accenture

Me, my brand and AI: The new world of consumer engagement

Building resilient relationships between consumers, brands and AI in times of uncertainty

Accenture Consumer Pulse Research 2025

Introduction

Generative AI (gen AI) is becoming a go-to for consumers in their daily lives. The reasons for this run deep. According to our research, 36% of active gen AI users consider the technology a "good friend."[1]

The implications for brands are significant. Nearly one in 10 consumers (9%) already rank gen AI as their single-most trusted source of what to buy. What began as a tool that could provide personalized product recommendations or help create content is quickly becoming a powerful engine of consumer behavior—shaping what people want and expect, and how they buy. But that isn't all. The technology is rapidly evolving towards autonomous task execution. Soon, gen AI won't just influence buying decisions. With agentic AI capabilities, it will make them—essentially becoming the consumer itself.

At the same time, consumer uncertainty prevails. More than half (54%) of consumers now see uncertainty as the new normal, a sentiment that has doubled in the past year. Diminishing consumer confidence and agentic solutions threaten to create a race to the bottom, where brands compete on price. In these times, the brands that will grow are those that compete on experience and connection, differentiating themselves in category-relevant ways to each individual consumer.

AI offers a solution by enabling truly differentiated experiences that deepen relationships with consumers. The brands that will succeed will be those that determine how to best show up in this new world, competing on unique AI-led experiences and forging strategic collaborations and partnerships. Brands that hesitate risk falling out of the consideration set altogether. But those that act now to get it right can shape the future of AI-driven marketing and commerce.

Accenture's **Consumer Pulse Research 2025** provides deep insights into how consumers are feeling—and how AI is reshaping sentiment and purchase behavior this year and beyond. In capturing responses from **18,000 consumers** in **14 countries**, our report reveals new pathways for brands to pursue sustainable growth, become more relevant to consumers and build resilient relationships in today's challenging economic climate.

The AI leap: A new era of consumer experience

Gen AI is becoming an integral part of our lives, with 72% of consumers using the tools regularly. These human-like interactions are expanding beyond recommendations to meet a wider range of personal needs. Just as they might confide in a friend, 94% of active gen AI users have or would consider asking it for help with personal development goals, and 87% say the same for social and relationship advice.
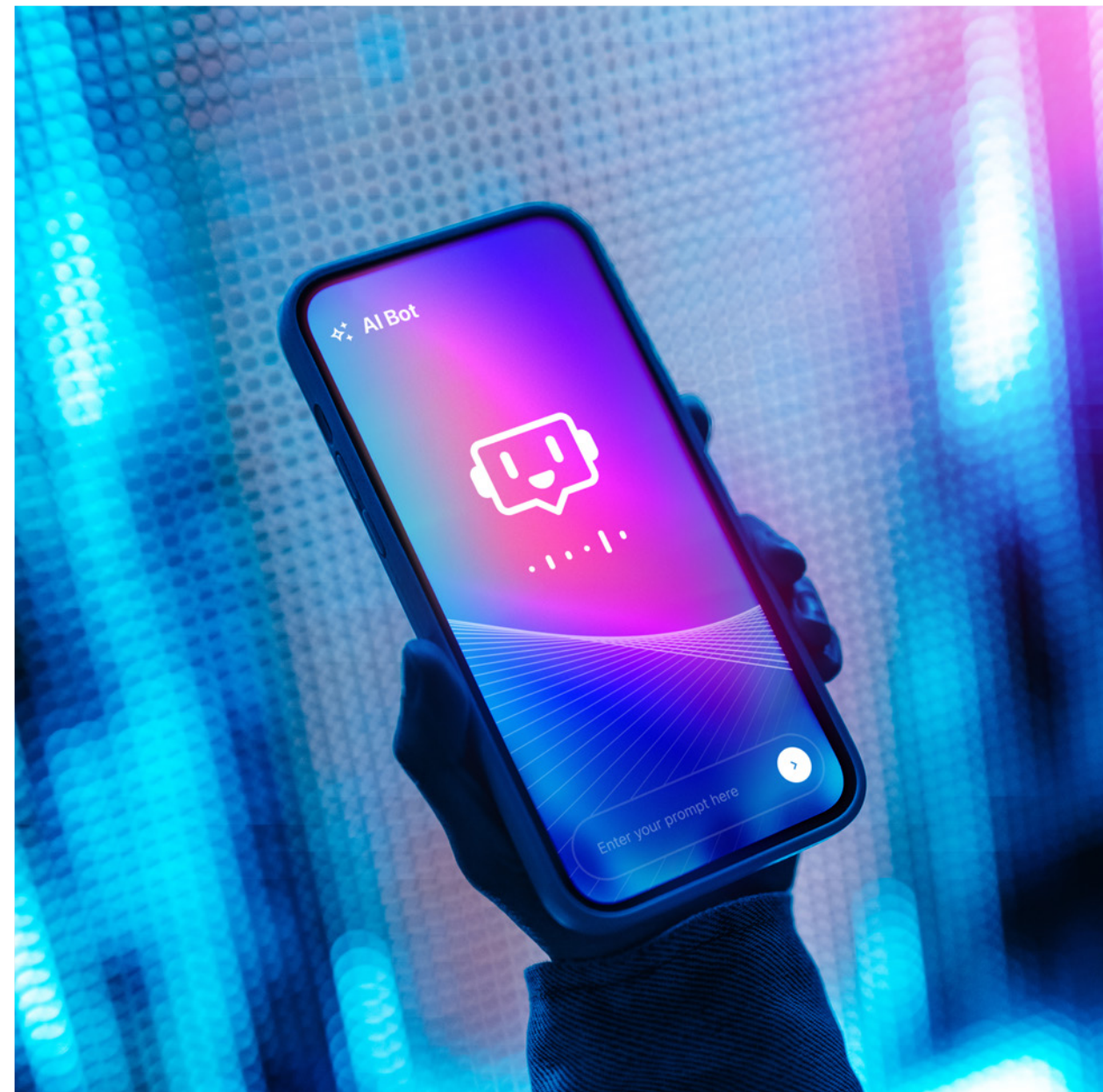
In parallel, the rapid growth of AI capabilities is creating entirely new experiences and end-to-end business models. Imagine, for example, a pharmacy providing in-home, human-like robots that can offer elderly patients physical support and companionship. Technology advancements in two critical areas of cognition—empathy and autonomy—are making breakthroughs like this possible. These capabilities are reshaping consumer journeys and providing brands with unprecedented opportunities to foster stronger relationships and drive growth.

Me, my brand and AI—The new paradigm

As AI becomes a friend and ally to consumers, the rules of engagement are changing. Brands that act now will be ready to shape the future of consumer engagement, with AI playing the role of a "friend" in three ways:

Me, my brand and AI as …

Circles labeled:
- My trusted guide
- My loyal companion
- My second self

01 My trusted guide—
Large Language Models (LLMs) are the new influencers

"The friend who always knows what to suggest." Getting helpful and trusted solutions to problems is becoming easier for consumers thanks to AI, influencing real-time engagement and purchasing decisions.

02 My loyal companion—
AI fosters deeper relationships

"The friend who puts my needs and wants first." Consumers can enjoy personalized, proactive and emotionally engaging experiences like never before thanks to AI, creating opportunities to foster deeper, long-term relationships based on mutual authenticity.

03 My second self—
AI becomes the consumer

"The friend who I trust to act on my behalf." Consumers' lives will get easier as autonomous AI takes the reins, fundamentally redefining the commerce landscape as agents make purchases for consumers.

01

AI as my trusted guide: LLMs are the new influencers
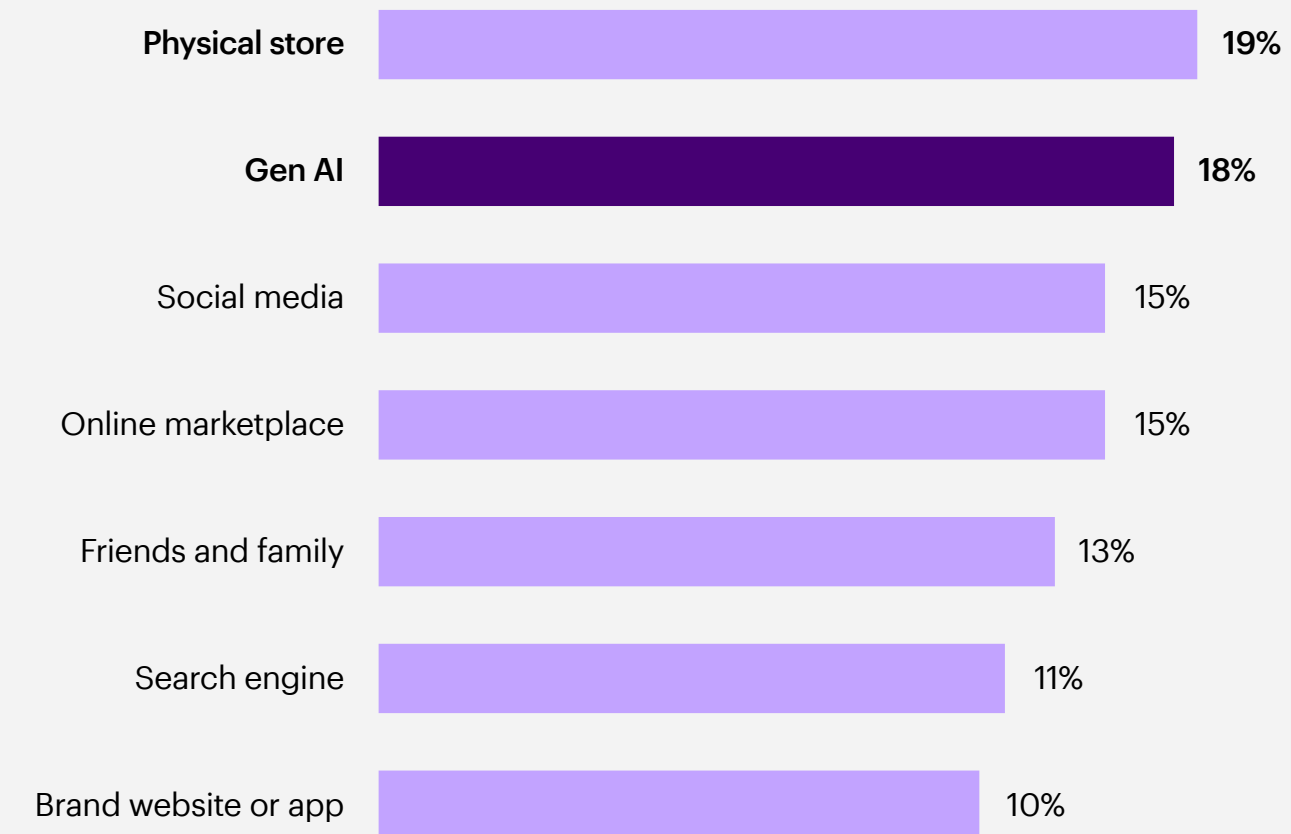
What's happening:

Natural language interfaces are accelerating the adoption of AI search, making gen AI tools a go-to channel. One in two users have already informed a purchase decision using gen AI, making it the fastest-growing source for recommendations and advice in the past year. And for active users, gen AI is now the second highest source for purchase recommendations after physical stores.

As third-party LLMs expand their influence from discovery to conversion, consumer businesses need to actively engage. Do nothing, and brands risk being misrepresented, or worse, left out of the consumer consideration set altogether.

This moment in the evolution of AI is an opportunity for brands to actively define their role within the LLM ecosystem—the network of models, platforms, data sources and integrations that shape how AI tools respond to consumer needs—and with it, shape the future of LLM platforms.

Top purchase recommendation sources for active gen AI users

% of active gen AI users who selected each category as their preferred source for purchase recommendations

Source	%
Physical store	19%
Gen AI	18%
Social media	15%
Online marketplace	15%
Friends and family	13%
Search engine	11%
Brand website or app	10%

Source: Accenture Consumer Pulse Research 2025

What to do: Define the brand's role in the LLM ecosystem

As LLMs intermediate the relationship between consumers and brands, consumer businesses must choose how to engage—assessing by platform and category, and their strategic ambition. Pathways include:

LLM partnerships

Partnerships with Perplexity demonstrate the opportunity that exists for brands as LLMs race to prove their utility, gain user trust and expand commercial offerings.[2] By collaborating with LLM platforms now, brands will be well-positioned to shape the consumer experience on their own terms—co-creating new models and interactions that deliver mutual value and help ensure they're actively involved in the conversation, not just passively represented.

AI discoverability

All brands must optimize for discoverability in an AI-mediated world by creating high-quality, frequently updated content and amplifying credible third-party signals like reviews and social posts. To optimize the quality of commerce and marketing content globally, Mondelēz International is using Gen AI to enable a future of faster creation of personalized text, images and videos at scale—staying a step ahead of rapidly changing tastes and interests.[3]

02 AI as a loyal companion: Fostering deeper consumer relationships

What's happening:

As AI becomes more emotionally intelligent, it can foster meaningful relationships with consumers like never before. Active AI users already see gen AI tools as their preferred channel for personalization, consumer-centricity and helpfulness—but real connections move beyond this by creating outstanding experiences for the consumer.

Brands are uniquely positioned to capitalize on this trend. By leveraging their comprehensive understanding of both their consumers and their industry, they can curate experiences that are not only tailored and proactive but also deeply personal and empathetic.

Brands that get this right can transcend transactions by playing the role of loyal companion and building connections that resonate on an emotional level. Doing so pays off. More than one-third (34%) of consumers would switch from a preferred brand to one that makes them feel special—and will be top of mind as they decide where to place their trust in a time of heightened economic uncertainty.

Consumers are **1.5x** more engaged   **2.3x** more likely to recommend   **1.7x** more likely to accept a higher price point from a brand that delivers emotionally engaging experiences

What to do: Reimagine consumer experiences

Brands can leverage AI to create differentiated experiences that both support and delight consumers, enhancing emotional connections in category-relevant ways. Pathways include:

Shift from personalization to proactivity

Marketers can use AI not only to respond, but also anticipate consumer needs. Agentic prediction engines like **Aaru**, backed by Accenture Ventures, can simulate consumer behaviors.[4] Proactivity makes brands 19% more likely to be preferred by consumers.

Design AI-first immersive experiences

Our **2025 Life Trends** report highlights consumer demand for depth, authenticity and sensory richness in their experiences.[6] By integrating physical experiences and multi-modal methods like augmented reality, video, voice and images, brands can create distinctive experiences that deepen consumer connections.

Make AI feel human

Consumers distrust AI-generated content lacking authenticity (41%) and personability (45%). Our **2025 Technology Vision** highlights the importance of developing an authentic AI personality,[5] integrating elements that make interactions feel natural and intuitive.

Integrate AI with supply chain data

As gen AI shifts to commerce, enterprise alignment will ensure personalized recommendations are relevant and available, reducing friction for consumers.

03 AI as my second self: AI becomes the consumer

What's happening:

Agentic AI is reshaping both the commerce landscape and the consumer-brand relationship. With intelligent agents now able to proactively act on instructions and make purchases on behalf of the consumer, AI is poised to become the decision-maker in everyday interactions—streamlining tasks like product comparison, checkout and post-purchase support.

As bot-to-bot commerce become more integrated and proactive, traditional brand touchpoints—such as banner ads and other retail media—may be bypassed altogether. This raises the stakes for brand visibility and discoverability in AI-driven journeys, with traditional search companies rapidly evolving and new players increasingly shaping what gets surfaced.

If agents optimize only for price or product specs, brands risk becoming interchangeable. To avoid a race to the bottom, brands must focus on what AI can't commoditize: emotionally resonant, experiential offerings that forge stronger, more memorable consumer connections.

> Consumers are ready for AI agents to purchase on their behalf, with 75% open to using a trusted AI-powered personal shopper that understands their needs.

What to do: Prepare for "zero-touch" engagement

As consumers empower agents to purchase on their behalf, brands must adopt a two-pronged strategy to stand out—both in direct consumer engagement and AI-driven interactions. Pathways include:

Prioritize experiential and emotional value

Give consumers, and their agents, compelling reasons to interact with brands beyond price and specifications. Experiential differentiation can be achieved through exclusive access, unique content and immersive experiences—elements that AI cannot commoditize.

Enable cross-brand and multi-service AI integration

Brands should strive to build, or integrate into, an AI ecosystem that transcends single-brand silos. This approach offers consumers and agents alike a connected experience across brands, services and platforms. Achieving this vision requires strong partnerships and shared data ecosystems, allowing AI to seamlessly coordinate between providers and ensure frictionless service delivery.

Noli, a beauty tech venture backed by L'Oréal and powered by Accenture, is revolutionizing beauty and skincare with hyper-personalized recommendations and advice. Its technology architecture can enable world-class consumer AI engagement, including the deployment of AI agents, as the proposition continues to evolve.[7]
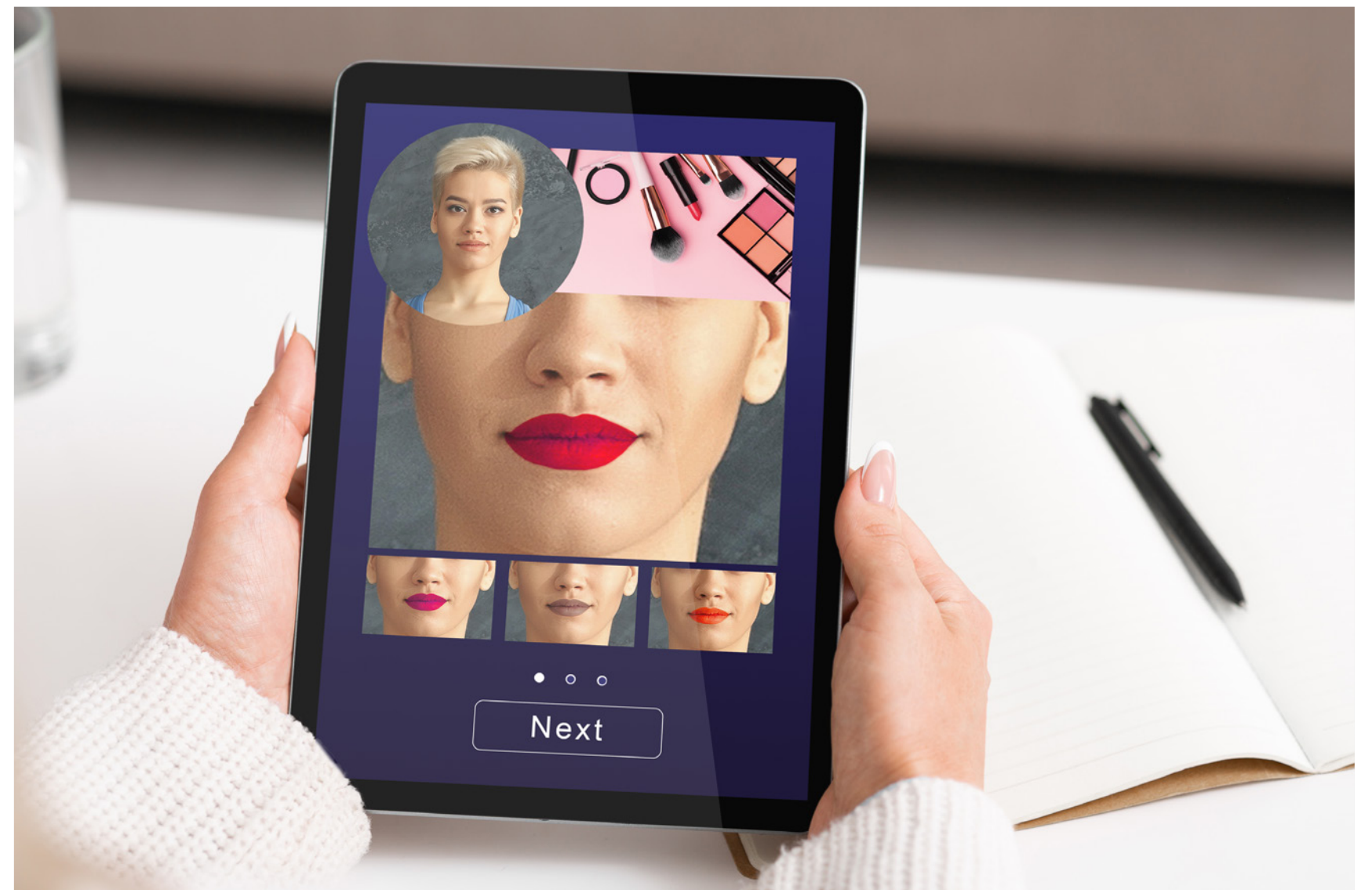
Winning hearts, minds and algorithms

Giving consumers the confidence to navigate both uncertainty and the new AI landscape will be brands' strongest asset in fostering long-term relationships and loyalty. The most successful brands will use AI to deepen relationships, improve service and reinforce what makes them unique, without losing the human touch. **Key actions include:**

Strategically navigate LLM ecosystems

Lay the foundations for enhanced positioning by articulating the value you provide and ensuring your content works for LLMs.

Leverage brand strengths

Data is a powerful bargaining chip for brands shaping the terms of an LLM partnership. Consumer brands can also use commerce assets—such as real-time inventory, pricing and location-specific information—to enable frictionless transactions.

From SEO to GEO

While Search Engine Optimization matters to LLMs, Generative Engine Optimization can drive organic visibility in AI-generated search results. Our work with a global retail client found that top-ranked traditional search results rank well with LLMs.

Create a dynamic customer experience

Strengthen your emotional IQ by learning what truly matters to consumers, and what it takes to build foundational trust with them.

Activate data

Build capabilities to consolidate rich zero-party, first-party and contextual data (e.g., location, time, device, weather and, crucially, data from past interactions) into intelligent consumer profiles, enabling AI to engage in ways that feel genuine and tailored.

Cultivate trust

To bridge the consumer-brand trust gap, adopt responsible AI practices and strengthen cybersecurity to protect against bad actors. Focus on data protection, consent-based personalization and transparency around how AI-powered interactions are shaped.

Take a holistic approach to AI agents

Build on existing loyalty to co-create your engagement strategy and new experiences with your most valuable consumers.

Define the engagement strategy

Brands can optimize for AI agents, engage consumers directly or use a hybrid approach. This includes testing experiential offerings that span physical and digital channels.

Build on existing loyalty

Loyalty program members are 1.6x more likely to be experientially or emotionally motivated; more willing to share data and engage with personalized experiences; and twice as likely to help brands refine new products and services.

The time to act is now. The investments brands make today will help them remain seen, relevant and indispensable in an AI-driven world.

Sources

1. All data points are from this study unless otherwise stated.

2. Perplexity. (2024, November 12). **Why we're experimenting with advertising.**

3. Accenture. (2024, September 26). **Mondelēz International joins forces with Accenture and Publicis Groupe to advance AI powered marketing capabilities.**

4. Accenture. (2025, March 4). **Accenture Invests in and Collaborates with AI-Powered Agentic Prediction Engine Aaru.**

5. Accenture. (2025). **Accenture Technology Vision 2025**

6. Accenture. (2025). **Accenture Life Trends 2025**

7. Accenture. (2025, March 25). **Accenture Expands AI Refinery and Launches New Industry Agent Solutions to Accelerate Agentic AI Adoption.**

About the research

Now in its sixth year, Accenture's Consumer Pulse Research explores how consumer sentiment, behaviors and expectations are driving change for consumer-facing industries. This year's research offers insights into the relationships that consumers have with brands across the consumer journey in the age of generative AI, with a particular focus on the implications this will have for the consumer goods and services, retail and travel industries. The research surveyed a representative sample of 18,214 consumers in 14 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Mainland China and Hong Kong, Italy, India, Japan, Spain, Sweden, UAE, UK and USA. The survey was conducted online between January 6 and January 17, 2025. Analysis allowed for comparisons across various demographic factors such as age or income, as well as behavioral attributes like an individual's motivations for brand preference. It also included focused deep dives across 13 categories: grocery stores, packaged food, alcoholic beverages, quick service restaurants, beauty retailers, beauty brands, clothing, footwear and accessories retailers, drugstores and pharmacies, DIY and home furnishing stores, consumer electronics, online travel agencies, airlines, and hotels and resorts. Further testing of hypotheses was conducted via AI-moderated interviews with 300 consumers in 12 countries between January 20 and February 4, 2025.

Authors

Oliver Wright

Senior Managing Director –
Global Consumer Industries
Group Lead

Emily Weiss

Senior Managing Director –
Global Travel Industry Lead

Brett Leary

Managing Director –
Global Generative AI Lead,
Retail

Emma Blackburn

Research Senior Manager –
Global Consumer Insights Lead

Jen Ducarre

Research Manager –
Global Consumer Insights,
Consumer Industries Lead

Contributors

Jill Standish

Senior Managing Director –
Global Lead, Retail

Nevine El-Warraky

Senior Managing Director –
Global Industry Lead, Song

Karen Fang Grant

Managing Director –
Global Research Lead, Industry
Networks & Programs

**Megan Bernardi, Ariel Bernstein,
Haley Bowse, Hicham Damahi,
Helen Previdi, Pasquale Strati,
Alessandra Zanetti**

Editorial Team

Shirley Brady
Regina Maruca
Priya Verma

About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company that helps the world's leading businesses, governments and other organizations build their digital core, optimize their operations, accelerate revenue growth and enhance citizen services—creating tangible value at speed and scale. We are a talent- and innovation-led company with approximately 801,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Technology is at the core of change today, and we are one of the world's leaders in helping drive that change, with strong ecosystem relationships. We combine our strength in technology and leadership in cloud, data and AI with unmatched industry experience, functional expertise and global delivery capability. Our broad range of services, solutions and assets across Strategy & Consulting, Technology, Operations, Industry X and Song, together with our culture of shared success and commitment to creating 360° value, enable us to help our clients reinvent and build trusted, lasting relationships. We measure our success by the 360° value we create for our clients, each other, our shareholders, partners and communities.

Visit us at **accenture.com**

About Accenture Research

Accenture Research creates thought leadership about the most pressing business issues organizations face. Combining innovative research techniques, such as data science-led analysis, with a deep understanding of industry and technology, our team of 300+ researchers in 20 countries publish hundreds of reports, articles and points of view every year. Our thought-provoking research developed with world-leading organizations helps our clients embrace change, create value, and deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity.

For more information, visit **accenture.com/research**