ChatGPT Appears To Use Google Search As A Fallback via @sejournal, @martinibuster

Aleyda Solís conducted an experiment to test how fast ChatGPT indexes a web page and unexpectedly discovered that ChatGPT appears to use Google's search results as a fallback for web pages that it cannot access or that are not yet indexed on Bing.

According to Aleyda:

> *I've run a simple but straightforward to follow test that confirms the reliance of ChatGPT on Google SERPs snippets for its answers.*

Created A New Web Page, Not Yet Indexed

Aleyda created a brand new page (titled "LLMs.txt Generators") on her website, LearningAISearch.com. She immediately tested ChatGPT (with web search enabled) to see if it could access or locate the page but ChatGPT failed to find it. ChatGPT responded with the suggestion that the URL was not publicly indexed or possibly outdated.

She then asked Google Gemini about the web page, which successfully fetched and summarized the live page content.

Submitted Web Page For Indexing

She next submitted the web page for indexing via Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools. Google successfully indexed the web page but Bing had problems with it.

After several hours elapsed Google started showing results for the page with the site: operator and with a direct search for the URL. But Bing continued to have trouble indexing the web page.

Checked ChatGPT Until It Used Google Search Snippet

Aleyda went back to ChatGPT and after several tries it gave her an incomplete summary of the page content, mentioning just one tool that was listed on it. When she asked ChatGPT for the origin of that incomplete snippet it responded that it was using a "cached snippet via web search"", likely from "search engine indexing."

She confirmed that the snippet shown by ChatGPT matched Google's search result snippet, not Bing's (which still hadn't indexed it).

Aleyda explained:

> *"A snippet from where?*
>
> *When I followed up asking where was that snippet they grabbed the information being shown, the answer was that it had "located a cached snippet via web search that previews the page content — likely from search engine indexing."*
>
> *But I knew the page wasn't indexed yet in Bing, so it had to be … Google search results? I went to check.*
>
> *When I compared the text snippet provided by ChatGPT vs the*

> *one shown in Google Search Results for the specific Learning AI Search LLMs.txt Generators page, I could confirm it was the same information…"*

Not An Isolated Incident

Aleyda's article on her finding (Confirmed: ChatGPT uses Google SERP Snippets for its Answers [A Test with Proof]) links to someone else's web page that summarizes a similar experience where ChatGPT used a Google snippet. So she's not the only one to experience this.

Proof That Traditional SEO Remains Relevant For AI Search

Aleyda also documented what happened on a LinkedIn post where Kyle Atwater Morley shared his observation:

> *"So ChatGPT is basically piggybacking off Google snippets to generate answers?*
>
> *What a wake-up call for anyone thinking traditional SEO is dead."*

Stéphane Bureau shared his opinion on what's going on:

> *"If Bing's results are insufficient, it appears to fall back to scraping Google SERP snippets."*

He elaborated on his post with more details later on in the discussion:

> *"Based on current evidence, here's my refined theory:*
>
> *When browsing is enabled, ChatGPT sends search requests via Bing first (as seen in DevTools logs).*

> *However, if Bing's results are insufficient or outdated, it appears to fall back to scraping Google SERP snippets—likely via an undocumented proxy or secondary API.*
>
> *This explains why some replies contain verbatim Google snippets that never appear in Bing API responses.*
>
> *I've seen multiple instances that align with this dual-source behavior."*

Takeaway

ChatGPT was initially unable to access the page directly, and it was only after the page began to appear in Google's search results that it was able to respond to questions about the page. Once the snippet appeared in Google's search results, ChatGPT began referencing it, revealing a reliance on publicly visible Google Search snippets as a fallback when the same data is unavailable in Bing.

What would be interesting to see is whether the server logs held a clue as to whether ChatGPT attempted to crawl the page and, if so, what error code was returned in response to the failure to retrieve the data. It's curious that ChatGPT was unable to retrieve the page, and though it probably doesn't have any bearing on the conclusions, it would still contribute to making the conclusions feel more complete to have that last bit of information crossed off.

Nevertheless, it appears that this is yet more proof that standard SEO is still applicable for AI-powered search, including for ChatGPT Search. This adds to recent comments by Gary Illyes that confirms that there is no need for specialized GEO or AEO in order to rank well in Google AI Overviews and AI Mode.

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