

Opening the Black Box.

Phase 2

A framework for measuring brand reputation in LLM environments.

The combined Phase 1 + Phase 2 findings from our generative citation analysis and what it means for corporate affairs and communications professionals.



FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

A second look inside the box.

When we released our first Black Box report at the end of 2025, we set out to apply traditional media-analysis rigour to a technology that had quietly become a major reputational channel.

We approached **LLM responses like any other media channel**: monitor it, code it, compare it, ask better questions of it.

Phase 1 told us something important. LLM citations didn't follow the patterns we expected; sentiment skewed dramatically positive; and a new, more enduring news cycle was forming alongside the traditional one.

Phase 2 deepens that picture.

We narrowed in on a single organisation, RACV, and a single campaign, My Melbourne Road, across 957 LLM responses and 10,000+ individually categorised citations. The four themes remained, but the practical implications are now clearer.

LLMs are not a passing technology story. They are an emerging **reputation channel that needs to be measured, monitored and managed**. This report is the next step in building the framework to do exactly that.



LLMs are a stakeholder that will need their own type of management.

They are an emerging reputational channel that needs to be measured, monitored and managed.

Our research is the first step in building the framework to do that.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A new **reputational channel** without clear direction, until now.

As users increasingly bypass search engines and go directly to AI assistants, we've seen the emergence of **a new reputational channel** with no established measurement framework to match. **LLMs are not passive conduits.** They interpret, summarise and present brand information in ways that can diverge sharply from traditional media.

Medianet noticed this **blind spot**, and applying the same rigorous analytical principles we use for traditional media, set out to shed light on the 'black box' of LLMs.

Across two connected phases we analysed **1,357 LLM responses** and categorised **11,127 citations** by hand.

Together, the work surfaces four findings that challenge assumptions communications professionals are making about how reputation works inside AI environments.

01 **LLMs tend to skew positive, and neutralise controversy.**

97–100% of mentions were favourable in financial services.
RACV at 100% on LLMs vs 71% in traditional media.

02 **A different news cycle. Slow to index, slow to forget.**

New issues take 6+ months to surface; events like the 2019 Royal Commission still appears in 2026.

03 **In Australia, owned content dominates over earned media.**

67% of all citations came from owned corporate or government channels.

04 **LLM Share of Voice doesn't mirror traditional rankings.**

Insurer Youi had 26% share in LLMs vs 7% in traditional media. Brand messaging can outperform brand name recognition.

SCOPE AT A GLANCE

Building a growing dataset to understand a new reputational channel.

ChatGPT

Perplexity

Google AI Summary

LLM RESPONSES ANALYSED

1,357

Across ChatGPT, Perplexity and Google AI Summary. Each one downloaded and read by a Medianet analyst before coding.

CITATIONS CATEGORISED

11,127

Phase 2 alone hand-coded 10,000+ URLs into five source types that our automated analysis tooling could not accurately categorise.

ANALYSED BRANDS

04

Analysed responses for Westpac, Commonwealth Bank, RACV and the Victorian Government because we already held benchmark traditional-media data.

PHASE 01
Nov 2025 · 14 days

PHASE 02
Mar 2026 · 14 days

PROMPTS
5 (Phase 1) · 18 (Phase 2)

ANALYST TIME
~280 hours coded

HOW WE APPROACHED THIS RESEARCH

Automation at scale, paired with human analysis.

Our research unfolded across two connected phases, with the methodology becoming more refined as our understanding deepened.

We sought to answer what is being said about a brand in LLM responses, what content is driving these responses, who published this content and how does a brand's LLM presence compare to competitors, and its traditional media profile.

THE TOOL LAYER

Automation at scale.

A third-party platform ran a consistent set of prompts across all three LLMs at the same time each day, returning quantitative brand-mention data, share of voice, citation URLs and time-series charts.

- Same prompts, same time, every day
- Captured raw responses, citation URLs that were automatically categorised
- Useful for breadth, but unable to interpret what was actually said

THE HUMAN LAYER

Where the insight lives.

Analysts downloaded every response and evaluated each brand mention against Medianet's core qualitative metrics. The same disciplines we apply to traditional media, applied response by response.

- Brand sentiment, prominence and key-message pickup, coded by hand
- 11,127 URLs recategorised in Phase 2
- Re-coded what our tool conflated with 'Editorial' to see what citations really were.

TWO PILOTS, ONE EVOLVING FRAMEWORK

Each phase refined the methodology , broadening scope, sharpening the citation lens.

PHASE 01

NOVEMBER 2025 · 14 DAYS

Financial services & automotive insurance.

400
RESPONSES

05
PROMPTS / BRAND

02
HYPOTHESES



HYPOTHESES TESTED

1. Citations would favour mainstream editorial media → **disproven**
2. LLM sentiment would skew positive vs traditional → **confirmed**

PHASE 02

MARCH 2026 · 14 DAYS

RACV & the 'My Melbourne Road' campaign.

957
RESPONSES

18
THEMATIC PROMPTS

11,127
CITATIONS RE-CODED

NEWS
RACV urges Melburnians to have their say on the state of their roads
Whether you're riding, driving or walking, roads can be improved for you.



HYPOTHESES ADDED

1. RACV would dominate due to its Victorian profile → **confirmed**
2. The MMR campaign would have strong named pickup → **mixed**
3. Plus: refined sentiment scale & competitor tracking

FINDINGS · THE FOUR THEMES

The four themes that persist across both phases.

01

LLMs are overwhelmingly positive.

And they go as far as *actively neutralising* controversial topics, reading more like research briefings than news articles.

97-100%

FAVOURABLE LLM RESPONSES

02

A different, longer news cycle.

Slow to pick up new issues. Slow to forget old ones.

6mo+

FOR NEW ISSUES TO SURFACE

03

Owned content dominates citations.

Across 11,127 categorised citations, owned corporate & government channels did the heavy lifting.

67%

OF ALL CITATIONS ARE OWNED

04

Share of Voice doesn't mirror media.

Brand messaging can outperform brand name recognition. Visibility leaders in media may not lead in LLMs.

+19%

YOUR VISIBILITY IN LLMs VS MEDIA

01

**LLMs are
overwhelmingly
positive, and they
neutralise controversy.**

The sentiment divergence between LLMs and traditional media was the starkest finding from Phase 1, and Phase 2 only reinforced it. Where journalists frame a topic, LLMs balance, and can even mitigate controversy for the brand.

SENTIMENT, SIDE BY SIDE

LLMs **balance** on your behalf.

Topics driving unfavourable media coverage such as job cuts, AI restructuring or branch closures, were absent from LLM responses entirely. The models drew on owned content with striking consistency. In Phase 2, the Victorian Government result was the most revealing of all: contentious in the news, but balanced in AI.

THE LEARNING

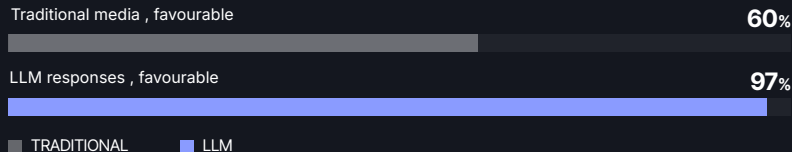
For public affairs & comms

Organisations with **meaty, complex owned content** may find LLMs managing issues on their behalf. The models often neutralised controversial topics through the weight of authoritative information, without needing reactive engagement from the comms team.

PHASE 01 · WESTPAC



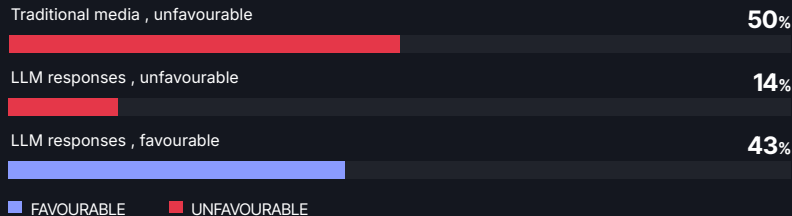
Major bank sentiment, traditional vs LLMs.



PHASE 02 · VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT



Government sentiment, traditional vs LLMs.



02

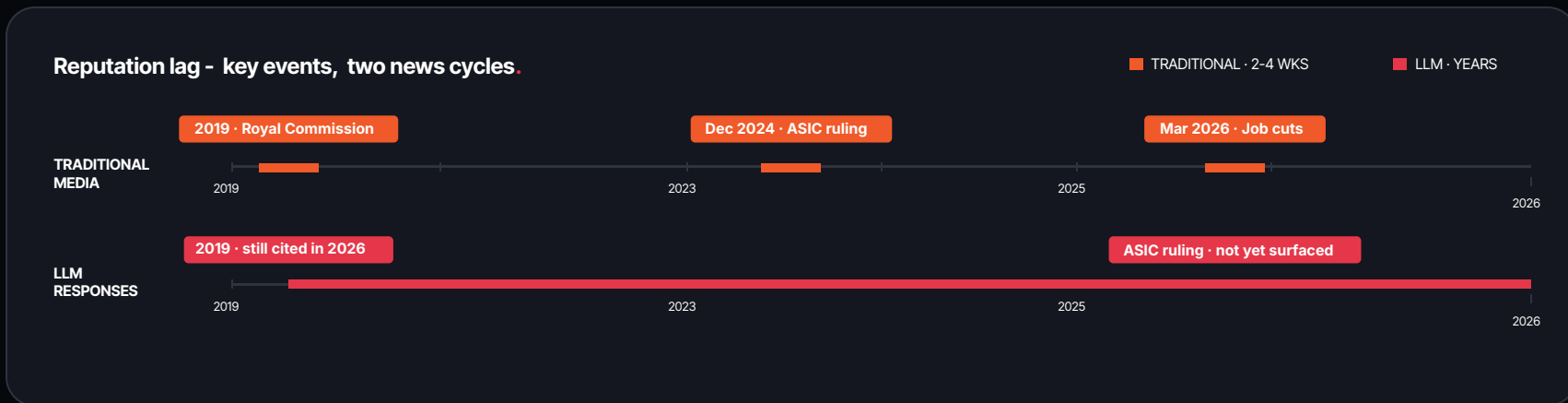
LLMs are on a different news cycle.

Traditional media issues fade in two to four weeks. **LLMs hold on.** Issues for the financial sector such as the 2019 Banking Royal Commission was still surfacing in 2025, while a December 2024 ASIC ruling, dominant in media, hadn't reached LLMs at all.

FINDING 02 · A NEW NEWS CYCLE

Slow to pick up new issues. Slow to forget old ones.

While traditional media interest fades within 2–4 weeks, LLMs' don't. The 2019 Banking Royal Commission is still surfacing in 2025. The RACQ ASIC ruling, which was dominant in mainstream media, hadn't reached LLMs yet.



2-4w

Traditional cycle.

Most reputational issues fade within a four-week media cycle. The strategy is built around speed.

6mo+

LLM index lag.

New events take six months or more to surface in LLM responses.

16%

MMR persistence.

RACV's My Melbourne Road (Oct 2025) still cited in 16% of LLM responses six months later. Zero in 2026 mainstream media.

A TECHNICAL DETAIL

AI will remember your content forever.

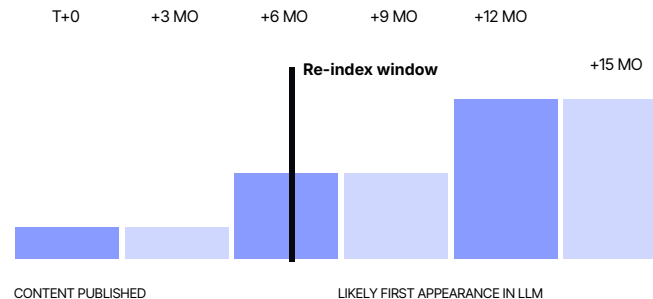
The long memory span of LLMs can be an opportunity and a risk for your organisation.

For brands managing high volumes of issues of the day, LLMs can give media teams some reprieve. Hot media topics that can require heavy resources to manage just don't appear in LLMs in the same way, so you don't need to canvass this channel when managing a real-time issue.

On the flip side, after content has been picked up by LLMs, it's likely to be remembered by AI forever. This poses a different challenge for issues management. The reputation impacts may not show immediately, but are likely to appear months after the media cycle has moved on.

The fix: Plan for the lag. If an issue breaks today, make sure you track it's LLM cycle, not just how it plays in the media.

Approximate LLM memory vs traditional media .



THE LEARNING

For issues & content planning

LLMs may start not surface your content until six months later, but unlike traditional media, they also don't forget. Prepare for your content to be remembered forever.

03

Owned content dominates citations.

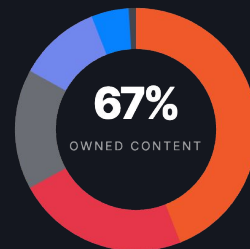
Our starting hypothesis was that mainstream editorial would lead. **It didn't.** Across 11,127 manually-coded URLs in Phase 2, corporate and government owned content accounted for 67% of every citation, while major Australian newspapers, just 4%.

FINDING 03 · THE SOURCE

LLMs go straight to the source. And that source is you.

Phase 1 disproved our starting hypothesis that editorial media would dominate citations. Phase 2 went further, with our analysts re categorising 11,127 individual URLs into more accurate source types. **Owned content (corporate + government) accounted for 67% of every citation.**

Major Australian national and metropolitan newspapers accounted for just **4%** of citations overall. The earned media citations that did appear came mostly from press-release aggregators and smaller outlets.



Government	4,921	44%
Corporate / Non-gov	2,525	23%
Media	1,795	16%
Social / Blog / Forum	1,261	11%
Research / Education	540	5%
Other	85	<1%

45%

of CommBank mentions contained verbatim website messaging .

Models were not interpreting; they were transcribing. CommBank's site was cited 1.5x per response on average in Phase 1.

INSIDE THE SOCIAL CATEGORY

Social accounts for 11% of citations, but YouTube is the one you can actually control.

Phase 1 didn't have a social category and the automated tool grouped social URLs under 'Editorial'. Having our analysts recode 11,127 URLs in Phase 2 made the 11% slice visible. Two platforms behave very differently inside it.

Facebook.

VOLUME, NO CONTROL

Scale of repository, not ownership.

Facebook's high citation volume reflects its sheer scale. Public posts, pages, community groups and event listings are all crawlable where permissions allow. Much of the content driving those citations wasn't brand-owned or brand-controlled.

518

Citations to facebook.com across Phase 2 responses, including community pages, consumer advocacy and third-party posts.

WHAT TO DO

Monitor your Facebook footprint as you would press. Assume third-party posts contribute to your brand's citations.

YouTube.

CONTROLLABLE CHANNEL

The controllable opportunity.

LLMs scrape video metadata and transcripts effectively and prefer well-titled, well-described content as a citable source. Traditional broadcasters with YouTube clip libraries get a path to LLM citations that bypasses paywalls entirely.

75%

of YouTube citations in Phase 2 came from RACV's own channel, specifically videos on My Melbourne Road intersections.

WHAT TO DO

Publish with LLM discovery in mind. Titles, descriptions and transcripts are all signal. The most controllable social channel for AI visibility.

TOP CITATION DOMAINS · PHASE 2

Government domains do the heavy lifting.

RACV's own site led at 944 citations, but Victorian Government sources collectively contributed over **3,500 citations**. The volume of authoritative public-sector content outweighs targeted brand prompting.

THE LEARNING

For owned-content strategy

Owned content gives organisations **more authority** in LLM responses. The models favour deep, structured information archives, an advantage to complex organisations that publish high volumes of detailed content the model can ingest as fact.

Most-cited domains

01	www.racv.com.au corp	944
02	www.vic.gov.au gov	574
03	www.facebook.com social	518
04	www.tac.vic.gov.au gov	418
05	transport.vic.gov.au gov	261
06	www.youtube.com social	258
07	bigbuild.vic.gov.au gov	246
08	www.premier.vic.gov.au gov	241
09	www.parliament.vic.gov.au gov	227

THE ECHO-CHAMBER RISK

High-quality, paywalled journalism is currently invisible.

The media subset in LLM citations reflects outlets that have opted into LLM crawling, which is not the full Australian media landscape. Earned coverage in major mastheads may not translate into LLM visibility at all.

04

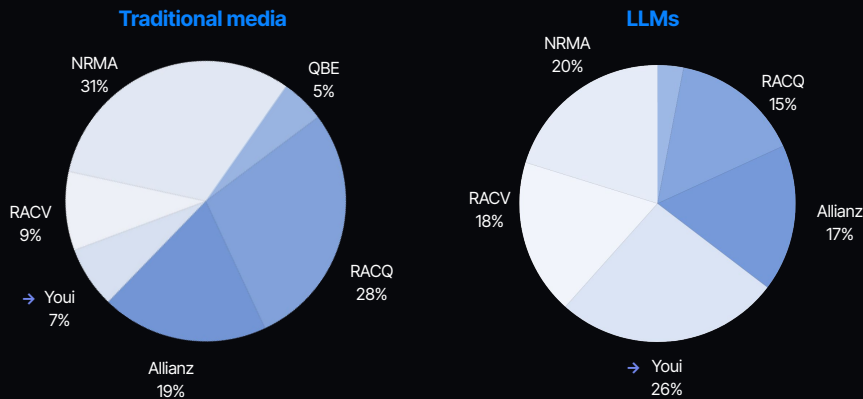
LLM Share of Voice doesn't mirror traditional rankings.

Youi held 26% of LLM voice compared with 7% of traditional media coverage. RACV ranked first in media but Vic Gov agencies collectively out-cited it in AI. And 137 responses cited RACV URLs without mentioning RACV by name at all.

FINDING 04 · SHARE OF VOICE

What works in media engagement doesn't guarantee LLM visibility.

Every automotive insurance brand's LLM share of voice diverged meaningfully from its media position. Phase 2 added an additional finding where brand messaging was being attributed without the brand name.



THE LEARNING
For brand & measurement

Strong media performance **does not guarantee** LLM visibility, and brand messaging can outperform brand-name recognition. Measure LLM Share of Voice on its own terms, against your competitors, alongside traditional rankings.

137 responses cited RACV URLs without mentioning RACV by name.

Brand messaging was outperforming brand name recognition. This content was so authoritative the model treated it as a source rather than a brand asset.

IMPLICATIONS · COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LLMs are a stakeholder. **Treat them like one.**

LLMs aren't a technology story, they're a reputation channel with their own dynamics and their own relationship to your brand. Like any influential stakeholder, they need to be monitored and strategically engaged.

01

Engage by shaping content, not by pitching.

You can't pitch to an LLM. You can shape what it draws from the volume, accessibility and authority of your owned content.

02

Issues management needs a new timeline.

A brand may look clean in LLMs months after a crisis, providing false reassurance.

At the same time, AI will remember everything, so expect this channel to become both an input and output for your brand's reputation.

03

Owned content is your most powerful lever.

LLMs favour organisations with deep, authoritative, crawlable archives. Go beyond the corporate site, YouTube, press release aggregators, industry publications all count.

04

The neutralising tendency is a strategic asset.

For organisations managing complex policy issues or long-running reputation challenges, LLMs' balancing tendency can be genuinely useful. Act on this advantage while it exists.

IMPLICATIONS · MEDIA & JOURNALISM

The foundations of the ad-funded media model are being **quietly redistributed**.

When LLMs answer questions directly, there's no click, no referral, no page visit. Corporate-owned dominance compounds this with brands reaching LLM users with their own messaging, bypassing the editorial function of journalism entirely.

01

The traffic problem.

Dominance of owned content in citations compounds direct-answer behaviour. Brands reach LLM users with their own messaging, bypassing editorial entirely.

02

The value of journalism.

A negative story that reaches readers but doesn't surface in LLMs for six months is a meaningful gap in public accountability. When owned content dominated, and LLMs neutralise responses, journalism's value becomes essential to hold power accountable.

03

The licensing challenge.

Restricting LLM access through paywalls protects revenue but reduces citation presence. YouTube clip libraries offer one path, though not a long-term solution.

ACTION PLAN

Four things **you can do now.**

Organisations that understand these dynamics now will be better positioned when LLM measurement matures. That moment is coming faster than most expect.

01 · MEASURE

Establish a baseline.

You cannot manage what you cannot measure. Be aware of brand sentiment, citation sources and share of voice across the LLM models against your key competitors.

→ Audit your LLM presence this quarter

02 · INVEST

Invest in owned content depth.

Review your owned-content strategy with LLM crawlability in mind. Prioritise open-access pages, video metadata, transcripts and press release aggregators. Audit what content is gated and therefore invisible.

→ Crawl-test your top 50 pages

03 · PUBLISH

Prioritise YouTube.

Of all social and owned channels tracked, YouTube emerged as the most reliable and controllable LLM citation source. Publish with LLM discovery in mind: titles, descriptions, transcripts.

→ Publish transcribed videos

04 · REFRAME

Reframe issues management.

Plan for the lag. Plan for the long memory. Build content strategies with persistence in mind, not just the immediate news cycle. The headlines you write today may appear in LLMs down the track.

→ Add LLM checks to crisis playbooks

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

What we know, and what we don't.

Both phases used short data windows and a small number of brands and industries. The findings are directional, and should not be extrapolated to other sectors or markets without independent validation.

The Australian context matters: paywalls and crawl restrictions likely suppress editorial citation rates in ways that may not apply in the US or UK, where publisher licensing with LLM providers is more established.

The categorisation framework evolved between phases, Phase 1 used aggregated tool data; Phase 2 introduced manual URL coding. The value of this research lies in the benchmarking, and continuous evolution of our research findings.

OPEN QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

01

How does prompt type influence citations?

Consumer, policy and crisis prompts likely produce very different results.

02

How quickly do LLMs actually index new content?

Our six-month indexing cycle was observational, we need to measure it directly.

03

What is the real role of Reddit?

It appeared in Phase 2 but its citation behaviour was unpredictable across runs.

04

How will the picture shift as publisher licensing matures?

As deals between AI companies and major publishers mature, the media share may rise.

ABOUT MEDIANET

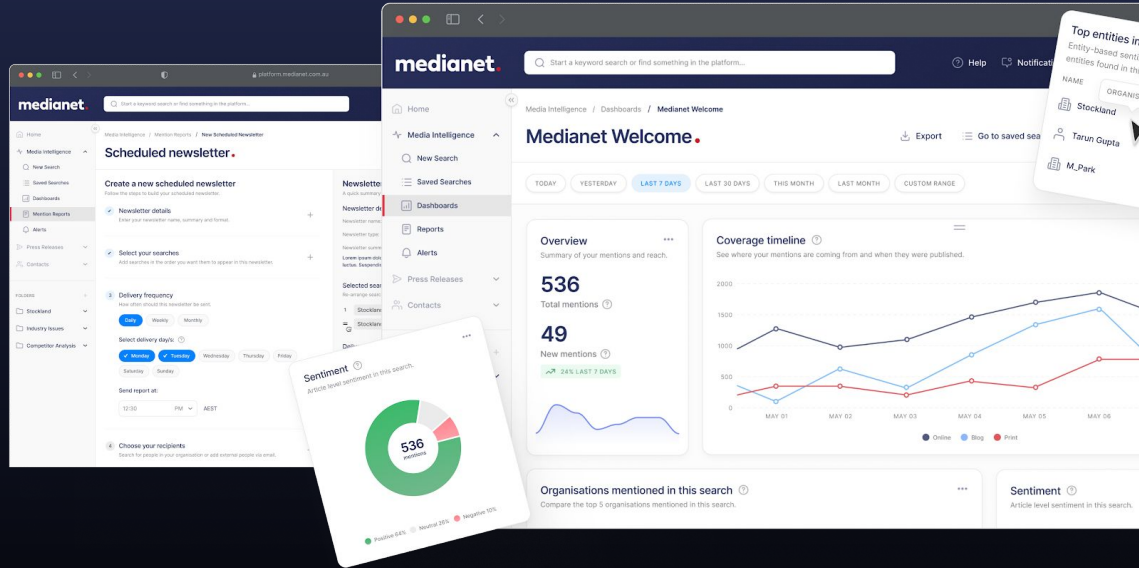
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