

The Pitfalls of Online Reviews

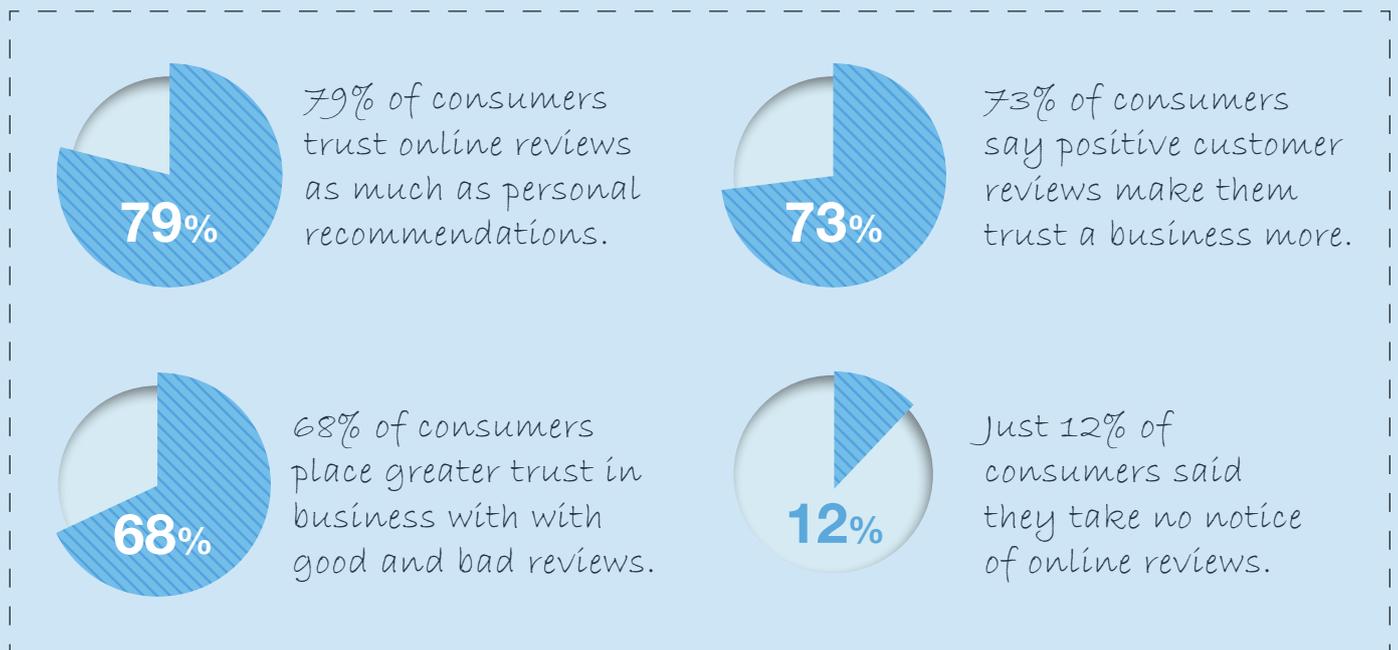
Online reviews are now essential to most shoppers' purchasing decisions - and that's exactly why you cannot afford to ignore them any longer.



Introduction to Reviews

The Pitfalls of Online Reviews

The statistics are clear – online reviews are now an essential part of the consumer’s buying process



Source: [Local Consumer Review Survey 2013 – BrightLocal](#)

The importance of online reviews for ecommerce success is no secret, but many businesses hold off implementation for a variety of reasons.





Pitfall 1

Soliciting feedback could mean asking for trouble

For many ecommerce managers, soliciting customer feedback is to invite uncertainty, and potentially madness, into online shopping operations. High profile incidents of customer comments gone wrong like the infamous [Bic for Her reviews](#) on Amazon, are proof that for most businesses, soliciting feedback is just asking for trouble:

“ My husband has never allowed me to write, as he doesn't want me touching mens [BIC] pens. However when I saw this product, I decided to buy it (using my pocket money) and so far it has been fabulous! Once I had learnt to write, the feminine colour and the grip size (which was more suited to my delicate little hands) has enabled me to vent thoughts about new recipe ideas, sewing and gardening. My husband is less pleased with this product as he believes it will lead to more independence and he hates the feminine tingling sensation (along with the visions of fairies and rainbows) he gets whenever he picks it up. ”

Amazon review

Although funny for readers, the sarcasm contained in these reviews should, logically, damage your brand image. But the fact is that these reviews attract website visitors when shared on social platforms, many of whom must convert to paying customers. At the time of writing, Bic for Her is ranked 30th out of 1744 in Amazon's ballpoint pens category.



Pitfall 2

Negative reviews could cause brand damage

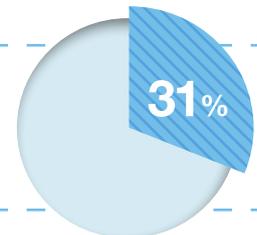
There is also the potential for customers to leave negative reviews based on your products or after-sales services. However very few of these complaints will be completely baseless.

However very few of these complaints will be completely baseless. Each will offer:

- 1 Guidance on where your business needs to improve.
- 2 A way to accurately assess customer sentiments about your company.
- 3 A chance to address the customer's issue in such a way that your initial failure is turned into a win, generating positive feedback in the process.
- 4 Balance to your reviews - 100% positive feedback is suspicious to savvy internet users.

The businesses worst affected by negative reviews are those who fail to act quickly and appropriately to complaints. Your business should encourage customers to leave public feedback in your domain, and prepare for the inevitable negative entries, rather than trying to stifle debate in the first place. Otherwise you risk complaints being aired outside your sphere of influence, making damage limitation even harder to manage. And don't ever take poor reviews personally. By remaining objective, you are better placed to address customer concerns properly.

31% of adults will vent about poor customer service using social media - [NewVoiceMedia](#)



Pitfall 3

Fake reviews could discredit your company

In the world of online retailing, business can be cutthroat, leading some brands to make some poor decisions about their own marketing activities. Some businesses, having recognised the importance of online reviews on consumer purchasing habits, resort to underhand tactics to try and discredit their competitors.

Smartphone giant Samsung was left publicly embarrassed (and facing a hefty fine) after being forced to admit it [paid students to leave negative reviews](#) about a competitor's products. The stunt backfired badly however, as consumer interest in the rival product increased and Samsung was accused of "evil marketing", damaging consumer trust in their brand.

“ Samsung Electronics Taiwan (SET) has ceased all marketing activities that involve the posting of anonymous comments, and will ensure that all SET online marketing activities will be fully compliant with the company’s Online Communications Credo.”
[The Register](#)

Some businesses may also seek to “balance” negative reviews by creating their own positive feedback. The temptation proves overwhelming, to the point that some ecommerce managers may be tempted to generate some positive vibes by being a little “creative”. But just as Samsung’s negative efforts damaged their reputation, your business could suffer a similar blow should the source of these reviews be exposed as your own employees.

The best way to avoid fake reviews is to use a verification system that restricts feedback to actual clients by asking reviewers to enter their order reference number, for example. In this way you can be sure that the feedback received is genuine, that the insights generated are real and that complaints raised really do need your attention. And you can rest easy in the knowledge that competitors will be unable to rig the feedback without actually buying your products! Also, make sure the review platform you’re using does not allow anonymous reviews, which are [fast becoming a thing of the past](#).

Next steps

These three pitfalls seem scary to many. However, the rewards online reviews can bring your business are well worth overcoming these obstacles - remember,

88% of online shoppers admit to using customer reviews as part of their purchase decision-making process.



Failure to solicit and publish customer reviews could be effectively restricting sales to the remaining 12% of shoppers, while the others head over to a competitor’s site where they can find the relevant customer reviews they want.



Download the free eGuide now:
**Top 5 Questions When Choosing
Your Online Review Platform**

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Sources

1. [Search Engine Land](#)
2. [Amazon](#)
3. [NewVoiceMedia](#)
4. [Huffington Post](#)
5. [The Register](#)