

Images, Coupons Boost Local Search Ads

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Searchers look for images and coupons from local business listings online

US local search ad revenues continue to grow and the consumers driving those gains increasingly expect local business search listings to have add-ons like phone numbers, images and even coupons as standard elements.

But the majority of local search marketers do not meet such expectations.

MarketingSherpa found in April 2011 that, of the 37% of total US marketers surveyed who had a local business listing, the majority (81%) optimized their pay-per-click listings by including the business phone number or by traditional search-related tactics like keyword optimization (60%). Less than half (48%) added images to their listings, and only 16% used coupons.

Local businesses typically transact most of their sales in-store rather than online; it's unsurprising the majority include a phone number to allow potential customers to contact them for store hours, direction and other inquiries.

Still, adding images, even a company logo or storefront photo to search listing, can greatly benefit a business. According to BrightLocal, 37% of US Google searchers looking for a local business reportedly give companies more attention and consideration when their search listings contain business images or a company logo, and 23% were more likely to contact a business when presented with such images.

Though such preferences only account for one of many potential outlets for local search listings, findings from comScore and the Local Search Association indicate roughly three-quarters of US internet users turn first to portals like Google to search for local businesses, perhaps justifying the investment in adding images to local search ads.

Also worth the investment for local search advertisers is the addition of coupons, currently utilized by only 16% of US local search marketers, according to MarketingSherpa.

This year, eMarketer estimates 47% of all adult US internet users, about 88.2 million consumers, will use online coupons—those obtained online but redeemable both online and offline.

Though it's unlikely every local business issues coupons in the offline world, in the online world restaurants, retail stores and those in the hospitality and entertainment industries have much to gain from adding online coupons to their local search listings, according to findings from PriceGrabber.

Without a doubt, search advertising—particularly paid search—can be a time-consuming investment for any business, let alone a local business strapped for not only time but also resources.

However, by leveraging the use of additional local search listing tactics like online coupons and business images, local search marketers can quickly boost their businesses' presence online.

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