

Interim Findings: Vision Interviews

“We are entering a time now where change is almost inadequate as a word. We’re entering what I call chronic turbulence.”

Interviewee 3
CMO & Marketing Strategist



Strategy: Redefined

The core strategy required for future success revolves around fundamentally redefining what winning means, justifying marketing's economic existence, and managing value generation in a fragmented world.

1. Winning and Value Management

- Growth must be within planetary limits – respecting biodiversity, climate, and sustainability
- Build a brand that shapes culture *and* drives sales
- Shift from transactional to relational marketing that builds meaning and trust
- CMOs must balance Brand Value, Customer Value, and Enterprise Value to achieve sustainable growth.

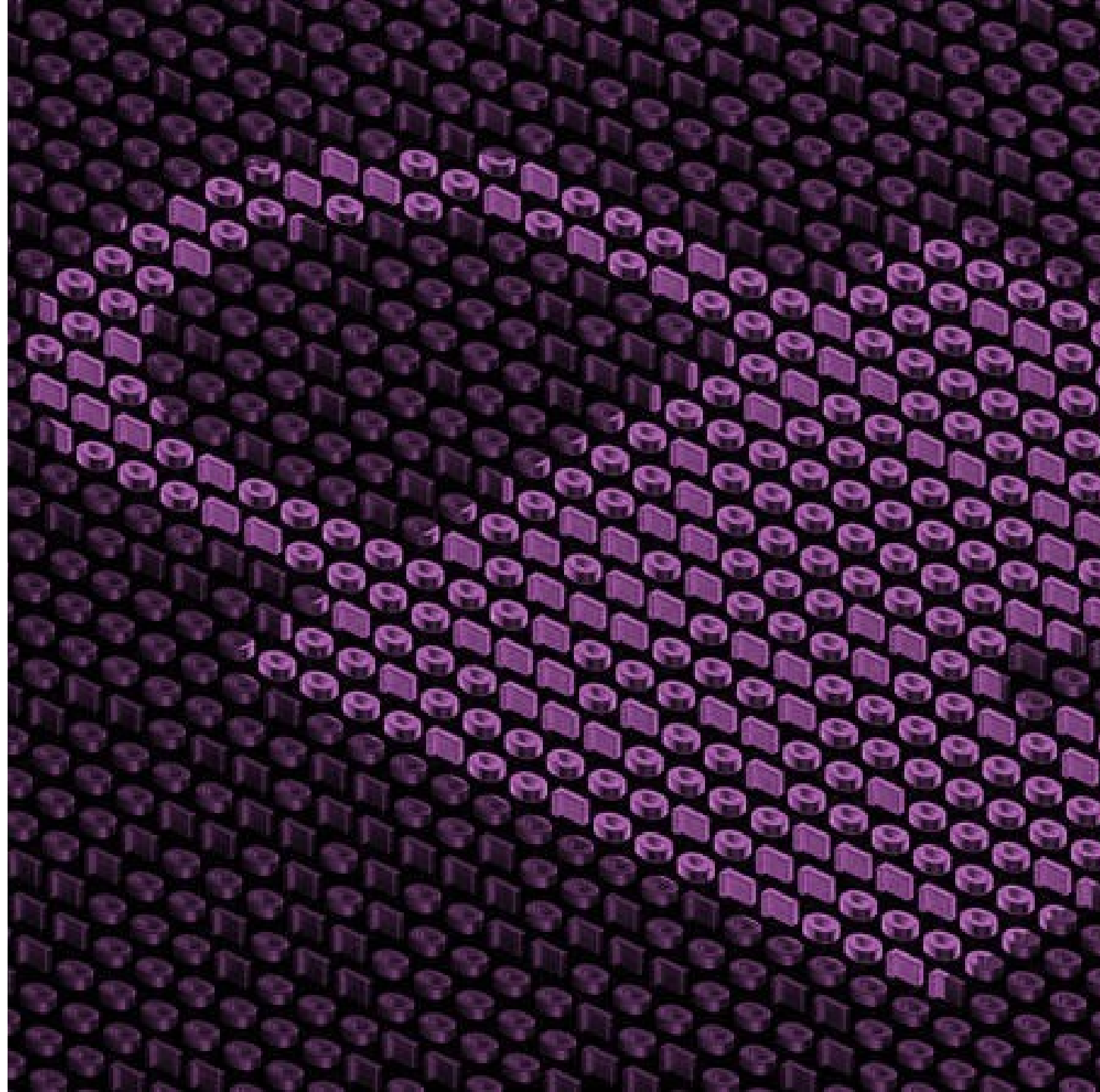
2. The Cost Crisis and Efficiency Imperative

- Traditional brand value is collapsing – quality is now assumed
- Private labels gain share by offering better value
- Marketing must become radically more efficient – target: 4 to 6% of revenue (vs. traditional 10 to 20%) to justify its existence – “Marketing as it is today is too expensive to survive.”

3. External Focus and Creative Strategy

- Simplify internal complexity – focus relentlessly on the marketplace
- **Corporate Purpose** – align strategy with delivering profitable solutions for people *and* planet, not diluted CSR
- Marketers lag on responsible growth within planetary and social limits
- **Data vs. Creativity** – data informs, but breakthrough success comes from bold, unpredictable creativity (e.g., Duolingo’s “unhinged” social media content).

- “Marketing as it is today is **too expensive to survive.**”
- “If you look at the growth figures from some of the biggest companies 20 years ago, you know, they’re pretty disappointing. And I think [that’s because] they’ve disinvested in a medium that we know can deliver long-term growth for them and [instead] spent a lot of money chasing short-term impact.”
- “I’m seeing brands evolve; you are winning if you build a brand that is **recognizable as a part of culture and drive sales**... To win in 2030, you need to release the idea of a cohesive brand voice... The worst thing you can do on social is be ignored.”
- “There is **no difference between short-term and long-term value creation**. If short-term value creation be at the expense of long-term value creation, you would still go nowhere.”
- “We have already, as marketers, created serious problems for ourselves by relying very, very heavily on metrics and on dashboards and evidence to prove our point. But the problem isn't that we have the evidence. **The problem is no one cares about the questions we're asking in the first place.**”





Technology: Integrated

The consensus is that organizations must evolve into “agentic enterprises” by embedding AI directly into workflows and organizational structure from the start. Isolated experiments fail to deliver productivity and scale.

1. The Agentic Enterprise

- Organisations must embed AI *end-to-end* – isolated pilots don’t scale
- **Process Automation** - AI integration is seen across the enterprise: sales uses AI for pricing models, outlet identification, and automatic replenishment; procurement uses negotiating software; and marketing leverages AI for instant learning cycles (millions per year compared to 3-4 annual Marketing Mix Modelling cycles)
- **Technology Shift** - A critical structural distinction is made between Generative AI (produces content) and **Agentic AI** (produces action, makes decisions, interprets context). Agentic AI is considered mission critical and presents significant strategic opportunities for creating powerful, meaningful services for customers.

2. Global vs. (Hyper-)Local: Community Management

- Traditional globalization/localization paradox (“Glocal”) is considered outdated and surpassed by technology
- The new operational structure is based on community and tribe management. Global teams focus on brand positioning and core assets, while execution—including working with influencers and community managers—is highly local. This fluid, localized execution makes the role of traditional regional teams difficult to justify.

3. External Structural Constraints

- A crucial external constraint, particularly affecting European businesses, is the paradox between technological innovation and rules and regulations. Europe is described as “way more restricted” in legal frameworks and financial markets (venture capital depth) compared to the US and China, creating a major disadvantage in sectors benefiting from global economies of scale (e.g., digital platforms).

- “The pace of change has moved from months/weeks to **days and seconds**.”
- “The most successful brands are investing in the value creation opportunities represented by **Agentic AI**.”
- “You need to **build an agentic enterprise** from the start... Everybody has done a lot of experiments [on AI], but it's going nowhere when you don't build it into workflows and [integrate] AI into your organizational structure and workflow processes... Marketing workflows [in 2030] will be largely computer-driven, so leaders need to define: **Where does the human come in a largely agentic workflow?**”
- “**Global-local is not a paradox anymore because marketing has become community and tribe management** and most of these tribes, according to TikTok and YouTube, 95% of them are local. But the question is: How do you build your connection with these different communities when you have a performance marketing business with individual personas?”
- “Nowadays, when we develop new innovations, we're looking simultaneously at how we monetize them across our brands and in private label.”





Leadership: Evolved

The emerging demands of chronic market turbulence and technological change require a new set of capabilities for marketing teams and specific leadership traits for CMOs.

1. Evolving CMO Leadership Traits

- The CMO role must be reclaimed as a genuine leadership role within the C-suite. Essential leadership traits for 2030 include:
 - The Three Cs (for driving change): **C**ourageous, **C**onfident, and relentlessly **C**reative
 - Visionary and Adaptable – CMOs of the future must lead with a clear vision, but one that is adaptable to champion how the brand shows up and resonates with many different communities simultaneously
 - CMOs must be numerate and understand their role inside the corporate P&L.

2. Talent, Data and Execution

- Success depends on securing the best management teams and entrepreneurs capable of translating strategy into rapid execution and reacting swiftly to accelerated industry cycles
- New capabilities for the marketing function include:
 - To reimagine processes and workflows, moving beyond traditional siloed thinking
 - Leaders need to recognise the foundational role of data and scaling capability
 - Marketers need the mental agility to translate the brand to diverse “community languages,” understanding the inside jokes and dialects of micro-communities.

3. Leveraging Humanity and Ceding Control

- The AI focus brings the unique human capabilities to the forefront. When implemented well, AI should release human staff from mundane administrative tasks to focus on higher-value activities, such as creativity, innovation, connection and specialized care, thus “unlocking what makes us truly human.”

- “A lot of CMOs now need to act as like **educators or cultural translators to their senior stakeholders.**”
- “We don't need an AI strategy. **We need a customer strategy for the AI era.** And I think reframing that is really important [because it] wins you the time to consider, OK, well what is the customer strategy, how's the customer journey evolving, etc.”
- (On ceding control) – “You have to **let go of a little bit more control**” when utilizing influencers and user-driven storytelling to really “explode your audience.”
- “The CMO role is a **call to duty** because the world has changed so much.”
- “**I’ve never seen it this bad.** The role of marketing is to be the voice of the customer... But it’s almost like [marketers today are] zombies; they’re consumed with questions like how are we showing up in LLMs? What can we do to game LLMs? Etc.”

