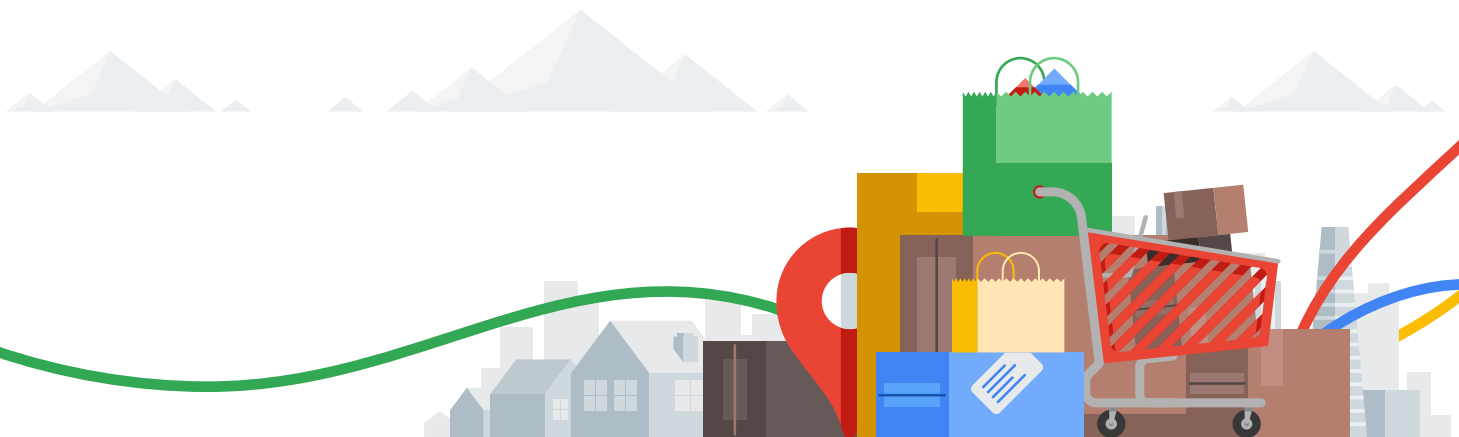# Elevating the Customer Journey in Retail with Google Maps Platform

How location intelligence can help deliver the experiences your customers expect

Google Maps Platform

Contents

Google Maps Platform

Welcome to the new retail landscape

For today's shoppers, experience is the new bottom line.

The rise of omnichannel shopping is reshaping the retail industry. Customers are equally at home online and in stores, while buying more on average than their peers who prefer one to the other.[1] They're tech savvy by nature, making them especially open to new experiences and hungry for innovation.[2] They're also reachable via more channels than any other cohort, both digital and physical, and the more channels they use, the more they tend to spend.[3] And on top of all that, the lingering effects of COVID-19 are making the flexibility of the omnichannel approach even more valuable.

That means an upswing in traffic to physical stores, as convenience-conscious shoppers gravitate towards BOPIS (buy online, pick up in store). This is a big change considering the downward trend of such visits as recently as a few years ago, with some declines even exceeding projections.[4] The rebound began in 2020, when one in three customers tried "click and collect" methods like curbside pickup for the first time. All told, nearly a third of the pandemic's online orders were fulfilled on the same day by neighborhood stores.[5] For many, options that began as safety-minded stop gaps are now synonymous with convenience, and show no sign of slowing down.

Finally, the numbers are staggering: global e-commerce is on pace to hit $4.2T, a 39% year-over-year increase. And the average order value has been increasing

1 in 3

Tried **curbside pickup** for the first time in 2020.[5]

1   eMarketer, "US Omnichannel Retail StatPack 2018"
2   McKinsey, "Ready to 'where': Getting sharp on apparel omnichannel excellence"
3   Harvard Business Review, "A Study of 46,000 Shoppers Shows That Omnichannel Retailing Works"
4   Bloomberg, "Gap Shares Drop as Dismal Store Traffic Drags Down July Sales"
5   Shopify, "The Future of Retail in 2021"

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worldwide, with shoppers' baskets shifting toward items related to health, working from home, and social distancing.[6] That difference had only grown by the holiday seasons, with $34.4 billion spent during Cyber Week—up more than 20% from 2019.[7]

With new opportunities come new challenges

Retailers are adapting to daily changes in supply, demand, and labor availability. Strategies for making the most of brick and mortar stores continue to evolve, with customer outreach a particularly urgent challenge. For example, what's the best way to keep an entire region of shoppers in the loop regarding nearby locations, changing business hours, inventory updates, COVID-related safety measures, and the availability of pickup options?

For many retailers with an online presence, customer attention is another major pain point. A staggering 70% of all digital shopping carts are abandoned before checkout, with more than 1 in 5 directly tied to the length and complexity of the process.[8] Research shows that the stakes couldn't be higher during this phase of the customer journey, with each passing second increasing the odds of a failed purchase.

Most notably, the pandemic saw more than 75% of all shoppers make some kind of switch—to a new shopping method, store, or brand—with convenience cited as the top reason. Shoppers have made major life changes as well, with the so-called "homebody" economy likely here

70%

Of all online shopping carts are **abandoned**, usually because of complexity.[8]

6   Adobe, "2021 Digital Economy Index"

7   Adobe, "A record-breaking Cyber Week 2020: Online shopping steals the show"

8   Baymard Institute, "44 Cart Abandonment Rate Statistics"

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to stay.[9] For all these reasons, the true differentiator in omnichannel retail isn't price, but *experience*.

It's perhaps no surprise that brand loyalty is more elusive than ever. As consumer demands for ease, speed, and confidence skyrocket, the margin for error is slim. Today, your reputation is only as good as the last experience you delivered. Specifically, more than half of today's millennials—the omnichannel generation—consider a brand's use of technology more important than the brand name itself.[10] That makes fast, reliable infrastructure a must, along with accurate data, a familiar interface, and minimal friction at each step.

The power of location

At the heart of these challenges is **location intelligence**—the maps, routes, and places that make up the world you share with your customers. When combined with your own internal data, location intelligence makes it possible to understand those customers in new ways, bridging the online and offline worlds and creating a seamless omnichannel experience.

## Introducing Google Maps Platform

With **Google Maps Platform**, location intelligence has never been more accessible. Our deep roots in mapping the world have achieved 99% global coverage, 25 million daily updates, and a monthly user base of over 1 billion. And we deliver it all in the form of easy-to-use APIs, tailor-made solutions, and high quality, continuously updated data, all designed to help bring the power of location to the moments that matter most to your customers.

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9   McKinsey, "US consumer sentiment and behaviors during the coronavirus crisis"

10   Annalect, "Omnichannel Strategy Essential for Millennial Marketing"

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The retail customer journey

Among its many applications, the role of location intelligence is perhaps most clear across the customer journey. In particular, customers are demanding more than ever when it comes to digital shopping experiences than they did before the pandemic, with an emphasis on integrated, tailored services delivered with total continuity across devices and channels.[11]

Marketing

Checkout

Delivery

Research

Browsing

Store Location

Pickup
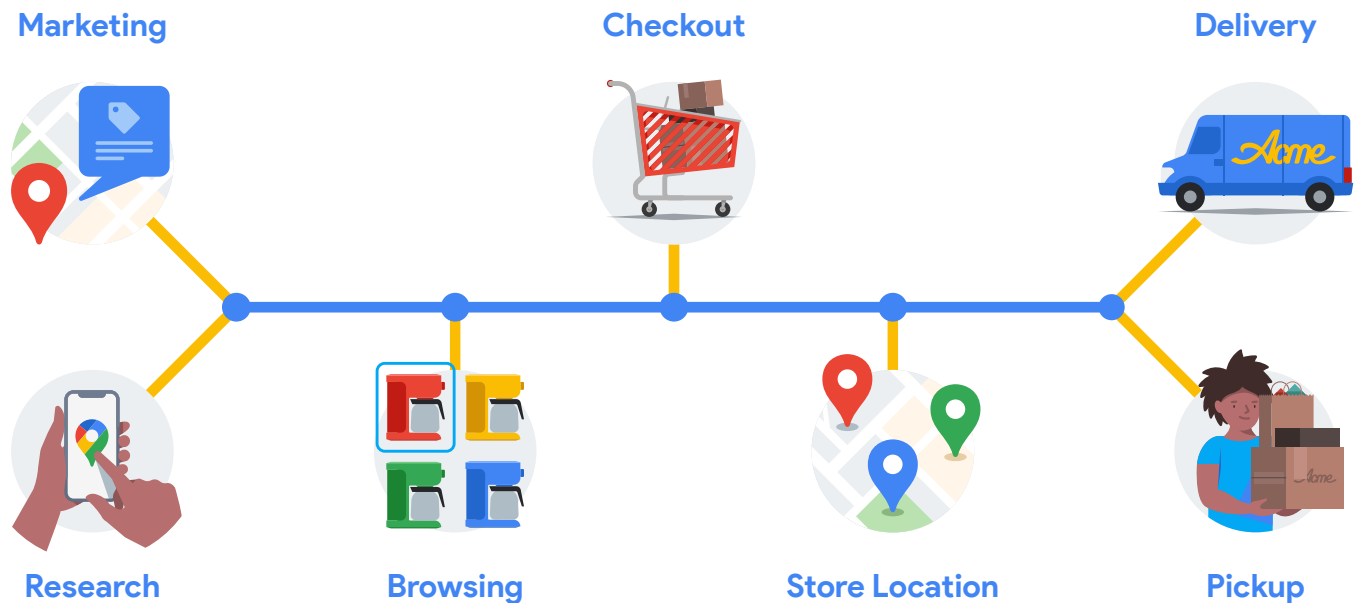
Elevating every step of the customer journey with location intelligence

The customer journey is multifaceted, but ultimately a series of clearly-defined steps expected to live up to each user's expectations. For example, customers demand ease and flexibility while browsing, speed at checkout, and reliability when it comes to delivery.

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11   Harvard Business Review, "The Pandemic Is Rewriting the Rules of Retail"

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Marketing: Giving it tailored relevance

Let's start with the very first point of contact between your brand and the world: marketing. With mobile devices and ubiquitous connectivity, your customers are never more than a moment away from their next shopping experience, which is why as many as 78% of all retailers have implemented geomarketing programs that use location-aware promotions to reach shoppers in a tailored way.[12]

More than a third of all mobile users are happy to share their location with a retailer in exchange for deals, events, and offers that depend on it.[13] Shoppers agreeing to share such information through your app on an opt-in basis can be matched with your nearest stores' inventories and event calendars to reveal a wide range of geomarketing opportunities. The resulting communications can be turned into rich, location-based experiences by leveraging Google Maps Platform to contextualize them with maps, places, and optimal routes.

The impact of these programs can be significant. Retailers report increases in average cart size of up to 15% when using location intelligence to deliver promotions that shoppers find timely and relevant.[14] For all these reasons and more, geomarketing has become a uniquely important channel for reaching today's customers.

Research: Making it a seamless path to your brand

Omnichannel shoppers are proactive and tech savvy, often finding your brand on their own through online research. Today, 74% of in-store shoppers search online before going to the store to shop,[15] and those that do spend an average of 13% more once they arrive.[16] Despite fears that physical stores were becoming "showrooms" for subsequent purchases from an online source, the research shows that neither medium holds an advantage over

78%

Of retailers have implemented geomarketing programs.[12]

11–15%

Increase in cart size when using location intelligence to deliver promotions.[12]

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12 *Unlocking Value with Location Intelligence.* Boston Consulting Group, 2021

13 eMarketer, "Location-Based Advertising Is Becoming More Costly"

14 *Unlocking Value with Location Intelligence.* Boston Consulting Group, 2021

15 Google/Ipsos, Global, Global Retail Study, Base: past week in-store shoppers and online searchers (n=7,599), online 18+ who searched before visiting a store in the last week, Feb. 2019

16 Harvard Business Review, "A Study of 46,000 Shoppers Shows That Omnichannel Retailing Works"

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the other, with shoppers "webrooming" just as frequently—browsing products online before making a purchase from a physical location.

Many omnichannel shoppers start their online search with Google. In fact, Google searches for "available near me" have grown globally by over 100% since last year[17], while searches for "who has <product> in stock"—whether the product is toilet paper, a Nintendo Switch, or even a freezer—have increased by an incredible 8,000% year over year[18].

Online browsing: Making it clearer and more informative

For all its convenience, however, online shopping experiences are often disconnected from local inventory. A customer eager to pick up an order in person may be frustrated to learn a desired item is unavailable, especially if this information is presented late in the checkout process. No matter the size of your product catalog, there's no substitute for your customers' peace of mind: knowing the product they want is available when they want it.

Meanwhile, more shoppers are choosing alternate fulfillment options, and spending an average of 23% more when they do.[19] Additionally, nearly *half* of those shoppers—45%—make another purchase once they arrive.[20] These are significant benefits, but they're left unrealized when the online shopping process fails to integrate such options in a clear, actionable way. That's why more retailers are leaning into local pickup and delivery to grow sales and improve their customer experience.

Location intelligence can close this gap by making local inventory an intuitive part of the customer journey, even online. With **Product Locator**, the availability of a product near the customer can be integrated directly into the product page as a list of nearby locations, sorted by distance, making the full range of pickup options clear. Alternatively, stores carrying the item can be visualized on a dynamic map, integrating the full scope of Google Maps features and usability into the product browsing process.

Make Product Locator a part of your shopping experience today with our implementation guide.

+19%

Higher conversion rate for shoppers who opt for local **delivery** over traditional delivery.[19]

+13%

Higher conversion rate for shoppers who opt for local **pickup** over delivery.[19]

45%

Of local pickup customers make an additional purchase upon arrival.[19]

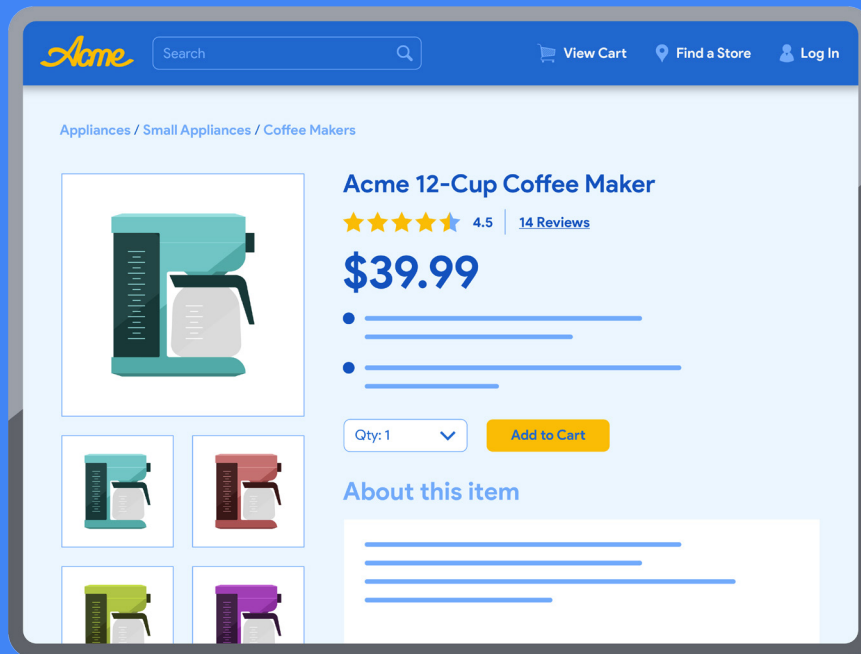17   Google Data, Global English, Feb 26 - Apr 25, 2020 vs Feb 25 - Apr 25, 2019
18   Google Data, US, March - May 2019 vs. March - May 2020
19   Shopify, "The Future of Retail in 2021"
20   Shopify, "The Future of Retail in 2021"

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Solution
Product Locator

With **Product Locator**, the availability of a product at locations near the customer can be integrated directly into the product page as a list of nearby stores, sorted by distance, making the full range of pickup options clear. Alternatively, stores carrying the item can be visualized on a dynamic map, gracefully integrating the full scope of Google Maps features and usability into the product browsing process.
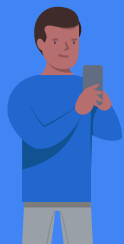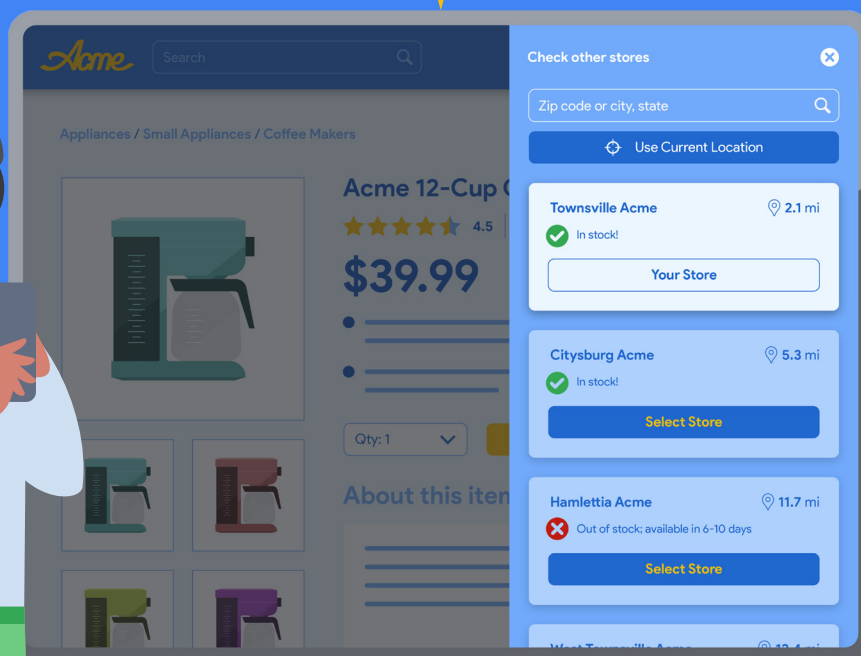
"Customer support calls on stock in stores **decreased by 50%**, due to placing the information on maps online, which equated to a third of all customer calls."

Head of Product Store Technology
UK-based Grocer[12]

Checkout: Speeding it up as much as possible

Research has shown that the process of entering an address is one of the biggest bottlenecks in completing a purchase. Addresses are critical information for both delivery and billing, but inconvenient to type, especially on mobile devices, leading to a slow, error-prone process.

Google Maps Platform's **Checkout** solution solves this problem with Autocomplete, making it easy and fast to enter even the most complex address. And because your users can choose from a menu of predicted addresses as they type, mistakes from manual entry can be dramatically reduced.[21] It's how Shopify has not only boosted conversion rates, but achieved almost 20% time savings and error reduction on mobile in the process.[22] And Tokopedia has implemented address validation to increase the rate of successful address entry by 10%.[23]

Make Checkout a part of your shopping experience today with our implementation guide, or build it in minutes.

20% faster

Checkout can help customers complete each purchase in less time.[21]

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21   Shopify, "Introducing Google Autocomplete for Shopify: Less Friction at Checkout, More Sales", 2017

22   Shopify, "Introducing Google Autocomplete for Shopify: Less Friction at Checkout, More Sales", 2017

23   Tokopedia, "Tokopedia: Building a powerful new address validation platform with Google Maps Platform"

Google Maps Platform

Solution
Checkout
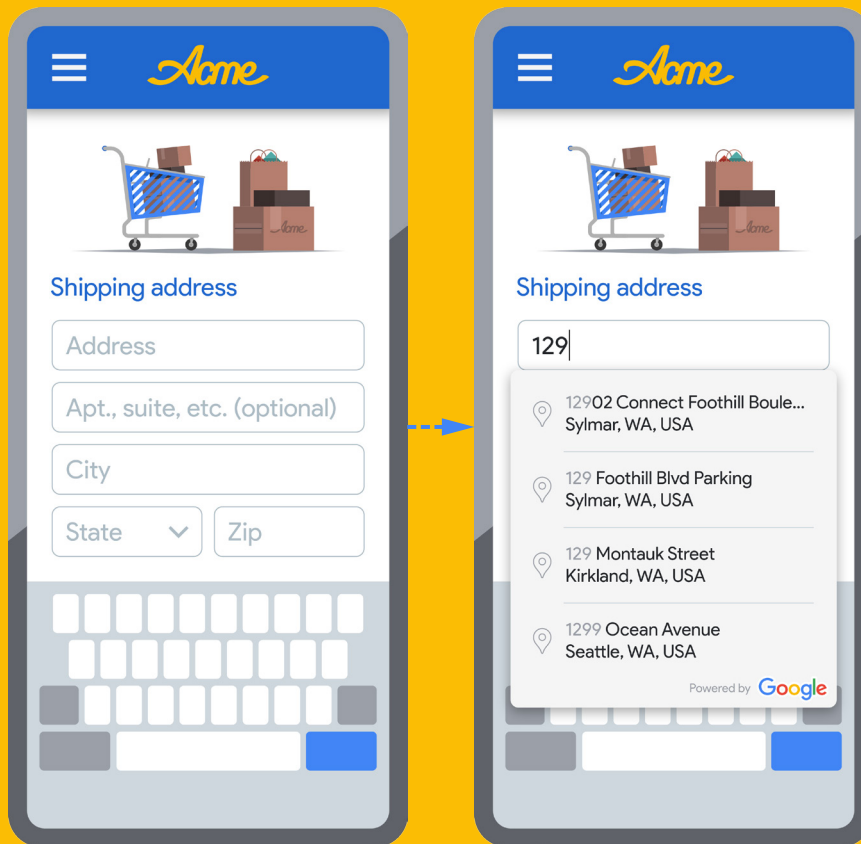
Checkout makes it easy and fast to enter even the most complex address—whether using a keyboard or mobile device. And because your users can choose from a menu of predicted addresses as they type, mistakes from manual entry can be dramatically reduced.

Faster, easier checkout

More accurate deliveries

Higher-quality CRM data

Finding a store: Making it effortless

With popular options like curbside pickup and personal shopping transforming the value of physical stores, searches for "open now near me" have grown globally by more than 200% year over year.[24] Now, as more online orders are tied to a place in the real-world, locating a store quickly and effectively can be a meaningful differentiator.

This may seem like table stakes, but the *experience* matters—and it can mean the difference between a conversion and a missed opportunity. That's why we designed **Store Locator Plus**, a ready-to-use solution that makes it easy for your customers to find the nearest physical branches of your business, all through the look and feel they already know from Google Maps and **Google My Business**—the world's largest storefront. In fact, when you manage your online presence with Google My Business, you can integrate the information your customers need and the mapping functionality that brings it to life—all in a single place.

A subtle but immediate challenge in any store locator is identifying the user's starting location. Retailers can either request user permissions via mobile location services and web browser geolocation to automatically surface the user's current location, or offer an Autocomplete entry form to fill out. From there, a map can clearly display the distance and travel times between the user and nearby locations.

Based on our own data, three quarters of all shoppers search for details on a store before leaving the house. Specifically, 96% of customers are more likely to visit a business that lists their hours of operation, 90% if the business provides photos on their storefront, and 67% when reviews are available.[25] These are simple but transformative measures, and they serve as differentiators in a world in which more than half of all brick and mortar locations fail to do so.[26]

Such information is even more important in the COVID era. Consumers are more eager than ever to find efficient routes and verify important store features like accessibility and parking. These are increasingly seen not just as factors of convenience, but health and safety as well.

96%
Of customers are more likely to visit a store when hours of operation listed.[25]
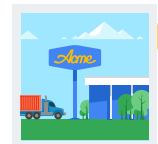
90%
Of customers are more likely to visit a store that posts photos of its storefront.[25]

67%
Customers say positive ratings is important in selecting a business or store.[25]
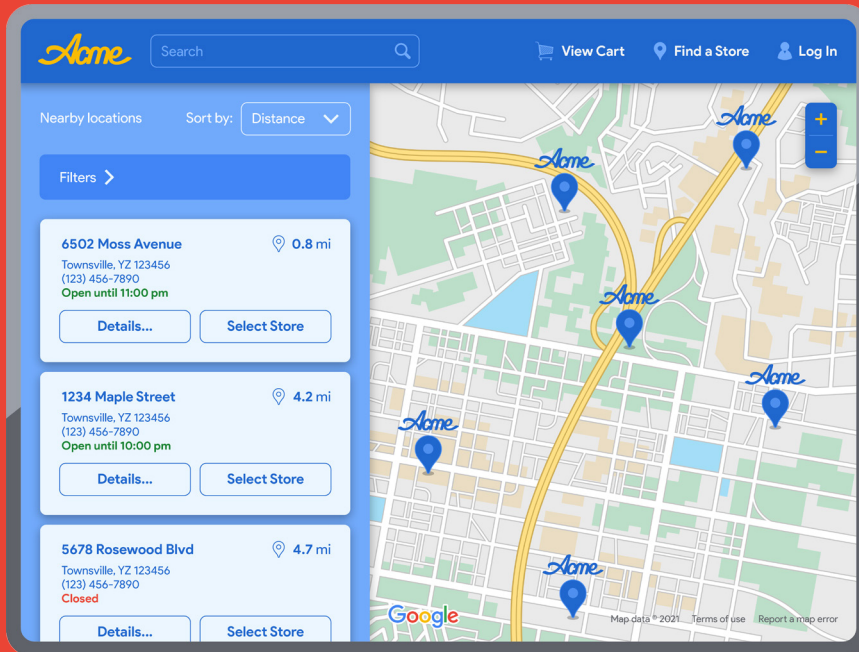
24   Google, "How retailers can stand out this holiday season", 2021

25   Ipsos Research, "Benefits of a Complete Listing," 2017

26   Geomarketing, "56 Percent Of Local Retailers Haven't Claimed Google My Business Listing"

Google Maps Platform

Solution
Store Locator Plus

Finding a store may seem like table stakes, but the experience matters—and can mean the difference between a conversion and a missed opportunity. That's why we designed **Store Locator Plus**, a ready-to-use solution that makes it easy for your customers to visit you in person, all through the look and feel they already know. But that's just the beginning. It can also integrate calendars for in-store offers and events, appointment scheduling, Google Street View photography, and much more.
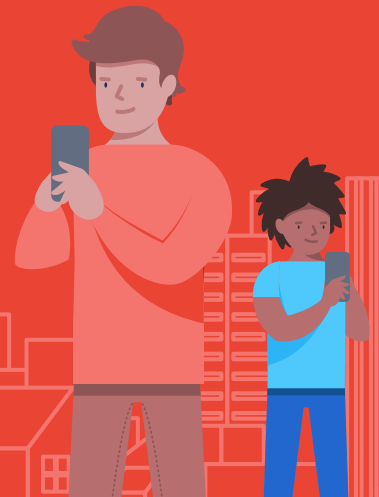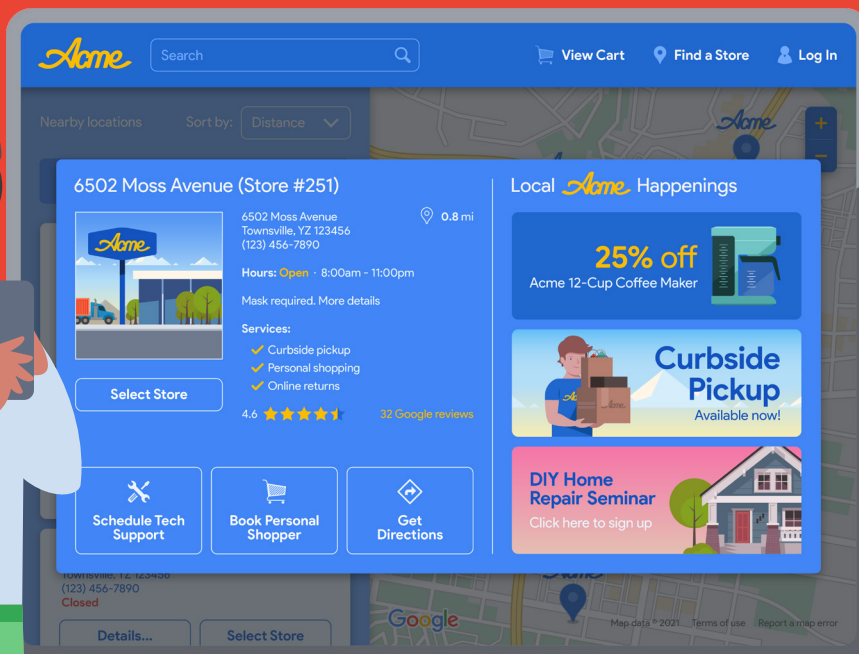
Finally, the store locator plays an essential role in keeping your visitors within your checkout flow. In the absence of a prominently displayed, usable store locator, consumers are tempted to break away in favor of third-party sources of information—and once they're gone, many consumers simply never return. Store Locator Plus helps you retake control of this crucial step in the checkout process, reducing risk of losing your customers to the web, or even competitors.
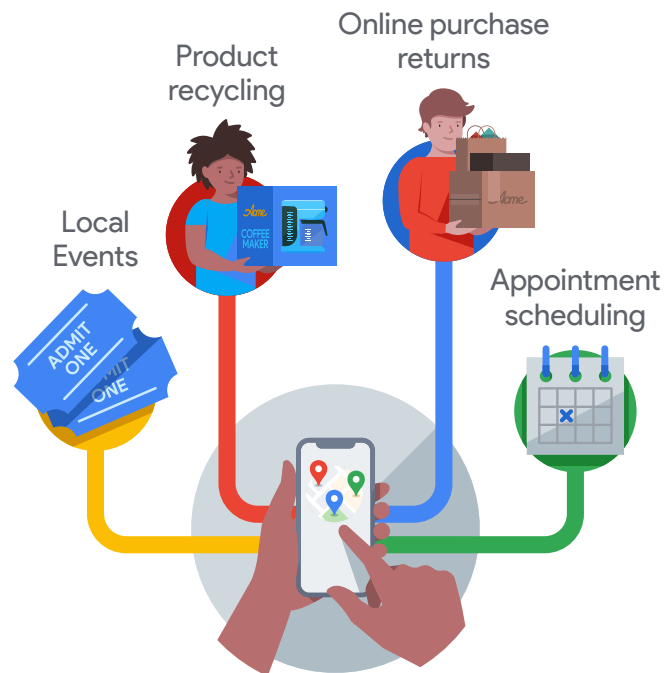
Make Store Locator Plus a part of your shopping experience today with our [implementation guide](#), or [build it in minutes](#).

Store location: Making it a richer and deeper experience

But even this is just the beginning of what a store locator is capable of in a post-COVID, omnichannel world. As customers rediscover the convenience of neighborhood stores, retailers are recognizing their unique ability to deepen brand loyalty. What used to simply be a place to shop is now being reimagined as a venue for events, classes, on-site services and consultations, recycling of specialty goods, and even a convenient way to process returns for offline and online orders alike.

This can mean all the difference for omnichannel shoppers. For instance, when users search for a location's details, the same page that lists its address and business hours can also present options for making an appointment directly through Google Maps—eliminating the need to redirect to another site or make a phone call. The Google My Business API makes this easy, allowing you to create a range of actions—including [appointment booking](#)—that can be retrieved and surfaced in your app.

Product recycling

Online purchase returns

Local Events

Appointment scheduling

A store locator shouldn't just be part of the customer journey— it should **extend** it.

An effective store locator also presents a flexible geomarketing channel for users who choose to share their location for a more tailored experience. This includes [location-based offers](#) like vouchers that entitle the shopper to discounts on their favorite items, redeemable only at their local store. In the process, such offers can provide an accurate way to track online-to-offline conversion.

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Simply put, your store locator isn't merely a feature. It has the potential to become the ultimate omnichannel storefront.

## Pickup: Getting there faster and more conveniently

With a purchase made, many of your omnichannel customers will choose to pick it up themselves, either in-store or at the curb. To help get them there, **Directions** can turn any two addresses into a list of routes, complete with time estimates based on up-to-the-minute traffic. Additionally, since no two shoppers get around in exactly the same way, routes can be easily converted based on mode of transportation, with cars, public transit, cycling, and even walking supported. Finally, we make it easy to filter distracting details from the resulting maps—including competing stores—while marking points of interest that customers might find relevant.

Delivery: Making it more transparent and reliable

Of course, delivery remains a common option as well. On average, however, retailers can expect up to 5% of addresses to be incorrect,[27] leading to costly delivery mistakes, customer frustration and reputational damage—not to mention unreliable data added to your CRM. By integrating Autocomplete across the entire customer journey, your shoppers can easily find the address they need by entering only the first few characters, then selecting their desired location from a list of predicted options—saving time and ensuring accuracy all at once.

As a final step, Google Maps Platform's ability to quickly render static map images makes it easy to generate a lightweight, email-friendly visual of exactly where the recipient can expect their package to arrive—an extra layer of security that users can understand at a glance.

For more insights into how customer expectations are changing, take a look at our recently published white paper on **optimizing the delivery and pickup experience for your business**.
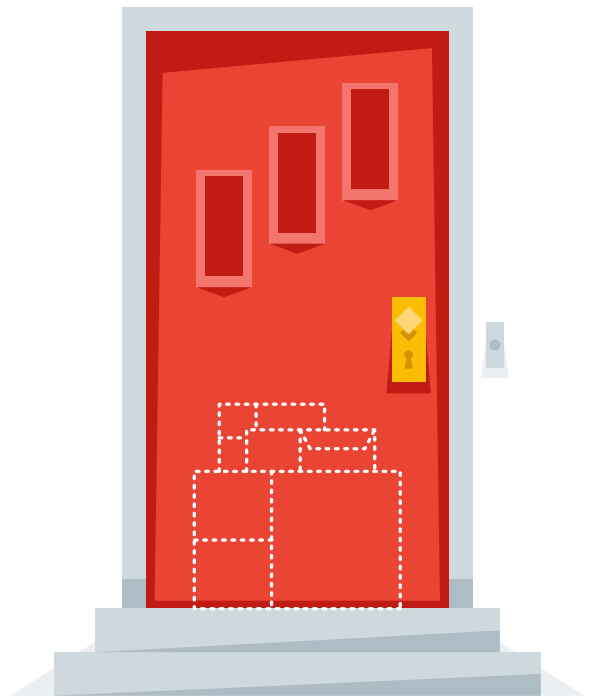
5%
Of all deliveries are sent to the wrong address.[25]

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27   Tamebay, "Failed deliveries cost industry £1.6bn each year – what can be done about it?"

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Customer experience is just the beginning

Location intelligence transforms customer experiences by making them faster, easier, and more engaging. But its applications extend across your operation, from marketing to your supply chain. And for almost any given business, in retail and beyond, it reveals insights that help improve the metrics that matter most: customer satisfaction, customer retention, online to offline conversion, revenue growth, and much more. Across a growing range of tasks, location intelligence provides the visibility you need to identify inefficiencies and reduce errors.

"Location intelligence plays an important role in Spencer's online grocery business, but this is only 3% of the overall business. There's a huge opportunity to leverage location to improve the conventional grocery business as well."

Jawed Ahmed

General Manager and Head of IT, Grocery

Spencer's Retail

Google Maps Platform

# What success with location intelligence looks like

As exciting as these applications are, we've only just begun to explore the full potential of this technology. In fact, a recent survey by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) of more than 500 executives found that the greatest benefits were realized by companies with location intelligence strategies that span the *entire* enterprise, not just the traditional use cases we associate with maps. Intriguingly, it found only 18% of all retailers have implemented truly mature location intelligence strategies—making now an opportune time to differentiate.

Where location intelligence is making a difference

BCG's report, **Unlocking Value with Location Intelligence**, explores how this technology is transforming key use cases in businesses across the world, including retail. Geomarketing ranks at the top, with most respondents reporting they use location intelligence to profile and segment customers, tailor the products and services they offer, and measure the efficacy of their marketing. Enhancements to online customer experiences come next, by surfacing relevant information at the right time. Finally, operational use cases are popular as well, such as using location intelligence to optimize networks and supply chains.

The power of measurement

Equally important is the ability to *measure* the value of your location intelligence strategy. For instance, the most successful businesses are big believers in the power of A/B testing: an essential technique for isolating the incremental impact of incorporating maps and geospatial data in use cases on business results. Multi-touch attribution models are important as well, as they allow businesses to tie revenue back to location intelligence programs and tactics. By combining multiple dimensions of data, the models help measure the relative contribution and ROI of specific interactions across the customer journey.
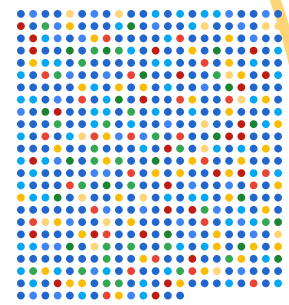
n = 520
Global executives polled
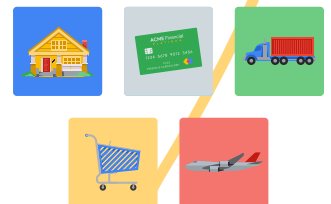
5 industries
Retail, financial services, real estate, travel, transportation

4 regions
US, UK, Singapore, India

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The difference between leading and following

Among the paper's most striking findings is the difference between companies found to be *leading* and *following* in location intelligence. Leaders are characterized by comprehensive strategies that apply the technology to a wide range of problems with in-house expertise. Followers, by contrast, are still in the early stages—and many have yet to begin—with limited implementation of basic use cases.

In comparison to followers, location intelligence leaders enjoy a 1.3× reduction in delivery errors, a 1.4× boost in online-to-offline conversion, and a 2.1× edge in customer satisfaction.[28] These are impressive numbers, and they're the product of a *holistic* strategy—not a lone feature or one-off upgrade.

Followers

1.3×
Operational
efficiency

1.4×
Online-to-offline
conversion

2.1×
Customer
satisfaction

Leaders

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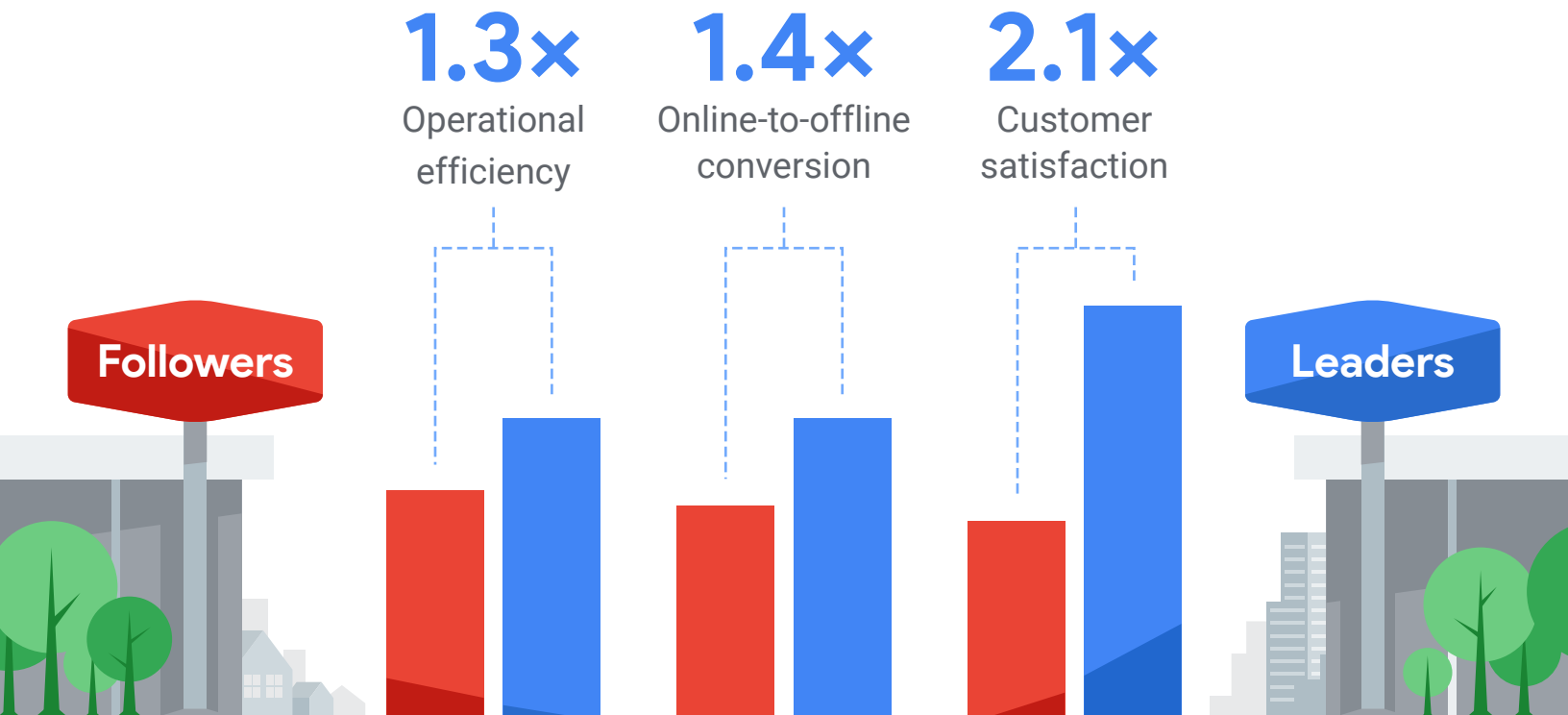
28   *Unlocking Value with Location Intelligence.* Boston Consulting Group, 2021

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Why Google Maps Platform?

Developing the location intelligence strategy that best suits your goals is a long-term process, making your choice of platform all the more important. Google Maps has been mapping the world since 2005 and innovating at every step, from providing street addresses to residents of India for the first time to capturing imagery from the depths of the oceans to Mars and Venus. Google Maps Platform brings this power to businesses through a familiar interface, all while adding enterprise-grade solutions, security, and support.
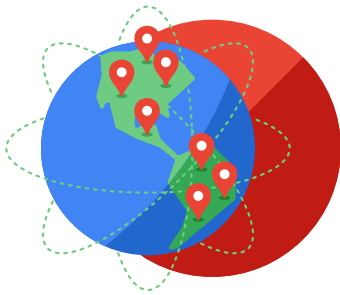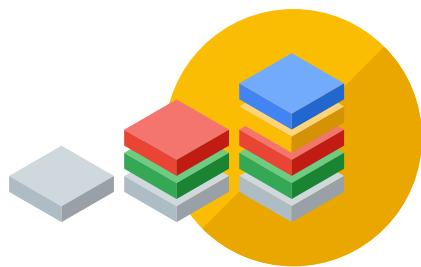
Global coverage

We've been mapping the Earth since 2005 at an unmatched scale: **200 million** places around the world, updated **50 million** times a day.

A familiar interface

Google Maps serves over **one billion** users every month, making it the navigation solution your customers are most likely to be familiar with.

Speed and reliability

Deliver the speed, responsiveness, and reliability your customers expect across their digital lives.

A pipeline of innovation

Working with Google means leveraging the talents of a team that never stops innovating.

Google Maps Platform

"More than four million customers a year continue their journey on our website thanks to Google Maps Platform. They really like the interface, helping us deliver the right stock to the right locations and make sure they leave satisfied."

Rob Sargent
Senior Lead Digital Product Manager
Argos

Global Scale

Maps, routes, and places not only operate at every scale, from national borders to neighborhood listings, but they're constantly changing. Whether it's shipping lanes, traffic patterns, or new construction, our world is always in flux—often from one second to the next. With reliable, comprehensive data for 220 countries and territories, Google Maps Platform covers 200 million places, and over 100 million square kilometers of land—the equivalent of 18 *billion* football fields.[29]

At the same time, we continue to invest in new ways to reflect the latest information, with over 50 million updates made to the map each day. We crowdsource a world of insights to keep data fresh, combining human perception, regional expertise, and automation with a growing set of machine learning tools—all to put fresh location data at your fingertips.

A familiar interface

Google Maps serves over one billion users every month, which is why so many business customers expect the Google Maps experience they know and love in their everyday lives. This kind of familiarity is a powerful thing, allowing even your newest features to draw on an existing understanding of concepts like points of interest (POIs), the visual representation of roads and other map details, and more.

Speed and reliability

Google Maps Platform is built on Google's infrastructure, allowing you to scale from prototype to production to planet-scale, all without having to worry about capacity, reliability, or performance. And our commitment to security is simple: whatever you build, we'll protect it with our multilayered secure infrastructure, expert engineers, and commitment to transparency. With cloud centers in 24 regions and 73 zones, our infrastructure operates at 99.9% reliability, offering high responsiveness, high availability, and low latency. Simply put, you can count on Google's worldwide network.

Benefit from a pipeline of innovation

Finally, working with Google means leveraging the talents of a team that never stops innovating. We're always working on new ways to put the power of location intelligence in your hands, and we've only scratched the surface of what's possible.

200M

Google Maps covers **200 million** specific places across the world...

250

...spread across a total of **250 countries and territories**...

50M

...with **50 million daily updates** to keep our view of the world fresh.

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29   "A more detailed, colorful map" - August 2020

Google Maps Platform

Conclusion

Getting omnichannel shopping right has never been more challenging, but the rewards have never been greater. Google Maps Platform's retail solutions are helping businesses of all sizes keep up, by gaining insights, taking action, and creating value for their customers. Whether you're looking to close the gaps in your online shopping experience, better merge your online and offline storefronts, or build something entirely new, Google Maps Platform makes it easier than ever to innovate. We can't wait to see where it takes you.

Visit the [Google Maps Platform for Retail site](#) to learn more.

Google Maps Platform