

CiteLens Study: SEO Decides AI Citations on Google and Perplexity, Not ChatGPT

CiteLens studied four AI engines across 320 queries: Google AI Mode and Perplexity follow SEO ~90%; ChatGPT ignores rankings and brand size entirely.

EDIRNE, TURKEY, July 8, 2026

/EINPresswire.com/ -- As buyers increasingly get answers from AI chatbots instead of ten blue links, a new benchmark from AI-visibility platform [CiteLens](#) delivers an uncomfortable message to marketers:

there is no single "AI SEO." The four leading AI answer engines disagree sharply on which brands they recommend — and only some of them care about your Google ranking at all.

“

SEO gets you into Google's AI and Perplexity, but it barely moves ChatGPT.

Marketers are told to optimize for AI as if it's one thing — our data shows it's at least three.”

Alper Tekin, Founder, CiteLens

CiteLens ran 320 real buyer queries through ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude and Google's AI Mode, then compared every source each engine cited against the same query's Google and Bing search results. The gap between engines was dramatic.

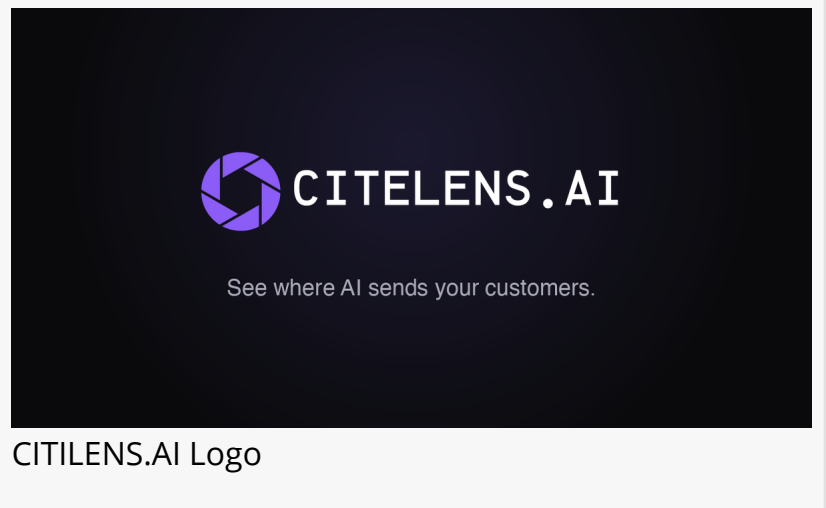
Google's own AI Mode drew 93% of its citations from Google's top-10 organic results, and Perplexity 89% — meaning classic search engine optimization still decides who these engines cite. But Claude pulled just 53% of its citations from Google's top-10, and ChatGPT only 30%. For

ChatGPT, 70% of the sources it recommended ranked in neither Google's nor Bing's top-10.

Three engines, three rulebooks

Statistical analysis revealed three distinct behaviors:

Search-ranking machines (Google AI Mode, Perplexity). Citation frequency correlated almost perfectly with how much Google ranks a domain (0.92 and 0.87). For these engines, SEO is the



entry ticket.

The brand machine (Claude). Claude was the only engine whose citations tracked brand search demand more than search ranking, favoring well-known and global brands; 58% of its citations went to sites with a Wikipedia presence.

The black box (ChatGPT). ChatGPT followed neither Google ranking nor brand popularity — correlation near zero on both — and only 21% of its citations went to Wikipedia-backed sites. It repeatedly surfaced a handful of niche domains that rank nowhere and command little search demand, evidence of preferences baked into the model itself.

A widely assumed explanation — that ChatGPT simply mirrors Microsoft's Bing index — did not hold: fewer than 4% of ChatGPT's citations appeared in Bing's top-10.

Why it matters

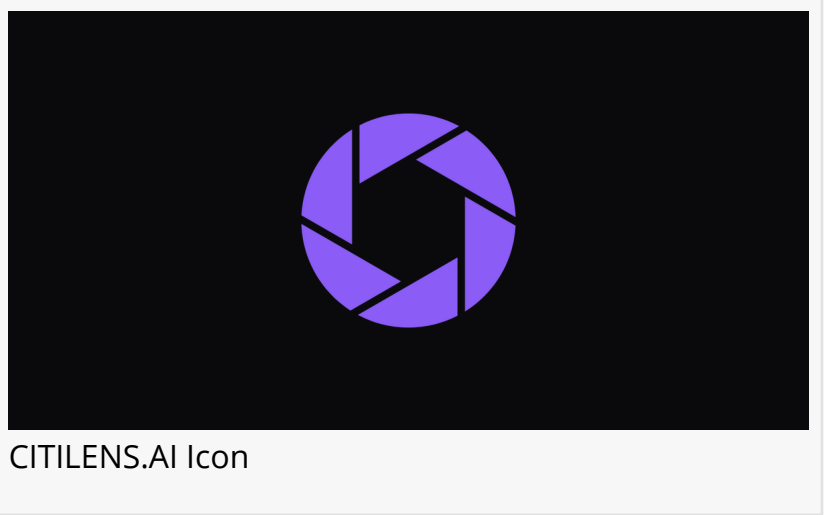
The finding reframes the entire "get cited by AI" challenge. Ranking on Google earns citations from Google's AI Mode and Perplexity, but has limited effect on ChatGPT and Claude, where entity authority — consistent, recognized brand presence across the web — matters more. CiteLens helps companies measure exactly where they appear across every major AI engine and diagnose why, turning [generative engine optimization](#) from guesswork into measurement. The company also publishes a public [AI Leaderboard](#) ranking which brands AI engines cite most, by country and sector, updated monthly.

Methodology

The benchmark covered 320 templated buyer queries across three consumer sectors in the Turkish market, run against four AI engines plus Google and Bing organic results in June 2026. Citations were normalized to registrable domains; search engines and social platforms were excluded as noise. Full methodology and the underlying dataset are available on request.

About CiteLens

CiteLens is an AI-visibility and generative engine optimization platform built by Solustiq. It measures how often ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, Google AI Mode and other AI answer engines mention and cite a brand — and who they recommend instead — giving marketing and SEO teams a single dashboard for the shift from search rankings to AI answers. Learn more at



citelens.ai.

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