



**PUBLICIS
COMMERCE**

2026 Trends and Predictions



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While we reflect on the shifts that defined 2025, our attention is squarely on the future. This report breaks down what's changing, and what it means for brands and retailers in 2026.

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2026: Certainty without a Map

Ask anyone and they'll tell you—it's been a year.

A year of acceleration and recalibration. Of bold experiments and quiet course corrections. Of signals arriving faster than frameworks could follow.

Looking back at 2025, it's clear that commerce entered a new world, one defined by automation, influence, and systems that increasingly act on our behalf.

As Jason Goldberg puts it, **"It's hard to overstate how the Agentic Commerce trend that emerged in 2025 is likely to impact the future of retail and commerce."**

Yet even amid that certainty, clarity remains elusive. As Jason goes on to note, "AI optimizations will likely touch every retail process. Watch for a fundamental change in how consumers discover, consider, purchase, and support new products."



That observation captures the moment we're in. We can see the magnitude of what's coming, even as the contours are still taking shape.

This is where our focus shifts forward. While we take a quick look back at what moved in 2025, this report is fundamentally about what comes next.

It's about using the present moment to decode where commerce is headed, while helping our clients understand how today's signals translate into tomorrow's advantage. After all, connecting emerging patterns to real business decisions is what we do best.

What follows reflects that perspective. We distill a small set of trends that took meaningful shape, then look ahead to the predictions that point toward the future of commerce.

Together, they offer a clear, practical lens for navigating what's ahead with confidence and intent.

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A Quick Look Back

Some of the Trends that Took Hold

The trends in the following pages reflect what actually moved in 2025—the shifts our contributors saw taking hold across markets, platforms, and categories.

They're a snapshot of where momentum built and, for the most part, foreshadow what comes next.

A Few Things We Saw in 2025



Agentic Commerce | A trend whose impact cannot be overstated

It's hard to overstate how the Agentic Commerce trend that emerged in 2025 is likely to impact the future of retail and commerce. AI optimizations will likely touch every retail process. Watch for a fundamental change in how consumers discover, consider, purchase, and support new products.

– Jason “Retailgeek” Goldberg, **Chief Commerce Strategy Officer, Publicis Groupe** (Chicago)



Ecosystem Wizards Made Magic Happen | The thoughtful orchestrators prevailed

The real power play in 2025 was brands owning the whole community-to-commerce ecosystem—from discovery on community platforms like Reddit, to influence, earned buzz, and conversion across digital shelves and platforms. Smart brands showed up in advance of checkout by shaping conversations, clarifying product facts in-feed, and driving consideration.

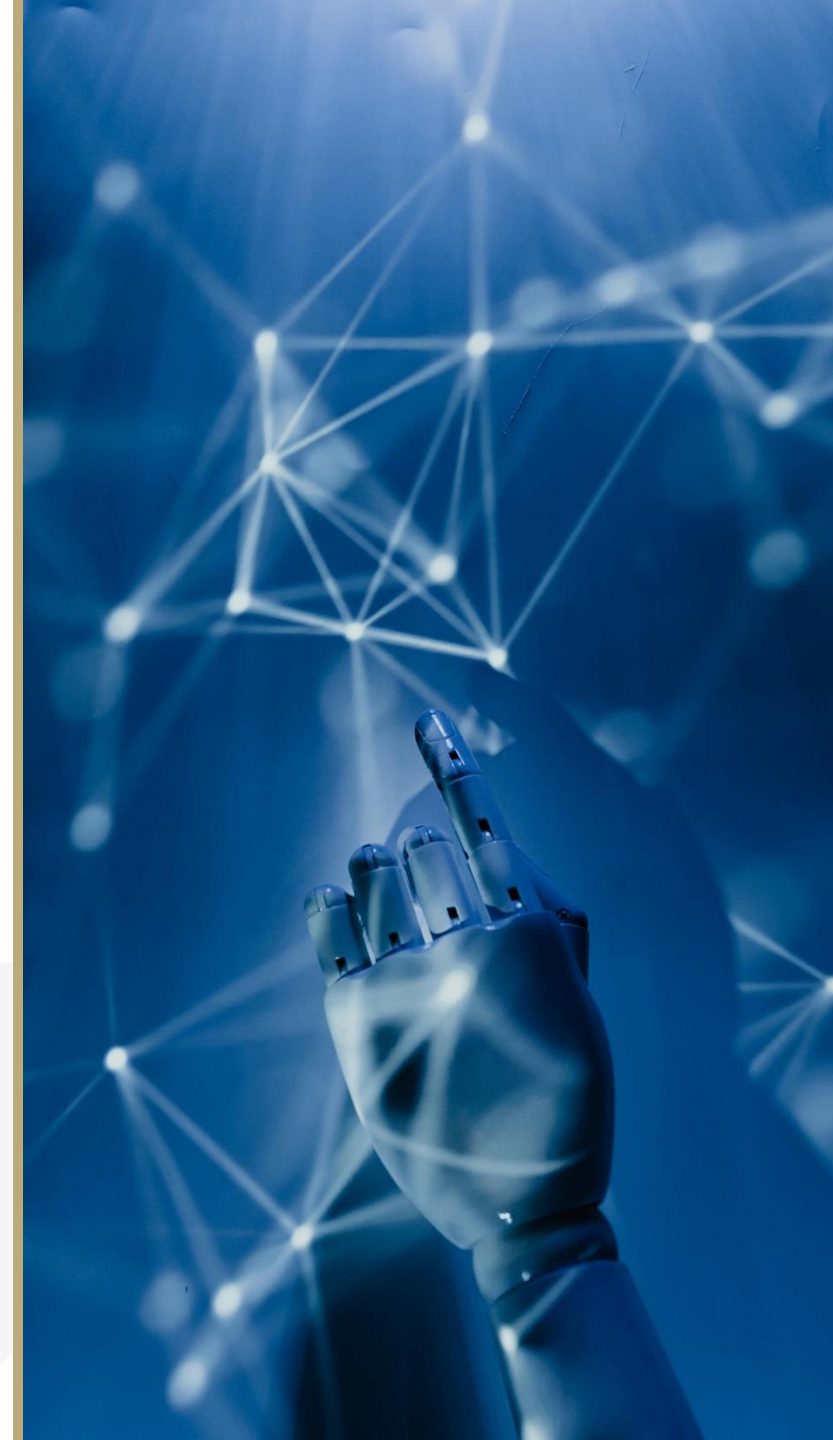
– Amy Lanzi, **CEO, Digitas** (New York)



Content for the Win! | The key to social commerce in 2025

In APAC (among other regions), social commerce was already a dominant trend by early 2025, but this past year showed that content is the key to social commerce success. Brands increasingly relied on compelling, authentic content to engage consumers and drive conversions in an environment where levers to optimize retail media are dwindling (i.e., being taken over by AI).

– Christine Tan, **Commerce Lead, APAC, Precision** (Singapore)





Trends Are Trending | Social commerce is following the money, gaining momentum

An important derivative of social commerce in 2025 has been trend-first commerce (i.e., creating products that align with emerging trends). What started with fashion is gaining momentum across beauty, electronics, and luggage, among other categories. Trend-first fashion alone is expected to grow to \$8–\$10 billion by 2028 (Bain & Company), with more than half of revenue from online sales. A rapidly expanding influencer base, advanced trend-spotting algorithms, and supplier ecosystems will only accelerate this growth.

– Pooja Dhamdhere, **Associate VP, E-Commerce, Starcom** (Mumbai, Maharashtra)



Reversing Currents | Retailers unlock data availability

It truly felt like the dam burst this year with respect to data availability from retailers. Yahoo, Google DV360, and even Pinterest now have wider opportunities to tap retail audiences, where The Trade Desk was the dominant default in 2024. It's a clear trend of retailers integrating into an advertiser's chosen channels and ad tech, rather than trying to lure them into their own ecosystems.

– Lee Dunbar, **SVP, Director E-Commerce, Starcom** (Chicago)



Welcome to the Future

And the shape of things to come

Looking ahead, the predictions explore what happens next. How will today's changes harden into new norms and new pressures?

Together, these points of view outline not a single future, but the many and varied paths commerce could take as Agentic systems, social ecosystems, and retail media mature.

2026 Predictions: Three Ideas that Keep Resurfacing

When we step back and look at our contributors' predictions, we see a variety of topics, but three things stand out.

Agentic Commerce Is a Certainty. Its Shape Is Not.

The impact of Agentic Commerce is no longer in question. What remains unclear is how it will rewire discovery, consideration, and purchase across categories and channels.

Social Commerce Collapses Content and Cart

Social commerce will move from rapid growth to operating reality. Creators, affiliates, and peer networks will drive a growing share of purchase decisions as social shopping intensifies.

Retail Media Faces Its Reckoning

Retail media will be scrutinized. Brands will demand clearer incrementality, stronger measurement standards, and provable ROI.

Agentic Commerce: Certainty Without a Final Form



Agentic Commerce Expands | And it will show up all over the place

The success of ChatGPT's Instant Checkout rollout will depend on a number of factors, but some directions are beginning to appear. Conversational AI is shifting from research to revenue—from helping people decide what to buy to helping them buy it. And retail is just the beginning; travel, entertainment, and services will follow. The brands that adapt their data, content, and checkout infrastructure now will own the next wave of intent.

– Amos Ducton, **SVP, Search, Razorfish** (New York)



Train the Agent | Win the cart

Generative and agentic AI will transform commerce marketing by enabling hyper-personalized experiences and automating content creation at scale. AI-agent livestreams are already mainstream in China, with early testing in Southeast Asia. Brands should act as first movers—using AI for product detail pages, decision-making, and campaign optimization—to stay competitive and operate at the speed of commerce.

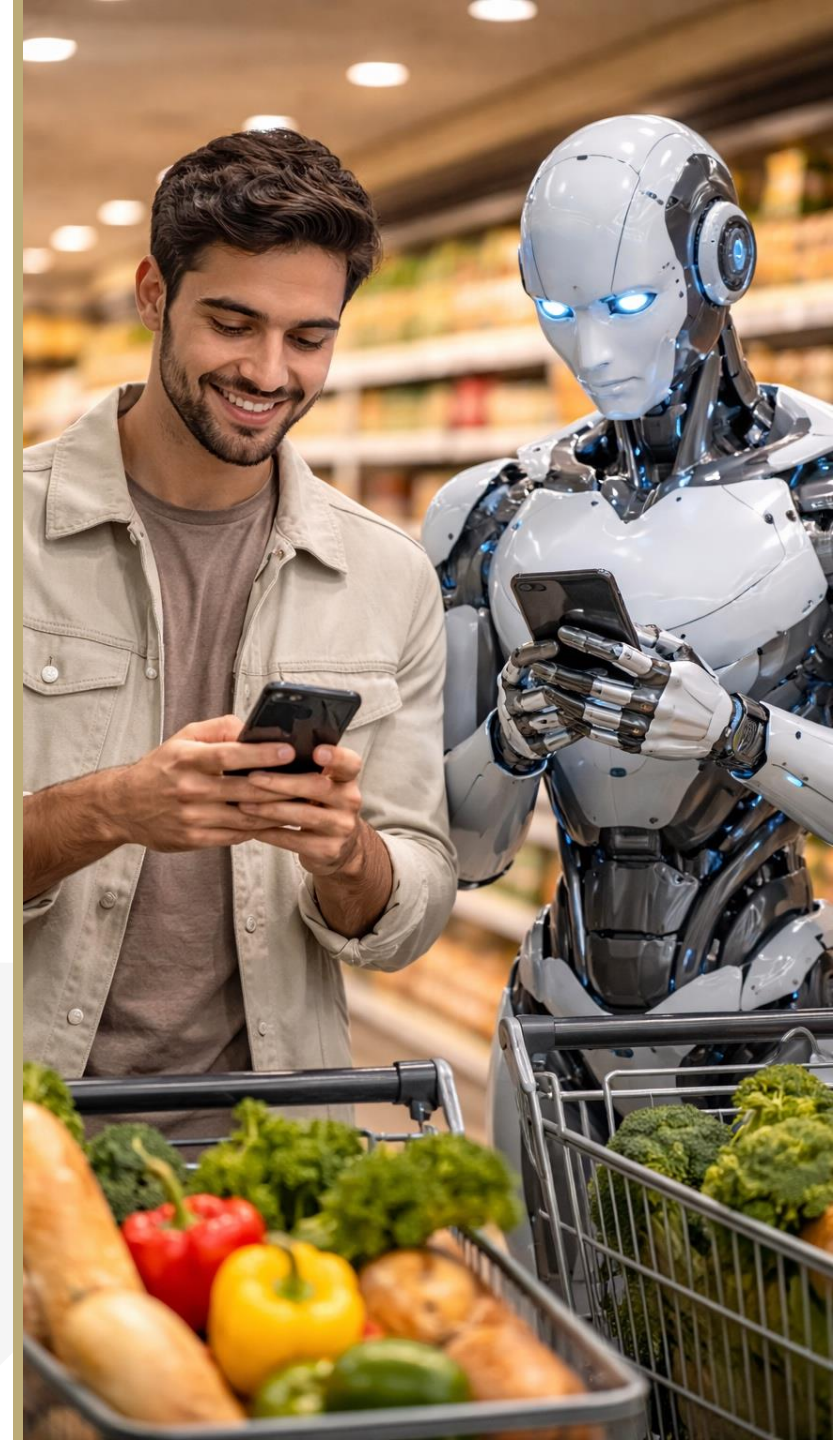
– Christine Tan, **Commerce Lead, APAC, Precislon** (Singapore)



The Quiet Power Shift | Agentic Commerce will matter before it's obvious.

The impact of Agentic Commerce will be less visible than many expect, but no less critical. Brands and agencies will begin building expertise in capturing agent-driven shopping traffic and experimenting with how to influence agentic engine optimization. While consumer adoption may lag near-term expectations, those who prepare in 2026 will secure an outsized advantage in 2027 and beyond.

– Zach Weinberg, **SVP Commerce, Zenith** (New York)



Social Commerce: From Channel to Operating System



Social Commerce Explodes | Brands should prepare now

Social commerce is about to explode, blurring the line between content and cart with creators at the center. The ecosystem of influencers, creators, and peer networks will drive more purchase decisions than traditional ads. Brands must meet shoppers where they are—on social feeds, in livestreams, or within creator ecosystems—or risk missing out on massive growth.

– Amy Lanzi, **CEO, Digitas (New York)**



Influencer Affiliates Spread in APAC | Mind the company you keep

Content was the key to social commerce success in 2025; in 2026, influencer affiliates will continue to gain traction across APAC, driving significant sales through key opinion sellers and creators. While affiliates are easy to activate, brands must establish clear engagement guidelines and safeguard brand equity. Affiliates represent the brand, so careful selection and ongoing monitoring are essential to maintain trust and ensure alignment with brand values.

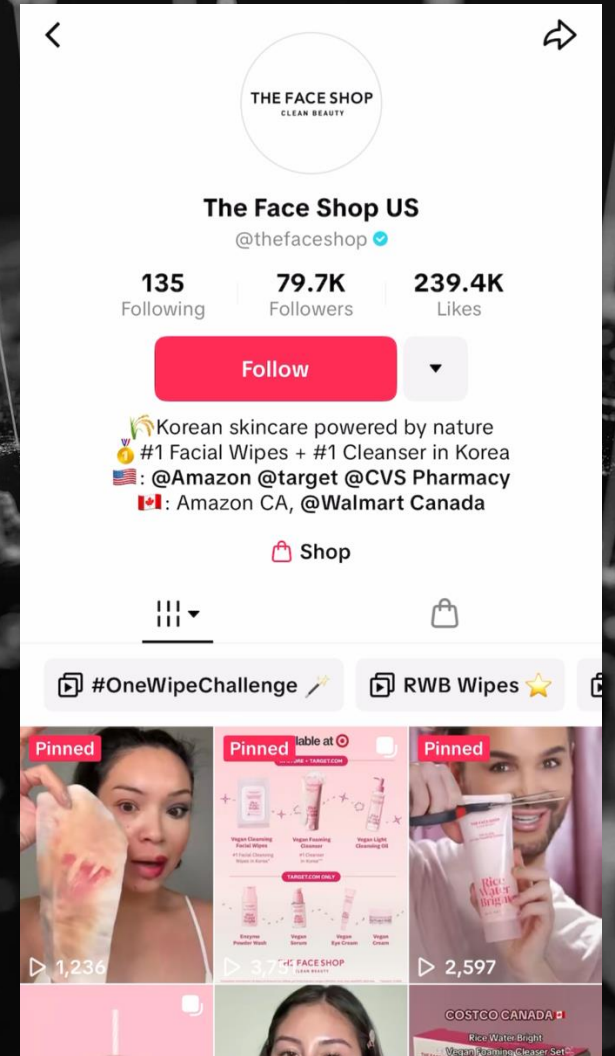
– Christine Tan, **Commerce Lead, APAC, Precislon (Singapore)**



Stocking the Social Shelf | TikTok will become a top retail media network for CPG brands

We've all witnessed the growth of TikTok Shop this year. To win on traditional retail shelves, CPGs increasingly first need to win on social shelves to bring new consumers into their brands and categories, especially younger demographics. To win in 2026, successful brands and retailers don't need a new playbook. They just need to meet shoppers where they are. And more than ever they're shopping (and buying) on TikTok.

– Amy Andrews, **President, Mars United (New York)**



Retail Media: Scrutiny, Scale, and Survival



Retail Media Scrutiny Ahead | Brands need more proof of ROI

Retail media in Germany is moving into a period of recalibration, with brands sharpening their focus on accountability and provable ROI. To that end, non-endemic spend still has ground to make up: a recent BVDW (Germany's IAB) survey shows 50% of respondents expect non-endemic investment to be flat or only marginally up.

– Veronique Franzen, **Managing Partner, Publicis Media** (Düsseldorf)



Isn't It Ironic? | Retail media measurement should be better. Soon, it will be

The big shift in 2026 is the evolution of measurement in retail media. Retail media (and commerce more broadly) has suffered the irony of being immensely measurable, but phenomenally unmeasured. With the IAB setting clearer definitions (e.g., for incrementality), we should see real progress. LLMs will also make it easier to unlock insights from data lakes—making measurement more actionable and immediate, and allowing brands to focus energy and investment where it matters most.

– Mudit Jaju, **Global Head of Connected Commerce Solutions, Publicis Commerce** (London)



The Ad Apocalypse Is Postponed | Disruption, not extinction

Many are predicting that Agentic retail will kill sponsored ads, the golden goose of retail media. In 2026, we'll find these rumors were exaggerated and that advertising found its way in (as it always does). Further, the advertising will be powered by placements that look and behave almost exactly like sponsored ads. The catch will be a smaller set of results, lower ad load, and higher CPCs. That's a significant disruption—but not the apocalyptic one some promised.

– Lee Dunbar, **SVP, Director E-Commerce, Starcom** (Chicago)



Streaming and CTV: Opportunities to Keep Watching



The Stream Will Trickle | Watch for a reduction in retailer-streamer partnerships

Is the era of blockbuster announcements of retailers partnering with streaming networks nearing its end? The ubiquity of retail data in DSPs, along with the outright ownership of inventory by Amazon and now Walmart, is making these managed offerings less valuable, even as big new entertainment acquisitions grab headlines. There may be a movie-studio purchase in the future for one of these retailers, but here's the question you have to ask: are these partnerships fueling self-serve, programmatic buying, or standalone, margin-heavy offerings?

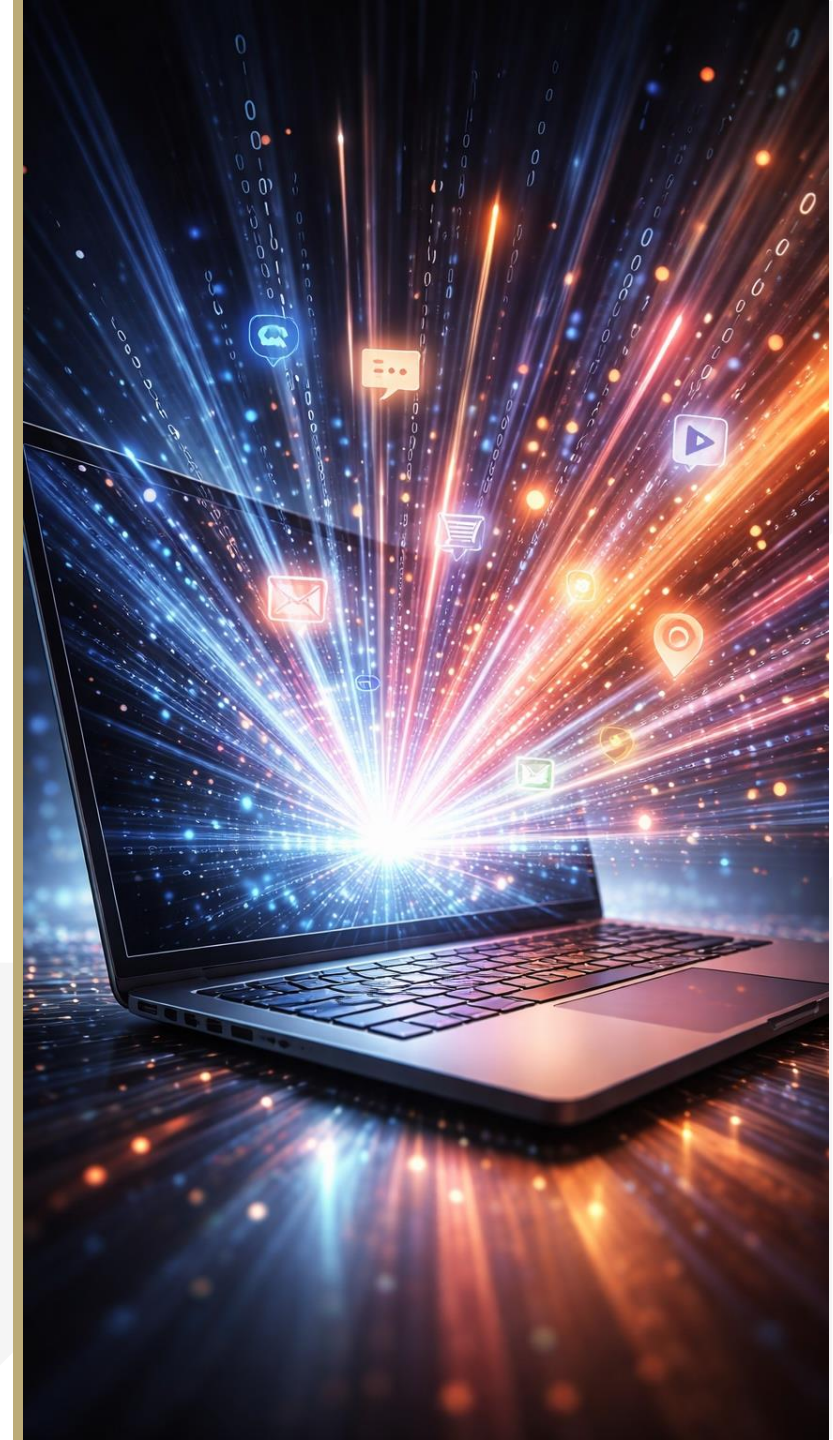
– Lee Dunbar, **SVP, Director E-Commerce, Starcom** (Chicago)



But Scale Will Win the Stream | Retailer-streaming integrations are expanding reach

The inking of multiple retailer + CTV partnerships stands out as the trend with the most practical application for advertisers. The Walmart and Vizio integration will be a step-change for their combined business in 2026, and Amazon's massive expansion with partners like Disney+, Hulu, Roku, and Netflix integrates the largest amount of streaming inventory through a single DSP source. The potential acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery by Netflix, if it goes through, will only expand on streaming availability in 2026.

– Zach Weinberg, **SVP Commerce, Zenith** (New York)



Personalization, and the End of Generic Journeys



Need to Safeguard Media Revenue? | Then maybe you need hyper-personalization

Predicting Agent Commerce's impact on retail media is tough, but e-retailers can safeguard their media revenue through hyper-personalization. As AI-driven shopping reshapes product discoverability (and with it, the relevance of retail media), there's an imperative to maintain and grow monthly active users, deepen first-party audience understanding, and deliver personalized assortments (paid and organic) that agents cannot easily disintermediate.

Markets such as India already point in this direction, with platforms building audience graphs that blend device attributes, payment signals, and geolocation data with on-platform behavior. The result is individually tailored assortments rather than generic, sales-velocity-based or purely search-based results. Retailers that truly own and activate their audiences will remain the primary destination for product discovery—even as AI alternatives rise.

– Pooja Dhamdhare, **Associate VP, E-Commerce, Starcom** (Mumbai, Maharashtra)



Fewer Generic Journeys | More brands will match up with missions

One-size-fits-all shopper journeys will decline. They no longer reflect how people actually shop. Today's consumers bounce between digital touchpoints and the aisle, expecting relevance at every step. Brands will continue to replace linear funnels with personalized, flexible experiences that match each shopper's mission and context.

– Amanda Rogers, **President, Saatchi X** (Springdale, AR)



Targeting in Real Life | More physical and contextual targeting is coming our way.

Stores are getting smarter, along with our airplane seats, hotel TVs, and rideshare screens. While digital contextual targeting is long established, we should expect physical contextual targeting to grow in sophistication and scale. The brands that understand the opportunity to show up beyond the phone—and tailor messages to the errand or vacation someone is on—will be celebrated and, ideally, drive incrementality.

– Lee Dunbar, **SVP, Director E-Commerce, Starcom** (Chicago)

Last Words...



Digital Moves Pretty Fast | Too few commerce marketers are keeping up

Digital has forever changed how we discover and buy new products—and it will almost certainly keep accelerating. Linear media, paid spokespeople, and in-store experiences are giving ground to micro-influencers on social media. TikTok Shop is now the fastest-growing retailer in the history of humankind, and very few commerce marketers have fully adapted to this new reality.

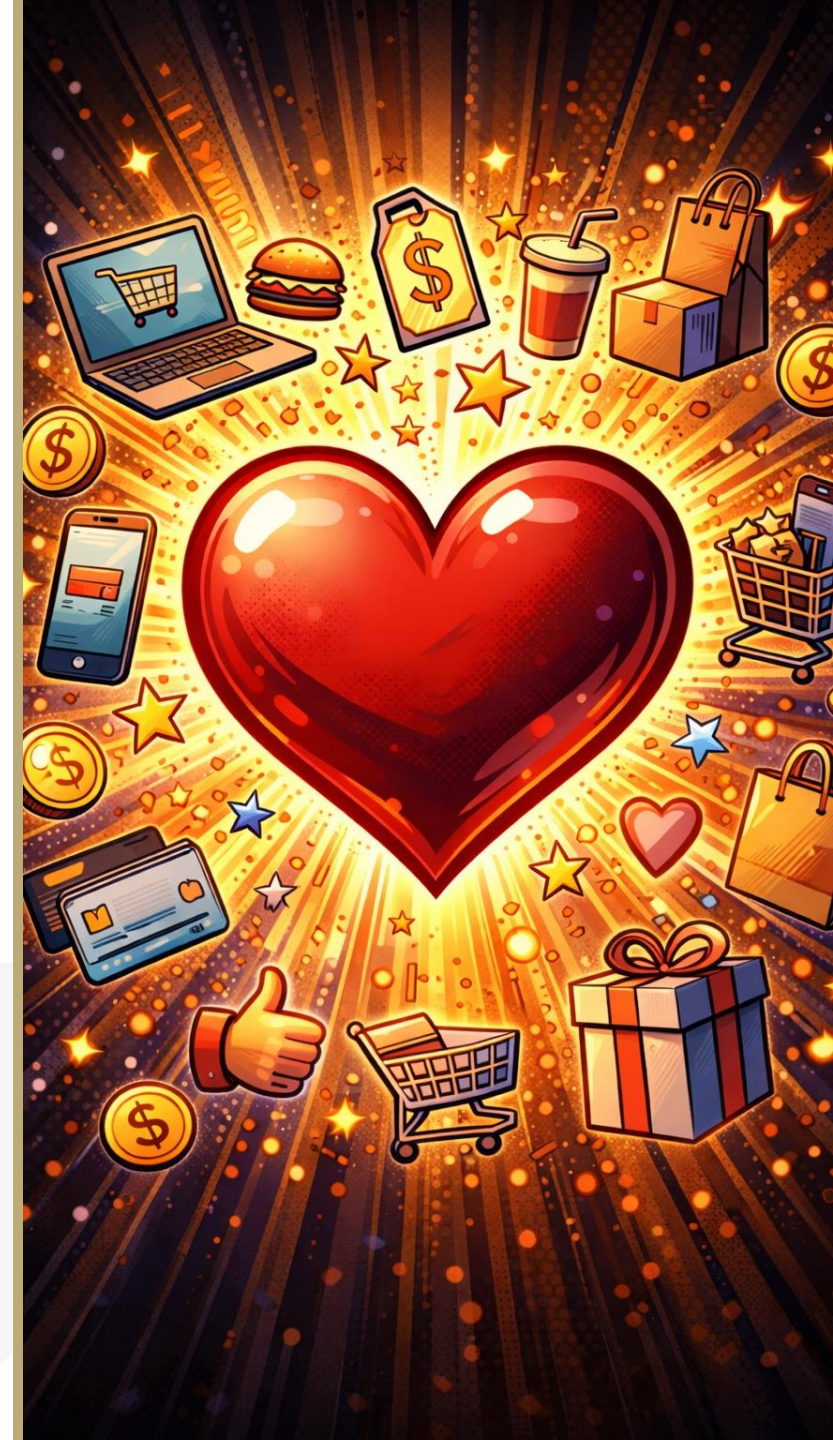
– Jason “Retailgeek” Goldberg, **Chief Commerce Strategy Officer, Publicis Groupe** (Chicago)



Once More, With Feeling | Will artificial intelligence distract us from real emotion?

Few people would deny that we’ve entered the “Age of Agentic Commerce.” But the growing demand for AI-enabled automated efficiency, and now the race to build strategies for turning agentic search platforms into “loyal shoppers,” are moving marketers even farther away from a need that has already been overlooked in commerce marketing for far too long—the complex role that human emotion plays in both the journey and the moment of purchase. If so, we risk exposing sophisticated commerce solutions to a fundamental shortcoming. It may be more important than ever to understand how emotion not only drives brand loyalty and affinity, but also how it can actually inform commerce decision-making.

– Soche Picard, **CEO, Arc Worldwide** (Chicago)



Last Words...



Long Live the Interface | Bigger AI benefits will flow through better designed journeys and experiences

To look ahead, let's take a quick look back to 2008: it was a blockbuster year when brands tapped into a whole new distribution mechanism—the app. Owning the interface back then was game-changing; it let brands build close relationships with consumers, forming trust and, if lucky, moving them from like to love to loyalty. In 2026, we'll see a powerful resurgence in owning the interface—and thus, the relationship. This time, it means leveraging AI for precision predictions, getting your data organized to supercharge deep personalization, and building trustful experiences—while avoiding “AI slop.” The brands that win will create seamless, intuitive journeys across every networked touchpoint, turning every interaction into a moment of brand connection.

– Amy Lanzi, **CEO, Digitas**, (New York)



AI Spreads, but Unevenly | Similar tools, differing regional adoption

Agentic AI in shopping is still early in Germany; unlike the U.S., you can't complete a full purchase inside ChatGPT via Instant Checkout yet, though early services are appearing and more are clearly on the way. To show up in ChatGPT Shopping and other agents, retailers need their GEO basics in place (structured catalogs, clean feeds, and product data that engines can parse so agents can surface and act on it). Meanwhile, Google is rolling out more “agentic” features in AI Mode; in Germany there are reports of Google's AI calling physical stores to confirm availability, signaling a shift from passive browsing to active assistance.

– Veronique Franzen, **Managing Partner, Publicis Media** (Düsseldorf)

Last Words...



New Networks, New Winners? | The fight for non-endemic advertisers will get more competitive

The retail media marketplace will grow more competitive—especially in the non-endemic space—thanks to non-traditional “commerce media networks,” or non-retailers with strong shopping and conversion data from high-quality, niche audiences. I expect 2026 to bring an explosion of new networks across travel, financial services, telecommunications, transportation, and more. What will give these networks a competitive edge? Broadening, deepening, and scaling their data and analytics offerings—all to show how their audiences will drive real business impact for brands. Go-to-market strategy and demand generation will also be important, as networks must bring compelling propositions to potential advertisers.

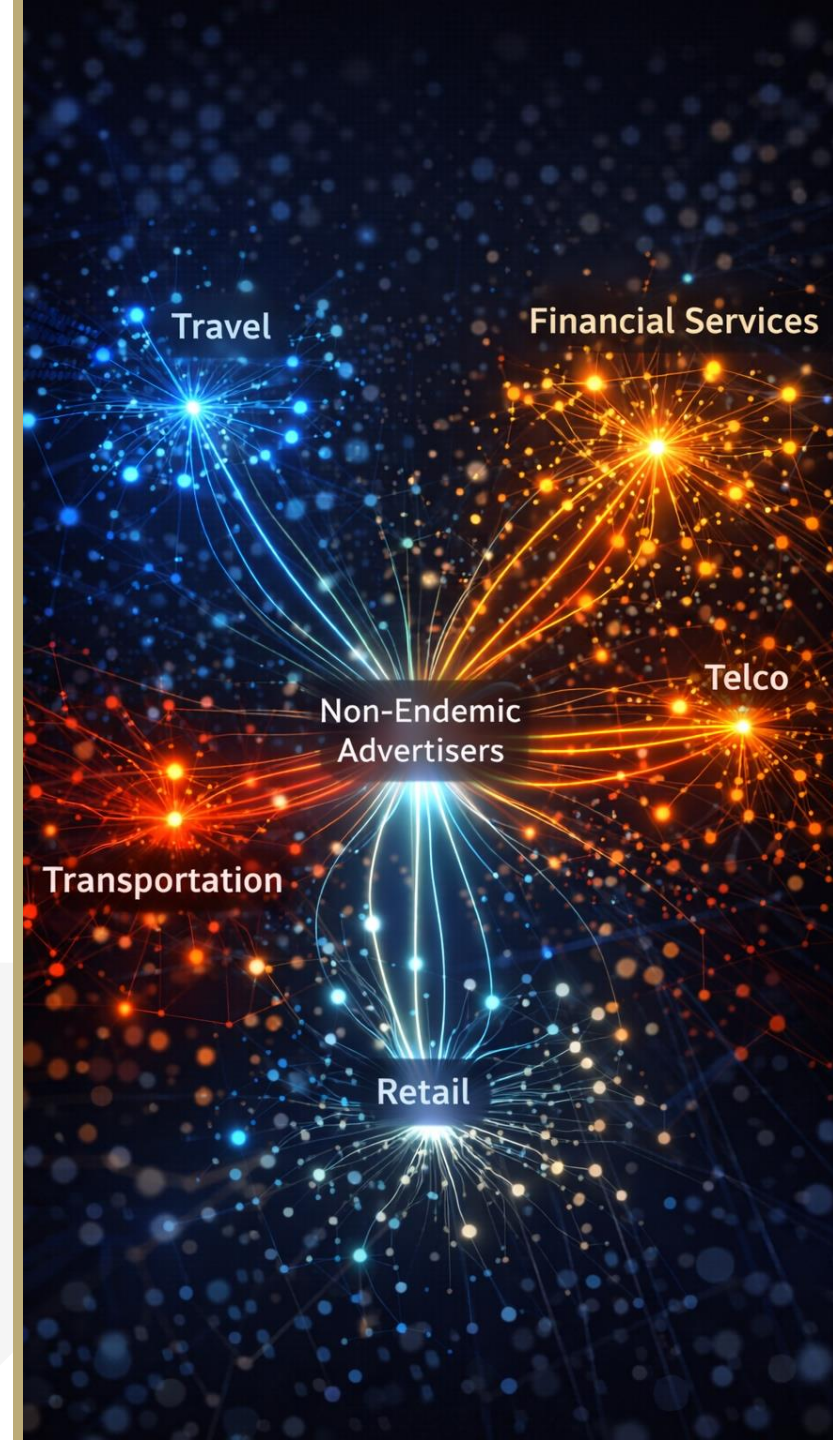
– Michele Roney, **EVP, Retailer CX, Mars United** (Detroit)



Ad Placements Displaced? | AI-assisted shopping will unseat paid dominance

The dominance of ad placements will wane. Sponsored product ads and paid search will become less relevant in 2026 as AI-assisted shopping continues its meteoric adoption curve.

– Andy Murray, **Executive Chairman, Saatchi & Saatchi X** (Springdale, AR)



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