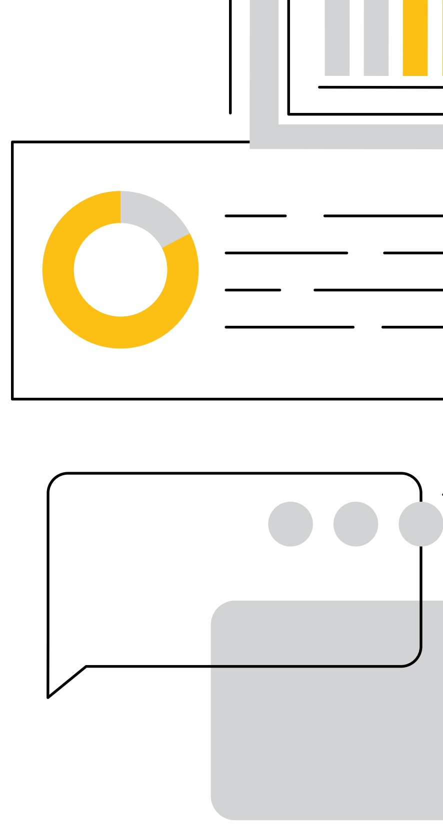
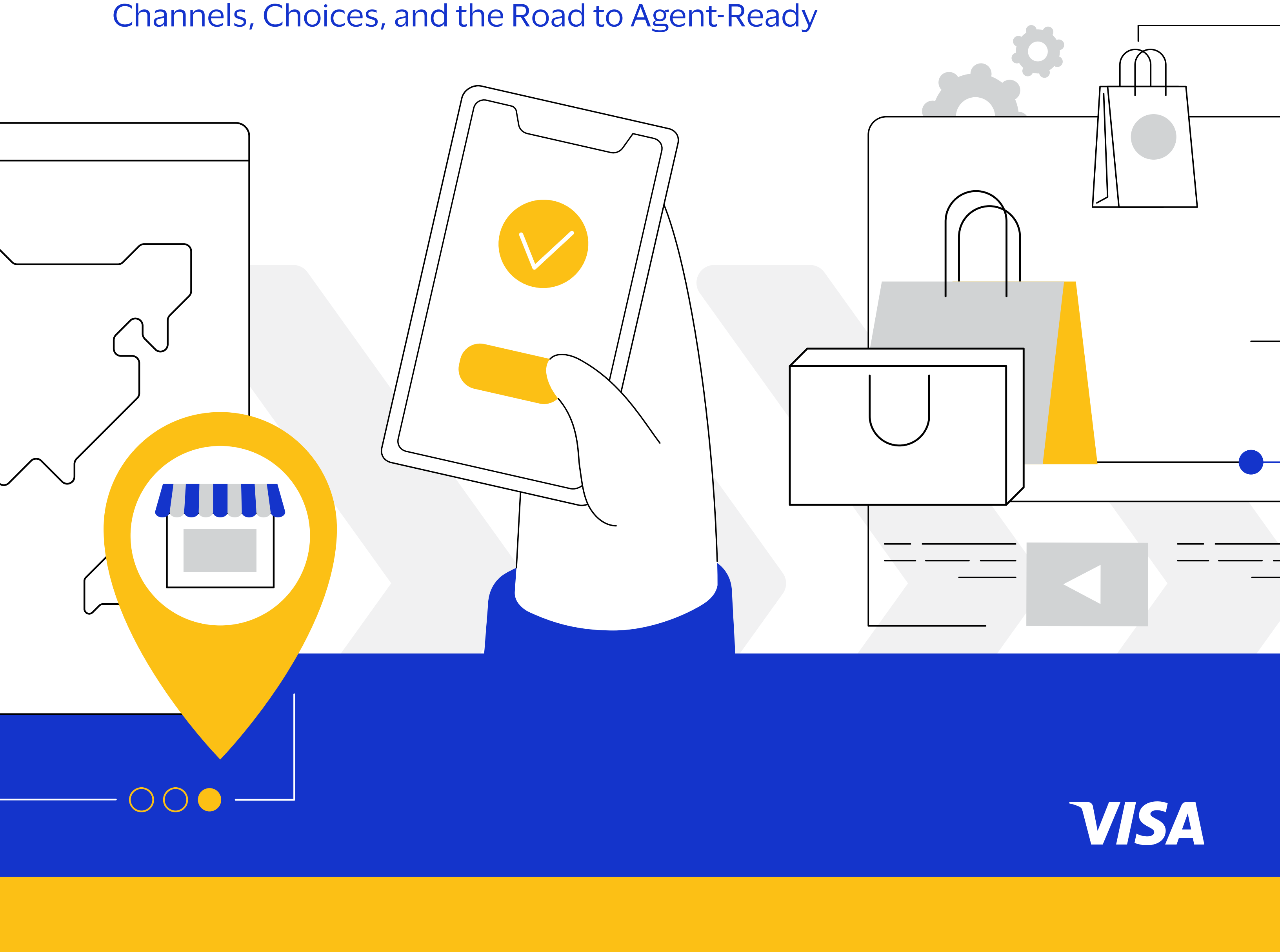
2026

Global Digital Shopping Index

Merchant Edition

Channels, Choices, and the Road to Agent-Ready





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Channels, Choices, and the Road to Agent-Ready

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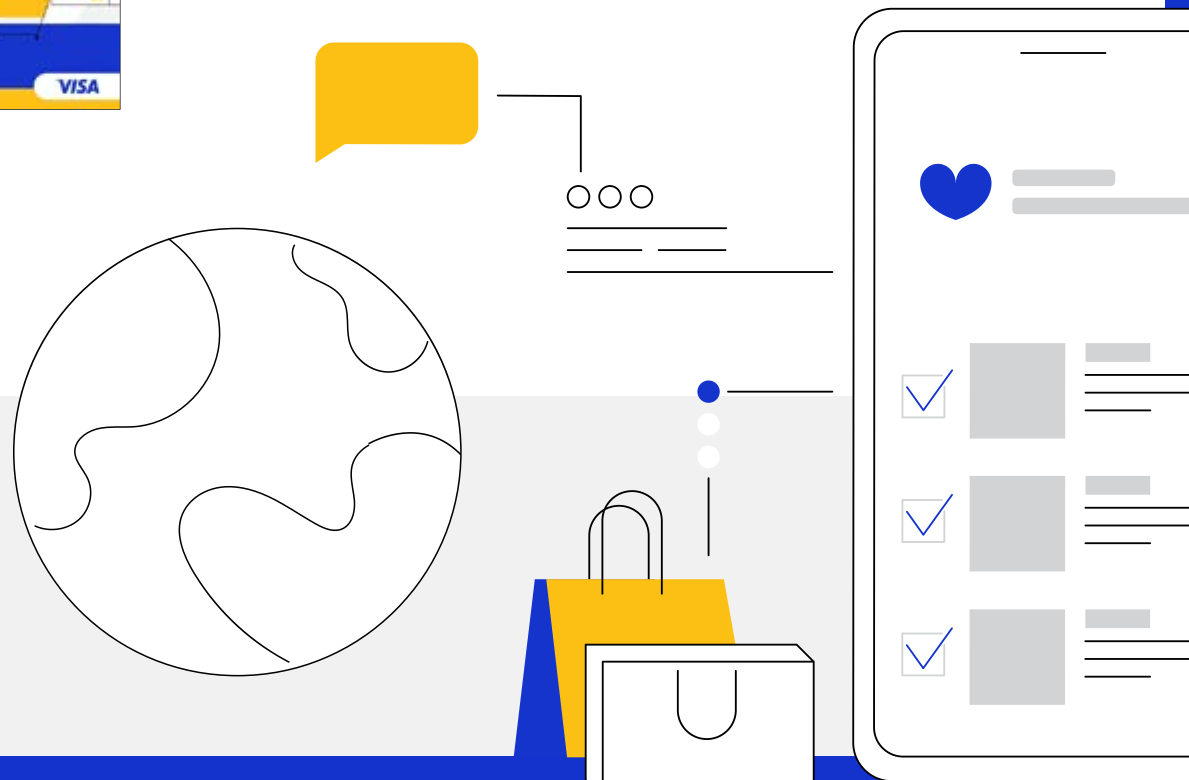


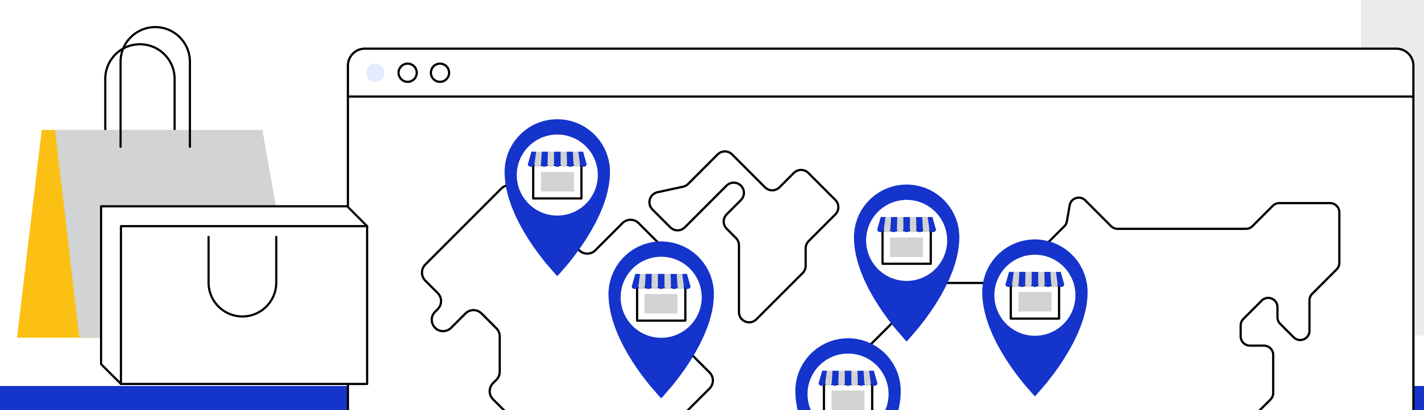
VISA

Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition was commissioned by Visa Acceptance Solutions, a Visa company, and PYMNTS Intelligence is grateful for the company's support and insight. • This report draws on a survey of 1,185 retail merchants across three countries (the United States, Brazil, and the United Arab Emirates) fielded in March 2026. To learn more about our data, refer to the methodology at the end of this report. • PYMNTS Intelligence retains full editorial control over the following content, findings, methodology, and data analysis. • Neither PYMNTS nor Visa makes representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, regarding the correctness, accuracy, completeness, adequacy, or reliability of or the use of or results that may be generated from the use of the information.

What’s at Stake

Digital shopping is entering a new phase, and merchants are under pressure to keep up. They can no longer focus on optimizing a handful of checkout modes and payment methods with a single customer journey type in mind. They must now support shoppers moving across apps, websites, and physical stores—and increasingly, AI-based agents doing the shopping for them.

This study reveals that one channel is disproportionately driving sales growth: merchants’ own branded apps. Among merchants selling through their own mobile apps, 57% say sales through that channel increased in the last year, more than for any other channel measured. Merchants also generally offer a wider range of checkout features in their apps than on their websites. These advantages matter because features such as biometrics, stored credentials, autofill, and one-click checkout reduce friction and help merchants turn digital engagement into repeat purchases.



Yet merchants also see major gaps in their current checkout capabilities. Nearly nine in 10 say their checkout experiences need improvement, and 59% worry their payment technology will no longer meet market needs within three years. These concerns highlight the urgency of modernizing payment infrastructure before today’s gaps become tomorrow’s competitive disadvantages.

AI agents are a major part of that challenge. Merchants broadly expect agents to influence shopping, payments, and loyalty, but only 23% can clearly identify both AI-driven traffic and purchases today. This visibility gap could leave merchants unable to understand where sales originate or how agentic commerce is changing customer behavior.

At the same time, merchants are becoming more active in shaping payment choice and managing risk. More than half use discounts, surcharges, or both to influence which payment methods shoppers choose, reflecting the growing importance of payment economics. Fraud pressures have eased since the prior survey, but six in 10 merchants remain highly interested in stronger fraud protection. Together, these findings show that the next stage of digital shopping will be defined by how well merchants integrate checkout, payments, pricing, and, most of all, agentic commerce into their digital shopping infrastructure.

Key Findings *at a Glance*

01 The merchant app is winning the channel race.

Merchants' mobile apps beat their websites on 11 of 14 digital payment methods. Over half of merchants (57%) recorded sales growth via their own apps, more than for any other channel.

02 Most merchants see gaps in their checkout experiences.

Nearly nine in 10 (87%) merchants say their checkout experiences need improvement, and 59% worry their current payment tech will no longer meet needs within three years.

03 Tap-to-pay is a bright spot.

Both merchant and consumer data showing this is becoming the clear default for in-store checkouts.

04 Merchants are positive about AI agents, but are not ready to transact just yet.

Most merchants believe AI agents will influence critical areas of their businesses, including customer insights, loyalty, and payment choice. However, readiness is lagging. Only 23% of merchants currently have visibility into AI-driven traffic, and just 15% have structured data ready to make their websites readable to agents.

05 Most merchants are using price to influence payment choice.

Over half of merchants (52%) intentionally steer payment choice with pricing: 41% provide discounts for low-cost payment options, and 22% add surcharges for high-cost ones. Discounts are the most common method in all three countries surveyed, with Brazilian merchants in the lead at 55%. U.S. merchants are the least likely to use discounts or surcharges.

06 Fraud dropped, but demand for better protection did not.

Six in 10 merchants are very or extremely interested in better fraud protection despite broad declines in every category of fraud. Compared to the previous survey, fewer merchants report increases in the number of fraud incidents, and only 22% rate fraudulent transactions as a severe problem, down from 34%.

Key Findings

01

The merchant app is winning the channel race

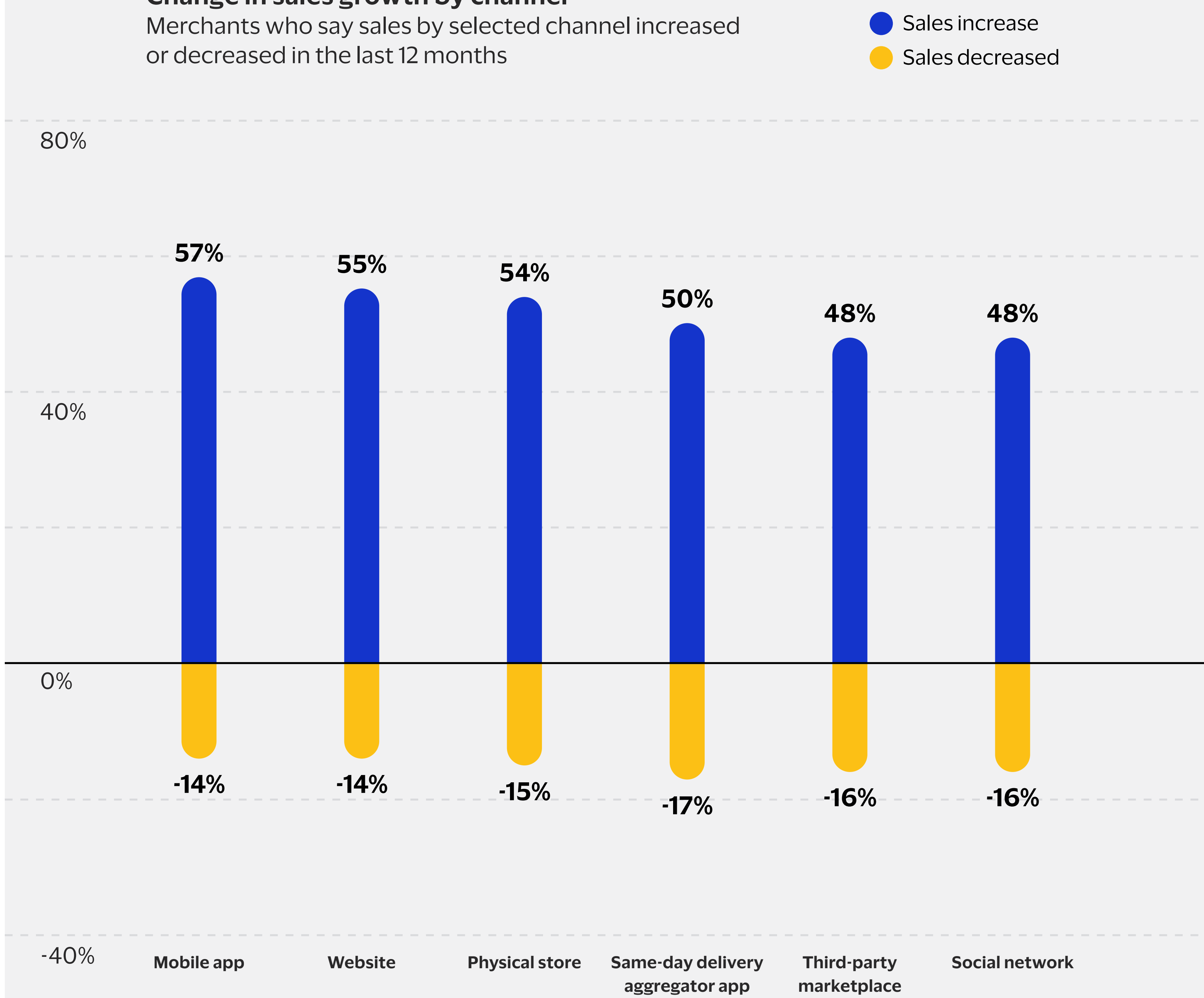
Merchants' own apps are driving sales growth, and the checkout stack behind them shows why.

Merchants' own mobile apps stand out as the most powerful growth driver for sales in 2026. Among merchants selling via their own mobile apps, 57% saw channel sales climb, while only 14% recorded a drop. Websites and physical stores follow closely behind, however, with 55% and 54% of merchants improving their sales through each channel, respectively. Other channels performed well too, including delivery aggregators and third-party marketplaces, results that emphasize the need for merchants to optimize the shopping experience across multiple channels.

Figure 1:

Change in sales growth by channel

Merchants who say sales by selected channel increased or decreased in the last 12 months



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N varies by channel and represents responses from merchants who sell their products to customers, fielded March 2026

Merchants' apps beat their own websites on 11 out of 14 checkout options.

A deeper look at the data reveals why merchants' own mobile apps are leading the way. **On average, merchants offer a much wider range of checkout options through their own apps than through their websites.** In fact, merchants' apps beat their websites on 11 of 14 checkout options measured. That adds up to more complete checkout stacks on apps that deliver better user experiences.

The biggest gap is for biometric authentication: More than four in 10 (42%) merchants make this feature available in-app, versus 26% on their websites, a 16-point gap. QR code is nine points higher in-app. Autofill from a digital wallet is seven points higher. One-click checkout and stored credentials are three points higher. All of these features reduce checkout friction, helping to drive positive experiences that fuel loyalty and repeat purchases.

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Figure 2:

Checkout options offered by channel

Merchants offering selected options in their own apps and on their websites

Payment method	Website	App	App vs. web gap
Biometrics/face ID	26%	42%	+16pp
QR code	50%	59%	+9pp
Autofill (digital wallet)	56%	63%	+7pp
Autofill (payment app)	57%	61%	+4pp
BNPL	42%	46%	+4pp
One-click checkout	58%	61%	+3pp
Stored credentials	60%	63%	+3pp
Pay-by-bank	53%	55%	+2pp
Digital wallet	66%	67%	+1pp
Autofill (stored credentials)	63%	64%	+1pp
Cryptocurrency	16%	17%	+1pp
Payment app	60%	60%	0
Local/alt payment methods	55%	53%	-2pp
Manual billing info	69%	65%	-4pp

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N= 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

Smaller merchants find it especially challenging to offer an advanced checkout stack on their own websites. Small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) lag large merchants by 12 percentage points on web biometrics (18% vs. 31%), 11 points on stored credentials, and 10 points on autofill from stored credentials and digital wallets.

All of these are checkout options that drive repeat purchases. SMBs looking to catch up should focus on packaged solutions offered by their banks or other payment partners rather than trying to build this infrastructure from scratch.

Figure 3:

The SMB gap

Merchants offering selected checkout options on their websites

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N= 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

Widest gaps	SMB	Large	Gap
Biometrics/face ID	18%	31%	-12pp
Stored credentials	54%	65%	-11pp
Autofill (stored credentials)	57%	67%	-10pp
Autofill (digital wallet)	50%	60%	-10pp

Moderate gaps	SMB	Large	Gap
QR code	45%	54%	-9pp
Autofill (payment app)	52%	61%	-8pp
BNPL	37%	45%	-8pp
Pay-by-bank	48%	56%	-7pp
Manual billing info	66%	72%	-6pp

Small gaps	SMB	Large	Gap
One-click checkout	55%	60%	-5pp
Digital wallet	64%	67%	-3pp

At parity	SMB	Large	Gap
Cryptocurrency	15%	17%	-2pp
Local/alt payment methods	54%	56%	-2pp
Payment app	60%	60%	0

02

The unfinished checkout experience

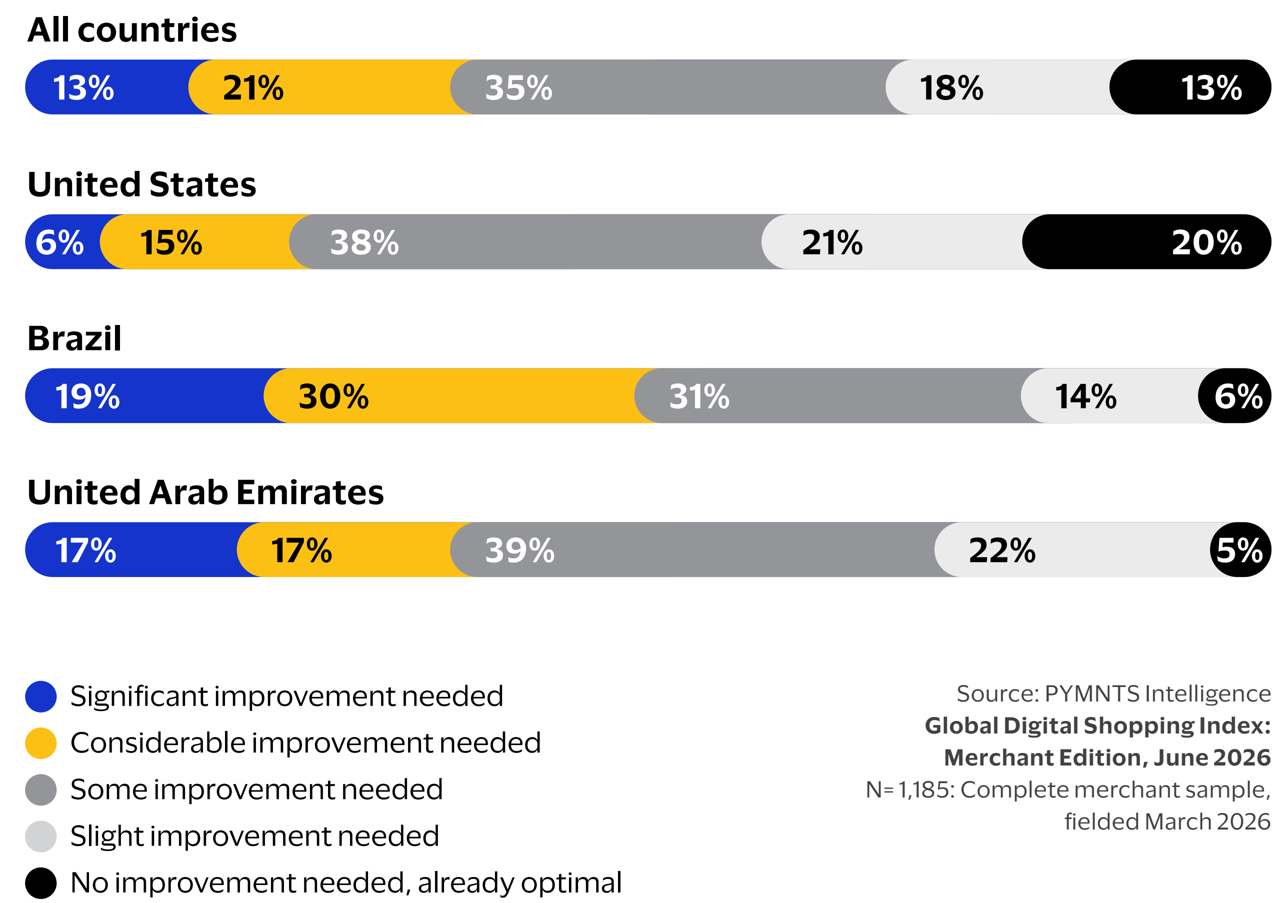
Nearly nine in 10 merchants see gaps in their checkout solutions, but tap-to-pay is solving the in-store side.

Despite all the growth across key sales channels, 87% of merchants say their checkout experience still needs at least slight improvement, and one-third (33%) say considerable or significant upgrades are required. Merchants in Brazil and the UAE are even more likely to believe their checkouts need work, with only 6% and 5%, respectively, saying their current solutions are optimal. For U.S. merchants, this climbs to 20%, which is still a low rate.

Figure 4:

Gaps in the checkout experiences

Merchants providing selected answers to the question “How much improvement does your checkout need?”



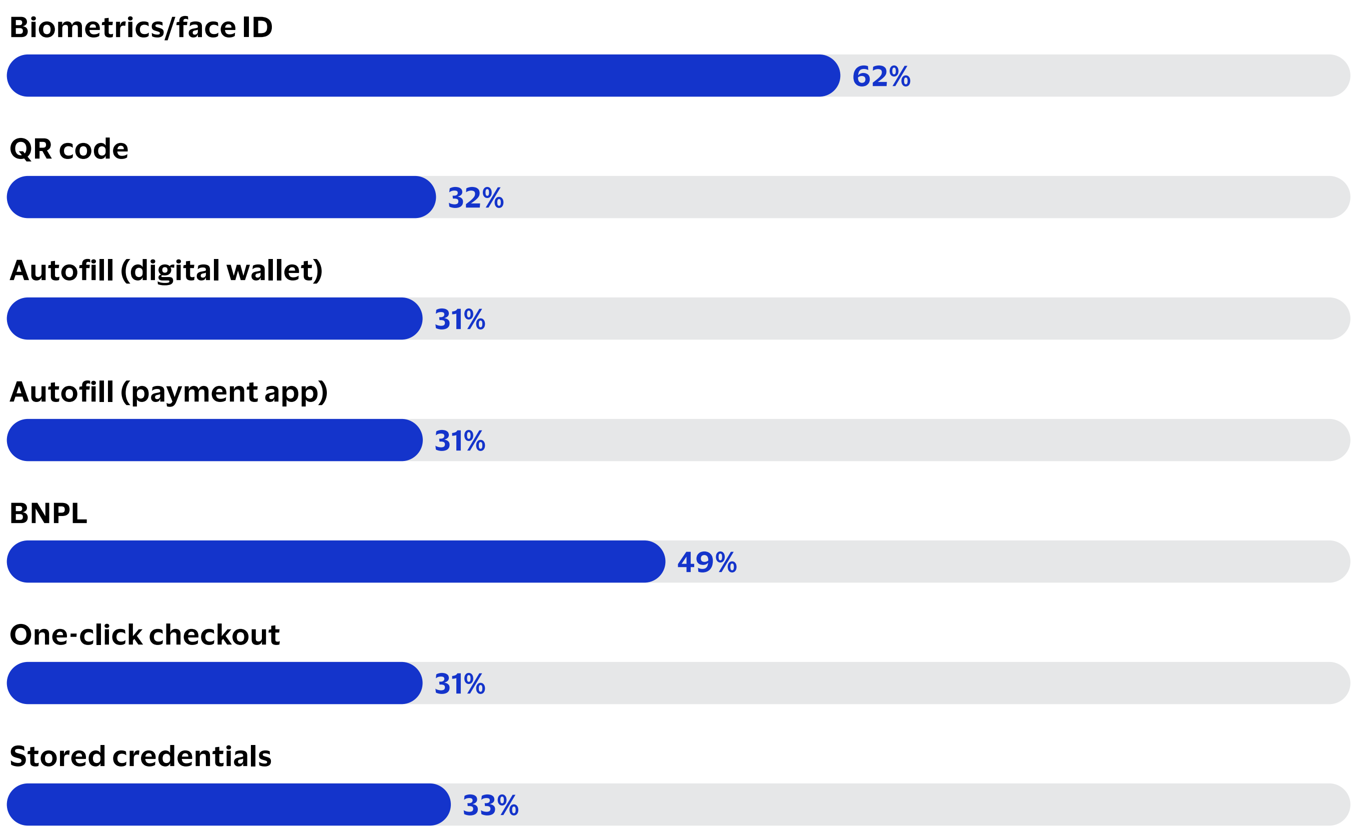
Source: PYMNTS Intelligence **Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026** N= 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

Merchants' widespread lack of confidence in their checkout systems reflects critical gaps in features that would improve the checkout experience. The most notable absence is biometric authentication: Only 38% of merchants currently include this as part of checkout in their own apps or on their websites.

Figure 5:

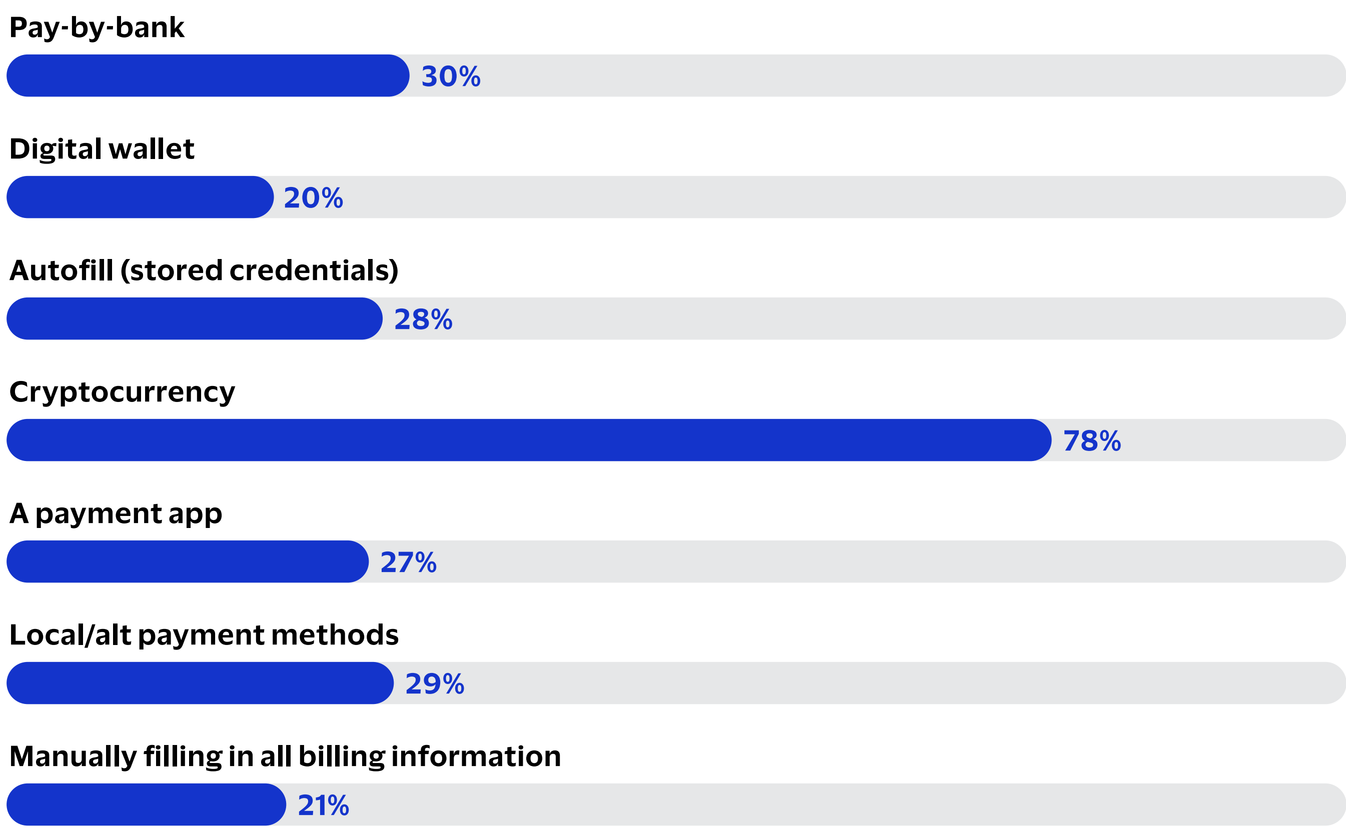
Missing checkout features

Merchants that do not offer selected features on either their mobile app or website



Another in-demand feature often found missing is buy now, pay later (BNPL), which only 51% of merchants make available. Several other important features, including autofill, one-click checkout, and stored credentials, are more widely implemented but still overlooked by about three in 10 merchants each.

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N = 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

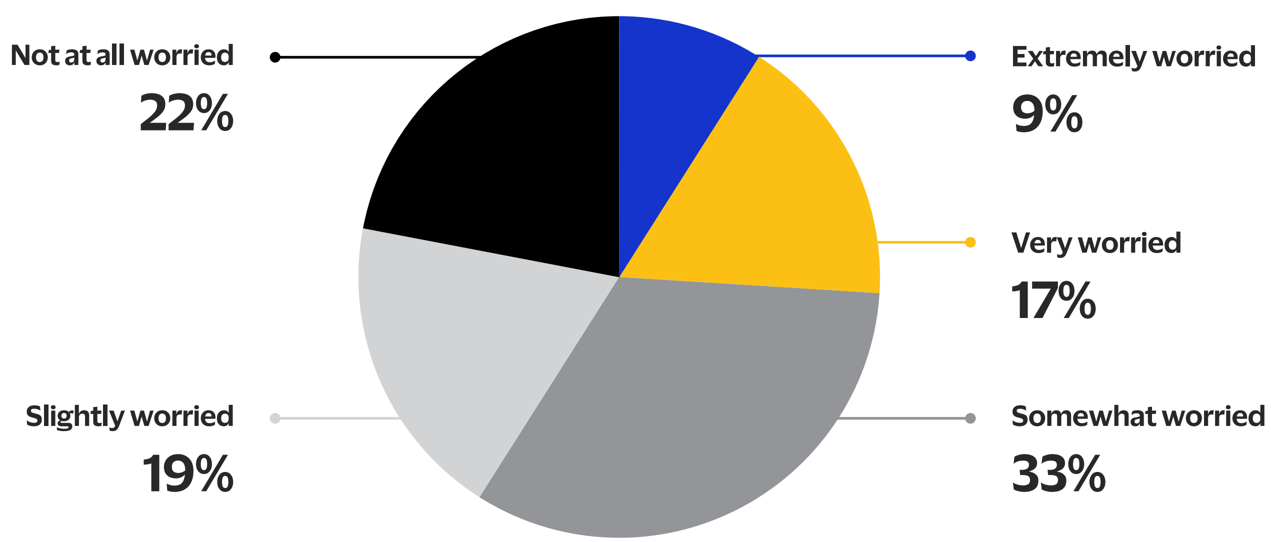


Another core challenge in checkout experiences is keeping up with rapidly advancing payment technologies. About six in 10 (59%) merchants are at least somewhat concerned their current stack will not meet market needs within three years. Those in Brazil are the most anxious: 43% are very or extremely worried, compared to 22% in the UAE and only 12% in the U.S. In large part, these high levels of concern appear to reflect the rapid shift to agentic commerce—more on this in the next section.

Figure 6A:

Keeping up with payment technologies

Merchants citing selected levels of concern that their current payment technology will not meet needs within three years

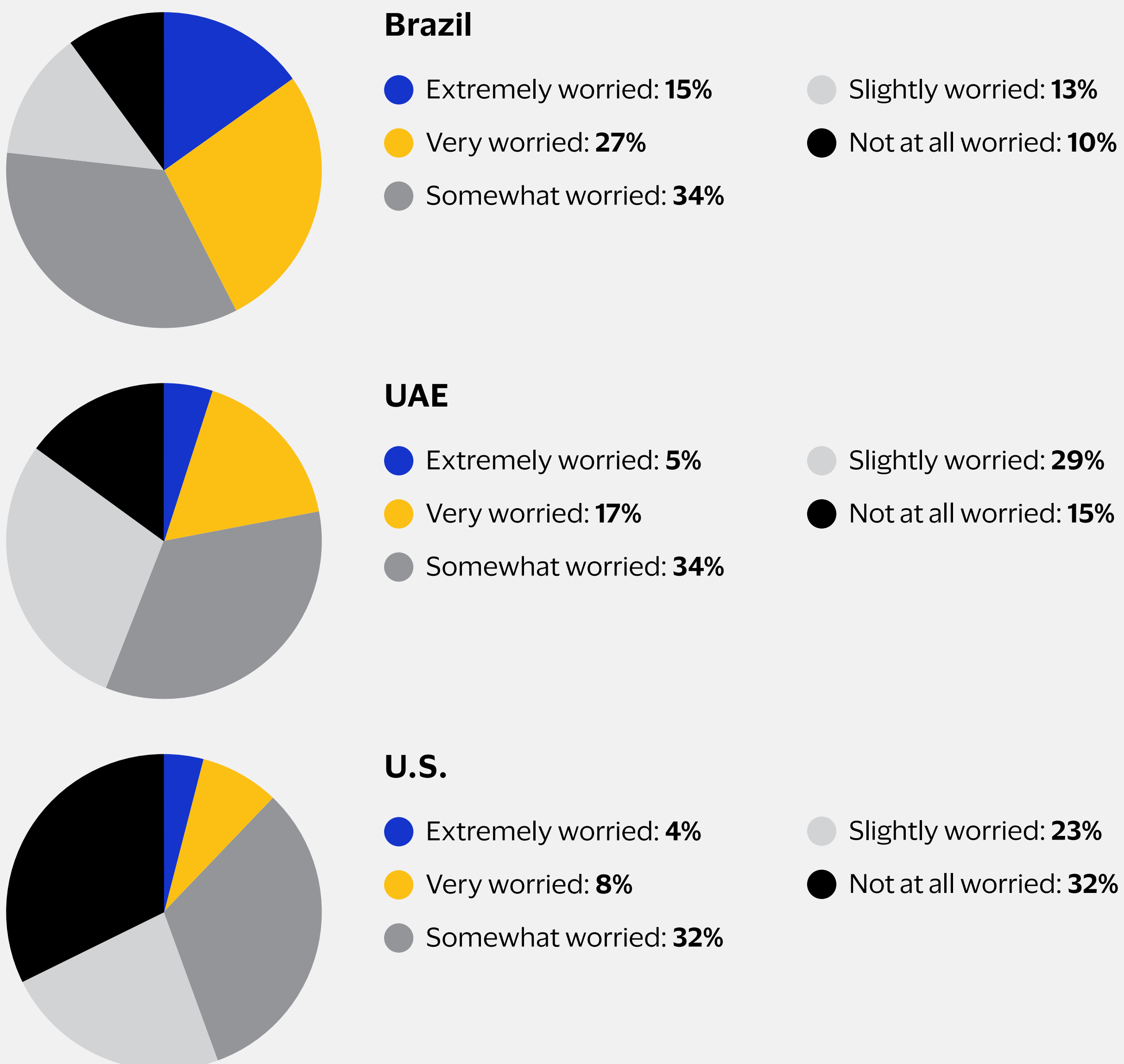


Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N= 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

Figure 6B:

Keeping up with payment technologies

Merchants citing selected levels of concern that their current payment technology will not meet needs within three years, by country



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
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N= 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

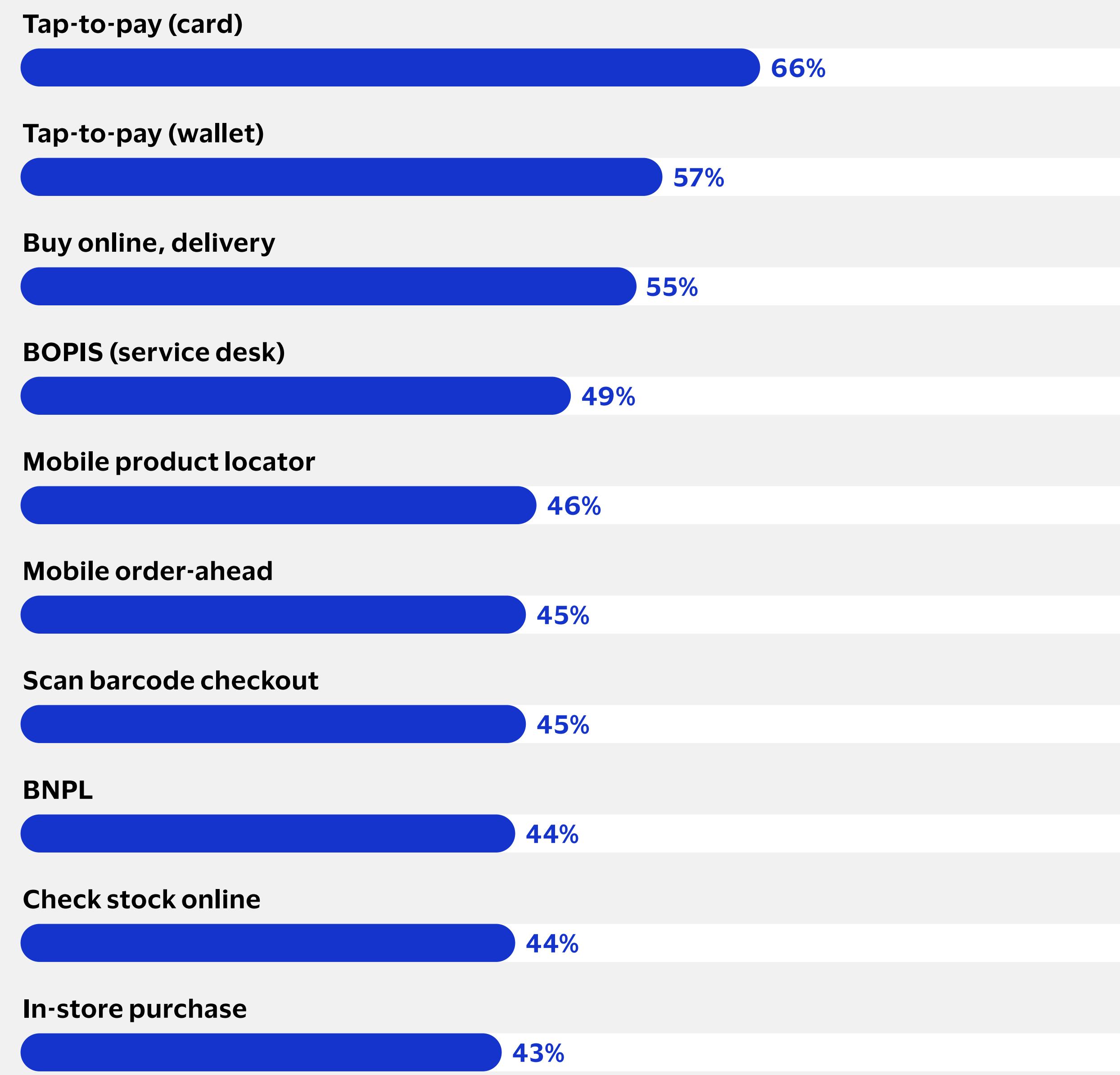
For in-store shopping, tap-to-pay has emerged as the go-to checkout option for most consumers. Two-thirds of merchants report growth in tap-to-pay by card over the last 12 months, and 57% say the same for tap-to-pay by digital wallet. Our companion survey of more than 5,000 consumers confirms this trend: 62% of shoppers say they often or always use checkout with tap-to-pay the last time they bought something in a physical store, up eight percentage points from two years earlier.

The dominance of tap-to-pay shows that consumer preferences can quickly coalesce around a winning shopping method when merchants widely make it available. This may provide a preview for the unfolding rise of AI agents: Once the technology becomes widely available and expected by shoppers, it could rapidly emerge as the default way to shop for many consumers.

Figure 7:

Shopping methods customers are using more

Merchants that report increased use of selected methods



Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N = 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

03

The agent readiness gap

Merchants recognize that AI agents will reshape the competitive landscape—but few are ready for agentic commerce today.

Merchants widely believe that AI agents will change how they do business. About half of merchants (49%) see AI agents as representing some level of opportunity, compared to just 21% who see them as any kind of threat. "Opportunity" in this context translates directly to revenue. Nearly four in 10 (38%) merchants expect purchases made by AI agents will account for over 15% of their total sales within two years, and more than two-thirds (68%) think agents will drive at least 5%. These values may appear small, but they mean merchants firmly believe AI agents will account for important parts of their sales portfolios in the immediate future.

49%

of merchants view agents as some form of opportunity.

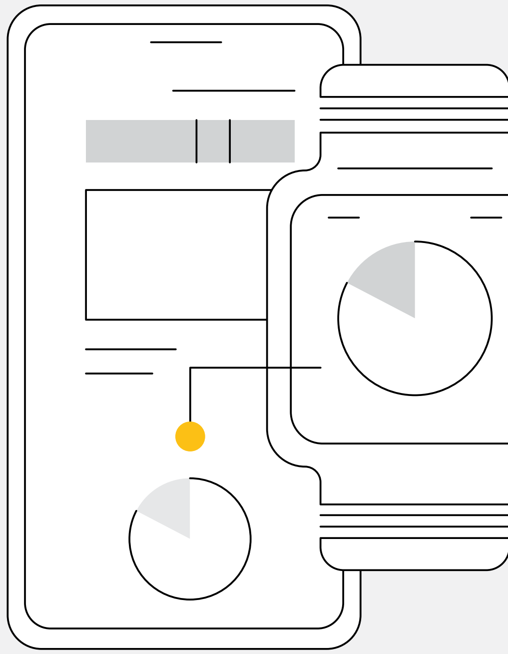
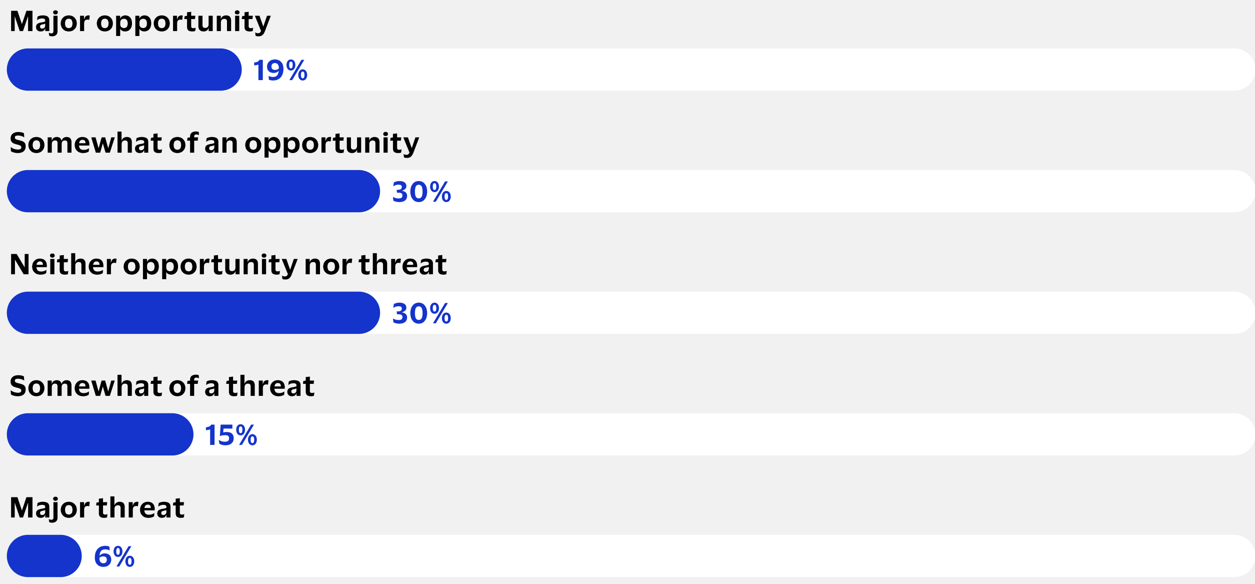


Figure 8:

Opportunity or threat?

Merchants who view AI agents as selected level of opportunity or threat, average across 11 use cases

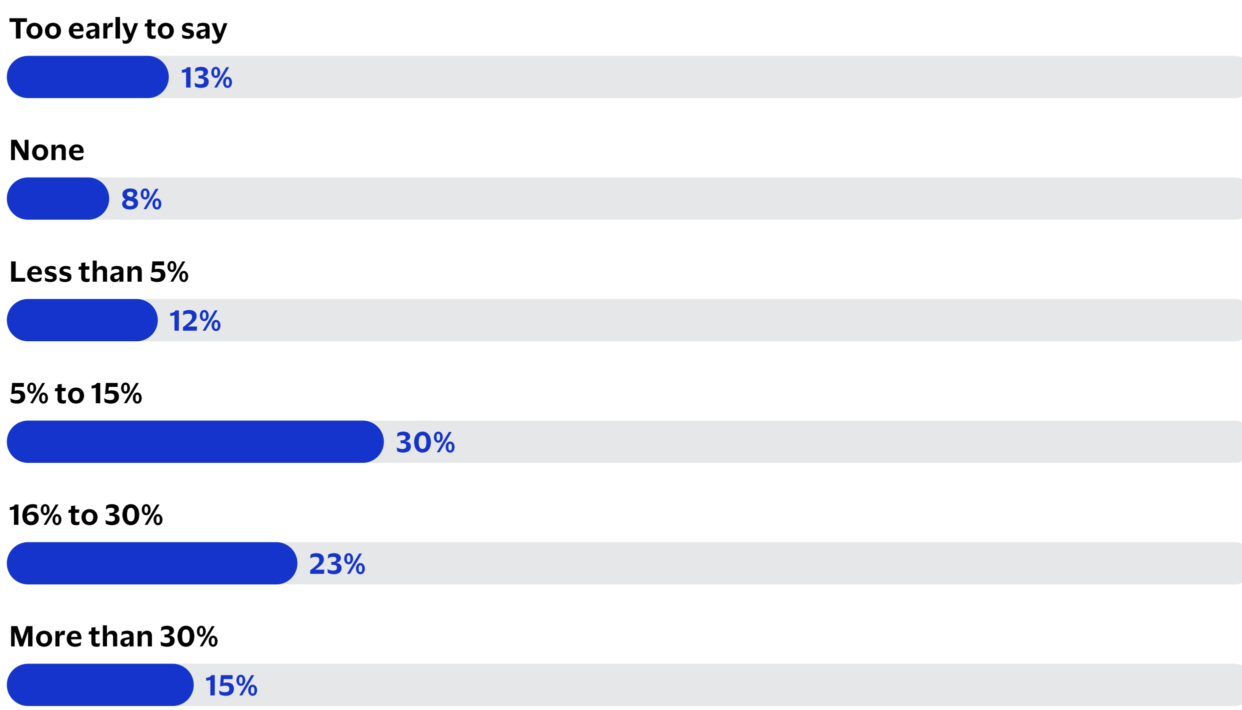


Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N= 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

Figure 9:

Expected level of purchases by AI agents

The percentage of sales merchants expect to come from AI agents within two years



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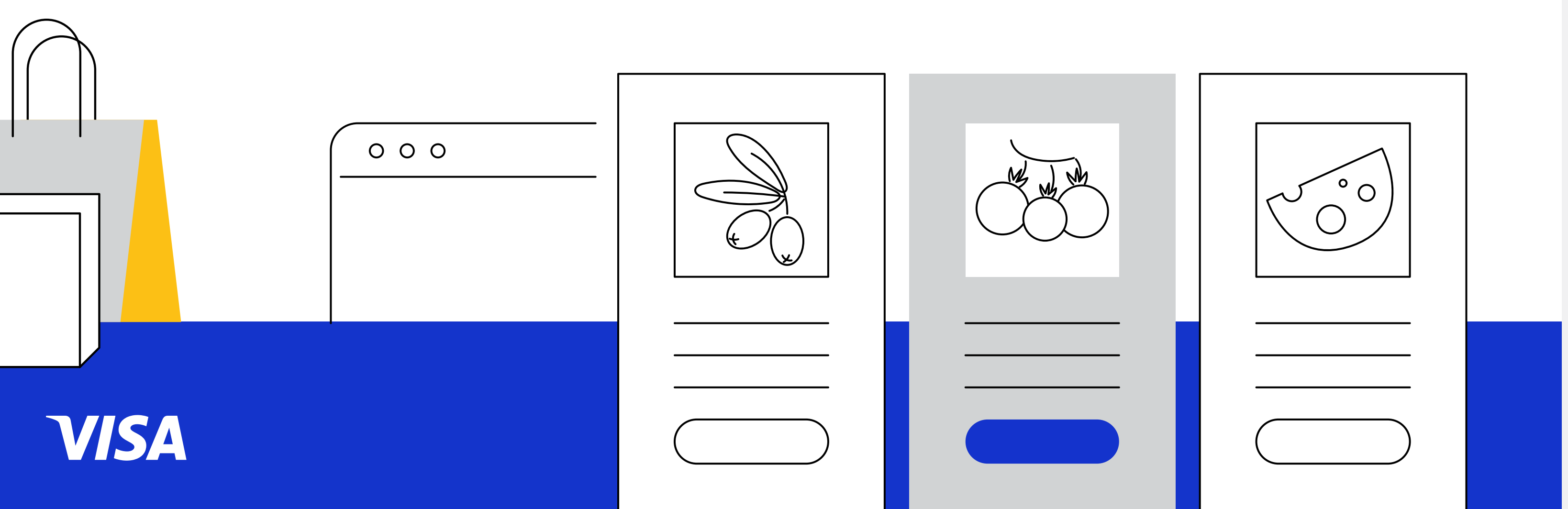
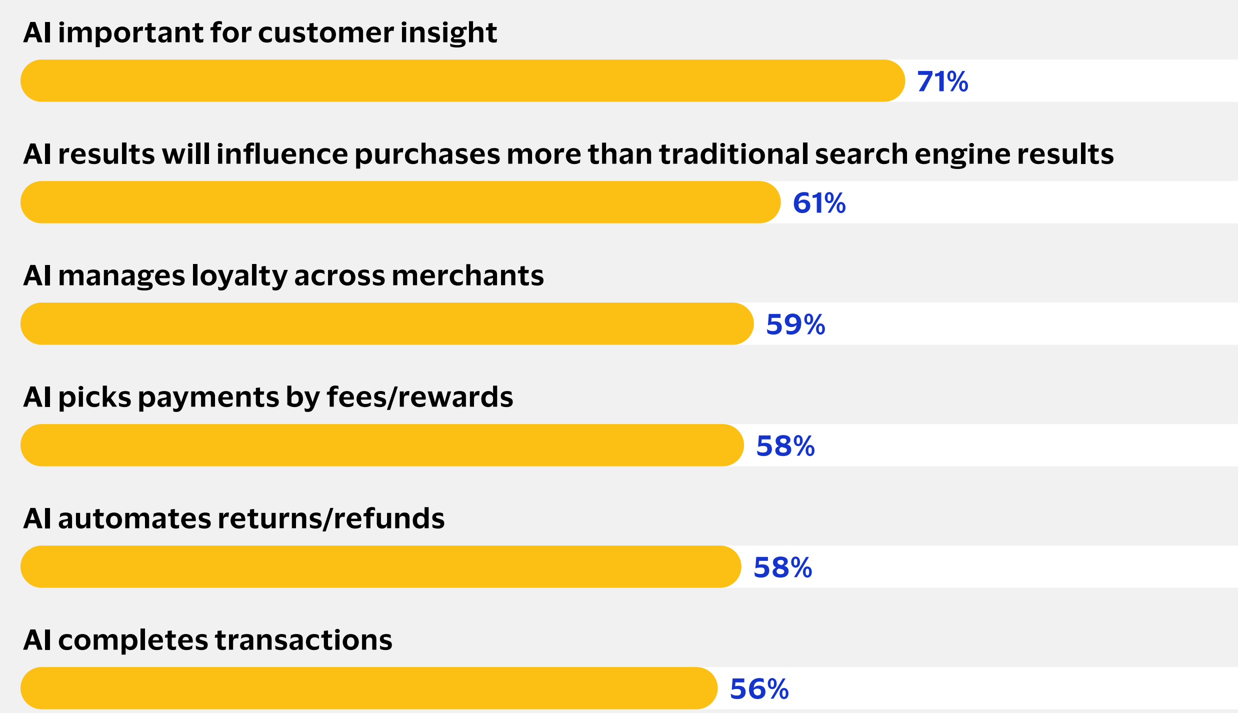


When merchants are asked about the specific impacts AI agents will have within this year, the pace of change becomes clearer. Over six in 10 (61%) agree that AI agents will influence purchases more than traditional search; 58% agree that agents will select payment methods based on fees and rewards; and 56% agree that agents will complete transactions by themselves. These results emphasize that merchants see agentic commerce bringing wide-ranging changes.

Figure 10:

How AI agents will impact merchants in 2026

Merchants who agree that AI will have selected impacts in 2026



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While merchants widely recognize that AI will reshape their industry, most are not ready for agentic transactions today. Globally, only 23% of merchants agree that they can clearly identify AI-based traffic and purchases. This matters because without correct attribution, merchants are essentially blind to which sales are made by agents, leaving them unable to adjust their checkout stack effectively. The UAE performs best in this context, with 31% of merchants already able to identify agent-driven purchases. This falls to 24% in the U.S. and 21% in Brazil.

Another 21% of merchants survey-wide say they can detect agentic traffic but not purchases. This is a step in the right direction, but it does not help understand purchasing dynamics. The remaining 56% indicate that their ability to identify AI-driven traffic is either spotty (19%) or non-existent (21%), or that they are not even sure what capabilities they have (16%).

SMBs have clear catching up to do on AI readiness. Only 19% of smaller merchants can currently identify purchases by AI agents, compared to 27% for large firms—a 1.5x gap that represents an urgent call to action. SMBs that invest in agentic commerce capabilities now will position themselves to capture agent-driven purchases, giving them an advantage not just over other small and mid-sized firms but also over many larger merchants.

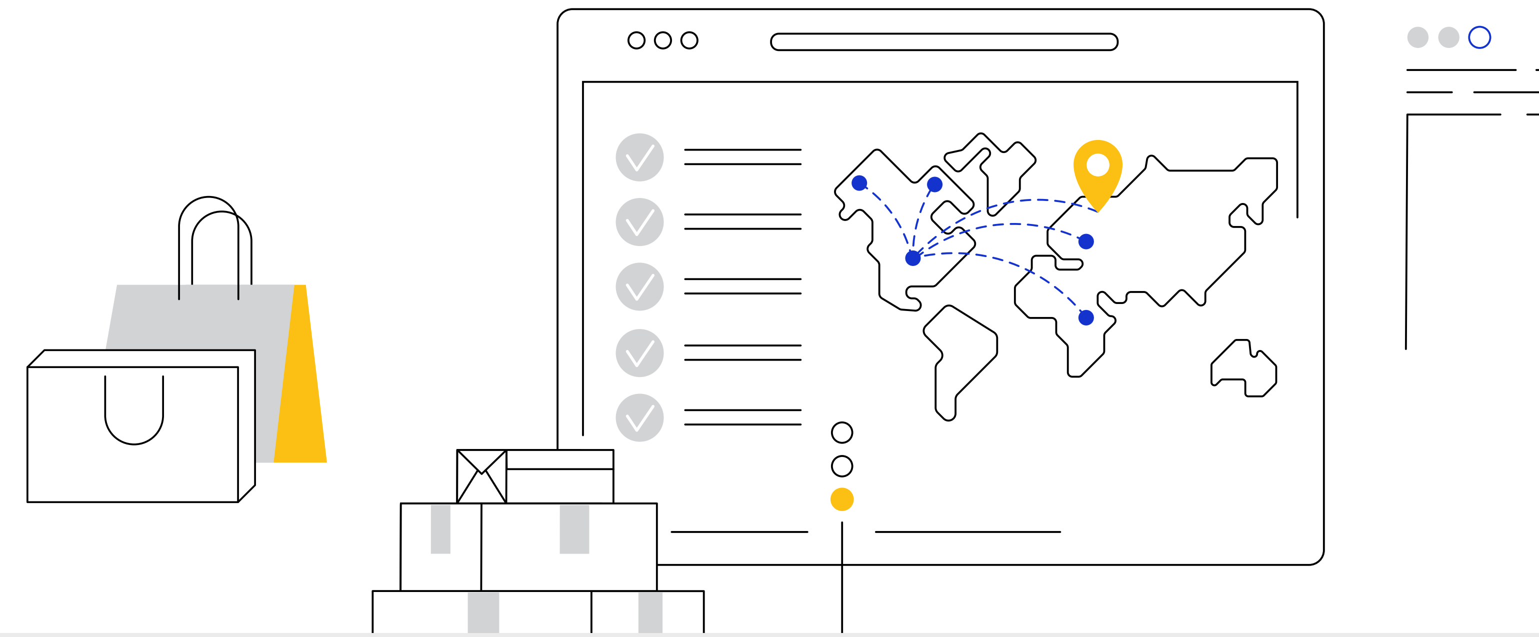


Figure 11:
Current visibility of AI agents

	Traffic and purchases are clearly identified	Traffic only, cannot attribute purchases	Partial identification, inconsistent	Cannot distinguish AI traffic	Unsure
Full sample	23%	21%	19%	21%	16%
• **United States**	24%	23%	16%	20%	18%
• **Brazil**	21%	19%	21%	25%	14%
• **United Arab Emirates**	31%	15%	31%	11%	12%
• **Large merchants**	27%	23%	22%	17%	12%
• **SMBs**	19%	19%	17%	26%	20%

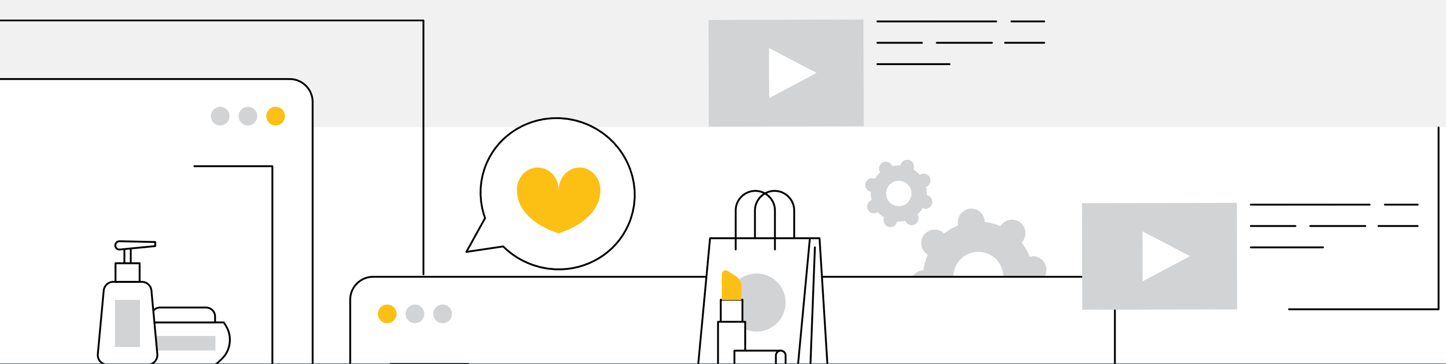
Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
N= 1,185: Complete merchant sample, fielded March 2026

04

How pricing steers payment choice

Over half of merchants are actively using pricing to influence what payment methods shoppers use.

From the merchant perspective, not all payment methods are equally attractive. Transaction fees and other costs vary across payment rails and partners, giving merchants a strong incentive to want to influence which payment methods their customers choose. Their most direct lever for this is price.



Just over half (52%) of merchants actively steer payment choice using either discounts, surcharges, or a combination of the two. Discounts are the most common approach: 41% of merchants offer a price break to customers using low-cost payment methods. Surcharges for high-cost payment methods are less common but still frequently used, at 22%. Nudging customers away from higher-cost payment methods can make a significant difference to a merchant's bottom line across a high volume of transactions.

Figure 12:
Use of discounts and surcharges to influence payment choice

	Discount	Surcharge	No practice
All countries	41%	22%	48%
Brazil	55%	22%	36%
United Arab Emirates	42%	28%	44%
United States	29%	20%	59%

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, June 2026
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55%

of merchants in Brazil offer discounts, almost twice the level of U.S. merchants.

These trends vary significantly across countries, however. Brazil's merchants are by far the most likely to offer discounts, at 55%, nearly twice the rate seen in the U.S. (29%), while the UAE falls in the middle (42%). Surcharges are the most common in the UAE, where 28% of merchants apply them, versus 22% in Brazil and 20% in the U.S. Notably, 59% of U.S. merchants do not apply either price control method, while only 36% of their counterparts in Brazil say the same.

Meanwhile, the data shows almost no difference between large merchants and SMBs when it comes to using discounts and surcharges to swing payment method choice. About four in 10 merchants in each category offer discounts, and just over one in five apply surcharges.

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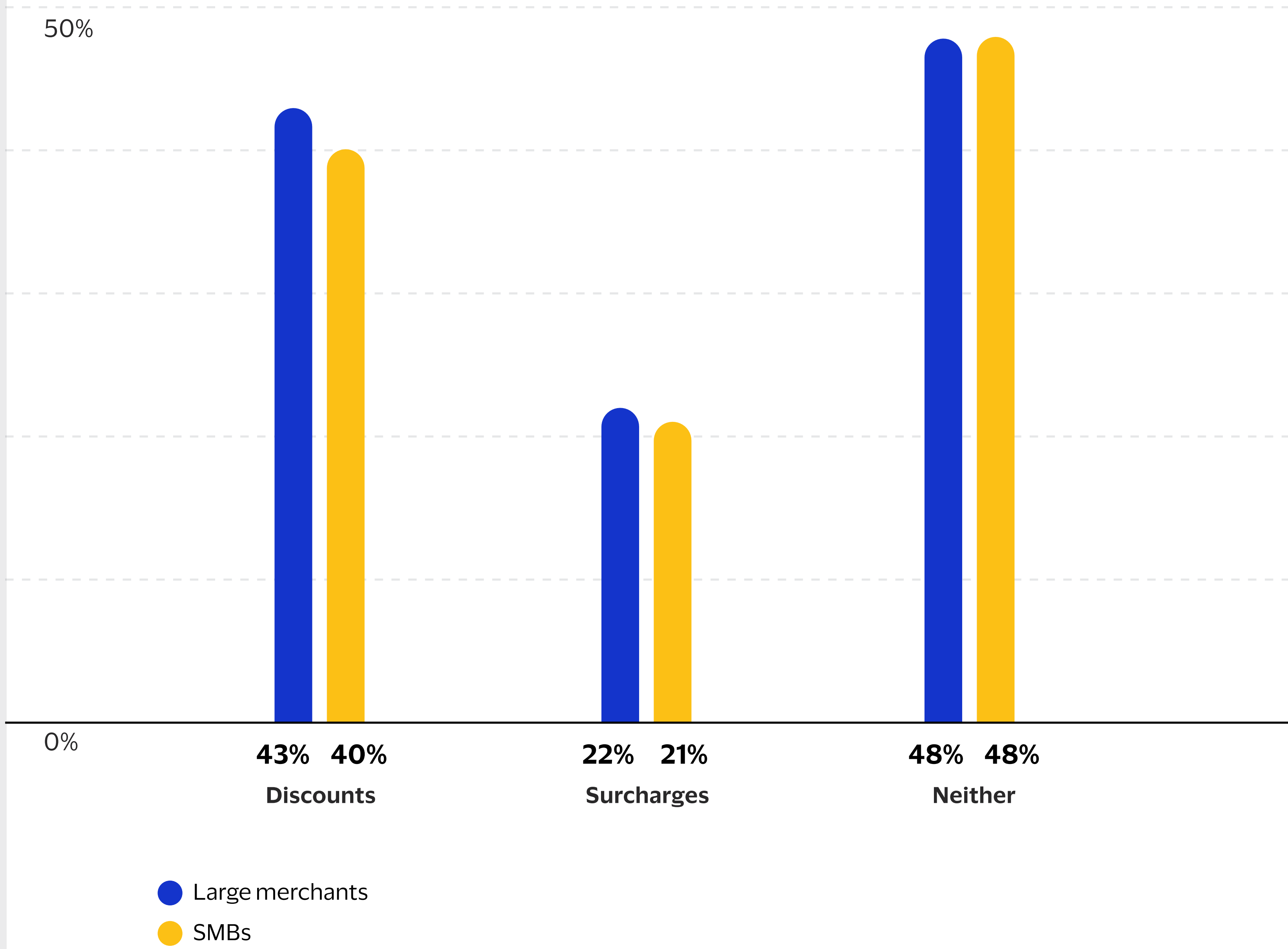
Figure 13:
Large versus small merchants



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05

Focusing on fraud

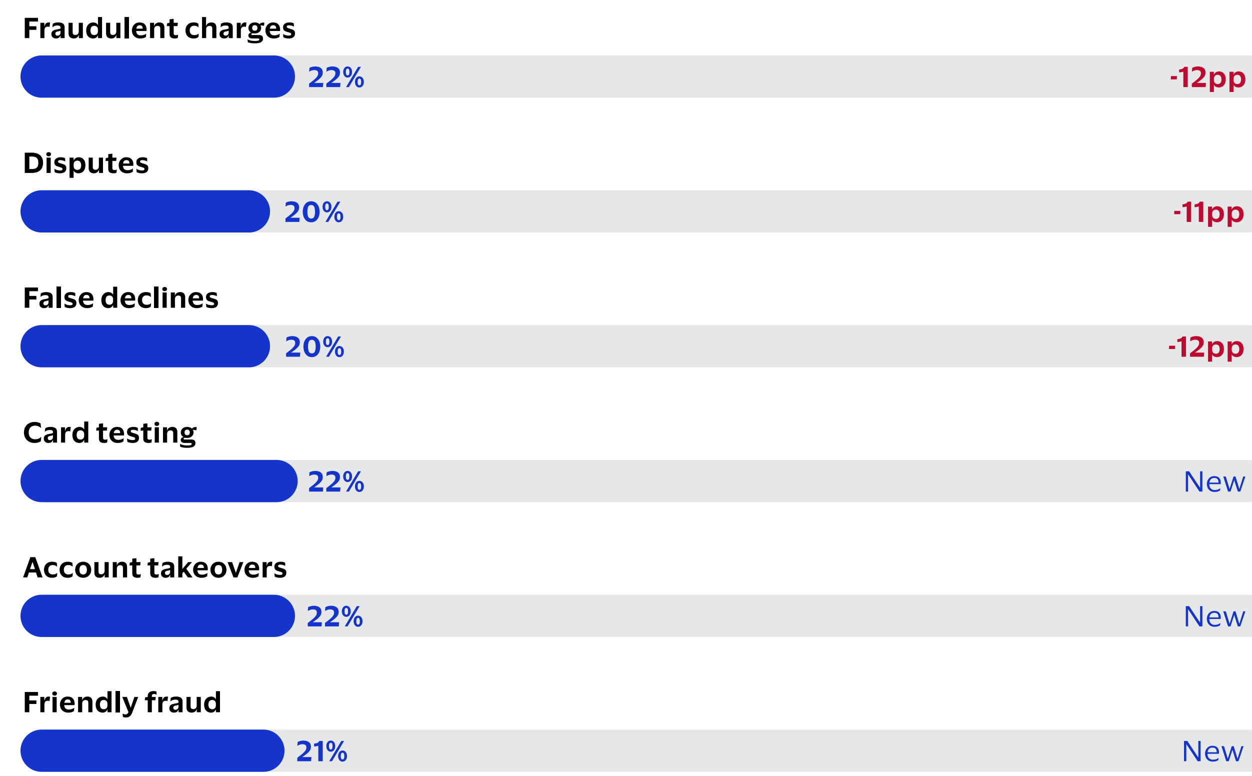
Fewer merchants are reporting significant impact from fraud but interest in fraud protection remains high.

Merchants report broad improvements in controlling fraud in the last two years. Only 16% of merchants cite an increase in fraudulent charges, nine percentage points below the level reported in the 2024 survey. Fraud incidents related to disputes and false declines show very similar patterns, each down eight percentage points from 2024. Similarly, fewer merchants this year say that these types of fraud had very or extremely significant impact on them than did so in the prior survey.

Figure 14A:

Fraud eased in the last two years

Merchants indicating the severity of selected fraud types compared to 2024



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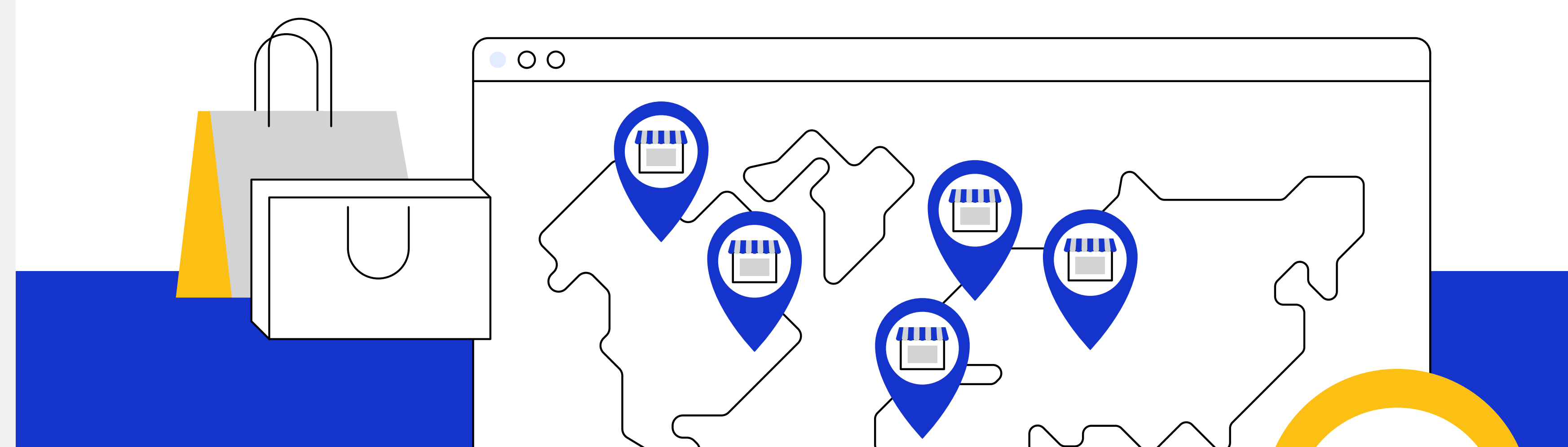
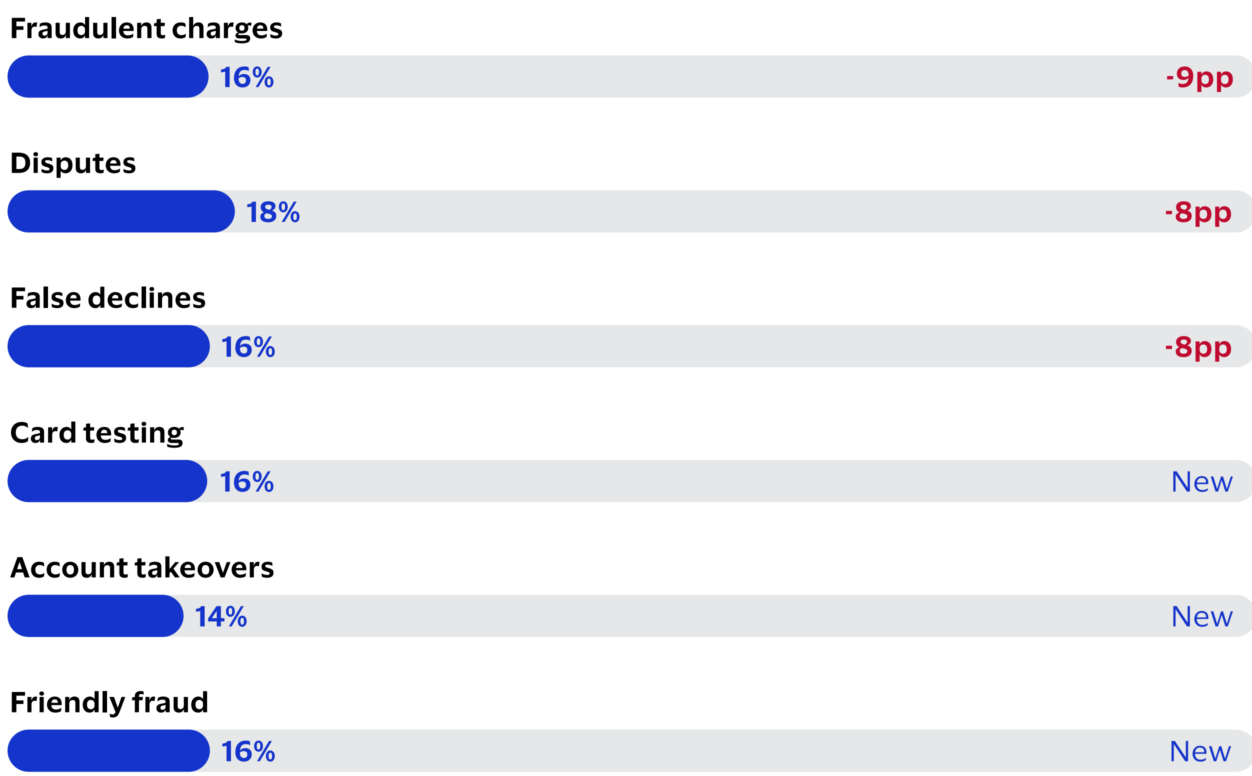


Figure 14B:

Fraud eased in the last two years

Merchants indicating the frequency of selected fraud types compared to 2024



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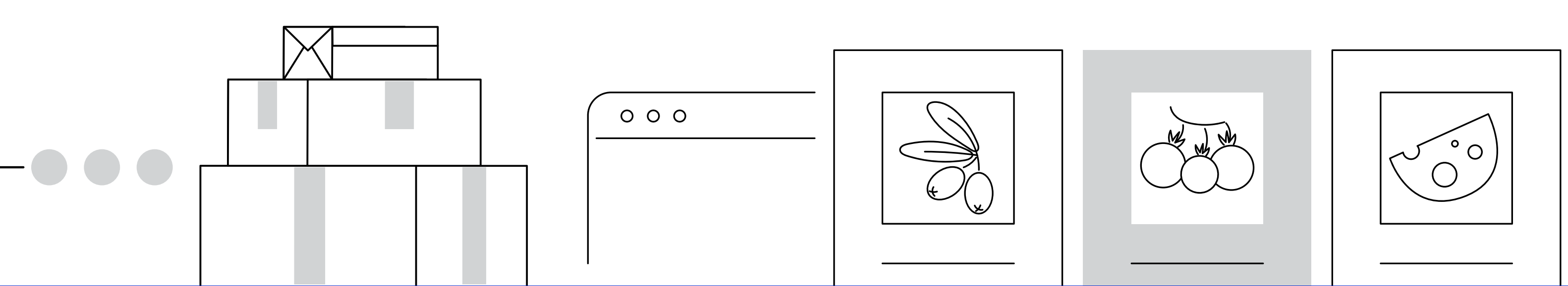

Even though more merchants appear to be keeping risks in check, fraud remains a major concern. Overall, six in 10 merchants say they are very or extremely interested in upgrading fraud protection beyond what their current solutions offer, and this varies relatively little across countries. Merchants in Brazil are the most likely to express strong interest, at 67%, followed by UAE merchants at 60%, and U.S. merchants at 54%. Large merchants (62%) and SMBs (59%) also show about the same level of interest.

Figure 15:

Upgrading fraud protection

Merchants very or extremely interested in improving fraud protection beyond their current offerings

	Extremely interested	Very interested	Slightly interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested
Full sample	28%	33%	9%	26%	5%
• United States	23%	32%	11%	28%	7%
• Brazil	32%	35%	7%	23%	3%
• United Arab Emirates	31%	29%	9%	28%	3%
• Large merchants	28%	33%	9%	25%	4%
• SMBs	26%	32%	9%	27%	5%

Source: PYMNTS Intelligence
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Actionable insights

Merchant Roadmap to Agent-Ready Commerce

This is a phased framework for how merchants can prepare for AI-driven shopping, agent-initiated purchases, and more dynamic payment choice, derived from a survey of 1,185 retail merchants across the U.S., Brazil, and the UAE.

The path to agentic commerce is sequential, not simultaneous.

Merchants that try to scale AI-driven shopping before modernizing checkout, attribution, payment choice, and risk controls will face the same friction already limiting digital sales growth today. Each phase unlocks the next.

Phase 1: Now
Strengthen the checkout foundation

Apps, friction reduction, and feature coverage

- Prioritize merchant-owned apps as the lead digital channel
- Close important checkout feature gaps
- Bring checkout stacks closer to enterprise standards

Phase 2: Within 12 months
Build agent visibility

Attribution, structured data, and traffic intelligence

- Identify AI-driven traffic and purchases
- Make product, payment, and loyalty data agent-readable
- Create reporting systems that distinguish human and agent activity

Phase 3: Within 24 months
Scale agent-ready commerce

Automation, loyalty, and cross-channel execution

- Prepare for agents to select products and payment methods
- Connect loyalty and checkout across channels
- Build flexible infrastructure for autonomous commerce

The core insight: Merchants see AI agents as a major opportunity, but most are not ready to act on it. Only 23% can clearly identify both AI-driven traffic and purchases today, even as merchants broadly expect AI agents to make purchases and influence key parts of the shopping journey, including product discovery, payment choice, and loyalty. This roadmap reflects that gap between expectation and readiness.

Phase 1

Phase 1:

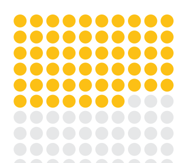
Now

Strengthen the Checkout Foundation

Apps, friction reduction, and feature coverage

Prioritize merchant-owned apps as the lead digital channel.

Merchant apps are the strongest near-term platform for agent-ready commerce because they combine customer engagement, stored preferences, payment credentials, and loyalty tools in one owned environment. Merchants should treat apps as the proving ground for the checkout features that will later need to work across agent-driven journeys.

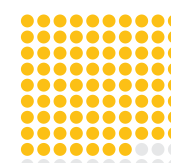


57%

of merchants selling through their own mobile apps say sales through that channel increased in the last year.

Close the most visible checkout feature gaps.

Merchants need to make checkout faster, easier, and more consistent before AI-driven shopping scales. Biometric authentication, stored credentials, autofill, QR codes, and one-click checkout reduce the friction that causes abandonment today and constrains agentic commerce tomorrow.

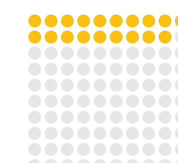


87%

of merchants say their checkout experience needs at least some improvement.

Bring SMB checkout stacks closer to enterprise standards.

Smaller merchants face a clear capability gap, especially on their own websites. Rather than trying to build advanced checkout infrastructure from scratch, SMBs should lean on packaged solutions from banks, payment partners, and commerce platforms that can help them add modern checkout features quickly.



19%

of SMBs can currently identify purchases by AI agents, compared to 27% of large merchants.

Why start here?

Agentic commerce will not work well on top of weak checkout infrastructure. Merchants' own mobile apps already lead sales growth and offer more complete checkout stacks than websites. The first step is not to build for full autonomy, but to improve the digital environments where merchants already have the most control.

Why this comes first?

Checkout modernization is the foundation for everything else. Merchants cannot prepare for agentic commerce without reliable digital checkout flows, feature-rich apps, and payment experiences that already reduce friction for human shoppers.

Phase 2

Phase 2:

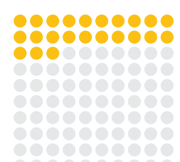
Within 12 months

Build Agent Visibility

Attribution, structured data, and traffic intelligence

Identify AI-driven traffic and purchases.

Attribution is the basic requirement for agent-ready commerce. Merchants need systems that can distinguish human purchases and site visits from agentic ones. Without that visibility, agentic commerce becomes a black box, making it difficult to optimize payment flows, loyalty offers, or product presentation.

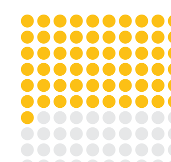


23%

of merchants can clearly identify both AI-driven traffic and purchases today.

Make product, payment, and loyalty data agent-readable.

Agents will need clear, structured information to compare products, understand availability, evaluate loyalty benefits, and execute transactions. Merchants should prepare data environments that allow agents to interpret checkout requirements, payment options, pricing, and incentives accurately.

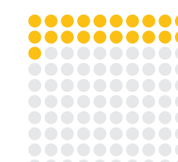


61%

of merchants agree AI agents will influence purchases more than traditional search in 2026.

Create reporting systems that distinguish human and agent activity.

Detecting AI traffic alone is not enough. Merchants need reporting systems that connect agent activity to completed purchases, payment choice, loyalty use, and transaction value. This will help merchants understand whether agents are driving incremental sales or simply changing the path to purchase.



21%

of merchants can detect agentic traffic but cannot attribute purchases.

Why this comes next?

Once merchants have stronger checkout foundations, the next priority is visibility. AI agents will change how shoppers discover products, select payment methods, and complete purchases. Merchants that cannot identify agent-driven traffic and sales will struggle to understand where demand is coming from or how their checkout stack should adapt.

Why this comes next?

Agentic commerce creates an attribution problem before it creates a full automation problem. Merchants need to know when agents are involved, what they influence, and whether they complete purchases before they can confidently optimize for them.

Phase 3

Phase 3:

Within 24 months

Scale Agent-Ready Commerce

Automation, loyalty, and cross-channel execution

Prepare for agents to select products and payment methods.

Merchants expect AI agents to take on more active roles in shopping and checkout. That means merchants must prepare for a world in which agents not only influence purchases but also complete transactions and select payment methods based on fees, rewards, and shopper preferences.

58%

of merchants agree AI agents will select payment methods based on fees and rewards in 2026.

Connect loyalty and checkout across channels.

Agentic commerce will likely blur the boundaries between search, comparison, loyalty, and payment. Merchants need loyalty data and checkout systems that work across apps, websites, physical stores, and agent-driven interfaces rather than stay trapped in separate channels.

56%

of merchants agree AI agents will complete transactions by themselves in 2026.

Build flexible infrastructure for autonomous commerce.

Merchants should prepare for AI agents to become an ongoing layer in sales, not a niche shopping tool. Flexible infrastructure will allow merchants to adjust payment rules, fraud controls, loyalty offers, and product visibility as agent-driven transactions become more common.

38%

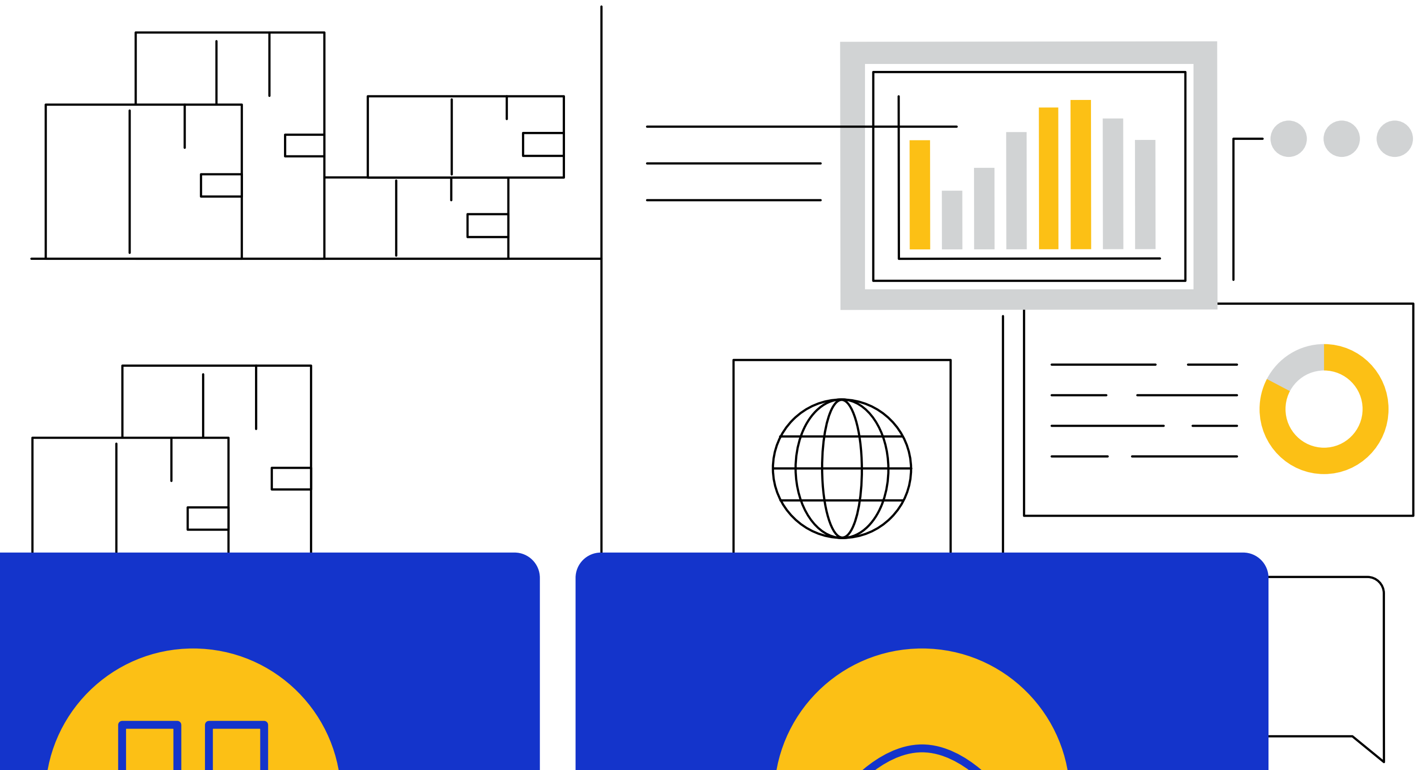
of merchants expect purchases made by AI agents to account for more than 15% of their total sales within two years.

Why is this the last stage?

Full agent-ready commerce requires more than smoother checkouts or better attribution. It requires merchants to support agent-driven product discovery, payment selection, loyalty optimization, and transaction execution across channels. This phase becomes viable only after the first three are in place.

How does autonomous commerce change things?

Autonomous commerce raises the stakes across every layer of the sales stack. Merchants should scale only once checkout, attribution, payment steering, and fraud controls are mature enough to support agent-driven purchases without creating new blind spots.



How Leading Merchants Stay Ahead of Agent-Ready Commerce

Treat apps as the control center.

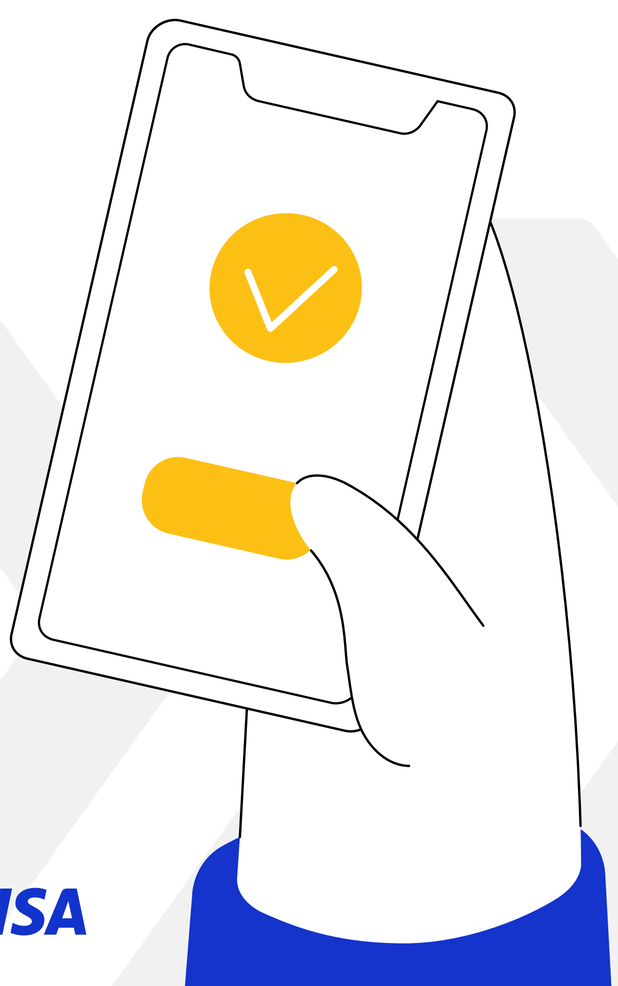
Leaders understand that merchant-owned apps already combine checkout, payments, loyalty, and customer data. They use apps to test the capabilities that will later need to work across agent-driven commerce.

Make attribution a core capability.

Leaders are not waiting for AI-driven shopping to become mainstream before measuring it. They are building visibility into agentic traffic and purchases now.

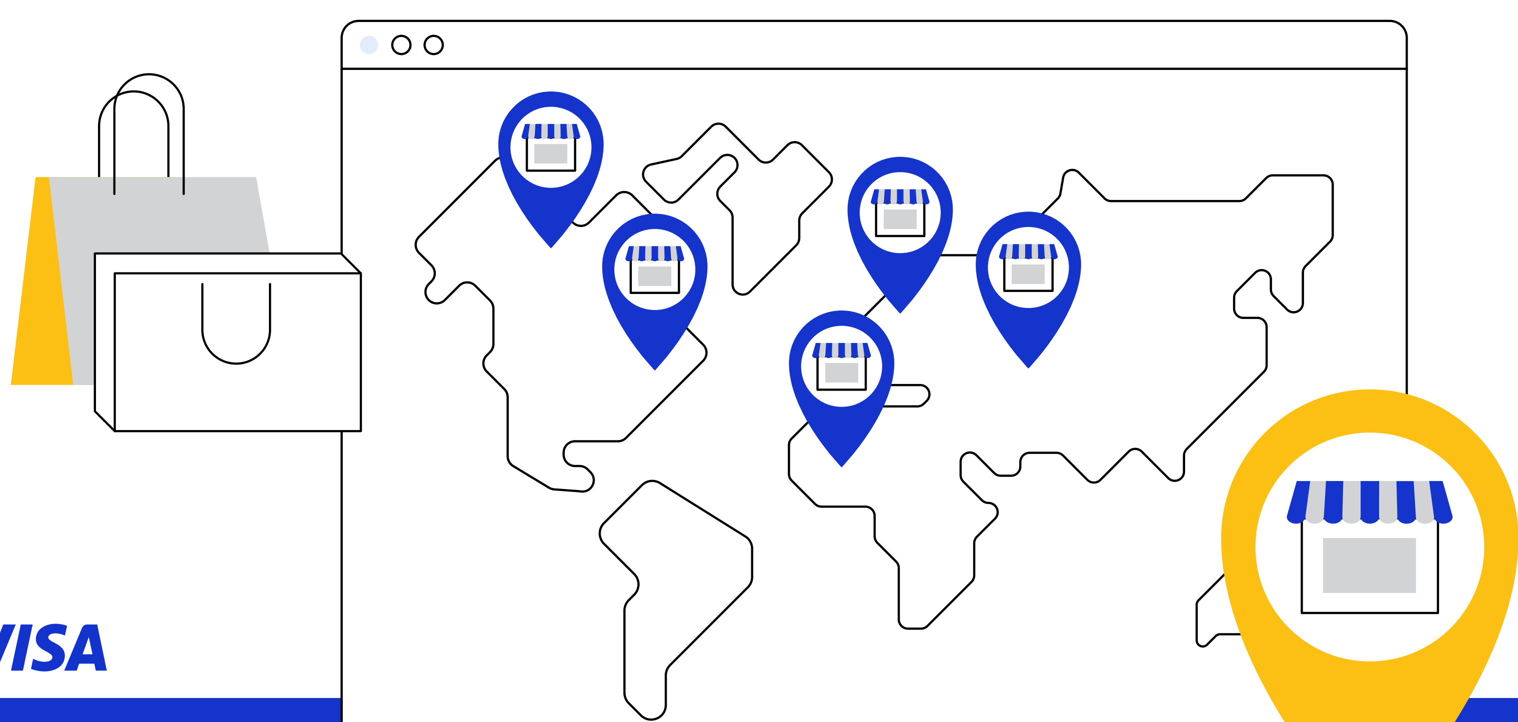
Build fraud controls for automation.

Leaders know that lower reported fraud does not eliminate risk. They continue upgrading fraud protection before agent-driven shopping creates new patterns of identity, authorization, and dispute exposure.



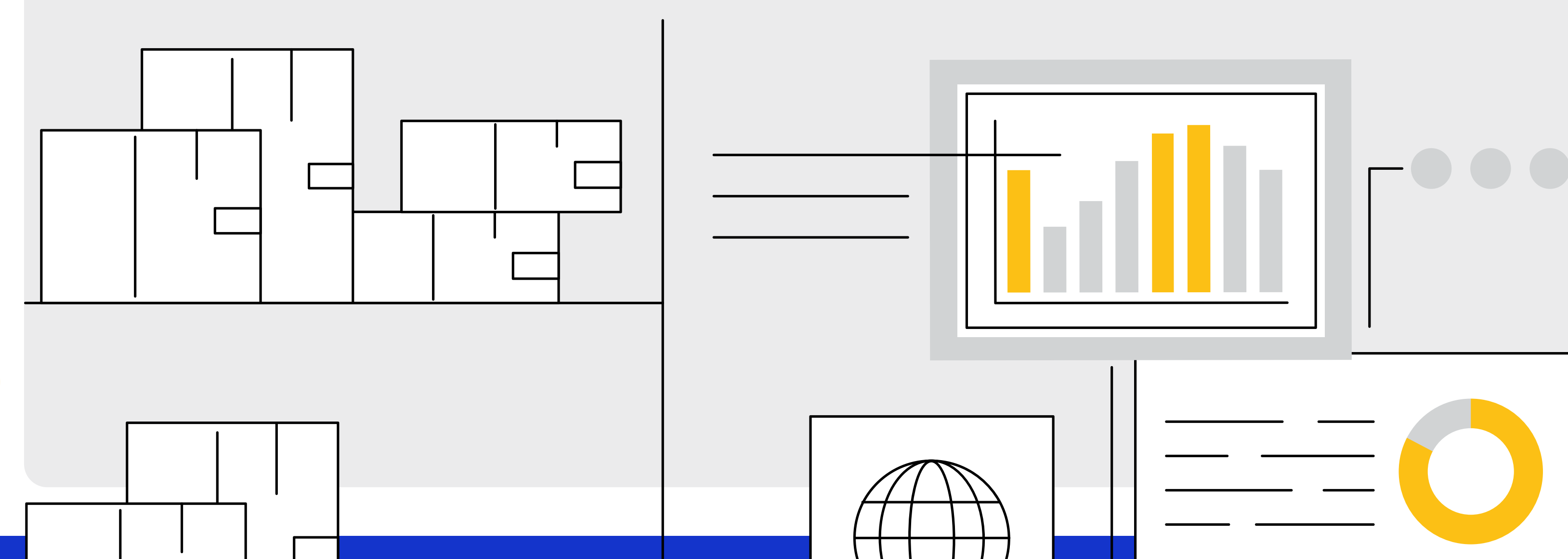
Conclusion

The 2026 merchant survey shows a business environment developing quickly but unevenly. Merchants' own apps are gaining strength, tap-to-pay is becoming the in-store default, and merchants increasingly recognize that checkout quality directly affects sales growth. Yet nearly all merchants still see room to improve their checkout experiences, and many worry their current payment stacks may not keep pace with market expectations. This creates a clear strategic challenge: Merchants must continue optimizing today's channels while preparing for the next generation of digital commerce.



Payments strategy is also becoming more active and more complex. Merchants are using discounts and surcharges to steer payment choice, while maintaining strong interest in better fraud protection even as reported fraud pressures ease. These priorities point to a broader shift in merchant thinking. Checkout is no longer just the end of the shopping journey. It is a strategic layer where merchants optimize the customer experience.

AI agents add urgency to that challenge. Merchants largely view agentic commerce as an opportunity, not a threat, but most lack the visibility and infrastructure needed to identify AI-driven purchases today. That gap matters because agentic commerce could alter product discovery, payment selection, loyalty engagement, and transaction completion. Merchants that modernize their checkout environments now—with stronger data, better attribution, and more flexible payment capabilities—will be better positioned as AI agents become the default way many consumers shop.



Methodology

The 2026 Global Digital Shopping Index: Merchant Edition, a PYMNTS Intelligence and Visa Acceptance Solutions collaboration, examines how merchants are adapting their shopping modes, innovation roadmap, payment stack, pricing practices, and fraud posture heading into the agent era.

It draws on a survey of 1,185 retail merchants across three countries (the United States, Brazil, and the United Arab Emirates) fielded in March 2026. Country samples are weighted and stratified so that both SMB and large merchants are represented on nationally relevant scales. SMB definitions follow standard local thresholds by country.

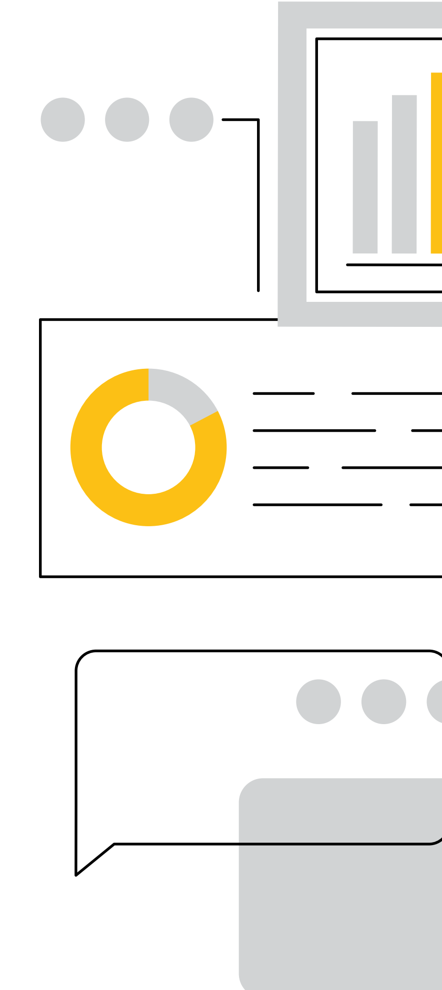
This edition compares the March 2026 wave against prior waves: January 2022 (baseline), January 2023, and November 2024 (prior wave, 24-month year-over-year). Where a question changed wording or answer choices, over-time comparisons are omitted and marked "New" in callouts. The consumer side of the same data wave is reported in the 2026 Global Digital Shopping Index (April 2026). References to consumer data draw from that companion report.

2026

Global Digital Shopping Index

Merchant Edition

Channels, Choices, and the Road to Agent-Ready



About

Visa (NYSE: V) is a world leader in digital payments, facilitating transactions between consumers, sellers, financial institutions and government entities across more than 200 countries and territories. Our mission is to connect the world through the most innovative, convenient, reliable and secure payments network, enabling individuals, businesses and economies to thrive. We believe that economies that include everyone everywhere, uplift everyone everywhere and see access as foundational to the future of money movement. Learn more at https://corporate.visa.com/en/solutions/acceptance.html

PYMNTS Intelligence is a leading global data and analytics platform that uses proprietary data and methods to provide actionable insights on what's now and what's next in payments, commerce and the digital economy. Its team of data scientists include leading economists, econometricians, survey experts, financial analysts, and marketing scientists with deep experience in the application of data to the issues that define the future of the digital transformation of the global economy. This multi-lingual team has conducted original data collection and analysis in more than three dozen global markets for some of the world's leading publicly traded and privately held firms.

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