

## An Introduction to Local-Shopping Search

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How bricks-and-mortar shops can benefit from the Internet after all

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**AskTheLocal.com**

## Introduction

Current studies estimate that up to 10% of UK retail sales this year will take place online, and by 2010 this number will be 20%. As online shopping grows many retailers fear that the Internet will bring an end to the High Street.

**Will the High Street thrive or die as Internet shopping continues to grow?**

Thrive **29%** (181 votes)

Die **71%** (445 votes)

The assumption here is that the Internet is bad for the High Street. But what if there were a way for High Street retailers to benefit from the Internet instead of suffering from it? And we don't mean hiring a team of programmers to take on Amazon. Instead we refer to "local shopping search-engines".

A local shopping search-engine is an Internet search-site that allows the searcher to enter a postcode and product query to view images, descriptions and prices of products they are looking for at bricks-and-mortar shops nearby instead of at online shops.

Local shopping search-engines could easily swing the shopping balance back in favour of the High Street. To understand how bricks-and-mortar retailers can utilize the power of local shopping search-engines to increase foot-traffic, this paper discusses:

- (1) Why bricks-and-mortar retailers should use local shopping search-engines based on some surprising, online consumer behaviour
- (2) How local shopping search-engines are designed to do a better job attracting foot-traffic than other types of search-engines

## Why Use Local Shopping Search-Engines?

A startling trend is that a significant number of people in Britain use the Internet to research product information – but then proceed to buy the item off-line.

For example, according to the May 2006 Internet Media Retail Group



(IMRG) Survey of 3,900 UK Internet users, 90% researched goods online before purchasing them off-line. Recent findings for the US marketplace are similar: according to BIGResearch's June 2006 Consumer Intentions and Actions Survey of 7,500 U.S. Internet users, 87% researched products online prior to buying them in person at actual stores.

Clearly, it is vital for bricks-and-mortar retailers' products to be easily found by Internet users when performing their shopping research. This is the exact purpose of local shopping search-engines. They allow consumers to research where they can buy a particular product at the price they desire from the closest, most convenient shop possible.

### **WHY YOUR BRICKS-AND-MORTAR BUSINESS MUST LIST PRODUCT INFORMATION WITH LOCAL SHOPPING SEARCH-ENGINES**

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**FACT:** 6 out of 10 people use the Internet, and 87% of Internet users research product information online.

(Source: The Oxford Internet Survey, May 2005)

**FACT:** 47% of customers assume that if a product isn't available online then it won't be in the physical store either, according to an April 2006 IMRG report.

Bricks-and-mortar retailers, therefore, will fail to take full advantage of this trend if they do not list their products on local shopping search-engines.

### **How Do Local Shopping Search-Engines Work?**

Local shopping search-engines are all about driving online customers to off-line retailers. Here is how they work: the searcher enters a postcode and product query and then sees detailed product information – product images, prices, and descriptions – of that particular item of interest selling at local shops, along with corresponding addresses, telephone numbers and map locations. All of this takes place in one step.

Two-thirds of Internet users, according to a 2004 online survey by TouchLocal, said they prefer to shop locally instead of online. Therefore, retailers who list their product information on local shopping search-engines can entice more people into their shops, potentially encouraging additional transactions.

Online shopping's recent success stems from satisfying consumers' desire to find and compare products and prices easily. So it is promising that



what sites like Amazon have done for online shopping, local shopping search-engines can now do for bricks-and-mortar shopping.

There will always be a place for online shopping, but retailers can now give customers the opportunity to look for a product on the Internet, and find it in their bricks-and-mortar shop.





# How Do Local Shopping Search-Engines Differ From Other Search-Engines with Local-Search Capabilities?

To better understand local shopping search-engines we need to compare them against three existing types of search services found online:

- (A) Yell.com, and other business directories
- (B) Kelkoo.com and other online shopping searches
- (C) Google.com and other major search services

*An Example of Local Shopping Search-Engine Results – After Entering the Postcode “SW1V 1EJ” and “Sony digital camera”:*

Which product?  UK postcode (remember )

Local shopping search results:	@ these local shops	miles away
 <p><b><a href="#">Sony R1 10MP Digital Camera.</a></b> 5 x optical zoom. 10 x <b>digital</b> zoom. 10.3m pixels. CMOS sensor. 24-120mm (35mm equivalent). 2in free angle LCD colour screen. Dual slot for memory ... <b>£699.99</b> <a href="#">Compare price</a></p> <p><a href="#">SEE 17 MORE RESULTS FROM THIS SHOP ▶</a></p>	<p><b>Argos , Victoria - 440</b> 279 Vauxhall Bridge Road, Victoria London, Greater London SW1V 1EJ Mon 09:30-19:00 Tue 09:30-19:00 Wed 09:30-19:00 Thu 09:30-19:00 Fri 09:30-19:00 Sat 09:30-18:00 Sun 11:00-17:00 Phone 0870 600 8784</p>	<p>under 0.1 miles <a href="#">Map this shop</a></p>
 <p><b><a href="#">John Lewis - Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T30 Digital Camera</a></b> Are your images of last night all a blur? The slim, 7 megapixel <b>Sony</b> Cyber-shot DSC-T30 will not only look good on the dance floor but will improve ... <b>£349.00</b> <a href="#">Compare price</a></p> <p><a href="#">SEE 21 MORE RESULTS FROM THIS SHOP ▶</a></p>	<p><b>John Lewis Oxford Street</b> John Lewis Oxford Street London W1A 1EX Mon - Sat: 9.30 - 7 (Thurs: 9.30 - 8) Sun: 12 - 6 Phone 020 7629 7711</p>	<p>1.8 miles <a href="#">Map this shop</a></p>

## (A) Differences Between Local Shopping Search-Engines and Business Directories

Business directories, or local search engines, act as “business finders”

Local shopping search-engines act as “product finders”

Compared to online business directories such as Yell.com which describe themselves as “local search engines”, local shopping search-engines can be

described as a next-generation technology. Local shopping search-engines go beyond locating broad categories of business and locate particular products instead, making shopping considerably easier.

Unfortunately, online business directories frequently require guesswork to determine which shops sell the desired product, and finding prices and additional product information consists of making numerous phone calls which are time consuming. In contrast, local shopping search-engines yield search results that include product pictures, prices, and descriptions, along with the addresses and phone numbers of the shops carrying them.

For example, if you enter “Sony digital camera” and a postcode in the search boxes of an online business directory, it will at best give you only the address and telephone number of businesses selling digital cameras.

Local shopping search-engines, on the other hand, would not only show Sony digital camera descriptions, pictures, and prices, but also the local shop information such as shop address, telephone number, and map locations, as shown in the figure above.

### **(B) Differences Between Local Shopping Search-Engines and Regular Shopping Search-Engines**

Kelkoo.co.uk is the UK's leading shopping search engine that finds products in online shops only. In contrast, a local shopping search-engine finds products in local, bricks-and-mortar shops. The advantages of buying locally, according to 60% of *wired* Europeans surveyed by Forrester Research include:

- (i) The ability to see and touch products before buying them
- (ii) None of the delay, cost, or uncertainty often associated with online product delivery
- (iii) No risk of online credit card fraud

The search technologies are also fundamentally different, with local shopping search-engines relying on geographic search technology as opposed to traditional search technology. Local shopping search-engines are able to find the nearest physical shop that stocks the product sought by the consumer.

## EXAMPLES OF LOCAL SHOPPING SEARCH-ENGINES

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**IN THE USA:** [ShopLocal.com](#), [Froogle.com](#), [Slifter.com](#)  
and [Yokel.com](#)

**IN THE UK:** [AskTheLocal.com](#)

### (C) Differences between Local Shopping Search-Engines and Major Search-Engines

The following points are benefits real-world retailers derive from listing their product information on local shopping search-engines versus advertising with major search engines such as Google or Yahoo!:

- Local shopping search-engines specialize in retail items. Since its searchers are interested retail consumers, retailers will not waste money on people who are unlikely to buy.
- Local shopping search-engines require a postcode, so the retailer targets Internet users who are living in close proximity to their shop – promoting foot-traffic. Additionally, the ability to display detailed product information such as pictures, prices and descriptions can only attract more potential customers.
- No website is necessary for retailers, although it can help to link product information back to the product page from the retailer's website. If a retailer does not have a website, there is the option for product information to link to a manufacturer's product page instead.
- Listing with local shopping search-engines is simple. Retailers do not need to make decisions on keyword bids, keyword selection or ad texts involved with typical search engine marketing because the entire set of information concerning the product, such as the product's description, price, and image is automatically used.
- No e-commerce website is required. No need to compete against Amazon on their own turf.

In conclusion, by listing their product information on local shopping search-engines, bricks-and-mortar retailers can direct Internet users looking for a specific product to their front-door.



## About AskTheLocal.com

AskTheLocal! is the UK's first local shopping search-engine and offers product listings to bricks-and-mortar retailers. Shops with or without websites can easily list, and reap the benefits from the most targeted traffic on the Internet.

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