IGNITE Study: In Japanese-Language Searches, Google AI Overviews Rarely Cite Overseas Brands' Own Websites

Across 10 product categories, overseas brands' own websites accounted for four of 123 cited sources, and all four cited pages were in Japanese.

OSAKA, JAPAN, November 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- IGNITE Co., Ltd., an international marketing agency in Osaka, Japan, has studied how foreign brands appear in Japanese AI search results, using Google AI Overviews for Japanese-language searches. The study examined which overseas brands the answers recommended and which sources the answers cited. IGNITE asked one Japanese-language question per category in 10 categories where overseas brands compete in Japan, such as a request for recommended sneaker brands. The categories included outdoor gear, sneakers, international money transfer services, and project management tools. Each search was run three times on November 9, 2026, and an AI Overview appeared in all 30 searches.

Overseas brands appeared in the AI Overviews for 8 of the 10 categories. Their own websites, however, were rarely cited. IGNITE counted each cited website once per question, combining the three runs, which gave 123 cited sources across the 10 questions. Only four of them were overseas brands' own websites. Most of the remaining sources were Japanese-language comparison sites, media outlets, online retailers, and user-generated content platforms. Only one cited website was in English, and none of the overseas brands' English-language pages were cited.

The four overseas brands whose websites were cited were each represented by a Japanese-language article on their own site. In the outdoor category, for example, an answer recommended a portable power station brand as an outdoor brand and cited a Japanese-language blog post on that brand's website.

The results suggest that, in this sample, Japanese-language AI answers drew mainly on

information written in Japanese. Brands with strong English websites but few Japanese pages and little coverage in Japanese media may find it harder to appear in these answers.

IGNITE provides Japanese-language AI search optimization for Japanese companies' websites. It tracks which pages AI answers cite and uses the findings to revise how pages are structured and written. IGNITE conducted this study to apply that experience to overseas brands expanding into Japan. Working in English, IGNITE also helps overseas brands build their presence in Japanese. It develops surveys of Japanese consumers, distributes Japanese-language press releases about the findings, contacts Japanese media, and updates brands' Japanese-language pages. Before deciding where more Japanese-language information is needed, it checks how Japanese-language AI answers describe the brand.

"In what we observed, Japanese-language AI answers recommended brands based on articles from Japanese media and comparison sites," said Hiroki Mitsui, COO of IGNITE. "One practical way into these answers is to be featured by third parties, in Japanese. We help brands give third parties a reason to feature them, for example by publishing research on Japanese consumers. IGNITE will publish its own consumer research in December."

The study was small. It covered 10 questions on Google AI Overviews, collected from Japan with the search location set to Tokyo. AI answers can change from one search to the next and over time. The findings describe this sample, may not apply to other searches, locations, or dates, and should be read as indicative only.

More information is available at https://igni7e.com/.

About IGNITE Co., Ltd.
IGNITE is an international marketing agency in Japan, headquartered in Osaka with an office in Tokyo. It supports overseas companies that want to launch products and services in Japan, as well as Japanese companies that want to reach customers abroad. The team includes native English-speaking staff and bilingual staff, so clients can communicate in English from consultation to reporting. Its services include market research, SEO, advertising, PR, social media marketing, influencer marketing, website development, localization, and e-commerce marketing.
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