

RESEARCH INSIGHT

AI-Generated Search Summary Warning Messages Increase Verification Behavior

Warning messages on AI-generated search summaries increase verification behavior through source-link clicks and time spent on the source webpage.

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Motivation

When individuals search online through search engine platforms such as Google, Yahoo, and DuckDuckGo, they increasingly see an AI-generated summary at the top of the results page before they see website links. These summaries save time by pulling information from multiple sources into one concise answer. Yet generative AI can make mistakes or present uncertain claims with unwarranted confidence. Because the summary appears authoritative and is immediately available, users may accept it at face value rather than checking the underlying sources. This research asks the question: can warning messages prompt users to verify the information in AI-generated search summaries?

How We Studied It

This research examines how warning messages provided along with AI-generated summaries on a search engine influence information verification behavior. We conducted a between-subjects experiment in which participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: no warning, a generic warning, or a source-specific warning. Verification behavior was measured through source-link clicks and time spent on the source webpage.

What We Found

Warning messages increased verification behavior. Compared with participants who saw no warning, participants who saw a generic or source-specific warning message were more likely to click through to the source link provided below the summary and more likely to spend time on the source webpage.

Why It Matters

Our findings show that platform design choices shape whether users scrutinize AI-generated summaries. For search engine managers, warning messages offer a low-cost, easily deployed intervention that encourages verification of AI-generated summaries.