

Online reviewers: Yes, they're compensating for something (w/ Video)

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Word-of-mouth and online product reviews may be less about sharing knowledge than you think, says a University of Michigan business professor.

New research by David Wooten, associate professor of marketing at U-M's Ross School of Business, suggests that some frequent online posters may feel that they have something to prove when their knowledge is deficient.

"It's always been said that word-of-mouth communication, by and large, is something you can trust because there's no profit motive," Wooten said. "We're seeing there may be distortions in word-of-mouth that aren't related to a profit motive."

Understanding where reviewers are coming from has become increasingly important as 92 percent of [consumers](#) say they trust recommendations from family and friends, and 70 percent say they trust online consumer reviews, according to Nielsen.

Wooten and co-author Grant Packard, a marketing professor at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, detailed their findings in an article published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

So what signs can consumers use to spot review posers? Look for longer reviews, language that might make them sound more intelligent, personal stories and a decidedly upbeat spin on the product, the researchers say.

"They're more positive because choosing and using a great product reflects back on them as being a smart consumer," Packard said.

For companies, this research can help them identify which consumers would be most likely to help spread good words about their products and services.

"The products you buy and display say a lot about what you think you are," Wooten said. "We're finding that the products you talk about and how you talk about them also say a lot about who you aspire to be."

Provided by University of Michigan

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