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When AI Guides the Shopping Journey

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARKETERS IN
THE AGE OF AI DRIVEN COMMERCE

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Welcome to the era of AI-driven commerce

As digital shopping is being redefined by intelligent assistance, we're witnessing a fundamental shift in how consumers evaluate and make purchase decisions.

AI is not just changing commerce - it's powering the next wave of growth.

Consumers are increasingly turning to AI tools to guide their shopping journeys, from discovery and research to product comparison and purchase. Nearly 40% of U.S. consumers now use AI when shopping¹, and this holiday season alone AI is expected to influence over \$260 billion in global e-commerce sales².

For marketers, this shift represents both a challenge and breakthrough opportunity. AI is reshaping the path to purchase, and success will depend on understanding the ways consumers engage with AI alongside other online sources, while finding effective ways to communicate within these new experiences that define the future of commerce.

To explore this transformation, IAB partnered with Talk Shoppe to conduct a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind research initiative. **Including 450+ digital ethnographies and a survey of 600 US consumers, this study analyzed actual shopping behavior to uncover:**

- What the AI-enhanced shopping experience looks like in practice
- How AI is used alongside other online services
- Where and how brands fit into this ecosystem
- The future opportunity for marketers

We found that AI is turning shopping into a more dynamic sequence of decisions. It helps cut through clutter, narrows choices, and builds confidence - but it also prompts shoppers to take more follow-up steps to confirm what they find, creating new, high-intent moments for marketers to earn attention and trust.

AI is reorganizing the moments where marketing is most effective. This report reveals the touchpoints that matter most, the *real* behaviors shaping post-AI shopping, and the shifts that align media and messaging to this new reality.



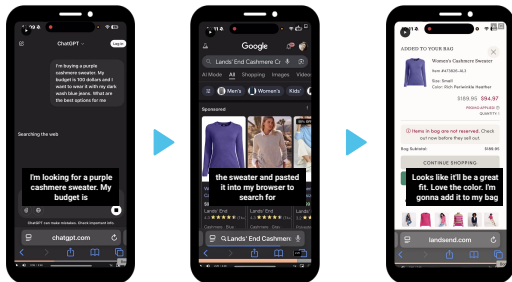
IAB partnered with Talk Shoppe on a first-of-its-kind, multi-phased research study to explore the digital consumer journey and how AI and other online sources work together

PHASE I:

OBSERVED ONLINE COMMUNITIES

A screen-recorded narrated online community of 150 US AI users completing over **450 AI shopping sessions** for low, medium, and high priced products on their desktop and mobile devices.

In the sessions, consumers shopped online for products and talked through what they were doing and why, while they were doing it. Touchpoints and friction moments were monitored and coded.



PHASE II:

NATIONAL CONSUMER SURVEY

An **ethnography-informed survey** of 600 US consumers was conducted to further quantify what was uncovered in the communities. The survey included both "AI Shoppers" and "AI Shopping Intenders."



AI SHOPPERS

Use AI tools/features occasionally or frequently to help with online shopping.



AI SHOPPING INTENDERS

Use AI tools/features in general. They don't yet use AI for shopping, but are open to the idea of doing so.

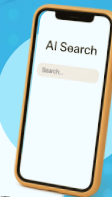
DEFINITIONS

"AI TOOLS:"

Generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Claude, Microsoft Copilot, Perplexity, Meta AI, Google Gemini. Search AI features such as Google AI Overviews and Bing's AI.

ONLINE SOURCE EXAMPLES:

- **Search engines:** e.g., Google, Bing
- **Marketplaces:** e.g., Amazon, Ebay
- **Retailers:** e.g., Best Buy, Target
- **Brands:** e.g., Nike, Apple
- **Community forums:** e.g., Reddit, Quora
- **Social Media:** e.g., TikTok, YouTube
- **News sites:** e.g., NYT, Consumer Reports



When AI Guides the Shopping Journey

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARKETERS IN THE AGE OF AI DRIVEN COMMERCE



KEY INSIGHTS

01

AI has become an essential tool in the consumer journey

Shoppers rank AI as the second-most helpful and influential shopping source in their decision-making process - rivaling search and retailers. Half of AI shoppers already use AI regularly when they shop, and 80% expect to rely on it more in the future.

02

It's most effective providing clarity mid-journey where complexity peaks

While AI influences discovery, shoppers say it's biggest strength is helping them in the research phase: comparing products and narrowing down choices. As a result, more than three-quarters say it helps them make decisions faster and feel more confident in their purchases.

03

However AI Shoppers frequently run into friction, eroding trust

Shoppers often run into challenges with AI, such as broken links or missing/conflicting product information. Only 46% of shoppers fully trust the shopping recommendations AI gave them, leading to 89% double-checking AI information with other sources.

04

AI isn't removing steps from the journey - it creates new ones

Although AI can make shopping easier, it's not removing steps from the journey. 95% of shoppers took additional steps online after AI to feel confident in their purchase. For marketers, these steps offer valuable moments to connect with attentive high-intent consumers.

05

AI-driven shopping an opportunity for marketers

Consumers are rapidly adopting AI for shopping, but lack of trust is a friction point. Brands and retailers have a significant opportunity to develop a strategy to deepen customer relationships through AI, while meeting consumers in the shopping moments that matter most.

Current State of Adoption

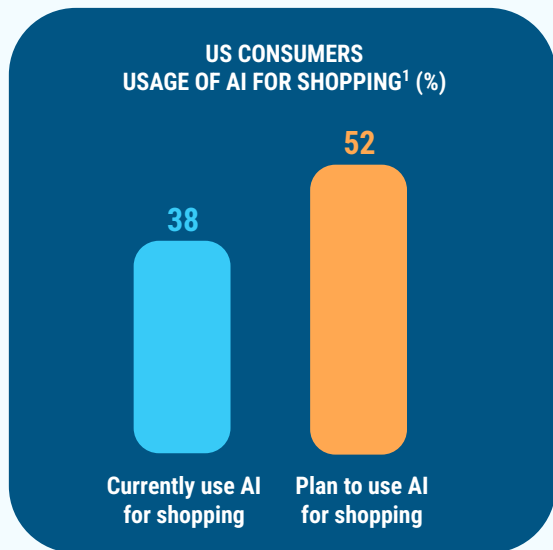
Who's using AI and why



AI has already become an essential shopping tool for consumers

Nearly 4 in 10 consumers currently use AI for online shopping¹, and over half plan to use it in the future.

Among AI Shoppers - nearly half use it most or every time they shop. And after completing their shopping sessions, over 80% of shoppers said they expect to rely on AI more in the future.



46%

of AI Shoppers **use AI most or every time they shop**



80%

of sessions ended with shoppers saying **they'll rely on AI more in the future**



"I think I will use it more and more as it continues to develop and enhance its capabilities. I can't wait!"

- Female, Millennial

"I see it being used all the time. I think shopping has been forever changed for me. Reviews. Products. Feedback. Innovation. It's all great and AI can be so helpful to people if you're willing to dive in!"

- Male, Gen X

AI Shoppers are a high-value audience that shop often and spend at a higher level

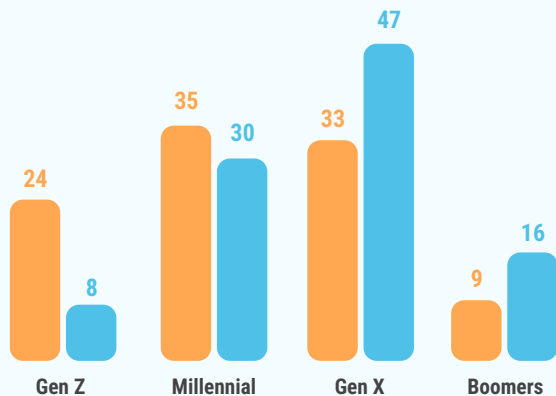
Those using AI for shopping **shop online more often and outspend AI users who don't yet use AI for shopping** by 1.3x each month, creating more shopping sessions and making them a high-value, highly actionable audience.

AI Shoppers also skew younger, with 6-in-10 being Gen Z or Millennials, while intenders skew older with nearly half Gen X.

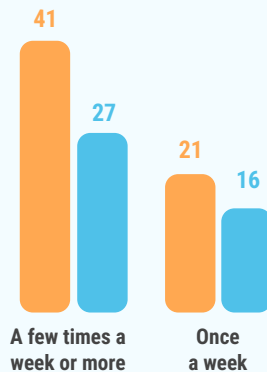
● AI Shoppers:
Currently use AI for shopping

● AI Shopping Intenders:
Use AI generally, but not yet for shopping

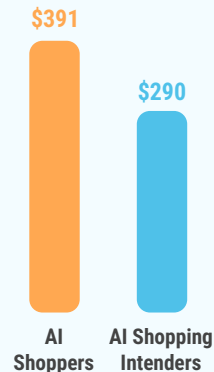
AI SHOPPERS BY GENERATION (%)



ONLINE SHOPPING FREQUENCY (%)



AVERAGE ONLINE MONTHLY SPEND (\$)



Shoppers use AI across categories, and find it most helpful when product comparison and evaluation is needed

While AI usage for shopping is high across all categories, certain product categories are a natural fit for AI assistance as consumers look for a summary of technical specifications, features, and options.

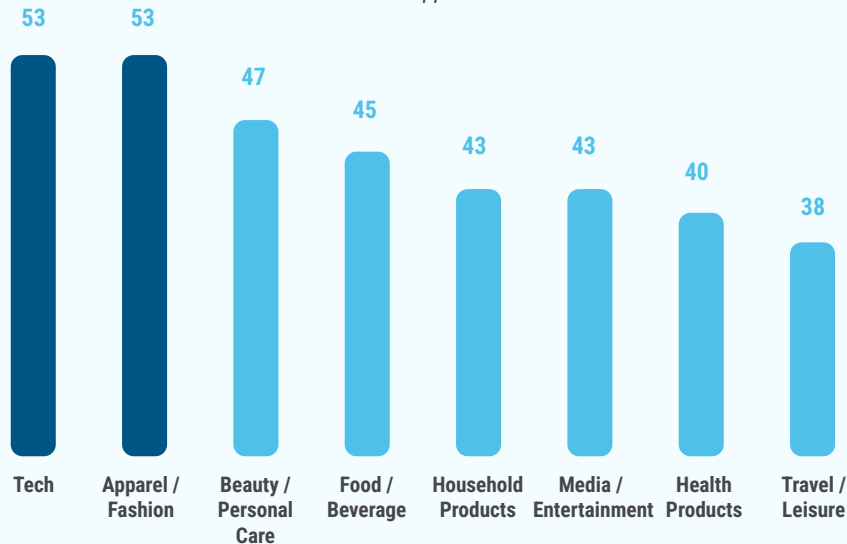
The categories where shoppers turn to AI most for shopping are **technology products, apparel/fashion, and beauty/personal care products**; sectors that typically involve a variety of models, sizes/fit, ingredients, or colors where side-by-side detail is helpful and personalization matters.



*"AI played a key role by helping to curate, compare, and personalize my choices quickly and efficiently; **filtering through hundreds of smart TVs** to surface only the best-rated and currently available models.*

- Male, Millennial

TOP CATEGORIES FOR AI SHOPPING USAGE (%)
AI Shoppers



AI rivals search and retailers as the most helpful and influential shopping source

AI Shoppers rank AI as the second-most helpful and influential shopping source in their decision-making process - on par with search engines and retailer sites and apps.

Additionally, in the AI shopping sessions, AI was most frequently named as the single most impactful resource in the journey, highlighting that AI is operating at the top tier of shopper influence.



"AI can be just as useful and helpful as the search engines. I know the more I use it the more it will learn what I like and don't like."

- Female, Millennial



"The most impactful source I used while shopping for this particular item was definitely AI because it showed me how I can easily buy the item I wanted after comparing it to other products. It even gave me the link to do so, which allowed me to add it to cart or buy now."

- Male, Gen X

TOP 5 MOST HELPFUL / INFLUENTIAL SOURCES WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO BUY*

- 1 Search engines
- 2 AI tools
- 3 Retailer websites or apps
- 4 Friends or family recommendations
- 5 Social media (posts, video reviews, unboxings)

*Selection of 'most helpful / influential' made based on shortlist of sources ever used when shopping online. Ranking reflects only sources personally used.

Because AI makes shopping more fun, intuitive, and personalized

AI is transforming online shopping into an experience that feels more personalized and enjoyable. More than 70% of shoppers say AI often anticipates their needs before they even ask, and 85% agree it delivers product recommendations that feel personalized. **The result is a more engaging experience overall, with 83% of shoppers say AI makes shopping more fun.**



83%

agree say using **AI makes shopping more fun**



"It makes the shopping experience more accurate, fun, and detailed. I foresee myself continuing using AI for bigger and smaller purchases in the future.

- Female, Gen X



73%

agree AI often **anticipates what I need** before I ask



"It's like a best friend that is a walking encyclopedia. It's really good at refining your search as well as providing more insight than you would normally bring to the table.

- Male, Millennial



85%

agree AI gives me **product recommendations that feel personalized**

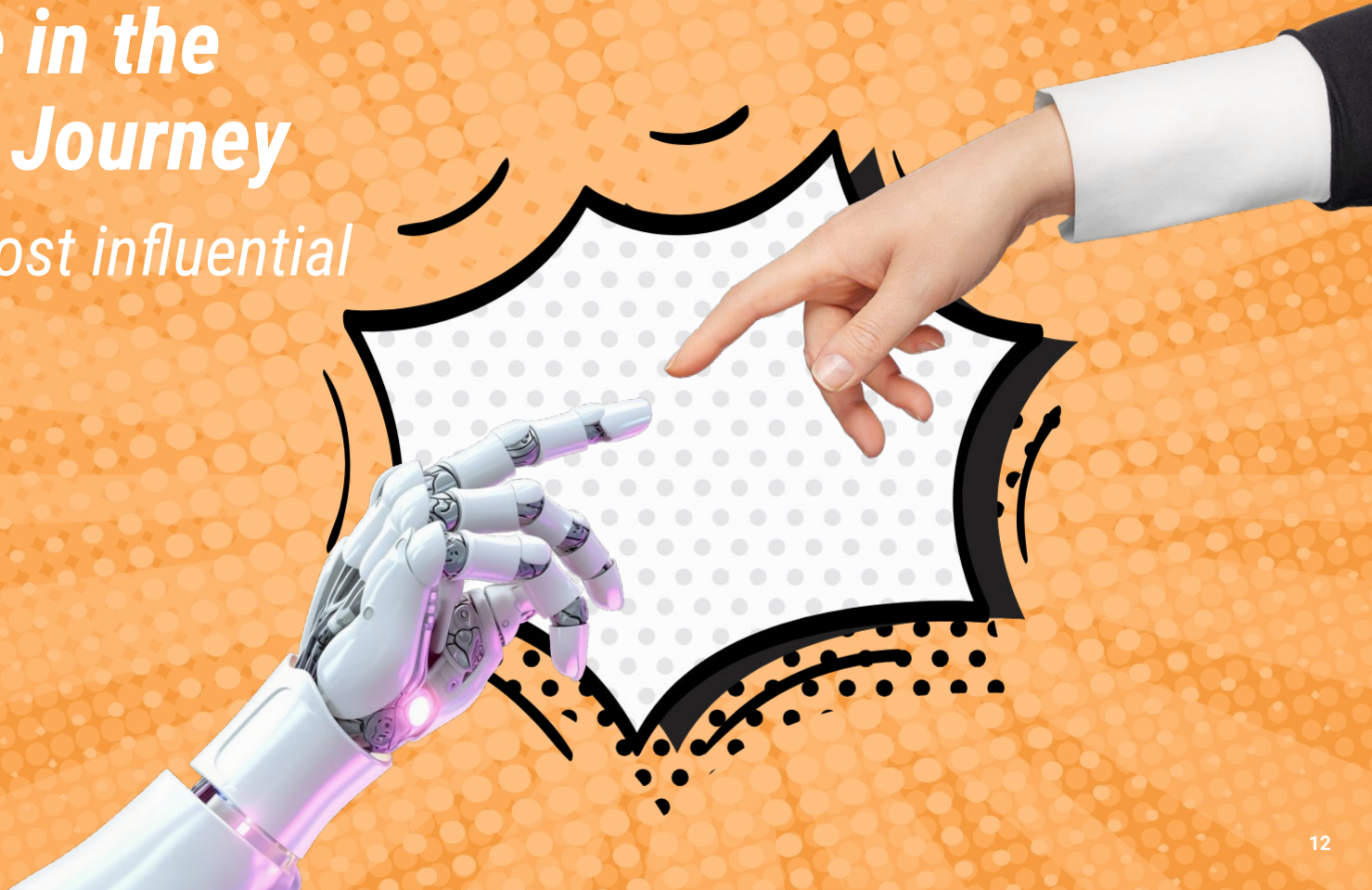


"AI feels more conversational and personalized. It's like someone is showing you a very specific powerpoint on the subject that YOU wanted answer for and it's basically instantaneous.

- Male, Gen X

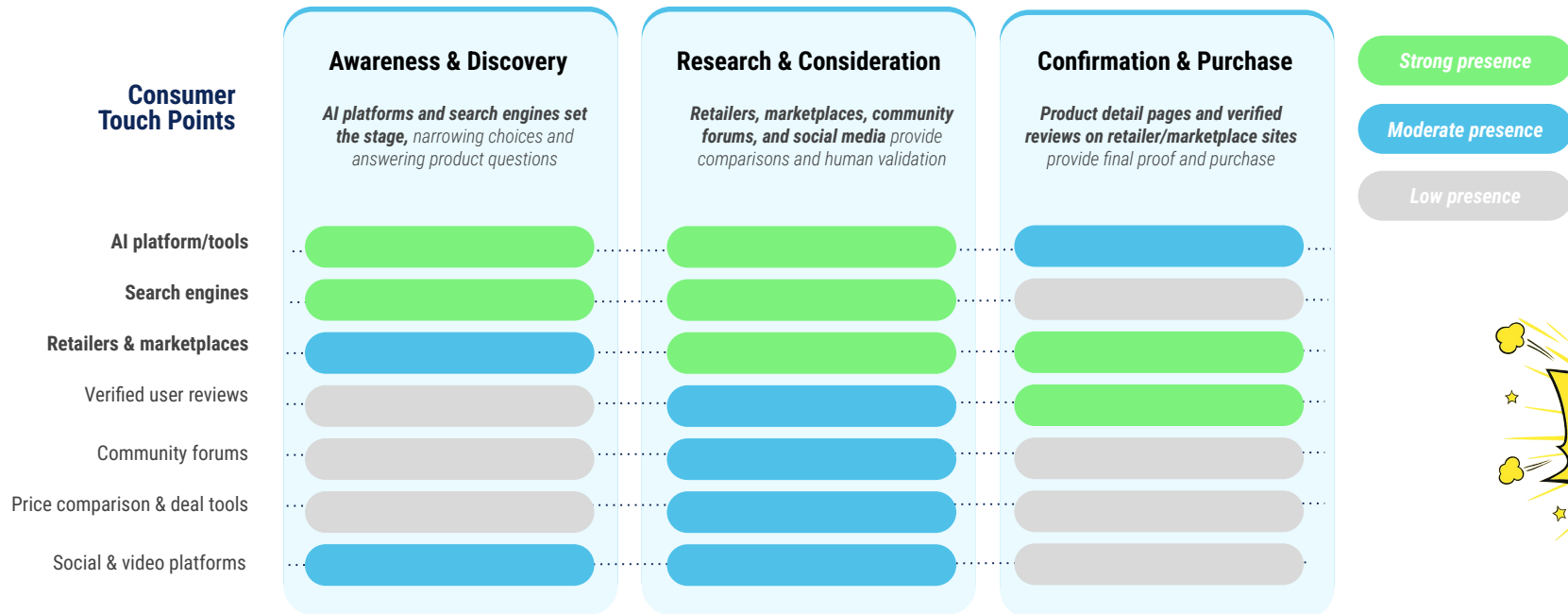
AI's Value in the Purchase Journey

Where it's most influential



AI usage is highest in the beginning and middle of the shopping journey

The shopping sessions revealed **that AI and search dominate the beginning and middle of the journey, easing off towards the end of the shopping session.** Retailers and marketplaces become the primary touchpoints from the middle through the end, while reviews on retailer sites show up near the end as validation. Community forums peak in the middle when shoppers are narrowing choices, while social/video platforms are consistent throughout.



AI unlocks discovery of new products and brands

When AI curates the shopping journey, it introduces people to products and brands they might never find on their own right when they're looking for them.

Nearly 9 in 10 say it helps them discover things they would have otherwise missed. **And across our hundreds of AI shopping sessions, 64% of AI Shoppers actually discovered a new product via AI.**

For shoppers it feels like personalized guidance. For brands, it's a center-stage moment to capture attention at exactly the right time.

88%



of shoppers say **AI helps them discover products they'd otherwise miss**

64%



of sessions **had AI surface a new product to the shopper**

THE MOST COMMON PRODUCT DISCOVERIES FROM AI RECOMMENDATIONS

AI Shopping Sessions

NEW-TO-ME BRANDS:

Credible, relevant alternatives beyond the usual set



"AI definitely helps find other products while I'm doing my research. For example when I compare a product to another product it suggests new ideas which I never would've otherwise seen."

- Male, Gen Z

NICHE VARIANTS & FITS:

Exact versions that match needs (size, color, etc)



You can be hyper-specific and have it just give you exactly what you need and compare and contrast products and everything that you want to make the most out of your shopping experience."

- Male, Gen X

VALUE SWAPS:

Look-alike lower priced options with comparable features



In this shopping experience AI helped me narrow down places to find the same product but for cheaper."

- Female, Gen Z

COMPATIBILITY FINDS:

Items confirmed to work with shopper's setup/requirements



I use AI to tell me how this product is compatible and its capabilities as well. I like how it tells me what it's able to do, because this will help me make a decision whether this is for me or not."

- Female, Gen Z

But it's most effective providing clarity mid-journey where complexity peaks

While AI usage spans the beginning and middle of the journey, **shoppers found the most value from AI in the middle: researching and comparing products, and narrowing down choices.**

While shoppers did see AI as an effective tool for exploring new ideas, categories, and products, it was most effective distilling and curating options, making the typically complex “messy middle” part of the journey easier and more satisfying.



“AI really does a great job at being a filter, think of it as mining for gold except instead of gold, what you are searching for doesn't get strained through the net!”

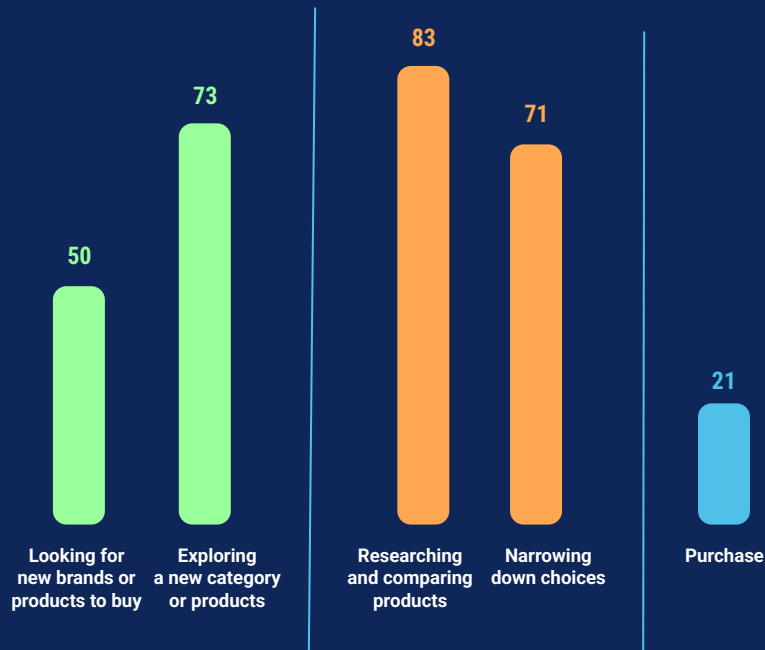
- Male, Millennial



AI is much more effective and efficient than any other tools I use to shop. It really does the best job at narrowing down the products I should choose from based upon price and quality.”

- Female, Millennial

WHERE SHOPPERS SAID AI WAS MOST EFFECTIVE IN THEIR JOURNEY (%) AI Shoppers



Shoppers most commonly use AI for deeper research & comparison tasks

The most common tasks shoppers turn to AI for are product comparisons, product-specific questions, and tools that track prices or surface deals - functions that simplify evaluation and help shoppers feel more assured about product value.

Summaries of customer reviews also stand out, translating volumes of feedback into concise lists that make choices clearer. And while less common, personalized recommendations and style/sizing guidance make the shopping process feel more tailored and engaging.



"AI played a major role in my shopping experience **by helping me compare options, understand technical specifications, and weigh the pros and cons of each product** in real time.

- Male, Millennial



"AI can save time, energy, and overall sanity by **narrowing down whatever product you are in the market for to a few either best rated products, or best priced products.**

- Female, Millennial

MOST COMMONLY USED AI SHOPPING TASKS (%)

AI Shoppers



This assurance enables shoppers to move forward quickly and confidently with their journeys, and materializes in two main ways

MAKING THE PROCESS EASIER

The clarity that AI brings to the journey makes the overall shopping process easier for consumers. AI can simplify comparisons, quickly answer product questions, and summarize lengthy reviews.

81%

of sessions ended with shoppers saying AI **did in fact make the job easier**



"[AI TOOL] gave me a clear breakdown of the features and how they compare. It **made the shopping process easier and less overwhelming** by summarizing everything in simple terms."

- Female, Millennial

PROVIDING CONFIDENCE IN THEIR NEXT STEPS

By narrowing down options and focusing the consumer, AI curates the shoppers world for them and guides their next steps. This enables shoppers to move forward quickly and confidently to the next steps in their journeys.

77%

of shoppers **felt more confident in their ability** to make a purchase decision with the help of AI



"AI offers focused, tailored guidance and makes the shopping experience faster, smarter, **and provides more confidence in a purchase decision!**"

- Male, Millennial

AI delivers high-intent shoppers to retailers and marketplaces

When AI shapes the shopping journey, retailers and marketplaces become the ultimate destination. In the AI shopping sessions, nearly 80% of shoppers visited a retailer or marketplace to validate their purchase decisions.

And once shoppers use AI, retailer and marketplace traffic doesn't just rise - it accelerates. **After interacting with AI, site visits to retailers and marketplaces nearly tripled**, and one in three shoppers clicked directly from an AI platform to a retailer or marketplace. This surge reflects not just increased traffic, but a high-intent purchase-ready audience.



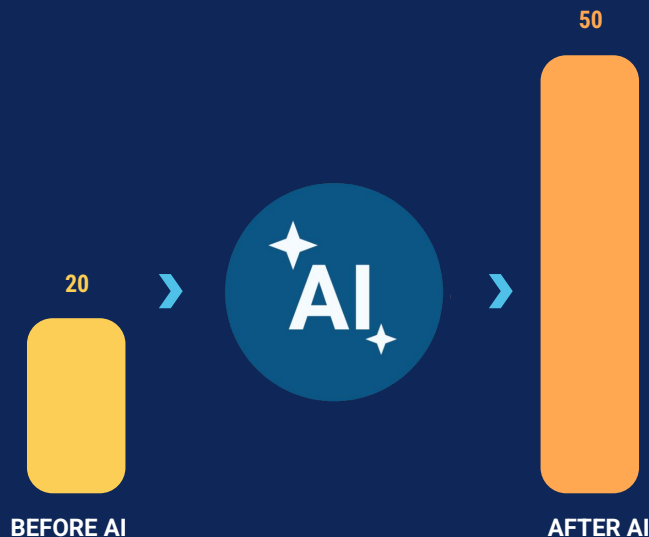
of shoppers **went to a retailer or marketplace site** to validate shopping details during their journey



went to an online retailer or marketplace **directly after using AI**

% OF SHOPPERS THAT VISITED RETAILER/MARKETPLACE SITES BEFORE & AFTER AI

AI Shoppers



Retailers and marketplaces are where trust needs to be earned to drive action

When shoppers arrive at a retailer or marketplace after using AI, they're already primed to purchase. They expect accuracy and ease of navigation as they verify information.

Above all else, three-quarters visit the site to verify prices and deals, followed by double-checking the variants and product options, along with reading verified user reviews and ratings.

This is the moment where intent converts. If retailer and marketplace pages are not clear and consistent with what AI suggested, shoppers may loop back to search and confirm; or pause the purchase altogether.

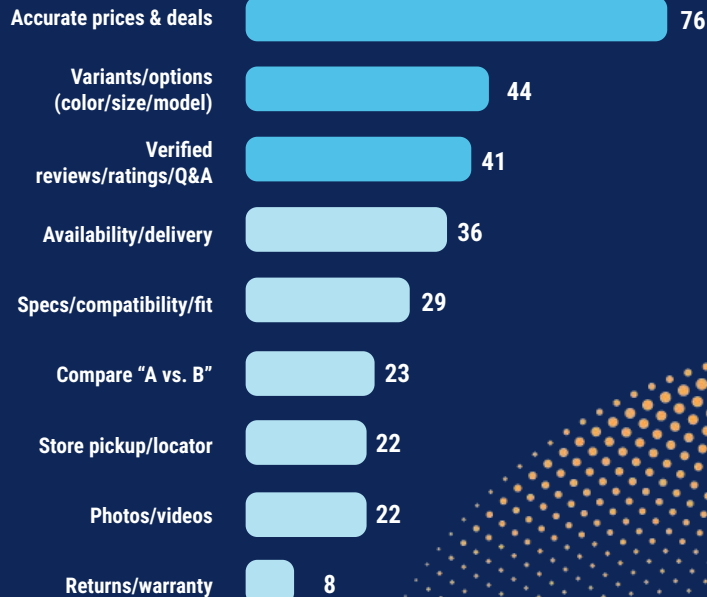


*"I visited a retail site because I wanted to **verify the accuracy of the AI recommendations and confirm images and pricing** before making a purchase. It also allowed me to check availability and shipping details directly, providing me with confidence and reassurance.*

- Male, Millennial

WHAT SHOPPERS INVESTIGATE ON RETAILER AND MARKETPLACE SITES COMING FROM AI (%)

AI Shoppers



The Trust Gap

More steps, more confidence



AI Shoppers frequently run into friction, creating detours

When shoppers run into challenges while using AI for shopping, such as missing or conflicting information in AI tools, they don't stop; they add steps online to build confidence.

There are four common frictions that shoppers run into, and they take predictable detours from each of these friction points.

Furthermore, the AI shopping sessions revealed that during these next steps shoppers are actively seeking clarity rather than casually browsing. Their attention is high, their minds are open, and they want to finish the journey.

COMMON SHOPPING AI FRICTION POINTS

AI Shopping Sessions



TRANSPARENCY:

"Where did this come from?"

FRICTION POINTS

- Answers that lacked links/sources
- Strong claims with no citations

NEXT STEPS

- Search to find sources
- Check news sites
- Check retailer product pages for accurate info



RELIABILITY:

"Are the details correct & current?"

FRICTION POINTS

- Broken/outdated links
- Specs/price/avails in AI misalign w/ retail pages

NEXT STEPS

- Cross-check a retailer or marketplace for prices/availability
- Review product detail pages to check specs and warranty



HUMAN VALIDATION:

"Do real people back this up?"

FRICTION POINTS

- AI summaries misalign w/ consumer sentiment
- Need real-life "proof"

NEXT STEPS

- Read user reviews and community forums
- Watch a demo or review video



RELEVANCE:

"Is this right for me?"

FRICTION POINTS

- Recommendations don't fit budget
- Wrong size, fit or compatibility

NEXT STEPS

- Restart the query
- Ignore the recommendations and apply filters elsewhere online

Friction erodes trust with AI, leading shoppers to build confidence elsewhere

When shoppers hit friction points their trust fades.

In the AI shopping sessions **only 46% of consumers fully trusted the shopping recommendations AI gave them**, which means a majority of consumers don't yet fully trust AI for shopping.

As a result, shoppers are turning to services they trust more to build purchase confidence including community forums and user reviews for real-world experiences, and search and retailer sites that provide verified up-to-date product information.



"AI serves as additional information. However, I trust search and community forums more. **AI will not give me the final confirmation as I do not trust it enough to do so.** So I'll re-confirm with forums and search afterwards."

- Female, Gen Z



46%
of shoppers
fully trusted
AI's shopping
recommendations

SHOPPER TRUST COMPARED TO AI

% of shoppers who trust each source more than AI



Gen Z have higher trust in social media & community forums

AI drives more steps online for validation and confidence

Although AI can make shopping easier and decisions faster, it's not necessarily removing steps from the journey - it's creating new ones.

In the AI shopping sessions 95% of consumers took additional steps online after AI to feel fully confident in their purchase before ending their session.

In fact, they're taking more steps after AI is used than before. The shopping sessions measured consumers take on average 1.6 online steps before using AI, and 3.8 steps afterward - reflecting both a desire to verify and validate what AI surfaces and occasional friction points where consumers need additional reassurance.

For brands and marketers, these moments offer valuable opportunities to connect with high-intent consumers who are actively working toward a decision. AI is a launchpad to more steps online, not a finish line.

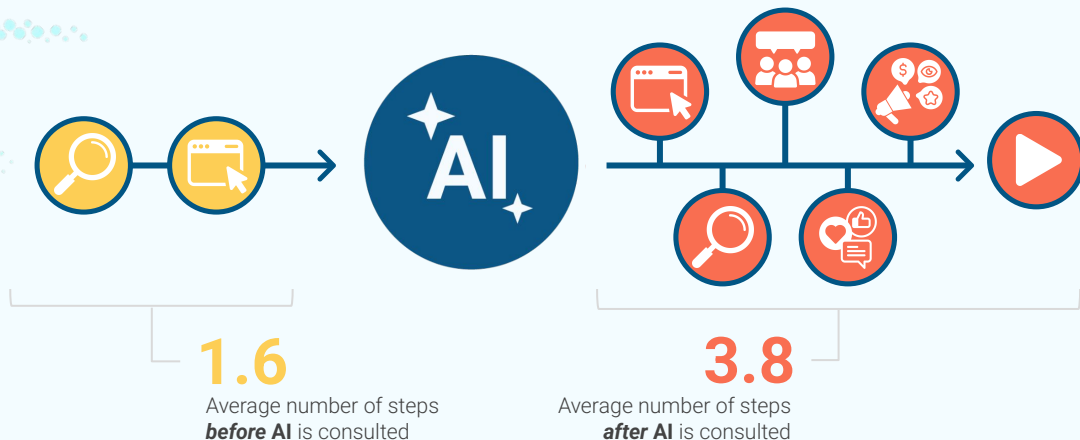
95%

of shoppers **took one or more additional steps online** after AI to feel certain about their purchase before ending their session



"I think AI works best when used in conjunction with traditional tools like search and retailer websites. It definitely enhances the usefulness but still ends up with you using the traditional tools at some point."

- Male, Gen Z



After using AI, consumers follow three distinct paths towards their purchase

But not every shopping journey requires the same level of validation. **After AI, journeys cluster into three behavioral paths: Fast-Track, Quick-Compare, or Evidence-Required.** Product complexity and price are the main factors influencing the path to final purchase.

FAST TRACK

Shoppers move quickly with minimal proof needed

AI USAGE After a brief AI query, shoppers go straight to a retailer/ marketplace and purchase

TYPES OF PURCHASES Low-risk, familiar, or urgent needs; products with clear specs

PRICE RANGE **Under \$50**

PRODUCT EXAMPLES Routine basics & simple replacements; standard services.
household refills, filters/bulbs, phone chargers, basic installs/oil change.

JOURNEY EFFICIENCY:
BEFORE AI → AFTER AI

0-1 → 1-2

STEPS

QUICK COMPARE

Shoppers review a short, clear list before deciding

AI USAGE Shoppers already have a short list; they use AI to compare A vs. B and then move to buy

TYPES OF PURCHASES Mid-price items or well-known categories with many similar options

PRICE RANGE **\$50 - \$199**

PRODUCT EXAMPLES Mid-tier, look-alike options where features/ price decide.
small appliances, earbuds, keyboards, shelving/storage

JOURNEY EFFICIENCY:
BEFORE AI → AFTER AI

1-2 → 2-3

STEPS

EVIDENCE REQUIRED

Shoppers take time to validate details and confirm confidence before purchasing

AI USAGE AI kickstarts the search, but shoppers validate across reviews, videos, forums, and retailer/marketplace pages before buying

TYPES OF PURCHASES Higher-stakes or complex buys; new-to-me categories; fit/compatibility concerns

PRICE RANGE **\$200+**

PRODUCT EXAMPLES High-consideration or fit/compatibility-sensitive buys.
major appliances, footwear/apparel, mattresses/furniture, electronics

JOURNEY EFFICIENCY:
BEFORE AI → AFTER AI

1-2 → 4-6

STEPS

Future Outlook

*What shoppers want
next from AI*



For AI Shoppers, AI doesn't replace the online consumer journey, it amplifies it

AI makes the journey easier and more reassuring, and helps shoppers cut through the noise and feel confident in their choices. And that confidence builds satisfaction. In our study **80% of shoppers agreed that AI helped them feel more confident in their purchase decisions**, and over 80% of shopping sessions that included AI resulted in shoppers feeling satisfied with their journey.

AI isn't taking over the way consumers buy, it's enhancing it. It guides shoppers to the right products and gives them the confidence to click "buy."

80%

of shoppers **felt more confident in their purchase decisions** when they used AI



*"I see myself using AI a lot more in the future for shopping as it has made my shopping much easier and more convenient **giving me the confidence in my purchases.**"*

- Male, Millennial

87%

of sessions that included AI **ended with satisfied customers**



*"The product checked all the boxes I was looking for; **AI helped me find a product I'm happy with.**"*

- Female, GenZ

84%

of shoppers **would recommend AI as a shopping tool to others**



*"It is super easy to use and takes a lot of the research out of making a purchase so **I would totally recommend it for anything** where you don't know what you want to buy yet."*

- Female, Millennial



But providing more sourcing and verified reviews will improve trust with AI Shoppers

As shoppers embrace AI for everyday shopping, trust is key to deeper engagement. AI Shoppers appreciate the ease and personalization AI delivers, but they also want to know that what they see is reliable and authentic. **89% of consumers still double-check shopping information from AI with other sources.**

More than 80% say their confidence would grow if AI responses included more clear sourcing and reviews from verified customers or users.



*"If the AI could **flag sketchy reviews or too-good-to-be-true listings**, that would go a long way in building trust."*

- Male, Millennial

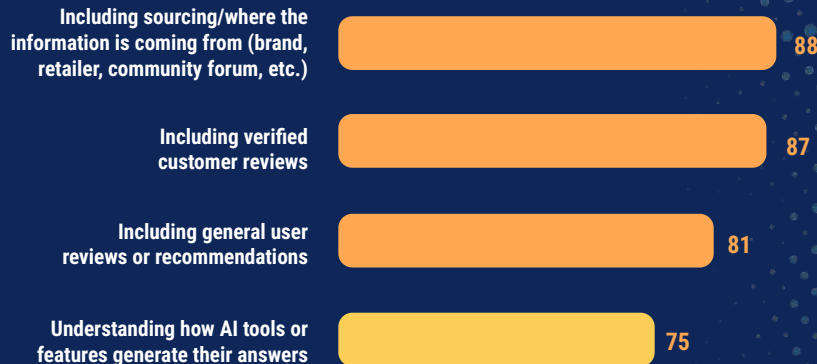


*"Including testimonials would be helpful and just **making sure we're hearing from real people and reliable sources**."*

- Female, Gen Z

WHAT WOULD DRIVE TRUST WITH AI SHOPPERS (%)

AI Shoppers



89%
of shoppers
double-check AI
information with
other sources



Boomers are more likely to say verified customer reviews would increase their trust in AI!

For AI Shopping Intenders they're ready to shop with AI, but barriers remain

Consumers who have not yet adopted AI for shopping are curious and open to trying it, but many still have concerns that hold them back.

Their biggest hesitation is around accuracy and data privacy. 45% worry that AI-generated information may be inaccurate, and 40% say they are reluctant to share personal data. Uncertainty also plays a major role, as many consumers are unsure how AI gathers or sources its information or whether the data is current and reliable.

For these shoppers, building confidence will require clear explanations and transparent sourcing that make AI feel understandable and safe.



"I would like a better idea of where AI gets its information. For instance, if I used AI created with [BRAND] data, it would never tell me that [COMPETITOR] had a better product for sale."

- Male, Gen X



*"For me to use AI for shopping I'd need assurance that **my data is protected** and that nothing personal gets leaked."*

- Female, Millennial

HESITATIONS FOR AI SHOPPING INTENDERS (%) AI Shopping Intenders



Millennials and Gen X are more likely to cite concerns with sharing their personal data

Even as AI improves, Intenders will continue to use additional online shopping sources

As AI-assisted shopping becomes more common, most AI Shopping Intenders say they'll still use other sources alongside it. **77% expect they would continue doing so even after adopting AI for shopping.**

They plan to keep using other sources to verify product details and specifications, compare prices, read real user reviews, and seek reassurance from the sources they already know and trust. And concerns about accuracy, privacy, and the need for human perspective will keep Intenders returning to familiar places for confidence before they buy.



"[It would help] If AI could show the or reference where they obtained the information so I could double check the accuracy."

- Female, Gen X



"I just double check everything, I'm not going to just trust AI. I don't just trust random people either."

- Male, Gen X

REASONS SHOPPERS WOULD CONTINUE TO USE OTHER SOURCES ALONGSIDE AI (%)

AI Shopping Intenders



77%

of Shopping Intenders expect they would **still use other sources** if they were to use AI tools for shopping

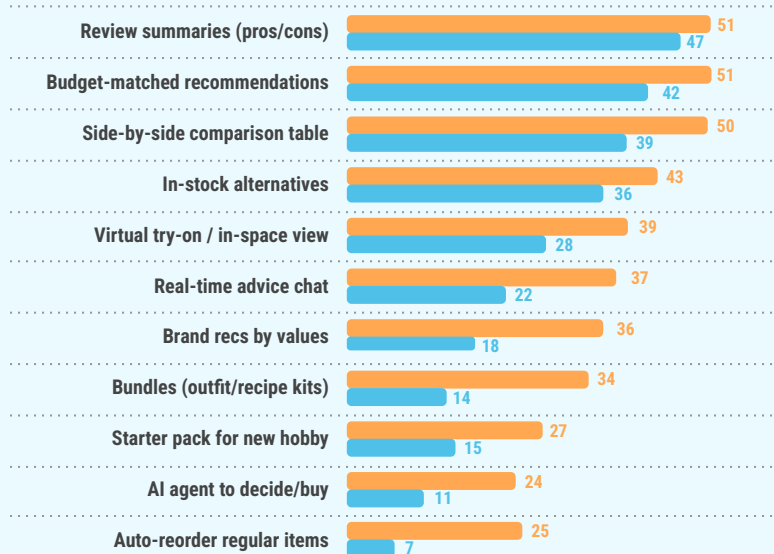
What shoppers want next from AI

When it comes the features shoppers are interested in using in the future, **both AI Shoppers and Intenders want similar things out of AI**, including review summaries, recommendations that better fit their budget, and product comparisons.

INTEREST IN USING FUTURE AI CAPABILITIES & FEATURES (%)

AI Shoppers

AI Shopping Intenders



However, when it comes to the role they want AI to play in their shopping process, consumers envision different kinds of support. AI Shoppers think about AI as a savvy companion, finding the best deals and comparisons. But AI shopping intenders want AI to be in the background - there when they need it, but an expert when they do.

RANKING OF WHAT KIND OF ROLE SHOPPERS MOST WANT AI TO PLAY IN THE FUTURE

	AI Shoppers	AI Shopping Intenders
A savvy researcher or comparison shopper	1	3
A bargain hunter that finds the best deals	2	1
A product expert who explains things clearly	3	4
A minimalist - only helps when asked	4	2
A personal stylist or taste advisor	5	6
A concierge or assistant who handles the details	6	7





***I see myself using AI a lot more in the future for shopping.
It's made my shopping much easier, faster and more
convenient, and gives me more confidence in my purchases.***

- Female, Millennial



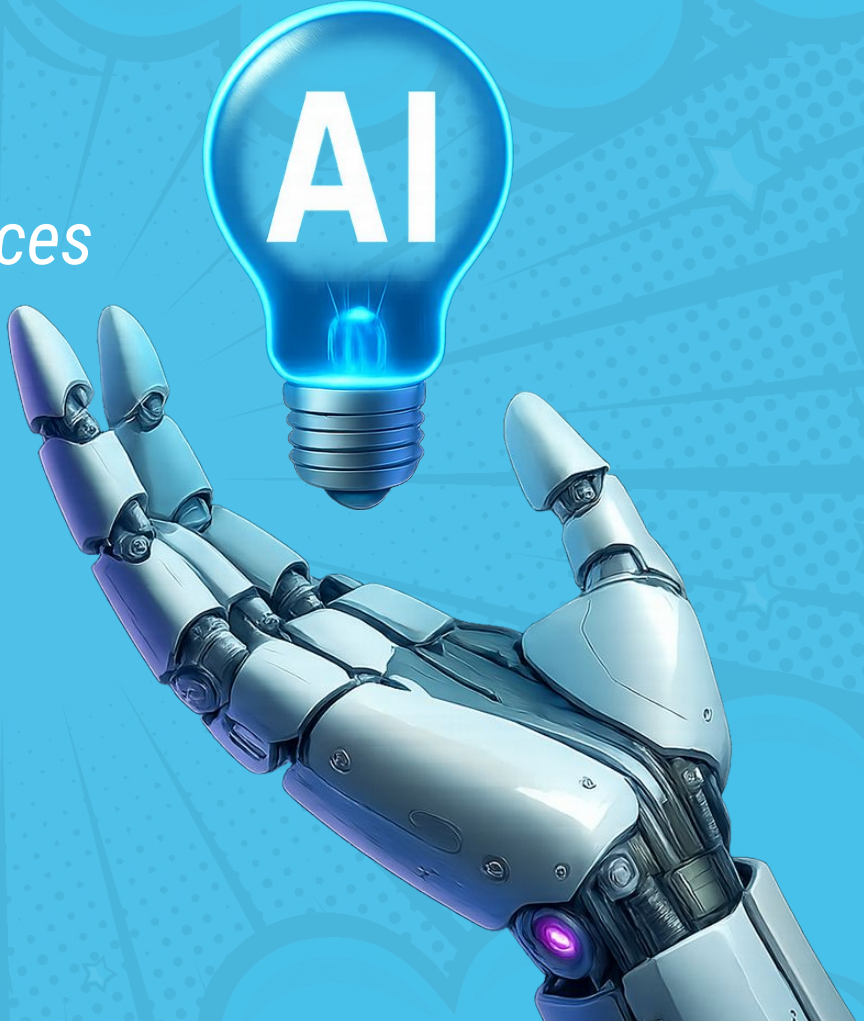
Call to Action

Recommendations and Resources

AI is now a major part of commerce. This rise has created both excitement and uncertainty for marketers and retailers. The path to discovery and purchase looks very different than before with AI platforms now serving as an intermediary.

Before businesses jump in to creating an “AI consumer strategy”, they must first embrace core principles that will have long-lasting effects on their overall go-to-market approach.

As AI becomes an everyday shopping companion, businesses that embrace it early have a distinct advantage, and by doing so they can meet consumers' expectations exactly where decisions are being made.



Recommendations for Marketers & Agencies

Be Discoverable Where AI and Consumers Search

When consumers primarily relied on traditional search, a marketer's job was to attract attention. Now with AI central to product discovery, a marketer's job is to market to machines that mediate consumer choice. To succeed, your brand must not just be seen, but understood by AI.

The new competitive advantage is ensuring your brand is present where AI learns, structured so machines can interpret it, and represented accurately when surfaced.

If your content isn't structured so machines can interpret and find it trustworthy, you will be invisible from intent to the moment of choice.



Be visible and accurately represented in AI ecosystems.

Ensure your brand and products are visible where AI systems learn from and build recommendations. Monitor and influence how AI describes, recommends, and presents your brand to shoppers so you're seen clearly and confidently at the moment of choice.

- Feed the ecosystems AI learns from.**
 Strengthen visibility in the ecosystems AI crawls and trusts, including search engines, retail platforms, review sites, community forums, and industry publications.
- Embed AI visibility into your retail media strategy.** Ensure your brand content and product data are optimized on retail partners' sites, since many AI models pull structured data from major retailers.
- Treat earned media as AI training data.** Press coverage, expert commentary, and third-party articles become source material for AI systems. Strategic PR placements in authoritative publications directly feed what AI "knows" about your brand.
- Write for conversational queries.** Incorporate terms that reflect how people ask AI for help, such as "best winter coat for travel" or "eco friendly dish soap alternatives."
- Monitor how AI represents your brand.** Regularly audit what AI systems, tools, and services actually say about your products to identify gaps and fix them.
- Plan for multi-modal AI.** Consider how visual search, voice queries, and video content factor into AI discovery, not just text.

Structure for AI understanding

Make your data and content machine-readable, consistent, and trustworthy.

- Ensure that data is machine-readable.**
 Structure product data clearly with accurate specifications, pricing, and availability so AI can parse and recommend with confidence.
- Build appropriate owned content assets.**
 Develop authoritative content on your owned properties (guides, FAQs, technical specs, how-tos) that AI can learn from and reference, reducing dependence on third-party interpretation.
- Build trust signals AI can measure.** AI systems evaluate clarity, completeness, consistency, and credibility across sources. Strong reviews, authoritative mentions, and accurate information become ranking factors.

Recommendations for Marketers & Agencies

Turning AI Discovery into Purchase Confidence

As AI transforms how people research and make purchase decisions, the marketer's role is shifting from generating clicks to generating confidence. Once AI introduces your brand as a potential choice, the next challenge is to inspire trust and prompt action while capitalizing on the extra steps shoppers take for purchase validation.

That requires credibility that can be verified, and messaging that meets shoppers at the moment they're validating or deciding.

Success now depends on two essential priorities: building visible, verifiable trust at every touchpoint, and aligning content and creative to the new AI-driven decision moments — when reassurance, rather than awareness alone, drive conversion.



Build credibility, not complexity

In AI shopping journeys, attention is abundant but trust is scarce. Shoppers rely on AI to narrow options, but they still need verifiable proof to purchase. Brands that make credibility visible at every touchpoint will outperform those that chase fleeting awareness.

- **Ensure consistent data/details across touchpoints.** Keep pricing, specifications, and descriptions aligned across all surfaces from retailer listings and marketplaces to ads, brand pages, and search.
- **Expose proof.** Create branded environments designed for validation: clear specs up front, comparison tools, and up-to-date product information.
- **Partner with trusted publishers & creators.** Build social proof through demos, reviews, unboxings, and community forums that reinforce credibility. User-generated content provides the natural language use cases and contextual detail AI systems prioritize for product recommendations.
- **Amplify authentic voices.** Make human credibility visible: surface expert reviews and real customer quotes, reviews, and ratings within owned environments. Support any claims with credible sources such as third-party ratings, certifications, or testing results.
- **Audit for hallucination risk.** Regularly check how AI systems describe your brand or products to identify gaps and correct misleading or incomplete information. Determine any information, sources, and signals you need to correct.

Match the message to the moment

After AI recommendations, shoppers take extra validation steps to compare, confirm, or decide to buy - creating new opportunities for high-intent moments where the right message matters.

- **Tailor creative to intent** when referral traffic is identifiable. Offer "buy now" cues for ready shoppers, compare tools for evaluators, and detailed proof for those still researching.
- **Personalize the consumer journey.** Direct them to product details, reviews, or comparison pages — instead of a generic homepage.
- **Use media sequencing** to align with shopper intent. Shift messaging from consideration to conversion as confidence grows.
- **Treat post-AI touchpoints as second impressions.** Capitalize on the extra validation steps. Use these moments to reinforce proof, precision, and trust that drive final conversion.

Recommendations for Retailers & Marketplaces

Turn AI Visits into Confident Purchases

Retailers and marketplaces are now seeing a new kind of visitor: one guided by AI, arriving with a plan and ready to act. Yet many shopping experiences aren't built for this behavior. Outdated product data, confusing navigation, and friction in the validation process make it harder for these shoppers to complete their journey.

Your site should make the validation process simple, credible, and human.

Design every touchpoint to build confidence: product pages that surface proof and consistency, experiences that adapt to intent, and authentic voices that reinforce trust. The sites that turn AI-driven visits into confidence-building moments will win not just attention, but conversion.

Make product pages do the lifting

Most shoppers who arrive from AI are there to confirm details, not browse. Your product pages should make that easy to solidify trust and purchase intent.

- **Lead with clarity.** Show prices/deals, verified reviews, shipping details, and key specifications right away.
- **Keep data and visuals consistent** across listings, ads, and AI references to prevent confusion.
- **Use authenticity cues** like "verified by" or "updated on" labels for product information to demonstrate accuracy and reliability.
- **Deep-link visitors directly to the section they care about** when referral traffic is identifiable: price, variant, or reviews, to reduce effort and build confidence.

Design for high-intent journeys

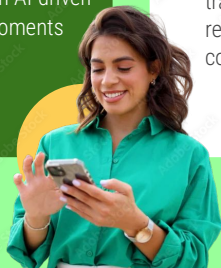
Shoppers referred by AI are high-intent consumers. Friction or repetition can quickly derail that intent.

- **Tailor landing experiences** to different shopper types: fast checkout for ready buyers, comparison tools for deciders, and deeper content for cautious researchers.
- **Simplify navigation** and remove unnecessary steps for visitors arriving from AI.
- **Use dynamic personalization** to surface offers, content, or bundles based on the inferred AI entry point or purchase stage.
- **Avoid dead ends** by suggesting in-stock alternatives, and offer easy access to live chat or store experts to keep progress moving.

Humanize the experience

AI may guide shoppers to your site, but human reassurance often completes the sale. Confidence grows when people can connect with real experts.

- **Integrate verified human input.** Pull in authentic shopper reviews, expert testimonials, and community Q&A directly into AI-powered experiences.
- **Feature real people.** Integrate user-generated videos, influencer demos, or staff picks prominently on your site.
- **Bridge AI and human assistance.** Offer seamless transitions from automated support to live chat or store experts for reassurance.
- **Educate consumers** about how AI sources data. Use content that explains how your AI recommendations are built, building confidence and transparency.



Actively Participate in IAB Boards & Committees

The following IAB guides and committees provide valuable opportunities and resources for digital marketers across the industry to deepen their knowledge of, and actively contribute to, the growth and standardization of areas related to AI and Commerce Media. Use the links below to learn more or visit iab.com.

COMMERCE MEDIA



[IAB Commerce Board](#): Unites leaders from brands, platforms, publishers, agencies, and tech partners to shape how businesses engage consumers throughout the purchase journey - online, in-store, and in-app. The Board defines industry standards that support transparent, accountable, and adaptable commerce media practices.

[IAB Commerce Media Committee](#): Brings together key stakeholders from the evolving retail media landscape, including buyers, sellers, and advertising technology solutions. Its mission is to harmonize advertising business needs, requirements, and standards, aiming to streamline the buying and selling process by facilitating the exchange of updates, research, and insights, as well as hosting discussions among experts.

[IAB's Defining Commerce Media and Its Ecosystem Guide](#): Breaks down what commerce media is, how it differs from traditional models, and how to navigate this growing ecosystem.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



[IAB AI Board](#): Kicks off its inaugural quarterly meeting onsite at IAB's Annual Leadership Meeting in February 2026. Offering unmatched influence, access, and visibility, this invitation-only forum will bring together senior leaders to define the best practices and standards to navigate AI's role in advertising.

[IAB AI Committee](#): Brings together leaders across the ecosystem to explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping the future of media, marketing, and measurement. From planning and personalization to optimization and oversight, this group will tackle the real-world applications and challenges of AI across the advertising value chain.

[IAB's AI in Advertising Use Case Map](#): Provides a comprehensive, practical guide to today's most relevant and emerging AI use cases across the marketing campaign lifecycle, from creative development to media buying, measurement, and brand assurance.



AI is reshaping commerce in ways that are both powerful and personal. For consumers, it delivers shopping experiences that feel smarter, simpler, and more intuitive — ones that anticipate needs, build confidence, and turn complexity into clarity. For marketers and retailers, it unlocks new possibilities to shape discovery, build trust, and guide decisions with greater precision than ever before.

But with this transformation comes a higher bar. Shoppers may trust AI to help them choose shortlists, yet they still rely on brands and retailers to validate and confirm those choices. Failing to meet that expectation risks breaking the chain of confidence that drives purchase decisions.

To fully realize AI's potential in commerce, marketers must design for discovery, clarity, and trust, while retailers and marketplaces deliver accuracy, consistency, and ease at every step. Together, experiences can be created that meet consumer expectations and lead in the new era of AI-driven shopping.

Step Into the Next Era of Intelligent Shopping

About IAB



The Interactive Advertising Bureau empowers the media and marketing industries to thrive in the digital economy. Its membership comprises more than 700 leading media companies, brands, agencies, and the technology firms responsible for selling, delivering, and optimizing digital ad marketing campaigns. The trade group fields critical research on interactive advertising, while also educating brands, agencies, and the wider business community on the importance of digital marketing.

In affiliation with the IAB Tech Lab, IAB develops technical standards and solutions. IAB is committed to professional development and elevating the knowledge, skills, expertise, and diversity of the workforce across the industry. Through the work of its public policy office in Washington, D.C., the trade association advocates for its members and promotes the value of the interactive advertising industry to legislators and policymakers. Founded in 1996, IAB is headquartered in New York City.

www.iab.com

About Talk Shoppe



Talk Shoppe is an award-winning, female-owned research agency founded in 2010 and based in Los Angeles. They reject the one-size-fits-all approach, focusing on delivering the 10% of data that truly matters to clients' businesses. Talk Shoppe's foundation lies at the intersection of strategy and consumer market insights, providing exceptional service and innovative solutions.

Celebrating over a decade in business, Talk Shoppe is certified by the Minority Supplier Development Council and the Women's Business Enterprise Council. They specialize in serving world-class brands across various industries, including media and entertainment, consumer packaged goods, and technology, helping them navigate growth and innovation with confidence.

www.letstalkshoppe.com

Our partners



Koddi is the leading commerce media technology platform for enterprises. We power retail and commerce media networks for the world's biggest companies—leveraging AI, first-party data, and over a decade of experience. Our platform supports full-funnel campaigns across display, native, video, sponsored products, off-site, and on-premise, all in one place.

Whether you're launching a franchise program, managing enterprise advertising, or scaling a commerce media network, Koddi helps drive measurable outcomes. We work across verticals—from retail to auto to travel—offering flexible solutions that grow with your business.

Learn more at koddi.com



Stingray Advertising operates North America's largest retail audio advertising network, delivering digital audio ads across thousands of superstore, pharmacy, grocery, and c-store locations. In addition, we offer a targeted DOOH video network within grocery and pharmacy stores specifically in Quebec and Ontario.

Our powerful in-store media solutions enable brands to communicate directly with active shoppers and build meaningful connections that are proven to drive results. We give brands the power to influence purchase decisions and convert shoppers on the spot.

Learn more at stingray.com

talkshoppe

A woman in a white blazer and trousers walking, surrounded by a collage of lifestyle items like sneakers, a laptop, a shopping bag, and various accessories, all set against a background of a repeating geometric pattern.