# eBay launches AI companion to transform online shopping discovery



eBay has introduced its first consumer-facing shopping agent, a significant development in its efforts to integrate generative AI into the online shopping experience. This initiative is part of a broader trend among major e-commerce platforms targeting enhanced product discovery through advanced technologies.

During a presentation at the Fortune Brainstorm AI conference in London, eBay's Chief AI Officer, Nitzan Mekel, explained how the new tool, referred to as a "companion," aims to make navigating eBay's extensive inventory more intuitive for users. He remarked, “The idea is for the UI to act as a companion—integrated and seamless," highlighting the focus on user-friendliness and assistance.

Unlike conventional keyword searches, this shopping agent interprets user intent more subtly, guiding shoppers to relevant items based on conversational prompts. Mekel elaborated, “Instead of users having to know how to navigate eBay, the agent can do it for them.” This approach aims to alleviate the overwhelm often associated with vast online marketplaces, making it easier for users to both find and explore unique items.

The move by eBay aligns with strategies adopted by competitors in the industry. For instance, Wayfair, also a participant in the Fortune Brainstorm AI panel, is similarly leveraging AI to enhance product discovery. Fiona Tan, the Chief Technology Officer at Wayfair, noted the importance of personalisation, stating, “Sometimes, shoppers don’t know exactly what they want until they see it.” Wayfair employs generative AI to create visual inspiration for home items, thus empowering users to make more informed decisions.

Both industry leaders highlighted that the utilisation of AI transcends mere speed and automation; it is fundamentally about enhancing discovery and building trust with consumers. Mekel stated, “There’s been this promise that the joy that some people get from browsing and treasure hunting in a physical experience will one day translate in the same way online.” Through this new agent, eBay aims to replicate the excitement of physically browsing items, with the added benefit of tailored guidance.

At the core of eBay's AI developments is a wealth of historical marketplace data accumulated over 30 years. Mekel mentioned that this data, enriched by insights from experts and enthusiasts in niche categories, provides eBay a robust foundation for evolving its shopping agent into a more knowledgeable entity. “We’re always looking for ways to enrich this data… to make the agent more knowledgeable,” he said, indicating a commitment to continual improvement in user experience.

As e-commerce evolves, the adoption of generative AI presents opportunities for companies like eBay and Wayfair to not only improve operational efficiency but also to create more enjoyable and personalised shopping experiences for consumers.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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