Google will now let users buy items through Assistant and search

Google has launched a new program called Shopping Actions that will allow users to purchase items through Google Assistant and shopping ads in search results.

On Google search, the Google Express shopping service, and Google Assistant on home devices and mobile, shoppers can now save their payment credentials and make purchases from retailers with instant checkout. In exchange, retailers will give Google a cut of the profit from each purchase, which is different from the usual ad payments retailers make to Google for sponsored listings. Retailers will only pay Google when sales are made.

For example, now you can search on Google for a scented candle, see a listing for a brand on Target, then add it to your Google Express cart. Then, you might decide to order foil on your Google Home. Both items will be added to the same cart and can be purchased together through a "Google-hosted checkout flow," the company says.

So far, companies like Target, Walmart, Home Depot, Costco Wholesale, 1-800-FLOWERS, and Ulta Beauty have signed on for the new program, as first reported by *Reuters*. The program is open to US retailers of any size. It was officially announced today, but some retailers like Target and Ulta have been testing it out for months.



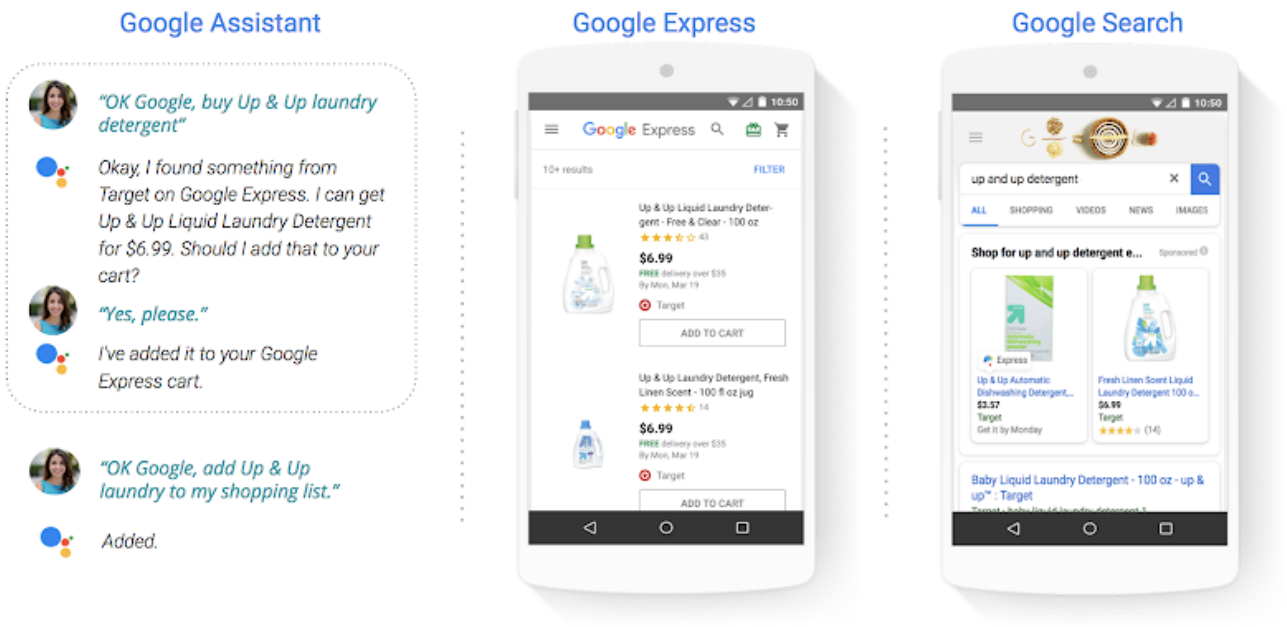


Image: Google

Google started the new program after observing that mobile searches asking where to buy products had risen by 85 percent over the past two years, the company noted in its blog post. Yet, despite the increase in searches, most shoppers ended up choosing to buy from Amazon, analysts told *Reuters*.

So far, Google is encouraging companies to see it as an ally against Amazon. "We have taken a fundamentally different approach from the likes of Amazon because we see ourselves as an enabler of retail…We see ourselves as part of a solution for retailers to be able to drive better transactions," Google's president for retail and shopping Daniel Alegre told *Reuters*.

Whether users and retailers will adopt one over the other might depend on smaller quality-of-life differences between Amazon and Google, such as delivery costs and speed, ease of use, and any final product price differences. It also depends on whether Shopping Actions can really be a "seamless shopping experience" like retailers and Google are hoping it will be.

https://www.theverge.com/2018/3/19/17138448/google-shopping-ac

tions-search-profits-instant-checkout