

Digital Engagement Is Transforming Grocery Shopping



Apr 29, 2026 | 3 min read

In [Digital Engagement Transforms Grocery Shopping 2026](#), FMI examines how grocery shopping is evolving into a seamless omnichannel experience while exploring shopper behaviors, key motivators and the growing influence of social commerce and artificial intelligence.

By: Steve Markenson, Vice President, Research & Insights, FMI

Grocery shopping is no longer a choice between store and screen — it is a blend of both. Retailers' success is dependent on how well they integrate ecommerce with physical stores to create a seamless, frictionless experience. Whether tapping an app, browsing online or walking store aisles, consumers are stitching together hybrid journeys that demand flexibility and convenience at every turn.



In our newest report, [Digital Engagement Transforms Grocery Shopping 2026](#), we have partnered with NIQ to explore trends and key motivators among shoppers, as well as the emerging impacts of social commerce and artificial intelligence (AI).

Here are some key takeaways:

- **The size of the grocery prize grows:** NIQ is projecting continued advances in grocery omnichannel sales over the next three years across the physical stores and ecommerce. While in-store currently accounts for about 80% of grocery sales, ecommerce will drive most of the growth. Total U.S. online grocery sales are projected to reach \$452 billion or a

25.5% share of grocery-related sales by 2028, according to NIQ's analysis.

- **Food's large scale underscores growth opportunity:** Given the size of the food sector, which contains many categories, food is a prime online growth opportunity. Food is still underrepresented across ecommerce relative to its opportunity and despite its growth in online dollar sales.
- **Categories vary in ecommerce adoption journeys:** The report explores the wide range of digital maturity across categories.
- **Emerging technology powers in-store and online shopping:** Food retailers are incorporating a wide array of technology into their organizations to enhance shopper experience and engagement.
- **Retailers enhance store destination strategies:** The food industry is responding to evolving shopper preferences by creating destinations—not just stores. These spaces offer expanded fresh food selections, serve as health and well-being hubs and provide foodservice solutions alongside seamless omnichannel experiences.
- **Speed represents a major competitive battleground:** Slow delivery erodes conversion and loyalty in key categories. Delivery speed is increasingly a competitive differentiator, especially on the food side of grocery.
- **Omnichannel buyers represent important demographic segments:** Households with higher income and education levels are most engaged in omni behaviors. Online only and in-store only cohorts are smaller and skewed in terms of demographic mix. These demographic insights are important to consider when developing shopper strategies.
- **Social Media selling is fueling discovery and impulse:** Social commerce adoption is growing, especially for Gen Z. TikTok Shop and Instagram are emerging conversion points, and brands have opportunities to integrate social into discovery-to-checkout journeys.
- **Shoppers leverage Gen AI for research:** Shopper familiarity with AI-enabled tech tools continues to grow, as 64% have at least tried Gen AI, and more than half have used AI for food-related activities.
- **AI has the potential to transform shelf strategy:** AI is compressing the "shelf" to fewer, better-matched SKUs per view.

- **Food industry eyes agentic shopping:** These are very early days for agentic shopping, as it remains niche at this stage. However, food retailers and suppliers are tracking the evolution of agentic technologies and preparing for a possible increase in consumer use of AI agents.

Learn more about this technological evolution by downloading the *Digital Engagement Transforms Grocery Shopping 2026* report.

Please join me on May 7 at 1 pm ET as I host a **webinar** with Jack O’Leary, Director, Ecommerce Thought Leader at NielsenIQ and FMI’s Jennifer Shawgo, Senior Director, Technology, to explore more insights on omnichannel, ecommerce and emerging technologies.

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

WEBINAR

Browse All Blog Topics

- Asset Protection
- Education
- Food Safety
- Fresh Foods
- Frozen Foods
- Government Relations
- Health and Well-being
- Nonfoods
- Omnichannel
- Private Brands
- Research
- Retail Operations
- Supply Chain
- Sustainability
- Technology
- Workforce

STAY CONNECTED

your email address



SUBSCRIBE

Manage your subscriptions >

Related Posts



What Food Industry Leaders Listen for in a Technology Pitch



Here's What 120 Food Industry Voices Said About The Value Chain