*By Vignesh S | 2026-10-17*

## Key findings

- Across three Microsoft Clarity snapshots spanning June to October 2026, one Topickz page went from 0 citations in a documented 30-day check to 2,692 citations, the most-cited page on the site, four months later.
- In the same window, the page that previously drove 55% of all our AI citations collapsed to near zero, replaced by more specific sub-topic pages Copilot now prefers.
- Overall citation volume on Topickz fell 44% from its July peak (26,903 to 15,178), but Share of Authority rose from 19.84% to 23.86%, and AI-referred traffic held steady at roughly 4% of sessions.
- This is Microsoft Copilot and Bing citation data specifically, not ChatGPT, Perplexity, or Gemini, which do not expose equivalent data to any outside tool.
- Unlike most state of AI citations reports, this one is not a synthesis of other vendors' published numbers. Every figure is pulled directly from our own site's citation dashboard, on dated pulls, by us.

Most "state of AI citations" reports you will find this year are built the same way: pull numbers from Profound, Semrush, Peec AI, or similar vendor datasets, and repackage them into one document.

That is a legitimate way to summarize the market, and several of those reports are well done. It is not what this one does.

**What makes this report different:**

• Every number below comes from Topickz's own Microsoft Clarity AI Visibility dashboard, pulled by us, on dated days, not aggregated from another vendor's published study.
• Three real snapshots, four months apart (June 29, July 25, October 16, 2026), so this is a trend, not one point-in-time count.
• We publish what we cannot explain alongside what we can. A section below states plainly what this data does not prove.

## The numbers, three dates

| Metric | Jun 29 (90d) | Jul 25 (30d) | Oct 16 (30d) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total citations | 728 | 26,903 | 15,178 |
| Cited pages | 3 | 66 | 100+ |
| Share of Authority | 33.58% | 19.84% | 23.86% |
| AI-referred traffic | under 1% | 4.14% | 3.80% |
| AI-referred sessions | n/a | n/a | 84 |
| Market pool (us + others) | n/a | ~135,700 | 63,617 |

• Data source on every pull: **Microsoft Copilot and partners** (Bing/Copilot answers). Not ChatGPT, not Perplexity, not Gemini, not Claude, none of which expose citation data to any outside tool.
• Read every number in this report as "Copilot citation," not "AI citation" in general, that distinction is the one most reports in this category blur.

• Our methodology covers how the review desk verifies the numbers behind our content. This report applies the same standard to our own citation data.
Screenshotted directly from Microsoft Clarity, October 16, 2026. The June and July figures were logged as data at the time of pull, not screenshotted, so we are not retrofitting images onto numbers we cannot visually back up.

## Finding 1: one page, zero to #1

• In the July pull, one page we had published three weeks earlier, a DevSecOps CI/CD platforms listicle, was live, indexed, returning a 200, and had exactly **zero citations**.
• By the October pull, the same page had **2,692 citations** in a 30-day window: the single most-cited page on all of topickz.com.
• Nothing about the page's URL, topic, or publish date changed between the two checks.
What changed between the checks was everything *around* the page, not the page's identity:

• More time indexed on Copilot/Bing.
• A site-wide internal linking pass.
• A scoring rubric added to every listicle in September.
• A fresh round of G2 rating updates in October.
No single change explains it alone, see "What this data does not prove" below.

## Finding 2: the page that carried the whole site, collapsed

• The citations were not lost to competitors. They moved to two narrower Topickz pages: PCI DSS compliance software and payment tokenization.
• Copilot's query phrasing shifted from broad ("compliance automation") to specific sub-topics, and the narrower pages won those queries.
• Takeaway: citation share follows the query layer, not the page. When the query shape moves, share moves with it, whether the page changed or not.

## Finding 3: where the citations land now

| Rank | Page | Citations (30d, Oct) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | DevSecOps CI/CD platforms listicle | 2,692 |
| 2 | Product analytics buyer guide | 1,869 |
| 3 | PCI DSS compliance software listicle | 1,608 |
| 4 | Freight forwarding rate comparison listicle | 821 |
| 5 | Data modernization companies listicle | 795 |

• Rank 2 is a buyer guide, not a ranked listicle, and it was not part of our citation picture in July at all.
• That is the first clean evidence we have that Copilot cites our guides format, not only ranked comparisons.

## Finding 4: the gap that will not close

• A low number that moves around is noise. A low number that holds still for three months, on the same query, is a real and stable gap.
• We do not have a page built for that exact query shape yet. That is the likely reason it has not moved.

## What this means if you publish comparison content

• **Stop judging a new page at 30 days.** Our flip page sat at zero citations three weeks after publish; Copilot needed closer to three months to pick it up.
• **Write to the exact query shape, not the category.** A generic page can lose almost all its citation share to narrower pages once buyer phrasing gets specific.
• **Buyer guides are not a dead format for AI visibility.** Our one guide page is already our #2 most-cited page, ahead of most listicles.
• **A gap that will not move on its own needs a dedicated page**, not a better version of an adjacent one.

## What this means if your brand sits inside one of these pages

This is also, plainly, why Topickz runs a listicle placement business, so we are stating the commercial logic in the open rather than leaving it implied.

• A brand placed in a page Copilot is actively citing rides a channel we can show moving in real numbers, not a vague "AI visibility" promise.
• A brand placed in a page that later loses citation share, like our compliance automation listicle did, is exposed to that same query-layer shift, through no fault of its own listing.
• We are not claiming placement guarantees citation, and we do not sell guaranteed outcomes.
Our disclosures page covers how rankings and sponsorships work on Topickz: ranking positions are not for sale, and any sponsored placement is labeled and kept separate from editorial rankings.

Topickz may also earn affiliate commissions from some tools covered across our listicles. Commissions never influence a ranking or a citation finding. See our affiliate disclosure for details.

## How this fits the rest of the 2026 AI citation research

Our data is the only part of this report that is first-party. For market-wide context, here is what two other 2026 citation studies found, with credit and links back to each:

• Across 680 million citations tracked by Profound between August 2024 and June 2025 (cited in 5WPR's State of AI Citations 2026), only about **11% of domains get cited by both ChatGPT and Perplexity**, meaning a site optimized for one AI engine's citation behavior is largely invisible on the other.
• The same report found **brand search volume correlates with citation likelihood at 0.334**, the strongest single predictor the researchers identified, ahead of content format or publish recency.
• HarperFlow's 2026 State of AI Citations ran 39 buyer questions across ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Gemini and found all three engines named a brand in **98% of answers**, but agreed on a full list of picks in only **about 7%** of cases. Each engine is effectively running its own separate ranking.
• HarperFlow's source-level analysis, limited to Perplexity since ChatGPT and Gemini do not expose citations, found Reddit and YouTube carry outsized citation share relative to their share of the open web.
Read next to our own findings, a consistent shape emerges across these independent studies:

• Citation behavior is engine-specific and does not generalize cleanly from one AI assistant to another.
• It rewards content that is narrow and specific over content built to cover everything at once.
• That lines up with our own Finding 2, where a broad compliance page lost citation share to narrower sub-topic pages the moment buyer phrasing got more specific.

## What this data does not prove

• We cannot isolate a single cause for the Finding 1 flip. Internal linking, a new scoring table format, freshness updates, and simple time on the index all changed together.
• This measures Microsoft Copilot and Bing only. ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, and Claude do not expose equivalent data to any outside tool, including this one.

• Three snapshots over four months is a real trend but still a small sample. We are reporting what the dashboard showed on each pull date, not a guaranteed mechanism.
What the three dates do support without hedging:

• Citation is not instant.
• It is not guaranteed the day you publish correctly-formatted content.
• It rewards pages that stay in the pipeline long enough to accumulate signal.
We will keep pulling this quarterly and publish the next snapshot with the same honesty about what moved and what we still cannot explain.

## Methodology

• **Citations and Share of Authority:** Microsoft Clarity's AI Visibility (Citation) tool, project wy6u1f81fp, data source labeled Microsoft Copilot and partners. Pulled directly on June 29, 2026 (90-day window), July 25, 2026 (30-day window), and October 16, 2026 (30-day window). The October pull is backed by a dated screenshot taken the same day.
• **AI-referred traffic and sessions:** the same Clarity project's analytics view, which counts real human sessions arriving with an AI tool as the referrer. Bots do not run JavaScript and do not appear in this count.
• **Per-page citation counts and the cited-pages ranking:** Clarity's "My cited pages" table for the October 16 pull, read in full rather than estimated from the capped 100-query grounding list.
• **Limits:** this measures Microsoft Copilot and Bing only. ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, and Claude do not expose equivalent citation data to any outside tool, including this one, so this report cannot and does not speak for them. Three snapshots over four months is a real trend but a small sample. We will refresh this quarterly as the time series grows.

## Cite this report

Free to reference with a link back to this page. Suggested credit: "The State of AI Citations 2026, Topickz (topickz.com/research/the-state-of-ai-citations-2026/)."

To embed a chart:

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Source: The State of AI Citations 2026, Topickz ```

Related reading: how to get your brand recommended by AI, the AI crawl-to-referral gap, and our review methodology.
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