

Personal Recommendations And Consumer Opinions Posted Online

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Most Trusted Forms Of Advertising Globally

However, brand websites score as highly as online consumer opinions; brand sponsorships have seen the greatest increase in levels of trust amongst Internet consumers since 2007

Recommendations by personal acquaintances and opinions posted by consumers online are the most trusted forms of advertising globally, according to the latest twice-yearly Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey of over 25,000 Internet consumers from 50 countries.

The Nielsen survey, the largest of its kind, shows that nine in every ten Internet consumers worldwide (90 percent) trust recommendations from people they know, whilst seven in every ten (70 percent) trust consumer opinions posted online.

However, in this new age of consumer control, advertisers will be encouraged by the fact that brand websites – the most trusted form of advertiser-led advertising – are trusted by as many people (70 percent) as consumer opinions posted online.

“The explosion in Consumer Generated Media over the last couple of years – we are now tracking over 100 million CGM sources – means consumers’ reliance on word of mouth in the decision-making process, either from people they know or online consumers they don’t, has increased significantly,” says Jonathan Carson, President of Online, International, for the Nielsen Company.

He adds

“However, we see that all forms of advertiser-led advertising, except ads in newspapers, have also experienced increases in levels of trust and it’s possible that the CGM revolution has forced advertisers to use a more realistic form of messaging that is grounded in the experience of consumers rather than the lofty ideals of the advertisers.”

The Trust in Advertising element of the survey was first conducted in April 2007 and the two years since then reveals that brand sponsorship has seen the greatest increase in levels of trust from 49 percent of Internet consumers in April 2007 to 64 percent in April 2009 – an absolute increase of 15 percentage points.

Brand sponsorships are closely followed by ads before movies which have increased from 38 percent to 52 percent – a 14 percentage point increase – and personal recommendations which have increased by 12 percent from 78 percent in April 2007 to 90 percent in April 2009.

Consumer opinions posted online tend to be trusted most by Vietnamese Internet consumers (81 percent) and their Italian (80 percent), Chinese and French (both 77 percent) counterparts.

However, online opinions tend to be trusted the least in Argentina (46 percent) and Finland (50 percent). In comparison, 68 percent of British Internet consumers trust this form of advertising, meaning Britain ranks 24th out of the 50 countries represented in the survey for trusting consumer opinions online.

When it comes to trusting brand sponsorships, Latin American countries lead the way with 81 percent of both Colombian and Venezuelan Internet consumers and 79 percent of Brazilians trusting this form of advertising.

In contrast, sponsorships hold the least sway amongst Swedish (33 percent), Latvian (36 percent) and Finnish online consumers (38 percent). In comparison, 52 percent of British Internet consumers trust brand sponsorships, placing Britain 34th out of the 50 countries surveyed.

Brand websites, globally the most trusted form of advertiser-led advertising, hold the greatest sway in China (82 percent). Following China are Pakistan (81 percent) and Vietnam (80 percent).

However, brand websites tend to be trusted least amongst Swedish (40 percent) and Israeli (45 percent) Internet consumers. Britain ranks 38th amongst the countries surveyed with 58 percent of British Internet consumers trusting brand websites.

“The regional differences provide a clear guide to advertisers as to how they should focus their ad strategy in different countries. It also shows that, despite the authority of word of mouth when it comes to consumer decision-making, advertisers still have a major say in the process.

This is backed up by past Nielsen studies which showed that the majority of people posting comments online went to the advertiser website or emailed feedback to the company before they posted. The website, and monitoring feedback through it, is a golden opportunity for advertisers to shape the tone and content of consumer opinion before it reaches the digital masses," said Carson.

Although brand websites score highly amongst Internet consumers, the survey shows that other forms of digital advertising are trusted less than ads appearing in traditional media such as TV billboards, radio, magazines and newspapers " despite the latter being the only form of advertising to experience a drop in levels of trust since the 2007 survey.

Text ads on mobile phones (24 percent), online banner ads (33 percent), online video ads (37 percent) and ads in search engine results (41 percent) are the forms of advertising least likely to elicit a degree of trust.

Carson concludes, "Despite the huge increase in the size of the world's Internet population and the sheer amount of time being spent online, the industry has yet to attract advertising revenue commensurate with the current levels of online media consumption.

The study shows there is still work to be done to shift advertising revenue from traditional forms of media to the Internet. The ability to turn this around rests on overhauling the way display advertising is served online so that it becomes a more effective medium for brand advertisers and a more trusted form of advertising in the mind of the consumer."

About The Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey

The Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey, conducted by Nielsen Consumer Research, was conducted from 19th March " 2nd April 2009 among 25,420 Internet consumers in 50 markets across Europe, Asia Pacific, North & Latin America and the Middle East.

The largest half-yearly survey of its kind, the Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey provides insight into the opinions and preferences of Internet consumers across the world.

Nielsen will be releasing a white paper on Wednesday 15th July covering consumers' trust in advertising, how they see the benefits of advertising as well as comparing the effect on consumers of TV and online video advertising.

About The Nielsen Company

The Nielsen Company is a global information and media company with leading market positions in marketing and consumer information, television and other media measurement, online intelligence, mobile measurement, trade shows and business publications (Billboard, The Hollywood Reporter, Adweek).

The privately held company is active in more than 100 countries, with headquarters in New York, USA.

For more information, please visit, www.nielsen.com

alexander.burmaster@nielsen.com

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