

GEO:
Stop Guessing. Start
Testing.

@willcritchlow / @searchpilot

There are two big divides in the SEO world right now

What do we call AI search optimisation?



Whatever we call it, isn't it just SEO?



AI SEARCH, GENERAL SEO

GEO, LLMO, AEO... It's All Just SEO

By [Ryan Law](#)

April 7, 2025 ▪ 12 min read

As a marketer, I want to know if there are specific *things* I should do to improve our LLM visibility that I am not currently doing as part of my routine marketing and SEO efforts.



WE MISSED THE MOMENT. IT'S GEO.

While our industry spent the last year in-fighting about what things should be called, the market has named it.

It's called "Generative Engine Optimization."

Let's move the fuck on.



**Isn't it
just
SEO?**

We'll get to that...

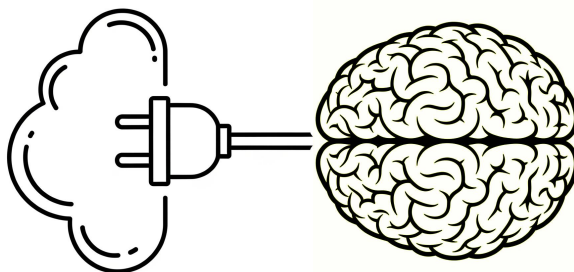
How LLMs work in e-commerce

How to run GEO experiments

Is GEO just SEO?

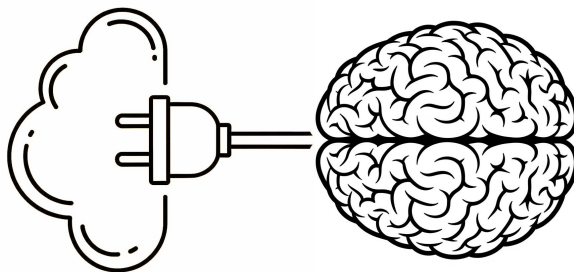
What real GEO hypotheses look like

**Let's start by thinking about how
LLMs work in e-commerce**



LLM has knowledge it “learned” during its lengthy training phase. This is fixed.

During a conversation, the LLM can get fresh knowledge “piped in” (**RAG** - Retrieval Augmented Generation)

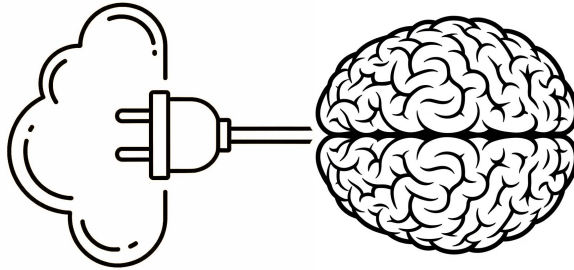


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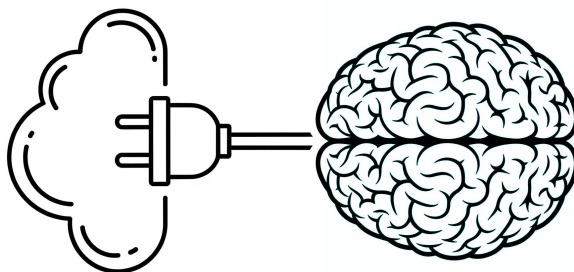
The RAG is the main opportunity for performing ecommerce GEO.

Up to date / fresh:

- Price
- Offers
- Stock
- Reviews
- Latest models



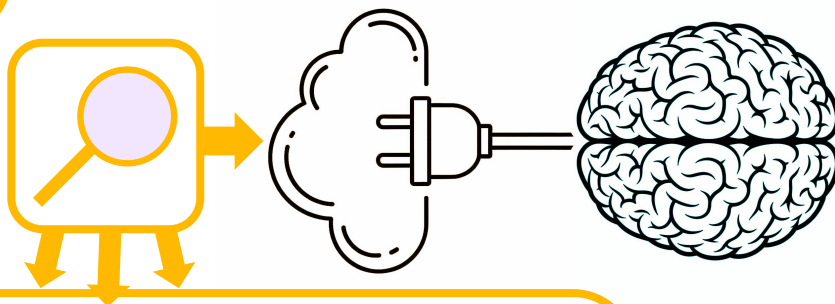
Primary source of
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Prompt: Best
hiking boots for a
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[Spring weather swiss alps]

[Trail conditions Swiss Alps spring hiking]

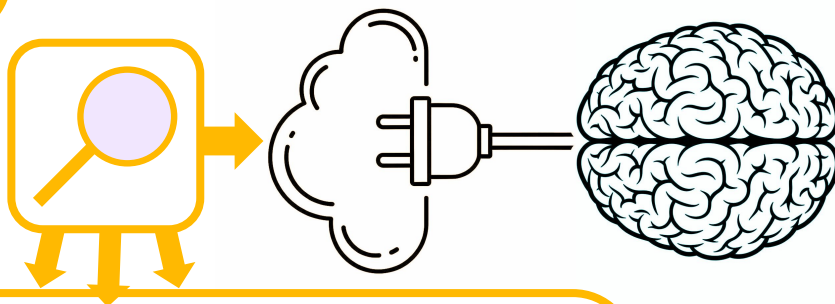
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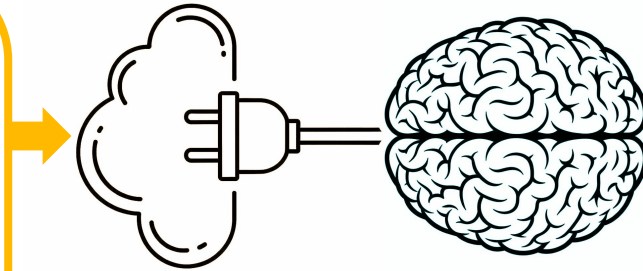
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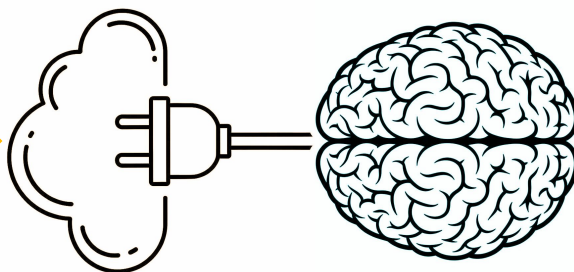
What do they get?

Somewhere between a list of URLs and full page content for each URL.



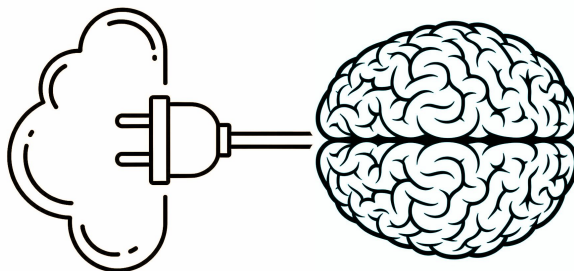
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They can
also access
these
pages:



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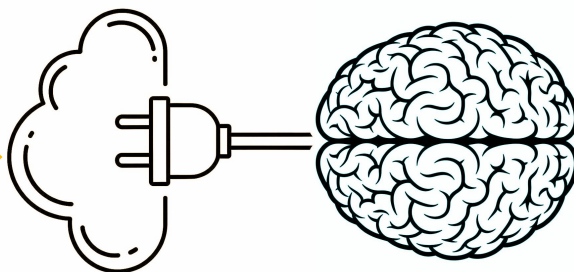
**Direct
access,
rendered**



Prompt: Best hiking boots for a trip to the Swiss alps in the spring, where I'll be walking around 10 miles a day

**Direct
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**Direct
access, no
JS**

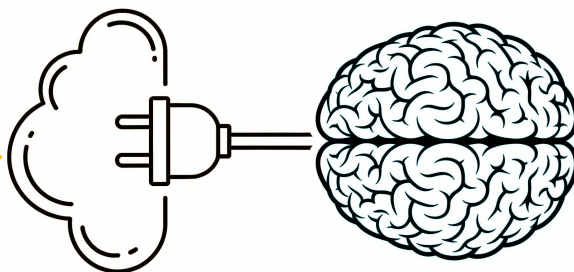


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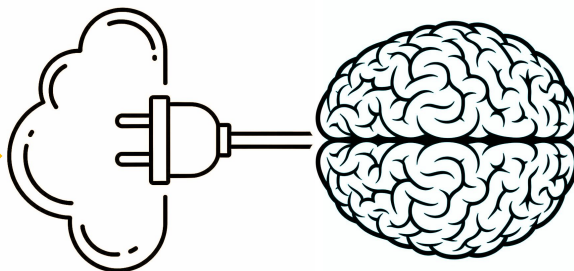
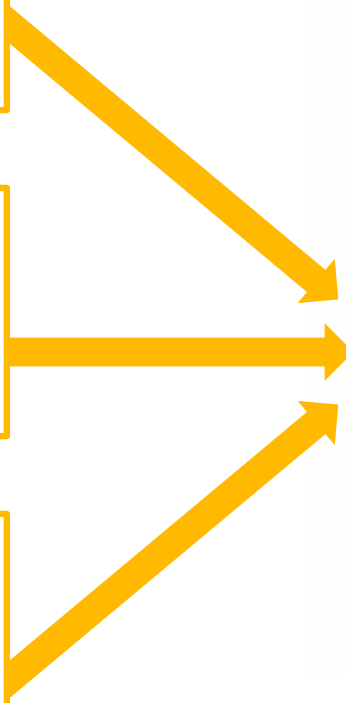
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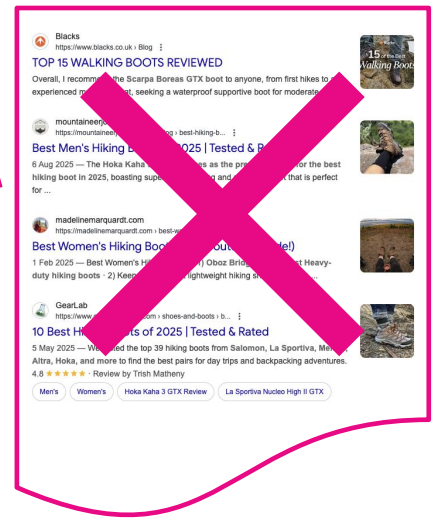
**Google
cache**

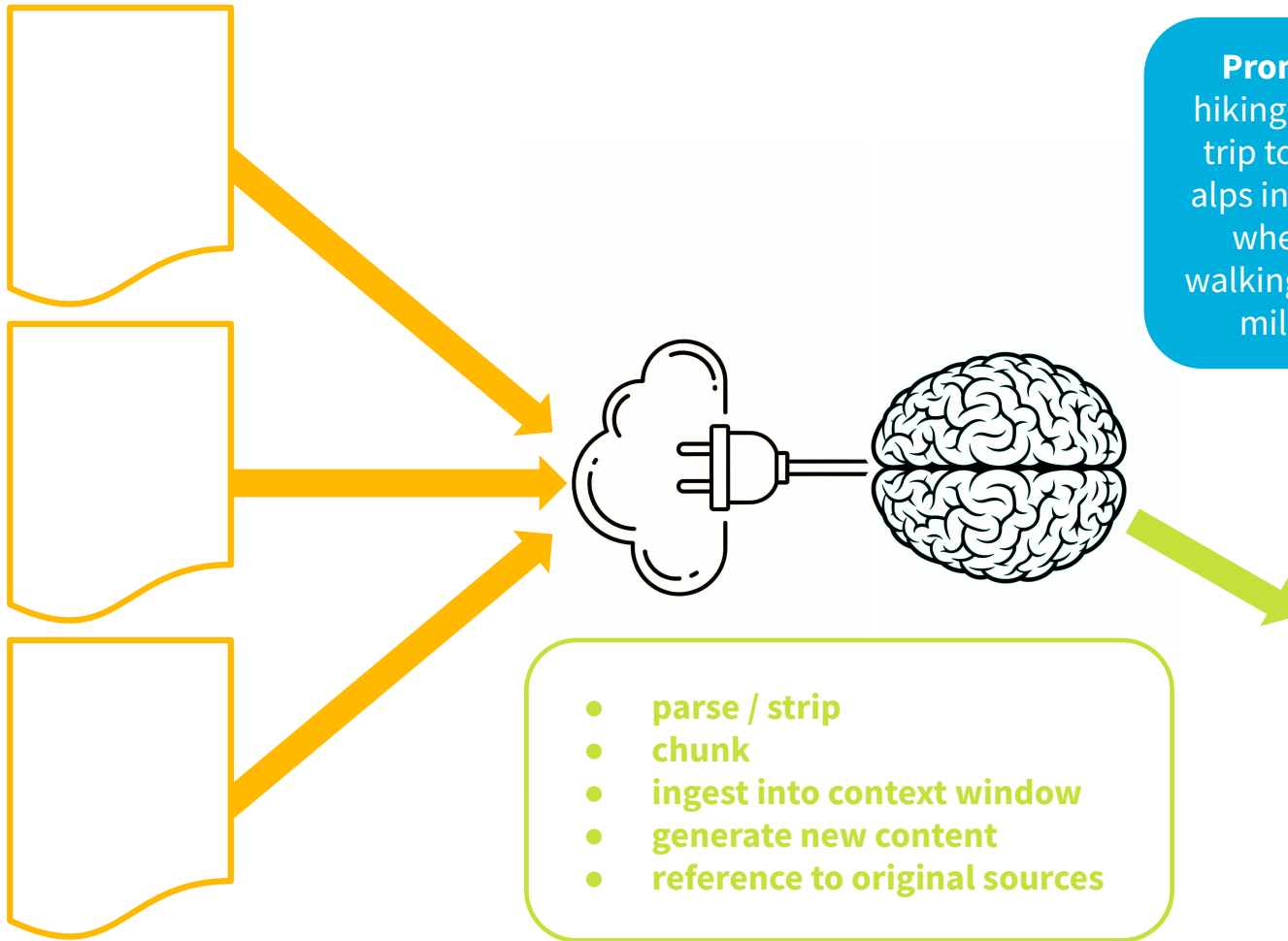


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Thought for 22s



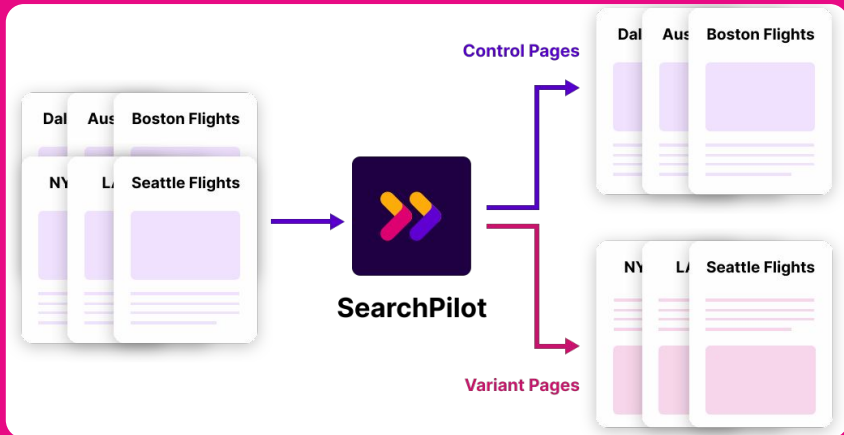
Nice — for 10 miles a day in the Swiss Alps in spring you want boots that balance support, weather protection, and comfort over long days. Spring in the Alps can mean wet trails, late snow patches, sharp rocks and chilly mornings, so here's a compact guide plus a short list of great models to consider.

Quick summary — what to look for

- **Midweight, mid-cut boot** for ankle support on uneven, rocky trails and descending long distances. (Scherkshoes Travel v1)
- **Waterproof breathable membrane** (e.g. GORE-TEX or equivalent) to keep feet dry in wet spring conditions while still shedding moisture. (Scherkshoes Travel v1)
- **Comfort / cushioning for 10 miles/day** — good footbed and rocker or shock absorption so you won't be sore after repeat days. (Scherkshoes Travel v1)
- **Grippy outsole** (Vibram or similar) and lug pattern suitable for mud, rock and occasional snow/ice. (Scherkshoes Travel v1)
- **Consider microspikes or lightweight crampons** in case of icy patches — useful in spring. (Accessory, not a boot feature.)

How do we run GEO experiments?

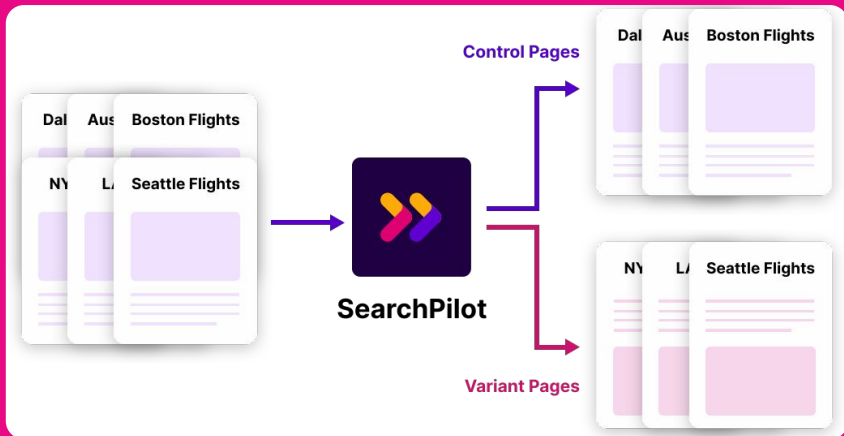
Similarities and differences: GEO vs SEO testing



The same as SEO testing:

Core mechanism
Testing ground (PDP / PLP)

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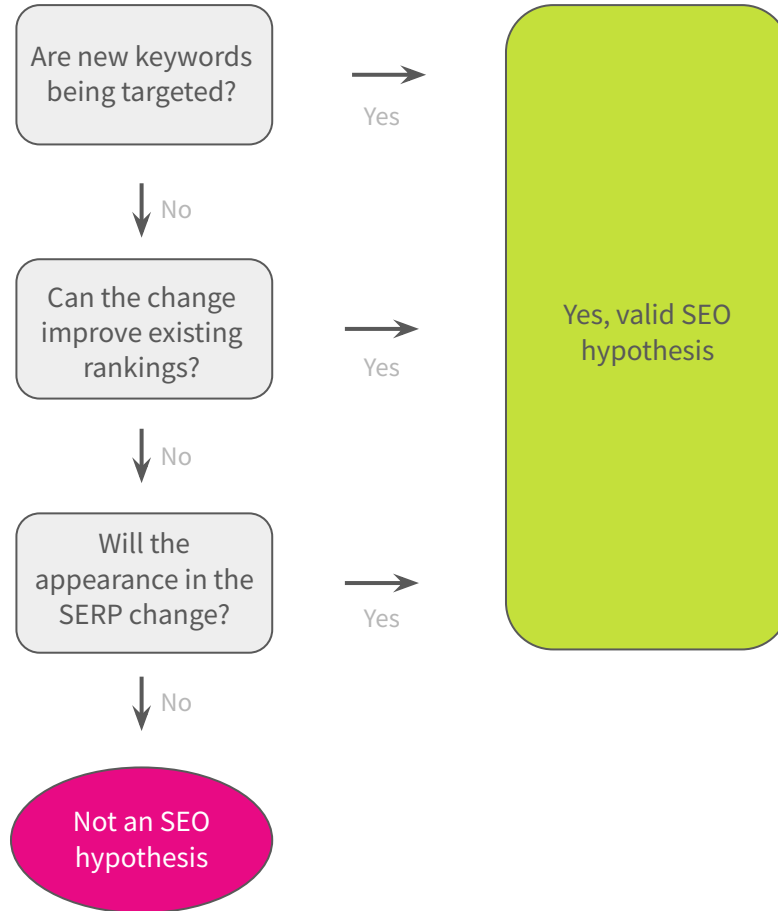
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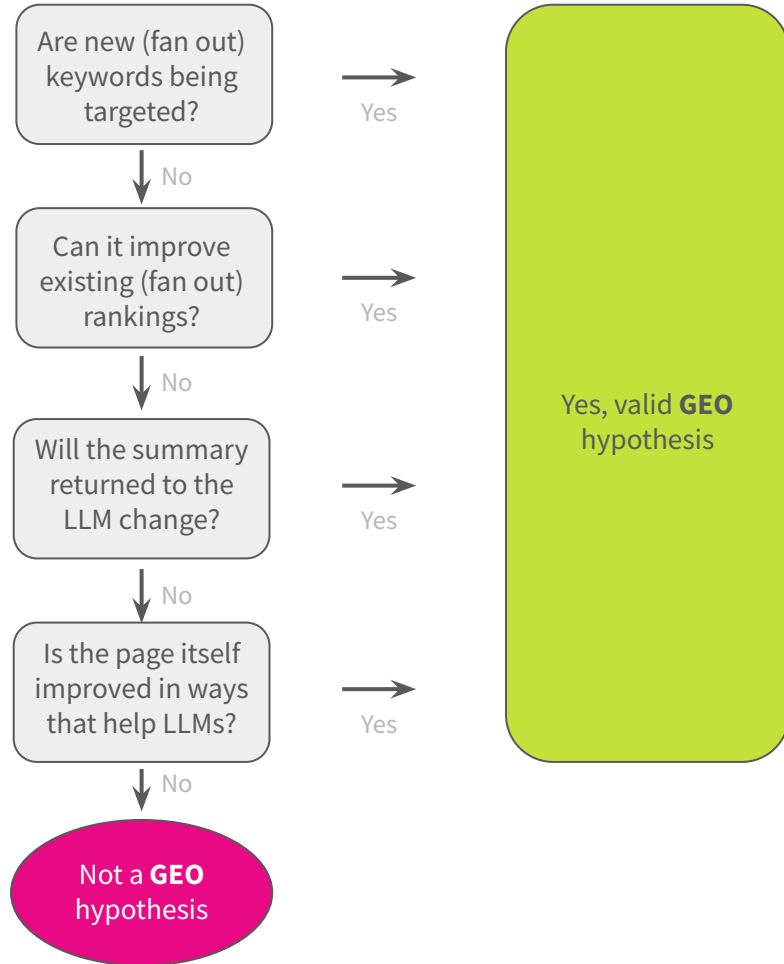
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Switchback Travel +1
- **Waterproof breathable membrane** (e.g. GORE-TEX or equivalent) to keep feet dry in wet spring conditions while still shedding moisture. Zamberian USA +1
- **Comfort / cushioning for 10 miles/day** — good footbed and rocker or shock absorption so you won't be sore after repeat days. GearJunkie +1
- **Grippy outsole (Vibram or similar)** and lug pattern suitable for mud, rock and occasional snow/ice. Outdoor Gear Lab
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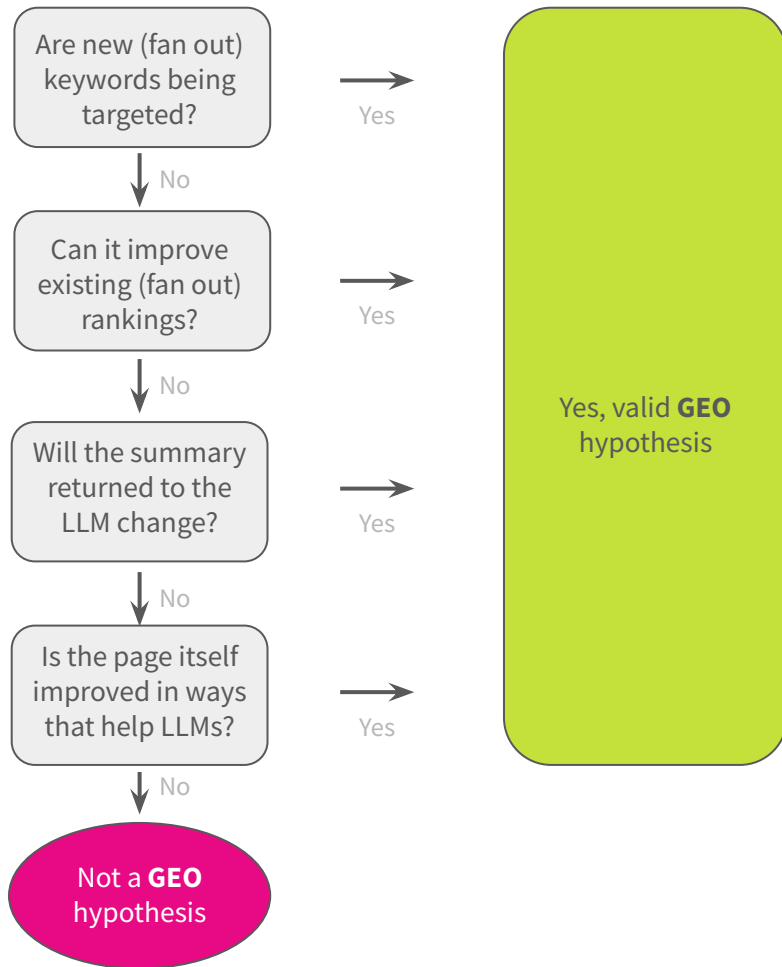
Different for GEO testing:

Testing against more of
the user journey "at once"





Very similar
to their SEO
equivalents



Very similar
to their SEO
equivalents

More like
traditional
CRO

Are new (fan out)
keywords being
targeted?

→
Yes

↓ No

Can it improve
existing (fan out)
rankings?

→
Yes

↓ No

Will the summary
returned to the
LLM change?

→
Yes

↓ No

Is the page itself
improved in ways
that help LLMs?

→
Yes

↓ No

Not a **GEO**
hypothesis

Yes, valid **GEO**
hypothesis

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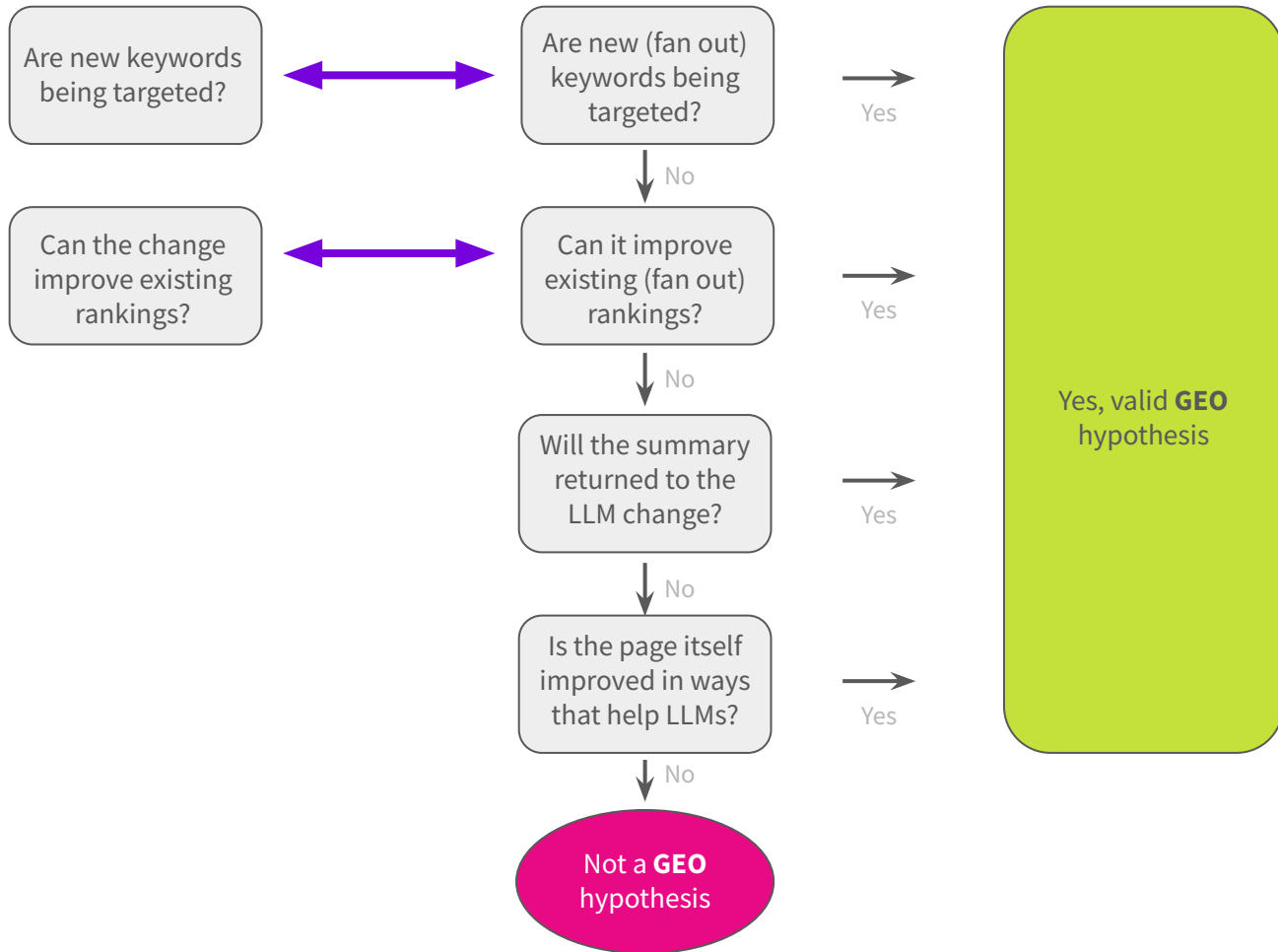


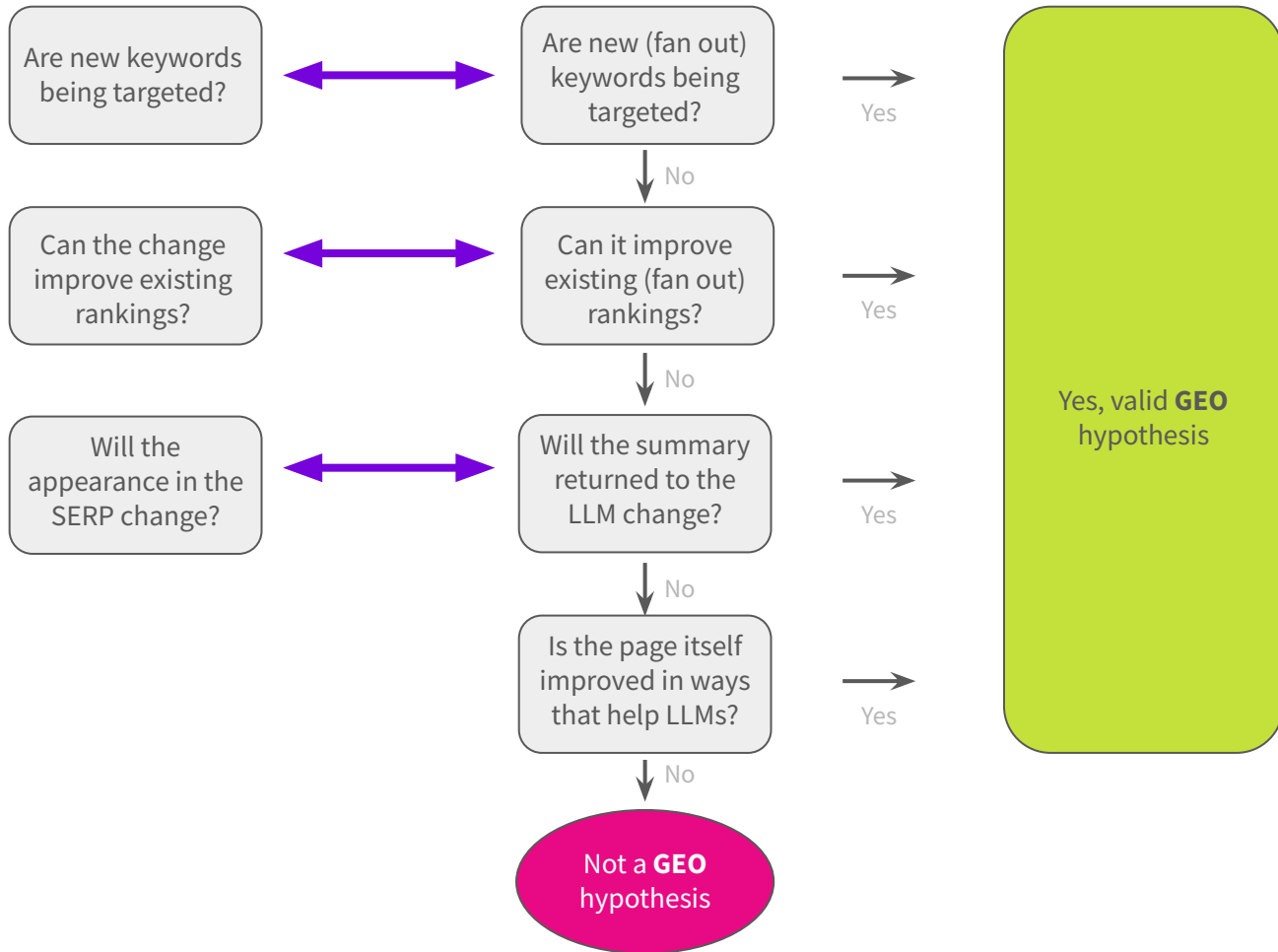
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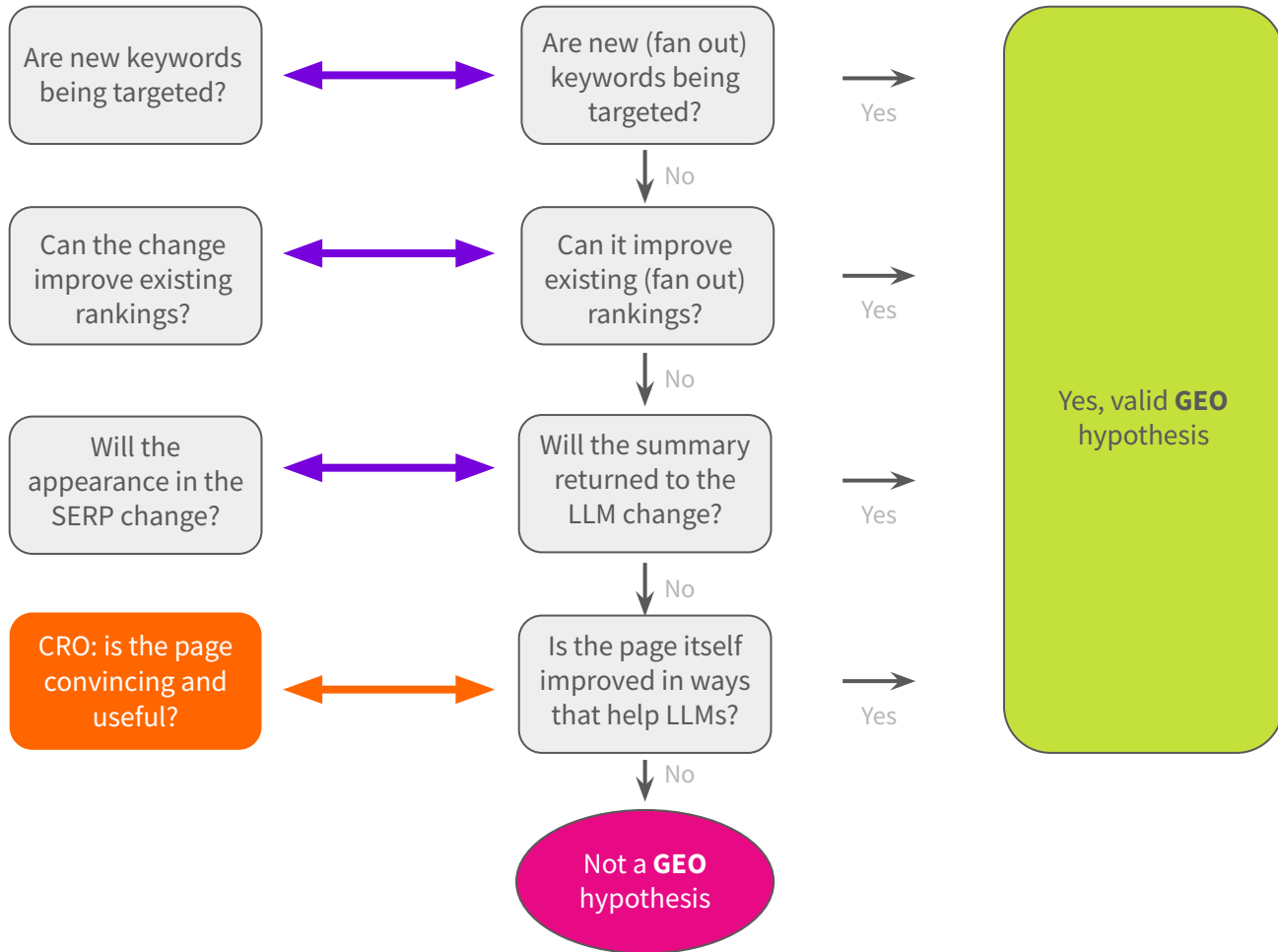


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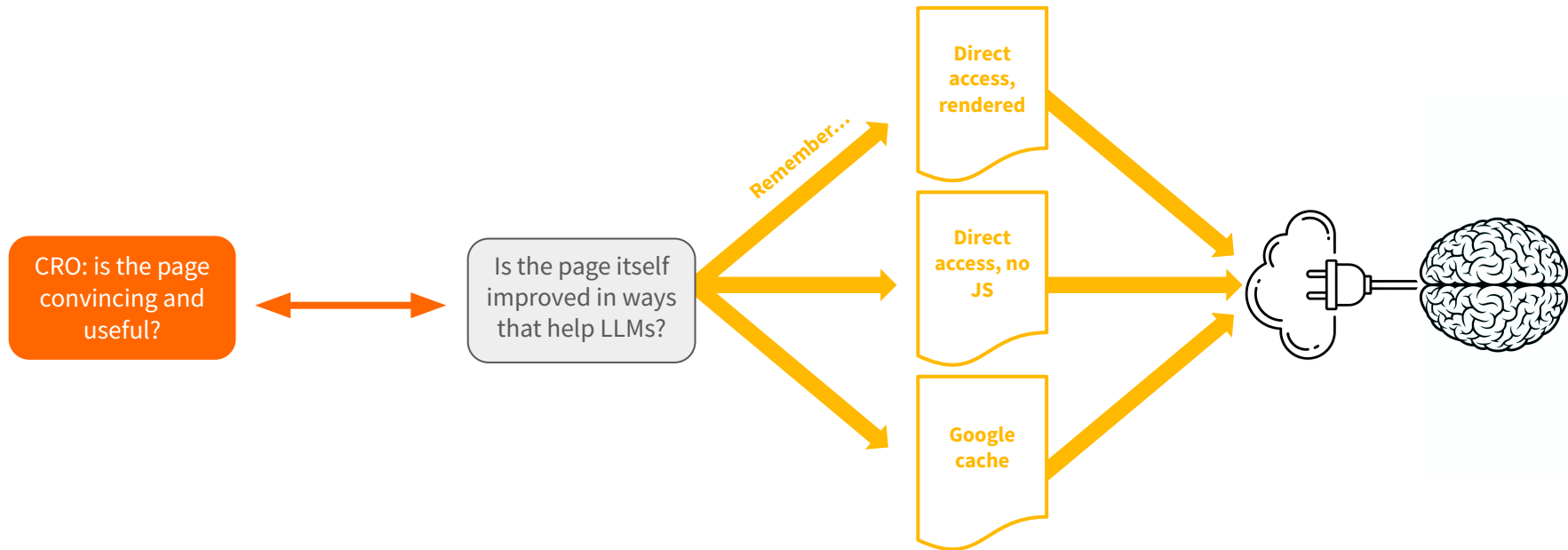




CRO: is the page
convincing and
useful?



Is the page itself
improved in ways
that help LLMs?



Is GEO just SEO?

The case for “yes”

- Provides Phenomenal UX

- ### Keyword-Targeted

-  Built to be Shared through Social Networks

-  Multi-Device Ready

- ## Elements of an Optimized Page



Created by Rand Fishkin

**Almost everything
you *do* could
plausibly be done for
SEO benefit**

[Spring weather swiss
alps]

[Trail conditions Swiss
Alps spring hiking]

[Best hiking boot outsole
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**Most of the ways you
do better is by
ranking better in the
fan-out queries**

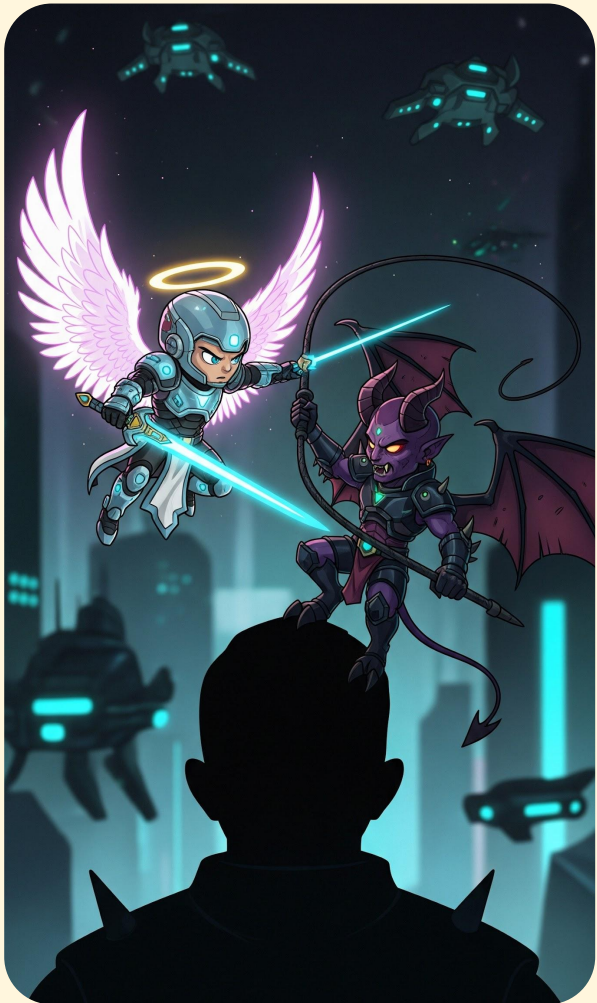


**It should be owned
by the SEO team –
it's at the very least
part of SEO**

BUT



There are new mechanisms (e.g. “influencing” what happens between fan-out and generation)



**As a result, it's
perfectly possible to
imagine specific
changes that are
good for SEO and
bad for GEO**



**(Just like you can
imagine a change
being good for Bing
but bad for Google)**

 **Hot take** 

**If you're *guessing* what
works, then yes, SEO =
GEO.**



**If you're *testing* what
works, then you might find
it's not.**

Let's make it concrete...

What do GEO hypotheses look like?

GEO hypothesis for a Product Detail Page (PDP)

- **Goal:** To be the product chosen and recommended in an AI-generated comparison (e.g., "compare the best running shoes for beginners").
- **Potential Hypothesis:** *"By reformatting our product specifications into a concise, scannable 'Key Features' summary at the top of the PDP, we hypothesize that generative engines will more frequently cite our product in comparison answers, leading to an increase in qualified last-click traffic."*

GEO hypothesis for a Product Listing Page (PLP)

- **Goal:** To become the AI's preferred source for a category-level query (e.g., "where's the best place to buy 4K TVs under £1,000?").
- **Potential Hypothesis:** *"By adding a clear, authoritative introductory paragraph above the product grid on our category pages, we hypothesize that AI models will use our page as a primary source for 'best of' queries, resulting in more citations and an uplift in high-intent traffic to the entire category."*



**Most GEO takes you'll
read are just
guesswork.**

Schema? Chunking?

**Stop guessing. Start
testing.**

Thanks!

@willcritchlow

Go deeper:

<https://www.searchpilot.com/resources/blog/geo-testing>

Generative Engine Optimization: Stop Guessing and Start Testing



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