THE INVISIBLE SHELF

Surviving the Algorithm & the Death of the Middle

2026 CONSUMER GOODS FORUM · VIENNA

DELOITTE

The consumer is coping, not confident

43%

are concerned about savings

73%

expect fuel and grocery prices to rise

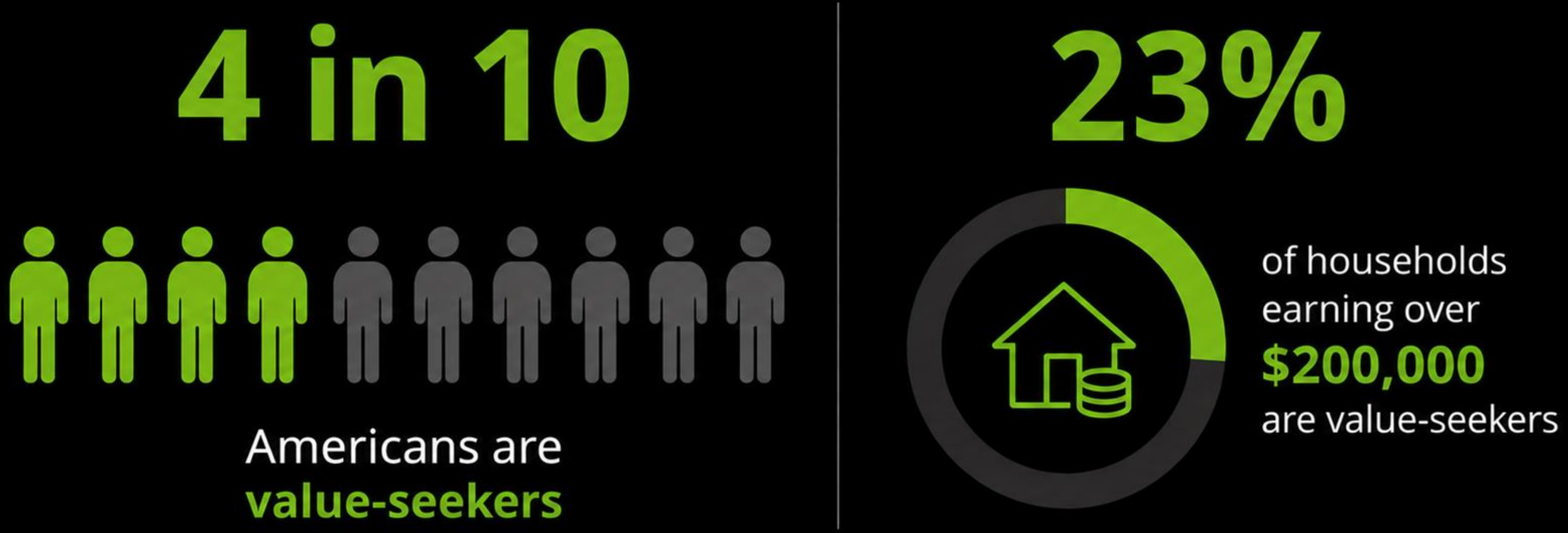
40%

are delaying large purchases

Source: ConsumerSignals · 16,000 consumers · 16 economies · May ’26 values

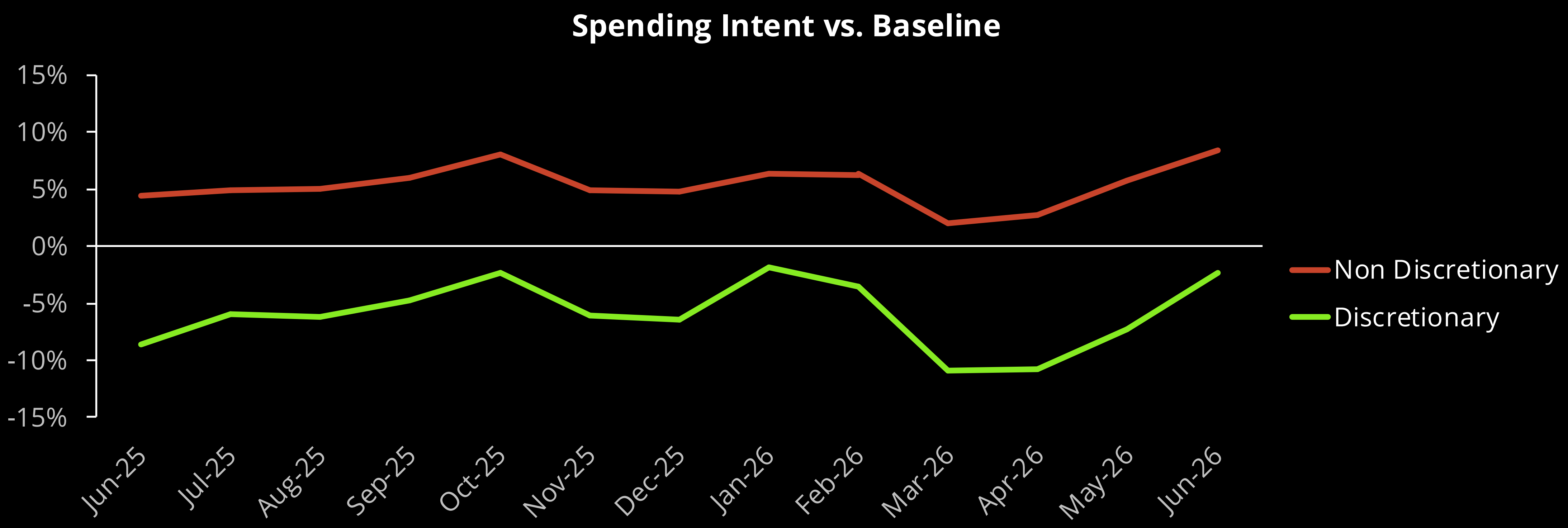
PART ONE — THE AGE OF INSTABILITY

Value seeking behavior has moved upmarket



Source: ConsumerSignals · 16,000 consumers · 16 economies

Consumers are spending on needs, not wants



Essentials remain elevated while discretionary stays below baseline

Source: ConsumerSignals · spending intent vs. 2021 baseline

PART TWO — THE COLLAPSE OF THE OLD MODELS

The old growth model rested on three assumptions

~~MORE~~

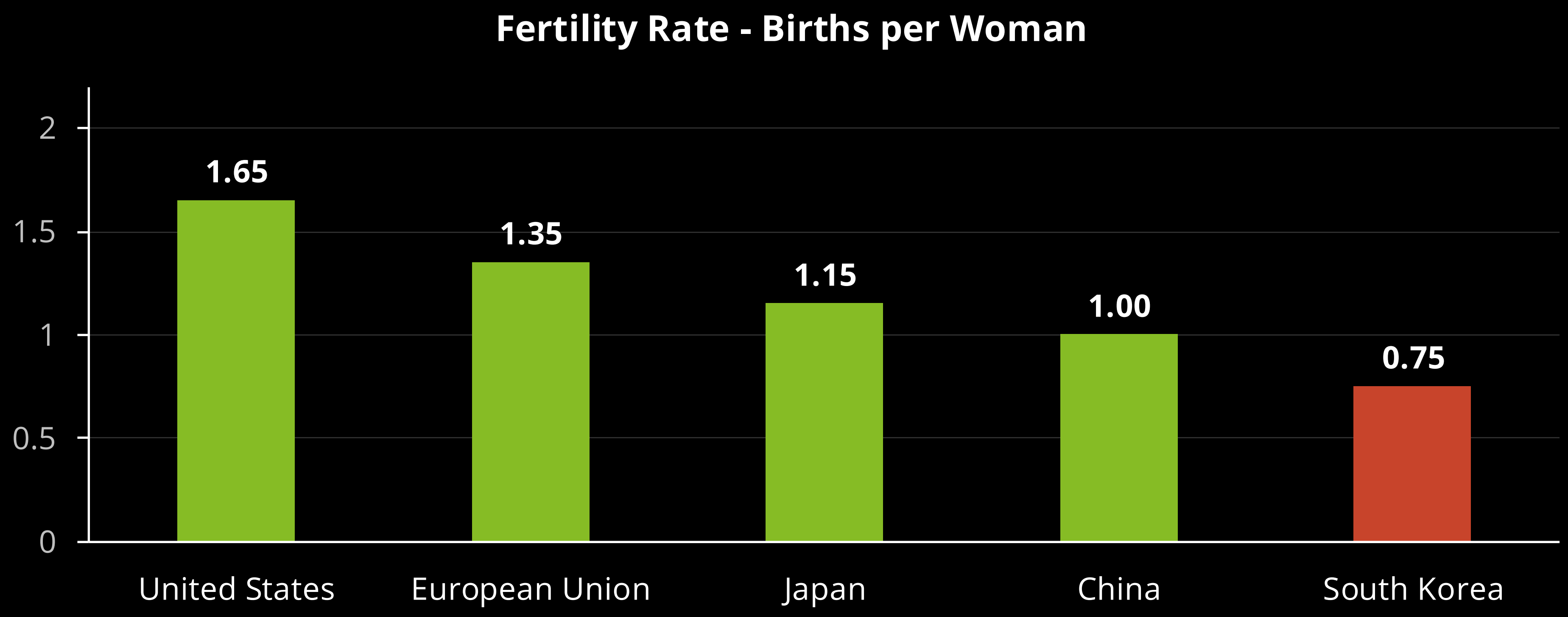
~~MASS~~

~~MONOTONOUS~~

All three are actively breaking down

PART TWO — THE COLLAPSE OF THE OLD MODELS

The world of more is over



Every major economy is below the 2.1 replacement rate

Sources: Eurostat; CDC NCHS; Statistics Korea via Korea.net; Japan MHLW via Nippon.com; UN World Population Prospects 2024

The mass consumer has split

+108%

net worth · US households 65+

−83%

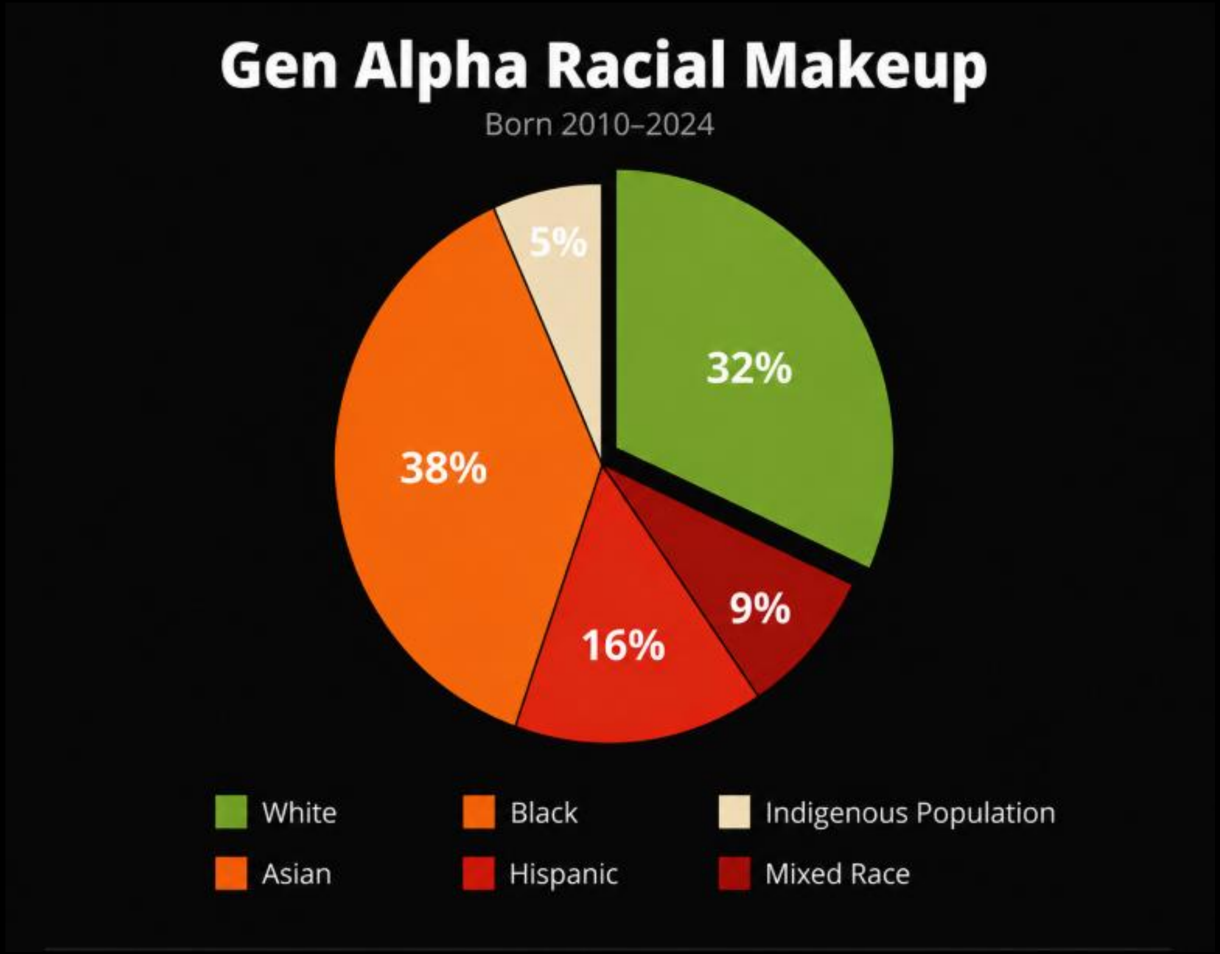
net worth · US under-35 with debt

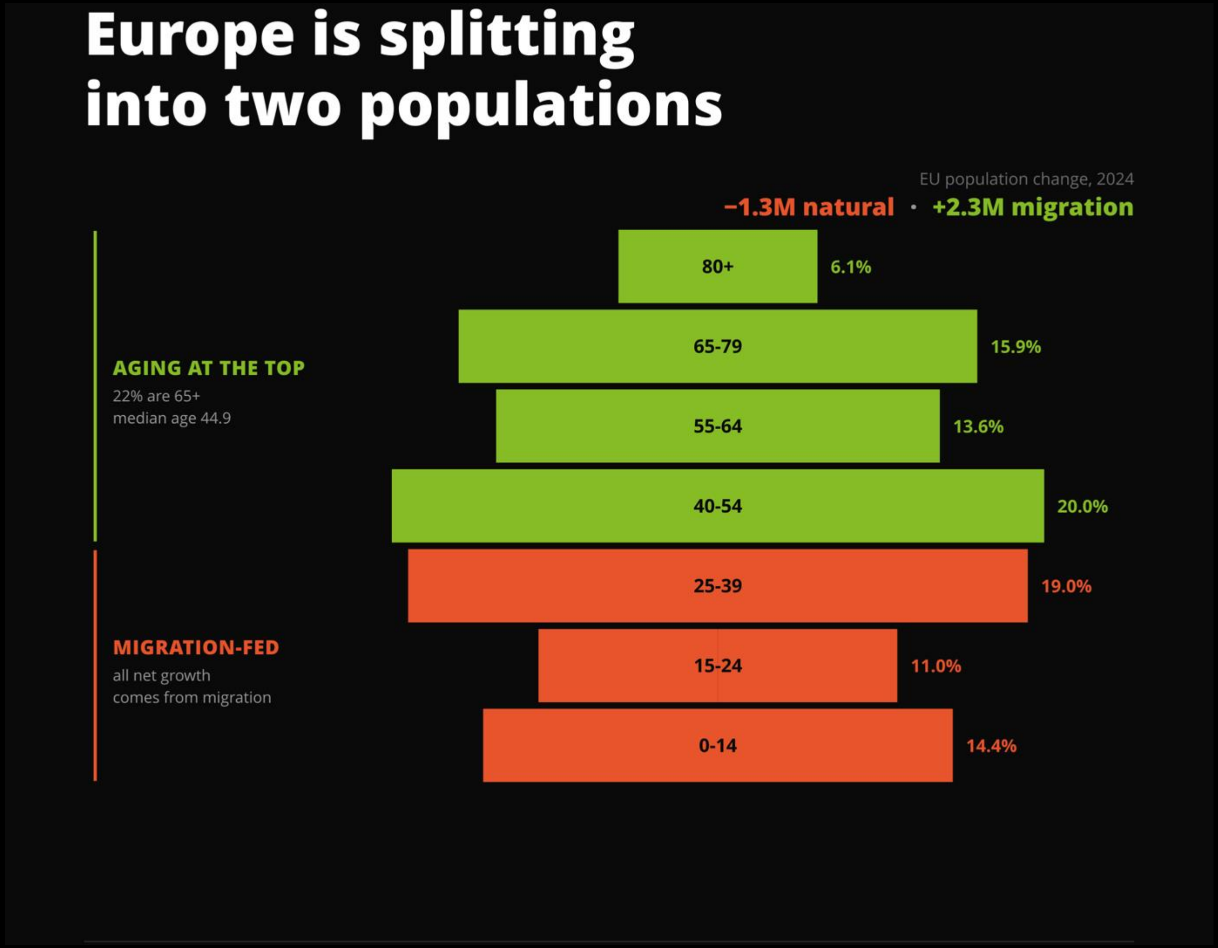
Older households gained wealth while younger household’s net worth plummeted

Source: OECD

PART TWO — THE COLLAPSE OF THE OLD MODELS

Monotonous ⟶ *(permanent)* Mosaic





Value perception is more than just price

Value = Benefits Received vs. Price Paid

Price is only 40-60% of value perception

Source: HundredX

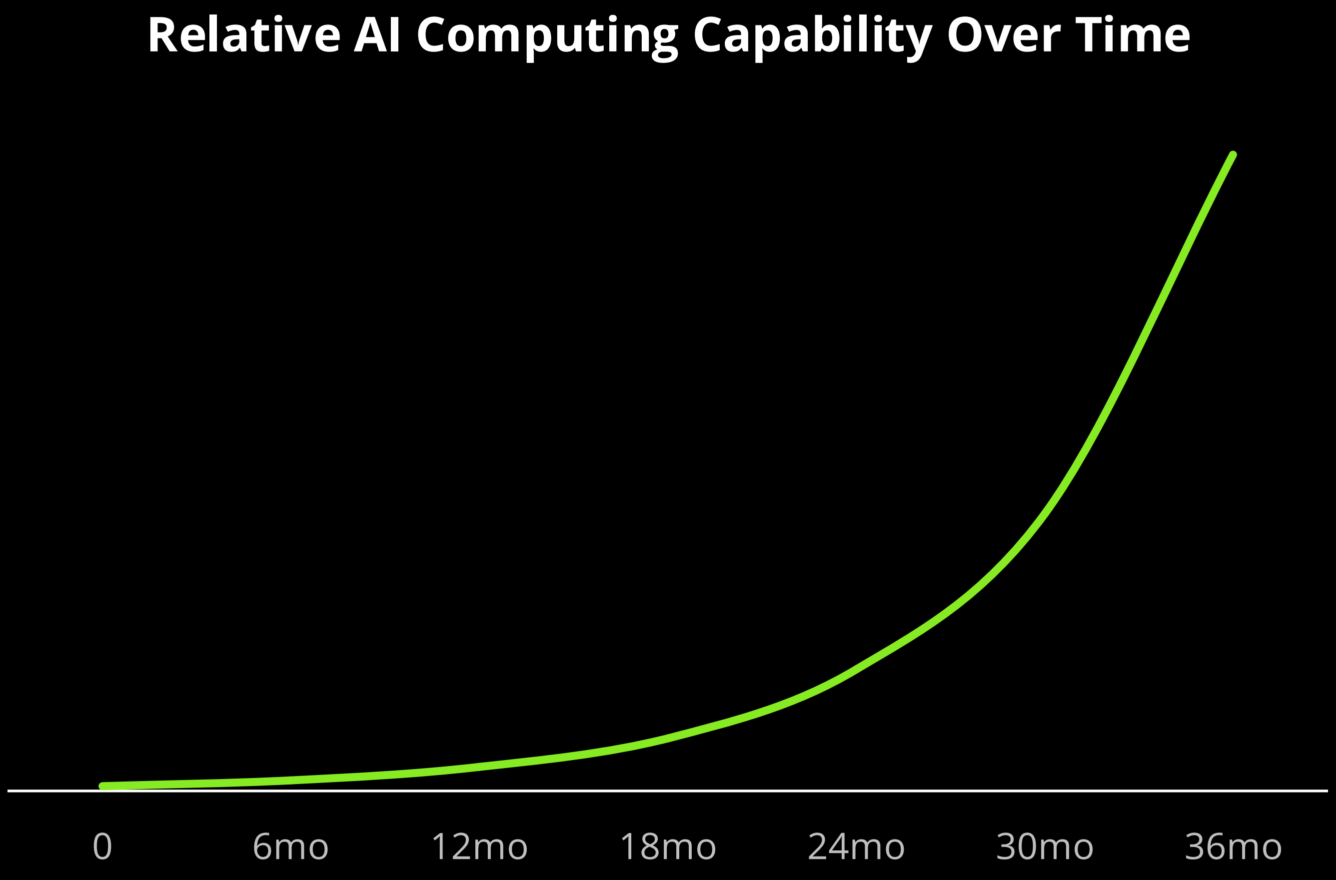
The middle is the danger zone

And only 1 in 3 brands achieve More Value for the Price status

Source: HundredX

PART THREE — THE TECHNOLOGICAL SQUEEZE

AI is growing exponentially



AI capability doubling every ~5 months

Over 5 years = 4,000x improvement

Source: Stanford University – The 2025 AI Index Report

Efficiency creates abundance

−90%

decrease in cost to create content

500K

pieces of personalized content a month

The winners are not the brands that create the most content. They are the brands AI chooses to surface.

AI ambition is outpacing governance

75%

of companies plan to deploy customized AI agents within the next two years

vs.

21%

of companies have mature agent governance

Source: Deloitte State of AI - 3,235 leaders and 24 countries

Welcome to the Invisible Shelf

Traditional merchandising …

…is irrelevant if AI is deciding

PART FOUR — THE INVISIBLE SHELF

In this environment, you must win the algorithm to win the customer

If you rely on human impulse, you will **physically disappear** from the consumer’s consideration set

PART FOUR — THE INVISIBLE SHELF

Four imperatives to be ready for the Invisible Shelf

01 Decide where you play on the barbell

02 Structure your master data for an agentic world

03 Build API-first checkout

04 Shift JBP to a continuous rhythm

IN AN AGENTIC WORLD, YOU HAVE ONE JOB.

Win the math for the bot, so you can prove the value to the human.

THE INVISIBLE SHELF

Want to connect to discuss more?

Ed Johnson
Principal, Deloitte Consulting

Latest perspective on Agentic Commerce in CPG

Industry Reflections

Ed Johnson
Principal, Deloitte Consulting

Filippo Catalano
Chief Information & Digital Officer,
Mondelēz International

Aparna Galiasso
Head, NA Retail & Consumer Goods
Industry Strategy & Business
Development, Amazon Web Services

DELOITTE CONSUMER PRACTICE

Consumer Goods Forum · Vienna · June 2026