

TCS Global Retail Outlook 2026

Key Insights



Study at a Glance

TCS global report with over 800 senior retail executives surveyed across 18 countries and five major subsectors.



The AI Imperative: Recognized, But Not Realized

24% of retailers use AI for autonomous decision-making.

85% have not started implementing—or even planning for—multi-agent AI systems.

AI is ranked as the **#1 or #2** tactic for addressing 11 out of 13 mission-critical objectives, including profitable growth and customer loyalty.

Where Retailers Stand Today

51% say chatbots and virtual assistants are their leading AI initiative, showing most AI adoption is still early stage and customer-facing.

Advanced AI capabilities remain largely untapped, with deeper integration needed across merchandising, supply chain, and pricing to truly transform retail economics.



The Success Formula: Intelligence + Agility

Top priorities for the next **1–2** years: sensing market shifts in real time and adaptive, AI-powered decision-making.

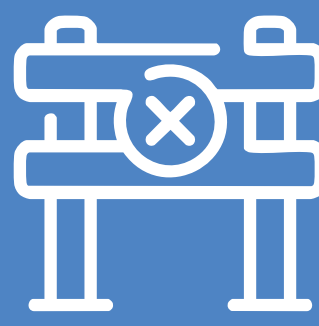
The most financially successful retailers are moving ahead with more advanced AI initiatives, such as dynamic pricing, demand scheduling, and cashierless stores.

Barriers to Progress

Top 3 obstacles to retail success: **#1** financial pressures, **#2** workforce skills gap, **#3** data security & privacy.

Only **33%** of retailers see digital literacy programs as a way to transform and upskill their workforce.

Less than half can use loyalty data to demonstrate marketing ROI, set pricing, or plan assortments—a missed opportunity for enterprise intelligence.



Essential Capabilities for 2026

1

Cost reduction through optimization

2

Real-time sensing of market changes and competitor moves

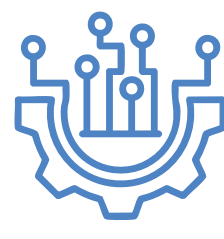
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Adaptive AI-powered decision-making

The Road Ahead: Perceptive Retail



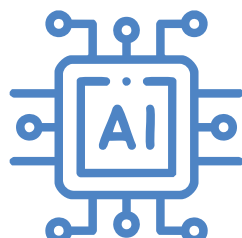
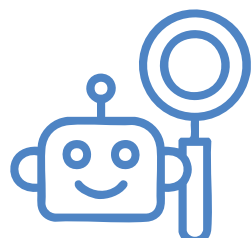
TCS envisions a shift from isolated AI experiments to “perceptive retail”—where AI, machine learning, and multi-agent systems interpret signals, adapt operations in real time, and orchestrate decisions across the value chain.



Achieving this future requires bold investments in technology, talent, and operating models, with a focus on measurable value creation.

The Road Ahead: Perceptive Retail

Most retailers are still at the starting line with AI, focusing on chatbots and assistants.



Multi-agent AI, which enables more advanced, autonomous decision-making, remains largely unexplored.

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