

Google Text Ad Click Share Rises Sharply In Some Verticals via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

An analysis of 16,000 U.S. search queries found that text ads gained 7 to 13 percentage points of click share between January 2025 and January 2026.

SEO consultant Aleyda Solis used Similarweb clickstream estimates to measure click share across classic organic results, SERP features, text ads, PLAs, and zero-click behavior.

She also tracked how often AI Overviews appeared on the page, but the dataset doesn't attribute clicks to AI Overviews directly.

What The Data Shows

Text ads gained between 7 and 13 percentage points of click share across every vertical Solis analyzed.

In the headphones vertical (top 5,000 US queries), classic organic click share fell from 73% to 50%. Text ads grew from 3% to 16%, and PLAs grew from 13% to 20%. Combined paid results now capture 36% of clicks in that category, up from 16% a year earlier.

Jeans followed a similar pattern. Classic organic dropped from 73% to 56%, while combined paid results rose from 18% to 34%.

The online games vertical saw text ads quadruple, from 3% to 13%, even though the category had historically had almost no ad presence.

In greeting cards, the only vertical where total clicks actually grew year over year, organic click share still fell from 88% to 75% as text ads nearly doubled.

The AI Overview presence on SERPs grew across all four verticals. Headphones saw AI0 presence jump from 2.28% to 32.76%, and online games went from 0.38% to 29.80%. But the analysis measured how often AI0s appeared on the page, not how many clicks they captured or prevented.

Solis wrote:

“When I started this research, my hypothesis was that text ads and organic SERP features -not just AI Overviews- could be significant culprits behind declining organic clicks. The data confirmed this across all four verticals, and the scale of the text ad impact surprised me: they gained between +7 and +13 percentage points of click share in every vertical, making them the single biggest measurable driver of the organic decline.”

Independent Data Points To The Same Pattern

The SERP-level click data lines up with what advertisers are seeing from the other side.

Tinuiti's Q4 2025 benchmark report found Google text ad clicks hit a 19-quarter high in Tinuiti's benchmark dataset, growing 9% year over year. Overall Google search ad spend rose 13% in the quarter, up from 10% in Q3.

Google's earnings tell a similar story. In its Q3 2025 report,

Alphabet posted \$102.3 billion in revenue, its first \$100 billion quarter, with search ad revenue reaching \$56.6 billion. CEO Sundar Pichai said AI features were expanding total query volume, including commercial queries.

More queries and more commercial intent create more ad inventory. The Similarweb data is consistent with more clicks shifting to paid placements in these verticals.

Why This Matters

The industry has spent much of the past year focused on AI Overviews as the explanation for declining organic clicks.

AIO presence is growing, and Google reported 1.5 billion monthly AIO users as of Q1 2025. This data indicates that text ads are an increasingly important factor to consider.

When diagnosing drops in organic traffic, it's helpful to look at the SERP composition for your industry rather than assuming AI Overviews are the sole reason.

Looking Ahead

Data from different sources indicate that text ads are gaining click share.

Whether Google is actively expanding ad placements or advertisers are bidding more aggressively on existing inventory is unknown.

What you may consider doing now is tracking SERP composition changes in your own vertical using tools that measure click distribution rather than rankings alone.

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