

Social search is strongest when marketers amplify organic efforts

Article

Paid social search offerings differ significantly from traditional search ads

Most major social networks—including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (the top three social platforms by ad spending)—have enabled ads in search results. But when available, social search ads aren't a standalone product. They're offered as an extension of broader social

campaigns. (YouTube is omitted from this analysis since we classify it as a digital video platform.)

- **Search formats are opt-in—usually.** TikTok’s Search Ads Toggle and campaigns using manual placements on Meta platforms give advertisers the choice to include search ads alongside other social formats. However, if an advertiser uses Advantage+, there is no option to go without search ads.
- **There’s no special creative for social search.** Social platforms typically leverage the same assets that appear in other placements (e.g., in-feed, Stories) for ads served in search results.
- **Keyword targeting is rare.** Audience targeting is the standard. While some platforms allow advertisers to avoid “negative” keywords, Pinterest is the only platform that enables keyword targeting akin to traditional search capabilities.

Many performance advertisers have embraced paid search formats as built-in performance optimizers, but brand marketers have been more skeptical of cost tradeoffs, leading to slower adoption.

But marketers can harmonize paid and SEO tactics to get the most out of social media campaigns

- **Savvy advertisers are taking advantage of organic social search.** By observing search trends to inform content marketing strategies and taking cues from SEO to refine language and tags, brands can maximize discoverability. Putting paid support behind posts that perform well organically is a logical next step. A notable minority of small-business owners surveyed in January by Adobe Express thought that a variety of TikTok content had outperformed traditional search engine results. This could be a harbinger of social search strategies to come.

Nearly a Quarter of Small-Business Owners Saw TikTok Content Outperform Search Results

% of US small-business owners, Aug 2023

Q: According to business owners, which TikTok content outperformed traditional search engine results pages*?



Note: *includes paid search ads, organic search results, and related searches
Source: Adobe Express as cited in company blog, Jan 4, 2024

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- **Platforms are incentivizing creators to optimize content for organic social search.** TikTok has rolled out a new payment structure—the Creator Rewards Program—which factors in how well content aligns with search trends. Over time, this will reinforce consumer search behaviors, which should, in turn, dictate paid marketing strategies.

Read the full report, [Social Search Trends 2024](#).

Report by Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf Jun 04, 2024

Social Search Trends 2024

