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brightonSEO.
United Kingdom

**What zero-click behaviour
actually means psychologically.**



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For the last 20 years we've measured:

- Clicks
- Rankings
- CTR
- Traffic
- Conversions

**We've become brilliant
at measuring what people did.**

**But none of those were ever
the reason people searched.**

What if zero-click isn't changing search...

**...it's exposing what search
has always been about?**



**Different technology.
Same human need.**

Search was never about clicking.

**It was always about
reducing uncertainty.**

**Every search begins
with uncertainty.**

**Every search ends when
we have enough confidence
to move forward.**



**Every decision has
two invisible forces.**



Required confidence.



Acceptable effort.

CONTEXT

Required confidence, acceptable effort.





Low-stakes decision: “What time does X open?”

Answer appears. Done.

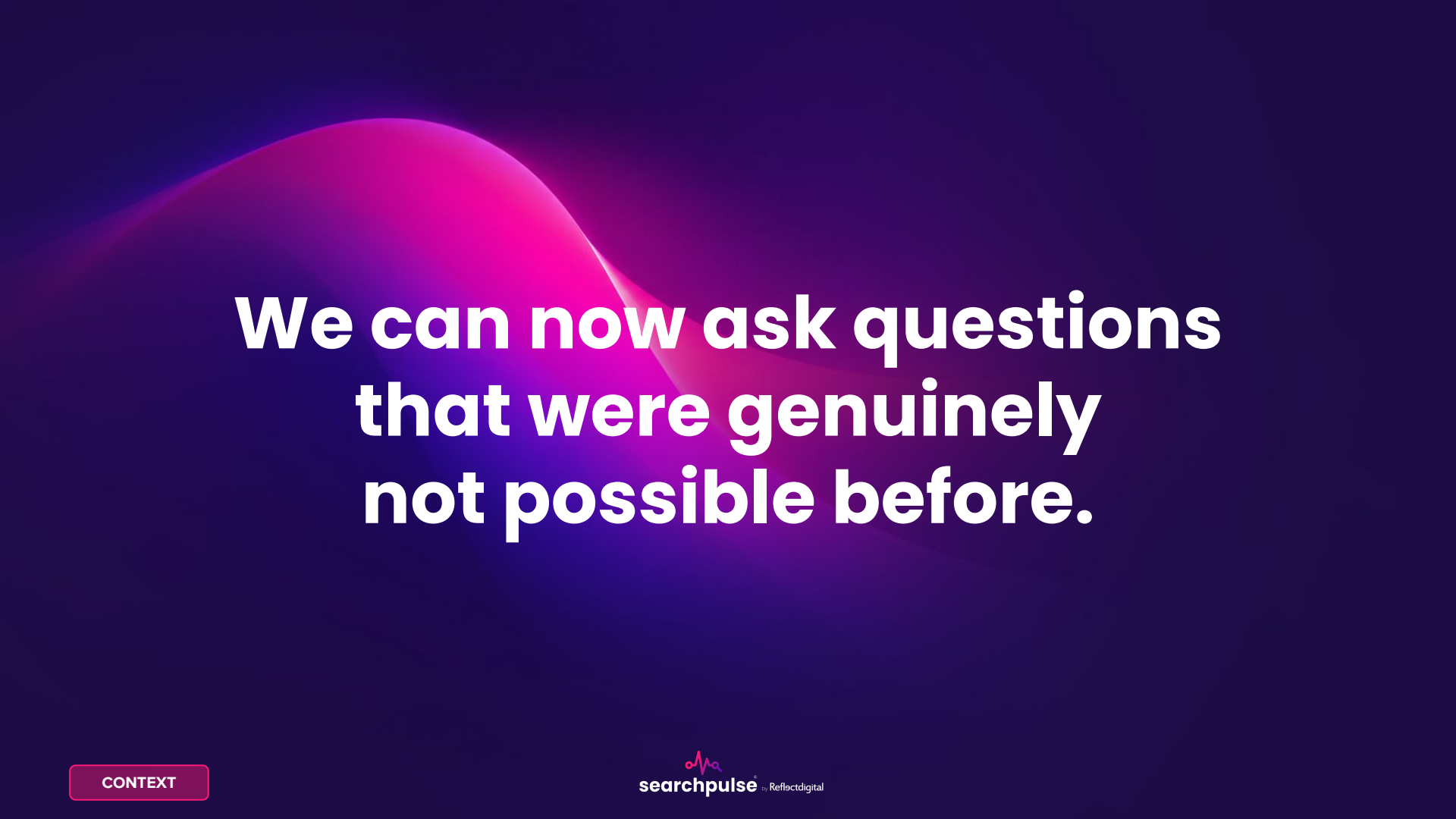
Higher-stakes decision: “Which £40,000 car should I buy?”

AI starts the process, but I'm willing
to expend substantially more effort
before acting.



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**As technology's
capabilities increase,
so do ours...**

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**We can now ask questions
that were genuinely
not possible before.**

What should we work on?

Can you help me find a hotel in Hong Kong with a swimming pool, that allows early check in (we get off a cruise at 8am) and late check out (our flight isn't until 11pm the next day)?



+

5.6 Sol Light ▾



Choose project

Plugins



Open desktop app

And get answers...

Find Hong Kong Hotel · Work

Worked for 48s >

Yes — and I think there's one unusually perfect answer for your timings: **The Peninsula Hong Kong**.

Their complimentary “**Peninsula Time**” policy allows guests who book directly to:

- Check in as early as **6am**
- Check out as late as **10pm**
- Use the room continuously across a one-night booking

So, if you arrive from the cruise on **2 January 2027** and fly at 11pm on **3 January**, you could potentially have your room from around 8–9am on the 2nd until roughly 7:30–8pm on the 3rd, when you need to leave for the airport. That is effectively a stay of nearly 36 hours without booking a second night. The timings can be agreed in advance, rather than merely requested on arrival. [The Peninsula confirms the policy here ↗](#).

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**That hotel didn't become
the answer because it existed.**

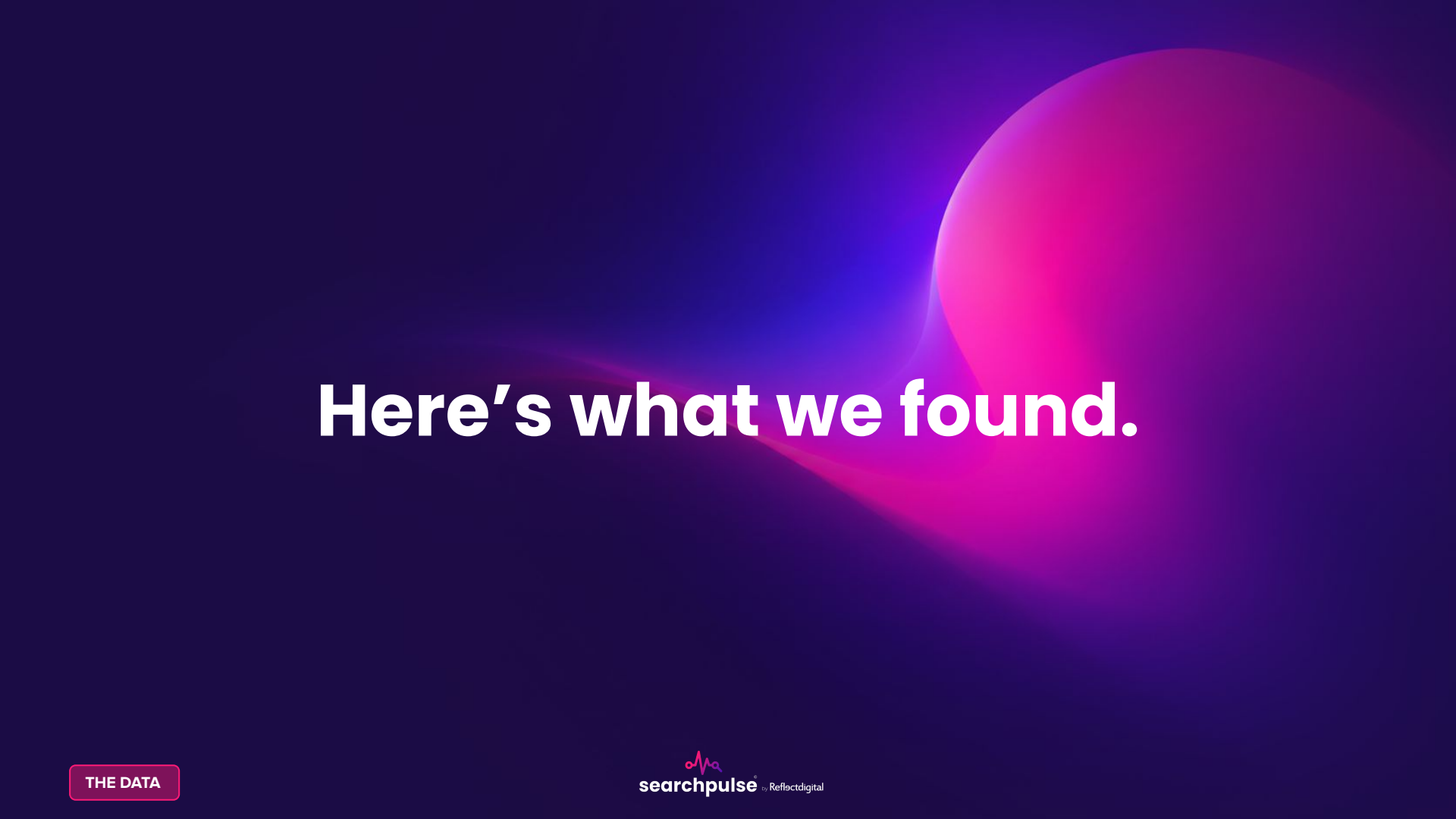
**It became the answer
because somewhere,
it had created the evidence
AI needed to recommend it.**

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**If confidence is really
what's driving search...
can we see it in the data?**

Having surveyed 14,000 people...

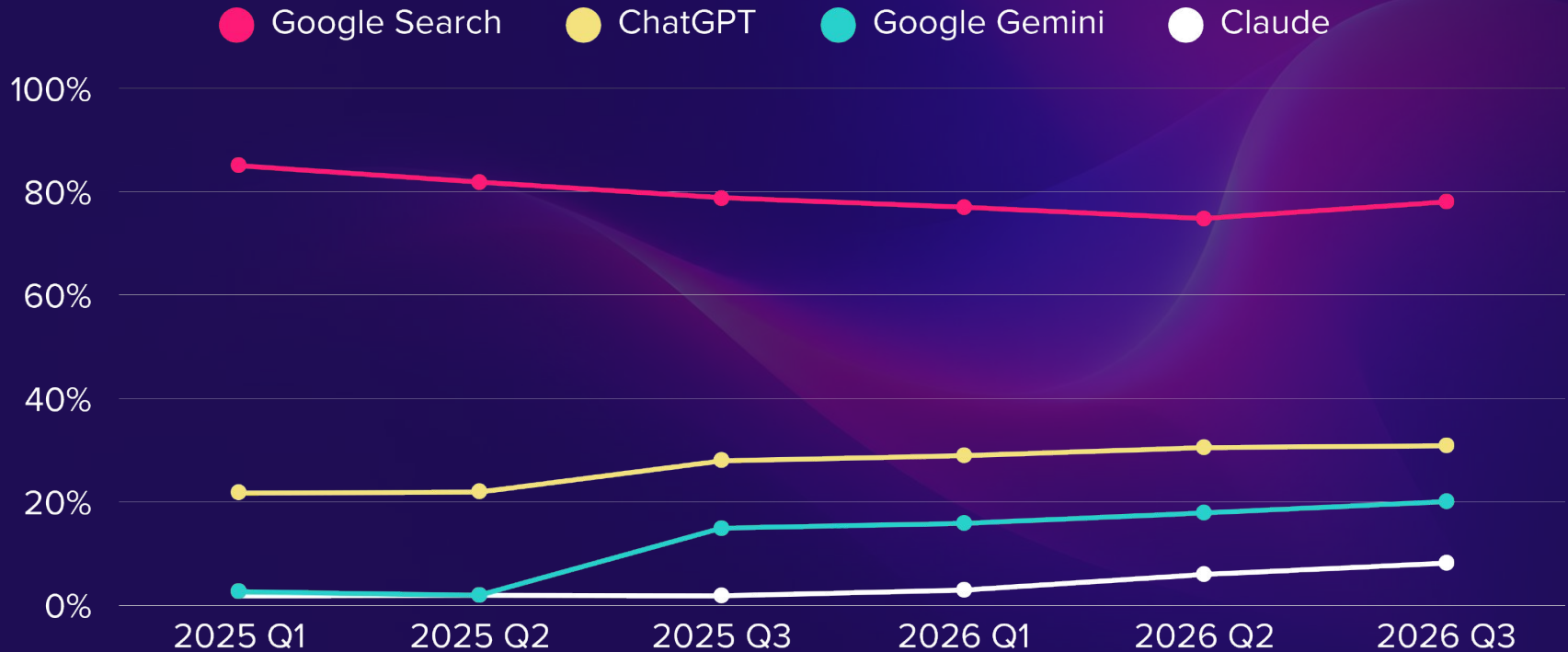




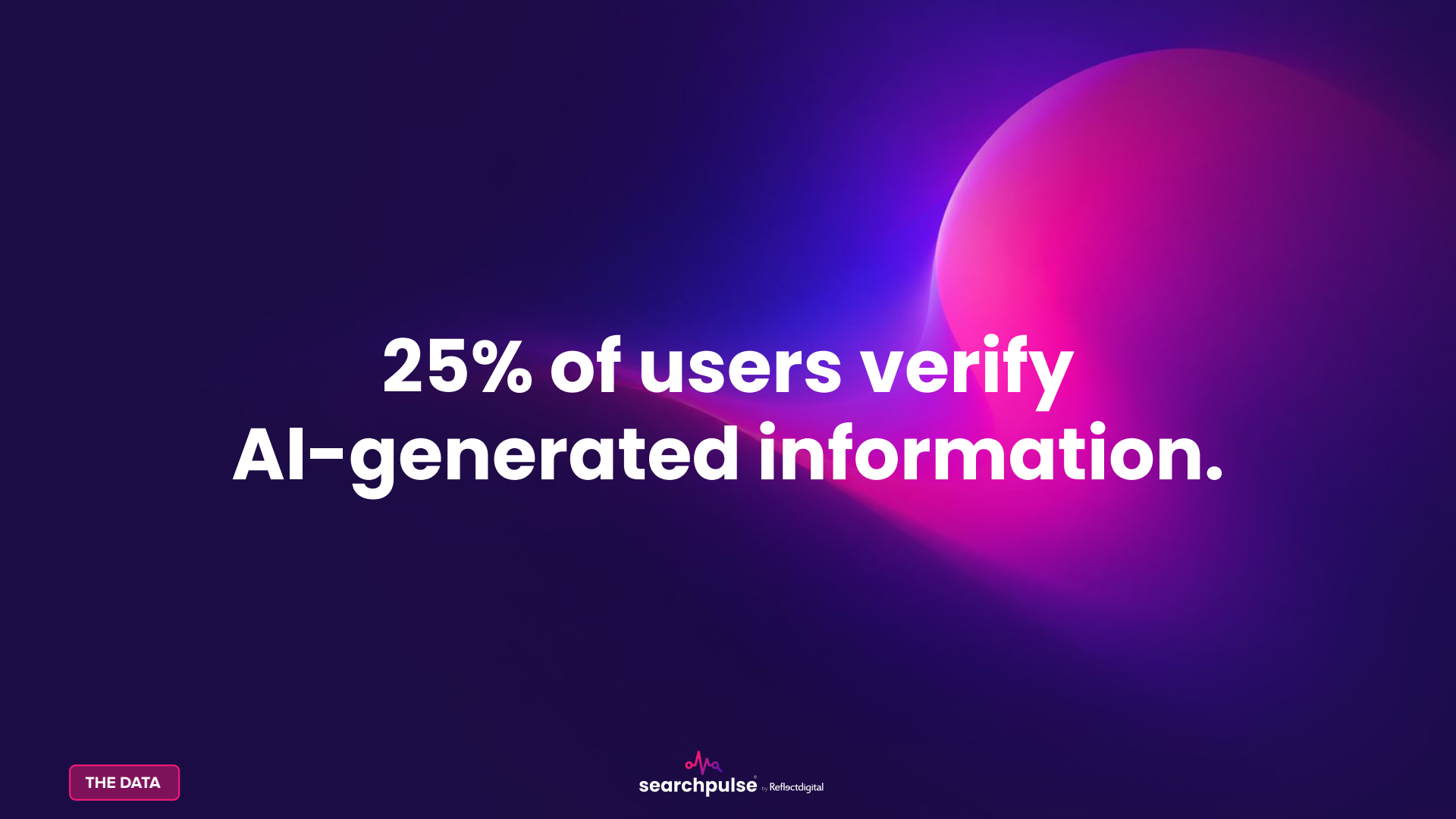
Here's what we found.

THE DATA

Share of people who use each tool, by quarter.



**Around 40% of people
regularly skip AI overviews.**



**25% of users verify
AI-generated information.**

52% of Reddit users say it "provides information from real people".

**People often verify through other people.
Authenticity has become part of confidence.**



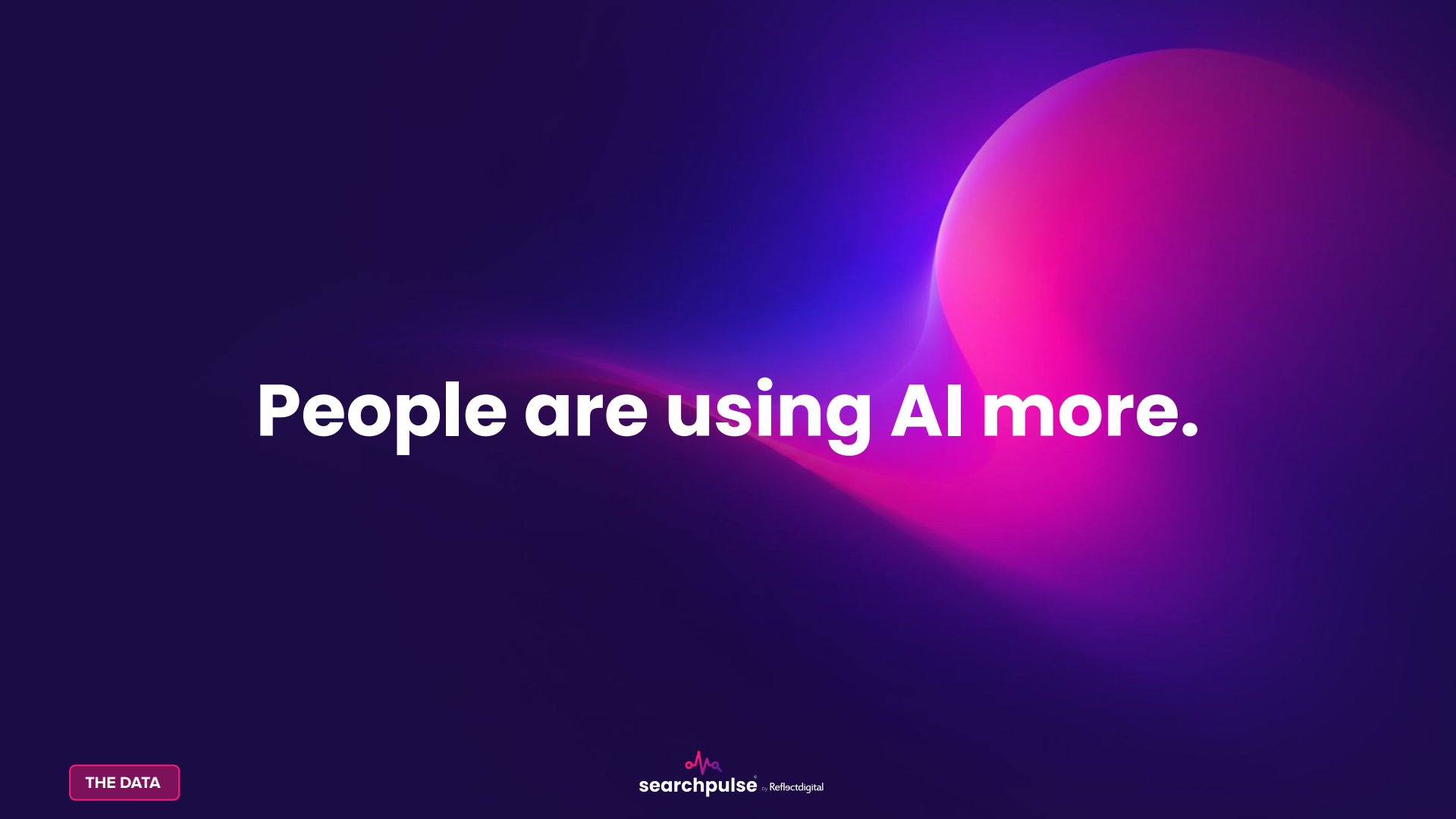
**ChatGPT (22%) and Claude (21%)
feel significantly more personalised
(around 3–4× more personalised than traditional search).**

**That reinforces why people are willing
to start with AI.**



Here's the mystery.

THE DATA



People are using AI more.

THE DATA



But they don't fully trust it.



They verify it.

THE DATA



So why are they still using it?

THE DATA

Because even after having to verify...

**Because even after having to verify...
the journey is still shorter.**

So what's actually happening?



That's where psychology helps.

THE DATA

**We found four
behavioural patterns.**

**We often think
humans are searching
for the best answer.**

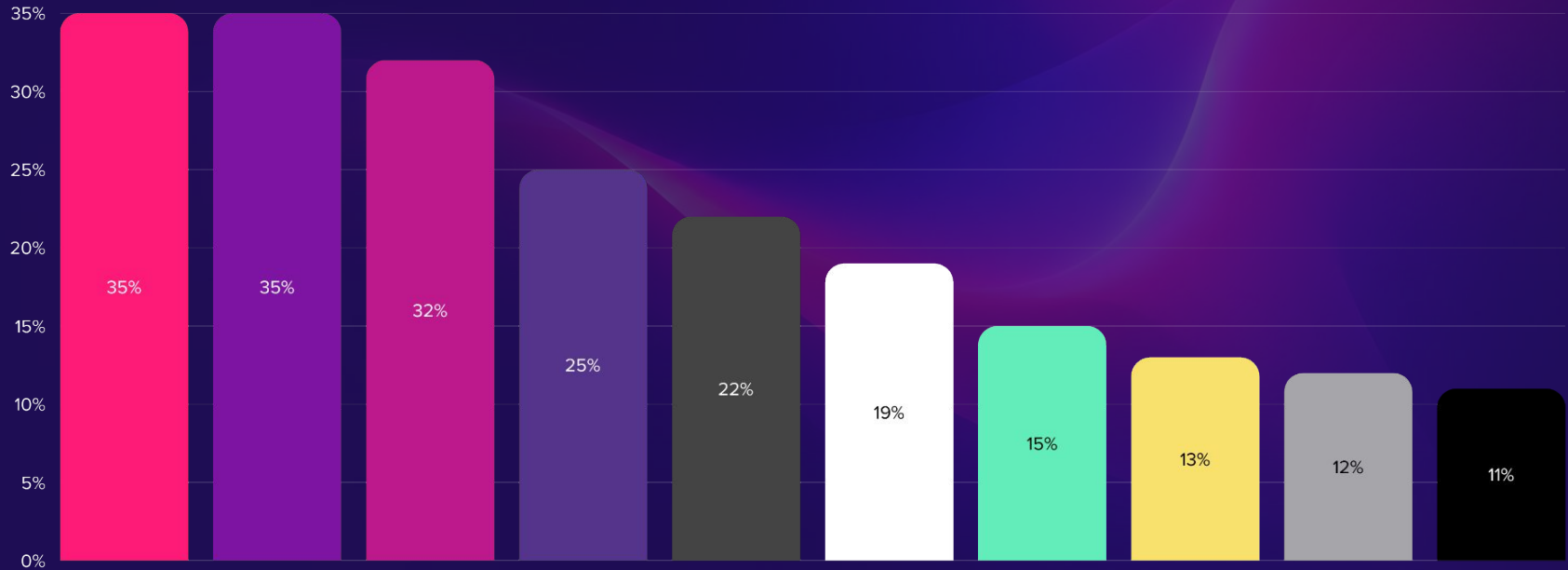
We're usually not.

**We're searching for an answer
that's good enough
to let us move forward.**

1. Good enough faster.

Why people turn to AI for search.

- Quick results
- Easy to use
- Saves me having to visit lots of websites
- Has advanced search features
- Helps me decide more confidently
- Personalised results
- Information in a format I like (e.g. images, videos)
- Gives unbiased information
- Provides information from real people
- Everyone I know uses it



2. The Trust Tax.

**AI search isn't growing
because people believe
everything it says.**

It's winning because...

Even after paying the trust tax, the journey is still dramatically shorter.

AI Search



Quick verification
(Trust tax)



Decision

AI Search



**Quick verification
(Trust tax)**



Decision

Search Engine



10 Websites



Comparison



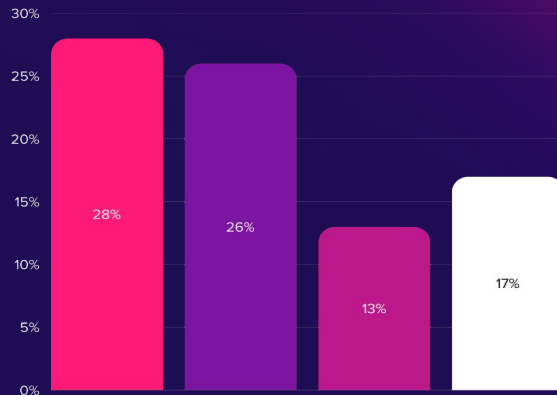
Decision

3. Confidence isn't binary.

People want different search experiences for different topics.

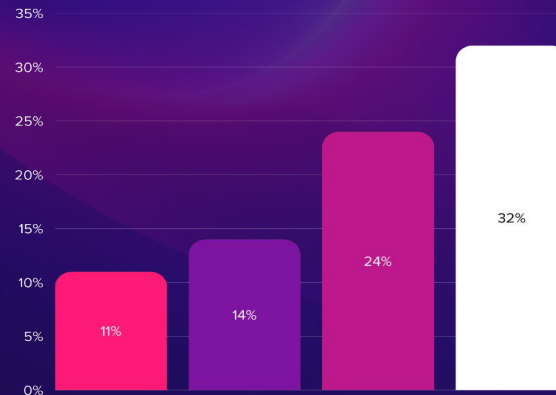
Keeping up with news or current events

- Getting an answer as quickly as possible
- Getting a short answer with some supporting information
- Spending a few minutes to compare sources/information
- Finding the most thorough and verified answer even if it takes more time



Planning travel or holidays

- Getting an answer as quickly as possible
- Getting a short answer with some supporting information
- Spending a few minutes to compare sources/information
- Finding the most thorough and verified answer even if it takes more time



**Evidence doesn't
determine behaviour.
Confidence does.**



4. Exploration vs. Delegation.

Sometimes we want to explore:

- Holiday
- Fashion
- Restaurants
- Creative ideas

Sometimes we want to explore:

- Holiday
- Fashion
- Restaurants
- Creative ideas

Sometimes we want to delegate:

- Compare
- Summarise
- Explain
- Narrow options

The question isn't: *Can AI do it?*

The question isn't:
Can AI do it?

The question is:
Do I still want ownership?

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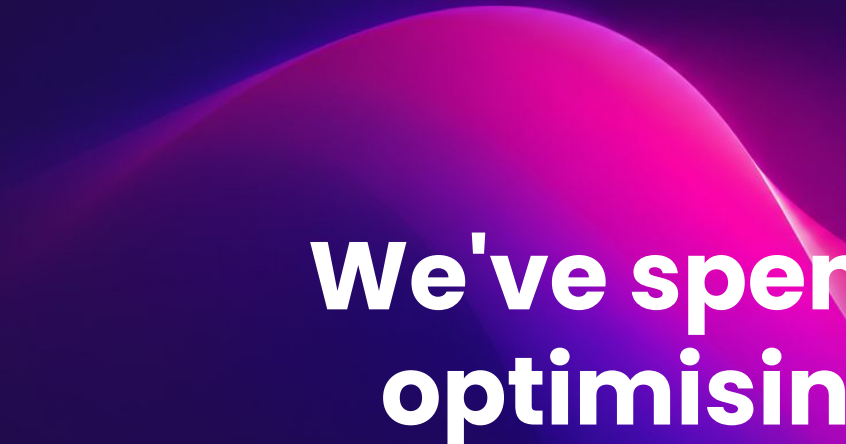
Behaviourally, it's important to understand that...

Confidence is cumulative.

AI → Reviews → Video → Reddit → Website → Decision



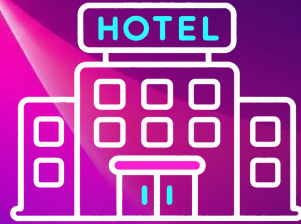
**Nobody trusts one thing.
Confidence accumulates.**



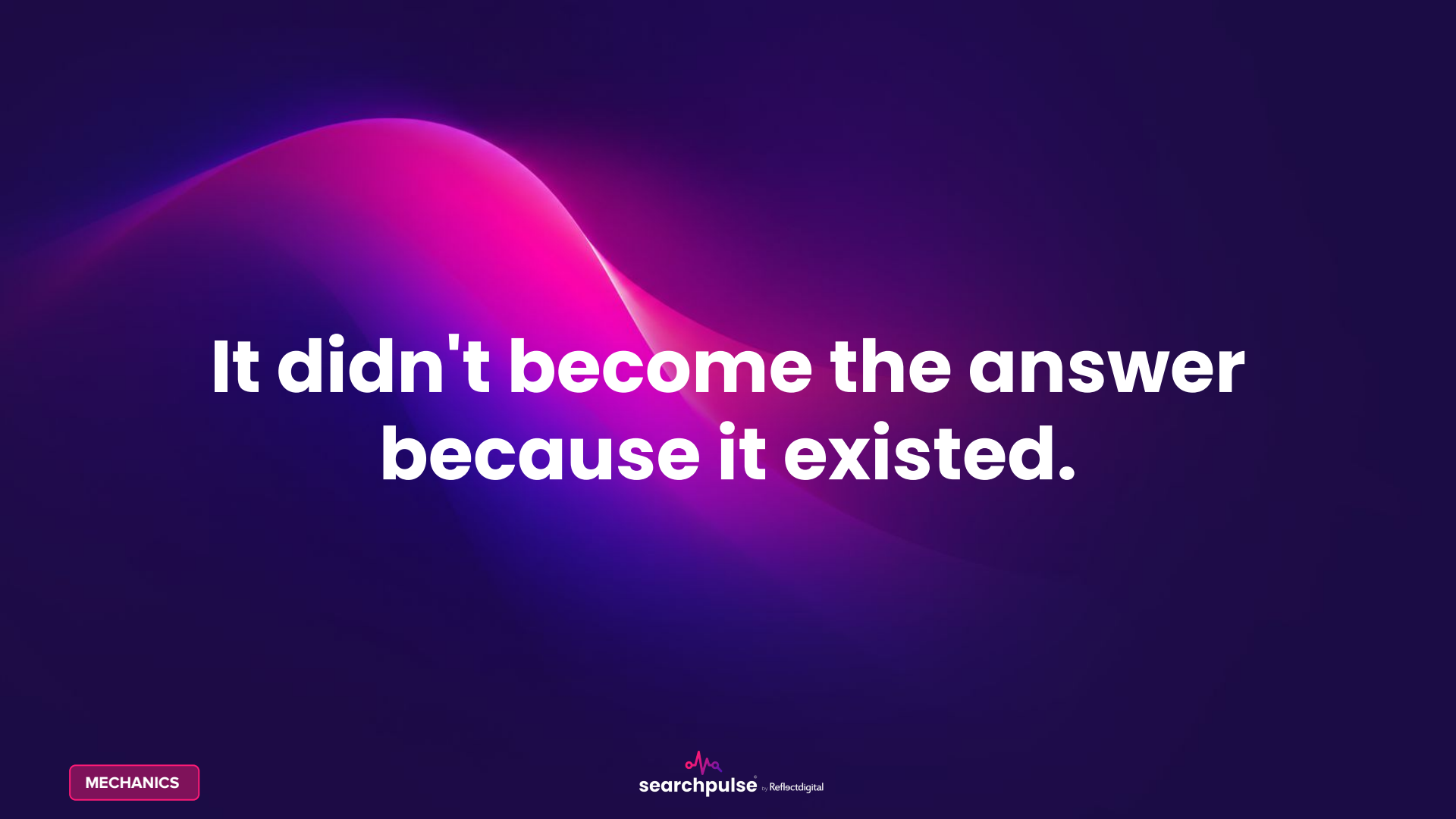
**We've spent twenty years
optimising how people
moved through search.**



**Now we need to optimise
how people move
through confidence.**



Remember the hotel?

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**It didn't become the answer
because it existed.**

**It became the answer because
somewhere, it had created
the evidence AI needed.**

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If your content doesn't answer the question...



You can't become the answer.



**AI can't recommend what doesn't
exist as evidence.**

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**You need to make
your knowledge visible.**

We used to be able to hide our best bits...

- We'll explain that on the call
- Customers discover that later
- That's built into the experience
- Sales tell people that
- We personalise that

**But AI doesn't experience
your customer journey.**

**It only sees the evidence published
about you; owned or earned.**



That's a massive mindset shift.



**AI is surfacing what customers
always cared about.**



**We call these
“hidden confidence builders”**

A quick story...



**They didn't win because they
built better gas stations.**



**They won because they understood
what customers were *actually*
basing their decisions on.**



**Your next competitive advantage
might already exist.**

**You just haven't realised customers
are using it to decide.**

What does this mean for brands?

Old question:
How do I get another click?



New question:
*What does my customer
need next to move forward?*

Designing for Confidence.

Analyse the journey.
Not your funnel.
Their confidence journey.
Where does uncertainty exist?

Understand behaviour.

What are they actually trying
to become confident about?

Not: "What keyword?"

But: "What decision?"

Identify verification.

What evidence will they look for before acting?

- Reviews?
- AI?
- Video?
- Experts?
- Communities?
- Friends?
- Brand?

Become the evidence.

Don't just create content.

Create the evidence people use to verify decisions.

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Don't just create content.

Create the evidence people use to verify decisions.

- Be cited
- Be reviewed
- Be discussed
- Be recommended

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Be useful enough to deserve inclusion in AI answers.

If AI can't find it...
AI can't recommend it.

If customers can't verify it...
Customers won't believe it.

Monitor and strengthen.

Are you showing up?

- Traditional search
- AI search
- Reddit
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Reviews
- Communities

Monitor and strengthen.

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- Communities

If yes...

Strengthen your authority.
Keep publishing evidence.
Keep answering new questions.

Monitor and strengthen.

Are you showing up?

- Traditional search
- AI search
- Reddit
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- TikTok
- Reviews
- Communities

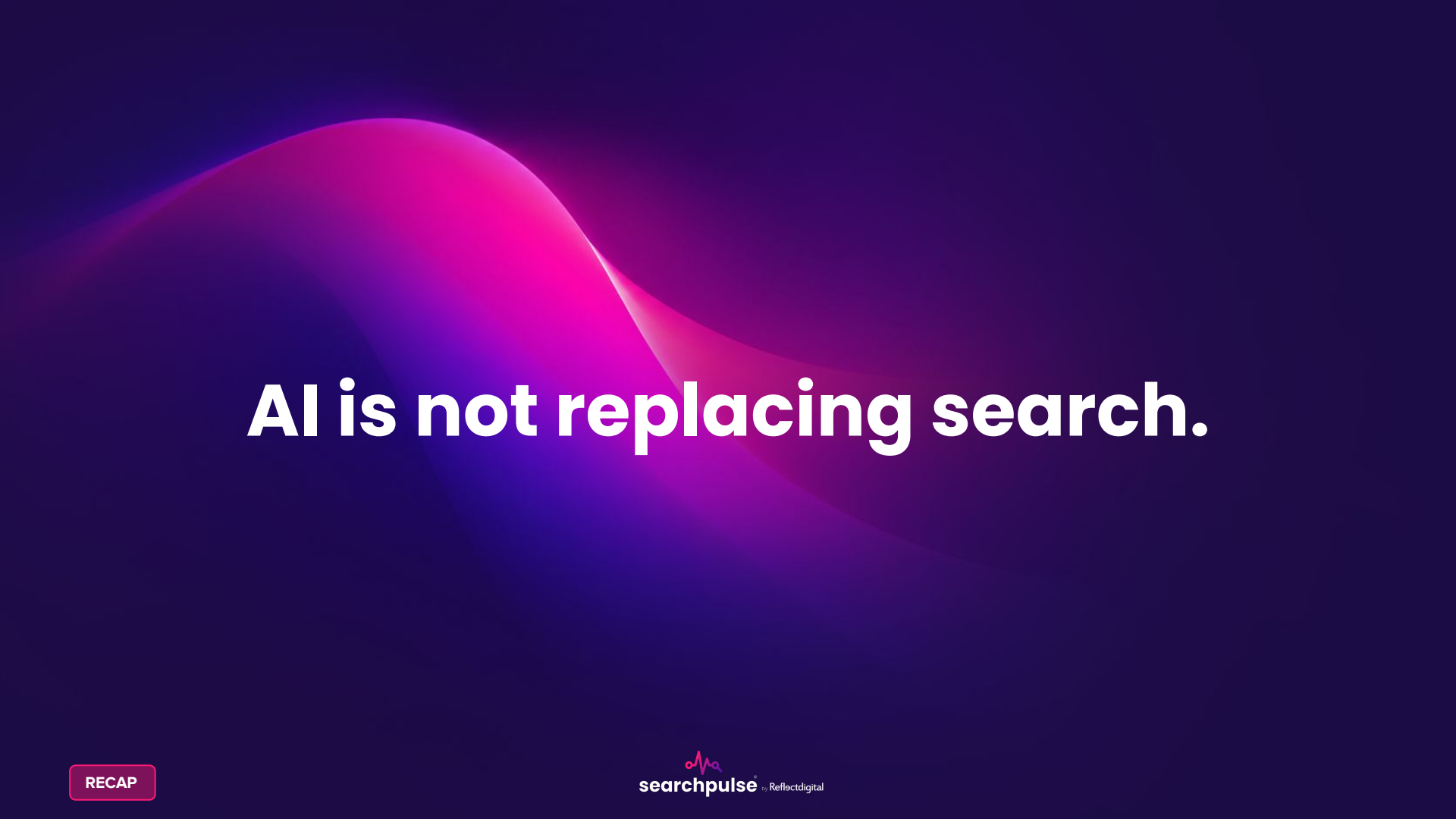
If yes...

Strengthen your authority.
Keep publishing evidence.
Keep answering new questions.

If no...

Build a strategy
to earn your place.

**This is how you
design for confidence.**



AI is not replacing search.

RECAP

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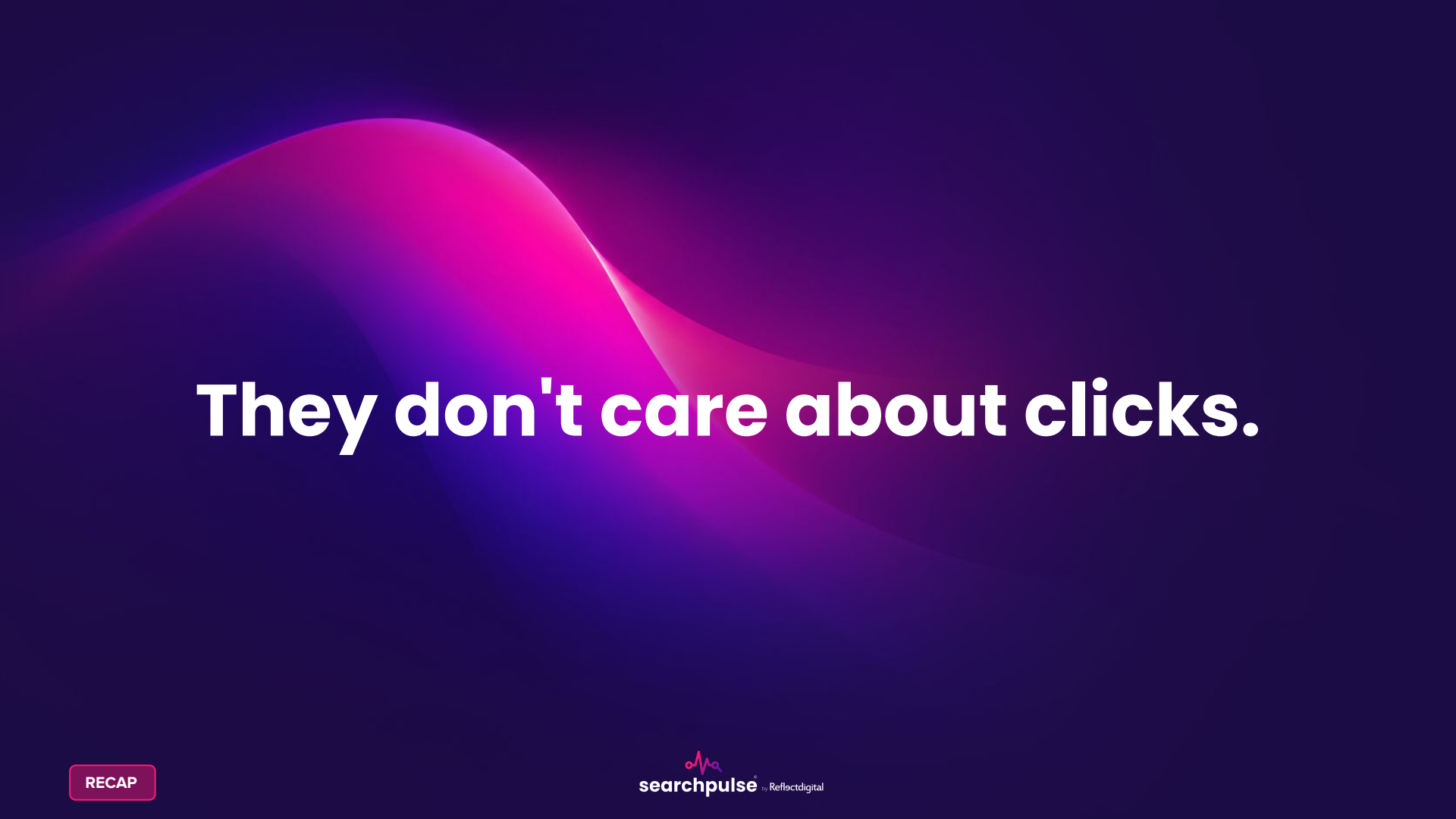
**It's exposing what search
was always about.**

RECAP



People don't care about channels.

RECAP



They don't care about clicks.

RECAP



They care about reducing effort...

RECAP



building enough confidence...

RECAP

**and retaining the level of agency
the decision requires.**

A large, abstract, flowing wave graphic in shades of pink and purple, set against a dark blue background. The wave starts from the left, peaks in the center, and flows towards the right, creating a sense of movement and modernity.

**Technology simply keeps
giving them better ways to do it.**

RECAP

A large, abstract, flowing wave graphic in shades of pink and purple, positioned behind the main text.

**People search until they
have enough confidence
to move forward.**



**Brands succeed when
they provide the evidence
that creates that confidence.**

What does zero-click behaviour actually mean psychologically?



It means...

FULL CIRCLE



People care about moving forward.

FULL CIRCLE



**Your next competitive advantage
might not be better marketing.**



**It might be understanding
what your customers
actually value...**

...and making that true.

**The future of search won't belong
to the brands that generate
the most clicks.**



**It will belong to the brands that
understand the confidence journey.**

Thank you.

**Connect
with me**



**Download
this deck**

