

# The State Of AI Search

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## Foreward:

While the wider SEO community has been busy arguing over acronyms, Prosperity Media has been busy building a best-in-class AI search service. We have been learning from some of the most respected figures in the industry and implementing, testing, and iterating our approach to AI optimisation. Ultimately, we have delivered substantial, measurable results for our clients, and now is the right time to share our approach with the wider market.

AI search is no longer a novel, shiny object. It is a legitimate growth channel with distinct approaches that need to be factored into bespoke strategies that enable brands to reach enormous additional audiences. This white paper is aimed at equipping brand decision makers currently grappling with the AI visibility dilemma with actionable insights. It will leave you better prepared to direct your resources strategically and handle complex discussions with senior stakeholders about the evolution of search.

Published on the 26th of February, 2026.

No AI Declaration: Whilst this white paper is all about AI, not one word has been written by AI. At Prosperity Media, we believe in real people creating content for real people and real businesses, because the personal insight and human judgment behind great content has always been, and remains, the heartbeat of the search experience.

## About the Authors:



Aaron Taylor is the General Manager of Prosperity Media. He has a passion for SEO and GEO and is a co-organiser of the Sydney SEO Collective in his spare time. Aaron has spoken at multiple national and international conferences, including Ahrefs Evolve, and has managed SEO campaigns for some of the world's biggest brands, including McDonald's and NIVEA.



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## Other Acknowledgements:

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## The Current State of the SEO–GEO Debate

In the history of digital marketing, few developments have generated as much professional uncertainty as the rise of AI-powered search.

The relationship between SEO and GEO (Generative Engine Optimisation) has become the subject of heated discussion, with questions encircling what it means to optimise for organic visibility in the context of AI.

Some practitioners are querying the extent to which SEO and GEO overlap, and whether the most effective strategy is to focus on shared optimisation principles rather than devising new GEO-specific approaches.

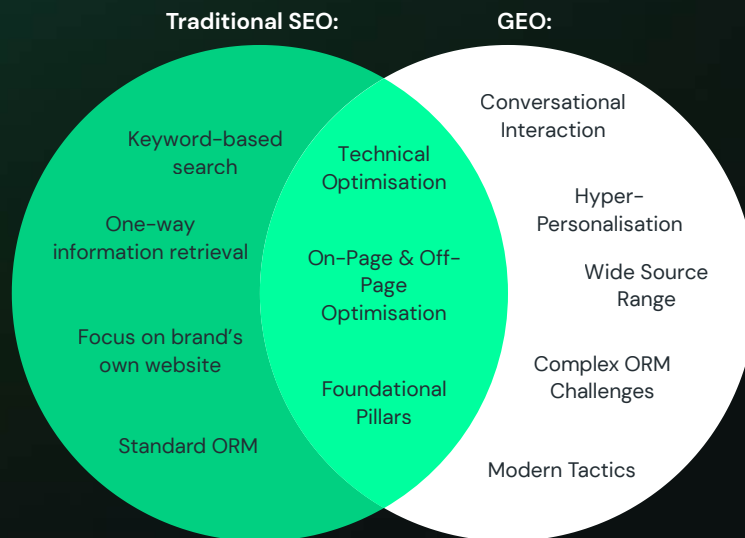
Other industry figures are questioning the very notion of GEO, claiming the concept is simply SEO repackaged with a fancy label, ready to be leveraged as a new and profitable service offering.

While the answers to these questions are likely to become clearer as AI search matures, a range of industry-specific metrics point to a single fact that cannot be ignored: AI platforms are rapidly changing people's purchase decisions.

Businesses that fail to adjust their content strategy to reflect this new mode of search run a serious risk of losing control over their buyer's journey, with AI mediating the information served to potential customers at crucial moments as they prepare to click "buy now".

# Prosperity Media's Position On AI Search

It is important to acknowledge the high degree of overlap between SEO and GEO. The foundational pillars of SEO still apply to successful GEO, with both focusing on technical, on-page, and off-page optimisations.



The main divergence exists in the way people are using and interacting with the technology to discover new information, consider purchases, and ultimately make buying decisions. For example, users would traditionally enter keywords into search engines to discover information and buy products. By contrast, a typical AI search uses entire sentences, if not paragraphs, with the additional text giving the AI model as much context as possible to retrieve the most relevant output. AI platforms enable follow-up questions, turning search into a two-way conversation rather than a one-way retrieval of information. Going from keywords to conversations also gives AI models a complex understanding of their users' preferences and needs, making the model's output hyper-personalised.

Another key differentiator is where source content lives. Traditional SEO focused on optimisations that improved the authority and visibility of a brand's own website. However, AI models pull information from a much wider range of sources, meaning brands looking to improve AI visibility must think well beyond their own site. This requires adapting tactics and strategies to meet new user behaviours, while not neglecting the significant market share that traditional SEO still holds over these AI platforms.

In addition, in SEO you optimise pages. Whilst for AI platforms you optimise passages. That is not a rebrand. That is a fundamentally different content architecture. Our approach to content for AI platforms has already adapted to this new system in all aspects – from what we write, how we write, and where we write – our optimised content on and off the brand's websites.

Another key consideration is how a brand is represented within AI models. This is often a central concern for the brands we are working with. Where SEO has long offered online reputation management (ORM) services, the challenge in GEO is far more complex.

LLMs can surface poor customer experiences buried deep within forum threads and niche review platforms that would never appear on page one in traditional search. Equally, old negative news stories are being resurfaced long after their news cycle has passed. Where users might naturally move on, LLMs have a long 'memory' and are readily serving up content with negative sentiment to a new audience.

Alongside these considerations, this white paper will also explore entirely new concepts shaping search in the age of AI, including query fan-outs, agentic commerce, retrieval augmented generation (RAG) and reciprocal rank fusion (RRF), covering the developments most critical to modern search tactics.

## Defining What Winning In AI Search Means

AI search has almost entirely removed the need for users to click through and read websites. Additionally, with the rise of agentic commerce, AI agents will soon be making purchases on behalf of users. Every move the major search players have made over the past 10 years has been aimed at slowly eroding organic traffic, fulfilling user needs within the search results themselves while amplifying ad revenue. Generative AI is simply the latest iteration of this approach. Success in AI search is therefore no longer about traffic; it's about visibility, brand sentiment, and influence.

'Winning in AI search comes down to one thing: whether AI recommends your brand to its users. Are you part of the conversation?'

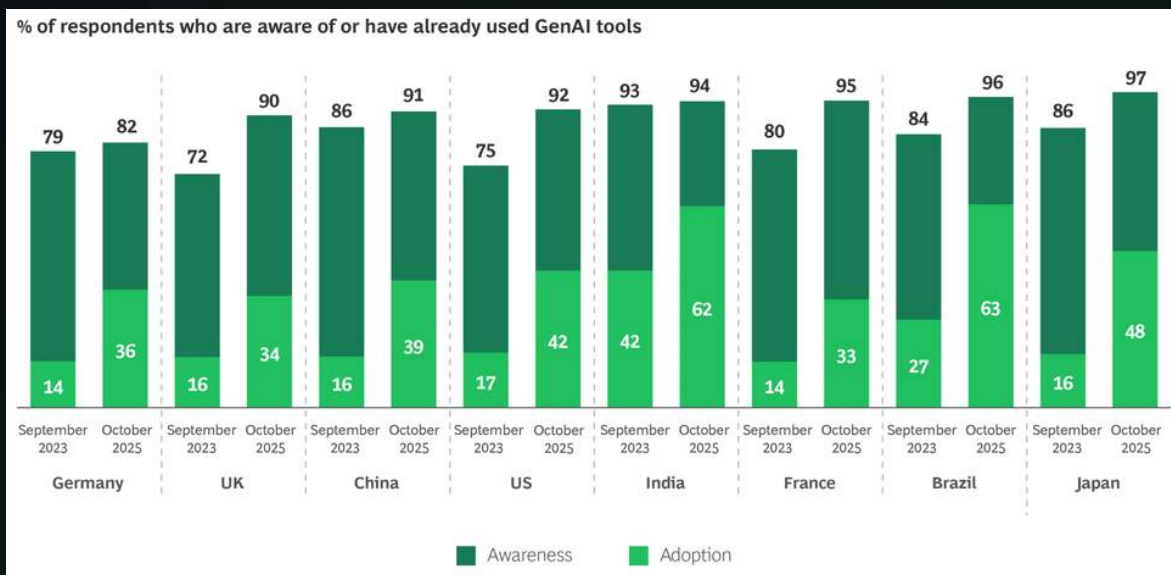
The brands winning in AI search are being rewarded with highly engaged traffic, stronger conversion rates, shorter sales cycles, and better-informed customers, all of which drive greater lifetime value.

## The AI Search Market Opportunity

AI-assisted shopping is a macrotrend impacting digital commerce. Increasingly, consumers are turning to ChatGPT to compare products, find the best prices, and even check out as part of their purchasing process.

Research by consulting group BCG surveyed 9,000+ adults across Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, the UK, and the US to understand this shift in consumer behaviour from 2023 to 2025. The research highlights a few key takeaways. Firstly, this trend toward using AI search is global. The graph below highlights that 82–97% of all respondents have already used GenAI tools in some form.

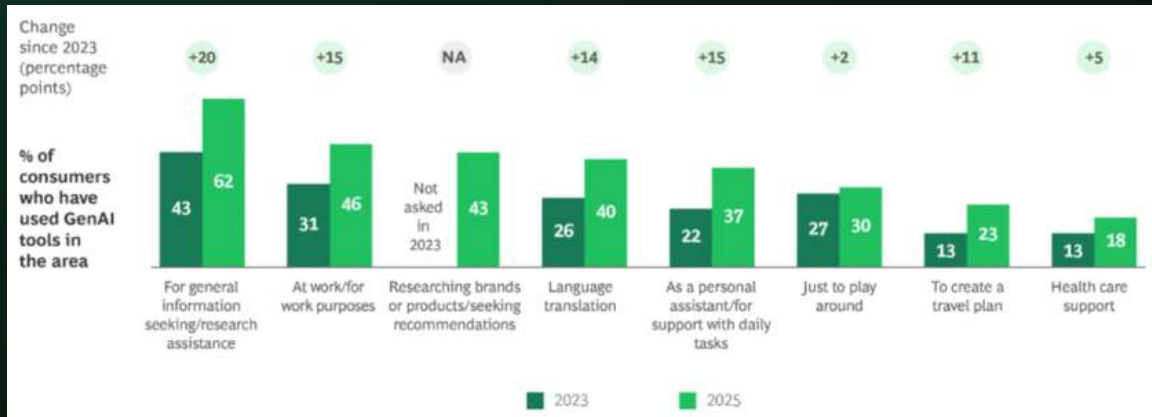
### Awareness & Adoption of GenAI Tools Are Nearly Ubiquitous



BCG Analysis Of Different Markets For GenAI Tool Usage

Secondly, the graph below highlights that 43% of respondents are using GenAI to research brands or products, or have actively asked a GenAI tool for its purchase recommendations. Unfortunately, this datapoint was not gathered in the 2023 survey, making it difficult to ascertain the exact growth of GenAI-powered product research.

## Consumers Increasingly Use GenAI As Apart of Everyday Behaviours



BCG Analysis On The Prevalence Of Usage Types 2025 vs 2023

A [McKinsey Study](#) has forecast that by 2030, agentic commerce could influence \$3 to \$5 trillion in global retail sales. Currently, agentic commerce is in its infancy. However, we at Prosperity Media believe this will become the default method of performing online transactions in the not-too-distant future. Subsequently, you should prepare your brand now so that you're well-positioned to capitalise on the sales potential of an emerging market that seems set to grow rapidly.

## The Data Behind a Consumer Search Shift

Search industry data paints a clear picture of how many consumers solely rely on AI when building a detailed understanding of a specific brand, product, or service. A [Bain & Company report](#) reveals that 80% of consumers now rely on AI-generated results for at least 40% of their purchase searches. Crucially, all of the searches tracked in Bain's report end without users visiting a website, with users reporting that their queries are answered to a satisfying degree by the AI-generated answers, making clicks unnecessary.

This user behaviour trend is often referred to as the "zero click" pattern. It demonstrates that in some cases, large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and Claude have become alternative platforms for finding information, not just supplements to traditional organic search. Significantly, the report finds that the zero-click pattern holds even throughout the comparison phase, when a user's informational needs are most demanding. 68% of those surveyed use AI-generated results to gather and summarise information about products or services with no website visit required.

Naturally, the zero-click pattern breaks when a final purchase is made. 42% of users ask AI for a final recommendation on what exactly to buy, which often leads to a direct website visit and a sales conversion.

This means that while AI-generated content is reducing traditional organic traffic, the clicks it delivers are highly qualified and often lead to purchases. [Ahrefs data](#) showed that visitors arriving on their site via AI platforms are 23 times more likely to convert than those coming through traditional organic channels. As a provider of industry-leading SEO and GEO tools, Ahrefs is better qualified than most to measure the quality of traffic. In terms of organic search, nothing puts consumers in the mood to buy more than an AI platform's direct recommendation of your product or service.

## GEO: An Outsourced Lead Nurture Journey

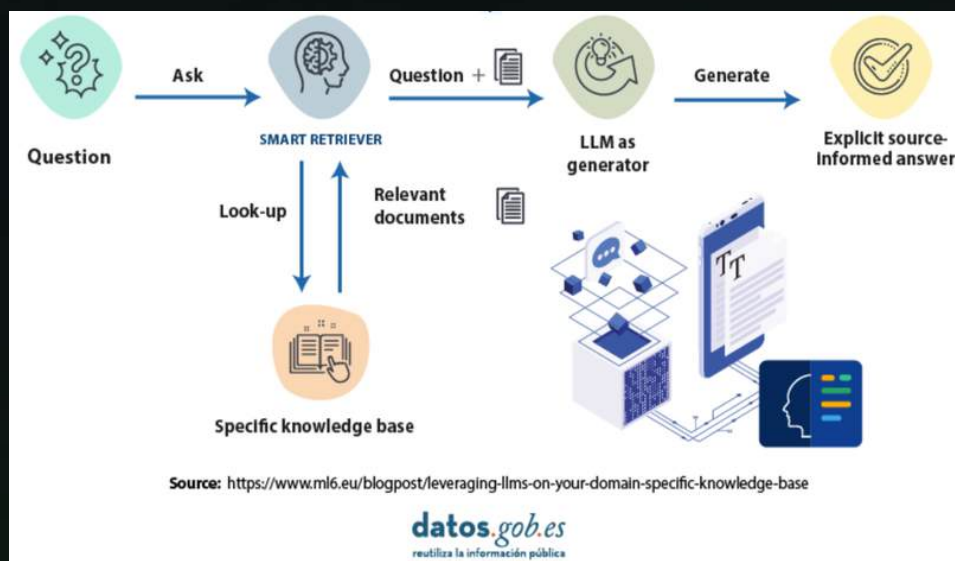
The logic behind AI's leap in conversion efficiency is surprisingly simple. AI often performs a large portion of the lead nurture journey, including the educational, consideration and comparison phases. When users finally arrive on a website, they have already gathered most, if not all, of the information needed to justify a purchase decision.

However, this dynamic only works to a brand's advantage if AI is surfacing accurate and favourable information about their product or service. This is where the real challenge for content writers now lies, since they must optimise for two distinct audiences simultaneously.

The first audience is the potential customers conducting research and examining information as they prepare to make purchase decisions. The second audience is the AI systems that extract, synthesise, and present information. Successful content creation requires understanding what AI and people need and, more importantly, where those needs intersect. Neither can be ignored for a piece of GEO content to perform successfully.

## The AI Search Process: Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG)

LLMs use a process known as retrieval augmented generation (RAG) to gather and synthesise information, ensuring an accurate and relevant output in relation to the user's questions or prompts. The process looks something like the illustrated workflow in the diagram below:



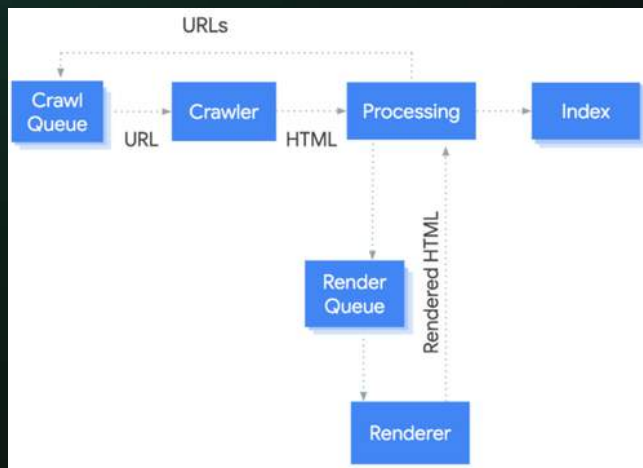
The RAG Process Visualised

Like a search engine, the whole process begins with a question or prompt. As LLMs are trained on a wide range of sources, including the web, they can answer questions based on what they learned during pre-training. In this phase, text and other data are converted into tokens, the basic units that the model processes as inputs and outputs. In many cases, however, a question will trigger a web search, which kickstarts the RAG process. This is where additional documents are consulted as a knowledge base to give the LLM greater context for answering the user's question. The process involves re-weighting tokens based on that knowledge base, sometimes referred to as fine-tuning, so that the LLM can generate a more accurate and informed response.

The goal in GEO is to position your brand with the highest possible probability of being referenced in the RAG process, with favourable sentiment, for prompts relevant to your ideal customer personas (ICPs). This means covering all elements of technical retrieval: ensuring your content is readable and

discoverable by LLMs, earning positive references on authoritative third-party websites and platforms to build consensus, and creating content on your own website or other platforms that answers your ICPs' questions and pain points as comprehensively as possible.

For now, the only way to influence this process is through organic content, whether text, audio, video, or image, which means much of the SEO work you have already done will have a positive impact on your AI representation too. A key distinction from SEO, however, is that content is retrieved in chunks or paragraphs within a page, rather than search engines ranking the page as a whole against the user's query.



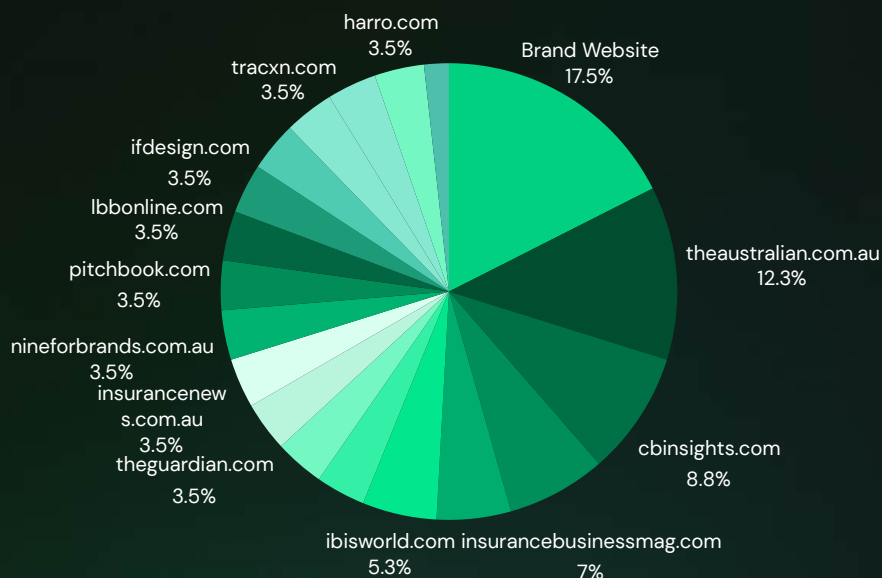
Google's Search Engine Indexing Process - URLs then go through an additional ranking process.

## Brand Representation Risk In AI

Brand representation is front of mind for a large proportion of the brand managers we are speaking with about AI search. Poor reviews on unmanaged third-party platforms, disgruntled customers in obscure Reddit threads, and negative PR from a decade ago are all being surfaced to buyers who are at the bottom of the funnel and ready to purchase. Rather than encouraging your ICPs to do business with you, this content is actively discouraging them.

SEO has long played a role in online reputation management (ORM), but the approach was largely focused on pushing negative content off page one and into the pages beyond, where few users would ever find it. In AI search, there is no page two. Models surface information from wherever it exists online. In our analysis of one insurance brand, only 17.5% of the sources influencing branded output came from assets owned and directly controlled by the brand. That means even for your own branded searches, you are heavily reliant on third-party sources to reference you favourably. And that figure is even lower for non-branded prompts.

## Domains Influencing The Branded Output For An Insurance Brand



In our analysis of one insurance brand, only 17.5% of the sources influencing branded output came from assets owned and directly controlled by the brand. That means even for your own branded searches, you are heavily reliant on third-party sources to reference you favourably. And that figure is even lower for non-branded prompts.

This reinforces the idea that we are in the age of off-page. LLMs are indifferent to whether the sources they reference are owned by your brand or not. Your content strategy needs to become more holistic, thinking beyond your owned assets and considering where your brand is showing up across the wider web.

## Technical GEO: What's Important For Visibility

There is significant overlap between foundational technical SEO principles and those required for GEO. Both AI and search engine crawlers, for example, access the robots.txt file and XML sitemaps (there is currently no evidence that LLMs use LLMs.txt), and both follow internal links to discover and crawl content.

SEO benefits from far more documentation and established best practices than GEO, which is still emerging. Key distinctions include the critical importance of server-side rendering (SSR) for LLMs, log file analysis to understand how LLMs are accessing your website, and reciprocal rank fusion (RRF) analysis, which provides a framework for mirroring the way LLMs synthesise information and determine the order in which they recommend brands in AI outputs.

### Log File Analysis

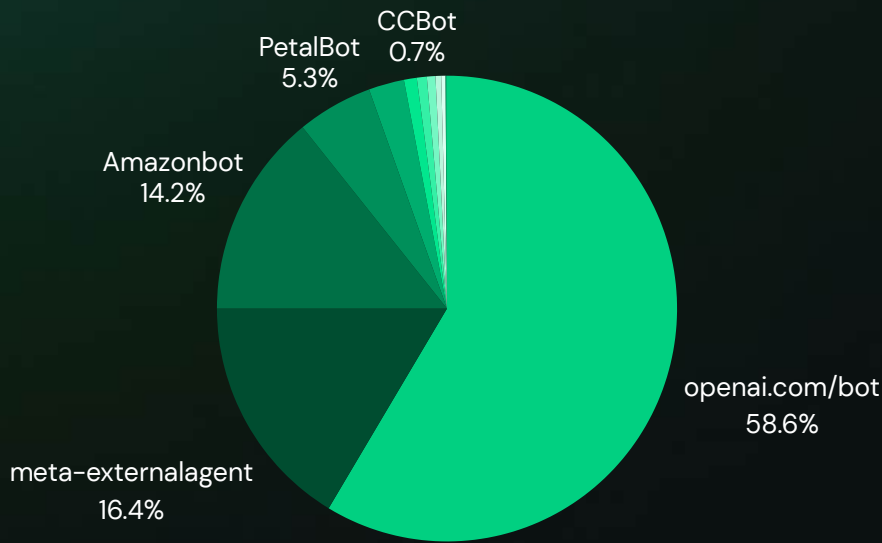
Log files are a valuable data point for understanding how your website is being crawled by LLMs. They record every visit to your website's server, along with the user agent identification of each visitor. If you use a platform like Cloudflare to manage your website, you can access a straightforward report of AI crawler activity.

The dataset to the right is drawn from AI crawler log files, broken down into three relevant categories: AI assistant, AI crawler, and AI search. [You can find useful information about OpenAI's crawler user agents on their website documentation.](#) The most relevant of these is the AI assistant openai.com/bot. According to their documentation: "When users ask ChatGPT or a CustomGPT a question, it may visit a web page with a ChatGPT-User agent." In our view, this suggests the bot is associated with some form of demand signal originating from within the platform. Below is a full breakdown of visits to this website by AI crawler category, user agent, and number of crawls.

| Bot Category              | Bot User Agent                                                                                                        | Crawls        |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| AI Assistant              | openai.com/bot                                                                                                        | 17,195        |
|                           | Mozilla/5.0 (Macintosh; Intel Mac OS X 10_15_7) AppleWebKit/537.36 (KHTML, like Gecko) Chrome/139.0.0.0 Safari/537.36 | 112           |
|                           | duckduckgo.com/duckassistbot                                                                                          | 82            |
| <b>AI Assistant Total</b> |                                                                                                                       | <b>17,389</b> |
| AI Crawler                | meta-externalagent                                                                                                    | 4,808         |
|                           | Amazonbot                                                                                                             | 4,165         |
|                           | PetalBot                                                                                                              | 1,558         |
|                           | GoogleOther                                                                                                           | 257           |
|                           | CCBot                                                                                                                 | 218           |
|                           | openai.com/gptbot                                                                                                     | 189           |
| <b>AI Crawler Total</b>   |                                                                                                                       | <b>11,195</b> |
| AI Search                 | Applebot                                                                                                              | 720           |
|                           | openai.com/searchbot                                                                                                  | 36            |
| <b>AI Search Total</b>    |                                                                                                                       | <b>756</b>    |
| <b>Grand Total</b>        |                                                                                                                       | <b>29,340</b> |

This data is represented in the piechart below. Here, it is important to note that the majority of visits are coming from that specific user agent mentioned above – openai.com/bot.

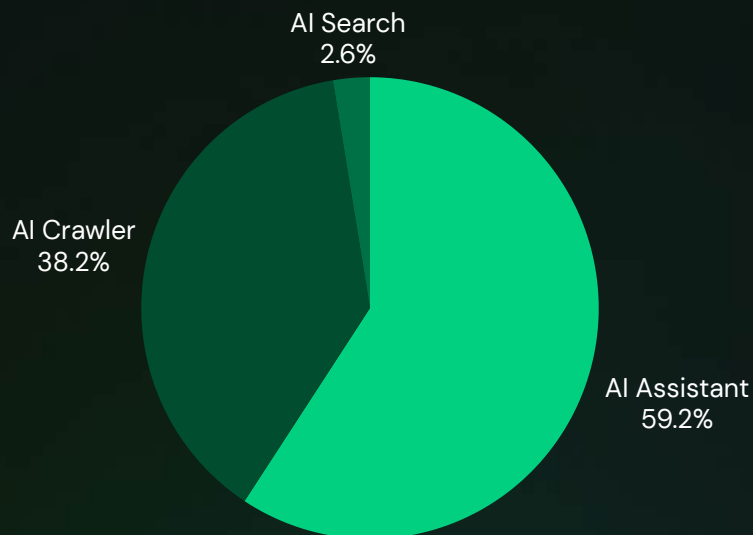
### AI Crawler Requests %



AI Crawler Requests By AI User Agent From A Cloudflare Log Explorer Report

The graph below shows a breakdown of the user agents by bot category, further emphasising that this demand-signal bot type constitutes the majority of crawl requests. It is also interesting to note that AI Search is only a tiny fraction of the total bot requests (2.58%).

### AI Crawler Type %



AI Crawls Broken Down By Crawler Type From A Cloudflare Log Explorer Report

The insights extracted from this data become even more granular when you review the exact pages the AI assistant bot is visiting. By comparing how frequently a page or site section is being crawled against its proportion of the overall website, you can identify which content areas are generating the most interest within AI models.

For example, if a site section covering partner integrations for your SaaS product makes up just 1% of your website but accounts for 20% of crawl requests, it suggests that this content cluster is being searched frequently within the AI model. Similarly, if your product feature pages are crawled at a high rate, it indicates your ICPs are regularly prompting AI about those specific features.

## Reciprocal Rerank Fusion (RRF)

RRF is a formula that merges ranked results across multiple retrieval methods to produce a single, unified, high-quality consensus list.

The formula is as follows:  $RRF(d) = \sum(r \in R) 1 / (k + r(d))$

In essence, a positive RRF rewards consistent ranking across a variety of searches rather than a high ranking within a single concentration of documents. In practice, we use this formula alongside Google Search Console data to understand how a brand is positioned across a range of query fan-outs, and to identify content gaps where new clusters need to be built out.

## Server-Side Rendering (SSR)

Server-side rendering is a framework for parsing JavaScript at the server level so that content is pre-rendered before being displayed to users and search engines. JavaScript powers the dynamic elements of web pages, such as data visualisations, widgets pulling from external data sources, and dropdowns triggered by mouse hovers or clicks. The goal is to ensure that any content important for LLMs to crawl is accessible without requiring them to render JavaScript, which LLMs are notoriously poor at handling.

## Ensure Critical Content Is Available Within the Page's HTML

As a best practice, we recommend that clients not only server-side render their content, but also ensure anything critical is embedded directly within the page's HTML for added assurance.

The example below illustrates the difference between how content is displayed on a website versus how it appears in the raw HTML. In this case, the raw HTML is missing the context of which platforms the reviews are sourced from, specifically Google, Facebook, and Trustpilot. This is exactly the kind of information you would want to address, so that LLMs can accurately reference it in their output for potential buyers.



Reviews Not Visible By Platform In HTML

## Content Strategy For LLMs

The goal for your content is no longer to have informational blog posts cited by LLMs. Top-of-funnel content has been almost entirely cannibalised by AI, and citations at this level carry little to no commercial value as you no longer gain the brand awareness halo effect that organic traffic once provided.

The new focus is to write directly for your ICPs at the middle and bottom of the funnel, with pages tailored to specific personas (e.g. 'project management software for accountants'). Comparison and alternative pages are also frequently cited by LLMs (e.g. '[your brand] vs [your competitor]' or '[your competitor] alternative'), as are use-case-specific pages targeting exactly what your ICPs are trying to achieve (e.g. 'best project management software for Gantt charts'). The more creatively you can map content to the ways your ICPs use your product or service, the better.

Beyond persona and use-case content, consider addressing your ICPs' deal breakers directly on your website. Do your customers require support in their time zone? Do they need specific integrations with platforms like Slack? Dedicate pages to FAQs, integrations, pricing, and features, and draw on the insights your sales and customer service teams already have. Done well, this allows AI to act as a free salesperson on your behalf, educating prospective customers and answering their objections before they visit your website or speak to your team.

There is one important caveat: search demand for these questions cannot be validated through keyword volume tools. Validation will come through referral traffic from LLMs, log file analysis as previously discussed, or direct conversations with customers to qualitatively assess how they discovered you, including self-reported lead form responses.

## The Technical Foundation of AI-Optimised Content

Creating content for GEO starts with building a solid technical foundation. Before AI can cite content, that content must be discoverable and interpretable. This requires specific technical implementations combined with a detailed understanding of the processes AI systems follow to generate responses.

### Content Chunking & Passage Level Retrieval

The most critical technical distinction involves how AI evaluates and extracts content. While traditional search engines assess pages holistically, AI systems assess the value of a piece of content based on its individual passages.

Creating passage-level content, often referred to as chunking, is the process of breaking written text into discrete, semantically complete units that AI systems can process, evaluate, and retrieve independently.

Each passage or chunk must contain enough context and information to be independently understood. This is because LLMs may not read an entire page, and if they do, they may not read it sequentially. Instead, they scan, extract, and evaluate individual passages based on relevance to a query.

Subsequently, content writers should frontload the answer, provide supporting context, and avoid relying on information disclosed in other sections of the page. This involves answering questions and providing information in succinct yet satisfyingly comprehensive paragraphs; a delicate balancing act of directness and detail.



## Anticipating AI Output Through Direct Observation

The most valuable optimisation intelligence comes from running target queries across multiple AI platforms and systematically analysing the outputs. This can reveal both universal patterns and platform-specific tendencies.

AI responses often demonstrate consistent structural patterns. Some queries trigger bulleted lists, others descriptive paragraphs, and others still data tables.

Tracking which content format appears most frequently for targeted queries and search terms provides writers with direct guidance on structuring their own content. Matching these output patterns increases the likelihood that AI will cite a piece of content as source material.

This elevates the presentation of content from a design consideration to a technical requirement. AI systems extract specific passages based on structural signals, which means disorganised content can become functionally invisible regardless of its underlying quality. Writers can no longer treat structure as a finishing touch; it must be built into every paragraph from the very start.

## Sending the Right Signals with EEAT

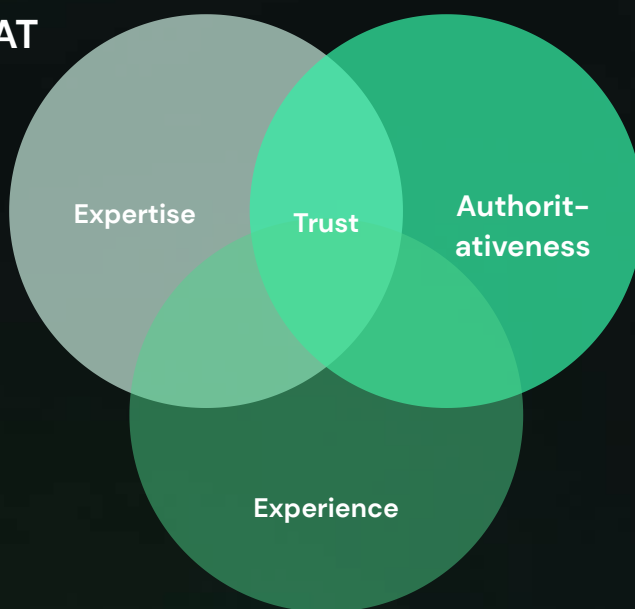
AI systems prioritise content from sources they perceive as credible, a determination heavily influenced by EEAT signals: Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness. While these principles originated in Google's Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines, they have become essential markers for AI-generated responses.

The distinction between traditional SEO and GEO content becomes particularly visible here. Search engines evaluate EEAT through backlinks, domain authority, and user engagement metrics. AI systems, by contrast, look for explicit, verifiable markers embedded directly within the content itself.

Author credentials function as a primary EEAT signal. Content with clearly identified expert authors demonstrates a higher citation probability than anonymous content. [Presence AI Research](#) found that a healthcare guide stating "Medically reviewed by Dr Jennifer Martinez, MD, Board Certified Endocrinologist" achieved a 74% citation rate compared to 19% for similar content without medical review details. This means bylines must include specific qualifications, professional roles, and relevant experience rather than generic titles.

Third-party validation also plays a pivotal role in enhancing EEAT. AI systems scan for consensus-based signals, including industry awards, customer ratings, and verified reviews. Presence AI's research found that content citing authoritative third-party sources demonstrates a 78% lift in AI visibility compared to content without clear third-party backing.

However, EEAT signals must be genuine. AI systems cross-reference claims against external sources, and fabricated credentials or inflated ratings reduce the probability of citation rather than increase it. This means authenticity has become a technical requirement rather than an ethical consideration.



EEAT Google Guidelines From Google Visualised

## The Human Element: Always Write for the User

What makes AI-generated responses so appealing to consumers is that they are normally more personalised than traditional organic search results. When a user asks an LLM for product recommendations or service comparisons, the response often reflects their specific circumstances, preferences, and constraints in ways that a static search results page never could. This creates both an opportunity and a responsibility for content writers.

The opportunity lies in the fact that AI systems draw from content that thoroughly addresses user needs. The responsibility is to ensure that content remains useful to the humans who will ultimately make purchasing decisions based on the information AI surfaces.

This is where user research becomes critical. Understanding audience personas, pain points, and deal breakers allows content writers to anticipate the full spectrum of questions a potential customer might ask before committing to a purchase.

A user researching project management software might need to know about pricing tiers, integration capabilities, learning curves, customer support, data security measures, and contract flexibility. Content that addresses only three of these concerns leaves gaps that AI will fill by citing competitors who have covered all six.

Subsequently, being granular when answering user questions has never been more important. Vague reassurances about "enterprise-grade security" mean less to both AI systems and human readers than specific details about SOC 2 compliance, encryption standards, and data residency options. AI extracts and prioritises concrete information, and users trust it more than the marketing platitudes that may have delivered results in previous years.

Yet, it remains essential to apply enduring marketing principles, such as clear brand positioning. In 1981, Al Ries and Jack Trout revolutionised marketing with *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, arguing that success hinges on perception, not product specs. Their foundational quote encapsulates this: "Positioning is not what you do to a product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect." Over 45 years later, the battle of how an audience perceives us can be dependent on how AI structures responses around identity. If we're not meticulous in defining who we are, what we're not and how we compare, we risk AI filling the gaps with averages and diluting our brand perception.

The balance lies in remembering that optimising for AI citation is a means to an end, not the end itself. Content that ticks every technical box but fails to address real user concerns will struggle to convert the traffic that AI delivers.

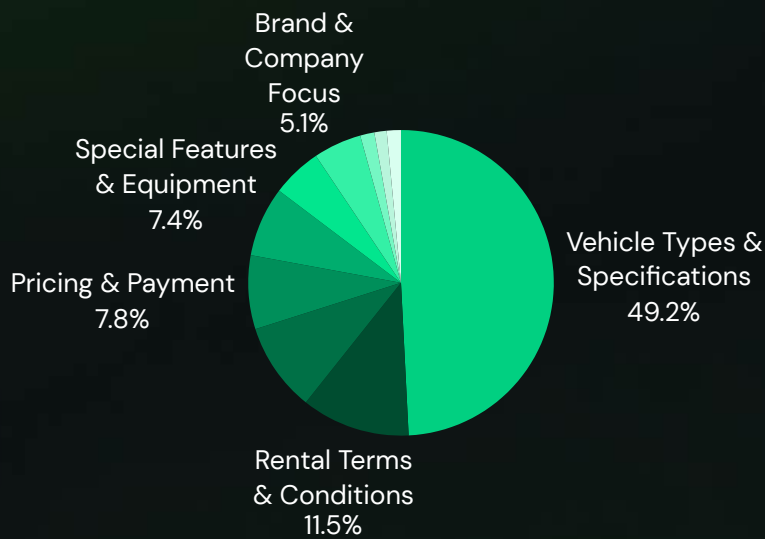
This means content writers must never lose connection with their human audience. The most successful GEO strategies recognise that AI systems and human users have complementary objectives: AI rewards content that demonstrates expertise and provides clear answers because those are precisely the qualities that help users make informed decisions.

When technical optimisation and a focus on user needs align, both audiences are served simultaneously, and that alignment is where effective GEO content ultimately lives.

## Query Fan-Out Analysis

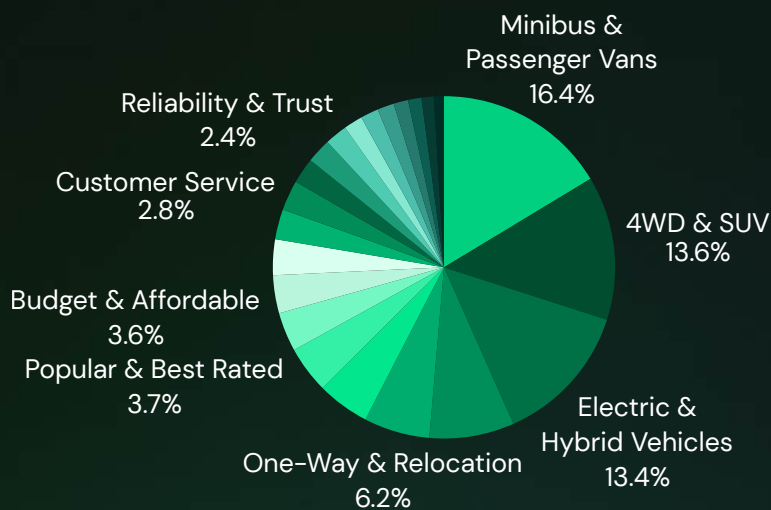
Query fan-outs are the subsequent searches an LLM runs in response to a primary prompt, gathering as many relevant documents and as much context as possible to generate a useful response. We tracked 130 prompts for one client using a third-party platform called Hall over several months, ultimately building a workable dataset of 3,439 fan-out queries. Some of the insights from this data meaningfully shifted our approach to content strategy and fan-out coverage.

Of that large volume of fan-out queries, only 226 (6.57%) were repeated more than once, and the highest number of repetitions for a single query was 18. Perhaps more revealing was the average word count per fan-out query: 15.53 words, indicating that LLMs are searching in a highly long-tail manner. The key takeaway is that optimising for individual fan-out queries, or even a small subset of them, is the wrong approach. Instead, fan-out queries need to be grouped into relevant topics and subtopics, and addressed more holistically through content clusters.



Categories Of Query Fan-Outs

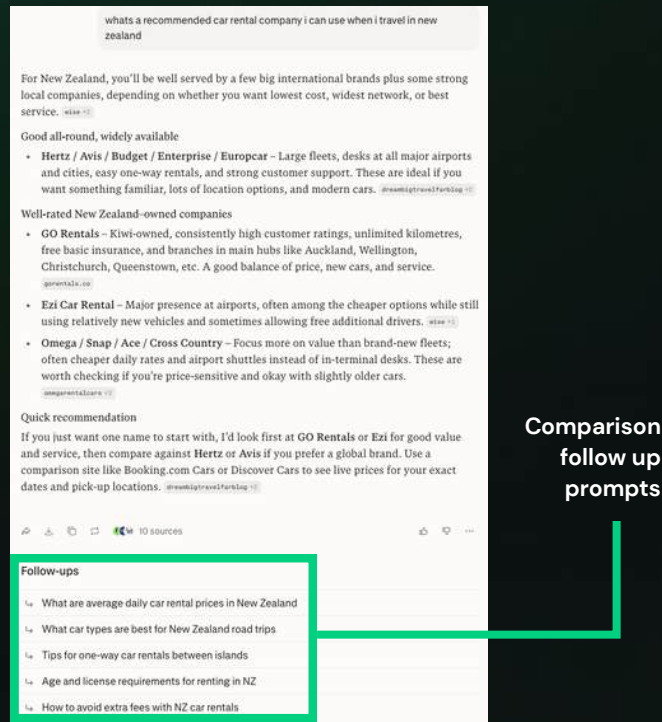
The graph above shows the topics identified as part of the overarching GEO content strategy for this client, while the graph below breaks these down into subtopics, giving a more granular view of how each topic area should be approached.



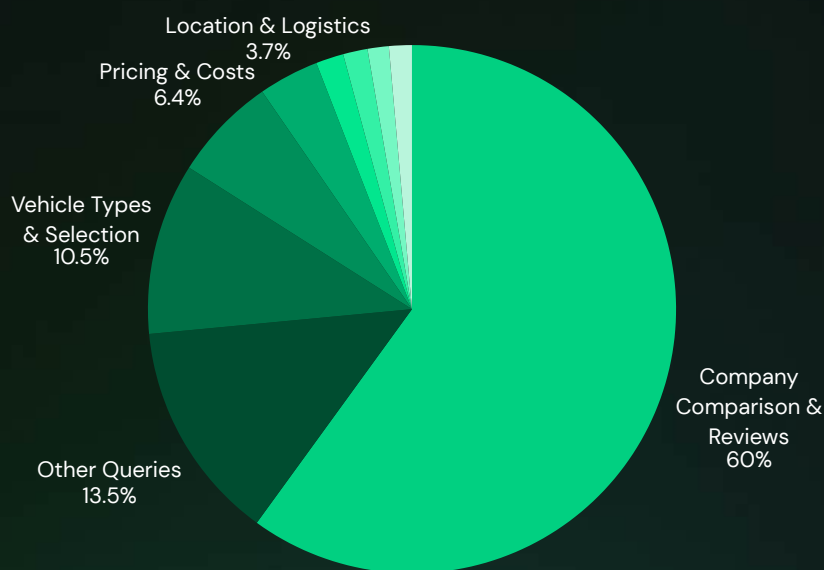
Categories Of Query Fan-Outs

## Follow-Up Prompt Analysis

It is common for AI platforms to suggest follow-up questions or prompts after delivering a response. Hall has a feature that allows us to examine which follow-up questions LLMs are encouraging users to ask, relative to the prompts we are tracking. Below is an example of what a follow-up prompt section looks like in Perplexity. ChatGPT and Gemini have their own equivalents of this function.

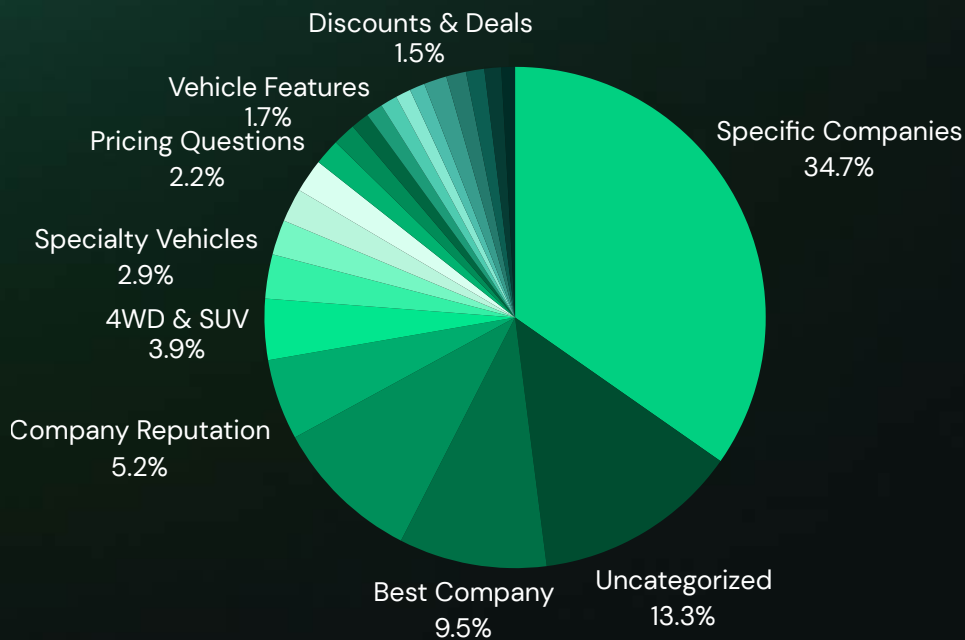


With the 130 prompts we tracked for this client, 5,685 follow-up prompts were analysed and broken into categories and subcategories. Crucially, 60% of the total follow-up prompts were related to comparing or reviewing a brand. This means that not only are users actively comparing your brand to others in their buying decisions, but the platforms are actively encouraging this behaviour through follow-up prompting.



Follow-Up Prompt Categorisation

The chart above shows the categories of follow-up prompts tracked for this client, and the chart below breaks these down into subcategories. Notably, the prompts go beyond direct company comparisons (9.7%) to include analysis of specific companies in their own right (35.3%).

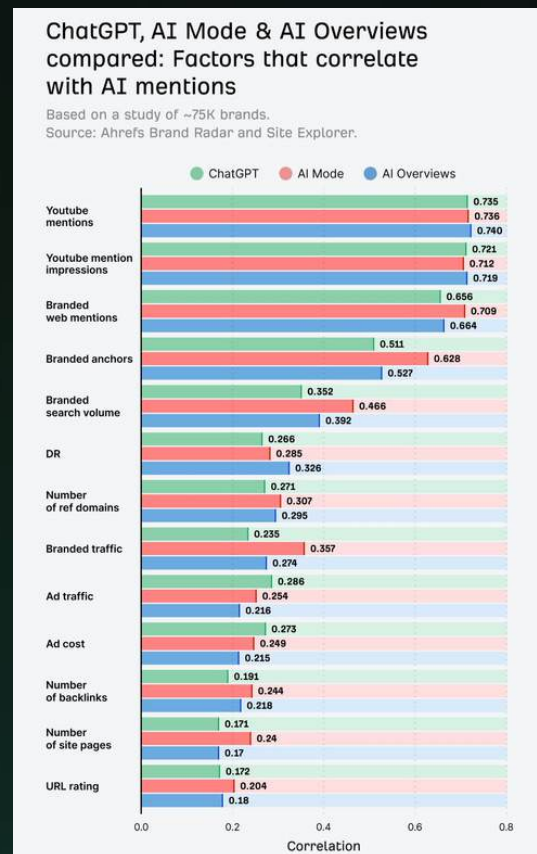


Follow-Up Prompt Categorisation

## The Age Of Off Page In AI Search Optimisation

As previously mentioned, even for branded prompts, as little as 17.5% of the sources gathered and cited by ChatGPT came from a brand's own assets, including their website. Brand representation is becoming site-agnostic. We are no longer simply optimising a website and building backlinks to improve its visibility in search results. Winning in AI search is about distributing content and positive brand mentions across the internet, increasing the probability that your brand will be surfaced within the RAG sources used by AI platforms.

According to [Ahrefs analysis](#), YouTube mentions are the single strongest predictor of AI visibility, with a correlation of 0.737, stronger than domain rating, backlinks, or any traditional SEO factor. YouTube is heavily cited in AI responses, and both Google and OpenAI train on YouTube content. OpenAI currently only trains on video transcripts, whilst Google is able to index and understand every frame of a YouTube video. If YouTube is not already part of your 2026 content strategy, it should be. It is a prime example of the multimodal, off-site content that AI models are increasingly drawing from.



Ahrefs' Correlation Analysis Of Factors That Influence AI Mentions

The most effective way to identify which platforms you need to be visible on is to track and measure the domains generating the most citations for the prompts you want to rank for. In our analysis across multiple clients, Reddit, Wikipedia and YouTube are the most widely sourced websites. However, each industry has its own nuances, so there is no one-size-fits-all answer when choosing where to focus your off-page efforts.

| <input type="checkbox"/> Domain                                                                                                  | DR  | Traffic | AI Responses |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>  www.youtube.com ▼     | 99  | 2.3B    | 3,000 ▼      |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  en.wikipedia.org ▼    | 97  | 4.8B    | 1,470 ▼      |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  www.reddit.com ▼      | 95  | 1.1B    | 1,197 ▼      |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  www.facebook.com ▼    | 100 | 1.6B    | 1,189 ▼      |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  www.healthline.com ▼  | 92  | 53M     | 667 ▼        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  www.taste.com.au ▼    | 77  | 2.7M    | 386 ▼        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  www.bbcgoodfood.com ▼ | 87  | 26.1M   | 382 ▼        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  www.instagram.com ▼   | 100 | 1.6B    | 377 ▼        |

The Most Visible Domains For An FMCG Food & Beverage Group According To Ahrefs' Brand Radar

## Digital PR

Digital PR is traditionally an SEO strategy that applies PR tactics to earn high-quality backlinks from online news publications, something conventional link-building tactics like guest posting cannot achieve. These backlinks help increase a site's authority, brand awareness, and organic rankings. With the rise of AI search and the growing importance of online brand mentions, however, Digital PR is becoming just as central to GEO strategies.

The Digital PR process typically begins with creating unique, newsworthy, data-led stories. These feature strong visuals and optimised copy, and are published on your website before being pitched to journalists at target publications via press releases or direct outreach.

Returning to the Ahrefs analysis discussed earlier, branded web mentions still correlate highly with AI visibility, with a correlation of 0.66 to 0.71. This speaks directly to the value of Digital PR in the AI search era. Done well, it can increase the scale of brand mentions across the web more effectively than almost any other tactic.



**The Best City In Australia to Start Your Business**

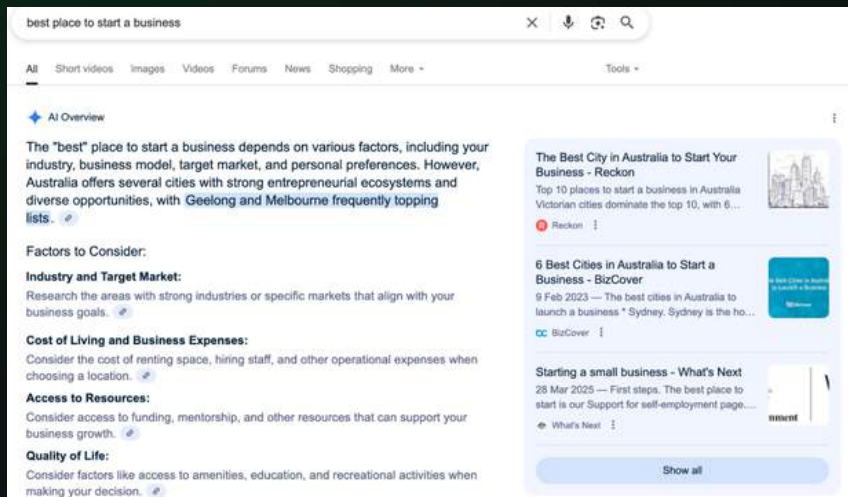
We analysed and researched the 50 largest cities in Australia to see which city is the best for starting a business.

[DOWNLOAD THE FULL REPORT](#)

Prosperity Media's Digital PR Campaign For Reckon

At Prosperity Media, we conducted a digital PR campaign for one of our clients, Reckon, to analyse where the best places to start a business were, according to 18 different factors. It attracted over 200 pieces of top-tier media coverage, winning the 2025 APAC Search Award for Best Use of PR in a Search Campaign. However, it also had additional benefits in terms of AI visibility.

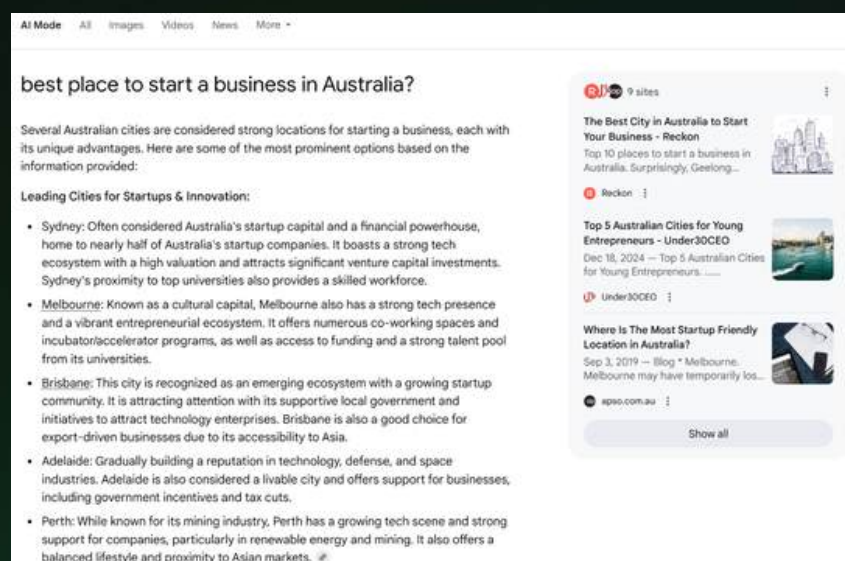
Firstly, by reaching out to the press, we achieved over 400 online brand mentions alongside relevant brand terms. These brand mentions act like a digital word-of-mouth. Because LLMs are built to replicate human language patterns, they tend to reflect the themes, associations and sentiment present in the data they've been trained on. Strong media coverage, clear product relevance and genuine online conversations all improve the likelihood of your brand being referenced in AI-generated responses.



Reckon Being Referenced In AI Overviews

In the example above, our digital PR asset is being cited in both an AI Overview and in AI Mode for searches about where to start a business in Australia.

Context carries more weight than ever in AI search. A mention within relevant content, a product roundup, or niche expert commentary is far more valuable than being name-dropped in an unrelated article. This campaign was designed to be directly on-brand for Reckon, whose target audience is small business owners, allowing them to reach people who would genuinely be interested in their product and are likely to be searching the kinds of queries new business owners ask.



Reckon Being Referenced In AI Mode

## The Emergence Of Agentic Commerce

We are at the precipice of the next evolution of search. Not only do users no longer need to visit your website to consider your product or service, but they can also now check out and purchase directly through the AI chat platform itself. This means your website or online store needs to be optimised for agentic checkouts. We are moving from user experience (UX) to agentic experience (AX).

### Google's Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP)

For e-commerce, Google has created a new open standard called UCP, which allows users to check out instantly from within Gemini or AI Mode, reducing friction and purchase abandonment while reaching more users at the point of intent.

Full [UCP documentation](#) is available, and there is a [waitlist](#) open for businesses seeking approval. Currently, UCP is only available to companies transacting in the US with US bank accounts, but a broader rollout is only a matter of time. UCP also allows businesses to integrate their own checkout logic for more bespoke checkout experiences.

[Google's roadmap](#) makes its international ambitions clear, stating: "We are building a scalable ecosystem that is inclusive of all business sizes and geographies, ensuring that "simple and open" means accessible to everyone. We plan to do this through a phased rollout across markets, including India, Indonesia, Latin America, and others. We are adapting the protocol to support broader regional use cases and localized payment interoperability."

### OpenAI's Agentic Commerce Protocol (ACP)

OpenAI built ACP in collaboration with Stripe to provide ChatGPT users with a powerful, flexible, instant, and secure checkout experience directly from the chat interface. To implement ACP, you first need to [set up a product feed](#) and get approval as a [ChatGPT Merchant](#). Crucially, both UCP and ACP allow you to maintain control of the customer relationship in post-purchase communication and customer database management.

### WebMCP

OpenAI built ACP in collaboration with Stripe to provide ChatGPT users with a powerful, flexible, instant, and secure checkout experience directly from the chat interface. To implement ACP, you first need to [set up a product feed](#) and get approval as a [ChatGPT Merchant](#). Crucially, both UCP and ACP allow you to maintain control of the customer relationship in post-purchase communication and customer database management.

### Claude Opus 4.6

This offering is a little more niche, but still an interesting movement in agentic commerce. Currently, you can utilise the [Claude Chrome extension](#) to automate tasks like product research, pricing comparisons, and filling in lead forms. It is a loss less efficient in token usage than WebMCP as it requires constant screenshots and iterations to complete tasks. User adoption is likely to be lower than that of UCP and ACP, but it represents an interesting experiment into how effectively an AI agent can handle your lead forms and other critical conversion touchpoints.

## Attribution & Success Measurement In GEO

Attribution in GEO remains one of the biggest gaps in the discipline and one of the hardest areas to get buy-in on. Because LLMs are highly personalised and outputs can vary dramatically from user to user, understanding what is actually happening inside the black box of an AI platform is a complex challenge. The most reliable approach is to triangulate attribution across a combination of qualitative and quantitative data points, building a picture of the impact being generated and the revenue being driven through AI search platforms. At Prosperity Media, we use the following combination of methods to measure the effectiveness of our GEO work for clients.

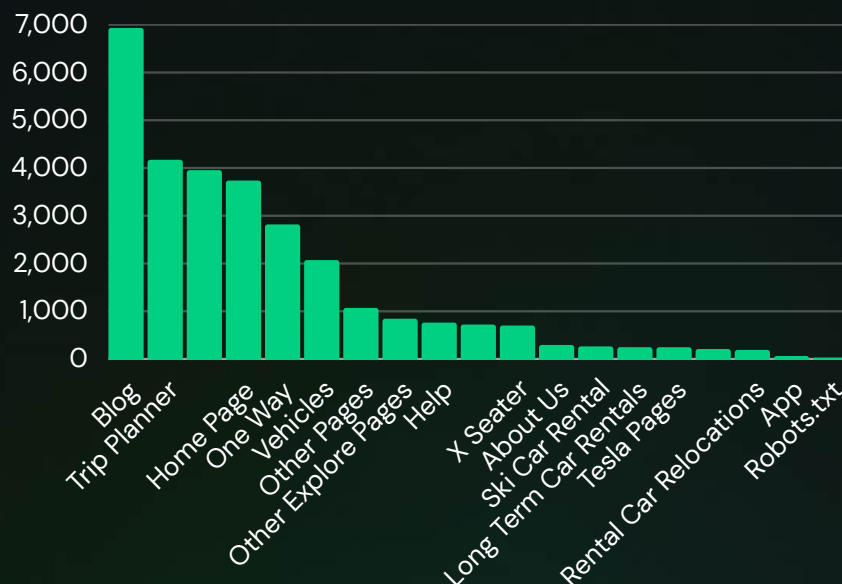
### Analytics Tools With Referral Traffic

The most direct way to measure the success of a GEO campaign is through referral traffic from LLM platforms themselves, such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, and Claude. Unfortunately, referral traffic from Google's AI Overviews or AI Mode cannot be assessed at this time.

However, referral traffic does have its limitations. A common pattern among LLM users is completing their product research within ChatGPT and then searching directly for the brand, before clicking on an SEO result or ad, or simply calling or visiting a store in person. This means referral traffic figures capture only a fraction of how LLMs are actually influencing purchasing decisions, which is why additional attribution methods are needed to build a clearer and more complete picture of GEO's impact on your bottom line.

### Log File Analysis

A complementary layer of measurement brings us back to log file analysis. If AI assistant bots are requesting crawls on important commercial pages, this suggests a user demand signal originating from within the platform.



Cloudflare's Log Explorer Crawls By Site Section

The graph above shows the site sections being crawled by AI crawlers. Notably, some of the more niche pages, such as one-way car rentals, rentals filtered by seat count (e.g. 7-seater car rentals), ski car rentals, and long-term car rentals, were crawled far more frequently than their share of total pages on the website would suggest. This points to the likelihood that these crawl requests are being driven by user prompts from within the platform.

## Looker Studio

Looker Studio is our preferred method for tracking referral traffic through Google Analytics. Our dashboard is filtered to capture traffic solely from AI platforms, and in our experience, over 90% of that traffic arrives via ChatGPT, making it the natural focus of our efforts. Where Google Analytics has been set up correctly, we are also able to measure revenue generated directly through LLM referrals, in addition to standard traffic and engagement metrics.

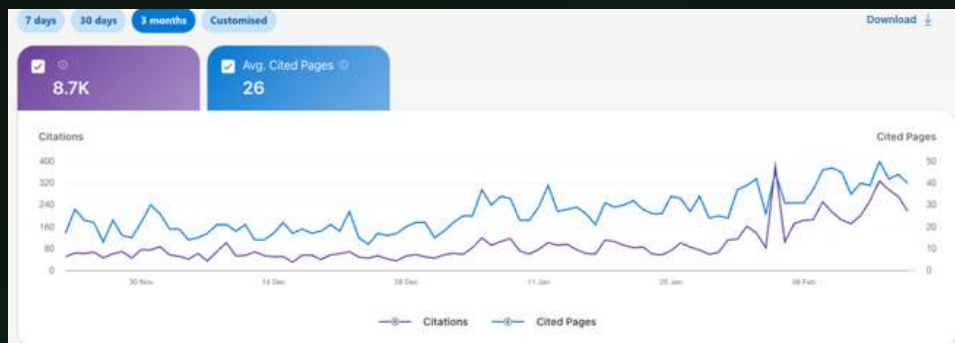


Looker Studio Dashboard That Measures Referral Traffic

## Bing Webmaster Tools

Bing made the first meaningful move toward AI performance transparency with their [AI Performance report](#), launched in February 2026. The data is drawn from Microsoft Copilot, AI-generated summaries in Bing, and their partner AI integrations, though what the latter encompasses is not entirely clear. Through this report, it is possible to gain insights into total citations, average cited pages, grounding queries (query fan-outs), and cited pages.

Hopefully, the usefulness of this data prompts Google to introduce a similar report covering AI Overviews, AI Mode, and Gemini within Google Search Console, as first-party data in this area remains extremely limited.

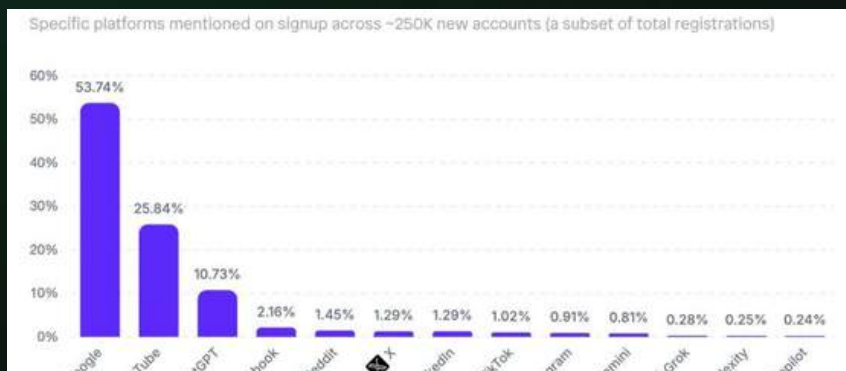


Bing Webmaster Tools AI Performance Report

## Self-Attribution Via Lead Forms

Another way to gather insight into how LLMs are driving business is simply asking your customers. Self-attributed data has its own limitations, but it can help fill that gap between the additional value LLMs are sending you beyond what can be tracked via referral traffic.

The diagram below shows Ahrefs' specific platforms mentioned upon signups across around 250K new accounts. Interestingly, ChatGPT has already emerged as the 3rd most effective platform. This is quite an achievement for a platform that only gained prominence roughly four years ago.



Ahrefs' Self-Reported Signups Showing ChatGPT As The Third-Highest Sign Up Source

When you add up all the additional LLMs that are mentioned, the attribution grows from 10.73% for just ChatGPT to 12.31%. This is 4.37 times smaller than Google, but still an important revenue source, especially considering the value of each lead; Ahrefs' Standard Option costs \$2,496 USD per year. Given the dataset size of around 250K signups, that roughly equates to 30,775 customers potentially paying \$2,496 annually. This translates to \$76,814,400 in projected annual revenue assisted by AI chat platforms. Ahrefs mentions that this is still only a subset of total registrations.

## Prompt Tracking To Measure Visibility

There is an ongoing debate in the wider SEO community about the reliability of prompt tracking. While we agree it cannot be a fully accurate window into what is happening inside an AI platform, it remains a valuable directional metric and an important piece of the overall picture.

The key difference between SEO and GEO lies in the shift from focusing on keyword volume to understanding conversational, prompt-based queries. To keep pace with this change, some form of prompt tracking is essential for analysing how search behaviour is evolving and ensuring our strategies adapt accordingly.

We use Hall as our preferred AI tracking platform, primarily because it offers a range of high-quality features not found in other platforms, such as website citations and crawler analytics. Hall data helps us understand brand performance across a specific set of business-critical prompts, allowing us to keep our strategies hyper-focused on brand goals.

Visibility by platform  
Mention visibility scores segmented by platform

Competitors only Filter 3089

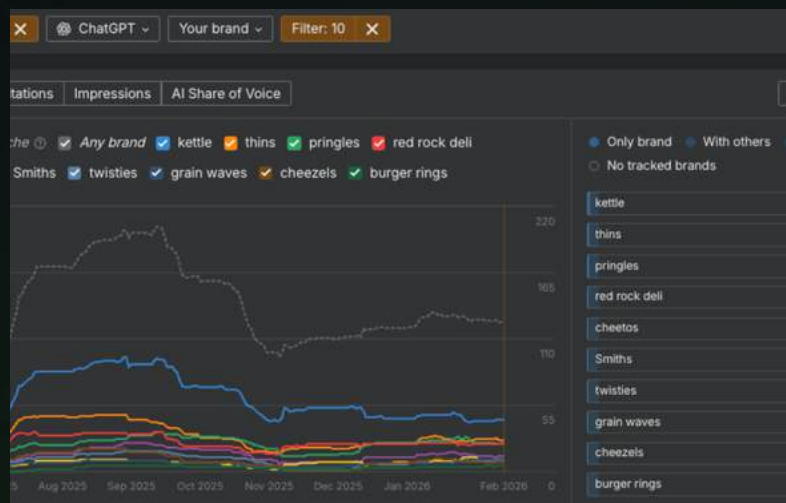
|                 | ChatGPT     | Perplexity  | AI Overviews |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| GO Rentals      | 40.6% ↗ 0.7 | 27.0% ↘ 2.7 | 59.6% ↗ 1.3  |
| Avis            | 30.1% ↘ 3.0 | 18.8% —     | 44.8% ↘ 5.2  |
| Hertz           | 23.8% ↘ 2.7 | 15.1% ↘ 0.5 | 40.8% ↘ 2.0  |
| Europcar        | 24.8% ↗ 0.7 | 13.6% — 0.1 | 31.3% ↗ 2.1  |
| Snap Rentals    | 14.9% ↘ 0.2 | 10.9% — 0.1 | 30.4% ↘ 3.3  |
| Enterprise      | 10.6% ↗ 0.9 | 11.0% ↗ 0.3 | 28.7% ↘ 4.4  |
| Apex            | 5.8% ↘ 2.1  | 3.3% — 0.1  | 26.4% ↘ 0.8  |
| SIXT            | 11.4% ↗ 2.3 | 11.8% ↗ 0.6 | 25.5% ↘ 5.1  |
| Transferrcar    | 6.0% ↗ 0.4  | 0.1% —      | 23.6% ↘ 1.2  |
| Ace Rental Cars | 6.9% ↗ 1.1  | 7.7% ↘ 1.5  | 16.3% ↗ 7.3  |

Hall Visibility Dashboard By Platform For Tracked Prompts

The dashboard above shows how our client, GO Rentals, is outperforming its key competitors across three major platforms: ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews.

## Prompt Databases To Gather Third-Party Insights

Alongside custom prompt tracking, we also use Ahrefs' Brand Radar to leverage their existing prompt database. This gives us a view of how our clients are positioned without the potential bias of only tracking prompts where we are already performing well.



An Example Of An Ahrefs Brand Radar Custom Report

Ahrefs holds millions of prompts across multiple industries in its database, which we can access through custom reports to monitor client performance and track movement over time.

# Prosperity Media's GEO Case Study: GO Rentals' 450.95% ROI In Six Months



### The Problem:

- Global competitors were being favoured in LLM answers and comparison tables.

### The Solution:

- Brand audit of sentiments, misrepresentations and gaps.
- Tech audit to improve LLM crawl efficiency.
- Hyper-personalised query fan out content strategy, passage inserts and FAQ pages to clear up misrepresentation.

### Top Result:

- Our niche persona-led pages now have the most conversions.

GO Rentals was quick to pivot to a hybrid SEO and GEO strategy in mid 2025. The ultimate objective of the campaign was to increase revenue; however, we also had secondary success metrics to correct misinformation around the client's brand, assess the current state of play in terms of the GEO competitor landscape, and ultimately improve visibility within the key platforms of influence for the client.

We started the strategy with a thorough health check of the brand's performance, the industry nuances and any technical roadblocks, to ensure we understood the LLM landscape for the brand. First, we conducted a thorough GEO brand audit and assessment to understand what the risks and opportunities were for the brand's current representation in AI. We then did a technical GEO audit to analyse log files and assess how content was being discovered, and correct any blockers by ensuring critical content was displayed directly in the HTML.

Next, we undertook a GEO content strategy to address any potential deal breakers, ICP pain points, or other content gaps from both a branded and non-branded perspective, focusing on FAQs, persona-led USPs and transparent pricing.

Our strategy then delved deeper into both a competitor analysis to discover further opportunities and gaps of coverage, and a local GEO audit to optimise platforms that are commonly cited in AI beyond the standard Google Business Profile.

Alongside our content implementations, we made some critical recommendations for the brand to action quick wins, such as a company subreddit thread, AI summary buttons on blogs, and an LLM info page. The strategy was supported with highly targeted and relevant off-page citations.

As a result of our robust GEO strategy, we were able to generate a 450.95% return on investment, only measured by referral traffic, not including the potential additional purchases that were influenced by LLMs. Engaged sessions from LLMs increased by 1,658% YoY, and we achieved a 46.7% overall visibility for the brand, a testament to both Prosperity Media and the brand's quick action to test and implement new strategies for an evolving search landscape.

## Client Testimonial



*"I recognised early that AI was fundamentally changing how consumers search. When Prosperity Media introduced its GEO offering, it was clear this was a strategic opportunity to stay ahead of the competition. Leading the marketing department at GO Rentals, it was important for me to ensure we weren't just reacting to change but proactively shaping our position within it. Their approach wasn't reactive; it was structured, data-led, proactive and commercially aligned. They provided clear LLM visibility benchmarking, competitive insights, and actionable recommendations that gave us real clarity on how the GO Rentals brand was performing across major LLMs.*

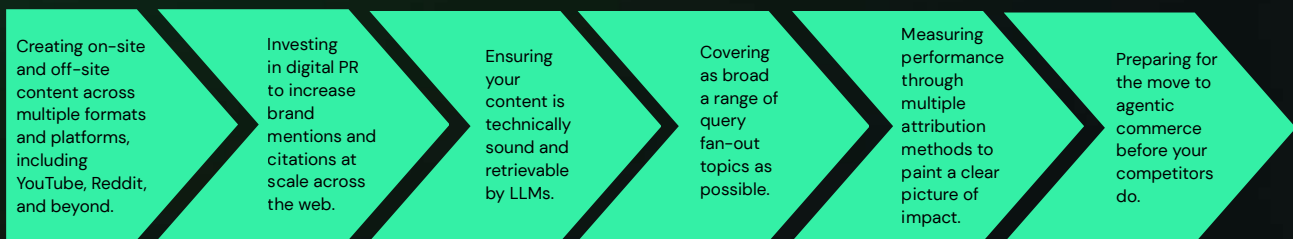
*"While ranking in Google remains critical, expanding our focus to 'Are we being recommended by AI?' has been a game-changer. By moving early, we positioned ourselves ahead of competitors in a rapidly evolving space. As a result, GO Rentals is now the most visible car rental brand across the three major LLM platforms (ChatGPT, AI Overviews, and Perplexity), achieving 46.7% overall visibility and ranking highest across all three. GEO has become a genuine competitive advantage for the business, and I would highly recommend Prosperity Media to any organisation wanting to lead in the AI-driven search landscape." – Jeena Kalyan, Marketing Manager, GO Rentals*

## Summary On The State Of AI Search

AI search is no longer an emerging trend; it is a significant growth channel in its own right, and its prominence is set only to rise. While there is meaningful overlap between SEO and GEO, Prosperity Media's position is clear: the differences in emphasis are substantial enough to warrant a distinct strategy in most cases.

Ultimately, deciding whether to pursue GEO comes down to a simple but consequential question: Is your brand being recommended by LLMs, or are you largely absent in the conversations potential customers are having with AI?

Winning in AI search requires a committed, multi-layered strategy. That means:



The investment in this strategic shift is real, but so is the opportunity. The brands that commit first will not just capitalise on AI search now; they will shape it in their favour for years to come.

## Get In Touch

If you have resonated with our approach to AI search please reach out to us with any questions or ask for a proposal if you'd like to engage us to assist your brand with increased AI visibility by scanning the QR code.

Website: <https://prosperitymedia.com.au/>

Email: [hello@prosperitymedia.com.au](mailto:hello@prosperitymedia.com.au)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/prosperity-media/>



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