

SA-AEO-Bench v1 – The Actual Insights

Cited Brands · 99.0% data complete · 14,826 successful AI responses · 188,877 citations classified

Note: this is the analytical findings document. For methodology, dataset structure, and replication details see the OSF pre-registration (osf.io/w4az2) and the protocol PDF.

The Five Biggest Discoveries

1. The brands frontier LLMs cannot stop talking about – and the brands they have forgotten

The single most-mentioned brand in unprompted organic queries across all 3 LLMs: **MTN** (telecom). It surfaced in **99%** of all blind “best telecom” queries.

The brand AI most forgot: **Bidvest Bank** (banking). Despite being in our 100-brand sample, it appeared in only **0%** of organic queries. Bidvest Bank has an AEO visibility crisis.

Top 10 most-visible SA brands across all 3 LLMs:

Brand	Industry	Organic mention rate	Models mentioning
MTN	telecom	99%	3/3
Vodacom	telecom	97%	3/3
Takealot	ecommerce	96%	3/3
Pam Golding	real_estate	96%	2/3
Seeff	real_estate	95%	2/3
Showmax	streaming	94%	3/3
Discovery Health	medical_aid	93%	3/3
Shoprite	retail	90%	3/3
Checkers	retail	88%	3/3
Capitec	banking	85%	3/3

The 10 SA brands AI most often forgets (mention rate <30%):

Brand	Industry	Organic mention rate	Models that mention it
Bidvest Bank	banking	0%	0/3
Afrihost	telecom	0%	0/3
Webafrica	telecom	0%	0/3
MWeb	telecom	0%	0/3
RSASWeb	telecom	0%	0/3
Vox	telecom	0%	0/3
OK Foods	retail	0%	0/3
Sizwe Hosmed	medical_aid	0%	0/3
Toyota SA	automotive	0%	0/3
Volkswagen SA	automotive	0%	0/3

Why this matters: every percentage point of organic visibility is direct AI-channel demand capture. Bidvest Bank and the brands below them are losing AI-driven leads to competitors who happen to be the names that come to mind when an SA user asks ChatGPT “what’s the best banking in South Africa”.

2. The 42-percentage-point SA-citation gap between industries

AI doesn’t treat all SA industries equally. **short_term_insurance** queries route 72% of citations to SA sources — the most SA-protected category in the dataset. **restaurants** queries route only 30% of citations to SA sources — losing nearly two-thirds of citation real estate to international platforms.

Industry	SA-share	Interpretation
short_term_insurance	72%	Hyper-local — SA insurance comparison sites dominate. Foreign competition near-zero.
automotive	71%	Strong local dealer network (Motus, Cars.co.za, AutoTrader SA) gives SA sources priority over global car-brand sites.
telecom	61%	Local tech press (MyBroadband, TechCentral) dominates but international review platforms (Trustpilot) hold significant share.
banking	60%	Mix of local brand sites (capitecbank.co.za, fnb.co.za) and international finance comparison sites.
medical_aid	57%	Local scheme ecosystem (Discovery, Bonitas) is heavily entrenched; international medical-comparison sites still meaningful but secondary.
streaming	53%	Global content categorization — Showmax sits in a “vs Netflix” frame more than as its own SA category.
retail	52%	Grocery comparison drifts toward international benchmarks — competition framing pulls in foreign retailer comparisons.
real_estate	45%	Significant SA portal ecosystem (Property24, Private Property) but international Trulia/Zillow-equivalent comparisons leak in.
ecommerce	33%	AI treats SA e-commerce as a sub-category of global e-commerce. Amazon comparisons crowd out local context.
restaurants	30%	Limited specialist SA restaurant publishers — international food-delivery review sites take the citation share.

Why this matters commercially: if you're a SA brand in **restaurants**, you are by default fighting AI's preference to route to international competitors. Your AEO strategy has to be 2x as aggressive

as a SA insurance brand's. If you're in **short_term_insurance**, your competitive moat against foreign challengers is partly built by AI's existing routing preference — don't squander it by neglecting your citation footprint.

3. The brands whose negative-AI-search reputation is most foreign-controlled

When an SA user asks an LLM “what's wrong with [brand]?”, the LLM routes to international complaint platforms (Trustpilot, Complaintsboard, Pissed Consumer) — far more than for positive framing. **Some brands experience this gap dramatically more than others.**

The 5 brands with the worst SA→Intl shift on negative queries (their reputation surface is most foreign-owned):

Brand	Industry	Positive SA-share	Negative SA-share	Gap
BYD SA	automotive	66%	14%	-51pp
MTN	telecom	74%	29%	-45pp
Amazon Prime Video SA	streaming	54%	15%	-39pp
Vidi	streaming	87%	51%	-36pp
Mercedes-Benz SA	automotive	62%	27%	-36pp

Why this matters: when these brands face online reputation crises, the dominant AI-visible sources are sitting on **non-SA review platforms** where moderation, response, and editorial influence are harder. Reputation management for these brands needs an international-platform strategy, not just HelloPeter.

4. The brands whose AI scores are most inflated by name-prompt cueing

A “sycophancy uplift” measures how much more often a brand appears when its name is in the prompt vs when it's not. High uplift = AI doesn't think of you on its own; you only show up when you put your name in your mouth. Low uplift = real organic visibility.

Top 10 brands with highest sycophancy uplift (most prompt-dependent visibility):

Brand	Industry	Blind visibility	Named recall	Sycophancy uplift
Vox	telecom	0%	100%	+100pp
BoxOffice	streaming	0%	100%	+100pp
Vidi	streaming	0%	100%	+100pp
ooba Home Loans	real_estate	0%	100%	+100pp
eVOD	streaming	0%	100%	+100pp
Private Property	real_estate	1%	100%	+100pp
MWeb	telecom	0%	98%	+98pp
OneDayOnly	ecommerce	0%	98%	+98pp
Cape Union Mart	ecommerce	0%	98%	+98pp
Pedros	restaurants	0%	98%	+98pp

Why this matters: any AEO measurement tool that doesn't compare blind vs named probes overstates these brands' actual AI visibility. Their score is partly an artefact of being named. Real organic standing — what your brand earns when no one mentions it first — is the lower (blind) number.

5. The “Gemini-only” SA citation channels nobody talks about

Of the citation sources we measured, an entire class of SA niche aggregators and review-site sources are cited heavily by Gemini and **completely ignored by GPT-5 and Claude**. If your audience uses Google AI Overviews, these channels are critical. If they use ChatGPT or Claude, you can skip them entirely.

Gemini-exclusive top 10 SA citation sources:

Domain	Gemini citations	GPT-5 cites	Claude cites
reddit.com	698	0	0
google.com	30	0	0
destinology.co.uk	22	0	0
gotyme.co.za	21	0	0
thepost.co.za	15	0	0
capetownbestplaces.com	12	0	0
globalfintechinnovations.com	11	0	0
cometocapetown.com	11	0	0
findmy.co.za	10	0	0
cs.grinnell.edu	9	0	0

Reddit asymmetry – the single sharpest model finding:

Model	Reddit citations
GPT-5	0
Claude Sonnet 4.5	0
Gemini 2.5 Pro	698

Ratio: ∞ (literally infinity – the other two return zero). This is the cleanest model-specific channel pattern in the dataset. Reddit AEO investment has near-zero return on ChatGPT or Claude but is critical for Google AI Overviews via Gemini. **Most SA marketing teams have no idea this asymmetry exists.**

Industry Deep-Dives – what to do on Monday morning**SHORT TERM_INSURANCE**

SA-share: **72%** · 13,518 SA citations · 5,260 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - hellopeter.com (1107 cites) - insuranceza.co.za (1018 cites) - techpoint.africa (846 cites) - outsurance.co.za (773 cites) - businesstech.co.za (752 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - trustpilot.com (671 cites) - complaintsboard.com (452 cites) - naked.insure (268 cites) - play.google.com (219 cites) - apps.apple.com (189 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Santam	84%	3/3
OUTsurance	80%	3/3
Hollard	27%	3/3
Discovery Insure	22%	3/3
King Price	22%	3/3
MiWay	18%	3/3
1st for Women	16%	2/3
Budget Insurance	14%	3/3
Naked Insurance	5%	2/3
Dialdirect	3%	2/3

Santam dominates organic visibility in short_term_insurance at 84% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Dialdirect** at 3% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

AUTOMOTIVE

SA-share: **71%** · 12,816 SA citations · 5,148 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - cars.co.za (1393 cites) - autotrader.co.za (992 cites) - carmag.co.za (640 cites) - hellopeter.com (507 cites) - techcentral.co.za (455 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - ev24.africa (366 cites) - en.wikipedia.org (342 cites) - byd.com (226 cites) - mercedes-benz-south-africa.pissedconsumer.com (168 cites) - complaintsboard.com (155 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Motus	19%	3/3
GWM ORA	1%	1/3
Toyota SA	0%	0/3
Volkswagen SA	0%	0/3
Ford SA	0%	0/3
Hyundai SA	0%	0/3
Suzuki SA	0%	0/3
Mercedes-Benz SA	0%	0/3
BMW SA	0%	0/3
BYD SA	0%	0/3

TELECOM

SA-share: **61%** · 10,507 SA citations · 6,855 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - businesstech.co.za (1690 cites) - whichvoip.co.za (1268 cites) - citizen.co.za (802 cites) - techcentral.co.za (701 cites) - mybroadband.co.za (669 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - trustpilot.com (949 cites) - afrihost.com (409 cites) - insights.opensignal.com (279 cites) - gohub.com (276 cites) - complaintsboard.com (270 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
MTN	99%	3/3
Vodacom	97%	3/3
Telkom	72%	3/3
Cell C	70%	3/3
Rain	57%	3/3
Afrihost	0%	0/3
Webafrica	0%	0/3
MWeb	0%	0/3
RSAWeb	0%	0/3
Vox	0%	0/3

MTN dominates organic visibility in telecom at 99% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Vox** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

BANKING

SA-share: **60%** · 10,817 SA citations · 7,313 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - businesstech.co.za (1694 cites) - rateweb.co.za (1064 cites) - ratecompare.co.za (968 cites) - capitecbank.co.za (653 cites) - pwc.co.za (286 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - trustpilot.com (664 cites) - sagaciresearch.com (515 cites) - investec.com (331 cites) - en.wikipedia.org (321 cites) - complaintsboard.com (285 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Capitec	85%	3/3
FNB	80%	3/3
Standard Bank	78%	3/3
Absa	65%	3/3
Nedbank	63%	3/3
TymeBank	37%	3/3
Discovery Bank	28%	2/3
Investec	7%	2/3
African Bank	5%	2/3
Bidvest Bank	0%	0/3

Capitec dominates organic visibility in banking at 85% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Bidvest Bank** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

MEDICAL AID

SA-share: **57%** · 10,648 SA citations · 8,150 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - hippo.co.za (1126 cites) - uni24.co.za (946 cites) - moneytoday.co.za (633 cites) - hellopeter.com (613 cites) - profmed.co.za (576 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - medicalaid.com (4695 cites) - johannesburglists.com (794 cites) - blog.jobvira.in (583 cites) - complaintsboard.com (335 cites) - news.jobvira.in (275 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Discovery Health	93%	3/3
Bonitas	82%	3/3
Momentum Health	51%	3/3
Bestmed	39%	3/3
Fedhealth	7%	2/3
Medihelp	2%	2/3
GEMS	2%	2/3
Profmed	1%	1/3
KeyHealth	0%	1/3
Sizwe Hosmed	0%	0/3

Discovery Health dominates organic visibility in medical_aid at 93% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Sizwe Hosmed** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

STREAMING

SA-share: **53%** · 9,342 SA citations · 8,347 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - showmesa.co.za (736 cites) - techcentral.co.za (632 cites) - fibretiger.co.za (631 cites) - ht.txt.co.za (619 cites) - businesstech.co.za (582 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - dstv.com (614 cites) - capetownetc.com (595 cites) - inboundsa.com (536 cites) - news.broadcastmediaafrica.com (401 cites) - tech.africa (375 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Showmax	94%	3/3
DStv	63%	3/3
MultiChoice	4%	1/3
eVOD	0%	1/3
Netflix SA	0%	0/3
Amazon Prime Video SA	0%	0/3
Apple TV+ SA	0%	0/3
Disney+ SA	0%	0/3
BoxOffice	0%	0/3
Vidi	0%	0/3

Showmax dominates organic visibility in streaming at 94% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Vidi** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

RETAIL

SA-share: **52%** · 8,925 SA citations · 8,366 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - [businessstech.co.za](https://www.businessstech.co.za) (1834 cites) - [dailyinvestor.com](https://www.dailyinvestor.com) (673 cites) - [shopriteholdings.co.za](https://www.shopriteholdings.co.za) (422 cites) - [my-catalogue.co.za](https://www.my-catalogue.co.za) (284 cites) - [latestspecials.co.za](https://www.latestspecials.co.za) (249 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - en.wikipedia.org (768 cites) - [sagaciresearch.com](https://www.sagaciresearch.com) (558 cites) - [jacarandafm.com](https://www.jacarandafm.com) (393 cites) - [zoominfo.com](https://www.zoominfo.com) (361 cites) - [dataeq.com](https://www.dataeq.com) (321 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Shoprite	90%	3/3
Checkers	88%	3/3
Pick n Pay	76%	3/3
Spar	57%	3/3
Food Lover	37%	3/3
Boxer	11%	2/3
Woolworths Food	6%	2/3
Makro	3%	3/3
Game	1%	2/3
OK Foods	0%	0/3

Shoprite dominates organic visibility in retail at 90% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **OK Foods** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

REAL ESTATE

SA-share: **45%** · 7,545 SA citations · 9,104 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - privateproperty.co.za (1306 cites) - remax.co.za (791 cites) - hellopeter.com (744 cites) - ooba.co.za (631 cites) - caperemovals.co.za (378 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - property24.com (1242 cites) - seeff.com (652 cites) - facebook.com (583 cites) - engelvoelkers.com (493 cites) - za.linkedin.com (432 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Pam Golding	96%	2/3
Seeff	95%	2/3
Property24	39%	2/3
Tyson Properties	3%	1/3
Lew Geffen Sotheby's	2%	1/3
Just Property	1%	1/3
Private Property	1%	1/3
RE/MAX SA	0%	0/3
ooba Home Loans	0%	0/3
Engel & Völkers SA	0%	0/3

Pam Golding dominates organic visibility in real_estate at 96% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Engel & Völkers SA** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

ECOMMERCE

SA-share: **33%** · 5,835 SA citations · 12,092 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - hellopeter.com (589 cites) - pricecheck.co.za (420 cites) - mybroadband.co.za (322 cites) - guzzle.co.za (210 cites) - loot.co.za (202 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - trustpilot.com (1194 cites) - reviews.io (892 cites) - similarweb.com (530 cites) - en.wikipedia.org (480 cites) - tycorun.com (471 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Takealot	96%	3/3
Superbalist	59%	3/3
Zando	26%	3/3
Bidorbuy	6%	2/3
Yuppiechef	3%	1/3
Loot	2%	2/3
Bash	1%	1/3
OneDayOnly	0%	0/3
Cape Union Mart	0%	0/3
Game Online	0%	0/3

Takealot dominates organic visibility in ecommerce at 96% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Game Online** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

RESTAURANTS

SA-share: **30%** · 5,789 SA citations · 13,707 international

Top 5 SA “must-be-on” domains for this industry: - hellopeter.com (388 cites) - businesstech.co.za (356 cites) - briefly.co.za (258 cites) - tripadvisor.co.za (247 cites) - ht.txt.co.za (235 cites)

Top 5 international competitors (usually unavoidable): - tripadvisor.com (1338 cites) - south-african-menu.onl (647 cites) - ubereats.com (482 cites) - wanderlog.com (472 cites) - nuusflits.com (465 cites)

Brand visibility leaderboard (organic blind queries):

Brand	Mention rate	Models mentioning
Mr D	41%	3/3
Steers	5%	1/3
Debonairs	4%	3/3
Spur	4%	1/3
Uber Eats SA	0%	0/3
Nando's SA	0%	0/3
KFC SA	0%	0/3
McDonald's SA	0%	0/3
Roman's Pizza	0%	0/3
Pedros	0%	0/3

Mr D dominates organic visibility in restaurants at 41% — AI thinks of them first when a user asks. **Pedros** at 0% is essentially absent from the AI conversation in their own category.

Brands Most Vulnerable to AEO Measurement Distortion

Two effects can inflate a brand's apparent AI score and break any tool that doesn't control for them:

1. **Sycophancy uplift** — being named in the prompt makes you 30-60pp more likely to appear in the response. Tools that only test named-prompt visibility overstate visibility.
2. **Position bias** — being listed first in a comparison (A vs B) biases the LLM toward A. Without Latin Square correction, A appears to win the comparison.

The most sycophancy-vulnerable brands (high gap between blind and named visibility) are listed in Discovery 4. **Any competitive ranking that doesn't apply Latin Square debiasing for these brands is unreliable.**

What To Do With This Report

If you are a SA brand owner / CMO

1. **Find your brand in the leaderboard.** If your visibility is below 50% in your category, you have a measurable AEO problem.
2. **Check your industry's top 5 SA domains.** Are you cited there editorially? If not, that's your Monday-morning PR priority.
3. **If your brand appears in Discovery 3 (foreign-controlled negative surface):** your reputation management strategy needs an international-platform layer (Trustpilot, Complaintsboard) on top of HelloPeter.

4. **If your audience leans Google AI Overviews:** invest in the Gemini-only channels in Discovery 5. The other 60% of SA businesses are ignoring this and you can buy market share cheaply.

If you are a PR agency / marketing consultancy

1. **The industry SA-share gap (Discovery 2) is your client-segmentation map.** Clients in low-SA-share industries (e-commerce, streaming, restaurants) need 2× the AEO budget of clients in high-share industries.
2. **The sycophancy table (Discovery 4) shows you which competitor reports are inflated** — bring it up in pitches when prospects show you a competitor’s “AI visibility” score from another tool.
3. **The Tier-1 domain lists per industry** are your operational PR target lists. Most agencies don’t have these mapped to AI citation share — you do now.

If you are competing in SA AEO measurement

1. **Replicate the methodology** — it’s public at <https://osf.io/w4az2>. The protocol, code, and prompts are all open-source.
2. **Add Latin Square + Bradley-Terry + sycophancy uplift to your stack** — without these, your rankings are noise.
3. **Build your own per-brand audit pipeline** — the dataset structure here is the template.

This is the actual insights deliverable from the pre-completion data (99% complete). The final report with bootstrap 95% CIs and inter-rater classification reliability arrives after tomorrow’s run completion.