



**Coconut.**

BRAND BUILDING  
**REPORT**

FEBRUARY 2026

**THE VALUE AND RELEVANCE OF BRAND BUILDING  
IN 2026**

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By “brand building” I mean all aspects of both paid and organic measures used to put your franchise brand in front of target audiences, through search & social media platforms.

Whilst much of the data refers to B2B/B2C strategies and “big-ticket” purchases, I believe this can relate to “investing in a franchise”, which would be considered a big investment for most people. Big Ticket investments are one-time or long-term purchases people spend time researching and reviewing before they buy. Annual studies, reveal people often start the year with an intention to make a big-ticket purchase. Whether they do or not is influenced by various economic and circumstantial factors which impact them throughout the year, both on a national and a personal level.

## **Purchase intent for big ticket purchases:**

According to a [GWI report in Marketing Trends for 2026](#), there's an "unidentifiable pattern" for big-ticket purchases. Data showed consumers who buy 'quickly' are drawing on a reservoir of pre-existing brand awareness and lightly held preferences. It's often the rapid activation of long-standing, low level consideration.

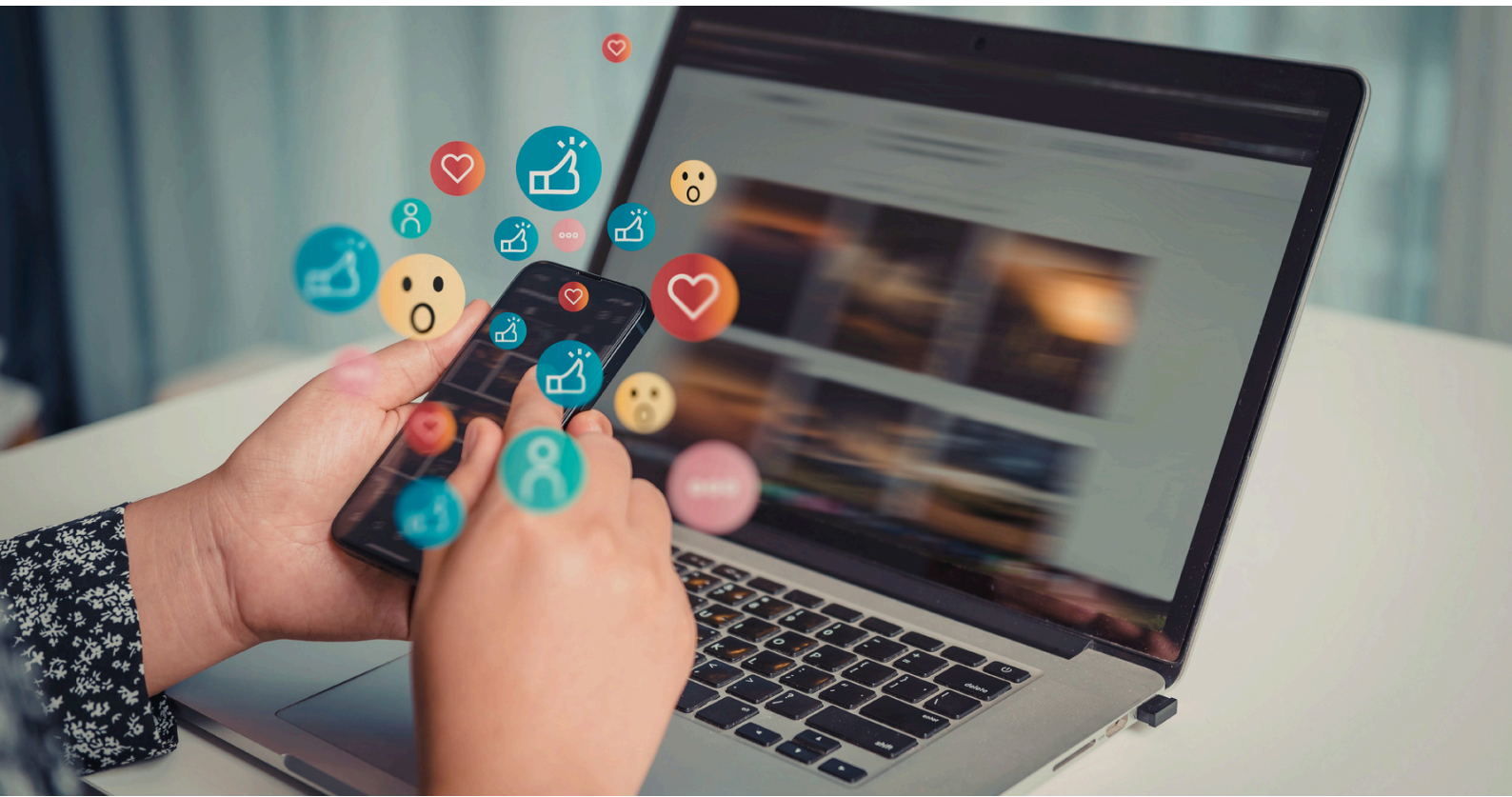
"Purchase intent builds in the background, especially for high consideration items, and isn't always declared... and happens when 'intent reaches a tipping point of confidence'. That confidence can come from many sources: validation from others, a sense of value, social proof, or the reassurance of good timing. These triggers don't create desire, they unlock it."

**GWI Report, Connecting the Dots 2026**

Rob Gaige, Global head of Insights, Reddit: "The reality is that demand is evergreen and impulse is incredibly personal. My advice is to act like your consumer is always in the market. You never know the individual impulse that pushes them to buy."

What this means for 2026, is a move toward "long-term trust building, recognising the lines between impulse and planning are already blurred, and allowing latent demand to be activated at unplanned moments."

**GWI Report, Connecting the Dots 2026**



## Where and what type of content?

According to the SproutSocial [2026 Social Media Content Strategy Report](#), 60% of consumers interact with brand content multiple times p/w on Instagram. Over 25% use Instagram for product / brand discovery. 52% interact with short form videos.

"On LinkedIn, 70% of users interact with brands' content at least 1x p/w, with around half preferring text-form posts. 48% of users say they want brands to focus on sharing educational product information and updates from company leadership."

**SproutSocial, 2026 social media content strategy report**

## Brand building = trust

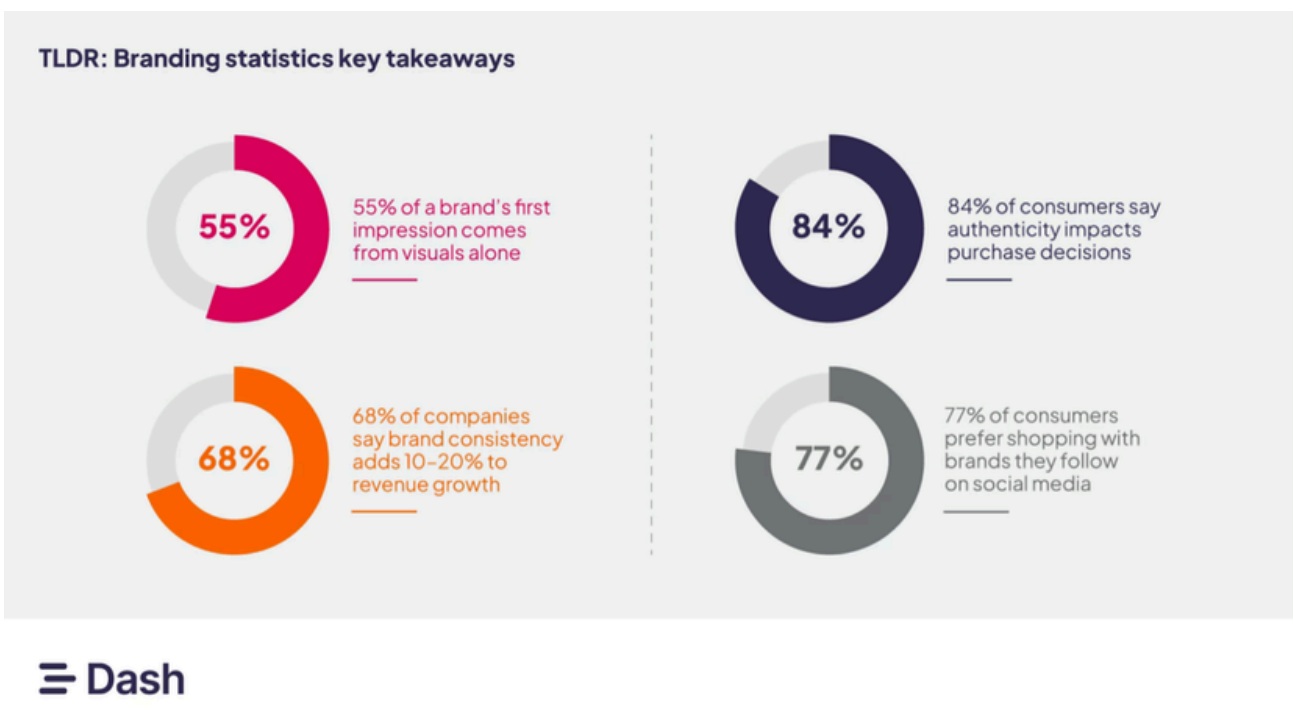
81% of consumers said they needed to trust a brand before they'll buy/invest. What makes the difference? According to [Marketing\\_LTB](#), 2025, "Showing how a brand makes customers (aka franchisees) feel. Can they see themselves in the brand? Do they trust you? Do you fit their values or lifestyle? It's the emotional layer that turns a brand from 'one of many options' into a favourite." The report also found that 68% of companies said, "brand consistency adds 10–20% to revenue growth".

[Exploding\\_Topics](#), 2024, found that 77% of consumers preferred to shop with or invest in those brands they follow on social media, as they already have an affiliation with them.

If this is the case for small purchases, how much more relevant for big ticket/life investments like buying a franchise?

Your target audience is "already spending time on social media platforms, and most social media users now use these channels to discover, research and decide which brands to buy from. Social media marketing isn't just about visibility. It's a direct driver of social media brand awareness, and a key part of how customers form trust and preference."

### Dash.app



## What about GEO / SEO?

The way people search for information online is changing, thanks to AI. With the emergence of AI-driven search, has come the rise of needing to implement Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO). AI systems, like Google AI Overviews and ChatGPT etc. synthesise information from multiple sources, from which they deliver a direct answer. So, "being referenced by AI is comparable to being 'ranked first' [in a search engine] but earning that citation depends on whether the model regards your brand as an authoritative, trustworthy source." ([Bronco](#)). The benefit to you of adopting this approach to content, is that "once an AI system recognises your expertise, it tends to maintain that recognition" ([Fly High](#)). Because LLMs have been trained on high-quality text, they currently prioritise content written for humans, rather than algorithms. In practice, this is copy which "explains concepts clearly, uses plain language, and organises information logically" ([Search Engine Land](#)).

This is potentially perfect for building brand awareness around franchising with your brand, and at Coconut we create and encourage all of our clients to have GEO-ready content. As GEO is still developing, there's not yet data or research into its true value for brand awareness, though early indicators show there's a high relevance around it.

## Value for money?

Building awareness and trust in a brand takes time; it takes an average of 6 / 7 impressions before your target audience has an awareness of your brand. From then, you need to build trust with those who are watching/investigating/researching you.

According to Hubspot's [State of Marketing 2026](#) report, "Instead of relying only on Google, buyers now explore social media feeds, creator networks, communities, review sites, and AI answers" before they're ready to commit to making any kind of purchase, especially a big ticket purchase. Community-based conversational sites, like Reddit, are becoming a big source of information-swapping for people wanting human-centric engagement, away from AI-sifted answers – even [around franchising](#) (though a couple of the subreddits seem to be engagement farming).

According to Statista's [Content Marketing Trend Study 2025](#), "61% of B2B marketers named building trust and credibility as the most important benefit of their content efforts. In the same study, trust ranked higher than engagement and lead generation."

## Further data from Hubspot:

The branding investments that deliver the highest ROI

**Overall** [Small Business](#) [Mid-Market](#) [Enterprise](#)

Brand awareness campaigns



Customer experience alignment with brand promises



Brand messaging framework development



Visual identity system



Brand partnership or sponsorship opportunities



Internal brand culture initiatives



We don't measure ROI on brand investments



Top channels by ROI and personalization success

**Biggest ROI this year** [Segmentation/personalization is most effective](#)

Website/blog/SEO (search engine optimization)



Paid social media content



Organic social media content



Social media shopping tools (e.g. Instagram Shops)



Email marketing



Brand awareness



Content marketing



Physical events and tradeshows



Search/Display ads



Mobile messaging (SMS, WhatsApp, Messenger, etc.)

