CHATMETER

How do consumers show brand love?

Consumer brand love and the online dialogue

Executive summary

We have come a long way since 1995 when Amazon began letting customers post reviews of products. Considered to be a risky retail gamble at the time – putting product commentary in the hands of customers – it inspired a revolution in customer feedback and engagement that launched more widely in 1999 with Epinions, RateItAll, and Deja.

Today, online reviews – through both traditional and non-traditional channels – are alive and well. Ranging from posts on OpenTable and Zocdoc to gaming platforms, and more, customers share their experiences with brands, and with each other, on a regular basis. Used for everything from evaluating product quality to selecting services, reviews have critical brand impact.

Overwhelmingly, customers see their reviews not just as a moment-in-time reaction to an experience, but as a dialogue – one they expect to be two-way. Customers post reviews as a way to engage with brands and help others make good decisions. For marketers focused on building brand loyalty and advocacy, this is not only good news, but an opportunity for differentiation.

Chatmeter recently initiated a survey to better understand how consumers use and perceive online reviews, what brands can do to fully leverage their reviews, and what the future holds when it comes to customer feedback.

We surveyed 1,369 consumers – all of whom have used a review to help in the decision-making process, and 94.5% of whom have posted a review in the last 12 months. It's clear that instead of shying away from the volumes of data that online reviews provide, marketers should embrace reviews and leverage technology that allows brands to build the competitiveness they seek.

At a time when enterprise CMOs and marketing leaders are taking a hard look at what will drive their marketing ROI, evaluating technologies to embrace, and developing strategies for growth in a tightening economy, the online review stands alone in its ability to impact the bottom line.

The survey also looked at specific consumer behaviors and perceptions across four vertical industries: **retail, restaurant, healthcare,** and **financial services**. The results indicate consumers have significantly different expectations and requirements across industries, and trust of online reviews varies greatly. It's critical that marketers don't assume that consumer behavior is a constant. Instead, marketers need to identify those actions that drive online review trust, usage, and engagement in a way that builds brand growth specific to their brand and industry.

This report highlights survey findings that repeatedly showcase the potential online reviews hold.

It's clear that instead of shying away from the volumes of data that online reviews provide, marketers should embrace it and leverage technology that allows them to build the brand competitiveness they seek.

Key areas of opportunity for brand leverage and growth:

Brand love and loyalty through a two-way customer dialogue.

Brand trust through customer engagement, and review frequency and authenticity.

Brand innovation insights through channel and technology usage trends.

Brand intelligence through deep listening across customer feedback.

Notable findings:

Reviews are part of everyday decision-making: Nearly 89% of respondents use online reviews to evaluate quality, and over 67% see them as an important part of deciding what to buy and want specific details such as pricing, features, options, and quality.

- **Expert advice and influence don't trump peer reviews:** There is a healthy skepticism regarding influencers, with 37.5% distrusting them.

Reviews are alive and well on SM: After Amazon (77%) and Google (62%), social media sites are the most popular places to read and post reviews with 51%.

- **Twitter is seen as a key communications channel:** Almost 25% of respondents have tweeted a compliment or a complaint about a company.

Review timeliness is important: More than 56% of respondents feel that reviews need to be posted within the past month to be relevant; only 6% believe that when the review is posted doesn't matter.

Brands can build better relationships with customers: 58% want brands to acknowledge their comments and fix problems quickly, and 51% want brands to make it easier to search and filter reviews by factors they care about, such as location, stars, product features, and more.

- **Customers are forgiving of mistakes when brands address their complaints:** 76% said they would go back and update a negative review if a company satisfied their complaint.
- **Customers can be enthusiastic brand ambassadors:** 74% of respondents who rarely leave online reviews would consider doing so after a great experience.

Consumers like new tech: 39% of respondents like the idea of using technology like ChatGPT for review information, and more than 30% of respondents like the idea of using the Metaverse for review information.

New review channels are emerging: Almost 13% of respondents use gaming platforms like Roblox, or games like Fortnite, for reviews, and more than 20% use chat tools.

Customers want to share – and they do.

The good news is that we have the tools and technology to elevate these online conversations into **strategic CX intelligence** that delivers both local and enterprise impact.
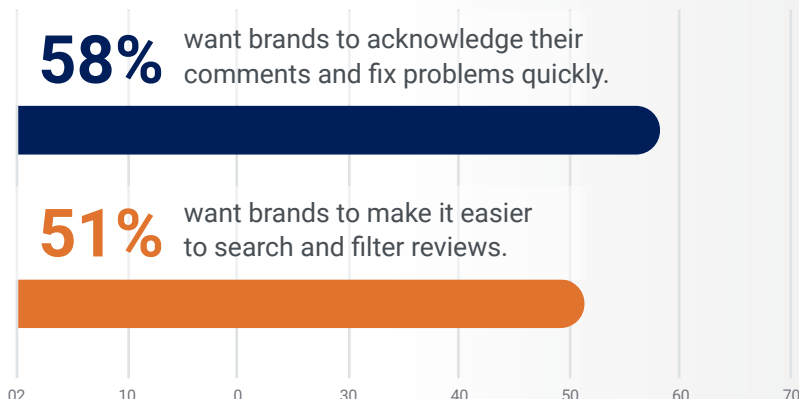
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Nearly **89%** of respondents use online reviews to evaluate quality.

58% want brands to acknowledge their comments and fix problems quickly.

51% want brands to make it easier to search and filter reviews.

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Methodology

A consumer-focused survey was sent out via SurveyMonkey with the goal of understanding consumer behavior around online reviews. The survey garnered 1,369 completed responses, with the criteria of having used an online review in the past 12 months. The respondents answered 31 logic-driven questions that were collected on January 8, 2023.

The target population was comprised of the following demographics:

- **Ages:** 18-60+
- **Male:** 45.81%
- **Female:** 54.91%

The respondents self-identified as frequent or infrequent review users and posters: 81.7% of respondents reported that they are frequent <u>users</u> of online reviews, while 35.6% reported that they are frequent <u>posters</u>.

There is an inherent bias observed in the survey. People who complete surveys are more likely to be technically savvy and are potentially more likely to use and leave online reviews. Most completed the survey using a mobile phone device. This should not affect the value of the responses for different weighted use levels of online review users.

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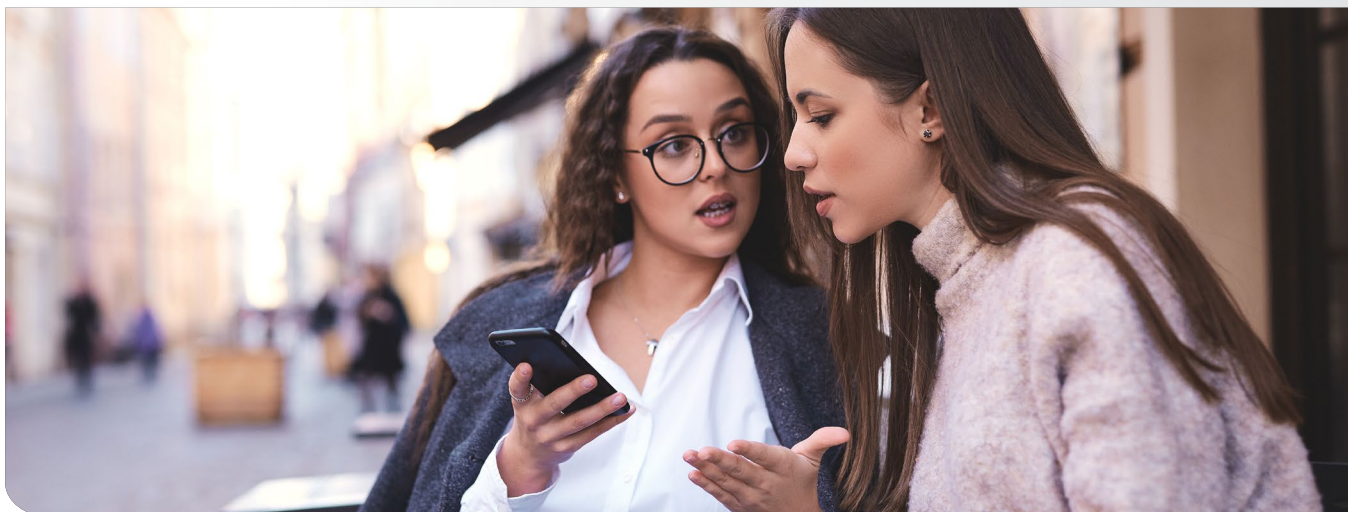
Build brand love through a two-way dialogue

The good news is online reviews across all channels offer marketers an opportunity to engage in a conversation where the customer is the initiator. The even better news is that these same customers expect and value your response.

Brand love and loyalty are built online through customer engagement and responsiveness. Customers seek a relationship where they feel they are being heard and that their voice matters. In return, they can and will become your best advocates.

- **Consumers use reviews more often than not.** When asked how often they use online reviews, 81.7% identified as frequent users. A staggering 88% of respondents said they use online reviews to evaluate the quality of a product or service.

- **Consumers want to have, and will reward, positive brand interactions.** 76% of respondents reported that if they posted a negative review and it was addressed to their satisfaction, they would go back and update their review – another 11% would go back and delete the negative review.

- **Reviews are valued, even by those who don't post themselves.** An overwhelming majority of responses indicate that online reviews are valuable, while only 35.6% of those surveyed indicated that they frequently posted their own reviews.

- **Consumers want to help others by providing valuable information in their reviews.** Over 81% of survey respondents read and post reviews because it is helpful for others.

- **Details are important.** 60% of survey respondents found company responses to reviews with comments that clear up their questions as being helpful.

- **Great service drives more reviews.** Consumers indicated that they usually post reviews when they have had a great experience with a company (72.7%) versus a terrible experience (62.8%), or when they want to give recognition to a specific employee who exceeded expectations (44.98%). Even self-described nonposters will consider posting based on an unbelievably positive experience (60.74%).
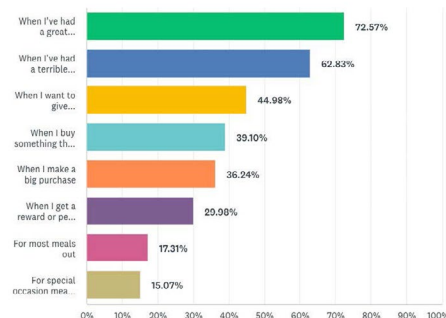
Vertical insight: Restaurant

68%
of respondents check recommendations on social media channels for restaurants.

71%
of respondents use online review sites for restaurant selection.

When do you post reviews and recommendations online? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 1,294   Skipped: 75

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
When I've had a great experience with a company (6)	72.57%	939
When I've had a terrible experience with a company (5)	62.83%	813
When I want to give recognition to an employee who exceeded my expectations (8)	44.98%	582
When I buy something that I think is fun or different (2)	39.10%	506
When I make a big purchase (1)	36.24%	469
When I get a reward or perk from the company by posting a review (7)	29.98%	388
For most meals out (3)	17.31%	224

Create brand trust through customer engagement, and review frequency and authenticity

Consumer trust of online reviews is driven by a number of factors and varies across industries. Consumers see review quantity, timeliness, and detail as part of the trust equation. In addition, despite the rise of social media influencers and industry experts, consumers show skepticism of these personalities.

The top three places where respondents have ever used or posted reviews are: Amazon (76.63%), Google (62.24%), or a social media platform, such as Facebook, Pinterest, or TikTok (51.13%). Online review sites, such as Yelp, OpenTable, and Zocdoc, ranked 5th at 45.87%, slightly below a company's own website at 46.6%.

However, users generally preferred online site reviews (70% like or love) over social media reviews (64% like or love).

- **Timely reviews are the most trusted.** More than 50% of respondents feel that reviews need to be posted within the past month to be trusted as relevant; less than 6% didn't feel that the timeliness of the review was important.

- **The more details, the better.** Reviews that include specific details, such as pricing, features, options, and quality are considered valuable (67.28%). Respondents (60.19%) also found value when the company responded and directly addressed questions or other feedback.

- **The more reviews, the better.** More than 60% of respondents felt that at least 6-10 reviews posted within the past two months were needed for them to build trust and have an influence on decision-making.

- **Incentives lead to more reviews.** Posters indicated they often leave reviews in order to receive an incentive, such as a coupon, discount code, or contest entry (44.13%).
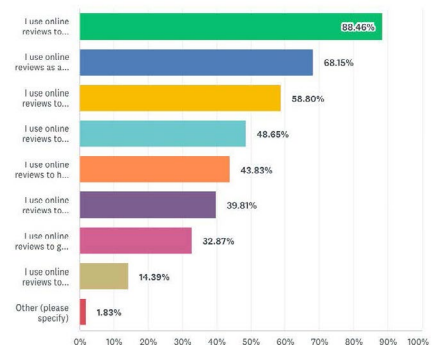
Vertical insight: Healthcare

56%
of respondents wished there were more reviews for healthcare services and doctors.

45%
of respondents want 11 or more reviews for a doctor or healthcare service for the reviews to be trusted and have influence.

Why do you use online reviews? (Check all that apply)
Answered: 1,369 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I use online reviews to evaluate the quality of a product or service (1)	88.46%	1,211
I use online reviews as an important part of deciding what to buy (3)	68.15%	933
I use online reviews to choose a restaurant (5)	58.80%	805
I use online reviews to evaluate the pricing of a product or service (2)	48.65%	666
I use online reviews to help plan my vacations (6)	43.83%	600
I use online reviews to choose doctors and medical specialists (7)	39.81%	545
I use online reviews to get ideas for a gift (4)	32.87%	450

Accelerate brand innovation by leveraging channel and technology usage trends

Many consumers are early adopters and brands need to be aware that online reviews and customer commentary are rapidly expanding to powerful new channels. Less than 18 months ago, ChatGPT didn't exist, Meta was still Facebook, the metaverse hadn't really hit mainstream audiences, and TikTok was just coming into its own. In contrast, our survey shows consumers posting reviews on Roblox and Fortnite, and showing interest and appreciation for what ChatGPT and the metaverse can bring to reviews and the overall brand experience.

Brand innovation can also come in the form of making review posts easier and more convenient. It's not that consumers don't want to post (only 10 respondents consider themselves "never posters"), but their inclination to do so can be increased through technology.

- **I like the sites I use in large part because they're easy:** Amazon, Google, and online review sites are the most liked places to use and post reviews. When asked why, ease of use was the number one reason.

- **People want to post reviews, but it needs to be easy and convenient.** Posters indicated that they are more likely to post a review if it is easy or convenient to do.

In addition, nearly 50% of non-posters don't post due to perceived relevance and convenience and 15% said they didn't post because they don't want to download an app.

- **Consumers like innovation:** 39% of respondents liked the idea of using technology like ChatGPT for review information and more than 30% of respondents like the idea of using the Metaverse. Nearly 50% liked the idea of having video capabilities in traditional online review sites.

- **Age matters:** Almost twice as many Gen Xers "liked very much" the concept of ChatGPT for reviews compared to Gen Zers. More than twice as many Gen Xers "liked very much" the concept of Metaverse for reviews compared to Gen Zers. Most surprisingly, over 30% each of Gen Xers and Millennials have used gaming platforms for reviews!

In addition, while only 11% of respondents who post reviews have posted a video review of something they bought on TikTok, over 18% of respondents aged 18-29 have.

Consumers like innovation:

39% of respondents liked the idea of using technology like ChatGPT for review information and more than 30% of respondents like the idea of using the Metaverse.

Vertical insight:
Financial services

43.5%
of respondents wish there were better ways to search reviews for financial services providers and advisors.

38%
of respondents wished there were more reviews for financial services providers and advisors.

Surface brand intelligence through deep listening across customer feedback

Consumers are eager to share their experiences – both good and bad. Using multiple channels, they share everything from what they ate, what they bought and what they thought, to where they're traveling next and what their financial advisor had to say. Beyond stars and structured rating systems, consumer commentary is rich in detail for other consumers and the brand itself, represented in posts, tweets, videos, and other forms of communication.

As we saw in our earlier commentary, new platforms and technologies such as gaming, ChatGPT, and the Metaverse will garner even more customer commentary waiting to be mined.

An article from MIT Sloan states that a majority of data (80% to 90%, according to multiple analyst estimates) is unstructured information like text, video, audio, social media, and more: a huge untapped resource with the potential to create competitive advantage for companies that figure out how to use it. For marketers, especially those with multiple locations to manage and mine, a location CX platform with brand intelligence is critical.

- **Customer commentary exists everywhere.** Over 20% of respondents use chat tools for reviews. Over 38% of Gen Xers have used chat tools such as iMessage, Google Chat, Slack, What's App, etc. for sharing reviews, while 36% have written a compliment or a complaint about a company and shared it via text, Slack, or in a group chat.

- **Non-posters still share.** Non-posters indicated that they share their opinions about a product or service directly with friends and family through other channels, such as text messages (35.58%).

- **Social media channels matter.** Almost 25% of respondents have tweeted a compliment or a complaint about a company on Twitter.

- **Don't forget the company or brand website.** Gen X (49%) and Baby Boomers (53%) use a company or brand's own site for review information.

Don't forget the company or brand website. **Gen X (49%) and Baby Boomers (53%) use a company or brand's own site for review information.**

Vertical insight: Retail

64%

of respondents feel that there are too many fake reviews for retail and brand purchases.

Only **52%** of respondents trust retail reviews – an opportunity to improve!

The Opportunity for Marketers

Online reviews are key to building brand love and loyalty, while also essential in attracting new customers. Deep listening to the "chatter that matters" – the customer commentary that goes on across platforms – is critical.

Direct customer feedback continues to be the most honest and accurate assessment of a brand's performance. Both solicited and unsolicited commentary from consumers gives marketers real, onthe- ground intelligence of the customer experience.

This online feedback, be that reviews, shared posts, tweets, videos, commentary left on a website, or some other communique, provides brands with customer insight and competitive intelligence unavailable through other means, at a volume that can be hard to replicate.

In short, reviews matter. A lot. Technology exists to help marketers respond to reviews in near real-time, and at scale, while also flagging negative reviews that need to be addressed immediately so that there is opportunity for a positive resolution. These two actions alone can have a tremendous brand impact.

In addition, thoughtful responses to reviews that highlight aspects of your value proposition are an opportunity to provide the detail that consumers crave. More than a "thank you for your post," brands can respond with key details about their product or service that other reviewers will see – and appreciate.

These online dialogues from customers are just that – dialogues – expected to be twoway, personal conversations. And through them, brands have the ability to transform a customer to an advocate, a one-time buyer to a life-time consumer.

Beyond the more obvious, yet essential, reputation management opportunities, lies the greater potential of brand intelligence. Local brand intelligence – the mining of how customers feel about your brand in a particular location – can help create a strategic advantage over the competition. That opportunity lies in the use of AI-powered technology that delves into unstructured data and surfaces insights unavailable through other means.

Reviews have impact. G2, **the world's most trusted tech marketplace and review platform indicates that:**

31%

more money is spent by customers when your business has positive reviews.

90%

of buyers are more likely to convert after reading reviews.

61%

of people who end up making a purchase read anywhere between 11-50 reviews.

What features of a review make it the most helpful? (Please select all that apply)

Answered: 1,369   Skipped: 0

Specific details such...	67.28%
When a company responds to...	60.19%
Explanations for the star...	59.82%
A story about the experien...	46.46%
Specific details such...	40.18%
A video (such as a make-up...	35.06%
None of the above	1.46%

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Specific details such as pricing, features, options, and quality are included (7)	67.28%	921
When a company responds to reviews with helpful comments that clear up my questions (6)	60.19%	824
Explanations for the stars given (2)	59.82%	819
A story about the experience is included (3)	46.46%	636
Specific details such as the names of people, products, location descriptors, etc. are included (4)	40.18%	550
A video (such as a make-up tutorial, a product demo, or an unboxing demonstration) is included (5)	35.06%	480

Today's marketing leaders are overwhelmed by too much data and not enough information. Technology can change that equation to give marketers useful, actionable insights from data that enable more strategic decisions. Unstructured data lies within online reviews, social media, and other channels – and it can be tapped to surface insights that no amount of manual data splicing and no technology that isn't using AI and natural language processing can conquer. **We have arrived at a point where people are talking to brands and in order to engage in a highly personal way and react to what we hear, we need advanced technology.**

But the investment is worth it: brand love and loyalty drive brand revenue. For example, a whopping [45% of diners](#) go out to eat multiple times a week, with another 20% going out to eat once a week. With reviews as a major source of influence – across dozens of industries – we are talking about hundreds of billions of dollars, and potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single location.

Where else in marketing does the door to consumer engagement and loyalty open so wide and without sales pressure than the online review? Optimizing the power and passion of the voice of the consumer is paramount – now more than ever. The right technology can pave the way.

> Brand love and loyalty drive brand revenue. With reviews as a major source of influence – across dozens of industries – **hundreds of billions of dollars are potentially at play, including hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single location.**

About Chatmeter

Chatmeter is the only reputation management and brand intelligence company to combine AI-powered deep listening with real-time CX agility to drive customer loyalty and growth for multi-location enterprises. A leader in Location CX, Chatmeter powers success for thousands of global brands, simplifying CX management, improving reputation scores, and delivering unmatched brand intelligence at both the local and enterprise level.

Focused on creating a strategic advantage for multi-location, omnichannel reputation management, Chatmeter has created a scaled platform that enables end-to-end visibility for everyone, from local owners to executive leadership. With a 93% customer retention rate, Chatmeter is the brand reputation partner of choice across the retail, restaurant, healthcare and financial services industries, and more.

For more information on Chatmeter's end-to-end Reputation Management x Brand Intelligence platform, please visit **www.chatmeter.com**, or **contact us for a demo!**

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