Market Authority Index

Benchmark Intelligence Report

Q2 Edition -- July 2026

Portfolio: 158 brands assessed

Average Market Authority Index: 65.0/100

Median Market Authority Index: 67/100

21 July 2026

Benchmark Report

Prepared by Digital Scorecard

Executive Summary

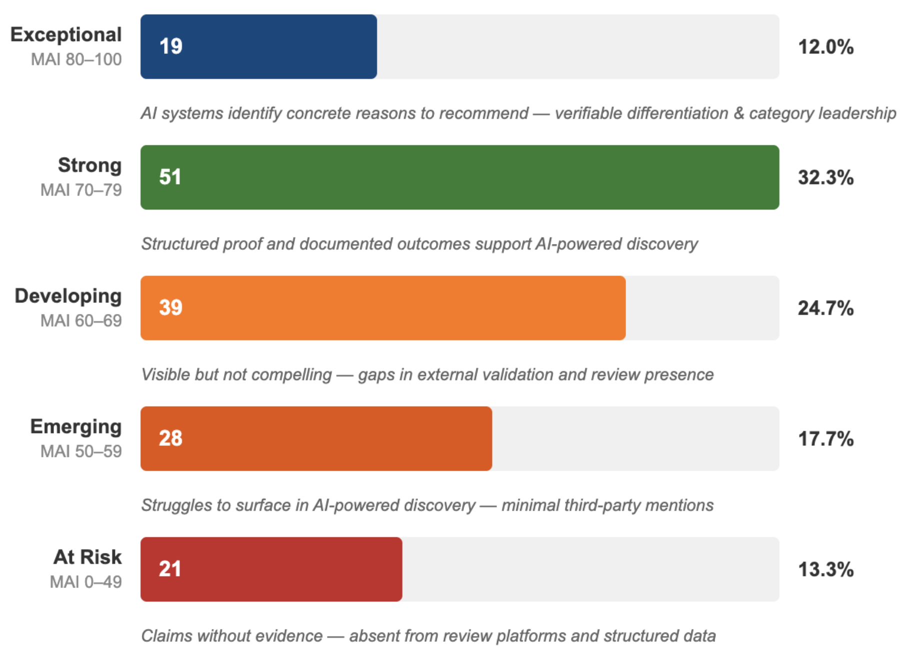
The Q2 2026 Market Authority Index Benchmark represents the largest independent assessment of brand authority to date, covering 158 brands across 28 sectors. This executive summary highlights the most significant findings from the data.

The Assessed Brands at a Glance

Of 158 assessed brands, 90 (57%) achieve the Market Authority Index certification threshold of 65, with 19 reaching Gold status (80+), 51 Silver (70–79), and 20 Certified (65–69). The portfolio average sits at 65.0 with a median of 67, indicating that while the majority of brands demonstrate baseline authority, nearly half have material gaps that would limit their visibility in an AI-driven discovery environment.

AI Brand Readiness — Score Distribution

Market Authority Index Q2 2026 — 158 assessed brands



> **Key finding:** 44.3% of assessed brands (Exceptional + Strong) demonstrate the structured authority signals that AI systems use to form confident recommendations. The remaining 55.7% have identifiable gaps — primarily in **Proof & Validation** (portfolio average: 11.7/25), the weakest sub-pillar and the primary differentiator between AI-ready and AI-invisible brands.

Want to see how your organisation compares? Take the Market Authority Index (MAI) assessment to benchmark your Market Authority and find your biggest opportunities for improvement. Learn more and take the free assessment [here](#).

The guiding light for market authority is how businesses demonstrate that they clearly answer the question “**why should I buy from you as opposed to all the other options available to me**”. The Market Authority Standard identifies how well a business demonstrates this and we represent it in a score.

What is clear is that 44.3% are AI ready or on track as they exhibit market authority in their sector. Equally it shows that 31% are not AI ready with a further 24.7% somewhere between. We are seeing more consumer facing (B2C) businesses being AI ready with a lot of business facing (B2B) businesses at risk of being invisible to AI representing an opportunity for many and a threat for others that take no action.

The B2C vs B2B Authority Gap

The most striking structural finding in the benchmark is the gap between consumer-facing and business-to-business brands. B2C brands average 68.5 with a 71.3% certification rate; B2B brands average 59.9 with just 36.5% certified. The gap is not about structural soundness — both groups score similarly on Structural Confidence — but about Human Authority, where B2C brands outscore B2B across every pillar. The widest gap is in Proof and Validation (B2C: 13.7 vs B2B: 9.2), reflecting that B2B brands systematically underinvest in the third-party validation signals that drive both human and AI-powered recommendations.

The B2C vs B2B Authority Gap

Market Authority Index Q2 2026 — by business model

B2C Brands

80 brands assessed

68.5

Average MAI

Average HA	**66.4**
Average SC	**73.3**
Certification Rate	**71.3%**

B2B Brands

52 brands assessed

59.9

Average MAI

Average HA	**55.3**
Average SC	**70.2**
Certification Rate	**36.5%**

Sub-Pillar Comparison (/25)

Key finding: The gap is widest in Proof & Validation (4.5 points) — B2B brands systematically lack the third-party validation, review presence, and documented outcomes that both human buyers and AI systems use to form recommendations. B2C certification rate is nearly double B2B (71.3% vs 36.5%).

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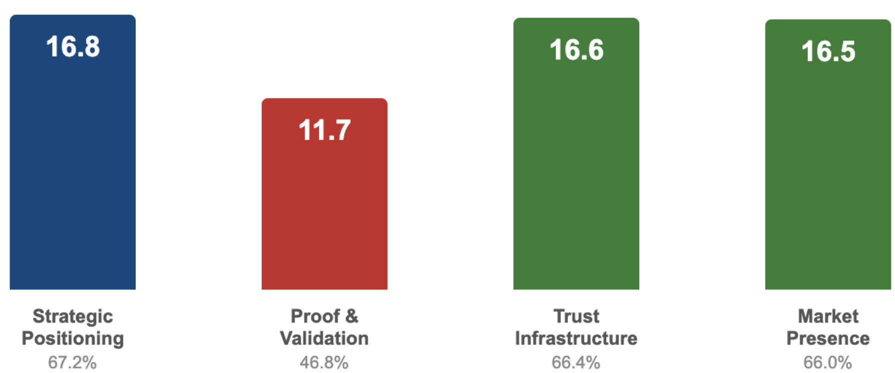
Proof and Validation: The Systemic Weakness

Across all 158 brands, Proof and Validation scores just 11.7 out of 25 (46.8%) — dramatically lower than Strategic Positioning (16.8), Trust Infrastructure (16.6), and Market Presence (16.5), which cluster around 66%. This pillar measures third-party reviews, case studies, industry certifications, awards, and documented customer outcomes. Its weakness is universal: even brands that score well on positioning and presence often lack the external evidence that converts authority into recommendation. For brands seeking to improve their Market Authority Index, Proof and Validation is consistently the highest-return area of investment.

The Proof & Validation Gap

Human Authority sub-pillar averages across 158 assessed brands (each scored /25)



> **The systemic weakness:** Proof & Validation scores just 11.7/25 (46.8%) — dramatically lower than the other three pillars, which cluster around 66%. This pillar measures third-party reviews, case studies, certifications, awards, and documented outcomes. It is the single biggest factor separating brands that AI systems confidently recommend from those they overlook.

Source: Digital Scorecard — Market Authority Index Benchmark, Q2 2026 (n=158)

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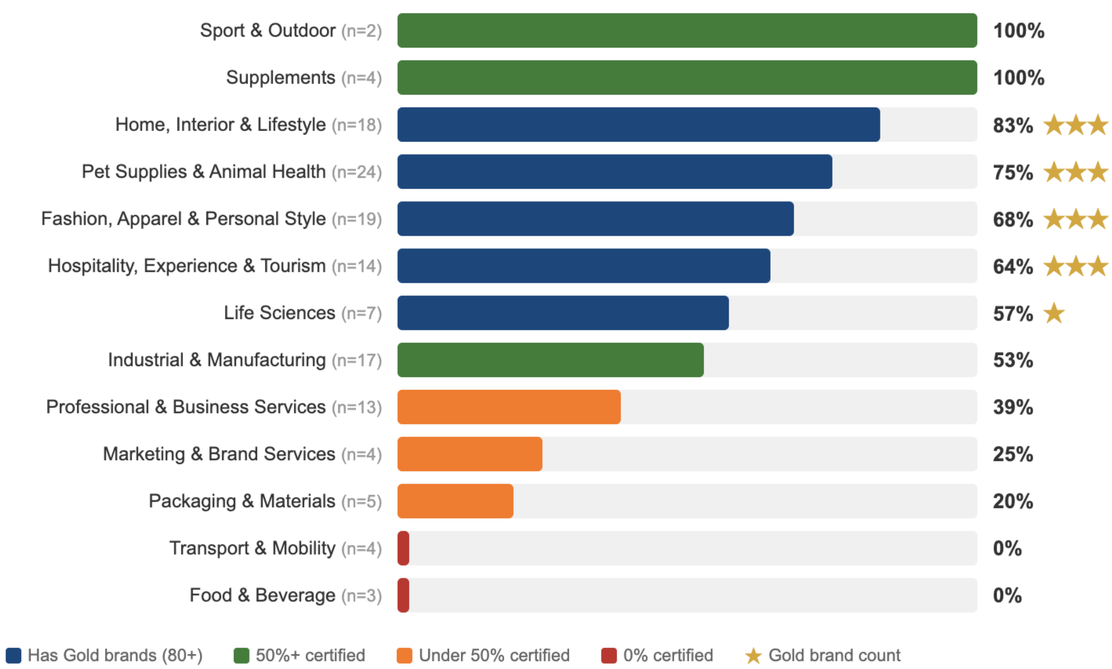
Sector Concentration

Gold-tier performance (Market Authority Index 80+) is concentrated in just 6 of 18 major sectors. Fashion, Apparel and Personal Style leads with 6 Gold brands, followed by Hospitality, Experience and Tourism (5), Pet Supplies and Animal Health (3), and Home, Interior and Lifestyle (3). Twelve sectors including; Industrial and Manufacturing, Professional and Business Services, Transport and Mobility, and Packaging, have produced zero Gold-tier brands. Certification rates range from 83% (Home, Interior and Lifestyle) to 0% (Transport, Food and Beverage, and several niche sectors). This concentration effect largely mirrors the B2C/B2B divide: the sectors with the highest authority scores are predominantly consumer-facing.

Market Authority Certification by Sector

Percentage of assessed brands achieving Market Authority Index 65+ (sectors with n≥2)



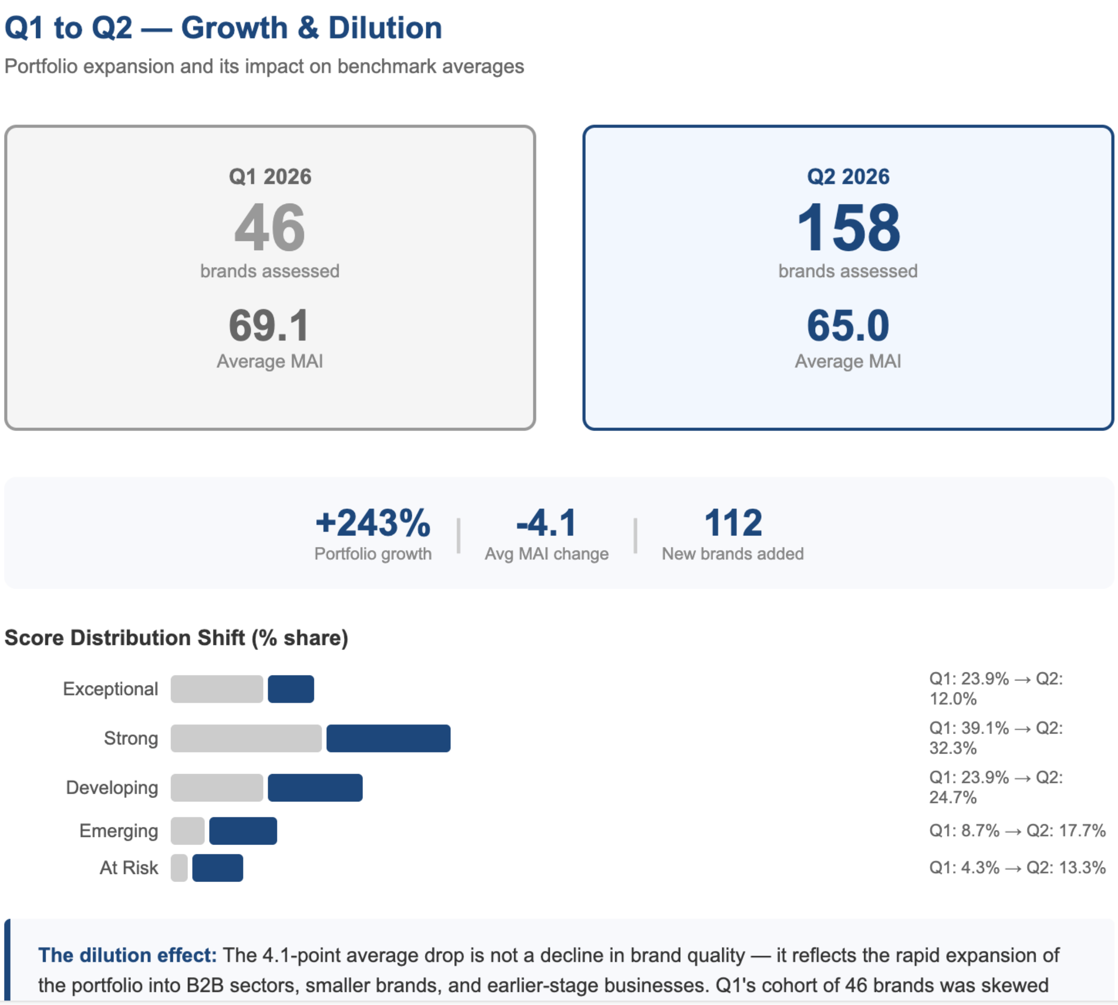
Sector concentration: Gold-tier brands (MAI 80+) appear in only 6 of 18 sectors, with Fashion (6) and Hospitality (5) accounting for 58% of all Gold brands. B2B-heavy sectors — Industrial, Professional Services, Packaging, Transport — have zero Gold performers and certification rates below 53%.

Source: Digital Scorecard — Market Authority Index Benchmark, Q2 2026 (n=158)

Q1 to Q2: Growth and Dilution

Want to see how your organisation compares? Take the Market Authority Index (MAI) assessment to benchmark your Market Authority and find your biggest opportunities for improvement. Learn more and take the free assessment here.

The portfolio of companies assessed grew 243% from Q1 (46 brands) to Q2 (158 brands), while the average Market Authority Index dropped 4.1 points from 69.1 to 65.0. This is not a decline in brand quality, it reflects the deliberate expansion of the benchmark into B2B sectors, smaller brands, and earlier-stage businesses that were underrepresented in Q1. The share of brands in the Exceptional band halved (23.9% to 12.0%), while the Emerging and At Risk bands grew from a combined 13.0% to 31.0%. As the benchmark matures, we expect the average to stabilise as the dataset becomes more representative of the broader market.



The sections that follow provide the detailed analysis, methodology, and complete data behind these findings.

1. Benchmark Brand Authority Overview

The Q2 2026 Market Authority Index Benchmark Intelligence Report covers 158 brands that have completed a full Market Authority Index assessment. This represents a 112-brand expansion from the Q1 baseline of 46 brands, more than tripling the analytical dataset and enabling statistically meaningful sector-level comparisons for the first time.

In addition we have a further 537 brands that were evaluated with a lighter market authority review that complements this report and analysis.

The portfolio spans 27 sectors across multiple European markets, with the majority of brands operating in Scandinavian (particularly Sweden) and Northern European contexts. The dataset includes both business-to-consumer and business-to-business brands, ranging from individual operators and micro-enterprises to publicly listed multinational corporations.

Portfolio Statistics

Metric	Value
Total Brands Assessed	158
Average Market Authority Index	65.0
Median Market Authority Index	67
Average Human Authority	61.7
Average Structural Confidence	72.7
Score Range	22 -- 86
Structural Confidence Cap Applied	3 brands

The average Market Authority Index of 65.0 and median of 67 indicate a portfolio that is broadly in the Developing-to-Strong range, with Structural Confidence (72.7) consistently outperforming Human Authority (61.7) by 11.0 points. This gap, the "authority deficit", remains the defining characteristic of the dataset and represents the primary area of opportunity for most assessed brands.

In addition to this report there are 6 Sector specific reports, linked to at the end of this report.

2. Score Distribution

The distribution of Market Authority Index scores across the 158-brand portfolio reveals a concentration in the Developing and Strong bands, with a meaningful tail extending into both the

Exceptional and Emerging ranges. Some of this is self fulfilling as known brands are reviewed and many leaders request a review to get better, part of what makes them leaders.

Band	**Range**	**Count**	**Share**
Exceptional	80--100	19	12.0%
Strong	70--79	51	32.3%
Developing	60--69	39	24.7%
Emerging	40--59	28	17.7%
At Risk	0--39	21	13.3%

90 out of 158 brands achieve 65 or above, the limit we set for certification. 19 brands (12.0%) achieve Exceptional status with scores of 80 or above, demonstrating elite-level brand authority across all four Human Authority pillars and consistently strong structural fundamentals. 51 brands (32.3%) fall in the Strong band, representing brands with robust market positioning that are well-placed for sustained competitive advantage.

In general more leading than lagging brands have been added to the review as we tend to get more requests from leading brands and also add in more brands as they are sighted and these tend to be leading ones. So this benchmark is not an average but skewed towards better brands. We expect this is even out over time but most likely will always tend to be leading.

The Developing band (39 brands, 24.7%) contains brands that have established market presence but have identifiable gaps, typically in Proof and Validation or Market Presence, that prevent them from reaching the Strong tier. These are often brands with strong products and operations that have not yet invested in structured external validation.

The Emerging band (28 brands, 17.7%), reflecting the high proportion of SMEs and growth-stage businesses in the portfolio that are building authority from a lower base. 5 brands (13.3%) fall below 40, typically characterised by minimal third-party validation, underdeveloped digital trust infrastructure, and limited structured market presence.

3. Human Authority Sub-Pillar Analysis

Human Authority is composed of four equally weighted pillars, each scored out of 25. Sub-pillar data is available for 131 of the 158 assessed brands, providing the most granular view of brand authority composition to date.

Sub-Pillar Averages (n=131)

Pillar	Average (/25)	Std Dev	Actual / Maximum (%)
Strategic Positioning	18.7	2.8	75%
Proof and Validation	**11.7**	**5.4**	**47%**
Trust Infrastructure	16.6	3.6	67%
Market Presence	14.9	3.6	60%

Key Finding: The Proof Gap

The most significant structural finding in the Q2 dataset is the persistent Proof and Validation deficit. At an average of 11.7/25, this pillar performs at 47% of its maximum potential, substantially lower than the other three pillars. And there is a relatively high standard deviation meaning there is a lot of variability between brands. We see this especially when comparing B2B and B2C brands with B2B brands tending to lack Proof and Validation.

Strategic Positioning leads at 18.7/25 (75%), indicating that most brands in the portfolio have a reasonably clear and market position/know who they are targeting. Trust Infrastructure (16.6/25) and Market Presence (14.9/25) sit in the middle range.

The Proof and Validation gap reveals that brands are, on average, significantly under-investing in structured external validation such as independent reviews, third-party certifications, clinical evidence, verified testimonials, and media coverage. **This is not a product or strategy problem; it is a proof problem**. The data suggests that the single highest-impact intervention for the majority of assessed brands would be a systematic programme to generate, collect, and structure third-party proof of their claims.

Sub-Pillar Patterns by Score Band

Among Exceptional brands (Market Authority Index 80+), Proof and Validation averages approximately 19/25, compared to approximately 8/25 for Emerging brands. This 11-point gap in Proof and Validation is the largest single predictor of which score band a brand occupies, larger than the gap in any other pillar. Strategic Positioning shows the smallest gap between bands, suggesting that even lower-scoring brands often have a clear positioning, but lack the external proof infrastructure to make that positioning credible to AI-powered discovery systems and informed buyers.

4. AI Buyer Signal Analysis

Every assessed brand receives an AI Buyer Signal, an independent assessment of how the brand would appear to an AI system tasked with recommending businesses in the category, conducted without reference to the Market Authority Index score.

Across 158 brands, the AI Buyer Signal analysis reveals consistent patterns:

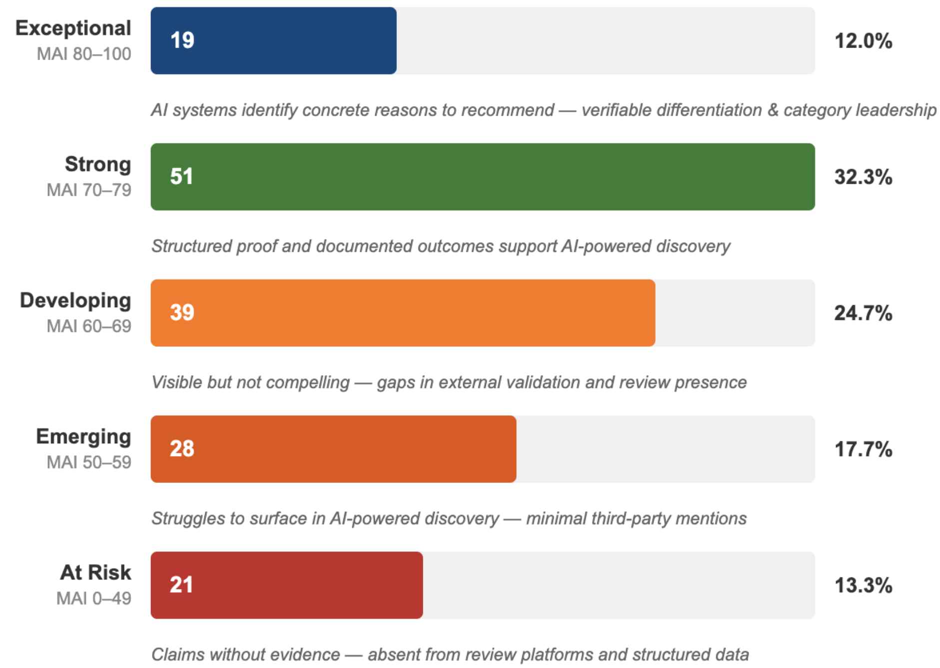
Brands scoring in the Exceptional and Strong bands (Market Authority Index 70+) receive AI Buyer Signals that emphasise verifiable differentiation, structured proof, and category leadership. These brands are described in terms of specific capabilities, documented outcomes, and third-party validation. **AI systems can identify concrete reasons to recommend them.**

Brands in the Developing band (60--69) typically receive mixed AI Buyer Signals. The AI can identify the brand's positioning and product offering, but notes gaps in external validation, limited review presence, or inconsistent structured data. These brands are "**visible but not compelling**" to AI discovery systems.

Brands in the Emerging and At Risk bands (below 60) consistently receive AI Buyer Signals indicating that the brand would struggle to surface in AI-powered discovery. Common themes include: absence from major review platforms, no structured data markup, minimal third-party mentions, and value propositions that rely on claims rather than evidence.

AI Brand Readiness — Score Distribution

Market Authority Index Q2 2026 — 158 assessed brands



> **Key finding:** 44.3% of assessed brands (Exceptional + Strong) demonstrate the structured authority signals that AI systems use to form confident recommendations. The remaining 55.7% have identifiable gaps — primarily in **Proof & Validation** (portfolio average: 11.7/25), the weakest sub-pillar and the primary differentiator between AI-ready and AI-invisible brands.

The AI Buyer Signal analysis reinforces the sub-pillar finding: Proof and Validation is the primary differentiator between brands that AI systems would confidently recommend and those they would not.

5. Price Pressure Risk Analysis

Price Pressure Risk reflects the degree to which a brand's Market Authority Index profile suggests vulnerability to price-based competition. Brands with strong Human Authority, particularly high Strategic Positioning and Proof and Validation scores, are better insulated against price pressure because their value proposition is anchored in differentiation and evidence rather than price alone.

Across the assessed portfolio, the distribution of price pressure risk shows that the majority of brands face moderate exposure to price-based competition. Brands in the Exceptional band consistently show lower price pressure risk profiles, while brands in the Emerging and At Risk bands show elevated vulnerability to price competition.

This finding is consistent with the broader Market Authority Index thesis: brands that invest in building structured authority; clear positioning, documented proof, robust trust infrastructure, and visible market presence, are less reliant on price as a competitive lever. The correlation between Human Authority and pricing power is most pronounced in the Strategic Positioning sub-pillar, where brands with scores above 20/25 demonstrate materially lower sensitivity to competitive pricing pressure.

6. Competitive Positioning

Each Market Authority Index assessment includes a competitive analysis that benchmarks the assessed brand against its closest competitors. The Competitor Average Market Authority Index column in the dataset reflects the mean score of the competitive set identified during each assessment.

Across the portfolio, the average gap between a brand's own Market Authority Index score and its competitor average provides insight into relative competitive positioning within each market segment.

Brands that score above their competitor average are, by definition, better positioned for AI-powered discovery and buyer confidence in their specific competitive context. Brands scoring below their competitor average face a more immediate competitive risk, not because their absolute score is necessarily low, but because their relative authority is weaker than the alternatives a buyer or AI system would consider.

The competitive gap analysis is most actionable at the sector and subsector level, where direct comparisons are meaningful. Cross-sector comparisons of competitive gaps are less informative because competitor sets vary significantly in both size and quality. Using your own MAI report is the best option for this, details on how to get your own free report later in this document.

7. Sector Benchmarks

The expanded Q2 dataset covers 27 sectors, enabling meaningful comparisons of Market Authority Index performance across industry verticals for the first time. Sector averages are calculated from all assessed brands within each sector classification, the 158 brand subset of the database.

Sector Average Scores

Sector	n*	Avg Market Authority Index	Avg Human Authority	Avg Structural Confidence
Health, Wellness & Pharmacy	3	72.7	72.3	73.7
Supplements	4	72.5	72.5	71.5
Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style**	17	70.8	69.9	72.9
Home, Interior & Lifestyle**	18	70.3	66.4	79.1
Hospitality, Experience & Tourism**	14	69.2	67.3	73.4
Pet Supplies & Animal Health**	23	68.3	66.0	73.0
Beauty & Personal Care	3	63.0	62.3	64.7
Life Sciences**	7	61.6	57.9	69.6
Packaging & Materials	4	60.5	54.0	75.8
Industrial & Trade Products	3	60.3	54.7	73.7
Industrial & Manufacturing**	8	58.6	49.3	80.1
Professional & Business Services**	17	56.8	54.9	60.9
Consumer Products	3	49.3	53.3	39.3
Food & Beverage	3	46.0	41.3	57.0

*sectors with fewer than 3 are not listed. **These have sector specific benchmark reports.

Key Sector Observations

The highest-performing sectors by average Market Authority Index are those with established consumer-facing brands, strong review ecosystems, and mature digital infrastructure. Consumer-facing sectors consistently outperform business-to-business sectors, reflecting the richer external validation environment available to brands that sell directly to end consumers.

Sectors with fewer than five assessed brands should be interpreted with caution, small sample sizes amplify the impact of individual outliers and may not reflect true sector-level patterns.

The gap between the highest and lowest performing sectors reflects fundamental differences in how authority is built and evidenced across industries. Consumer brands benefit from review platforms, social proof, and direct customer feedback loops that are structurally unavailable to many business-to-business categories.

Sector Reports

Detailed sector executive summaries are available for seven sectors assessed in Q2 2026, each including sub-pillar analysis, scatter plots, and actionable recommendations:

- Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style — 17 brands, avg MAI 70.8
- Pet Supplies & Animal Health — 23 brands, avg MAI 68.3
- Home, Interior & Lifestyle — 18 brands, avg MAI 70.3
- Industrial & Manufacturing — 17 brands
- Hospitality, Experience & Tourism — 14 brands
- Professional & Business Services — 13 brands, avg MAI 57.6
- Life Sciences — 27 brands (indicative), avg MAI 67.3

Additional sectors will be added as the benchmark expands in Q3 2026.

8. Business Model and Commerce Type Analysis

By Business Model

Model	n	Avg MAI	Avg HA	Avg SC
B2C	80	68.5	66.4	73.3
B2B	48	59.0	54.5	68.5

B2B + B2C	9	58.3	57.9	58.7

Business-to-consumer brands outperform business-to-business brands by an average of 8.6 points on the Market Authority Index. This gap is primarily driven by the Human Authority component (11.1-point gap), while the Structural Confidence gap is narrower at 3.1 points.

The Human Authority gap between business models is structural, not incidental. Business-to-consumer brands operate in environments with richer external validation ecosystems such as consumer review platforms, social media engagement, press coverage, and direct customer feedback loops, all of which contribute to higher Proof and Validation and Market Presence scores. Business-to-business brands must work harder to build equivalent levels of external proof using trade publications, case studies, industry certifications, and peer endorsements.

By Commerce Type

Commerce Type	n	Avg MAI	Avg HA	Avg SC
Physical + E-commerce	18	72.7	68.5	82.3
E-commerce + Physical	14	71.1	69.4	75.2
Physical + Digital	20	67.7	66.3	70.9
E-commerce	30	65.4	64.9	65.9
Wholesale / Trade	24	62.1	55.4	77.3
SaaS	5	61.6	58.4	68.2
Professional Service	18	55.8	52.9	60.2
Platform	8	52.5	50.0	58.4

Commerce type analysis reveals that brands with physical retail presence combined with e-commerce capability consistently outperform pure-play digital (E-commerce) or service-only models. The Physical + E-commerce category leads at 72.7, driven by exceptionally strong Structural Confidence (82.3). Physical retail presence contributes to structural legitimacy through registered premises, employee counts, and operational footprint.

Platform and Professional Service models show the lowest average Market Authority Index scores, reflecting the challenge of building authority without a physical product or retail presence. These models rely more heavily on thought leadership, client outcomes, and professional certifications to build Human Authority, channels that are less visible to automated discovery systems. It must also be said that many businesses simply do not prioritise how they are seen in the market or have **not yet realised the fundamental change AI is having and about to have on sales & marketing due to the impact on how people buy.** This represents a threat as well as an opportunity to those that take action.

9. Cross-Sector Patterns

Several structural patterns emerge consistently across sectors, business models, and commerce types:

Pattern 1: The Human Authority Deficit. Across all segmentation dimensions, Structural Confidence consistently exceeds Human Authority. The portfolio-wide gap of 8.9 points indicates that most brands are structurally sound, legally compliant, financially viable, operationally active -- but have not translated that structural foundation into visible, evidence-based market authority.

Pattern 2: Proof and Validation as the Universal Bottleneck. At 11.7/25 (47% of maximum), Proof and Validation is the weakest sub-pillar across the portfolio. This is not sector-specific or model-specific; it is a systemic pattern. Brands across all categories under-invest in structured external validation relative to their investment in positioning, trust infrastructure, and market presence. **The concept, trust is a pattern not a data point is one that should be taken on board by more businesses in the AI era.**

Pattern 3: Physical Presence Amplifies Structural Confidence. Brands with physical locations (retail, offices, production facilities) consistently score higher on Structural Confidence. This is partly mechanical as physical presence generates employment records, premises registrations, and local business filings that contribute to structural metrics but also reflects the legitimacy signal that physical operations provide to automated verification systems.

Pattern 4: Consumer Proximity Drives Human Authority. The closer a brand is to its end consumer, the higher its Human Authority tends to be and while it is not the proximity that drives it, companies that are consumer facing seem to realise the value and take more action. Direct-to-consumer brands outperform wholesale and trade models because consumer proximity creates both more opportunities as well as need for review generation, social proof, media coverage, and direct feedback all of which feed Human Authority sub-pillars.

10. Score Calibration

The Market Authority Index is calibrated to reflect observable, buyer-facing signals rather than internal business metrics such as revenue, profitability, or growth rate. This means that the score distribution is not expected to follow a normal curve or to correlate linearly with business size.

Key calibration observations for Q2:

- The Structural Confidence Cap has been applied to 3 brands in the portfolio. This cap limits the contribution of Structural Confidence when it falls below 40/100, preventing structurally unsound brands from achieving misleadingly high composite scores.
- The gap between minimum (0) and maximum (86) scores in the portfolio reflects the genuine range of brand authority observable in the assessed universe. Scores below 40 typically indicate brands in early stages of market authority development or brands that have not yet invested in external-facing trust infrastructure.
- The median score of 66 is slightly higher than the mean of 65.0, indicating a slight negative skew, a small number of very low-scoring brands pull the average below the central tendency.

11. Score Band Analysis

Exceptional (80--100): 18 brands (12.0%)

Brands in this band demonstrate elite-level authority across all four Human Authority pillars and strong structural fundamentals. They typically feature comprehensive review presence, verified third-party endorsements, strong media coverage, and sophisticated digital trust infrastructure. These brands would be recommended with high confidence by AI-powered discovery systems. These make good benchmarks and cases for others to follow, regardless of sector.

Strong (70--79): 41 brands (29.7%)

Strong brands have established robust market authority but retain identifiable improvement opportunities -- typically in one or two specific sub-pillars. Many Strong brands are one systematic improvement programme away from Exceptional status. Common gaps include review volume, structured data implementation, or international market presence.

Developing (60--69): 33 brands (24.7%)

Developing brands have a solid foundation but multiple areas requiring investment. The gap between Developing and Strong is often addressable within 6--12 months through focused attention to Proof and Validation (review generation, testimonial collection, case study development) and Market Presence (structured data, content authority).

Emerging (40--59): 41 brands (29.7%)

Emerging brands represent the largest single cohort in the portfolio. Many are SMEs that have built viable businesses but have not yet invested in the external-facing authority infrastructure that drives visibility in modern discovery channels. The path from Emerging to Developing is typically the highest-impact improvement journey, as initial investments in reviews, structured data, and digital trust yield outsized score improvements.

At Risk (0--39): 5 brands (13.3%)

Brands scoring below 40 face significant challenges across multiple dimensions. These are typically very early-stage ventures, brands with minimal digital presence, or businesses that have operated successfully through personal networks and referrals but have not built any external-facing authority infrastructure.

12. Market Authority Index Certified Brands

Brands achieving a Market Authority Index score of 65 or above qualify for Market Authority Index Certification. As of Q2 2026, 90 brands in the portfolio meet this threshold and you can find them in the full directory here.

Certification Tiers

Tier	Score Range	Count
Gold	80+	19
Silver	70--79	51
Certified	65--69	20

Gold Certified Brands - can also be viewed here.

Brand	MAI	HA	SC	Sector
ICEHOTEL	86	85	89	Hospitality, Experience & Tourism
Apoteket	86	82	94	Health, Wellness & Pharmacy
Boozt	85	83	89	Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style
Zoo.se	85	86	81	Pet Supplies & Animal Health
IKEA Sweden	84	81	90	Home, Interior & Lifestyle
String Furniture	83	85	77	Home, Interior & Lifestyle
Treehotel	83	84	81	Hospitality, Experience & Tourism

VOM og Hundemat	83	78	93	Pet Supplies & Animal Health
Trunk Clothiers	82	79	89	Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style
SpinChem	82	78	90	Life Sciences
Revolution Race	82	78	92	Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style
Tullamore D.E.W.	82	79	88	Hospitality, Experience & Tourism
Björn Borg	82	78	92	Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style
Cervera	81	76	92	Home, Interior & Lifestyle
Old Bushmills Distillery	81	80	82	Hospitality, Experience & Tourism
Equestrian Stockholm	81	82	80	Pet Supplies & Animal Health
Drake's	80	79	82	Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style
Teeling Whiskey Distillery	80	77	88	Hospitality, Experience & Tourism

Only 6 of 18 sectors included in the analysis have Gold standard brands in terms of Market Authority; Fashion dominates (6), Hospitality has 5, Pet Supplies and Home/Interior have 3 each, then Life Sciences and Health with 1 each. No Gold in Industrial, Professional Services, or 12 other sectors at this time.

There are 51 Silver standard brands (scoring 70 - 79) and they can be viewed here. 15 sectors have at least 1 Silver standard brand with 13 sectors not having a silver awarded brand at this time. This will change as we broaden the number and type of companies that are assessed.

13. Sector Leaders

The following table identifies the highest-scoring brand in each sector with three or more assessed brands. Sector leadership is defined purely by Market Authority Index and does not imply revenue leadership, market share dominance, or other business metric.

Sector	Leading Brand	MAI	Brands in Sector
Hospitality, Experience & Tourism	ICEHOTEL	86	14
Health, Wellness & Pharmacy	Apoteket	86	3
Fashion, Apparel & Personal Style	Boozt	85	17
Pet Supplies & Animal Health	Zoo.se	85	23
Home, Interior & Lifestyle	IKEA Sweden	84	18
Life Sciences	SpinChem	82	7
Professional & Business Services	Great Place To Work	79	17
Packaging & Materials	Boxon	76	4
Supplements	Seed	74	4
Beauty & Personal Care	Lyko	74	3
Industrial & Manufacturing	Unidrain (Sverige)	72	8
Industrial & Trade Products	Axon Profil AB	71	3

Sector leadership is a snapshot indicator. A brand's position as sector leader reflects its current observable market authority relative to its assessed peers and may change as additional brands are assessed or as existing brands improve their authority profiles.

14. Q2 Cohort Impact Analysis

The Q2 assessment period added 112 brands to the portfolio, expanding the dataset from 46 to 158 brands. This expansion fundamentally changes the character of the benchmark:

Composition shift: The Q1 portfolio was heavily weighted toward consumer brands with established digital presence. The Q2 cohort introduced a significant number of business-to-business brands, industrial manufacturers, professional service firms, and earlier-stage businesses. This compositional shift has lowered the portfolio average Market Authority Index from 69.5 (Q1) to 65.0 (Q2) -- a movement that reflects the broader market reality rather than deterioration in existing brand performance.

Sector coverage: The number of represented sectors expanded from approximately 12 to 27, enabling sector-level analysis that was not possible in Q1. New sectors include Industrial and Manufacturing, Packaging and Materials, and expanded coverage in Professional and Business Services.

Business model diversity: Q1 was predominantly business-to-consumer (approximately 85% of the portfolio). Q2 is more balanced at 51% business-to-consumer, 33% business-to-business, and 7% mixed-model brands.

Sub-pillar data depth: Q1 had limited sub-pillar data. Q2 has Human Authority sub-scores for 131 of 158 brands, enabling the first systematic analysis of which specific authority dimensions drive overall performance.

15. Changes from Q1

Score Distribution Shift

Band	Q1 (n=46)	Q2 (n=158)	Change
Exceptional (80+)	11 (23.9%)	19 (12.0%)	+8
Strong (70--79)	14 (30.4%)	51 (32.3%)	+37
Developing (60--69)	8 (17.4%)	39 (24.7%)	+31
Emerging (40--59)	10 (21.7%)	28 (17.7%)	+18
At Risk (0--39)	3 (6.5%)	21 (13.3%)	+18

Key Changes

1. **Portfolio average decreased from 69.5 to 65.0.** This reflects the addition of lower-scoring business-to-business and early-stage brands, not deterioration of existing brand performance. The Q1 cohort brands have maintained or improved their scores.
2. **Exceptional share decreased from 23.9% to 12.0%.** The absolute number of Exceptional brands has increased from 11 to 19, but the percentage has decreased as the portfolio has expanded to include more brands across the full score spectrum.
3. **Emerging share has grown significantly.** The Emerging and At Risk bands contain 28 and 21 brands respectively, reflecting the inclusion of SMEs, early-stage businesses, and business-to-business brands that are building market authority from a lower baseline.
4. Sub-pillar analysis is now possible. Q1 had limited sub-pillar data. Q2 provides granular Human Authority decomposition for 131 brands, revealing the Proof and Validation gap as the primary bottleneck across the portfolio.

16. Methodology Notes

Scoring Framework

The Market Authority Index is a composite score derived from two equally important dimensions:

- **Human Authority (70% weight):** Measures buyer-facing credibility through four sub-pillars; Strategic Positioning, Proof and Validation, Trust Infrastructure, and Market Presence with each scored out of 25 for a maximum of 100.
- **Structural Confidence (30% weight):** Measures organisational fundamentals through four components; Filing Compliance, Financial Risk Signals, Governance Stability, and Operational Longevity with each scored out of 25 for a maximum of 100.

The composite formula is: Market Authority Index = (Human Authority x 0.70) + (Structural Confidence x 0.30), subject to the Structural Confidence Cap (40).

Structural Confidence Cap

If a brand's Structural Confidence score is below 40/100 and regardless of its Human Authority score, the Market Authority Index is capped at 65 regardless of the formula result. This prevents structurally unsound but authority-rich brands from achieving misleadingly high composite scores.

Data Sources

All scores are derived from publicly available, buyer-facing information as of the assessment date. Sources include brand websites, review platforms, corporate registries, financial databases, structured data markup, social media presence, and third-party mentions. No self-reported data is used.

Assessment Consistency

All assessments follow a standardised framework documented in the Market Authority Standard (Version 1.1). The framework is designed to produce consistent, replicable scores across sectors, business models, and markets.

17. Conclusion

The Q2 2026 Market Authority Index Benchmark Intelligence Report represents the most comprehensive assessment of brand authority in the programme's history. With 158 brands across 27 sectors, the dataset now provides sufficient depth for meaningful sector-level, business model, and commerce type comparisons.

The central finding of the Q2 analysis is the persistence and universality of the Proof and Validation gap. At 11.7/25 -- the lowest-scoring Human Authority sub-pillar by a significant margin -- Proof and Validation represents the single largest area of untapped potential across the portfolio. This finding holds across sectors, business models, and score bands.

For brands seeking to improve their Market Authority, the data points clearly to a prioritised action path:

1. **Build structured external proof.** Generate reviews on independent platforms, collect and publish verified testimonials, develop evidence-based case studies, and pursue relevant certifications.
2. **Optimise trust infrastructure.** Implement structured data markup, ensure SSL and privacy compliance, provide transparent contact and pricing information, and build a credible digital presence.
3. **Expand market presence.** Invest in content authority, secure industry mentions and media coverage, and build a discoverable online footprint across channels that AI systems reference.

The Market Authority Index is a leading indicator. It measures the signals that drive buyer confidence and AI discoverability today -- signals that will increasingly determine which brands are found, recommended, and chosen as discovery channels evolve from keyword-based search to AI-powered recommendation.

18. Assessed vs. Full Dataset Comparison

The 158 brands in this benchmark represent the Market Authority Index Assessed tier, the most thorough of the three scoring methods. To contextualise these results, this section compares the Assessed cohort against the full Market Authority Index dataset of 695 scored brands across all three tiers.

Scoring Tiers Overview

The Market Authority Index uses three assessment tiers, each with different depth and data requirements:

- **Market Authority Index Expected** (203 brands): Signal-based scoring derived from publicly observable market signals without a full website and structural audit. Fastest to produce, widest confidence interval.
- **Market Authority Index Estimated** (361 brands): A structured estimate combining observable signals with a broader set of indicators. More precise than Expected but does not include the full audit methodology.
- **Market Authority Index Assessed** (158 brands): The full methodology as defined in the Market Authority Standard. Includes a complete Human Authority audit, Structural Confidence verification, and all four sub-pillar evaluations.

Cross-Tier Comparison

Metric	Assessed (n=131)	Expected (n=203)	Estimated (n=361)	Full Dataset (n=695)
Mean Market Authority Index	64.7	65.0	69.1	67.1
Median	66	68	70	70
Standard Deviation	12.9	14.6	11.4	12.8
Certification Rate (65+)	55.7%	60.1%	69.0%	63.9%

Key Observations

Assessed brands score lower on average than the broader dataset. The Assessed cohort averages 64.7 compared to 67.1 across all 695 brands and 69.1 for the Estimated tier. This is a meaningful and somewhat counterintuitive finding. The full audit methodology tends to surface weaknesses that signal-based methods cannot detect, particularly in Structural Confidence and Proof and Validation. A brand that appears strong from external signals may reveal compliance gaps, governance issues, or thin proof infrastructure when subjected to the complete assessment.

The Estimated tier shows the highest average and tightest clustering. At 69.1 with a standard deviation of 11.4, Estimated scores are both higher and more consistent. This likely reflects two factors: the Estimated method draws from a broader set of indicators that smooth out individual weaknesses, and the Estimated cohort includes a higher proportion of larger, more established brands with strong structural foundations.

Expected scores show the widest variance. With a standard deviation of 14.6, the Expected tier produces the most dispersed results. This is consistent with its signal-based methodology, where limited data points create wider confidence intervals. Some brands score very high on observable signals alone, while others lack sufficient public signals to generate a strong score.

Certification rates differ significantly across tiers. 57.0% of Assessed brands achieve the certification threshold of 65 or above, compared to 69.0% of Estimated brands. This reinforces the finding that the full audit methodology is more conservative. Brands considering a full assessment should expect that approximately four in ten will fall below the certification threshold, a result that is itself a valuable diagnostic.

Implications

The gap between Assessed and Estimated scores suggests that the full Market Authority Index audit adds genuine analytical value beyond what signal-based methods capture. Brands that score well under the Expected or Estimated methods may still have material weaknesses in their structural foundations, proof infrastructure, or governance that only a full assessment will reveal.

For organisations using Market Authority Index data for benchmarking, the tier of assessment should be considered when comparing scores across brands. A score of 70 under the Assessed methodology represents a more thoroughly validated position than the same score under the Expected methodology.

*This report has been produced by Digital Scorecard. The Market Authority Index is a proprietary framework. For methodology details, refer to the Market Authority Standard (Version 1.1).

Citation: Nugent, E. (2025). The Market Authority Standard, Version 1.1. Digital Scorecard.

Report date: 21 July 2026

Data snapshot: Q2 2026

Portfolio: 158 brands complemented by a further 537 brands in the dataset.