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Brand Discoverability in the AI Age

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If you're a marketer, you undoubtedly know that Search is well past the cusp of fundamental change.

As context, Google's search market share has fallen below 90% for the first time in a decade. And just this last May, Google searches in Safari fell for the first time in its 22-year history.

While these movements are simply two data points that are part of a larger picture, web search —as we once knew it— is being redefined and marketers need to make some strategic changes to how they work. This is the AI age.

LLMs are changing the Search game

The eye-watering speed of growth in active users amongst LLMs, such as ChatGPT, signals that more and more people are turning to Generative Engines as their default mode of web search. With their conversational interfaces, rich context, and ability to deliver incisive recommendations – plus advanced features like Deep Research – it's hardly a leap to conclude that AI, in generative form, is likely driving the initial signs of erosion to Google's search dominance. Even Sam Altman himself admits to being surprised about the level of trust people have in AI generated answers.

That all said, the role of AI as the new 'matchmaker' between consumers and brands, especially in the early stages of a relationship, is becoming increasingly elevated. The added challenge for marketers is, that unlike the tried and tested business models of SEM, we can't (at least not currently) pay generative engines to put brands at the top of the list.

So, what can marketers do to maximize discoverability in the AI age?

Invest in Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) is one of many emerging acronyms in the AI age – referring to the practice of optimizing content to appear in AI-driven search results, such as Google's AI Overviews or OpenAI's ChatGPT.

GEO provides a future-looking approach to site optimization: it's been contended that traffic from generative engines is worth up to 4.4x compared to traditional, organic search. Where SEO was primarily focused on optimizing Google's algorithm, the AI search space is still nascent with few best practices or standards. While ChatGPT and Google's Gemini are household names, that doesn't necessarily mean they'll be the LLMs of choice next year or the year after. Other models like Claude, Llama or DeepSeek are emerging quickly, so it's important for marketers to know that content and technical investments made on websites will continue to pay off as the industry evolves.

So, how does GEO work?

GEO can provide recommendations that are LLM-agnostic because they're based on the underlying shared principles of how LLMs crawl and interpret content. While traditional search engines rely on crawling and indexing webpage content through links and metadata, LLMs like ChatGPT operate differently. These models are trained on vast datasets that include a wide variety of web content, documentation, books, and other structured and unstructured sources. Rather than relying solely on keyword frequency or link structures, LLMs assess the semantic quality and clarity

of content. This means they prioritize well-structured information, consistent topical focus, and language that reflects natural human intent and helpfulness. Clear hierarchy, concise answers, credible context, and user signals all play a role in how information is ranked or surfaced in generative outputs.

Fundamentally, LLMs excel at identifying patterns and relationships between concepts. Content that aligns with user intent, answers common questions succinctly, and demonstrates topical authority is more likely to surface in AI-generated answers. This is why GEO emphasizes fundamentals like E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness) and semantic clarity. These principles are broadly understood across LLMs, making them key levers for visibility regardless of which platform is generating the answer.

Getting started

To improve visibility in generative search, marketers need to go beyond the tried and tested SEO principles and invest in a strategic, LLM content framework. Gartner believes that 'quality and authenticity will be focal points' for generative engine search, therefore, it's no longer enough to just include keywords or publish frequently; content must be deeply authoritative, semantically rich, and contextually aligned with how LLMs infer meaning and relevance. This requires rethinking everything from information architecture to how expertise is demonstrated across digital touchpoints like Reddit and Wikipedia. It's a high bar that demands technical acumen, editorial discipline, and an understanding of how AI models process language, structure, and intent.

Admittedly, it's early days for GEO. Considering the rate of change in the generative engine space, it's conceivable that everything we believe today about brand discoverability through AI could be completely overturned in 12 months. Regardless, it's vital to gain experience in this emerging discipline now in order to stay ahead for the future – only then will marketers start to gain some control and influence over how brands are experienced through generative AI.

To learn more about MRM and the future of brand discoverability, reach out to: hello@mrm.com.

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Jon Taylor
Global Chief Data Officer, MRM

Jon is Global Chief Data Officer at MRM, where he leads a worldwide team of data strategists, audience specialists, analysts, and data scientists dedicated to helping clients build enduring customer relationships. With two decades of experience in data-driven marketing, he has played a hands-on role in the evolution of the field— shaping platform-based media, establishing global programmatic networks, creating new audience data products, and building high-performing teams that serve some of the world's most valuable brands.

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About MRM

MRM is a modern relationship marketing agency that builds enduring relationships between people and businesses.

MRM's core capabilities help grow relationship lifetime value, and span across CRM & Loyalty, Customer Experience, Commerce and MarTech, underpinned by Data & Analytics.

MRM operates in a borderless, integrated way, to allow for greater collaboration and velocity. MRM is part of McCann Worldgroup and the Interpublic Group of companies (NYSE: IPG), and spans 35 offices across North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific.

For more information, please visit www.mrm.com

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