

VIEWS ON CHATGPT'S NEW SHOPPING FEATURE



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The Future of Online Shopping: ChatGPT's New Shopping Feature and Its Implications

OpenAI's latest update to ChatGPT introduces a new capability: users can now shop directly within the conversational interface. If you ask for product suggestions, ChatGPT can understand your intent, surface relevant options, offer detailed descriptions, and even link you to websites where you can make a purchase.

For anyone who has used ChatGPT, it's clear that with the intelligence behind large language models (LLMs), the possibilities are vast.

From Self-Sufficiency to Expert Guidance: A New Consumer Paradigm

In the Google era, we were self-reliant shoppers—scrolling through pages of products, reading reviews, comparing options, and making decisions ourselves. We were information hunters, synthesizing data to reach informed conclusions.

Now, in the AI era, that dynamic may shift. ChatGPT's shopping feature offers consumers access to a virtual shopping expert. For e.g. in categories like fashion and beauty, users can describe their preferences—style, color, budget—and receive tailored recommendations. Over time, as it learns individual preferences, the suggestions become increasingly personalized.

This could change how we discover and choose products online. We can delegate the task to a virtual shopping expert that understands our preferences, and if we trust it enough, we might even let it choose the brands and products independently.

A New Channel—And Challenge—for Marketers

For marketers, this shift raises important questions about how influence, loyalty, and brand choice will work in an AI-driven world.

Marketers are always eager to meet consumers wherever they are, but the rules of this new channel remain unclear. Currently, ChatGPT pulls product listings from third-party data providers without re-ranking them. However, OpenAI has indicated that this may evolve to enhance the user experience.

This raises important questions: How do brands optimize for LLMs? Can marketers influence AI-generated recommendations? Unlike SEO, where optimization playbooks exist, LLMs present an opaque and evolving landscape. Marketers must also consider the broader impact of AI intermediaries on brand-building. If consumers increasingly rely on AI recommendations, will brand recall and loyalty become harder to achieve?

More Than Just a Threat to Google

It's easy to view this feature as a challenge to Google's search dominance (which is already under threat with tools like Perplexity), and that's certainly part of the picture. But ChatGPT's update may go beyond just competing with search—it could disrupt the broader e-commerce landscape.

On the ChatGPT release page, merchants can now express interest in submitting their product data directly to OpenAI, which could signal a shift toward a more direct sales platform—reshaping how products are marketed and sold online.

No Ads—For Now

OpenAI has stated that this shopping feature currently excludes advertisements and does not take commissions from purchases. However, it's difficult to ignore the potential for future monetization. Sponsored listings, promoted products, or brand partnerships could emerge as new forms of paid visibility—creating another advertising channel for marketers to navigate, if not evolving into full-fledged commerce.

This new feature could signal the start of AI intermediaries playing a role in the customer purchase journey.. Retailers, ad platforms, and marketers will likely need to rethink their strategies to stay relevant in a world where conversation, rather than search, drives discovery.

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