Instacart Eversight AI price tests

IMPLEMENTED 2023–2025 · RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY · US · BAND E · REVERSED
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Retailers on Instacart ran item price tests through Eversight, Instacart's AI pricing tool. A volunteer study found shoppers seeing different prices for the same items at the same store. After a reported FTC inquiry, Instacart ended all item price tests in December 2025.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

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Facts and figures are as reported by the sources listed below, which may be incomplete, self-reported or out of date. Check the original source before relying on any figure.

The impact band, proof marker and SEAM view are MarLuc's opinion. The organisation is not a MarLuc client and has not reviewed or endorsed this synopsis. Names and trademarks belong to their owners.

NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

No measurable effect: withdrawn after a test.

AI used: AI-powered pricing and promotions platform (Eversight), as Instacart describes it.

Implemented: 2023–2025. Grade: band E, No measurable effect, Reversed.

Headline result, as reported: Instacart ended all item price tests with its Eversight AI tool in December 2025, after a study of 437 shoppers found price gaps of up to 23%

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 5 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

Instacart. US online grocery delivery platform. Retailers set their own prices on it, by Instacart's account. Canvas block: 3. Customers and proposition. Also 8. Governance and risk, 6. Data and technology.

Business challenge

The challenge. Instacart said the tests were limited, short-term, randomised tests that help retail partners learn what matters most to consumers and how to keep essential items affordable, and that such testing is common in the grocery industry.

How it was addressed. Instacart acquired Eversight, which it describes as an AI-powered pricing

Who implemented it

In-house (In-house): Eversight: aI pricing platform acquired by Instacart in 2022 and offered to retailers.

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: T8 Predictive / ML models. Deployment: Not reported. Vendors and products: Eversight (owned by Instacart), Eversight.

Where it was built in: Offered to retailers on Instacart to run randomised item price tests.

What changed

Before: retailers could run randomised item price tests through Eversight on Instacart. After: Instacart ended all item price tests, effective immediately, in December 2025; retailers still set their own prices, which may differ between store locations. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

What it cost

Not reported. Instacart's separate $60 million settlement with the FTC over alleged deceptive practices on delivery fees and subscriptions is a different matter.

What it saved

Not reported [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

Governance and control

Instacart said the tests were randomised and did not use personal data. Reuters reported, as relayed by Gizmodo, that the FTC sent Instacart a civil investigative demand seeking information on Eversight; the FTC said it was disturbed by press reports of Instacart's alleged pricing practices. Outcome of the inquiry: Not reported in the sources opened.

S2 · Accountable owner · Not reported
Not reported.

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
Instacart says the tests were never based on personal data, demographics or individual shopping behaviour and were not dynamic or surveillance pricing. [4]

A2 · Human in the loop · Not reported
Not reported.

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Not reported
Not reported. The price differences were found by outside researchers. [1]

A4 · Vendor AI · Not reported
Eversight is owned by Instacart; retailers used it to run the tests. [3]

A5 · Agent controls · Not reported
No agents described.

A6 · Standards and regulation · Outside scrutiny (a regulator, court, auditor or similar body acted)
Reuters reported that the FTC sent Instacart a civil investigative demand about Eversight; the FTC said it was disturbed by press reports. Outcome not reported. [2] [3]

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– Not reported

DID NOT

– Almost 75% of items in the study were shown at more than one price, with as many as five prices for one item, per Engadget.

– Instacart said the tests fell short of customers' expectations and left some people questioning the prices they saw.

UNPROVEN

– Whether the tests raised or lowered prices overall: Instacart says they helped retailers invest in lower prices; no figures are published.

– The outcome of the reported FTC inquiry.

Timeline

2022 Instacart acquires Eversight, an AI-enabled pricing platform [3]

2023 Instacart begins offering pricing software to retailers [3]

Dec 2025 Consumer groups publish a study of 437 shoppers showing different prices for the same items [1]

Dec 2025 Reuters reports an FTC civil investigative demand about Eversight [2]

Dec 2025 Instacart ends all item price tests on its platform [3]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: Not applicable. Grade: E, No measurable effect. Proof: Reversed. Level of change: Not graded.

No level assessed: band E, a live pricing test programme withdrawn after independent research and a reported regulatory inquiry. No sanction or refund linked to it is reported.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

The tool did what it was designed to do: show different prices to measure responses. The difficulty was at the join with customers, who could see the differences but not the reason for them. For any organisation using AI to set or test prices, the design needs to stand up to public comparison as well as statistical review.

1. Tell customers when prices are being tested.
2. Check pricing experiments against consumer protection expectations before launch.
3. Assume outside researchers will compare prices, and design for that.

Evidence

Score 2 of 4. Independent: a volunteer study by consumer groups, with Instacart's own statements; the FTC inquiry was reported by Reuters and not confirmed by the FTC.

Evaluation method. Independent consumer study (437 volunteer shoppers) and company statements.

Sources disagree. CBS News says the study drew on more than 400 volunteers; Engadget gives 437. Gizmodo reports some customers were charged nearly 25% more than others, while Engadget gives the largest gap on an item as 23%.

Status. Closed: item price tests ended on 22 December 2025. FTC inquiry outcome: Not reported.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/instacart-eversight-ai-price-tests

[1] Engadget: Study shows that Instacart was charging different amounts for the same items (December 2025)
https://www.engadget.com/big-tech/study-shows-that-instacart-was-charging-different-amounts-for-the-same-items-165108224.html

[2] Gizmodo: Feds Probe Instacart's AI-Fueled Pricing Experiments on Groceries
https://gizmodo.com/feds-probe-instacarts-al-fueled-pricing-experiments-on-groceries-2000701379

[3] CBS News: Instacart to end AI price tests for retailers following investigation
https://www.cbsnews.com/news/instacart-ends-ai-price-testing-tool-eversight

[4] Gizmodo: Instacart Says It Is Pulling the Plug on Its AI-Powered Price Tests
https://gizmodo.com/instacart-says-it-is-pulling-the-plug-on-its-ai-powered-price-tests-2000702649

[5] Engadget: Instacart is ending its controversial price tests
https://www.engadget.com/big-tech/instacart-is-ending-its-controversial-price-tests-134552152.html

Instacart website: https://www.instacart.com

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