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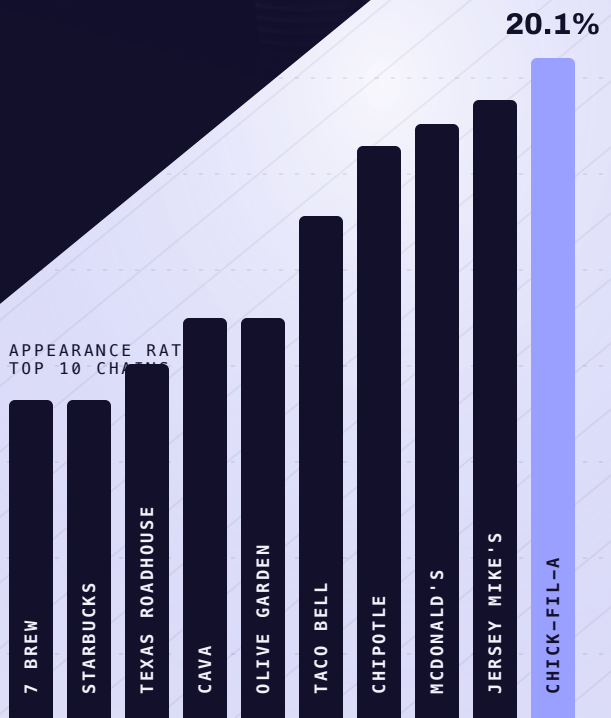
RESTAURANT CHAINS INDEX 2.0

Which restaurant chains AI engines name
288 AI answers · October 30 to 31, 2026

Measured :
October 30 to 31, 2026
24 questions × 3 runs · 288 AI answers

Engines :
ChatGPT · Claude · Gemini · Perplexity
plus 57 Google AI Overviews

Prepared by :
5W Public Relations
5wpr.com



AT A GLANCE

No clear leader. Seven chains are within the margin.

Chick-fil-A was named most often, but six other chains are within its margin. Chick-fil-A: 58/288 (20.1%; 95% interval 15.9–25.1%). Jersey Mike's: 54/288 (18.8%; 95% interval 14.7–23.7%). Their 95% intervals overlap. McDonald's (52/288), Chipotle (50/288), Taco Bell (44/288), Cava (35/288) and Olive Garden (35/288) are also within the margin.

> Version 2. This version replaces the first version of this study, first published June 15, 2026. It uses measured counts, so the two versions are not comparable.

288
AI answers analyzed across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity

20.1%
of answers named Chick-fil-A, the most-named (58 of 288)

50
tracked chains named at least once (of 56)

100%
of Google searches showed an AI Overview (57 of 57)

INSIDE THIS REPORT

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KEY FINDINGS

01 What the data shows

MOST NAMED

58/288 (20.1%)

Chick-fil-A appeared in 58 of 288 four-engine answers (CI 15.9–25.1%). Jersey Mike's appeared in 54 of 288 (18.8%, CI 14.7–23.7%). The intervals overlap, so the two cannot be separated.

NAMED FIRST

30/288 (10.4%)

Jersey Mike's was the first chain named in 30 of 288 answers, more than any other tracked chain. Its average first position was 2.1. Chick-fil-A was named first in 12 of 288.

OWN-SITE CITATIONS

5/288 (1.7%)

Qdoba's own domains were cited in 5 of 288 grounded answers, more than any other tracked chain. Cracker Barrel followed at 3 of 288. 48 of 56 tracked chains had 0 of 288.

AIO TRIGGER

57/57 (100%)

Google AI Overviews appeared on 57 of 57 searches (CI 93.7–100%).

AIO LEADER

18/57 (31.6%)

Chick-fil-A was the chain named most often in AI Overviews, at 18 of 57, followed by McDonald's at 14 of 57 (24.6%). In the four-engine set, Chick-fil-A was named in 58 of 288 answers (20.1%).

TOP DOMAIN

64/288 (22.2%)

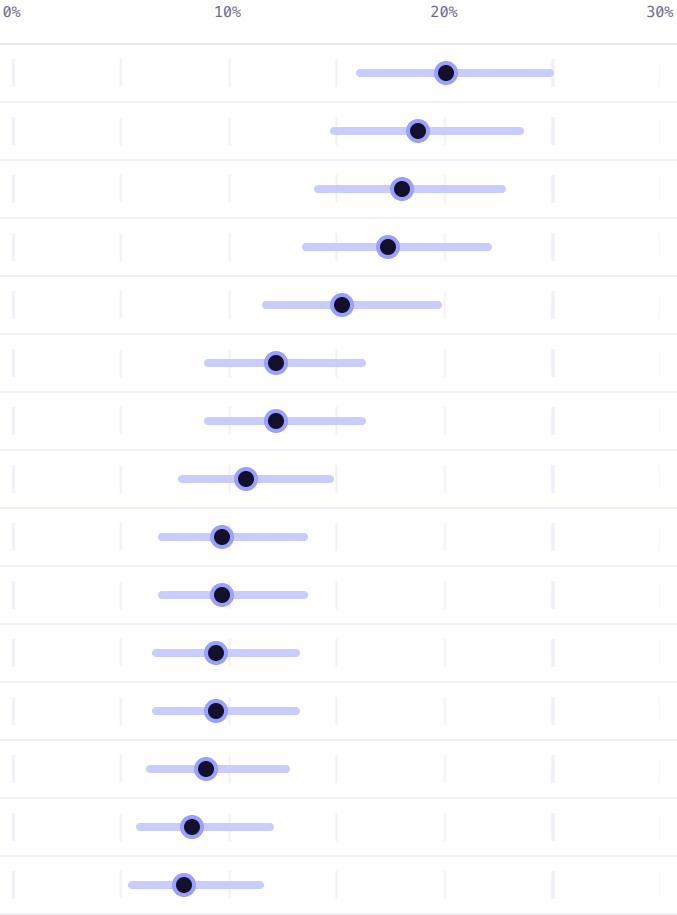
en.wikipedia.org was cited in 64 of 288 grounded four-engine answers, with 149 of 2,084 citations (7.1%). tastingtable.com came second with 118 citations in 97 answers (33.7%).

02 THE LEADERBOARD

Which chains AI engines name

Appearance rate across 288 four-engine answers. The bar is the 95% confidence interval; overlapping bars cannot be told apart at this sample size.

	BRAND	RATE	NAMED IN
1	Chick-fil-A	20.1%	58/288
2	Jersey Mike's	18.8%	54/288
3	McDonald's	18.1%	52/288
4	Chipotle	17.4%	50/288
5	Taco Bell	15.3%	44/288
6	Cava	12.2%	35/288
7	Olive Garden	12.2%	35/288
8	Texas Roadhouse	10.8%	31/288
9	7 Brew	9.7%	28/288
10	Starbucks	9.7%	28/288
11	Five Guys	9.4%	27/288
12	Panera Bread	9.4%	27/288
13	Sweetgreen	9.0%	26/288
14	Whataburger	8.3%	24/288
15	Dutch Bros	8.0%	23/288



02 THE LEADERBOARD

The full list

Own-domain citation is the share of 288 grounded answers that cited the tracked name's own domains (subdomains included). Citation share is of all 2,084 citations.

#	CHAIN	NAMED IN	APPEARANCE RATE	95% INTERVAL	FIRST MENTION	OWN-DOMAIN CITATION	CITATION SHARE
1	Chick-fil-A	58/288	20.1%	15.9–25.1%	2.3	0.3% (1/288)	0%
2	Jersey Mike's	54/288	18.8%	14.7–23.7%	2.1	0% (0/288)	0%
3	McDonald's	52/288	18.1%	14–22.9%	2.4	0% (0/288)	0%
4	Chipotle	50/288	17.4%	13.4–22.2%	2.3	0% (0/288)	0%
5	Taco Bell	44/288	15.3%	11.6–19.9%	2.5	0% (0/288)	0%
6	Cava	35/288	12.2%	8.9–16.4%	2.2	0.3% (1/288)	0%
7	Olive Garden	35/288	12.2%	8.9–16.4%	2.1	0% (0/288)	0%
8	Texas Roadhouse	31/288	10.8%	7.7–14.9%	1.4	0% (0/288)	0%
9	7 Brew	28/288	9.7%	6.8–13.7%	1.7	0.3% (1/288)	0%
10	Starbucks	28/288	9.7%	6.8–13.7%	2.3	0.3% (1/288)	0%
11	Five Guys	27/288	9.4%	6.5–13.3%	2.5	0% (0/288)	0%
12	Panera Bread	27/288	9.4%	6.5–13.3%	3.5	0% (0/288)	0%
13	Sweetgreen	26/288	9%	6.2–12.9%	2.5	0% (0/288)	0%
14	Whataburger	24/288	8.3%	5.7–12.1%	3	0% (0/288)	0%
15	Dutch Bros	23/288	8%	5.4–11.7%	2	0% (0/288)	0%
16	Dunkin'	22/288	7.6%	5.1–11.3%	3.8	0% (0/288)	0%
17	In-N-Out Burger	22/288	7.6%	5.1–11.3%	2.5	0% (0/288)	0%
18	Jimmy John's	22/288	7.6%	5.1–11.3%	2.8	0% (0/288)	0%
19	Culver's	20/288	6.9%	4.5–10.5%	3.8	0% (0/288)	0%
20	Wingstop	20/288	6.9%	4.5–10.5%	1.6	0% (0/288)	0%
21	Wendy's	19/288	6.6%	4.3–10.1%	2.5	0% (0/288)	0%
22	LongHorn Steakhouse	18/288	6.3%	4–9.7%	1.6	0% (0/288)	0%
23	Subway	17/288	5.9%	3.7–9.2%	3.2	0% (0/288)	0%
24	Domino's	16/288	5.6%	3.4–8.8%	1.6	0.3% (1/288)	0%
25	Jack in the Box	16/288	5.6%	3.4–8.8%	2.6	0% (0/288)	0%
26	Popeyes	16/288	5.6%	3.4–8.8%	1.7	0% (0/288)	0%
27	Shake Shack	16/288	5.6%	3.4–8.8%	3.9	0.3% (1/288)	0%
28	Burger King	15/288	5.2%	3.2–8.4%	3.9	0% (0/288)	0%

THE LEADERBOARD

02 The full list (continued)

#	CHAIN	NAMED IN	APPEARANCE RATE	95% INTERVAL	FIRST MENTION	OWN-DOMAIN CITATION	CITATION SHARE
29	Cracker Barrel	15/288	5.2%	3.2–8.4%	2.3	1% (3/288)	0.1%
30	Chili's	14/288	4.9%	2.9–8%	3.3	0% (0/288)	0%
31	Dave's Hot Chicken	13/288	4.5%	2.7–7.6%	3.8	0% (0/288)	0%
32	Little Caesars	13/288	4.5%	2.7–7.6%	4.6	0% (0/288)	0%
33	Qdoba	13/288	4.5%	2.7–7.6%	2.2	1.7% (5/288)	0.4%
34	Papa John's	12/288	4.2%	2.4–7.1%	2.3	0% (0/288)	0%
35	Raising Cane's	12/288	4.2%	2.4–7.1%	5.3	0% (0/288)	0%
36	Waffle House	12/288	4.2%	2.4–7.1%	3.5	0% (0/288)	0%
37	Buffalo Wild Wings	11/288	3.8%	2.1–6.7%	2.1	0% (0/288)	0%
38	Firehouse Subs	11/288	3.8%	2.1–6.7%	3	0% (0/288)	0%
39	Pizza Hut	11/288	3.8%	2.1–6.7%	2.7	0% (0/288)	0%
40	Panda Express	8/288	2.8%	1.4–5.4%	4.4	0% (0/288)	0%
41	Arby's	7/288	2.4%	1.2–4.9%	4.1	0% (0/288)	0%
42	KFC	7/288	2.4%	1.2–4.9%	4.7	0% (0/288)	0%
43	Denny's	6/288	2.1%	1–4.5%	4.5	0% (0/288)	0%
44	Dickey's Barbecue Pit	6/288	2.1%	1–4.5%	1.2	0% (0/288)	0%
45	IHOP	6/288	2.1%	1–4.5%	4.2	0% (0/288)	0%
46	Bojangles	4/288	1.4%	0.5–3.5%	3.5	0% (0/288)	0%
47	Famous Dave's	3/288	1%	0.4–3%	1.7	0% (0/288)	0%
48	Outback Steakhouse	3/288	1%	0.4–3%	4	0% (0/288)	0%
49	Applebee's	2/288	0.7%	0.2–2.5%	6	0% (0/288)	0%
50	Zaxby's	1/288	0.3%	0.1–1.9%	3	0% (0/288)	0%
51	Cinnabon	0/288	0%	0–1.3%	–	0% (0/288)	0%
52	Dairy Queen	0/288	0%	0–1.3%	–	0% (0/288)	0%
53	Mendocino Farms	0/288	0%	0–1.3%	–	0% (0/288)	0%
54	Slim Chickens	0/288	0%	0–1.3%	–	0% (0/288)	0%
55	Sonic Drive-In	0/288	0%	0–1.3%	–	0% (0/288)	0%
56	Tropical Smoothie Cafe	0/288	0%	0–1.3%	–	0% (0/288)	0%

PROFILES

03 The top eight, side by side

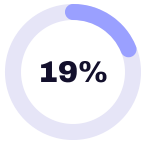


RANK 1

Chick-fil-A

58/288 answers · 95% CI 15.9–25.1%

2.3	0.3%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (1/288)	citation share

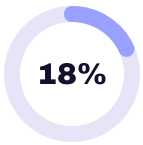


RANK 2

Jersey Mike's

54/288 answers · 95% CI 14.7–23.7%

2.1	0%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (0/288)	citation share

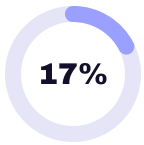


RANK 3

McDonald's

52/288 answers · 95% CI 14–22.9%

2.4	0%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (0/288)	citation share

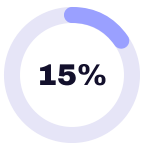


RANK 4

Chipotle

50/288 answers · 95% CI 13.4–22.2%

2.3	0%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (0/288)	citation share

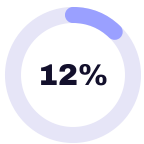


RANK 5

Taco Bell

44/288 answers · 95% CI 11.6–19.9%

2.5	0%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (0/288)	citation share



RANK 6

Cava

35/288 answers · 95% CI 8.9–16.4%

2.2	0.3%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (1/288)	citation share

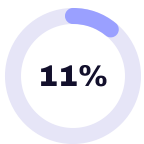


RANK 7

Olive Garden

35/288 answers · 95% CI 8.9–16.4%

2.1	0%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (0/288)	citation share



RANK 8

Texas Roadhouse

31/288 answers · 95% CI 7.7–14.9%

1.4	0%	0%
first-mention position	owned-domain citation (0/288)	citation share

04 HOW THE ENGINES DIFFER

Same questions, different answers

The four engines named the leading names at similar rates.

ChatGPT

72 ASKED	72 RETURNED	72 GROUNDED
McDonald's		**23.6%**
Chipotle		**15.3%**
Cava		**15.3%**
Panera Bread		**15.3%**
Jersey Mike's		**12.5%**
Olive Garden		**12.5%**

Claude

72 ASKED	72 RETURNED	72 GROUNDED
Chick-fil-A		**26.4%**
Jersey Mike's		**20.8%**
Taco Bell		**20.8%**
Chipotle		**19.4%**
McDonald's		**16.7%**
In-N-Out Burger		**16.7%**

Gemini

72 ASKED	72 RETURNED	72 GROUNDED
Chick-fil-A		**29.2%**
Jersey Mike's		**22.2%**
Chipotle		**19.4%**
Taco Bell		**15.3%**
Olive Garden		**12.5%**
Texas Roadhouse		**12.5%**

Perplexity

72 ASKED	72 RETURNED	72 GROUNDED
Chick-fil-A		**20.8%**
McDonald's		**20.8%**
Jersey Mike's		**19.4%**
Chipotle		**15.3%**
Taco Bell		**15.3%**
Olive Garden		**15.3%**

05

GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS

The fifth engine

Google AI Overviews were captured through 57 U.S. desktop searches and scored only where an overview appeared, so five-engine figures use 288 + 57 = 345 answers.

100%
57 OF 57 SEARCHES

TRIGGER RATE

Google AI Overviews appeared on 57 of 57 searches (100%, CI 93.7–100%). The other 0 searches showed no overview. Within the 57 overviews, Chick-fil-A was named in 18 (31.6%), McDonald's was named in 14 (24.6%), Taco Bell was named in 13 (22.8%), Jersey Mike's was named in 12 (21.1%). youtube.com was the most-cited source, with 51 citations and an appearance in 33 of 57 overviews.

FIVE-ENGINE RANK (FOUR-ENGINE RANK IN ARROWS)

1	Chick-fil-A	22.0%	=
2	Jersey Mike's	19.1%	=
3	McDonald's	19.1%	=
4	Chipotle	17.7%	=
5	Taco Bell	16.5%	=
6	Olive Garden	12.5%	▲ 1
7	Cava	11.3%	▼ 1
8	Texas Roadhouse	11.3%	=
9	Five Guys	10.7%	▲ 2
10	Sweetgreen	10.1%	▲ 3

LEADERS BY QUESTION

06 Who each question surfaces first

Six questions from the set. Each tile uses that question's own four-engine answers as the denominator.

Q01 · 12 ANSWERS

Jersey Mike's 100%

McDonald's	83.3%
Chick-fil-A	75%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q02 · 12 ANSWERS

Five Guys 100%

In-N-Out Burger	83.3%
Burger King	66.7%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q03 · 12 ANSWERS

Popeyes 100%

Chick-fil-A	83.3%
KFC	33.3%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q04 · 12 ANSWERS

Wingstop 100%

Buffalo Wild Wings	91.7%
Popeyes	33.3%

AI Overview shown on 1 of 1 searches

Q05 · 12 ANSWERS

Starbucks 100%

Dunkin'	75%
Dutch Bros	75%

AI Overview shown on 3 of 3 searches

Q06 · 12 ANSWERS

Dutch Bros 100%

7 Brew	91.7%
Starbucks	83.3%

AI Overview shown on 2 of 2 searches

07

WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Most-cited domains

The four engines produced 2,084 citations in total. en.wikipedia.org was cited most often, with 149 citations (7.1%) across 64 answers. Next came tastingtable.com (118), eatthis.com (89), mashed.com (59), thetakeout.com (56), allrecipes.com (54).

FOUR AI ENGINES · SHARE OF 288 GROUNDED ANSWERS

tastingtable.com	**33.7%**
en.wikipedia.org	**22.2%**
eatthis.com	**19.1%**
thetakeout.com	**18.4%**
mashed.com	**17.4%**
thedailymeal.com	**14.9%**
yahoo.com	**13.2%**
nrn.com	**13.2%**
foodrepublic.com	**13.2%**
smarterranking.com	**11.5%**

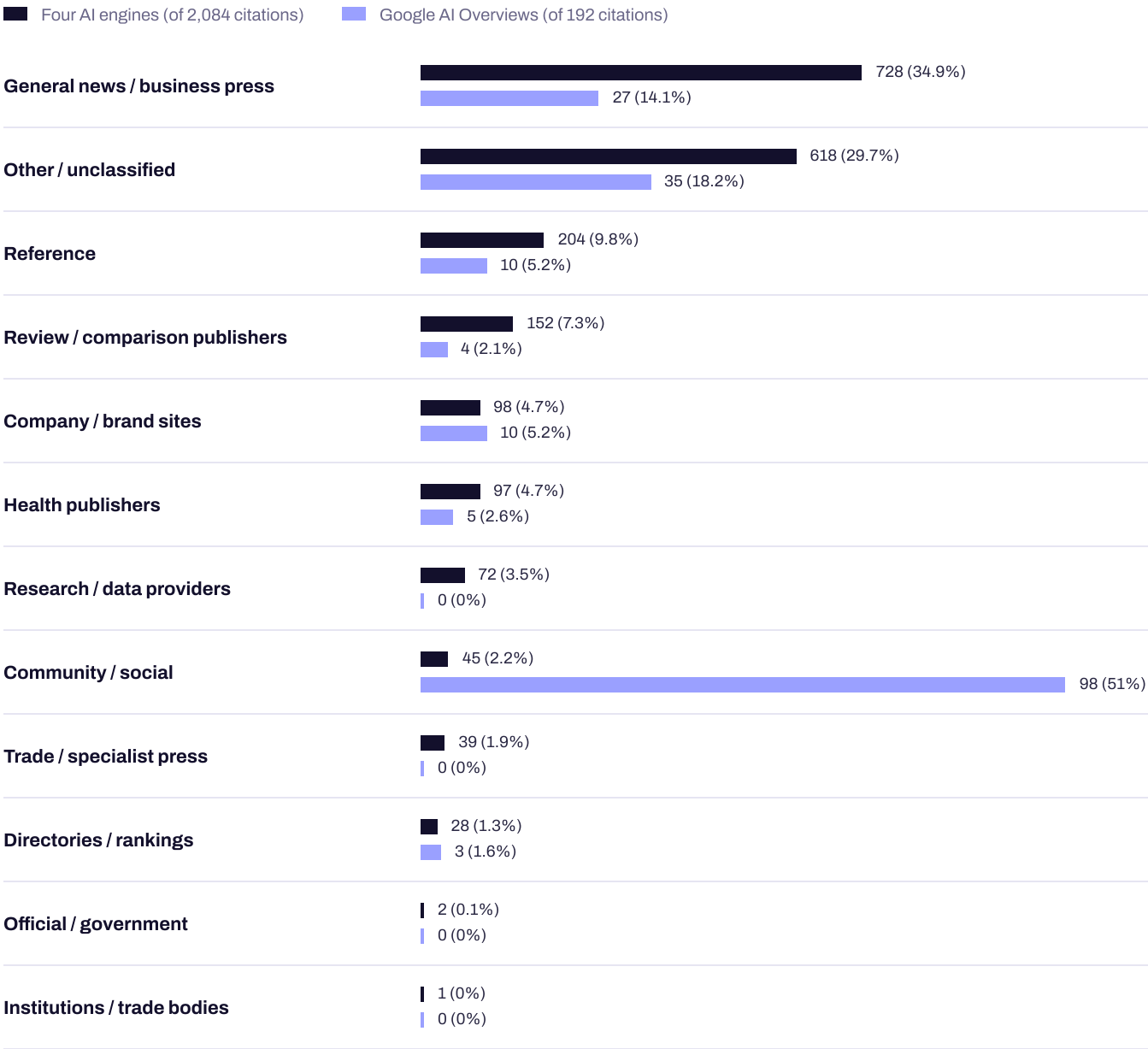
GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS · SHARE OF 57 OVERVIEWS

youtube.com	**57.9%**
facebook.com	**29.8%**
reddit.com	**24.6%**
quora.com	**14%**
allrecipes.com	**10.5%**
tastingtable.com	**10.5%**
tasteofhome.com	**8.8%**
eatthis.com	**7%**
businessinsider.com	**7%**
en.wikipedia.org	**7%**

07 WHO THE ENGINES CITE

Citation share by source type

Share of all citations by the type of site cited.



08

WHAT THE DATA SUGGESTS

How can chains improve their AI visibility?

These steps follow from the measured results above. They describe what the engines cited in this study and are not a guarantee of results.

STEP	WHAT THIS STUDY MEASURED
Put your facts on your own domain.	Starbucks' own domains were cited in 0.3% of grounded answers, Chick-fil-A's in 0.3% and Cava's in 0.3%.
Keep your facts accurate on the sites engines cite.	The most-cited sites other than the tracked names' own were tastingtable.com (in 33.7% of grounded answers), en.wikipedia.org (22.2%), eatthis.com (19.1%), thetakeout.com (18.4%) and mashed.com (17.4%). General news and business press supplied 34.9% of citations and reference sites 9.8%.
Check each engine separately.	Gemini named Chick-fil-A in 29.2% of answers against 4.2% on ChatGPT. ChatGPT named McDonald's in 23.6% of answers against 11.1% on Gemini.
Watch names outside the tracked list.	Del Taco (14 answers), The Great Greek Mediterranean Grill (12 answers), American Customer Satisfaction Index (8 answers), Scooter's Coffee (7 answers), Habit Burger & Grill (7 answers) were named often but were not tracked.
Re-run the same questions every month.	Compare counts and intervals, not ranks. The 24 questions are in the appendix.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

09 What AI answers

Q1 Which chain do AI engines name most often?

Chick-fil-A, named in 58 of 288 four-engine answers (20.1%, CI 15.9–25.1%). Jersey Mike's was second at 54 of 288 (18.8%). The intervals overlap, so the two cannot be separated statistically.

Q2 Which chain is named first most often?

Jersey Mike's was the first chain named in 30 of 288 answers, with an average first position of 2.1.

Q3 How often do Google AI Overviews appear for these questions?

An overview appeared on 57 of 57 searches (100%, CI 93.7–100%). Within those 57 overviews, Chick-fil-A was named most often, in 18 (31.6%).

Q4 Which sources do the engines cite?

Across 2,084 four-engine citations, en.wikipedia.org was cited most (149 citations, in 64 of 288 grounded answers), followed by tastingtable.com (118 citations).

Q5 Do the four engines agree?

Largely. No tracked name differed by more than 12 points between engines.

METHODOLOGY

10 How this study was measured

24	×	3	×	4	=	288	+	57
questions		runs each		AI engines		answers		Google searches · 57 AI Overviews

24 questions asked three times on each of ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity, measured October 30 to 31, 2026. United States, English; Google retrieval uses desktop results. Models: gpt-5-mini, claude-sonnet-5-5, gemini-3.6-flash only, sonar-pro. Google AI Overviews come from DataForSEO, not inferred chat answers. Appearance counts returned text, including ungrounded answers; citation rates use grounded answers. Longer overlapping names suppress shorter ones; First mention is the earliest eligible name order. Own-domain rates include declared domains and subdomains; shared parent scopes may count for multiple names and cannot be summed as unique citations.

ENGINE	MODEL IDS CALLED	ASKED	RETURNED	GROUNDED
ChatGPT	gpt-5-mini	72	72	72
Claude	claude-sonnet-5-5	72	72	72
Gemini	gemini-3.6-flash	72	72	72
Perplexity	sonar-pro	72	72	72
Google AI Overviews	DataForSEO Google SERP (live, advanced)	57	57 shown	57

Own-domain citations count a domain plus all its subdomains, with the same rule in every table.

METRIC DEFINITIONS

- Appearance rate: answers naming the tracked name ÷ answers returned, with Wilson 95% intervals.
- First mention: average order in which the tracked name first appears (1 = first).
- Own-domain citation: grounded answers citing the tracked name's domains ÷ grounded answers.
- Citation share: citations to the tracked name's domains ÷ all citations.

LIMITATIONS

- Only 56 tracked chains are ranked; results are not an exhaustive market ranking.
- Only the tracked chains were scored. Untracked names that appeared often were not scored, including Del Taco (14 answers), The Great Greek Mediterranean Grill (12 answers), American Customer Satisfaction Index (8 answers), Scooter's Coffee (7 answers), Habit Burger & Grill (7 answers).
- Answers were collected over two days, October 30 and 31, 2026. 345 of 360 planned results were returned. 15 AI Overview lookups were excluded after at most three total attempts.
- 57 successful Google searches: 57 overviews shown; 0 without an overview. Failures are excluded, not scored as zero.
- All returned chat answers had search sources.
- No Core question names a tracked name.
- Unverified own domains are not available, never zero or guessed. Source types use Company / brand sites only for verified official organisations; other unresolved sites are Other / unclassified.
- Wilson 95% intervals are descriptive; overlapping leading intervals do not establish a sole leader. Measurements do not endorse medical, legal, financial or product claims.
- The tracked chains are the 25 from the original report plus 30 chains added across eleven restaurant types. Each chain counts its own US website.
- Answers came from each engine's API (model IDs above); the consumer apps can answer differently.

A

APPENDIX

The 24 questions

Questions marked "Core question" are the original study questions, asked word for word. The others are added neutral questions.

#	QUESTION	GROUP	SOURCE
01	What is the best fast food chain in the US?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
02	What is the best burger chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
03	What is the best fast food chicken sandwich?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
04	What is the best chicken wing chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
05	What is the best coffee chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
06	What is the best drive-thru coffee chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
07	What is the best pizza chain for delivery?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
08	What is the best fast casual restaurant?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
09	What is the best Mexican fast food chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
10	What is the best Mediterranean chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
11	What is the best healthy fast food chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
12	What is the best sub sandwich chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
13	What is the best chain steakhouse?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
14	What is the best value fast food chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	CORE QUESTION
15	What is the best fast food chain for breakfast?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
16	Which fast food chain has the best fries?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
17	What is the best casual dining chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
18	What is the best Italian chain restaurant?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
19	What is the best salad chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
20	What is the best late-night fast food chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
21	Which new restaurant chains are growing fastest?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
22	What is the best family restaurant chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
23	What is the best chain for a quick lunch?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION
24	What is the best barbecue chain?	US Restaurant Chains Index 2.0	ADDED QUESTION

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