

What AI says about you

How reviews build trust and get
your brand recommended by
ChatGPT, Gemini, and beyond

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The way people find brands is changing.

Search driven discovery

The goal

Rank on Google to be found.

The problem

Users had to hunt through ad-clutter and endless “blue links” to find a real answer.

AI driven discovery

The goal

Become AI’s recommended answer.

The process

AI vets multiple sources to decide which brands to suggest.

The outcome

Influence the purchase decision before a customer even clicks your website.

AI platforms have become a main research channel for consumers in a span of months, not years. According to Similarweb’s 2025 Generative AI Landscape report¹, AI platforms attract 7 billion monthly web visits, **up 76% year over year**. AI mobile app downloads also grew **319% to 1.9 billion**.

Consumers now use AI every day to research products, compare brands, and make purchase decisions. That change has consequences.

For over two decades, brand visibility was a function of search engine optimization: Rank well on Google, and the right buyers would find you. The “right” answer could be easily lost in an array of links to choose from, together with a glut of ads.

In AI search, brands no longer compete for a ranking on a page of blue links. They compete to be included in a generated answer. The AI collects signals from multiple sources, weighs competing claims, and forms a judgment about which brands to recommend, which to compare, and which to avoid. People make brand choices based on AI recommendations, without ever visiting brand websites.

The question “can people find us online?” has been replaced by: **“when AI is asked about us, what does it say?”**

¹SimilarWeb: 2025 Generative AI Landscape: The State Of Gen AI

About this study

Goal of the study

Understand how AI systems use third-party reviews and if Trustpilot measurably changes how AI describes or recommends brands.

The scale of the study

★ Prompts sent to **4 major AI platforms:**



★ **804,491** AI responses analyzed

★ **1,926 brands** tracked across **8 industries**

★ All brands were **US based**

★ Testing was done in **March 2026**



“I’ve always been driven by a curiosity for what’s next.

Right now, everyone’s talking about AI, but very few have the data to back it up. I’ve noticed a massive appetite for verified research in this area.

That’s why we commissioned an independent study with Seer Interactive in March 2026, analyzing over 800,000 AI responses. I wanted to move beyond speculation and see exactly how human sentiment affects the AI recommendation engine.

This research is for the leaders who want to stop guessing and start shaping what AI says about their brand.”

Ciaran Dynes
Chief Product Officer



Key insights



AI uses review content to construct answers

#2

review and trust sites are the second most-cited source category in the study.

+16x

the share of AI citations going to review sites grows 16x from the Awareness stage to the Decision stage - the closer a consumer is to a purchase, the more AI leans on review data.



A Trustpilot profile helps you stand out

1%

citation rate for brands with no Trustpilot profile.

54%

average citation rate after claiming a profile - based on profiles with a median of 13 reviews.

75%

Trustpilot citation rate for businesses that optimize their profile and collect a median of 81 reviews.



Trustpilot drives a competitive advantage

+9.5x

more competitive co-mentions for brands with optimized Trustpilot profile and a high number of reviews compared to brands with no profile.

+43x

largest relative lift in the dataset - travel and vacation brands moving from no profile to a claimed profile.

Why AI reaches for reviews

When someone asks AI whether a company is reliable, the brand's own website is not enough. AI needs independent evidence that reflects real customer experience.

Review content fits that need because it gives AI three useful signals: Relevance, Ranking, and Recency.

That is why review platforms often appear in AI-generated answers - and why Trustpilot can influence how brands are discovered, compared, and described.

At Trustpilot, we've always believed that timely, genuine, human experience is the most important signal. Technology changes, but the need for a second opinion never will.

★ Relevance

When a consumer asks an AI about a brand, the question is usually evaluative:

- ★ Is this company reliable?
- ★ How is their customer service?
- ★ Would I have a good experience buying from them?

Review content is, by its nature, a direct answer to these questions. AI doesn't have to infer sentiment from context - the content itself already answers consumer questions.

★ Ranking

AI models don't read the entire web before answering. They run searches and pull from reputable sources.

Trustpilot, with its strong domain rating and AI friendly page structure tends to rank well when AI searches for brand information.

In the study, 99.5% of the Trustpilot citations observed in AI responses were due to Trustpilot's organic strength of the content - not because the AI deliberately sought Trustpilot out by name.

★ Recency

AI systems prioritize information that reflects what is true about a brand now, not what was true a year ago.

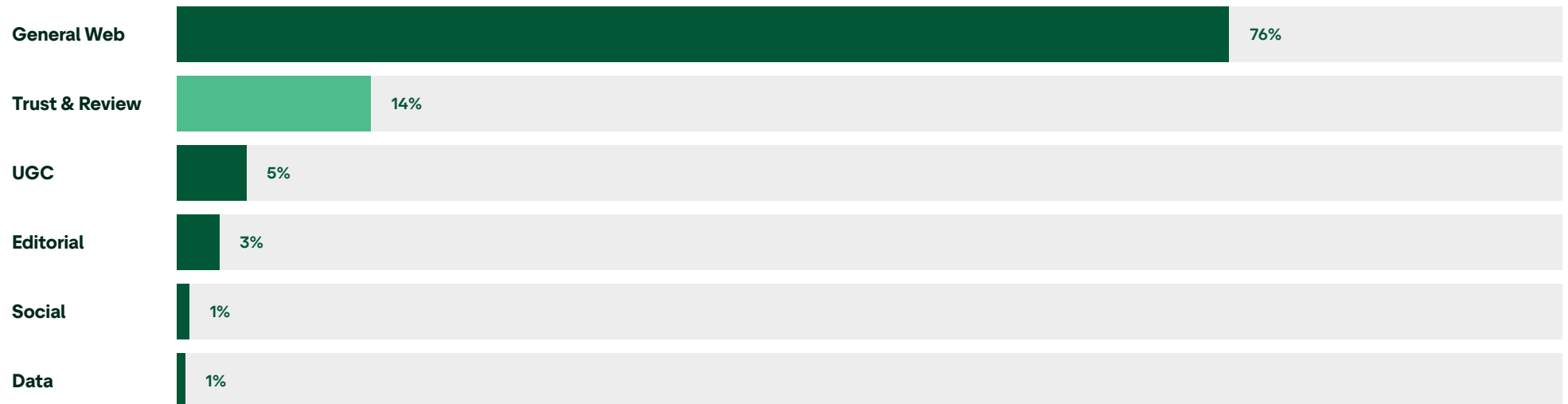
Review platforms update continuously as customers post new feedback. This creates a current, customer-first snapshot of a brand that AI can incorporate into its answers.

AI search engines use review sites for independent validation.

Key insight
 Review sites are now part of the AI evidence layer. They ranked as the #2 most-cited source category in the study.

When AI search engines recommend a brand, they do not rely only on brand-owned content. They look for independent sources that can augment business information and validate brand claims.

In SEER Interactive’s research, trust and review sites were the second most-cited source category, ranking behind only the general web.



How reviews influence the conversion funnel

The study also analyzed how the AI use of reviews changes along the conversion funnel.

Awareness: AI uses general information to craft responses. At this early stage, reviews are cited 2% of the time.

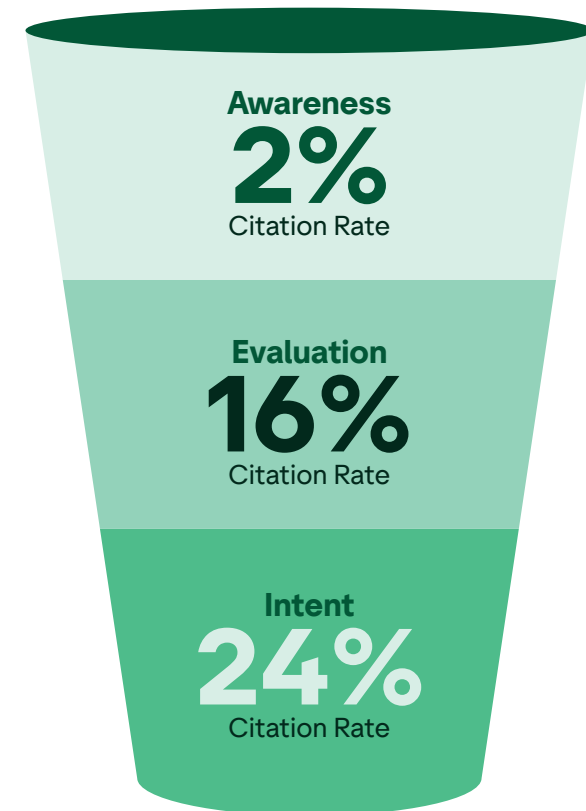
Evaluation: AI begins to collect additional, third-party information to inform the response. Review influence jumps 10x during this stage to 16% of all citations.

Intent: This is the point of purchase. Nearly 1 in 4 sources cited were independent review sites (24%).

The message is clear:

The later in the funnel a consumer is when they ask AI about you, the more reviews will shape the answer. Reviews are one of the most concentrated sources of independent signal available, and AI treats them accordingly.

Review citations climb at evaluation and intent stages



What this means for a brand's AI visibility strategy



Your review strategy is now part of your AI visibility strategy.

- ★ As AI-generated answers become an established channel for brand research, the sources AI use become important.
- ★ Review sites are one of those sources. AI models are built to check claims against independent data, and review content is an important source of independent data.



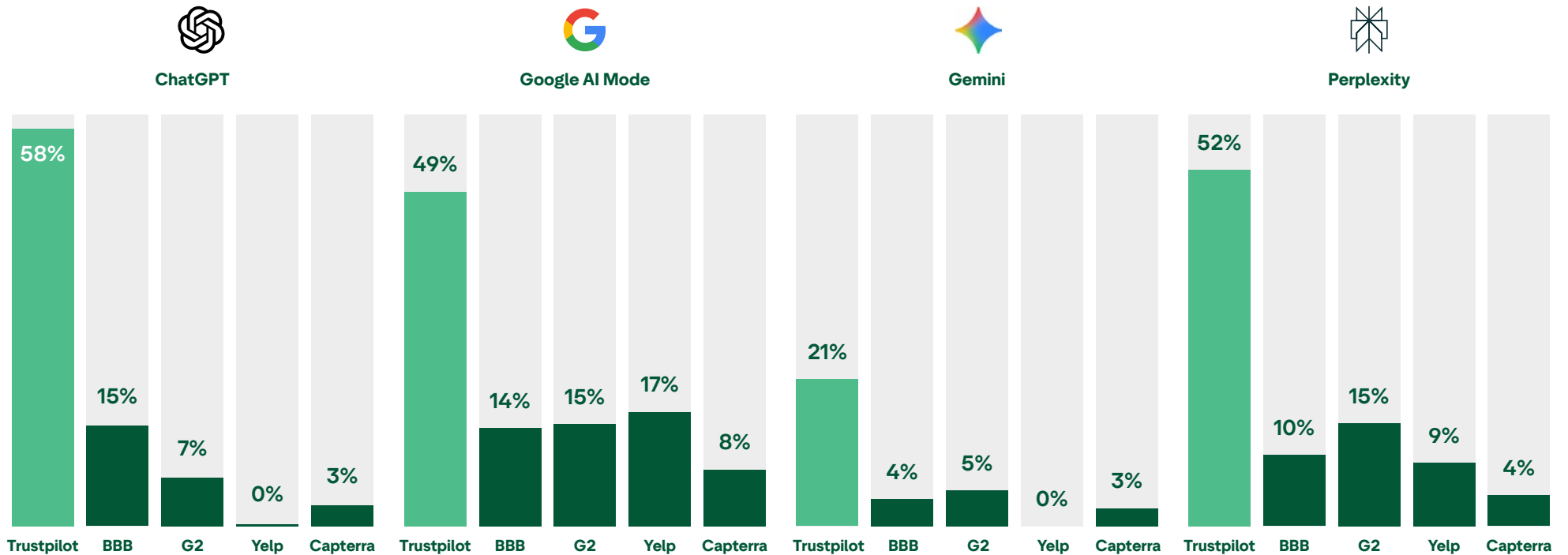
Where you build review presence matters.

- ★ As Trustpilot appears consistently most-cited across all four major AI platforms studied, a presence there can reach a broad range of AI-generated answers without requiring a separate strategy for each platform.
- ★ It is a single, high-impact lever for all brands.

Trustpilot is the review source AI engines cite most.

After identifying trust and review sites as a major source category, the next question is: Which review sources do AI engines rely on most?

Across ChatGPT, Google AI Mode, Gemini, and Perplexity, Trustpilot was the most-cited review platform tested. This suggests that Trustpilot plays a leading role when AI systems look for independent review evidence.



How Trustpilot improves AI visibility

One of the clearest findings from the study is that businesses do not need a large review footprint to improve AI visibility. A basic Trustpilot profile with a median of 13 reviews was cited in 54% of AI responses - up from just 1% for businesses with no Trustpilot profile.

The most striking finding in the data is how sharply AI citation rates change between No Profile and Minimal Profile.

Gains continue as review volume grows.

Key insight
 The impact shown here is not a gradual improvement. It's a huge change, and it happens at the lowest threshold of Trustpilot activity.
 Claiming a profile and collecting a small number of reviews is the single highest-return action observed in the study.

Cohort	Definition	AI citation rate
No Profile	No claimed Trustpilot profile	1%
Minimal Profile	Claimed profile, ~13 reviews	54%
Active Profile	Claimed profile, ~81 reviews	75%

A Trustpilot profile presence helps small brands compete with mid-sized brands

As part of the study we wanted to understand how reviews might impact small businesses and mid-sized businesses differently.

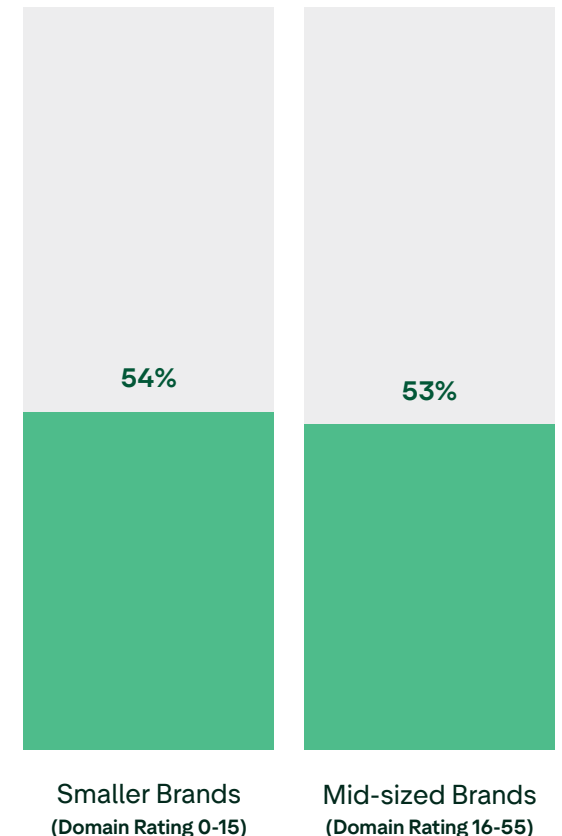
To accomplish this, brands were segmented by domain rating - a way to segment these types of companies - and examined to see how citation rates changed within each segment when a Trustpilot profile was introduced.

The findings proved that smaller brands can be cited as often as larger brands by adding a Trustpilot profile and getting some reviews.

Key insight

The AI citation gap between small and mid-sized brands can be closed by establishing a review presence - something a brand can do in weeks rather than months. This is not a claim that review presence makes brand size irrelevant. This means that, for smaller brands with limited marketing resources, the investment required to reach parity with larger competitors in AI visibility is much smaller than before.

Reviews can help smaller brands achieve AI citation rates comparable to mid-sized businesses.



Standing out from competitors: The “co-mention effect”

Brands with highly active profiles are more likely to be mentioned when AI is asked about their competitors.

Direct vs competitive visibility

- ★ **Direct visibility:** This refers to citations for your own brand. These rates tend to level off once a brand reaches the “Active” cohort.
- ★ **Competitive visibility:** This refers to appearing in searches for other brands. Unlike direct citations, competitive visibility continues to scale as you increase review volume and profile engagement.

For brands operating in competitive categories, the distinction matters. Direct visibility protects the share of answers a brand commands. Competitive visibility expands the share of answers a brand appears in.

“**Co-mention**”: When AI recommends your brand in response to a query about your competitor (e.g., “What are the best alternatives to Brand X?”).

9.5x

Brands with optimized profiles are mentioned 9.5 times more often when consumers ask AI about their competitors, compared to brands with no profile.

Key insight

- ★ **Large brands:** Brands with high review volume and optimized profile receive 9.5x more co-mentions than those with no profile.
- ★ **Emerging brands:** Even smaller brands with active profiles see 4.9x more co-mentions than those without a presence.

AI shapes your brand narrative with review content

The study examined **91,292** ChatGPT responses in which Trustpilot was cited, and examined how the cited content appeared in the answer delivered. AI systems use Trustpilot content in the following ways.

1 AI uses your TrustScore as a credibility shortcut

The simplest way AI uses Trustpilot content is to reach for the headline numbers - the TrustScore, the star rating, and the total review count - and present them as quick credibility markers.

The study found:

- ★ **59%** of ChatGPT answers that cited Trustpilot referenced the TrustScore or star rating directly.
- ★ **16.6%** referenced the number of reviews a brand has.
- ★ Roughly **three out of five** Trustpilot-citing responses surfaced a numeric trust signal of some kind.

The practical implication is that the TrustScore is not a vanity metric in AI search. It is one of the two most commonly cited pieces of content a Trustpilot profile produces, alongside review volume.

59%

of ChatGPT answers that cited Trustpilot referenced the TrustScore or star rating directly.

17%

referenced the number of reviews a brand has.

2 AI reads your reviews and forms an opinion based on them

AI systems also read the review text itself and synthesize recurring themes. When ChatGPT cited Trustpilot, the generated answers often described the kinds of experiences customers had reported - not by quoting individual reviews, but by summarizing what came up repeatedly across reviews.

Five themes appeared most often in the analyzed responses

Theme	Share of Trustpilot-citing responses
Customer service quality	63%
Shipping and delivery	34%
Product or service quality	33%
Scam or legitimacy concerns	30%
Refund or return issues	21%

Key insight

- ★ Customer Service is the single most frequent theme by a wide margin - nearly two thirds of Trustpilot-citing responses surfaced it.
- ★ AI systems consistently treat the following topics as relevant to the user experience: **service experience, fulfillment, product quality, trust concerns, and resolution behavior.**
- ★ For brands, these themes are the types of reviews AI is looking for. A brand whose reviews speak to all five produces richer material and more opportunities for AI to cite their reviews.

3 AI treats missing reviews as a trust gap

AI systems do not only use Trustpilot when reviews are present. In some cases, they also mention Trustpilot when independent review evidence is missing.

In the study, when ChatGPT searched for Trustpilot and found an existing profile, Trustpilot was cited in 90–96% of responses. But when ChatGPT searched for Trustpilot and found no profile it still mentioned Trustpilot in 34.4% of sampled responses - usually to point out the absence of third-party reviews.

That makes the absence of reviews part of the trust evaluation. A brand without a visible review presence is not always treated as neutral. In some responses, AI used the lack of Trustpilot reviews as a reason to question whether the business had enough independent validation.

The findings point to a practical AI readiness framework: First establish a review presence, then build a consistent base of fresh reviews, and finally use that review content to strengthen how AI systems understand and describe the brand.

34%

When ChatGPT searched for Trustpilot but found no profile, it still mentioned Trustpilot in 34.4% of sampled responses - often to highlight the absence of independent review evidence.

Key insight

Claiming a profile and collecting an initial base of reviews does more than increase the chance of being cited. It also reduces the risk that AI will describe the brand as lacking visible, independent customer feedback.

A 3-step framework for improving AI visibility

Step 1

Establish your presence

1% → 53%

Citation rate after claiming a profile and collecting a median of 13 reviews.

Checklist

- Claim your Trustpilot profile.
- Automate review invitations.
- Respond to every review, positive or negative.



Biggest visibility lift

Step 2

Build review volume

75%

Citation rate for active profiles with a median of 81 reviews.

Checklist

- Collect reviews at consistent customer touchpoints.
- Set targets for review volume, recency, and coverage.
- Respond regularly to keep the profile active and current.
- Measure AI citations to understand visibility gains.



Build momentum

Step 3

Win the comparison game

9.5x

More competitive co-mentions than brands without a profile.

Checklist

- Maintain a fresh, high-volume review base.
- Track AI mentions in competitor and comparison prompts.
- Use review themes to shape the brand narrative.
- Feed customer insights back into the business.



Competitive advantage

Conclusion: The new era of authority

AI search hasn't just changed how people find you, it's changed how they verify you.

The data from this study is clear: AI models read Trustpilot, and rely on our platform to anchor their recommendations in reality.

What we've learned

The visibility gap is real

Without a Trustpilot presence, your brand is effectively invisible to AI, cited just 1% of the time.

Presence is the multiplier

Simply establishing a profile triggers a 50x jump in visibility, moving your citation rate to 54%.

Management matters

Active engagement earns you 9.5x more co-mentions, putting you on the shortlist when customers look at your rivals.

The path forward

In the age of AI, your review profile is no longer a “nice-to-have” marketing tool. It's a strategic data asset.

The organizations that win in this new landscape will be those that treat customer sentiment as a business priority.

Don't let AI guess who you are.

Review your brand's AI visibility today



Speak to a Trustpilot expert

Appendix

About this study

Our goal was to answer three questions in this study:

- 1 **Reliance on reviews:** To what extent do AI systems rely on third-party review data when describing or recommending brands?
- 2 **The Trustpilot effect:** Does the presence of a brand's Trustpilot profile measurably change how AI describes that brand?
- 3 **Actionable steps:** What can brands do today to shape how they appear in AI-generated answers?

To find the answers, Trustpilot commissioned an independent study by SEER Interactive in March 2026.

The scale of the study

- ★ **804,491** AI responses analyzed
- ★ **1,926** Brands tracked across 8 industries.
- ★ **B2C Industries:** Money & Insurance, Shopping & Fashion, Travel & Vacation, Home Services, Health & Medical, and Education & Training.
- ★ **B2B Industries:** Electronics & Technology and Business Services (with specific tagging for subcategories like Sales & Marketing and IT & Communication to ensure granular analysis).
- ★ **4 Major AI platforms:** ChatGPT | Google Gemini | Perplexity | Google AI Overviews.
- ★ **When:** March 2026.
- ★ **Where:** US.
- ★ Maintains a claimed, active, and valid Trustpilot profile.
- ★ Has generated at least one active customer review and possesses a non-zero TrustScore.

How it was tested

We divided the 1,926 brands into four cohorts based on their Trustpilot profile activity (from no profile to fully optimized).

To ensure fairness and isolate the effect of reviews from general SEO strength, we benchmarked brands using Ahrefs data. This additional data includes brand search volume, domain authority, backlinks, and organic traffic and other metrics. Benchmarking matters because it isolates the effect of Trustpilot presence from the underlying organic strength of the brands being measured. Without it, a finding like 'brands with profiles get cited more' would not be possible to separate from the finding, "bigger brands get cited more, and bigger brands happen to have profiles."