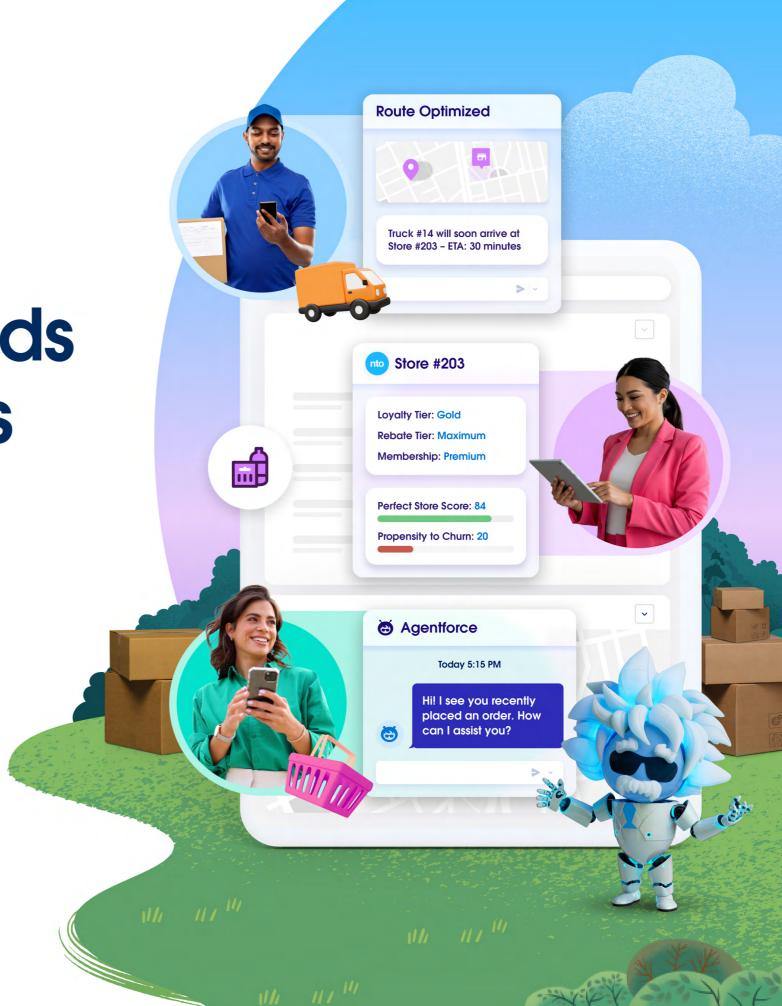


THIRD EDITION

Consumer Goods Industry Insights

Insights and trends shaping Consumer Goods from 2,400 industry decision makers worldwide



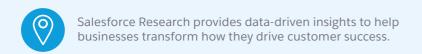
What You'll Find in This Report

Salesforce surveyed 2,400 global decision makers in the consumer goods industry to learn:

- How shifting macroeconomics are impacting the industry's priorities, challenges, and outlooks for profitable growth
- To what extent, and in what areas, artificial intelligence (AI)
 including AI agents is being implemented
- How the route to market is changing across account management, marketing, field sales, ecommerce, and customer service touchpoints
- What steps consumer goods companies are taking to innovate their relationships with retailers and end consumers

Data in this report is from a double-anonymous survey conducted from May 1–June 12, 2025. Respondents represent 12 countries across four continents. All respondents are third-party panelists. For sample details, see <u>page 28</u>.

Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report sum to 100%. All comparison calculations are made from total numbers (not rounded numbers).





Flag icons: Getty Images

Contents

Executive Summary	Э4
Part 1: Consumer Goods Navigates a Recalibration Period	05
Part 2: Optimizing Growth from Factory to Consumer	14
Part 3: Building Digital Experiences for the Modern Shopper	21
Sample Details	27



Executive Summary

This is arguably the most challenging period in history for the consumer goods (CG) industry. Economic policy is rapidly and constantly shifting.

Supply chains are undergoing transformation. Consumer confidence is shaky. Most CG leaders expect increased volatility for the foreseeable future.

Yet after making significant investments and pivoting their business models in response to other challenges, the industry is largely bullish on its expectations for profitable growth. Now, the advent of AI agents is providing more reason for optimism as the industry addresses challenges ranging from employee capacity and skill sets to changing consumer tastes and behaviors.

Consumer Goods Navigates a Recalibration Period

With rapidly shifting economic policies, rising input costs, labor challenges, and more, there's no shortage of factors transforming the industry. Yet amidst it all, nothing matches AI's impact. **CG leaders** view leveraging AI as their #1 opportunity – and adapting to AI as their #1 challenge.

Optimizing Growth from Factory to Consumer

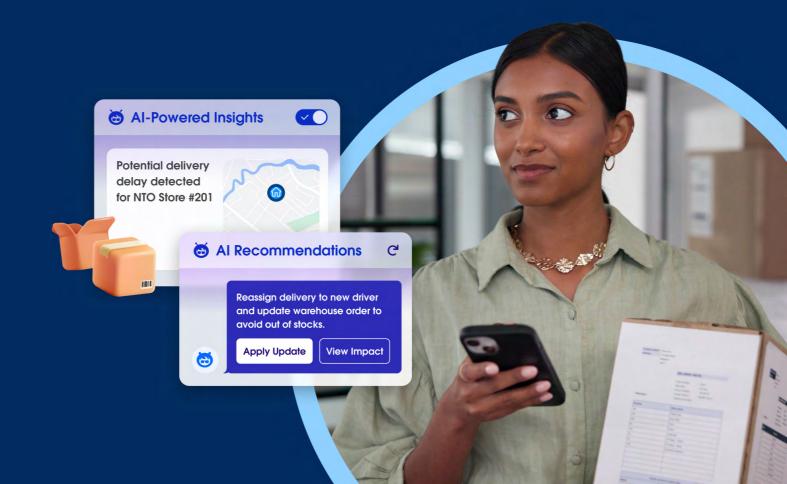
Margin pressures, stretched employees, the ongoing shift to digital channels, and other factors are upending the traditional route-to-market playbook. In response, CG leaders are not only ramping up investments in modern tools and strategies, but rethinking how they deploy them. AI-and data-driven promotions rank #1 in ROI performance, 20+ percentage points higher than traditional tactics

Building Digital Experiences for the Modern Shopper

CG companies continue to focus on developing and deepening consumer relationships in addition to those with retailers. Direct to consumer (DTC) and loyalty program investments are holding steady, but companies need new ways to provide the personalization that increasingly fickle and digital-first shoppers demand. Seventy percent of CG companies are increasing their social media marketing spend.

1

Consumer Goods Navigates a Recalibration Period



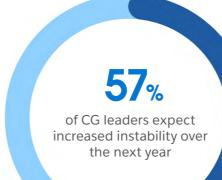
Consumer Goods Faces Headwinds

From the rise of ecommerce and DTC models to heightened attention to sustainability, to historic supply chain shocks, the CG industry has had no shortage of disruptions in recent years.

Now, economic headwinds are presenting new challenges. In the U.S., for example, consumer confidence is down 11% year-over-year and consumer debt is up 3%.1, 2 This comes alongside year-over-year drops in ecommerce conversion rates and shopper spend per visit.3

In this environment, the majority of consumer goods leaders foresee increasingly complex routes to market, more elusive profitable growth, and greater difficulty attracting qualified talent to help overcome challenges.

Industry Objectives Are Getting Harder to Reach









¹Source: University of Michigan Surveys of Consumers, Index of Consumer Sentiment, June 2025.

²Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Center for Microeconomic Data, Household Debt and Credit Report, Q1 2025.

³Source: Salesforce Shopping Index, Q2 2025.

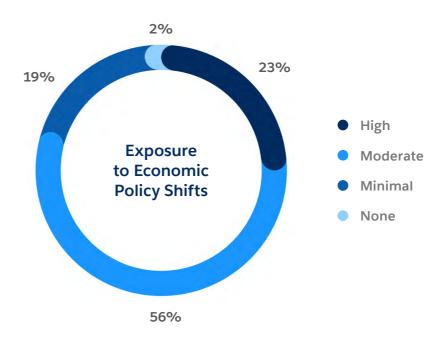
Economic Policy Shifts Challenge the Industry

Shifting economic policies – such as the implementation or expansion of tariffs – are at the forefront of the industry's hurdles. Ninety-eight percent of CG leaders report some level of exposure, with impacts across sourcing, operations, and margins.

Companies are seeing an array of impacts, especially to their ability to bring innovative products to market, navigate shifting consumer sentiments, and maintain healthy margins. To prepare, many companies are adjusting their sourcing strategies, repackaging products, or even relocating operations. But at this point, industry leaders are less likely to pass along costs to consumers, putting additional pressure on profitable growth.

Passing costs on to consumers is the least common response to economic policy shifts thus far.

The Consumer Goods Industry Is Adapting to a Changing Economic Landscape



Top Business Impacts from Economic Policy Shifts

- Innovation and product development
 - 2 Supply chain and logistics
 - 3 Price and margin management *tied* with Consumer demands and sentiment.

Top Tactics in Response to Economic Policy Shifts

- Adjust sourcing strategy
- Reformulate, redesign, or repackage products
- 3 Relocate manufacturing or operations

AI Seen as Brands' Biggest Dilemma and Solution

Despite significant economic shifts, no development is proving as disruptive as AI. CG leaders rank AI as their top opportunity by a wide margin. Yet becoming an agentic enterprise is no easy feat, and these same leaders also rank adapting to the technology as their top challenge.

Combined with factors such as trade promotion optimization, product innovation, and rapidly evolving consumer tastes and behaviors, AI – including agents – is presenting consumer goods leaders with an exciting but intricate future to prepare for.

AI Is the Industry's Top Opportunity – and Challenge

Top CG Industry Opportunities

- 1 Leveraging AI
- 2 Optimizing trade promotion spend
- 3 Shift to digital marketing
- 4 Marketing personalization
- 5 Product innovation

Top CG Industry Challenges

- 1 Adapting to AI
- 2 Supply chain difficulties
- 3 Customer acquisition costs
- 4 Changing customer expectations/behaviors
- 5 Economic and geopolitical shifts



Salesforce Perspective

Consumer goods leaders – like those in all industries – often struggle to define the use cases, technical requirements, and change management strategies to build an agentic enterprise. Our AI Strategy Guide can help. <u>Get the guide</u>

AI Is Quickly Becoming a Necessity

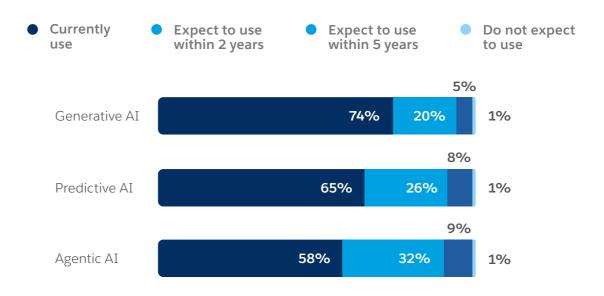
The CG industry is no stranger to AI, whose long-standing use cases like demand forecasting and inventory optimization, supply chain management, and personalized customer engagement are especially applicable to the sector. Most consumer goods companies already use AI to some extent, with generative use cases especially popular among marketing, sales, and other business functions that made up our survey sample.

Now agents – the newest and most sophisticated form of AI, which can proactively and autonomously complete tasks without human input – are set to play a central role as the industry navigates unprecedented change.

90% of CG leaders expect their companies to increasingly invest in Al agents, and 89% believe they'll be essential to compete within two years.

Consumer Goods Leaders Expect Near-Universal AI Adoption

Adoption Plans for AI in the Consumer Goods Industry



Top Functions Using AI in the Consumer Goods Industry¹

- 1 Customer Service
- 2 Marketing
- 3 Digital Commerce
- 4 Sales
- **5** I

The Impact of AI Agents

With generative and predictive AI already firmly entrenched in CG operations, the industry is set for continued momentum with AI agents. Industry leaders foresee many benefits from the technology, led by improved trade promotion, product research and development, and marketing campaign operations.

88% of CG leaders believe Al agents will help their company increase sales.

Yet, as with all technologies, there are notable roadblocks to overcome as consumer goods companies plan for, implement, and accelerate the use of AI agents. In a related study, CG leaders cited outcome quality, employee acceptance, and legacy technology as their top challenges.¹

85% of CG leaders would trust Al agents to act autonomously with sufficient guardrails.

¹Salesforce and Accenture Industry Insights Report: AI Edition, 2025.

Trade Promotion Leads a Long List of Beneficial AI Agent Use Cases

Ranking of AI Agent Use Cases by Value to Consumer Goods Companies

- 1 Trade promotion creation and optimization
- 2 Innovation and new product development
- 3 Marketing campaign creation and optimization
- 4 Data analysis and insight creation
- 5 Personalized shopper engagement
- 6 Sales meeting/key account support
- 7 24/7 service support to distributors, partners, or consumers
- 8 Targeted sales planning
- 9 Store visit and sales follow-up
- Out-of-stock detection and resolution
- 11 Long-tail customer outreach



Salesforce Perspective

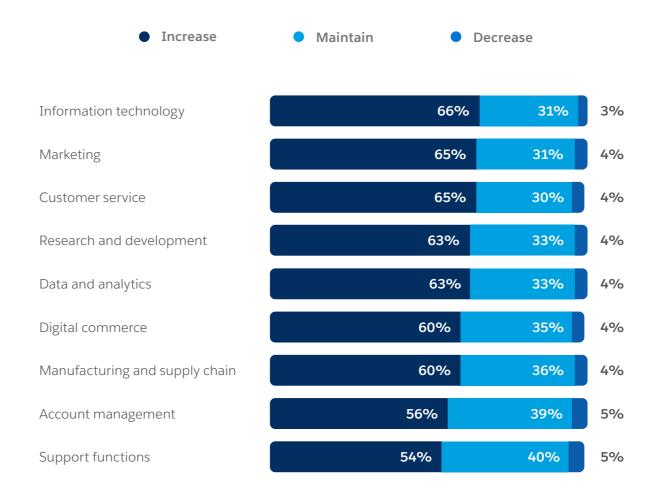
The most popular use cases show that consumer goods leaders are turning to AI as a creative and innovation engine. If trends continue, AI has the potential to become an on-demand, in-house consultancy for brands that must continuously adapt to a changing landscape.

Consumer Goods Investments Emphasize Offers and Services

AI investment is part of a broader increase in resources across strategic areas of CG businesses as companies adapt to a changing environment. In spite of – or perhaps because of – shifting economic conditions, a strong majority of survey respondents expect to boost spend across a broad range of functions, as well as the technology and infrastructure that underpin them.

Despite Headwinds, the Consumer Goods Industry Is Investing in the Capabilities Needed to Compete

Investment Plans Over the Next 12 Months



Base: Vice president or higher seniority.



Salesforce Perspective

Heavy planned investment in marketing and service suggests that consumer goods companies are especially focused on maintaining brand relevance and elevating brand equity.

Data-Driven Routes to Market Are Increasingly Complex – and Elusive

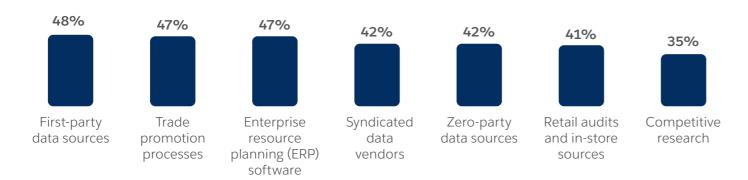
Nuances in customer, market, supplier, and partner data have always had the capacity to make or break route-to-market strategies, but this has never been more true than in the age of AI. Today, firms must have quality, relevant, accessible, and integrated information from multiple real-time sources. Yet there is no single source of truth for this data, and the average company uses only three of the seven popular sources listed in our survey.

Even when comprehensive data is available, the average consumer goods company stores it across multiple environments ranging from data lakes and warehouses to customer relationship management (CRM) systems and customer data platforms (CDP) to spreadsheet applications. Given this insufficient connectivity of insights, it's no wonder that so few CG leaders have full confidence in the data that's so critical to their success, especially in the agentic AI era.

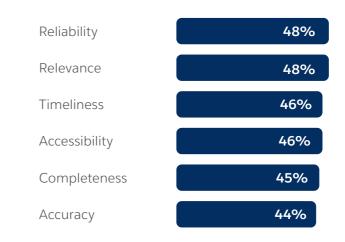
89% of CG leaders believe Al's outputs are only as good as its inputs.1

Consumer Goods Strategy Is Informed by Haphazard Insights

Data Sources Used to Inform Consumer Goods Route-to-Market Decisions



Consumer Goods Leaders Fully Confident in the Following Aspects of Their Data¹





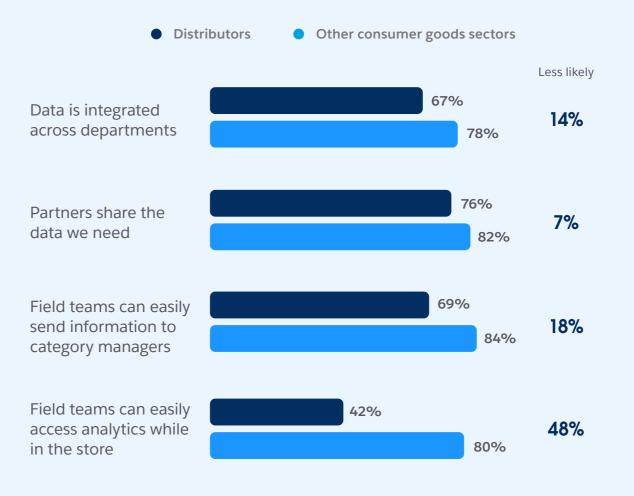
Spotlight: Distributors Trail Data-Driven AI Transformations

Distributors are the critical intermediaries of the CG industry, bridging the gap between manufacturers, retailers, and consumers. But their behind-the-scenes nature can cast them as the industry's unsung heroes. Distributors' historically slow approach to digital transformation doesn't help this dynamic, and there is more to be done.

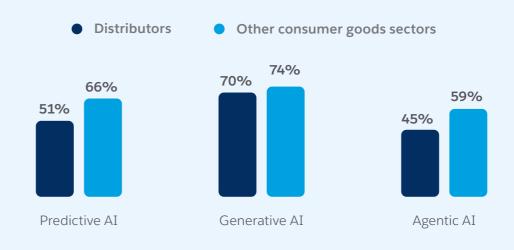
Distributors use 6% fewer data sources than other CG sectors to inform route-to-market decisions.

Distributors are less likely to have the breadth of and access to various data required to thrive in today's competitive marketplace, and are relatively slow on the uptake of AI. This segment is particularly poorly equipped to make informed decisions in the field.

Consumer Goods Leaders Who Agree With the Following Statements

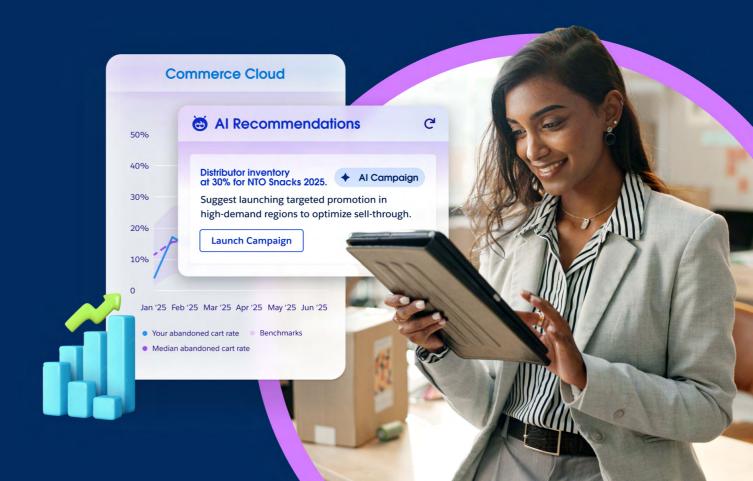


Reported Use of AI in the Consumer Goods Industry



2

Optimizing Growth from Factory to Consumer



Revenue Growth Management's Iterative Nature Stands on Shaky Data Foundations

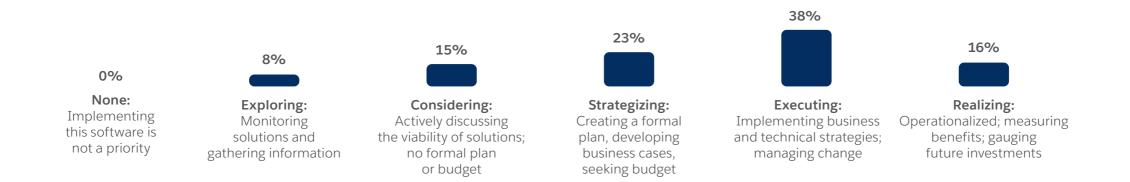
Revenue growth management (RGM) strategies, which encompass a variety of sector- and company-specific product, pricing, and promotional tactics, are hardly new to the consumer goods industry. But as the macroeconomic environment shifts with unprecedented speed and volatility and AI-driven capabilities mature, RGM is seeing a surge in attention.

70% of CG leaders believe RGM tactics are more important amid economic uncertainty.

The majority of CG leaders are turning to dedicated RGM software and tools to guide decisions that maximize profitability. Yet RGM is a continual process that demands iterative improvements, with just 16% of respondents feeling they're getting its full benefits. Given CG leaders' shaky confidence in the accuracy, timeliness, and relevance of their enterprise data, decision makers are wise to consider whether the inputs to their RGM strategies will fuel credible outputs.

Most Consumer Goods Companies Use Dedicated RGM Software

Status of Revenue Growth Management (RGM) Software in the Consumer Goods Industry



AI Rewrites the Trade Promotion Playbook

In the interest of boosting revenue, enhancing brand awareness, strengthening retailer relationships and optimizing inventory management, trade promotions represent a substantial budget item for the industry. Yet despite its critical role in go-to-market strategies, less than half of trade promotion spend yields positive ROI.

As budgets come under increasing scrutiny and brands consider how to get the most value from their trade promotions, AI is proving to be a boon for early adopters.

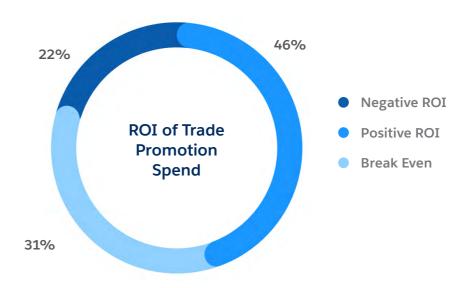
Al- and data-driven personalized offers bring the highest ROI — consumer goods leaders are more likely to rank these as #1 than the runner up (loyalty programs) by nearly 20 percentage points.

AI and Data Drive the Most Effective Trade Promotions

Trade Promotion Tactics with Most ROI Over Past Year¹

- 1 AI- and data-driven personalized offers
- 2 Loyalty programs
- 3 Digital coupons and rebates
- 4 Direct-to-consumer exclusive promotions
- 5 In-store displays and end caps

¹Base: Executive management, corporate strategy, marketing, sales and account management, and field sales respondents





Salesforce Perspective

CG leaders can boost revenue and profitable growth with the right approach to trade promotion management. **Get the guide**

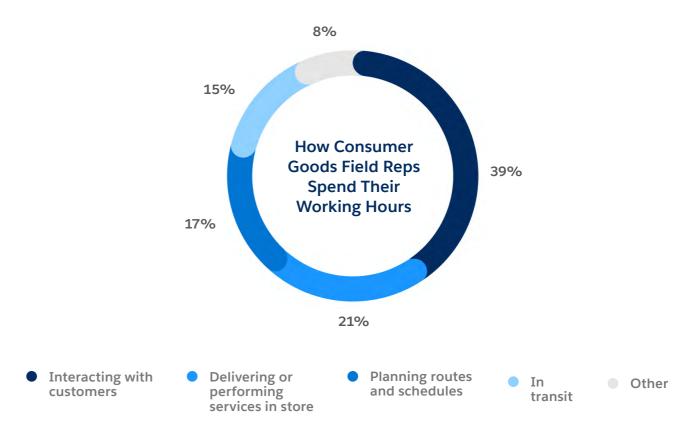
Overtaxed Field Reps Grasp for Relief

Trade promotions, brand partnerships, and customer engagement may be strategized in the home office, but they come to life in the field. The industry has made significant investments in field technology, with 86% of field reps claiming easy access to analytics while on-site and 89% saying they can easily send information to category managers. Still, pain points abound as this critical workforce is stretched thin.

73% of field reps are often burned out by their jobs, compared to 39% in other roles.

While data is flowing more than ever, automation has yet to meaningfully reach the field. Field reps estimate they spend more than one-quarter of their time – 11 hours of a standard work week – on manual, repetitive, or low-value tasks. Increased automation and AI agents may help: Only 28% of field reps strongly agree they have access to technology that effectively automates their day-to-day activities.

Field Reps Spend Less Than Half of Working Hours with Customers



Digital Channels Drive Increasing Revenue

In addition to their tried and tested legacy channels like brick-and-mortar retailers, consumer goods companies are diversifying their go-to-market tactics with a growing array of digital options.

Nearly half (46%) of consumer goods companies sell their products through online marketplaces like Amazon and MercadoLibre, and nearly as many (44%) sell through their own DTC channels.

Consumer goods companies are particularly enthusiastic about B2B self-service portals, where retailers can order on their own. Although just 39% of companies have implemented this option, those with portals in place say they contribute the most revenue. While this overall ranking is telling, there remains significant nuance across subverticals in terms of which channels drive the most value.

Self-Service Portals Stand Out Among Increasingly Diverse Digital Channels

Consumer Goods Companies That Sell Through the Following Channels



Top Channels for Revenue Generation¹

- B2B self-service portals
- 2 Traditional retail
- 3 Direct-to-consumer
- 4 Modern retail
- 5 Broker and distributor networks

¹ Note: Ranking is based on mixed bases of respondents who have adopted a given channel.

Service Shifts Focus to Revenue as AI Ramps Up

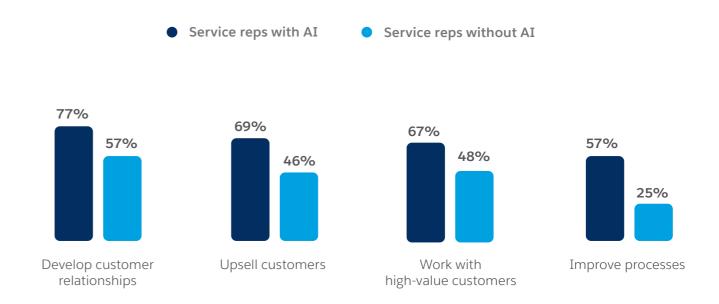
AI's revolutionary business impacts are arguably most apparent in customer service. Already, 47% of service organizations in the CG industry report using AI agents, with an additional 34% expecting to within two years. Teams with AI resolve an estimated 30% of inquiries with the technology, and expect this figure to rise to 50% within two years.

AI's rise is shifting customer service professionals' focus from reactive to proactive, earning them a more strategic seat at the table as CG companies seek to boost revenue, deepen customer relationships, and increase loyalty with retailers and consumer alike. Proactive service is becoming the norm, along with increased opportunities for upselling, account development, and process improvement.

65% of consumer goods leaders say their teams perform proactive outbound service.

AI Is Upleveling the Customer Service Role

Consumer Goods Customer Service Reps Who Say They Have Extensive Opportunity To...¹



¹Source: Salesforce State of Service Report, September 2025.



Salesforce Perspective

With AI agents, brands have the opportunity to retrain and redeploy service representatives as strategic account partners that anticipate customer needs and drive incremental revenue. Freed from closing tickets, representatives can monitor inventory and suggest an improved product mix, or reach out to customers who show signs of dissatisfaction.



Spotlight:

How AI Agents Can Improve the Route to Market

With 90% of CG companies expecting to use AI agents within two years – and 89% of consumer goods leaders believing a lack of agents will bring competitive disadvantages – the question is not if AI agents will transform the industry, but how.

Fifty-two percent of CG leaders expect their companies will hire fewer people moving forward, ushering in a new era where human capital's role will be to bring strategic guidance while digital labor automates simple, repeatable tasks. Whether it be the burned-out field sales representative who leverages agents for personalized customer interactions or the customer service representative who automates routine casework, stakeholders around the enterprise foresee substantial benefits.

89% of consumer goods leaders believe AI agents will be essential support in their jobs.

How Consumer Goods Leaders Expect AI Agents to Benefit Their Departments

Executive Management

- 1 Improved forecasts or predictions
- 2 Proactive calendar and priority management
- 3 Automated routine decision making

Trade/Channel Marketing

- (tie) Reduced administrative tasks
- 2 (tie) Improved forecasts or predictions
- 3 Automated routine decision making

Customer Service

- 1 Automated routine decision making
- 2 Accelerated data gathering and synthesis
- 3 Continuous process optimization

Corporate Strategy

- Automated routine decision making
- 2 Accelerated data gathering and synthesis
- 3 Proactive calendar and priority management

Sales/Account Management

- Automated routine decision making
- 2 Improved forecasts or predictions
- 3 Continuous process optimization

Ecommerce

- Personalized customer interactions
- 2 Improved forecasts or predictions
- 3 Automated routine decision making

Consumer/Brand Marketing

- Reduced administrative tasks
- 2 Automated routine decision making
- 3 Accelerated data gathering and synthesis

Field Sales

- 1 Automated routine decision making
- 2 Personalized customer interactions
- 3 Continuous process optimization

Operations

- 1 Continuous process optimization
- 2 Automated routine decision making
- 3 Improved forecasts or predictions

3

Building Digital Experiences for the Modern Shopper



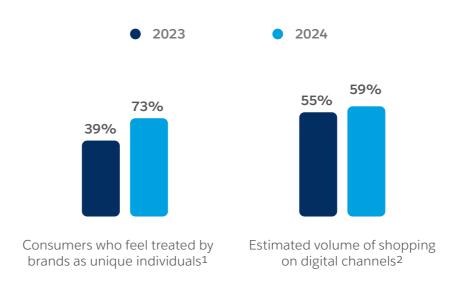
Loyalty is Elusive as Personalization Becomes Table Stakes

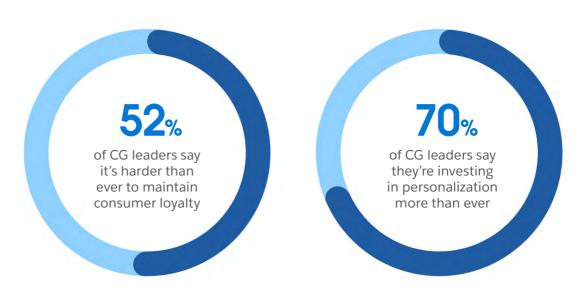
For all industries, but especially for consumer goods, it's critical to keep on top of the latest consumer needs and preferences. CG leaders must be aware of not only how to formulate and package the right products, but how to effectively market and sell them to end users. This is a complex endeavor, with industry leaders and consumers, themselves, agreeing loyalty is increasingly fleeting.

74% of consumers report switching brands within the past year.¹

Personalization is a key factor in winning over fickle consumers. But the bar is being raised at a rapid clip, and understanding individuals' unique needs and preferences alone won't guarantee their loyalty. Consumers' ongoing migration to digital channels provides opportunity for CG companies to gain a leg up in the race to drive differentiated personalization that wins hearts and wallets.

Consumer Goods Industry Is Investing to Meet Rising Personalization Standards of Increasingly Digital Shoppers





¹Source: Salesforce State of the AI Connected Customer Report, October 2024.

²Source: Salesforce Connected Shoppers Report, March 2025.

Loyalty Program and DTC Growth Stagnate

After a proliferation of digitally native brands in the 2010s followed by a march of traditional brands during the pandemic, DTC growth has stagnated. This trend coincides with loyalty program implementation that, while having ticked upward, has fallen far short from the near universal adoption that our survey predicted in 2023.

DTC and Loyalty Programs Underpin the Industry's Turn to Data-Driven, Personalized Engagement

Percent of Retail Business from DTC Channels1





Brands with Proprietary Loyalty Programs





Brands with Partner Loyalty Programs

71 %





Salesforce Perspective

With personalization-driven loyalty commodified and DTC revenue contributions seemingly at their peak, consumer goods brands are being challenged to find new modes of growth built on deep B2C and B2B engagement. The advent of agents opens new avenues for innovative revenue drivers.

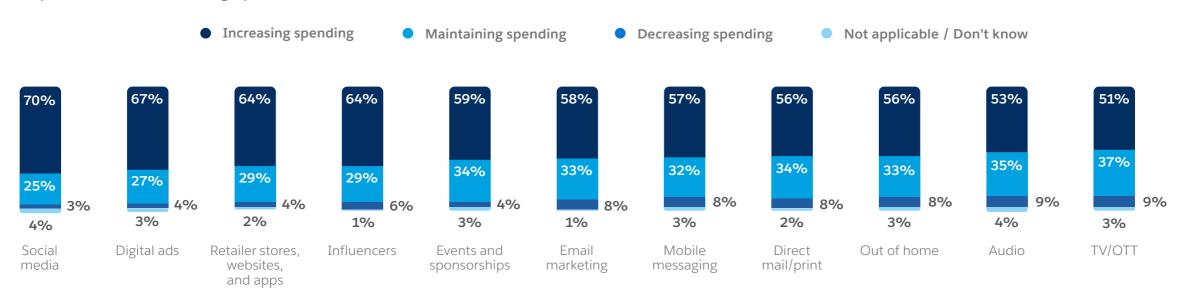
¹ Base: Respondents with DTC channels.

Social Media Is Key Among Fragmented Marketing Channels

Consumer demands for personalized experiences aren't new, but brands must meet this mandate across a growing myriad of digital touchpoints where behavior is rapidly shifting. A recent Salesforce survey of shoppers found, for example, that 53% now use social platforms to discover products – up from 43% in 2023 – while 23% follow influencers for inspiration. What's more, 25% of shoppers make purchases over social media and 16% do so over messaging apps, with high variation across demographic factors like generation and geography.¹

Consumer Goods Leaders Are Ramping Up Marketing Spend Across Channels

Expectations for Marketing Spend Over Next 24 Months



Base: Executive management, marketing, and ecommerce respondents.



Salesforce Perspective

Customer journeys are increasingly unique to the individual. This, combined with the stagnation of DTC and loyalty programs, means brands will require increasingly sophisticated capabilities to stitch together consumer touchpoints across media – such as their use of AI to discover products – and move them along the funnel.

¹ Source: Salesforce Connected Shoppers Report, March 2025.



Spotlight: Earning Consumer Trust in the Agentic Era

The industry's agentic revolution won't be limited to employee and B2B customer use cases. AI agents are also set to overhaul the consumer experience, but CG leaders must be mindful of ushering in this technology with trust at the forefront.

61% of consumers say Al advancements make it more important for companies to be trustworthy, but only 42% trust businesses to use Al ethically.¹

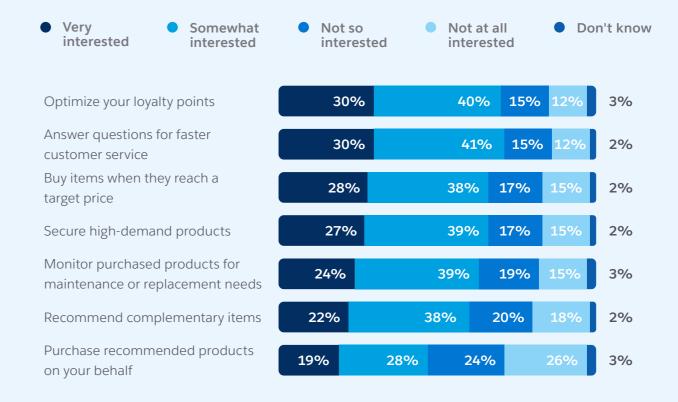
Considerations like data privacy and security, opt-ins, and transparency can go a long way in earning consumers' trust in AI agents.
But just as important is prioritizing the use cases that customers will actually want, such as helping them optimize loyalty program points or taking care of simple customer service issues.

Consumers Distrust AI That Acts Without Their Permission

Top Factors That Increase Shoppers' Trust in AI2

- Data privacy and security protections
- 2 Ability to easily turn it on/off
- 3 Require approval before any purchase
- 4 Transparency over how data is used
- 5 Availability of human customer service backup

Shopper Interest in Select AI Agent Use Cases²



¹Source: Salesforce State of the AI Connected Customer Report, October 2024.

²Source: Salesforce Connected Shoppers Report, March 2025.

Explore More Resources for Consumer Goods



Consumer Goods Cloud Demo

Together, humans and agents can integrate planning and execution on the world's #1 AI CRM for consumer goods.

WATCH DEMO



Fisher & Paykel Customer Story

Fisher & Paykel uses Agentforce to deliver luxury service at scale.

VIEW THE STORY



The Total Economic Impact™ of Salesforce for Consumer Goods

Explore the benefits of Salesforce for Consumer Goods

GET THE REPORT



Consumer Goods Summer '25 Release

Get the inside scoop on cutting-edge AI, data, planning, and execution innovations

WATCH THE WEBINAR

Sample Details



Sample Details

Country

Australia	N=200, 8%
Brazil	N=200, 8%
Canada	N=200, 8%
France	N=200, 8%
Germany	N=200, 8%
India	N=200, 8%
Italy	N=200, 8%
Japan	N=200, 8%
Mexico	N=200, 8%
France	N=200, 8%
Spain	N=200, 8%
United Kindom	N=200, 8%
United States	N=200, 8%

Seniority

C-level	N=317, 13%
EVP, SVP or equivalent	N=464, 19%
VP or equivalent	N=587, 24%
Senior director or equivalent	N=590, 25%
Director or equivalent	N=442, 18%

Annual Revenue (USD)

\$25M-50M	N=167, 7%
\$50M-\$100M	N=453, 19%
\$100M-\$500M	N=962, 40%
\$500M-\$1B	N=641, 27%
>\$1B	N=177, 7%

Department

Consumer/brand marketing	N=431, 18%
Corporate strategy	N=96, 4%
Customer service	N=479, 20%
Ecommerce	N=550, 23%
Executive management	N=131, 5%
Field sales	N=102, 4%
Operations	N=110, 5%
Sales and account management	N=300, 13%
Trade/channel marketing	N=201, 8%

Consumer Goods Industry Segment

, ,	
Alcohol and tobacco	N=138, 6%
Apparel, accessories, and footwear	N=447, 19%
Beauty and personal care	N=390, 16%
Distributors	N=214, 9%
Home care	N=213, 9%
Home durables	N=267, 11%
Non-alcoholic bevarages	N=95, 4%
Over-the-counter medications	N=64, 3%
Packaged foods	N=430, 18%
Pet care	N=142, 6%



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