Dissolving boundaries between social and search

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Instagram has always been a platform for discovery, but until recently, that discovery happened almost entirely within the app. Now, it's expanding far beyond the feed.

As of July, public content from business and creator accounts now appears in Google and Bing search results. Reels, carousels, profile bios, and pinned posts are now eligible to show up in branded and topic-based queries. Without changing how they post, many brands are already finding their social content ranking in places they didn't expect.

While not a dramatic transformation as Google was already [indexing photos and videos from public reels and posts](#) from accounts that met certain criteria, this update opens the door to new considerations and forms part of a broader shift in how platforms and search engines treat short-form content. YouTube Shorts and TikTok's have been appearing in Google results for some time. With Instagram deepening that layer of visibility, social content is becoming an increasingly relevant part of open-web search.

Captions, bios, and alt text also take on new meaning. They now serve as entry points for search engines as well as users. Optimising these elements doesn't require a full content strategy shift, but it does invite more attention to how and where Instagram fits into the broader visibility picture.

The user journey is shifting, too. According to Sprout Social's Q2 2025 Pulse Survey, [41% of Gen Z now turn to social platforms first when searching for information](#) - ahead of traditional search engines, AI tools, and even friends or family. Search is no longer confined to search engines. And content created for social engagement is now being encountered by audiences with search intent.

There are measurement and operational implications, too. Instagram Insights will attribute Google referrals under "External sources," while Google Search Console will begin surfacing Instagram URLs for branded terms. These are two separate data sets that need context and coordination to interpret properly.

This isn't a moment to overcorrect. It's a chance to pause, review what's already surfacing, and ensure it reflects the story you want to tell.

For questions about this document or our approach to social search, contact us at **digital@fgsglobal.com**.