

Study: AI Assistants Give 56% of Local Business Recommendations to Just Three Names

Across 840 trade-and-metro leaderboards, national-chain dominance ranges from half of all mentions in moving to effectively zero in five other trades.

SACRAMENTO, CA, UNITED STATES, August 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SACRAMENTO, Calif., August 28, 2026 — Across 840 local-service leaderboards covering 21 trades in 40 US metropolitan areas, AI assistants named an average of 9.2 businesses per trade but gave 56.2% of all mentions to only three of them, according to [data published today by MentionedOn](#).

Key figures:

- 56.2% of mentions to the top 3: The three most-mentioned businesses in a given trade and metro captured a majority of all mentions, which means a fourth-place listing earns little of the available attention.

Source: MentionedOn leaderboard dataset, 840 reports through 2026-08-22

- 24.7% of mentions to the top 1: The single most-mentioned business took roughly a quarter of every mention available in its trade and metro.

Source: MentionedOn leaderboard dataset, 840 reports through 2026-08-22

- 9.2 businesses named on average (median 10): Assistants named a limited slate per trade and metro rather than surveying the local market.

Source: MentionedOn leaderboard dataset, 840 reports through 2026-08-22

- 54 brands, 17.9% of all mentions: National brands, defined as names appearing in at least 10 of the 40 metros, made up a small minority of mentions overall.

Source: MentionedOn leaderboard dataset, 840 reports through 2026-08-22

- 2 brands present in all 40 metros: Only two brands in the entire study were named in every one of the 40 metros surveyed: Two Men and a Truck, and Terminix.

Source: MentionedOn leaderboard dataset, 840 reports through 2026-08-22

- movers 51%, pest control 42%, accountants 37%, versus 0% in five trades: Chain dominance is not a general property of AI local search. It is concentrated in a handful of trades, while others were almost entirely independent businesses.

Source: MentionedOn leaderboard dataset, 840 reports through 2026-08-22

The finding that matters to an individual business owner is the concentration, not the chains. When an assistant answers a question like "who is the best plumber in Sacramento", it does not

produce a directory. It produces a shortlist, and that shortlist is heavily weighted toward its first few names. Placing fourth in a trade returns a fraction of the attention that placing first does.

The national-brand story turned out to be far more uneven than expected. In moving, 51% of all mentions went to brands that appear across at least a quarter of the metros studied, and in pest control 42% did. Two Men and a Truck and Terminix were the only two names in the entire dataset that appeared in all 40 metros.

In five of the 21 trades studied, that share was effectively zero. HVAC, law, veterinary care, real estate and med spas were answered almost entirely with independent local businesses. For an owner in one of those trades, the field is open. For an owner in moving or pest control, roughly half of the available recommendation space is already occupied before the local market is considered at all.

Across the whole corpus the assistants named 5,552 distinct businesses, which is a reminder that these systems are not simply reciting the largest advertiser in every category. They are producing a short, specific and quite concentrated answer, and which businesses land inside it varies enormously by trade.

"Owners tend to ask whether AI knows they exist. The more useful question is whether AI puts them in the first three names, because past that the difference between being listed and being invisible gets very small." said John Arndt, Founder, MentionedOn.

Methodology

MentionedOn generates a public leaderboard for each combination of 21 local-service trades and 40 US metropolitan areas by putting five category questions to two AI assistants and extracting the business names each one recommends. Figures above use the most recent leaderboard per trade and metro as of 2026-08-22, covering 840 leaderboards and 8,400 assistant answers, from a corpus that began 2026-06-18. "National brand" is operationalized as a name appearing in at least 10 of the 40 metros; there is no external brand list involved. The 21 trades and 40 metros were selected by MentionedOn and are not a random sample of US local businesses, so shares should be read as descriptive of this corpus rather than as national estimates. Mention counts measure how often a name was recommended, not revenue, quality or customer satisfaction.

More information: <https://mentioned-on.com/top>

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