

AI Platforms Nearly Twice as Likely to Recommend Brands They Already Cite, Victorious Report Finds

Q3 2026 Search Report: 94 percent of brands cited on research questions were also named on buying questions, versus 50 percent of brands that were not.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, October 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Brands whose content AI platforms cite when buyers research a category are almost twice as likely to be named when those buyers ask which company to choose, according to the [Q3 2026 Search Report](#) from Victorious. Of the brands studied, 94 percent of those cited in answers to research questions were also named in answers to buying questions, compared with 50 percent of brands that were not cited.

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*Michael Transon, CEO,
Victorious*

The relationship also predicted which brands AI would start recommending. On July 1, 40 brands in the study had

not been named on any buying question. By October, 81 percent of those already cited on research questions had been named on at least one, compared with 21 percent of those without a research citation.

"Research-stage content has been treated as a traffic play," said Michael Transon, CEO of Victorious. "In AI search it looks more like a qualifying round."

The report covers 161 brands across five industries and about 16,500 AI answers collected from nine platforms. The research-to-buying analysis used [Ahrefs Brand Radar](#) data on questions US searchers asked AI platforms, sorted into research questions and buying questions. Part of the relationship held after accounting for how often AI mentions each brand overall, and the report presents it as a correlation rather than a cause. Victorious, an SEO and AEO agency, works on AI search visibility with mid-market and enterprise companies and publishes the report each quarter.

The finding arrives as AI search grows more selective. Of the 42 brands AI named in the second quarter, 15 were no longer named in the third, while two were newly named. Brands now need roughly 24,000 to 28,000 third-party web mentions for an even chance of being named, up from

about 20,000. In every industry studied, the 10 most-cited websites took a larger share of AI citations, reaching about half in legal services. Google's AI Overviews appeared on 97.5 percent of category searches, up from 72.8 percent.

"People have always trusted the company that helped them understand a problem before it tried to sell them a solution," Transon said. "AI search platforms appear to be following suit."

Transon first described the research-to-buying idea as a working theory on [The Search Signal](#), the agency's podcast, in August. The full report, including methodology and sample sizes, is available on the Victorious website.

About Victorious

Victorious is an SEO and AEO agency that helps mid-market and enterprise companies grow their visibility in Google and AI platforms like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity. Founded in 2013 and headquartered in San Francisco, the agency delivers technical SEO, content strategies, and digital PR. Victorious has been named Search Agency of the Year five times by juries of its peers at the US Search Awards, the US Agency Awards, and Search Engine Land.

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