

ComScore Study Reinforces Online Reviews' Impact on Offline Sales

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People are willing to pay up to 99 percent more for services after reading positive online reviews about them, according to new research.

The study, conducted in October by comScore and The Kelsey Group, found that online, consumer-created reviews have a big impact on prospective buyers. The researchers said 24 percent of those who eventually pay for local services -- such as restaurants, hotels and automotive shops -- read online reviews before making a choice.

The study showed consumers were so trusting of online reviews, they were willing to pay at least 20 percent, and up to 99 percent, more if a company was rated excellent or five-star than if a business received a good, or four-star, rating. The study was based on 2,078 survey respondents, including 508 who used online consumer reviews.

Professional critics, and owners of companies that receive less-than-excellent online reviews by laypersons, might question the ability of regular people to adequately judge a service. However, the comScore/Kelsey Group study found that 90 percent of the people who trusted consumer-written reviews found the critiques to be accurate. In fact, noted the researchers, "reviews generated by fellow consumers had a greater influence than those generated by professionals."

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