kenso

KENSO RESEARCH · METHODOLOGY

Only 4 of 20 famous marketing stats match what their source measured

The data, the methods, every number and every limitation behind the study.

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ABOUT THE DATA

Kenso internal data: public posts in the recent activity of a sample of professional profiles in six English-speaking countries, used only to pick the statistics. Each statistic was then traced through web pages, archived copies, books, reports and papers.

Aggregates only. Post counts under 50 are shown as <50, no post text was stored, and no post author is named.

Figure 1 is the study page's chart, drawn from the same numbers. The methodology after it keeps the full tables.

SUMMARY

Only 4 of 20 famous marketing stats match what their source measured

We followed 20 famous marketing stats back to where they first appeared. Only 4 match what their source measured, and 11 end at someone stating a number with no data behind it.

4 of 20

famous marketing stats match what their source measured. All 4 come from surveys and data studies that vendors published in 2019 or later.

11 of 20

end at someone stating a number with no data behind it. The goldfish attention span is one of them.

5 of 20

bend a real measurement. One trail behind the five-times customer cost reaches data, one research firm's calculation for one US car maker, and that firm later found 2 to 20 times.

8 of 20

have a credited source that lacks the number or can't be found. The 75% on judging credibility by web design is two shares of comments, 46.1% and 28.5%, added together.

Data and method

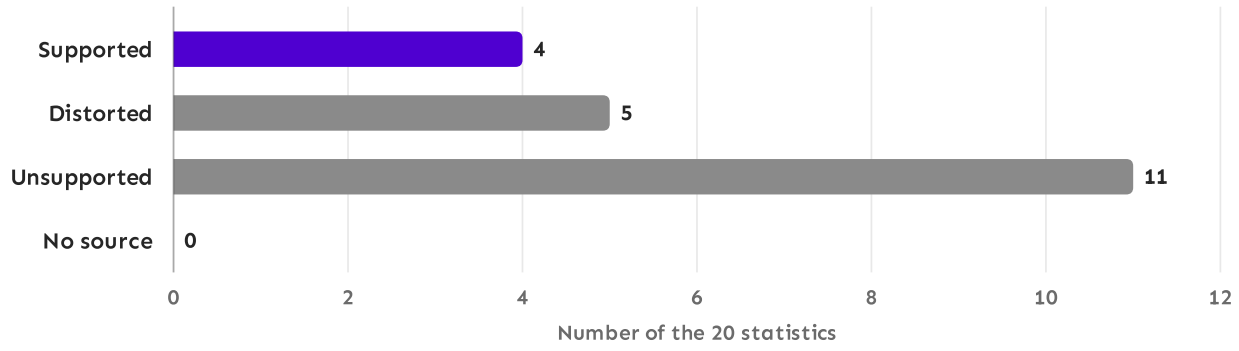
Data	Kenso internal data: public posts in the recent activity of a sample of professional profiles in six English-speaking countries, used only to pick the statistics. Each statistic was then traced through web pages, archived copies, books, reports and papers.
Sample	20 marketing statistics from 163 candidates fixed in advance: 4 famous ones in by rule and the 16 that came up most often in posts in the recent activity of 1,996,807 profiles.
Date range	Posts scanned on 2 November 2026 and statistics traced in November 2026. The first appearances found date from 1890 to 2024.
Method	Pre-registered source tracing: each statistic was followed citation by citation to its first appearance and graded by a fixed rule from coded fields. An independent re-analysis recomputed 120 of 120 numbers, and a blind second trace of 8 of the 20 agreed on 6 grades.
Excluded	• Statistics outside the 163 candidates fixed before any data • Sales-process claims such as follow-ups, touches and rep time, left to a companion study of sales statistics • Workplace and management claims • Variants of a statistic with other numbers, which were noted but not traced separately
Privacy	Aggregates only. Post counts under 50 are shown as <50, no post text was stored, and no post author is named.

FIGURES

The study's charts

FIGURE 1

Only 4 of 20 famous marketing stats match what their source measured



Each of 20 marketing statistics traced to where it first appeared and graded by a fixed rule. Supported: the source states its method and the quote matches it. Distorted: a real measurement, but the quote changes the number, the population, the measure or the scope. Unsupported: someone states the number with no data behind it. No source: no document at all. Four famous statistics were in from the start; the other 16 came up most often in the posts.

Source: Kenso Research trace of 20 marketing statistics to where they first appeared, picked from posts in Kenso internal data (the public profile records Kenso uses for sales and outreach), analysed by Cristian Frunze.

FULL METHODOLOGY

The data, the methods and every number

Kenso Research. By Cristian Frunze. November 2026.

1. Question and answer

Where do the most quoted marketing statistics come from, and does each rest on a study, a survey, a vendor report, a blog or nothing? Of the 20 marketing statistics most often repeated in professionals' public posts, 4 are Supported (the origin measured what the quote claims, states its method, and the quote matches it), 5 are Distorted, 11 are Unsupported and none was graded No source, since every trail reached a document that states the number. Of the 1,041 matched posts that quote one of the 20, 64.8% quote one graded Unsupported (59.9% after the precision adjustment). All 4 Supported statistics are vendor surveys first published in 2019 or later.

The hypothesis, the plan, the candidate list, the match patterns and the grading protocol were fixed and time-stamped before any data was pulled (2 November 2026, 03:13 UTC). Every later change is logged with its date and reason in the study's decision log (22 entries).

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2. Data

- **Selection corpus.** Public posts in the recent activity of a random sample of profiles in Kenso internal data, Kenso's dataset of public professional profiles, work histories and company records. A profile is in the sample when it has at least one activity item and a fixed hash of its id falls below 0.025 (the sample rule of an earlier Kenso study of public posts, copied unchanged). The scan ran on 2026-11-02 from 03:59 to 05:54 UTC, at night by Amsterdam time: 1,996,807 profiles, 18,261,273 activity items (17,778,527 with text), 15,940,269 distinct posts or items. Each activity item is a post the person posted, shared, liked or commented on, with its visible text, usually a snippet of a few hundred characters. Only match flags were kept; no post text was stored.
- **Pilot.** The existing sample of that earlier study, 200,209 profiles (1,827,871 activity items), used to test the pipeline and to measure the precision of each pattern.
- **Tracing record.** For each of the 20, every document on its trail: web pages and their archived copies, books (full-text search), reports and papers. 197 hops and 907 logged lookups in all. Pages were fetched through a logged, rate-limited helper that names the study to each site.

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3. Candidate pool

The count can only rank what is in the pool, so the pool was made wide and fixed in advance: 99 candidates written down before any data (the four statistics named in the question plus 95 widely quoted marketing statistics spanning every expected kind of source), and 64 added by a fixed expansion, 163 in all.

The expansion ran eight neutral web searches ("marketing statistics", "marketing statistics you should know", "B2B marketing statistics", "content marketing statistics", "email marketing statistics", "customer retention statistics", "consumer behavior statistics", "advertising statistics") and took the first 5 results of each that list at least 10 statistics: 37 distinct pages on 31 domains, 3,168 statistics recorded (2,800 in scope). Every statistic was extracted into a fixed schema, grouped into claims by script, and every group found on 3 or more domains was then read and split one by one. Each claim on pages from 3 or more different domains that was not already in the pool joined it. No search asked for myths or debunks. Most added claims are recent vendor-survey and market-size figures.

Scope: numeric claims about advertising, brands, content, email, social media, search, websites, customer psychology, customer experience, acquisition, retention and marketing returns. Sales-process claims (follow-ups, touches, rep time, how far buyers get before talking to sales) belong to a companion Kenso study of sales statistics; workplace claims belong to a planned companion review of management findings.

4. Matching and counting

Each candidate has a match pattern: one or more clauses, each a set of regular expressions that must all match the normalized post text (lowercase, unified quotes and dashes, "percent" as %, thousands separators removed). Variants of one claim with different numbers share a candidate, and the matched number is kept. Patterns were unit-tested on canonical phrasings before any data, and a speed-up (literal gates and a faster proximity test) was checked to give identical results on 20,176 mutated test texts (a logged change to the plan). For each candidate the count is the number of distinct matched posts, deduplicated by post id, and the number of sampled profiles with a match.

5. Precision read and selection

Short snippets often use the same numbers for something else, so raw counts would reward loose patterns. On the pilot, up to 20 matched posts per candidate were drawn at random (seed 340) and read blind: does the post state the claim (including to question or debunk it)? 375 posts over 83 candidates were read. Precision is the yes share. For candidates with fewer than 5 posts read, the plan used the median precision of the others, but that median came out at 0, because most number-agnostic expansion patterns matched other text. Before any main count was read, this was replaced by shrinking each small read toward the pooled yes share of all 375 posts (weight 5), a logged change to the plan. The pre-registered rule is kept as a sensitivity.

The four statistics named in the question are in by rule. The other 16 are the non-named candidates with the highest adjusted count (distinct posts x precision); ties break on profiles, then id. The 20 were fixed and time-stamped before any of the 16 was traced. Counts under 50 are shown as <50 (disclosure rule), and the adjusted count is left blank where posts are suppressed.

Id	Statistic	Reason	Rank	Distinct posts	Profiles	Posts read	Precision	Adjusted
M01	Attention span shorter than a goldfish's	named		69	77	6	0.833	57.5
M02	A new customer costs five times more than keeping one	named		138	183	20	0.300	41.4
M03	The rule of seven exposures	named		89	104	13	0.308	27.4
M04	95% of buying decisions are subconscious	named		<50	<50	3	0.242	
M11	80% of revenue comes from 20% of customers	count	1	171	212	20	0.200	34.2
M05	5% more retention lifts profit 25-95%	count	2	<50	<50	6	0.833	
M18	Half of advertising is wasted (Wanamaker)	count	3	145	148	15	0.133	19.3
M125	Share of marketers using AI	count	4	<50	<50	6	0.333	
M115	Click share of the first organic search result	count	5	<50	<50	3	0.367	
M24	75% judge credibility by website design	count	6	<50	<50	4	0.437	
M131	Most people have watched an explainer video	count	7	<50	67	4	0.215	
M06	People see thousands of ads a day	count	8	<50	<50	4	0.437	

Id	Statistic	Reason	Rank	Distinct posts	Profiles	Posts read	Precision	Adjusted
M63	95% of B2B buyers are out of market	count	9	<50	<50	4	0.215	
M59	The 90-9-1 rule of online participation	count	10	<50	51	5	0.200	
M44	Repeat customers spend 67% more	count	11	<50	<50	4	0.548	
M23	Visitors judge a website in 50 milliseconds	count	12	<50	<50	3	0.492	
M35	Color lifts brand recognition 80%	count	13	<50	<50	2	0.419	
M08	90% of information sent to the brain is visual	count	14	<50	<50	6	0.167	
M154	People prefer learning about products by video	count	15	51	52	3	0.117	6.0
M07	Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text	count	16	<50	<50	2	0.276	

Most counts are small: 14 of the 20 have fewer than 50 matched posts, and the ranks below the top few are close, so the exact order of the lower ranks is not meaningful. Sensitivity of the 16:

Alternative ranking	Of the 16 kept
distinct profiles	4
raw distinct posts	3
posts without liked-only items x precision	15
pre-registered precision fallback (median of 5+ read)	6

Rankings on raw counts or profiles keep few of the 16 because they bring in patterns that read as 0% precise; dropping posts the person only liked keeps 15 of 16.

6. Tracing and grading

Each statistic was traced by a fixed, written protocol: search with several phrasings, book full-text search, scholarly indexes and archived copies; follow each citation to the cited document and check that it contains the number; continue until a document presents the data (the origin), or states the number on its own authority (the originator), or the trail dead-ends. Earlier fact-checks were used as leads only, never as evidence. Coded fields: first appearance, originator, origin, source type, whether the method is stated, what was measured and on whom, four mismatch flags (number, population, measure, scope), the most often named source and whether it contains the number, and the best later test.

Grades, by a deterministic rule from the coded fields (the scale is shared with the companion study of sales statistics): **Supported**, an origin with a stated method and no mismatch; **Distorted**, an origin with a stated method and at least one mismatch; **Unsupported**, an origin without a stated method, or an identifiable originator stating the number with no data; **No source**, neither. Source types: peer-reviewed study; survey or study with a stated method; vendor or consultancy report without a stated method; book, speech or press article; blog or web page; none found (the type of the origin when found, else of the originator). The better test is the strongest independent evidence on the claim itself, with a verdict: consistent, mixed, contradicts or none found.

7. Results

Id	Statistic	Grade	Source type	First appearance found	Origin year	Named source contains it	Better test
M01	Attention span shorter than a goldfish's	Unsupported	Blog or web page	2012		yes	contradicts
M02	A new customer costs five times more than keeping one	Distorted	Survey or study with a stated method	1952	1999	no	mixed
M03	The rule of seven exposures	Unsupported	Book, speech or press article	1983		no	mixed
M04	95% of buying decisions are subconscious	Unsupported	Book, speech or press article	2002		no	contradicts
M11	80% of revenue comes from 20% of customers	Unsupported	Book, speech or press article	1931		no	mixed
M05	5% more retention lifts profit 25-95%	Distorted	Survey or study with a stated method	1994	1990	yes	mixed
M18	Half of advertising is wasted (Wanamaker)	Unsupported	Book, speech or press article	1890		no	consistent
M125	Share of marketers using AI	Supported	Survey or study with a stated method	2024	2024	yes	consistent
M115	Click share of the first organic search result	Supported	Survey or study with a stated method	2022	2022	yes	mixed
M24	75% judge credibility by website design	Distorted	Survey or study with a stated method	2007	2002	no	contradicts
M131	Most people have watched an explainer video	Supported	Survey or study with a stated method	2019	2019	yes	contradicts
M06	People see thousands of ads a day	Unsupported	Blog or web page	2015		yes	contradicts
M63	95% of B2B buyers are out of market	Unsupported	Vendor or consultancy report without a stated method	2021		yes	mixed
M59	The 90-9-1 rule of online participation	Unsupported	Blog or web page	2006		yes	mixed
M44	Repeat customers spend 67% more	Distorted	Survey or study with a stated method	2000	2000	yes	contradicts
M23	Visitors judge a website in 50 milliseconds	Distorted	Peer-reviewed study	2006	2006	yes	consistent
M35	Color lifts brand recognition 80%	Unsupported	Blog or web page	2005		no	contradicts
M08	90% of information sent to the brain is visual	Unsupported	Book, speech or press article	1959		no	none found
M154	People prefer learning about products by video	Supported	Survey or study with a stated method	2019	2019	yes	mixed
M07	Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text	Unsupported	Book, speech or press article	1982		yes	contradicts

- **H1, grades:** Supported 4, Distorted 5, Unsupported 11, No source 0.
- **H2, source types:** Peer-reviewed study 1; Survey or study with a stated method 8; Vendor or consultancy report without a stated method 1; Book, speech or press article 6; Blog or web page 4; None found 0. 9 of 20 rest on a peer-reviewed study or a survey with a stated method.
- **H3, what people quote:** 1,041 distinct matched posts quote one of the 20; 64.8% of them quote one graded Unsupported. Weighted by precision: Unsupported 59.9%, Distorted 27.8%, Supported 12.3%.
- **H4, broken attributions:** for 8 of the 20, the source most often named does not contain the number or cannot be found.
- **H5, better tests:** consistent 3; mixed 8; contradicts 8; none found 1. 3 of the 20 are Supported and not contradicted.
- **H6, age:** the median year of first appearance is 2005.5; 13 of the 20 first appear before 2010. The median origin year, over the 9 with an origin, is 2006.

Predictions. 5 of the 7 pre-registered predictions came true, and the hypothesis was not refuted (it would have been by 8 or more Supported, 6 or fewer Unsupported or No source, or H3 below one third).

Prediction	Observed	Came true
P1: At most 4 of the 20 Supported	4	True
P2: At least 10 Unsupported or No source	11	True
P3: At most 8 with a peer-reviewed or stated-method origin	9	False
P4: More than half of matched posts quote one graded Unsupported or No source (adjusted)	0.5988	True
P5: At least 5 with a broken popular attribution	8	True
P6: At most 3 Supported and not contradicted	3	True
P7: Named four: M01 Unsupported, M02 Unsupported, M03 No source, M04 Unsupported	M01 Unsupported;M02 Distorted;M03 Unsupported;M04 Unsupported	False

P3 failed because the pool expansion brought recent vendor surveys into the 20, and these state their method. P7 failed on two of four: the five-times figure traces to a real calculation (Distorted, not Unsupported), and the rule of seven has an identifiable originator (Unsupported, not No source). No statistic was graded No source: every trail reached at least an identifiable document that states the number.

Sensitivity of the grades. The five-times figure first appears in 1952, decades before the TARP calculation it is now credited to. Graded on the 1952 statement alone it would be Unsupported: grades would read Supported 4, Distorted 4, Unsupported 12, No source 0.

8. The 20 trails

M01. Attention span shorter than a goldfish's (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** People now have an attention span of 8 seconds, shorter than a goldfish's 9 seconds.
- **Most often credited to:** Microsoft (Microsoft Canada Consumer Insights "Attention spans" report, 2015), usually via Time, 14 May 2015 (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Statistic Brain, "Attention Span Statistics", statisticbrain.com (earliest Wayback capture 8 Feb 2012; page dated "Date Verified: 1.30.2012"): average attention span 2012 8 seconds, 2000 12 seconds, goldfish 9 seconds; source given as The Associated Press.

- **Originator:** Statistic Brain, "Attention Span Statistics", statisticbrain.com, Jan/Feb 2012 (Wayback 2012-02-08). Credits only "The Associated Press", with no article named; no AP document with the numbers was found.
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (contradicts):** Fortenbaugh, F. C., DeGutis, J., Germine, L., Wilmer, J. B., Grosso, M., Russo, K. & Esterman, M. (2015). Sustained attention across the life span in a sample of 10,000: Dissociating ability and strategy. Psychological Science 26(9), 1497-1510. doi:10.1177/0956797615594896. Supporting: Bradbury, N. A. (2016). Attention span during lectures: 8 seconds, 10 minutes, or more? Advances in Physiology Education 40(4), 509-513. doi:10.1152/advan.00109.2016.. In a web sample of 10,430 people across the life span, participants kept up a 4-minute continuous go/no-go task (gradCPT). Only 1.4% of completers were excluded for a gap of 30 seconds or more without a response. Ability peaks in the early 40s. Bradbury's review finds the primary data do not support even a 10-15 minute attention limit in lectures. No study found measures a single human attention span in seconds or a decline from 12 s (2000) to 8 s (2013). No study found measures a goldfish attention span.
- **Variants:** Most quoted today: 8 seconds vs goldfish 9, often with "down from 12 seconds in 2000" (Time 2015; Microsoft p. 6 gives 8 s for 2013). Statistic Brain dated the same 8 s to 2012 (2012-2013 captures) and changed it to "2015: 8.25 seconds" by May 2015, adding NCBI/NLM as sources. That is the source of the 8.25 variant (Wyzowl infographic, many stats pages, usually credited to Microsoft). Precursors with other numbers: BBC News 2002 "nine seconds - the same as a goldfish" (no source), repeated in books 2005-2012 including Hogshead's Fascinate (2010). Wikipedia (2011) gave focused attention "as short as 8 seconds", citing Dukette & Cornish 2009. Lloyds TSB Insurance 2008 gave 5 min 7 s vs 12-15 minutes in the 1990s, in minutes, not seconds.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M02. A new customer costs five times more than keeping one (Distorted)

- **As quoted:** Acquiring a new customer costs five times (up to 25 times) more than retaining an existing one.
- **Most often credited to:** Bain & Company / Frederick Reichheld (named in 9 of about 25 current pages tallied from search results), closely followed by Harvard Business Review, Gallo 2014 (8 pages); a few credit TARP / the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, Invesp, Forrester or Gartner, many name no source. (contains the number: no)
- **First appearance found:** "How Locker Plants Can Sell To Freezer Owners," Air Conditioning & Refrigeration News 67(9), 27 October 1952 (report of a utility farm sales manager's talk at the National Frozen Food Locker Institute convention, Omaha).
- **Originator:** Same 1952 Air Conditioning & Refrigeration News article: it states the five-times figure, relayed from an unnamed businessman, and cites no document.
- **Origin:** Goodman, John (former president of TARP). "Basic Facts on Customer Complaint Behavior and the Impact of Service on the Bottom Line." Competitive Advantage, June 1999, pp. 1-5: retrospective account of the TARP calculation behind the five-times figure (one domestic auto company).. Sample: One domestic US auto manufacturer (TARP client study; year not given, placed by Goodman before the early-1980s 800-number rollout): company-level advertising cost per car sold, its base loyalty rate (about 50%), and its average goodwill (complaint-resolution) expense per retained customer. No customer sample size given.. Measured: Advertising cost per new customer won ($375 per car sold divided by 50% loyalty = $750) compared with goodwill expense to retain an existing customer through complaint handling ($150).. Number: 5 to 1 ($750 vs $150) for that one auto company; the same document adds that TARP later found the ratio varies from 2:1 to 20:1.
- **Mismatch with the quote:** population, measure, scope
- **Better test (mixed):** KBCM Technology Group (KeyBanc Capital Markets) and forEntrepreneurs, 2017 Private SaaS Company Survey, Part 1 (survey of over 400 private SaaS companies; CAC ratios for companies with at least $5M ARR). https://www.forentrepreneurs.com/2017-saas-survey-part-1/. Median spend per $1 of ARR: $1.15 from new customers vs $0.15 for renewal ARR (13%, about 7.7x), $0.30 for expansion (26%, about 3.8x) and $0.57 for upsell (50%, 2x). Self-reported, per dollar of revenue, one sector (B2B SaaS).

- **Variants:** Traced the 5x phrasing (most common on the web today; the pattern counts 5x, 5-25x and 6-7x together and the main count was not yet available). 5 to 25 times: first found in Gallo, HBR 2014, which names no study; no source found for the 25 (TARP itself, per Goodman 1999, reports up to 20:1). 6 or 7 times: six times appears in sales books from 1980 (Value Added Selling Techniques), 1985 and 1987, and in 1990 as an unnamed association estimate; current pages credit 6-7x to Bain & Company, but the Bain brief they point to contains no ratio. Earlier folk versions use other numbers: ten times (Sales Management, 1925) and four times (Office Appliances, 1946; seen in a full-text snippet only). Five to six times is credited to the White House Office of Consumer Affairs on customer-service fact lists.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M03. The rule of seven exposures (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** A prospect has to see or hear a marketing message about seven times before they buy (the rule of 7).
- **Most often credited to:** 1930s Hollywood movie studios ('studio bosses' or 'research' finding that audiences had to see a film promoted about seven times before buying a ticket). The second most named source is Dr. Jeffrey Lant (1980s, seven contacts in 18 months). (contains the number: not found)
- **First appearance found:** Shown, Janet. Freelance Foodcrafting: How to Become Profitably Self-Employed in Your Own Creative Cooking Business. Boulder, Colo.: Live Oak Publications, 1983 (ISBN 0911781005), advertising section, page not identified: 'a general rule of thumb in advertising is that people may see an ad seven times or more before taking positive action on it.'
- **Originator:** Shown, Janet. Freelance Foodcrafting, Live Oak Publications, 1983. Earliest document found that states the claim without citing any other document (it calls it a general rule of thumb in advertising). The named 'Rule of Seven' form that today's quotes descend from was put forward on his own authority by Lant, Jeffrey, Money Making Marketing, JLA Publications, 1987 (seven contacts within 18 months). Bly 1993 and Hustad 2002 credit Lant.
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (mixed):** Schmidt, Susanne, and Martin Eisend (2015). Advertising Repetition: A Meta-Analysis on Effective Frequency in Advertising. Journal of Advertising 44(4), 415-428. doi:10.1080/00913367.2015.1018460. Supporting field evidence: Jones, John Philip, When Ads Work: New Proof That Advertising Triggers Sales (1995; 2nd ed. 2007), Nielsen single-source panel of 2,000 homes.. The meta-analysis of advertising-repetition experiments finds that brand attitude peaks at about ten exposures and recall rises steadily and does not level off before the eighth exposure. It measured attitude and recall in lab settings, not purchase, and found no threshold at seven. Single-source purchase data (Jones) show that effective ads raise short-term sales after a single exposure. Older reviews (Naples 1979, citing McDonald 1970) put effective frequency at two to three exposures within a purchase cycle.
- **Variants:** Most quoted today: 'the rule of 7 / rule of seven', a prospect must see or hear a message seven times before buying, usually credited to 1930s Hollywood. That story was first found in Hustad 2002 and on the web in EmptyEasel 2010. No 1930s document was found. Other variants: (1) Lant's B2B form, seven contacts within 18 months (Lant 1987). (2) Thomas Smith, Successful Advertising (London, 1885), credited with a 20-step list ending in purchase at the twentieth exposure. That list already appears in Harper's Weekly, 1 May 1869, where the reader 'reads it all through' at the seventh time but buys at the twentieth. Smith 1885 was not opened. (3) 'Direct Marketing Association says seven times', reported by a blogger; not checked. (4) '5 to 7 impressions to remember a brand', a separate statistic credited to the AMA, Shapo or unnamed research; not traced. (5) The widely copied sentence 'The Rule of Seven is an old marketing adage...' is credited to Lant by Growth Method but was not found in any indexed Lant book.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M04. 95% of buying decisions are subconscious (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** 95% of purchase decisions take place in the subconscious mind.
- **Most often credited to:** Gerald Zaltman, Harvard Business School professor, usually via his book How Customers Think (2003) or the HBS Working Knowledge Q&A of 13 January 2003 (contains the number: no)
- **First appearance found:** Seidman, D. (2002). The Death of 20th Century Selling: 50 Hilarious Sales Blunders and How You Can Profit from Them. Barrington, IL: Sales Autopsy Press (April 2002). Page not determined.
- **Originator:** Seidman, D. (2002). The Death of 20th Century Selling. Sales Autopsy Press. States 'I claim that 95 percent of buying decisions are indeed subconscious' on his own authority. In the popular citation chain the originator is Mahoney, M. (2003, Jan 13), HBS Working Knowledge Q&A summary, which assigns Zaltman a purchase-decision claim his book does not make; the 95 percent figure itself goes back to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Philosophy in the Flesh, a rule of thumb with no source.
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (contradicts):** Newell, B. R., & Shanks, D. R. (2014). Unconscious influences on decision making: A critical review. Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 37(1), 1-19. doi:10.1017/S0140525X12003214. Also: Nieuwenstein, M. R., et al. (2015). Judgment and Decision Making, 10(1), 1-17; Wood, W., Quinn, J. M., & Kashy, D. A. (2002). JPSP, 83(6), 1281-1297, doi:10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1281; Rebar, A. L., Vincent, G. E., Kovac Le Cornu, K., & Gardner, B. (2025 online). How habitual is everyday life? Psychology & Health, 41(9), 1507-1532, doi:10.1080/08870446.2025.2561149.. No study measures what share of purchase decisions is made unconsciously, so the 95 percent figure has no direct test. The strongest review (Newell and Shanks 2014, decision research across multiple-cue judgment, deliberation without attention and decisions under uncertainty) concludes that unconscious influences have been given inflated and erroneous explanatory power, mainly because awareness was assessed poorly. A meta-analysis plus N = 399 replication (Nieuwenstein et al. 2015) found no unconscious thought advantage. In an EMA study of everyday behavior (N = 105, UK and Australia; Rebar et al. 2025), 65 percent of behaviors were habitually instigated and 88 percent habitually executed, yet 76 percent were aligned with intention: habits are common, but they measure automatic action, not a share of decisions made without awareness.
- **Variants:** (a) '95% of thought, emotion and learning is unconscious' is Zaltman 2003 p. 40, citing a bundle of eight works in note 39, of which only Lakoff and Johnson (1999) contains the figure ('rule of thumb among cognitive scientists', no source). Coulter and Zaltman (2000) already cited Lakoff and Johnson for 95 percent of cognition. (b) '95% of purchase decisions subconscious' first appears in the HBS Working Knowledge summary (Mahoney, 13 Jan 2003), turning Zaltman's all-cognition figure into a purchase-decision figure; the interviewer's own question says 'all cognition'. An independent earlier statement is Seidman 2002 ('95 percent of buying decisions'), not cited by current appearances. (c) The 90% variant ('90 percent of purchase decisions are made in the unconscious mind') comes from the Guerrilla Marketing line: Levinson 1989, Guerrilla Marketing Attack, and Levinson 1993 say 'most purchase decisions' are made in the unconscious, with no number; 90 percent appears in Bigwig Briefs (Aspatore, 2001) and later Levinson books. Not traced further. (d) Later 'as much as 95% of our decisions' (Pradeep, The Buying Brain, 2010) and Lakoff's 2024 blog use of 98 percent are drift of the same rule of thumb.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M11. 80% of revenue comes from 20% of customers (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** 80% of your revenue (or future profits) comes from 20% of your customers.
- **Most often credited to:** Vilfredo Pareto / "the Pareto principle" (80/20 rule); the "future profits" variant is credited to the Gartner Group (contains the number: no)
- **First appearance found:** Management Review (American Management Association) 20(4), April 1931, abstract "Sales-Plan Obsolescence" (Graton & Knight sales analysis: 80% of total business from 20% of accounts)

- **Originator:** H. C. Dunn, Chief, Merchandising Research Division, U.S. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, in Domestic Commerce, 30 March 1932, as reprinted in The Manufacturing Confectioner 12(4), April 1932
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (mixed):** McCarthy, D. M. & Winer, R. S. (2019). The Pareto rule in marketing revisited: is it 80/20 or 70/20? Marketing Letters 30: 139-150, doi 10.1007/s11002-019-09490-y; with Kim, B. J., Singh, V. & Winer, R. S. (2017). The Pareto rule for frequently purchased packaged goods: an empirical generalization. Marketing Letters 28: 491-507, doi 10.1007/s11002-017-9442-5. Across 339 publicly traded non-CPG firms the top 20% of customers produce on average 67% of sales (non-subscription .68, subscription .59). In a Nielsen panel of 100,000+ households over 6 years, the mean brand-level share in 22 CPG categories is 73%. Concentration is real, but the typical share is about two-thirds to three-quarters, not 80%. Leads not opened (snippets only): Sharp, Romaniuk & Graham 2019 report about 59% for brands in a year; Libai, Haenlein & Gelper 2026 (IJRM) report a category-level ratio near 0.51.
- **Variants:** Two variants. (1) Traced here: the generic "80% of revenue/sales comes from 20% of customers", by far the commoner phrasing in current web results, credited to Pareto. (2) "80% of your future profits (or revenue) will come from 20% of your existing customers", credited to "Gartner Group". Its earliest dated appearance found is Forbes.com, Alex Lawrence, 1 Nov 2012 (Wayback copy opened): "Gartner Group statistics tell us" with no document named. Wikipedia (Most valuable customers) cites a 2014 NextUp.Asia blog that says only "According to The Gartner Group". No Gartner publication with the figure was found in web search, the Google Books feed or Internet Archive full text; A 2025 Gartner social post (seen only as a search snippet, not opened) gives a different figure: 65% of revenue expected from existing customers. By the tracing rules that variant ends in a dead end (named source cannot be found), and the wording drifts between "profits" and "revenue". For profits, customer-profitability (whale-curve) work reports that the most profitable 20% can yield over 100% of profits; that literature was not opened here.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M05. 5% more retention lifts profit 25-95% (Distorted)

- **As quoted:** Increasing customer retention by 5% increases profits by 25% to 95%.
- **Most often credited to:** Bain & Company / Frederick Reichheld (often via Harvard Business Review) (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Jacob, Rahul. 'Why Some Customers Are More Equal Than Others.' Fortune, 19 September 1994, pp. 215-224 (statement attributed to 'a Bain & Co. study')
- **Originator:** Barlow and Moller (1996) and other 1996 books state 25 to 95 percent on the authority of 'Bain and Co.' research without a document that contains it; the earliest Bain-authored statement found is Reichheld and Schefter (2000), E-Loyalty, HBR, which cites Zero Defections (1990), which reports 25% to 85%.
- **Origin:** Reichheld, Frederick F. and W. Earl Sasser Jr. (1990). Zero Defections: Quality Comes to Services. Harvard Business Review 68(5), September-October 1990.. Sample: Bain & Company client analyses: 'more than 100 companies in two dozen industries'; the exhibit shows about nine service industries (branch deposits, credit card, credit insurance, insurance brokerage, industrial distribution, industrial laundry, office building management, software, auto service), with text naming single cases (one bank's branch system, an insurance brokerage, an auto-service chain). Company names and per-bar sample not stated.. Measured: Modelled increase in the net present value of the profit stream of an average customer over the customer life, comparing current defection rates with defection rates 5 points lower; not observed company profits.. Number: 25% to 85% (exhibit); text also says 'almost 100%'; The Loyalty Effect (1996) later gives 25 to 100 percent of average customer value
- **Mismatch with the quote:** number, population, measure, scope
- **Better test (mixed):** Gupta, Sunil, Donald R. Lehmann and Jennifer Ames Stuart (2004). Valuing Customers. Journal of Marketing Research 41(1): 7-18. doi:10.1509/jmkr.41.1.7.25084. Also Reinartz, Werner and V. Kumar (2000). On

the Profitability of Long-Life Customers in a Noncontractual Setting. Journal of Marketing 64(4): 17-35. doi:10.1509/jmkg.64.4.17.18077.. Gupta et al. (public data for five firms): a 1% improvement in retention improves firm (customer) value by about 5%, a large lever but a model-based valuation, not observed profit. Reinartz and Kumar (catalog retailer, three years of daily data): long-life customers are not necessarily more profitable, challenging the premise behind the claim in noncontractual settings.

- **Variants:** Traced the dominant web phrasing (25% to 95%, wording of Reichheld and Schefter 2000 and HBR 2014). Other variants: 'reducing defections 5% boosts profits 25% to 85%' (Zero Defections exhibit, 1990); 'boost profits by almost 100% by retaining just 5% more' (Zero Defections text, 1990); '25 to 100 percent' of average customer value or profits (The Loyalty Effect 1996, and its 2001 edition); 'more than 25%' in financial services (Bain brief c. 2001); 'e-companies ... 25-95%' (Bain summary of E-Loyalty 2000); '25% to 125%' (Wikipedia, slides; likely from MBNA's 125% customer-value figure in Zero Defections).
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M18. Half of advertising is wasted (Wanamaker) (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half.
- **Most often credited to:** John Wanamaker (Philadelphia department-store founder, 1838-1922); in Britain, William Lever, Lord Leverhulme (contains the number: not found)
- **First appearance found:** Printers' Ink: A Journal for Advertisers 3(14), 1 October 1890, "Don'ts for Advertisers", p. 311: half of the money spent in advertising is wasted (no source; without the 'which half' clause or a Wanamaker credit). The full quip credited to Wanamaker first appears in Rev. Roy L. Smith, Winona Echoes (1919), p. 333.
- **Originator:** Rev. Roy L. Smith, "The Salesmanship of Preaching", Winona Echoes (Winona Publishing Society, 1919), p. 333. States the quip as an oral remark of John Wanamaker and cites no document
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (consistent):** Bradley T. Shapiro, Guenter J. Hitsch and Anna E. Tuchman, "TV Advertising Effectiveness and Profitability: Generalizable Results From 288 Brands", Econometrica 89(4), 2021, pp. 1855-1879, doi:10.3982/ECTA17674 (read in the January 2021 accepted revision). Across 288 large US consumer packaged goods brands (Nielsen store sales and TV ad data), median long-run ad elasticity is 0.014 and two thirds of estimates are not significantly different from zero; marginal weekly ad ROI is negative for more than 80% of brands, and the observed ad schedule beats no advertising for only about one third of brands.
- **Variants:** Most quoted web form today is the claim text, credited to Wanamaker. Other forms: "about one-half ... I have never been able to decide which half" (Smith 1919, the first full form); "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted, and the trouble is I don't know which half" credited to Leverhulme and then Wanamaker (Ogilvy 1963); "half the money spent in advertising was wasted, but he was unable to say which half" credited by W. H. Lever to his father Lord Leverhulme (East Kent Times 1931, per QI, not opened); "fifty cents out of every dollar ... which fifty cents" credited to Wanamaker (Printers' Ink Monthly 1922 per QI, not opened; Elba Clipper 1933 seen in IA search) and to George Washington Hill (LA Times 1980 per QI); "I know half my advertising is wasted. I just don't know which half" credited to William Wrigley Jr. (1992 per QI); a 1922 Financial Post item (IA snippet) has a "half a million out of every million I spend, but which half" form near a Henry Ford mention. Partial lines without "which half" go back to Printers' Ink 1890. The pattern also counts any post naming Wanamaker.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M125. Share of marketers using AI (Supported)

- **As quoted:** Most marketers (88% in one figure) now use AI in their work.
- **Most often credited to:** SurveyMonkey (its 2024 marketing trends research, usually cited as 'SurveyMonkey' or 'SurveyMonkey research') (contains the number: yes)

- **First appearance found:** Raczkowski, G. 'Marketing trends: 3 strategies marketers are prioritizing in 2024'. SurveyMonkey Curiosity (blog), 2024; earliest Wayback capture 19 April 2024.
- **Originator:** SurveyMonkey (2024), 'Marketing trends for a new era' study, first reported in Raczkowski, G., 'Marketing trends: 3 strategies marketers are prioritizing in 2024', SurveyMonkey Curiosity blog.
- **Origin:** SurveyMonkey (2024), 'Marketing trends for a new era' survey of 707 US workers (507 marketing professionals, 200 market researchers), fielded 8-18 January 2024; results reported in Raczkowski (2024) and Bacon, A., 'Market research trends: Both MRX pros and marketing professionals face pressure to adapt' (SurveyMonkey Curiosity, 2024); method note on the SurveyMonkey 'Product marketing trends for 2024' page. The gated full report was not opened.. Sample: 507 US marketing professionals, part of an online survey of 707 US workers (plus 200 market researchers) recruited from people who take surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform, fielded 8-18 January 2024.. Measured: Self-reported reliance on AI in their current job: 34% 'a great deal' plus 54% 'somewhat' = 88%. Exact question wording and full answer scale not published in the pages opened.. Number: 88%
- **Mismatch with the quote:** none
- **Better test (consistent):** Salesforce Research (2024). State of Marketing, 9th edition. Double-anonymous survey of 4,850 marketing decision makers in 29 countries, 5 February - 12 March 2024, pp. 3, 18-19. https://www.salesforce.com/content/dam/web/en_us/www/documents/marketingcloud/S-MC-State-of-Marketing-Report-9th-Edition-c.pdf. 75% of marketers say their organization is experimenting with (43%) or has fully implemented (32%) AI; a clear majority, about 13 points below 88%, measured at organization level.
- **Variants:** Traced the figure the claim text names (88%), attributed on the web almost always to SurveyMonkey. In the post corpus the most frequent matched figure is 80% (4 of 38 matched posts, about 11%), which was not traced separately, because the protocol traces the figure the claim text names. Other figures circulating for the same idea, each from a different survey: 91% (Iterable 2024), 75% (Salesforce 9th ed.), 87% use AI for content (Ahrefs 2025, 879 marketers), 69.1% (Influencer Marketing Hub). An independent and EARLIER 88% exists: Kaltura's 'Riding the Wave: 2024 Survey Report' (reported 7 Nov 2023), 88% of 500 marketing and event employees in 5 countries had 'adopted or experimented with' AI tools; current appearances do not cite it. Drift inside the SurveyMonkey line: 'rely on AI in their current job' became 'use AI in their day-to-day roles' (SurveyMonkey's own stats page) and then '88% of marketers now use AI daily' (e.g. Genesys Growth 2026); the origin did not measure daily or frequency of use, so the 'daily'/'day-to-day' variants would carry a measure/scope mismatch that the coded claim text does not.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** high

M115. Click share of the first organic search result (Supported)

- **As quoted:** The first organic Google result gets about 27-39% of clicks.
- **Most often credited to:** Backlinko (Brian Dean), "We Analyzed 4 Million Google Search Results" (27.6%); the upper figure is usually credited to First Page Sage (39.8%) (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Brian Dean, "We Analyzed 4 Million Google Search Results. Here's What We Learned About Organic Click Through Rate", Backlinko, version "Updated Oct. 14, 2022" (earliest capture 2022-11-04)
- **Originator:** Brian Dean, Backlinko, "We Analyzed 4 Million Google Search Results...", updated Oct. 14, 2022 (same document as the origin)
- **Origin:** Brian Dean, "We Analyzed 4 Million Google Search Results. Here's What We Learned About Organic Click Through Rate", Backlinko (Semrush), updated Oct. 14, 2022; current version updated Apr. 16, 2025. Sample: Google Search Console data from "several different" accounts supplied by Semrush: 1,312,881 pages and 12,166,560 search queries (~4 million results). Number of sites, countries, devices and date range not stated.. Measured: Average organic click-through rate (clicks divided by impressions, as reported by Search Console) of pages at position 1, after an undescribed clean-up of the data. Number: 27.6%
- **Mismatch with the quote:** none

- **Better test (mixed):** Advanced Web Ranking, "Google Organic CTR by Position: 2026 Study + AI Overviews" (CTR study, year-over-year view and July 2026 snapshot), https://www.advancedwebranking.com/seo/organic-ctr. Independent large dataset (1.75M+ tracked US SERPs per month). Position 1 CTR averaged 26.83%-30.33% each year 2015-2024, 25.77% in 2025, 20.02% in July 2026 and 9.69% on SERPs with an AI Overview. No year near 39%.
- **Variants:** The claim joins two sources. 27% is Backlinko's 27.6% (Oct 2022 update; the 2019 version of the same page said 31.7%, from ClickFlow data, 874,929 pages). 39% is First Page Sage's 39.8% (2025 report), which applied only to SERPs with plain text results; its 2026 edition reports a blended 7.1% and 22.6% without an AI answer. Other figures quoted for the same claim: 28.5% (Sistrix 2020, mobile), 31.7% (Backlinko 2019), 39.6% (First Page Sage, earlier edition). Per the protocol, the figure the claim text names first (27%) was traced. The main count's most frequent matched variant value is "10" (6.0% of matches; counts under 50 suppressed), which looks like the "10x" phrasing rather than a CTR figure.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** high

M24. 75% judge credibility by website design (Distorted)

- **As quoted:** 75% of users judge a company's credibility based on its website design.
- **Most often credited to:** Stanford University / Stanford Web Credibility Project (B.J. Fogg, Persuasive Technology Lab); secondary attributions to WebFX, Kinesis, Clutch, Made for Web (contains the number: no)
- **First appearance found:** Robins, D. & Holmes, J. (2008). Aesthetics and credibility in web site design. Information Processing and Management 44(1), 386-399, p. 388 (online 12 April 2007)
- **Originator:** Robins, D. & Holmes, J. (2008). Aesthetics and credibility in web site design. Information Processing and Management 44(1), 386-399, p. 388
- **Origin:** Fogg, B.J., Soohoo, C., Danielson, D., Marable, L., Stanford, J., Tauber, E.R. (2002). How Do People Evaluate a Web Site's Credibility? Results from a Large Study. Consumer WebWatch / Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab, Table 1 p. 23-24 (also DUX 2003 paper). Sample: 2,684 volunteer web users (recruited online, largely via nonprofit groups) each rating two live sites of 100 sites in 10 categories; 2,440 free-text credibility comments coded by two coders. Measured: Share of free-text comments that mentioned each topic when people explained a site's credibility (design look, information design, etc.); comments could carry several codes. Number: 46.1% of comments mentioned design look; 28.5% information design/structure. 75% is not reported; it is the sum 46.1 + 28.5 made by Robins & Holmes, invalid because categories overlap
- **Mismatch with the quote:** number, measure
- **Better test (contradicts):** Kakol, M. & Nielek, R. (2015). What affects web credibility perception? An analysis of textual justifications. Computer Science (AGH) 16(3), 295. doi:10.7494/csci.2015.16.3.295. Large replication of Fogg-style coding of written credibility justifications (Reconcile dataset); abstract says earlier findings mostly hold but reports a weaker impact of webpage appearance than Fogg's 46.1% (exact share not read)
- **Variants:** Most common web phrasing: '75% of users admit to making judgments about a company's credibility based on [their] website design' credited to Stanford. Other phrasings: '75% of consumers admit...' (Sweor); '...based on website design alone' or 'visual design alone' (itechindia, Made for Web, WebFX credit); '75% of web users admit making judgments about the credibility of an organization based on the design of its web site' presented as a BJ Fogg quote (Techna Digital c. 2012; 2010 Slideshare deck); '75% of website credibility comes from design' (Truelist, Paradigm). All carry 75 and the same Stanford root; none traced separately.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M131. Most people have watched an explainer video (Supported)

- **As quoted:** 96% of people have watched an explainer video to learn about a product.
- **Most often credited to:** Wyzowl, State of Video Marketing (usually the current year's edition, 2026 in current appearances) (contains the number: yes)

- **First appearance found:** Wyzowl, The State of Video Marketing 2019 (web page wyzowl.com/video-marketing-statistics-2019 and PDF report p. 12), survey fielded December 2018
- **Originator:** Wyzowl, The State of Video Marketing 2019, p. 12 (own survey, cites no other document)
- **Origin:** Wyzowl, The State of Video Marketing 2019 (survey of 613 unique respondents, December 2018), PDF p. 12 (stat) and p. 17 (method). Sample: 613 unique respondents surveyed in December 2018, a mix of marketing professionals and online consumers split by a preliminary question; the number of consumers who answered this item, the country, recruitment and question wording are not stated. Measured: Share of consumer respondents who say they have ever watched an explainer video to learn more about a product or service (self-reported recall). Number: 96%
- **Mismatch with the quote:** none
- **Better test (contradicts):** Pew Research Center, 'Online Shopping and E-Commerce', report released December 19, 2016, section on online reviews and topline question SHOP1d ('Watch product review videos online'); national survey of 4,787 US adults, Nov 24-Dec 21, 2015. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/12/PI_2016.12.19_Online-Shopping_FINAL.pdf. 55% of US adults say they have watched product review videos online (68% of under-50s, 41% of 50+). HubSpot's later consumer survey (700+ consumers) reports 62% have watched video content such as demos or reviews to learn about a brand or product
- **Variants:** Most common today: '96% of people have watched an explainer video to learn more about a product or service' (Wyzowl). Others: '96% of consumers ...' (Blogging Wizard, MNTN, Vidico); '96% of customers say they've watched an explainer video to understand a product better' (SocialPilot); attributed to HubSpot (ContentBeta); misread as '96% of consumers who have watched explainer videos usually learn more' (Realtime Report 2020) and '96% ... to learn how to do something' (Here Now). Wyzowl's own figure differs by survey wave: 98% (2016), 91% (2017), 95% (2018), 96% (2019-2023 and 2026), 91% (2024), 98% (2025, per Wyzowl's 2026 trend table only).
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M06. People see thousands of ads a day (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** The average person sees 4,000 to 10,000 ads every day.
- **Most often credited to:** Red Crow Marketing (Ron Marshall blog post, 2015); Forbes (Jon Simpson, Forbes Agency Council post, 2017) is the second most named. (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Ron Marshall, "How Many Ads Do You See in One Day?", Red Crow Marketing blog, 10 September 2015
- **Originator:** Ron Marshall, "How Many Ads Do You See in One Day?", Red Crow Marketing blog, 10 September 2015 (attributes the range to unnamed "Digital Marketing experts"; no document cited)
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (contradicts):** Media Dynamics, Inc., press release "Adults Spend Almost 10 Hours Per Day With The Media, But Note Only 150 Ads", Nutley NJ, 21/22 Sep 2014, topline of the report America's Media Usage & Ad Exposure: 1945-2014 (full report not opened). https://www.mediadynamicsinc.com/uploads/files/PR092214-Note-only-150-Ads-2mk.pdf. US adults are exposed to about 360 ads per day across TV, radio, internet, newspapers and magazines (exposure = opportunity to see or hear), of which 150-155 are noted; estimate built from media usage time and ad loads per medium. Older diary counts point lower still (Bauer and Greyser 1968: 76 registered ads/day in four media, read via Tomcik and Rosenlacher 2018, original not opened).
- **Variants:** Most quoted today: "4,000 to 10,000" (traced here). Other variants with separate trails, not traced: "up to 5,000" (Yankelovich via Story, NYT 15 Jan 2007, citing no document; The Drum links it to J Walker Smith et al., Coming to Concurrence, 2005, not opened; Smith told The Drum he endorses no number); "3,000" and "3,000 to 5,000" (Kotler and Keller, Marketing Management 2013, as cited by Tomcik and Rosenlacher, not opened); "6,000 to 10,000" (AdLock, Lunio, b9solution, 2020 onward, no source); "10,000" alone; Forrester 2018 "350 to 10,000"; SJ

Insights 2014 "3,000 to 20,000 brand exposures". Some pages (anythingcounter) attribute the 4,000 to 10,000 range to Walker-Smith/Yankelovich 2007, but the NYT 2007 text gives only "up to 5,000".

- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M63. 95% of B2B buyers are out of market (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** At any time only 5% of B2B buyers are in the market; 95% are out of market (the 95:5 rule).
- **Most often credited to:** Professor John Dawes, Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, for the LinkedIn B2B Institute (2021), 'Advertising effectiveness and the 95-5 rule' (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Dawes, J. (2021). Advertising effectiveness and the 95-5 rule: most B2B buyers are not in the market right now. The B2B Institute at LinkedIn / Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, p. 2
- **Originator:** Dawes, J. (2021). Advertising effectiveness and the 95-5 rule: most B2B buyers are not in the market right now. The B2B Institute at LinkedIn / Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, pp. 2-3
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (mixed):** Competition and Markets Authority (2016). Retail banking market investigation: final report, paras 8.35-8.37, Figure 8.6 (Charterhouse Business Banking Survey 2010-2014, about 14,000-16,000 SMEs per year). Also: NetLine, 'Challenging the 95-5 Rule' (19 Apr 2022; 24k+ responses); Forrester, J. Arnold, 'The 95-5 Rule Is Not A Rule, But It's Not A Myth Either' (12 May 2025).. CMA: about 4% of GB SMEs switched main bank in 2014 and 70% of SMEs over ten years old had kept their main bank at least ten years. That is far slower than the paper's five-year interval for principal banks, which puts the switching rate near 1% a quarter. NetLine (self-selected content registrants): 7.6% planned to decide within the next quarter, 30.8% within 12 months. Forrester (B2B marketing tech only, sample not stated): about 15.6% of firms in market each year.
- **Variants:** Traced variant: the Dawes 95:5 rule (5% in market per quarter, 95% out). Related forms: 'up to 95% of business clients are not in the market' (Dawes's own hedged wording); '95% of your potential buyers aren't ready to buy today' (LinkedIn B2B Institute); '80% of companies switch business banks once every five years' and 'only ~2% in market over the next month' (Weinberg & Lombardo, Marketing Week 2021, uncited). Earlier, separate origin: Chet Holmes, The Ultimate Sales Machine (2007), 'buying pyramid' with about 3% of potential buyers 'buying now' (seen as an Internet Archive full-text snippet only, not traced).
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M59. The 90-9-1 rule of online participation (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** In online communities 90% only read, 9% contribute a little and 1% create most content.
- **Most often credited to:** Jakob Nielsen, 'Participation Inequality' Alertbox / Nielsen Norman Group article, 2006 (the 90-9-1 rule) (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Nielsen, J. (2006, October 9). Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute. Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox, useit.com (now nngroup.com/articles/participation-inequality/)
- **Originator:** Nielsen, J. (2006, October 9). Participation Inequality: Encouraging More Users to Contribute. Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox, useit.com
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (mixed):** van Mierlo, T. (2014). The 1% Rule in Four Digital Health Social Networks: An Observational Study. J Med Internet Res 16(2):e33. doi:10.2196/jmir.2966. Also: Nonnecke & Preece (2000) CHI 2000 pp. 73-80, doi:10.1145/332040.332409; Carron-Arthur et al. (2014) Internet Interventions, doi:10.1016/j.invent.2014.09.003; Antelmi et al. (2019) WWW Companion pp. 1035-1038, doi:10.1145/3308560.3316705; Gasparini et al. (2020) OpenSym, doi:10.1145/3412569.3412582. van Mierlo: 63,990 registered actors in four health forums. Under 25% (19.4%) ever posted, and the top 1% of actors wrote 74.7% of 578,349 posts. Nonnecke & Preece (2000), mailing lists, lurking as no posts in 12 weeks: health lists 46% lurkers, software lists 82%, range 0-99%. Antelmi (2019, Twitter): lurkers about 3 in 4, not 9 in 10. Gasparini (2020): the principle does not hold on a major open-source

code-hosting platform as a whole. Carron-Arthur (2014): replicates the 1/9/90 content shares in one depression forum, and a Zipf curve fits 98.6% of variance. Concentration of content in a small top group is reproduced. The 90% read-only share varies widely and is often well below 90%.

- **Variants:** Traced the most common web phrasing, Nielsen's 90-9-1 (90% lurk/read, 9% contribute a little or occasionally, 1% create most content or account for almost all the action). Related variants: (a) the '1% rule', McConnell & Huba blog, May 3, 2006 (1% of visitors create content); (b) Horowitz, Feb 16, 2006: nested 1% create / 10% synthesize / 100% consume; (c) Guardian (Arthur, Jul 20, 2006): 1 / 10 / 89, the '89:10:1' variant; (d) the wiki form '90% view, 9% edit, 1% create' (Wikipedia 1% rule article), a later rewording of (a)-(c); (e) a separate, earlier '90% of members are lurkers' figure (Katz 1998, Mason 1999, cited by Nonnecke & Preece 2000) for the lurker share alone. Nielsen's own examples give other splits (blogs 95-5-0.1, Wikipedia 99.8-0.2-0.003), and later writers give 70-20-10 and 98/1.9/0.1.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M44. Repeat customers spend 67% more (Distorted)

- **As quoted:** Repeat customers spend 67% more than new ones.
- **Most often credited to:** BIA/Kelsey and Manta, 'Achieving Big Customer Loyalty in a Small Business World' (2014), often as 'BIA Advisory Services'; Bain & Company is a close second (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Michael Pastore, 'Customer Loyalty Key to E-Commerce Profitability', ClickZ, 30 March 2000 (reporting the Bain & Company/Mainspring study)
- **Originator:** Baveja, Rastogi, Zook, Hancock and Chu, 'The Value of Online Customer Loyalty and How You Can Capture It', Bain & Company / Mainspring eStrategy Brief, April 2000
- **Origin:** Baveja, Rastogi, Zook, Hancock and Chu, 'The Value of Online Customer Loyalty and How You Can Capture It', Bain & Company / Mainspring eStrategy Brief, April 2000, p. 2 and Figure 2 (Bain & Company/Mainspring Online Retailing Survey, n=2116, December 1999). Sample: Online shoppers surveyed by Bain & Company and Mainspring in December 1999 (n=2,116), plus a separate Bain survey of 522 shoppers at ten Internet retailers; the 67% figure is for the apparel category only. The brief's footnote lists the joint survey's categories as groceries, consumer electronics and appliances, which does not match the apparel charts sourced to it.. Measured: Spending by the average online apparel customer in months 31-36 of the relationship with an online retailer compared with that customer's spending in months 0-6 (growth in spending with tenure, from survey data).. Number: 67 percent more (apparel, months 31-36 vs months 0-6); 23 percent for groceries
- **Mismatch with the quote:** population, measure, scope
- **Better test (contradicts):** Werner J. Reinartz and V. Kumar, 'On the Profitability of Long-Life Customers in a Noncontractual Setting: An Empirical Investigation and Implications for Marketing', Journal of Marketing 64(4), 2000, pp. 17-35 (read as INSEAD working paper 2000/04/MKT); supported by Reinartz and Kumar, 'The Mismanagement of Customer Loyalty', HBR 2002, and the abstract of East, Hammond and Gendall, Journal of Marketing Management 22, 2006, pp. 5-23. In daily purchase data for 9,167 catalog households over three years, three of four lifetime segments showed profits per period falling over time and long-life customers did not pay higher prices; across four firms and 16,000+ customers, tenure-profit correlations were only 0.20 to 0.45. East et al.'s review finds little support that long-tenure customers are worth more.
- **Variants:** Two families of wording. (1) The traced phrasing, 'a repeat customer spends 67% more than a new one', from Inc.com (2010) via the BIA/Kelsey-Manta report (2014), often with 'per order', 'per transaction' or 'on a given purchase' added. (2) The Bain wording, 'the average repeat customer spent 67% more in months 31-36 than in months 0-6', sometimes as 'in the third year' (ClickZ 2000) or 'after 30 months' and 'per order' (Geckoboard, CleverTap). Reichheld's own later texts give the same Bain/Mainspring data as 'more than twice as much in months 24-30' (HBR 2000; Loyalty Rules! 2001). Some pages add 'loyal customers' or 'returning customers'.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M23. Visitors judge a website in 50 milliseconds (Distorted)

- **As quoted:** It takes about 50 milliseconds (0.05 seconds) for users to form an opinion of a website.
- **Most often credited to:** Lindgaard et al. (2006), Behaviour & Information Technology (often given as 'Carleton University'); a minority of current pages credit 'Google' research (Tuch et al. 2012), including the 2024 Forbes Advisor page. (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Lindgaard, G., Fernandes, G., Dudek, C. and Brown, J. (2006). Attention web designers: You have 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression! Behaviour & Information Technology 25(2), 115-126. doi:10.1080/01449290500330448
- **Originator:** Lindgaard, G., Fernandes, G., Dudek, C. and Brown, J. (2006). Attention web designers: You have 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression! Behaviour & Information Technology 25(2), 115-126. doi:10.1080/01449290500330448
- **Origin:** Lindgaard, G., Fernandes, G., Dudek, C. and Brown, J. (2006). Attention web designers: You have 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression! Behaviour & Information Technology 25(2), 115-126. doi:10.1080/01449290500330448. Sample: Carleton University students (English first language, normal vision) in a lab: Study 1 n=22, Study 2 n=31, Study 3 n=40 (20 per condition, between subjects), rating screenshots of 100 (Study 1) or 50 (Studies 2-3) homepages, each rated twice.. Measured: Rated visual appeal (how much participants liked the look) of static homepage screenshots shown for 500 ms or 50 ms, and how well ratings agreed across two viewings and across the 50 ms and 500 ms groups.. Number: 50 ms exposure (the shortest tested): mean appeal ratings at 50 ms correlated r=.947 with ratings at 500 ms (phase 1); individual agreement was weaker at 50 ms (interrater r=.337 vs .557).
- **Mismatch with the quote:** measure
- **Better test (consistent):** Tuch, A. N., Presslaber, E. E., Stoecklin, M., Opwis, K. and Bargas-Avila, J. A. (2012). The role of visual complexity and prototypicality regarding first impression of websites. International Journal of Human-Computer Studies 70(11), 794-811. doi:10.1016/j.ijhcs.2012.06.003 (preprint https://research.google.com/pubs/archive/38315.pdf). Two lab experiments (n=59 at 50/500/1000 ms; n=82 at 17/33/50 ms) found design factors already shaped aesthetic ratings at 17-50 ms. Its review table reports masked (Lindgaard 2011) and independent (Tractinsky 2006) replications of fast stable appeal judgments, and weaker trust consistency at 50 ms (Albert 2009).
- **Variants:** Most quoted web phrasing comes from ConversionXL (Laja, 15 Nov 2012): 'It takes about 50 milliseconds (that's 0.05 seconds) for users to form an opinion about your website', followed by a clause that the opinion decides whether they like the site and stay or leave, copied by Sweor and many lists. The 'stay or leave' clause is the blogger's addition, not measured. Shorter forms: 'users form an opinion about a website in 0.05 seconds' (Forbes Advisor), 'first impressions are formed in 50 ms', 'you have 50 milliseconds to make a good first impression' (the paper's own title). A second variant credits Google research and sometimes 17 ms (Tuch et al. 2012), which tested aesthetic ratings at 17-1000 ms; it is a later test, not the origin. Newer pages escalate to trust or credibility in 50 ms.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** high

M35. Color lifts brand recognition 80% (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** Color increases brand recognition by up to 80%.
- **Most often credited to:** University of Loyola, Maryland study (no author, title or year given) (contains the number: no)
- **First appearance found:** Morton, J., 'Why Color Matters', Colorcom web page, (c) 2005, earliest Wayback capture 2005-04-29 (colorcom.com/why_color.html)
- **Originator:** Morton, J., 'Why Color Matters', Colorcom (2005): states the number and credits an unnamed 'University of Loyola, Maryland study' that, as identified through the Xerox source list (Hoadley, Loyola College),

does not contain it. The wording and Loyola credit almost certainly come from Xerox colour marketing material (Xerox Office Volume Three, 2005; leaflet '20 Ways to Share the Color Knowledge', COLFS-02UB, undated, archived 2006), which states 'Color can improve brand recognition by up to 80%' against a bundled source list.

- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (contradicts):** Torbarina, M., Cop, M. and Jelenc, L. (2021), 'Logo Shape and Color as Drivers of Change in Brand Evaluation and Recognition', Nase gospodarstvo/Our Economy 67(1), doi:10.2478/ngoe-2021-0004; supporting context: Wichmann, F. A., Sharpe, L. T. and Gegenfurtner, K. R. (2002), 'The contributions of color to recognition memory for natural scenes', J. Exp. Psychol.: Learning, Memory and Cognition 28(3):509-520, doi:10.1037/0278-7393.28.3.509. In a test of original-colour against greyscale versions of new logos with 190 students, greyscale logos were recognized more accurately (abstract). In lab recognition memory for natural scenes, coloured images were recognized 5%-10% better than black-and-white ones (abstract). No meta-analysis or large field study of colour and brand recognition was found.
- **Variants:** Traced form: 'Color increases brand recognition by up to 80 percent' (Colorcom, credited to a University of Loyola, Maryland study). Other forms: Xerox 'Color can improve brand recognition by up to 80%' (2005 guide and leaflet, bundled sources); 'by 80%' with 'up to' dropped (Brand Mapping Strategy 2016, 20/20 Smart Lists 2017); 'a signature color... used consistently' (Review42 and others, crediting Loyola or Colorlib 2025); attributions to Loyola University Chicago (R+M agency), the Seoul International Color Expo 2004 (Lindstrom, Buyology, 2008), the Color Marketing Group (Personal Branding for Dummies; Simple Steps, Big Results 2013), and an unnamed 'study' (Kotler and Armstrong, Principles of Marketing, 2011-2020 editions).
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M08. 90% of information sent to the brain is visual (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** 90% of the information transmitted to the brain is visual.
- **Most often credited to:** 3M Corporation and Zabisco (via HubSpot, Sibley 2012); other attributions seen: Hyerle 2000, Visual Teaching Alliance, MIT, Medina, Jensen 1996 (contains the number: no)
- **First appearance found:** Harmon, L. D. (1959). Analogs and models of the human visual system. American Journal of Optometry and Archives of American Academy of Optometry, 36(6), 304-312, p. 304. doi:10.1097/00006324-195906000-00004
- **Originator:** Harmon, L. D. (1959). Analogs and models of the human visual system. Am J Optom Arch Am Acad Optom, 36(6), 304-312, p. 304 (paper read 14 Dec 1958, Bell Telephone Laboratories author)
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (none found):** None found that tests the visual share of all sensory information. Closest indirect evidence: Koch, K., McLean, J., Segev, R., Freed, M. A., et al. (2006). How much the eye tells the brain. Current Biology 16(14), 1428-1434. doi:10.1016/j.cub.2006.05.056. Koch et al. measured guinea-pig retinal ganglion cells and estimated about 875,000 bits/s through the optic nerve, extrapolating that the human retina transmits at roughly Ethernet rate; no other sense was measured, so no share is computed. Textbook channel-capacity tables (Zimmermann 1989, Human Physiology, doi:10.1007/978-3-642-73831-9_7) are cited elsewhere for sense-by-sense estimates but could not be opened (paywall).
- **Variants:** Traced phrasing: "90% of (the) information transmitted to the brain is visual", first found in HubSpot (Sibley, 6 Aug 2012), citing 3M and Zabisco. Sister wording "90 percent of information that comes to the brain is visual" (Visual Teaching Alliance home page by 2008; Zabisco infographic; later lists cite "Hyerle, 2000") and "80 to 90 percent of the information received by the brain is through visual means" (Hyerle 2000; Costa and Kallick 2000). The "information to the brain" wording goes back to Harmon 1959 ("over 90% of all the information input to the brain"), repeated by Lindgren 1962 (Electronics, citing Harmon), Martin 1965 (Bionics) and SRS News 1971/74. A separate, older family says "80-90% of our knowledge (or of what we learn) comes through the eye": 75-80% from 1902, 85% from 1904, Edison "80 or 90 per cent" (Dearborn Independent, 20 Feb 1926, as quoted in a 1931

compilation), and "Over 90 per cent of our knowledge" (Manitoba Teacher, Nov 1932). That family is about learning or knowledge, not sensory input to the brain, and no link to the Harmon line was found; it is noted, not traced. If the two families were merged, first appearance moves to 1926 (Edison, reported, "80 or 90") or 1932 ("over 90"), and the grade by rule stays Unsupported (identifiable originators, no data). Companion claims often paired: 60,000x faster (3M 1999-2001 page), 40% of nerve fibers linked to the retina and 36,000 visual messages per hour (attributed to Jensen 1996).

- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

M154. People prefer learning about products by video (Supported)

- **As quoted:** About 68-73% of people prefer to learn about a product by watching a video.
- **Most often credited to:** Wyzowl, The State of Video Marketing (annual survey); the 68% figure is the 2019 edition, 73% the 2022 edition (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Wyzowl, 'Video Marketing Statistics 2019: The State of Video Marketing 2019' web page (survey of 613 unique respondents, December 2018)
- **Originator:** Wyzowl, 'Video Marketing Statistics 2019: The State of Video Marketing 2019' (web page and full report)
- **Origin:** Wyzowl, 'The State of Video Marketing 2019' survey (613 unique respondents, marketers and online consumers, December 2018), reported on the Wyzowl 2019 statistics page; same question repeated in the 2022 edition (582 respondents, December 2021) giving 73%. Sample: 613 unique respondents surveyed in December 2018, a mix of marketing professionals and online consumers split by a preliminary question; the consumer subsample size, country, recruitment and weighting are not stated. Measured: Stated preference: online consumers chose the one format they would most prefer for learning about a new product or service (short video, text article, infographic, presentation or pitch, ebook or manual, and others). Number: 68% (2019 edition); 73% in the 2022 edition; same question gave 66% (2020), 69% (2021), 44% (2024), 78% (2025), 63% (2026)
- **Mismatch with the quote:** none
- **Better test (mixed):** YouGov Surveys: Serviced, 'From reviews to experts - how global consumers research before buying a phone' (YouGov article, 2023; online surveys February 2023, adults 18+ in 17 markets, 512-2034 per market, mostly nationally representative). Before buying a phone, 47% of consumers across markets read written consumer reviews and 33% consult consumer video reviews; in Britain 55% written vs 23% video, in the US 23% video, in India 57% video. Measures sources used (multi-select) for one product category, not a single preferred format.
- **Variants:** Traced the 68% figure named first (Wyzowl 2019, question 'most prefer to learn about a new product or service', short video). 73% is the same Wyzowl question in the 2022 edition; 69% (2021) and 66% (2020) are the same question; 78% (2025), 44% (2024) and 63% (2026) are later editions of it. Earlier Wyzowl editions asked a different binary question (video vs text on the same page): 69% in 2016, 79% in 2017, 72% in 2018. The 72% is also widely attributed to HubSpot (Retail Dive, May 2018, citing HubSpot Research via Coresight; not opened). Some pages misattribute 73% to Wyzowl 2026, whose figure is 63%.
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** high

M07. Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text (Unsupported)

- **As quoted:** The brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than text.
- **Most often credited to:** 3M Corporation (usually the 3M Meeting Network brochure 'Polishing Your Presentation', often dated 2001) (contains the number: yes)
- **First appearance found:** Business Week, 28 June 1982, Special Advertising Section 'Computer Services: Management's Answer to Data Overload', quoting Philip Cooper, president of Computer Pictures Corporation: people assimilate visual information about 60,000 times faster than they assimilate printed copy.

- **Originator:** Business Week (28 June 1982), Special Advertising Section 'Computer Services: Management's Answer to Data Overload': statement by Philip Cooper, president of Computer Pictures Corporation, a business-graphics vendor; no study or document named.
- **Origin:** none found (no document presents data behind the number)
- **Better test (contradicts):** Potter, M. C. and Faulconer, B. A. (1975). Time to understand pictures and words. Nature 253:437-438. doi:10.1038/253437a0. Context: Tuscher, M. (2022). Processing Speed and Comprehensibility of Visualizations and Texts. CESCG 2022 (non-peer-reviewed review of 19 studies and 2 meta-analyses).. In a direct timed comparison, deciding whether an object is in a category took slightly less time for a line drawing than for its written name, while naming a drawing took much longer than reading the word (abstract). The 2022 review of 19 studies found no global answer on whether visualizations or text are processed faster, with conflicting results. Differences are on the order of milliseconds in either direction, not a 60,000-fold ratio.
- **Variants:** M07 has a single match pattern (60,000 or 60k times, faster or quicker); the main phrasing today is 'visuals are processed / the brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than text', credited to 3M. Older phrasings: 'assimilate visual information about 60,000 times faster than they assimilate printed copy' (Business Week 1982); 'absorbs information 60,000 times faster in graphic form than in written form' (1984-85 computer-graphics trade press: PC World, Electronic Products, Assembly Engineering, American City & County, as 'recent studies'); 'see the big picture is more than 60,000 times faster than your ability to process information in traditional ways' (Alesandrini 1992, after a visual-channel bandwidth calculation); 'up to 60,000 times faster' (Assembly Engineering 1984; Gregory and Chapman 2013 'up to ... than words'). The 3M wording 'process visuals 60,000 times faster than text' first appears in documents found via 3M Brilliant Meetings (1993, per Albert 1996, not opened) and 3M Polishing Your Presentation (c) 1997 (opened).
- **Confidence that no earlier or better source exists:** medium

9. Verification

- **Independent re-analysis.** A separate analysis, written from the plan alone with the extracts, recomputed the selection, the precision of the 20, the counts, every grade from the coded fields and H1 to H6: 120 of 120 numbers matched at the reported precision.
- **Blind second trace.** 8 of the 20, drawn at random (seed 340), were traced a second time from the protocol alone without the first trace: the grade agreed on 6 of 8 and the source type on 7 of 8.
  - M05: first trace Distorted, second trace Unsupported. Both traces found the same Bain exhibit (Zero Defections, 1990: 25% to 85%); the second coded it as a model without a stated method (Unsupported), the first as a stated-method analysis whose quote changes the number (Distorted). The second trace also found an earlier first appearance, Fortune, 19 September 1994, which was adopted as a factual correction; the grade was left as first coded.
  - M115: first trace Supported, second trace Distorted. Both traces found the same origin (Backlinko, 2022, 27.6%); the second coded a measure mismatch, because a click-through rate per impression is quoted as a share of all clicks (Distorted), the first did not (Supported).
  - Agreement met the pre-registered threshold (6 or more of 8), so no review round was run, and the grades are reported as first coded. Both disagreements are about how a real measurement is read, not whether one exists: under the second readings, H1 would be Supported 3, Distorted 5, Unsupported 12.

Alternative explanations and how they were handled.

- *The 20 were picked to look weak.* The pool was written before any data and spans every kind of source; 64 claims were added by neutral searches; the four named statistics were in by rule and the other 16 by a count. The four Supported statistics all came in through that count, and the selection is reported under four other rankings.

- *The origin exists but was not found.* Each trail used several search routes and archived copies, and a blind second trace of 8 statistics was run without the first. Book full-text search was limited (see Limitations), so some Unsupported grades could become Distorted or Supported if an earlier study turned up. The grade reflects what can be found, which is also what anyone quoting the number can find.
- *The grading is too strict.* Grades follow a written rule from coded fields, and the re-analysis rederived every grade from the fields. The one grade that depends on a judgment about which lineage counts (the five-times figure) is shown both ways. Distorted keeps real measurements apart from Unsupported claims, so a strict reading of mismatches moves statistics between those two grades and does not change the 11 with no measurement.
- *Professionals' posts are not the web.* The question is what gets repeated to working professionals, and posts in Kenso internal data measure that directly. The count only decides which 20 were traced; it does not enter the grades.
- *H3 rests on a few statistics.* The five statistics with the most matched posts (80/20, five times, Wanamaker, the rule of seven, the goldfish) are all Unsupported or Distorted, so H3 mostly reflects them. H3 describes what people quote, weighted by how often, not the average quality of the 20.

10. Limitations

- **Book search.** Google Books refused the study's automated searches (HTTP 429 and a CAPTCHA) for every trace, so book full-text search used the Internet Archive only. Earlier print appearances may exist, so a first appearance found is a lower bound on a statistic's age.
- **Access.** Several cited papers and reports were behind paywalls or bot walls; some hops and many better tests were read from abstracts, indexed snippets or archived copies. These are marked in the trace records, and better-test verdicts based on abstracts are provisional.
- **One trace each, plus a blind check.** Each statistic was traced once; 8 of the 20 were traced a second time without the first. The second trace used the same tools and met the same access limits, so the check may share blind spots with the first.
- **The count is thin below the top.** 14 of the 20 have fewer than 50 matched posts; precision comes from small pilot reads (often fewer than 5 posts per candidate); and the lower ranks are close. A different sample could swap several of the lower 16 for other candidates of similar frequency.
- **The corpus.** The posts are snippets of a few hundred characters in the recent activity of profiles in six English-speaking countries, mostly from 2025 and 2026, and the patterns are English. Posts that state a claim in other words or with other numbers are missed; posts that debunk a claim count as repeating it.
- **The pool.** A claim not in the pool could not be picked. The expansion's domain counts are lower bounds, because groups found on only 2 domains were not all read one by one.
- **What a grade means.** A grade says whether the quote matches its source, not whether the claim is true. The four Supported statistics come from vendor surveys with self-selected or panel samples; Supported means the quote reports them faithfully.
- **The precision fallback was changed after the pilot**, a logged change made before any main count was read; the pre-registered rule's ranking is reported as a sensitivity.

11. Related studies

- *Which persuasion science survived the replication crisis?* (Kenso Research): graded review of persuasion effects whose approach (a fixed protocol, a graded scale, better tests reported beside the grade) this study follows. None of the 20 statistics here is one of its 12 effects, so none of its grades is reused.

- A companion review of management findings (planned), which uses the same kind of graded scale.
- A companion study of sales statistics (in progress), which uses this study's grading scale and source types.
- An earlier Kenso study of public posts: the sample rule and post-key rule, and its existing sample for the pilot.

12. Sources

Documents on the 20 trails, as coded (first appearance, originator, origin and better test). The study's trace records hold the full hop list, with what each document says and where.

- M01: Statistic Brain, "Attention Span Statistics", statisticbrain.com (earliest Wayback capture 8 Feb 2012; page dated "Date Verified: 1.30.2012"): average attention span 2012 8 seconds, 2000 12 seconds, goldfish 9 seconds; source given as The Associated Press.
- M01: Statistic Brain, "Attention Span Statistics", statisticbrain.com, Jan/Feb 2012 (Wayback 2012-02-08). Credits only "The Associated Press", with no article named; no AP document with the numbers was found.
- M01: Fortenbaugh, F. C., DeGutis, J., Germine, L., Wilmer, J. B., Grosso, M., Russo, K. & Esterman, M. (2015). Sustained attention across the life span in a sample of 10,000: Dissociating ability and strategy. Psychological Science 26(9), 1497-1510. doi:10.1177/0956797615594896. Supporting: Bradbury, N. A. (2016). Attention span during lectures: 8 seconds, 10 minutes, or more? Advances in Physiology Education 40(4), 509-513. doi:10.1152/advan.00109.2016.
- M02: "How Locker Plants Can Sell To Freezer Owners," Air Conditioning & Refrigeration News 67(9), 27 October 1952 (report of a utility farm sales manager's talk at the National Frozen Food Locker Institute convention, Omaha).
- M02: Same 1952 Air Conditioning & Refrigeration News article: it states the five-times figure, relayed from an unnamed businessman, and cites no document.
- M02: Goodman, John (former president of TARP). "Basic Facts on Customer Complaint Behavior and the Impact of Service on the Bottom Line." Competitive Advantage, June 1999, pp. 1-5: retrospective account of the TARP calculation behind the five-times figure (one domestic auto company).
- M02: KBCM Technology Group (KeyBanc Capital Markets) and forEntrepreneurs, 2017 Private SaaS Company Survey, Part 1 (survey of over 400 private SaaS companies; CAC ratios for companies with at least $5M ARR). https://www.forentrepreneurs.com/2017-saas-survey-part-1/
- M03: Shown, Janet. Freelance Foodcrafting: How to Become Profitably Self-Employed in Your Own Creative Cooking Business. Boulder, Colo.: Live Oak Publications, 1983 (ISBN 0911781005), advertising section, page not identified: 'a general rule of thumb in advertising is that people may see an ad seven times or more before taking positive action on it.'
- M03: Shown, Janet. Freelance Foodcrafting, Live Oak Publications, 1983. Earliest document found that states the claim without citing any other document (it calls it a general rule of thumb in advertising). The named 'Rule of Seven' form that today's quotes descend from was put forward on his own authority by Lant, Jeffrey, Money Making Marketing, JLA Publications, 1987 (seven contacts within 18 months). Bly 1993 and Hustad 2002 credit Lant.
- M03: Schmidt, Susanne, and Martin Eisend (2015). Advertising Repetition: A Meta-Analysis on Effective Frequency in Advertising. Journal of Advertising 44(4), 415-428. doi:10.1080/00913367.2015.1018460. Supporting field evidence: Jones, John Philip, When Ads Work: New Proof That Advertising Triggers Sales (1995; 2nd ed. 2007), Nielsen single-source panel of 2,000 homes.
- M04: Seidman, D. (2002). The Death of 20th Century Selling: 50 Hilarious Sales Blunders and How You Can Profit from Them. Barrington, IL: Sales Autopsy Press (April 2002). Page not determined.

- M04: Seidman, D. (2002). The Death of 20th Century Selling. Sales Autopsy Press. States 'I claim that 95 percent of buying decisions are indeed subconscious' on his own authority. In the popular citation chain the originator is Mahoney, M. (2003, Jan 13), HBS Working Knowledge Q&A summary, which assigns Zaltman a purchase-decision claim his book does not make; the 95 percent figure itself goes back to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Philosophy in the Flesh, a rule of thumb with no source.
- M04: Newell, B. R., & Shanks, D. R. (2014). Unconscious influences on decision making: A critical review. Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 37(1), 1-19. doi:10.1017/S0140525X12003214. Also: Nieuwenstein, M. R., et al. (2015). Judgment and Decision Making, 10(1), 1-17; Wood, W., Quinn, J. M., & Kashy, D. A. (2002). JPSP, 83(6), 1281-1297, doi:10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1281; Rebar, A. L., Vincent, G. E., Kovac Le Cornu, K., & Gardner, B. (2025 online). How habitual is everyday life? Psychology & Health, 41(9), 1507-1532, doi:10.1080/08870446.2025.2561149.
- M11: Management Review (American Management Association) 20(4), April 1931, abstract "Sales-Plan Obsolescence" (Graton & Knight sales analysis: 80% of total business from 20% of accounts)
- M11: H. C. Dunn, Chief, Merchandising Research Division, U.S. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, in Domestic Commerce, 30 March 1932, as reprinted in The Manufacturing Confectioner 12(4), April 1932
- M11: McCarthy, D. M. & Winer, R. S. (2019). The Pareto rule in marketing revisited: is it 80/20 or 70/20? Marketing Letters 30: 139-150, doi 10.1007/s11002-019-09490-y; with Kim, B. J., Singh, V. & Winer, R. S. (2017). The Pareto rule for frequently purchased packaged goods: an empirical generalization. Marketing Letters 28: 491-507, doi 10.1007/s11002-017-9442-5
- M05: Jacob, Rahul. 'Why Some Customers Are More Equal Than Others.' Fortune, 19 September 1994, pp. 215-224 (statement attributed to 'a Bain & Co. study')
- M05: Barlow and Moller (1996) and other 1996 books state 25 to 95 percent on the authority of 'Bain and Co.' research without a document that contains it; the earliest Bain-authored statement found is Reichheld and Schefter (2000), E-Loyalty, HBR, which cites Zero Defections (1990), which reports 25% to 85%.
- M05: Reichheld, Frederick F. and W. Earl Sasser Jr. (1990). Zero Defections: Quality Comes to Services. Harvard Business Review 68(5), September-October 1990.
- M05: Gupta, Sunil, Donald R. Lehmann and Jennifer Ames Stuart (2004). Valuing Customers. Journal of Marketing Research 41(1): 7-18. doi:10.1509/jmkr.41.1.7.25084. Also Reinartz, Werner and V. Kumar (2000). On the Profitability of Long-Life Customers in a Noncontractual Setting. Journal of Marketing 64(4): 17-35. doi:10.1509/jmkg.64.4.17.18077.
- M18: Printers' Ink: A Journal for Advertisers 3(14), 1 October 1890, "Don'ts for Advertisers", p. 311: half of the money spent in advertising is wasted (no source; without the 'which half' clause or a Wanamaker credit). The full quip credited to Wanamaker first appears in Rev. Roy L. Smith, Winona Echoes (1919), p. 333.
- M18: Rev. Roy L. Smith, "The Salesmanship of Preaching", Winona Echoes (Winona Publishing Society, 1919), p. 333. States the quip as an oral remark of John Wanamaker and cites no document
- M18: Bradley T. Shapiro, Guenter J. Hitsch and Anna E. Tuchman, "TV Advertising Effectiveness and Profitability: Generalizable Results From 288 Brands", Econometrica 89(4), 2021, pp. 1855-1879, doi:10.3982/ECTA17674 (read in the January 2021 accepted revision)
- M125: Raczkowski, G. 'Marketing trends: 3 strategies marketers are prioritizing in 2024'. SurveyMonkey Curiosity (blog), 2024; earliest Wayback capture 19 April 2024.
- M125: SurveyMonkey (2024), 'Marketing trends for a new era' study, first reported in Raczkowski, G., 'Marketing trends: 3 strategies marketers are prioritizing in 2024', SurveyMonkey Curiosity blog.
- M125: SurveyMonkey (2024), 'Marketing trends for a new era' survey of 707 US workers (507 marketing professionals, 200 market researchers), fielded 8-18 January 2024; results reported in Raczkowski (2024) and Bacon, A., 'Market research trends: Both MRX pros and marketing professionals face pressure to adapt' (SurveyMonkey Curiosity, 2024); method note on the SurveyMonkey 'Product marketing trends for 2024' page. The gated full report was not opened.

- M125: Salesforce Research (2024). State of Marketing, 9th edition. Double-anonymous survey of 4,850 marketing decision makers in 29 countries, 5 February - 12 March 2024, pp. 3, 18-19. https://www.salesforce.com/content/dam/web/en_us/www/documents/marketingcloud/S-MC-State-of-Marketing-Report-9th-Edition-c.pdf
- M115: Brian Dean, "We Analyzed 4 Million Google Search Results. Here's What We Learned About Organic Click Through Rate", Backlinko, version "Updated Oct. 14, 2022" (earliest capture 2022-11-04)
- M115: Brian Dean, Backlinko, "We Analyzed 4 Million Google Search Results...", updated Oct. 14, 2022 (same document as the origin)
- M115: Brian Dean, "We Analyzed 4 Million Google Search Results. Here's What We Learned About Organic Click Through Rate", Backlinko (Semrush), updated Oct. 14, 2022; current version updated Apr. 16, 2025
- M115: Advanced Web Ranking, "Google Organic CTR by Position: 2026 Study + AI Overviews" (CTR study, year-over-year view and July 2026 snapshot), https://www.advancedwebranking.com/seo/organic-ctr
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Selection data: public posts in the recent activity of a sample of profiles in Kenso internal data (scanned November 2026).

Numbers added with the article

The article and its chart use these numbers in a form the sections above do not print.

Number in the article	Where it comes from	In this methodology
About 2 million profiles (How we measured it, and the chart's source line)	The selection corpus: 1,996,807 profiles	Section 2 gives 1,996,807 profiles
The blind second trace disagreed on 2 grades (The ones that match are recent vendor studies)	The blind second trace: the grades differ for M05 and M115; of 8 statistics, 6 grades agree	Section 9 gives 6 of 8 and describes the two disagreements

The article's chart shows the same grade counts as section 7 (Supported 4, Distorted 5, Unsupported 11, No source 0). Its title uses the article's headline, and its source line says that four statistics were in from the start and the other 16 came up most often in posts.