



## BUSINESS

# Google Is Kick-starting the Era of AI Shopping

- A deep revamp for Google Shopping joins a wave of major platforms putting AI front and center.

BY ADRIANA LEE

After years of sporadically launching new features and adding in artificial intelligence, Google is finally tying it all together into an extensive makeover for Google Shopping.

With this revamp, which was revealed Tuesday, the company joins a wave of major platforms moving AI from an embellishment, gimmick or experiment to the very core of its shopping experience.

This is no mere facelift for Google, it's an extensive reimagining of how to match people with the right items, product education, prices and more.

"It represents the biggest step change we've introduced in Google Shopping to date," said Lilian Rincon, vice president of consumer shopping product, in an interview with WWD. "It's a destination, completely rebuilt with AI for today's shopper."

The redesign features a more visual layout containing an AI guide with fine-tuned product research and recommendations, a personalized feed based on shopping activity throughout Google and a customized deals page, including price tracking and comparisons.

All of it is powered by two of Google's top AI initiatives: the company's AI assistant, Gemini, and its Shopping Graph, an enormous dataset of 45 billion listings that helps spur on more than a billion shopping interactions daily.

They can do "everything from virtually trying on fashion with our generative AI virtual try-on tool, finding product details using just an image with Google Lens, testing out beauty tools with our AR beauty tool, or watching a review on YouTube," Rincon said. "And what all of these shopping activities have in common is that they're all powered by the Shopping Graph."

Now, paired with the Gemini models, the system uses everything that the company knows about those interactions and shopping proclivities to shape the content on the new Google Shopping.

It starts with a query, say, a business-casual blazer for a meeting in Arizona or an outdoor jacket for New England. The AI guide offers advice on dressing for the weather or a particular region and offers product recommendations based on a

range of information, from viral trends to reviews to published articles.

The new Google Shopping also remembers across sessions, so users can pick up where they left off. And if the content isn't quite right, they can offer feedback through a thumbs up or thumbs down mechanism.

According to Rincon, the AI overhaul is indicative of a consequential shift in people's relationship with online shopping, on par with e-commerce's transition from desktop to mobile.

"Sixty percent of U.S. consumers say that making the right purchase decision requires more effort than it used to," she added. "We also know that more than two-thirds of Americans seek advice from friends or family to help them make better purchase decisions."

"Given those points, we really saw an opportunity to make shopping research much more assistive and much less burdensome."

Google is far from alone. Walmart's ongoing "Adaptive Retail" strategy places a high priority on AI to help shoppers. This month, Vestiaire Collective introduced AI-driven search tools, as well as a new chief technology and product officer, Stacia Carr, who brings expertise in AI to the role.

The most visible example in recent days may be Amazon, which launched its own AI shopping guides in October.

"When shopping for a new product, it can be difficult to understand the options available or know the right questions to ask," Dan Lloyd, vice president of personalization at Amazon, was quoted as saying in the e-tailer's blog. "With AI Shopping Guides, we're pairing helpful product information and guidance with Earth's largest selection to help customers understand a product type, discover the most trusted brands, and find the best product for their needs."

In Amazon's example, customers looking for a new moisturizer can specify their skin type to learn what could be best suited for them. The e-commerce giant's AI shopping assistant, Rufus, acts like a back-up assistant that can field other questions that may pop up in the course of shopping.

Rufus, with access to the entirety of Amazon's platform, can likely answer more pointed or specific questions than Google Shopping, which can't access third-party purchase or returns history. Google has no first-party transaction data either, since it's not a retailer and holds no inventory. But

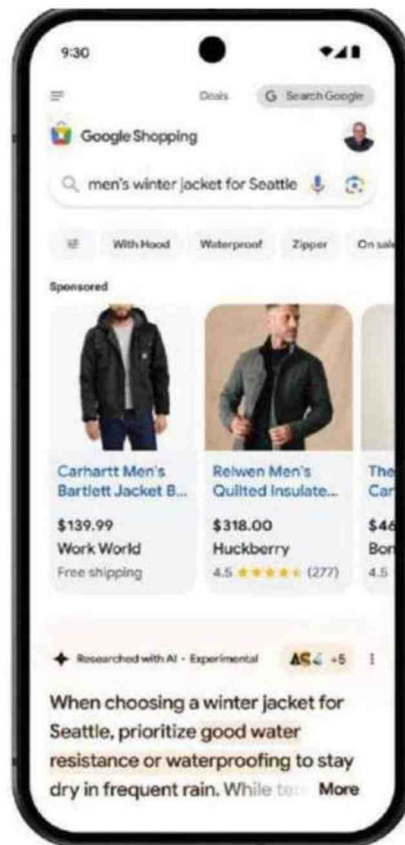


that can also be a plus as it is not confined to its own walled-off garden and can crawl a multitude of sites across the internet.

Alone, Google's scale makes its shopping effort meaningful. But that's just one facet of much broader momentum.

The cumulative effect of the internet's leading search engine, a top luxury fashion resale platform, the world's biggest retailer and the largest e-tailer on the planet, among many others, officially putting AI at the heart of their customer experiences can only mean one thing.

The era of AI shopping has truly begun.



Google Shopping gets an extensive AI makeover.

