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## CHATGPT AND ITS IMPACT ON SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

### OVERVIEW

Since its launch late November 2022, ChatGPT has likely caused a few restless nights for digital marketers. Will it displace Google as the way we find information? Will it decimate traffic to my websites? What should I be doing to mitigate the risks, let alone take advantage of this new technology?

ChatGPT's incredible facility and flexibility are both awesome and somewhat limited. Ask it a question or give it a task and it does it, returning anything from factual answers to coding solutions. You can even have it answer in Old English or iambic pentameter if you like. From tech newsletters and podcasts to mainstream media, many are postulating that it could even disrupt the dominance of Google Search.<sup>1</sup> In short, ChatGPT is capturing our collective imaginations, and some feel it has the potential to dramatically change the digital marketing landscape.

But is it ready to challenge Google? Will it render your carefully crafted content strategy obsolete? Will it upend the marketing world?

**Is ChatGPT Going to Blow Up My Digital Strategy?** Probably not but be prepared to evolve as AI-driven technologies continue to proliferate.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ChatGPT is capturing headlines and imaginations, but it's not yet ready to begin displacing Google
- Accuracy, reliability, and timeliness are current barriers to widespread adoption
- The technology underpinning ChatGPT could transform Search in the future
- Could this be the harbinger of a transition from multi-answer engines to a single-answer future? Only time and continued progress in AI will tell.

### WHAT IS CHATGPT, REALLY?

There are two important answers to this question. First, as ChatGPT will tell you itself if you ask, it's a "conversational AI model that is based on the GPT architecture... a type of transformer-based neural

network that is trained on a large dataset of text. The model learns to understand the patterns and relationship in the data and can then generate new text that is similar to the input it has seen.”<sup>2</sup>

More plainly, ChatGPT is a sophisticated chat bot accessing a very large dataset that is better able to mimic a natural human interaction than anything we’ve seen previously. It appears to know just about everything and interacts with you like a chat session with an incredibly smart friend.

The second part of the answer is that ChatGPT is a public beta test of new technology, **not a product** (at least not yet). Incredible as it is, even the CEO of OpenAI, ChatGPT’s creator, has said it’s still not very reliable. Cloaked in its confidence-inspiring responses are a lot of incorrect answers and ChatGPT doesn’t currently cite the sources of its information, making fact checking difficult.<sup>3</sup>

Future training of ChatGPT’s large language model will continually improve accuracy – OpenAI has already launched one update with this aim. It also has a bandwidth challenge. People have flocked to the site very rapidly – it topped one million users only a few days after its launch – and this rapid adoption has caused lots of service disruptions. Privacy, security and ethical concerns also loom as hurdles ChatGPT will have to clear. As a Google-like utility, ChatGPT just isn’t up to the task at this point and likely will not be anytime soon.



## HOW BIG A THREAT IS CHATGPT TO GOOGLE AND THE SEARCH-BASED MARKETING MODEL?

Despite recent headlines that Sundar at Google has called a “Code Red” in response to ChatGPT<sup>4</sup>, and even called up Larry and Sergey, it seems unlikely that the current search paradigm will shift in the short term. While captivating, the technology does not appear ready for adoption at the scale required to put a dent in Google’s dominance. A more likely scenario is that we will see other search engines incorporating similar technology into their search offerings and wider products, creating more of an evolution than a revolution.<sup>5</sup> Google has certainly taken note though, and is already asking employees to test potential ChatGPT competitors, including a chatbot called ‘Apprentice Bard’.<sup>11</sup>

Another consideration is developing user trust. As attractive as it may seem to be able to ask ChatGPT a question and get back a specific answer, it’s only valuable if you feel you can trust it. That’s a major issue for ChatGPT at this point. Google and other search engines overcome this by providing lots of potential

“answers” to each search query – they’re multi-answer engines – allowing users to decide what’s credible.

Today’s voice assistants are other examples of single answer engines. Despite initial hype and hope, their credibility and capability limitations quickly became well known. Most users now know not to bother asking complicated or important questions of those engines. Until ChatGPT and other similar technologies that are sure to appear soon overcome this challenge, their utility and adoption will likely remain limited.

## **WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR VOICE ASSISTANTS?**

When Apple, Amazon and Google initially launched their voice assistants, many users undoubtedly hoped for a ChatGPT-like experience, but they all fell short to varying degrees. While voice integration is not yet part of the ChatGPT offering, it seems inevitable that it will be at some point.

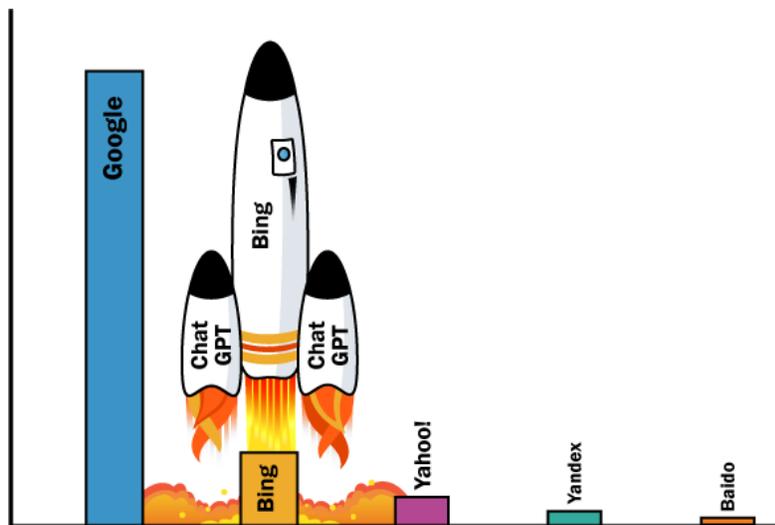
Additionally, Google’s Duplex technology may get a jump start from the reception to ChatGPT creating a new field of intense competition and fan the flames of the still developing voice assistant market.<sup>9</sup>

What this could mean for voice optimization of web content remains to be seen, but GroupM will continue to monitor developments and develop solutions to help our clients best position themselves for the environment ahead.

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## **COULD THIS BE BING’S MOMENT?**

Microsoft invested \$1 billion in ChatGPT creator OpenAI in 2019, has been in discussions about a new multiyear, multibillion-dollar investment, and has reportedly already begun to integrate its technologies into its leading productivity applications Word, Excel and PowerPoint. It seems likely that Microsoft will look to extend that technology into their search engine, Bing, as well.<sup>6</sup>



While locked out of Open AI's technology, Google has been developing its own similar technology, LaMDA, for several years and already uses other forms of artificial intelligence in its search algorithms.<sup>7</sup>

On the strength of their ingrained place in our online behavior and their propensity to continuously progress their technology, search engines appear to have the greatest opportunity to bring this technology to the masses relatively quickly. A more intriguing question is whether

Bing can seize a potential momentary advantage and finally make inroads in Google's dominance of the global search market.

## SHOULD I USE CHATGPT TO CREATE CONTENT FOR MY SITES?

Currently not recommended. Search engines have historically detested AI-generated content. They consider it "automatically generated" and that has been synonymous with spam. It seems, though, that Google may be getting more nuanced in this regard.

In a recent Twitter post, Google spokesman Danny Sullivan stated "...content created primarily for search engine rankings, however it is done, is against our guidance. If content is helpful and created for people first, that's not an issue."<sup>10</sup>

Sullivan's post was in response to BankRate.com publishing AI-generated content and attributing it as such, albeit with the caveat that it was "thoroughly edited and fact checked by our editors."

Furthermore, ChatGPT results have come back varied in terms of containing factual information, so it's not a viable solution at this time.

## GROUPM RECOMMENDS:

### It's time to prepare, not panic.

The search ecosystem is constantly evolving. Google and other search engines alter the way they work thousands of times each year and our practices continually change to keep pace. A ChatGPT-like feature in Google or Bing could be a significant shift, but remember, the information a sophisticated chat bot presents is dependent on the data available to it and, with respect to brands, that is often your websites.

Additionally, search engines are motivated to provide a valuable experience to users so that they can then present them with ads (that in turn direct users to your websites) to generate revenue. That incentivizes some level of symbiotic relationship between the search engines and the websites they present.

GroupM continues to recommend that website creators maintain their focus on understanding what their customers want, the intent behind the queries they enter, producing content that aligns with that intent and ensuring their technical website foundation remains up-to-date and incorporates structured data mark-up wherever appropriate.

## RELEVANT LINKS & READING LIST

- <sup>1</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/21/technology/ai-chatgpt-google-search.html>
- <sup>2</sup>Source: ChatGPT, January 12, 2023, Q: “What technology does ChatGPT use to generate responses to queries?”
- <sup>3</sup><https://www.vice.com/en/article/wxnaem/stack-overflow-bans-chatgpt-for-constantly-giving-wrong-answers>
- <sup>4</sup><https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/21/technology/ai-chatgpt-google-search.html>
- <sup>5</sup><https://bdtechtalks.com/2023/01/02/chatgpt-google-search/>
- <sup>6</sup><https://www.theverge.com/2023/1/9/23546144/microsoft-openai-word-powerpoint-outlook-gpt-integration-rumor>
- <sup>7</sup><https://searchengineland.com/how-google-uses-artificial-intelligence-in-google-search-379746>
- <sup>8</sup><https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-says-ai-generated-content-is-against-guidelines/444916/>
- <sup>9</sup><https://www.marketwatch.com/story/openais-chatgpt-has-awed-the-world-expect-a-version-of-google-duplex-to-strike-back-amid-a-wave-of-ai-assistants-11673373697>
- <sup>10</sup><https://www.seroundtable.com/amp/google-ai-content-guidelines-bankrate-34732.html>
- <sup>11</sup><https://www.cnbc.com/2023/01/31/google-testing-chatgpt-like-chatbot-apprentice-bard-with-employees.html>

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