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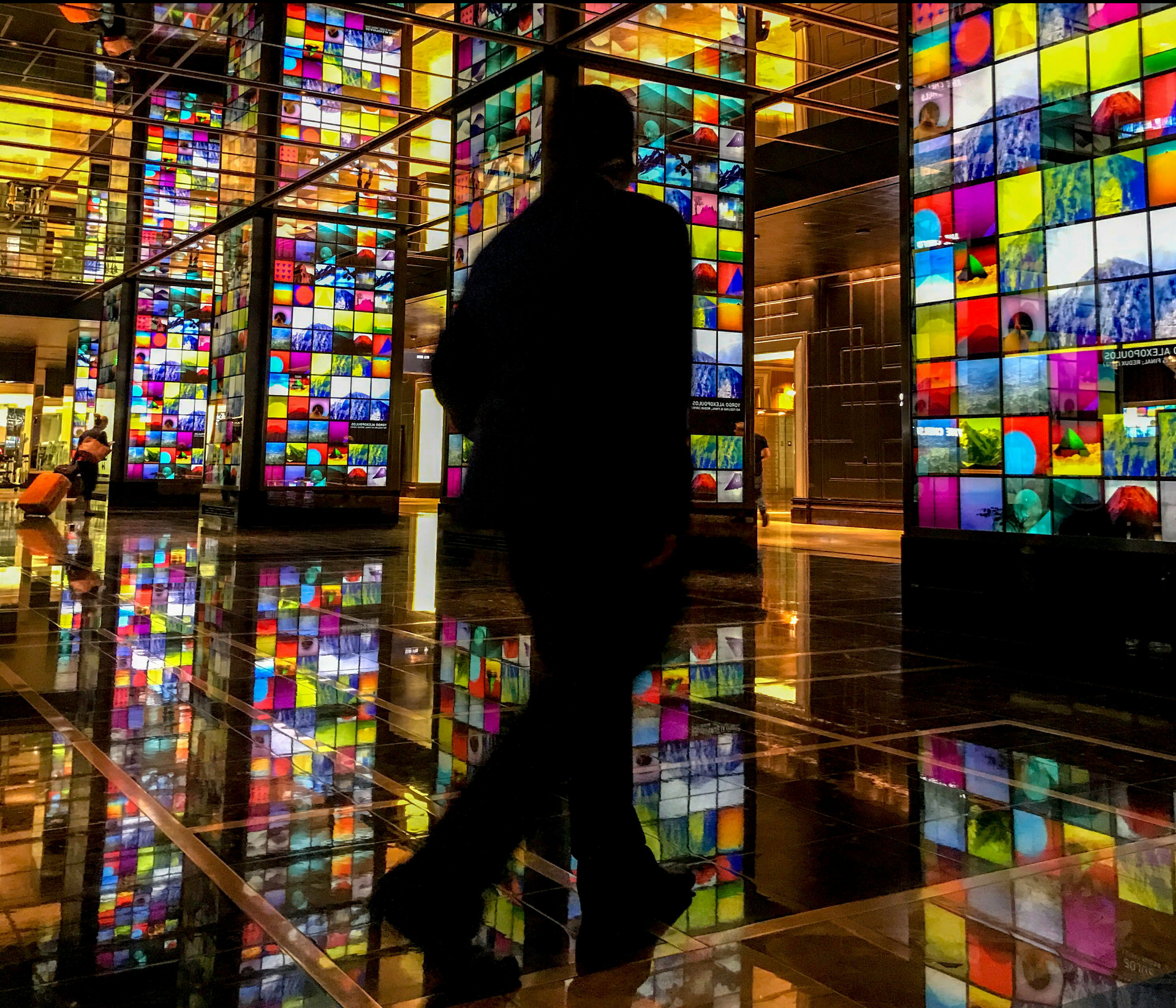
Reinvent for growth

The signals shaping media's next chapter

2026



Preface

The media industry stands at an inflection point in the face of accelerating disruption. New monetization models are emerging; AI is reshaping content creation, discovery, and distribution; and audience engagement is further fragmenting across media types, platforms and moments, redefining value.

Last year, we urged media leaders to move beyond incremental improvements and pursue structural reinvention: change that is radical. That call still stands, but now the urgency is greater.

A few players have heeded the call. For instance, Universal Music Group is shifting from a streaming-led model to one built on owning the artist-to-fan relationship and monetizing fan communities.[1] By anchoring loyalty to the artist rather than the platform, the company can follow fans wherever they go, respond to shifts in consumer habits and monetize across a wider range of channels.

However, such moves are the exception rather than the rule. Most major media actions have focused on portfolio reshuffles, ownership swaps and balance sheet repair, none of which amounts to reinvention.

Many leaders tell us they want to make bold moves but are unsure where to start. To understand what media companies should do next, we distilled five signals that matter from our annual survey of 6,000 consumers across 10 countries and, for the first time, 300 media executives spanning every major subsector.

First, as newer, more interactive formats continue to pull users away from passive consumption, growth opportunities have multiplied. Second, audiences want authenticity, bundling and community. The battle for engagement requires expansion into various formats and experiences. Third, despite widespread embrace of AI across the industry, most efforts are missing the mark; the true power of AI lies in its capacity to enable end-to-end reinvention not to just optimize the current model. Fourth, media companies' confidence in their technology readiness outstrips reality. Finally, transformation fatigue is rising even as disruption accelerates.

Together, these signals indicate a move from static formats to fluid ecosystems where value flows to companies designed for continuous adaptation. To compete, leaders must embrace this fluidity: follow the audience, adapt to their needs and build the technology foundation to enable capabilities, products and business models that will help them stay agile.
This report is a practical guide to help media companies set direction and adjust course as conditions shift.

01

Audience fragmentation multiplies growth opportunities

Consumer attention, no longer concentrated in a handful of dominant media types, is now distributed across platforms and interaction modes, shaped by context and convenience.

Subscription video on demand (SVOD) and social media dominated for a while. Music, with its emotional resonance and compatibility with multitasking, remains a durable constant. But newer, more interactive formats such as social video, gaming, online gambling and AI chatbots are increasingly pulling users away from passive consumption (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Preferred entertainment services are moving fluidly as new options emerge

What type of entertainment would you choose in each situation?

I Want To....	2022	2023	2025
Have background Noise	Music	Music	Music
Be a part of the Cultural Conversation	SVOD	Social Media	Social Media
De-stress and relax	SVOD	SVOD / Music	SVOD
Escape	SVOD	SVOD	SVOD
Feel inspired	SVOD	Social Media	SVOD
Feel less lonely	SVOD	Social Media	Social Media
Be Social	SVOD	Social Media	Online Gambling
Have fun	SVOD	SVOD	Video Gaming
Avoid boredom	SVOD	Social Media	Social Video
Learn a new skill	SVOD	Social Media	AI Chatbot
Learn about something new	SVOD	Social Media	AI Chatbot

As Figure 1 makes clear, audiences pick the media that fits the moment. They move fluidly across services and experiences, creating their own personalized media stacks. One might watch creator-led streams, listen to a podcast while gaming and end the day chatting with an AI agent.

This fragmentation is expanding the playing field for media companies, multiplying growth pathways. While many media executives believe fragmentation has been more advantageous for diversified platform companies than for traditional players, even legacy media players have opportunities to seize the moment and flow to adjacent value pools.

80%

Executives surveyed believe that disruption has positively affected the growth prospects of diversified platform companies, while **only 4%** say that about traditional TV and video content production and distribution companies.

Companies that build their business models around audience attention can unlock strong revenue streams and capture a larger share of growth.

Build ecosystems around existing core businesses

Establish an ecosystem of content, commerce and social interaction, such as ESPN's direct-to-consumer model. Anchored by an interactive app, it surrounds the core product—live sports—with real-time data, betting and personalized features, turning it into a connected experience.[2] Shoppable experiences are another pathway, with 80% of media executives expecting this model to soon go mainstream. Disney100's TikTok activations are an early example, blending storytelling and retail.[3]

Push the brand's boundaries with lifestyle bundles

Trusted media brands have permission to stretch into new categories—even outside the media industry. In our research, 64% of consumers are open to bundled digital and non-digital services from a single provider, ranking Amazon the most preferred and Netflix second. This opens the door for lifestyle bundles. For example, companies with deep audience loyalty like Fox Corporation could extend into verticals such as financial services, learning and health.

Own, not just license to, gaming and social video

Look to own gaming environments and short-form video platforms, not just license to them. This gives greater control over audience engagement, first-party data and monetization. The Oracle-led TikTok US joint venture signals a new model: pairing technology, data, distribution and content into a vertically integrated engine that powers discovery, sharing and fan engagement in real time. It's all enabled by an AI-enabled platform that surfaces the experience.[4]

Reframe for a chatbot-first world

Generative AI optimization (GEO) is rewriting visibility rules. Treat AI assistants as a new distribution and discovery layer. Optimize content for discovery and structure licensing to ensure attribution and revenue flow back to the content originator, not just the AI layer that surfaces it.

Follow music as a model and adjacency

Music, under pressure for the past quarter century but now one of the fastest-growing digital media categories, shows strength as an evergreen form of consumer consumption. It stands out for its low churn and high engagement, driven by personalization, platform stickiness and subscription resilience. Our research found that consumers spend 54 minutes per day listening to music—engagement equivalent to social media, just ahead of video games and social video. Music offers an adjacent field for media companies to play in. Acquiring streaming services like Spotify or even live entertainment players like Live Nation could deepen fan engagement and unlock new revenue streams.

02

Engagement patterns expose the risks of singularity

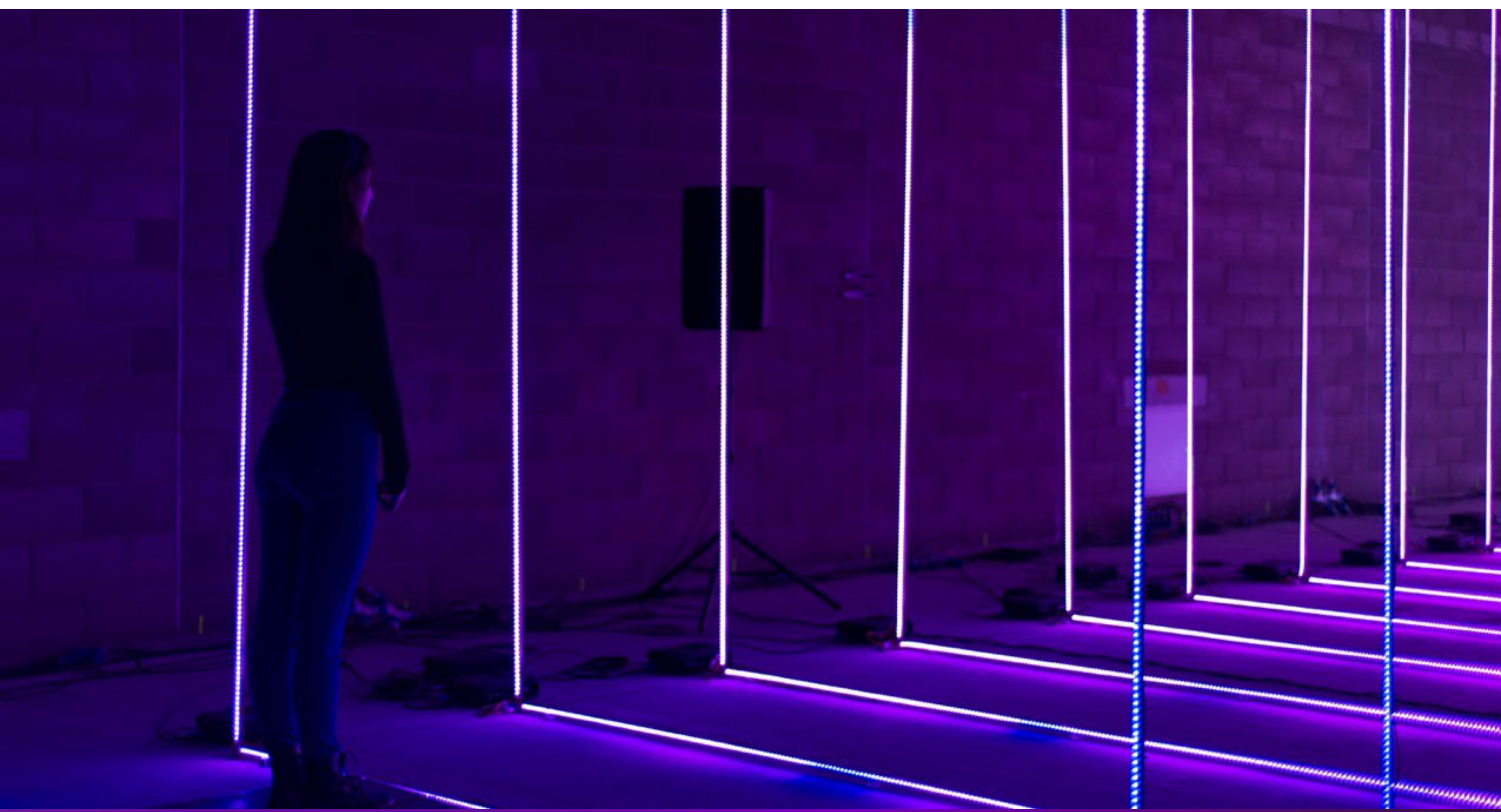
Fragmentation shows where audiences are moving. Engagement patterns explain why they stay or leave.

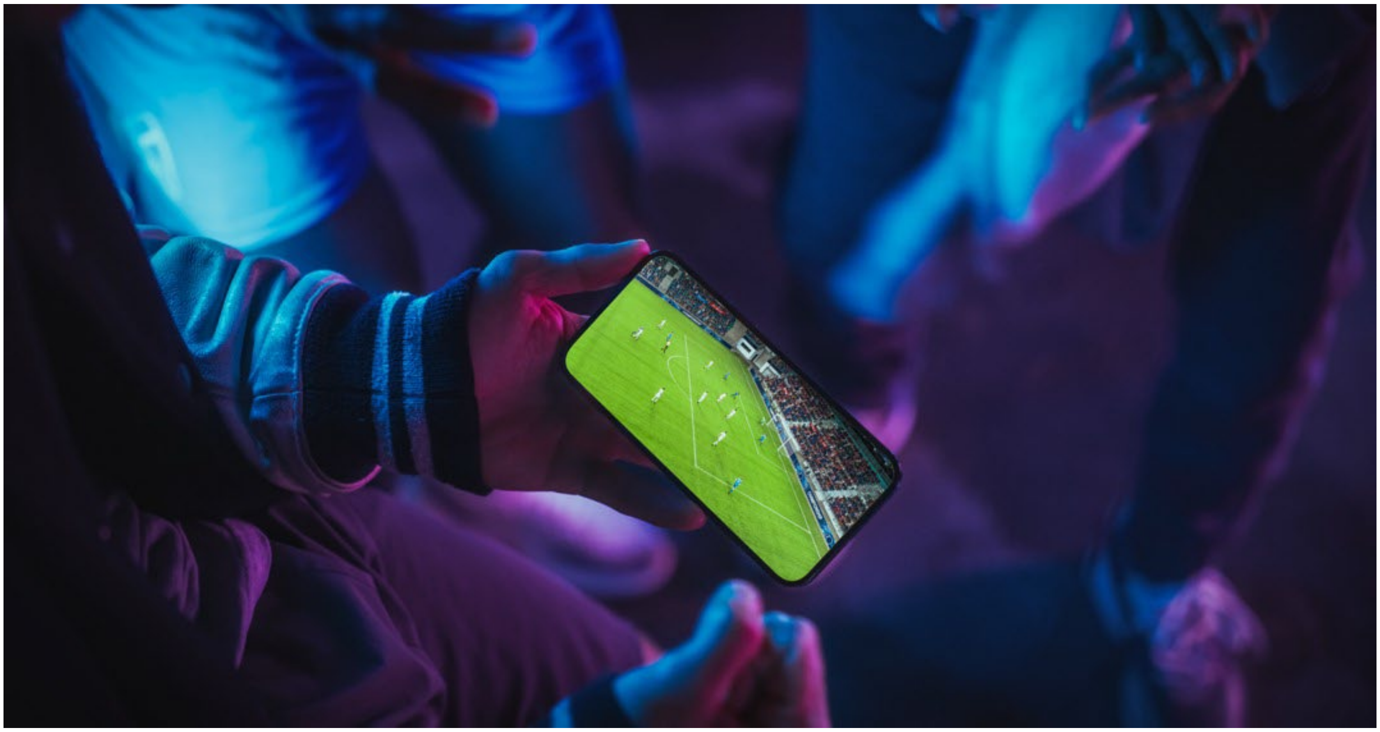
What keeps audiences coming back is not just access to content, but **authenticity**, **bundling** and **community**. **Authenticity** holds audience attention. In our research, 58% of consumers say user-generated video is as entertaining as traditional media and an equal percentage trust independent creators as much as major news outlets. AI-generated content is acceptable, too. Over 80% of consumers consider it comparable or superior to human-created content as long as people remain in the lead. **Bundling** reduces friction: 64% of consumers want a single app for all services and 70% prefer category-specific bundles. **Community**, on the other hand, is increasingly central to engagement. TikTok, Instagram, Reddit and YouTube fuel content discovery, discussions and second-screen interaction (Figure 2). Loyalty is no longer anchored to a single platform or format.

Figure 2: Consumers preference towards second-screen and social interactions

Media consumers use a second screen, primarily to scroll social media, during long-form viewing experiences

Media consumers want social features inside their streaming services, up from 48% in 2022





This shift is already playing out in engagement patterns. SVOD serial churn has become persistent, with half of consumers canceling two or more services in the past year, but engagement with social media (85%) and social video (62%) remains strong. Platforms must evolve from episodic viewing destinations to daily engagement hubs, embracing the formats audiences already favor.

Make vertical, mobile-first content and creator ecosystems a core component of your platform

Instead of continuing to optimize for passive viewing, integrate scrollable, mobile-friendly content like microdramas, news clips, highlights and repurposed scenes from existing shows into your platform. Invest in long-term creator ecosystems with creator tools and revenue-sharing. Our research shows that only 12% of media executives report mature creator partnerships, making this a major untapped growth lever.

Treat YouTube as an engagement hub, not just a marketing channel

YouTube is the world's default video discovery engine, ideal for low-cost early-stage audience engagement. Yet many media companies treat it narrowly as a place for promotional clips or trailers. The NFL offers a better model: Shareable content such as "Mic'd Up" clips and highlight reels build early affinity and draw younger audiences toward paid subscriptions, proving YouTube's value beyond being a marketing channel as a platform for content experimentation, audience-building and connection.[5]

Turn your platforms into experience hubs organized around fandoms

Evolve your platform into an **immersive environment that facilitates fandom**. Crunchyroll and BritBox offer a compelling model as purpose-built destinations delivering simulcasts, curated collections, exclusive trailers and community features. Mainstream platforms can adopt this playbook by organizing content around **franchises and fandoms** rather than formats, blending long-form content, vertical video, podcasts, games, behind-the-scenes access and fan contributions in one continuous engagement loop.

Embrace the aggregator model to drive retention and monetization

Rethink bundling through the lens of user experience by assuming an aggregator's mindset. Platforms like **Amazon Fire TV** and **Roku** simplify access with unified interfaces, personalized recommendations, seamless billing and cross-platform navigation. This improves satisfaction and gives valuable cross-platform viewing data, enhancing ad-targeting without the cost of owning content.

Build advertising technology that enhances, not disrupts, the audience experience

To turn engagement into revenue, embrace advertising technology that delivers relevance without compromising authenticity. Well-targeted, context-aware ads are key. Own what differentiates you and use external partners for other services. Netflix's partnership with Amazon Ads illustrates this balance: Netflix retains control over how ads appear on its premium content but relies on Amazon's demand-side platform for ad buying and targeting across 11 markets.[6]

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03

Initial AI adoption lacks vision and risks missing the opportunity

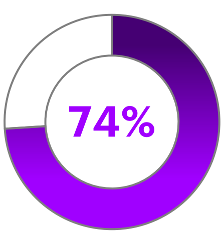
Emerging technologies such as generative AI (gen AI) dominate the media agenda, but most adoption is incremental.

Over 90% of the media executives in our survey expect these technologies to be the most disruptive driver of change over the next two years, 72% report widespread AI use in content production and post-production and two-thirds are piloting AI in advertising, content strategy, marketing and subscriber acquisition.

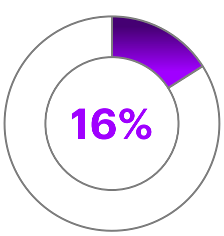
But most are using it to optimize today's model, not to reinvent tomorrow's. Executives cite faster turnaround and improved productivity as major benefits; these are important, but the real opportunity lies in building an AI-ready enterprise that embeds intelligence across the entire value chain. To capitalize on it, redesign core processes, redefine talent strategies and scale what truly differentiates the business while automating what doesn't. In fact, failure to fully embrace AI could put traditional media companies behind their big tech competitors, who cite more ambitious visions for AI (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Vision of building an AI-ready enterprise vs. readiness

Becoming an AI-ready company is a top transformation priority



Diversified tech platform companies



Traditional media companies

However, there is lack of clear vision for how generative AI will reshape their business

3% Of media executives say their organization has a clear vision for how gen AI will reshape their business

30% Of executives feel fully prepared to reimagine their core processes and operating model to unlock efficiencies across the organization by leveraging Gen AI

Make AI a strategic core, not a tactical add-on

Define an **enterprise-wide vision for AI**, one that focuses not just on cost savings but also on what becomes possible when AI powers the business end-to-end. Among traditional information companies, Thomson Reuters is combining proprietary data with advanced AI to transform flagship products into platforms that help legal, tax and other professionals automate workflows and accelerate research. The company is reinventing itself into a **content-powered AI enterprise**, embedding AI into products, infrastructure, engineering and workforce strategy.[7]

Build AI across end-to-end workflows, not silos

Optimizing individual processes or silos is not enough for reinvention; a holistic reimagination of end-to-end workflows is required to truly rewire how work gets done. Leading video game companies offer a blueprint. They have been early adopters of AI-powered reinvention at scale, applying it across the full cycle from greenlighting projects and production acceleration to pre-launch simulations and post-release personalization and monetization.

Treat AI as a growth engine

Use AI to expand discovery, engagement and monetization. In advertising, for instance, AI simplifies planning, targeting and measurement, streamlining transactions and shortening sales cycles. Spotify Ad Exchange's embedded gen AI tools help advertisers generate scripts and voiceovers and activate campaigns.[8] NBCUniversal's One Platform Total Audience uses AI to automate cross-screen planning, improve targeting and improve measurement accuracy.[9] In both cases, the impact extends beyond efficiency: AI streamlines transactions, shortens sales cycles, accelerates campaign activation and increases yield through more precise targeting.

Rethink talent

Rethink talent for AI-led reinvention at scale. While 77% of media executives expect fundamental workforce changes, only 32% say they understand how gen AI will reshape roles, skills and team structures. This disconnect is reflected in the way many organizations try to hire for AI without first reimagining the work itself. Instead, begin by reengineering processes end-to-end. Identify how roles must evolve: what to automate, what should remain human-driven, and what new capabilities to build. Only then develop targeted upskilling, workforce planning and hiring.

Review what is core

The key to becoming an AI-ready organization is knowing what to shed and where to double down. Use AI to streamline and automate non-differentiated work and refocus on what truly sets your business apart. Simplify, spin off or outsource non-core functions, such as back-office processes. Companies with strong broadcast and distribution operations, for instance, can extend them beyond their own portfolios, turning cost centers into a revenue stream.

04

Tech optimism is outpacing tech readiness

Media executives overwhelmingly agree that technology transformation is essential to reinvention, but many overestimate their tech readiness.

Legacy media companies also underinvest in IT, allocating 3% less of their revenue to technology than the media units of diversified platforms such as Google and Amazon. This mismatch between perception and reality masks structural weaknesses and delays urgent investments. Meanwhile, a handful of truly tech-forward competitors quietly gain ground through faster adoption and targeted investments.

To move fluidly into new models, media companies must treat technology as the foundation of reinvention. That requires not only aggressive investment but strategic choices around where to focus, how to architect the enterprise, when to partner and what to divest.

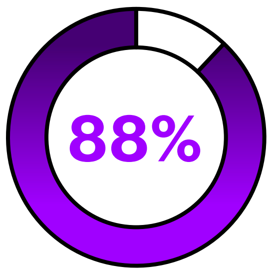
Figure 4: Tech Readiness: Perception vs. Reality

Media executives believe they are ahead of peers in:

In AI adoption **60%**

In Cloud-first infrastructure **54%**

But beneath that confidence, critical gaps remain:



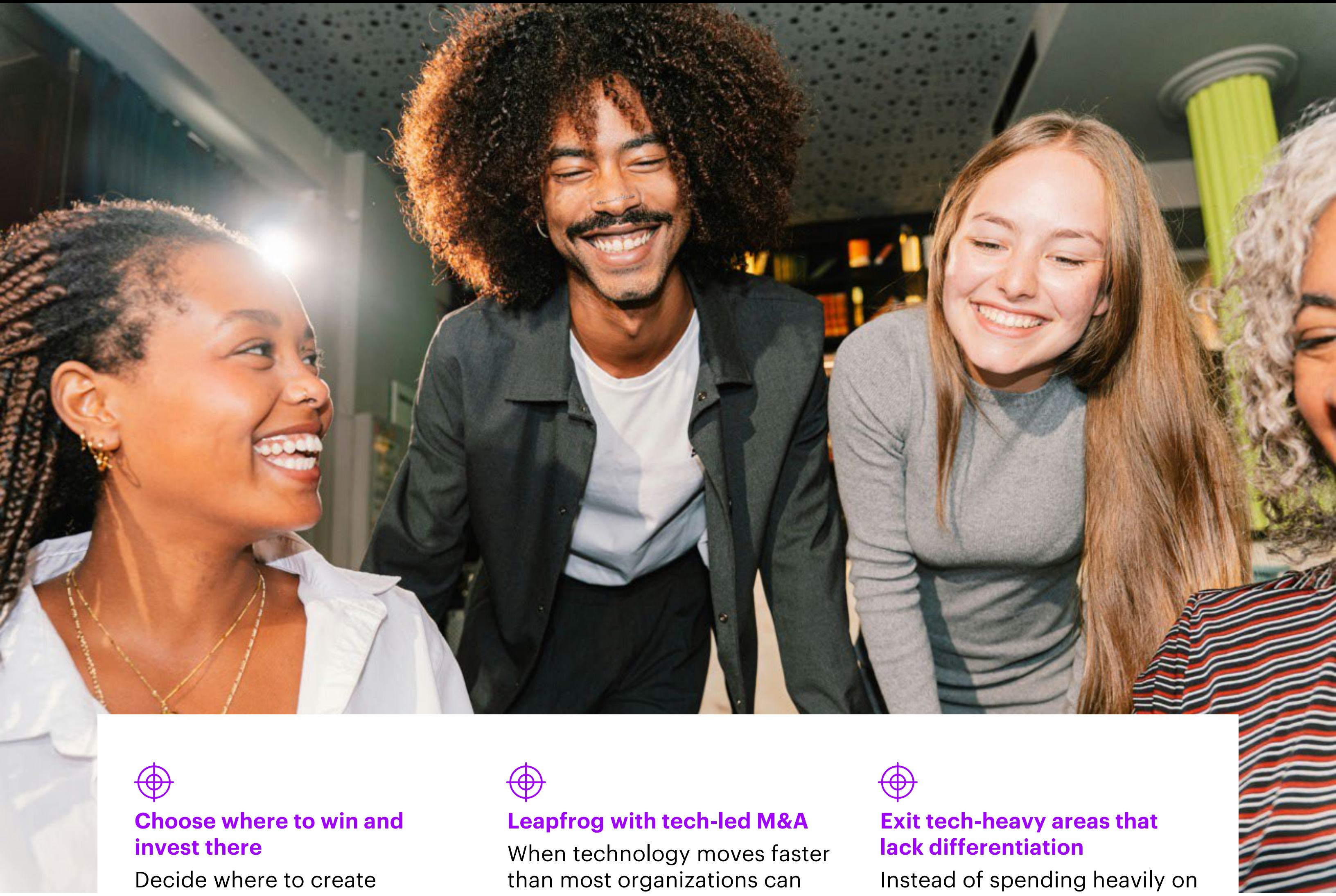
Of media executives say many organizations continue to operate on rigid technology stacks and lack advanced infrastructure

Put technology at the center of your transformation strategy

Treat technology as a strategic core, not a support function, and design your business models around it. In sports betting and business information, technology spending has already reached 9–10% of revenue, on par with diversified technology platforms, reflecting where competition now lies. Paramount Skydance articulates a vision to become a new kind of studio that embeds AI tools, machine learning and virtual workflows across production, distribution and user experience, reducing costs, accelerating franchise development and improving personalization, retention and ad monetization.[10]

Build a digital core that enables fluidity

Equip your organization with a flexible cloud-native digital core to power entry into new domains such as streaming, gaming, ad tech, creator platforms and AI-driven products without rebuilding itself each time. A modern digital core that includes enterprise platforms, cloud infrastructure, data, AI and security lets companies deploy, scale and retire business unit technologies modularly. They can do so without operational disruption and with minimal tech debt. These could be over-the-top (OTT) ecosystems, for example, or content management systems and audience intelligence tools Increasingly, media companies are bringing their finance, supply chain and workforce systems onto a single cloud platform, making it structurally more flexible and enabling accelerated expansion into new initiatives.



Choose where to win and invest there

Decide where to create differentiation and commit resources accordingly. For some, that may mean platform excellence; for others, advanced advertising or AI-enabled operations. Rather than trying to dominate every front, the Walt Disney Company, for instance, has poured resources into modernizing its advertising capabilities. Tools like Compass and the Select AI Engine help consolidate audience data to improve targeting and measurement.[11]

Leapfrog with tech-led M&A

When technology moves faster than most organizations can build internally, M&A becomes a strategic accelerator. Media companies recognize this: 84% of executives anticipate using M&A to gain advanced streaming capabilities in the next 24 months, and Accenture's research shows that successful deals often center on a clear technology-driven investment objective. Roku offers a model, using dataxu and Nielsen's Advanced Video Advertising business to strengthen its ad stack—automated buying, audience insights and ad delivery, enhancing measurement, monetization—and compete more effectively in connected TV.[12,13]

Exit tech-heavy areas that lack differentiation

Instead of spending heavily on proprietary playout systems, recommendation engines and platform infrastructure that do not contribute to differentiation, use infrastructure maintained by specialist providers. Formula 1's F1 TV, for instance, is a cloud-based, multi-platform streaming service built on Accenture Video Solutions and Amazon Web Services. The multi-camera views, real-time statistics and personalized race-day experiences delivered on a global scale are the real differentiators, not the technology plumbing.[14]

05

Transformation fatigue is colliding with accelerating disruption

After more than a decade of relentless upheaval, many media leaders are understandably exhausted.

However, the urgency to transform may be easing just as disruption accelerates. Our research highlights a widening divide between diversified technology platforms, which prioritize fundamental transformation, and legacy media companies, many of which remain focused on incremental revenue tactics (Figure 5).

Meanwhile, AI, platform competition and shifting consumer behavior continue to reshape the industry. Reducing ambition or risk appetite at this juncture would be a mistake.

Instead, media companies must redesign themselves for fluidity, embedding adaptability into their operating model, technology architecture and culture. Change should be designed into the enterprise, rather than delivered in episodic, disruptive bursts. Experimentation should become routine and new business models should plug into the organization without destabilizing the core.

Figure 5: Diverging strategies across media companies

Media companies pursuing radical reinvention

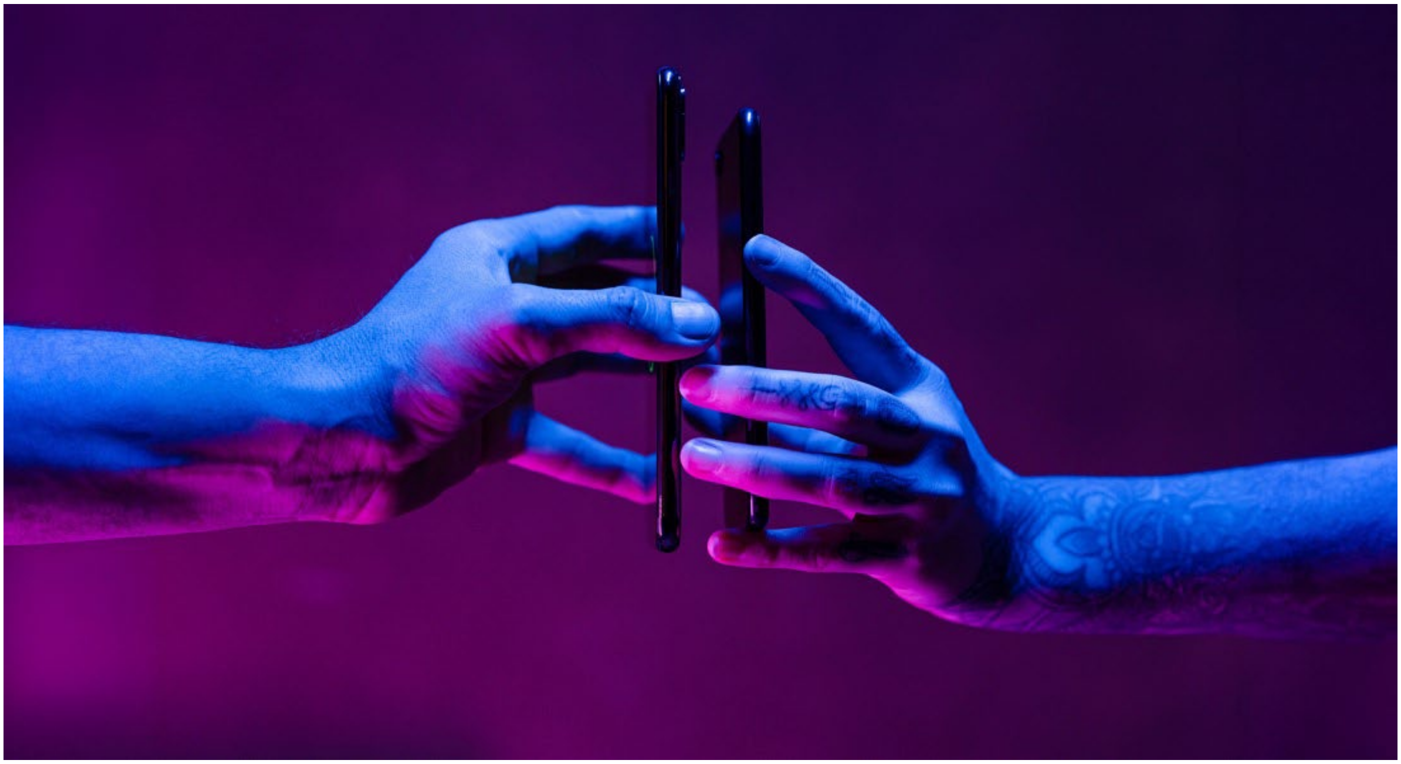
20%

Just 20% of media executives pursue radical reinvention— strategies that fundamentally redefine their operations, business model or market position

Reinvention strategies: Legacy vs. diversified technology platforms

52%

Of legacy media executives focused on incremental tactics while **84%** of the media execs at diversified technology platforms focused on fundamental transformation



Adopt a big-tent backbone

Design an operating model that enables continuous fluidity. The "big tent backbone" approach centralizes what must be shared—such as core systems, cloud infrastructure, data standards and identity—and decentralizes what must move fast. Amazon illustrates this model. Prime Video, Audible, Twitch and Amazon Music, each pursues its own strategy and growth path, but they all sit on a shared backbone of AWS infrastructure, identity systems, payments, data and advertising tools, allowing them to innovate and scale without rebuilding foundational capabilities.

Establish dedicated engines for continuous innovation

Innovation will stall if it is trapped in traditional ROI frameworks and siloed decision-making. Establish dedicated entities for innovation and cross-divisional transformation with separate funding and metrics. Bertelsmann, for instance, created a central AI Hub that coordinates AI deployment across media, services and education businesses, defining priorities, managing partnerships and sharing expertise across divisions. Teams can use AI to enhance content creation, recommendations, marketing and productivity workflows in a coordinated manner rather than as fragmented experiments.[15 16]

Initiate expansive experimentation

In a market defined by uncertainty, no one knows which strategic bet will succeed. Place multiple small bets and let real-world performance determine what to scale. Facing cord-cutting and streaming disruption, for instance, ESPN tested multiple parallel initiatives, from a live sports streaming joint venture (Venu)[17] and sportsbook (ESPN Bet)[18] to investing in emerging sports leagues like the Premier Lacrosse League.[19] Not every initiative endured, but collectively they led to learning, optionality and momentum.

Invest to learn and create future options

Take intelligent equity positions in the emerging media ecosystem to gain insight into new business models and operational realities before committing at scale. For example, Comcast Ventures is investing in early- to growth-stage technology companies in areas such as AI-driven creative tools, generative voice technology, competitive gaming and betting platforms and advertising innovation.[20]

Use partnerships to move faster

Sixty percent of media executives plan to rely on partnerships to acquire future capabilities, and here, Walt Disney Studios' partnership with Accenture offers an illustration. By partnering to explore the application of emerging technologies like machine learning, extended reality, and real-time technologies to cinematic storytelling, Disney's StudioLAB accessed advanced technology and deep expertise faster than it could have otherwise. As a result, the company was able to condense the time it would otherwise have taken to move from experimentation to productization in areas as diverse as location scouting, script writing, and film asset search.[21]

Conclusion

The Reinvent for Growth signals are clear: disruption is accelerating and expanding opportunities for those ready to redesign around it.

Companies that will lead are those that embrace flow. They are more deliberate about being agile in the face of continuous change, building new experiences for audiences, shifting investment into adjacent growth areas, modernizing their digital core and embedding AI across the enterprise to grow faster.

Reinvention must be continuous, embedded in the operating model, not delivered in bursts. Episodic change exhausts organizations while fluid design sustains them. That makes fluidity the blueprint for how companies allocate capital, structure platforms for experimentation, scale talent models and build adaptable technology infrastructure.

The path forward isn’t one big leap, but a disciplined commitment to flow: redesigning engagement, building new ecosystems of value, shedding what no longer differentiates and scaling what does. In a fluid marketplace, advantage belongs to those structured to move with it. That’s how media companies will shape the next era of growth.

About the research

Our multi-method research approach integrates primary media consumer and executive studies, qualitative interviews with subject matter experts at Accenture and case studies.

Primary survey:

- **Consumer survey**: In 2025, Accenture conducted an online survey of 6,000 consumers aged 18+ across 10 key markets (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States) to understand global consumers' entertainment preferences, beliefs and behaviors amid the evolving media landscape. Major areas the survey covered include media usage, interests and convenience, frustrations and churn, lifestyle bundles, personalization and attention monetization.

- **Enterprise survey**: Also in 2025, Accenture conducted a comprehensive survey of 300 senior enterprise executives across diverse geographic regions and different media industry segments. The study examined the current disruption in the media industry, tracking companies' transformation, key challenges and organizational maturity in IT and digital investments. It also analyzed AI/gen AI adoption and readiness and monetization strategies and assessed the role of content creators and influencers.

Case studies: To complement our survey findings, we analyzed case studies of media companies undergoing transformation, demonstrating the impact of reinvention on value creation and the key factors driving success.

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