REPORT

Does Listings Management Still Matter?

An Analysis of 115,000 Business Locations

uberall

Introduction & Key Findings

Listings management and citation consistency used to be the most important local SEO tactics. But perceptions have changed in the past few years. While finding citations still have a role to play, some local SEOs now recommend against listings management as an unnecessary expense.

To determine what is actually going on we created a large "before and after" Uberall customer data set. We looked at 115,000 customer locations (SMB and enterprise) across the US, UK, Germany and France to determine whether and how listings management impacted Google Local Pack visibility and consumer engagement: directions, calls and clicks.

The study compared the performance of businesses listed on four key sites (i.e., Google My Business, Bing, Facebook, Apple Maps) to those distributed on an extended directories network, which also included the four primary directories.

What we found (US data):

1 Listings distributed on 10+ sites saw an average of 80% improved local visibility on Google.

2 An average of 67% improvement in consumer actions for businesses listed on 10+ directories.

3 When distribution extended to 30+ directories, user actions increased by more than 136%.

4 Profile completeness also boosted visibility and resulted in a 69% increase in website clicks.

Content Overview

Are Local Business Listings Still Important in 2023?

Way back in 2014...

" **Citations/NAP [is] the number one issue affecting local businesses. The majority of businesses have NAP consistency issues on some level, ranging from cripplingly bad to very minor, and this issue will remain a thorn in our side for some years to come.** "

Search Engine Land   SEO SEM LOCAL RETAIL GOOGLE BING SOCIAL RESOURCES LIVE MORE EVENTS

Local

Citation Inconsistency Is No.1 Issue Affecting Local Ranking

This post is a follow-up from my November post, in which I shared some interesting findings from the current InsideLocal webinar series. During InsideLocal webinars, we survey the audience, which consists of 500+ local search consultants and SMB owners. The vast majority of attendees are search consultants/agencies, with 90-95% located in USA and Canada (so the data are skewed to [...]

Myles Anderson on December 22, 2014 at 8:56 am

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During InsideLocal webinars, we survey the audience, which consists of 500+ local search consultants and SMB owners. The vast majority of attendees are search consultants/agencies, with 90-95% located in USA and Canada (so the data are skewed to that sector's experience and location).

The results of these polls help to illuminate the scale of specific issues impacting local businesses and the local search community.
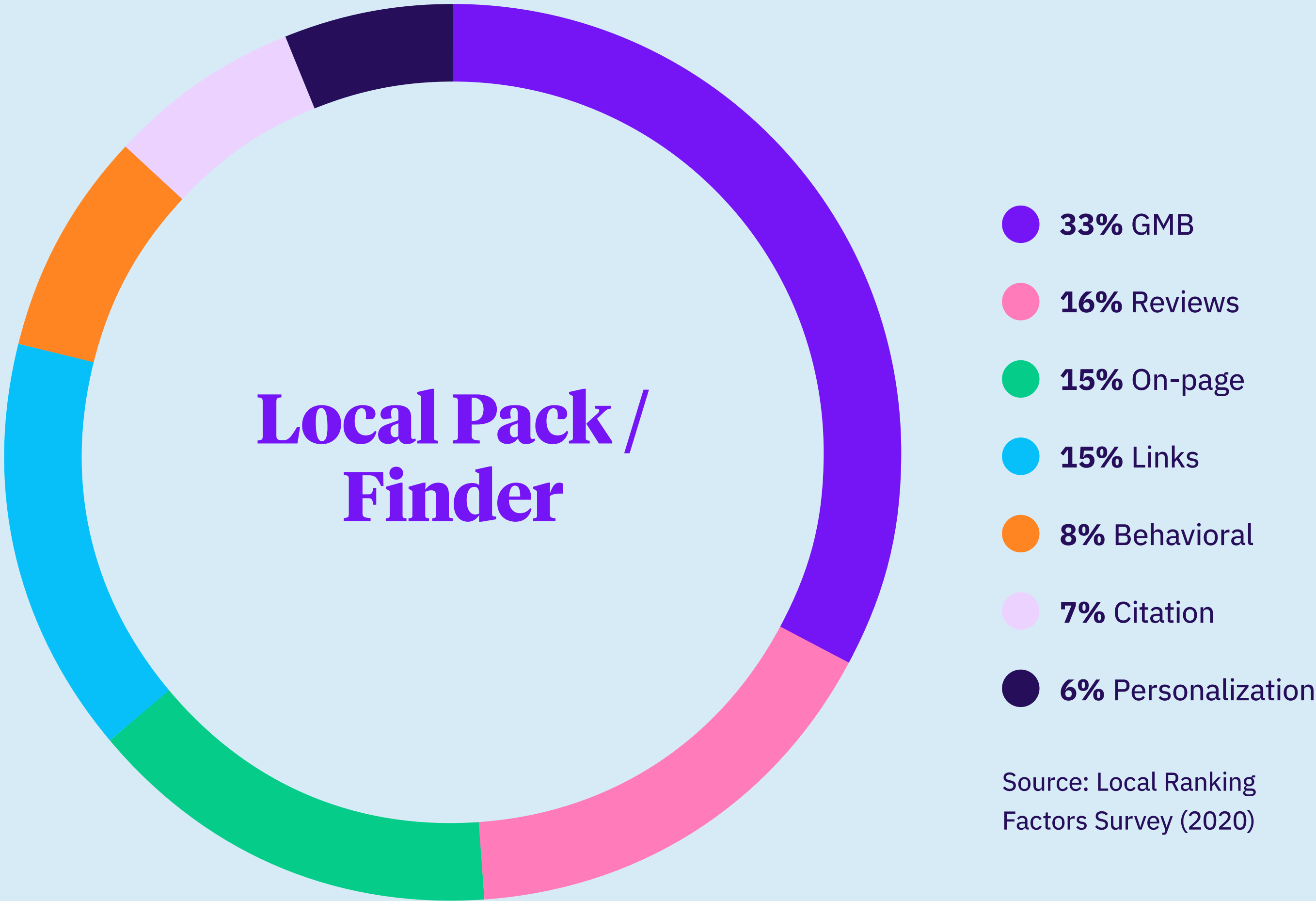
Q1. What Are The Most Common Local Ranking Issues

2020 Local Ranking Factors

Cut to:

## 6 years later

Perceptions have changed dramatically.

Experts believe that GMB and review factors account for almost half of local ranking factors - while citations account for a small piece of the optimization pie.

Local Pack / Finder

- **33%** GMB
- **16%** Reviews
- **15%** On-page
- **15%** Links
- **8%** Behavioral
- **7%** Citation
- **6%** Personalization

Source: Local Ranking Factors Survey (2020)

What Drives Local Organic?

Since 2013, citations have gone from being viewed as one of the most important drivers of local organic visibility to one of the least...
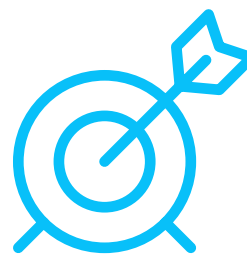
Changes Over Time

Source: Local Ranking Factors Survey (2020)

● 2020 ● 2018 ● 2015 ● 2013
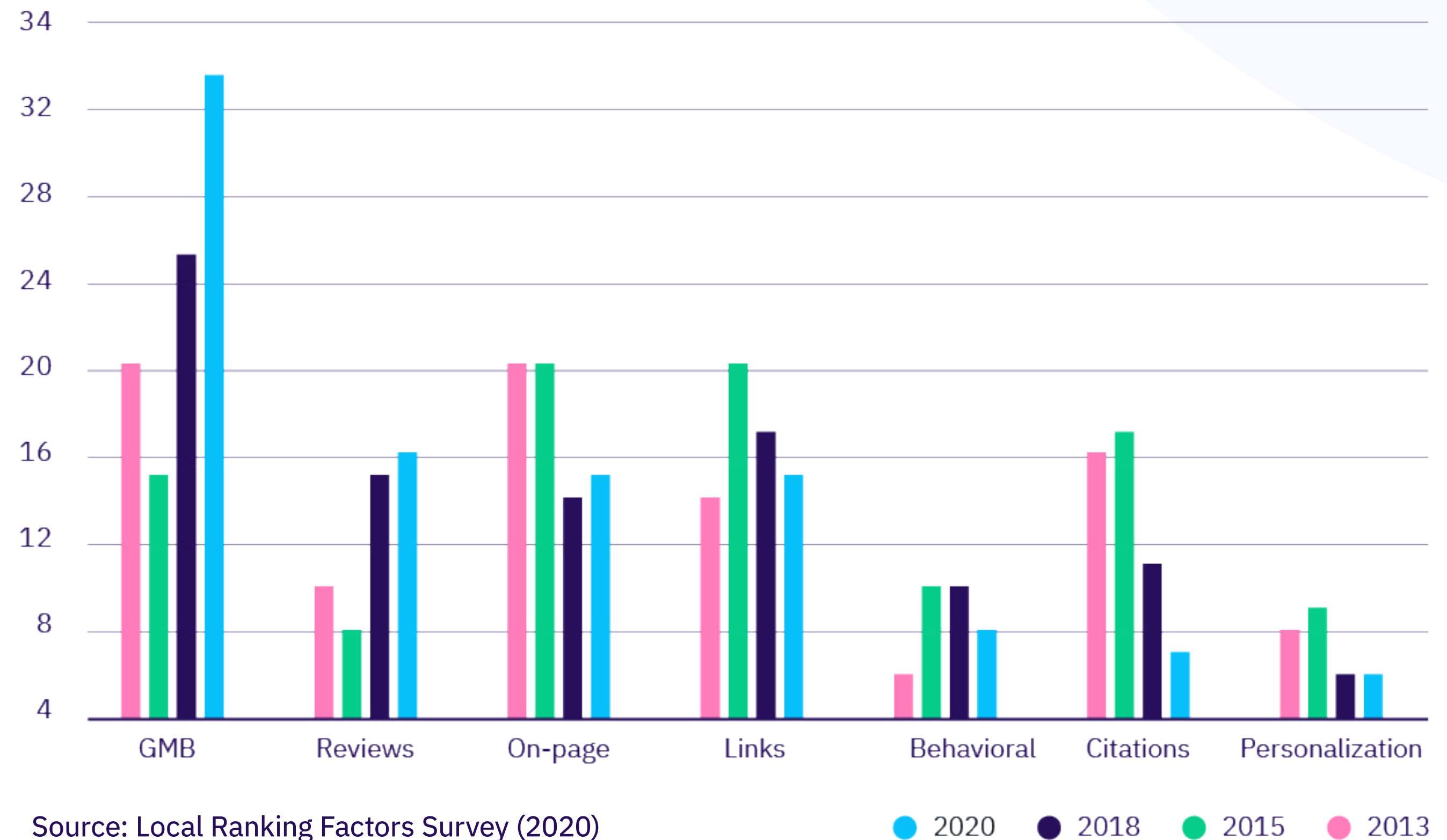
We decided to investigate...

R D P
Relevance   **Distance**   **Prominence**

"

Prominence refers to how well known a business is. Some places are more prominent in the offline world, and search results try to reflect this in local ranking. For example, famous museums, landmark hotels, or well-known store brands are also likely to be prominent in local search results.

Prominence is also based on information that Google has about a business, from across the web, like links, articles, and directories. Google review count and review score factor into local search ranking. More reviews and positive ratings can improve your business' local ranking. Your position in web results is also a factor, so search engine optimization (SEO) best practices

Caveats – things we didn't have access to:

Visibility to see other SEO tactics deployed during time period
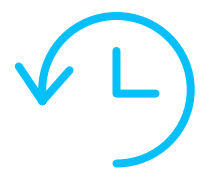
Historical rank reporting on measured locations

Annualized data (next year)

Impact of Long Tail Directories on Visibility + Engagement

US Data Only

Impact of Long-Tail Directories on Search Visibility

From a global data set of 115,000 locations, we randomly selected a control group of 6,000 locations (containing both enterprise and SMBs).

Half of the 6,000 locations were only on GMB, Facebook, Bing and Apple Maps and the other half were on these as well as an extended network of directories.

Why did we do this? We wanted to know whether there was still a business case to be made for a company to have location profiles on an extended network of directories.
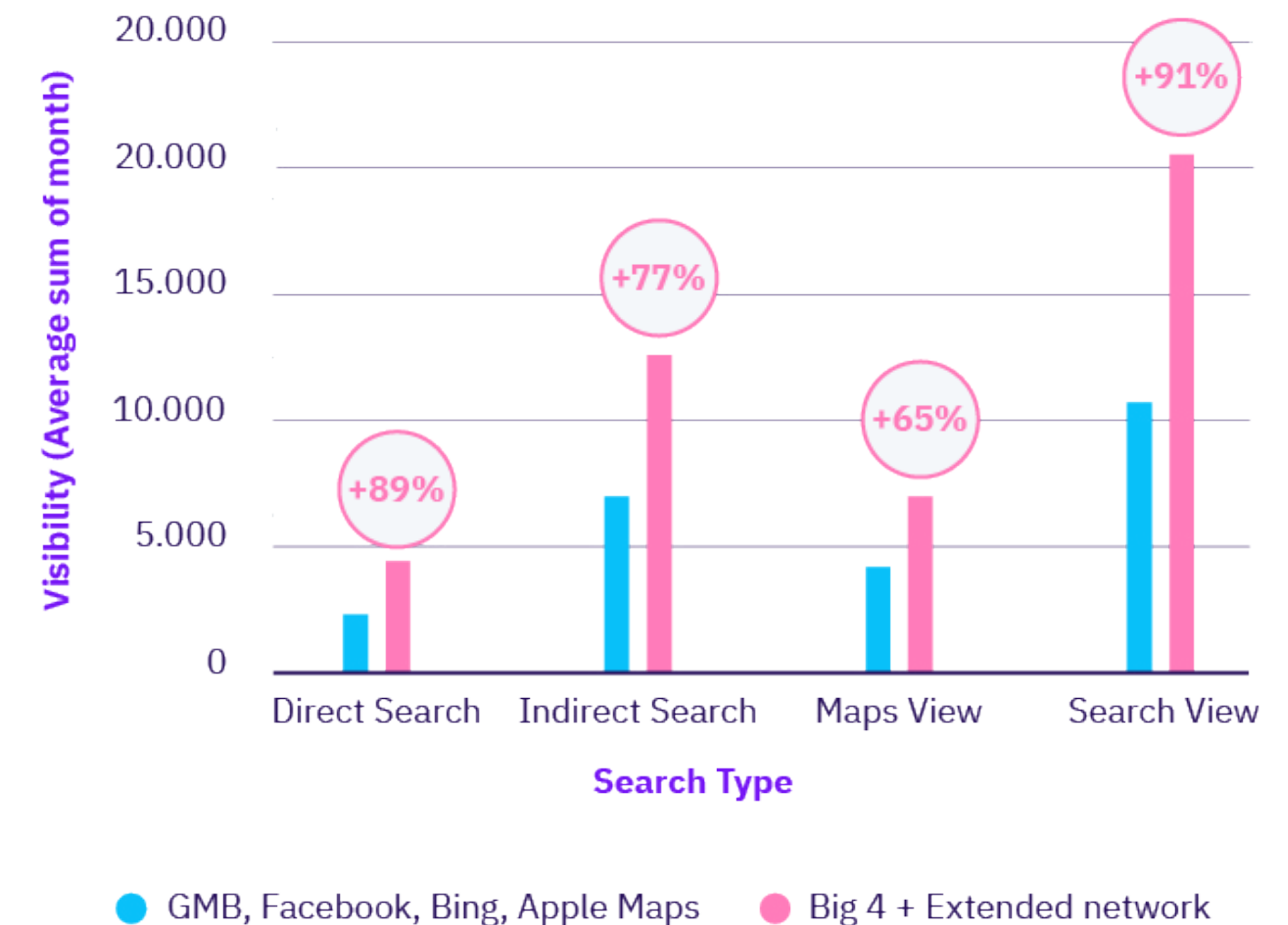
The more widely distributed listings saw increasses in visibility of 65% to 91%. The data thus show that listings distribution to an extended network still matters.

Note:

3,000 locations with 10+ directories

3,000 locations with top 4 directories

Date range: September 2019 - October 2020

Legend: ● GMB, Facebook, Bing, Apple Maps   ● Big 4 + Extended network

Impact of Long-Tail Directories on Engagement

It should come as no surprise then that as visibility increases, so too do conversions.

Measuring the same group of GMB profiles we found that both driving directions and website clicks basically doubled for the locations on an extended network.

At a high level, it does appear that there is a case to be made that if a business wants to maximize their visibility and engagement for local search, they should be doing more than just the minimum when it comes to creating local business profiles on directories.

Note:

3,000 locations with 10+ directories

3,000 locations with top 4 directories

Date range: September 2019 - October 2020
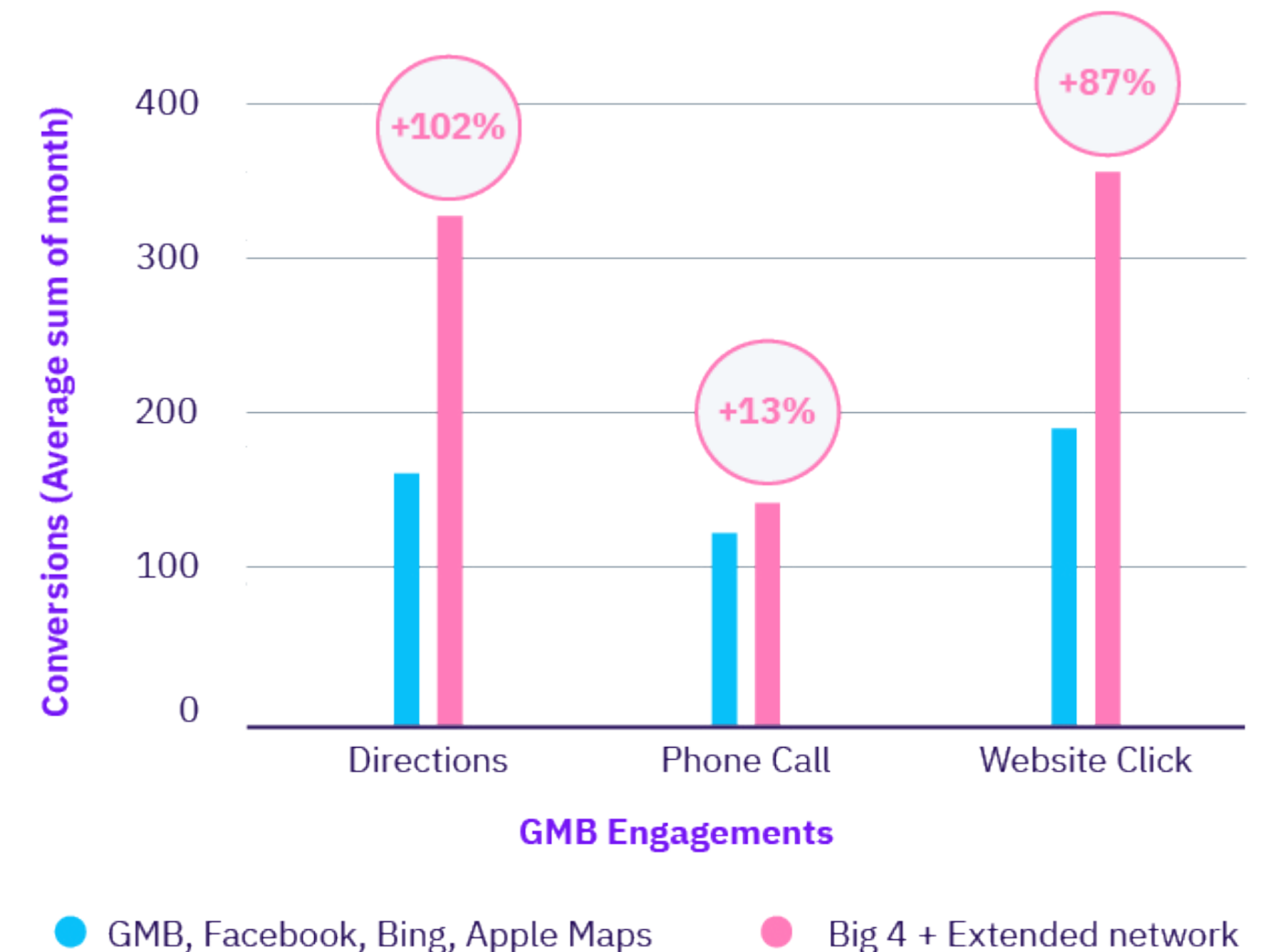
Directory Expansions increase GMB visibility

Expansion of a company's directory network has a positive impact on Google My Business (GMB) impressions and actions.
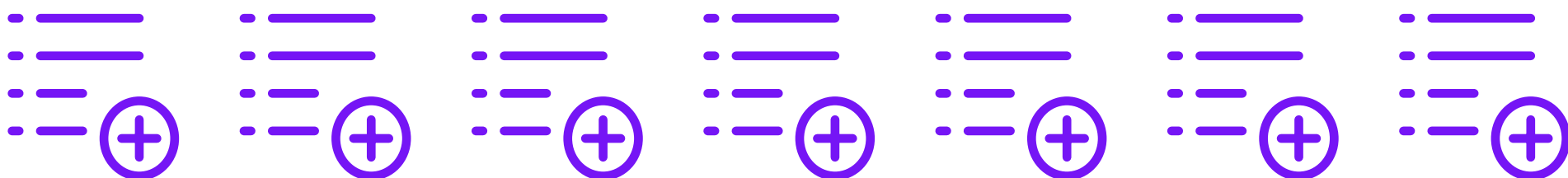
Listings distribution is a contributing factor in Google's "prominence" local ranking signal.

How Many Directories to Maximize Visibility & Engagements in GMB?

US Data Only

Maximising Visibility & Conversion Potential: The Directory Sweet Spot

In the previous section we established that long-tail directories do matter. But how many directories are important to maximize visibility and conversions?

Our data suggests that between 20 - 40 directories is the 'sweet spot' that delivers the greatest visibility and engagement.

GMB Searches/ Views

By analyzing a set number of locations per group and looking at the search averages across groups, we found that 31 - 40 directories seems to be the sweet spot for increasing total search volume in both the SMB & Enterprise markets - from the worst performing group to the best, we found a total average increase of 55 - 58%.

Note:

SMB = 200 locations analyzed per group

Enterprise = 1500 locations per group

Enterprise Directory 'Sweet Spot' for Maximizing Visibility

Total Increase: 55%

Average Sum of Month

40.000
30.000
20.000
10.000
0

<=10   11-20   21-30   31-40

Combines GMB Search (Direct, Indirect, Search & Maps) Grouped by Directory Count

SMB Directory 'Sweet Spot' for Maximizing Visibility

Total Increase: 58%

Average Sum of Month

60.000
40.000
20.000
0

<=10   11-20   21-30   31-40

Combines GMB Search (Direct, Indirect, Search & Maps) Grouped by Directory Count
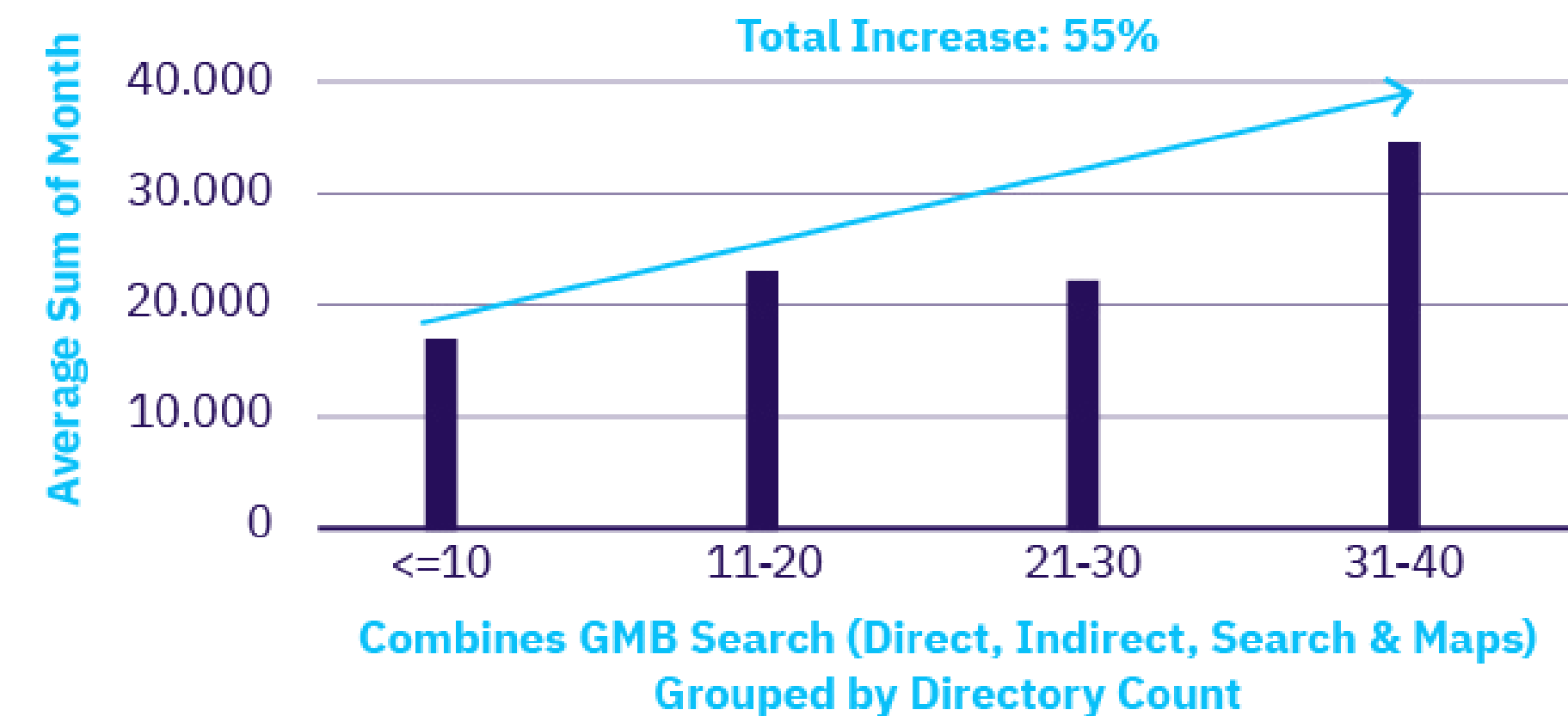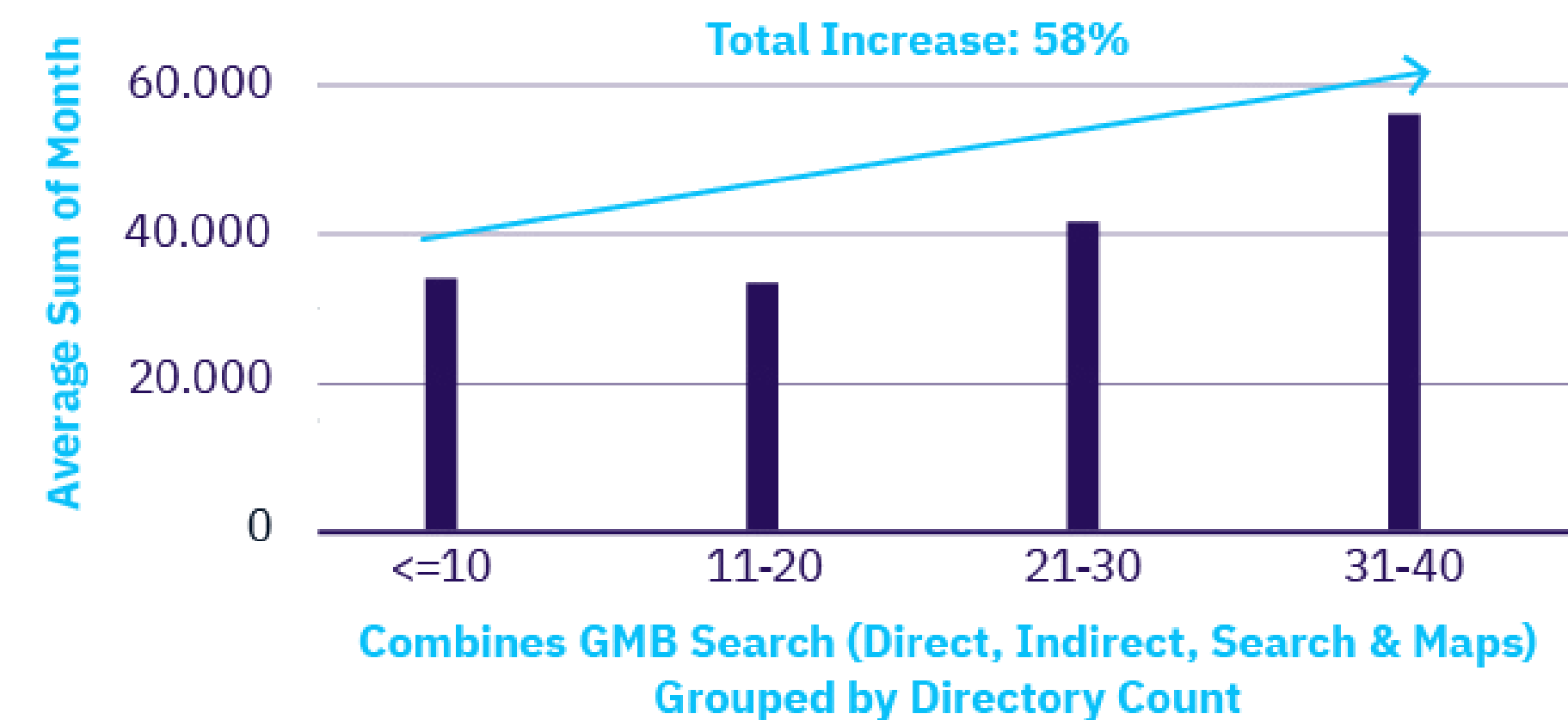
Consumer Engagement / Actions

We analyzed the same locations to determine a conversion "sweet spot." We found that listings showing on more than 20 directories had many more engagements (directions, calls, clicks) than those on fewer than 10 directories. SMBs saw 200% more engagement and enterprises saw 73% more engagement in the highest distribution group compared with the lowest for each population.

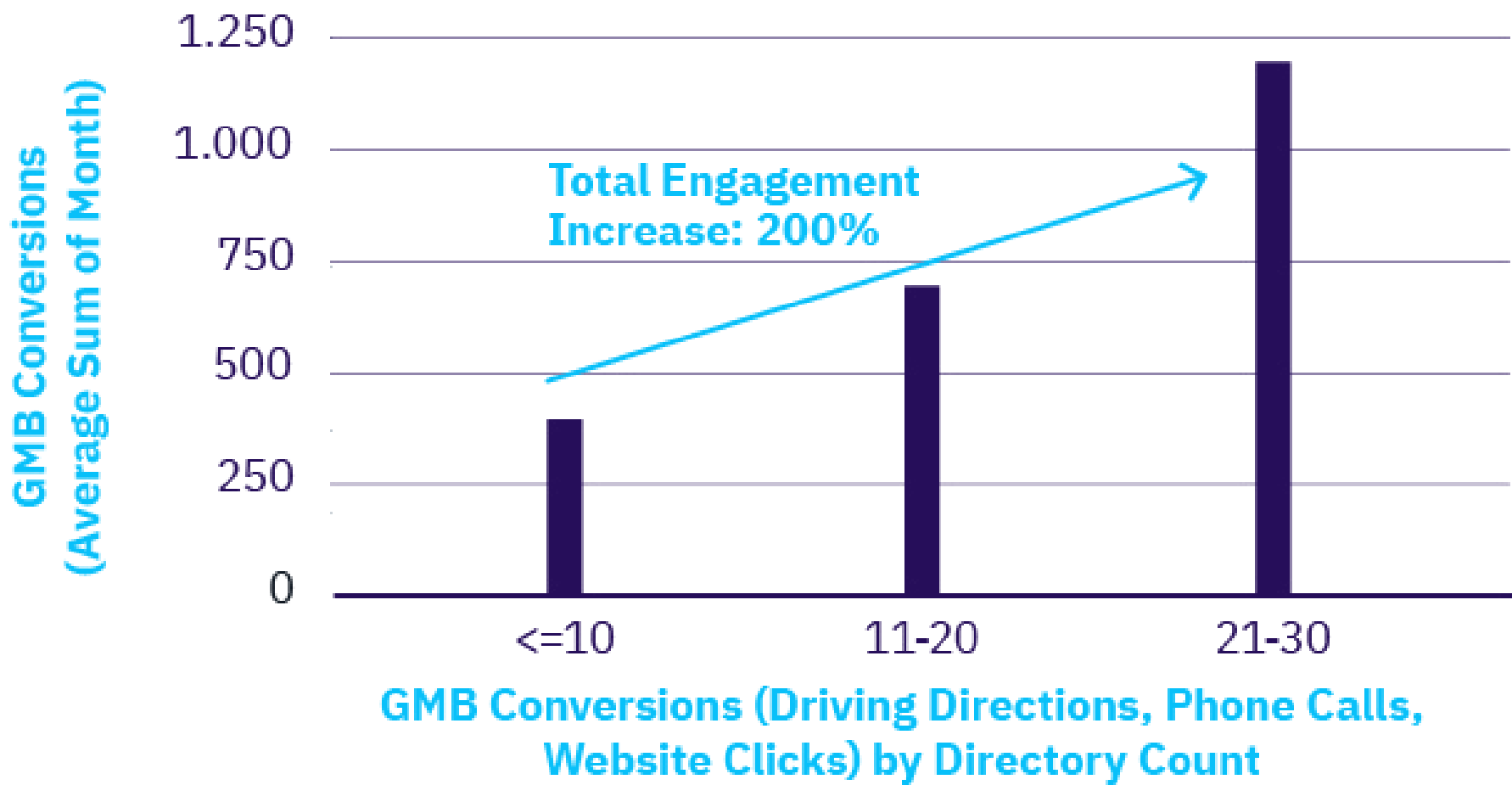## Note:

- SMB = 200 locations analyzed per group
- Enterprise = 1500 locations per group

SMB 'Sweet Spot' for Maximizing Conversions

Total Engagement Increase: 200%

GMB Conversions (Average Sum of Month)

GMB Conversions (Driving Directions, Phone Calls, Website Clicks) by Directory Count

<=10   11-20   21-30

Enterprise Directory 'Sweet Spot' for Maximizing Conversions

Total Engagement Increase: 73%

GMB Conversions (Average Sum of Month)

GMB Conversions (Driving Directions, Phone Calls, Website Clicks) by Directory Count

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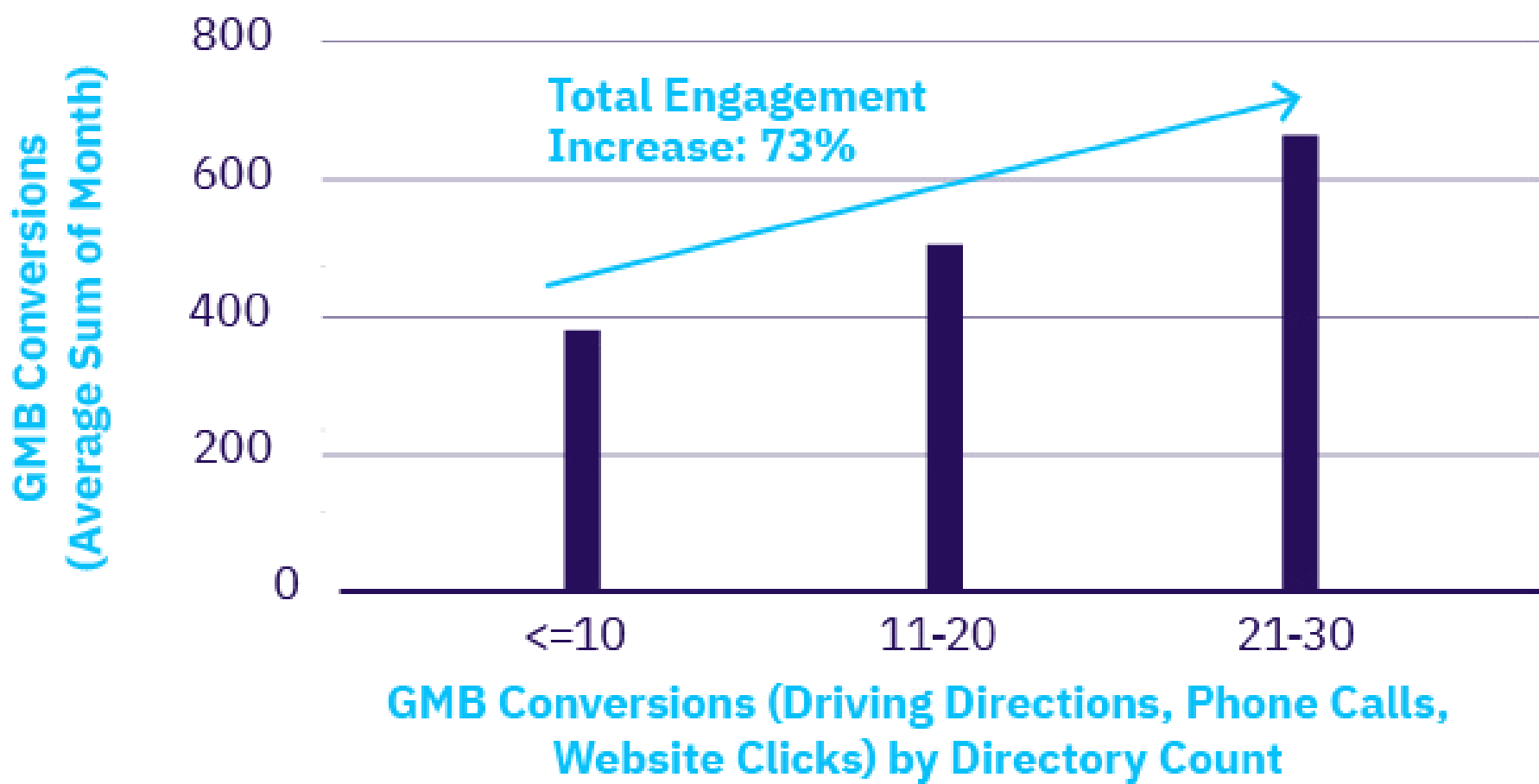
What is a Citation?

A digital mention of your brand locations' name, address and phone number on another webpage.

This is a key factor for boosting or lowering your local search ranking in Google and Bing.

In general across all locations, more directories means more visibility and more engagement. The sweet spot is between 30 - 39 directories.

Boost your Digital Presence with Citation Building

What Part Does Data Accuracy Play in Our Listings Conversation?

US, UK, Germany & France

In September we completed a separate study which showed a high correlation between locations with complete and accurate citations and major visibility gains.

The top 10% most accurate locations had 18x higher search visibility than the least accurate locations in our study.

Note:

- 15,000 total locations analyzed from EU and US
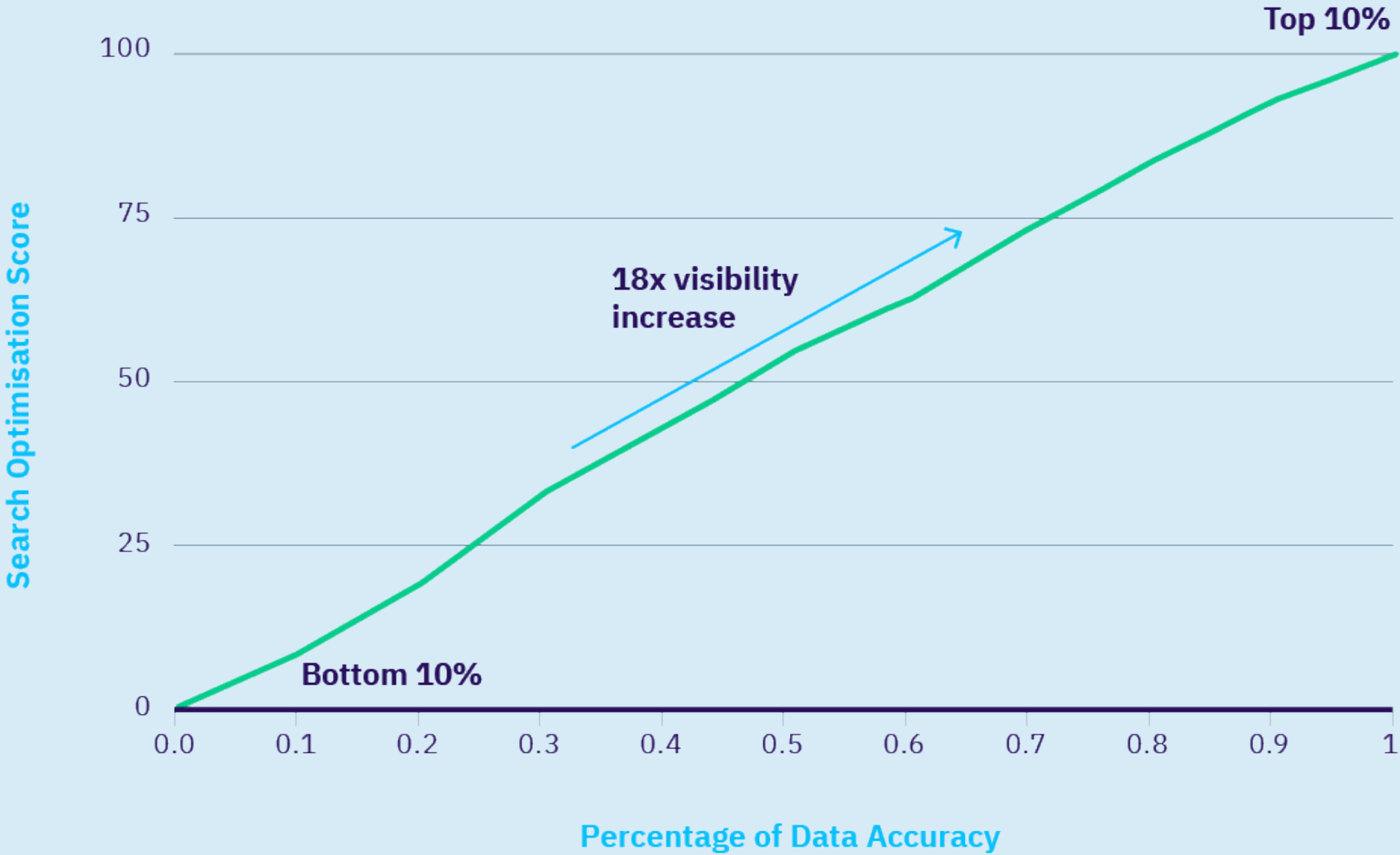
Search Optimization:

- ½ calculated using probability of being on first page + local pack
- ½ calculated based on impressions

Data Accuracy:

- ½ score calculated based on correct listings
- ½ score calculated based on number of completed listings

The Impact of Data Accuracy on Search Engine Optimisation

Chart: x-axis "Percentage of Data Accuracy" (0.0 to 1), y-axis "Search Optimisation Score" (0 to 100). Line rises from "Bottom 10%" to "Top 10%" with annotation "18x visibility increase".

Do Complete Business Profiles Matter?

Search Metrics

First, we looked at the impact profile completeness had on key search metrics. Business locations with complete citations had large visibility increases across all key metrics vs those locations without complete profiles...

GMB Profile Visibility Increases Across All Major Search Categories With Complete Listings:

Locations	Region type	Direct Search	Indirect Search	Map Views
80164	EU	+24.74%	+90.27%	+23.45%
34789	US	+58.50%	+15.54%	+39.88%

Region	Profile Completeness Under 90%	Profile Completeness Over 90%
EU	54,983 locations	25,181 locations
US	30,020 locations	4,770 locations

NOTE: Profile completeness is measured by checking that the basic fields of NAP (+opening hours, website. photos) were complete on all directories.

Do Complete Business Profiles Matter?

Engagement Metrics

We then looked at the impact of profile completeness on the key GMB engagement metrics (Driving Directions, Phone Calls, Website Clicks) and again found increases in all key metrics from both the EU and the US.

> **Verdict: Complete listings are associated with higher consumer engagement.**

GMB Profile Conversions Increase Across All Categories With Complete Listings

Locations	Region type	Drive Directions	Phone Call	Website Clicks
80164	EU	+70.51%	+46.15%	+84.62%
34789	US	+46.53%	+11.48%	+69.18%

Region	Profile Completeness Under 90%	Profile Completeness Over 90%
EU	54,983 locations	25,181 locations
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Conclusion
& Methodology

Conclusion

Some might be inclined to see these findings as self-serving, given that Uberall offers listings management, among other products. Our original motivation in conducting this study, however, was to simply understand what was happening in the market.

We have tried to let the data speak for itself and sought to be as transparent as possible. To that end, we shared early findings with a group of independent local SEO experts to get their feedback and answer questions.

Google itself says that citations still matter ("prominence"), although their impact may be less than it was several years ago. Despite this perception, this study found meaningful increases in visibility and engagement among listings optimized across an extended network of sites compared with those appearing only on a few directories.

For very small businesses with tight budgets, there is a valid discussion about whether a formal listings management solution is the right choice. But the data clearly shows that accurate and compete business profiles, distributed to a broad network, have higher visibility and drive more engagement in search results.

As businesses reopen around the world, with differing rules in nearly every city, listings management is arguably more important than ever. It's critical to provide customers with timely and accurate information in search. Listings management solutions are a highly efficient way to do that and, for enterprises and many small businesses, deliver a very strong ROI.

Methodology

Our overall data set included 115,000 enterprise and SMB locations in the US and Europe. Our segmentation of locations per region and size are as follows:

115,000

35,000

US Enterprise & SMB Locations

80,000

EU Enterprise & SMB Locations
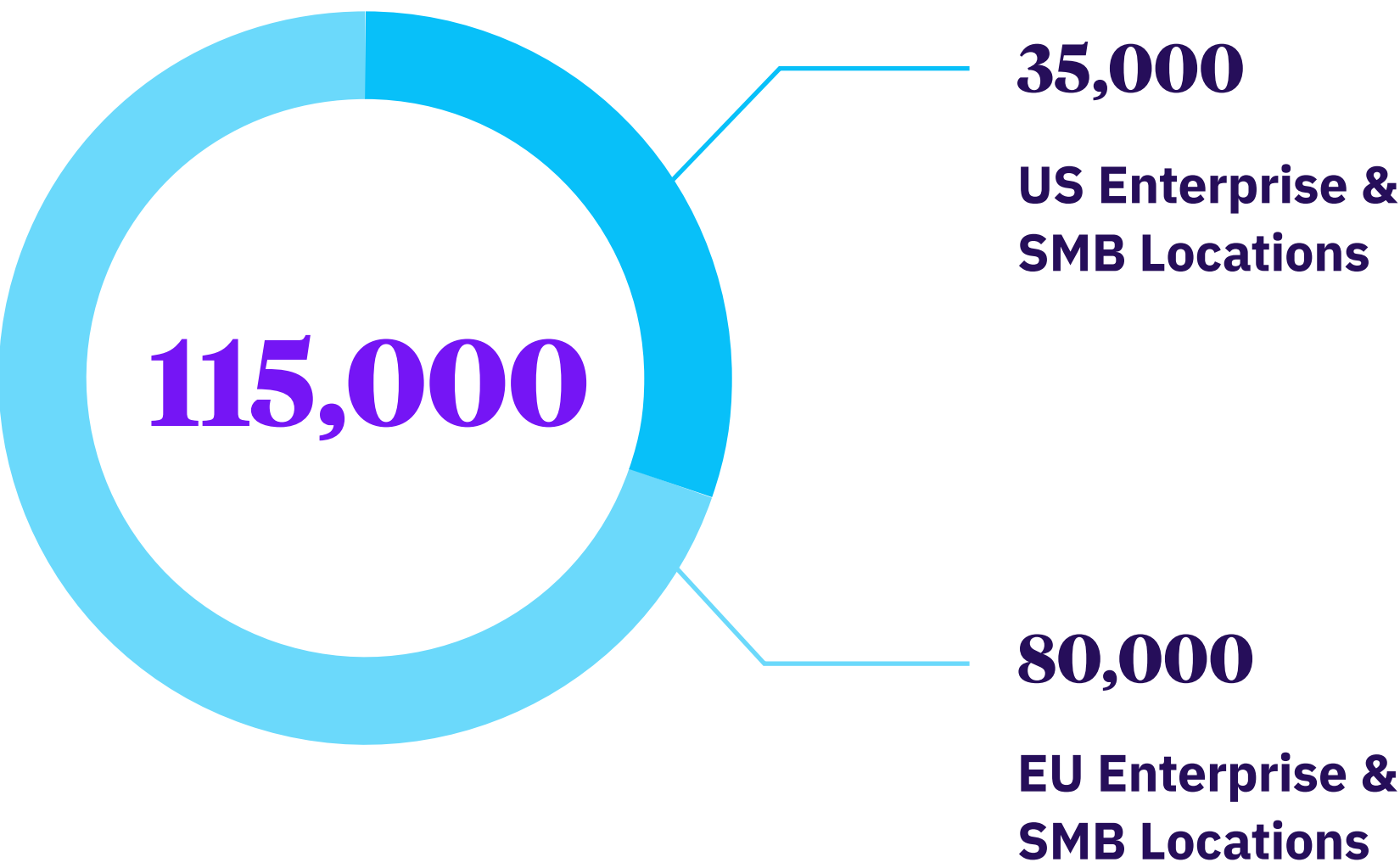
All data sourced from Jan 2019 - Oct 2020: Average sum of month

Every location in our initial 115,000 data set had a GMB connection.

Search-related metrics: visibility of the GMB profile in Search or Maps

Engagement: directions, calls and website clicks in local pack/GMB business profile

90,934

locations were on GMB, Bing, Facebook and Apple Maps (at least)

24,019

locations were on GMB, Facebook, Bing, Apple Maps, Yelp, NextDoor, Manta, Judy's Book and Foursquare (at least)

All additional directories represented by a numerical value have a direct Uberall API connection

The Directories Included in Our Study*

– In alphabetical order

- Abclocal
- Acompio
- Annuaire
- Apple_maps
- Bing
- Branchenbuch
- Bundes Telefonbuch
- Business Branchenbuch
- Central Index
- Chamber Of Commerce
- City Squares

- Cylex
- Dialo
- Elocal
- Ezlocal
- Facebook
- Factual
- Foursquare
- Cylex (Fr)
- Gelbe Seiten
- Google
- Go Local
- Go Yellow
- Hotfrog

- Infobel
- Infobel (Es)
- Infobel (Fr)
- Infobel (Uk)
- Infogroup
- Info Is Info
- I Global
- Judys Book
- Justacote
- Koomio
- Localstack
- Loocal
- Manta

- Meinestadt
- N49
- Navmii
- My_Local_ Services
- Neustar
- Next_Door
- Nokia_Here
- Pointoo
- Pratique
- Scoot
- Shopping Time Network

- Showmelocal
- Stadt Branchenbuch
- Tomtom
- Trip Advisor
- Tupalo
- Uber
- Unternehmen- sauskunft
- Us City
- Us Info Com
- Wand
- Waze

- Where_To
- Wo_Gibts_Was
- Yalwa
- Yandex
- Ya_Sabe
- Yellow Map
- Yelp
- Zip Ch

Some directories market-specific.

About Uberall

About Uberall

Uberall helps the world's most innovative brick and mortar businesses stay relevant, competitive, and profitable, by using digital technology to win clicks online and feet offline.

Uberall CoreX, our hybrid customer experience platform, powers the entire customer journey from online discovery, to store visit, to recommendation and repeat purchase. Uberall makes sure businesses are not only found, but attract and delight customers on every corner, across the globe – driving revenue and customer lifetime value, at scale.

Uberall, founded in 2013 and headquartered in Berlin, Germany, has more than 400 employees and services over 1,850 multi-location businesses across 170 countries.

For further information visit

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