

## Foodies Get a Taste for Online Reviews

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Over a third of adults said they have researched online about a restaurant they had not visited before, according to the National Restaurant Association's 2006 research. That is up from the 13% who did in 1999.

The association's Hudson Riehle noted that "in the restaurant business, word-of-mouth publicity has always been crucial; it's just that now, with the growth of online customer reviews, diners' opinions aren't restrained to their circle of friends."

Top national sites for amateur restaurant reviewers include Citysearch, Yelp, Dinesite.com, local.Yahoo.com and Chowhound.com. Even Zagat.com, which focuses on subscription-only content, has added a free online feedback function to collect input from the average diner.

In a MediaWeek interview, marketing professor Michael Solomon said that online consumer reviews will continue to grow, although one problem needs to be controlled.

"That is the ability of reviewees to slant the reviews by strategically placing their own employees or paid skills in the audience," Dr. Solomon said. "If this pernicious trend can be brought under control, our restaurant choices truly can benefit from the power of crowds."

Source - *eMarketer*

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