

5 Reasons to Love Your Negative Reviews



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Every retailer knows that customer reviews are an essential part of the online purchasing journey.

In order to feel confident in their decision to buy, shoppers want to know if a product is high quality, if the checkout process is painless and if their item will ship on time. Above all, they want to hear these details from the mouths of other consumers.

To support shopper-fueled reviews, many retailers collect store reviews, product reviews and Google seller ratings (which appear in Google search results).

But not every review is positive. Can the negative reviews help more than they hurt? The truth may surprise you.

The Bright Side of Negative Reviews

Most retailers now embrace the fact that consumer-generated reviews help reassure shoppers and drive sales—but what about the negative reviews? What about the *scathing* reviews, the ones that you fear will scare away potential customers before they add a single item to their cart?

Those negative reviews are not only important, they provide valuable benefits that are vastly underappreciated by many retailers.

1 They Validate Your Existing Reviews

When Bizrate Insights asked online shoppers what was most important with respect to store reviews, the most common answer was that the reviews must be “truthful.”

Few shoppers trust all positive reviews, and the occasional cantankerous rant lets shoppers know that you’re not screening reviews or surfacing all positive ones. This, in turn, adds greater credibility of all your positive reviews.

Bizrate Insights found that 75% of online shoppers look for a mix of both positive and negative store reviews, and

6% outright distrust a lack of negative reviews—meaning 81% look for some form of negative reviews when shopping online.

As [Holly Corder](#) writes in [Marketing Profs](#), “Seeing some negative reviews mixed in with the good can also make customers feel as if they’re ‘doing their research.’ If they see your not-so-perfect side and decide to make a purchase anyway, they’re likely more committed to the decision.”

2 They Help You Enhance the Customer Experience

A negative review may be painful to read, but in some ways it can also prove more useful for your business than a positive

one. Why? A negative review is a great way to identify problems with your online navigation, checkout process, payment system, order fulfillment and more.

Bizrate Insights found that on average, negative reviews are over two times the word count of positive reviews. Thus, negative reviews not only provide invaluable feedback, they provide richer details that enable e-tailers to deconstruct the rough patches in their customer's experience.

3 They Help Identify Bugs in the Checkout Process

One of the most common problems with online shopping is, of course, dealing with technical issues. In their special [Abandonment Report](#), Bizrate Insights found that about 1/3 of abandoners who intended to buy ended up leaving at checkout; the number one reason cited was "Web Technical Problems."

Identifying technical issues can be tricky in a staging environment, but negative reviews offer an excellent way to crowdsource your QA process and identify recurring bugs on a wider scale. Brands who are able to quickly identify and resolve common checkout issues will undoubtedly see a positive influence on conversions and abandonment reduction.

4 They Offer a Chance to Rebuild Relationships

While everyone likes high ratings and happy customers, you also need to know who you've disappointed and why, otherwise you risk sabotaging customer loyalty.

Responding to negative reviews with a strong customer service follow-up goes a long way in rebuilding a relationship with the customer, even if the first purchase was a disappointment. To do this effectively,

merchants must admit mistakes (if they were made), and offer to do right by the customer in a timely manner.

If the customer's review was inaccurate, take the time to politely explain why. In some cases the customer may just have misunderstood a feature, and a clarification may be all that's required.

5 They Help You Identify Problem Products

No retailer wants unsold inventory sitting on their shelves. Every product is bound to have a couple negative reviews, but a concentration of negative ratings and reviews around specific products can act as an indicator of either a misleading product description or poor quality.

If a product is pulling a low average rating and a high percentage of negative reviews, take a look at the return rate to corroborate whether the reviews align with lower-than-average customer satisfaction. This can help you decide whether an item should be taken off the shelf, or ad spend should be reduced in order to save from investing in inventory which will inevitably be returned.

Likewise, if a particular item is a strong seller and receives great reviews, you may decide to order a higher quantity to satisfy higher demand the following year.

**Why More Reviews =
More Rankings
& Revenue**

In case you needed further convincing, here are a few more reasons why encouraging—even incentivizing—shoppers to leave reviews can boost your bottom line.

Free Voice-of-Consumer Insights

Reviews provide your business with a huge, aggregated pool of honest consumer voices. They help illuminate what your customers are passionate about, why they purchase from you and how your products help them. You can even leverage the language customers use to describe your products in order to create a more authentic brand voice.

Search Engine Benefits

In general, Google recognizes unique and useful reviews as valuable content; consider that some businesses rank extremely well based solely on reviews, such as TripAdvisor or Yelp.

For retailers specifically, allowing product reviews activates the possibility of “rich snippets” in which Google sources your ratings to the search engine level; this can increase social proof as well as click-through rates.

On the store level, retailers can improve click-throughs to their website by leveraging free solutions like Bizrate Insights [seller ratings program](#), which publishes a brand's ratings on Google other search engines. Shoppers are more likely to click through to stores who display seller ratings.

Increased Likelihood to Purchase

Bizrate Insights found that store reviews are an important part of the consideration process for online shoppers. 88% of online shoppers consider store ratings when determining where to shop (and this number jumps up to 90% for Generations Y and X).

Reviews also provide tangible benefits to your conversions. According to [Internet Retailer](#), having product reviews can increase revenue by 62% per online visit.

However, to be truly valuable, these reviews must be deemed authentic. [According to eMarketer](#), consumers are 12x more likely to trust customer's review more than the vendor's. Luckily, embracing negative reviews along with the positive is one of the best ways assure shoppers of their credibility overall.

Want easy access to your customers' voices?

Let's talk.

Bizrate Insights conducts millions of customer surveys a month to help over 6,000 brands improve customer satisfaction, online experience and conversions. Best of all, our basic version is free.

[Contact us today](#) to get started.

About our research

The Bizrate Insights studies on Customer Use of Store Ratings and Customer Use of Store Reviews were conducted via the Bizrate Insights survey platform and offered to online buyers immediately after purchasing from the Bizrate Insights Network of over 5,000 e-commerce retailers in the US and Canada. Data from the Customer Use of Store Ratings was collected from 5,178 online buyers and Customer Use of Store Reviews studies was collected from 5,041 online buyers, each from January 22-27, 2015.

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