



# CRACKING THE CODE: SIIA'S DEEP DIVE INTO A TRANSFORMATIVE SHIFT IN TRADITIONAL INTERNET BEHAVIOR

In the ever-evolving landscape of the Internet, the way individuals navigate and seek information varies significantly between personal and professional spheres. The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), a leading trade association in the information business, recently teamed up with Opinium to shed light on the diverse patterns of online behavior, and how people search for information. The survey, encompassing 2,000 U.S. internet users aged 18-70, uncovered fascinating insights that shed light on the current digital landscape.

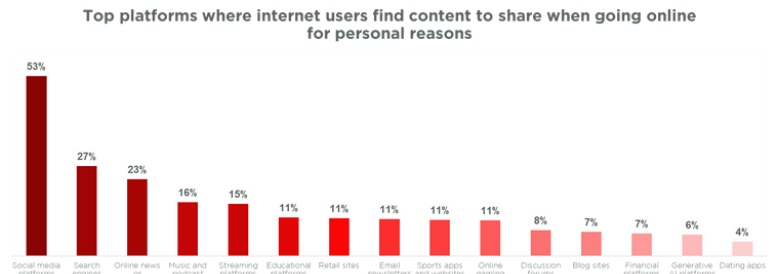
## KEY FINDINGS:

- **Shift in Traditional Search Behavior:** Historically, traditional search engines represented a popular means of accessing information across various subjects. However, in recent years a transformative shift has emerged, notably among the Gen Z demographic, that impacts thinking on what constitutes “search,” in a way that can blur lines between platforms.
- **Rise of Social Media and Niche Platforms:** Younger generations favor platforms featuring social media-style and topic-specific content when they search for information, showcasing a shift in information-seeking behavior.
- **Generative AI Tools Reshaping Information Search:** Across generations, there’s consensus that Generative AI tools are further evolving online information search.

## The Changing Landscape of Information Discovery

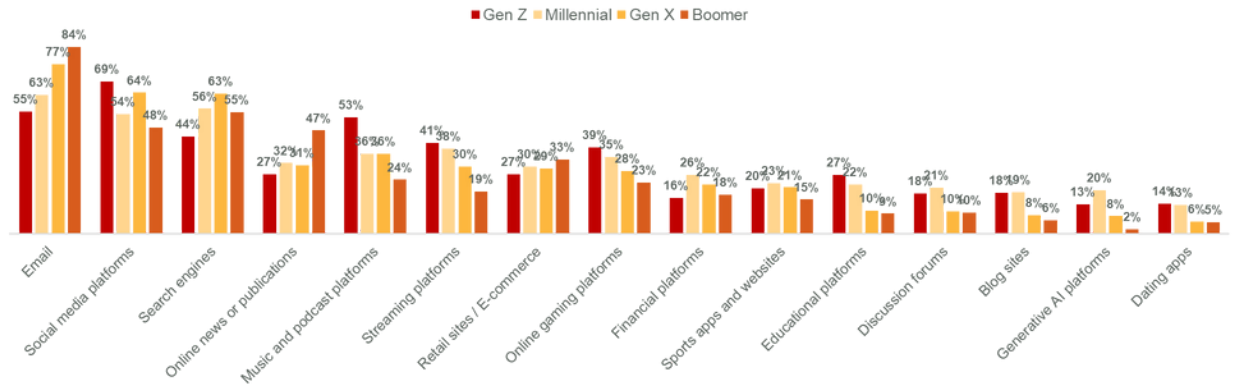
The Internet has transformed the way we live, learn, and connect with others. The survey reveals that 94% of individuals agree that the internet is a place for exploration and discovery, with 57% forming meaningful friendships online. Because the digital world has become an integral part of our daily routine, this has led to significant changes in online behaviors and preferences.

Users navigate the digital landscape with a consistent browsing habit, with subtle variations based on their context—whether online for personal or work-related reasons. Personal internet use often involves extensive exploration, leading users to unintended websites, and they go to social media or industry-specific sites in the same frequency as search engines.



In contrast, work-related browsing leans toward a more focused approach, with search engines taking the lead, particularly among senior executives. Younger people, however, exhibit a distinct preference for social media, online news, targeted publications, and platforms fueled by Generative AI. It is noteworthy that across generations, there is a consensus that Generative AI tools are streamlining the process of finding information online and reshaping traditional search methods. Millennials lead this transformation, with 74% acknowledging the replacement of conventional research or information discovery journeys by Generative AI tools.

Percent who visit the following online platforms daily when going online for personal use  
By generation



Social media and industry-specific sites are prominent, particularly among younger generations, indicating a paradigm shift in information-seeking behavior. Over 50% of individuals explicitly mentioned that social media is their preferred platform for sharing information online.

As we witness this transformation in search patterns, it is evident that the interest in a traditional search format has waned, particularly among younger generations. Gen Z has been steering away from traditional search content, opting for the immediacy and specificity offered by that on social media platforms and niche websites. Even so-called traditional search engines seem to be evolving and changing to address changing consumer preferences. The rise of Generative AI adds another layer to this evolution, providing users with accessible and user-friendly alternatives to conventional search methods.

The internet's impact on our lives goes beyond leisure and entertainment. It has become an integral part of our daily routine, shaping our behaviors and preferences. As technology continues to advance, the landscape of information search is evolving, with younger generations leading the way in exploring new platforms and capabilities. The future promises a diverse and dynamic online experience, where the quest for knowledge, connection, and exploration will continue to evolve and shape our digital interactions.

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SIIA's Policy Priorities at:  
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