TCS Global Retail Outlook Report
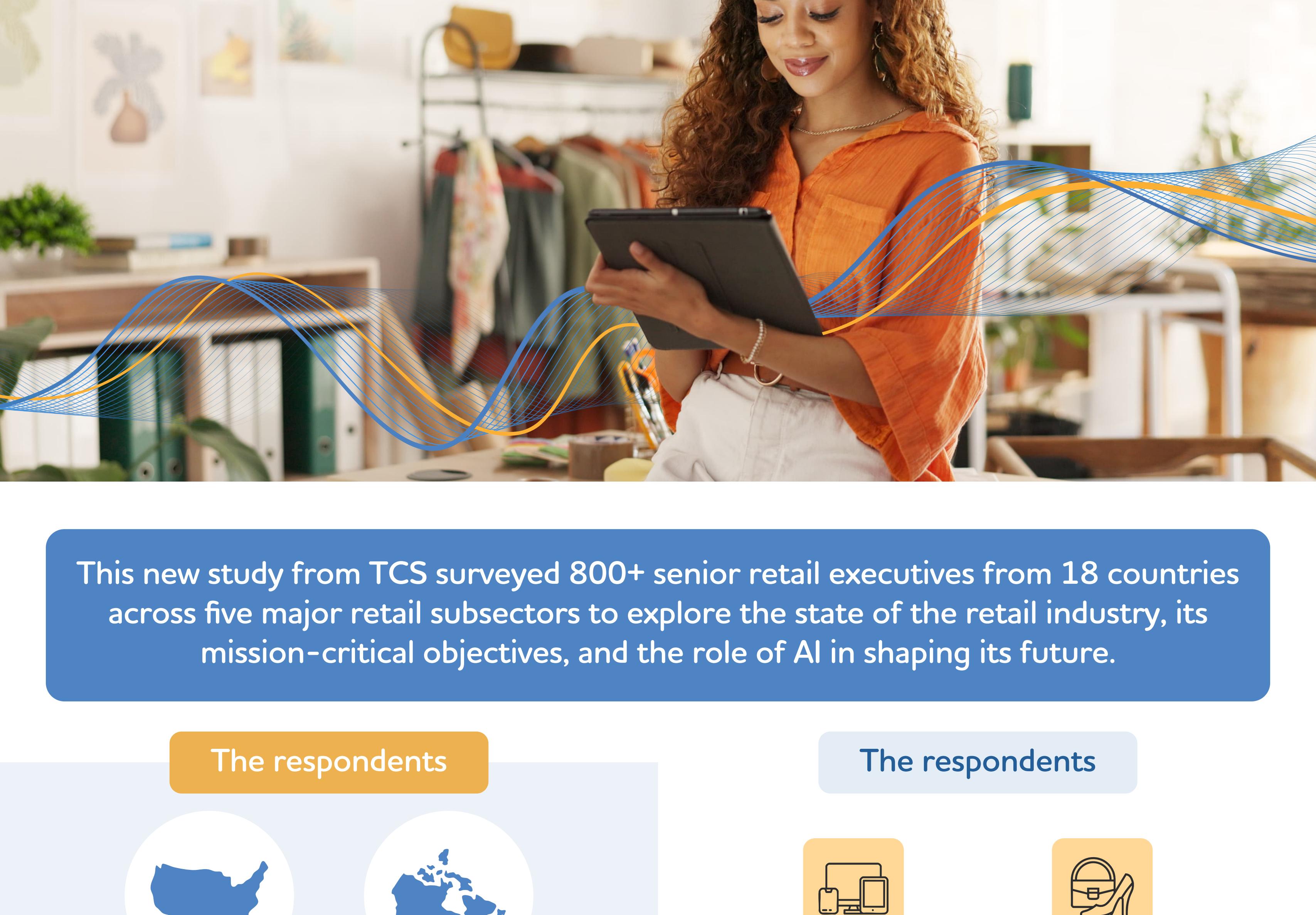
This new study from TCS surveyed 800+ senior retail executives from 18 countries across five major retail subsectors to explore the state of the retail industry, its mission-critical objectives, and the role of AI in shaping its future.

The respondents

US (n=250+)

CAN (n=65)
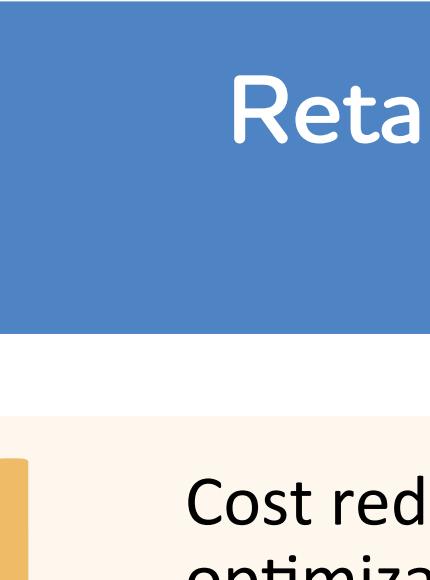
ANZ (n=75+)
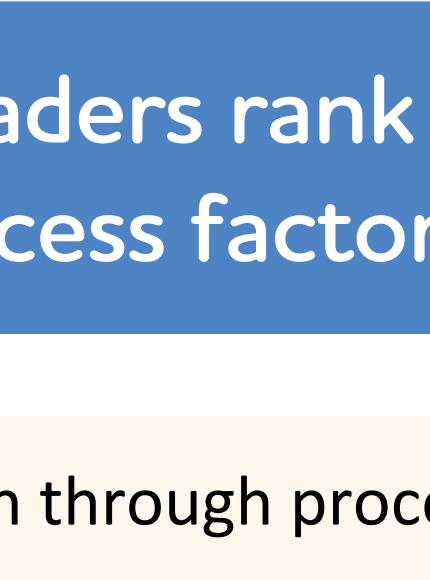
UK & IE (n=75)
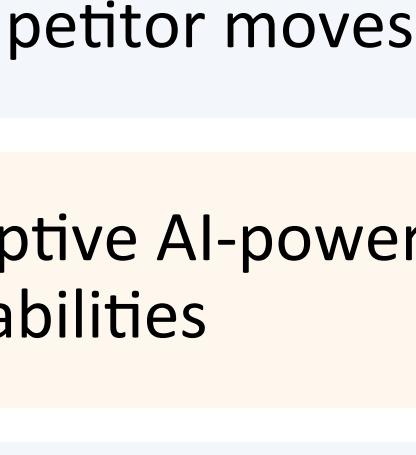
EUR [France, Germany/Austria, Spain, Switzerland] (n= 200+)

Benelux (n= 65)

Nordics [Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden] (n=70+)

The respondents

Electronics

Fashion
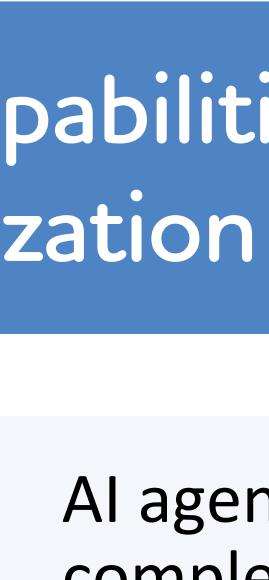
Apparel & Home Goods

Home Improvement/ Hardware
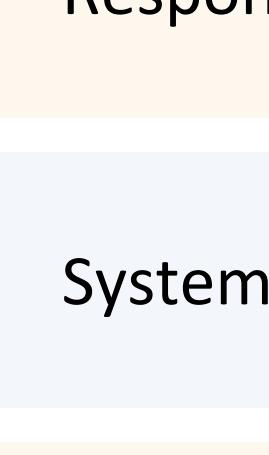
Groceries
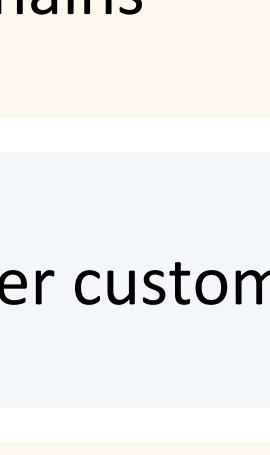
Convenience Stores

Pharmacies
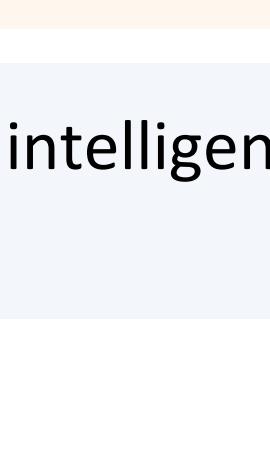
Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs)

Retail leaders rank AI-supported capabilities as a critical success factor for their organization in 2026:

1. Cost reduction through process optimization

2. Ability to sense market changes and competitor moves in real time

3. Adaptive AI-powered decision-making capabilities

4. Faster time-to-market for new products and services

5. Automated workflows that reduce manual intervention

6. AI agents that can orchestrate complex, multi-step processes

7. Responsive supply chains

8. Systems that can infer customer needs

9. Technology that captures documented procedures and employee expertise

10. Traditional business intelligence and reporting tools

Over half of respondents are focused on standalone AI implementations, such as AI assistants and chatbots

51%

Yet AI deployments remain largely superficial and not yet delivering the promise of enterprise-wide intelligence

Only **24%** are currently using AI for autonomous decision-making

A striking **85%** haven't started or are even planning to implement multi-agent systems

What perceptive retailers are focused on for 2026

Operationalizing AI where it moves P&L fastest

Investing in decision velocity, not just analytics

Building foundational capabilities over flashy features
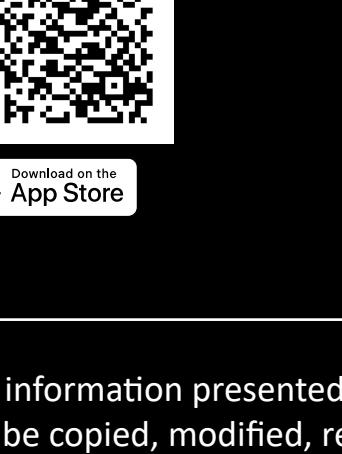
Using speed as a competitive weapon

Adopting integrated, not isolated, transformation
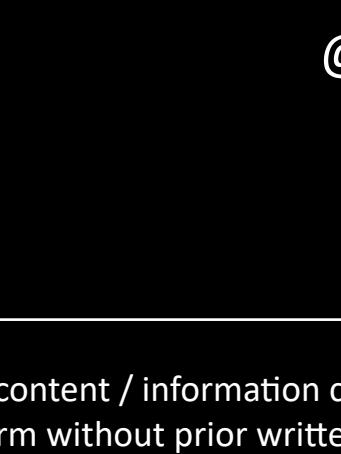
Viewing multi-agent orchestration as the next frontier
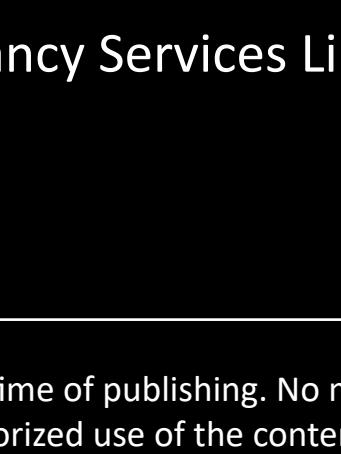
Leveraging loyalty data for a better customer experience