

Social is not next to search. It *is* search.

What the citation data shows about where AI answers actually come from.

Three layers, one search result.

Supadu's DTC report frames modern commerce as three layers. Discovery, conversion, and your own site. **The citation data says AI reads all three.**

Your social feed is a source, not a shopfront.

Discovery.

The layer where people find you, and where they ask the real questions.

Reddit is the second most-cited domain across 9,978 AI answers, on 807 citations. Brandwatch found community posts average 113.8 words against 5.4 in a search box. That is where the reasoning sits.

Communities are training data now.

Conversion.

The layer where intent gets settled, and where you have least control.

Marketplaces and comparison pages own this step. Dentsu's warning applies here. LLMs do not forget, and they treat old listings, old reviews and old pricing as part of your permanent record.

What you cannot edit still gets quoted.

Your own site *does the work.*

When ChatGPT recommends a product it cites that product's own website **53% of the time**. Gemini does it **13%**, leaning on third-party pages instead. One engine delivers a link. The other delivers a mention you cannot click.

Both, always.

You cannot pick a layer. The engines do not.

Working only on your own site wins ChatGPT and loses Gemini. Chasing only social earns mentions with nothing to click. Dentsu calls these two jobs machine readability and human referenceability.

Neither layer works on its own.

The NZ version.

Your discovery layer is probably not TikTok.

For most NZ businesses it is a Facebook group, an industry association, a trade forum, or the local thread nobody admits to reading. Same behaviour as the global data. Different rooms.

Answer a question where your customers already ask them.

Sources.

- Three-layer discovery, conversion and brand framing adapted from Supadu Insights 2026, Direct-to-Consumer and eCommerce Trends. Framing only. All figures below are independently sourced.
- Citation figures from the GetIntel AI Software Index 2026. 9,978 answers collected 6 August 2026 across 126 software categories.
- Question-length figures from Brandwatch, The Question Gap, July 2026. Automotive sample.
- Machine readability and human referenceability from Dentsu Creative, Word of Mouth Word of Machine, June 2026.

— OVER TO YOU

Which layer are you *actually* working on?

Most businesses I look at are doing one of the three.

The BUILD Scorecard checks all three. Link in the comments.

LET ME KNOW IN COMMENTS ↓