

Meet Your New Personal Shopper: Your AI Chatbot

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions. Give details.

- How do you choose where to buy a product?
- What do you trust more: the results of a search engine or the answer from an AI chat?
- How comfortable would you be with an AI having the ability to buy things for you?

2 Reading for gist

a. Read the article quickly and choose the statement that best summarises the main idea.

1. Shopping results from search engines are changing because of AI.
2. AI chatbots are creating new products to influence what people buy.
3. The use of AI is changing how people shop and how companies sell.

3 Key words

a. Find these words in the article and try to guess that they mean. Some of the words may appear in a different form in the article. Then match the words to the definitions. Check your answers and your understanding of how the words are used by using them to complete the example sentence immediately after each definition. Then read the complete article to see how the key words are used in context.

reflect	emerge	deal	purchase
agent	source	enable	retailer
budget	brand	generative	scrape
anticipate	shoot up	revolutionise	review
behalf	convert	loyalty	scroll down

1. when customers continue to buy from the same brand because they trust it _____

Apple has strong _____ from its customers because they always buy its products.

2. to show or represent something clearly _____

The reviews _____ that most customers are happy with the quality.

3. to rise quickly and suddenly _____

The price of computer games might _____ during the holiday sales.

4. to move down a web page on a screen to see more content _____

I had to _____ to the bottom of the website to see more details.

5. to make it possible for something to happen _____

Mobile phones _____ people to shop online easily.

6. to expect something to happen and prepare for it _____

Many online stores _____ higher sales during the holiday season.

7. to completely change something in a very big or important way _____

Companies predicted that mobile payments would _____ how we shop on the internet.

8. to collect data or information automatically from websites _____ Some

companies _____ information online stores to compare prices.

9. to change something into a different form or use _____

The app can _____ prices from dollars to euros.

10. to appear or become known after being hidden _____

New fashion trends often _____ from social media influencers.

11. the place or person something comes from _____

The website shows the _____ of the products, so people know where it was made.

12. the name of a company or product that makes it special and easy to recognise

Nike is a popular _____ known for its sports shoes.

13. the amount of money you plan to spend on something _____

She made a(n) _____ before shopping online so she wouldn't spend too much.

14. the act of buying something _____

My latest _____ was a wireless keyboard from Amazon.

15. doing something for someone else or representing them _____

I bought the shoes on _____ of my friend because she didn't have an account.

16. an opinion or comment written by a customer about a product or service

He always reads a(n) _____ before he decides to buy something online.

17. a type of artificial intelligence that can create new things, like text _____

The store uses _____ AI to create realistic product images.

18. a special offer that helps you buy something at a lower price _____

I found a great _____ on headphones with 50 per cent off the original price.

19. a person or company that sells products to customers _____

The _____ sent my order quickly, and it arrived in two days.

20. a computer program that can think or act like a person to help with tasks

The website uses a(n) _____ to help customers find the right product faster.

I've seen the future of shopping — and I'm sold on AI

BUYING WITH THE HELP OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS LIKE HAVING A PERSONAL SHOPPER WHO KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT I WANT

BY CLAER BARRETT

- 1 Whether we're shopping for fashion, food or furniture, more consumers are asking generative artificial intelligence for help and inspiration as they decide what to buy — and it's revolutionising the way we shop online.
- 2 If you're using GenAI apps like ChatGPT, Perplexity or Google Gemini to help you navigate modern life, then the chances are you've already used them to weigh up purchasing decisions. This trend was the talk of the FT's Future of Retail summit this week. Adobe, the software company, reckons more than half of US shoppers will be using GenAI in some form by the end of this year.
- 3 Having tried it myself recently to buy a bookcase, I am a convert. Type "white bookcase" into a search engine, and the top hits are Ikea and Argos (thanks, but no thanks). Scroll down, and better options emerge, but I soon have dozens of tabs open trying to compare them.
- 4 So, instead, I just speak into my phone app and tell it exactly what I want, describing the ideal size, design, my budget and desire for adjustable shelf heights, specifying that I hate DIY and want it delivered fully assembled.
- 5 Within seconds, I have a summary of UK retailers offering products that meet my description, plus a comparison table of prices and delivery lead times — very helpful. Tempted by one of the recommendations, I ask my AI assistant: "What's their customer service like?" Many retailers are outsourcing this to AI-powered chatbots, but a summary of hundreds of Trustpilot reviews concludes: "Delivery mishaps are rare."
- 6 Whether we're asking about a decor refresh, a special gift or what to cook at a dinner party, an important part of the answer is where we can buy it. To capitalise on this, retailers are shifting their focus from search engine optimisation (SEO), reflecting the keywords shoppers are most likely to type into Google, to enhanced content through generative experience optimisation (GXO). Brands want to ensure their products are inserted into the conversation when we say what we're looking for and why.
- 7 The Cotswold Company, which came up among my bookcase suggestions, says it has spent the past six months tweaking the GXO on its website to reach more customers searching via large language models. User-generated content on social media is another important source of what's trending for apps to scrape and crunch down. To do this, brands are not solely relying on influencers to tell stories about their products so they are made more discoverable; Estée Lauder has an internal creator network making content about its huge portfolio of beauty brands.
- 8 The pace of change is accelerating. In the US, the number of shoppers directed to retailers' websites from GenAI browsers and chat services shot up by 4,700 per cent in the year to July, Adobe says.
- 9 There are huge commercial opportunities as "agentic commerce" enters the next phase — direct transactions. Last month, Shopify signed a partnership with OpenAI that will enable its merchants to sell directly through ChatGPT conversations, rather than customers being redirected to a retailer's website.
- 10 As we chat away to these apps, they're accumulating a wealth of data on every aspect of our lives and can tailor recommendations with greater accuracy; a personal shopper who knows exactly what we like. The next phase will be anticipating our needs and suggesting purchases: "It's going to be chilly next week. Would you like to see a selection of cashmere knitwear that's trending this season?"

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- 11 All this sent shivers down the spines of retail executives at the conference — if consumers' purchasing decisions rely on the influence of AI-powered shopping agents, what becomes of brand loyalty?
- 12 Retailers will have to invest in AI-powered technology to benefit, but the reward could be selling us more. One in-store example already being used in US grocery stores is Instacart's Caper Cart — a smart trolley with a digital screen and sensors powered by Nvidia chips. This can link up with loyalty schemes, flashing up personalised deals, discounts and suggestions as you shop. The result? AI helps shoppers spend more money. But if it could help us find the eggs (put in the most bizarre places by supermarkets) then I'm in.
- 13 The next frontier for agentic commerce? Ordering what we need autonomously. You'd never run out of toilet paper, but would you really trust AI to spend money on your behalf? As someone who really enjoys shopping, I'm not sure that I'm ready to outsource this pleasure just yet. But if my personal shopping agent could check my bank balance and arrange delivery on a day I'm going to be working from home, I might change my mind.

FT

Claer Barrett, 11 October, 2025.

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4 Understanding the article

a. Read the article carefully, then pick the correct option a, b or c.

1. According to the article, what are more consumers using AI for when they shop?
 - a. To design new clothes
 - b. To get help and ideas for what to buy
 - c. To make their own products
2. Which company said that more than half of US shoppers will use GenAI this year?
 - a. Google
 - b. Adobe
 - c. Ikea
3. What problem did the writer have when searching for a bookcase using a search engine?
 - a. Too many ads appeared
 - b. Websites were too slow
 - c. Too many options and open tabs
4. What did the writer tell the AI app when looking for a bookcase?
 - a. Only the colour
 - b. Details like size, design, budget and delivery needs
 - c. Just the shop name
5. What are retailers now focusing on instead of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)?
 - a. Unique Selling Points (USP)
 - b. Generative Experience Optimisation (GXO)
 - c. Return On Investment (ROI)

6. What has The Cotswold Company been doing to reach more customers?
 - a. Lowering prices
 - b. Using GXO to appear in AI searches
 - c. Hiring more influencers
7. According to Adobe, how much did traffic from GenAI browsers grow in a year?
 - a. 47 per cent
 - b. 4,700 per cent
 - c. 470 per cent
8. What does the partnership between Shopify and OpenAI allow?
 - a. Direct sales through ChatGPT
 - b. Free products for users
 - c. Cheaper website hosting
9. What are retail executives worried about?
 - a. Running out of AI tools
 - b. Too many new customers
 - c. Losing brand loyalty
10. What is one possible future use of agentic commerce?
 - a. AI ordering things automatically
 - b. Shopping without the internet
 - c. Using cash only

5 Business language – introductory clauses

a. Look at the sentences from the article and answer the questions.

- a. Within seconds, I have a summary of UK retailers offering products.
- b. In the US, the number of shoppers directed to retailers' websites shot up by 4,700 per cent.
- c. Having tried it myself recently to buy a bookcase, I am a convert.
- d. Tempted by one of the recommendations, I ask my AI assistant.

1. Which sentences start with a verb?
2. Which sentences start with a preposition?
3. What is the difference between the verbs at the start of sentences c and d?

b. Match each sentence to the correct introductory clause.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Using online stores, | a. you can request searches for specific products. |
| 2. Comparing different websites, | b. you can buy anything without leaving home. |
| 3. Delivered straight to your door, | c. shoppers often find better deals. |
| 4. Trusted by many customers, | d. online shopping is more popular than going out. |
| 5. In many countries, | e. online purchases are very convenient. |
| 6. With the use of AI chatbots, | f. big online brands continue to grow. |

6 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What are the positives and negatives of using AI becoming the main form of online shopping?
2. How do you think businesses will personalize deals in order to keep brand loyalty?
3. How much power should AI be given to make purchases for us without our control?

7 Wider business theme – presenting a description an AI personal shopper

- a. You work for a multinational company that wants to develop an AI personal shopper. You have been asked to conduct a survey to understand how your customers purchase your products. You then need to present a description of a potential AI personal shopper agent that would appeal to those customers.

1. Match the customer questions to the themes of AI shopping.
 - a. Brand Loyalty
 - b. Budget Awareness
 - c. Confidence in AI
 - d. Convenience vs. Control
 - e. Independent AI
 - f. Interaction Preferences
 - g. Personalisation Needs
 - h. Privacy & Data Concerns
 - i. Research & Decision Process
 - j. Online vs. In person
 1. How do you feel about an AI assistant storing your payment details and shopping history?
 2. Before buying something, how much investigation or reading of reviews do you normally do?
 3. What do you usually shop for online, and what makes you choose to buy it there instead of in a shop?
 4. How much do you want your AI shopping assistant to know about your style, habits or the things you buy?
 5. Would you rather talk to your AI agent or type your requests in chat?
 6. What would make you trust an AI agent enough to let it make purchases for you automatically?
 7. Do you usually stick with your favourite brands, or do you like discovering new ones online?
 8. How much do you believe that an AI agent is capable of recommending the right products or brands for you?
 9. How important is finding the best price or putting a limit on how much you spend?
 10. Would you prefer an AI agent that makes quick decisions for you, or one that gives you many options to compare?
2. Create a survey on similar themes to the ones above. Write a short description of the characteristics of the perfect AI personal shopper agent based on what you might learn in the survey.
3. Present your description to the class. Introduce the characteristics of the AI personal shopper agent with reference to any possible information from the survey.

Useful language

Comparing multiple options of products, ...

With a limit on price, ...

By storing all of your shopping history, ...

Excited by all the abilities an AI could have, ...

After spending a lot of time waiting in shops, ...