



REGIONAL INSIGHTS:

Why Marketers Should Care About "Where"

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THE **RUNDOWN**

According to Google research, four in five people use search to find local information. Collectively, these searches provide a view into consumer interest and intent in a given place. Today, we can use that intent to offer the most relevant ads, but that's only half the picture. Location data can also provide rich consumer insights that inform strategy from the start, before there's even an ad to distribute. That's because *where* people are actually says a lot about *what they might be looking for*—their mind-sets, intentions and concerns. Here are four ways you can use location to learn more about your consumers.

think with **Google**



Waiting for the subway in New York's Times Square, you'll see posters for *The Lion King* on Broadway. Driving into San Francisco, you'll pass a billboard for local icon IT'S-IT ice cream. Leafing through *The Washington Post*, you might spot an ad for a Capitals game. This is location-based marketing, and it's been around in some form or another since ads have existed. Like real estate brokers, marketers have long known that location is everything. And as consumers, we appreciate knowing what's nearby. In fact, four in five people use search to find local information, according to [Google research](#).

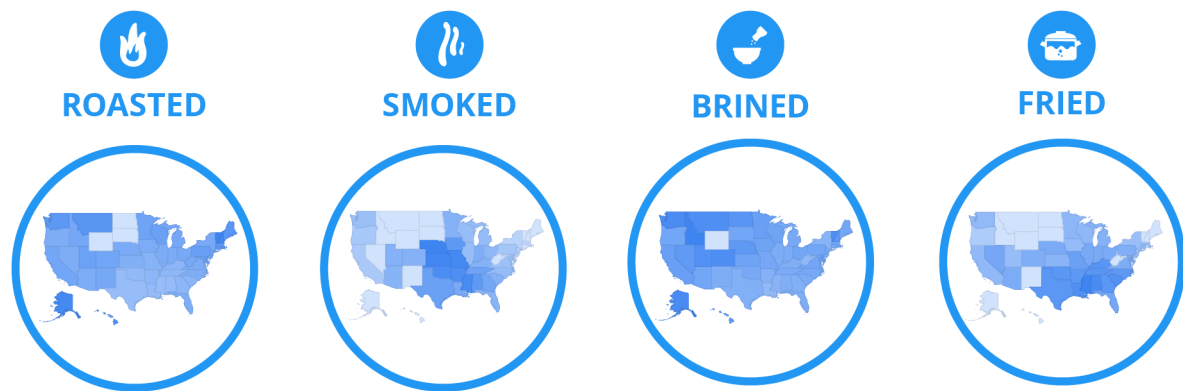
"Search data moves at the speed of culture."

All these searches are like paint strokes, creating a bigger picture of consumer interest and intent in a given place. We can use that intent to reach these consumers with just the right ad. If someone searches for "coffee maker," we can even point out a store that has it in stock nearby. But there's another way we can use location—a way many marketers don't think about. Location data can inform our strategy from the very start, before there's even an ad to distribute. That's because environments are a powerful shaping force. *Where* someone is actually says a lot about *how* they talk and *what* they care about.

Think geographic, not just demographic

Take turkeys. This Thanksgiving, Americans will prepare their birds in a variety of ways. Brining is increasingly popular across the country, but especially so in Seattle and Denver. Meanwhile frying reigns in the Deep South, smoking in the Midwest (think BBQ) and roasting in New England and Hawaii. This isn't something you'd necessarily see by surveying suburban women aged 25–34 about their Thanksgiving menu plans. It's a simple example, but it has clear and immediate takeaways. If you're a marketer in the Food and Beverage or Restaurant category, you're already thinking about regional promotions and events, even special local menus at restaurant chains.

Regional Interest in Turkey Preparation Methods



Source: Google Data, January 2011–October 2014, Indexed Search Query Volume, United States.

Beyond what people do, location data can uncover what people care about—and how that differs by region. A map of the top rising searches around [tax season](#) this year is rather striking. We saw that searches for “refund” were more prominent in the South, whereas searches for “extension” are popular on the coasts. And in New York and California, the top refund-related searches were for purchases, especially televisions and vacations. This wasn’t true elsewhere in the country, where “invest” was most popular. For marketers in auto, tech, retail and travel, this might suggest where to invest media dollars come Tax Day.

Location data also speaks to the collective mind-set and intentions of consumers in the various areas. As planners know, this kind of information traditionally requires cost and time-consuming studies to collect. And by the time you get it, the research might be dated. Search data, on the other hand, moves at the speed of culture.

Spot a needle in a haystack

Because of factors such as culture and climate, people who live in the same area often have the same concerns. Look at searches about hair. We all have it (or used to), but the questions we have about it vary based on where we live. “How to tame frizzy hair” is a top hair-related question that Americans have asked Google this year. This is a decidedly warm-weather issue. During the [winter](#), most searches take place in Florida and California. But in the [summertime](#), New Jersey and Pennsylvania top the list. In the South, people are more concerned about [flat hair](#).

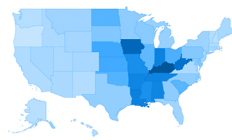
Meanwhile, if we look at [dry hair](#), another top concern, we see much greater concentration in the Northeast. Using Google Correlate, which shows what else people search for in those

same areas, we see [moroccan argan oil](#) and [sulfate free shampoo](#) pop up. Both of these products are dry hair treatments that have grown in popularity for the last few years. Knowing this might inform our positioning (no sulfates!) or new product development (is moroccan argan oil the next coconut oil?). Search trends data can be quite powerful. Google Correlate can also show how searches differ by a [state's latitude, being in New England](#) or [annual rainfall in the state](#). What you discover might back up your hypotheses or provide clues for further research.

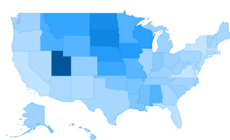
Shape your creative with location insights

Location can also inform creative executions. Say “bathing suit” to someone in Iowa, and you might get a puzzled look (a suit to take a bath?). People there are much more likely to search for a “swimsuit.” “Swim trunks” are popular among Midwesterners, while “board shorts” appeal to Hawaiians (and particularly hip Utahns). Essentially, these are all the same product, but how people refer to them varies by region. Looking at the maps below, you can see the potential implications of how you’d craft your copy.

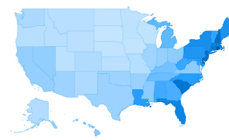
Regional Search Interest for Swimwear



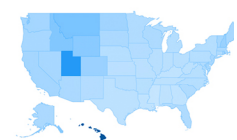
Swim Trunks



Swimsuit



Bathing Suit



Board Shorts

Source: Google Data, January 2011–October 2014, Indexed Search Query Volume, United States.

Simply looking at where a brand is popular can spark creative ideas. In the Union Square subway station, Poland Spring has a [series of ads](#) thanking New Yorkers for making it the “#1 beverage brand in the city.” The creative is designed to appeal to a New York audience only. A recent campaign for YouTube took this concept a step further, delivering hyper-relevant mobile creative based on someone’s location. For example, if you were in a high-density commuter area, you might see an ad that asked, “Did you know that motion sickness is incurable?” with a prompt to watch a [SciShow](#) video that answers that question. YouTube found that people were 53% more likely to engage with locally relevant creative when it was hyper-targeted than with the same ad without hyper-targeting. YouTube used this strategy with over 30 similar questions to turn people’s daily commutes into relevant educational experiences.

McCormick had an “aha moment” when it looked at data around recipe searches. “We saw that the popularity of certain recipes varied greatly by region,” explains Jennifer LaFrance, director of digital communications at McCormick & Company. Some findings have been fairly obvious (Cuban food was popular near Miami), while others have been surprising (mountain regions tend to overindex on chicken recipes). Now, McCormick is making geographical segmentation a core part of its 2015 strategy. “We’re paying attention to these trends and trying to figure out how to not only create content that has a geographic skew but also serve it up in a more contextually relevant, personalized way.”

Uncover demand for your brand

Brands that use location data to be smarter about their creative and their spend are winning customers and awards. [Kleenex](#) and its agency Mindshare used a particularly clever approach: To figure out where people needed tissues the most, they wanted to see where flu was breaking out. To do this, they ran a paid search campaign that identified where people were most often searching for terms related to cold and flu symptoms. They then focused their media on consumers in those areas “at the first sign of a sneeze or a sniffle.” The approach enabled Kleenex to target 96% of its media investment in real time to areas with the flu, growing sales by 40% year-on-year and winning a Gold Lion in Media in Cannes.

StubHub took a similar approach when it entered the U.K. market. Location data backed up its thinking—that London and Manchester made up the bulk of ticket sales. So, it devised an aggressive approach to capturing search traffic in these cities using location bid modifiers, scoring top-positioned search ads for many local events. “Understanding our audience allows us to promote events that will be easily accessible to them,” says StubHub’s Hannah Ayhan. The company has seen some impressive results: Within just three months, StubHub’s brand awareness in London doubled.

Four reasons you should care about “where”

What makes a great ad today? Cleverness? Creativity? Emotion? I’d argue that today we should add relevance to that list. If you’re actually talking about something people care about, they’ll sit up and pay attention. The key to relevance is consumer insights—knowing their intents, interests and mind-set.

Here are four ways you can use location to learn more about your consumers:

1. THINK GEOGRAPHIC, NOT JUST DEMOGRAPHIC

Location is not the only factor that shapes our needs or language as consumers, clearly, but it's a big one that we tend to overlook. At times, location might even be a more reliable way to view an audience—their mind-sets, intentions and concerns—than demographics. By looking at Trends data by region, you can spot differences and uncover new opportunities.

2. SPOT A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

Using Trends and Correlate, you can see what else people search for in a given area. This could tip you off to related interests or concerns to then explore further. It could also inspire new product ideas or change how you position an existing product.

3. GET CREATIVE WITH LOCATION

Based on how people search in a particular place, you can nuance how you go to market there. That might mean talking about “swimsuits” in Iowa and “bathing suits” in New Jersey or pitting smoking against frying in a turkey cook-off for Thanksgiving. Think about potential variants and explore the data to see what bears out. Plug your brand, category or product name into Google Trends to see where the most searches come from. Simply looking at where your brand is popular can spark creative ideas.

4. UNCOVER DEMAND FOR YOUR BRAND

If you know where demand will be for your product, you can be smarter about your media spend. Take a cue from Kleenex and look for new potential audiences based on search trends. Plan your spend accordingly and adapt it as shifts happen in real time.



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