Google showing mobile ‘search by photos’ option in selected local verticals

Google is starting to show a new option to “search by photos” box in certain local verticals. It appears only in mobile results right now and is distinct from “interesting finds” and “discover more places,” which are also photo-centric boxes in SERPs. This was discovered initially by Mike Blumenthal.

Examples of the “Search by photos” option appearing in Google Search for some local queries.

No fixed position. The above result is for “Tacos near me.” It shows “search by photos” below the fold, below the local pack and other organic results. However, this wasn’t true in every instance; in a couple of cases the search by photos box appeared immediately below the local pack.

Each image shows a star rating and distance from the user. Clicking any individual photo takes users to the GMB profile page. There’s also an option to open “more photos” which displays a full page of images from different listings. Users can then click “view list” to get more information and scroll through multiple listings.

Below is another example for dentists.

“Search by photos” appearing in Google Search results for the query “dentists.”

Not showing for all categories. I was able to find similar SERPs for several other local categories but not all local

verticals I searched. Dry cleaners, locksmiths and jewelry stores, for example, yielded these photo boxes but not lawyers, architects or plumbers.

It’s not clear whether Google is simply testing this or rolling out a new mobile SERP element and whether it will ultimately come to the desktop. It’s also not clear what the criteria are for showing specific images. The listings in the local pack and search by photos box sometimes directly corresponded and sometimes did not.

Depending on how this evolves, it might be an opportunity to get double exposure: in the local pack and the search by photos box.

Why we should care. Local business profiles with optimized images significantly outperform those without. Search by photos is yet another argument in favor of claiming and fully building out GMB profiles with lots of images. It also argues that photos should represent every major menu item or important product category and should be more “professional” as well.

About The Author

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