2026 TRENDS

eCommerce

TREND 1

AI-Driven Personalization & Automation

TREND 2

Composable & Headless Commerce Architectures

TREND 3

Omnichannel & Mobile-First Experiences

TREND 4

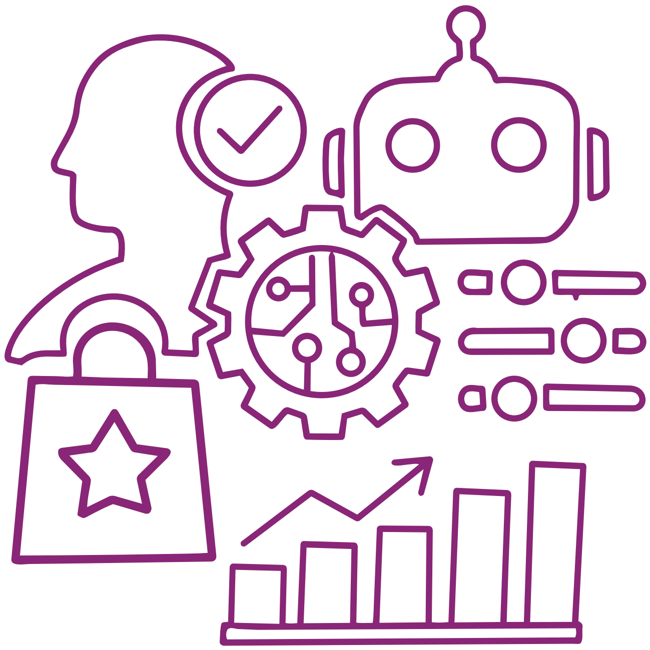
Hyperlocal Fulfillment & Supply Chain Agility

The eCommerce landscape continues to evolve rapidly as we move toward 2026. Changing customer expectations, advancing technologies, and ongoing market pressures are forcing retailers and consumer brands to rethink how they engage shoppers and operate across channels.

As organizations look ahead, the opportunity to modernize commerce strategies and create more connected, customer-centric experiences has never been greater. What should brands expect in the year ahead, and which shifts will have the greatest impact on how they sell and serve customers? From AI-driven personalization to more agile fulfillment models, we explore the top four eCommerce trends shaping 2026 in this report.

TREND 1

AI-Driven Personalization & Automation



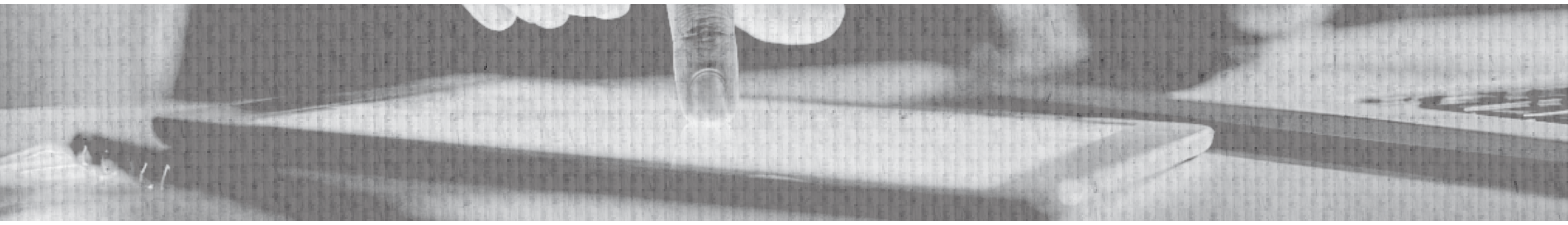
As we move into 2026, AI-driven personalization and automation are becoming central to how brands design the shopping experience. Retailers and CPG companies are now using AI throughout the customer journey, from product discovery to support and repeat purchases.

What once required manual effort or generic messaging can now be automated and tailored to each shopper, making strategies such as customized promotions, predictive pricing, dynamic content, and AI-powered customer service feasible at scale. These features are true difference makers: 65% of eCommerce brands report higher conversion rates after implementing personalization strategies. Together, these AI-driven capabilities enable eCommerce businesses to deliver the same, and in some cases greater, personal touch and support that previously only in-store experiences could afford.

Beauty brands provide a clear example of this shift. Companies are using tools like Revieve to guide shoppers through personalized routines and product bundles based on individual skin or hair needs. Historically, this level of guidance was exclusive to in-person retailers, like Sephora's beauty advisors, but AI now allows online shoppers to receive similar experiences at home and on-demand. These personalized journeys encourage customers to add more items to their carts and often increase overall order value.

As AI becomes more accessible, organizations must still approach it with intention. The brands that see the most value are those that align AI investments to clear use cases tied to specific business goals, such as improving conversion, strengthening loyalty programs, or protecting margin.

Before launching new tools, organizations should assess data quality, establish ethical guidelines for customer data management, and run short pilot programs – such as 90-day test-and-learn cycles – to measure early results and scale AI initiatives with confidence. The competitive edge in personalization in 2026 and beyond will go to the organizations that are able to master their data management and adaptively pursue new AI-enabled programs.

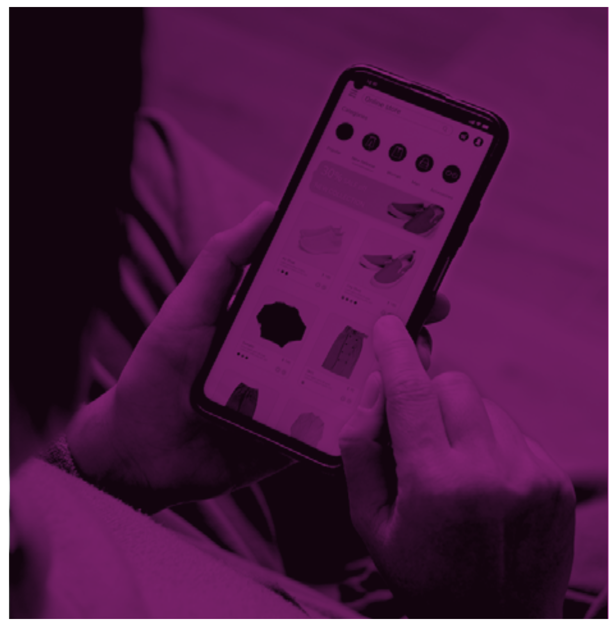


TREND 2

Composable & Headless Commerce Architectures

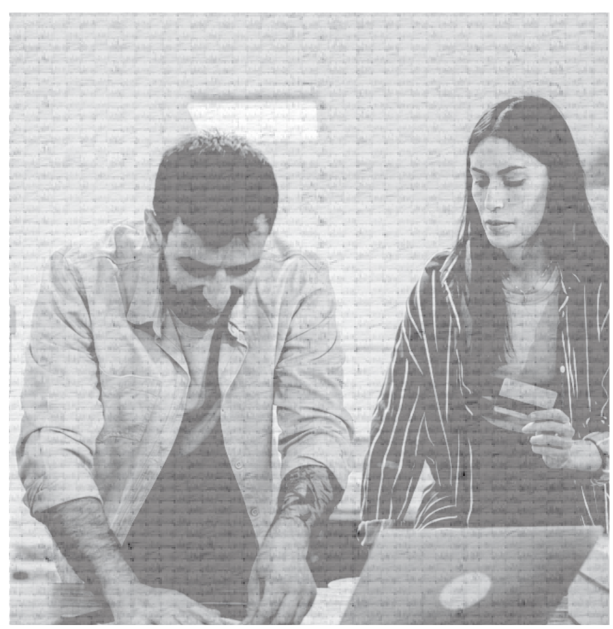
While composable and headless architectures have been on the rise, as we enter 2026, we'll see them more than ever. Retailers are increasingly shifting from monolithic platforms to modular, API-first headless architectures, which help them gain agility and enhance their ability to launch new channels quickly and easily, from mobile to voice.

Headless architectures decouple the front end from the back end, helping promote more flexible overall experiences. Composable architectures take customizability to the next level by treating every aspect of the commerce platform *(e.g., cart, search, payments)* as independent, allowing organizations to create systems with the best of the best for every function.



Because of this customizability, both headless and composable architectures are known for helping organizations pivot quickly and create new features, while also allowing them to assemble the best parts of eCommerce through flexible, modular components. Organizations are no longer locked into a single vendor for key capabilities like search or payments; instead, they can mix and match solutions tailored to their specific needs.

In 2025, retailers such as Shoe Carnival adopted headless, composable architectures as they sought to update product assortments and introduce new styles more frequently. That said, headless commerce isn't necessarily fit-for-purpose for every organization. It remains important to assess a brand's needs, technical maturity, and long-term goals before making the shift.



Organizations should also understand how widely headless adoption exists within their industry to gain perspective on the competitive landscape. As businesses begin this journey, conducting a readiness assessment of the current commerce stack – paired with a thoughtful eCommerce vendor selection – can help identify where modernization will deliver the most value.

TREND 3

Omnichannel & Mobile-First Experiences

In 2026, shoppers expect a smooth, connected experience every time they interact with a brand, regardless of platform, whether they start on a mobile app, browse on a laptop, click through a social media post, or complete a purchase in store.

Mobile remains especially important, as it continues to be the first place most shoppers engage with retailers. Industry benchmarks show mobile conversion rates average about 2.8% compared to 3.2% on desktop, highlighting how much opportunity remains to improve the mobile journey. When mobile experiences are intuitive, fast, and consistent with other channels, they become powerful drivers of engagement and sales.

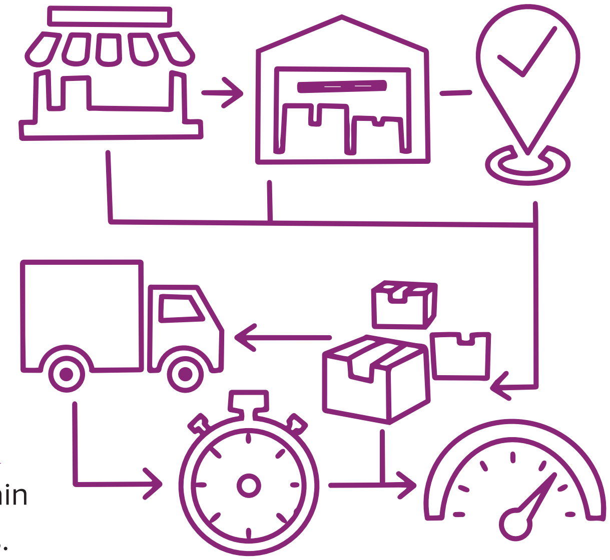
For brands with a large physical retail presence, DICK'S Sporting Goods offers a strong example of how mobile apps can bridge online and in-store experiences. Its app supports both digital and physical commerce through purposeful integration. On one hand, it provides app-only deals, new product releases, and early access to promotions. On the other, it informs customers about promotions and products that are exclusively available in store. From an operational perspective, this allows DICK'S to optimize offerings by time and place while giving customers multiple incentives to shop across channels. As a testament to its omnichannel strategy, the DICK'S mobile app consistently ranked above those of larger retailers like Amazon and Walmart in Apple's App Store charts during the 2025 holiday shopping season.

For eCommerce-first brands with smaller retail footprints, mobile and online experiences should extend beyond a simple digital storefront. Health products company Thorne demonstrates this well. Across its website and mobile app, Thorne pairs products with personalization quizzes, wellness guides, research articles, and podcasts, transforming its platform into a broader wellness hub. Combined with subscription options for repeat purchases and compelling bundle savings, this approach makes it easier for customers to make informed, personalized decisions while building trust in the brand.

Regardless of business size or model, omnichannel experiences will only grow in importance in 2026 and beyond. Successful brands will map the full shopper journey to understand how customers move between channels, then improve handoffs and reduce friction. Running mobile UX audits and connecting loyalty programs and customer data across touchpoints will help teams identify gaps, prioritize improvements, and deliver a more consistent experience that supports long-term engagement.

TREND 4

Hyperlocal Fulfillment & Supply Chain Agility



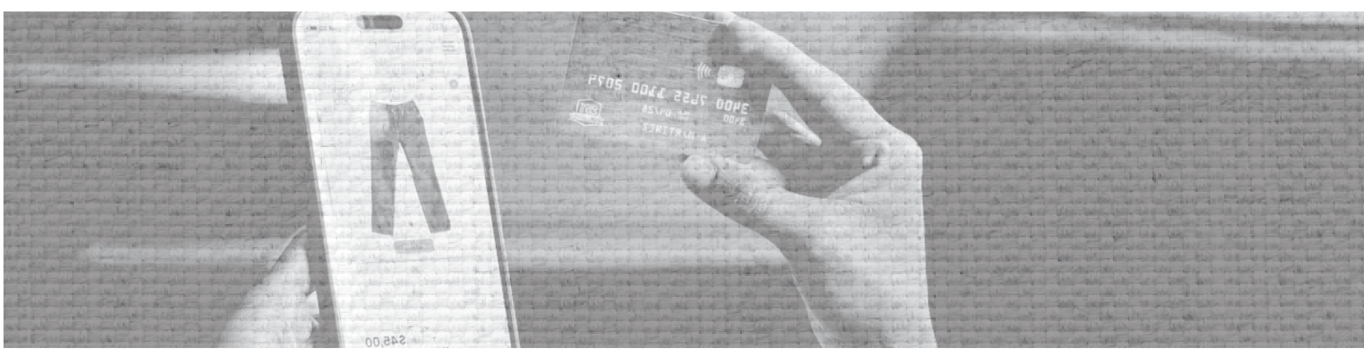
When it comes to fulfillment in 2026, we know that consumers are expecting speed (77% of consumers expecting delivery in <2 hours), and they're willing to pay for it, with 41% opting to pay extra for same-day delivery. Clearly, hyperlocal fulfillment and supply chain agility are no longer just nice-to-have, but rather competitive norms.

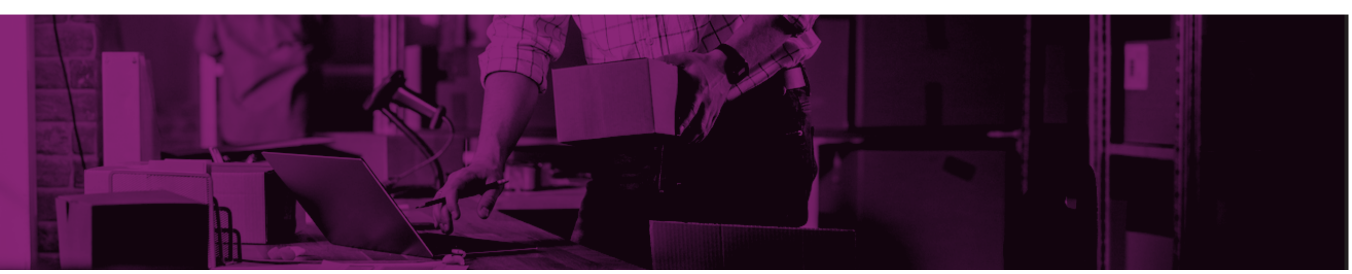
Prioritizing hyperlocal strategies also delivers meaningful operational benefits. Last-mile delivery has long been one of the highest-cost components of eCommerce, and by reducing shipping distances, organizations can lower fulfillment costs while improving delivery speed.

Retailers succeeding in this space are finding creative ways to meet demand. Target has famously embraced a "stores as hubs" model, fulfilling 90–95% of digital orders from physical locations. This approach has reduced fulfillment costs per unit and expanded same-day delivery capabilities.

Other retailers, including Sephora, have leaned into partnerships as part of their hyperlocal strategy, working with DoorDash to enable delivery in roughly an hour. These models allow brands to capitalize on impulse purchases while supporting a seamless omnichannel experience.

Moving into 2026, businesses seeking to remain competitive must prioritize hyperlocal fulfillment and meet consumers where they are in terms of speed. Whether organizations pursue a "stores as hubs" model or a partnership model, it's critical to keep supply chain agility top of mind.





Final Thoughts

Taken together, these trends point to a few core themes. Successful commerce strategies in 2026 will be built around flexibility, connected experiences, and intentional investment. Whether through AI-driven personalization, composable architectures, omnichannel journeys, or hyperlocal fulfillment, the brands that pull ahead will be those that align technology decisions with real customer needs and measurable business outcomes.

By taking a thoughtful, phased approach grounded in data, experimentation, and a clear understanding of their shoppers, organizations can position themselves to adapt quickly and compete effectively in an increasingly dynamic retail landscape.

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