

A close-up, high-tech portrait of a woman's face. Her skin is dark and has a matte finish. Overlaid on her face are various digital elements: a circular data panel in the upper left, a grid pattern across her forehead, and several rectangular data panels with text and icons. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and digital, with a color palette dominated by dark tones and red highlights.

# RE:HUMAN

## 2026 AI TRENDS



TAKUMI

RE:HUMAN is Takumi's annual look at how AI is reshaping human behaviour, culture and expectations. AI is rewriting how we create, consume and connect and 2026 marks the moment humanity pushes back, redefining what "human" really means. This report explores six cultural shifts that will define 2026 and what they mean for CMOs, CX leaders and modern marketers.

# 1 AGE OF AUTO-CONSUMERS

## DELEGATED COMMERCE

Consumers increasingly delegate shopping, booking and everyday decisions to AI “agents” that act on their behalf – searching, negotiating and transacting without a human intermediary.



### Human insight

People are time-poor and trust convenience. When a tool reliably saves time & friction, we hand it more responsibility. Delegation becomes a form of intimacy, “my agent knows me.”

### Signals & data

- Kantar predicts 2026 “will see the emergence of AI agents at scale,” where consumers increasingly delegate purchase decisions to AI helpers. Already 24% of AI users employ shopping assistants (Source : Kantar). CMOs must prepare for this shift: brands will need to service not only human buyers but also the AI agents advising them.
- Zendesk finds “memory-rich AI agents” are essential for personalized journeys; CX leaders expect these agents to drive loyalty. (Source : Zendesk)
- Search experts note the rise of AI search and agentic discovery reshaping SEO/visibility strategies.

### Why it matters

Your next competitor might be a 3-line piece of code that buys better for customers than you do. If brands aren’t discoverable and trusted by agents, they lose at the point of automated choice.

### Implications for brands & marketers

Rethink “SEO” for the agent era (Generative Engine Optimization).

Build APIs and partner-programmes so agents can transact reliably (prices, inventory, returns).

Train brand “personas” for agents – allow controlled access to brand voice and offers.

“The real competition isn’t with other brands anymore – it’s with the AI agent your customer trusts. If your brand isn’t optimized for the proxy consumer, it won’t even show up at the moment of truth. Winning 2026 means winning the algorithm and the human behind it.”

Mohit Lodha, Founder & CEO – Takumi Advisory

### 📌 Takumi POV

**“Brands must design for AI as the new decision-maker – win the agent’s confidence, and you win the customer’s choice.”**

# 2 THE CO-CREATIVITY RENAISSANCE

## CONSUMERS AS COLLABORATORS

AI turns consumers into collaborators. Brands open creative systems so communities co-create products, art, and campaigns at scale.



### Human insight

People want to participate, not just consume. Co-creation converts passive audiences into loyal communities and R&D crowds.

### Signals & data

Instead of fearing AI in art and media, people are embracing it as a new kind of creative partner. By 2026, co-creation with AI will be routine, unleashing a renaissance of user-generated content and design. Enthusiasts without formal training can use LLMs to make images, music, and videos in minutes. A study of 4 million AI-generated artworks shows that when artists use text-to-image AI, their output jumps 25% – and their peers “favorite” rates climb 50%. In other words, AI is amplifying human creativity: it’s helping people iterate faster and try bolder ideas.

### Why it matters

Co-creation scales relevance and reduces creative risk – the best ideas increasingly come from the crowd, not the boardroom.

### Implications for brands & marketers

Launch safe “co-create” sandboxes with legal/brand guardrails.

Reward contributors to build authentic communities.

Treat generated ideas as experiment pipelines – test small, scale fast.

“Co-creation isn’t a tactic – it’s a mindset shift. When you open your brand to the community, you don’t lose control; you gain cultural velocity. The most relevant work in the next era will be built with people, not just for them.”

**Banali Luthra Malhotra – Strategic Advisor Takumi Advisory**

### □ Takumi POV

**“AI doesn’t replace creativity – it multiplies it. The brands that co-create with consumers will own culture, not just campaigns.”**

# 3 WELLNESS 3.0

## THE ALGORITHMIC COACH

AI moves from tracking health to actively coaching behavior: fitness, nutrition, mental health and lifestyle become continuous, AI-guided journeys.



### Human insight

Wellness is aspirational and personal — people want affordable, tailored guidance that fits their life rhythms.

### Signals & data

AI isn't just for business — it's becoming a personal trainer, nutritionist and even therapist. By 2026, AI-driven wellness will be an established part of daily life. Consumers will have AI coaches that adapt workouts on the fly, diet planners that suggest recipes based on gut microbiome data, and chatbots that deliver basic mental health support. This reflects growing trust: as people share more biometric data, they expect real-time guidance. Indeed, surveys show nearly half of users want AI assistance making personal decisions (45% in one Kantar study) and 42% want help with planning finances — indicating that the concept of a personal AI advisor is resonating

### Why it matters

Health & wellness form sticky relationships — help someone feel better every day and you earn lifetime value (and rich data).

### Implications for brands & marketers

Consider wellness add-ons: AI coaches, nudges, or subscription services tied to product use.

Partner with credible health providers and ensure clinical validation where needed.

Treat privacy as default — health data is sensitive and trust is fragile.

"In wellness 3.0, it's ultimately the customer's daily decisions that move the needle on their own results. Wellness brands that move into immersive, realtime coaching will own the moment when people actually change their behavior, and get the credit for it. That's where the lifetime value lives."

Samantak Ray — AI Strategy Consultant, Takumi

### Takumi POV

**“Wellbeing is becoming a data-driven lifestyle - brands must solve for energy, clarity, and mental resilience, not just health.”**

# 4 SNACKABLE CINEMA

## RISE OF AI MICRO DRAMAS

Ultra-short, emotionally dense episodic content — generated, localized and personalized by AI becomes a dominant cultural snack format.



### Human insight

Attention is scarce; emotion still rules. Micro-dramas give instant catharsis and social shareability – the perfect cocktail for modern cultural virality.

### Signals & data

In 2026, AI-generated bite-sized storytelling—micro-dramas will become mainstream entertainment. Millions already consume TikTok-length narratives written, voiced, edited and scored by AI in seconds. This is more than content efficiency—it's a new cultural runtime shaped by shrinking attention spans and an appetite for rapid emotional payoff. Platforms like Douyin have already created AI-generated mini-soap operas with billions of views in China.

### Why it matters

Micro-dramas are high-velocity culture engines — brands that master them can own everyday conversation and embed products inside narratives people actually crave.

### Implications for brands & marketers

Build rapid creative loops for episodic formatting

Use data to personalize story beats to micro-audiences.

Plan for seriality: episodic loyalty beats one-off virality.

“Storytelling isn’t getting shorter, it’s getting sharper. AI-powered micro-dramas show that you can deliver emotion, tension and brand meaning in under 20 seconds. People aren’t getting dumber or less focused; they’re becoming far more discerning in a world drowning in content. The future belongs to marketers who can compress impact without compromising craft”

Hubert Boulos – Strategic Advisor

### ❏ Takumi POV

**“Narratives are shrinking – brands must deliver emotion in seconds or risk cultural invisibility.”**

# 5 REGEN CULTURE

## NOSTALGIA RESURRECTION

AI remixes the past — voices, visuals and cultural icons are revived, remastered or reimagined to connect heritage with new audiences.



### Human insight

Nostalgia is emotionally potent. When it's reimagined skillfully, it bridges generations — creating shared experiences between boomers and Gen Z. We're living in a moment where people crave comfort, familiarity, and emotional anchoring, even as the world accelerates at breakneck speed

### Signals & data

AI gives people emotional time travel. People aren't using AI to escape the past — they're using it to bring the past with them into the future.

- **The Beatles' AI-powered "Now and Then":**  
Paul McCartney used AI to isolate John Lennon's original vocals and "finish" the last Beatles song — not as a gimmick, but as an emotionally authentic tribute. This wasn't just a release — it became a global cultural moment.
- **Holographic & AI-resurrected performances**  
Whitney Houston, ABBA's Voyage, Tupac at Coachella — AI is powering an entire industry of "live" performances featuring artists who are no longer here or who want to exist in multiple eras simultaneously.

### Why it matters

Your brand's archive is a growth asset. Regenerating heritage with care can create emotional resonance for younger audiences while retaining older fans.

### Implications for brands & marketers

Audit archives for re-usable assets (sound bites, past campaigns, iconic imagery).

Use AI restoration with clear provenance and storytelling that shows respect for origin.

Monetize digital heritage thoughtfully: limited drops, remastered collections, experiential revivals.

"AI lets the past speak to the future. Brands that harness their heritage thoughtfully can create shared cultural moments that resonate across generations. But nostalgia isn't a gimmick — it's a tool for emotional relevance, and context is everything."

**Mohit Lodha, Founder & CEO — Takumi Advisory**

### Takumi POV

**"AI is rewriting nostalgia as a strategic asset — brands can revive heritage to unlock new relevance and emotional equity."**

# 6 THE HUMAN PREMIUM

## AUTHENTICITY IS THE NEW LUXURY

What happens when customers don't shop — their AI does? As AI makes flawless content trivial, real human authorship becomes scarce and therefore more valuable. Authenticity becomes a signal of luxury



### Human insight

People crave connection and truth. When everything can be faked, being real is a differentiator — and younger audiences are surprisingly strict about provenance and credit.

### Signals & data

By 2026, the sheer volume of AI-generated content will have skyrocketed — deepfakes, synthetic celebrities, and auto-composed ads will be everywhere. Consumers will battle skepticism: “Can I even trust what I see?” In fact, recent studies already show a backlash. One survey finds 32% of US/UK consumers say AI is negatively impacting creative work (up from 18% in 2023). Younger users especially want human originality: 54% of Gen Z say they prefer no AI involvement in creative content. Even Coca-Cola’s AI-powered ads have drawn ire.

### Why it matters

If consumers distrust AI-generated ads or celebrity revivals, brand equity can erode quickly. Transparency & provenance become not just ethical, but strategic.

### Implications for brands & marketers

Label AI use where appropriate; create “human + AI” stories that highlight the human role.

Invest in third-party ethical audits and publish simple explainers.

Use human talent deliberately — reserve “real” moments for premium experiences.

“In a world where machines can produce infinite content, the scarce resource is the human soul. The brands that win will be the ones that double down on humanity — empathy, judgment, vulnerability and trust. AI can scale efficiency, but only people can scale meaning.”

Rishad Tobaccowala — Strategic Advisor

### Takumi POV

**“In a world engineered by AI, human imperfection becomes a competitive advantage — authenticity now signals value, not vulnerability.”**