Bridging the Customer Journey across the Physical and Digital Worlds

People today shop online, but most still prefer to complete their purchases in a physical location. In fact, nearly 3 out of 5 consumers in the US made their last purchase in a physical store.[1] Getting better insight into this complex digital-to-physical purchase path helps marketers design better experiences for customers, allocate budget more effectively, and optimize digital marketing programs.

However, advertisers often struggle to connect digital advertising impact to offline traffic and sales. Because aggregate industry benchmarks are difficult to source or find, they have traditionally used rough estimates or third-party data providers to connect offline purchases with online marketing. When evaluating solutions to measure online-to-offline, there are three key criteria and factors that advertisers should consider:

Criteria	Key Factors
Accuracy	• Size and representativeness of user base • Precision of technology • Differentiation between an in-store and nearby visit • Verification panel
Actionability	• Turnaround time for results • Ability to pivot bidding and strategy quickly
Availability	• Cost and resources required • Setup and implementation • Coverage in major markets

Without these attributes, marketers may struggle to make informed decisions or adapt marketing strategy quickly. This paper will review the advantages and shortcomings of traditional offline data matching solutions and new app/panel solutions. We'll also explain how Google store visits provide accuracy and actionability and are available at no cost and with no setup required.

Offline Data Matching

Data matching solutions have been in use for several years. This methodology works best for consumer packaged goods or brands with many retail locations, such as drugstores, grocery stores, or club stores. Brands that aren't frequently found on retail shelves may not meet data feasibility requirements.

To work with a data provider, advertisers must have a way to match offline purchase data with online customer information, such as a loyalty program with email addresses or website logins. To match customer data to cookies or user data, advertisers place a third-party supplier pixel on their websites or directly link user data. Then, the data providers partner with ad platforms to manually match customer info with cookies or user data of the people who saw an ad before making a purchase.

Google offers a store sales solution through partnerships with data providers. The advertisers share transaction data with their data partner, who then match offline transaction data to Google ad clicks. This data is then imported into AdWords by the data partner.

Because these solutions only match a sample set of customers, advertisers sometimes struggle with low match rates for extrapolation if they are not large enough. Additionally, offline data matching solutions are generally complex to deploy. Lastly, these solutions require advertisers to operate ongoing uploads of their transaction data to data partners, which is prone to errors, people going on vacation, and other operational hiccups.

Using offline data matching, marketers use their own data to match real sales dollars to users who clicked on an online ad. This can lead to powerful and convincing data to drive business decisions. However, the ongoing resources required make this solution difficult for many advertisers.

Pros	Cons
• Matches sales dollars to users who have clicked on an ad • Vendor manages end-to-end process after data is provided • Uses advertiser's own data and third-party data (platform-neutral)	• Requires a robust loyalty program • Slow setup and deployment • Low match rates for extrapolation • Complex

App and Panel Solutions

App and panel solutions emerged in the last 2-3 years and rely on app user location history, surveys, and/or self-reported user check-ins to calculate an offline visit. Because these solutions are platform agnostic, they can integrate with targeting solutions and major display and video advertising platforms. This means that advertisers can compare online-to-offline performance across different media channels.

For solutions that rely on self-reported data or use a limited panel, results may suffer from bias, may not be representative of the general population, and users may need to use the apps while in-store. Advertisers pay a fee for offline attribution in addition to media costs and must setup and implement tracking tags.

Finally, without comprehensive data on store dimensions and building geometry, these solutions often cannot differentiate between a true store visit and a nearby user or a visit to a neighboring store. For example, many of these app and panel providers will count a visit to the mall as a visit to all stores within a given mall. This lack of accurate data can lead to spurious results.

Pros	Cons
• Platform-agnostic • Integrations with targeting solutions and major display and video advertising platforms • Compares performance across different media channels	• Panels are typically not representative of general population • Fees in addition to media costs • Tag setup and implementation required • Poor differentiation between a true visit and one nearby

Google Store Visits

Google created store visits conversions to help global marketers accurately measure and quickly optimize the impact of search and display ads on offline visits. Store visits conversions are

calculated based on aggregated, anonymized data from hundreds of millions of Google users who opt-in to share Location History, click on a search or display ad, then visit a business location.

Store visits conversions match opted-in Android and iOS location history with detailed Google Maps data on the exact coordinates and dimensions of over 200 million buildings. By connecting Wi-Fi, cell tower, GPS location signals, and bluetooth beacon data, store visits uses machine learning to differentiate between true visits to the store and visits next door, even in multi-story buildings.

To verify our results and achieve 99% accuracy in reported visits[2], we use a survey panel of over five million users globally to double-check that a user actually visited the locations we've recorded. We provide granular store visits reporting at all levels within AdWords (account, campaign, and keyword-level), and data is reported 48 hours after a visit. Finally, store visits are provided free of charge, require no setup to get started, and available in major markets around the world.

Pros	Cons
• Based on hundreds of millions of Android and iOS users who opt-in to share Location History	• Sales revenue is calculated using an average spend per visitor multiplier
• Detailed Google Maps data on the exact coordinates and dimensions of over 200 million buildings	• Applies to AdWords Search and Display campaigns only
• Measures true visits within store boundaries	
• 99% accuracy in reported visits[2]	
• Validated by a panel of 5M+ users worldwide	
• Granular data is reported in AdWords within 48 hours of a visit and is immediately actionable	
• Free of charge	
• No setup required	
• Available in major markets globally	

Offline Data Matching, App and Panel Solutions, and Google Store Visits

Technology has helped marketers better connect digital marketing to offline traffic and sales. Offline data matching solutions have helped connect revenue to digital marketing across multiple channels, and app or panel solutions support offline attribution across display and video networks. However, both approaches have problems with accuracy, actionability, and availability, which prevent advertisers from optimizing programs and budget efficiently.

Google store visits conversions are 99% accurate in reported visits, provide near real-time reporting for quick optimization, and are available free of charge to advertisers around the world. Speak to your Account Manager to get started, and let Google help you measure the moments that matter.

	Accuracy	Actionability	Availability
Offline Data Matching	• Low match rates for extrapolation	• Slow setup and deployment	• Requires a robust loyalty program • Complex
App and Panel Solutions	• Panels are typically not representative of general population • Poor differentiation between a true visit and one nearby	• Integrations with major video and display platforms	• Fees in addition to media costs • Tag setup and implementation required
Google Store Visits	• 99% accuracy in reported visits • Measures true visits within store boundaries • Based on hundreds of millions of Android and iOS users who opt-in to share Location History • Detailed Google Maps data with exact coordinates and dimensions of over 200 million buildings • Validated by a panel of 5M+ users worldwide	• Granular data reported in AdWords within 48 hours of a visit and immediately actionable	• Free of charge • No setup required • Available in major markets globally

[1]*Source: The Consumer Barometer Survey 2014 / 2015. Based on purchases made across 20 verticals.*

[2]*Store visits are calculated using conservative data thresholds with 99% certainty that reported visits are less than or equal to actual visits.*

Google Store Visits Success

In the US, retailers are measuring, on average, 4x more conversions overall and 10x more conversions on mobile when including Google store visits data as part of their search ads performance. In the US Auto and Travel verticals, where driving a consumer to a dealer lot or hotel is a high value event, advertisers are measuring 2x more conversions when including store visits data.

NISSAN

Using Google store visits, Nissan UK could see which keywords were actually driving people into its dealerships. Nissan UK discovered that 6% of its mobile ad clicks resulted in a dealership visit and delivered an estimated 25 to 1 return on investment.

Jerome's Furniture

After implementing Google store visits, Jerome's Furniture saw a 44% decrease in its cost-per-acquisition because each AdWords click was attributed to many more sales. The changes were so successful that the company was able to increase its investment in mobile Search by 82%, drive a staggering 93% increase in sales, and launch two more storefronts to keep up with demand.

Sprint

Sprint learned that 1 in 4 clicks on mobile search ads lead to a store visit and that paid search ads drove five in-store sales for each online sale. With Google Store Visits enabled, Sprint achieved a 31% higher visit rate from mobile search ad clicks versus desktop search ad clicks.