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Internet search goes local

Move over Google and Yahoo! Vertical search is here. Specialised search engines are making the business of looking for local content a lot easier

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GOOGLE AND Yahoo! May be leading search engines. However, try searching for a pub in your vicinity and you will ultimately be confused with the information overload.

Do you need to look for a local needle in a global haystack? What if your needs are more local than global? A local search engine may be the answer for you. It not just gets you the stuff relevant to you; it also is big opportunity for local advertisers.

Check out www.guruji.com or www.asklaila.com. The former allows you to search for city-specific information for about 33 Indian cities at present. Guruji.com does both city search as well as web search for your keywords. The data has been provided by Infomedia's Yellow Pages.

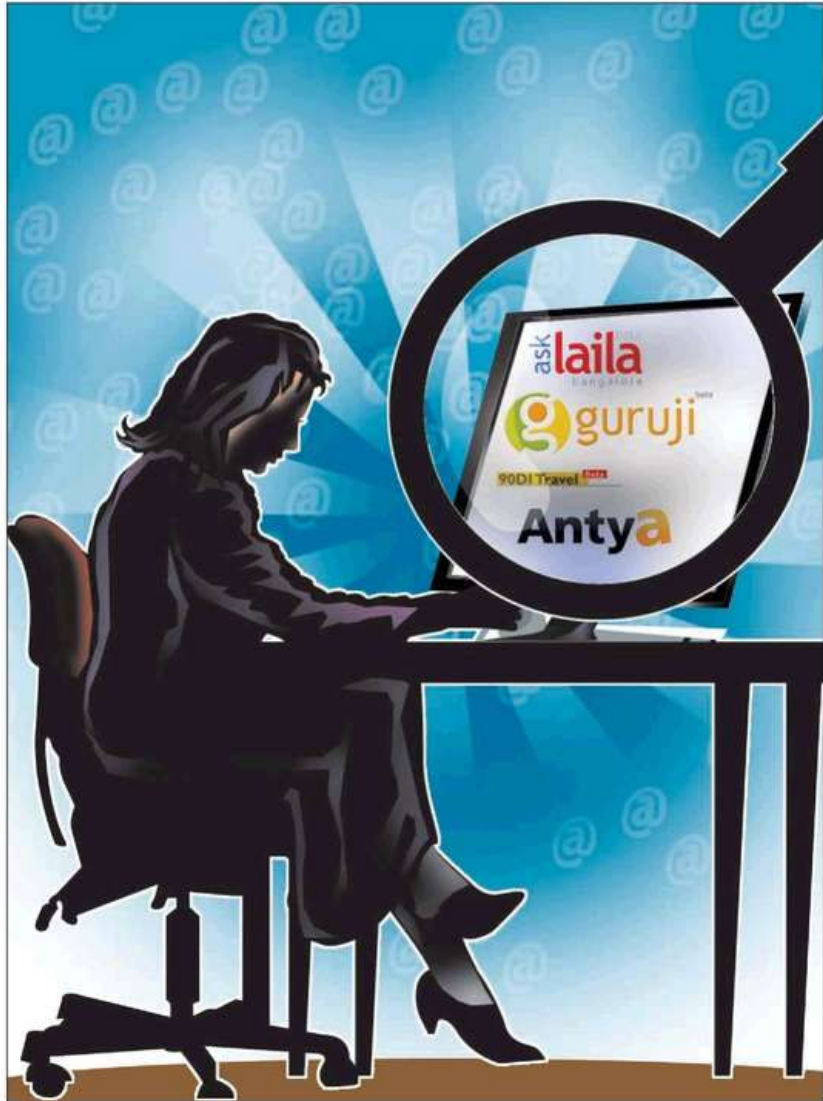
Four Interactive, the company that runs asklaila, was set up last August. Funded by three venture capitalists, the company received an investment of around \$2 million in November 2006 and another 10 million this year. The site gets you Bangalore specific information at present and the company plans to cover the metros in the near future and about 22 cities in the next 18 months, Kiran Konduri, Co-Founder, asklaila, told Hindustan Times.

If you try looking for a pub or a parlour in your vicinity, you won't just get the result but also get a small note about the place. As long as relevant people come looking for specific information, it is worth the money a local advertiser would spend on an ad. "Online local advertising is expected to be worth \$24 billion in the next three years and at present India's contribution is insignificant," Konduri added. However, asklaila would only be taking in ads after establishing a pan-India presence.

While the travel search segment has been largely led by players like MakeMyTrip and Yatra, these can only give you options for flight and hotel search. This is where travel search engines like 90DI (www.90di.com) step in. The Bangalore-based company offers combined search for both flights and trains. "We started the 90DI service in September last year and provide booking options for 4,000 cities in India," company spokesman Khushnood Naqvi, told Hindustan Times.

"The portal will generate money out of advertisements, referrals from airlines, through revenue sharing with travel agents and by licensing the software to big companies that may want to use the technology for their own use," Naqvi added.

The company plans to add a service called 'Trip Planner' that will allow users to plan



GRAPHIC: SEBASTIAN

multi-city trips, save their itinerary, share it with others and finally book it through travel agents. Not to forget, there are other websites that now allow you to book bus tickets as well.

To top it all, we also have a search engine devoted to yielding websites relevant to the keyword you type in. Called Antya (www.antya.com), which means the end in Hindi, the site can be your first and last resort if you want to search for a website

related to a specific subject. This discover-engine was launched last year. "We are focussed on bringing websites related to Indians but would gradually scale it up to other countries as well," said Bharanidharan Viswanathan, co-founder, Antya.

The business model for Antya will also be ad driven. The company's future plans include enabling site development for companies that want to have an online presence.

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