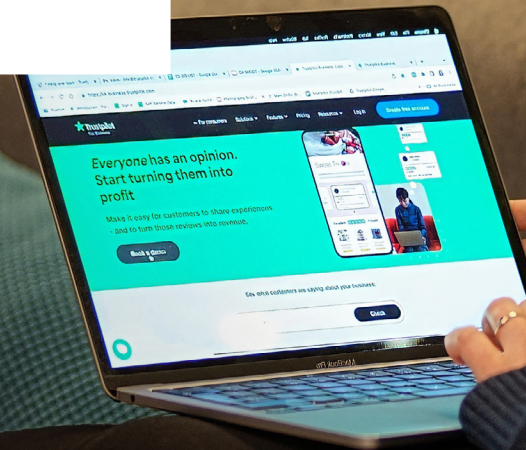




The Impact of Customer Ratings and Reviews on German Buying Behaviour

How Trustpilot content influences German consumers



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Executive Summary

This research explores the value of showcasing customer star ratings and reviews in advertising, and in particular the impact of Trustpilot content in digital campaigns.

Based on a survey of 750 German nationally-representative consumers, this London Research study reports on the benefits of using Trustpilot ratings and reviews to build trust and increase propensity to purchase, and the efficacy of Trustpilot compared to a leading competitor.

This Germany-focused research is part of a wider European study of 3,000 consumers also covering France, Italy and the Netherlands.

The research also looks at the extent to which specific types of Trustpilot content in online advertisements influence German consumers, including the Trustpilot logo and stars, TrustScore, the volume of reviews, and the impact of an authentic customer testimonial.

Looking at the impact of customer star ratings and reviews at the broader level within the customer journey, the vast majority of German consumers (81%) agree that both customer reviews and customer star ratings are useful during the buying decision-making process.

The proportion of German consumers who agree that a good Trustpilot score makes them more likely to buy from a brand has increased from 48% to 59% since the research was last carried out in 2021.

Over the same time period, the proportion of German consumers who say they are aware of the Trustpilot brand has increased from under half (47%) to more than two-thirds (69%).

To test the value of Trustpilot ratings and reviews in ads, survey respondents were shown a series of digital advertisements for a fictitious banking brand, and asked which ads they would be most likely to click through with a view to potentially applying.

Methodology

London Research was commissioned by Trustpilot to carry out a survey of 3,000 European consumers, including 750 in Germany. The nationally representative survey, carried out in December 2023, included questions about sources of information and touchpoints used during the buying process, and also questions specifically about Trustpilot. More than two-thirds (69%) of German respondents say they are aware of Trustpilot customer ratings and reviews, compared to 47% in 2021 when similar research was conducted.

A survey-based research technique called conjoint analysis was used to quantify consumer preferences when respondents were shown different combinations from a series of advertisements for a fictitious bank called Neobank. The ads included star ratings and customer reviews co-branded with Trustpilot and Trusted Shops, and also ads without any co-branding.

Survey respondents were asked which of the ads for Neobank would most make them want to click through. They were also asked whether they would actually click through on the ad they selected with a view to signing up if they were considering changing to a different bank.

Similar reports are also available for France, Italy and the Netherlands, and also an aggregated report for all European countries surveyed.

According to the research:

- **59% of German consumers agree that a good Trustpilot score makes them more likely to buy from a brand**, compared to only 12% who disagree.
- **A similar percentage (60%) agree that a good Trustpilot score makes them more likely to trust a brand**, again compared to only 11% who disagree.
- **German consumers are 2.6 times more likely to click an online advertisement with the Trustpilot logo and stars** than the same ad without the logo and stars.
- **They are seven times more likely to click a Trustpilot co-branded ad with a five-star customer rating, TrustScore, 3,000+ reviews, and a customer review** than an ad with no Trustpilot content.
- **An advert with a five-star Trustpilot score, 3,000+ reviews and customer testimonial performs twice as well as the same ad with no Trustpilot components**, even when the welcome reward is decreased by 20% (from 100 € to 80 €).
- **German consumers are 16% more likely to click through on an online advertisement for a brand with the Trustpilot logo and stars** than the same ad with the Trusted Shops logo and stars.
- **And they are 5% more likely to click a Trustpilot co-branded ad with a five-star customer rating, 3,000+ reviews, and a customer testimonial** than a Trusted Shops ad showing exactly the same information.

Impact of Trustpilot: the anatomy of a co-branded ad

German consumers looking at a banking advertisement are **seven times more likely** to click on a Trustpilot co-branded ad with a five-star customer rating, 3,000+ reviews, and a verbatim customer review than an ad with no Trustpilot content.

Customer review

German consumers are 46% more likely to click through on a like-for-like Trustpilot co-branded ad when it contains a customer testimonial (i.e. verbatim customer review).

Trustpilot

German consumers are 16% more likely to click through on an online advertisement for a brand with the Trustpilot logo and stars than the same ad with the Trusted Shops logo and stars.

Trustpilot logo and stars

An online advertisement with the Trustpilot logo and stars is 2.6 times more persuasive than the same ad without them.

TrustScore

German consumers are 11% more likely to click through on a like-for-like Trustpilot co-branded ad when it specifies the high TrustScore behind the five-star rating.

Number of reviews

Showing 3,000+ reviews makes the ad 34% more compelling than the same ad just showing the Trustpilot stars and TrustScore without the number of reviews.

Section 1

Introduction - Importance of Star Ratings and Reviews in the Buyer Journey

Customer star ratings and reviews are an integral part of the journey to purchase for the majority of consumers, and among the five most useful touchpoints for influencing buying behaviour (Figure 1).

The *Edelman Trust Barometer* for 2023 shows that there is a growing distrust of traditional and social media in Germany. While only 47% of the population trust the media in general, this nearly halves to 26% for social media. German consumers are far more likely to trust people like them, such as neighbours, 63%, and co-workers, 71%.

It is therefore no surprise that the vast majority of German consumers (81%) agree that customer ratings and reviews are at least somewhat useful during the buying decision-making process, compared to 68% for social media and 67% for TV advertising.

Against this backdrop it is clear that many consumers are relying on ratings and reviews for unbiased information. Our research shows that more than half of consumers say they're at least occasionally influenced by both star ratings (52%) and customer reviews (53%) during the journey to purchase (Figure 2).

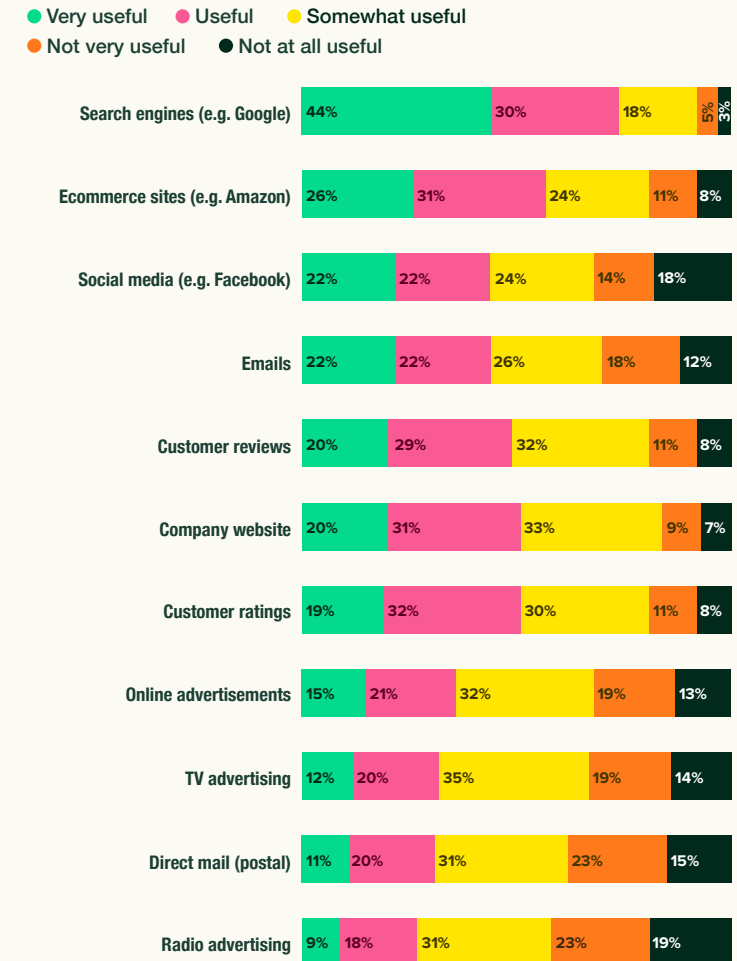
“We live in a context of reputation economy in which people choose based on the quality of the service. Trustpilot has allowed us to communicate the value of our courses through the words of our own satisfied students, combining our brand with that of a reviews company recognised worldwide for its reliability and transparency.”



Luigi Sguerri
CEO of MyES

FIGURE 1

How useful are the following sources of information for influencing your decision to buy something?



And it is clear that star ratings and reviews continue to play an important role in influencing buying decisions across a wide range of categories, from travel to electronics, and financial services to property. For most sectors shown in *Figure 3*, consumers are more likely to regard them as useful or very useful than was the case in 2021.

An example of how reviews and ratings can be used to great effect comes from *My English School (MyES)*. The company used both to provide social proof to potential new customers as it set about a period of sustained international expansion. The result of using Trustpilot reviews and ratings in its marketing was a 26% leap in leads which led to a 70% rise in contracts being signed. The company attributes this to people being reassured the school is highly reputable and represents good value for money.

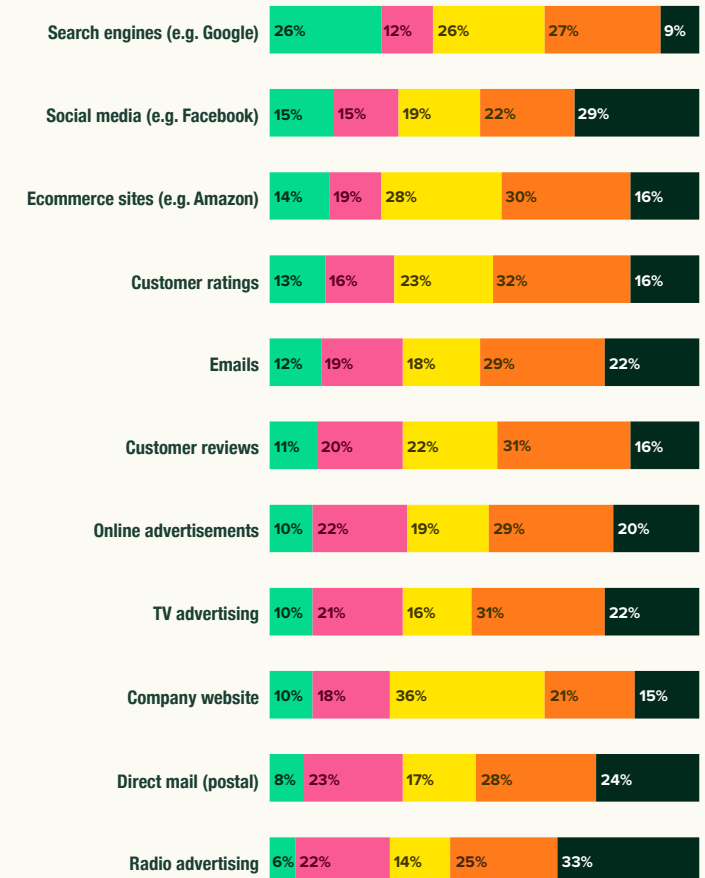
As the customer journey has become increasingly complex and non-linear, with consumers using multiple devices across multiple touchpoints, it is clear that German advertisers need to respond accordingly.

It is also clear from *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* that consumers are influenced by a wide range of online and offline touchpoints before they make a decision to purchase something. In addition to customer ratings and reviews, search engines, ecommerce sites, social media, email, company websites, online advertisements, TV and radio advertising, and direct mail are all considered to be useful to some degree by at least half of German consumers.

FIGURE 2

How often do the following sources of information influence your decision to buy something?

● Very often ● Often ● Occasionally ● Rarely ● Never



Brands need to understand how different touchpoints and channels work together to build trust and positively impact the decision-making process. Given the popularity and usefulness of ratings and reviews, it makes sense for marketers to understand how they can be harnessed across other channels, including both online and offline advertising, as well as across their own digital properties and email campaigns.

Cross-channel gains are a top priority at winter sports clothing business, *686 Technical Apparel*. It not only uses reviews and ratings to stand out against competitors in terms of social proof, but also to help improve its search rankings.

“Trustpilot has really helped us improve our organic search results, bringing 686 new customers to the attention of us every day. Given our increased visibility and excellent social proof throughout our customer journey, we can easily stand out from our competitors.”

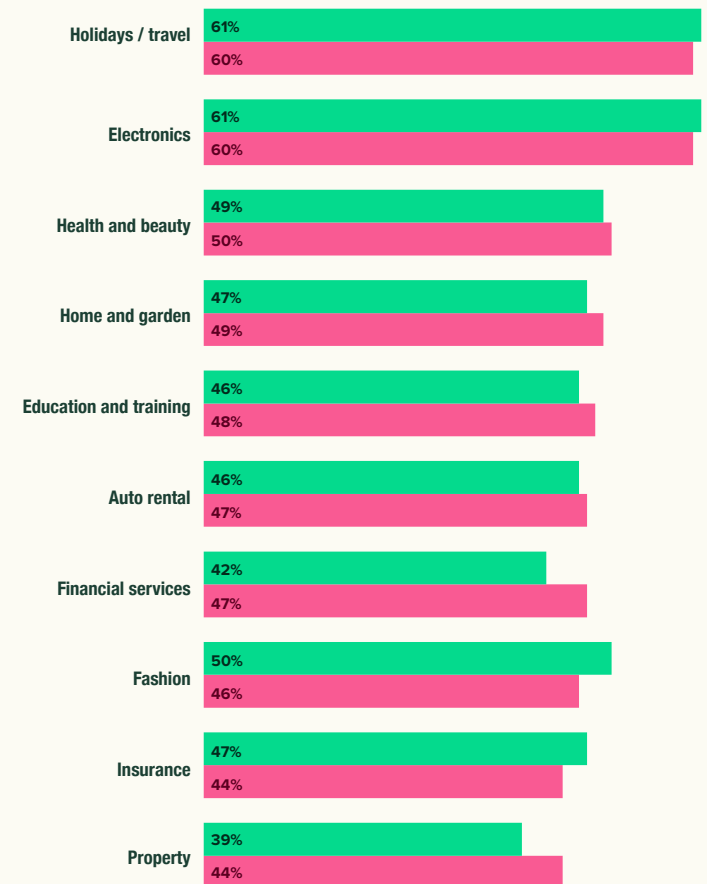


Colin Johnson
Online Marketing Manager
686 Technical Apparel

FIGURE 3

Proportion of consumers saying ratings and reviews are ‘very useful’ or ‘useful’ for influencing their decision to buy the following types of products or services

● 2021 ● 2023



Section 2

Benefits of Trustpilot Content Through the Funnel

The trust engendered by adding Trustpilot stars and scores to digital advertising is not just good for brand image, it is also a core component in driving sales. The proportion of German consumers who agree that a good Trustpilot score makes them more likely to buy from a brand has increased from 48% to 59% since the research was last carried out in 2021. Only 12% disagree that this is the case, down from 18% in 2021.

The propensity to buy something from a company is very closely linked to the level of trust in that brand. A similar percentage of consumers (60%) agree that a good Trustpilot score makes them more likely to trust a brand (*Figure 5*), a similar jump from 48% in 2021.

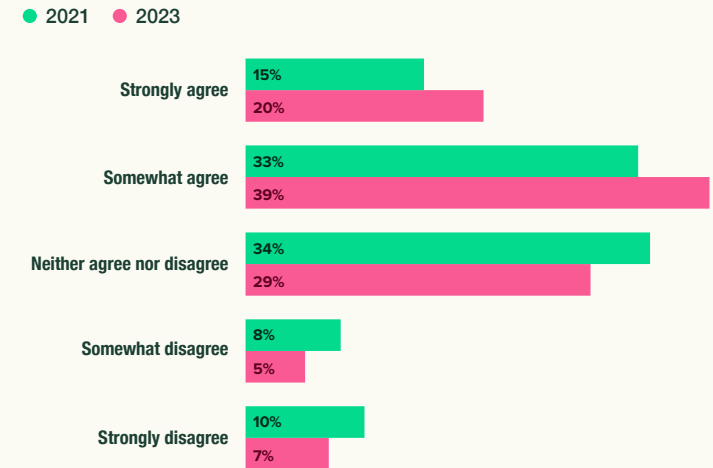
This increase in how Trustpilot is impacting consumer behaviour can be attributed to increased awareness of the Trustpilot brand. Over the same time period, the proportion of German consumers who say they are aware of the Trustpilot brand has increased from under half (47%) to more than two-thirds (69%).

This can be confirmed by the successes seen by businesses who test digital marketing campaigns with their Trustpilot reviews, stars and ratings included, compared to no mention of social proof. Fashion company, *KLEIR*, ran tests on social media advertising to show the leap and found that compared to a return of 18 Euros for every Euro invested on a generic social media advert, adding Trustpilot ratings and stars delivered a return of 86 Euros.

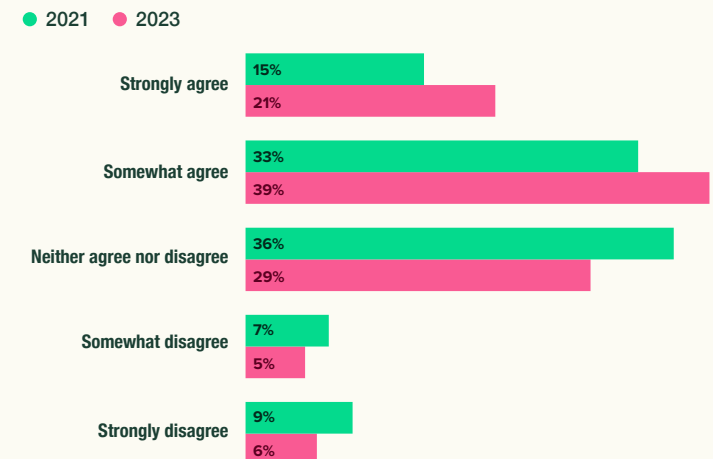
This has encouraged the business to use ratings and reviews throughout the customer funnel, from discovery in digital advertising, through to retention in its email campaigns.

FIGURE 4

To what extent do you agree that a good Trustpilot score makes you more likely to buy from a brand?


FIGURE 5

To what extent do you agree that a good Trustpilot score makes you more likely to trust a brand?



Section 3

Impact of Trustpilot

Logo with Star Rating

We have seen that consumers say they're more likely to trust and buy from a brand with a high Trustpilot rating.

A key objective of our research was to understand the impact of different Trustpilot content elements, namely the logo and stars, TrustScore (out of five), number of reviews, and an actual verbatim quote from a named customer ('Gabriele V.').

As part of our proprietary research, consumers were shown a series of digital advertisements for a fictitious banking brand called Neobank, and asked which ads they would be most likely to click through with a view to signing up.

The research found that German consumers are more than two-and-a-half times (2.6 times) more likely to click on an online advertisement with the Trustpilot logo and stars than the same ad without them, even when the text to the right-hand side of the original ad is sacrificed. .

An even more emphatic finding from the research was that consumers are seven times more likely to click a Trustpilot co-branded ad with a five-star customer rating, high TrustScore, 3,000+ reviews, and a customer testimonial (compared with the baseline ad with no Trustpilot branding).

As well as seeking to understand the overall impact of the full suite of Trustpilot content and the logo and stars on their own, we also wanted to explore the relative impact of different content components, namely the customer review, the TrustScore at different levels, and the volume of reviews. We also compared the performance of Trustpilot ads with similar ads featuring Trusted Shops branding.

An online ad with the Trustpilot logo and stars is **more than two-and-a-half times (2.6 times) more persuasive** than the same ad without them, even without the text to the right-hand side of the original ad.



German consumers are **seven times more likely to click** a Trustpilot co-branded ad with a five-star customer rating, high TrustScore, 3,000+ reviews, and a customer testimonial (compared with a baseline ad with no Trustpilot branding).

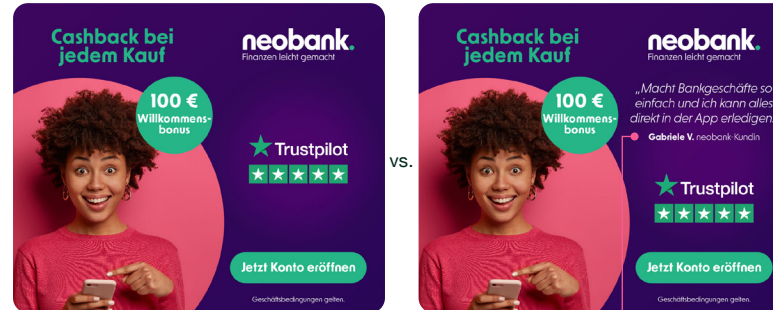
Customer Review

The power of an authentic testimonial to build trust and sway a prospective customer into a purchase should not be underestimated. German consumers are 46% more likely to click through on a Trustpilot co-branded ad when it contains a customer review.

“Trustpilot reviews are a great motivation to keep improving the product and service through feedback every day.”

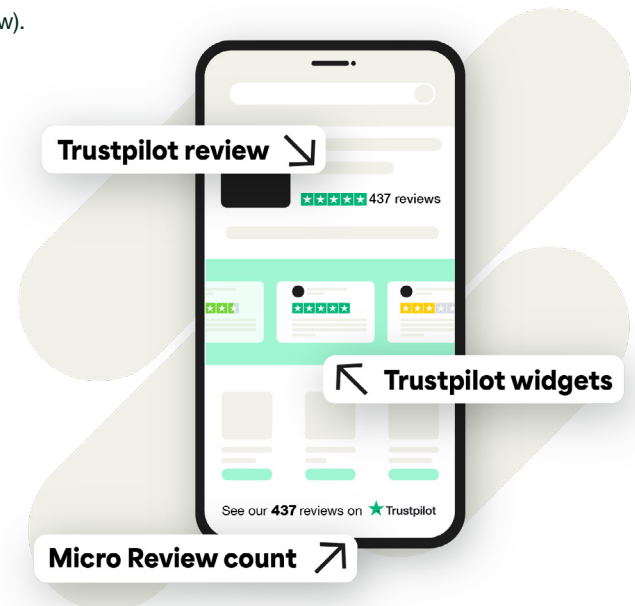


Sarah Buge
Team Lead Customer Success Management
Companisto



vs.

German consumers are **46% more likely** to click through on a like-for-like Trustpilot co-branded ad when it contains a customer testimonial (i.e. verbatim customer review).



TrustScore

German consumers are 11% more likely to click through on a like-for-like Trustpilot co-branded ad when it specifies the high TrustScore behind the five-star rating.

The ad showing the 4.8 score performs 58% better than the ad with a 4.2 score, though the ad with a 4.2 score is still 86% more compelling than the basic ad with no co-branding.



German consumers are **11% more likely** to click through on a like-for-like Trustpilot co-branded ad when it specifies the high TrustScore behind the five-star rating.



A four-star ad with a 4.2 TrustScore is **86% more compelling** than the ad with no Trustpilot co-branding.

Number of Reviews

A Trustpilot five-star advert with a 4.8 score showing 500+ reviews is almost three-and-a-half (3.4) times more compelling than an ad with no Trustpilot branding, according to our research.

Our consumer research also shows that a Trustpilot five-star advert with 3,000+ reviews performs 34% better than an almost identical ad including the Trustpilot stars and TrustScore, but without the number of reviews.



A Trustpilot five-star advert with a 4.8 score showing 500+ reviews is **3.4 times more compelling** than an ad with no Trustpilot branding.



A Trustpilot five-star advert with 3,000+ reviews **performs 34% better** than an almost identical ad without the number of reviews.

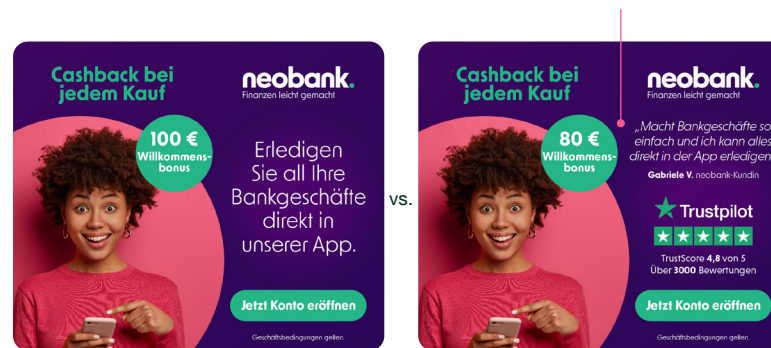
Impact on Reduced Incentive or Higher Price

The research found that consumers are twice as likely to click through on an advert with a five-star Trustpilot score, 3,000+ reviews and customer testimonial than the same ad with no Trustpilot components, even when the welcome reward is decreased by 20% (from 100 € to 80 €).

This can translate into significant cost savings or revenue increases for businesses either wishing to reduce incentives and discounts or increase pricing or interest rates (in the case of banks or personal loans companies).

Separate studies carried out by London Research have shown similar results for a higher price (in the case of a fictitious SIM card company), a higher interest rate (in the case of a personal loans company) and smaller discount (for a car insurance company).

An advert with Trustpilot co-branding including a customer testimonial **performs twice as well** as the same ad with no Trustpilot components, even when the welcome reward is decreased by 20%.



Performance Against Competitor

As part of this research, London Research also compared the level of consumer engagement with similar advertisements co-branded with Trusted Shops.

German consumers are 16% more likely to click through on an online advertisement for a brand with the Trustpilot logo and stars than the same ad with the Trusted Shops logo and stars.

Additionally, the research found that consumers are 5% more likely to click a Trustpilot co-branded ad with a five-star customer rating, 3,000+ reviews, and a customer testimonial than a Trusted Shops co-branded ad showing exactly the same information.



German consumers are **16% more likely to click** through on an online advertisement for a brand with the Trustpilot logo and stars than the same ad with the Trusted Shops logo and stars.

German consumers are **5% more likely to click** a Trustpilot co-branded ad with a five-star customer rating, 3,000+ reviews, and a customer testimonial than a Trusted Shops co-branded ad showing exactly the same information.

About us



London Research is focused on producing research-based content for B2B audiences. We are based in London, but our approach and outlook are very much international. We work predominantly with technology companies and agencies seeking to tell a compelling story based on robust research and insightful data points.

As part of Demand Exchange Ltd, we work closely with our sister companies Digital Doughnut (a global community of more than two million marketers) and Demand Exchange (a lead generation platform), both to syndicate our research and generate high-quality leads.

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Trustpilot is a leading online review platform – free and open to all. With more than 238 million reviews of over 980,000 domains, Trustpilot gives people a place to share and discover reviews of businesses, and we give every company the tools to turn consumer feedback into business results.

Our mission is to bring people and businesses closer together to create ever-improving experiences for everyone. Trustpilot reviews are seen more than 9 billion times each month by consumers worldwide. Trustpilot is headquartered in Copenhagen, with operations in London, Edinburgh, New York, Denver, Melbourne, Berlin, Vilnius, Milan, and Amsterdam. Trustpilot's 900 employees represent more than 50 different nationalities.

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