

1,099 views | Jan 31, 2020, 09:32am

CMOs' Top Topics Of Interest At CES 2020: Report



Daniel Newman Contributor ⓘ

CMO Network

I explore all things Digital Transformation.



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Earlier this month, thousands gathered in Las Vegas for the annual CES convention—likely the world's most talked-about event surrounding new consumer technologies. For more than 50 years, CES has been a showcase for next-gen innovation, with more than 20,000 new products and services being introduced each year. Some of these technologies quickly fall by the wayside. Others go on to be game changers in one or more industries. How do we know which will stick and which will fall flat? Data.

Just as they did [last year](#), MavenMagnet has released a report on the top topics of interest at CES this year among CMOs. It's useful to look at these products from a CMO perspective because CMOs are the ones with boots on the ground, analyzing these products from a customer perspective: Will this help me know my customers better? Will it help my company create products that better serve them? Will it help my team communicate and work more efficiently for them? At least, these are the things they should be thinking about at CES.

What I found most fascinating in this year's MavenMagnet report is that the technologies CMOs were most interested in weren't necessarily the ones technologists like myself have been touting as most useful for the coming years—at least, not 100%. Why? Let's dig a bit deeper and see if we can nail down some reasons.

CMOs' Top Focus at CES: Marketing Innovation, Brand Fundamentals, and Consumer Centricity

OK, to be fair, I agree that all of these topics are noteworthy, although “marketing innovation” (taking top spot at 45%) is a broad category. The research broke it down into personalized experience, data-driven marketing, and intelligent products as the hottest innovations this year, and all of those technologies and services do speak to the purpose of digital transformation—helping to get to know the customer better with the hope of serving them better, as well.

One verbatim response from Hyundai CMO Angela Zepeda said it best: the experience of buying a car in today’s digital marketplace is just as important as the car itself. Crazy, right? But also true. To make that experience a positive one means knowing our customers well enough to create an experience that suits them. Right now, there’s huge opportunity for CMOs to increase personalization and elevate their brands through data and consumer-centric marketing, whether that’s through more personalized content, more personalized marketing campaigns, or being able to differentiate one’s brand to attract the customers that vibe best with it. In other words, for the most part, I can see why most CMOs focused on these issues at CES. What I don’t understand is why they ignored a few others.

CMOs’ Lesser Focus: 5G, Changing Roles, and Security

Here’s where I think CMOs missed a huge opportunity at CES. From what technologists know, **5G** is going to be a huge force in bringing reliable 24/7 connectivity—including things like the Internet of Things and blockchain—to the world. In fact, it’s already a huge focus **throughout Asia**. MavenMagnet’s research, however, showed that just 16% of CMOs found 5G tech to be a top priority.

Also surprising: We've been reading a lot about the [changing role of the CMO](#) in digital transformation. Of all people, you'd think CMOs would be interested in learning more about that. But the MavenMagnet research showed that workplace trends and changes were a priority for just 12% of CMOs.

Last, while the amount of data flowing around the ether clearly indicates a growing need for data protection and privacy (and new regulations like the [GDPR](#) and [California Consumer Privacy Act](#)), just 10% of CMOs at CES were focused on this issue. What does this disconnect tell us about CMOs in digital transformation?

For one, I think it shows that most of us will tend to focus on the new and exciting, rather than the nuts and bolts that hold digital transformation together when we have the opportunity—especially when that opportunity is in Vegas. 5G, security, and job changes—those aren't necessarily fun to think about. They're structural. They're necessary. But they aren't exciting and cool, which is what CES is all about.

Second, it shows that CMOs simply have way too much to focus on in digital transformation. Yes, marketing innovation is important, as is brand development, and customer-centricity, and personalization, and on and on and on. But there is simply no way that a single CMO could prioritize all of these things, along with the almost greater necessities of security and workplace development. When it comes to a singular job—it's just too much.

I do want to stress that the MavenMagnet represents just a mini glimpse into the modern CMO's brain—what they're thinking about most in today's digital marketing environment. And in their defense, data privacy and 5G aren't exactly rock-your-socks

topics gadget hungry consumers want to see at CES. However, to serve customers in today's digital environment, they need to be top of mind—either for CMOs, or another member of the C-suite team.

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Daniel Newman

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