



TALLOO RESEARCH

The State of Local Visibility.

First Half 2026

How customers found, evaluated, and chose local businesses in the first six months of 2026.



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WHY THIS REPORT EXISTS

Customers decide where to spend money before they ever contact a business. Those decisions happen across maps, search results, reviews, directories, and now AI answers. Most business owners never see any of it.

This report makes that invisible layer visible. It is built entirely from published consumer research and official platform announcements from the first half of 2026. Every figure is credited to its source.

The short version: the way customers find local businesses changed more in the past three years than in the previous fifteen. The businesses keeping up are not doing more marketing. They are maintaining better infrastructure.

FIVE FINDINGS. TWO PLATFORM MOVES.

- 01** AI local discovery went mainstream. Usage grew from 6 percent to 45 percent of consumers in twelve months.
- 02** Google still closes the decision. Most journeys start there, and nearly all pass through it.
- 03** Customers verify everything. An AI answer starts the decision. Reviews and websites finish it.
- 04** Consistency is the new ranking factor. AI recommends the businesses it can verify.
- 05** Most businesses are not ready. Just 16 percent of brands track how AI represents them.

Plus: what Google and Apple announced this spring, and what each move means for a local business.

FINDING 01

45% OF CONSUMERS USED AI TO FIND A LOCAL BUSINESS

AI local discovery went mainstream.

In early 2025, 6 percent of consumers said they had used an AI tool to find a local business. Twelve months later, that number is 45 percent, per BrightLocal's 2026 Local Consumer Review Survey. AI is now the third most used discovery channel for local businesses, behind only Google and Facebook.

This is not idle browsing. Yext's 2026 consumer research found that 28 percent of consumers tried a new local business in the past six months because an AI assistant recommended it. Among households earning \$150,000 or more, a majority now start local searches with AI instead of Google. The customers with the most to spend moved first.



WHAT IT MEANS

AI assistants are already sending customers to someone in your category. If they cannot identify your business clearly, they name one they can.

FINDING 02

71% OF LOCAL SEARCHES TOUCH GOOGLE AT SOME POINT

Google still closes the decision.

More than half of consumers started their most recent local search on Google Search or Google Maps, and 71 percent used Google at some point in the journey, per BrightLocal. For ready-to-buy searches like “plumber near me,” Google's map results still appear on more than 90 percent of queries. Nearly three quarters of these journeys happen on a phone.

AI did not replace Google. It added a step in front of it. Customers move between an AI answer, a Google search, and a business profile without noticing the seams. A business now has to be correct in every one of those places, because the customer treats them as one system.

WHAT IT MEANS

Abandoning the basics to chase AI costs as much as ignoring AI. Maps, search, and AI answers work as one system, and they are maintained as one.

FINDING 03

88% OF AI USERS FACT-CHECK THE RECOMMENDATION

Customers verify everything.

Trust in AI is real, but it is conditional. BrightLocal found that 88 percent of consumers who get an AI recommendation check it before acting. Yext's data shows what that looks like: after an AI answer, 62 percent search Google, 58 percent visit the business website, and 52 percent click the sources the AI cited.

Reviews carry the most weight in that final check. Per BrightLocal, 97 percent of consumers consult reviews before choosing a local business, and review signals occupy five of the top six purchase influencers in Yext's research. An AI answer starts the decision. Reviews, the website, and the profile finish it.

WHAT IT MEANS

A business can win the AI mention and lose the customer at verification. Wrong hours, stale reviews, or a weak website end the sale you never knew you had.

FINDING 04

91% OF AI CITATIONS COME FROM SOURCES YOU CONTROL

Consistency is the new ranking factor.

When AI assistants cite sources for a local recommendation, 91 percent of those citations come from brand-managed sources: the business website and its listings, per Yext's 2026 analysis of more than 23 million AI citations. AI identifies a business by matching signals across surfaces. When the name, categories, services, and hours agree everywhere, the machine recommends with confidence. When they conflict, it moves on to a business it can verify.

The same logic now applies inside Google itself. Roughly 60 percent of searches ended without a click to any website in 2024, per SparkToro and Datos, and Similarweb data analyzed by SparkToro puts that figure near 68 percent in 2026. For most customers, the profile is the storefront. What it says, and whether it agrees with everything else the machine can see, decides who gets the call.

WHAT IT MEANS

This is infrastructure work, not promotion. Nothing here is a campaign. It is a state a business either maintains or loses.

FINDING 05

16% OF BRANDS TRACK HOW AI REPRESENTS THEM

Most businesses are not ready.

Per McKinsey, just 16 percent of brands systematically track their AI search performance. The other 84 percent are maintaining a presence in a channel they cannot see. Meanwhile, customer behavior has already moved. The gap between how customers search and how businesses maintain their presence is the defining local marketing opportunity of 2026.

That gap favors early movers. In most local markets, the first business in a category to get its information consistent, its reviews current, and its website machine-readable becomes the one AI names. That position compounds, because every consistent signal makes the next recommendation more likely.

WHAT IT MEANS

Your competitors are probably not doing this work yet. In a local market, being six months early is the whole advantage.

PLATFORM MOVES 01

Google rebuilt Search around AI.

At Google I/O and Google Marketing Live in May 2026, Google announced the largest set of changes to Search in years. The ones that matter for local businesses:

- May 15** Google published official guidance for appearing in its generative AI features, its clearest statement yet on what AI search rewards: clear answers, structured information, and consistent business data.
- May 19** Google reported that AI Mode passed 1 billion monthly users, with queries more than doubling every quarter since launch. It also shipped a redesigned conversational search box, calling it the biggest change to the box in 25 years.
- May 19** Agentic booking expanded to local services. Search can now take a specific request, gather live pricing and availability, and hand the customer directly to a provider to finish booking.
- May 20** At Google Marketing Live, Google expanded ads inside AI Mode, scaling paid placement in AI answers alongside new AI-driven campaign tools.

WHAT IT MEANS

Google is no longer a list of links. It answers, recommends, and increasingly books. A business appears in that flow only if its information is structured, consistent, and current enough for a machine to act on.

PLATFORM MOVES 02

Apple turned Maps into a business platform.

Apple made its most significant local commerce moves in years during the first half of 2026:

- March 24** Apple confirmed that ads are coming to Apple Maps in summer 2026, starting in the US and Canada: keyword-bid placements at the top of Maps search results, plus a new Suggested Places section. Targeting is contextual and privacy-first, not tied to a user's Apple Account.
- April 14** Apple unified Business Connect, Business Manager, and Business Essentials into a single Apple Business platform, live in more than 200 countries. Place data managed there feeds Apple Maps, Siri, Spotlight, Safari, Wallet, and CarPlay.
- Ahead** Businesses must claim their location through Apple Business to run Maps ads when they launch. Ad creation will be self-serve with no minimum spend, per Apple's announcement.

WHAT IT MEANS

Apple Maps is the default on more than a billion iPhones, and its users skew toward higher incomes. An unclaimed Apple listing was a gap before. Once paid placement launches, it is a competitor's opening. Claiming and completing the profile now, while the surface is uncrowded, is some of the cheapest visibility available in local marketing this year.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Three things to maintain. Not ten things to try

Get found.

Make sure your business information agrees everywhere machines look: Google, Apple, maps, directories, and your website. Consistency is what both search and AI reward. One wrong listing is enough to break the chain.

Build trust.

Keep reviews recent and answered, and keep your presence active. Customers verify before they call, and reviews are the signal they trust most. A silent profile reads as a closed business.

Convert demand.

Your website confirms the decision. It should state clearly what you do and where, load fast on a phone, and make contact effortless. Every verification path ends there.

None of this is a campaign. It is a state to maintain. That is the work Talloo does, so the business owner never has to.

See how your business shows up today: talloo.com/get-my-score

SOURCES

All figures in this report are drawn from published research and official platform announcements, and are reported as stated by their sources.

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Marketing infrastructure for local business. Get found,
build trust, convert demand.

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