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The AI Visibility Lifecycle Framework
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Abstract

This document describes the 11-Stage AI Visibility Lifecycle, a stage-based observational framework describing how websites achieve visibility within AI discovery, comprehension, trust, and human exposure systems. The framework identifies three distinct phases -- AI Comprehension (Stages 1-5), Trust Establishment (Stages 6-8), and Human Visibility (Stages 9-11) -- through which domains progress from initial AI crawling to sustainable human-facing visibility.

Canonical Source Notice

This Internet-Draft is NOT the canonical source for the AI Visibility Lifecycle framework. The authoritative reference is the Zenodo deposit at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18460711. This Internet-Draft mirrors the specification for IETF community accessibility. In case of any discrepancy between this Internet-Draft and the Zenodo deposit, the Zenodo version governs.

Status of This Memo

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1. Introduction

The AI Visibility Lifecycle (v0.7) provides a structural model for understanding how AI systems discover, evaluate, trust, and surface websites to human users. This framework is observational and analytical, not prescriptive. This document does not propose a standard, protocol, or recommendation for implementation.

This document mirrors the canonical specification maintained at Zenodo [ZENODO]. Companion papers on ambiguity elimination [AMBIGUITY] and website visibility reporting [REPORTING] provide additional context. In case of any discrepancy between this Internet-Draft and the Zenodo deposit, the Zenodo version governs.

2. Framework Overview

The lifecycle consists of eleven stages organised into three phases:

Phase 1: AI Comprehension (Stages 1-5) The process by which AI systems discover, parse, classify, verify internal consistency, and cross-reference content against external sources.

Phase 2: Trust Establishment (Stages 6-8) The process by which AI systems accumulate evidence of reliability, grant formal

eligibility for inclusion in answers, and assess competitive readiness against alternatives.

Phase 3: Human Visibility (Stages 9-11) The process by which content transitions from AI-evaluated candidate to human-visible result, progressing through controlled testing, baseline placement, and sustained growth.

3. Stage Definitions

3.1. Stage 1: AI Crawling

Discovery and reconnaissance. AI systems identify and access content through crawling mechanisms, evaluating technical accessibility, structural signals, and initial content availability.

3.2. Stage 2: AI Ingestion

Semantic parsing and embedding. Content is processed into machine-readable representations, including semantic embeddings, entity extraction, and structural decomposition.

3.3. Stage 3: AI Classification

Purpose and identity assignment. AI systems assign topical classification, entity type, commercial intent signals, and domain purpose categorisation.

3.4. Stage 4: AI Harmony Checks

Internal consistency evaluation. AI systems verify that claims made across a domain are internally consistent, structurally coherent, and free of contradictions.

3.5. Stage 5: AI Cross-Correlation

External alignment verification. AI systems compare domain claims against external sources to verify factual accuracy, citation validity, and alignment with established knowledge.

3.6. Stage 6: AI Trust Building

Evidence accumulation over time. AI systems monitor consistency, stability, and reliability signals across repeated evaluations to build cumulative trust assessments.

3.7. Stage 7: AI Trust Acceptance

Formal eligibility for answers. A domain reaches the threshold at which AI systems consider it a credible source eligible for inclusion in generated responses.

3.8. Stage 8: Candidate Surfacing

Competitive readiness assessment. AI systems evaluate the domain against alternative sources to determine whether it should be surfaced in preference to competing candidates.

3.9. Stage 9: Early Human Visibility Testing

Controlled experiments. Content begins appearing in human-facing results on a limited, experimental basis to measure engagement, relevance, and user satisfaction signals.

3.10. Stage 10: Baseline Human Ranking

First stable placement. The domain achieves a consistent, reproducible position in human-facing results based on accumulated AI evaluation and human interaction data.

3.11. Stage 11: Growth Visibility

Human traffic acceleration. Sustained visibility drives increasing human engagement, which in turn reinforces AI trust signals, creating a compounding visibility effect.

4. Key Principles

* Stages 1-2 are sequential; Stages 3-11 operate as parallel evaluation dimensions.
* Architectural quality determines timeline compression or extension.
* Commercial classification determines trust threshold height.
* Crawlability (Stage 1) does not equal Visibility (Stages 9-11).
* Framework versioning, amendments, and authoritative updates are defined exclusively by Zenodo DOI releases.

5. Canonical Reference

This Internet-Draft is NOT the canonical source. The authoritative specification is maintained at Zenodo:

Primary: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18460711

Concept DOI (always resolves to latest version): https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18460710

GitHub mirror (non-citable): https://github.com/Bernardnz/ai-visibility-lifecycle

6. Security Considerations

This document describes an observational framework and does not define any protocols, data formats, or executable specifications. There are no security considerations directly applicable to this document.

7. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

8. References

8.1. Normative References

[ZENODO] Lynch, B., "The 11-Stage AI Visibility Lifecycle (v0.7): A Framework for Understanding AI-Mediated Content Discovery", DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18460711, January 2026, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18460711>.

8.2. Informative References

[AMBIGUITY] Lynch, B., "Ambiguity Elimination as an AI-Native Visibility Strategy", DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18461352, January 2026, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18461352>.

[REPORTING] Lynch, B., "Website Visibility and Activity Reporting", DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18512385, February 2026, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18512385>.

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