ChatGPT Referrals to E-Commerce Websites: How Do LLMs Compare Against Traditional Channels?

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Organic LLM traffic — shoppers who reach an e-commerce website through ChatGPT rather than search, ads, email, or social — is, one year in, a small but fast-improving channel: under 0.2% of visits, converting and earning per session below every traditional channel except paid social, and running higher-intent for complex, considered purchases.

973	$20B	164M+	50,000+
e-commerce websites	combined revenue	total purchases	ChatGPT-referred transactions

KEY FACTS

- First large-scale empirical study of **organic LLM (oLLM)** traffic to e-commerce.
- 12 months of first-party data, Aug 2024 – Jul 2025; ChatGPT is **90%+** of LLM-referred sessions.
- oLLM converts and earns per session **below all traditional channels except paid social**.
- It **improved over the year** (conversion up, order value down).
- Runs **higher-intent for complex products** (~4.6× higher traffic share), where it already out-converts several channels.

HOW TO COVER IT

- **A small, fast-improving channel that runs higher-intent for complex products** — not "AI doesn't work for commerce," but also not "high-intent across the board."
- The headline is the **channel comparison**; the forward angle is **steady improvement**.
- "E-commerce websites" span **24 categories** — retail, finance, travel, law & government, and more — not just shops.
- Measures **ChatGPT referrals to e-commerce websites** — distinct from on-platform Instant Checkout or paid ads.

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