From Search to Suggestion

How LLMs are Rewriting Brand vs Product Discovery

Abstract

AI-powered answers are transforming how consumers find products online. We used Seshes.ai to get a better understanding of the split between brand vs product mentions across LLMs (like GPT-4, Claude, Llama4, Perplexity) and traditional search engines (Google, Bing, DuckDuckGo). Using 30 days of tracked data on skate shoe queries, we show how generative AI shifts visibility patterns - supporting an 805% seasonal rise in AI-assisted purchases.

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1. Introduction

In 2025, the digital path to purchase saw a major shift from static links to conversational suggestions. Generative AI systems now guide product discovery with context-rich answers. But do these systems favor products or brands?

Key stat: AI-assisted purchases are up **805% YoY** (Adobe https://business.adobe.com/blog/adi-october-2025-holiday-shopping-actuals).

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2. Methodology

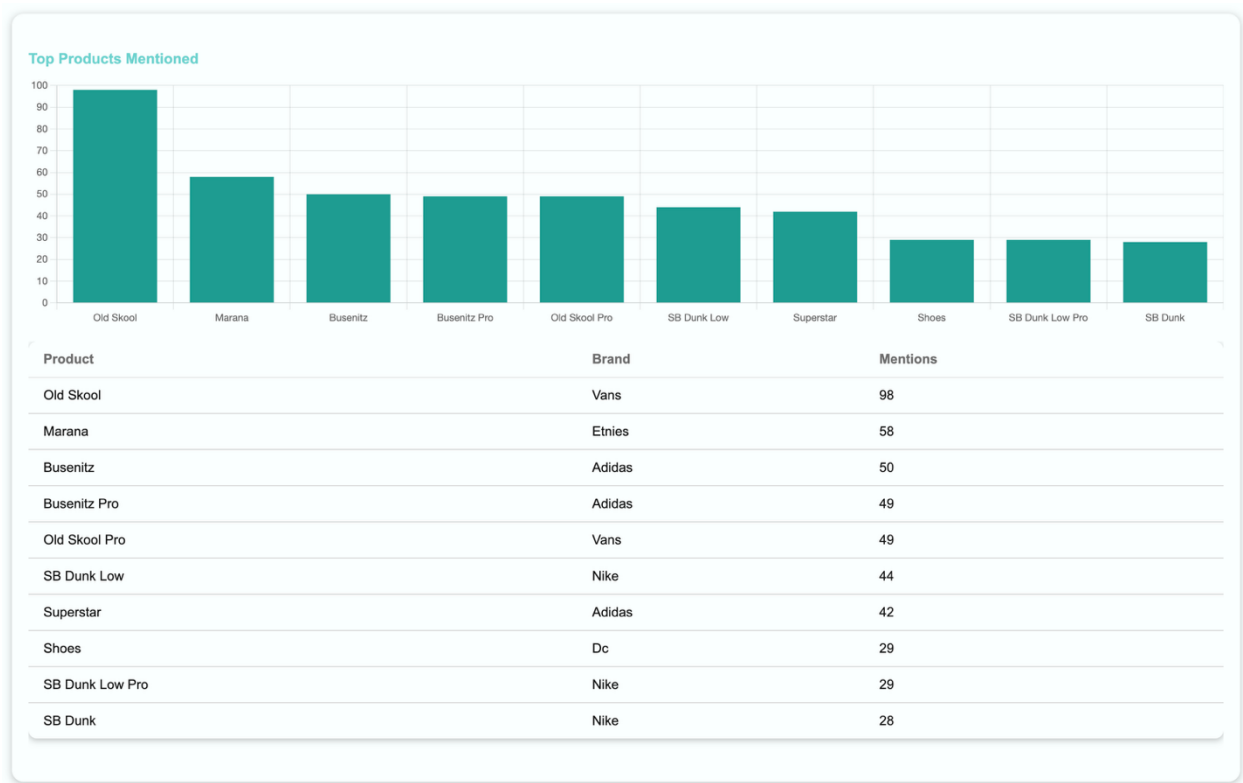We tracked 3 prompts across 6 LLMs and 3 search engines over a 30-day period:

- *What are the best skate shoes for beginners in 2025?*
- *What are the top rated skate shoes for durability and comfort?*
- *What are the top skate shoes for streetwear style?*

Collected metrics included:

- Product and brand mentions (ranked/unranked)
- Visibility and presence scores (per model)
- Top citations and domains linked
- Google/Bing/DuckDuckGo SERPs
- Sentiment and context analysis

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3. Top Product Mentions in LLMs

Product	Brand	Mentions
Old Skool	Vans	98
Marana	Etnies	58
Busenitz	Adidas	50
SB Dunk Low	Nike	44
Superstar	Adidas	42

Top Products Mentioned

Product	Brand	Mentions
Old Skool	Vans	98
Marana	Etnies	58
Busenitz	Adidas	50
Busenitz Pro	Adidas	49
Old Skool Pro	Vans	49
SB Dunk Low	Nike	44
Superstar	Adidas	42
Shoes	Dc	29
SB Dunk Low Pro	Nike	29
SB Dunk	Nike	28

4. Brand Visibility vs Presence

Brand	Presence	Δ Presence	Visibility	Δ Visibility	Mentions	Δ Mentions	#1 Count	Top Model
Etnies	33.96%	+0.84%	66.35%	+2.85%	36	+10	6	perplexity
Vans	66.67%	+32.71%	65.38%	-0.97%	115.7	+79.7	1	llama4
Nike	66.67%	+32.71%	3.31%	-63.04%	106.2	+70.2	0	llama4
Adidas	66.67%	+32.71%	3.63%	-62.72%	90.5	+54.5	0	llama4
Dc	0.0%	-33.96%	0%	-66.35%	42.4	+6.3999999999999990	0	N/A
Emerica	66.67%	+32.71%	43.28%	-23.07%	37.9	+1.8999999999999980	0	copilot
Converse	0.0%	-33.96%	0%	-66.35%	16.0	-20.0	0	N/A
Lakai Griffin	100.0%	+66.04%	13.78%	-52.57%	13.3	-22.7	2	copilot

Etnies
Mentions: 36
Visibility: 66.35%
Presence: 33.96%
Top Model: perplexity

Vans
Mentions: 115.7
Visibility: 65.38%
Presence: 66.67%
Top Model: llama4

Nike
Mentions: 106.2
Visibility: 3.31%
Presence: 66.67%
Top Model: llama4

Adidas
Mentions: 90.5
Visibility: 3.63%
Presence: 66.67%
Top Model: llama4

Dc
Mentions: 42.4
Visibility: 0%
Presence: 0.0%
Top Model: N/A

Emerica
Mentions: 37.9
Visibility: 43.28%
Presence: 66.67%
Top Model: copilot

Brand Industry Ranking

	Brand		
1	Etnies	↑ 2.0%	66.35%
2	Vans	↑ 50.0%	65.38%
3	Emerica	↑ 30.0%	43.28%
4	Adidas	↓ -0.2%	3.63%
5	Nike	↓ -0.1%	3.31%
6	Dc	↔ 0%	0%

Brand	Presence	Δ Presence	Visibility	Δ Visibility	#1 Count	Top Model
Vans	66.7%	+32.7%	65.4%	-0.97%	1	Llama4
Etnies	34.0%	+0.8%	66.4%	+2.9%	6	Perplexity
Nike	66.7%	+32.7%	3.3%	-63.0%	0	Llama4
Adidas	66.7%	+32.7%	3.6%	-62.7%	0	Llama4

Presence = Mentioned in any part of the answer
Visibility = Ranked in top recommendation positions

5. LLMs vs Search Engine Results

Google/Bing (SERP Sample):

- Top links focus on **brand collection pages** or **marketplaces**.
- Emphasis on authority domains like Nike.com, Amazon, Reddit.

LLMs (Sample Responses):

Prompt	LLM	Top Mention
Beginners	GPT-4	Vans Old Skool
Streetwear	Claude	SB Dunk Low
Durability	Perplexity	Etnies Marana

LLMs often prioritize product performance or style over brand ownership.

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6. Product vs Brand Behavior

Key Observations:

- **LLMs emphasize individual products** - even obscure ones - without linking to a brand homepage.
- **Search engines favor brand-level results** (e.g. Adidas Skateboarding).
- **Citation behavior varies** - Perplexity often cites niche blogs; Claude links to Reddit; GPT prefers clean summaries.

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7. Strategic Implications

Insight	Brand Strategy Impact
LLMs favor products over brands	Optimize product descriptions for LLM visibility
Each model behaves differently	Track model-specific trends and tune content
High presence ≠ high visibility	Improve rank-worthiness, not just mentions

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8. Case Study: Skate Shoes

- **Etnies Marana** dominated "durability" mentions in Perplexity.
- **Vans Old Skool** appeared across all LLMs and was also top in search.
- **SB Dunk Low** performed well on Claude, but was less visible in Google.

Insert seshes.ai trend chart: brand visibility vs presence

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9. Conclusion

Discovery is diverging. LLMs act as intent-aware, product-recommending engines. To win visibility, brands must understand how they are presented by models - not just indexed by search.

Welcome to the era of LLM SEO and conversational commerce.

Appendix: Prompts Tracked

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Prompt 1: What are the best skate shoes for beginners in 2025?
Prompt 2: What are the top rated skate shoes for durability and comfort?
Prompt 3: What are the top skate shoes for streetwear style?
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