01 02 03

INSIGHTS ABOUT GBP VERIFICATION YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ASK CHATGPT FOR LOCAL RESULTS?

GOOGLE ROLLS OUT AI MODE TESTING TO MORE USERS, ADDS NEW CARDS AND HISTORY TAB

1 INSIGHTS ABOUT GBP VERIFICATION YOU NEED TO KNOW

Last month, Lisa Lansman from Google's Global Partnerships team interviewed Shrina, a product manager with the Google Business Profile team, to discuss recent improvements and best practices related to business verification.

Lisa shared on LinkedIn that Google recognizes verification can be challenging for businesses and emphasized the company's commitment to making this process smoother.

Here's an overview of the key points:

What Google's Verification Team Looks For:

- Your business must physically exist at the provided address.
- You must be a genuine person, not a bot or a fraudulent actor.
- You must be authorized to manage Google's business profile.

Balancing User Experience and Security: Google faces the complex task of simplifying verification for legitimate businesses while effectively preventing fraudulent activities. Every step taken to enhance user experience could weaken security, and every fraud prevention measure might unintentionally frustrate honest businesses.

Google continually balances:

- Streamlining onboarding for trustworthy businesses.
- Ensuring robust protection against fraud and misuse.

Improvements in Video Verification: In response to user feedback, Google has significantly enhanced the video verification process:

- **Clear rejection feedback:** Merchants now receive precise explanations about why a video was rejected and how to correct it.
- **Video previews:** Users can review their videos prior to submission to ensure compliance.
- **Animated tutorials:** Instructional videos in the Help Center clearly guide users through the process.
- **Multi-location verification:** Simplified procedures for businesses with multiple locations, including chains and franchises.

Addressing Suspensions and Re-verifications: While suspensions and reverifications help maintain platform integrity, they sometimes inadvertently affect legitimate businesses. Google is actively:

- Seeking solutions to minimize unintended disruptions while maintaining stringent security.
- Resolving issues related to incorrect suspensions and improving the appeals process.

Looking Ahead to 2025 and Beyond: Google plans to continue refining the verification process by:

- Further simplifying the process for authentic businesses.
- Strengthening anti-fraud measures.
- Enhancing support responsiveness and improving overall customer assistance.

Best Practices for Video Verification: To ensure successful verification, follow these guidelines:

For Storefront Businesses:

● Clearly display your business name on exterior signage.
● Show interior spaces appropriate to your business type (e.g. restaurant kitchens).
● Provide evidence of authorized access (opening locked doors, using cash registers).
● Capture surroundings with identifiable street signs or landmarks.

For Service Area Businesses:

● Display branded vehicles, business cards, or professional equipment.
● Include footage of you actively providing services at customer locations.
● Use clear location markers for easy identification.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

● Avoid filming generic fields or unmarked roads that lack identifiable features.
● Do not submit videos recorded by individuals not affiliated with the business.

Google helps businesses by enhancing transparency, responsiveness, and innovation to provide a smoother, safer verification experience while maintaining trust across its platform.

2 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ASK CHATGPT FOR LOCAL RESULTS?

ChatGPT now offers more accurate local search results by leveraging Bing data. Learn how it works—and what steps local businesses can take to maintain visibility.

Although Google remains the leader in local search, ChatGPT has made significant progress.

While still trailing Google, its local results have improved markedly since we last ranked it among AI search tools less than a year ago.

The key shift?

ChatGPT began tapping into Microsoft Bing's search index last fall.

While it now retrieves data from Bing, ChatGPT uses its proprietary algorithm to interpret and present the information.
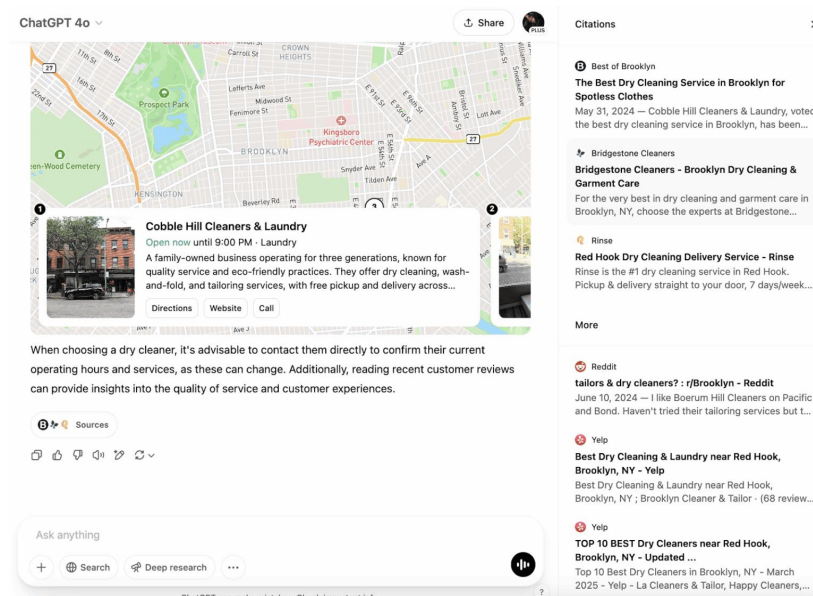
This means that the most effective way to boost your business's visibility in ChatGPT results is to ensure you're listed in Bing's search index.

That said, ChatGPT handles local search queries differently than Bing does.

Some notable differences were discovered by comparing queries side by side and analyzing how ChatGPT assembles local search results.

ChatGPT draws from Bing Search, but results may differ

When ChatGPT was asked for dry cleaners in Red Hook, Brooklyn, that are open on Sundays, it responded with a map and three listings—similar to the local pack you'd see on Google.

The references span a mix of city guides such as Best of Brooklyn, business directories, and user-generated platforms like Reddit and Yelp.

Running the same search on Bing initially yields a similar-looking result, but closer inspection reveals several important differences.
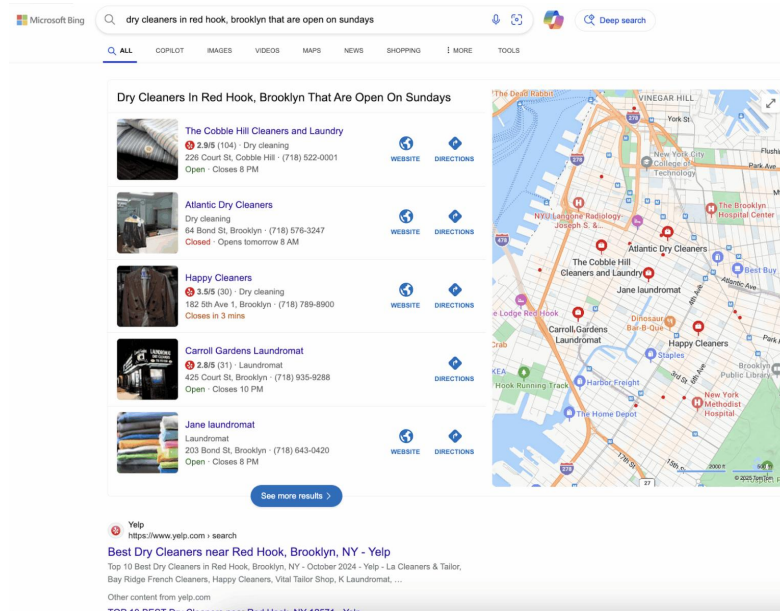
For instance, the top result—The Cobble Hill Cleaners and Laundry—appears identically in both ChatGPT's list and Bing's.

However, the second entry from ChatGPT, Bridgestone Cleaners, shows up much lower on Bing, ranked 14th as Bridgestone Dry Cleaners & Bridal Care.

Meanwhile, the third listing, Brooklyn Cleaner & Tailor, is absent from Bing's results.

While there is some overlap, these discrepancies suggest that ChatGPT's output isn't simply a repackaging of Bing's search results.

What's going on here?

ChatGPT Cannot Access Bing's Local Business Profile Information

- ChatGPT does not access or utilize business profile data managed through the Bing Places for Business platform.
- It cannot retrieve third-party enhancements from Bing listings, such as reviews from platforms like Facebook or Yelp.
- It does not have visibility into the maps or geographic displays that appear with Bing local business results.Strengthening anti-fraud measures.

These limitations have been confirmed through a series of in-depth questions with ChatGPT to better understand how it generates local search information (detailed further below).

ChatGPT Now Integrates Bing Web Results

ChatGPT initiates a Bing search using the relevant local query, retrieves the top 20–30 search results, and then organizes the information based on its internal analysis and reasoning.

The priorities of ChatGPT diverge in several ways from those of a search engine.

For instance, when asked about top-rated local businesses in a certain category, ChatGPT said it goes through this process:

- **Initial scan:** ChatGPT reviews the top 20-30 search results, focusing on store websites, review aggregators, niche blogs or local guides, and directories.
- **Selection filter:** ChatGPT selects 3-5 sources that display an average star rating, offer unrestricted access without paywalls, and are both verifiable and linkable.
- **Deeper dive:** From this pool, ChatGPT narrows down to 5-8 sources that appear the most relevant and informative.

ChatGPT Uses Its Own Standards to Filter and Display Results

In the "Deeper dive" phase of the sorting process, the term "most promising" is used.

For instance, for a search like "best store for snow gear in Eugene Oregon," ChatGPT aims to find sources that appear to provide reliable, detailed, and well-organized information to answer the question effectively. It evaluates these sources based on several key criteria, such as:

Use highly relevant and specific titles or snippets, such as "Top 5 Ski Shops in Eugene" or "Eugene Outdoor Gear Guide," to convey useful, immediately targeted information.

Prioritize trusted and authoritative domains, including:

- Retailer websites like REI.com
- Review platforms such as Yelp.com
- Local interest blogs (e.g., eugenemagazine.com)
- Official or credible sources like BBB.org, Facebook business pages, or reputable news outlets
- **Rich metadata:** "When a snippet displays details like business hours, star ratings, and addresses, it indicates that the page is well-structured and provides valuable information."
- **Unique content:** "I tend to avoid repetitive listings from aggregators or generic directories such as Yellow Pages or outdated TripAdvisor pages unless no higher-quality alternatives exist."

Regarding what ChatGPT means by "verifiable and linkable," it defines "verifiable" as follows:

- You can independently verify the facts I reference by visiting the source yourself.
- The information I provide is precise, clearly dated when relevant, and properly attributed—never vague, anonymous, or lacking a credible source.

I avoid citing any content that appears to be unmoderated, user-generated fluff, or lacks reliable oversight.

It listed the following examples:

● A dedicated REI store page showcasing business hours and featured outdoor gear brands.
● A Yelp listing displaying a 4.7-star average rating based on over 100 customer reviews.
● A published blog article with a clearly attributed author and visible date of publication.

It also provided examples of sources that would fail to meet the "verifiable" standard.

● Content sourced from an unattributed forum comment without verifiable context or citation.
● A business name lacking identifiable online presence, physical address, or verifiable credentials.
● A website missing essential details such as contact information or an identifiable author or publisher.

ChatGPT explained that 'linkable' refers to a page with a direct URL that users can access freely, without needing to go through a paywall or subscription.

ChatGPT does not use Google as a source
This answer required a bit of in-depth research.

ChatGPT indicated in several responses that it retrieves local query data from multiple sources, including Google Search and Google Maps.

When asked directly, ChatGPT clarified it does not have direct access to Google.

ChatGPT may occasionally mention a business's Google rating or include a Google Maps link, but only if that information appears on a website indexed by Bing.

The Map is an Integral Part of ChatGPT's Interface

If ChatGPT is independently applying its own logic to reorganize Bing's web results, why do its results still resemble Bing's local pack format, complete with a map, as seen in Bing's local search results?

When asked about this, initially, ChatGPT responded confidently that it does not generate maps, but it may occasionally copy a map from a web page found in Bing search results.

However, this was clearly not reflected in the local query results observed.

When mentioned to ChatGPT that the maps in its responses included features like a "List/Map" toggle and a carousel of business listings, it explained that these maps are not created by the language model itself. Instead, they are generated by the interface layer of the ChatGPT website—what ChatGPT referred to as "OpenAI's front end".

ChatGPT states:

● "The map visually organizes businesses by leveraging the structured data I provide—such as names and addresses—through integration with a mapping service or platform."

How Local Businesses Can Maximize Benefits from ChatGPT?

ChatGPT was asked:

- "Considering your explanations on handling local queries, what key strategies would you recommend to local businesses aiming to enhance their online visibility and secure prominent placement in ChatGPT's responses?"

ChatGPT provided eight strategies, which are as summarized below along with some commentary.

Keep your website accurate and comprehensive.

ChatGPT often references business websites that appear in Bing search results.

Ensure your site features well-structured content, ideally using schema.org markup, including essential details like business contact information, operating hours, and customer testimonials.

This structured data helps signal to search engines and users that your website is trustworthy.

Claiming and optimizing your Bing Places listing is an essential tactic.

ChatGPT has clarified that Bing Places listings do have an indirect impact by influencing the web results that ChatGPT analyzes.

For example, businesses that rank highly in Bing local listings are more likely to have their websites appear prominently in organic search results.

Secure Your Spot on Trusted Review Sites

Maintaining accurate and up-to-date profiles on public platforms like Yelp and Facebook, especially with positive recent reviews, can significantly help you stand out.

Boost Reviews on Key Platforms

There are many reasons why this is a no-brainer, with ChatGPT being the latest.

Build Authority with Links from Local Directories and Media

ChatGPT specifically highlights local magazines, "best of" blog posts, and directories from local chambers of commerce.

Maintain Consistent Local SEO Best Practices

ChatGPT emphasizes the importance of maintaining consistent information across your website, local listings, and social media profiles.

Additionally, many other best practices mentioned earlier also apply to ChatGPT.

Deliver Distinctive and Easily Discoverable Content

"If your site features useful content like 'How to choose ski boots' or 'Why eco-friendly dry cleaning matters,' those pages can serve as valuable entry points that I might discover and reference."

Track What's Actually Ranking on Bing

Review the top 20 to 30 organic Bing search results for queries related to your business.
Identify opportunities to enhance your visibility in the results that ChatGPT is likely to reference.

To sum it up, here's what ChatGPT highlights:

"Ensure your business is simple for Bing to interpret and straightforward for ChatGPT to cite."

A concluding caveat

As ChatGPT itself reminds us in its footer: "ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info." Hence, it's important to approach the above mentioned explanations and suggestions with some caution.

Overall, the information ChatGPT provided aligns well with the results observed in its local queries and offers a clearer, more coherent explanation of how ChatGPT handles local queries.

3 GOOGLE ROLLS OUT AI MODE TESTING TO MORE USERS, ADDS NEW CARDS AND HISTORY TAB

Google is significantly expanding its AI Mode in both capabilities and availability. The search engine giant is now testing this feature publicly with a limited number of U.S. users and has removed the waitlist, allowing any U.S. resident aged 18 or older to opt in immediately.

Key Developments

1. **Public Testing of AI Mode**

   Google has started testing AI Mode "in the wild," meaning users no longer need to enroll via Search Labs to access it. According to Google's Soufi Esmaeilzadeh, a small percentage of U.S. users will begin to see an AI Mode tab directly in their search interface. Feedback collected during this phase will help improve the experience.

2. **No More Waitlist**

   Previously available only to select individuals, AI Mode is now open to all users in the U.S. who are 18 or older. Interested users can opt in without restrictions.

3. **New Feature: Product and Place Cards**

   Google introduced product and place cards in AI Mode results.

   - Products are sourced from the Google Shopping Graph.
   - Places are drawn from Google Business Profiles.
   - Users can view details such as ratings, reviews, hours of operation, pricing, images, promotions, shipping options, and local inventory.

4. **New Feature: History Panel**

   A "history" tab has been added, enabling users to revisit past searches and continue from where they left off. This enhancement supports a more seamless and consistent search experience.

Here are some images showing it in action:
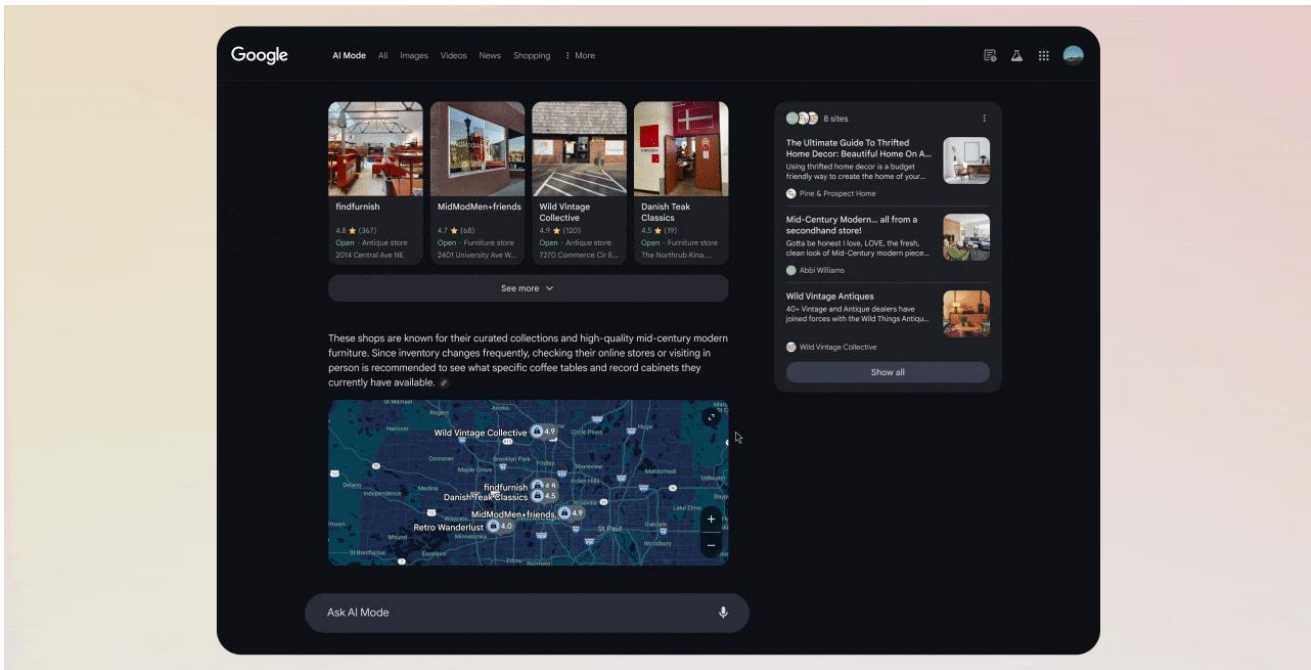
In addition, Google has introduced a "history" panel, allowing users to view previous queries and pick up where they left off.

https://x.com/rajanpatel/status/1917979358251417926
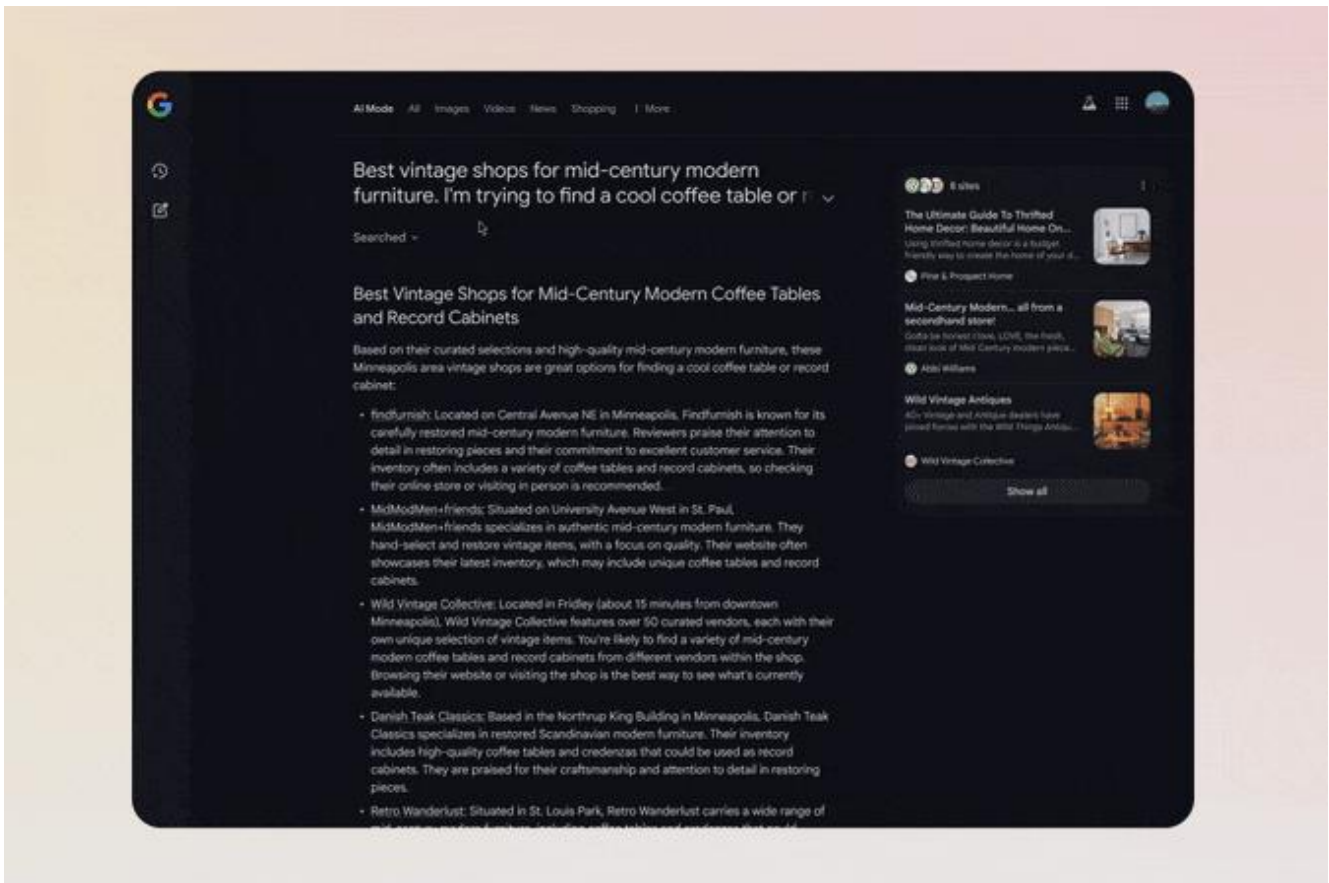
And of course, this can be a concern - but this is where things are headed:

https://x.com/glenngabe/status/1917981630452351448

While these innovations bring new convenience and personalization to search, they also raise questions about user data and algorithm transparency—key areas to watch as AI Mode continues to evolve.