

WPROMOTE

**THE GREAT
REWIRING OF
CONSUMER
BEHAVIOR**

www.wpromote.com

The Quiet Revolution

What happens when the old playbook stops working?

Consumers today don't just want more; they want better. That's a fundamental "rewiring" of behavior that has huge implications for marketing and dozens of other fields.

The evidence is everywhere: consumers are embracing "intentional disconnection" from brands that waste their time. They're demanding reciprocity instead of one-sided marketing. And they're redefining satisfaction around quality over quantity.

That's fueled four key trends we'll examine in this guide:

Intentional Disconnection

Disconnection is shifting from a luxury to a lifestyle as consumers seek to reclaim their time, attention, and dollars.

Reciprocal Consumerism

Burned out on influencers and algorithms, consumers are seeking out real value and radical transparency.

The New Sports Model

As the old broadcast models crumble, fans are becoming speculators and athletes are turning themselves into media channels.

Chasing Satisfaction

Consumers are tightening their belts in more ways than one, redefining what they want from their diets and lifestyles along the way.

To win, you need to redefine how your brand connects, competes, and grows. Read on to learn how to adapt to a landscape in constant flux, where values and desires collide, budgets are tightening, and new behaviors surface and accelerate in real time.

SHIFT 1

INTENTIONAL DISCONNECTION

Digital fatigue is widespread: almost eight in ten Gen Zers wish it were easier to disconnect, according to eMarketer. That sentiment is manifesting in an overall trend toward disconnection from digital devices.

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1

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND

DIGITAL MINIMALISM

Pinterest data reveals that interest in “digital detox” trends is surging. People are embracing the opt-out by unfollowing, unsubscribing, or just hitting the “do not disturb” setting on their phone. Only content with immediate, real value breaks through, and brands that don’t serve a true purpose get ignored.

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HOW WE GOT HERE

Most Millennials and Gen Zers are feeling digital fatigue.

% of US adults who agreed they often wished to disconnect from digital devices more easily, by generation Feb 2025



Note: Responses of “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree”
Source: Quad, “The Return of Touch” conducted by the Harris Poll May, 13, 2025

EM | EMARKETER

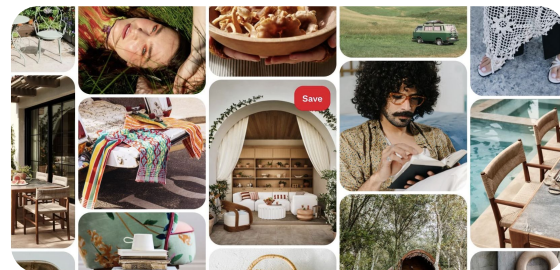
MORE TECH TO USE LESS



Over 60% of US adults aged 18–34 have enabled at least one app or setting to monitor or curb their screen time.

[EXPLODING TOPICS](#)

DIGITAL DETOX VISION BOARD



On Pinterest, searches for digital detox ideas and digital detox vision boards have increased 72% and 273% since summer 2024.

[PINTEREST TRENDS](#)

2

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND

THE NEW BALANCE ECONOMY

The era of idolizing hustle is over. Rest, boundaries, and analog enjoyment are on the rise as the new benchmarks for success. Consumers, especially young consumers, are much more aware of the “work-life balance” and the need to combat burnout through intentional, often non-digital activities.

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HOW WE GOT HERE

79%

of women between the ages of 18 - 34 are drawn to calmer lifestyle imagery associated with TradWives, but only 10% support more traditional gender roles.

Source: GLOBAL INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

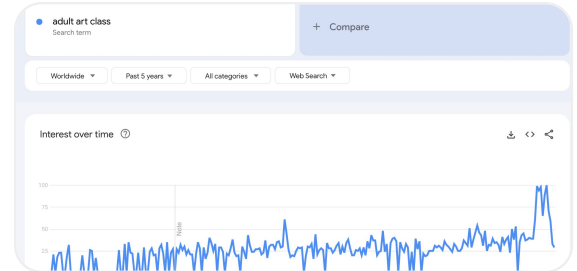
THERAPEUTIC HOBBIES



Etsy has reported a 40% increase in analog-themed shop openings in 2025, including shops focusing on journals, paper planners, and handcrafted memory books.

[ETSY](#)

ACTIVITIES ON THE RISE



Since August 2025, Google searches for “Adult Art Classes” has skyrocketed. Searches for “Candle Making Near Me” has risen 250% and “Pottery Classes Near Me” has risen 160%.

[GOOGLE TRENDS](#)

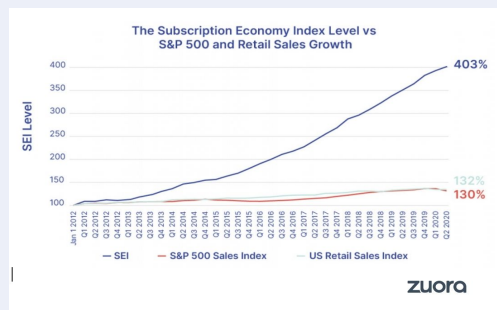
3

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND SUBSCRIPTION FATIGUE

The subscription reckoning has arrived as consumers increasingly audit and trim their subscription budgets. According to [CivicScience](#), 41% of paid video streamers canceled at least one subscription due to subscription fatigue in 2025. Younger consumers are leading the charge: 46% of Millennials have canceled at least one subscription in the past six months to control costs.

HOW WE GOT HERE

[Zuora's Subscription Economy Index](#) shows the subscription economy grew more than 435% between 2012 and 2020, as subscription businesses outpaced the S&P 500 by nearly six times.



MOSTLY UNAWARE

DoorDash DashPass Monthly	\$9.99	Hulu Monthly
Netflix Monthly	\$15.49	MAX Monthly
Walmart+ Yearly	\$98.99	GEICO Every 6 Months

A 2022 study found that consumers spent roughly \$219 a month on subscriptions, far surpassing the \$86 they thought they spent.

FORGOTTEN 'FREE' TRIALS

Cancel subscription



65% of Millennials and 59% of Gen Z have forgotten to cancel a subscription trial at least once, turning "free" trials into ongoing charges.

FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT THROUGH INTENTIONAL DISCONNECTION

TREND TAKEAWAY

Intentional disconnection is producing lasting changes in how people spend their attention, money, and emotional energy.

The golden rule: every brand interaction should deliver immediate value, not create another task. Before asking consumers to click, sign up, or engage, ask yourself "What's in it for them right now?"

- **Align brand presence with spaces of intentional choice**
Position your brand where consumers actively seek refuge and restoration, not where they're passively scrolling.
- **Design engagement that respects agency**
Build interactions that require conscious participation and always offer clear paths to disengage vs. cheap tricks drive engagement.
- **Prioritize opted-in channels over interruptive ones**
Invest in formats consumers deliberately select (podcasts, newsletters, long-form content) rather than algorithmic interruption.
- **Signal respect through transparency**
Make your brand's intentions and data practices clear and upfront, giving consumers control over the relationship from first contact.

SHIFT 2

RECIPROCAL CONSUMERISM

Years of one-way marketing and influencer campaigns have driven consumer skepticism and burnout. Consumers today demand tangible reciprocity: "If I share my data, give me loyalty, or engage, what do I get in return?"



1

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND PARTICIPATORY CONSUMPTION

Consumers expect brands to actively listen and iterate, as Nike discovered when their AI-powered review programs improved product satisfaction by 25%. For some brands, community management is the new R&D: look no further than Urban Outfitters, which curates merchandise based on real-time feedback.

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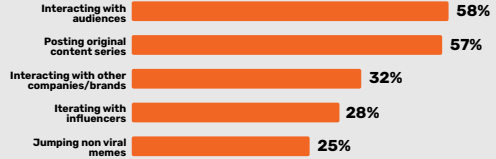
HOW WE GOT HERE

86%

want to co-create with brands and view them as more trustworthy when engaging with co creator

VURVEY

What social media users want brands to prioritize most



02 2025 PULSE SURVEY

sproutsocial

REVIEW CULTURE



Nike's AI-powered review analysis has resulted in a 25% increase in customer satisfaction with their products, as reported by the company.

NIKE

IRL CUSTOM EXPERIENCES



Urban Outfitters' customer-first store concept uses direct input from their Gen Z "UO Insiders" community to curate merchandising strategies tailored to each market and store

URBAN OUTFITTERS

2

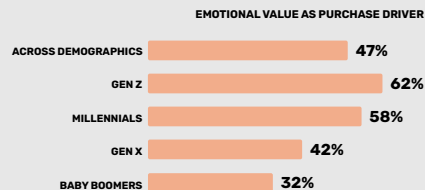
FACTORS FUELING THE TREND DESIRE FOR EMOTIONAL ROI

“How does this make me feel?” is now the deciding factor for many consumers’ purchase decisions, even eclipsing discounts and loyalty points. According to Mintel, 62% of consumers across all demographics (with Gen Z and Millennials leading) rank emotional value as more important than price.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Emotional value is extremely important to Gen Z and Millennials

The importance of emotional value in purchase decisions is particularly skewed towards younger demographics in the US



BASE: 2,000 INTERNET USERS AGED 18+ | SOURCE: MINTEL, DECEMBER 2024



THEY'RE JUST LIKE ME



Student athletes simultaneously serve as cultural icons and conduits to a valuable younger audience who can relate to brand ambassadors who are still students themselves

GLOSSY

SENSORY EXPERIENCES



Fragrance brands are increasingly stepping away from rigid gender binaries, reflecting broader cultural conversations around identity and inclusion.

MINTEL

3

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND QUESTIONING PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Consumers are growing skeptical of the value the “simulated friendship” of the influencer economy is bringing to their lives and looking for closer, more intentional communities. “De-influencing” content, where users puncture the overinflated hype of popular products, is growing in popularity.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Consumers say they are most influenced by friends and family, not social media.



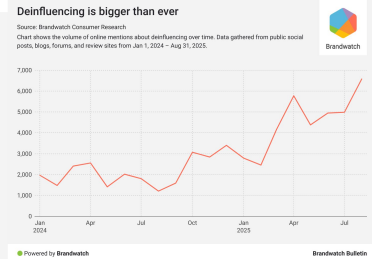
EMOTIONAL COMMODIFICATION



When Snapchat announced it would charge users to keep their archived photos and videos, sparking a backlash users called a ‘Memory Tax,’ it confirmed that consumers no longer see digital spaces as disposable entertainment but as emotional ecosystems.

SNAPCHAT

DE-INFLUENCING



“Deinfluencing” rose 79% in 2025 and has racked up over 730 million views on TikTok, signaling that the sharp pendulum swing toward influencer content may be starting to move the other way.

BRANDWATCH

INVITE YOUR CUSTOMERS TO THE TABLE BY LEANING INTO RECIPROCAL CONSUMERISM

As consumers demand real value, co-creation, and emotional return and grow skeptical of one-way influence and performative connection, you must redesign your marketing to deliver tangible reciprocity and deeper, more authentic engagement.

TREND TAKEAWAY

Reciprocity is non-negotiable. Consumers want to build with you, not just buy from you.

- **Create spaces for genuine dialogue, not broadcast**
Build environments where your brand listens as much as it speaks, and consumers can connect with each other and real people behind your brand.
- **Let your consumers do the talking**
Test UGC against studio creative in paid social, and mine your comment sections and reviews for organic content and ad copy.
- **Make transparency operational, not performative**
Show how consumer input directly shapes your decisions, products, and priorities.
- **Quantify reciprocity**
Move from "we value your input" to "your input changed X, saved Y, or created Z".

SHIFT 3

THE NEW SPORTS MODEL

Sports sits right at the center of the battle for attention. From betting apps to individual athletes as media channels, “the game” is an omnichannel nexus of hyper-personalized engagement.

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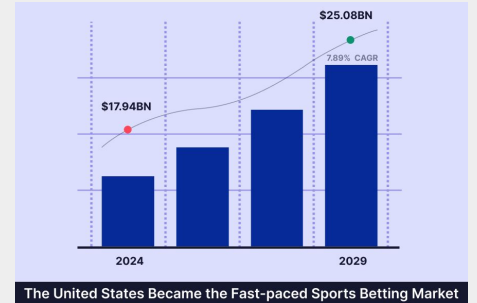
FACTORS FUELING THE TREND

BETTING ON FANDOM

Sports betting is rewriting the fan experience, turning spectators into speculators with every play. As wagering becomes mainstream, marketers face a new challenge: how do you amplify the action without diluting your brand?

HOW WE GOT HERE

The U.S. sports betting market is forecast to surpass [\\$25B in annual revenue by 2029](#), with nearly 55 million users and user penetration climbing to 15.5% of the population.

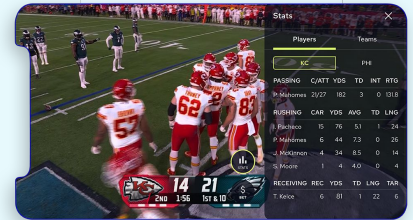


BETTERS ARE VALUABLE FANS



26% of adults 21+ place online sports bets at least a few times a year, and online bettors are nearly 3x more likely than non-bettors to say now is a 'good' time to make a major purchase.

BETTING DATA IS RESHAPING SPONSORSHIP VALUE



In college sports, brands are tying more of their +14.7% YoY increase in sports media ad spend to moments with high betting activity, using wager data to prove their placements land when fans are most engaged.

2

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND

ATHLETES AS MEDIA

Athletes have become sovereign media channels, building production companies and owning their narratives outside traditional sports broadcasting. This shift creates a powerful opportunity for brands: direct access to niche, fiercely loyal audiences through athlete-owned platforms that command trust and cultural credibility.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Researchers identified [33 athlete-owned production companies producing more than 370 media properties.](#)



ATHLETES ARE MEDIA

68%

of new cumulative sports fans on social were captured by athlete accounts (versus teams/leagues).

[KORE SOFTWARE](#)

ATHLETES HAVE A VOICE ON VIDEO



Spotify reported 4x YoY growth, with 53% quarter-on-quarter growth in 2025 alone. The female audience share for sports podcasts surged 353% YoY.

[PODNEWS](#)

3

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND THE BROADCAST BREAKUP

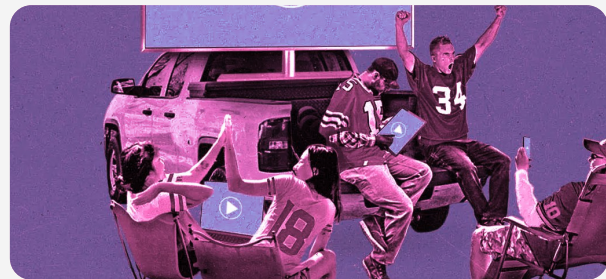
The broadcast era is still here, just scattered across more surfaces than ever before. Live games now anchor a much larger attention graph spanning streaming, athlete-owned channels, creator feeds, and betting platforms. For brands, success means building systems that follow fans across every surface where sports culture lives, turning that fragmentation into deeper engagement and sustained influence.

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HOW WE GOT HERE

70%

of US sports viewers
watch via streaming



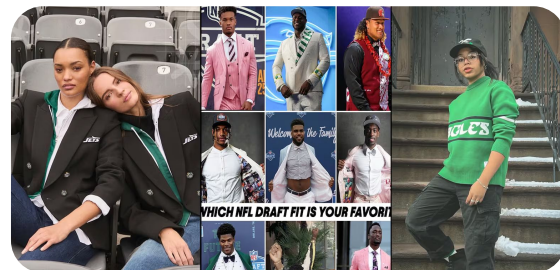
SUBSCRIBE, CANCEL, REPEAT



The frustration is measurable. Nearly one-third (33%) say content and service fragmentation hurts their overall TV experience. For 25 to 34 year-olds, it jumps to 40%.

[GADGET HACKS](#)

LIFESTYLE INFLUENCE



The NFL is expanding its social media and influencer marketing strategies, hiring stylist Kyle Smith as its first-ever fashion editor and producing more content around players' personal lives and families.

[CNBC](#)

EMBRACE THE PARTICIPATION & PERSONALIZATION OF THE NEW SPORTS MODEL

As sports evolves into an always-on, athlete-powered, and highly fragmented ecosystem of participation and personalization, you must rethink how and where you show up to turn these shifts into meaningful growth for your brand.

TREND TAKEAWAY

Fragmentation is the new reality of sports marketing. Brands must adopt a streaming- and creator-first mindset to win in this space.

- **Fund the full fan journey**
Go beyond game day and connect via podcasts, documentary series, athlete vlogs, and fantasy/betting platforms.
- **Treat athletes as media channels, not spokespeople**
Get the authentic access and loyal niche audiences broadcast can't match through athlete production companies and content platforms.
- **Develop creative with multiple entry points**
Casual viewers see brand presence, engaged fans see deeper stats/insights, and bettors see odds/predictions.
- **Design for participation**
Invite fans to predict, react, and create alongside your brand so you're part of the moment, not just adjacent to it.

SHIFT 4

CHASING SATISFACTION

What does "satisfaction" really mean to consumers in 2026? Whether driven by changing habits driven by GLP-1s, rising inflation, or new emotional needs, the answer looks radically different from what it did even two years ago. Consumers are fundamentally redefining what "enough" means, and marketers must keep up with the measurable shifts in consumer appetites unfolding before our eyes.



1

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND THE OZEMPIC ECONOMY

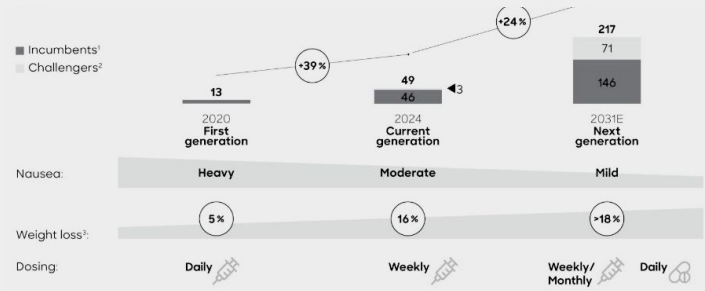
GLP-1 drugs are reshaping both consumers' bodies and the CPG landscape. More than one in 10 Americans have been prescribed GLP-1s, and monthly grocery spending for these buyers is down. Volume-driven categories are under threat, while health-aligned products are seeing growth. Retailers ignoring the "body change" effect could miss out on \$5 billion in margin by 2027.

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HOW WE GOT HERE

The drug has improved significantly since its first generation

Evolution of the GLP-1 market (USD bn)



GROCERY OVERHAUL



GLP-1 usage can lower monthly grocery spend by 31%. An average of \$203 per month are being directed away from junk food to health & wellness products

[GLOBAL INSIGHTS](#)

RETAIL IMPACT



Rapid body change is affecting retail industry forecasts. Misalignment between national sizing averages and localized demand poses a \$5 billion potential margin hit for retailers by 2027 if not addressed (17).

[YABBLE](#)

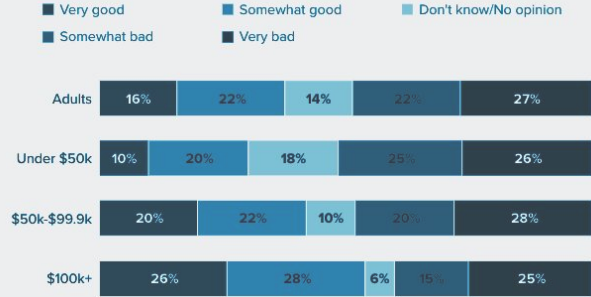
2

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND THE DAMN GROCERY BILL

Consumers are demanding honesty about pricing, portion sizes, and sourcing as grocery inflation remains sticky. 81% of people have noticed products getting smaller ("shrinkflation"), and more than half say they'll switch brands if they catch on. Coupons are making a comeback, but the real battleground is perceived value and transparency.

HOW WE GOT HERE

The share of US consumers who believe US tariffs have been good or bad for the economy



MAKING GROCERIES EXPENSIVE AGAIN



Powerful forces are pushing the US food industry to make what could be the biggest overhaul in decades to supermarket shelves.

SHRINKFLATION OUTRAGE



According to a 2025 study, 81% of respondents say they've observed grocery items shrinking, and 52% say they're likely to switch brands if they notice it.

3

FACTORS FUELING THE TREND

COMFORT-SEEKING IN A CRISIS ERA

In times of stress, Americans search for security in the familiar, but they're looking for a modern twist on their favorites. According to Talker Research, two-thirds of Americans want their childhood products to come back.

Neo-nostalgia dominates quick service menus and CPG innovation, while casual, fun socializing is replacing formal entertaining.

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HOW WE GOT HERE

71%

of US consumers say they enjoy products that remind them of childhood

SOURCE: MINTEL'S TREND DRIVER GLOBAL SURVEY

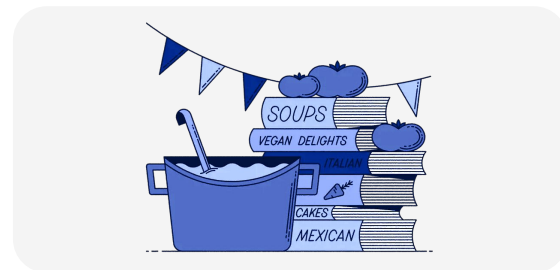
THROWBACK DINING



Beyond rebooting beloved 2000s menu items, Taco Bell leans into fan service with LTO merch drops throughout the Y2K promo period

[QSR MAGAZINE](#)

LESS FANCY, MORE FUN



Gen-Z and Millennial hosts are reclaiming time and enjoying the company of friends and family more than showing off or creating an air of sophistication

[STYLE RAVE](#)

REFRAME VALUE TO CONNECT WITH CONSUMERS CHASING SATISFACTION

As consumers redefine what “enough” means, reshaping spending through GLP-1 adoption, demanding transparency, and seeking comfort in uncertain times, you need to recalibrate your value proposition to align with evolving definitions of satisfaction.

TREND TAKEAWAY

Brands need to prepare for the new consumer of 2026: choosy, health-conscious, and more interested in value than quick-hit dopamine.

- **Reframe aspiration around strength, not thinness**
As GLP-1s shift body norms and protein obsession grows, position wellness through power and capability rather than traditional beauty standards or weight loss.
- **Focus on the ritual, not the indulgence**
Food porn is losing potency as reward systems recalibrate. Show the process, the feeling, the moment, not the cheese pull or burger bite.
- **Fight private label with proprietary proof**
Consumers believe "it's the same factory, different logo." Heritage won't save you. Aggressively market unique sourcing, formulation science, or production methods they can't get elsewhere.
- **Sell emotional outcomes, not product features**
Consumers are curating feelings, not just buying goods. Position products as mood delivery systems and activate around pre-event rituals where emotional preparation happens.

Your Evolution Imperative

More is out. We're leaving the era of:

- More content
- More subscriptions
- More marketing impressions

Better is in. The new epoch of marketing is all about:

- Smarter choices
- Stronger values
- Higher expectations

Consumers today are taking back control of their time, money, and attention from the brands, platforms, and patterns of the past. Your brand needs to embrace these principles to help navigate the new landscape:

- 1 **Respect the boundaries** consumers set by valuing their personal time and attention.
- 2 **Build two-way relationships** through co-creation, not dictation.
- 3 **Get fluent in platform fragmentation** by going where the audience is, on their terms.
- 4 **Deliver uncompromising, transparent value** by showing exactly what they're paying for and why it matters.

This is the time to challenge convention, deliver proof, and innovate relentlessly. The brands that win 2026 will be those that shape their own unique signal out of the noise. In other words, the winners will dare to do better.

Are you ready to meet the new era head-on?

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Ready to transform your strategy for the new era of consumer behavior?

Wpromote is the independent marketing agency that breaks down the barriers between brand and the bottom line. We help our clients transform bold ideas into decisive action and business impact by uniting strategy, media, creative, and data into one fully integrated playbook. By harnessing, augmenting, and accelerating the power of human intelligence and creativity with our industry-leading Polaris IQ technology, we stay ahead of the culture and make sure you're ready to move first, move fast, and move confidently so you can outsmart the competition and win.

CONTACT US

