

**Trustworthy, real reviews and
customer insights to boost
business & build trust**

Feefo helps any company
that values its customer-
relationships and wants to
expand, and enables people
to make more informed
decisions about what to buy
and who to do business with

ONLINE REVIEWS: THE CONSUMERS' PERSPECTIVE

feefo^{ee}



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INTRODUCTION

Consumers have never been more informed about their buying decisions. Online shopping is nothing new, but customers are increasingly empowered to compare products, prices and opinions like never before.

Reading reviews has become an integral part of the buying journey, and feedback left by other shoppers is used to help people make informed and confident purchases. By understanding the value of customer reviews, leading brands are utilising feedback strategies in new and innovative ways.

This report explores the attitudes and behaviours of today's consumer towards online reviews: How influential they are, to what extent they are trusted, and where they fit within the buying journey.



KEY DISCOVERIES:

✓ SHOPPING AND RESEARCH BEHAVIOUR

Whether shopping online, or in-store, consumers are likely to take time to do research into brands and products before they buy, to ensure they make the best choice. A large part of this research is reading reviews.

✓ USING AND LEAVING ONLINE REVIEWS

Almost everyone shopping online is influenced by reviews, and more people now check reviews of products while in store – not just at home.

There is a huge disparity between the number of consumers that read reviews, and those that leave them. In order to maximise responses, it is important to provide an easy process with few hoops to jump through.

✓ BUILDING TRUST

Three quarters of people are worried about fake reviews to at least some extent.

Independent verification of reviews is a huge contributing factor as to whether they are trusted.

✓ THE FUTURE OF ONLINE REVIEWS

New technologies continue to impact the way consumers and business alike are interacting with reviews. Regular online shoppers are most likely to embrace future review innovations, such as listening and leaving voice reviews or seeing product ratings left by friends and family.

To present this versatile report, the most exciting and interesting results have been selected. To discuss the results further, please get in touch via marketing@feefo.com

Matt West
Chief Marketing Officer

2. SHOPPING & RESEARCH BEHAVIOUR

LOOKING AT THE LANDSCAPE

From browsing shop windows on the high street, to buying online, understanding what motivates customers to select brands and buy products is imperative in today's highly competitive marketplace.

SO, HOW DO UK SHOPPERS SHOP IN 2017?

Whether choosing a new TV, buying a pair of shoes, or booking a table at a restaurant, the customer journey is most likely to start from home. Before heading to the shops – whether online or not – most people (69%) do research at home first.

Reviews play a major part in this research process. Customers like to feel confident about what they're buying, and to have that opinion validated. Over half (66%) say reading reviews is the first port of call to help make a decision.

That's why, unsurprisingly, the digital marketplace continues to be popular. Most (82%) consumers shop online at least once a month. Here, they can easily search for products and make confident buying decisions, and at a glance, have their choices backed up by the feedback of fellow shoppers.

This is especially important for people aged 25-34, with 93% shopping online at least once a month. This is a mobile generation that has come to expect a digital experience.

Regardless of age, when it comes to choosing products, cost is the most influencing factor for over three quarters of customers (78%). While nothing is more persuasive than price, reviews clearly play a major role in the customer journey and buying decision for the majority of people.

WHICH OF THESE BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU PREFER TO SHOP?


Respondents are most likely to research a product or service at home, regardless of whether the purchase is also made online (41%) or if it is made in a store (28%)



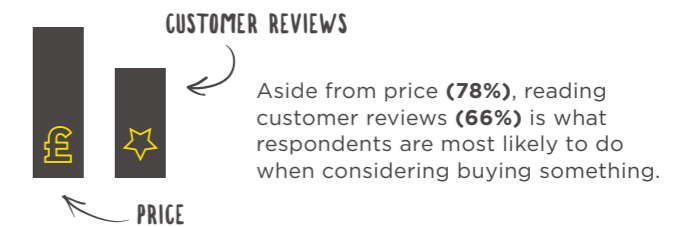
HOW OFTEN DO YOU SHOP ONLINE? 8 IN 10



82% respondents shop online at least once a month, if not more often.

 **8%** of respondents who shop multiple times per week, largely made up of younger respondents aged **16-34 years old** (and who are particularly likely to be **males**).

WHEN YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT BUYING SOMETHING, WHICH OF THESE DO YOU DO IN ORDER TO HELP YOU DECIDE?



Consumers are becoming increasingly informed and empowered by choice. While price makes the most impact on purchase decisions, what other shoppers have to say about the brand or service carries a lot of weight.

Businesses looking to engage with their customers should understand that the customer journey starts at home, where customers are likely to be researching services, products, prices and reviews.



3. USING & LEAVING ONLINE REVIEWS

USING ONLINE REVIEWS

Word of mouth is the oldest form of recommendation, and this has translated to the digital marketplace in the form of customer reviews.

Overwhelmingly, consumers are influenced by reading them. Most people (74%) say that reviews influence them to at least some extent, and surprisingly, this isn't limited to online shoppers. The majority (75%) of in-store shoppers consult the feedback of others, using their smartphone, before making a purchase - and this is even more evident (89%) for mobile-savvy millennials.

There are two important parts to reviews: the overall star rating, and the tone and language of the written review itself. Both play an important part, and over three quarters (76%) look at these two aspects above all else.

While reading written feedback remains the most popular way of engaging with reviews (57% prefer to read reviews), user-generated content (UGC), such as video, is becoming more prominent. Rich-media, such as video reviews, particularly resonate with millennials, with 44% of 16-24 year olds preferring to watch reviews, rather than read them.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU CHECK ONLINE REVIEWS ON A PRODUCT, USING YOUR SMARTPHONE, WHEN YOU ARE SHOPPING IN A STORE?



This rises to nearly nine in ten (87%-89%) for millennials.

NEARLY THREE QUARTERS (73%) OF RESPONDENTS CHECK ONLINE PRODUCT REVIEWS WHILE IN A STORE

DO YOU READ REVIEWS TO DECIDE WHETHER TO BUY SOMETHING?

74%



Nearly three quarters of respondents say that reviews influence them to some extent.

Only 5% say that reviews don't influence them at all.

76%



Respondents are equally likely to report that the general tone of reviews (76%) is one of the top three influences when deciding whether to buy something, as they are to say the overall star rating (76%).

WOULD YOU RATHER WATCH A VIDEO REVIEW THAN READ A WRITTEN REVIEW?

Younger respondents are far more likely to prefer video reviews, particularly males aged **16-24** years old (**44%**) and **25-34** years old (**42%**)



WOULD THE ABILITY TO WATCH A VIDEO REVIEW ON A PRODUCT MAKE YOU MORE LIKELY TO BUY THE PRODUCT?



More than four in ten (**42%**) male respondents aged **16-24 years** say that they are much more likely to buy a product if there is a video review available for it.



Reviews are a hugely popular for consumers. Almost everyone shopping online is influenced by them and more people now check reviews of products while in store – not just at home.

Younger customers in particular are more likely to engage with user-generated content, such as video reviews, but regardless of how they are displayed, what fellow shoppers have to say is just as important as the overall rating they give.

LEAVING ONLINE REVIEWS

The information gathered from reviews provides valuable insight for businesses. So, what can brands do to encourage people to leave more of that rich feedback?

While most (68%) online shoppers leave reviews from time to time, only a quarter (24%) leave them regularly. This varies by industry, with service based sectors such as travel, tourism, leisure and hospitality being most popular, and also electronic products featuring highly.

Regardless of the industry, the reason people leave feedback is due to the experience they have. 71% of people will leave a review after a good experience and 52% of people will leave a review after a poor one.

Encouragingly, people generally see leaving reviews as an opportunity to give positive feedback, particularly if the product was good value for money or they received good customer service.

More often than not, reviewers prefer to endorse products and services, rather than complain.

A combination of factors can encourage people to leave a review. While 66% of people say an incentive such as a loyalty points or discount, would encourage them, the desire to inform others (58%) ranks highly.

Taking the time to connect with consumers is important. Almost half (49%) say that they would be motivated to leave a review if they were prompted by a personal invitation from a company.

The research also reveals a need for an efficient and fast-paced shopping experience. When it comes to leaving reviews, 67% are put off by a lengthy process. Other barriers include being asked too many irrelevant questions (52%), and being pestered by the company too many times for feedback (47%).

CUSTOMERS ARE PUT OFF BY A LENGTHY PROCESS, TOO MANY QUESTIONS, OR NOT KNOWING IF THEIR FEEDBACK WILL BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE COMPANY

HOW OFTEN DO YOU LEAVE A REVIEW FOR SOMETHING THAT YOU HAVE BOUGHT OR USED?

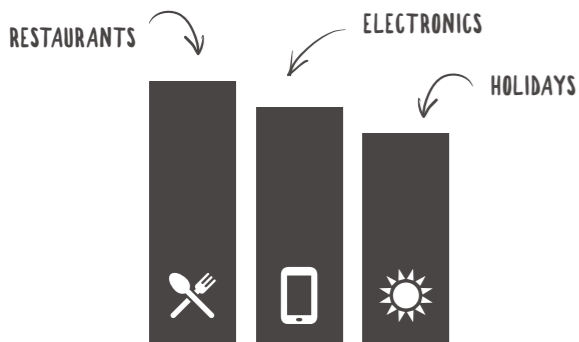
71% of people will leave a review after a good experience and **52%** of people will leave a review after a poor one.

24% claim to leave reviews most of the time.



THE POWER OF GENUINE REVIEWS AT WORK IN YOUR BUSINESS CAN BOOST TRAFFIC, SALES AND ACTIONABLE BUSINESS INSIGHTS.

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Restaurant (48%), electronics (46%) and holiday (45%) experiences are most likely to be reviewed by respondents.

Respondents are most likely to leave a review due to their experience with the product or service (**57%**).

57%



28% say that they are more likely to leave a review if they have been asked.

WHICH OF THESE ARE MOST LIKELY TO MAKE YOU LEAVE A REVIEW?



The quality of the product or experience is most likely to encourage respondents to leave a review, whether it is a **good experience (71%)** or **poor (52%)**.

A **reward (66%)** is most likely to encourage respondents to leave a review, compared to either their **own personal motivation (58%)** or being **prompted with an invite (49%)**.



WHAT WOULD PUT YOU OFF LEAVING A REVIEW?

Two thirds (67%) of respondents report that the process taking too long would put them off leaving a review.



14%

are put off leaving a review when they don't know if the company will respond.

Although regular reviewing overall is limited, businesses can improve the number of reviews they receive by simplifying the process. With fewer hoops to jump through, or a personal invitation, customers are more likely to leave their feedback.

4. BUILDING TRUST

Despite the overwhelming popularity and influence of reviews, there is a general feeling of mistrust about them. The reason? The rise of fake reviews. This pertinent issue has been a subject of recent court cases and headlines, and the problem is gaining more and more traction.

This exposure has left a significant number of consumers (75%) worried about the issue. In fact, only 7% said they completely trust reviews.

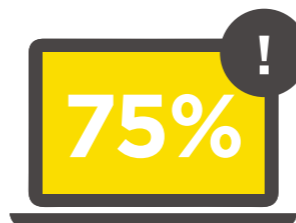
Interestingly, despite this scepticism, the actual opinion of other people is still held in high regard, with the majority (69%) generally trusting the recommendations of fellow shoppers. Confidence in reviews increases with a wider pool of reviews to compare, particularly for certain products. More expensive, one-off purchases such as a car, require 55 reviews to build trust on average, whereas smaller purchases, such as clothing, required just 27.

Alongside the number of reviews available, independent verification of reviews is a huge contributing factor as to whether they are trusted. 40% of people rank it an important factor, behind only the language and tone of the review itself. For many online shoppers, this third party protection assures them that the reviews they are reading are credible.

What encourages people to trust reviews varies by age, with younger people, for example, more likely to feel confident if there are pictures or videos to accompany the written text: 35% of 16-24 year-olds agree with this, compared with just 11% of over 55 year-olds. Older people are more likely to trust reviews if they have been independently verified and are dated accurately. 45% of over 55 year-olds agree, compared to 36% of 16-24 year olds.

The vast majority (81%) of online shoppers seek out negative reviews. Over half (56%) would be suspicious of a company or product if there weren't any, suggesting that a robust and balanced view is more influential than reams of positive feedback.

SOME COMPANIES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO PAY FOR FAKE REVIEWS TO INCREASE THE CHANCES OF PEOPLE BUYING FROM THEM. DOES THIS WORRY YOU?



Three quarters (75%) of respondents say that they are worried about **FAKE REVIEWS** to at least some extent.



NEARLY 7 IN 10

Nearly seven in ten (69%) of all respondents agree that they trust fellow shoppers' recommendation.



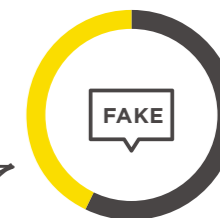
Regular online shoppers are more likely to have a greater sense of trust in their fellow shoppers (32%).

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU TRUST REVIEWS?



Only 7% of respondents say that they completely trust reviews.

Regular shoppers are also more likely to be concerned regarding fake reviews (43%).



THREE QUARTERS (75%) OF RESPONDENTS SAY THAT THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT FAKE REVIEWS

AVERAGE NUMBER OF REVIEWS THAT PRODUCTS OR SERVICES NEED FOR RESPONDENTS TO TRUST THE OVERALL RATING

ONE OFF PURCHASES



Respondents report that **significant one-off purchases** require the most reviews in order to trust an overall score. **(55 on average)**



Clothing, jewellery and cosmetics required the least number of reviews to build trust **(27 on average)**.

WHICH OF THESE IS MOST LIKELY TO MAKE YOU TRUST A REVIEW?

6 IN 10



Six in ten (60%) respondents report that the language and tone of the review is one of the top three factors most likely to inspire trust in a review.



40%

Four in ten report that independent verification by a company is also an important factor.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS THAT STRONGLY OR SLIGHTLY AGREE WITH VARIOUS STATEMENTS REGARDING REVIEWS

More than eight in ten (81%) respondents read several negative reviews to judge consistency.



54% would be suspicious if there were no negative reviews at all.

While the worry of fake reviews is prominent, particularly with those that shop more regularly online, businesses can put in place measures to assure customers. Some of these measures include using an independent third-party company to verify the reviews, ensuring all reviews are published and are 100% genuine. This deepens the level of trust for many.

5. THE FUTURE OF ONLINE REVIEWS

The way customers interact with reviews is changing. Technological advancements such as machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) are being developed and implemented to streamline the customer journey and shopping experience. New developments are not only helping customers engage with reviews, but also help businesses use their feedback in new and intuitive ways.

AI is helping shoppers to find relevant information faster. By dynamically categorising popular aspects of reviews – for example the camera on a smartphone – consumers are able to find reviews not just on products themselves, but on individual components. The majority (91%) of shoppers are interested in this sort of efficiency, saying they want to be able to see a quick summary of all the relevant reviews for a single product at a glance.

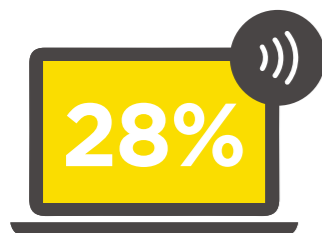
Reading a written review remains the most popular option for engaging with feedback. As it stands, 42% have no desire to listen to audio reviews, and only 8% agree that they would love to listen to reviews. Leaving audio reviews is even less popular, with 57% of people stating they would have no interest in doing this.



Instead, the overwhelming rise of social media consumers are more attracted to seeing what their friends and family would recommend. Three quarters (75%) of people would like to be able to see this functionality when shopping.

Regardless of demographic, those that shop online regularly are more likely to embrace future review innovation. These shoppers are at least twice as likely to be interested in listening to voice reviews (63%), leaving voice reviews (62%) or seeing product ratings left by friends and family (44%).

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LISTEN TO VOICE REVIEWS THAT HAVE BEEN LEFT BY OTHER PEOPLE?



Just over a quarter (28%) of respondents are interested in listening to reviews.

HOW USEFUL WOULD IT BE TO SEE A SUMMARY OF THE PROS AND CONS OF A PRODUCT OR SERVICE BASED ON ALL OF ITS REVIEWS?

The majority of respondents believe that being able to see a summary of all of the reviews for a single product

91%

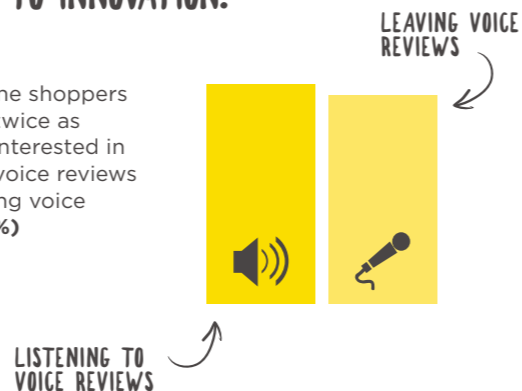
WHEN LOOKING TO BUY SOMETHING, HOW USEFUL WOULD IT BE TO SEE PRODUCT RATINGS THAT HAVE BEEN LEFT BY YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY?



Three quarters (75%) would find being able to see product ratings left by friends and family useful.

ANALYSIS OF SHOPPING HABITS IN RELATION TO INNOVATION.

Regular online shoppers are at least twice as likely to be interested in listening to voice reviews (63%), leaving voice reviews (62%)



New technologies are continually advancing the way customers and business alike are interacting with reviews. It is imperative for all businesses to understand these changes, and embrace new technology in order to meet the demands of increasingly tech savvy customers.

6. OUR TAKE ON IT

It comes as no surprise that this report confirms the significant part that reviews continue to play within the buyer's journey. Since Feefo began, the company quickly discovered that the ratings and opinions of fellow customers are powerful. Despite a rising issue of fake reviews, and level of mistrust of their authenticity, practically everyone shopping online is influenced by reviews.

In an effort to build trust in reviews, businesses can look to independently verify reviews and encourage customers to leave genuine and honest feedback. By doing this, customers can be confident that what they are reading is real, and a fair reflection of the products and services.

As shoppers demand a more convenient and efficient experience, the need for new and innovative ways of engaging with reviews increases – particularly with the younger generation. There is no doubt that new technologies, such as AI, are set to revolutionise the way consumers can access information about products and services.

Social media also provides a huge opportunity for brands to share the experiences of their customers. Those that embrace modern ways of collecting feedback, such as audio and video, will attract the millennial, mobile generation, thanks to their appreciation and interest in user-generated content.

As new technology continues to enhance the shopping experience, there is no doubt that the way reviews are used and implemented will evolve to meet these innovations.

Ultimately, the role of reviews for both consumers and businesses should not be underestimated. Playing a major part in managing reputation and relationships with customers, listening and learning from what they have to say is key to success.

**OUR AWARD WINNING PLATFORM
COMBINES THE GENUINE VOICE OF
YOUR CUSTOMERS WITH POWERFUL
INSIGHT TOOLS TO BOOST BUSINESS
& BUILD TRUST**

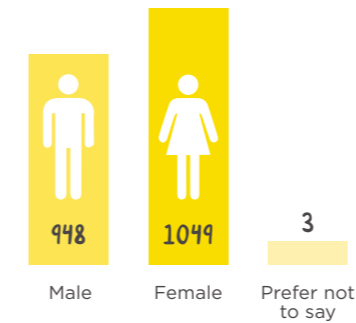
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ABOUT THE RESEARCH

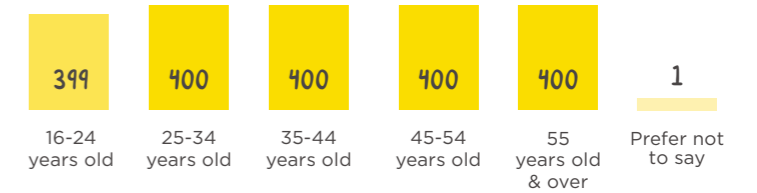
The research was undertaken by Vanson Bourne on behalf of Feefo. 2,000 UK consumers were interviewed throughout February 2017.

Breakdown of respondents:

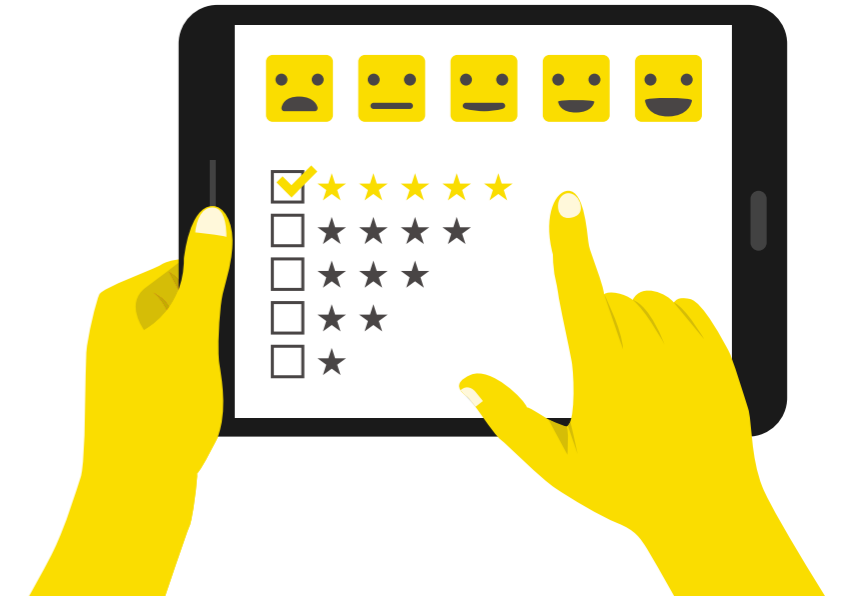
GENDER



AGE



LOCATION





Fancy a chat? Get in touch with questions, and our friendly Feefo team will be happy to help you.

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