RESEARCH

How modern shoppers move—and where your brand needs to be

bazaarvoice

INSPIRE

Customer evidence is becoming part of what shapes AI recommendations

Third-party research on how customer proof impacts AI rankings and buyer choices

Ratings were one of the few traditional marketing signals shown to consistently lift AI-agent product selection."

— Harvard Business Review

When AI agents choose products, they reward credible signals: a sponsored tag lowered selection odds, while a platform 'best pick' endorsement raised them sharply across every major model"

— Columbia & Yale, 2025



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What helps a product get surfaced?

Credibility

Ratings

Is there evidence that customers rate the product highly?

Depth

Review volume

Is there enough customer experience to create a meaningful body of evidence?

Relevance

Attributes + evidence

Is there specific proof that connects the product to the shopper's need?

And that evidence needs reach.

Customer proof can only contribute when it's available across the places discovery happens.

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Customer evidence is becoming part of what shapes AI recommendations

Third-party research reveals how algorithms rank products and how buyers use AI

How does AI make you feel while shopping?

6 months ago
caution | neutral skepticism | indifference

Cautious... I am unaware if I can trust the information I was given. I would rather see personal reviews, and photos of the product."

TO

Now
informed | happy | confident | cautious

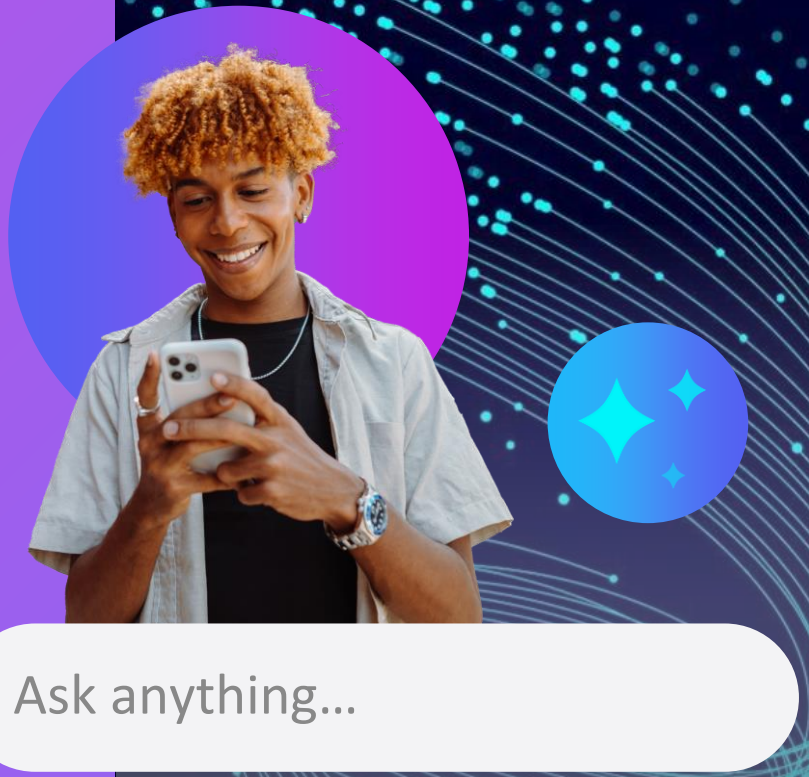
AI has made shopping feel more convenient and less overwhelming... It can also make me feel more confident in my choices, although I still like to check reviews and product information myself before purchasing."

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62%

of shoppers say their trust in AI recommendations has grown in the last six months

51% have purchased or changed brands because of an AI recommendation.



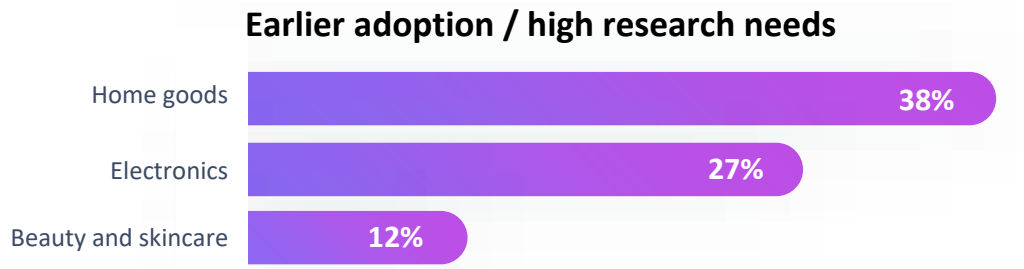
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AI shopping adoption is starting where research needs are highest

Today’s category differences look more like a maturity curve than a permanent divide.

In which of the following categories are you most likely to trust an AI recommendation?
(1316 users)



Earlier in the curve

Personal care, Apparel, Luxury, Food & Beverage, Haircare, Baby & Kids

We saw a similar pattern with ecommerce:

adoption started in research-heavy categories, then broadened.
AI shopping may be following the same path, *faster.*

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Familiarity still matters. But it no longer owns the shortlist.

65%

still favor a brand they already know and trust when presented with multiple AI recommendations.

But shoppers are increasingly willing to investigate unfamiliar options recommended by AI.

51%

have already purchased or changed brands because of an AI recommendation.

36%

more have considered doing so

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AI is creating a new route into consideration

For challenger brands, AI can create credibility before familiarity does.

20% completely trust AI tools - on par with expert advice

31% have used AI in a purchase journey up from 10% in 2025

57% rate real reviews as the #1 driver of AI trust, above brand name or price

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AI earns consideration. Shoppers still verify.

60.2%

conduct additional research outside AI after receiving a product recommendation

66%

go to detailed customer reviews on a brand or retailer site after an AI recommendation

only 7%

would buy based on the AI recommendation alone



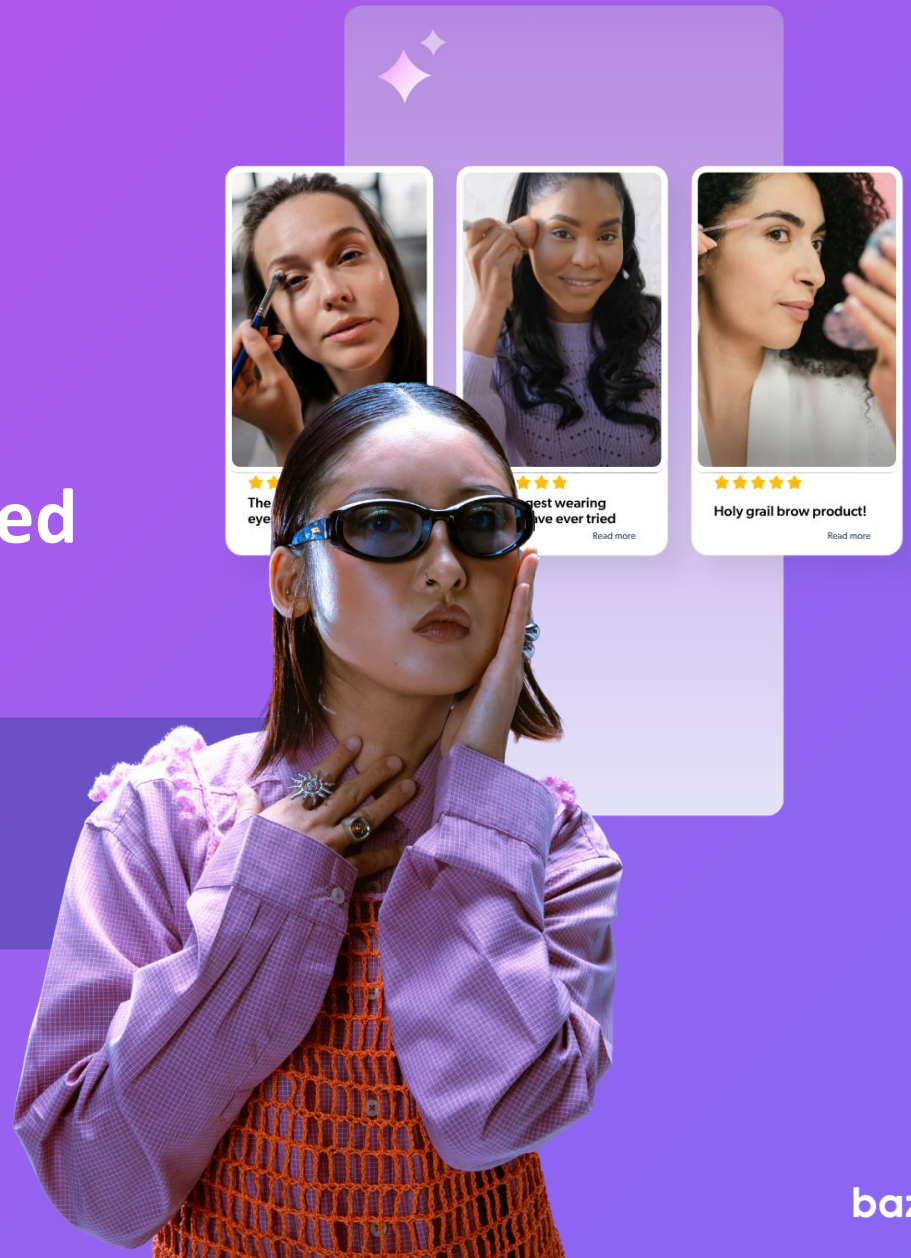
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90%

say it matters that AI recommendations are grounded in user-generated content.

57% say reviews and ratings are what makes them trust an AI recommendation most.



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What gives shoppers confidence after the recommendation?

75%

need to see written reviews

76%

need to see reviews with photos or video

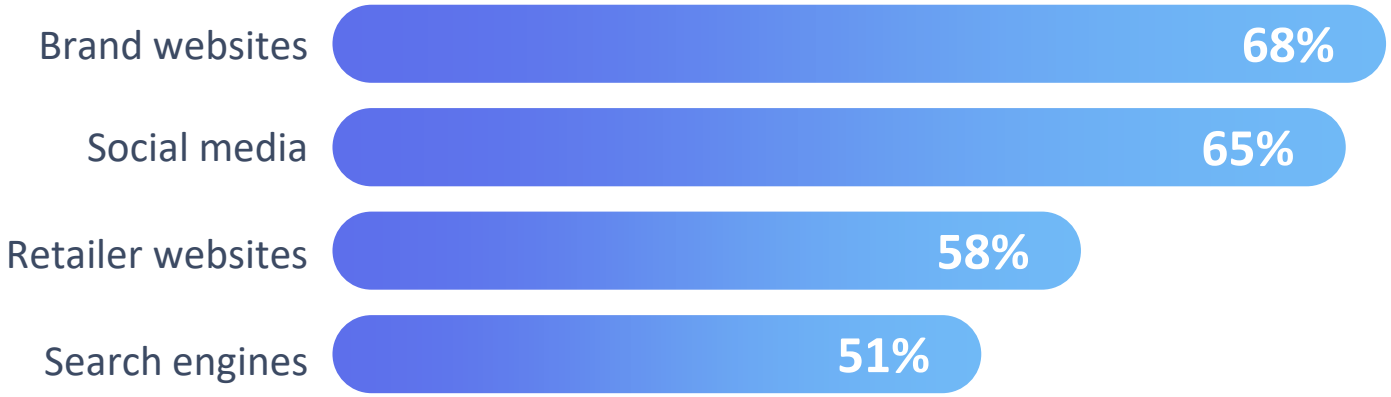
before feeling confident buying a brand recommended by AI.

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Post recommendation, shoppers keep moving

Where shoppers double-check AI recommendations:



What they look for by place:

Product pages: ratings, detailed reviews, Q&A, customer photos and video.
Social: demos, creator experiences, unboxings, comments, real-world use.

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One customer experience. Two jobs.

6 months ago

Authentic customer evidence can contribute to how AI **understands and surfaces the product**

Now

Written and visual customer evidence help the shopper **validate the choice**

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The opportunity looks different depending on the part of the shopper journey you own

Brand equity, reach & private label

- Familiarity still matters, but AI introduces unfamiliar alternatives
- Real customer experiences define how national brands and private labels are understood
- Written and visual proof must support the brand promise across all touchpoints

Digital shelf, merchandising & eCommerce

- Familiarity still matters, but AI introduces unfamiliar alternatives
- Real customer experiences define how national brands and private labels are understood
- Written and visual proof must support the brand promise across all touchpoints

The brand promise and customer experience need to reinforce each other.

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AI is winning trust faster than shoppers are giving up control

62%

trust AI recommendations more than six months ago

BUT

66%

still go to detailed customer reviews after recommendation

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