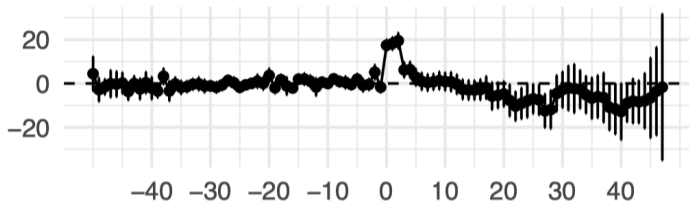


Discussion of the
Consumer Search Session

Leon Musolff
(Discussant)

FTC Conference on Marketing and Public Policy
Mar 2026

The Impact of LLM Adoption on Online User Behavior I



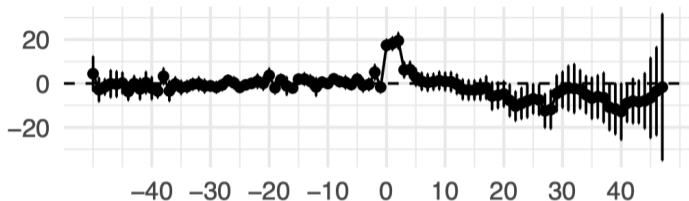
Summary:

- Consumers who adopt LLMs eventually use traditional search engines less.
 - This effect appears with a roughly 20-week lag, but then seems persistent; it is concentrated in informational queries.
- They also visit less-popular websites less often.

Assessment:

- Fascinating paper on an important topic.
- Chatbots are likely to change how we consume information online.

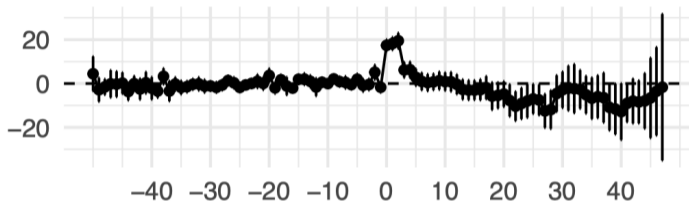
The Impact of LLM Adoption on Online User Behavior II



Main Comments:

- A related paper (Gholami, Firullo, Cheyre, and Acquisti 2026) finds the opposite pattern
 - Padilla et al.: LLMs are substitutes for search.
 - Gholami et al.: LLMs are complements to search.
 - Padilla et al.: LLMs lead to decline in visits to smaller sites.
 - Gholami et al.: LLMs lead to a sustained increase in the number of unique websites visited.
 - Both papers use comScore data, and both use staggered adoption / event-study designs.
 - One possibility is that the difference comes from the length of the event-study window; Padilla et al. use a longer post-adoption window.

The Impact of LLM Adoption on Online User Behavior II



Main Comments:

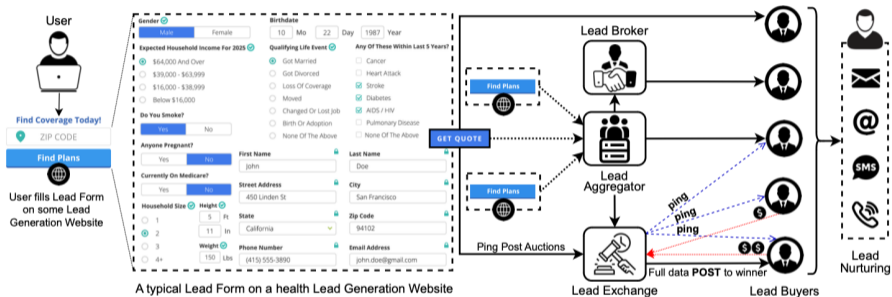
- Is the dynamic pattern of the effect plausible?
 - Why is there an immediate spike in search activity right after LLM adoption?
 - Could this reflect activity bias? (Paper says yes, but also says activity is controlled for.)
 - Why does the persistent decline in search activity only emerge after 20 weeks?

The Impact of LLM Adoption on Online User Behavior III

Minor Comments:

- Early LLMs were not very good at search-like tasks; this has improved considerably since.
 - e.g., ChatGPT "Deep Research" was introduced in 2025; data ends in 2023.
 - Suggestion: Why not add 2024 and 2025 data? Both are readily available.
- The implied $(2041/74940) \approx 3\%$ adoption rate seems low?
 - Pew suggests 18% in July 2023 (Pew Research, 2025)
- (Very minor) Event-study figures are central to the paper, but they are hard to read.
 - Could the authors show fewer outcomes, or fewer event-time coefficients per figure?
 - Could the effects be normalized into percentage terms to ease interpretation?

Understanding Data Collection, Brokerage and Spam in the Lead Marketing Ecosystem



Summary:

- Lead generation websites ask you to fill out a form to receive a quote.
- Your data is then sold to multiple companies, which may contact you with offers.
- The resulting contact can be extremely intense (up to 593 calls), and arguably spam-like.
- Brokers sometimes fabricate sensitive data and fail to honor opt-out requests.

Understanding Data Collection, Brokerage and Spam in the Lead Marketing Ecosystem II

Main Comments:

- What are the consumer *benefits* of receiving multiple offers?
 - Lead generation plausibly reduces search frictions.
 - Could you survey consumers? (Reviews may be selected on bad experiences.)
 - Could you collect data on the actual offers received?
- The paper proposes targeted fixes (real-time opt-out, call frequency limits). Can we think bigger?
 - Requiring firms to post full price menus may be infeasible.
 - Could regulators require insurers to make non-binding quotes available via API?

Understanding Data Collection, Brokerage and Spam in the Lead Marketing Ecosystem III

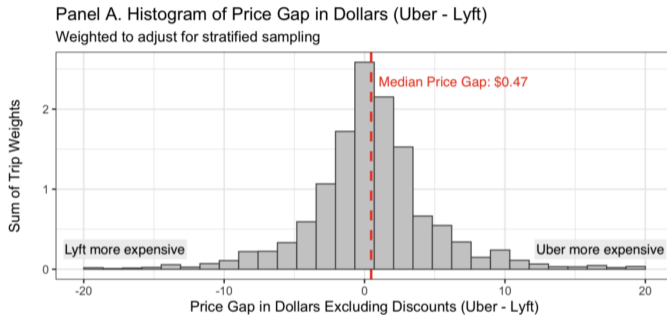
Minor Comments:

- Could non-response mechanically inflate the number of follow-up calls?
 - Marketers may interpret non-response as 'missed connection' rather than lack of interest.
- Inability to test the most common SMS opt-out method.
 - The authors could not reply "STOP" as Telnyx does not support outbound texts.
 - Does this limit the conclusions we can draw about SMS opt-out effectiveness?

Assessment:

- Important reminder that more quotes/information is not always better.
- Meticulous and creative data collection that answers policy-relevant questions I have not seen addressed elsewhere.

Leaving Money on the Dashboard: Price Dispersion and Search Frictions on Uber and Lyft I



Summary:

- For a given route, Uber and Lyft offer very similar services, yet prices often differ.
- If consumers checked both apps, they would save $\sim 7\%$ (\$300M/yr in NYC alone)
- Simple model: consumers should compare prices 97% of the time.
 - But in practice they only do so $\sim 16\%$ of the time (!)

Leaving Money on the Dashboard: Price Dispersion and Search Frictions on Uber and Lyft II

Main Comments:

- What are potential remedies?
 - Ellison and Ellison (2009): comparison tools can induce obfuscation.
 - ⇒ e.g., rideshare apps really offer (wait-time, price, car type) bundles
 - Similarly, on Amazon, Buybox drives product proliferation.
 - ⇒ API creates incentive to differentiate
 - Maybe public API + chatbots can help?
- In China, aggregators like Meituan have large market share.
 - How does the regulatory environment differ?

Leaving Money on the Dashboard: Price Dispersion and Search Frictions on Uber and Lyft III

Minor Comments:

- Is the result driven by people who don't have both apps installed?
⇒ This matters for welfare calculation/model.
- What about business trips?
- Can we do a similar analysis on the driver side (in future work)?
- Uber (eventually) discounting every trip (Fig. A8) – is there a new study idea here?

Assessment:

- Excellent data, straightforward analysis in the best sense, and a stark message.

The State of Consumer Search: Consumers Don't Search

- A unifying theme: many **consumers don't like to search**.
- This makes them ...
 - willing to trust chatbots' synthesized information,
 - vulnerable to lead marketers who promise to do the work for them,
 - willing to overpay for rides.
- **Remedy 1:** Price comparison platforms and APIs.
 - But providers respond by differentiating and obfuscating (Ellison & Ellison 2009).
- **Remedy 2:** LLM-powered comparison tools may be able to cut through obfuscation.
 - But consumers won't compare across LLMs/comparison tools.
 - So the aggregator captures the rents instead.