

Ahrefs Data Shows Brand Mentions Boost AI Search Rankings via @sejournal, @martinibuster



The latest Ahrefs podcast shares data showing that brand mentions on third-party websites help improve visibility across AI search surfaces. What they found is that brand mentions correlate strongly with ranking better in AI search, indicating that we are firmly in a new era of off-page SEO.

Training Data Gets Cited

Tim Soulo, CMO of Ahrefs, said that off-page activity that increases being mentioned on other sites improves visibility in AI search results, both those based on training data and those drawing from live search results. The benefits of conducting off-page SEO apply to both. The only difference is that training data doesn't get into LLMs right away.

Tim recommends identifying where your industry gets mentioned:

“You just need to see like where your competitors are mentioned, where you are mentioned, where your industry is mentioned.

And you have to get mentions there because then if the AI chatbot would do a search and find those pages and create their answer based on what they see on those pages, this is one thing.

But if some of the AI providers will decide to retrain their entire model on a more recent snapshot of the web, they will use essentially the same pages.”

Tim cautioned that AI companies don't ingest new web data for training and that there's a lag in months between how often large language models receive fresh training data from the web.

Appear On Authoritative Websites

Although Tim did not mention specific tactics for obtaining brand mentions, in my opinion, off-page link-building strategies don't have to change much to build brand mentions.

Tim underlined the importance of appearing on authoritative websites:

“So yeah, ...essentially it's not that you have to use different tactics for those things. You do the same thing, you appear like on credible websites, but yeah, let's continue.”

The only thing that I would add is that authoritativeness in this situation is if a site gets mentioned by AI search. But the other thing to think about is if a site is simply the go-to for a particular kind of information, relevance

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Topicality Of Brand Mentions

The other thing that was discussed is the topicality of the brand mentions, meaning the context in which the brand is discussed. Ryan Law, Ahrefs' Director of Content Marketing, said that the context of the brand mention is important, and I agree. You can't always control the narrative, but that's where old-fashioned PR outreach comes in, where you can include quotes and so on to build the right context.

Law explained:

"Well, that segues very nicely to what I think is probably the most useful discrete tactic you can do, and that is building off-site mentions.

A big part of how LLMs understand what your brand is about and when it should recommend it and the context it should talk about you is based on where you appear in its training data and where you appear on the web.

- What topics are you commonly mentioned alongside?*
- What other brands are you mentioned alongside?*

I think Patrick Stox has been referring to this as the era of off-page SEO. In some ways, the content on your own site is not as valuable as the content about you on other pages on the web."

Law mentioned that these off-page mentions don't have to be in the form of links in order to be useful for ranking in AI search.

Testing Shows Brand Mentions Are Important

Law went on to say that their data shows that brand mentions are important for ranking. He mentions a correlation coefficient of 0.67, which is a measure of how strongly two variables are related.

Here are the correlation coefficient scales:

- 1.0 = perfect positive correlation (two things are related).
- 0.0 = no correlation.
- -1.0 = perfect negative correlation (for example, for every minute you drive the distance gets smaller, a negative correlation).

So, a correlation coefficient of 0.67 means that there's a strong relationship in what's observed.

Law explained:

"And we did indeed test this with a bit of research.

So we looked at these factors that correlate with the amount of times a brand appears in AI overviews, tested tons of different things, and by far the strongest correlation, very, very strong correlation, almost 0.67, was branded web mentions.

So if your brand is mentioned in a ton of different places on the web, that correlates very highly with your brand being mentioned in lots of AI conversations as well."

He goes on to recommend identifying industry domains that tend to get cited in AI search for your topics and try to get mentioned on those websites.

Law also recommended getting mentions on user-generated content sites like Reddit and Quora. Next he recommended getting mentioned on review sites and on YouTube video in the transcripts because YouTube videos are highly cited by AI search.

Related: How To Get Brand Mentions In Generative AI

Ahrefs Brand Radar Tool

Lastly, they discussed their Ahrefs tool called Brand Radar that's useful for identifying domains that are frequently mentioned in AI search surfaces.

Law explained:

"And obviously, we have a tool that does exactly that. It actually helps you find the most commonly cited domains. ...if you put in whatever niche you're interested in, you can see not only the top domains that get mentioned most often across all of the thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of conversations we have indexed. You can also see the individual pages that get most commonly mentioned.

Obviously, if you can get your brand on those pages, yeah, immediately your AI visibility is going to shoot up in a pretty dramatic way."

Citations Are The New Backlinks

Tim Soulo called citations the new backlinks for the AI search era and recommended their Brand Radar tool for identifying where to get mentions. In my opinion, getting a brand mentioned anywhere that's relevant to your users or customers could also be helpful for ranking in the regular search as well as AI (Read: Google's Branded Search Patent)

See also: Data Finds Brand Mentions Improve Visibility

Watch the Ahrefs podcast starting at about the 6:30 minute mark:

How to Win in AI Search (Real Data, No Hype)

[embedded content]

<https://www.searchenginejournal.com/ahrefs-data-shows-brand-mentions-boost-ai-search-rankings/559938/>