

HFA LAS VEGAS MARKET • SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026

The Future of Retail: **Personalizing the Shopping Experience**

How agentic commerce, AI search, and a re-warming home are rewriting what “personalized” actually means for independent furniture retail.

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THE MOMENT WE'RE IN

Two truths can be true at once.

HOW PEOPLE FEEL

47.6

U. Michigan Consumer Sentiment, April 2026

Lowest reading in the post-WWII era.

Lower than the Great Recession.

Lower than the pandemic.

HOW THEY ACTUALLY SPEND

+4.4%

Projected 2026 retail sales growth

Higher than 2024-2025.

Higher-income households driving the market.

Behavior keeps diverging from feeling.

***The retailers winning right now are watching what consumers DO,
not what surveys say they FEEL.***

...AND THE INDUSTRY UNDERNEATH IT

Q1 2026 was a culling year for furniture.

17

FURNITURE RETAILERS

closed or filed bankruptcy in Q1 2026

78

YEARS

Weir's Furniture, Dallas—going-out-of-business sale

8%

SALES DECLINE

U.S. furniture stores, 2022 to today

American Signature & Value City filed Chapter 11. Ashley shut down its Mesquite, TX plant.

Progressive Furniture ceased production. IKEA cut 800 office jobs.

THE THESIS

The retailers who survive this decade won't be the ones who got bigger.

*They'll be the ones who got **more personal**—
to humans, and to the AI agents
now shopping on their behalf.*

Three forces are hitting the floor at once.

None of them care whether you're ready.

01



Tariff & Cost Whiplash

Section 232 now hits full product value —duties up to 50% on metal-content furniture. Section 122 expires July 24. IEEPA refunds opened April 20 (\$127B Phase 1). Diesel at \$5.45.

02



AI Has Replaced the Search Bar

Google's March 2026 update: AI filler - 71%, expert content +22%. AI Overviews on 48% of queries. LLM bots crawl 3.6x more than Googlebot. AI-referred traffic converts 42% better.

03



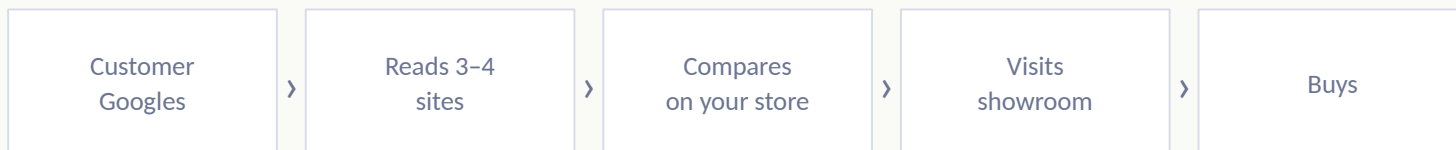
Agentic Commerce Went Live

5.6M Shopify merchants are visible to 880M ChatGPT users. AI-driven traffic up 7x, AI orders up 11x. UCP, Gemini, Copilot, AI Mode—all open. McKinsey: \$3-5T by 2030.

HOW SHOPPING ACTUALLY HAPPENS NOW

The customer journey just lost a step.

THEN



NOW



The compare-and-decide step moved from your website to an AI conversation.

If your product data isn't complete and structured, you're not in the consideration set—you're invisible.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE SHIFT

This is not theoretical. It's already happening.

880M

monthly ChatGPT users

now seeing Shopify products
by default

7x

AI-driven traffic to
Shopify

since January 2025

11x

AI-attributed orders

growth over the same period

42%

higher conversion

AI-referred vs. non-AI traffic
(Adobe)

Personalization starts at the data layer.



INVISIBLE TO AI

“Sofa”

Title: Sofa

Description: Beautiful sofa for your home.

Materials: –

Dimensions: –

Variants: Various

Category: Living Room

AI cannot recommend what it cannot read.



RECOMMENDABLE BY AI

Walnut Curved-Arm Sofa

Title: Walnut Curved-Arm Sofa, 84”

Materials: Solid walnut frame, performance bouclé

Dimensions: 84W x 38D x 32H, seat 19H

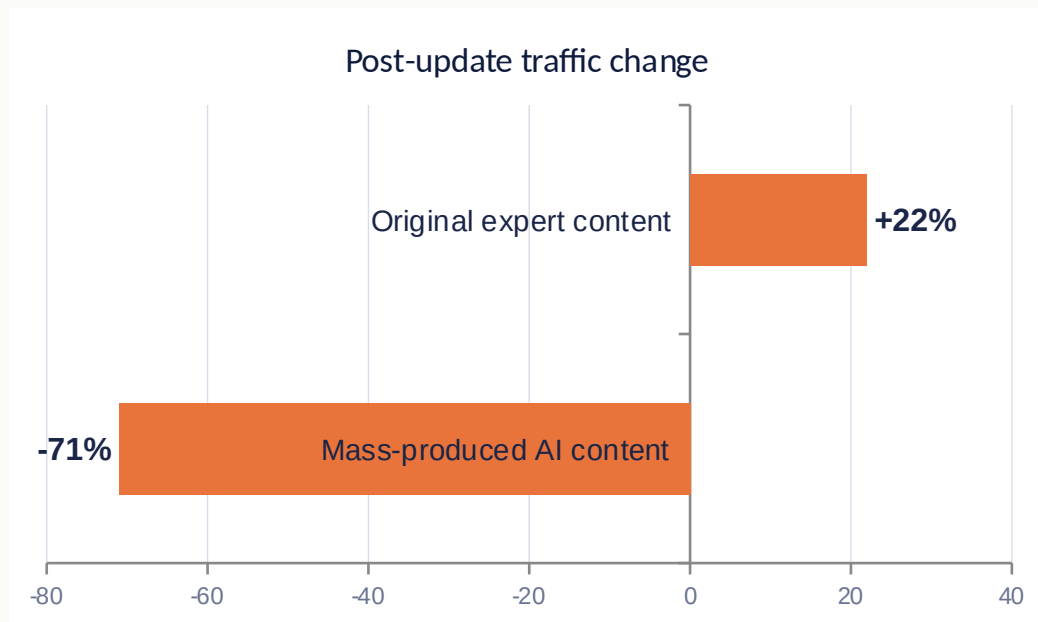
Variants: Cream, Sage, Walnut Brown

Taxonomy: Home & Garden > Furniture > Sofas > Curved

Made in: North Carolina, USA

This is the product AI surfaces in a conversation.

Generic content lost. Expertise won.



THE NEW SIGNAL:

Information Gain

Does this page add anything that doesn't already exist in the top results?

WHAT WINS NOW

- Original photography
- Staff-written buying advice
- Verified customer reviews
- Proprietary comparison data
- Verifiable author credentials (E-E-A-T)

YOUR SITE NOW HAS THREE AUDIENCES

Personalization isn't just for the human.



Humans

Browsing your site

Story, taste, photography, confidence
to spend \$2,500.



Crawlers

Indexing your content

Original expertise, structured data,
fast load times, real authority.



Agents

Shopping on a customer's behalf

Clean product data, parsable specs,
machine-readable answers.

LLM bots already crawl your site 3.6x more than Googlebot.

Agentic Engine Optimization (AEO)

Published April 11 by Google's AI director Addy Osmani — the first operational framework for making your site readable by AI agents.

0 1

Discoverability

Can agents find your pages, sitemaps, and feeds?

0 2

Parsability

Is your HTML clean, semantic, and structured?

0 3

Token Efficiency

Concise descriptions — no wall-of-text padding.

0 4

Capability Signaling

Tell agents what your site can DO (search, filter, buy).

0 5

Access Control

Decide which agents you let in — and on what terms.

Plus: Chrome 146 ships WebMCP — agents can now interact directly with your site's tools.

PART II

Personalization on the floor.

The home is getting warmer. So should your showroom.

HIGH POINT MARKET, SPRING 2026 • THE “COLLAGE” MOMENT

● Warm walnut

dominant wood tone; blonde wood declining

● Cream

the new neutral; cool greys are done

● Curves

69% of designers prefer curvy to clean-lined

● Brass

79% of designers prefer over chrome and nickel

● Skirted silhouettes

back in dining chairs, sofas, accent pieces

● Provenance

54% say sustainability matters; “where was it made?”

WHY THIS MOMENT FAVORS THE INDEPENDENT

Big-box can't fake “collected and considered.”

01

Taste

You curate. They allocate shelf space. AI can compare specs, but it can't curate a vignette.

02

Provenance

You know where it was made and by whom. That story now drives 54% of furniture decisions.

03

Trust

Authentic Reddit/community presence compounds in search and AI results for weeks.

04

Service

White-glove delivery, in-home consults, financing flexibility. The agent ends; you begin.

WHAT “PERSONALIZED SHOPPING” ACTUALLY MEANS NOW

It's not a recommendation widget.

WHAT WE USED TO MEAN

“Hi, Sarah!” email subject line

“Recommended for you” widget

Retargeting ad after visit

Birthday discount code

Cookie-driven product carousel

WHAT IT MEANS NOW

Showing up in the conversation a customer is having with their AI

Product data so clean an agent can confidently recommend you

A point of view—taste, provenance, expertise—that AI cites by name

A showroom and a story that match the customer's actual home, not their demographic

PART III

What to do Monday morning.

Five moves. Stack-ranked by leverage.

*“You cannot personalize what you cannot describe.
You cannot describe what you don’t know about your own product.”*

— Where the next 5 slides start.

Personalization, ranked by leverage.

01

Audit your product data.

Titles, dimensions, materials, variants, granular taxonomy. Every missing field is a lost AI recommendation.

THIS WEEK

02

Replace generic copy with expertise.

Original photography. Staff buying advice. Real comparisons. Information Gain or invisibility.

0 - 30 DAYS

03

Build content for the AI to cite.

Buying guides, material explainers, room-style guides. Be the answer, not just a result.

0 - 30 DAYS

04

Update the floor for warm + curved.

Walnut, cream, brass, skirted, swivel, storage built in. The home re-warmed; the showroom should too.

0 - 60 DAYS

05

Show up in real communities.

Reddit, TikTok, in-home consults, video in real rooms. Taste compounds; advertising rents.

0 - 90 DAYS

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

Personalization used to mean knowing your customer's name.

Now it means being the store an AI recommends, by name, to a customer it knows better than *you ever could*.

That's the future of retail. And it starts with your data.

THANK YOU.

Let's build the next decade together.

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Q & A

What's on your mind?