

A SURVEY OF 100 RETAIL AND DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER BRANDS

The race to unified commerce: Keeping pace with customer expectations, technology and trends

Introduction

Unified commerce isn't just a future ambition, it's becoming the decisive edge in a retail market shaped by speed, complexity, and rising expectations.

This report is the result of a collaboration between PMC and Retail Economics, combining PMC's expertise in digital retail transformation with Retail Economics' in-depth market analysis and research. Together, we set out to understand how UK retailers and direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands are navigating the journey to unified commerce.

Through original research with 100 senior leaders from across the retail and DTC landscape, this report reveals how the most digitally advanced businesses are delivering faster, more connected customer experiences — and the practical steps others can take to catch up.

This report offers

- **Benchmark insights** by revenue size, business model, and transformation maturity
- **Actionable frameworks** for building flexible, future-ready operations
- **Strategic guidance** on how to overcome legacy barriers, unlock speed, and scale innovation

Customer expectations are evolving faster than most retail models can respond. Traditional systems—siloed, sluggish, and hard to scale, are no longer fit for purpose. In this environment, brands need more than incremental change. They need an architecture that brings together systems, channels, and data to deliver seamless experiences and operational agility.

That's where unified commerce comes in. To succeed, brands must bring together systems, channels, and data to deliver seamless experiences and operational agility.

As our data shows, doing this work is worth it. In just one example of the impact it can have, 58% of retailers who have rolled out centralised analytics report faster decision-making, 45% report cost savings, and 48% report revenue growth.

But transformation isn't easy. Many businesses still struggle to turn ambition into execution. This report outlines how those leading the way are breaking through barriers—and how you can too.

Whether you're defining your strategy or deep into implementation, this report provides the insight, structure, and momentum to unlock the full value of unified commerce.

We explore how forward-thinking brands are using agile digital platforms and modular technologies to:

1. Unify customer journeys across touchpoints
2. Reduce technical complexity and operational cost
3. Accelerate speed to market for new initiatives
4. Build resilience for the demands of tomorrow

At its core, unified commerce merges all retail systems, channels, and data into a single, real-time platform. This enables brands to deliver:

- Consistent customer experiences
- Personalised engagement
- Intelligent stock allocation
- Agile operations across every channel



Definitions: In this report, 'omnichannel retailer' means any consumer-facing business with between 1% and 90% of their sales transacted via online channels. 'Direct-to-consumer (DTC) brand' means any consumer-facing brand with 91% or more of their sales transacted via online channels.

Foreword

In today's fast-moving and fiercely competitive retail environment, delivering seamless, connected customer experiences isn't just a differentiator - it's a necessity. The pace of change in consumer expectations has outstripped the capacity of many traditional retail systems. At PMC, we believe the solution lies in unified commerce.

We're proud to have partnered with Retail Economics to bring you this report, which draws on in-depth insights from 100 senior leaders across UK retail and DTC brands. Together, we explore how forward-thinking businesses are leveraging unified commerce to meet rising expectations, drive operational agility, and unlock meaningful growth.



Their experiences confirm what we've long seen in the field. Transformation isn't just about technology - it's about building a flexible, scalable foundation that connects every part of your business in real time.

The data shows the benefits are real and measurable. Brands embracing centralised analytics and integrated systems report faster decision-making, reduced costs and increased revenue. But we also recognise the journey can be complex.

That's why this report goes beyond analysis to offer practical guidance, including strategies, benchmarks and frameworks, to help you move from ambition to execution.

At PMC, we're committed to supporting retailers and DTC brands navigating this evolution. Whether you're at the start of your unified commerce journey or accelerating transformation, I hope the insights in this report empower you to take the next step with confidence.

Regards,

Richard Lowe
CEO

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Section 1

The rise of unified commerce: Untapped value for consumers

Over the past decade, brands have evolved through several stages. First came the multichannel model, often built around siloed teams and disconnected systems. Then came omnichannel which was a step forward, offering better coordination but still lacking real-time integration.

Now, the next phase is taking shape. Leading retailers and direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands are shifting their focus to 'unified commerce'. This model connects systems, data, and customer touchpoints into a single, intelligent framework. While still an ambition for many brands, in today's uncertain climate, it's fast becoming essential.

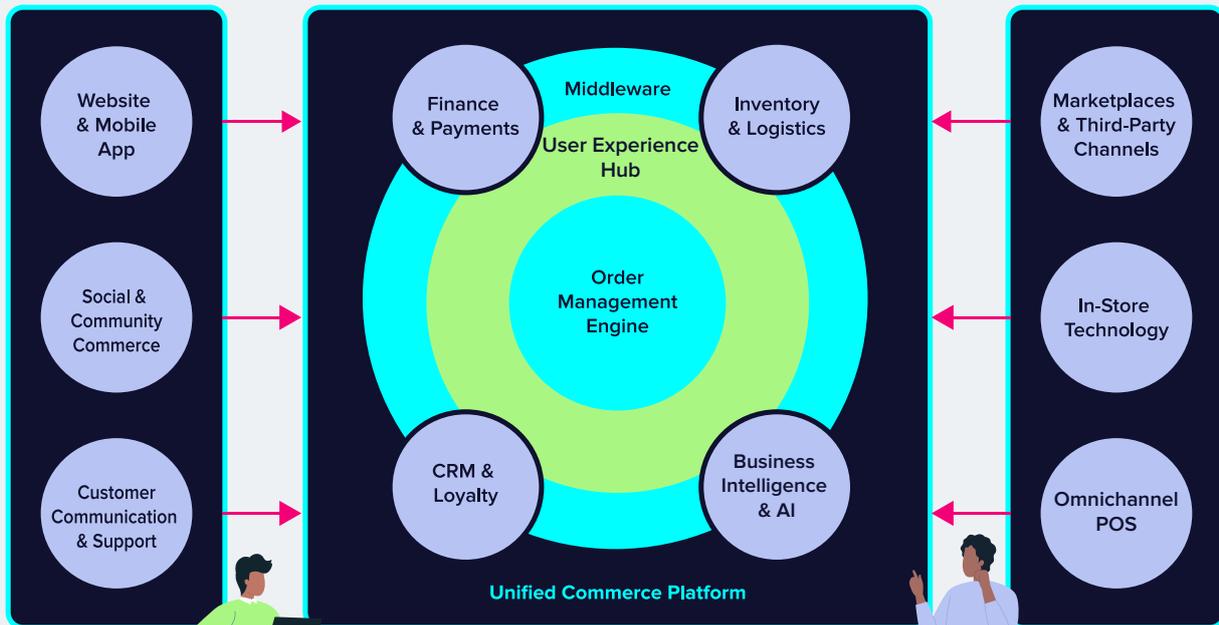
At its core, unified commerce merges all retail systems, channels, and data into a single, real-time platform. This enables brands to deliver:

- Consistent customer experiences
- Intelligent stock allocation
- Personalised engagement
- Agile operations across every channel

Together, these capabilities form the foundation for scalable, data-driven, and future-ready retail in 2025 and beyond. Most consumer brands are no strangers to change. Yet some are adapting faster and more effectively than others.

To better understand the building blocks of successful transformation, we've developed the **Next-Generation Unified Commerce Ecosystem** (Fig. 1). This framework illustrates how consumer-facing businesses must coordinate digital commerce, physical retail, backend infrastructure, and real-time analytics to meet rising expectations and deliver seamless journeys.

Fig 1: Next generation unified commerce ecosystem



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

Under this framework, a centralised unified commerce platform can enable businesses to manage the multiple systems, inputs and services they need in order to deliver the next generation of service expected by shoppers today.

However, achieving this is not easy. In a bid to understand how retailers and DTC brands are approaching unified commerce, we surveyed 100 businesses to determine who is leading the way across key functions, and what their slower counterparts need to do to catch up.

1.1 Real-time inventory visibility

Achieving real-time inventory visibility across all sales channels is a significant milestone for retailers and DTC brands aiming to maximise every potential sale.

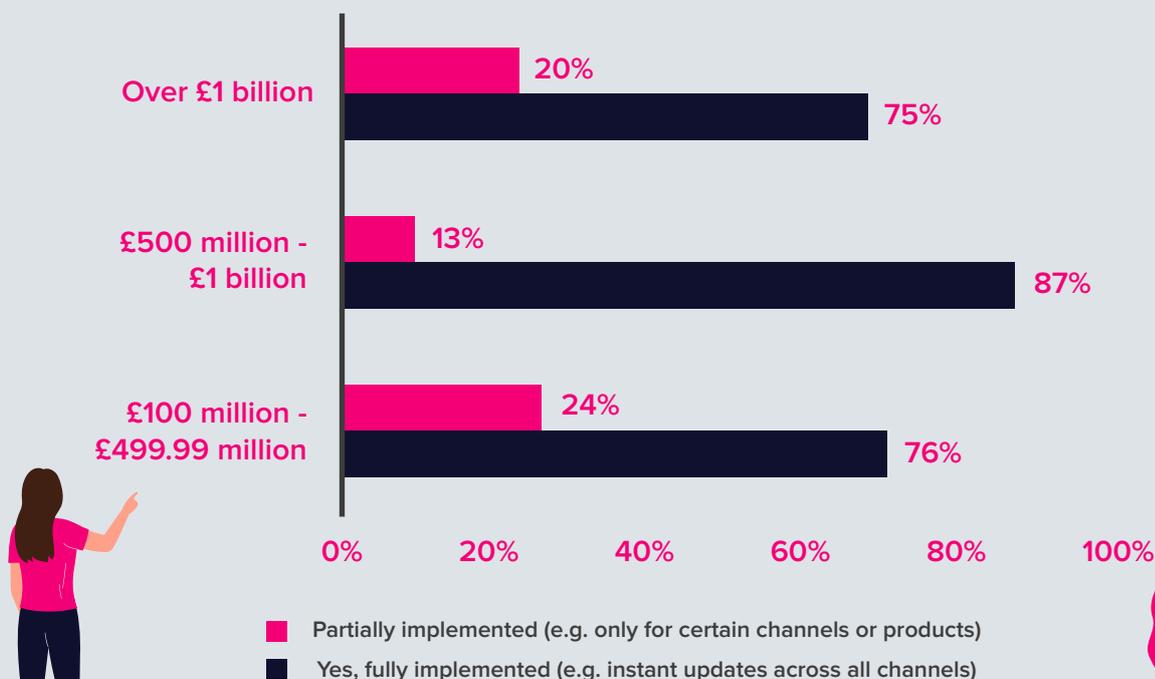
For DTC brands, where lean inventory, rapid fulfilment, and fast turnarounds are the norm, visibility is critical. It reduces overstocking and markdowns, improves fulfilment accuracy, and ensures better sell-through. In fast-moving models with little margin for error, it's a direct driver of profitability.

Real-time inventory visibility provides an early indicator of which companies are leading on unified commerce capabilities. Here, our research confirms that businesses are moving at vastly different paces.

Medium-sized businesses, with annual revenues between £500m and £1bn, are currently in the strongest position (Fig. 2). They have the scale to invest in technology but are often less structurally complex than their larger counterparts – making it easier to implement change at speed.

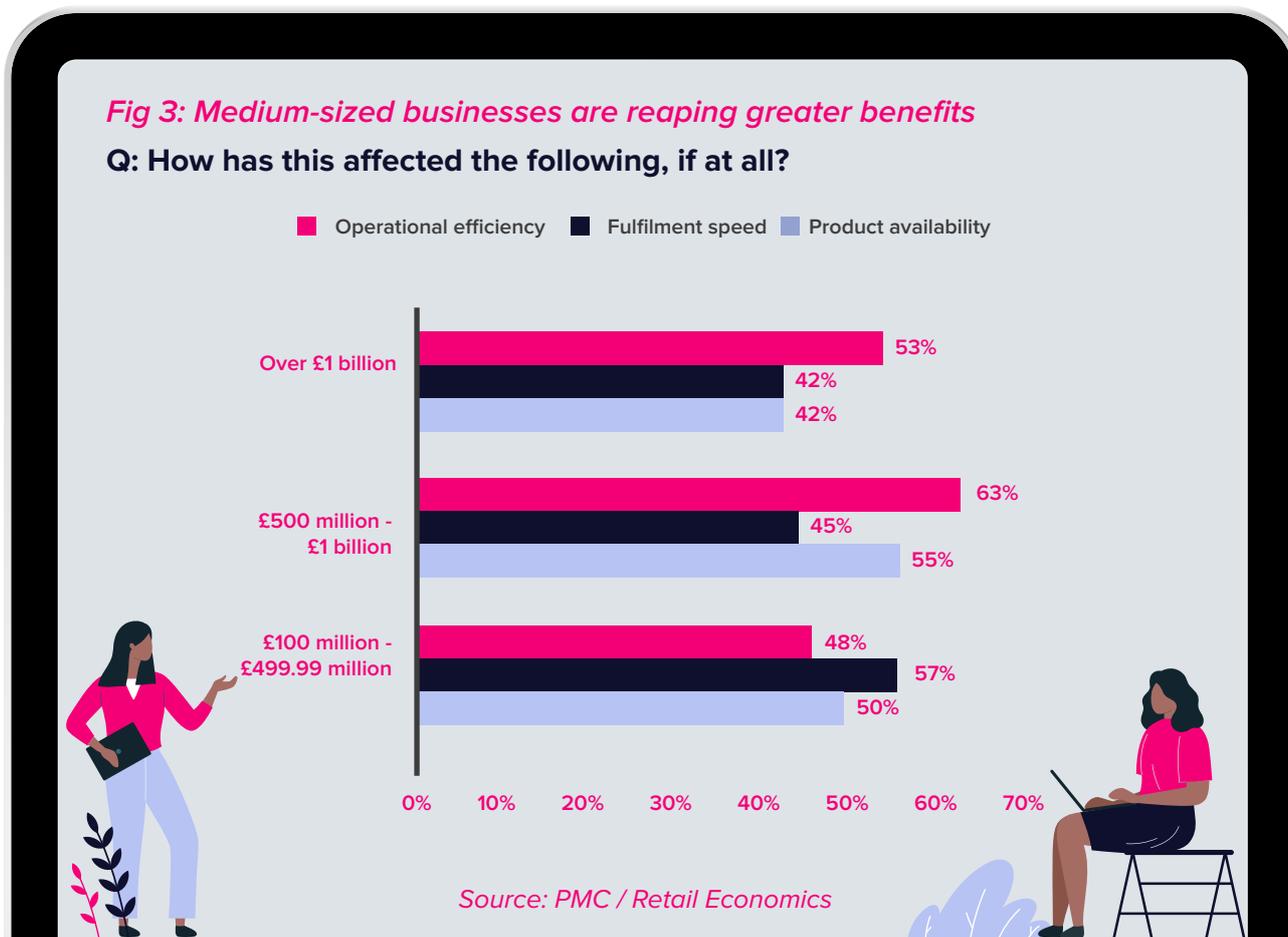
Fig 2: Businesses of between £500m and £1bn annual revenue are more likely to have real-time inventory visibility

Q: Does your business have real-time inventory visibility across all sales channels?



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

This group is also more likely to have realised tangible benefits from their investments (Fig. 3). They report higher operational efficiency and improved product availability. Meanwhile, smaller businesses (those with under £500m in annual revenue) are seeing the greatest gains in fulfilment speed, as they enhance their inventory systems.



The data also suggests a broader trend. These medium-sized businesses are more likely to be in the advanced stages of digital transformation, highlighting the advantage of moving early. They had enough capital to invest with fewer legacy barriers than larger firms, enabling them to lay the groundwork for unified commerce ahead of the curve.

Why this matters

Inventory visibility unlocks profitability, agility, and customer satisfaction - core pillars for staying competitive in fast-moving retail environments.



1.2 Dynamic order management systems

While business size plays a role in determining progress with unified commerce, the maturity of a brand's digital transformation journey is just as important and often more telling.

Our research reveals a clear divide. Businesses that classify themselves as 'mature' in digital transformation are significantly further ahead in implementing key capabilities within our Unified Commerce Framework.

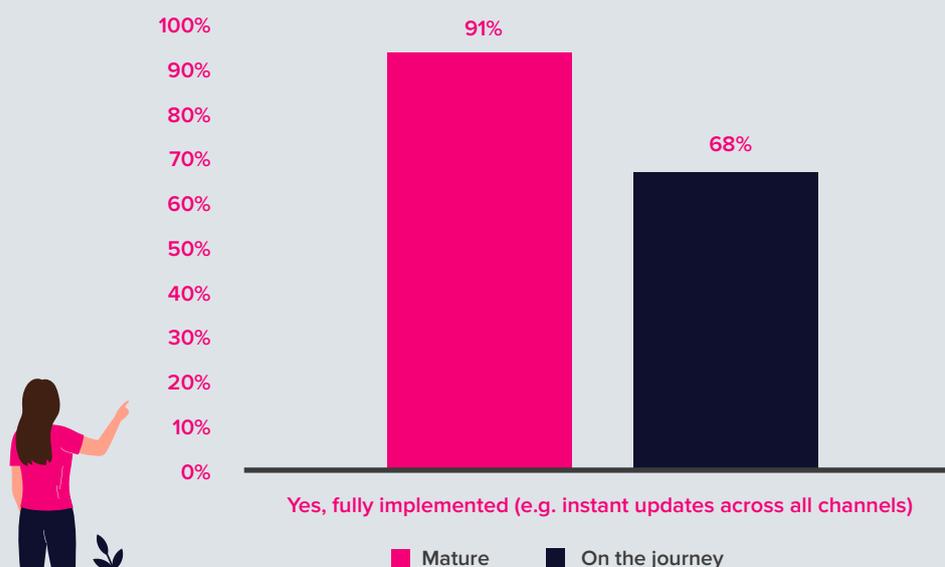
To explore this, we asked retailers and DTC brands to self-assess their transformation stage, from 'just starting' to 'mature'. The results show a strong correlation between digital maturity and progress across unified commerce systems.

This is especially true in the area of dynamic order management, which is the ability to intelligently route orders across channels to optimise fulfilment, reduce delivery errors, cut costs, and respond more effectively to shifts in demand.

Among mature digital transformers, nearly all (91%) have fully implemented dynamic order management systems. That compares to just over two-thirds among businesses still progressing through earlier transformation stages (Fig. 4).

Fig 4: Mature digital transformers are more likely to have dynamic order management systems in place

Q: Can your order management system (OMS) dynamically allocate stock across channels for fulfilment and returns?

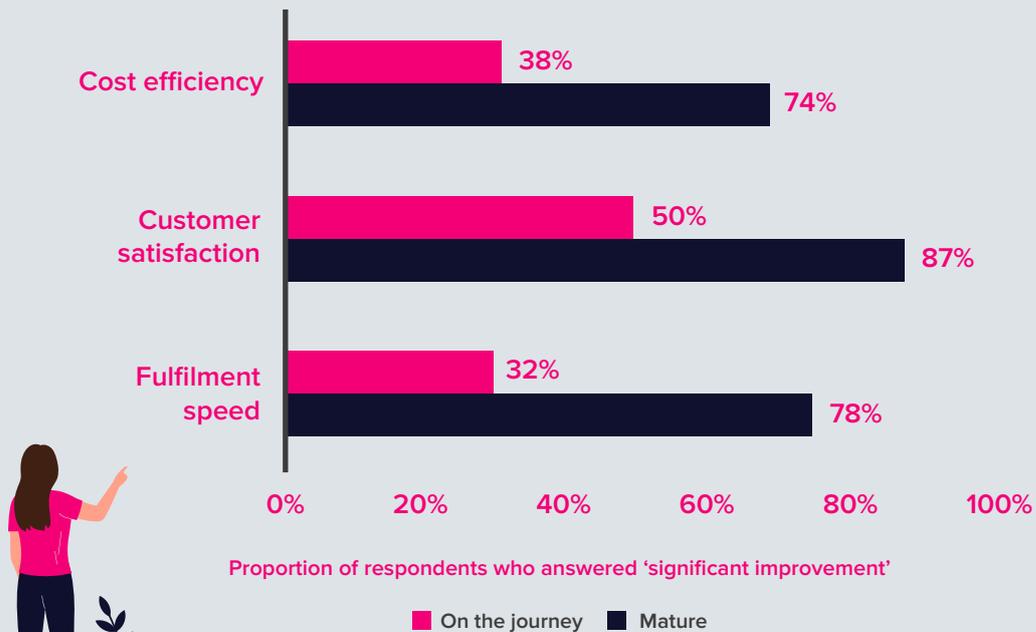


Source: PMC / Retail Economics

As expected, mature transformers are also more likely to experience the key benefits of this technology; this includes faster fulfilment, improved customer satisfaction, and better cost efficiency.

Fig 5: Mature transformers are more likely to be reaping benefits

Q: How has this affected the following, if at all?



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

Why this matters

Dynamic order management boosts fulfilment speed, reduces costs, and improves customer satisfaction, and without it, retailers risk falling behind. It's the engine that powers fast, flexible, and cost-effective omnichannel fulfilment.



1.3 Integrated core systems

Connecting core systems is fundamental to building a unified commerce architecture; these include Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Order Management Systems (OMS), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and Point Of Sale (POS).

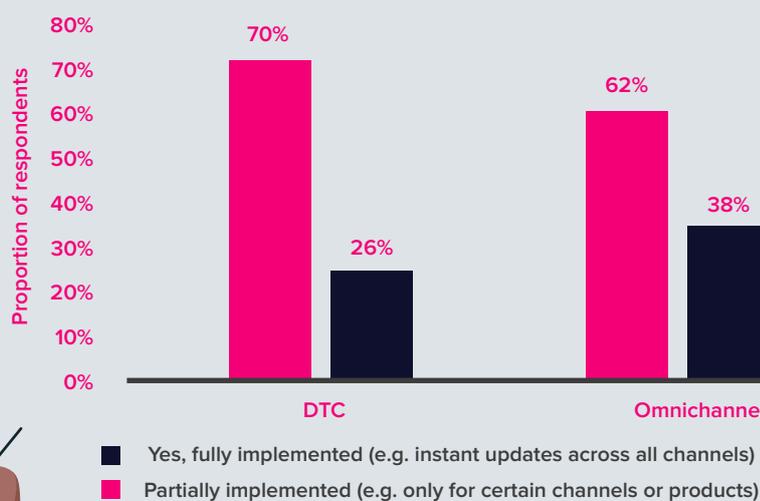
When these systems are connected, they create a single flow of data that improves visibility, streamlines operations, and supports real-time decision-making. Businesses that achieve this integration are better positioned to optimise stock, personalise customer interactions, and reduce operating costs, unlocking the full potential of their digital infrastructure.

This can be observed in the work that many retailers have already done. One large homewares retailer, for instance, faced challenges with manual data entry between its POS systems and ERP system, leading to inefficiencies and errors. By integrating these systems, the company achieved real-time data synchronisation, with all financial data automatically updated across both systems at the end of the day. The work improved data accuracy and enhanced decision-making capabilities, resulting in significant time savings and efficiency gains.

DTC brands are often leading the way in this area. Typically younger and predominantly online, these businesses benefit from simpler technology stacks, making full integration easier to achieve. In contrast, omnichannel retailers often contend with more complex legacy systems, which can slow progress and reduce agility.

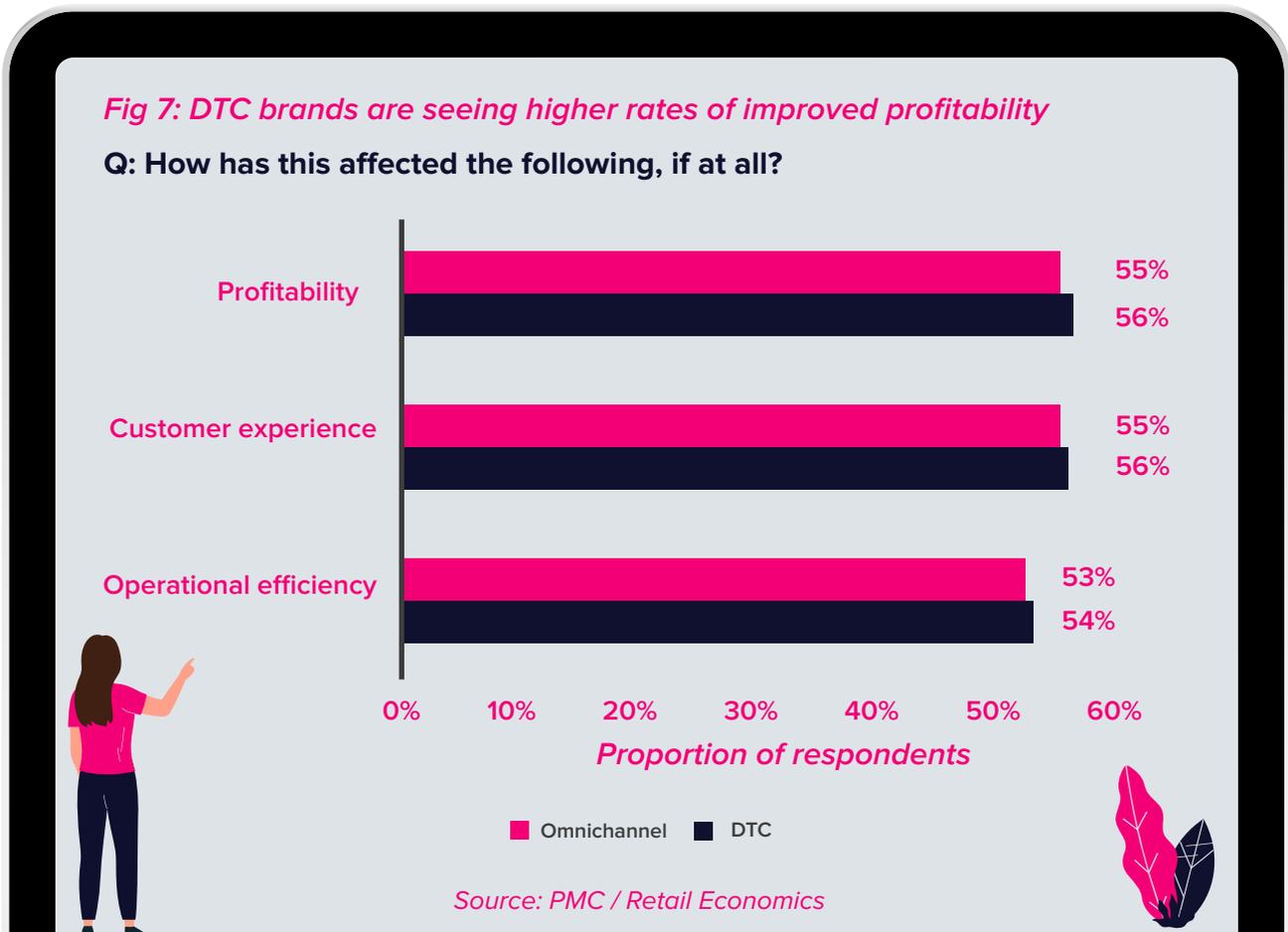
Fig 6: Direct-to-consumer brands are more likely to have achieved core integration

Q: How integrated are your core systems with each other (ERP, OMS, CRM, POS)?



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

Crucially, those that have achieved integration are seeing results. DTC brands report slightly higher rates of improvement in profitability, customer experience, and operational efficiency – reinforcing the value of a well-integrated core.



Why this matters

Integrated core systems drive profitability by reducing inefficiencies, lowering operational costs, and enabling smarter, data-led decisions across the entire retail value chain.



1.4 Consistent checkout experience

A consistent checkout experience across in-store, online and mobile channels is a key part of seamless shopping. It reduces friction, builds trust, and increases conversion rates. It also helps brands and retailers meet customer expectations while also supporting unified data capture, simplified operations, and improved customer satisfaction.

Businesses with revenue of £500m-£1bn, as well as those who are mature digital transformers, are again most likely to have this in place (Fig 8). Larger businesses are least likely to have fully implemented a consistent checkout (70% vs. 89% of medium-sized businesses), again highlighting the challenges that larger, more complex businesses face in rolling out unified commerce technologies.



These same groups are also more likely to have achieved higher conversion rates and customer satisfaction as a result.

Why this matters

A consistent checkout boosts conversion and customer satisfaction — directly impacting revenue, loyalty, and operational efficiency across all channels.



1.5 Technology-driven personalisation

Medium-sized businesses that are also mature digital transformers continue to lead the way in adopting technology-driven personalisation. This group consistently outperforms others across key unified commerce capabilities, and their use of tools such as machine learning (ML), automation, and AI for product recommendations and tailored offers is no exception (Fig. 9).

DTC brands are also ahead of traditional retailers in this area. Half of DTC brands report fully implementing AI personalisation tools, compared with 42% of omnichannel retailers. With more direct access to customer data and fewer legacy systems to contend with, DTC brands have been able to move faster in deploying AI solutions.

Many retail technology leaders are placing AI at the top of their priority list for implementation by 2026 this reflects a growing strategic emphasis on intelligent automation and innovation.

While AI continues to dominate headlines, much of the value in retail today comes from more targeted, pragmatic applications. Whether through automated rules-based engines, ML algorithms, or AI-driven analytics, the companies seeing the most impressive results are those using these technologies to solve specific business problems and enhance operational efficiency.

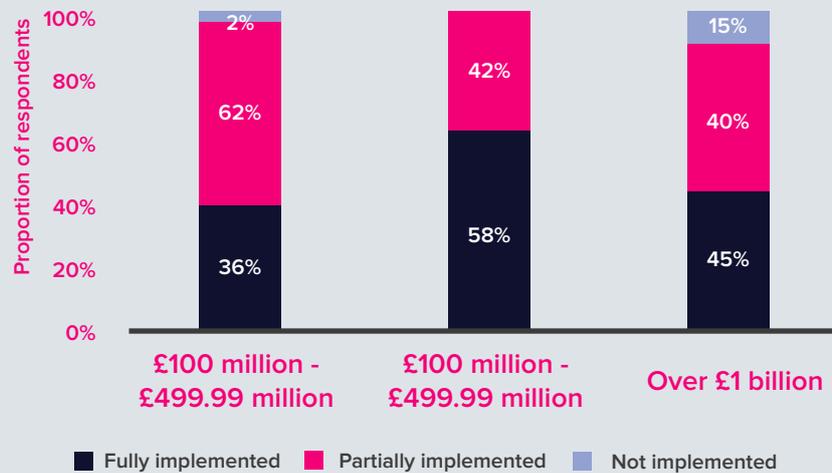
Retailers are seeing tangible benefits from AI in areas such as:

- 01 Inventory forecasting and demand planning:** Improving stock accuracy and margin via better sell through rates.
- 02 Dynamic pricing and promotions:** Adjusting prices in real time based on demand and inventory levels, increasing revenue and margin.
- 03 Fraud detection and loss prevention:** Identifying anomalies in transactions to flag fraud.
- 04 Customer service:** AI-chatbots are dealing with inbound customer queries.
- 05 Visual search and product discovery:** Helping customers find items using photos and natural language.

- 06 Warehouse and logistics automation:** Powering robotics for picking and packing in the warehouse and optimising route planning to boost fulfilment speed and accuracy.
- 07 Marketing personalisation:** Enabling real-time, tailored marketing efforts, enhancing customer engagement and conversion rates.

Fig 9. Medium-sized businesses are more likely to have implemented AI than smaller or larger firms

Q: Does your business use AI-driven personalisation to tailor offers, pricing, or product recommendations in real time?

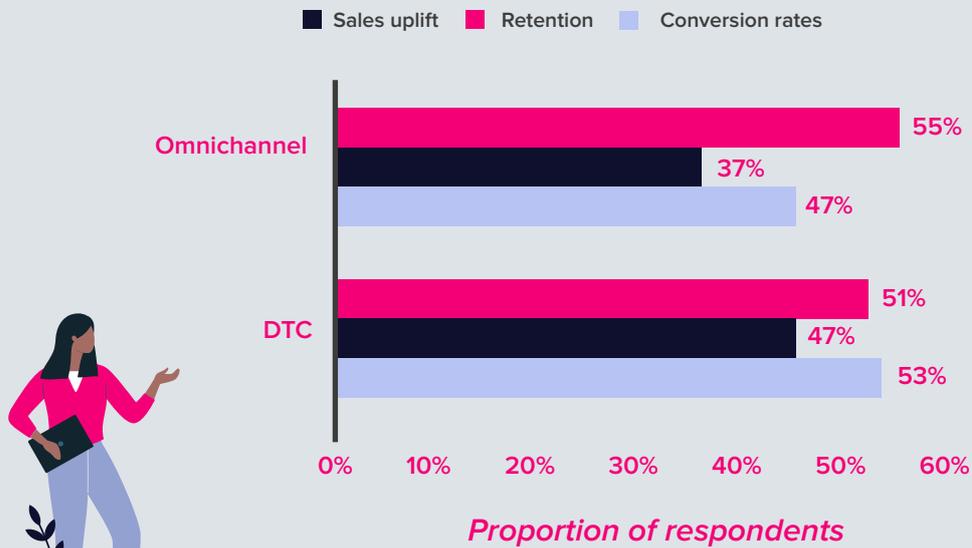


Source: PMC / Retail Economics

Interestingly, when omnichannel retailers do invest in AI-driven personalisation, they tend to see strong results. Over half (55%) of those who have fully or partially implemented AI tools report a measurable uplift in sales (Fig. 10). This suggests that for businesses still on the fence, AI personalisation could be a high-impact area worth prioritising.

Fig 10: Omnichannel retailers have seen impressive sales uplifts following AI investment

Q: How has this affected the following, if at all?



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

Why this matters

AI personalisation directly drives revenue growth. Over half of retailers using it report measurable sales uplift, making it a high-impact, high-return investment.



1.6 Centralised analytics

Centralised analytics is the integration of data from all channels and systems into a single, real-time view. It presents a more nuanced picture in terms of performance.

Our findings reveal that while DTC brands have taken the lead in several areas of unified commerce, omnichannel retailers are ahead when it comes to implementing this foundational capability.

In fact, omnichannel businesses are more likely than DTC brands to have centralised their analytics infrastructure (Fig. 11). This gives them a critical advantage. It enables agile, data-driven decision-making, improves forecasting, breaks down silos, and ensures consistency across customer touchpoints.

Fig 11. Omnichannel businesses are more likely to have centralised analytics than DTC brands

Q: Do you have centralised analytics providing real-time insights into sales, inventory, and customer behaviour?



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

This group is also more likely to report significant cost savings as a result of doing this work, highlighting another area where rewards are likely to be substantial for omnichannel retailers.

Why this matters

Centralised analytics unlock significant cost savings and sharper forecasting, giving retailers the visibility needed to drive profitability and make smarter, faster decisions.

1.7 A modular approach

Delivering on the promise of unified commerce is no small task. To get there, leading retailers and DTC brands are shifting away from rigid, one-size-fits-all systems. Instead, they are adopting **modular technology stacks** that offer greater flexibility and speed.

This modular approach allows businesses to deploy targeted solutions quickly, tailored to specific needs, whether that's powering a pop-up experience, supporting a seasonal campaign, or enabling event-based commerce.

Many businesses are already on the path. DTC brands, medium-sized businesses with annual revenues of £500m–£1bn, and mature digital transformers are the most advanced in adopting modular architecture.

However, full adoption remains limited. Overall, just 28% of businesses consider themselves fully modular. That figure drops to 22% for omnichannel retailers and 24% for smaller businesses under £500m in annual revenue.

This is despite the significant real-world benefits it brings. A modular approach can enable swift entry into new markets, for instance, as well as the ability to integrate emerging technology seamlessly. It can improve vendor flexibility and cost control by making it easier to switch tools as needed, allowing a brand to negotiate better terms. It can enable experimentation without risk, allowing the testing of technologies such as AI product recommendations by plugging them into an existing stack and scaling from there as needed. And it can enable faster rollout of new features without disrupting a brand's entire platform.

Transformation maturity stands out as the strongest predictor of modular progress. It suggests that businesses of all sizes whether DTC or retail should accelerate investment in digital transformation. The sooner they do this, the sooner they can unlock the speed, flexibility, and responsiveness that modular systems make possible.

Fig 12. Most businesses do not yet rate their technology stack as 'fully modular'

Proportion of different business types that say their tech stack is fully modular



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

More than two-thirds (70%) of the most mature transformers say they have fully modular, flexible commerce systems that are designed for seamless updates and replacements with minimal dependencies, highlighting just how much of an advantage early adopters have developed over those who have been slower to start.

Underpinning this modular approach are unified commerce platforms, which allow businesses to innovate in an agile manner around their core modular components of order management, product offering, customer management and data.

By combining the speed and flexibility of modular design with the reliability and scalability of enterprise systems, businesses can reduce complexity, balance upfront and ongoing costs, and deliver faster return on investment.

Why this matters

Modular systems reduce complexity, lower total cost of ownership, and accelerate ROI, giving early adopters a clear financial and competitive edge.



Section 2

Leveraging unified commerce in the digital transformation journey

This section sets out the core components of a successful unified commerce strategy, and how businesses can begin aligning their operations to meet the demands of next-generation retail.

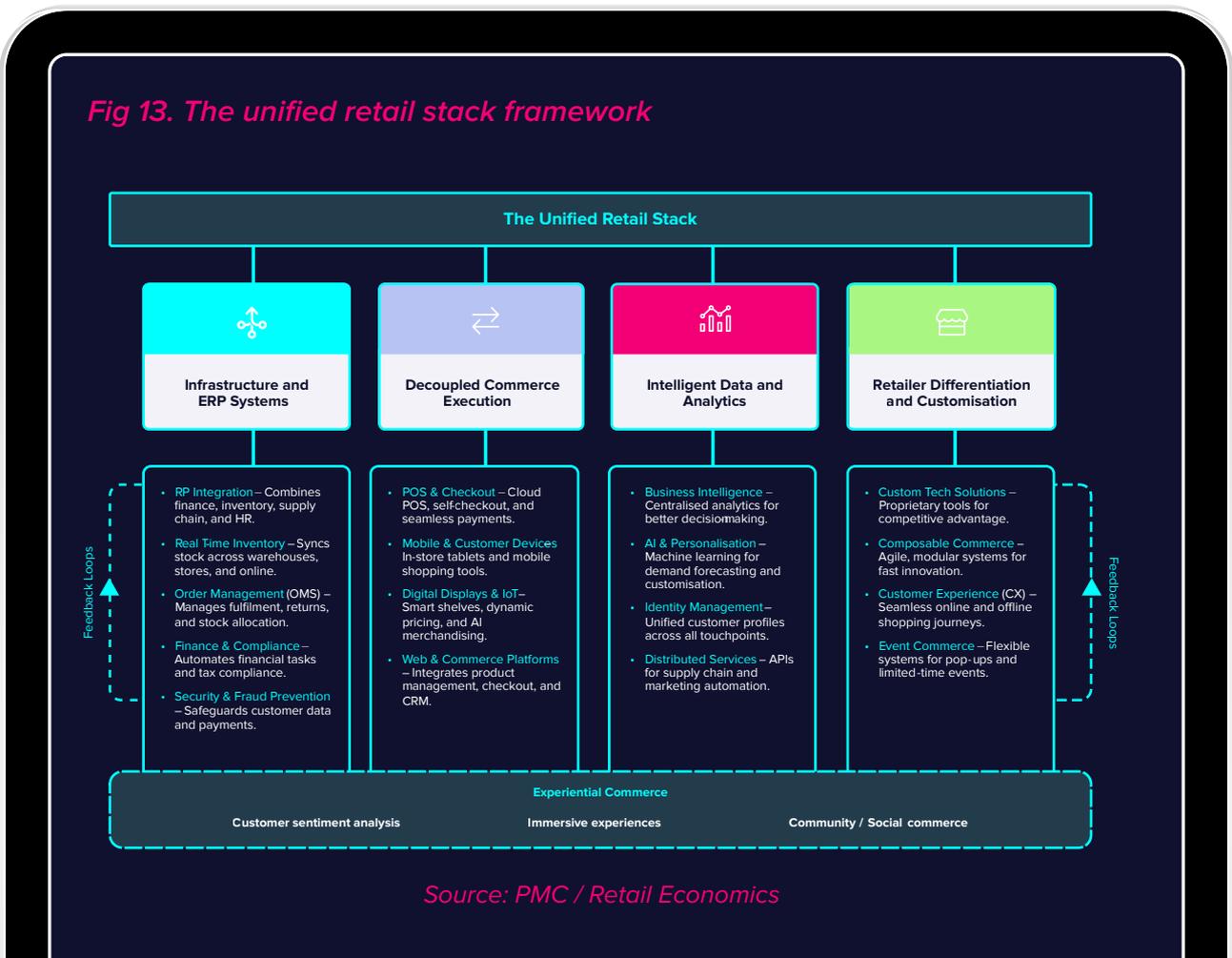
2.1 The unified retail stack framework

At the heart of this approach is the Unified Retail Stack (Fig 13). It is a framework designed to assess how advanced a brand's technology ecosystem is across four critical pillars:

- Core infrastructure and ERP systems
- Decoupled execution capabilities
- Intelligent data and analytics
- Stack customisation and differentiation

Together, these pillars define the maturity of a brand's digital foundation and provide a clear roadmap for building a more agile, connected, and scalable commerce model.

Fig 13. The unified retail stack framework



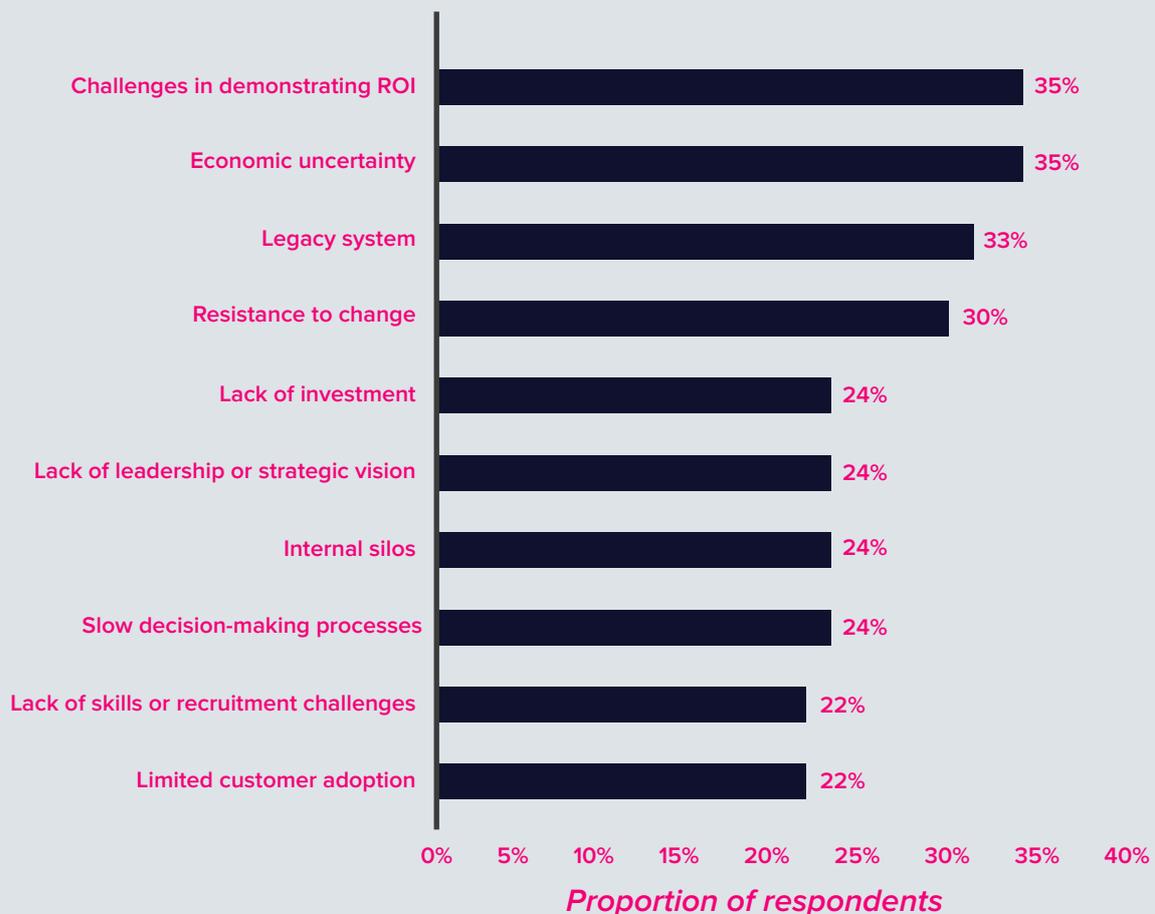
2.2 Pillar 1: Foundational retail infrastructure and ERP systems

Robust infrastructure ensures accurate stock visibility and seamless transactions, forming the backbone for successful omnichannel and event-driven commerce.

As the data shows, businesses that have fully integrated their ERP, CRM, POS, and OMS systems consistently report gains in operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and profitability. Interoperability (the ability of these systems to work together) is emerging as a key driver of ROI. And with ROI ranked among the top challenges by respondents (Fig. 14), getting the fundamentals right is critical.

Fig 14. ROI, uncertainty and legacy systems are the biggest challenges for digital transformation journeys

Q: What are the main challenges, if any, your business faces when it comes to digital transformation work?



Source: PMC / Retail Economics

The benefits are clear. Real-time inventory visibility and dynamic order allocation are strongly associated with faster fulfilment, better product availability, higher customer satisfaction, and improved cost efficiency.

That said, dynamic stock allocation remains slightly less developed. While 73% of businesses have fully implemented it, that figure drops to 64% among smaller firms with revenues under £500m.

To build on this progress, brands should focus on fully connecting systems end-to-end and integrating real-time analytics. This creates a more intelligent, responsive infrastructure and unlocks smarter stock allocation, quicker decisions, and the agility needed to compete in an increasingly volatile market.

Despite these challenges, many businesses have made solid progress. 80% report full real-time inventory synchronisation, rising to 86% among DTC brands and falling to 74% for omnichannel retailers. These capabilities are often prioritised early in the transformation journey, serving as the foundation for more advanced functions.

2.3 Pillar 3: Intelligent data and analytics layer

In today's volatile retail environment, data visibility is a powerful performance lever. Among retailers with centralised analytics, 58% report faster decision-making, 45% cite significant cost savings, and 48% see measurable revenue growth.

Despite these benefits, full implementation remains limited. Just 39% of surveyed businesses say they have fully implemented and optimised their centralised business intelligence and reporting functions. Smaller omnichannel retailers are most likely to face challenges, with only 34% of omnichannel firms and 33% of businesses with annual revenues between £100m–£500m reaching full implementation.

Digital maturity plays a decisive role. Mature transformers are more than twice as likely to have this capability in place. However, even in this group, it remains a work in progress as 65% report full implementation, compared to just 31% of others.

AI also represents a missed opportunity. Despite its ability to drive gains in conversion, retention, and personalisation, adoption remains uneven. Only 46% of all businesses report full AI personalisation rollout, dropping to 36% among smaller firms.

Transformation maturity again proves influential. 74% of mature transformers report full AI implementation, versus just 38% of those earlier in their journey. This highlights a clear opportunity to accelerate adoption through modular, plug-and-play solutions.

2.4 Pillar 4: Retailer differentiation and customisation

Being flexible with technology is fast becoming a defining trait of future-ready retailers. Businesses embracing modular systems and API-based integration are better positioned to adapt quickly, respond to disruption, and deliver tailored experiences at scale.

Customisation plays a key role. Modular platforms allow retailers to configure technology around their unique operational needs, supporting agility, enabling innovation, and helping them capitalise on fast-moving trends.

Our research finds that 48% of businesses say they have customised their technology stack to meet specific challenges. This rises to 54% among DTC brands, and falls to 42% for omnichannel retailers. Larger businesses face particular difficulty. Just 40% of those with annual revenues over £1bn report full customisation, as more complex systems prove harder to adapt.

To close this gap, brands should focus on modular upgrades that allow for incremental change without requiring full system overhauls. Target high-impact areas such as checkout, order management, or personalisation, and prioritise solutions that integrate easily through APIs. This reduces complexity, speeds up delivery, and helps legacy-heavy businesses compete with more agile rivals.

Section 3

Strategies for success

For unified commerce to move from ambition to reality, consumer and DTC brands must act decisively. Our findings reveal four essential strategies to accelerate progress:



3.1 Prioritise digital foundations to unlock future agility

Digital maturity starts with getting the basics right, as we discussed in section 2, interoperability between ERP, OMS, CRM, and POS is a key enabler of both operational gains and long-term scalability.

Mature transformers (those most advanced across all pillars of the unified commerce framework) began by investing early in core systems such as real-time inventory, dynamic order management, and system integration.

These capabilities drive measurable improvements in fulfilment speed, availability, cost efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Without them, more advanced initiatives – from AI to modular upgrades are difficult to scale.

Businesses should treat infrastructure as a strategic asset. Focus first on visibility (inventory, order, and returns), then build outward to ensure all future innovations rest on solid ground.

3.2 Embrace modular technology to reduce risk and accelerate change



Modular commerce stacks allow businesses to innovate without disrupting daily operations. Yet just 28% of businesses are fully modular, falling to 22% for omnichannel firms and 24% for those under £500m in revenue. Digital maturity plays a significant role here - as Section 2 highlights, mature digital transformers are more than three times as likely to report having fully modular systems, giving them a measurable edge in speed, flexibility, and innovation delivery.

To close this gap, brands must adopt cloud-native, API-first platforms that support plug-and-play functionality. Prioritise upgrades in high-impact areas such as checkout, personalisation, and OMS to accelerate innovation with less technical debt.

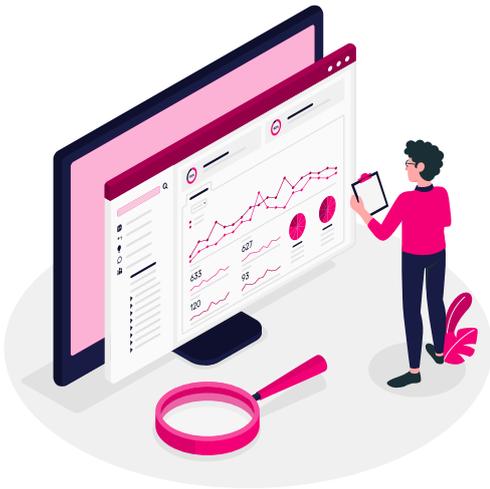
Beyond risk reduction, modularity is a competitive advantage. It enables businesses to scale new propositions rapidly, adapt to local market conditions, and respond in real time to consumer shifts.



3.3 Fix legacy issues blocking unified execution

True unified commerce demands a shift in mindset and as we explored in section 2, legacy systems are slowing progress, particularly for larger companies. Businesses must invest in cross-functional collaboration, agile governance, and leadership alignment to move at speed. Change management should be prioritised alongside tech investment. Create empowered teams, build flexible roadmaps, and design incentives around customer outcomes, not departmental ownership.

Legacy systems, operational silos, and slow decision-making are still cited by 40% of large and omnichannel businesses as major barriers. These are often structural and cultural challenges, not purely technical ones.



3.4 Use data as a commercial growth engine

Businesses must treat data as a profit and loss driver, not just an IT function. As shown in the previous section, just 39% of businesses have fully implemented centralised analytics. Closing this gap requires upskilling teams, embedding data tools in frontline roles, and aligning KPIs across departments to turn insight into action.

Businesses with integrated data layers report 58% faster decision-making, 48% revenue growth, and 45% cost savings. But full adoption remains limited, especially among smaller omnichannel players. This is a missed opportunity. When embedded across the stack, analytics unlock smarter stock management, trend forecasting, campaign precision, and real-time operational responsiveness.



3.5 Build personalised experiences using AI for better engagement

Focus on modular AI tools that can integrate with existing infrastructure and begin generating value in weeks or months, not years. Despite the proven impact of AI-powered personalisation, only 46% of businesses have fully implemented it. While DTC brands lead adoption, omnichannel retailers report the strongest sales uplifts, underlining the untapped potential. Personalisation tools like AI-driven product recommendations, dynamic pricing, and tailored promotions offer fast ROI and scalable impact. As we explored in the previous section, AI personalisation is most effective when underpinned by centralised analytics and modular architecture, reinforcing the need for strong digital foundations.

Conclusion

This research highlights the urgent need for retailers and DTC brands to evolve beyond disconnected systems and static roadmaps. As we look to the future, unified commerce—integrating systems, channels, and data to deliver joined-up customer experiences and operations—will be essential to compete effectively.

The businesses pulling ahead are those investing in digital foundations, modular architecture, and intelligent data systems that enable speed and adaptability. But transformation isn't easy. Progress remains uneven, with agile and digitally mature brands outpacing larger, legacy-heavy organisations.

To move beyond omnichannel and lead the next phase of retail, businesses must prioritise real-time visibility, embrace modular tools, and embed data and AI across their stack. As technology and customer expectations continue to rapidly evolve, success will depend on the ability to deliver seamless experiences with speed, intelligence, and agility.

Methodology

This report draws insights from a survey of 100 senior decision makers at UK retail and direct-to-consumer (DTC) businesses with a turnover of £100 million or more, conducted in March 2025.

About PMC

At PMC, we help businesses scale smarter by combining deep experience, independence, and a progressive mindset to drive meaningful outcomes through technology. Our talent-led delivery model is built for modern commerce - agile, accountable and impact-driven.

With a team of over 500 skilled professionals across the UK and India, we bring hands-on domain expertise and full ownership of project success. Whether optimising digital infrastructure or accelerating transformation, we deliver the right capabilities at the right time to help our clients navigate complexity and unlock lasting value.

Our work is guided by our strong core values, and it's why we're trusted by the current 120+ brands that we support globally. These principles shape every engagement - helping us deliver not just solutions, but confidence, clarity and long-term success.

About Retail Economics

Retail Economics is an independent economics research consultancy focused on the consumer and retail industry. We analyse the complex retail economic landscape and draw out actionable insight for our clients. Leveraging our own proprietary retail data and applying rigorous economic analysis, we transform information into points of action.

Our service provides unbiased research and analysis on the key economic and social drivers behind the retail sector, helping to inform critical business decisions and giving you a competitive edge through deeper insights.

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