

The rise of Agentic Commerce

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Why retailers must prepare for a future where AI becomes the customer

For more than two decades, digital commerce has been built on one assumption: a human makes every buying decision. Retailers have optimized websites for search engines, refined user experiences, invested in personalization and improved digital merchandising to help customers discover, evaluate and purchase products.

That assumption is beginning to change.

Artificial intelligence is fundamentally reshaping how consumers search for information, compare products and make purchasing decisions. Increasingly, consumers are asking AI assistants to recommend products, summarize reviews, compare prices, identify alternatives and even complete purchases on their behalf. Rather than visiting multiple websites or scrolling through endless search results, shoppers are increasingly relying on intelligent agents to narrow choices and make recommendations based on their preferences, purchase history, and intent.

This shift represents one of the most significant changes to digital commerce since the emergence of online shopping itself.

The next customer visiting your digital storefront may not be a person—it may be an AI agent acting on their behalf.

This new reality is driving the emergence of **Agentic Commerce**, an operating model where intelligent software agents participate directly in product discovery, evaluation, and purchasing. While today's AI assistants remain largely advisory, rapid advances in large language models, enterprise AI platforms and agentic systems suggest that autonomous purchasing will become increasingly common over the next several years.

For retailers and CPG brands, this creates both enormous opportunity and significant disruption.

Historically, organizations focused on optimizing websites for search engine rankings and customer experience. Tomorrow's commerce ecosystem will require optimization for AI comprehension. Intelligent agents do not browse websites the way people do. They evaluate structured product information, compare specifications, analyze reviews, interpret availability, assess pricing, and recommend products using machine-readable signals rather than visual merchandising alone.

This makes product data one of the most valuable strategic assets in retail.

Retailers that maintain incomplete product attributes, inconsistent specifications, or fragmented catalog information risk becoming less visible to AI-powered buying agents, regardless of how strong their traditional digital marketing efforts may be. Rich product content, standardized taxonomy, real-time inventory visibility, accurate pricing, and accessible commerce APIs will increasingly determine whether AI systems recommend a product or overlook it entirely.

The implications extend well beyond merchandising.

Commerce platforms themselves must evolve to support autonomous interactions. API-first architectures enable AI agents to securely access inventory, pricing, fulfillment options, loyalty programs, and transactional workflows without relying exclusively on traditional web interfaces. Organizations built on disconnected legacy systems will struggle to participate in this new ecosystem because intelligent agents require real-time, trusted, and consistent information.

Personalization also enters a new era.

Today's recommendation engines primarily respond to customer behavior after shoppers arrive on a retailer's website. Agentic Commerce moves personalization upstream by influencing purchasing decisions before customers even reach a digital storefront. AI agents will increasingly evaluate products based on contextual preferences, sustainability goals, dietary restrictions, household purchasing habits, delivery preferences, and countless other consumer-specific factors.

Winning an AI agent's recommendation may become as important as winning the customer.

This evolution also introduces new governance challenges. Organizations must establish policies around AI identity, authentication, transaction authorization, customer consent, and responsible AI usage. Autonomous purchasing cannot succeed without trust, transparency, and robust governance frameworks that ensure both retailers and consumers remain in control of purchasing decisions.

Fortunately, retailers do not need to wait for fully autonomous commerce to begin preparing.

Organizations can start by modernizing product information management, improving data quality, exposing commerce services through secure APIs, strengthening personalization capabilities, and investing in AI-ready digital architectures. These foundational capabilities not only improve today's customer experience but also position retailers for the next generation of intelligent commerce.

Those that begin this journey today will be significantly better prepared as AI transitions from assisting shoppers to actively participating in the buying process.



HOW UST HELPS

UST is helping retailers and consumer brands prepare for the next generation of digital commerce by combining artificial intelligence, cloud-native platforms, and data-driven customer experiences into a unified commerce strategy.

Our **Smart Recommendation** solution, developed in collaboration with **Microsoft Azure AI**, enables retailers to deliver highly personalized recommendations across digital and physical channels using real-time customer behavior, inventory availability and contextual business rules. Rather than relying solely on historical purchasing patterns, Smart Recommendation continuously adapts to changing customer intent, helping organizations improve product discovery, increase conversion rates, and create more relevant shopping experiences.

Beyond personalization, UST helps organizations modernize commerce platforms through API-first architectures, cloud transformation, enterprise integration, and intelligent data platforms that enable AI systems to access trusted product, pricing, and inventory information securely. We also help clients establish governance frameworks that support responsible AI adoption while keeping transparency, security, and customer trust central to every commerce interaction.

Whether organizations are beginning their AI journey or preparing for fully agentic commerce, UST provides the strategy, technology and implementation expertise required to build resilient, future-ready digital commerce ecosystems.



Customer success

Retailers are already seeing measurable value by combining AI with intelligent customer engagement.

UST's **Smart Recommendation** solution enables retailers to deliver contextual, AI-powered product recommendations that improve digital merchandising and create more personalized customer experiences across every touchpoint. Built on Microsoft Azure, the solution helps organizations accelerate deployment while leveraging enterprise-grade AI capabilities and responsible governance.

In physical retail environments, UST's **Vision AI** solution helped **Sam's Groceria** reduce operational costs by **25%**, increase sales by **20%**, and improve workforce productivity by **15%** by connecting customer behavior insights with operational intelligence. These same AI capabilities create the data foundation needed for smarter recommendations, merchandising decisions, and personalized shopping experiences.

Together, these engagements demonstrate that the technologies supporting Agentic Commerce are already delivering measurable business outcomes today. The next evolution is connecting these capabilities into an ecosystem where **AI** can participate directly in product discovery and purchasing.

RELATED UST RESOURCES

- [From Search to Agents: How AI Is Restructuring Retail Power](#)
- [The Department Store Reset: Where Growth Will Be Won Next](#)
- [How AI Is Reinventing the World of Retail](#)
- [Building Retail Solutions That Work for Modern Shoppers](#)
- [Harnessing Vision Intelligence for Personalized and Seamless Holiday Shopping Experiences](#)
- [Smart Recommendation for Retail \(Microsoft Azure\)](#)
- [The Autonomous Retail Era: 14 Trends Rewriting the Rules of CPG & Retail](#)

READY FOR THE NEXT ERA OF COMMERCE?

The shift to Agentic Commerce is already underway. Organizations that invest today in AI-ready product data, intelligent personalization and modern commerce architectures will be best positioned as AI increasingly influences how customers discover and purchase products.

Request a [UST Intelligent Commerce Assessment](#) to evaluate your organization's readiness for Agentic Commerce and develop a roadmap for building AI-powered customer experiences that keep your brand visible in an AI-first marketplace.

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Since 1999, UST has worked side by side with the world's best companies to make a powerful impact through transformation. Powered by technology, inspired by people, and led by our purpose, we partner with our clients from design to operation. Our digital solutions, proprietary platforms, engineering, R&D, products, and innovation ecosystem turn core challenges into impactful, disruptive solutions. With deep industry knowledge and a future-ready mindset, we infuse expertise, innovation, and agility into our clients' organizations—delivering measurable value and positive lasting change for them, their customers, and communities around the world. Together, with 30,000+ employees in 35+ countries, we build for boundless impact—touching billions of lives in the process.

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