zoovu

The 2026 Benchmark for AI in Ecommerce Conversion

What 3 million shopper interactions reveal about shopper behavior, friction, and the path to better buying experiences

Explore the report

A note to ecommerce and digital sales leaders

Let's be real: conversion isn't just a marketing metric—it's your bottom line. And while AI has taken over the headlines, the pressure to turn buzz into business impact is only growing.

The real challenge?

Knowing where to place your bets. With AI promising everything from smarter ads to better retention, it's easy to overlook the one place where impact is most measurable: the buying experience itself.

That's why we created this report. It's grounded in millions of real-world interactions with Zoovu's generative AI assistant across a range of global ecommerce sites, combined with practical examples of how leading brands are using AI to meet shopper expectations and drive measurable results. This data set will continue to grow, evolve, and deepen over time, offering even more insight into how discovery experiences shape conversion outcomes.

While you may have already invested in AI to drive awareness and engagement, this report shows how to extend that investment to the moments that matter most—where buyers decide whether to convert or bounce. It's where brands like Microsoft, Sephora, and Trek are eliminating friction and driving growth. If you're deciding where to place your next bet, start where the sale happens.

01

AI is changing shopper expectations. Conversion is where it counts.

Generative AI is rewriting the rules of online shopping. Tools like ChatGPT have trained consumers to expect fast, helpful, and conversational experiences, where questions are answered instantly and product suggestions feel intuitive. Shoppers now expect ecommerce to work the same way: relevant, real-time, and tailored to their intent.

But most brands are missing that mark.

Ecommerce teams are spending millions to drive traffic. Investments in AI-powered media, brand campaigns, and top-of-funnel targeting are growing fast. But the real question is: what happens when those users land on the site?

If discovery is clunky, content is static, or support is buried, buyers don't convert—they bounce.

78%
of business leaders say their teams aren't equipped for AI

Deloitte

80%
of AI projects were abandoned last year due to delays and cost

Reuters

40%
of executives still cite data privacy as a top blocker

Forrester

Meanwhile:

58%

of shoppers already use GenAI
instead of traditional search

Capgemini

71%

of shoppers say they want it woven
into their buying experience

Baymard Institute

So while expectations are rising, execution is stalling. And with no true benchmark for how AI is performing in ecommerce, most teams are flying blind.

That's where this report begins:

→   **What today's shoppers actually want.**

→   **What's standing in the way**

→   **How 3 million+ AI-powered interactions reveal the path forward**

02

When buyers can't buy

The shift: From keyword scroll to AI expectations

Shoppers are no longer content to scroll through filters and product grids hoping to find the right match. They've been trained by AI to expect something better—experiences that understand their intent, adapt to their behavior, and deliver answers without friction.

Legacy search & discovery

- Static filters and product grids
- Spec sheets and disconnected content
- One-size-fits-all experiences

↓

Next-gen discovery

- Conversational, guided search
- Personalized, dynamic recommendations
- Experiences tailored to user context

Why shoppers abandon

Buyers today are overwhelmed by:

- Expansive product catalogs with little guidance
- Complex specifications that require decoding
- Fragmented information spread across PDPs, PDFs, Youtube, and reviews
- Static, non-adaptive filters that don't reflect real intent

They're doing the discovery work that your site should be doing for them. When that support is missing, confidence drops—and so does conversion.

```
→ Search  ·········  → Browse  ·········  → Compare

→ Evaluate  ·········  X Abandon
```
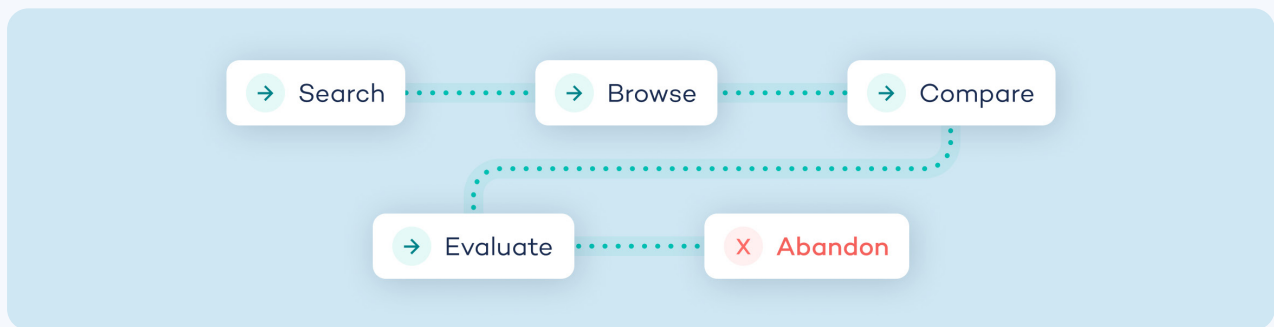
The AI expectation curve

> *"ChatGPT changed everything"*

Since the launch of large language models, shoppers have started typing full questions, expecting intuitive answers and relevant suggestions in return.

- 71% want GenAI in their shopping experience (Baymard Institute)
- 58% have replaced traditional search (Capgemini)
- Search queries are now 4x longer, reflecting a shift from keywords to natural language (Search Engine Land)

These aren't emerging trends—they're your customer's new default.

BEFORE

    bluetooth headphones   🔍

AFTER

    best noise-cancelling headset for working from home and travel   🔍

Why it matters

If your discovery experience doesn't deliver intelligent support at the moment of consideration, you're not just missing a sale; you're undermining every upstream investment in traffic and targeting.

Whether it's SEO, paid ads, or influencer campaigns, they all fail when users land on your site and bounce. Brands that can't guide users to the right product won't just see high abandonment—they'll lose customers for good.

03

Real behavior, real impact

What millions of shopper interactions reveal about AI's role in driving ecommerce conversion

We've covered the "why"—why AI matters now, why expectations are changing, and why conversion is the moment that matters. Now it's time for the "how." Not theory. Not speculation. Real benchmarks, grounded in shopper behavior.

This section draws from more than 3 million interactions with Zoe, Zoovu's generative AI product advisor, across 30+ leading brands and retailers in North America, EMEA, and APAC.

It's the largest known dataset of its kind focused on how generative AI impacts ecommerce discovery and decision-making.

What we found isn't just promising. It sets the benchmark. These patterns show how AI changes behavior, where it removes friction, and what actually drives conversion when real shoppers engage.

1   AI-assisted shopping drives conversion

Shoppers who engaged with Zoe were 40% more likely to click through to the next step in their journey—and 25% more likely to convert. It wasn't just effective, it was valued: 71% of users rated Zoe's responses as helpful, confirming that AI is more than a novelty—it's a utility.

2   Shoppers use GenAI to research and validate—not just browse

Buyers aren't using generative AI for inspiration—they're using it for answers. Over 50% of assistant questions were about product specs, and 38.4% of PDP questions focused on usage guidance

The top questions? "What is the battery life?" and "Can I use this outdoors?

In total, more than 70% of shopper queries centered on product validation—questions about compatibility, performance, or real-world use.

This signals a clear behavior shift: shoppers are turning to GenAI to get clarity and build confidence before they buy.

3   One-size-fits-all content doesn't cut it

Tailoring product content such as descriptions and features to what actually matters to the shopper—like performance, sizing, or use case—boosted click-through rates by 29–43%. But the biggest gains came from translating specs into benefits.

When content explained why a feature was relevant to that shopper, conversions jumped by up to 40%.

4   Localization and device behavior impact performance

AI doesn't perform the same everywhere—or on every device. In the U.S., desktop users clicked through at a rate of 39.8%, while mobile users trailed at 30.4%. Meanwhile, Malaysia saw a 12.8% uplift in engagement with longer descriptions, while markets like Singapore, the UAE, and Germany consistently favored shorter, more concise content.

These patterns underscore the importance of testing and adapting AI discovery experiences by geography and device. What works in one region—or on one screen size—may fall flat in another.

5   UX is the silent killer: AI needs clearer cues

Even though only 6.1% of PDP visitors engaged with Zoe, 83% of those who did rated the experience helpful. The issue? Visibility and context. Unlike the universal search bar, generative AI discovery doesn't yet have a clear UX pattern. Shoppers aren't sure what they're clicking into—is it a bot, a chat window, a human, or just another popup?

Most shoppers skip the AI experience simply because they don't know what it's for. Prompts like "Ask me about warranty, sizing, or compatibility" can dramatically increase engagement by signaling value upfront and reducing hesitation—especially on mobile, where UX real estate is limited and user behavior is more tentative.

→ **Pro tip:** Testing language, visual placement, and format (chat vs. bar vs. prompt) makes a measurable difference in engagement. Early tests show that desktop users are more likely to engage with GenAI than mobile users, despite mobile being the dominant ecommerce platform.

→ **Key takeaway:** AI supported online shopping works—but only when it's visible, relevant, and confidence-building. Shoppers are eager for smart, contextual help. The brands that make these tools findable, usable, and effective will be the ones that win the next conversion.

04

The buyer's journey reimagined: The "Help Me" framework

Today's shoppers don't want to scroll and guess. They want clarity. They want confidence. And above all, they want momentum.

In a world shaped by AI, buyers now expect every interaction to work like their favorite assistants—fluid, responsive, and built around their intent. The old model of ecommerce search—static filters, generic lists, and fragmented spec sheets—can't deliver that. But a new framework can.

This "Help Me" model outlines the four moments that matter most across the buyer journey and how AI-powered experiences can reduce friction, build trust, and drive higher-value conversions.

Awareness → Consideration →

1. Help me find
2. Help me choose
3. Help me learn
4. Help me bundle

Purchase → Retention → Advocacy
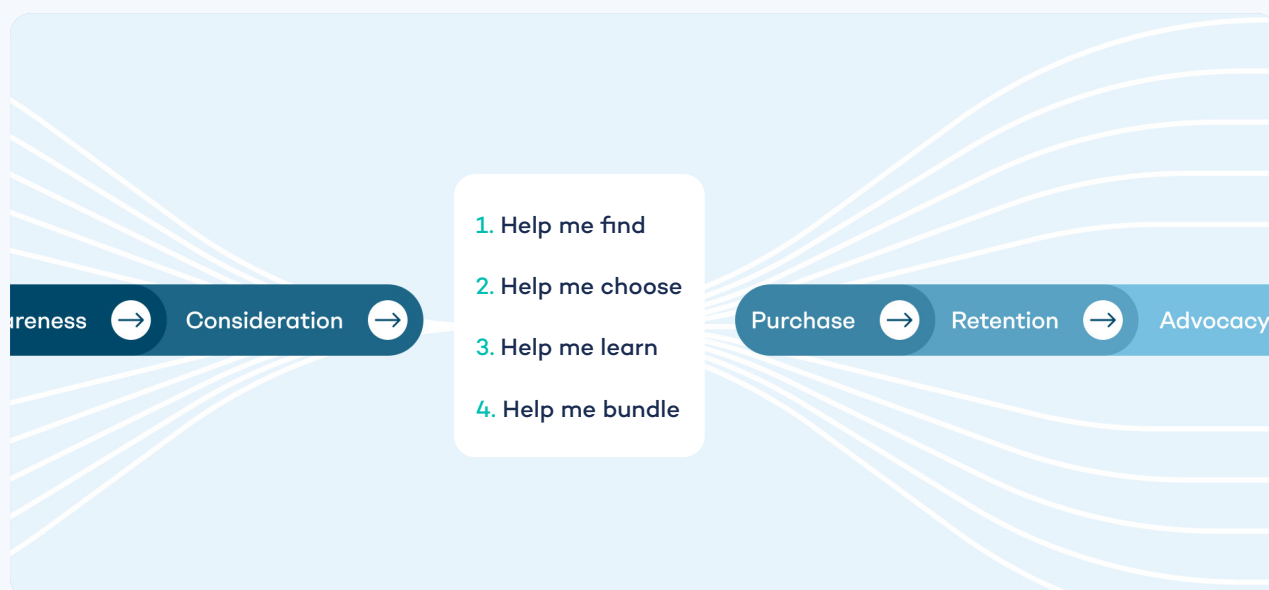
Framework: The four "Help Me" moments

1 Help me find

What buyers need
Discover relevant products quickly

The old way
Static search bars and broad filters

What AI enables
AI-powered search that understands context and intent

2 Help me choose

What buyers need
Compare options, understand fit, and clarify value

The old way
Generic spec tables, and dropdowns

What AI enables
Guided selling and dynamic, needs-based recommendations

3 Help me learn

What buyers need
Get fast, accurate answers to lingering questions

The old way
Manual research, FAQs, and PDFs

What AI enables
Conversational Q&A and contextual messaging on PDPs

4 Help me bundle

What buyers need
Finalize purchase with confidence, including add-ons

The old way
Disconnected add-ons and guesswork

What AI enables
Visual configuration, compatibility logic, and smart bundling

1   Help me find

⚛ What this stage looks like

A shopper arrives with a need—"a pink travel mouse," "a compact air purifier," or "a bold red lipstick." They want to quickly locate products that match their intent without scrolling endless grids or decoding complex category trees.

⚲ Why it matters

43%

of site visitors go directly to the search bar, and those who use it are 2–3x more likely to convert

Salesforce, 2024 Connected Shoppers Report
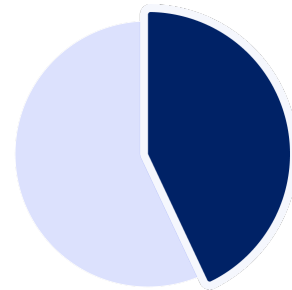
🗨 The old way

- Keyword-only search that breaks with misspellings or vague input
- Static filters and rigid taxonomies
- No interpretation of intent, context, or product goals

🔍 The AI-powered way

- Conversational search that accepts natural language queries
- Predictive auto-suggestions that evolve with input
- Context-aware refinement that guides shoppers instead of making them do the work

Brands doing it right
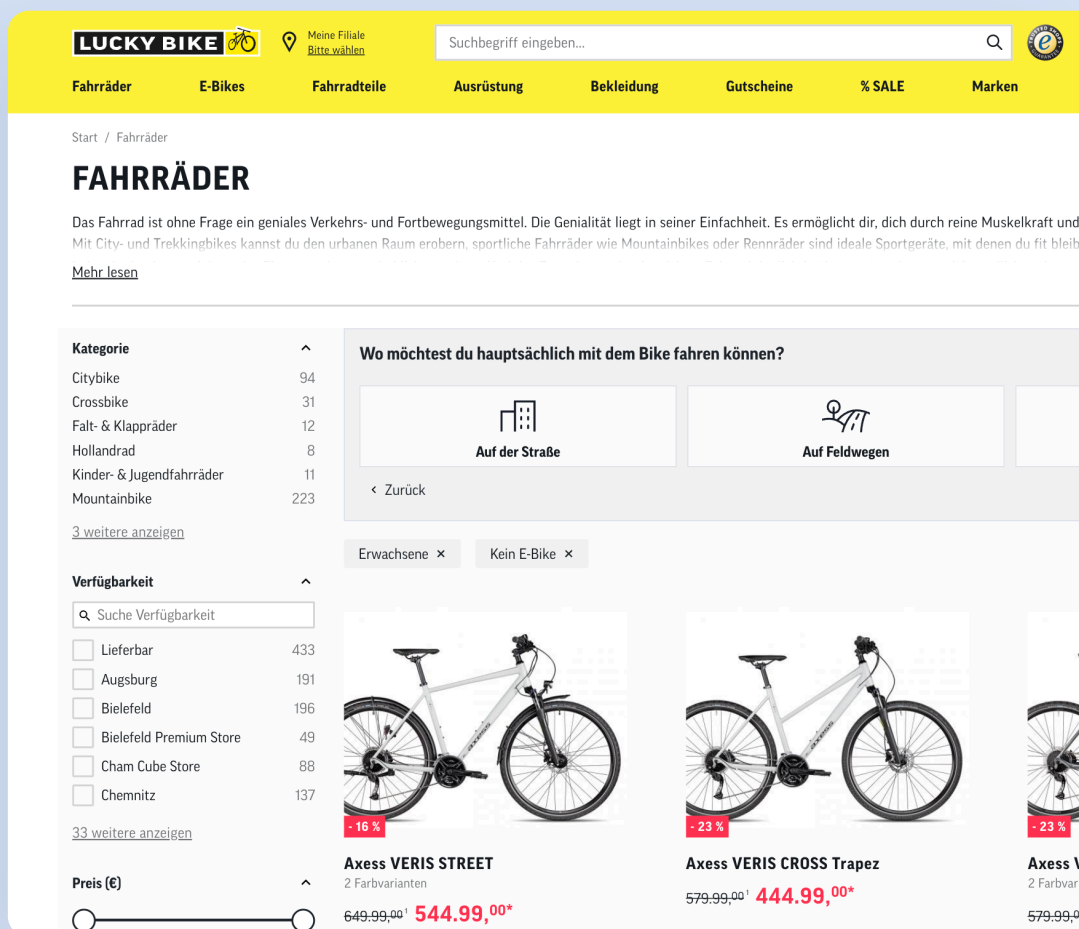
One of Europe's largest bike retailers is using AI-powered search with dynamically generated questions that guide shoppers from vague queries to the right product—driving a 50% lift in click-throughs from search.

2 Help me choose

What this stage looks like

A shopper is deciding between similar products and needs help evaluating fit, value, or performance. They want clarity—why should I pick this one over the other? They're looking for reassurance they're making the right choice.

Why it matters

54%

of shoppers abandon purchases due to unclear product information or difficulty comparing alternatives

Baymard Institute, 2023 UX Research
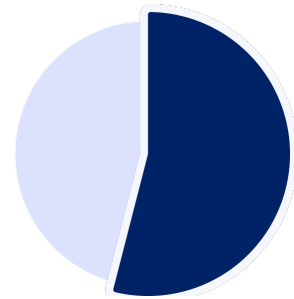
The old way

- Product comparisons require manual tab toggling
- Product comparisons require more than tab toggling—shoppers have to chase down specs across pages, decode technical details, and figure out how it all connects to their needs.
- Specs are listed but not explained
- Content is identical regardless of what the shopper needs or values

The AI-powered way

- Guided selling flows that ask users what matters most and dynamically rank products based on their needs and intent
- Contextual content that explains features in buyer-friendly language
- Benefit-led messaging tailored to use case

Brands doing it right

✓

Uses AI to recommend the powertool accessory based on the job and the tool to be used.

Brands doing it right

Created a laptop finder with AI personalized recommendations, content, and answers that increased click through by 19%.

3 Help me learn

What this stage looks like

The shopper is ready to buy—but first, they need a few quick answers to feel confident. Common questions include specs, warranty info, or compatibility. The goal isn't more options—it's validation.
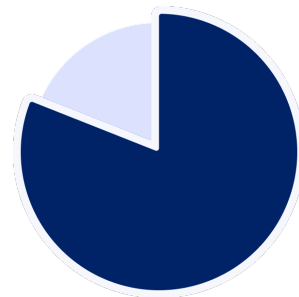
Why it matters

81%

of consumers try to solve issues on their own before contacting support—but only 34% are successful. That gap erodes trust and leads to missed conversions.

Gartner, 2023

The old way

- Answers buried in static FAQ pages or spec sheets
- No clear place to ask follow-up questions
- Shoppers leave the site to search Reddit, Google, or YouTube

The AI-powered way

- Conversational Q&A that adapts to product, shopper, and context
- Preloaded prompts to reduce effort and drive engagement
- Smart fallback answers that keep shoppers moving forward

Brands doing it right

Integrated a GenAI-powered Q&A experience directly into product detail pages for consumer tech devices, enabling instant, context-aware answers to shopper questions—boosting decision confidence and increasing conversions by 25%.

4 Help me bundle

What this stage looks like

The shopper is ready to convert—but wants to make sure they aren't missing something. That means: what's compatible, what's optional, and what enhances the experience.

Why it matters

20%

Increase AOV with personalized bundling—especially when driven by context and real-time behavior.

McKinsey, 2024
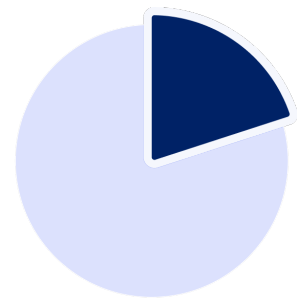
The old way

- Static "related products" that don't account for context
- No clarity on what's included or required
- Buyers must dig into specs or FAQs to validate compatibility

The AI-powered way

- AI-powered bundling logic based on product type, intent, and past behavior
- Visual configurators that adapt dynamically to what the user is buying
- Upsells that feel helpful, not pushy

Brands doing it right
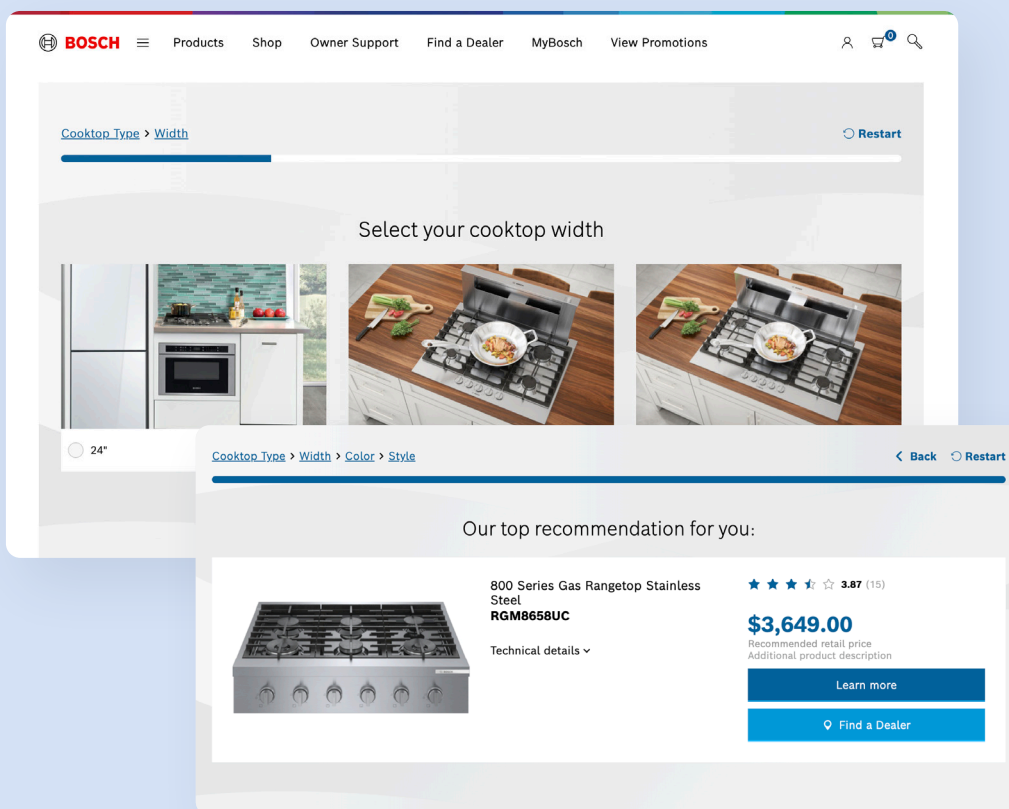
Uses AI-guided product finders to match shoppers with kitchen appliances based on household size, lifestyle, and cooking habits—streamlining the path to relevant products increasing AOV by 65%.

05

The AI advantage starts with AI-ready data

AI can't deliver meaningful experiences if the data behind it is messy.

In ecommerce, shoppers expect fast, intuitive, and accurate product experiences—from search to recommendation to checkout. But none of that works if your product data is inconsistent, incomplete, or disconnected across channels.

That's the hidden blocker behind most underperforming AI implementations.

Whether it's personalized search results, helpful comparisons, or dynamic Q&A, every AI-powered experience depends on product data that's structured, enriched, and optimized for real-world decision-making.

The challenge? Most brands still aren't ready.

Disorganized content, siloed attributes, and flat descriptions all limit your ability to power the kinds of experiences consumers now expect. Before layering on AI, brands need to fix the foundation:

→ Audit product content across categories and channels

→ Normalize attributes and fix inconsistencies

→ Enrich specs with benefit-driven language buyers actually understand

Clean data isn't a backend task—it's the front line of conversion. Without it, AI can't guide, personalize, or support. With it, every touchpoint becomes faster, smarter, and more shopper-friendly.

Why it matters for AI

Benefit	How data readiness helps
✓ Improved Search Relevance	AI interprets intent and returns more accurate, context-aware results
✓ Personalized Recommendations	Matching products to personas is only possible with rich attributes
✓ Faster Product Discovery	Clean, connected data removes friction and speeds up decision-making

Bottom line: If your product data isn't ready, your AI won't be either. Build the foundation first—so the tech can do what it's supposed to.

06

Ready to turn AI expectations into ecommerce outcomes?

Shoppers have made it clear: they want smarter discovery, faster answers, and buying journeys that adapt to their intent—not just their clicks. But while AI has raised the bar, most ecommerce sites are still stuck delivering outdated, disconnected experiences. Zoovu is how you close that gap.

Zoovu's AI discovery platform brings structure, intelligence, and adaptability to every stage of the buyer journey—from search to recommendation, configuration, and bundling. It transforms messy, fragmented product content into personalized discovery experiences that scale across every digital touchpoint.

Why Zoovu

→ AI that adapts to each buyer's intent, context, and behavior in real time

→ A unified platform for product search, guided selling, and bundling

→ Composable experiences that scale globally and integrate seamlessly

→ Built-in data readiness tools to clean, enrich, and connect your product content—without the manual lift

35% decrease in search abandonment

53% increase in conversion with guided recommendations

65% increase in AOV with AI-powered bundling

Microsoft's AI journey:
From choice overload to confident purchases

Microsoft

With hundreds of laptop options and nearly all sales happening through retail partners, Microsoft faced a challenge: too many choices were leading shoppers to abandon their search—and costing retailers sales.

The solution? A generative AI product advisor powered by Zoe that guides customers through a dynamic Q&A flow, asking about their needs, preferences, and budget. In return, shoppers get a personalized explanation of why a specific device is the right fit, plus instant answers to any lingering questions.

"

**The investment in better product discovery has driven results across the customer journey.**

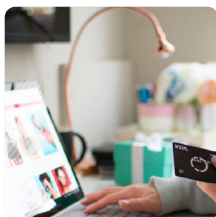**Ram Iyer,** Senior Director of Digital Strategy and Ecommerce at Microsoft
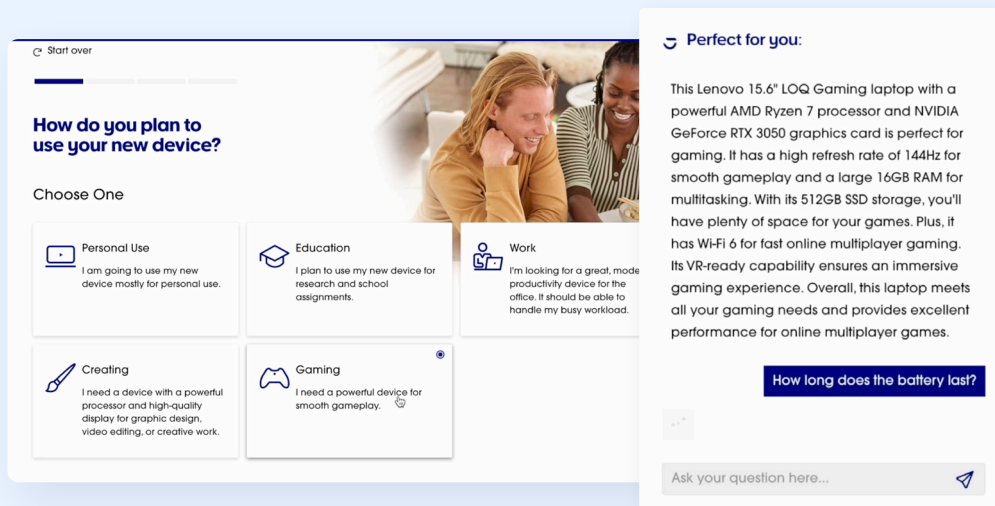
- **45%** increase in online customer engagement
- **25%** increase in conversion
- **27%** increase in in-store revenue
- **Actionable insights** to inform future marketing and sales

Learn more

Looking to take it further? Check out these resources
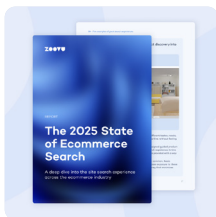
The 2025 State of Ecommerce Search Report

Conversational search: The AI advantage that converts lost shoppers

Smarter with every sale: How AI is redefining ecommerce personalization

Let's build smarter discovery together

Your buyers are ready for AI. Let Zoovu help you meet them with experiences that convert.

Book a demo