

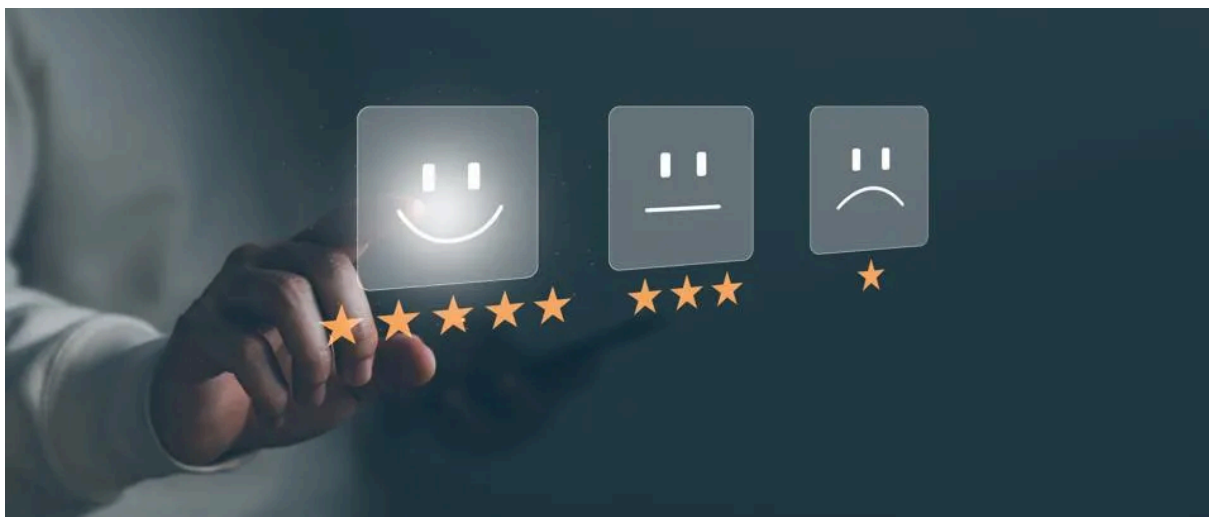
FORBES &gt; SMALL BUSINESS

# Online Review Trends Affecting Today's Consumers

**Michael Podolsky** Forbes Councils Member**Forbes Business Council** COUNCIL POST | Membership (Fee-Based)

Feb 8, 2024, 09:30am EST

*Cofounder and CEO of [PissedConsumer](#), a review platform that helps consumers be heard and brands improve their customer service processes.*



GETTY

Online reviews have become integral in many consumers' decision-making processes. With so much faith now being placed in peer recommendations, it's no surprise that many consumers read reviews before making a purchase.

Having worked closely with businesses to understand and work with customer feedback, I've seen firsthand how critical review management can be. Taking account of evolving consumer trends and behaviors is an

important part of developing strategies to ensure your business is meeting customer satisfaction standards. To that end, let's look at some statistics from recent consumer surveys that reveal consumer review trends.

An online review survey by my company focusing on the tangible benefits of customer feedback found that a remarkable **75.5% of consumers** put their trust in online reviews when making a purchase decision. On top of that, BrightLocal research revealed that **49% of consumers** trust reviews as much as they would a direct recommendation from their friends or family. This level of faith shows that consumers now largely depend on the opinions and experiences of their peers, online even more so than offline, when choosing between brands. With the purchase likelihood for a product with five reviews being **270%** greater than that of a product with no reviews, businesses simply cannot overlook the weight that online reviews carry.

## Negative Reviews And Their Impact

The negative review is the threat that strikes fear into reputation-conscious brands. While bad feedback is not the be-all and end-all, and can sometimes even be turned around to one's advantage, the impact of poor feedback that's visible to all is undeniable. Left unaddressed, even a solitary scathing review followed by a handful of less-than-complementary testimonials can be enough to put many buyers off.

---

MORE FROM **FORBES VETTED**

### Save Up To 75% With The Best Black Friday Clothing Deals That Are Still Running

By **Jordan Thomas** Forbes Staff

### 10 Unofficial Hoka Cyber Week Sales You Don't Want To Miss

By **Alexandra Polk** Contributor

---

No company, no matter the size, is immune to the issues that can come with public negative customer reviews—even if it's a large online retailer. For instance, Amazon fields a high volume of customer service inquiries and gets a large share of online complaints. While their scale means they are **well-positioned** to identify weak links in their operation and implement broad solutions, maintaining a positive reputation grows more challenging as online interactions increase, and even minor mistakes can go viral if not addressed properly.

## Evading Criticism

A worrying trend that is coming to light is the coercive tactics that some companies are resorting to in an attempt to massage their review scores. The online review survey by my company also found that 14.8% of those surveyed have reported being threatened by companies demanding the removal of negative reviews. Whilst incentivization to leave a review is just, penalizing the customer for not removing or editing a critical review is a very bad move, ethically and reputationally. Further antagonizing reviewers through such demands only compounds existing issues by making a brand appear insecure or deceptive.

## Learning From Online Reviews To Strengthen Your Brand

My experience has shown me how vital it can be for businesses to proactively monitor and engage with their online reviews. Cast aside any notions that reviews have negligible impact and thus can be ignored. Instead of digging the hole further, consider ways you can make online reviews—positive and negative—work for your business. Here are some steps to get you started:

### 1. Respond to all reviews.

Acknowledging each review, whether it be one star or five, shows customers you are paying attention. Promptly and thoughtfully address problematic reviews to reassure potential customers. Address problems sincerely, and thank reviewers for the time they took out of their day to provide you with useful feedback. Non-responses can breed mistrust and suggest to prospective buyers that when/if the time comes, their issues will also be ignored.

## **2. Empower your frontline staff.**

Customer service is your brand's first point of contact with its clients/customers. Equipping your CS team to confidently and swiftly identify, document and solve complaints can help stop small frictions from escalating into public retaliation through damning reviews.

Here, training is an important tool. Give your CS staff clarity and confidence in company products, processes and procedures, as well as the leeway to think laterally to devise unique solutions to particular customer problems. I also recommend bringing onboard AI assistance to help divert the more rudimentary inquiries away from your human staff, giving them more time to put their minds to trickier or more sensitive customer complaints.

- **Gather customer insights.**

Monitoring feedback and online review trends can provide a wealth of knowledge on pain points, preferences and data on different customer groups. This data can be put to work to refine your operation, your products and your service standards. What's more, keeping an eye open for patterns across positive and negative feedback can allow you to get the jump on emerging issues and take action to cool down potentially heated situations before they boil over.

## **Using Review Management For Long-Term Success**

Ultimately, trust in a brand is easily lost if the connection between the company and the customer fails. Both sides can benefit from active communication, and honest customer reviews, positive and negative, are important to maintaining a strong [brand reputation](#).

Keeping a close eye on what's being said in online reviews and identifying patterns in online review statistics can help your brand better understand the customer perspective. You can then put proactive strategies in place to eliminate problem areas and smooth out any stumbling blocks in the customer journey. With a sensitive and solution-oriented approach to handling reviews, you can build up your reputation and gain not only valuable, actionable insights but also advocates for your brand.

---

[Forbes Business Council](#) is the foremost growth and networking organization for business owners and leaders. *[Do I qualify?](#)*

---

*Follow me on [LinkedIn](#). Check out my [website](#).*



**Michael Podolsky**

Michael Podolsky, Co-founder and CEO of [PissedConsumer](#), a review platform that helps consumers be heard and brands... **Read More**

Editorial Standards

Forbes Accolades

---

ADVERTISEMENT

---