

Big Tech search wars could attract attention from FTC's new outfit

Article



The news: On Friday, the **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)** launched an **Office of Technology** to provide more tech industry oversight.

- The move will **more than double the number of tech experts the FTC has on staff, to over 20 technologists**, per [The Washington Post](#).

- By hiring staff with skills in security, software, data science, and AI, the FTC hopes it will keep pace with tech industry innovation and opaque algorithms.
- FTC chief technology officer **Stephanie Nguyen** told the Post that the **fresh talent could help the agency refine its subpoenas and reach settlements that get closer to “the root cause of the harm.”**

An antitrust wild card: The FTC’s reinforcements come at a time of heightened regulatory appetite aimed at Big Tech.

Google, which has been under fierce antitrust scrutiny for years, might see a silver lining in **Microsoft’s** generative AI **Bing** integration.

- For over two decades, Google has dominated search, **reaching nearly 93% of the global market share**, according to StatCounter, per [Insider](#)— making it a prime antitrust target.
- With the rise of [AI-powered Bing](#), Google might use it as evidence of diminished market standing in court cases.

Whether a disrupted search market will play to Google’s regulatory advantage will depend in part on how well Bing performs.

- **Microsoft will have to convince a critical mass of users that its product is better than [Google’s Bard](#).**
- The outcome is questionable. Reports of Bing’s bot berating some users, [expressing love for others](#), and saying it yearns to be human **run wildly out of bounds**.
- We expect that generative AI bots will have ongoing issues with accuracy and appropriateness, but the [Bing bungle](#) gives **Google a chance to reaffirm its search authority**.

Search playing field opens: Antitrust cases aren’t Google’s only concern on the AI front. The FTC could also take aim at the technology over **inaccuracy, bias, copyright infringement, digital privacy lapses, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities**.

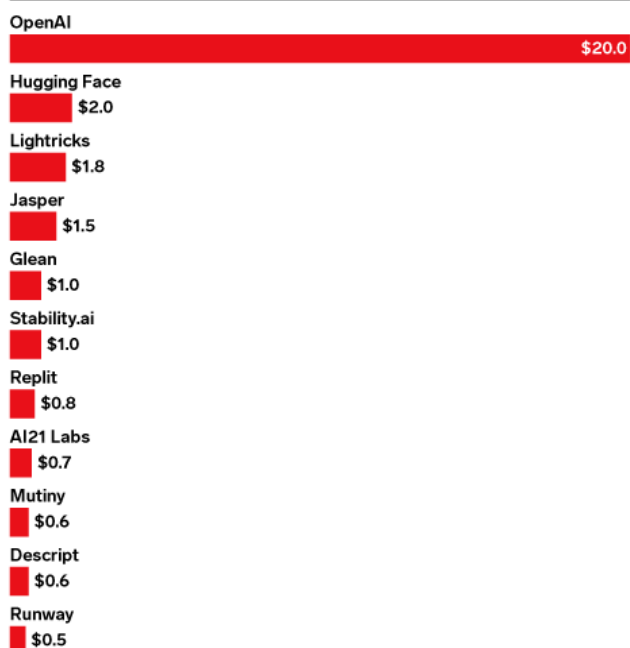
- This bodes well for generative AI search startups like [Neeva](#), [You.com](#), [Perplexity](#), [Andi](#), and [Metaphor](#) that aren’t facing antitrust scrutiny. They have **a chance to offer AI search tools with competitive features and tighter safety controls**.

- [Apple could also use the search competition](#) as an opportunity to start a bidding war between Google and Microsoft over status as the default search engine for iOS.
- However, if scrutiny by the UK's **Competition and Markets Authority** over [Google allegedly sharing search revenue with Apple](#) results in repercussions, Microsoft might reap the benefits.

***Dive deeper:** Learn more about the generative AI market in our [Data Drop: 5 Charts You Need to Make Sense of Generative AI Now](#).*

Leading Generative AI Companies Worldwide, Ranked by Valuation, 2022

billions



Note: disclosed valuations as of 2022; excludes companies that use generative AI for specific industrial applications such as protein design
Source: CB Insights as cited in company blog, Jan 25, 2023

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