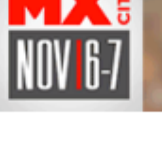
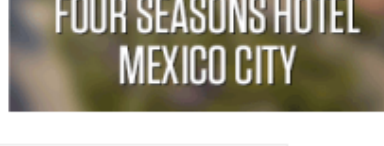


# Customer Experience Report



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14

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## Social Media User Ratings & Rankings Matter: Just Ask #1 Ranked Hampton Inn & Suites

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Ratings and feedback left via social media channels count, according to an academic study correlating a hotel's online reputation to its profitability as well as the most recent hotel benchmark survey released by customer experience specialist [Medallia](#). Using metrics gathered from travel review sites on multi-property brands in the U.S., Hilton's [Hampton Inn & Suites](#) was awarded top ranking in the report's Upper Midscale category and credits this accolade with their satisfaction guarantee initiative.



Michelle de Haaff, vice-president of marketing for Medallia

customer experience. The increasing impact of social review sites is just one example of this trend."

General criteria factoring into Medallia's rankings included property condition and staff hospitality. The study also noted that customers recognize and appreciate enhancement efforts. "In this data, we found that the most-improved hotels brands in five of the six categories saw that improvement because of upgrades they made to amenities like dining and recreational facilities," de Haaff says.

Other research indicates the growing value customers place in online reviews and their impact on revenue. BrightLocal's 2014 [Local Consumer Review Survey](#) found that 88 percent of customers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations, up from 79 percent the previous year. A [study](#) by Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration on social media's ability to influence spending discovered that a 1 percent uptick in a hotel's online reputation led to a 0.89 percent average daily rate increase as well as a higher occupancy of up to 0.54 percent.

Hampton Inn maintained its top ranking in Medallia's Upper Midscale category with an 88 percent positive percentage ranking. Karl Thomas, senior director of brand culture and internal communications at Hilton Worldwide, says Hampton's ratings are based on the brand's satisfaction guarantee initiative and driven by guest awareness of Hampton's hospitality commitment, building customer loyalty through its "risk free" offering and competitive advantage.

To ensure effective implementation of this strategy, Hampton's front desk team is directed to emphasize the pledge to guests upon check-in and employees are taught preventative techniques to preempt possible common issues that might affect the guest experience. Thomas says Hampton Inn trains their staff to maintain customer loyalty "by listening to the issue first, then resolving, finally issuing our 100 percent Satisfaction Guarantee."

Achieving the goals behind the behind Hampton's guarantee, says Thomas, varied in complexity. Simplest was increasing brand awareness. "Two 100 percent Satisfaction Guarantee plaques are posted at the front desk of every Hampton hotel, worldwide. The 100 percent Satisfaction Guarantee is also on our brand site and we train all team members to make sure the guest is aware of it.

Hampton's internal customer experience research shows a correlation between customer education on their guarantee and brand loyalty. "Data shows the guests who are made aware of the Satisfaction Guarantee during their stay are 30 percent more likely to be loyal to the brand," says Thomas. "Nothing builds loyalty faster than having a no questions asked, money back guarantee. We are committed to exceptional stays. If your stay didn't exceed your needs, it's on us."

Thomas says a more difficult challenge Hampton faced was achieving a competitive advantage once the popularity of their program caught on. "Much like our product, our competitors have started to copy our Satisfaction Guarantee. However, their guarantees/promises come with lots of small print."

Historically, consumer feedback's influence was limited to word of mouth and strongly phrased comment cards. Since the advent of social media, the customer voice grows louder and its global reach more influential. As recordings of poor customer service interactions going viral have shown, indifference or worse to reviews, ratings and other feedback has had negative effects on brand perception and loyalty.

"On a broader level, there's an important learning in how successful hotels deal with their own social review data," says de Haaff of the overall message behind Medallia's report. "Rather than shuttling all of that information to a centralized social media team, they operationalize it by giving it to the properties to learn from and respond to. Properties will be able to resolve guests' issues much more effectively since they have a direct understanding of why the issue occurred. This makes their responses much more sincere."

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### About Kimberly Warner-Cohen



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