

WELCOME

Marketing campaigns are won and lost on the accessibility and quality of companies' data about their customers – and how smartly they use it. Across every industry, this makes customers' data a hugely valuable asset and means of gaining competitive advantage. No sector holds more data about their customers than telcos.

The crucial sweet spot is where relevance and privacy intersect. Intent HQ, an AI Customer Analytics platform, enables telcos to leverage their customer data by targeting that sweet spot. Without ever losing focus on compliance with privacy and other regulations, the platform can deliver highly personalized, relevant marketing campaigns to new and existing customers. This could generate millions in new revenues and help their recovery after the pandemic, but do telcos appreciate they are sitting on a gold mine?

In the spring of 2022, we decided to find out by conducting two surveys. Our consumer survey explored how people feel about their data being used to make marketing, offers and services more relevant and personal to them, and if operators are meeting their expectations.

Our survey of operators probed their attitudes towards using customers' data for these purposes, how they are using it, and why they make those choices. They are far from making the most of their data assets. For example, we found that less than a third of operator respondents are using weblogs from within their network data to improve customer experience and marketing to them, although this fabulously rich source of insights is unique to them.

We dug down further to extract some fascinating, more granular understanding of operators' attitudes and concerns, which often differed radically from those of our consumer respondents. In short, we discovered that operators are leaving millions on the table and failing to meet their customers' expectations.

We hope that our passion to better understand consumers; and network operators' attitudes and approaches through these surveys will inspire you to strive for a richer data maturity, in every sense. Most of all, we want the knowledge we uncovered to give you the confidence to make the best possible choices for your business.

Colin White, Head of Marketing Intent HO



INTRODUCTION

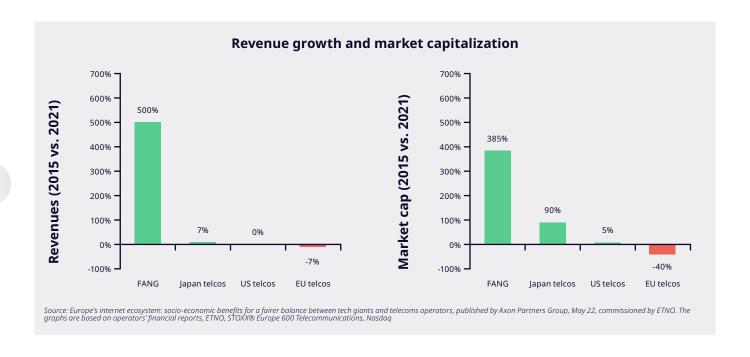
Personalization is about making products and services relevant, appealing and to the advantage of an individual. This differs from mass marketing which often leaves people feeling that the company, not them, is benefiting as they're asked to accept a newsletter or notifications.

Proper personalization means knowing a lot about customers and using that data well. The pandemic resulted in far more people using digital channels than ever before, and almost all will continue to do so.

Network operators have unparalleled data about many aspects of customers' lives and are in an enviable position in this suddenly more digital world – and they desperately need new sources of revenue.

Huge spikes in traffic during lockdowns forced them to build more capacity than they'd planned and budgeted for, while losing roaming revenues, forking out sometimes eye-watering amounts for 5G spectrum, and investing massively in infrastructure.

The graphs overleaf sum it up.



As McKinsey states,

More than ever, satisfying, retaining, and acquiring customers requires telcos to embark on a complex journey away from the business-driven campaigns that they have traditionally embraced and toward customer-centric, data-driven, highly personalized campaigns that are always on and always evolving.

Companies that excel at personalization generate 40% more revenue than average players according to McKinsey's cross-industry research, while Bain & Company notes,

Customers don't need to be persuaded about the value of personalization and other aspects of the customer experience. If anything, brands may need to catch up with customer expectations.

THE QUEST TO UNDERSTAND

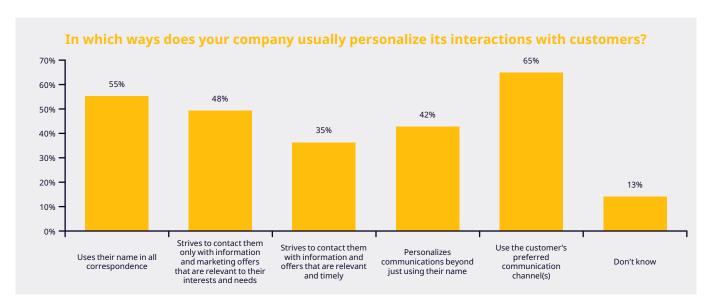
Against this backdrop, we carried out a survey to better understand operators' attitudes and approaches to using customers' data for personalization and to improve customer experience, and how their efforts are progressing. Where useful, we compare their responses with a consumer survey we undertook in March 2022. Here are the key takeaways at a glance.

- Operators' use of personalization is patchy and primitive: Almost half don't even use customers' names in all correspondence and many still rely heavily on mass marketing ploys.
- **Twice as good? The personalization perception gap:** 80% of operators feel they are doing a good, or very good job of personalizing customer experience, compared with 40% of consumers.
- Operators and consumers are aligned on the value of personalizing customer experience and relevant marketing. Operators worry about negative reactions, but consumers want choice and this applies to privacy too.
- Potential new revenues are falling into the chasm between operators' and consumers' views about consent.
- Operators don't care about the breadcrumb cookie trail disappearing they have the unique advantage of network data. So why aren't more of them using it?
- Privacy pops up again and again as the top challenge to using customers' data lurid headlines means that trust is at a low point, about how data is used, collected and stored. Education, education is the answer.
- A lack of technology and data infrastructure are holding back personalization efforts according to a fifth of respondents, while 41% struggle with data privacy, security and auditability.
- The worst of both worlds: Survey respondents expressed personal concerns that operators are leaving money on the table AND failing to meet consumers' expectations.
- Dangers of a data breach: operators most fear confidence in the brand will be damaged but nothing is ever a 100% secure, and how operators react and how well prepared they are when something goes wrong is the key to being forgiven.
- Responsibility without authority leads to people keeping their heads down, not to innovative customer solutions it seems organizational structure in many instances is throttling commercial imperatives.
- How mature are you? In many cases, operators look to be embarking on personalization efforts without the proper processes, technology and policies in place. This can only be described as a huge risk.
- Six steps to success: Our respondents identify six areas where action can bring about change and enable telcos to deliver a more personalized and relevant customer experience.

FINDINGS IN DETAIL



Operators' use of personalization is patchy and primitive



The use of customers' names in all correspondence should be table stakes, yet only 54% of respondents use this basic courtesy. This could be due to gaps in CRM data or a lack of confidence in its accuracy.

Although 64% of operators use customers' preferred channels of communications, this is likely to be a positive byproduct of privacy legislation because in their first interaction with an operator, customers are typically asked to specify which channels can be used to communicate with them. The key here should be to measure the success rates of each communication with customers and store this data as part of individuals' profiles. This enables operators to use predictive analytics to select the best audience and channel for specific interactions. For example, some customers might prefer receiving offers via text but service updates via email.

Our market experience indicates few operators hold such granular customer permissions, or update customer permissions regularly. When operators do take this approach, they can leverage machine learning and other kinds of artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze the huge data volumes they generate to spot patterns and identify customers with similar profiles.

Such insights could result, for instance, in recommending changes to a more appropriate channel (while keeping within customers' consent permissions) to improve campaigns' performance and customers' experience.

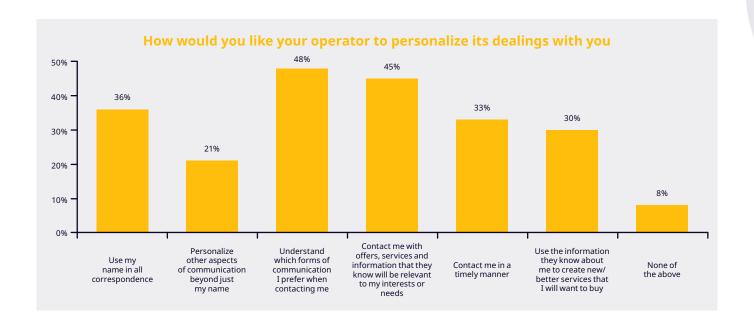
Instead, operators are still heavily reliant on mass marketing techniques – high-volume blasts to drive conversions.



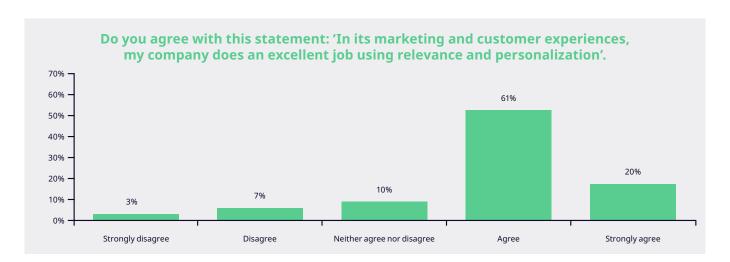
What consumers say

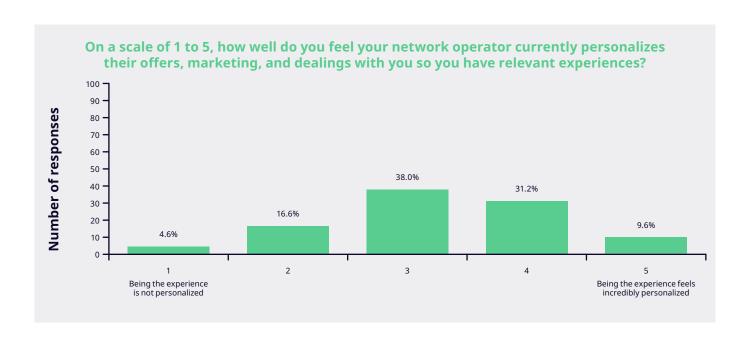
Consumers are clear about how they want operators to introduce more relevance and personalization into their relationship. By far the highest response (48%) is wanting operators to understand which forms of communication they prefer. They would

also like operators to go beyond superficial personalization and indicate that mass marketing is a turn-off with 45% only wanting to receive offers, services, and information that is relevant to them.



Twice as good? The personalization perception gap





A whopping 80% of operator respondents think they are doing a good or excellent job at delivering relevance and personalization versus under 10% who think they aren't. This perception is a huge concern because while operators might be doing a great job within the constraints of their environment, only half as many consumers think they are and ultimately, it's the consumers' opinion that counts.

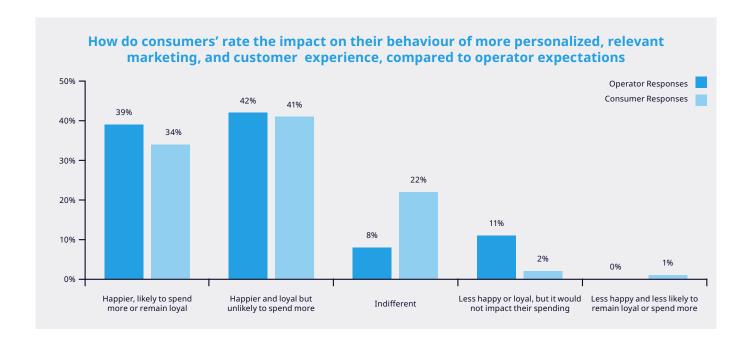
What consumers say

Only 40% of consumers felt that operators are doing a good or very good job regarding relevance and personalization. Yet our survey showed that people will reward the operators that get this right, creating a direct link to return on investment (ROI) with delivering relevance and personalization. In fact, consumers are 25 times more likely to reward operators that meet their expectations here than they are to react negatively. This includes greater loyalty (41%) and, according to feedback from consumers, 34% are also likely to spend more.

Consumers' views vary by geography, with those in the US having the highest opinion of their operators' efforts at delivering personalization and relevance, with an average score of 3.5. Across the five European countries in which we surveyed consumers, German and Spanish operators came out top, while UK operators were bottom with an average score of 2.8, and more customers who are dissatisfied by their interactions with operators.



Operators and consumers are aligned on the value of personalizing customer experience and relevant marketing, but operators worry about negative reactions



Operators' opinions of how good they are at personalization do not match consumers' views, as we have just seen. Therefore it's fascinating to see the two parties are aligned regarding the value of it. Some 41% of consumers and 42% of operators believe that personalization and relevance in marketing and customer experience will generate greater loyalty, and 38% of operators and 34% of consumers think this results in customers spending more.

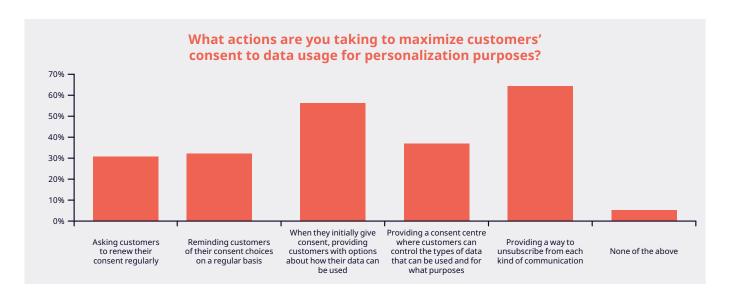
Their views diverge, however, concerning whether more relevant marketing and customer experience will make customers less happy, with 11% of operators thinking it will,

compared to 2% of consumers. Operators need to grasp that the average consumer is exposed to 5,000 brand communications daily, with less and less of it making any impact. As we see later, customers are willing to trade the use of their data in return for more value.

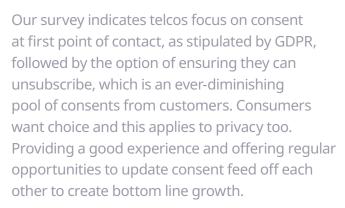
Operators are potentially throwing away millions through their failure to maximize customers' consent to use their data for personalized marketing, offers and customer experience. Consumers want choice and this applies to privacy too.



Potential new revenues are falling into the chasm between operators' and consumers' views about consent



Our survey shows operators are potentially throwing away millions in achievable new revenues, with their activity driven more by compliance with regulation like GDPR instead of maximizing value to customers. Compliance does not automatically limit options or innovation.



This is interesting as operators often see consent as a barrier to personalized marketing and customer experience rather than a gateway. This disconnect is a massive, wasted opportunity that is hindering bottom line growth.

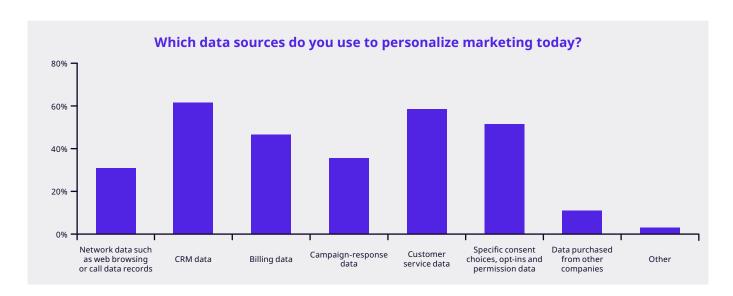


What consumers say

In our survey, 73% of consumers stated that if they were asked to give their operators consent to use the data held about them for the sole purpose of personalizing offers, marketing, and customer service, they would give full or partial consent.

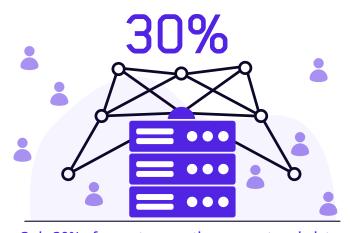


Operators don't care about the breadcrumb cookie trail disappearing – they have network data. So why aren't more of them using it?



It was remarkable to see such a spread of customer data being used for personalization purposes. It ranges from first-party customer data held in CRM systems (61%) through to customer service (58%) and billing data (47%). The value of billing data when machine learning is applied can provide even greater customer insights, for example, analyzing the customer base for similar profiles to those struggling to pay their bills, so that telcos can take remedial action before they become a churn risk, perhaps by offering them new ways to pay.

It's surprising that only 30% of operators say they use network data which includes web browsing and call records. This is a big lost opportunity, particularly given the impending death of cookie-based analytics set in motion by Google and Apple, which will shake up the whole data industry. Brands from all sectors, including some Big Tech companies, are scrambling to find alternative forms of data from which to glean understanding of customers, such as being able to identify their intent and predict future actions.



Only 30% of operators say they use network data

That breadcrumb trail has provided detailed insight across marketing campaign journeys for years, but network data gives telcos a robust alternative and even offers a privacy-compliant chance for monetization.

Telcos can use web browsing records in a privacy-compliant manner, **making them no riskier to use than other personal data sets they use.** By bringing them together, these data sets are even more valuable.

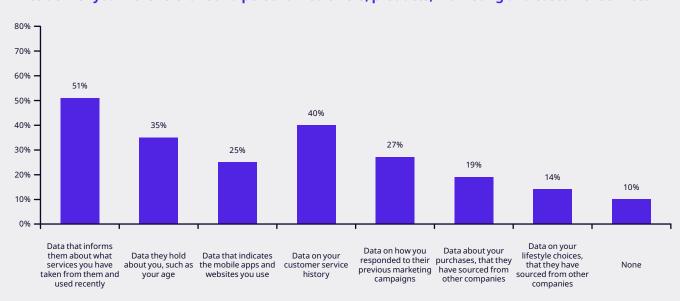


What consumers say

While customers are accepting of the value exchange from giving consent to use their data, they are not experts on the different types of data operators hold about them nor how they could use it. Almost a third, 31%, of consumers cite 'a lack of knowledge about their operators' collection and storage practices' as a reason for holding back consent.

Clearly, as data controllers, operators need to do a better job of educating customers to increase consent levels. There are grounds for optimism once they are better informed as consumers already regard data about their use of mobile apps and websites more favorably (25%) than operators acquiring third-party data about their lifestyle choices (14%). Even better, insights based on data about first-party web browsing is more accurate and will have fewer objections to its use. The big proviso is that operators' processes and technology do the best possible job of protecting consumers, while delivering greater relevance and a better experience.

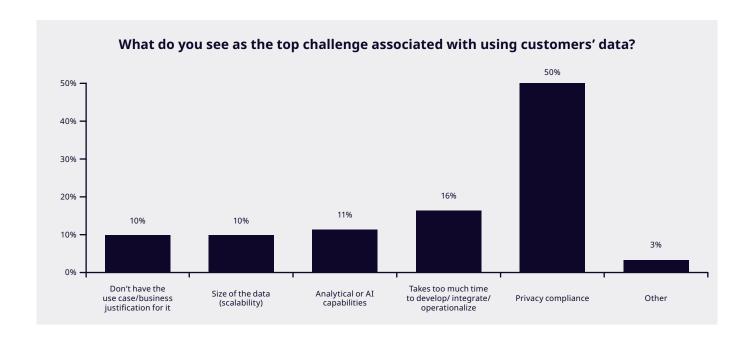






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Privacy pops up again as the top challenge to using customers' data



Yet again, issues around privacy dominated with 50% of the vote regarding challenges associated with using customers' data.

High-profile data breaches at telcos in recent times have stopped compliance, regulatory and privacy teams in their tracks. Operators' focus on battening down the hatches above all else has led to commercial inertia when it comes to finding privacy-safe ways of using customer data. Early adopters who apply appropriate processes and technology will see the additional value to customers go straight to their bottom lines.

The second most cited barrier, at 16%, is the difficulty of operationalizing customers' data. There is no question that it is difficult, takes time and often requires process changes, but there are potentially big rewards for operators keen to increase value and provide better customer experiences from the customers' data they hold.

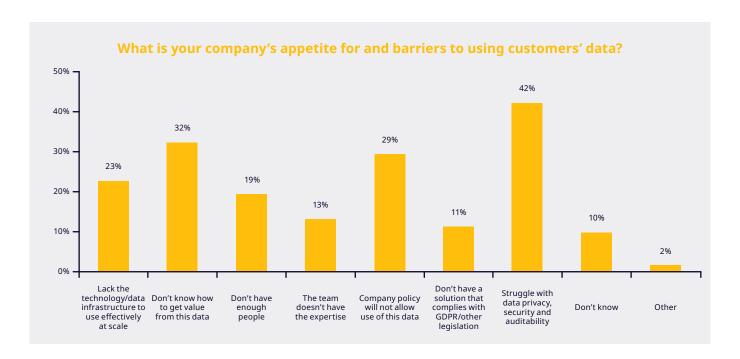
Only 10% of respondents cited a lack of commercial imperative. As our survey respondents came from multi-disciplinary backgrounds, including technical, strategic and commercial, this shows a high level of recognition within operators of the value of customers' data. The issues of privacy and operationalization are proving barriers.

What consumers say

Customers are fed up with their privacy being exposed by data controllers who were deemed fit to hold the data. Some 47% of customers expressed concerns about their operators' ability to protect their privacy and 42% took this further with specific concerns that their data might be exposed via a data breach. Lurid headlines means that trust is at a low point, about how data is used, collected and stored (31%) – nevertheless, operators enjoy a higher level of trust than many other kinds of organizations.

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A lack of technology and data infrastructure are holding back personalization efforts according to a fifth of operators, while 41% struggle with data privacy, security and auditability



Our follow-on question from the previous one regarding the biggest challenges of using customers' data was to gauge whether operators have the appetite to change and use customer data to create value for themselves and their customers alike. The highest score, at 41%, showed operators struggle with the concepts of data privacy, security and auditability, which ties into their answers to the previous question. Some 32% of responses show that some operators don't know how to extract value from this data while 22% say they lack the technology or data infrastructure to use data effectively at scale.

There are broadly four stages to extracting value from customers' data: stage 1 is the extraction of signal from the data; stage 2 the enrichment of data; stage 3 is analysis and understanding the data; and stage 4 is acting on the intelligence gleaned. With 16% of respondents in the previous question listing operationalizing data as a major challenge,

it seems that problems exist across all four stages. Knowing where their shortfalls are helps operators to identify appropriate solutions.

Of course, these issues are of no consequence if company policy forbids the use of customers' data for these purposes – and a surprisingly high 29% of respondents identified this as a barrier. Telcos are losing out on millions in revenues by not monetizing customers' data to address even basic metrics like ARPU, churn and Net Promoter Score (NPS). The decision not to use this data urgently needs to be reviewed at C-level, balanced against the business justification, all commercial interests and customers' stated wishes (see next page). Using the right technology, customers' data can be used to release value for all parties in a secure way that meets all regulatory demands.

We did have one respondent who bucked the trend, commenting, "No serious barriers at the moment," which is heartening.

What consumers say

Consumers want more value in exchange for their data. They know operators have it and they want them to use it, but draw the line at any risk to their privacy. This has deterred telcos from using their data in recent years.

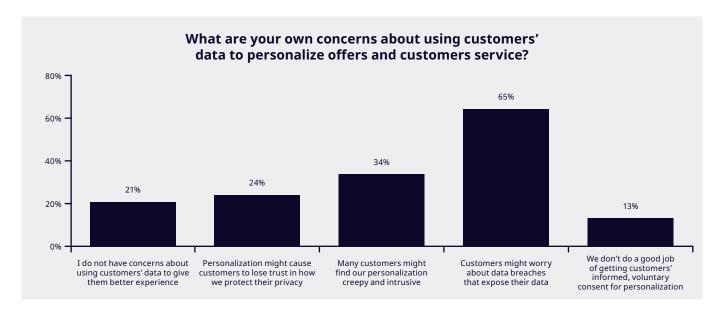
In our consumer survey, 47% of respondents say they have concerns about telcos protecting their privacy, but this concern seems to differ with age. Older age groups who became adults before breaches of personal data were made public are generally more giving in terms of allowing their data to be used. Younger adults are less so, and this came across in our question to consumers about the acceptable use of data.

Telcos must do more to educate customers about their practices and consumers' rights to transparency which will help overcome objections. Telcos should then give consumers more opportunities for informed consent. Consumers in the US were most accepting of web browsing data being used – a trend that is expected to influence European consumers as more tech firms headquartered in the US look to roll out services globally, while complying with local legislation.





The worst of both worlds: Respondents' personal concerns about using customers' data



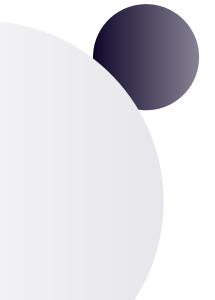
Understanding personal concerns about using customer data to improve marketing experience is critical as the attitude of employees to new approaches can make or break them. No surprise that their biggest concern, at 65%, is data breaches. More interestingly, 34% of the vote was given to concerns that using customer data to personalize offers and customer service would be considered creepy and intrusive by consumers – 10 percentage points more than concern expressed by consumers.



What consumers say

No-one is trivializing the importance of privacy for customers' data – only 9% of consumers said they had no concerns at all, but they are more worried about privacy than feeling that personalization is 'creepy' and 31% say a lack of understanding of operators' practices is part the problem. Transparency is the answer to winning customers' trust and confidence, which in turn results in better performance metrics like a higher NPS.

An over-cautious response from operators is at odds with those of consumers, meaning operators are leaving money on the table AND failing to meet consumers' expectations.





And the fall-out that operators dread most from a data breach is...



We wanted to know what would most keep operators awake at night if they were to suffer a breach of customers' data. Respondents ranked customer confidence in the brand as their highest concern, with a lot of daylight between it and the second most dreaded result of increased churn. This is not surprising, given that although churn has a more immediate effect on the bottom line, it is easier to fix except when it is combined with dented customer confidence, which can manifest for years. Some firms never recover.

It says a great deal that respondents worrying about customers withdrawing consent to use their data scored so low, as the basis of all customer data-driven activity is consent. Every operator that wants to put customer data to commercial use should have a consent strategy and performance metrics against it.

Nothing is 100% secure and operators failing to use customers' data to serve them better and deliver more value is equivalent of a shipping line not allowing ships to go sea because they might sink. Rather they accept the risk and put the best possible measures in place to prevent accidents at sea and to save lives if the worst

happens. In the same way, it is essential for operators to put the best possible privacy practices – and recovery plans – in place. And if something goes wrong, be upfront and transparent.

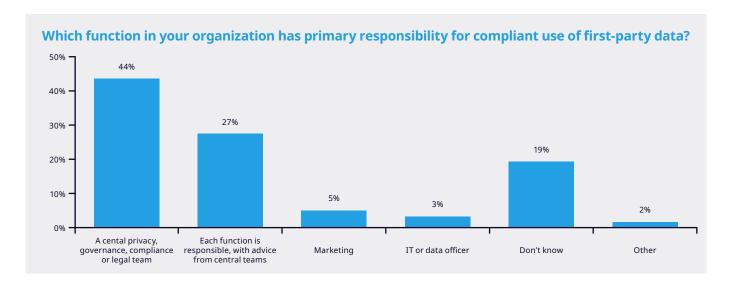


What consumers say

We didn't ask consumers about this directly, but a 2019 Data Breach Consumer Survey Report by Experian found that, following a data breach, 90% of consumers would be more forgiving of companies that had a response plan in place. Nearly 70% said they would stop doing business with a company that had a poor response.



The dangers of accountability without control



We asked our respondents which functions in their organization has primary responsibility for compliance of first-party data? Perhaps the most shocking result here is that 19% of our respondents chose 'don't know', given the huge importance attached to complying with privacy and security regulations for data throughout. Also, everyone involved in the use of customers' data is accountable for compliance.

This apparent lack of accountability is likely linked to the most common approach, with 44%, citing a centralized privacy, governance, compliance or legal team owning responsibility for compliance. It strengthens our conclusion (see page 22) that compliance dominates approaches to gaining customers' consent partly because the commercial potential is not well understood. In turn this hinders marketing, customer experience and data science functions in commercializing opportunities.

There is also a concern here about how well that separate, central team understands the needs of the other departments, and how a centralized approach slows decision making and time to market.

It also sheds more light on the answers we received when we asked operators about the top challenges to using customers' data (see page 13). Complying with privacy regulation was their number one concern by a huge margin, but the second most cited barrier was that using customers' data 'takes too much time to develop, integrate and operationalize'. This centralization could well contribute to that.

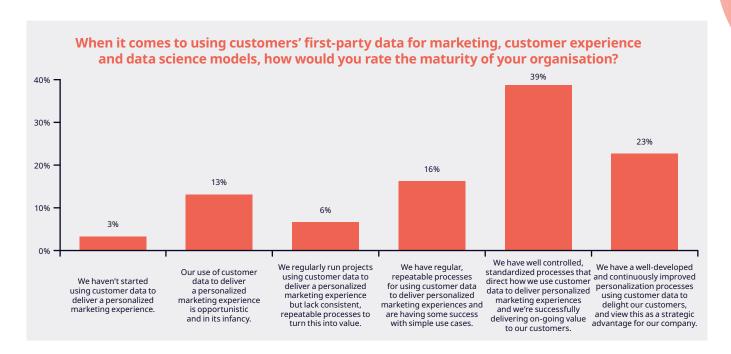
A better approach would seem to be the second highest scoring option at 27%, which is that each function is responsible with advice from central teams. Perhaps best of all is the option one of our respondents gave, which is to have a cross-functional data governance team.

The disconnect between responsibilities for compliance and marketing, at 5%, is unexpected and reinforces the notion that compliance is enshrined as an entity in itself instead of being inherent in many other things. This is especially true of marketing which is under huge pressure in most operators to launch campaigns and new products and services quickly. Agility is the key.

Again, the lack of control that IT and data officers have, with less than 3% of respondents choosing that option, suggests accountability without authority.

It seems that the structure of organizations is interfering with commercial goals, preventing operators from using more nuanced and valuable data options, such as weblogs (see page 11), which is readily available to them. BGC writes, "In real-world deployments, analytical models never live up to expectations. In many cases, the problem isn't the algorithm. The problem is the ecosystem that should be, but isn't, surrounding it. Companies often view analytics as the solution, instead of as part of the solution. They lack an end-to-end approach."





We asked operators to assess their maturity regarding using customers' first-party data for marketing, customer experience and data science models. The responses here seem out of kilter with those elsewhere in the survey (see page 14). Overall, 97% said they are well on the way to data maturity. The highest score of 39% was for the option of, 'We have well controlled,

standardized processes that direct how we use customer data to deliver personalized marketing experiences and we're successfully delivering on-going value to our customers'.



This is reminiscent of an early question (see page 8) where 80% of operator respondents think they're doing a good job of delivering personalization and relevance. The results here suggest many operators are underway without the proper processes, technology and policies in place. This can only be described as a huge risk. A further 22% say their organizations have well-developed and continuously improved personalization, which they view as a strategic advantage for their company.

The third highest score was 16% who say they have 'regular, repeatable processes for using customer data to deliver personalized marketing experiences and are having some success with simple use cases' still smacks of early days. They are probably looking at how to scale up their approaches having carried out successful projects, to gain market advantage.

Only 3% of respondents said they haven't yet started to use the data they hold about customers to deliver personalized marketing. Another 13% who say this is in its infancy in their organizations form a sizeable chunk. A further 6% approach this through regular projects, which is a long way from being inherent in their activities, and projects do not always scale.

12 If you could change just one thing...

Our final question helps us understand where operators feel they need to improve, asking what they think the single most important change is to their company being able to deliver more personalized and relevant customer experience. Their responses fell into six themes:

- **Make data easier to use** respondents refer to how data is stored as holding them back. They need a single, centralized customer profile to implement models and marketing activity at speed, accurately.
- **Improve organisational knowledge** learning from real-life examples using knowledge to change the cultural approach to the use of customers' data usage and removing regulatory bottlenecks with better application and more shared knowledge. This is not about paying less attention to compliance, it's about improving the handling of it.
- **Operational improvements** improving how big data is used and how it delivers stronger insights will remove barriers to consistent, secure and safeguarded customer privacy, allowing the repeatable and scalable application of customer data.
- **Technology investment** better application of machine learning to deliver personalization at scale means investing in capabilities on top of other systems. This allows them to create exponential ROI from existing investments and deliver always-on personalization.
- **Drive up the commercial agenda** personalization and relevance impact the bottom line in many ways more than up-selling alone. Many use cases complement the ROI of technology investments. Adopting new use cases gives customers more relevant options and better value.
- **Greater focus on customer needs** understand that customers' need transparency around data usage and communicate with them more, and clearly, on this. Implement support mechanisms to make them feel more engaged and in control of their preferences.

IN CONCLUSION

Compliance with privacy and data regulation is, and should always be, a major focus for telcos. It should not, though, be allowed to stifle innovation, thereby depriving telcos of millions in potential new revenue streams or as an excuse to disappoint customers. That almost a third (29%) of our operator respondents say that company policy prohibits them from using customers' data to make consumers' experience more individual and relevant is astounding. It suggests an urgent, C-level rethink is required about the balance between compliance, and meeting all commercial demands and customers' expectations.

Operators' prevailing view that personalization and privacy are opposing forces rather than complementary components to best serve customers is the single biggest takeaway from our research. This is largely borne out by the attitudes and opinions expressed by consumers, and much can be done to raise their appetite for experiences tailored to them through transparency and trust. We might be led to believe that consumers hate it when we use their data, but they don't. They just want us to do it better.

Telcos ignoring their consumers' wishes risk an uncertain future.

OUR SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This is the first personalization and privacy survey that Intent HQ has conducted among consumers and network operators. The purpose of the two surveys is to measure and compare the attitudes, needs and approaches of the

two parties, not in isolation, but with the commercial goal of creating greater value for them both by using customer data to drive personalization and relevance in marketing and customer experience.

The Operators

We conducted our operator survey April to May 2022. We had 62 responses from 16 telco operators, including most of the larger groups in Europe and the Middle East. Respondents were screened to ensure they were qualified to talk about personalization and privacy practices, with responsibilities for functions across marketing,

customer experience, data science, business intelligence, IT and/or privacy, governance and compliance. Most had responsibilities for two or more of these functions. Their positions in the operators varied in seniority from Senior VP roles to managers and executives. The survey was made up of 16 questions.

The Consumers

Our consumer survey was conducted in April 2022 amongst 500 consumers. The split of consumers by geography is that 25% came from both the UK and the US, with 10% each from France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden.

The survey was made up of seven questions including one being asked to name their mobile operator, and we had responses reflecting customers' sentiments about more than 35 operators including AT&T, Bouygues, EE, Orange, T-Mobile, Verizon and Vodafone.

ABOUT INTENT HQ

Intent HQ was founded with a clear purpose, to help our clients - big brand owners including some of the world's largest telcos - to create more relevant and sustainable customer interactions.

We do this by minimising wasted marketing. Marketing that's poorly targeted and frankly irrelevant to the recipient. There's a lot of it about. At Intent HQ, our approach is to use advanced machine learning and AI to develop what we call 'true personalization' marketing.

Intent HQ's Customer AI Analytics platform draws on detailed behavioural insights gathered from a diverse array of data sets and we help clients to connect with customers at the deepest possible levels.

We help activate your strategic asset by leveraging AI to operationalize your first-party customer data. Creating unique insights into the real human meaning behind your customers' behaviors and actions. Insights on-demand, and at scale.

The results are happier customers that feel more connected to your brand, higher marketing conversions, and new monetization opportunities; with less marketing waste and improved privacy governance. It's a win for the dataset owner and a win for the consumer, who is treated like an individual and avoids being targeted with irrelevant messages.

Today Intent HQ is a growing global team of over 100 data scientists, digital marketers, CRM experts and psychologists with operations in London, New York and Barcelona. We're starting to be recognised for our outstanding results and ranked one of the FT 1000 Europe's fastest growing companies.

Learn more about Intent HQ, our customers and our range of products at: intenthq.com



WANT TO SEE WHAT INTENT HQ CAN DO FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

INTENTHO

Email us at tellmemore@intenthq.com or visit www.intenthq.com