



5 Things Every Casino Marketer Needs to Know About the Future of Search Marketing

*How Google, AI, and changing guest behavior are
rewriting the rules of how people find your property*



A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

A Shifting Landscape and Why It Matters Now

Not long ago, if someone wanted to find a casino near them with a good buffet, a weekend concert or a hotel deal they opened Google, typed a few words, and clicked one of the first results. Your marketing team worked to make sure your property showed up at the top. It was predictable. It was learnable. It worked.

That system is changing faster than most people realize.

Today, a growing number of guests aren't typing searches into Google at all. They're asking questions out loud or in a chat window using tools like ChatGPT, Google's AI tool, or Siri. And those tools don't show a ranked list of blue links. They give a single answer. They make a recommendation. They ask the user to take an action. If your property isn't part of that answer, you simply don't exist in that moment.

At the same time, the cost of showing up in traditional paid search ads is rising. The space is getting more competitive. And the habits guests used five years ago to find a casino are being replaced by behaviors that didn't exist a year ago.

This white paper isn't meant to overwhelm you with technology. It's meant to give you five clear, practical things you need to understand and start thinking about so your property isn't left behind.

No jargon. No scare tactics. Just the essentials.

01

Google Is Changing and Search Will Never Look the Same

For most of its history, Google worked like a very organized library. You asked a question, and it handed you a list of books to look through. Your job and your marketing team's job was to make sure your book was at the front of the shelf.

Google is now building something fundamentally different: an AI-powered layer that reads all those books itself and gives the person a direct answer at the top of the page, before they ever scroll to the results below. Google calls this the AI Overview. For many common searches, it's already there.

When someone asks Google, "Where are the best casino concerts this Summer?" the AI Overview may answer that question for them before a single website ever gets clicked.



This has a direct consequence for casino marketing. Historically, the goal was to rank #1 in Google's results. Now, even a #1 ranking can be invisible if an AI-generated answer appears above it. The click never happens. The implication isn't that Google is broken or that search is dying. It's that the rules have changed, and properties that adapt their strategy now will be the ones that end up in those AI-generated answers.

02

Brand Strength Is Now a Search Ranking Factor

For years, search engine optimization (SEO) was a technical game, the right words on your website, the right number of links pointing to it. Brand strength mattered in the hotel lobby. Online, it was mostly about mechanics.

AI has changed this. The tools that now power search, whether it's Google's AI Overview, ChatGPT, or others, are trained to understand reputation. They learn which brands are talked about most positively, most frequently, and across the widest variety of sources. A property with a strong, well-recognized brand doesn't just win in the room. It wins in the algorithm.

Put simply: the more people know your name, talk about your property, write reviews, mention you in articles, and recommend you to others online, the more likely AI systems are to surface you as the answer when a potential guest asks a question.

A strong brand used to be a marketing advantage. Now it's a search advantage.

This doesn't mean running a generic brand awareness campaign. It means being intentional about the signals your property puts into the world, your guest experience, the stories your guests tell online, the consistency of how you describe yourself across every channel.

Your brand isn't just what you say about yourself. In the AI era, it's the sum of everything the internet says about you.

03

Your Website Needs to Speak AI's Language

If you've ever had a website redesign, you've probably heard about the importance of **SEO**, making sure search engines can find and understand your pages. That's still true. But the definition of "speaking Google's language" has expanded to **generative engine optimization (GEO)** and most casino websites haven't caught up. These AI tools are commonly known as **large language models (LLMs)**.



Today, your website needs to be structured in a way that AI tools can understand at a glance. That means clear, direct answers to the questions guests are actually asking. It means organizing your pages so that an AI tool reading your site can quickly extract: What kind of property is this? What do they offer? What makes them different? What events do they have coming up?

The websites that AI tools trust and reference most often are the ones built to answer questions, not just to look pretty or promote deals. Think of it less like a brochure and more like an expert who's ready to be interviewed.

The question isn't whether your website looks good. It's whether AI can understand it well enough to recommend you to a stranger.

Practically, this means adding content that mirrors the way guests actually speak: "Is there a hotel at your casino?", "What concerts are coming up this summer?", "Do you have a buffet?", "Is your casino dog-friendly?" Pages that answer these questions in plain, natural language are the ones that get pulled into AI-generated responses. In practice, this often means building out FAQ-style content, structured pages for amenities, and clear, searchable event listings rather than relying solely on promotional landing pages.

04

The Internet Is Talking About You. Are You Part of the Conversation?

Here's something most casino marketing teams haven't fully reckoned with yet: AI tools don't just read your website. They read everything. Every review on TripAdvisor. Every Reddit thread where someone asks, "which casino has the best buffet in Minnesota?" Every travel blog, every local news article, every Facebook group post. They absorb all of it and use it to decide who to recommend.

This means your online presence isn't just your owned channels anymore. It's the entire ecosystem of places where your property gets mentioned and whether those mentions are positive, detailed, and credible. Organic brand recognition and consistent community management is becoming more important every day.

Think of it the way you think about word-of-mouth reputation in your own community. A guest who raves about their experience at a dinner party helps fill your floor. A guest who writes about that same experience on TripAdvisor, shares a photo on Facebook, or mentions your property in a travel forum does the same thing, except now it's being read by the AI tools that millions of people use to make decisions.

Google reviews, TripAdvisor ratings, travel blogs, and niche forums are no longer just reputation management. They're search infrastructure.



Properties that proactively encourage guests to leave reviews, that engage with travel writers, that show up in regional “best of” lists, and that have an active presence on platforms where real people share real opinions will be far better positioned in the AI era than those that rely solely on their own website and ad budget.

05

Paid Search Is Getting More Expensive and Less Predictable

Paid search advertising, buying ads that appear at the top of Google or Bing results has been a staple of casino marketing for years. And it still works. But the math is changing, and every casino budget holder needs to understand why.

First, there are simply more competitors bidding for the same keywords. As more businesses shifted budgets online, the online auction to bid on a click got more expensive.

Second (and this is the bigger shift) Google's AI Overview is now appearing above the paid ads for many searches. A guest who gets a complete AI-generated answer at the top of the page may never scroll far enough to see your ad at all.

You can win the auction, have your ad appear, and still get nothing because Google's AI answered the question before anyone scrolled to your ad.

This doesn't mean abandoning paid search. It means rethinking the balance. Properties that invest equally or more in their organic search presence (the kind driven by strong content, brand recognition, and third-party mentions) are building a foundation that doesn't require paying for every visit. Over time, properties with strong organic presence will pay less per guest acquired than those who rely entirely on paid ads.

The smart play isn't to panic about paid search. It's to stop treating paid and organic as separate conversations and start building a strategy where they reinforce each other so that as paid search becomes more expensive and less reliable, your property is still showing up.

Ready to Future-Proof Your Search Strategy?

The window to get ahead of these changes is open, but it won't stay open long.

Pixel & Plume specializes in helping gaming, retail, and hospitality properties build holistic creative and media strategies for the AI era.

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