

2026 Snowflake Marketing Predictions: Agentic AI and the Rise of the Context Marketer



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Marketing is entering a period of fundamental rewiring. The industry is moving beyond early AI applications such as chatbots and recommendation engines into a world shaped by autonomous AI agents, context-aware decisioning and new expectations of trust.

To help marketing leaders understand what this shift means in practice, Snowflake recently hosted its 2026 Marketing Predictions webinar, [The Rise of the Context Marketer in the AI-Driven Era](#). Moderated by Florian Delval, Product Marketing Principal for Marketing and Advertising at Snowflake, the conversation featured Snowflake's Erin Foxworthy, Industry Principal for Marketing and Advertising; Eddie Drake, Industry Principal for Regulated Industries; and Ryan Watson, Industry Principal for Retail and Consumer Goods.

Together, they outlined why 2026 will be a defining year — and what marketers must rethink, and rebuild, to stay relevant.

Agentic AI at the heart of the marketing transformation

A foundational shift shaping every prediction is the move from AI assistants to agentic AI (the primary focus of [Snowflake's 2026 Data + AI Predictions](#) report).

Assistants can be thought of as copilots: They respond to prompts while keeping humans firmly in control. Agentic AI, by contrast, is designed to act autonomously, perceiving its environment, reasoning through options and taking action with defined oversight.

Watson offered a simple way to think about the difference: “I always simplify the concept of agentic as an end-to-end automation of something. As a human user, I can be hands off the keyboard. I can outsource something from soup to nuts.”

This distinction matters because, as AI moves from supporting marketing decisions to making them, accountability, trust and organizational design all change.

Prediction #1: We're entering the era of the context marketer

For years, data-driven marketing meant optimizing against metrics such as clicks, opens and conversions. But those signals alone no longer explain why customers behave the way they do.

That gap is where the context marketer emerges.

"For so long, from a marketing perspective, we've relied a lot on platform signals," Foxworthy explained. "But it was never really telling you the whole story. It was never giving you the context of what that click was about."

Context lives in unstructured data: call center interactions, chat transcripts, social sentiment and other signals that reveal intent and motivation. Unlocking it requires more than better analytics; it demands breaking down both data silos and organizational silos so teams can operate from a shared understanding of the customer. "When the data can move freely through your ecosystem, it's available to everyone," she said.

Foxworthy pointed out that the challenge ahead is not just technical but structural.

But as we shift into a context-aware marketing world, Watson reminded that, still, "fundamental to it all is data."

Prediction #2: The path to purchase shifts from search to AI

One of the most immediate disruptions marketers face is at the beginning of the path to purchase: the discovery phase.

"The days of consumers clicking on 10 blue links, visiting a bunch of buying guides and then going to retail or brand websites to do deeper research," Watson said, "those days are largely over."

Instead, consumers increasingly turn to AI and chat-based experiences to complete a specific "job to be done." While fully autonomous, hands-off commerce is still emerging, but the research and discovery phase of the purchase journey is already being reshaped.

This shift forces marketers to rethink how brands are discovered, evaluated and recommended when AI — not the consumer — is navigating the options.

Staying with the topic of data and AI optimization, Delval asked: If discovery and research is where the purchase disruption is happening today, what is the first step for marketers to gain strategic advantage at the discovery stage?

"Think about deep understanding of what is influencing and impacting recommendation engines on the AI side," Watson said. "It's a combination of robust metadata but also authority and relevance. These levers have been in the marketer's tool kit for a while but need to be rethought and reimaged in the age of AI."

Prediction #3: Brand trust will depend on agent integrity

As AI agents take on more responsibility, opportunity rises — but so does risk.

In an agentic world, brands are no longer defined solely by their campaigns or messaging but by the behavior of systems acting on their behalf. Safety lies in balancing how much control is given to the agents and where the human oversight comes in.

"The 'AI made me do it' excuse," Drake warned, "is not only going to be a legal dead end but a very precarious place to find yourself in as a CMO."

Ethics, transparency, governance and data integrity become core marketing concerns, not just technical ones. The panel emphasized that success in this era depends on close alignment between marketing, data, compliance and technology teams to ensure AI-driven actions reflect brand values and regulatory expectations.

Avoiding AI paralysis

The panel closed with a caution against overcorrection.

Rather than attempting to automate everything at once, Foxworthy advised marketers to focus on learning through action: "Pick a really important segment, a really important use case that matters to the company, define it, test it, learn, and then iterate."

Drake encouraged leaders to embrace the discomfort that comes with change, while Watson framed the moment as a stark reminder that 2026 is the year marketing orgs must build for this AI future: "At the end of the day, companies are going to go into one of two camps. They're either going to try to hang on and survive or they're going to figure out ways to thrive."

Want to go deeper into these predictions? Watch the full webinar to hear the full insights and recommendations from Snowflake's industry experts.

Webinar

2026 Marketing Predictions

Snowflake industry experts will break down how AI agents are changing the rules, what shifts are already underway and what marketing leaders should be preparing for now.

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