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AI Assistants Set to Influence Over One Fifth of Online Holiday Orders, Salesforce Finds

Rising consumer trust and rapid adoption of generative AI reshape shopping habits as brands adapt to new digital trends

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Artificial intelligence and digital agents are expected to drive 21% of online orders during the upcoming holiday shopping season, according to global forecasts from Salesforce. This figure represents $263 billion in sales, marking a significant increase from last year and highlighting how quickly consumers are adopting AI assistants like ChatGPT and Gemini in their shopping routines.

Salesforce’s report notes that traffic from AI assistants grew by 119% year-over-year in the first half of 2025. Conversion rates for these AI-driven interactions are up to seven times higher than those seen on social media platforms. The data shows that 17% of consumers have used an AI assistant or a large language model-based search engine in the past year to look for products.

Consumer trust in AI recommendations has also risen sharply. In the latest findings, 86% of users say they trust suggestions made by AI, compared to just 46% in May of this year. This rapid shift suggests that brands will need to adapt their product catalogs, promotions, and digital communications to fit new generative AI search experiences. The report points out that generative search is emerging as a key channel for product discovery, expanding beyond the traditional boundaries set by search engine optimization.

The study also identifies several trends likely to shape the holiday season. Sustainability and savings are becoming more important for shoppers. The secondhand market is projected to reach $64 billion, with 46% of buyers open to gifting reused products. Physical stores remain important, especially among younger shoppers. Despite being a digital generation, three out of four Gen Z consumers plan to visit brick-and-mortar stores during events like Black Friday, spending three times more in-store than online.

Retailers are expected to offer fewer promotions this season, with a predicted 2% drop in purchases using promotional codes. Rising logistics costs are leading brands to focus more on delivering a consistent brand experience across all channels rather than relying on discounts.

Enrique Mazón, Regional Vice President Commerce Cloud Iberia at Salesforce, said that the industry is experiencing a structural change in how people discover and buy products. He emphasized that brands optimizing their presence in generative search environments will be better positioned to connect with a new generation of omnichannel consumers.

The report also highlights improvements in customer service driven by digital agents. Salesforce forecasts a 39% increase in the use of AI agents for customer support this season. This shift is expected to reduce customer interactions by 2.5%, freeing up human teams to handle more complex inquiries.

These changes reflect broader shifts in consumer behavior and technology adoption as the holiday shopping season approaches. Retailers and brands are watching closely as artificial intelligence becomes an increasingly central part of the online shopping experience.