



## How Big Data Powers PR, Marketing & Sales

Using big data analysis to influence consumer opinion, inform marketing strategy, and nudge customers towards making a purchase offers a level of insight and accountability previously undreamed of, but it comes at a price.

Consumer expectations rise continuously and brands that are not using the available data effectively to manage and enhance the customer experience may find themselves losing ground among customers who are increasingly accustomed to a seamless, omnichannel world.

The intelligent use of big data is no longer a competitive advantage, it is table stakes in today's economy.



# Recognizing the big data opportunity

Knowing what people think about your brand, products and service is the holy grail of successful business. By understanding your strengths, you can amplify them; by identifying your weaknesses, address them. If you know your competitor's strengths and weaknesses, you can counter and exploit them.

Yet historically, this kind of intelligence has been notoriously difficult to glean.

Companies previously had few effective tools from which to gain genuine insight into customer experience and brand awareness. As a result, the impact of marketing and

PR campaigns has not been visible until the sales figures are in; too late to change messaging, identify new audiences and trends, or try new channels.

The advent of big data and its interaction with artificial intelligence has fundamentally disrupted the commercial landscape. For the first time, it is possible to accurately quantify and analyze responses to marketing, PR and sales campaigns in real time. By putting numbers behind the psychology, businesses can gain in-depth understanding of what customers want and how to give it to them.

The successful application of big data relies on getting access to the right data from the right sources and analyzing it quickly and effectively to inform the future path of brands, products and services.

In this way, the art and science of marketing align and pull together; insight from big data gives direction to creativity.

## Filling in the knowledge gaps

By analyzing billions of online interactions, behaviors and opinions—along with news and industry data—businesses have a route to establishing return on investment (ROI) and greater accountability. PR and marketing campaigns can be linked securely to sales outcomes. It is the missing piece of the puzzle between marketing and sales that validates campaigns and gives direction for investment.

Businesses that saw the opportunity early gained a considerable competitive advantage from crunching data and feeding insight back into strategy. Nevertheless, some elements of an industry that prides itself on creativity and instinct were slow to recognize the opportunity provided by the application of big data.

That reticence is past, as Dominic Williamson, marketing science lead

for Facebook succinctly put it: “A sense of rationalism has swept the industry. Old habits die hard but the inherent value of correctly using data is moving from a competitive advantage to a pre-requisite for marketers.”<sup>1</sup>

## Leveling the playing field

Technology evolution has also had an impact on the proliferation of big data use. Access to market intelligence on the present scale used to be the preserve of multinational corporations with big budgets and vast computer processing power. Now the commoditization of computing power and storage enabled by the cloud means it is accessible to businesses of all sizes.

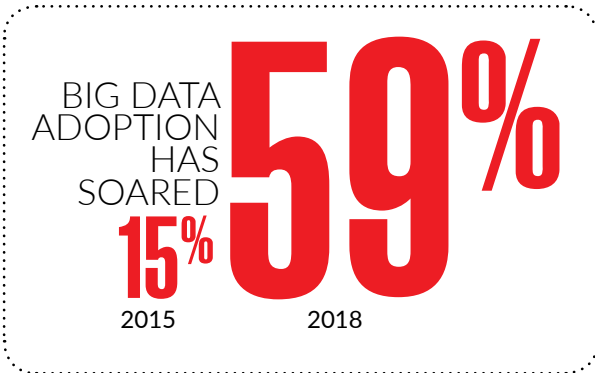
On one hand, big data enables large companies to act like cottage industries, offering highly targeted, personalized products and services. On the other, it empowers smaller business to think big, reducing the risks of exploring new products and markets by creating more certainty over emerging trends and customer demand.



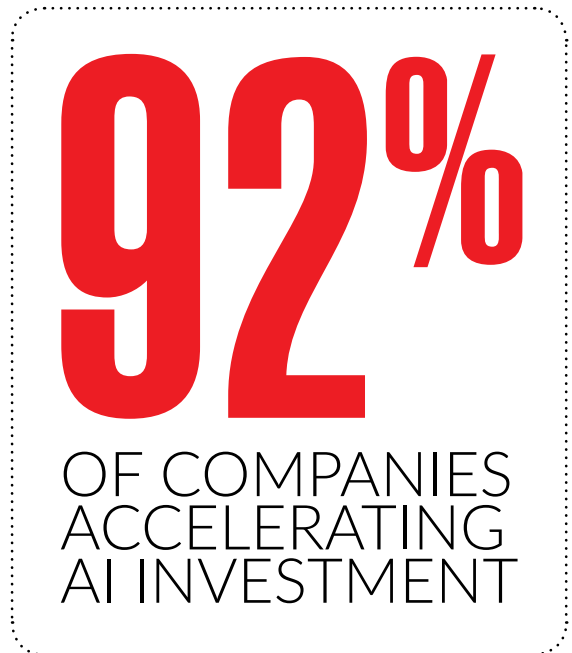
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Unsurprisingly, big data adoption in enterprises has soared, rising from 15 percent in 2015 to 59 percent in 2018 according to a study by Dresdner Advisory Services.<sup>2</sup> The report found that 58 percent of marketing and sales functions surveyed were already using big data, while a further 26 percent believed that they would do so in future.



Accompanying this explosion in data use is growing investment in the artificial intelligence necessary to analyze such high volumes of information in real-time. AI and big data are symbiotic: the more data you have, the more intelligent your AI and the richer, more accurate insights you can access. Ninety two percent of executives recently surveyed by NewVantage Partners stated that they were accelerating their investment in Big Data and AI.<sup>4</sup>



IDC forecasts worldwide revenue from Big Data and Business Analytics will reach \$260 billion in 2022, achieving an annual growth rate of almost 12 percent.<sup>3</sup>

## Navigating the data deluge

The sheer amount of structured and unstructured data available threatens to obscure valuable insights.

Data grows exponentially and there will be overload if businesses do not discriminate. Sources must be authoritative, robust and relevant to business objectives. Finding the optimal combination of internal and externally generated data and getting them working together is a central challenge for data analysts.

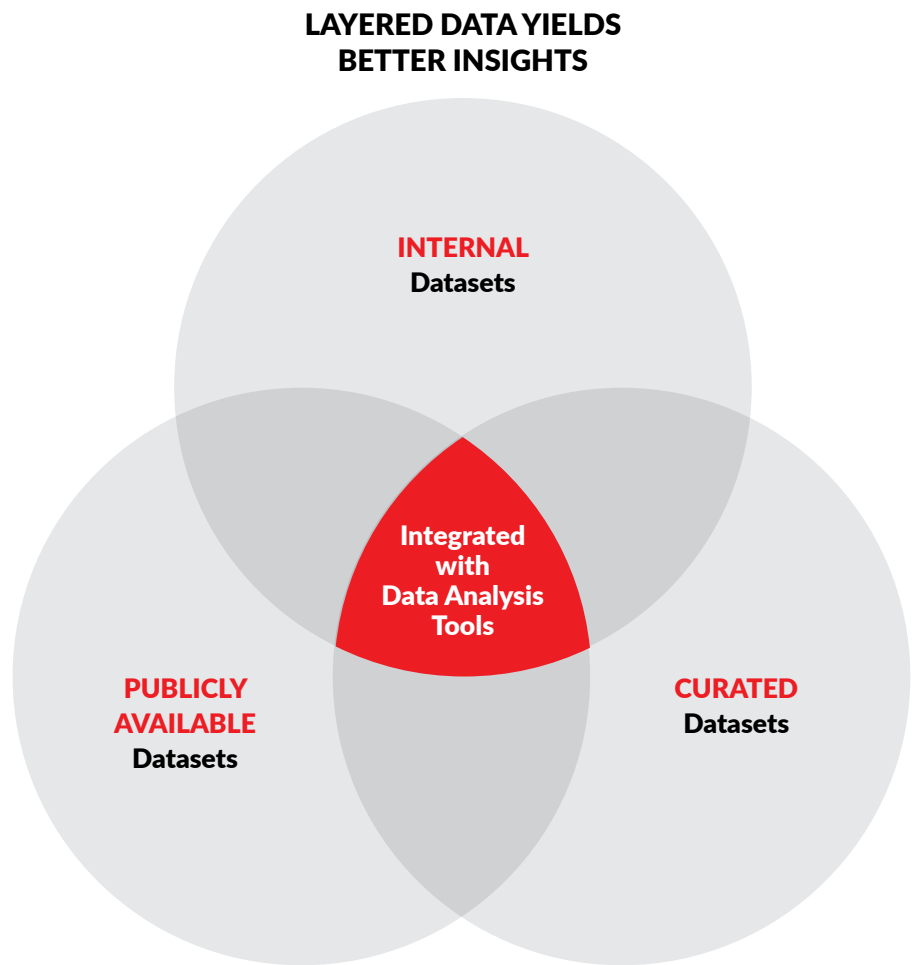
Businesses generate large amounts of data internally from sales, PR and marketing activities. Clicks, downloads, registrations—even recordings of sales conversations by tools such as gong.io—can all be mined for business performance intelligence. But proprietary datasets tell only part of the story.

External datasets offer the essential context in which company activities take place that internal data sources cannot provide. Thanks to the drive for open data there are increasing numbers of publicly available datasets which can be used to analyze trends across everything from population growth and demographic change to financial markets and the weather.

The most high-profile public dataset is arguably Twitter, which puts trending topics in front of users as part of its core proposition and offers a mine of user sentiment at a very granular level. But even this rich vein of information requires deeper context if businesses are to get a valid picture.

Businesses seeking the ultimate in-depth insight into market trends, customer experience and competitor

activity need to combine this raw internal and public data with analysis of curated datasets from trusted data-as-a-service partners. These encompass news sources, industry publications and influencer activity, overlaid with legal insights such as intellectual property developments and company data.



**These layers of data, integrated via APIs into sophisticated analysis tools, can help to deliver the insights that enable companies to tailor Marketing, PR and Sales strategies for the optimum ROI.**

# Data-driven marketing

## GAINING BRAND INSIGHT

Twenty-first century consumers expect more from marketing.

The maturing of the internet has opened up new methods and channels for marketing. Consumers have turned away from the concept of mass marketing in favour of a more personal approach that, given the amount of data they share about themselves, they feel is more than justified.

This is partly due to the proliferation of devices such as smartphones and voice assistants, which bring marketing messages directly into our hands and homes, creating an intimacy that jars with generic mass-market messages.

This means that today building a brand is about much more than having a great product and strong, single message. To succeed, a brand needs to provoke an emotional and personal response in its target audience. Whether that is affection, respect, reliance or amusement, a brand must be relatable in order to earn its place in the consumer psyche.



Big data analysis allows companies to identify the values and behaviors that appeal to their customers and devise marketing campaigns that resonate.

And brands can quickly see if they are succeeding thanks to real-time monitoring of brand perceptions through semantic analysis of articles, blog posts and comments that indicate audience response.

## UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMERS

Understanding the customer journey and experience of using products is an equally important aspect that helps businesses improve their marketing strategy, products and service.

Big data captures a myriad of touchpoints that customers pass through on their journey from the top of the funnel to making a purchase and beyond. It allows marketers to understand the factors that are affecting consumers, helping build multiple customer personas to which they can pivot their promotional messages to appeal to those most likely to buy.

By building tactical campaigns to influence customers at key points, through targeted advertising, PR campaigns and content distribution, marketing professionals can tailor and personalize the customer journey to the degree that customers now



In 2019, brands need to build a persona that people can relate to and ultimately love. Achieving this means gathering the right insights about what customers value and realizing that there's no excuse for running tone-deaf campaigns.<sup>5</sup>

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expect. The speed and flexibility data insight provides also allows marketers to live-test marketing messages and sales channels, establish which are most effective and modify campaigns to achieve optimum results.

And once the purchase has been made, customer service teams benefit from the wealth of data on product performance to identify and proactively manage any issues.

### **TRACKING COMPETITORS**

As well as monitoring the experiences and opinions of their own customers, big data offers critical insight into competitor strengths, weaknesses and strategies. This is a potentially huge advantage in a quickly evolving marketplace.

Is a competitor about to diversify its products? Knowledge of its patent applications and IP registrations provides early warning of its intentions. By studying industry information, news stories and analyst opinion, marketers can identify competitor threats and disruptive forces, formulating strategies to respond.

### **PREDICTING WHAT'S NEXT**

Emerging trends can be identified through a mixture of predictive analytics applied to internal datasets and detailed monitoring of public sentiment around the company's existing products and those of the competition.



## Data-driven PR

### MANAGING THE CONVERSATION

Public Relations is no longer a broadcast activity, it is a conversation. Managing that conversation to benefit and protect the organization is more challenging than ever.

Social media gives consumers considerably more power to name and shame, with multiple platforms at their disposal to reach out directly to journalists and influencers and make their voices heard. And it's not just product failures or poor customer service that are potential risks for the business. Company values, ethics and corporate social responsibility performance are all under the spotlight of public and media attention. Brand inauthenticity or errors of judgement are quickly and devastatingly

amplified—Pepsi's Kendall Jenner ad is just one recent case where negative sentiment quickly forced the company to pull the ad and apologize that they "missed the mark."

Understanding public perceptions of the brand, and the media through which they are expressed, is the base on which PR professionals can begin to build a management strategy. Semantic analysis of sentiments expressed through global and regional news articles, blog posts and comments gives qualitative insights into how the company is being talked about and which actions provoke positive responses. Once this intelligence is uncovered, businesses can act to address brand perception gaps and adjust company messaging to amplify positive stories.

Quantitative analysis of news stories and blog posts also helps PR professionals identify publishers and influencers that have the greatest reach when it comes to sharing news stories—both good and bad—and develop PR engagement plans to encourage brand champions and change the opinions of detractors.

Never is this more important than in a crisis situation. Today's 24/7/365 news cycle, citizen publishing and the reach of social media platforms mean a crisis can develop in minutes and have far-reaching impacts that endure for years. Loss of public trust, erosion of shareholder value and the financial effect of lost sales are all attendant on the crisis-hit company.



The amount of data generated by a crisis can be overwhelming, as stories are published and re-published across multiple digital platforms, but with the right tools careful analysis can help to develop a fast and informed response. By identifying the key media outlets and influencers through which the story is propagating, the crisis PR team knows where to focus its activities. The priorities are to clarify the situation, correct misinformation and inform the largest audiences of the company's response in the most efficient, effective way.

### **ACHIEVING ACCOUNTABILITY**

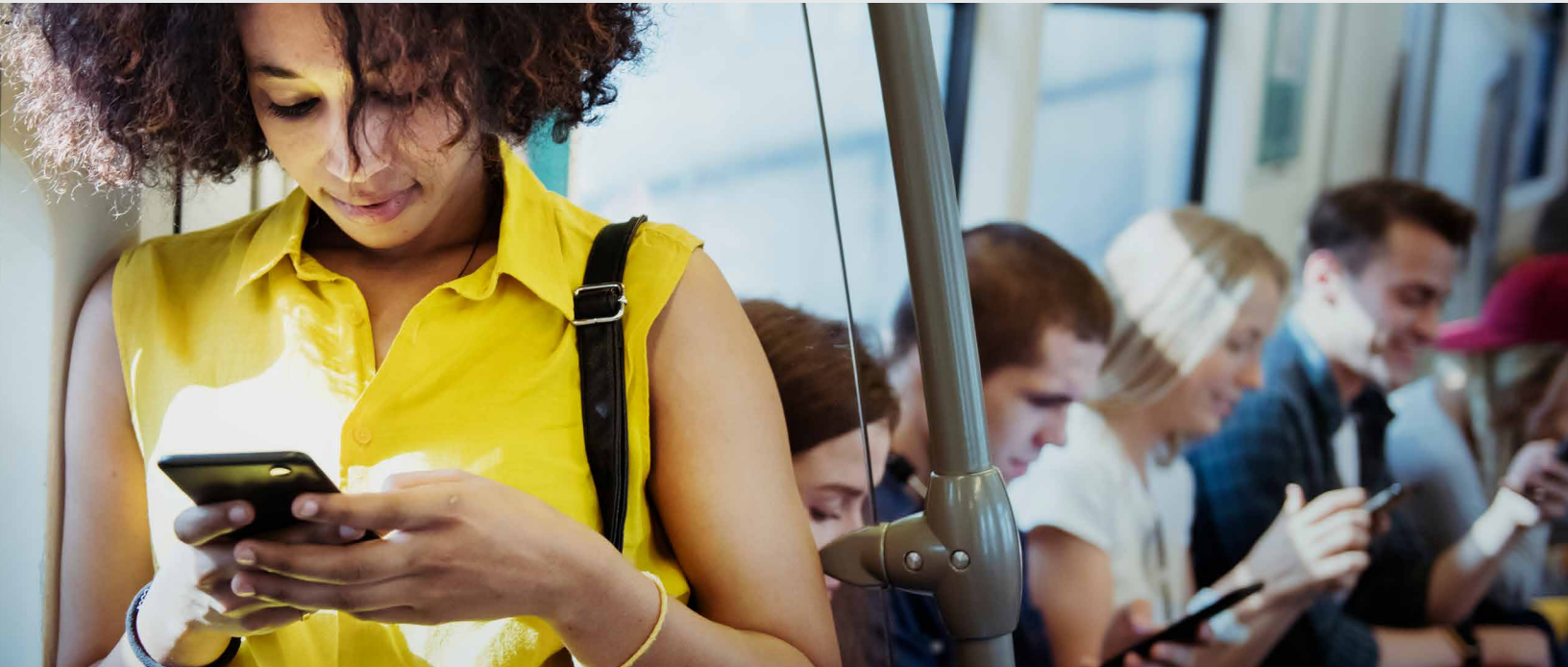
Proving the return on investment of PR Campaigns has historically been difficult. For a long time, Advertising Value Equivalents (AVE) were reluctantly used, but these are blunt instruments that offer little information on audience engagement and subsequent actions.

Now there is a wealth of metrics around article clicks, downloads, likes and shares which can be traced all the way through the buying cycle through to website visits and product purchases. This enables PR

professionals to justify investment and plan more effectively to maximize it.

This ability to validate PR activity represents a new era for accountability and efficiency in the industry and is driving a revolution in how businesses shape and control their PR conversations.

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## Data-driven sales

At the bottom of the funnel the smallest changes have a big impact on sales.

### PRICE OPTIMIZATION

Customers are no strangers to generic price optimization—it has been a feature of the holiday market in particular for decades—but big data enables predictive pricing down to the level of individual customers. Algorithms analyze supply, demand, market conditions and customer purchase history, alongside a multitude of other factors, to present the customer with the optimum price and the company with the best chance of making a sale.

### CUSTOMER-BASE PROFILING

By analyzing customer data for information such as time since purchase, interactions with the company and customer service engagement, sales teams can farm their existing customer base to uncover new sales and upselling opportunities. Combining this with analysis of external sources such as

news reports and emerging trend data allows sales teams to engage with customers at the point when they're likely to be considering replacing or upgrading their purchase.

Take, for example, a garden tools company. A period of bad weather is likely to prompt customers to undertake work in their garden. They may need new tools or complementary products to the ones already purchased. By being aware of the approaching weather impact and the customer's product preferences, sales teams can capitalize on the opportunity to offer the solution needed.

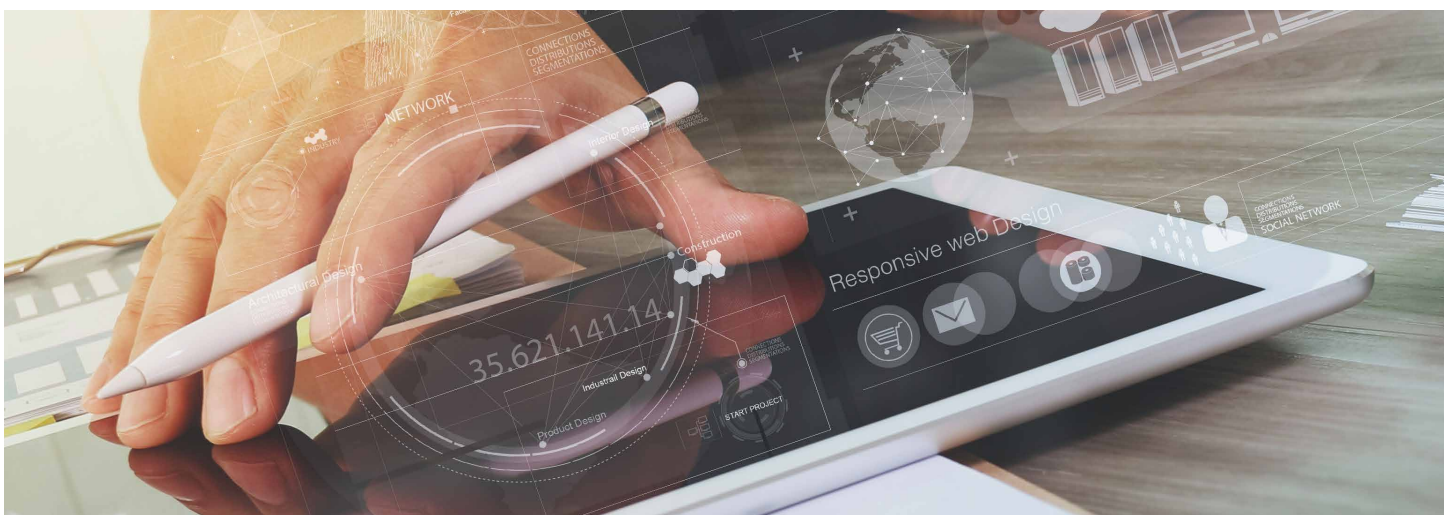
The same goes for seasonal events and combinations of events, such as a British tennis player featuring in a Wimbledon final on a sunny June day. By tracking granular sales data from a previous occurrence of the same combination of criteria and accounting for uplifts caused by external factors, sales planners can ensure that they are poised to anticipate customer demand.

### GEO-LOCATION ANALYSIS

Geo-analytics help align sales and go-to-market strategies with the regions and territories that demonstrate the most potential.

By scrutinizing which areas are responding best to PR and Marketing campaigns, through semantic analysis of curated datasets such as blogs, news and industry magazines, companies can put sales resources into the right locations to capitalize on high demand.

Geolocation also enables highly targeted messages to consumers that can help drive stock management. A supermarket that has a large quantity of stock about to go out of date can, for example, message customers in the local area to advise on a special offer. Restaurants are now geolocating special offers to fill empty tables.





Data hasn't just changed the CMO role. It has disrupted it.

## The future

Continued advances in mobile and in-home technology and the saturation of devices will add yet more valuable intelligence to the mix, particularly when it comes to geo-targeted marketing, PR and sales activities.

Data harvested from smartphones in combination with geolocation tags in retailers, emerging trend information and the customer's previous history will let marketers nudge them into action at the perfect point to drive a sale. When you know where someone is, as well as what they are likely to be doing and can access previous patterns of behavior, delivering a highly relevant and timely message or offer becomes possible, driving incremental sales and ROI.

Voice search will become mainstream, with the Natural Language Processing element of AI coming to the fore to unlock insights into consumer behavior and habits that are more powerful because they come from the natural language people use, rather than what they type into search engines.

All this raw data will need to be viewed in a global context, so curated datasets will become increasingly valuable to organizations that need to understand the political, legal, sociological, economic and cultural environment in which they operate.

The impact of big data and AI on the way businesses market and sell their wares can be seismic. Organizations that do it well stand to gain considerable competitive advantages.

By knowing customers better, accurately understanding how brands are perceived and tailoring sales activities to the customers and markets with the best chance of success, much of the guesswork that previously accompanied sales, marketing and PR efforts has been eliminated.

That is not to say challenges do not remain. The vast quantity of available data is itself a problem for companies trying to gain usable insights. Selecting the right combination of robust sources to analyze and having the right tools to conduct that analysis will be key to success.

The role of Chief Marketing Officer will evolve to encompass advanced data skills, as Tom Benton, CEO of the Data and Marketing Association, talking to Forbes, explains: "Data hasn't just changed the CMO role. It has disrupted it. CMOs were traditionally communications and campaign-focused. Now, there are many more aspects to it. Today's data-inspired CMOs must not only be marketing communications experts, they must also be user experience experts. They have to understand ecommerce. They have to understand the totality of the holistic customer journey."<sup>6</sup>

Consumer expectations will continue to rise and companies that do not meet them will be at a commercial disadvantage. Big data is an ally in the battle for customers' hearts, minds and ultimately, pockets.

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<sup>1</sup> Herve, Anne-Claire. "How Analytics Has Changed Marketing," Innovation Enterprise. April 7, 2018. Accessed at: <https://channels.theinnovationenterprise.com/articles/how-analytics-has-changed-marketing>

<sup>2</sup> Columbus, Louis. "Big Data Analytics Adoption Soared in the Enterprise in 2018," Forbes. December 23, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/louiscolombus/2018/12/23/big-data-analytics-adoption-soared-in-the-enterprise-in-2018/#64989ffb332f>

<sup>3</sup> "Revenues for Big Data and Business Analytics Solutions Forecast to Reach \$260 Billion in 2022, Led by the Banking and Manufacturing Industries, According to IDC," IDC Media Center. August 15, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS44215218>

<sup>4</sup> "How Big Data and AI are Accelerating Business Transformation," New Vantage Partners Big Data and AI Executive Survey 2019. January 7, 2019. Accessed at: <http://newvantage.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Big-Data-Executive-Survey-2019-Findings-Updated-010219-1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Chisholm, Yoli. "Top Three Marketing Trends in 2019," Martech Advisor. December 30, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.martechadvisor.com/articles/marketing-analytics/top-three-marketing-trends-in-2019/>

<sup>6</sup> Columbus, Louis. "Big Data Analytics Adoption Soared in the Enterprise in 2018," Forbes. December 23, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/louiscolombus/2018/12/23/big-data-analytics-adoption-soared-in-the-enterprise-in-2018/#64989ffb332f>