Using Google Maps Platform to meet shoppers' changing expectations

Optimizing the delivery and pickup experience for your business

Google Maps Platform

Contents

Google Maps Platform

Introduction

Loading up on hand sanitizer. Disinfecting groceries. Putting on a mask before leaving the house. These are behaviors that we might not have even considered before the COVID-19 pandemic. But in the blink of an eye, people around the world were forced to adopt new routines and adjust to our new normal.

The COVID-19 pandemic hasn't just shaped the ways we socialize and go about our daily routines, it's also fundamentally changed consumer behavior and expectations. As the pandemic continues to play a major role in our lives, today's customers are placing a premium on convenience and safety. Efficient delivery and seamless in-store pickup are no longer just nice bonuses for businesses to have — they're now non-negotiable.

Most experts agree: these behaviors aren't going away anytime soon. It's believed that a preference for contactless commerce could become the norm for consumers, as COVID-19 changes everyday habits[1]. And that doesn't just mean delivery is on the rise — Buy Online, Pick up in-store (BOPIS) was by far the fastest growing area of ecommerce even before COVID-19, growing at five times the speed of overall ecommerce[2]. To meet these changing consumer habits, the need to ramp up technology is urgent.

In this guide we'll demystify this process, outlining the powerful APIs and tech stack needed to meet these new customer expectations by adding contextual cues that help users make quicker decisions, speed up check out, or know when their order is arriving. We've added in some real-life examples of companies adapting to changing customer demands as well as steps to put these recommendations into action. As we'll see, the brands that are succeeding are turning the challenge of this moment into an opportunity for renewed customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty.

[1] NRF Monthly Economic Review, May 2020.
[2] IHL Group, April 2019.

Google Maps Platform
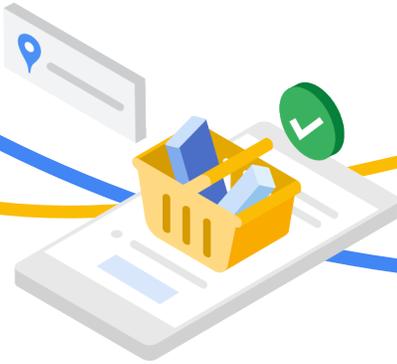
Part 1: Rethinking delivery and pickup

Convenience and safety come first

When it comes to grocery shopping, most people stick to a routine. Throughout the week shoppers will probably build up a list of meals, snacks, and household supplies that they need to restock. Then, they head to the store and knock out this list during an hour-long excursion. Shoppers browse the aisles, check out the bakery, and maybe pick up a few odds and ends that they didn't plan for. This grocery shopping experience isn't just a chore to cross off the list — it's an event that consumers look forward to and enjoy as they do it.

Fast-forward to 2020 — when this routine has been turned upside down. When shoppers are going to the store, they're trying to get in and out as quickly as possible. According to research by McKinsey & Company, 65% of US shoppers want to shop at a store that's easy to navigate and 58% are looking for fast checkout. This underscores the need for stores to be organized so that customers can quickly find exactly what they're looking for.

But more likely customers are opting for delivery to avoid the crowds altogether. Customers want to get what they need and get it fast. And because of the uncertainty of the situation, they want to stock up on essentials because they're not sure when they'll get to the grocery store next. *At the heart of the current shopping experience is a need for convenience, availability, and safety.*

Google Maps Platform

Over the past few months, businesses have seen a major uptick in delivery, curbside pick-up and takeout. According to Google data, search for "curbside pickup" and "home delivery" have grown by 70% and over 100% respectively over the week ending March 28[3]. In the U.S. alone, 24% of surveyed shoppers went online to buy something that they'd normally purchase in-store — and 87% of respondents said they'd try it again[4].

The stakes rise for businesses

Due to the shift from offline to online, last-mile delivery providers are seeing huge growth — but consumers have very high expectations for these services, which some brands may not be prepared to deliver. Some retailers don't have the technology and scale to deliver user-friendly experiences with a range of delivery slots and flexible timing. And they don't offer the real-time visibility for customers to stay updated on the status of their delivery.

As more brands prioritize delivery, the drawback of a poor experience is felt more sharply. Recent research by McKinsey & Company indicates that 60% of global consumers have changed their shopping behavior, with many prioritizing convenience and value. If a customer doesn't feel your brand is offering an experience that is as convenient and safe as they had hoped, they may seek out alternatives.

60%

of global consumers have changed their shopping behavior since March[5].

Turning a challenge into an opportunity

Today businesses have a unique chance to rethink customer service, all while easing anxieties during an uncertain time. And if you have a robust digital infrastructure, you're poised to succeed in this moment. For instance, pizza giant Papa John's has seen sales growth of 26.9% in April 2020[6]. As a delivery-centric business, Papa John's had the resources in place to succeed when strong delivery and BOPIS operations became essential.

Businesses have a lot of options. In the next part of this guide, we'll walk through the digital toolkit available to you. Understanding your needs and budget before investing in a solution is a key step. Once you know where you stand, you can offer customers the experiences they've come to expect.

[3] Google Data, Global English, March 22, 2020–March 28, 2020 vs. March 15, 2020–March 21, 2020.
[4] Google/Ipsos, U.S., Shopping Tracker, online survey, n=3,005, Americans 18+ who conducted shopping activities in past two days, March 2020.
[5] McKinsey & Company COVID-19 Consumer Pulse surveys, conducted globally between June 15 and June 21, 2020.
[5] Papa John's International, Inc. (2020). First Quarter 2020 Results
https://www.businessinsider.com/american-quarantine-diet-boost-sales-at-wingstop-papa-johns-2020-5

Google Maps Platform

Part 2: Embracing this new normal

Pivoting to Buy Online, Pick Up in Store

In the wake of COVID-19, one trend that's gained popularity is Buy Online, Pick up in Store (BOPIS or curb-side). Unlike delivery, BOPIS puts the customer in charge of picking up their order and bringing it home. For this reason, BOPIS calls for robust map data to ensure a customer finds the nearest pickup location for the inventory they're looking for and gets there as efficiently as possible.

If you're looking to add BOPIS capabilities to your website, you'll want to prioritize the following features using powerful Google Maps Platform APIs:

⭐ Improving the customer experience

- **Display the nearest store location.** In order to offer the most efficient BOPIS experience, you'll want to quickly search your store database to generate the nearest store details: pick-up location, hours of operation, etc. To do this, you'll need a combination of the Geocoding API, Distance Matrix API, and Maps APIs. The Geocoding API will figure out the latitude and longitude of a user's home address, while the Distance Matrix API will sort nearby stores by driving distance, using real-time traffic information. Then you can display a static map photo of the nearest store so the user knows exactly what to expect and where to go. Office supplies retailer Staples used Google Maps to help customers find and locate the nearest store, making it easy to pick up orders at any of their 1,600 stores.

STAPLES®
Make More Happen

"Google Maps was a natural choice for Staples. It has the most familiar interface and the most useful APIs. With Google Maps, we've been able to very easily build a website and mobile apps that let people quickly find a nearby Staples store and get directions to it."

—Bolivar Bravo, Head of Mobile Engineering Staples "Velocity Lab" in Cambridge, Staples

Read more about the Staples story.

→

Google Maps Platform

- **Frictionless checkout experience.** If your website's checkout page is confusing and inefficient, you run the risk of frustrating customers and losing business. This is even more true when the customer shopping experience is done on their mobile device. One way to expedite checkout is by incorporating the Places Autocomplete API, which will automatically populate businesses, addresses and points of interest as a user types. This reduces the time it takes for shoppers to type their addresses, which in turn, increases conversion rate. Not only will this API make checkout faster, but it will also validate addresses upstream, ensuring the user has typed in a more accurate address and reducing the number and cost of failed deliveries.

- **Reassure customers that they selected the right store.** In the confirmation receipt, you can display a static map using the Maps Static API to provide extra assurance to the customer that the correct location was chosen.

- **Provide turn-by-turn directions with real-time traffic data.** The Directions API will give customers the clear turn-by-turn directions they need to go to the store. Embedding Street View into these directions will provide even more clarity.

Streamlining in-store operations

- **Give store employees visibility into when customers will arrive.** Having your customer's order ready right as they pull up to the curb is a great way to enhance the customer experience and reduce wait time. Directions API can be built into your ordering system; when the customer opts in to sharing their location, store employees can calculate the user's estimated arrival time through their trip, adjusting for evolving traffic conditions.

Google Maps Platform

Buy Online, Pick up in Store in action

To understand the Buy Online, Pick up in Store (BOPIS or curb-side) process, let's look at how Argos, a partner of the Sainsbury's retail group, implemented Google Maps Platform. With nearly 2,000 stores across the UK, Argos is a giant in the retail sector that always puts the customer at the center of their strategy. But when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down Argos' standalone stores, they had to get creative and draw on their partnership with Sainsbury's supermarkets. Argos' BOPIS experience would use Sainbury's supermarkets as collection points for their customers.

Finding the nearest store is just one part of the BOPIS equation. The Argos team also wanted to make sure their customers could seamlessly navigate their way to these nearby stores. That's why they're using the Directions API to provide their customers with clear instructions about how to get to the Argos location in question.

The process works similarly in food. Instead of picking up a product, the customer might be grabbing a hot meal that they'll pick up at the curb. The same principles of immediacy and seamlessness apply. In the restaurant industry, freshness is king. That's why the best restaurants have improved operational efficiency to get meals to BOPIS customers at the right time.

Google Maps Platform

To help customers quickly find the nearest Sainsbury's location, Argos used the Maps Javascript API and the Maps Static API. These fast-loading, easy-to-use maps served as an efficient store locator for customers and led to a 12% reduction in bounce rate.

Argos, a partner of the Sainsbury's retail group, implemented Google Maps Platform in 2,000 stores across the UK. Their customers can order from the online or in-store catalog and collect their items from a checkout desk.

12%

reduction in bounce rate.

Read more about the Argos story.

→

"Location services are very important for us...after we adopted Google Maps Platform, our bounce rate was cut by 12%, which translates to 4 million visitors a year who continue their journey on our website."

—Rob Sargent, Senior Digital Product Lead, Argos

Capability	*Frictionless checkout experience*	*Finding nearest pickup location*	*Real-time turn-by-turn directions*	*Real-time ETA for customers*
API(s)	Places Autocomplete API	Geocoding API, Distance Matrix API, and Maps APIs	Directions API	Directions API
Result	Ensures more accurate, efficient entry of customer's home address	Cuts down on customer driving time by directing them to the closest store	Prevents customers from getting lost on their way to pick up an order	Lets businesses know exactly when a customer is about to arrive at store

Google Maps Platform

Enhancing delivery

More and more customers are opting for delivery, where the product comes directly to their home. Here are some of the features needed to improve delivery experiences for customers, support drivers, and simplify the dispatching process, along with their associated APIs.

Keeping customers satisfied

- **Minimize delivery errors.** Delivering to the wrong address is costly. It upsets the customer and wastes your employee's time. The Places Autocomplete API uses predictive analytics to suggest possible addresses as the user types, minimizing the chances of typing in an inaccurate location or an address that doesn't exist. Then the Geocoding API gives the user an added sense of control, helping them finetune the delivery location to an exact latitude and longitude. A prime example is Tokopedia, one of Indonesia's largest marketplace platforms, which uses the Places API and Geocoding API to improve delivery accuracy for their 90 million monthly users.

- **Provide real-time delivery tracking.** Your customers should never have to guess when their order will arrive. Keep customers informed by letting them track the ETA of their delivery using the Directions API and Distance Matrix API. You can then build a simple delivery tracker on your website with the Maps JavaScript API.

---

tokopedia

"Tokopedia Care team members used to call customers to correct their address whenever we have failed deliveries. By introducing Autocomplete on Google Maps, we validate the delivery address at the source to avoid costly delays and unhappy customers."

—Edwin Hartanto Mailoa, AVP of Logistics, Tokopedia

Read more about the Tokopedia story.

→

Google Maps Platform

Simplifying the process for dispatchers

- **Automatically choose the best positioned driver.** Whenever a customer makes an order, you want to make sure you're dispatching the driver best positioned to reach that customer quickly. Similar to how the Distance Matrix API connected BOPIS customers with the nearest store, the Distance Matrix API can also choose the nearest fulfillment center and have a driver from that fulfillment center complete the order.

- **Monitor driver safety.** You can use the Roads API to evaluate driver behavior in real time. The API's speed limits data can help you ensure drivers are operating safely and efficiently to guarantee quality of service.

Supporting drivers

- **Optimize the delivery route.** The Directions API can ensure drivers are completing deliveries using the shortest possible distance. This API also gives real-time traffic information and makes it easy to adjust their route to avoid high-traffic areas and slowdowns.

- **Always find the right home.** With StreetView built into the delivery app, you can ensure drivers know the exact appearance of the house they're driving to.

Delivery in action

Frichti, a fast-growing French meal service committed to delivering healthy, eco-conscious meals, has used Google Maps Platform to build a winning customer experience.

To achieve optimal delivery efficiency, Frichti's team first uses the Maps Javascript API to understand the street layouts of different cities. This precise mapping helps them understand roughly how many orders one city hub will generate versus another. Once they have this valuable data, they can better understand their inventory while also developing routing algorithms that help them deliver food quickly.

Google Maps Platform

The Frichti team also used the Maps JavaScript API to offer real-time delivery tracking on the Frichti platform. This has led to 75% fewer calls from customers asking where their delivery is, as well as a significant increase in repeat customers. With a vast library of APIs to explore, Frichti is hoping to test out new features that boost customer satisfaction and lead to repeat orders. To learn more about how Frichti has used Google Maps Platform to scale and grow, read the full case study here.

Frichti is a French company that offers delivery of fresh, seasonal, ready-made meals by leveraging Google Maps Platform.

FRICHTI

75%

reduction in customer service costs.

Read more about the Frichti story.

→

"For a food delivery firm like Frichti, that means game-changing mapping and data platforms that give us extreme precision in planning routes and meal quantities. We adopted Google Maps Platform two years ago and discovered an immediate transformation in our capabilities."

—Damien Leroux, CTO, Frichti

Capability	*Frictionless checkout experience*	*Finding best delivery driver*	*Route optimization*	*Real-time ETA for customers*
API(s)	Places Autocomplete API	Distance Matrix API, Roads API	Directions API	Directions API, Distance Matrix API, Maps Javascript API
Result	Ensures more accurate, efficient entry of customer's home address	Dispatches the driver best positioned to quickly reach the customer	Lowers delivery distance and for drivers, helping them complete jobs quickly	Lets customers track the status of their delivery in real time

Google Maps Platform

Part 3: The road ahead

Convenience and safety have taken on a much greater significance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. While this new normal presents challenges for businesses, it's also an opportunity to enhance the customer experience and strengthen customer loyalty. With the innovative mapping capabilities mentioned above, we hope you now feel confident in scaling up your customer experiences, all the way from payment to fulfillment and navigation.

The best customer experiences are data-driven while protecting the user's privacy. As always, these APIs must be used with the end user's privacy in mind. Before getting started, read the Google Maps Platform Terms of Service carefully and keep those guidelines in mind as you build your customer experiences.

Now is the time to explore Google Maps Platform and gain a deeper understanding of the APIs at your disposal. With the power of Google Maps Platform in your toolkit, you can waste no time meeting your customers' expectations for convenience and value.

About Google Maps Platform

For more than 15 years, Google Maps Platform has provided more accurate, real-time, and comprehensive location-based data and insights to millions of developers, companies, and nonprofits around the world. Through its core products—Maps, Routes, and Places—and industry solutions, it provides location intelligence and immersive location experiences for companies to build contextual customer experiences, improve operational efficiencies, and make strategic decisions.

Google Maps Platform