



## Is Social Going Mobile?

By Brian Wool, vice president of content distribution, Localeze

Recently, I purchased a new car that came equipped with an in-car navigation system. With the exception of a few car rental experiences, I had never owned, much less heavily used this type of product. I thought the mapping features of the device were very good and provided a lot of utilitarian value for car trips to uncertain places. My primary interest, however – given my line of work – was to test the navigation system’s search prowess.

I suspect that the demographic of people willing to spend \$1,000 or more for an in-car navigation system fall into the category of “technologically savvy” consumers, and like me, would expect a fair amount of search content for their buck. I am specifically referring to the ability to find local businesses and various points of interest. Unfortunately, I found that my new car’s navigation system fell squarely on the inadequate side and the type of local content available and the ability to access it were limited.

In all fairness, it’s possible that the traditional in-car navigation system manufacturers consider their products to be more utilitarian mapping tools than local search portals. However, knowing first-hand that consumers’ preferences for products and using various online search products can quickly change, I think we will see in the near future these traditional manufacturers teaming up with data providers in an effort to tap more deeply into the local search market.

Typically, one wouldn’t compare an in-car navigation device to an online local search engine or Facebook, but last week a device called the Dash Express was introduced to the market, which can aggregate all three interactive experiences to a single interface.

In addition to the features of a traditional navigation device and the ability for consumers to access content through various local search products (namely Yahoo! Local), Dash also offers a social aspect. Dash collects information from its users traveling on the same road or highway, uses the data to identify pockets of traffic or congestion, and then relays an alert to other users traveling in the same direction—allowing them to proactively avoid a potential headache by selecting another route. As more people join the Dash community, a better driver and search community will exist. Drivers can even access destination lists created by communities on “Web 2.0 mashup” sites.

In another ClickZ article I wrote last year, I pointed to several potential areas of exposure that brick-and-mortar businesses would have to consider to achieve digital visibility, making them most relevant to how and where their customers search. The Dash is a solid example of how devices can impact and influence consumer spending in local markets.

I've seen a host of new companies recently promising to deliver brick-and-mortar business listings to various search engines and/or Internet Yellow Pages. There's no doubt that this is a very important part of doing business, but in a quickly changing marketplace where consumers have hundreds of touch points to refer to when making decisions on businesses, many of these new companies are missing an important piece of the puzzle that the Dash Express represents.

As this niche and others in local search continue to develop, selecting a provider that can distribute your local business listings to larger portions of the marketplace will become more and more important. Proactively establishing the relationships with new content points and manufacturers is a must to reach the ever-elusive and demanding online and off-line consumer.