

The AI Citation Map

What actually gets cited, and how to earn your spot.

Citation analysis across ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, Google AI Overviews and DeepSeek, spanning B2B Software & IT Services and Communication Services.

Citation data: December 2025 to August 2026.

01

There is no single "AI."

Only 5 sources appear in every major engine's top 20. The same site can be a top source on one engine and invisible on another: PCMag gets 8 citations on ChatGPT but over 216,000 on Perplexity. Winning one engine does not mean winning the next.

02

UGC/Social runs the layer.

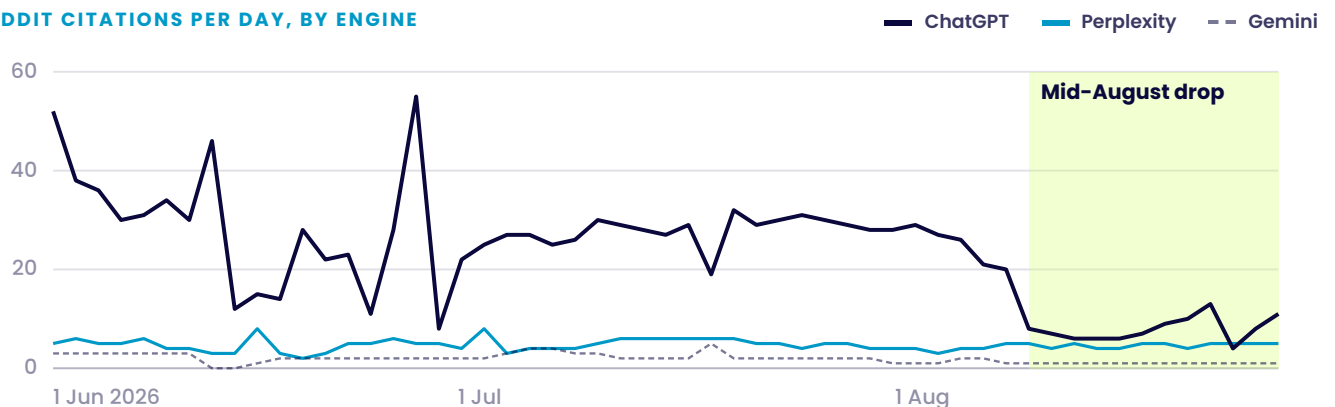
User-generated and social sources make up a large share of citations, not brand blogs.

03

Reddit & YouTube — in the top sources for every industry, every engine we studied.

However, that was during Summer. ChatGPT drastically changed Reddit's significance in its sources.

REDDIT CITATIONS PER DAY, BY ENGINE



Source maps move. A citation base built on one engine's habits can halve in a week.

04

Each engine has a personality.

Perplexity and ChatGPT are the two heaviest citers. ChatGPT leans hardest on reference-grade sources like Wikipedia. Google AI Overviews is the narrowest, so being absent there is total.

05

The search map is not the citation map.

Where you rank on Google and where AI pulls its sources are two different worlds. Optimising for one leaves the other to competitors.

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How to earn your place.

This is learnable and repeatable. Four steps, worked in order, then worked again next month.

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01

Map the real sources

Map your category's actual cited sources instead of guessing from a generic list.

02

Pick your engine

Pick the engine that matters most to your business and prioritise its source set.

03

Show up where they live

Go where those sources live: Reddit threads, YouTube, review and comparison sites, industry directories, reference-grade pages, and the specialists in your niche.

04

Track the shift

Track it over time, because the map shifts by engine and by month.

WATCH-OUTS

- Don't treat AI as one channel.
- Don't assume Google wins carry over.
- Don't chase the famous domains and skip your vertical.

See how AI sees you

Map your own sources, free at trendos.com

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