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Does AI always pick the same name?

We asked four AI models to recommend a bank, a hotel chain, a law firm, a CRM, a PR agency and an electric car, ten times each. In some categories one name wins every time. In others it depends on which assistant you ask.

This is a study of how AI assistants behave. It is not a ranking of companies and it is not advice. The names below are the assistants' own words, reported as measured. Being named often says nothing about quality.

560

answers from four AI models, across seven categories

40 of 40

answers that chose HubSpot when asked to pick one CRM

37 of 40

answers that chose Cooley when asked to pick one law firm for a startup

9%

of the sources cited in PR-agency answers were news or trade press; 48% were business-owned sites

What we found

- 1 In two categories, one name wins on every assistant.** Asked to pick a single CRM for a small business, all four models chose HubSpot in all 40 answers. For a law firm for a startup, Cooley was the pick in 37 of 40 and was named in every one of the 40 open answers.
- 2 In three more, one name wins on three assistants out of four.** For a hotel chain, Gemini, Claude and Perplexity chose Marriott in 29 of 30 answers, while ChatGPT chose Hyatt in 7 of 10. For a bank, ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity chose Capital One in all 30, while Claude leaned to Ally. For an electric car, three chose Hyundai most often and ChatGPT chose Tesla in 8 of 10.
- 3 PR agencies were the most open category.** Each model had a favourite and repeated it, but the favourites differed: LaunchSquad on two models, Bospar on one, Treble PR on one. A model named about a dozen different agencies in those ten answers, counting the alternatives it mentioned beside its pick.
- 4 Stocks, where we started, were the least concentrated of all.** On money questions some models hedge or decline to pick; Claude never singled out one stock. Our first study understated how narrow AI answers become elsewhere.
- 5 Which sources get cited changes with the category.** For cars, about a third of the cited sources were news and another third were rankings and review sites. For PR agencies, law firms and CRM software, about half were business-owned websites, and news was 9%, 2% and 13%.
- 6 In business services, many cited pages are written by businesses in the field.** Many of the most-cited pages were "best agencies" or "best firms" lists published by an agency, a firm or a vendor on its own site. We did not test whether a company's own pages are the reason it gets recommended.

- 7 An app can still answer differently from its model.** Gemini's app gave the same single pick as the Gemini model in four categories and a different one in two: Highwire as its one PR agency in 10 of 10 answers, where the model chose LaunchSquad in 8 of 10, and Tesla as its one electric car in 6 of 10, where the model chose Hyundai in all 10. ChatGPT's app and model agreed on the name for both a bank and a PR agency, though the app was less consistent.

1. Forced to pick one, who comes first?

The question was "If you had to pick just one ..., which one would it be?". Each cell is the name a model put first most often, and in how many of its ten answers.

CATEGORY	CHATGPT MODEL	GEMINI MODEL	CLAUDE	PERPLEXITY	EACH MODEL REPEATS ITS OWN PICK	MODELS WITH THE SAME PICK
CRM for a small business	HubSpot CRM 10/10	HubSpot CRM 10/10	HubSpot CRM 10/10	HubSpot CRM 10/10	100%	4 of 4
Law firm for a startup	Cooley 10/10	Cooley 10/10	Cooley 7/10	Cooley 10/10	93%	4 of 4
Hotel chain	Hyatt 7/10	Marriott 10/10	Marriott 10/10	Marriott 9/10	90%	3 of 4
Bank	Capital One 10/10	Capital One 10/10	Ally Bank 4/10	Capital One 10/10	85%	3 of 4
Electric car (by maker)	Tesla 8/10	Hyundai 10/10	Hyundai 5/10	Hyundai 7/10	75%	3 of 4
PR agency for a tech startup	LaunchSquad 9/10	LaunchSquad 8/10	Bospar 8/10	Treble PR 4/10	73%	2 of 4
Stock to buy	Alphabet 9/10	VOO 4/10	none	Microsoft 6/10	48%	1 of 4

The bar shows how often each model repeated its own first pick, averaged over the four. It can be high while the models disagree with each other, so the last column counts how many of the four had the same first pick.

2. Asked openly, how often is one name in the answer?

The question was "What is a good ... right now?". An open question gets a list, so nearly every answer contains each assistant's leading name. What differs is how long the list is and how much of it goes to three names.

CATEGORY	NAMED IN THE MOST ANSWERS	SHARE OF ANSWERS THAT NAME EACH ASSISTANT'S LEADER	DIFFERENT NAMES PER ASSISTANT	TOP THREE NAMES' SHARE
CRM for a small business	HubSpot CRM leads on 3 of 4	100%	7	62%
Law firm for a startup	Cooley leads on 4 of 4	100%	16	49%
Hotel chain	Hyatt leads on 2 of 4	100%	7	64%

CATEGORY	NAMED IN THE MOST ANSWERS	SHARE OF ANSWERS THAT NAME EACH ASSISTANT'S LEADER	DIFFERENT NAMES PER ASSISTANT	TOP THREE NAMES' SHARE
Bank	Capital One leads on 2 of 4	93%	13	55%
Electric car (by maker)	Hyundai leads on 3 of 4	100%	7	61%
PR agency for a tech startup	Bospar leads on 1 of 4	88%	21	36%
Stock to buy	VOO leads on 2 of 4	65%	11	58%

"Leads on 4 of 4" means the same name was the most-named on all four models.

3. Which sources the answers cite

Every website an answer cited, counted once per answer, by kind of site. Read across a row: it adds up to 100%.

	NEWS AND TRADE PRESS	COMPANIES' OWN SITES	RANKINGS AND REVIEWS	FORUMS AND SOCIAL	REFERENCE AND OFFICIAL	NOT PLACED
CRM for a small business 447 citations	13%	53%	15%	3%	2%	13%
Law firm for a startup 348 citations	2%	51%	22%	1%	4%	21%
Hotel chain 396 citations	17%	23%	34%	4%	16%	6%
Bank 333 citations	26%	28%	29%	2%	10%	5%
Electric car (by maker) 429 citations	32%	16%	30%	5%	7%	10%
PR agency for a tech startup 473 citations	9%	48%	13%	3%	0%	27%
Stock to buy 223 citations	23%	24%	35%	2%	11%	5%

"Not placed" is mostly other businesses' blogs and sites we could not identify with confidence. The kinds were assigned site by site with a model and spot-checked by hand; treat the shares as approximate. In the PR-agency row more than a quarter of the citations are not placed, so that row is the least certain.

4. The apps beside the models behind them

Most people meet these models through an app. We also asked the apps, logged out, the same questions: Gemini's app in all six categories and ChatGPT's in two. Each cell is the first pick when forced to choose one, and in how many answers.

CATEGORY	CHATGPT APP	CHATGPT MODEL	GEMINI APP	GEMINI MODEL
PR agency for a tech startup	LaunchSquad 4/10	LaunchSquad 9/10	Highwire PR 10/10	LaunchSquad 8/10
Bank	Capital One 9/10	Capital One 10/10	Capital One 9/10	Capital One 10/10
CRM for a small business	–	HubSpot CRM 10/10	HubSpot CRM 10/10	HubSpot CRM 10/10
Electric car (by maker)	–	Tesla 8/10	Tesla 6/10	Hyundai 10/10

CATEGORY	CHATGPT APP	CHATGPT MODEL	GEMINI APP	GEMINI MODEL
Hotel chain	–	Hyatt 7/10	Marriott 9/10	Marriott 10/10
Law firm for a startup	–	Cooley 10/10	Cooley 9/10	Cooley 10/10

An app is a product built around a model, with its own instructions and its own search, so the two can differ. A brand's standing in one says little about the other.

What this means for a brand

- **Where one name wins, second place is nearly invisible.** In a list of ten links a runner-up is still on the page. In a single-pick answer it is not there at all.
- **Where assistants disagree, measure each one.** A brand can be the first pick on one assistant and absent on another. An average across assistants hides both facts.
- **In business services, look at what businesses publish, yours included.** About half of the sources cited for PR agencies and law firms were pages on agencies', firms' and vendors' own sites, far more than press coverage. This study does not show that changing a page changes the answer; that takes a before-and-after test.

WHAT WE ASKED

Two questions per category, each framed "in the US": an open one ("What is a good ... right now?") and a forced one ("If you had to pick just one ..."). Each was asked ten times of each model on 6 October 2026.

HOW WE COUNTED

Names that are the same company count once: a car model under its maker, a hotel brand under its parent company, a bank's product under the bank. The stock row uses the questions of our first study; its ChatGPT answers were collected again for this report, so that row differs from the first report.

An exploratory study. Limits: one day, ten runs per question and model, US framing, four models asked directly. The apps were asked logged out, up to ten answers per question: Gemini's in all six categories, ChatGPT's in two. Shares by kind of website are approximate. Nothing here describes other countries or languages, and nothing here says which company is better.

See what AI says about your brand

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