

## Marketing to AI: Your Next Customer Might Be an AI Agent

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### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Brands are optimizing for human search behavior while the shopping journey is being outsourced to AI systems that act on the customer's behalf. If an AI agent is assembling the "shortlist" and shaping the recommendation, your visibility and persuasion must work on machine logic, not just human preference.

### WHY IT MATTERS FOR MARKETERS

Generative AI is already influencing purchase decisions at scale and agentic commerce is accelerating through emerging buying and selling protocols. That means product content is becoming training data and decision input. Small wording changes can materially shift whether your brand is recommended, especially if you're not already ranked first, creating a new, fast-moving competitive layer on top of SEO.

### WHAT THE EXPERT(S) SHARED

Kartik Hosanagar (The Wharton School) argued that "marketing to AI" is quickly becoming a distinct discipline because AI now handles much of the early decision process and acts as an agent that can plan and complete transactions. In this environment, AI functions like a new customer persona: it reads sources, extracts snippets, and builds recommendations.

He argued that most generative engine optimization (GEO) today is just SEO repackaged (check where you appear in an LLM's answer, then create more content to try to improve visibility). Instead, he suggested a more rigorous approach: treat AI recommendation as a measurable optimization problem. Identify which words

or phrases in your product description most affect the model's choice; then make small, brand-consistent edits that increase the likelihood your brand is recommended.

Hosanagar investigated which words in a product description most influence whether an AI recommends the brand. His system tested small, brand-safe wording changes under strict truth and edit limits to increase the odds of being selected. Across many product categories, a handful of word changes produced meaningful lifts in recommendation rates, especially for brands not already ranked first. One caveat: if your brand isn't included in the AI's retrieved sources, no copy tweak will help, so visibility across search results, affiliates, and review sites is just as important as your own website.

### REALITY CHECK

Whether your brand appears in the AI's retrieved context depends on descriptions in third-party sources (reviews, affiliates, marketplaces) you don't fully control. Also, improvements may vary by query phrasing and persona, as LLM "search" is highly context-dependent, so you need to optimize against the questions your buyers (and agents) actually ask, not generic prompts.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Treat AI as a decision-maker.** Build a content strategy that explicitly targets how AI systems, not just humans, retrieve, extract, and compare product claims.
- **Prioritize snippet-ready facts.** Rewrite key sections (top features, constraints, who it's for, comparisons) so an agent can easily lift accurate, differentiated claims.

- **Run AI visibility audits by persona and query.**  
Test prompts and track whether you appear in retrieved sources and final recommendations.
- **Optimize where AI pulls from.** If recommendations rely on review sites, affiliates, and marketplaces, align your language and proof points with those partners.
- **Make minimal edits with maximum impact.**  
Focus on a small set of high-leverage words/phrases (benefit framing, quality signals, category language) rather than full-page rewrites.
- **Instrument speed-to-impact.** Monitor changes in AI-referred traffic, rank/order in AI answers, and conversion lift. Retrieval + snippet extraction can shift faster than model updates.
- **Plan for competitive escalation.** Assume rivals will also optimize for AI; protect differentiation with verifiable claims, consistent terminology, and a tight set of “ownable” attributes.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- AI is shifting from research assistant to shopping agent, making “marketing to AI” a new core capability.
- Generative engine optimization should move beyond “make more content” to “optimize the inputs models actually use.”
- Small, brand-safe wording changes can meaningfully shift AI recommendations, especially when you’re not already #1.
- If you’re not in the AI’s retrieved sources, on-site copy changes won’t matter; distribution and partners become leverage.
- The winning play is persona-based query strategy plus snippet-ready, provable product language across the web.