

# LLM Traffic Is Shrinking via @sejournal, @Kevin\_Indig

LLM referral traffic has been growing +65% year-to-date. But we should assume 0 in the future.

## LLM Referral Traffic Is Shrinking

LLM referral traffic in B2B grew +65.1% since January – but dropped **-42.6% since July**.

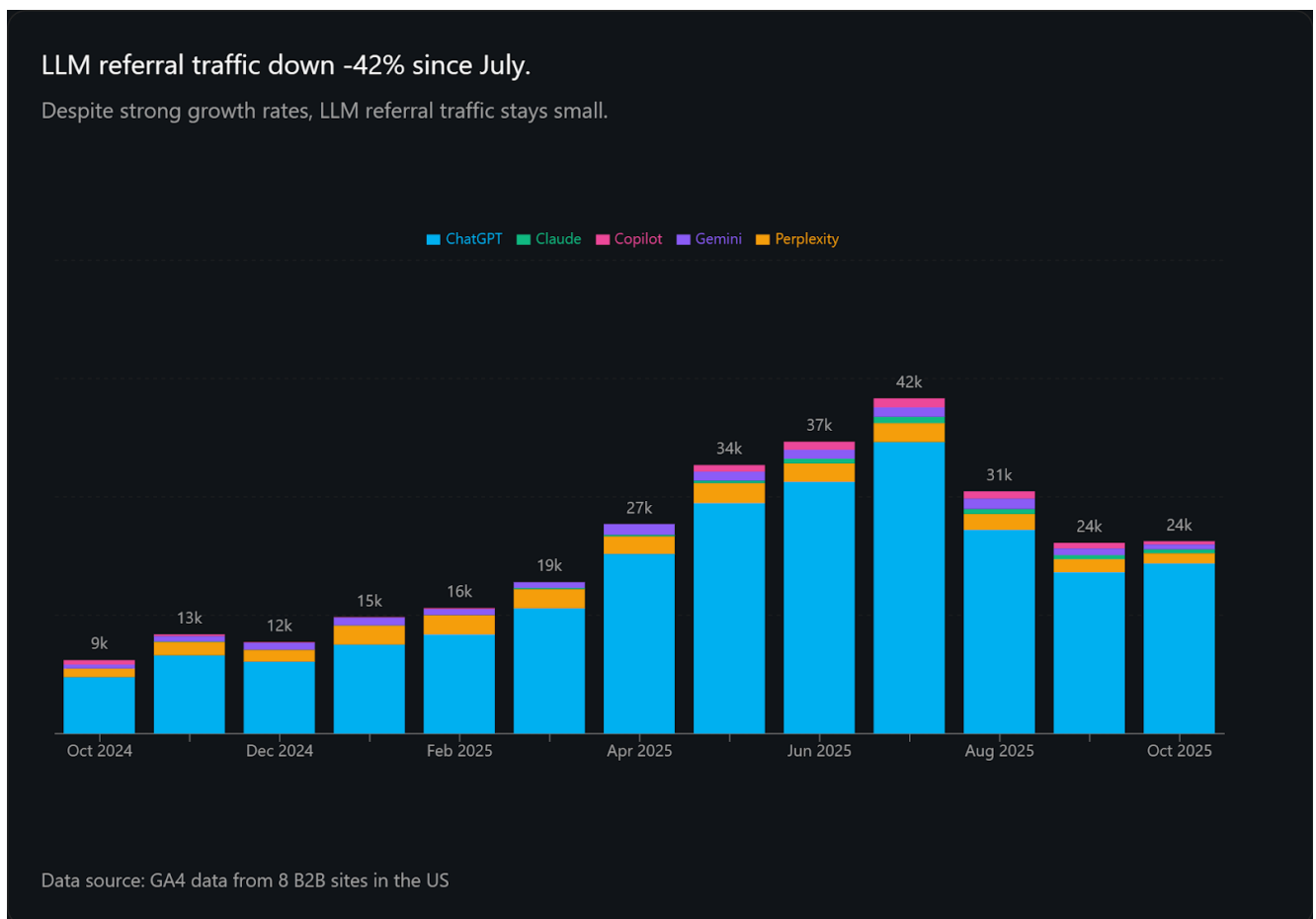


Image Credit: Kevin Indig

My December prediction of 50% organic by 2027 is dead:

- In December 2024, I analyzed six B2B sites and found LLM referral traffic was growing at such a fast rate it would make up 50% of organic traffic in three years.
- Today, I'm finding the monthly growth rate of LLM

traffic dropped from 25.1% in 2024 to 10.4% in November 2025.

- Even from January to July 2025, the average growth rate was lower (19.2%) than my projection. That's fast, but not enough to reach 50% organic traffic in three years.

LLM contribution to organic traffic grew from 0.14% in 2024 to 1.10% in 2025, which is more than I projected (0.79%).

| Year | LLM share of organic traffic |
|------|------------------------------|
| 2024 | 0.14%                        |
| 2025 | 1.10%                        |

Image Credit: Kevin Indig

But with organic traffic falling due to AI Overviews, this growth becomes meaningless.

## Fewer Citations Despite Growing Usage

In August, several factors influenced LLM referral traffic:

1. **Seasonality:** Siege Media documented that B2B sites lost LLM traffic in August due to vacation season.
2. **Router:** ChatGPT 5, which launched on August 7, has a router that picks the model. The router favors non-reasoning models, which show fewer citations and send less traffic out.
3. **Concentration:** Josh from Profound found a higher

concentration of referrals to Reddit and Wikipedia starting late July.

Business seasonality has a lower impact because **neither ChatGPT (consumer focus) nor Claude (business focus) sees a decrease in site visits.**

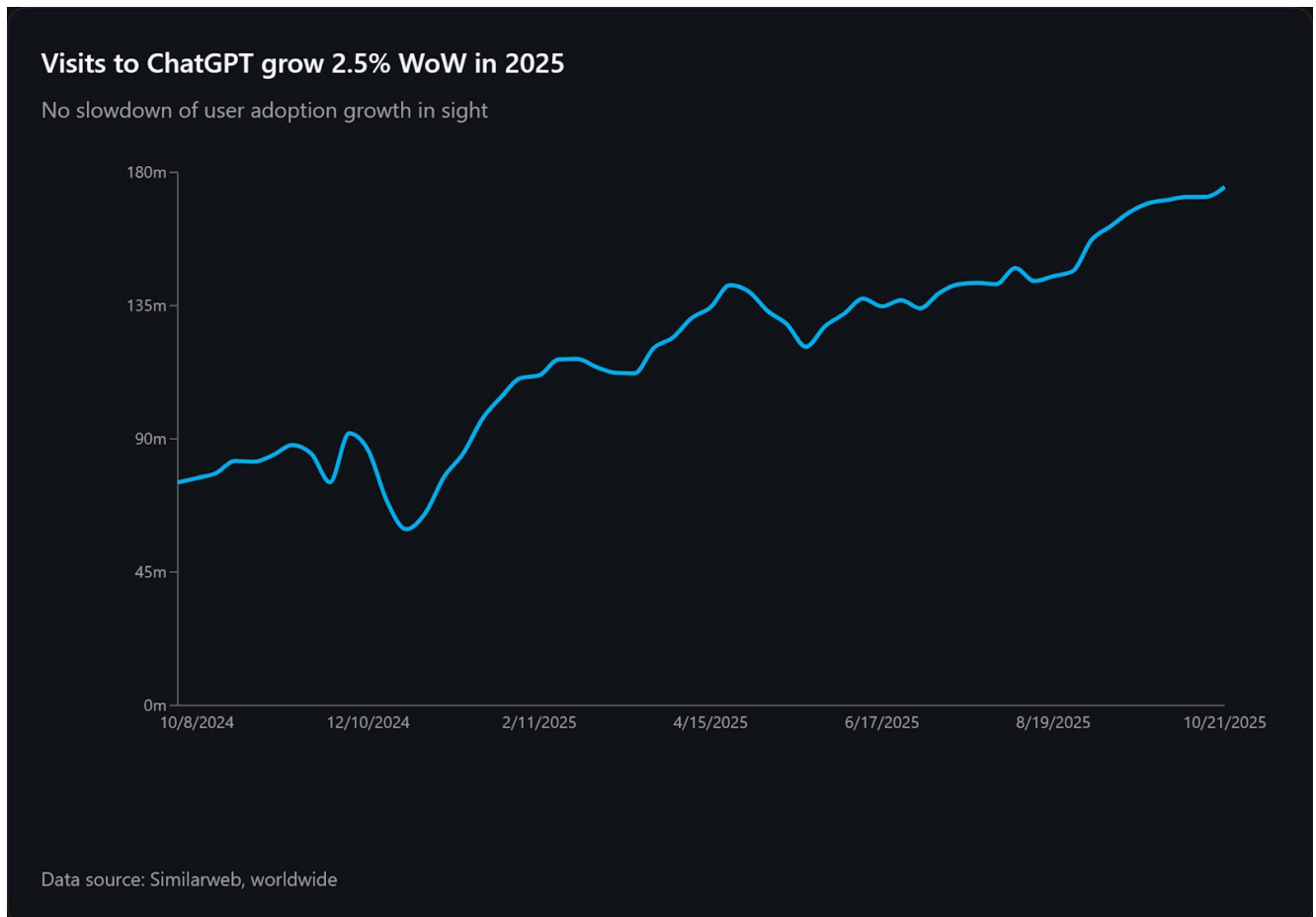
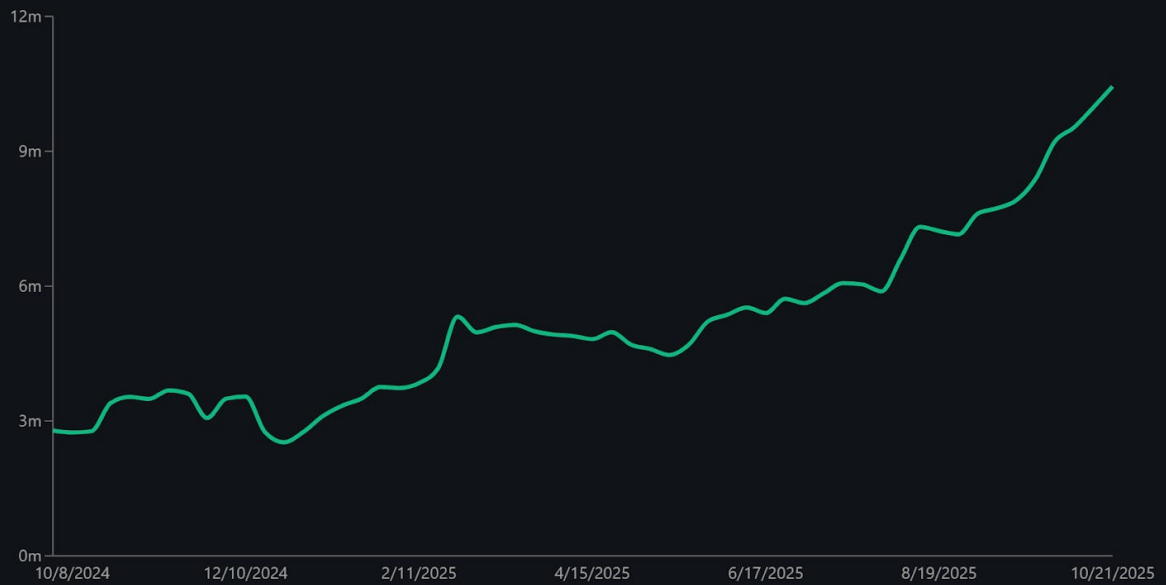


Image Credit: Kevin Indig

## Visits to Claude grow 3.4% WoW in 2025

Claude gets 4.3% the visits of ChatGPT but grows at a faster rate.



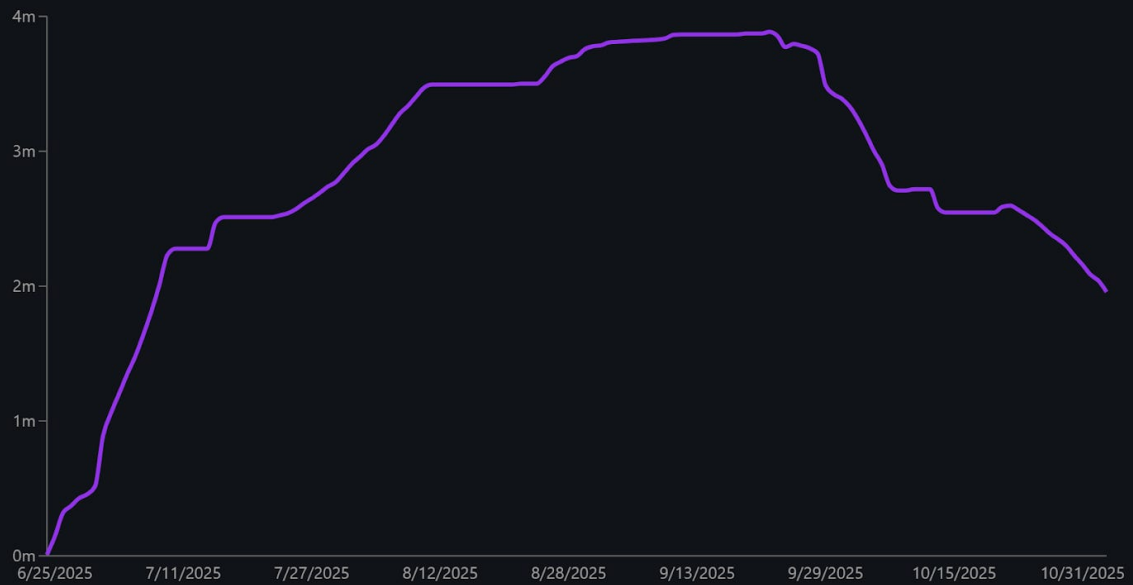
Data source: Similarweb, worldwide

Image Credit: Kevin Indig

ChatGPT mentions, however, dropped by one-third in October and continue dropping in November.

## ChatGPT mentions drop by ~1/3 in October

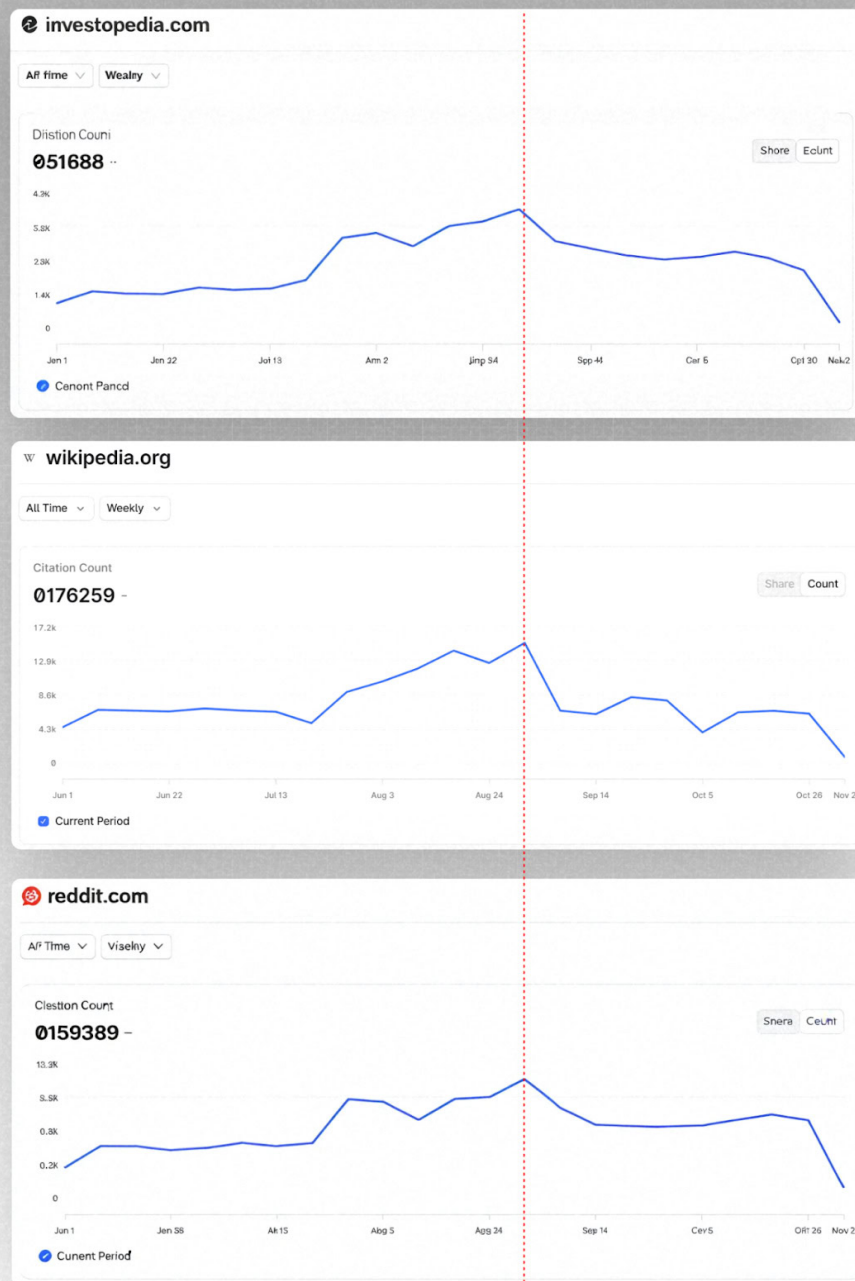
Fewer mentions and citations lead to less referral traffic



Data source: Ahrefs, ChatGPT mentions, worldwide

Image Credit: Kevin Indig

Citations for large domains like Reddit or Wikipedia follow suit (based on Profound data).



Major sites see citation declines in September (Image Credit: Kevin Indig)

Conclusion: LLM visits are up, which removes seasonality as dominant cause. The driver of lower referral traffic is ChatGPT, showing fewer citations due to the model router.

## Visibility Is The Real Price

Traffic was never the right way to value LLMs because LLMs make clicks redundant:

- The AI Mode study I published last month validates that

clicks only occurred for shopping-related tasks (zero-click share = ~100%).

- Pew Research has found that only 1% of users click links in AI Overviews.

Focusing on traffic leads to disappointing results. ChatGPT is more like TikTok than Google Search. The currency of the AI world is visibility.

The good news: LLMs grow the pie. Semrush found people don't use Google less often because they also use ChatGPT. If LLMs are additive to Google Search, the visibility surface grows even though clicks per source shrink. **You have more places to be seen, fewer clicks per place.**

But our success metrics need to change. Referral traffic neither works for ChatGPT nor Google, as AI Overviews and AI mode swallow more clicks. Instead, we need to adopt visibility-first.

## Default To Zero LLM Traffic

1. Track LLM and organic search seasonality for your vertical to measure the total pie of citations and make sense of drops/spikes.
2. Monitor total citation and mention count to answer the question, "Are we growing because the market grows?" Lower citations/mentions means fewer chances to influence purchase decisions.
3. Prioritize brand mentions over citations in LLMs. Mentions without links drive familiarity and influence purchase decisions.
4. Stop expecting (meaningful) LLM referral traffic. Budget for visibility.
5. Invest resources where LLMs go to train: UGC and third-party reviews like Reddit, YouTube, review sites, community forums.

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