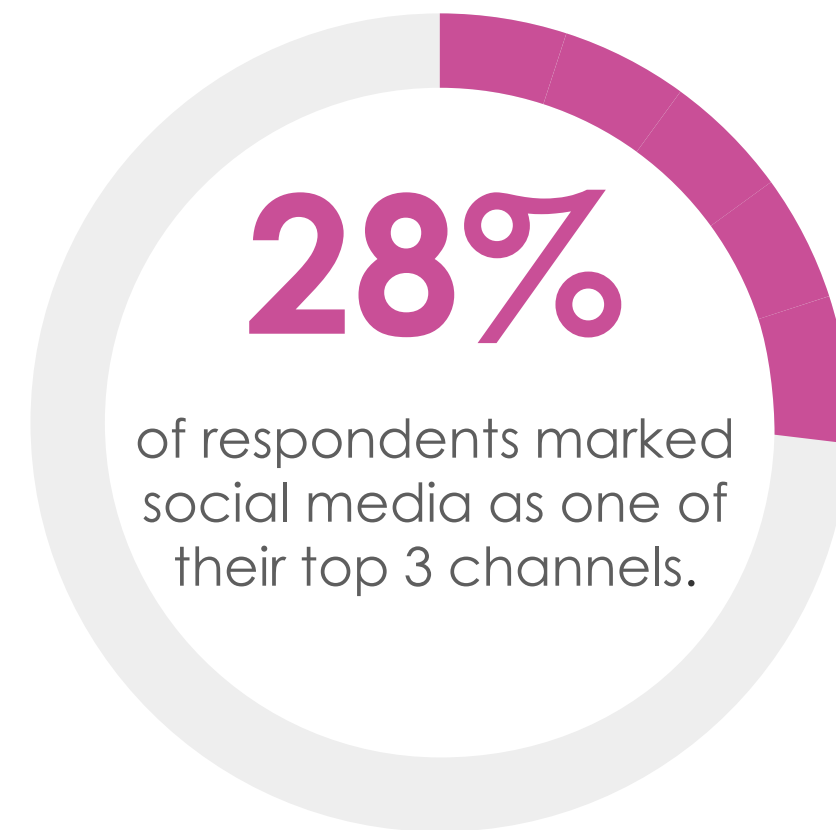


## 2. Monitoring conversations

### Where brands stand today

#### Key takeaway:

Even though it's evident that brands need to monitor social media, the difference between all other channels is small enough that brands cannot afford to miss conversations that might take place on any of these channels.

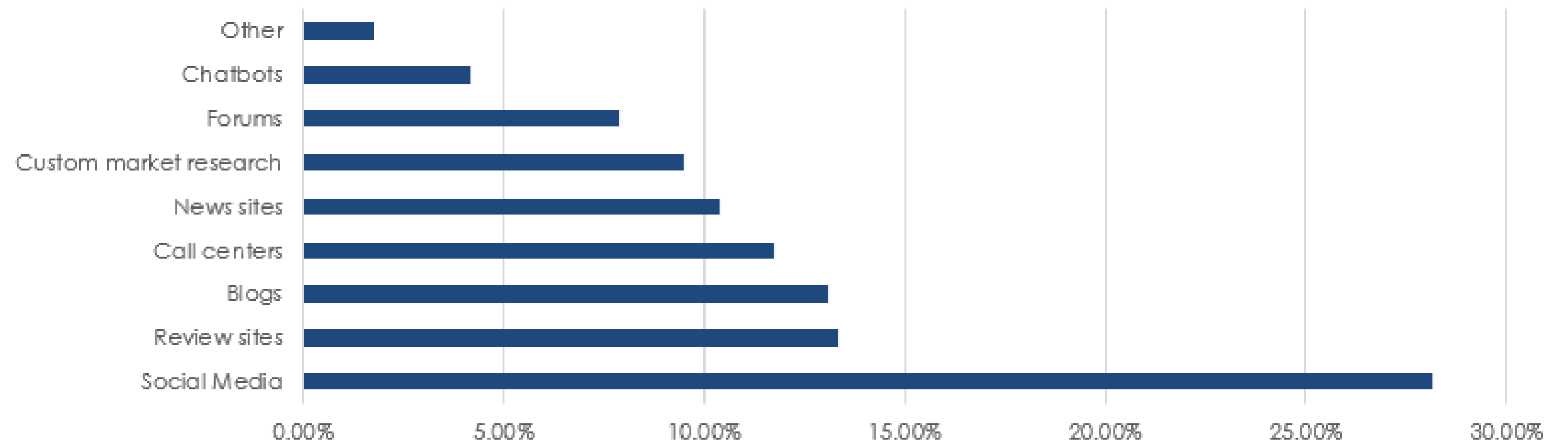


“Social media has transformed the world. **Monitoring online conversations is essential for brand equity**, as it allows us to anticipate and interpret attitudes and opinions, as well as measure success of our campaigns. No brand today can survive without monitoring online conversations.”

Lucia Domville | Director, Grayling New York

#### Social media remains top source of brand interaction, with growing focus on review sites, blogs and call centers

#### What are the top 3 channels where your brand interacts with consumers and customers?

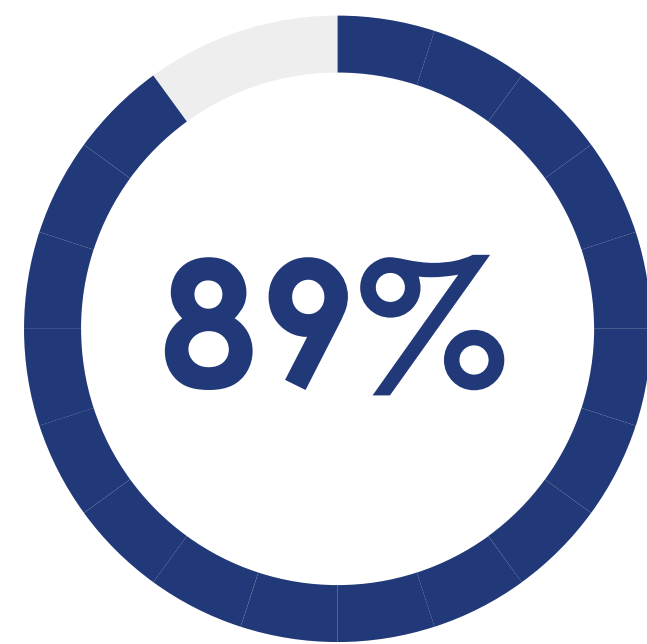


Survey question: What are the top 3 channels where your brand interacts with consumers and customers?

## 2. Monitoring conversations

### Where brands stand today

Why is it that brands now consider review platforms to be the second most important channel to interact with consumers and customers? It may be to do with the fact that consumers themselves rank reviews as the second-most trusted source of honest opinions about a product or service (behind friends and family).



Today, 89% of shoppers check reviews as part of their online buying journey, and 49% of people consider positive reviews to be one of their top 3 purchase influences (in a survey of consumers in the US, UK, and France, [source](#)).

Creating a community of customers can play an important role in your brand's success and growth strategy. As a trusted destination for consumers, review platforms present the opportunity to build social proof by engaging with customers and collecting helpful feedback.

### Spotlight: The importance of reviews platforms as a conversation destination

Of the hundreds of thousands of brands interacting with consumers on Trustpilot, those with the highest star-ratings have a few strategies in common:

#### They ask every customer to leave a review.

Requesting feedback shows customers that you care about their experience, and that you are constantly working towards building trusted relationships. Cherry picking reviews, or only inviting your happy customers to leave reviews, can foster distrust. In fact, a Trustpilot study found that 68% of consumers trust reviews more when they see both good and bad ones (in a survey of consumers in Europe and North America, [source](#)).

#### They respond to every review and work to resolve problems.

A one-sided conversation is not much of a conversation. A response makes customers feel heard and grows loyalty and advocacy. No one expects every experience to be 5-stars, but consumers want to see that businesses care enough about their experiences to solve problems when they arise.

#### They act on feedback.

If your product, service, or customer experience is lagging, your customers will know it first. Read reviews, look for trends in them, and take them seriously. Your reviewers will lead you right to the pain points of your business. Acting on their feedback and suggestions can mean huge wins for your business.

When a customer leaves a review, they're speaking directly to your business and to other consumers. Listen closely: you'll earn their trust and prove to others that you care about their experiences.

## 2. Monitoring conversations

### Where brands stand today

#### Key takeaway:

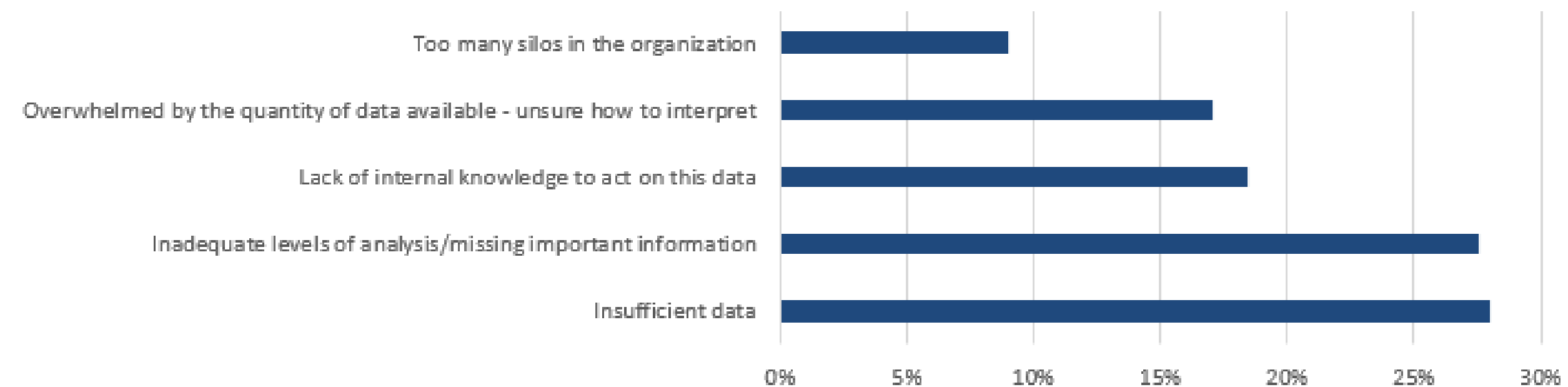
Manual approach & MarTech stacks remain common for conversation monitoring, but the use of a unified platform is on the rise. To reduce the different difficulties that arise when monitoring conversations, brands should consider moving away from manual conversation monitoring and instead trust unified platforms.



of respondents stressed that they were not able to gather enough data about consumer conversations, or to analyze them adequately.

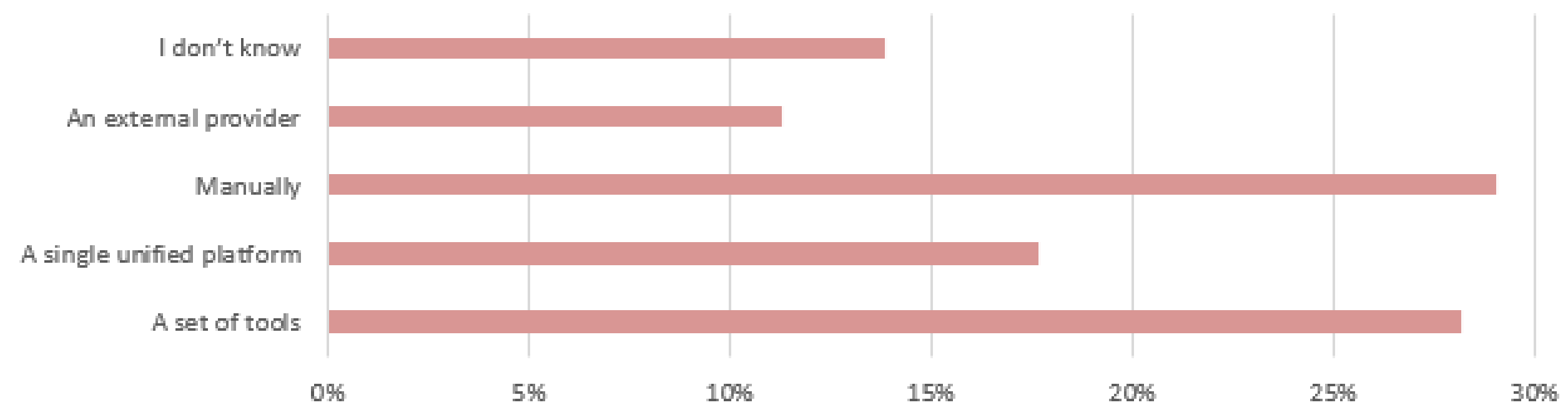
### Brands are struggling to gather enough data about consumer conversations, as well as to analyze them adequately

#### Different approaches to monitoring conversations



Survey question: How do you monitor these conversations?

#### Main difficulties of monitoring conversations



Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?



The State of

Conversation

## In the words of experts



*“Conversation monitoring is key to making data-informed - and valid - decisions. I have been an advocate for social listening, from the early days. Now, the growth of conversational platforms calls for expanded monitoring.*

*Why? These are the best sources of information coming directly from existing and potential customers.”*

*Samuel Pavin, Founder and Principal Consultant,  
[Resumption](#)*



*“We know that every brand needs to know their audience. What’s changed is that the conversation is no longer between the brand and their audience but between the audience themselves. If you combine conversational data sources and listen deeply enough, these conversations will tell you what to do, and how to sell and deliver experiences.”*

*Dr Jillian Ney | Founder,  
[The Social Intelligence Lab](#)*

## 2. Monitoring conversations

### Where brands stand today

**Conversation channels are used most commonly for customer service and brand promotion - a missed opportunity**

#### Key takeaway:

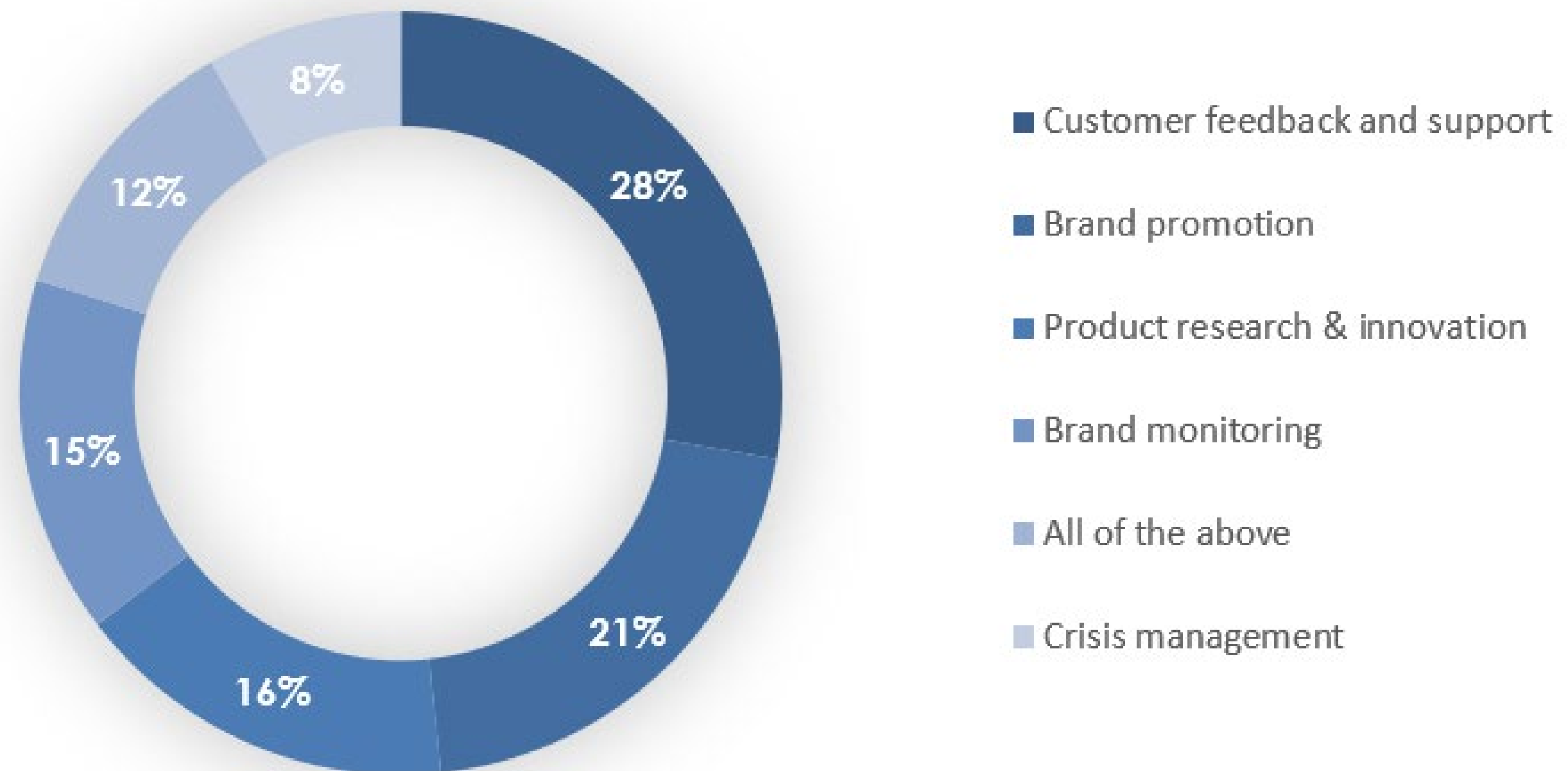
Customer feedback and support is the top reason that companies use these channels. Brand promotion and product research follow, showing that brands are not only using conversations to protect their brand health, but also to promote their products, and find insights on what their customers might want next. Yet, at this stage few brands (12%) have the capacity to leverage all these channels.



**“Conversations are a way of knowing what the customers want or how they want us to package our services for their consumption. They also drive our decision making process such as in content approach, service packaging and customer service. Additionally, they contribute to meaningful relationship building, community building and referrals to new clients.”**

Janet Machuka, Digital Marketing Strategist,  
**ATC Digital Academy**

#### What do brands use conversation channels for?



Survey question: What do you use these channels for?

## 2. Monitoring conversations

### Where brands stand today

#### Too much data or not enough? Brands are struggling with data analysis in-house and with external providers

##### Key takeaway:

Organizations that analyze data in house tend to struggle with finding enough data, and lack depth in their analysis of conversations. In contrast, brands that depend on external providers, find that their biggest problem is having overwhelming amounts of data.

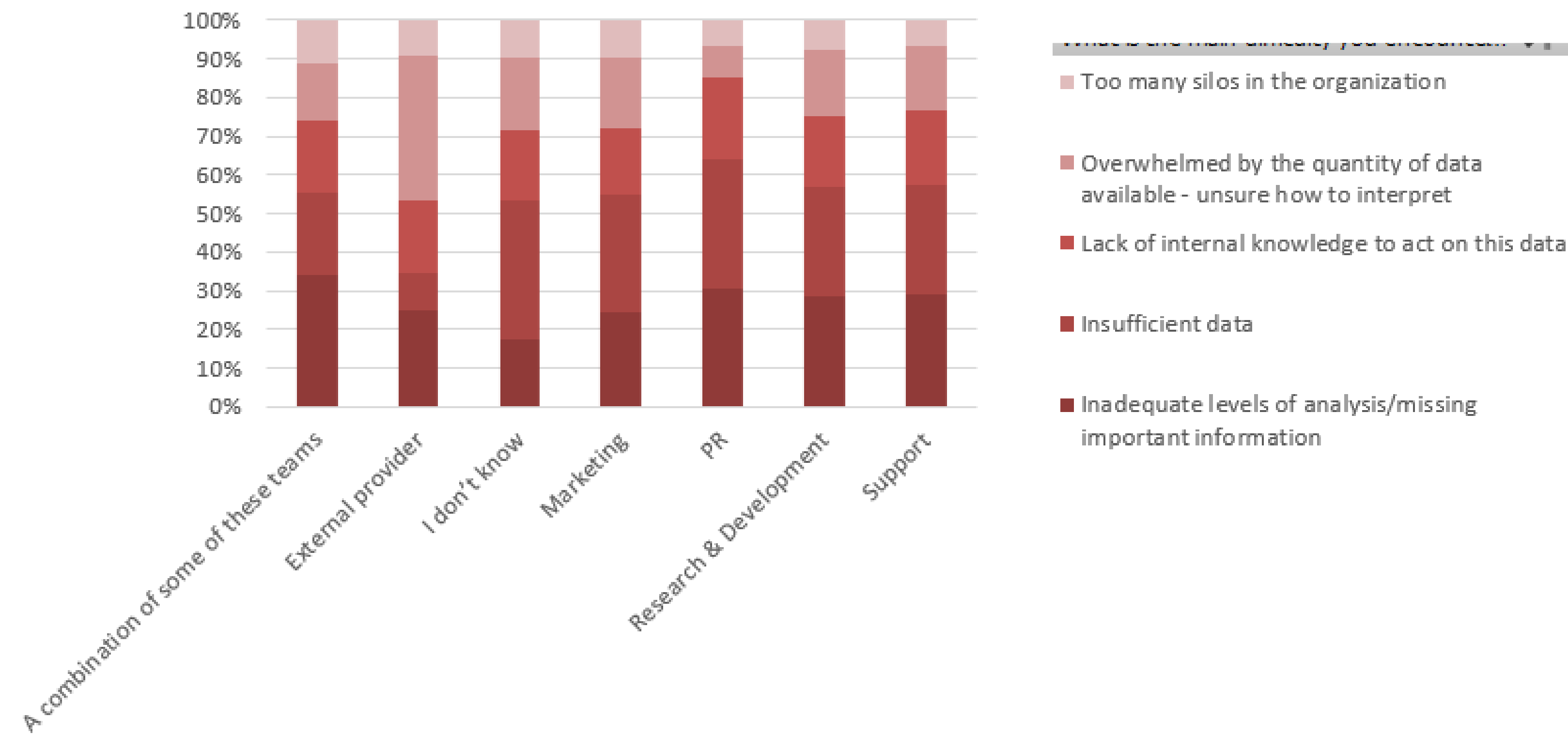
From this, it is clear that brands need to upskill their teams to find and analyze conversations at scale, within one unified platform.



***“The pandemic has caused drastic changes in consumer behaviour. In response to this, the need to enrich and provide ongoing audience intelligence is a priority. With claimed data sources lacking the ability to provide regular updates, social conversations are now an essential data source to understand and monitor behaviour changes.”***

Victoria Hoyle, Social Intelligence Specialist,  
**OMD EMEA**

##### Main difficulty when monitoring conversations, according to the department in charge of this task



Survey questions: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations? Who's in charge of monitoring and analyzing these conversations?



## 2. Monitoring conversations

### Where brands stand today

#### Brands already know they need consumer intelligence, but seem to lack data maturity

##### Key takeaway:

Brands are giving a large amount of importance to data for business decisions, but there are still some obstacles for companies to reach their peak data maturity.



of respondents gave high marks for both statements:

- Their organization is extremely data-driven.
- Brand/market/consumer intelligence are extremely important for decision-making.

Importance given to data and insights



Survey questions: On a scale of 1 to 10, how data-driven do you consider your company? (1 being 'not important at all and 10 being 'of the utmost importance')  
On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is brand/market/consumer intelligence to your decision-making process? (1 being 'not important at all and 10 being 'of the utmost importance')

The State of

Conversation

## In the words of experts



*"The pandemic has significantly changed the perception of what things mean, in every way, becoming more attached to feelings and ownership; the public now stops to voice their opinion more than before, and gives greater value to everything they see, read and hear around them."*

Miguel Carranza, Regional marketing director  
**KIA**



*"Simply put, customer conversations are pure gold to any brand today. It's an invaluable resource for setting strategy, deciding on offerings or marketing campaigns."*

Heba Sayed, Strategy Executive,  
**IBM Hybrid Cloud and AI, Middle East and Africa**



*"Working with customer conversations allows us to make the consumer human - and to bring their thoughts, frustrations and joys into the boardroom."*

Chris Botha, CEO  
**GetClosure**



*"[Consumer conversations] are simply everything. Without feedback, we can't act with precision. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was more movement in communication. In the meantime, a kind of "paralysis" has set in..."*

Dorothee Thimm, Head of Marketing & Communications,  
**UNIVITA**

# 3. Regional findings

## USA vs APAC vs EMEA

**APAC is leading the charge in data democratization, followed by EMEA and the United States**

**Key takeaway:**

With many brands across regions choosing marketing departments to be in charge of monitoring conversation, there is a growing need for these teams to have analytics/data-savvy individuals.

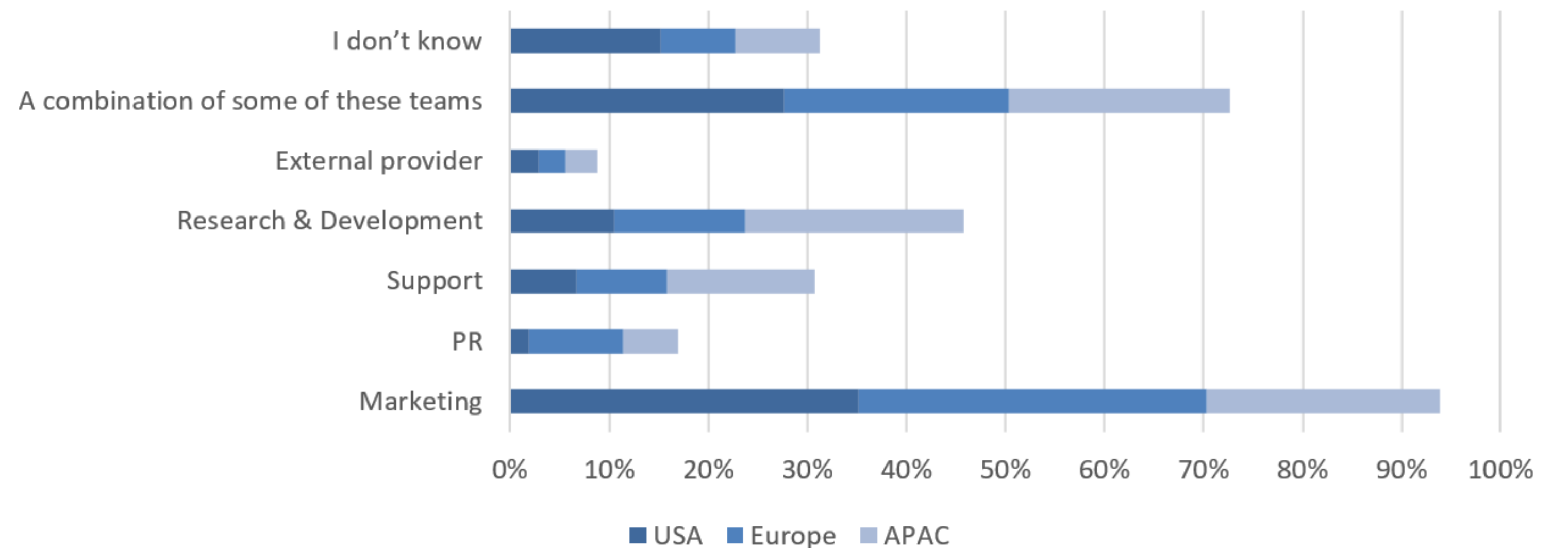
APAC is leading the charge in data democratization, followed by EMEA and the United States.

However, there seems to be a need across the board for more data-savvy professionals, and more in-house training on the topic.

**Data democratization – respondents who answered that their entire company has access to insights from conversations**

USA	EMEA	APAC
28%	33%	41%

Who's in charge of monitoring and analyzing conversations?





# 3. Regional findings

## USA vs APAC vs EMEA

**APAC shows maturity by having the largest percentage of brands using unified platforms**

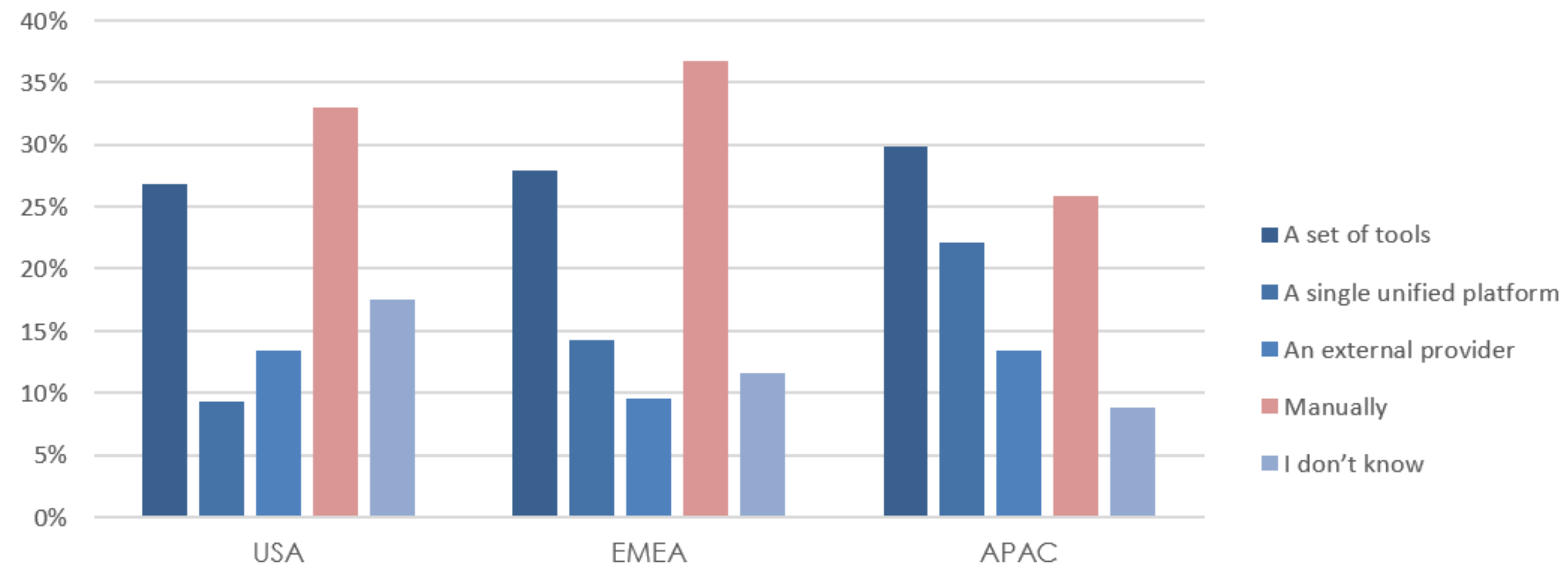
**Why do brands monitor online conversations?**

**Key takeaway:**

Brands in EMEA and APAC must consider the wider spectrum of reasons behind monitoring conversations and thus reap greater benefits.

Many brands in EMEA and the US should consider switching out of manual monitoring to reduce their time to insights.

**How conversations are monitored across regions**



**Main reasons to monitor conversations**



# 3. Regional findings

## Key findings in the US

Having understood the importance of conversations, brands must now find the right tools to analyze them accurately.

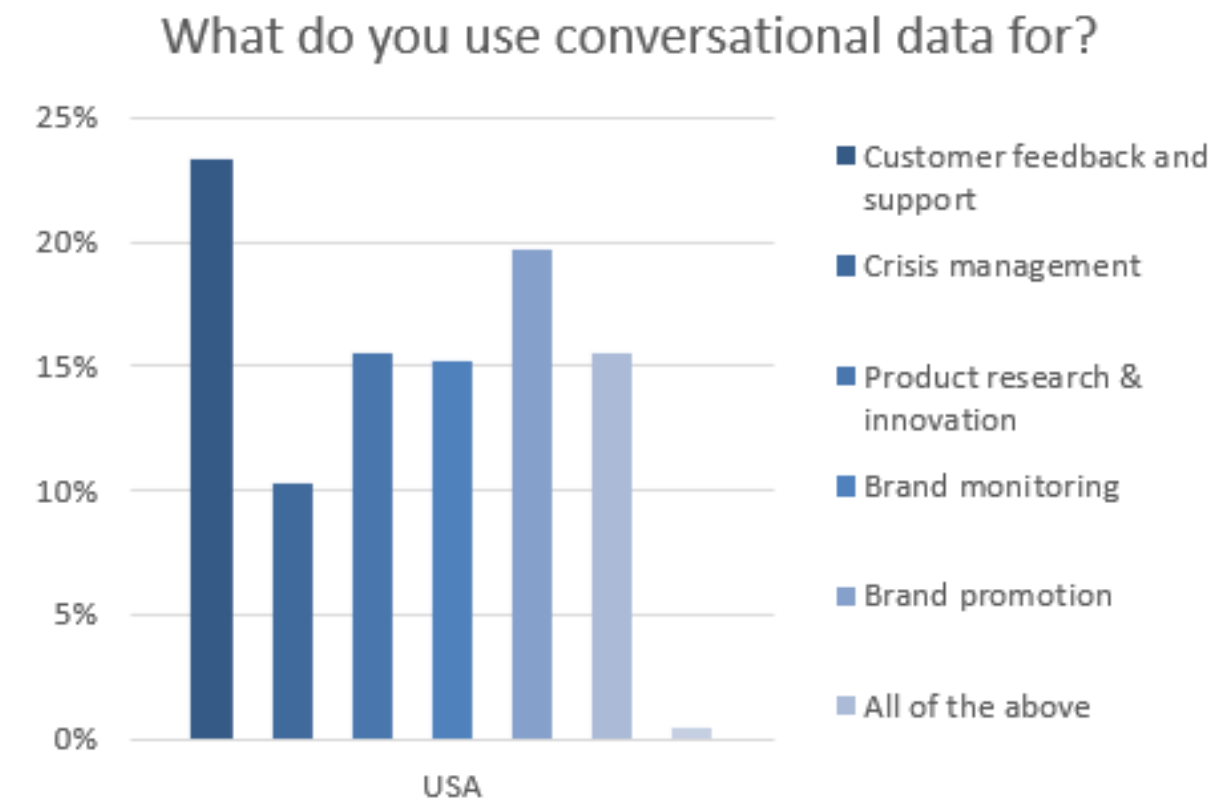
### Key takeaway:

With COVID-19 affecting how most brands in the US perceive consumer conversation, many will now change the way they monitor brand/market/consumer conversations to solve their biggest problem, i.e., inadequate levels of analysis.



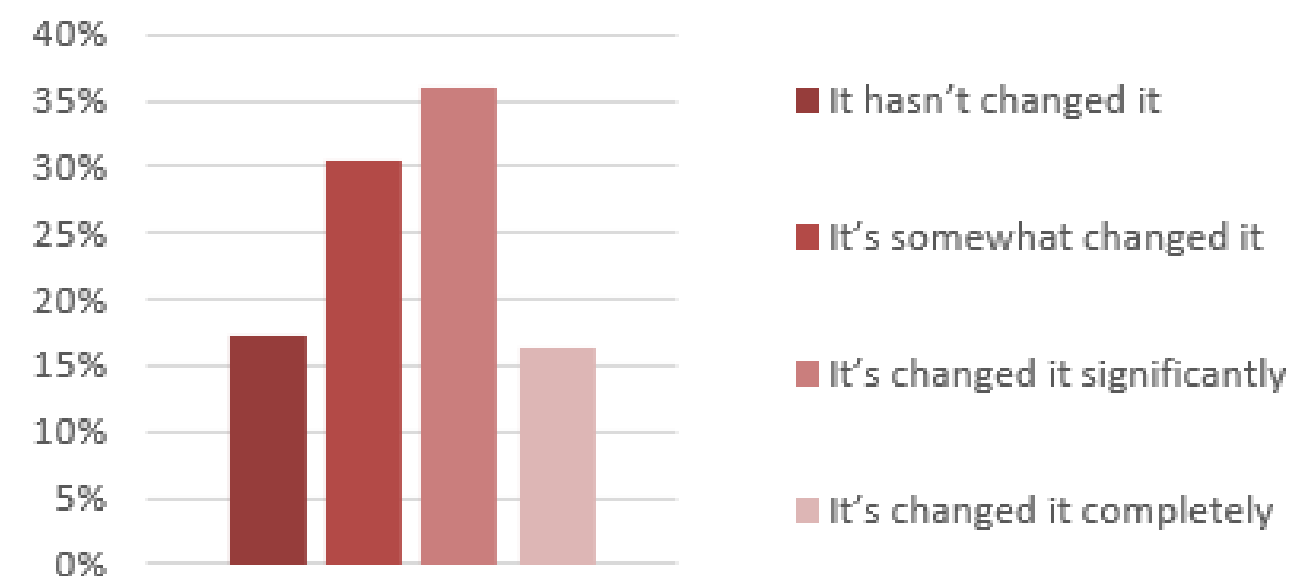
*“Brands can leverage their own in-house research to not only gain market insights, but to get conversational data that can increase the success of future product launches.”*

Michael Stelzner,  
CEO and Founder,  
**Social Media Examiner**



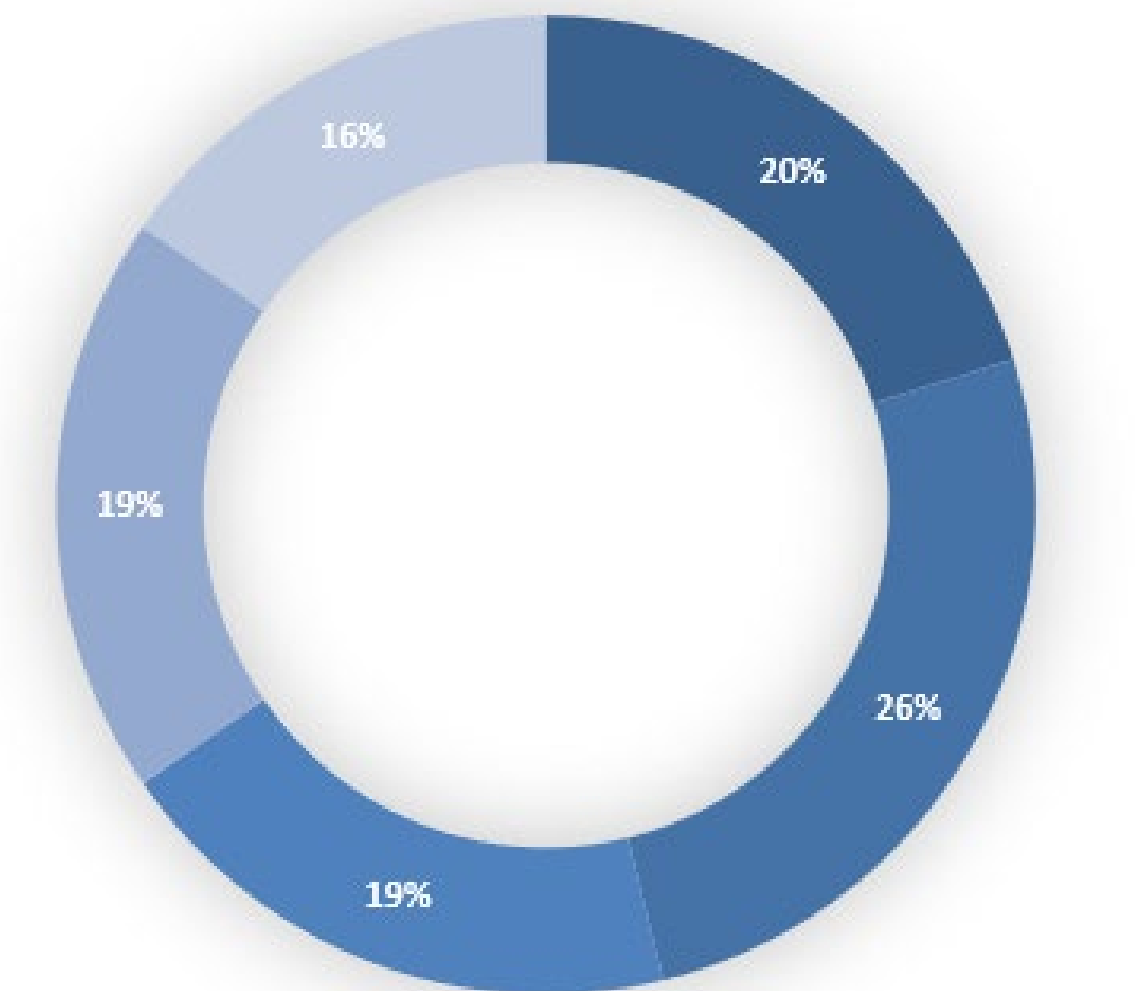
Survey question: What do you use these channels for?

## COVID-19's effect on the understanding of consumer conversation



Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?

## Main difficulty tracking conversations



Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?



The State of

Conversation

## In the words of regional experts



*“Customer conversations are the fastest way to become smarter about how we can solve their problems before they happen. When one customer experiences a pain point, chances are others do as well. The faster we recognize the pain point, the faster we can build solutions to remove it.”*

Shawn Kallet, CEO,  
DeepWater Strategies

*“No amount of analytics or AI can ever crawl into someone’s head to understand why they made a decision. The only reliable way to do so is ask them, and listen to their responses. That’s where the power of AI and natural language processing shines - parsing all that data.”*

Christopher S. Penn, Chief Data Scientist,  
Trust Insights



*“If you want to know what people actually think about your brand, forget about reach and frequency and listen to what they’re saying. Social media monitoring is how you mind the gap between what you say versus how people feel about your brand.”*

Eric Schwartzman, Digital Marketing Author,  
Speaker & Trainer

*“Our social feeds are a springboard for connection, frustration, and a voice for change. Brands need to incorporate social listening to find and harness these conversations for an impactful strategy. It isn’t enough to resonate with your audience. You have to read the room and understand that a breaking news item could shift your audience’s needs in a matter of seconds.”*

Christina Garnett, Senior Marketing Manager,  
Offline Community & Advocacy, HubSpot





# 3. Regional findings

## Key findings in EMEA

Brands must reevaluate the way in which they are monitoring conversations, to find meaningful insights.

### Key takeaway:

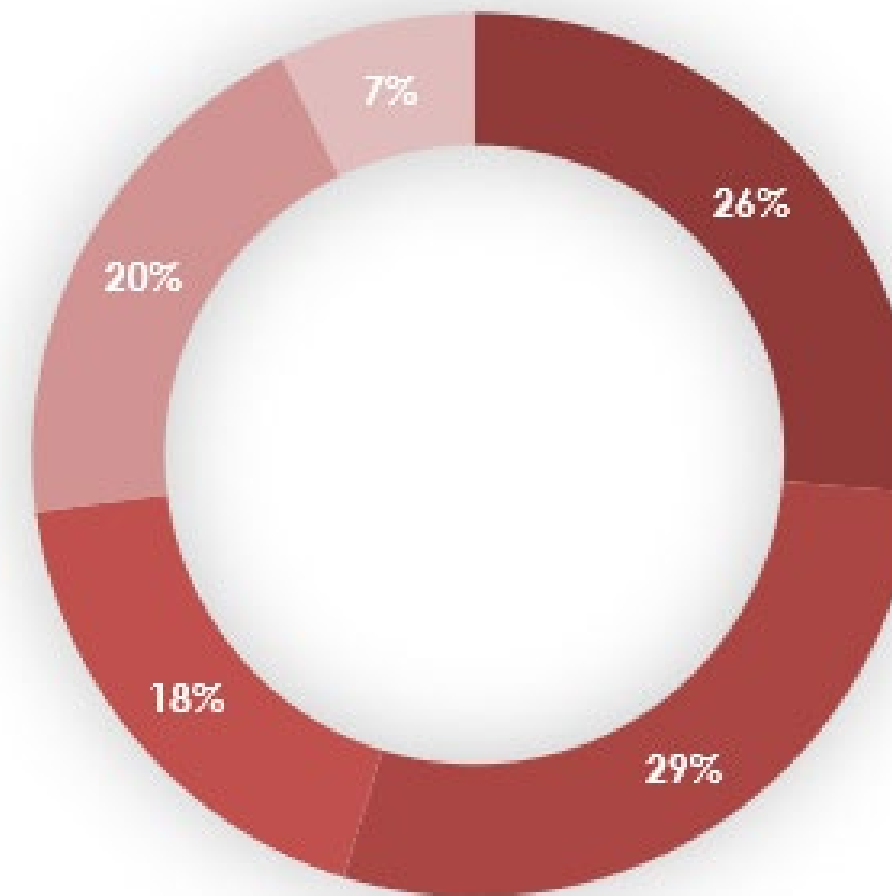
The EMEA market's perception of consumer conversations changed with COVID-19. With a greater importance being given to conversations, now over 50% of brands are having difficulties in finding these conversations and analyzing their data.



*“Social listening plays a strategic role in the marketing and communication of brands, but also for quality assurance, innovation or media activation... Consumer insights are at the center of each and every consideration, and drive decision-making.”*

Helena De Foucault, Social Media & Data Marketing Expert, **Groupe SEB**

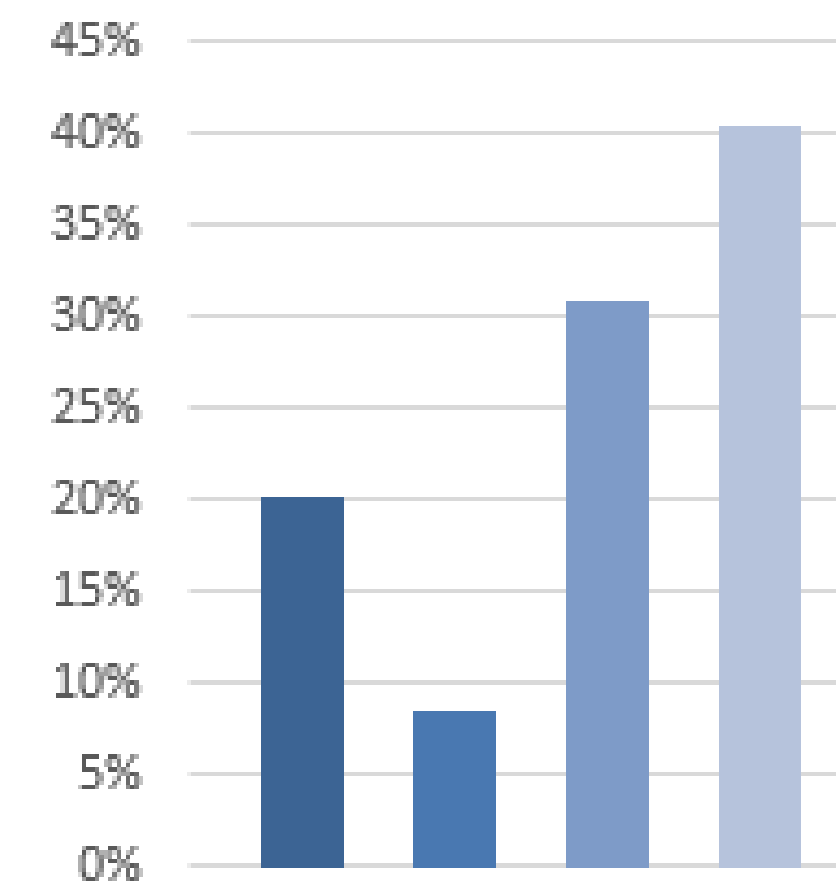
## Main difficulty tracking conversations



- Insufficient data
- Inadequate levels of analysis/missing important information
- Lack of internal knowledge to act on this data
- Overwhelmed by the quantity of data available - unsure how to interpret
- Too many silos in the organization

Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?

## COVID-19's effect on the understanding of consumer conversation



- It hasn't changed it
- It's somewhat changed it
- It's changed it significantly
- It's changed it completely

Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?

The State of

Conversation

## In the words of regional experts



*“The essence of maintaining a strong brand is understanding what is being said about. While brands are not always mentioned in conversations, it is crucial to catch the dialogue and be able to understand the sentiment, and what opportunities or risks sit within.”*

Kristjan Mar Hauksson, Digital Evangelist,  
[Pipar\TBWA](#)



*“The customer is king. But do you know who your customer is?”*

Arnaud Steinkuhler, Head of Solutions,  
[Auxipress](#)

*“Client digitalization has accelerated in 2020, which is why in 2021 we will find consumers who consider digital channels to be the natural way to relate to brands, which will generate data that brands will need to analyze.”*

Fernando Rivero, CEO,  
[Ditrendia](#)



*“In order to collect useful insights from online conversations, you need to be able to look back to a year of historical data to pinpoint key industry moments and identify the next trends that will be part of your communication, and the influencers that will contribute to and relay the messages of your brand.”*

Anne-Laure Barieraud, Head Of  
[Digital Omnicom Public Relations](#)



# 3. Regional findings

## Key findings in APAC

### Key takeaway:

Most of the brands in APAC that are struggling with insufficient data and inadequate analysis, currently rely on manual monitoring as well as a set of different tools. To reduce these difficulties, companies should consider a unified platform that gathers all necessary data, and allows them to analyze conversations at scale.

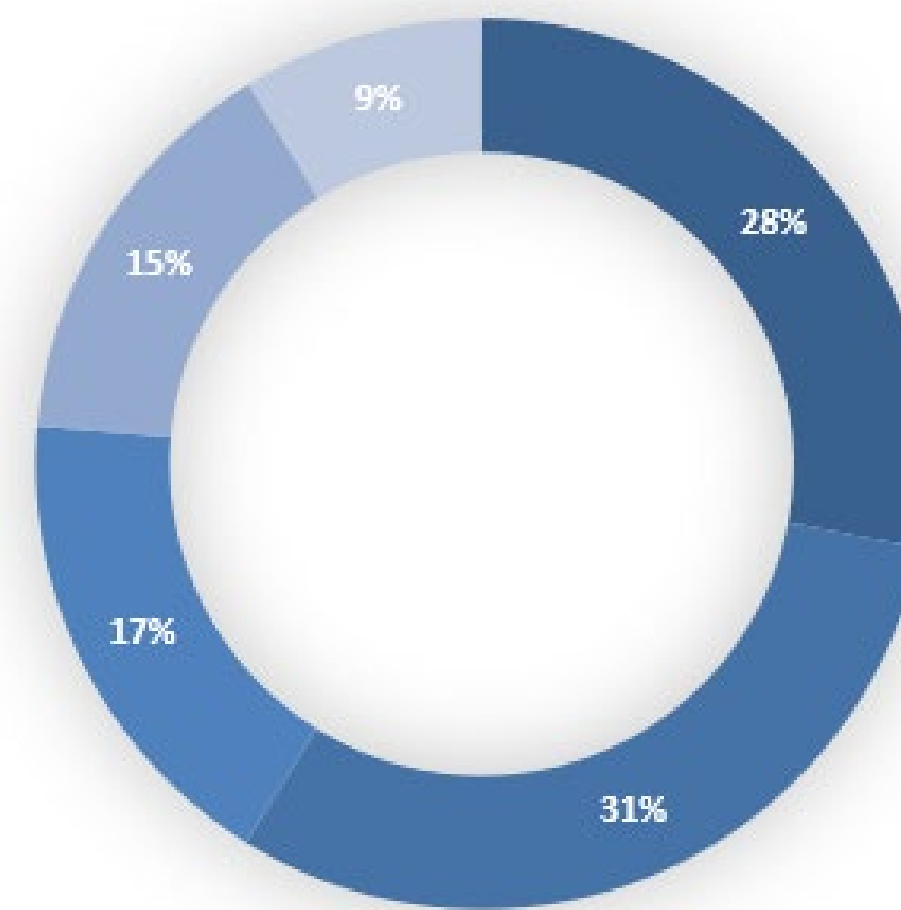


*“During these unprecedented times, there is a drastic shift in social behaviour, as people move their offline presence to online. As consumers get better at expressing themselves online, brands are recognising this shift and there is increasing focus on social listening to understand their audiences.”*

Nauar Kuswadi | Social Media Listening Manager, Vaynermedia APAC

Brands should reshape the teams and procedures in which conversations are analyzed.

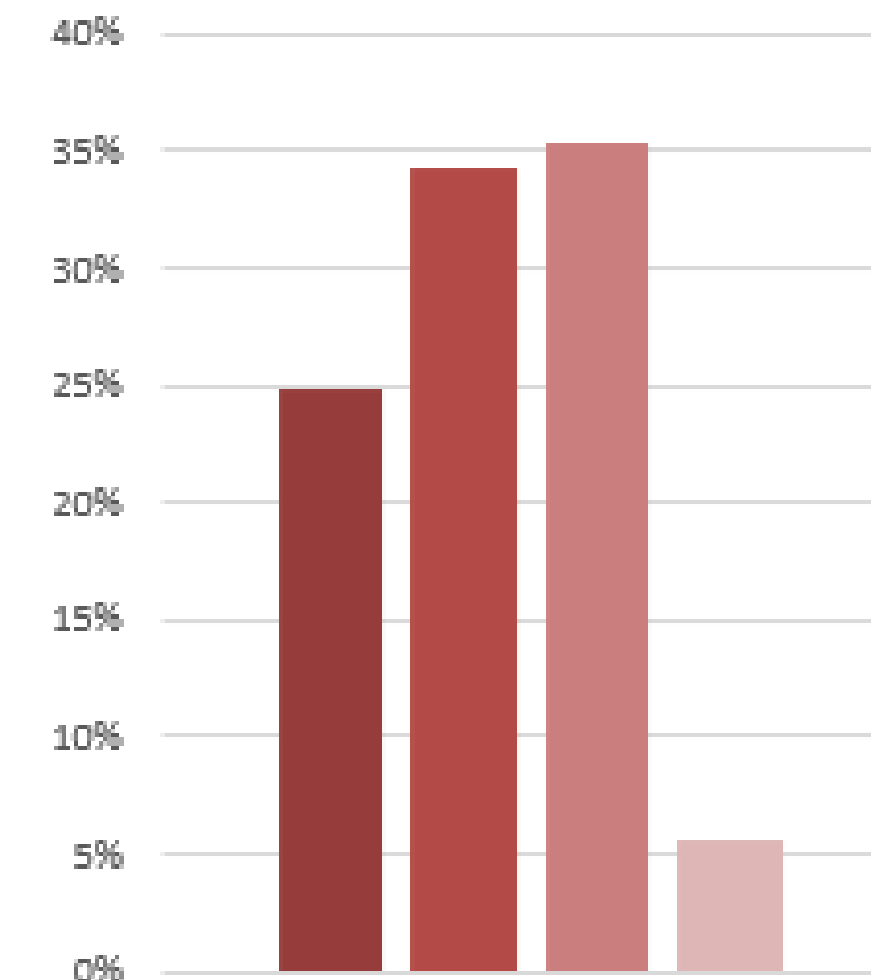
### Main difficulty tracking conversations



- Insufficient data
- Inadequate levels of analysis/missing important information
- Lack of internal knowledge to act on this data
- Overwhelmed by the quantity of data available - unsure how to interpret
- Too many silos in the organization

Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?

### COVID-19's effect on the understanding of consumer conversation



- It hasn't changed it
- It's somewhat changed it
- It's changed it significantly
- It's changed it completely

Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?



The State of

Conversation

## In the words of regional experts



*"We are born with two ears and a mouth, to listen more than talk. Listening to the conversation gives us a larger picture and a better understanding of what is happening and how our business will become a part of the solution in someone's life."*

*Andin Rahmana, Digital Marketing Strategist,  
CikalBakal Creative*

*"Conversation monitoring allows brands to understand their consumers needs and wants, which helps the development of marketing strategies that are directed to the right target audience, and the ability to generate leads from potential customers. It also allows brands to engage with their consumers for both positive and negative posts."*

*Andrew Pinto, Head of Marketing,  
Mudah.my*



*"These are sensitive times and mere marketing or selling won't work. Brands are really listening to what their customers are saying online. Agility is the key now – be it in offering a more personalized customer experience, creating value, introducing innovations."*

*Bijoya Ghosh, Founder,  
Adgully*

*"Consumer journey today is no longer the linear direct path it used to be. Through social listening and sentiment analysis, consumer verbatim will provide stronger insights and capture emerging trends for marketers to deliver highly relevant and engaging campaigns."*

*Eileen Ooi, Chief Operating Officer,  
Omnicom Media Group*





## 4. Industry zoom

### What brands can learn from conversations happening in 5 key industries

#### Conversations have become the focus for brands across industries

##### Brands are adapting to give customers what they want

Across markets, it is evident that brands today must constantly adapt to respond to the evolving environment around them and the changes in consumer behavior.

As shown in the responses of over 1,000+ professionals in multiple fields, COVID-19 has heightened the importance of conversations across industries. Brands must now prioritize these interactions to find insights that can be used to add value for their customers through products and services.

We've compiled how conversations have changed in previous months within five industries, with examples of brands that have leveraged conversations to improve their strategy, create different products or adapt their message.





# 4. Industry zoom

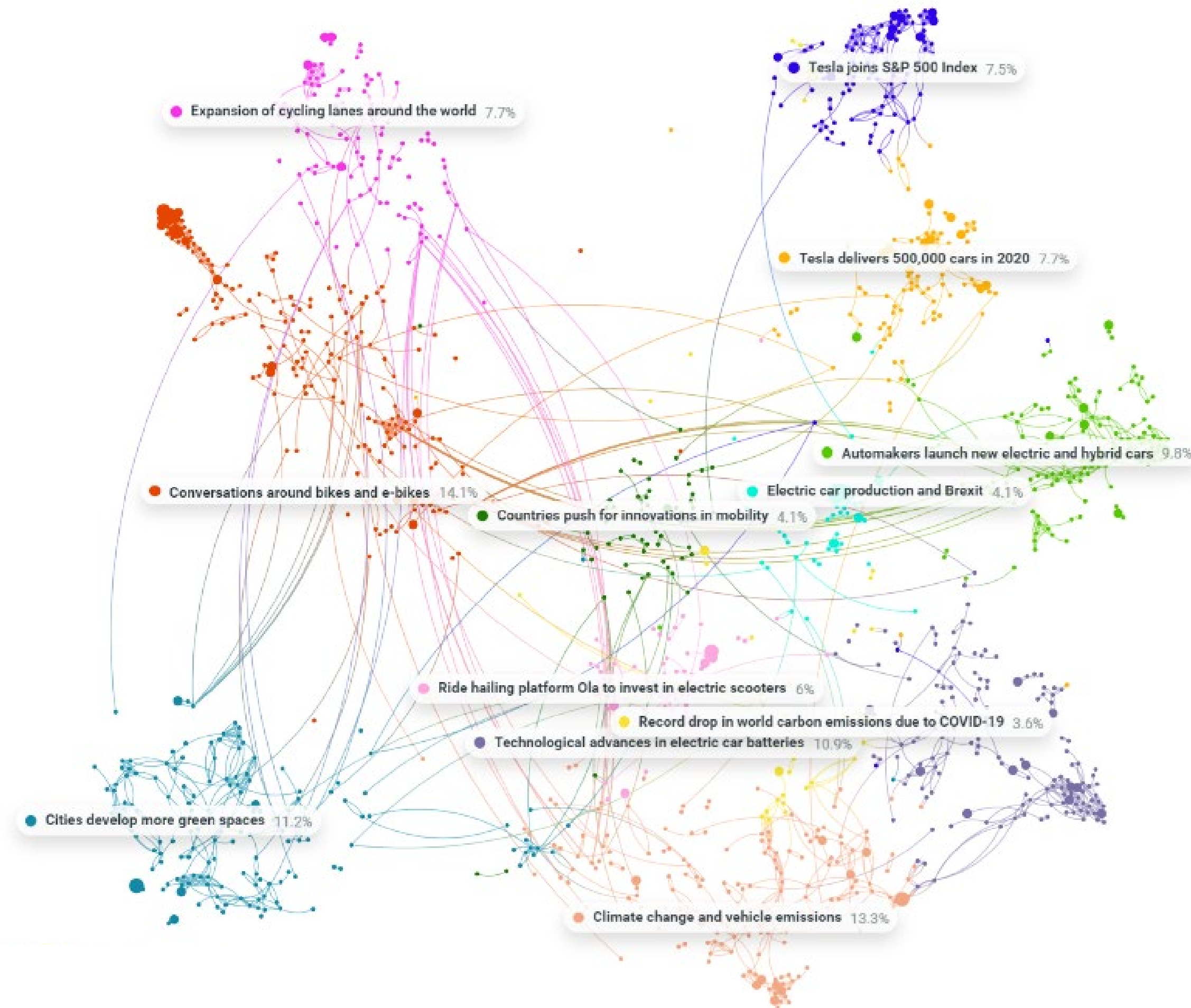
## Automotive the acceleration of green mobility

Throughout 2020, the automotive & mobility industry has been going through important changes at a global level, to become a more sustainable industry. We tracked conversations around sustainable transportation and mobility last year, and found that the total amount grew by 15% in the second half of the year.

One of the factors that led to the **acceleration of green mobility** was the temporary reduction of CO2 emissions due to COVID-19, which reminded brands and consumers alike of the looming climate crisis. A second factor came about due to social distancing measures, people began looking for **alternatives to public transportation**, making way for bicycles and electric scooters. Additionally, the sales of hybrid and electric vehicles rose in places like Europe last year, with governments tightening emissions regulations.

We created the [Conversation Clusters](#) displayed here around sustainable transportation and green mobility, to understand the major conversations that are present in the industry today. From environmental effects to city planning, conversations around sustainability are now a crucial part of the automotive and mobility industry.

### The search for alternatives to public transportation





## 4. Industry zoom

### Automotive the acceleration of green mobility

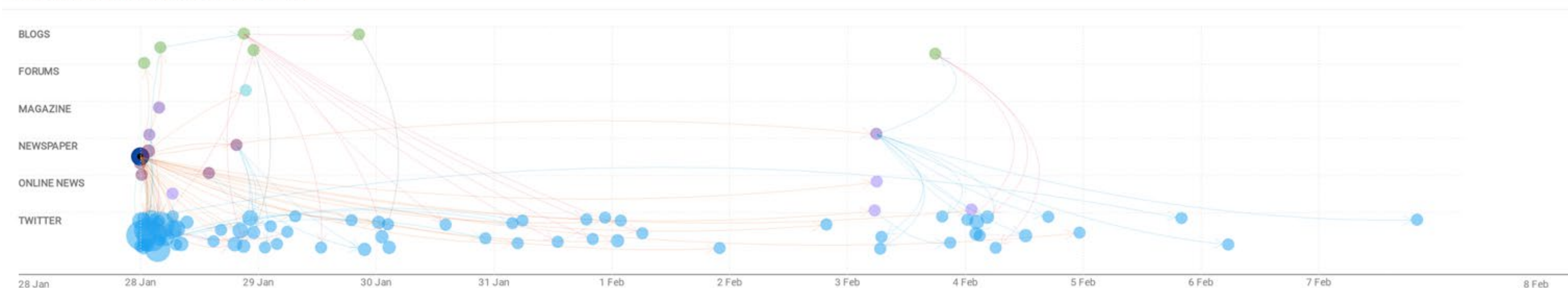
As automotive continues to evolve, brands are looking to sustainability as the new way to take a greater share of the market. We've already seen brands like Tesla reap major benefits throughout 2020 by entering the S&P 500 index, but many are close behind. In the last two years, brands like Kia, Toyota and Volkswagen have rebranded as they put the environment at the top of their agenda.

At the start of 2021, General Motors became the first major U.S. automaker to pledge all electric cars and SUVs by 2035, showing its interest in this growing market and generating 80K engagements around the news. However, when looking at the market today, Tesla continues to be the top-of-mind brand amongst EVs, regardless of the efforts we have seen among other large manufacturers.

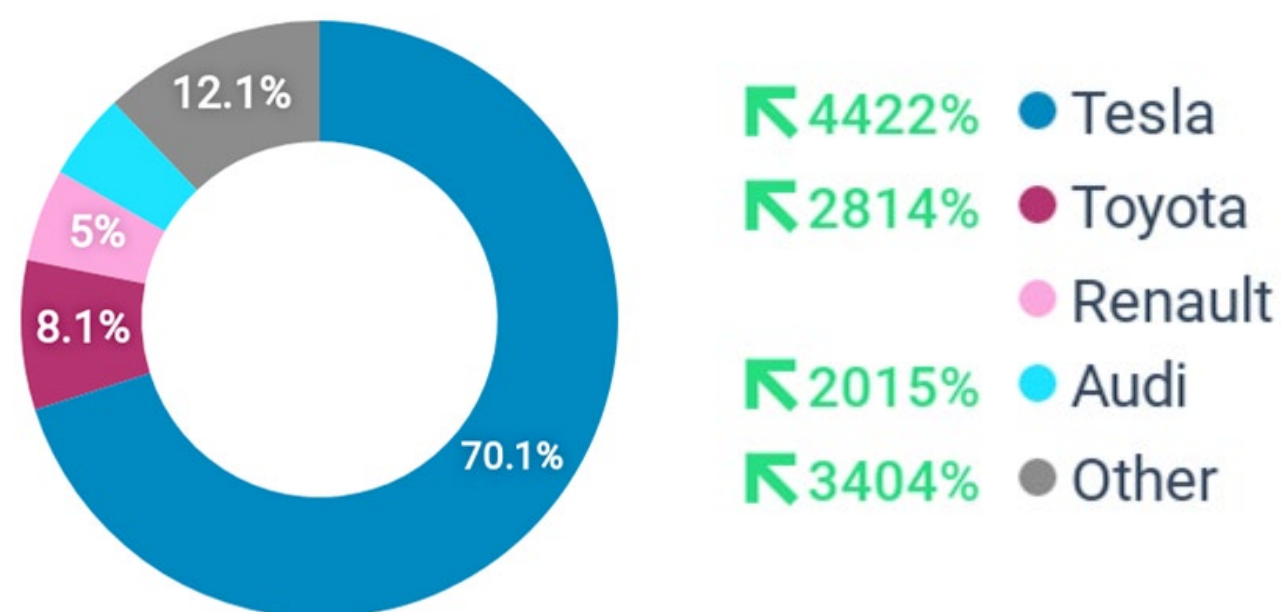
An important part of Tesla's large share of conversations is Elon Musk, as not only does he have a big audience (40M followers on Twitter), but his two-word tweets often result in some kind of change in market trends.

### The pledge for sustainability, and Tesla's dominance

GM PLEDGES ALL ELECTRIC CARS BY 2035



ELECTRIC VEHICLE MARKET - SHARE OF VOICE









# 4. Industry zoom

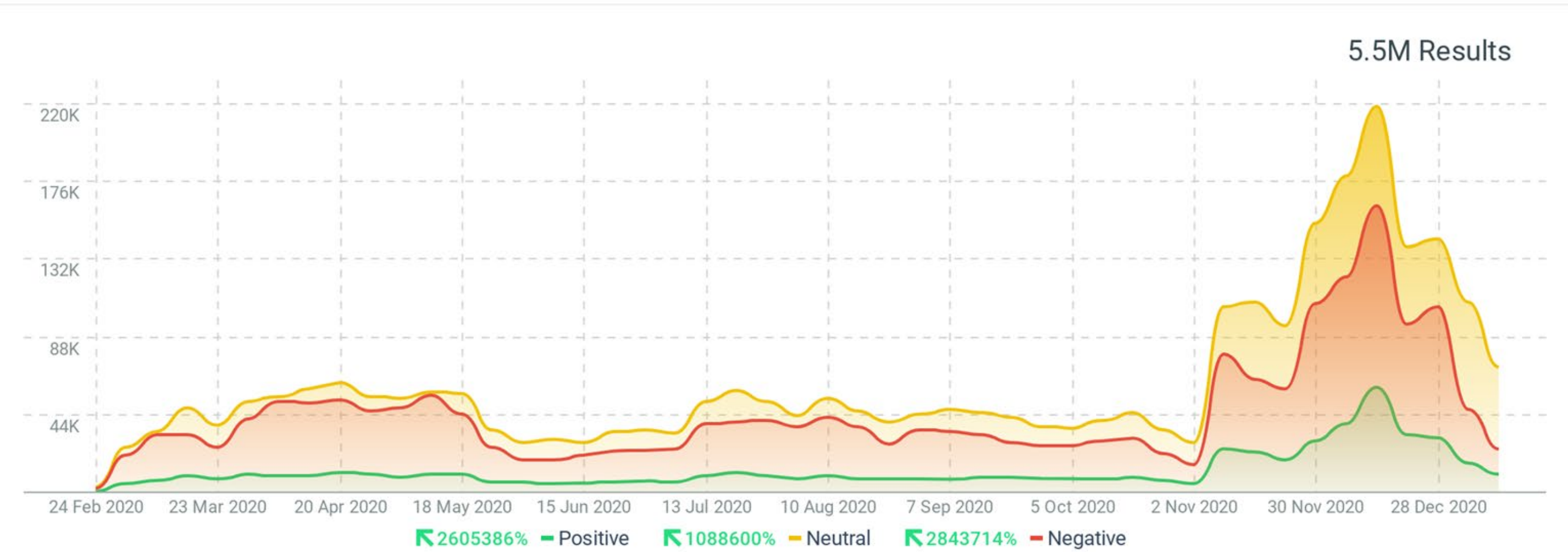
## Pharma industry's rapid digital transformation

The rise of fake claims around COVID-19 and the vaccine in 2020, have made brands more engaged in the conversation. The Mayo Clinic, a renowned nonprofit American academic medical center, shared an article debunking general myths around COVID-19 and the vaccine, and received over 150K engagements in social media.

In a similar fashion, The New York Times responded to the conspiracy that claimed the vaccine has a microchip, by listing the 10 ingredients of Pfizer's mRNA vaccine. The article received over 270K engagements since its publication, and was widely shared across the Web, as shown in our [virality map](#) below.

## Trending conversations about the COVID-19 vaccine

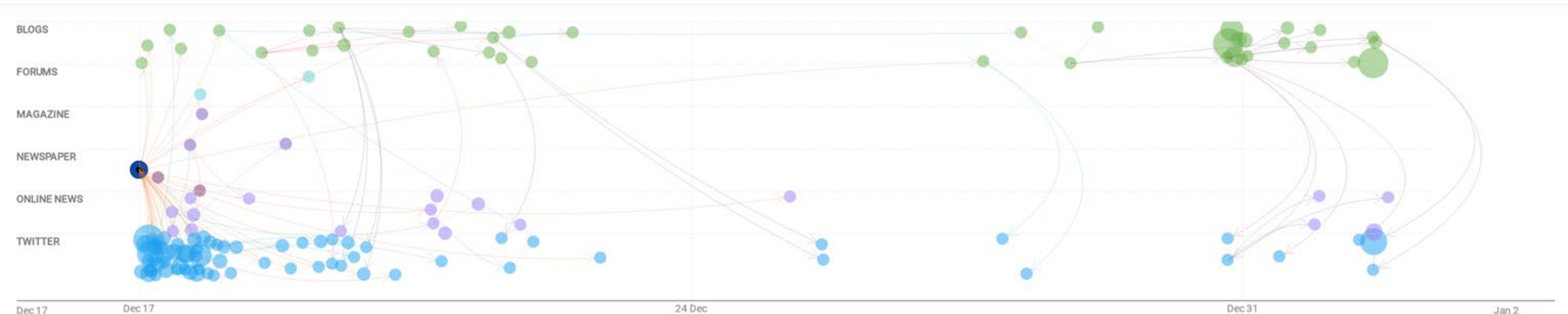
GLOBAL SENTIMENT OVER TIME AROUND THE VACCINE



MAIN CUSTOMER CONSIDERATIONS ON THE VACCINE



VIRALITY MAP





## 4. Industry zoom

### Finance sector's increased adoption of digital banking

The physical barriers imposed by the pandemic accelerated the transformation of the financial services industry through innovation and decentralization.

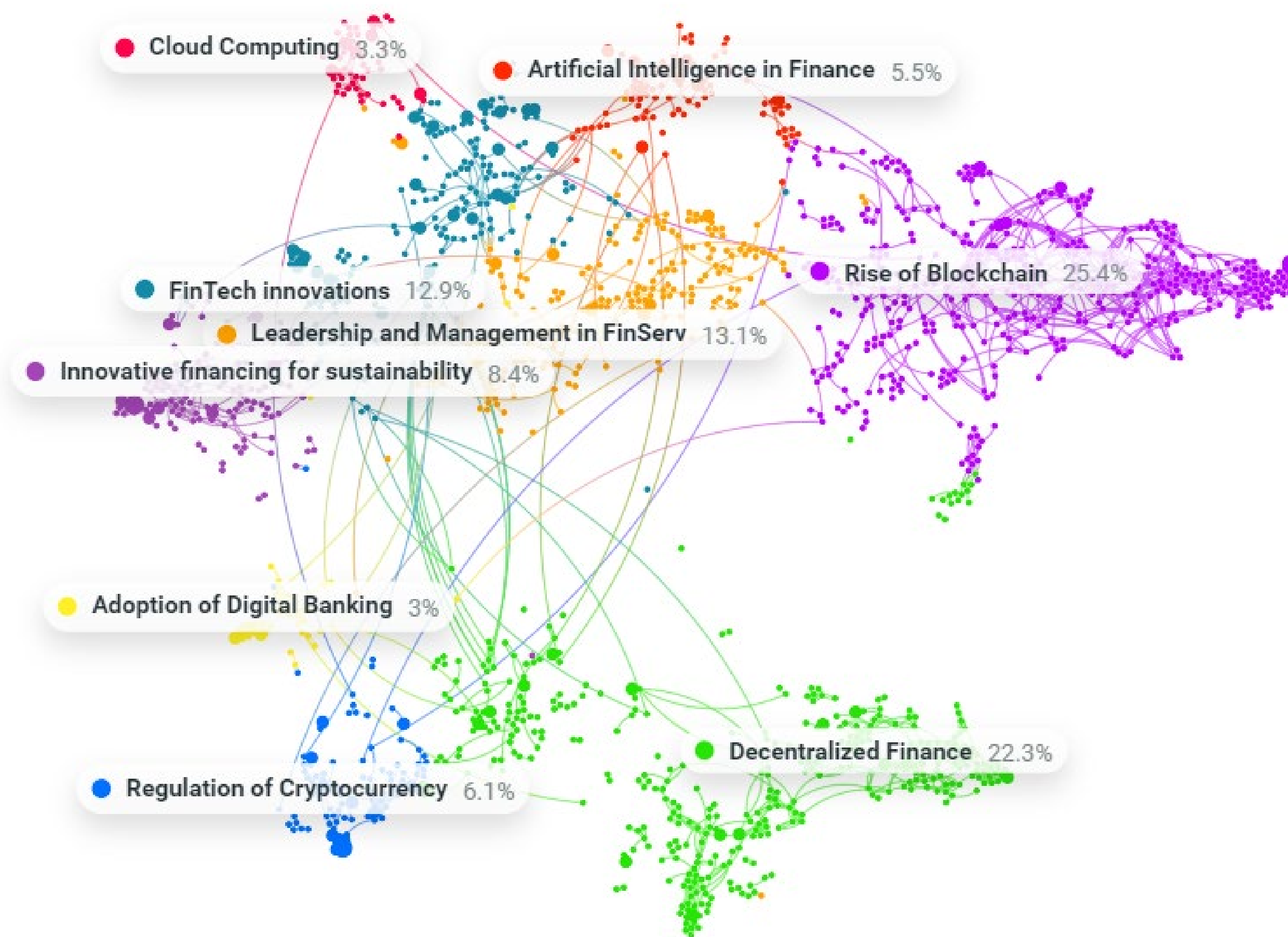
By creating Conversation Clusters around FinServ in Q3 2020, we found that innovation was permeating the industry through AI, greater adoption of digital banking and a surge in FinTech startups. As for decentralization, we found a large cluster of conversations regarding DeFi, **speculation about different cryptocurrencies**, and the rise of blockchain-based solutions for businesses.

When zooming into conversations around online banking, we saw that the market was growing with traditional banks creating their apps or improving the customer experience of existing apps, and **neobanks leading the charge for digital transformation**. Looking at sentiment around online banking for the last three months of 2020, we found that people praised rapid growth, good user interface, and a high level of personalization.

SENTIMENT KEY DRIVERS: ONLINE BANKING



### Crypto speculation and the growth of neobanks





## 4. Industry zoom

### Finance sector's increased adoption of digital banking

As for decentralization, it's worth mentioning that the price for Bitcoin grew 4x between November 2020 and January 2021. One of the main reasons for the growth of this cryptocurrency has been the interest that many institutions such as JP Morgan, and platforms like PayPal have given it. We have yet to see how Bitcoin will continue to evolve in 2021 given its overall stability, and how this will affect the whole market for DeFi.

As seen in the word cloud above, top brands from the financial sector have been mentioned alongside Bitcoin in the past few weeks, as it gathers strength amongst customers and institutions alike.

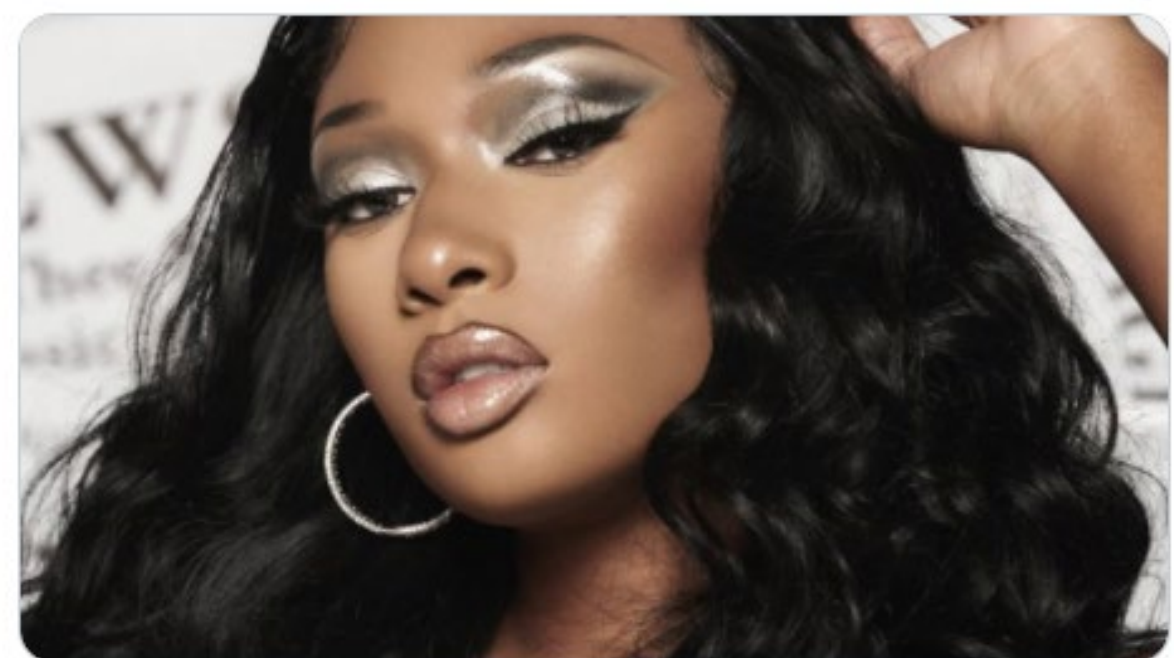
### Decentralized finance and influencer marketing

We also found that neobanks are not only gaining popularity organically, but they are including celebrities in their conversations in order to attract younger consumers and wider audiences to their apps or platforms. Below you can see one of Megan Thee Stallion's tweets in December, where she invited her followers to join CashApp and have the chance to earn a reward.

TOP BRANDS LINKED TO BITCOIN



**HOT GIRL MEG** @theestallion · Dec 17, 2020  
Thee Hot Girl coach is OFFICIALLY on team @Cashapp! To celebrate I'm giving \$1 MILLION in Bitcoin to as many hotties as I can! Will be giving out this million units until its gone, so drop your \$cashapp below w #BITCOINMEG to get a piece



189.4K 20.6K 74.8K



# 4. Industry zoom

## CPG industry's direct-to-consumer concept

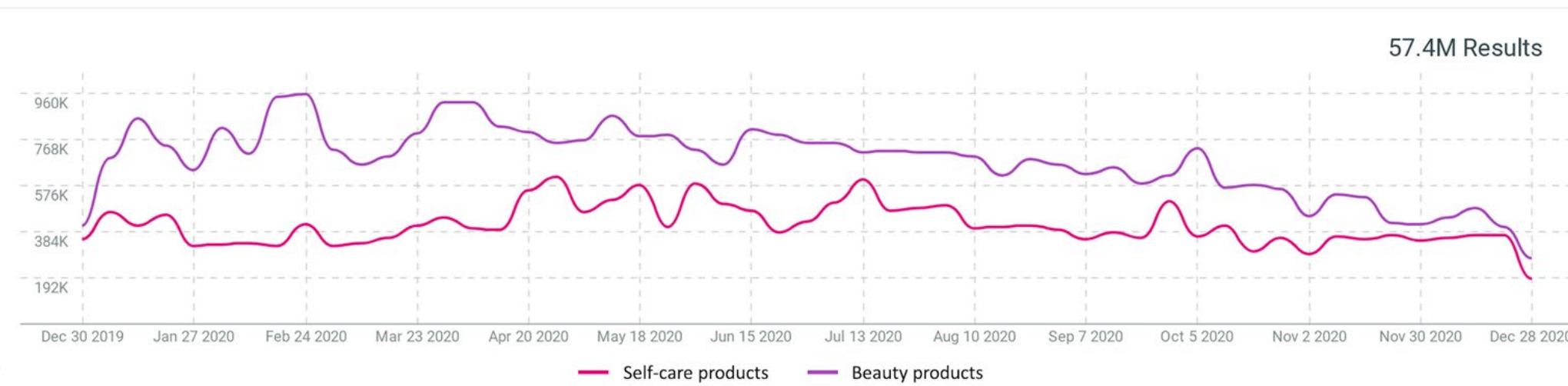
As the months went on, and people ventured into the streets, masks became the mainstream accessory for all, and cosmetic products were directly affected. **Consumers prioritized self-care products for sanitation and hygiene**, with pandemic-specific issues cropping up such as mask-related skincare problems.

The change in consumer needs was evident when we compared makeup to self-care products and skincare, as conversations around the former fell throughout 2020, whereas those around the latter category grew.

That being said, we identified a new driver of cosmetics conversations, with an increase in the **availability of tutorial and unboxing videos** starting in March 2020.

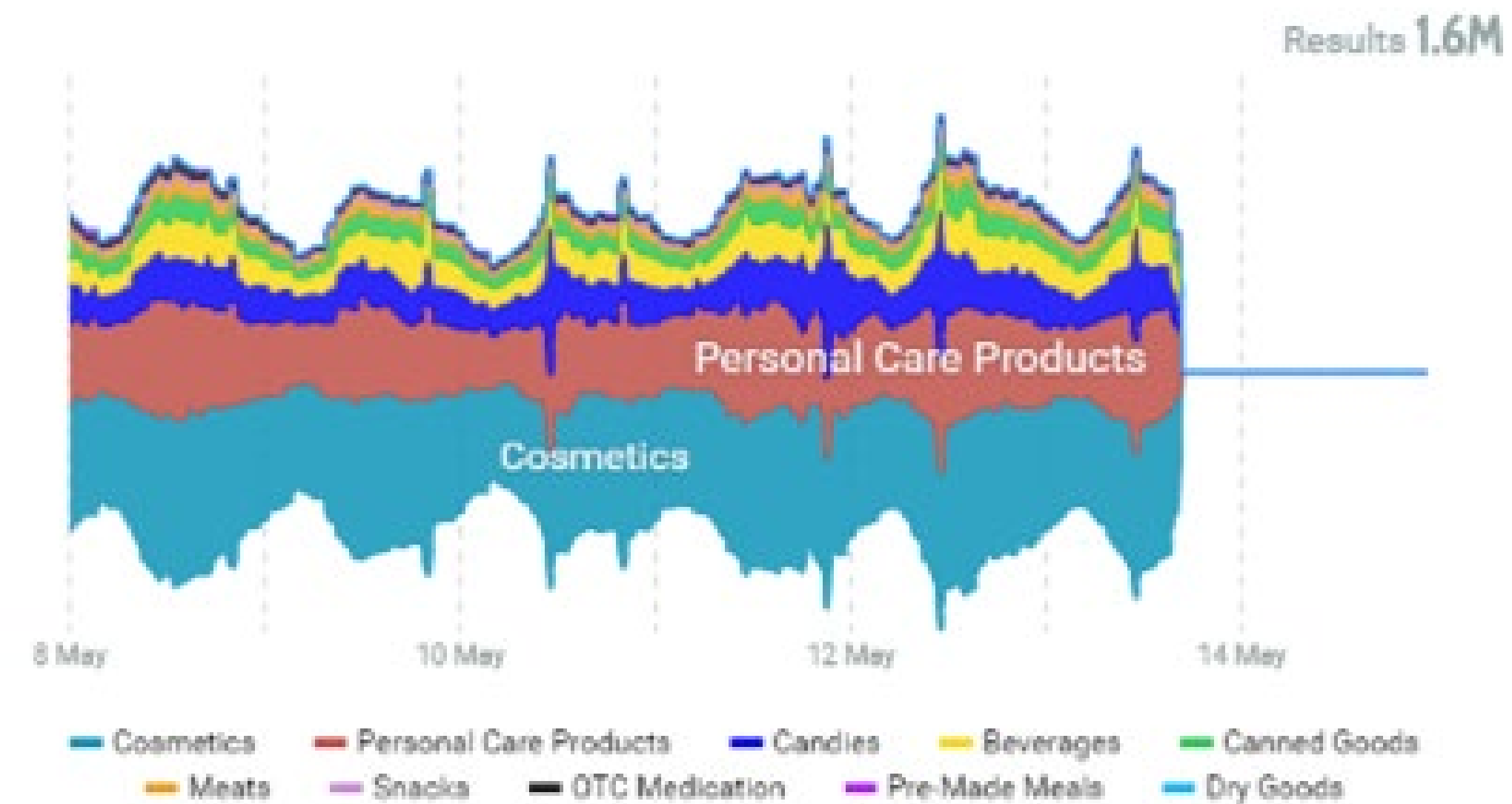
### Customers prioritize self-care

CONVERSATIONS AROUND SELF-CARE AND BEAUTY PRODUCTS

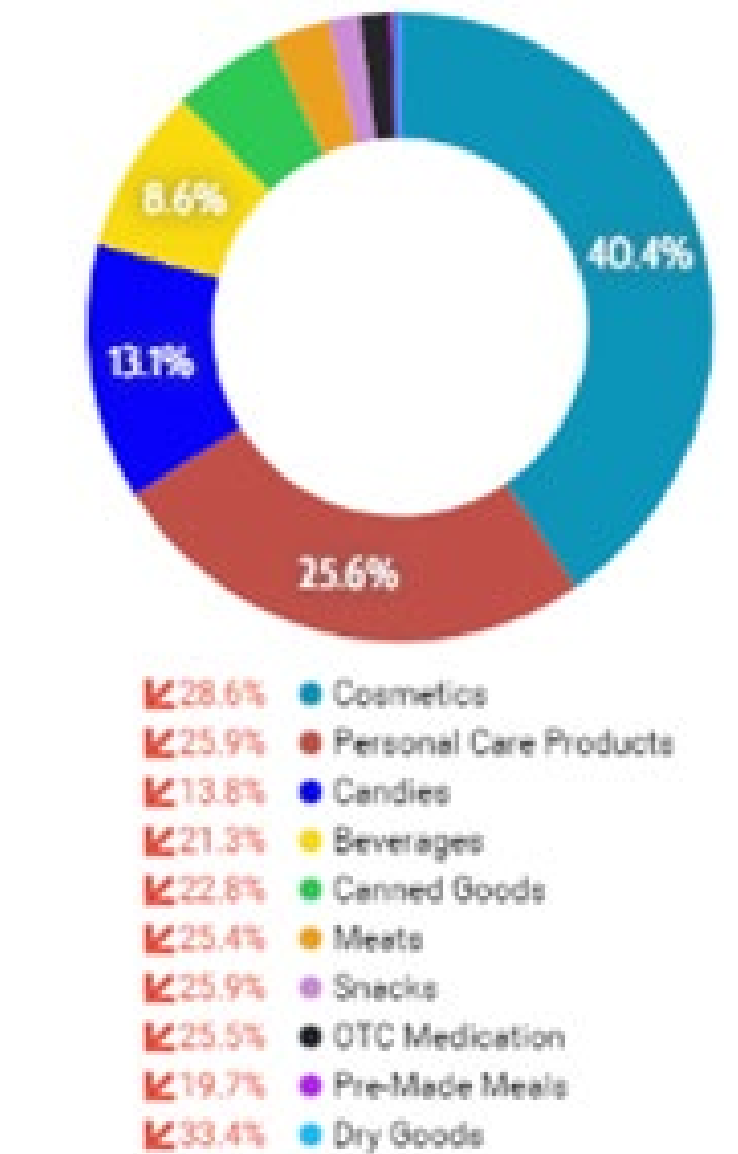


### RESULTS OVER TIME

by filter



### SHARE OF FILTER



Zoom on CPG conversations by [product categories](#) between May 7-14, 2020







## 4. Industry zoom

### How e-commerce coped with major inevitable growth

One of the leading industries through the COVID-19 pandemic was e-commerce. With a growth in digital interactions between businesses and consumers, online shopping grew at a much faster pace in 2020 than we could have imagined a year ago. Total retail e-commerce sales last year grew to \$4.13 trillion, and conversations around the industry also saw a greater volume of results than in previous years.

With people entering lockdown, and brick-and-mortar stores closing their doors, the online shopping model expanded its pick up options to include buy online, pickup in store, (BOPUS or BOPIS) and curbside pickup. These options were not only quickly adopted and talked about in March, but also kept throughout the year due to their success - as seen on the top right graph tracking BOPUS/BOPIS conversations across the Web throughout 2020.

By the second semester of 2020, the hype around e-commerce, along with COVID-19, changed traditional sales holidays. In North America, many shops abandoned the tradition of Black Friday as we know it, offering many discounts online, and extending the overall sales period. In Mexico, El Buen Fin, a 4-day sales event, changed to a 12 day format, with a larger number of online deals.

### E-commerce adapts to fit customer needs

RESULTS OVER TIME



E-COMMERCE IN THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Deals COVID  
Shipping Safety  
Online Shopping  
In-store Shopping  
Holidays  
Payments

Scarcity  
Product Availability

## 4. Industry zoom

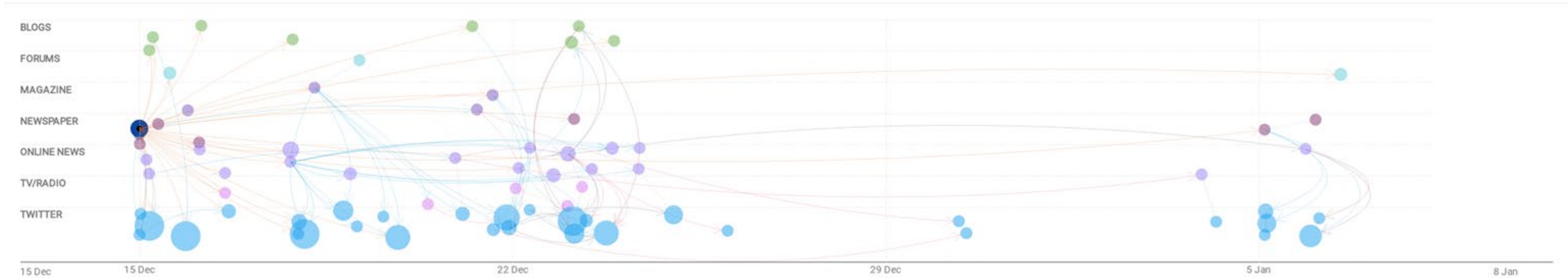
### How e-commerce coped with major inevitable growth

As the holidays approached, conversations on e-commerce grew again, with people considering it the **ideal channel for overall shopping and gift buying**. Tracking themes around e-commerce in December, we saw that the top themes besides online shopping included shipping and deals across the different markets, as shown in the left-hand graph tracking Indian holiday conversations.

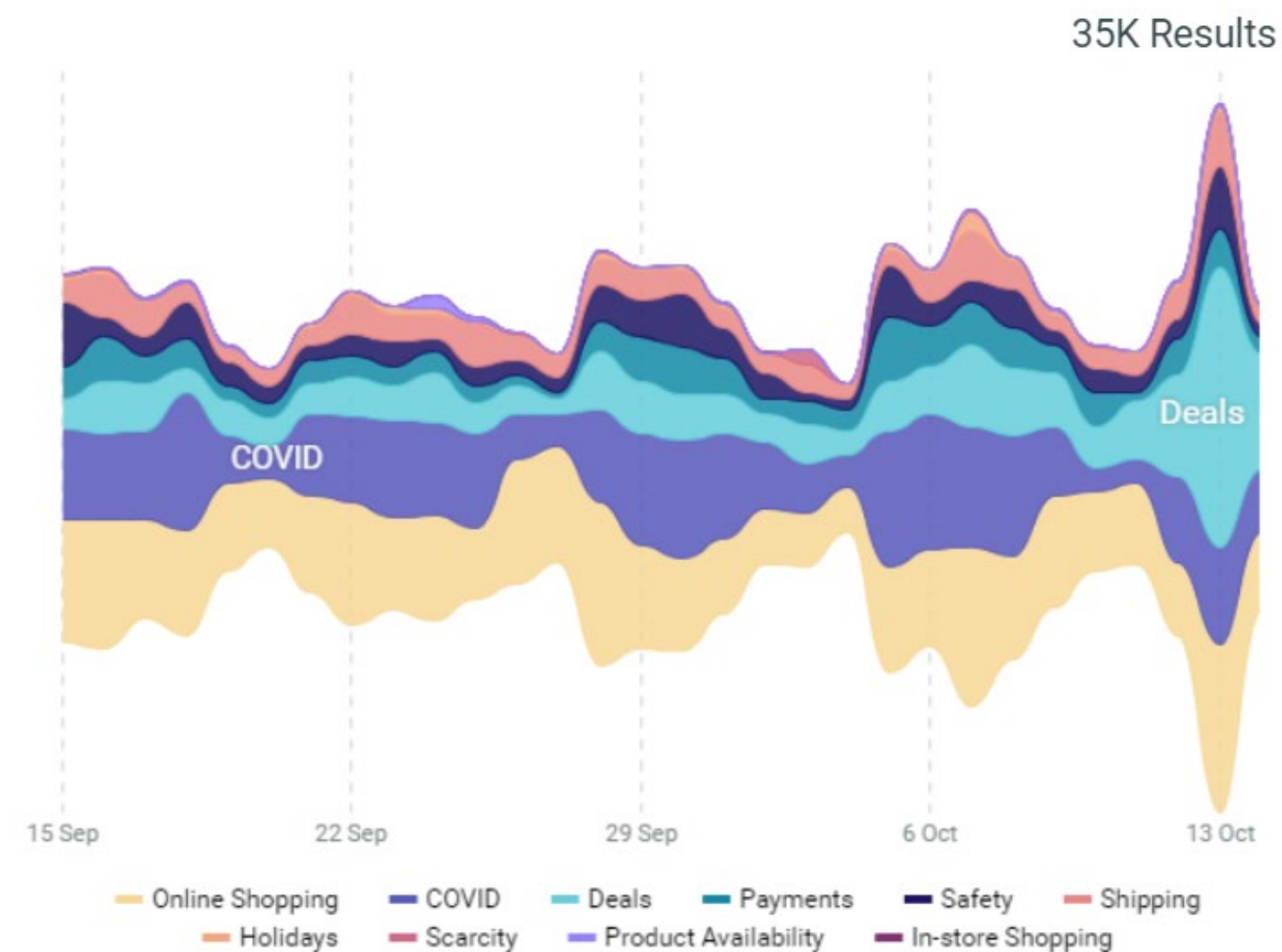
As orders grew during December many e-commerce players like Etsy posted about potential shipping delays and in the US, The Washington Post revealed the strain on the postal service given the large number of packages it needed to deliver. As seen in the virality map below, the article gained traction online with over 144K engagements, as FedEx and UPS cut deliveries for certain retailers and intentionally delayed shipments.

### E-commerce holiday boom strains package deliveries

VIRALITY MAP: HOLIDAY PACKAGE DELAYS



MAIN THEMES ON INDIA'S HOLIDAY SALES





# Conclusion

## The age of conversational intelligence

From social media platforms to product reviews and call center transcripts, consumer and customer conversations are happening everywhere. As shown in our survey statistics and verbatims, the COVID-19 pandemic made global brands more aware of the importance of consumer, market, and brand intelligence for the survival of their business.

In 2021, it's time for innovative businesses to quickly analyze consumer and customer conversations at scale, and turn them into opportunities. To adapt to the new normal brought forth by the pandemic. To democratize data access within their organization for faster reactions. To create more customer-centric experiences and more innovative products.

## The State of

## Conversation



***“While all previous market research and predictions were rendered mostly inaccurate during the pandemic, online conversations became one of the only options to get a timely and accurate pulse check of consumer minds.”***

Tiankai Feng | Global Director, Voice of Consumer Analytics,  
[adidas](#)



***“Today’s consumers expect brands to meet them where they are, with empathy, and a shared set of values. Conversational Intelligence is the key to unlocking meaningful customer relationships by understanding what customers are saying, where they are saying it and why.”***

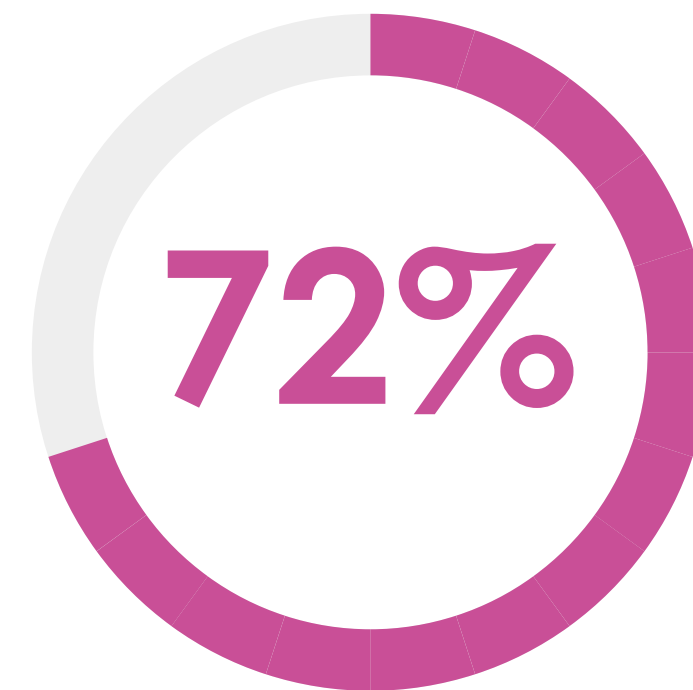
Cara Buscaglia, Chief Innovation & Insights Officer,  
[Talkwalker](#)

# Country profiles

## Key statistics in Australia & New Zealand

### Australia

1. Social Media (29%)
2. Review Sites (14%)
3. Call Centers (14%)

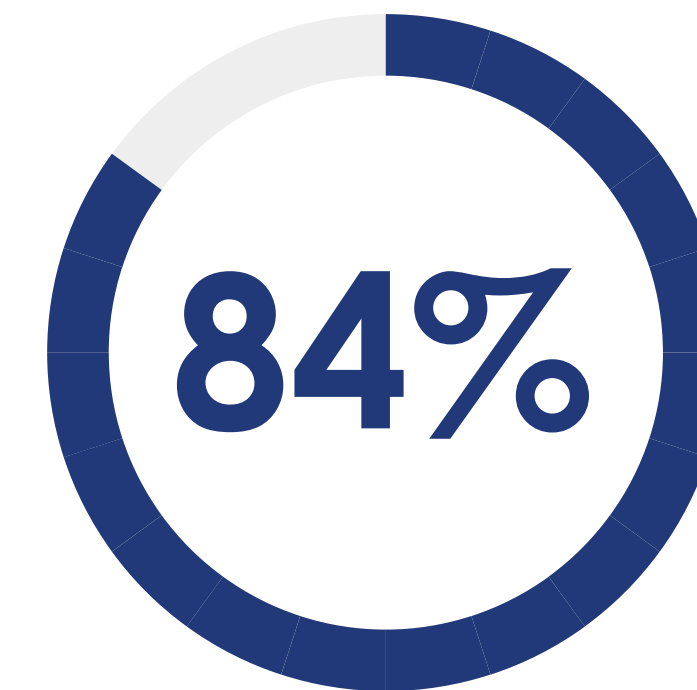


1. Customer feedback & support (33%)
2. Brand promotion (24%)
3. Product research & innovation (17%)

Inadequate levels of analysis (30%)

### New Zealand

1. Social Media (31%)
2. Review sites (16%)
3. News sites (13%)



1. Customer feedback & support (28%)
2. Brand promotion (18%)
3. Product research & innovation (17%)

Insufficient data (30%)

**Top 3 channels where your brand interacts with customers**

**What percentage of industry professionals believe that the pandemic has changed their understanding of consumer conversation?**

**Main reasons to use these channels**

**Main difficulty tracking conversations**



# Country profiles

## Key statistics in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines

### Indonesia

1. Social Media (31%)
2. Forums (17%)
3. Blogs (13%)

### Malaysia

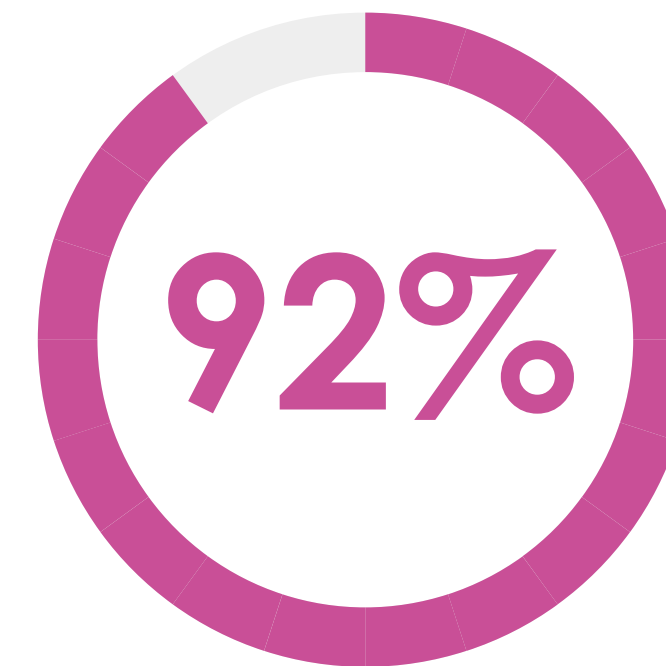
1. Social Media (26%)
2. Review sites (20%)
3. Blogs (13%)

### Philippines

1. Social Media (32%)
2. Blogs (17%)
3. Call Centers (16%)

**Top 3 channels where your brand interacts with customers**

**What percentage of industry professionals believe that the pandemic has changed their understanding of consumer conversation?**



**Main difficulty tracking conversations**

Insufficient data (43%)

Inadequate levels of analysis (34%)

Inadequate levels of analysis (32%)

**How do you monitor these conversations?**

A set of tools (41%)

A single unified platform (30%)

A set of tools (46%)

# Country profiles

## Key statistics in Singapore, Thailand, Japan

### Top 3 channels where your brand interacts with customers

#### Singapore

1. Social Media (27%)
2. Review sites (16%)
3. News sites (13%)

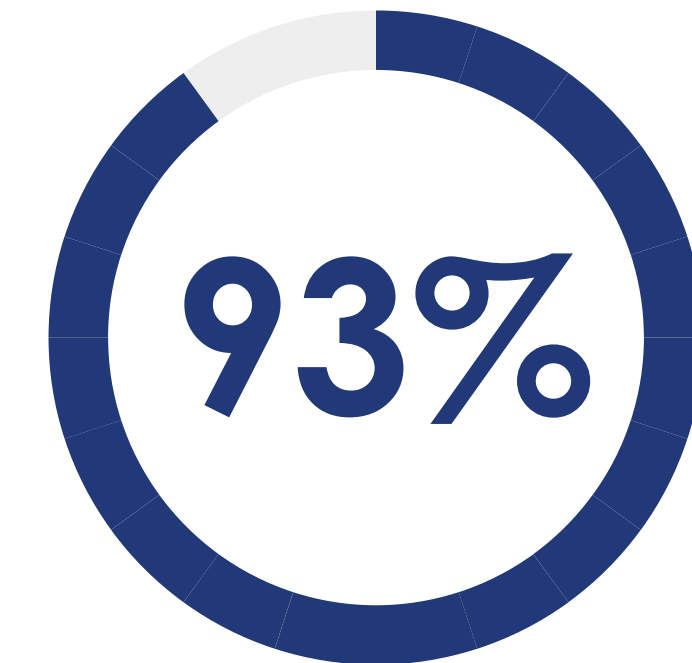
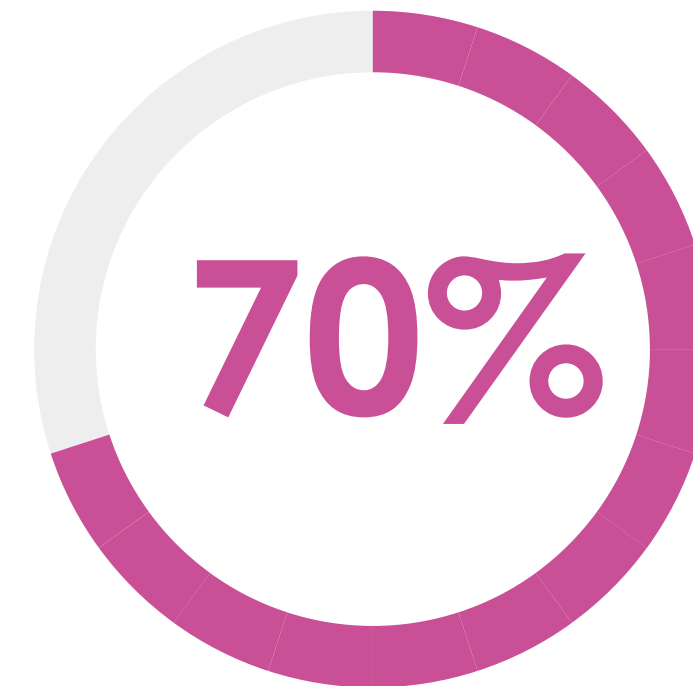
#### Thailand

1. Social Media (28%)
2. Blogs (16%)
3. Review sites (14%)

#### Japan

1. Social Media (18%)
2. Call Centers (17%)
3. News sites (16%)

### What percentage of industry professionals believe that the pandemic has changed their understanding of consumer conversation?



### Main difficulty tracking conversations

Inadequate levels of analysis (34%)

Insufficient data (44%)

Insufficient data (29%)

### How do you monitor these conversations?

A single unified platform (40%)

A single unified platform (32%)

A set of tools (20%)



# Country profiles

## Key statistics in Japan

### Top 3 channels where your brand interacts with customers

1. Social Media (18%)
2. Call Centers (17%)
3. News sites (16%)

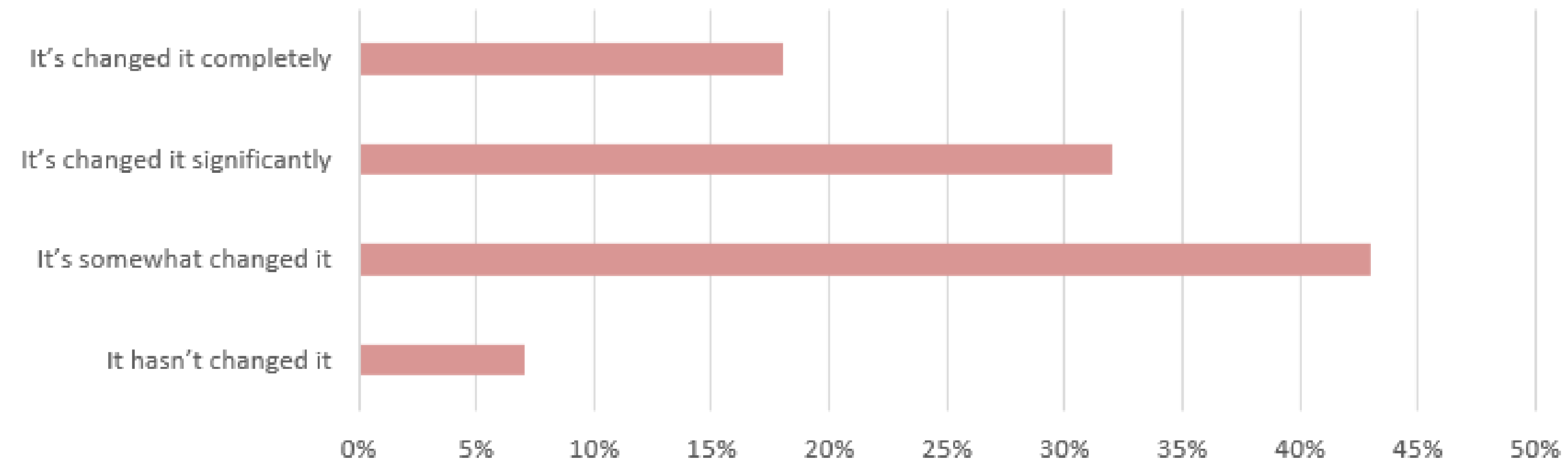
### Main reasons to use these channels

1. Customer feedback & support (43%)
2. Brand monitoring (22%)
3. Product research & innovation (14%)

### Main difficulty tracking conversations

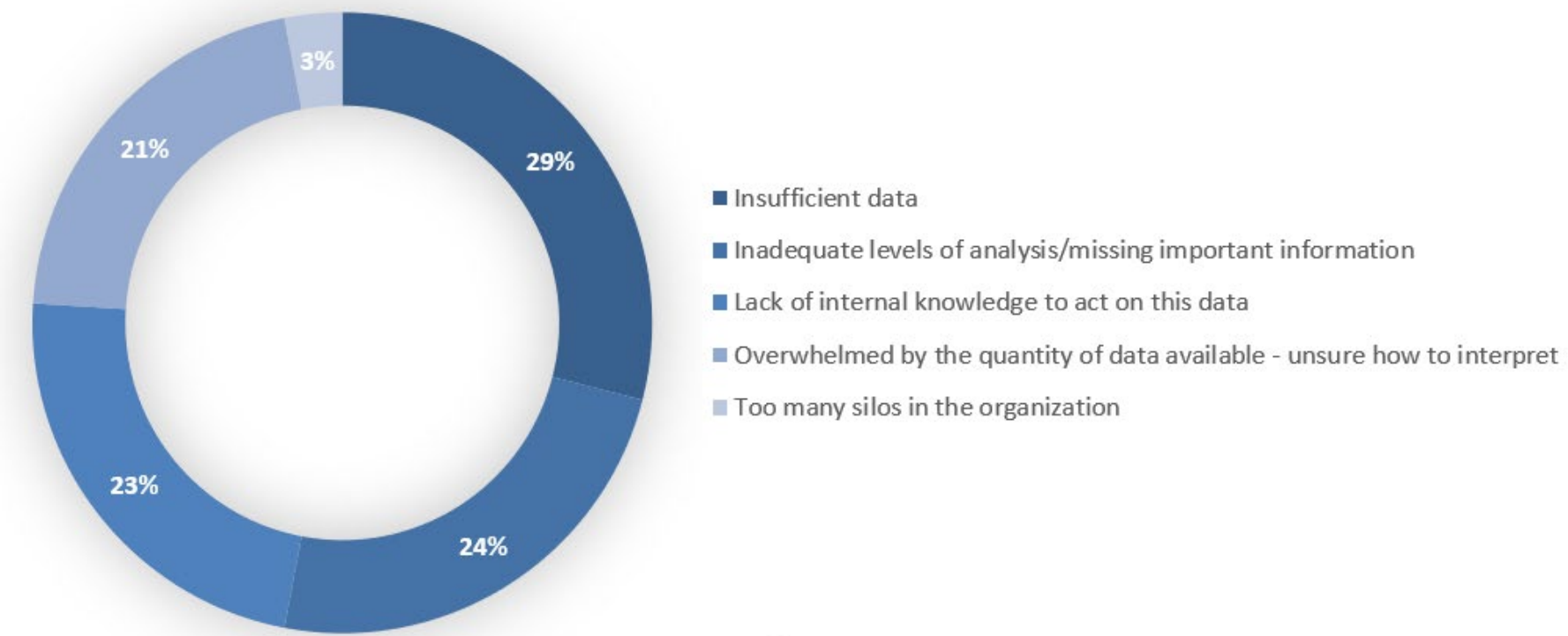
Insufficient data (29%)

## COVID-19's effect on the understanding of consumer conversations



Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?

## Main difficulty tracking conversations



Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?

# Country profiles

## Key statistics in India

### Top 3 channels where your brand interacts with customers

1. Social Media (30%)
2. Blogs (21%)
3. Review sites (15%)

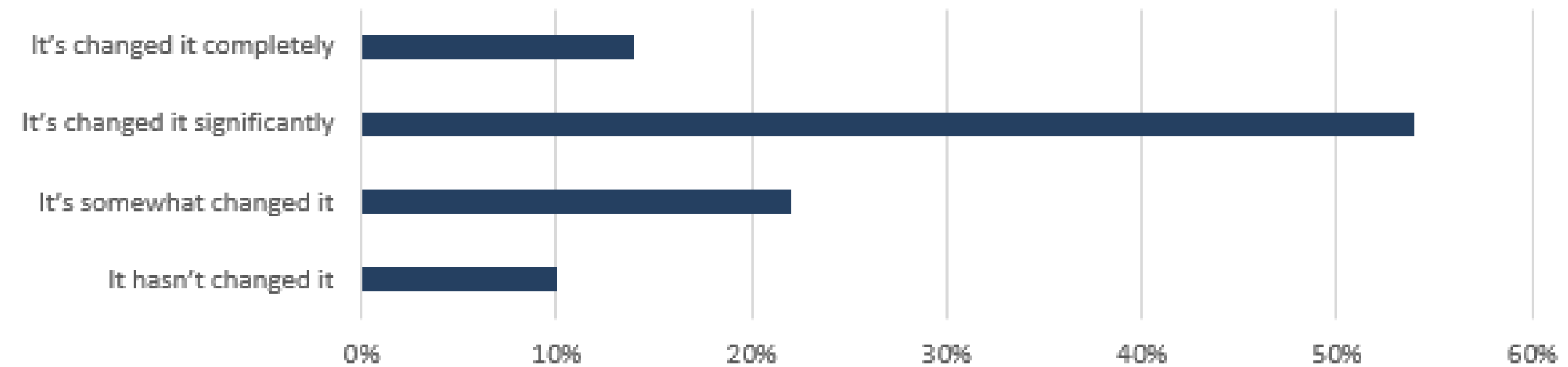
### Main reasons to use these channels

1. Customer feedback & support (26%)
2. Product research & innovation (24%)
3. Brand promotion (17%)

### Main difficulty tracking conversations

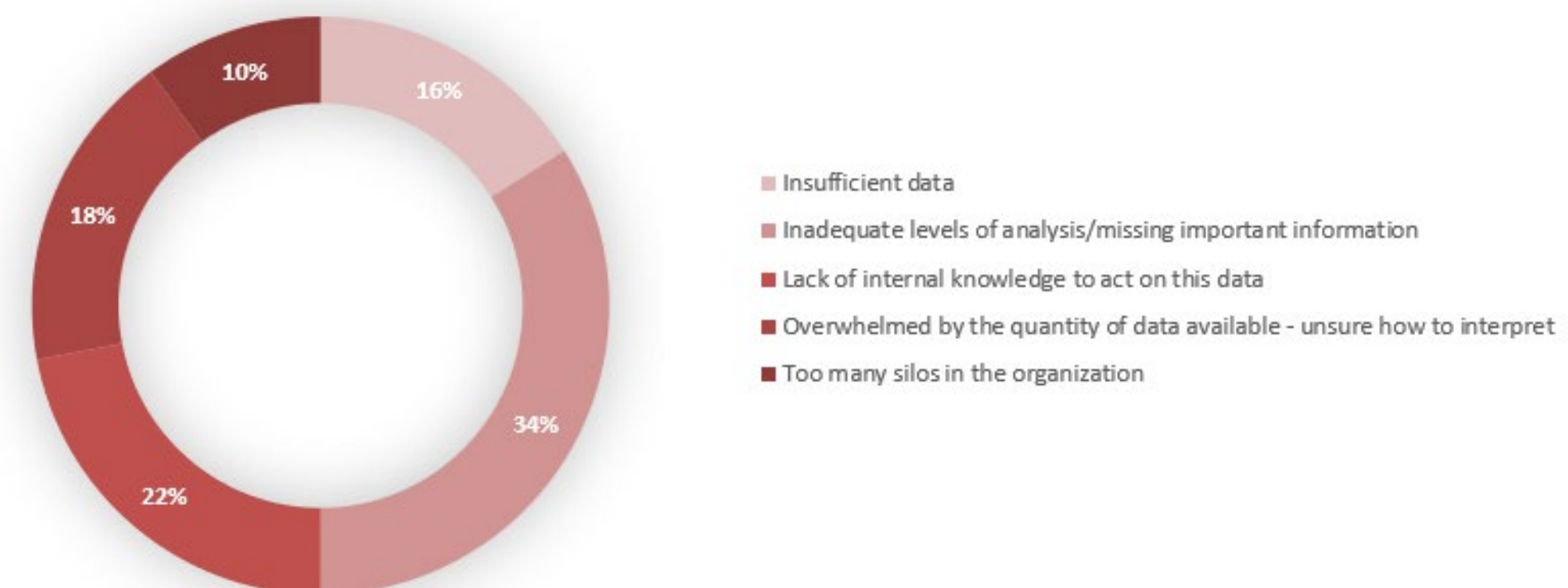
Inadequate levels of analysis (34%)

## COVID-19's effect on the understanding of consumer conversations



Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?

## Main difficulty tracking conversations



Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?



# Country profiles

## Key statistics in United Kingdom

### Top 3 channels where your brand interacts with customers

1. Social Media (27%)
2. Review Sites (16%)
3. Call Centers (14%)

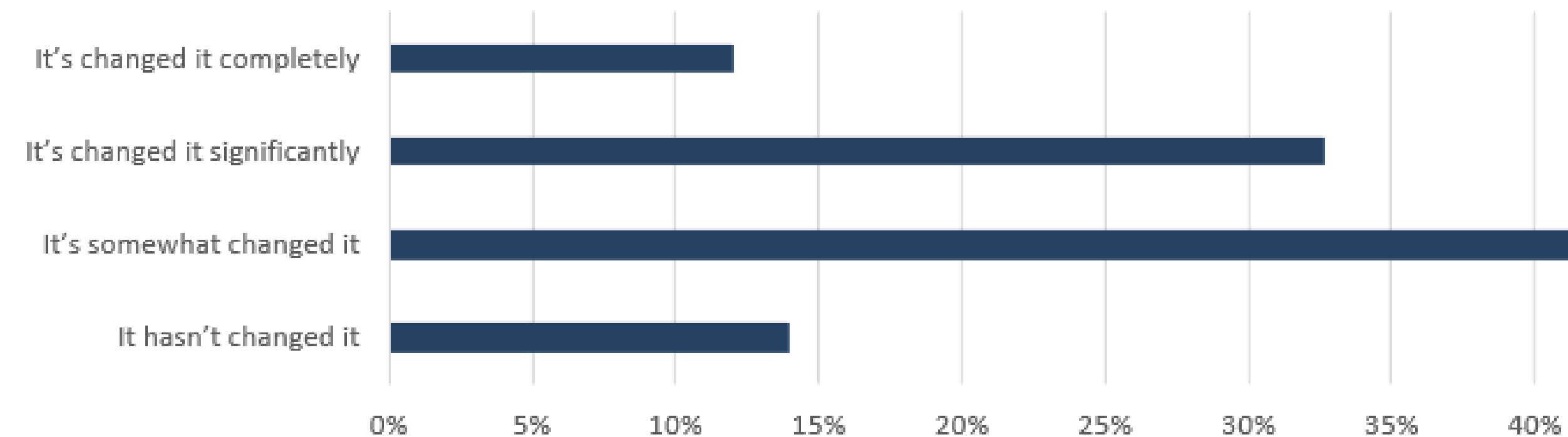
### Main reason to use these channels

1. Customer feedback & support (32%)
2. Brand promotion (20%)
3. Product research & innovation (17%)

### Main difficulty tracking conversations

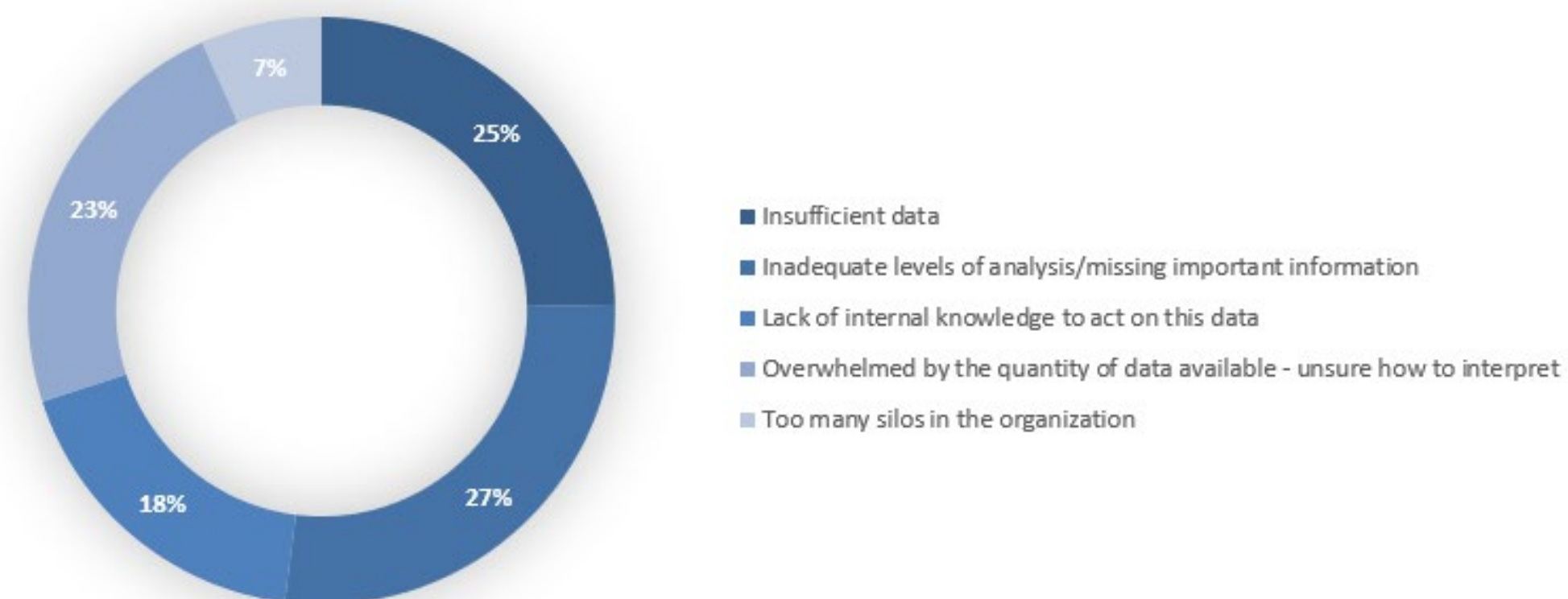
Inadequate levels of analysis (27%)

## COVID-19's effect on the understanding of consumer conversations



Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?

## Main difficulty tracking conversations



Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?

# Country profiles

## Key statistics in LATAM

### Top 3 channels where your brand interacts with customers

1. Social Media (31%)
2. Blogs (15%)
3. Custom market research (10%)

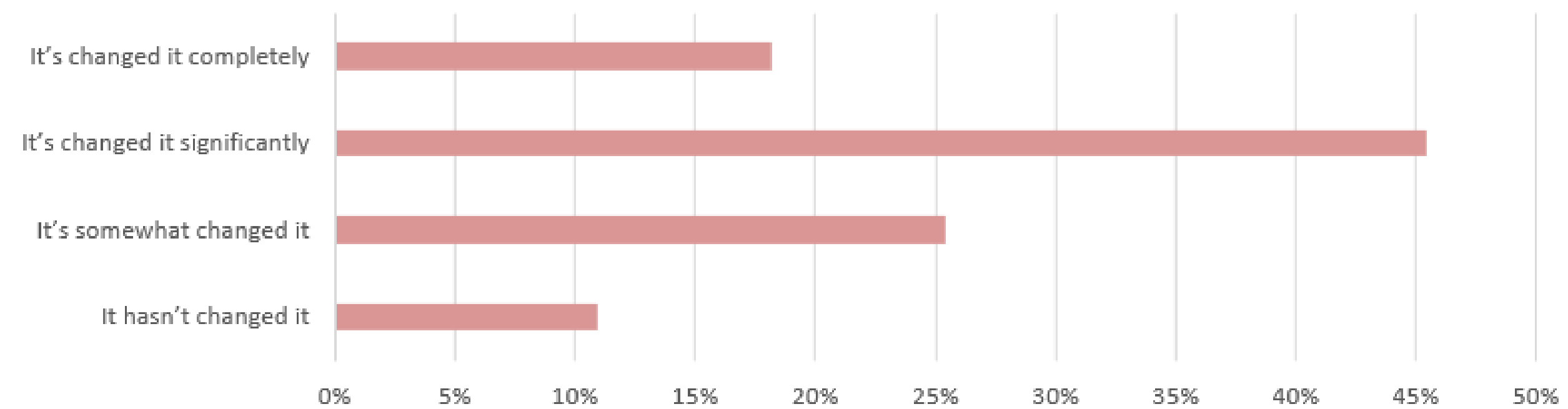
### Main reasons to use these channels

1. Customer feedback & support (25%)
2. Brand promotion (24%)
3. Brand monitoring (15%)

### Main difficulty tracking conversations

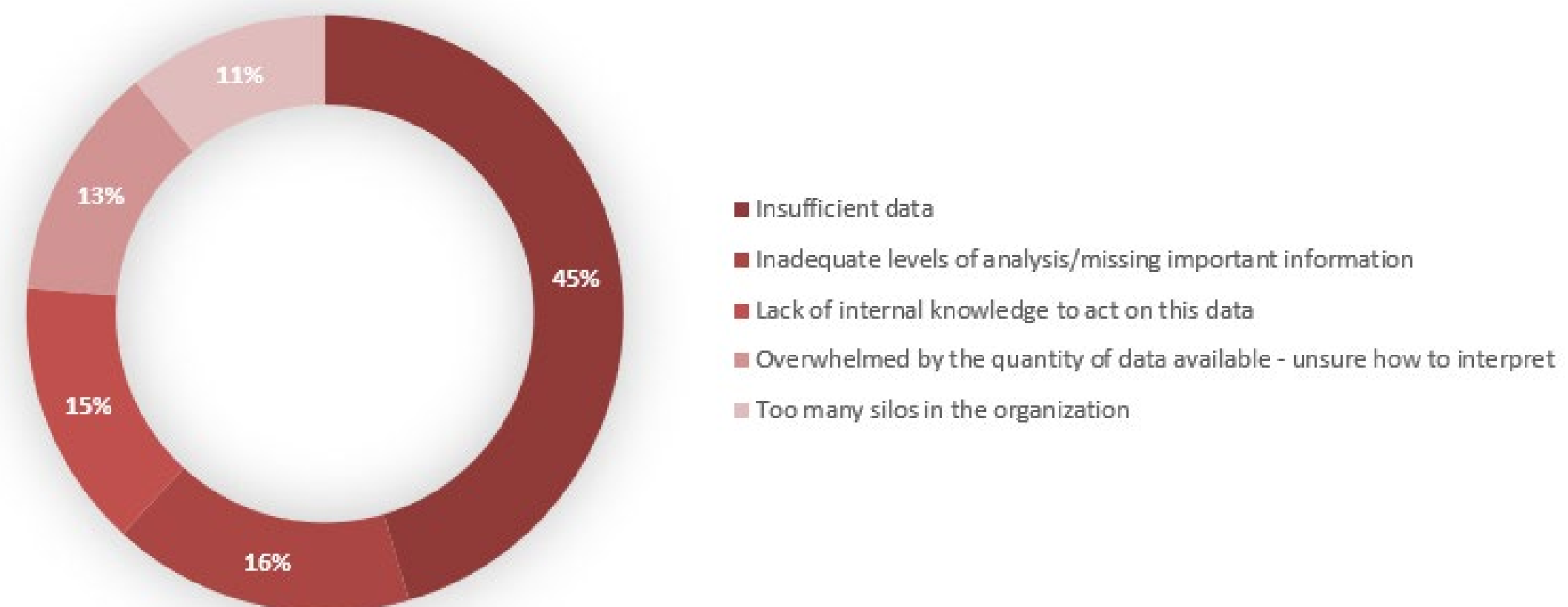
Insufficient data (45%)

## COVID-19's effect on the understanding of consumer conversations



Survey question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your understanding of the importance of consumer/customer conversations for your company?

## Main difficulty tracking conversations



Survey question: What is the main difficulty you encounter when tracking these conversations?



The State of

Conversation

Helpful resources for  
data-driven professionals

# Helpful resources for data-driven professionals

[Case study - How Orange squeezes the most out of social listening](#)

[The Forrester Wave™: Social Listening Platforms Q4 2020](#)

[How the world's 50 most popular brands survived the pandemic](#)

[Industry report - E-commerce is changing: how should brands adapt across industries?](#)

[Industry report - Pharma & Healthcare](#)  
[The race for a COVID-19 vaccine](#)

[Lead your industry with category insights](#)

[Covid-19 impact on Southeast Asia consumer trends](#)

[Customer Experience insights you can bank on with U.S. Bank](#)

[The importance of data-driven decision making in marketing](#)

[Remove data silos in your organisation using conversational intelligence](#)

[How to leverage data for your CX strategy](#)

[Without a single source of truth, your brand is a lie](#)

The State of

Conversation





The social listening and analytics platform behind the world's most impactful brands

Book a meeting



@talkwalker

contact@talkwalker.com

www.talkwalker.com