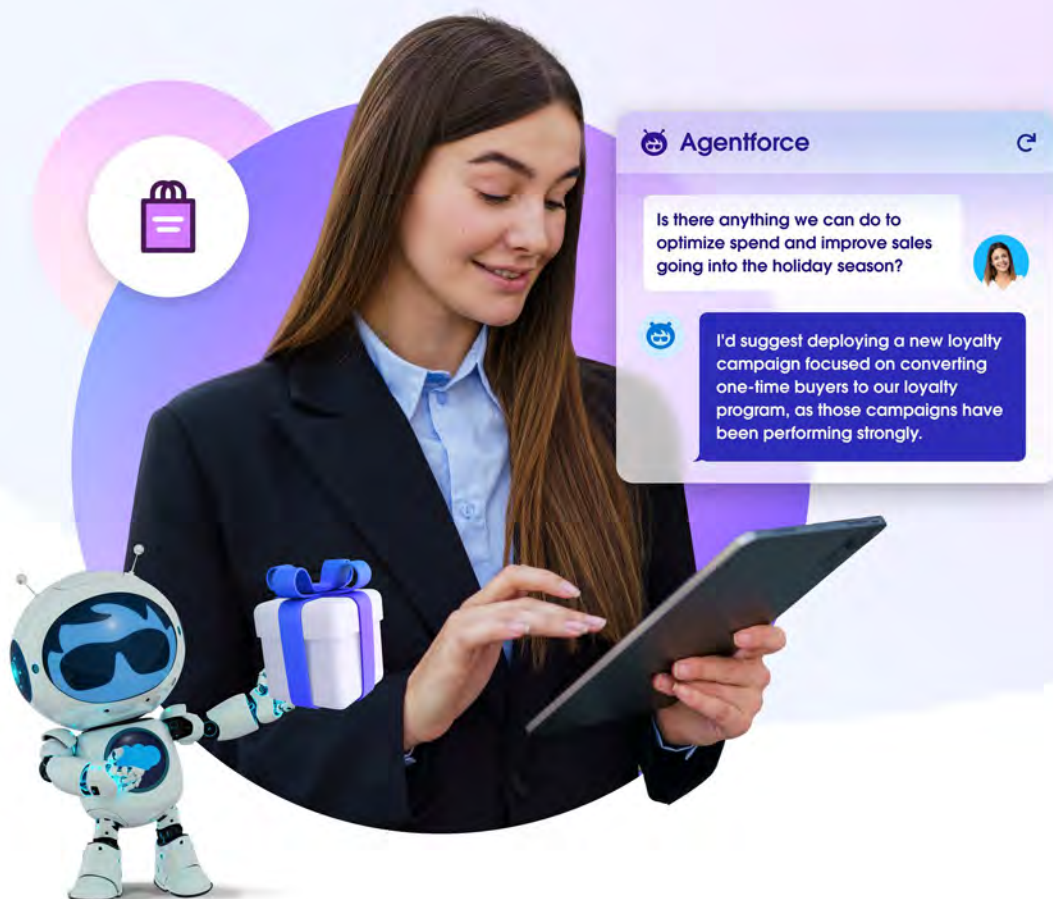


The 2025 Retail Holiday Planning Guide

The secret to winning this holiday season? Smarter product recommendations, happier shoppers, and a little help from AI.



Agentforce

Is there anything we can do to optimize spend and improve sales going into the holiday season?



I'd suggest deploying a new loyalty campaign focused on converting one-time buyers to our loyalty program, as those campaigns have been performing strongly.

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INTRODUCTION

Today's consumers are back to spending – with the majority prioritizing physical goods over savings and experiences.¹ That said, how people are discovering and buying products has changed. Market uncertainty is forcing shoppers to reprioritize, leading many to trade brand love for lower prices. This year's holiday season won't look like those of the past, and retailers need to be ready. It's no longer about tradition – this year, it's about going all in on transformation.

As consumer behavior shifts and economic pressure mounts, retailers are being forced to rethink the way they do business. Macroeconomic issues like inflation, high interest rates, tariff-uncertainty, and supply-chain volatility require solutions beyond just raising prices. Furthermore, consumer loyalty, though harder than ever to win, has become more and more valuable, making loyalty programs table stakes.

Today's consumer is value-driven, debt-conscious, and digitally savvy. This has changed not only why they shop – weighing needs over wants – but also how. According to Salesforce's latest [Connected Shoppers report](#), more and more consumers are turning toward LLMs to discover products and research brands – with 39% reporting using an LLM at some point in their shopping journey.

And while at present 45% of traffic is still coming from traditional search, early indicators suggest that behaviors are evolving quickly.²

More than half (58%) of consumers have replaced traditional search engines with Gen AI tools as their go-to for product/service recommendations.

[What matters to today's consumer 2025](#)

The shift from traditional search to LLMs is consolidating what was once a multistep search journey, making it more and more personal in the process. This is a big shift that will impact how people shop across all channels. Case in point: According to Salesforce research, 30% of shoppers are using LLM chat assistants while shopping in brick-and-mortar retail stores. For retailers, this means competing for attention across an entirely new discovery landscape – one where value, personalization, and agility matter more than ever.

¹Salesforce research, May 2025

²Salesforce Shopping Index

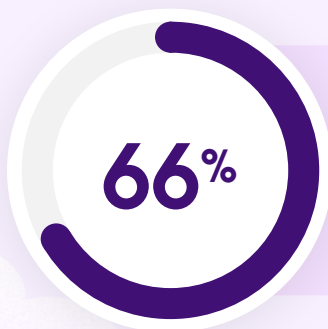
Consumers expect more than just a great deal. They want to feel like brands “get them.” They also expect flexibility across the board: where they shop, how they shop, and even how (and when) they pay. People have gotten used to the ability to shift seamlessly between digital and in-store, and they expect ease and speed to follow suit. This demand for seamless experiences necessitates that retailers break down the walls between channels. The experience from online to physical needs to be connected and brands must be able to service customers across all these channels without missing a beat.

The cross-channel nature of consumer shopping habits has changed the role of the store. It’s no longer just a place to shop; it’s an extension of the overall brand experience. Today’s store serves as a hub for product discovery, immersive experiences that build loyalty, and convenient fulfillment. Even further, when stores are equipped to support seamless cross-channel journeys, they enable the flexibility and friction-free experiences shoppers expect – like the ability to buy online, try at home, and then return in-store.

More than 50% of consumers have had products delivered from stores or bought online for in-store pickup.

[The Sixth Edition Connected Shoppers Report](#)

In a market where value matters more than ever and cost-conscious consumers won’t hesitate to walk away for a better deal, retailers need solutions that unlock efficiency and hyper-personalized engagement. This will allow them to engage their consumers 1:1, where they already are, with products they may not even know they want. It will also go a long way toward preserving their margins and avoid passing costs onto the consumer – and potentially alienating price-sensitive shoppers.



66% of consumers are swapping for lower priced goods.³

³Salesforce research

CHAPTER 1

In a chaotic market, data brings order.

Now more than ever, efficiency, automation, and personalization matter. The key to enhancing personalization, unlocking automation, and delivering the kind of smart, seamless experiences your consumers crave is AI. And in order to have strong, capable, and accurate AI, you need data. This makes data the foundation of your operation.

The good news is you already have the data. Tons of it. The bad news is that data is doing nothing for you if it's stuck in silos. You can only understand and activate your data when it's connected, integrated, and harmonized. Integrated data enables a single source of truth across your entire organization – digital marketing, promotions, digital shopping experiences, loyalty, store operations, customer care, and more, giving everyone a complete view of your customers, inventory, and overall operation. This replaces the fragmented retail journey with a seamless, cross-channel experience. It trades gut-instinct and after-the-fact analyses for real-time insights that empower your teams to make proactive, data-driven decisions that positively impact both the consumer experience and the bottom line.

It's likely no surprise that AI will play a major role this holiday season. However, many retailers see implementing [a strong data strategy](#) as too big of a hill to climb, despite the fact that it's incredibly important when it comes to AI implementation. Your AI is only as powerful as the data it draws from, and this makes your ability to activate data across your organization key to producing accurate, relevant, and trusted outputs.

A strong data foundation [should be your top priority](#). Building one is a multistep process that begins by ensuring your data is accurate, complete, and aligned to the outcomes you want your AI to support. This starts with profiling, cleansing, validating, and continuously monitoring your data quality. Next, unify the data from siloed sources into one unified platform. This can be done through extraction, transformation, loading (ETL), and harmonization. Once centralized, you should enhance your data with metadata. You can do this through annotation, classification, segmentation, and verification – now, AI systems can interpret your data and act on it effectively. Your last, but important, step is to reinforce your foundation with rock-solid data privacy protocols – implementing AI guardrails like prompt forgetting and automatic data masking ensures responsible and secure data usage.

Ultimately, exactly how to perfectly prep your data is another subject for [another guide](#). It's not a quick and easy lift, but there are tools and advisors to help you and your IT team get started. [Salesforce Data Cloud](#) simplifies the process of prepping your data, and if you want to make it even easier, [Salesforce Professional Services](#) and [Success Plan teams](#) are here to help.

CHAPTER 2

This holiday season, unified commerce matters more than ever.

The holiday season is a high-stakes moment for retailers. It couples high demand with even higher expectations, making every interaction an opportunity to win loyalty. It's also a time when cracks in disconnected systems and manual operations become most visible, potentially putting experiences and sales at risk.

Poor planning, limited visibility, and disconnected operations could lead to empty shelves, inconsistent experiences, frustrated customers, and higher prices. The risk is a fragmented consumer journey in which less-than-stellar service drives returns and sends shoppers elsewhere.

To avoid these scenarios, more retailers are turning to a unified commerce strategy. In fact, [88% agree unified commerce will significantly impact their goals, and 25% say they can't meet their objectives without it](#). A [unified commerce strategy](#) brings ecommerce, point-of-sale (POS), and order management (OMS) systems onto a single cohesive platform. This enables brands to deliver a seamless and consistent shopping experience across online, in-store, and mobile touchpoints.

The ability to bring everything together in one place creates a foundation for success. It enables seamless management of inventory, orders, customer data, and promotions across all channels (online and off). It also gives retailers a deeper understanding of each consumer, providing insights into things like purchase history, wish lists, abandoned carts, and more. Even more important, the ability to access and activate data from one central location makes it possible for brands to deliver intelligent, hyperpersonalized, connected shopping experiences no matter what the customer journey might look like or where it may take place. And, it allows them to do this efficiently and at scale.

When everything works together, so does the customer journey.

Already, retailers understand that taking a unified approach to commerce makes it possible to create smoother, more cohesive shopping experiences. Bringing all touchpoints together reduces data silos and makes information more accessible and AI-ready. However, despite retailers' recognition of these benefits, the vast majority have yet to put everything into place. This makes a great unified commerce strategy a differentiator in the market.

Your ability to manage retail operations across the entire digital and physical shopping journey – intelligently – could be the competitive advantage you need to win this holiday season.

A strong unified commerce platform enhances each touchpoint and customer interaction with valuable insights that enable you to create deeply personalized, AI-powered, connected shopping moments, at scale. For example, imagine a shopper is browsing your site for a pair of running shoes. They find a pair they like but want to try them on before deciding to buy. With a unified platform, they can check the inventory of the store nearest them in real time.

They can then go into the store where an associate armed with their browsing history has the shoes already waiting and ready for them to try on. Knowing their browsing history, that associate can also use the visit as an opportunity to show them some other personally recommended products that they might like. From there, the shopper can purchase in-store, arrange next day home delivery, or even complete the purchase they already started online. Even further, if the shopper changes their mind a few weeks later and decides the shoes aren't quite right, they can initiate a return online and then drop the shoes at the physical store, where an associate can find the purchase history in the unified customer profile, negating any need for a physical receipt.

Ultimately, a unified commerce strategy puts the customer at the center — not the channel.

This allows shoppers the flexibility to shop whenever and wherever they want. It means that a consumer can begin their journey by browsing on their phone, add to their cart on their laptop, and complete the purchase in-store – or vice versa – without friction.

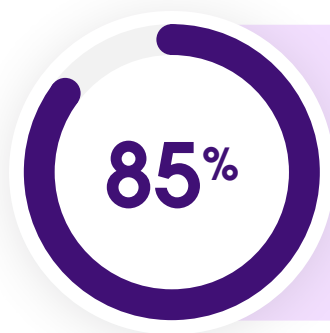
Their preferences, purchase history, and loyalty information carry across all channels, making every interaction feel consistent. And because data is connected, stored, and accessible across your organization, any personalized recommendations, offers, and communications can draw on the totality of that data, reflecting the customer's total relationship – not just a single transaction.

A unified commerce strategy, powered by a retail-specific solution like [Retail Cloud](#), enables you to grow revenue, strengthen relationships, and unlock efficiencies behind the scenes by streamlining things like inventory and order data, allowing you to easily offer flexible fulfillment options (for example, buy online, pick up in store, return anywhere, or the ability for a consumer to easily track their order or see in real time whether the product they want is at their local store). Even further, all updates cascade across the entire system, standardizing pricing, promotions, and product information. This creates seamless online and offline shopping experiences, ensuring information is accurate and up-to-date no matter what channel a consumer is shopping on.

CHAPTER 3

Agentic AI: The gift that keeps shoppers coming back

The past decade has seen AI evolve from a fairly nascent technology into the cornerstone of retail innovation. Predictive AI transformed personalized shopping experiences, and more recently generative AI has begun to truly reshape how retailers operate. Together, these technologies have moved AI from novelty to necessity, firmly embedding it in every retail operation.



of retailers agree AI advancements are transforming retail, with the vast majority planning to increase their AI (76%) and data management investments (74%).

[The Sixth Edition Connected Shoppers Report](#)

This holiday season, there's a new player in the AI game as [Agentic AI](#), takes traditional AI's ability to analyze content a step further by pairing it with the ability to be conversational and act and react autonomously. This is a huge leap. Autonomous agents have the ability to reason based on predictions drawn from large data set as well as the technology's ability to perceive the environment, take autonomous action, and then learn and adapt based on feedback.

For example, in prior years, you may have used traditional AI to analyze past data in order to predict the popularity of certain products. However after that, your marketing teams would have to manually create a marketing campaign. This is a time-consuming process that encompasses everything from writing a brief to creating segments to launching the campaign, and more.

Now, with agentic AI, you can simply ask an agent to create a campaign in the way you'd ask a peer. A marketing associate can prompt the system by asking it to do something like "create a new eco-conscious campaign for Gen Z loyalty customers." An agent would create the campaign, identify the right customer segments (based on past behaviors and preferences), generate campaign assets, and select channels and timing.

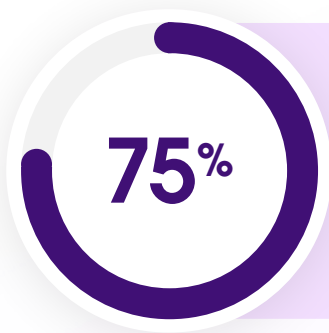
This leap from insight to action and one-time outputs to ongoing optimization is a true game changer. It's not just helping provide insights, it's activating those insights and taking on meaningful tasks that drive efficiency, personalization, and performance. This provides an unprecedented ability to scale, allowing you to reach more people, in less time, thereby increasing your likelihood of sales, engagement, and overall success.

From Taskwork to Teammate: the Power of Agentic AI.

Agentic AI powers faster decisions, smarter experiences, and stronger results. This is especially true when it's integrated into a unified commerce platform where it can unlock productivity through purpose-built agents – directly where your teams are already working. This is where [Agentforce](#) comes in.

Agentic AI-powered retail is the new digital labor force, helping companies find efficiency and scale without having to overburden teams or pass the bulk of rising costs on to the consumer. Embedding this technology across every area of your operation – customer relationship management system (CRM), OMS, ecommerce, and more – turns it from a tool into a teammate that can take actions that support both employees and customers. You simply equip it with the appropriate business knowledge and guardrails, after which it can make decisions, take action, and execute tasks independently without constant human input. This allows agents to take over manual tasks, supercharge store-associate knowledge, and up-level customer interactions.

Both shoppers and retailers are already recognizing the value of agents. [Shoppers seem to be gravitating toward AI agents that perform practical, value-driven activities](#) – or tasks that offer clear, immediate benefits – and [75% of retailers agree that AI agents will be essential for a competitive edge by 2026](#). This makes the potential for agentic AI huge. Everything from improved customer service to optimizing supply chain management to scaling employee training and more is now possible thanks to new innovations in this technology.



of retailers agree that AI agents will be essential for a competitive edge by 2026.

[The Sixth Edition Connected Shoppers Report](#)



Boost efficiency when it matters most with 24/7, personalized retail.

During the holiday season, scale is everything. Stores are open longer, people are shopping more, and more often than not, retail employees bear the burden. Now, with agentic AI, retailers can ease that burden, delivering personalized experiences at the speed and scale the season demands, without overextending their teams.

Finding efficiency and productivity isn't just a bonus. This holiday season, it's an imperative. Rising costs as a result of macroeconomic challenges mean that retailers will need to find a way to preserve their margins without passing the entirety of cost increases to consumers. Brands that can operate smarter – and pass those savings along – will earn both trust and business.

Agentic AI built into a unified commerce platform can help solve these issues. It makes it possible to automate repetitive tasks, speed up decision-making, and reduce the need for manual work.

This allows teams to focus on the valuable work that matters most, without sacrificing faster, more tailored experiences.

Think of AI agents as your team of elves. They use real-time data to take meaningful action across channels, helping ease friction at every stage of the consumer journey. This can take the form of tailored recommendations, personalized offers, or support to thousands of consumers simultaneously. This helps you create the meaningful connections you need without having to overwork your teams.

Agentic AI doesn't just enable you to keep up with holiday demand – it makes it possible for you to meet it with precision, speed, and efficiency. Agents can work alongside teams across every area of your business, making your holiday (and year-round) efforts more efficient and effective.



AI Agents Built for Retail

The following retail-specific AI agents go beyond the holiday rush, enabling you to deliver the kind of fast, personalized, 24/7 service that keeps customers happy, engaged, and coming back long after the lights are down and the tree has been packed away:



Marketing agents can help with campaign creation, paid media optimization, and personalized decisioning.

These agents can be tasked with everything from building end-to-end campaigns – creating a brief, identifying target audience segments, and generating campaign content – to delivering the right content, offers, and products to each customer based on their profile. Once campaigns are live they can optimize paid media by autonomously identifying and pausing low-performing ads, recommending optimizations, and adjusting metrics and autocreated goals.



Sales agents can help boost sales, increasing conversion and engagement.

They can also gather insights based on a unified profile data, summarize it, and deliver it to sales associates who can use it to sell more personally, tailor offers, and uncover cross-sell opportunities. This not only increases personalization, it boosts order value as well.



Personal shopping AI agents are redefining product discovery through hyperpersonalized product recommendations and 1:1 follow up on orders, returns, and service inquiries.

These agents can tap into a retailer's catalog, ingest product data, and then match that to shoppers' behaviors and preferences, allowing them to make proactive product recommendations. Once a consumer expresses a desire to purchase the product, the agents can quickly add the recommended items to cart for instant checkout.

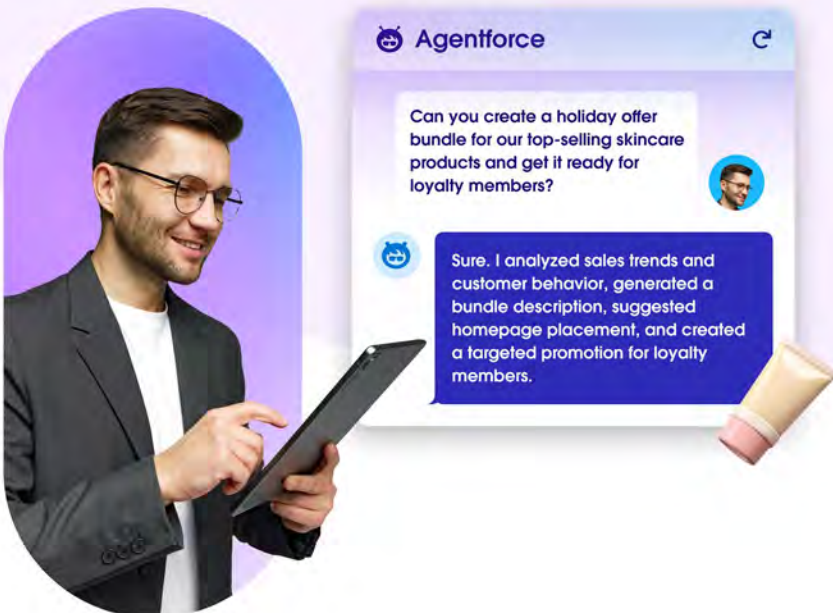


Customer service agents can offer 1:1 follow up on orders, returns, and service inquiries.

These agents can pick up where personal shopping agents left off by providing seamless post-purchase support like returns, “where’s my order” requests, order cancellations, exchanges, or other order modifications, reducing the need for human representatives to manually attend to these more routine customer service interactions. This improves awareness, retention, and customer satisfaction by providing proactive service and ensuring that customers and consumers know if there are issues with shipping or restocking. Customer service agents can function across channels, going beyond your ecommerce site to converse with consumers via email, chat, or even messaging apps like WhatsApp. This enables you to meet consumers where they are so that you can ensure their questions are answered, that they receive relevant product notifications, and that your brand’s 1:1 personalized attentive service continues long past the point of purchase.



Merchandising agents can be used to support key tasks related to site setup, goal setting, personalized promotions, and product descriptions. They can set up site pages, align promotions with specified business goals, and tailor orders to specific customer segments. They can also generate compelling product descriptions and surface real-time insights that help merchandisers make faster, smarter decisions that drive sales. For example, a merchandiser could use an agent to analyze sales trends and consumer behavior to recommend a limited-time bundle for top-selling skin care products. The agent could generate a product description, suggest the best placement on the homepage, and even create a targeted promotion for loyalty members. This helps the merchandiser go from insight to action in a matter of minutes.



The era of hyperpersonalization is here.

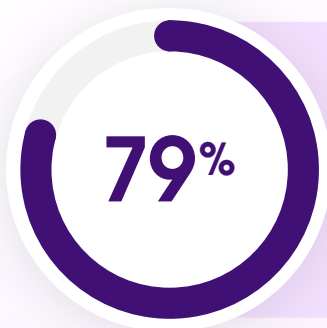
The most wonderful time of the year can also be the most stressful. Cutting through the noise is harder than ever as the holiday promotional season continues to creep earlier every year. Shopper inboxes are overflowing with promotional emails, social media feeds are packed with advertisements, and [SEO is changing](#) in real time. Shoppers need a hook – something they can grab onto that breaks through. Personalization is that hook. The ability to personalize experiences helps retailers stand out, convert faster, and build loyalty – all incredibly important during this most critical and competitive time of the year.

People gravitate toward relevant experiences, tailored recommendations, personalized offers, and messaging that feels geared toward helping them find what they want faster. But beyond that, we now live in a world where everything from “what to watch” lists to daily meal delivery options are made “just for you.” This makes personalization table stakes.

People expect brands to speak to them with messages created just for them. So much so that [79% of consumers say they expect the brands they’re loyal to to actively demonstrate they understand and care about them](#). During the holidays this means using data like past purchases, shopping behaviors, and preferences to personalize suggestions, deliver relevant offers, and target marketing. However, as technology advances and people’s expectations rise, retailers are evolving how they approach personalization.

In the past, retailers used AI to analyze past purchases and browsing behavior in order to generate product recommendations through “you may also like” carousels. But this holiday season, shoppers are looking for more. Agentic and generative AI enable real-time context-aware interactions, allowing you to surface dynamic offers based on what a shopper is doing at any given moment – not just what they’ve done in the past.

For example, you can adjust promotions based on what someone has in their cart or suggest an alternative product if something is out of stock.



of consumers say they expect the brands they’re loyal to to actively demonstrate they understand and care about them.

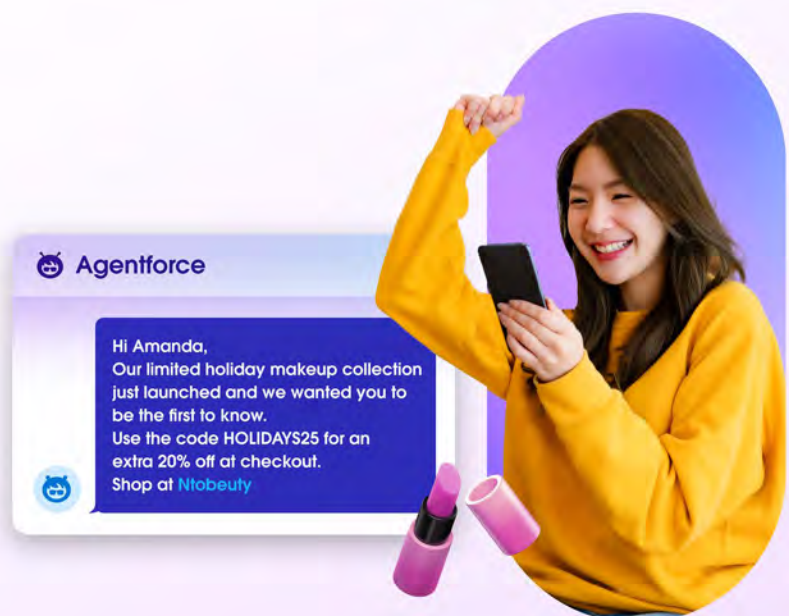
Just as important, personalization is no longer limited to passive recommendations on a product detail page. Semantic capabilities and conversational interfaces allow you to provide shopper interactions that feel less transactional and more human. And, shoppers are here for it. Salesforce research shows that 46% of shoppers trust the recommendations they get from agentic interactions, while 33% feel neutral.

AI agents provide the kind of always-on support shoppers crave. And, all of this happens in natural language, making it feel just like it would were they to converse with a human associate. This doesn't just provide more natural, intuitive interactions, it builds trust and deepens brand connections.

AI agents may be new, but shoppers are leaning in. According to Salesforce research, 5% of all shoppers now start their product search with AI chat assistants like Chat GPT, Gemini, Meta, etc. That number jumps even higher (10%) when it comes to Gen Z. Shoppers like the level of personalization these tools are able to provide.

Brands that can activate their data intelligently so that it works both within their own ecosystem and beyond will reap the benefits. Internally, smart customer segmentation and personalized promotions will allow brands to deliver product recommendations and offers that truly resonate, prompting people to buy.

This boosts conversion rates and basket size, which is key for brands looking to maximize holiday revenue. Externally it will enable you to show up in relevant AI-powered search. Either way it will allow you to deliver great holiday purchase experiences that can turn a one-time gift shopper into a lifetime consumer.



CHAPTER 4

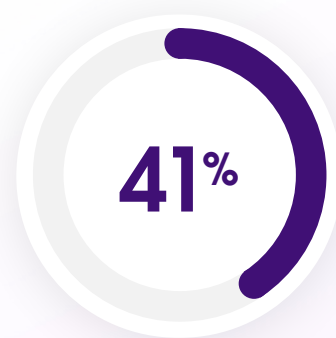
Help shoppers find what they love — faster.

Today's shoppers have more ways to discover products via more channels than ever before. With endless choice (and shorter attention spans) this means that retailers need to be able to surface the right products at the right moment – across all channels. And, as shoppers become more dispersed and new channels become more and more mainstream, it may be worthwhile to rethink things like content strategy, SEO, metadata, and product descriptions so that they're optimized for AI-driven tools.

One of the biggest changes in the way people discover products is [the rise of SearchGPT](#). SearchGPT is an extension of ChatGPT that responds to detailed comments like “my family is doing a holiday pajama party, and I need matching holiday-themed pajamas for kids” with smart answers alongside links and references. This impacts purchases across channels with 30% of global shoppers saying they use it while shopping in-store. That number goes up even more (41%) when talking about millennials and Gen Z. What's more, even social media channels have embedded AI search tools, signaling the full transformation of search across all mediums and channels.



of global shoppers use LLM chat assistants while shopping in-store.



of Millennials and Gen Z use LLM chat assistants while shopping in-store.

So how do you build for AI-driven search? SearchGPT seems to favor long-form content that provides in-depth analysis or comprehensive reviews that address specific user intents. This type of content also has the added bonus of offering numerous opportunities for internal and external linking, driving more traffic and engagement to your site.

In the past, a Google search for holiday pajamas would result in a bunch of links. Today that same search will return actual product grids with filters. This has changed the browsing experience from one that takes place on your website to one that starts in search. To contend with this, brands need to ensure that they are showing up with their best foot forward. This means optimizing your product pages with accurate [schema markups](#) in order to ensure that they render properly as well as including carefully curated backlinks that reflect your most important shopper intents.

Even further, these new search tools allow shoppers to go beyond text, using photos, video, and even audio clips to initiate a search. This is a significant part of the draw. According to Salesforce research, thirty-six percent of Gen Z and millennials say that the reason they turn to SearchGPT is because it allows them to search via different modes. Now, instead of searching for beauty products, you can upload a picture of your face and get a fully customized beauty routine for your skin tone, features, and budget. That's personalized discovery at a level we've never seen before, clearly signaling a whole new world of search possibilities.

These new ways of searching and discovering products are reshaping consumer behaviors. Making the most of this shift in search behavior means thinking beyond just showing up in search results. It means turning your brand pages into a destination for answers. You can do this by crafting content that doesn't just describe products, it actually anticipates and addresses real shopper questions, preferences, and use cases. This transforms your product and brand pages into rich sources of information, improving both search relevance and shopper engagement. You can also take this as an opportunity to rethink your cart experience. More and more shoppers are coming to your brand site with their minds already made up. Facilitating a fast and easy checkout ensures that they can convert quickly. You can then fuel further discovery, bringing the rest of your website to them, by providing upsell and cross-sell opportunities in the cart environment.

Knowing people are shifting away from keywords in favor of more conversational queries, you might want to think about site search options that include semantic search capabilities. Without such capabilities a shopper searching for eco-friendly cleaning products would have to search separately for sprays, reusable cloths, or biodegradable soaps. With semantic search they would be able to just enter the phrase "eco-friendly cleaning products" and get a curated list that matches their intent.

From in-store to online, social media to SearchGPT, optimizing for the way people discover today can help you cut through the noise and capture shopper attention. This makes it easier to guide people to what they want (and what they didn't even know they wanted), boosting sales and satisfaction.

Make products pop with powerful content.

Content development plays a crucial role in product discovery. From well-crafted product descriptions to reviews to user-generated social media content, rich, dynamic content has the potential to reach your consumers where they already are. As mentioned above, good, long-form content that's optimized for LLMs and AI-driven search can not only highlight your product's value, it can make it more discoverable.

Content and discovery go hand in hand. Aligning your content strategy with product discovery can help you increase visibility, drive engagement, and ultimately boost conversions.

We've already covered some of the specifics pertaining to AI-driven search, but there are other things you can be doing when it comes to your broader content strategy.



Optimize content for traditional search:

Despite the recent rise of AI-driven search, traditional search is still dominant, making SEO strategy extremely important. Use SEO to your advantage so that products appear in relevant searches, helping consumers to find them – even in cases where they've never heard of your brand.



Entertain and delight:

Create engaging content with high-quality images, videos, and detailed descriptions that showcase your products' benefits and really bring your products (and their value) to life.



Leverage social posts and user-generated content:

Meet consumers where they're already spending their time. Engage via social media posts and contests or encourage authentic customer reviews to boost trust.



Don't overlook your own social content:

Organic brand content is key to how consumers discover brands on social media. Though often thought of as a broadcast channel, social media has become a prime destination for consumers to discover and research products. This makes it worthwhile to think about how your social content strategy is or isn't enabling shoppers to learn about your brand.



Partner with influencers to expand your audience:

Leverage influencer relationships with their existing audiences. Teams can task agents with identifying influencers who might be a good fit, after which they can have the agent draft a personalized introductory email, reach out, and set up an initial call at which point the relationship can be handed off to a team member who can take the deal over the line.



Use AI to personalize content:

AI agents can use unified profile data to personalize content based on browsing behavior, past purchases, or preferences. This ensures that customers get A+, proactive experiences no matter where they interact with your brand. This also transcends your website, enabling seamless omnichannel discovery experiences. For example, a store associate assisting a consumer with a return would be able to see personal profile details that would allow them to facilitate the return and possibly turn it into a revenue opportunity. The system might flag that this particular consumer recently bought a bunch of linen dress shirts alongside the information that she has two teenage sons. The associate can then use this information to let the consumer know that a new shipment of summer-weight shirts has arrived and ask if she would like to see the new color options.

CHAPTER 5

In a competitive season, loyalty is your edge.

What drives customer loyalty has been a moving target over the last several years. As previously stated, inflation and macroeconomic conditions have consumers less concerned with brand names and identification and [more concerned with price](#). In fact, according to Salesforce research, 66% of shoppers have traded down for lower priced alternatives in the last six months. Additionally, free delivery and low prices are the top two factors influencing who consumers choose to buy from. In their quest for lower prices, consumers often look to loyalty programs as a way to build equity with a brand that they can then trade for discounts, perks, or exclusive access to loyalty-only services.

To put it more plainly, in a price-conscious world, consumers want to build relationships with brands that offer the best value. The good news is that shoppers are getting more loyal.

The Salesforce Shopping Index found that in the first quarter of 2025, 46% of online orders were from repeat customers, up 6% over the same time period last year.

This number continues to grow every single quarter as shoppers consolidate their purchases and double-down on their favorite brands. This makes your loyalty program your way in. Even the most price-conscious consumer can be influenced by exceptional customer experiences, making it possible for you to drive loyalty beyond transactional benefits.

Your loyalty programs benefit you as well. Loyalty shoppers are known shoppers. Their robust profiles arm you with rich datasets. You can use your access to these customers to strengthen relationships throughout the year by trading customer information for points or rewards. This is where unified data becomes really powerful. You can use all the information garnered over the course of a shopper's history with your brand to kick off the holiday season with targeted, highly-personalized, relevant holiday campaign content that keeps you top of mind. This will have consumers turning to you before they even make a list, nevermind check it twice.

Your loyalty program can add a personal touch to your early-season marketing efforts. However, just as the reason consumers turn to loyalty programs change, the loyalty program itself sometimes needs to evolve as well. In order for your loyalty program to really work for you, it needs to align with what your audience wants. That doesn't always mean a points-based system. Value-driven programs can also take the form of tiered benefits, where shoppers unlock perks based on engagement or spend. This kind of flexibility allows consumers to realize value in different ways, especially for brands where points-based models may not make sense. Tailoring your approach in this manner personalizes your strategy and your interactions. Playing to specific wants and needs makes you seem more authentic, which will resonate with consumers and allow you to build further brand loyalty. You can then use your already loyal consumers to expand your customer base with personalized promotional perks and offers tied to referral programs.

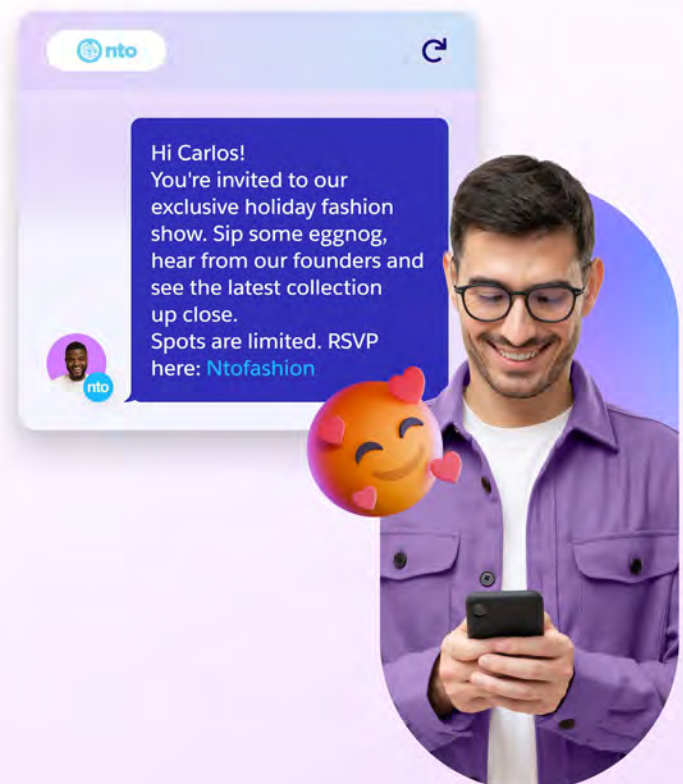
Tools like [Salesforce Loyalty Management](#) can help you identify behaviors and patterns around what your shoppers buy as well as if it was part of a loyalty program promotion or other personalized offer. You can then [connect this data to other data](#) like sales and inventory to power new segments and promotions. This helps marketing teams understand how effective the loyalty program is and allows them to create even better-targeted seasonal offers based on shopping history and loyalty campaign performance. Marketers can also amplify their loyalty efforts through agents who can create and update loyalty promotions or build tailored customer emails based on loyalty status. This drives productivity and enables your teams to reach more loyalty members, more personally, in less time.

More than discounts: Create loyalty moments that matter.

Customers don't start out loyal, you need to create that relationship. Doing this requires that you build out programs that drive customers for life. A unified commerce platform approach enables you to create audience segments that group shoppers together using common behaviors and preferences and then use AI agents to help curate bespoke, hyperpersonalized experiences that speak to those specific groups' desires. This provides a top-of-the-line experience that engenders loyalty and instills long-term brand love.

Once you have a loyal base of customers, the goal becomes two-fold. You still need to remain focused on bringing in more loyal customers, but you also need to continually nurture those already invested. Offers and discounts are great, but they cost money. In order to be truly effective, you need to go beyond providing things like discounted merchandise. This might look like special invite-only experiences, access to a hard-to-find gift item, an invite to an in-store or online holiday fashion show, or the opportunity to sip some eggnog with influencers or company founders.

A multifaceted loyalty program that includes things like offers, discounts, perks, and experiences enables you to activate transactional and behavioral data signals. This blends things like purchase history with social comments, event attendance, wishlist additions, open and abandoned carts, open rates, and media ad views, enabling you to build a much richer profile that can drive further offers and experiences that capture shoppers' imaginations. It equips you with the right information to reach out, dazzle people early in the season, and then cross-sell and upsell as more seasonal merchandise becomes available. What's more? Word of mouth travels. Satisfied shoppers will tell their friends, sing your praise on social media, and send more love your way on an ongoing basis.



CONCLUSION

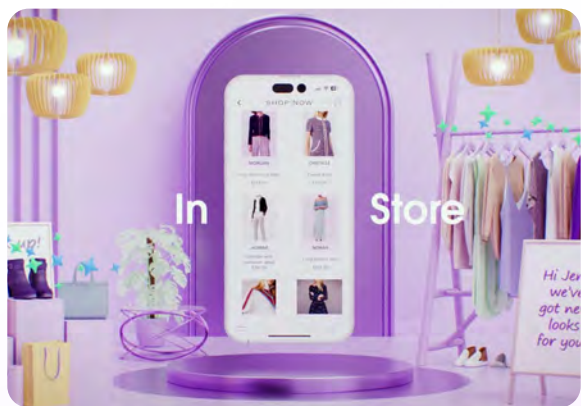
Your smartest season yet, starts now.

The 2025 consumer is unique. While they may be holding onto the cost-consciousness of 2024, most see themselves at an economic turning point. One thing is certain, they're shopping with intention.

Between an increasingly fragmented retail landscape, rising expectations for personalization, and new, fast-moving channels for product discovery, this holiday season demands a smarter, more connected approach across marketing and commerce.

Retailers have the tools, but success depends on how well those tools are integrated. A unified data strategy implemented via an AI-powered unified commerce platform is what ties it all together. When implemented correctly, these tools power everything from personalized promotions and agentic AI to seamless commerce journeys and memorable brand moments. Even better, it's the gift that keeps on giving, creating a foundation for year-round success and turning seasonal shoppers into loyal consumers that keep coming back again and again.

Ready to learn more?



Retail Cloud Demo

Say hello to Retail Cloud, The only cloud-native POS built on the #1 AI CRM that brings online and offline shopping experiences together. See how you can unite transactions from anywhere and maximize every sale with unified commerce.

[EXPLORE SOLUTION](#)



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