

How The Shift From SEO To AEO In Digital Marketing Has Impacted Luxury Brand Management Globally!

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ABSTRACT

The rapid transformation of digital search from traditional Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) towards Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) is reshaping the global landscape of luxury brand management. While SEO has traditionally focused on improving website visibility, rankings, organic traffic, and keyword performance, AEO prioritises delivering direct, relevant, contextual, and authoritative answers through search engines, artificial intelligence assistants, voice interfaces, and generative search platforms. This shift has significant implications for luxury brands, whose value depends not only on visibility but also on exclusivity, authenticity, heritage, storytelling, and carefully controlled consumer perceptions. The present study examines how the transition from SEO to AEO has influenced luxury brand management globally, particularly in relation to digital visibility, brand positioning, consumer engagement, reputation management, content strategy, and customer experience. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach based on secondary information obtained from academic literature, industry reports, digital marketing studies, luxury market publications, and relevant online sources. It explores how AI-generated answers and conversational search are altering the traditional consumer journey from keyword-based discovery towards intent-driven information seeking. The study further analyses the opportunities and challenges created by AEO, including enhanced brand discoverability, personalised communication, authority building, information accuracy, loss of direct website traffic, and reduced control over brand narratives. The findings indicate that luxury brands increasingly require integrated SEO-AEO strategies that preserve exclusivity while ensuring authoritative representation across emerging digital answer ecosystems. The study concludes that AEO is becoming an important component of contemporary luxury brand management and requires a strategic balance between technological visibility, brand authenticity, and controlled digital storytelling.

Keywords: Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO); Search Engine Optimisation (SEO); Luxury Brand Management; Digital Marketing; Artificial Intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of marketing has fundamentally altered the manner in which consumers discover, evaluate, compare and interact with brands. Among the most significant developments is the evolution of search from conventional Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) towards Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) and broader generative-AI-enabled search experiences. SEO traditionally concentrates on improving a website's visibility in search-engine results through keywords, technical optimisation, backlinks, content quality, website architecture and user experience. AEO, by contrast, is concerned with making information sufficiently clear, authoritative, structured and contextually relevant to be selected or synthesised as an answer to a user's question.

This transformation is particularly significant for luxury brands because their competitive advantage is derived not merely from product availability but also from brand heritage, symbolic value, exclusivity, authenticity, craftsmanship and carefully managed consumer perceptions.

The digital environment has already become an important component of luxury brand management. Luxury consumers increasingly encounter brands through social media, digital platforms, online communities, search engines and other technology-mediated environments. Research by Godey et al. (2016), based on consumers of Burberry, Dior, Gucci, Hermès and Louis Vuitton across China, France, India and Italy, demonstrated that social media marketing activities can influence brand awareness, brand image, preference, loyalty and willingness to pay a price premium. Similarly, digital luxury marketing research indicates that technological developments have transformed luxury consumption, customer experiences and brand-management practices across international markets. Consequently, search is no longer simply a technical mechanism for directing consumers towards corporate websites; it has become part of the broader environment in which luxury brands establish authority, communicate identity and influence consumer interpretation.

From SEO-Centred Visibility to Answer-Centred Discovery

The traditional SEO model is primarily associated with the objective of achieving prominent positions in organic search results. Luxury companies have consequently invested in branded content, product descriptions, editorial storytelling, technical SEO, image optimisation, link-building and digital public relations to strengthen online visibility. However, the increasing use of conversational search, voice assistants and generative artificial intelligence is changing the nature of information discovery. Consumers can now formulate longer and more complex questions and receive synthesised responses rather than merely a list of hyperlinks. Google, for example, states that its AI Overviews and AI Mode are designed to help users understand complicated questions more quickly while providing links that allow further exploration. Google also confirms that fundamental SEO practices remain relevant to these AI experiences, although there are no separate technical requirements specifically guaranteeing inclusion in AI-generated results.

This development gives rise to an important conceptual distinction between being found and being represented in an answer. Under a conventional SEO environment, a consumer searching for a luxury handbag, watch, automobile or fashion house may encounter several ranked websites and independently determine which source to visit. Under an answer-oriented environment, however, the search system may synthesise information from several sources and present a concise response before the consumer visits any individual website. The implications for luxury brand management are substantial because the brand's digital identity may increasingly be mediated by information selected, interpreted and synthesised by artificial-intelligence systems. Google's current guidance emphasises valuable, original, reliable and people-focused content as important for generative-AI search experiences, while also highlighting the importance of clear organisation, trustworthy information and technically accessible content.

For luxury brands, therefore, AEO is not simply another keyword-management technique. It represents a broader shift towards semantic authority, contextual relevance and information credibility. Luxury brands need to ensure that information concerning their history, founders, craftsmanship, materials, sustainability practices, collections, collaborations and product characteristics is accurately represented across authoritative digital sources. Structured data can also assist search systems in understanding the meaning and characteristics of webpage content, although Google specifically indicates that there is no special schema or additional technical markup required solely for inclusion in AI Overviews or AI Mode. This means that luxury brands should not view AEO as a replacement for SEO; rather, the two approaches increasingly operate as complementary components of digital brand management.

Implications for Global Luxury Brand Management

The shift towards AEO has wider implications because luxury branding depends upon maintaining a delicate balance between accessibility and exclusivity. Traditional luxury marketing often relies on controlled communication, selective distribution and carefully constructed narratives. Digital platforms, however, expose luxury brands to increasingly diverse audiences and enable consumers to participate in brand-related conversations. Academic research has shown that luxury consumers engage with digital brand content for informational, cognitive, emotional and experiential reasons. For example, Kim et al. (2019) found that luxury-brand social-media activities can provide consumers with both affective and cognitive gratification, while Bazi et al. (2020) identified cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of customer engagement with luxury brands on social media.

AEO intensifies this development because consumers increasingly expect immediate answers to questions concerning product authenticity, sustainability, craftsmanship, brand comparisons, pricing, provenance and reputation. The information supplied through answer engines can therefore influence brand perception before consumers interact directly with the luxury company's own digital channels. This creates both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, authoritative answers may improve brand discoverability, strengthen expertise and facilitate consumer education. On the other hand, inaccurate, incomplete or contextually inappropriate information can potentially affect brand reputation and weaken managerial control over brand narratives.

Recent scholarship also demonstrates that digital luxury marketing is continuing to expand as an interdisciplinary research field. A systematic review of 162 peer-reviewed studies identified social media and emerging technologies as important areas shaping contemporary digital luxury marketing and called for further investigation of technology-related dimensions. In this context, the movement from SEO to AEO represents an emerging stage of digital transformation in which luxury brands must optimise not only webpages but also the information ecosystem surrounding the brand.

Thus, the present study examines how the shift from SEO to AEO in digital marketing has impacted luxury brand management globally. It focuses particularly on changes in digital visibility, brand storytelling, consumer discovery, information authority, reputation management, customer engagement and strategic control. The central issue is not whether SEO has disappeared, but how established SEO practices are being supplemented by answer-oriented and AI-mediated forms of discovery. As search increasingly becomes conversational and generative, successful luxury brand management requires the integration of technological discoverability with authenticity, heritage, exclusivity and

consistency. The transition therefore represents a significant development in global luxury marketing, requiring brands to reconsider how their identities are communicated and interpreted in an increasingly AI-mediated digital marketplace.

Review of literature

1. Evolution of Digital Marketing and Search-Based Brand Visibility

The literature on digital marketing establishes that the internet has transformed brand communication from predominantly one-way communication into an interactive, data-driven and consumer-centred process. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) explain that digital marketing integrates search, social media, content, email and other digital channels to create measurable consumer engagement. Within this environment, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) emerged as an important mechanism for improving organic visibility and directing consumers towards brand-owned digital properties. Enge et al. (2015) describe SEO as a combination of technical, content and authority-related practices intended to improve a website's visibility in search results. Fishkin (2015) similarly emphasises that search visibility depends upon relevance, authority, user experience and the ability of content to satisfy search intent.

From a consumer perspective, search engines have become important information intermediaries during the purchase decision process. Google et al. (2012) demonstrated the significance of online research and multiple digital touchpoints in consumer decision-making. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) subsequently conceptualised the customer journey as a multidimensional process involving numerous interactions across channels. These studies are particularly relevant to luxury brands because consumers may undertake extensive information searches before purchasing expensive and symbolically significant products. Thus, SEO has historically provided luxury brands with a mechanism for managing visibility at important stages of the digital customer journey.

2. Digital Transformation of Luxury Brand Management

Luxury branding differs from conventional brand management because luxury value is associated with symbolic meaning, exclusivity, heritage, craftsmanship, scarcity and premium pricing. Kapferer and Bastien (2012) argue that luxury management requires a distinctive strategic logic in which excessive accessibility and conventional mass-market practices can potentially undermine exclusivity. However, the development of digital media has challenged the traditional tension between luxury and accessibility.

Okonkwo (2009) identified the internet as a significant transformational force in luxury fashion, demonstrating that luxury companies increasingly needed to develop sophisticated digital strategies without compromising brand identity. Kim and Ko (2012) found that social-media marketing activities can positively influence customer equity in the luxury fashion context. Godey et al. (2016), examining major luxury brands across several countries, further found that social-media marketing activities influence brand equity and consumer responses. These findings indicate that digital communication is no longer peripheral to luxury management.

Tynan et al. (2010) conceptualised luxury value as involving multiple dimensions, including experiential, symbolic and relational value. Hennigs et al. (2012) similarly demonstrated that luxury value perceptions encompass financial, functional, individual and social dimensions. Consequently, digital search content should not be viewed merely as promotional information. The information encountered by consumers can contribute to their understanding of authenticity, prestige, heritage and brand personality.

3. Luxury Consumers, Social Media and Digital Engagement

The expansion of social media has further complicated the management of luxury brands because consumers increasingly participate in producing and distributing brand-related information. Gensler et al. (2013) argue that consumers can influence brand storytelling through social-media interactions, thereby reducing the degree of control traditionally exercised by brand managers. This observation is important for AEO because answer engines increasingly draw upon information available across multiple digital sources rather than relying exclusively upon corporate websites.

Kim et al. (2019) examined luxury brands' social-media activities through a uses-and-gratifications perspective and found that consumers engage with luxury-brand social media for cognitive and affective purposes. Bazi et al. (2020) further demonstrated that luxury consumers' engagement with brands on social media has cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. Dwivedi et al. (2021) broadly observed that artificial intelligence, social media and emerging digital technologies are increasingly transforming marketing communication and consumer engagement.

These findings suggest that the contemporary luxury consumer may encounter a brand through an interconnected information ecosystem comprising search engines, social networks, reviews, editorial publications, influencers and brand-owned content. The movement from SEO towards AEO therefore extends an existing trend: the consumer increasingly expects information to be immediately available, conversational and contextually relevant.

4. Emergence of AEO and Generative Search

The literature specifically addressing Answer Engine Optimisation remains comparatively new, reflecting the recent emergence of generative artificial intelligence in search. Unlike traditional SEO, which generally seeks visibility within ranked search results, AEO emphasises the discoverability and usefulness of information within direct answers generated by search or conversational systems. Google Search Central (2025) explains that AI features in search can generate responses from multiple sources while still providing links for further exploration. Google also emphasises original, helpful, reliable and people-first content as important principles for visibility in AI-mediated search experiences.

The emergence of generative AI has therefore changed the relationship between content and search visibility. Huang and Rust (2021) argue that artificial intelligence is transforming marketing activities by changing how firms interact with customers and process information. Davenport et al. (2020) similarly identify AI as a technology capable of transforming marketing functions, particularly through personalisation, automation and improved decision-making. Kietzmann et al. (2018) highlight the broader implications of AI for marketing, suggesting that intelligent technologies can alter customer experiences and communication processes.

For luxury brands, this development introduces an additional layer of brand management. A consumer asking an AI-enabled search system about the heritage of a luxury house, the sustainability of a product, differences between brands or the characteristics of a particular collection may receive a synthesised response rather than a conventional list of links. The brand's digital presence therefore needs to be understandable not only to human consumers and conventional search crawlers but also to increasingly sophisticated information-retrieval and generative systems.

5. AEO, Brand Authority and Future Luxury Marketing

The literature on brand equity provides a useful theoretical foundation for understanding the implications of AEO. Keller (1993) established that consumer-based brand equity depends substantially upon the knowledge structures consumers associate with a brand. Aaker (1991) similarly identified brand awareness and associations as important components of brand equity. If answer engines become important intermediaries in information discovery, the accuracy and context in which brand information is presented may influence these associations.

Kapferer and Valette-Florence (2018) emphasise that luxury brands require strong control over their distinctive identity while responding to changing consumer expectations. This creates a strategic tension in the AEO environment. Greater visibility can improve discovery and consumer education, but excessive dependence on automated systems can potentially reduce direct control over how brand narratives are presented. At the same time, authoritative and accurate digital information may reinforce perceptions of expertise, authenticity and credibility.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that research has extensively examined SEO, digital marketing, luxury branding, social-media engagement and artificial intelligence, but the specific intersection between AEO and global luxury brand management remains comparatively underexplored. Existing studies largely examine digital transformation through social media, e-commerce, consumer engagement and AI-enabled marketing rather than examining how luxury brands can manage visibility when search systems increasingly provide direct answers. This research gap provides the basis for examining the transition from SEO to AEO and its implications for luxury-brand visibility, storytelling, consumer trust, reputation, engagement and strategic brand control in global markets.

Research objectives

1. To examine the impact of the shift from SEO to AEO on the digital visibility and global brand management strategies of luxury brands.
2. To analyse how AEO influences consumer engagement, brand perception, storytelling, credibility, and reputation in the global luxury market.

Research methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research methodology to examine how the shift from Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) has impacted luxury brand management globally. The study is primarily based on secondary data collected from peer-reviewed research articles, academic books, industry reports, luxury-market publications, search-engine documentation, digital marketing reports, and credible online sources. A systematic review of relevant literature is undertaken to identify developments in SEO, AEO, artificial intelligence-driven search, consumer behaviour, digital visibility, brand storytelling, and luxury brand management. The study follows a qualitative and conceptual approach, enabling comparison between traditional SEO practices and emerging AEO strategies. Relevant global luxury brands and documented digital marketing practices are examined as illustrative examples. The collected information is thematically analysed to identify major opportunities, challenges, and strategic implications of AEO for luxury brands. The methodology ultimately helps assess how AI-mediated search is transforming brand visibility, consumer engagement, credibility, reputation management, and control over luxury brand narratives.

Data Analysis

The present study examines how the shift from Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) has impacted luxury brand management globally. Since the methodology is based on secondary sources and a qualitative, descriptive and analytical research design, the analysis does not create artificial respondent-level percentages or statistical results. Instead, published academic findings, industry evidence and search-engine documentation are systematically organised into analytical dimensions corresponding to the two research objectives. This approach is appropriate because the study seeks to understand changes in digital visibility, brand management, consumer engagement, storytelling, credibility and reputation rather than to estimate a population parameter through primary survey data. Recent systematic research confirms that digital luxury marketing has developed into a substantial research field involving social media, influencers, omnichannel strategies, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, and AI-enabled customer interaction. A 2025 systematic review based on 162 peer-reviewed studies specifically identifies technology-related dimensions as an important area for further research in digital luxury marketing.

Table 1: Analytical Dimensions for Examining the Shift from SEO to AEO

S. No.	Analytical Dimension	Traditional SEO Orientation	Emerging AEO Orientation	Implication for Luxury Brands
1	Digital visibility	Search-result ranking	Inclusion in direct AI-generated answers	Visibility increasingly depends on information authority
2	Content strategy	Keywords and optimised webpages	Contextual, comprehensive and answer-oriented content	Content must answer consumer questions clearly
3	Consumer discovery	Clicking search results	Receiving synthesised answers	Consumer journey may begin without website visitation
4	Brand authority	Backlinks, rankings and domain authority	Trustworthy and contextually relevant information	Expertise and credibility become increasingly important
5	Brand storytelling	Brand-controlled webpages	Information distributed across multiple digital sources	Greater need for consistent brand narratives
6	Customer engagement	Website visits and organic traffic	Conversational and AI-mediated interaction	Search becomes more interactive
7	Reputation	Search-result management	Representation within generated responses	Accuracy and source quality become strategically important

Source: Compiled by the researcher from Google Search Central (2025), Godey et al. (2016), Kim and Ko (2012), and recent literature on digital luxury marketing.

The table demonstrates that the transition from SEO to AEO should not be understood as the complete replacement of SEO. Instead, it represents an expansion of the digital visibility environment. Conventional SEO remains relevant because search engines continue to index webpages, evaluate content and provide links. However, AI-mediated search increasingly adds another layer in which information can be synthesised into direct responses. Google's current documentation identifies AI features as part of the broader Search ecosystem and continues to emphasise the importance of technically accessible, useful and well-structured content. Google also states that structured data helps its systems understand webpage content and can support enhanced search presentations.

Objective 1: To Examine the Impact of the Shift from SEO to AEO on Digital Visibility and Global Brand Management Strategies of Luxury Brands

The first objective is concerned with the transformation of luxury-brand visibility. Historically, SEO has enabled luxury brands to improve organic discovery by optimising product pages, editorial content, metadata, images, technical architecture and external authority. The effectiveness of digital visibility has increasingly been linked to the consumer's broader digital journey. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) conceptualise customer experience as a journey involving multiple touchpoints, suggesting that search should be considered as one component of a wider customer experience rather than as an isolated marketing activity.

Table 2: Transformation of Luxury Brand Visibility from SEO to AEO

Factor	SEO-Based Model	AEO-Based Model	Observed Change	Strategic
Primary objective	Improve organic ranking	Become a reliable answer source	From ranking to answer visibility	
Search behaviour	Keywords and short queries	Conversational and question-based queries	Greater emphasis on search intent	
Content	Keyword-optimised pages	Comprehensive question-answer content	Greater informational depth	
Brand control	Relatively high on owned website	More distributed information environment	Reduced direct control	
Traffic mechanism	Search result → website	Answer → optional source visit	Potentially fewer intermediary clicks	
Authority	Links and search prominence	Relevance, reliability and source quality	Authority becomes multidimensional	
Consumer interaction	Website navigation	Conversational information seeking	More immediate interaction	

Source: Researcher's compilation based on Google Search Central documentation and literature on digital luxury marketing.

The evidence indicates that luxury brands increasingly operate in a search environment where visibility cannot be reduced to conventional rankings. Google's documentation explains that AI features can help users explore complex questions by generating responses and providing links to supporting webpages. This changes the strategic importance of brand information because consumers can encounter a brand narrative through a synthesised answer before directly visiting the brand's website.

For luxury brands, this is particularly important because consumers often seek detailed information before making purchase decisions. Questions concerning heritage, craftsmanship, product characteristics, authenticity, sustainability, country of origin, materials, pricing and brand positioning can all become part of the information-seeking process. AEO therefore encourages luxury brands to develop content that provides explicit and authoritative answers rather than relying exclusively on promotional language.

The findings of Godey et al. (2016) provide important supporting evidence for this interpretation. Their empirical study of 845 consumers across China, France, India and Italy examined Burberry, Dior, Gucci, Hermès and Louis Vuitton. The authors found significant relationships between luxury-brand social-media marketing activities and consumer-based brand equity, including brand awareness and brand image. They also identified relationships with brand preference, loyalty and willingness to pay a premium. Although this study examined social media rather than AEO, its findings demonstrate that digital information environments can influence core luxury-brand outcomes. Consequently, AEO can be interpreted as a further development of the broader digital transformation of luxury-brand visibility.

Table 3: Evidence from Existing Research on Digital Luxury Brand Visibility

Study	Context	Main Evidence	Relevance to AEO
Kim & Ko (2012)	Luxury fashion	Social-media activities significantly affect several forms of customer and brand equity	Digital information can influence consumer evaluation
Godey et al. (2016)	Five global luxury brands	Social-media marketing positively affects brand awareness and image	Digital visibility contributes to brand equity
Bazi et al. (2020)	Luxury social media	Consumer benefits and experiences influence brand-equity outcomes	Informational experiences matter
Heine & Berghaus (2014)	Digital luxury touchpoints	Digitalisation creates new luxury brand-consumer touchpoints	Search is part of broader digital transformation
Ye et al. (2025)	Digital luxury marketing	Technology-related themes are increasingly important	AI and emerging search require additional study

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the cited literature.

The evidence in Table 3 indicates a consistent movement towards digitally mediated brand experiences. Kim and Ko (2012), for example, identified entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customisation and electronic word-of-mouth as important dimensions of luxury-brand social-media marketing. Their results demonstrated significant relationships between these activities and value, relationship and brand equity. This supports the broader conclusion that digital channels have become strategically relevant to luxury brand management.

At the same time, the transition towards AEO introduces an important distinction between brand-owned visibility and platform-mediated visibility. Under conventional SEO, a consumer who clicks a brand's webpage enters an environment largely controlled by the brand. In an AI-generated answer, however, information may be synthesised from several sources. This means that the luxury brand's communication strategy increasingly needs to consider not only what it publishes itself but also how reliable third-party information describes the brand.

Objective 2: To Analyse How AEO Influences Consumer Engagement, Brand Perception, Storytelling, Credibility and Reputation

The second objective focuses on the consequences of AEO for consumer engagement and brand perception. The secondary evidence indicates that digital information influences luxury consumers through cognitive, emotional and behavioural mechanisms. Bazi et al. (2020), for instance, found that consumer benefits mediate the relationship between social-media marketing and consumer-based brand equity, while emotional and rational brand experiences contribute to brand-related outcomes. These findings have direct relevance to AEO because answer-oriented search can provide consumers with immediate cognitive information during brand discovery.

Table 4: Potential Effects of AEO on Luxury Brand Management

Management Area	Potential Positive Effect	Potential Challenge
Consumer engagement	Faster access to relevant information	Reduced direct interaction with owned websites
Brand awareness	Greater appearance in conversational search	Dependence on external information systems
Brand image	Consistent authoritative answers can reinforce identity	Incorrect synthesis may affect perceptions
Storytelling	Heritage and craftsmanship can be explained contextually	Loss of control over narrative presentation
Credibility	Reliable information can strengthen authority	Conflicting sources may create uncertainty
Reputation	Accurate information can support trust	AI-generated inaccuracies can create reputational risk
Exclusivity	Selective high-quality information can educate consumers	Excessive accessibility may affect perceptions of rarity
Customer experience	Faster and more convenient information discovery	Less direct contact with brand-owned environments

Source: Researcher's analytical synthesis based on Godey et al. (2016), Bazi et al. (2020), Kapferer and Bastien (2012), and Google Search Central guidance.

The first major implication concerns consumer engagement. AEO can shorten the information-search process by providing direct answers to consumer questions. This may improve convenience, particularly for consumers who are researching unfamiliar brands or comparing products. Nevertheless, the relationship between accessibility and luxury is complex. Research by Kim et al. has demonstrated that social-media marketing can enhance consumer relationships and brand outcomes, but other research has warned that excessive consumer-brand engagement may reduce perceptions of uniqueness and psychological distance. Thus, the implications of AEO for luxury brands cannot be understood simply as "more visibility is better."

The second implication concerns brand storytelling. Luxury brands traditionally rely heavily on narratives surrounding heritage, craftsmanship, artistic creativity, provenance and cultural identity. AEO creates opportunities for these narratives to be communicated through questions and answers. For example, instead of simply displaying a historical webpage, a brand's digital information ecosystem can enable consumers to obtain concise explanations of its origins, craftsmanship or distinctive design philosophy. However, because answer engines may synthesise information from several sources, brands have less direct control over the precise sequence and context in which their stories are presented.

The third implication is credibility and trust. AI-mediated search makes the quality of underlying information increasingly important. A brand may publish accurate information on its own website but still be represented differently

through external publications, databases, reviews or social-media discussions. Consequently, AEO expands reputation management from traditional search-result monitoring towards broader digital information governance.

Table 5: SEO-AEO Shift and Luxury Brand Management Outcomes

Outcome	SEO Environment	AEO Environment	Overall Finding	Analytical
Discoverability	Primarily ranking-based	Answer-based and conversational	Search visibility becomes more multidimensional	
Consumer knowledge	Website-led research	AI-assisted synthesis	Information can be obtained more rapidly	
Brand narrative	Predominantly brand-controlled	Distributed and synthesised	Narrative control becomes more complex	
Trust	Website and search reputation	Source credibility and answer reliability	Authority becomes increasingly important	
Engagement	Clicks, visits and browsing	Conversational interaction	Engagement may occur before website visitation	
Reputation management	Search-result monitoring	Cross-source information monitoring	Wider digital ecosystem requires attention	
Exclusivity	Controlled website communication	Wider information accessibility	Brands must balance access and rarity	

Source: Researcher's synthesis of secondary literature and search-engine documentation.

The table shows that AEO changes the managerial unit of analysis. Instead of focusing only on the individual webpage, luxury brands increasingly need to consider the information ecosystem surrounding the brand. This includes official websites, editorial coverage, social media, reviews, structured information and other authoritative digital sources.

Recent research strengthens this interpretation. A 2025 systematic literature review of digital marketing strategies for luxury fashion brands identified 15 strategies across six categories and specifically included artificial intelligence and AI chatbots among emerging digital approaches. Another systematic review of 162 peer-reviewed studies found that social media and emerging technologies are substantially transforming luxury marketing and called for further research into technology-related dimensions. This suggests that AEO should be considered within the wider technological transformation of luxury marketing rather than as an isolated SEO technique.

The emergence of AI-generated luxury advertising also illustrates the growing importance of trust and perceived authenticity. Recent research found that trust in AI and perceived humanness can influence consumer responses to AI-generated luxury advertising, while informativeness and novelty were important drivers of purchase intention. Although advertising and AEO are distinct activities, the finding is relevant because both involve increasing mediation of luxury-brand communication through artificial intelligence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The secondary evidence analysed in this study establishes three broad conclusions. First, SEO continues to provide an important technical foundation, but digital visibility is becoming broader than conventional organic rankings. Google continues to document SEO-related search practices while simultaneously developing AI-mediated search features. Therefore, the shift should be interpreted as an evolution from SEO-only strategies towards integrated SEO-AEO strategies.

Second, AEO potentially changes the location of brand influence. Previously, luxury brands could focus strongly on the consumer's movement from search result to brand website. In answer-oriented environments, consumers may receive information before visiting a brand-owned platform. This creates opportunities for rapid information discovery but also increases dependence on the accuracy and authority of the broader information ecosystem.

Third, luxury-brand management requires a balance between accessibility and exclusivity. Existing research demonstrates that digital marketing can strengthen luxury brand awareness, image, engagement and consumer responses. However, research also indicates that excessive consumer-brand interaction can potentially reduce psychological distance and perceptions of uniqueness. AEO consequently should not be evaluated solely according to traffic or visibility. Its strategic relevance also depends upon whether the information delivered through answer engines preserves the brand's distinctive identity, credibility, heritage and perceived exclusivity.

Overall, the analysis supports the argument that the movement from SEO to AEO represents a change in the architecture of digital luxury-brand communication. SEO remains important for discoverability, while AEO adds a

layer of conversational, contextual and AI-mediated discovery. For global luxury brands, this requires greater attention to authoritative content, semantic clarity, consistent brand information, digital reputation and the accuracy of information available across the wider web. The evidence also reveals a research gap: empirical research directly measuring the effect of AEO on luxury-brand equity, consumer trust, purchase intention and perceptions of exclusivity remains limited. This gap provides an important basis for future empirical research.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined how the shift from Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) in digital marketing has impacted luxury brand management globally. The analysis demonstrates that this transition represents more than a technical modification in search strategy; it reflects a broader transformation in how consumers discover, interpret and engage with luxury brands. SEO continues to provide an important foundation for organic visibility, website accessibility and digital discoverability. However, the increasing use of conversational search and generative-AI interfaces means that consumers can increasingly receive synthesised answers without necessarily visiting individual brand websites. Google's guidance confirms that AI-powered search experiences are becoming an additional component of the search ecosystem, while useful, reliable and people-focused content remains important.

The study further establishes that AEO has important implications for luxury brand visibility, storytelling, credibility, consumer engagement and reputation management. Previous research has demonstrated that digital marketing and social-media activities can influence luxury brand awareness, brand image, consumer engagement and brand equity (Kim & Ko, 2012; Godey et al., 2016). AEO extends this digital transformation by shifting attention from merely obtaining a high search ranking towards becoming a reliable and contextually relevant source of information within answer-oriented environments.

For luxury brands, this development creates both opportunities and strategic challenges. More effective answer visibility can facilitate consumer education and make information concerning heritage, craftsmanship, products and sustainability more accessible. At the same time, AI-mediated answers can reduce direct brand control over the presentation of brand narratives. Therefore, luxury companies need to maintain consistency between owned content and the wider digital information ecosystem.

Overall, the findings suggest that the future of luxury digital marketing is likely to involve an integrated SEO-AEO strategy, rather than a complete replacement of SEO. Luxury brands must combine technical discoverability with authoritative content, authenticity, distinctive storytelling and careful reputation management. The limited empirical literature directly connecting AEO with luxury-brand equity also indicates a significant opportunity for future research.

Suggestions

Luxury brands should adopt an integrated SEO-AEO strategy that improves digital discoverability while preserving exclusivity, authenticity, heritage, and consistent brand storytelling.

- Develop authoritative, accurate and comprehensive content addressing consumer questions.
- Optimise content for conversational and intent-based searches rather than keywords alone.
- Maintain consistent brand information across websites, social media and third-party platforms.
- Strengthen digital reputation and monitor AI-generated representations of brand information.
- Use structured, credible and easily understandable content to improve machine interpretation.
- Balance greater digital accessibility with the exclusivity traditionally associated with luxury branding.
- Continuously evaluate AEO performance alongside conventional SEO indicators and consumer engagement metrics.

Future scope

Future research can empirically examine AEO's influence on luxury brand awareness, consumer trust, purchase intention and brand equity across countries. Comparative studies between luxury and non-luxury brands can identify sector-specific differences. Further research may also investigate generative-AI search accuracy, algorithmic bias, brand narrative control, and the long-term effectiveness of integrated SEO-AEO strategies.

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