



— AI Search Optimization —

STELLAR AEO LABS · ORIGINAL RESEARCH

2026 Holiday Gift Recommendations in AI Search

When a shopper asks an AI assistant for gift ideas, the answer names a short list of brands, products and stores, and the majority of shoppers choose from that shortlist. We wanted to know which brands make that list and what puts them there. We asked ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews 100 holiday gift questions across 20 product types, and analyzed a total of over 2,000 runs of the answers. This report shows which brands, products and retailers the AI engines recommend, where they get their information, and what brands can do to be included.

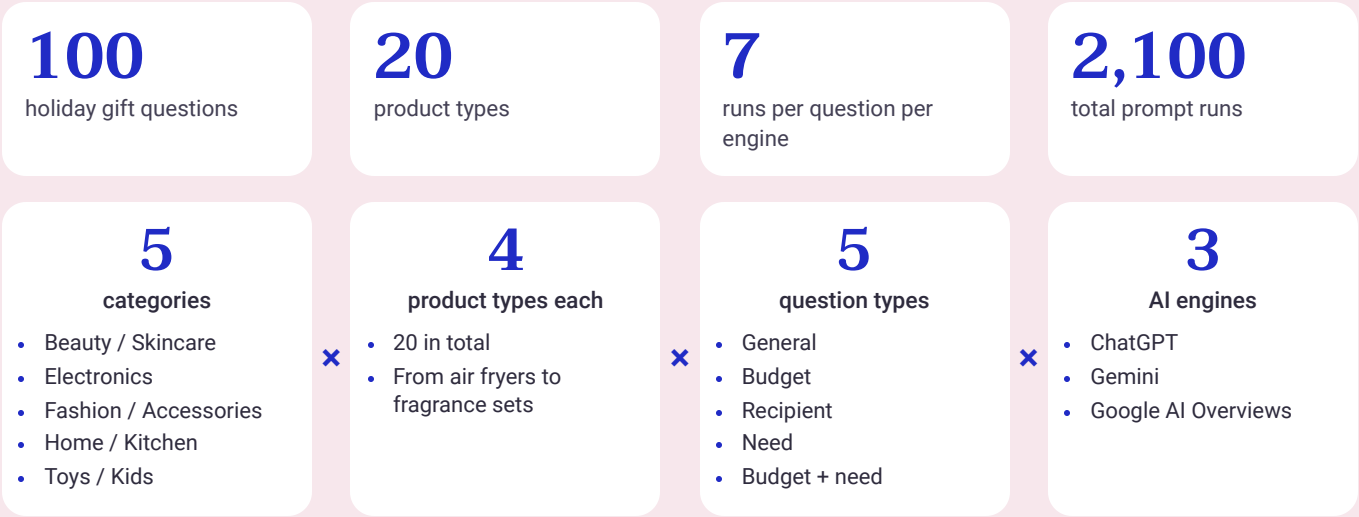
October 2026

Report Contents

Research design	3
Executive summary	4
Part 1: Insights from holiday AI answer data	5
1. Specific gift questions	6
2. Editorial sources	8
3. Product specs	10
4. Retailer visibility	12
5. “Best for” use cases	14
6. Google AI Overviews sources	16
7. Content freshness	18
8. Differences between AI engines	20
Part 2: Brand leaderboards for tested categories	22
Most-recommended brands by category	23
Leading brand by product type	25
The websites AI used most, by category	26
Top brands and products in each product type	27
Methodology	31
About Stellar AEO Labs	32

How we ran the study

Stellar wrote 100 holiday gift questions in the words a shopper would ask, ran each one through ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews seven times between October 13 and 17, 2026, and recorded every answer with Peec AI.



None of the questions named a brand or a store. Every brand, product, retailer and source in this report is one the AI engines chose on their own. For each answer we recorded the brands and products it named, the retailers it linked to or showed in product cards, and the web pages it read.

Each product type was asked five ways

Question type	What it adds	Example (wireless headphones)
General	Nothing beyond the product type	What are the best wireless headphones to give as holiday gifts this year?
Budget	A price limit	What are the best wireless headphones under \$100 to give as holiday gifts?
Recipient	Who the gift is for	What are the best wireless headphones to give as a holiday gift to a college student ?
Need	A use or problem the product should solve	What are the best wireless headphones for someone who takes calls in noisy places to give as a holiday gift?
Budget + need	A price limit and a need together	What are the best wireless headphones for noisy work calls under \$100 to give as a holiday gift?

Throughout the report, "share of answers" means the percentage of answers that named a brand, product or source at least once. Percentages are rounded to whole numbers. Full definitions are on the methodology page.

Key Takeaways from Holiday AEO Research

1

Adding details to the same gift question changes which brands AI recommends

72% of the time, adding a detail to a gift question (a recipient, a budget or a specific need) changed which brand AI recommended most.

2

Editorial sites are the main source for AI gift answers on all three engines

73% of AI answers used at least one editorial site: 95% for ChatGPT, 65% for Gemini and 57% for Google AI Overviews.

3

AI compares products using a consistent set of 3 to 5 specs in each category

94% of AI answers mentioned at least two of the key specs for their product type, such as capacity for air fryers or metal type for jewelry.

4

A few large national retailers (excluding Amazon) appear in the majority of AI answers with shopping links

68% of ChatGPT and Google AI Overview answers with shopping links linked to Walmart, Target, Nordstrom, Sephora or Ulta. None of their product offers came from Amazon.

5

AI answers qualify each recommended product with who or what it is best for

71% of AI answers described who or what a product was best for, such as best overall, best budget or best for small kitchens. In ChatGPT it was 99%.

6

YouTube and Reddit are major sources for Google AI Overviews

53% of Google AI Overview answers drew on YouTube, Reddit or another social or community platform. For ChatGPT it was 4%.

7

ChatGPT and Gemini read 2026 content and almost nothing older

96% of the dated pages ChatGPT and Gemini read were from 2026.

8

ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews recommend different brands for the same question

57% of questions led to each engine recommending a different brand most often. All three agreed on only 9% of questions.

PART 1

Insights from holiday AI answer data

This section presents the top findings from the holiday gift research across ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews. Each insight starts with the supporting observed data, shows examples from the AI answers we collected, and ends with specific steps a brand can take before and during the holiday season.

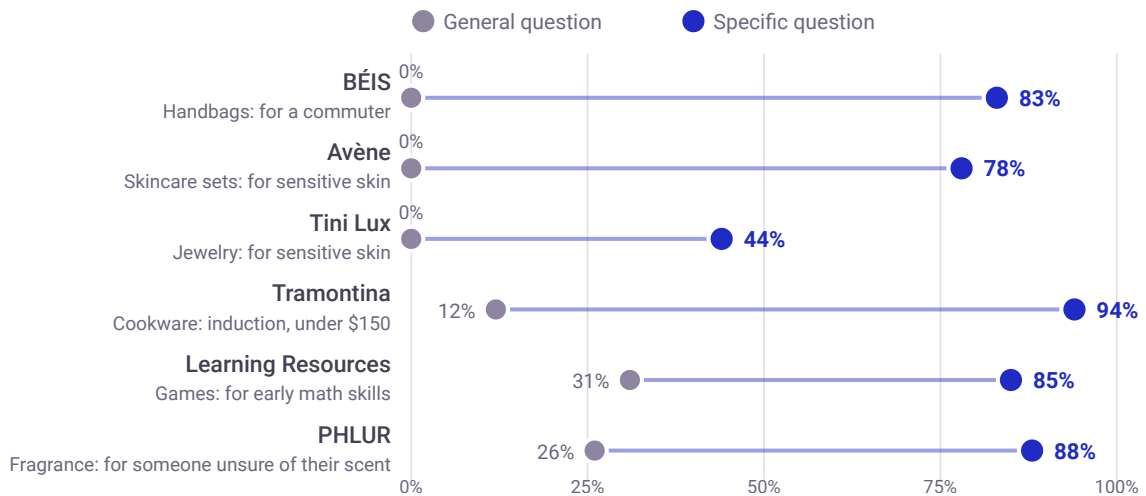
FINDING 1

Adding details to the same gift question changes which brands AI recommends

72%

of the time, adding a detail to a gift question (for example, a recipient, a budget or a specific need) changed which brand AI recommended most. In 39% of cases, the new top brand was not in the top five for the general question.

Share of answers naming the brand: general question vs specific question



Examples

BÉIS did not appear in any answer to "What are the best everyday handbags to give as holiday gifts this year?" When the question became "for someone who commutes to work," BÉIS appeared in 83% of answers. Avène followed the same pattern for skincare: absent from the general gift-set question, named in 78% of answers about gift sets for sensitive skin.

"If the recipient regularly carries a laptop, charger, notebook, water bottle, and personal essentials, BÉIS makes particularly practical options."

ChatGPT, handbags for a commuter

"The best everyday handbags for a commuter under \$150 to give as a holiday gift include highly-rated options from BÉIS, Quince, and Portland Leather Goods."

Google AI Overviews, everyday handbags for a commuter under \$150

Why this happens

When a question includes a recipient, a need or a price, the AI engines search for pages about that exact situation. ChatGPT's background searches repeat the details from the question, for example "best everyday jewelry for sensitive skin hypoallergenic metals titanium niobium 14k gold." The engines then recommend the products those pages describe in the same terms. A tote with a laptop sleeve and a water bottle pocket fits "for a commuter"; a fragrance-free kit fits "for sensitive skin."

Shoppers also get pushed toward specific questions. 89% of the answers in our study ended by asking about the recipient or offering to narrow the list ("Is the gift for an adult, teen, or child?"). The follow-up answer is often where the brand list changes.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

A brand that ranks low for "best [product]" can still be the top recommendation for a specific shopper. The brands that won specific questions had pages and reviews describing the exact situation in the question: who the product is for, what problem it solves and what it costs.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

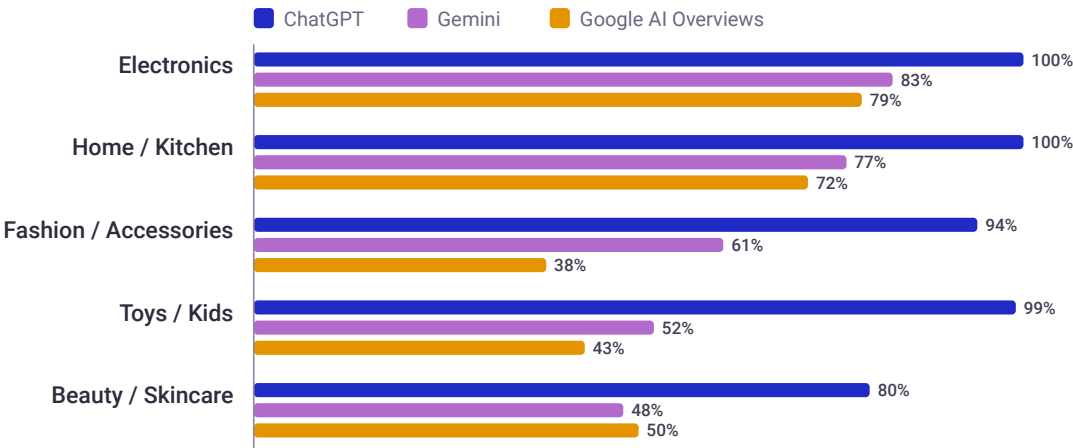
1. **Describe the situations each product fits on its product page.** Pick the three to five situations a product fits best, using a recipient, a need or a price in shoppers' words ("a tote for a commuter who carries a laptop," "a gift set for sensitive skin," "cookware for an induction stove under \$150"). Name them in the product description and list the specs that prove each one (laptop sleeve size, fragrance-free formula, induction-compatible base).
2. **Get reviews and editorial mentions that use the same words.** Send products to reviewers who write for that recipient or need, and ask customers about the use case in review prompts.
3. **Track the specific questions alongside "best [product]".** Your AI visibility reports should include the recipient, need and price versions of each question.

FINDING 2

Editorial sites are the main source for AI gift answers on all three engines

73% of AI answers used at least one editorial site: 95% for ChatGPT, 65% for Gemini and 57% for Google AI Overviews. Editorial sites were the largest source type on all three engines.

Share of answers using at least one editorial site, by category



Editorial sites each engine used most

ChatGPT		Gemini		Google AI Overviews	
Good Housekeeping	28%	Forbes	8%	The New York Times	10%
New York Magazine	21%	CNET	7%	Serious Eats	5%
WIRED	20%	Mashable	5%	CNET	5%
TechRadar	16%	Food Network	4%	TechRadar	4%
Consumer Reports	15%	PCMag	4%	SoundGuys	3%

Examples

Electronics and home and kitchen answers relied on editorial sites the most, at 72% or more on every engine. Each engine had its own favorites. For electronics, ChatGPT used WIRED in 62% of answers, Gemini used CNET in 21% and AI Overviews used The New York Times in 21%. For home and kitchen, the leaders were Good Housekeeping (52%), Food Network (23%) and Serious Eats (25%). ChatGPT drew on more editorial sites per answer and returned to the same ones often: 71% of its answers used at least one of the 15 editorial sites it read most.

“Recent testing by Consumer Reports, RTINGS, and Good Housekeeping highlights the trade-off between countertop footprint, cooking capacity, and performance.”

ChatGPT, air fryers for limited counter space

“Praised in reviews from Serious Eats and Food Network for producing some of the crispiest, most even results for wings, fries, and cakes.”

Google AI Overviews, best air fryers to give as holiday gifts

Why this happens

The engines search the web for most gift questions, and searches such as "best air fryers to buy 2026 holiday gifts reviews tested" return publisher gift guides and product tests. Editorial sites made up 63% of the pages ChatGPT read, 42% for Gemini and 34% for AI Overviews. Gemini also read more brand websites and retailers, and AI Overviews more YouTube and Reddit (Findings 6 and 8).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

On all three engines, editorial coverage is one of the main ways a product gets into a gift answer. ChatGPT draws on a short list of large publishers and product testers, while Gemini and Google AI Overviews spread across a wider set that includes smaller niche blogs. Brand websites still count, and they work best when they say the same things the editorial coverage says.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

1. **List the editorial sites that cover your category on each engine.** Start with Part 2 of this report, then check which sites appear as sources in AI answers to your own product questions.
2. **Pitch 2026 gift guides and product roundups early.** Send editors the product name, price, the specs from Finding 3, who the gift suits, availability and images.
3. **Send products to sites that test them.** Electronics: RTINGS, SoundGuys, WIRED, TechRadar, CNET. Kitchen: Consumer Reports, Serious Eats, Good Housekeeping. ChatGPT linked to hands-on product tests far more often than to roundups.
4. **Include niche blogs for Gemini and AI Overviews.** In toys, smaller blogs were the editorial sites these engines used most: Busy Toddler for Gemini and MomJunction for AI Overviews.
5. **Make your own pages match the coverage.** Use the same product names, specs and use cases on your product pages, so the engines find the same facts on your site and in editorial coverage.

FINDING 3

AI compares products using a consistent set of 3 to 5 specs in each category

94% of AI answers mentioned at least two of the key specs for their product type, and 73% mentioned three or more. The pattern held on ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews.

Share of answers mentioning the spec, by product type

PRODUCT TYPE	SPEC	ANSWERS
Portable speakers	Waterproof / IP rating	100%
Everyday jewelry	Metal type	100%
Wireless headphones	Noise cancellation	99%
Air fryers	Capacity in quarts	98%
Travel bags	Carry-on size	95%
Fitness trackers	Subscription needed or not	82%
Cookware	Induction compatibility	80%
Travel bags	Trolley sleeve	77%
Arts and crafts kits	Mess level	72%
Everyday jewelry	Hypoallergenic / nickel-free	60%
Cookware	PFAS-free or non-toxic coating	51%

Examples

Cookware answers mentioned induction compatibility 80% of the time and non-toxic or PFAS-free coatings 51% of the time. Jewelry answers always named the metal (sterling silver, solid gold, vermeil) and 60% mentioned whether a piece was hypoallergenic or nickel-free. Fitness tracker answers told the shopper whether a subscription was required in 82% of cases.

“It has an IP67 water- and dust-resistance rating.”

ChatGPT, portable speakers for a college student

“The best everyday jewelry pieces for sensitive skin are crafted from biocompatible and nickel-free materials like pure titanium, medical-grade titanium, platinum, or high-karat gold (14k or higher).”

Google AI Overviews, everyday jewelry for sensitive skin

Why this happens

AI engines compare products side by side (83% of ChatGPT answers in our study included a comparison table) and give a reason for each pick. They can only repeat specs that appear in the pages they read, so a product page that leaves a spec out gives the engine nothing to quote for that question.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

Each category we tested had a checklist of specs that AI uses to decide which products fit a question. Brands that state those specs plainly, in the same words shoppers and reviewers use, give the engines a reason to include them.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

1. **Find the specs for your category.** Use the table below as a checklist for every giftable product page.
2. **Write each spec in a consistent, searchable form.** "IP67 waterproof," "induction-compatible," "PFAS-free ceramic coating," "solid 14k gold," "fits a 16-inch laptop," "no subscription required."
3. **Repeat the specs in structured data and product feeds.** The same values should appear on your site, on retailer listings and in the feeds you send to Google and OpenAI.
4. **State limits plainly.** If a pan does not work on induction or a tracker needs a subscription, say so. AI answers include these trade-offs, and missing information can be replaced by a competitor's page or a review.

The two most-mentioned specs in each product type

Product type	Specs mentioned most often (share of answers)
Air fryers	Capacity in quarts (98%); Cooking presets / functions (97%)
Arts and crafts kits	Age range (84%); Mess level (mess-free, low-mess) (72%)
Building toys	Open-ended play (97%); STEM / engineering skills (92%)
Coffee equipment	Compact / small-kitchen footprint (76%); Fresh / specialty beans (76%)
Cookware	Material (cast iron, tri-ply, ceramic, carbon steel) (100%); Induction compatibility (80%)
Educational games	Specific skill taught (math, logic) (100%); Age range (89%)
Everyday handbags	Leather type (full-grain, Italian) (87%); Interior pockets / organization (87%)
Everyday jewelry	Metal stated (sterling, solid gold, vermeil, plated) (100%); Hypoallergenic / nickel-free (60%)
Facial skincare tools	Technology named (LED, microcurrent, sonic) (99%); Skin concern (puffiness, fine lines) (95%)
Fitness trackers	Sleep tracking (99%); Built-in GPS (92%)
Fragrance gift sets	Scent family (woody, floral, gourmand) (100%); Full-size bottle voucher / credit (90%)
Home organization gifts	Space it fits (closet, pantry, door) (99%); Visible / clear storage (74%)
Makeup gifts	Shade range / universal shades (92%); Mini / travel sizes (84%)
Outdoor play toys	Skills (coordination, active play) (96%); Storage / portability (86%)
Portable Bluetooth speakers	Waterproof / IP rating (100%); Durability (drop-proof, dustproof) (99%)
Portable tech	Charging speed (W) / USB-C (88%); TSA / travel-friendly (73%)
Skincare gift sets	Skin type / concern (sensitive, barrier) (97%); Travel / mini sizes (82%)
Travel bags	Carry-on / personal-item size (95%); Laptop sleeve (89%)
Winter accessories	Material (merino, cashmere, fleece) (99%); Touchscreen-compatible (67%)
Wireless headphones	Noise cancellation (ANC) (99%); Comfort / fit (98%)

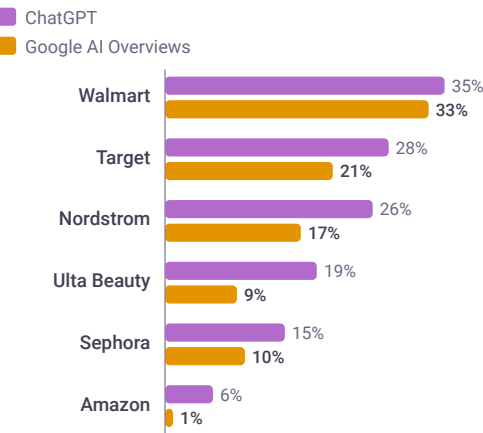
FINDING 4

A few large national retailers (excluding Amazon) appear in the majority of AI answers with shopping links

68%

of ChatGPT and Google AI Overview answers with shopping links linked to at least one of five retailers: Walmart, Target, Nordstrom, Sephora and Ulta. The same five supplied 43% of the product offers in those engines' product cards.

Share of answers with shopping links that linked to the retailer



Gemini answers had no shopping links.

Share of all product offers, by retailer



About 3,900 offers from 671 merchants (Peec merchant data).

Examples

Amazon supplied none of the product offers and was named in 3% of answers, compared with Walmart in 15%. In beauty, the retailer was also the main source: Ulta's pages were read in 34% of beauty answers and Sephora's in 25%, more than any beauty publication, and Sephora's own multi-brand sets (Sephora Favorites) appeared in 64% of makeup gift answers. Brands that sell direct appeared on Google: L.L.Bean was named in 68% of AI Overview answers about winter accessories and in none of ChatGPT's.

"Here are three real options at different price points, all available through Nordstrom or the listed retailer."

ChatGPT, everyday jewelry for a sister in her 20s

"Available at Ulta Beauty, this 5-piece routine includes a hydrating facial cleansing gel, niacinamide brightening toner, hyaluronic acid serum, daily moisturizer, and yerba mate eye gel."

Google AI Overviews, skincare gift sets

Why this happens

Amazon has blocked ChatGPT's crawlers and keeps outside AI shopping agents off its site, while Walmart and Target have opened their catalogs to them (Modern Retail, November 2025; GeekWire, June 2026). Walmart also partnered with OpenAI in October 2025 so shoppers can buy Walmart products inside ChatGPT. Google's AI Overviews draw on Google's shopping data, which includes brand stores that send a product feed through Google Merchant Center.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

AI shopping answers often send the shopper to a retailer's product page instead of the brand's site. The engine reads and shows what that page says: the title, description, specs, price, stock and reviews. A brand's listings at Walmart, Target, Nordstrom, Sephora or Ulta need the same care as its own product pages.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

1. **Audit your listings at the retailers AI links to in your category.** Check product titles, descriptions, the specs from Finding 3, images, price, stock and reviews for your top holiday products.
2. **Keep price and inventory current through the season.** Product cards show the price and seller, so an out-of-date price or an out-of-stock listing at a major retailer is what the shopper sees.
3. **In beauty, treat Ulta and Sephora pages as sources.** List set contents and sizes, skin type, key ingredients, fragrance notes and price, and pitch for inclusion in retailer-curated holiday sets.
4. **Send product feeds for your own store** to Google Merchant Center and to OpenAI, so your site can appear next to the retailers. Google's AI performance report shows how products appear in AI Overviews and AI Mode.

FINDING 5

AI answers qualify each recommended product with who or what it is best for

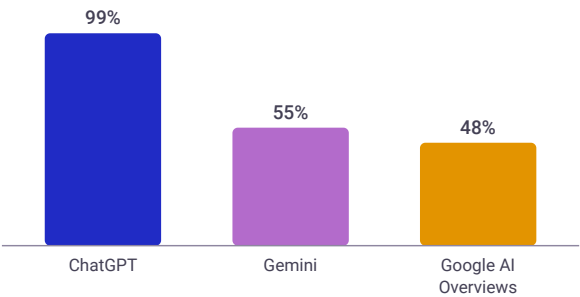
71%

of AI answers described who or what a product was best for, with phrases such as “best for,” “ideal for” or “great for”: 99% for ChatGPT, 55% for Gemini and 48% for Google AI Overviews. ChatGPT used “best for” 7.7 times per answer on average.

ChatGPT: share of answers using each label



Share of answers using “best for,” “ideal for” or “great for”, by engine



Examples

The roles were specific. The most common “best for” phrases named an age group (toddlers, preschoolers), a person (travelers, iPhone users, beginners), a place (small kitchens, small spaces) or a need (sensitive skin, outdoor adventures). The same answer usually gave different products different use cases, so several brands could be recommended in one answer without competing for the same spot.

“Best for: Train and subway commuters who like everything in its place.”

ChatGPT, everyday handbags for a commuter under \$150

“Best for: Young engineers and artists who want to build and power their own spinning platform.”

Google AI Overviews, arts and crafts kits for kids

Why this happens

ChatGPT formats gift answers as a list of picks with a reason for each one, and it takes those reasons from the pages it reads. In one air fryer answer, ChatGPT reported that RTINGS had named the COSORI TurboBlaze its best air fryer for most people, then labeled it “Best for: Parents, couples, home cooks, and anyone getting their first air fryer.” When an editorial site gives a product a label, such as “best for most people,” ChatGPT can repeat it in the product’s “best for” line.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

Most AI gift answers say who or what each product is best for, and almost every ChatGPT answer does. A product with a clear use case or target persona, such as a compact air fryer for small kitchens or a tote for commuters, gives the engine an easy reason to include it next to the category leader. A product described as good at everything competes with every other product for “best overall.” This ties to Finding 1: the situations a product is best for, such as a small kitchen or sensitive skin, are the same details shoppers add to their questions.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

1. **Choose one or two use cases or target personas for each product that you can back up.** For example: best for small kitchens, best under \$100, best for beginners, best for people with sensitive skin.
2. **State them in plain words on the product page:** in the title or subtitle, the first paragraph and a short “best for” line, with the specs that prove it.
3. **Compare your products by use case and persona on your category pages.** A short comparison (“for small kitchens,” “for families”) gives the engine the reasoning it repeats.
4. **Pitch editors and product testers on the use case.** Ask to be considered for the specific slot (“best compact air fryer”) in roundups, since the labels editors give products can carry into AI answers.
5. **Keep the use case and persona consistent** across your site, retailer listings, product feeds and press materials.

FINDING 6

YouTube and Reddit are major sources for Google AI Overviews

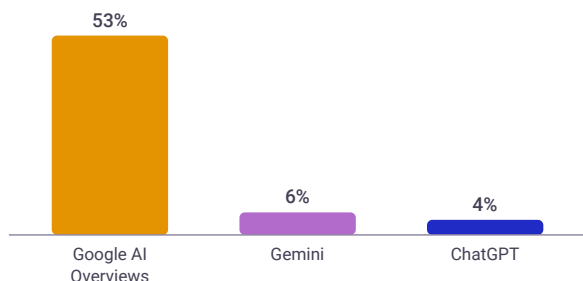
53%

of Google AI Overview answers drew on at least one social or community platform. For ChatGPT it was 4%, and for Gemini 6%.

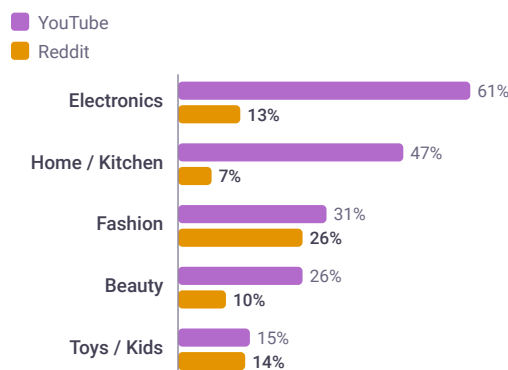
36%

of AI Overview answers used YouTube as a source, more than any other site. Reddit was second at 14%.

Share of answers using a social or community platform, by engine



Google AI Overviews: share of answers using YouTube and Reddit, by category



Examples

YouTube was a source in 61% of AI Overview electronics answers and 47% of home and kitchen answers. Reddit carried the most weight in fashion (26%), with threads from communities such as r/handbags and r/jewelry. Other subreddits used included r/headphoneadvice, r/fragrance, r/fitnesstrackers and r/cookware. ChatGPT did not use YouTube as a source in any answer, and used Reddit in 4% of the answers with recorded sources.

“Features balanced 360-degree sound, solid bass, an IP67 dustproof and waterproof rating, and a design that actually floats.”

Google AI Overviews, portable speakers for a college student (sources included two YouTube videos)

“Mentioned by users on Reddit as a great space-saver because its unique design allows it to flip up vertically against the backsplash when not in use.”

Google AI Overviews, air fryers for limited counter space

Why this happens

Google AI Overviews are built on Google Search, which includes YouTube videos and Reddit threads alongside publisher and retailer pages. ChatGPT runs its own web searches and, as Finding 2 shows, reads mostly editorial sites. The same question sends the two engines to different parts of the web.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

A plan built on gift guides and press coverage reaches ChatGPT better than Google. For Google's AI answers, video reviews, product demonstrations and community discussion are a separate channel that needs its own plan, especially in electronics, home and kitchen, and fashion.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

1. **Work with YouTube reviewers in your category.** Send products to creators who review gifts and products in your category, with priority on electronics (61% of AI Overview answers used YouTube) and home and kitchen (47%).
2. **Publish your own product demonstration videos.** Title them with the product type and the use ("compact air fryer for small kitchens"), describe the specs out loud and in the description, and add chapters.
3. **Answer questions in category subreddits** from an openly identified brand account, with specs and honest trade-offs. Communities such as r/handbags, r/headphoneadvice and r/cookware appeared as sources.
4. **Encourage honest customer discussion**, for example by inviting buyers to share reviews and photos, without paying for or scripting posts.
5. **Measure Google AI Overviews separately from ChatGPT**, since the two engines use different sources for the same question.

FINDING 7

ChatGPT and Gemini read 2026 content and almost nothing older

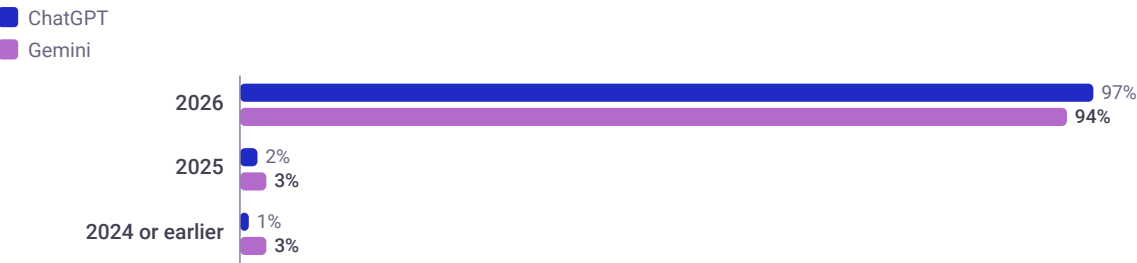
96%

of the dated pages ChatGPT and Gemini read were from 2026: 97% for ChatGPT and 94% for Gemini.

94%

of ChatGPT's background web searches added "2026" to the question, although none of our questions mentioned a year.

Share of source pages with a year in the URL, by year



Google AI Overviews used too few dated pages to measure.

Examples

A question about travel bag gifts produced the search "best travel bags gift guide 2026 carry-on weekender duffel backpack holiday gifts." A question about building toys produced "best building toys holiday gifts 2026 kids age recommendations LEGO magnetic tiles marble run." Gift guides labeled 2025 were almost never read, even when the products in them were still on sale.

"I compared current craft-kit options with recent 2026 gift guides, considering age suitability, replay value, cleanup, and how gift-worthy each set feels."

ChatGPT, arts and crafts kits for kids

"The Lancôme Holiday Beauty Box 2026 offers an incredible assortment of full-size skincare and makeup favorites packaged in a stunning Parisian-inspired holiday collection."

Gemini, makeup gifts

Why this happens

Both engines search the web for most gift questions. ChatGPT added the current year to 94% of its searches, so pages with 2026 in the title or URL matched what it was looking for and older gift guides did not.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

A gift guide or best-of page from last year is close to invisible to ChatGPT and Gemini this season, however good it is. The year in the title and URL is one of the main ways these engines find current gift content.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

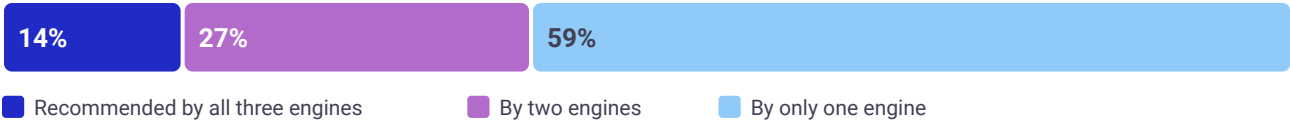
1. **Update your gift guides and best-of pages for 2026**, with the year in the page title, the main heading and the URL.
2. **Show a visible "last updated" date** and keep current prices and models on the page.
3. **Pitch publishers' 2026 gift guides early**, since those are the pages the engines will read in November and December.

ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews recommend different brands for the same question

57%

of questions led to each engine recommending a different brand most often. ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews recommended the same brand most often for only 9% of questions.

Brands each engine recommended regularly for a question (in 40% or more of its runs), by how many engines agreed



Most-recommended brand on each engine for the same question

Question	ChatGPT	Gemini	Google AI Overviews
Best wireless headphones as gifts	Bose	Apple	Anker Soundcore
Best fitness trackers as gifts	Fitbit	Garmin	WHOOP
Best travel bags as gifts	Away	CALPAK	Samsonite
Best portable speakers as gifts	Ultimate Ears	Bose	JBL

Examples

Hario appeared in 91% of ChatGPT’s coffee equipment answers and 11% of AI Overviews’. Beautiful by Drew Barrymore appeared in 69% of Gemini’s air fryer answers and 6% of ChatGPT’s. L.L.Bean was named in 68% of AI Overview winter accessory answers and in none of ChatGPT’s. A brand that checks only one engine can miss how it appears on the other two. Asked for coffee gifts for someone with a small kitchen, ChatGPT and AI Overviews pointed to different brands:

“Consider a compact dripper from Hario, paired with paper filters and a small bag of specialty coffee.”

ChatGPT, coffee gifts for a small kitchen

“Coffee Subscription (e.g., Trade Coffee): A consumable gift that delivers fresh whole-bean coffee regularly without adding physical clutter to the kitchen.”

Google AI Overviews, coffee gifts for a small kitchen

Why this happens

Each engine searches and reads a different mix of the web, so each one starts from a different set of pages. ChatGPT relies most on editorial sites, Gemini reads more brand websites and retailers than the other two, and Google AI Overviews use far more video and community content. Shopping results differ too: ChatGPT’s product cards lean on national retailers, while AI Overviews include brand stores that send a product feed to Google.

Where each engine’s sources came from

Share of the pages each engine read	ChatGPT	Gemini	Google AI Overviews
Editorial sites	63%	42%	34%
Brand websites	14%	22%	15%
Retailers	6%	14%	10%
Social, video and community sites	3%	5%	23%
Other	15%	17%	18%

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

A brand’s AI visibility is three separate results. A brand that leads in ChatGPT can be missing from Gemini or AI Overviews for the same question, and the fix differs by engine because each one reads different sources. A single combined number, or a screenshot from one engine, can hide the engine where a brand is missing.

WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

1. **Measure each engine separately.** Track the share of answers that name your brand in ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews, and run each question several times over several days. Answers change between runs: only 14% of the brands ChatGPT named for a question appeared in all seven of its runs.
2. **Find the engine where you are missing,** then look at the sources that engine used for those questions.
3. **Missing in ChatGPT:** work on editorial gift guides and product tests (Finding 2) and on complete listings at the retailers ChatGPT links to (Finding 4).
4. **Missing in Google AI Overviews:** work on YouTube and Reddit (Finding 6) and keep a complete Google Merchant Center feed for your own store. L.L.Bean and Fat Brain Toys appeared as their own merchants in AI Overview product galleries.
5. **Missing in Gemini:** Gemini read brand websites more than the other engines did, so start with complete product pages on your own site, with specs, the use cases your products fit and prices (Findings 3 and 5).

PART 2

Brand leaderboards for tested categories

The brands, products and sources AI recommended or used most often, for the 5 categories and 20 product types we tested. Share of answers is the percentage of answers that named the brand or product at least once.

Most-recommended brands by category

These lists cover the five categories we tested. Anker and its audio line Soundcore were named in half of all electronics answers, more often than Apple, JBL, Sony or Bose. Brands that sell across several product types in a category (Anker in speakers, headphones and portable tech) rank higher on these lists than brands that sell in one.

Electronics

Top 10 brands · share of the category's answers

1	 Anker / Soundcore		50%
2	 Apple		38%
3	 JBL		34%
4	 Sony		31%
5	 Bose		28%
6	 Fitbit		24%
7	 Garmin		19%
8	 Ultimate Ears		15%
9	 Amazfit		13%
10	 JLab		9%

Beauty / Skincare

Top 10 brands · share of the category's answers

1	 Sephora Favorites*		28%
2	 Rare Beauty		18%
3	 PHLUR		17%
4	 Clinique		13%
5	 FOREO		11%
6	 Dermalogica		11%
7	 The Ordinary		11%
8	 Maison Margiela Replica		11%
9	 First Aid Beauty		11%
10	 Skin Gym		10%

*Sephora Favorites are Sephora-curated multi-brand sets.

Home / Kitchen

Top 10 brands · share of the category's answers

1	 Ninja		23%
2	 Cuisinart		18%
3	 AeroPress		18%
4	 Instant Vortex		17%
5	 Fellow		16%
6	 Cosori		13%
7	 Caraway		13%
8	 Hario		13%
9	 Lodge		12%
10	 Tramontina		12%

Toys / Kids

Top 10 brands · share of the category's answers

1	 LEGO		23%
2	 Educational Insights		21%
3	 Magna-Tiles		19%
4	 Learning Resources		16%
5	 Fat Brain Toys		13%
6	 ThinkFun		12%
7	 Stomp Rocket		12%
8	 Melissa & Doug		11%
9	 Crayola		10%
10	 Creativity for Kids		9%

Fashion / Accessories

Top 10 brands · share of the category's answers

1	 BÉIS		20%
2	 Quince		19%
3	 CALPAK		13%
4	 Samsonite		13%
5	 Ana Luisa		12%
6	 The North Face		12%
7	 Smartwool		11%
8	 Longchamp		10%
9	 Coach		9%
10	 Travelpro		8%

Some product types have a clear leader and others are open

Of the 20 product types we tested, fitness trackers, speakers and building toys each had a brand in more than 90% of answers (Fitbit, JBL, LEGO). In home organization gifts the leading brand appeared in 21%, and AI often recommended a type of product instead of a brand: 23% of jewelry answers and 13% of home organization answers named no brand at all. In those open categories, a brand with clear pages and reviews for specific uses has room to become the default recommendation.

Leading brand by product type

Share of the product type's answers

Fitness trackers	 Fitbit	92%
Portable Bluetooth speakers	 JBL	92%
Building toys	 LEGO	90%
Portable tech	 Anker	84%
Air fryers	 Ninja	80%
Makeup gifts	 Rare Beauty	76%
Wireless headphones	 Sony	72%
Coffee equipment	 AeroPress	70%
Fragrance gift sets	 PHLUR	68%
Educational games	 Educational Insights	64%
Travel bags	 BÉIS	49%
Cookware	 Lodge	48%
Outdoor play toys	 Stomp Rocket	48%
Everyday handbags	 Quince	47%
Everyday jewelry	 Ana Luisa	46%
Skincare gift sets	 Dermalogica	44%
Facial skincare tools	 FOREO	44%
Winter accessories	 Smartwool	43%
Arts and crafts kits	 Crayola	40%
Home organization gifts	 SpaceAid	21%

The websites AI used most, by category

Editorial sites led four of the five categories we tested. In beauty, Ulta and Sephora were read more than any publication. YouTube and Reddit appear on these lists almost entirely because of Google AI Overviews.

Electronics

			All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 techradar.com	Editorial	19%	36%	4%	18%
2	 wired.com	Editorial	17%	40%	0%	8%
3	 soundguys.com	Editorial	17%	26%	10%	14%
4	 rtings.com	Editorial	15%	31%	0%	13%
5	 tomsguide.com	Editorial	15%	31%	1%	10%

Beauty / Skincare

			All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 ulta.com	Retailer	34%	51%	22%	22%
2	 sephora.com	Retailer	25%	37%	19%	14%
3	 allure.com	Editorial	12%	25%	0%	10%
4	 whowhatwear.com	Editorial	8%	13%	6%	3%
5	 harpersbazaar.com	Editorial	8%	18%	1%	0%

Home / Kitchen

			All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 foodnetwork.com	Editorial	16%	24%	13%	8%
2	 goodhousekeeping.com	Editorial	15%	34%	5%	0%
3	 consumerreports.org	Editorial	11%	27%	0%	3%
4	 bonappetit.com	Editorial	9%	20%	0%	7%
5	 youtube.com	Social / video	8%	0%	1%	39%

Toys / Kids

			All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 thetoyinsider.com	Editorial	9%	16%	4%	2%
2	 sciencebasedkids.com	Editorial	8%	21%	1%	0%
3	 goodhousekeeping.com	Editorial	8%	19%	1%	0%
4	 parents.com	Editorial	8%	16%	0%	5%
5	 nymag.com	Editorial	7%	16%	1%	2%

Fashion / Accessories

			All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 travelandleisure.com	Editorial	9%	22%	0%	0%
2	 reddit.com	Social / video	8%	3%	6%	22%
3	 outdoorgearlab.com	Editorial	8%	13%	5%	3%
4	 goodhousekeeping.com	Editorial	7%	14%	2%	0%
5	 yahoo.com	Other	7%	14%	0%	4%

Share of all answers in the category that used the website as a source; the engine columns show the share of each engine's answers (AIO = Google AI Overviews).

PRODUCT TYPE LEADERBOARDS

Top five brands and top three products in each product type we tested

"All" is the share of all answers for that product type; the engine columns show the share of each engine's answers (AIO = Google AI Overviews).

Fitness trackers

Electronics

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Fitbit	92%	100%	100%	68%
2	 Garmin	75%	100%	71%	41%
3	 Amazfit	50%	51%	54%	41%
4	 Apple	35%	66%	20%	9%
5	 Oura	30%	43%	20%	27%

Top products: Fitbit Charge 6 (62%) · Fitbit Inspire 3 (60%) · Garmin vivosmart 5 (36%)

Portable Bluetooth speakers

Electronics

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 JBL	92%	94%	97%	79%
2	 Anker Soundcore	65%	60%	77%	53%
3	 Ultimate Ears	61%	94%	46%	26%
4	 Bose	48%	66%	43%	26%
5	 Sony	40%	46%	43%	26%

Top products: Ultimate Ears WONDERBOOM 4 (60%) · JBL Clip 5 (48%) · JBL Charge 6 (45%)

Portable tech

Electronics

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Anker	84%	97%	89%	50%
2	 Apple	74%	74%	83%	56%
3	 JBL	36%	37%	40%	28%
4	 Twelve South	31%	26%	46%	11%
5	 UGREEN	25%	43%	20%	0%

Top products: Anker Nano Power Bank (40%) · Apple AirTag (38%) · Universal travel adapter (Epicka, Tessan) (35%)

Wireless headphones

Electronics

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Sony	72%	83%	80%	33%
2	 Anker Soundcore	53%	49%	60%	50%
3	 Bose	52%	60%	54%	33%
4	 Apple	46%	57%	37%	39%
5	 JLab	25%	17%	29%	33%

Top products: Bose QuietComfort Ultra (49%) · Sony WH-1000XM6 (44%) · Anker Soundcore Life Q30 / Q20i (38%)

Facial skincare tools

Beauty / Skincare

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 FOREO	44%	43%	63%	14%
2	 Skin Gym	39%	37%	54%	18%
3	 Solawave	38%	34%	43%	36%
4	 NuFACE	34%	43%	37%	14%
5	 Therabody	26%	40%	26%	4%

Top products: Solawave 4-in-1 Radiant Renewal Wand (38%) · Generic: stainless steel / ice roller (37%) · NuFACE MINI+ / Trinity+ (29%)

Fragrance gift sets

Beauty / Skincare

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 PHLUR	68%	86%	66%	39%
2	 Maison Margiela Replica	44%	77%	26%	17%
3	 Sephora Favorites*	38%	26%	49%	39%
4	 Jo Malone	31%	34%	23%	39%
5	 Le Labo	30%	26%	31%	33%

Top products: PHLUR Discovery / Mini Sampler Set (68%) · Maison Margiela Replica Memory Box / minis (44%) · Sephora Favorites perfume sampler sets (38%)

Makeup gifts

Beauty / Skincare

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Rare Beauty	76%	100%	51%	75%
2	 Sephora Favorites*	64%	66%	71%	44%
3	 Clinique	43%	69%	34%	6%
4	 Charlotte Tilbury	38%	51%	31%	25%
5	 Fenty Beauty	30%	54%	14%	12%

Top products: Sephora Favorites makeup sets (64%) · Rare Beauty sets (Bestselling Faves, Hope Faves) (56%) · Clinique Soft Glam / Black Honey set (44%)

Skincare gift sets

Beauty / Skincare

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Dermalogica	44%	54%	31%	48%
2	 First Aid Beauty	43%	54%	43%	24%
3	 The Ordinary	43%	54%	49%	14%
4	 Estée Lauder	32%	46%	31%	10%
5	 Peach & Lily	29%	40%	23%	19%

Top products: Dermalogica kits (Sensitive Skin Rescue, Stabilize) (44%) · First Aid Beauty Sensitive Skin Bestsellers set (43%) · The Ordinary The Sensitive Skin / Daily Set (43%)

Air fryers

Home / Kitchen

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Ninja	80%	100%	80%	38%
2	 Instant Vortex	70%	94%	66%	25%
3	 Cosori	55%	94%	29%	25%
4	 Beautiful by Drew Barrymore	38%	6%	69%	44%
5	 Chefman	31%	37%	31%	19%

Top products: Ninja 4-Qt Air Fryer (AF101) (42%) · Ninja Crispi (36%) · Instant Vortex Mini (31%)

Coffee equipment

Home / Kitchen

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 AeroPress	70%	94%	54%	53%
2	 Fellow	63%	91%	43%	47%
3	 Hario	51%	91%	31%	10%
4	 OXO	37%	66%	11%	32%
5	 Timemore	28%	43%	23%	10%

Top products: AeroPress (Original / Go / XL / Clear) (70%) · Fellow Stagg EKG kettle (51%) · Hario V60 pour-over (45%)

Cookware

Home / Kitchen

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Lodge	48%	80%	26%	32%
2	 Le Creuset	47%	54%	57%	16%
3	 Tramontina	47%	77%	37%	10%
4	 Cuisinart	45%	60%	46%	16%
5	 Caraway	44%	34%	60%	32%

Top products: Le Creuset Signature Dutch oven (47%) · Caraway Cookware Set (34%) · Lodge cast iron skillet (32%)

Home organization gifts

Home / Kitchen

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 SpaceAid	21%	37%	3%	24%
2	 The Container Store	20%	6%	17%	53%
3	 Brightroom	18%	20%	14%	24%
4	 Yamazaki	17%	6%	31%	12%
5	 Brother P-touch	15%	23%	6%	18%

Top products: Over-the-door organizers (48%) · Hanging closet / sweater organizers (47%) · Slim velvet hangers (various) (37%)

Arts and crafts kits

Toys / Kids

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Crayola	40%	80%	17%	10%
2	 Creativity for Kids	38%	31%	54%	20%
3	 Mondo Llama	26%	34%	11%	35%
4	 Klutz	22%	23%	31%	5%
5	 Hello Hobby	22%	17%	26%	25%

Top products: Creativity for Kids kits (38%) · Crayola Imagination / Inspiration Art Set (27%) · Mondo Llama Bucket of Crafts / kits (Target) (26%)

Building toys

Toys / Kids

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 LEGO	90%	97%	97%	67%
2	 Magna-Tiles	67%	86%	69%	33%
3	 PicassoTiles	31%	40%	31%	14%
4	 Plus-Plus	28%	54%	17%	0%
5	 Clixo	21%	37%	11%	10%

Top products: Magna-Tiles sets (67%) · LEGO Classic Creative Brick Box (65%) · PicassoTiles magnetic tiles (31%)

Educational games

Toys / Kids

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Educational Insights	64%	89%	54%	37%
2	 Learning Resources	53%	49%	49%	68%
3	 ThinkFun	51%	60%	63%	10%
4	 Numberblocks	28%	46%	14%	21%
5	 HABA	17%	26%	17%	0%

Top products: Kanoodle / Kanoodle Jr. (Educational Insights) (40%) · Numberblocks activity sets (hand2mind) (28%) · Sum Swamp (Learning Resources) (27%)

Outdoor play toys

Toys / Kids

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Stomp Rocket	48%	60%	46%	30%
2	 Little Tikes	32%	57%	20%	10%
3	 Step2	31%	49%	17%	25%
4	 Fat Brain Toys	22%	0%	37%	35%
5	 Flybar	19%	26%	6%	30%

Top products: Stomp Rocket launchers (48%) · Water / sand-and-water table (42%) · Step2 climbers / sandbox (31%)

Everyday handbags

Fashion / Accessories

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Quince	47%	49%	46%	47%
2	 Longchamp	36%	57%	29%	7%
3	 Coach	35%	43%	37%	13%
4	 BÉIS	35%	40%	31%	33%
5	 Cuyana	32%	51%	23%	7%

Top products: Quince Italian Leather totes / shoppers (38%) · Longchamp Le Pliage tote (34%) · BÉIS The Commuter Tote (33%)

Everyday jewelry

Fashion / Accessories

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Ana Luisa	46%	37%	60%	38%
2	 Mejuri	22%	23%	26%	14%
3	 Mint & Lily	20%	29%	17%	10%
4	 Gorjana	13%	9%	11%	24%
5	 Quince	12%	14%	9%	14%

Top products: Huggie hoops (any brand) (84%) · Generic: initial / name necklace (24%) · Mejuri (Tiny pearl / Bold hoops / Dôme) (22%)

Travel bags

Fashion / Accessories

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 BÉIS	49%	31%	77%	17%
2	 Samsonite	48%	60%	40%	33%
3	 CALPAK	48%	37%	69%	17%
4	 Travelpro	34%	31%	40%	25%
5	 Cotopaxi	32%	54%	20%	0%

Top products: Samsonite (Virtuosa, Better Than Basic) (48%) · BÉIS The Weekender (39%) · CALPAK Luka Duffel (39%)

Winter accessories

Fashion / Accessories

#	Brand	All	ChatGPT	Gemini	AIO
1	 Smartwool	43%	40%	60%	16%
2	 The North Face	30%	31%	46%	0%
3	 Carhartt	24%	9%	43%	16%
4	 Ocoopa	19%	34%	14%	0%
5	 L.L.Bean	19%	0%	11%	68%

Top products: Rechargeable hand warmers (Ocoopa, Thaw, Zippo) (51%) · Smartwool merino beanies, gaiters & socks (43%) · Touchscreen gloves (generic) (37%)

How the study was run and measured

This study was designed and run by Stellar using Peec AI for answer collection. The prompts, data and analysis are Stellar's own. Brands named in this report did not sponsor or take part in the study.

Item	Detail
Questions	100 non-branded holiday gift questions in US English: 5 categories, 4 product types each, 5 question types per product type (general, budget, recipient, need, budget + need). No question named a brand, retailer or year.
Engines	ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews, run through Peec AI from a US location.
Dates and runs	Seven runs per question per engine, October 13 to 17, 2026. Google showed an AI Overview in 372 of 700 runs.
Brands	A brand counts as recommended when the answer names it at least once. Brand names were matched against a list built for each product type from the answers themselves (442 brands). Sephora Favorites, Sephora's multi-brand sets, is counted as one name because AI recommends it as a product. Game titles were credited to their makers (for example, Kanoodle to Educational Insights).
Products	Product lines group close variants of the same product (for example, sizes of the LEGO Classic Creative Brick Box).
Share of answers	Percentage of answers in the stated group that named the brand, product or source at least once. Category figures count each answer once across the category's four product types.
Sources	Pages the engine read for an answer, as recorded by Peec. "Cited" means the answer linked the page inline. ChatGPT's background searches come from Peec, which records them for ChatGPT only.
"Best for" language	The answer contains the phrase "best for" at least once (Finding 5). "Best overall," "best budget," "best premium" and "best value" were counted separately.
Retailers	Product offers attached to ChatGPT product cards and Google AI Overview product galleries (about 3,900 offers from 671 merchants), and retailer links inside the answer text. Gemini answers in this study showed no product offers or shopping links.

Sources for outside facts

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- [GeekWire](#), "Prime Day shows how AI is changing shopping, testing Amazon's bet against ChatGPT and others," Jun 29, 2026
- [PYMNTS](#), "Walmart Launches AI-First Shopping Experience: Checkout Within ChatGPT," Oct 14, 2025
- [OpenAI](#), Commerce developer documentation, "Key concepts" (product feeds)
- [Google Merchant Center Help](#), "About AI performance insights"
- [Kevin Indig, Growth Memo](#), "Organic Growth in E-Commerce in 2027," Oct 12, 2026 (cover: shoppers choosing from the AI shortlist)

About Stellar AEO Labs

Stellar AEO Labs is an AI search optimization agency. We help retail and e-commerce brands get recommended when shoppers ask ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews, Perplexity or shopping agents such as Meta's Muse what to buy. Our work is built on a proprietary framework we have developed for how AI engines choose which brands and products to recommend.

The five areas we work on

Content Intelligence

Product facts, attributes, use cases and buying guidance

Findings 1, 3 and 5

Structured Data

Product, offer, variant, review and entity markup

Findings 3 and 4

Authority Signals

Reviews, editorial coverage, creators, Reddit and YouTube

Findings 2 and 6

Indexability

Crawlable product pages, catalog structure and AI crawler access

Finding 4

Recency

Current pricing, availability, launches and product updates

Finding 7

Our retail AEO program

1

Benchmark AI visibility

Test how your brand and your competitors appear in AI answers, engine by engine, and which third-party sources the answers cite.

2

Evaluate and prioritize

Score your on-site and off-site presence against the five pillars and build a ranked roadmap.

3

Optimize what you own

Improve product pages, structured data, product feeds and crawlability, and keep listings consistent across retail partners.

4

Build off-site authority

Plan reviews, editorial coverage, YouTube and Reddit, with a target list of the publications AI reads in your category.

5

Measure and repeat

Re-run the benchmark and track visibility, citations, sentiment and answer accuracy for each engine.

Talk to us about your holiday AI visibility

contact@stellar-ai.co

Get a free AEO score for your brand

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Read more

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