

✦ 2026 AI CONSUMER TRENDS

AI Consumer Personas Playbook

Explore new research on the 4 AI consumer personas and learn how to engage each one



What's in the report

Introduction

The AI Engagement Map

The 4 Personas

- ✦ The AI Enthusiast
- ✦ The AI Evaluator
- ✦ The AI Skeptic
- ✦ The AI Holdout

How to use this playbook

AI doesn't only make you more efficient. It transforms how customers experience your brand.

AI has fundamentally changed how shoppers research and evaluate purchases. But not all shoppers have evolved the same way. Some completely trust AI, use it multiple times a week, and depend on it for planning and decision-making. Others use AI a few times a month to find information or answer questions. On the other end of the spectrum are those who never use AI, or say they've never found the technology helpful.

We surveyed 8,000 global consumers and categorized them into 4 distinct personas, reflecting how they feel about and interact with AI. These personas are the AI Enthusiast, the AI Evaluator, the AI Skeptic, and the AI Holdout. Each persona has different expectations for trust, speed, and personalization in their shopping experiences. And each responds differently to how brands use AI.

If you treat AI as a blunt instrument, you'll lose relevance. This thinking can be applied across all places where shoppers experience your brand - whether you're using AI to generate marketing materials, personalize outreach, make product recommendations, or provide on-site assistance.

In this playbook, you'll learn:



Practical methods to identify AI personas in your customer base



Tactics to activate those strategies with Klaviyo, without adding more tools



Clear guidance on what actually drives conversion for each persona

“The brands that adapt experiences to how consumers feel about AI will drive more revenue in 2026.”

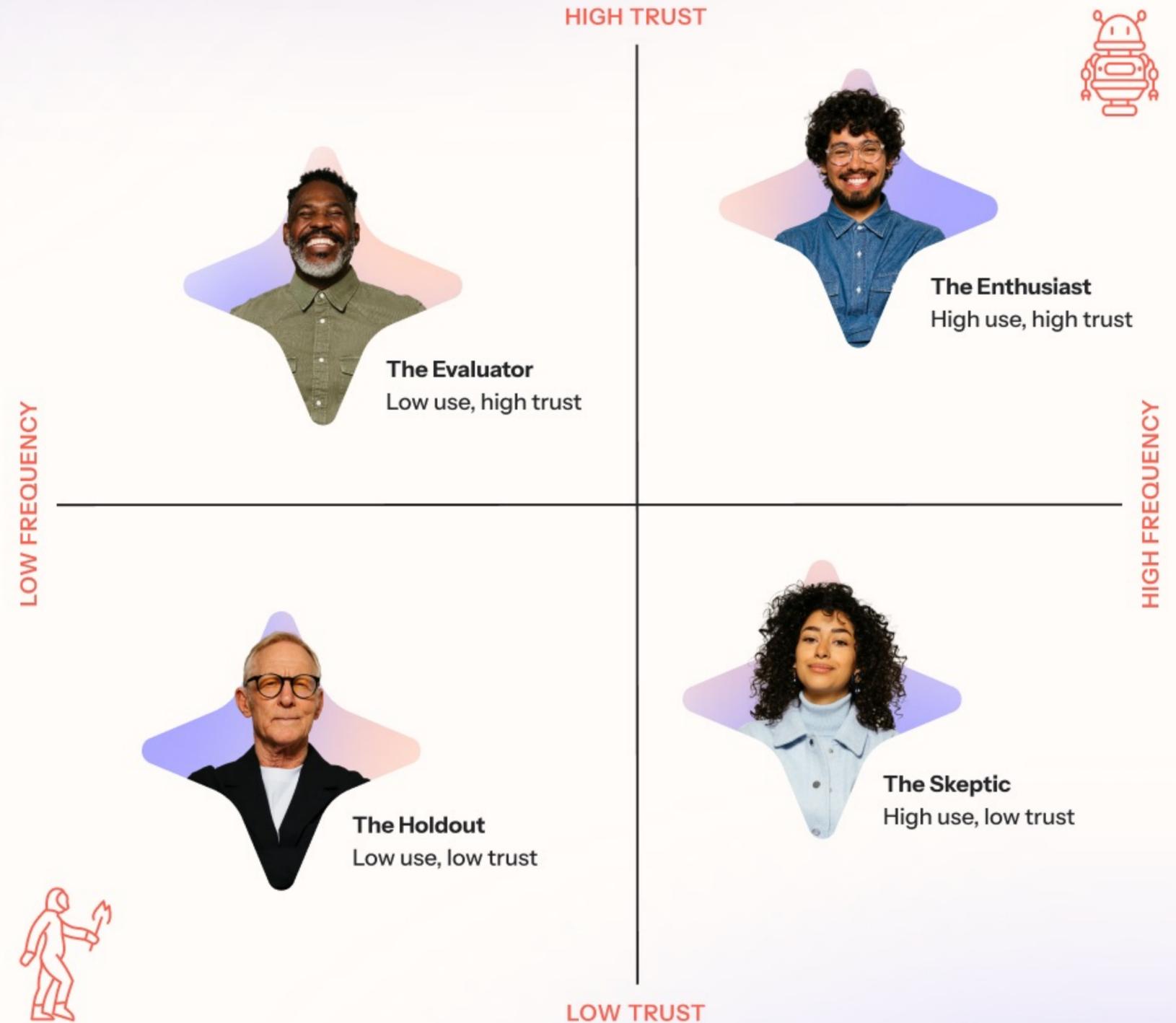
Andrew Bialecki,
co-founder and co-CEO, Klaviyo



THE AI ENGAGEMENT MAP

How consumers engage with and perceive AI

Shoppers fall into 4 distinct personas based on their level of trust in AI and how frequently they use it.



AI Enthusiasts trust AI the most. And they're hyper-aware of brands that use it.

AI is already part of the Enthusiast's routine, and they treat it as a decision-making partner.

Who they are

AI Evaluators somewhat trust AI and use it at least monthly.

- ◆ 63% Men
- ◆ 20% Gen X
- ◆ 20% earn \$100K annually



THE AI ENTHUSIAST

How they feel about AI

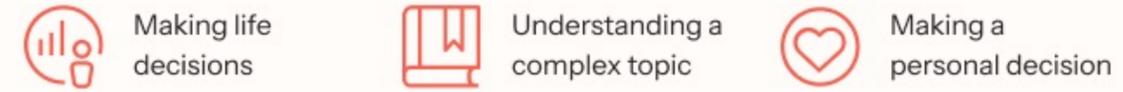
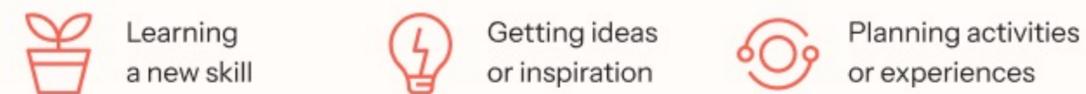
AI Enthusiasts overwhelmingly agree that AI has improved their experiences with brands, from the quality of personalized product recommendations (81%) and the quality of customer support (74%) to personalized marketing and promotions (72%)—a higher positive sentiment than any other persona.



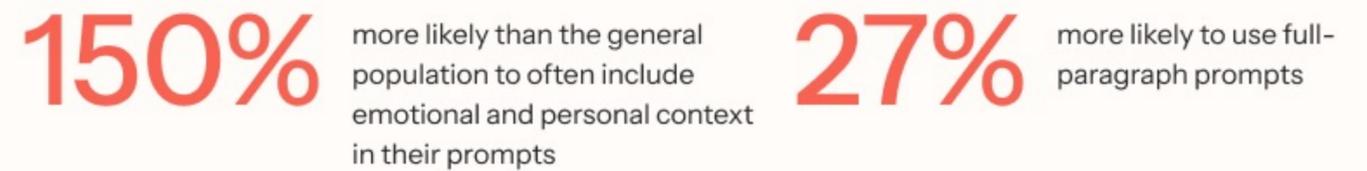
They're comfortable letting AI guide their decisions, and they act quickly on relevant recommendations.



And Enthusiasts turn to AI for help before traditional search engines, social media, or family and friends in every scenario included in our survey:

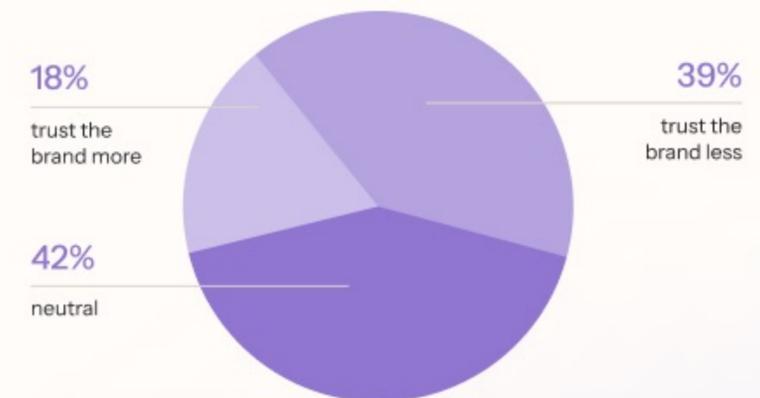


This high level of trust influences how much information Enthusiasts share with AI. They're 150% more likely than the general population to often include emotional and personal context in their prompts, and 27% more likely to use full-paragraph prompts.



Because they use AI so much, Enthusiasts are highly attuned to brands using it. 60% of AI Enthusiasts are somewhat or very confident that they can tell when they're interacting with AI vs. a human, and 38% say they encounter "AI slop" from brands multiple times per week—a higher proportion than any other persona.

AI Enthusiasts are split on how they feel about brands that use AI-generated content

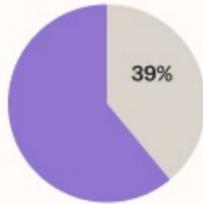


While Enthusiasts value AI's ability to improve their shopping experiences, and are more likely than any other persona to feel positively about AI-generated content, many don't respect brands that use AI to replace human work.

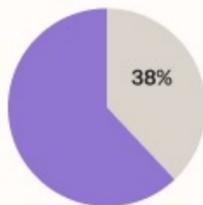
What turns them off

Anything generic:

One-size-fits-all messaging doesn't fly with AI Enthusiasts.



say a brand experience feels "too automated" if the company sends generic and repetitive marketing messages



say product recommendations miss the mark

Slow or irrelevant messages:

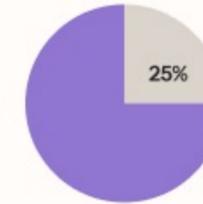
AI Enthusiasts want relevant answers, fast. They'll be frustrated with slow response times, or tools that make them work hard to get what they need.



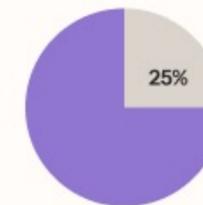
of all AI Enthusiasts say their "aha" moment from using AI was when it solved a problem faster than expected, or anticipated what they needed next

Static personalization:

When they receive poorly personalized content from a brand,



of AI Enthusiasts say they feel like the brand "doesn't really know or value me"



lose trust in the brand's ability to use their data responsibly

AI Enthusiasts reward brands that anticipate, not brands that react.

To reach AI Enthusiasts, get ahead of their next move

Optimize for AI search engines

An accepted fact in the SEO field is that if your site doesn't rank on the first page of Google, you might as well not exist, because most searchers hardly ever bother to click past the first page of results. These days, the stakes are even higher. AI has split the funnel, and discovery in 2026 happens across channels. AI Enthusiasts are leading this change by turning to LLMs like ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity to conduct research, which means to reach them. In order to reach them, you need to [optimize your online store](#) to make sure you show up in AI search results.

Cross- and up-sell based on customer behavior, not rules

Rule-based cross-selling goes something like this: a customer buys foundation from a makeup brand, which then promotes a complementary blush and lip gloss to them, which could be items that other people frequently buy together. This could be effective if the customer liked the foundation, but not if they returned it or rated it one star. Go beyond simple rules to take the AI Enthusiast's whole experience into account, and surface [recommendations specific to them](#), not ones that generally apply to your entire audience.

Send fewer messages with higher confidence

Less is more with AI Enthusiasts, who hate generic messages but are willing to convert on relevant ones. Remember, AI Enthusiasts want to feel like brands know them. Suggest the perfect product before they know they want it, [personalize send times](#) for every individual recipient, and send the [variation of a marketing message](#) that's most likely to resonate with each recipient.

How to reach AI Enthusiasts with Klaviyo



Use [predictive analytics](#) to anticipate a customer's next order date and reach out around then, or calculate potential lifetime value (LTV) and trigger relevant flows accordingly.



Include [personalized product feeds](#) in emails and your Customer Hub to surface relevant products.



Target customers where they're most likely to engage with AI-powered [channel affinity](#).



Create, launch, and continuously optimize campaigns with [K:AI Marketing Agent](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUR PARTNERS

“Collecting zero-party data using sign-up forms, surveys, Marketing Agent, or other tools is crucial for reaching AI Enthusiasts, because you’re able to directly learn about and address common problems or remove friction in an automated way via flows. WhatsApp is great if you want to be conversational while doing it, too. This will then increase your conversion rate and maximize revenue potential.”

Stefan Milicevic,
strategy director, Underground Ecom



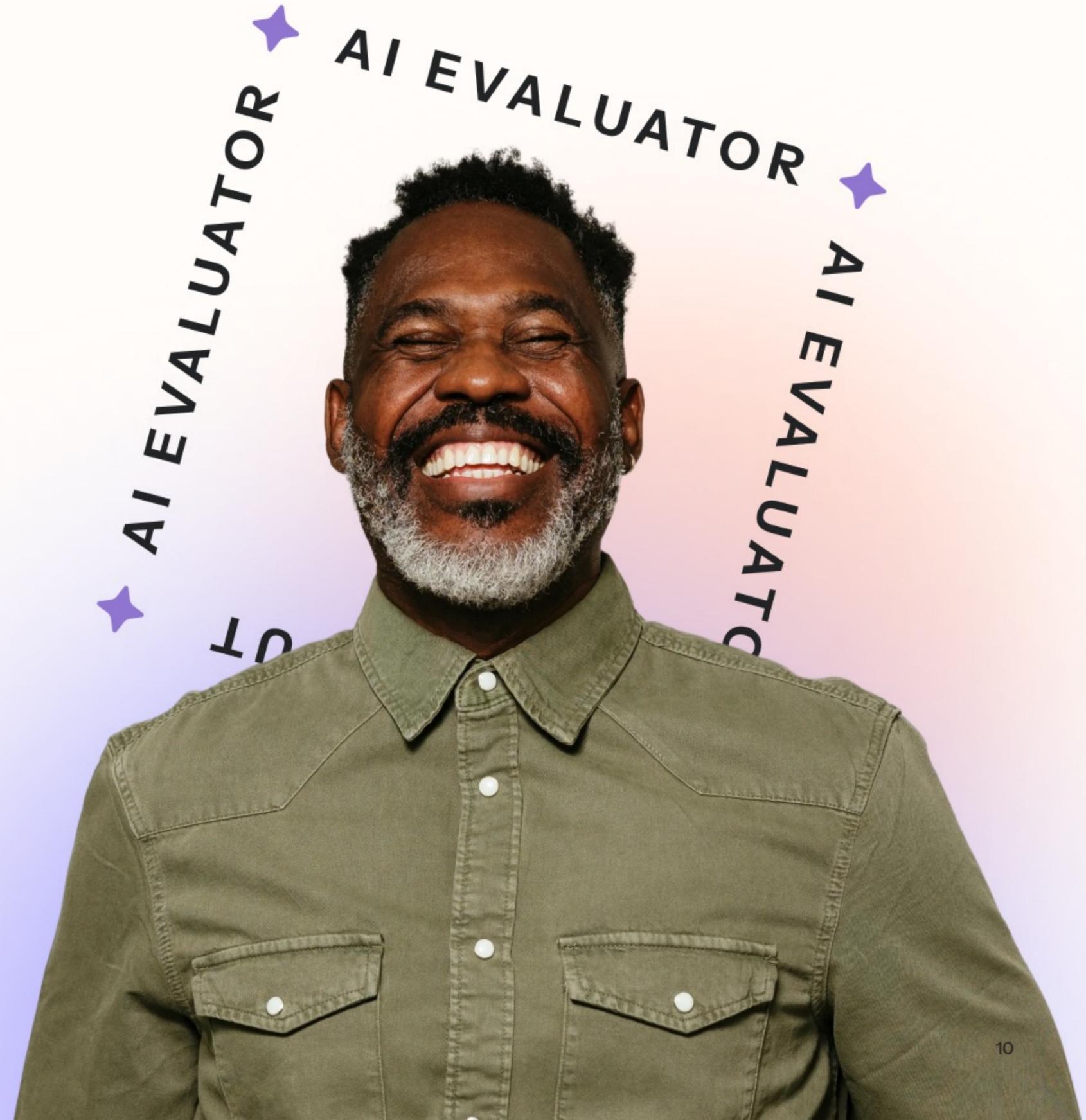
AI Evaluators don't rely on AI, but they're open to it.

AI Evaluators believe in AI's potential, but they're still deciding where it fits. They're not relying on it for everything but when they use it, they use it intentionally.

Who they are

AI Evaluators somewhat trust AI and use it at least monthly.

- ◆ 54% Women
- ◆ 40% Gen X
- ◆ 20% earn <\$75K annually



THE AI EVALUATOR

How they feel about AI

AI Evaluators primarily use traditional search engines for research and discovery, and they sometimes consult social media before using AI as well. When they do turn to AI, they treat it as a casual acquaintance rather than a trusted assistant: they're 54% less likely than AI Enthusiasts to use AI for planning or decision-making purposes (10% vs. 22%), but they use it to find information or do research (25%), or to answer their questions (24%).

When shopping, 54% of AI Evaluators have used AI multiple times to compare products or brands, and 45% have used it to read or summarize reviews. And 35% say AI has introduced them to products that they then researched further. This suggests that AI Evaluators are comfortable using AI to aggregate information about products or guide their research, but ultimately prefer to make buying decisions on their own.

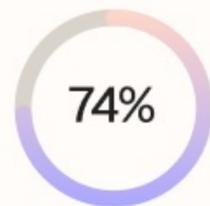
This persona isn't as sensitive to AI-generated content:



Of Evaluators say they encounter AI slop only a few times a month or less



Are neutral on their ability to detect AI vs. a human



Neutral to brands using AI-generated content

AI Evaluators' ambivalence may stem from a lack of proven value rather than inherent suspicion: 46% say they've yet to experience an "aha" moment when using AI, but they're open to it. A slight majority are neutral on whether AI has improved their experience as a customer, but there's opportunity: 43% believe AI has improved the quality of product information they receive and another 37% believe it's improved quality of customer service.

What turns them off



Pushiness:

Because AI Evaluators' shopping habits suggest that they direct their own research and verify recommendations on their own, messages that try to get them to buy, without including seriously compelling reasons to do so, probably won't be effective.



Vague value props:

AI Evaluators look for specific, factual information when making purchases. Generic platitudes that don't demonstrate a product's value or explain how it can solve a specific problem aren't helpful to AI Evaluators, whether they're reading a product page themselves or using AI to summarize it.



Over-personalization too early

26% of AI Evaluators say they're less likely to open or read future communication from a brand after receiving poorly personalized messages. Instead of telling AI Evaluators what they should buy (and running the risk of getting it wrong), give them the information they need to understand how to assess your products in the first place.

AI Evaluators respond to marketing that helps them help themselves.

To speak to AI Evaluators, tell them what they need to know and let them decide.

Create content that helps shoppers decide

As shoppers who prefer to make their own decisions, AI Evaluators want to feel like they're in the driver's seat. They respond well to clear, informational resources that complement their own evaluation process. Invest in educational resources like FAQs and side-by-side comparisons that explain the differences between products and provide the information AI Evaluators need to make the best decision. For example, a company that sells hiking gear could outline what climates and/or terrains each product is best suited for. An AI shopping assistant can offer real-time help by sharing this information with shoppers browsing your website.

Lean on customers to tell your story

Instead of pushing your value proposition on shoppers, let your happy customers tell your story for you. A good [product review](#) explains the problem someone faced, why they chose your product, their experience using it, and what results it helped them achieve. AI Evaluators are already seeking out customer perspectives by using AI to summarize reviews, so make sure you're encouraging people to leave them. (As an added bonus, public customer reviews can also help your brand show up in AI search results.)

You can also use reviews to personalize the education process by sending them to shoppers at the right time. Let's say a customer with a history of purchasing products to address dry skin views a moisturizer but doesn't purchase it. This could trigger a browse abandonment flow that highlights a positive review written by a customer with the same skincare concerns.

Use gentle nudges to build confidence over time

Help move AI Evaluators toward buying while keeping them in charge of their own decisions. For example, suggest a product category to browse, followed by educational resources about that category, then a side-by-side comparison between a handful of options based on browsing history. Stay top of mind with buyers who are taking longer to make a decision with an extended flow that sends educational information over time.

How to reach AI Evaluators with Klaviyo



Personalize education by targeting [customer segments](#) with the reviews most relevant to them.



Create [multi-step flows](#) that guide customers through the buying journey.



Centralize self-service information in [Klaviyo Customer Hub](#).



Identify where hesitation and dropoff happen with [marketing analytics](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUR PARTNERS

“The facts matter. AI can pull in data from online reviews, product descriptions, and trust badges to help AI Evaluators make informed decisions about their next purchase.”

Ashley Ismailovski,
director of email marketing, SmartSites



AI Skeptics are AI-literate and highly discerning.

AI Skeptics don't think that AI has improved their overall experiences with brands, and many lose trust in brands that use it.

Who they are

AI Skeptics feel neutral about or somewhat distrustful of AI, but they use it at least monthly.

- ◆ 61% Women
- ◆ 39% Gen X
- ◆ 68% earn <\$75K annually



THE AI SKEPTIC

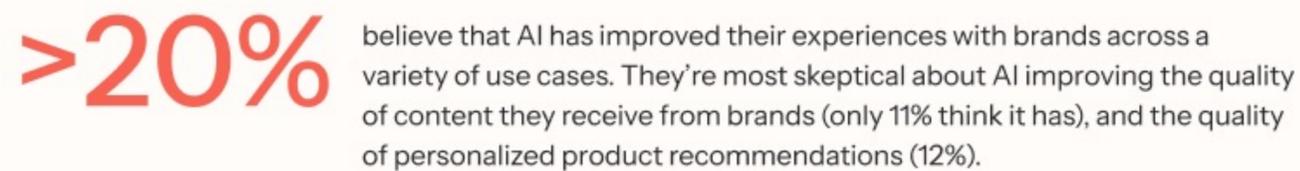
How they feel about AI

AI Skeptics use traditional search engines to help them troubleshoot, learn, research, and plan, and they use social media for ideas and inspiration. When making personal decisions, family and friends' opinions matter most. Less than 10% of AI Skeptics turn to AI in any of these scenarios.

When it comes to shopping, only 7% have used AI in the last 6 months. But 53% have used AI for product discovery at some point:



Skeptics don't have an AI habit, but they're not ideologically opposed to using it and have experienced some value.



While most (61%) Skeptics feel neutral about a brand using AI-generated content



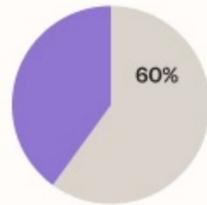
36% say it makes them trust the brand less

A 61% jump compared to AI Evaluators. And there's a little AI Skeptic in all of us. When we presented them with 4 customer service messages, at least one-third of all respondents identified all 4 messages as AI-generated, even though two were written by a human. In 2026, consumers may be overestimating how much content is AI-generated—a signal that strong brand differentiation is now more important than ever.

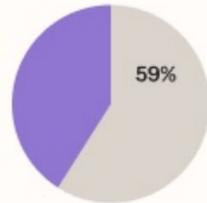
When content is clearly AI-generated, the repercussions can be swift. Over the holidays, an ad by Coca-Cola, which featured an AI-generated Santa Claus and animals, [sparked huge backlash from consumers](#). McDonald's [pulled an AI-generated ad](#) launched just a few days later after a similar negative response. More recently, [Super Bowl ads using or about AI](#) elicited mixed responses. In response, many brands have joined the conversation with ad spots that [lampoon the use of AI](#).

What turns them off

“AI-sounding” copy:



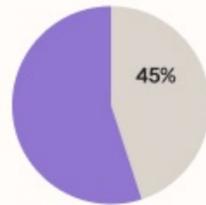
of AI Skeptics assume a writing style that feels “off or unnatural” indicates AI-generated content



look for an overly formal or robotic tone. A well-defined voice and tone guide keeps copy on-brand but feeling human

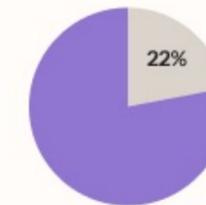
Over-automation:

AI Skeptics don’t want to feel like they’re interacting with a robot. They’re particularly sensitive to customer service chats that don’t feel human:

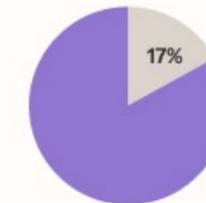


feel these make a brand experience feel too automated.

Mistargeted personalization:



of AI Skeptics are less likely to open future messages from brands if they receive bad personalization



lose trust in a brand’s ability to use their data responsibly

AI Skeptics only buy when brands prove relevance.

To connect with AI Skeptics, be careful when using AI.

Use AI sparingly in the creative process

AI can help with the copy or media creation process, but 36% of AI Skeptics say AI-generated marketing content makes them trust the brand less. Strike a balance by using AI to become more efficient instead of as a total replacement for human creatives. For example, use AI to brainstorm ideas or outline content, then hand it off to a human writer. For visuals, use AI to enhance real photos or edit individual elements, like swapping out a background or inserting brand colors. Avoid generating images and video from scratch, which risks the “uncanny valley” effect.

Define a clear brand voice and tone

When deciding whether content is AI-generated or written by a human, AI Skeptics look for an overly formal tone that sounds “off” or robotic. And remember, many lose trust in companies they believe are using AI-generated content. [Voice and tone](#), which communicate your brand’s personality to foster trust and a sense of connection with customers, have always been important. In 2026, a distinct brand voice is an even bigger competitive advantage, helping companies stand out amidst a sea of AI slop. AI can help you create clear guidelines by analyzing existing content across your website, marketing messages, and customer service content and identifying common patterns.

Prioritize AI for service moments that remove friction

AI Skeptics are wary of overly automated customer service. But those who do use AI have found it useful for answering questions (27%) and finding information (24%). Strike a balance by using an AI customer agent to help answer simple questions, but escalating issues that need personalized help to a human.

How to reach AI Skeptics with Klaviyo



Manage [omnichannel marketing](#) from one place to avoid redundant or excessive messages.



Use [brand voice AI](#) to apply brand voice guidelines to AI-generated content.



Answer questions at high-intent moments with [K:AI Customer Agent](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUR PARTNERS

“One of the biggest mistakes I see brands make with AI Skeptics is assuming the problem is messaging volume, when it’s actually credibility. When personalization misses, or even feels slightly ‘off’, Skeptics don’t just ignore it, they downgrade their trust in the brand. In practice, we’ve seen stronger conversion when brands lean harder on customer reviews, UGC, and creator proof, using AI behind the scenes to optimize timing and placement rather than always generate the message itself.”

Zac Fromson,
Co-founder, Lilo Social



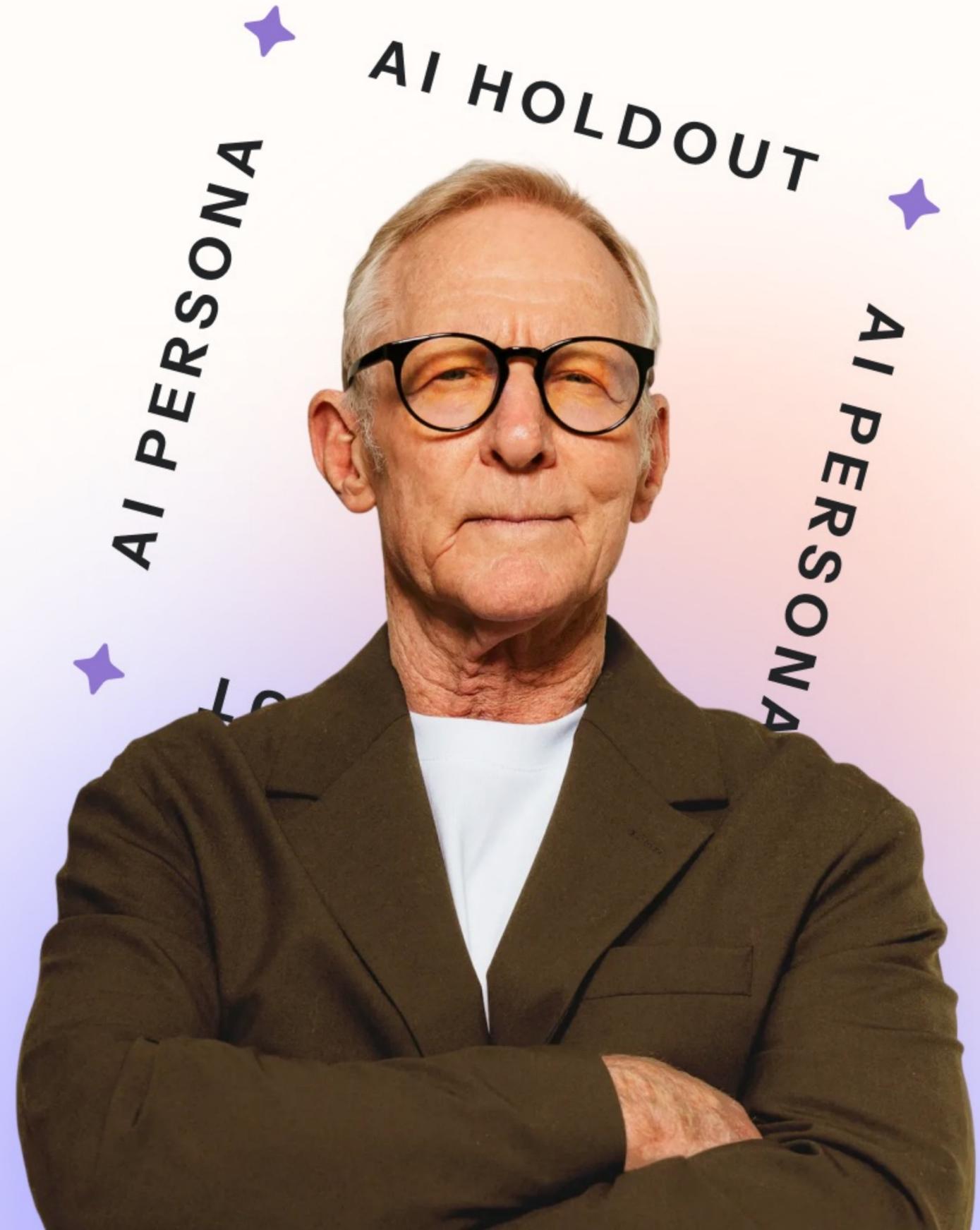
AI Holdouts prioritize reliability over novelty.

AI Holdouts aren't sold on AI yet, and may never be. They think it's unreliable or overhyped.

Who they are

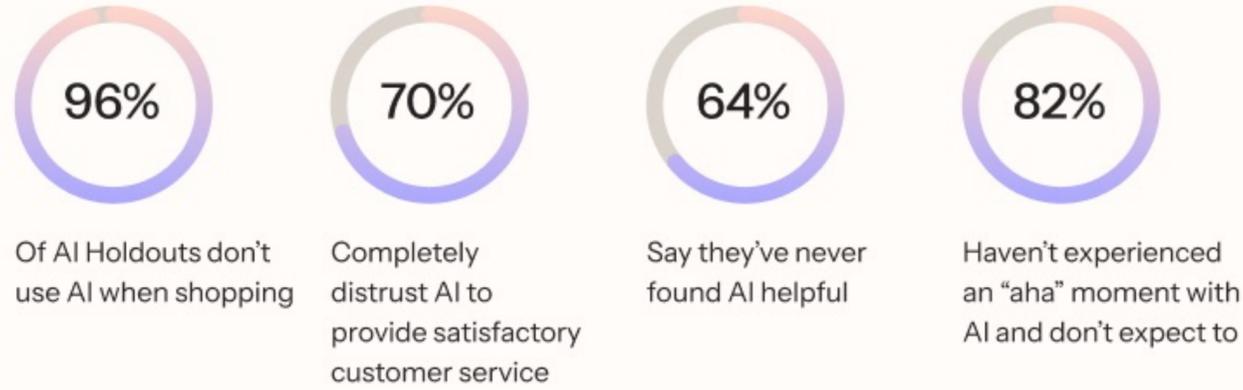
AI Holdouts distrust AI and use it less than once a month, or not at all.

- ◆ 60% Women
- ◆ 45% Gen X
- ◆ 80% earn <\$75K annually



THE AI HOLDOUT

How they feel about AI



AI Holdouts overwhelmingly do not believe that AI has made the customer experience better. Only 1–4% believe that AI has improved the quality of brand experiences like personalized product recommendations, promotions, customer service, and content.

AI Holdouts prefer familiar paths and clear answers to their questions. They turn to traditional search engines for answers and guidance first, then seek advice from their family, friends, or colleagues. They're more likely to consult traditional media or news than any other persona:

8–18% of Holdouts turn to these outlets depending on the scenario, but that range falls to...

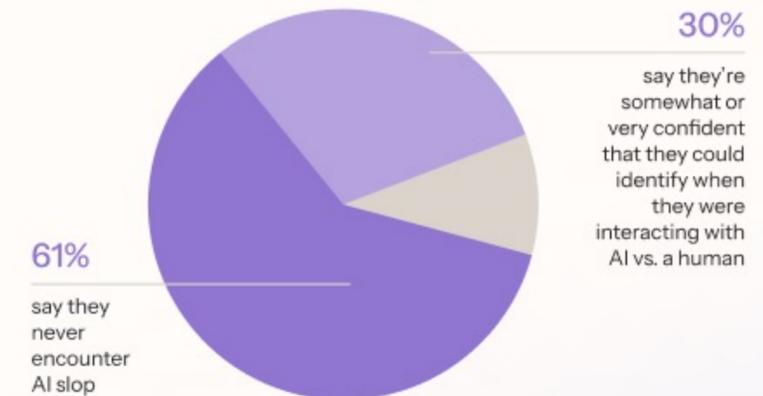
1–9% across AI Enthusiasts, AI Evaluators, and AI Skeptics.



This suggests that much of AI Holdouts' reticence toward AI is rooted in emotion.

Over half of AI Holdouts (58%) trust brands less when they use AI-generated content. But they're not particularly attuned to it:

Over half of AI Holdouts (58%) trust brands less when they use AI-generated content. But they're not particularly attuned to it:



(That said, AI Holdouts performed just as well as other personas when asked to identify AI-generated copy and images.)

What turns them off



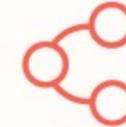
Mistargeted personalization:

Make sure there's always a clear option for AI Holdouts to get to a human, whether that's while they're browsing, or when they need help after placing an order.



Using information you've gathered to hyper-personalize content:

There's a fine line between personalized and creepy. (Remember the viral news story about how Target figured out a teen girl was pregnant before she did?) Don't use data to make assumptions about your customers, or use data that you've gathered without explicit consent to personalize marketing.



Poorly AI-generated content:

In general, AI Holdouts may trust your brand less if you use AI-generated content. But that's only if they know it's AI-generated. Use AI well, and you can appeal to these audiences without losing their trust.

AI Holdouts trust brands that create clear value.

AI Holdouts trust what they know. They aren't open to AI being the only option for support.

Promote bestsellers and “sure things”

Besides traditional search engines, AI Holdouts consult their friends, family, and traditional media to research products, plan activities, make personal decisions, and more. They want to know what real people like them think of the products and services they're evaluating, and what kind of value those products and services provide. You can cater to this preference by curating collections of bestsellers and top-rated products your existing customers swear by. This kind of social proof shows Holdouts the insights they'd look for on their own anyway, and reassures them that they're getting the best.

Create clear offers and reminders

Simplicity is key when marketing to AI Holdouts. Overpersonalization can feel intrusive (“Here are the best products for dog owners with birthdays in July who last purchased two months ago, just like you!”). Instead, target AI Holdouts with offers that still feel timely, relevant, and familiar—but that aren't closely tied to personal data—like [holiday-based deals](#) or promotions, like flash sales. If you do personalize, keep it simple and straightforward, such as offering a birthday month deal.

Use human-forward service

Holdouts may not be as comfortable as some of your other customers interacting with AI customer agents, or self-serving when they need help. Make sure you're supporting them by building a human option into every support touchpoint. For example, always include a “Talk to a human” option in support interfaces, and explain that if your AI agent is collecting information up front, it's just so a human rep can enter the conversation with a complete picture of what's going on.

How to reach AI Holdouts with Klaviyo



Use [customer reviews](#) and UGC in campaigns to build confidence.



Collect customer information that you directly use in marketing using [forms](#).



Make it easy for human agents to step in and provide 1:1 customer support using a unified, AI-powered [helpdesk](#).

To connect with customers using AI, match personalization depth to AI trust level

All of your customers and potential customers are at different points in their AI journeys, and it's influencing how they perceive your brand and make decisions. As you adopt AI into your internal operations and customer-facing channels, it can both help and hurt your business, depending on how you use it and the tools you trust.

Klaviyo B2C CRM is the AI-powered foundation brands need to connect with AI Enthusiasts and Evaluators with high-tech personalization, while reassuring Skeptics and Holdouts with high-touch accuracy.

[Sign up](#)

[Get the demo](#)

“A useful way to operationalize AI mindsets is to think in terms of personalization depth. AI Enthusiasts respond to predictive, anticipatory messaging that connects behavior across channels. AI Evaluators convert when personalization explains itself. AI Skeptics and AI Holdouts need far shallower personalization, where relevance comes from timing and context, not inferred intent. When teams align depth to trust level, conversion improves without increasing message volume or tooling complexity.”

Zac Fromson
Co-founder, Lilo Social



Methodology

To gather the data for this research, Klaviyo surveyed 8,000+ consumers in the US, the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Australia, and Singapore in November 30 to December 22, 2025.

Report created in collaboration with Datalily

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