



TREND REPORT 2025

Shaping the future of technology

The future will not wait. As we look ahead, trends such as generative AI, next-generation connectivity and climate-tech solutions will continue to push the boundaries of innovation.

In 2025, technology stands at a pivotal moment, with the potential to address some of the world's most complex challenges - if guided by bold leadership and purposeful innovation. This report calls on businesses to move beyond reacting to disruptions and instead take charge of shaping the future.

At 42T, we believe that transformative opportunities emerge at the intersection of human-centred design, ecology and technological advancement. By prioritising usability, sustainability and digital-physical convergence, organisations can transform complexity into clarity and innovation into tangible value.

This report explores these critical megatrends, offering actionable insights to help leaders tackle growing complexities and drive meaningful progress. It urges businesses to align technology with genuine human needs and ecological responsibility, creating a future defined by inclusivity and resilience.

Together, we can envision a world where technology not only addresses challenges but also enhances lives. The future isn't just something to anticipate; it's something we can design.



Dr Jon Spratley

Chief Executive Officer

42T.

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Shaping the future of technology

2025 represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of technology. Businesses are operating at the intersection of accelerating innovation and intensifying global challenges - economic volatility, environmental crises and the demand for greater equity in digital access.

As technology permeates every facet of our lives, it is no longer a question of whether to embrace it, but how to do so responsibly, effectively and with lasting impact.

This report is not merely an exploration of trends but a response to a critical reality. The traditional playbook for innovation is no longer enough. To thrive, businesses must rethink their strategies, shifting from reactive adaptation to proactive leadership. At 42T, we approach these challenges with a unique perspective - one that places human needs and ecological responsibility at the core of technological progress.

Executive Summary

Building on the foundations of 2024 - where AI-powered innovation, edge computing and circular design principles redefined what businesses could achieve.

This report identifies three pivotal megatrends shaping the future:

Usability:

Simplifying complexity through intuitive, human-centred design to create products and experiences that resonate emotionally and functionally.

Sustainability:

Embedding regenerative practices into core business strategies, transforming ecological responsibility into a competitive advantage.

Digital-physical convergence:

Merging digital and physical realms to create interconnected ecosystems that deliver seamless, engaging experiences

By understanding these trends and their interconnected implications, organisations can navigate disruption with confidence and design solutions that resonate with people, protect the planet and generate measurable value.

This is a moment for critical decision-making and purposeful innovation. This **2025 Trend Report** offers the insights and strategies needed to take action, not just to keep pace with change but to shape the future.

Introduction

2024 Trends recap: Foundations for 2025



The technological milestones of 2024 laid a strong foundation for innovation, transforming industries and reshaping how businesses create value.

However, as we enter 2025, these advancements are no longer optional; they are prerequisites for staying competitive. Businesses that fail to integrate these technologies into their strategies risk falling behind in an increasingly demanding market. Let's revisit the key trends of 2024 and explore the opportunities they present, as well as the challenges they pose for the year ahead.

AI-powered innovation: From tool to strategic partner

Artificial intelligence transcended its role as a supplementary tool

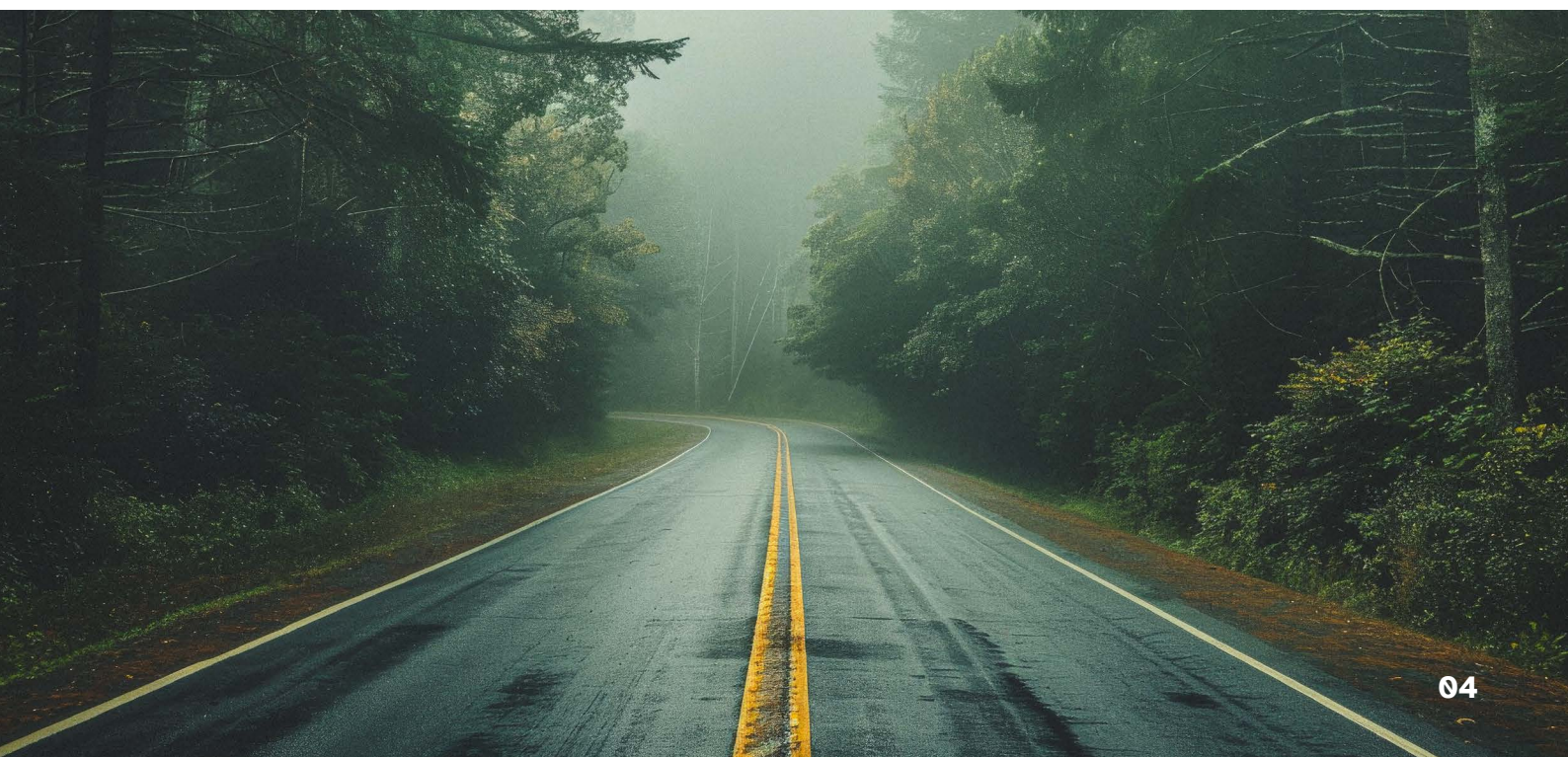
In 2024, artificial intelligence transcended its role as a supplementary tool to become a driving force behind creativity, efficiency and personalisation. Generative AI revolutionised content creation and product development, while machine learning optimised decision-making and customer experiences.

Prediction for 2025:

AI will deepen its integration into strategic decision-making, driving predictive analytics and real-time adaptability. However, businesses that fail to address ethical AI deployment risk reputational damage and customer mistrust. For example, improper handling of AI-driven data collection could lead to compliance violations under evolving regulations like the EU's AI Act.

Challenge ahead:

Organisations must balance the promise of AI with transparency and accountability. Without investing in AI governance frameworks, companies could face operational setbacks and eroded consumer confidence.



Edge computing: The era of distributed intelligence

The rise of edge computing in 2024 marked a shift from centralised cloud dependency to localised data processing

This paradigm reduced latency, improved data privacy and unlocked new possibilities for real-time applications in sectors like healthcare and manufacturing. For instance, smart factory sensors powered by edge computing can enable predictive maintenance and, potentially, save millions in downtime costs.

Prediction for 2025:

Edge computing will expand into connected ecosystems, powering innovations such as advanced robotics in manufacturing and real-time health monitoring wearables. In the energy sector, edge computing will play a pivotal role in optimising smart grid systems, enabling real-time monitoring and adjustment of energy distribution. For instance, localised energy nodes equipped with edge devices will balance supply and demand more efficiently, reducing outages and improving the integration of renewable energy sources. Businesses that fail to adopt edge solutions risk being constrained by outdated infrastructure, unable to meet consumer demands for speed, reliability and sustainability.

Challenge ahead:

Scaling edge infrastructure requires significant investment in hardware, software and cybersecurity. Without these, organisations could face inefficiencies, data breaches or an inability to compete with agile, tech-forward competitors.



Circular design principles: Redefining sustainability

Circular design emerged as a pivotal strategy for reducing waste and enhancing resource efficiency in 2024

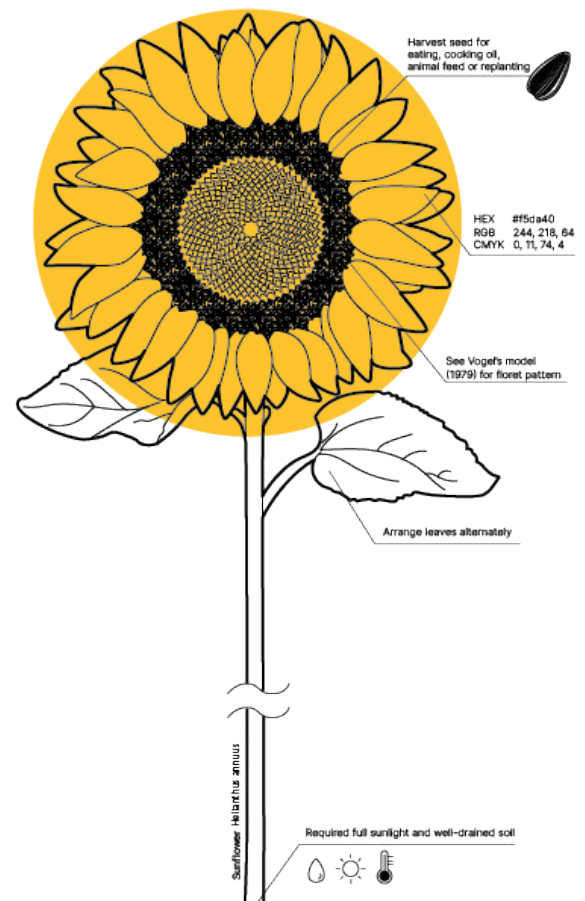
Packaging manufacturers began adopting reusable and modular shipping containers that can be disassembled, repaired and reassembled. These innovations drastically reduced waste and transportation emissions while meeting stringent sustainability regulations, demonstrating how circularity can align environmental goals with cost savings and customer satisfaction.

Prediction for 2025:

Circularity will evolve from a niche concept to an industry standard, driven by regulatory mandates and growing consumer demand for eco-conscious products. For instance, the European Union's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) is pushing businesses toward fully recyclable packaging solutions.

Challenge ahead:

Organisations that overlook circular design principles risk higher compliance costs, diminished brand relevance and environmental backlash. Furthermore, they could miss out on lucrative opportunities, such as developing subscription-based services for reusable products.



2025 Trends

The lessons of 2024 are clear: AI, edge computing and circular design are no longer futuristic concepts but essential components of modern strategy

In 2025, these trends will continue to evolve, but their adoption will come with increased complexity and higher stakes.

To thrive, businesses must act decisively, investing in innovation, adapting to regulatory shifts and addressing the ethical and operational challenges that accompany these transformative technologies.

By embracing these advancements, businesses can position themselves not only as leaders in innovation but as drivers of meaningful change in an increasingly complex world. However, those who hesitate risk being left behind in an era that demands agility, accountability and vision.

01 Usability

Simplifying complexity for seamless experiences

As technology becomes more pervasive in 2025, usability has emerged as a defining factor for brand differentiation and consumer loyalty.

Today's users expect products that are intuitive, accessible, and emotionally engaging - not just functional. For businesses, neglecting usability risks alienating consumers, diminishing trust and losing relevance in competitive markets.

Our research shows that today's consumers face increasingly complex lives, and intuitive usability is a crucial solution. Brands that simplify these experiences stand to gain not only consumer trust but also a competitive edge in saturated markets.

Usability as a strategic differentiator

53%

Of UK consumers believe that digital technology helps them manage complexity in their lives

Usability has evolved into more than just a product feature - it's a core expectation from consumers who are juggling increasingly complex lifestyles. Brands that prioritise usability not only improve customer satisfaction but also build trust and long-term loyalty.

Insights from 42T's Consumer products report 2025 survey reveal:

- Consumers value simplicity in digital tools. **53% of UK consumers believe that digital technology helps them manage complexity in their lives**, but there is significant room for improvement, as only a small minority feel their lives are "not at all complicated."
- **Over half (54%) of all consumers feel their lives are increasingly complicated**, signalling a demand for products that reduce cognitive load and streamline everyday tasks.
- **High-value and digitally mature consumers seek advanced usability:** 62% of these groups prefer tools that address their specific needs, such as intuitive interfaces or systems that adapt to their habits.

For brands, usability is a strategic imperative. Products designed with accessibility, ease of use and user engagement in mind are more likely to resonate with today's consumers, particularly younger and digitally advanced demographics.



Industry-specific innovations in usability

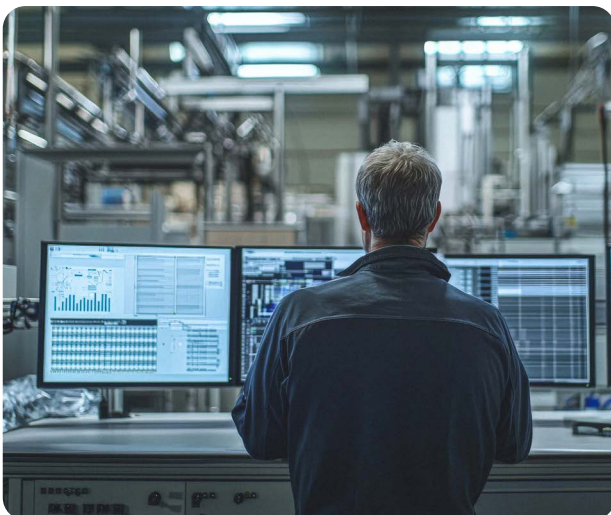
MedTech: Accessible interfaces for precision

In the MedTech industry, usability is critical in high-stakes environments. For example, surgical navigation systems now incorporate streamlined interfaces designed to reduce setup time and make advanced features more accessible. Similarly, wearable health devices leverage AI to provide real-time insights through dashboards designed for ease of interpretation by both patients and clinicians, improving outcomes and adoption.



Industrial: Streamlined processes with intuitive design

Industrial products like sensor control systems are embracing usability by integrating dashboards that simplify operational insights, enabling technicians to act quickly without extensive training. In printing and packaging, digital workflows reduce errors and enable operators to manage tasks with minimal cognitive strain.



Consumer: Enhancing everyday interactions

From smart kitchen appliances that guide users through recipes via voice-activated systems to personal care devices that offer step-by-step instructions for optimal results, consumer brands are embedding usability into their product ecosystems. These innovations resonate emotionally while offering convenience.



Energy: User-centred efficiency tools

In the energy sector, usability is transforming the way consumers interact with efficiency tools. Smart thermostats and energy monitoring apps are now optimised for intuitive use, providing actionable insights to help users reduce their energy



Redefining usability for modern consumers

30%

Of Gen Z believe digital technology hinders them, indicating the need for products that balance complexity with usability.

Today's consumers demand more than just functional products; they expect solutions that are seamless, personalised and emotionally engaging.

Our findings reveal that:

- 67% of Gen Z feel their lives are complicated, highlighting their demand for products that simplify rather than overwhelm.
- 30% of Gen Z believe digital technology hinders them, indicating the need for products that balance complexity with usability.

To meet these expectations, brands must:

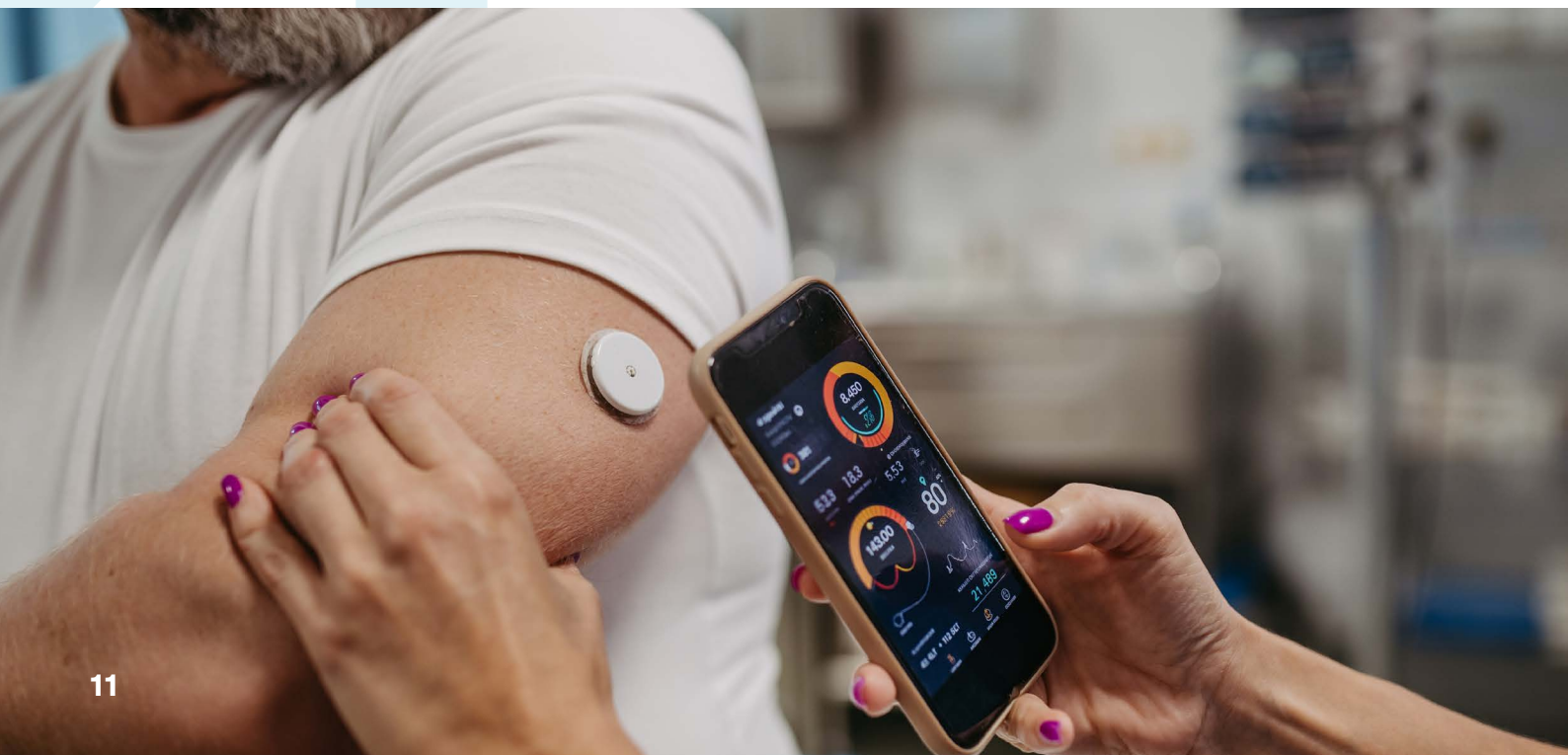
1. Design for intuition: Simplify complex features into user-friendly experiences.
2. Prioritise accessibility: Ensure products are inclusive and cater to diverse needs.
3. Leverage feedback loops: Continuously refine usability based on user insights.

The path to usability leadership

To excel in usability, brands must adopt human-centred design principles and anticipate the evolving needs of their users. Key strategies include:

- **Embedding accessibility beyond compliance:** Develop products that cater to diverse users, including individuals with disabilities or neurodiverse needs.
- **Investing in predictive usability:** Use AI to deliver adaptive, context-aware systems that evolve with user behaviour.
- **Proactively engaging with standards:** Stay ahead of usability-related compliance mandates to ensure trust and adoption.

By embedding these principles into their strategies, businesses can deliver solutions that resonate with users and drive sustained growth. The era of usability isn't just about refining existing systems; it's about reimagining how technology enhances human interaction in a world that demands clarity, connection and purpose.



Transforming responsibility into competitive advantage

Sustainability is no longer optional - it has become a core driver of innovation, consumer loyalty and long-term growth.

Brands that integrate sustainable practices into their operations are not only better positioned to meet growing environmental demands but also to unlock new markets and attract purpose-driven consumers. In contrast, those that fail to act risk regulatory penalties, reputational harm and even losing relevance in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

The stakes, and the opportunities, are significant. The latest research from 42T's Consumer Sustainability Report 2025, which surveyed 3,000 UK consumers, reveals that 84% of British consumers have already taken steps to lead more sustainable lives, yet only 16% feel that the brands they shop with actively enable positive environmental change. Conducted at a crucial time when brands must balance regulatory compliance with the need for transformative action, this research highlights how consumer expectations are reshaping the future of sustainable innovation.

This gap between consumer expectations and brand action presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Businesses that rise to the occasion with bold, transformative strategies can establish themselves as leaders in sustainability while building trust, loyalty and long-term value.

Sustainability leadership: The new competitive imperative

Our insights highlight that consumers increasingly view sustainability as a measure of trust and a reason for loyalty:

- 74% of advanced sustainability adopters **value brands that show long-term sustainability commitments.**
- 59% of consumers **admire brands that lead in sustainability**, going beyond regulatory requirements.
- 57% believe sustainability-driven transformation **offers brands a competitive advantage.**

72%

Of Gen Z considering themselves influential in shaping others' choices.

Younger consumers, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, are driving this shift

Their purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by belief and value alignment rather than income. These groups are not only loyal customers but also vocal advocates for brands that align with their sustainability values, with 72% of Gen Z considering themselves influential in shaping others' choices.

To remain competitive, businesses must shift their focus from incremental improvements to systemic innovation.

Industry-specific innovations in sustainability

MedTech: Sustainable surgical tools and devices

In 2025, MedTech companies are advancing sustainability through reusable surgical instruments engineered to endure multiple sterilisation cycles, significantly reducing single-use waste. Innovations in biodegradable drug delivery systems, such as syringes and vials crafted from renewable materials, are further minimising the environmental impact of medical plastics. Additionally, digital health platforms are lowering the carbon footprint of care delivery by facilitating remote consultations, reducing the need for patient travel and associated emissions.

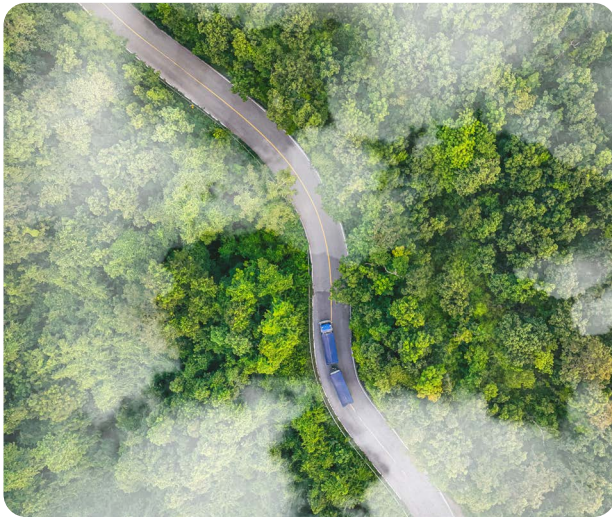


Industrial: Eco-friendly processes and packaging

Industrial innovation is driving sustainability through processes like 3D printing with recycled materials to create customised components while minimising waste. In packaging, advancements in lightweight, compostable materials are helping manufacturers reduce transportation emissions and meet regulatory mandates. For instance, sensors and instrumentation companies are integrating low-power IoT devices that optimise energy consumption across industrial plants.

Consumer: Circular design and ethical sourcing

Consumer brands are embracing circular economy principles, with personal care companies launching refill stations for shampoos and lotions, drastically reducing plastic waste. In the food and beverage sector, companies are introducing edible or biodegradable packaging innovations, such as plant-based wraps for fresh produce, to tackle packaging waste while maintaining product quality. Consumer health brands are also innovating with compostable or biodegradable packaging for over-the-counter medications, reducing environmental impact without compromising functionality.



Energy: Hydrogen and carbon capture innovation

The energy sector is revolutionising sustainability with hydrogen-powered industrial equipment and carbon capture technologies. For example, leading energy companies are piloting large-scale direct air capture facilities that remove CO₂ from the atmosphere for storage or reuse. Electrification of heavy-duty machinery is reducing emissions in traditionally high-polluting sectors like mining and construction.

A five-step blueprint for sustainable growth

To guide brands in this transformation, 42T has developed a five-step framework that outlines the path from reactive compliance to proactive sustainability leadership.

This framework emphasises:

- **Leveraging technology to engage and educate consumers.**
- **Redefining value by integrating durability, repairability and ethical sourcing into product design.**
- **Scaling systems-level solutions that address barriers such as cost and time constraints.**

These strategies don't just address immediate challenges; they position businesses as leaders in sustainability, creating enduring consumer trust and competitive advantage.

The consumer sustainability report 2025: Transforming sustainable growth strategies

Download the full report here



03 Digital-physical integration

Bridging real and virtual worlds in 2025

67%

Of Gen Z expect seamless integration of products into their lives.

In 2025, the blending of digital and physical experiences is not just transforming products, it's redefining how brands engage with consumers.

This trend challenges businesses to go beyond functionality, offering solutions that simplify complex lifestyles while meeting aspirational needs through emotional and experiential value.

However, many brands are struggling to meet these expectations. 42T's future of consumer products report 2025 reveals that there is a critical need for consumer product brands to innovate meaningfully in integrating physical and digital elements. Based on our survey of UK consumers, this research offers valuable insights into consumer attitudes toward digitalisation, product innovation and the complexities of modern living.

Notably, 54% of consumers feel their lives are increasingly complicated, yet only 53% believe digital technology simplifies this complexity effectively. Additionally, 67% of Gen Z expect seamless integration of products into their lives, highlighting the demand for systemic innovation that creates cohesive and impactful experiences.

Brands that rise to this challenge have the chance to lead in a marketplace where success increasingly depends on mastering digital-physical convergence.

The need for systemic innovation

Digital-physical integration must move beyond bolt-on digital features that add little value or even frustrate users.

To succeed, brands must adopt systemic innovation, redesigning how digital and physical elements coexist to create holistic ecosystems.

Our findings reveal that:

- **Younger consumers crave innovative solutions:** 53% of Gen Z and 61% of Millennials prefer to shop with brands they associate with being innovative, increasing to 66% of the most digitally mature and high-value consumers.
- **Consumers seek aspirational benefits:** 50% of all consumers, and 60% of Millennials, expect products that help them achieve life goals, whether it's improving health, reducing their carbon footprint, or feeling more confident.

The challenge is clear: brands must redefine value and deliver solutions that are not only functional but also deeply resonant with modern consumer lifestyles.

Industry-specific innovations in digital-physical integration

Personal care: Smart systems for individual needs

Personal care products like smart toothbrushes now leverage AI to tailor routines based on individual habits, while skincare devices combine real-time diagnostics with personalised treatment recommendations. These innovations create deeper engagement by merging technology with everyday rituals.

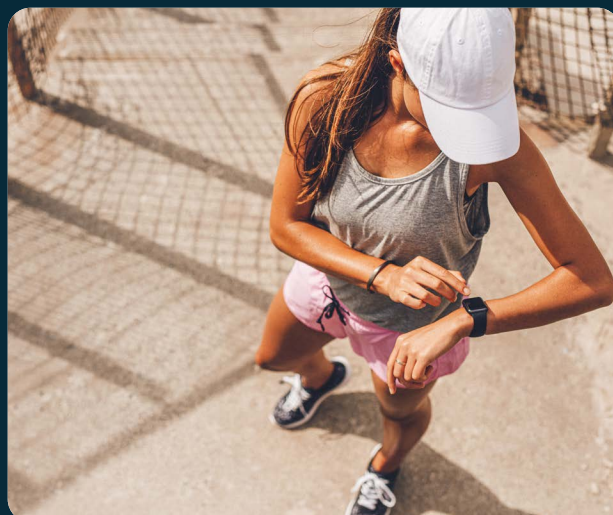


Appliances: Efficiency meets interconnectivity

Home appliances are evolving into smart systems. Refrigerators equipped with inventory tracking now integrate with meal-planning apps, while washing machines optimise water and energy use based on AI-analysed load data. These advancements simplify household management and deliver eco-conscious benefits.

Fitness & health: Personalised ecosystems

Wearable devices that sync with apps for real-time health monitoring and fitness planning are becoming indispensable. Products like smart yoga mats that provide posture correction or fitness trackers offering personalised insights represent a new era of integrated health solutions.



Home automation: Connected comfort

Smart home platforms now enable seamless control of lighting, temperature and security through unified interfaces, allowing users to customise their living environments with ease. These systems not only enhance comfort but also improve energy efficiency, aligning with broader sustainability goals.



Redefining value for the modern consumer

Consumers, especially younger generations, seek products that resonate with their identities and aspirations. It is no longer sufficient for products to simply perform a task; they must also enhance lives both emotionally and objectively.

48%

Of Gen Z believe brands are failing to keep up with changing lifestyles

Our research reveals that:

- 30% of Millennials regularly shop with brands that help them to “be their best selves.”
- 48% of Gen Z believe brands are failing to keep up with changing lifestyles.

To meet these demands, brands must adopt two key approaches:

1. Adopt systems thinking: Products should be seen as part of a larger ecosystem, designed to interact seamlessly with other tools and platforms.
2. Emphasise aspirational value: Focus on emotional connections and higher-order needs, such as helping consumers achieve their personal goals.

The path to seamless digital-physical experiences

To succeed in integrating digital and physical elements, brands must innovate with purpose, leveraging technology to build meaningful ecosystems and redefining the value of digital features.

Key strategies include:

- **Designing systems that address both functional and aspirational needs.**
- **Moving beyond basic functionality to focus on emotional and aspirational benefits, such as self-expression, confidence and personal growth.**
- **Investing in intuitive solutions that make consumers' increasingly complex lives simpler and more fulfilling.**

By embedding these principles into their strategies, businesses can deliver solutions that resonate with users and drive sustained growth. The era of usability isn't just about refining existing systems; it's about reimagining how technology enhances human interaction in a world that demands clarity, connection and purpose.

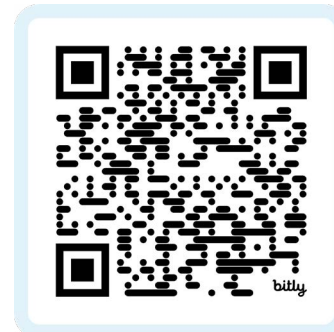


Discover deeper digital-physical insights

For a detailed exploration of how systems thinking and new definitions of value can drive meaningful digital-physical integration, scan the QR code below to access **The future of consumer products report 2025: Creating meaningful digital and physical experiences.**

The future of consumer products report 2025: Creating meaningful digital and physical experiences

Download the full report here





Conclusion

The megatrends shaping 2025 - **Usability, Sustainability, and Digital-Physical Integration** - mark a profound shift in how businesses must approach innovation.

These trends demand not just incremental improvements but bold, systemic changes that redefine industries and create lasting value. They challenge organisations to go beyond solving immediate problems and to consider how their solutions will shape society, the environment and future generations.

At 42T, we believe this moment represents more than an opportunity to adapt - it's a call to lead. The next wave of innovation will belong to those who embrace complexity, anticipate change and align technology with authentic human needs. Companies that prioritise usability will forge deeper connections with their customers. Those who embed sustainability into their strategies will become beacons of resilience in a resource-constrained world. And those who master digital-physical integration will redefine the boundaries of what's possible.

Yet, the question remains: how will your organisation respond to this moment? Will you wait for disruption to force change, or will you seize the chance to set the agenda for 2026 and beyond?

The future will not wait. As we look ahead, trends such as generative AI, next-generation connectivity and climate-tech solutions will continue to push the boundaries of innovation. The businesses that thrive will be those willing to take risks, embrace collaboration and reimagine their impact on the world.

At 42T, we're committed to helping you lead with purpose and clarity. Our expertise in human-centred design, cutting-edge technology and sustainability enables us to guide organisations through complexity and into growth. Together, we can build not just solutions, but legacies, innovations that enrich lives, drive progress and set the stage for a better tomorrow.

Are you ready to transform 2025 into the foundation of your next decade of success?

Let's design the future together.

Report downloads

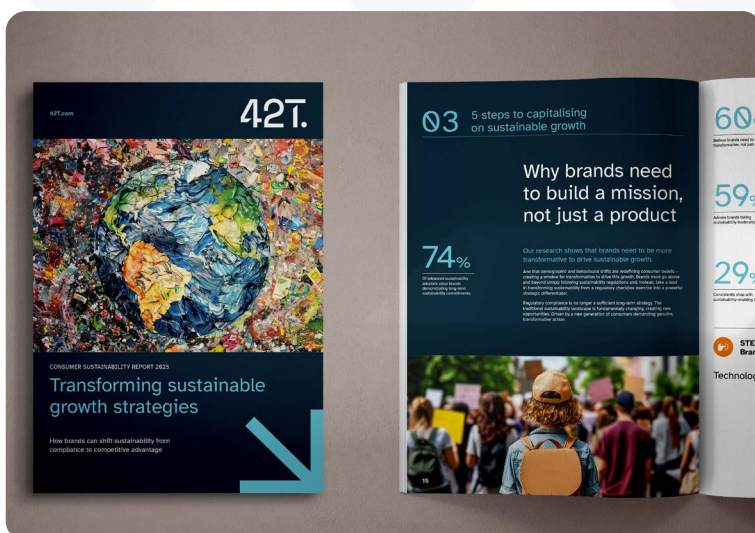
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