



Google Marketing Live 2026

# The Rise of AI-Native Commerce

*How Google is rebuilding search, advertising,  
and commerce around AI and what it means  
for eCommerce leaders.*

---



Udayan Bose  
Founder and CEO



Arijit Dutta  
Director, Business Excellence

May 2026

# Executive Summary



If you only have a few minutes, this section covers the **five key takeaways** from Google Marketing Live 2026 (GML 2026).

## **1. Search is becoming more conversational and AI-driven**

Google is increasingly transforming search from a navigation engine into a recommendation and decision engine. Consumers may increasingly discover, evaluate, compare, and even purchase products directly inside AI-powered experiences without following traditional browsing behavior.

## **2. Product data and machine-readable commerce are becoming strategic advantages**

Product feeds, inventory visibility, reviews, pricing accuracy, and structured product information are becoming increasingly important in AI-driven commerce experiences. Google's continued investment in UCP and AI-powered commerce systems signals a future where not only humans, but also AI assistants, may increasingly interact with commerce environments.

## **3. YouTube is becoming a much bigger part of the commerce journey**

Google is positioning YouTube as more than a video platform. Increasingly, YouTube appears to be evolving into a major discovery and influence layer connected to Shopping, Search, creators, and AI-powered commerce experiences.

## **4. Tactical optimization is becoming more automated**

Google continues to automate many traditional optimization tasks including bidding, targeting, campaign management, reporting, and even portions of creative generation. As a result, long-term differentiation may increasingly come from better first-party data, faster experimentation, stronger creative, better customer understanding, and sharper commercial strategy.

## **5. The future will likely belong to Humans + AI**

Perhaps the most important signal from GML 2026 was not simply the advancement of AI itself. It was the growing realization that the future of marketing may not belong to AI alone. It may belong to organizations that effectively combine human judgment, creativity, commercial thinking, and strategic direction with AI scale, speed, automation, and intelligence.

# Introduction

---

For over two decades, digital marketing teams have largely been built around the pursuit of optimization.

Marketers optimized bids, refined keywords, adjusted targeting strategies, restructured campaigns, analyzed reports, and continuously searched for incremental performance improvements. Entire teams and operating models evolved around the mechanics of execution.

At Google Marketing Live 2026, Google signaled something profound. Many of these optimization tasks are increasingly being handled by AI systems.

This does not reduce the importance of marketers. But it may fundamentally reshape where long-term competitive advantage comes from.

Increasingly, the advantage may shift toward stronger customer understanding, better product intelligence, faster experimentation, sharper creative differentiation, stronger first-party data, and better commercial decision-making.

Google Marketing Live 2026 was not simply another advertising product launch event. It felt more like a preview of how commerce itself may increasingly operate in an AI-native world.

# Search Is Becoming More Conversational

---

One of the most important announcements at GML 2026 was the continued expansion of AI-powered search experiences.

Google introduced or expanded AI-generated answer ads, conversational shopping experiences, AI-powered Shopping ads, conversational discovery formats, and AI-assisted product recommendations. While many of these capabilities are still evolving, the direction is becoming increasingly clear.

Historically, search worked in a relatively predictable way. Consumers searched for information, browsed websites, compared products, evaluated alternatives, and eventually completed a purchase.

Google is now increasingly collapsing parts of that journey directly into AI-powered experiences.

# YouTube Is Becoming the Front Door to Google's Commerce Ecosystem

---

Another major signal from GML 2026 was the growing strategic importance of YouTube within Google's broader commerce ecosystem.

For years, YouTube was viewed primarily as a video and awareness platform. At GML 2026, Google positioned it much more expansively. Increasingly, YouTube appears to be evolving into one of the primary discovery layers for AI-driven commerce journeys.

Consumers are no longer discovering products only through traditional search. Discovery is increasingly happening through creators, short-form video, reviews, tutorials, connected TV, and AI-assisted recommendations.

Google is now connecting YouTube more deeply with Shopping, Search, Merchant Center, and AI-powered commerce experiences. In many ways, YouTube is becoming the emotional and discovery layer of Google's broader AI-native commerce strategy.

This may fundamentally reshape how brands think about full-funnel marketing and commerce.

## Why This Matters

Brands are no longer competing only for clicks. Increasingly, they are competing to become the AI's recommended answer. This changes how organizations think about content, product information, reviews, authority, and differentiation.

Earlier this month, in [NetElixir's State of AI in Marketing report](#), we discussed how AI-mediated discovery may increasingly reshape digital commerce behavior. GML 2026 strongly reinforced many of those broader industry trends.

If AI systems cannot clearly understand what a product does, who it is for, why it is differentiated, and why consumers trust it, visibility may become increasingly difficult in AI-native environments. This may ultimately reshape how brands think about discoverability.

# The Product Feed Is Becoming More Strategic

---

Another major signal from GML 2026 was the growing importance of product data quality.

Google's continued investment in Merchant Center, AI Shopping experiences, Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP), dynamic offers, and structured commerce data reinforces how central product intelligence is becoming to modern commerce experiences.

Historically, many organizations treated product feeds as operational infrastructure. That mindset may increasingly become outdated.

In AI-native commerce environments, feeds become strategic assets.

AI systems increasingly rely on structured product information to recommend products, answer shopping questions, compare alternatives, personalize recommendations, and determine relevance. Product data quality may increasingly influence discoverability, conversion efficiency, and recommendation visibility.

The brands with cleaner product data, stronger categorization, richer metadata, clearer positioning, better reviews, and more accurate inventory visibility may gain meaningful advantages in AI-driven commerce environments.

Increasingly, brands may need to optimize for both humans and machines simultaneously.

# Agentic Commerce and the Rise of Machine-to-Machine Shopping

---

One of the more important, but less understood, announcements at GML 2026 involved Google's continued push toward agentic commerce and Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP).

The idea is actually quite simple. Historically, commerce was designed for humans to navigate manually. In AI-native environments, software agents may increasingly help consumers complete parts of the shopping process automatically.

For example, instead of manually researching products, a consumer may simply ask an AI assistant: *"Find me the best lightweight carry-on suitcase under \$250 for international travel."*

The AI system may then compare products, evaluate reviews, assess pricing and inventory, and recommend the best options.

This is where UCP becomes important. UCP helps AI systems access structured commerce information like product details, pricing, inventory, shipping, and promotions in a standardized way.

The broader implication is significant. Commerce environments are increasingly being designed not only for humans to browse, but also for machines to understand and transact within. This further reinforces why structured product data and machine-readable commerce are becoming strategically important.

## Questions eCommerce Leaders Should Ask

- Is our product data complete and structured properly?
- Are our product differentiators machine-readable?
- Are reviews accessible and well-structured?
- Is inventory visibility accurate in real-time?
- Can AI systems clearly understand why our products are valuable?
- Are we optimizing for both humans and machines?

# Tactical Optimization Is Becoming More Automated

---

For years, performance marketing advantage often came from tactical execution expertise. Teams differentiated through keyword management, bid adjustments, campaign structures, audience segmentation, and manual optimization.

Google's AI systems are increasingly automating many of these functions.

As systems like AI Max, PMAX, conversational ad generation, and autonomous optimization tools mature, tactical execution itself may become less differentiated over time.

This does not mean marketers become less important. It means the nature of marketing work may evolve.

As AI handles more operational execution, human value may increasingly shift toward strategy, experimentation, customer understanding, creativity, commercial prioritization, and organizational alignment.

The future advantage may not come from who can manually optimize campaigns the fastest. It may come from who learns faster, experiments smarter, adapts quicker, and combines human judgment with AI capabilities most effectively.

# Cross-Channel Intelligence Is Becoming More Important

---

Another major theme from GML 2026 was Google's push toward more connected AI-assisted environments.

Historically, reporting lived in Analytics, execution lived in Ads, catalog intelligence lived in Merchant Center, and strategic interpretation lived with humans. These systems often operated independently, forcing teams to manually reconcile data and insights across platforms.

Google is increasingly collapsing these silos into more unified systems.

Examples included Ask Advisor, Meridian integration, conversational insights, and cross-platform intelligence tools. While still early, these developments signal a broader industry shift toward connected decision environments instead of isolated channel management.

Organizations operating through fragmented media silos may increasingly struggle against organizations using more connected intelligence systems that enable faster learning and more coordinated decision-making.

The industry appears to be moving toward orchestration instead of fragmented execution.

# The Human Side of the AI Transition

---

Perhaps the most important takeaway from GML 2026 was not simply the advancement of AI itself.

*It was the growing realization that the future of marketing will likely be defined by Humans + AI. Not Humans vs AI.*

AI is becoming extraordinarily capable at scale, automation, pattern recognition, optimization, and analytical processing. But humans still remain uniquely strong at judgment, creativity, empathy, storytelling, prioritization, and strategic thinking.

GML 2026 repeatedly reinforced the idea that the future may not belong to AI alone, but to organizations that learn how to combine human intelligence and machine intelligence effectively.

The highest-performing organizations of the future may not necessarily be the ones that replace humans with AI. They may be the ones that build the strongest collaboration models between human intelligence and machine intelligence.

This may ultimately become one of the defining organizational advantages of the next decade.

# What eCommerce Leaders Should Focus On Now

---

## Improve Product Data Quality

Product feeds increasingly influence AI-driven commerce visibility. Structured product data, inventory accuracy, reviews, and pricing consistency are becoming more strategically important.

## Strengthen First-Party Data

AI systems depend heavily on high-quality business signals. The organizations with the strongest customer intelligence and cleanest data environments may gain meaningful advantages.

## Increase Experimentation Velocity

Organizations that test and learn faster may gain disproportionate advantage as AI accelerates execution cycles.

## Break Down Organizational Silos

The future operating model appears increasingly cross-functional. Marketing, analytics, merchandising, and customer intelligence teams may need to operate more collaboratively.

## Improve Creative and Brand Differentiation

As optimization automates, differentiation matters even more. Brand storytelling, creative quality, trust, and positioning may become increasingly important sources of competitive advantage.

## Prepare for AI-Mediated Discovery

Brands may increasingly need to optimize for recommendation environments instead of only traditional search rankings.

## Invest in Human + AI Collaboration

The future likely belongs to organizations that combine human creativity, strategic thinking, and AI-powered execution effectively.

# Final Thoughts

---

Google Marketing Live 2026 reinforced a reality that has been building steadily for several years:

AI is no longer simply improving marketing execution. It is increasingly reshaping how commerce itself operates.

The future competitive advantage may not come from who manages campaigns more efficiently. It may come from who understands customers more deeply, structures better business intelligence, experiments faster, adapts quicker, and combines human judgment with AI capabilities most effectively.

The execution layer is increasingly becoming automated.

Strategy, creativity, differentiation, and decision-making are becoming even more important.

The next era of commerce may belong to organizations that recognize this shift early and adapt thoughtfully.

Source:

- <https://blog.google/products/ads-commerce/google-marketing-live-2026-collection/>

NetElixir™

# State of AI in Marketing

Powered by NetElixir | LXRInsights

Translating real-world signals into a clearer view of AI's impact today and its next wave of opportunity.

