Decision Signals

Decoding the market shaping modern brand building.

October 2026



AI is changing which brands make the shortlist.

The path from discovery to decision is narrowing. Being found is only the beginning.

The Signal



Customers are asking AI to filter their choices.

They describe what they need.

AI answers with a handful of brands or products.

Which ones appear depends on the platform, the question, and the information available.

The Evidence

Semrush ↗
Fewer than half of the 100 most-mentioned brands also appear among the 100 most-cited domains.

Shopify ↗
AI agents can search products, build carts, and move shoppers to checkout.

Google ↗
AI Search is expanding source links and testing sections for official websites.

Select source names to view the original research.

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What It Means



The path to consideration is changing.

Visible:
Your brand appears.

Recommended:
Your brand is suggested.

Preferred:
Your brand is chosen.

Three different outcomes.

Takeaway

Visibility is no longer the only measure of discovery.

Understand how AI represents your brand, which alternatives it recommends, and what information shapes those suggestions.

When AI compares your brand with others, what gives it a reason to recommend you?

Research Sources: Semrush / Shopify / Google

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