

Customer Engagement:  
**What APAC  
CMOs Think**



*braze*





## Preface

With the introduction of new technologies like generative AI and intelligent data-driven marketing tools, theories abound on how to get customer engagement right in APAC and what marketers in the region should or should not do. However, what are the thoughts of actual marketing, product and CX leaders in APAC and the chief marketing officers about the challenges and opportunities and best practices in customer engagement in APAC in this regard?

To answer this question, Braze, a leading provider of solutions for real time engagements between customers and brands, captured the key trends and perspectives expressed by the C-suite leaders in APAC at [a recent Braze event](#) in this eBook. This eBook particularly focuses on the application of technology to transform customer engagement and CX along with first-hand experiences.

The speakers at the event, from whose insights this information has been compiled, include:

**Derek Goh**, Country Manager of Kadence International

**Anna Znamenskaya**, CMO APAC, Foodpanda

**Max Del Vita**, Chief Product Officer, MoneySmart

**Sarun Chinsuvapala**, CMO, Robinhood

**Anupong Tasaduak**, Chief Commercial Officer, Noc Noc

**Lin Zhihao**, Technical Advisor, minden.ai

**Qinyi Soon**, Director of Customer Success, Verticurl



# Introduction: Passion, Creativity and Technology

Today brands can differentiate only by combining passion, creativity and technology. When brand managers think of creativity, they mostly consider only branding and long term marketing communications strategy. For sustainable businesses, creativity should be infused into long term strategies while meeting short term goals.

The better the marketing technology a company has, the easier it is to unleash the potential of creativity and engage customers organically. Marketing teams are required to find a way to integrate data across organizational silos. Data teams, on the other hand, should look at applications of data that can drive marketing insights and how and where else the data they have can be applied to drive key insights. Marketing breakthroughs depend upon integration and application of data to arrive at such insights.

Data can be used to deliver customer delight beyond transactional use cases like giving discounts by understanding what makes customers happy and touching their lives with it. So, how can passion, technology and creativity come together to deliver customer value and delight?

First of all, it is essential to think about interactions above interruptions. ***Instead of trying to command their attention, brands need to try to understand what customers are doing in a given moment in an organic manner.*** Brands can then add a layer of interactivity to that insight and persuade customers to positively engage with them.

Second, brands are required to unlock community currency. Unlocking community currency entails brands using data to understand what drives customers in their network environments. Identifying their network environments and becoming part of their conversations in communities is key to unlocking community currency.

Finally, it is important to orchestrate ‘worlds’ instead of channels. This means looking beyond channels as touch points. Brands can use data to figure out how to be part of the social, corporate and personal worlds of customers.

ONE

# Decoding Trends and Typologies

## Judging What and When to Communicate

When it comes to predicting trends, it is important to figure out what are the different possibilities that exist between what is probable when projected in a very linear fashion to what could happen in the realm of possibility. There is a preferable state where the brand wants to get to as well. So how does a brand get to the preferable end-state?

The future is not predetermined. This fact makes all the reports that are published on any market an extrapolation of current trends at the best. Information shifts in dynamic ways and what is true today may not hold true two years from now. Any prediction of the state of affairs two years from now is at best an interpretation of the information available now.

Insights can often activate foresight. This means organizations are required to actively conduct research and data mining on their market audience. Understanding what data is to be collected now, in the near future and much later is critical – all of which have causation and correlation with the future organizations seek to build.

When a customer opens and reads an email on a new promotion from a brand, what the customer feels and thinks – how they define themselves in relation to the brand, what motivates or demotivates them, the goals that the person wants to achieve today, tomorrow and in the future – provide a personal moment of truth. When brands release marketing collateral, it also involves a moment of truth. The moment of truth intersects with the ideas of trends and typologies.

Using first-party data helps brands to identify typologies and reveal the moment of truth when those typologies intersect with trends.

Customer preferences and behavior change over time. Understanding what they are, and what makes them shift or become one or the other – and at a broader level who these people are and what kind of context they work in – is essential to identifying typology.

Personal analysis is trying to understand the worlds that people work in through the lens of political, social, environmental, legal, technological, and economical contexts. Personal and regional analysis gives a holistic understanding of the typologies and that along with the global analysis provides the broad trends under which the market is operating.

Once brands have identified typologies and trends, it is easier to judge what to communicate and when to communicate. This brings brands into a better position to influence the future state that they want to be in. Then it is a matter of figuring out how to reach out to the customers, and deciding the message and the medium.

When a brand has a solid future vision, it can define the typologies and identify the trends that apply to them and align the preferable state with the trends. Such an alignment helps delineate the action plan for the brand in terms of marketing communication.

TWO

# **Crossing the Chasm in Customer Engagement**

## It's All About Getting Customer Engagement Right

It is **proven** that it is easier to retain a customer than to acquire a new one. Brands lose customers because of the chasm between actual customer expectations and the customer experience delivered. Getting customer engagement right is key to crossing this chasm.

***Customer engagement teams need to be advocates for the customers to the management by understanding their pain points and getting what they need from the management.*** Data makes this easier.

Brands in the region are shifting their marketing budgets to retention, with some companies deploying as much as half of their budgets for it. Both online and offline businesses are coming to the conclusion that retention is about seeing the customer journey holistically.

Typically, companies have had a campaign-based marketing approach. But a question arose with all the customer data they had: what do they do after and in between campaigns? This realization makes it fundamentally important to understand the cohort of customers and their entire lifecycle. Modern organizations are imagining customers through one large, holistic user journey and not parts of it as before.

The lifecycle starts from the instant the customer encounters the company – through whatever channel. The goal of this holistic user journey understanding is to figure out exactly what a user is thinking about a company at any given moment – even if he or she is not buying anything from the company.

All marketers expect a direct correlation between marketing and sales. Ideally, the marketing technology platform used should help correlate the customer journey from the first click onwards.

For example, in the case of a car brand, it is difficult to correlate data between the brand and the sales activities of the car agency. But even in such cases, a modern marketing technology platform can help correlate sales and marketing to highlight unknown dependencies.

Intelligent marketing technology platforms can help establish correlations between the brand budget and brand performance marketing and its impact on all other areas of marketing while helping identify the right marketing mix. They can also help closely examine various marketing metrics and understand their correlation with marketing spend.

THREE

# Using Generative AI for Hyper Personalization



## Balancing Trust and Hyper Personalization

Instead of interacting with apps or websites, customers are increasingly going to interact with brands with the help of LLMs (large language models). How do brands adapt to the evolving use cases of generative AI for marketing?

Although brands have spent the last decade building various systems for personalized interactions with customers, AI is substantially different. From a product perspective, how is the primary interface going to change? Driving hyper-personalization with AI using real time data on consumer behavior is another emerging trend.

Braze's recent consumer survey shows that 80% of APAC consumers are willing to share personal data with brands. This high level of openness is driven by consumers in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Consumers in the same countries also have very high regard for personalized customer experiences.

Furthermore, the survey shows 92% of consumers in APAC find personalized experience important. Over half of SEA consumers surveyed are comfortable with AI technology creating personalized experiences.

While personalization is key, brands are increasingly coming to the realization that maintaining trust is quite necessary. Customers have the right to know how brands are using their data and where their data rests at any given moment.

Gone are the days when brands could dictate narratives to consumers on what they wanted customers to hear. It is important to strike a fine balance between earning trust and driving hyper personalization. Technology is the key to it.

Brands are required to consider the value exchange they are providing customers with. This means brands must use data to closely understand customer needs, motivations and frustrations. This helps brands cater more effectively to the needs of customers and earn their trust.

Where and how do brands start to use AI in marketing? It is often easy to start with simple use cases. For example, increasing operational efficiency with AI – brands are using AI to build prototypes with customers and improve product-customer interface.

They are using AI with contextual data and transactional data to put together a cohesive view of the customer journey. AI is also being used to drive two-way conversations with customers to encourage them to 'find' products of their choice and interests by themselves. Moreover, AI used with data modeling helps predict which customer is likely to churn and which customer is showing a propensity to making a purchase.

Marketers without coding skills are using AI to discover the best channels and best timings to send messages that help improve customer experience. For product teams and engineers, AI has made it easy to build propensity models or hyper-personalization engines with cloud services.

FOUR

# **The Future: Combining Marketing and Product**

## Maintaining an Always-On Feedback Loop

Breaking branding silos and enabling seamless collaboration is all about data. Intelligent marketing platforms help accelerate time to market by breaking down the silos. **Marketing is now required to adopt an agile approach based on iterative testing and learning, because the customers and their preferences are evolving fast.** There should thus be a constant feedback loop from the field to the decision-making center and back.

One of the perceptible shifts in marketing due to this approach is that the traditional approach to the funnel, involving creating awareness, nurturing leads and leading the customer to the purchase, has changed. Instead, marketing is integrated into the lifestyles of customers and their daily activities. To cross the chasm of customer engagement, teams first of all need a modern funnel thinking.

The funnel helps organizations see much more granularly into marketing spend with the right marketing technology. The quest is to build a mature relationship with the customers – to persuade them to repurchase from the company as they engage with the brand.

The final objective is to avoid giving discounts, and instead entertain the customers with more content or useful information. Therefore, it is essential to understand the different customer cohorts and their entire lifecycle.

Each different user cohort deserves content according to its maturity level. For companies with commoditized products, churn prediction is crucial. If the frequency of engagement with the customer goes down, it indicates that marketing efforts must be increased to engage the customer.

The customer engagement becomes a circular, always-on loop. The funnel thinking ensures that the company understands when there is a break in the customer's engagement with the company or if the customer has stopped engaging altogether, it becomes the beginning of a funnel.

Ultimately all these mean that marketing teams and product teams need to be one team and marketing needs to have strong data analytics competency. The modern model of customer engagement means the marketing teams need to have half of their team armed with data analytics skills.

**With different customer cohorts demanding different content at various stages of their life cycles, platforms that enable agile methods of trialing, testing, running and iterating ideas while using AI to scale the production of textual and visual content for each cohort will become game-changers in the immediate future.**



In practice, this means that companies that had a transactional approach to customer engagement – such as mortgage lenders – are now actively listening to their customers. They are trying to understand customers better and mapping their journeys with the brands over time.

Tight integration between product and marketing is indeed fundamental to such a lifecycle engagement approach toward customers. A lifecycle engagement loop involves mapping the journeys they go through before engaging with a company and after as well as once they churn and come back.

Customers are also no longer attracted by one-size-fits-all marketing solutions. This means brands must engage with the customers in more contextual, immediate, and meaningful ways. In fact, savvy brands are building propensity models to see what customers might require even before they decide that they need something.

## CONCLUSION

**Finding the Right Tool Is  
Key**

## Unleashing the Persuasive Power of Technology

One of the key challenges of engaging customers over a lifetime is that customer preferences can change fast and brands need to change their engagement strategies with their new choices. Technology helps identify the conversations that customers are currently having and it can be used to actively segment them into dynamic cohorts.

***Customers and technologies are changing in a dynamic and symbiotic way to influence each other's evolution. Technologies can persuade customers to interact in new ways – it can change perspectives and push the boundaries of what is possible.***

With the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between technologies and consumers, agile methodology has come to marketing to stay. Marketers are collaborating with the product teams to create solutions quickly, measure their impact and understand how to improve them iteratively.

In this regard, product teams are imbibing the data-driven approach to marketing while marketers are learning the CX-based approach from product developers. Product teams are also helping marketers test and identify marketing tools that can save valuable time and effort for both teams.



How do marketers zero in on the right tools and step up to the new customer engagement dynamics? Ultimately, the key is to have the tools that can constantly and iteratively monitor, measure and adjust customer engagement in an agile manner while always showing value to the company as a whole.

The iterative approach increases preference for marketers who can use such advanced tools and effortlessly work with data to bring a deeply intuitive yet analytics-driven customer centric approach to customer engagement. Such an approach not only bridges the chasm in customer engagement but also helps quickly understand fast changing customer behavior and preferences while helping the organization seamlessly adapt to the shifting digital landscape.



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Braze is a leading comprehensive customer engagement platform that powers interactions between consumers and brands they love. With Braze, global brands can ingest and process customer data in real time, orchestrate and optimize contextually relevant, cross-channel marketing campaigns and continuously evolve their customer engagement strategies. Braze has been recognized as one of Fortune's 2023 Best Workplaces in New York, 2023 UK Best Workplaces for Women by Great Place to Work, and Fortune's 2022 Best US Workplaces in Technology. The company is headquartered in New York with 10+ offices across North America, Europe, and APAC. Learn more at [braze.com](https://braze.com).