

# The AI consumer. The brand response.

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## Start with the behavior

The technology only matters when it changes what people expect, how they make decisions, and where they place their trust. The opportunity is broader than a new chatbot or a new channel. It is to connect discovery, evaluation, purchase, and the relationship that follows.

## Retail: the next storefront is a conversation

OpenAI introduced richer visual shopping and side-by-side comparisons in ChatGPT in March 2026. For brands, the implication is that product discovery can start before a customer reaches the brand's own site. [OpenAI product announcement](#)

Adobe reported 125% year-over-year growth in AI-sourced visits to US retail sites for April through June 2026. This measures referral growth, not the proportion of all shopping done through AI. [Adobe, published August 7, 2026](#)

**The FutureProof response:** connect product information, content, and reputation to a customer experience that helps people decide. Track answer accuracy, referral behavior, conversion, and incremental value separately.

## Travel: be part of the plan

Adobe found AI referrals to US travel sites grew 194% year over year in May 2026. However, these visits still converted 28% less often than non-AI visits. Attention is not the same as a booking. [Adobe, June 17, 2026](#)

**The FutureProof response:** connect destination expertise, conversational planning, accurate information, and the booking handoff. Design around what the traveler needs to decide, then test where the experience breaks down.

## Consumer brands: new tools, new expectations

In Matt Britton's Generation AI, the central connection is between technology, consumer behavior, and the business response. Younger consumers are one lens on emerging expectations. AI affects consumers across generations.

**The FutureProof response:** give the brand a useful role. A product advisor, participatory campaign, or relevant follow-up should solve an actual customer need. Gen Alpha is a strategic lens, not a direction to target minors with advertising.

## Paid attention and organic answers are different jobs

ChatGPT advertising is in beta. Eligibility, geography, and platform approval determine access. OpenAI keeps ads separate from answers; an ad does not purchase an organic recommendation. [Advertising guidance](#) · [Ads and answers](#)

**The FutureProof response:** plan paid media and AEO as complementary work, with separate objectives and measures. Bring the customer into an experience worth continuing.

## One journey, six opportunities

1. **Strategy:** which behavior is changing, and what is the commercial implication?
2. **Awareness:** where should the customer encounter the brand?
3. **Discovery:** can people and AI systems understand why the brand matters?
4. **Engagement:** what would make someone choose to participate?
5. **Conversion:** what gets in the way of a confident decision?
6. **Retention:** what would make the next message genuinely useful?

The first project does not need to cover the whole funnel. The thinking should. Define the need, data permissions, commercial objective, and measurement before choosing the technology.

## Evidence note

This briefing synthesizes published sources and FutureProof's interpretation. It is not original survey research, a forecast, or a promise of client performance. Reporting periods and methodologies differ. Sources checked September 11, 2026. Advertising availability must be rechecked before any campaign launch.

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