Datum | MARKET INTELLIGENCE

SEPTEMBER 2026

2026 Festive AdEx

A third of the ad year is festive, and it is moving to where the sale happens

Festive advertising is worth **₹60,000 to 62,000 crore** in 2026, a third of India's ad year. Commerce advertising, where the platform that shows the ad also records the sale, is growing at more than twice the rate of the market.

THE SEASON

Festive is a third of India's ad year

Datum forecasts 2026 festive advertising at **₹60,000 to 62,000 crore**, 13 to 17 per cent above last year's ₹53,000 crore and a third of the ₹1,75,782 crore market.

34-35%

Of India's 2026 ad spend is festive

THE CHANNELS

Commerce advertising grows at twice the market

Online video leads the formats at ₹32,303 crore, but commerce advertising is the pool that moves: **₹23,740 crore** in 2025, growing 27 per cent to **₹30,091 crore** in 2026. Google and Meta still take six of every ten digital rupees, and give up share every year.

+27%

Commerce ads growth, 2026

against +11 for the whole market

THE BUYERS

Buyers want proof of return on every buy

Programmatic mobile buyers hold a channel to its return whatever it is priced on: **72.9 per cent** measure channel-level return even on a CPM buy. After targeting, seeing the price is what they weigh most, and nearly two in three moved budget out of the walled gardens last year.

72.9%

Measure return even on a CPM buy

THE PLATFORMS

A quarter of festive digital is sold at the checkout

Commerce and retail media take about **₹11,500 crore** of festive spend in 2026, the largest single pool inside digital and up 27 per cent. Quick commerce is the fastest part of it at about **₹2,200 crore**, up 50 per cent, and festive carries up to two fifths of its advertising year.

+50%

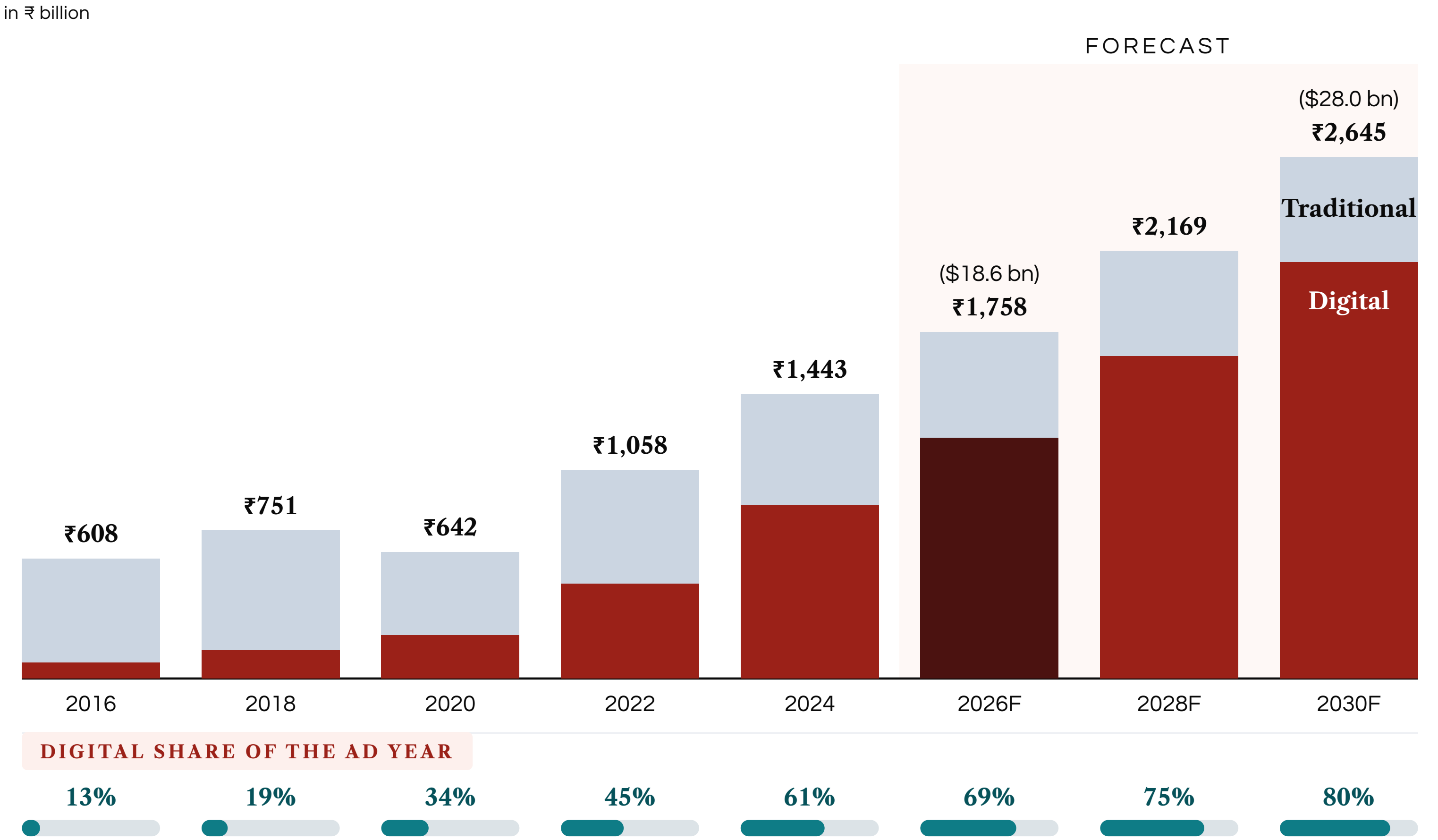
Quick commerce ad growth, festive 2026

Every rupee added to Indian advertising since 2019 is a digital rupee

Indian advertising adds ₹1,843 billion ($19.5 bn) between 2019 and 2030. Digital adds **₹1,926 billion** ($20.4 bn) of that, and traditional gives ₹83 billion ($0.9 bn) back. Traditional will be smaller in 2030 than it was in 2019, in rupees and in share.

EXHIBIT 1

India advertising, digital and traditional, 2016 to 2030F



THE GROWTH, DECOMPOSED — ₹ BN, 2019-30

Digital +₹1,926
Search, social, online video, display, commerce advertising and the SME long tail.

Traditional −₹83
Television, print, radio, cinema and out-of-home together.

The market +₹1,843
Digital and traditional combined.

WHAT IS DRIVING THE SHIFT

Budgets followed shoppers to the checkout
People now browse and buy on phones and shopping apps. A commerce ad sits on the page where the purchase happens, and is judged on what that page sells.

Buyers are starting to shop through AI tools
Ads are following them. ChatGPT announced ads in India on 27 August 2026.

Source: Datum India Advertising Forecast 2025-2030

Who owns India's advertising stack

More than two thirds of Indian advertising is now bought through a platform or an auction. All of the market's growth since 2019 has come from that side, because traditional media has not grown.

01 DEMAND
the money enters

Advertisers set the budget. An agency spends it, or the brand buys directly through a platform's console.

WPP Media · Publicis Groupe · dentsu · Madison World + in-house D2C

02 SERVING
who sells the space, and where the loop closes

BOUGHT IN AN AUCTION — digital, served by a platform or an exchange — 69.4%

The walled gardens
Search, social and commerce platforms that run the auction, deliver the ad and measure the result themselves. Most of India's digital money is spent here, and commerce media grows fastest, at 27 per cent.

Google · Meta · amazon · Myntra · blinkit · zepto · Swiggy Instamart

The open path
Independent demand-side platforms buy, and exchanges and supply-side platforms sell. Fees are visible and impressions can be audited.

BUY SIDE Display & Video 360 · theTradeDesk · amazon DSP · MiQ · Moloco · AppLovin · InMobi · affle · Criteo

SELL SIDE Google Ad Manager · OpenX · Index Exchange · PubMatic · Magnite

BOUGHT DIRECT — the seller's own salesforce — 30.6%

Television 14.2%
Star, Sony, Zee, Colors, Sun and the regional networks. Spots priced on BARC ratings and sold by the broadcaster.

Print 10.4%
The Times of India, Hindustan Times, Dainik Jagran, Dainik Bhaskar and the language dailies. Jackets and full pages, booked weeks ahead.

Out-of-home, radio and cinema 6.0%
Transit and roadside media owners, the radio networks and the cinema chains. Sites and slots are sold by the campaign.

03 SUPPLY
where the ad lands

News sites, OTT and connected television, gaming, audio and the app long tail. On the direct side, broadcast airtime, newsprint, hoardings and cinema screens.

JioHotstar · Spotify · unity Ads plus broadcast and print inventory

04 PROOF
audits every path

Attribution, brand safety and fraud detection on the auction side, paid for by the advertiser. BARC for television and ABC for print circulation, paid for by the industry.

AppsFlyer · DV DoubleVerify · HUMAN · pixalate · TAM

Sources: Datum India Advertising Forecast 2025-2030 for the shares; Datum Intelligence analysis. Firms shown are examples from each layer

Google and Meta nearly tripled their India ad revenue in four years

Google and Meta were first in India with self-serve buying and their own measurement. Their combined India ad revenue went from ₹23,213 crore in FY21 to **₹64,134 crore** in FY25, and Datum estimates ₹73,000 crore for FY26.

WHAT THEY BUILT

01 The console
Any brand could buy, at any budget, without an agency. A campaign took minutes to set up, and a small advertiser bought the same inventory as a large one.

02 Their own data
They knew who was seeing the ad, because Android and the Meta apps put a signed-in account on most phones. And they graded their own work: the console that spent the money also reported the result, at no extra cost.

SHARE OF DIGITAL, FY25

61.5% Google and Meta's share of Datum's ₹1,04,214 crore digital pool

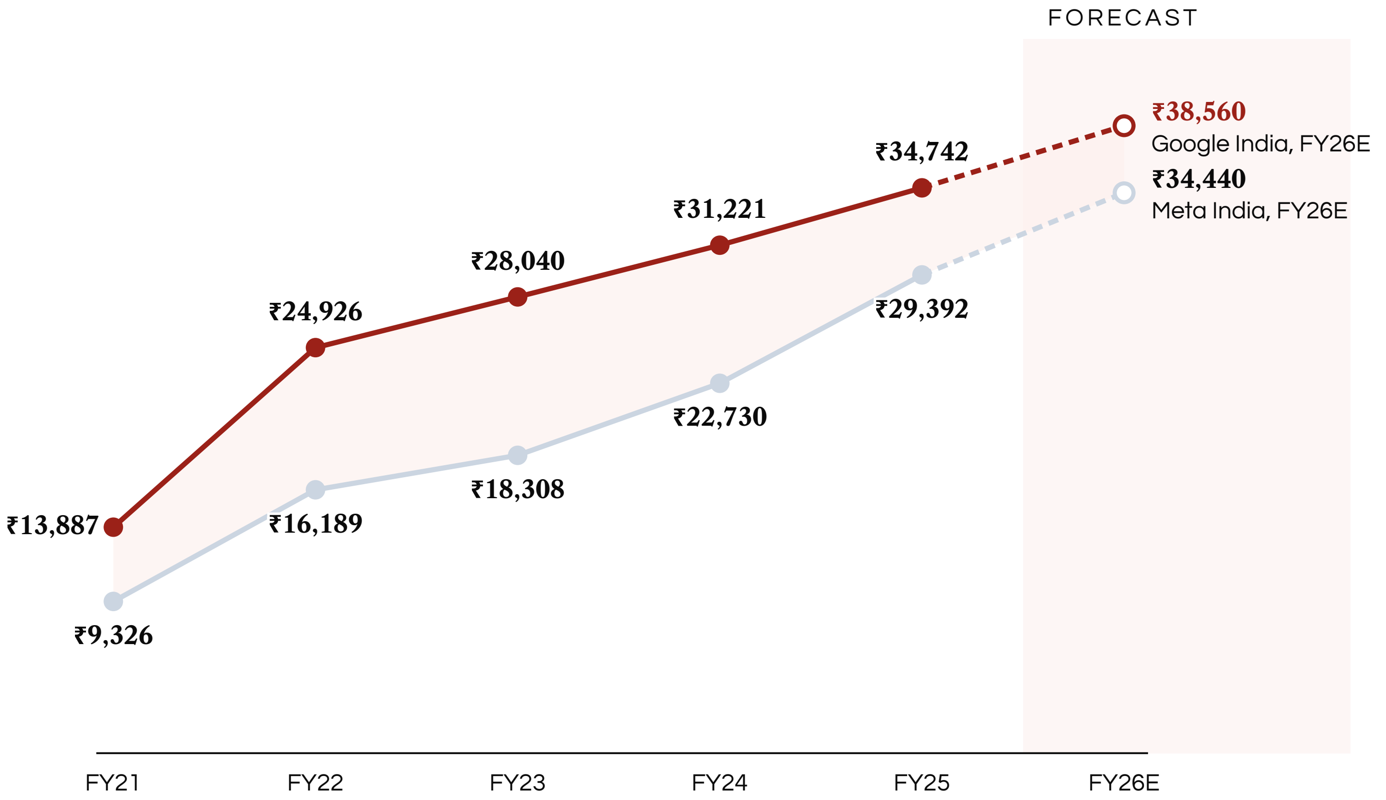
COMBINED, FY26E

₹73,000 cr Up ₹8,866 crore on FY25. Google's lead over Meta shrinks from half of Meta's revenue in FY21 to an eighth.

EXHIBIT 2

Google and Meta India gross ad revenue, FY21 to FY26E

₹ crore, reseller-basis gross ad revenue; FY26E is a Datum estimate



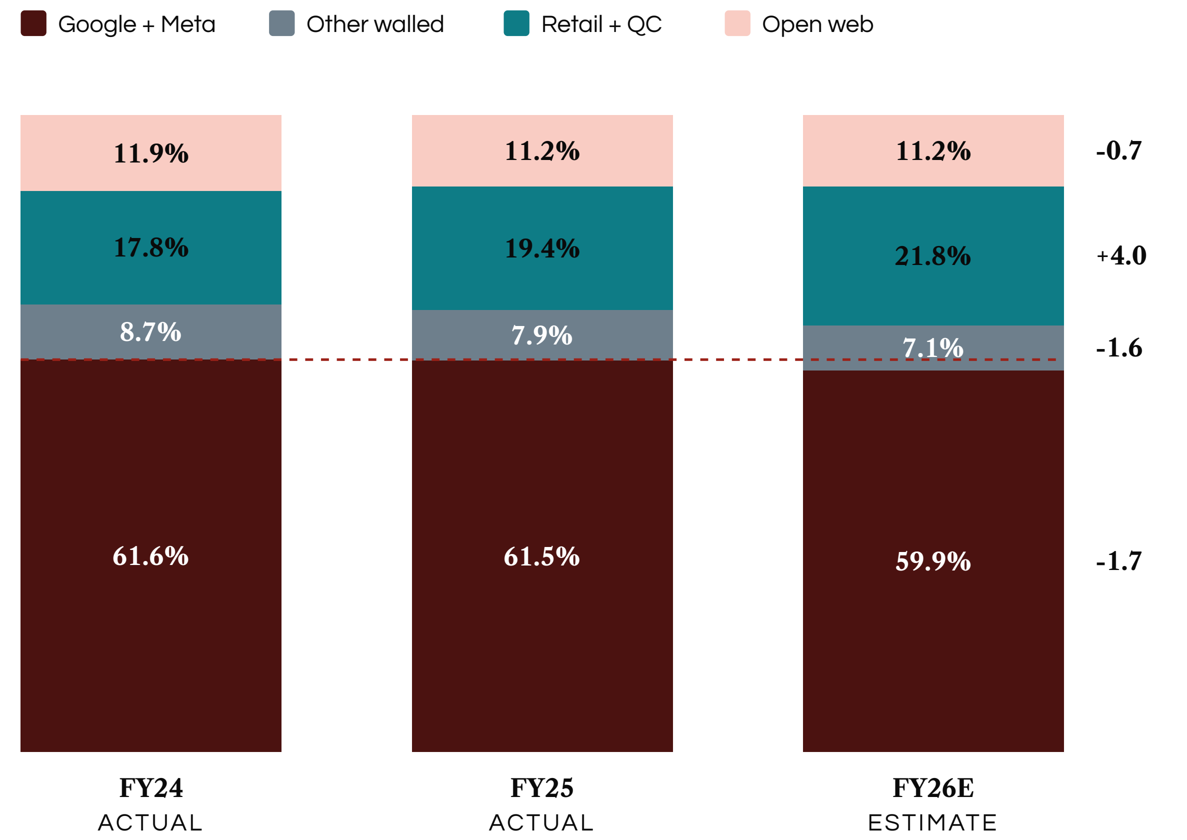
Commerce platforms gain four points of digital share in two years

Google and Meta still take most of India's digital ad spend, and their revenue still grows every year. But their share is slipping. Commerce platforms add **four points** between FY24 and FY26, and every other group loses some.

EXHIBIT 3

India digital ad spend by cohort, per cent of the pool

FY24 and FY25 actual, FY26E Datum estimate. Dashed line is the FY24 Google and Meta share



WHY THE MONEY MOVED

01 Checkout attribution
The platform that shows the ad also records the sale, on the same customer account, and the advertiser sees what sold in the same dashboard. A TV or print panel takes weeks and still has to be matched to sales.

02 Purchase frequency
Groceries are bought every week, a phone once every few years. The platform that sells groceries learns from far more orders.

03 Regulation
India's DPDP Act will require consent before personal data is used for advertising, with the rules phasing in to 2027. Platforms that track people across other sites will have to ask. A retailer already holds its own customers' accounts and order history.

04 Signal decay
Consent prompts and platform controls keep cutting third-party tracking. What is left is data a company collects itself, and the retailer that runs the checkout holds the most.

Sources: Google, Meta, Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra and Zepto filings FY20-FY25; FY26E Datum estimates; Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023

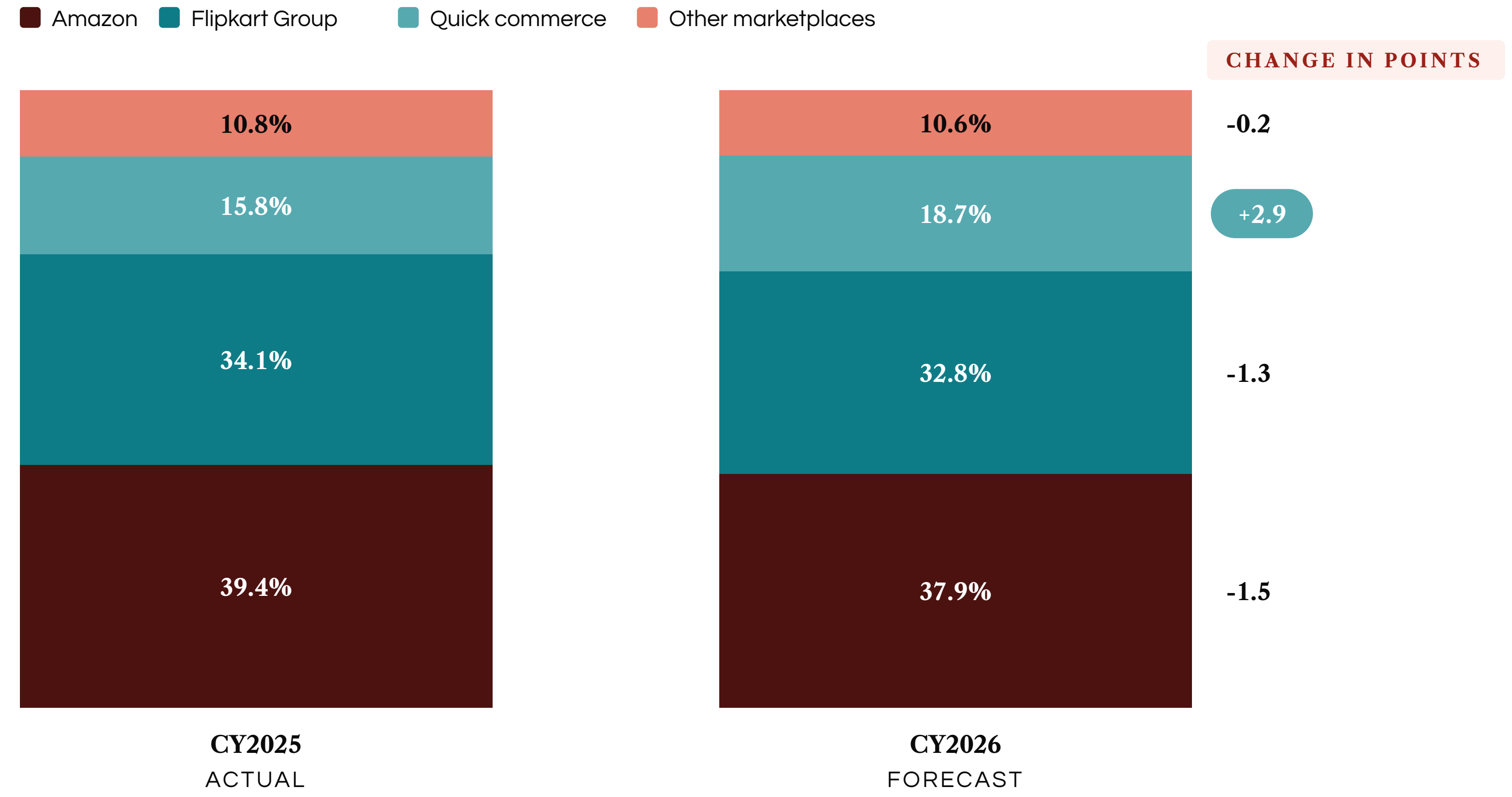
Quick commerce is the only platform group gaining share

India's commerce-ads pool grows from ₹23,740 crore in 2025 to **₹30,091 crore** in 2026, and Amazon and Flipkart Group still take seven rupees in ten. Quick commerce adds 2.9 points of share while Amazon and Flipkart Group each give up more than one.

EXHIBIT 4

India's commerce-ads pool by platform

Per cent of the pool. Flipkart Group is Flipkart and Myntra; quick commerce is Blinkit, Zepto and Swiggy Instamart; other marketplaces includes Meesho



WHY THE BUDGET GOES THERE

"E-commerce and quick-commerce ad platforms proved to be strong performance drivers for Nat Habit, especially in lower-funnel conversions."

Swagatika Das, Nat Habit — exchange4media, October 2025

"Retail media and quick-commerce are no longer experimental; they have become essential touchpoints in an increasingly fluid consumer journey."

Akshaali Shah, Parag Milk Foods — exchange4media, October 2025

"Marketplaces are great for visibility, but you don't control the story there."

Akanksha Sethi, Miss Mosa — exchange4media, November 2025

"Unlike TV or print, where impact is measured in reach and impressions, quick commerce ads convert directly into sales at the point-of-intent."

Prateek Rastogi, Better Nutrition — Inc42, September 2025

Sources: Datum India Advertising Forecast 2025-2030. Quotes as reported by exchange4media, October and November 2025, and Inc42, September 2025

An AI assistant can sit at every step of a purchase

A purchase runs through **six stops**, from first search to return, and each screen sees only part of it: a keyword, a video, a price, a basket. An assistant used at every step would hear all of it: the budget, who it is for, what rules a product out, and why it came back.

EXHIBIT 5

The changing customer journey, one purchase

	01 Search	02 Watch	03 Browse	04 Compare	05 Buy	06 After
CONVERSATIONAL SIGNALS	"Best air fryer under eight thousand, for two people"	"Show me one quiet enough for a studio flat"	"Which of these has good reviews for daily use"	"Compare these two on noise and warranty"	"Who has it in stock tonight, and for how much"	"It is louder than I expected. What do I swap it for"
THE CONSUMER JOURNEY	Google best air fryer under 8000	 6:12 Air fryers under 8K, tested	amazon Digital air fryer, 4.5L ₹7,499 ★★★★ 4.3	amazon 4.5L ₹7,499 58 dB 5.5L ₹8,299 64 dB	blinkit zepto Digital air fryer, 4.5L ₹7,499 Place order	Delivered Return or replace
WHAT THE ASSISTANT LEARNS	**Category, budget and household size**	**The attribute that will decide it**	**The shortlist, before any click**	**The two attributes that settle it**	**Delivery time and price sensitivity**	**The reason it failed, and the next purchase**

Source: Illustrative purchase journey. Datum analysis

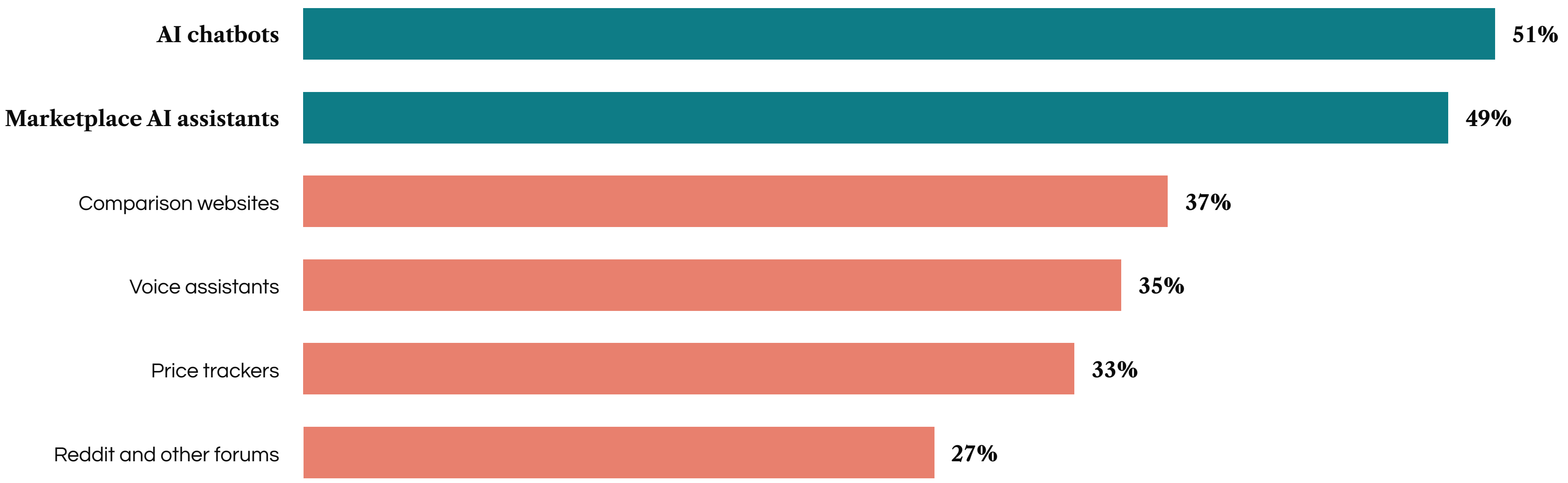
Half of India's online shoppers already research purchases with AI

Ninety-six per cent of shoppers had used at least one of six research tools in the past three months. AI chatbots led at **51 per cent**, and marketplace assistants such as Rufus and Flippi reached 49.

EXHIBIT 6

Tools used to research an online purchase, past three months

Per cent of online shoppers, multi-select; teal marks the two AI tools



01 WHO USES IT

Use is highest at 35 to 44, at 60 and 61 per cent, and lowest among 18 to 24s, at 42 and 38. It runs 49 to 53 per cent across all three city tiers, and women are ahead of men on chatbots, 54 against 48 per cent.

02 A HIDDEN LAYER

Rufus, Flippi and the general chatbots now sit between the shopper and the marketplace. A brand can measure its search rank and ad impressions, but not what the assistant told the shopper about it.

Source: Datum Intelligence India Online Shopper Survey, June 2026, n=6,218 online shoppers, multi-select

ChatGPT ads came to India six weeks before the festive sales

OpenAI announced ads for Indian users on 27 August, and brands could buy them directly from 4 September. That puts a new ad channel in front of more than **100 million** weekly users before the first festive sale opens.

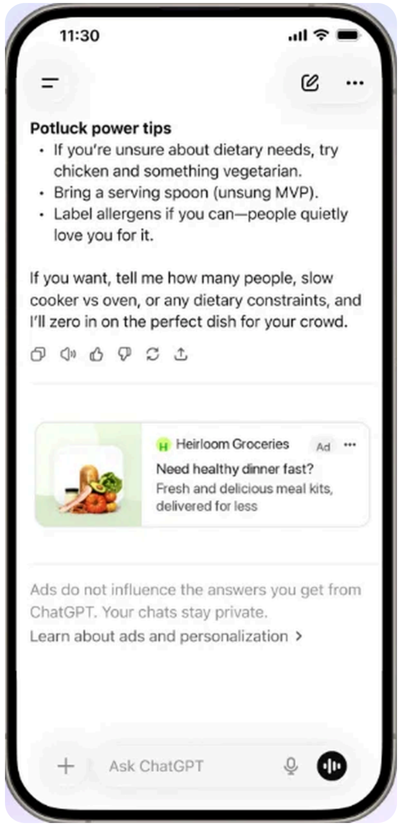
9 Feb 2026 — US launch. Ads below answers on the free tier. The pilot passed $100 mn of annualised revenue in six weeks.

199 DAYS

27 Aug 2026 — India launch. About 50 brands at the start, with WPP and Omnicom as launch partners.

8 DAYS

4 Sep 2026 — Self-serve Ads Manager opens. Daily budgets from ₹725.



Where the ad sits. Below the answer, marked **Ad**, above a line saying ads do not influence the answer. OpenAI product image.

THE INDIA SHELF

100 mn+ weekly ChatGPT users in India as of February 2026, OpenAI's second-largest market after the United States

WHAT A FESTIVE BUYER CAN AND CANNOT DO

01 Who sees the ads
Adults on the Free and Go tiers; Go costs ₹399 a month. Plus and every tier above it stay ad-free, so the audience leans to the lower end of the market.

02 What is off limits
No ads next to health, mental health or politics, and none for users under 18. Festive categories are not affected.

03 What the advertiser gets
Advertisers cannot see chat history, memories or personal data, and OpenAI does not sell user data. Ads are matched to the conversation, so the creative has to do the targeting.

04 The unknown
Advertisers get aggregate impressions and clicks only. Treat 2026 as a learning budget.

Sources: OpenAI announcements; TechCrunch and Business Standard, August 2026; Campaign US, March 2026; Amazon and Flipkart sale dates

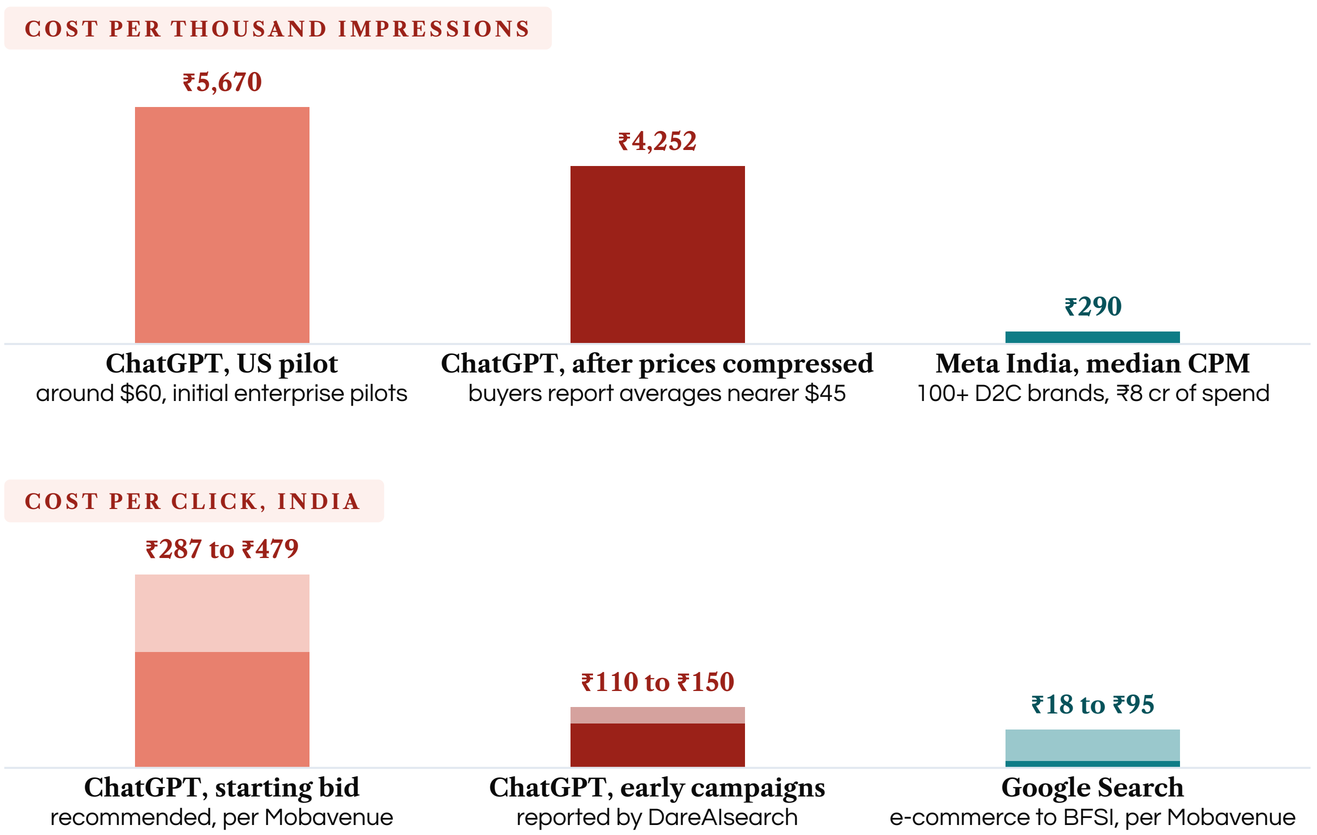
ChatGPT is charging a premium for intent it has yet to prove

ChatGPT's US ads settled at about **$45** per thousand impressions. One buyer below puts that at three times Meta's CPM; against Meta's India median of ₹290 it is closer to fifteen times. OpenAI has not published an Indian price, so the first festive campaigns will set it.

EXHIBIT 7

What a thousand impressions costs, and what a click costs

₹. Dollar figures at ₹94.5. Click bars run solid to the low end of each range and tinted to the high end



WHAT THE MARKET SAYS

"ChatGPT ads launched at roughly three times Meta's CPM. That's appetite, not proven ROI."

Viren Inaniyan, Trucommerce.ai — exchange4media, 1 September 2026

"If a ChatGPT click costs 50% more but also converts 50% better, cost per acquisition stays flat, and the premium makes economic sense."

Jacob Joseph, CleverTap — exchange4media, 1 September 2026

"A ChatGPT query often includes context, budget, business size and use case, giving advertisers deeper commercial signals."

Pankaj Srivastava, UnoSearch — Moneycontrol, 15 September 2026

"ChatGPT is emerging as a new layer of intent-led advertising but it is too early to compare it directly with Google on cost."

Kunal Kothari, Mobavenue AI Tech — Moneycontrol, 15 September 2026

"I expect brands to experiment first rather than immediately paying a premium."

Nikhil Khatri, LS Digital — exchange4media, 1 September 2026

Source: Impressions: exchange4media, 1 September 2026, with Meta from a 2026 dataset of 100+ Indian D2C brands it cites. Clicks: Moneycontrol, 15 September 2026

Discovery now starts in the feed as often as in the marketplace

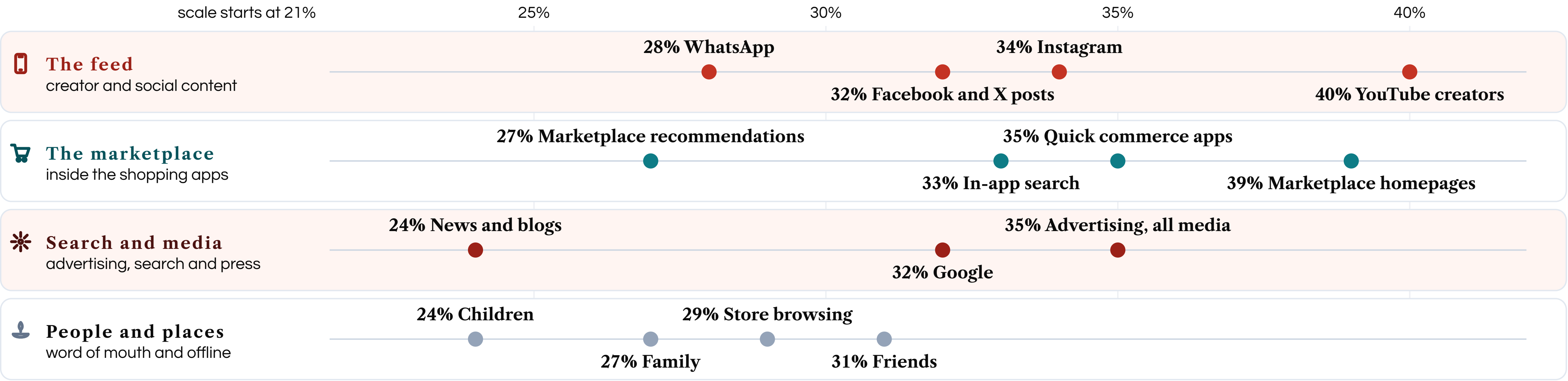
Shoppers were asked where they come across products they did not already know, across fifteen routes. A YouTube creator leads at **40 per cent**, one point ahead of the marketplace homepage. The weakest route on the list still reaches 24.

EXHIBIT 8

Where shoppers discover the products they buy online

MORE IN THE DATUM 2026 FESTIVE OUTLOOK →

Per cent of online shoppers, multiple responses. Rows group routes by kind of place. The scale is truncated and starts at 21 per cent



01 NO FRONT DOOR

Sixteen points separate the top of this list from the bottom, and no route reaches half of shoppers. In-app search at 33 and Google at 32 sit below the homepage, the quick commerce apps and the top feed routes. Search is where a shopper confirms a product met somewhere else.

02 QUICK COMMERCE IS A SHELF

Quick commerce apps are named by 35 per cent, level with all advertising across television, online and print, and ahead of in-app search at 33. Shoppers browse it like a store shelf, so brands can launch there.

Source: Datum Intelligence India Online Shopper Survey, June 2026, n=6,218 online shoppers, multiple responses. Datum analysis

Discounts still lead, but instalments are the reason that moved

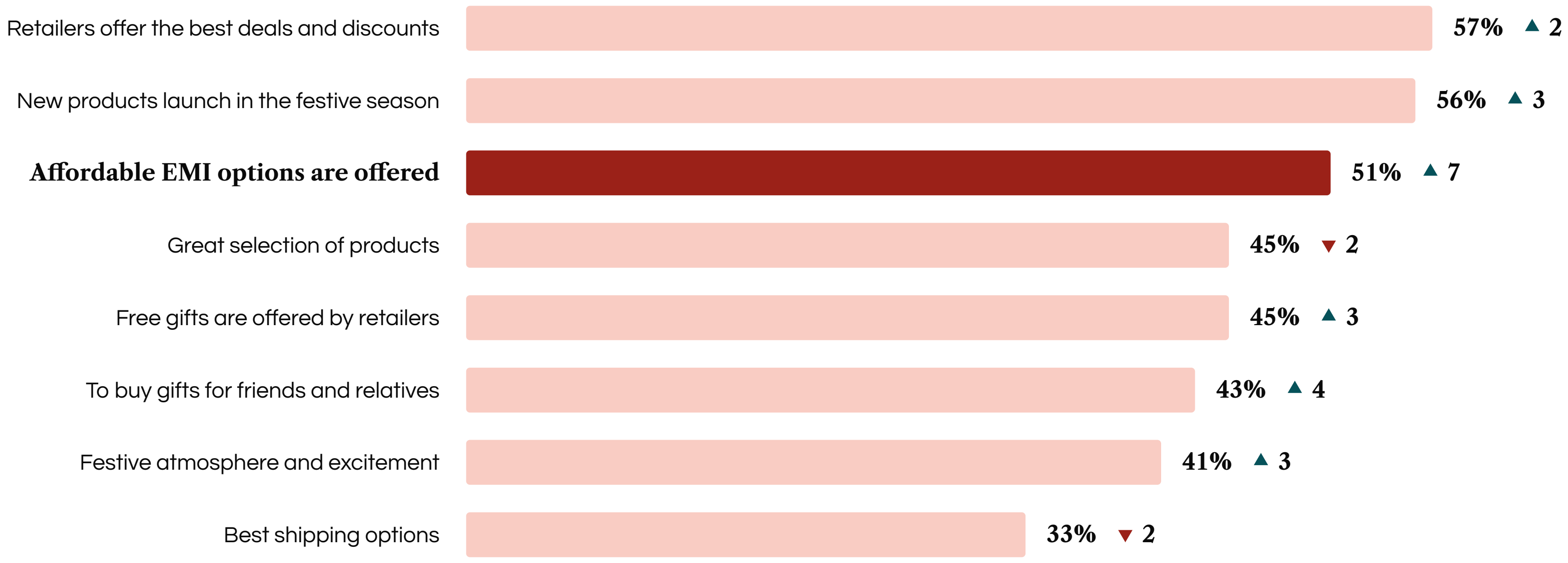
Discounts still top the list at 57 per cent and new-product launches sit one point behind them. Affordable EMI rose seven points to **51 per cent**, the largest move on the list.

EXHIBIT 9

Why people say they will shop

MORE IN THE DATUM 2026 FESTIVE OUTLOOK →

Per cent of respondents, n=2,000, multiple picks, with the point change against the 2025 wave



01 INSTALMENTS

Affordable EMI is now the third reason to shop, up seven points. On phones and appliances, show the EMI at checkout.

02 WHAT FELL

Best shipping fell two points to last place, and great selection fell two. Both still count for a third or more of shoppers, but neither is gaining.

Source: Datum Festive Barometer Study 2026, n=2,000 online adults, against the 2025 wave, n=2,000. Datum analysis

Nearly half plan to spend more than ten per cent above last year

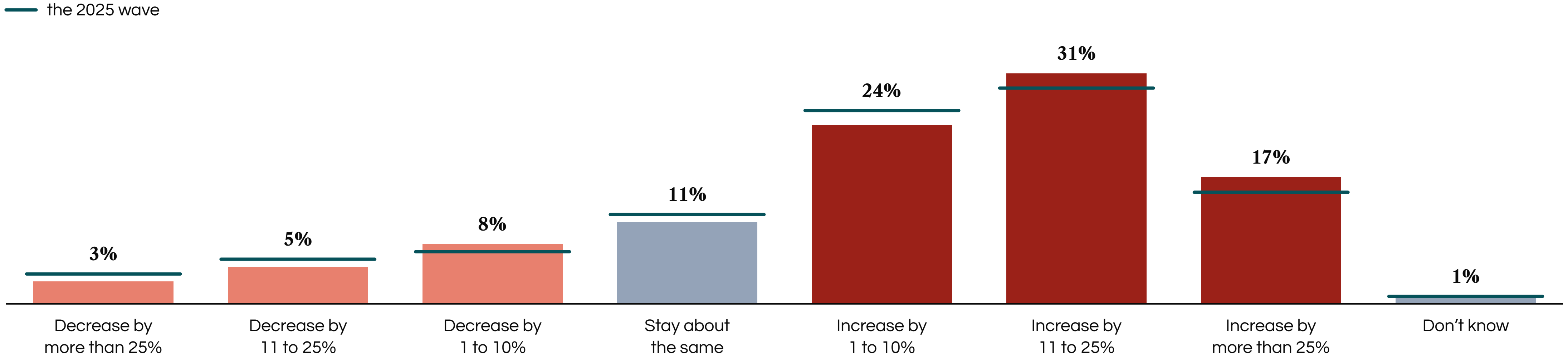
Seventy-two per cent of households plan to spend more this season and 16 per cent plan to cut. The shift against last year is toward the larger increases: both bands above ten per cent gained two points, and the one-to-ten band lost two.

EXHIBIT 10

Expected change in festive spending

MORE IN THE DATUM 2026 FESTIVE OUTLOOK →

Per cent of respondents, n=2,000, single pick, with the 2025 reading marked



01 MORE HOUSEHOLDS CHOSE THE BIGGER INCREASES

Seventy-two per cent plan to spend more, two points above 2025. The gain sits in the bigger increases: the two bands above ten per cent added four points between them.

02 THE MODAL ANSWER

The most common answer is a rise of 11 to 25 per cent, picked by 31 per cent. A budget sized for a single-digit lift undershoots the typical household.

Source: Datum Festive Barometer Study 2026, n=2,000 online adults, against the 2025 wave, n=2,000. Datum analysis

Mobile is the only category fewer shoppers plan to buy

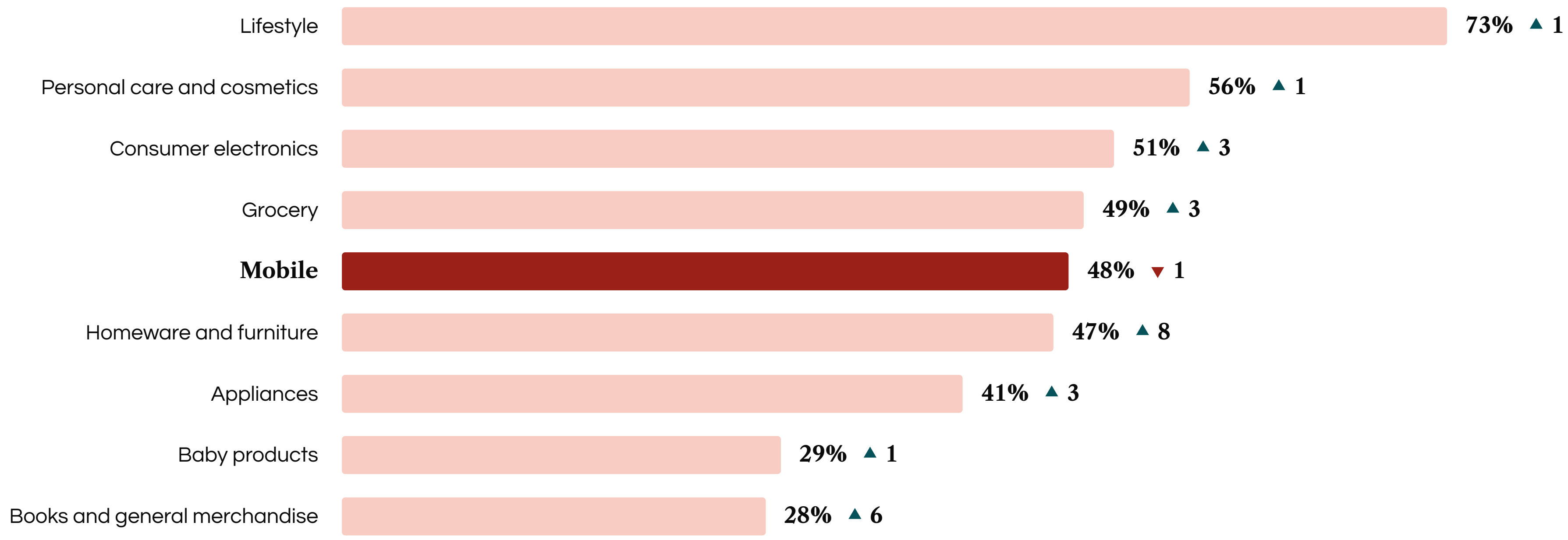
Mobile slipped one point against eight categories that gained. Homeware and furniture rose **eight points** and books and general merchandise six.

EXHIBIT 11

Purchase intent by category

MORE IN THE DATUM 2026 FESTIVE OUTLOOK →

Per cent of respondents, n=2,000, multiple picks, with the point change against the 2025 wave



01 WHY PHONES SLIPPED

Mobile is the only category shoppers marked down. IDC has shipments down 11 per cent in the June quarter and the average phone 14 per cent dearer. Buyers are putting off the upgrade.

02 WHERE INTENT GREW

Homeware and furniture gained eight points, the largest move on the list, and appliances three. Some of the money not spent on a new phone looks set to go on the home.

Source: Datum Festive Barometer Study 2026, n=2,000 online adults, against the 2025 wave, n=2,000. Datum analysis; IDC India smartphone tracker, Q2 2026

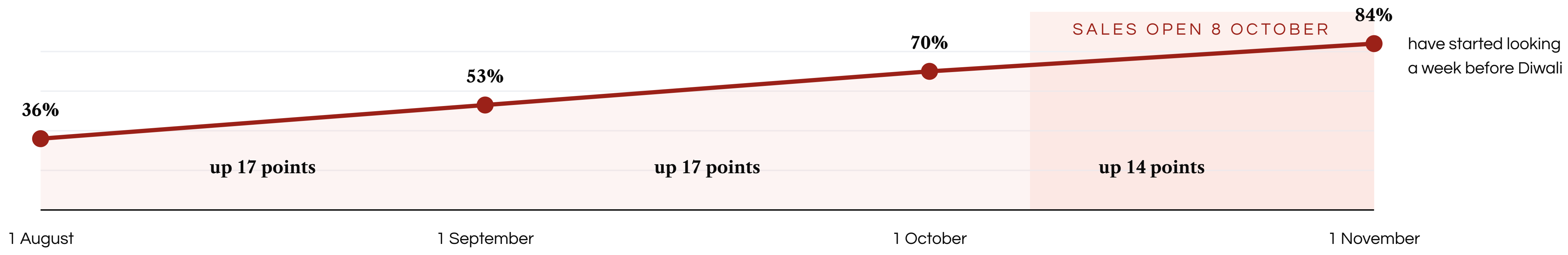
Seven in ten shoppers start looking before the first sale opens

Thirty-six per cent of Diwali shoppers were already exploring on 1 August, before a single sale date had been announced. The share climbs about seventeen points a month through August and September. By the time the first event opens, seven in ten are already looking.

EXHIBIT 12

When Diwali shoppers begin exploring products

Per cent who have started, urban internet population, read at four dates



01 THE AUGUST BASE

Thirty-six per cent had started by 1 August, before any sale date was announced. A brand that starts in September meets them after they have begun choosing.

02 WHAT THE SALES INHERIT

The curve gains 17 points to 1 September and another 17 to 1 October, so more than seven in ten have started looking when the sales open on 8 October. The last 14 points arrive while the sales run.

BEFORE THE SALE Discovery money has to be spent in August and September. A budget that starts with the sale arrives after seven in ten shoppers have started choosing.

Source: Amazon Ads x YouGov Pre-Diwali Consumer Study, July 2026, n=5,000. Share of Diwali shoppers who have begun exploring products, urban internet population, read at four dates. Datum analysis

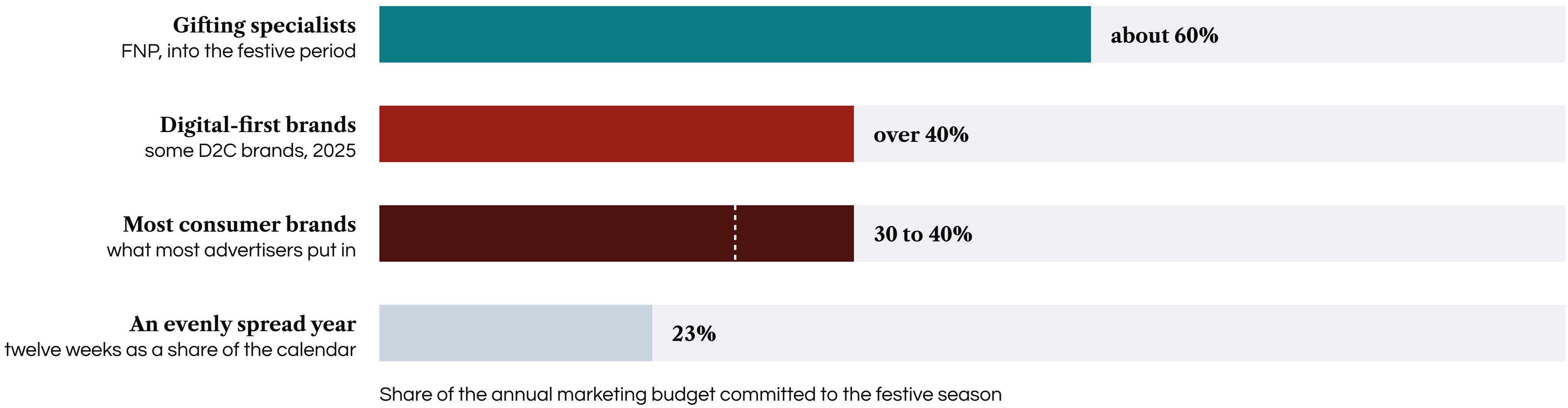
Brands put a third of the year into festive, gifting brands three fifths

The festive season runs twelve weeks, less than a quarter of the year. Most consumer brands put **30 to 40 per cent** of their annual advertising into it, and gifting specialists about 60. A typical brand spends about one and a half times the calendar's share in these twelve weeks.

EXHIBIT 13

Festive share of the annual marketing budget, by kind of advertiser

Figures as brands and trade press stated them; the dashed edge marks the low end of a range



01 BUDGETS ROSE EARLY

Ad budgets were already rising in the April-to-June quarter. Nestlé India raised advertising more than 40 per cent, Marico 25 and Dabur 14. HUL, the largest spender, took its outlay to ₹1,657 crore, its highest in nearly three years. Brands are building up to the season a quarter ahead.

02 THE GAMING MONEY IS GONE

The 2025 real-money gaming ban removed close to ₹4,000 crore a year, about two per cent of the 2026 market. The festive sponsorships those apps used to buy need new buyers this year.

Sources: exchange4media, August 2026, for 30-40%; Marketing Mind on FNP, Nestlé and Dabur; Storyboard18 on Marico, HUL and the gaming ban; Financial Express on digital-first

Budgets are flat or a little higher, and brands want results first

Brands in gifting, food, beauty, jewellery and two-wheelers told the trade press much the same thing this August. They are starting earlier and holding back part of the budget until a campaign earns it. Quick commerce budgets still rise **25 to 35 per cent**.

WHAT THEY ARE PRIORITISING

01 Same budget, used harder
CaratLane holds festive spend level and works the existing budget harder. Yamaha keeps festive spend in line with last year and moves it by region as demand shows up.

02 Starting before the peak
Two Brothers India Farms released its campaign on 7 August, its first on OTT, to run through to Diwali. It is buying reach before the sales open.

03 What they measure
Bakingo tracks revenue, ROAS, conversions, CAC and order value alongside new against returning customers and branded search. Every one of those is a number Bakingo can count itself.

04 Quick commerce gets its own budget
Festive quick commerce budgets rise 25 to 35 per cent, and The Body Shop reports occasion spikes of two to three times expectation. Bakingo still puts its own site first, where the range is wider.

05 New customers as the goal
Two Brothers India Farms is judging its festive push on the buyers it brings in. "New-to-brand customers will be an important metric for us," co-founder Satyajit Hange says.

WHAT THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT

01 Slower decisions
Brands are holding back part of the budget and releasing it as confidence builds. Decisions are taking longer amid geopolitical uncertainty and cost pressure, and house forecasts for festive AdEx growth run from 3 to 15 per cent.

02 A strong base to lap
GST 2.0 landed a day before the 2025 festive sales, so last year's numbers carry a one-off tax cut inside them. Some of any slowdown this year is just a tougher comparison.

03 Media inflation
Last season premium slots cost **9 to 20 per cent** more, with last-minute spikes to 25. This season quick commerce rates are up 30 to 40 per cent and creator rates 20 to 40. Holding last year's bids buys less.

04 The economy
India Ratings puts FY27 GDP growth at 6.8 per cent and names the West Asia conflict and rising inflation as the risks. Manoj Singh, consultant at Mangodata: "There's some caution from clients on geopolitics and commodity costs, but sentiment remains constructive."

05 TV is buying blind
BARC's weekly ratings are disrupted going into the season, so television is being planned on historical data. Buyers expect some budget to move to digital, CTV and retail media, where results can be measured.

Sources: exchange4media, IMPACT, Marketing Mind, Social Samosa, Storyboard18 and Medianews4u, August 2026; Social Samosa, October 2025, for last season's rates

Buyers want proof of return on every buy and a price they can see

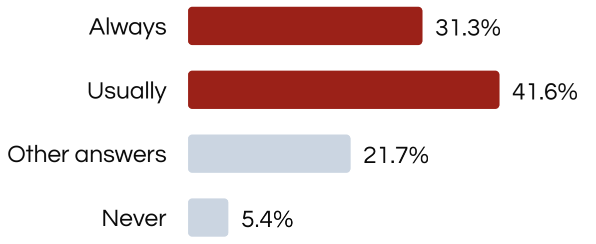
Programmatic mobile buyers check the return on every channel, however they pay for it, and nearly **two in three** moved budget out of the walled gardens in the past year. After targeting, a visible price is what they weigh most when they choose where that money goes.

01 RETURN MATTERS

Buyers check the return on CPM buys too

72.9% always or usually measure channel-level return on a CPM buy

Measure return on a CPM buy

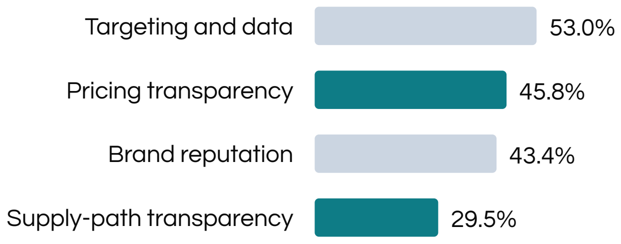


02 TRANSPARENCY

Seeing the price ranks second only to targeting

90.4% call supply-path transparency essential or somewhat important

What buyers weigh in a partner, top four

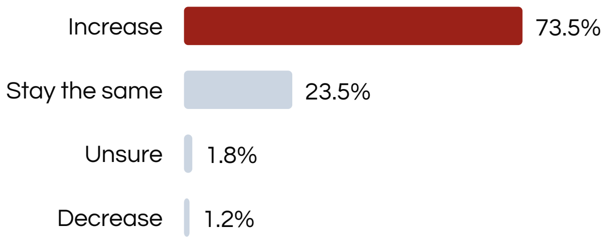


03 INDEPENDENT PLAYERS

Budget is leaving the walled gardens and staying out

63.9% moved budget to independents in the past year; 1.2 per cent moved it back

Expected change, next three years



BRING THE RETURN

Seven in ten buyers check the return on a CPM buy anyway. A reach proposal should arrive with its own measure of return.

SHOW THE PRICE

Pricing transparency is the second thing buyers weigh, after targeting. A partner should show its fees and supply path up front.

THE SHIFT IS STILL GROWING

Only 1.2 per cent moved money back, and three in four expect to give independents more over the next three years. The budget leaving the walled gardens has further to go.

DATUM EMARKETER REPORT →

Source: EMARKETER and Datum Intelligence, Independent Mobile Advertising Survey, July 2026. n=166 programmatic mobile buyers. Part of Datum's global research coverage with EMARKETER

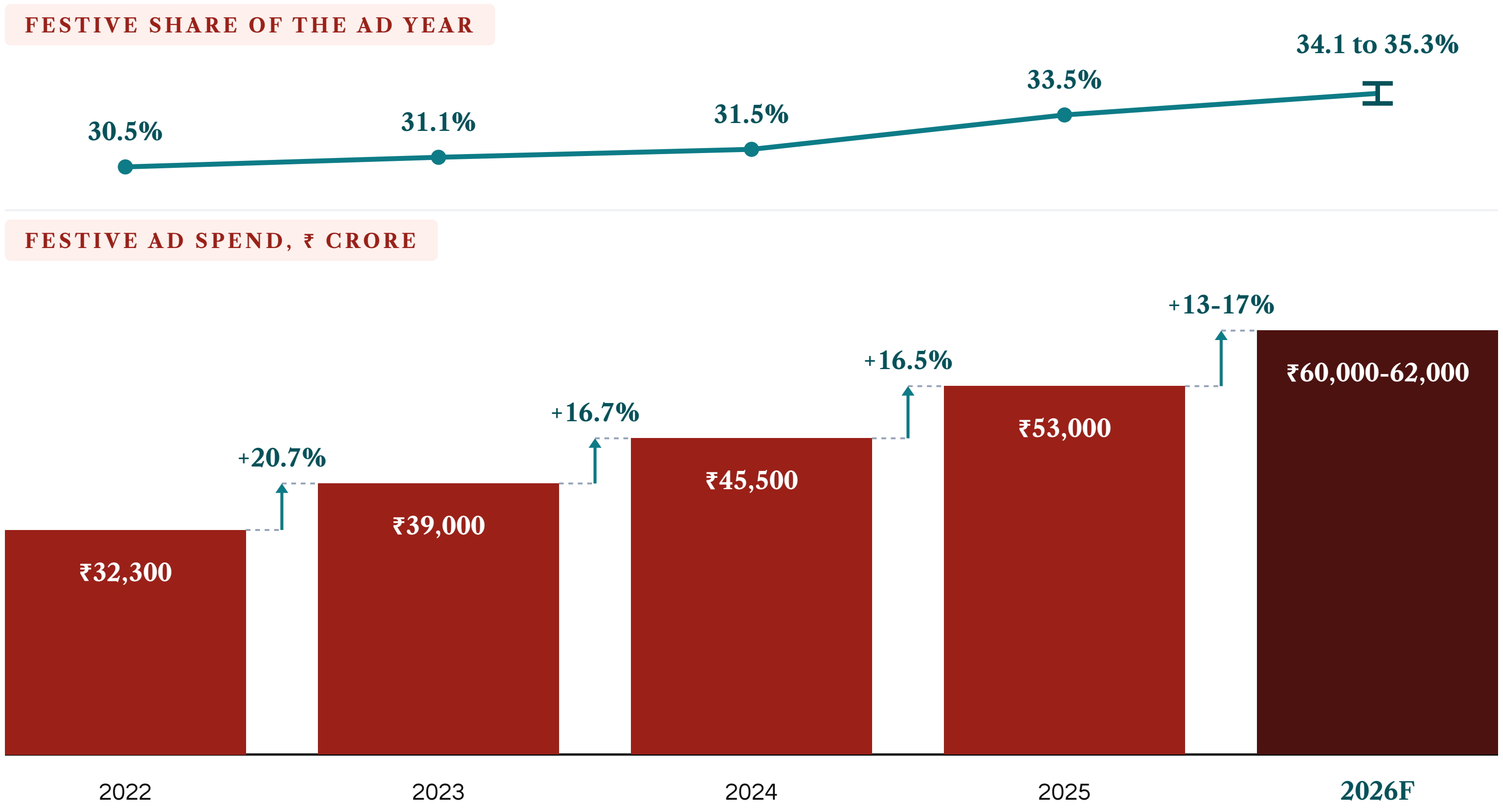
Festive spend grows 13 to 17 per cent to ₹60,000 to 62,000 crore

Festive's share of the ad year stood at 30.5 per cent in 2022 and has risen every year since. Festive spend has grown about **17 per cent** a year against about 13.5 for the whole market. Festive now takes two rupees in every five the market adds.

EXHIBIT 14

Festive ad spend and its share of the Indian ad year, 2022 to 2026F

Share of the ad year, per cent; festive spend, ₹ crore



WHO TOOK THE GROWTH — ₹ CR, 2022-26F

The market added — **+₹69,982**
All Indian advertising, 2022 to 2026.

Festive took — **+₹28,700**
Between ₹27,700 and ₹29,700 of it.

Two rupees in every five — **40-42%**
Festive is 34 to 35 per cent of the market but gets 40 to 42 per cent of its growth.

WHAT IS DRIVING IT

Four rises in a row
Festive's share has gone up every year since 2022, from 30.5 per cent to 34 to 35 this year.

Commerce advertising is growing fastest
It grows 27 per cent this year against a market at 11, and festive carries up to two fifths of a quick commerce platform's ad year.

Durables and quick commerce budgets are rising
Consumer durables budgets are expected to rise 15 to 20 per cent, and brands' quick commerce budgets 25 to 35 per cent.

Sources: Datum India Advertising Forecast 2025-2030; IMPACT and Storyboard18, August 2026

Two thirds of the festive rupee is digital, a quarter of it sold at the checkout

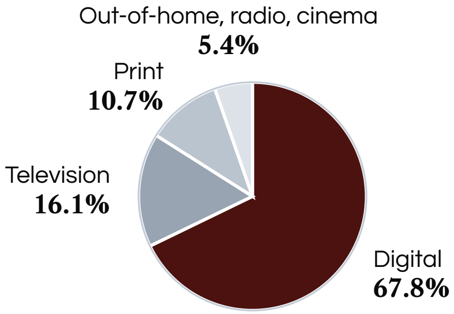
Commerce and retail media is the biggest pool inside festive digital, at about **₹11,500 crore**. It runs across search, social, video and display, so it never shows up as a line of its own. A plan built format by format misses it and underbuys it.

EXHIBIT 15

Where the festive rupee goes, and the pools inside it that are growing, 2026F

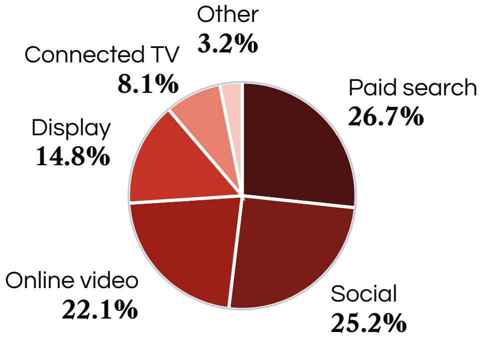
Per cent of festive spend, 2026F

FESTIVE SPEND BY MEDIUM



Festive total, ₹60,000-62,000 crore

DIGITAL, THE LARGEST SLICE, OPENED UP



Festive digital, ~₹42,000 crore

01 COMMERCE AND RETAIL MEDIA

~₹11,500 cr +27%

Just over a quarter of festive digital, and growing 27 per cent this year. It is bought on the platforms where the sale itself happens.

02 QUICK COMMERCE

~₹2,200 cr +50%

A fifth of the commerce pool, and up to two fifths of a quick commerce platform's ad year. Festive rates are up 30 to 40 per cent, so the same budget buys less.

03 CONNECTED TV

~₹3,300 cr

About 8 per cent of festive digital, streamed to television sets through smart TVs and apps.

04 CREATORS

~₹900 cr +29%

Up from about ₹700 crore last year. Most of it is bought on social platforms.

Source: Datum India Advertising Forecast 2025-2030

Recommendations for brands and platforms

₹60,000 to 62,000 crore goes into festive advertising this year. The money is following the checkout. Shopping and quick commerce apps gain because they can show the sale an ad drove.

BRANDS AND ADVERTISERS

01 Book festive inventory in September

Diwali falls on 8 November, nineteen days later than in 2025, and Amazon and Flipkart open their sales on 8 and 9 October. Last season premium slots cost 9 to 20 per cent more, and late buyers paid up to 25 per cent more. Book before Navratri, before the rates move.

02 Launch new products on quick commerce

Thirty-five per cent of online shoppers find new products on a quick commerce app, the same share that names advertising on television, online and in print. Brands plan to raise festive quick commerce budgets 25 to 35 per cent. Put launches in that money.

03 Lead big tickets with the monthly price

Affordable EMI rose seven points to 51 per cent, the biggest jump among reasons to shop. Phones cost about 14 per cent more, and mobile is the one category where fewer shoppers plan to buy. On phones and appliances, sell the instalment first.

04 Agree how a sale is counted before paying

In the past year, 63.9 per cent of mobile buyers moved budget from the walled gardens to independent channels, and 67.5 per cent raised spend with a partner paid on CPM. Where a channel proved its return, some of that money was new. Settle what counts as a sale before the first rupee goes out.

PLATFORMS

01 Offer outside measurement

Commerce advertising grows 27 per cent this year against 11 for the market, because the platform that shows the ad also sees the sale. Buyers now want to check that return themselves. Third-party measurement wins budget.

02 Bring new categories into festive

Festive brings in up to 40 per cent of a quick commerce platform's ad year, and FMCG, beauty and gifting take up to 70 per cent of it. Homeware and furniture gained eight points in purchase intent, more than any other category. Go after those advertisers.

03 Make the catalogue readable to AI assistants

In the past three months, 51 per cent of online shoppers used an AI chatbot to research a purchase and 49 per cent used a marketplace assistant. ChatGPT started selling ads in India on 27 August. Assistants recommend from the specs and prices they can read.

04 Link creator videos to the product page

A YouTube creator is the top discovery route, named by 40 per cent of online shoppers. Festive creator spend is projected at ₹900 crore. The link lets the platform count the sale a creator drives.

Definitions

Festive season
Onam through Chhath. In 2026 that is 26 August to 15 November, twelve weeks; Navratri to Diwali is 28 days in both years.

AdEx
Advertising expenditure. Datum's forecast for calendar year 2026 is ₹1,75,782 crore, or $18.6 bn.

Commerce advertising, retail media
Ads sold by platforms where the purchase happens, priced against the basket and attributed to checkout. Reported by the platforms that sell it; overlaps search, display and video splits.

Quick commerce
Delivery inside one hour from a dark store or micro-fulfilment centre.

Walled garden
A platform that keeps buying, serving, delivery data and measurement inside its own closed loop.

Independent channels
Mobile ad platforms outside the walled gardens of Google, Meta and TikTok, such as InMobi.

Programmatic
Ad space bought and sold automatically, through auctions and trading platforms rather than direct deals.

Supply-path transparency
Seeing every intermediary between the advertiser's money and the ad slot, and what each one takes.

Self-serve advertising
Ads a business buys directly in a platform's console, at any budget, without an agency.

Connected TV
Ads streamed to an internet-connected television through smart TVs, streaming sticks or apps. This report counts it inside digital.

Creator marketing
Paid content made by creators and influencers for a brand, mostly bought on social platforms.

AEO and GEO
Answer and generative engine optimisation: getting a brand named in the answers AI assistants give.

CPM, CPC, ROAS
Cost per thousand impressions; cost per click; return on ad spend, revenue attributed to a campaign divided by its cost. Which sales count, and for how long, depends on who measures.

Ad take rate
Platform advertising revenue as a share of the commerce it rides on (GMV or net order value, as disclosed). Restated bases make cross-platform comparisons unreliable; this report avoids them.

Reseller-basis revenue
Google and Meta India figures are gross ad revenue as filed with the RoC, which includes amounts billed through resellers. They overstate net India revenue and are used only for scale and direction.

DPDP Act
India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023. It requires consent before personal data is used, with rules phasing in to 2027.

Source: Datum Intelligence

About Datum and Commercify360

Datum

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Datum measures and forecasts Indian digital commerce and advertising.

Forty forecasts a year, built on a standing shopper panel and about a thousand tracked sources.

DATUM INTELLIGENCE
Dark Patterns in Indian e-Commerce
June 2026 study

DATUM INTELLIGENCE
Korean Beauty Takes Off in India
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275+	₹3,500 cr+	₹1,000 cr+	50+
Profitable brands	Sales impact	Ad spend managed	Brands built to ₹100 cr

AMAZON ADS PARTNER AWARDS

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Winner 2024 · APAC

Challenger Strategy Award
Finalist 2026 · APAC

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