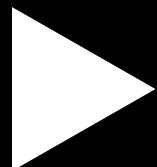


# Strategy<sup>B</sup>

## The Data Landscape AI & Analytics Challenges in Retail and CPG

2025 Global Survey

Start



# Executive Summary

Retail and Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) companies are entering a new phase of data maturity, one defined less by experimentation with AI and analytics, and more by the need for trusted, consistent, and well-governed data.

According to the 2025 Global Survey, inconsistent answers, fragmented definitions, and weak governance remain among the top obstacles to scaling AI-powered insights. As organizations accelerate automation, personalization, and real-time decision-making, these foundational issues now determine whether AI delivers value or stalls.

This report examines how retail and CPG organizations are addressing the core challenges of data trust and governance while preparing their environments for scalable, responsible AI. The findings point to a clear conclusion: the next wave of competitive advantage will belong to companies that treat data governance not as a back-office function, but as the strategic enabler of speed, innovation, and enterprise-wide intelligence.



**54%** of retail/CPG companies say their top priority is faster decision-making and innovation



**50%** expect cost savings and higher productivity from data & AI investments



**27%** of retail/CPG respondents want to empower at least 21% of their workforce with AI-powered analytics in the next 12 months



**53%** cite cost, and **50%** cite unrealistic expectations as top barriers to AI adoption



**35%** experience inconsistent answers—a direct result of missing semantic layers and poor data governance

## What sets leaders apart?

They're investing in **self-service tools, semantic governance, and domain-specific AI agents**—while actively expanding access beyond analysts and onto the front lines.

Case studies from **GUESS** and **Vuori** demonstrate what's possible when AI and analytics is backed by a solid data foundation.

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## Key Takeaways from the 2025 Survey

AI-powered analytics is no longer the limiting factor in retail and CPG. The real bottleneck is the data foundation beneath it. The 2025 Global Survey reveals three core insights shaping the new data landscape.

### Lack of a unified data foundation

Despite significant investment in analytics, many organizations still operate with disconnected BI tools, and duplicated logic. Survey respondents point to missing semantic layers, unclear ownership, and uneven data quality as the most persistent structural blockers.



### AI readiness requires more than tools

Natural language querying, embedded analytics, and automated workflows are gaining traction, but their success depends on trusted, governed, and semantically rich data.



### Trust in data is a major concern

More than a third of surveyed organizations report inconsistent or incorrect answers to basic data questions, a direct consequence of fragmented definitions and siloed data models.



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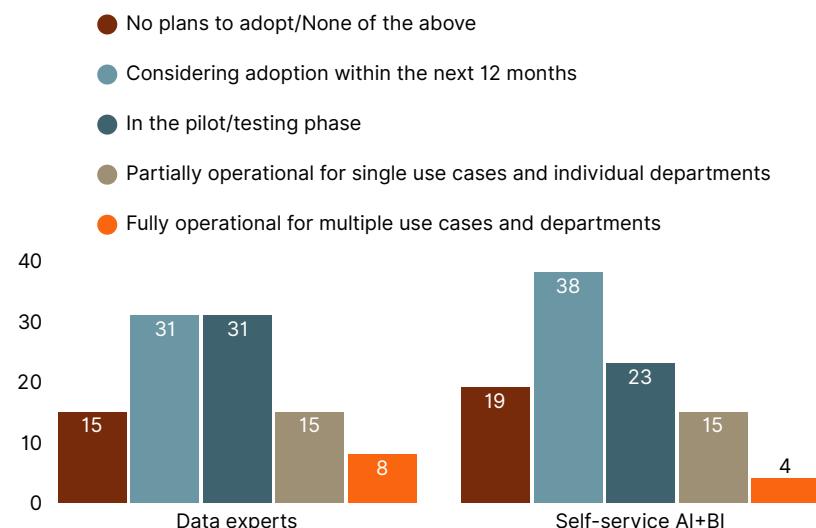
# Data Maturity in Retail

Retail and CPG companies are advancing their use of analytics, but maturity levels vary widely across the industry. Two adoption patterns offer a clear picture of where the industry stands.

- Technical teams use automated data workflows to speed up prep and analysis but still spend time reconciling data and ensuring consistency.
- Non-technical users benefit from self-service analytics, yet their effectiveness depends on robust data governance.

## Pilots and adopters

Data experts drive adoption, self-service analytics follows suit (responses in %)



## Use Case 1: Data Experts

Organizations are using AI to speed up tasks for technical users, from data preparation to dashboard generation.

- **15%** of surveyed companies have operational deployments in single departments
- **8%** are fully scaled across multiple departments and use cases



## Use Case 2: Self-Service

AI tools are making it easier for non-technical users to explore data via natural language and auto-generated visualizations.

- **19%** of respondents have operational self-service analytics programs
- **38%** are considering adoption within the next 12 months

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## Data Democratization in Retail

Broader access to data only works when definitions are consistent, business logic is centralized, and security travels with the data regardless of tool or interface.

Retail and CPG companies are beginning to roll out natural language tools and embedded visualizations that make data accessible to frontline staff, from in-store associates to plant-floor operators.

This shift could unlock the largest wave of analytics adoption since the spreadsheet era.

## What's Driving This Expansion?

New capabilities are lowering the barrier to entry—and boosting confidence in data.



Natural language interfaces that let anyone ask data questions



Automated visualizations that eliminate dashboard dependencies



Embedded analytics in tools people already use—like Microsoft Office, Slack, and POS apps



AI literacy training and change management support to drive adoption

### Adoption Potential

Organizations are rethinking access to analytics.

9%

of employees in most organizations currently use analytics tools beyond spreadsheets

27%

of surveyed companies plan to give over 20% or more of their workforce access to AI-powered analytics in the next 12 months

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# Automated Analytics and AI Agents

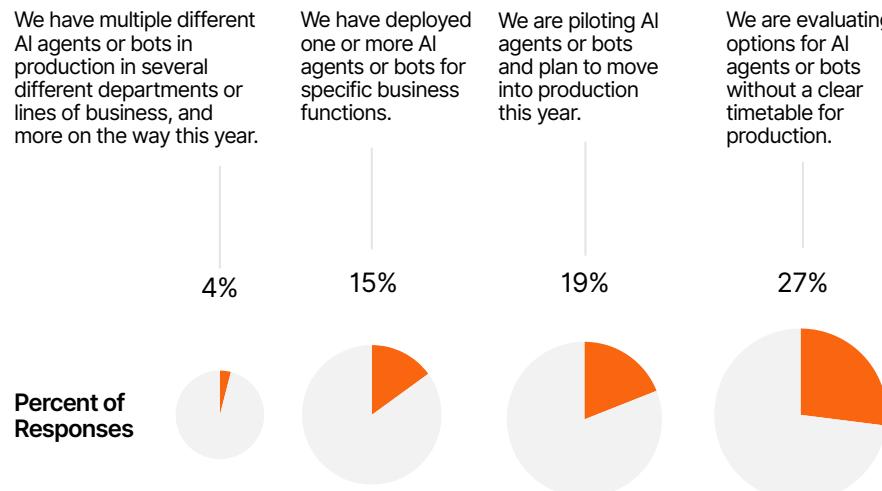
Retail and CPG companies are experimenting with automated assistants, insight notifications, and conversational interfaces that deliver governed data on demand. This shift reduces friction and accelerates decision-making, but it also magnifies the need for a consistent, trusted data foundation. When insights appear in real time, any inconsistency in definitions or logic becomes immediately visible across the organization.

In retail, AI agents are increasingly used to:

- Summarize key metrics in natural language for faster understanding across business functions.
- Suggest actions based on sales and inventory trends to improve operational decision-making.
- Alert managers to anomalies or shifts in demand before they impact performance or service levels.
- Answer ad hoc questions using secure, governed data sources with speed, accuracy, and consistency.

## AI Agents in Retail + CPG

AI Agents are moving from experimentation to deployment.



By bringing governed insights into operational workflows, retailers are able to reduce manual effort, strengthen alignment across teams, and build an analytics environment where decision-making is not an extra step—but a natural part of everyday work.

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# Speed Depends on Strong Data Foundations

Retail and CPG organizations are turning to data-driven intelligence with a clear objective: to operate faster.

In contrast to the global cross-industry trend—where employee productivity ranked as the most commonly achieved or expected benefit—retail and CPG organizations placed the highest priority on speed. Specifically, 54% of companies in these sectors cited faster decision-making and innovation as their top current or anticipated outcome.

This reflects a strong desire to respond quickly to market changes, accelerate planning cycles, and streamline execution using AI and business intelligence tools.

## Top 3 Outcomes for Retail + CPG

AI-powered insights are delivering measurable impact where it matters most.



Faster decision-making and innovation

54%



Increased employee productivity

50%



Cost savings

50%

Strong data foundations shorten planning cycles, accelerate store and supply chain decisions, and allow teams to pivot quickly when demand shifts. In this context, speed is not just a byproduct of analytics—it is the direct result of well-governed, consistent, and accessible data.



# Barriers to Data & AI Scale

While retail and CPG organizations are committed to expanding AI-powered analytics, most still face structural barriers that limit their ability to scale. The most frequently cited barriers fall into three categories: **cost**, **clarity**, and **capability**. Survey responses point to a consistent theme: the challenge is less about technology, and more about the maturity of the data foundation beneath it.

## Cost Pressures



The **#1 barrier to adoption is cost**. More than half of respondents (53%) pointed to budget concerns arising from fragmented architectures: multiple tools, separate data pipelines, and inconsistent logic that require constant maintenance.

## Misaligned Expectations



50% of surveyed organizations said **unrealistic expectations**—either from leadership or vendors—have slowed down adoption. These include assumptions about speed to value, ease of implementation, or automation capabilities.

## Gaps in Data Governance



A lack of strong data strategy and governance surfaced as another major blocker. 42% of respondents highlighted **inconsistent data quality**, absence of a semantic layer, and fragmented reporting practices as critical challenges.

## Operational Hurdles

When asked about the biggest technical and operational blockers:

**38%**

of respondents pointed to the absence of internal centers of excellence, uneven **data literacy**, and limited frontline enablement.

**35%**

noted **inconsistent answers**, often caused by siloed data or weak metadata standards.

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# Governance as a Strategic Capability

Inconsistent answers, unclear definitions, and fragmented access models remain among the most frequently cited blockers to scaling data-driven decision-making. These issues are not technical failures—they are governance failures.

In particular, 35% cited receiving inconsistent or incorrect answers to data questions, often caused by fragmented systems, unclear definitions, and the lack of a semantic layer.

AI models rely on **clean, structured, and well-defined data to produce reliable insights**. Without a shared set of business definitions and relationships, different departments may report or interpret the same data differently, leading to misalignment and lost confidence in AI recommendations.

## Governance Gaps

Survey respondents flagged deeper issues:

31%

pointed to the lack of a **corporate data strategy and semantic** layer as a key challenge.

This reflects an urgent need for consistency, stewardship, and properly governed data ownership.

## Semantic Layers Enable Scale

The most advanced organizations are separating business logic from underlying data structures and managing it centrally—often through modern semantic layers.

This allows:

- Consistent answers across tools and teams
- Easier deployment of AI-powered natural language queries
- Better compliance and auditability

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# GUESS: Leveraging Data for Cutting-Edge Innovation

GUESS is a premium global brand with a lifestyle collection of clothing and accessories, operating in over 90 countries through wholesale, retail, and online channels.

## Challenge & Solution

To stay competitive in the fast-paced fashion industry, GUESS set out to make data more accessible across the business by improving data usability for faster, smarter decisions, moving from static reports to real-time insights, and empowering employees of all skill levels with easy access to critical information.

GUESS established a holistic data ecosystem built on Strategy's **universal semantic layer**, designed to unify and prepare data for AI-powered analytics. This foundation enabled teams to access, interpret, and act on insights within an AI-ready data framework—accelerating development cycles, improving data accessibility, and maximizing customer experiences across locations.



“

*We leverage Strategy solutions across our entire organization to better understand customer needs and market trend insights.*

**Bruce Yen,**  
Vice President of Retail Applications  
GUESS  
[Find out more >>](#)

## Impact

**Reporting Consistency:** The universal semantic layer unified insights across retail, eCommerce, and wholesale operations—strengthening global alignment and confidence in data.

**Maximized Value:** Analysts and business users focused on delivering insights rather than managing data, accelerating time to value for cross-functional initiatives.

**AI-ready Infrastructure:** GUESS's data foundation supports mobile analytics, cloud scalability, and AI agents, fueling faster, contextual insights at scale.

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# Vuori: Building a Cohesive Data Ecosystem

Vuori is a lifestyle athleisure brand representing the coastal Californian lifestyle.

## Challenge & Solution

As Vuori scaled globally, it aimed to connect data across its enterprise systems and provide business leaders and analysts with self-service access to consistent insights. The company sought to eliminate discrepancies across datasets and reports, enabling faster, data-driven decision-making across functions.

Vuori streamlined data across multiple sources, platforms, and applications using Strategy's universal semantic layer. This created **a single, unified source of truth** that aligned KPIs and definitions for every team. Users gained access to consistent, governed data for reporting and analytics at scale—empowering faster insights and improved collaboration across global operations.



“

*We implemented Strategy to enable our business leaders and analysts to become more self-serving, rooted in a single version of truth of the data across the company.*

**Himanshu Shekhar**

Vice President, Planning & Analytics  
Vuori

[Find out more >>](#)

## Impact

**Data Consistency:** Departments could view, report, and act on unified data across systems, eliminating discrepancies and ensuring shared metrics.

**Operational Efficiency:** Teams gained governed access to consistent data, reducing misalignment and enabling faster, more confident decision-making.

**Global Alignment:** Vuori established a cohesive analytics ecosystem that supports cross-functional collaboration and drives agility across its domestic and international operations.

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# Conclusion

Retail and consumer packaged goods companies are entering a new phase of analytics maturity—one where the quality, trustworthiness, and consistency of data determine how far AI and analytics can scale. This survey confirms that organizations are moving from experimentation to operationalization, but persistent gaps in definitions, governance, and data lineage continue to slow progress.

Leading organizations that centralize business logic and apply consistent controls across tools and clouds are better positioned to:

- Avoid fragmentation
- Reduce inconsistent outputs
- Scale insights beyond technical teams.

## What to Expect

The next phase of transformation will depend on building stronger foundations. Clean, governed data; shared semantic definitions; and unified access models form the core requirements for responsible AI and reliable decision-making. Looking ahead, we expect retailers and CPG companies to:

- Expand data access across frontline roles
- Invest in literacy programs
- Adopt well-governed data architectures, such as universal semantic layers, that unify logic across the enterprise.

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# Research Methodology

This report is based on the 2025 global survey on data maturity and AI-powered analytics, conducted by an independent research firm, Dúnedain Research.

- **Survey size:** 235 organizations worldwide
- **Retail + CPG segment:** 26 organizations
- **Countries represented:** 11 in this segment, representing Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, the UK and Africa.
- **Organization sizes:** From under 500 employees to over 20,000
- **Roles surveyed:** Data leaders, BI practitioners, and senior business stakeholders

Retail and CPG participants represented a mix of global retailers, specialty brands, and multinational packaged goods companies, with geographic distribution across North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

Each response reflects the perspective of one organization. All responses were anonymized for reporting purposes.

## About the Authors

This report was authored by the research team at Dúnedain Research, specialists in enterprise analytics, AI adoption, and data strategy. The lead analyst, Brett Sheppard, has over two decades of experience in business intelligence—including roles as a Gartner analyst and U.S. military data engineer. The team's work has appeared in publications by Gartner, GigaOM, and O'Reilly, and has been cited by outlets such as Businessweek, Wired, and Computerworld. Their mission is to provide actionable, data-driven insight to help organizations navigate the evolving analytics landscape.

Explore more insights from the Global Survey, including regional findings and industry-specific reports, at:  
[strategysoftware.com/survey](https://strategysoftware.com/survey)



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