

eMarketer and Partnerize Study Shows AI Discovery Is Outpacing Marketing Measurement

New research finds marketers risk losing visibility and partner influence as AI-driven discovery changes how commercial value is measured

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new study from eMarketer and Partnerize

finds that marketers are rapidly losing visibility into how consumers discover and evaluate brands as AI-driven search, recommendation engines, and generative discovery tools reshape the path to purchase.



“The report, *From Clicks to Influence: The New Economic Model of AI-Driven Commerce*, draws on a survey of 100 U.S. marketing leaders and reveals that while 91% agree AI-driven search and discovery are already changing how their organizations approach marketing, only 13% currently have a clear way to connect AI-driven visibility to partner compensation.”



The challenge for marketers is no longer simply driving traffic. It is understanding how value is created across an increasingly fragmented and machine-mediated discovery environment.”

*Matt Gilbert, CEO of
Partnerize*

The findings point to a growing structural gap in digital marketing: consumers are increasingly influenced by AI-generated recommendations, summaries, and discovery experiences that do not drive clicks, while marketers continue to rely on attribution systems built around click-based engagement.

At the same time, the research found nearly two-thirds of marketing leaders are concerned that publishers and content partners may prioritize competitors with better measurement capabilities and the ability to reward AI-influenced outcomes.

“AI discovery is fundamentally changing the economics of digital influence,” said Matt Gilbert, CEO of Partnerize. “For years, the industry has relied on clicks as the dominant signal of value,

largely because clicks were the most observable action in digital commerce. But consumers are increasingly making decisions before a click ever occurs. They are comparing products through AI-generated summaries, validating choices through creator and publisher content, and forming preferences through recommendation systems that traditional attribution models were never designed to capture. The result is a growing disconnect between where influence is created and where commercial value is recognized. What this research makes clear is that marketers understand the shift is happening, but most organizations still lack the infrastructure required to measure, verify, and compensate influence in a scalable or economically credible way.”

The study also found:

- 60% of marketing leaders identified AI-driven discovery as the most difficult marketing channel to attribute accurately
- Only 8% of organizations can track AI-driven discovery’s influence on revenue and conversions end-to-end
- 51% of marketers plan to shift budget into content and SEO if AI-driven discovery continues to erode traditional search traffic
- 38% plan to increase investment in performance-based partnerships tied to visibility or outcomes
- 41% of marketers currently rely on multiple disconnected systems as their primary source of truth for measurement and reporting

The findings arrive as marketers, publishers, creators, and commerce platforms are already being forced to adapt with the rise of zero-click discovery and AI-generated answers that surface recommendations without driving traditional referral traffic.

As AI systems increasingly mediate how consumers discover, evaluate, and choose products, commerce itself is becoming more machine-mediated. Partnerize refers to this transition as the [machine-mediated market](#), where influence increasingly occurs upstream of the click and across AI-driven discovery environments.

Recent discussions at the [EMARKETER Ad Buyers Summit](#) between Principal Analyst Max Willens and Partnerize Chief Product Officer, Andy Crossen, highlighted how affiliate content, publisher recommendations, creator ecosystems, and trusted third-party sources are becoming increasingly influential in large language model outputs and AI-generated search experiences. The report argues that as publishers and creators adapt to AI-driven discovery, they are increasingly directing their attention, content investment, and commercial efforts toward brands capable of measuring and compensating their influence.

Brands that cannot connect influence to economic value risk losing visibility as these dynamics reshape how commercial attention is allocated.

“Influence itself is becoming the new economic layer of commerce,” Gilbert continued. “The challenge for marketers is no longer simply driving traffic. It is understanding how value is

created across an increasingly fragmented and machine-mediated discovery environment. The organizations that adapt first will not simply improve attribution. They will help define the commercial standards that govern how influence is measured, compensated, and optimized across the next era of digital commerce.”

The report also explores how marketers are beginning to rethink compensation models, attribution standards, and partner relationships as AI-generated discovery becomes more prevalent across search, shopping, and content experiences.

“Affiliate content sites routinely rank among the most cited domains in LLM replies, and creator- and user-generated content published across trusted platforms can rapidly influence a brand's AI visibility,” said Max Willens, principal analyst of social media and the creator economy at EMARKETER. “As AI-generated discovery grows, the ability to understand and reward that influence becomes increasingly important.”

As AI-driven discovery reshapes how commercial influence is created and distributed, marketers are increasingly confronting a new operational challenge: connecting influence, commercial outcomes, and compensation in a scalable and auditable way. To help address this need, Partnerize has introduced VantagePoint™ (<https://bit.ly/4fRSK6O>), its auditable influence measurement and compensation system for AI-mediated commerce, and Lighthouse, a market validation program that brings together brands, publishers, content creators, and technology partners to test, validate, and operationalize compensation models for AI-driven influence.

“Most brands understand the urgency, but many are still waiting for a perfect standard to emerge before taking action,” Gilbert said. “Historically, measurement standards tend to be defined by the organizations willing to build through periods of uncertainty rather than wait for consensus. The brands investing now in transparent measurement, auditable influence models, and partner compensation infrastructure are likely to help define the commercial standards the rest of the market ultimately follows.”

The full report, *From Clicks to Influence: The New Economic Model of AI-Driven Commerce*, is available here: <https://bit.ly/4ehKxYo>

About Partnerize

Partnerize is building the economic infrastructure for the machine-mediated market, enabling brands, publishers, creators, and platforms to measure, verify, and fund influence across modern commerce journeys. The company connects discovery, decisioning, and outcomes into a single measurable and economically actionable system that extends beyond traditional click-based and performance marketing models.

Through VantagePoint™, Partnerize helps organizations understand and quantify influence occurring across AI-mediated, zero-click, social, publisher, creator, and partner-driven environments, connecting upstream influence to downstream commercial outcomes, budget

allocation, and compensation. By enabling trusted verification and measurable participation in the economics of influence, Partnerize is helping define the next generation of commerce infrastructure.

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