

# *Future* Trends in Marketing Executive Summary

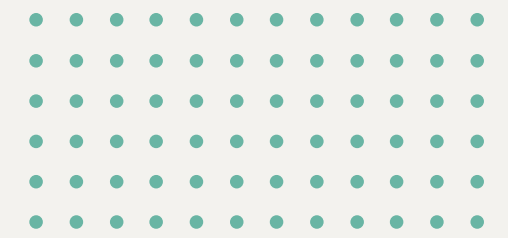
2026 Report at a Glance

[ama.org/marketing-news/2026-trends-report/](https://ama.org/marketing-news/2026-trends-report/)



# Introduction

The AMA created this report guided by the belief that marketers are not just responders to change, but active innovators who shape the future through their work. Developed with input from over 30 professional marketers with diverse perspectives, the report explores how global forces—sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory—are on a trajectory to transform the marketing landscape over the next five to ten years.



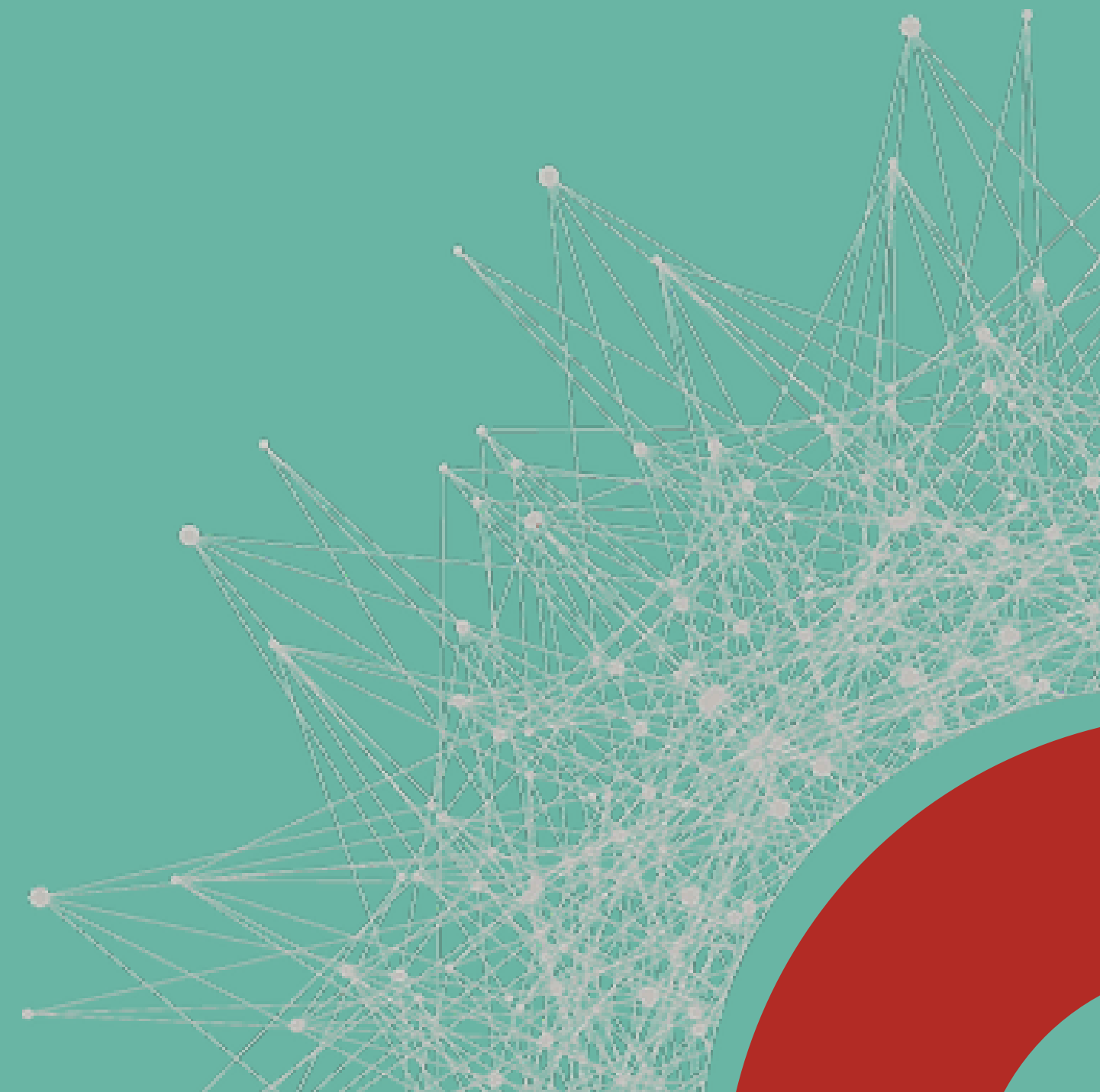
**As the essential community**  
for marketing, the AMA is committed  
to helping professionals anticipate  
and navigate these changes while  
leveraging marketing's power to  
**drive business growth** and  
**create positive societal impact.**



# Top 5 Trends

In this section, we explore the top five trends:

1. The Age of Autonomous Agents
2. Consumer Discovery Shifts to Scroll
3. Portfolio Careers and the Liquid Workforce
4. Innovation Imperative in Sustainability
5. Building Brand Trust in a Fragmented World





## TOP 5 TRENDS

# 01



# The Age of Autonomous Agents

AI agents are poised to revolutionize marketing by acting as intermediaries between consumers and brands, automating everything from shopping decisions to campaign execution.

# How to Navigate the Shift

**Optimize content and product information for AI interpretation.**



Ensure your brand messaging, product details, and value propositions are structured in ways that AI systems can easily parse and prioritize when making.

**Shift from "AI as tool" to "AI as teammate."**



Reimagine workflows, management practices, and organizational design to integrate AI agents as collaborative partners.

**Audit your marketing work for "commodity vs. craft."**



Identify repetitive tasks that AI agents can automate while doubling down on creative and strategic work that requires human imagination and insight.



## TOP 5 TRENDS

# 02

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# Consumer Discovery Shifts to Scroll

Consumer discovery is shifting from traditional keyword-based search engines to scroll-native social platforms and AI chatbots. Brands need to create emotionally resonant, feed-optimized content and partner with creators while adapting to a landscape where social media and AI interfaces have become the primary discovery engines for consumers.



# How to Navigate the Shift

**Reallocate budgets toward creator-led platforms.**



Prioritize partnerships with micro and niche influencers who deliver stronger engagement and ROI.

**Develop scroll-native, emotion-first content.**



Design content for feed-based environments like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, rather than simply repurposing traditional advertising for social platforms.

**Optimize for "answer engine optimization" and AI discoverability.**



Ensuring your brand content, product information, and website structure can be easily parsed by large language models and AI assistants like ChatGPT.

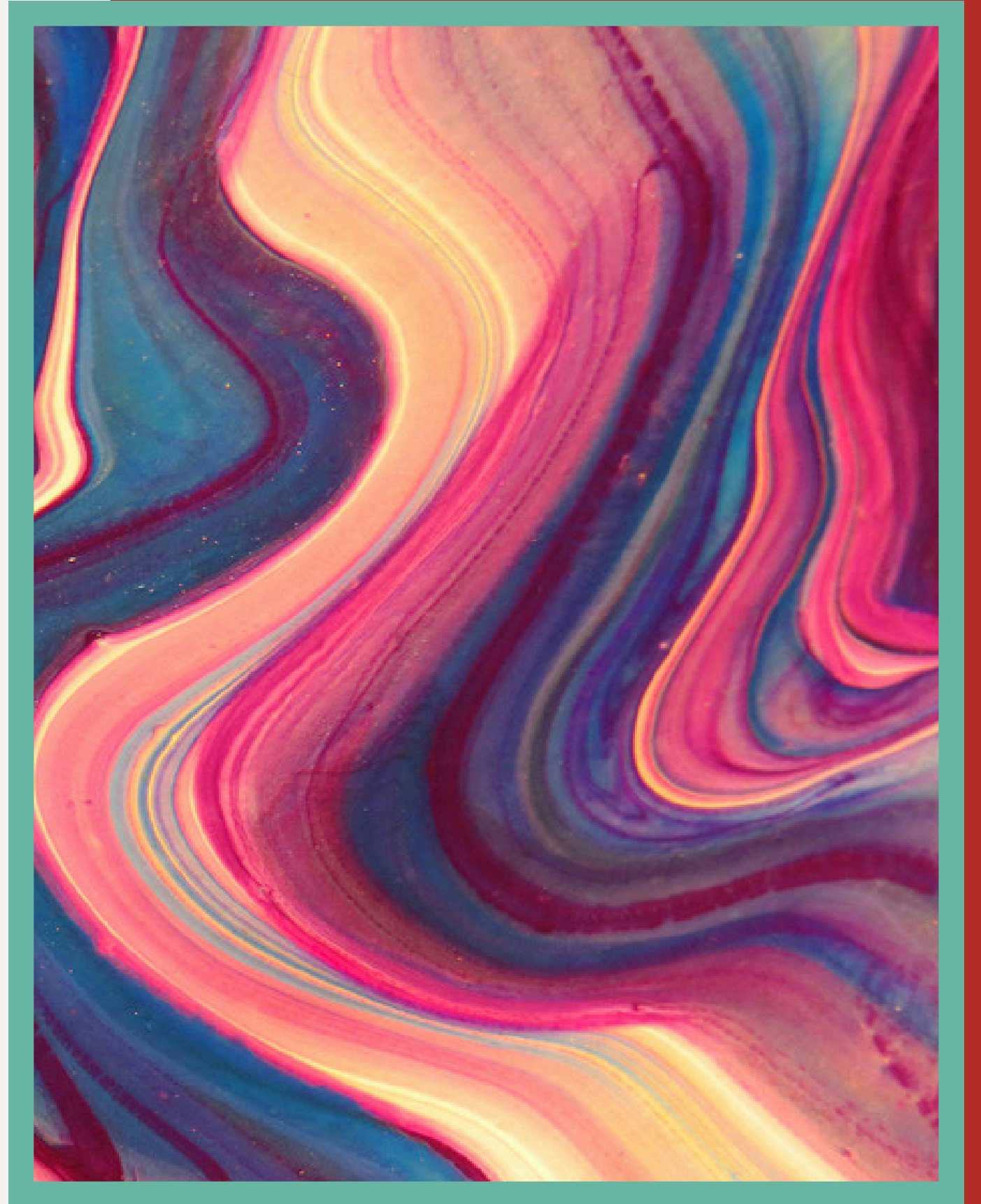


## TOP 5 TRENDS

03

# The Liquid Workforce and the Portfolio Career

The traditional full-time career model in marketing is being replaced by a "liquid workforce" of fractional leaders, freelancers, and portfolio careerists who combine multiple roles and income streams while companies increasingly rely on flexible talent and AI to stay agile in uncertain times.





TOP 5 TRENDS > THE LIQUID WORKFORCE AND THE PORTFOLIO CAREER

# How to Navigate the Shift

**Redesign organizational structures.**



Reorganize so that hybrid teams of full-time employees, fractional leaders, freelancers, and AI agents can work collaboratively.

**Consider a freelance, fractional, or portfolio career path.**



This path may or may not be a good fit for your life and priorities.

**Commit to upskilling in multiple areas of expertise.**



Focus on strategic capabilities that can't be easily automated.



TOP 5 TRENDS

04

# Innovation Imperative in Sustainability

Forward-thinking marketers are maintaining sustainability investments and innovating through circular design, smart packaging, and green storytelling to differentiate their brands and meet growing consumer demand for environmental responsibility.



# How to Navigate the Shift

**Take the long view and maintain sustainability investments.**



Despite short-term political and cultural headwinds, position your brand for competitive advantage by differentiating through authentic sustainability commitments that will matter when the inevitable rebound occurs.

**Expand marketing's role beyond launch campaigns.**



Shift focus to building long-term value by promoting repair services, creating product care tutorials, and highlighting resale or take-back platforms that educate customers on maximizing product lifespan.

**Practice green storytelling, not greenhushing or greenwashing.**



Communicate authentic sustainability efforts with evidence-based narratives that build trust and avoid both exaggeration and silence around genuine impact.



## TOP 5 TRENDS

# 05

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# Building Brand Trust in a Fragmented World

In an era of AI-driven misinformation and fragmented identity-based communities, brands must earn trust through transparency, cultural fluency, and authentic participation in the rituals and values of digital communities rather than relying on traditional demographic targeting or broad messaging.



# How to Navigate the Shift

**Map emerging virtual groups.**



Identify the groups relevant to your industry and understand their specific polarization patterns.

**Empower authentic ambassadors.**



Opt for those who already belong to the communities your brand serves. Their advocacy carries deeper credibility than paid influencers.


**Shift from “one size fits all” demographic targeting to modular brand strategies.**



Create flexible narratives that adapt to different identity ecosystems while staying anchored in a consistent core.

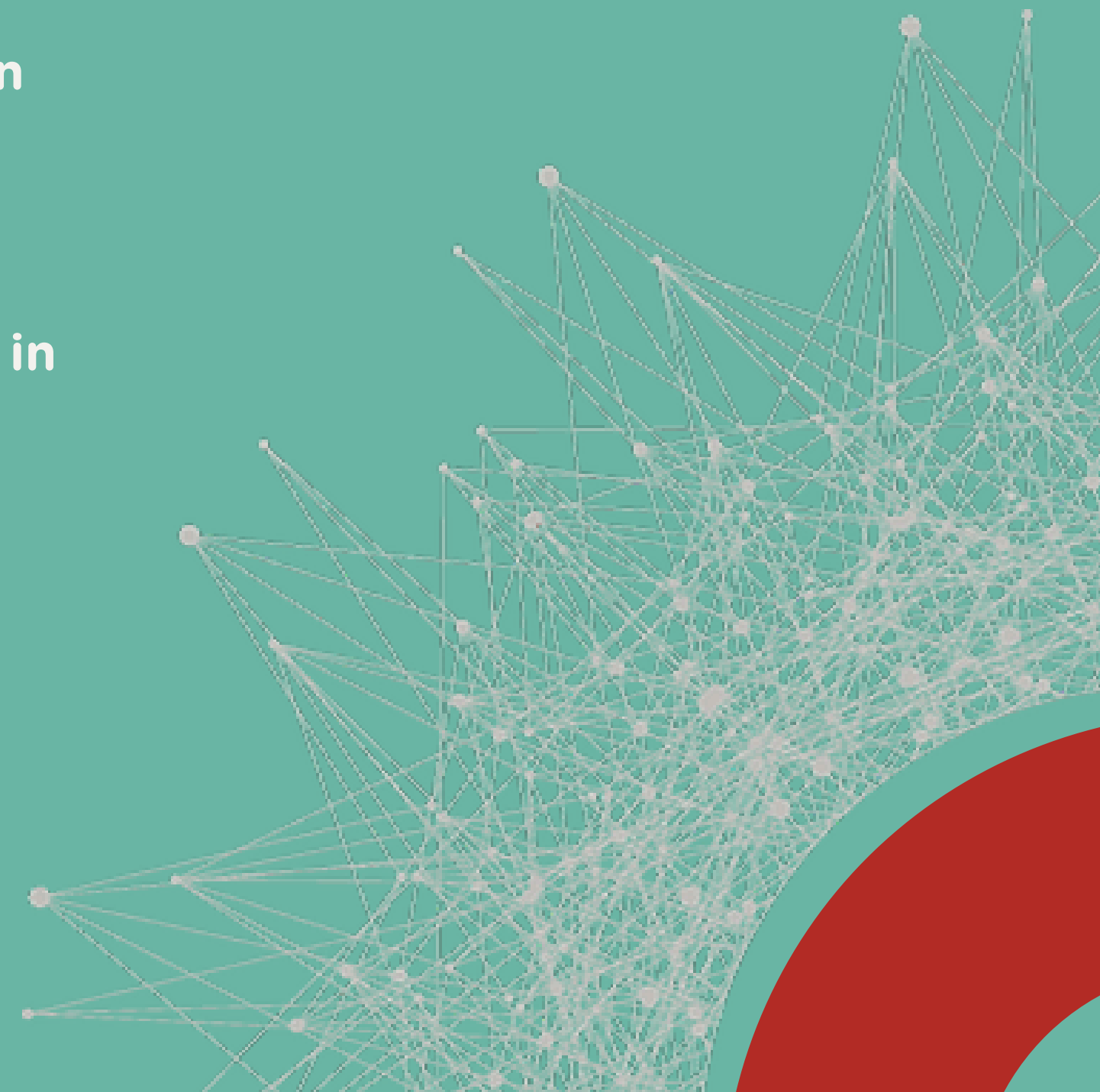


# Four Possible Futures

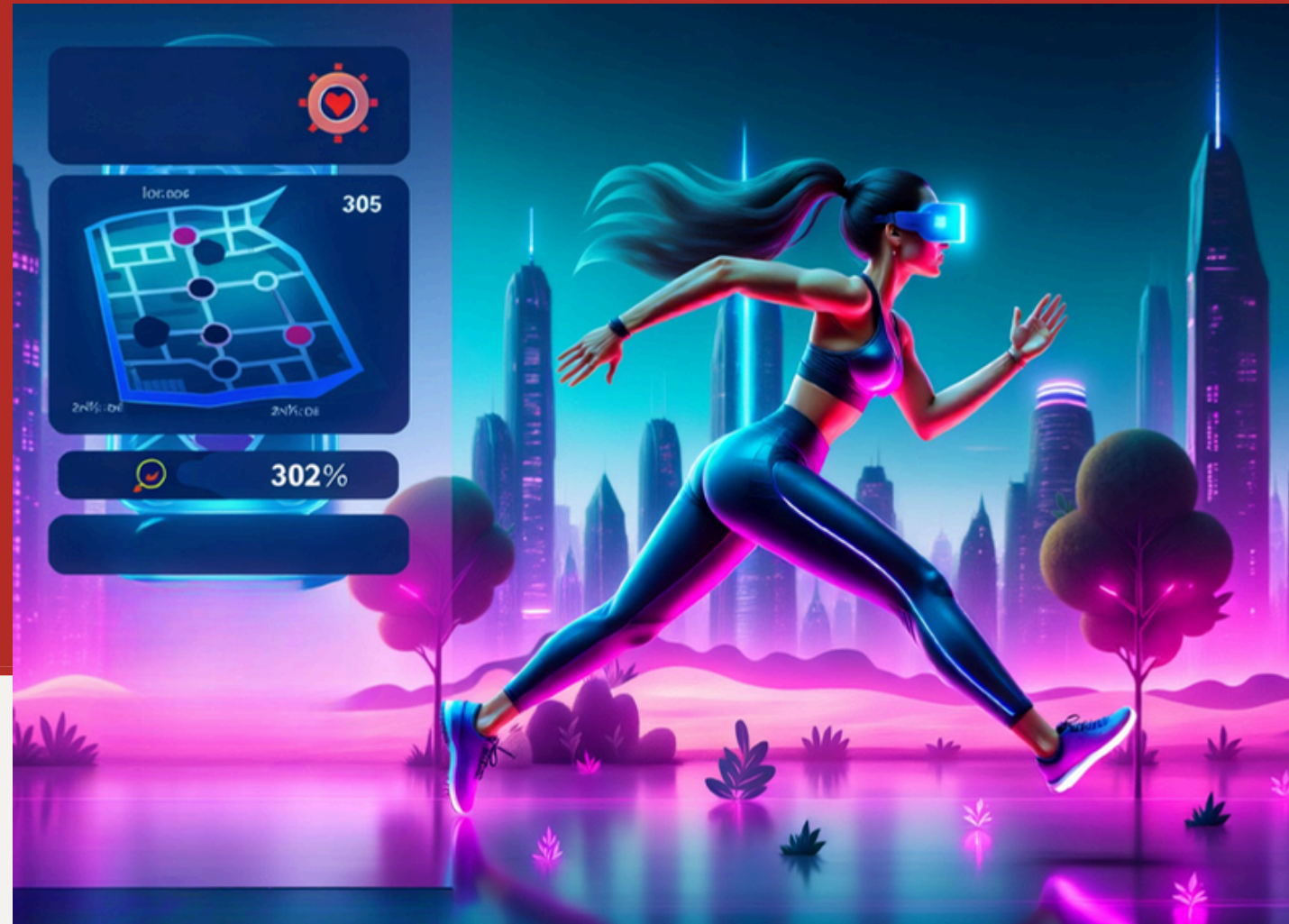


The future of marketing is anything but certain. The question isn't what will happen, but how we can imagine possibilities ahead and prepare for them.

Included here are snapshots of four scenarios for marketing in 5-10 years. They are not predictions, but provocations that explore how today's trends might evolve differently.



# GROWTH



## Sofia in the Infinite Marketplace

In a world of abundant energy and AI-driven hyper-personalization, Sofia navigates life as both a consumer managed by an AI health coach that constantly markets to her and a fractional marketer who provides the "human filter" of authenticity that burned-out consumers crave.

# CONSTRAINT



## Malik in the Age of Enough

After catastrophic climate disasters forced global rationing and austerity measures, Malik works as a marketer helping communities adapt to resource constraints by crafting messages of solidarity and shared sacrifice rather than promoting consumption.

## COLLAPSE



### Alex in the Free Attention Zone

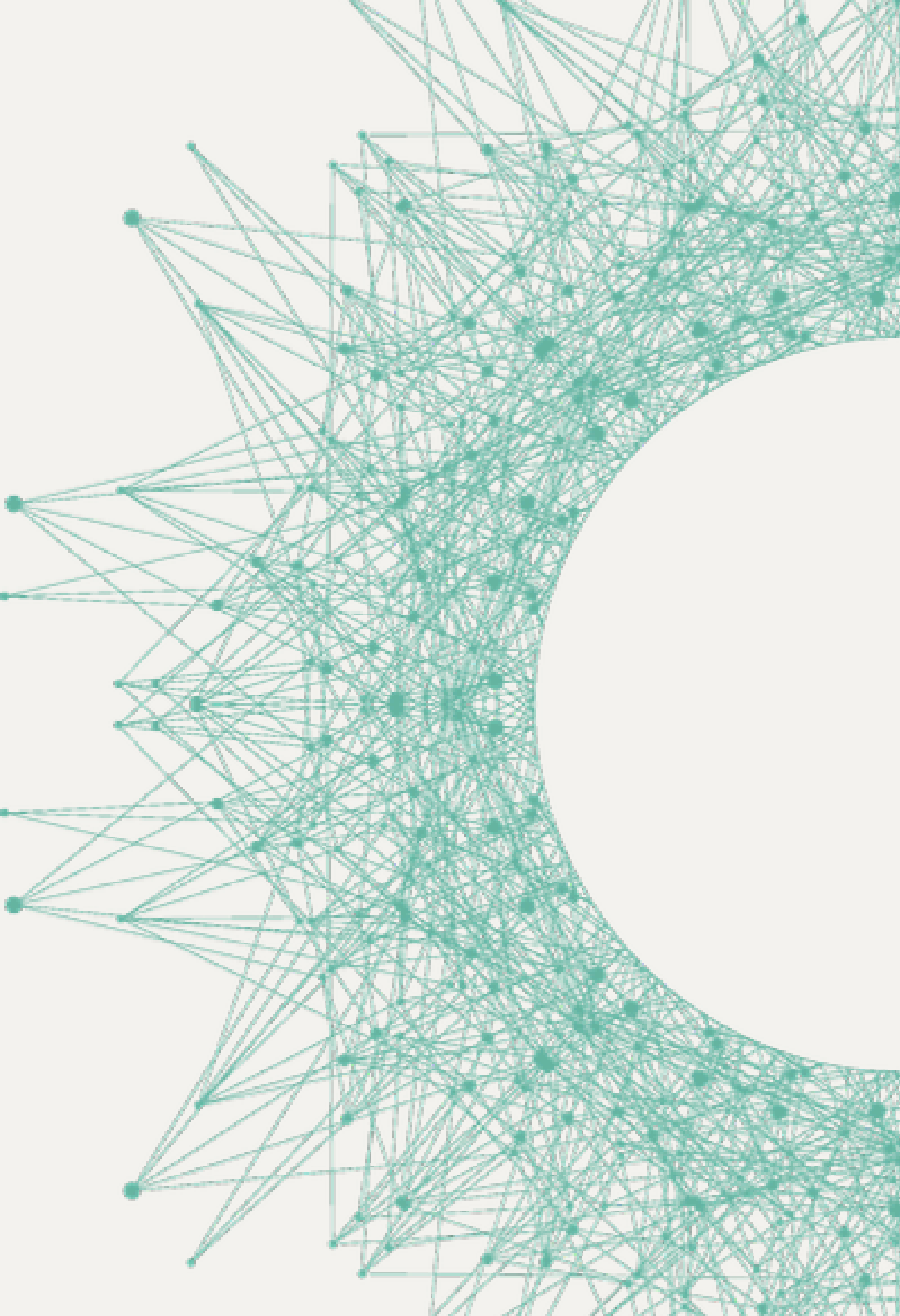
Following a reckoning around the attention economy and its negative impacts on society, the world is divided between “protected” attention zones and unregulated Free Zones. Alex works as an underground cognitive broker helping people and brands navigate the fragmented landscape of attention regulation.

## TRANSFORMATION



### Riley and Marketing Reimagined

As AI agents take over all transactional marketing functions, Riley reinvents themselves as a “Creative Resonance Designer” who creates imaginative, emotionally resonant experiences that algorithms cannot replicate in a world where human meaning-making is the only remaining differentiator.



# Methodology

This report used a modified Delphi process combined with elements from the Institute for the Future's foresight methodology, bringing together over 30 marketing professionals from May to August 2025. The panelists, selected for their diverse expertise and backgrounds, participated in strategic foresight training, independently nominated trends, engaged in multiple rounds of voting and discussion, and examined future scenarios using the STEEP framework (considering social, technological, economic, environmental, and political factors). Throughout the process, they provided evidence-based insights to forecast how marketing might evolve over the next five to ten years, and what marketers and brands should do now to stay ahead.





# Get the Full Report

Download the full report for an in-depth analysis of each of the five trends, as well as the full future scenarios.

