

A GUIDE TO LOCAL MARKETING FOR NATIONAL BRANDS





INTRODUCTION

Local marketing isn't new—[nearly two-thirds \(64%\)](#) of brands consider local marketing strategies to be critical. Yet, even though customers crave a sense of connection with the brands they buy from, it can be difficult for national brands to build strong relationships with consumers. Deciding which local marketing tactics work best for your brand takes time and a healthy amount of trial and error.

In this guide, we cover the ins and outs of local marketing, why it's essential for national brands, some of the challenges to look out for, and key local marketing strategies and tactics to consider when crafting a local marketing strategy that best fits your national brand. When it comes to attracting and converting potential customers, local marketing remains one of the best strategies for creating a strong sense of loyalty, connection, and relevance.

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WHAT IS LOCAL MARKETING?

Local marketing, or “neighborhood marketing,” is a strategy that targets potential customers in local markets where your products are available or you have physical locations. It’s a marketing approach that focuses on creating a strong brand presence in a specific geographic area with messaging tailored to the people who live there. By investing in local customers’ unique needs and interests, your national brand is more likely to build strong relationships and generate long-term growth.

Why is local marketing important for national brands?

People are searching with local intent

82% of mobile phone users surveyed—and 92% of millennials—[reported](#) doing a “near me” search on their devices.



Not only are people seeking local information online more often, but they're also searching with high intent. According to [HubSpot](#), 72% of consumers who did a local search visited a store within 5 miles.

People who search with keywords like “near me” are usually closer to exercising their purchasing power. **57% of users contact a business they found on Yelp within a day**, according to a 2022 [Yelp survey](#). That's why it's important for your local marketing strategy to target specific locations and meet your customers where they already are.





Consumers pay attention to local reviews

When people search locally, they want to know what the service and amenities are like at specific locations. A brand's name and reputation serve as a starting point, but local reviews play a crucial role in deciding whether or not to visit the location. For example, when people crave a simple burger, many think of McDonald's. However, if they also need to be able to send an email on the fly, they may turn to reviews to determine if a nearby McDonald's has a comfortable dining area or specific conveniences like wifi. Or, if someone needs a pit stop during a road trip, they'll look at reviews to find which gas station reportedly has a clean restroom.

Reviews at the local level can have a big impact on your brand's national reputation. Suppose a restaurant chain has multiple locations across the country, but one of the locations receives consistently critical reviews. Potential customers may stumble across these critical reviews and be discouraged from visiting any of the restaurant's locations, even if other locations have glowing reviews.

76%

of consumers "regularly" read online reviews when browsing for local businesses.

95% of people in a 2023 survey said they had written an online review for a local business in the past 12 months or might leave one in the future.

People who live in the same neighborhood as a business are usually more motivated to leave reviews because they have a personal connection to the area and feel a sense of community. They want to help their friends and neighbors make informed decisions.

Consumers crave connection and convenience

People respond to people. No matter how recognizable and beloved your brand may be, at the end of the day, we're all humans who value connection—and that feeling of connection is what keeps customers coming back. That and a healthy dose of convenience—something consumers want more of in their busy lives.

Research shows that [87% of consumers](#) won't travel more than 15 minutes to make routine purchases. While it's important to maintain consistency across your national brand, using relatable local marketing tactics can increase your brand's reach and inspire deeper loyalty than a catch-all national campaign.

Customers want to know what's going on with businesses in their own neighborhood—not in another zip code.



CASE STUDY

Lululemon has cultivated a strong sense of brand community by offering exercise and wellness classes—such as yoga, meditation, and barre—both in person and online.

These offerings create a community for people in the comfort of their own homes via a smart fitness **mirror** as well as in branded Lululemon and partner spaces.



The Mirror is a literal full-length mirror that doubles as a home fitness system that displays virtual live classes and on-demand options. The Mirror offers a convenient platform for customers to connect with each other through the live classes, where they can see and interact with other participants in real time in their living rooms. The environment Lululemon has fostered creates a sense of community and support among members who can share their fitness goals, progress, and tips with each other.

Lululemon's in-person offerings range from yoga and fitness classes to running clubs led by local coaches. These in-person events build a strong local community centered around shared interests, values, and experiences. It's also a powerful way to create moments for user-generated content that can be reshared and repurposed. For example, Lululemon encourages its customers to share their experiences and progress on social media using branded hashtags.

It's natural for people to seek community. By integrating brand communities into its marketing and product strategy and offering consumers what they're already looking for, Lululemon can nurture a more connected and engaged community of fitness enthusiasts—a community that is more likely to turn to Lululemon's brand when they need fitness attire.

The benefits of local marketing

Although national marketing campaigns help build brand recognition, local campaigns can reach your target audience precisely when they're looking for products or services your brand offers. **With local marketing, you're more likely to reach the right audience at the right time, which is more cost-effective.** And as you continue to test, learn, and leverage local market insights, your offerings will become more and more personalized, which increases brand loyalty.

Local marketing also sets you up to zoom out a bit and execute at a regional level, which allows for more tailoring than a blanket national marketing strategy. This provides room for tactics like locally tailored menu items or services designed for the local climate. For example, pest control companies have to market locally because different areas have different types of pests. A northeast location may deal with rats that scurry inside when it rains or snows, while a southwest location has to manage scorpions in hot, arid climates. When you implement local marketing strategies, you're freed up to meet regional customer demands, ultimately attracting high-intent customers to your brand.





CHALLENGES OF LOCAL MARKETING FOR MULTILLOCATION BUSINESSES

While local marketing has a lot of benefits, it also comes with challenges. Brands should be aware of the following pitfalls when taking on local marketing.

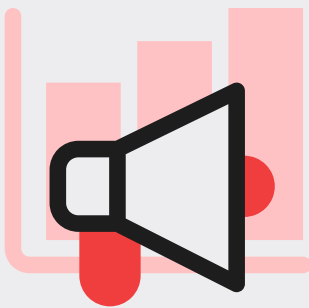
Local adaptation

Catering to local market preferences while staying true to the brand's overall values, messaging, and image can be a difficult balance to strike. What works in one region may not necessarily work in another, and maintaining consistency while adapting to local preferences and norms often requires significant research, testing, and data analysis, which can be time-consuming and costly.

On the other hand, failing to strike the right balance between brand consistency and localization can lead to brand dilution, confusion, and loss of customer trust. To overcome this challenge, national brands should focus on establishing clear brand guidelines, providing training to local marketing teams, and conducting regular audits to ensure overall brand fidelity across local markets.

Another challenge of local adaptation in national brand marketing is the potential for misinterpretation or offense. When businesses adapt national marketing campaigns to local cultures, there's a risk of unintentionally using language, images, or symbols that may be "off," inappropriate, or even offensive. That's why it's crucial to invest in local market research, establish local partnerships, and test campaigns with members of your local audience to make sure your campaign resonates and to avoid an embarrassing misstep. Local markets can be diverse, complex, and constantly evolving, and spending time to understand each local market's unique cultural, linguistic, and behavioral norms is worth the investment.





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Tim Hortons offers a good example. The menus at the quick-service restaurant chain vary across Canada and the United States to cater to local tastes, preferences, and cultural differences. They offer poutine in Canada, where it's a popular dish, and they serve a Beyond Meat breakfast sandwich in the US, where vegetarianism is on the rise. These adaptations to their standard menu help Tim Hortons appeal to local customers while maintaining an overall brand image and identity in the food options they offer.



Managing your local reputation

Negative feedback or experiences in one location can quickly spread and harm your brand's overall reputation. In a world where one bad experience can go viral on social media, national brands need to proactively manage their reputation at the local level more than ever. [Local online reviews influence customer perceptions and purchase decisions](#), so it's important to regularly monitor and respond to online reviews promptly and professionally. Try creating a handful of prewritten examples your team can use as templates to address common pain points or questions. This provides a starting point for crafting a tailored reply quickly and easily while maintaining brand consistency.

Data management and measuring success

National and multilocation brands also manage and collect large amounts of data from multiple locations, which can be difficult to analyze and use effectively for local marketing efforts. When it comes to tracking performance at the local level, measuring the total value of local marketing efforts while also factoring in the impact on the overall brand can be challenging. In fact, many brands don't track ROI at the local level at all.

Calculating ROI for local marketing requires setting clear and measurable campaign goals, like [store visits after seeing an ad](#), volume of phone calls, or something sales-specific, like the number of poutine meals Tim Hortons sold in their Canadian locations. To collect and manage those types of data safely and securely, your team will likely need a [third-party tool](#) or integration. More importantly, you'll need to take the time to thoroughly analyze your data. For example, tracking, organizing, and analyzing demographic information, customer behavior, feedback, and preferences will help you identify potential trends and personalize future marketing messages.

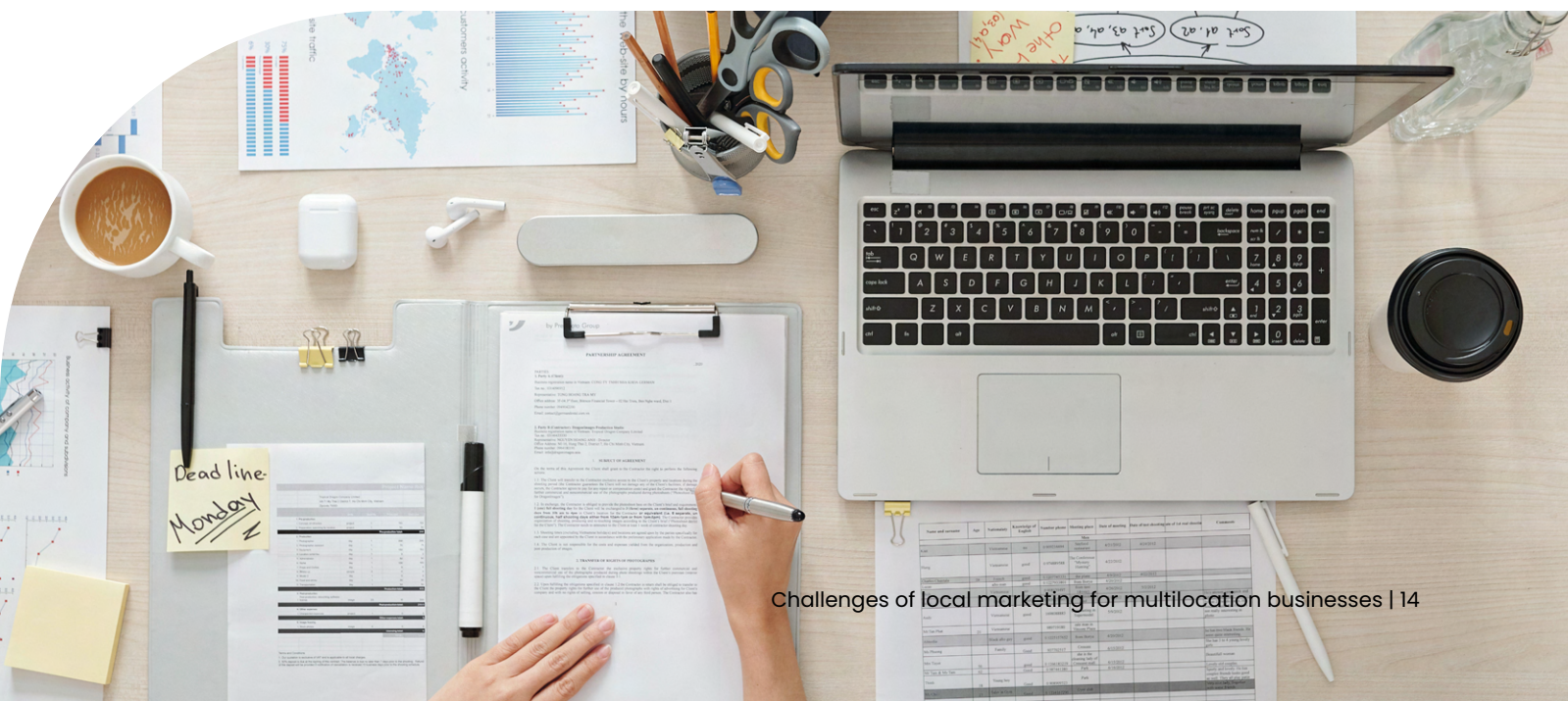
Coordination

Despite operating under a larger brand umbrella, each individual location in a chain or franchise likely has its own unique needs and goals. When individual stores or regional marketing teams strike out on their own and create local campaigns that aren't consistent with the brand's national campaigns, it can lead to confusion and can even corrode the trust you've built with your customers.

To avoid this, take a hard look at your internal structures to determine the most effective way to execute local marketing initiatives. In some cases, empowering local store managers or franchisees with more marketing autonomy can help local branches form stronger local partnerships and community trust. Even if you give local store managers a degree of marketing freedom in their own territory, you still need to provide guidance to keep your brand's voice steady. [Brand and campaign guidelines](#) are critical here, as are regular check-ins and audits for marketing quality control.

In other cases, regional marketing managers can tailor corporate branding and messaging or even campaign messages and tactics for the overall region or smaller areas within it. This helps ensure your national campaigns strike a chord in every location.

Taking the time to empower the right teams and individuals with clearly defined guidelines and goals helps ensure that your investment in local marketing will deliver results.





TOP LOCAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

The first step in local marketing is the same as in any other type of marketing: Know your target audience, including who they are and what they want. Defining local or regional buyer personas can help you understand how demographics and audience attributes may vary from location to location.

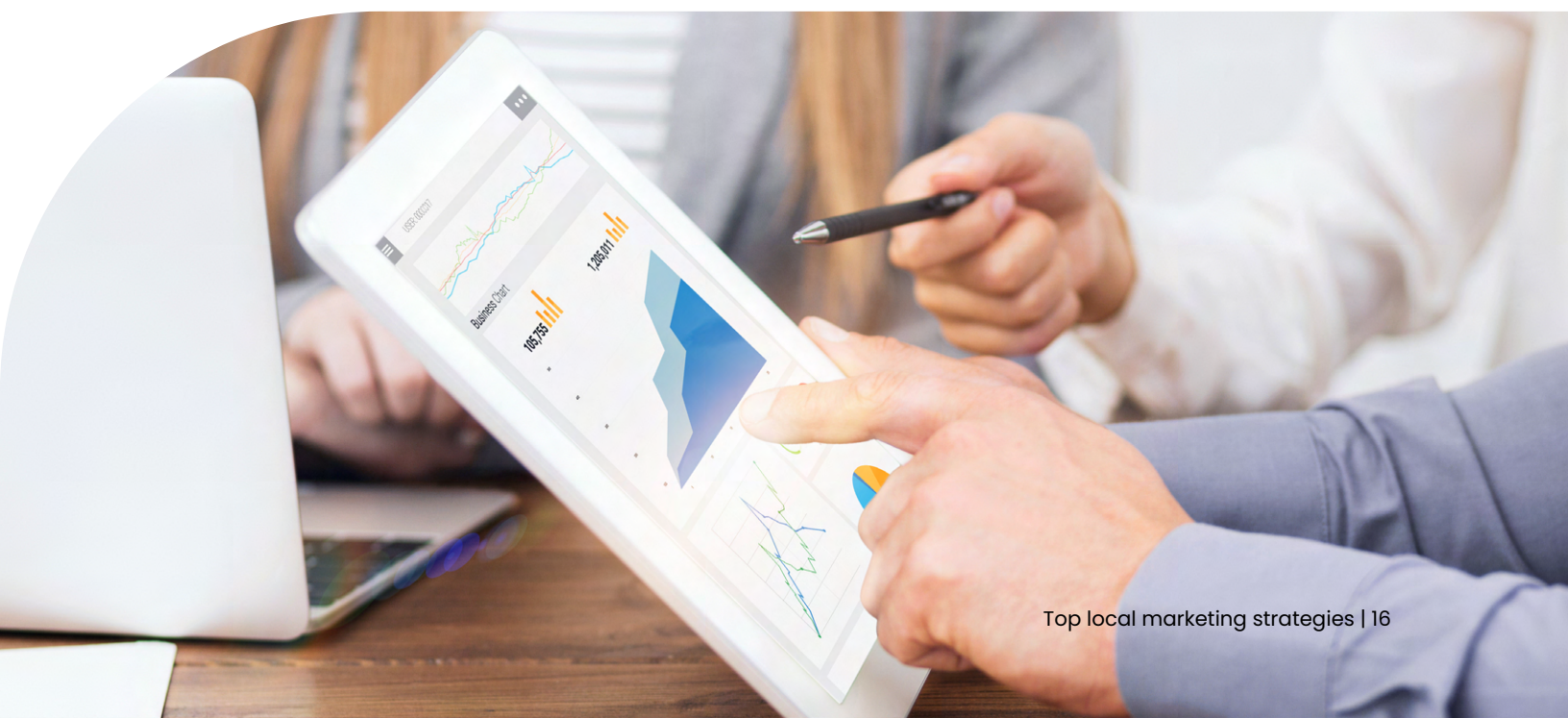
Once you better understand your buyers, it's time to define your strategy for reaching them by deciding where to focus your local marketing energy. Besides your locations and audience, there are many factors at play here, including budget and overall company goals. Consider the following eight strategies as you determine the best approach.

Invest in local listings

Local listings are a must-have in any local marketing strategy and are critical for being discoverable in local searches. They are also a cost-effective and fairly straightforward tactic to start with. A local listing is an online profile that includes information about your business, such as the name, address, phone number, website, hours of operation, images with captions, and customer reviews. These types of listings can be found on popular search engines, online directories, review sites, and social media platforms.



- **Claim your listings:** The first step in capitalizing on local listings is to claim all your location listings on popular directories and review sites, including [Yelp](#), [Facebook](#), [TripAdvisor](#), and [Google](#). By claiming your listings, you can actively manage them so that consumers always see correct information about each location, your listings appear accurately in search engine results, and, importantly, you can respond to customer reviews and inquiries.
- **Optimize your listings:** Once you've claimed your listings, it's important to optimize them for local searches as well as for the customer experience. By adding localized information to local listings, you're more likely to appear in searches, and customers get a better feel for each individual location. Your listing should include your business name, address, phone number, website, and hours of operation. You should also add high-quality photos and videos that show off your location's unique features, products, or services.
- **Actively manage your listings:** Monitoring your business's online reputation and responding to customer reviews and inquiries in a timely and professional manner help build trust and credibility with your customers and improve your visibility in search engine results.

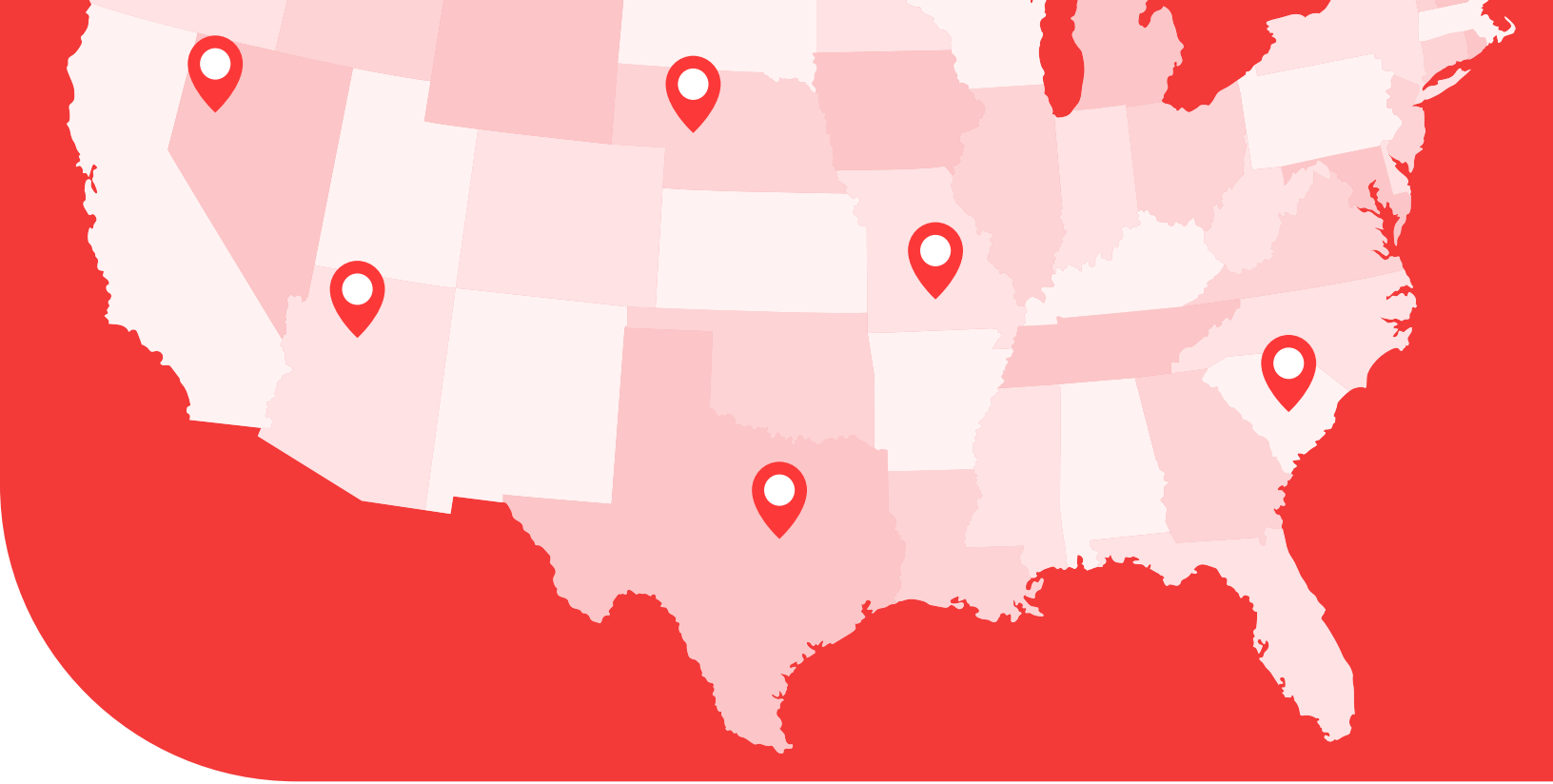




- **Be consistent:** The more consistent your brand's information is across the web, the more search engines will trust your website and business. Wherever possible, keep high-level brand information consistent across your local listings.
- **Monitor your competitors:** Keeping an eye on your competitors' local listings to see what they're doing right and where they're falling short can help you identify areas to improve your own listings and help yours stand out.



By claiming and optimizing your local listings, you're effectively managing your online reputation and ensuring consistency across all your online profiles. It's a low-lift, cost-effective way to get started with local marketing.



Localize your website and landing pages

Adding location-specific information to your corporate website is a good signal of commitment to the communities in which you do business. One way to accomplish this is by adding a map with all your store locations in each region. This simple addition can help customers find your stores quickly and easily while providing an opportunity to showcase additional information about your local presence, such as localized menus.

It's also crucial to provide local contact information for each store, including addresses, phone numbers, and hours of operation. You can also create landing pages for regions, cities, or even neighborhoods where you operate to better capture local search traffic. Using those regional names as keywords in page content and metadata (titles and descriptions for search engine optimization or SEO) will help customers searching for your locations find these pages and get in touch with your stores nearest them.

You might also want to talk to the team that manages your website about [local business schema](#), a data markup code that makes it easier for search engines to identify your offerings. All of this information can help you appear closer to the top of local search engine results pages (SERPs).

Given the potential effort and cost, creating localized content on your website may be worthwhile only in specific scenarios. For example, suppose your brand offers bespoke travel experiences that vary broadly by location. In that case, your website could benefit from individual, location-specific landing pages that incorporate images, directions, and even local reviews, events, or promotions.

It's also important to remember that most people use their phones to search locally. Offering a mobile-friendly, personalized digital experience will increase your chances of reaching your target audience.

Improve your position in local search results

Local search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of optimizing your website and local directory listings to appear in the search results for relevant keywords particular to a specific city, state, or geographic region. These SEO tactics can increase your brand's visibility in local search results, so customers in a targeted location can find you when they're looking for a business like yours.

Let's say you have pizza restaurants nationwide but want to attract more customers to a particular branch. You could use local SEO tactics to increase your visibility in the search results, making it easier for potential customers to find your restaurant when they search using keywords such as "pizza," "pizza near me," or "best pizza in [city/state]."

Search engines are also capable of serving up localized results based on your physical location, so it's important to get all the localized details correct even if the searched keyword does not include a physical location in the request.



It is important for each of your [business listing locations](#) that the business name, address, and phone number (NAP) are easily visible and match third-party directories. Search engines use multiple sources of information to verify accuracy. Having matching names, addresses, and phone numbers for each of your locations will increase the trustworthiness of the information for the search engine and the customer.





Your web team should [localize your website](#) with relevant title tags, keywords, meta descriptions, local business schema, and more to help search engines understand the locations and offerings of each branch to give your site the best possibility of ranking highly for relevant searches.

Another important factor in local SEO is creating [locally relevant content](#) that incorporates relevant keywords and attracts inbound links and traffic from other sites or is added from other parts of your own website or properties. For example, blog posts about local events or promotions can help establish your restaurant as a local authority and drive more traffic to your website.

Finally, it's important to keep the information on your website up to date—if branch hours change in one location or your product offerings shift, you'll want that to be reflected on your website and local listings.

Go local with your ads

Consumers are constantly bombarded with information and ads, so to stand out in a crowded market your ads need to be extremely relevant and provide clear value.



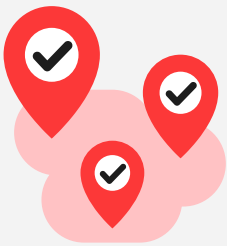
With [61% of local consumers](#) searching nearby every day, brands have an opportunity to meet those consumers where they already are with information to address their immediate needs.

GEOTARGETING



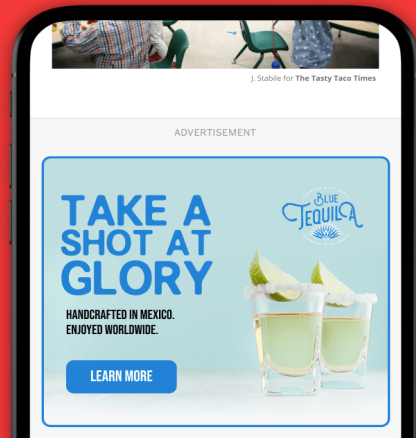
Geotargeting uses geographic parameters to show ads to an audience in a specific area. For example, suppose your company has a restaurant in downtown Los Angeles. You can geotarget potential customers within a 10-mile radius of your location with ads highlighting your proximity to popular tourist attractions. You can also use local terminology and images that resonate with your target audience to make the most of your geotargeted ads. Time-based targeting is another helpful tool that enables you to show ads at specific times of day when you are trying to drive additional traffic to your business.

GEOFENCING



Geofencing is a more advanced form of geotargeting whereby businesses can set up virtual boundaries around specific geographic areas. When someone enters or leaves the geofenced area, they receive an ad. For example, a clothing store might set up a geofence around a nearby shopping mall and send an ad offering a discount on their products to users who enter the area. When optimizing your geofenced ads, it's important to use location-specific calls to action, such as "Visit our store in the next hour and receive 20% off your purchase." You should also consider using triggers like time of day or weather conditions to increase the relevance of your ads.

Another great way to reach potential customers is to place local ads on websites that reach your target audience. For example, Yelp Audiences helps businesses advertise to **Yelp** users on an array of third-party sites, including Business Insider, The Washington Post, the Daily Mail, the New York Post, and others. Using first-party data, Yelp offers custom, cobranded ads called Dynamic Yelp Content Ads (DYCA), which incorporate Yelp's content and highlight offerings near the consumer's location. Let's say you're a hotel brand with locations nationwide. You can drive a higher return on ad spending by targeting customers who have already searched for hotels or travel businesses on Yelp with localized display ads—even as they move across the web.



Local, out-of-home (OOH) ads may seem old-fashioned in a digital world, but they can be a fun and creative way to get your brand in front of more eyes. More than just billboards, OOH ads can also get pretty imaginative with placements on park benches, bus stops, and vehicles like buses, subways, taxis, and trains. Or you can get really unorthodox with [art installations](#), [flash mob dances](#), or even temporary, interactive murals like White Claw's "[Wall of Cool](#)." During one of the hottest weeks in London in 2022, White Claw jumped on an opportunity to create a mural depicting ice and waves with built-in cooling pads that gave Londoners respite from the heat. Not only did this installation speak to the literal local climate, but the ad was both delightful and useful.

Engage on social media

Social media is one of the best ways to get customers and potential customers to engage with your brand. Social platforms often have features like location tags, local hashtags, and local groups. Here are a few ways to leverage social media for local marketing.

- **Work with local influencers:** One of the most effective ways to promote your business on social media is through local influencers, ambassadors, and experts. Influencers tend to have a loyal following and deep community knowledge. Working with them to create content that showcases your products or services to their followers increases your reach and credibility. For example, if you're a national coffee chain with a new holiday flavor, select key markets and look for popular local influencers who post about food and beverage trends.
- **Collaborate with other local businesses:** Make sure to follow and engage with other local businesses or potential local partners from your social handles. For example, to drive more people to a specific location during a slow month, you could partner with a nearby bar and create a joint social media promotion that offers customers a discount if they follow both locations. Many platforms—like [TikTok](#) and [Instagram](#)—offer opportunities for creative collaboration between brands.





- **Join local groups or create your own:** Being active in social groups is an excellent way to build an online community that shares your passion and interests. You not only gain valuable insights into the needs of the local community, but you can also directly share relevant content with these groups to increase reach and engagement. Just be careful not to be too “salesy,” as this can alienate community members.
- **Apply location tags and hashtags:** Location tags help people find your business when they explore locations on social media. Topic hashtags help categorize your content, making it easier for people to find you when they’re searching for something you’re promoting. You can search for popular hashtags, use local hashtags, or create your own to join the conversation about local events and topics.
- **Inspire user-generated content:** User-generated content (UGC) is created by customers sharing their experience with your brand on social media. You can encourage locals to use certain hashtags or tag your brand when sharing content about their experience, or you can even [run a contest](#) to encourage users to post. Once your community starts posting about your brand, you can look to reshare that content on your social channels and even create local campaigns out of it—including targeted social ads. Just be sure to get permission to use the UGC content first.

Send direct mail

Tried-and-true direct mail remains an effective option to consider for your local marketing strategy. You can tap into audience data and information that you already have to send relevant coupons, personalized mailers, or postcards to supplement your digital campaign content. For example, in 2015, Airbnb launched a personalized, direct mail campaign to promote its “Live There” campaign, which aimed to position Airbnb as a travel brand that helps people experience destinations like a local.

Airbnb created a personalized direct mail piece for each recipient, featuring a photo of a unique location in their city along with a message that encouraged them to [“Live There.”](#) The mailer also included a \$50 coupon that could be used toward an Airbnb stay. The idea won several marketing awards, including a Gold Lion at Cannes. By leveraging personalization and providing a valuable offer, Airbnb created a memorable and effective direct mail campaign that helped drive brand awareness and customer acquisition. Airbnb’s cost-effective tactic is a great example of how to create local content from an existing national campaign.

Target local media outlets

Using local media is another traditional tactic that can still be a powerful marketing tool for your targeted marketing efforts. The first step to leveraging local media outlets is to research the media landscape in the communities where you do business. Work with your regional or local teams to identify local newspapers, radio stations, TV channels, and other relevant trade publications or blogs serving your industry. You’ll want to note each outlet’s programming, audience demographics, and any free or paid opportunities they offer to see if it makes sense for your brand. Building relationships with local media outlets can take perseverance, but it might be easier on your budget in the long run.

When you’re a big brand, it’s important to remember that it can be hard to scale this type of local media engagement strategy across many locales. Pulling off an ultralocal tactic like this works best if your national brand can incorporate a carefully planned media outreach approach into a local store manager’s marketing playbook.





Build local relationships

It's a high-effort tactic, but engaging in community events, sponsorships, loyalty programs, and partnerships (think charities and fundraisers) is a great way to build lasting relationships with consumers. Starbucks has built strong local relationships in communities worldwide through their longstanding commitment to corporate social responsibility. The coffee giant hosts community events at their various branches, including coffee tastings, live music performances, and book readings. These events help build a sense of community and provide a space for people to connect and engage.

Starbucks has also sponsored local events and organizations, including youth sports teams, arts festivals, and charity runs. And, of course, there's the famous Starbucks Rewards loyalty program, which incentivizes customers to return to the store by offering rewards and personalized offers. Finally, Starbucks likes to source beans locally, creating solid partnerships with people who live and work in the region.

By supporting local initiatives, Starbucks shows its commitment to the community and helps build goodwill. And enlisting local business associates who can help them enter the local market more easily creates a smooth, standardized operation.



LOCAL MARKETING TRENDS

As technology evolves and consumer behavior changes, local marketing trends constantly shift. It's why marketers are always looking for new ways to connect with customers and create engaging experiences. In recent years, a few emerging trends are making waves in the local marketing space: brand activism, influencer marketing, and interactive experiences.



BRAND ACTIVISM

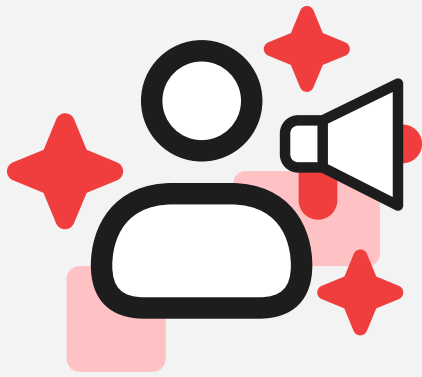
In the current social climate, consumers want to buy from and support brands that align with their values—they want to know that these companies are doing good and giving back.



As companies pay closer attention to consumers' desires, engaging in local brand activism helps you stand out and lets potential customers know you care. Local brand activism can take the form of supporting local organizations and causes or taking action to address issues that affect the community.

By engaging in brand activism, businesses can connect with customers personally and show their commitment to making a positive difference in the community. For example, each of your restaurants might choose to source ingredients from local farmers and promote sustainable agriculture, or one of your retail store locations might choose to donate a portion of its profits to a local homeless shelter.

Brand activism can build brand loyalty, increase customer engagement, and attract new customers who share the same values. However, it's important to approach brand activism carefully and to consider its potential impact on reputation, brand image, and bottom line. Not all customers will agree with a business's stance. It's also important to ensure that local brand activism efforts align with your brand's values at the corporate level.



INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing has been a growing trend for several years and continues to evolve. Local influencers may have a smaller following (typically between 5k-25k) and tend to post content about things close to them. Local influencers are generally more authentic, have a higher engagement rate, and are more trusted by your target audience. They also tend to be more affordable than macroinfluencers with a huge national following.

Brands that partner with local influencers are more likely to reach a target group in a certain region through personalized and authentic recommendations, product demos, and reviews. It's a trending tactic that helps brands build trust and credibility and drive conversions in a more natural and organic way.

An example of a local influencer marketing campaign for a restaurant chain would be to partner with a local food blogger to create a custom salad bowl that's sold exclusively at locations in the area and promoted via your local marketing channels and the influencer's social handles.





INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES

As we all become more immersed in the digital world, businesses are looking to tap interactive experiences like augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) displays, in-store events and workshops, and interactive displays.



[Netflix used an in-person AR experience](#) to promote season four of Stranger Things. To participate in the immersive experience, fans showed up at a location near them and played games that simulated Stranger Things experiences. Known for bringing entertainment to viewers in their homes, Netflix delighted fans with a memorable interactive Stranger Things experience out in their neighborhood. As AR and VR continue to develop, more companies will likely begin to experiment with these interactive experiences in local marketing.



THINK LIKE A BIG BRAND, ACT LIKE A LOCAL BRAND

Learning which local marketing strategies make the most sense for your brand takes some experimenting. Referring back to your buyer personas to help guide your tactics, messaging, and content creation will help you focus your efforts. National brands don't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to local marketing. Using what you already have is a great place to start—like putting a localized spin on a national campaign or retargeting customers who've already shown interest with **localized ads**. At the end of the day, it's about meeting and connecting with customers where they are, when it makes sense for your brand.

Connect with Yelp for Brands to learn how your multilocation business can partner with Yelp for impactful local marketing.

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