



New ARF Research Reveals How AI Is Reshaping Marketing

Study finds growing AI adoption, confidence and governance across advertisers and agencies

NEW YORK, NY – September 16, 2026 – The Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) today released a new research report, *How Marketers Are Using Artificial Intelligence*, examining how advertisers and agencies are adopting AI across marketing, media, research and measurement. The study finds that AI is now widely used for creative development, media buying, customer engagement, analytics, campaign measurement, synthetic data and AI-generated personas.

Confidence is rising alongside adoption. Among marketers using AI, average confidence in AI-generated outputs increased from **82% in November 2025 to 93% in May 2026**. At the same time, organizations are becoming more systematic about AI: extensive testing reached **64%**, and formal training programs grew from **50% to 70%** between the two survey waves.

“AI is becoming embedded in how marketers work, from creative development to analytics and measurement,” said Scott McDonald, Ph.D., President and CEO of the ARF. “As adoption accelerates, the industry needs to put the same energy into validation, governance and standards, so marketers can understand when and how these tools can be trusted.”

The study finds that there is **no single dominant AI system across marketing functions**. Instead, adoption varies by use case, with platform-native tools playing a major role in media buying and measurement, while different providers lead in creative, analytics and other applications.

The study also finds that marketers see immediate benefits from AI in **efficiency and speed, higher-quality insights and improved targeting**, while data privacy, inaccurate outputs and brand safety remain leading concerns. Overall, the findings point to an industry where adoption and confidence are advancing quickly, but shared standards and validation practices are still developing.

Read the full report, [How Marketers Are Using Artificial Intelligence](https://thearf.org/research/how-marketers-are-using-artificial-intelligence), at thearf.org.

About the ARF

Founded in 1936 (over 90 years ago), the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) is the leading organization dedicated to creating better advertising through research,

standards and collaboration. With more than 400 member companies, the ARF advances the science and practice of advertising, media and marketing.

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