



New Uberall research shows struggling UK department stores are missing out on high street customers due to online ‘invisibility’

Department stores have an opportunity to boost footfall by improving the accuracy of their local directory listings

London, UK, 27 September 2018 – Uberall, the Berlin-headquartered location marketing technology specialist, today announced the findings of its research into the accuracy of online location search results of the UK’s largest department stores.

The research, which encompassed 573 department stores across the country, revealed that many stores are either absent from major directory listings or, if they do appear, the brand information that customers see contains wrong or missing information. With the eCommerce Foundation¹ finding that 88 percent of consumers now search online for local products and services before purchasing in-store, department stores that can improve their visibility via local online search results have an immediate opportunity to drive more customers to their doors and beat the malaise that is affecting many UK high street retailers.

The 573 stores included in the research are operated by Marks & Spencer, Debenhams, John Lewis Partnership, House of Fraser, Selfridges, Fenwick, Fortnum & Mason and Harrods. All stores listed on their own company websites were included in the sample, with the exception of Mark & Spencer’s specialist forecourt and food only stores. Store information located on these brands’ proprietary websites was compared to listings on Google My Business, Facebook, Bing and Yelp.

Key findings:

Stores prioritising Google My Business listings

UK department stores prioritise their Google My Business listings over other major directories, with just over 90% of all stores listed. However, this does mean nearly one in ten stores are absent or unclaimed, and therefore invisible to those customers who rely on local search results to find what they want instore.

The research suggests that brands find it a challenge to manage the accuracy of their Google My Business listings. Less than 15% of all listings were accurate, with store names and street addresses the most common inconsistencies.

Facebook’s user-generated content is a challenge to manage

Managing **Facebook** listings - which often include a high proportion of user-generated content and reviews - is proving particularly challenging for UK department stores.

¹ <http://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/infographic-how-omnishoppers-browse-and-buy/>

Approximately 14% of storefront pages were missing or unclaimed on Facebook, while the remaining 86% contained information that was different than that provided on the brand's official website.

Stores that can 'crack' Bing can profit from growing popularity of voice search

Far fewer stores were listed on **Bing** than on Google and Facebook, with just over a quarter of stores (27.5%) missing or unclaimed and the remainder containing some inaccurate data. This might indicate that brands are put off by the strict formatting demands of this search engine. However, with Bing powering Alexa, and with more and more consumers relying on voice search to find what they want in-store, retailers that can 'crack' Bing have an opportunity to boost footfall.

Investing in Yelp could have knock on benefits

Fewer stores were listed on **Yelp** than any of the other major directories, with 46.5% missing or unclaimed. However, accuracy rates for these listings were comparatively good, with just 37.5% containing discrepancies when compared with the data provided on the retailers' own websites. While Yelp is less popular in the UK market than elsewhere, it should not be overlooked. Google and other search engines do cross-reference their own results with Yelp to verify their accuracy. Retailers that focus on improving their Yelp listings should see a boost in their general online visibility.

"Department stores may dominate our high streets but many are 'invisible' online because they don't show up in local search results and listings," said Daniel Mathew, UK Vice President, Uberall. "With more and more would-be customers consulting their phones before heading to the high street, those stores that can find a way to optimise their online presence have a fantastic opportunity to boost their footfall and turn around their fortunes."

Even minor inaccuracies matter

In addition to making it harder for consumers to access accurate information about these stores, any inconsistency between the information held on directories and on proprietary websites negatively impacts overall search results, causing store listings to fall down search engine rankings. Unmonitored online reviews can also have a detrimental impact on a store's brand.

As Mathew explained: "Retailers may dismiss minor discrepancies between their online listings as petty and inconsequential; after all, a slight difference in the way the address or postcode is written won't necessarily prevent a shopper from beating a path to their store. However, search engines continually cross-reference directories to verify their results; if the information they find matches, it boosts their rankings. However, the slightest variation could bump them off page one or could mean they don't show up on Google's coveted local three pack. In summary, consistency is key."

Mathew continued: *"The process of managing and updating information about multiple stores, not to mention keeping an eye on customer reviews and other user-generated content, is onerous and time-consuming, it's no wonder that discrepancies arise. Retailers that can find strategies to automate and centralise the way they update and monitor these various listings should see immediate benefits."*

Uberall research methodology:

Uberall's research uses proprietary APIs to cross-reference the exact store names, addresses and contact details, as provided on each retailer's website against the data held on the four main local listing directories in order to identify missing and inaccurate information. This latest research was undertaken during August 2018.

About Uberall:

[Uberall](#) is a global leader in location marketing technology. Its flagship Location Marketing Cloud platform empowers the world's biggest brands to connect with their customers and turn online interactions into offline sales. Uberall gives businesses central control of their digital presence and online reputation, enabling them to easily manage brand interactions in real-time on all digital platforms—mobile, voice and desktop—across websites, mobile apps, store locators, search engines, maps, social platforms, and advertising networks. The [Location Marketing Cloud](#) provides a consistent, accurate digital brand footprint that helps businesses capture new customers and maximise revenue for every location.

Uberall is headquartered in Berlin, with additional offices in San Francisco, London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Cape Town. Its clients include Fortune 500 companies and industry leaders from all over the world.

Learn more at www.uberall.com.

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