

Embark Marketing Advises Restaurants to Reevaluate Yelp Strategy as AI Search Reshapes Dining Discovery

SAN ANTONIO, TX, UNITED STATES, June 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Embark Marketing, an award-winning hospitality marketing agency is encouraging restaurant operators to reassess the role of Yelp in 2026 as AI-driven search platforms increasingly rely on trusted reviews, user generated content, and business listing sources to generate dining recommendations.

According to Embark Marketing, many restaurant owners still view Yelp primarily as a review platform, which historically, left a bad taste in their mouth. However, the agency says Yelp now plays a broader role in digital visibility, consumer discovery, and high-intent advertising for restaurants, bars, and hospitality groups, especially when it comes to the emerging AI search platforms.



Kim Beechner CEO of Embark Marketing

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“Restaurants that ignore Yelp may be overlooking a meaningful source of traffic and visibility,” said Kim Beechner, Founder and CEO of Embark Marketing. “Consumers use review platforms to make immediate dining decisions, and AI search tools are placing greater value on trusted business data and verified user reviews.”

Embark Marketing notes that complete and actively managed Yelp profiles can support restaurant discoverability through updated business information, menus, photography, amenities, and customer sentiment, even without ad dollars.

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As AI platforms evolve, there is more emphasis placed on trusted sources, with Yelp consistently ranking in the top 10 of cited AI searches. This is particularly valuable for the hospitality industry as it relies on foot traffic and is particularly susceptible to seasonal fluctuations.

"Even just making sure everything on your profile is accurate can help." Beechner continues "but answering reviews, proper categorization, and regular updates that show off your food and experience - that's what really helps get people through the door."

As a Yelp Agency Partner and recipient of the Best in Client Services Yelp Agency Partner Award, Embark Marketing works directly with restaurant brands to manage campaigns, optimize listings, and improve performance reporting.

Through its partner status, the agency has access to direct support from Yelp internal teams as well as expanded campaign metrics and user data that help quantify ad effectiveness, refine targeting, and improve return on ad spend.

The agency reports that properly managed Yelp campaigns can generate:

- High-intent traffic from active diners
- Calls, map clicks, and reservation consideration
- Efficient cost-per-visit performance
- Increased visibility in competitive restaurant markets
- Hyper local targeting to capture primary market
- Strong seasonal and tourism-driven demand capture



Embark Marketing team



Yelp 2025 Award

Embark Marketing says these benefits are particularly valuable for restaurants in high-density dining districts, tourism markets, and competitive urban centers, with the numbers and case studies to prove it.

The agency regularly achieves a less than a dollar average cost per click for clients with incredible returns on ad spend, averaging in the 30 to 1 range. One client saw a return of 35 to 1 with a year's advertising spend at less than \$8K and a revenue of \$250,000 attributable to the Yelp Platform. Another client achieved \$36,700 in revenue for less than \$1,000 with 93% of those customers never having visited the restaurant before. Yet another client was able to obtain an additional 6,000+ store visits in 6 months with a 55x return on investment.

"We've heard time and again how restaurant owners dislike the platform, but we are trying to change that." Beechner stated "Yelp really can be a valuable tool to capture diners at the exact time they are hungry and close by."

About Embark Marketing

Embark Marketing is an award-winning Texas-based agency specializing in hospitality marketing for over 15 years. The firm supports restaurants, bars, and hospitality groups through digital strategy, web development, paid media, public relations, and reputation management with a team made up of former restaurant industry workers.

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