

## THREE WAYS TO LEVERAGE LOCAL SEARCH

> The Web is massive — by the end of 2015, more than one billion websites will be active and ready for visitors. But the real question — and answer you'd want as a retailer — is: How do consumers search for products and what information do they act upon to purchase these products? Remarkably, this information exists and is provided by none other than Google.

Last year, Google published a study called "Understanding Consumers' Local Search Behavior." This month, we'll distill that study into three key takeaway points, so that you can leverage these trends in your search engine marketing efforts.

### Location and Proximity

The most prominent trend revealed by the study is that four out of five searches are usually a canvass of local services. Mobile surpassed desktops and tablets in searches but just slightly (88 percent vs. 84 percent, though slight nuances exist, depending on the exact platform).

Fifty-four percent of smartphone searches were for business hours, 53 percent were for directions to the local store and 50 percent were for the local store address.

Desktops and tablets were similar in searches for business hours and addresses but differed in that those on larger screens checked for product availability at the local store first. In fact, the study revealed that people on desktops

and tablets spent way more time researching the product — 83 percent vs. 53 percent on smartphones — and made more purchases — 64 percent vs. 43 percent on smartphones.

This makes sense. It's still much easier for consumers to make purchases in the comfort at home. But don't dismiss mobile purchasing; it's on the rise.

Diving deeper into the smartphone statistics, here's a quick breakdown of where consumers searched for local information: 53 percent at home, 51 percent on the go (car, bus, etc.), 41 percent in-store, 33 percent at the workplace, 33 percent at a restaurant or bar, 25 percent at hotels and 20 percent at the airport.

The action step is simple. Be sure that your business information is accurate and complete in all the search databases (think business hours, addresses and written directions for those who may be on a desktop/tablet). Start with [google.com/business](http://google.com/business), [bingplaces.com](http://bingplaces.com) and [local.yahoo.com](http://local.yahoo.com). Beyond the searches, [Yelp.com](http://Yelp.com) would be the priority, followed by [SuperPages.com](http://SuperPages.com), [YellowPages.com](http://YellowPages.com) and [CitySearch.com](http://CitySearch.com).

### Post-Search Activity

So what do consumers do after these searches? Eighteen percent of them make a purchase. Within a day of their local search, 50 percent of smartphone users and 34 percent of desktop/tablet users visit your shop.

Local searchers are searching for very local businesses: 66 percent of consumers searching using a desktop/tablet and 72 percent using a smartphone visit a store within 5 miles of their location. When they arrive in-store, guess what? They're still searching. Fifteen percent of these smartphone users conduct searches of products right in front of them, often to compare prices.

The good news is, more than likely, they'll still purchase from you, according to Google. In-store purchase motivators include proximity and pricing. To seal the deal, consider offering price matching when possible. (Remember, a standard practice is to decline a price match if the competitor's stock is sold out.) Convey to the customer that if she shops with you, there will be no wait and perhaps no



shipping charge, and remind her that you can provide more personalized service as a local business.

For those investing in paid advertising, strongly consider radius-enabled bidding options for ads to reach consumers near stores. If you use Google Adwords, consider building an attribution model for local searches to track activity of ads clicked by local customers. (Find out more: <http://tinyurl.com/obabjap>.)

### Location-based Ads.

Speaking of ads, you need to customize ads to a consumer's location. Seventy-two percent of desktop/tablet users and 67 percent of smartphone users preferred ads customized to their city and zip code. Similarly, 70 percent of desktop/tablet users and 61 percent of smartphone users want ads customized to their immediate surroundings. Location-based ads are effective — 32 percent of consumers visited stores and/or made purchases!

Be sure to include your address and phone number in paid online ads. If you use Adwords, fill out the location extensions so this information appears formatted correctly for desktop and mobile users. According to Google, ads with extensions see an immediate 10 percent boost in click rate. Study results support this statistic: 61 percent of desktop/tablet users use this information, while 68 percent of smartphone users click to get directions or hit the call button to speak with you directly. 📍

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