

Fall 2026 State of Instacart: Growth, Ad Investment, and What Brands Are Telling Us

By Claire McBride // August 24, 2026 // Briefings, Forecasts, Research

***TL;DR:** Instacart's growth rate has stepped up in recent quarters, widening the gap versus the total grocery market and strengthening the case for brands to lean in on the platform. We recommend brands plan for Instacart Ads investment of ~3% of sales, with most dollars in lower-funnel search where returns are provable; co-branding campaigns and the newer Grow and Acquire pilots are the more compelling opportunities from there, ahead of offsite and in-store offerings. Product data quality should be a top priority heading into 2027 to stay visible as Instacart's personalization and agentic commerce initiatives scale (the latter still being in the very early days according to management).*

11 minute read

Instacart is growing at 4-5x the rate of the broader U.S. grocery market, capturing an outsized share of the category's incremental dollars as more grocery purchasing shifts online. It's why we continue to view Instacart as an important growth platform for virtually every grocery brand.

In this report, we analyze Instacart's accelerating growth profile, cover Instacart's latest developments with retail media and agentic commerce, and share recent real-world feedback from brands activating on the platform.

The report includes:

- **Growth Trends:** 2Q results and what drove the acceleration across GTV, orders, and average order value
- **Updated Forecasts:** Stratably's 2026-2028 GTV outlook and the outperformance it implies versus the broader grocery market
- **Instacart Ads:** Growth trends, how brands view and justify investment levels, funding models, internal resourcing, allocation decisions, and more
- **Agentic Commerce:** Updates on Cart Assistant and partnerships with horizontal agents

- **Personalization:** Health tags, nutrition scores, AI-powered replacements, and the product data they require

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