

## Brummies splash out, eat out and drink out to combat January blues

Trends for 2008 revealed in touchlocal.com Index

Detox, quitting smoking and gym memberships traditionally chime with the start of a New Year. However, an audit of online searches and recommendations on touchlocal.com, the UK's fastest growing local business search and social practical networking website, has revealed that these activities have totalled a meagre 0.35% of national lifestyle searches in the first two weeks of 2008.

Brummies are taking a novel approach to January blues by splashing out on restaurants and drinking. 1 in 3 touchlocal.com users in Birmingham are searching for local restaurants, takeaway joints, pubs and off licences. Fitness, on the other hand, is not highest on the Birmingham folk's agenda, with only 10% seeking out gyms and fitness tips.

A mass exodus from the second city of the UK could follow January's party continuation as Brummies show their discontent online, with over a quarter of users searching for a new career, new house and a holiday.

The touchlocal.com Index also reveals the following exciting national trends which look set to emerge in 2008. From a new national dish to trends within charity, 2008 starts here:

- **From Vindaloo to Bolognese** – no more is Vindaloo the undisputed national dish of Britain. Italian cuisine has replaced the hot favourite as the nation's number one restaurant choice. The number of unique users searching for Italian restaurants totalled 13.0% to pip Indian (11.6%) and Chinese (11.2%) into the runner-up spots. Even in the takeaway stakes Indian fare plummeted with Chinese takeaways claiming 34.0% of searches.  
**touchlocal.com prediction: a move away from established cuisine to more adventurous tastes in line with international travelling habits, as we are already noticing new searches for Colombian, Nepalese and African cuisine. A secondary trend is for Polish and Eastern European restaurants in line with migration patterns.**
- **Ethically-sourced food** – following the impact of the Channel 4 programme Hugh's Chicken Run, touchlocal.com has identified a wider trend for ethically-sourced food produce. Since the show aired, the category of "Organic Food" has recorded a 92% increase in unique user searches, with categories including local delivery, retailers and wholesalers. touchlocal.com is now encouraging all food retailers and grocers on the site to explicitly reference their ethical credentials to aid their customers' choices.  
**touchlocal.com prediction: consumers looking for not just organically produced food in 2008, but also for ethical food packaging.**
- **Hypnotherapy** – trend-setter Lily Allen has already used the treatment to drop two dress sizes and is now employing it in an attempt to beat smoking. This type of celebrity endorsement has prompted a new search category with over an 80% increase in searches for hypnotherapy since the New Year.  
**touchlocal.com prediction: an increased uptake of alternative therapies hitting the mainstream. This could be down to reviews on sites that allow nervous users to access real-life testimonials and recommendations. touchlocal.com's 'Circles' of recommendation allows users to take reassurance from local people's experiences and inspire them to try something new.**
- **Charity begins at home** – local and community-focused charities have enjoyed a major focus in the first two weeks of the year, receiving a 34% rise in unique user searches on touchlocal.com. This could be a move to balance recent high-profile international charity campaigns, such as Live8 with supporting home-grown charities.



***touchlocal.com prediction: a continued focus on community for 2008 and supporting local causes closer to home.***

Tamer Ozmen, CEO of touchlocal.com, commented "many people now go online as a first port of call for making a change in their life or when looking for inspiration. So, by assessing search terms and recommendations posted by the touchlocal.com community we are able to quickly identify upcoming behavioural trends. The consumer feedback provided by members of touchlocal.com provides a level of reassurance via a virtual community which can make the choices seem far less daunting."

The statistics have come from the first touchlocal.com Index, a report of localised searches and recommendations from the UK's first locality and necessity-based business search and social networking website. The report investigates a variety of key areas, including Social Responsibility, Family, Lifestyle, Relationships and Health & Wellbeing.

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Notes to Editor

**About touchlocal.com**

touchlocal.com is the UK's first local business search website that combines a powerful search tool with practical social networking capabilities. The site attracts over 2 million unique users per month and an estimated 18 million unique visitors annually. touchlocal.com lets real people review, rate and recommend local businesses and services enabling consumers to make informed choices based on trusted user-generated content. Using bespoke "Circles" social networking mode, touchlocal.com allows users to rank family, friends and others according to their level of influence and trust. These circles are graphically represented on-screen allowing users to quickly and easily search for trusted businesses across the UK.

touchlocal.com is backed by Balderton Capital, the leading Venture Capital Firm

**About Balderton Capital**

Balderton Capital is one of Europe's largest venture capital firms, committed to finding and helping talented entrepreneurs build great companies. Based in London, it manages approximately USD 1.5 billion in committed venture capital.

Since 2000, Balderton has invested in over 70 companies across a wide variety of technology sectors and geographies, including the UK, mainland Europe, the US and China. Notable investments include Betfair (online betting exchange), Bebo (leading social networking site), Codemasters (developer and publisher of innovative video games), Habbo Hotel (teen social networking site), Payzone (Europe's largest payment-processing network) and Setanta Sports (European sports pay-tv broadcaster).

Editorial contacts:

Toan Ravenscroft touchlocal@webershandwick.com 0207 067 0426 / 07862 716 979

