



Search is changing forever.

Are you ready?

SearchPulse can help you

AI and social media channels are rewriting the rules of online search.
Discover the latest trends and what they mean for your strategy.

SearchPulse Q2 • 2025



Your Personal AI Expert Awaits.

Ready to explore the report in more detail?

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Ask anything about the findings and explore the data like never before.



Search is Changing. Here's Why it Matters.

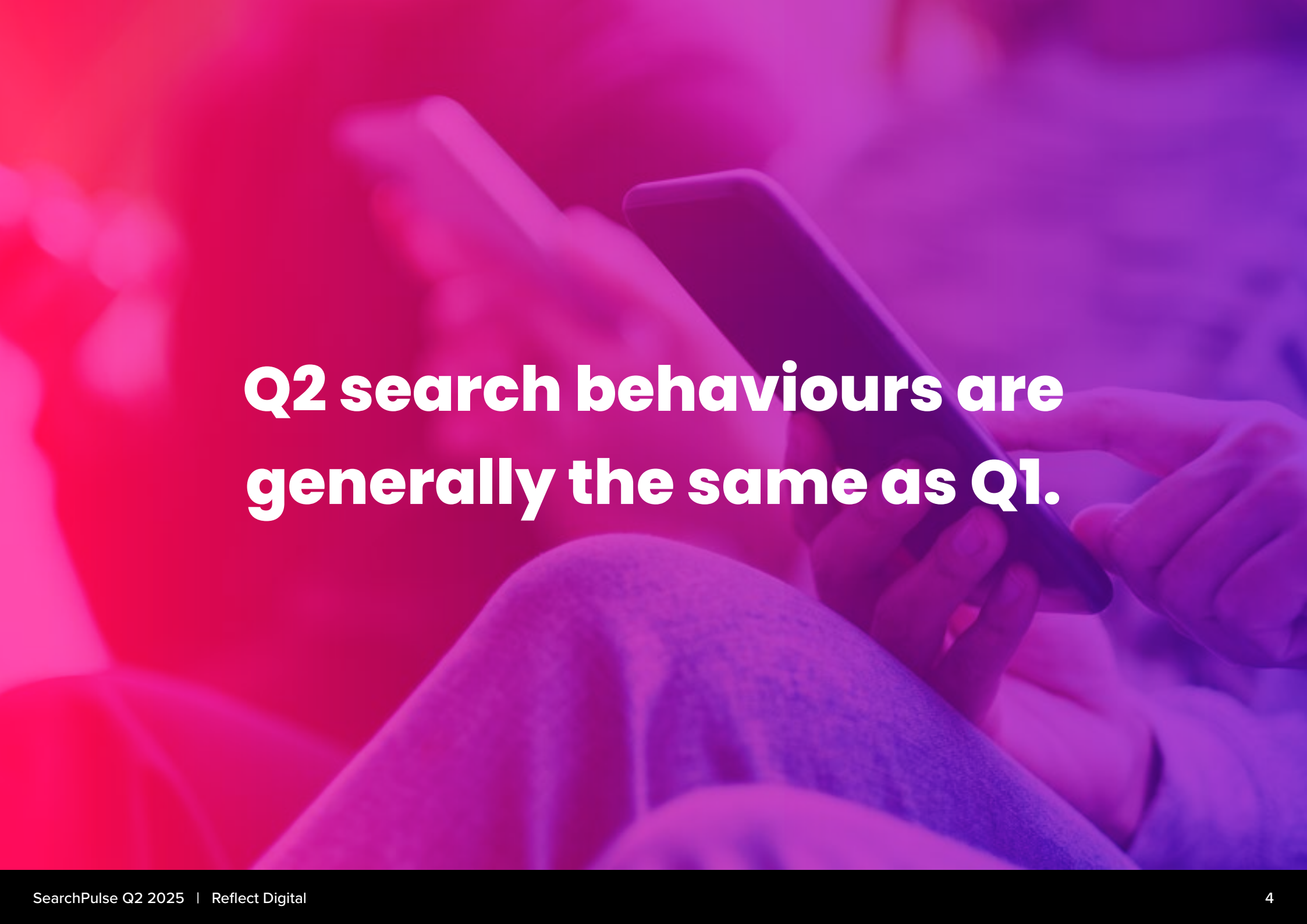
The Q2 SearchPulse report comprehensively validates the findings from our Q1 analysis, confirming the consistent nature of consumer search behaviours. This robust verification has enabled us to delve deeper into nuanced aspects, specifically examining how age demographics, career sectors, and preferred platform types influence search intent.

Understanding these continually evolving search dynamics is paramount for businesses striving to maintain a competitive edge. By meticulously analysing shifts in consumer behaviour, we aim to provide actionable insights that empower brands to refine their digital marketing strategies, optimise content creation, and ultimately enhance their online visibility and relevance in an ever-changing digital landscape.

Our vision is to help you meet your customers where they are searching.

Becky Simms,
CEO & Founder, Reflect Digital

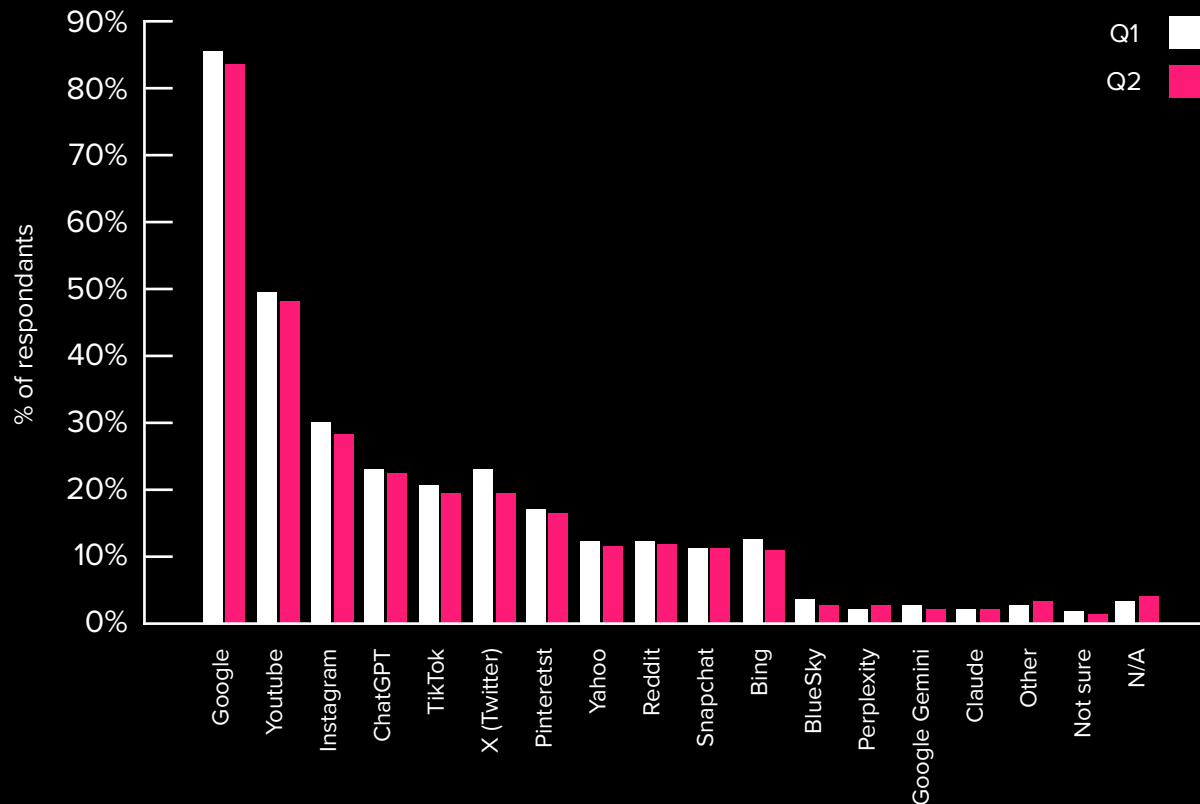




**Q2 search behaviours are
generally the same as Q1.**

In Q1 2025, we surveyed 2,000 respondents about their search behaviours, using a nationally representative split of age.

For Q2 we asked a new set of 2,000 respondents, to allow us to further enrich the data pool, but also validate the findings of the first report.



Results from Q1 were entirely verified by the responses to the Q2 survey, with only minor differences (+/-4%). This allowed us room to dive deeper into new areas, specifically around age, career sector and platform type, interrogating the data with a more search intent focus.



Matt Greenwood,
Innovation and
Automation Lead

[READ ARTICLE](#)



Theme 1: Search Intent and Platform Choice

Key Takeaway: Search is a journey. While people have preferences, they may switch between different platforms. Marketers need to make sure their brands are present across this journey.

- Search engines are still the top choice due to their **broad functionality** and **simplicity**, while social media is preferred for **inspiring and engaging content**.
- While still a tool for early adopters, AI search is gaining ground for being **more comprehensive and interactive** than traditional search engines.



Theme 2: Search Expectations by Age

Key Takeaway: Understand your core audience's expectations for search. Invest in diverse social media content and AI features for younger segments. Invest in simplified content in familiar platforms, particularly Google and YouTube, for older segments. For all, optimise for AI Overviews as their convenience and simplicity can appeal to all age segments.

- Younger segments value **functionality** and have **higher expectations** for search platforms. They're less likely to stick with familiar search engines and explore other options, including social media and AI.
- Older segments lean on familiar platforms and consider **understanding** as a key barrier for using AI search. While not frequent users, they may still search using AI and social media primarily for **learning skills and research**.



Theme 3: Search Expectations by Sector

Key Takeaway: Understand the challenges of each sector for B2B audiences. Demonstrate human expertise to address fears related to trust and lack of understanding. Be mindful that AI use at work can influence how people think and feel about its impact in their daily lives.

- Tech and data-driven sectors use AI more frequently and express more use of its **advanced features** when searching.
- The public sector and creative fields lag behind in AI search, with **lack of understanding and trust** being the main barriers.

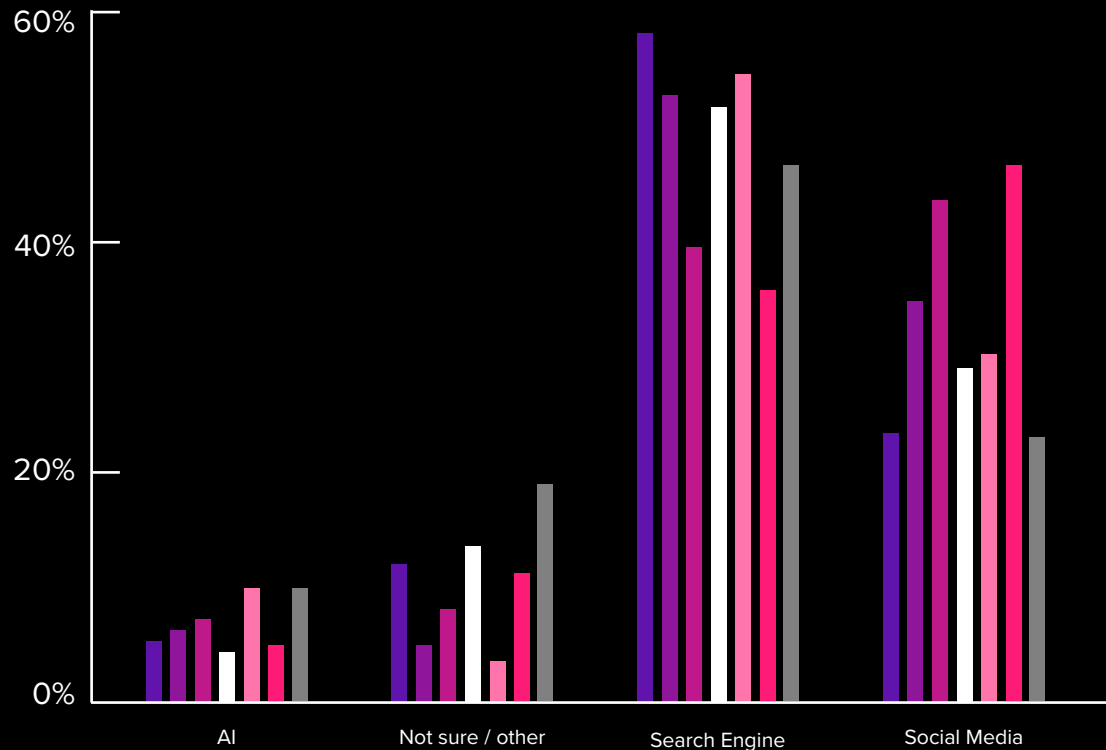
THEME 1

Search intent and platform choice



Search platforms address unique needs and search intent.

DATA



Broadly **search engines continue to be the most-used search tool**, followed by social media **for certain search intent**.



Traditional search engines continue to require investment but strategy must adapt to diverse user search intent, considering the influence of social media communities and evolving AI features.

Ed's Take

“There's a growing narrative surrounding search behaviours, particularly amongst the younger generations, that social media is 'taking over'. We need to be careful about jumping to this conclusion, as this narrative misses crucial context.

Whilst it is true that for particular search intent, such as lifestyle inspiration, social media platforms have increased their slice of the pie, the same cannot be said for search as a whole.

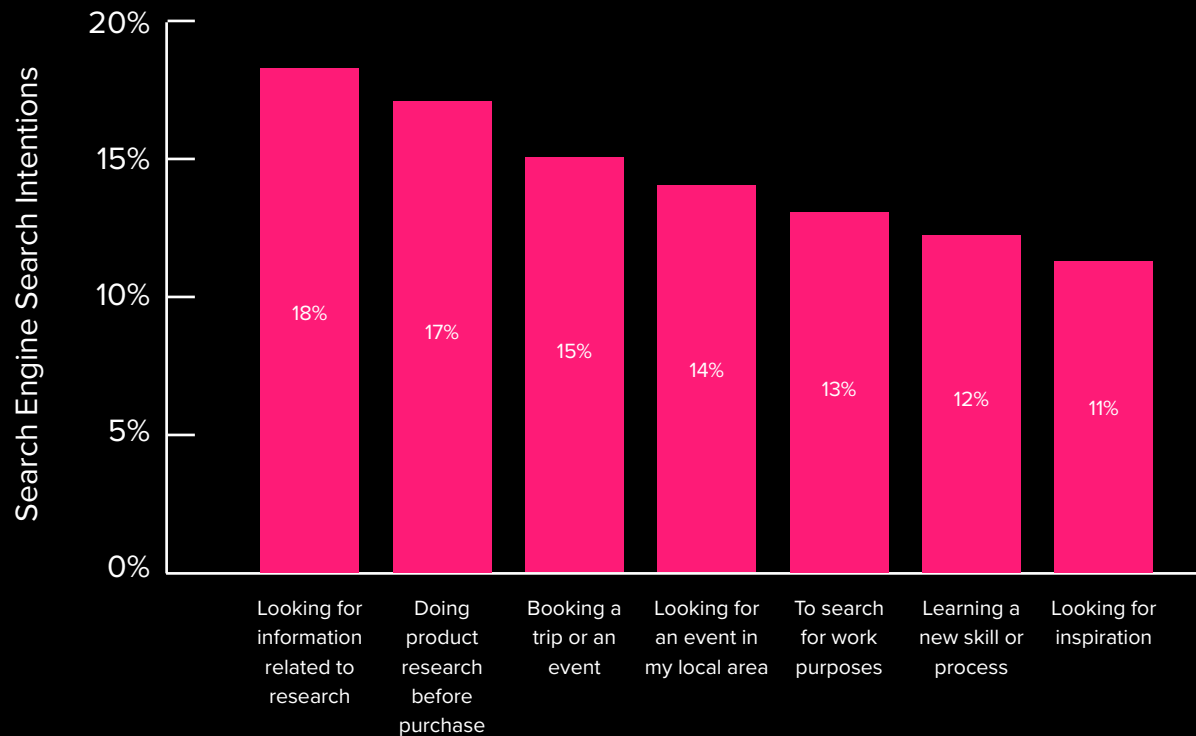
Furthermore, not all 'search behaviours' are equal. We should differentiate between 'passive' content that is shown in feeds by default and 'actively searched' content that is the result of a user entering a search term. These two behaviours can be confused in the minds of the user.”



Ed Cox,
Behavioural Analytics and Insights Lead

Search engine use is relatively consistent across intentions.

DATA



Search engines have a broader range of uses, including research and booking trips or events.

Google remains the top choice for search despite its simplicity.

THOUGHTS



“I just use Google because it is **simple.**”



“I think since the initiation of AI with Google, searching for information is a lot **easier than before.**”



“Google has gotten markedly worse in the last year but it still provides the **quickest and clearest info.**”

The introduction of AI Overviews and a new AI Mode solidifies artificial intelligence as a cornerstone of the Google search experience of the future.



How will this influence the trust levels and familiarity with AI as it becomes more entrenched in ‘everyday’ search engines?

Ed's Take

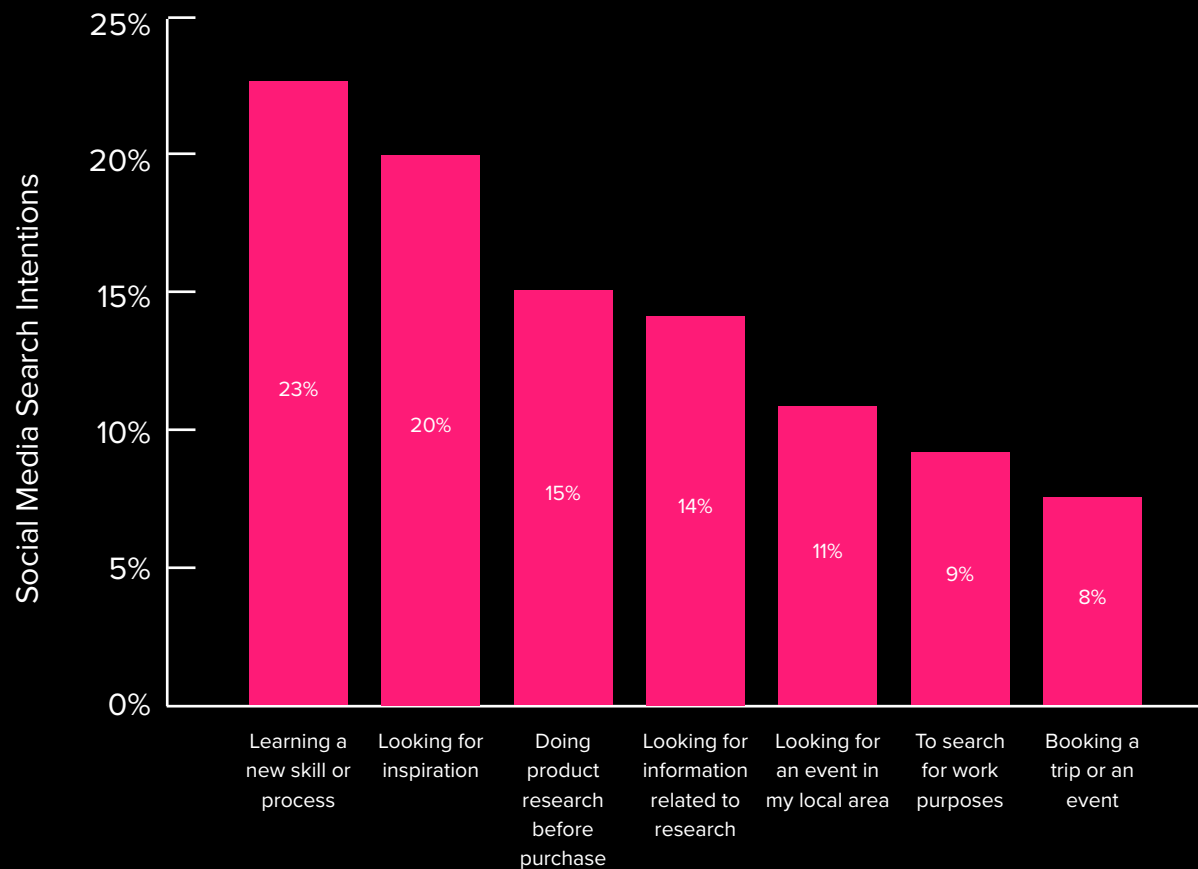
“It’s interesting to ponder just how aware some users are that they are using AI at all. With the introduction of ‘AI Summaries’ for Google Search, it is plausible that users read the summary, and are satisfied with the answer, without being aware it was AI generated at all.”



Ed Cox,
Behavioural Analytics and
Insights Lead

Social media is used to for inspiration and learning.

DATA



1 in 5 social media search users do so for **finding inspiration.**

While 1 in 5 use social media to learn a skill, this is driven almost exclusively by **YouTube**, with 55% of responses, followed by **TikTok** with 12%.

Social media is still preferred for community interactions and visual content.

THOUGHTS



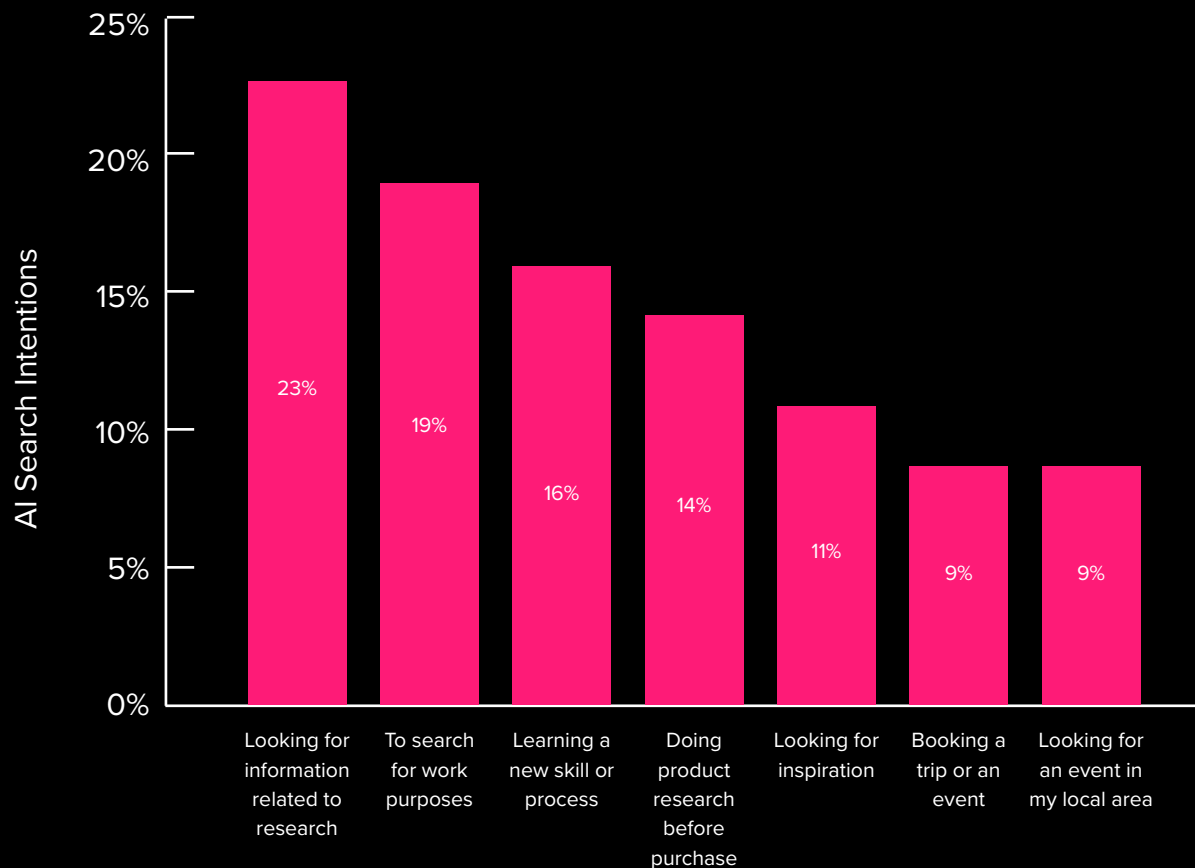
“Searching my **Facebook Groups** on related topics is useful.”



“I like to use videos to learn things as I am more of a **visual/practical** learner.”

AI is primarily used for research and at work.

DATA



1 in 4 people who use AI for search do so for **research purposes**, whether that is information (23%), for work (19%) or to learn a skill (16%).

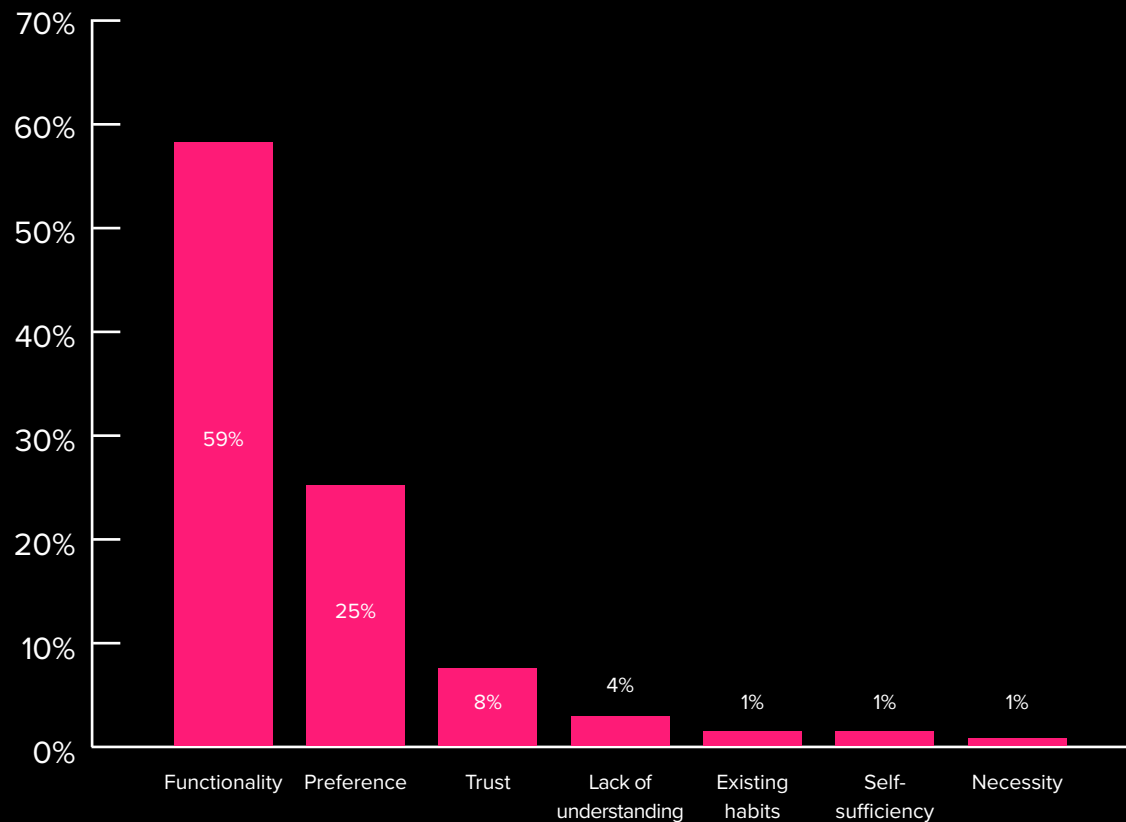
Whilst some consumers express concerns about the accuracy of AI tools, **AI search users value its advantages** - namely, easy access, convenience and sufficiently detailed information.

SOURCE [1].

People value accuracy and convenience when it comes to online search.

DATA

Do you have anything else that you'd like to share about your online search preferences? n = 3,798



AI Search's unique capabilities for more comprehensive and faster search align with what users like about online search. There's a good potential for AI to be the preferred engine overtime.

"AI has all the information possible for **any topic**"

"Gives answers to search **at the appropriate time and when needed**"

Search is a journey – while people may default to Google, they may still turn to social media or AI for clarity.

THOUGHTS



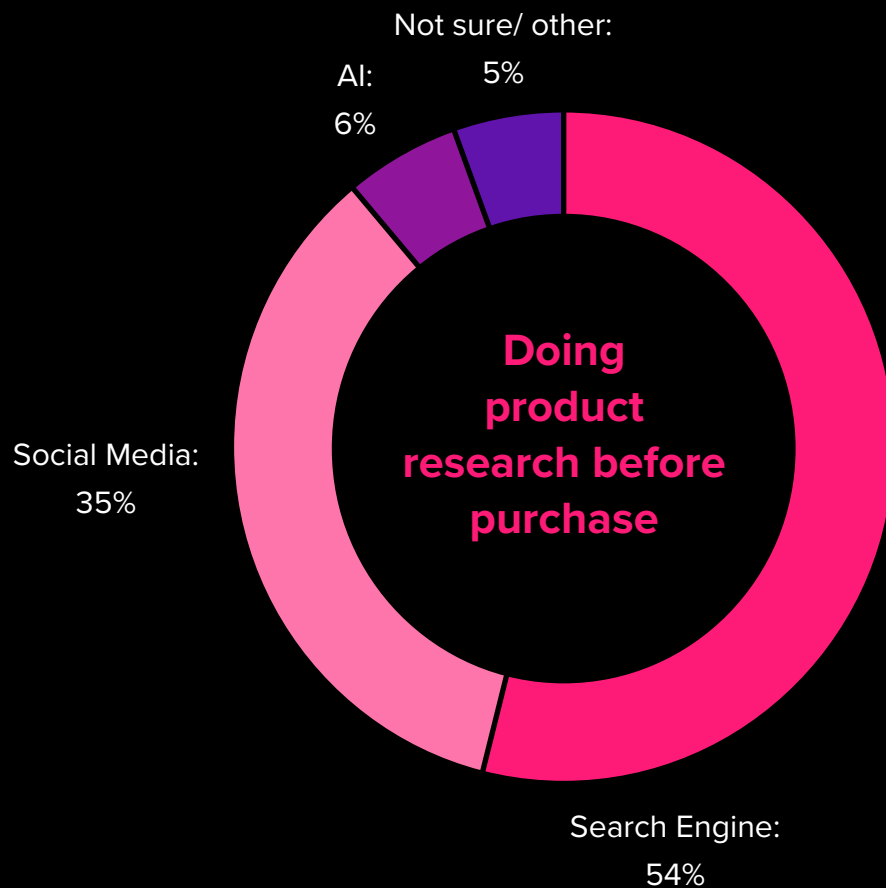
“I like to use Google more than ChatGPT but if Google doesn’t give me a clear answer, I use ChatGPT.”



“Pretty much always go for Google in the first instance then may click through to Reddit/YouTube links. If I need some specific guidance I would use ChatGPT.”

Information and inspiration are important for product research.

DATA



When looking at research before a purchase, **search engines are still king**, although social media is not far behind.

AI Magazine have found that **58% have replaced search engines with generative AI platforms** for shopping research, up from 25% in 2023.

SOURCE [2].



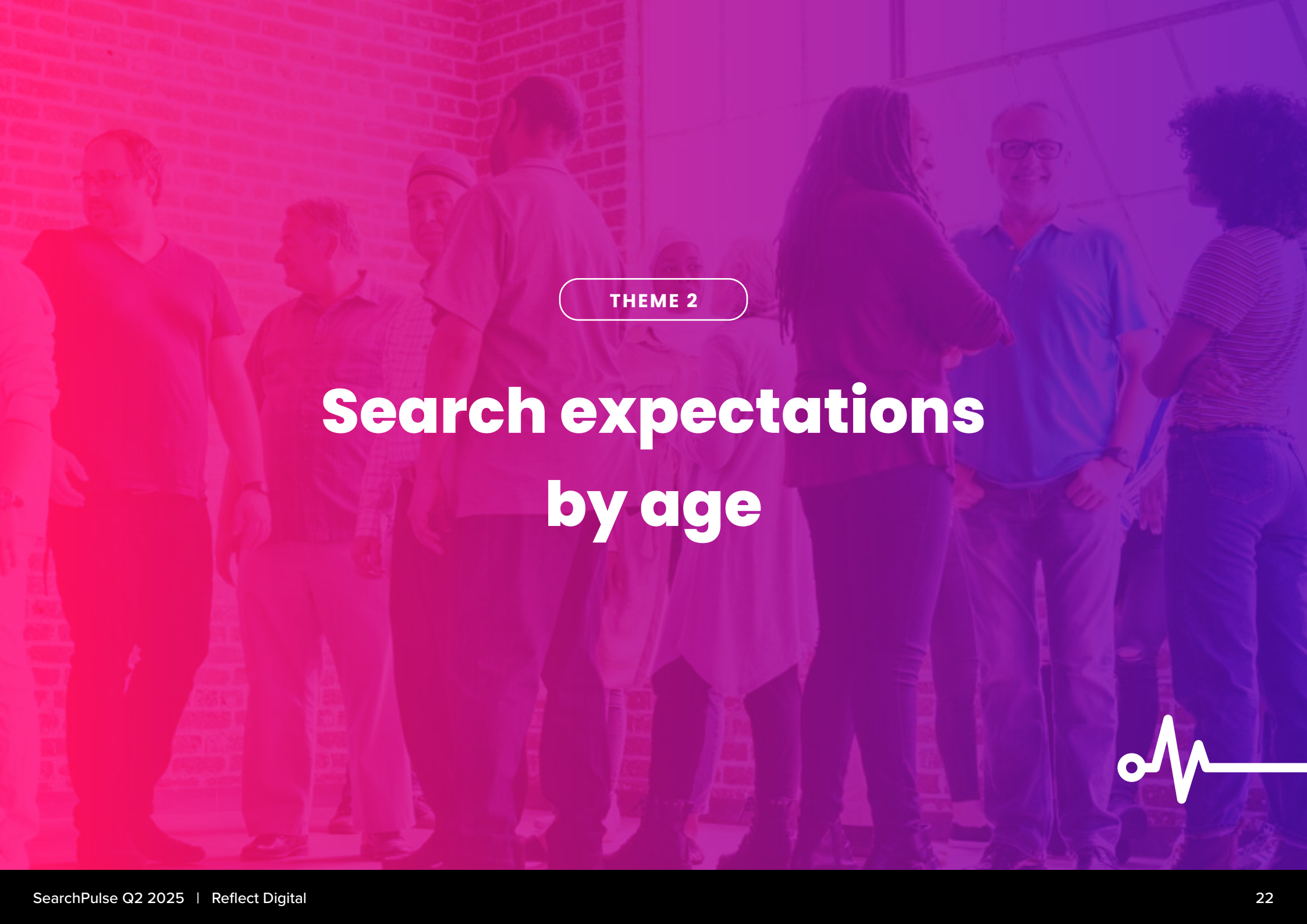
Providing information and inspiration should form a part of any sales-based marketing strategy, but with differing message types – inspirational for social media, informational for search.

Google claims their new Agentic capabilities will help with tasks such as searching for tickets for events.

SOURCE [3].

Given these emerging AI features in **search platforms that people are already familiar and comfortable with**, we can expect people to passively build more confidence with AI in their search.





THEME 2

Search expectations by age



Younger segments tend to use Google Search less than their older counterparts.

DATA

Younger age groups appear to use **Google less often than their older counterparts**. When they do, **it's for similar reasons as other age groups (mainly informational)**.

Gen Z show a higher preference for **social media** over traditional search engines like Google, signalling a preference for platforms with **visually engaging content and social signals**.

SOURCE [4].



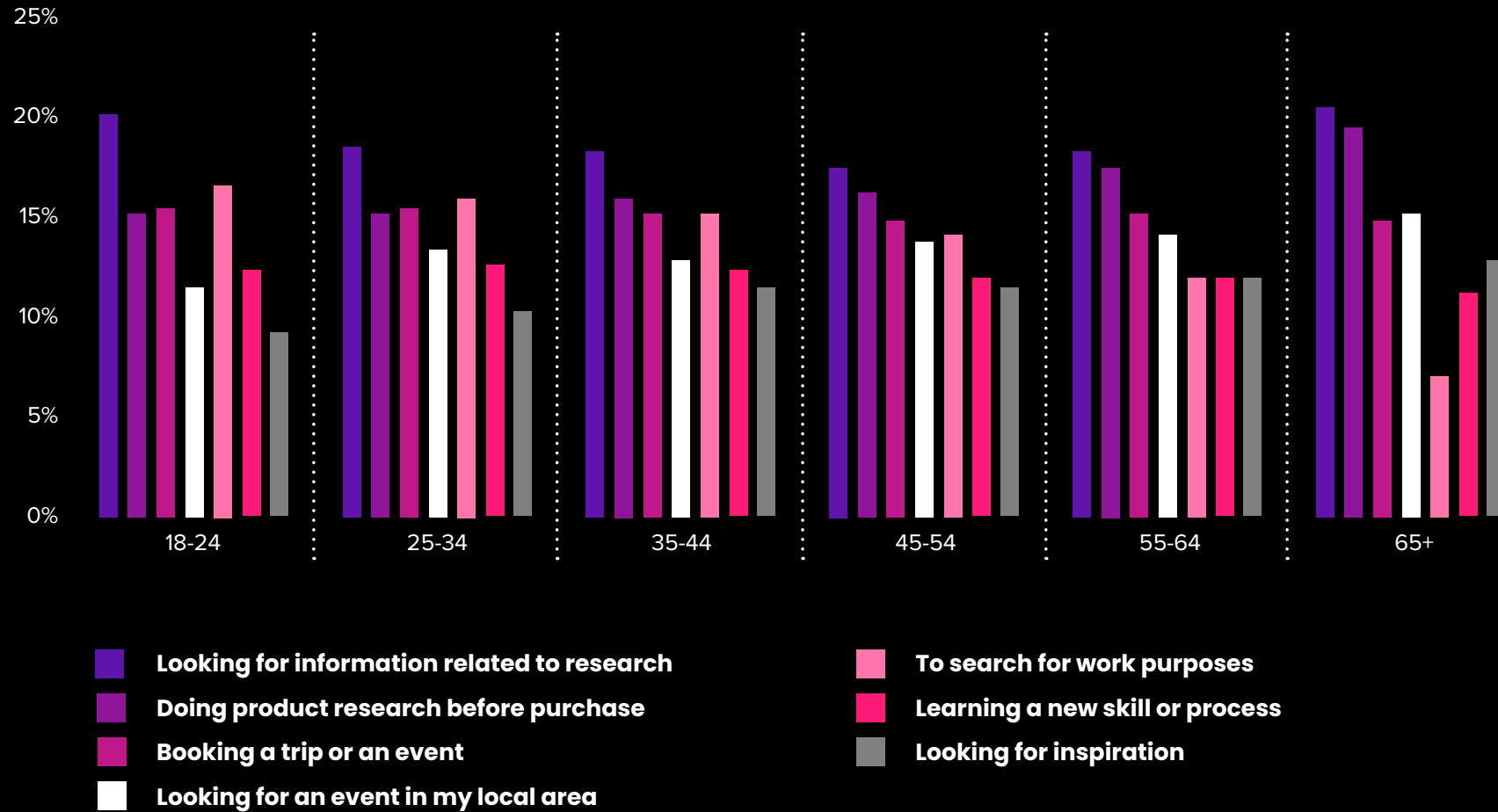
Paid search isn't going anywhere as it covers a lot of bases and contexts. However, there is a need to diversify, especially for the 18 to 24 year old segment.

What online tools, if any, do you use to search regularly? (Google) n = 4,000



What, if anything, do you use to search online when doing the following things? n = 3,798

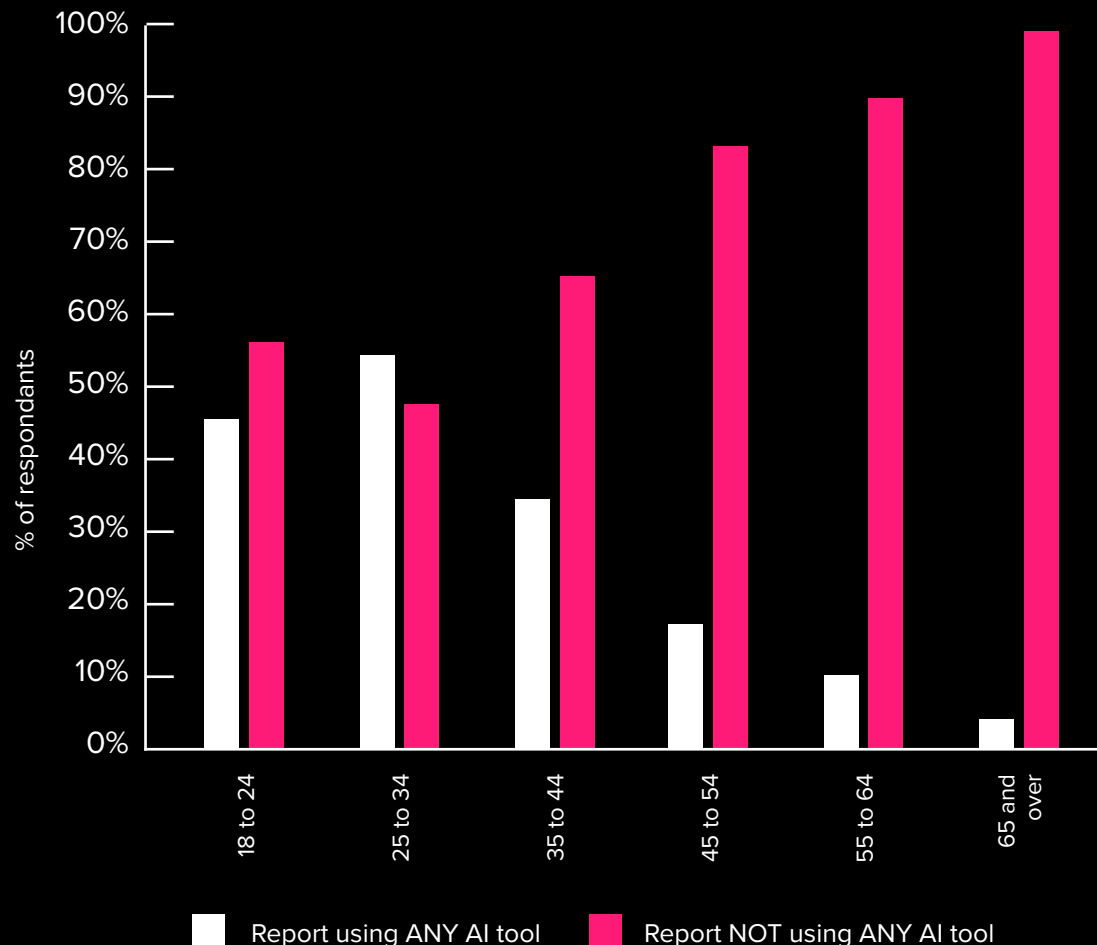
(Search engine usage by age)



AI Search usage peaks at 25-34.

DATA

What online tools, if any, do you use to search regularly? n = 4,000



Regular AI usage peaks at 25-34, with a downward trend as respondents got older.

The 'usefulness' of AI may not develop until around the age when people are **getting into their careers**.

Younger people have search intents that align better with using social media, then the older demographics being slightly slower at adopting AI, since it is a new technology.



If your target audience skews towards the younger demographic, optimising towards AI results becomes increasingly important.

Little Black Book and FRACTL have identified patterns in search and media use among the Gen Z:

- Gen Z are mobile-first and prefer diverse search platforms, including AI and social media.

SOURCE [5].

- Gen Z tend to use more long tail search terms, averaging 5 words per query.

SOURCE [6].

- It's important to **meet the Gen Z where they are and talk to them how they speak.**
- Be present in **multiple platforms (not just TikTok!)**, and leverage their comfort with interacting with technology to give them more **interactive content** (e.g., chatbots).

Older segments tend to use social media (YouTube) for learning.

DATA

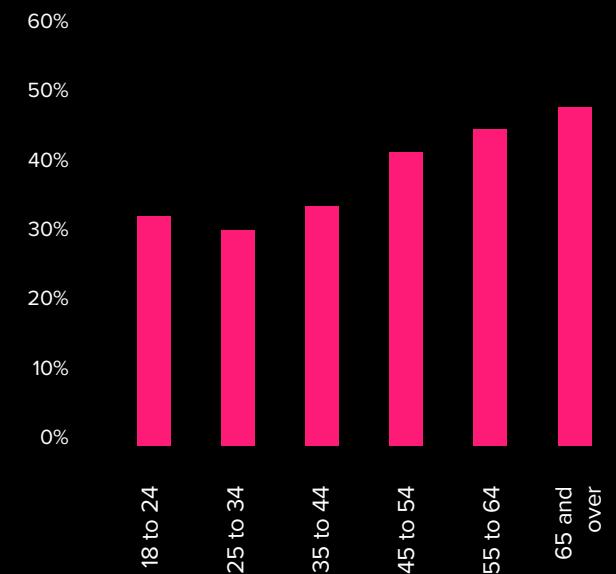
While the older generations use social media less frequently, they tend to **use social media (particularly YouTube) for learning new skills or processes.**

This perhaps is down to the **mixed audio-visual medium**, which helps with unfamiliar tech or processes that the younger generation are growing up with.



YouTube or video content is a good option to target older segments, if the context is learning or new skills related to your product.

Using YouTube to learn a new skill or process



What, if anything, do you use to search online when doing the following things? n = 3,798

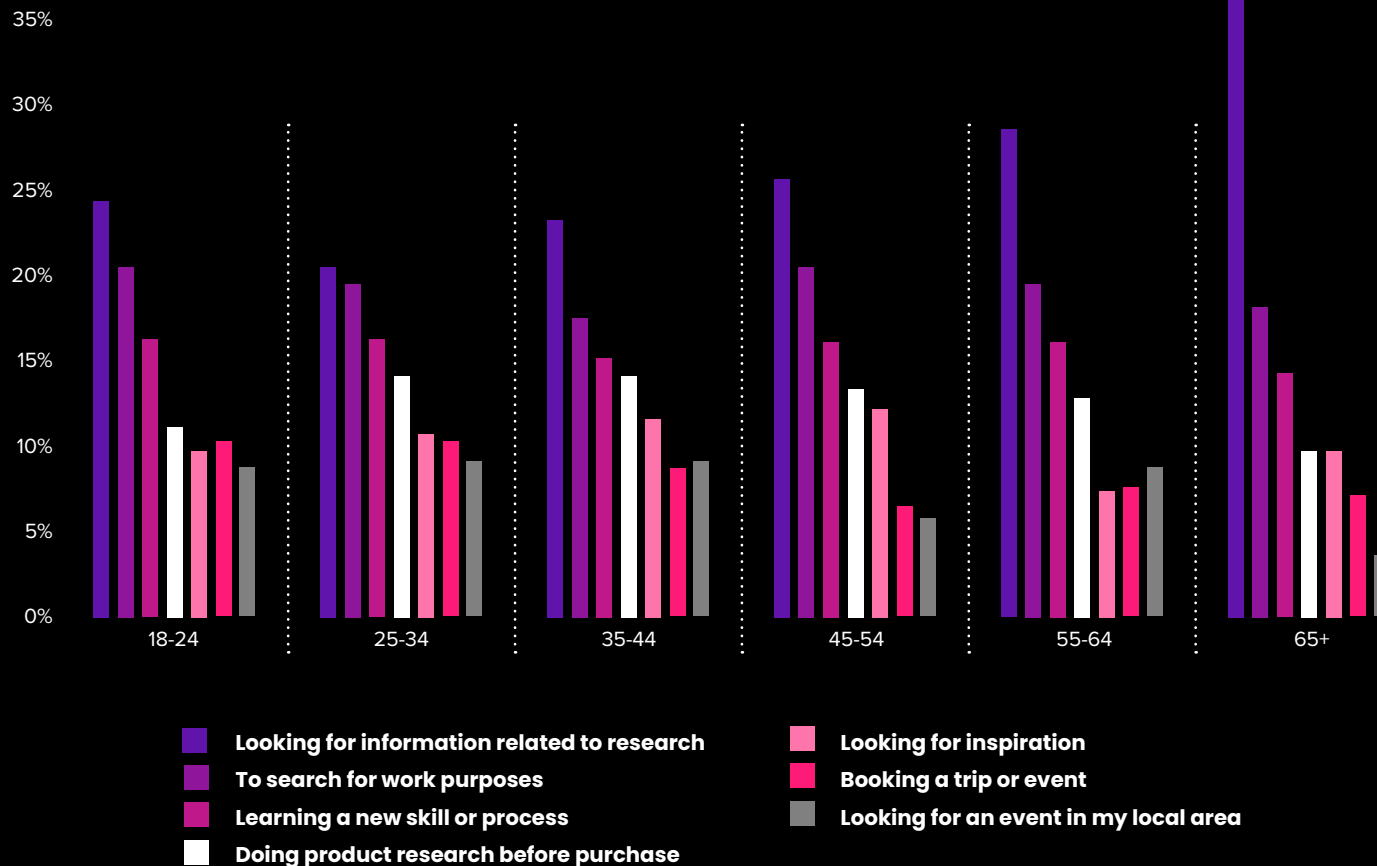
(Social media usage by age)



While older segments use AI less frequently, they may still do so for research.

DATA

What, if anything, do you use to search online when doing the following things? n = 3,798 (AI usage by age)



The older the age group, the more the skew towards **using AI for research purposes**.

Although still the biggest reason for younger age groups, the difference is far less stark.



Any search activity optimised towards AI results should focus on being informative, increasingly so the older the demographic.

AI search may feel like a lot for those less familiar with how to use it, especially among older segments.

THOUGHTS



“Sometimes it’s a struggle to find the answers I’m seeking. Modifying a search to ask the correct questions can be frustrating.”



“It’s all got too much too quickly and it’s getting too intrusive.”

Others, particularly younger segments, are less impressed with what AI Search can offer.

THOUGHTS



“It just produces summaries of the first few pages.”

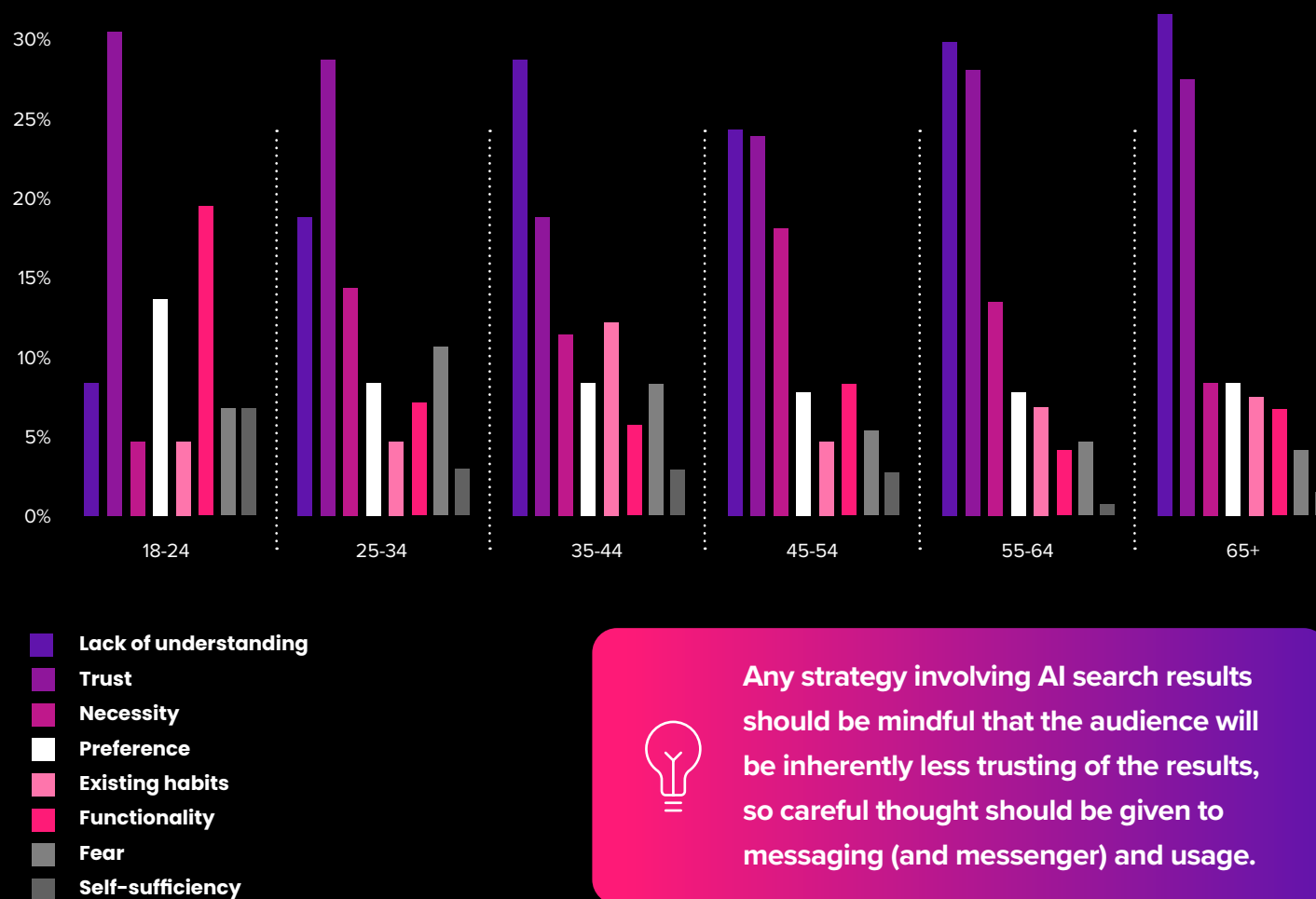


“It often has illogical answers that initially seem to make sense but when I read through more carefully, don’t.”

Trust is a key issue for all; functionality and understanding vary based on age.

DATA

Why don't you use AI tools for searching online more? n = 3,798



Any strategy involving AI search results should be mindful that the audience will be inherently less trusting of the results, so careful thought should be given to messaging (and messenger) and usage.

For the younger demographic, the biggest barrier for AI is trust, followed by functionality. This implies that younger generations have **higher expectations for what AI search can do for them.**

Noticeably, **lack of understanding** becomes more and more of a factor for the older demographics.

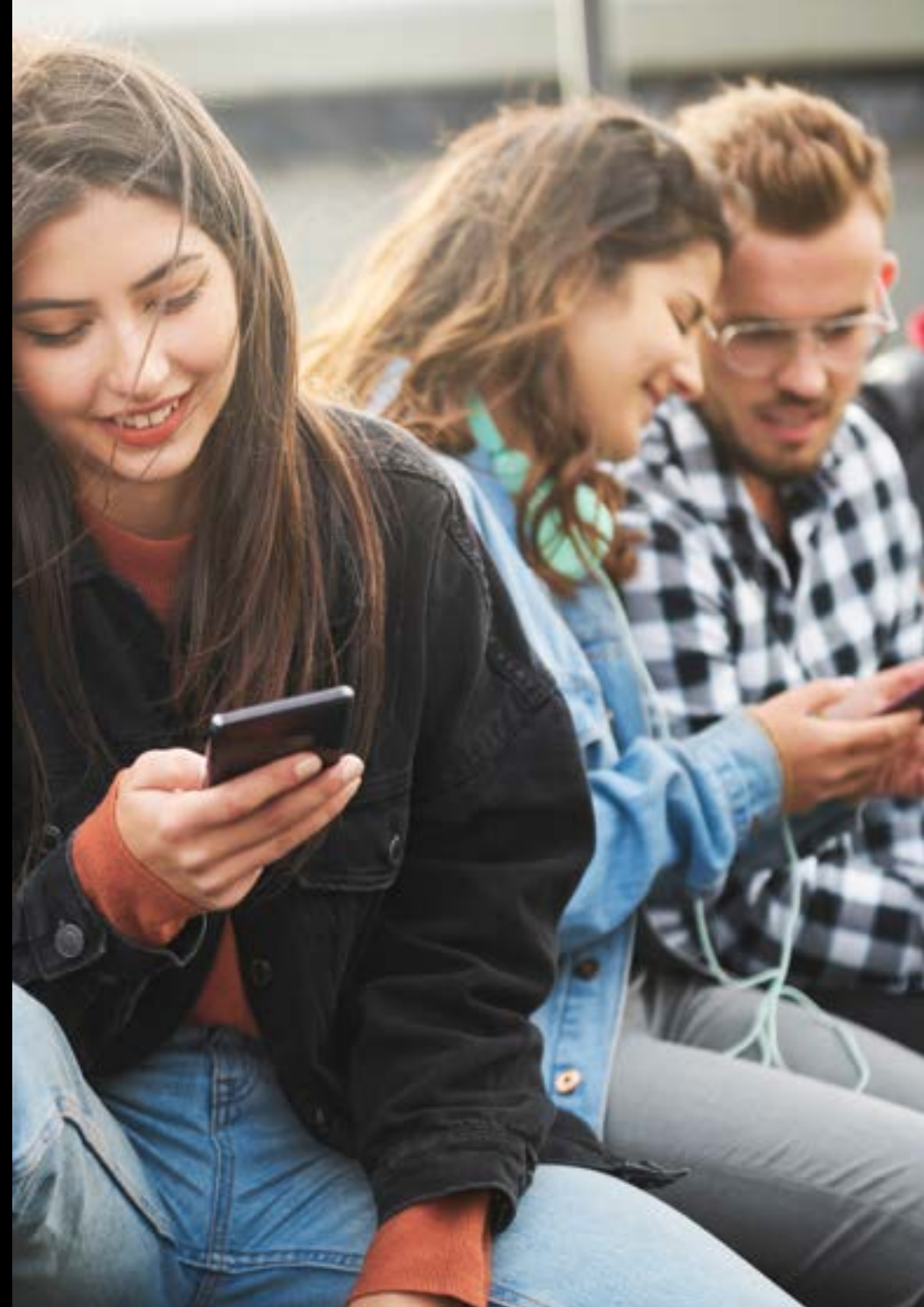
The 45-54 year old demographic was most likely to suggest there was little need for them to use it. This could be a function of where they are in their careers; their **experience and wisdom is valued above searching for an answer using AI.**

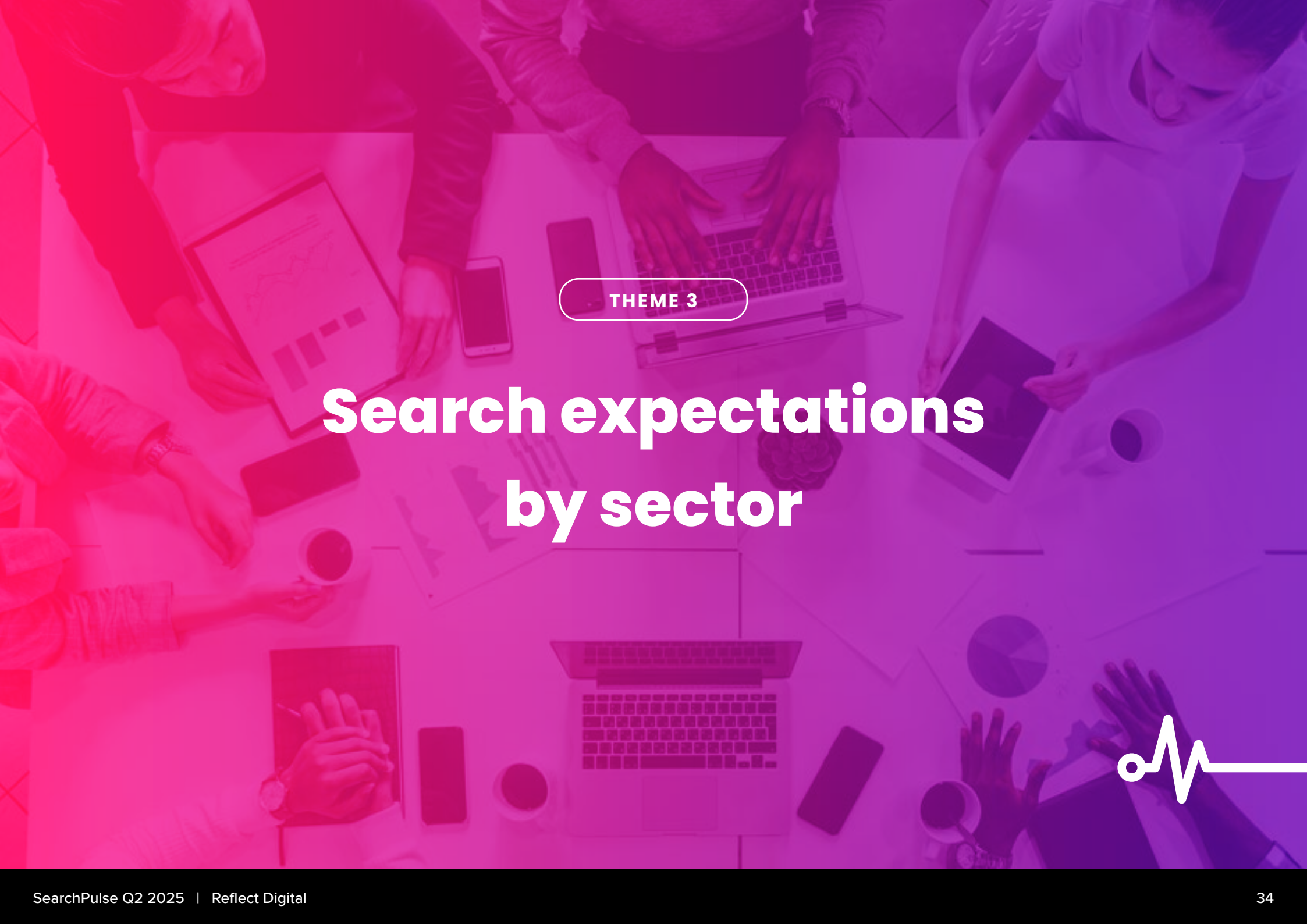
However, trust is relative.

Attest have found that nearly 2 in 5 consumers trust AI search results more than paid and organic search results.

SOURCE [7].

Consider how you send trust signals in the wider search landscape through establishing social proof and authority for your brand.





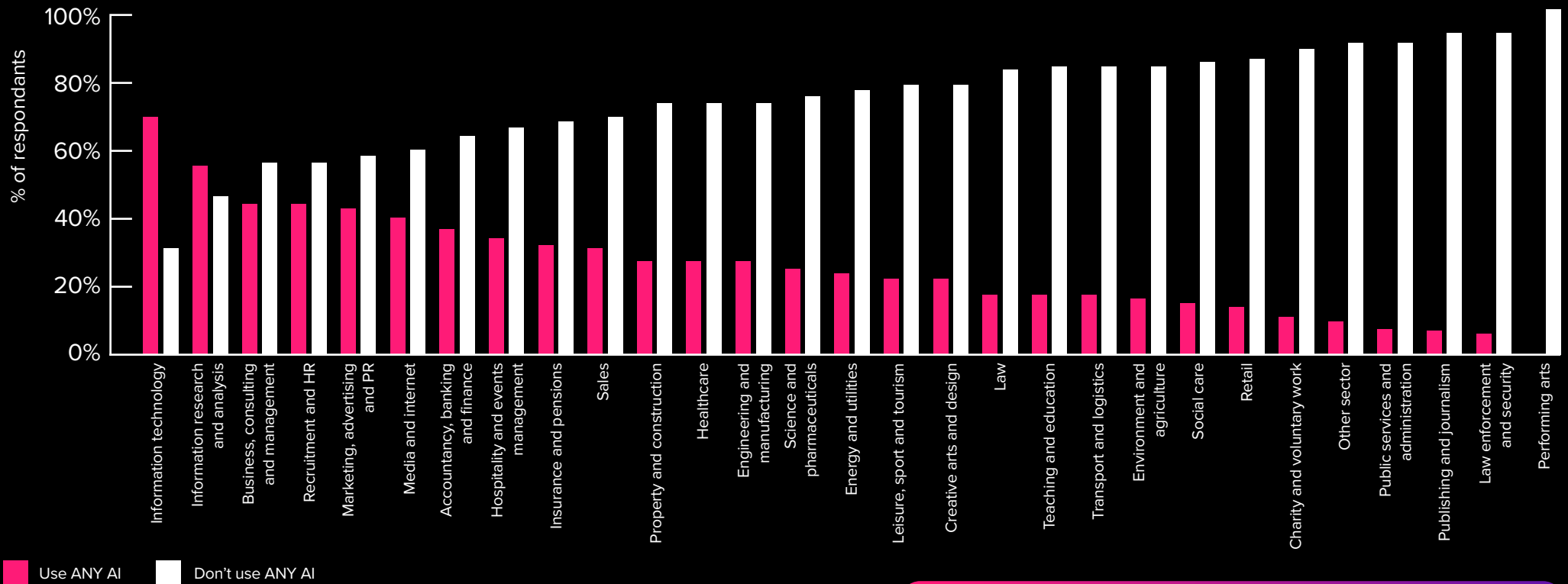
THEME 3

Search expectations by sector



AI Search is more frequently used by those in tech, less so for public sectors and performing arts.

DATA



The only sectors using AI more than not is in **IT and information and analysis** roles, which should come as little surprise.

Equally unsurprising, **performing arts** scores null points.



AI Search is more likely to be used in industries like IT and data analysis, while creative sectors still need proof points for adoption, or have no necessity for it (yet).

Ed's Take

“Usefulness is an important factor to consider when looking at differing sector’s ‘openness’ to the use of AI. It hasn’t been adopted as well by some sectors quite probably more due to its limited usefulness and accessibility within the workplace, rather than some inherent lack of trust or understanding.”



Ed Cox,
Behavioural Analytics and
Insights Lead

Exposure to AI search at work can influence broader attitudes.

“My job involves doing research about answers AI has given to search queries in order to validate/improve AI. As such, I know how poor AI is and I prefer to use search engines (usually Google but others when I am working as I am required to use at least three) and my own judgement”

Information Technology Sector

Over 70% of knowledge workers use AI tools to make their job easier and to save them time.

SOURCE [8].



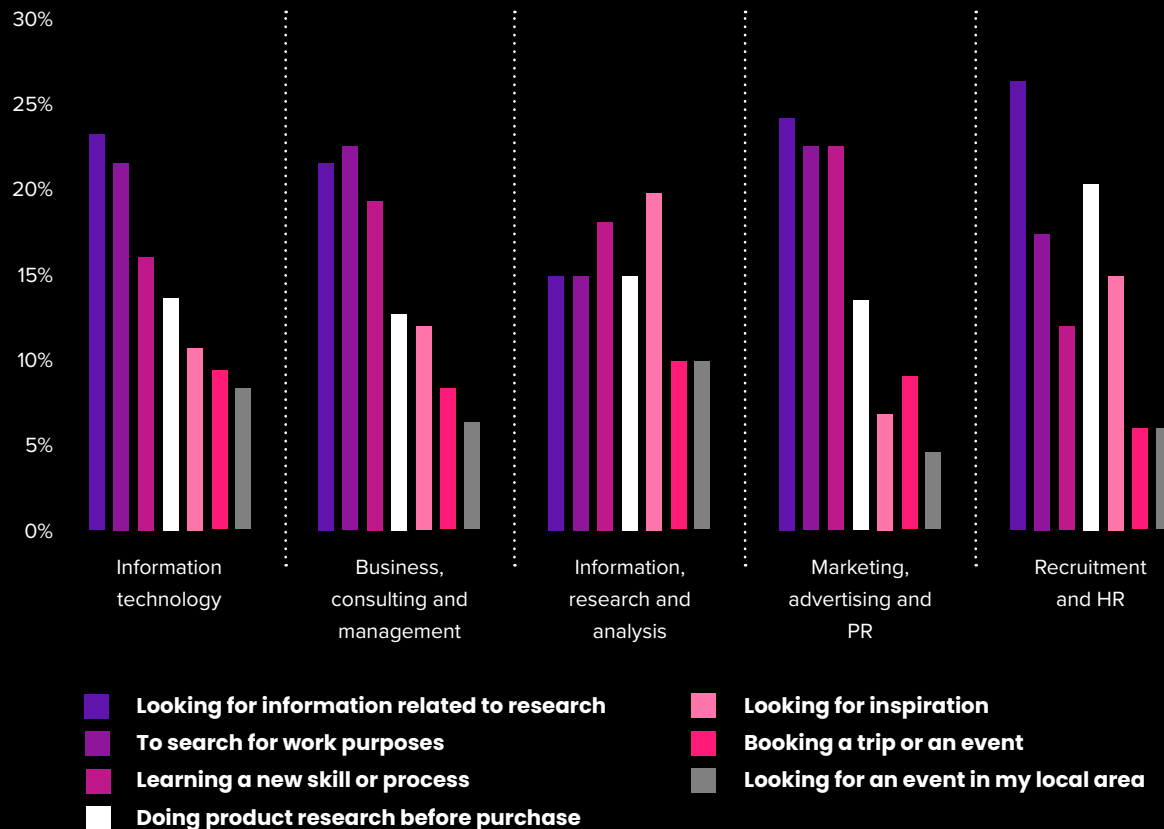
It's essential for B2B marketers to optimise for AI-driven search environments for visibility.



While some sectors are more likely to use AI than others, search intent still varies.

DATA

What, if anything, do you use to search online when doing the following things? n = 3,798



Considering the top sectors who use AI search, those in **information research and analysis** roles tend to use **AI for information, learning and work**.

HR and recruitment are more likely to use AI more for product research than the other sectors, perhaps related to **procurement decisions**.

Marketing, advertising and PR are heavily work and skills focused, perhaps reflecting the realised opportunity to **use AI to perform more complex tasks** that were perhaps limited to programmers and IT experts previously, such as automated systems and analytics tools.

Search intent for AI may vary based on the norms in the different industries, where tech-adjacent roles tend to be more open to its use.

People in tech-adjacent sectors see AI search as promising for its advanced features.

THOUGHTS



“Use specific keywords, use advanced search features, verify sources, and use multiple sources.”

Information Technology Sector



“AI with increased accuracy would become my mainstream search. It needs more speed as well, but it is far more personal.”

Media Sector

Lack of understanding and trust are key barriers for AI search use.

DATA

Why don't you use AI tools for searching online more? n = 3,798



Among the top sectors that report to not using AI search, the top two reasons are a **lack of understanding** and **trust**.

For the **teaching sector**, understanding is the main reservation. It's a similar pattern, but to a much lesser extent, for public services, healthcare and retail.

Accountancy, banking and finance bucks the trend, with **trust** being a bigger factor. This could very well be due to the **relative risk and consequences for getting information wrong**.

In terms of lack of necessity, engineering stands out, with the majority of comments simply being 'not needed'. This could be a function of the nature of the work and the kinds of training necessary to become an engineer; the **'knowledge' is very 'black and white'**.



Demonstrate sector expertise through human experts to earn the trust of those who are slower to adopt.



People in certain sectors tend to be less trusting of AI search results in their field of expertise.

THOUGHTS



“When I ask it questions related to my field I can spot errors. So if there are errors in a field I am knowledgeable in why should I assume there are no errors in fields I am not knowledgeable in?”

Accountancy, Banking and Finance Sector

People in education tend to be more hesitant to use AI search due to misinformation and inaccuracy.

THOUGHTS



“The number of times they have been proven to be inaccurate is of serious concern for me. I work in a higher education institution where students use ChatGPT for their essays quite consistently and it is shocking how incorrect or poorly worded their work is as a result.”

Teaching & Education Sector

Using AI at work is associated with HIGHER concern for its impact on daily life.

SOURCE [9].



Hoping familiarity alone will improve trust is futile. Trust must be earned through tangible benefits to consumers; offer value and demonstrate respect.



Source Reference.

- SOURCE 1** AI in search: Charting changing trends in search engines
<https://www.gwi.com/blog/ai-and-search>
- SOURCE 2** Capgemini: How Gen AI is Driving Consumers Away From Search
<https://aimagazine.com/articles/capgemini-how-gen-ai-is-driving-consumers-away-from-search>
- SOURCE 3** AI in Search: Going beyond information to intelligence
<https://blog.google/products/search/google-search-ai-mode-update/#ai-mode-search>
- SOURCE 4** Social media overtakes search engines for discovery among Gen Z and millennials
<https://www.emarketer.com/content/search-behavior-being-redefined-thanks-generational-shifts>
- SOURCE 5** By the Numbers: Generational Media Habits and Shifts in Search Behaviour
<https://lbbonline.com/news/by-the-numbers-generational-media-habits-and-shifts-in-search-behavior>
- SOURCE 6** Unlocking the Secrets of Search, by Generation
<https://www.frac.tl/unlocking-secrets-search-generation/>
- SOURCE 7** Consumer Adoption of AI Report
https://www.askattest.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Consumer-Adoption-of-AI-Report-2025_digital.pdf
- SOURCE 8** Chasing Shadows: Getting ahead of Shadow AI https://www.ey.com/en_uk/insights/consumer-products/how-to-serve-consumers-who-rely-on-tech-but-dont-trust-tech
- SOURCE 9** How to serve consumers who rely on tech, but don't trust tech
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Explore the data, ask questions, and uncover what matters most to you.



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scan the QR code to speak to our team.**





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