

Google Is Using Social Media Signals To Mask AI Search Click Loss via @sejournal, @TaylorDanRW

As you may already know, Google recently updated Search Console to let brands track how their social media and video posts perform in search results.

Most marketers view this update as a helpful gift. They believe Google wants to reward brands that build strong footprints across TikTok, YouTube, and X. And not wanting to be glass-half-full, I think this is the positive optics Google was hoping for.

If you look past the official announcements, a different picture comes into focus; this update is a clever trap. It serves as a shield to hide the traffic loss caused by artificial intelligence while positioning creators into further training Google's AI models.

Redefining Success In The Era Of Click Loss

To understand this strategy, you must look at the crisis Google faces with web publishers.

Generative search experiences and AI summaries answer user questions directly on the search page. This setup keeps users on Google instead of sending them to external websites.

Organic traffic to a company website was the main measure of

marketing success, and a narrative we as an industry pinned to the mast for years as to whether or not we were justifying our budgets.

By tracking social media views inside Search Console, Google is trying to change the definition of success. If your website traffic drops by a third, Google can point to your social media data. They can show you that your TikTok videos received thousands of impressions on the search page; they want you to believe you are still winning, even if you do not get actual clicks.

It forces marketers to view Google as the central control room for all visibility, even when Google stops sending visitors to their websites, as they're still providing visibility.

Outsourcing The Search Graph To Creators

The update also serves as a tool to train Google's artificial intelligence and to power generative search, Google needs to understand the real world.

The engine maps relationships between people, brands, and topics. This process is called entity resolution.

Google needs to know who is an expert, what they write about, and whether they are a real person or just an automated spam site.

By encouraging you to verify your social accounts inside Search Console, Google makes you do their work. You hand over the exact connections they need, tell them that your website, your X profile, and your TikTok account are all the same entity.

Instead of Google guessing which profile belongs to which author, publishers hand-deliver verified identity maps. Google

can then use this clean data to train its language models on who the true authorities are.

This Search Console update also ties in nicely with the initial release of Google Search Profiles, which feels like a modern re-spin of the authorship benefits of Google+.

The Human Trust Filter

Having verified data is essential in the age of generative text.

Anyone can build a website, buy a drop domain, and programmatically generate thousands of articles with AI, and inflate third-party authority metrics.

Social profiles with real human engagement are the best proof of life. Real companies and real brands operate across the multiple channels and have a form of pulse and presence outside their single web domain.

Google uses these connections as a trust filter to separate real brands from synthetic spam. You are giving Google the exact blueprints it needs to verify content ownership. This helps Google decide which sources are reliable and which sources are junk.

Looking at this cynically, the ability to verify social profiles in Google Search Console is an optics masterclass in platform survival.

It somewhat pacifies publishers by giving them new vanity metrics to track, and at the same time, it creates a new network for those same publishers to map the entity relationships that Google needs to build its AI future.

How Google Get Social Content

Google pulls social media posts into search engine results

pages through a combination of live data firehoses, standard web crawling, and dynamic JavaScript rendering. The process differs based on the specific platform and user privacy settings.

Some of these data pipelines have been around for almost a decade, with the X (then Twitter) firehose deal coming into play in 2015.

This doesn't mean that fresh posts are the only ones considered. In my own Search Console profile, I'm seeing X posts receiving clicks on Google that I posted in October 2024.

LLMs behave in a similar manner, and because of this we need to look at a post deprecation strategy.

Reviewing pricing prompts for one of our clients, I found that a couple of LLMs were returning pricing information from an X post advertising a student only offer from July 2022. This isn't only misinformation, but can lead to a negative brand experience when a user clicks through expecting to receive one price, but find one substantially different.

Your Audience, Google's Platform

The brands that win in this new landscape will not focus on these new Google metrics, but understand these are now another piece of the puzzle.

We need to stop treating Google as a neutral partner, as Google needs Search to bring people to the platform for Ads.

We should use our social channels to build a direct connection with your audience. Gather your community on platforms you control, rather than a search engine that wants to keep your visitors for itself.

More Resources:

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<https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-is-using-social-media-signals-to-mask-ai-search-click-loss/582227/>