

Retail's key marketing themes for 2025: More value, engagement, personalization

Article

In 2025, [retailers](#) will redefine value by blending discounts with innovation, empathy, and personalization. Brands will prioritize authentic connections, engaging audiences through in-

person experiences, and highly targeted campaigns powered by advanced technologies like AI.

Let's look at three key [marketing](#) themes industry experts believe will shape 2025.

1. Value beyond discounts

2024 was dominated by cost-conscious consumers seeking the best prices and deals.

- Cost considerations were the top reason consumers worldwide switched brands, per June 2024 data from Emarsys.
- Over half (55.4%) of US [grocery](#) shoppers said they shop based on discounts and promotions to save money, according to a September 2024 survey from Swiftly.

While we will continue to see a very value-oriented consumer in 2025, there will be a greater emphasis on innovation, said R.J. Hottovy, head of analytical research at Placer.ai.

“Deals played a significant role in driving store visits in 2024, but the retailers that truly stood out were those that combined value with new products, unique flavors, and innovative offerings.”

As the definition of "value" evolves, retailers may rethink their messaging approach.

- “The narrative will likely shift to value-driven messaging that balances cost with quality,” said Dan Larkman, CEO of Keynes Digital.
- Retailers’ messaging may take a more empathetic approach, said Amanda Richman, vice president, global media sales at Microsoft Advertising.
- “As we navigate through uncertain global markets, it will be crucial for advertisers to deliver uplifting messages that resonate with consumers on a personal level,” she said. “The ability to show understanding and empathy will be a new expectation of brands.”

2. Community-driven brand awareness

Community-driven storytelling will be key in brand marketing in 2025, according to Lance Wolder, head of strategy at PadSquad.

“Brands will focus on connecting with audiences through shared values and beliefs, crafting campaigns that go beyond demographic targeting to create deeper, more authentic connections,” he said.

One way to do this is through in-person events and activations.

- “As brands continue to find ways to meet consumers where they are and create unique, shareable experiences, they will prioritize activations that excite their fans and in turn, increase awareness,” said Ivy Everitt, social strategist at VML. “Creating experiences that people want to brag to their friends about or tell their family they got an invite to will be a powerful strategy for brands to stand out in 2025.”
- For example, music label Putyouon Music Group hosts monthly DJ sets around Los Angeles to bring fans together for a shared, in-person experience.

3. Tech-enabled personalization

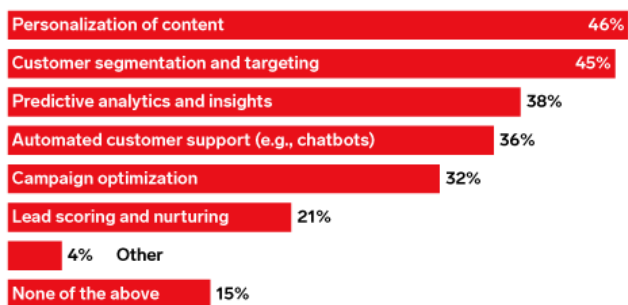
“The trend of hyper-personalization will dominate, allowing brands to connect with their audience in more meaningful ways,” said Microsoft’s Richman. However, “advertisers will need to leverage [advanced technologies](#) and partners to deliver tailored messages that reflect the unique preferences and needs of each consumer,” she said.

In 2025, more retailers will embrace machine learning and generative AI (genAI) to craft personalized customer journeys.

- 46% of marketers worldwide plan to use AI to personalize content in the next 12 months, according to an October 2024 survey from Ascend2.
- 61% of global marketing executives believe genAI will enhance customer personalization and engagement efforts, according to July 2024 data from Coleman Parkes Research and SAS.

Areas of Marketing Technology Stack Marketers Worldwide Are Planning to Enhance With AI Capabilities in the Next 12 Months, Oct 2024

% of respondents



Source: Ascend2, "The Future of Martech Stack 2025," Nov 10, 2024

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"I believe personalized messaging in particular will become more common in 2025, so that brands use [advanced data](#) to decide which message someone will respond to best given their recent behavior," said Eric Danetz, president at Cognitiv.

- AI could help retailers deliver more relevant offers, which will be imperative to win consumers' [loyalty](#).
- "Marketers will focus on fostering deeper, more meaningful connections with their audiences by delivering highly relevant content and offers precisely when they matter most," said Melanie Zimmermann, general manager, global retail media, at Criteo.

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