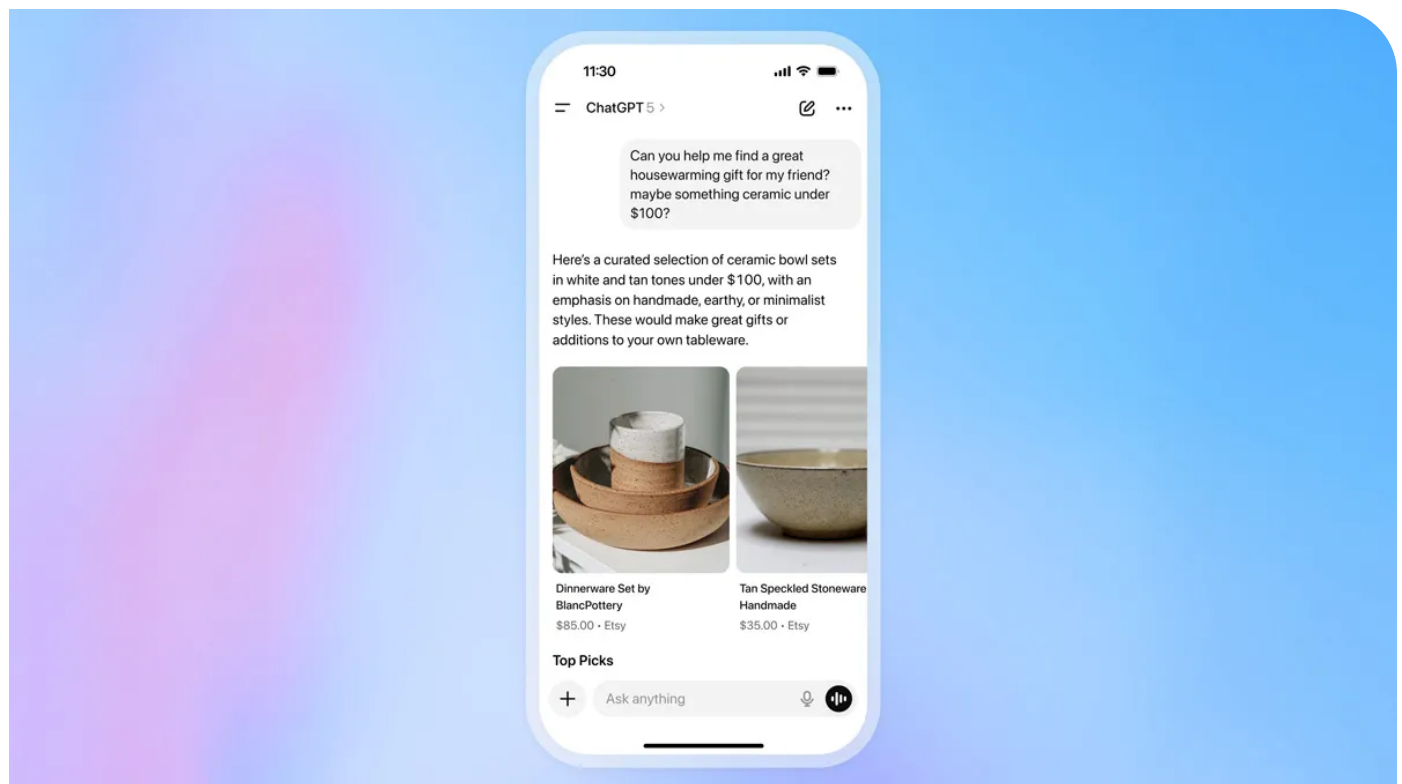


RETAIL NEWS

2025 Will Be the First Year Brands Develop an Agentic AI Holiday Strategy

Walmart, Etsy, and Shopify are signing big deals with OpenAI.

OCTOBER 15, 2025 | 5 MIN READ



ChatGPT's Instant Checkout feature
ChatGPT



BY LAUREN JOHNSON

As more people use AI search engines like OpenAI and Perplexity, marketers are developing holiday strategies to ensure their brands appear prominently in AI search results.

Big AI players are trying to cash in on commerce. OpenAI is working with Walmart, Etsy, and Shopify to power a feature that allows people to make purchases directly from ChatGPT. Walmart's integration will include a Buy button and is linked to a shopper's Walmart or Sam's Club account when it goes live this fall.

Perplexity has AI agents that help consumers research and buy products from ecommerce websites. Google is experimenting with shopping tools within AI Mode, its AI-backed Google Search feature. Walmart and Amazon also have their own AI agents that help customers find products on their websites.

A blue rectangular banner with the text "Walmart | OpenAI" in white. The word "Walmart" is in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by a vertical line, and then "OpenAI" in a similar font.

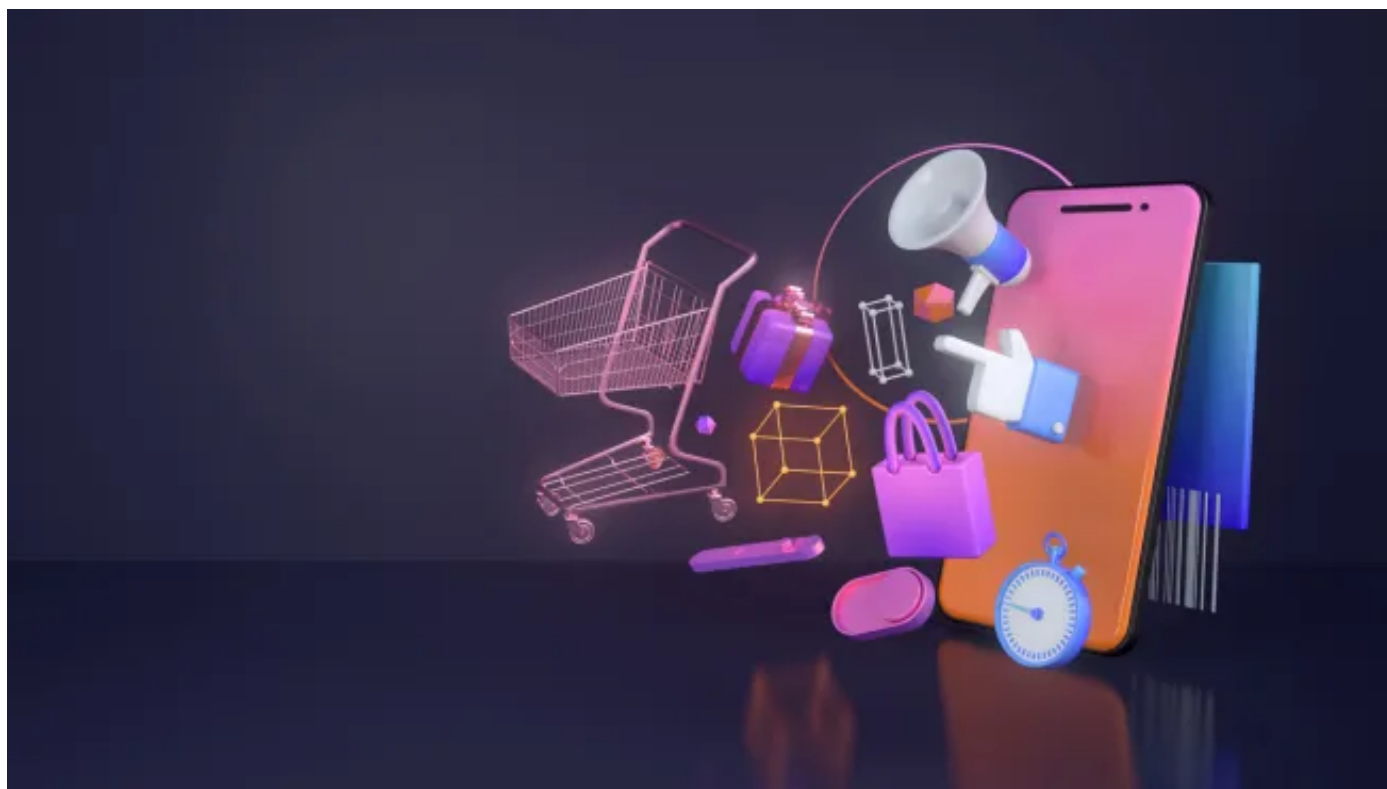
Shoppers Will Soon Be Able to Buy Walmart Products on ChatGPT

While retailers don't receive the bulk of ecommerce traffic from AI chatbots and tools, it's a growing source of referral traffic. Roughly 27% of Etsy's referral traffic comes from AI chatbots and tools, with 23% of that traffic coming from ChatGPT specifically, according to data from Similarweb. About 16% of Walmart's referral

traffic comes from AI, and ChatGPT alone contributes 14% of referral traffic; for Target, it's 15% and 13% respectively.

Experts agree that commerce integrations between AI tools and retailers are not likely to drive significant holiday sales this year given that more than 80% of sales still happen in stores, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Separate data from Adobe expects AI traffic to increase 520% year-over-year during the 2025 holiday season, with the bulk of consumers using the technology to research products.

“It’s probably the first season that we’ll see agentic AI start to impact commerce,” said David MacDonald, head of retail and commerce experience practice at Publicis-owned Razorfish. “People are going to use it to make decisions.”



Holiday Ecommerce to Hit \$253B as Shoppers Use AI to Deal Hunt

Still, marketers are plotting ways to make sure that their products show up in the condensed results that AI search engines spit out. Unlike traditional search engines

like Google, people use AI engines to search for products using more specific, conversational queries.

For example, instead of searching for a “red dress,” people may ask an AI search engine for a list of red dresses that match a pair of black shoes with high-star reviews. The average SEO search query is two or three words while the average AI search query is 12 to 20 words long, said Imri Marcus, CEO of Brandlight, a startup that helps brands appear in AI platforms.

That specificity means that brands are developing holiday AI strategies for the first time this year.

“For the brands we work with, we have strategies for them that are specific to the holiday season—that didn’t happen last year,” Marcus said.

Holiday shopping goes AI

To prominently appear in AI search results, brands are tweaking web content like landing pages and reviews, and cranking out social media content with information about discounts and promotions. Zeroing in on users who are searching for the best price for gifts is one way for brands to stand out in AI engines during holiday shopping, said Marcus.

That also opens up a big challenge for retailers to optimize their websites for AI engines with current inventory, prices, and stock availability.

Razorfish’s MacDonald pointed to Reddit becoming a bigger focus for marketers because AI models readily pull information from its forums. Reddit posts tend to focus more on customer sentiment rather than information about products. Instead of matching content to specific queries, marketers should focus on matching context, he said.

“You start thinking about the ways that consumers think about your product and how they work together, and those are going to be the nuances that change,” MacDonald said.

Chasing scale

The growing scale of AI platforms is core to why marketers are adapting AI strategies. ChatGPT has 800 million weekly active users, doubling in size since February.

Still, AI technology is nascent for shopping. While AI models pull information from marketplaces like Walmart and Amazon, Razorfish's MacDonald recommended that brands also continue to invest in their own direct-to-consumer websites. Consumer packaged goods brands, for example, can use AI insights to highlight the most relevant products for consumers.

"It becomes the purchase and discovery within a store," MacDonald said.

Brands and retailers are also testing on-site shopping agents that find and recommend products. Agentic agents that help shoppers find products on retailers' websites can increase conversions up to 25% compared to shoppers that use traditional search to find products on an ecommerce website, according to Morgan Seybert, chief business officer and head of retail at data and AI consulting firm Tredence.

Cranking out social content

VaynerX predicts that brands with a content strategy optimized for AI will outperform brands without one by 20% to 40% this holiday season, said Zubin Mowlavi, EVP of commerce at VaynerX.

One way that brands can stand out in agentic commerce is by creating video content that is being increasingly picked up by AI models, specifically YouTube Shorts and live videos, Mowlavi suggested. These videos should answer the top 10 questions that consumers have about a brand.

Brands should also rethink gift guides this holiday season. Instead of guides that include broad categories like "gifts for dads that cost \$50-\$100," brands should create more specialized topics such as "gifts that have sold well on TikTok Shop for the past 60 days." These more specialized topics are likely to be picked up by AI models.

“Make sure you have the right content, [and] a significant frequency of content,” he said.



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