Is Chrome The Next AI Battleground? Experts Weigh In

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Tor Constantino, MBA August 13, 2025

Perplexity makes a bold $34.5 billion bid to buy Google Chrome while possibly determining the future of the internet.

VCG via Getty Images

Perplexity's $34.5 billion bid to buy Google's Chrome browser seems shocking at first glance. The AI firm has an estimated value of $18 billion — roughly half its offer price for Chrome. But the bid reaches beyond reality. This isn't a stunt around a browser. It's an attempt to seize the gate to the internet. And it's occurring at a time when Google may be forced by the courts to slip its grip on key assets, such as Chrome.

"For Perplexity, this is an important commitment to the open web, user choice and continuity for everyone who has chosen Chrome," noted a statement from a perplexity spokesperson asked to comment for this article. "In the formal terms of the offer, Perplexity makes several important commitments including: ongoing and substantial investment in Chromium — $3 billion over the next 24 months; never changing user defaults without giving users the choice; never secretly replacing Chrome's default search engine; seeking to retain a substantial portion of Chrome talent as well as 100 months of availability and support to Chrome users."

AI Seeks To Shift The Center Of Gravity For Online Search

In the old web, you searched, clicked and browsed. In the new web, you just ask — AI takes care of the rest.

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“One of the biggest ideas emerging in AI is the single interface experience,” said Piers Fawkes, founder of tech advisory firm PSFK and AI startup ServiceBuddy. “Unlike the Google era, where you’d search and then browse multiple sites, the SIE keeps you inside the AI, which then researches, books and buys on your behalf.”

That’s a revolution. Browsers are no longer dumb pipes. They're intelligent agents. The user who's driving the interface is driving the experience. And that's why Chrome matters now more than ever.

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“For the average Chrome user, there may be no big change at first,” Fawkes said. “But over time, AI could be baked into every browsing moment — comparison shopping, booking flights,even finding a mechanic — without leaving the browser.”

In that world, Chrome’s 68% share of global search is more than dominance. It's distribution for the next generation of AI. It's the high ground.

The Prompt: Get the week’s biggest AI news on the buzziest companies and boldest breakthroughs, in your inbox.

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AI Startup Is Punching Above Its Weight Class

Perplexity’s offer is more than a buyout bit. It’s symbolic. A challenge flag waved at Google, already on the griddle for potentially overstepping on browser dominance.

“A federal court has ruled that Google holds an illegal search monopoly,” said Usha Haley, the W. Frank Barton distinguished chair in international business and professor of management at the Barton School of Business at Wichita State University. “The U.S. Justice Department may force divestiture of Chrome.”

That’s not hearsay. It’s one option presented as part of the DOJ’s antitrust case. Chrome could become a liability that Google has to divest. And if that happens, Perplexity wants first crack.

Haley calls Perplexity's move "strategically audacious, though unlikely to succeed." But, she adds, "an AI-focused company acquiring Chrome brings new risks around data usage and privacy." Perplexity has already said it will use browsing context to refine user profiles.

Google Needs Chrome More Than Most Realize – So Do AI Companies

"Chrome isn't just a browser," said Rich Pleeth, who was the U.K. and European Chrome marketing leader and is co-founder of AI-based delivery route optimizer Finmile. "It's the quiet lever that underpins Google's search and advertising dominance."

Chrome comes with Google search. That saves Alphabet billions of dollars every year in traffic acquisition costs. No Apple payments. No sweetheart deals with Mozilla. Just free, straight search volume.

"Based on retained search revenue alone, Chrome's value could easily exceed $100 billion," Pleeth said.

But, he explained, it's not just search. Chrome feeds information to Google's whole ecosystem, from YouTube to Maps to Ads. That feedback loop makes ad targeting more precise, improves ad ranking and locks in user behavior. If Google loses Chrome, it doesn't just lose a product; it loses clout, a rich data-mining asset and access to lots of revenue.

"Chrome as a structural pillar of Google's business model is unbelievably valuable," Pleeth added. "Selling it would fundamentally weaken Google."

AI Firms See The Real Fight Is Over Discovery

Who shows up when someone searches for a product, books a vacation or looks for a plumber? That's the gatekeeper power. And that power is shifting from websites to AI front-ends.

"If an AI front-end controls the experience, it controls which brands and businesses get surfaced," Fawkes said. "That's the power play here — it's not just about owning a browser, it's about owning the point of access to the internet in the AI age."

Haley agrees. "E-commerce, travel, local services and even content publishers" could be worse off. According to her, ad networks could be heavily impacted while Bing, DuckDuckGo and even Amazon's Alexa could be harmed.

OpenAI's ChatGPT has a head start. Gemini is catching up. Perplexity doesn't want to be left behind.

“Perplexity knows they risk becoming the Ask Jeeves of this generation,” Fawkes said. “By buying the most popular browser, they can become the default SIE.”

That’s the bet. Outrageous. Risky. Probably impossible.

But if Google is forced to sell Chrome, the question won’t be whether or not Perplexity can afford it. The question will be whether a bidding war ensues among AI firms for this crown jewel of internet search.

ForbesThese AI Models Didn't Learn Language, They Learned Strategy
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