

It's all about 'me'—how people are taking search personally

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The sort of advice people once sought from friends, they now expect to get from their phones. Marketers who understand emerging search trends have the advantage, writes Google's VP of Marketing for the Americas Lisa Gevelber.

Five years ago, if I set out to find a new pair of running shoes online, I likely would have turned to search and typed in "running shoes." But as a running hobbyist, I have strong feelings about shoes and very specific needs. And because my own expectations for search have grown, these days I search for "running shoes for overpronation" using my phone.

I'm not alone in my personalized shoe queries. Mobile searches relating to "____shoes for____" have grown over 120% in the past two years (e.g., "comfortable shoes for traveling").¹

It makes sense. We've got an abundance of information at our fingertips. But finding what we want and need in this world of infinite choices can be a challenge. We expect to find answers (even if we're not exactly sure what we're looking for) as fast as possible, with as little effort as possible. And they'd better be relevant.

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Search can be a personal advisor

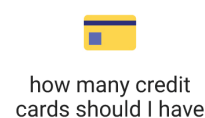
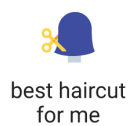
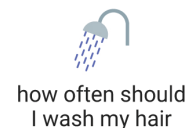
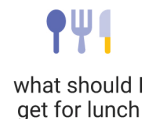
The fact is, people expect information and [advice](#) relevant to their needs.

People have realized that by being more specific in how they search, they can more quickly get to the information they're looking for. A specialized pair of running shoes is one example. Shampoo for a certain type of hair is another. In fact, mobile searches for "shampoo for ____" are up 130% over the past two years (e.g., "shampoo for highlighted hair").²

We're also seeing this personal advisor theme play out quite literally, as people are specifically including qualifiers like "me" and "I" in their searches. Over the past two years, mobile searches with the qualifier "for me" have grown over 60%.³ For example, consumers aren't just searching for "best car insurance" anymore, they're searching for "best car insurance for me." Or, "which dog is right for me."

Picking a dog might strike you as something a little emotionally advanced for search, but it's only the tip of the iceberg. People are also wondering what they should and shouldn't do. Mobile searches with the qualifier "should I" have grown over 65% in the past two years.⁴

"What should I get for lunch?" is something a person once would have asked a friend or coworker. Now it's something they also ask of search. And we're seeing this search data across categories. People are looking for advice about a range of things from personal hygiene ("How often should I wash my hair") to fairly substantial health and financial decisions like "should I go vegan" and "what kind of credit card should I get."



Just as “[near me](#)” is a contextual signal that people want to find something based on their location, these searches for “me” and “I” are signals that people expect personally relevant content. Marketers who understand search intent and look for patterns in how people qualify their needs have a big opportunity.

It’s fairly clear that if a person is wondering what she should have for lunch, then a restaurant might want to get in front of her with its menu or relevant lunchtime specials.



But what about those “___ for me” searches? Just run a couple yourself. “Best running shoes for me” turns up quite a bit of content—some from publishers like Runner’s World and some from brands like Brooks, Nike, and Asics offering to help runners find that perfect shoe.

The same goes for “best shampoo for me” and “what kind of dog should I get?” Redken offers a hair diagnostic tool. The American Kennel Club and Pedigree are among those suggesting quizzes to help people select the right dog breed.

Savvy marketers now know that consumers want answers as well as ideas and inspiration. And they want these things fast. Those who can deliver answers to people’s personal needs will have an advantage.

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Sources

1–4 Google Data, U.S., Jan.–June 2015 vs. Jan.–June 2017