



passion
digital 

The Future of Search... Are You Ready?





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Introduction



Google has long been synonymous with search. The verb 'google' was chosen as Word of the Decade for 2000–2009 by the American Dialect Society, with the generic meaning “to search the internet”, regardless of the search engine used. Very few brand names have made it into common parlance in the same way – but very few brands have had such a monumental impact on our day-to-day habits and processes.

The traditional way to get an understanding of the search landscape would be to look at the market share among search engines – and that market is dominated by Google, with 92.9% global market share. However, to focus on search engines alone would be to look at just a small slice of the search landscape. It has become increasingly clear that user habits are changing and information is sought in more places and through more formats than just a text search on Google.

As marketers we need to understand the shift in habits and adapt accordingly – both to capture the search intent of our audience now and to futureproof our activity going forward.

In this guide we will cover:

- 1.** ● How search habits are changing, especially among younger generations
- 2.** ● How developments in social search, visual search and voice search are broadening the search landscape
- 3.** ● How future technologies like AI-driven chatbots may further alter the landscape
- 4.** ● How to develop search strategies that bridge the traditional silos of SEO and social media marketing



How search habits are changing

How search habits are changing

The generational shift

Where are users searching for information online if it's not on search engines? The significant change here can be found among younger demographics.

If we consider online brand research, we can see a clear generational shift. Boomers and Gen X markedly favour search engines over social networks, but this gap closes for Millennials. **Gen Z are the first age group who use social networks more than search engines for online brand research.**



This is not a close-kept secret. Google's Senior Vice President Prabhakar Raghavan said as much at the FORTUNE Brainstorm Tech Conference in July 2022:

"In our studies*, something like almost 40% of young people, when they're looking for a place for lunch, they don't go to Google Maps or Search, they go to TikTok or Instagram."

*Google USA research among 18-24 year olds

For these younger age groups, the key reason for this change is that social media is a better provider of the type of content that they want to find. For them, short, fast-moving video content with in-built social proof is easier to consume than long, text-heavy pages on brand websites or online publications.

[Zoë Jenkin's viral LinkedIn post](#) from August 2022 illustrated the disconnect between how marketers understand channel strategy and how young people use those channels. Jenkin asked her 14-year-old niece what she thought of different social media platforms and the answers were enlightening. For example:

YOUTUBE - "It's just tv, and better than using Google like dad does, I can find anything on there faster and easier than reading an entire article."

TIKTOK - "We're mostly there to watch videos, not to create ourselves. Again better than Google, can find anything with a quick search and plus be entertained for hours."

But it's not just social media that we need to consider when assessing the search landscape. Marketplaces are a key starting point for many e-commerce-driven users. In a US survey, [Jungle Scout](#) found that **61% of US consumers start their shopping online on Amazon**, compared to 49% starting on a search engine. Although this isn't a new phenomenon, it is rarely "counted" alongside search engines and social media when understanding how users find what they're looking for online.

So, leaving the Google-centric view of the search landscape behind, in the next few sections we're going to explore the new ways that users are searching online and the platforms that serve them best.



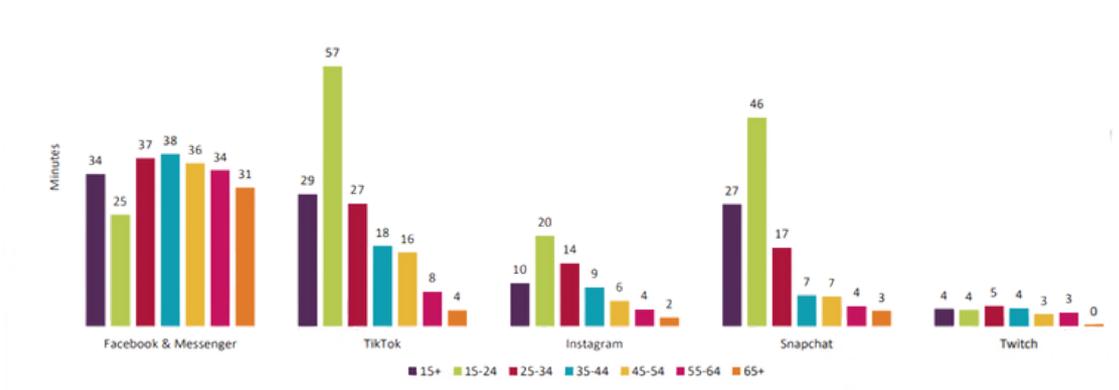
Social search and the rise of TikTok

Social search and the rise of TikTok

The social media channel that has seen the biggest shift in recent years is TikTok. The short-form native video platform may have started as a lip syncing app in 2014 (originally named Musical.ly) but since supercharged global growth during the Covid-19 pandemic it has become a mainstream social media player. As of January 2023 [TikTok had 1 billion monthly active users](#) (Statista, 2022).

Why should you care about TikTok?

Firstly, it is Gen Z's most used social platform by some margin (in terms of minutes spent per day).

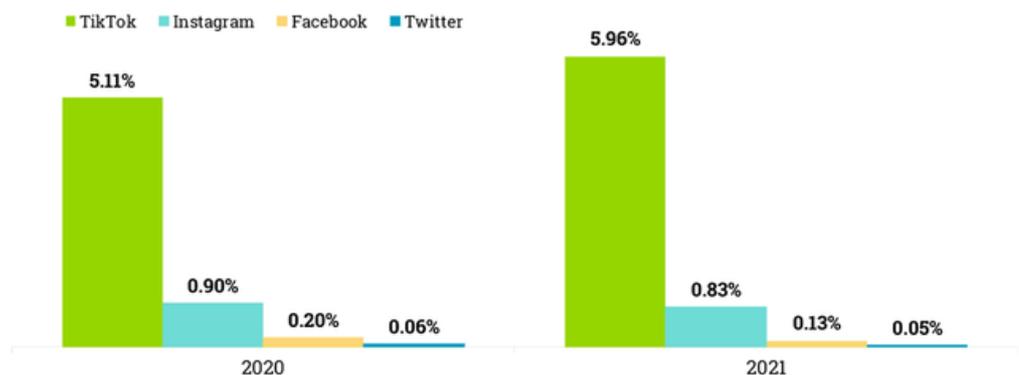


Source: © Ipsos, Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 1 March – 31 March 2022, adults aged 15+

Engagements with brands on TikTok is much higher than it is on other social media

Brand Post Engagement Rates on Social Media

(Sum of engagements divided by total number of followers, multiplied by 100)



Data source: Socialinsider

But most importantly for the topic of this whitepaper, TikTok is a big part of the reason why younger generations are going to social when seeking information rather than search engines.

Why are people turning to TikTok for answers?

Here is an example. Imagine you are a 20-something woman who wants to find something fun to do in London at the weekend.

If you search 'what to do in London' in Google, these are the results:

The screenshot shows a Google search for "what to do in London". The search bar is at the top, and the results are divided into several sections:

- Ads - Tickets and tours:** A carousel of five ads. The first ad is for "Full-Day Windsor,..." with a price of £69 and a 4.4-star rating. The second is "Full-Day London Sightseeing To..." for £108 with a 3.5-star rating. The third is "Small Group Warner Bros..." for £129 with a 4.6-star rating. The fourth is "Westminster Walking Tour..." for £77 with a 5.0-star rating. The fifth is "1 Day Pass The London P..." for £76.
- Top sights in London:** A section with filters like "Local favourites", "Kid friendly", "Art and culture", "Outdoors", "History", "Museums", and "Moi". It features three main sights: "Tower of London" (4.6 stars, 84,994 reviews), "The British Museum" (4.7 stars, 129,320 reviews), and "Tower Bridge" (4.7 stars, 127,318 reviews).
- Colleges and Universities:** A section with logos for "UNIVE OF LOI", "rial Co lon", "LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY", and "WEST LONDON".
- Events:** A list of events including "Inheritance Tax Masterclass" on Tue, 15 Nov at 10:00, "IDLES Conference 2022: Decarbonising the..." on Tue, 15 Nov at 10:00, and "Photo Tour: Framing Architecture" on Tue, 15 Nov at 10:30.
- People also ask:** A section with questions like "What is the coolest thing in London?", "What you Cannot miss in London?", "What's worth visiting in London?", and "What can I do in London for 2 days?".

The first section is a carousel of ads; one has a picture of Stonehenge (not in London) and another has a picture of the Warner Bros Studio Tour (also not in London).

Verdict: not relevant to your search.

The second section shows some of the 'Top sights in London', including the Tower of London, The British Museum and Tower Bridge.

Verdict: doesn't serve your personal search intent.

A large amount of real estate on the right of the SERP is taken up by the knowledge panel. In some searches this contains useful information to read at a glance, but the elevation of the city and its population is hardly relevant to 20-something you.

Verdict: doesn't serve your personal search intent.



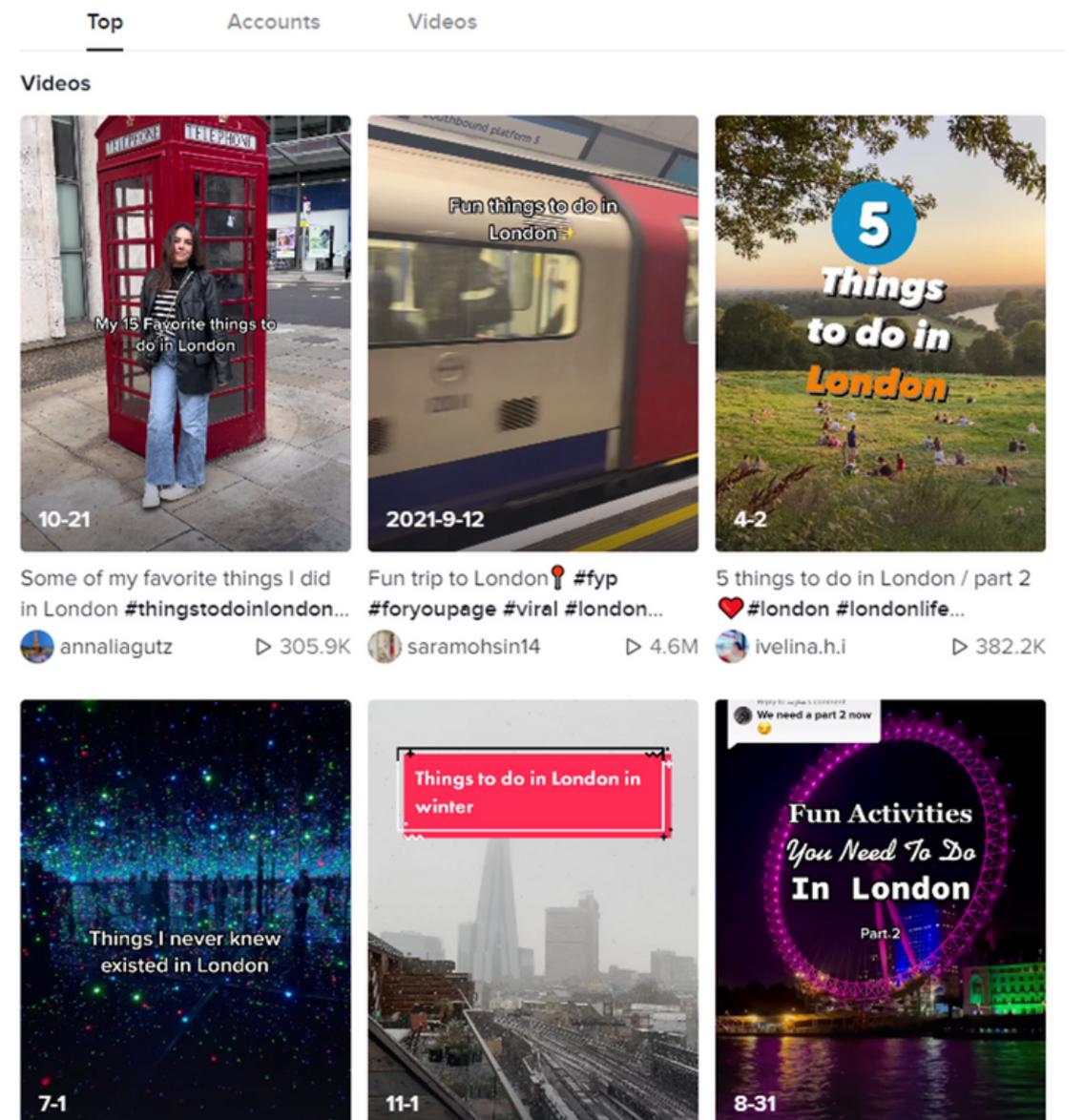
Contained within the knowledge panel is a list of events that someone might be interested in, including an Inheritance Tax Masterclass and Under 5s at the Marylebone Library. Again, this is not very relevant to a 20-something.

Verdict: doesn't serve your personal search intent.

And finally we get to the organic SERP - the web pages that are, in theory, most relevant to your specific search. The first result is '101 things to do in London', which is a common listicle-style article that tends to rank in Google. This is an example of the [skyscraper technique](#), when a website tries to outdo its competitors who only offer '50 things to do' or '75 things to do'. Although the technique may have worked well for Brian Dean back in 2015 when he first publicised it, the top of the SERPs now are filled with ever-expanding listicles that prioritise quantity of options over quality.

Verdict: too time-consuming

Now here is the same search in TikTok. All of the results are videos that you can watch in about 30 seconds.



The activities it recommends are:

1. Life-sized Monopoly
2. Bottomless cake experience
3. Cinema with real sand
4. 2L glass of Aperol Spritz
5. Upside down globe
6. Market inside an old church

Each point features footage from the experience by the creator, and it's accompanied by a great soundtrack. It's not surprising that a 20-year-old finds this search experience more appealing and more rewarding than sifting through the overcrowded SERPs on Google.

In May 2022 a tweet by KA went viral when she said that TikTok was a better search engine than Google. The responses give an insight into why users prefer it.

 **KA**
@ikeko__

I'm not even joking but TikTok is proving to be a better search engine than Google these days

12:38 PM · May 30, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

13.8K Retweets 2,926 Quote Tweets 114.7K Likes

 **Him.**
@sevendaire

Replying to @ikeko__

They give a video explanation and proof all in one, it explains and breaks it down. Google be wanting me to click too many links

4:36 AM · May 31, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

2 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 80 Likes

 **tacos_on_yachts**
@tacos_on_yacht

Replying to @ikeko__

I love it for how-tos. It's quick so you don't have to sit through boring preamble, like on YouTube

3:35 AM · May 31, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

2 Retweets 178 Likes

TikTok is becoming an important first step in the online search journey because it offers:

- Short, fast-moving video content that is easy to consume
- Social proof – recommendations are largely driven by creators, who are more trusted than brands and publishers
- A powerful algorithm that serves curated content for you
- Time sensitivity
- An addictive scrollable format

Until very recently, TikTok has been reluctant to see itself as a search engine (or a direct competitor of Google). It doesn't make the search data for its platform public, and it hadn't officially acknowledged the use of TikTok as a place for 'active discovery' rather than traditional 'passive discovery' through scrolling.

However, in December 2022 it released its '[Do it with TikTok](#)' campaign, which says:

“TikTok has become the go-to place for everyday tips and tricks. Whether you're after #diyonabudget tips for a new home, #BookTok inspo for an uplifting read, or just #budgetmeals inspo for a dinner that's affordable without compromising on taste, our community has the answer. So you never have to struggle and do it alone.”

Although it doesn't explicitly say that TikTok is a vehicle for search, it is clearly edging into the world of information discovery as well as entertainment.

What is Google doing to combat the rise of TikTok?

TikTok may not publicly acknowledge that it is going head to head with Google, but Google - which owns YouTube - is fighting back with **YouTube Shorts**. They satisfy the desire for easily snackable short-form video content, served in a familiar UI (full screen, vertical scrolling). In 2022 there was a huge cash injection from YouTube via the [Shorts Fund](#) to tempt creators over from TikTok and traditional YouTube.

Will YouTube Shorts ever eclipse TikTok? It's unlikely, but clearly Google is recognising the shift in its users' desire for short-form video content for more than just entertainment - for active discovery too.





Visual search and the rise of 'lens' options

Visual search and the **rise of** **'lens' options**

One of the important developments in search that is sometimes overlooked is the growth of visual search as opposed to traditional text search. The usefulness of this is [best described by Pinterest](#) when they first released their “crazy-fun new visual search tool” in 2015:

“...we’ve got a new tool that lets you find all those things you don’t have the words to describe.”

Rather than using text to describe what you’re looking for, you can use an image as the search query.

This is not new – Google’s Reverse Image Search has been available since 2011 – but it is growing more sophisticated thanks to developments in AI and machine learning.

The process works as follows:

- A smartphone user uploads or takes a photo with their phone
- The software uses [computer vision](#) to interpret the image and pull relevant results
- Search results, which could be similar images, product listings, websites, translations (the list goes on!), appear on the screen

Pinterest Lens

The most established player in the visual search field is Pinterest, which has been innovating in the space for over a decade. The hard work of their software engineers came to fruition in 2017 when they released three visual search tools:

- 1. Pinterest Lens** - allows users to 'point and shoot' their phone camera at something in the real world and generate relevant pins
- 2. Instant Ideas** - allows users to refine their feed by self-selecting which pins they like the look of, which generates a series of more relevant results
- 3. Shop the Look** - allows users to pinpoint different items inside a pin and browse through product listings for them



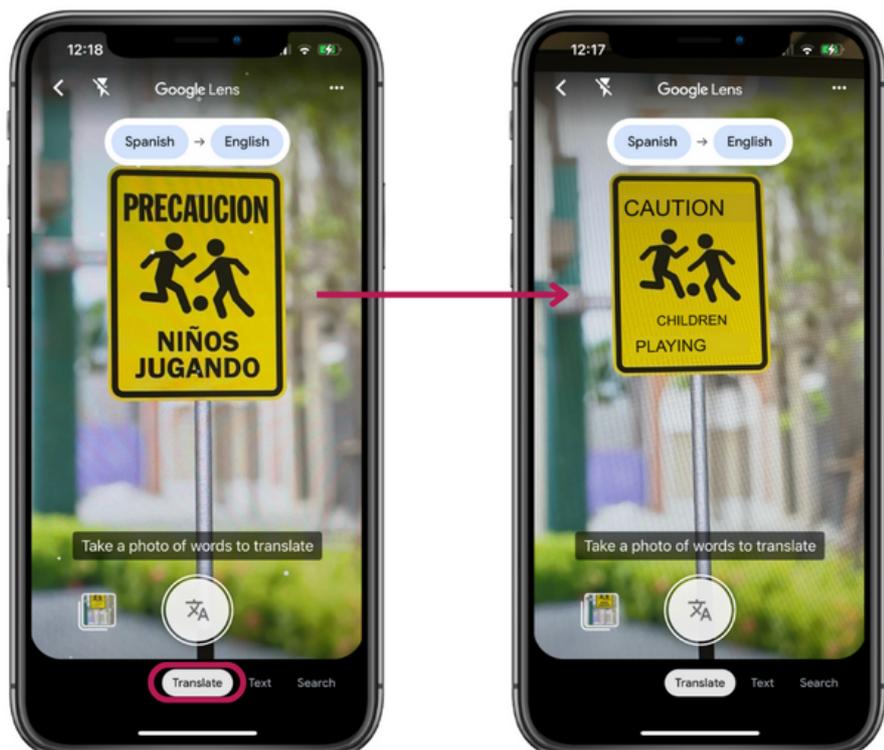
What is particularly interesting about Pinterest is the sophistication of its AI. For example, if you point Pinterest Lens at an avocado sitting on your kitchen counter, the results won't just be other pictures of avocados. You could get pins that feature avocado recipes, growing tips, DIY beauty treatments ... It's about idea generation rather than just product matching.

Google Lens

While Pinterest may have been the trailblazer when it comes to visual search, Google is responsible for making it commonplace with Google Lens. What started as a standalone app in 2017 has been slowly integrated into other Google products (including Google Photos and Google Assistant) and, as of 2022 has now replaced Reverse Image Search and is fully available on the web.

There are so many uses for the technology:

- **Shopping** - like Pinterest, you can take a picture of an item and pull results of visually similar items online
- **Barcode and QR code recognition** - you can follow a link directly from a QR code to a website without having to download a specific app
- **Translation** - taking the smart text function a step further, it allows you to translate menus or street signs by simply holding your camera up to it
- **Location identification** - it can identify your surroundings and provide information like business reviews or opening hours



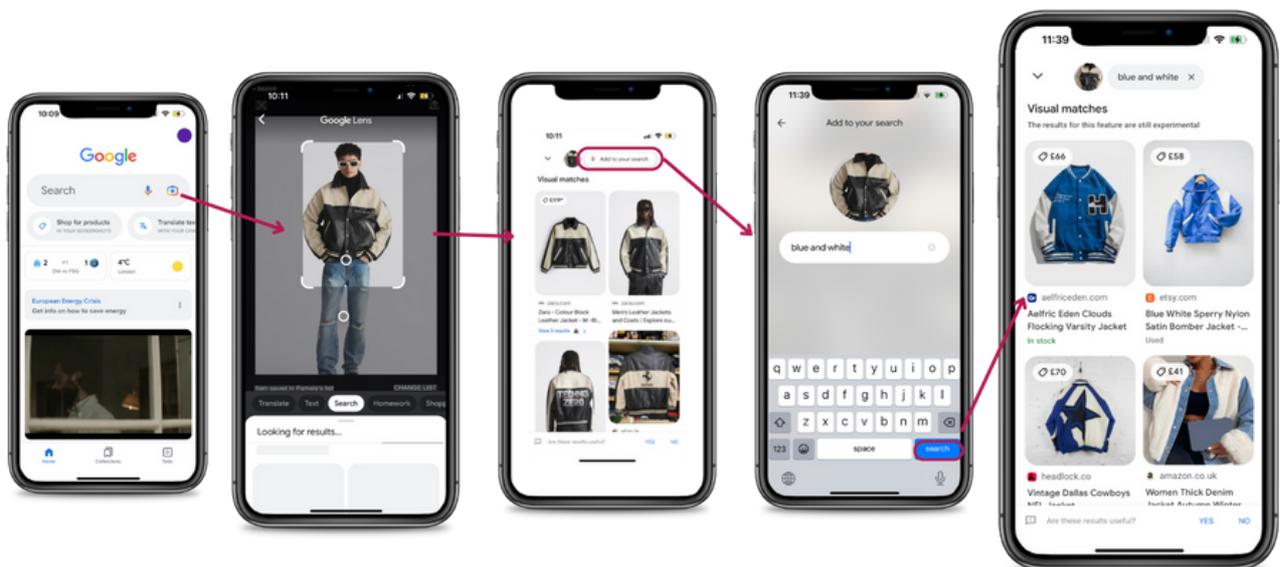
- **Smart text selection** – it can detect written text and allow you to copy and paste it, useful for things like WiFi passwords, addresses and dates, and even create calendar invites based on the information
- **Item identification** – it can help you to identify a species of bird or a flower that you snap with your phone

The big jump forward here is the combination of visual search with augmented reality. When you hold your camera up to a menu and click 'translation', the results aren't pulled into a SERP – they are superimposed on the image in real-time.

Google Multisearch

In April 2022, Google announced the next iteration of Google Lens: [Google Multisearch](#), which allows you to augment your visual search using text prompts.

For example, you could use Google Lens to search based on an black and white jacket that you like, and then add the query 'blue and white' to change the colour of the results.



Google Multisearch is really where Google is competing with TikTok, rather than YouTube Shorts. It addresses the rising appetite for visual answers and a resistance to waiting, scrolling and sifting through too much information. Ultimately it makes finding answers quicker and easier than ever.

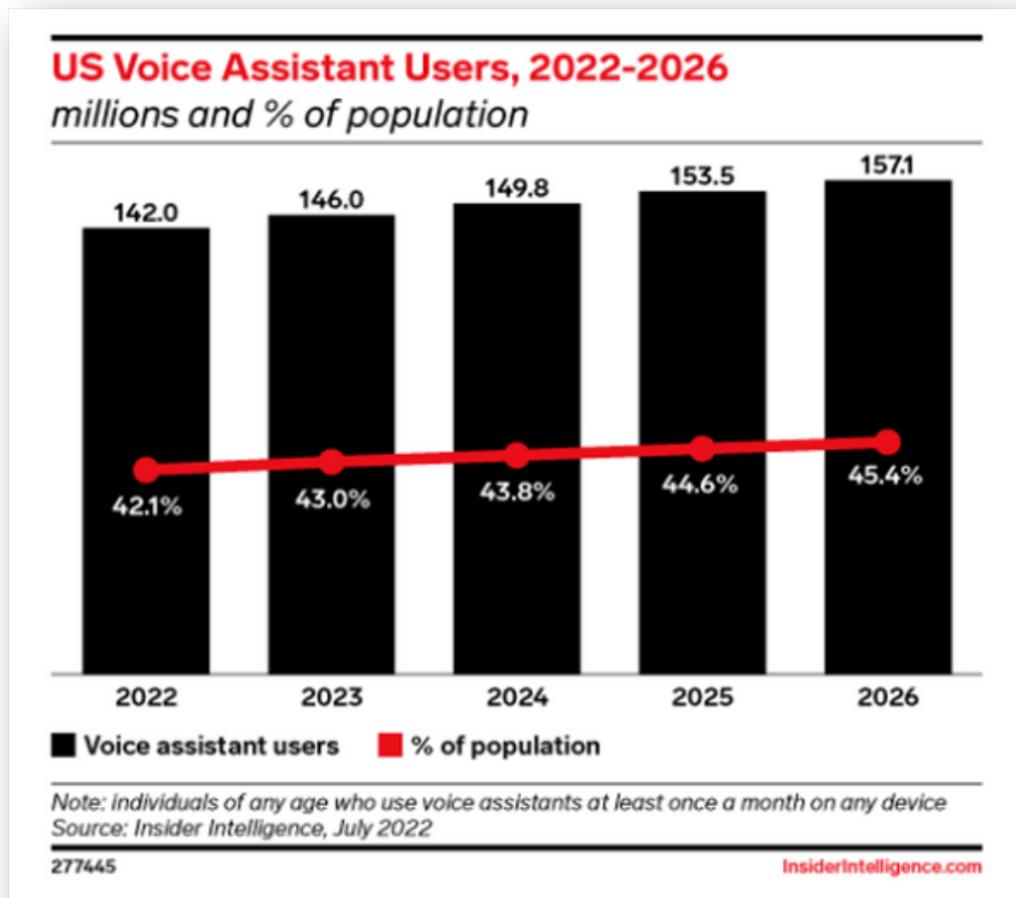


Voice search and the... plateau

Voice search and the... plateau

Around five years ago, SEOs were talking about voice search as a revolution in the way we seek and find information. Voice Assistants such as Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri and Google's Google Assistant have become part of everyday life for millions of people around the world.

A key reason for this is ease of use. It's quicker and more convenient for users to say what they are thinking instead of having to type it out, especially while out using their mobile or when they've got their hands full at home. This is exactly the trend we are seeing across social and visual search, too. Usage has plateaued at around 40-45% of the population in the countries where usage is highest, including the UK (46% in 2022, according to [Statista](#)).



However, the difference between voice search and text search is minimal from a technical perspective. Rather than typing out their search query, users speak it out loud and the software uses automatic speech recognition (ASR) to turn the audio into text. The impact that this has on SEO is that there are more searches for long-tail, question-based keywords that are phrased more conversationally than text searches.

For example:

Voice search	"Ok Google, who was the third wife of Henry VIII and how did she die?"
Text search	"Henry VIII 3rd wife death"

Talking to tech is the new norm

Now that voice search has been available to the mass market for a number of years, it is interesting to observe how people use it compared with other search channels. Back in 2018, [Bryson Meunier](#) did an analysis of 3,000 voice search queries of his own Google Home and found that 75% of them were 'device actions' like turning the lights on and off, setting timers and controlling the music. As Meunier said:

"When it comes to query intent and categories of queries used by my family over three months, usage may be high, but the opportunity for marketers is relatively low."

While certain content-driven niches may be able to benefit from voice search – for example, recipe providers, cinemas who want to advertise their listings, weather reporters, etc. – users aren't turning to voice search to browse the internet, visit brand websites or make new purchases.

In 2023, the conversation around voice search has died down among marketers, but it remains an important part of the wider search landscape.



Text search and the rise of AI

Text search and the rise of AI

ChatGPT saw a meteoric rise to fame in November 2022. It became the [fastest growing consumer application of all time](#), gaining more than 100 million users in the two months after launch.

How can AI be used in text search?

AI technology is revolutionising the way we search online. Rather than spending time trawling through endless irrelevant results, AI can help you discover the relevant answers quickly and effortlessly. It can identify keywords and phrases in the data, tailor website rankings to suit your exact requirements and even adjust outcomes based on past searches. Within a few clicks, you'll be able to find precisely what you're after.

What is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is a particular kind of natural language processing (NLP) which allows conversations with artificial intelligence-driven bots. By assessing the context of a discussion, ChatGPT can answer questions, make recommendations or even complete tasks such as customer service or sales. This groundbreaking technology is quickly gaining traction in chatbot design because of its highly engaging and personalised user experience. It can also be used for larger data collection projects for analytics and research purposes.

Considering the topic of this section, it may not come as a surprise to you that the last two paragraphs were written by AI. There were a few minor tweaks to the copy, but it has been taken almost verbatim from the suggestions given by Jasper, an AI content creation tool that we have been using as an agency for over a year now.

Explain how AI is affecting online search engine experience

AH

AI technology has greatly improved the online search engine experience by making searches more accurate and efficient. AI algorithms can quickly identify keywords and phrases in large amounts of data, helping to produce more relevant results for users. Furthermore, AI can help optimize website results for specific keywords and personalize the search based on a user's previous searches. As a result, searches have become faster and easier than ever before, allowing us to find the answers we need with just a few clicks.



Make it less formal

AH

AI technology is transforming the way we search online. Instead of spending time scrolling through tons of irrelevant results, AI helps you find relevant answers faster and easier. It can pinpoint keywords and phrases in data, tweak website rankings to match your specific needs, and even tailor results based on your previous searches. In just a few clicks, you'll be able to find exactly what you're looking for!



Explain the rise of ChatGPT

AH

ChatGPT is a natural language processing (NLP) technology that enables conversations with AI-powered bots. By analyzing the context of a conversation, ChatGPT can answer questions, provide recommendations, and even complete tasks like customer service and sales. This revolutionary technology is quickly becoming popular in chatbot design as it provides an engaging and personalized user experience. Additionally, ChatGPT can be used to perform large scale data collection for analytics and research purposes.



Make it UK english

AH

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The battle between Google and Bing

AI chatbot technology has been around for years in various applications – usually gated by paywalls – but we’re at an important break-through moment now as both Google and Bing are incorporating it into their free search offering.

Many commentators are wondering whether Microsoft’s acquisition of OpenAI, the company that developed ChatGPT, is their most significant challenge to Google’s dominance in the search arena to date. [Satya Nadella](#), Chairman and CEO of Microsoft, said at a press conference on 7 February 2023:

“AI will fundamentally change every software category, starting with the largest category of all – search.”

Not to be outdone, Google announced the launch of its [own AI chatbot, Bard](#), the day before Microsoft. However, [Google stock prices were hit](#) when an incorrect response from Bard caused consumer trust in the technology to wobble.

When asked “what is Google doing to compete with AI chatbots?”, Jasper answered with information about Google Duplex, which is its voice-based AI offering. It was announced that Duplex was retired from the web [in December 2022](#). Jasper has missed both the Google Bard announcement and the retirement of Duplex, and has given an answer that is completely out of date in a fast-moving industry. This exposes one of the main hurdles of the current crop of AI tools: keeping their indexes up to date.

How do these developments affect marketers?

An entire whitepaper could be written on AI chatbots alone – their use cases, weaknesses, developmental issues and the ethical quandaries they present, especially for education. The focus here is on how they may affect search and the people who harness search engine marketing for a living.

I think it's very important to reiterate how new this technology is in the public search sphere. We can't confidently say how it will affect the average person's search habits, or what marketers can do about it. AI chatbots are not perfect fonts of absolute fact and wisdom, and the technology has a long way to go in terms of developing, learning and growing. I think that [Sam Altman](#), the CEO of OpenAI, says it best:



Sam Altman  @sama · 11 Dec 2022



ChatGPT is incredibly limited, but good enough at some things to create a misleading impression of greatness.

it's a mistake to be relying on it for anything important right now. it's a preview of progress; we have lots of work to do on robustness and truthfulness.

 920

 4,244

 28.8K





Search strategies for 2023 and beyond

Search strategies for 2023 and beyond

The diversification of the search landscape can feel intimidating. We're at a pivot point of changing user habits and emerging tech that could revolutionise how we search.

This section will highlight some strategies that marketers can adopt to take advantage of the changes in social and visual search.

Unsiloing search and social

The preference for social search – with a spotlight on TikTok, but not forgetting YouTube and Pinterest – may seem like a massive shift in user behaviour, but from a marketing perspective I would argue that we can adapt pretty easily.

"The search landscape may have shifted into social, but the psychology of how we seek information online hasn't changed."

To understand this we need to wind back to the fundamentals of search marketing. At the dawn of the search engine, marketers had a revelation: they didn't have to identify the right message, find the right audience and engage them while in a buying mindset like they did offline. Instead, the buyer would show up when they wanted something, type in exactly what they needed and all marketers had to do was be found by them. The key to knowing what their audience wanted and making sure that their brand was visible to them was keyword research.

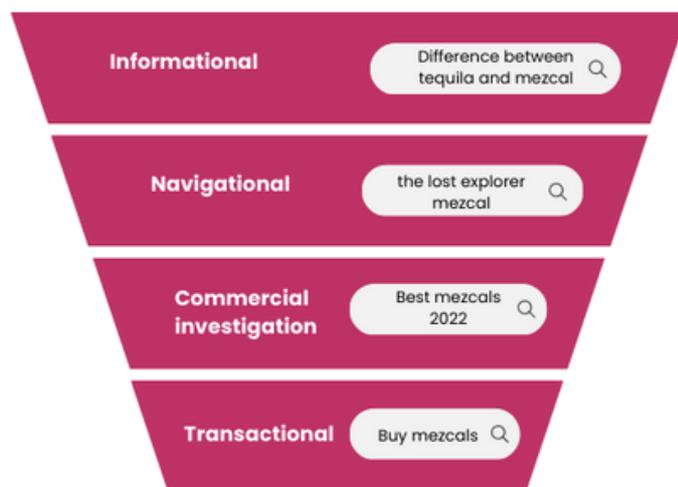


Understanding user intent

Understanding user intent

A huge part of SEO has always been understanding what people are searching for. It is common to use a search intent model like this one as a way of categorising keyword data:

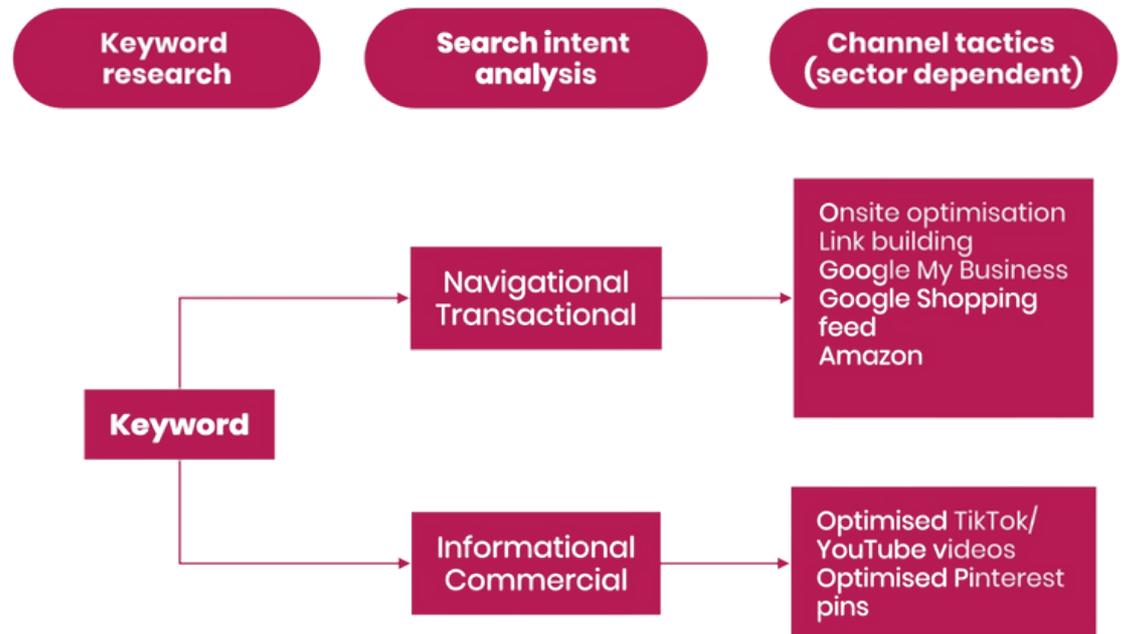
- **Informational** search queries at the top of the funnel show an intent to find out information on a topic; they tend to be more long-tail and often include questions
- **Navigational** search queries show an intent to visit a specific website
- **Commercial investigation** search queries sit further down the funnel at a point when a searcher does seem to be interested in buying something but they're not sure what to choose yet; often modifiers like 'best', 'top' or 'reviews' are used
- **Transactional** key phrases at the bottom of the funnel show an intent to buy



Search marketers are used to serving these intents with different tactics per channel. Traditionally informational key phrases are served by text-based blog posts. SEO and PPC can be used to target specific key phrases further down the funnel.

And this is still true - but now we have more platforms than ever that can be used to serve those different intents aside from Google.

Serving user intent on more platforms



The process is very similar: carry out keyword research, categorise the data based on search intent, but then consider where your audience is mostly likely to be entering those queries online.

In all likelihood, your website will still be important for **navigational** and **transactional** phrases. Traditional SEO techniques such as onsite optimisation, link building and the optimisation of your Google My Business profile and Google Shopping feed are all extremely important for ensuring visibility online. If you are an e-commerce brand, Amazon is an extremely important player when it comes to taking advantage of transactional searches happening outside of the Google ecosystem.

For your **informational** and **commercial investigation** phrases, however, you might want to think about providing content in a more visual format on TikTok, YouTube or Pinterest. These platforms are great for an intent to learn, get inspiration, discern between products or be reassured by social proof.

TikTok, YouTube or Pinterest?



Demographic

Age 16-34
Male and female
Global

All ages
Male and female
Global

All ages
Female (+75%)
USA, Europe,
S. America

Top categories

Fitness and sports
Home reno and DIY
Beauty and skincare
Fashion
Recipes and cooking
Life hacks and advice

Makeup
Fitness
Tech
Reviews
Gaming
Educational

Travel
Health and wellness
Home reno and DIY
Style and beauty
Food and drink

Format

Short form videos,
shot and edited from
a phone

Long or short
form videos,
edited out of app

Image or video Pins
linking to a
web page

How to optimise for social search

While it might seem intimidating to optimise all of your content across multiple platforms, it's a simple task in reality. The social algorithms for search are much less sophisticated than Google's. Keyword stuffing is not a danger and link building is not necessary. You can increase your visibility by using some basic optimisation techniques.

“In essence, social optimisation for search is about helping the crawler to make sense of your content and understand if it's related to a specific search topic.”

Two golden rules for social search optimisation:

1. Wherever a crawler (or reader) may come across text in your post, you can add a key phrase

Add your key phrase to the video or pin title and description, in any on-image text (the crawler can recognise text over graphics) and in hashtags.

2. Structure your content thematically on your profile

This is important for YouTube and Pinterest, which allow you to group content together in playlists (YouTube) and boards (Pinterest). Make sure that their titles use a relevant key phrase, and select any relevant categories to give the crawler as much context for your content as possible.

TikTok optimisation guide

Optimise your videos for search:

1.

Do keyword research and choose a topic that you could answer.

Eg. Secret Santa gift ideas, Secret Santa under £10



2.

Add your keyword as in-video text.

E.g. Secret Santa gift ideas for under £10

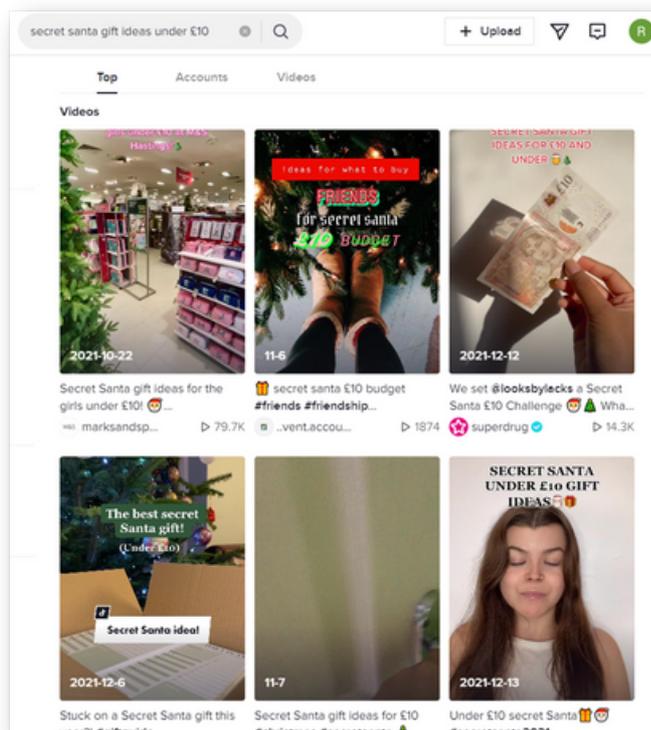


3.

Include relevant keywords in the caption and hashtags, like:

Secret Santa gift ideas for under £10. Find the best Christmas present for your budget this year.

#secretsanta #christmaspresent #giftideas



TikTok optimisation guide

Optimise your videos for the platform:

Search is only one way that users might encounter your videos. It's important that you remember TikTok best practice when it comes to video creation and posting.

- **Keep them short** - video completion has a high weight in the algorithm, so keep them short and make the first 2-3 seconds count
- **Use trending sounds** - when users interact with a video that uses an audio track, the algorithm recommends others that feature the same track, so using trending sounds can improve visibility
- **Post timing** - post regularly (several times each week) and use analytics to identify when your audience is most active



YouTube optimisation guide

Optimise your videos for search:

- 1.** Do keyword research and choose a topic that you could answer.
E.g. Sustainable cities, Sustainable cities and communities, Why are sustainable cities important
- 2.** Add your most important keyword in the video file name and video title (<70 characters).
E.g. Why-are-sustainable-cities-important, Why are sustainable cities important? | With Professor Expert
- 3.** Include your keyword(s) in the video description (<1,000 characters, truncated after 100).
E.g. As populations rise and resources are strained, it's more important than ever that we focus on sustainable cities and communities... [etc.]
- 4.** Select relevant video tags that relate to the video itself and its wider relevance.
E.g. Sustainable cities, sustainability, urban planning
- 5.** Select a video category from YouTube's list - this can help it to become 'recommended for you' content.
E.g. Education, science and technology

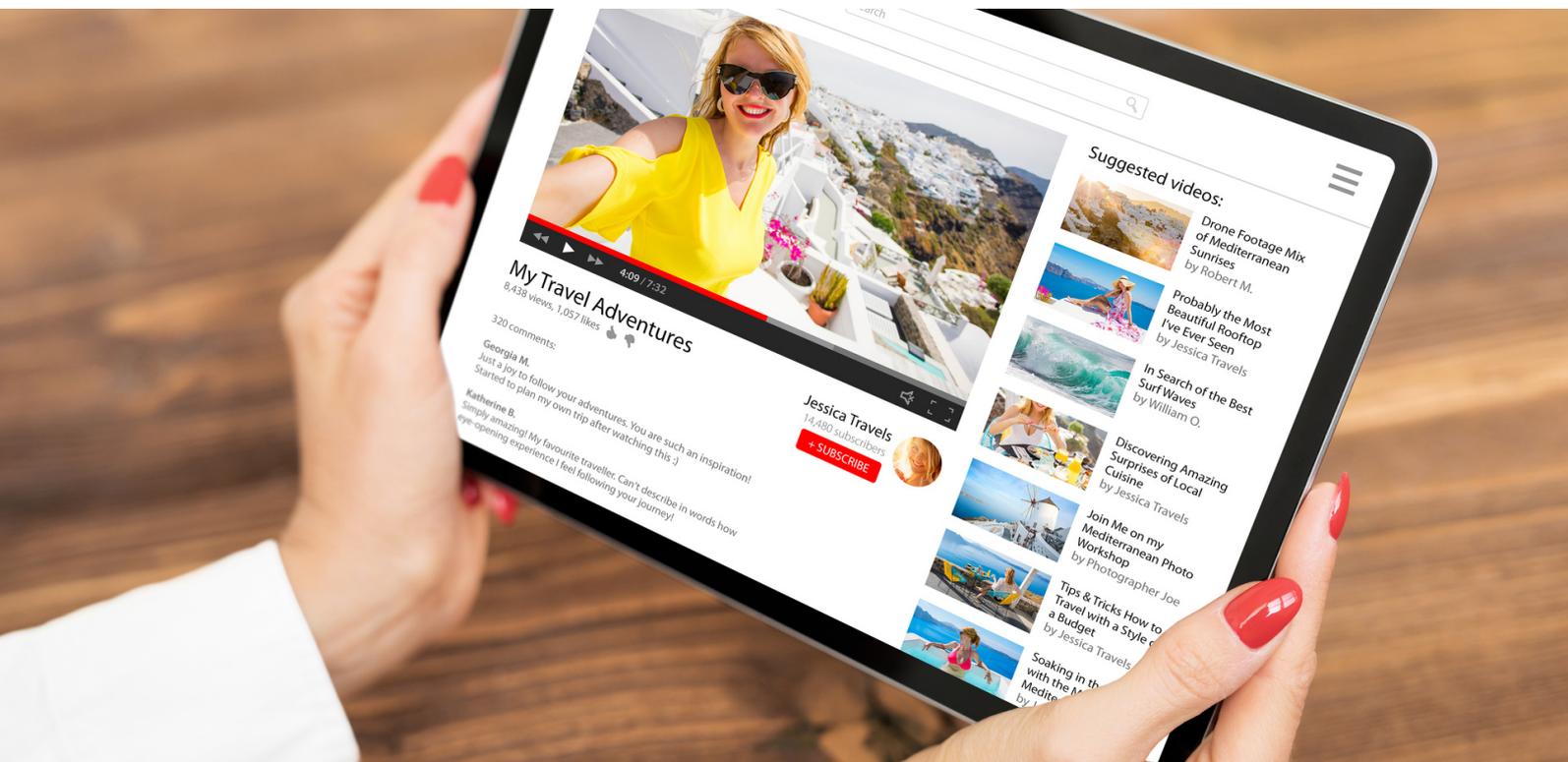


YouTube optimisation guide

Optimise your videos for the platform:

It's important that you consider the user as well as the algorithm. Here are some recommendations for improving click-through rates to your videos from YouTube search results.

- **Custom thumbnails** - create a custom thumbnail for each video that will entice the searcher to pick your video from the search results; include a small amount of text in a large font that communicates what the video is about
- **Video title** - as well as the SEO recommendations above, keep it snappy and engaging
- **End screens** - these appear at the end of the video and allow you to add links to various places on YouTube; take advantage of YouTube's templates that allow you to link to another video, a playlist and a subscribe button



Pinterest optimisation guide

Optimise your pins for search:

1.

Do keyword research and choose a topic that you could answer
Eg. *Small kitchen ideas Kitchen design small*



2.

Include 1-2 keywords in your pin name and pin description
E.g. *Small kitchen ideas | [Brand Name] When it comes to kitchen design, small spaces offer lots of opportunities for clever storage solutions. Take a look at our blog post for some innovative small kitchen ideas. #smallkitchenideas #smallkitchen #kitchendesign*



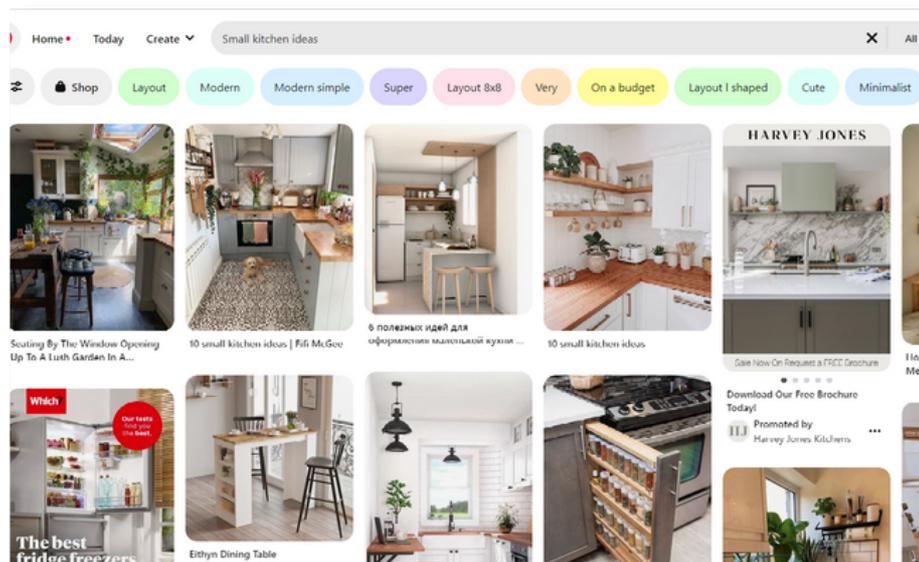
3.

Include your main keyword in a text overlay on the pin image itself
E.g. *Small kitchen ideas*



4.

Save pins to relevant boards that share keywords on the same topic
E.g. *Kitchen design*

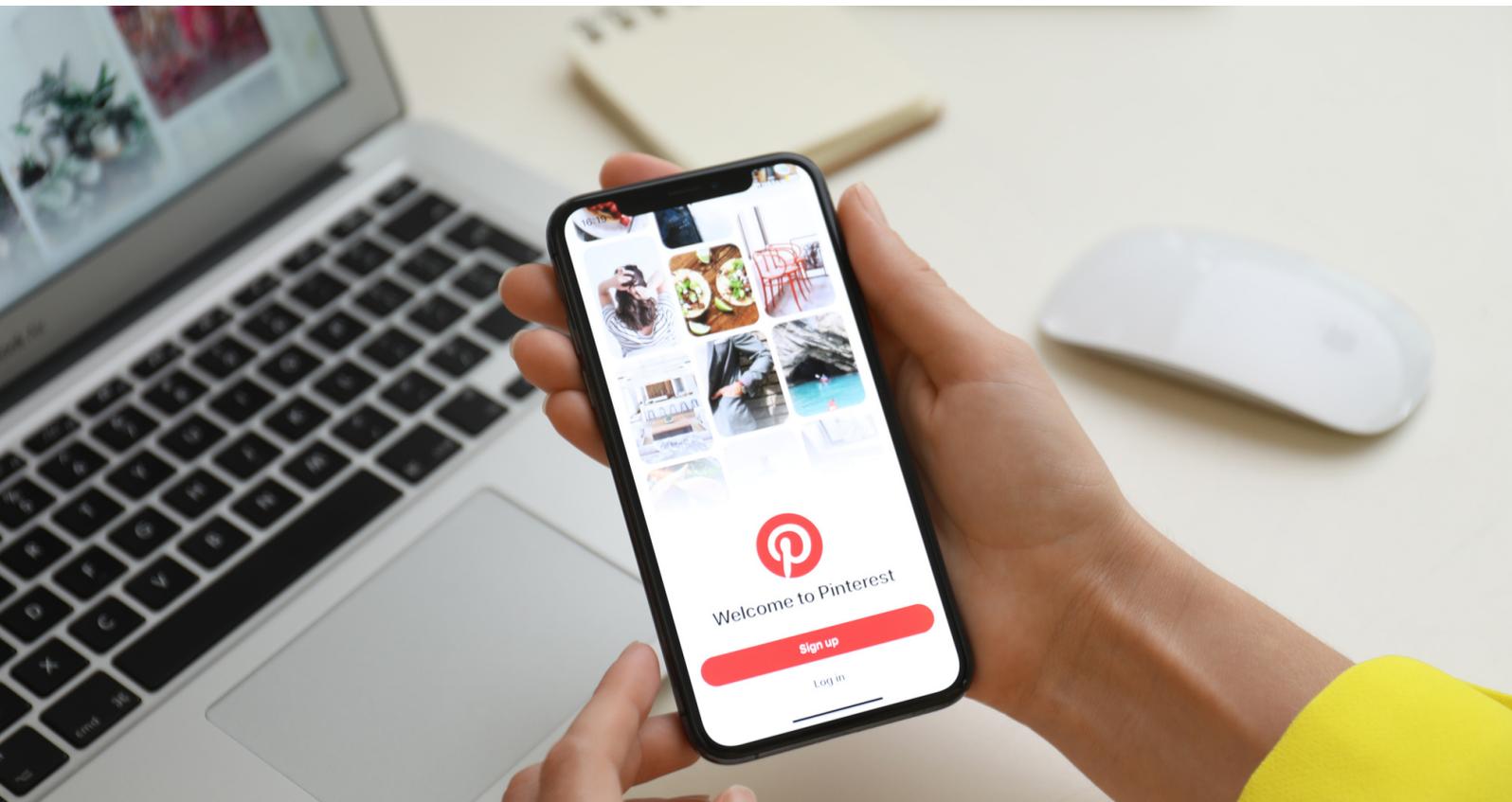


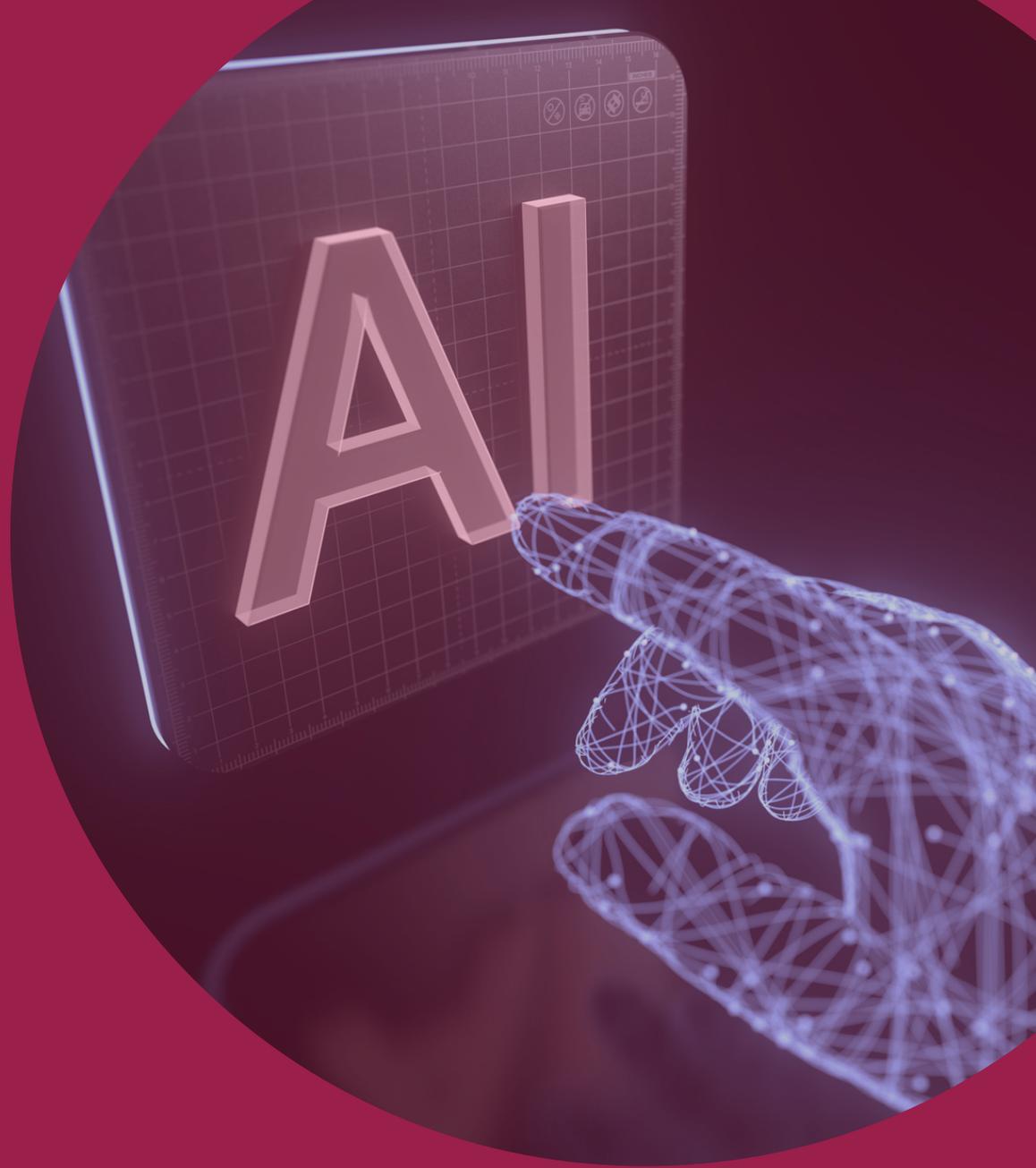
Pinterest optimisation guide

Optimise for the platform:

While TikTok and YouTube are geared towards keeping their users on the platform by serving native content, Pinterest is more of a traffic generation tool. Every pin has to link to a URL, so it offers a great opportunity to get new users to your site.

- Make sure that **each pin links to your site**, not to your Instagram page or other online sources, to take advantage of referral traffic
- **Link to the most relevant page** on your website (eg. a blog post) rather than your homepage to ensure a seamless user journey from Pinterest





AI and its place in search

AI and its place in search

Earlier in this section it was stated that the way we seek information online hasn't fundamentally changed - and that is correct, in the context of social searching. The same is true of voice search, which still relies on a user inputting (ie. speaking) keywords into a search engine to return relevant results. These keywords can be analysed to understand the searcher's intent.

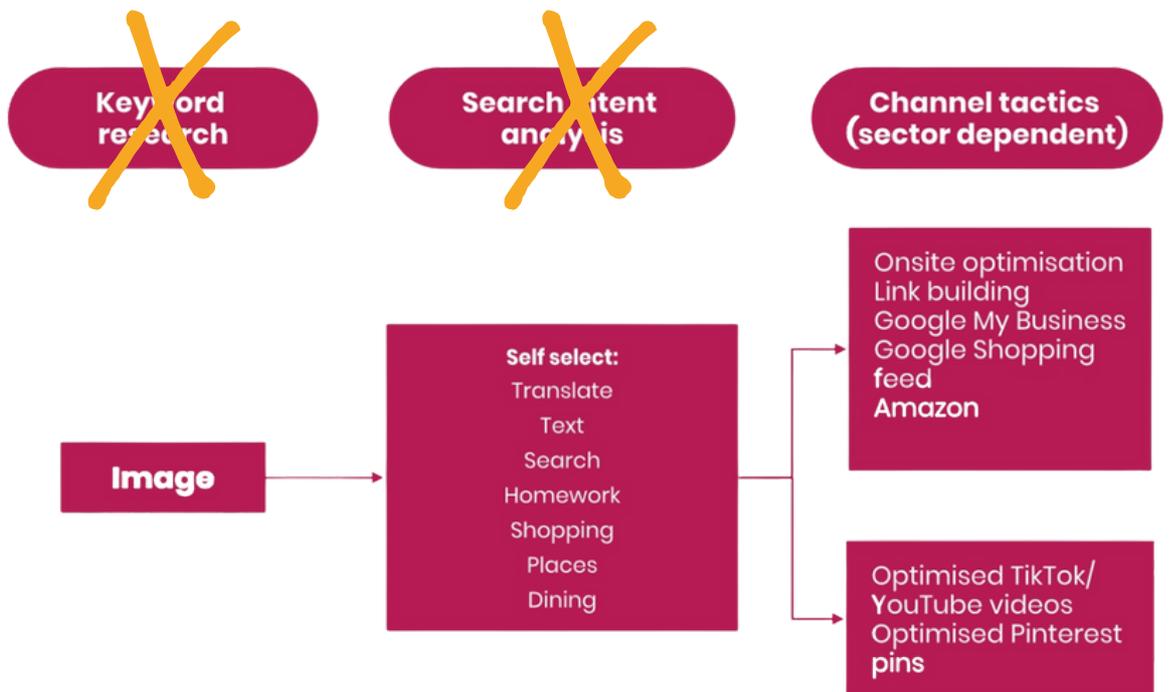
Visual search

When it comes to visual search, the intent-based model that SEOs are familiar with is being disrupted. Rather than providing a key phrase with modifiers that help to return the right kind of result, searchers input an image they have taken with their camera.

Why is this important?

1. As every image is user generated and reflects what the searcher sees in front of them at that time, every search query could potentially be unique - making search volume hard to accurately quantify
2. An image on its own doesn't indicate any search intent - on Google Lens, users select what they intended to find out using their image by scrolling through the ribbon at the bottom of the screen

To our knowledge, Google does not give SEOs any information about what identifiers are most used in images for visual search or what intent the searcher went on to select. This essentially means that keyword research is impossible for visual search.



How can SEOs optimise for visual search queries?

Visual search is never going to completely replace text search, because it has its limitations. While it might be quicker to snap a photo of a plant you pass in the park and do a Google Lens search to find out what species it is, how would you perform a visual search for something like “what is hyperconverged infrastructure” or “best places to travel in April”? Keyword research – based on text searches – is still going to be a vital source of information when it comes to understanding what users want and creating content to serve it.

The big change is how those users access your website from the search engine. Anyone who has used visual search will have noticed that the SERPs tend to be more visual. Although the ‘Search’ tab can pull through traditional text results like a mobile search, often queries will generate image-led results. The ‘Shopping’ and ‘Places’ tabs are entirely visual. This drives home the need for a proper image optimisation strategy for your website.

“If you want your website to be found in visual search, image optimisation is vital.”

Image optimisation guide

1. Balance image quality and file size

Tech SEOs will always recommend reducing the size and weight of web images in accordance with Google's [guidelines on site speed](#). While it's still essential to keep images as light as possible, images shouldn't be low-resolution or blurry. This might make it more difficult for Google to identify it as a match for a visual search query - plus, it's likely to get a bad CTR if it isn't clear to users what is being shown in the image.

2. Optimise image file names, alt tags and captions

The AI that is used to interpret images does so by generating descriptors for what it finds (eg. green, shoe, lace-up, Nike, etc.). These descriptors are then compared with all of the results in its index. The more context you give to the images on your site, the easier you make it for the crawler to find and retrieve a visual result to pull into the SERPs.

For example:



File name: pink-axolotl-on-rock.jpg

Alt text: A pink axolotl perches on a rock in an aquarium

Caption: We think that axolotls rock!

Note that, regardless of image optimisation, alt text for images is also an important accessibility measure. People who use screen readers rely on it to understand what an image is about.

3. Use proper structured data markup and add an image sitemap

Again, this is about making it as easy as possible for a search engine crawler to navigate your site and retrieve the information it needs to rank your images. You can find out more about schema markup options [here](#) and image sitemaps [here](#).

Chatbot search

There are still many unknown factors and moving parts when it comes to AI chatbots, but there is one actionable insight that search marketers can take away at this point in time:

“Chatbots can only analyse what they find in their index. And their index is the internet.”

Without web content, chatbots are useless. They only work if brands, institutions, publishers and individuals are continuously adding new, fresh, accurate information to websites. The relationship has to be symbiotic.

It can be easy to use new AI tools to make content production quicker and cheaper, but brands should think carefully before relying wholly on AI-generated content for their websites. Instead, think about how to provide your audience with a fresh take, a tailored response or a new insight. Rather than churning out four generic AI-made blog posts a month, concentrate on one human-made piece that offers something new to the user – and the internet.

And if users decide that they prefer finding information through chatbots and our websites stop getting organic traffic? We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it – because human beings are excellent problem solvers.

Key Takeaways

The search landscape is much broader than just text-based search in search engines, driven by:

- **Changes in user behaviour** - users are searching for information, inspiration and social proof in more platforms than ever
- **Developments in tech** - there have been gigantic leaps forward in AI and how it can improve voice, visual and chatbot search



Users want a simpler, easier and more visual search journey than they find in traditional text search

- The popularity of TikTok as a search engine stems from the ease with which searchers can find and consume the information they're looking for, provided by creators they can "trust"
- Voice and visual search both cater to those who don't find it convenient to type out search queries, or find it hard to express what they want to search for with words

Key Takeaways

Younger demographics have been the first to branch out from traditional search, but it's likely that older generations will follow

- Brands need to be aware of these developments and how best to serve their audience's search intent on whatever platform they choose to find information



Now is the time for brands to engage with these behavioural shifts and technological developments - can you truly say that you're ready for **the future of search?**



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