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POLICY FRAMEWORK

The SMB AI Governance Charter

Generative Engine Optimization & Visibility Rights

| A Policy Framework for the Age of AI-Mediated Commerce

Prepared by

Othmane El Ouarzazi | CEO Mention.ma | April 2026

Executive Abstract

The transition from traditional search engines to generative AI systems represents the most significant shift in information discovery since the commercialization of the internet. Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) , defined as an optimization framework for optimizing the visibility of web content for proprietary and closed-source generative engines has emerged as the critical discipline for business survival in this new paradigm.

This charter establishes that small and medium businesses (SMBs) face systematic disadvantages in AI-mediated markets due to opaque algorithms, hallucination risks, and linguistic and cultural biases. With 80% of shoppers under 44 now using Large Language Models (LLMs) as their primary shopping vector, and 41% of consumers having purchased products based on AI recommendations in the past six months, the question is no longer whether AI will influence commerce, but whether SMBs will have equitable access to these new discovery channels.

We present empirical data on eight major generative AI platforms, analyze consumer trust patterns, and propose four fundamental rights to ensure SMB competitiveness in the generative economy.

I. The Generative AI Landscape: Platform Analysis

Market Concentration and Usage Metrics

The generative AI ecosystem is dominated by eight major platforms, with significant concentration at the top. As of April 2026, the market presents the following architecture:

Platform	Market Share	Monthly/Weekly Active Users	Key Characteristics
ChatGPT (OpenAI)	60.2–78.2%	900M weekly active users	Market leader, 5.2B monthly visits, broad integration
Google Gemini	15.3–21.5%	750M monthly active users	Fastest growth (370% YoY), deep Android/Search integration
Microsoft Copilot	12.8–13.2%	Integrated via Windows/Office	Enterprise ecosystem lock-in
Perplexity	5.5–7.1%	45M monthly active users	Citation-forward, research-focused, 100M queries/month
Claude (Anthropic)	4.9%	19M monthly active users	Enterprise preference, 70% win rate vs. OpenAI in B2B
DeepSeek	0.2–4.0%	130M active users (end of 2025)	Cost-efficient, strong in China/India/Indonesia
Qwen (Alibaba)	<1% (Western markets)	203M monthly active users	Dominant in China, 700M+ model downloads
Kimi (Moonshot)	<1% (Western markets)	Rapid growth via OpenClaw integration	23,357% token growth on Open Router
Mistral (Le Chat)	<5%	~45M EU recipients	European sovereign AI, 1M downloads in 14 days

KEY INSIGHT

While ChatGPT maintains dominance with 64.5% market share, the field is fragmenting. ChatGPT's share dropped from 86.7% in January 2025 to 64–68% by January 2026 a 19.2 percentage point decline in 12 months. This fragmentation creates complexity for SMBs attempting to maintain visibility across platforms.

II. Consumer Behavior: The AI-First Purchase Journey

The Shift to AI-Mediated Discovery

The transformation in consumer decision-making:

80%

of shoppers aged 18–43 use LLMs as their primary shopping vector

20%

have purchased from a brand they'd never heard of simply because AI recommended it

37%

of consumers now start searches with AI tools rather than Google

90%+

of AI-active shoppers use LLMs for product research and comparison

44%

of AI-powered search users describe AI as their primary information source

53%

use AI to choose the retailer, not just the product

Trust Patterns and Demographic Variations

Trust in AI recommendations varies significantly across populations:

- 49% of shoppers have purchased something because of an AI recommendation
- 97% of consumers report AI has some degree of influence on shopping behaviors, with 38% saying it influences them "a lot" or "completely"
- Consumers are twice as likely to trust AI over family and friends for recommendations
- Men are 60% more likely than women to completely trust AI
- Millennials and Gen Z are 75% more likely than baby boomers to completely trust AI
- European consumers show higher AI trust than US and Australian counterparts

CRITICAL FINDING

By the time consumers reach a product page, LLMs have already done most of the work. Shoppers use AI to decide which products deserve a click, which retailers are worth visiting, and which brands merit consideration. This makes the product page less of a discovery surface and more of a place where a choice that has already started to form gets confirmed or lost.

III. The Visibility Crisis: Why SMBs Are at Risk

The GEO Challenge

Generative Engine Optimization presents unique challenges compared to traditional SEO. A research from Princeton and Georgia Tech demonstrates that GEO methods can boost visibility by up to 40% in generative engine responses, but effectiveness varies significantly by domain.

- **Citations and statistics:** Including authoritative references, data points, and direct quotations significantly improves visibility in AI responses
- **Keyword strategy:** Traditional keyword stuffing is ineffective in generative engines; authoritative tone and fluency optimization matter far more
- **Domain specificity:** Domain-specific strategies are required .What works in legal content differs from consumer goods.

Systemic Disadvantages for SMBs

- **Resource asymmetry:** Large enterprises deploy dedicated GEO teams; SMBs cannot
- **Citation bias:** AI systems favor established sources with high domain authority, disadvantaging new or niche SMBs
- **Hallucination risk:** AI systems generate false information about SMBs at higher rates due to sparse training data
- **Language barriers:** Non-English SMBs face reduced visibility as models optimize for English-centric content
- **Black-box opacity:** Proprietary algorithms prevent SMBs from understanding why they are or are not cited

IV. The SMB AI Governance Charter: Four Fundamental Rights

Based on the empirical evidence above, we establish the following rights for small and medium businesses in the generative AI ecosystem.

ARTICLE I THE RIGHT TO VISIBILITY

PRINCIPLE	<i>SMBs must have the right to be discoverable across generative AI platforms through transparent, non-discriminatory protocols.</i>
PROTOCOLS	– Universal Crawler Standards: Standardized AI-Robots headers and sitemap extensions for all major platforms : ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, DeepSeek, Qwen, Kimi, Mistral – Indexing Transparency: Public information showing which SMBs are included in training corpora and retrieval indexes – No-Fee Discovery: Basic business information must remain accessible without paywalls or artificial technical barriers – Citation Equity: Algorithms must weight source diversity, preventing large-domain dominance that crowds out SMB expertise
IMPLEMENTATION	<i>AI providers must publish quarterly "SMB Inclusion Reports" showing citation rates by business , size and category.</i>

ARTICLE II THE RIGHT TO CORRECTION

PRINCIPLE	<i>SMBs have the right to dispute and correct AI-generated misinformation about their business within commercially reasonable timeframes.</i>
PROTOCOLS	– Hallucination Reporting: Standardized APIs for reporting false AI claims wrong hours, fabricated services, incorrect locations, fake reviews – Correction Timelines: 72-hour acknowledgment and 14-day resolution for factual errors – Source Attribution: AI responses must indicate information sources, enabling root-cause analysis – Reputation Protection: No amplification of unverified negative claims without human oversight
IMPLEMENTATION	<i>A cross-platform "SMB directory" allowing single-submission correction across all major AI systems.</i>

ARTICLE III THE RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION

PRINCIPLE *SMBs operating in non-English markets or serving diverse communities have the right to equal AI optimization.*

PROTOCOLS

- **Multilingual Equity:** Proportional representation of 119+ languages in training data and retrieval
- **Local Context Preservation:** Recognition of regional business practices, regulatory environments, and cultural nuances
- **Dialect Competence:** Models must distinguish between regional variations. Example: Quebec French vs. France French; Brazilian Portuguese vs. European Portuguese
- **Bias Testing:** Regular audits ensuring comparable visibility quality across languages and geographies

IMPLEMENTATION *Public benchmark measuring AI performance for identical business queries across languages, with gap reporting.*

ARTICLE IV THE RIGHT TO AUDIT

PRINCIPLE *SMBs have the right to understand and monitor how AI systems represent their brand across all platforms.*

PROTOCOLS

- **Knowledge Monitoring:** Tools to query what each AI system knows or says about the business
- **Change Tracking:** Notifications when AI-generated information changes significantly
- **Competitive Parity:** Anonymized benchmarks showing representation relative to similarly-sized competitors
- **Algorithmic Transparency:** Plain-language explanations of ranking and recommendation logic

IMPLEMENTATION *A "Brand Knowledge Dashboard" providing unified auditing across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, DeepSeek, Qwen, Kimi, and Mistral.*

V. Policy Recommendations for Think Tanks

Immediate Actions (0–12 months)

1. Establish GEO Standards: Develop industry standards for Generative Engine Optimization that prevent bias while ensuring SMB competitiveness
2. Create Independent bodies to adjudicate disputes between SMBs and AI platforms
3. Fund AI Literacy Programs: Educate SMBs on GEO best practices, with special focus on underrepresented languages and regions

Medium-Term Reforms (1–3 years)

4. Examine whether AI platform concentration 60%+ ChatGPT market share creates unfair barriers to SMB visibility
5. Data Portability: Mandate that SMBs can export their AI optimization profiles between platforms
6. Transparency: Require AI companies to disclose training data sources and citation algorithms

Long-Term Structural Changes (3–5 years)

7. Public AI Infrastructure: Consider sovereign AI options for SMBs.
8. Algorithmic Impact Assessments: Required audits for AI systems above certain scale thresholds, measuring SMB inclusion metrics
9. International Coordination: Harmonize SMB AI rights across jurisdictions to prevent regulatory arbitrage

VI. Conclusion: The Stakes for Global Commerce

The data is unambiguous: AI is no longer an emerging technology, today it is the primary interface for consumer discovery. With 900 million weekly ChatGPT users, 750 million Gemini users, and hundreds of millions across Perplexity, Claude, DeepSeek, Qwen, Kimi, and Mistral, the generative AI ecosystem has achieved scale that demands serious policy attention.

For SMBs, the risk is important. If visibility requires sophisticated GEO expertise that only large enterprises can afford, we will witness a concentration of commerce that mirrors the platform consolidation seen in social media and e-commerce. The 80% of young shoppers using AI as their primary shopping vector will simply never encounter SMBs that lack algorithmic representation.

This charter proposes that visibility in generative AI is not a privilege to be earned through technical sophistication, but a right to be guaranteed through transparent governance. The four rights 1) Visibility 2) Correction 3) Representation 4) Audit will provide the minimum foundation for a fair representation in the zero click economy.

CLOSING

The decisions made today about SMB AI rights will determine the answer. The think tanks and policy institutions receiving this charter are urged to treat these four rights not as aspirations, but as baseline standards for a functioning ai led economy.

Data Sources & Methodology

This charter synthesizes data from academic research (Princeton and Georgia Tech GEO study), industry reports (SEMrush, Conveo, Klaviyo, Rithum), platform statistics (OpenAI, Google, Anthropic, Mistral, Alibaba, Moonshot, DeepSeek), and market analysis (StatCounter, FirstPageSage, DemandSage).

All statistics reflect the most recent available data as of April 2026. Market share figures vary by methodology web traffic vs. app usage vs. survey data. Ranges are provided where sources diverge.