

TRENDS REPORT

The 2026 NRF APAC Innovators: Retail-Focused Tech Companies To Watch

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Summary

The 2026 National Retail Federation (NRF) APAC Innovators Showcase features 23 companies from around the world that are applying new technology tools to transform how retailers and brands sell and how consumers shop. The Showcase is curated by the NRF Innovation Advisory Committee (IAC), of which Forrester is a member. This report reveals how these technology vendors harness generative and agentic AI, as well as other forms of automation, to enhance retail operations and transform consumers' shopping experiences. This is a companion document to showcase companies also featured during the NRF 2026: Retail's Big Show Asia Pacific event in Singapore.

The NRF Innovators Tackle Significant Pain Points For Retailers

This report analyzes the technology vendors selected for the 2026 NRF APAC Innovators Showcase. Collectively, these companies represent a cross-section of the industry's current focus on generative and agentic artificial intelligence solutions that promise to decrease costs and improve the customer experience.

The NRF Innovation Advisory Committee (IAC) — which comprises individuals from venture capital, incubators, retail innovation groups, and research (including Forrester) — selects the finalists based on four criteria:

- **Problem relevance.** Does the technology solve a critical problem for retailers?
- **The significance of the problem.** How significant and widespread is the problem that the technology addresses?
- **Product-market fit.** Has the solution demonstrated viability and adoption in real-world retail settings?
- **Scalability.** Is the company ready to scale and deliver solutions across the broader retail industry?

AI Dominates The Innovators Showcase

The most profound shift evident in the 2026 cohort is the rise of agentic AI and automation tools. Generative AI (genAI) dominated the discourse in previous years with its ability to create text and images. Today, agentic AI represents the functional evolution of these models. In early 2026, [Forrester's data](#) showed that 27% of global business and technology professionals in retail and wholesale said building and scaling AI agent capabilities is among the most important AI-related investment priorities for their organization in the next 12 months. Retailers are exploring chat interfaces and the deployment of autonomous agents capable of reasoning, planning, and executing complex workflows across the value chain. In procurement, we hear about agents negotiating with suppliers. In merchandising, AI agents harmonize fragmented product data to make it intelligible for large language models (LLMs). In customer acquisition, they dynamically restructure web experiences in real time based on user intent.

The specific companies featured in the innovators showcase address a range of retail problems. Several are based in the Asia Pacific region, and several are based in other parts of the world, including the US (see Figure 1).

- **Atronous.ai.** Product information and specifications are among the most important factors for online adults in metropolitan India (28%), Singapore (24%), and Australia (19%) when making a purchase. Although product information creation has been a manual and cumbersome process in the past, AI promises to automate and create accurate and user-friendly product descriptions. Atronous uses AI to generate and validate missing product attributes, extracting from PDFs, spreadsheets, images, line drawings, and CAD files and supplementing with publicly available information where appropriate, ultimately improving product descriptions and helping to drive higher site conversion rates. Clients include Tjernlund Products and Voomi Supply.
- **CartsyAI.** Most retail analytics data is pulled from transaction data, which comes at the end of a purchase journey. However, for years retailers have known that [pricing and promotion](#) decisions that shoppers see earlier in the shopping journey are critical to the purchase decision. For example, [one-third](#) of Hong Kong online adults regularly postpone both large and everyday purchases until a discount becomes available. That said, detailed insight on the elasticity of shopper demand is difficult to infer. CartsyAI is a shopper-intent analytics platform that measures the impact of promotions and prices based on what people view and add to cart. The company gathers data on different promotions across retailers and on what shoppers ultimately choose, through what it calls a “decision ecosystem.” CartsyAI did not share the names of any clients.
- **Catecut.** Many retailers still rely on manual workflows to create product descriptions, which results in inconsistency and slow time to market. Meanwhile, the accuracy of product attributes [is critical for digital shopping](#). For example, when they’re shopping online for clothing or shoes, [67%](#) of US online adults say they are likely to check the product description and the materials list before they buy. Catecut uses AI models to extract product details from images and generate structured product data that retailers can then publish in their sales channels. It primarily supports fashion e-commerce brands and Shopify merchants, and its clients include Borrow Luxury and Katia.
- **Cookiy AI.** In their quest to accelerate time to market in response to external changes, [29%](#) of global business and technology professionals in retail and wholesale said that extending their customer and market research capabilities is a key action their organization is taking. The market research industry has [no shortage of platforms](#) that reduce decision risk and scale research. However, traditional qualitative research is time-intensive and difficult to scale. Cookiy AI is a market research platform that uses AI to lead interviews, focus groups, and usability tests with human research subjects. The company uses generative and

agentic AI as well as automation to design research guides, recruit participants, conduct interviews, and analyze responses to surface themes and actionable insights. Clients include Amazon, miHoYo, Supercell, and Tencent.

- **DotKonnekt.** Many retailers are exploring how to integrate AI into their enterprise. For example, [28%](#) of global business and technology professionals in retail and wholesale say launching or scaling AI-powered products and services is among the most important investment priorities related to AI in the next 12 months. However, our interviews suggest that they often rely on existing solutions or integration partners. DotKonnekt is an AI agency that enables retailers to build bespoke and retail-specific solutions that integrate new AI capabilities to explore new opportunities. For example, the company created Pearl, a wedding planner agent using generative and agentic AI capabilities, for David's Bridal. Other clients include Aurate, Pike, Smytten, and TATA Digital.
- **Gennoctua.** Among the [15%](#) of US online adults who have used “try it on” or “see how it looks” augmented reality (AR) features while shopping on a phone or in a store in the past six months, about one in three say the experience influenced their decision to buy. Many virtual try-on approaches add friction (e.g., image uploads, camera use) and therefore limit how readily consumers adopt the functionality. Meanwhile, retailers in sectors such as home furnishings and beauty have [considered AR for years](#) as a way to improve browsing and buying. Gennoctua is a virtual try-on platform positioned to deliver frictionless, immersive personalization experiences at scale and with privacy in mind. The company provides a plugin for mobile and web apps that enables try-on across categories such as apparel, beauty, jewelry, and home goods.
- **Grivy.** Retail media is a critical and growing marketing channel, yet the contribution of online sales to offline measurement is elusive for most merchants. Overall, [Forrester's 2026 data](#) shows that B2C marketing decision-makers in retail have difficulty measuring the return on advertising spend across numerous paid media channels such as search engine marketing (43%), linear TV (41%), retail media networks (40%), and podcasts (39%). Forrester has covered the [attribution challenge of retail media](#) extensively. Grivy asserts that its solution tackles this challenge by linking online engagement to offline purchases. The company says it links first-party engagement data (e.g., ads, QR, wallets, messaging) to POS/receipt data and is therefore able to match offline purchases to online influence and improve promotion effectiveness. Clients include 7-Eleven, Alfamart, Coca-Cola, Mondelez, Unilever, and Watsons.
- **Intellect Design Arena.** In developing markets, digital retail sales often happen through marketplaces that aggregate small sellers. Furthermore, chain retailers,

which are often anchored in shopping centers and frequently support omnichannel capabilities like click-and-collect, are less common than in the US. In metropolitan India, 74% of online adults often find new products or brands through recommendations from the retailer or marketplace, and 68% are less likely to visit a store if its in-store inventory is not available online. Intellect Design Arena is a services provider that is now extending its solutions from the financial services industry to the retail industry. Its eMach.ai Retail 6DX solution unifies store operations, transactions, customer data, and inventory, particularly for retailers in developing markets such as India. Clients include Choppies, HomeTown, Kalyan Hyper, and Schecrets.

- **Intelligence Node.** One of the key success factors of large global online marketplaces is that they have access to vast amounts of competitive information and can react in real time. In addition to these marketplaces helping them locate products that they wouldn't have found elsewhere and find new products, approximately two-thirds of online adults in Hong Kong, metropolitan India, and Singapore who have purchased products from online marketplaces agree that prices are lower there. Intelligence Node provides global enterprise retailers and brands with AI-driven tools to accurately monitor price, assortment, and product content across their competitive landscape in real time. This functionality gives retailers and brands visibility into competitor price and product movements and helps them cost-effectively optimize product listings to stay competitive. Clients include Dollar Tree, Kroger, Nestlé Purina, and Prada.
- **Johnsmith.ai.** Fashion, beauty, and lifestyle brands are intrigued by the idea of live commerce, particularly given its success in markets like China, and the promise of companies such as WhatNot. However, live selling is difficult to execute cost-effectively or at scale without a full-scale television studio operation. Johnsmith.ai provides an AI avatar that enables “always-on, high-fidelity digital selling experiences” on a retailer’s website and through social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. The company says it can recognize consumer intent and deliver proactive selling and storytelling across markets and languages. Clients include Estée Lauder, L’Oréal, LVMH, Procter & Gamble, Shiseido, and Unilever.
- **LAAM.** Marketplaces are the driver of most e-commerce sales globally, accounting for 63% of global e-commerce in 2024. Marketplaces that are predominantly located in Southeast Asia (89%), Brazil (83%), China (79%), and Japan (57%) account for more than half of B2C e-commerce sales in their respective markets. LAAM aims to be another player in the Asian online retail space as a vertical marketplace focused on small Asian sellers of fashion goods. The company also has a commerce platform that small businesses can use to sell their own items on

individual online stores. LAAM notes that it has over 3,000 retail customers using its e-commerce platform and selling on the consumer-facing LAAM marketplace.

- **Lazuli.** Content creation is a cumbersome process, and new generative AI tools promise to speed up that challenge overnight. When asked about the greatest content operations challenges expected for their organization over the next 12 months, 43% of business decision-makers who contribute to the content lifecycle noted “inefficient content creation and reviews.” Lazuli extracts and structures product information from unstructured sources (e.g., PDFs and catalogs) and enriches it with search-optimized and answer-engine-optimized attributes and metadata. Clients include Asahi Breweries, Kao, Kirin, and Panasonic.
- **Merchmix.** Retail planning solutions are a well-established investment area within the retail industry. Forrester’s 2026 data shows that 18% of business and tech professionals working in retail plan to invest the most in implementing new retail planning capabilities in the next 12 months. Only now are more of the incumbent players actively investing in agentic and conversational interfaces to modernize their solutions. As a new market entrant, Merchmix is a retail planning solution that is not hindered by legacy systems or integrations. With an “AI-native inventory operating system,” it claims to unify merchandising, allocation/replenishment, enterprise resource planning (ERP) workflows, supplier collaboration, and execution. Its solutions target sectors as diverse as fashion and pharmacy.
- **Mirakl.** To expand their growth opportunities, retailers face pressure to expand assortments and offer strong retail media solutions. For years, Forrester has written about the profit opportunity that retail media presents to large merchants. We expect global retail media spending will exceed \$300 billion by 2030, up significantly from \$184 billion in 2025. China leads global retail media spending, with \$78 billion in 2025. Retail media spending in Asia Pacific, excluding China, will more than double over the next five years, reaching \$26 billion by 2030. We size the current global market opportunity at hundreds of billions of dollars. Mirakl enables companies to launch and scale marketplaces, drop-shipped goods, and retail media. Its solutions automate seller onboarding, catalog management, and commerce operations. Clients include Best Buy, Carrefour, H&M, Macy’s, Nordstrom, Tesco, and Ulta.
- **Moving Walls.** Years ago, the movie *Minority Report* showed an example of an in-person ad talking in real time to a shopper. It’s still not a reality, and any digital out-of-home advertising has also been difficult to measure, even though consumers say that it can be very effective. Moving Walls is a 10-year-old company that provides planning, targeting, and measurement capabilities for all formats of digital out-of-home ads. Over time, we expect this technology to be integrated into more

retail media networks and their in-store ad formats. Clients include Jeki (JR East Japan, a transit media operator) and Prowtech International (an in-store media operator in Vietnam).

- **Planoverse.** Store layout design is something that retailers want but isn't always integrated into retail planning systems. Planoverse is a store planning and operations platform that uses AI-powered 3D digital twins that provide merchants and brands with more ideas to optimize store shelves. [Forrester's 2025 data](#) shows that 39% of digital business strategy decision-makers in retail and wholesale are already investing in digital twin technology, and another 19% plan to invest in the next 12 months. [Forrester's research](#) highlights that digital twin use cases are expanding beyond single assets to broader operational environments. Planoverse's clients include the Australian supermarket Woolworths.
- **Propheus.** Retailers use external data points like weather and competitive activity in an ad hoc and inconsistent way. Yet anyone who has ever been in a retail planning meeting knows that those external forces impact sales perhaps more than a retailer's own decisions around product, pricing, and allocation. Propheus aggregates many of those external signals and has an agent that generates recommended actions across inventory, staffing, promotions, and assortment. Propheus provided no names of customers using its product.
- **Sourcy.** To strengthen their organization's growth and market position over the next year, [one-third](#) of global retail business and technology professionals whose organizations are focused on growth and market position said that launching new products or services is an important action they are taking. New product creation is far more than just an idea; it involves a tremendous amount of sleuthing to discover suppliers that can bring an item to life in a way that is brand-compliant and differentiating. Sourcy uses generative AI prompts to discover suppliers, negotiate deals, and even support product creation. The company says it is best used by consumer goods brands and multicategory merchants that create private-label goods.
- **Trendier AI.** Many of the hottest recent beauty trends grew through social media. It's essential for brands to capture these insights [in a timely fashion](#). Trendier AI is a market intelligence platform that uses AI to help beauty brands more quickly identify and act on emerging product trends. The company analyzes real-time signals from dozens of marketplaces and uses LLMs to transform fragmented data into insights on ingredients, claims, and sentiment. The company asserts that it can reduce product validation from weeks to one day. Clients include Amazon, Chalhoub, Coupang, Olive Young, and Watsons.

- **Whale.** Given the complexity of internal systems (which may not talk to one another), finding an answer to a question often involves digging through multiple systems with different layers of authentication, varied data structures, and protections around who can access what. The ripple effects are wide: For example, [37%](#) of US B2C marketing executives say that siloed data is a specific data challenge their organization faces when executing consumer personalization programs. Whale attempts to address some of the challenge of enterprise data that lives in different — even difficult-to-access — locations. It tries to unify data and harmonize it and also has a chatbot-like interface to help business users retrieve information more easily than before. Clients include Carrefour, L’Oréal, Mannings, Maybelline, NIO, and Watsons.
- **Wink.** Payment security is an enormous cost of doing business for the retail industry. Numerous players are racing to have the best identity resolution solutions, the lowest chargeback rates, and the greatest protection against rogue AI agents. Wink is a new player in the payment security space and says it uses a number of signals such as to consumer biometrics to authenticate, authorize, and verify transactions in stores and online, including through mobile devices. The solution enables transactions in age-restricted environments as well. As is standard in the payment security space, Wink provided few details on the mechanics of its solutions, but the company’s partners include Clover, Fiserv, PAX Technology, and Sunmi.
- **Wubble.** For some retailers and restaurants, part of the brand experience is the music that plays in a physical space. But commercial music licensing can be costly, slow, and limited in options. Music creation is an aspect of generative AI that isn’t frequently discussed but is viable. Plus, Forrester cites [creativity as a key output](#) of new genAI tools. Wubble enables retailers and brands to create on-demand customized, royalty-free audio for physical and digital environments. Clients include Changi Airport Group, Disney, HP, L’Oréal, Microsoft, and Starbucks.
- **Xillions AI.** Product creation is often a top-down process that is expensive and time consuming and doesn’t take consumer feedback into account. Xillions AI captures text-based insights from shoppers and brand guidelines to enable real-time concept generation and editing across design, marketing, buyers, and production. This functionality reduces sampling costs and integrates consumer feedback into product design. Generative AI [enables this solution](#) by allowing designers and marketers to envision what products look like before production. Clients include KPMG and Walt Disney.

Figure 1

Firms In The 2026 NRF APAC Innovators Showcase

Asia Pacific firms

Company (headquarters, year founded)	Description	Retail team impacted
DotKonnekt (Singapore, 2022)	Services provider building bespoke AI solutions	Digital, innovation, technology
Grivy (Indonesia, 2020)	Solution to link online engagement data to offline retail purchases	Marketing
Intellect Design Arena (India, 1993)	Links disparate retail systems together for business users	Finance, management, merchandising
Intelligence Node (India/US, 2012)	Competitive intelligence capabilities for pricing, assortment, and PDP content	Merchandising, marketing
Johnsmith.ai (China, 2022)	AI avatars enabling live commerce	Digital, marketing
Lazuli (Japan, 2020)	Enhances product data with AI	Digital, merchandising
Merchmix (Australia, 2024)	Next-gen retail planning tool	Merchandising
Moving Walls (Singapore, 2016)	Data-led digital out-of-home placement and measurement	Marketing
Planoverse (Australia, 2023)	AI-driven 3D digital twins for store layout planning and shelf optimization	Merchandising
Sourcy (Singapore, 2021)	Generative AI platform to discover suppliers for new products	Merchandising
Trendier AI (Korea, 2024)	Market intelligence tool to identify emerging beauty trends from real-time marketplace data	Management, marketing, digital
Whale (Singapore, 2017)	Enterprise data unification platform with conversational access to fragmented business systems	Management, finance
Wubble (Singapore, 2024)	Generative AI platform creating custom, royalty-free music for brand environments	Store operations, visual merchandising
Xillions AI (Australia, 2025)	AI-powered product creation platform for designers	Merchandising, marketing

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Firms from non-Asia Pacific regions

Company (headquarters, year founded)	Description	Retail team impacted
Atronous.ai (US, 2023)	Enhanced product descriptions with AI	Digital, merchandising
CartsyAI (US, 2025)	Measures impact of price based on what people view and add to cart	Digital, merchandising, finance
Catecut (Iceland, 2019)	Fully generated product pages with AI	Digital, merchandising
Cookiy AI (US, 2025)	Market research using AI for moderation, survey design, and analysis	Marketing
Gennoctua (US, 2024)	Virtual try-on platform available on mobile apps	Digital, merchandising
LAAM (US, 2021)	South Asian fashion marketplace and online retail platform	Management
Mirakl (France/US, 2012)	Enterprise platform enabling scalable marketplaces, drop shipping, and retail media monetization	Digital, merchandising, marketing
Propheus (US, 2024)	Solution that incorporates external data like weather, competitive insights, and consumer sentiment to make recommendations to business users	Merchandising, operations
Wink (US, 2021)	Payment security platform to reduce fraud and chargebacks	Technology, cybersecurity, technology

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