

# Search experts on how AI, changing consumer behaviors, and an influx of digital channels are redefining search advertising

Article

TikTok and Amazon join the ranks of Google (and to a lesser degree Microsoft) as places where consumers start their searches. Meanwhile, audience-based targeting is becoming a more privacy-compliant way to reach consumers. And of course, generative AI will change search as we know it, though no one can be sure of how—yet.

We asked search experts (one paid, one organic) to weigh in on these trends and the future of search.

## 1. Changing consumer behaviors

There's been a major shift in how and where consumers start their searches online, said Lily Ray, senior director of SEO and head of organic research at Amsive Digital, during our recent [virtual summit](#).

**Getting started:** “Last year, the big threat to Google was Amazon,” she said. “And now with the rise of TikTok, we know that younger generations are starting many of their searches there or on YouTube Shorts.”

- As the number of search starting points increases, it's imperative that marketers understand where their audiences are spending their time—and why.
- For example, what attracts Gen Z to platforms like YouTube or TikTok are the personalities, rather than the brands themselves.

**Who's there:** “I think a lot of what people take issue with in terms of search engines right now is that they feel the content they're being served is faceless,” said Ray. “Almost like they don't know who's really behind it.”

- In May, Google announced [Perspectives](#), a search filter designed to highlight long- and short-form videos, images, and written posts from across the web.
- “Google knows people want more faces and authors,” said Ray. “You can't just be a big anonymous brand publishing content without people knowing who's behind it. That's a really important place [for marketers] to focus on going forward.”

## 2. An influx of digital channels

Another result of increasing digital touchpoints is that marketers are no longer relying on paid search alone to reach consumers, said Timothy Jensen, senior search engine marketing specialist at M&T Bank.

**Spread it out:** “Paid search is [still] fundamental to any advertising strategy,” he said, but marketers are diversifying across multiple platforms, whether that be social media, video, or mobile.

- Advertisers are also diversifying targeting, pulling in more audience-based data (e.g., consumers who have visited their site or consumers in market for a particular product) and layering that onto their keyword bidding.
- This blended strategy could be helpful as third-party cookies are deprecated and more privacy regulations come into effect, said Jensen.

**Joining in:** Diversification can be helpful for organic search marketers too, said Ray.

- “We’re seeing a lot of examples where [a video will] trend on TikTok, but then you go to Google and you can’t find it,” she said.
- Instead of thinking of TikTok and organic search as separate things, marketers can use each platform to help boost the other.
- “If you’re a brand that’s had anything [go viral on] TikTok or you want to create some type of conversation or demand on TikTok, make sure you’re supporting that with that organic search strategy,” said Ray.

## 3. Generative AI

Ever since the release of ChatGPT, there’s been a flurry of activity from companies trying to incorporate generative AI into their platforms, including [Google](#), [Microsoft](#), [Snap](#), [Meta](#), and more.

**Searching the future:** But for all of these new developments, the future of AI-assisted search is still unclear to advertisers, especially in highly regulated industries like finance and healthcare, said Jensen.

- “We’re thinking [about] how we can use AI to assist us as well as making sure we’re compliant with what we’re allowed to say,” he said.
- On the organic side, there are a lot of questions about the implications on SEO and the flow of traffic, specifically to **Google’s Search Generative Experience**, which just opened for testing in May.
- “There [are] definitely a lot of existential questions about how Google is getting this information,” said Ray. “Who are they sourcing it from? Are they displaying those sources in a manner that is fair to publishers? If they’re not, are publishers going to continue to feel incentivized to publish as much content on Google? And if they don’t, is the quality of the AI results going to be good?”

**Watch the full session.**

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