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Visa establishes an early position in agentic commerce infrastructure

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Intelligent Commerce Connect represents a strategic effort by Visa to establish itself as a foundational infrastructure provider for agentic commerce.

Introduction

Earlier this year, Visa Inc. unveiled Intelligent Commerce Connect, a new solution designed to give businesses — merchants, agent builders and payment enablers — a single, standardized on-ramp into agent-driven commerce. Intelligent Commerce Connect is part of the broader Visa Intelligent Commerce portfolio and is designed to simplify participation in an increasingly fragmented agentic commerce ecosystem.

THE TAKE

Intelligent Commerce Connect represents a strategic effort by Visa to establish itself as a foundational infrastructure provider for agentic commerce. Rather than attempting to drive adoption of a single proprietary protocol, Visa is positioning Intelligent Commerce Connect as a trusted translation and orchestration layer that can accommodate multiple protocols, payment providers and ecosystem participants. This approach mirrors Visa's historical role in payments as a connectivity and trust layer between diverse market participants.

As agentic commerce gains traction, we expect the vendors that facilitate interoperability, trust and governance will occupy some of the most valuable positions in the ecosystem. Intelligent Commerce Connect creates a compelling opportunity in that regard, and Visa is uniquely positioned to execute. However, realizing that opportunity will require careful management of potential channel conflict and ecosystem influence concerns among acquiring partners and merchants.

Context

While interest in agentic commerce is accelerating, the market remains highly fragmented, with multiple competing approaches emerging for agent identity, authorization, payment execution and merchant connectivity. Several technology and payments providers have introduced protocols and frameworks, but no dominant standard for agentic transactions has yet emerged. This uncertainty creates integration challenges for merchants, payment providers and commerce platforms seeking to participate in the ecosystem without committing to a single approach.

At the same time, merchant expectations for agentic commerce adoption are rising: According to our 2026 Voice of the Enterprise Merchant Study, 68% of merchants believe AI agents could initiate at least 10% of their e-commerce transactions within the next three years. For Visa, early participation is strategically important because foundational infrastructure decisions made during this period may shape how agentic commerce ecosystems evolve and determine which vendors occupy the highest-value positions within the future commerce stack. As a result, Visa is seeking to establish itself as a trusted interoperability and payments infrastructure provider before market standards and competitive roles become entrenched.

Product

Intelligent Commerce Connect is an interoperability and orchestration platform designed to simplify participation in emerging agentic commerce ecosystems. Positioned as neutral infrastructure, Intelligent Commerce Connect provides a single integration layer that enables merchants, payment processors and commerce platforms to support transactions initiated by AI agents across multiple agentic commerce protocols. Through this integration, organizations can support several emerging agentic commerce protocols, including Visa's Trusted Agent Protocol (TAP), Stripe LLC's Machine Payments Protocol (MPP), OpenAI LLC's Agentic Commerce Protocol (ACP) and Google LLC's Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP). By abstracting protocol-specific requirements behind a single integration, Intelligent Commerce Connect is designed to reduce the complexity of participating in a fragmented and rapidly evolving agentic commerce ecosystem.

Intelligent Commerce Connect combines several functional layers. At the payments layer, Intelligent Commerce Connect serves as an orchestration layer for agent-initiated transactions, providing tokenization, authentication, payment initiation, spend controls and PCI-compliance management. Visa positions Intelligent Commerce Connect as a network-agnostic infrastructure capable of connecting merchants to multiple payment networks, payment types and token providers through a single integration. At the identity and governance layer, Intelligent Commerce Connect manages agent authentication, credential handling, delegated purchasing authority and merchant-defined spend controls intended to govern how AI agents transact on behalf of consumers or businesses.

A distinguishing component of the offering is its AI-ready product catalog capability. Visa converts merchant catalog data into a format optimized for AI agent consumption and connects those catalogs to supported agent ecosystems. This allows AI agents to discover, compare and recommend a merchant's products during the shopping process.

Intelligent Commerce Connect is in pilot with a select group of partners, including Aldar, AWS, Diddo, Highnote Inc., MESH LLC, Payabli, Replit and Sumvin, with broader availability planned throughout 2026. Merchants can access Intelligent Commerce Connect directly from Visa or via partners, such as acquirers, leveraging Intelligent Commerce Connect on a white-label basis.

Competition

Intelligent Commerce Connect enters a rapidly forming competitive landscape where payment networks, processors, technology platforms, and emerging startups are all seeking to establish roles in agentic commerce. Mastercard Inc. and American Express Co. have each announced initiatives focused on enabling trusted AI-driven transactions. Across the major card networks, the common objective is not simply payment acceptance, but establishing a trusted infrastructure layer that governs identity, authorization, credentials and transaction execution for AI agents acting on behalf of consumers.

EMVCo LLC, the payments standards organization jointly owned by the major card networks, has remained largely absent from public agentic commerce initiatives. However, if agentic commerce evolves into a meaningful transaction channel, pressure will likely increase for industrywide standards in the near-to-mid term. In the meantime, Visa is moving quickly to secure an early position during this formative period. Its early efforts with Intelligent Commerce Connect may provide practical implementation experience that informs future industry standardization efforts.

For payment processors, gateways and orchestration providers, Intelligent Commerce Connect presents both partnership opportunities and competitive implications. On one hand, Visa is positioning Intelligent Commerce Connect as infrastructure that can be embedded, white-labeled or consumed through partners, enabling payment providers to accelerate their agentic commerce capabilities without developing their own frameworks. On the other hand, Intelligent Commerce Connect extends Visa into areas traditionally served by merchant payment providers. Stripe, for instance, has already made moves toward becoming an orchestration layer for AI-native transactions.

Various agentic commerce startups focused on payments and identity, such as Skyfire Labs Inc., could be seen as competitive, though it lacks the trustworthiness of Visa. Over time, AI platforms like OpenAI and Perplexity AI Inc. could assume more direct roles in facilitating agentic commerce transactions.

It is important to note that this expansion into merchant commerce infrastructure is not entirely new for Visa. The network owns Cybersource and has maintained a recognizable merchant-facing infrastructure presence for more than 15 years. Intelligent Commerce Connect extends that strategy into agentic commerce, positioning Visa not only as a transaction network but increasingly as a provider of higher-level commerce infrastructure.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Intelligent Commerce Connect is a strong value proposition for merchants and enablers who would otherwise need to develop against multiple competing standards simultaneously. As the operator of a global payment network, Visa has deep and trusted infrastructure credibility. Intelligent Commerce Connect is designed for merchants to retain customer data, transaction visibility and the shopper relationship. Visa's network reach, tokenization capabilities and existing acceptance infrastructure provide a foundation that many emerging competitors will struggle to replicate.	Intelligent Commerce Connect may be met with skepticism by certain merchants wary of a card network exerting greater influence over their commerce strategy. The offering's value proposition depends in part on continued fragmentation among agentic commerce protocols; if the market rapidly converges around a dominant standard, the need for a protocol abstraction layer may diminish. As a newly emerging category, Intelligent Commerce Connect faces the challenge of proving measurable merchant demand and ROI.
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Visa has an early mover advantage with Intelligent Commerce Connect, positioning the network as an attractive agentic commerce onramp during a formative period for the market. Intelligent Commerce Connect could help further Visa's momentum in the high-growth commercial payments segment, enabling agents to initiate payments directly from invoices and contracts. The platform creates an opportunity for Visa to establish a larger role in identity, orchestration and commerce infrastructure.	If EMVCo or a regulatory body eventually mandates open, interoperable standards for agentic payments, Intelligent Commerce Connect could face reduced differentiation, though Visa's early efforts here may help influence the direction of future industry standards. Visa could face channel conflict, especially if large merchants go directly to Visa for Intelligent Commerce Connect instead of working through their acquiring partners. A diverse competitive landscape could compress Visa's ability to establish Intelligent Commerce Connect as a de facto infrastructure layer.

Source: 451 Research by S&P Global.

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