

Was the restaurant really that bad—or was it just the rain?

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There are a few things that will result in poor customer reviews of a restaurant: bad service, bad food—and bad weather.

A study of 32 Florida restaurants found that customers left more

negative remarks on comment cards on days when it was raining than on days when it was dry.

Results showed the odds of patrons leaving very negative comments versus very positive comments were 2.9 times greater on [rainy days](#).

In two other online studies done in other parts of the country, results suggested that unpleasant weather left people in bad moods, which was then linked to them having less positive views about the restaurants they visited.

"Restaurant managers may see more than the usual bad reviews on certain days, and it may have nothing to do with the service or the quality of the food," said Milos Bujisic, co-author of the study and assistant professor of hospitality management at The Ohio State University.

"Restaurants can't control the weather, but it may affect how customers review them."

The research appears online in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* and will be published in a future print edition.

While weather was not the most important factor in how customers reviewed their dining experience, it can't be ignored, said study co-author Vanja Bogicevic, a visiting assistant professor of hospitality management at Ohio State.

"It may be a smaller factor, but it is something that managers should pay attention to," Bogicevic said.

In the first study, researchers examined the comments cards left at the Florida restaurants, all part of the same national fast-casual chain.

The researchers rated the comments on a five-point scale from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). They also examined weather data from the National Climatic Data Center for each [restaurant](#)'s location on the days comment cards were left.

They examined 14 different weather variables, but only three were related to customer comments—rain, temperature and [barometric pressure](#).

Higher temperatures—which in Florida, can often mean it is uncomfortably hot—were linked to more negative comments.

Higher barometric pressure was also connected to [negative comments](#) in Florida, which is also probably different from much of the country, the researchers said, because rising pressure is often associated with fair weather. In [warmer climates](#), high barometric pressure is often linked to higher daytime temperatures.

Two other studies conducted online offered more insight into exactly how weather affected [customer](#) evaluations.

In one study, 158 people from around the country who visited a restaurant within the last 24 hours were asked to rate and describe the [weather conditions](#) right before their restaurant visit. They also rated their own mood and what kind of "word-of-mouth" review they would give the restaurant—in other words, whether they would recommend the restaurant and tell others positive things about their experience.

Results showed that people who described the weather as more pleasant also rated their mood more positively. Better moods—and not the weather itself—were related to more positive word-of-mouth.

A third study specifically targeted people living in the Midwest,

Northeast and Northwest regions of the United States, where the weather is variable over the year.

This study involved 107 people. Some were asked whether they visited a restaurant in the last seven days during pleasant weather, and some were asked if they had visited a restaurant in unpleasant conditions (very cold, raining or snowing).

Participants who reported eligible conditions for the study then answered questions about their mood that day, their dining experience and whether they would give good word-of-mouth to the restaurant.

Similar to the previous study, pleasant weather elevated consumers' moods, which was linked to a better rating of their restaurant experience and better word-of-mouth compared to those who visited in unpleasant weather.

Bujisic noted that [bad weather](#) may affect not only the mood of customers, but also the wait staff and others who serve the customers.

"A rainy day may put employees in a bad [mood](#) and that will affect their service," he said. "Managers need to explain that to their employees and work to keep them motivated."

In addition, managers may want to find ways to boost customers' moods during unpleasant [weather](#), Bogicevic said.

"Think about creative strategies to make customers happy. Maybe offer a free drink or play more upbeat music," she said.

Provided by The Ohio State University

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