Strategy₿

The State of AI+BI
Analytics Global
2025 Survey

Retail & CPG in Focus

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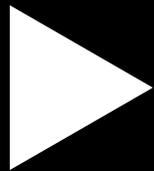
Executive Summary

Today, organizations in both retail and Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) are moving beyond pilot programs and into full-scale production. Automation, personalization, and faster decision-making are no longer optional—they've become the new operating model. At the heart of this transformation is AI+BI—the integration of artificial intelligence with business intelligence to make data-driven insights more accessible, explainable, and actionable.

This research brief explores how retail and CPG organizations are deploying AI+BI to:

- Automate workflows for data professionals
- Empower less technical staff to ask and answer data questions
- Improve the speed, accuracy, and adoption of data-driven decisions

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

50% expect cost savings and higher employee productivity from AI+BI 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+BI 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 **The Warehouse Group** demonstrate what's possible when AI+BI platforms are paired with a modern data foundation.

Key Takeaways from the 2025 Survey

AI-powered analytics is no longer experimental in retail and CPG. This report presents findings from a global survey conducted in the first half of 2025 by an independent research firm commissioned by Strategy, targeting leaders across the retail and CPG industries.

Speed is the top priority

Retail and CPG companies rank faster decision-making and innovation above all other outcomes from AI-powered analytics.

Trust starts with governance

Inconsistent answers and stalled adoption trace back to poor data quality and the absence of a semantic layer.

Frontline access is the next frontier

27% of surveyed organizations plan to extend AI+BI tools to over 20% of their workforce—three times higher than current adoption levels.
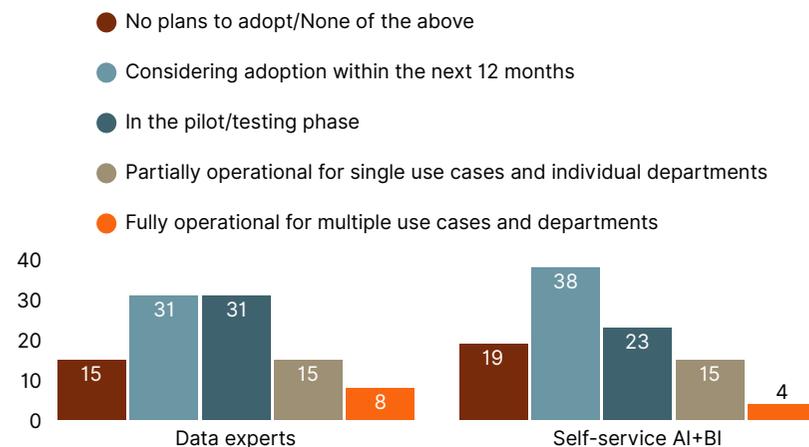
Where AI+BI Is Working Now

Retail and CPG companies are no longer just testing AI-powered analytics—they're deploying it where it matters most. Across the industry, two core application areas are leading the shift from pilot projects to production:

- Automating workflows for **data experts**. These advanced adopters report significant time savings for analysts and improved accuracy in recurring tasks.
- Helping less technical staff ask data questions, with the use of AI-powered **self-service modules**. These tools reduce dependency on data teams and speed up everyday decisions across business units.

Pilots and adopters

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

- ● No plans to adopt/None of the above
- ● Considering adoption within the next 12 months
- ● In the pilot/testing phase
- ● Partially operational for single use cases and individual departments
- ● Fully operational for multiple use cases and departments

	Data experts	Self-service AI+BI
No plans	15	19
Considering	31	38
Pilot/testing	31	23
Partially operational	15	15
Fully operational	8	4

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+BI 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

Bringing Data to the Frontlines

Despite decades of business intelligence investments, most employees still rely on spreadsheets or don't use analytics at all. AI-powered analytics is changing that—fast.

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.

Adoption Potential
Organizations are rethinking access to analytics.

9%
of employees in most organizations currently use BI tools beyond spreadsheets

27%
of surveyed companies plan to give over 20% or more of their workforce access to AI+BI in the next 12 months

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
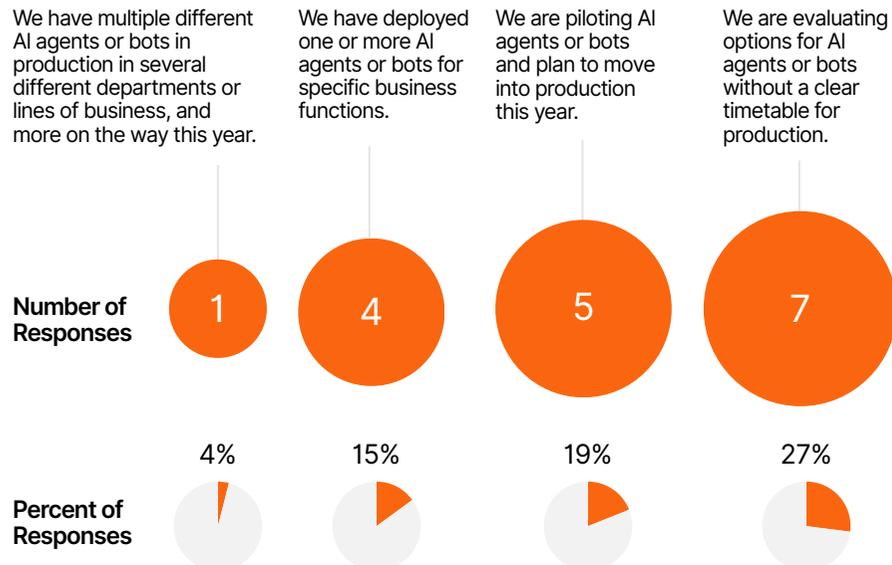
AI Bots: Analytics Beyond Dashboards

AI-powered analytics isn't just living in dashboards anymore—it's showing up where work happens. A growing number of retail and CPG companies are deploying **AI+BI bots** that deliver insights directly into tools employees already use, like Microsoft Office, Slack, and POS systems.

AI bots are built 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 Bot Adoption in Retail + CPG

AI Bots are moving from experimentation to deployment.

We have multiple different AI agents or bots in production in several different departments or lines of business, and more on the way this year.

We have deployed one or more AI agents or bots for specific business functions.

We are piloting AI agents or bots and plan to move into production this year.

We are evaluating options for AI agents or bots without a clear timetable for production.

Number of Responses: 1 | 4 | 5 | 7

Percent of Responses: 4% | 15% | 19% | 27%

What Is AI+BI?

Generic GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT or other large language models (LLMs), struggle with math, statistics, or logic. In AI+BI, the LLM handles natural language input and explanation. The analytics platform performs the actual calculations and ensures results are accurate through a semantic layer for data governance.

Speed Is the Strategy

Retail and consumer packaged goods companies are turning to AI-powered analytics with a clear objective: to move 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%

These top priorities signal a shift away from theoretical potential toward measurable, operational value. Leaders are looking for tools that don't just inform decisions—but accelerate them, simplify workflows, and contribute directly to the bottom line.

Top 3 Barriers to Scale

While enthusiasm for AI-powered analytics is growing across retail and CPG, adoption at scale still faces real obstacles. The most frequently cited barriers fall into three categories: **cost, clarity,** and **capability.**

Cost Pressures

The **#1 barrier to adoption is cost**. More than half of respondents (**53**%) pointed to budget concerns or unclear ROI as a primary challenge to expanding AI+BI tools.

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.

These barriers reflect a common theme: organizations are eager to scale—but lack the structural foundation to do so confidently. Without trusted data, clear expectations, and centralized ownership, AI+BI initiatives risk stalling before they deliver measurable impact.

Operational Hurdles

When asked about the biggest technical and operational blockers:

38%

of respondents pointed to the **absence of an internal AI+BI center of excellence**

35%

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

Trust Starts with Governance

Of all the challenges cited, one stands out beyond financial or practical considerations: it is not a question of what AI+BI can do, but a foundational issue of **whether its answers can be trusted.**

Among surveyed retail and CPG companies, data inconsistency and poor governance emerged as recurring pain points. 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 semantic layer—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**.

Others described the challenge as "depends on the cleanliness of data," reflecting an urgent need for consistency, stewardship, and 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

AI+BI can only move as fast as the trust behind it. Organizations looking to scale adoption must treat governance—not as a back-office function—but as a strategic enabler of AI at scale.

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 partnered with Strategy to implement a modern data and analytics platform that delivered on these needs through:

- Dashboards & Mobile Apps: Real-time and historical sales data, store performance, and product trends—all accessible on the go
- AI Chatbots: Instant, natural language access to supply chain and loyalty data, enabling non-technical users to get meaningful insights in real time

Impact

Efficiency: Cut reporting from two weeks to seconds with mobile dashboards.

Accessibility: Enabled thousands with real-time insights via dashboards and AI chatbots.

Innovation: Transformed data access through early adoption of Strategy's AI.

"

Strategy AI frees trapped data—data that we've worked hard to build, data that lives in assets across the company, but has been hard for people to access."

Bruce Yen,
Vice President of Retail Applications, GUESS
Find out more >>

The Warehouse Group: Transforming Retail with Data & AI

The Warehouse Group, New Zealand's largest non-food retailer, uses advanced analytics and a 20-year partnership with Strategy to lead in data democratization and AI.

Challenge & Solution

Amid a recession and declining consumer spending, The Warehouse Group needed to break down data silos, enable self-service insights, and optimize operations through better data use.

The Warehouse Group leveraged Strategy One to modernize its data foundation and empower decision-making across the organization, and:

- Built **custom analytics** and **self-service reporting** tools to give teams direct access to relevant insights
- Deployed **AI chatbots** that deliver real-time, actionable data through simple natural language queries
- Established a **governed data fabric** to ensure consistency, security, and trust in enterprise-wide reporting

Impact

Democratized Data: data accessible organization-wide, essential to daily operations.

Operational Efficiency: Improved decisions across customer service, merchandising, logistics.

AI Integration: Natural language access to data through AI chatbots.

"

Data is the lifeblood of our business—it's the oxygen fueling everything we do. Strategy democratizes our data in a safe, governed, consistent, and well-managed way."

Keryn McKenzie,
Chapter Area Lead, Data, Insights & Services
The Warehouse Group
Find out more >>

Conclusion

Retail and consumer packaged goods companies are entering a new phase of analytics maturity—where AI is not just enhancing insight but reshaping how work gets done. This survey confirms that the shift from AI+BI pilots to production is underway. Leading organizations are already using AI-powered analytics to:

- Automate routine workflows for data teams
- Enable employees to ask and answer questions on their own
- Accelerate decision-making across departments
- Deliver personalized experiences at scale

But the road ahead still requires discipline. Adoption barriers remain real, especially around cost, governance, and inconsistent data. The next wave of transformation will depend on building the right foundation: clean, trusted data; semantic clarity; and scalable access for all employees—not just analysts.

The companies that master AI+BI deployment across people, processes, and platforms will be best positioned to lead.

" *AI+BI is no longer an innovation experiment.*
It's a core business capability.

What to Expect Next

As economic pressure mounts and competitive timelines shrink, we expect to see:

- Broader rollouts of AI+BI to frontline teams, especially in retail
- Increased investment in governance and literacy programs to support responsible AI use
- Growing emphasis on multi-cloud flexibility and vendor independence
- A clearer distinction between general-purpose GenAI and enterprise-grade AI-powered analytics

Research Methodology

This report is based on the 1H 2025 global survey on 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

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