GENERATIVE ENGINE OPTIMISATION · AN ADVISORY FOR BRANDS AND AGENCIES

Man of Many's 2026 Guide to GEO.

What AI answers are actually built from, which of the tactics being sold to you the evidence kills, and what a brand can do about it this quarter. Every number is sourced and dated, including the ones that do not flatter us.

PUBLISHED	EVIDENCE BASE	POSITION	FOR
21 September 2026	Named sources only	Vendor neutral	Brands and agencies

CONTENTS

What is in this guide.

Nine sections. The first seven are the evidence and what to do with it.

Why this exists, and who wrote it

Man of Many is a publisher, not an GEO vendor. We do not sell a visibility dashboard, an audit subscription or a monthly retainer against a score, so we have no reason to talk up numbers that make the category look bigger than it is.

We built this because we kept being sent decks that reversed the evidence. This is the third in a series. Issue 01, *GEO is Mostly Bullshit*, and Issue 02, *AI Visibility is a Topic-Level Game*, were written for the IAB Australia Discovery: AI & Search Summit in July 2026. This one collects everything since, adds our own first-party data, and puts a source next to every claim.

> **HOW TO READ A NUMBER IN HERE**
>
> Every figure carries the publisher, the sample size where one exists, and the date it was measured. Where two studies of the same thing disagree, both are printed rather than averaged. Where our own data contradicts a claim we would like to make, our data wins and the claim is not printed.

AT A GLANCE

The guide in one page.

For the reader who has ten minutes before a planning meeting. Everything below is argued properly later, with sources.

85%
of brand mentions in AI answers come from third-party sites, not the brand's own domain (AirOps, 21,311 mentions, Oct 2025)

15.2%
of AI topic categories have a clear owner. The other 85% are unclaimed (Semrush, 1,094 categories, Jul 2026)

2.5%
is the real year-on-year fall in organic traffic across the 40,000 largest US sites, not 25% to 60% (Graphite, Jan 2026)

0.59%
of Man of Many's sessions come from AI assistants. Half a per cent is not a channel (our GA4, 90 days to 22 Jul 2026)

14%
of 1,042 content marketers report their blog delivers strong results, a twelve-year low, while 92.4% now use AI to write it (Orbit Media, Sep 2026)

> **You cannot optimise your way into an AI answer. You earn your way in, through the trusted editorial AI already relies on.**

THE SIX THINGS WORTH KNOWING

1. **AI search is real and small.** AI chatbots draw 0.65 billion monthly visitors against 3.3 billion for search. The AI most people actually meet is Google's, and AI Overviews now appear on more than 40% of US searches.
2. **Search did not collapse.** Organic traffic across the 40,000 largest US sites fell 2.5% year on year. Budgets have been cut as though it fell 50%.
3. **The answer is assembled from other people's pages.** 85% of what AI says about a brand comes from third-party sites, and nearly 90% of that sits in listicles, comparisons and reviews.
4. **Most of what is sold as GEO does not survive measurement.** Adding schema was followed by a 4.6% fall in AI Overview citations. Publishing llms.txt showed no relationship to citations across 300,000 domains. Scaling AI content cost 54% of sites 30% or more of their peak traffic.
5. **There is no single AI strategy, only a category one.** Beauty answers are built from retail, travel from reviews, finance from specialist publishers. Across all categories, news and publishers are the largest single cited source.
6. **Nobody owns your category yet, and that closes.** Only 15.2% of categories have an owner, but once owned they are retained 90.4% month to month. Incumbency is forming now.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Stop buying rank in AI. Start buying the reputation AI reads. Get the search fundamentals right, because AI answers ground in the same indexes. Then invest where the 85% sits: independent reviews, comparisons and best-of guides written by named journalists in your category, published somewhere AI already cites, and kept current. Measure it per AI tool, against business outcomes, not against a blended visibility score.

01

The state of play.

AI search is growing quickly from a small base, and the collapse in search everyone budgeted for did not happen. Both facts matter, because the second one is where the money still is.

SECTION 01

AI search is real, and it is small.

Two numbers decide how much of your budget this deserves: how many people use AI assistants, and how many of them arrive at a brand through one.

AI chatbots are the fastest growing category on the web and still the smallest one that matters. They draw **0.65 billion** monthly visitors. Search draws **3.3 billion**, and news and publishers draw 1.4 billion, more than twice the chatbots.

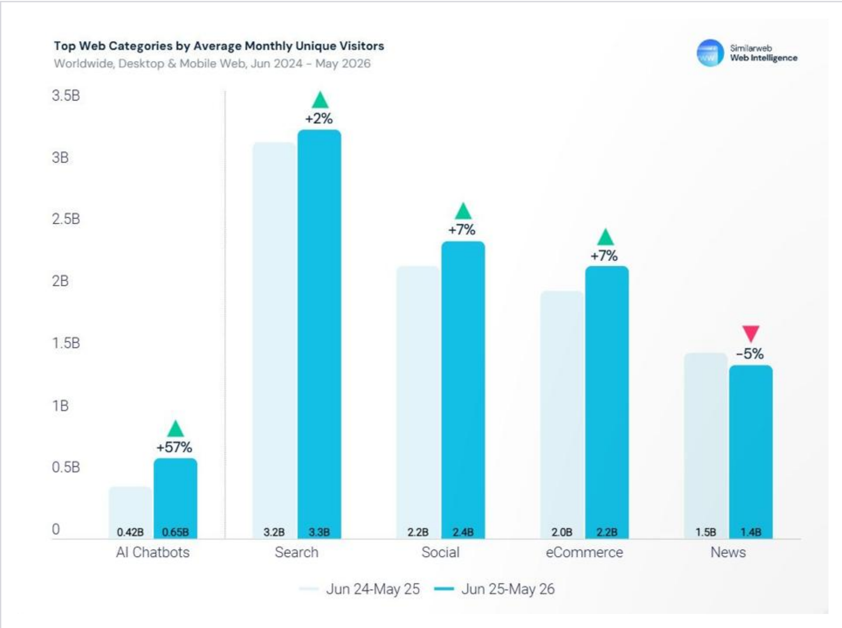


FIGURE 1. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Top web categories by average monthly unique visitors, worldwide, June 2024 to May 2026. Similarweb, 2026 Generative AI Landscape.

This is the first place most GEO pitches go wrong. The growth rate is genuinely steep, and it is being presented as though the base were already large. It is not.

The AI most people meet is Google's

Most Australians encountering an AI answer are not in ChatGPT. They are in Google, where **more than 40% of US searches** now return an AI Overview, up from about 15% in January 2025. Google is explicit that AI Overviews and AI Mode are built on its core ranking systems.

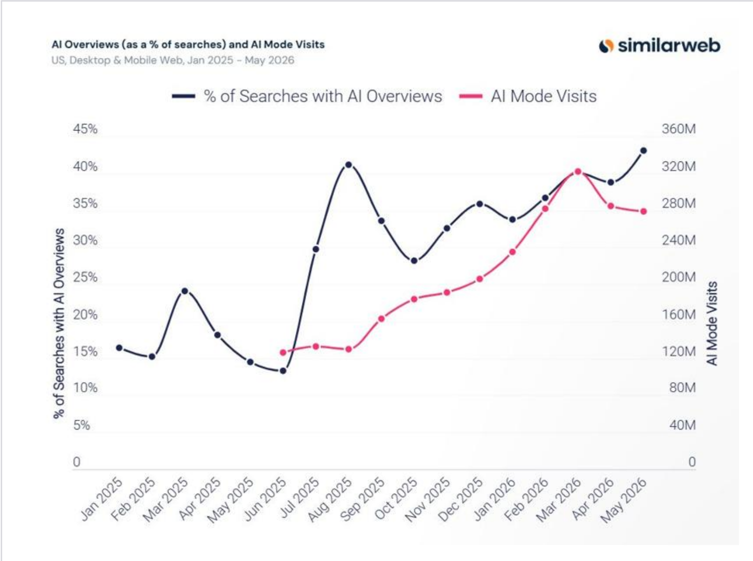


FIGURE 2. SOURCE SCREENSHOT AI Overviews as a share of US searches, and AI Mode visits, January 2025 to May 2026. Similarweb.

> *Generative AI features like AI Mode are built directly on top of our core ranking systems. Stop optimising for bots. Focus on people.*
>
> BRENDON KRAHAM, VICE PRESIDENT, GOOGLE

99%

of shoppers who research with ChatGPT consult Google for final decisions.

Brendon Kraham, Google, on stage at Rethink Retail, September 2026. The slide's own source line: Google-commissioned Ipsos Consumer Continuous online survey, April 2026, 25 countries including Australia, consumers aged 16 to 74, **n=12,038 ChatGPT commercial users**, not weighted to population size. Google-commissioned, so read it as Google's claim about Google. The clickstream data agrees with the direction: AI tools are still under a twentieth of Google's size, and AI sessions are followed by Google searches (Rand Fishkin, SparkToro, September 2026).

FIGURE 3. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Brendon Kraham presenting the figure at Rethink Retail, September 2026. Image via Juozas Kaziukėnas, shared by Mark Williams-Cook on LinkedIn, 18 September 2026.

Your website is the confirmation step, not the persuasion step. That is Bengü Sarıca Dinçer's line from Search Evolution Summit, and the Google figure supports it. Discovery may start in an assistant. The decision is checked in Google and on your site, which is why the third-party verdicts Google surfaces still decide the sale.

That matters commercially, because it means the lever has not changed. If your search fundamentals are wrong, your AI visibility is wrong, and no amount of AI-specific tooling fixes it. Google's own documentation says the same thing in plainer terms: *there are no additional requirements to appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode, nor other special optimizations necessary.*

The Google Zero correction

Through 2026 a story took hold that organic search traffic was collapsing by a quarter to a half. Measured across the 40,000 largest US sites, the actual fall was **2.5%** year on year. Google still takes 73.7% of US desktop searches, and Amazon, Bing and YouTube each individually carry more search activity than ChatGPT.

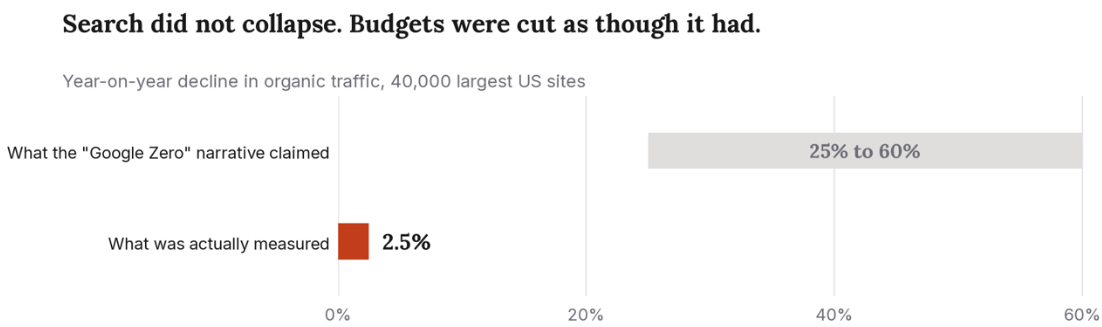


Figure 4. Year-on-year decline in organic traffic. Sources: Graphite, January 2026 (Similarweb panel, 40,000 sites). SparkToro, Search Happens Everywhere, March 2026.

> **THE EXPENSIVE MISTAKE**
>
> Budget has moved out of content and earned media into AI tooling on the strength of a collapse that was roughly twenty times smaller than reported. If you cut a Q4 content programme on the Google Zero narrative, that decision was made on a number that did not hold.

Zero click is not zero value

What did change is the click. About **68%** of US searches now end without one, and 1,000 searches return roughly 276 clicks to the open web. But **78%** of people who read an AI summary still go on to visit websites for the detail.

So the job changes rather than disappearing. The value moves out of the click and into two things: being the source the answer is built from, and being the brand the answer names.

The link economy is being replaced by a licensing one

The referral side of the old bargain is genuinely breaking. Across roughly 100 of the largest US news sites, monthly visits peaked at about **68 million** in November 2024 and had fallen to **47.6 million** by August 2026, as search and social sent less and AI referrals came nowhere near replacing it.

What is replacing it is a market. Axios counts **299 licensing deals** between AI companies and media companies against **107 lawsuits** since 2020, with deals overtaking suits in June 2024 and pulling away since. The licensing market is forming faster than the courts can settle the rules, which is the commercial version of the argument this guide makes: the value of journalism to AI is being priced at the source, not at the click.

WHAT THAT MEANS FOR A BRAND

The publishers being licensed are the ones whose pages the models are built from. Being written about by one of them is now a route into the training and grounding corpus as well as into the answer, and neither is something a brand can buy directly.

Google is also closing the side door

Since mid-September 2026 the rank trackers, search scrapers and AI tools that read Google's results at scale have been losing access. Nozzle reported roughly an **80% drop** in the data it could collect, Sistrix's status page recorded a reduced collection rate from 16 September, and Search Engine Roundtable tied it to the same human-verification methods Google has been rolling through its results all year. Google has not confirmed any of it, and it may ease. But the direction is clear: the more Google controls who can read its index, the more the AI most people meet is Google's own, and the less any third-party AI product can borrow Google's ranking to build its answer. That concentrates the game further on the sources Google itself trusts.

SECTION 01

What the AI Overview does to the click.

The first randomised experiment on Google's own claim that AI Overviews send higher-quality traffic. It found the opposite, and brands need the numbers.

Saharsh Agarwal and Ananya Sen recruited **1,065 US desktop users**, let them search Google as normal, and for a random half used a browser extension to strip the AI Overview while leaving the ordinary results in place. Google says AI Overviews raise satisfaction and produce higher-quality clicks. The experiment found no measurable change in satisfaction (4.0 out of 5 either way), no difference in time on site, bounce rate or return-to-Google, and a large fall in clicks.

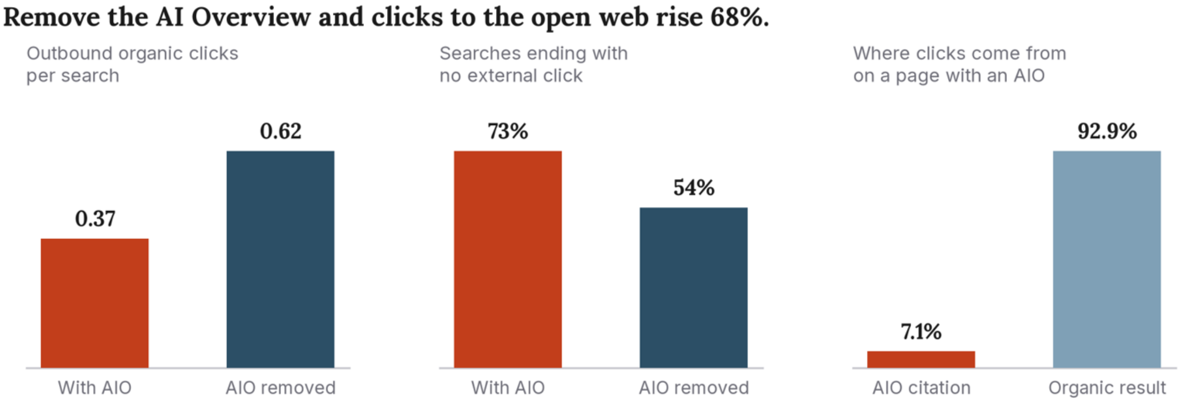


Figure 5. Clicks with and without the AI Overview, and where the clicks on an AIO page come from. Source: Agarwal and Sen, 2026, reported by Digital Content Next, 15 September 2026.

68%
more outbound organic clicks per search once the AIO is removed: 0.62 against 0.37

73%
of searches ended with no external click when an AIO appeared, against 54% without one

88%
more organic clicks when a top-of-page AIO is removed; no measurable effect when the AIO sits lower

7.1%
of outbound clicks on an AIO page came from the AIO's own citations; 92.9% still came from the organic results

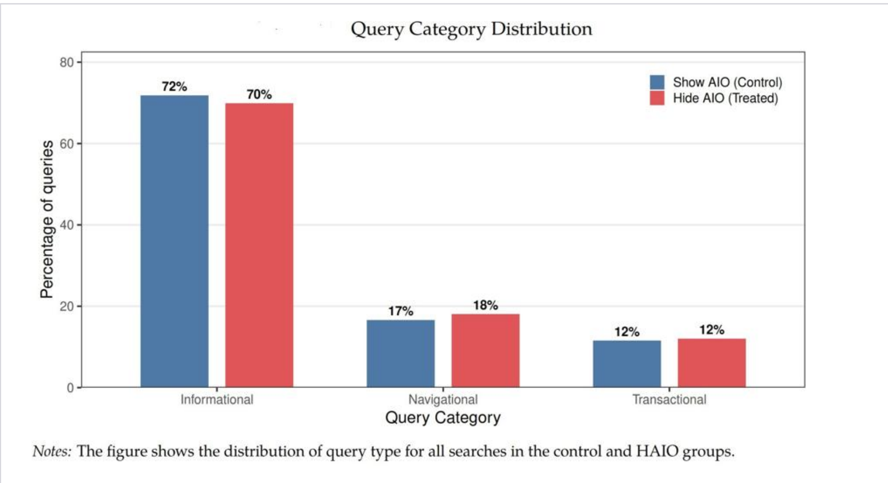


FIGURE 6. SOURCE SCREENSHOT What people searched for, in both groups: informational 72% and 70%, navigational 17% and 18%, transactional 12% and 12%. Google showed an AIO on about 41% of searches overall, 53% of informational, 15% of transactional and 6% of navigational, and more than 87% sat above every organic result. Figure from Agarwal and Sen via Digital Content Next.

WHAT A BRAND SHOULD TAKE FROM IT

Three things. The click-through rates you were used to are gone on informational queries, and the AIO citation does not give them back: 7.1% is not a channel. The organic results underneath still carry 93% of what does click, so ranking has not stopped mattering. And satisfaction did not move, which means the AIO is substituting for the source, not improving on it. Plan for being the source the answer is built from, and for the branded search that follows, rather than for the referral. The paper is on SSRN (abstract 6513059); we read the DCN report and the abstract, not the full text.

SECTION 01

What Australians do with AI before they buy.

The one local study, and the first that measures the interrogation rather than the click.

WPP Media's *The Hidden Pathway* surveyed **2,500 Australians** who had already used AI search to help make a purchase, across 12 categories, with fieldwork completed in August 2026. Each respondent answered on two categories, so category samples run from 363 to 424 people. It measures reported behaviour and attitudes, not observed transactions, and it excludes agentic purchasing, where the AI buys on the person's behalf.

2 in 3
used AI to check whether an advertising claim was true

26%
said it completely changed the purchase they intended to make

82%
more likely to trust a brand that appears in AI results (42% much more)

91%
said AI sped up their decision

WHAT AI DID TO THE DECISION	SHARE OF BUYERS
No influence at all	**3%**
Confirmed the original choice	**10%**
Influenced the thinking, often significantly, without changing the outcome (the variant, model, price point or colour)	**62%**
Completely changed the intended decision	**26%**

Complete changes of mind were highest in **automotive (34.8%)**, fashion and accessories (33.3%), financial services (32.6%) and electronics and appliances (32.2%). Buyers reported an average of 18 AI actions per decision: recommendations, comparisons, suitability, price and availability. Incumbency helps, and it does not protect: WPP's Catherine Wolkers found the interrogation happens whether or not the buyer went in predisposed to a brand.

> *The outtake from this isn't to go all in on AI as a recommendation touchpoint. It's that AI is synthesising most of the other touchpoints. Influencers on YouTube, online communities like Reddit, expert reviews, super important for automotive, traditional search, consumer reviews: if they're available on the open internet, they are getting crawled, ingested and synthesised through AI.*
>
> DANIEL BENTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR DIGITAL SOLUTIONS, WPP MEDIA, SEPTEMBER 2026

WHY THIS SITS NEXT TO THE 99%

Read together, the two studies describe one journey. The assistant runs the interrogation and shapes the shortlist; Google and the brand's own site confirm it. Both stages are built from the same raw material, and it is mostly third-party: reviews, expert coverage, comparisons and communities. WPP's own measurement advice follows: AI visibility and brand descriptions, referral traffic, brand research and business measures together, fed into marketing mix modelling, because there is not going to be a singular metric. Source: WPP Media, *The Hidden Pathway: How AI search is rewriting consumer decision-making*, via Mi3, Andrew Birmingham, 17 September 2026.

SECTION 01

Our own numbers, unvarnished.

We publish ours because the argument only works if the inconvenient number is on the page too.

Our own numbers, including the one that does not flatter us.

Growth since February 2026, and the AI assistant share of all sessions

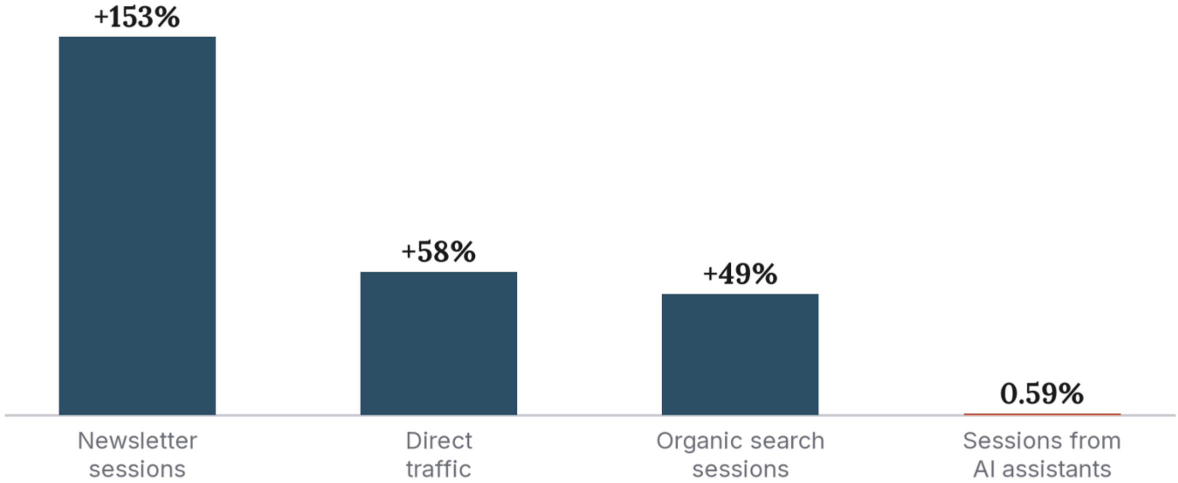


Figure 7. Man of Many channel growth and the AI assistant share of sessions. Source: Man of Many GA4. Growth February to July 2026; AI assistant share is the 90 days to 22 July 2026.

Organic search sessions are up **49%** since February. Direct is up **58%** and newsletter sessions are up **153%**. AI assistants send **0.59%** of our sessions, and that figure is **down 19.4%** year on year, from 10,523 sessions to 8,483.

WHAT WE WILL NOT PRINT

Two figures that circulated in our own materials earlier this year have been removed from this document. An *AI referral traffic up 38% year on year* claim is contradicted by our own GA4 and has no source attached anywhere, so it is out. A *1.3 million AI crawler requests per week* figure had no first-party source, so the dated Cloudflare measurement of over one million a week (5 to 12 August 2026) is printed instead.

We also will not print a headline audience reach number in this document. Our own assets disagree on what it should be, and the figure in current circulation is impressions described as reach. Until that is settled, the honest thing is to leave it out and give you the intent and impact data instead, which is in Section 08.

> **Anyone selling you an AI traffic strategy is selling you a rounding error. The money is in the citation, not the click.**

02

What AI answers are actually built from.

If you only read one section, read this one. It is the mechanism, and it is why the brand-side playbook has a ceiling.

SECTION 02

Most of what AI says about you, you did not write.

Across 21,311 brand mentions, only 13.2% traced back to the brand's own domain.

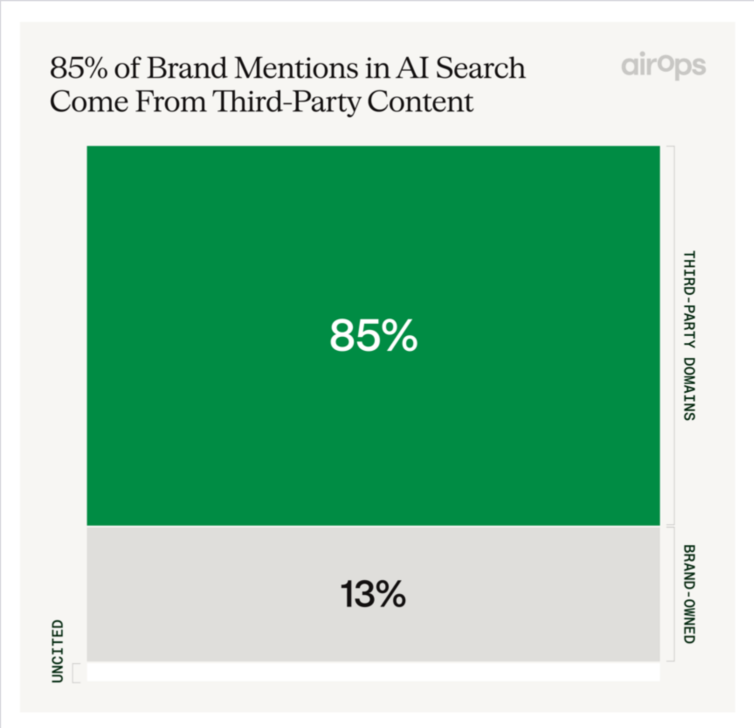


FIGURE 8. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Where brand mentions in AI answers come from. AirOps, The 2026 State of AI Search, drawing on The Influence of Offsite Signals in AI Search, 21,311 brand mentions, October 2025.

This single finding reorganises the whole problem. A brand controls its own site, its own schema, its own llms.txt and its own content calendar, and that territory accounts for roughly an eighth of what AI says about it. The other **85%** is other people's pages.

It gets more specific. Nearly **90%** of those third-party mentions sit in **listicles, comparisons and reviews**. Not press releases, not thought leadership, not the brand's blog. Round-ups and verdicts.

> *Getting recommended by AI isn't about prompt tricks, it's about having a trusted reputation across the web that these systems have every reason to cite.*
>
> MIKE COOK, NEWS AUSTRALIA, SEPTEMBER 2026

We are quoting a competitor there deliberately. News Australia launched its own GEO advisory product this month, and that sentence is the correct diagnosis. Where we differ is what follows from it, which is Section 04.

SECTION 02

Publishers are the largest source, and the mix swings by category.

Across every category AI cites publishers more than any other source type. Within a category, the picture changes enough that a single AI strategy is not a coherent thing to buy.

Across all categories, news and publishers are the biggest single source type AI cites: **24.3%** in Google's AI Mode and **26%** in ChatGPT. But the category-level picture varies so widely that a single AI strategy is not a coherent thing to buy.

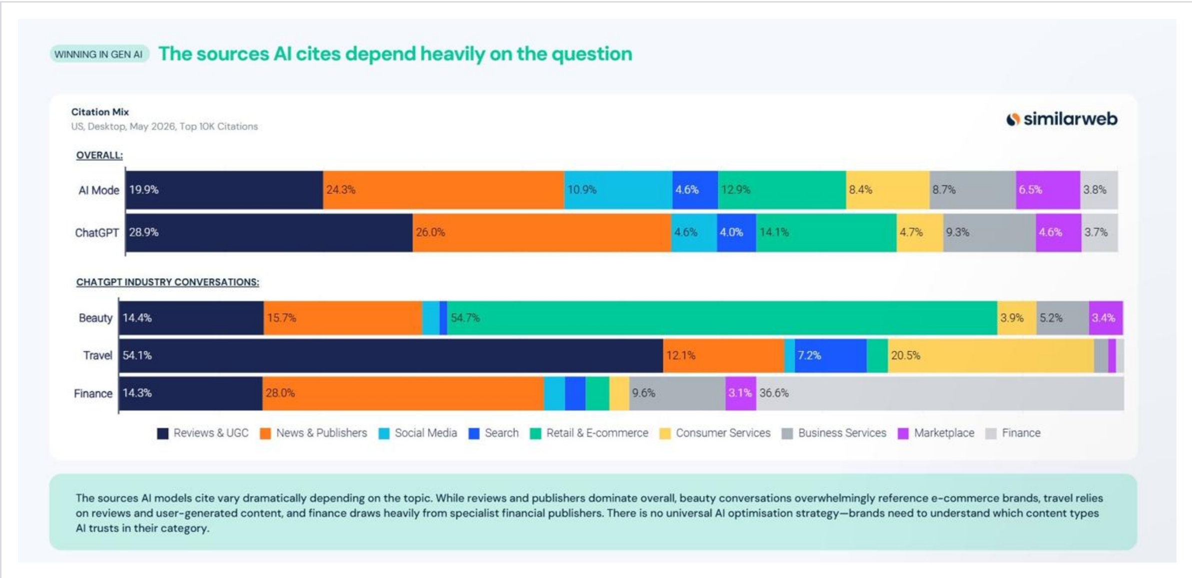


FIGURE 9. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Citation mix by source type, AI Mode and ChatGPT overall, and ChatGPT by industry conversation. US desktop, May 2026, top 10,000 citations. Similarweb.

> **THE PRACTICAL READ**
>
> Before commissioning anything, find out what your category's answers are actually built from. If you sell beauty, retail and e-commerce pages are doing the work. If you sell travel, it is reviews and user-generated content. If you sell into a money or health category, it is reputable publishers, because Google's own rater guidelines treat those topics as Your Money or Your Life and hold them to a higher standard.

SECTION 02

The model often decides before it searches.

Citations are the second game. The first is being in the answer's shortlist before a single source is fetched.

When ChatGPT answers a buying question, it frequently writes its own follow-up search query first, and fills that query with brands the user never typed. Those brands made the final answer **68.9%** of the time. Brands that only turned up because they were fetched and read during grounding made it **2.1%** of the time.

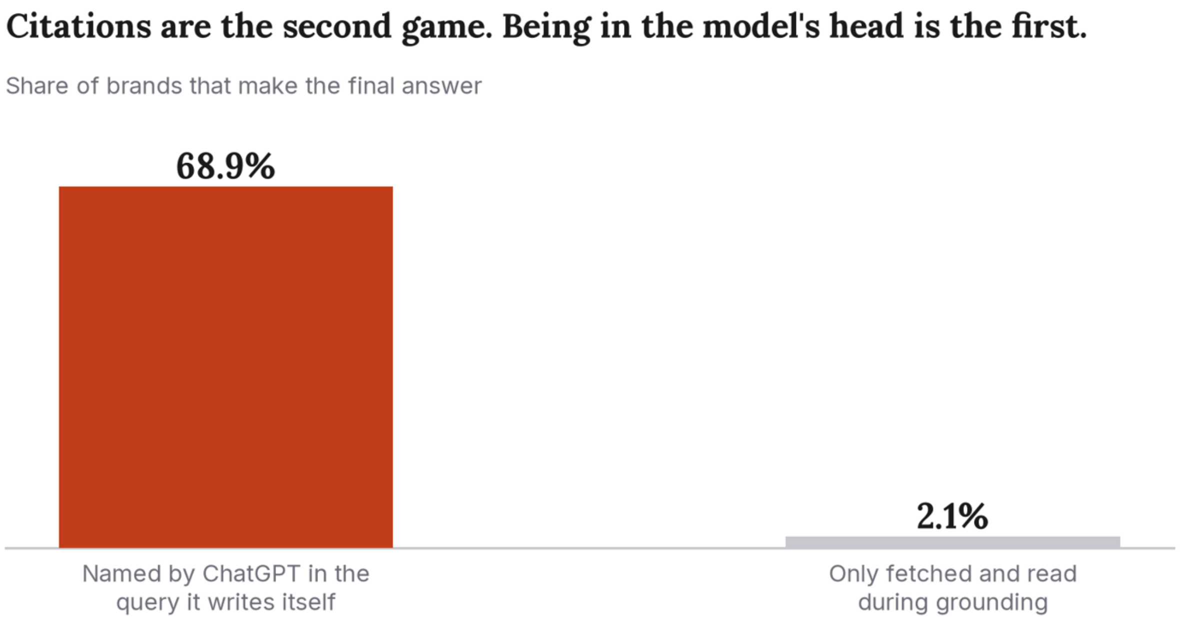


Figure 10. Share of brands that make the final answer. Source: Suganthan Mohanadasan, ChatGPT decides before it searches, 10 August 2026.

> **TREAT THIS ONE AS DIRECTIONAL**
>
> 27 conversations on a single account, weighted toward software brands. It is a small study and we are printing it as a signal, not a law. We flag it because the same finding is being quoted elsewhere without the caveat, and it would be hypocritical of us to do the same.

If it holds, the implication is uncomfortable for the tooling market. Optimising the page you own improves your odds in the 2.1% lane. Getting written about in the reviews and round-ups your buyers read is what puts you in the 68.9% lane, because that is the corpus the model learned the shortlist from.

SECTION 02

Freshness gets you cited. Evergreen keeps you cited.

Two findings that look contradictory and are not. Together they describe exactly one kind of asset.

Nearly **65%** of AI citations point to content published in the previous year, so stale pages fall out. But a news article persists in AI citations only **1.4%** of the time, while category, comparison and review pages anchor and stay.

Figure 11. Sources: Seer Interactive, June 2025 (recency). SISTRIX, AI Citation Drift, 2026 (persistence).

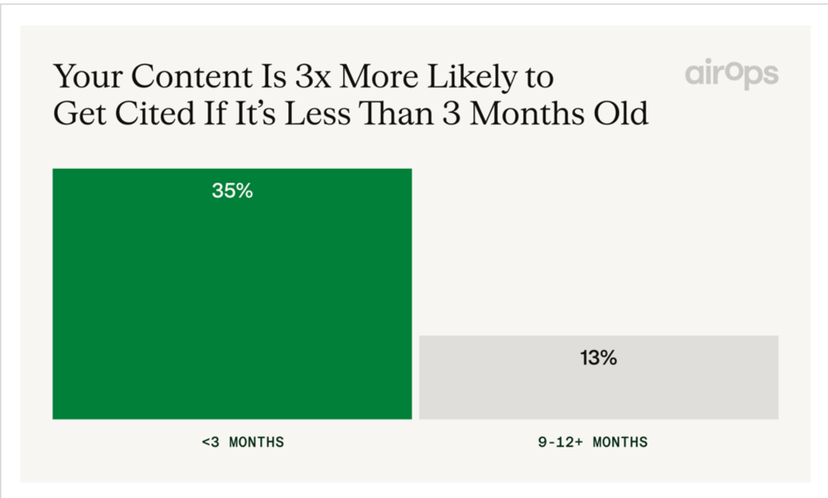


FIGURE 12. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Share of cited pages by age: 35% under three months old against 13% at nine months or older. AirOps, The 2026 State of AI Search.

Together they describe one asset: a best-of guide or a hands-on review that is **kept current**. A news hit spikes and vanishes. An evergreen page that is genuinely updated compounds.

This is the finding that should change a media plan, because it prices the two options differently over time. A launch burst buys attention. A maintained category page buys a position in the answer, and keeps buying it for as long as it is maintained.

ASSET	WHAT IT DOES IN AI ANSWERS	WHAT IT NEEDS FROM YOU
A news hit or launch announcement	Spikes, then drops out. Persists 1.4% of the time	Nothing. It is spent on publication
An evergreen best-of guide or review	Anchors, and stays cited while it stays fresh	A genuine refresh cadence, because 65% of citations go to the last year
A suite of interlinked pages on one topic	Compounds, and is what category ownership looks like	A two-year horizon, not a quarterly keyword

THE COMMISSIONING QUESTION TO ASK

When anyone proposes content for AI visibility, ask what happens to the page in twelve months. If the answer is nothing, you have bought a news hit and priced it as an asset. Budget for the refresh at the same time you budget for the build, or do not build it.

03

The five layers of search.

A brand can build three of the five layers that decide whether AI recommends it. The two that matter most are judgements other people make.

Build the bottom three

Earn the top two

E-E-A-T, applied honestly

Readable is not the same as citable

SECTION 03

You build the bottom three. You earn the top two.

The single most useful framework we have found for explaining where GEO money should go.

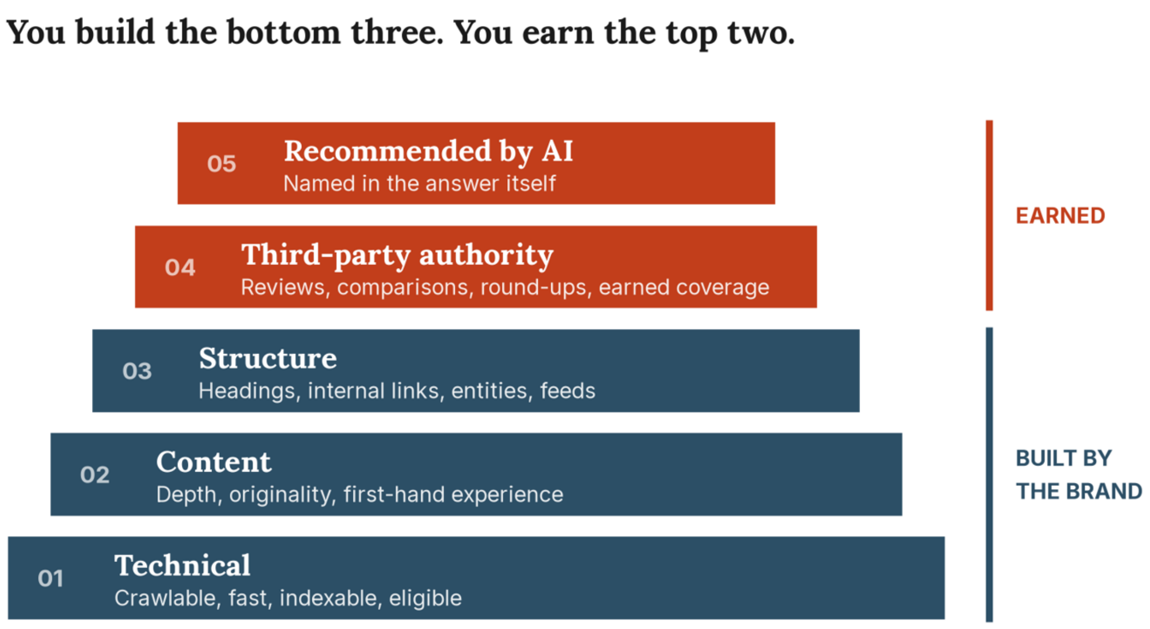


Figure 13. Framework: Jake Ward, known.agency, 31 August 2026. Redrawn by Man of Many.

Layers one to three are engineering and editorial work inside the brand's own perimeter, and they are necessary. A page that cannot be crawled cannot be cited. Thin content will not be chosen even when it is retrieved. Bad structure means a model cannot lift a clean claim out of the page.

But the top two layers cannot be built from inside. **Third-party authority** is what independent sources say about you. **Being recommended** is the outcome. This is the same 85% from Section 02, drawn as a hierarchy: the brand owns the foundations and earns the roof.

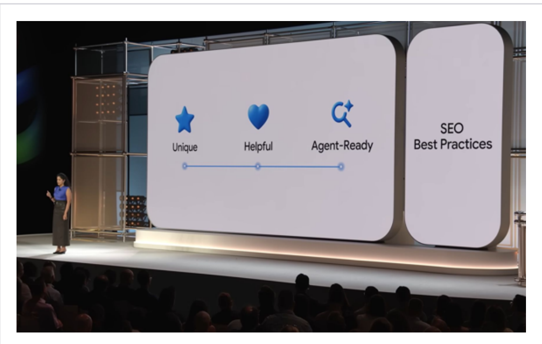


FIGURE 14. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Google on stage: Unique, Helpful, Agent-Ready, and SEO best practices. The four words Google uses for what its AI features reward.

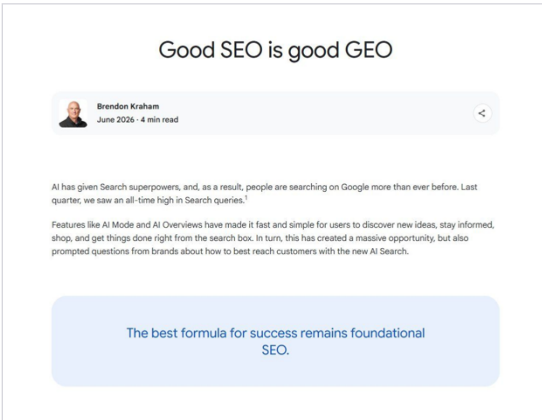


FIGURE 15. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Good SEO is good GEO: Google's own guidance, with the line that the best formula for success remains foundational SEO.

What 130 search experts say moves Google's AI

Cyrus Shepard's Google AI Ranking Factors survey asked more than 130 search practitioners to rate each candidate factor from minus three to plus three. The shape of the result is the argument of this section: eligibility and answer match at the top, what the model already knows and trusts about the brand next, specific citable facts and first-party information after that, and the AI-specific tactics (structured data at +0.80, llms.txt at +0.05) at the bottom.

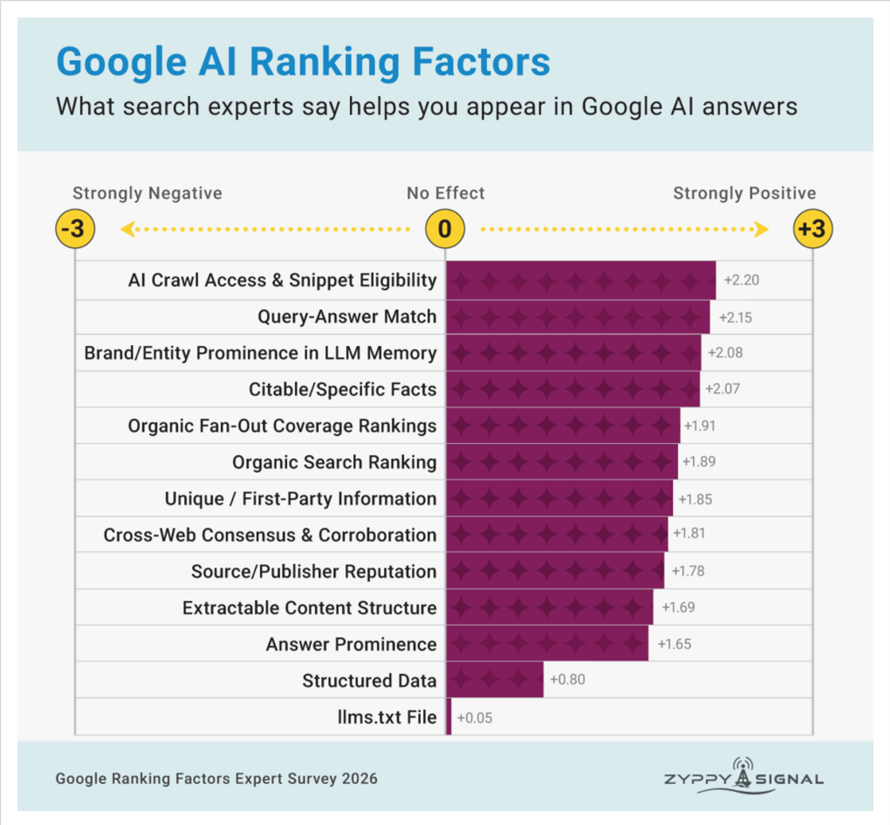


FIGURE 16. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Google AI Ranking Factors, expert survey of 130+ search professionals, mean rating per factor. Zyppy Signal, Cyrus Shepard, 16 September 2026. Reproduced with credit; the survey and commentary are Zyppy's.

- **Brand and trust outweigh AI-specific factors.** What Google knows about and trusts your brand weighed more than chunking or llms.txt files.
- **Parametric memory**, what the model already knows about you, rated third, and is the hardest factor to move quickly. Dan Petrovic's framing: entering the model's training data is harder than link building.
- **Specific evidence wins.** Original data, citable facts and first-party information beat generic content, nearly unanimously.
- **It overlaps with ordinary SEO.** Crawl access and organic ranking, including for the fan-out sub-queries Google runs, scored among the highest.

E-E-A-T, applied honestly

Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines are the origin of E-E-A-T: experience, expertise, authoritativeness and trust. It is worth noticing what they actually are.

SIGNAL	WHO ESTABLISHES IT	WHAT A BRAND CAN DO DIRECTLY
Experience	The author, by having done the thing	Nothing, unless the author is independent of you
Expertise	The author's track record	Nothing directly. You can choose who covers you
Authoritativeness	Other people, by citing and linking	Nothing directly. It is conferred
Trust	The publisher's accumulated record	Partly. Your own site's accuracy and transparency

Three of the four are judgements someone else makes about you. That is not a gap in the framework, it is the point of it. A brand asserting its own authoritativeness is exactly the signal the guidelines are designed to discount.

Premium environments do more of the work

37%
lift in purchase intent from premium placements, 20% more effective at driving action than ads in lower-quality contexts

73%
of 1,500 Australians surveyed place greater trust in content made by human journalists

1.6x
less likely to trust social media than premium news and entertainment, because of misinformation

Source: The Trade Desk Intelligence with PA Consulting, *The Premium Media Payoff*, survey of 1,500 Australians. Every Man of Many placement is a premium, human-made environment: 100% human editorial, Australian Press Council member, brand-safe.

Readable is not the same as citable

A useful way to audit your own programme: split the requirements in half.

FOUR THAT MAKE YOU READABLE	FOUR THAT MAKE YOU WORTH CITING
Crawlable and indexable by AI agents	Independent coverage in your category
Clean structure a model can extract from	Named authors with verifiable track records
Consistent naming of products and entities	Original data nobody else has
Fast, accessible, stable URLs	A record of being right over time

THE STAFFING QUESTION

Most organisations are fully staffed on the left column and have nobody who owns the right one. SEO owns readability. Nobody owns citability, because it sits between brand, comms, PR and partnerships. Framework credit: Emilia Möller, Searchable.

SECTION 03

What an AI Mode answer is made of.

The more technical page in this guide. Google's AI Mode assembles its answers from typed building blocks, and knowing the blocks tells you what a brand has to look like to be placed in one.

Dan Petrovic of DEJAN documented the structured tags AI Mode uses to build a response: a *FollowUp* block that asks for the missing variable (budget, location, amenities), a *Generate* block that builds a calculator or tool on the fly, *layout* modes for maps, side-by-side *comparison* tables and full-width *inspiration* galleries, and *List* and *Entity* containers that turn text into cards. Every entity carries one of thirty types, among them *SkuLevelProduct*, *ShoppingBrand*, *VehicleModel*, *LodgingPlace*, *Event* and *SpecificPerson*, with dedicated *Product*, *ShoppingOffers*, *Video* and *Event* cards sitting underneath. Published 20 September 2026; it is one researcher's reconstruction from observed output, not Google documentation, and Google can change it without notice.

BUILDING BLOCK	WHAT TRIGGERS IT	WHAT IT MEANS FOR A BRAND
Entity card (SkuLevelProduct, ShoppingBrand, VehicleModel)	A query the model resolves to named things it can compare	You exist in the answer only if the model can resolve you to a typed entity with consistent attributes. Third-party reviews and comparisons are where those attributes are read from
Comparison layout	Two or more entities and a spec-shaped question	The answer becomes a table of specs and prices with the prose stripped out. Whoever supplied the clean, consistent specs supplies the row
Product and ShoppingOffers cards	Commercial intent narrowing to one item	Product data, imagery, review aggregates and live merchant feeds. Publisher coverage feeds the review aggregate and the standout-feature line
Video card	A how-to or step-by-step query	The engine refuses to render an empty frame: a verified video must exist in the index. Our YouTube reviews are eligible; a brand's unlisted asset is not
Inspiration layout	Style, design and gift queries	A full-width image gallery. Editorial photography with named products is what populates it
FollowUp block	Any under-specified request	The model asks for budget, location or feature before it recommends. The brand named after that answer wins, which is the fan-out argument in Section 03 in miniature

THE PRACTICAL READ

None of this is optimised for with a tag or a file. It is optimised for by being a clean, consistently described entity on pages the model already trusts: name, category, price, the two or three attributes it will compare you on, and a review that states them plainly. That is what a hands-on review or a best-of guide on Man of Many is, structurally, and it is why Section 02 found nearly 90% of third-party brand mentions in exactly those formats. Source: Dan Petrovic, DEJAN, *AI Mode Tags*, 20 September 2026.

04

What the evidence kills.

Five tactics currently being sold as GEO, and what happened when somebody measured them. This is the section that costs us nothing to publish and saves you a retainer.

SECTION 04

The two tactics sold hardest, measured.

Neither of these is fraud. Both are being sold as an AI visibility lever, and neither measures as one.

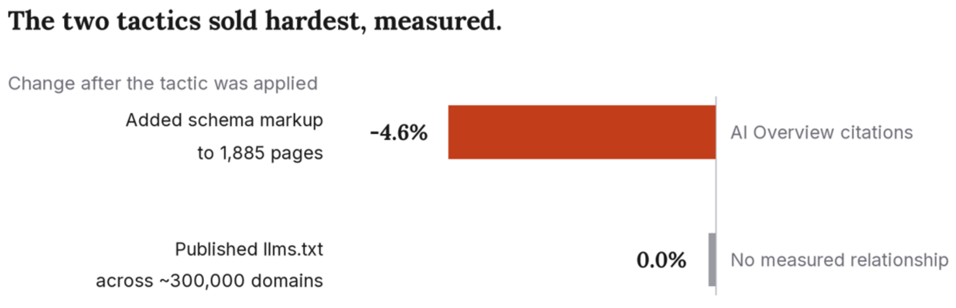


Figure 17. Sources: Ahrefs, schema and AI citations, 1,885 pages, 11 May 2026. SE Ranking, llms.txt study, around 300,000 domains, 7 November 2025.

Adding **schema markup** across 1,885 pages was followed by a **4.6% fall** in AI Overview citations. Schema is still worth having for other reasons, including rich results. It is not an AI citation lever, and a programme sold on that basis is sold on a number that points the other way.

Publishing **llms.txt** showed **no measurable relationship** to AI citations across roughly 300,000 domains. It costs almost nothing to publish, so publish it if you like. It should not be a line item, and an audit whose main finding is that you need one has told you nothing.

Scaling AI content

Of 220 or more sites that scaled AI-generated content, **54% lost 30% or more** of their peak traffic. The mechanism is not mysterious: the thing that makes content citable is that it contains something a model cannot generate itself.

> **DISCLOSURE**
>
> We have a commercial interest in this finding, so treat it accordingly and read the study. Man of Many publishes zero AI-generated content and is a member of the 100% Human Initiative. Source: Lily Ray, Amsive, It Works Until It Doesn't, 13 May 2026.

Watch what the vendors do, not what they say

A useful tell, from search consultant Harpreet Chatha on 20 September 2026: the best-funded GEO tools are pivoting their business models to "AI in marketing" generally, because a dashboard for a thing you can check by hand was never going to return venture money. The incumbents, HubSpot and Meltwater among them, have added GEO as a line item rather than a product. And the new roles report into brand, SEO or demand teams; unlike SEO, the discipline has not earned its own department. His harder point is the one this guide agrees with: good SEO was good GEO before ChatGPT existed, and the loudest advice has reduced search optimisation to listicles, scaled content and spamming third-party sites on the strength of one statistic.

OUR READ OF THE 85% HE IS TALKING ABOUT

That statistic is in this guide, in Section 02, and it is real. The abuse of it is not. It says AI answers are assembled from independent pages; it does not say that seeding a hundred thin ones works, and Section 04 shows what happens to sites that scale content that way. The honest response to the 85% is fewer, better, first-hand pages on publishers the models already trust, which is the opposite of spam and, not coincidentally, what a publisher sells.

AI visibility scores

THE DASHBOARDS ARE LOSING THEIR DATA FEED

Most rank-tracking and AI-visibility tools read Google's results by scraping them. From mid-September 2026 Google appears to be blocking that at scale: Nozzle reported an 80% fall in collectable data and Sistrix cut its collection rate. Treat any vendor chart of your AI or search visibility from September 2026 onward as possibly wrong until the vendor says its collection is back to normal. Search Engine Roundtable, 18 September 2026.

The product category with the fastest growth is the dashboard that gives your brand a position in AI. The problem is that there is no stable position to report. Across 2,961 queries from 600 volunteers, the same prompt rarely returned the same brand list twice.

Anything this volatile is not a channel you can buy.

Reddit's share of ChatGPT citations, an 86% fall in three days

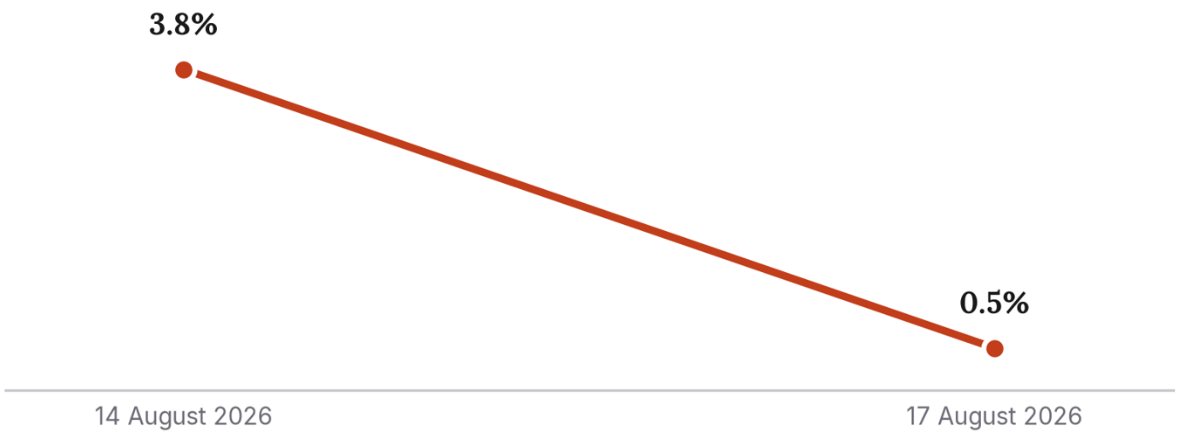


Figure 18. Reddit's share of ChatGPT citations. Source: Semrush, 26 August 2026.

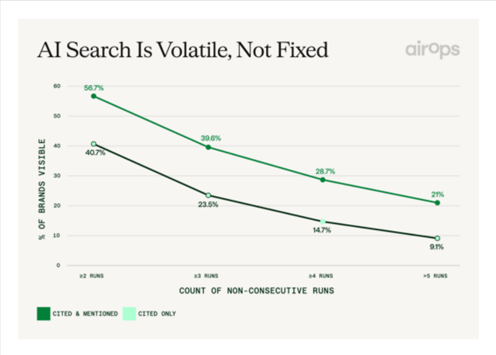


FIGURE 19. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Share of brands still visible across repeated runs of the same query. AirOps, The 2026 State of AI Search.

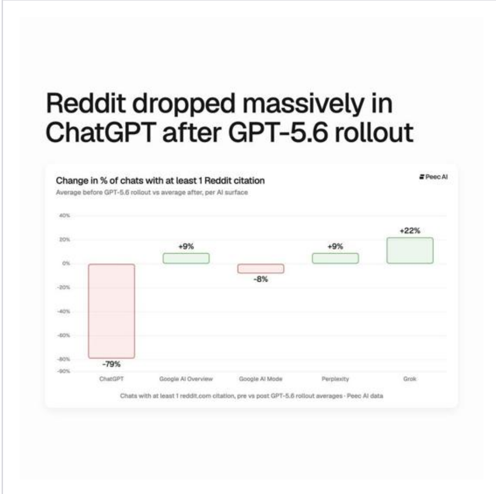


FIGURE 20. SOURCE SCREENSHOT The same fortnight per AI product: change in the share of chats citing Reddit, before and after GPT-5.6. Peec AI, 19 August 2026.

Then there is the volatility of the sources themselves. Reddit's share of ChatGPT citations fell from **3.8% to 0.5%** between 14 and 17 August 2026, an 86% fall in three days. Peec AI measured the same fortnight at a 79% cut in ChatGPT while **Grok raised** Reddit citations 22%.

> **WHY A BLENDED SCORE IS WORSE THAN NO SCORE**
>
> A single number averaging six AI tools would have shown almost nothing that fortnight, while the cheap route into AI answers, forum and social posting, collapsed inside the largest tool. Report per tool or do not report.

One more caution, and it applies to our own format. Listicles and comparison articles work today because models lean on them heavily. Profound, a vendor in this space, makes the fair point that AI platforms may eventually discount thin comparison content the way Google discounted keyword stuffing. The defence is that the piece is genuinely tested and genuinely useful, which is an argument for quality of coverage rather than volume of it.

SECTION 04

Content marketing's own scoreboard.

The AI content question has now been asked of 1,042 marketers against a business outcome rather than a visibility score, and the answer is not the one the tooling market has been selling.

Orbit Media has run the same survey of content marketers every year since 2014. In the 2026 wave, the share reporting that their blog delivers **strong results** fell to **14%**. That is a twelve-year low, six points below the previous worst year, against a prior range of 20% to 30%. A further **18%** said they do not know whether their blog delivers results at all.

Over the same period, **92.4%** of them adopted AI to help write it. Reported performance went from 26% to 14% while adoption went to almost universal, and the survey finds **no AI use case that correlates with results**. Marketers who use no AI at all report strong results at exactly the same 14%.

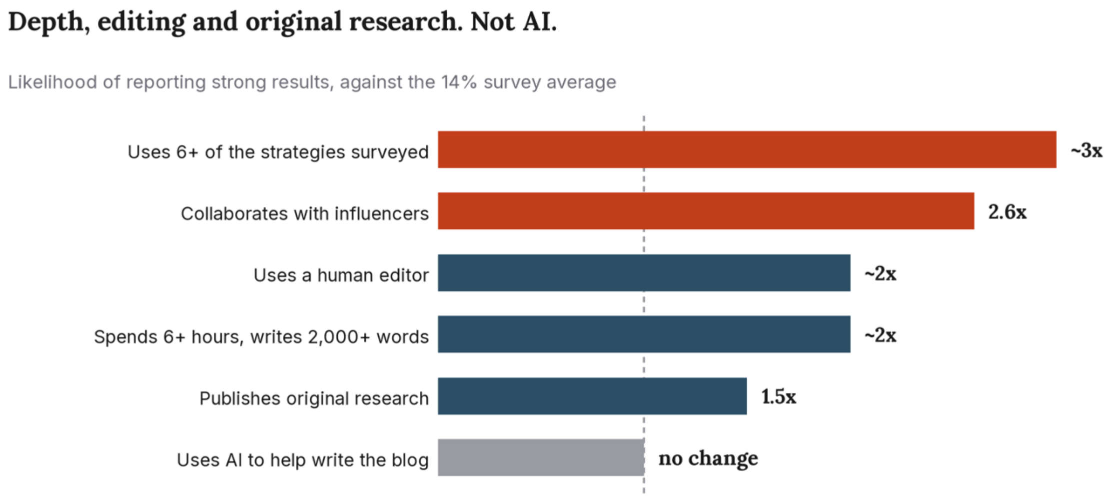


Figure 21. Likelihood of reporting strong results, against the 14% survey average. Source: Orbit Media, 2026 Blogging Statistics, Andy Crestodina, 1,042 content marketers, 8 September 2026.

READ THIS ONE CAREFULLY

This is a **self-reported** survey. "Strong results" is a marketer's own assessment of their own blog, not measured traffic, revenue or citations, and every predictor above is a **correlation**. We include it because the sample is large, the series is thirteen years long, the methodology is named and the outcome measured is a business one rather than a proxy score. We are not claiming it proves causation, and anyone who quotes it to you as though it does has not read it.

The market moved in the opposite direction to its own evidence

What correlates with results is depth, editing and original research. What the average marketer actually did was get shorter and faster.

WHAT CORRELATES WITH STRONG RESULTS	WHAT THE AVERAGE MARKETER DID
6+ hours on a post and 2,000+ words roughly doubles the odds	Average time to write fell to 3 hours 20 minutes, from 4 hours 10 minutes in 2022
Depth: the 2,000-word threshold	Average post length fell to 1,312 words, from 1,427 in 2023
Publishing original research improves the likelihood by 50%	Adoption is falling, after nearly a decade of growth
A human editor is worth nearly 2x the benchmark	92.4% added AI, which correlates with nothing

Two of those rows are the same finding this guide reaches from the AI search side. Original data earns roughly 3.3 times more AI citations and improves the odds of a strong business result by 50%, and **fewer people are doing it every year**. That is not a crowded trade.

> **THE HONEST COMPLICATION**
>
> The strongest single predictor in the survey is not editorial at all. It is collaborating with influencers, at 37% against the 14% benchmark, and adoption has collapsed from 25% in 2017 to 7% today. We sell editorial, not influencer work, so that finding does not flatter us and we are printing it at full value. The narrow read we would defend is that the top predictor involves other people's voices rather than owned content, which is the same direction as the 85% figure in Section 02.

SECTION 04

What to ignore, and what to fund.

The same budget, allocated against the evidence rather than the pitch deck.

IGNORE, OR DO CHEAPLY	THE EVIDENCE	FUND INSTEAD
A monthly AI visibility score	Same prompt rarely returns the same brand list twice (SparkToro, 2,961 queries)	Per-tool reporting against business outcomes
Schema as a citation play	4.6% fall in AI Overview citations (Ahrefs, 1,885 pages)	Structure that lets a model extract a clean claim
llms.txt audits	No relationship across ~300,000 domains (SE Ranking)	Making sure AI agents are not blocked at all
Scaled AI content	54% of 220+ sites lost 30%+ of peak traffic (Lily Ray, Amsive)	Fewer pieces, first-hand, by named authors
Prompt engineering services	Google: no additional requirements or special optimizations necessary	The search fundamentals that AI answers ground in
Chasing AI referral traffic	0.59% of our sessions, down 19.4% YoY (our GA4)	Being the cited source, and licensing the content

> *Any tool that gives a ranking position in AI is full of baloney.*
>
> RAND FISHKIN, SPARKTORO

HOW TO TELL RELABELLED ADVICE FROM NEW EVIDENCE

Most GEO guidance is not wrong so much as recycled: an existing checklist with a new acronym on the cover. Three questions separate the two, and they take about a minute.

1. **Does it cite a study, with a sample size and a date?** An article that makes repeated claims about how models behave and cites nothing is describing a belief. Ours are in Section 09 so you can check them.
2. **Does the advice predate the acronym?** If the same checklist was sold as SEO advice in 2019, it may still be good advice, but it is not evidence about AI. Be especially wary of a readability or word-count score presented as an AI visibility factor: no published study links either to citation rates.
3. **Does the person recommending it sell it?** Not disqualifying, because it applies to us too. But when a recommendation happens to be the recommender's own product, the evidence has to carry more weight, not less.

APPLY ALL THREE TO THIS DOCUMENT

We sell third-party editorial, and this guide concludes that third-party editorial is where the budget should go. You should discount that accordingly. What we can offer against it: every figure is sourced and dated, the numbers that damage our case are on the page (0.59%, down 19.4%), and Section 05 tells you which categories to spend somewhere other than with us.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR ANY GEO VENDOR

- ☐ What is your first-party data source, and is it Google Search Console or Bing Webmaster Tools? If it is neither, you are being sold a prompt panel.
- ☐ Do you report per AI tool, or one blended score? A blended score hides the August 2026 Reddit collapse entirely.
- ☐ What sample size sits behind your benchmark, and when was it measured?
- ☐ Which of your recommendations would survive if Google's statement that no special optimisations are necessary is taken at face value?
- ☐ What proportion of your proposed budget goes to third-party editorial, where 85% of AI brand mentions actually come from?

> **APPLIED TO US**
>
> We would fail question one, because we do not sell a measurement product at all. We report campaign outcomes per AI tool and we do not sell a visibility dashboard, because we do not believe an honest one exists yet. What we sell is the thing in the 85%.

05

Your category, not the category.

Generic GEO advice fails because AI answers are assembled from different source types in every vertical. Here is how to find yours, and where a men's lifestyle publisher does and does not belong in the answer.

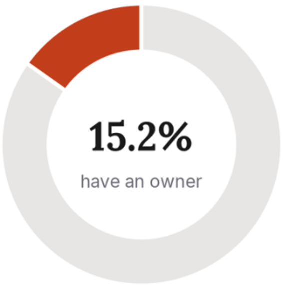
SECTION 05

Diagnose the category before you commission anything.

Four steps, none of which need a tool subscription, and all of which use the only first-party data that exists.

Nobody owns your category in AI yet.

Share of AI topic categories with a clear brand owner



1,094
AI topic categories mapped

90.4%
month-to-month retention once a category is owned

~50%
of the time domain authority predicts the owner, a coin flip

Figure 22. Share of AI topic categories with a clear brand owner. Only 15.2% of 1,094 categories mapped have one. Once a category is owned it is retained 90.4% month to month, and domain authority predicts the owner about half the time. Source: Semrush, 20 July 2026.

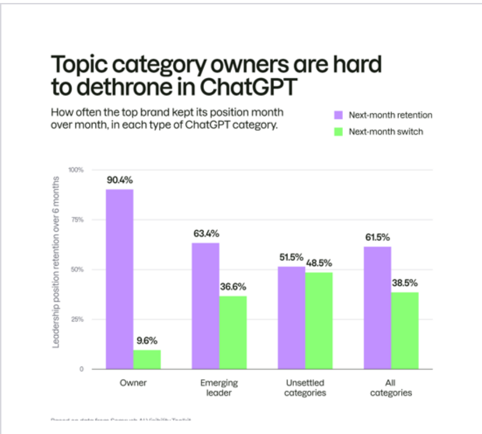


FIGURE 23. SOURCE SCREENSHOT How often the top brand kept its position month on month, by category type. Semrush AI Visibility Toolkit, 1,094 US categories, January to June 2026.

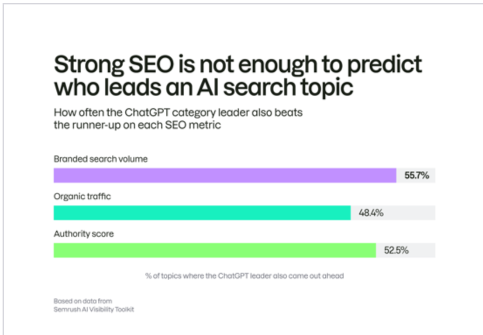


FIGURE 24. SOURCE SCREENSHOT How often the ChatGPT category leader also leads on each SEO metric. Semrush, same study.

The window is open and it is closing. Most categories have no established brand in the answer, which is unusual and will not last: incumbency in AI answers is extremely sticky once it forms. The work below is how you find out where yours stands before committing a budget to it.

1. **Write down the questions your buyer actually asks.** Not keywords. The full sentence, with the persona and the use case in it. Go narrow: AI answers are far more personalised than most people assume, and a tightly defined audience with a specific pain point is a far more winnable target than a whole category.
2. **Run them and read the sources, not the ranking.** Ignore whether you are mentioned for a moment. Note which *types* of site the answer was built from: retailers, review sites, forums, specialist publishers, mastheads.
3. **Check you are not blocked.** Engineering teams sometimes disallow AI crawlers protectively without realising it removes the brand from the corpus entirely. Check robots.txt before spending anything.

4. **Set up the two real measurement sources.** Google Search Console's generative AI performance reports, and Bing Webmaster Tools, whose AI grounding queries are one of the only genuine views of what people ask Copilot. Both are free.

THE BRIEF WE WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE

A topic or prompt cluster tied to a high-value audience, with the measurement agreed up front. For example, a twelve-week series with fresh content each week against a defined cluster. Two things make it work much better: go niche rather than broad, and include original data, because research and first-hand testing are what models cite.

Where a men's lifestyle publisher belongs in the answer, and where it does not

Being straight about this is more useful to you than a capability list. Our categories sit where independent verdicts and round-ups do the work in the answer.

CATEGORY	WHAT THE ANSWERS LEAN ON	WHERE WE FIT
Watches, automotive, audio, tech	Specialist review sites and publishers, hands-on verdicts	Strong. Named journalists, tested product, long archive
Travel, hotels, hospitality	Reviews and user-generated content (54.1%)	Partial. We add the editorial verdict, not the UGC volume
Grooming, fashion, beauty	Retail and e-commerce pages (54.7% in beauty)	Partial. Best-of guides and gift guides, not retail feeds
Drinks, food, entertainment	Publishers and round-ups	Strong. Category authority since 2012
Finance, health and fitness	Reputable publishers, held to Your Money or Your Life standards	Selective. Only where a named expert carries it

Where we would tell you to spend elsewhere: if your category's answers are 55% retail, your first move is your retailer and review-platform presence, not an editorial partnership. We would rather say that than sell you the wrong thing.

06

Twenty-three tips, each with a source.

The practical section. Nothing here is a trick, because tricks are what this guide is arguing against. Each one is something that measures, with the name of whoever measured it.

SECTION 06

Twenty-three things that measure.

Grouped by where they sit in the five layers. Attribution is on every one, so you can check us.

LAYERS ONE TO THREE: THE PART YOU OWN

01 Do the SEO first, because AI answers ground in the same indexes.

ChatGPT and other assistants look things up in search indexes, and Google says AI Overviews and AI Mode run on its core ranking systems. Good SEO is good GEO. Google Search Central; Danny Sullivan, 17 Dec 2025

02 Check you have not blocked the crawlers.

The most common own goal in this field. A protective robots.txt entry can remove a brand from the corpus that AI answers are built from, silently.

03 Write so a model can lift one clean claim out of the page.

The test is extraction, not ranking: can a specific, quotable claim be pulled from this page without context collapsing? Clear headings and direct answers do this.

04 Name your products and entities the same way everywhere.

Inconsistent naming splits the entity. AI blends unrelated meanings when a term is ambiguous, so spell out acronyms on first use.

05 Keep the page current instead of publishing a new one.

Nearly 65% of AI citations point to content published in the previous year, so the asset that compounds is an evergreen page that is genuinely updated. Seer Interactive, June 2025

LAYERS FOUR AND FIVE: THE PART YOU EARN

06 Put the majority of the budget where 85% of the mentions are.

Only 13.2% of AI brand mentions come from the brand's own domain. If the split of your GEO budget does not roughly reflect that, it is allocated against the evidence. AirOps, 21,311 mentions, Oct 2025

07 Buy into listicles, comparisons and reviews specifically.

Nearly 90% of third-party brand mentions sit in those three formats. Not press releases and not thought leadership. AirOps, Oct 2025

08 Get written about before the model searches, not after.

Brands ChatGPT names in the query it writes itself make the answer 68.9% of the time, against 2.1% for brands it only fetches and reads. Suganthan Mohanadasan, 10 Aug 2026, directional

09 Publish a benchmark, not a number.

Original data earns roughly 3.3 times more AI citations, but a lone proprietary figure tells a model nothing about quality. Benchmark it against a field and it becomes quotable. Measured on business outcomes rather than citations, publishing original research improves the odds of a strong result by 50%, and fewer marketers do it every year. Kevin Indig and Amanda Johnson, Growth Memo, 6 Jul 2026; Orbit Media, 1,042 marketers, Sep 2026

10 Build a suite on a topic, not a single article.

Interlinked coverage of a topic, indexed over roughly six to eight weeks as it is published and picked up, is what shifts a category. One article does not.

11 Brief on a two-year topic horizon, not a quarterly keyword.

Only 15.2% of categories have a clear owner, but once owned they are retained 90.4% month to month. Incumbency is being decided now. Semrush, 1,094 categories

12 Treat brand search volume as your leading indicator.

Of the factors tested across 75,000 brands, brand search volume was the strongest predictor of AI brand mentions. Worth noting the correlation is about 0.33, so strongest rather than strong. Kevin Indig, Growth Memo, 4 May 2026

13 Insist on named authors who have handled the product.

Experience and expertise are two of the four E-E-A-T signals and both attach to a person, not a brand. An unbylined page cannot carry either. Google Search Quality Rater Guidelines

14 Pay for an editor before you pay for a tool.

Across 1,042 content marketers, using a human editor correlates with nearly twice the benchmark rate of strong results. Using AI correlates with nothing. An editor is cheaper than most GEO retainers. Orbit Media, Sep 2026, self-reported

15 Fewer, longer, slower.

Spending six or more hours on a post and writing 2,000 or more words roughly doubles the odds of a strong result. The average marketer went the other way, to 1,312 words in 3 hours 20 minutes, and reported performance halved. Orbit Media, Sep 2026, self-reported

16 Own a true objection rather than denying it.

If AI says you are expensive and third-party sources corroborate it, a denial reads as evasion. Reframe against value and distribute that across several page types.

SECTION 06

Timing, formats and the things not to do.

The last six, including the two we would most like agencies to stop being sold.

FORMATS AND TIMING

17 Match the format to what your category's answers are built from.

Beauty answers lean 54.7% on retail, travel 54.1% on reviews and user-generated content, finance 36.6% on specialist publishers. Commission accordingly. Similarweb, May 2026

18 Use the order of operations, not the loudest channel.

Ranked by marketing value: Google AI Overviews for the right keywords, then the social accounts your audience already follows, then the publications they read, watch and listen to, and a distant fourth, the chatbots' own responses. Rand Fishkin, SparkToro

19 Do not skip video.

YouTube and video are a major source for Google's AI features, and Google Search Console now reports on social and video properties including Instagram, TikTok, X and YouTube. Google

20 Brief the window, not the day, and book gifting early.

Editorial calendars fill months ahead. Gift guide placements need locking well before December, and Black Friday trading opens earlier every year. Refresh the pages that already rank before October rather than relying on last year's.

WHAT NOT TO DO

21 Do not buy a single blended visibility score.

In one August 2026 fortnight ChatGPT cut Reddit citations 86% while Grok raised them 22%. A blended number would have shown almost nothing. Semrush, 26 Aug 2026; Peec AI, 19 Aug 2026

22 Do not cut content budget on the Google Zero narrative.

The measured year-on-year fall in organic traffic across the 40,000 largest US sites was 2.5%, not the 25% to 60% widely claimed. Graphite, Jan 2026

THE FIVE-MINUTE TEST: CAN THE ASSISTANTS EVEN RETRIEVE YOUR PAGE?

1. Copy a unique 20 to 30 word sentence straight from your page.
2. Paste it into ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini with: *Search for [snippet] and return any results which contain that exact text only.*
3. If it returns your URL, that assistant can retrieve your content. If not, check discoverability, robots.txt and WAF blocks, crawlability and indexability before you spend a dollar on visibility.

Run it in all three, in a clean session. To do it properly, Chris Green's Chrome extension automates the check: chrisgreenseo.substack.com. Method: Myriam Jessier and Chris Green, September 2026.

23 Run the retrieval snippet test before you spend on visibility.

Copy a unique 20 to 30 word sentence straight from your page. Paste it into ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini with: "Search for [snippet] and return any results which contain that exact text only." If your URL comes back, that assistant can retrieve your page. If it does not, check discoverability, robots.txt and WAF blocks, crawlability and indexability before anything else. Run it in all three, because each assistant reads from a different index, and in a clean session so the tool cannot answer from memory. A hit proves retrievability, not that the model trusts you enough to cite you: those are separate tests. Myriam Jessier, 19 September 2026; method documented by Chris Green, chrisgreenseo.substack.com

> **IF YOU ONLY DO THREE OF THESE**
>
> Do **06** (move the budget to where the 85% is), **11** (brief a two-year topic, not a quarterly keyword) and **19** (refuse the blended score). Those three are where the largest sums are currently being misallocated.

07

Measuring it honestly.

There are exactly two sources of first-party data about AI search, and both are free. Everything else is a panel of prompts, which is a legitimate research method and an illegitimate performance metric.

SECTION 07

The only first-party data, and it is free.

If a measurement product cannot tell you which of these it is built on, it is built on neither.

SOURCE	WHAT IT ACTUALLY GIVES YOU	PUBLISHED
Google Search Console, generative AI performance reports	AI Overview and AI Mode impressions and clicks for your own property	Google, 3 June 2026
Bing Webmaster Tools, AI citation performance	Real grounding queries from Copilot: what people actually asked	February 2026
Google Search Console, social and video properties	Search queries for your Instagram, TikTok, X and YouTube accounts	Google, 2026

Set up Bing Webmaster Tools for every client brand. Its AI grounding queries are the closest thing that exists to a keyword report for AI, and almost nobody uses it because Bing's search share makes it easy to dismiss. The queries are real.

Three layers, and only the first one is fast

LAYER	WHAT TO TRACK	HONEST STATUS
01. Visibility	Citation presence per tool, bot crawl activity, organic keyword coverage	Leading indicator. Measurable, but not a ranking
02. Traffic	Organic, direct, and AI assistant referrals, reported separately	Reliable, and small. Watch direct closely
03. Revenue	Traditional attribution plus self-reported attribution	The one that matters. Click attribution will undercount it

WHY DIRECT TRAFFIC IS THE TELL

AI influence often does not arrive as a referral. Someone reads a recommendation in an AI answer and then types the brand name. That lands in direct, not in an AI channel. One newsletter operator found LLMs accounted for under 1% of new subscribers by click attribution, while 13.7% self-reported first hearing about it through an LLM. If you only read the referral line, you will undercount the effect by roughly an order of magnitude.

Source for the self-report comparison: Kyle Poyar, Growth Unhinged, via Profound's GEO guide, 2026. It is one operator's data, not a study.

Track your **inputs** alongside the outputs: content shipped, partner briefs sent, coverage secured. A number that went up without a record of what you did is neither repeatable nor defensible at a budget meeting.

SECTION 07

What we report, and what we will not sell you.

The shortest section in the guide, because the honest version of this is short.

GOOGLE SAYS SEARCH CONSOLE CANNOT SEE THIS PROPERLY

In September 2026 Google confirmed what practitioners had suspected: average position, impressions and click-through rate assume a ranked list of links, and an AI Overview or AI Mode answer is not one. So a query with strong impressions and weak clicks could mean you ranked and lost, were cited inside the answer and skipped, or were paraphrased without citation: three situations, one flat number. Use it for presence, not position, and build the rest yourself: server logs, branded search as its own signal, manual retrieval tests on your ten highest-value pages, and AI referrals as a tagged segment. *Reported by RebelMouse, 17 September 2026; Google's statement was not sighted directly.*

A SCORECARD, NOT A SCORE

Vahe Arabian's Search Everywhere framework puts this in one table: one row per topic you believe you own, and for each, what Search, Top Stories and Discover delivered; whether you are *the* source, *a* source, mentioned or absent in AI answers, including on the sub-questions Google expands your topic into; and whether you are in the threads the engines read from. Every gap has one of five causes: not covered, not extractable, not fresh, not eligible, or not framed well. Branded search lift is the proof the surfaces compound. That is the report we would rather send you than a visibility score. State of Digital Publishing, September 2026.

Detailed post-campaign reporting, with a separate line per AI tool rather than one blended score, measured against the business outcomes agreed in the brief. What that looks like in practice:

REPORTED	HOW	WHY NOT A SINGLE NUMBER
Citation presence, per tool	ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot and Google AI features, each on its own line	In one August 2026 fortnight one tool cut Reddit citations 86% while another raised them 22%
Crawler activity on the content	Edge measurement through Cloudflare, by bot and by page	Tells you the content is eligible to be cited at all, which is the precondition
Referrals, by assistant	Tracked separately in GA4, not bundled into a single AI channel	The volumes are small and honest reporting says so
Direct traffic movement	Read alongside the campaign window	AI influence usually lands in direct, not as a referral, so this is where the effect hides
Search visibility on the topic	Google Search Console, including the generative AI performance reports	First-party, and the same ranking systems AI answers are built on
Business outcome agreed up front	Whatever the brief named, measured the way the brief named it	It is the only layer that survives a budget meeting

WHAT WE DO NOT SELL

We do not sell an AI visibility dashboard, because we do not believe an honest one exists yet. When the platforms report properly, we will. Saying so costs us a product line and is the only position consistent with the rest of this document.

SECTION 07

If you must track prompts, track them like a poll.

Prompt tracking is not rank tracking. It can still be honest, if you run it the way a pollster would. The method below is Kevin Indig's, condensed with credit.

The case against tracking is real. Sampling alone moves the answer to an identical prompt by **10 to 34%**; across 815,000 prompt-and-page pairs only **2.2%** of citations survived three runs in ChatGPT; SISTRIX found AI Mode replaces 56% of its cited sources every week and ChatGPT 74%; cross-engine overlap is under 2%. A single run, reported monthly, blended across tools, is astrology. But probabilistic is not unmeasurable: treat every prompt as a survey question, not a keyword.

Four rules

RULE	WHY	IN PRACTICE
Run 3 to 5 repetitions per prompt	One run is a coin flip	Report mention and citation rates with a confidence interval, never a point estimate
Track weekly	Sources turn over 56 to 74% a week; monthly misses every inflection	Daily is overkill outside finance and legal
Segment by platform	ChatGPT cites fewer, higher-authority sources; Perplexity cites more; Gemini's YMYL thresholds differ	Separate benchmarks and separate content plans per engine. Never one blended score
Split reasoning, personas and journeys	High reasoning opens an 18-point citation gap and fires 4.6x more fan-out queries; a CFO and a marketer ask different questions	One seed prompt plus at least one follow-up per persona. Turn one says whether you are mentioned; turn two says whether you survive the alternatives, price and risk questions

The six-step build

1. **Pick and label the collection source**: model API, SERP provider or browser automation. Never mix them in one trend line.
2. **Store the raw answer first**, with cited URLs, source, timestamp, location, language, platform, model, prompt ID and method. It is the audit trail.
3. **Score with a second model, for extraction not judgement:** mentioned, cited, URLs, position, sentiment, context, competitors, attributes. Never infer a citation without a URL; a warning against the brand is not a mention.
4. **Track attributes, not just mentions.** What the brand is associated with (price, quality, best-fit buyer) is the part you can turn into content.
5. **Classify every cited source**: owned page, review site, forum, publisher, marketplace, competitor. The type tells you the next move: owned-site gaps mean publish, review gaps mean review velocity, publisher gaps mean digital PR.
6. **Add human QA** on 5 to 10% of scored answers, and track scorer error separately from answer variance.

Method and figures: Kevin Indig, Growth Memo, *Make your prompt tracking more accurate this week*, 8 June 2026, and the *Build Your Own Prompt Tracking* worksheet, July 2026. Condensed with credit; full citations in Section 09.

08

Man of Many.

Australia's largest men's lifestyle publisher, and the part of the five layers we can actually sell you: the third-party authority that AI answers are assembled from.

SECTION 08

Who reads Man of Many.

Australia's largest men's lifestyle publisher, measured by the industry's audience standard, with the categories where AI answers are built from independent verdicts.

Unique Australian audience, Ipsos iris, men's lifestyle, August 2026.

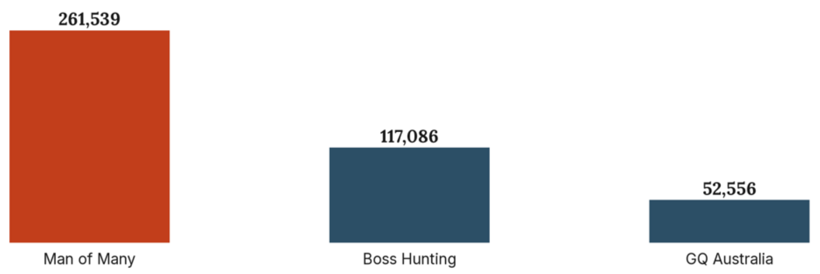


Figure 25. Unique Australian audience, men's lifestyle set, August 2026. Source: Ipsos iris Online Audience Measurement Service, 18+, all devices. Forbes Australia, DMARGE and Men's Health Australia are not in the August report and are not drawn as zero.

> **ON REACH**
>
> The number above is the only audience figure in this document, and it carries its measurement month. We do not print a headline annual reach figure, because the ones in circulation are impressions described as reach, and this guide has spent forty pages asking you to insist on the honest version of a number. Full audience profile: advertise.manofmany.com/audience.

Who they are

25 to 44	64 / 36	$140k+	80%	81%	91%
core age bracket	male / female	household income	live in major cities	tertiary educated	responsible for household purchases

Source: Man of Many Annual Reader Survey 2024. Re-run due before the FY27 selling season.

Who reads Man of Many, and what it does.

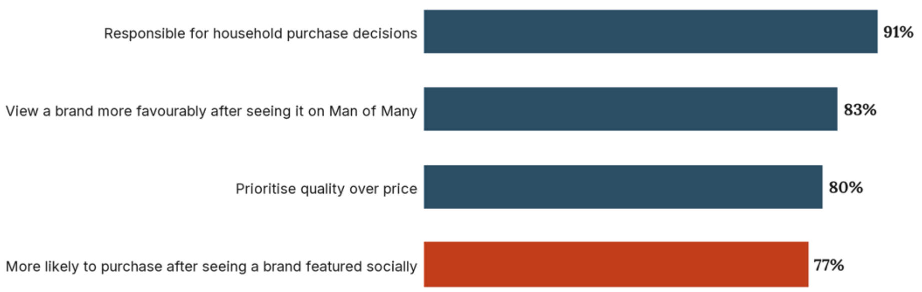


Figure 26. Man of Many reader impact. Source: Man of Many Reader Survey 2024.

SECTION 08

Editorial authority, and where it lives.

Bold yet accessible: aspirational, genuine content across the full spectrum of modern living, spotlighting high-end products and experiences without the elitism.

CATEGORY INTENT, WHERE THE SURVEY MEASURES IT

CATEGORY	PROOF POINT	VALUE
Automotive	*"Would pay more for a premium auto brand"*	**71%**
Travel	*"Planning an international holiday in the next year"*	**70%**
Tech and audio	*"Consider themselves early tech adopters"*	**57%**
Watches	*"Plan to buy a luxury watch within the next year"*	**25%**
Watches	*"Consider quality more important than price"*	**86%**

These are the categories where the survey asked a purchase-intent question, and we do not present content interest as purchase intent.

Eight categories, one editorial standard

Tech

Hands-on reviews and best-of guides, by a named tech journalist

Style

Buying guides and brand verdicts from the fashion and grooming desk

Travel

First-hand stays and itineraries; hotels and destinations reviewed

Drinks

Whisky, wine and cocktail specialists; tasting notes and rankings

Health and fitness

Tested gear and programmes; reviews and comparisons

Auto

Launch and road-test coverage; the category's dominant AI source

Watches

Specialist watch editors since 2012; reference guides

Entertainment

Film, TV and culture desk; curated lists and releases

SECTION 08

The content ecosystem.

One publication, every platform the audience is on, and the followings behind each.

CHANNEL	WHAT IT IS	SCALE
manofmany.com	The publication, since 2012	Ipsos iris, August 2026 above
Social	Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, TikTok, Threads, X, LinkedIn, Flipboard, MSN News, WhatsApp, Bluesky, Telegram, Apple News	995,307 followers across thirteen platforms, September 2026
YouTube	Long-form reviews, documentaries, the Daddies podcast	46,800 subscribers; 530K+ monthly views (April 2026)
Podcasts	Daddies, video-first; host-read integrations	Flagship show
Newsletters	Opt-in editorial and category editions	116,045 subscribers; 35% open rate, 3 to 5% click rate (April 2026)
Events	Guest lists, hosting, video and photography, amplification	Sydney Whisky Month and partner launches
Production	Studio and location shoots, premium assets, licensing	In-house

Sources: follower and subscriber counts as in the grid below; other channel figures from the Man of Many Media Kit, June 2026 edition, as at April 2026.

Where the audience is, by platform

305,087 Instagram followers	**213,538** Facebook followers	**130,992** Pinterest followers	**119,079** TikTok followers
53,942 Threads followers	**47,152** X followers	**46,800** YouTube subscribers	**116,045** Newsletter subscribers
9,219 LinkedIn followers	**31,000** Flipboard followers	**22,267** MSN News followers	**14,180** WhatsApp channel followers
1,800 Bluesky followers	**251** Telegram subscribers	**315,756** Apple News monthly reach	**995,307** Followers across the thirteen platforms above

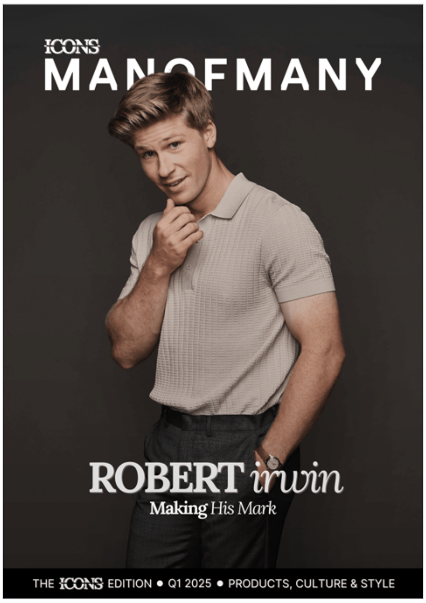
Sources: Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, TikTok, Threads, X, YouTube and LinkedIn pulled from Vista Social on 20 September 2026 (LinkedIn 19 September); newsletter from Mailchimp, 21 September 2026; Flipboard, MSN News, WhatsApp, Bluesky, Telegram and Apple News from the platforms' own dashboards, 21 September 2026. Apple News is monthly reach, not a following, and is excluded from the total.

SECTION 08

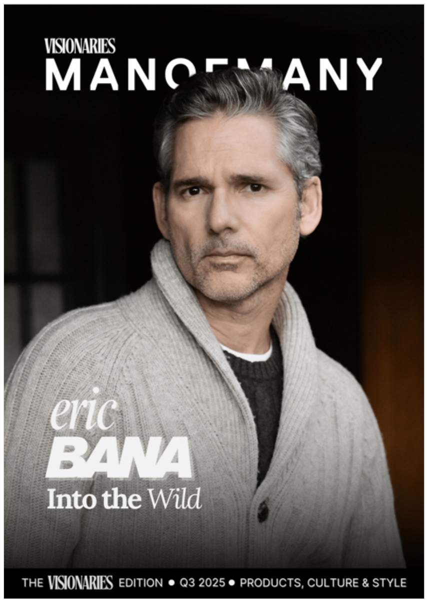
Digital editions.

Quarterly cover stories with Australia's most recognisable men, produced and published by Man of Many as interactive digital editions.

Max Verstappen, Icons, Q1 2025



Robert Irwin, Icons, Q1 2025



Eric Bana, Visionaries

Scott Rose-Marsh, Visionaries

G Flip, Trailblazers, Q1 2024

Dyson Daniels, Trailblazers, Q3 2024

Each edition is a long-form cover interview and photo shoot, plus the season's product, culture and style features, built as a scrollable digital magazine with commercial integrations placed by the editorial team. For the model, an edition is a cluster of original, first-hand, named-author reporting about a public figure, which is exactly the kind of page a grounded answer cites when someone asks about the person. For a brand, it is a premium environment with a talent halo, sold as a presenting partnership. See the sponsored content options.

SECTION 08

Original research: the Male Confidence Index.

Australia's first national benchmark of how confident men feel, and the strongest form of the original data that earns citations.

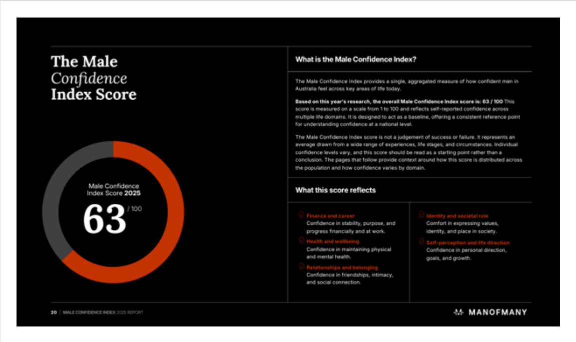


FIGURE 27. The Male Confidence Index score page: 63 out of 100, and what the score reflects.

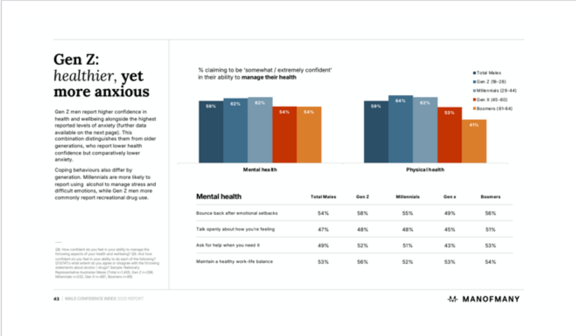


FIGURE 28. Gen Z: healthier, yet more anxious. Confidence in managing mental and physical health, by generation.

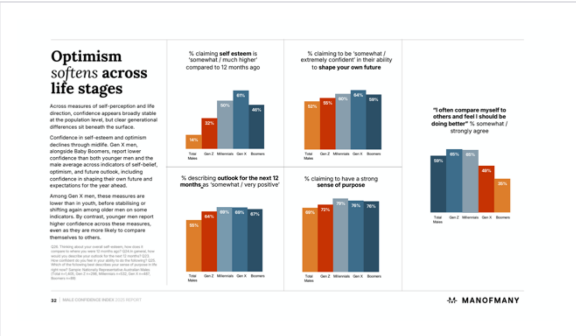


FIGURE 29. Optimism softens across life stages.

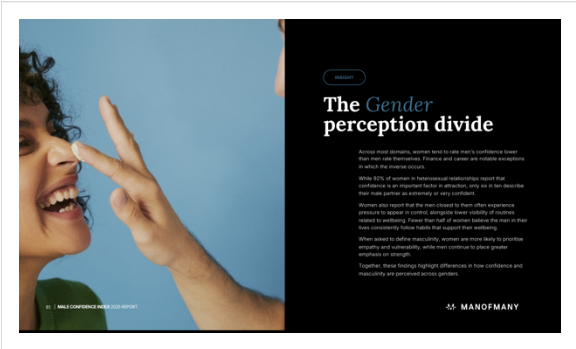


FIGURE 30. The gender perception divide.

The Male Confidence Index measures how confident men feel across five life domains: finances, health, relationships, masculine identity and self-perception. A national online survey of **2,001 Australians** aged 18 to 64, conducted with Fifth Quadrant in line with ISO 20252:2019, produced an inaugural score of **63 out of 100**, with Gen Z at 66, Millennials 64, Gen X 60 and Boomers 61. It was covered on Nine's TODAY Show and is repeated annually.

It is in this guide for a specific reason. Original data earns roughly 3.3 times more AI citations than commentary (Section 02), and a national benchmark with a named methodology is the strongest form of it. A brand attached to the Index is attached to a source the models have every reason to cite. The full report, generational breakdowns and ten strategic opportunities are free to download from the Index page.

SECTION 08

What we have built for the AI layer.

A year inside the AI layer as a publisher, not a vendor: licensing the journalism, measuring what crawls it and tracking what it sends back. One article, two formats, no cloaking.

CAPABILITY	WHAT IT IS
Markdown for AI agents	Every article on manofmany.com is served as Markdown to verified AI agents through Cloudflare: the same article a reader sees, in a format models read easily. We do not serve bots a different version, which would be cloaking
Measurement at the edge	We can see which AI crawlers access our content and how often: over one million bot requests a week (Cloudflare, 5 to 12 August 2026)
Referral tracking per assistant	ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity and Copilot tracked separately in GA4, which is why we can tell you the honest 0.59%
AI licensing	Our journalism is licensed to AI platforms through direct and collective licences
100% Human Initiative	We publish zero AI-generated content. Given 54% of sites that scaled AI content lost 30% or more of peak traffic, this is a commercial position as much as an editorial one

315,419
live AI agent page fetches in seven days (Cloudflare, 5 to 12 August 2026), 285,777 of them by ChatGPT-User

Since Jun 2026
Markdown for Agents live on manofmany.com; re-verified 14 September 2026

0
bot-only versions. Serving machines content no reader sees is cloaking, and it breaks Google's spam policies

A verified agent that asks for *text/markdown* gets the article as clean text; everyone else gets the page. The content is identical, which keeps it inside Google's rules and makes it citable. If your campaign runs on Man of Many, the model reads the article in the format it prefers, from a source it already trusts, with your brand named in the sentence it is most likely to lift.

SECTION 08

What the crawlers and the assistants actually do.

Two views from the edge: what AI operators send back, and how the AI agents rank us against the content owners they consider for the same tasks.

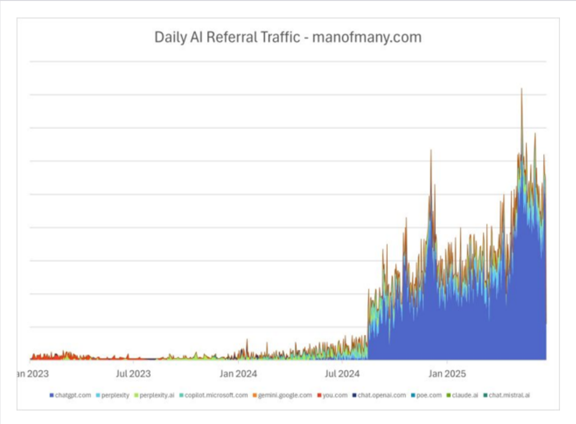


FIGURE 31. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Daily AI referral traffic to manofmany.com, January 2023 to September 2026, stacked by assistant. Cloudflare, 14 September 2026.

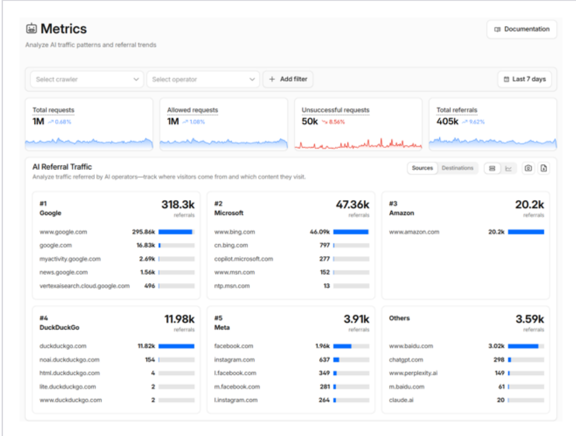
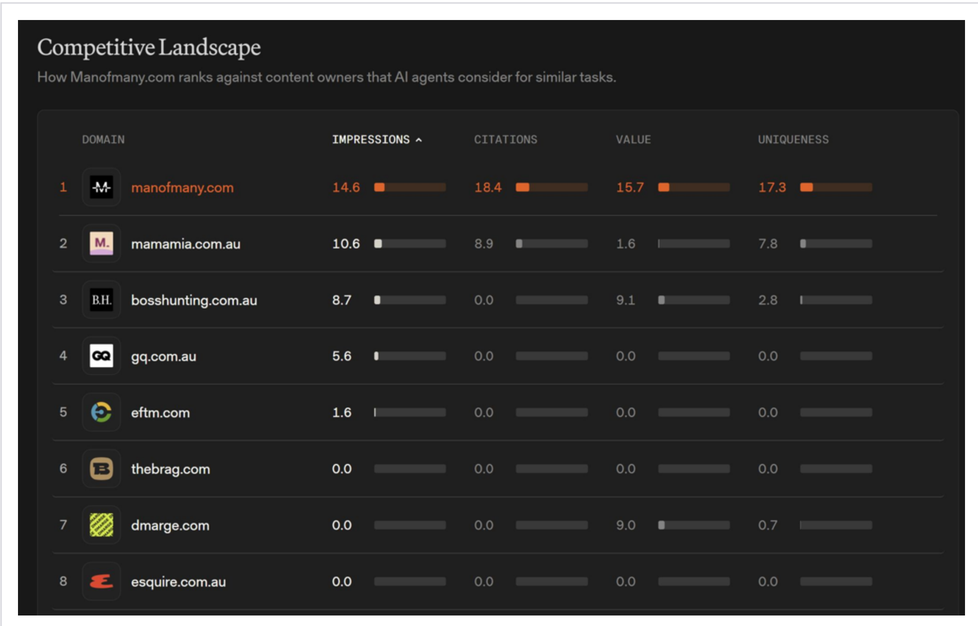


FIGURE 32. SOURCE SCREENSHOT AI referral traffic by operator over the seven days to 14 September 2026: Google 318.3k, Microsoft 47.4k, Amazon 20.2k, DuckDuckGo 12.0k, Meta 3.9k. Cloudflare AI Crawl Control.

Read the two together with Section 01. The referral line is rising steeply and it is still small against search; what has grown far faster is the fetching. The assistants read the site constantly and send a trickle back, which is the whole argument for buying the citation rather than the click.



Competitive Landscape

How Manofmany.com ranks against content owners that AI agents consider for similar tasks.

	DOMAIN	IMPRESSIONS	CITATIONS	VALUE	UNIQUENESS
1	manofmany.com	14.6	18.4	15.7	17.3
2	mamamia.com.au	10.6	8.9	1.6	7.8
3	bosshunting.com.au	8.7	0.0	9.1	2.8
4	gq.com.au	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
5	eftm.com	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	thebrag.com	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
7	dmarge.com	0.0	0.0	9.0	0.7
8	esquire.com.au	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

FIGURE 33. SOURCE SCREENSHOT Competitive landscape: how manofmany.com ranks against the content owners AI agents consider for similar tasks, on impressions, citations, value and uniqueness. First of eight, ahead of Mamamia, Boss Hunting, GQ, EFTM, The Brag, DMARGE and Esquire. Parallel Web Systems Index, September 2026. The uniqueness score measures how hard the content is to substitute: the agents cite original reporting over commodity coverage.

SECTION 08

What we stand behind.

The awards, the memberships and the two commitments that matter most to a model deciding whom to trust.

Award-winning

WINNER
Publishing Company of the Year
Mumbrella Awards 2026

WINNER
Branded Content Studio of the Year
Mumbrella Awards 2026

WINNER
Best Use of Video
Mumbrella Publish Awards 2026

WINNER
Media Brand of the Year
Mumbrella Awards 2025

WINNER
Website of the Year
Mumbrella Publish Awards 2020, 2023, 2024 and 2025

Two commitments

100% Human Initiative

Every written story on Man of Many is written and edited by our in-house journalists. AI supports research and preparation only. In a corpus where 92% of content marketers now use AI and results have halved, the guarantee that a named person did the thing and wrote it down is the E-E-A-T signal a model cannot generate for itself.

Climate Active certified carbon neutral

Man of Many is a certified carbon neutral organisation under the Australian Government's Climate Active programme: certified for calendar years 2021, 2022 and 2023, three consecutive certifications, with emissions measured, reduced and offset under the programme's standard. The 2026 recertification is under way. More on our positive impact.

SECTION 08

The formats AI cites, and the proof.

Every product below maps to a format the models already lean on, written by journalists with their names on it.

FORMAT	WHY AI CITES IT	WHAT WE HAVE
Best-of guides and comparisons	Nearly 90% of third-party AI brand mentions sit in this format	More than 1,000, tested and written by our journalists
Hands-on reviews	Carries the experience and expertise E-E-A-T signals	Named journalists per vertical, with product in hand
Original research	Original data earns roughly 3.3x more AI citations	The Man of Many Male Confidence Index, 2,001 Australians
Video and YouTube	A major source for Google's AI features	Award-winning video, including Best Use of Video 2026
Interactive Studio microsites	Scroll-driven, unsummarisable, and linked from cited pages	Built in-house by our branded content studio
Newsletters	Direct audience, and the channel AI cannot intermediate	Newsletter sessions up 153% since February 2026

How the programme runs

1. **Map** the topics the brand could own, and who covers them today.
2. **Build** a suite of interlinked content on that topic, not a single article.
3. **Index** it over roughly six to eight weeks as it is published, distributed and picked up.
4. **Report** outcomes, with a separate line per AI tool rather than one blended score.

SECTION 08

Two that show the thinking.

Unique, real stories that cannot be generated and are not available anywhere else. Press play.

The Ambition Project, for Stake

Big-wave surfer Laura Enever, episode one of the three-part documentary series. Best Use of Video, Mumbrella Publish Awards 2026. Watch

Angel's Envy, A Tale of Two Barrels

The in-house short film, shot in Kentucky for a whiskey-literate audience and premiered at Golden Age Cinema, Sydney. Watch

WINNER **Best Use of Video, Mumbrella Publish Awards 2026** for The Ambition Project

The Ambition Project, for Stake. A twelve-month brand-building series of mini documentaries on Australians who achieved ambitious goals, including big-wave surfer Laura Enever, plus an Ambition Fund for readers. Part two is under way. **Angel's Envy.** We travelled to Kentucky to tell the bourbon's story authentically, on video, for a whiskey-literate audience. What both have in common is the thing that makes content citable: unique, real stories that cannot be generated and are not available anywhere else. More at our case studies.

4,055,413
Stake impressions delivered, 14% above target

62,803
YouTube long-form views (909 watch hours)

1.57M+
short-form cut-down views

1.09M
newsletter opens; 22,837 companion-article pageviews

What partners say

> *A massive thank you for an epic year of partnership. We're thrilled that we over-delivered on all media targets.*
>
> JAMES HEALEY, HEAD OF MARKETING, STAKE

> *Man of Many has a way of turning a brief into something so much bigger. The team understands Seiko, our heritage and our commercial goals, and then builds content that genuinely connects with audiences. The Prospex campaign we shot together in Cairns last year is a great example: it wasn't just about watches, it was about adventure, place, passion and perspective.*
>
> DANIEL FINDLAY, MARKETING MANAGER, SEIKO

SECTION 08

Interactive Studio & Microsites

Premium interactive brand microsites and productised high-end interactive experiences, built by our award-winning in-house studio.

Every part, considered: an exploded-view automotive microsite.

Every Glen came after: The Glenlivet 12. studio.manofmany.com/glenlivet

How a tourbillon works: an interactive explainer. studio.manofmany.com/tourbillon

From first pour to Pappy: the Buffalo Trace hierarchy. studio.manofmany.com/buffalo-trace

Premium feature articles
Long-form, named-author, product in hand

Integrated brand messaging
Placed by the editorial team, never bolted on

High-impact social video
Reels, TikTok and Shorts cut natively per platform

Evergreen content
Kept current, so it keeps being cited

Expert insight and advice
The formats models lean on for verdicts

Interactive microsites
Scroll-driven, unsummarisable, linked from cited pages

Events & Live Activations

Sydney Whisky Month: the venue, lit for the night.

Guests at a tasting.

Pours lined up at the bar.

Bespoke, full-service experiences, or hosting duties for events you have already organised. Sydney Whisky Month, hosted by Man of Many, is an annual, city-wide celebration of tastings, rare releases and immersive events. Every event generates the one asset no model can synthesise: first-hand coverage by people who were in the room, published before and after the night.

Pre-event planning
Concepts, mood boards, venue, logistics, invitations, RSVPs

VIP guest list
Readers, professionals, influencers and high-net-worth guests

Styling and management
Look and feel, run sheet, entertainment, catering and drinks

Hosting and entertainment
Our editors and talent, on the mic

Media and content
Photography, video and social from the night

Pre- and post-event coverage
Australia's largest men's lifestyle audience, in print and on social

Creative and production · Sponsored content · Ad specs · Events · Sydney Whisky Month 2024 case study · Contact us.

SECTION 08

Brand uplift studies, and attribution.

Prove the real impact of your marketing: two complementary studies, one for perception and intent, one for the incremental outcomes that would not have happened without the media.

FIGURE 34. How the Brand Uplift Study runs on site: a quick five-question survey served to exposed and unexposed readers, scored from brand non-familiarity through awareness, consideration and preference to actionable intent.

	BRAND UPLIFT STUDY	ATTRIBUTION AND INCREMENTALITY
What it measures	Change in key brand metrics after exposure to your campaign: awareness, consideration, preference and intent	The incremental outcomes that would not have happened without Man of Many media: purchases, revenue, app installs, new customers
Best for	Brand and mid-funnel activity where proving a perception or intent shift is the point	Performance, retail and omni-channel campaigns that need proof of sales or customer lift
How it works	Survey-based lift using campaign-aligned questions, fielded on site before, during and straight after the flight, exposed against control	Causal time-series modelling on historical geo-level data, and geo-based incrementality testing with treatment and control regions
What you get	A clear KPI lift read-out with insights and next-step recommendations for messaging, creative and targeting	Incremental lift, incremental conversions and revenue, iROAS, and results split by region, audience, placement and flighting
Timing	Questionnaire aligned pre-flight; fieldwork during and after the campaign; insights deck on completion, minimum four weeks	Minimum four weeks; ideally twelve months of daily historical KPI data by region supplied pre-campaign

Read with Section 07: these are the outcome-based measurements this guide asks you to insist on, alongside per-tool citation reporting, not instead of it. Brand Uplift Studies · Contact us.

SECTION 08

Recognised, and cited.

The mastheads that cover us and the industry bodies we belong to: the third-party record a model reads when it decides whether to trust a source.

PRESS COVERAGE OF MAN OF MANY

Coverage of Man of Many's journalism, research and awards by the mastheads above, each on our maintained press log at manofmany.com/press, is the E-E-A-T signal in its literal form: other publishers citing this one. It is also what the models read.

INDUSTRY MEMBERSHIPS

Australian Press Council (member) · **Digital Publishers Alliance** (founding member) · **Local & Independent News Association** (member) · **News/Media Alliance** (member) · **WAN-IFRA, World Association of News Publishers** (member) · **Online News Association** (member) · **Ipsos iris** (independently audited, iab-endorsed).

SECTION 08

Who we do this for.

The partners and agencies already buying the layer this guide argues for.

BRANDS WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH

Also Penfolds, Ardbeg, Wynns Coonawarra Estate and Ressence. Booked directly and through Mindshare, EssenceMediacom, L'Atelier, MOBKOI and Treasury.

Watches, automotive, fashion and drinks, booked directly and through the holding agencies. The relevance to this document is that these are the categories where AI answers are assembled from independent verdicts, and the work above is what being one of those sources looks like when a brand pays for it.

WORK WITH US

Consider Man of Many for your next brief in any of the categories above. Send it, or the prompt your buyers type, to any of the three people on the back page and we will come back with where your category's answers are built from, our honest place in it, and a plan with the measurement agreed up front.

SECTION 08

Bring this to your team.

A lunch and learn, in your office or ours, on any of the topics below. Forty-five minutes, questions welcome, no pitch unless you ask for one.

SESSION	WHAT YOUR TEAM LEAVES WITH
The 2026 Guide to GEO	This document, presented: what the evidence says, what to ignore, what to fund, and how to measure it honestly
Ten practical use cases for AI and prompting	How the Man of Many team actually uses AI day to day in research, production and operations, and the prompts behind each
The Man of Many media kit	Audience, categories, formats and case studies, with the numbers dated
The Male Confidence Index	Australia's national benchmark on how men are really doing: the findings, and what they mean for brands speaking to men

BOOK A SESSION

Email Scott Purcell at scott@manofmany.com with the topic and two or three dates that suit your team. Sydney in person; anywhere else by video.

09

Sources.

Every study cited in this guide, with its publisher, sample size and date, so you can check any number in it rather than taking ours.

SECTION 09

Sources.

Grouped as the guide uses them. Where a study is small or directional, that is noted rather than buried.

SCALE AND SEARCH BEHAVIOUR

- Similarweb, *2026 Generative AI Landscape*, data to May 2026. Category visitor volumes, AI Overview prevalence, and the citation source mix by category.
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SECTION 09

Sources, continued.

The tactics that were measured and failed, what the platforms say in their own words, whose frameworks we have borrowed, our own first-party data, and the one quote we checked before printing it.

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MAN OF MANY FIRST-PARTY

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THE NEWS AUSTRALIA QUOTE IN SECTION 02

Mike Cook, News Australia's Search, AI and Emerging Platforms lead, on the launch of *The Prompt Report*, September 2026. Wording checked against two independent reports of the announcement: B&T, 15 September 2026, and Mediaweek, 14 September 2026. Both reproduce the sentence identically.

> **NOT USED**
>
> The statistics in that same announcement are not reproduced anywhere in this guide. The 57% non-human traffic figure sits inside Cook's own quote rather than being sourced to a study, and the 63% long-term reputation figure is attributed to WARC by the trade press without naming the report. We have not sighted the WARC document, and a press release is not a primary source, so neither number prints. We quote the diagnosis, which we agree with, and leave the arithmetic alone.

MANOFMANY

Work with us.

Put Man of Many on the list for your next brief. Everything in this guide says the same thing: the brands AI recommends are the ones independent publishers have already written about, and in Australian men's lifestyle that publisher is us. Send us the brief, the category or the prompt your buyers type, and we will come back with where your answers are built from today, our honest place in it, and a plan with the measurement agreed up front.

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WINNER Publishing Company of the Year, Mumbrella Awards 2026

WINNER Branded Content Studio of the Year, Mumbrella Awards 2026

WINNER Best Use of Video, Mumbrella Awards 2026

WINNER Media Brand of the Year, Mumbrella Awards 2025

WINNER Website of the Year, Mumbrella Publish Awards 2020, 2023, 2024 and 2025