

# The GenAI Shift:

New Discovery Patterns and the Next Wave of Advertising Spend

GenAI is rapidly becoming the first stop for consumer discovery. As more early-stage research moves into GenAI chat interfaces, top-funnel search and open-web traffic decline. Yet deeper product research, shopping activity and purchase intent remain strong, preserving performance in mid- and lower-funnel channels.

The landscape is evolving quickly, and future GenAI capabilities such as surfacing real-time coupons could further reshape how consumers navigate the journey.



## GenAI becomes the new front door

Consumers increasingly begin discovery in GenAI instead of Google or the open web. Quick, synthesized answers replace many informational queries, reducing early-stage browsing and shifting how users obtain initial product recommendations.



## What drops and what holds

Top-funnel browsing is declining as GenAI resolves informational queries directly.

Across Sept 2024-Aug 2025, total traffic to the **top 500 news and media** sites fell ~9%, and **search-driven referrals** fell ~10%, reflecting **rising "no-click" behavior**.

Despite this, mid- and lower-funnel behaviors hold steady as **consumers still rely on search and commerce platforms for reviews**, visuals and shopping-oriented queries (especially for considered purchases).

## Channels with momentum

Closed ecosystems continue to gain traction because discovery and engagement already happen in-platform.



### Social commerce

Shopping directly inside social platforms with in-app checkout



### Influencer

Creator recommendations that guide product consideration



### Retail media

Ads on retailer sites using shopper data to reach high-intent buyers

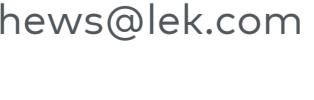
Social commerce spend is projected to grow at **~15% CAGR through 2029**, and personalization on retailer sites can lift conversion and cross-sell by **30%-40%**.

Together, these channels maintain strong performance as intent concentrates downstream.

## Channels under pressure



Search, open web display, and review sites lose upper funnel traffic as GenAI absorbs informational queries.



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