

WITH A COUPON A DAY ...

A 'VERY' SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION INTO THE REAL DISCOUNTS OF E-COMMERCE SITES LIKE GROUPON AND LIVINGSOCIAL

By Jen Hanauer

Groupon Daily Deal for Dayton: \$119 Tandem Jump with Start Skydiving, worth: \$239, discount: 50%, savings: \$120. Wait, do you mean to tell me I can save 50%, 120 dollars of my hard-earned money, off a tandem skydiving experience? Groupon, you had me at "deal."

Electronic commerce sites such as Groupon and LivingSocial began saving consumers bean-coup bucks just over two years ago with e-mailed "daily deals" on everything from peppermint scalp massages to Dayton Philharmonic tickets. Most deals happen on a local level, not only saving the consumers' dollars, but also putting those dollars spent back into the local economy. Similar sites have popped up, such as DealSwarm launched by Cox Media Group last fall, albeit with a slightly less aggressive approach to inundating their target audience with deals.

But which one has the best deals, the most savings? Over the course of several weeks, I kept

been for the coupon," said Heller. "But now that I've tried it and liked it, I would probably do it again."

And this is good news for the small business owners of the Dayton area.

Shannon Teague, creator of Cake, Hope & Love, a Dayton-based cake design company, knows that electronic commerce sites are about exposure. So when faced with the price-prohibitive prospect of getting her company's name into 55,000 Dayton area homes, Teague turned to Groupon.

"We ran our Groupon as a side offer for three days," said Teague. "The response was great. While we only sold around 115 Groupons, we more than tripled our web traffic. This, of course, increased our sales. I would say about 65% of our Groupon customers purchased additional items."

While exceptional in the amount of exposure

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tabs on the three aforementioned sites to see who was best at watching out for my dollar, saving me the highest percentage of my tip-based salary. Empirical data agrees: Groupon will get you the most bang for your buck.

Over a three-week period of time, had I taken Groupon up on all of their offers I would have saved \$1,047 with an average daily percent saved of 56.1%. Comparatively, LivingSocial would have saved me \$926 at an average daily percent saved of 54.4%, and DealSwarm would have saved me a modest \$105.50 at an average daily percent saved of 51.8%.

Savings isn't just about percentage off during these difficult financial times. My saving 62% on auto detailing at Mr. Suds Detail Shop still means I spent \$34 of my much-protected disposable income on prettifying my 15-year-old, hand-me-down sedan. So when is a deal really a deal? When it can save you money on something you would have spent it on anyway, that's when.

Nichole Heller, a 28-year-old mother of two from Kettering, is constantly on the look out for ways to save her family money. Feeding a husband and two growing boys can add up, so when a deal showed up in her inbox from LivingSocial for 50% off from Dream Dinners, a prepared meal assembly store that offers patrons a chance to let someone else do the meal-planning, Heller jumped at the opportunity.

"I probably wouldn't have tried it had it not

and increase in sales, the inundation of sudden new customers can overwhelm a small business.

"The first two days were pretty stressful," said Teague. "I probably spent about five hours straight on those two days answering just the Groupon questions."

Still, the experience was a positive one. "Overall, it was pretty successful for us," said Teague.

Groupon seems to be all about continued success, despite the clone sites and despite the occasional tripping over itself with debacles like their misstep of a Super Bowl commercial. Perhaps it's its own marketing of itself, what with the clever cat stamp at the bottom of each of their emails and all, warranting at least a second glance and a "Whuuuuut?!" from most of their viewers. What it really is, though, is the relentless tide of daily deals all promising a savings of at least 50% and usually more from local businesses.

The e-mails from Groupon can intrigue even the most frugal of deal-seekers, listing not only what you pay versus the original price, but also including the discount percentage and the dollar amount that you're NOT spending. Shrewd move, Captain. I'm not entirely certain I need pole-dancing instruction, but I certainly want to save \$25 on a pole fitness class from Femme Fatale Fitness.

But who's to say that all of the things we buy need to be things we need? Getting out and hav-



Cupcakes from Cake, Hope & Love, which sold 115 of their local Groupons and saw their web traffic triple [above], and a typical Groupon deal e-mailed to customers [left].



ing some fun does wonders for the soul, an invaluable commodity. I don't know that I've met one

ing yourself into freefall from 10,000 feet in the air, but, hey, how much better is that stationary barstool going to look after that kind of excitement? After you've taken to the skies, take your adrenaline-laden bod down to Therapy Cafe and spend \$15 for \$30 worth of food and drink to unwind. Stimulating the local economy AND saving over \$100 while you're at it? Fantastic job, you daredevil you.

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