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The Strategic Role of AI-Assisted SEO Content in Enhancing Digital Marketing Performance: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly Generative AI (GenAI), has transformed search engine optimization (SEO) by enabling intelligent content creation and data-driven digital marketing strategies. However, existing studies on AI, SEO, and digital marketing remain fragmented, limiting a comprehensive understanding of how AI-assisted SEO contributes to organizational marketing performance. This study aims to systematically synthesize the existing literature on the strategic role of AI-assisted SEO content in enhancing digital marketing performance. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines by identifying, screening, and synthesizing 22 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025. The review identified seven major themes demonstrating that AI-assisted SEO has evolved from a conventional keyword-based optimization technique into a strategic organizational capability. The findings indicate that AI-assisted SEO enhances content generation, semantic optimization, search visibility, customer engagement, lead generation, conversion, and overall digital marketing performance while also raising challenges related to AI ethics, transparency, algorithm dependency, and content reliability. This review integrates fragmented research into a comprehensive conceptual framework grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capability Theory, positioning AI-assisted SEO content as a strategic capability that supports sustainable competitive advantage. The study contributes to the growing literature on AI-driven digital marketing and provides practical insights for organizations seeking to implement intelligent SEO strategies in increasingly AI-mediated marketing ecosystems.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; AI-Assisted SEO; Digital Marketing Performance; Generative AI; Systematic Literature Review.

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), has fundamentally transformed digital marketing by reshaping how organizations create, optimize, and distribute online content. The emergence of large language models has shifted digital marketing from conventional automation toward intelligent content generation that enhances strategic decision-making, customer

engagement, and business competitiveness. Consequently, AI has evolved beyond an operational support tool into a strategic organizational capability that improves content quality, personalization, scalability, and marketing effectiveness across digital channels (Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Chan and Choi, 2025).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is among the digital marketing domains most significantly influenced by AI. While conventional SEO primarily emphasized keyword optimization, metadata, backlinks, and technical website optimization, recent advances in semantic search and AI-driven search technologies have shifted SEO toward contextual relevance and user search intent (Erdmann, Arilla and Ponzoa, 2022; Giomelakis, 2023). This transformation has given rise to AI-assisted SEO content, which integrates Generative AI with SEO principles to produce user-oriented, semantically optimized, and search-engine-friendly content. Moreover, the emergence of AI-powered search assistants requires organizations to optimize content for both search engines and AI-driven information retrieval systems, positioning AI-assisted SEO as a strategic capability for digital competitiveness (Cui and van Esch, 2025; Gensler and Rangaswamy, 2025).

Previous studies consistently demonstrate that effective SEO enhances online visibility, website traffic, and customer engagement through strategic keyword selection and long-term optimization strategies(Nagpal and Petersen, 2021; Erdmann, Arilla and Ponzoa, 2022). Likewise, digital content marketing creates customer value by supporting customer acquisition, engagement, and retention across multiple digital touchpoints (Terho et al., 2022). Consequently, integrating AI into SEO enables organizations to develop scalable, personalized, and data-driven content that strengthens digital marketing performance.

Despite growing scholarly attention, research on AI, SEO, and digital marketing remains fragmented. AI studies primarily focus on AI adoption, customer behavior, and marketing automation without adequately explaining how AI-generated content enhances SEO effectiveness (Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Hartmann, Exner and Domdey, 2025). Meanwhile, SEO research largely emphasizes keyword optimization and search visibility while overlooking the strategic integration of Generative AI (Nagpal and Petersen, 2021; Giomelakis, 2023). Digital marketing studies also examine organizational capabilities and performance but rarely conceptualize AI-assisted SEO as a strategic capability that drives marketing outcomes (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Herhausen et al., 2020). Furthermore, existing evidence is dominated by empirical studies, whereas comprehensive Systematic Literature Reviews (SLRs) synthesizing AI-assisted SEO remain limited.

Accordingly, this study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 framework to synthesize current knowledge on the strategic role of AI-assisted SEO content in enhancing digital marketing performance. By integrating fragmented evidence into a unified conceptual framework grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capability Theory, this study explains how AI-assisted SEO functions as a strategic organizational capability that improves online visibility, customer engagement, content effectiveness, and overall digital marketing performance. This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ_1. How does AI-assisted SEO content contribute to enhancing digital marketing performance?

RQ_2. What are the major research themes, challenges, and future research directions concerning AI-assisted SEO content in digital marketing?

This review makes three main contributions. First, it integrates Generative AI, SEO strategy, and digital marketing performance into a unified conceptual perspective. Second, it synthesizes recent evidence explaining the transition from conventional keyword-based SEO to AI-assisted semantic and intent-driven optimization. Third, it identifies future research opportunities related to AI-powered search ecosystems, organizational digital capabilities, ethical AI implementation, and digital marketing performance measurement, thereby providing theoretical and managerial insights for leveraging AI-assisted SEO as a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence and AI-Assisted SEO Content

Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), has significantly transformed digital marketing by enabling intelligent content creation, semantic optimization, and data-driven decision-making. Unlike conventional AI applications that primarily support automation and predictive analytics, GenAI actively generates textual and multimodal content, allowing organizations to produce scalable, personalized, and contextually relevant marketing communications (Hermann and Puntoni, 2024). This evolution has expanded the role of AI from an operational support tool to a strategic capability that enhances content quality, customer engagement, and marketing effectiveness.

Within Search Engine Optimization (SEO), AI has accelerated the transition from traditional keyword-oriented optimization toward semantic, intent-driven, and user-centered optimization. Conventional SEO primarily focused on keyword density, metadata, backlinks, technical website optimization, and other ranking factors designed to improve website visibility in search engine results (Lewandowski and Schultheiß, 2023). However, advances in machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), and semantic search have fundamentally changed how search engines evaluate digital content. Contemporary SEO increasingly emphasizes contextual relevance, topical authority, and user search intent rather than exact keyword matching (Matošević, Dobša and Mladenić, 2021; Giomelakis, 2023).

The convergence of Generative AI and SEO has given rise to AI-assisted SEO content, which integrates AI capabilities into various stages of content development, including keyword research, search intent analysis, content generation, semantic optimization, and performance evaluation. These capabilities enable organizations to develop search-engine-friendly content while simultaneously addressing users' information needs. Consequently, AI-assisted SEO has evolved beyond a technical optimization technique into a strategic organizational capability that improves online visibility, customer engagement, and digital marketing effectiveness (Chan and Choi, 2025). Furthermore, the emergence of AI-powered search assistants and conversational search engines requires organizations to optimize content not only for traditional search algorithms but also for AI-mediated search environments, reinforcing the strategic importance of AI-assisted SEO in contemporary digital ecosystems (Cui and van Esch, 2025).

Digital Marketing Performance and Theoretical Foundation

Digital marketing performance refers to an organization's ability to achieve marketing objectives through digital channels by improving online visibility, customer engagement, lead generation, conversion, customer retention, and overall marketing effectiveness (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015) . Previous studies indicate that organizations possessing stronger digital capabilities achieve superior marketing outcomes because they effectively integrate digital technologies into strategic decision-making and customer value creation (Herhausen et al., 2020) . Accordingly, digital marketing performance depends not only on technology adoption but also on an organization's capability to continuously adapt its marketing strategies to changing customer behavior and digital environments.

This study adopts the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capability Theory as complementary theoretical foundations for explaining the strategic role of AI-assisted SEO content. RBV suggests that sustainable competitive advantage is derived from valuable, rare, inimitable, and well-organized organizational resources. Within this perspective, AI-assisted SEO content represents a strategic resource that combines technological capabilities, organizational knowledge, and marketing expertise to generate superior digital marketing performance. Meanwhile, Dynamic Capability Theory explains how organizations continuously sense environmental changes, seize emerging opportunities, and reconfigure internal resources in response to dynamic technological and market conditions. AI-

assisted SEO enables firms to continuously optimize digital content, respond to evolving search engine algorithms, and align content strategies with changing user search behavior.

Integrating these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for this study. Rather than functioning merely as a technological tool, AI-assisted SEO content should be understood as a dynamic organizational capability that supports intelligent content development, enhances digital marketing performance, and strengthens sustainable competitive advantage. This perspective serves as the basis for interpreting the findings of the systematic literature review presented in the following sections.

Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize existing evidence regarding the strategic role of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted Search Engine Optimization (SEO) content in enhancing digital marketing performance. The SLR approach was selected because it provides a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing scientific evidence while minimizing researcher bias (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003; Snyder, 2019). Given that AI-assisted SEO is an emerging interdisciplinary field spanning artificial intelligence, digital marketing, search engine optimization, and strategic management, a systematic review was considered the most appropriate approach to consolidate fragmented knowledge.

The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). which provide standardized procedures for study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. Following the evidence-based review process proposed by Tranfield et al. (2003), the review consisted of three stages: planning, conducting, and reporting the review. To address the research objectives, the review was guided by the following research questions:

RQ_1. How does AI-assisted SEO content contribute to enhancing digital marketing performance?

RQ_2. What are the major research themes, challenges, and future research directions concerning AI-assisted SEO content in digital marketing?

Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using four internationally recognized scientific databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight. These databases were selected because they index high-quality peer-reviewed journals in business, marketing, information systems, and artificial intelligence. The search covered publications from January 2020 to December 2025, reflecting the rapid development of Generative AI and AI-assisted SEO practices.

The search strategy combined three conceptual domains Artificial Intelligence, Search Engine Optimization, and Digital Marketing Performance using Boolean operators (AND and OR) to maximize retrieval accuracy while minimizing irrelevant studies.

Table 1. Search Keywords and Boolean Strategy

Concept	Keywords
Artificial Intelligence	"Artificial Intelligence", "Generative AI", "GenAI", "Large Language Model", ChatGPT
Search Engine Optimization	"Search Engine Optimization", SEO, "SEO Content", "Semantic SEO", "AI-Assisted SEO"
Digital Marketing	"Digital Marketing", "Digital Marketing Performance", "Content Marketing", "Marketing Performance"

The Boolean search string applied across all databases was:

("Artificial Intelligence" OR "Generative AI" OR "GenAI" OR "Large Language Model*" OR ChatGPT)
AND
("Search Engine Optimization" OR SEO OR "SEO Content" OR "Semantic SEO" OR "AI-Assisted SEO")
AND
("Digital Marketing" OR "Digital Marketing Performance" OR "Content Marketing" OR "Marketing Performance")

Backward reference searching and citation tracking were also conducted to identify additional relevant studies.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure methodological consistency and relevance, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria were established before the screening process.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference proceedings, books, editorials, dissertations
Publication year	2020–2025	Before 2020
Language	English	Non-English
Indexing	Scopus-indexed journals	Non-indexed publications
Research topic	AI, SEO, AI-assisted SEO, Digital Marketing Performance	Unrelated topics
Accessibility	Full text available	Abstract only

Study Selection

The study selection followed the four stages of the PRISMA 2020 framework: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Included Studies. The initial database search identified 512 records. After removing 68 duplicate records, 444 studies remained for title and abstract screening. Subsequently, 378 articles were excluded because they did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria.

The remaining 66 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, resulting in the exclusion of 44 studies. Finally, 22 peer-reviewed journal articles met all eligibility criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis. The complete study selection process is presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates the systematic study selection process following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, resulting in the inclusion of 22 peer-reviewed journal articles for thematic analysis.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data were systematically extracted from the 22 selected studies using a structured extraction form. The extracted information included the authors, publication year, country, research objectives, methodology, AI concepts, SEO aspects, digital marketing dimensions, key findings, and publication source. The extracted data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring concepts and patterns across the selected studies. Through an iterative coding and categorization process, the analysis generated seven major themes that explain the strategic role of AI-assisted SEO content in enhancing digital marketing performance.

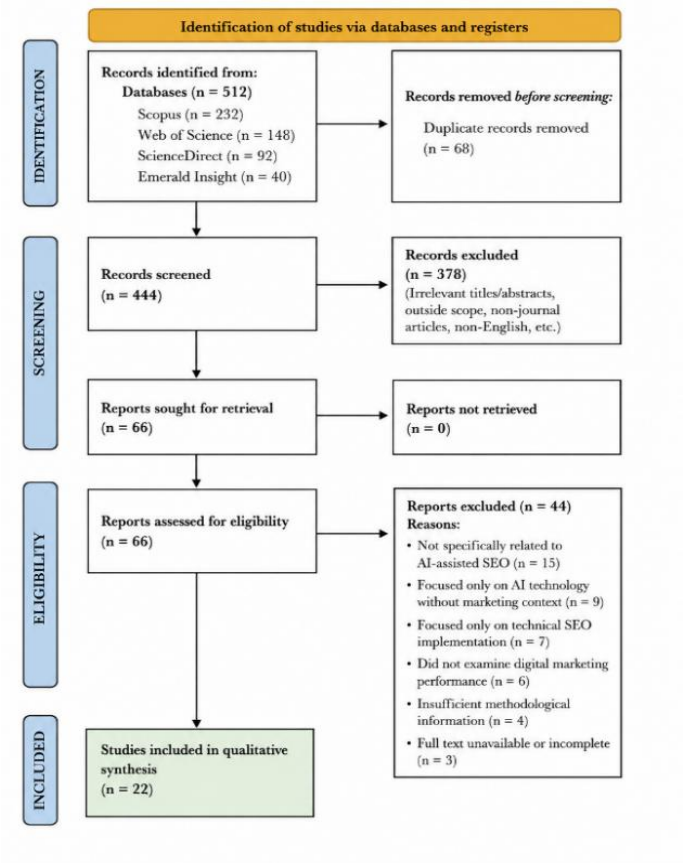


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

Results

Characteristics of Selected Studies

The systematic literature review included 22 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025. The selected studies employed qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, conceptual, and systematic review approaches, covering various aspects of artificial intelligence, search engine optimization, digital marketing, customer engagement, and organizational capability. Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategic role of AI-assisted SEO content in enhancing digital marketing performance. The thematic analysis identified seven major themes, which are presented in the following sections

Evolution of AI-Assisted SEO Content

The reviewed studies indicate that SEO has evolved from conventional keyword-based optimization toward AI-assisted semantic and intent-driven strategies. Recent developments in Generative AI, machine learning, and natural language processing enable organizations to optimize content based on contextual relevance, search intent, and user experience rather than keyword frequency alone (Matošević, Dobša and Mladenić, 2021; Giomelakis, 2023; Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Chan and Choi, 2025). Furthermore, AI-powered search environments require organizations to develop content that is understandable not only by search engines but also by AI-driven search assistants, positioning AI-assisted SEO as a strategic organizational capability rather than merely a technical optimization practice.

AI Capabilities in SEO Content Creation

The selected studies demonstrate that AI enhances multiple stages of SEO content development, including automated content generation, keyword recommendation, semantic optimization, search intent analysis, personalization, and content scalability. These capabilities enable organizations to produce high-quality digital content more efficiently while improving consistency and relevance across digital marketing channels (Saura, Ribeiro-Soriano and Palacios-Marqués, 2021; Villarroel Ordenes and Silipo, 2021; Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Chan and Choi, 2025; Hartmann, Exner and Domdey, 2025). Consequently, AI increasingly functions as an intelligent collaborator that supports strategic content development rather than replacing human marketers.

AI-Assisted SEO Strategies for Search Visibility

The literature consistently highlights that AI-assisted SEO improves search visibility through semantic optimization, contextual relevance, predictive analytics, and adaptive keyword strategies. Instead of emphasizing keyword density, AI enables organizations to continuously optimize content according to evolving search engine algorithms and user behavior (Matošević, Dobša and Mladenić, 2021; Nagpal and Petersen, 2021; Erdmann, Arilla and Ponzoa, 2022; Giomelakis, 2023; Mladenović et al., 2023). These findings indicate that sustainable search visibility depends on the integration of AI-driven optimization with high-quality and user-oriented content.

AI-Assisted SEO as a Strategic Organizational Capability

The reviewed literature suggests that AI-assisted SEO has evolved into a strategic organizational capability that strengthens digital marketing processes and organizational competitiveness. AI enables firms to integrate market intelligence, customer insights, and digital technologies into strategic decision-making while continuously adapting content strategies to changing market conditions (Herhausen et al., 2020; Saura, Ribeiro-Soriano and Palacios-Marqués, 2021; Terho et al., 2022; Wei and Pardo, 2022). Accordingly, AI-assisted SEO should be understood as a dynamic capability that supports sustainable competitive advantage through continuous learning and digital transformation.

Impact on Digital Marketing Performance

Most reviewed studies report that AI-assisted SEO positively influences digital marketing performance by improving search visibility, website traffic, customer engagement, lead generation, conversion rates, and customer retention. AI-driven optimization enables organizations to deliver more personalized and relevant digital content, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and strengthening overall marketing effectiveness (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Herhausen et al., 2020; Terho et al., 2022; Mladenović et al., 2023) . These findings demonstrate that AI-assisted SEO contributes not only to operational efficiency but also to long-term organizational performance.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Challenges related to content authenticity, algorithm dependency, transparency, bias, misinformation, copyright, cybersecurity risks, and ethical AI implementation. The reviewed studies emphasize that excessive reliance on AI-generated content may reduce originality, increase the risk of inaccurate or misleading information, and expose organizations to emerging threats such as search engine optimization poisoning, which can undermine the credibility and security of digital marketing practices (Behera et al., 2022; Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Le, Le-Dinh and Uwizeyemungu, 2024; Cui and van Esch, 2025; Hartmann, Exner and Domdey, 2025). Therefore, organizations should combine AI capabilities with human expertise to ensure responsible, transparent, secure, and trustworthy content development.

Future Research Directions

The reviewed studies identify several promising directions for future research, including AI-powered search ecosystems, conversational search optimization, explainable AI, responsible AI governance, cross-industry implementation, and longitudinal evaluation of AI-assisted SEO strategies (Chan and Choi, 2025; Cui and van Esch, 2025). Future studies are also encouraged to investigate how AI-assisted SEO capabilities interact with organizational resources and digital transformation to generate sustainable competitive advantage across different business contexts.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic literature review demonstrate that AI-assisted Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has evolved from a conventional technical optimization tool into a strategic organizational capability that enhances digital marketing performance. The seven identified themes consistently indicate that AI contributes to intelligent content generation, semantic optimization, search visibility, customer engagement, and organizational adaptability. These findings support previous studies suggesting that Generative AI has shifted digital marketing from technology-assisted practices toward AI-driven strategic marketing capable of improving organizational value creation (Erdmann, Arilla and Ponzoa, 2022; Giomelakis, 2023; Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Chan and Choi, 2025).Furthermore, AI-assisted SEO enables organizations to continuously adapt their content strategies to changing customer behavior and search engine algorithms, reinforcing the Dynamic Capability perspective that organizational competitiveness depends on the ability to continuously sense, seize, and transform organizational resources (Herhausen et al., 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, this review integrates fragmented research on artificial intelligence, search engine optimization, and digital marketing into a unified conceptual framework. The findings suggest that AI-assisted SEO represents the convergence of AI capability, SEO capability, and digital marketing capability, extending current understanding of how organizations create value through intelligent digital content. Moreover, the findings reinforce the Resource-Based View (RBV) by demonstrating that AI-assisted SEO constitutes a valuable organizational capability developed through the integration of technological infrastructure, organizational knowledge, human expertise, and continuous learning, thereby contributing to sustainable competitive advantage (Järvinen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Terho et al., 2022; Wei and Pardo, 2022). From a managerial perspective, organizations should strategically integrate AI across the SEO process while maintaining transparency, ethical governance, and human oversight to ensure trustworthy and high-quality digital content (Hermann and Puntoni, 2024; Hartmann, Exner and Domdey, 2025).

Overall, the findings answer the first research question by demonstrating that AI-assisted SEO enhances digital marketing performance through intelligent content generation, semantic optimization, improved search visibility, organizational capability development, and stronger customer engagement. The seven identified themes also answer the second research question by illustrating the current evolution, challenges, and future research directions of AI-assisted SEO within digital marketing. Future research should further investigate AI-powered search ecosystems, Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), explainable AI, and the long-term organizational impact of AI-assisted SEO across different industrial contexts (Saura, Ribeiro-Soriano and Palacios-Marqués, 2021; Cui and van Esch, 2025).

Conclusion

This systematic literature review synthesized evidence from 22 peer-reviewed journal articles to examine the strategic role of AI-assisted Search Engine Optimization (SEO) content in enhancing digital marketing performance. The findings identified seven major themes, demonstrating that AI-assisted SEO has evolved from a conventional technical optimization tool into a strategic organizational capability

that enhances intelligent content generation, semantic optimization, search visibility, customer engagement, and overall digital marketing performance.

By integrating insights from the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capability Theory, this study highlights that sustainable digital marketing performance depends not only on AI adoption but also on an organization's capability to strategically integrate AI into content development and decision-making processes. These findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of AI-assisted SEO as a strategic capability while providing a conceptual foundation for future research and practical guidance for organizations seeking to leverage AI in increasingly intelligent digital marketing ecosystems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this systematic literature review, several recommendations are proposed for both future research and managerial practice. Future studies are encouraged to conduct empirical investigations to validate the conceptual relationships identified in this review, particularly the influence of AI-assisted SEO capabilities on digital marketing performance across different industries and organizational contexts. Comparative studies involving small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), large enterprises, and various geographical regions would provide deeper insights into contextual differences in AI-assisted SEO implementation.

In addition, future research should explore emerging topics such as Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), AI-powered search ecosystems, conversational search, multimodal search, explainable AI, and responsible AI governance to better understand their implications for sustainable digital marketing strategies. From a practical perspective, organizations should strategically integrate AI into the entire SEO process, including keyword intelligence, semantic optimization, content personalization, and performance evaluation, while maintaining ethical governance, transparency, and human oversight to ensure trustworthy content and long-term competitive advantage.

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