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AI Overviews vs. the Maps Pack:

An Analysis of How Query Intent Variation
Affects Google SERP Features

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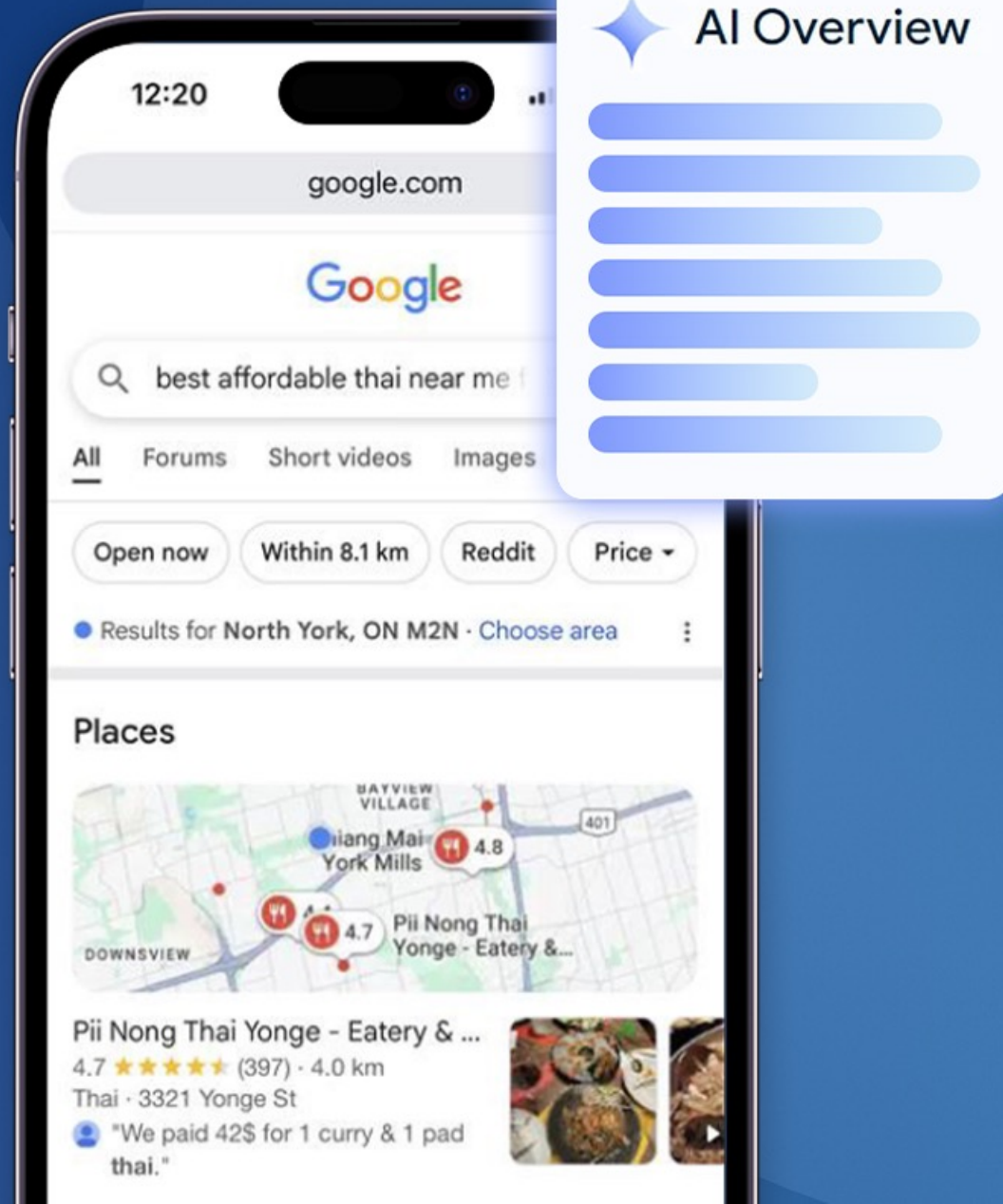Director, Local
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Overview and Purpose

Our objective with this analysis was to understand how the addition of AI Overviews (AIOs) as a Google SERP feature may be changing the marketing opportunities for multilocation businesses, with a specific view into the types of queries that trigger AIOs vs. Maps Packs in the results.

We hoped to uncover whether there were obvious consistencies in the types of query intents that would cause each of these SERP features to appear. We also intended to assess whether there are cases of both features appearing in the same SERPs, with the presence of AIOs "displacing" Maps Packs into lower positions.
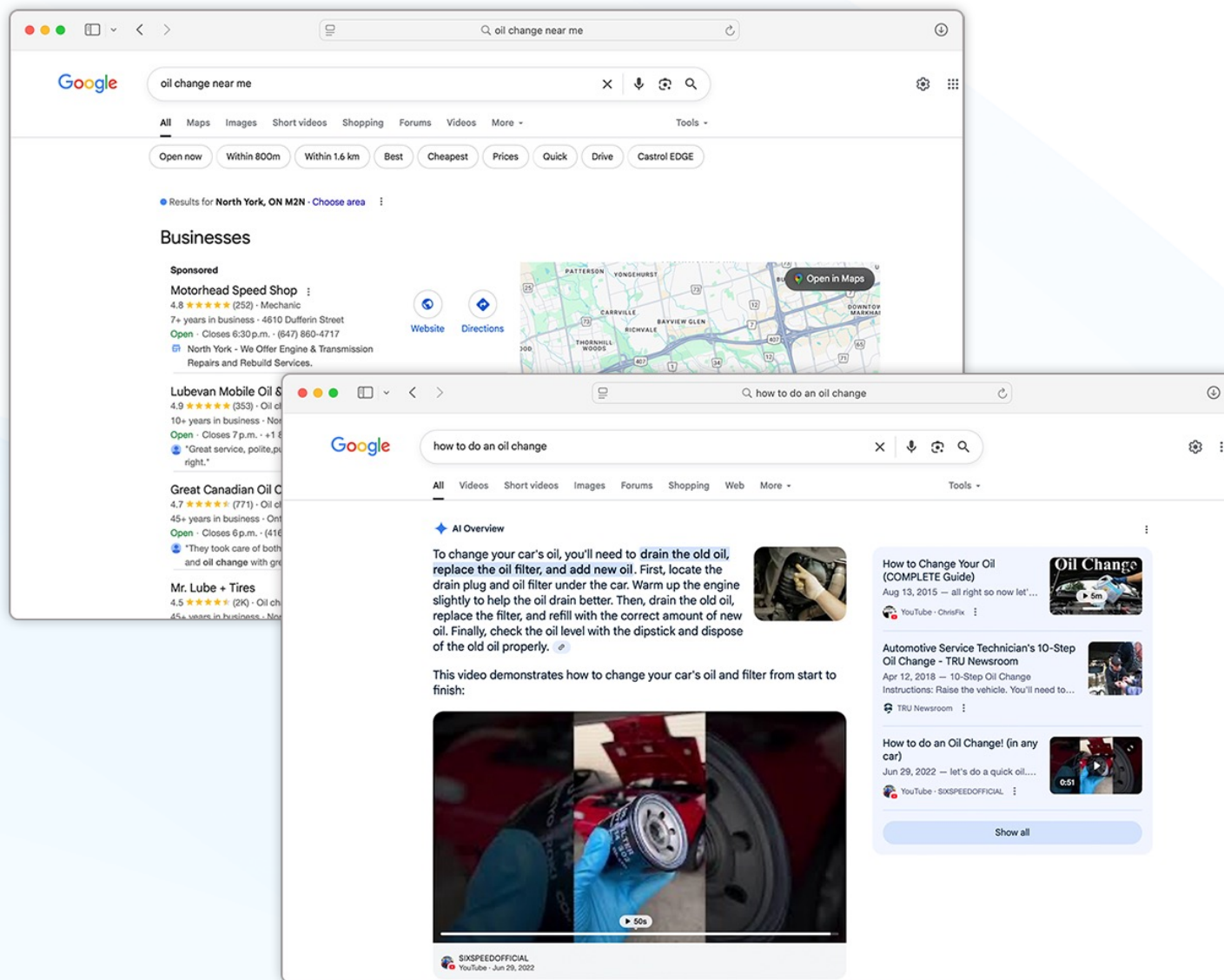
Methodology

1) **Preparation of Seed Topics:** Leveraging our [TotalSERP](#) toolkit, we extracted some of the most important core themes from real client data across four different industry verticals: *Auto Service, Home Services, Financial Services and Insurance,* and *Apparel Retail*. This resulted in a list of seed terms for each vertical that represents the most significant monthly demand volume across keyword variants.

2) **Systematic Morphing of Queries for Intent Variation:** We created a custom-built GPT to intentionally morph the root themes from the seed list into variants with different intents, making one-at-a-time tweaks to pluralization, localization, and punctuation. As an example, the seed theme of "oil change" would be morphed into queries such as:

- Oil change near me
- Oil change New York
- Best oil change
- How to do an oil change
- Why do an oil change
- Oil change cost
- Oil change coupon
- Oil change?
- Oil changes
- Oil change locations
- Etc…

3) **SERP Data Gathering:** Leveraging our [TotalSERP](#) toolkit, we batched requests to SERPAPI to capture the results page for each of the morphed query variants. Results of each search were captured in JSON files. We gathered a total of 739 SERPs for analysis.

Vertical	# of query variant SERPs
Apparel	294
Auto Service	116
Financial-Services & Insurance	229
Home Services	100
All verticals	**739**

4) **Data Frame Preparation:** We created a custom Python script to summarize the JSON contents and prepare a file that listed the industry vertical, query variant, presence of Maps Pack, Presence of AIO, and the AIO content text.

5) **Final Analysis:** We submitted the summary file to ChatGPT's o3 Pro model with a detailed prompt describing analysis goals.

Overall Findings

Whether an AIO or a Maps Pack is served appears most commonly to be an "either or" choice for Google. Only a small number of query variants triggered both features to appear on the same page. In the rare cases when both elements appear, the AIO is always first and the local pack is pushed halfway down the results, well below the fold on desktop.

Feature	Queries triggering it	Share of all queries
AI Overview only	97	13%
Map Pack only	172	23%
Both AIO + Map (Map pushed below AIO)	7	** ≈ 1 %**

Informational intent as indicated by question prefixes in the query was most likely to trigger the presence of an AIO and not a Maps Pack. "Near me" queries had 100% success in triggering a Maps Pack, due to their explicitly local intent. Prefixes such as "best" and "affordable" indicate transactional intent, so also favor Maps Packs over AIOs. Question mark punction did not appear to fundamentally influence SERP features in cases where the query

intent would otherwise likely be interpreted as local in nature, but pluralization triggers AIOs at a slightly higher than average rate, perhaps indicating that Google treats plurals as broader, more research-oriented queries.

Signal in query	% of queries that showed AIO	% that showed Map
Contains a question word (how/what/why…)	28%	<1%
Contains "near me"	0%	100%
Ends with "?"	6%	47%
Plural noun (e.g., "jackets")	20%	25%

Nuances by Industry Vertical

While there are consistent patterns behind which query intents tend to trigger AIOs vs. Maps Packs, different industry verticals had different overall rates of AIO and Maps Pack appearance. While the SERPs responded to distinctions between DIY intent and intent to hire a professional when it comes to Auto Repair or Home Services, Google appears to have intentionally shied away from providing DIY financial advice.

Does AIO *Content* Change with Query Wording?

Our analysis also suggests that the textual content of AI Overviews is influenced by query intent and the specific framing of the question:

- **How-to / DIY** types of queries produce AI Overviews with multi-step instructions (eg: "Start by shutting off the water…")
- Requests for **comparisons and definitions** produce AIOs with paragraph-style distinctions (eg: "A coat reaches below the hips whereas a jacket…")
- Because **pluralization** broadens the scope, it often triggers AIO content that provides a category-level definition (eg: "Jackets are outerwear garments…")

Vertical	AIO rate	Map-pack rate	Distinctive patterns
Apparel	15%	18%	AIOs triggered by style/advice ("how to wear…", "X vs Y"). Transactional "buy/near me" searches switch to map packs for local boutiques. No overlap observed.
Auto Service	23%	**49%**	Highest dual-intent surface. Maintenance questions ("oil change cost", "why is my car…") show AIO; service + location ("tire shop Toronto", "mechanic near me") show maps. Six of seven displacement cases occur here, so content AND local optimization are both critical.
Financial-Services & Insurance	**3%**	18%	Google is cautious (YMYL). Most queries,—even informational ones,—return classic links or "People also ask". Local packs appear for broker/agent + location. Brands should focus on local and trust signals to build their Search presence.
Home Services	**27%**	29%	Highest AIO incidence. DIY troubleshooting ("how to fix…") consistently spawns AIOs with step-by-step instructions. "Plumber near me", "HVAC Boston" show maps. One overlap case observed.

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Key Takeaways

Importantly for multilocation businesses, we see that Local Search remains resilient in the face of advances in the AI Search experiences. Queries with explicit and inferred local intent still prioritize a Maps Pack, most commonly without any displacement from AIOs.

Multilocation businesses should consider a true Enterprise-to-Local strategy for Search, with different strategies to optimize for AIOs and Local Search inclusion. The former requires that the brand establish a strong and authoritative presence with informational and educational content, while the later requires strong optimization of local landing pages, business listings, and reviews. In the rare cases where both features appear in the same SERP, successful Enterprise-to-Local strategy ensures greater overall domination of results.
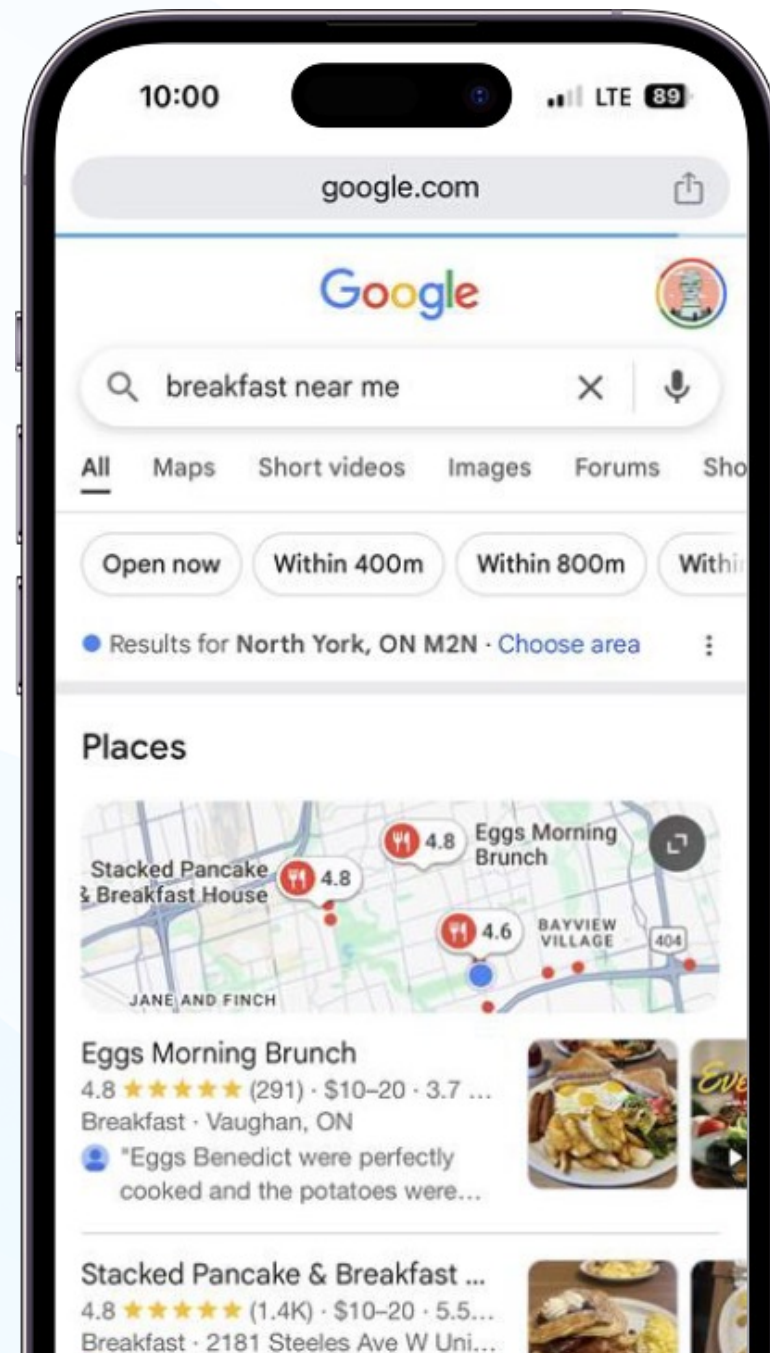
More About TotalSERP

TotalSERP is DAC's complete agency solution for dominating what matters most across paid, organic, and local search. Supported by our proprietary AI-powered toolkit, we:

1) **CLASSIFY** relevant search demand into topics & intents – the backbone of the data
2) **ENRICH** the data with custom scraping of SERPs, LLM brand mentions, competitive brand intel, Reddit opportunities
3) **SCORE** strategic opportunities across paid, organic, and local
4) **CREATE** content for EEAT principles, location visibility, and winning Search ads
5) **OPTIMIZE** with ongoing reporting and continuous testing

About DAC

Founded in 1972, DAC is an international leader in full-funnel media, mastering the art of media application from enterprise to local. As a digital-first agency with expertise across the entire media landscape, we ensure that our clients stay ahead of the curve with innovative solutions that drive success.

We thrive in the evolving media environment, building on our core strengths while continuously seeking new, groundbreaking methods to serve our clients better. We help brands gain awareness and achieve performance both globally and locally through our comprehensive range of services, including paid media, SEO, content strategy, local presence management, reputation management, and data analytics. Our team of high-quality, knowledgeable professionals works in an integrated environment, leveraging unique expertise and technology to deliver powerful outcomes.

At DAC, we partner with you to achieve exceptional success, driven by our dedication to your goals.

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