

New Study

NEW STUDY REVEALS HOW CONSUMERS CHOOSE LOCAL BUSINESSES IN 2020

We Asked 500+ Local Searchers What They Look for Online. Here's What We Found Out.

In this industry study, Ignite Visibility surveyed over 500 internet users to gain insight into how they're searching for local businesses, and what factors have the biggest impact on their decision to visit a local store.

Key Takeaways:

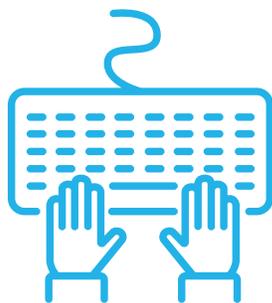
- Despite the rise in mobile usage, 59% of those surveyed still prefer to search for local information on a desktop.
- An overwhelming majority (81%) disclosed that they do not leave online reviews.
- But reviews remain incredibly important - 58% responded that a negative review would stop them from calling a local business, and the majority read between 1 and 3 before visiting.
- 89% of respondents do not check Glassdoor for reviews when considering a purchase from a local business, showing that their primary concern is a company's overall service, not employee opinions.
- Facebook's losing steam - a whopping 74% don't bother to check a local business's Facebook page before visiting.
- Traditional communication still wins out, with 61% preferring to call a business over any other form of communication, and 22% preferring email.
- In keeping with that, the overwhelming majority (74%) would prefer to call, email, or text as opposed to message a business directly through Google My Business.

Local Search Habits Study

Findings

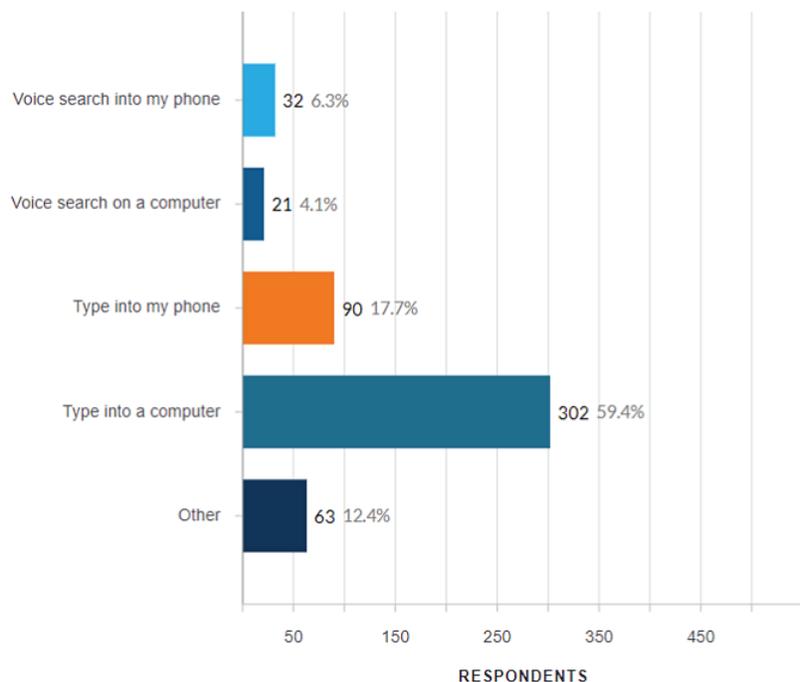
What is your favorite way to search for local businesses?

Of those surveyed, the **majority (59%)** reported that **typing into a computer was their favorite way to search** for a local business, followed by **17.9% who preferred to type a search into their phone**. Voice search by phone or computer were the least popular options, with 6% and 4% preferring it, respectively.



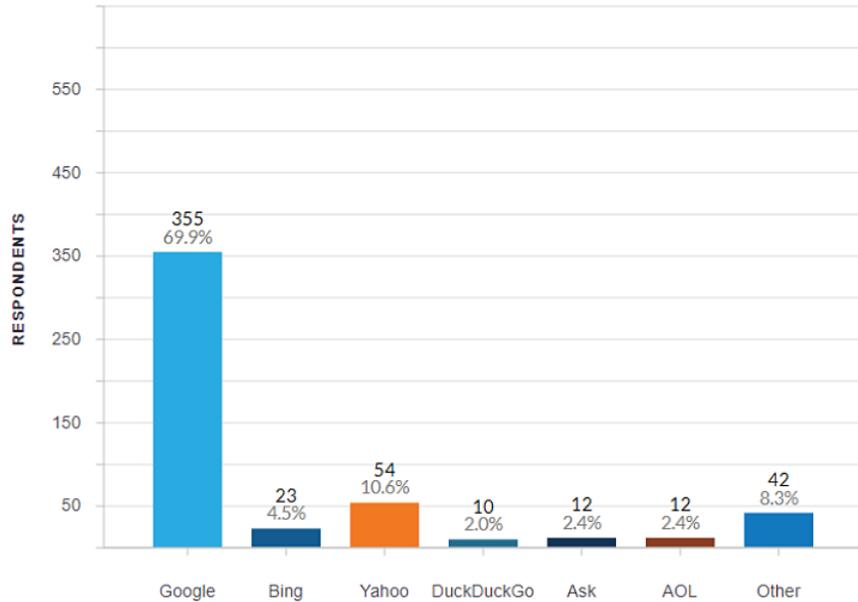
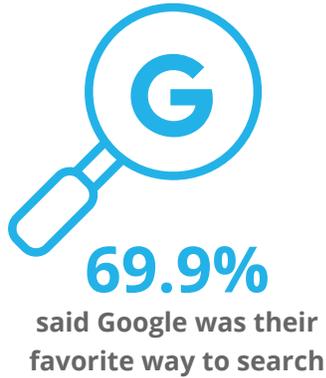
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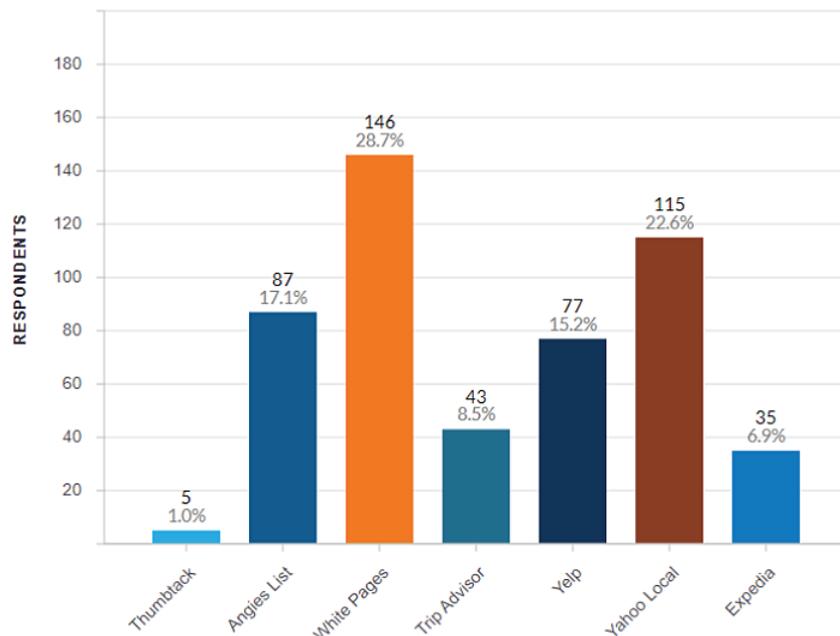
When you search for a local business, what search engine do you use?

When asked which search engine they're most likely to use, **the majority (69.9%) reported that Google was their favorite way to search for a local business**, followed by Yahoo (10.6%) and Bing (4.5). 10% selected "Other" as the search engine they're most likely to use.



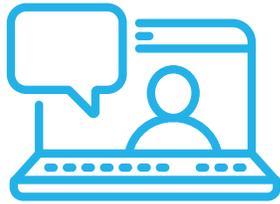
What app or website do you trust the most when reviewing local businesses?

White Pages was the app or website most trusted when reviewing local businesses, followed closely by Yahoo Local, Angie's List, and Yelp.

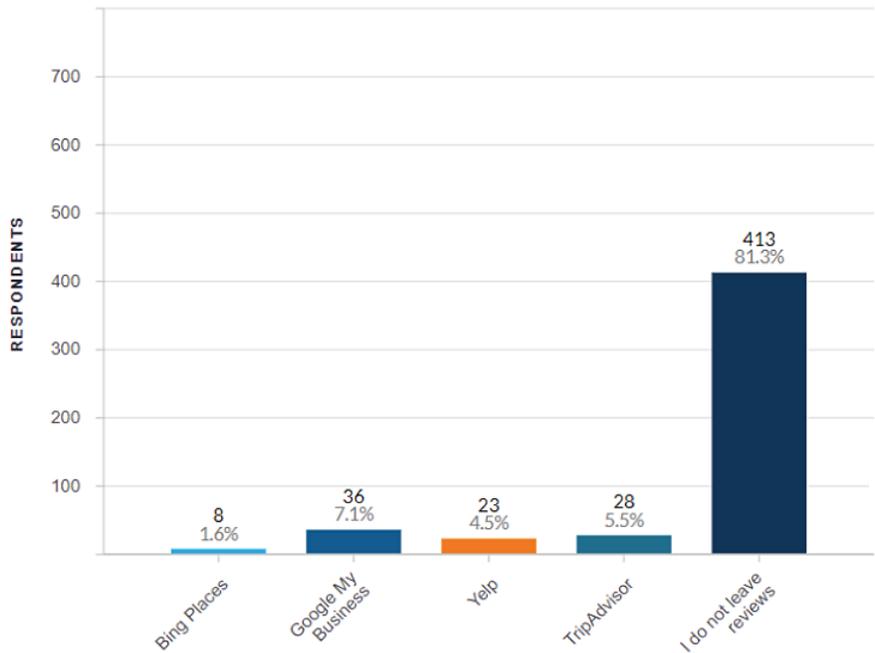


Where do you leave the most online reviews?

An overwhelming majority reported that they did not leave reviews online (81.3%). Of those that did, most left reviews on Google My Business (7.5%), followed by TripAdvisor (5.5%), and Yelp (4.5%)

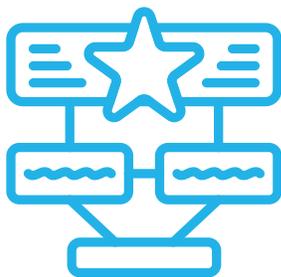


81.3%
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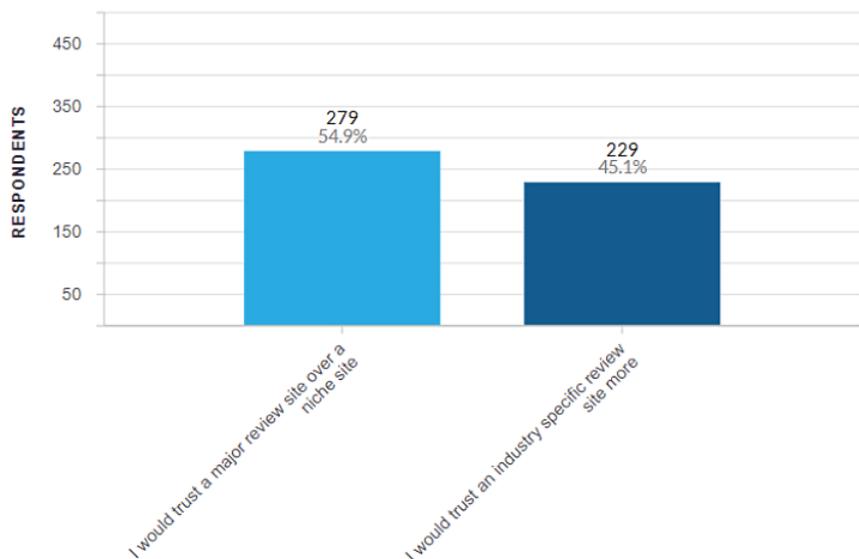


When looking for a local business, do you trust a niche and industry-specific review site or a major review site more?

Most reported that they would trust a major review site over an industry or niche site when looking at a local business.



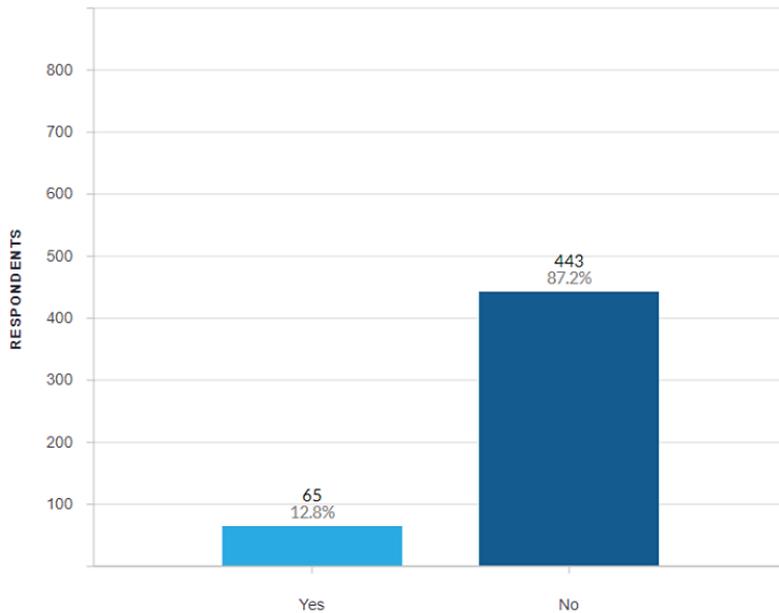
trust a
**MAJOR
REVIEW SITE**



When considering purchasing from a local business, do you read their reviews on Glassdoor?

The vast majority (87%) do not read Glassdoor reviews before purchasing from a local business.

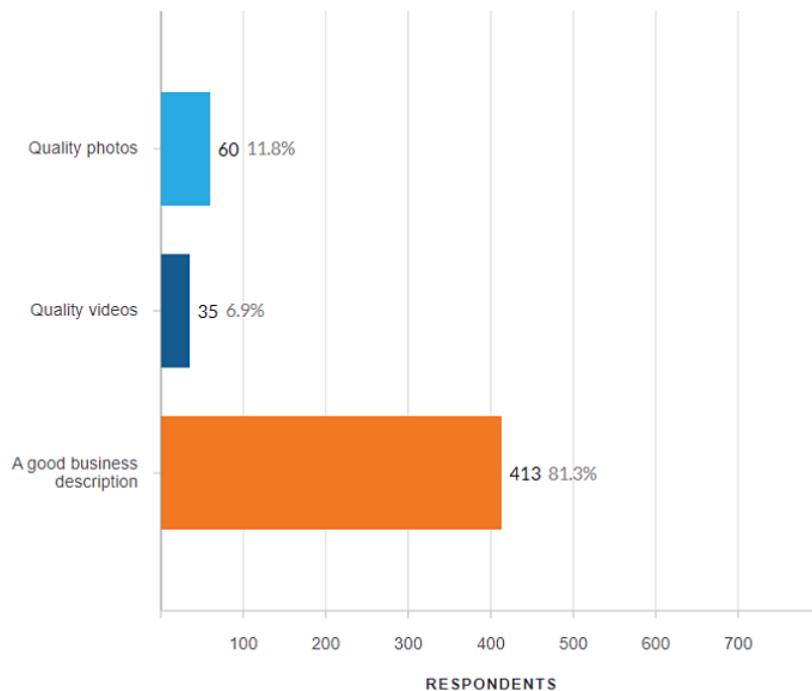
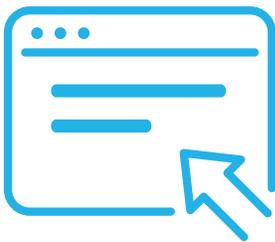
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What is the most important element to you on a Google My Business Profile outside of reviews?

81.3% responded that **outside of reviews**, the most important element on a **brand's Google My Business** page is a **good business description**, followed by quality photos (11.8%) and quality videos (6.9%).

81.3%
said a good business
description

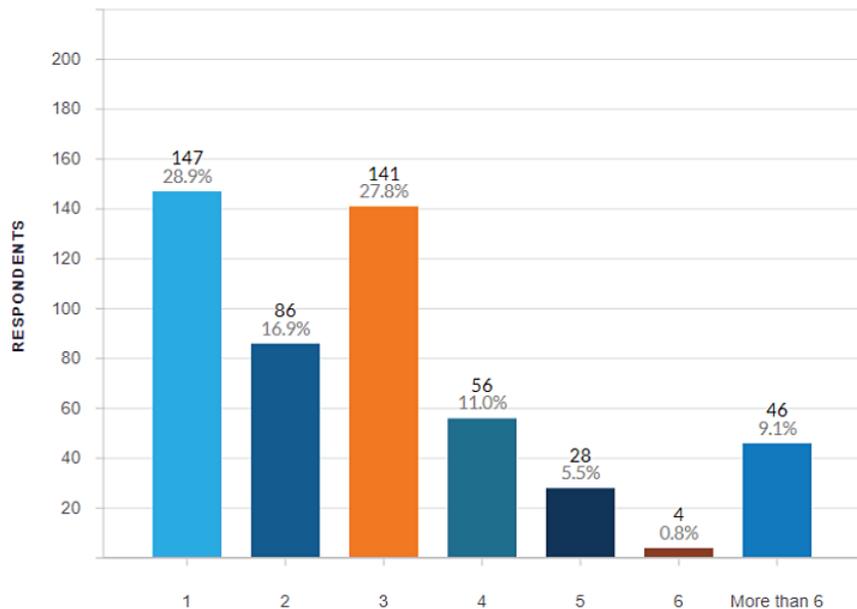


How many review sites do you look at before selecting a business?

Most responded that they look at just 1 (28.9%) or 3 (27.8%) review sites before selecting a business. 16.9% look at 2, 11% look at 4, and 9.1% look at 6 or more.



28.9%
responded that they
look at just 1 site

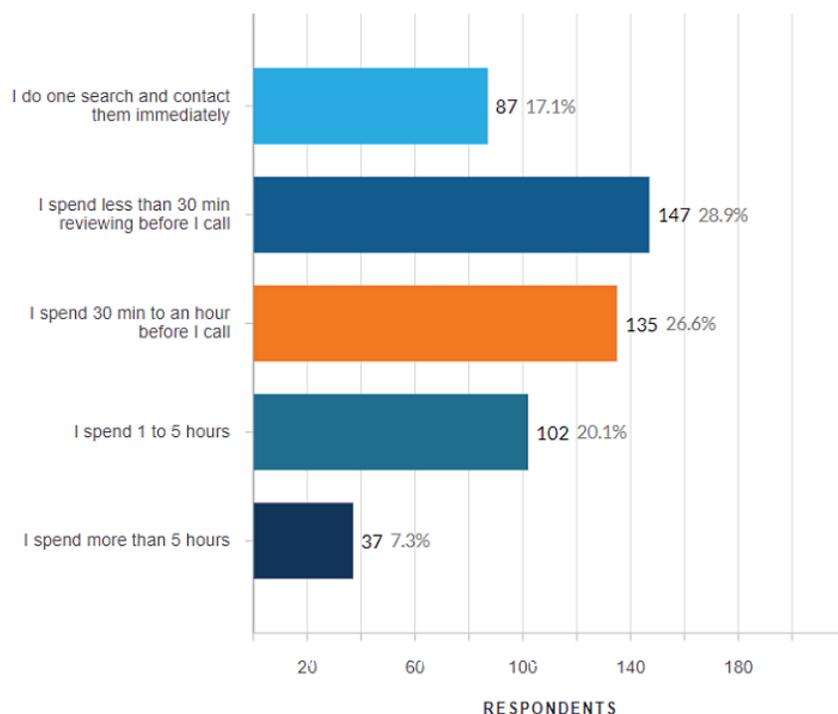


How long do you spend reviewing and considering local businesses online before contacting them?

Most (28.9%) spend less than 30 minutes researching a local business before they call, followed closely by those who spend 30 minutes - 1 hour (26.6%). 20% spend 1-5 hours reviewing, and 7% spend more than 5 hours. Surprisingly, 17.1% spend no time reviewing; they simply perform one search and called.



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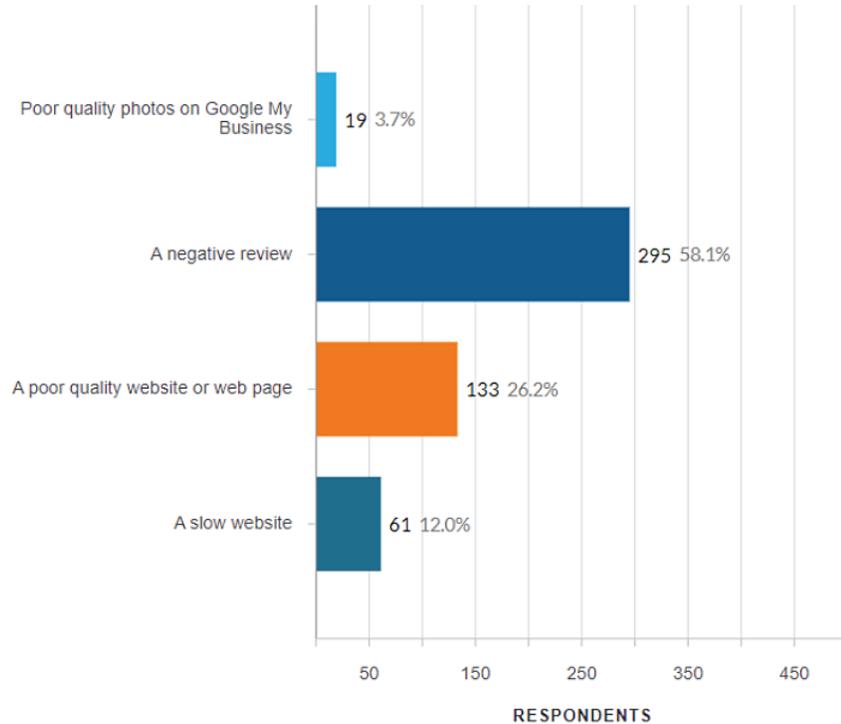


What is the number one factor that stops you from contacting a local business?

58.1% reported that a negative review is most likely to stop them from calling a local business, while 26% claimed a poor quality website or webpage was the deciding factor. 12% would not call a business due to a slow website, and 4% would not call due to poor quality photos on Google My Business.

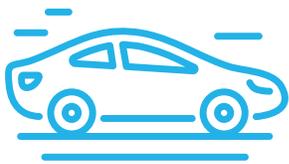


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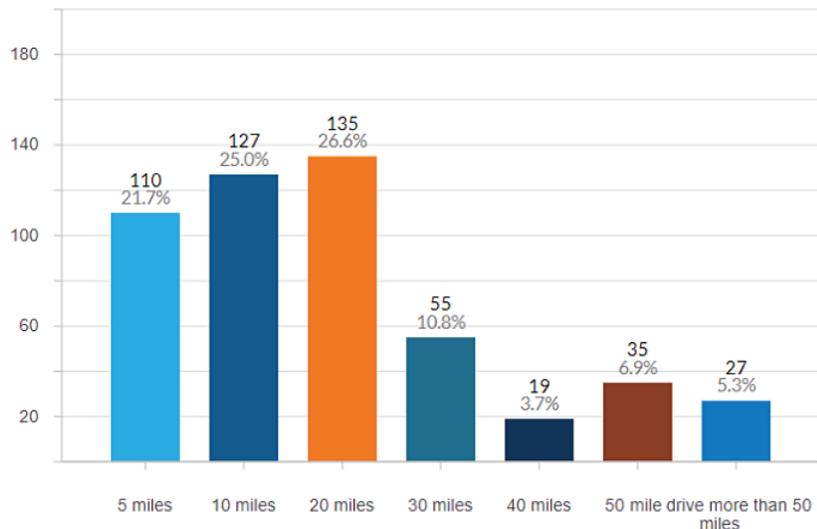


What is the furthest you will drive to visit a local business?

Most would be willing to drive up to **20 miles to visit a local business.**



20 MILES
to visit a local business

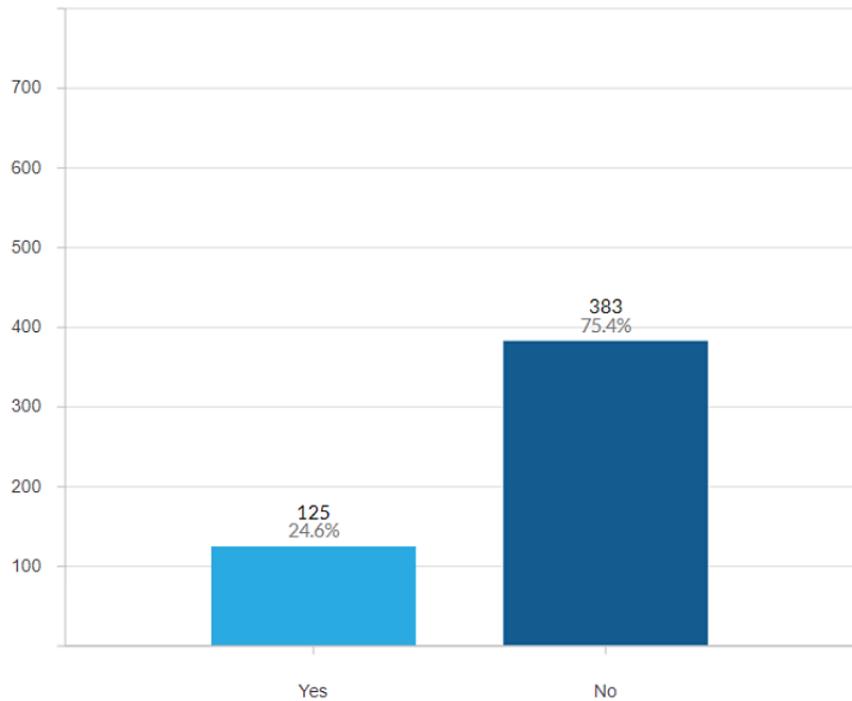


Do you review a local business's Facebook page before your visit?

The overwhelming majority (75%) do not visit a local business's Facebook page.

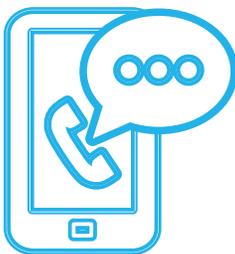


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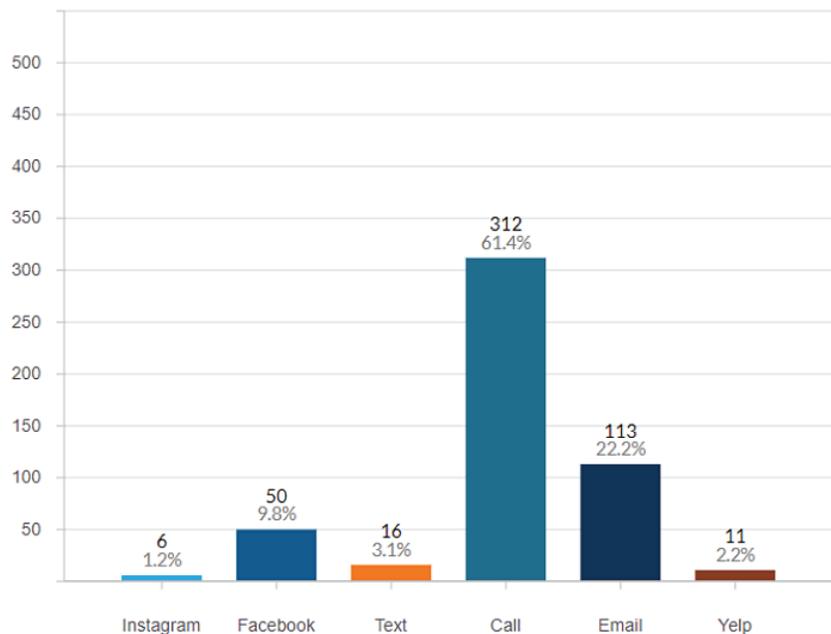


When you reach out to a local business, what method do you prefer the most?

Most (61%) prefer to call a local business, while 22% prefer email, 10% prefer communication through Facebook, 3% prefer to text, and just 2% and 1% prefer to communicate through Yelp or Instagram, respectively.



61%
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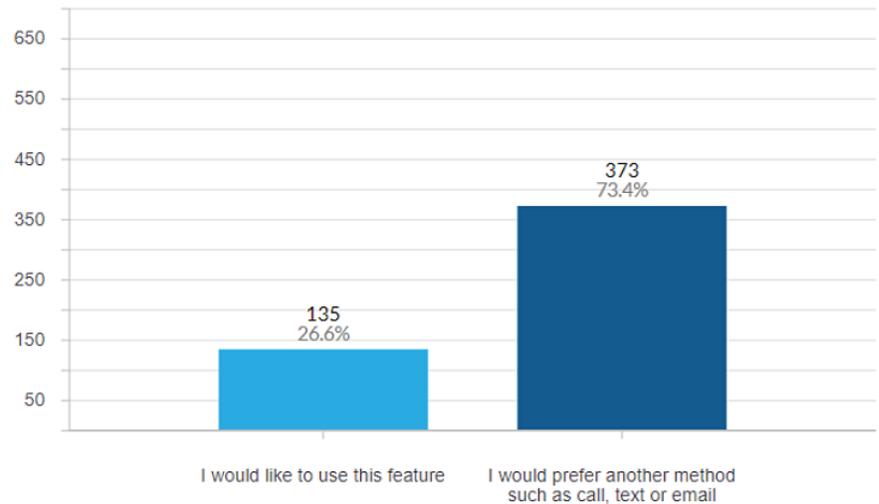


Google has made it possible to message a business directly through Google My Business. Would you be open to using this new feature or would you prefer another method?

Surprisingly, when asked if they would message a business directly through Google My Business, **73%** said they would prefer another method such as call, text, or email.



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Summary of Findings:

Summary

A digital presence is definitely necessary in today's marketing strategy, but traditional means of communication still hold strong.

Some answers were unsurprising; yes, reviews matter. And yes, a high-quality website is crucial to bringing customers in the door.

Others, however, we didn't quite see coming.

For example, even with the rise of Yelp, TripAdvisor, and a myriad of other local review sites, many still rely on old standbys like Yahoo when it comes to finding information on local businesses - which emphasizes just how important it is to make sure you've claimed and updated your listings across the board, not just doubled-down on Google My Business.

Also surprising is that despite the rise of visual media and AI-powered communication, most still look to the basics when researching a business. Desktop searches still outperform mobile when it comes to local, so make sure you're accounting for design and user experiences across all devices.

When it comes down to actually purchasing big-ticket items from a business, people still love desktop and that is probably going to take a long time to change.

Similarly, a business's description carries more weight than quality photos and videos. And to top it off, most users aren't turning to chatbots or text communication; they still prefer a phone call or email over newer communication methods.

This is, when you think about it, good news. It means that people still want to connect to actual people, not bots, and that though other people's opinions via reviews do matter, you still have control over the experience through a solid description and online presence. While we all like the idea and ease of appointment booking automation, don't underestimate the effect of a friendly, knowledgeable service rep. And, despite the importance placed on positive reviews, it appears that most people do not want to tarnish a business's reputation or take the time to build them up. If a business wants reviews, it really needs to have a review generation strategy in place.

As far as social media, Facebook is not the place people where most turn for local information. Although they have a similar profile to a channel like Yelp, it lacks the same level of moderation from the site and trust from the consumer. That may change over time, but right now the 74% margin that don't rely on Facebook for local information signifies a very large part of the customer pool. When it comes to Glassdoor, we are seeing that customers don't check the site. This shows that searcher's primary concern isn't what employees think about the company. Rather, they care more about the service. This is good news for business owners who may have accrued some bad reviews on the platform. However, businesses that considered employee reviews a substantial means for customer acquisition may need to rethink their strategy.

Overall, the study shows that local consumers:

- **Still love the computer**
- **Use Google as their primary search engine**
- **Leave most of their reviews on Google and Yelp**
- **Trust major review sites more than niche**
- **Don't care much about Glassdoor**
- **Care deeply about a good business description on Google**
- **Check multiple review sites before making a purchase**

Consumers want to be able to verify a business is doing great work in multiple areas and contact them however they want. Often, that means traditional phone or email, not through AI and bots. Business owners should invest the most in Yelp and Google and make sure their websites still look polished on desktop.

