

## **Independent Hotels need to consider Local Search Marketing**

Hotel chains are spending a great deal on paid search marketing with all of the major search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo. These campaigns play an important role in achieving brand recognition and capturing brand name-related searches, but they leave out tremendous revenue opportunities from local search initiatives. This presents an opportunity for a non branded local hotel to compete with the large brands in a cost effective way by simply using their local knowledge of the area, its events and attractions.

### **Why should independent hotels pay attention to Local Search Marketing?**

- Online consumers conduct 2 billion local searches per month; 8 out of 10 local searchers follow a search with a phone call (ComScore).
- Over one-third of all searches on the major search engines are local in character (i.e., searches by Internet users for businesses in their immediate area).
- Online Directories such as Yell.com, Thomson Local, Free Index, Brownbook and others such as “The Best Of” are becoming viable online competitors for local search market share - they are often perceived to be “more local” than the major search engines.

Local search has gained strong momentum as more savvy online consumers are seeking highly relevant local business listings. All of the major search engines have introduced Local Search functionality.

Online travel consumers search for hotel services within the context of a particular destination. ‘Destination + hotels’ or ‘destination + accommodations’ are popular keyword searches for any location and are used for international, national, regional and local searches.

Local search marketing enables independent hoteliers to increase online sales by precisely targeting potential customers:

- Traveling on business or leisure
- Looking for a hotel near local attractions, e.g., a theme park
- Searching for a hotel room in conjunction with a local event (fair, festival, concert, sporting event)
- Interested in a hotel or venue for a group for family celebrations, wedding receptions, local corporate events, conferences etc
- Looking for a restaurant, leisure club or spa.

Branded hotel chains do not adequately address and capture these local business opportunities via the national marketing campaigns. Switched on independent hoteliers can definitely take advantage of this marketing gap to generate incremental revenues and stay ahead of the competition.

Local Search Marketing can be improved by:

- Local Search Marketing on Major Search Engines (Google maps)
- Paid Search Marketing on Major Search Engines (Google PPC)
- Online Directory Listings (Free and Paid)
- By creating individual pages about local events, attractions etc on your website and optimising them for specific search terms.