



LOCALISED DIGITAL MARKETING

THE UNTAPPED OPPORTUNITY



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT IS LOCAL SEARCH?	4
WHAT DOES A LOCAL SEARCH LISTING LOOK LIKE AND INCLUDE?	5
WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS WHEN IT COMES TO LOCAL SEO RANKING?	9
MY BUSINESS SIGNALS.....	9
ON-PAGE SIGNALS	9
SOCIAL SIGNALS	9
BEHAVIORAL/MOBILE SIGNALS.....	9
GMB SIGNALS	9
‘NEAR ME’ RANKING FACTORS.....	10
HOW TO OPTIMISE FOR LOCAL SEARCH QUERIES	11
UTILISING GOOGLE TOOLS TO MAKE SURE YOUR BUSINESS IS FOUND	13
SET UP YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS PROFILE.....	13
CHECK YOUR BUSINESS’ INFORMATION IS ACCURATE.....	14
REFLECT LOCAL TERMS IN YOUR ON-PAGE CONTENT	15
USE SCHEMA MARKUP	16
FINAL THOUGHTS	17

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to search and digital marketing one thing that is vital to remember is that there is no 'set' way to do things. Different businesses and brands have different targets and goals and there is also the small matter of budget. Some businesses run huge websites designed to handle eCommerce and sales whilst others are simply a point of information or there to support a form to encourage the businesses to actively contact the customer based on the submission of their details or enquiry.

Over the years we've worked on a range of projects for clients of all sizes and budgets. Some run single sites for an independent business and others run hundreds of localised pages or multiple sites for different stores, locations and services. This eBook will explain the importance of localised search and digital marketing, the way you can attract customers in your area at the exact time they are there and how you can present information for different stores as your business grows.

External location signals, on-page signals, inbound link signals, social signals and review signals are all taken into account by Google when determining whether to show a local listing for a website and where to rank it. This is why it is important to have a local SEO search strategy written specifically for your website and your industry to ensure you are sending the right message to Google about the locations most relevant to your business. This is especially relevant for SMEs and locally based businesses to drive local trade enquiries.

It is important to implement a local organic search strategy written specifically for your website and industry, to ensure that you communicate the right message to Google about the locations most relevant to your business.

This really is one of the untapped opportunities for businesses , so what are you waiting for? Let's begin...

WHAT IS LOCAL SEARCH?

Local SEO is one of the most versatile types of digital marketing and is also one of the fastest growing areas of the market. In essence, optimising a local SEO strategy for your business allows you to directly target potential customers, who are looking for products in both your marketplace and your location, at the exact time that they are searching for them.

By making sure that you are at the top of Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) and business directories in a local setting, you are giving your company the best possible chance of picking up extra sales and extra web traffic.

In a world when mobile search is growing at a huge rate of knots and where ‘savvy’ consumers are looking for the most accurate returns in their search, it is something of a sin to miss out on improved connectivity and a mobile friendly approach to search.

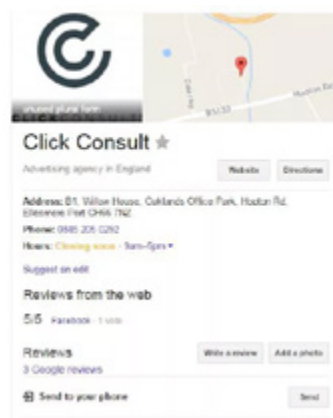
In principle local SEO is the concept of increasing your chance of appearing on page one of search results whether that be through conventional organic results or within the local specific sub-sections.



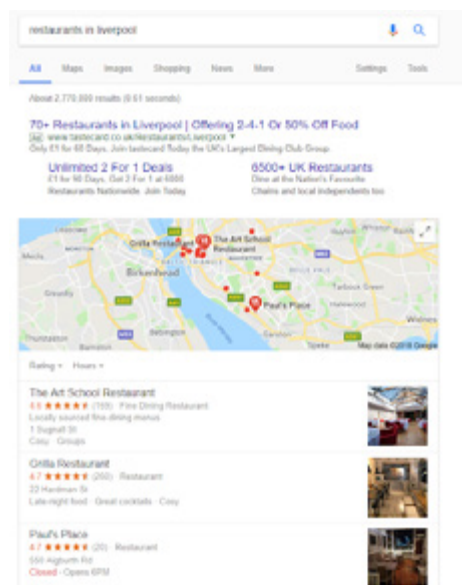
WHAT DOES A LOCAL SEARCH LISTING LOOK LIKE AND INCLUDE?

A local search or the local specific sub-section will usually appear directly below the opening conventional organic listing and can be differentiated by its appearance. They generally include but are not limited to:

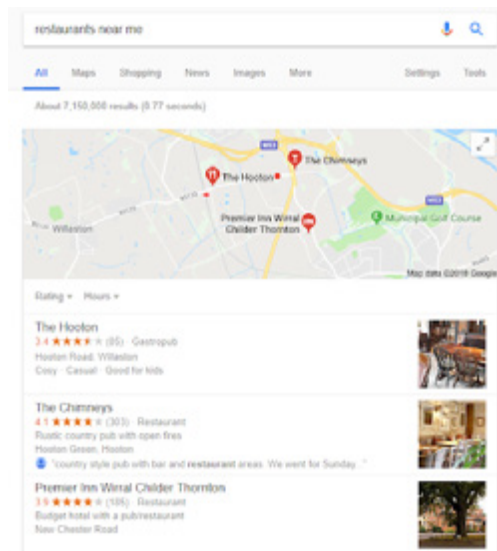
- A link to the company website
- Business address
- Geographical location in the form of a pinned location on Google Maps
- Reviews
- Call now button



Users want information that best serves a need which is why 'near me' searches are on the rise. Imagine the scene – you are at home and want to head out for dinner. Your search might appear similar to the following:



With the advancements in technology however and with location services more accurate than ever there is now a precedent for a hyperlocal search which means you can look ‘on the go’ for businesses that best suit your need and which are in your vicinity. We have covered extensively the importance and indeed the shift to a Mobile-First environment and how this is perhaps the most significant development in recent years. A search in this format might display the following results, for example:

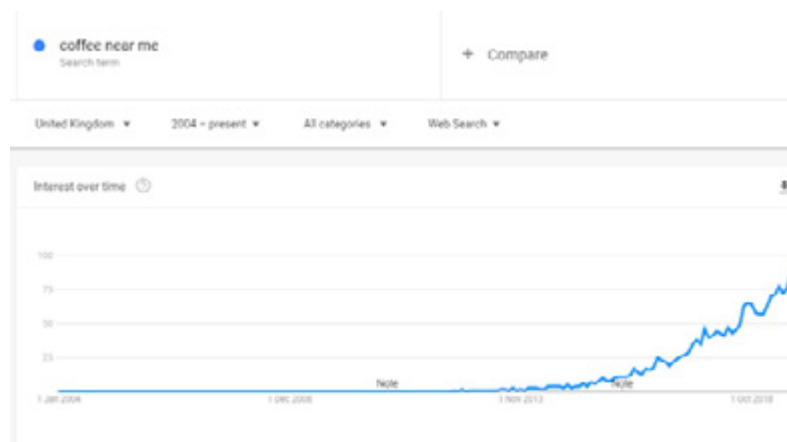


With the time poor, information rich nature of the users searching habits it is no surprise that they are using both mobile search and local search more frequently. Google has adapted to this and over the last few years paid particular attention to how searches with hyperlocal intent are displayed and, indeed, ranked.

From a consumer perspective, the very reason that a search is conducted is for research purposes. Buyers want answers and access relating to where, how and when they can purchase and that doesn't change whether they are buying a coffee or a car. According to a report by Forbes Insights customers still like to do their research online but make their purchase instore (N.B. this is changing and will continue to do so). In their study "A Split Screen: Online Information and a Human Touch," customers prefer to mix technology and in-store visits for major purchases.

It also found that nearly 50% of retailers surveyed said that their customers are looking for an 'omnichannel' shopping experience. In terms of those using a search engine prior to buying and choosing where to buy from the number is 82%, which shows the sheer power of being at the top of SERPS for your most relevant and your industry's most competitive keywords.

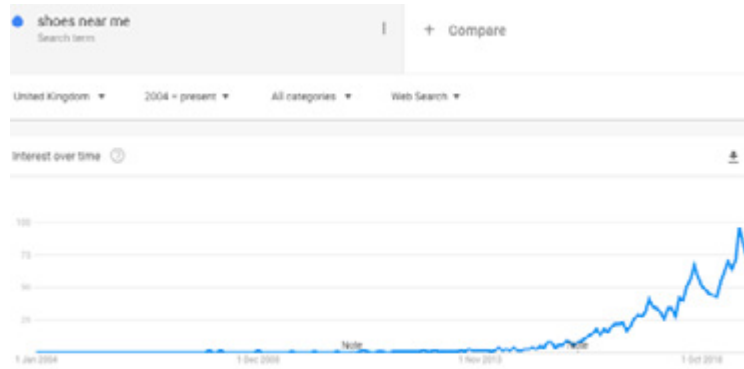
For businesses who are trying to gain local business with a local search strategy, Google Trends has identified the importance of utilising the ‘near me’ suffix to searches as is displayed below:



This search for ‘coffee near me’ is on an upwardly mobile curve and this directly correlates with the idea that mobile search and local search have been given a greater level of importance over the last five years. This phenomenon is sure to continue and, in reality, I’d say it’s highly likely that instead of being one way of conducting a search I feel it will become ‘the way’ to search and with Mobile-First finally being announced in March 2018, the shift will continue to turn this from a mobile marvel to standard practise.

Google has acknowledged that insofar as the has the following to say: “Across our client base we are still seeing more than 50% of the traffic from these queries coming from desktop — and more than 80% of the clicks but there is a shift”.

Trying a different search, this time for ‘shoes near me’ the results are very similar (see below) and simply looking for ‘near me’ also shows the upward trend.



If we also go back to the search relating to 'coffee near me' you can pull some additional data and see related topics and queries which can help you to build out your keywords strategy.

Related topics		Related queries	
	Top		Top
1 Coffee - Drink	100	1 coffee shops near me	100
2 Café - Topic	50	2 coffee shops	99
3 Starbucks - Coffee company	6	3 coffee shop near me	35
4 The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf - Tea company	2	4 coffee shop	34
5 Breakfast - Topic	2	5 starbucks near me	17

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS WHEN IT COMES TO LOCAL SEO RANKING?

MY BUSINESS SIGNALS

The signals that your businesses give out in terms of the basic information that they provide. These could be the keywords that you have identified in your business title or the signals that you give out in terms of geo-specific proximity to the search.

ON-PAGE SIGNALS

One of the most important things for a business to include when it comes to local SEO is the presence of NAP (Name, Address and Phone Number). Making sure that these things are visible and that they are clear is vital.

SOCIAL SIGNALS

According to research conducted by moz.com social signals contribute heavily to local ranking. Social signals act almost like reviews or recommendations, especially in an era of increased mobile search. Including Google+ authority, Facebook likes and Twitter followers have to be included where possible.

BEHAVIORAL/MOBILE SIGNALS

When we consider ranking factors, it is imperative that all possible triggers are offered to the customer. Tracking the clickthrough rate as well as following check-ins and mobile clicks to call is a great way to see interaction. This factor also allows for the business to include user offers.

GMB SIGNALS

One of the top ranking factors that a business can use is to register and regularly update the Google My Business page. Making sure that you have a keyword in your GMB page is highly recommended as is maximising the data that you put on your GMB page. Things such as pictures of the business and displaying reviews can help as can linking your business page to an Owner Verified page or profile.



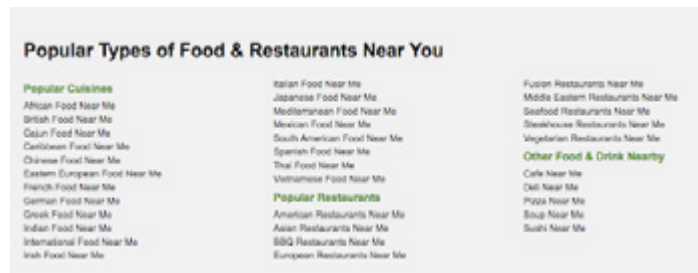
'NEAR ME' RANKING FACTORS

'Near me' queries as a whole are a relatively small (but expanding) part of local search volume, but these searches are clear signals of local intent and consequently represent high-quality traffic for businesses targeting locally.

In a statistic-led study of Google's Local SEO Ranking Factors report by Search Engine Land, they found that when looking at ~600 searches, which included ~6,000 Google My Business (GMB) pages, as well as the corresponding domains/pages that the GMB pages linked to, the following factors had the strongest positive correlations with ranking well in Google's and 'near me' searches:

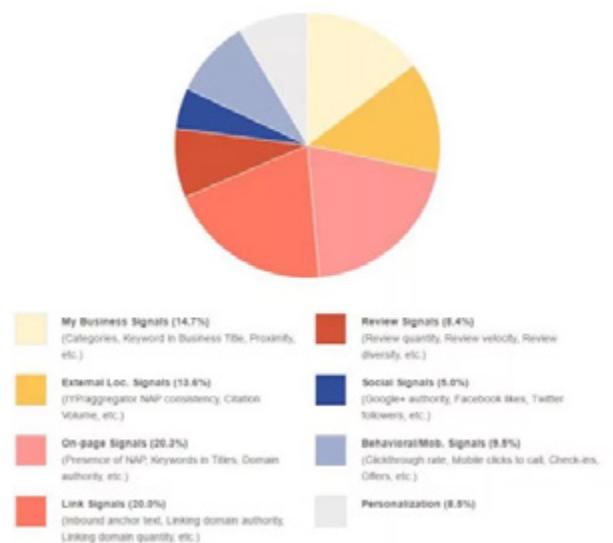
- Google reviews
- Total number of backlinks with searched city/region in the anchor text
- Percentage of backlinks with searched city/region in the anchor text

They also found that link metrics were some of the strongest indicators of good rankings, so it's not surprising that they also matter for 'near me' queries. The example that they used was that TripAdvisor have an aggressive use of 'near me' in internal link anchor text may be one of the reasons those URLs rank so well for local queries:



Moz, a respected authority on Google's ranking criteria, collects data each year from industry experts about what they believe are the main local search ranking factors and assigns each of them a weighting:

Overall Ranking Factors



HOW TO OPTIMISE FOR LOCAL SEARCH QUERIES

Now that you know what the main ranking factors are and understand why a good local strategy is important, we must then utilise these to optimise websites and enable them to generate the best traffic.

Firstly the NAP on your website must be an exact match to that which is shown on your Google My Business profile page. Doing this will ensure that Google categorises you as the same business. In most cases this information will be housed in the footer of the website and they should match, regardless of whether or not the business is based at a single site or multiple ones.

If the information you provide including the business phone number and email are in the form of an image, then it is vital to add the correct alt tags and that the text or numbers are included elsewhere.

Another consideration is that all of the copy on your website must be both extensive and to a high quality. In the case of location specific landing pages, they should be around 300 words in length and be rich in information relating to the area in which the business is based. For sites with multiple pages, the main thing to check is that the content on each of them is unique.

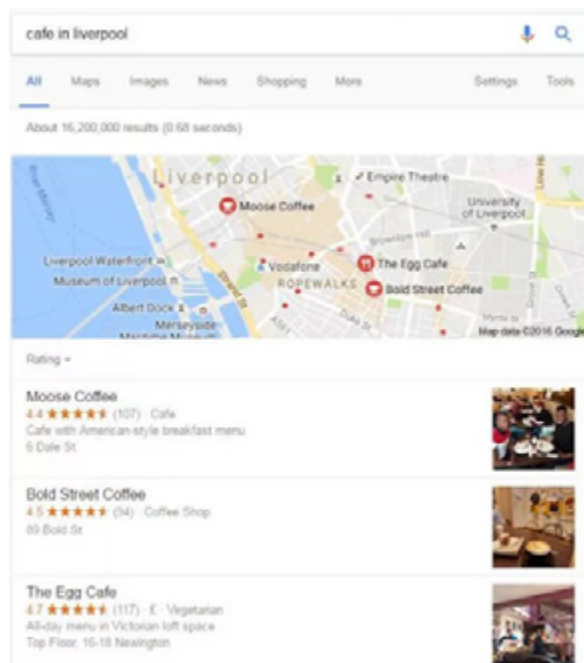
Much like conventional SEO, landing pages should be optimised to include local terms. Certifying that your business name, location and targeted local keywords are present on all landing pages and that they are in the correct places and that the keywords appear naturally.



These correct locations are as follows:

- Meta title
- Meta description
- Opening H1
- Image alt tags
- On-page copy

Optimising your website for semantic markup allows Google to understand the context of the information shown on the page. The markup of information such as business address, phone number, opening times and map data must be highlighted and ready for Google to read.



Whilst these are all important, map data is perhaps the one that stands out. All businesses that are looking to grow should have a Google Map embedded on each location landing page based on the business address.

UTILISING GOOGLE TOOLS TO MAKE SURE YOUR BUSINESS IS FOUND

Getting started with local SEO is all about ensuring it is easy for Google to know your business is relevant to local searches. The best way to ensure that you are prepared is to follow these steps:

SET UP YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS PROFILE

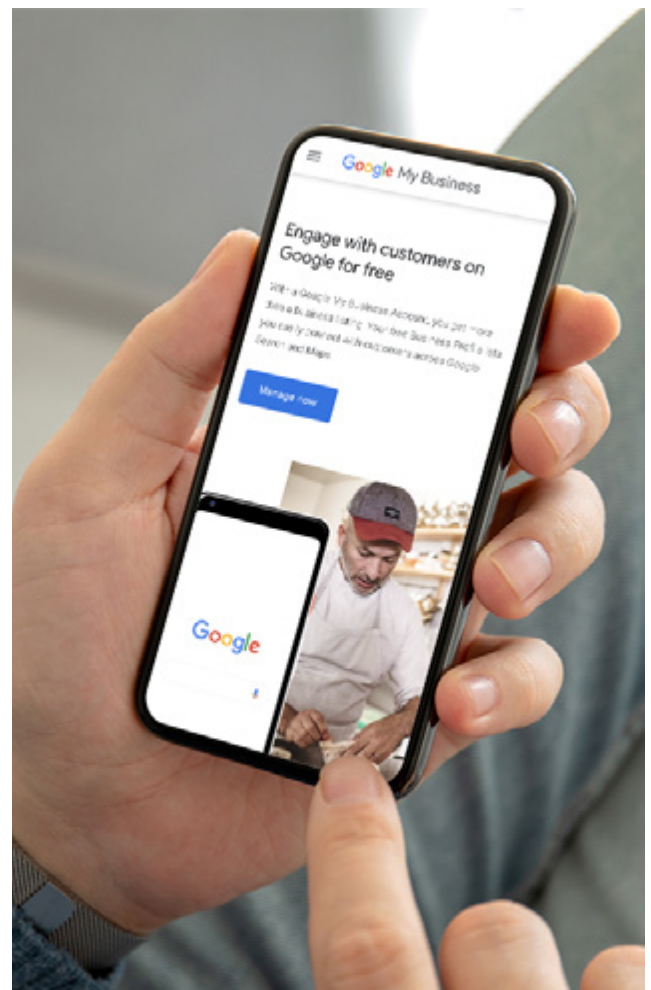
With a log in/sign-up page that promises to help you ‘Manage’, ‘Connect’ and ‘Understand’, Google My Business seeks to be a hub for a number of Google’s small business products including (but not limited to) local listing info for maps, Google reviews, ‘Insights’ and the latest addition ‘Website’. The platform (not to be confused with Google Business Solutions) is a good starting point for any start-up looking to hit the ground running.

By signing up to Google My Business you can tell Google directly the name of your business, the exact location, what it does, opening times, what it looks like (upload your own images), and many more attributes.

It is of particular relevance to the map results and the 3-pack listings. For instance, Google smartly tells the searcher whether the business is open or closed right now and pulls out images to give users more of an idea of what to expect.

In order to view performance in a local environment GMB also offers a huge amount of data in Google Analytics, so you have the stats to back up the strategy.

Not only does Google My Business make it easier for it to know what’s what about your business, it also improves the search experience for your customer – giving more ‘at a glance’ information than the traditional SERPs listings do. What’s more the service is free to use.

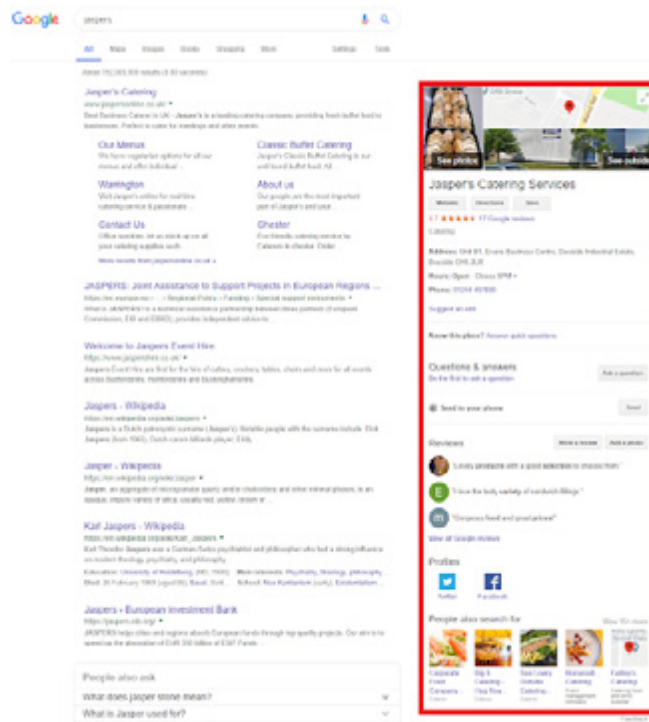


CHECK YOUR BUSINESS' INFORMATION IS ACCURATE

Make sure your business' details are complete and accurate – and ensure you frequently check your listing to ensure it stays this way. This includes:

- Your physical address
- Phone number
- Business category
- Opening hours
- Many businesses don't realise that third parties can edit your GMB profile (see the 'Suggest edit' option in the Jaspers listing).

Plus, Google encourages people who are familiar with your business to answer questions, so that Google can learn more information about your company. To do this they simply click on the 'Know this place? Answer quick questions' link. You should be notified when someone does this, but it's important to log in to your GMB dashboard regularly to ensure that no one has made any unwanted changes to your listing.



REFLECT LOCAL TERMS IN YOUR ON-PAGE CONTENT

An important aspect of local SEO is ensuring that the copy across your website is high quality and extensive. In the case of local SEO, this must be the case on all local pages on your website.

Location-specific landing pages should ideally be 300 words in length and include information about the local area. If you have multiple local pages on your website, you have to ensure that each page has unique content.

Once you're sure of your local term, make sure it is reflected in your titles, descriptions, body text, alt. text of images etc. so when Google crawls this content – and potential customers read it – both know your business is there.

A top tip from searchenginewatch on this is that if you are located near a well-known place or landmark (university, sports stadium, monuments etc.)? It might be worth reflecting this in your onsite content.



USE SCHEMA MARKUP

When optimising your website for local SEO, it's critical to optimise your website with semantic markup. For local businesses, the markup of important information such as the business address, telephone number, opening hours and map data is important as it allows Google to understand the context of the information shown on the page.

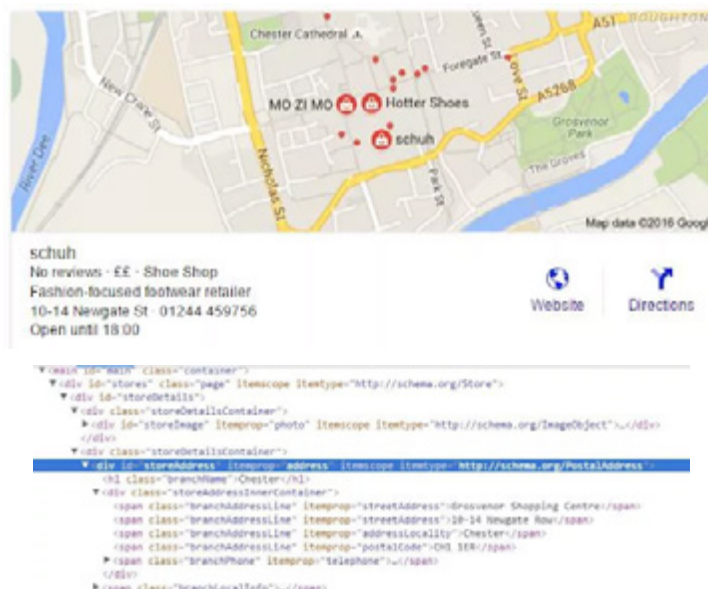
By including the relevant markup, you can make Google's job of displaying the necessary information and call-to-actions about your business even easier.

Currently Google accepts markup for (among other things):

- Opening Times. Even down to seasonal changes
- Including latitude and longitude
- Restaurant-specific properties. Such as food served, how it can be delivered, how to reserve a table etc.

Consider adding markup to the content pages on your site as a best practice accompaniment to the information in your Google My Business profile. It will ensure that when Google is crawling your site, it will deliver the most trustworthy, up-to-date and relevant information.

An example of local schema markup, using Schema.org, and the corresponding local listing on Google can be seen below:



It might also be worth noting that if you have multiple locations then make sure that you make landing pages for each of the sites. This will maximize your appearance in search and allows you to optimise the content further.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Whether you are a small business supporting a single physical location or a multinational brand running various locations across the world, local search is just as important. It's one thing to be found online but it's another thing making sure that a customer can have real world access to your business.

When it comes to the impact of adopting this kind of strategy has on your business is quite clear. Smallbiztrends said: "You already know that location is paramount for local businesses. But it isn't just your storefront's location that can make a big difference to your business's success. Location can also have a big impact when it comes to your market research efforts.

For instance, the questions you would ask someone who is in your store would differ from the questions you'd ask people who are just nearby. And the questions you would ask people nearby might be different from what you would ask those outside your direct neighbourhood or city."

This sums it up nicely. You need to be an adopter of local search if you haven't already.

Look and test different strategies if you are to attract not only those who are directly in your area but those who are passing by. These impulse sales can mean big profits and the ROI of a local strategy is not to be sneered at.



GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

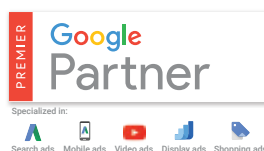
CONTACT US



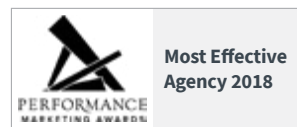
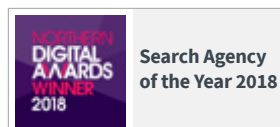
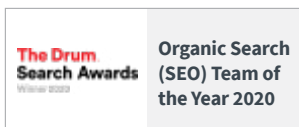
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