

PRESS RELEASE

05. May 2026

Google Has a Strategy Behind “AI Overviews” – Study Finds

- Researchers analyze 15,000+ Google search results
- Google’s strategic deployment of generative AI in search
- EPoS Economic Research Center at Bonn and Mannheim publishes paper

Bonn, Mannheim, 05.05.2026 – **Google’s “AI Overviews” do not appear for all search queries. To understand when the platform provides AI-generated summaries, economists have for the first time systematically examined the likely underlying strategy. The results suggest that “AI Overviews” show up when they best serve Google’s interests to maximize ad revenue per user. The research findings have implications for regulators concerned with platforms’ market power. The EPoS Economic Research Center at the Universities of Bonn and Mannheim publishes the results in the discussion paper “AI Overview or Overreach? Google’s Strategic Deployment of Generative AI in Search”.**

“According to our results, ‘AI Overviews’ are not just an improvement to help users but form part of a broader strategy to maximize revenue,” says Robin Ng from the EPoS Economic Research Center. “Our research shows that the algorithm tends to withhold AI-generated summaries for certain searches. This is mostly the case when users make targeted queries, i.e., looking for a specific product.”

Targeted vs. exploratory searches

To understand the underlying strategy, the researchers have analyzed more than 15,000 Google search results. They find that “AI Overviews” appear in about half of exploratory searches in which users are unfamiliar with a topic. However, for targeted searches, Google tends to withhold AI summaries; they appear in only 10–20% of cases. “Targeted searches are focused, and users have a specific objective,” says Ng. “For example, they may look for a specific mobile phone model. In these instances, the data shows that users often do not get the full, AI-powered picture immediately. Instead, the algorithm displays traditional search results, including prominent advertising slots.”

Algorithm appears to prioritize what is profitable for Google

The researchers suggest that targeted searches are often commercially valuable for the platform and that this is why “AI Overviews” are initially withheld. However, they observe that “AI Overviews” do appear when the traditional results page cannot generate enough revenue from advertising. In this case, Google synthesizes content from various sources, including ad clients, to redirect user attention to search queries that are valuable for the platform.

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Possible extension of market power by means of AI

“Our empirical findings suggest that Google is adapting to recent advances in AI-generated answers, while using them selectively to protect its advertising revenue,” says Robin Ng. “Such behavior is also relevant for the design of regulatory frameworks such as the Digital Markets Act. Additional transparency requirements may be warranted, for example, in the form of obligations requiring platforms to disclose when and why they deploy AI-generated content.”

The presented discussion paper is a publication without peer review of the Collaborative Research Center Transregio 224 EPoS. Access the full discussion paper here: <https://www.crctr224.de/research/discussion-papers/archive/dp742>

Find the list of all discussion papers of the CRC here: <https://www.crctr224.de/research/discussion-papers>.

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The Collaborative Research Center (CRC) Transregio 224 EPoS

Established in 2018, [the Collaborative Research Center Transregio 224 EPoS](#), a cooperation of the universities Bonn and Mannheim, is a long-term research institution funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG). EPoS addresses three key societal challenges: how to promote equality of opportunity; how to regulate markets in light of the internationalization and digitalization of economic activity; and how to safeguard the stability of the financial system.

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