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When Algorithms Shape Desire and Entertainment Sells

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The New Frontier of Global Commerce

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When Algorithms Shape Desire and Entertainment Sells

What Happens When Your Shopping Assistant Has Better Taste Than You?

From São Paulo to Shanghai, New York to Nairobi, consumers are no longer navigating the marketplace alone. [Algorithms are increasingly deciding](#) what we see, what we desire, and ultimately what we buy. At the same time, commerce itself has ceased to be purely transactional. [Livestreams, shoppable videos, and viral TikTok trends are turning buying into cultural performance and entertainment.](#)

Together, these forces mark a turning point in global commerce. AI assistants are becoming the first gatekeepers of choice, while entertainment platforms are transforming shopping into a show.

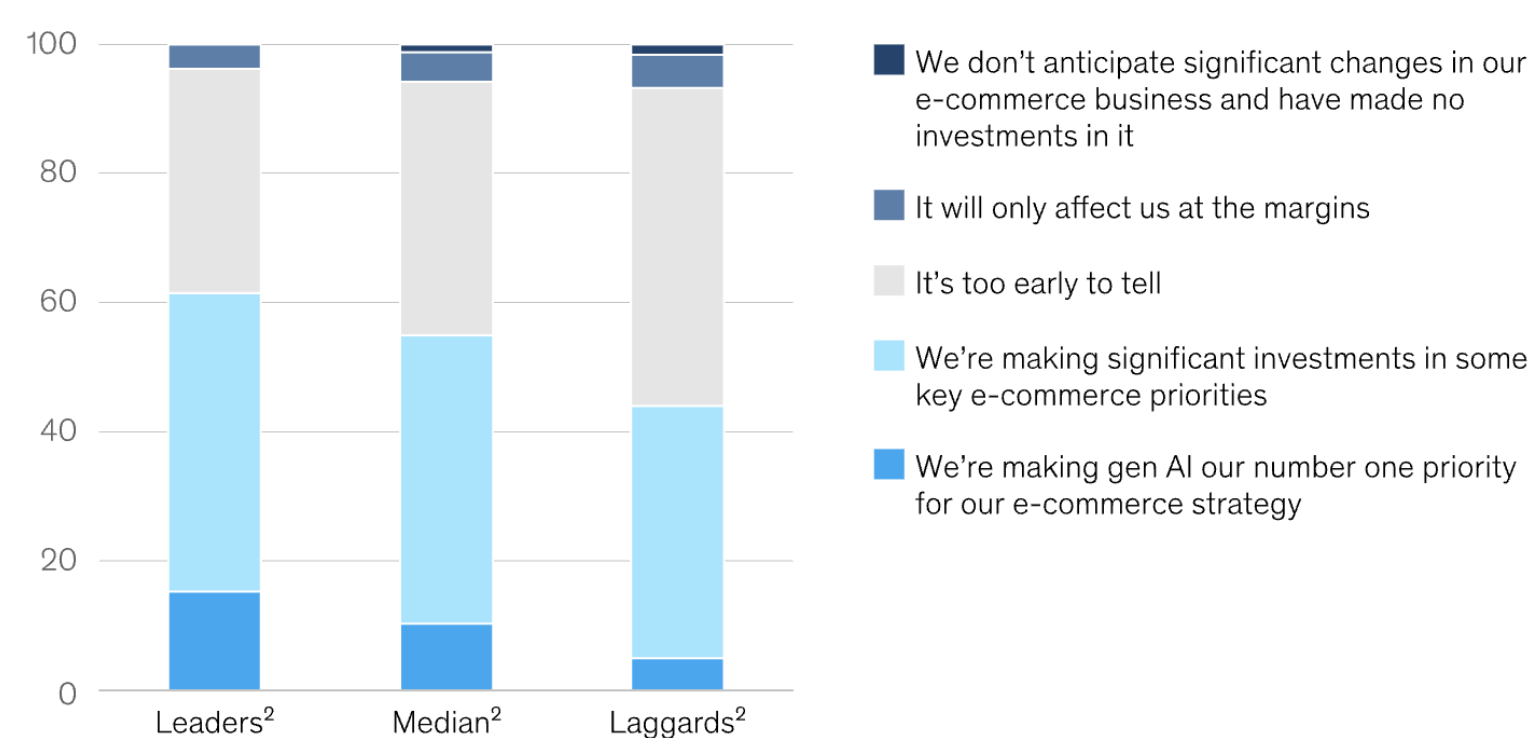
For marketers, the challenge is profound: success no longer depends only on persuading consumers directly. It also means earning visibility in the algorithms that curate options and creating experiences that are so engaging that they feel less like selling and more like storytelling.

The market for AI shopping assistants is expanding at breakneck speed. Analysts estimate it will grow more than tenfold over the next decade, from around [USD 3.4 – 4.3 billion](#) in 2024 to [USD 37 – 42 billion](#) by 2034.

North America currently leads in market share, while the Asia-Pacific region is scaling fastest, driven by rapid adoption in China, India, and Southeast Asia. In these markets, assistants are being woven into super-apps and e-commerce giants, making AI a default part of the shopping journey.

Adoption, however, still lags behind awareness. In the U.S., for example, [43% of adults know about AI shopping assistants, but only 14% have used one](#), a gap that underscores both curiosity and trust. Familiarity still needs to catch up with infrastructure.

Role of gen AI in e-commerce strategy,¹ % of respondents



As for brands, leading e-commerce companies are investing through uncertainty, while laggards cut costs. [Leaders prioritize generative AI, with up to 30% of budgets shifting there](#), and expand digital channels like marketplaces, DTC sites, and social commerce, according to a survey by McKinsey. The result: digital channels drive far greater profitability, widening the gap with cautious competitors.

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Shopping Journeys Now Start with an AI Conversation

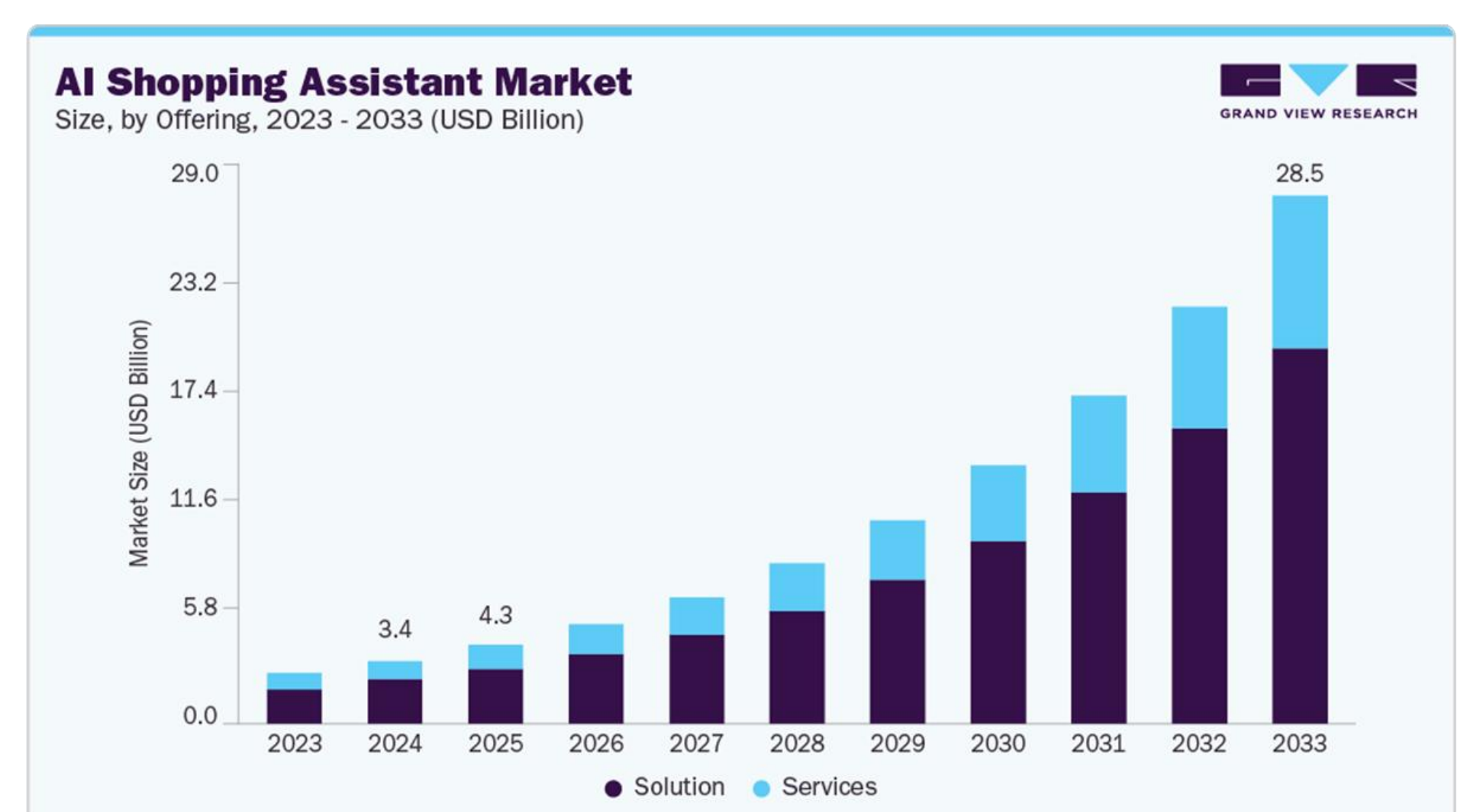
Meanwhile, the technology itself is racing ahead. OpenAI's ChatGPT now delivers [ad-free, structured shopping recommendations](#), even on the free tier. These suggestions are powered not by affiliate commissions, but by metadata and product information alone; a sign that algorithms are evolving [from search filters into cultural curators](#). With the release of GPT-5, these capabilities are expanding further, making AI assistants not just recommenders, but trusted intermediaries in the purchase journey.

Google is following with AI Mode, a conversational product search powered by Gemini and its [Shopping Graph of 50 billion listings](#). Meanwhile, companies like [Microsoft and Perplexity are testing autonomous agents](#) capable of searching, recommending, and even completing purchases on a user's behalf.

This shift isn't confined to big tech ecosystems. In Latin America, AI-driven conversations are already powering commerce at scale. [WhatsApp, used by 98% of Brazilians, has become a frontline channel for shopping](#). Generative AI chatbots integrated into WhatsApp Business are now handling orders, answering questions, and offering personalized recommendations all within the chat.

[75% of consumers who message a business on WhatsApp complete a purchase](#), and SMBs using AI chatbots report up to [60% sales growth with response times under 30 seconds](#).

Whether through GPT-powered global platforms, WhatsApp-led local ecosystems, or AI mode in Google search, the shopping journey is increasingly beginning with a conversation.



The global AI shopping assistant market size was estimated at USD 3.36 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 28.54 billion by 2033, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 26.9% from 2025 to 2033.

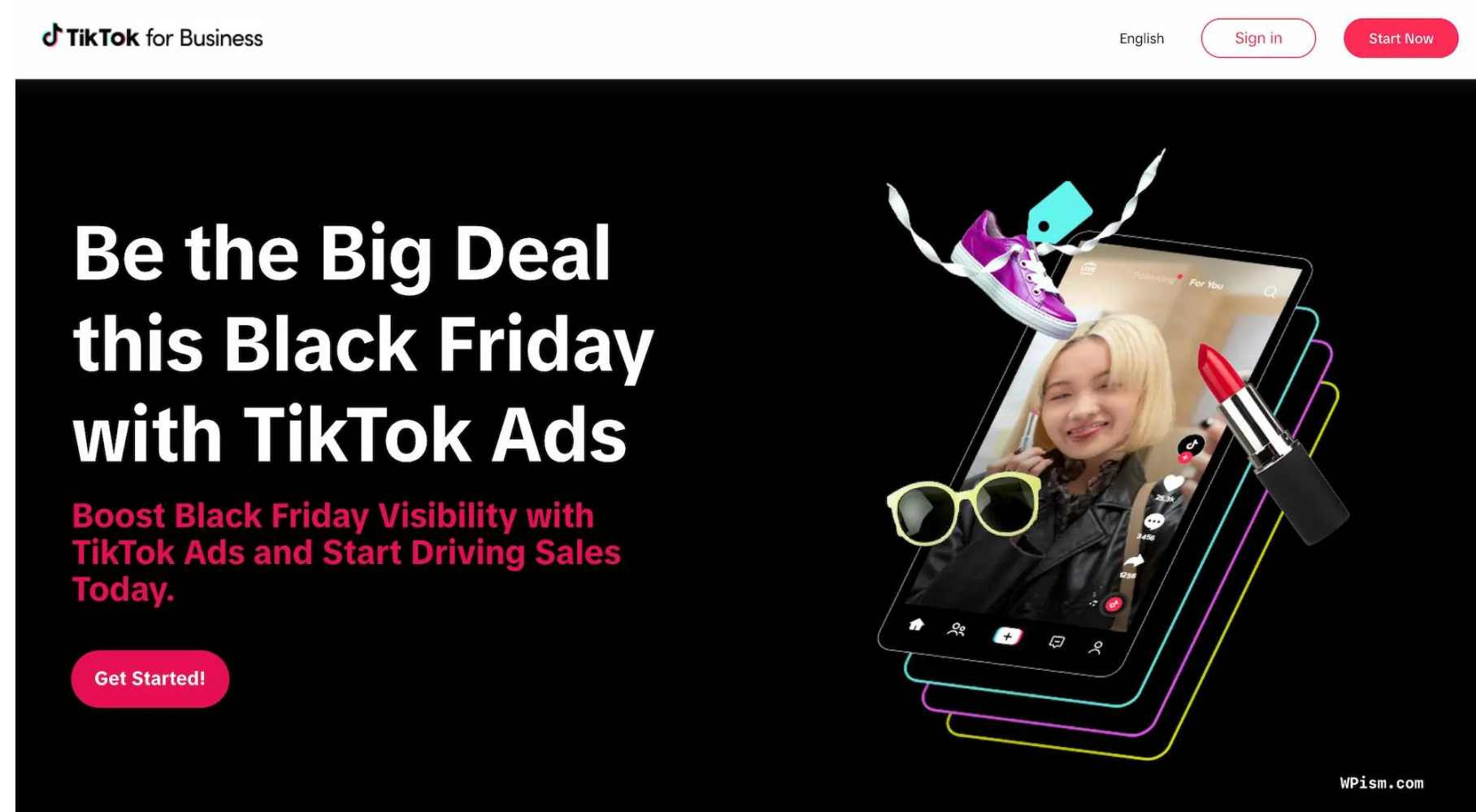
Marketers now have two audiences to influence: people and algorithms. Winning the latter requires not only clean metadata and transparent attributes, but also strategies for GEO. As conversational AI becomes the first stop in the shopping journey, GEO will grow in impact.

When Commerce Feels Like Culture

[TikTok Shop turned Black Friday into a shoppable festival in 2024](#), driving over USD 100 million in U.S. sales in a single day.

Over 30,000 livestreams went live across the platform, with top creators like Canvas Beauty generating USD 2 million in one session.

The broader livestreaming market is projected to exceed [USD 345 billion by 2030](#).



This blending of entertainment and purchase is no longer unique. Across markets, shopping is evolving into a cultural experience:

- Asia-Pacific leads the way, holding more than 66% of livestream commerce in 2024, forecast to hit USD 258 billion by 2034. In [Southeast Asia, livestreams already account for 15–20% of e-commerce](#).
- Europe has seen an [86% rise in livestream shoppers since 2020](#); North America is up 68%
- [LATAM and MENA are rapidly scaling](#), accounting for 10% and 7% of global livestream commerce, respectively.

Whether through the theater of a global product launch or the interactivity of shoppable livestreams, shopping experiences must be designed to entertain as much as they sell.

The trends of AI assistants as tastemakers/curators and commerce as entertainment are converging. Recommendations won't only reflect product data; they'll be shaped by the buzz of shoppable TikToks, livestream activity, and cultural sentiment.

Marketers must therefore operate in two modes:

- **Machine legibility:** ensuring algorithms can parse product attributes, ratings, and relevance.
- **Human delight:** creating content that entertains, inspires, and sparks desire.

The winners won't choose between these imperatives. They will master both.

Four Provocations for the Future of Shopping

This new era of shopping demands fresh questions, not recycled templates. Growth will not come from treating media, commerce, and creativity as separate lanes, but from integrating them. Four provocations stand out:

1. If algorithms are the new shelf space, how do we earn visibility?

In retail, winning once meant negotiating eye-level placement. Online, it meant bidding for search terms. Now, it's about being chosen by an AI assistant that may only recommend three products. That demands structured product data, transparent attributes, strong reviews, and campaigns that generate the signals algorithms reward, from visibility to relevance to trust.

2. If shopping is culture, not just commerce, how do we design for participation?

Livestreams, shoppable TikToks, and influencer activations aren't side projects; they're where intent is sparked. The task is to make these experiences both entertaining enough to inspire and shareable, and retail-ready enough to convert instantly. Participation and purchase must happen in the same moment.

3. If strategies must scale globally but resonate locally, how do we balance both?

AI systems are global by design, but shopping habits are deeply local: livestream dominance in APAC, mobile-first commerce in LATAM, cautious adoption in EMEA, and culture-led influencer shopping in North America. Success requires globally consistent signals for algorithms while ensuring local relevance in availability, pricing, and retail execution.

4. If channels multiply but budgets stay flat, how do we scale?

Livestreams, AI assistants, social commerce, and retail media all demand unique assets, formats, and signals, yet most organizations face static or shrinking budgets. The challenge isn't just media allocation; it's building infrastructure, partnerships, and creative systems that can flex across dozens of touchpoints without collapsing under cost or complexity.

The next era is no longer fiction: algorithms shape desire, culture drives demand, and shopping spans livestreams, AI assistants, and chat platforms. The challenge is staying future-ready when the extraordinary becomes everyday.



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