LINKEXIS
莱睿寰略咨询公司

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Linkexis X-Change

August 25 – 31, 2026

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THIS WEEK

Global B2B Advertising

New benchmark data dominates B2B advertising this week: fresh ROI numbers put LinkedIn ahead of Google and Meta, a specific ranking of which ABM tactics actually pay off, and Microsoft doubling down on Copilot as a real third ad ecosystem.

121%	28%	47%
LinkedIn ROAS vs. other B2B ad platforms	lower cost-per-qualified-lead than Google	cite personalized content as ABM's top-ROI tactic

LINKEDIN ROI

New Benchmark Data Puts LinkedIn Ahead of Google and Meta on B2B ROI

Dreamdata's 2026 benchmark shows LinkedIn delivering 121% ROAS and a 28% lower cost-per-qualified-lead than Google Ads for B2B campaigns.

121%

LINKEDIN ROAS

WHAT WE FOUND

Dreamdata's newly published 2026 LinkedIn Ads Benchmarks Report puts a number on something many B2B marketers have suspected for a while: LinkedIn is now outperforming both Google and Meta on return on ad spend for B2B campaigns specifically, posting a 121% ROAS. The same report finds LinkedIn's cost-per-qualified-lead running 28% below Google Ads for comparable B2B campaigns, largely a function of LinkedIn's targeting precision (job title, seniority, company size, industry) reaching people who can actually approve or influence a purchase, rather than just click an ad. The report frames the two platforms as complementary rather than competing: Google still wins on speed and cost for capturing existing demand, while LinkedIn does more of the work creating it.

WHY IT MATTERS

Budget conversations for 2026-2027 have leaned heavily on “prove it” data, and this is exactly that kind of number: sourced, comparative, and specific to B2B rather than a general advertising benchmark. It gives any B2B marketer a credible reference point when deciding how to split spend between platforms, and a useful counter to the assumption that LinkedIn's higher CPCs automatically make it the less efficient channel.

NEXT STEPS

Worth pulling your own ROAS and cost-per-qualified-lead numbers by platform and comparing them against this benchmark. A LinkedIn program running meaningfully below 121% ROAS may have a targeting or creative problem worth investigating, not necessarily a platform problem. Expect more platform-specific ROI benchmarking like this as B2B budgets keep tightening.

Source: Demand Gen Report, August 2026

New Survey Asks Where AI Is Actually Working in B2B Marketing, Not Just Where It's Deployed

Demand Gen Report's 2026 Benchmark Survey, published Aug 6, targets practitioners already running AI in production across content, lead scoring, and workflow orchestration.

WHAT WE FOUND

Demand Gen Report opened its 2026 Demand Generation Benchmark Survey on August 6, and its scope is notably narrower than most “AI in marketing” surveys. Rather than asking whether teams are experimenting with AI, it targets demand gen managers, marketing operations leads, and martech decision-makers already running AI-assisted programs in production, and asks four specific questions about where AI is delivering measurable results across content creation, lead scoring, campaign optimization, and workflow orchestration, versus where it's still more promise than performance. It also maps how AI competes for a fixed demand generation budget against ABM, intent data, and content personalization, noting that most teams can no longer fund every platform at full scale.

WHY IT MATTERS

Most AI-in-marketing coverage right now is either breathless hype or vague caution, and this survey is aimed squarely at the gap between those two: practitioner-level data on what's actually working. For anyone trying to make a budget case for, or against, further AI investment, results from a survey like this carry more weight internally than another vendor case study.

NEXT STEPS

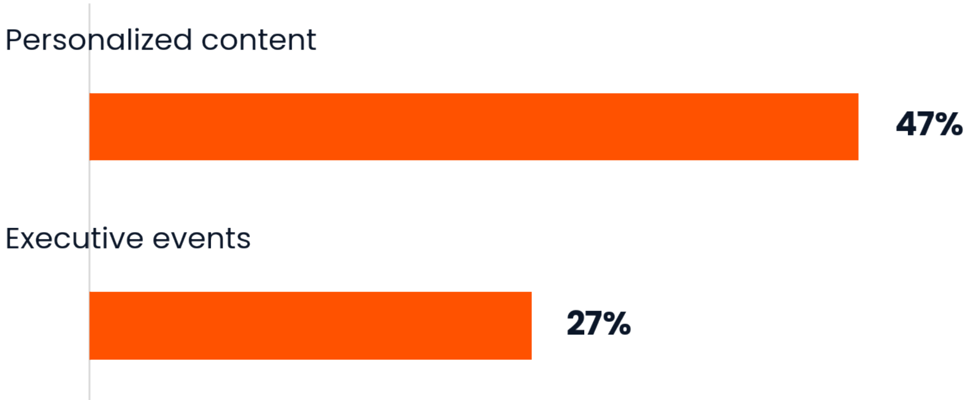
Worth watching for the published results later this year, and worth auditing your own AI tooling now against the same four categories (content, lead scoring, optimization, orchestration) to have a clear answer ready when someone asks what's actually paying off.

Source: MarketScale / Demand Gen Report, August 2026

ABM BENCHMARK

Personalized Content Tops the List of Highest-ROI ABM Tactics

The 2026 ABM Benchmark Survey finds personalized content delivers the best ROI for account-based programs (47%), with executive events a distant second, even as most teams still cite martech integration as their biggest barrier to using AI within ABM.



WHAT WE FOUND

The 2026 Account-Based Marketing Benchmark Survey finds ABM has settled into a mature phase: 52% of respondents say their programs are meeting expectations, with another 23% exceeding them. Among specific tactics, personalized content ranks as the clear ROI leader at 47%, well ahead of executive events at 27%. New account acquisition remains the top strategic goal for 56% of respondents, with account expansion the primary focus for another 28%. The survey also flags where AI adoption inside ABM is stalling: martech integration, limited internal expertise, and difficulty proving ROI, not lack of interest in AI itself.

WHY IT MATTERS

This gives ABM practitioners a specific, ranked answer to "where should we actually invest," rather than a generic push toward "more personalization." The gap between personalized content's ROI and executive events' is wide enough to be worth reallocating budget around, especially for teams that have defaulted to event-heavy account plans out of habit rather than evidence.

NEXT STEPS

Worth checking whether your own ABM tactic mix reflects this ranking, or whether budget is still weighted toward lower-ROI tactics for reasons unrelated to performance. If AI adoption inside ABM has stalled, integration friction, not lack of use cases, is the more likely culprit based on this data.

Source: Demand Gen Report, 2026 ABM Benchmark Survey

MICROSOFT COPILOT

Microsoft Advertising Bets Its Future on Copilot, Not Just Bing

New root-cause-analysis AI, brand-controlled AI creative generation, and ad surfaces spanning Bing, Edge, and Copilot itself signal where Microsoft thinks advertising is headed.

WHAT WE FOUND

Microsoft's Advertising Activate 2026 event laid out a platform strategy built around Copilot rather than treating it as a bolt-on feature. New Copilot-powered root-cause-analysis AI diagnoses account performance issues and troubleshoots conversion tracking automatically, while a new AI creative generation tool lets advertisers produce assets with explicit brand controls over tone and messaging rather than fully automated output. Ad inventory now formally spans Bing, Edge, Outlook, Windows Start, Microsoft 365 apps, and Copilot's own conversational surfaces, following Microsoft's move from testing sponsored Copilot responses in late 2024 to general availability in 2025.

WHY IT MATTERS

This gives B2B advertisers a genuine third AI-powered ad ecosystem beyond Google and Meta, with a distinct inventory footprint (enterprise devices, Microsoft 365, Copilot conversations) that neither of the bigger platforms can fully replicate. For teams already frustrated by rising costs on the two dominant platforms, an ecosystem with real enterprise-device reach and lower competitive density is worth a look.

NEXT STEPS

Worth testing a small Microsoft Advertising allocation if enterprise or IT-adjacent buyers are part of the target audience, since managed corporate devices skew Bing/Edge by default. Worth watching how quickly ad load increases inside Copilot itself; early entrants into a new ad surface typically get the best economics before competition catches up.

Source: ALM Corp, Microsoft Advertising Activate 2026 recap

02

THIS WEEK

Marketing Technology

AI ad platforms are heading in different directions this week. ChatGPT ads are maturing fast and getting cheaper, Perplexity is walking away from advertising entirely, and the growing gap between Google rankings and AI citations keeps changing what visibility actually means.

$25

ChatGPT ad CPM, down from $60 in February

394%

growth in ads inside Google AI Mode results

<20%

overlap between Google rankings and AI citations

CHATGPT ADS

ChatGPT Ads Go From $200K Minimum to Open Self-Serve in Under Three Months

CPMs dropped from $60 to roughly $25 as OpenAI removed its spend minimum entirely between February and May, a sign ad-supported AI is maturing into a real performance channel.

WHAT WE FOUND

OpenAI's rollout of advertising inside ChatGPT moved unusually fast for a new ad platform. It launched in February 2026 at a $60 CPM with a $200,000 minimum spend, limited to Free and ChatGPT Go tier users so paying subscribers kept an ad-free experience. By May 5, the minimum spend was gone entirely and CPMs had dropped to roughly $25, opening the platform to self-serve advertisers of any size. Ads appear in clearly labeled, subtly tinted boxes at the bottom of responses and never influence the answer itself, with targeting based on conversation context and chat history rather than traditional keywords.

WHY IT MATTERS

A three-month path from enterprise-only pilot to open self-serve is fast even by platform-launch standards, and the falling CPM means it's no longer priced only for large brand budgets. For advertisers who assumed AI chat ad inventory was still an experiment reserved for major spenders, that assumption is now out of date.

NEXT STEPS

Worth a small test budget to see how contextual, conversation-based targeting performs against your existing channels, particularly for anything with a strong intent signal (research-stage B2B queries, high-consideration purchases). Expect CPMs to keep moving as more advertisers enter; testing early usually means better economics before the platform fills up.

Source: explainx.ai, ChatGPT Ads Launch coverage

Perplexity Walks Away From Advertising Entirely, Bets on Being the 'Ad-Free' AI Search Option

63% of US adults say they trust AI answers less when ads are present, according to Ipsos. Perplexity is targeting $500M in subscription revenue instead.

63%

TRUST ADS LESS

WHAT WE FOUND

After testing sponsored follow-up questions since late 2024, Perplexity has phased out all advertising and says it has no plans to revisit the model. Company executives cited user trust as the deciding factor, pointing to Ipsos research showing 63% of US adults trust AI-generated answers less when ads are present. Perplexity is now positioning itself explicitly as the ad-free alternative to ChatGPT and Google, targeting $500 million in annualized subscription revenue instead of ad dollars.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is a useful counterpoint to the assumption that every AI platform is racing toward the same ad-supported model. Perplexity's bet is that trust, not reach, is its more defensible asset, and the Ipsos number gives that bet some real backing. For anyone budgeting across AI ad surfaces, it's a reminder that not every platform will stay a paid channel, and some are deliberately opting out.

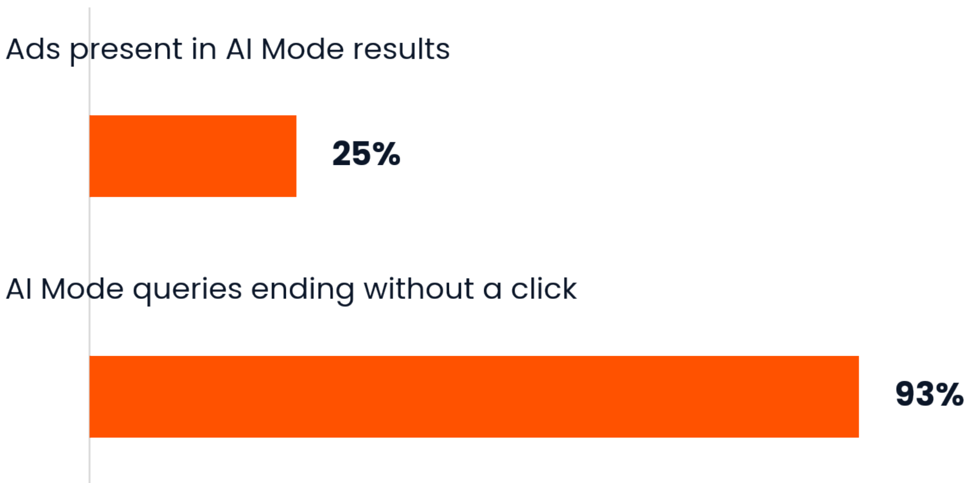
NEXT STEPS

Worth not assuming AI search advertising is a uniform, growing category. Track which platforms are actively building out ad products (ChatGPT, Google AI Mode) versus which are moving away from them (Perplexity), and weight test budgets accordingly.

Source: Campaign US, August 2026

Google Scales Up Ads Inside AI Mode, but Most Searches Still End Without a Click

Ads now appear in about 25% of AI Mode results, up 394%, even as 93% of AI Mode queries end without a single click to an external site.



WHAT WE FOUND

Google's AI Mode has crossed 75 million monthly users, and ads now appear in roughly 25% of AI Mode results, a 394% increase in ad presence. Eligible campaign types include Performance Max, AI Max with search term matching, Shopping, and broad match. But the same research finds 93% of AI Mode queries end without a click to an external website, as the AI-generated answer satisfies the search on the page itself. Early performance data shows AI Mode ads generating stronger engagement (18% higher) but at a real premium (35% higher CPC) compared to traditional search ads.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is the clearest evidence yet that AI-generated answers are changing search economics, not just search interfaces. Advertisers paying more for engagement that increasingly doesn't lead to a site visit need a different way to think about what a “good” AI Mode campaign result looks like, since click-through can no longer be the primary success metric.

NEXT STEPS

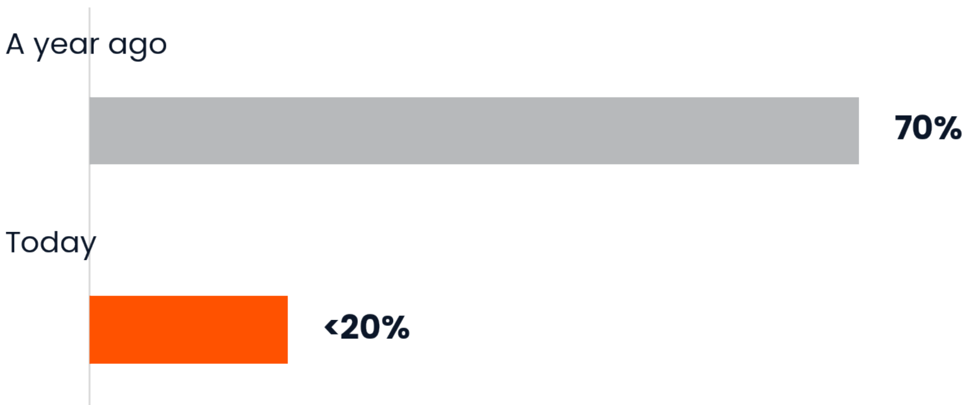
Worth testing AI Mode-eligible campaign types on a limited budget and evaluating success by engagement and assisted-conversion metrics rather than click-through rate alone. Expect this gap between ad presence and click behavior to keep widening as AI Mode usage grows.

Source: Digital Applied, August 2026

GEO

Ranking Well on Google No Longer Means Showing Up in AI Answers

The overlap between top Google search results and the sources AI tools actually cite has collapsed from roughly 70% to under 20%, while Princeton research shows specific techniques can lift AI citation rates by up to 40%.



WHAT WE FOUND

Research from GEO analytics firm Brandlight finds the overlap between what ranks at the top of Google search and what AI tools actually cite in their answers has collapsed from roughly 70% a year ago to under 20% today. Traditional SEO rankings are no longer a reliable proxy for whether content actually gets surfaced by AI systems. Separately, peer-reviewed research from Princeton quantifies what does work: content using direct quotations sees a 41% lift in AI citation rates, content with concrete statistics sees a 32% lift, and content with explicit inline citations sees a 30% lift.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is the clearest evidence yet that SEO and AI visibility have become two different disciplines with two different scorecards. A brand can rank on page one of Google and still be effectively invisible inside ChatGPT or Perplexity responses, which matters more every quarter as AI-assisted research becomes a bigger share of how buyers find vendors and information generally.

NEXT STEPS

Worth running a quick audit on your top-performing content: does it use direct quotes, concrete statistics, and inline citations, the three tactics with proven lift? Worth treating AI-citation tracking as a distinct metric from search rank rather than assuming one predicts the other.

Source: MarTech Series, 2026 AI-Visibility Landscape

THIS WEEK

03 China Market & Cross-Border

China's ad platforms and market structures keep evolving in parallel: Baidu is rebuilding its playbook around AI, Xiaohongshu is tightening the rules while rewarding a more personal selling style, and the ‘China+1’ expansion strategy is settling into something more permanent.

300M+	5	$266.6B
Xiaohongshu monthly active users	core Southeast Asia markets in China's regional expansion	projected China digital ad spend by 2030

Baidu Rebuilds Its 2026 Marketing Playbook Around AI, End to End

Baidu's newly released 2026 Marketing Strategy Guide folds AI into targeting, creative, and measurement across the full advertising workflow, not just search results.

WHAT WE FOUND

Baidu released its 2026 Marketing Strategy Guide, positioning AI not as a single new feature but as a structural rebuild running through the entire advertising workflow: audience targeting, creative production, and campaign measurement. The guide frames this as necessary for advertisers to achieve “smarter operations and more sustainable growth” on the platform, echoing a pattern playing out across China's major ad platforms, where Tencent and ByteDance are making similar full-workflow AI commitments rather than treating AI as an add-on.

WHY IT MATTERS

For anyone running Baidu campaigns, or considering the platform for China-inbound or China-facing marketing, this signals that the tools and best practices that worked a year ago are likely to shift meaningfully over the coming months. Platforms that rebuild around AI at the strategy-guide level tend to follow with real product changes, not just marketing language.

NEXT STEPS

Worth requesting a walkthrough of the new framework from your Baidu account team if you're actively running campaigns there, and worth budgeting time to re-test targeting and creative workflows once the AI-driven tools roll out more broadly.

Source: Octoplus Media, August 2026

XIAOHONGSHU

Xiaohongshu Tightens Disclosure Rules While Rewarding More Human, Less Polished Selling

New Community Guidelines require disclosure of AI-generated and reposted content, even as the platform's broader 2026 shift favors 'KOS' style personal selling over top-down brand posts.

WHAT WE FOUND

Xiaohongshu (RedNote) has rolled out Community Guidelines 2.0, adding mandatory disclosure requirements for AI-generated content, staged “plot acting” presented as authentic, and reposted material. At the same time, the platform's broader creative direction for 2026 is moving away from centralized, top-down brand advertising and toward what the ecosystem calls “KOS,” Key Opinion Sales, where a brand employee, store staff member, or specialized salesperson runs a personal account offering expert, humanized advice rather than polished campaign content.

WHY IT MATTERS

These two shifts point in the same direction: content that reads as authentic and personally voiced is both what the platform now rewards and what its new disclosure rules are designed to protect. Brands still running centralized, agency-produced campaign content on Xiaohongshu without adapting to either the compliance requirements or the creative shift risk both enforcement action and simply underperforming against accounts that have already adapted.

NEXT STEPS

Worth checking any Xiaohongshu content and KOL partnerships for undisclosed AI-generated or reposted material, and worth testing a KOS-style personal-account approach alongside existing brand content to compare performance.

Source: Nobody Digital, 2026 Rednote Rule Update Guide

CHINA+1

China's 'China+1' Strategy Matures From Tariff Workaround Into a Long-Term Play

Chinese firms continue clustering regional headquarters in Singapore and production in Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia, though rising compliance scrutiny is reshaping how the expansion gets done.

WHAT WE FOUND

Chinese enterprises expanding into Southeast Asia have entered what one report calls a “reshuffling” phase in 2026. Singapore remains the preferred base for regional headquarters and capital access, with Huawei, ByteDance, Alibaba, and Tencent all maintaining a presence there, while manufacturing investment continues clustering in Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. The strategic framing has shifted: “China+1” started as a tariff workaround but is increasingly described as a long-term, deliberate supply-chain and market-diversification play rather than a temporary hedge. That maturity comes with rising scrutiny, including at least one high-profile case of a Chinese company facing a significant tax bill tied to a Singapore shell entity.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is a useful signal for anyone tracking how Chinese companies structure cross-border expansion, since the "just set up a Singapore entity" playbook from a few years ago is now colliding with tighter compliance expectations. The pattern also says something about durability: workaround strategies rarely attract this level of institutional investment and headquarters commitment, so this looks more like a permanent feature of the regional business landscape than a temporary response to trade tension.

NEXT STEPS

Worth watching how compliance requirements around regional holding structures evolve, particularly for any business already using or considering a Singapore or Southeast Asia entity as part of a China-facing strategy. The gap between "quick tariff workaround" and "properly structured regional operation" is where the current scrutiny is concentrated.

Source: 36Kr, August 2026

04

THIS WEEK

Other News This Week

Global B2B Advertising

G

Google's Aug 17 Bidding Change Quietly Tightens Target CPA/ROAS Delivery

Budget-constrained campaigns now converge faster on your stated CPA/ROAS target as spend expands, instead of drifting from it. Worth checking recent performance for any account that's historically run under-target.

Source: Optmyzr, August 2026

Meta

Meta's B2B Ad Stack Gets Its Biggest Overhaul Since iOS 14

Advantage+ Leads, a stricter Conversions API requirement, and shifting attribution models are landing together. Worth a measurement-setup check before data gaps show up in reporting.

Source: AdAdvisor, August 2026

in

LinkedIn Adds 'Career Journey' Targeting and Native CRM Sync

New signals for recent promotions and job changes, plus first-party integrations with Salesforce, HubSpot, and Pipedrive for tighter closed-loop attribution.

Source: AeroLeads, 2026

Marketing Technology

GEO

AI-Visibility Tracking Tools Move Downmarket

Profound remains the enterprise leader in AI answer-engine analytics, while Otterly.AI, Peec AI, and Scrunch AI expand toward SMBs and agencies, making AI-citation tracking accessible without an enterprise budget.

Source: Authority Tech, 2026

AI

Agentic Marketing Tools Launch on Two Different Models

Auxia's new Agent Studio uses AI agents to analyze campaign data and auto-generate creative briefs, while Awestruck AI (launched Aug 7) takes a services approach, embedding AI capability-building inside client teams instead of selling a tool.

Source: MarTech Series, August 2026

China Market & Cross-Border

7.5%

US Weighs New 7.5% China Tariff Ahead of Xi-Trump Summit

Reports surfaced Aug 24 that Washington is considering a fresh tariff tied to manufacturing overcapacity, timed just before the planned leaders' summit next month. Worth watching for cross-border businesses planning Q4 spend.

Source: Bloomberg via US News, August 2026

CN·US

Cross-Border Exporters Keep Adjusting to US Tariff Terms

Merchants are raising prices, shifting to US-based warehousing, and leaning on China's tax-refund-on-departure policy for overseas-warehouse exporters to offset the impact.

Source: Caixin Global / SCMP, 2026

$

China's Digital Ad Spend Forecast to Reach $266.6B by 2030

Alibaba, Tencent, and ByteDance continue capturing the majority share, useful context on where China ad dollars are concentrating.

Source: Yahoo Finance / industry report, 2026

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