



LINKEXIS
莱睿寰略咨询公司

WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Linkexis X-Change

September 29 – October 12, 2026

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THIS WEEK

Global B2B Advertising

Two structural stories anchor B2B advertising this cycle: a major antitrust ruling that will shape programmatic auctions for years, and an industry starting to reckon with AI agents doing the buyer's research and shortlisting for them. New research on bot traffic and on broken briefing processes rounds out a week that's less about a single platform update and more about the ground shifting under familiar B2B marketing assumptions.

6 YRS

antitrust compliance monitor
Google must accept

426

senior marketers surveyed on
broken briefing/RFP processes

50%+

reported premium in the PE
take-private bid for adtech firm

ADTECH ANTITRUST

Google Keeps Its Ad Exchange, But Loses Control of the Auction

A newly unsealed federal ruling orders Google to loosen ad-auction rules and accept an antitrust monitor for six years. Google is appealing, so the uncertainty isn't over.

GOOGLE

AD AUCTION RULES

WHAT WE FOUND

A 106-page remedies ruling in the US government's antitrust case against Google, unsealed in mid-September, requires Google to loosen the rules governing its ad-auction and exchange business and to accept an internal compliance monitor for the next six years. The judge stopped short of forcing Google to sell or spin off its AdX exchange, the outcome the Department of Justice had originally pushed for, and set the remedy period at six years rather than the fifteen the DOJ sought. Google has said it will appeal the underlying liability finding, so the final shape of these rules is not yet settled.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is the most consequential adtech regulatory decision in years, and it lands as programmatic and display advertising take up a growing share of overall ad budgets, B2B included. Whatever auction rules survive the appeal will set the competitive terms for publisher ad serving and exchange bidding across the industry, not just for Google's own properties. Anyone buying programmatic inventory through an agency or in-house desk is, in effect, operating inside whatever framework this case ultimately produces.

WHAT TO WATCH

Keep an eye on the appeal timeline rather than treating this as resolved. If the looser auction rules hold up, expect more real competition among exchanges for publisher inventory over the next six years, which historically tends to show up as better rates and more transparent pricing for buyers further down the chain.

Source: The Star, September 2026

AGENTIC B2B BUYING

AI Agents Are Starting to Make the B2B Purchase Decision, Not Just Research It

A headline session at Advertising Week New York argued the traditional B2B buying journey, with its human research and shortlisting steps, is starting to disappear into AI agents.

AGENTS

B2B BUYING

WHAT WE FOUND

At the B2BMX Summit inside Advertising Week New York this month, a session titled "The B2B Customer Journey Is Disappearing" argued that AI agents are increasingly doing the research, shortlisting, and in some cases the purchase-approval steps that used to involve a human buying committee working through a vendor's website, content, and sales calls. The panel framed this as an early-stage but accelerating shift rather than a future hypothetical.

WHY IT MATTERS

This reframes a core assumption behind demand generation and account-based marketing: content and targeting built for a human researcher may simply be invisible to the AI agent now doing that research on a buyer's behalf. It's the clearest signal yet that "optimize for the agent, not just the person" is becoming a real discipline inside B2B marketing, not a thought experiment reserved for AI conference panels.

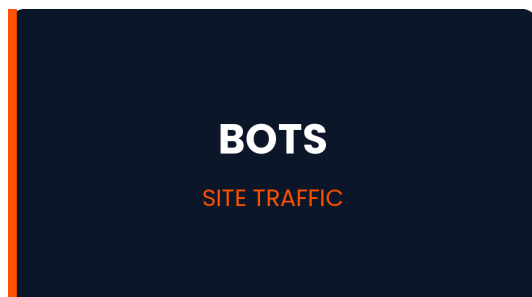
WHAT TO WATCH

Worth testing how your own public content reads when an AI tool is asked to summarize or compare it against a competitor, rather than only checking how it reads to a human visitor. Expect more conference programming on this theme over the next few quarters as the shift moves from early-adopter conversation to mainstream planning assumption.

Source: Demand Gen Report, October 2026

Who's Really on Your Website? AI Agents Are Complicating B2B Site Analytics

A separate Advertising Week New York session tackled how AI-agent and bot traffic is muddying lead scoring, site analytics, and ad verification.



WHAT WE FOUND

Another B2BMX session at Advertising Week New York, this one pairing speakers from a bot-detection vendor and a major communications platform, dug into how AI-browsing agents and automated scrapers are increasingly showing up in B2B website traffic, alongside the usual mix of real visitors and legacy bots.

WHY IT MATTERS

Marketers can no longer safely assume that a spike in site visits, form fills, or content downloads equals a spike in real human buyer interest. That touches lead-quality scoring, intent-data accuracy, and ad-verification spend across the industry, not just one vendor's tech stack. It's a quiet but real data-integrity problem sitting underneath a lot of reported marketing performance right now.

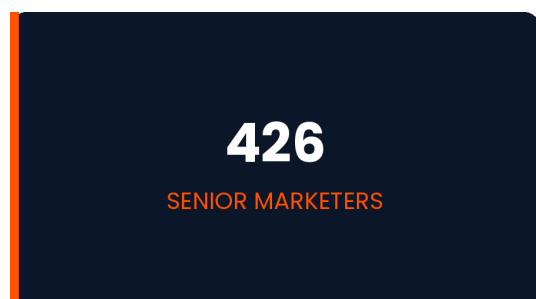
WHAT TO WATCH

Worth a periodic sanity check on what share of your own site traffic and form submissions look machine-generated, rather than assuming your analytics platform already filters all of it out. This is likely to become a standard line item in marketing-ops audits within the next year or two.

Source: Demand Gen Report, September 2026

New Research Says the B2B Creative Brief Is Broken

A survey of 426 senior marketers, presented at Advertising Week New York, found the brief and RFP process breaks down across planning, execution, and measurement.



WHAT WE FOUND

A session at Advertising Week New York's B2BMX Summit presented new research surveying 426 senior marketers on where the creative brief and RFP process actually breaks down in practice, covering planning, omnichannel execution, measurement, and AI adoption. The headline finding is less a single statistic than a pattern: the brief, often treated as a formality, is quietly one of the biggest sources of wasted time and misaligned output in B2B marketing.

WHY IT MATTERS

Agencies and brands have spent years optimizing media buying, targeting, and creative production while largely leaving the brief and RFP process itself untouched. This is a rare, data-backed look at a process pain point that nearly every B2B marketer and agency deals with but few actually benchmark or measure.

WHAT TO WATCH

Worth comparing your own briefing process against the research's specific failure points (planning clarity, omnichannel handoffs, measurement definitions, and AI-tool integration) rather than assuming your process is fine simply because nobody has complained about it recently.

Source: Demand Gen Report, September 2026



THIS WEEK

Marketing Technology

AI visibility is the throughline this cycle: branded search results are being rewritten by AI Overviews at a striking pace, OpenAI is turning ChatGPT into a genuine ad platform, and Google just gave site owners a first-party way to measure how they show up in AI answers.

82.9%

of branded Google searches
now show an AI Overview

1B+

weekly ChatGPT users as
OpenAI rolls out visual ads

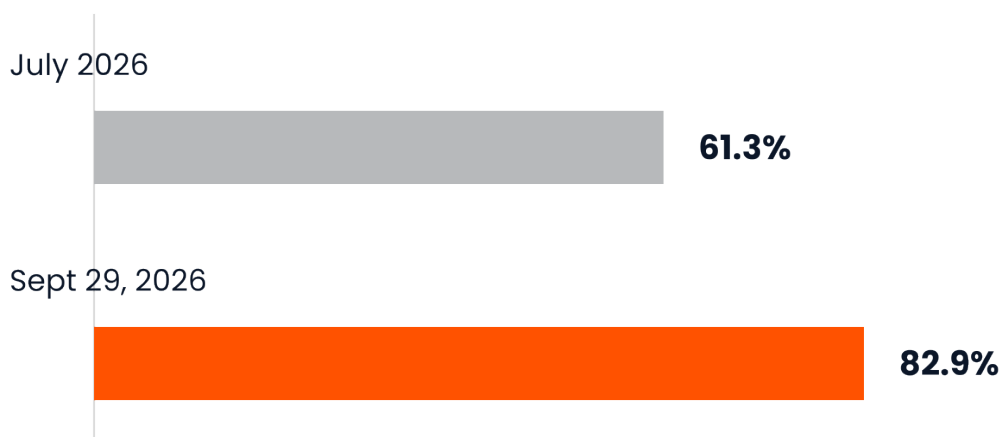
\$1M+

reported top annual payout in
Google's publisher AI-pay pilot

AI SEARCH TAKEOVER

AI Overviews Now Appear on 83% of Branded Searches, and Click-Through Rates Are Falling

A study of 232.8 million searches found Google's AI Overviews now show up on the vast majority of brand-name searches, up sharply from two months earlier, often citing third-party sources over the brand's own site.



WHAT WE FOUND

An Ahrefs study covering 232.8 million US desktop search crawls found AI Overviews appeared on 82.91% of branded-keyword searches as of September 29, 2026, up from 61.3% just two months earlier in July. In most of those cases, the AI Overview sits at the very top of the page, pushing the brand's own website further down, and the sources it cites most often tend to be large third-party sites like Wikipedia, YouTube, and LinkedIn rather than the brand's own pages.

WHY IT MATTERS

Searching your own brand name is no longer a safe, fully controlled surface. For the large majority of branded queries, Google is now inserting an AI-generated summary, built mostly from third-party sources, between a searcher and the brand's own website. Combined with separately reported drops in click-through rate when an AI Overview is present, this is strong evidence that brand reputation management now has to include managing how AI describes you, not just optimizing your own site.

WHAT TO WATCH

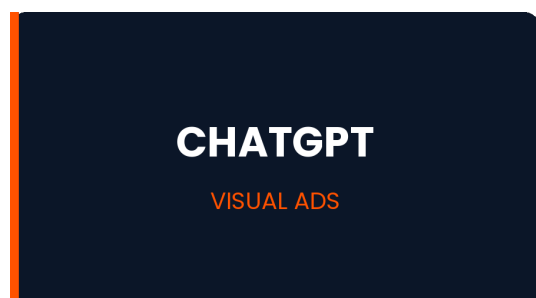
Worth checking what currently shows up when AI Overviews summarize your own brand name, and whether the sources it's pulling from are ones you'd choose. Expect this appearance rate to keep climbing rather than plateau, given the trajectory from July to September alone.

Source: Ahrefs, October 2026

VISUAL AI ADS

OpenAI Brings Visual Ads to ChatGPT's Image Generator

Starting this month, US ChatGPT users generating images will see labeled visual ads, backed by real attribution and brand-safety partnerships rather than a simple bolt-on.



WHAT WE FOUND

OpenAI confirmed this month that, starting later in October, US ChatGPT users generating images will see clearly labeled visual ads (product thumbnails or a full-width image) alongside their results, drawn from an initial pool of advertisers. Alongside the ad placements themselves, OpenAI is rolling out measurement partnerships with attribution and analytics firms, plus brand-safety pilots with established ad-verification vendors.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is OpenAI building a genuine ad-tech stack, attribution, brand safety, and measurement partners included, rather than simply bolting ads onto a chat interface. With over a billion weekly ChatGPT users by OpenAI's own figures, this is a real signal that a third major ad platform is forming alongside Google and Meta, not a side experiment.

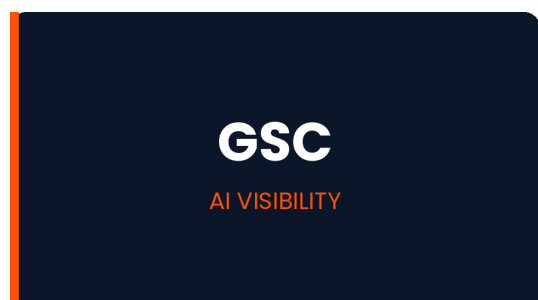
WHAT TO WATCH

Worth watching the initial advertiser pool and early reported performance benchmarks closely over the next few months, since early access and early learnings on a genuinely new ad surface tend to be disproportionately valuable compared to joining once it's mature and crowded.

Source: TechCrunch, October 2026

Google Gives Search Console Its Own AI-Visibility Reports

Site owners can now see, for the first time from Google itself, how their pages appear inside AI Overviews, AI Mode, and AI-powered Discover.



WHAT WE FOUND

Google's generative-AI performance reports inside Search Console, separate impression, page, country, and device breakdowns for how a site's content appears inside AI Overviews, AI Mode, and AI-powered Discover, were confirmed as a global rollout this month. A multimodal-search filter was added alongside it, and Google says click and position reporting for these AI surfaces will keep evolving.

WHY IT MATTERS

For the first time, site owners get a free, first-party (if still incomplete) answer to a question that previously required guessing with third-party GEO tools: is my content actually showing up inside Google's AI answers. That lands right as AI Overviews are hitting record volumes across branded and non-branded searches alike.

WHAT TO WATCH

Worth adding this report to a regular monitoring routine alongside standard Search Console data, since it's free and likely to become the first stop for anyone trying to put a number on their AI visibility.

Source: Search Engine Roundtable, October 2026



THIS WEEK

China Market & Cross-Border

Trade and platform news moved in tandem this cycle: a new EU parcel fee is quietly reshaping cross-border e-commerce economics, Golden Week data offers a fresh read on Chinese consumer sentiment, and Tencent is building AI agents directly into WeChat's core experience.

€3

flat EU fee now charged on
low-value China parcels

10.1–8

dates of this year's China
Golden Week holiday

\$5.2B+

Tencent's planned AI spend as it
builds a WeChat agent

EU PARCEL FEE

The EU's New Parcel Fee Is Reshaping Cross-Border E-Commerce Math

A flat handling fee on low-value parcels, replacing the old duty-free exemption, is now visibly biting into the direct-to-consumer export model heading into Q4.

Old duty-free threshold



New flat parcel fee



WHAT WE FOUND

Since July 1, 2026, the EU has charged a flat €3 customs handling fee on low-value parcels entering the bloc, ending the old exemption that let parcels under €150 clear customs duty-free. Reporting through October shows the change is now visibly reshaping the unit economics behind the direct-to-consumer export model that built the growth of platforms like Shein and Temu, right as those platforms head into their biggest selling season of the year.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is a structural change, not a cyclical one. Every seller shipping small parcels into the EU now faces a real per-unit cost that didn't exist a year ago, and other markets, with the US exemption already gone and other jurisdictions reportedly watching the EU's approach, are treating this as a template rather than an isolated policy. Anyone advising a cross-border seller on EU expansion needs to factor this into margin models now, not after Q4 results come in.

WHAT TO WATCH

Worth stress-testing margin assumptions for any low-value-parcel export business against this fee before committing to Q4 promotional pricing, and watching whether other major markets formally adopt a similar flat-fee approach over the next year.

Source: SIBIZ / HWBusters, October 2026

China's Golden Week: Record Travel, But Cautious Spending

This year's October 1–8 holiday saw a travel surge, including a notable jump in outbound trips, but spending per trip hit a multi-year low.



GOLDEN
WEEK TRAVEL

WHAT WE FOUND

China's Golden Week holiday, running October 1 through 8 this year, saw a genuine travel surge, including a notable increase in outbound trips, but spending per trip fell to its lowest level in several years. More people traveled; each of them spent more carefully.

WHY IT MATTERS

Golden Week is one of the cleanest real-time reads available each year on Chinese consumer sentiment, and this year's split result, more trips but tighter spending per trip, is a pattern worth internalizing for anyone targeting Chinese consumers abroad or at home: travel volume recovering does not automatically mean spending recovering.

WHAT TO WATCH

Worth treating volume metrics and spend-per-visitor metrics as two separate signals rather than one combined read when evaluating China-facing consumer campaigns, luxury, travel, and duty-free included.

Source: The Star / CGTN, October 2026

WECHAT AI AGENT

Tencent Builds an AI "Super Agent" Into WeChat

Tencent confirmed it's embedding an AI agent, built on its Yuanbao assistant, directly into WeChat to handle everyday tasks, alongside plans to roughly double AI investment.



WHAT WE FOUND

Tencent confirmed it's building an AI agent, based on its Yuanbao assistant, directly into WeChat for handling everyday tasks, with reporting suggesting shopping and customer-service flows are part of the scope. The move comes alongside Tencent's plans to roughly double its AI investment to more than \$5.2 billion.

WHY IT MATTERS

WeChat is the backbone of nearly every consumer and B2B marketing funnel in China, from mini-programs to CRM to customer service. An AI agent layer sitting inside WeChat itself could reshape how brands structure the customer journey there over the next twelve to eighteen months, echoing how AI search is already reshaping SEO and SEM in Western markets.

WHAT TO WATCH

Worth watching for early pilots of conversational commerce or AI-assisted customer service inside WeChat mini-programs over the coming months, since the agent layer described here is still in build-out rather than full rollout.

Source: Shopifreaks / Caixin, October 2026

Other News This Week

Global B2B Advertising

DELOITTE

Deloitte's ABM Program Goes From Pilot to Board-Level Case Study

A named, measurable ABM program at enterprise scale is a useful proof point for anyone still building the internal business case for account-based marketing investment.

Source: Demand Gen Report, October 2026

CRITEO

Private Equity's Bid for Adtech Firm Criteo Keeps the M&A Spotlight On

A reported 50%+ premium take-private offer for Criteo remains unresolved, but it's a signal that private equity sees real value in adtech infrastructure even amid AI disruption.

Source: PPC Land, October 2026

MS ADS

Microsoft Advertising Retires Max CPC Bidding for New Campaigns

As of October 1, new non-portfolio campaigns can no longer use Max CPC, pushing advertisers toward conversion-based bidding. Worth checking account settings if you run B2B search on Bing.

Source: Search Engine Roundtable, 2026

Marketing Technology

AI PAY

Google Quietly Starts Paying Some Publishers for Content Used in AI Answers

A small pilot is paying publishers for content cited in AI Overviews and Gemini, with payouts ranging from under \$1,000 to over \$1 million a year and no visible formula explaining the gap.

Source: Search Engine Land, September 2026

META

Meta Unveils a Slate of Agentic AI Ad Tools at Advertising Week New York

Persistent-memory campaign assistants, in-chat checkout, and a new Ads MCP server for third-party AI tools all moved from pilot to general availability in the same announcement cycle.

Source: TechJuice, October 2026

AI MODE

Google Loosens AI Mode Ad Eligibility Beyond Automated Campaigns

A small test now lets ordinary exact- and phrase-match search campaigns show ads inside AI Mode, previously exclusive to fully automated bidding products.

Source: PPC Land, September 2026

China Market & Cross-Border

US-CN

US-China Trade Truce Still "Fragile," Analysts Say

Weeks after the Trump-Xi summit produced a one-year tariff and rare-earth truce, analysts say key friction points remain unresolved, with little sign rare-earth export controls are easing.

Source: The Star / Benchmark Minerals, October 2026

XHS IPO

Xiaohongshu Pushes Toward a Hong Kong IPO Targeting Roughly \$70B

Goldman Sachs and CICC are reportedly working on a listing by year-end. A public float would force far more transparency on ad revenue and user metrics than the platform currently discloses.

Source: DealStreetAsia / The Standard HK, October 2026

TT SHOP

TikTok Shop on Track for Roughly \$100B Global GMV in 2026

US sales are leading the growth, the clearest proof yet that Douyin's livestream-commerce model has exported successfully outside China.

Source: Tubefilter, 2026



Thank you for reading Linkexis X-Change.

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