

## Researching Purchases Online - UK - April 2011

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### What is this report about?

Consumers use the internet for information to help their purchasing decisions on products and services ranging from films and home appliances to holidays, utilities and insurance. Internet users read consumer and professional reviews online to get a better understanding of technical specifications and performance of a product or service they are about to purchase. Prior to purchase, some will use online services such as price comparison, voucher, and cashback websites to get the best price.

### What have we found out?

- Consumers generally trust consumer reviews, with 53% of internet users stating they trust reviews by consumers more than those by magazines or TV. However, there is an inclination towards professional reviews for some areas such as financial products and utilities.
- Female consumers are less likely to read professional reviews even though they are just as likely to conduct research online, if not more so, than their male counterparts. This presents an opportunity for professional reviews to target more female readers.
- Only one in five consumers have submitted an online review, compared with three in five who have read reviews. Online services, retailers, and brands can encourage higher review participation rate by incentivising consumers to write, which could help provide a more balanced picture of the product or service.
- Amongst the different price discovery methods available online, consumers are more likely to have used price comparison since this technology has been established for the longest time. However, total and unique visitors for voucher/discount and cashback websites are growing at a faster rate than price comparisons, as more consumers discover the benefits of these services.
- Mobile technology for price comparison and product information is nascent but is expected to grow. Mintel's research finds 17% of consumers who don't know how to use mobile price comparison curious about the service, with the numbers rising to one in four for the younger consumers aged 16-24.
- Online shopping will become more social, ranging from group buying amongst strangers to recommendations within one's social network. Commerce through Facebook is a notable sales channel for retailers since close to 50% of the adult population having an account with this social networking site.

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