

Productsup⁷

Ahead of the feed: 2026 commerce trends report



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Introduction

Fellow commerce enthusiasts,

If there's one thing I've learned over two decades in this evolving industry, it's this: commerce never stands still. Just when I think we've cracked the code, a new technology, regulation, or consumer shift rewrites the rules overnight. Every week brings some exciting headline that changes the way we work, and we've made it our mission at [Productsup](#) to help companies turn that constant flux into their advantage.

As Co-Founder and Chief Innovation Officer, my passion is following the top industry and market trends across the commerce landscape. I've spent the last 20 years of my career studying and experimenting with the latest tech advancements, government regulations, and consumer behavior patterns to develop an understanding of this industry's evolution.

Over the past year, I've also had the chance to take a deep dive into this transformation in my latest book, [Feed Management & Syndication in the Age of AI](#). The book unpacks how AI is reshaping product data, advertising, and the way consumers discover and trust brands — a shift that's redefining what it means to be “commerce-ready” in 2026.

As the new year unfolds, I'm convinced we're entering the most exciting and unpredictable era of commerce yet. Search is being rewritten, AI is evolving from a cool concept to a core capability, and data is finally working smarter (not harder). From agentic shopping to augmented experiences and smarter CRM, the rules of engagement are being rewritten.

So, let's get started. I'm excited to share the top 5 trends that will redefine how we buy, sell, and connect. Happy reading!



Marcel Hollerbach

Co-Founder and Chief Innovation Officer, Productsup

Download my free ebook!



FEED MANAGEMENT &
SYNDICATION IN THE
AGE OF AI



HOW AGENTS ARE CHANGING
THE RULES OF THE GAME IN
E-COMMERCE

MARCEL HOLLERBACH
FOREWORD BY PROF. DR. DOMINIK MATYKA

1. The search shake-up



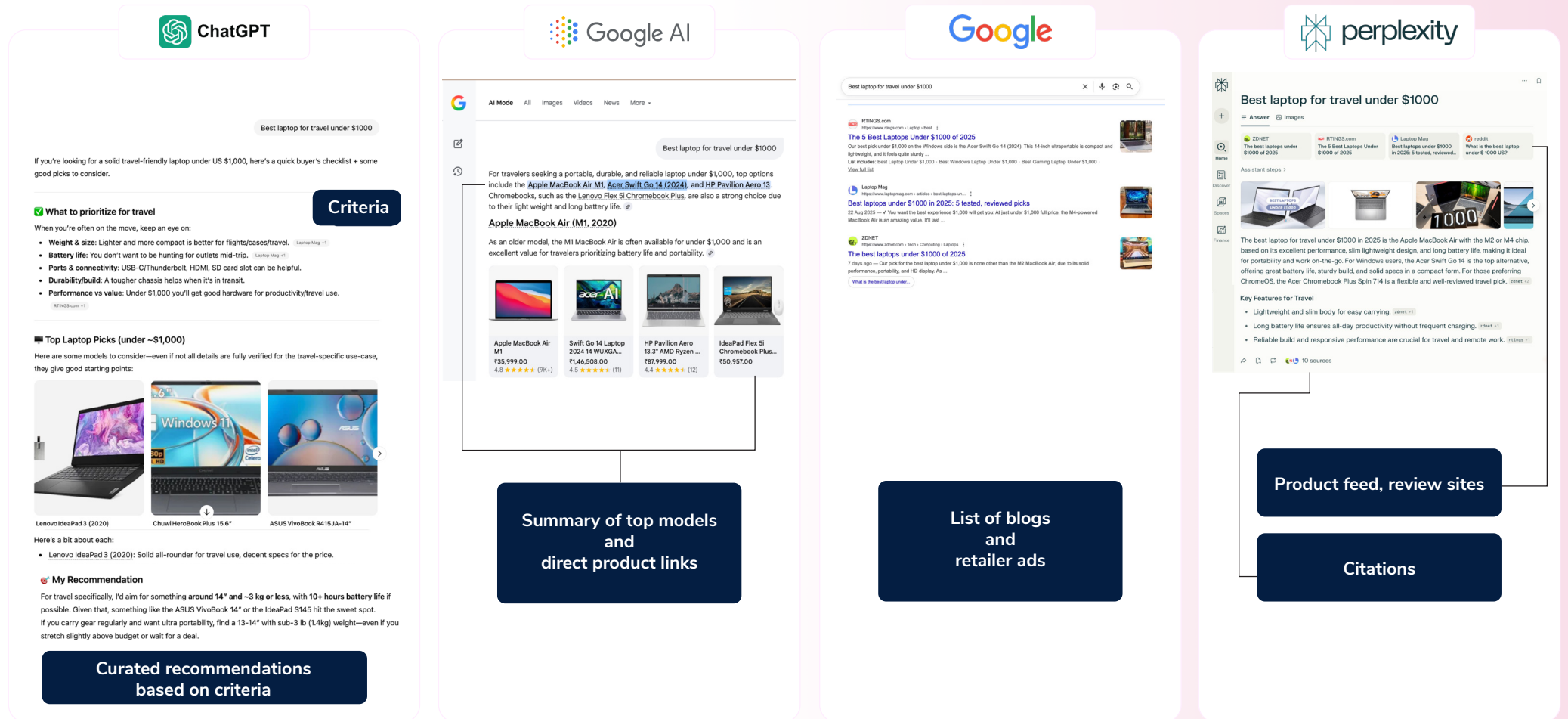
What happens when your customers don't "Google it" anymore?

Once upon a time, the path to purchase started with a few typed keywords and ten blue links. Not anymore. In 2026, your next customer isn't searching, they're asking. Whether it's [ChatGPT](#), [Gemini](#), or [Perplexity](#), discovery has gone conversational. Search has shifted from pages to prompts, and visibility now means being the answer, not just an option.

The evolution of search

| Era | Goal | Example | Why it matters in 2026 |
|-----|---------------|--|--|
| SEO | Be found | Ranking for "best running shoes for flat feet" on Google | Still vital for organic visibility and authority |
| SEM | Be seen | Paid ad campaigns for "Nike Zoom Fly" on Google Ads | Key for fast reach and top-of-funnel exposure |
| SEA | Be bought | Sponsored listings on Amazon, Zalando, or eBay | Marketplace search now drives a major share of product discovery |
| GEO | Be the answer | Being cited by ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Gemini | Structured data decides if AI recommends your product in answers |

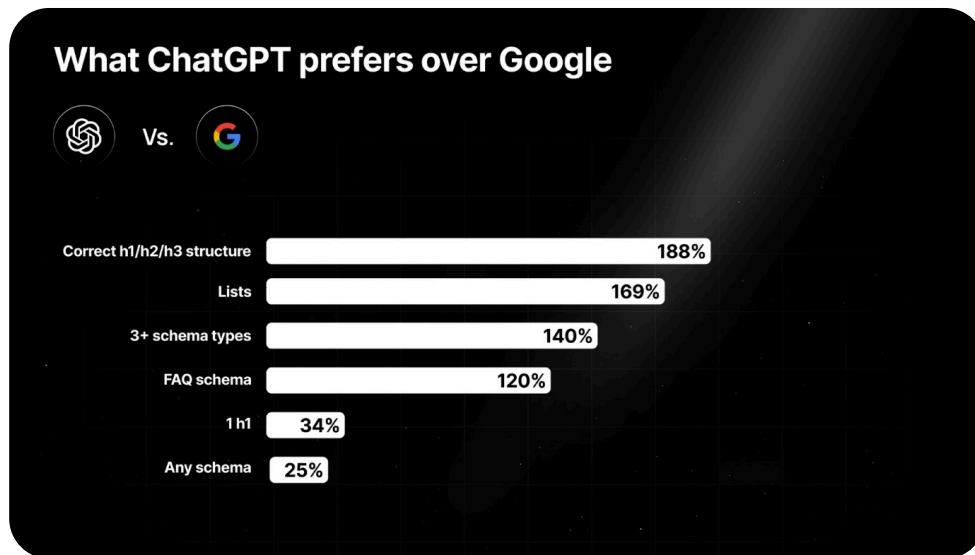
Let's say a shopper searches: Best laptop for travel under \$1,000. The visuals below show how the same query triggers four distinct decision paths, each powered by a different type of search logic: one query, four completely different buyer journeys.



The new rules of visibility

Structure is power

AI engines read structured data first, such as attributes, GTINs, and variant details that help them understand your products. Unstructured text gets skipped.



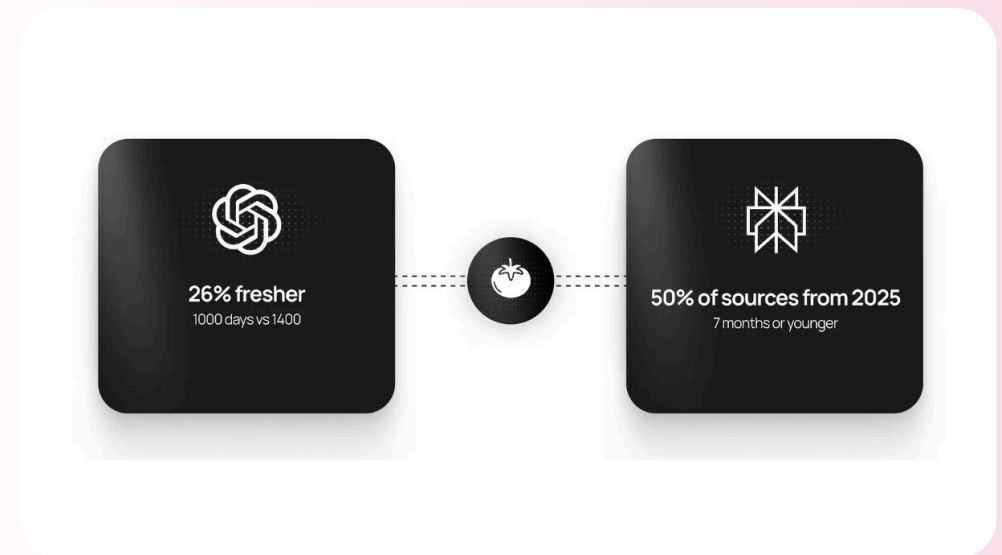
Source: Peec AI

Context beats keywords

Optimization is now intent-driven. Your product descriptions and feeds must align with use-cases, not just features.

Speed and freshness win

AI favors recently updated feeds over stale pages. Your data pipeline matters as much as your content.



Source: Peec AI

Quality over quantity

LLMs reward clarity and consistency over volume. Being accurate once is better than being visible everywhere.

What can you do?



Double your search strategy: Keep your SEO and SEM strategies strong for Google and marketplaces, but add GEO tactics to appear in LLM-generated answers. Use structured formats (schema.org, JSON-LD), consistent GTINs, and contextual tags (use-case, audience, sustainability).



Make your product feeds AI-ready: Enrich attributes, standardize taxonomy across channels, and run periodic feed-health checks to ensure data accuracy.



Test your visibility in AI tools: Run the same query in Google Search, Google AI Overview, ChatGPT, Perplexity, and other AI tools. See where your brand shows up and where it doesn't.



Prepare for prompt ranking: Think question → answer, not keyword → rank. For example, instead of “wireless earbuds,” use “what are the best noise-cancelling earbuds for long flights?”, as it’s more intent-driven and conversational.

2. Shoppers without browsers



What happens when the shopping assistant becomes the shopper?

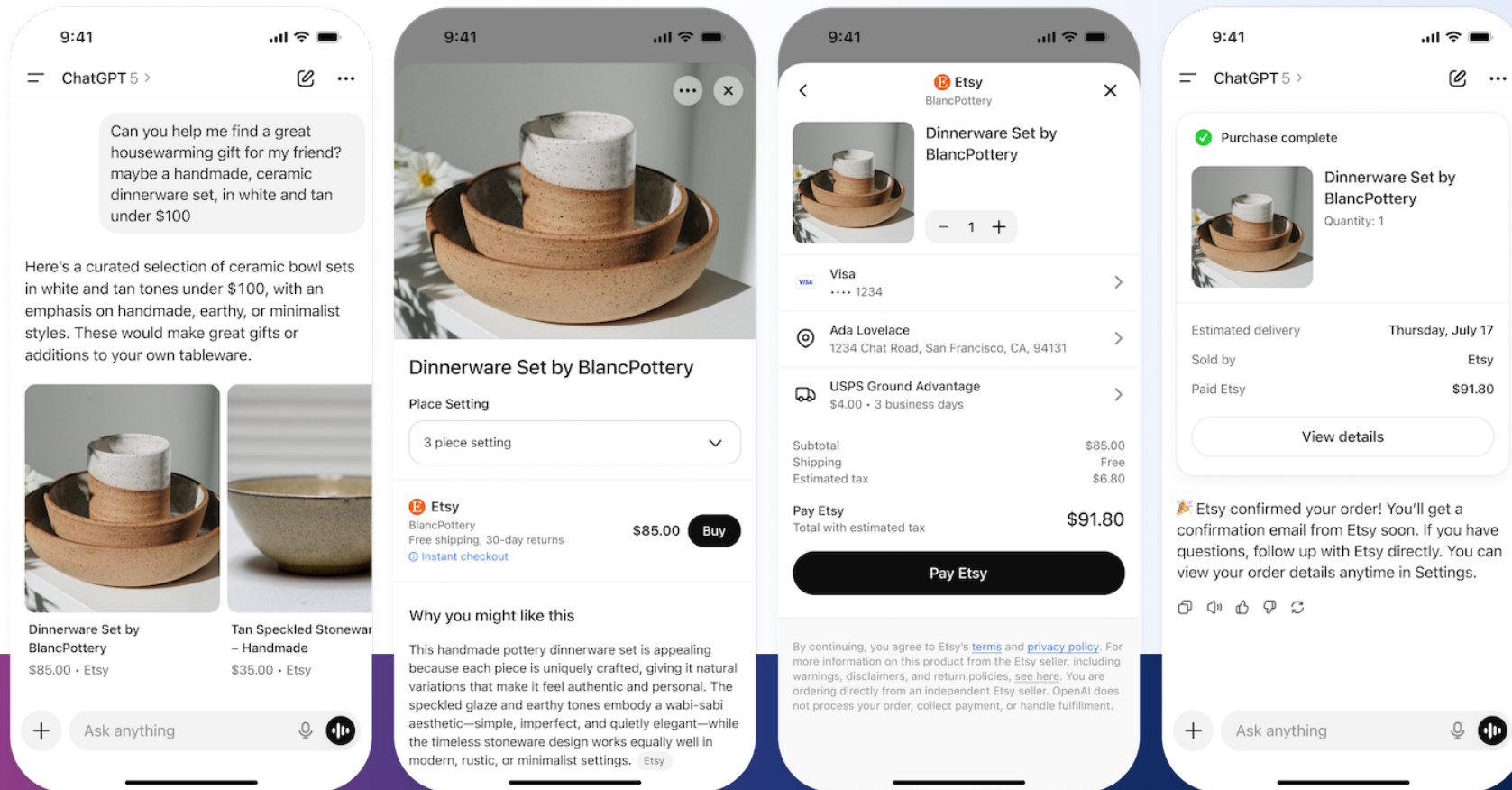
Every second, Google handles nearly 100,000 queries — [over 16.4 billion searches a day](#). But the search giant now has a competitor: [ChatGPT processes around 2 billion prompts daily](#), making it the second-largest discovery engine on the planet.

Industry analysts call this moment “[the dawn of the agentic commerce era](#),” where shopping isn’t just assisted, it’s automated. And here’s the big shift brands need to understand.

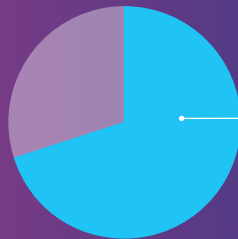
When people buy directly inside an AI chat, they don’t visit your website. They don’t read your product detail page. They don’t see your content. Instead, your product feed becomes your sales pitch. Whatever is in that feed is what the AI understands, recommends, and ultimately, buys.

Now, let’s look at the two models driving this transformation:

| Model | How it works | Example platforms |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Agentic Commerce Protocol (ACP) | Agents connect directly to merchant systems through standardized APIs. They pull data from product feeds (e.g., price, stock, delivery), place items in the cart, and trigger checkout and payment automatically — all without opening a webpage . | ChatGPT Instant Checkout, Shopify + ACP plug-ins, Perplexity with API integrations |
| Agentic checkout | The agent is built into the shopping or browsing experience. It discovers products, compares options, and completes the purchase on behalf of the user within the same interface — no manual checkout or redirects . | Google Gemini Shopping, Chrome Auto-Buy, Perplexity Shop |



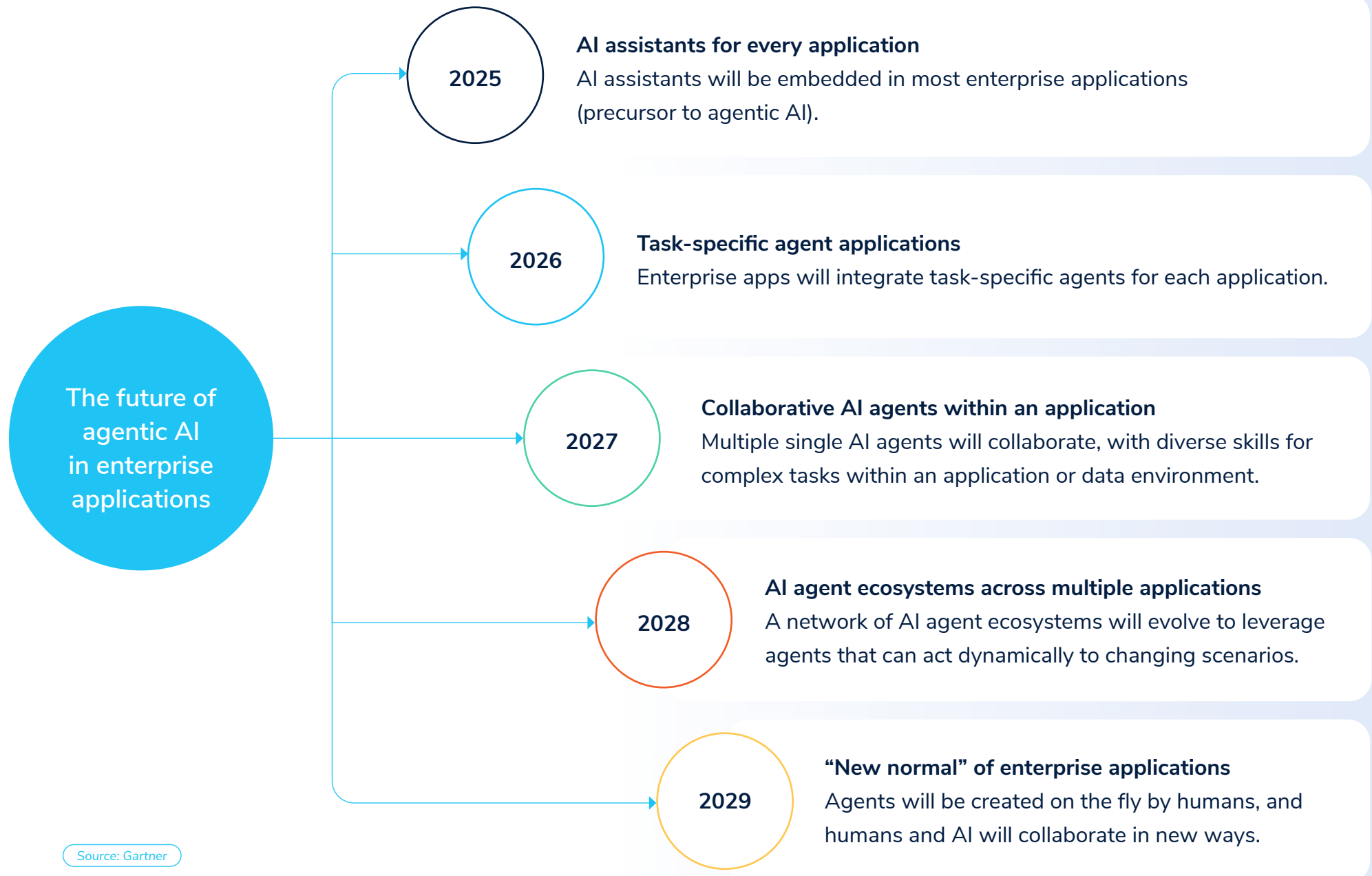
Source: ChatGPT



70%

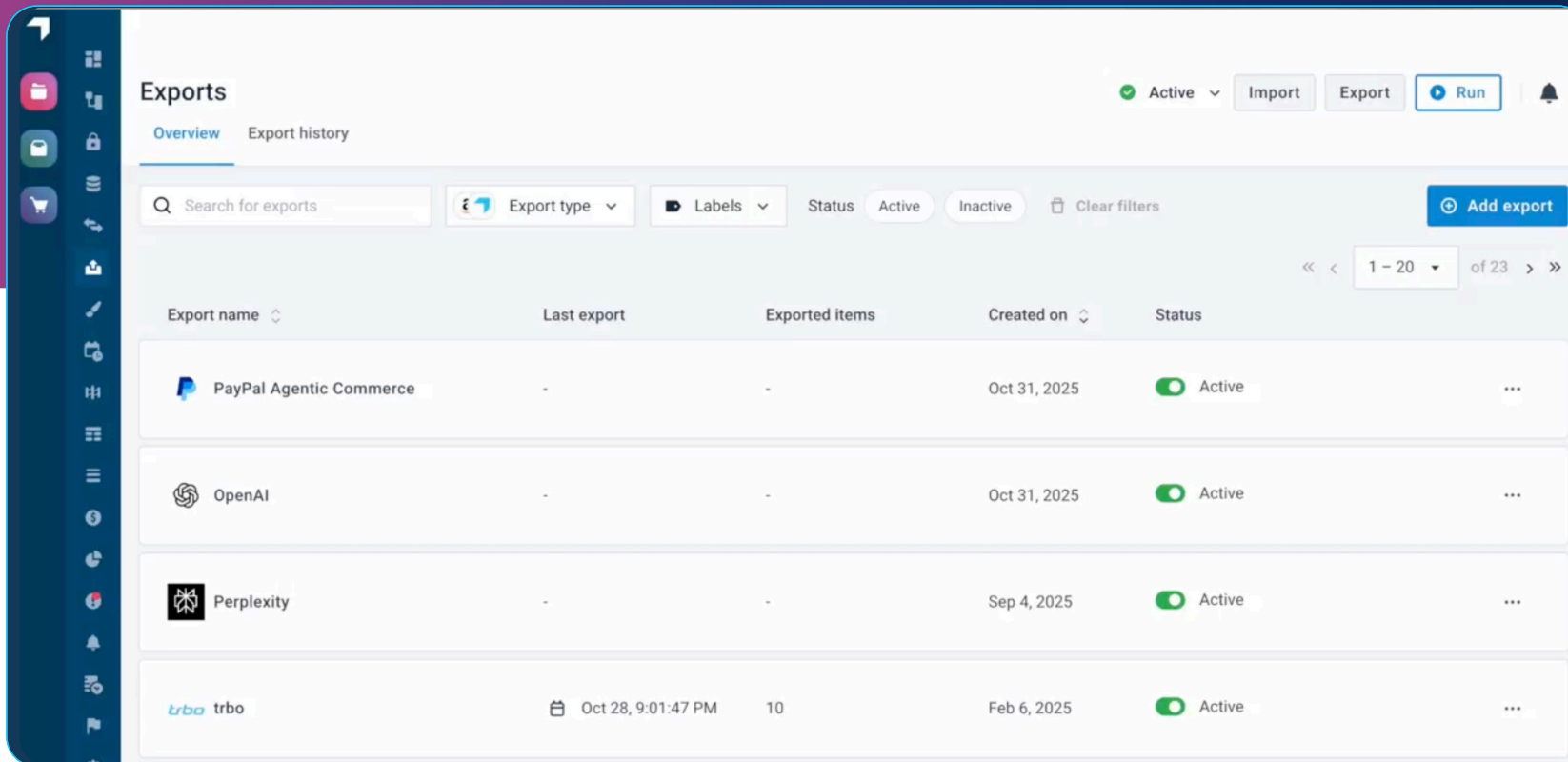
of shoppers are now comfortable with an AI agent making purchases on their behalf

Source: YNetGlobal



PayPal joins ChatGPT's shopping revolution

Starting in 2026, users can “Buy with PayPal” inside ChatGPT, while merchants list and sell directly through the app. The integration marks the first real bridge between payments and agentic commerce. [Productsup](#) already supports this setup, so you're ready the moment your customers are.



The screenshot shows the 'Exports' management interface in the Productsup platform. It includes a sidebar with navigation icons, a top bar with 'Overview' and 'Export history' tabs, and a main table of exports. The table has columns for Export name, Last export, Exported items, Created on, and Status. Four exports are listed, all with a status of 'Active'.

| Export name | Last export | Exported items | Created on | Status |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| PayPal Agentic Commerce | - | - | Oct 31, 2025 | Active |
| OpenAI | - | - | Oct 31, 2025 | Active |
| Perplexity | - | - | Sep 4, 2025 | Active |
| trbo | Oct 28, 9:01:47 PM | 10 | Feb 6, 2025 | Active |

Source: [Productsup platform](#)

The new rules of agentic commerce

Bots are buyers now

Your next customer may be an AI agent making decisions without ever landing on your site.

APIs are the new storefronts

If your product data can't be pulled via a clean feed or catalog API, you're invisible to shopping agents.

Product feeds are forever

What used to be an ad file is now your brand's main touchpoint with AI; enrich it like you would your homepage.

What can you do?



Audit your data chain: Make sure your pipeline from PIM → feed → channel supports real-time syncs and API connectors.



Be Agentic Commerce Protocol-ready: If you want agents to buy, expose structured product data, pricing, and inventory via standard endpoints.



Strengthen data trust: Use verified sources and machine-readable certifications to ensure authenticity in agentic environments.

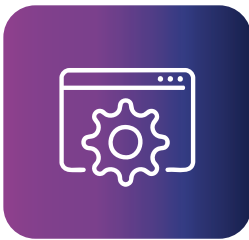


Simplify checkout: Simplify your buyer flow by enabling direct agent-to-retailer purchasing via API or token-based authentication.

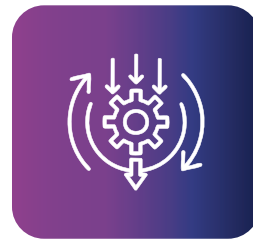


Monitor the agent footprint: Track visibility across Gemini, ChatGPT, and Perplexity plug-ins.

Want to get ahead of agent-led shopping? We've got you.



Plug your feeds directly into
our OpenAI ecosystems



Refine product data right
down to the product detail
page level



Build custom AI connectors
with our Connector Development
Environment (CDE)

Do this all within the Productsup platform.

[Learn more](#) —>

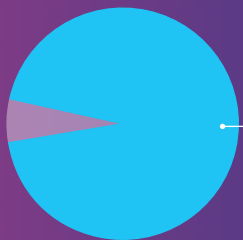
3. Augmented commerce goes mainstream



What happens when the real world has AR and AI overlays?

With the rise of Meta's Ray-Ban smart glasses, Google's AR search, and AI-infused product recognition, shoppers can now point, scan, and instantly unlock a layer of digital insight in the real world. From real-time reviews floating beside products to dynamic size, stock, and sustainability info, augmented reality is becoming the interface for instant product decisions.

In 2026, the physical world becomes shoppable in real time. See it → Scan it → Shop it



94%

That's how much AR experiences can boost conversion rates compared to non-AR versions

Source: BrandXR

The new rules of phygital presence

Every product needs a digital twin

If it exists in the real world, it needs a complete version online with attributes, images, and context included.

Product data must be location-smart

AI surfaces what matters most right here, right now, such as sizing availability and nearest pickup points.

Visuals become interfaces

Photos, 3D models, and packaging are now trigger points for live product intelligence through cameras and AR lenses.

Reviews now power discovery

Whether in AR, AI chat, or agentic shopping flows, updated, trusted reviews are what pull your products into the decision-making moment.

What can you do?



Create recognition-ready data: Standardize images, use consistent angles, and align GTINs or barcodes across channels to support instant lookups.



Tie inventory to reality: Sync local availability to your feed so assistants can direct shoppers in-store or recommend nearby stock.



Invest in 3D and rich media: Meet new surfaces where they are, such as AR mirrors, glasses, kiosks, or virtual try-ons.



Simplify checkout: Simplify your buyer flow by enabling direct agent-to-retailer purchasing via API or token-based authentication.



Design for one-to-one moments: Build product content that adapts to each scan, whether the user is in a store, at home, or seeing an ad.

4. The rise of repair, rental, and resale



What happens when product lifecycles circle again (and again)?

[92 million tons of textile waste](#) are dumped globally every year. But consumers are pushing back. They're renting outfits instead of owning them. They're reselling sneakers to pay for the next pair. They're repairing electronics instead of ditching them.



Source: The Sustainable Fashion Forum, LLC.

2x
growth by 2027

The secondhand and rental market is projected to double and hit over [\\$350 billion](#), reshaping how people shop, share, and style.

2
out of 5 items

That's how many products in the average [Gen Z's closet are secondhand](#).

The new rules of recommerce

Products need a life story

Ownership history, care, and condition are the new value signals. Shoppers want to know what products are made of, how long they'll last, and whether they can be repaired.

Access is greater than ownership

Rentals, swaps, and subscriptions unlock endless options without overconsumption.

Sustainability must be visible

"Less waste," "kg CO₂ saved," "local repair"... these details deserve the same real estate as price or size. And soon, disclosing certain lifecycle details will become mandatory in the EU through the enforcement of [digital product passports](#) (starting 2027).

Learn how [Productsup's partnership with Protokol](#) makes it easy to create DPPs from your existing data.

What can you do?



Optimize product feeds for rentals and returns:

Add lifecycle fields like rental status, repair history, and refurbishment notes.



Make circular options discoverable: Display labels, like "Rent this," "Pre-loved version," "Repair near you," etc.



Use content to fuel re-styling: AI-generated pairings, user inspiration galleries, and creator-driven lookbooks extend rental fashion's appeal.



Partner with resale and rental networks via APIs:

Sync your product inventory across rental partners, resale marketplaces, and your own ecosystem.



Prepare your data for DPP compliance: Get ahead of upcoming EU mandates by standardizing your data in accordance with digital product passports (DPPs).

4. The CRM renaissance



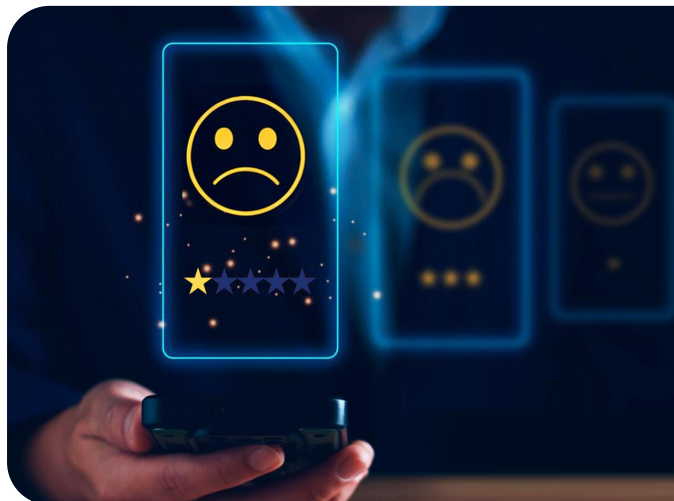
What happens to brand loyalty when AI owns discovery?

AI assistants are now discovering and deciding what to buy, but where does that leave your relationship with the customer?

For some time now, CRM has taken a back seat as brands chased new customers through paid search, social ads, and marketplaces.

AI assistants, marketplaces, and algorithms are deciding what gets shown and in what order. So, if your customer only meets your brand through ChatGPT, Shopify, Google AI Mode, or TikTok Shop, they're not just your customer. They're everyone's.

That's why 2026 marks the comeback of CRM as the core engine for customer loyalty and lifetime value.



Customer loyalty dropped 5% in 2025

Brands need to reprioritize customer commitment as discovery becomes increasingly AI-driven and multi-platform.

Source: Emarsys

The new rules of customer reconnection

Relationships are the new reach

You can't outspend algorithms, but you can out-remember them. Build connections that make customers return because they feel known, not just targeted.

First-party data is now a power move

The best AI decisions aren't trained on cookies or third-party graphs. They're built on your own interactions, behaviors, and lifecycle events.

Loyalty needs to be intelligent, not just incentivized

Point systems are outdated. Lifecycle rewards, insider drops, and AI-driven segmentation win the modern buyer.

What can you do?



Feed your CRM with product data: Lifecycle and attribute-level signals, such as “added to cart 3 times,” make your messaging contextual and timely.



Shift the funnel mindset: Optimize beyond acquisition. Start designing for retention loops: email → repurchase → upsell → referral.



Automate lifecycle segmentation: Trigger workflows based on behavior and product types. For example, replenishment reminders, restock alerts, or “bought with” bundles.



Connect CRM and search: Use personalized search ads and AI prompts to pull cart abandoners back to your site.

What happens next?

Act on the trends with Productsup

You've just walked through the biggest shifts shaping commerce in 2026.

At Productsup, we don't just help you keep pace; we help you take the lead. With one platform powering product data, syndication, and next-gen readiness across every channel, assistant, and algorithm, we turn commerce complexity into clarity.

Backed by a global team of **FeedFighters**—seasoned engineers, developers, feed managers, strategists, and more—we'd love to learn about the trends you're watching in 2026 and explore together how you can act on them.

[Productsup](#) is the leading feed management and syndication platform for enterprises, handling more monthly data requests than Google's consumer search service. It powers the entire product content journey, from onboarding supplier data to distributing optimized content across more than 2,500 channels, including social media, marketplaces, retailer and distributor sites, comparison platforms, and data pools.

Trusted by 10% of the Global Fortune 500

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