

**HOW CONSUMERS**

*Use Reviews*

**TODAY**



# HOW CONSUMERS USE REVIEWS TODAY

Earlier this year, Trustpilot conducted a research study to understand how online shoppers interact with reviews.

We wanted to focus on how consumers engage with reviews when deciding what to buy and who to buy from.

We surveyed over 1,000 customers about the importance of reading, writing and trusting online reviews.

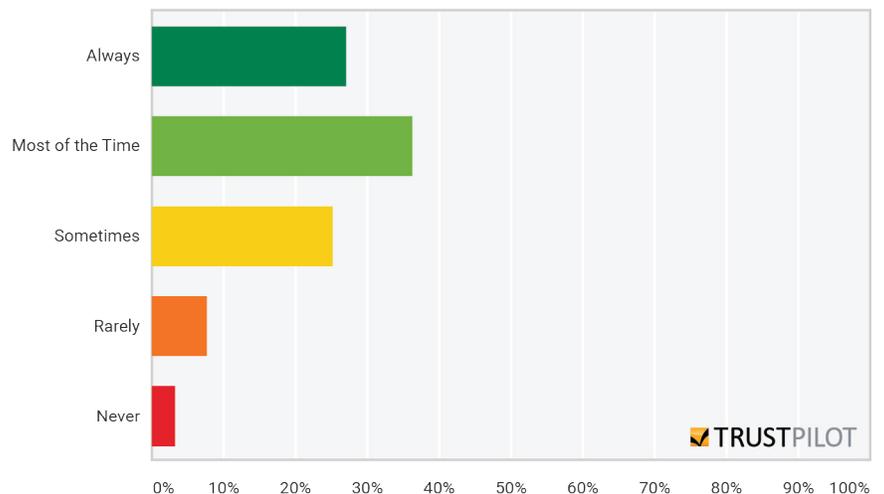
## SHOPPING HABITS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIEWS

First, let's consider how people shop. The majority of consumers are still doing most of their shopping in [physical stores](#), though online sales [continue to grow](#).

We found that when consumers do shop online, reviews play an important role in shaping their purchase decisions. 89% of people said they read reviews at least 'Sometimes' when they shop.

Since the majority of consumers are seeking reviews to help inform their purchase decisions, we wanted to research which factors consumers consider most important.

How often do you read reviews when shopping online?



## WHAT CUSTOMERS LOOK FOR

Half of the consumers surveyed cited overall rating (e.g 4 out of 5 stars) as the most important factor they considered when reading online reviews. After all, the overall rating is a high-level, easy-to-understand aggregation of a company's feedback. But there's also a case to be made for the recency and volume of reviews: 20% of consumers indicated that how recently the reviews were posted was the most important factor for them, and another 20% said that they considered the number of reviews posted to be most relevant.

When it comes to the content of reviews, online shoppers are looking for quality products and great customer service: 88% of respondents claimed phrases relating to product quality were 'very' or 'somewhat' important, and 82% of respondents placed the same amount of importance on comments pertaining to customer service and support.

Consumers also want to see that companies are delivering products and services in a timely manner, and staying engaged with their customers: 68% of consumers say that references to speed of delivery are important considerations when reading reviews, and 79% of consumers want to see companies responding to negative reviews.

So consumers are becoming increasingly reliant on reviews to make purchase decisions. But when are they most likely to read reviews, and how do they find this content?

## WHEN AND WHERE CONSUMERS READ REVIEWS

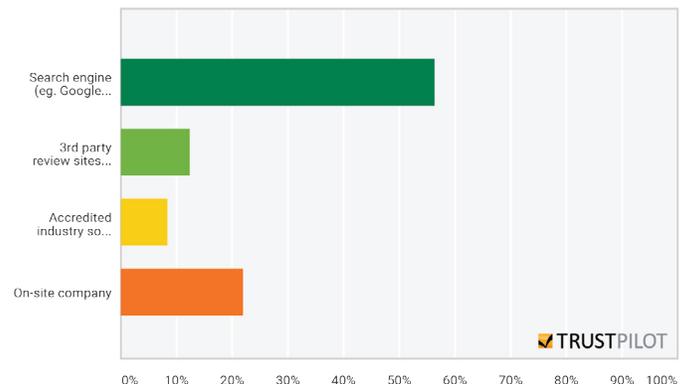
Nearly 1 in 5 consumers (19%) are reading reviews prior to visiting a company's site -- before they are even part of the conversion funnel. And 1 in 4 shoppers will read reviews right when they get to a company's site, before they start to shop.

But it's not as simple as reading reviews first, buying second. Consulting reviews and shopping are activities that tend to be done in tandem: 47% of consumers claim to read reviews while on a company's website, before they add items to their cart -- that is, while actively shopping. Engagement with reviews occurs throughout the conversion funnel, so ensure that your customer feedback is showcased to consumers at every step of their shopping experience.

And where are customers looking for reviews? The vast majority start their research in search engines before looking at 3rd party sites or company testimonials.

Consider the implications for you business. Make sure you optimise your review content for organic search, just like you would for your blog and landing pages, so that the great feedback you've collected ranks highly.

Where are you most likely to search for reviews about companies and/or products?

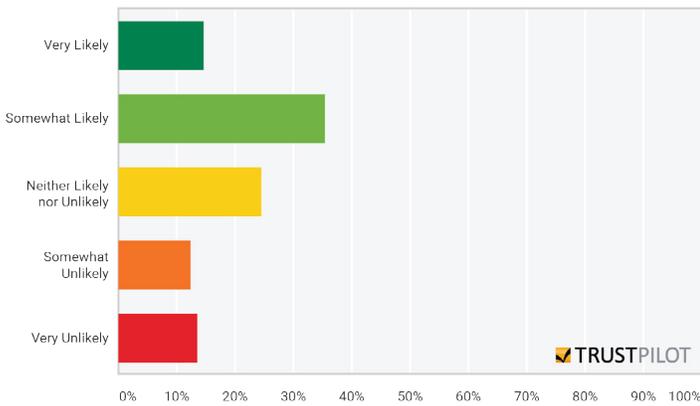


## WRITING REVIEWS

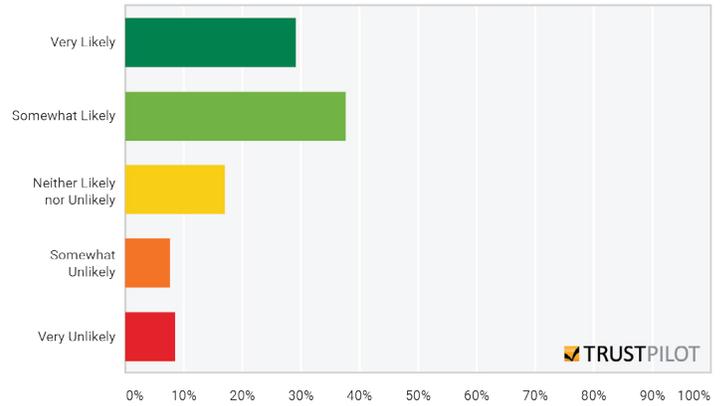
It's not just about reading reviews -- consumers also want to voice their opinions by writing reviews about products and companies. And the best way to ensure you're getting feedback from your customers is to ask them for it. We found that consumers are much more likely to write a review if asked by a company, than they are to independently post feedback.

Only 14% of consumers claimed to be 'Very Likely' to write an organic review -- meaning, on their own, without an invitation from a company. If a company takes the time to solicit customer feedback, the percentage of consumers that are 'Very Likely' to write a review jumps to 29%.

How likely are you to write a review on your own, without any invitation from the company?



How likely are you to write a review if a company invites you to review your experience after your purchase?



### KEY BUSINESS TAKEAWAYS:

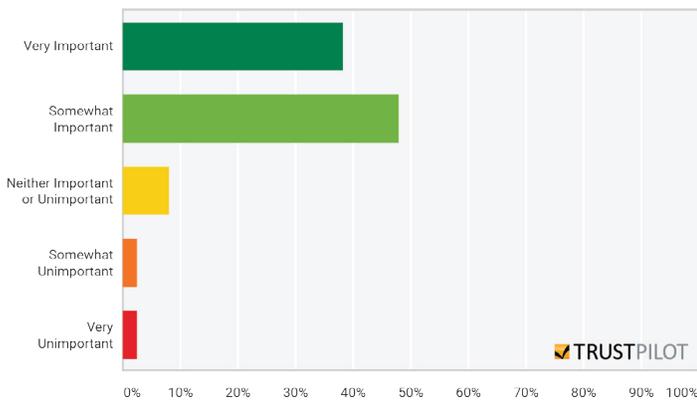
- As online shopping continues to grow, reviews will play a greater role in helping consumers research companies and make purchase decisions.
- Consumers will be consulting reviews even before they visit your site, and also while actively shopping your products and services. Make sure any feedback you have is easy for shoppers to find.
- Ask your customers for feedback. Listening to consumers is an excellent way to continually improve your business, and customers are more likely to give you their opinion if you ask for it.

# TYPES OF REVIEWS

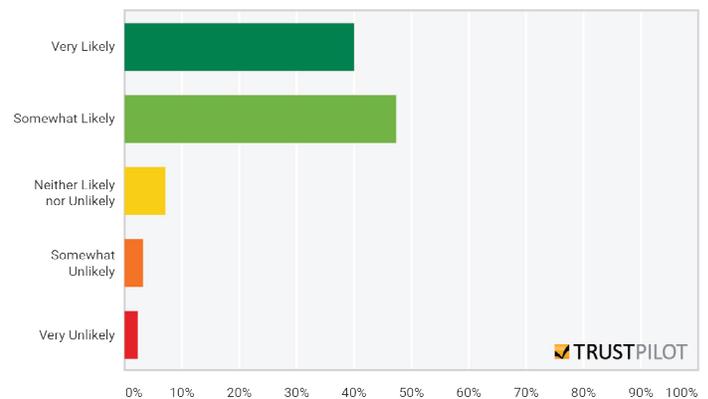
## REVIEWS ACROSS DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES

Not all reviews are created equal. Some focus on the evaluation of specific products – the quality, the price, any relevant features – while others provide opinions of the company – the customer service, speed of delivery, etc. In general, we find that consumers value both types of reviews: 88% of consumers said reviews are ‘Somewhat’ or ‘Very’ important when deciding which products to purchase and which companies to buy from.

**How influential are reviews when deciding which product to purchase?**



**How important are reviews when you are deciding which company to buy from?**



While the majority of shoppers will read multiple reviews on products and companies before making a purchase decision, we see that consumers tend to spend slightly more time researching specific products. Almost 60% of consumers read more than 3 reviews on a product, moderately higher than the 54% who read more than 3 reviews on a company.

Whether the review is of an individual product or a holistic experience of a business, consumers are more likely to write about a negative experience than a positive one. If buyers have a poor experience with a product or a company, 33% say that they would be ‘very likely’ to write a review expressing their displeasure. Only 20% of consumers who would be ‘very likely’ to write a review for a product or company after a good experience.

However, actual data shows this could be more perception than reality. For example, on Trustpilot, companies that are not proactively asking for reviews still see more 5-star reviews than 1-star reviews.

## REVIEWS ACROSS DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES

Consumers can now buy practically anything online. In addition to traditional e-commerce retail products like clothing and simple household items, consumers are now able to purchase automotive parts, apply for loans and research healthcare providers online. As companies from various industries conduct more business on the internet, reviews will play an important role in helping those businesses connect with consumers.

We asked consumers about the importance of reviews when shopping in the following categories:



**Software**



**Travel**



**Automotive**



**Health & Wellness**



**Financial Services**



**Retail (general)**

We found that online shoppers have varying opinions of reviews, based on the industry. Additionally, we see the importance of reviews in any given industry often mirrors the relative maturity of the industry's e-commerce presence. Industries in the midst of a significant transition from brick and mortar to online will rely on reviews to inform prospective customers and build trust in their brand. Industries that have been selling online for years will still find value in reviews, but consumers may be less likely to consult them. Industries that have recently moved online will see increased demand for consumer feedback as their e-commerce businesses mature.

Consider the two industries with the highest percentage of consumers saying online reviews were 'Very Important' for researching a company -- Automotive (53%) and Software (49%). Both industries are relatively new to the online market, and have been growing rapidly - leading to increased competition, and a demand for reviews. Online new car sales [exceeded £2.63m in 2015](#), which was an all-time high and is expected to grow over time, and the rapid growth of the 'as-a-service' business model has given rise to a number of software companies selling services and products online. Reviews will continue to play an important role in helping consumers find the best companies in these industries as more companies start to conduct business online.

General Retail -- think clothing, consumer electronics, etc -- is the largest and most established e-commerce industry. These players are, by now, well known, so it makes sense that only 37% of consumers claimed company reviews were 'very' important when researching e-retail companies. These numbers reflect what we already understood - when consumers have bought from the same e-tailers for years, they know which companies they prefer. While company reviews for e-retailers are still important, they may not have the influence they once had. (Note that 42% of consumers said reviews were very important when deciding which products to buy from online retailers, indicating that demand for reviews in this space has shifted to the product level. This also makes sense given that general e-retail companies will sell a number of different products).

Finally, consider Finance and Health & Wellness. Respondents were more 'neutral' when considering reviews in these industries. Yet research suggests we're in the midst of a shift to a more tech-centric approach when it comes to [healthcare](#), and financial companies are now [investing more than ever](#) in technology and digital advertising. As healthcare and finance companies continue to rapidly grow their online presence and invest heavily in digital advertising, online reviews will likely play a larger role for both consumers and businesses in these industries.



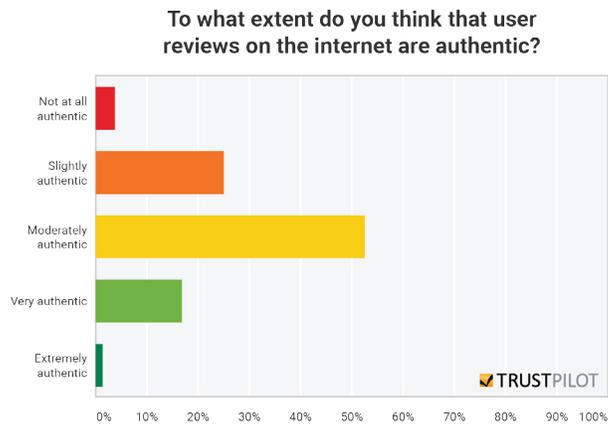
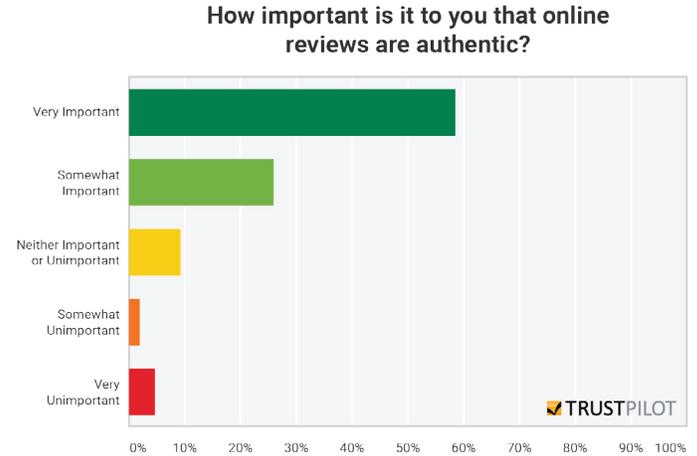
## KEY BUSINESS TAKEAWAYS:

- Analyse the sentiment of product and company reviews to make vital improvements to your business and products.
- Study online trends in your industry and consider how customer feedback can help you get a leg up on the competition, especially in emerging e-commerce industries.

# TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

If consumers are going to engage with online reviews, trust is paramount. Shoppers want to know the feedback they are reading is both reliable and relevant. It's surprising, then, that the data we collected shows a large gap between this demand for trust and the actual perception of authenticity for online reviews.

84% of consumers stated that it was 'somewhat' or 'very' important that online reviews are authentic.



But only 18% say they believe online reviews have a high level of authenticity. Most consumers have some skepticism – 52% of respondents think that online reviews are only 'moderately' authentic.

How does this perception of trust compare to other sources of information? We tend to trust the opinions of those closest to us: 73% of consumers trust what friends and family say more than online reviews.

However, independent review platforms are considered to be just as, if not more, trustworthy than content posted by a business on their company website: 80%

of respondents claim to trust independent, third-party reviews as much or more than feedback posted directly on a company's website. Additionally, 81% of consumers trust third-party review sites as much or more than comments posted on social media.



## KEY BUSINESS TAKEAWAYS:

- Consumers demand trustworthy online reviews. Ensure that trust is a central part of your customer feedback strategy in order to connect with skeptical shoppers, who may be unfamiliar with your products or do not have a personal connection to your brand.
- Third party review platforms are still trusted as much or more than other forms of consumer-generated feedback (e.g. social media).

# SUMMARY

As customer feedback becomes an increasingly important factor of the consumer buying process, reviews are playing a larger role in business strategy. Making your reviews easy to find is important, but interacting with customers -- inviting them to leave their opinion, responding to negative reviews, and using feedback to improve your business -- is even more crucial. After all, consumers want to know that you're not just hearing them, but that you're actually listening to what they're saying and improving your products and services to meet your customers' needs.

[Schedule a demo today!](#)