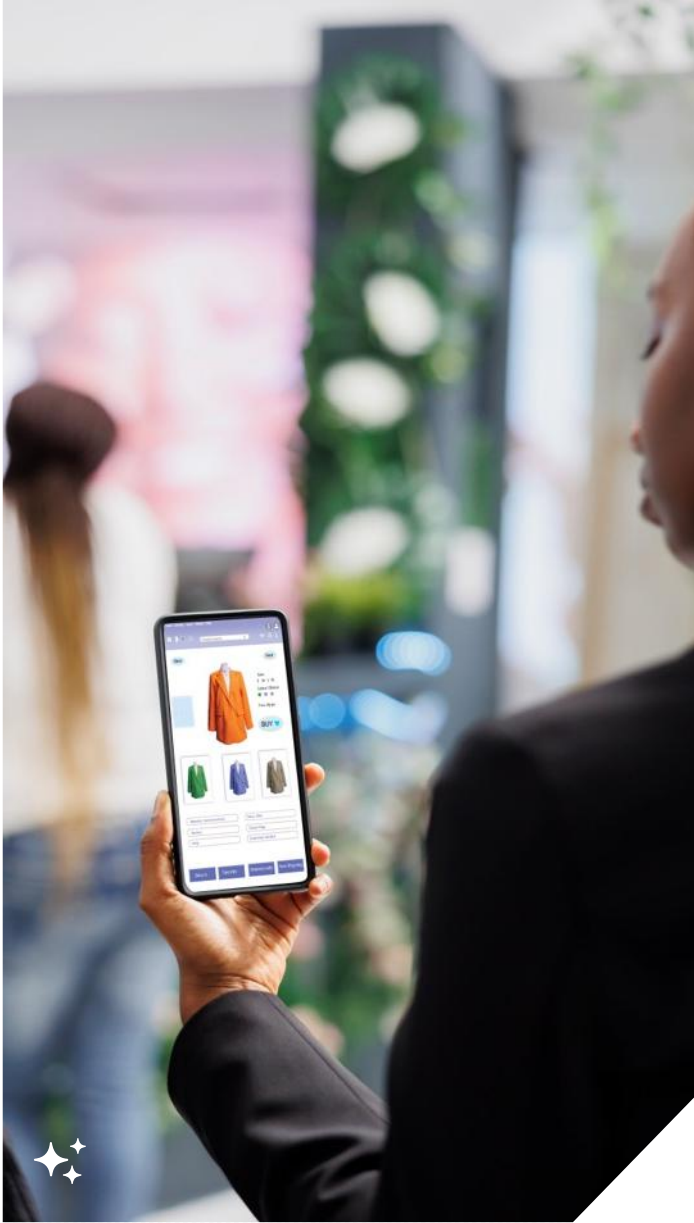


AI CAN SHOP FOR YOU. BUT WILL CONSUMERS LET IT?



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REALITY SETS IN

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In late 2024, we asked whether AI was about to rewrite the "First Moment of Truth." We imagined a new "Prompted Moment of Truth," where an assistant picks the brand before the shopper ever reaches the aisle. In July 2026, after 18+ months of AI model updates and product launches, we asked 2,000 Canadians the same questions again.

The short answer: AI is changing. Canadians aren't.

The Prompted Moment of Truth, Two Years On

Between December 2024 and July 2026, AI shopping moved from an emerging capability to a rapidly expanding product category. Canadians' response has not moved:

- **Appeal:** seven in ten like the idea to some degree, but only 29% like it very or extremely well, the same as in Wave 1. Interest is broad; enthusiasm is not.
- **Intent to sign up:** 41% then, 40% now. Commitment has softened, too: those who would definitely sign up fell from 16% to 12%.
- **Trying an AI-suggested brand:** 63% then, 61% now, compared with 90% who would try a brand on a trusted person's recommendation.
- **Letting AI make the final purchase decision:** only 26% would, essentially unchanged. Shoppers want an assistant, not a replacement.



Beyond grocery, enthusiasm for AI is cooling. Ipsos' Global AI Monitor shows the share of Canadians excited by AI-powered products fell from 37% to 26% between 2024 and 2026.

It's not a question of unfamiliarity. 44% have used AI for a shopping-related task in the past six months, mostly for research: finding product information (21%), comparing products (18%) and checking prices (17%). Only 8% have used it to build a shopping list. AI has become their research assistant, not their shopper.

Other Ipsos data shows a large pool of shoppers who would *consider* using AI for almost every shopping task. This research is a caution on how quickly that pool converts: in Canada, appetite has held still for 19 months.

So what is holding it back?

Consumers Are Not Rejecting the Technology. They Are Rejecting the Terms.

Ask shoppers what would worry them most about an AI grocery assistant, and their answers have little to do with whether the tool works.

Privacy and data security remains the largest concern: 51% name it in their top three and 27% rank it first. Close behind is scepticism about pay-to-play algorithms. 43% name brands paying for AI promotion as a top three worry, unchanged from Wave 1. **Neither are complaints about capability; rather questions about the companies operating the tool:** what happens to my data and whose interests does this recommendation really serve? Tellingly, 37% expect an AI shopping assistant to raise their grocery bill, while just 15% expect it to lower it, even though 71% would make lowest price or best value its number one priority.

Ipsos' global research sharpens the point. Canadians report among the lowest trust of any market in companies using AI to protect their personal data (27% in Canada. 74% in India. Global average 47%). They also rank among the most cautious markets on autonomous purchasing, with only 16% showing any openness.

The worries also split by generation, though the difference is one of emphasis.

- **Gen X's** concerns are concentrated on trust. They are significantly more likely than Gen Z to rank privacy as their number one worry (33% versus 18%) and to name pay-to-play in their top three (47% versus 35%).
- **Gen Z's** concerns are spread more widely. Privacy is still their biggest single worry (41% top three), but it sits almost level with over-reliance on technology for basic tasks (39%) and potential job losses in retail (37%, versus 21% of Gen X).

In effect, there are two different "brakes". Gen X is asking whether it can trust the company behind the assistant, with its data and with its recommendations. Gen Z is asking, almost as often, what using the assistant does to its own habits and to the people the technology displaces.

Both share a third brake that is getting stronger, not weaker: doubt about whether the recommendations are accurate. That concern has risen from 26% to 32% overall. Gen Z, the generation using AI most, is the most likely to rank it first (11% versus 6% of Gen X). Greater familiarity with AI may be making its limitations more visible.

The Generational Reality Check

That distinction is key to reading the sharpest movement in Wave 2. Ipsos' AI Monitor shows excitement about AI falling across every generation in Canada, and most steeply among Gen Z, from 49% to 30% between 2024 and 2026. This study suggests that cooling has now reached the grocery list:

- Gen Z intent to sign up for an AI shopping service fell from 57% to 47%.
- Gen Z willingness to try an AI-suggested brand fell 10 points, from 70% to 60%.
- Gen Z has lost the lead to Millennials who are now just as likely to sign up (49%) and more open to AI-suggested brands (65%).

This is not a generation that is unfamiliar with AI or preoccupied with its data handling. Gen Z is the heaviest user of AI for shopping (58% in the past six months) and the least concerned about privacy. Their reservation is about dependence, consequence and whether the recommendations hold up. Familiarity is producing calibration, not conversion. **Any strategy that assumes resistance will simply age out should be revisited.**

▼ **19pts**

Gen Z excitement about AI

▼ **10pts**

Gen Z intent to sign up for an AI shopping service

▼ **10pts**

Gen Z willingness to try an AI-suggested brand



The Path Forward

AI is clearly not a fleeting trend. But neither has it produced the step change in consumer behaviour that many marketers and retailers anticipated. Canadians are using AI to research, compare and plan, but most are not ready to hand over the final decision. The technology is moving quickly; consumer trust is not.

That gap plays out differently depending on who you are. Brands control their products, claims and data. Retailers and platforms control the assistant itself: how it recommends, what it discloses and how much it decides.

01

Anchor

Anchor in value, and make it legible to the algorithm

In what Ipsos calls the Endurance Economy, value still decides the basket. 95% rate best value for money as important and finding the best price across stores is the AI feature shoppers want most (53%). But value is widening. The importance of where a product is made or grown rose from 67% to 72%, and requests to prioritise local brands or block certain companies are rising.

For marketers: Win on price and performance first. Then make provenance, sustainability and quality claims structured and verifiable, so an algorithm can find and compare them. Know where you're exposed. If an AI says the store brand is just as good, 56% would pay nothing extra for their usual one, and openness to an AI-suggested brand runs highest in pantry staples (56%) and lowest in personal care (42%).

For retailers: Give shoppers the filters they're starting to ask for, such as origin, local and exclusions, rather than optimising on price alone.

02

Assist

Help shoppers decide; don't decide for them

Only 26% would let AI make the final purchase decision, and 76% would rather use AI to build a shopping list for the store than fill an online basket for delivery. Consumers want help deciding, not someone deciding for them.

For retailers: Design for assistance: lists, comparisons and substitutions the shopper approves, with a visible override at every step. Your trust advantage is real (41% trust traditional retailers for personalised recommendations, against 11% for AI), but it doesn't transfer to an algorithm by default.

For marketers: Build preference before the AI gets involved. 71% still want to discover new brands by browsing the aisles, against 39% through AI suggestions. Brands that are already preferred are the ones shoppers will tell the assistant to look for.

An assistant that visibly supports the decision also answers both: Gen X's need for control and Gen Z's worry about dependence.

The Path Forward (cont'd)

03

Answer

Answer the objection your consumer actually has.

Resistance isn't one objection. Gen X's concerns centre on privacy and pay-to-play; Gen Z weighs dependence and job losses almost as heavily as privacy. Accuracy is a growing worry for both, up from 26% to 32%. The response has to match the objection, and who should act depends on who owns the assistant.

For retailers and platforms: Treat trust as infrastructure, not messaging. Show why a product was recommended, be explicit about what data is collected and why, and label paid placement clearly. 43% worry that brands pay for AI promotion, and 37% expect an AI assistant to raise their grocery bill. For younger shoppers, keep the human skilled and in charge.

For marketers: You don't control the platform, but you share its reputation. When a recommendation goes wrong, the brand in the basket takes part of the blame. Keep product data accurate, steer clear of undisclosed pay-to-play, and push retail partners on how their AI handles sponsored results and substitutions.

Conclusion

The winners will not be those that automate the consumer journey fastest. They will be the marketers and retailers that understand where consumers welcome AI, where they resist it, and how those boundaries differ by category and generation. The AI shopping revolution may be coming. For now, the smarter strategy is to earn the right to assist before asking consumers for permission to take control.

About the Research

This article draws on quantitative research conducted by Ipsos in December 2024 and July 2026 among nationally representative samples of 2,000 Canadians aged 18 to 59, surveyed through [Ipsos' Omnibus](#). The article also references the Ipsos AI Monitor and Ipsos Market Essentials (15 markets, February–April 2026)



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THANK YOU

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