Visibility in AI:

F.A.C.T.S. framework

by Owen Mulhern

the F.A.C.T.S. framework

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Have you noticed a drop in Google traffic? → Most brands are experiencing one.

The culprits: → **AI search** and **AI overviews**.

People are moving away from traditional "search" and toward LLMs' "ask and answer"* formula.

*(Soon, it will be "ask and execute," but that's a story for another time.)

So people are clicking less. But what about overall traffic? Is it stable?

Check your branded search. Has it increased?

If not, it probably means **AI isn't citing you**.

‘AI search will take over, and its shoppers are 4.4x more likely to buy from brands AI cites.’

If you hadn’t heard, Semrush conducted a study to find out how AI search (including Google AI Overviews, Google AI Mode, ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity) could impact the digital marketing and SEO industry’s traffic and revenue over the coming years.

In brief: AI search will take over, and its shoppers are 4.4x more likely to buy from brands AI cites.

AI optimization isn’t optional.

In order to help you get an early movers’ advantage, I pieced together a powerful framework (supported by Semrush’s data) for AI visibility.

I invite you to read on and see for yourself.

1. The shift to AI search

- ‘You’ve probably already experienced search with AI.’

Google AI overviews turned a significant part of the internet click-less.

You’ve probably already experienced search with AI.

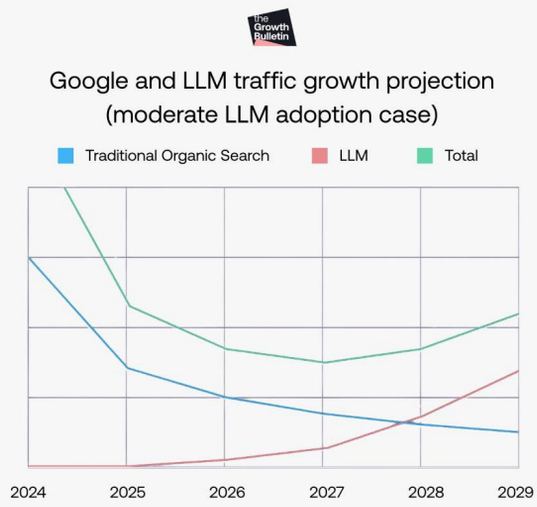
these machines hallucinate and sometimes get stuck in strange patterns.

Meanwhile, ChatGPT took the world by fire with the quickest time to 100M users (2 months to TikTok's second place 9 months) and quickest global takeover (<3 years).

But it isn't just about its adoption, it's what its adoption is replacing.

It's different. You get complete answers to your question no matter what it is, and whether it would have taken 20 Google searches to reach the same result or not.

There is a degree of mistrust of course – Nevertheless, the pros outweigh the cons. Accordingly, Semrush reports an increasing number of users turning to AI for their queries. They expect AI Search traffic to your website will overtake that from traditional engines by 2028, maybe earlier.



As a consequence, more of your revenue is going to come from AI.
But not proportionally more, no.

As mentioned earlier, LLM traffic is 4.4x more likely to buy.

Why? Well, some say LLMs compress the funnel. People get answers to questions faster, and tend to trust the factual data and reasoning presented by the LLM.

Here are the facts: traffic coming to you from AI right now is about 1% of your total.

However they're already about 4% of your search-derived revenue.

By 2027, they'll be around 52%, and by 2028, a whopping 75%.

Value share	2025	2026	2027	2028
Google search	97%	83%	52%	75%
LLM's	4%	17%	48%	25%

Optimizing for AI isn't a luxury, it's a necessity.

Thankfully, AI optimization (AIO) is 70% similar to SEO.

Most of what you do will benefit you both ways.

2. How do you get AI to cite YOU?

↓

the F.A.C.T.S. framework

SEO was predictable. Give people what they're looking for, do the on-page work, get some backlinks, watch your page climb.

AIO is probabilistic. It depends on your content, where it lives, who's asking, what they're asking, and what their intent is.

What you don't need to do anymore: rank.

80% of cited webpages rank 20+ on Google, though that could simply be because there are more of them. Either way, AI considers URLs far beyond the first page.

What you really need to do now:

Help AI do what it is designed to do: answer specific questions with contextual precision.

And that, people, comes down to five things.

1. **F**acts
2. **A**uthority
3. **C**rowd consensus
4. Posi**T**ioning
5. **S**tructured data

Introducing: the F.A.C.T.S networks

Before we jump in, a quick tip
(Courtesy of Chris Long, VP of marketing at Go Fish Digital):

Check the ChatGPT is crawling your site at all!

1. Find your "access log files" stored by your website hosting provider.

2. → Navigate to OpenAI's "Crawlers" documentation here and write down the different user agents (e.g. ChatGPT-User, GPTBot).

3. → Open your log files and search for the crawlers. If they appear, you know you're getting crawled by AI search and the context it's using (ChatGPT Search, training data, user requests etc).

This is a very simple process that gives you definite proof.

F.A.C.T.S.
Facts

There are few things considered more factual today than scientifically measurable and repeatable outcomes.

When you don't have those, just sounding scientific usually does the trick.

Which of these two statements would you trust most?

A. "We modified subject lines and significantly increased open rates"

B. "Upon changing subject line format to X, we increased open rates by Y% over Z months.".

It's a credibility shortcut, and AI knows.

• How to optimize ?

Use customer-derived, real results in your content.

Phrase it scientifically, e.g.: "X found that upon Y, Z happened."

LLMs respond well to **structured, outcome-based language** — it helps them "understand" what your product does, for whom, and what the effect is.

Why this is also good for SEO:
It's quotable, and if trustworthy, increases your chances of getting mentioned by other authoritative sources.

F.A.C.T.S.
Authority

When you read a fact, it's either true or not.

How you know is usually
a combination of:

1. Critical analysis
2. How much you trust
   the source

People mostly defer to the latter. Facts are rarely backed correctly and even if they are, we prefer the mental shortcut of trusting the source.

AI needs to decide whose word to take for true online, but more importantly, make you happy. If "trusting the source" is what we'd do to reach a satisfying answer, it makes sense for it to do so.

How does AI assign authority?

- Being mentioned alongside recognized authorities in the same context
  High-traffic pages
- Original content that others repeat
- Frequent citation by other trusted sources
- Repeatedly listed as a "top X" in its niche
- Consistently framed as expert or best-in-class by third parties

• How to optimize ?

- Create something really insightful
  e.g. a data-based report pulled from your customer data
- PR outreach to .edu, .gov, or industry-leading blogs offering them the data.
- Get third-party sites to echo your key phrasing, outcomes, and positioning
  e.g., multiple SEO blogs saying “Semrush’s Competitive Research tool is best for keyword gap analysis”
- Make sure your image is consistent.
- e.g., multiple SEO blogs saying “Semrush’s Competitive Research tool is best for keyword gap analysis”

Bonus: Own or influence multiple domains that speak about you.

Why this is also good for SEO: SEO algorithms measure and reward for authority using many of the same metrics as AI, though some differ.

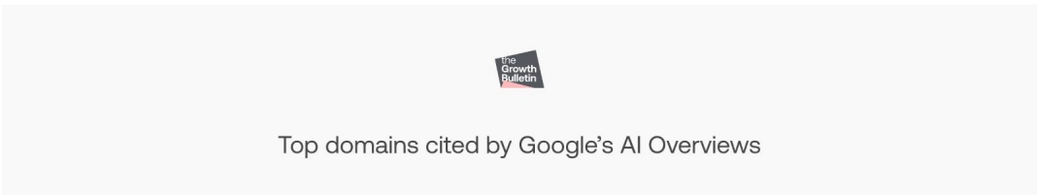
F.A.C.T.S.

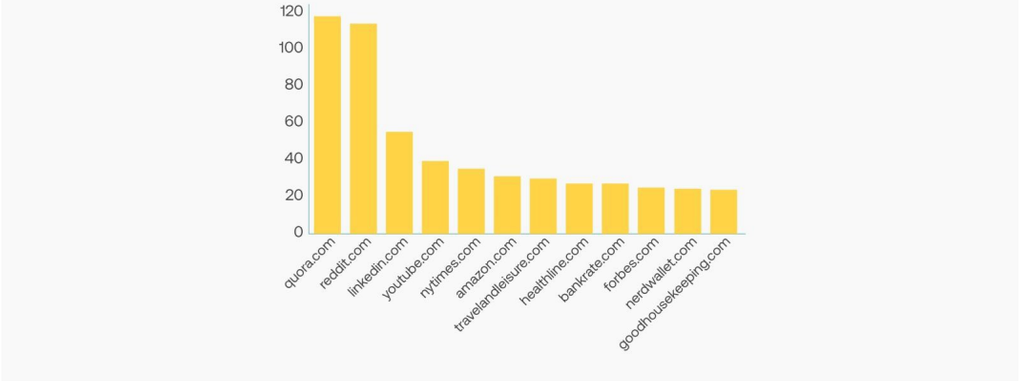
Crowd consensus

● **Strongly supported by Semrush research.**

AI’s criteria for trustworthiness differ greatly for websites v.s. “real” users. Users aren’t more trustworthy in real life, but what they say, especially when heavily upvoted, has a higher chance of accomplishing the AI’s real goal (pleasing the user) since humans have demonstrated approval.

Just look at how often it pulls from Quora and Reddit.





A few other factors explain why AI does this, including these platforms' conversational language matching the LLM experience's format.

More importantly however, is that Quora, Reddit and the like have become far more potent as channels for indirect discovery.

- # How to optimize ?

Get mentioned a lot across user-based platforms like:
Reddit, Quora, Stack Overflow, Medium, LinkedIn, GitHub.

It isn't easy to promote your brand on these, though.

E.g. for Reddit:

Redditors hate obvious promotion. Try:

- Setting your username as something with your company in it (brand account)
- Participating in relevant subreddits with pure value, never related to the brand but rather to the topic and industry
- Engage in threads, always using your expertise to bring value and help
- Build trust
- Host AMAs down the line

Why this is good for SEO: You won't be able to track it directly but mentions here will increase traffic and branded search. Over time, that will build into authority.

Hypothetical

Let's assume you've got everything above ship-shape and airtight.

You won't be the only one, and likely won't have the highest authority out of those that do.

So, why should AI mention you?

The best reason I can think of: because you bring something unique to the table.

It makes it easier for the AI to explain why it added you to the list.

E.g
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- "Semrush — because its Keyword Research tool is best-in-class for gap analysis."
- "Ahrefs — for its backlink database size and intuitive UI."

LLMs don't just repeat facts, they make useful comparisons. To get cited, you need to give them a reason to mention you over someone else.

• Positioning requirements

- Make sure you know why you're different. If you were added to a product list, what would you be the best option for?
- Unique story, values and features. (e.g. "for millennials whose parents don't understand what they do," or "built for sales teams that are tired of cold calling").
- Consistent framing. You're described the same way no matter where you're mentioned.

Tip: Use structured summaries. Concise, formatted blurbs (in About pages, press kits, product pages) that explain who you're for, what you're best at, and why you're different.

The idea: flood the LLM's input pool.

Everything you've read up till now was the human-facing content.

But AI is a machine and it has exploitable flaws.

Here's the biggest one:
make a dataset with tons of anonymized customer success examples that are structured adequately (markdown table of structured data) and linked to from a bunch of places online
(start with your website).

- 5-step How-to

1. Gather customer proof points with measurable outcomes
2. Scrub data for privacy and format into LLM-friendly structure
3. Link these datasets from relevant Markdown pages
4. Track impact on AI visibility and traffic
5. Refresh quarterly to remain relevant

3. What happens to SEO now?

96% of buyers still come through Google. By 2028, it will still be 25%. You can't ignore 25% of the market, so SEO is here to stay.

What might be of extreme interest to you is the following:

When you prompt ChatGPT and it searches online, it uses many different derivative versions of your question to search the internet.

You can now see these with Ziggy Shtrosberg's ChatGPT search query extractor.

Shtrosberg found that ChatGPT generates a JSON file with all of its search terms when this happens – use his tool and get them.

Your gameplan:

1. Try it out with terms around your business
2. Create internet-ready content with the terms you find

When it comes to step #2, I usually throw my keyword of interest into Semrush's SEO Content Template to get a detailed article brief. Combined with their SEO-trained AI ContentShake, I can create SEO-optimized content in a matter of minutes.

4. The analytics gap

Last but not least: in this new world of search, you have a tracking problem.

- If you get cited by AI and people type your name in a new tab, all you see is branded search.
- Even worse, users clicking your URL directly through AI overviews or LLMs will appear as "direct traffic" in your analytics.

Traditional metrics miss the real impact of your LLM optimization.

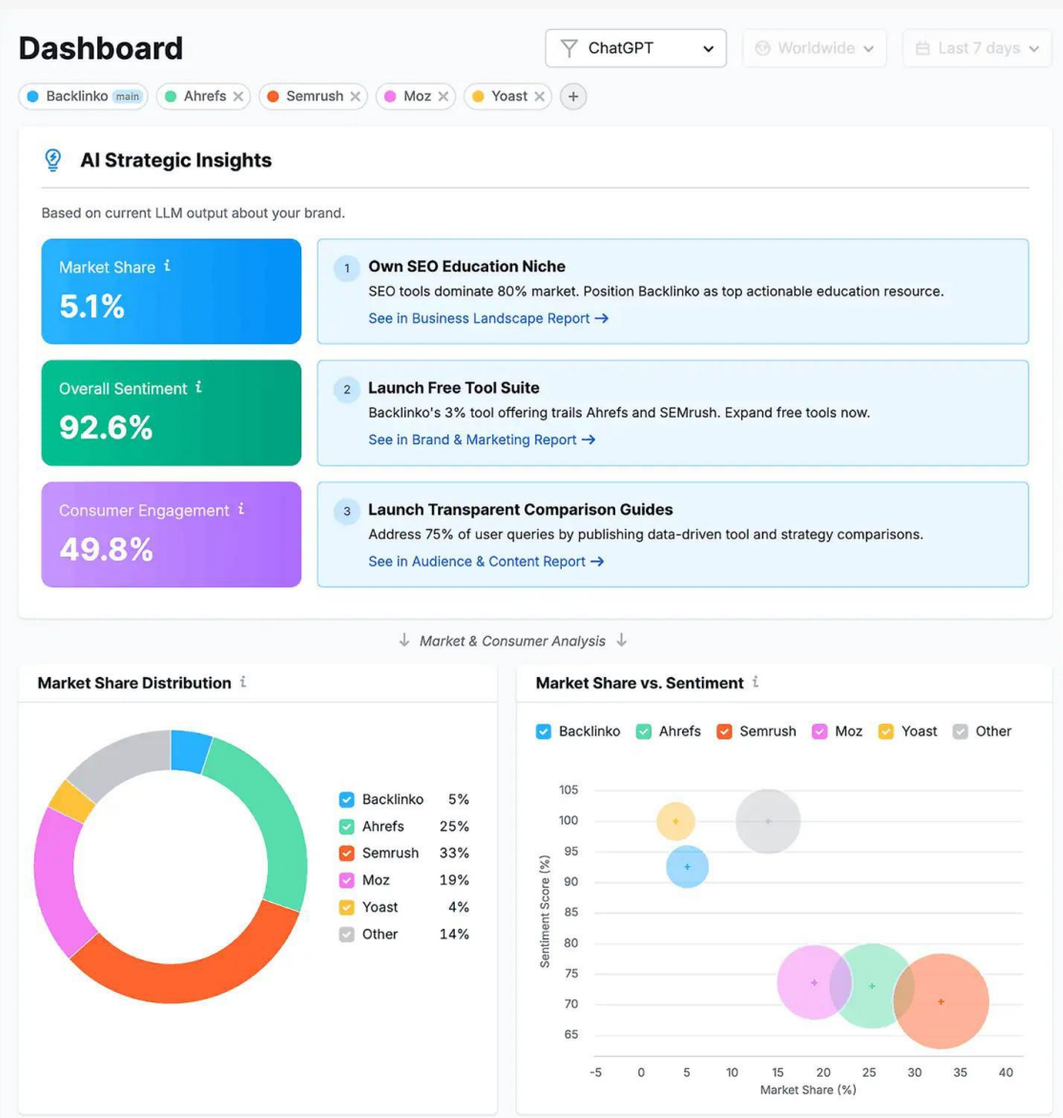
So what do you do?

1. **Monitor branded search** and **direct traffic** as you optimize for LLMs
2. Use the newest **LLM visibility tools**

I use Semrush's AI toolkit – it shows you how your brand does v.s. Competitors in AI citations.

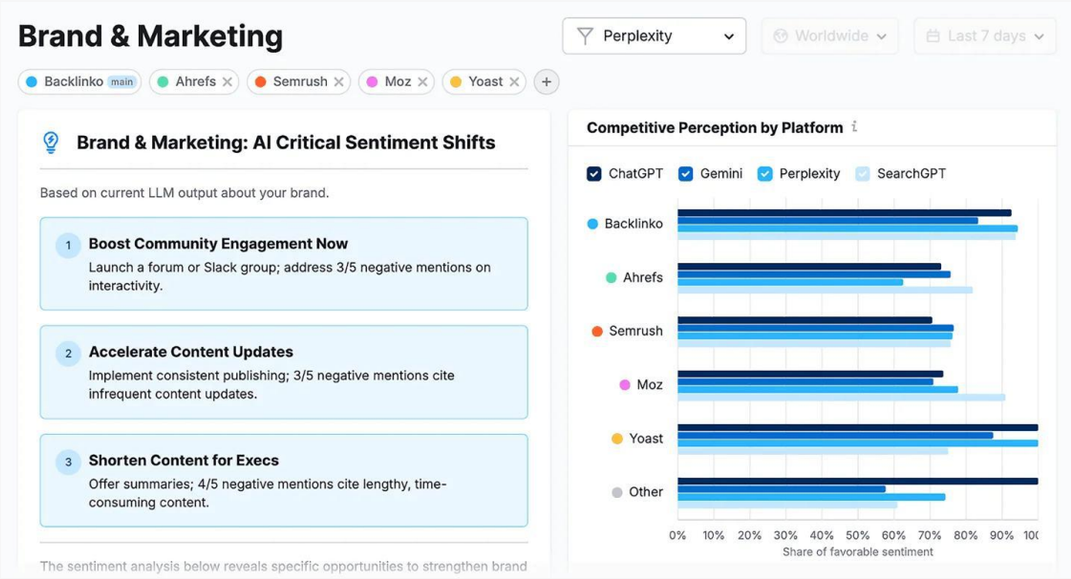
For this example, we'll use Backlinko (whom I recommend for a more technical dive into LLM optimization here) and compare them to four competitors.

Here's their ChatGPT visibility.



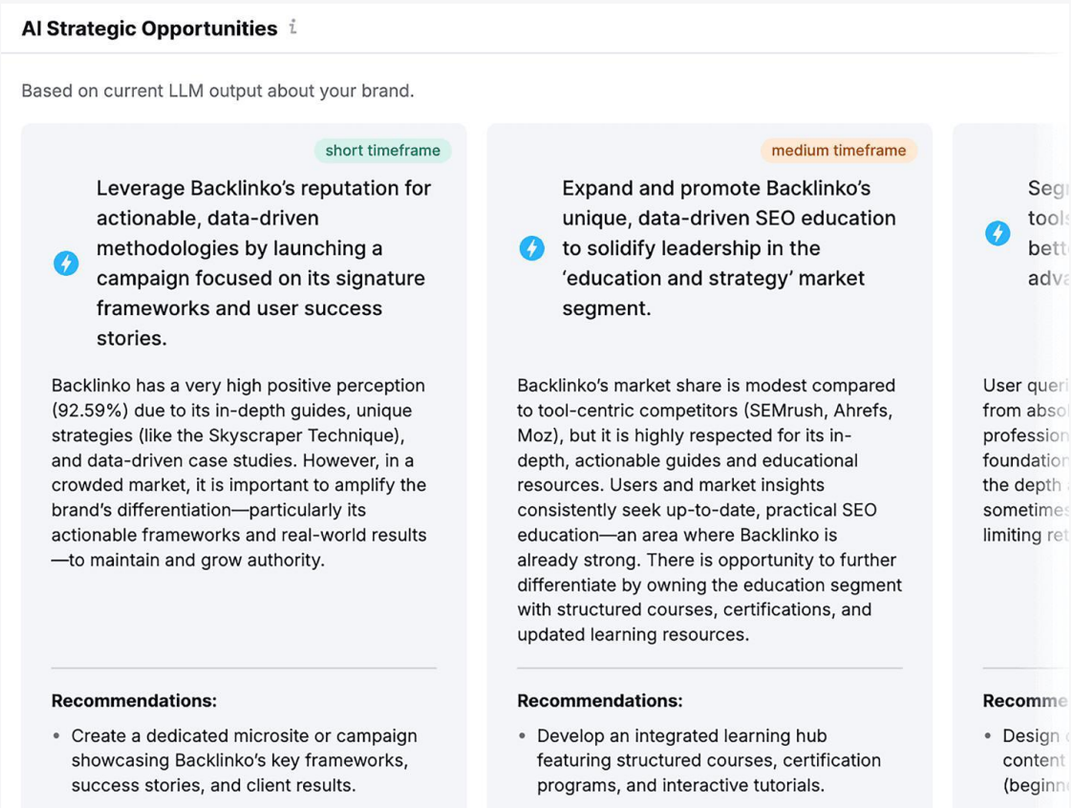
Backlinko sits at 5%, while Semrush leads with a 33% market share. This is expected since Backlinko doesn't sell anything – products generate more discussion and mention volume is a strong LLM citation driver.

Next, the toolkit shows you the sentiment around your brand across LLMs.



Backlinko has exceptional public perception across all LLMs.

Next, The Strategic Opportunities tab gives you just that. Spot the gaps and make moves that count.



- Use testimonials, downloadable resources, and webinars to highlight the effectiveness of Backlinko's unique methodologies.
- Drive home the message of proven, practical results to reinforce Backlinko's authority and distinctiveness in SEO education.

See Brand & Marketing Report →

- Regularly update resources to reflect current SEO trends and promote through partnerships, webinars, and SEO communities.
- Position Backlinko as the go-to destination for actionable SEO education, not just another tool provider.

See Business Landscape Report →

- Introduc
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See Audie

My recommendation: Track the following metrics monthly.

- Visibility score changes across all LLM models
- Branded search movement in correlation to visibility
- Market share shifts vs competitors (indicated in the Semrush AI Toolkit)

Semrush's Enterprise AIO offers even more powerful ways to monitor brand visibility in LLMs.

5. the F.A.C.T.S. framework checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you're applying the F.A.C.T.S. framework and getting AI's eyes on you.

I recommend checking at least 12 boxes if you want to be competitive.

Understand the shift.

- ○ You're tracking branded and direct traffic alongside traditional SEO metrics
- ○ You know that LLM traffic converts 4.4x better than traditional search
- ○ You're planning for LLMs to drive most search-derived revenue by 2028

F- FACTS

- ○ You consistently use measurable, verifiable claims in your content
- ○ You phrase outcomes with clarity:
  "X did Y, resulting in Z% increase over T weeks"
- ○ Your messaging favors structured, cause-and-effect language — the kind AI can cite

A- AUTHORITY

- ○ You publish original insights or data-backed reports others want to cite
- ○ You pitch trusted domains (e.g., .edu, .gov, top industry blogs) for backlinks and exposure
- ○ Your brand is consistently framed as best-in-class across third-party sites
- ○ Multiple properties (your own or partner-owned) echo your positioning with identical phrasing

C- CROWD CONSENSUS

- ○ You're organically mentioned across forums like Reddit, Quora, GitHub, and Medium
- ○ You engage on these platforms without promoting, building credibility through value
- ○ You've hosted or participated in community AMAs or discussions under a recognizable brand handle
- ○ You're matching the tone of these communities and contributing as a peer

T- POSITIONING

- ○ You have a clear, differentiating "best for" statement (e.g. "Best for X use case")
- ○ Your language is consistent across product pages, press kits, media mentions
- ○ You use structured summaries (e.g. in your About page) that clarify:
  - ○ Who you serve
  - ○ What you do best
  - ○ Why you're different
- ○ LLMs can easily pick up why you deserve a mention over someone else

S- STUCTURED DATA

- ○ You've built LLM-friendly datasets using anonymized, high-signal customer outcomes
- ○ They're formatted in tables or markdown, hosted on your domain or linked from other hubs
- ○ You refresh them quarterly to stay relevant in AI training data
- ○ These datasets are discoverable and clearly attributed to your brand

Track the invisible

- ○ You monitor direct and branded search traffic to detect untrackable AI referrals
- ○ You use AI visibility tools (e.g., Semrush AI Toolkit) to track citation share and sentiment
- ○ You correlate visibility movement with actual revenue shifts

In Brief

There's a new discovery channel and its users are 4.4x likelier to buy.

With a few tweaks to your SEO strategy, you can add LLM optimization and get ahead more now than ever before.

You've got the guidelines, the hacks and the advantage.

But remember, AI only cites a handful of brands every time. Those that don't adapt essentially disappear.

The time to move is now.