



The Most Important Food and Beverage Marketing Strategy

**A guide to attracting more hungry
customers to your locations**



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The Most Important Marketing Strategy Right Now

The most important marketing strategy – it’s a bold claim.

But if we may be so bold to say, it’s actually a fairly simple claim to prove.

At its most basic level, we can all agree that the success of a marketing strategy for food and beverage brands can be defined by the number of customer visits and diners in seats.

So, if digital marketers play their dining cards right they can place themselves in a key area to get more customers simply by targeting local consumer search – also known as ‘near me’ search.

Here’s what we mean by this...

In just two years, Google saw a 150%+ growth in mobile searches for “food near me now” and “delivery near me open now”¹

Your hungry and thirsty customers are turning to their mobile devices first for products, services and information wherever they are – right here and right now.

So, if you own, run or market a food or beverage brand then you have to understand what a ‘near me’ search is and why your marketing strategy is make or break based on how you optimise for it.

In this guide, you’ll learn about:

- 1 The hungry customer’s new journey
- 2 The problem with your current marketing plan
- 3 What ‘near me’ searches are and why they matter
- 4 Why unbranded local search queries matter
- 5 3 steps to optimise your brand for ‘near me’ searches
- 6 How to rank for ‘near me’ searches

¹ <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/near-me-searches/>



The Hungry Customer's New Journey

Long gone are the days when marketing and brand teams could rely on a linear customer journey — from awareness to consideration to purchase.

Today, the customer journey is unpredictable and no longer resembles the typical marketing funnel.

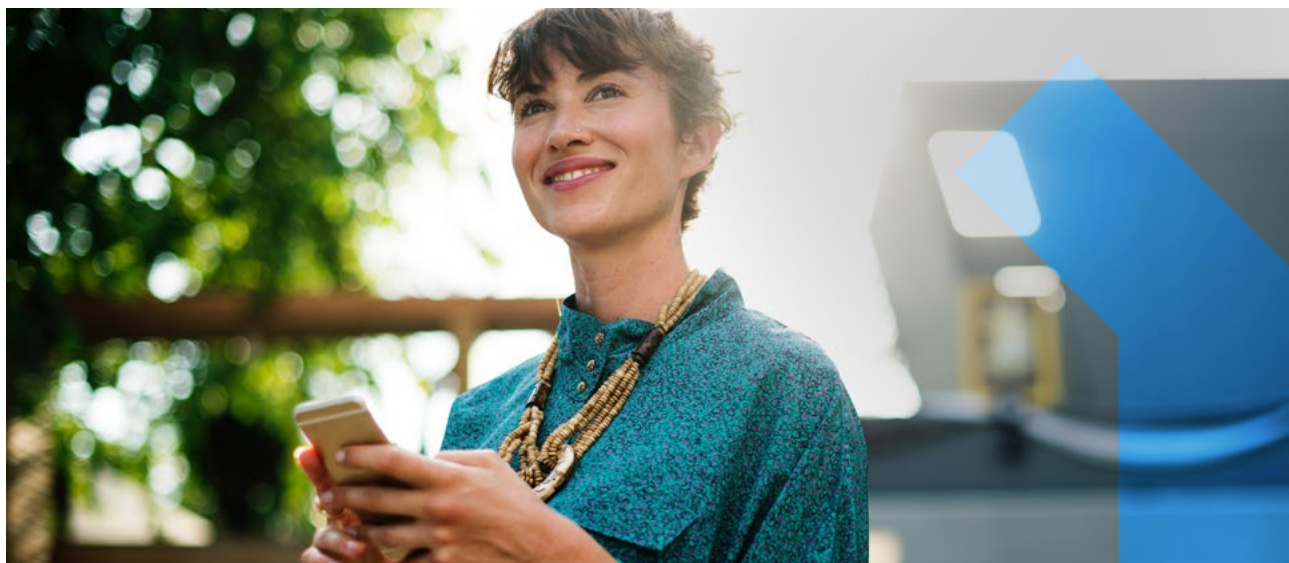
Empowered by an abundance of information at their fingertips, consumers are now owning the customer journey, and no two customer journeys are the same.

Your customers and prospects are essentially transforming the entire marketing funnel through every review read, expression of intent, click, mobile search query and interaction with your brand.

From scoping out reviews on the city's best pizza to gathering location details and closing hours, your hungry and thirsty customers will turn to their mobile devices first when they need to fuel up quickly, need a coffee on the go or a romantic restaurant for a date.

With their pocket-sized trusted advisors by their side day and night, consumers put in a lot of consideration and time researching online, often via mobile, before buying at local stores — and they have up to 500+ touchpoints with a brand before they make a decision. ²

While at other times, you may only have one touchpoint to connect with your customers who are searching for what you offer near them right here and now.



² <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/feature/search-intent-marketing-funnel/#/>



The Problem With Your Current Marketing Plan

The food and beverage sector has benefited the most from consumer search behaviour.

As we can see from Google trends data, searches for the food and beverage industry have continued at a high growth rate since July of 2014.

INTEREST OVER TIME



That said, the data we have for the food and beverage industry suggests brands need to focus their efforts on optimising for 'near me' search terms.

'Near me' searches are serving up good fit consumers with an intent to spend on a silver platter. This is your chance to optimise and reach the hungry masses.

But first...



What Are ‘Near Me’ Searches?

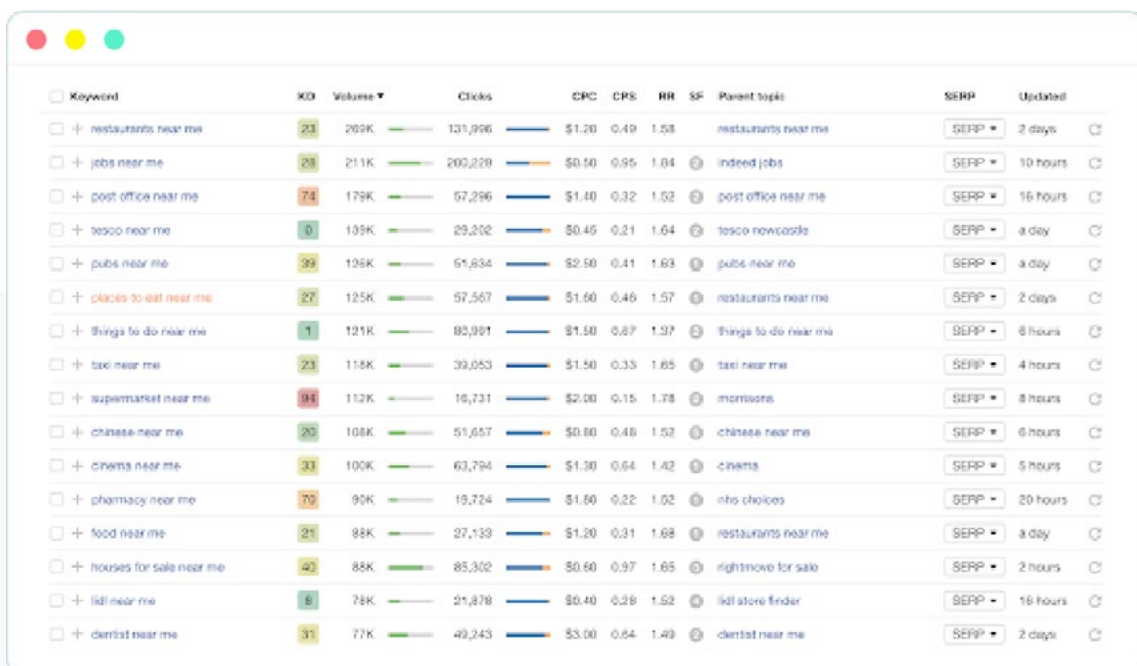
The ‘near me’ search phrase made its debut in Google when people were looking for something they needed right away and close to them — like a bakery when they were hungry or a quick service restaurant when they needed food fast.

“It’s now about finding a specific thing, in a specific area, and in a specific period of time”³

As ‘near me’ searches grew, search engines got smarter and consumers didn’t need to add the phrase every time they were searching for something with local intent.

The definition of ‘near me’ has expanded and is no longer solely about finding a specific place.

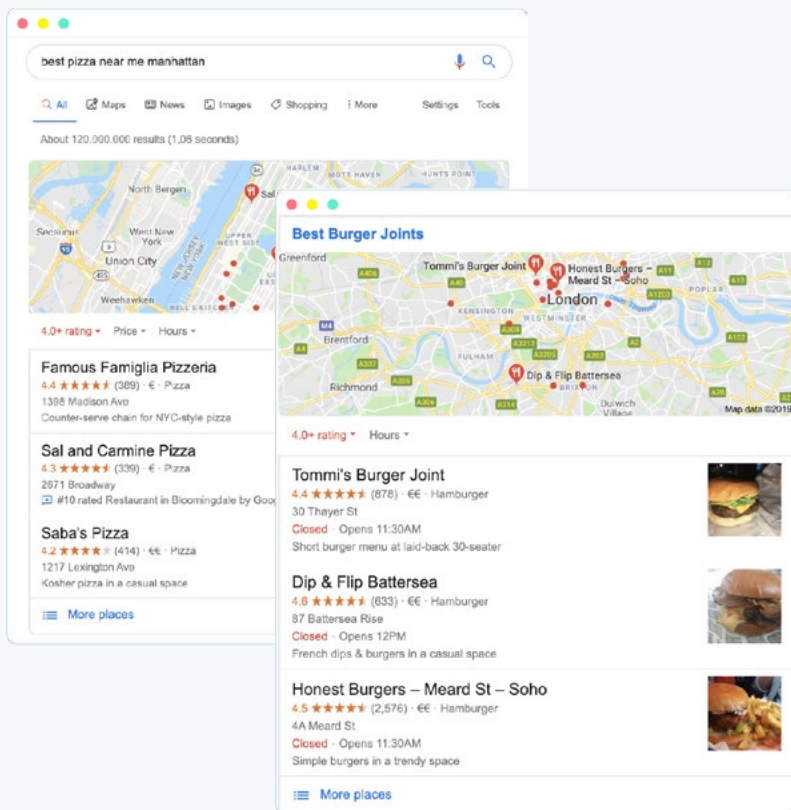
In the UK, “restaurants near me” is the most popular ‘near me’ search with 269,000 search queries per month.



Keyword	KD	Volume	Clicks	CPC	CPS	RR	SP	Parent topic	SERP	Updated
+ restaurants near me	23	269K	131,996	\$1.20	0.49	1.58		restaurants near me	SERP	2 days
+ jobs near me	23	211K	209,229	\$0.50	0.95	1.04		indeed jobs	SERP	10 hours
+ post office near me	74	179K	57,296	\$1.40	0.32	1.02		post office near me	SERP	16 hours
+ tesco near me	9	139K	29,202	\$0.46	0.21	1.04		tesco newcastle	SERP	a day
+ pubs near me	39	126K	61,634	\$2.50	0.41	1.63		pubs near me	SERP	a day
+ places to eat near me	27	125K	57,567	\$1.60	0.46	1.57		restaurants near me	SERP	2 days
+ things to do near me	1	121K	83,991	\$1.50	0.67	1.37		things to do near me	SERP	6 hours
+ taxi near me	23	118K	39,053	\$1.50	0.33	1.65		taxi near me	SERP	4 hours
+ supermarket near me	84	112K	16,731	\$2.00	0.15	1.78		morrisons	SERP	8 hours
+ chinese near me	25	108K	51,057	\$0.80	0.48	1.52		chinese near me	SERP	6 hours
+ cinema near me	33	100K	63,794	\$1.30	0.64	1.42		cinema	SERP	5 hours
+ pharmacy near me	70	90K	19,724	\$1.60	0.22	1.02		info choices	SERP	20 hours
+ food near me	21	88K	27,133	\$1.20	0.31	1.68		restaurants near me	SERP	a day
+ houses for sale near me	40	88K	85,302	\$0.60	0.97	1.65		rightmove for sale	SERP	2 hours
+ lidl near me	8	78K	21,878	\$0.40	0.28	1.52		lidl store finder	SERP	16 hours
+ dentist near me	31	77K	49,243	\$3.00	0.64	1.49		dentist near me	SERP	2 days

Source: Ahrefs



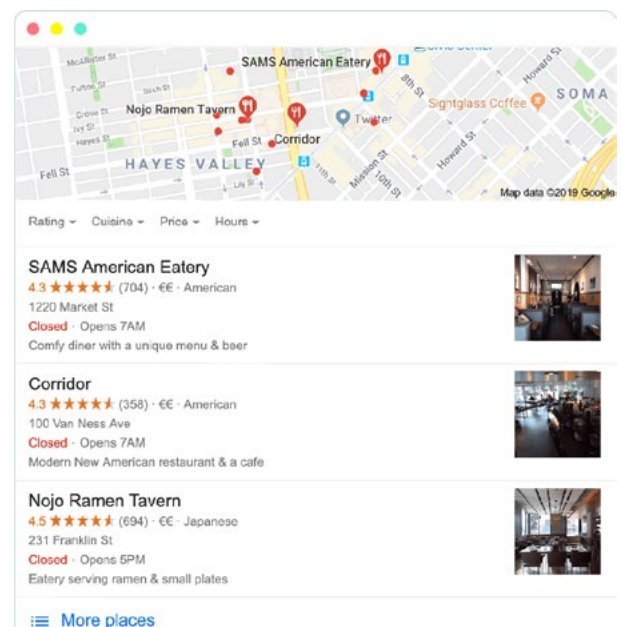


Consumers who are typing in ‘near me’ search queries usually want to make a purchase at the time of the search.

They know what they are looking for (in this case food) and they know where they want it (near them), but they have not made a decision on the business yet. These are also called “unbranded local searches,” which we’ll delve into a below.

What Does Optimisation Mean?

When we talk about optimisation we are talking about ranking. When a consumer types in “restaurants near me” into Google, they are presented with three results:



[Research by Moz](#) suggests that if you aren’t ranking in the first three results, your chances of even being seen falls to under 8% which means that if you aren’t showing up in the top three results, you’ll have far less users finding their way to your door.





Why Unbranded Local Search Queries Matter

As mentioned, unbranded local search is when consumers use general words such as “restaurant near me”, “coffee open now”, or “best brunch spots”.

These consumers don’t have a brand or business name in mind when they need something right away.

They want information instantly and it needs to be as relevant as possible. **In fact, 90% of smartphone users are not absolutely certain of the specific brand they want to buy from when they begin looking for information online.**

This means you may be able to reach your competitors’ customers because you gave the consumer the information they needed first.



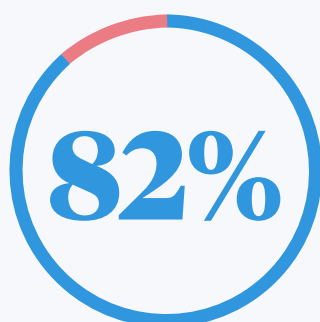
A Closer Look at Unbranded Local Search

Let's imagine it's a hot summer day and you're on your way to an outdoor party with your family. On the ride there, you're passing time scrolling through Instagram and stop on a photo of a chocolate ice-cream cone. Suddenly, you not only want ice cream but you also want to buy several tubs as a surprise treat for the party guests. Switching to Google, you search for "best ice cream near me".

Josie's Independent Ice-Cream shop comes up in the top spot in the Google local pack and it has more than 2,000 reviews. Although some of the reviewers mention it's a bit pricier than other places, it seems well worth it based on what people are saying online.


However, Well-Known Brand Ice Cream is just around the corner, and it's only a five-minute drive from your destination. Their prices are half of what Josie's are and they also have vegan options — great for meeting all the guests' dietary needs. But... they rank fifth in Google's local pack, so you miss them because only the top three spots will show up.

Consumers who are typing in unbranded "near me" search queries usually want to make a purchase at the time of the search. They know what they are looking for (in this case ice cream) and they know where they want it (near them), but they have not made a decision on the business yet. Here we see how Josie's 'Near Me' Brand Experience won over the consumer.



of local searches are unbranded





Unbranded Local Searches: A Success Story

Most think petrol when it comes to BP, but they don't. They've fully monetised on their unbranded local search opportunity, making sure to show up in 'near me' searches when consumers search for products and services unrelated to their core business — and they are a leader in how it's done well.

One of BP's objectives was to boost its online presence in 'near me' searches for all their product and service offerings — such as food, groceries and cafés for all of their UK locations.

Uberall came up with a pin-within-a-pin solution — the first such innovation in the fuel retail world — allowing customers to find their closest BP location in three unbranded local search categories.

Here's how one location with a fuel station, market and café might look like:

- BP location is optimised for **petrol and diesel**
- Wild Bean Café (also owned by BP) is optimised as **cafés**
- Marks & Spencer (a BP partner) is optimised as **supermarkets**

RESULTS

30m

Nearly 30 million more directions to BP locations from Google Maps

21%

Requests for driving directions up 21%

24%

24% year over year growth in action requests

42%

Calls up 42%

73%

Website visits up 73%

4b

Overall impressions have climbed to 4 billion

By optimising all their UK locations for unbranded local searches, BP is now poised to deliver a standout 'Near Me' Brand Experience for its millions of customers in the UK.



What the Rise of ‘Near Me’ Searches Means for Your Brand

As we pointed out, most ‘near me’ searches are both unbranded and food related. Hungry and thirsty consumers want to see whether their favourite drinks and foods are close by when their cravings are demanding their attention.

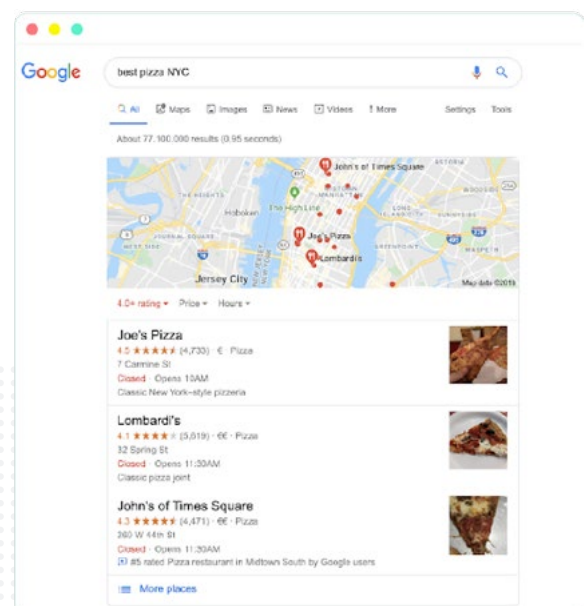
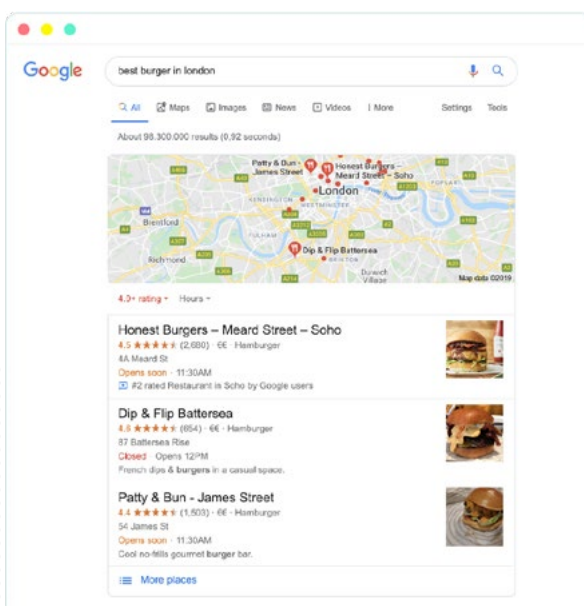
In the Age of ‘Near Me’, brands face empowered consumers with a wealth of information at their fingertips – wherever they are. So even though you’re a well-known brand, today’s customers want a personalised, local experience.

This means the playing field between big multi-location brands and local businesses has been leveled. Brands who aren’t showing up in unbranded local searches are becoming less and less visible, and risk falling into a ‘near me’ void.

Adding to that, today’s customers demand to be treated as individuals; for their digital experience and communications to be personalised and highly relevant, and catered to match their specific needs, interests and preferences.

For example, say you’re in a new city and you are hungry and want an organic grocery store for some high-quality grab and go food; or a hearty burger to satisfy your craving.

From the ‘near me’ searches below for “best pizza NYC” and “best burger in London” we see that Google’s Local 3 pack does not include any global multi-location brands.



Attract Customers to Your Locations: Optimise for 'Near Me' Searches

You may already know that listing your restaurant on business directories, map services and review sites is the number one way to rank for local search.

Sounds simple right? Well, here's what most businesses don't understand about business listings...

Listings alone are not enough.

The key to ranking for 'near me' searches is in the accuracy and consistency of your business information. Quality listings are more important than quantity.

Here's an example of what we mean by this:

'What The Cluck' is the name of a Thai restaurant in San Francisco that was randomly selected. We ran them through [Uberall's online company presence check tool](#), which establishes the online presence, consistency and accuracy of a business location, and here we see how easy it is to have inaccurate location information online.

Directory	Business Info	Hours	Photos
Google Search	What The Cluck 1782 Haight Street, San Francisco (415) 702-6777 http://www.whattheluckus.com/	✓	✓
Manta	Listing not found		
Google Maps	What The Cluck 1782 Haight Street, San Francisco (415) 702-6777 http://www.whattheluckus.com/	✓	✓
Facebook	Listing not found		
Yelp	What The Cluck SF 1782 Haight St, San Francisco +14157026777 http://www.whattheluckus.com	✓	✓
Bing	What The Cluck SF 1782 Haight St, San Francisco +1 (415) 702-6777 Website missing	✓	✓
Foursquare	What The Cluck 1782 Haight St, San Francisco Not applicable Website missing	✗	✗

- What The Cluck isn't listed on Facebook
- The name of the restaurant is different on Yelp and Bing
- The website is missing on Bing and Foursquare
- There are no photos or opening hours on Foursquare



The importance of choosing this restaurant location at random was not to call out an unsuspecting small business.

In fact, the reason What The Cluck was chosen is because they have accurate Google My Business listings. However, it's accuracy and consistency across the most important directories that are the real problem for most restaurant brands — [a recent study we conducted](#) found that...

96%

of business locations had inconsistencies across Google, Bing and Yelp.

So what information do you need to get right?

The most important information (from most to least important) is:

- 1 Address
- 2 Opening hours
- 3 Phone number
- 4 Business name
- 5 Website
- 6 Postcode

Google uses the accuracy and consistency of your business address, opening hours, phone number, business name, website and postcode as trust factors to see whether they should send a user to your location.

The more accurate your information is, the more likely Google will rank you in one of the top three spots.



Your **Three-Step** Guide to Ranking for 'Near Me' Searches

When optimising for 'near me' searches, it's important to understand that business listings and review management go hand-in-hand.

While having accurate and consistent business listings is a trust factor for search engines, so is a local restaurant's review score, review volume and the frequency with which a business location replies to its customers.

Basically, search engines want to know that customers are engaging with you and that you are engaging right back.

A restaurant location that follows the steps below will not only be optimised for the trust factors that Google feels are most important and gain visibility, but replying to reviews and engaging with your customers online will help to encourage brand loyalty and repeat visits from customers again and again.





Step 1 Optimise Your Business Listings

- Enter your address, opening hours, phone number, business name, website and postcode on the most important directories (Google, Bing, Yelp, Apple Maps, Facebook, Foursquare, Trip Advisor, etc.)
- Make sure that each location you list has the exact same information across the different directories, review sites and search engines listed above
- Be as specific as possible about your business and what it does. Do you allow dogs? Offer vegan options? Have special offers?— the more information you provide, the more you will rank for specific search queries
- Add photos that show off the best parts of the restaurant location



Step 2 Optimise Your Reviews

- Ask your customers to leave you reviews online by encouraging them while they are in your restaurant
- Encourage them to leave reviews on Facebook, TripAdvisor and Yelp — not just Google
- Make sure you reply to your reviews — [33%](#) of customers who receive a reply to a negative review change their review to be more positive
- Get as many reviews as you can as often as you can. Review velocity is important for rankings
- Reply to reviews fast — information from Google suggests that business locations that reply to reviews in under 5 minutes are more likely to rank higher in local search



Step 3 Find Out if Your Locations Are Optimised for ‘Near Me’ Searches

Focusing on optimising listings and reviews is the best way to ensure that you have a [marketing plan](#) that matches how consumers are currently searching.

But first, you need to understand how well your location/locations are optimised across the directories that matter most for ranking in local search.

To find out your current online optimisation score, use our [location presence check tool](#) now.



Create Your 'Near Me' Brand Experience

Take a look at our website for more information on how we help brands optimise their marketing strategies with a memorable experience at every step of today's customer journey.

For more Uberall studies, take a deep dive into the 'Near Me' Brand Experience with our library of free e-books, guides and reports.





About Uberall

Uberall empowers some of the world's biggest brands to deliver a memorable 'Near Me' Brand Experience – from online interactions to offline sales. The 'Near Me' Brand Experience consists of all the online touchpoints that a consumer has with the local outlets of a brand, from finding, persuading, buying and recommending, to returning as a regular customer.

Uberall's solutions enable multi-location brands to easily manage search and discovery, engagement and conversion in real-time on all online platforms, voice assistants, across websites, mobile apps, store locators, search engines, maps, social platforms and advertising networks.

Uberall is headquartered in Berlin, with additional offices in San Francisco, London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Cape Town. Its clients include Fortune 500 companies and industry leaders from all over the world.

[Learn more at uberall.com](https://uberall.com)

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