

How TGI Fridays Uses Location Services to Provide Value for Its Franchise Partners

A Q&A with vice president of marketing Cindy Syracuse

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Location data has become a valuable resource for restaurants looking to target potential customers in specific areas. This data can provide analytics and attribution for marketing strategies, with opportunities to drive performance on a more granular level, including specific times where restaurant traffic is at a lull.

TGI Fridays is one such restaurant chain that has learned to use location intelligence to its advantage. For our recent “[Location Intelligence 2020](#)” report, we spoke with Cindy Syracuse, vice president of marketing at TGI Fridays, about harnessing the power of location data, as well as the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Why is location data important for a business like TGI Fridays?

In the past year, we've incorporated a larger percentage of our budget into social media marketing—and location data has been a real game changer for us. When you're in a franchise system, your franchisees are always wondering how the brand's spending affects their restaurant

directly. Social location data has allowed us to demonstrate how the money works more efficiently at a local level.

What are some of the practices you have in place?

We drop a target within a 10-mile radius around the restaurants and use location intelligence to create detailed personas for ad targeting. It has helped us identify look-alike audiences and target competitive customers who may be dining at nearby locations.

This is very helpful for daypart strategies. For example, a restaurant in a suburban area may not have a great lunch business. And with look-alike data, we can understand and then expand the target. So, we may go beyond casual dining users to people who use QSRs [quick-service restaurants], which is more common at lunchtime in some areas. This is especially effective when you're getting into granular levels, like lunch, dinner or happy hour.

Outside social media marketing, what are some other ways marketers are utilizing location data?

When you look at something like in-car marketing—based on the consumer's current location—the goal is driving convenience and benefiting daily life. For us in the restaurant business, that means providing online and to-go services. For instance, if you're using location when deciding where you can order and pick something up while running errands, that convenience will help bring us into the consideration set. So in-car marketing, beyond mobile devices, is an important advancement.

Both Apple and Google have made location-data opt-outs more prominent on their respective smartphone operating systems. Have these changes, along with regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), affected your ability to do this kind of targeting?

Privacy and user compliance have begun to limit the sources, and therefore the availability of the mobile location data points. As a result, the price for quality source data is increasing. But as the concerns tie

into the quality of the data, you always want the best quality. So, that has certainly affected the pricing.

Do you think there will always be quality data out there, but it may be more expensive and harder to seek out?

Yes, absolutely. Ethically sourced data is most likely going to come at an increased premium. But as a marketer, having that quality data is of utmost concern; that's the data we need in order to be strategic and see results. Consumer privacy is also always a concern. Advertisers need to be very careful in deciding when and where to utilize location data points.

Despite privacy concerns, do you think consumers are willing to share their location data if there's a clear benefit to them?

Consumers are much more aware of that value proposition, and when data collection is done right, it's done with explicit consumer consent. So, they're signaling to us that they are open to this type of marketing. For advertisers, being able to interact with a consumer who's open to messaging—in the form they want it—is very valuable. Using location data is really important in delivering these messages.

How else can marketers strive to deliver on the value proposition?

Increased accuracy: understanding what data you are going to take in and how you're going to refine it. That's where the challenge for marketers exists. There's plenty of data—there's almost an overload. Being smart about how you're going to use it helps you determine the channels and the mix of where you're going to place it.