

A fashion advertisement featuring four models in a surreal, dreamlike landscape. The models are diverse in ethnicity and are dressed in high-fashion, minimalist clothing. The background is a soft-focus, warm-toned environment with large, stylized plants and a hazy horizon. The overall mood is artistic and ethereal.

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Trends & Inspiration
Q3 2025

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Q3 Study: Topics

The following sections on trends, insights, and strategy have been curated to represent Imagine Studio's collective thought leadership regarding future customer and client needs.

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Retail Banking

Retail Banking Overview



The retail banking industry is undergoing tremendous change. A few years ago, it was a fairly straightforward business, but today, technology and innovation, increasing competition, regulatory complexity, embedded finance, consolidation, and evolving customer expectations are placing immense pressure on traditional business models. This intricate and evolving web of trends influences whom consumers trust and how they prefer to conduct their financial lives. It also forces banks to address the fundamental question of what a financial institution is—and what value it provides.

Retail Banking Trends

1 | Evolving Front of House

Transformation of client relationship capture—the “front end” of banking—has been accelerated by players outside the traditional institutions. This has allowed a more unique approach for incorporating financial services into their platforms. These companies are established, cash-rich brands in the technology, media and entertainment sectors, capable of creating an improved user experience and hyper-personalized offerings to aggressively control more of the customer relationship.

Established banks—generally facing higher regulatory burdens and dealing with outdated technology—compete as the infrastructure backbone of the financial system. They act as utility providers that offer licensed services and products, but no longer have a customer-facing brand.



Retail Banking Trends

2 | Digital Currency Development within Central Banks

A steady decrease in the use of cash continues alongside the rollout of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs). Digital currencies gain wide acceptance in B2B, B2C and C2C segments. The new generation financial consumer and the companies they interact with find the flexibility and transparency of digital currency more rewarding and appealing.

Incumbent banks lose the basic bank account to central banks. This ultimately makes traditional bank business models nonviable because they have always had control over this anchor of their customer relationships.



Retail Banking Trends

3 | Economic Turmoil Leads to Distrust

Amid deteriorating societal trust, customers grow doubtful of global institutions. The supervisory regime favors smaller and local banks, and sentiment gravitates towards nationalistic protection. Clients and assets flow from global players to more locally focused banks with smaller balance sheets, deposits, and lending facilities, and to specialized micro-niche players.

These facts fair well for these small players who have a great opportunity to capture loyalty with new customers, many of whom are seeking a personalized, human experience.



Retail Banking Trends

4 | Regulators Taking Action

Regulators take an active approach to a wave of Big Tech and other nontraditional entrants to ensure a safe and strong financial system. Government antitrust actions push technology players out of the industry and increase barriers to entry; competition comes solely from firms that hold full financial services licenses.

This degree of regulation opens the door for banks to rebuild trust and reclaim their role as the central provider of financial products and services.



Retail Banking Trends

5 | Banking World Aggregation

A wave of consolidation will likely result in a few mega banks and fintech companies ruling the banking landscape. These massive, tech-enabled institutions generate a competitive advantage through scale.

As in many other industries, customers will gravitate towards the largest, most personalized and convenient platforms and generally have no concerns about data privacy or the ability to choose. Only the largest banks will be able to make the technological investments necessary to create a differentiated customer experience.

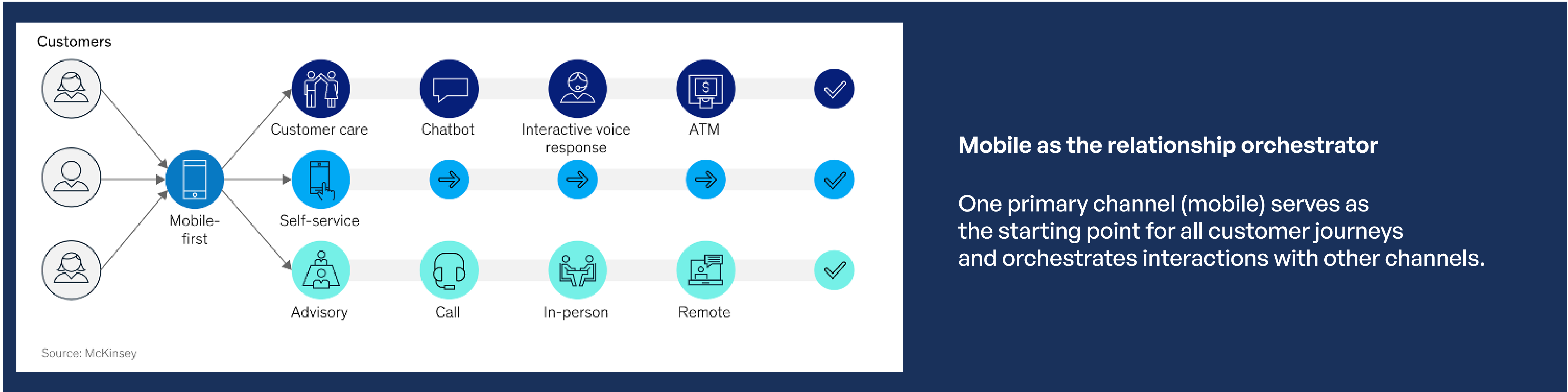


Retail Banking Customer Trends

Mobile-First

A mobile-first approach means banks design their services with mobile users in mind first, making sure the experience is fast, convenient, and easy to use. As more people prefer managing their money on the go, this approach is becoming essential for banks to meet customer needs.

The rise in smartphone usage, combined with an increasing number of mobile banking subscribers, is driving an industry-wide shift. This isn't just a trend—it's becoming the backbone of modern banking. The global mobile banking market is projected to grow by an astounding \$4.26 billion USD by 2032.



Retail Banking Customer Trends

Voice Banking

Alongside those changes with handheld tech, payments, on-demand loans, and other banking activities will increasingly be done by talking to Siri, Alexa, or a car or phone app.

“When you think about the world and how we’ll access banking services, we’ll talk to Alexa and Siri and get financial information,” said Brett King, futurist, author and founder of Moven. “We might use smart glasses from Facebook and Apple. Those operating systems will be the gatekeepers for the way we connect to core banking utility.”
(AmericanBanker.com)



Retail Banking Customer Trends

Hyper-personalization



According to research, roughly three out of four consumers report feeling frustrated when the website content of the brands they frequently interact with is not personalized. Fortunately for banks, the tools and services available to meet these expectations and deepen relationships through highly personalized customer engagement are keeping pace with demand. There has been an explosion of both data and providers

that specialize in helping companies deploy a more personalized engagement strategy, more granular audience targeting, and dynamic optimization of creative and marketing content.

Banks own more customer data than companies in most other industries, but they are behind many other consumer-facing sectors when it comes to personalization at scale. Banks seeking to unlock the full potential of personalization can focus on five key priorities: identify and prioritize use cases based on value; rapidly activate and optimize at scale; deploy MarTech and data enablement; develop an agile operating model for personalization; and build talent and capabilities.

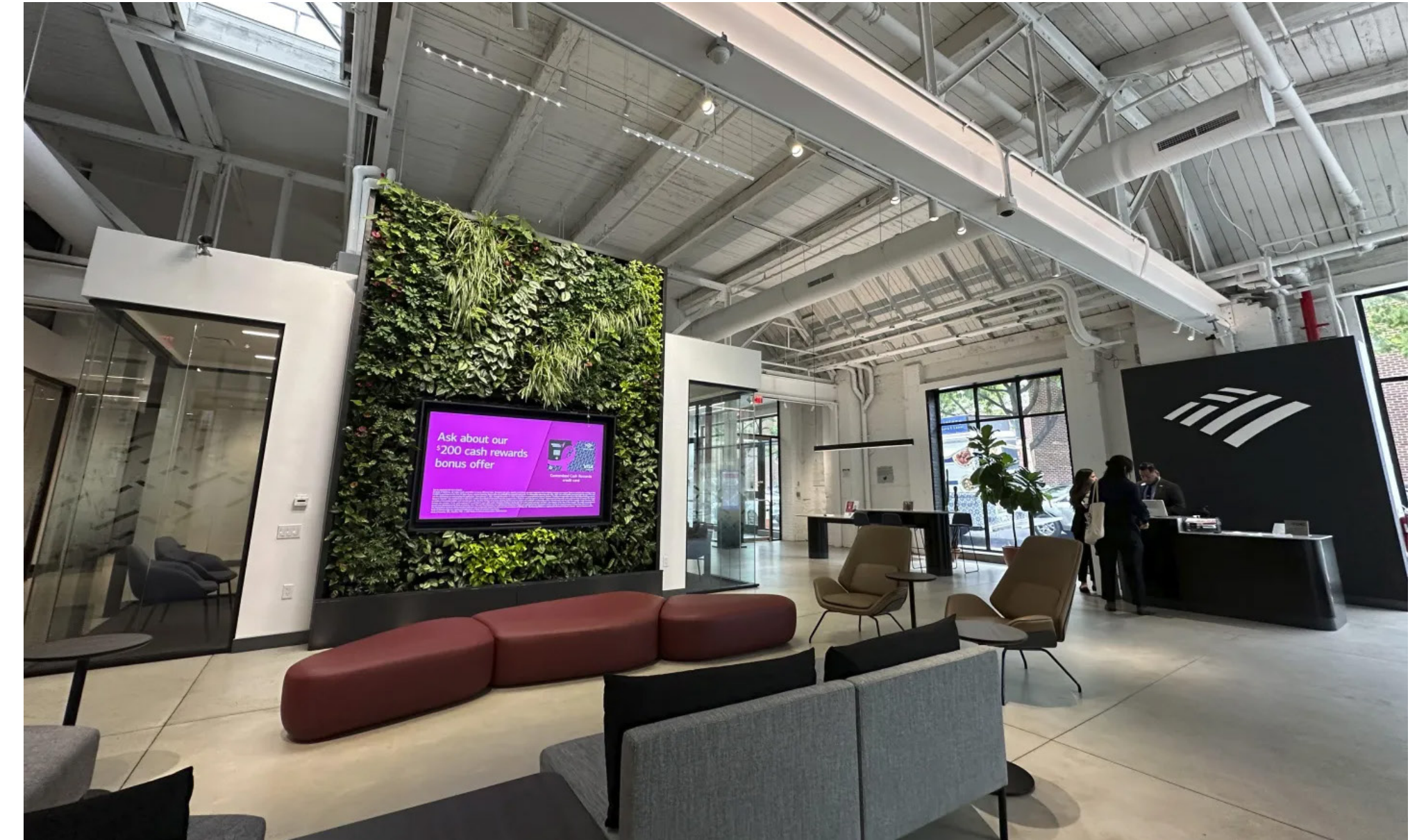
Hyper-personalization is set to redefine customer experiences in banking, with AI-driven solutions enabling financial institutions to offer tailored services at an unprecedented scale.

Retail Banking Customer Trends

Desire for Third Spaces

Customers are demanding for more “third spaces” — places to work and collaborate that are neither their home or office. Many are designed to allow local customers or community representatives to hold meetings, take care of business or hold workshops or seminars for other customers or neighbors. They are a contrast to the marble-clad temples to finance built 50 or 75 years ago and the stale cookie cutter branches that more recently cluttered suburban malls.

Financial institutions are modernizing and allocating space to locations as a welcoming community center, offering spaces that are both publicly accessible and technologically equipped. Guests have access to free Wi-Fi, a free coffee bar, multiple open seating and meeting areas, reservable conference rooms, and, in some cases, event space for public use.



Retail Banking Pop-ups

With whispered rumors of the death of physical banking branches circulating, experts have called for the need to rethink the role that branches will play in the future. It doesn't sound all that different from discussions happening among retailers. **Pop-up venues** may be the answer banks and credit unions are looking for. Yes, an ATM service, issuing debit cards, opening new accounts, handling loan application and distributing information—it's all possible in the so-called “pop-up micro branch”.



Although the number of bank branches in the U.S. is expected to drop 20% over the next five years, recent research shows people still want to come into a branch. Banks — even virtual ones — are experimenting with technological solutions to get the mix of human and virtual interaction right.

Retail Banking Pop-ups



PNC Bank

One of the early adopters of this strategy, PNC Bank, has incorporated a pop-up on the campus of West Virginia University. It remained there for five months and aimed to become part of the community by handing out free rally towels on game days and cups of coffee during exam periods. PNC Bank also used a pop-up venue to introduce their “SmartATM” where customers could cash checks, deposit multiple checks and dispense \$1 bills.

“Branch convenience remains the number one consideration when consumers choose their primary bank,” explains Jim Balouris with PNC Bank. “A tiny branch is a fun, creative way to bring a host of services that help customers discover ways to enhance their financial wellbeing.”

Retail Banking Pop-ups



Capital One

While not a pop-up, Capital One opened a string of cafes across the country to experiment with customer experience. These cafes offer free Wi-Fi, low-priced coffee and food, and complimentary money coaching for customers and non-customers alike. ATMs and customer-facing technology are available for digital banking and financial learning and exploration. The bank offers a relationship-based experience in a communal lifestyle space where target customers want to hang out.

“The space looks so much cooler, cleaner,” explains Antonio Wilson, Capital One’s Chicago Café Coach. “It makes you feel like you’re inside a digital website with a café, and friendly people from a community. Our goal as a company is to reimagine banking in a different way. The goal is to get people to come in for coffee or pastries. This is not a place where they feel like they are instantly going to have a banker in their face talking about our products. So initially, people use the site as a full-fledged café. Over time, though, they might bring up the conversation with our on-site bankers about our products.”

Retail Banking Pop-ups



Bank of America

The main factors most banks take into account when considering customer experience into their pop-ups are convenience and comfort. Many banks provide multiple settings and ways to interact, both virtually and in person. A variety of interactive spaces let customers select the setting they’re most comfortable with and eliminates barriers between banker and customer.

Bank of America is making strides in this direction and gained media attention for a new kind of ATMs with integrated video displays that enable customers to speak with bank employees directly and outside normal banking hours. Bank of America’s minimally-staffed branches let customers make the most of mobile banking tools and allow them to connect to banking representatives through video conferences, with employees on hand to provide guidance when needed. “Although our clients are using our digital tools more and more, they still rely on in-person conversations with financial center professionals for some of their more complex financial needs, such as buying a home and saving for retirement or college,” said a Bank of America spokesperson. Giving customers control of their experience is key.



Retail Banking Pop-ups



TD Bank

Besides reaching out to existing and potential customers, several banks have also been using the pop-up venue to try out new technologies. For example, TD Bank has been experimenting with new models for staff operations and technology use, featuring iPads with preloaded custom software. In these micro-branches, staff members assist customers in learning to work with newly launched apps.



Tangerine

Similarly, direct bank Tangerine incorporated cafés and pop-ups into their focus on attracting new customers. Looking into one of their pop-ups, the portable branch is equipped with iPads loaded with Tangerine’s “Sign Me Up” app, which allows customers to sign up for an account by simply scanning their passport or driver’s license. Customer service agents are on hand to assist, not to conduct any transactions. “Since we’re a direct bank, our pop-up locations allow us the opportunity to showcase our unique everyday banking experience to potential clients in new markets who may need a little extra nudge to help discover what we’re all about,” says Phil Taylor, VP of Service, Sales & Retail. “We view ourselves as innovative retailers that happen to be in banking and I think pop-ups really support that approach.”

Retail Banking Pop-ups



Mastercard x Marie Claire

Marie Claire magazine partnered with Mastercard to launch a New York concept store, bringing to life the newest innovations in fashion, beauty, entertainment, technology and wellness. Called “The Next Big Thing”, the pop-up was divided into three zones named after popular sections in the magazine. Technology was blended seamlessly into the experience with smart mirrors from Oak Labs, Sensor Mirror Pros by Clarins, smart windows and Masterpass digital payment where customers could make cashless transactions from anywhere in store.

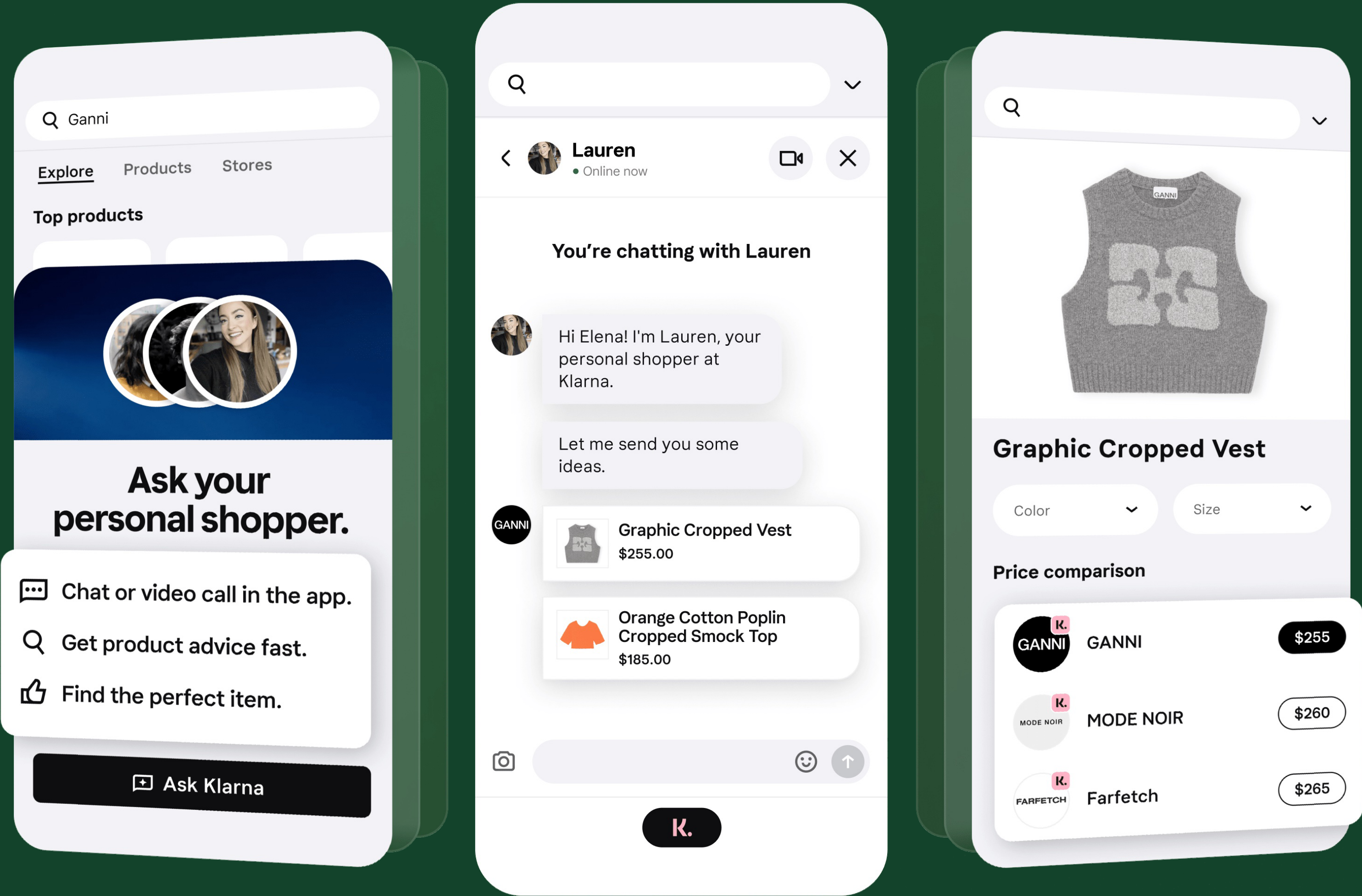


AI & Digital Commerce

AI & Digital Commerce Overview

AI is set to further transform retail, driving efficiency, personalization and new business models.

AI is widely regarded as the most disruptive technology of our time, driving rapid transformation across the retail landscape and warranting significant investments to build the infrastructure and platforms shaping the future.



Ask Klarna

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

Proof points

The global market for AI products and services is projected to reach between \$780bn and \$990bn by 2027

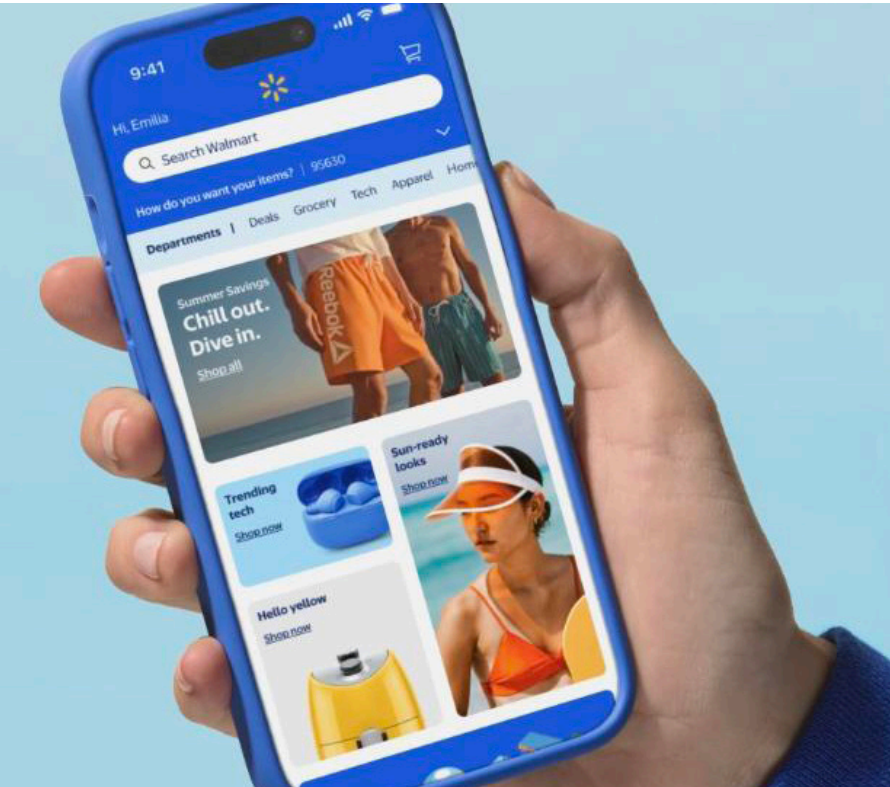
(Bain & Company)



Global research suggests that many **retailers should be able to increase revenue** by 5-10% through AI-powered personalization initiatives (Bain & Company).

Southeast Asian consumers who use AI features on e-commerce platforms at least once a week

Consumer adoption of online AI tools in Southeast Asia is high, with 88% making purchasing decisions based on AI-powered product recommendations (Lazada).



In its Q2 2025 earnings call, Walmart revealed that **using GenAI is about 100 times more productive** than having people work through each product display page on its website (Walmart).

Top uses for generative AI that US consumers look forward to

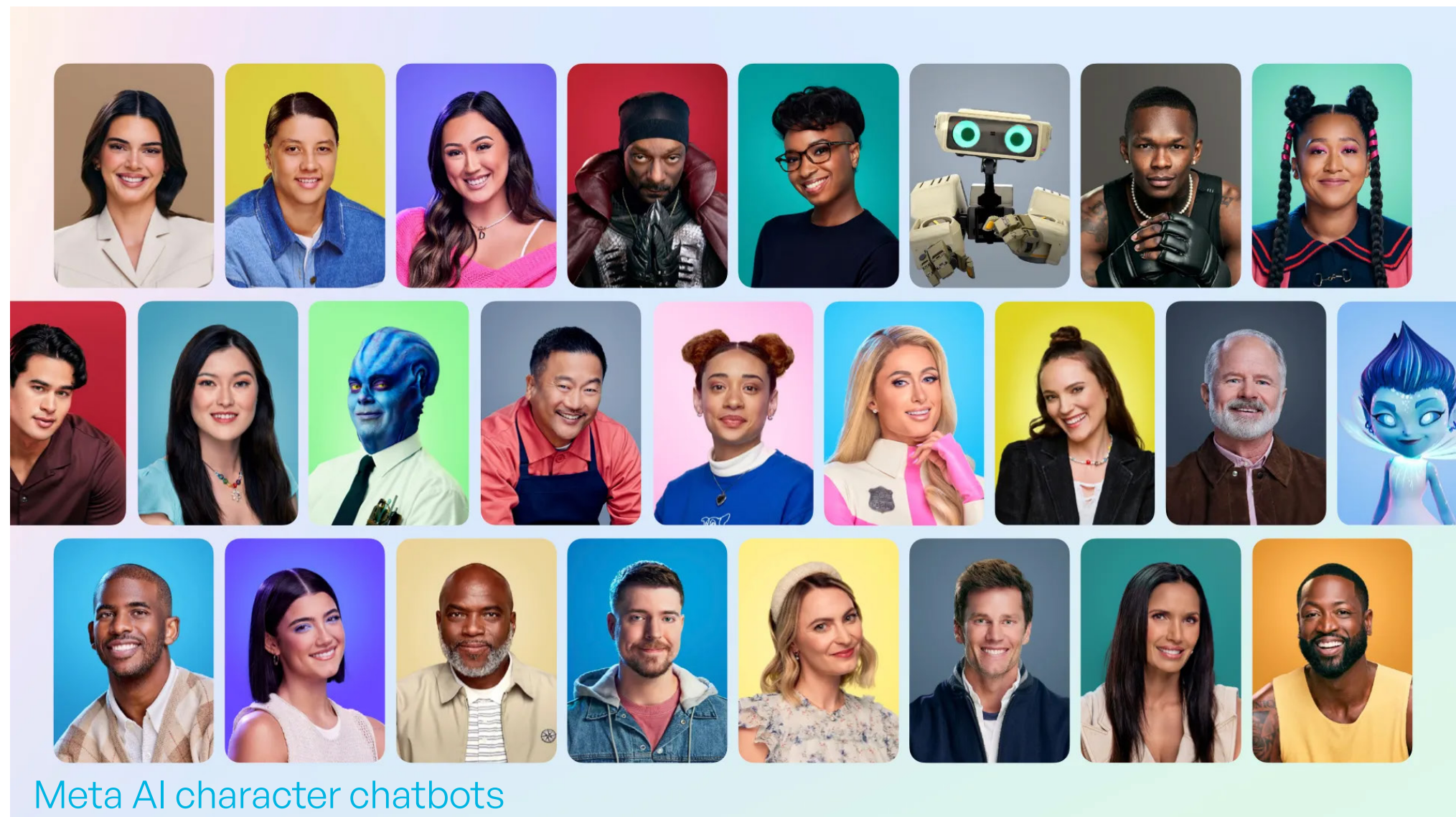
- Automating product filters based on customer needs
- Summarizing product reviews
- Customer service chatbots

US consumers are embracing AI, with 58% of respondents to a survey saying that generative AI has already improved their online shopping experience (Adobe).

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

Opportunity

Retailers are increasingly adopting AI to enhance all aspects of operations, from revolutionizing supply chains to personalizing online interactions and enhancing the in-store experience.



Retailers must embrace this technology, adopting emerging solutions to meet evolving consumer expectations and drive efficiencies that enable them to stay ahead of the competition. To capitalize on AI’s potential, retailers must focus on clear implementation roadmaps, cross-functional collaboration and continuous evaluation of the impact on customers and associates.

Need to know

AI will continue to drive innovative change within the retail industry as retailers and brands develop new capabilities to enhance the shopping experience for consumers while driving efficiencies that enable them to be competitive.

Key strategies

AI-Powered Hyper-Personalization

Make customers feel valued by engaging with their specific needs and desires by integrating AI technology.

Enhance the online shopping experience

Embrace the use of AI capabilities across the digital shelf to create a faster and more convenient path to purchase.

Drive operational efficiencies

Integrate tech into all aspects of your business, from content creation to fulfillment, to drive cost and speed efficiencies.

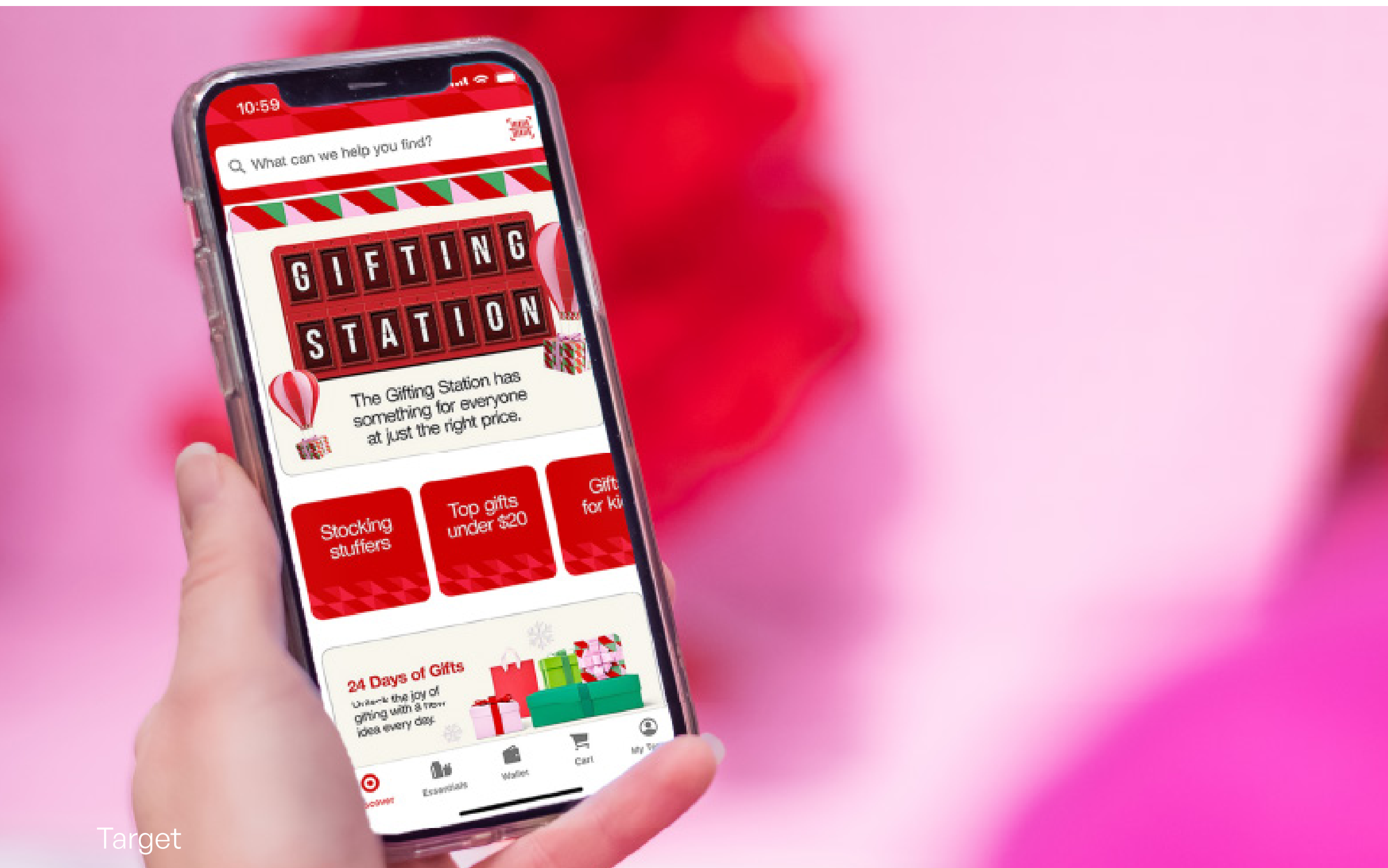
Support in-store associates through tech

Explore the use of AI in-store to improve the shopping experience for both associates and shoppers.

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

AI-powered personalization

Create a unique shopping experience that considers preferences and previous purchases to drive affinity with the 80% of consumers who prefer brands that offer personalized experiences (Deloitte, 2024).



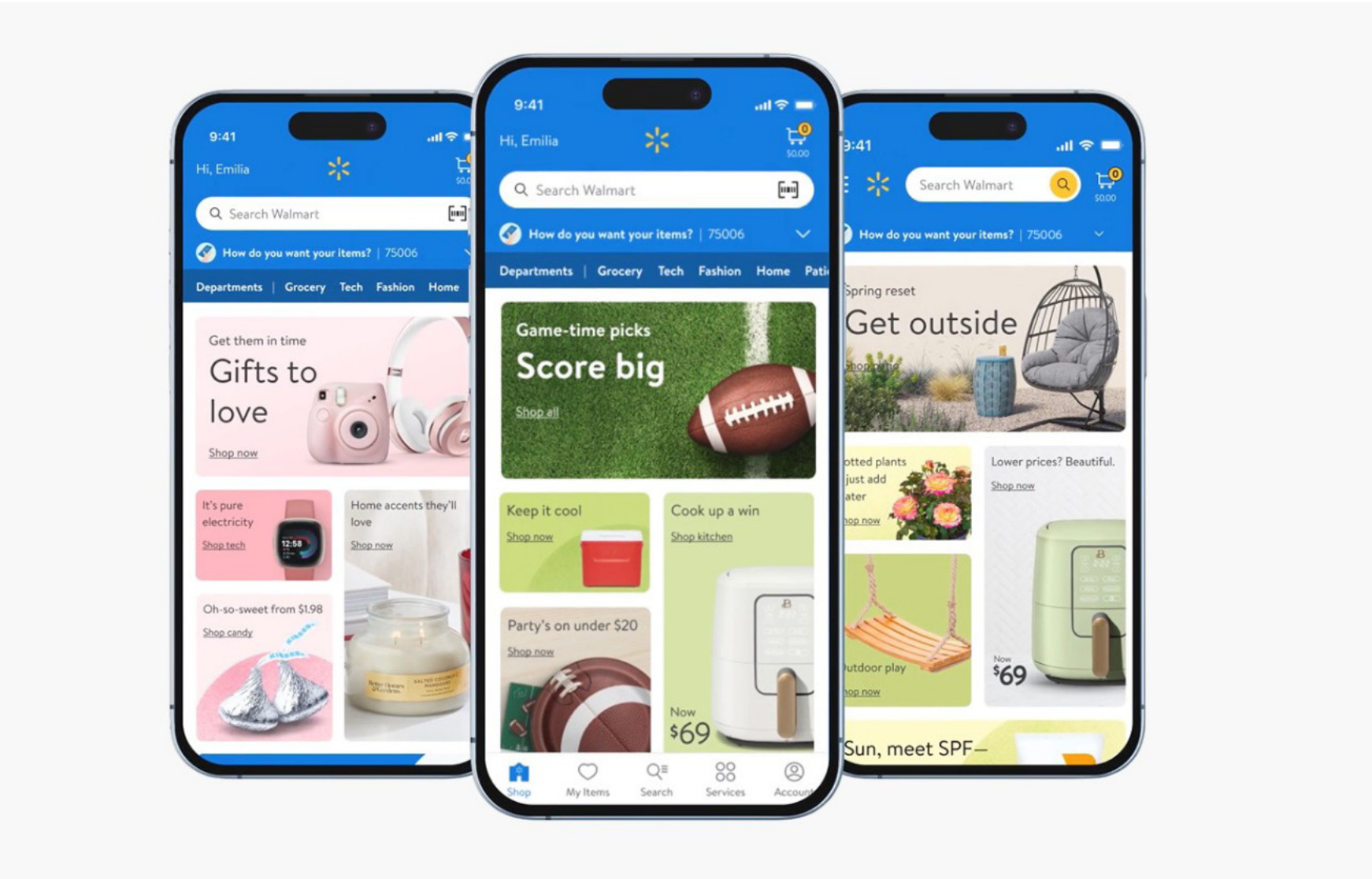
Strategies

- Embrace AI to individualize the shopping experience through hyper-personalization. Showing consumers relevant ads, content and product suggestions will increase engagement and chances of conversion, subsequently driving sales. Global research suggests that many retailers should be able to increase revenue by 5-10% through AI-powered personalization initiatives (Bain & Company, 2024).
- Drive convenience through personalization, speeding up the online browsing experience by making search and product suggestions more relevant. Support shopping missions such as searching for gifts through AI-powered recommendations. Target's (US) Bullseye Gift Finder leverages generative AI to make personalized product recommendations based on criteria such as the recipient's age and hobbies.
- Extend personalization into the store through retail media. Seek opportunities for placement on smart cart screens and handheld scanners to recommend your products to complement others in shopper s' baskets. Look to Instacart (US), which prompts shoppers with ads on its AI-powered smart carts, which are personalized according to real-time, in-store behavior.

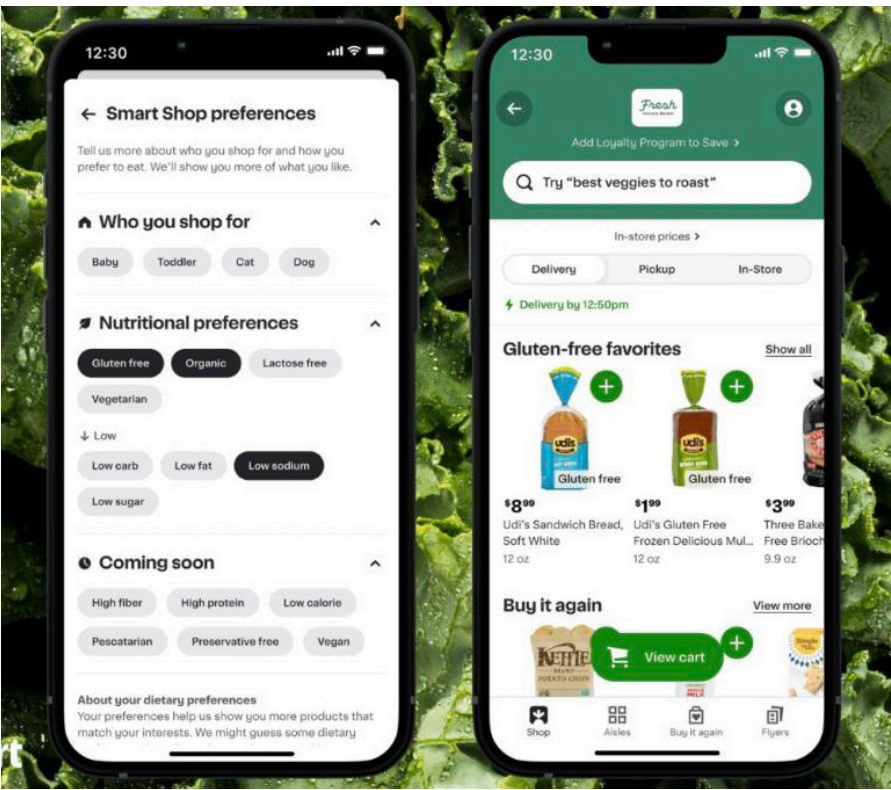
Target

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

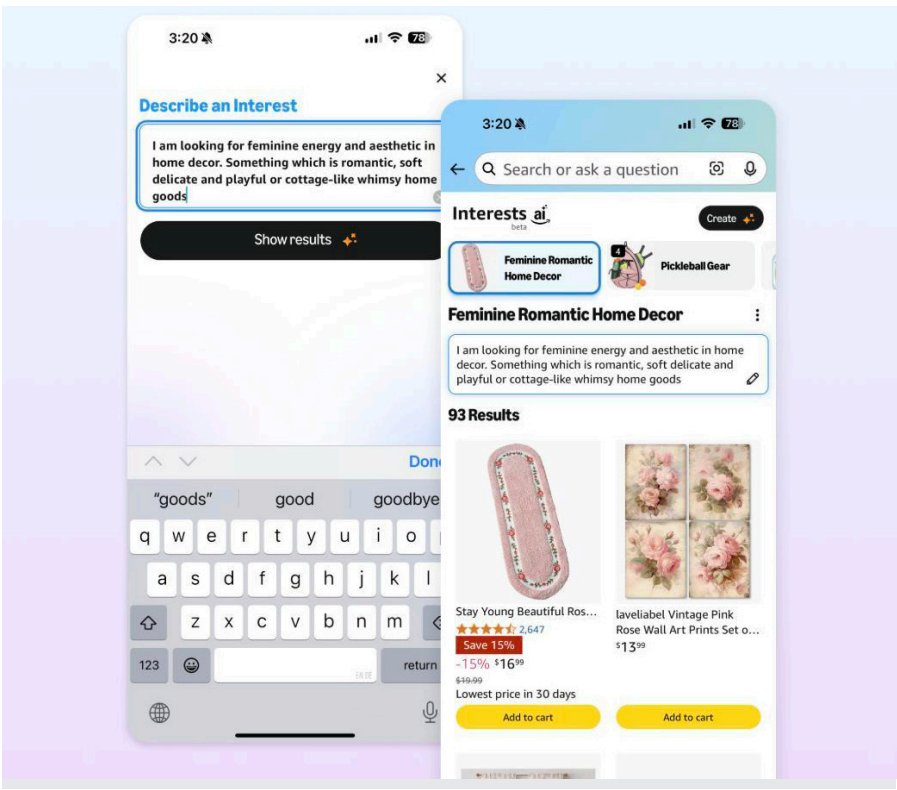
AI-powered personalization: In Action



Walmart (US) leverages generative AI technology on its website to create a personalized homepage and shopping experience that is relevant and customized according to previous shopper purchases and searches. The retailer predicts the type of content that individual shoppers want to see, with its virtual shopping assistant giving personalized product recommendations.



Instacart's (US) Smart Shop feature leverages generative AI and machine learning to analyze shopper habits and dietary preferences to recommend products most suited to each individual.



Amazon (US) is testing an AI-powered “Interests” feature in the US that tracks new inventory and creates personalized product suggestions, tailored to individuals’ hobbies, budgets and preferences.

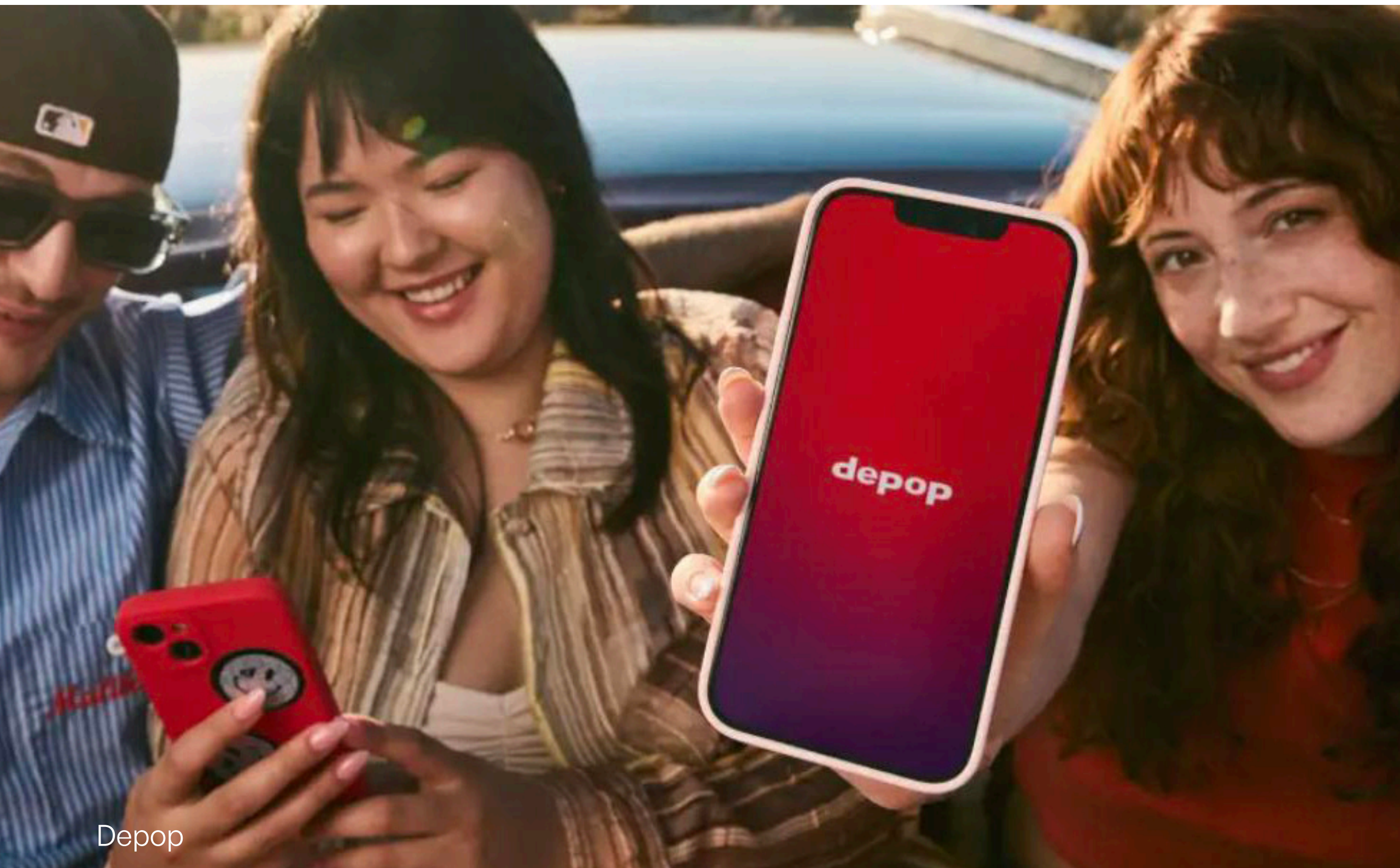


Online personal styling service **Stitch Fix** (US) has created StyleFile, an AI tool that analyzes clients’ clothing-related preferences to identify their style personality. Users are then able to search for products that align with this personality.

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

Enhance the online shopping experience

Innovate across the digital shelf, introducing AI capabilities that make the shopping experience more seamless.



Depop

Strategies

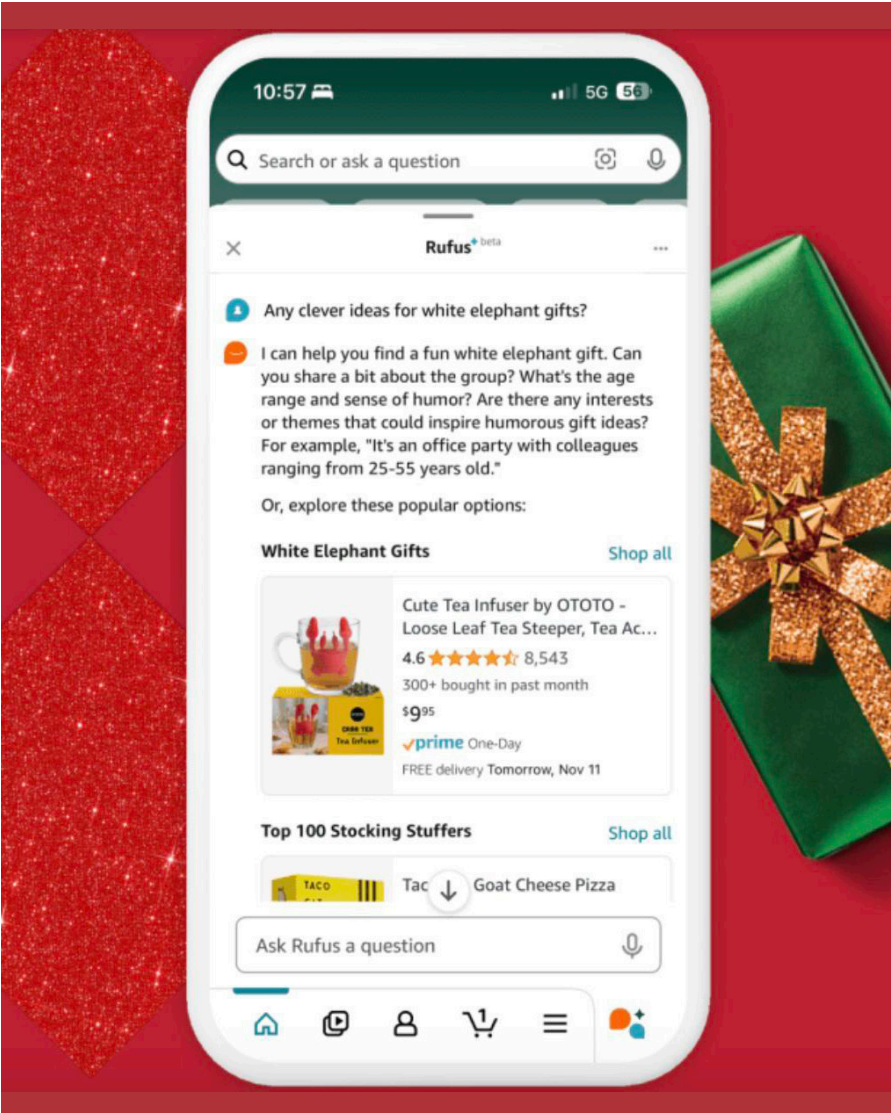
- Embrace the use of AI to improve search and reduce decision fatigue by making results more relevant to individual shoppers. Move from keyword to generative AI-based semantic search, where consumers can search for products by intent, rather than individual words, such as “snacks for hosting a party”. Look to retailers such as Walmart and Ahold Delhaize, which have implemented this capability.
- Improve the quality of your content through AI, elevating shopper experience and driving conversion. Alibaba (China) reported that the click-through rate of AI-enhanced images is 25% higher than the original photos.
- Drive convenience for shoppers and minimize time spent comparing products through AI-powered comparison and summarized product reviews.
- Provide shoppers with rapid, 24/7 support throughout the purchasing process through automated chatbots and assistants. Alongside offering advice and recommendations, these chatbots can also be leveraged for rapid basket-building through conversational AI.
- Invest in AI sizing solutions to minimize returns. These tools evaluate customer data to give shoppers precise, real-time fit recommendations.

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

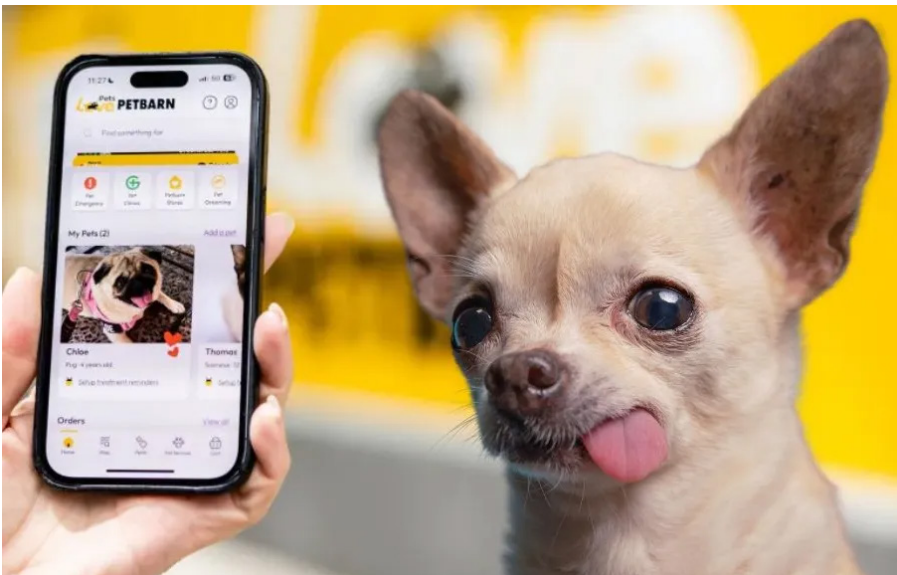
Enhance the online shopping experience: In Action



Depop (UK) introduced an AI-powered tool that speeds up the listing process for sellers, generating a product description and populating attributes such as product category or color upon uploading a single photo.



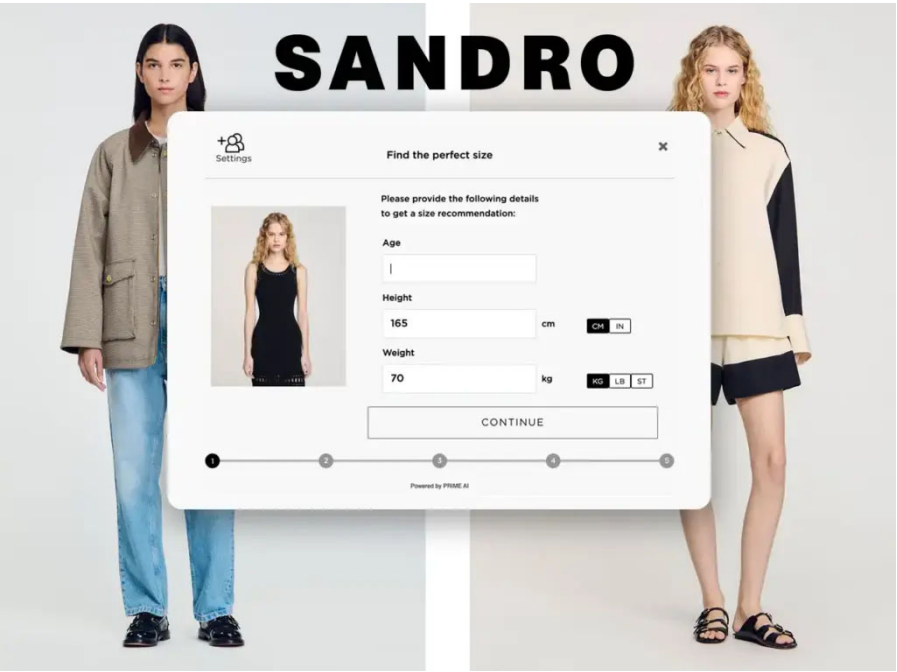
Amazon's AI-powered shopping assistant, Rufus, is designed to make shopping faster and easier, answering queries and helping shoppers narrow down the retailer's vast assortment to find relevant products.



Australian pet care retailer **Petbarn** launched a generative AI-powered tool that answers pet-related queries, helping shoppers find products suited to their animals' needs.



Vestiaire Collective launched AI-driven semantic search on its site, translating keyword searches into image pattern recognition. This generates highly relevant and more personalized results for shoppers.



Sandro Paris launched an AI-powered solution on product detail pages that analyzes basic data and facial recognition to help shoppers find their ideal size and reduce the rate of returned items.

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

Drive Operational Efficiencies

Speed up previously manual or time-consuming tasks for associates or merchants through AI-powered automation capabilities.



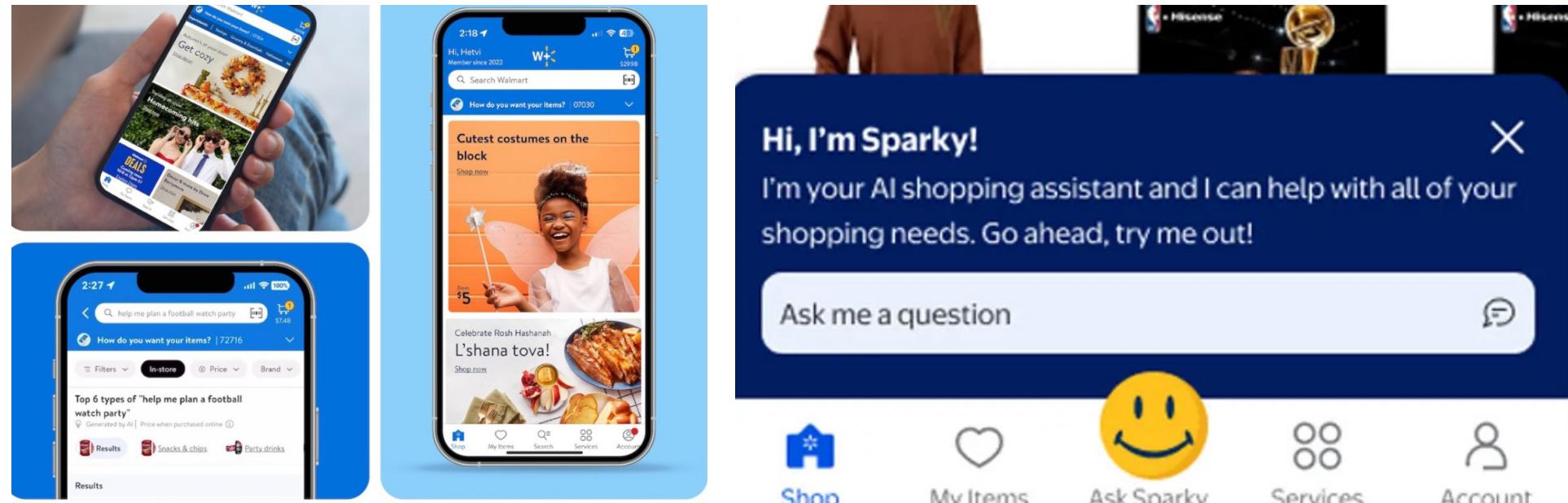
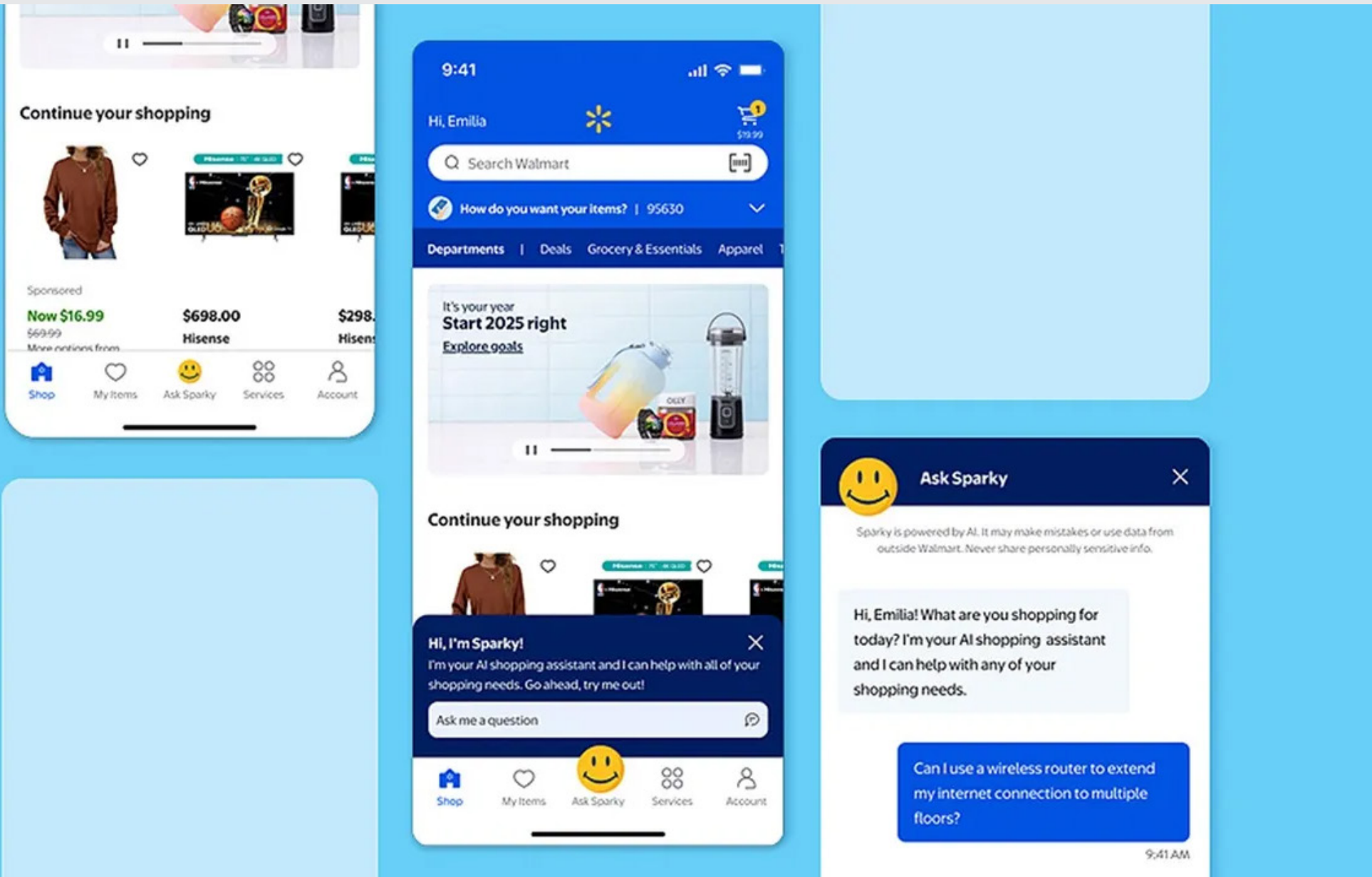
Amazon

Strategies

- Integrate the use of AI throughout the supply chain, automating tasks such as picking orders in distribution centers through robotics. These technologies will drive efficiencies relating to picking capacity and speed. Ensure that the use of AI is human-centric, enabling human workers in fulfillment centers to be more productive.
- Drive efficiencies through the use of automated delivery vehicles and drones to reduce transportation costs while maintaining speed.
- Automate the production of content, such as the imagery used for marketing campaigns or the creation of online product detail pages. Walmart (US) found that using Gen AI is 100 times more productive than having people work through each product display page (Walmart, 2024).
- Utilize predictive analytics to forecast demand fluctuations and adjust inventory in real-time, minimizing out-of-stocks and overstock. Dress rental marketplace Hirestreet (UK) leverages AI-generated insights and predictive analytics to forecast likely demand for specific occasions.

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

Drive Operational Efficiencies: In Action



Walmart bets big on AI with ‘super agent’ strategy

Walmart is overhauling its artificial intelligence strategy by consolidating dozens of fragmented AI tools into four comprehensive “super agents” designed to simplify interactions and drive e-commerce growth.

The world’s largest retailer announced plans to roll out these AI-powered super agents as the primary interface for customers, employees, suppliers/sellers and software developers. This consolidation comes after the company built numerous specialized AI agents that were becoming confusing for users to navigate.

In a LinkedIn post, Walmart chief technology officer Suresh Kumar stated that the company is deliberately choosing “to go beyond individual tools and build a unified, company-wide framework” that ensures every new agent makes life simpler for customers, associates and partners.

The customer-facing super-agent, “Sparky” is already available on Walmart’s app. In its enhanced form, it would help shoppers reorder items, plan events and even suggest recipes by analyzing the contents of a customer’s refrigerator through computer vision. The employee-focused “Associate” super-agent would streamline administrative tasks like submitting parental leave applications and accessing sales data.

For suppliers and advertisers, a super-agent called “Marty” would manage the onboarding process, handle orders and create ad campaigns. The fourth super-agent would serve developers as the platform for testing and launching future AI tools.

In 2025, the company Walmart has deployed a suite of agentic AI tools—**Sparky** for shoppers, **Associate** for employees, **Marty** for suppliers, and **Engineering** for developers—to create a seamless, AI-first retail experience. These agents, built on a retail-specific large language model (LLM) and tailored for Walmart’s unique workflows, are poised to outpace competitors like Amazon by integrating AI into the very fabric of its operations.

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

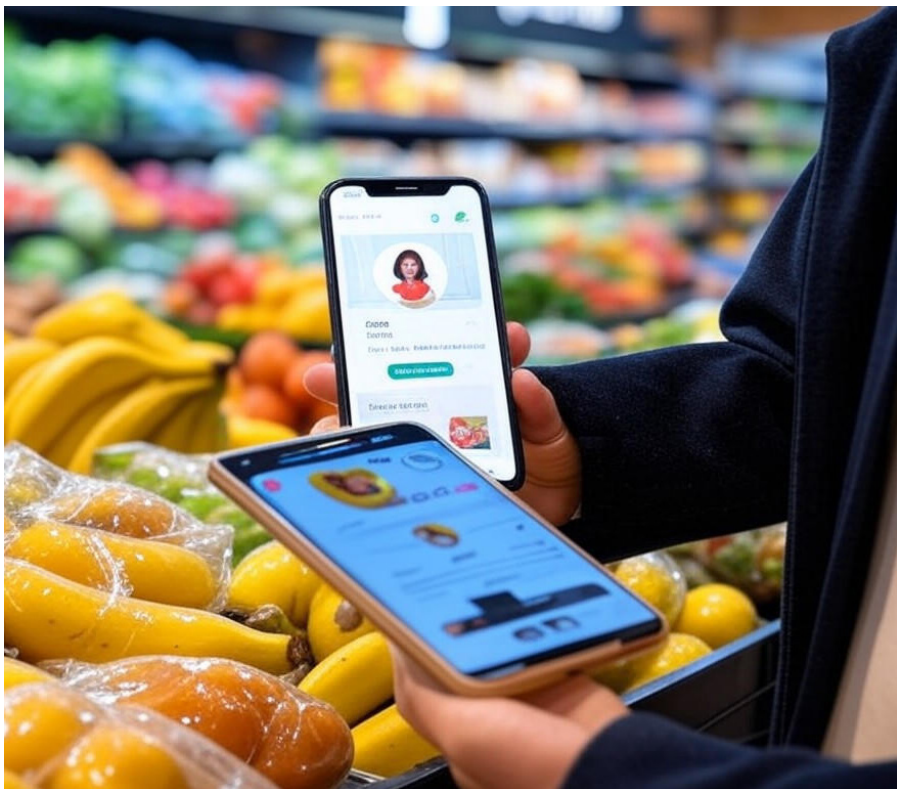
Drive Operational Efficiencies: In Action



Amazon (US) has launched an AI-powered assistant designed to save delivery drivers time and effort. The Vision-Assisted Package Retrieval (VAPR) tech helps associates identify the right order for each address by illuminating the relevant package in a green light.



Alibaba's (China) AI-powered tools, designed to improve merchant operating efficiencies and reduce costs, were made available to all sellers on Taobao and Tmall in early 2024. The retailer's AI toolkit has been adopted by 4M merchants (Alibaba, 2024).



Albert Heijn stores in The Netherlands use AI to mark down products nearing their expiration date every 15 minutes. This initiative led to the reduction of more than 250 tons of food waste in its first year of operation while driving value for shoppers (Ahold Delhaize, 2024).



H&M (Sweden) is leveraging generative AI to create digital twins of models that will feature in campaigns and on the brand's social media. H&M promises that "the creative process and outcomes remain firmly controlled by the people involved".

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

Support in-store associates through tech

Integrate AI technology within the store to automate tasks and give associates more time to support customers.

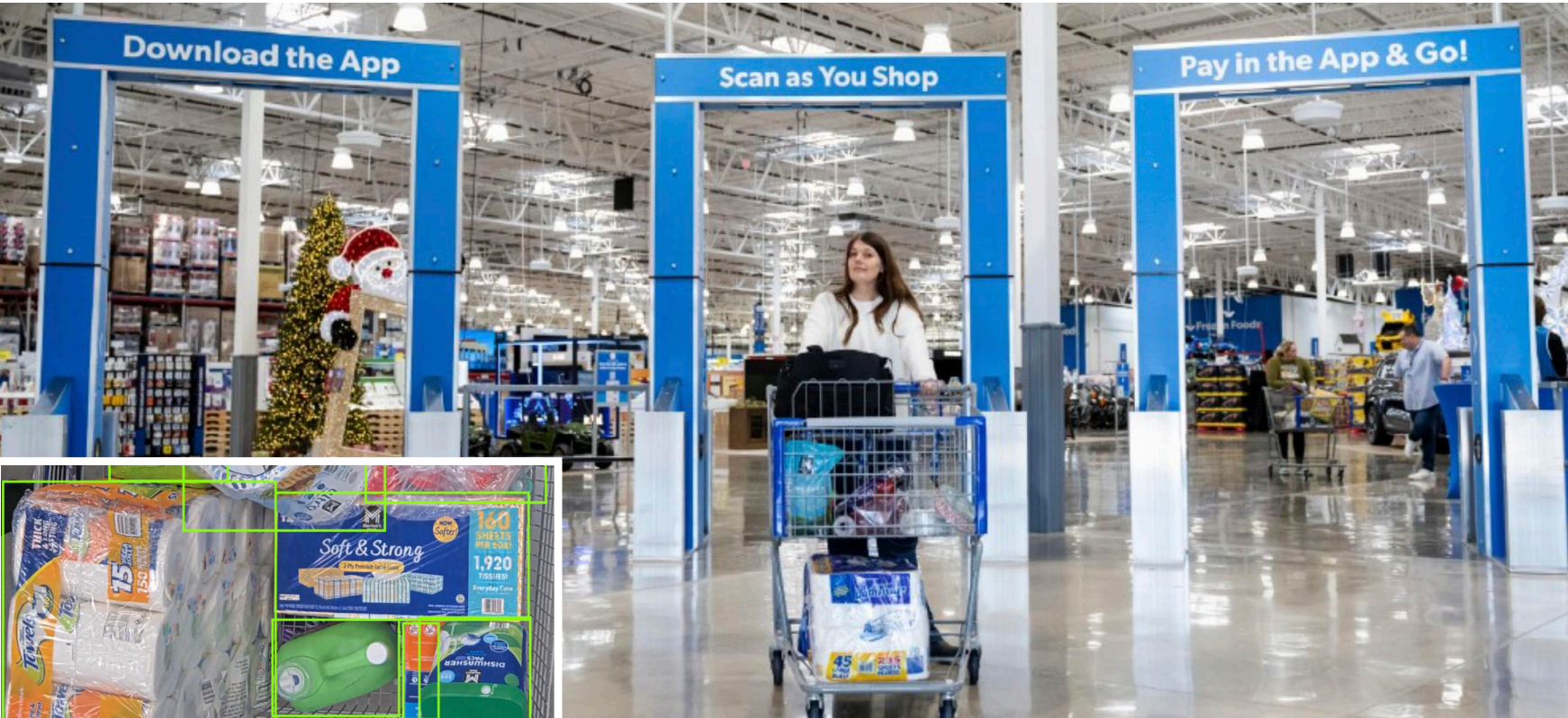


Strategies

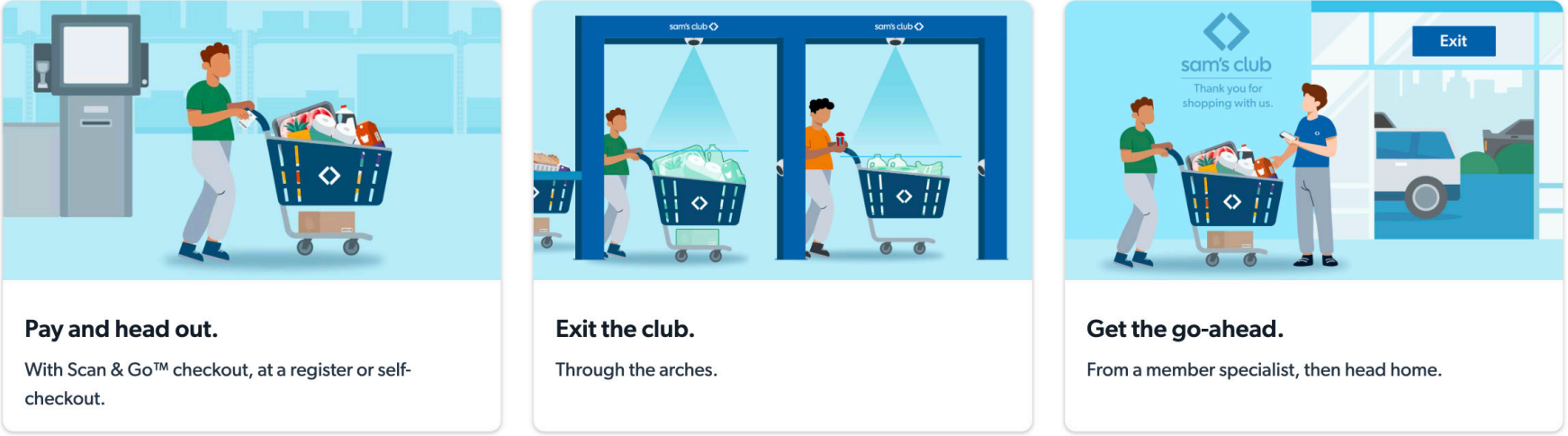
- Integrate tech to digitize physical stores and automate previously manual tasks such as cleaning, marking down expiring products and checking receipts upon exit. Consider deploying AI-driven robotics for tasks such as inventory management, reducing the likelihood of out-of-stocks and giving associates more time for customer-facing tasks.
- Invest in the creation of chatbots or virtual assistants to help associates work faster and more efficiently while answering shopper queries more effectively.
- Take a considered approach to automation and the use of AI in stores, ensuring that technology aids associates rather than eliminates their jobs entirely, while keeping in mind that many older shoppers actively look to stores for human interaction.

AI & Digital Commerce Strategies

Support In-store associates through tech: In Action



How it works.



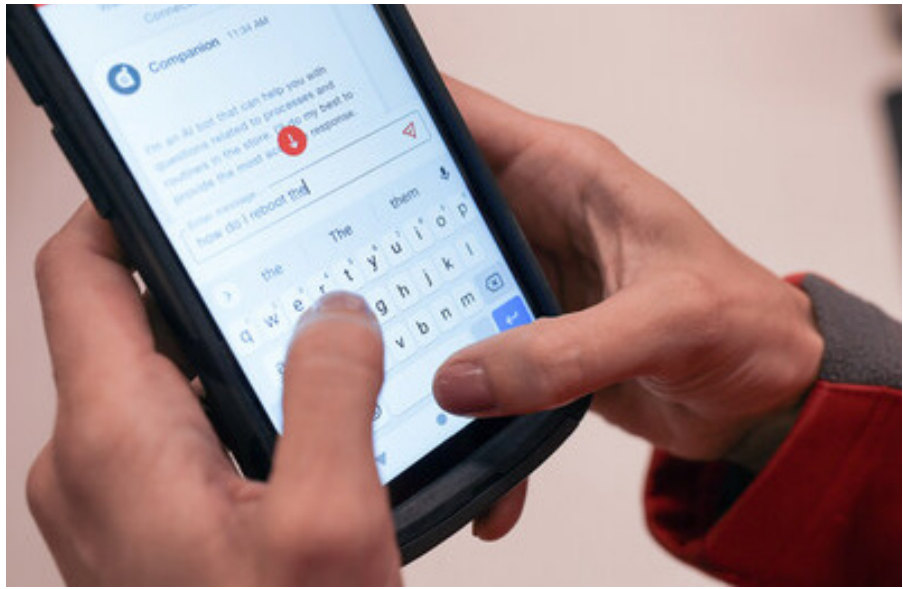
Sam's Club has rolled out its Exit Technology to all stores across the US and Puerto Rico, combining AI and computer vision to scan shopping carts as members leave the club, automatically verifying if they have paid for all items and removing the need for associates to check shopper receipts. This tech aims to remove friction within the store experience and reduce wait times for shoppers, enabling members to leave the store 21% faster (Walmart, 2024).



Carrefour has partnered with Wasteless AI, rolling out its tech to all 640 stores in Argentina. The technology reduces food waste by dynamically discounting perishable food products to ensure that they are sold at the optimal moment in their life cycle.



UK supermarket **Morrisons** improved product availability in Q3 2024, following the rollout of AI-powered cameras in stores. The cameras monitor on-shelf stock levels, automatically reordering items when needed and alerting associates to gaps.



Target (US) has rolled out a generative AI chatbot that can answer in-store associates' on-the-job questions. The Store Companion tool is designed to make their jobs easier while enhancing the shopping experience for consumers.

Pop-ups, Takeovers & Cross Collaborations

Pop-ups, Takeovers & Cross-Collaborations

Overview

Temporary spaces are a great opportunity to engage with Gen Z and Millennial consumers and immerse visitors in your brand's world, in a way that doesn't feel forced – it's about enticing customers to experience your brand without too much product pushing. From social hangouts to one-off exclusives, think outside the box to offer spaces that signify and represent more than just products on display.



Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Opportunity

Pop-ups that successfully evoke emotions are outperforming those focused solely on product sales, as consumers—especially Gen Z and Millennials—seek memorable, multisensory, and community-driven experiences.



Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Push the boundaries of retail theater

With IRL retail rising in popularity, brands have an opportunity to use pop-ups as launchpads for innovative store design and to create an otherworldly sense of awe.



Charlotte Tilbury, UK

Strategies

- Turn your store into a destination in its own right by bringing art and craftsmanship to the forefront. Amid increasing store competition, retailers must provide a more compelling reason to make a shopper's visit worthwhile.
- As more consumers look to counter anxiety amid difficult times, lean into the resurgence of mood-led retail through environments that evoke the senses based on emotional states. Consider aligning the sales messaging of pop-ups to appeal to certain mindsets as well.
- Leverage AI and AR to capture the Gen Z Sensory Seeker. With 70% of people reporting they can't remember the last time a brand did anything that excited them, retailers should work to prioritize spaces that transcend superficiality and deliver memory and meaning for visitors.
- Building spaces for experimentation or relaxation through atypical layouts, props and new formats.

Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Push the boundaries of retail theater: In Action



Charlotte Tilbury, UK: tapping into sensory-first retail, the beauty retailer designed a pop-up around olfactive experiences to showcase how fragrance impacts different people and their emotions. Visitors could step through a “magical portal” into six multisensory worlds, each representing a different emotion evoked by the fragrances – love, happiness, seduction, energy, serenity and empowerment.



Louis Vuitton (France): the luxury retailer has launched 50 pop-ups globally since its S/S 24 men's runway collection. Designed as immersive experiences that showcase Pharrell Williams' debut collection, the pop-ups – in various formats – aim to transform locations across the globe into vibrant showcases of fashion and art.



Random Studio, France: the design agency developed a unique wellness-focused pop-up for Nike's House of Innovation store in Paris. Visitors can enter the BreathLab pod to participate in a series of guided breathwork exercises. A thermal camera captures their breathing patterns, reflecting it back as a glowing “aura portrait”.



Gentle Monster, China and Korea: leaning into brand fiction, the South Korean eyewear label's pop-ups reimagine high school with a hyperphysical and retrofuturistic direction, from oversized school bags to Y2K-style photo ID booths powered by AI.

Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Retail as social facilitator

As consumers continue to channel their spending towards experiences, they are seeking spaces that underscore the feeling of togetherness. Retail is no longer just about transactions; it's about experiencing and building relationships with a brand.



Rare Beauty, UK

Strategies

- Shift your philosophy from service provider to memory provider. Pop-ups can be the ultimate way for retailers to demonstrate a brand's overarching efforts to mobilize community-building. Be sure to deprioritize mere product sales for more authentic, community-led events to create long-term brand value and loyalty.
- Create pop-up spaces that feed into Gen Z's hunger to be sociable and satisfy the quest for meaning and connection post-pandemic. Consider designing formats that champion self-care and mental health, which will be critical to appeal to the growing number of young people as they aim to combat loneliness.
- Leverage temporary store formats around the hobbies or experiences your target customer is most interested in. This will be critical, as 71% of global consumers expect businesses to understand and cater to their individual interests.
- As pop-ups gain relevance as sites for discovery and connection, brands should look to develop unforgettable experiences built on exclusive services and hyper-personalized interactions for their most loyal customer base.

Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Retail as social facilitator: In Action



Rare Beauty, UK: The Selena Gomez-founded beauty brand hosted a pop-up for those looking to take a moment amid the city’s rush. Called the Comfort Club, the space offered socialization opportunities as well as free mental health support, including a floral workshop and guided meditations.



Westman Atelier, US: Using the space to build closer connections with its community, the beauty brand hosted VIP events where its top e-commerce shoppers were invited for an evening of shopping, bites, drinks and product engraving.



Djerf Avenue, Sweden: Rather than prioritize influencers and celebrities, the fashion retailer filled its Fashion Week pop-up with community members who were selected at random via a lottery.



Seen Studios, UK: The agency designed and hosted a car boot sale-inspired pop-up for Nike to celebrate Air Max Day in March 2024. Leaning into local and niche cultural activities (car trunk sales have become popular among youth in the UK), the space housed nail art, retro gaming and sneaker cleaning, gathering over two thousand sign-ups in the first 24 hours.

Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Push new boundaries for co-branded experiences

Blend different brand identities to create novel experiences and innovative products, expanding your reach and renewing excitement around your brand.



CLOT and Adidas Originals' Clot Cafe pop-up in Shanghai

Strategies

- Prioritize unexpected collaborations, cross-industry or otherwise, to combat collaboration fatigue and drive interest while still anchoring partnerships in key similarities to retain authenticity.
- Adopt color as intellectual property and identify distinct colors to guide visual merchandising and help your collaboration stand out as a creative spectacle.
- While food and drink collaborations might feel overdone at this point, brands can still leverage food hype by reimagining tradition. Work with hyper-local food and drink partners, including popular street food stores and heritage brands, which drive hype via growing interest in rural lifestyles and cultural preservation. Ensure that these partnerships are localized even as they travel across cities.
- Explore entertainment licensing opportunities as you look for new collaborators, and time pop-ups around key movie releases, concerts, sporting events and music festivals. This will draw spending from younger cohorts who organize their lives around fandoms and prefer to spend on their favorite passions rather than brands.

Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Push new boundaries for co-branded experiences: In Action



Paying tribute to the traditional Hong Kong-style diner (cha chaan teng), Hong Kong streetwear label **CLOT** and **Adidas Originals**’ **Clot Cafe** pop-up in Shanghai transported visitors across time and space with vintage tiles, neon signage, deep green tones and nostalgic food and drink items.



In Singapore, **Coach** partnered with local shop **Two Men Bagel House** to recreate a New York-style bagel store at the Duxton Hill estate, to celebrate its Spring 2022 collection and reinforce the brand’s origins from the city.



Coinciding with the re-release of the Harry Potter movies in China, Chinese lifestyle brand **Miniso** launched its **Harry Potter** collaboration with a series of pop-ups, including stops in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.



American beauty label **Fresh** partnered with Singaporean cafe **Merci Marcel** for a popup at its Orchard outlet in July. Named the **Fresh Rose Café**, the popup offered a rose-inspired menu including rose-infused drinks and macarons, and also offered visitors a hand massage using the brand’s products.

Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Push new boundaries for co-branded experiences: In Action



7-Eleven, Inc., Unleashes Epic Summer Takeover with Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment’s Jurassic World Rebirth

In a partnership as epic as the film, Imagine and Midnight Oil has teamed up with industry giants 7-Eleven and Universal Pictures to bring to life a groundbreaking creative campaign in honor of one of the most anticipated movie releases of 2025: Jurassic World Rebirth.

The limited-time activations transformed three 7-Eleven locations into immersive, prehistoric experiences. From towering dinosaurs that roar with visual impact to intricately designed in-store signage that draws fans into the heart of the story, every element was crafted to ignite excitement and celebrate the film’s larger-than-life presence.

“Our goal was to uniquely create something as monumental as the creatures on the screen,” said Andy House, Senior Director of Imagine Studio.

“This partnership allowed us to push the boundaries of creativity and scale, crafting a campaign that delivers emotion and a lasting memory for those that seek out this exclusive event.”

Three locations were transformed into immersive Jurassic World Rebirth experiences from June 27 to July 6:

- 7-Eleven at 1611 West Olive Ave., Burbank, California
- 7-Eleven at 673 8th Ave., New York
- Speedway at 3991 Indian Ripple Road, Beavercreek, Ohio

Exterior: The store was covered in Jurassic World Rebirth decorations, including a 360-degree wrap and a Jurassic Park-themed Jeep displayed outside.

Interior: The interior was transformed with character posters, dinosaur overlays on coolers and refrigerators, and themed end caps.

Merchandise: The takeover included exclusive merchandise, such as Big Gulp cups and badge-style dangler straws featuring dinosaurs, and Slurpee flavors like Mission: Deep Blue and Mission: Colossal Cherry.

Food: The collaboration also featured themed food items like 5 bone-in wings for \$5 and a deal for two pizza slices and a Big Gulp.



Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Create sensorial awe and trigger emotional responses: In Action

Up the ante on immersive environments that flood the senses, including sound, smell and touch, to induce awe and trigger emotional reactions.



Marie Dalgard, Hangzhou China

玛丽黛佳自然剧场
nature theatre

Strategies

- Turn brand values or product stories into an interactive mixed-reality journey. Amp up your use of immersive 4D technologies, including large digital displays, AR, VR, and the newest AMIEX (Art and Music Immersive Experience), to bombard the senses, though you should also be mindful to let human-led creativity take the lead.
- Reinterpret your brand's story, values or products with cross-industry collaborations and ensure that you are engaging three or more senses at once. Add a gastronomical layer to the experience, or start building long-term creative partnerships with artists, musicians and theater production companies for an entertainment-led direction.
- Create impactful spaces in a single hue to leverage the power of color to elicit emotional and physical responses.

Pop-up & Takeover Strategies

Create sensorial awe and trigger emotional responses: In Action



Marie Dalgar: Color commerce meets sound and touch at Chinese beauty brand’s Nature Theater pop-up in Hangzhou, which immerses shoppers in a green “bamboo forest” alongside works by digital artist Nanooooh, live DJ sets by Young-Z, and physical try-on stations.



Lotte Chilsung Beverage: In Seoul, the South Korean beverage company’s “Saero 02-57 Cave” pop-up immersed visitors in interactive 4D “magical environments and luminescent particles” powered by motion sensors and AI image generators.



Pepsi: In Bangkok, Pepsi’s “Into the New Era” experience took place in an electric blue interactive dome consisting of a “panoramic spectacle of ice cubes, water, bubbles and sparkling lights,” and featured performances by local idols.



Heineken: As part of its “The First Ahhh” campaign in May 2024, Heineken Singapore took consumers “on a journey through food, art and music”. The “maltiverse” included a “chefs table” experience featuring 5D Malt Gelato and interactive art installations to malt-powered music.



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