

 VERSION 2

Conversational Advertising in 2026:

FROM CHATGPT TO PROGRAMMATIC



The next time you open ChatGPT for a quick question, you might see a new kind of answer: ads.

ChatGPT users say exactly what they want to get out of the platform. Instead of triangulating various characteristics and online behaviors, it can see exactly what a person wants to do, learn, or purchase. The ads it presents are based on that information: prompts, rather than personas. From a behavior change perspective, that means every user's intent to act is very clear.

In January, OpenAI started to allow ads in-platform for their [free and low-cost tiers](#). For this initial push, they'll be [prioritizing impressions over clicks](#). Unlike Google's search ads that prioritize performance, OpenAI will do what Meta does: charging per impression or view.

OpenAI [made some promises](#) to their users with this announcement:

- Ads won't influence the answers to your queries
- Ads will be clearly labeled
- Ads won't be shown to users under 18, or next to sensitive topics (like mental health, physical health, or politics)
- User conversations will be kept private from advertisers
- Users will have the option to turn off ad personalization

They promise that their ads will be useful, entertaining, and relevant. That's because they [understand user intent](#) in a different way than other channels can.

"In a prompt-driven environment like ChatGPT, intent is no longer inferred; it is expressed."



OpenAI's COO said that ad rollout would be an **iterative process**. Shortly after the first announcement, they declared plans to **charge a \$60 CPM**, similar to the cost of ads during NFL games, and three times the CPMs on Meta. At first, the company asked advertisers to commit **at least \$200,000** as they rolled out beta ads; now, they're updating that **minimum threshold to \$50,000** for the pilot.

OpenAI started with high minimums to get ad placements on the platforms. The **prices are coming down**, but as of this publication, there's no self serve platform—advertising is only available **by request**.

They're also launching their own **ads manager**, which is unusually early for this stage in the game. CPA (cost-per-acquisition) options are labeled "coming soon."

As of late April (a testament to how quickly everything is moving in this space), OpenAI shifted ChatGPT's advertising model from CPMs (cost-per-mille/cost per thousand impressions) to **CPC (cost-per-click)**, putting them in direct competition with Google and Meta. Bids range from \$3 to \$5 per click.

Other LLMs might soon follow suit. A senior executive at Google said that they're **not ruling out ads for Gemini**.

CHATGPT IS EVERYONE'S NEW FAVORITE SHOPPING BUDDY

ChatGPT has also become a major hub for shopping.

Survey data shows that **over half of U.S. consumers** intend to use AI to compare prices and find the best deals over the holidays.

Some companies are more ready to take advantage of this shift than others.



Shopify recently started [allowing its merchants to advertise on ChatGPT](#), following early beta testers [Target](#), [Williams Sonoma](#), and [Adobe](#). Retailers are tracking brand visibility and making it possible for customers to shop in the app. This is also why AI search visibility is getting more and more important. (For a deep dive into Answer Engine Optimization/Generative Engine Optimization, check out our [industry brief](#) on the subject.)

ChatGPT could become a key part of conversational advertising. Shopping inside the platform compresses the distance between discovery and purchase into a single conversation. OpenAI wants ChatGPT to be a primary research tool for shopping: they want users to try the app first, before scrolling product listings on retailer websites, and return to ChatGPT to find the best deals.

WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THIS?

[Ad tech industry experts](#) see advertising in AI apps as a natural next step, however,

“generative AI is expensive to keep up. More resources call for more revenue, and subscription fees alone won't be able to cover the infrastructure costs.”

However, general users aren't so casual about it.

[Users still have concerns](#) about the value of the information, potential influence on chatbot answers, and data-sharing with advertisers—all things that OpenAI pledged to address when they first introduced ads through their earlier-referenced promises to users.

HOW CAN YOU IMPLEMENT CONVERSATIONAL ADVERTISING RIGHT NOW?

Because some barriers make ChatGPT inaccessible for smaller campaigns, here are a few things you can do in the meantime to [improve visibility in AEO/GEO](#):

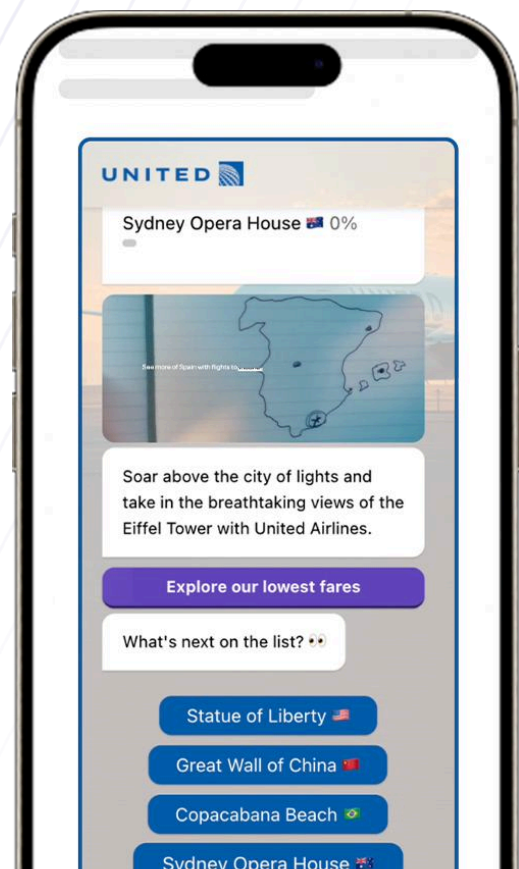
- Expand your digital footprint through omnichannel programmatic campaigns, placing programmatic ads on relevant websites to reach people as they're browsing online
- Create content that LLMs can read
- Test, measure, and iterate by searching your company on AI platforms to see what they say about you
- Create helpful content in your vertical and become an expert
- Replicating conversational advertising through our Conversational Display Units

Some programmatic units allow for this one-on-one, personal interaction:

“Conversation display units simulate a chat-like experience within standard display placements, allowing users to engage with tailored questions, prompts, or product paths.”

Finally, remember that touchpoints can occur outside digital spaces. We can continue to reach customers offline by capturing people's attention through digital out-of-home units. With offline avenues, we can keep the conversation flowing in the real world.

V2's Conversational Units for Programmatic



Version2 is actively monitoring this constantly shifting landscape. We can help you improve your visibility in AI platforms by applying this knowledge to your omnichannel campaigns.

Sources: Wall Street Journal (2026), WARC (2026), OpenAI (2026), Digiday (2026), AdExchanger (2026), Digiday (2026), Digiday (2026), Digiday (2026), Digiday (2026), Wall Street Journal (2026), TechCrunch (2026), AdWeek (2026), AdExchanger (2026), Digiday (2026), Digiday (2026), Reuters (2026), The Next Web (2026), Wired (2026), Digiday (2026), Digiday (2025), The Information (2025), Target (2025), Retail Dive (2025), Adobe (2026), Digiday (2026), AdWeek (2025), TechCrunch (2026), Digiday (2026), Wall Street Journal (2026), New York Times (2025), Digiday (2026)