

3.3.2 Customer Reviews as Reputation Information

Customer reviews can be helpful for assessing the reputation of a store, business, or any website that offers products or services to users. You may consider a large number of detailed, trustworthy, positive user reviews as evidence of positive reputation for a store or business.

However, you should interpret customer reviews with care, particularly if there are only a few. Keep the following in mind:

- **Be skeptical of both positive and negative reviews.** Anyone can write them, including the website owner or someone whom the store or business hires for this purpose.
- **Try to find as many reviews as possible.** Any store or business can get a few negative reviews—this is completely normal and expected. Large stores and companies receive thousands of reviews, and most receive some negative ones.
- **Read the reviews because the content of the reviews matter, not just the number or star rating.** Credible, convincing reports of fraud and financial wrongdoing is evidence of extremely negative reputation. On the other hand, a single encounter with a rude clerk or the delayed receipt of a single package should not be considered negative reputation information. Please use your judgment.

3.3.3 How to Search for Reputation Information about a Website

Here is how to research the reputation of the website:

1. Identify the “homepage” of the website. For example, for the IBM website, ibm.com is the homepage. You may need to identify the content creator, if it is different from that of the overall website.
2. Using ibm.com as an example, try one or more of the following searches on Google:
 - `[ibm -site:ibm.com]` - A search for IBM that excludes pages on ibm.com.
 - `["ibm.com" -site:ibm.com]` - A search for “ibm.com” that excludes pages on ibm.com.
 - `[ibm reviews -site:ibm.com]` - A search for reviews of IBM that excludes pages on ibm.com.
 - `["ibm.com" reviews -site:ibm.com]` - A search for reviews of “ibm.com” that excludes pages on ibm.com.

Note: When searching for reputation information, try to find sources that were not written or created by the website or the company itself. For example, IBM might have official social media pages that it closely maintains, which would not be considered independent sources of reputation information about the company. See [here](#) for a Wikipedia article on identifying and using independent sources.

3. Look for articles, references, recommendations by experts, and other credible information written by people about the website.

High quality news articles and informational articles may be good sources of reputation information. Search for such articles. For example, try `[ibm site:en.wikipedia.org]`. News articles and informational articles can help you learn about a company and may include information specific to reputation, such as awards and other forms of recognition, or also controversies and issues. Note that some informational articles include a message warning users that there are disagreements on some of the content, or that the content may be outdated. This may be an indication that additional research is necessary.

4. Make sure the information you find is appropriate for judging the reputation of the website. For example, reputation information for YMYL topics should come from sources that have expertise in the associated YMYL topic.