



Pocket Bar,
NSW

**better
hospitality
reviews** 

Google Business Profile Lookbook

With the rise of AI powered Google Search, optimizing your profile has never been more important. Here you will find a guide on how to optimise Google Business Profile photos specifically for the hospitality industry.

Why Does Optimising Images Specifically for Google Maps Matter?

Optimized photos enhance your local SEO, increasing your visibility on Google Search, Google Maps, and AI driven recommendations. While aesthetic trends and mood driven photography work well for social media branding, they don't always align with Google's SEO best practices. We'll dive further into why this is important in this guide.

Let's Start

- ▶ Basic Photo Guideline 3
- ▶ How Google AI Categories Image and Case Studies 5
- ▶ Lookbook For Your Photoshoot 9
- ▶ Cover Image Guide 16
- ▶ Video Specification Recommendations 22

Basic Photo Guideline

Best Practices for GBP Photos:

- **Format:** JPEG or PNG
- **Dimension Size:** 720 x 720 pixels minimum, 2048 x 2048 pixels maximum.
- **File Size:** Minimum 500KB, Maximum 5MB.
- **Lighting:** Bright, natural lighting preferred
- **Angles:** Show clarity and details
- **Authenticity:** Avoid excessive filters; keep it real. Google's filters don't like edited imagery.
- **Focus:** High resolution with sharp details

Example:



Basic Photo Guideline

What to Avoid

- Heavily edited images
- Overlays, text, or watermarks
- Blurry, dark, black and white or pixelated images
- Images with object distractions (e.g., leaves, lamps, other decorations or objects)

Example:



HOW GOOGLE AI CATEGORISES IMAGES

Google's AI and machine learning models analyse and categorise images based on various factors to improve search visibility and relevance.

If Google misidentifies your images, your ranking can suffer!

Here's a breakdown of how it works:



Object Recognition & Google AI

Google AI analyzes and labels objects within images, including:

- **Products:** Plates, tables, food, wine/cocktail glasses
- **People & Faces:** Staff, customers, happy expressions
- **Landmarks & Places:** Storefronts, restaurant interiors
- **Text in Images:** Google's OCR (Optical Character Recognition) reads visible text on signage, labels, or menus



Optimising Images for Better Recognition

To maximize visibility, we should align uploaded photos with your business's primary categories. This means ensuring images are clear, well lit, and not overly edited (e.g., no excessive filters, black and white effects, or blurriness).

Best Practice

- ✓ Use high quality, well lit images that highlight key subjects
- ✓ Avoid clutter or distracting elements that could mislead Google's algorithm
- ✓ Stick to photos that directly align with your business category

Aesthetic or artistic photos with distracting elements may be misinterpreted by Google, leading to irrelevant keywords or labels. For example, if we want to optimize for "**restaurant**," images should consistently feature **dining spaces**, **food**, and **service** rather than abstract decor shots that don't reinforce the category.

POOR EXAMPLES THAT HINDER GOOGLE AI RECOGNITION:



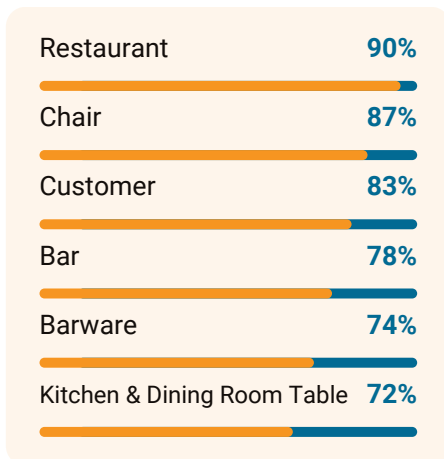
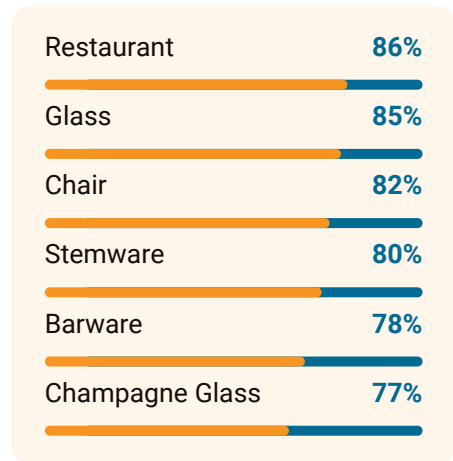
Wood	96%
Wood Stain	78%
Garden	78%
Eco Hotel	76%
Hardwood	72%
Shade	70%

Photograph	99%
Furniture	97%
White	97%
Monochrome Photography	95%
Table	91%
Black	91%



Light Fixture	95%
Lantern	94%
Lighting	94%
Interior Design	91%
Lampshade	85%
Ceiling	82%

GOOD EXAMPLES THAT HELP GOOGLE AI RECOGNITION:



1. IMAGE CONTEXT & SCENE ANALYSIS

Google assesses the **background, setting, and objects in relation to each other** to determine an image's purpose.



Interior vs. Exterior

AI differentiates between an indoor setting (e.g., a cozy café) and an outdoor location (e.g., a street front restaurant).



Action & Mood

A busy restaurant with customers vs. an empty table setting can change how Google interprets the image. Try and incorporate a combination of ambience, design, table with people, food on tables and waiters walking around for the best restaurant ratings.



Branding Elements

Visible store signage, logos, and recognizable décor help reinforce a business identity.

Tip: Capture your business in different states (busy, relaxed, well lit) to give Google a well rounded view.

The same place with a different photo situation. A photo of an **empty restaurant** has higher percentage to be categorised as irrelevant categories such as **"furniture"**, and a photo of a **bustling restaurant** will register as their targeted category, which is **"restaurant"**.

✗ Poor Example



Furniture	99%
Interior Design	96%
Table	96%
Flooring	94%
Chair	93%
Floor	92%
Kitchen & Dining Room Table	92%
Flowerpot	92%
Dining Room	87%
Houseplant	87%

✓ Good Example



Restaurant	90%
Drinkware	87%
Plate	85%
Sharing	84%
Dishware	83%
Customer	81%
Kitchen & Dining Room Table	80%
Lunch	79%
Serveware	78%
Brunch	73%

LOOKBOOK FOR YOUR PHOTOSHOOT

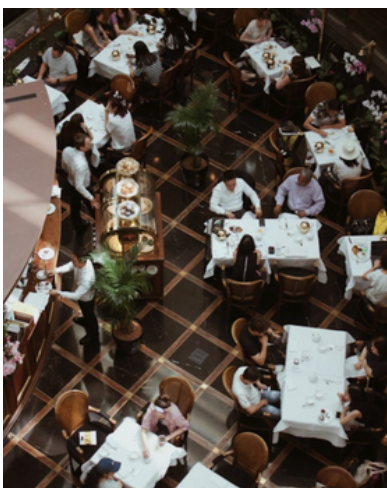
Type of for GBP Optimization

Uploading diverse image shots helps Google better understand and categorize your restaurant while improving keyword matching for potential customer searches. This also increases engagement and ultimately encourages them to choose your restaurant when browsing on Google Maps!

Here are the type of photos that what we need

1. COVER PHOTO (HERO IMAGE)

- **Purpose:** The first impression of your business; displayed prominently in search results.
- **Best Choice:**
 - ✔ Google favor a vibrant interior shot over exterior or food photos
 - ✔ Emotionally engaging interior shot with guests instead of an empty restaurant
 - ✔ Preferably portrait to optimized Mobile View
- **Avoid:**
 - ✘ Photo that only focused on the guests or the food



2. PRODUCT SHOTS

A. Menu Focused

- **Purpose:** Highlight key dishes to attract customers and improve search visibility for specific keywords
- **Best Choice:**
 - ✓ Well lit, close up shots with natural colors
 - ✓ Focus on one menu that represents the dish
 - ✓ Minimal background



Avoid

- Overcrowded backgrounds
- Distracting prop (e.g., herbs, or other raw ingredients that could mislead to cooking class/food store)



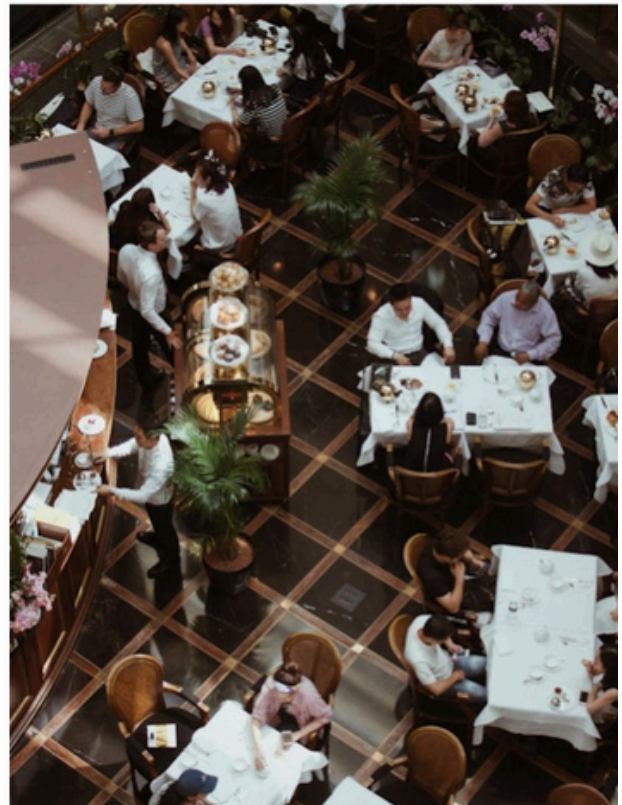
B. Commercial Shot

- **Purpose:** Ranks best for food/brunch/breakfast/lunch/dinner AI readings
- **Best Choice:**
 - ✓ Relevant dishes and beverages in one frame
 - ✓ Minimal but relevant props for styling (e.g., wine glass, cutlery)
 - ✓ Well lit with natural colors (to fill the “Brunch”, “Lunch” query)
 - ✓ Evening shot with good lighting (for the “Dinner query”)



3. VENUE SHOTS (INTERIOR & EXTERIOR)

- **Purpose:** Ranks best for restaurant AI readings
- **Interior:**
 - ✔ Both landscape shots and portrait shots
 - ✔ Different angle showcasing ambiance, seating, lighting, and layout
 - ✔ Well lit with natural colors
 - ✔ Captured both during **relax** and **busy hour**



3. VENUE SHOTS (INTERIOR & EXTERIOR)

► Exterior:

- ✓ Capture signage, entrance, or street view
- ✓ Capture both daylight shot or golden hours for optimal lighting
- ✓ Capture evening shot with good lighting



4. TEAM IN ACTION

- **Purpose:** Builds trust and showcases a welcoming atmosphere.
- **Best Choice:**
 - ✔ Friendly staff engagements with customers
 - ✔ Chef or staff in action



Better Hospitality Reviews

Cover Image Guide

Choosing a cover image that converts.

Your Google Maps listing is your digital storefront, so you'll want to make sure it's looking consistently sharp and on brand.



High-quality photos on your Google Business Profile can mean the difference between a customer choosing your business or scrolling past. Quality images have a measurable impact, too. Great photos don't just show what you offer; they build trust, improve visibility, and drive real results. In this guide, we will help you understand what cover image is right for your venue, and how to shoot it in house if you wish.



Selecting the right cover image requires an understanding of your **business identity**, **ideal customer profile**, and the type of experience your venue offers. Your cover image should visually communicate what makes your venue unique and appeal to your target audience.



It's important to note that **Google only allows cover images that are either an interior or exterior shot of the venue**, so we must work within these guidelines while ensuring the image aligns with your brand.

In this guide

Section 1:

Choose a cover image that is on brand.

Section 2:

Capturing a cover image in-house.

IMPORTANT: Specs (Cover Photo Size)

Before we start, it's important to understand the recommended Google My Business cover photo size is 1024 x 576 pixels (16:9 aspect ratio). Portrait (9:16 aspect ratio) can also be used, depending on your preference. The minimum size is 480 x 270 pixels, and the maximum size is 2120 x 1192 pixels. In addition to optimising the cover photo size, there are some other requirements defined by Google.

- **Format:**
JPG or PNG file type.
- **Size:**
Between 10 KB and 5 MB.
- **Recommended resolution:**
720 x 720 pixels.
- **Minimum resolution:**
250 x 250 pixels

SECTION 1: CHOOSING A COVER IMAGE THAT IS ON BRAND.

Do not leave your cover image to chance. If we do not proactively upload a suitable cover image, it will be automatically selected by Google, which is almost never ideal. Google could select an image posted by a user (UGC) that typically is low quality, unintentional and not a true representation of the business.

A COVER IMAGE FOR A
GOOGLE MAPS LISTING
SHOULD NEVER:

Randomly taken by customers - no control.

Poor lighting, blurry, or unflattering.

Examples of a Poor Cover Images:



THE TWO TYPES OF COVER IMAGES THAT DRIVE CLICKS

1. SLEEK, EMPTY VENUE SHOT

Best For

- ✓ High End Restaurants
- ✓ Fine dining
- ✓ Boutique Cafés
- ✓ Premium Cocktail Bars
- ✓ Venues Designed for Special Occasions.

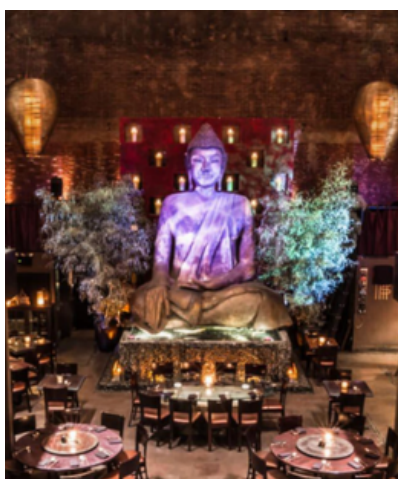
This type of cover image works well for venues that prioritise **elegance, exclusivity, and a curated experience**. It showcases the **design, ambiance, and attention to detail** of the space, making it appealing to customers looking for a sophisticated or premium experience.

Characteristics of this style:

- ✓ Professionally shot, highlighting architectural design and decor.
- ✓ Clean, polished, and refined—communicating quality and exclusivity.
- ✓ Typically an **interior shot** that showcases lighting, layout, or decor.
- ✓ An **exterior shot** may work if it effectively captures the venue's personality.
- ✓ A **wide shot** that provides more context and insight into the venue are preferred.
- ✓ If a **view** is a feature of the venue, it should be utilised here

Potential downside: While visually striking, these images **do not always evoke emotion or tell a story**, which can make the venue feel less approachable.

Examples of Sleek, Empty Venue Cover Images



2. BUSY, LIVELY VENUE SHOT

Best For

- ✓ Bars
- ✓ Clubs
- ✓ Casual Restaurants
- ✓ Takeout Venues
- ✓ Fast Food Spots
- ✓ Social Dining Spaces.

This style works well for venues that sell **energy, atmosphere, and social proof** rather than a highly curated, high-end experience. A bustling, vibrant venue image creates a sense of **demand and excitement**, making potential customers more inclined to visit.

Characteristics of this style:

- ✓ Shows a **crowd enjoying the space**—customers dining, drinking, or socialising.
- ✓ Captures the **energy and experience** of the venue in a dynamic way.
- ✓ Often taken during peak hours to showcase the venue at its most lively.
- ✓ Relies on **human elements** to create warmth, connection, and FOMO (fear of missing out).

Potential downside: This type of image can be harder to capture without proper planning, as it requires the right moment, lighting, and a natural but well-composed shot.

Examples of Busy, Lively Venue Shots:



BONUS: STAFF SHOT

Best For

- ✓ Any venue looking to showcase its personality, culture, and hospitality values.

A **well-executed staff image** can be a powerful way to visually communicate the **identity and ethos** of your business. Whether it's a relaxed, fun shot or a professional lineup, staff images can:



Convey a **positive work culture** and strong team spirit.



Highlight **friendly, approachable service**



Build a sense of **trust and authenticity** for potential customers.

To be effective, these images should capture the team in an **engaging, natural, and energetic** way. A posed but lifeless shot (e.g., staff standing stiffly without smiles) **can have the opposite effect** and make the venue feel unwelcoming.

Examples of Staff Shots:



CAPTURING A COVER IMAGE IN HOUSE

Investing in a **professional photographer** for your cover image is ideal, as a high-quality first impression can significantly increase your **click-through rate (CTR)**. However, if this isn't an option, you can still capture an effective image by following these key guidelines.

Planning and Preparation

✓ Plan ahead

If capturing a naturally busy moment is difficult, schedule a quick shoot with staff before opening.

✓ Set the mood

A short positive feedback session before the shoot can help staff feel relaxed and engaged.

✓ Choose the right time

Take photos at the start of a shift when staff are fresh and the space is clean.

Lighting and Composition

✓ Keep subjects in the middle

As the image will be cropped for phone or desktop, it's important that the image that is used has its subjects in the middle of the frame, so that the image is effective for any device.

✓ Use natural light

Position the light source behind the photographer for the best quality. If shooting at night, use high-quality equipment or a smartphone with night mode.

✓ Find the right angle

Avoid flat, straight-on shots. Angled shots add depth and warmth.

✓ Keep it sharp

Use a steady hand, a tripod, or a high-resolution camera to avoid blurry images.

Creating Atmosphere

✓ Show People – Include staff or customers to make the space feel inviting.

✓ Capture Variety – Take both portrait and landscape shots for flexibility.

✓ Explore Different Locations – Try shots at the counter, bar, outdoor entrance, and seating area to showcase different aspects of the venue.

VIDEO SPECIFICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Duration:** Up to 30 seconds long
- **File size:** Up to 75 MB
- **Resolution:** 1080x1920
- **Orientation:** Portrait
- **Quality:** No filters, no logo covering the video

Video Content Recommendation for Restaurant:

The goal is to create a short, high-impact video that brings your venue to life and sparks cravings instantly. Below are the key moments to include:

1. WELCOME & AMBIENCE TOUR

Start with a quick walk-through from the entrance into the dining space.

- ✓ Capture the vibe: music, décor, natural light, and your team setting up.
- ✓ Include a wave or smile from staff to create a welcoming feel.
- ✓ Optional script or caption: "Welcome to [Restaurant Name], your go-to brunch spot in [neighbourhood name]!"

2. HERO DISHES IN ACTION

Show your most popular dishes being plated or served.

- ✓ Get those mouthwatering moments: sizzling sounds, sauce pours, final touches.
- ✓ Natural daylight is ideal for the most appetizing look.
- ✓ Bonus: If a menu is nearby, let the dish name appear subtly in the background.

3. CHEF OR BARTENDER MOMENT

Film a quick behind the scenes moment—like a chef finishing a dish or a bartender mixing a cocktail.

- ✔ These clips add personality and show the passion behind your food and drinks.
-

4. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Show happy guests enjoying their time (with consent).

- ✔ Think cheers, smiles, laughter, or a guest saying something like, “This is amazing!”
- ✔ These shots help viewers imagine themselves in the space.

Video Content Recommendation for Retail Store:

To bring your store’s personality to life and drive foot traffic or online engagement, we recommend creating a short, dynamic video featuring the key moments below:

1. STOREFRONT & WELCOME WALK-THROUGH

Start with an exterior shot and guide viewers into the space.

- ✔ Highlight your location, signage, and open-door vibe.
 - ✔ Capture a friendly wave or “Welcome in!” from a team member
 - ✔ Optional caption or voiceover: “Come take a look inside [Store Name]—your new favourite spot in [neighbourhood name]!”
-

2. PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS IN MOTION

Showcase bestsellers or new arrivals being handled, styled, or explored.

- ✔ Film staff arranging displays or customers browsing naturally.
- ✔ Feature textures, colours, or unique design details up close.
- ✔ Bonus: Include price tags or product labels subtly for context.

3. STAFF & BEHIND-THE-SCENES TOUCH

Add a quick peek behind the counter or in the stockroom.

- ✓ Capture your team tagging items, unpacking new stock, or chatting about their favourite pieces.
- ✓ This adds a human element and shows the passion behind the brand.

4. CUSTOMER MOMENTS

Film real (or staged) interactions with happy customers.

- ✓ Think: someone trying something on, getting styled, or saying, "This is exactly what I was looking for!"
- ✓ Keeps the experience relatable and real.

BONUS TIPS FOR SEO IMPACT

- **Rename file before upload:**
 - ✓ balinese-restaurant-canggu-tour.mp4
- **Make sure your signage, logo, or menu is visible at some point**



Conclusion: Better Imagery

Your cover image is the **first impression** potential customers have of your venue on Google Maps. A well-chosen, high-quality image can **increase clicks, establish your brand identity, and create a strong visual impact** that sets you apart from competitors

A strategic and well-executed cover image will not only enhance your Google Maps presence but also attract more customers by making a compelling first impression. Take control of how your business is perceived and ensure your cover image tells the right story about your brand.



Santanera,
Bali

Contact Us

If you would like to learn more about how you can better manage your Google Maps profile to encourage more walk-ins, please visit our website (www.betterhospitalityreviews.com) for more resources.

Alternatively, reach out to joshua@betterhospitalityreviews.com to discuss a bespoke management GMB strategy for your business.