

AI In Advertising: How Marketers Are Adopting It—And What Consumers Really Think

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Three Quick Updates



August 11 • JAR



Today's Speakers



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THE MARKETER SIDE OF AI ADOPTION

How advertisers and agencies are using AI



Tracy Adams, Ph.D.

Sr. Director, Research & Insights, ARF

What ARF studied

102

Wave 1

Advertiser Perceptions, Nov 2025

101

Wave 2

Qualtrics B2B, Apr/May 2026

203

Total base

U.S. marketers

\$1M+

Ad spend qualifier

annual advertising spend

The survey asked advertisers and agencies about AI familiarity, use, confidence, systems used, testing, validation, training, standards, benefits and concerns.

Because the waves were broadly consistent, most findings are reported in combination; wave differences are highlighted where they signal meaningful change.

AI has moved from experiment to infrastructure

Across marketers, adoption is not just broader — it is becoming more operational.

58% → 76%

Marketing task use

Average use across tasks

82% → 93%

Confidence in outputs

Among marketers using AI outputs

50% → 70%

Formal training

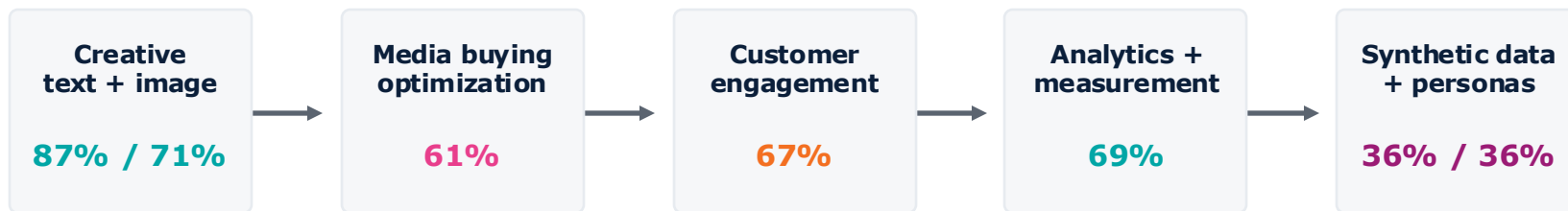
Organizations with formal programs

The implication:

Consumers are reacting to a capability that is no longer hypothetical inside marketing organizations.

AI is now spread across the advertising workflow

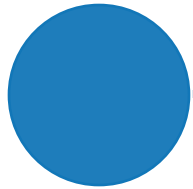
It is not only about making copy or images. AI now touches planning, execution, measurement and consumer understanding.



The important shift is from “AI helps make things” to “AI helps make decisions.”

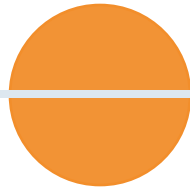
The market is segmenting by use case – and platform gravity is strong

No single system leads across all function.
Tools win where they are embedded in the workflow.



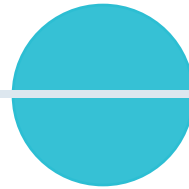
Google + Meta

Buying, optimization, attribution



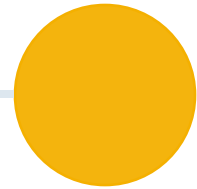
Adobe

Creative workflows +
commercial safety



Salesforce

CRM, analytics, service
workflows



LLMs

Text, research support,
productivity

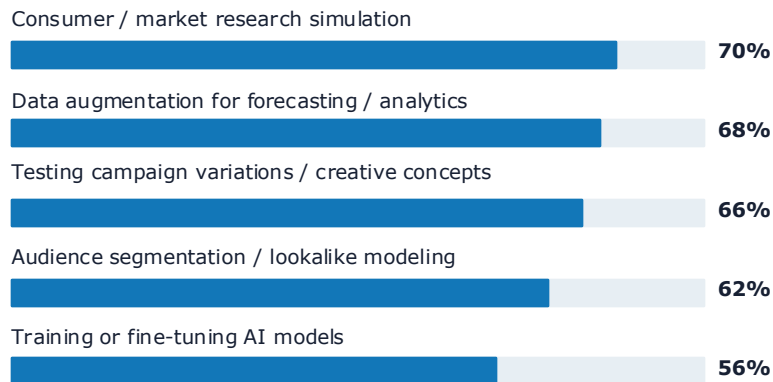
Convenience, install base and integration are accelerating adoption — but they also raise questions about dependency, transparency and control.

Synthetic data and personas are early – but strategically important

Use is still lower than mainstream AI applications, but the use cases point to research and planning

36%

organizations using synthetic data



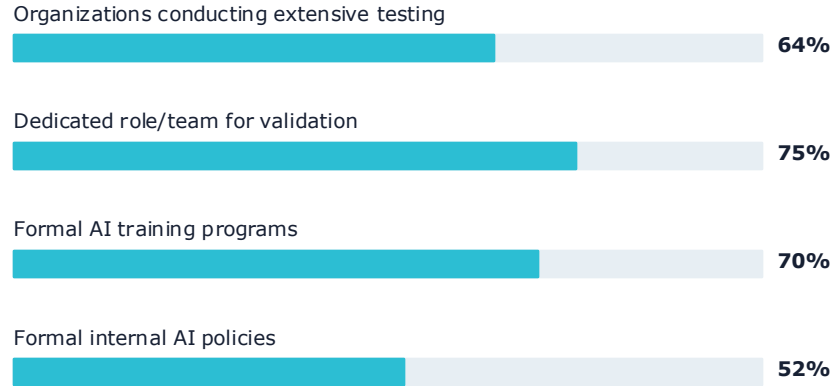
Interpretation: marketers are mostly using synthetic approaches as decision-support tools — not as a wholesale replacement for human research.

Confidence is high. The validation system is still catching up

The central risk is not adoption itself; it is confidence without enough evidence.

93%

confidence among
marketers using AI
outputs in May 2026



The gap to watch: measurement and attribution are already using AI, but these outputs are among the hardest to independently validate.

How Do Consumers Feel About the Growing Presence of A.I. in Advertising?



BACKGROUND

This work explored how people think and feel about the various uses of A.I. in the advertising ecosystem, including...

- Consumer attitudes, comfort levels, and concerns about the use of A.I. in advertising
- The conditions under which consumers will accept the use of A.I. in advertising
- The shift from traditional search to A.I. as a discovery tool and consumer reactions to advertising within it

Method:

- Survey of 4,047 US Consumers
- Age 16 – 74
- Balanced on Age, Gender & Race
- Conducted in March 2026

Overall Attitudes

Consumers aren't embracing A.I. yet – they're accepting it.

- More consumers associate A.I. with skepticism, distrust, and fear than with excitement or optimism. 42% say A.I. makes them nervous about the future. Only 25% think it will ultimately make life better for most people.
- Notably, Skepticism is highest among Gen Z, likely a reflection of their concerns about entering an evolving job market.
- Overall, women are more likely to be concerned about the impact of A.I..

Emotions Associated With A.I.

	% Very Strongly
Curiosity	39%
Skepticism	38%
Distrust	35%
Fear	30%
Excitement	27%

OR2 - How much do you agree with each of the following statements?

OR3 - How much do you associate each of these emotions with A.I. overall?

N = 4,047

Perceived Benefits & Concerns

Consumers hope that A.I. will bring a smarter, more useful world - and worry that what they say and see can no longer be trusted.

The top perceived benefits of A.I. are **informational**. Utility dominates. Commerce follows.



All Participants % Significant Benefit	
Explaining complicated topics more simply	48%
Translating things to or from a foreign language	44%
Organizing information in ways that help you make better decisions	41%
Helping you learn about products or services that are interesting to you	41%
Saving time on everyday tasks	41%

The top concerns are related to trust and surveillance.



All Participants % Significant Concern	
Not knowing if images, videos, or news stories are real	53%
Companies having access to too much personal information from your chats	51%
The government using your chats to profile you	50%
A.I. replacing jobs that you would normally use people to do	49%
Getting information that sounds accurate, but is wrong	45%
Being manipulated or misled by A.I.	45%

OR5 - Thinking specifically about the potential benefits of A.I. in your PERSONAL life (i.e. not work), how much benefit do you see A.I. providing in each of these ways? OR6 - Thinking specifically about the potential benefits of A.I. in your PERSONAL life (i.e. not work), how much of a concern are each of these to you? N = 4,047.

Advertising Benefits

Consumers want A.I. in advertising to provide them with restraint, not (so much) curation

- Primarily, they want A.I. to reduce the clutter.
- Personalization is secondary.

All Participants

% Significant
Benefit

Perceived Benefits

A.I. reducing the number of ads you see overall	37%
A.I. reducing the amount of times you see the same ads or brands	35%
A.I. remembering what you have already bought, so you don't keep seeing ads for it	34%
A.I. offering you deals or promotions that are unique to you and your situations	31%
A.I. learning your preferences over time, so the ads you see become increasingly relevant	29%
A.I. showing you brands or products you would not have found on your own	29%
AT4 - How much of a benefit do you feel each of the following could be for you?	

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Thank you!