

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE FOCUS: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM SEARCH BEYOND GOOGLE



INTRODUCTION



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Many years ago, around the time when the word “programmatic” had just entered digital advertising and we were all losing our minds trying to explain what “real-time bidding” meant to our clients, I was asked to give a talk at a pharmaceutical client regarding the importance of search.

Now, being young, enthusiastic, and facing a room of 200 + highly specialised health care professionals busy saving the world, I thought it best if I opened with a joke. I delivered my wisdom to a large and very silent room.

IT IS A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ANYONE GOOGLING THEIR SYMPTOMS IS CONVINCED THEY ARE ABOUT TO DIE.

(10 points if you get the Jane Austen reference)

And 7 years later I can say without a doubt, it is less a truth universally acknowledged and very much a universal behaviour.

We all search for information all the time, not only when we are sick. To put it into perspective:

Google processes over 8.5 billion searches a day. Back in 1998 Google was processing just over 10,000 search queries per day. So yes, things certainly have escalated.

How Many Google Searches are conducted per Day?

Google processes over

8.5 BILLION

searches per day.

Fun fact:



15%

of the searches Google processes every day are brand new. Source: Google

Seeking out answers is not new to people's behaviour, what has changed is the landscape of search itself and where people are going to seek out information relating to products, services, and entertainment. There is also a tendency by marketers to view search from a highly functional and mid-to lower funnel perspective despite being a highly emotive data-filled landscape.

The very phrase or syntax that a person uses to search for an answer tells us a lot about where they are in their journey.

There is a brilliant TED talk by Seth Stephen-Davidowitz **The Secrets in our Google Searches** where he talks about how Google is essentially Truth Serum – how we tell it all our fears, our worries, our secrets and our hopes and dreams, and we then expect it to answer us. Google's **Year in Search** is a brilliant summary of this thinking.

When people seek out various sources of information online, search behaviour cannot be underestimated as it relates to social media. And as far as emotional and functional resolution goes there is a strong need for emotional resolution when it comes to decision making. Emotions often shape decisions. You can therefore argue that having a discovery mindset on social media is as much search driven as on Google or YouTube. The rise of social search has been one of

the fastest growing and evolving behaviors in the last few years with younger audiences accelerating this change even further. This paper will look to offer a perspective on what is considered the shift from a traditional understanding of what search is,

to how it has expanded beyond the first page of Google into a much richer platform landscape across social;

some filled with an infinite number of dancing teenagers and all of it filled with a treasure trove of customer and audience insights.

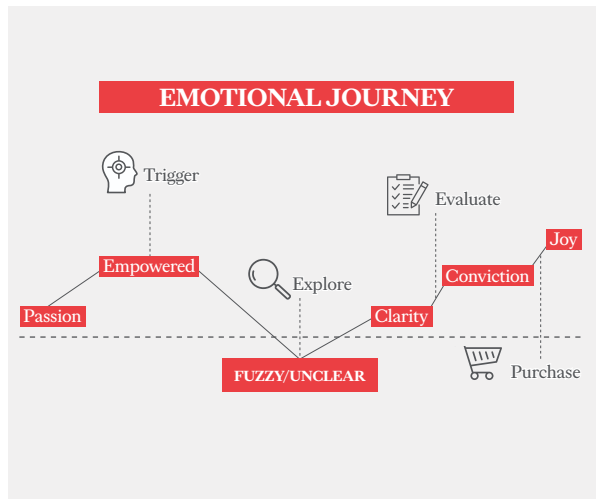
Not only is search a major source of data for marketers, planners, and creatives alike, but it is also super easy to get to grips with.

And I will share some nifty free tools at the end of each of the paper to help get you started.



SEARCH AND THE CONSUMER JOURNEY

What better place to start than the customer journey?



Source: Think with Google

Remember we spoke about search being as much an emotive landscape as it is a functional one? The latest research from Google reinforces that.

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY IS MARKED BY EMOTIONS AND PEOPLE WANT TO FEEL CERTAINTY AND CONFIDENCE BEFORE THEY MAKE A PURCHASE

Source: Google/Kantar/Quantum, Emotional Value of Search, 2021.

Whether seeking an answer through Google or Amazon; researching an answer on YouTube or TikTok, the reality is that when a consumer is not sure, they want to feel convinced. In the same way, when a searcher is confused, they want clarity. What this means is that people are searching for information to attain that emotional resolution and where they are seeking out this resolution is happening across both Social and Google, often coupled together. Whether presented as a product listing, images, videos or stories, digital platforms are constantly evolving

in the way they present users with information. What this means is that at every stage of the customer journey there are incredibly rich insights to be found and leveraged. Some of my other favorite search insights from 2021 include:

HOW TO MOVE WITH PLANTS WAS SEARCHED MORE THAN HOW TO MOVE WITH KIDS AND HOW TO MOVE WITH PETS GLOBALLY.

And

LOVE YOU IN SIGN LANGUAGE WAS SEARCHED MORE THAN EVER BEFORE WORLDWIDE.

Source: Google's Year in Search

Each insight presents a potential rich and emotive territory for understanding people and psychographic characteristics such as interests and choices, affording a powerful customer lens that can be applied to a brand.

Search also unlocks insights into more practical consumer behaviors as we know that people (myself included) use search to optimise their lives.

WHETHER IT IS TAKING A VACATION OR GOING OUT TO DINNER, PEOPLE CURATE THEIR EXPERIENCES BEFORE THEY GO...

Source: Google's Year in Search

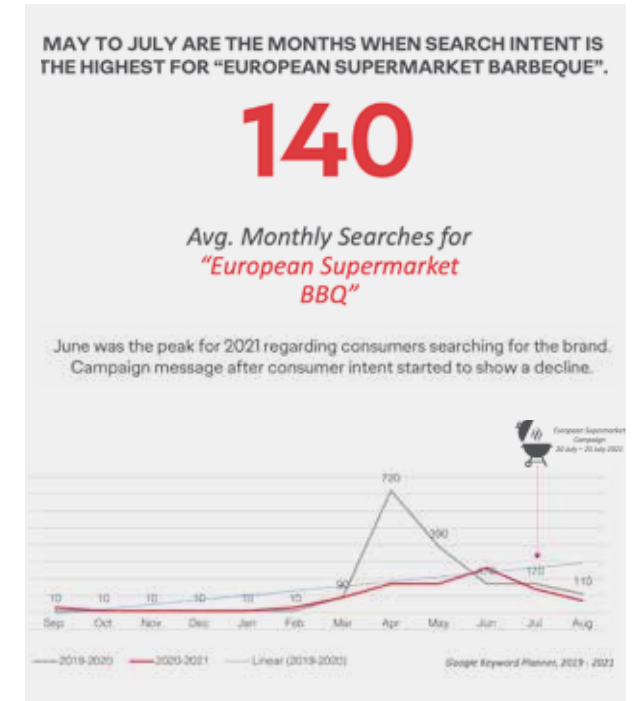
For marketers, understanding the different moments and mindsets of your customers as they are planning an experience or purchase presents an opportunity to become a part of their consideration set early

on in their decision-making process. One of the easiest things a brand can do with this data is to measure their content and social marketing calendars against search behaviour. This includes optimising your website content to ensure findability online. A good example of this (but not limited to) is around seasonality.

Let us take for example BBQ season (or as we say in South Africa, braai time).

The retail brand in the example to the right tended to communicate their BBQ specials towards the end of July, the hottest summer month.

Via a quick search intent analysis, data showed a misalignment between the target audience's intent and the brand's social content calendar.




Study is reflective of the Belgium market

While the brand communicated their BBQ specials towards the peak of summer on social media, consumer behaviour showed that interest, planning, and intent starts building as early as April and, tends to begin declining over July and into August. Communicating in July was accurate, yet additional opportunities existed to expand the efficacy of this by entering people's BBQ planning cycle earlier.

By aligning search data to your brand's content calendar, you put the customer at the heart of your communication approach, ensuring you show up in moments that are relevant and which matters to them.

WHERE TO START



Google trends




Google Year in Search



Answer the public



SOCIAL DISCOVERY
THROUGH SEARCH
DRIVEN BEHAVIOUR



Social media users have seen even faster growth than internet users over the past decade and become an integral part of business marketing strategies. Social commerce has changed the way consumers shop and prefer to buy and with it, the rise of influence and conversational commerce have in turn redefined the online experience and customer journey.

The result? Social is immensely data rich and should be a key consideration when it comes to surfacing consumer insights. The good news is that it is also mostly free for marketers to leverage.

2.1 YOUTUBE

THE TYPICAL YOUTUBE USER NOW SPENDS ALMOST A FULL DAY, 23.7 HOURS, PER MONTH USING YOUTUBE'S MOBILE APP.

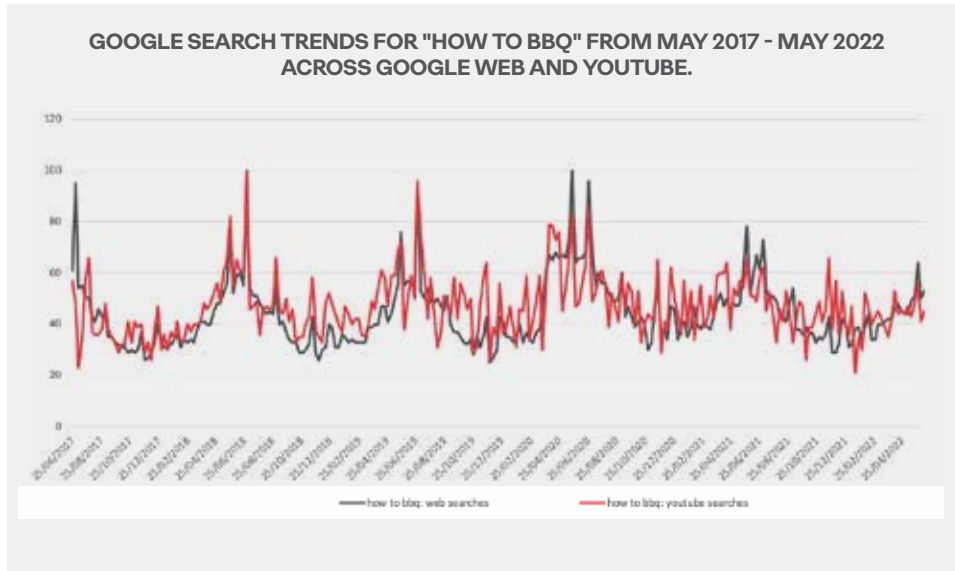
Source: App Annie X We are Social; 2022

YouTube may only be 15 years old, but it has long been considered the second biggest search engine with over 14 billion monthly visits. As a result, the platform has only gotten stronger, and more insights driven over time and there are so many possibilities as it relates to surfacing audience insights.

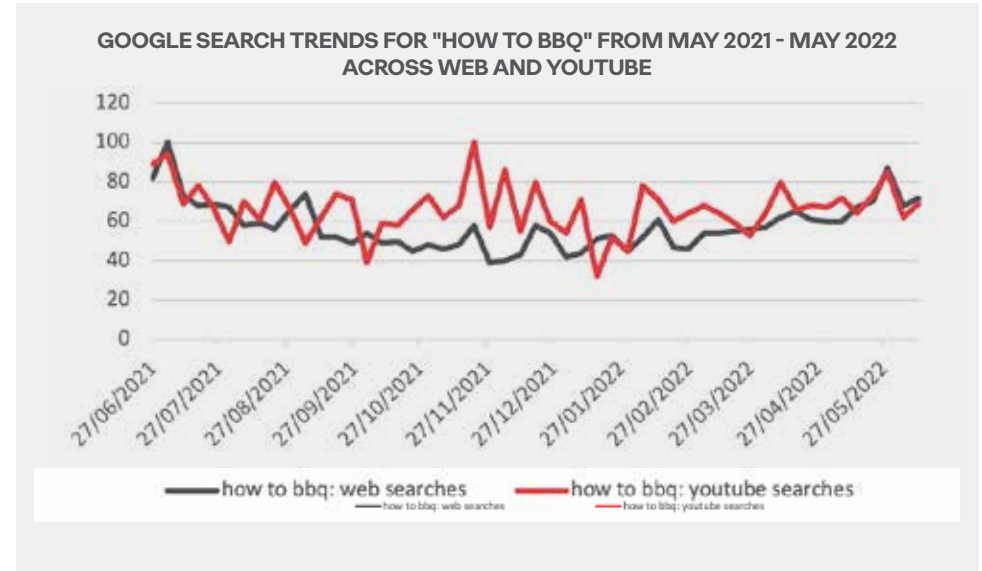
How it differs from our traditional understanding of search is in how it connects brands to customers. It uses traditional search mechanics to connect videos to people – helping them to find what they are looking for. Considering that YouTube receives more than 2 billion logged-in users per month and feeds over 1 billion hours (about 110,000 years) of video each day to users, the social media platform is a robust insights pool.

As an example, take searches for the phrase “how to BBQ” in the United States across YouTube and Web search.

Break that intent down into the last 12 months alone and at a quick glance it is easy to see how YouTube is a key channel as part of the consideration mindset when it comes to the search term BBQ.



Source: Google Trends; May 2017 – May 2022



Source: Google Trends; May 2017 – May 2022

YouTube data provides marketers with advanced audience insights which can be further used to understand what people are seeking beyond just one search term. You can also enrich your YouTube data with Google Search Data to help fully unpack what that intent means for your brand specifically and to better understand what matters to your target audience.

I will use the BBQ brand as an example of what I mean by “unpacking intent.”

Using “BBQ” searches as the initial search query from YouTube one can conduct extensive keyword research using Google’s Keyword Planner to better understand search behaviour and monthly volumes as it related to BBQ and BBQ-related search terms it then becomes easier to correlate the search data to behaviour on YouTube, by utilising a tool like Google Trends (which allows you to filter on placement and specifically on YouTube).



The output: data-led themes to help guide a brand’s content strategy, including (and not shown here) the times of year when consumers are actively seeking out specific products, services, and entertainment.

WHERE TO START

1

YouTube Trends

2

Find My Audience

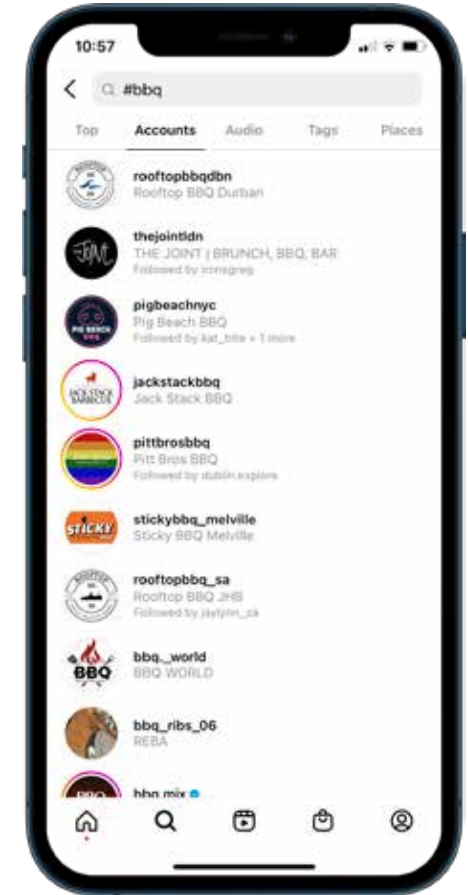
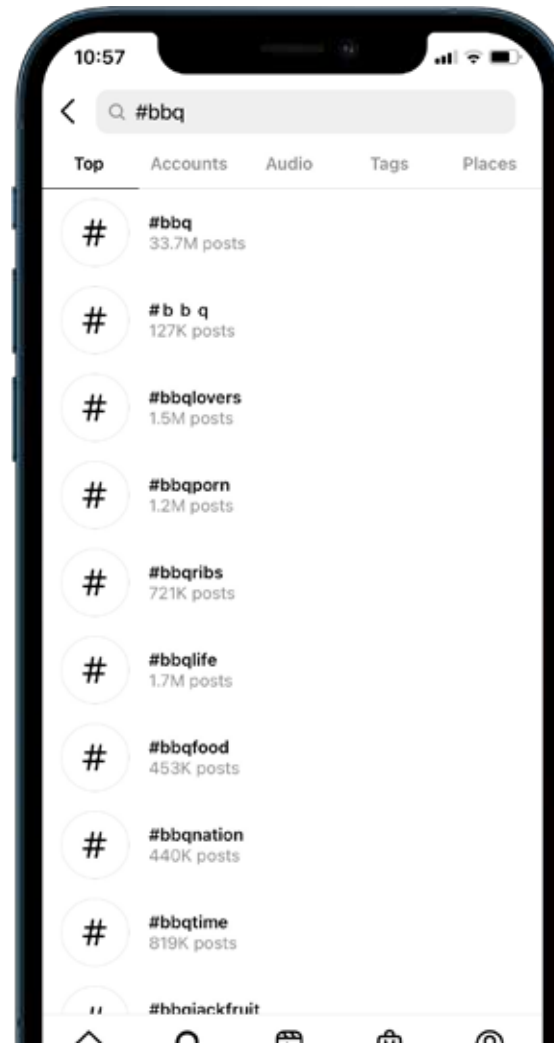
2.2 INSTAGRAM X SEARCH

In the same way that YouTube boasts a highly engaged audience, Instagram takes the cake in terms of preference. GWI's latest data reveals that Instagram has now overtaken Facebook to claim second place in the worldwide rankings in terms of "favourite" social platforms.


A less common fact is that Instagram places a big emphasis on the search and the discovery of content. So much so they even have a handy description on how to best approach search on Instagram.

Search is built to help users find accounts and topics of interest, but in the same way, also affords marketers insight into what people are seeking out and choosing to engage with.

Coming back to our favourite "BBQ" search term, we can see how a search of the term #BBQ gives you a promising idea of what people are choosing to search and engage with.



Source: Instagram; May 2022



The number of mentions is your best volume indicator in terms of what is popular and what users are actively seeking out. While the data may not be as rich in terms of understanding volume and growth over time, it is still a wonderful way to validate what you have identified through other platform data in real time.

As Instagram has also strengthened their Commerce offering, Instagram shop has also become a key discovery channel for shoppers. The only limitation is that search results are curated based on what you already follow so if you are using a private account be mindful of what data you are being served. And that is a key point about understanding consumer intent.

Our behaviour as searchers is omnichannel and therefore your research as a marketer should reflect this in your use of digital planning and the online customer journey. Use multiple tools and data sources to build and validate your story rather than relying on a single search channel for all answers, especially knowing how algorithms in social media are geared to show you a personalised experience.

You can also supplement your search with Meta's Foresight platform which offers plenty of useful data around marketing and behavioral insights. The more search data analysed, the bigger the picture and the richer the narrative (and I know brand strategists love a good narrative).



WHERE TO START



Instagram's Guided
Methodology to Search



Meta Foresight

2.3 PINTEREST X SEARCH

One of my favourite tools for search insight is Pinterest. There was a big push when Pinterest first came out but over time people have come to (erroneously) believe the platform is dying out. Much like the rest of the world, Pinterest saw a tangible shift (and growth) during the height of the pandemic and as result added millions of new users and is currently sitting with a user base of 444 million users. (Source: App Annie; 2022)

Now, considering that I have heard of entire strategies built off insights from data pools of statistical

insignificance (I.e., 5 interns at Agency), I concur that data from 444 million people seems a stable global data pool as far as drawing conclusions are concerned. Pinterest publishes annual data around consumer search trends that are quantified by the growth on platform keyword queries.

They are very data led and wonderfully visual.

In addition, much like Google's recommendation engine, the Pinterest search engine is a great starting point for understanding and refining your research when it comes to understanding what is top of mind for searchers.

Travel

"Road trip route" searches are up 248%

August 24, 2020

Entertainment

Searches for "backyard movie nights" are up 743%

May 10, 2020

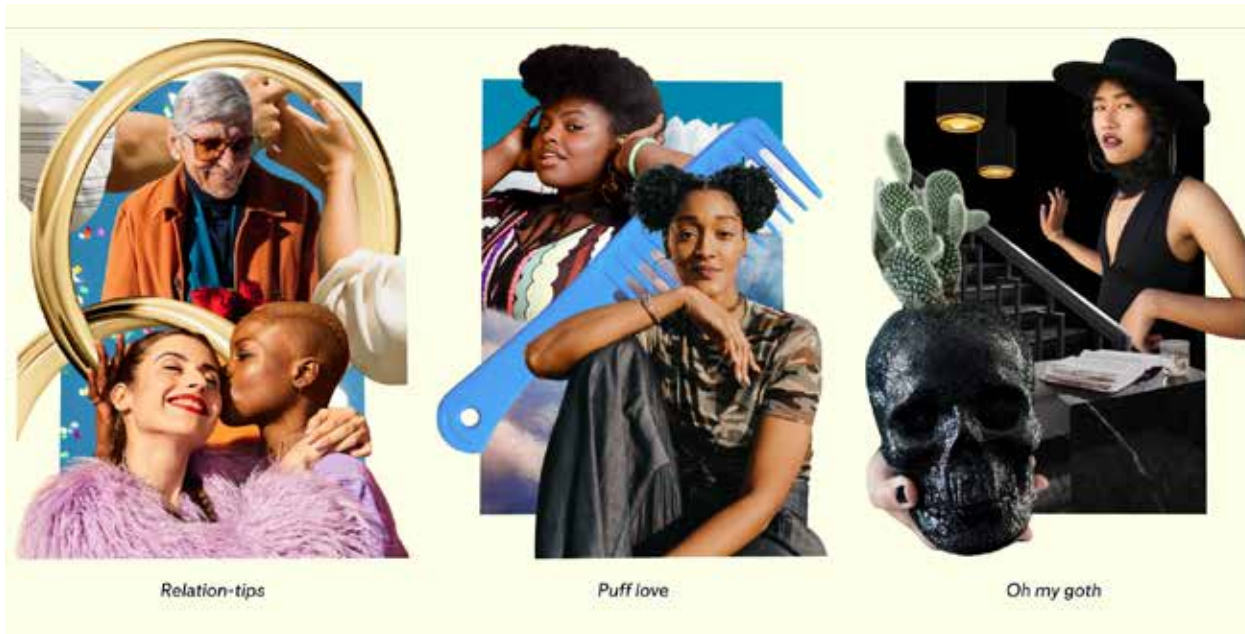
Perspectives

**Holiday searches jumped 77%
in April 2020 vs. April 2019**

July 1, 2020

Source: Pinterest; 2022

The platform aggregates these insights into a highly visual trends report which is honestly, one of my all-time favourite January reads.



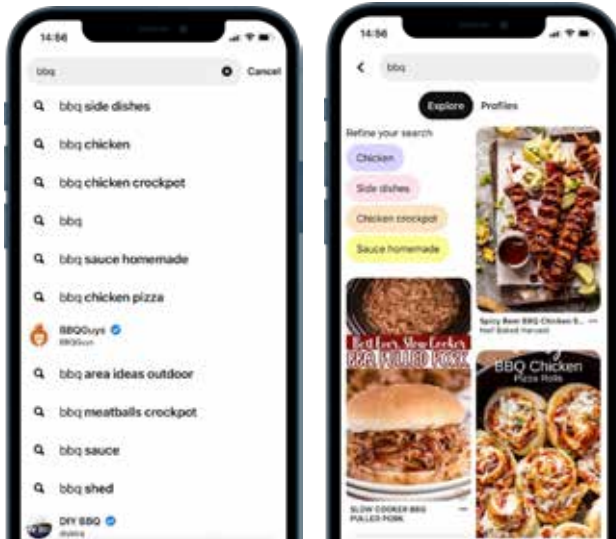
Source: Pinterest; 2022

Pinterest also goes as far as to breakdown what growth in searches constitutes as a rising trend, putting a lot of especially useful data into marketers and agency hands alike.

- +90%** Goth business casual
- +70%** Goth cowboy
- +120%** Goth baby clothes
- +85%** Goth kitchen decor
- +90%** Goth pajamas

Source: Pinterest; 2022

I mean what pairs better with a summer BBQ than a gothic cowboy theme?! A lot of great data, I think you can agree. So, whatever your need – strategy, creativity, media, business – do not disregard the role of Pinterest as it relates to people’s lives. (Also, if you happen to read this and your brand sells BBQs and goth cowboy clothing, you know the agency that can help).



WHERE TO START

1

Pinterest Trends
(for US-based clients only)

2

The Point: Insights
for what is next

3

Pinterest Predicts

Source: Pinterest; May 2022

2.4 TIKTOK & SEARCH

There are many myths and misconceptions when it comes to TikTok. The most famous being: “It’s full of Dancing Teenagers.”

But the platform has moved far beyond teenagers dancing and is currently revolutionising the social space. In fact, TikTok no longer considers itself a typical social platform and views themselves as an entertainment platform based on what they call “democratised discovery,” meaning that unlike other social media platforms who typically serve you content based on your connections, TikTok aims to broaden your scope of discovery outside of connections.

TikTok enables you to find answers and new interests.

49%

of users say TikTok is a source for discovering something new.

35%

of users say TikTok is a source for learning something new.

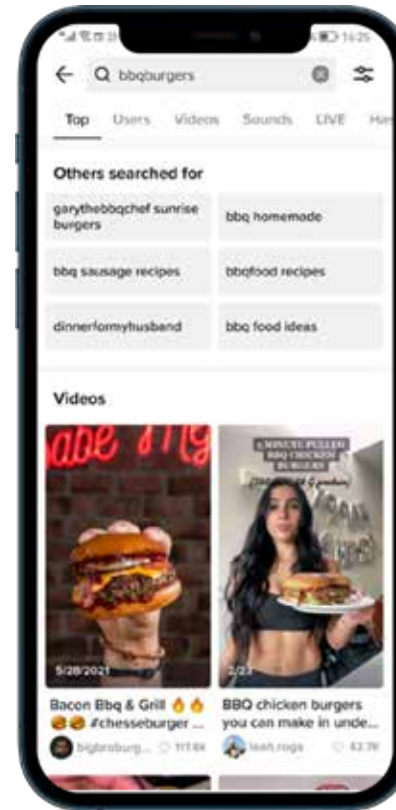
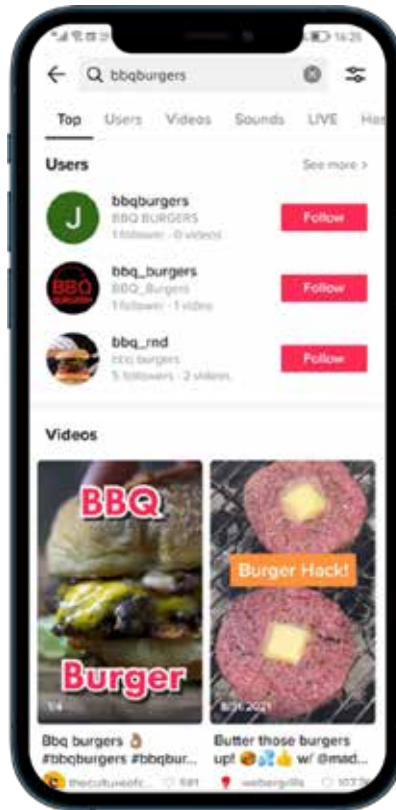
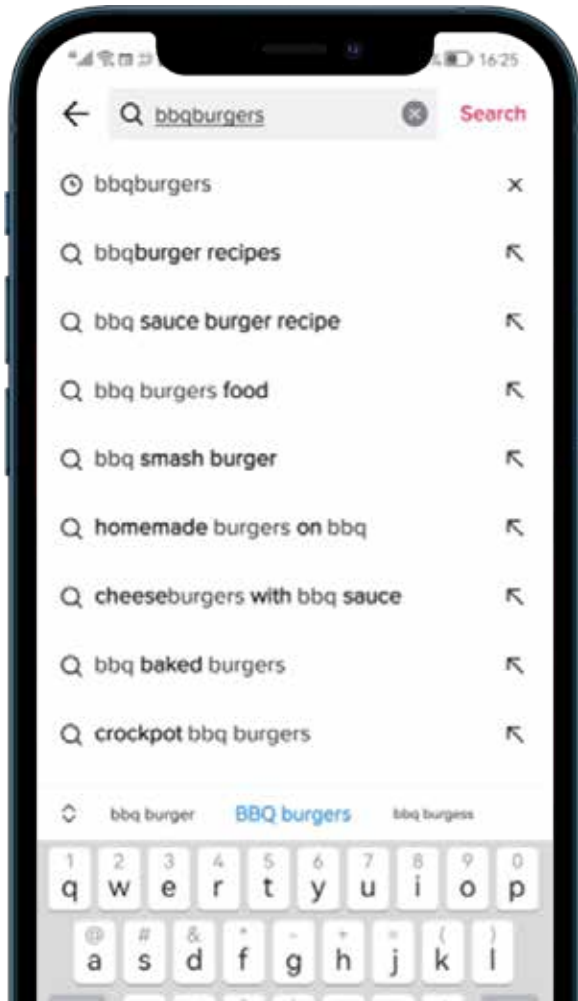
29%

of users say TikTok is a source of inspiration.

Source: Tik Tok; 2021

When it comes to insights (of which TikTok is sitting on a proverbial data mound) the platform search features are a combination of Google, Instagram, and Pinterest: a recommendation engine that also gives insight into what other users are searching for as well as popular accounts and hashtags that are relevant to your search term supported with highly visual content to aid discovery.

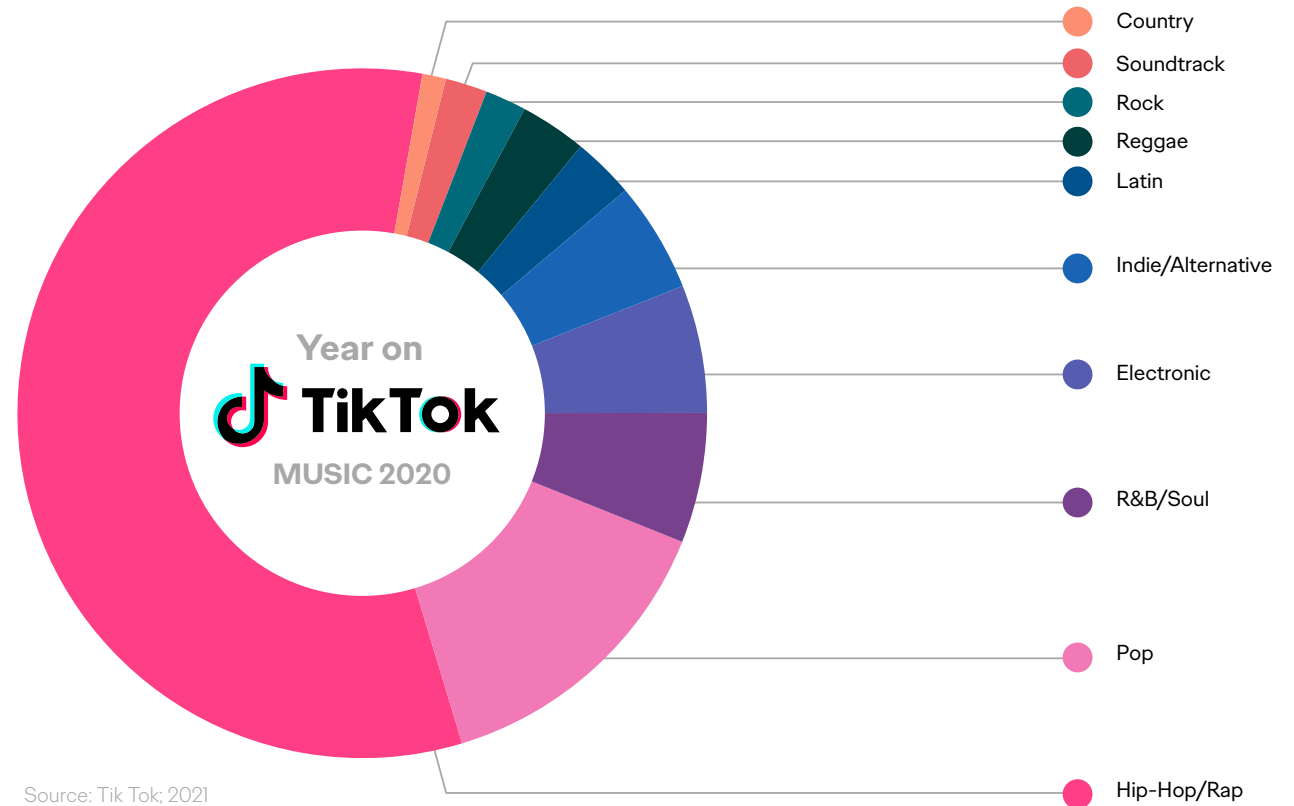
If I input “BBQ burgers” you are served some great data insights around what consumers are actively searching and engaging with. While it is a manual process and you are reliant on views rather than the number of mentions, it still gives you a decent basis to understand what potential audience opportunities there are for your brand around interests and intent.



Source: Tik Tok; 2022

TikTok also has a Trends section on their business platform that enables you to correlate your discovery in one place without needing to scroll through the platform manually but you are limited to what is currently trending in real time so you will not access historical data.

Another key component of how TikTok is driving discovery is in music and sounds and there are a lot of insights into what people are creating and what is trending in terms of music and clips. Not forgetting discovery through content creators, even if it is limited in terms of actual search data over time.



The reality is that the platform changes at such a speed that it is exceedingly difficult to streamline one or two surefire methodologies for surfacing insights to capitalise on trends. Brands tend to hijack trends without leaning into culture and it is quickly noticeable. Using insight driven creativity is crucial for brands at the best of times but even more so when considering TikTok.

The platform has recently launched an Interactive Market Insights Section to help marketers tap into consumer insights to better understand their audiences behaviour and preferences, but it is quite top line still so you can't rely exclusively only on this tool. Much like you, we at Social Lab are still figuring it out so keep an eye and ear out on our social channels.

WHERE TO START



Some brands that are doing an excellent job on TikTok through strong insights-led creative are Volkswagen France and Ryanair so go check them out for inspiration.



Tik Tok's New Insight Platform



Trends Discovery

Source: Tik Tok; 2021

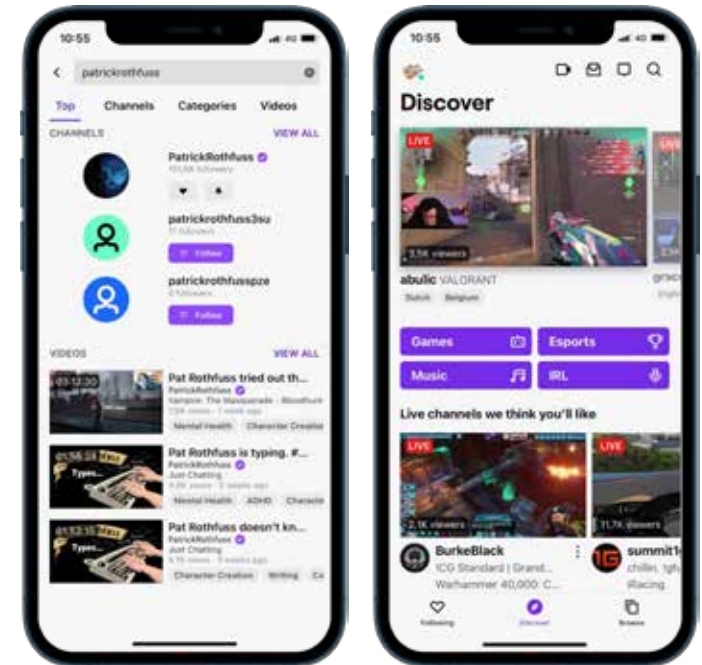
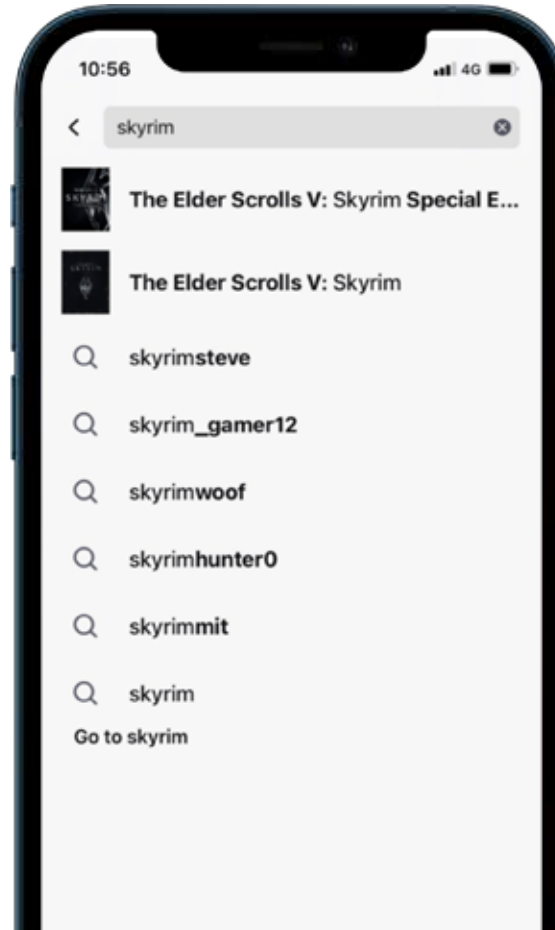


COMMUNITIES

At the periphery of social media is a space where people congregate around. We call these spaces communities and by communities we are not talking about social media following or page fans but a space where people can interact with one another and build relationships based on shared passions and interests. For example, I have a Twitch account for the singular purpose of watching one of my favourite authors Patrick Rothfuss chat about his writing, play DnD and engage with the Skyrim community.

How did I discover this content? By searching of course.

As we have seen with other social media platforms, communities are also geared towards social search.



Source: Twitch; May 2022

That does not even begin to touch on where consumers are spending their time and interests. Twitch, Discord, D-Pop, Roblox all these communities present an opportunity to go beyond traditional social media for consumer insights because they are curated to such specific passions and interests. You can discover quite a bit about niche markets by searching interest groups on social media or community platforms, where people engage with, and post content related to their passions and interests. Discord's own CMO Tesa Aragonés put it simply.

CONSUMER INSIGHTS, FOR ME, HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE BEST PLACE TO START AS A CONSUMER-FOCUSED MARKETER.

Source: The Drum: 2021

(So Tesa, can we get a trends report?)

But seriously, while we cannot tap into most of the data yet there will be increased traction in social communities and increased visibility will hopefully build for both consumers and marketers over time. In the interim, the best place to start is by opening an account and searching for yourself.

WHERE TO START



Open an account on Discord or Twitch or any other community and explore what is happening on these platforms.



AMAZON



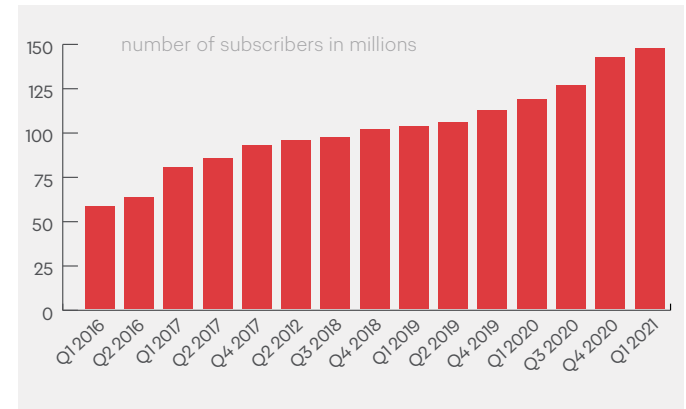
When it comes to retail search insights there is no business-like show business, or in this case Amazon. Search discoverability is a key KPI when it comes to measuring success on retail platforms like Amazon and is one of the most common ways a consumer will find your products online. Further considering that a larger % of those shoppers are on a hunt for something new and unexpected, the search insights to be found are extraordinarily rich in intent.

AMAZON.COM CONSISTENTLY RECEIVES OVER 2 BILLION WEBSITE VISITORS EACH MONTH.

Source: SimilarWeb; 2021

Just because your brand or competitors do not sell directly through Amazon does not mean the platform is not relevant to your consumer and it is important to keep this in mind.

While they may not buy your product through Amazon the likelihood that they have visited or purchased other products through Amazon is high, especially if your brand is based in the United States where Prime users are currently reported at sitting at 148 million users.



Source: Statista; 2021

What this means is that there is a lot of search rich information about your customer.

The key is to think of Amazon as its own search engine (which it is) and not just an E-commerce platform. Consumers are telling Amazon a lot about what they like and dislike through their search behaviour, browsing habits and purchase behaviors.

Now for the brands who are on Amazon, hopefully you are familiar with Amazon Insights but if not, it is a market research program that enables brands to effectively develop, launch, and sell their products. The program analyses and aggregates Amazon customer insights from surveys to highlight which product attributes and assets customers say are most likely to impact buying decisions.

The tools are not free so you will need to invest in the program, but the possibilities are endless provided you are willing to pay a (hefty) fee for it. For everyone else, do not despair, there are some

free tools to help you gather search insights specific to the platform even if the data is limited. Some data is preferable to no data at all so do not overlook what is out there.

Like Pinterest, Amazon publishes a trends report on their website by qualifying category trends with what people are searching for in their store. You can deep dive into each to enrich your audience and digital shelf strategies. Like other closed ecosystems, my best advice is to always get onto the platform and spend time searching for yourself.

This will get you top line insights regarding what competitors are selling and consumers seeking with indications of the top selling products and related brand searches.

You can supplement this with a free keyword tool such Keyword IO or Sellics Amazon Search Tool to build a bigger more accurate picture of customer intent. Not every tool does the same thing, and as I've previously said, it all works better when used together. So, get searching.

Trending Products



Source: Amazon Trends; 2022

WHERE TO START



Amazon Trends



AND
EVERYTHING
ELSE

Super Awesome has some of the most robust consumer insights regarding Kids and Teenagers as it relates to their influence on parents' buying power and when loyalty starts. As an official Epic Games Partner they also house some nifty gaming insights as it relates to the coveted Gen Xers so check them out.

I have also not touched on AR (Augmented Reality), voice or anyway of the snazzy tech stuff, but there is so much out there and too much to cover in one paper but there is so much coming so stay tuned to our social media pages for new papers and insights..

WHERE TO START



Super Awesome Resource Section

Key takeaways



1

Think of internet search data as a vast reservoir of human needs and desires, a collective of consciousness and a rich territory for brand, creative, media and marketing teams alike.

2

YouTube insights can give you a better and wider view of your audience and at the end of the day, the better you know your audience, the easier it is to connect.

3

Instagram has said they are moving towards a full search results page experience that makes it even easier for consumers to go deep on their interests. So, do not go down a worm hole but use what search data is available to build on your view of your customer.

4

Pinterest is a great example of how search intent data can be used for visual storytelling and enriching your understanding of customers.

5

Spend time understanding the role of Tik Tok as well as communities in your target audience's lives and tap into this space in a way that is authentic, and insights led.

6

Spend time on Amazon searching assorted products for yourself to better understand what consumers are searching for and what competitors are selling.

Conclusion



Search behaviour can help marketers not only better understand their customers but also identify new and exciting ways to show up for them in the moments that matter.

So do not only think of search data as an output of what people are seeking online but instead consider it as powerful data storytelling, platform agnostic.

So, get searching – both on web and across social!

For more information about Search and Insights driven marketing, please contact the Intelligence Team mateusz.wanat@ogilvy.com

<https://ogilvy-sociallab.be>





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