



COMMERCIAL SERVICES

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Hotel Guests Blogging about Bugs ***Orkin Study of Online Reviews Reveals “Zero Tolerance” for Pests***

ATLANTA, July 2009 – Summer is in full swing as travelers book their tickets, pack their bags – and now – blog, text and tweet to update the world about their vacations. A study released today by Atlanta-based pest control company [Orkin, Inc.](#) shows that hotel guests are blogging about pests in hotels, and they have “zero tolerance” for things that go bump – or bite – in the night.

Orkin partnered with international hospitality and linguistic experts John Crotts, Ph.D., and Peyton Mason, Ph.D., to determine the frequency of pest mentions on travel and restaurant review blogs, and the resulting impact of these encounters on guests’ loyalty.

“Studies of other types of hotel service failures do not compare to the reaction guests have to pests. In virtually all of the blog narratives we reviewed, attempts of hotel management to remedy the situation had no effect on recovering guest loyalty,” said John Crotts, Ph.D., primary investigator for the study and professor of hospitality and tourism management at the College of Charleston. “Unlike a rude employee, a meal served cold, or a broken air conditioner, observing a pest was deemed a failure management could not overcome.”

Using the [Google blog index](#), 3,200,497 blog postings about U.S. hotels and restaurants were reviewed for mentions of pest encounters in 2008. Then, Crotts randomly selected and analyzed 500 blog narratives using language analysis – allowing the researchers to evaluate the impact of pest encounters on guests’ loyalty to those hotels, motels and restaurants.

Out of 2.89 million hotel blog posts reviewed, more than 1 in 100 mentioned a pest in the narrative:

- 61.5 percent of the pest mentions cited occurred at unrated, and one to two diamond/star properties.
- 27.3 percent of the pest mentions cited occurred at three diamond/star properties.
- 11.1 percent of the pest mentions cited occurred at four to five diamond/star properties.

“Whether five star or no star, no hotel or resort is immune to pests – or negative blog reviews mentioning pests,” said Crotts. “Hotel managers should know that it only takes one pest to cloud a guest’s perception of a hotel property – a single cockroach, bed bug, rodent and spider garnered negative attention, and in all but one review, sampled guests reported zero tolerance for pests.”

The study found that pest encounters lead to blog narratives that focus on the pest rather than other aspects of the hotel such as price and service. Words such as “awful,” “dirty” and “disgusted” often appeared alongside pest mentions. In comparison, guests who did not encounter a pest at the same hotel were more likely to have a positive impression of the property and their room, and to write other amenities.

“The strong measurable effect of any pest – regardless of hotel type – is significant,” said Crotts. “The presence of a pest in a single room casts a shadow over an entire property and implies to the countless consumers who look to travel blogs for recommendations that the entire facility is unclean or unhealthy.”

According to Crotts, it is difficult to recover from a pest sighting. Even when management apologizes or provides some type of compensation for the incident, customers are reluctant to return. For all pests except flies at the pool, 100 percent of bloggers would not stay again at the property, or recommend the hotel to others.

“Hoteliers should see these results as an opportunity to update their pest management programs,” said Ron Harrison, Ph.D., director of technical services for [Orkin, Inc.](#) “Implementing proactive processes, such as training staff to identify signs of pests, can have a big impact on catching pest problems early on – before guests do.”

Visit [FiveStarList.com](#) to read the full research report and download helpful resources like *8 Places to Check Out Before Pests Check In*, a free educational checklist designed to help hotel staff identify and prevent pests in key problem areas.

About Orkin, Inc.

Founded in 1901, Atlanta-based [Orkin, Inc.](#) is an industry leader in essential pest control services and protection against termite damage, rodents and insects in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Asia. With more than 400 locations, Orkin’s almost 8,000 employees serve approximately 1.7 million customers. The company serves homeowners and numerous industries including food and beverage processing, foodservice, hospitality, healthcare, retail, warehousing, property/facilities management, schools and institutions. Learn more about Orkin on our website at [www.orkin.com](#). Orkin is a wholly owned subsidiary of Rollins, Inc. (NYSE: ROL). To learn more about Orkin Commercial Services, visit [www.orkincommercial.com](#).

About the Researchers

John Crotts, Ph.D., is a professor in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at the College of Charleston. His research encompasses the areas of economic psychology, tourism marketing and sales strategy, and management of cooperative alliances. In 2004 and 2007, Crotts was ranked in the top 20 list of scholars worldwide for his published research productivity by the Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education and Journal of Tourism Management respectively. He serves on numerous editorial boards for hospitality and tourism research journals.

Peyton Mason, Ph.D., is the founder of Linguistic Insights, Inc. His quantitative approach to the analysis of consumers’ language comes from more than 20 years of market and new product research experience. He previously managed new product development and consumer research for Bank of America, Lipton (Unilever), Anheuser-Busch and Kellogg’s.

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