

Was It Really That Good? How Written Customer Feedback Impacts Customer Evaluations, Attitudes and Intentions

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Keywords: *customer feedback, mere measurement, tie strength, remembered enjoyment*

Description: *Using an experimental context to vary how customer feedback is solicited and measured, it was shown that customers' evaluations of consumption experiences could be changed and more favorable attitudes and intentions towards the requestor could be created.*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Customer feedback solicitations have become nearly ubiquitous: When buying products online, consuming meals in a canteen or going through airport security, one would be hard-pressed not to be asked for customer feedback. “HappyOrNot,” a leading Finnish startup in this area, reported that its feedback terminals have generated over six hundred million responses, more than the total number of online customer ratings posted on Amazon, Yelp, or TripAdvisor (Owen, 2018).

The increasing importance of customer feedback is not only felt by customers, but also by managers. In 2016, 94% of 503 U.S. business executives agreed that listening to customer feedback is increasingly critical to the bottom line (hundredx, 2016).

However, previous research has not focused on how being asked for and giving feedback impacts consumers. Both practical advice and scientific research rather focus on how to get many consumers to provide feedback and how to best make use of customer feedback.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate how different mechanisms to solicit and measure customer feedback impact the feedbacking customers' evaluations of the consumption experience.

Method and Data

Ninety-four participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk took part in the main study. Participants were told

that they would watch and evaluate a movie. While watching the movie, they had to indicate how much they were enjoying the movie every thirty seconds on a seven-point Likert scale. Subsequently, the computer randomly assigned participants to one of the feedback conditions, which were either writing or thinking. In the writing condition, participants had to provide feedback on the movie in writing. They had to write five texts: One text per systematic cue identified in a prestudy. In the thinking condition, participants had to provide feedback on the movie with the help of seven-point Likert scales. There was one Likert scale per systematic cue identified, i.e. five scales in total. After completing the feedback, the participants were asked to fill in the evaluation sheet.

Summary of Findings

The research addresses a critical but understudied issue in marketing: The impact of customer feedback on the feedbacker. It shows that written customer feedback influences customers' evaluations of consumption experiences, as well as their intentions to broadcast their experience (i.e. share the movie with many other people) and the perceived strength of their tie to the provider of the experience. Specifically, written feedback has shown to dampen evaluations of consumption experiences, i.e. makes evaluations less extreme.

Key Contributions

This approach contributes to prior work on providing feedback in several ways:

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First, in contrast to previous research, which focused on how to best use the data gained from customer feedback, I investigate the effects of soliciting and measuring realistic feedback mechanisms on the customer.

Second, while the previous study on soliciting and measuring customer feedback by Bone et al. (2017) varied the feedback questions and their requested valence, I broaden existing theory by holding the questions constant and instead varying the way they are measured.

Finally, I provide the counterintuitive advice to practitioners to not make feedback easy and to not focus on high feedback scores. Rather, companies should aim to make customers think and understand their consumption experience, as this can lead to stronger and more favorable evaluations of companies' products or services.

References are available on request.