BRAND VELOCITY AUDIT

SOLARA BEAUTY

DEMAND DIAGNOSTICS

Is your marketing building future demand or just capturing today's?

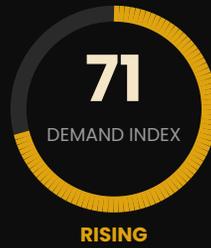| VELOCITY SCORE	SOS DELTA	BRAND DEMAND	PAID DEPENDENCY
62	**+4.2%**	**+18%**	**54%**
LIKELY RISING	VS. 12 MO. AGO	YOY IMPRESSIONS	OF CONVERSIONS

62
OVERALL

LIKELY RISING

71
DEMAND INDEX

RISING

48
SHARE OF SEARCH

FLAT

SCORE METHODOLOGY

The Brand Velocity Score is a composite of two deterministic indices: a first-party Brand Demand Index (BDI) derived from Google Search Console branded-query impressions, and a Market Share of Search proxy derived from Google Trends data. The overall score weights BDI at 60% and Share of Search at 40%, reflecting the higher reliability and granularity of first-party data.

CONFIDENCE NOTE
The BDI trend is classified as "Likely Rising" (slope = +0.034 on log-transformed weekly impressions, $p < 0.05$) with moderate variance. The Share of Search is classified as "Flat" due to competitor growth offsetting Solara's absolute gains. Both classifications use z-score thresholds within the brand's own 16-month history to avoid false labeling from data noise.

BRAND DEMAND INDEX: 16-MONTH TREND

Branded Query Impressions (Weekly Avg by Month)
● Solara Beauty
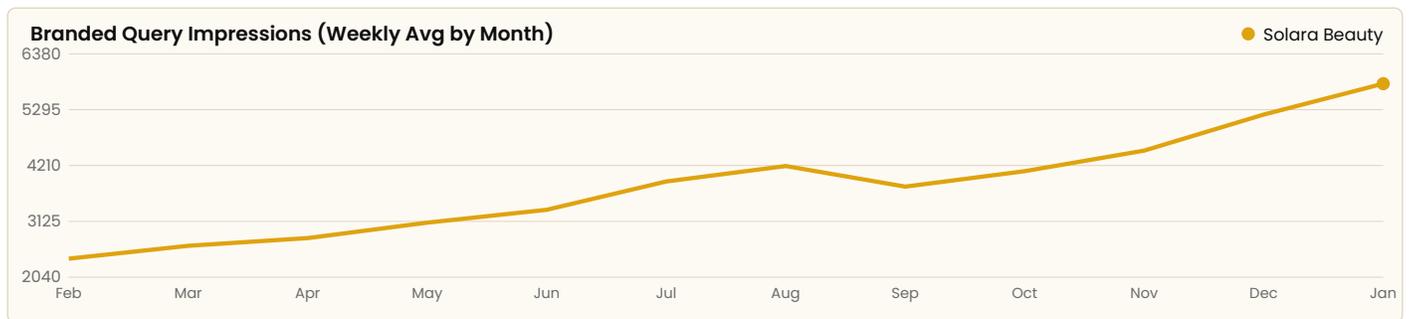
Branded impressions show a sustained upward trajectory with a notable acceleration in Q4 2025, coinciding with increased brand campaign activity. The August dip aligns with a two-week paid media pause. Year-over-year growth stands at +18%, driven primarily by organic branded search volume rather than paid amplification.

DATA LIMITATION
Search Console retains performance data for approximately 16 months. Impressions for low-volume branded queries may be anonymized by Google's privacy filtering, meaning table-level sums may undercount total branded exposure by 5–15%. The BDI computation accounts for this by tracking the ratio of anonymized to reported queries over time.

SHARE OF SEARCH: SOLARA VS. CATEGORY

Share of Search (SoS) measures the proportion of category-level branded searches attributable to Solara Beauty versus direct competitors. Research from the IPA and Les Binet indicates that SoS correlates with market share at approximately 83% across categories, though this varies by market and vertical. In DTC skincare, the correlation appears strong but the lead time from search share movement to revenue impact can range from 3 to 9 months.

Share of Search (%) — DTC Skincare Category   ● Solara Beauty   ● GlowRx   ● Verra Skin   ● Lumiere
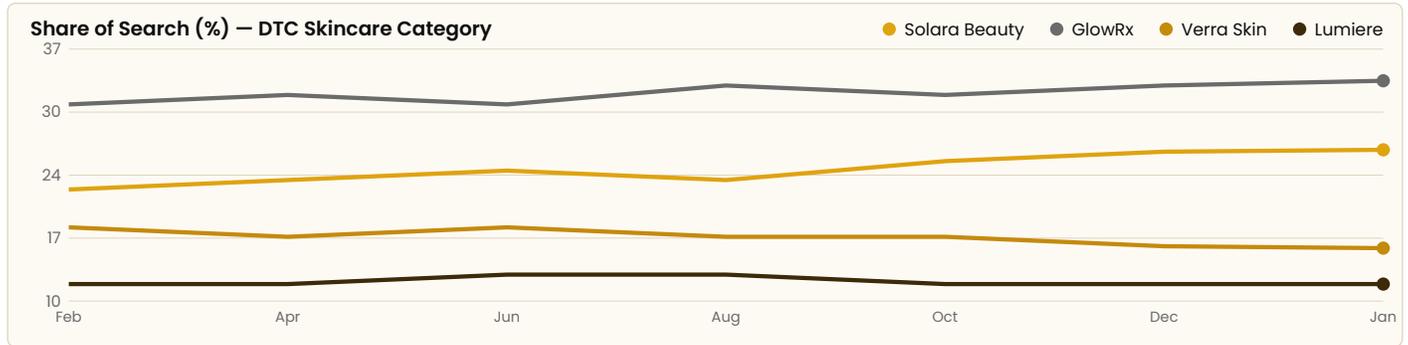
KEY FINDINGS

- Solara's SoS increased from 22.0% to 26.2% over the audit period (+4.2 points), representing the largest positive movement in the tracked competitor set.

- GlowRx maintains category leadership at 33.5% but growth has plateaued. Their absolute search volume is still ~1.3x Solara's, but the gap is narrowing.

- Verra Skin shows a declining trajectory (-2.2 points), potentially indicating brand fatigue or reduced marketing investment.

METHODOLOGY NOTE
Share of Search values are derived from Google Trends interest indices, not absolute search volumes. Trends normalizes data to location and time range, and outputs can vary between pulls due to sampling. These values represent a snapshot taken on January 15, 2026 and are stored for reproducibility. If the Google Trends API (alpha) becomes available, future audits will use consistently-scaled data.

The core question this audit answers: is your marketing generating new demand for Solara Beauty, or is it primarily capturing demand that already exists? Both matter. But if you're only capturing, your growth has a ceiling — and that ceiling is set by someone else's brand building.

DEMAND CREATION SIGNALS

- Branded impression volume (BDI) is up 18% YoY, indicating that more people are actively searching for Solara Beauty. This is the strongest signal that demand creation efforts are working.

- Share of Search increased +4.2 points, meaning Solara is growing faster than the category average. Research suggests this can precede market share gains by 3–9 months in DTC skincare.

- Non-branded organic traffic grew only 6% in the same period, suggesting that category-level interest is relatively stable — Solara's growth is brand-specific, not a rising tide.

DEMAND CAPTURE CONTEXT

- Paid search branded campaigns account for 31% of total ad spend but generate 54% of attributed conversions. This is typical but potentially misleading: high branded ROAS often reflects capturing existing intent, not creating new conversions.

- Branded search impression share is at 78%, meaning competitors are visible on 22% of Solara-branded queries. Under Google Ads policy, competitors may bid on your brand name as a keyword. Increasing impression share to 90%+ is a defensive priority.

> **ATTRIBUTION VS. INCREMENTALITY**
> The 54% conversion figure above is based on last-click attribution, which describes who got credit for the conversion — not what caused it. To estimate true incremental impact of branded paid search, we recommend running a platform lift study (Google Conversion Lift or Meta Conversion Lift). Without this, the actual incremental value of branded spend remains unknown. This is not a flaw in your data; it is a structural limitation of attribution models.

TRAFFIC SOURCE MIX (GA4, LAST 90 DAYS)

Session Distribution by Channel Group

| Paid 38%	Organic 29%	Direct 21%	Referral 12%

DEPENDENCY ASSESSMENT

- Paid channels account for 38% of sessions and 54% of conversions, making Solara moderately dependent on rented traffic. A sudden budget cut or platform policy change would have material impact on revenue.

- Organic search (29% of sessions) is the strongest owned channel, and its branded component is growing faster than non-branded. This is a healthy signal of brand equity translating into free traffic.

- Direct traffic (21%) should be interpreted with caution. GA4 classifies traffic as "direct" when there is no clear referral source. In practice, this includes true typed/bookmarked visits, but also tracking loss from missing UTM parameters, dark social, and app-to-web transitions.

TRACKING HYGIENE RECOMMENDATION
Solara's Direct traffic percentage has fluctuated between 17% and 26% over the audit period. This variance likely reflects inconsistent UTM tagging rather than real demand shifts. We recommend a full UTM discipline audit and channel grouping review before treating Direct as a demand signal. Until then, it is best used as a dependency indicator, not a measure of word-of-mouth.

REVENUE CONTRIBUTION BY CHANNEL

Revenue Share by Channel (%) ■ Paid ■ Organic ■ Direct ■ Referral
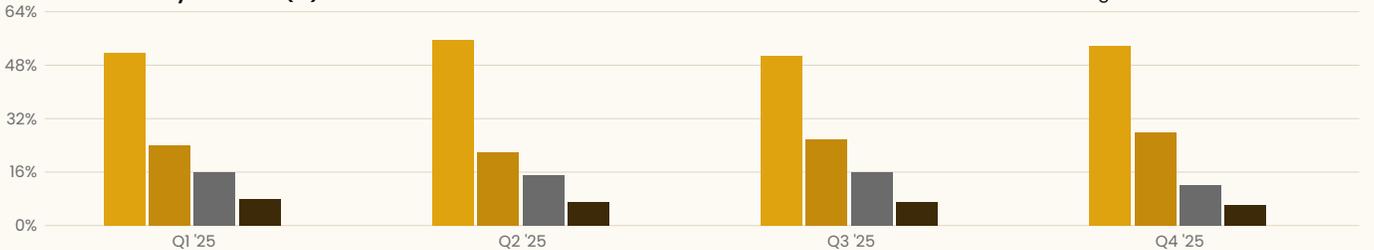
The following actions are ranked by a rules-based scoring system that combines impact potential (which signal is weakest), time-to-effect (brand effects lag; capture effects can be immediate), data confidence, and estimated effort. This is not a prediction of ROI — it is a diagnostic prioritization.

1. DEFEND BRANDED SERP REAL ESTATE

Priority: High | Time to effect: Immediate | Confidence: High

- Increase branded search impression share from 78% to 90%+ by expanding exact-match branded campaigns and improving Quality Score (expected CTR, ad relevance, landing page experience).
  - Google Ads policy permits competitors to bid on your brand name as a keyword. You cannot prevent this, but you can out-bid and out-relevance them.
  - Monitor Auction Insights weekly to track competitor presence on branded terms.

2. SUSTAIN DEMAND CREATION INVESTMENT

Priority: High | Time to effect: 3–9 months | Confidence: Moderate

- Brand demand is rising, which means current brand-building activity is likely working. Do not reallocate this budget to performance channels based on short-term ROAS comparisons — the lag between demand creation and revenue realization means cutting now could flatten growth 6 months from now.
  - Continue monitoring BDI monthly. If the slope flattens for 3+ consecutive months, investigate creative fatigue or positioning drift before adjusting spend.

3. RUN AN INCREMENTALITY TEST ON BRANDED PAID SEARCH

Priority: High | Time to effect: 4–6 weeks | Confidence: Will improve with test

- Branded paid search generates 54% of attributed conversions. Some portion of these conversions would occur organically without the paid click. A Google Conversion Lift study (holdout experiment) can estimate the true incremental contribution.
  - If incrementality is low (e.g., 20–30% of attributed conversions are truly incremental), this frees significant budget for upper-funnel demand creation.

4. FIX TRACKING HYGIENE BEFORE SCALING

Priority: Medium | Time to effect: Immediate | Confidence: High

- Direct traffic variance (17–26%) indicates UTM tagging gaps. Before you can trust channel-level ROI comparisons, you need consistent attribution data. Audit all campaign URLs, email links, social bio links, and influencer tracking codes.

5. CLASSIFY BRANDED QUERIES BY INTENT

Priority: Medium | Time to effect: Ongoing | Confidence: Moderate

- Not all branded search is demand. Queries like "solara beauty login," "solara careers," or "solara beauty complaint" are operational, not commercial. Future audits should segment branded queries by modifier category (purchase intent, support, employment, reviews) to give a cleaner demand signal.

WEEKLY SCOREBOARD

Track these three numbers weekly. They require no additional tooling — all are available in Google Search Console, Google Trends, and GA4 respectively.

- Branded Impressions (Search Console)

  - Your first-party demand proxy. Track the rolling 4-week average of impressions for your core branded query set. A sustained decline (3+ weeks) warrants investigation into creative fatigue, competitive conquest, or seasonal factors.

- Share of Search (Google Trends)

  - Your competitive position proxy. Pull monthly and compare against your tracked competitor set. Remember that Trends values can vary between pulls due to sampling; store your values with timestamps for consistency.

- Channel Dependency Mix (GA4)

  - Your risk exposure indicator. If paid's share of sessions or revenue rises above 45%, you are increasingly renting your audience. Aim to grow organic and referral contribution over time.

MEASUREMENT UPGRADE PATH

This audit establishes a diagnostic baseline. To move from diagnosis to proof, consider these upgrades in order of impact:

- Incrementality testing: Run Google Conversion Lift or Meta Conversion Lift to measure true incremental value of paid branded search and paid social. This is the single most valuable measurement upgrade available and directly answers the question attribution cannot.

- Data warehousing: Begin warehousing Search Console and Trends data weekly. Search Console's 16-month retention window means you are losing historical data every day you don't store it. A simple BigQuery or Snowflake pipeline solves this permanently.

- Query intent classification: Build automated tagging of branded queries by modifier type (purchase, support, careers, reviews, complaints) to separate real demand from operational traffic.

- Category lag calibration: As you accumulate quarterly audits, track whether BDI and SoS changes actually precede revenue changes for Solara specifically, and at what lag. This turns the audit from a general framework into a calibrated prediction tool for your business.

> **ABOUT THIS AUDIT**
> This Brand Velocity Audit was produced by Branded Mayhem Collective LLC. The scoring methodology is deterministic and reproducible; narrative recommendations are grounded in computed outputs, not ad hoc inference. All data limitations are disclosed inline. For questions about methodology, data sources, or next steps, contact us at brandedmayhem.com.