

Creators become part of brands' AI search strategies

31.08.2026

As consumers increasingly turn to AI tools for product research and recommendations, brands are looking beyond traditional SEO and paid media to improve their visibility in AI-generated answers. A growing number of marketers are now exploring how creators can help influence what large language models (LLMs) discover and reference online.

In traditional search, brands largely controlled visibility through their own websites, advertising and optimisation strategies. AI search works differently: models draw information from a much broader range of sources, including social platforms, blogs, news sites and online communities. This has created a new opportunity for creators, whose reviews and discussions may shape the information AI systems use when responding to consumer queries.

“The machine is going towards the most accessible public information and the most authentic to get closer to an answer,” said Joe Gagliese, CEO of Viral Nation, noting that AI systems often rely on external voices rather than brand-controlled content.

Building visibility through creators

Some brands are already testing this approach. Zoom, for example, worked with creator and journalist Nayeema Raza as part of an effort to strengthen brand authority through storytelling. While measurement remains challenging, agencies say interest from marketers is growing rapidly.

Creator marketing agencies are increasingly being asked whether influencer content appears in AI search results and how campaigns can be designed to improve AI visibility. While a direct link between creator activity and AI-driven sales has not yet been fully established, agencies see enough potential to begin developing new strategies.

A new creator-AI playbook

Agencies are adapting their influencer strategies by analysing which creators and types of content are already being referenced by AI systems. This involves auditing existing creator content, tracking mentions in AI-generated answers and using those insights to guide future partnerships.

Some teams are also working with SEO specialists to understand how content is discovered and surfaced by AI platforms. Creators are being encouraged to make their content easier for AI systems to interpret by using clearer captions, detailed descriptions and structured information.

For creators, this means optimisation is expanding beyond traditional engagement metrics. Content may now need to perform not only with audiences and social algorithms, but also with AI systems searching the web for reliable sources.

The risks of chasing AI visibility

However, marketers are also being warned against treating AI optimisation as a simple numbers game. Creating large volumes of creator content does not necessarily guarantee visibility in AI-generated answers. Content still needs to appear in sources that AI systems consider useful and credible.

Some brands have experimented with strategies such as encouraging mentions on online forums like Reddit, but these approaches have faced criticism from communities concerned about manipulation.

New services are emerging around this trend. Creator marketing companies and AI search specialists are developing tools that analyse which creators appear in AI results and help brands adjust influencer strategies accordingly. These approaches may involve everything from selecting new creators to making small changes in video titles, descriptions or captions.

The rise of AI search is adding another layer of complexity for marketers. Brands must now consider not only traditional search rankings and social media algorithms, but also how AI systems discover, interpret and recommend information.

As AI-powered search becomes more influential in consumer decision-making, creator partnerships may become an increasingly important part of how brands build credibility and visibility in the next generation of digital discovery.