Key Differences Between AI Search and Traditional Search Engine

There are notable differences between AI Search and the Traditional Search Engines, these include a multitude of categories such as how the rankings are evaluated and how the queries are divided up and structured, there's many more but I will focus on these two for now. I must also stress that when we say AI we are mostly referring to LLM's like Chatgpt, Perplexity and so on.

How rankings are evaluated - Traditional Search Engines look for keywords, backlinks and relevance to the content, this returns a very general answer with no personalisation. AI Search looks for other things, instead of keywords, AI mostly focuses on intent for example 'race' could mean running or ethnicity, AI has an emphasis on deciphering which context to use for its query, a lot of search engines have actually incorporated AI models like BERT for things like this. I am going to give an example of a possible question a user may ask, "What is the best laptop for video editing that is under £1000" a search engine would mostly likely bring up web pages of popular articles that include the keywords whereas AI understands that the user is asking for product comparison within said budget and will search for product specifications that are important for video editing, will look for reviews and recommendations from multiple sources that are within the budget. AI models can infer user preferences based on the conversation, past interactions and real time clues such as location, this gives more personalised answers, if the AI models know that the user has tried Mac and Lenovo in the past and did not enjoy either, it will be more likely to suggest different brands, if the user had told the AI model that it didn't like one particular brand, it would exclude it from the search, for this I'll give an example of a cafe, let's say the user asks "I'm going to London this weekend, I want to go to a cafe, do you have any recommendations?" If the AI knows the user is a vegetarian, it will suggest somewhere with a strong vegetarian menu, if the AI knows the user is a heavy smoker, it may suggest somewhere with a large outside area where customers can smoke. So, while Search Engines rank generally for everyone, AI is much more personalised, focusing on what it knows and context which allows businesses to focus more on their target audience. Of course, there is a lot more to it but we save that for our clients.

How Queries are Structured - Let's take a dive behind the scenes of these technologies and their methods of giving the user their search result, like we mentioned earlier, search engines have a focus on keywords, when the user searches for something, search engines use their database which maps keywords to web pages and then they do their ranking evaluations before giving the user the result. AI Models tend to first evaluate what the user means and what they are looking for, AI often breaks down the query into multiple and then breaks it down logically, I will use a new example, let's say the user asks "I am looking for a camera under £700 that has good low light performance as I want to use it for taking photos, can you do comparisons and such five? " Now how can search engines even compete with AI when you have questions like that? The search engines will most likely return articles that are relevant to the question based off of the keywords linked to web pages which it gets from the database it uses, AI will break down the query so it will query cameras within the price range, cameras that have good low light performance and cameras that are good for outdoor photography while also applying any knowledge of the user it has and then aggregates the necessary results and generates a response in conversational language or other structured

ways but normally conversational unless prompted not . I don't see how traditional search engines will be able to compete with AI when there is a question like that. Optimising for AI Search will make it easier for consumers to find what they're looking for, it will make it easier for businesses to be more visible to their target audience .