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DFW Local Web Usage Study

A study to understand how Dallas/Fort Worth area residents find, interact with, and view local business websites.

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Abstract

Dallas/Fort Worth (Metroplex) consumers are constantly searching for local businesses to patronize by using Internet search engines. How are these searches carried out, what online venues are used the most, and what are these searchers looking for? These are all questions we sought answer by surveying local consumers. The answers we found might surprise you.

Methodology

100 adults that reside in Dallas/Fort Worth of varying gender and age were surveyed in a random sampling.

Margin of Error:	+/- 9.80%
Confidence Level:	95%
Survey Software:	SurveyMonkey.com
Respondent Selection:	Random intercepts via Internet websites and social media messaging

Summary

75% of the Metroplex population uses the Internet to find a local business on a frequent basis, at least once per week. 71% of these searches end up on the website of a local business. Most often, searchers get to these local business websites by way of searching on Google, by recommendation on Facebook, by local news websites, and by advertising on Google and Facebook.

With such a large volume of the Metroplex population visiting local business websites with a degree of frequency, local businesses need to provide the right experience to their users. 77.46% of the population reported that they would be sure not, or would not be likely, to use a business if they considered the website to be ugly. Only 22.54% of respondents reported that they would likely use a business with an ugly website.

Social media check-ins seem to be seen as positive signals from peers, because 40% of respondents said that, at least once per week - if not daily, when they see a friend check in at a local business they will look into that business by searching for it or visiting its website.

The results suggest that a company that fulfills all the information that a consumer looks for on a website should gain new market share, or keep market share in the face of competition, all things being equal. Our big takeaways from this are:

- Local businesses should update their website designs, professionally, at regular intervals to keep an aesthetically pleasing look, or they risk losing up to 77% of their business.
- Consumers equate website aesthetics to trust in the company and/or sanitary conditions.
- Address and phone number should be prominently placed on the home page in most cases.
- Posting positive customer reviews on your website should be considered.
- Businesses where consumers gather (shops, restaurants, and bars) should encourage check-ins via all social media formats to maximize exposure.
- Having a website that functions and appears well on smart phones and tablets is a high priority.

- Locally owned restaurants should not ignore online ordering if they offer to-go or delivery services.
- Facebook ads were reported nearly as often as Google's ads in their search engine as motivators to visit a business site, even though Google searches were cited nearly 4 times more often than Facebook searches.
- Live online chat widgets do not appear to be very important to consumers; neither does music playing on the website.
- Directions to a location or locations are deemed more important to consumers than video content, links to social media, or a blog.
- When searching for a business, consumers most often want your business site/information provided in the search engine and rank social media as a very low priority. So, if you're relying on Facebook as your website, at least have your business information claimed in Google, Bing, and Yahoo!

Frequency of Visiting Local Business Websites

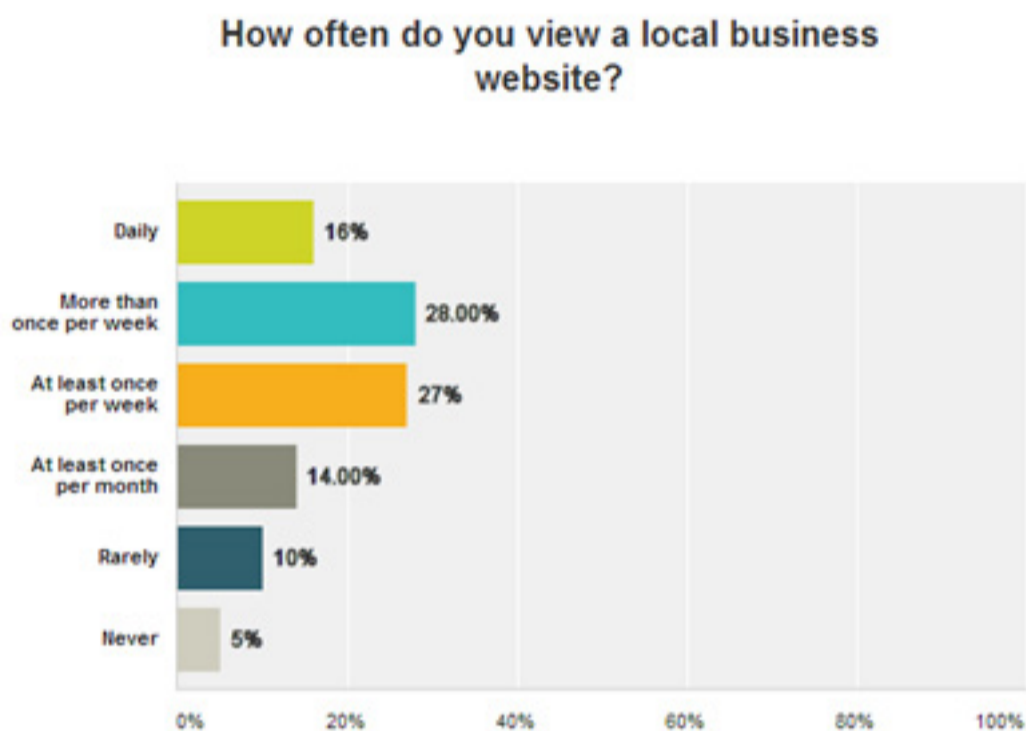## Q1: How often do you use the Internet to find a local business?

This question revealed that residents in DFW appear to use the Internet to search or look for a local business with a high degree of frequency. 75% reported using the Internet to find a local business at least once per week. This should make sense that a large majority of the population is constantly looking for information. The remaining 25% might use other sources such as printed listings or simply use the same local businesses frequently. However, this is only speculation at based on the amount of searching using online resources.

How often do you use the internet to find a local business?

Frequency	Percentage
Daily	25%
More than once per week	30%
At least once per week	20%
At least once per month	17%
Rarely	7.00%
Never	1%
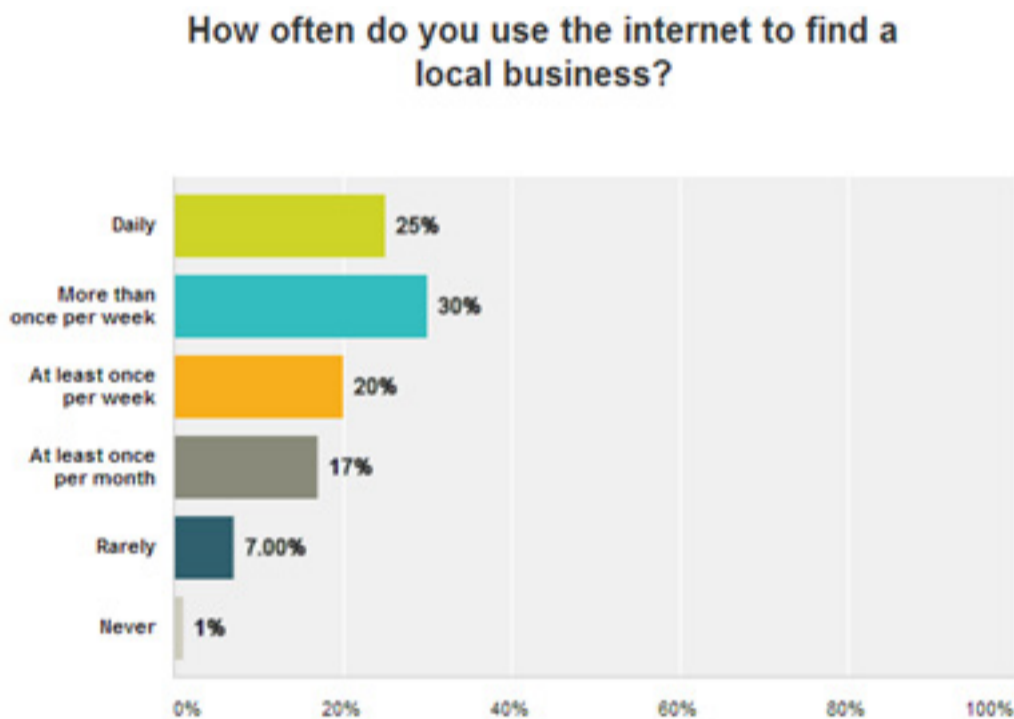
Q2: How often do you view a local business website?

This question was designed to see how frequently searches for a local business end up on a local business's website. When we look at the general population in the study, including those who 'rarely' use the Internet to find a local business, we find that 71% of searches for a local business end up on a website for that business at least once per week. When we exclude the population of those who rarely use the Internet to find a local business or do so only at least once a month, we see a major increase in that figure with 91.99% of residents who frequently look for a local business also frequently viewing the website of a local business.

This result is a bit surprising. A high degree of usage might have been expected, but if the searches were purely for contact information such as a phone number or for directions to a location, there would not be this high of a need to visit local business websites. This shows that at least those looking for a local business with a high frequency (75% of the DFW metro population) the query for a local business contains a much deeper need than what the social media site or search engine shows.

How often do you view a local business website?

Frequency	Percentage
Daily	16%
More than once per week	28.00%
At least once per week	27%
At least once per month	14.00%
Rarely	10%
Never	5%

Q3: What type of local business have you visited in the past 12 months? (choose all that apply)

Now it's time to see what types of local businesses get the most interaction on their websites. The goal here is to find out what types of companies DFW residents are looking for that end up in a website visit, and what types of companies might end up in a visit to another type of website such as a yellow pages site, aggregator, map site, or other form of local business website. The types of businesses that end up being the most likely to get website visitors are; Locally owned restaurant, Bar, Chain retail store, Clothing store, Locally owned retail store, Fast food restaurant, Grocery store, Medical, Salon or Barber. Locally owned restaurant was the most likely type of business to have a website visitor with 72% of the metro reporting having visited, a chain retail store was the second most likely with 60% of survey respondents citing a visit, and bars were third with 56%.

Some of the least likely to end with a website visit are; Locksmith (5%), Towing (6.%), Taxi (6%), Electrical (8%), Landscaping (8%), Construction / Remodeling (12%). These figures should not lead to the idea that these types of businesses do not need a website as they might relate closer to frequency of need rather than frequency of interest, i.e. we need to eat frequently (thus the highest volume) and hopefully we lock ourselves out of our cars with a very low frequency (thus the lowest volume).

This question also allowed respondents to enter an 'other' answer with Gyms, Tattoo Shops, Gold / Silver company, Massage Therapist, Foundation Repair (likely counted as Construction/Remodeling), Marketing, Printing, and Auto Parts all being mentioned as they were not in the initial list. It would take a follow up study to ascertain the volume of website usage for these types of businesses. One respondent used the field to write "If you don't have a web presence, you're dead to me".

Full List of Businesses

Type of Business	Percentage of Population
Locally Owned Restaurant	72%
Chain Retail Store (Walmart, etc..)	60%
Bar	56%
Clothing Store	55%
Chain Restaurant	50%
Locally Owned Retail Store	48%
Fast Food Restaurant	42%
Grocery Store	39%
Salon / Barber	36%
Medical	34%
Electronics Only Store	33%
Car Dealership	33%
Real Estate	32%
Video Game Store	24%
Florist	24%
Appliance Repair / Installation	14%
Cleaners	13%
Construction / Remodeling	12%
Landscaping	8%
Electrical	8%
Taxi	6%
Towing	6%
Locksmith	5%
Automotive / Tire Repair (other)	2%

Gym (other)	2%
Gold / Silver Shop (other)	1%
Tattoo Shop (other)	1%
Marketing (other)	1%
Mall (other)	1%
Dance Studio (other)	1%
Massage (other)	1%
Auto Parts (other)	1%

Q4: When it comes to a local business website how important are the following to you? Place them in order.

Here we designed a question to discover what it is that people searching for a local business and landing on a website really want. This question was designed to help guide both web developers and small businesses to build the best experience for your website visitors. There is often talk of terrible experiences on a local or small business website with incorrect information or difficult and/or non-existent information along with things added to the website that might annoy the potential customer visiting the site. When we asked what DFW residents really thought was important in a local business website the top 5 things that were requested were: Hours of Operation, Address, Phone Number, Ability to order online / request a quote, Easy to find Specials / Deals.

The least important things that could be on a local business website were: Provide a Customer Newsletter, Live Online Chat, A Blog on the Website, Videos Describing the Product, Links to the Businesses Social Media. Does this mean not to add these things? Well that is really subjective. You might have a business where things do not always work so well and live online chat makes sense, blogs really help in your marketing efforts and videos are often cited by consumers as being helpful. However, if you don't have the top 5 things down you might want to hold off on these extras and if they have the potential to break your website or annoy your users, make sure that you test them with an analytics testing tool.

Q5: When it comes to a local restaurant, how important are the following when it comes to their website?

We had heard a lot of complaints (and I've had my own) about restaurant websites and wanted to ask metroplex residents what it is they really expected in a website experience from a small, local restaurant. Given that 72% of the population reported visiting a locally owned restaurant in the past year, this

question takes on much more meaning. The top 5 things residents really want in a locally owned restaurant website are: Menu, Address, Prices of Each Food Item, Ability to Order Food Online (for delivery / to go), Drink Specials. Pictures of Each Food Item was the 6th most important thing listed. This should be telling, I am not familiar with too many local restaurants that offer online ordering nor are there many CMS systems or hosted solutions online to offer this. It appears that there is a decent gap in the expectations of area residents and in the experience provided by their locally owned restaurants, those who remedy this could stand to make substantial gains.

Q6: How likely are you to use a local business if you consider their website "ugly"?

Ugly might be a subjective term, but there appear to be clear enough lines that people would agree upon and while this study did not explore those, we did want to know how you would view a business with an ugly website. The answers were shocking. 22.54% reported that they would be "Likely" to use a local business after visiting their website if they considered the website ugly, ever scarier 0% reported as "Very Likely". Local business are not always know for the most aesthetically pleasing websites and this survey paints a remarkable picture of what kind of business they might be losing out on. 28.17% reported as "Not Likely" and 7.04% reported as "Not at All Likely" that means that 35% of DFW residents are UNLIKELY to use a business with an ugly website. 42.25% reported as "Not Sure", we could infer that as unsure of how they would react or that the decision would be dependent on other factors. Either way it shows a whopping 77.46% of people are at least unsure of your business if your website's look and feel is offensive to their visual senses. That's incredible.

Random respondents who reported as "Not Likely" or "Not at all Likely" were invited to give a reason as to why. Most often it appears equated with trust with an ugly website meaning that your work or place of business would be less that savory.

How likely are you to use a local business if you consider their website "ugly"?

Not at all Likely
7.04% (5)

Likely
22.54% (16)

Not Likely
28.17% (20)
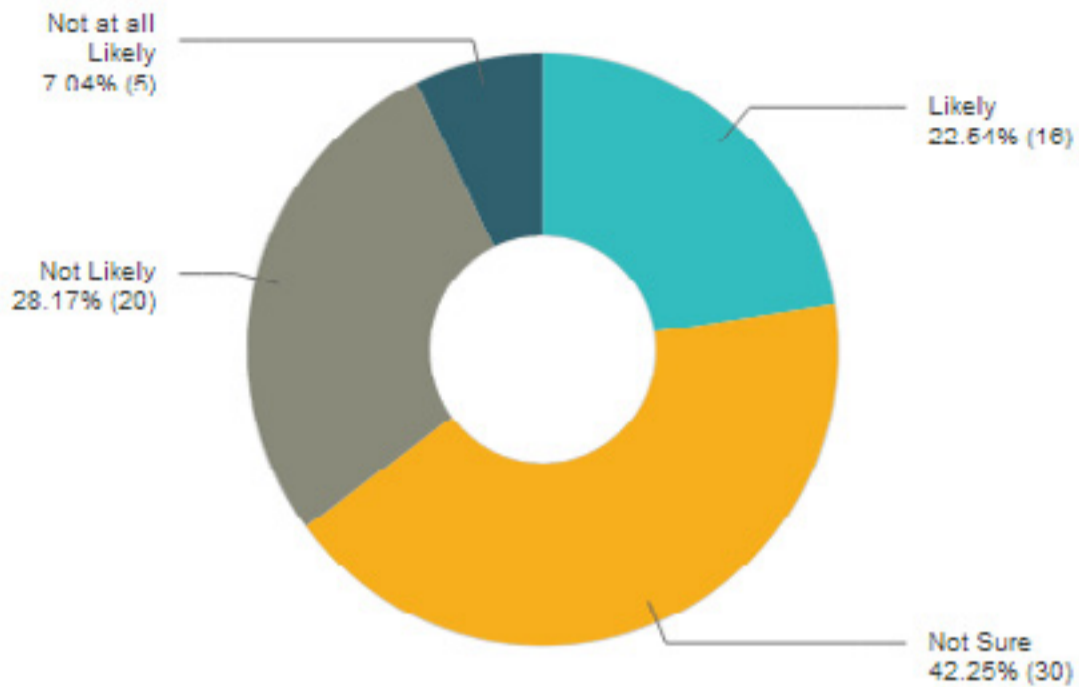
Not Sure
42.25% (30)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Not Sure	42.25%	
Not Likely	28.17%	
Likely	22.54%	
Not at all Likely	7.04%	
Very Likely	0%	

Q7: In the past year which of the following have you used to find a local business that you were not previously aware of?

Now that we know how often local businesses are sought out, at what rate of frequency certain types of businesses are sought out, what it is consumers want from a website and what is likely to happen with an ugly website, it's time to dig into the search process itself. This question is straight forward, we want to know how a local business you had never heard of before was found. The reasoning here is that we want to know if the prior data will be useful in helping expand a business's customer base. The question made sure to identify search engines from advertising, especially when the two might get confused. The most used methods were: Google Search (81.43%), Facebook Search (30%), News Website (i.e. Dallas Morning News, Star-Telegram) (28.57%), Google Ads (21.43%), Facebook Ads (20%), Twitter (18.57%). These results were fairly astounding,

especially in relation to the social media and local news website figures. Unless employees from these companies tainted the data, it would seem that local news websites are a good way to spread information about a local business. However, they still pale far far in comparison to Google's search engine.

Method	Responses
Google (search)	81.43%
Facebook (search)	30.00%
News Website (Dallas Morning News, Star-Telegram, D Magazine)	28.57%
Google (ads)	21.43%
Facebook (ads)	20.00%
Twitter	18.57%
Blog Website (such as Culture Map)	17.14%
Yahoo! (search)	15.71%
Bing (search)	15.71%
Craigslist	14.29%
Foursqure	12.86%
Pinterest	11.43%
Yahoo! (ads)	10.00%
Instagram	8.57%
YellowPages.com	8.57%
Bing (ads)	4.29%
SuperPages.com	4.29%
Other Search Engine (duck duck go, blekko, etc..)	2.86%
Angieslist	2.86%
Red Beacon	1.43%

Q8: In the past year how often have you performed a "check in" at a local business on a social media website such as Facebook or Foursquare?

In 2008 Foursquare made a splash at SXSW, an annual festival of digital media, music, and film in Austin Texas. Immediately after it seemed that checking in was the newest way to help promote your local business and for a few years after it capture headlines and local bars, restaurants and other businesses begin getting on board asking their customers to check in. As of 2013 however, the amount of chatter around check-in's for local marketing seems to have subsided, local venues don't appear to be making it much of a priority anymore. According to this it also doesn't appear to be something that consumers do on a frequent

basis with only 2.44% reporting that they perform a check in on a daily basis and 18.57% reporting that they do it more than once per week. 50% reported completing a check in at a local business either rarely or never.

In the past year how often have you performed a "check in" at a local business on a social media website such as Facebook or Foursquare?

Daily

More than once per week

At least once per week

At least once per month

Rarely

Never
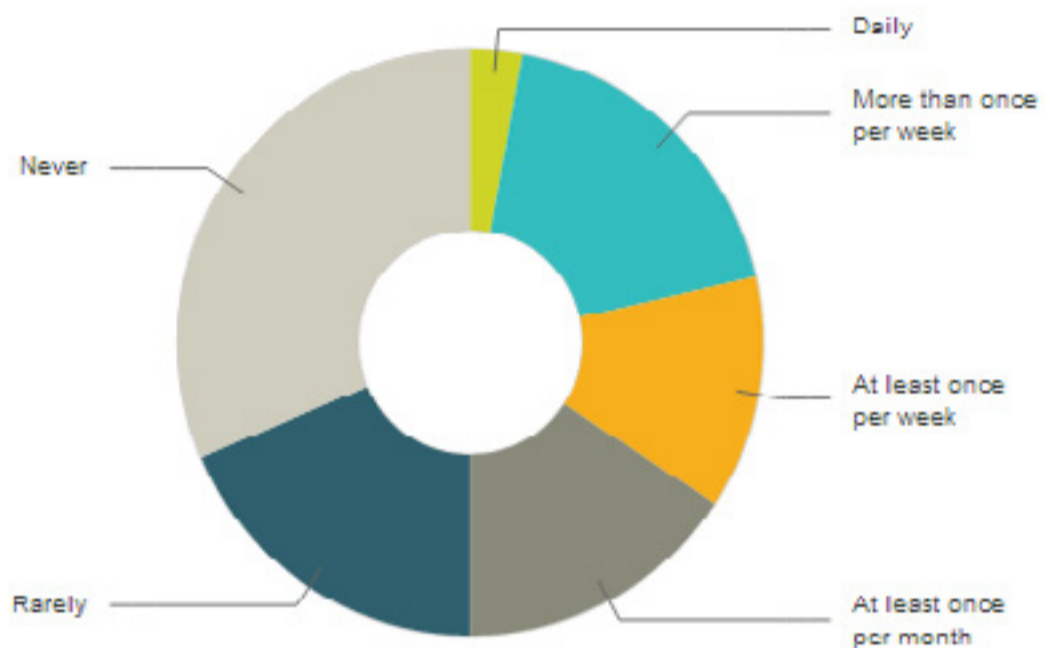
Q9: In the past year how often have you seen a friend "check in" at a local business on Facebook, Foursquare, or Twitter and then searched for that business online and/or visited their website or place of business?

The other side of the check in game is how these check in's get distributed via social media. Foursquare integrates with Twitter and Facebook promoting check ins through those social media outlets, Facebook has their own check in functionality as does business listing website Yelp. With the ability to check in to a location becoming more available how is this affecting the visibility of a business? That's what this question is design to discern.

72.86% of the Dallas – Fort Worth metro population reported seeing a friend check in to a local business and then looking into that business by searching for them or visiting their website or physical location at least once per month

with 40% reporting to do this at least more than once per week if not daily. Only 27.14% reported rarely or never doing this. We see here an almost inverse relationship between the amount of people actually checking in and those who view the check in as a sort of peer to peer recommendation. This data clearly shows that the minority of those who check in frequently seem to encourage the majority of those who are looking for a local business.

In the past year how often have you seen a friend "check in" at a local business on Facebook, Foursquare, or Twitter and then searched for that business online and/or visited their website or place of business?

Never — Daily

Rarely —

More than once a week

At least once per month — At least once per week
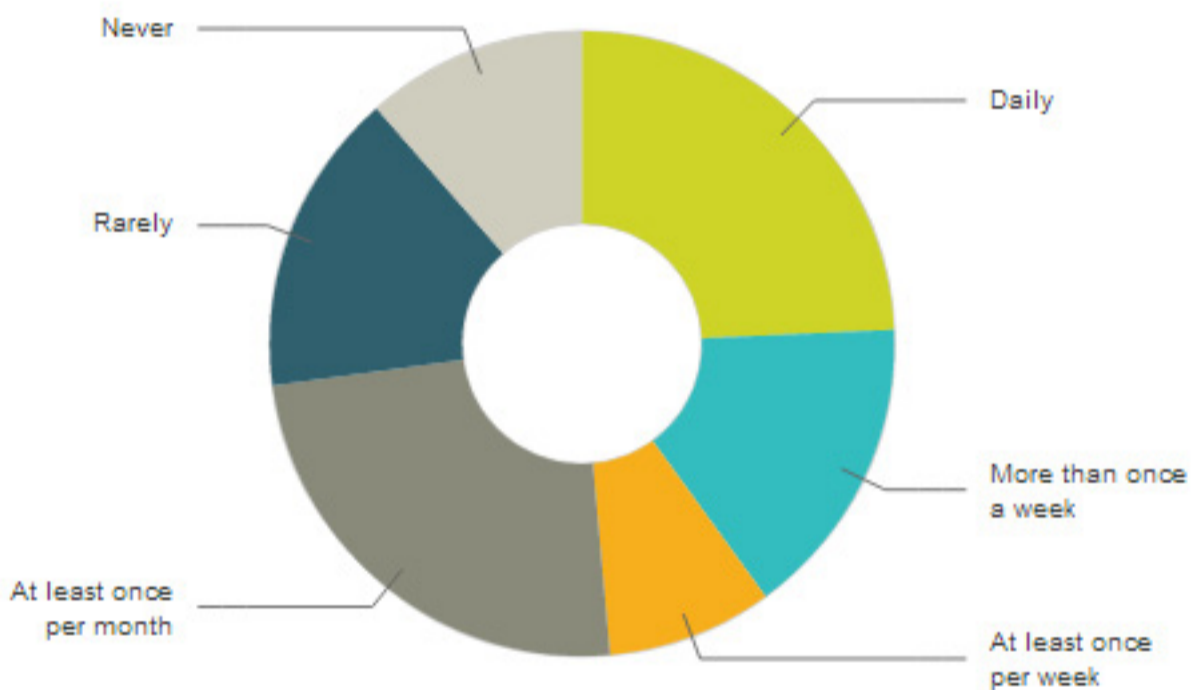
Q10: When searching for a local business online that you're not aware of (i.e. landscaper in Dallas) how important is it that the search engine shows the following? (rank in order)

The final question in our survey was aimed at seeing how well the major search engines perform when displaying results for a local business search. We wanted to see what it is that the consumer thought of as important when finding a business in their local area. The full list of items in order are: Phone Number,

Website Address, Prices of Products / Services, Links to Directions From Your Location, Customer Ratings of Products / Services, Only Businesses in Your Local Area, Ability to 'click to call' the business, Links to Other Pages on the Business Website, Images that match the search, Business Listings on Other Websites (Yellow Pages, Merchant Circle, etc..), Videos Matching the Search, Link to a Facebook Page, Link to a Google+ Page, Link to a Twitter Account, Link to an Instagram Account, Link to a Pinterest Account.