*By Vignesh S | 2026-10-17*

## Key findings

- Listicles drive 64.8% of all Topickz citations on Microsoft Copilot and average 87.0 citations per page, more than double the next-best format.
- Buyer guides are the second most-cited format (18.6% of citations, 42.5 per page) but in a 3-week BigQuery sample of 42 ChatGPT-referred sessions, guides sent only 1 real human, versus 24 for listicles.
- Comparison pages get referred traffic (12% of sessions) but showed near-zero engagement time in this sample, consistent with a quick fact-check visit rather than a read.
- Being heavily cited by an AI engine is not the same as being the format that sends a human. This report cross-references both halves of that funnel for the same site over the same period.
- The referral-session sample is small (42 sessions over 3 weeks) and reported as directional, not conclusive; the citation-side data (14,894 citations) is the solid half of this report.

Every AI citation report answers one question: who gets cited. None of them answer the next one, because none of them are a publisher who can see both sides: who gets cited, and who that citation actually sends somewhere.

We can, because it is our own site on both ends.

**What this report cross-references:**

• Citation data: Microsoft Clarity's AI Visibility tool, every cited Topickz page in the October 16, 2026 pull, classified by content type.
• Referral data: real human sessions landing on Topickz with chatgpt.com as the traffic source, pulled from our GA4 BigQuery export, September 26 to October 17, 2026.
• Both halves cover the same site, overlapping time windows, so the comparison is apples to apples.

## Half 1: who gets cited

| Content type | Citations | Share | Pages cited | Corpus size | Avg citations/page |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listicles | 9,652 | 64.8% | 42 | 111 | 87.0 |
| Buyer guides | 2,763 | 18.6% | 21 | 65 | 42.5 |
| Comparisons | 1,104 | 7.4% | 10 | 41 | 26.9 |
| Software profiles | 743 | 5.0% | 20 | 164 | 4.5 |
| Alternatives pages | 539 | 3.6% | 5 | 34 | 15.9 |
| Research reports | 84 | 0.6% | 1 | 21 | 4.0 |

• Listicles are 64.8% of all citations despite being only 111 of our roughly 436 cited-eligible pages, a disproportionate share by any measure.

• Software profiles get cited on 20 separate pages but at a thin 4.5 citations each, a wide page footprint with shallow depth per page.
• Research reports have the lowest average, 4.0 citations per page, and only one of our 21 research pages carried any citations at all in this pull.

## Half 2: who actually sends a human

| Content type | ChatGPT-referred sessions | Share of sessions | Engagement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Listicles | 24 | 57% | ~295 sec total, real reading behavior |
| Comparisons | 5 | 12% | near zero, consistent with a quick fact-check |
| Research reports | 3 | 7% | near zero |
| Buyer guides | 1 | 2% | ~5 sec |

• Listicles are 57% of all real referred sessions in this window, and the only format with meaningful engagement time attached to those visits.
• Comparisons pull real referred clicks but the visits look like a glance, not a read, no measurable engagement time in the sample.
• Buyer guides sent exactly one human in three weeks, despite being the second most-cited format by a wide margin.

## The gap: citation does not equal referral

**Buyer guides are the clearest case.** 18.6% of our citations, the second-highest share of any format, but only 2% of referred sessions. Copilot clearly trusts guide content enough to cite it.

It is not, in this sample, the format Copilot hands a human to go read.

**Listicles win on both sides of the funnel.** 64.8% of citations and 57% of referred sessions, the only format that leads on citation volume and actually converts that into a real visit with engagement behind it.

**Comparisons sit in the middle.** Solid citation share, real referred sessions, but the visits do not look like reading.

That could mean the comparison table itself already answered the question inside the AI's own response, and the click is just a verification glance.

## What this means if you publish comparison content

• **Citation count alone is a vanity metric for traffic purposes.** A format can be heavily cited and barely referred. Track both numbers, not just one.
• **If your goal is AI-driven traffic, not just AI-driven mentions, listicles are the safer bet** on this data, at least for a B2B SaaS review site's content mix.
• **A format with high citations and low referral is not necessarily failing.** It may be doing its job of informing the AI's answer directly, which has its own value, just not a traffic value.

## What this data does not prove

• The referral sample is small: 42 total ChatGPT-referred sessions across three weeks. Several content types have 1 to 5 sessions, too few to treat the exact percentages as stable.
• This covers ChatGPT referral traffic specifically (via GA4) cross-referenced against Microsoft Copilot citation data (via Clarity). These are two different AI engines measured two different ways, not one unified "AI" number.

• Engagement time of "near zero" for comparisons and research in this sample may reflect genuinely short visits, or a tracking gap on fast bounces; we are reporting what the data shows, not asserting certainty on the mechanism.
• This is one site's content mix in one category (B2B SaaS reviews). A news site, a recipe site, or a different vertical could show a different pattern entirely.
We will re-run both halves of this comparison alongside our next quarterly citation snapshot, once the referral sample has more weeks behind it.

## Methodology

• **Citation data:** Microsoft Clarity's AI Visibility (Citation) tool, project wy6u1f81fp, the full "My cited pages" table from the October 16, 2026 pull (100 pages), classified into content type by URL path.
• **Referral data:** Topickz's GA4 property, accessed via its BigQuery export (analytics_539351834), filtered to sessions where traffic_source.source = 'chatgpt.com', September 26 to October 17, 2026, classified into content type by landing page URL path.
• **Corpus sizes:** counted directly from the Topickz content repository by section (list, comparisons, alternatives, guides, software, research) as of October 17, 2026.
• **Limits:** the referral sample is 42 sessions, small enough that per-type percentages should be read as directional. Citation and referral data come from two different AI systems (Copilot and ChatGPT respectively) measured through two different tools, not a single unified source.

## Cite this report

Free to reference with a link back to this page. Suggested credit: "Which Content Gets AI to Send You Real Humans, Topickz 2026 (topickz.com/research/which-content-gets-ai-to-send-humans-2026/)."

To embed a chart:

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Source: Topickz, 2026 ```

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