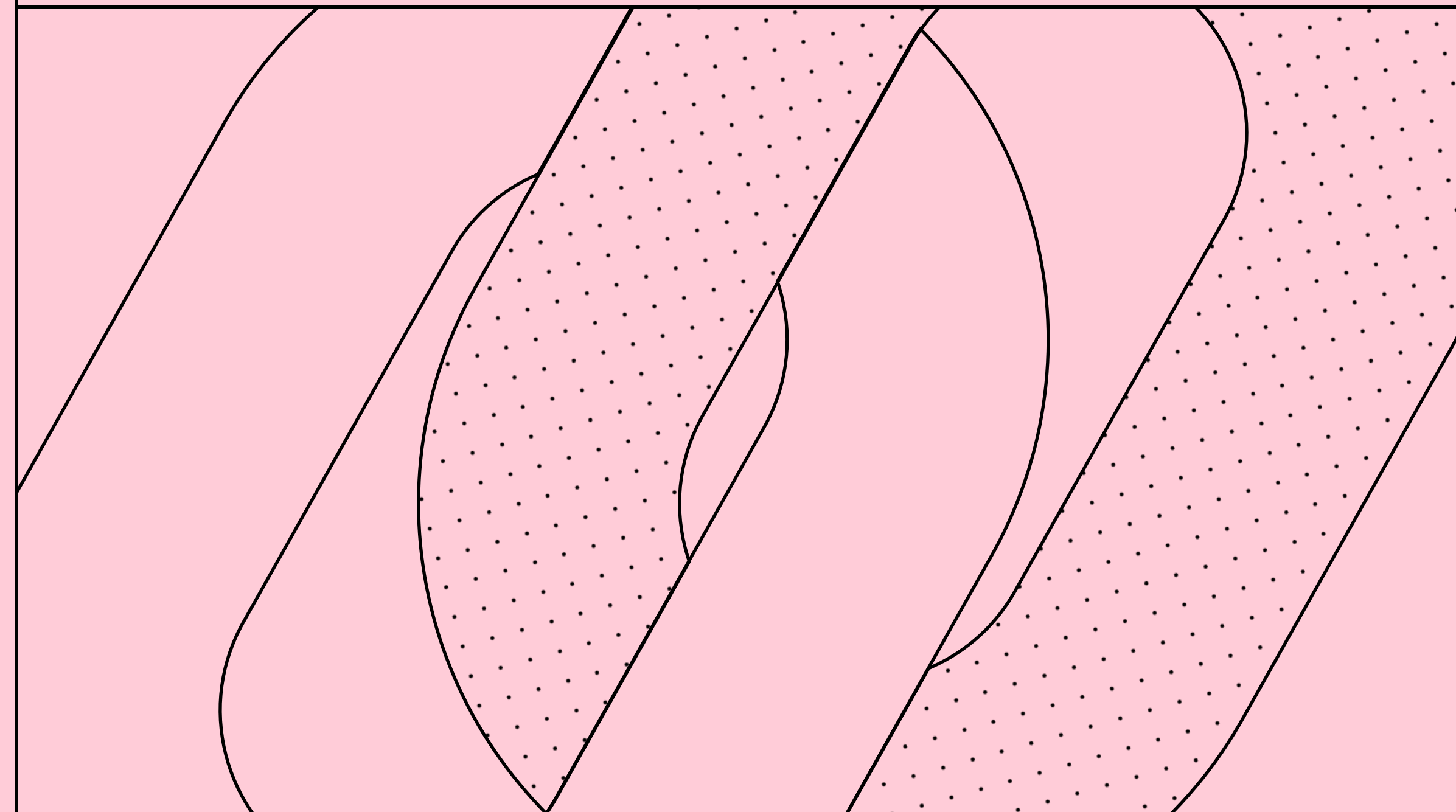


Germany Edition

Brand Trust in the Age of Information Overload

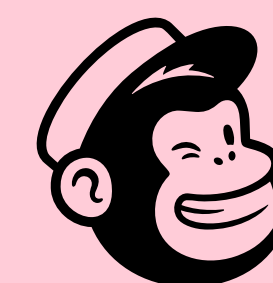
How brands can build trust and connect with
Germany's conscious consumers

A Mailchimp Report



This report is based on
a commissioned survey
conducted by

SAPIO
RESEARCH 



INTUIT
mailchimp

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Brand love isn't bought – it's earned

Never has it been more challenging for German businesses to cut through and grab the attention of consumers. Brand reputation matters, especially with myriad macroeconomic, social and environmental factors at play. Your customers may have already decided about whether to engage with you before you've even launched your latest campaign.

In this current climate, you must prioritise building a long-term strategy and a lasting relationship with your customers. In this report, we gather the latest consumer intel and break down what constitutes real consumer connection – in 2024 and beyond.



The way customers and brands connect is changing

According to a survey of consumers conducted by Sapio on behalf of Intuit Mailchimp, the German consumer landscape is changing in a number of key ways:

→ Consumers want data-driven personalisation – but also assurances

Most Germans are happy to receive targeted brand recommendations based on their personal data after searching or shopping for a product on search engines (57%), in person (55%) or on a website (52%). But 70% want assurances about how their personal data will be used, meaning businesses must take the necessary steps to remain transparent.

→ Customers are looking for cheaper alternatives to beloved brands

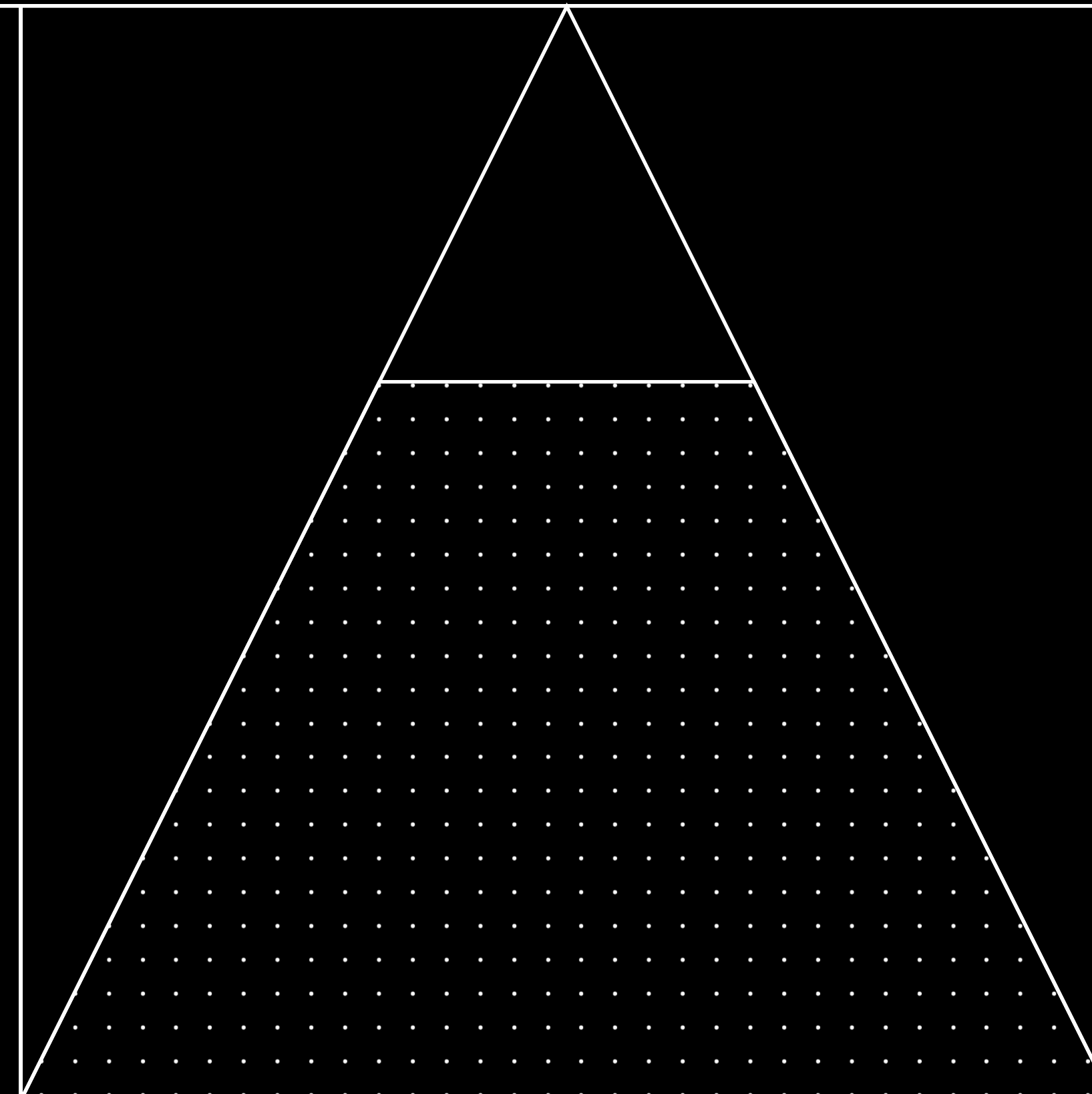
Consumers are growing increasingly cost-conscious and rethinking which brands to stay loyal to – 56% of shoppers in Germany are looking for cheaper alternatives to brands they've purchased from in the past.

→ The next generation of consumers want products and services to come to them

Over half of 18-to-34 year-olds in Germany (54% for 18-to-24 year-olds and 51% for 25-to-34 year-olds) believe the future of personalisation means they won't be searching for products and services, but that the right products and services will be coming to *them*.

→ Connection and trust are just as important as free delivery

40% of German customers are more likely to buy from brands they connect with and trust. But these aren't the only purchasing motivators for German shoppers, with 37% prioritising free delivery, and 36% prioritising regular discount codes and rewards.



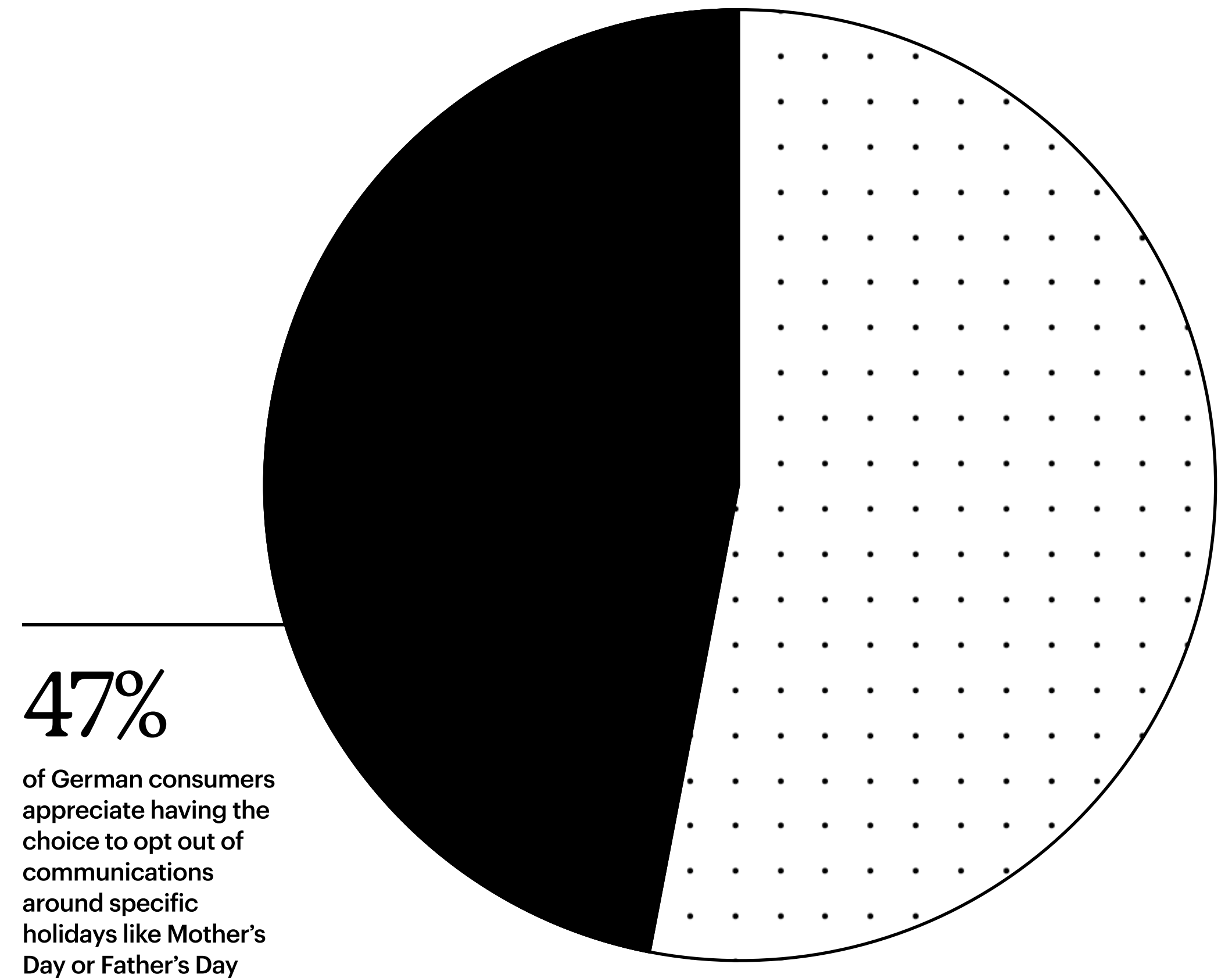
The marketing landscape in 2024

Hard to reach and even harder to please: how to find the balance with today's mindful consumers.

When done well, brand emails work. In fact, well over a third (39%) of consumers say they enjoy receiving emails from some brands. But too often, brands are getting the recipe wrong. So how can you give German shoppers what they really want?

Consumers want to hear from you, but on their own terms. When it comes to engaging with customers via email, personalised content is the most popular (49%), followed by limited and exclusive stock items (40%). Meanwhile, 41% of respondents say repetitive or unimaginative emails drive them to unsubscribe, followed by partisan/biased commentary on elections (36%), and biased/partisan commentary on social or political issues (34%).

Personal preference is often determined by lived experience. And nearly half (47%) of German consumers appreciate thoughtful marketing, such as the chance to opt out of communications around Mother's Day or Father's Day.

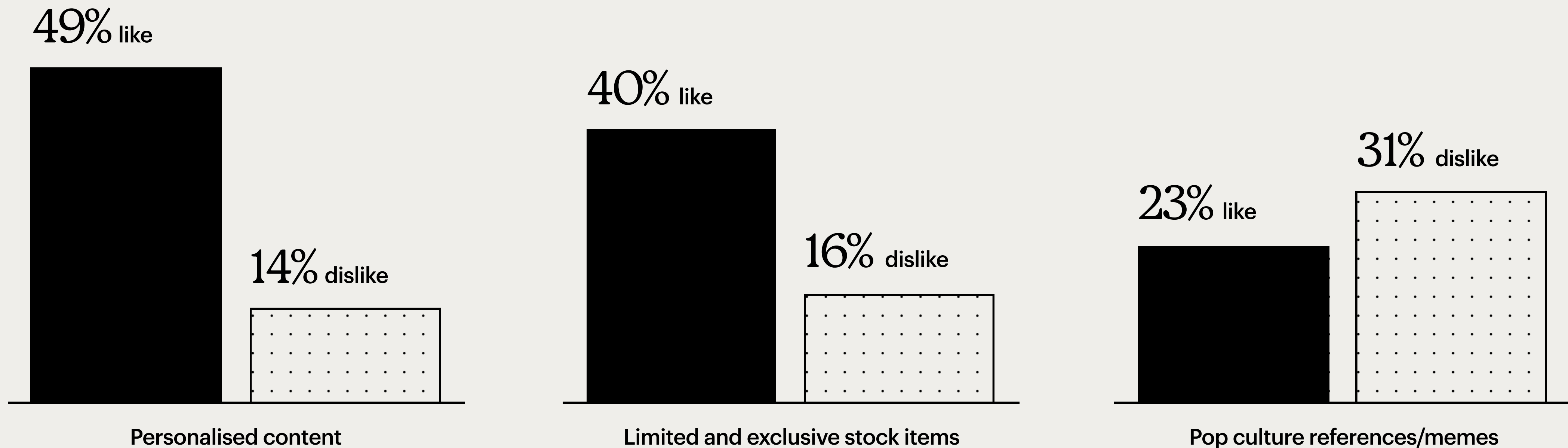


47%

of German consumers appreciate having the choice to opt out of communications around specific holidays like Mother's Day or Father's Day

This adds to a landscape where German shoppers are increasingly selective in their communications preferences. But don't panic – there's still plenty of opportunity to capture their attention over email.

The Biggest Likes vs. Dislikes for German Consumers



OUR TAKE

In the pursuit of brand trust, remember to stay authentic.

In the battle for consumer attention, brands are contending with added noise on social media platforms. Germans spending more time on social media are open to an increase in brand communications; however, sending more comms isn't necessarily the answer.

In addition to offering competitive products and price points, your brand values shouldn't go unheard. There's nothing stopping you from communicating your views on people and planet/corporate social responsibility, but pick your battles wisely. 34% of consumers are inclined to unfollow/unsubscribe if they disagree with your point of view. Your perspectives won't be for everyone, but what matters is that your message resonates with your target audience. Just be sure to give customers the power to opt-out, and be prepared to potentially lose followers along the way.

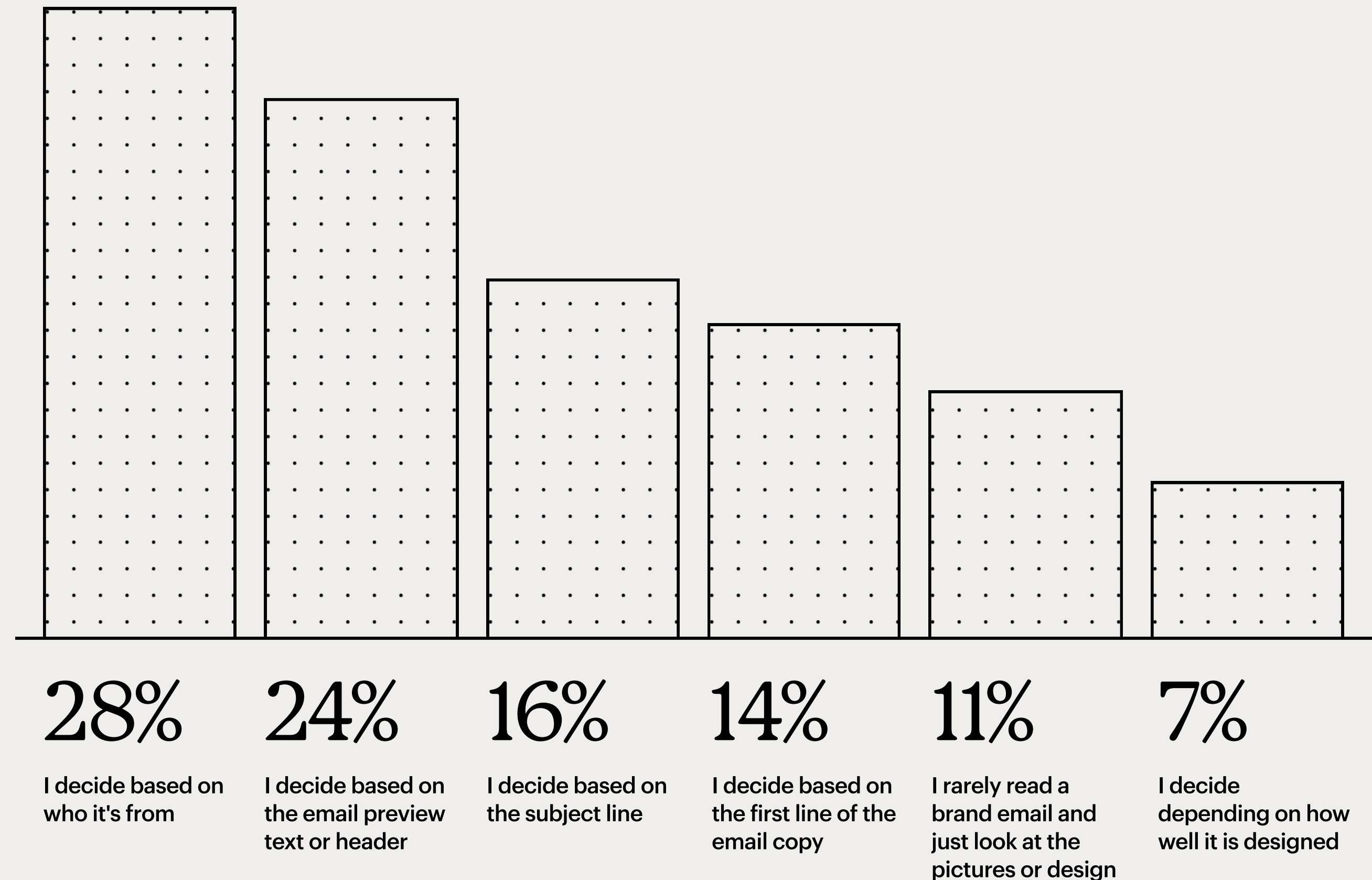


What makes German shoppers engage with a brand email?

Consumer trust is about playing the long game.

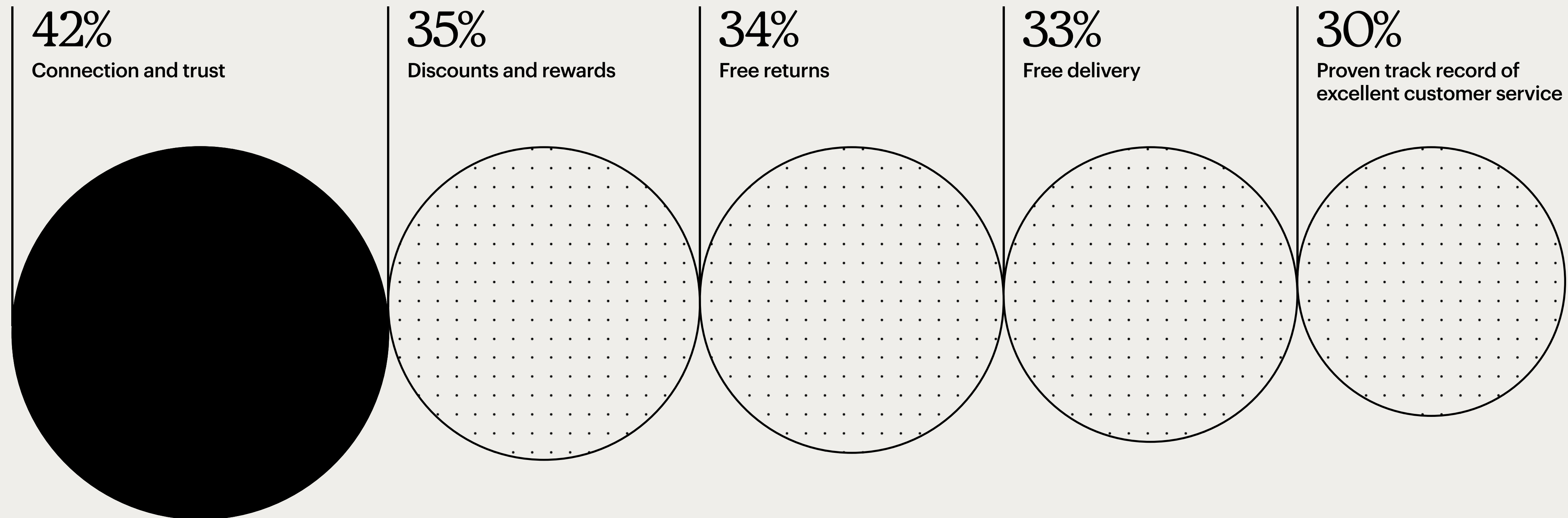
Today's consumers know exactly what they want and who they want it from. But brand loyalty isn't built in a day. So, how do you convince your customers to sign up and stay subscribed?

Most people decide to read or click links in an email based on who it's from (28%) versus preview text (24%) or subject line (16%). What's more, 15% of 18-to-24 year-olds state email design is a deciding factor – more than any other age group.



For German shoppers, engagement has a lot to do with trust and convenience. Once a byword for ‘close-by’, convenience today means quick shipping, one-click payments and meeting expectations in terms of quality and support. It’s also about meeting the right consumer in the right place, at the right time, with the right product at the right price.

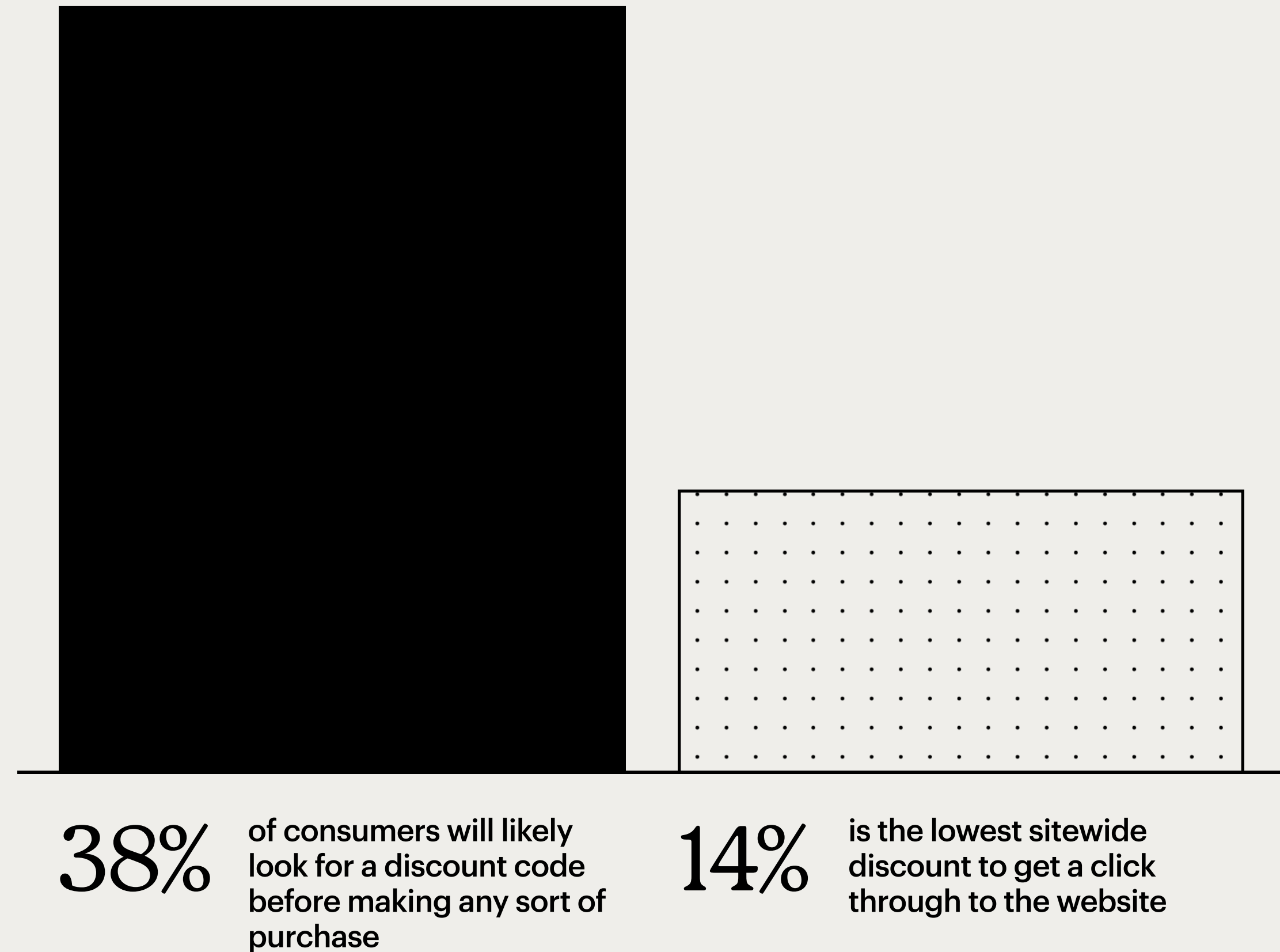
The Top Factors for Consumer Engagement in Germany



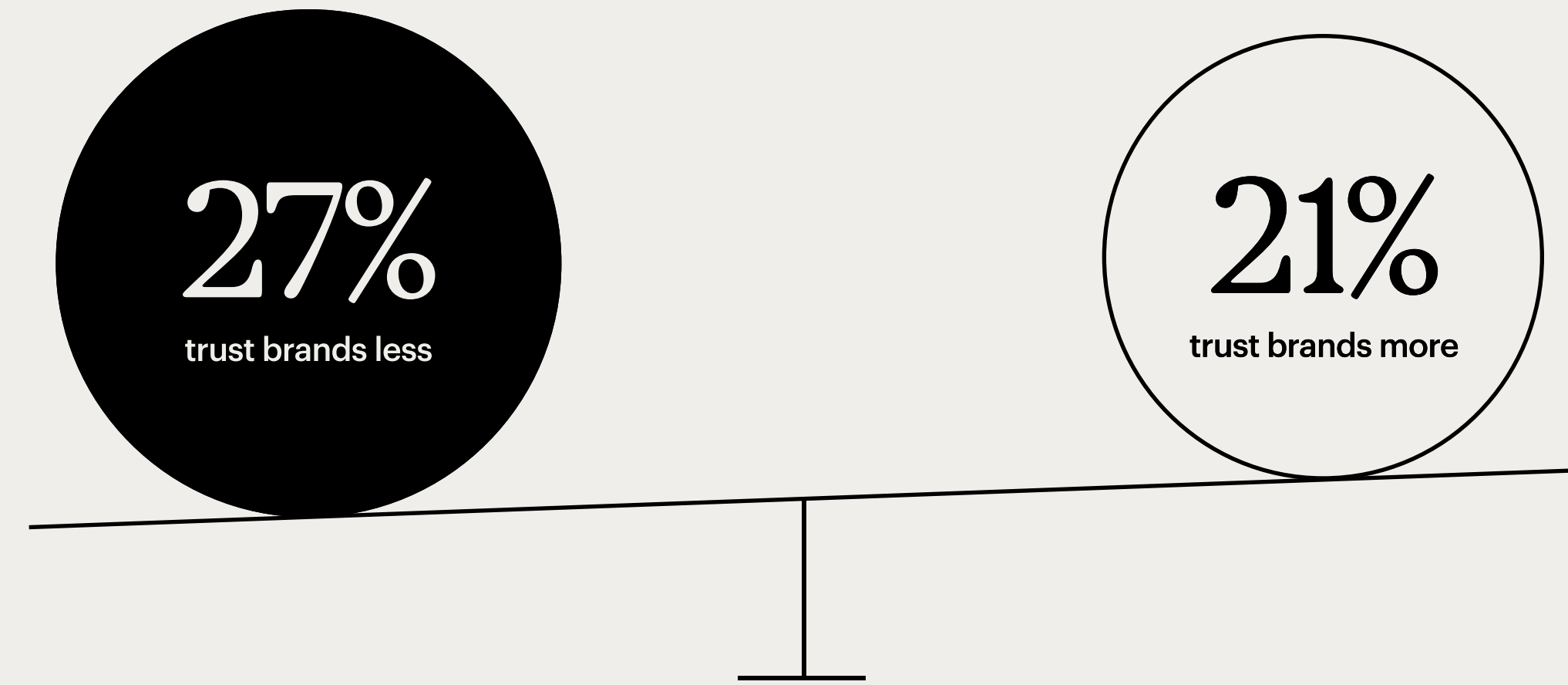
Connection via customer service is something that becomes more important with age. For 44% of over-65s, a proven track record of great customer service makes them more likely to buy from a brand – compared to just 23% of 18-to-24 year-olds.

Plus, the more consumers shop with a brand, the more likely they are to continue engaging with them. Discounts and rewards are a strong purchasing motivator for consumers, with over a third (38%) looking for one before making a purchase.

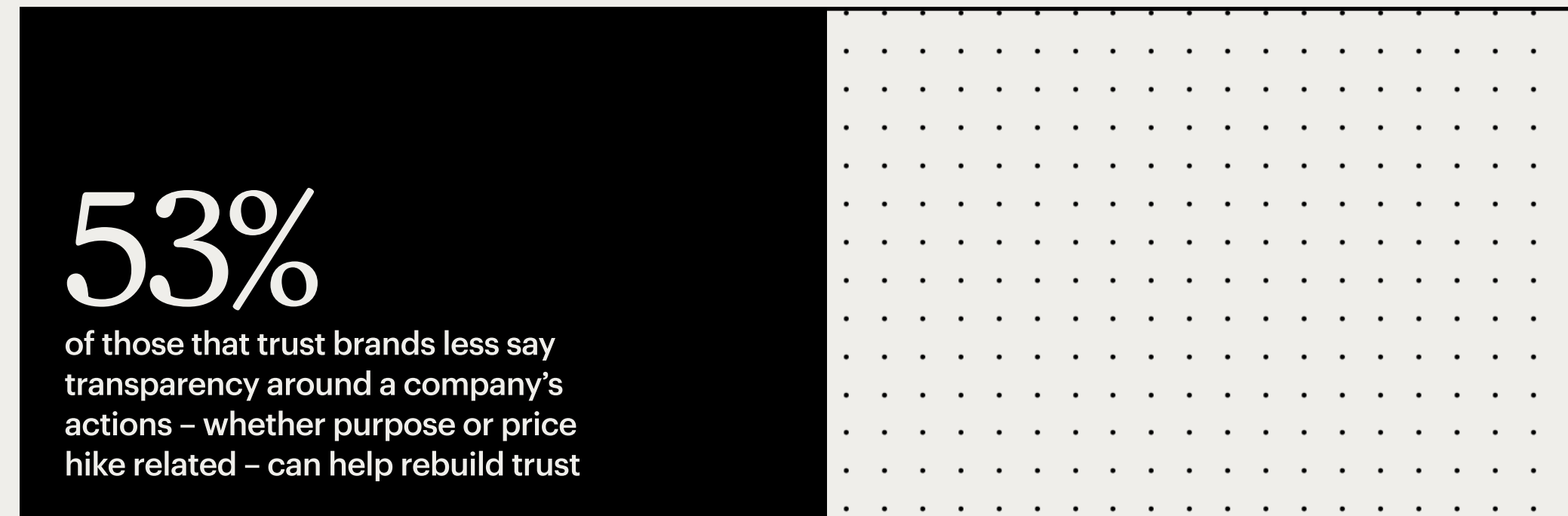
But discounts aren't the only type of reward Germans are after. 37% of German shoppers say they want more chances to win prizes or store credit in exchange for taking part in surveys and reviews. This is not only an opportunity for you to reward loyal customers, but also a way to persuade new prospects – and to curb the rise of distrust in brands.



Amid the rise of global misinformation, 27% of consumers trust brands less, compared to 21% of those who trust brands more. This means it is increasingly important to nurture those long-lasting connections.



The rise of misinformation has caused customers to trust brands less (27%) as opposed to more (21%)



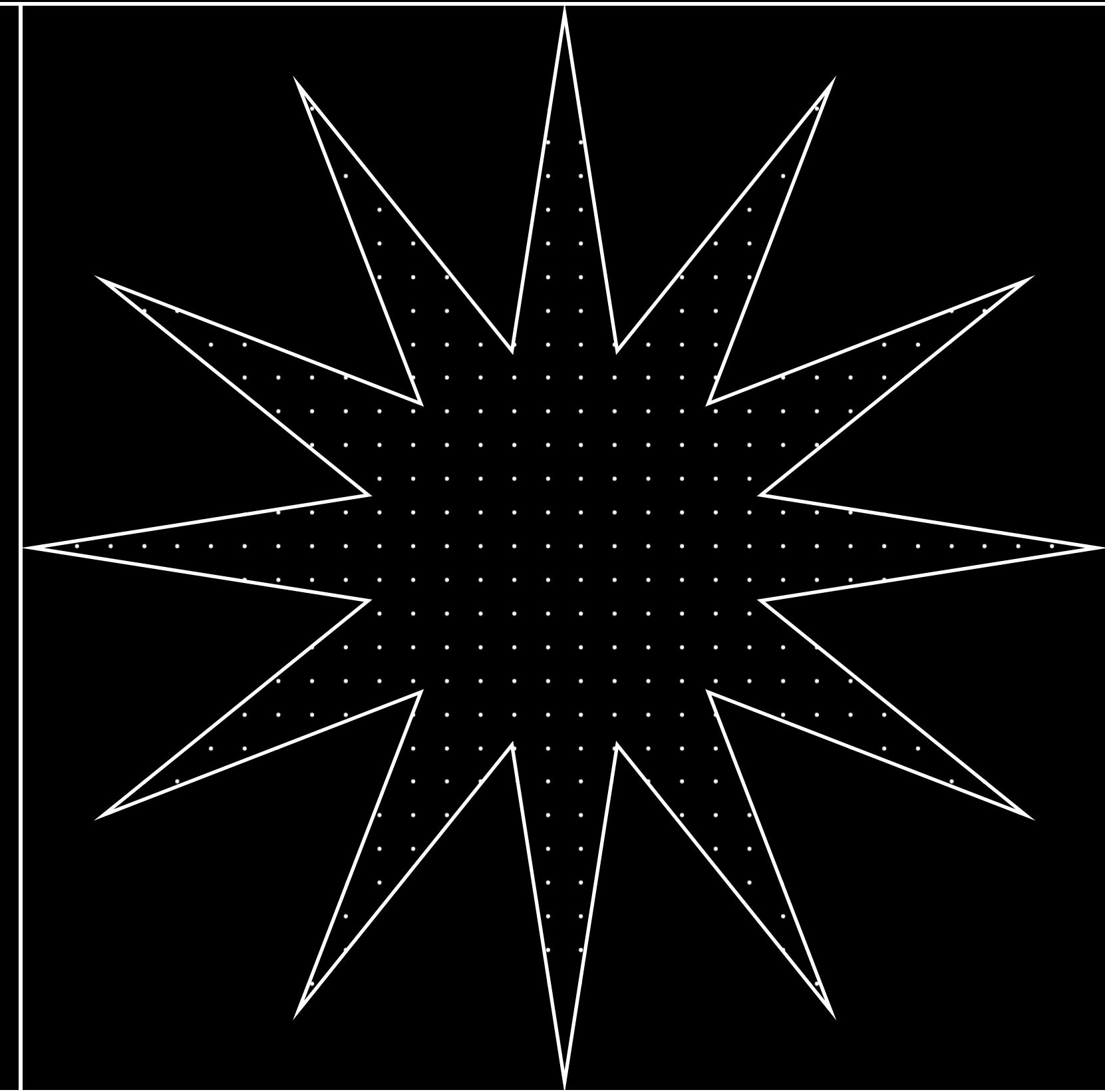
OUR TAKE

Prioritise customer experience first; the rest will follow.

It's not just about offering value beyond your product from day one. Companies must also deliver on their brand promise by matching consumer expectations – whether through the quality of a product, the price point or the shipping times. To do this, invest in business-critical areas such as customer service before considering elevating your brand messaging to touch on social/political issues.

Incentives encouraging consumers to take part in surveys, reviews, or endorsements on social media can be offered in exchange for loyalty perks. But remember: when marketing to young shoppers, the look and feel of your brand identity matters.





The importance of trust and how to build it

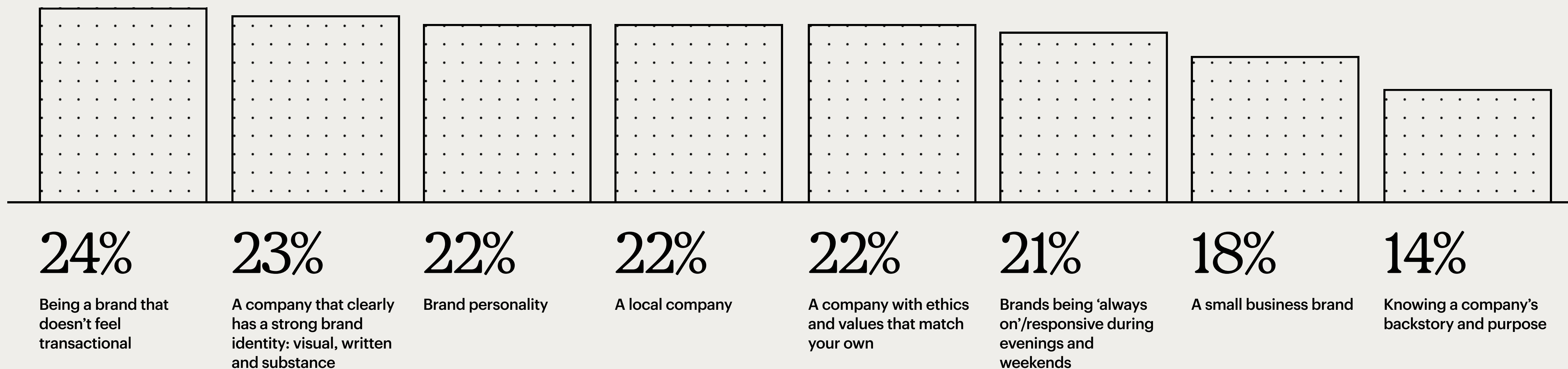
German shoppers are happy to hand over their data and euros to brands they trust. So how can you build trust? And more importantly, how do you maintain it?

Today, 40% of German shoppers say they need to trust and connect with a brand before buying from them. But over a quarter (27%) of buyers trust brands less amidst the rise of misinformation. So, how can you foster trust in consumers?

One way to inspire confidence is to demonstrate strong brand identity. When asked to select their top three brand qualities, 23% of German consumers cited identity as a reason for making a purchase.

A strong brand identity demands authenticity. As marketers, you must ensure your brand aligns with the personality and values you want to project to the world – not just those that will tick a box.

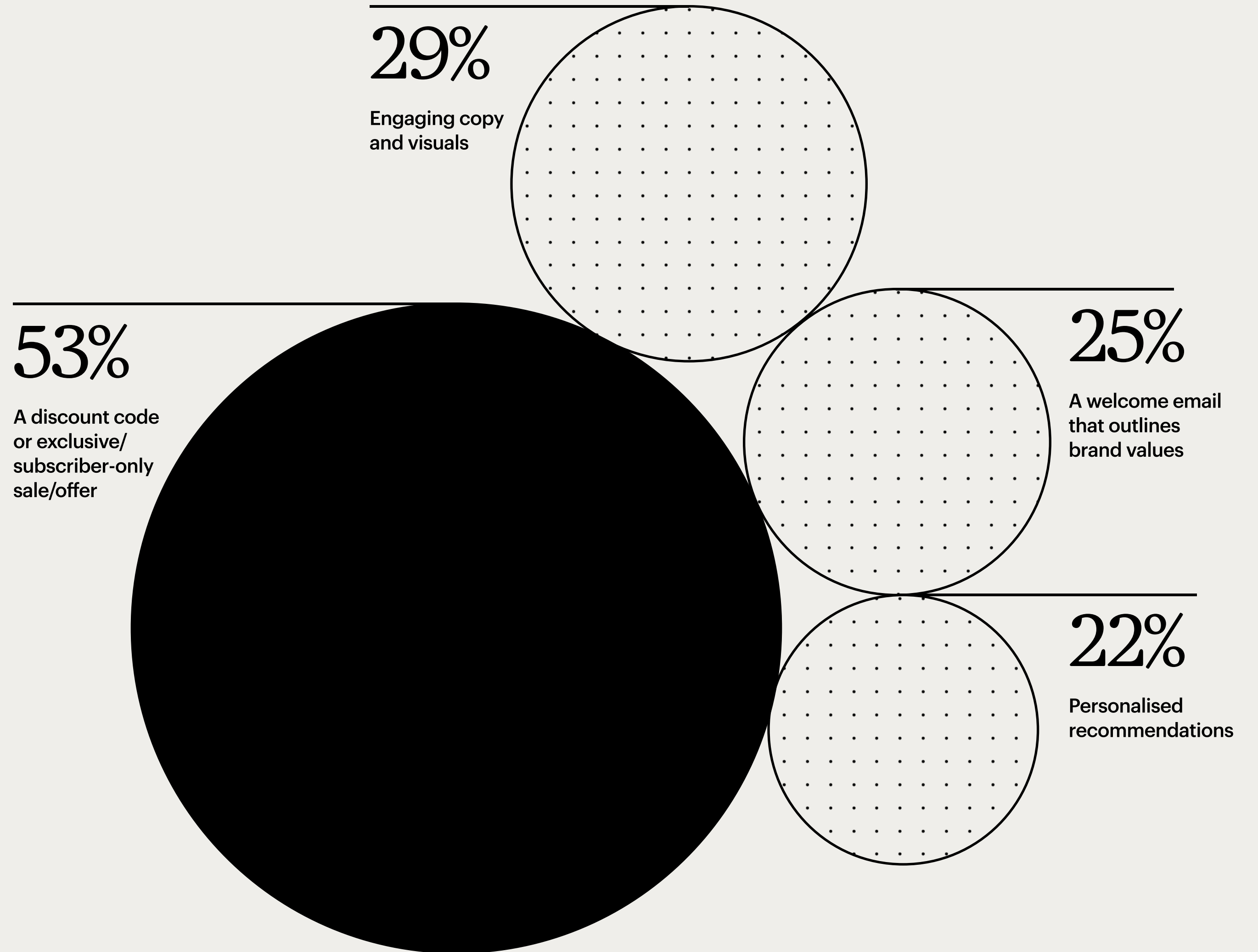
What brand qualities are most important to German customers?



The Best Ice Breakers for German Shoppers

Consumers want to know that you care, especially at the start of a relationship.

25% of Germans like to receive a welcome email when they initially sign up outlining a brand's values and ethics. However, only 14% of Germans want to hear a brand's backstory or purpose.

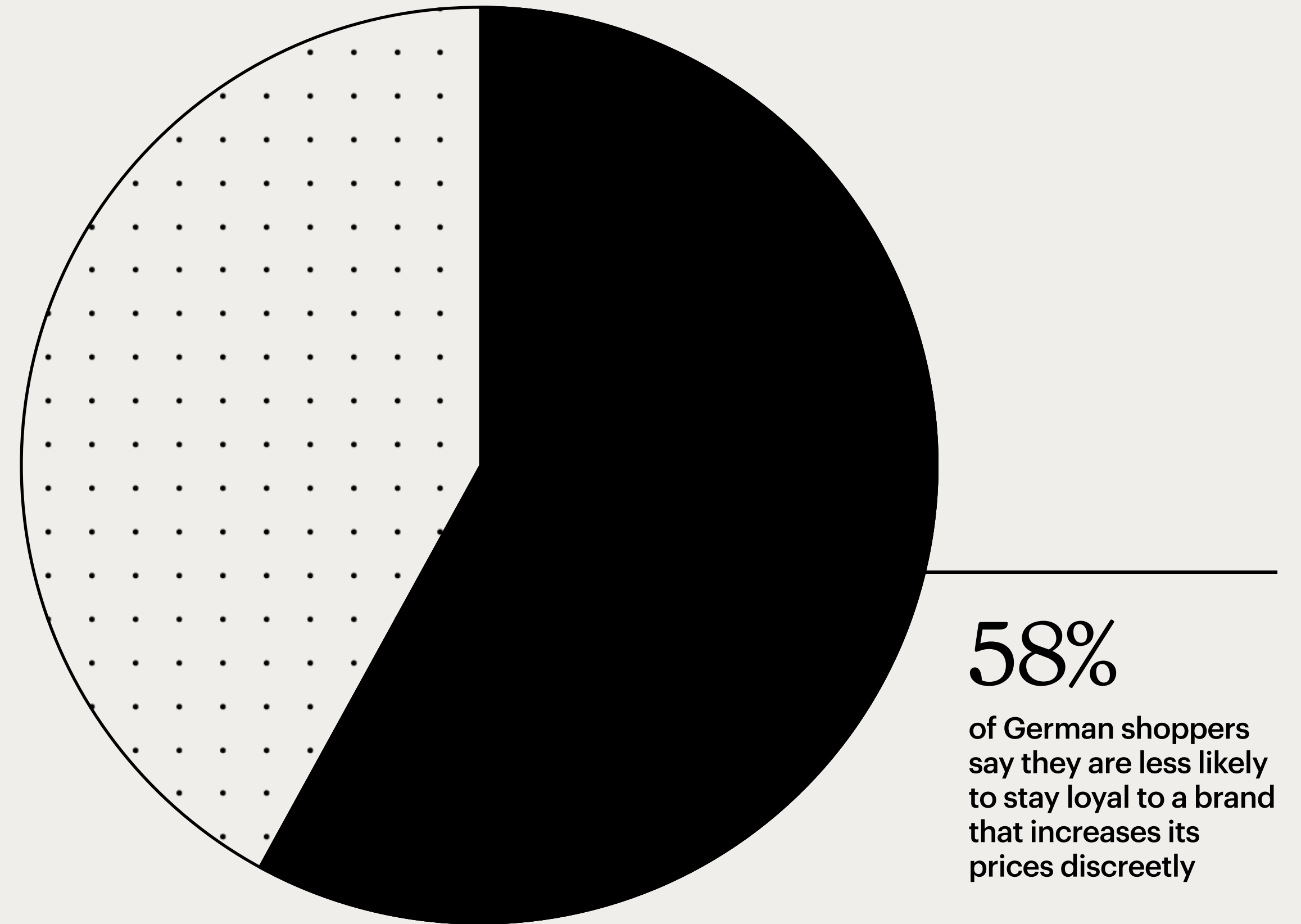


How do you make trust last?

A major factor in preserving trust and connection is understanding your audience. When asked about brand behaviour during the cost-of-living crisis, 60% of German respondents say they have stayed loyal to brands who have lowered and/or locked their prices in the face of inflation. Meanwhile, 56% agreed they are looking for cheaper alternatives to beloved brands.

Despite brand loyalty, cost still holds sway when it comes to consumer sentiment. This is especially true when brands are transparent about price rises.

Over half (58%) German shoppers say they are less likely to stay loyal to a brand that increases its prices discreetly, while 49% would stay loyal to a brand if price rises were communicated openly.



58%

of German shoppers
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Premium brands can capture and retain shoppers despite the cost-of-living crisis. 39% of all German consumers remain loyal to high-quality brands, even if they are more expensive. This figure rises to 48% for 18-to-24 year-olds, and 46% for 25-to-34 year-olds.

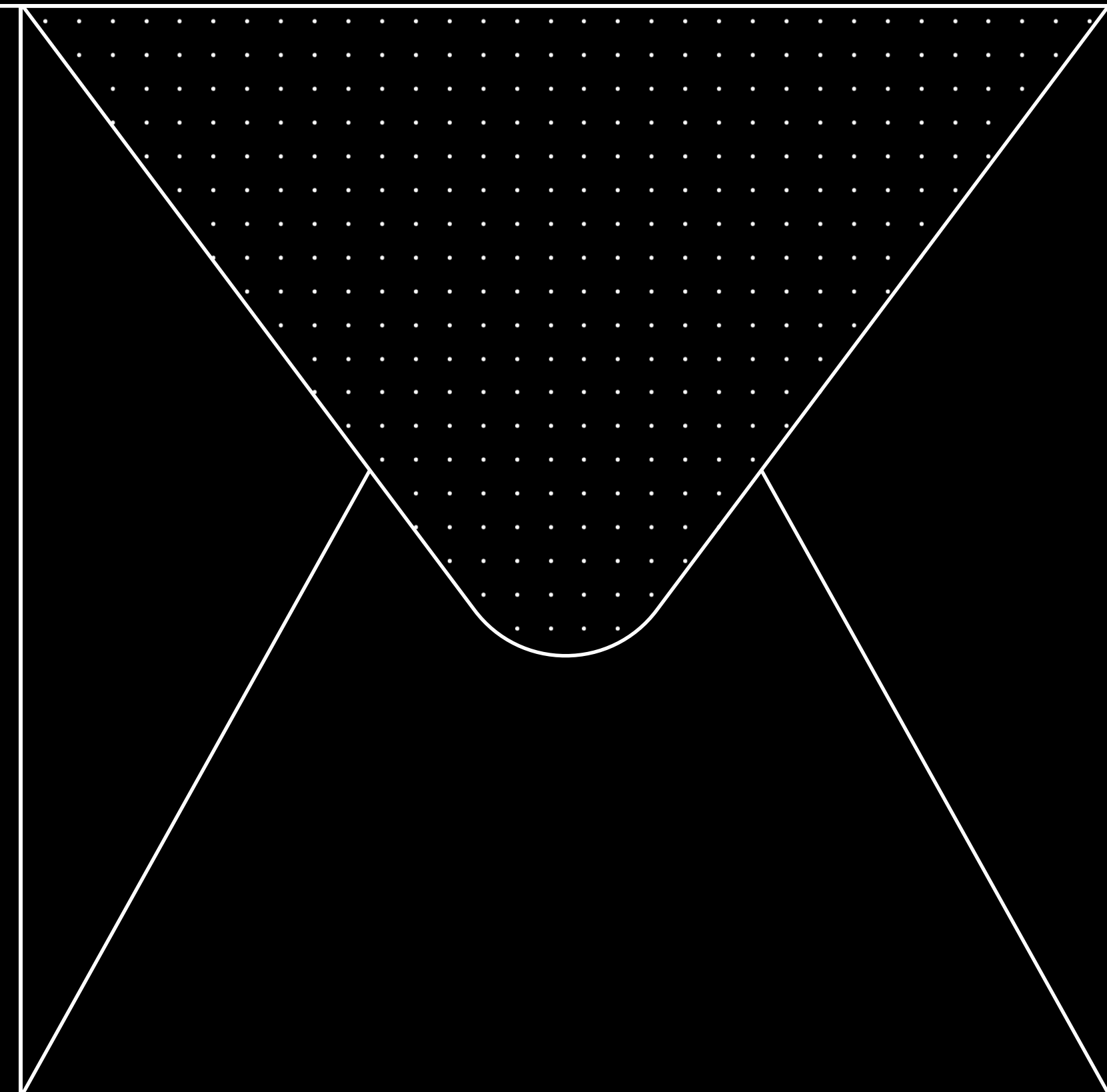
Factors such as responsible sourcing and sustainability are often seen as offering higher quality and worth the additional expense. If prices are set to stay high, or even climb, you should have a good reason – one that customers are likely to support.

OUR TAKE

Rewarding customers for their loyalty is the key to good brand karma.

In today's economy, customer loyalty is hard fought-for, and the customer's lifetime value is a precious commodity. Therefore, think hard about your brand identity and purpose to ensure your strategy for earning consumer trust is built on solid ground. Consider the value you're providing customers. Even with the best brand values, getting them across in interesting and insightful ways to your customers is vital.

Understanding how consumer relationships are made can help you weather tough financial times. But during these periods, remember that shoppers are going through the same as you, so continue to honour these relationships with transparency. Doing so can cement strong, personal connections and ensure that hard-won customers aren't lost because of a lack of communication.

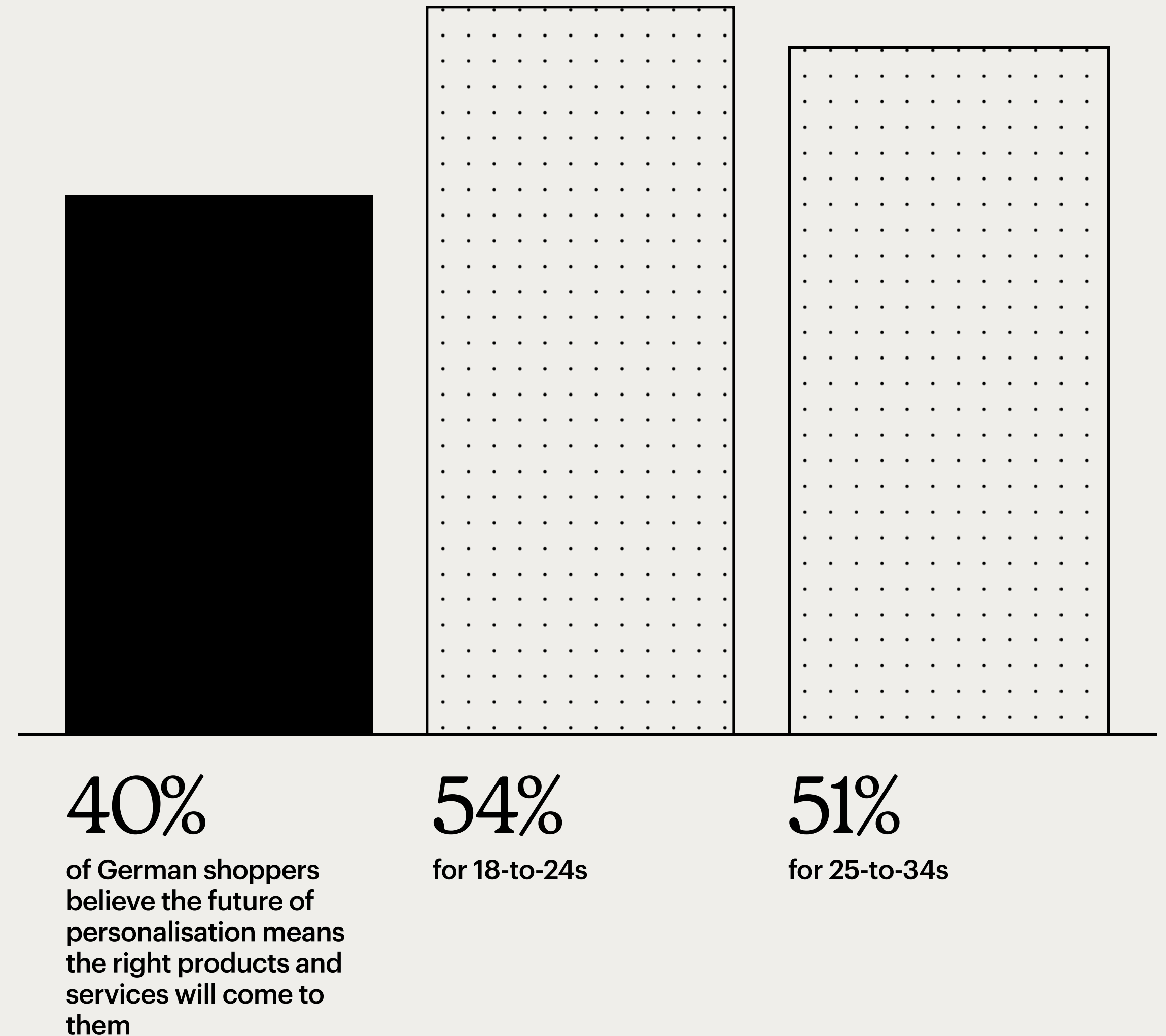


The future is personalised –
here's how to deliver it

Germans believe the evolution of personalisation means products and services will soon come to *them*.

Almost half (43%) of German consumers are happy to share their personal data so long as they can see more value/personalisation. In fact, over a third (35%) of Germans see the value in personalisation and believe it stops them from “missing out” on products, trends and deals.

This number is highest (45%) for 18-to-34 year-olds in Germany, who are more optimistic than other age groups about how handing over their data will make their future lives easier. In fact, the future of personalisation looks even brighter, with 40% of German consumers believing that products will find them – taking the guesswork out of shopping online. This figure rises considerably for younger consumers with 54% of 18-to-24 year-olds agreeing.



More than half are open to receiving targeted brand recommendations based on their behaviour, specifically after shopping on a search engine (57%), in person (55%) or on a website (52%).

But it's not just about product recommendations. Over one in five (22%) German shoppers want to see more personalised brand marketing campaigns. Marketers must be prepared to not only build communications around products but also invest in aspirational brand content.

OUR TAKE

Customer data is precious; use it wisely.

You must tailor when and how you reach customers, whether it's through organic search, flagship stores or personalised content. Shoppers are rightly protective over how their transactional and personal data is handled. But once consumers have trust in a brand, they'll shop, hand over their details and be more open to targeted advertising.

Getting this right is worth your time. It can ensure you're hitting that sweet spot with your audience, delivering the value and personalisation they want in return for their data – and creating a long-lasting connection in the process.

Personalisation is paramount, but how can marketers do this efficiently?

AI-powered insights and automation are being increasingly used by brands to generate more personalised content. The consensus in Germany is generally positive with 42% of Germans comfortable with AI being used to support human-made content. Additionally, 26% are comfortable with AI-made content with extensive human input and oversight.

But despite today's consumers exhibiting a progressive attitude towards AI, there is still a strong affinity for human-made communications. Two in five (40%) of consumers crave human-made brand communications.

OUR TAKE

Seeking help from AI should be second nature to marketers – but not reductive.

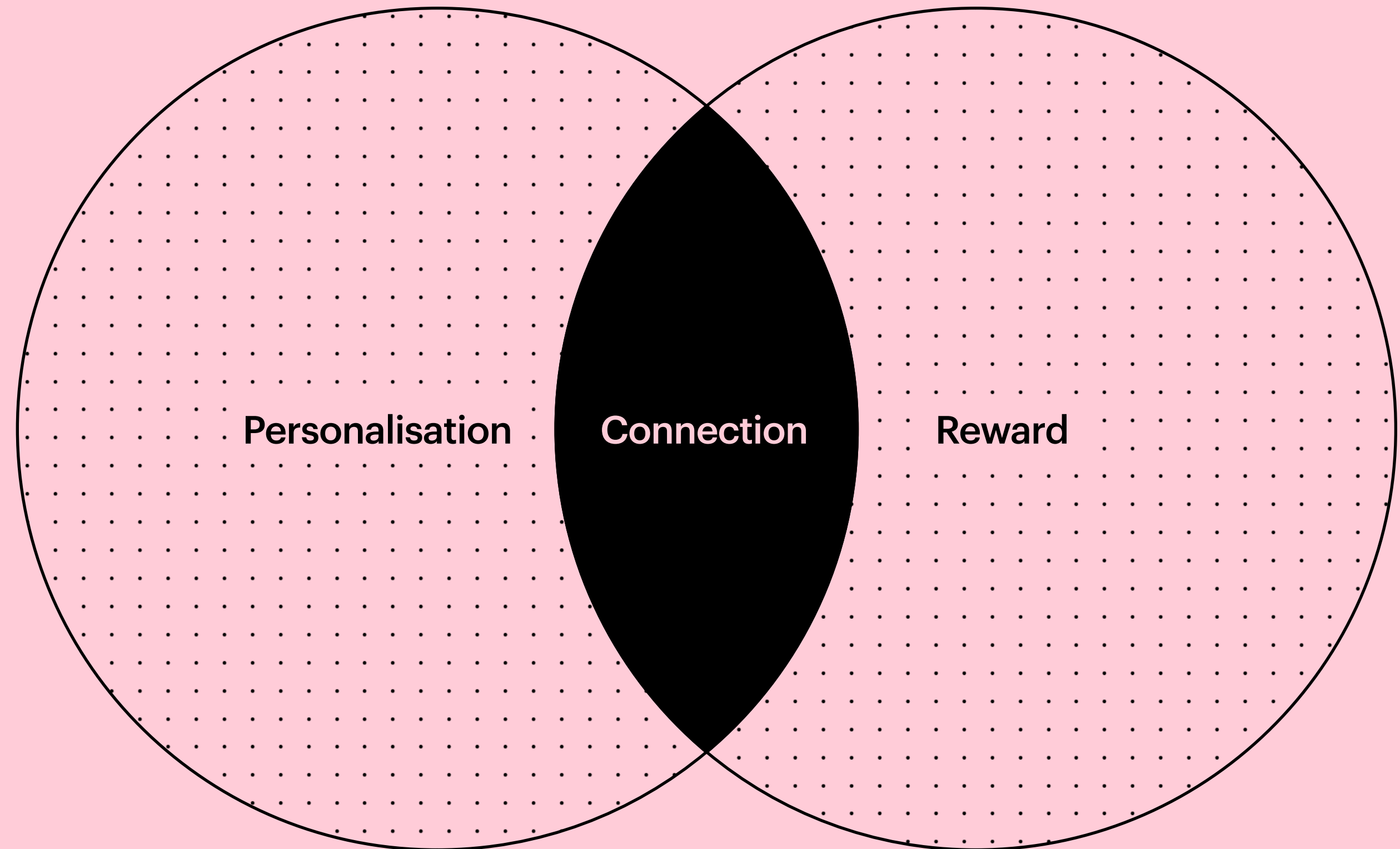
AI can be a sidekick to help you craft and deliver your message but, without a human touch, it can lack substance and authenticity. Implementing AI in a way that drives new efficiencies but maintains brand standards is vital.

In short, develop an AI strategy where the tools work for you, not instead of you. This is especially true for time and process efficiencies, such as automating email sends, or segmenting recipients faster than you can manually. This will give your brand more time to do what it does best: make connections. For that, you need humans.

CONCLUSION

Build connections that last and make every message count

As customers evolve, marketers today have a chance to evolve with them, forging long-lasting relationships that reward those on both sides of the shop window. For this, you need a strategy that can land at the intersection of personalisation and reward.



Methodology

The survey was conducted among 10,000 consumers in the UK, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Australia and New Zealand. Of that 10,000, 1,500 were German consumers. The figures in this specific report focus on the German findings only.

The interviews were conducted online by Sapio Research, on behalf of Mailchimp in February 2024 using an email invitation and an online survey.

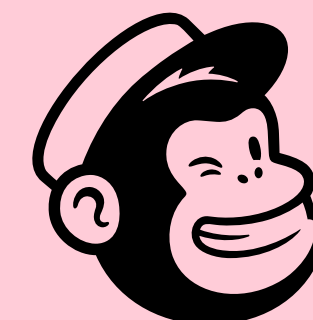
Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. In this study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 1% percentage point from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

Ready to change how you connect with your customers?

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