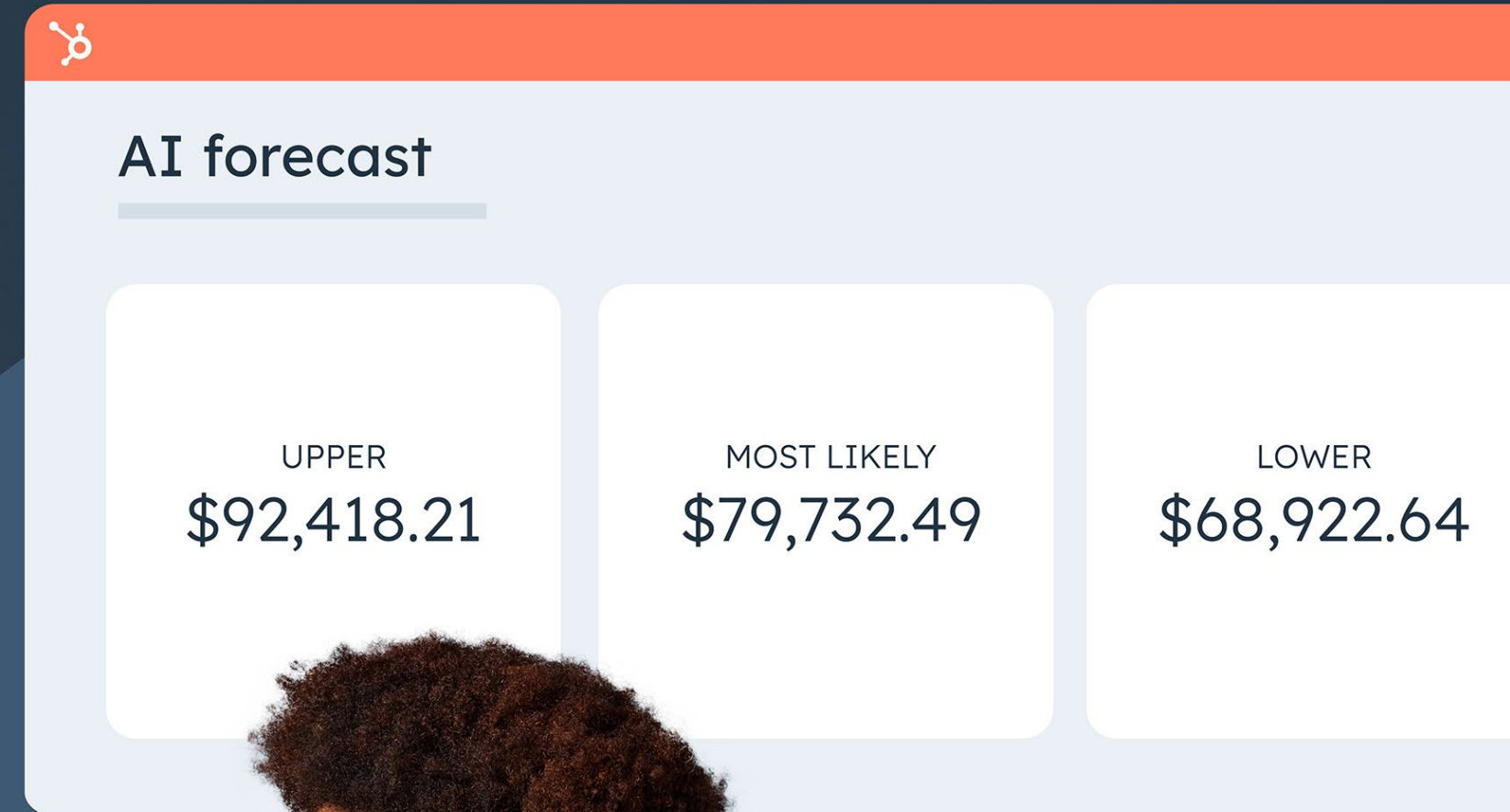


HubSpot

SurveyMonkey®

# In AI We Trust?

How Brands Are Earning Loyalty  
in an Automated World







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# Brand integration of AI is no longer a question of if, but how.

Business leaders are moving full speed ahead with AI across marketing, sales, and customer experience, drawn by the promise of greater speed and efficiency. But while organizations shift into high gear, customers are still pumping the brakes.

Adoption is uneven. Sentiment is mixed. And for brands, that means navigating an uneasy middle ground between innovation and trust.

This report from HubSpot and SurveyMonkey explores how that gap is reshaping the art of building brand trust. Based on insights from over 1,800 business leaders and 15,000 consumers across seven global markets, we uncovered four key tensions defining today's AI moment:

## Rapid business adoption vs. cautious consumer uptake

Nearly two-thirds of marketing, CX, and sales leaders say AI is more important to their strategy this year than last, yet only one-third of consumers report using AI more, with sentiment skewing skeptical.

## AI-forward content strategies vs. low trust in AI-generated experiences

Teams are laser focused on optimizing for AI search. But AI-friendly doesn't always mean customer-ready.

## Gaining notice vs. capturing attention

Consumers are noticing AI in emails, ads, and support, but exposure doesn't equal buy-in. Fewer than 1 in 4 say they "like" or "love" it. Even younger generations aren't sold.

## Maximizing customer data vs. staying transparent and trustworthy

Most consumers assume their data is being used to train AI, and want brands to be upfront about it. Nearly 3 in 5 say it's very important that companies disclose when AI is in play. Data privacy and brand authenticity go hand in hand.

Together, these tensions point to one clear takeaway: **While AI is here to stay, brands must build consumer trust around its use.** This report offers a roadmap for closing the gap, with data-backed insights and strategies to help you lead with confidence as we're quickly approaching an AI-first world.



# AI Adoption Is Accelerating, But the Trust Gap Is Growing

Across industries, leaders are embracing AI with growing urgency, especially in marketing. In our global survey of 1,818 business leaders, 75% of marketers say AI is more important to their strategy this year than last. That sentiment holds in customer experience (59%) and sales (59%), but marketing is clearly leading the charge.

AI is more important to our strategy this year than last

75%

Marketing

59%

CX

59%

Sales

These teams are using AI to go faster and think bigger, whether that's automating research, generating SEO-friendly content, or personalizing outreach at scale. The most common AI use cases cited by leaders include:

- Analytics and insights
- Market research
- Advertising and personalization
- SEO and content creation

Yet while AI is becoming mission-critical for businesses, **consumers aren't moving at the same pace.**

Only one-third of consumers say they're using more AI this year compared to last. And excitement is in short supply. Globally, just 19% of consumers say they feel excited about AI. By contrast, 34% report feeling concerned, 30% skeptical, and only 29% impressed.

Even among younger generations, enthusiasm is muted. Fewer than 1 in 4 Gen Z or Millennial respondents say they're excited about AI, suggesting that generational optimism alone won't bridge the trust gap.

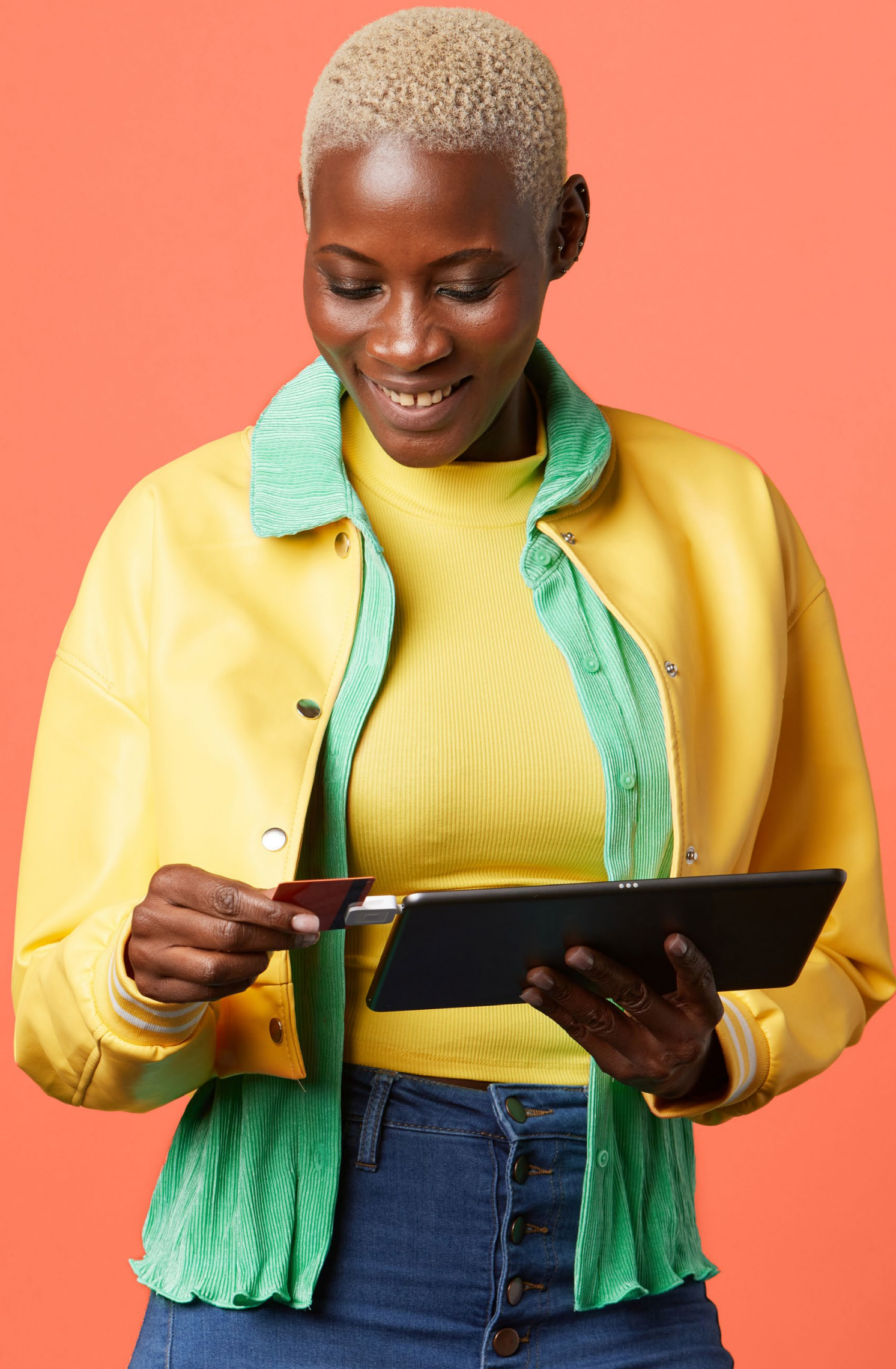
**Germany: 47%**

consumer skepticism around AI, the highest of any country surveyed.



**SurveyMonkey** is the world's most popular platform for surveys and forms, built for business and loved by users. Over 25 million questions are answered daily on the [SurveyMonkey platform](#). The insights in this report come from a sample of global survey respondents who complete user-generated surveys.





“The most successful marketing teams are now AI-first marketing teams. They’re not only experimenting with new tools, LLMs and agents, they’re **rewriting their playbooks with new AI-enabled systems and processes**, and installing the proper guardrails needed to scale quickly, effectively and ethically. In 2025, if you’re not using AI across your content production, monetization and distribution efforts, you’re behind.”

**JONATHAN HUNT**

VP of HubSpot Media, Head of The Hustle

“AI empowers smarter marketing, but **human creativity and empathy are essential for genuine connection**. Just because we can generate endless content doesn’t mean it’s meaningful or memorable — marketing that feels personal, relevant, and real remains the ultimate differentiator.”

**PRIYA GILL**

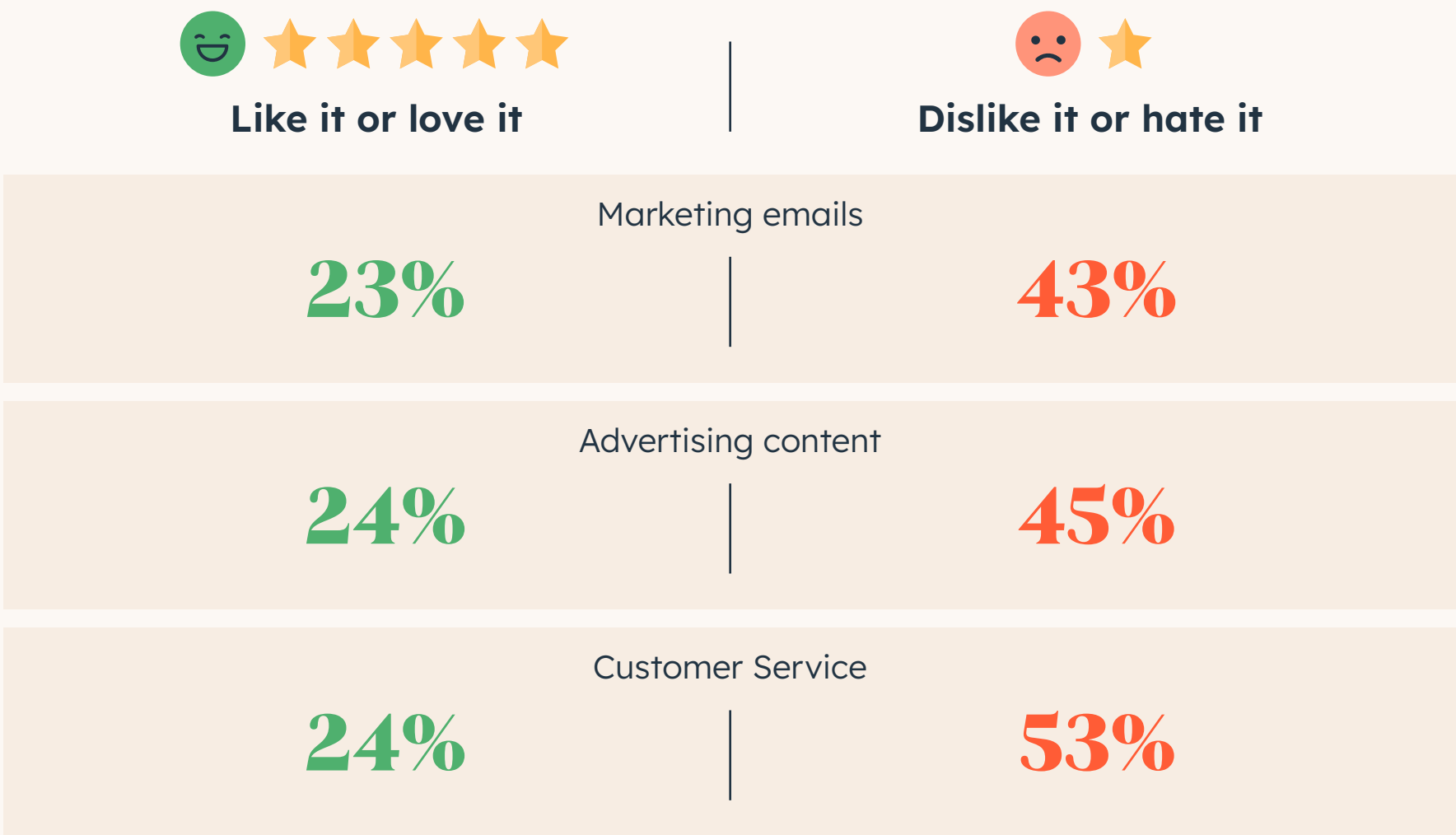
Global Head of Marketing, SurveyMonkey



# Consumers See the AI, They Just Don't Love It

Consumers aren't in the dark about AI — they're seeing it everywhere. In fact, 70% say they've noticed AI being used in marketing emails, advertising, and customer service interactions. **But awareness hasn't translated to approval.**

Only about 1 in 4 consumers say they like or love these AI-driven brand touchpoints. Far more report discomfort, with nearly half saying they dislike or hate them, depending on the context.

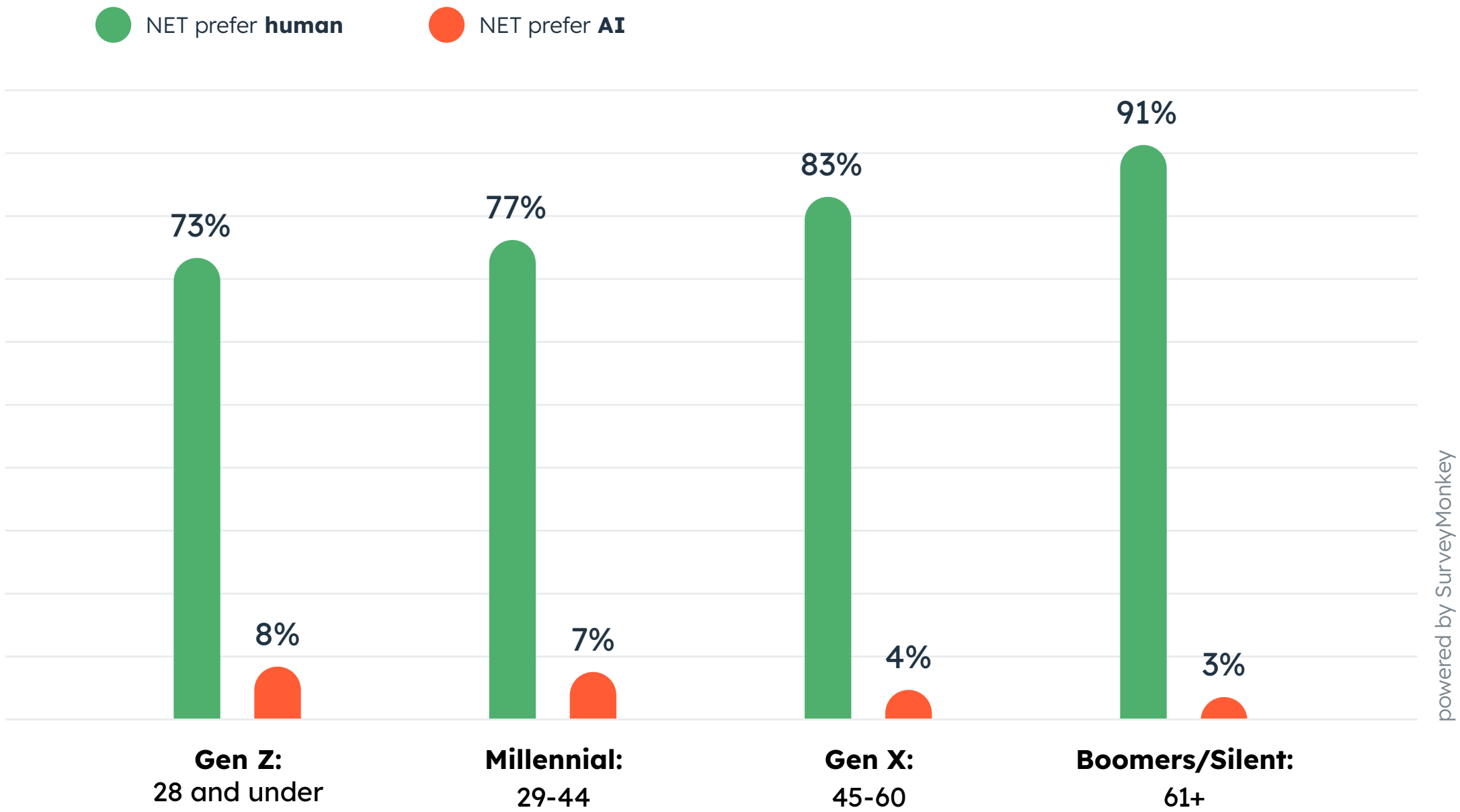


powered by SurveyMonkey

Customer service is a particular flashpoint. While AI chatbots and agents are becoming more common, they're still falling short on customer expectations. A full **82% of consumers say they prefer human support**, even when the outcome and wait time are exactly the same.

Younger consumers are marginally more open to AI-powered support, but not by much. Even among Gen Z and Millennials, a strong majority still say they'd rather talk to a human. Generational openness may increase over time, but today's customer experience strategies still need to center empathy, clarity, and human connection.

If the outcome and the time spent were exactly the same, would you prefer to get customer support from a human or from AI?



powered by SurveyMonkey

## Put people first.

Are you measuring what matters to your customers? SurveyMonkey makes it easy to listen and respond to customer needs:

**CX solutions:** Get insights across the customer journey so you can make smarter decisions and drive loyalty.

**Customer Satisfaction Survey Template:** Learn how to keep your customers happy and earn more advocates for your business.

**Customer Effort Score Template:** Identify customer journey pain points and start making the right improvements.



# AI Search Is Convenient, But Not Trusted

AI-powered search tools are becoming a go-to resource for consumers. Over half (56%) say they regularly read AI-generated summaries when using search engines, and 70% agree that these summaries make it easier to find the information they need.

But ease of access isn't the same as confidence. **Only 30% of consumers say they trust AI-generated search results a lot or completely.** A much larger share remain skeptical: **50% usually verify the answers they get**, and 17% assume those answers are inaccurate by default.

## Consumer levels of trust in AI search



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This signals an important distinction for brands: **showing up in AI search is helpful, but not sufficient.** To earn real credibility, companies need to pair discoverability with transparency, useful content, and a clear brand voice.

As search continues to shift from link lists to AI-generated summaries, businesses that focus on quality content and make trust part of the user experience will stand out from the noise.



“AI search compels brands to expand their focus beyond Google, demanding a broader aperture to track product and brand mentions across the entire web. This new landscape requires brands to directly, clearly, and completely answer prospect questions — which, for me, is simply good content marketing.”

**SAM NEEDHAM**

Senior Director, Product Management - Web, SEO, Global Experience, SurveyMonkey



# How Teams Are Adapting to Leadership Demands and Consumer Sentiment

AI is reshaping how marketing, sales, and customer experience teams operate. **Over half of business leaders surveyed say they’ve already made changes to their strategies in response to AI.** For marketing teams in particular, those shifts are focused on how content gets discovered, consumed, and trusted.

Top ways teams are adapting their content creation approach to meet the demands of AI-driven search include:

- Creating content designed for AI-driven search
- Prioritizing user intent and longer-tail keywords
- Adopting a more conversational tone
- Expanding into diverse content formats, including video and audio

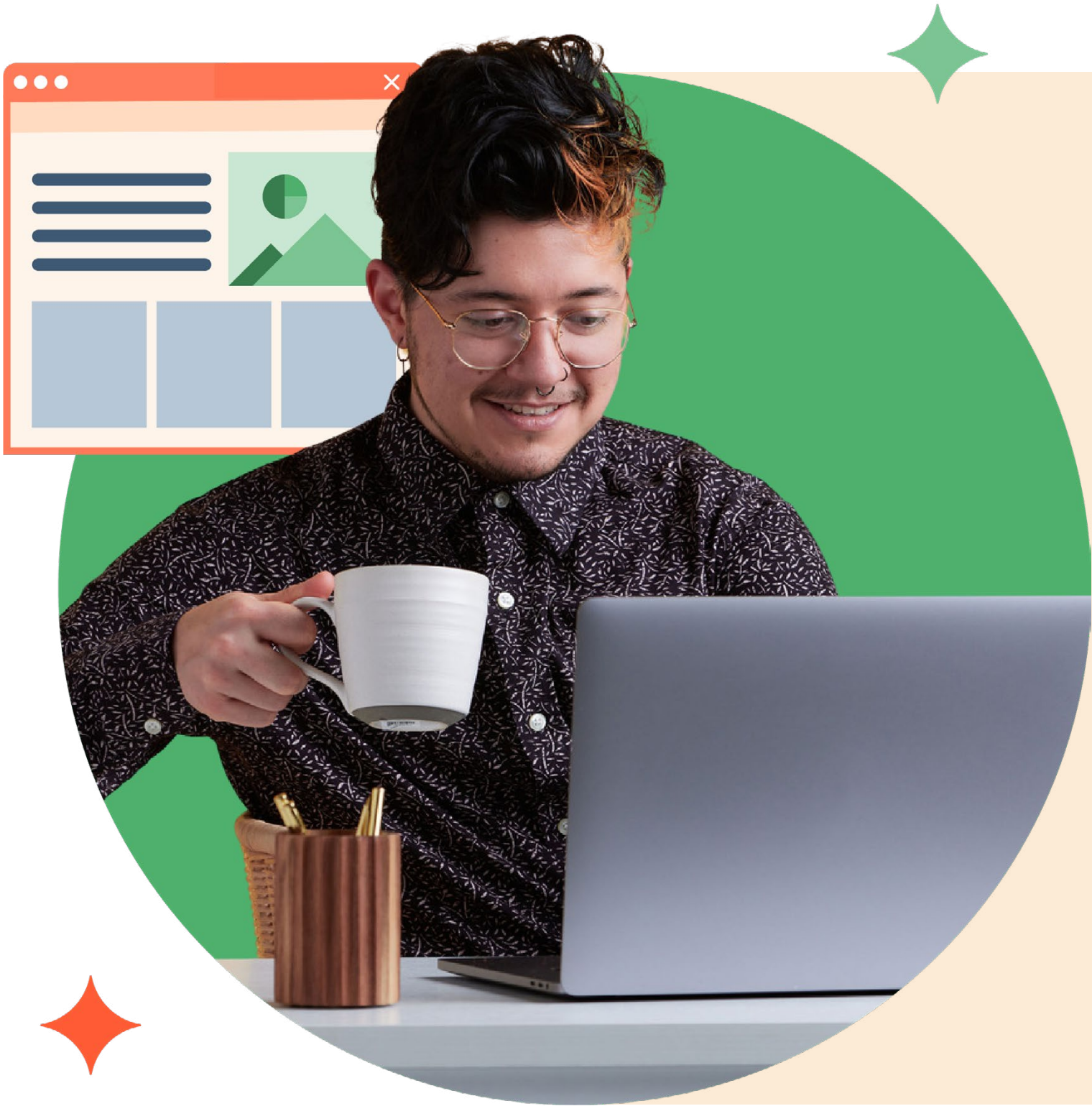
## AI has improved workflows for each of the following



Percentage reflects those seeing somewhat to great improvement after implementing AI in each area

Approaches to content volume vary across teams. Some marketers are **producing less, using AI to enhance quality and relevance** (28%). Others are **producing more, leveraging AI to increase efficiency and coverage** (28%). Both groups are working to align content strategy with changing patterns in discovery and engagement.

This moment requires intentionality. AI tools are making production more efficient, but the most effective teams are using that capacity to adapt content to AI search behavior, diversify formats, and stay aligned with how people actually discover and engage with information.



# 41%

of marketing and communications leaders say their organization has incorporated AI into workflows for analytics and insights.

Only 31% of CX leaders and 26% of sales leaders said the same.



# Training, Readiness and Gaps

## Where Readiness Stands Today

Teams across marketing, sales, and customer experience are preparing for the shift to AI, but readiness levels vary.

Overall, 68% of leaders say their teams feel prepared to adapt to the AI landscape. That includes 32% who feel very prepared and 36% who feel somewhat prepared. Readiness is strongest in marketing, where 77% of leaders report feeling prepared, followed by CX at 72%, and sales at 59%.

## How prepared is your team to adapt your strategies to the new AI landscape?

77%

Marketing

72%

CX

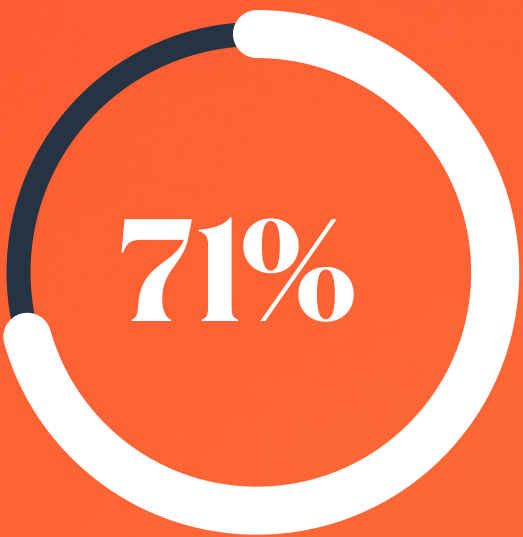
59%

Sales

Building that confidence takes time. More than half of leaders (57%) say their teams have invested a fair amount (33%) or a great deal (24%) of time developing new AI skills.

While both CX (60%) and sales (49%) are putting in a strong effort, that number jumps to 66% in marketing, underscoring the central role marketers are playing in the AI transition.

## The AI paradox in marketing and comms



say AI helps them do their jobs better



are concerned it may eventually replace them

powered by SurveyMonkey





Resources and Gaps by Company Size

Most leaders (73%) say their organizations have provided some resources to help employees build AI skills.

What resources has your organization provided employees to help them develop new AI skills? (select all that apply)



powered by SurveyMonkey

Resource access differs by company size. Very small businesses (1-5 employees) are falling behind in both support and preparation:



AI readiness by company size

How prepared is your team to adapt your strategies to the new AI landscape?



56%  
Very Small  
(1-5 employees)



72%  
Small/Medium  
(6-2000 employees)



75%  
Large  
(2000+ employees)

Looking ahead, leaders are prioritizing skills that will help teams navigate AI-driven change.

These include:

- Problem solving and critical thinking (36%)
- Creativity and innovation (31%)
- Adaptability and learning agility (32%)
- Technical literacy and AI understanding (31%)

For marketing leaders, creativity tops the list, with 45% selecting it as the most important trait in new hires.

To help organizations assess and improve their preparedness, SurveyMonkey offers a practical [AI Readiness Assessment Template](#).



“The magic of AI happens when leadership trusts employees to identify their own challenges. Those doing the work daily know where the gaps are. Set clear guardrails, but empower your team to determine where AI can do the heavy lifting. Make them directors of their own roles and measure success not by output metrics, but by the tangible value and deeper insights delivered to clients.

ARIEL GONZALEZ  
Content Marketing Manager, HubSpot



# Data Privacy, Disclosure, and the Authenticity Equation

## What Consumers Expect

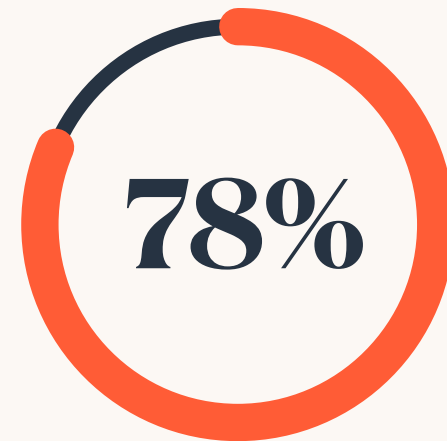
As AI becomes more integrated into business operations, consumers are paying close attention to how their data is handled. In our survey:



of consumers believe companies they buy from are using their data to train AI.



say disclosure is important, with 60% saying it's very important.



report concern about data security when companies use AI.

Many consumers are acting on these concerns, with more than one in four (28%) reporting they have stopped purchasing from a brand due to its use of AI. **Transparency around AI usage is now a core part of the brand trust equation.**

## What Business Leaders Are Prioritizing

Leaders share many of the same concerns consumers have. In our survey, more than half of marketing, sales, and customer experience leaders cited the following as key risks when implementing AI:

- Data security
- Biased or inaccurate AI outputs
- Loss of customer trust

Yet among those risks, **loss of customer trust ranked lowest**, with only 54% of leaders feeling concerned, compared to 61% for biased outputs and 62% for data security. This gap is striking, given the **clear signal from consumers: transparency and trust directly impact purchasing behavior.**

Despite those risks, the most common barrier to adoption isn't privacy — it's lack of knowledge and training. **Teams need time and resources to apply AI in a way that's both effective and ethical.**



“It is critical to be transparent and clear about how you handle customer data, the data protection standards you comply with, and where AI is used in the product or service you offer. Transparency will ensure you build and retain customer trust.”

**SALLY-ANNE HINFEY**

Vice President, Legal, SurveyMonkey

SurveyMonkey has thoughtfully integrated AI into its products and services, prioritizing the customer experience. The company also partners with 3rd-party providers who do not use customer data to train their models. Learn more about the platform's enterprise-grade security, compliance, and privacy controls on the [SurveyMonkey Trust Center](#).





# AI Sentiment and Concerns Around the Globe

We asked consumers: How do you feel about AI?

	US	AU	CA	FR	DE	UKI
Concerned	32%	37%	34%	44%	34%	31%
Impressed	30%	28%	30%	26%	39%	30%
Skeptical	27%	24%	25%	24%	47%	25%
Excited	19%	19%	22%	13%	21%	18%
Indifferent	17%	14%	14%	17%	8%	15%
Nervous	17%	17%	16%	4%	8%	16%
Confused	10%	10%	10%	11%	7%	10%

powered by SurveyMonkey

Respondents from Germany express by far the most AI skepticism of any region we surveyed, but they’re also most impressed with the technology. France expresses the highest level of concern with AI.

## Regional Insights

These findings stood out in terms of commonalities and disparities across geographies.

- Consumers in Australia were most likely to notice the use of AI in marketing emails, customer service, advertising content, and products — and they were most likely to dislike seeing it.
- Canadian consumers were most likely to say they strongly prefer connecting with a human vs. a bot for customer support.
- Respondents in Australia were most likely to say they are “somewhat/very worried” about data security (82%). Those in Germany were least likely (76%).
- In no region did more than 35% of respondents say they trust AI summaries completely or a lot.
- In every region, **“How well they treat their customers”** was the number one response from consumers when asked what influences their opinion of a brand.

## Brands That Stay True in the Age of AI

Survey respondents from each region named these companies as examples that are implementing AI in ways that feel true to their brand.

**United States:** Verizon, Target, Costco

**Australia:** Woolworths, Coles, Commonwealth Bank

**Canada:** Canadian Tire, Bell

**France:** Orange

**Germany:** Audi, Siemens

**UK/Ireland:** Energia, Bank of Ireland, John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Vodafone





“AI’s impact is undeniably global, yet the way it’s perceived is profoundly local. Regulations, cultural norms, and comfort levels with emerging tech vary a lot from San Francisco to London to Berlin. Forward-thinking brands will treat these differences as opportunities to listen closely to customers, protect their data, and tailor every AI-powered touchpoint to meet real human needs. Adaptability and customer empathy are the new success metrics for AI-driven marketing.”

**IRINA NICA**

Senior International Product Marketing Manager, SurveyMonkey

## Conclusion: Closing the Loop with Authenticity

In an AI-driven market, customer voice remains essential. Brands are expected to move faster, reach further, and respond more precisely than ever before. The only way to do that well is to stay closely connected to what customers are actually saying.

AI makes it easier to listen at scale. It can surface patterns, summarize sentiment, and accelerate how teams respond. But it doesn’t determine what matters. That clarity comes from real people: through the feedback they share, the choices they make, and the expectations they carry into every interaction.

To build meaningful customer connections in this environment, brands need more than automation. They need a repeatable system for listening, interpreting, and acting with intent.





# Operational Best Practices for Staying Authentic with AI

## 1. Listen on a loop, with systems that scale

AI can accelerate how you act on feedback, but it can’t replace the need to gather it. Consumer sentiment toward AI is dynamic and often mixed: only around a quarter say they like or love AI-driven brand touchpoints, while nearly half express discomfort. That’s why consistently listening to your customers (current and future) is essential. Use [customer surveys](#), social listening, and support feedback to understand how customers really feel.

70% of consumers say they’ve noticed AI in brand interactions. Fewer than 1 in 4 say they like what they see.

## 2. Use AI to move faster without guessing

AI is a powerful tool for prioritization and productivity, especially when layered with real audience input. HubSpot’s AI features like sentiment analysis, predictive lead scoring, and call summaries help teams move quickly to surface insights, draft content, and automate actions that reflect actual customer needs. For example, you can use SurveyMonkey AI to [summarize open-ended feedback](#) or turn a single asset into an entire campaign with HubSpot’s Content Remix.

AI is credited by 93% of marketers who implement it in their content creation workflows as improving results.

## 3. Segment your strategy: AI is not one-size-fits-all

Consumer sentiment varies widely by age, geography, and experience. A majority of Boomers (91%) still prefer human support, while Gen Z shows slightly more openness. Use [segmentation tools](#) and audience filters to analyze sentiment by cohort, then tailor your AI messaging and functionality accordingly — from chatbot usage to email tone and timing.

Germany had the highest rate of AI skepticism (47%), yet also the highest rate of “impressed” responses (39%). That’s an example of a nuance you can act on.

## 4. Let AI enhance your brand rather than diluting it

As more content and customer touchpoints get automated, brand consistency becomes non-negotiable. Align your values, tone, and personality with every AI interaction, and set guardrails to ensure these qualities remain intact at scale. Collect regular feedback on [brand perception](#), [ad performance](#), and customer touchpoints to ensure AI-driven efforts feel consistent, authentic, and on-brand.

Only 30% of consumers say they fully trust AI search results. Your brand voice is still your strongest differentiator.

## 5. Build AI literacy internally and close the readiness gap

AI adoption is accelerating — especially in marketing, where 77% of leaders feel prepared — but gaps remain. SurveyMonkey offers an [AI readiness assessment template](#) to help you evaluate internal confidence and identify training needs. HubSpot supports teams with [intuitive, no-code AI tools](#) designed to drive adoption across departments, especially for small and medium-sized businesses where tech resources may be limited.

Very small businesses are 2x more likely to have provided no AI training resources at all — despite 56% saying they feel unprepared.



“We’ve been pushing every marketing team at HubSpot to experiment, and the results have been incredible. Avoid thinking in limitations. Come up with ideas, and figure out a way to execute them. You might surprise yourself. I see this year as the year everyone adds a few core agents to their team that completely change the game.”

**KIPP BODNAR**  
CMO, HubSpot



# Methodology

This report is based on two global surveys conducted by SurveyMonkey in partnership with HubSpot. Fielding took place in June 2025 and included both business leaders and consumers across key markets. Respondents for this survey were selected from the more than 1.5 million people who take surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform each day. The modeled error estimate for this survey is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for leaders and 1.0 percentage point for consumers.

## Business Leader Survey

### Sample sizes

**Marketing:** 418 leaders

**CX:** 675 leaders

**Sales:** 722 leaders

**US:** 1,001 leaders

**Australia:** 141 leaders

**Canada:** 133 leaders

**France/Germany:** 185 leaders

**United Kingdom and Ireland:** 358 leaders

### Audience

Business leader responses came from professionals in marketing, sales, and customer experience roles. Titles included managers, directors, vice presidents, executives, and business owners.

### Fielding Date

June 11-23, 2025

## Consumer Survey

### Sample sizes

**US:** 6,693 consumers

**Australia:** 1,928 consumers

**Canada:** 2,001 consumers

**France:** 622 consumers

**Germany:** 537 consumers

**United Kingdom and Ireland:** 4,042 consumers

### Fielding Dates

June 11-18, 2025

Consumer data are weighted to reflect the demographic composition of each country, using the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Consumer totals are weighted by country population size.





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