

Press Release

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ECOMMERCE CLINIC REPORT

Across four live eCommerce Clinic sessions hosted by eCommerce Expo, leading ecommerce practitioners, strategists and technology experts explored the trends reshaping digital commerce. Covering artificial intelligence, supply chain transformation, customer experience, digital merchandising, subscriptions and loyalty, the discussions revealed a consistent industry message: ecommerce is entering a new era where operational excellence, intelligent technology and customer-centric thinking must work together.



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PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

While each clinic focused on a different area of ecommerce, several themes emerged repeatedly. Artificial intelligence is transitioning from an emerging technology to a core business capability. Customer expectations continue to rise across every stage of the purchasing journey.

Organisational adaptability is becoming just as important as technological investment.

Most importantly, businesses achieving long-term success are those using technology to strengthen, not replace, human expertise and customer relationships.

THE FOUR PILLARS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ECOMMERCE

The Clinic series examined four interconnected areas of modern ecommerce:

- Artificial Intelligence & Digital Transformation
- Supply Chain & Fulfilment
- Customer Experience & Agentic Commerce
- Subscriptions, Loyalty & Sustainable Growth

Rather than existing independently, these areas increasingly influence one another, creating an integrated model for future ecommerce success.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HAS BECOME A BUSINESS CAPABILITY

Perhaps the strongest conclusion across every clinic was the industry's agreement that AI is no longer experimental.

Rather than asking whether businesses should adopt AI, discussions focused on how organisations can embed AI into everyday operations while maintaining governance, trust and commercial focus.

Throughout the series, AI was shown to deliver measurable value across multiple functions including:

- pricing optimisation
- inventory management
- demand forecasting
- warehouse operations
- customer service automation
- product content creation
- digital merchandising
- customer insights
- personalised recommendations
- subscription propositions

The consensus was that AI delivers its greatest value by removing operational friction and enabling teams to make faster, more informed decisions.

Importantly, clinicians consistently rejected the idea that AI replaces people.

Instead, human expertise remains essential at both ends of every workflow:

- defining objectives
- providing context
- ensuring brand authenticity
- validating outputs
- making strategic decisions

AI accelerates execution, while people provide judgement.



DISCOVERY IS BEING REDEFINED

A recurring topic across the clinics was the changing nature of product discovery.

Traditional ecommerce has been built around search engines, keywords and website optimisation. However, large language models and conversational AI are rapidly changing how consumers find products.

Consumers are increasingly asking AI systems questions such as:

- "What's the best running shoe for marathon training?"
- "Which ingredients should I buy for a vegan lasagne?"
- "Recommend a laptop for video editing."

Instead of matching keywords, AI evaluates context, suitability, trust and product information before making recommendations.

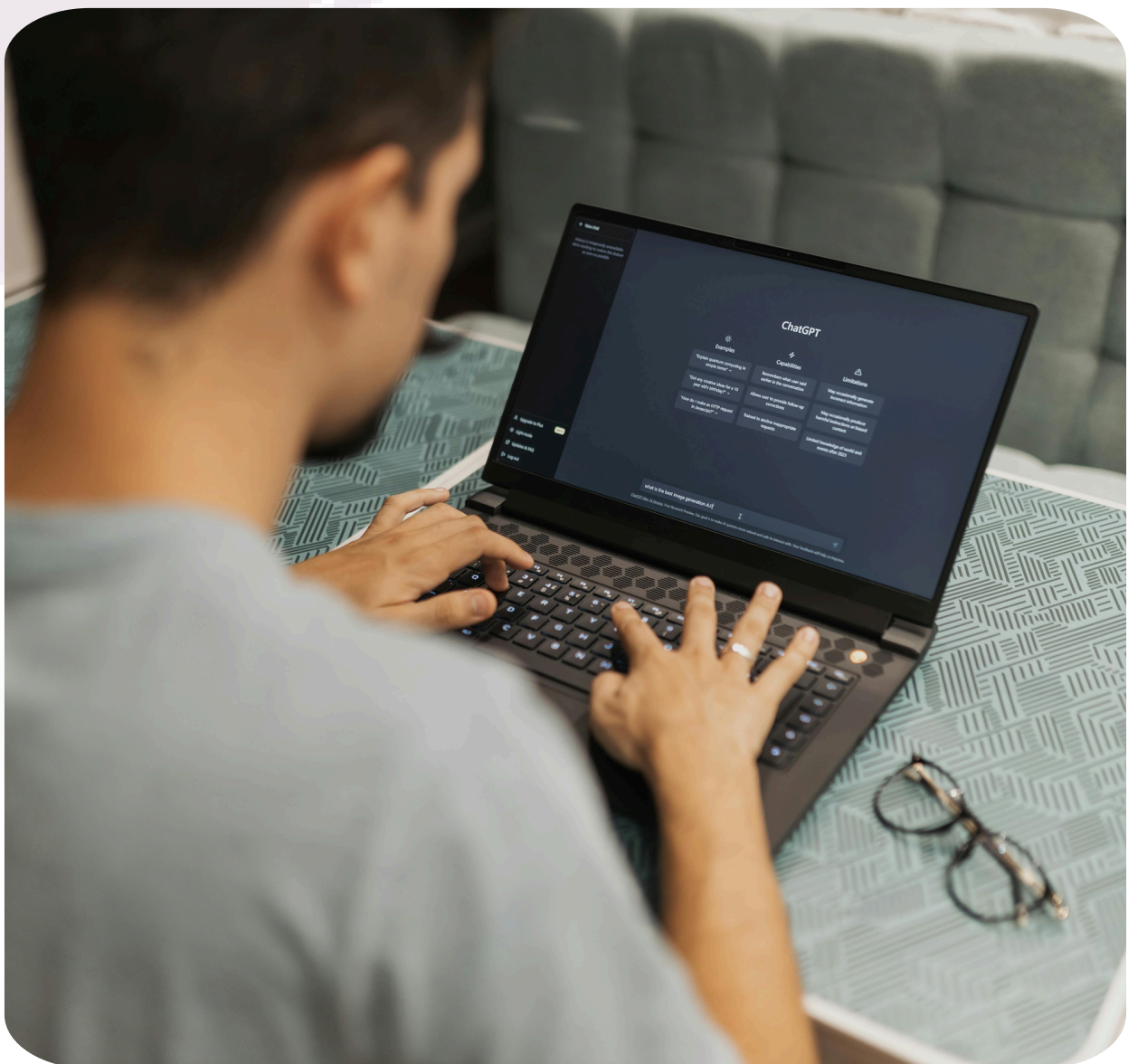
This shift introduces a new challenge for brands.

Success increasingly depends upon whether AI systems understand and recommend products, not simply whether products rank highly within search engines.

As a result, organisations were encouraged to invest in:

- richer product descriptions
- structured product information
- authentic reviews
- contextual content
- ingredient and specification data
- accurate imagery
- trustworthy information across the web

The future digital shelf will be built around **understanding customer intent** rather than optimising for keywords alone.



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE EXTENDS BEYOND THE WEBSITE

Customer experience featured prominently throughout every discussion.

Rather than viewing CX as a website design challenge, clinicians described it as the complete experience from discovery through purchase, delivery, ownership and repeat engagement.

Fundamental ecommerce principles remain unchanged.

Customers still value:

- product availability
- competitive pricing
- reliable delivery
- accurate information
- trustworthy reviews
- seamless checkout

However, AI is changing how customers reach these experiences.

Product pages must now communicate effectively with both human shoppers and AI systems.

Similarly, customer experience increasingly includes operational capabilities traditionally viewed as back-office functions, including fulfilment visibility, returns handling and delivery communication.

SUPPLY CHAINS HAVE BECOME STRATEGIC ASSETS

The Supply Chain & Fulfilment Clinic demonstrated how logistics has evolved from a cost centre into a competitive differentiator.

Recent years of disruption have encouraged retailers to move beyond cost optimisation towards resilience.

Businesses are now investing in:

- operational flexibility
- supply chain visibility
- risk management
- transparent customer communication
- collaborative partnerships

Transparency emerged as one of the strongest themes.

Customers increasingly expect:

- real-time tracking
- accurate delivery promises
- stock visibility
- proactive communication
- simple returns

Meeting these expectations reduces customer service pressure while strengthening trust and loyalty.

AI also plays an increasingly important operational role through:

- demand forecasting
- warehouse optimisation
- inventory allocation
- carrier selection
- network planning

Again, technology was consistently described as augmenting operational teams rather than replacing them.



RETURNS REDUCTION BEGINS BEFORE PURCHASE

Returns appeared repeatedly across multiple clinics despite being discussed from different perspectives.

Supply chain specialists focused on reducing reverse logistics costs.

Customer experience experts highlighted better product information.

AI discussions centred on improved personalisation. Together these viewpoints produced a common conclusion:

- The most effective returns strategy begins before customers place an order.
- Better sizing guidance, clearer product descriptions, richer imagery, stronger recommendations and more accurate personalisation all reduce the likelihood of unsuitable purchases.
- Reducing returns therefore benefits both customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

LOYALTY IS BECOMING EXPERIENCE-LED

The final clinic explored how customer loyalty is evolving.

Rather than relying solely on discounts or acquisition incentives, businesses are increasingly focusing on long-term customer value.

Subscription models illustrate this shift.

Successful subscriptions are not created by encouraging repeat payments.

Instead, they solve genuine customer needs through convenience, flexibility and ongoing value.

Speakers highlighted that customers increasingly expect:

- flexible plans
- transparent pricing
- personalised services
- consistent experiences
- meaningful engagement between purchases

As AI increasingly influences product discovery, brands will need to work even harder to retain customers after the initial sale.

Loyalty will depend less on marketing campaigns and more on consistently delivering positive customer experiences.



ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTABILITY IS EMERGING AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Across every clinic, speakers stressed that technology alone does not create transformation.

Successful organisations share several characteristics:

- cross-functional collaboration
- willingness to experiment
- continuous learning
- employee engagement
- practical implementation
- strong leadership

Rather than appointing a single AI specialist, businesses are embedding AI capability throughout marketing, operations, merchandising, logistics and customer experience teams.

Likewise, clinicians encouraged organisations to begin with **manageable projects** rather than large transformation programmes. Small wins build confidence, capability and momentum.

Perhaps the most consistent leadership message across the series was that curiosity and **adaptability** are becoming competitive advantages.

THE RISE OF AGENTIC COMMERCE

One of the newest themes emerging during the series was agentic commerce.

AI assistants are beginning to research, compare and increasingly purchase products on behalf of consumers.

This evolution represents a significant change in ecommerce.

Brands must now optimise for both human decision-makers and AI decision-makers.

Product information, trust signals, structured data and contextual relevance will increasingly determine whether products are recommended within AI-powered purchasing journeys.

At the same time, conversational commerce, integrated checkout experiences and platform-based purchasing continue moving ecommerce towards increasingly frictionless transactions.

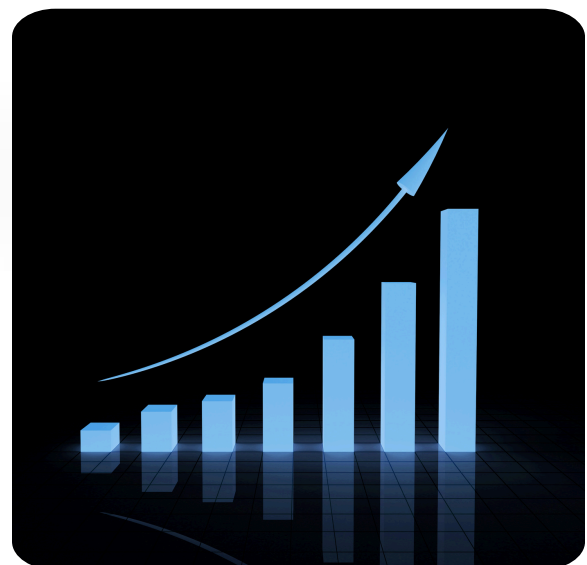
INNOVATION MUST SUPPORT OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Although discussions frequently explored emerging technologies, the clinics repeatedly reinforced that innovation should strengthen, not distract from, core business performance.

The organisations leading digital commerce are those combining:

- operational resilience
- excellent fulfilment
- trusted customer experiences
- intelligent use of AI
- rich product content
- transparent communication
- adaptable leadership

Technology succeeds when aligned with clear commercial objectives and genuine customer value.



OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The four-part eCommerce Clinic Live series demonstrated that ecommerce has reached an important inflection point.

Artificial intelligence is becoming embedded throughout commerce, from discovery and merchandising to operations and customer engagement. At the same time, customer expectations continue to increase, requiring retailers to deliver richer content, greater transparency, faster fulfilment and more personalised experiences.

Supply chains are evolving into strategic assets, loyalty is increasingly earned through flexibility and value, and AI-powered shopping assistants are beginning to reshape how purchasing decisions are made.

Despite these technological advances, one message remained remarkably consistent throughout every discussion. Long-term success will continue to depend on people.

Businesses that combine intelligent technology with strong leadership, adaptable teams, operational excellence and an unwavering focus on customer value will be best positioned to thrive in the next generation of digital commerce.

ABOUT THE ECOMMERCE CLINIC LIVE SERIES

The eCommerce Clinic Live series, hosted by eCommerce Expo between April and July 2026, brought together industry leaders for four interactive 48-hour Q&A sessions covering:

- Agentic Growth & The Future - Karl Lillrud
- Supply Chain & Fulfilment - Katie Bowman
- Digital Transformation & CX - Swagat Choudhury
- Subscription, Trust & Revenue Growth - Duncan Rutherford

Collectively, the sessions provided a comprehensive view of the technologies, strategies and organisational changes shaping the future of ecommerce.



ABOUT ECOMMERCE EXPO

WWW.ECOMMERCEEXPO.CO.UK

23 - 24 SEPTEMBER 2026

eCommerce Expo is the UK's leading event for ecommerce and digital marketing professionals, bringing together retailers, brands, technology providers, and industry experts to explore innovation, strategy, and growth in modern commerce.



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