

tech.
marketing.
creative.

Key insights into the thoughts, challenges and priorities
of the modern brand marketer

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About Bynder

“Brands embracing digital transformation don’t wait for change, they look for change.”

Introduction

A warm welcome to Bynder and OnBrand's State of Branding Report 2019; packed with expert insights to help marketers tackle the year ahead with perspective and confidence.

With the help of independent research firm Survata, we got inside the heads of 501 marketing decision-makers to discover their biggest challenges and opportunities going into 2019, what's at the top of their to-do lists, and how they're leveraging the latest industry trends to woo—and keep—customers.

Now more than ever, marketers are at the whim of a rapidly-changing digital landscape that's revolutionizing how brands and audiences interact. Unraveling this complex web between branding, technology, and people is essential for brands to get their voices heard and stand out from competitors.

This report will snapshot the thoughts and working habits of the modern marketer, and uncover five key findings—with some deeper dives—that provide invaluable insights on both the current and future states of branding.

A snapshot summary

At a glance, our results reveal the typical challenges and opportunities that marketers are now grappling with as they contend with the rapid changes to the tech landscape and consumer behavior patterns:

- For the second year in a row, identifying the right tech to serve as an extension of a brand continues to be a top challenge for many of today's companies
- Customer experience is believed to be the most effective way to differentiate a brand from competitors and engage with consumers
- Marketers are more reliant on social media than ever before, but many are wary that frequent algorithm changes are a major threat to online brand engagement
- Companies are ramping up investment in branded visual content to help cut through the digital noise

Methodology

This survey was conducted with Survata, an independent research firm based in San Francisco. Survata anonymously surveyed 501 marketing decision-makers at organizations across the United States and the United Kingdom between November 28, 2018 and December 11, 2018.

Demographics

Decision-making role

Sole decision-maker: 45.7%

Shared decision-making responsibility: 54.3%

Company size

501-1,000: 25.5%

1,001-5,000: 34.5%

5,001-10,000: 21.4%

More than 10,000: 18.6%

Type of organization

Business-to-Business (B2B): 17.2%

Business-to-Consumer (B2C): 39.7%

B2B and B2C: 25.7%

Non-profit/Government: 16.8%

Industry

Financial Services: 12.0%

Consumer Products: 11.4%

Healthcare and Medical: 11.0%

IT and Services: 10.8%

Education: 10.2%

Industrial and Manufacturing: 7.2%

Other: 5.4%

Marketing Agencies: 5.0%

Travel and Tourism: 5.0%

Media and Publishing: 4.8%

Telecommunications: 4.0%

Software: 3.8%

Nonprofit/Government: 3.4%

Staffing and Recruiting: 2.4%

E-commerce: 1.4%

Research: 1.2%

Sports and Recreation: 1.2%

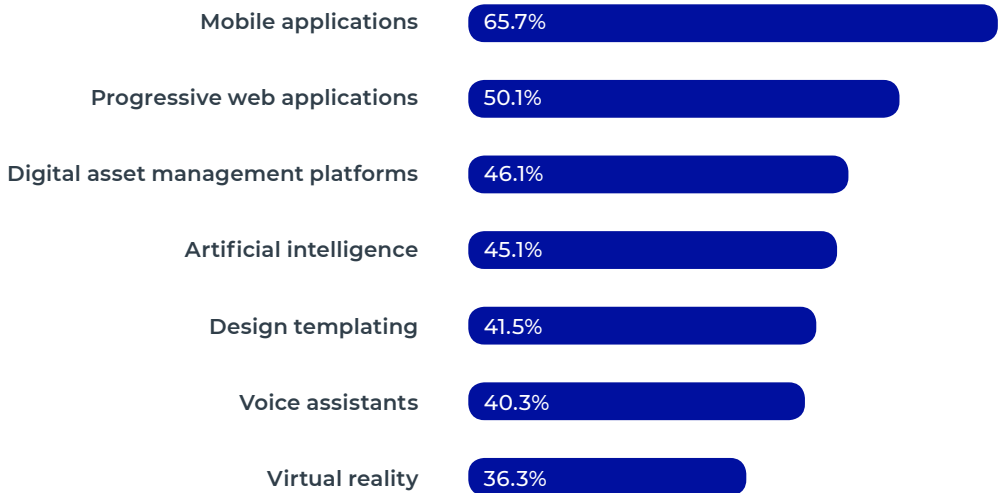
Key findings



**Majority of brands
playing it safe with
their 2019 tech
investments**

Planned tech investments for branding and marketing purposes in 2019

94% of respondents feel that it is “very” or “somewhat” important for their company to invest in new technologies in 2019, with customer experience and engagement proving to be the number one motivation. Experimental technologies such as AI, virtual reality and voice assistants are firmly on the investment radars of most, but more established outlets—such as the development of effective mobile apps, progressive web apps, and digital asset management software—still make up the largest slice of most marketing budgets.



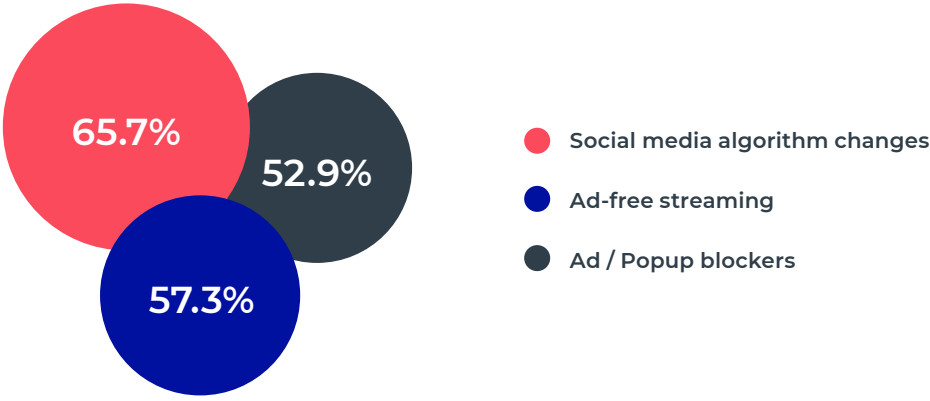
Key findings



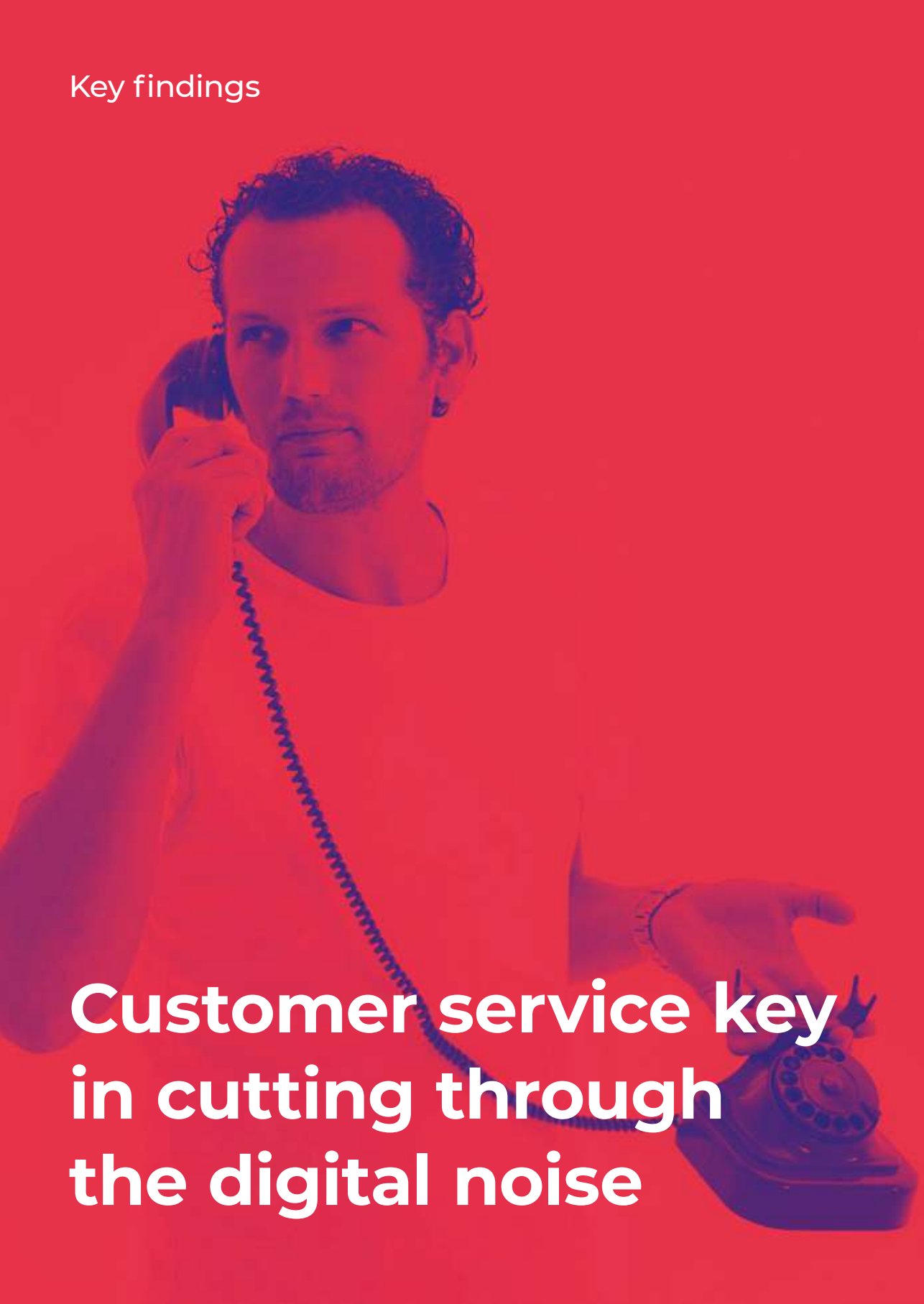
Social media more powerful than ever, but brands wary of algorithm changes

Top 3 biggest threats to digital brand engagement according to respondents

Respondents identified social media networks as the most fruitful channels for reaching target audiences and influencing buyer behavior. However, 65% feel that algorithm changes are the biggest threat to online brand engagement.



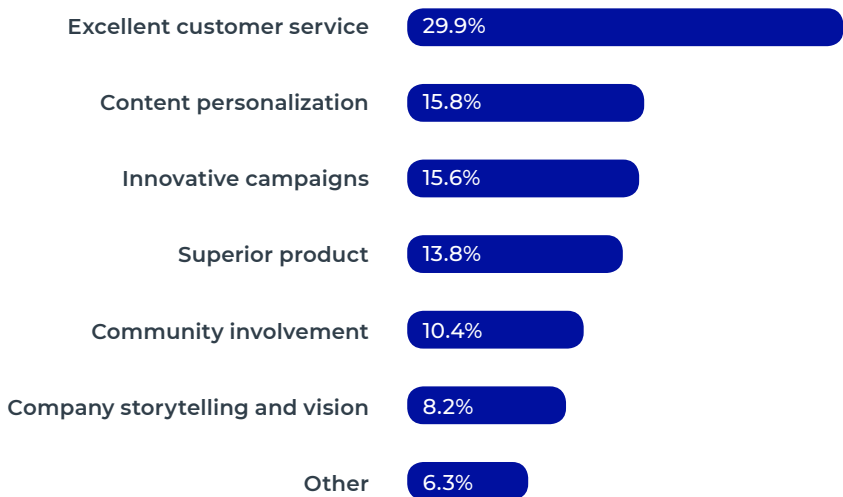
Key findings

A man with dark, curly hair and a goatee is shown from the chest up, wearing a white t-shirt. He is holding a black rotary telephone receiver to his ear with his right hand. His left hand is resting on the base of the rotary telephone. The background is a solid, vibrant red color. The overall image has a high-contrast, graphic quality.

**Customer service key
in cutting through
the digital noise**

Tactics considered most effective for reaching consumers in a crowded digital landscape

30% of marketers surveyed believed that “excellent customer service” was the most effective way to stand out from the crowd and engage with consumers—even more than the product itself or the quality of brand campaigns. However, respondents felt that finding the best online channels to reach audiences was a significant challenge.

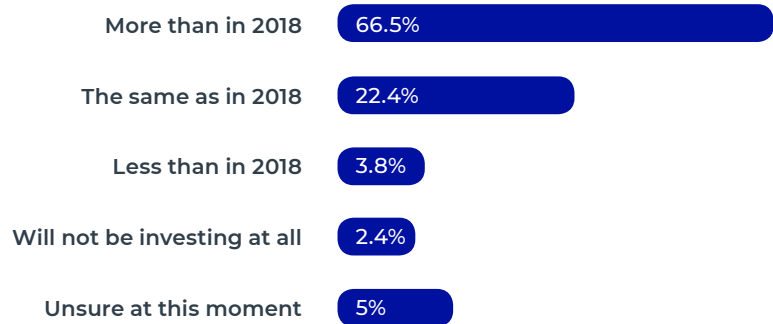


Key findings

**Heavier investment
in branded visual
content**

How much do you plan to invest in branded visual content in 2019?

66% of marketing decision-makers will be investing more in creating branded visual content than they did in 2018. Why? To boost visibility and engagement with their target audiences (42%), and to stand out from the competition (22%).



Key findings



**Heavier investment
in branded visual
content**

Biggest challenges associated with personalization

Last year's report revealed "personalization" to be the trend that brands were most excited to explore in 2018. However, half of this year's respondents are only somewhat confident or not confident at all about their ability to architect personalized experiences for existing or prospective customers. It seems many brands are still figuring out the best way to ensure personalized content targets the right audience, and whether or not their company is equipped with the right tech to support personalization efforts.



**Emerging tech
investments**



“In 2019, brands will continue to exploit the fascination of users with emerging technologies. People have a special taste for on-trend tech and the constant stream of new innovations keeps this addiction alive. This is concerning however, as emerging technologies pose new questions and challenges involving privacy, overdependence and corporate exploitation. When does emerging technology become dangerous? And where is the limit?”

Alain Sylvain, Founder and CEO Sylvain Labs

Now more than ever, technology acts as a catalyst for the marketing of tomorrow as brands aim to stay relevant and gain that competitive edge. With the stakes so high in a rapidly-evolving tech landscape, 93.8% of respondents felt that it was “very” (62.7%) or “somewhat” (31.1%) important for their company to invest in emerging technologies for 2019, with customer experience and engagement (40.5%) proving to be the number one motivation.

Despite this optimism, it seems that most companies are treading lightly when it comes to the new and novel and ensuring that more foundational marketing channels are performing optimally first and foremost.

Among those surveyed, the majority of tech investments related to more established

outlets such as the development of effective mobile applications (65.7%), progressive web applications (50.1%), and digital asset management software (46%), rather than more experimental technologies such as AI (45.1%), voice assistants (40%), and virtual reality (36%).

The growing wealth of tech solutions at the disposal of marketers can be a blessing and a curse: how do brands ensure their investment is a reliable one while making sure it aligns with their brand identity?

For the second year in a row, “identifying the right tech serve as an extension of their brand” continues to be the most frequently cited challenge when it comes to the adoption of new technologies such as chatbots, voice assistants and AR/VR.

How important will the investment of emerging technologies be for your company in 2019?

Very important

62.7%

Somewhat important

31.1%

Unsure

4%

Not important

2.2%

From a brand and marketing perspective, what is your company's number one motivation for investing in emerging technologies?

Customer engagement/experience

40.5%

Efficiency and resource saving

15.0%

Customer loyalty

13.6%

Brand awareness

13%

Brand consistency and control

11.2%

Other

6.6%

**Getting your brand
voice heard**



“At Growth Tribe, we see algorithm changes as an opportunity rather than a threat. Most social algorithm changes are made to improve the user experience and increase the value that users get from the platform. Therefore, algorithm changes tend to work in favour of companies that have a healthy content strategy—one that offers value to their audience. Companies who have a culture around creating a wholesome user experience tend to be rewarded.”

David Arnoux, Co-Founder of Growth Tribe

With what seems like an ever-growing, ever-changing landscape of digital channels out there for marketers to get their voices heard nowadays, does the old adage that “content is king” still ring true in 2019? [Content Marketing Institute](#) reported 91% of marketers were committed to content marketing efforts in 2018, but how much of this content is actually engaging with consumers, and how much is clutter?

In an effort to cut through the digital noise, 66.5% of marketing professionals are planning to spend more on branded visual content compared to last year, with the main reason being increased visibility and engagement among their target audiences (41.6%).

If McKinsey’s recent [report](#) into the value of design is anything to go by, this could prove to be a sound strategy: firms that embrace design generated 32% more revenue and 56% more shareholder returns than rivals over a five-year period.

When it comes to influencing buyer behavior, social media was believed to be the most effective channel for reaching target audiences. Yet despite this optimism towards the power of social, less than half of respondents feel “very confident” that their brand is heard in the online space. This lack of confidence may be attributed to the perceived threat of social media algorithm changes—identified as the biggest obstacle to digital brand engagement (65.7%) in 2019.

How confident are you that your brand is well-heard in the online and social media space?

Very confident

44.1%

Somewhat confident

48.9%

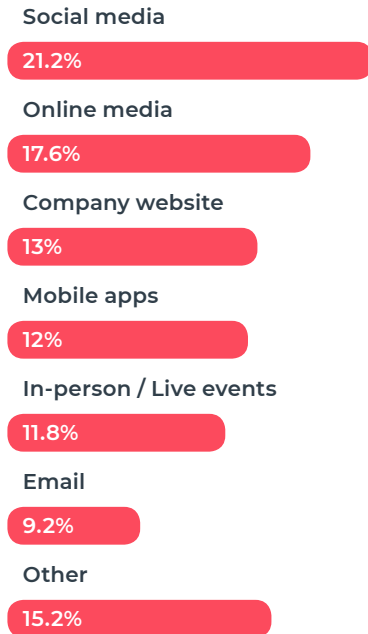
Not confident

6%

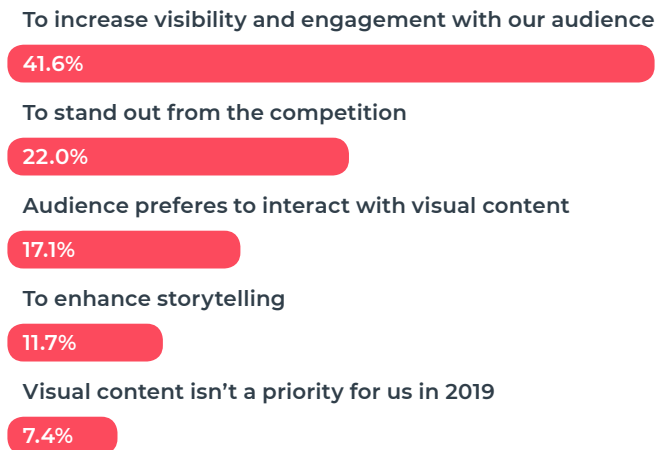
Unsure

1%

Which channel is most effective for reaching your target audience?



Top reasons for investing in branded visual content for 2019



**Connecting with
demanding, distracted
consumers**



“Today, brands have more channels than ever before to reach out and connect with audiences. This can lead to a lot more impact, but also a lot more meaningless noise. To cut through and generate meaningful engagement, choosing the right medium paired with the right message has never been more important.”

Lucy von Sturmer, Founder The Humblebrag

New technologies are emerging at a rapid rate, and with a growing number of digital channels to grapple with, marketers are under pressure to figure out what exactly is worth their time and investment—made harder when you consider that consumer **attention spans** are a precious and dwindling resource.

With that in mind, the top challenge for companies when it comes to customer engagement was finding the most relevant and targeted channels for reaching their target audience (28.3%). So what's the best way for brands to break through to consumers in today's crowded digital landscape?

Marketers reported excellent customer service to be the most effective tactic (29.9%), more so than content personalization (15.6%) or even the product itself (13.8%).

If customer experience is such a key driver

of brand differentiation nowadays, a major challenge for marketers this year will be placing CX efforts at the heart of a brand's strategy:

“Customer experience (CX) quality has been a recurring theme for years. CMOs will now tackle this perennial problem by returning to their roots and grounding CX efforts extensively with brand.” — [Forrester Predictions 2019](#).

The majority of marketers were “very confident” (47.5%) or “somewhat confident” (47.1%) in their brand's ability to create personalized experiences for their customers, with targeted marketing and advertising campaigns seen as the most effective personalization tactic to influence buyer behavior (30.3%). However, getting personal with consumers has its challenges, and “ensuring the right personalized message reached the right audience” was reported to be the most common challenge associated with personalization tactics (25.7%).

Most frequently reported challenges when trying to reach current and prospective customers

Finding the most relevant and targeted channels

28.3%

Securing loyalty

26.5%

Standing out from competitor content / messaging

22.6%

Ensuring content / messaging is relevant to each audience

22.2%

Other

0.4%

Which form of brand personalization is most effective to influence buyer behavior?

Targeted marketing and advertising campaigns

30.3%

Ease and convenience

20.0%

Customized digital experiences

17.4%

Location based marketing

13.2%

Product customization

13%

Packaging customization

6.2%

How confident are you in your brand's ability to create personalized experiences / products that consumers enjoy?

Very confident

47.5%

Somewhat confident

47.1%

Not confident

3.6%

Unsure

1.8%

Tactics considered most impactful for influencing buyer behavior in 2019

Social media marketing

30.9%

Online advertising

20.7%

Content marketing

17.8%

Influencer marketing

12.2%

Offline activities and events

12.2%

Print and offline advertising

6.2%

Bynder empowers some of the world's most iconic brands with a digital asset management (DAM) service that simplifies the management of digital content and brand operations via one central hub.

OnBrand represents Bynder's community of digitally-savvy professionals exploring "what's next?" in branding, marketing, and technology.

Known for hosting Europe's leading branding conference, an annual event in Amsterdam, OnBrand aims to drive conversations on the future of marketing via insightful keynotes, fiery panel discussions, and global networking opportunities.

About Bynder & OnBrand

