BRIGHTEDGE

WEEKLY AI & SEARCH INSIGHTS

Local SEO still matters: where the map pack holds and which sources AI search cites

On searches with clear local intent, Google returned the Local 3-Pack far more often than an AI Overview. In separate research on restaurant and travel prompts, ChatGPT cited review and booking platforms more often than the businesses themselves.

Three findings, and what each one changes for a local marketing team.

Source: BrightEdge AI Brand Presence and tracked keywords, October 2026. United States, desktop.

Which local searches kept the pack.

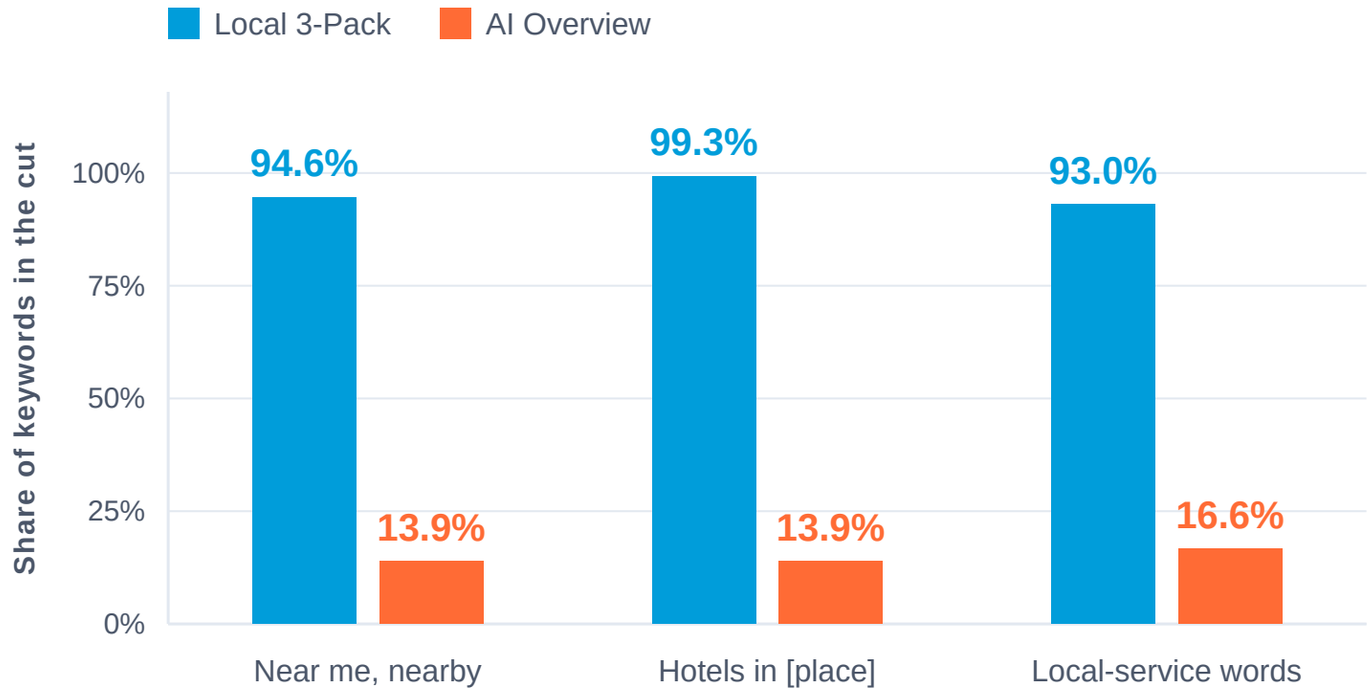


Figure 1. Share of keywords in each cut where the feature appeared. The Local 3-Pack is the block of three business listings Google shows with a map when a search has local intent. Google builds it from Business Profile and Maps data rather than from page content. Source: BrightEdge AI Brand Presence and tracked keywords, October 2026. United States, desktop.

WHAT IT MEANS

Local intent is still a Google SEO problem, and the inputs are business listing accuracy, categories and reviews rather than page content.

DO THIS

Audit listing accuracy across every location before anything else.

A city in the keyword does not make it a local search.

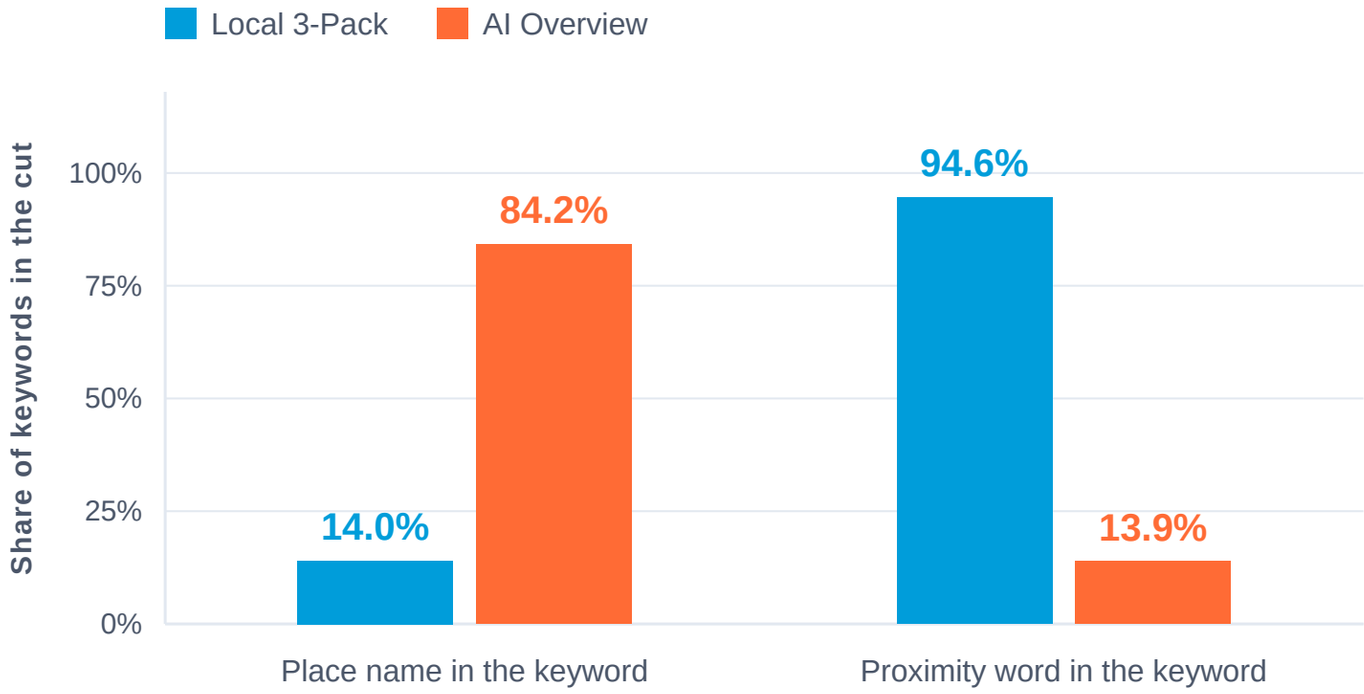


Figure 2. City-modified keywords against proximity keywords. Adding a city reversed the result: most of those searches drew an AI Overview. Source: BrightEdge AI Brand Presence and tracked keywords, October 2026. United States, desktop.

WHAT IT MEANS

The AI Overviews in this set sit on the informational local questions. A local report built on place-name keywords will measure the wrong half.

DO THIS

Split local terms from informational ones in reporting. They are won in different places.

Each engine cites a different set of sources.

Which sources ChatGPT and Google AI Mode cited for restaurant and travel questions. Broad category prompt groups, not a matched comparison with Findings 1 and 2.

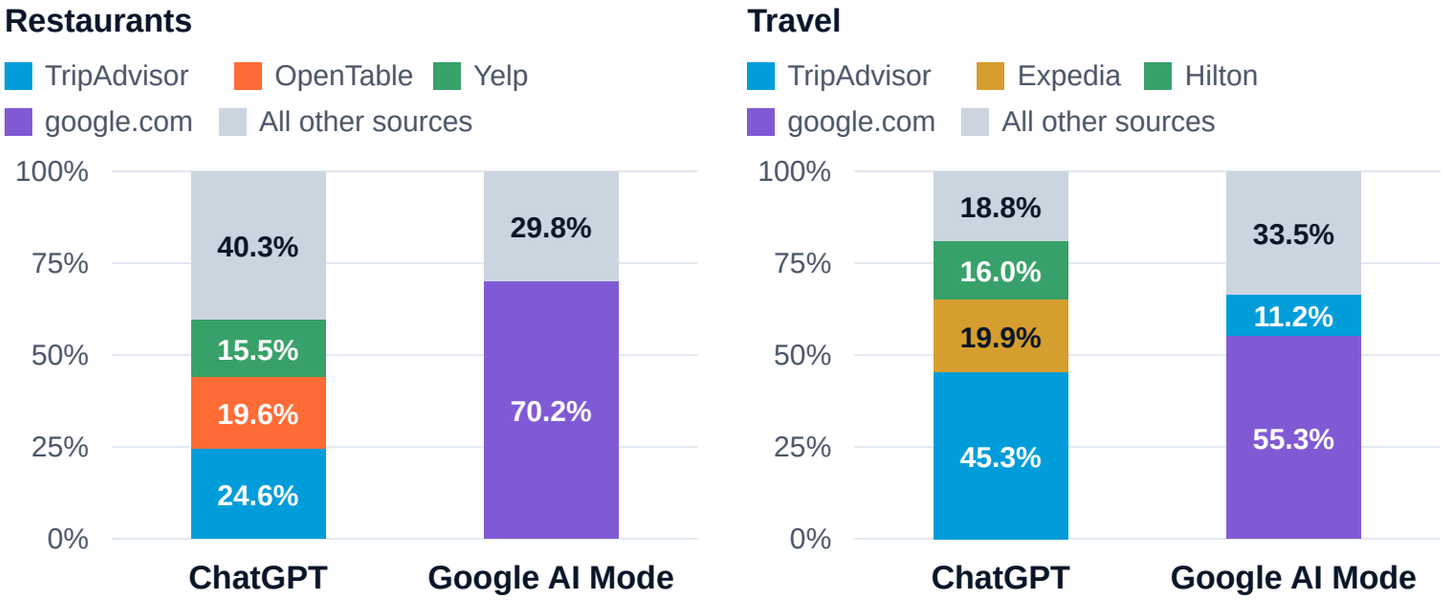


Figure 3. Share of citations by domain, each column totalling 100%. On restaurant prompts one domain takes 70.2% of Google AI Mode citations, more than ChatGPT's top three together at 59.7%. Named domains are the top cited; **All other sources** is everything else and is not broken out, so the grey band is larger where fewer domains were pulled. AI Mode and AI Overviews are separate surfaces. Source: BrightEdge AI Brand Presence and tracked keywords, October 2026. United States, desktop.

WHAT IT MEANS

ChatGPT cited review and booking platforms. Google AI Mode cited its own properties. Where a brand's category information sits depends on which engine a customer asks.

DO THIS

Read your pages on the platforms an engine cites the way you would read a landing page of your own.

Local SEO and AEO: two jobs, different inputs

Two areas to manage. On Google you can manage the details in your Business Profile: categories, hours and location information. In AI search, third-party reviews and booking platforms also shape how your business is described.

1 Keep investing in local SEO

On keywords with clear local intent the pack is what appeared, on 93% to 99% of the three cuts. Business profile accuracy, local content and pack visibility carry that.

2 Strengthen your local search presence

On keywords that trigger the Local 3-Pack, audit your Business Profiles, categories, location details, reviews and location pages. BrightEdge Local SEO manages those across every location.

3 Separate local keywords from informational ones in reporting

A near-me search and a how-much-does-it-cost search behave differently in this data. The informational set is where the AI Overviews in this tracked list are, and it is easy to leave out of a local report.

4 Report pack, AI Overview and AI citations as three numbers

Each answers a different question: whether you are in the map, whether an AI Overview appeared, and which sources the AI answer drew on. Blending them hides all three.

These results were collected from one fixed location, so the businesses an engine names will differ in another market. BrightEdge Instant checks live results by location: brightedge.com/products/instant

RUN THIS ON YOUR OWN TERMS

Check where your locations stand

Google kept returning the pack on local intent, and ChatGPT built its category answers from review and booking platforms. A local brand has to win both, and they are won in different places with different work.

1 **Fix what the pack reads**

Local SEO manages listings, categories and reviews across every location, which is what Google builds the pack from.

brightedge.com/products/local-seo

2 **See which of your terms carry which feature**

Data Cube X reports pack and AI Overview presence across tracked keywords, so the split is visible per term rather than inferred.

brightedge.com/products/s3/data-cube

3 **Track who gets cited on your category prompts**

AI Catalyst reports the domains each engine cites, which is where the review and booking platforms show up.

brightedge.com/products/ai-catalyst

Source: BrightEdge AI Brand Presence and tracked keywords, October 2026. United States, desktop. Page features and citations counted, not clicks, calls or bookings. Not a market rate.

Full research linked in the post.

Request a demo