

From TikTok to Amazon, 3 social and retail media search trends

Article



“Google will account for over half of search ad spending this year, but [Google's](#) not the perfect fit for every query that every person could ever ask,” our analyst Evelyn Mitchell-Wolf said on a recent [EMARKETER webinar](#). “It never has been, and now consumers are also going elsewhere to satisfy their search needs.”

Alongside traditional search engines, [retail platforms like Amazon, Walmart, and Target are top search destinations](#) for consumers, according to a survey from Jungle Scout. But don't discount the power of [social media](#): Over two-thirds (67%) of US adults are at least [somewhat likely to engage in social search](#), per IZEA.

Here are three trends advertisers should watch to take advantage of social and retail media search opportunities.

1. TikTok's future in the US may be uncertain, but its influence on social search is long lasting.

[TikTok](#) has until January 19, 2025, to find a US-based buyer or [face a ban](#). Even if the ban is successful, TikTok has reshaped social search and the search landscape in general.

"Thanks to TikTok, younger generations have developed an appetite for infotainment and user-generated video (UGC) in their search results," said Mitchell-Wolf.

Young adults ages 18 to 24 are more likely to use Instagram (67%) or TikTok (62%) than Google (61%) when searching for local businesses, according to December 2023 data from SOCi. This fact isn't lost on Google, Mitchell-Wolf noted, which has taken an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" approach and started surfacing more UGC from social platforms.

"[Google is] trying to capitalize on the authenticity that exists on social platforms where appropriate," she said.

2. YouTube and Instagram are best poised to fill a potential TikTok void.

If TikTok is banned, YouTube and Instagram are the two platforms users between ages 13 and 39 would turn to as an alternative, according to a February 2024 survey from YPulse.

YouTube may be better suited to capitalize, thanks to its sheer volume and variety of content, said Mitchell-Wolf. "And it's got a more sophisticated search offering thanks to its relationship with Google."

Instagram is the more popular option. It's favored by 45% of US TikTok users ages 18 to 24 in YPulse's survey, compared with 24% who would opt for YouTube. Another factor that may give Instagram an edge is [Meta AI](#), which is now embedded in search across Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp.

“Meta is encouraging users to rely on Meta AI for all their search needs by integrating search results from Google and Bing,” said Mitchell-Wolf. “And while it's unlikely that [social search](#) on any single platform will completely replace Google for all use cases for all people, enriching the search experience increases the chances that a user will choose to stay on that platform to search.”

3. Retail media search growth is outpacing traditional search, dominated by Amazon and Walmart.

[Retail media networks](#) will account for over a quarter (27.2%) of search ad dollars in 2024, or \$33.86 billion, according to EMARKETER’s forecast.

If you remove Amazon, [Walmart is poised to take 4 in 10 non-Amazon retail media search ad dollars](#) this year, with its vast network of stores and growing omnichannel measurement solutions.

“Walmart has repeatedly demonstrated its market power. It has a solid search offering matching Amazon's in breadth and consistency,” said Mitchell-Wolf. “And like Amazon, Walmart serves ads against the vast majority of search queries, 99% according to H1 2024 research from Crealytics.”

[Watch the full webinar.](#)

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