AI SEARCH GLOBAL

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

AEO vs GEO vs SEO.

What the evidence says about being found, cited and recommended in search and AI answers. November 2026.

AISearch Global · Sydney, Australia
3 November 2026 · Version 1.0 · aisearch.global
Public sources only. Studies are correlational unless stated.

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> **How to read this report.** Every source is dated and linked. Studies are correlational unless stated. Anything that could not be verified is marked “Not confirmed”. Platform behaviour changes fast, so treat the figures as a snapshot of 3 November 2026.

Prepared by AISearch Global, Sydney NSW, Australia. Researched 3 Nov 2026 (Sydney time, AEDT). Public sources only. Every source is dated; studies are correlational unless stated. Anything not verified is marked "Not confirmed".

Executive summary

There is no industry-standard split between AEO and GEO. HubSpot treats the difference as "mostly terminological" and uses AEO as the umbrella; Search Engine Land uses GEO. Google's own guide says optimising for generative AI search "is still SEO" (HubSpot, n.d.; Search Engine Land, 2026; Google Search Central, live 3 Nov 2026).

Retrieval beats page tricks. The strongest new study (Chen & Koudas, arXiv, Oct 2026; 158,099 answers) found every page ChatGPT cited was one its own search had retrieved. Retrieval explained 32% of within-website citation variation, against 2.8% for page features. FAQ blocks, schema markup, summary boxes and author boxes showed no within-website benefit (arXiv 2610.15033).

One on-page trait survived every test: titles and paragraphs that match the questions people actually ask (arXiv 2610.15033).

Off-site evidence matters, especially for small brands. In a niche market of small vendors, a cited third-party page naming a vendor raised the odds that ChatGPT named it by x39.7. Separately, 46% of ChatGPT's unprompted brand mentions had no supporting cited page, meaning they came from model memory (arXiv 2610.15033).

Measurement finally exists from the platforms themselves: Google Search Console's Generative AI performance reports (rolled out worldwide 31 Aug 2026) and Bing Webmaster Tools' AI Performance report, with Intents, Topics, Citation Share and Compare (16 Jun 2026) and Topics Portfolio (beta, 13 Oct 2026) (Google, 3 Jun 2026, updated 31 Aug; Bing, 16 Jun 2026; Bing, 13 Oct 2026).

Clicks are shrinking, and AI traffic is still small. A randomised field experiment found AI Overviews cut outbound organic clicks by 39.8% when they appear (US desktop) (Agarwal & Sen, SSRN, draft dated 17 Jun 2026). Across 100 sites, ChatGPT sessions were 0.62% of Google organic volume, though they converted at 4.5x the rate (Search Engine Roundtable summarising Marie Haynes, 22 Oct 2026).

Australia-specific change: Google began scaling ads inside AI Mode in Australia on 28 Oct 2026 (Google, 28 Oct 2026). Paid placements now sit inside the answer, so organic citation and accurate entity data are worth more.

Myths to drop: schema does not guarantee AI gains, and no AI search engine has confirmed it uses llms.txt. Google says Google Search ignores llms.txt (Google guide, live 3 Nov 2026). Ahrefs found 97% of llms.txt files received zero requests (Ahrefs, 15 Jun 2026, updated 27 Aug 2026).

At a glance: SEO, AEO and GEO side by side

DIMENSION	SEO	AEO	GEO
Core goal	Rank and earn clicks in search results	Be the direct answer to a question	Be mentioned or cited inside AI-generated answers
Main surfaces	Google and Bing organic results	Featured snippets, voice, AI Overviews, answer boxes, chat assistants	ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot, AI Mode
Unit of success	Ranking position, click	Extracted answer, citation	Brand mention, citation, share of voice
Key levers	Crawlability, relevance, links, helpful content	Question-matching titles and paragraphs, clear answers	Retrieval by the engine's own search, third-party mentions, model memory of the brand, accurate entity data
Official stance	Google Search Essentials	Google: "still SEO"	Google: "still SEO"; Bing reports AI citations separately
Official measurement	Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools	Search Console Generative AI report	Bing AI Performance (Citation Share etc.); no OpenAI or Perplexity publisher dashboard found (Not confirmed)
Volatility	Moderate	Higher	Very high (15% same-day cited-page overlap in ChatGPT)
Schema role	Rich-result eligibility	No guaranteed AI effect	No within-site citation effect found
llms.txt role	None (Google ignores it)	None confirmed	None confirmed by any engine
Typical time horizon	Months	Weeks to months	Weeks, but drifts; needs ongoing monitoring
Overlap	Foundation for both	Built on SEO	Built on SEO, plus off-site and brand work

01

Definitions, overlap and differences

SEO (search engine optimisation): making pages crawlable, indexable and relevant so they rank in classic search results and earn clicks. Success metrics: rankings, impressions, clicks, conversions.

AEO (answer engine optimisation): making a business or page the source an answer system uses to answer a question directly. That covers featured snippets, voice assistants, AI Overviews and chat assistants. HubSpot uses AEO as the broader umbrella (HubSpot, n.d.).

GEO (generative engine optimisation): making a brand easy for generative AI systems to find, understand and reference. Search Engine Land frames it as building on SEO while shifting metrics to citations, mentions and share of voice (Search Engine Land, 2026). The term comes from academic work by Aggarwal et al. (KDD 2024), as cited in arXiv 2610.15033 (Oct 2026).

Google's position: "From Google Search's perspective, optimizing for generative AI search is optimizing for the search experience, and thus still SEO." Google also tells site owners to review its guidance on evaluating third-party "AEO" or "GEO" services (Google, live 3 Nov 2026).

How they overlap: all three rest on the same base: crawl access, indexation, useful content that matches real questions, and accurate business facts. **Where they differ:** the unit of success (a ranking, an extracted answer, or a mention or citation inside a synthesised answer), the engines involved, and how you measure it. Search Engine Journal sets out three positions: GEO/AEO is a subset of SEO, a standalone discipline, or "just SEO" (SEJ, 2026).

What this means in practice: the label matters less than what you measure. Clients don't need separate AEO and SEO budgets; the evidence shows the work overlaps heavily.

02

How each AI engine sources and cites

Google AI Overviews and AI Mode

- Both are rooted in Google's core ranking systems and use retrieval-augmented generation and "query fan-out" (several related searches across subtopics). To be eligible, a page must be indexed and snippet-eligible. There are "no additional requirements" (Google, live 3 Nov 2026; Google guide).
- A site must also be included in (not opted out of) the Search generative AI control in Search Console (Google guide, live 3 Nov 2026). The opt-out went global on 31 Aug 2026 (SEJ, 31 Aug 2026).
- 15 Oct 2026: Google added more inline links, placed some links higher, and is testing one or two "official" links for some queries (Google blog, Oct 2026).
- 13 Oct 2026: Gemini 4 Argon began rolling out in AI Mode for Google AI Pro and Ultra subscribers (SEJ, Oct 2026; Search Engine Roundtable, Oct 2026).
- Prevalence: third-party trackers now put AI Overviews on more than 80% of Google searches (US-weighted samples). The figures vary by tracker and query set, and Australian prevalence is Not confirmed (Search Engine Roundtable, Nov 2026 report, 2 Nov 2026).
- Merchant Center and Google Business Profile data feed local and product answers (Google, live 3 Nov 2026).

ChatGPT search

- To appear in ChatGPT search answers, a site must allow **OAI-SearchBot**. GPTBot (training) is a separate crawler, and robots.txt changes take about 24 hours (OpenAI crawler docs, live 3 Nov 2026).
- ChatGPT rewrites a question into about four keyword-style sub-queries (adding the current year to 23% of them), consults about 26 pages and cites about 3. It cites 43.8% of the pages it ranks first and 3.5% of those at ranks 11-20 (arXiv 2610.15033, Oct 2026).
- 97% of the pages ChatGPT retrieved were absent from Google's top 50, and 99% from Bing's top 30, for the same queries (US data, API replay). Half of those pages' websites did appear in Google's top 50, so it picks different pages, often from the same sites (arXiv). This conflicts with practitioner studies that find Google rank predicts citation (AirOps, 2026; aiplusautomation, 2026). Both can be true at the website level.
- Local data: Yelp licensed reviews and business details to OpenAI for ChatGPT local answers (announced 23 Jul 2026) (Axios, 23 Jul 2026; live re-check blocked 3 Nov, verified 2 Nov 2026). Its relevance in Australia is Not confirmed.
- Ads: ChatGPT Ads are in 89 countries (Free and Go plans). OpenAI says ads do not influence answers (OpenAI, 21 Oct 2026). Whether Australia is one of the 89 is Not confirmed (the post does not list every country).
- ChatGPT's exact search providers are Not confirmed. OpenAI says it uses third-party search providers and partner content, and Bing is widely reported to be one (OpenAI Help, undated).

Perplexity

- PerplexityBot surfaces sites in search and is not used for training. Perplexity-User fetches pages on request and "generally ignores robots.txt" (Perplexity docs, undated).

- Perplexity labels some sources Government, Academic or Trusted, and says partnerships and payments don't affect those labels (Perplexity Help, 2026).
- Recent shifts in API data: Reddit citations fell from 13.5% to 1.5% of Perplexity answers between Aug and Sep 2026 (200 prompts, vendor study) (Citlyze, Q3 2026), and from 5.6% to 0.1% over weeks 33-41 in a Spanish-language panel (vilnux, Oct 2026). Both are vendor studies using the API, and whether the consumer app behaves the same way is Not confirmed.
- In the arXiv API sample, Perplexity (Sonar) cited nothing in 95.8% of answers. The authors note API results may differ from the consumer app (arXiv 2610.15033).

Gemini

- Gemini grounds on Google Search. In the arXiv sample it cited about 10.1 pages per answer, 83% on third-party sites (Reddit 13%), and rewrote questions into about three natural-language sub-questions (arXiv 2610.15033).
- Only 5.6% of the pages Gemini cited were in Google's top 10 for its own sub-queries, even though it grounds on Google (arXiv).
- Control: Google-Extended governs Gemini training and grounding in Gemini Apps and Vertex AI. It does not affect Google Search, AI Overviews or AI Mode (SEJ, 1 Nov 2026).

Microsoft Copilot and Bing

- Bing now has two AI experiences, **AI Mode** (conversational) and **AI Overview** (summaries), both powered by Copilot (Search Engine Watch, 1 Nov 2026).
- Microsoft Web IQ (2 Jun 2026) is a set of grounding APIs for AI agents, built on the Bing index, that honours robots and publisher controls (Bing, 2 Jun 2026). Which outside products use it is Not confirmed.
- New controls: a page-level AI Grounding preference (with DisallowExtended, which blocks Web IQ partners but not Copilot). These will be honoured from 1 Feb 2027, NoArchive/NoCache stop counting after 1 Mar 2027, and a temporary preference tool opens in Bing Webmaster Tools on 15 Dec 2026 (SEJ, 1 Nov 2026).
- **Bing Webmaster Tools AI Performance report** (public preview 10 Feb 2026): citations in Copilot, Bing AI summaries and select partner experiences, plus grounding queries and page-level citations (Bing, 10 Feb 2026). On 16 Jun 2026 Bing added (Bing, 16 Jun 2026):
  - **Intents:** grounding queries grouped as Informational, Commercial, Navigational, Learn and Solve, Research, Creation, Local and more.
  - **Topics:** related grounding queries grouped into themes. Labels may be broad for niche sites while it's in preview.
  - **Citation Share:** your % of all citations for a grounding query. Bing says it is "an observational metric – not a ranking system or a competitive scoreboard". It shows no competitor domains, and it is not traffic share or a quality score.
  - **Compare:** overlay the current period on a prior one (for example, 30 days against the previous 30).
  - 13 Oct 2026: **Topics Portfolio (beta)** adds approximate topic demand, competition and "opportunity" queries, but only where Bing has enough data (Bing, 13 Oct 2026).
  - Data is sampled and aggregated, and low-volume citations may not appear (Bing help, undated). Which "partner AI integrations" feed it is Not confirmed.

03

Ranking and citation factors

FACTOR	EVIDENCE	STRENGTH
Being retrieved by the engine's own search, and its rank there	Retrieval explained 32% of within-site variation vs 2.8% for page features; rank 1 cited 43.8% vs 3.5% at ranks 11–20 (arXiv, Oct 2026)	Strong (API replay, US)
Title and paragraph match to real questions	+14.1% (title) and +15.5% (best paragraph) more citations per SD within websites; passed all five tests (arXiv); cited titles more similar to prompts (Ahrefs, 2026)	Strong (observational)
Model's prior knowledge of the brand	47% of ChatGPT citations from sites its model names without search; 46% of unprompted brand mentions unsupported by any cited page (arXiv)	Strong (observational)
Third-party pages that name you	x39.7 odds of being named (ChatGPT, niche market) (arXiv); branded web mentions correlate 0.664 with AI Overview visibility vs 0.218 for backlinks (Ahrefs, 26 May 2025, older than 12 months)	Moderate
Links pointing to the page	+22.7% citations per SD within sites, mostly Gemini; direction not established (arXiv)	Moderate
Reviews and complete, claimed listings (local)	Businesses surfaced by ChatGPT and Perplexity averaged 133.4 Google reviews vs 10.7 (Insites, 12 Aug 2026); engines lean on different directories (8ight.ai, 5 Oct 2026, vendor)	Moderate (US)
Freshness and page age	Older pages cited less (-5.1% per SD, not consistently selected) (arXiv)	Weak
FAQ blocks, schema, summary or author boxes, page speed	No within-site effect; slightly lower odds at equal rank (arXiv)	No supported effect
Google classic rank	Predicts AI citation in some studies (aiplusautomation, 2026; AirOps, 2026) but not page-for-page in API replay (arXiv)	Contested

Stability: between two same-day runs, ChatGPT's queries overlapped by 2.7% and its cited pages by 15%. After 10 weeks, only 14% of citation variation was still shared (arXiv). Measure distributions, not snapshots.

04

Tactics that work now vs myths

Supported by evidence or official guidance

1. Allow the right crawlers: Googlebot, Bingbot, OAI-SearchBot and Claude-SearchBot. Check the CDN as well, since Cloudflare's AI-bot defaults for new domains changed on 15 Sep 2026 (OpenAI, live 3 Nov 2026; Claude Help, undated; Cloudflare docs).
2. Get indexed in both Google and Bing, and verify the site in Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.
3. Write titles and paragraphs that answer real customer questions in their own words (arXiv).
4. Create non-commodity, first-hand content (Google, live 3 Nov 2026).
5. Earn genuine third-party mentions (local press, industry bodies, directories, reviews). Google warns against seeking inauthentic mentions (Google guide).
6. Keep Google Business Profile, Bing Places, Merchant Center and licence and registry records accurate and consistent (Google guide; 8ight.ai, 5 Oct 2026).
7. Keep important content in text and not locked behind JavaScript. JS-only main text got fewer Gemini citations (-10.6%) (arXiv).

Myths or unproven

- **"Schema gets you into AI answers."** There's no special schema for AI features (Google), and there was no within-site citation effect (arXiv). Schema still helps rich-result eligibility and entity clarity. *Schema does not guarantee AI gains.*
- **"llms.txt helps AI visibility."** No AI search engine has confirmed it uses llms.txt. Google Search ignores it (Google guide). 97% of files got zero requests (Ahrefs, 15 Jun 2026), and 8 of 10 tracked sites saw no change (Search Engine Land, 2026). Its real use is coding agents.
- **"Chunk content for AI" or "rewrite content just for AI."** Google says neither is needed (Google guide).
- **"Mass-produce pages for every fan-out query."** Google says this can breach its scaled content abuse policy (Google guide).
- **"You can pay or submit to be recommended by ChatGPT."** There's no such mechanism. Ads are separate and labelled (OpenAI, 21 Oct 2026).
- **"An AI visibility score is a standard."** Vendor scores use their own weightings (for example, Arobis gives llms.txt 10%), and none is endorsed by an engine (Arobis, n.d.). Google says no third-party tool has access to its internal systems (Google guide).

05

Measurement and tools

Official, free

- Google Search Console Generative AI performance reports: impressions, pages, countries, devices and dates for AI Overviews, AI Mode and Discover. There's no click data yet (Google, 3 Jun 2026, worldwide 31 Aug 2026; SEJ, 31 Aug 2026).
- Bing Webmaster Tools AI Performance: citations, grounding queries, Intents, Topics, Citation Share, Compare and Topics Portfolio (see section 2).
- Analytics: AI referrals (for example, utm_source=chatgpt.com; a vendor guide reports ChatGPT adds it, Not confirmed from an official OpenAI page) (LegitPR, 2026). ChatGPT referral tags reportedly went missing for about a week after an October model rollout (Not confirmed) (Paralax change log, 20 Oct 2026).

Paid trackers: Ahrefs Brand Radar, Semrush AI Visibility (including its AI Visibility Index across 9 markets), Otterly and Peec AI (Ahrefs; HubSpot LLM visibility tools). Their sampling methods are not independently audited (Not confirmed).

DIY method: a fixed set of 10–20 real customer prompts (branded, service plus suburb, comparisons), run logged-out several times on ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, AI Mode and Copilot. Log mentions and cited URLs and repeat monthly (Ahrefs, n.d.). Repeat runs are essential because citations drift (arXiv).

Three numbers, not one: mentions (including from memory), citations (linked pages) and clicks or conversions. They move independently.

06

Recent studies and data (newest first)

DATE	STUDY	KEY FINDING	CAVEAT
Oct 2026	Chen & Koudas, U of Toronto (arXiv 2610.15033)	Retrieval 32% vs page features 2.8%; FAQ and schema no within-site effect; 46% of brand mentions from memory	US English, API not consumer apps
30 Oct 2026	Cyrus Shepard opt-out test (Search Engine Land; Search Engine Roundtable)	Roughly 0.9% CTR on AI impressions; opting out also lowered regular organic clicks ("halo effect")	Single site, small test
22 Oct 2026	Marie Haynes (100 sites, GA4), SEO Works, Kevin Indig (Search Engine Roundtable summary)	ChatGPT sessions 0.62% of Google organic; converted 13.8% vs 3.02%; Google drove 96.5% of conversions; organic 39x AI traffic (SEO Works); no reliable AI visibility to direct/branded link (Indig)	Mixed samples, not AU
21 Oct 2026	OpenAI (post)	ChatGPT has 1.2B+ weekly users; ads in 89 countries	Company-reported
5 Oct 2026	8ight.ai (study)	Claude cited Yelp in 93% of local answers; ChatGPT leaned on BBB (39%) and government licensing sites (25%)	Vendor; US + Toronto
Q3 2026	Citlyze (study)	Publishers 41-54% of citations; Perplexity Reddit 13.5% to 1.5%	Vendor; API
17 Jun 2026 (draft)	Agarwal & Sen field experiment (SSRN)	AI Overviews cut outbound organic clicks 39.8% and raised zero-click by 34.5%; no satisfaction gain	US desktop, 1,065 users, working paper
12 Aug 2026	Insites (study)	Review count and profile completeness strongly associated with AI recommendation	US, correlational
15 Jun 2026 (updated 27 Aug)	Ahrefs llms.txt (study)	97% of llms.txt files never requested	Log sample, May 2026
29 Sep 2026	AI referral benchmark, 95 sites (Zenodo)	AI sessions 2.6% of organic, converted 1.18x better	Verified 26 Oct 2026; live re-check blocked 3 Nov
9 Aug 2026	Cross-engine agreement (Zenodo)	Engines agreed on 32% of recommended brands but only 1% of cited sources	Verified 26 Oct 2026

07

Platform changes (May-Nov 2026, newest first)

- **1 Nov 2026:** Bing makes AI Mode and AI Overview official (Search Engine Watch).
- **30 Oct-1 Nov 2026:** Google, Microsoft and OpenAI plan to honour a shared robots.txt AI-training line (an IETF individual draft by Anthropic's Kevin Kelley). None supports it yet. Google is targeting 2027, and Microsoft adds a separate AI Grounding preference (SEJ, 1 Nov 2026).
- **28 Oct 2026:** Ads in AI Mode scale to Australia and nine other markets. Existing Search, Shopping and PMax campaigns are eligible automatically, with no separate opt-out (Google; PPC Land).
- **21 Oct 2026:** ChatGPT Ads in 89 countries (OpenAI).
- **15 Oct 2026:** More prominent links in AI Overviews and AI Mode (Google).
- **13 Oct 2026:** Gemini 4 Argon in AI Mode (Pro and Ultra); Bing Topics Portfolio (beta) (SEJ; Bing).
- **Oct 2026:** Google docs updated on fact-checking AI content and deceptive authorship; September 2026 spam update completed (Search Engine Roundtable, 2 Nov 2026).
- **31 Aug 2026:** Search Console Generative AI reports and the Search generative AI opt-out go worldwide (SEJ).
- **23 Jul 2026:** Yelp-OpenAI data licence for local answers (Axios).
- **16 Jun 2026:** Bing Intents, Topics, Citation Share and Compare (Bing).
- **3 Jun 2026:** Google announces Generative AI performance reports and the opt-out (Google).
- **2 Jun 2026:** Microsoft Web IQ grounding APIs (Bing).
- **May 2026:** ChatGPT began showing brands as clickable inline links, and a benchmark reported AI referrals rose 36-39% afterwards (Zenodo, 29 Sep 2026). An official OpenAI announcement was not located (Not confirmed).

08

What it means for Australian small businesses

The Australian context

- AI adoption figures vary by survey. The ABS put AI use at about 11% of small and micro businesses in 2024-25 (ABS, 25 Jun 2026), NAB found 42% of SMEs use AI (NAB, 20 Apr 2026), and QuickBooks reported 69% regular use (QuickBooks AU, 2026). Always cite the source with the number.
- Google AI Mode has been in Australia since 8 Oct 2025 (Google AU), and AI Mode ads since 28 Oct 2026 (Google).
- Almost all citation research is US-based. Semrush's AI Visibility Index shows sources and brands are localised even across English-speaking markets (per Aleyda Solis on X, 26 Oct 2026). Which Australian directories (True Local, Hipages, Yellow Pages AU, Bing Places, Apple Business) AI engines cite is Not confirmed, and it's a testable gap.
- Google still drives most traffic and conversions (Search Engine Roundtable, 22 Oct 2026). The honest pitch is SEO fundamentals plus AI visibility, not "SEO is dead".

Reporting honestly: never promise rankings or citations. Present Citation Share as observational, not a ranking, and report mentions, citations and clicks separately.

09

X expert voices (opinion, separated from evidence)

These are practitioner opinions or summaries posted on X. They are not peer-reviewed evidence. Post dates are shown in Sydney time (AEDT from 4 Oct 2026, AEST before). Collected from public posts on 3 Nov 2026.

WHO	DATE (AEDT)	QUOTE	TYPE
Rand Fishkin (@randfish)	22 Oct 2026	"Is AI visibility a waste of time? Three new studies out this week suggest that very well might be the case." post	Opinion, citing studies (Haynes, SEO Works, Indig)
Kevin Indig (@Kevin_Indig)	23 Oct 2026	"Across 632 tests on four brands, I couldn't establish a reliable relationship" (AI visibility vs branded or direct traffic). post	Own analysis (evidence, small sample)
Kevin Indig (@Kevin_Indig)	24 Oct 2026	"I'd be careful about using ChatGPT as a proxy for all AI Search." post	Opinion
Cyrus Shepard (@CyrusShepard)	31 Oct 2026	"Based on this small study, websites who opt out of Google's AI answers could see up to a 20% drop in clicks… AI links had an ~0.9% click rate." post	Own test (single site)
Aleyda Solis (@aleyda)	27 Oct 2026	Semrush's AI Visibility Index shows "clear differences in sources used and brands showcased" across English-speaking markets, "so… think twice" before assuming US results transfer. post	Opinion on vendor data
Aleyda Solis (@aleyda)	30 Oct 2026	"A channel can create business value without being the one that captures the conversion." post	Opinion
Lily Ray (@lilyraynyc)	29 Sep 2026 (AEST)	"LLMs appear to be better at filtering out self-promotion, especially with better/more expensive models." post	Observation (anecdotal)
Lily Ray (@lilyraynyc)	25 Sep 2026 (AEST)	Multimodal reporting arrived in GSC "before query reporting or clicks for AI Overviews / AI Mode." post	Opinion
Glenn Gabe (@glenngabe)	16 Oct 2026	"Long live the link! Google is updating how it handles links in AIOs and AI Mode again." post	Summary of official change
Barry Schwartz (@rustybrick)	16 Oct 2026	"Google updates links in AI Mode and AI Overviews again, but Google continues to refuse to show us click data in Search Console." post	Opinion plus news
Marie Haynes (@Marie_Haynes)	31 Oct 2026	On Google's Q3 call: "Google sees AI Mode, AI overviews and traditional Search as one unified product." post	Interpretation of earnings call

Pattern: recognised practitioners are converging on scepticism about AI traffic volume, but they still recommend measuring visibility and influence beyond clicks. That fits the evidence: the clicks are small, while presence inside answers increasingly is the page.

Not confirmed

- AI Overviews prevalence in Australia (the more than 80% figure is from US-weighted trackers).
- Whether Australia is among ChatGPT Ads' 89 countries.
- ChatGPT's exact search providers, and Bing's role.
- Which partner AI integrations feed Bing's AI Performance report.
- Yelp's relevance to ChatGPT answers in Australia, and which AU directories AI engines cite.
- An official OpenAI announcement of inline brand links (May 2026), and the official utm_source=chatgpt.com behaviour.
- Whether Perplexity's consumer app matches its API citation behaviour.
- Which outside products use Microsoft Web IQ.
- Independent audits of paid AI-visibility trackers' sampling.
- Any causal (controlled) test of schema or llms.txt on AI citations: none found.
- Live re-checks of Axios, Zenodo and Search Engine Land pages were blocked on 3 Nov 2026. Those items rely on verification dated 26 Oct–2 Nov 2026.

Method

This report draws on primary sources (platform documentation, official announcements and published studies), re-verified live on 3 Nov 2026 and topped up with web search and public posts on X. Nothing here is a guarantee of results: most citation research is correlational, US-based and drifts over time.

Sources

1. What Drives AI Citations? (Chen & Koudas) (2026-10; study): Retrieval explains 32% vs page features 2.8%; FAQ/schema no within-site effect; 46% brand mentions from memory
2. Google: Optimizing for generative AI features (live 2026-11-03; official): AEO/GEO 'still SEO'; ignore llms.txt, chunking, inauthentic mentions; structured data not required
3. Google: AI features and your website (live 2026-11-03; official): No additional requirements; no special schema; query fan-out
4. Google: Search Generative AI performance reports (2026-06-03 (updated 2026-08-31); official): GSC AI impressions by page/country/device/date; worldwide 31 Aug
5. SEJ: GSC AI reports rolled out worldwide (2026-08-31; news): Opt-out control global; no click data; CMA page-level controls by Mar 2027
6. Bing: New AI Visibility Insights (Intents, Topics, Citation Share, Compare) (2026-06-16; official): Citation Share is observational, not a ranking; preview, rolling out globally
7. Bing: AI Performance public preview (2026-02-10; official): Citations in Copilot/Bing/partners; grounding queries
8. Bing: Topics Portfolio (beta) (2026-10-13; official): Topic demand, competition, opportunity queries
9. Bing help: AI Performance (undated; official): Sampled, aggregated; low-volume may not show
10. Bing: Announcing Microsoft Web IQ (2026-06-02; official): Grounding APIs for agents built on Bing index
11. Search Engine Watch: Bing AI Mode and AI Overview (2026-11-01; news): Bing splits Copilot Search into AI Mode and AI Overview
12. SEJ: Shared AI training opt-out (2026-11-01; news): Shared robots.txt line planned; Microsoft AI Grounding preference; dates Dec 2026-Mar 2027
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16. SEJ: Gemini 4 Argon in AI Mode (2026-10; news): Gemini 4 Argon for Pro and Ultra in AI Mode
17. Search Engine Roundtable: November 2026 Google Webmaster Report (2026-11-02; news): AI Overviews on 80%+ of searches (trackers); spam update done
18. Search Engine Roundtable: 3 new studies on AI visibility (2026-10-22; news): ChatGPT 0.62% of Google organic sessions; Google 96.5% of conversions
19. Search Engine Roundtable: 0.9% CTR opt-out study (2026-10-30; news): Cyrus Shepard single-site opt-out test
20. Search Engine Land: AI opt-out test organic clicks drop (2026-10; news): Halo effect after opting out
21. Agarwal & Sen: AI Overviews field experiment (2026-06-17 (draft); study): AI Overviews cut outbound organic clicks 39.8%
22. OpenAI: ChatGPT Ads expands to 26 new countries (2026-10-21; official): 89 countries; ads don't influence answers; 1.2B weekly users
23. OpenAI crawler docs (live 2026-11-03; official): Allow OAI-SearchBot to appear in ChatGPT search; GPTBot separate
24. OpenAI Help: ChatGPT search (undated; official): Third-party search providers
25. Axios: Yelp reviews to ChatGPT (2026-07-23; news): Yelp licenses data to OpenAI for local answers
26. Perplexity crawlers docs (undated; official): PerplexityBot vs Perplexity-User
27. Perplexity source labels (2026; official): Government/Academic/Trusted labels not paid
28. Citlyze: AI citation sources Q3 2026 (2026-Q3; study (vendor)): Perplexity Reddit 13.5% to 1.5%
29. vilnux: Perplexity stops citing Reddit (2026-10; study (vendor)): Reddit 5.6% to 0.1% weeks 33-41
30. Claude Help: Anthropic crawlers (undated; official): ClaudeBot, Claude-SearchBot, Claude-User
31. Ahrefs: llms.txt study (2026-06-15 (updated 2026-08-27); study): 97% of llms.txt files never requested
32. Search Engine Land: Does llms.txt matter? (2026; news): 8 of 10 sites no change; Mueller: no AI service says it uses it
33. Ahrefs: Why ChatGPT cites pages (2026; study): Cited titles more similar to prompts
34. AirOps: The fan-out effect (2026; study (vendor)): Position in ChatGPT web results predicts citation
35. aiplusautomation: query intent and AI citation (2026; study): Google rank predicts AI citation; near-random cross-platform agreement
36. Ahrefs: AI Overview brand correlation (2025-05-26; study): Mentions 0.664 vs backlinks 0.218 (older than 12 months)
37. Insites: Google reviews and AI recommendations (2026-08-12; study (vendor)): 133.4 vs 10.7 reviews
38. 8ight.ai: How AI recommends local businesses (2026-10-05; study (vendor)): Engines use different directories; licensing sites 25%
39. Zenodo: AI referral benchmark (95 sites) (2026-09-29; study): AI 2.6% of organic sessions; 1.18x conversion; +36-39% after inline links
40. Zenodo: Cross-engine brand/source agreement (2026-08-09; study): 32% brand agreement, 1% source agreement
41. HubSpot: AEO vs GEO (n.d.; guide): Difference mostly terminological

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43. SEJ: A little clarity on SEO, GEO and AEO (2026; guide): Subset vs standalone vs just SEO
44. Arobis AI visibility checker (n.d.; vendor): Own weighting incl. llms.txt 10%
45. Ahrefs Brand Radar (n.d.; tool): Paid AI mention tracker
46. HubSpot: LLM visibility tools (n.d.; guide): Tracker roundup
47. Ahrefs: Monitor brand mentions in ChatGPT (n.d.; guide): DIY prompt testing
48. LegitPR: Get ChatGPT to recommend your business (2026; guide (vendor)): utm_source=chatgpt.com
49. Paralax AI search change log (2026-10-20 entry; tracker): ChatGPT referral tags reportedly missing ~1 week
50. Cloudflare AI bot defaults docs (2026-09-15 effective; official): New-domain AI bot defaults
51. ABS: Business adoption of AI 2024-25 (2026-06-25; official (AU)): ~11% of small/micro businesses used AI
52. NAB: SME AI adoption (2026-04-20; survey (AU)): 42% of SMEs use AI
53. QuickBooks AU AI impact report 2026 (2026; survey (AU)): 69% regular AI use (Jan 2026)
54. Google AU: AI Mode in Australia (2025-10-08; official (AU)): AI Mode launched in Australia
55. X: Rand Fishkin (2026-10-22; X opinion): Is AI visibility a waste of time?
56. X: Kevin Indig (AI visibility vs direct) (2026-10-23; X analysis): No reliable relationship across 632 tests
57. X: Kevin Indig (ChatGPT proxy) (2026-10-24; X opinion): Don't use ChatGPT as proxy for all AI search
58. X: Cyrus Shepard (2026-10-31; X test): Opt-out could drop clicks up to 20%; ~0.9% AI CTR
59. X: Aleyda Solis (Semrush index) (2026-10-27; X opinion): Sources localised across English markets
60. X: Aleyda Solis (measuring AI impact) (2026-10-30; X opinion): Value beyond the converting channel
61. X: Lily Ray (self-promotion) (2026-09-29; X observation): LLMs filtering self-promotion
62. X: Lily Ray (GSC reporting) (2026-09-25; X opinion): No AI query/click reporting yet
63. X: Glenn Gabe (2026-10-16; X summary): Long live the link
64. X: Barry Schwartz (2026-10-16; X opinion): Google won't show AI click data
65. X: Marie Haynes (2026-10-31; X interpretation): AI Mode, AIO and Search as one product

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