

The Digital Shelf: Where Shoppers Decide

We surveyed 848 grocery shoppers to understand how they use digital tools to decide what to buy. 79% use a digital tool before or during their shopping trip, and the channel they rely on most is the retailer's own app or website, not a marketplace or AI assistant.

Search engines and third-party channels play a role, but the digital shelf shoppers count on most is the one retailers already control.



Why is this *important*?

For CX and digital leaders at grocery retail chains, this is a signal about where to invest. When shoppers look for product information, the largest single share goes straight to the retailer's own site or app, more than to search engines, in-store browsing, marketplaces, or AI assistants. Retailer-owned channels also lead in day-to-day use: shoppers rely on the store app and website more than any other single touchpoint.

That means the app and website you already operate carry more weight in everyday decisions than emerging channels like AI assistants, which are still used by a small minority. And once shoppers are on your digital shelf, what influences them is straightforward: price and discounts are named far more often than any other product detail. Getting those fundamentals right where shoppers already are is a more direct lever on decisions than chasing new channels.

In a typical grocery shopping experience, do you use a digital tool to help decide what to buy?

79%

of grocery shoppers use a digital tool (a store's app or website, a marketplace, social media, search, or an AI assistant) before or during their shopping trip.

39% say “Yes, before I shop” • **33%** say “Both before and during” • **7%** say “Yes, while I'm in the store” • **21%** say “No, I don't.”

Q: “In a typical grocery shopping experience, do you use a digital tool (a store's app or website, a marketplace, social media, search, or an AI assistant) to help decide what to buy?” • n=848

Which is closer to how you feel?

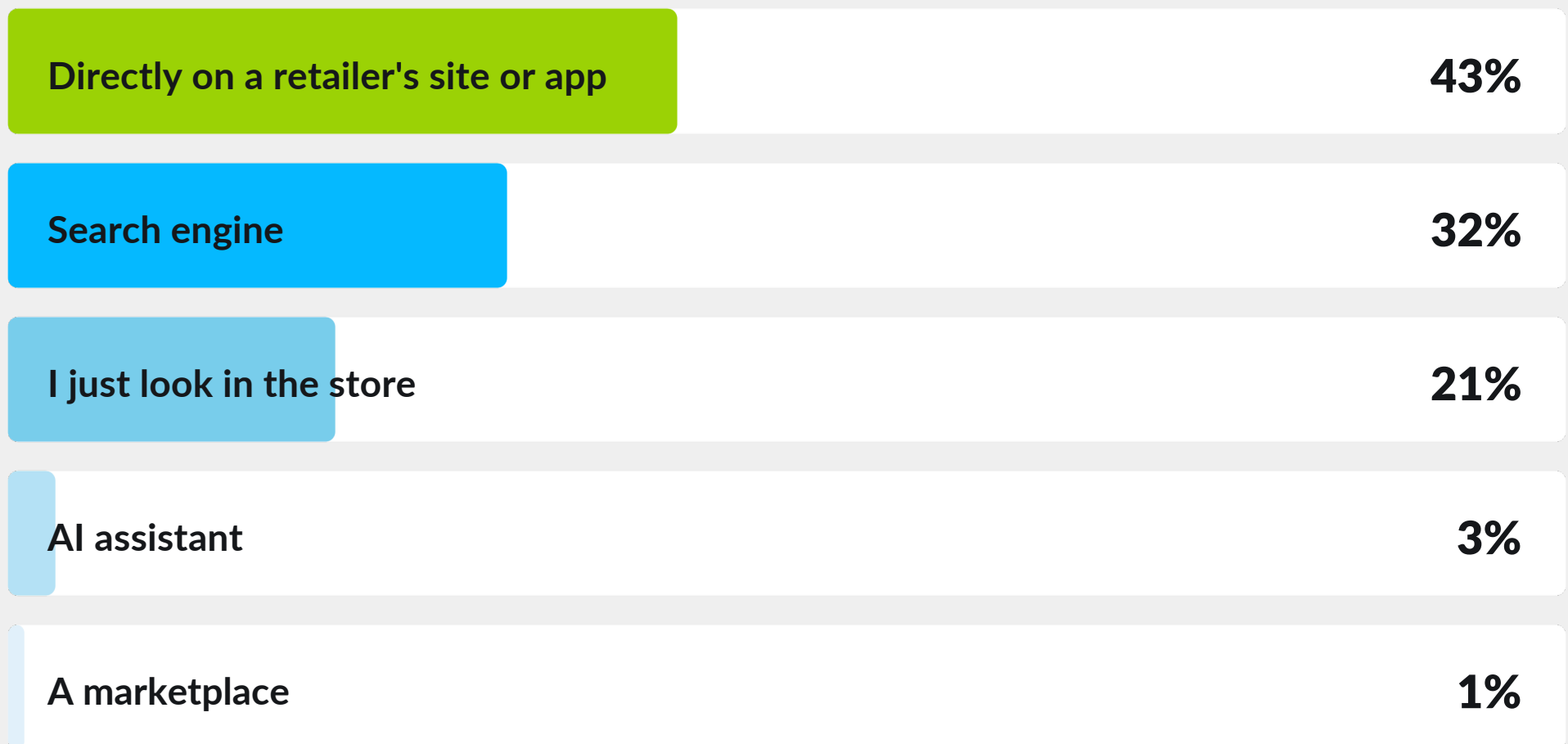
A store's digital shelf (its app, site, and product info) is now a key part of how I decide what and where to buy

39%

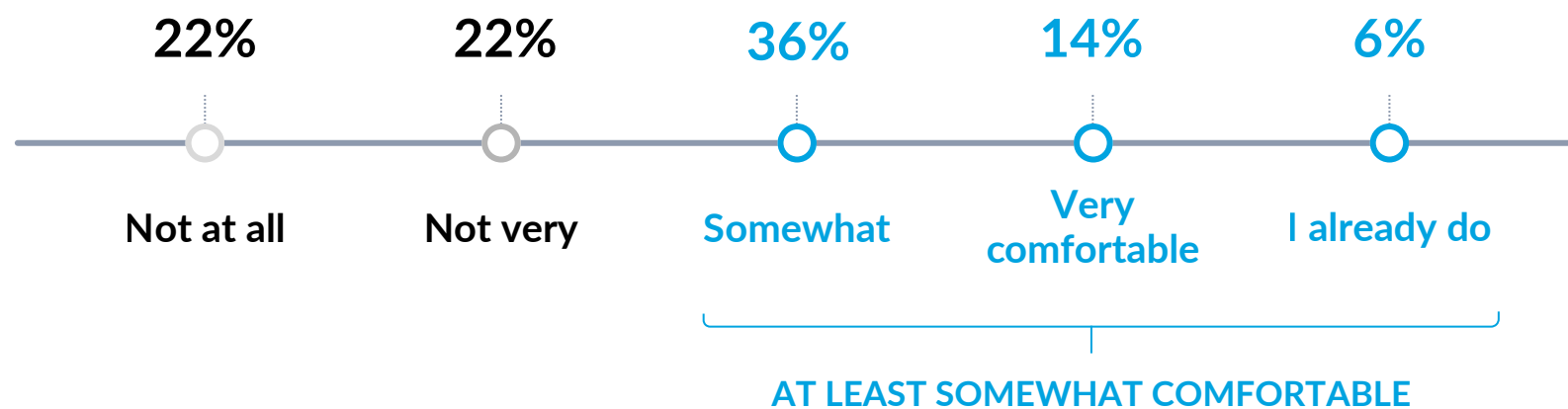
The digital shelf is nice-to-have, but my real grocery decisions happen in the store

61%

When you're trying to find a specific product or check a detail about it, where do you look first?



Shopper Comfort with AI



Most shoppers aren't there yet. **44%** are not at all or not very comfortable letting an AI assistant find and recommend grocery products, while **56%** are at least somewhat open to it, and just **20%** are very comfortable or already do.

Q: "How comfortable would you be letting an AI assistant find and recommend grocery products for you?" · n=848

The *top 3 touchpoints* shoppers actually rely on are:

1. Store app

62%

2. Store website

47%

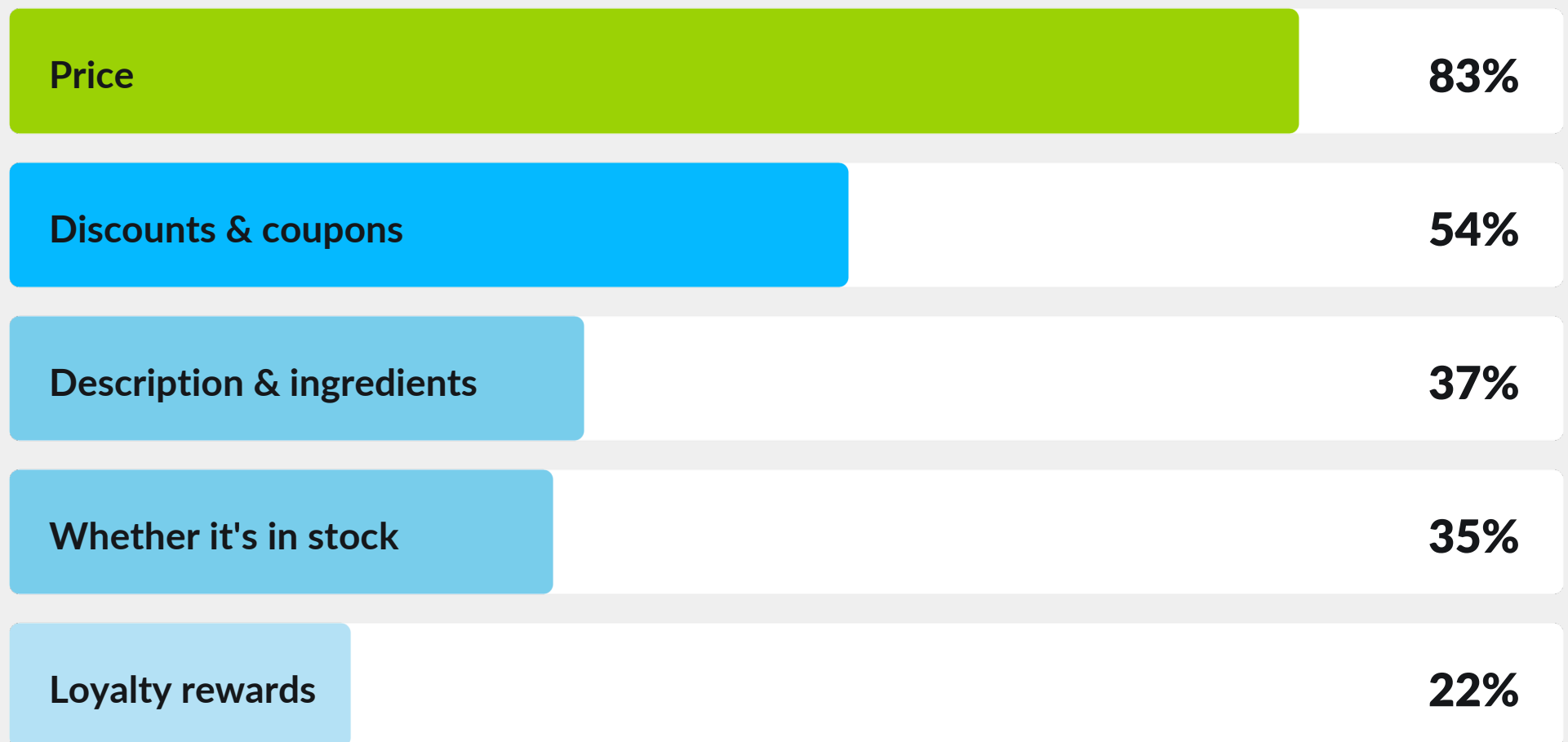
3. Email or text offers

35%

Other touchpoints shoppers rely on include in-store screens or digital shelf tags (29%), recipe sites (17%), search engines (13%), marketplaces like Amazon or Instacart (12%), social media (7%), and AI assistants like ChatGPT (5%).

Q: "Which of these do you actually use to help make grocery decisions?" (select all that apply) • n=848

When viewing a product online, which details matter most to your decision?



Also selected: ratings & reviews (19%), nutrition, allergens & health claims (16%), photos (6%), and videos (0.1%). Respondents could select up to 3.

What this means for *CX & digital leaders*

1 Prioritize your app and website.

They're the largest single channel shoppers turn to first (43%) and the most relied-upon touchpoints overall (62% store app, 47% store website).

2 Don't overcorrect for AI yet.

Just 3% look to an AI assistant first, and only 5% use one regularly today. Comfort isn't there yet either: only 20% are very comfortable with AI grocery recommendations or already use one. Worth monitoring, but not a reason to divert resources from your core digital shelf.

3 Make price and discounts impossible to miss.

83% say price matters most when viewing a product online, and 54% cite discounts and coupons, far ahead of descriptions, stock status, or reviews.

About *Intouch Insight*

At Intouch Insight, we specialize in helping multi-location brands achieve operational excellence, exceed customer expectations, and build long-term customer loyalty, and we are proud to deliver growth solutions to over 300 of the world's most beloved brands.

Our solutions are designed to streamline operations, maintain brand standards, and provide actionable insights to help our clients enhance their CX. With over 40 years of CX expertise, we excel in providing our clients with top-notch CX, customer surveys, mobile forms, mystery shopping, as well as operational and compliance audit solutions.

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