

# Local SEO

What is local search engine optimization and how can it be used to help your business?

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This whitepaper will help you understand what local SEO is and how your organization can leverage it to increase your brand awareness and drive online traffic to your website.

We take a look at how local SEO works from the three main perspectives: the search engines - the ones trying to provide the most accurate results, the businesses - the ones trying to improve ranking, and the end users - the ones trying to find answers to their questions.

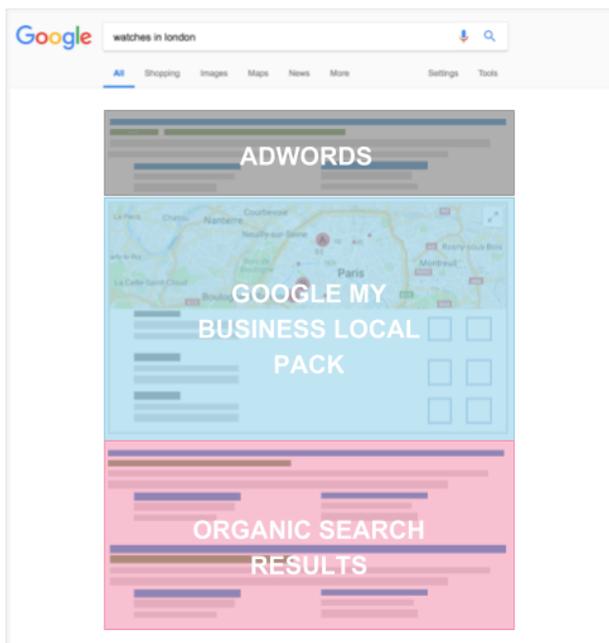
# 1. What is local SEO?

Local SEO helps businesses promote their products and services to customers on a local level. When customers use search engines to look for brands, products or services in relation to their current location or a future location this is referred to as local search. These searches may include terms such as 'near me' and 'nearby' or simply include the neighborhood, city or town relevant to the query. Search engines provide results based on the location specified, and businesses are able to implement a number of local SEO strategies to optimize their website for such local searches.

Google has responded to the local search trend by customizing results for local queries by taking into account the location of the user and providing location-specific results. Often it will display a map with location pins alongside the search results known as the Google My Business Local Pack.

Obtaining strong - ideally top three - rankings within organic search results is essential for brands and retailers in order to increase brand awareness amongst potential customers. Organic results are a simple and effective way to increase online traffic and provide users with accurate information and ultimately attract them into stores. For example, a watch retailer has a vested interest to optimize their local web pages in order to appear in Google results as people that are searching for "watches in London" are potential customers that have already identified a need or want to purchase a watch.

Search engine results page illustrating the different types of results:



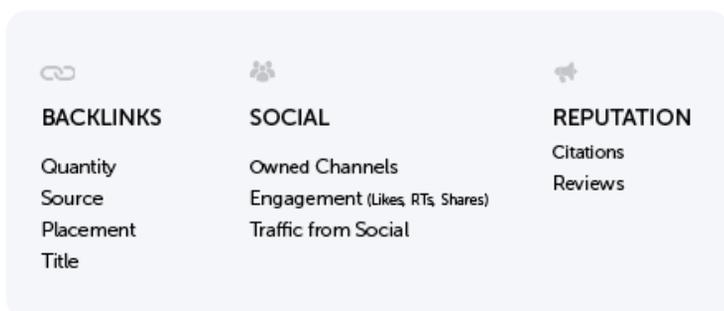
Customers expect to find accurate information regarding local businesses, including the address, phone number, opening hours and even reviews of the products and services offered.

## How does local SEO fit within your SEO strategy?

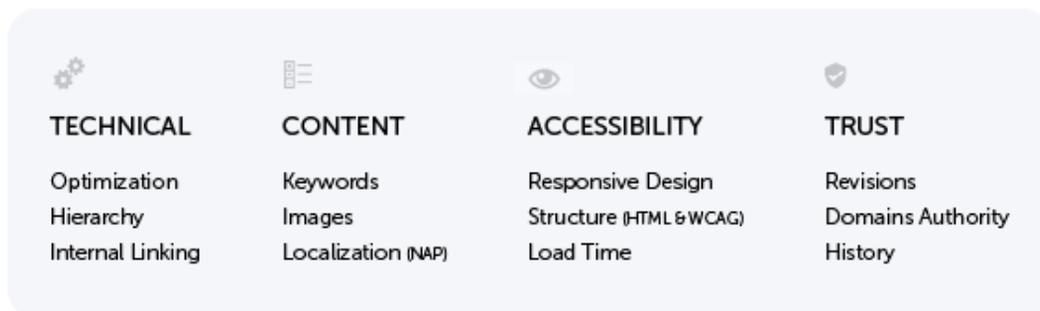
General SEO is used to help businesses' websites perform better in search engine rankings nationwide, targeting popular, broad, industry-related keywords to help a website stand out against competitors'. Local SEO fits within your general SEO strategy, but is focused entirely on geo-modified keywords that are specific and limited to certain locations.

As you can see from the below diagram, and as you will discover as you read through this white paper, there is a definite overlap between general SEO strategy and local SEO strategy when it comes to the techniques employed across onsite and offsite SEO. For example, creating quality, keyword optimized content is important across the board, as is building strong backlinks and creating strong domain authority.

### OFFSITE SEO



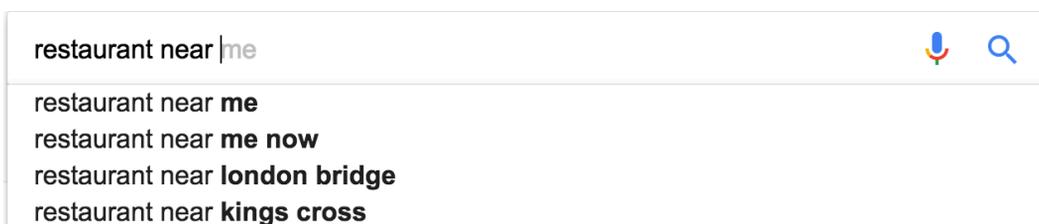
### ONSITE SEO



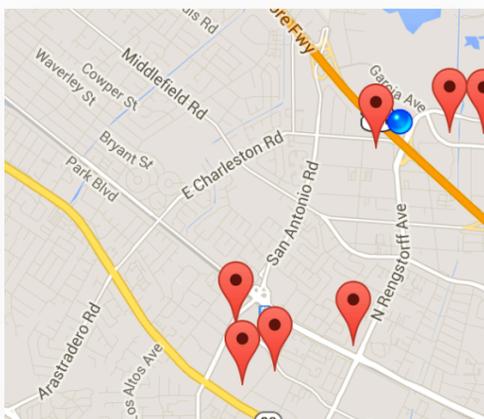
## How does local search work on Google?

If a user includes the name of a town or city in their search or includes local keywords such as “near me” or “nearby”, it is easy for a search engine to understand that this is a local search. For example if a user searches for “restaurants in London” or “restaurants near me”, Google will populate the search results with local restaurant websites, reviews of restaurants, restaurant-related websites etc.

If a user does not specify the name of a location and does not include local keywords, Google’s algorithm helps determine if the intention of the query is location based. For example, if a user is searching for “chinese restaurant” or to “buy a watch”, the results populated are often local because it can be interpreted that geographical location is important and relevant for the user.



Sample search results within Google Maps:



Google uses the geolocation of the user to analyze the varying results available for each query and each user in order to provide the most relevant results. Distance between the geolocation of the user and the address of the location is a very important factor within the algorithm. Geotargeting takes into account all the information Google can access from each user including: IP Address, GPS or WLAN Access Point, search history and cookies.



### BRIDGE TIP

It's possible to [emulate a local search](#) to check how your local pages are ranking.

## 2. How to optimize on-site pages to improve search engine ranking?

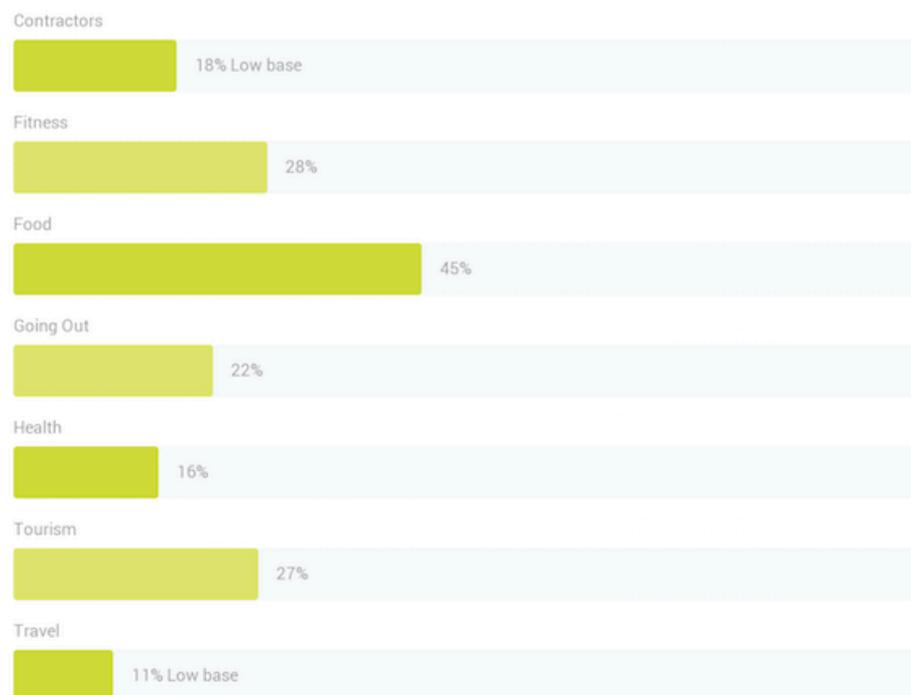
On-site page optimization is a crucial step for businesses with physical locations to improve performance and ranking within organic search results. Here are the elements that need to be considered:

### KEYWORDS

Queries made by users often include the brand or store's name and the city or neighborhood, for example "Pizza Hut Leeds". The NAP (Name, Address, Phone Number) are important keywords to include within the content as they provide answers specific to these local requests and make it easy for the customer to proceed to point of sale.

All potential keywords that could be searched by a user should be included within the content of the page. Queries may include additional information such as opening hours or promotions. For example, a grocery retail chain could integrate content about current promotions, deals and/or coupons on each location's dedicated page. This also helps the page's online visibility for general promotion focused queries such as 'London + coupon + store name'.

What kinds of promotions, deals, coupons, store sales, etc do people look for?



Google Consumer Barometer, 2015

## KEYWORDS (CONT'D)

When selecting relevant keywords to target it is important to target the relevant business category - meaning the type of business such as "hair salon" or "organic grocery store". Keywords related to business category and the types of products or services offered are more competitive, however they are essential to acquiring online traffic, and attracting new customers both online and offline. Descriptions of the products and services offered should be included throughout the website and within each location's dedicated page.

Providing this content in a well thought out and descriptive manner can be beneficial to standing out amongst other competitors. For example, a global brand like L'Oréal Professionnel trying to rank for queries such as "hair salon Cardiff" or "Manchester hair care products" should be including the relevant hair salon and hair care keywords throughout the content of each page in order to make an explicit connection for Google and users. Narrowing down a list of keywords can be done by taking into account the number of monthly searches and the global competitive level. Tools such as Google Keyword Planner and SEMrush can help determine the most favorable keywords when writing content for the location pages. The selection of keywords and the optimization of content will be key factors when ranking within search engine results.

### Keyword ideas from Google Keyword Planner

The screenshot shows the Google Keyword Planner interface. At the top, it indicates 'Locations: United Kingdom', 'Language: English', and 'Search networks: Google'. The search query entered is 'hair salon, hair colourist, hairdresser'. Below the search bar, a table lists keyword ideas with columns for 'Keyword (by relevance)', 'Avg. monthly searches', 'Competition', 'Ad impression share', 'Top of page bid (low range)', and 'Top of page bid (high range)'. The table contains 9 rows of data.

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Ad impression share	Top of page bid (low range)	Top of page bid (high range)
<input type="checkbox"/> hair colourist	100 – 1K	Medium	–	€0.64	€1.28
<input type="checkbox"/> hairdressers	100K – 1M	Low	–	€0.71	€1.67
<input type="checkbox"/> hair salon	10K – 100K	Medium	–	€0.03	€0.55
<input type="checkbox"/> hair salons near me	10K – 100K	Low	–	€0.83	€1.71
<input type="checkbox"/> haircut	10K – 100K	Low	–	€0.10	€2.31
<input type="checkbox"/> hair cut	10K – 100K	Low	–	€0.06	€1.92
<input type="checkbox"/> hairdressers near ...	100K – 1M	Low	–	€0.86	€1.95
<input type="checkbox"/> salons near me	1K – 10K	Low	–	€0.62	€1.68

## TITLE TAGS AND PAGE TITLES

The business needs to determine one to two combinations of keywords based on the business category, what users are likely to search and location, which could be a town, city or region depending on levels of competition. Examples of these keyword combinations include: "Pizza Hut London", "Euromaster opening times", "Birmingham florist" or "Old Town Edinburgh hotel".

birmingham florist	 
birmingham florist <b>same day delivery</b>	
birmingham florist <b>delivery</b>	
birmingham florist <b>city centre</b>	
birmingham florist <b>open sunday</b>	

The selected keywords need to be included within the title of the page. An optimized title for a location, for example, could be structured as follows: "Name" + "City": "call to action" + "Business Category". When looking at Pizza Hut's Soho location the page title could be "Pizza Hut Soho, London: Order pizza or book a table at our restaurant". Adaptations to this structure can be made according to the strategy, objectives and prominence of the brand.

## META DESCRIPTIONS

Meta descriptions provide users with a brief explanation of what content is displayed on the page. They can attract the user's attention and encourage them to click on the result. When determining the optimal meta description for location pages identify the intent of the user and the interest the user could have in the location to then decide what keywords and information to include. Local keywords are very important in order to create a connection between the search query and the business. An example meta description for a travel agency could be "Visit us today or make an appointment with Global Travel in San Francisco, California to learn how you can save on your next vacation and travel packages."

## URLs

The next step to optimizing on-site pages is crafting the URL for each location page. It's important to be concise while including keywords that describe the content of each page. An easy structure for a retail store could be: "http://shop.nameofthebrand.com/locationname-cityname".

## HEADING TAGS

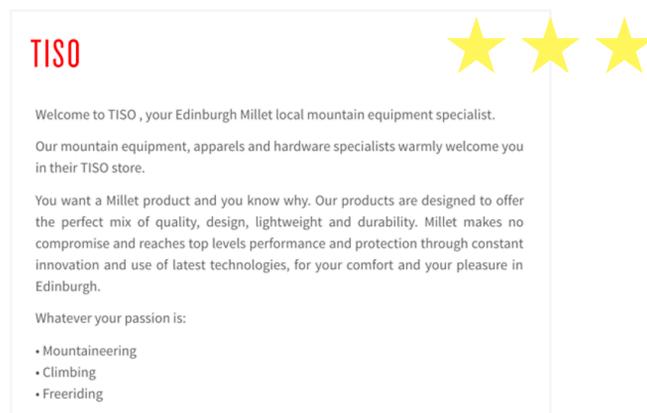
In order to rank highly for local search queries, it's also important to optimize the heading tags of each page with local keywords. These HTML elements create structure and highlight important content. Use H1 and H2 headings to push local keywords that don't fit in the title tag or meta description, and be sure to include the brand name, local information such as the name of the town and region, and any other keywords related to activity at the point of sale.



## QUALITY CONTENT

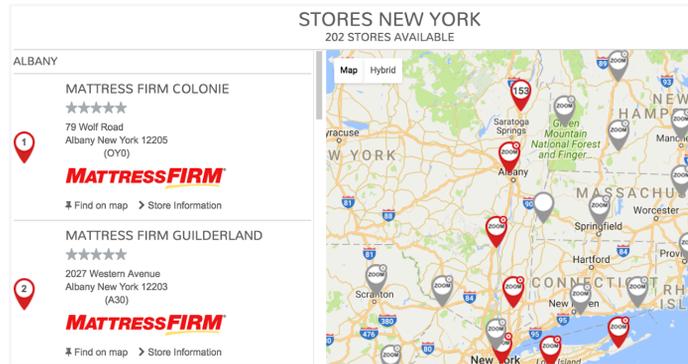
Quality is the priority at every step of the on-site optimization process. All content should be well-written and unique, so duplicate content and the over-use of keywords must be avoided. It may be difficult to provide unique content for each location when the business category and the products and services offered overlap, however to avoid the creation of duplicate content you can leverage the content that can be customized for each location, such as the name of the location, the neighborhood, the city, the region, any variations in the products or services offered, and anything else that differentiates each location.

Using fresh content is also important for local businesses, because location pages have a greater chance of achieving a higher ranking if Google can see that information is being regularly updated. The creation of time-bound content, such as seasonal trends, holiday-specific promotions, coupons and contests on each location page ensures that content is fresh, and such changes are picked up by Google.



## MAPS

Including a map on your website not only helps visitors to find their nearest store, it also signals to Google that you have local stores and your pages are therefore more likely to rank higher for locals searches.



## INTERNAL LINKING

A good internal linking strategy can help a store to improve its ranking. Index every local page, highlight the importance of each page, and link nearby locations to one another. This is not only useful for search engines when it comes to site crawling, but for the end user too.

It's important to provide a complete sitemap that can be easily analyzed. Integrate hreflang tags if your brand is international, canonical tags in the case of duplicate content, and pagination tags if there are different points of sale on different pages.

Using microdata is important for a local business. It communicates specific information to search engines to give them a better understanding of what is on a website. The search engines display some of these details, such as phone number/address/opening hours of a store, providing your website with greater visibility. This can result in a huge increase in visitor engagement.

```
<script data-ldf-jsonld-outlet type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "http://schema.org",
  "@type": "LocalBusiness",
  "name": "Boutique SFR PARIS SEBASTOPOLE",
  "address": {
    "@type": "PostalAddress",
    "streetAddress": "18 BOULEVARD SEBASTOPOLE",
    "addressLocality": "PARIS",
    "postalCode": "75004"
  },
  "geo": {
    "@type": "GeoCoordinates",
    "latitude": "48.860068",
    "longitude": "2.34932"
  },
  "url": "/189194-boutique-sfr-paris-sebastopol",
  "telephone": "01 42 74 66 88",
  "openingHours": "Mo 10:00-19:00,Tu 10:00-19:00,We 10:00-19:00,Th 10:00-19:00,Fr 10:00-19:00,Sa 10:00-19:00",
  "openingHoursSpecification":
  [
  ]
}
</script>
```



## BRIDGE TIP

For more information on recommended properties for local businesses visit [schema.org](http://schema.org). For information about linked data visit [JSON-LD.org](http://JSON-LD.org). To test your structured data use [Google's Structured Data Testing Tool](http://Google's Structured Data Testing Tool).

## OPTIMIZED FOR MOBILE AND TABLET

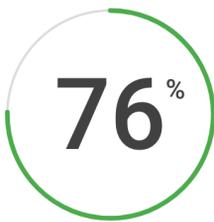
More and more local searches are being performed on smartphones, so it's important that your website is responsive and optimized for mobile for the purpose of user experience and ranking. Furthermore, search engines like Google are introducing mobile-first indexing, so having a mobile site that includes all the same rich data and content as the desktop version is more important than ever.

How urgently did people need local information?



Nearly 1/3 of all mobile searches are related to location.

*Google Internal Data, 2016*



76% of people who conduct a local search on their smartphone visit a physical place within 24 hours and 28% of those searches result in a purchase.

*Google/Purchased Digital Diary, 2016*



Nearly 2/3 of smartphone users are more likely to purchase from companies whose mobile sites or apps customize information to their location.

*Google/Ipsos Connect, 2016*



### BRIDGE TIP

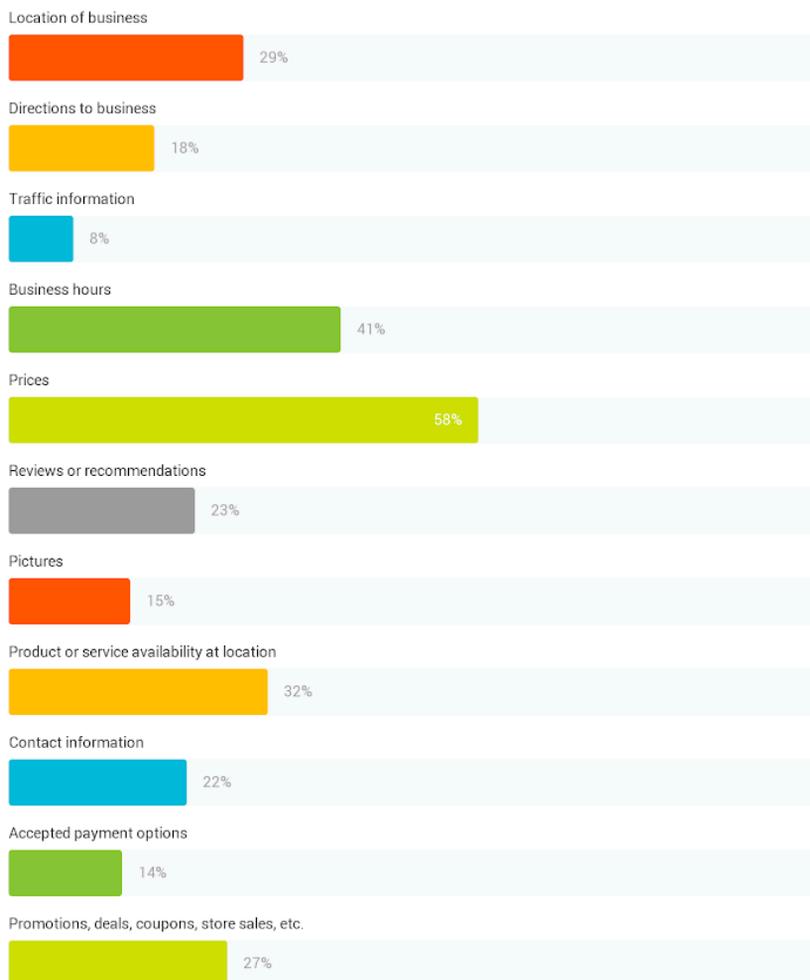
Ensure your website pages are ready for mobile use through these two handy tools from Google: [Mobile-Friendly Test](#) and [Test Your Mobile Speed](#)

Search engines give a lot of importance to the content of a website. Content helps search engines determine the theme and purpose of each web page (through keywords), correlate the page with the relevant queries, and use it as a factor in their rankings. For a query such as “jewelry shop in Dublin”, high quality content related to these keywords on a local page will increase the page’s chances of having a better ranking.

Businesses with multiple physical locations can leverage a local SEO strategy in order to appear in “product and/or service + location” results by creating a dedicated page for each location. Additionally, they can leverage a store locator with a set of structured pages that populate relevant results for each country, region and/or city along with the pages for each location.

The first step for brands and retail networks looking to improve their local search ranking is to determine the queries made by users and the relevant keywords they would like to rank for within the organic search results.

What type of local information did people look for?



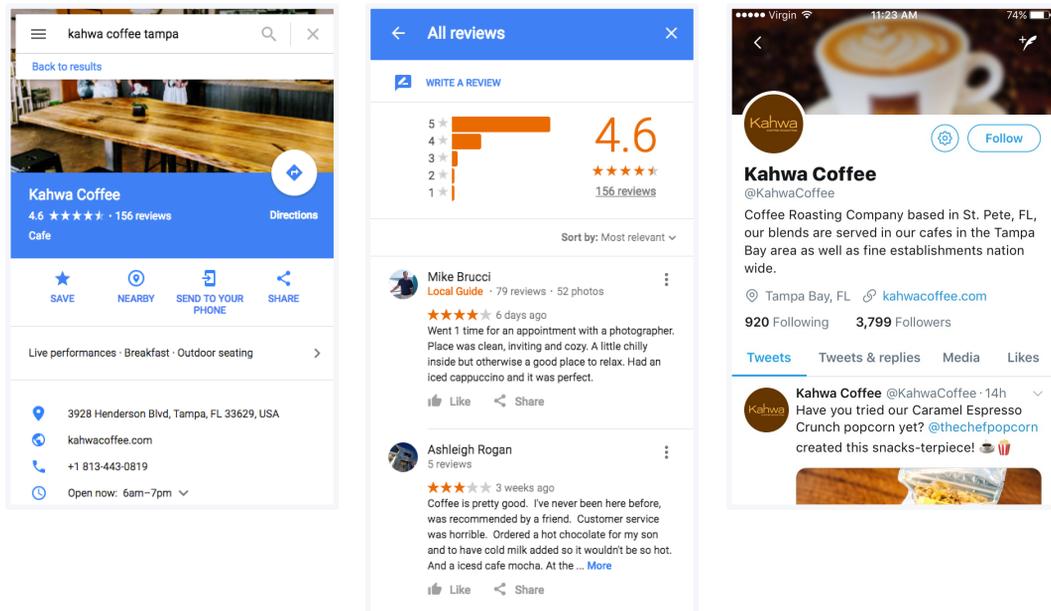
Google Consumer Barometer, 2015

### 3. Leveraging brand awareness

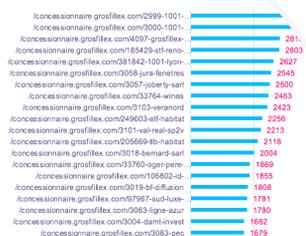
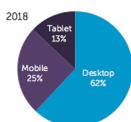
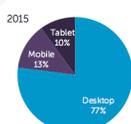
The next step to optimizing a brand with local points of sale is to develop its popularity. Prominence is a criteria of Google when it comes to search ranking, and well-known stores have better chances of ranking in Google local search results. Links that lead to a sale often come from online business listings (often referred to as citations), customer reviews websites, blogs, local publications, local organizations and social media.

Backlinks play a big part in helping search engines to determine the popularity of a company. The quantity and quality of inbound links are taken into account (strong and natural links are favored), as are the popularity of the referring domain, the content on the referring page and the anchor text of a link. Links that lead to a sale often come from business listing, customer reviews websites, blogs, local publications, local organizations and social media. Every mention of a brand online will have an impact on ranking as it implies popularity. It is worth noting, however, that negative mentions can negatively impact rankings as well as deterring potential customers, so it is important for brands to take care of their online reputation and to manage customer reviews.

Online business listings, reviews and social media help build awareness and reputation of a brand.



## Page Views & Devices



## Global Traffic



## 4. How to evaluate your local SEO strategy

Once you've kickstarted your local SEO strategy (your pages have been optimized with fresh, quality content; keywords, title tags, meta descriptions have all been updated; you've focused on building quality backlinks), there are certain metrics you can use to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the SEO strategy.

The ranking of your local pages in search results is a clear demonstration of the strategy's effectiveness. You should also analyze engagement by looking at page views, bounce rate, percentage of new vs returning customers, average session duration, top performing pages with regards to volume of traffic, and conversion rate.

It's also important to take into account the total number of clicks from search engines, the percentage of the organic search channel, the rankings of main keywords, the click through rate of each request and the number of clicks per page. You can use these metrics to alter your strategy accordingly.

Hours ▾

**A Tag Heuer**  
449 Oxford St · 020 7495 1451  
Open · Closes 8PM

**B TAG Heuer Boutique**  
Old Spitalfields Market, 53 Brushfield St · 020 7247 3090  
Closes soon · 7PM

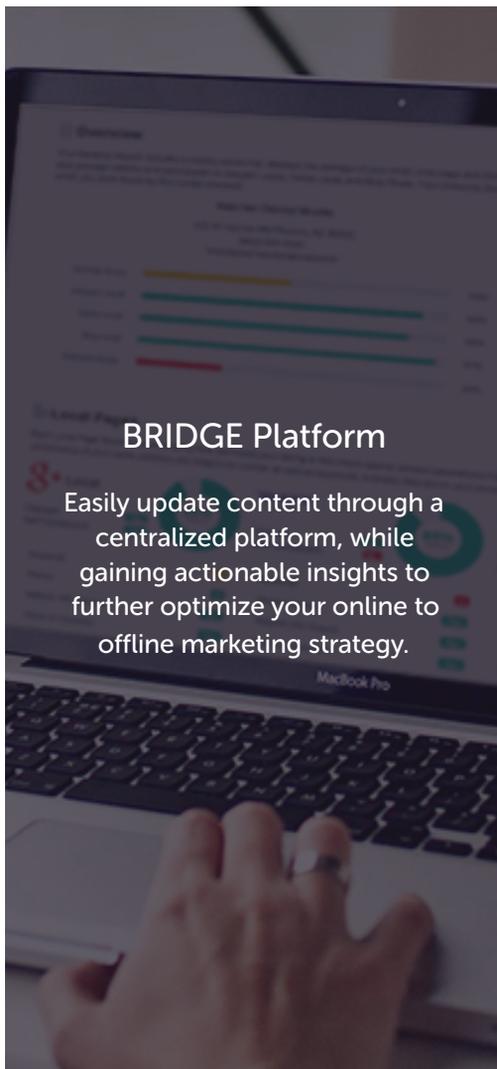
**TAG Heuer store London - Luxury watches in London - TAG Heuer ...**  
<https://store.tagheuer.com> › Locate a point of sale › England › Greater London ▾  
 TAG Heuer store in London. Renowned for its elegant sports watches, the brand puts its trust in TAG Heuer London Flagship Boutique to advise you on the choice of your prestige watch.

**Swiss watches - TAG Heuer UK Online Watch Store**  
<https://www.tagheuer.com/en-gb> ▾  
 PATROUILLE DES GLACIERS 2018: TAG HEUER ENGAGED IN THE RACE OF EXTREMES. TAG HEUER & THE 2018 VIRGIN MONEY LONDON MARATHON. 18 Apr 2018 ...

## 5. Conclusion

With the number of mobile searches increasing every year, the resurgence of online to offline conversions and an increase in local searches, leveraging local SEO has never been so important. By creating local pages and optimizing these to appear in local search results your business will see results in no time at all. Add to this a strategy to improve brand awareness and the chances of ranking highly in Google local search results will increase in no time. And remember that once your local SEO strategy is up and running, it's important to analyze the results to see how effective your strategy is, and to understand how you can improve on it.

Specializing the domain of online-to-offline marketing, BRIDGE by Leadformance helps retailers and chain stores develop the local internet traffic. Aware of the importance of qualified visitors, with conversion into physical stores, local SEO is one of the main component of our services. Our platform is comprised of the Store Locator, Local Pages and Online Listings.



### **BRIDGE Platform**

Easily update content through a centralized platform, while gaining actionable insights to further optimize your online to offline marketing strategy.

### **BRIDGE Store Locator**

Help customer find the right location by creating a seamless experience user experience on your website, mobile site or Facebook Page. Track user behaviour to learn more about your audience and identify opportunities to improve the customer journey.

### **BRIDGE Local Pages**

Connect customers to each and every one of your locations with dedicated pages for each location, city and region. Optimized for local SEO these pages allow you to build brand awareness in search results and create an engaging experience to convert visitors from online to offline.

### **BRIDGE Online Listings**

Acquire more local search traffic by driving more visitors to your website and stores through local search optimized business listings. Update listings across the leading search engines, maps, apps and GPS systems.

> [Contact us for more information](#)

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