

Social media overtakes search engines for discovery among Gen Z and millennials

Article

The news: Traditional search engine usage is declining, particularly among younger demographics, who are increasingly turning to social media and mobile devices for their

information needs.

- A new [survey](#) from Forbes Advisor and Talker Research reveals a significant transformation in search behavior across generations. The study of 2,000 Americans found that social media platforms are becoming primary search tools for many.

Search engines slide: Generation Z is 25% less likely to use **Google** for searches compared to Gen X.

- Only 64% of Gen Z use search engines for brand discovery, compared with the 94% of Baby Boomers who do so.
- But there's a bright spot for Google: 57% of people use **YouTube** to search for information in the same way they use Google.

Social search climbs: Nearly one in four (24%) of respondents primarily use social media for searches.

- 46% of Generation Z and 35% of millennials prefer social media over traditional search engines.
- 44% of Gen Z discover new brands on social media daily.
- **TikTok** is favored over Google by Gen Z for searches on topics like hair and makeup (40%) and gift ideas (40%).
- On **Instagram**, the most popular search category is fashion brands (12%).
- **Facebook** users frequently search for news and current affairs and recipes and meal ideas.

Mobile matters: One-third of respondents access the internet only on their cellphones; this trend is stronger among millennials (39%) and Gen Z (40%).

Our take: The data underscores a seismic shift in how different generations approach search. Gen Z's preference for social media over traditional vehicles like Google signals a move toward platforms that offer quick, visually engaging content. This shift is not just about convenience but reflects deeper changes in digital consumption patterns.

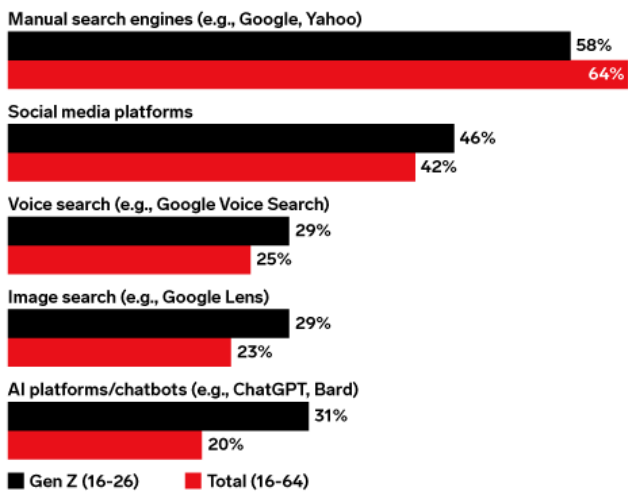
- Businesses aiming to connect with younger audiences must prioritize their presence on social media, ensuring their content is optimized for mobile and video formats.

- The significant use of YouTube for search suggests that video content is becoming increasingly important. Brands need to consider how they can provide value and capture attention on video platforms.
- Emphasizing mobile-first and social media-centric approaches will be key to staying relevant in this rapidly changing digital landscape.

Go further: Read our [Gen Z Social Search Habits report](#).

Platforms/Programs Gen Z vs. Total Internet Users Worldwide Use to Find Information Online, Aug 2023

% of respondents



Note: total n=15,469; Gen Z n=2,072
Source: GfK, "2024 Global Media Landscape Report," March 26, 2024

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