

CUSTOMER'S REVIEWS ON THE INTERNET - POSSIBILITY OF PROMOTION OR A THREAT FOR ENTERPRISES

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Abstract: Nowadays, many customers start looking for their dream product or service by reading reviews published about them on the Internet. The universal process of digitization and easy access to the Internet allowed for the development of this type of information source. The problem is how to classify this phenomenon, whether the reviews published on the Internet are free advertising for a given enterprise or rather a threat related to the negative attitude of customers. The aim of this paper is to analyze the respondents' approach to publishing reviews on the products and services they purchased. The author wanted to check whether the respondents had will to share their reviews with other Internet users, why they wrote such reviews, if they wrote more often positive or negative reviews. A short online survey, which was published in the period January 2021 - June 2021, was used as a source of information. The respondents were people using both traditional shops and e-shops who wanted to share their experience in writing reviews on the Internet.

Keywords: e-commerce, digitalization, customer's reviews, Internet

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons for changes in the external environment, but also in the enterprise, is Revolution 4.0. It is mainly related to the need to digitize individual processes, but also to process huge amounts of data. The ubiquitous digitization, the development of the Internet and the ability to collect and process huge amounts of data in real time mean that modern enterprises must increase their competition and introduce digitally supported production and sales technologies (Grabowska, 2020).

The digitization process has therefore become the basis for competitiveness in the business and industrial environment (Bejtkovský et al., 2018). Châlons and Dufft (2016), (Petter et al., 2012) claim that digital information and communication technologies are changing dynamically and have a huge impact on almost every aspect and aspect of everyday life. It is also related to the digitization of everyday life of customers, who have transferred many of their activities to the Internet. They also buy various products on the Internet, use various types of services, evaluate them,

and want to be able to contact them easily and quickly service them. It can therefore be concluded that the Internet has become a channel that can increase competition in the industry (Kalia, 2017). It allows to reach a very wide group of customers that would be difficult to get in a traditional way.

The development of the Internet also means the emergence of various types of social media. These media have become the main media platforms for sharing personal information, messages, photos, videos and are an indispensable communication platform to facilitate online user interactions. It is also a place where people often share their experiences and feelings, describing various types of situations. This also tell about their purchases. There are also special pages dedicated to reviews on products or services purchased by customers.

Quality has become the basis of management in every enterprise. Sales volume, profit and customer satisfaction depend on the quality of products and services (Holota et al., 2019; Kardas et al., 2017; Niciejewska et al., 2021; Pietraszek et al., 2020; Porubcinova et al., 2020; Dulska et al., 2021). The attention should be also paid to the concept of e-commerce quality related to online shopping and everything that happens on this topic on the Internet (Ingaldi and Ulewicz, 2019).

Another important change in everyday life of enterprises and customers is the market, which belongs to customers who decide what and where to buy. Nowadays, the customer wants a higher and higher level of service, which is related to his increasingly higher requirements. Enterprises in almost every segment of the market began to realize that a higher level of customer service affects the quality of products sold and services provided, which allows them to fight competition on the market. Many customers are guided by the price of products and services (Pilarz and Kot, 2019), but also by the method of service.

It should be remembered that enterprises that strive to be successful in the market and achieve high profitability should treat customer satisfaction as a significant goal, which is associated with a high level of product and service quality that will influence the achievement of high customer satisfaction (Midor and Kučera, 2018; Lazar et al., 2021), and thus allow to generate an appropriate profit.

In addition to the typical quality assessment, the analysis of customer feedback is also important. Due to the fact that more and more people decide to publish reviews on the purchased products or services, it is worth reading such reviews, reacting in order to be able to influence customers and their feelings, find out what customers like and what does not. Reviews can therefore be treated as a rich source of information about the offered and sold products and services. Unfortunately, negative advertising is difficult to eliminate, and negative reviews can be such an advertisement. Therefore, it should be considered whether customer's reviews should be treated as an opportunity to promote the enterprise, offered products or services, or rather as a kind of threat that may scare other potential customers.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the respondents' approach to publishing reviews on the products and services they purchased. The author wanted to check whether the respondents had will to share their reviews with other Internet users, why they wrote such reviews, if they wrote more often positive or negative reviews. A short online survey, which was published in the period January 2021 - June 2021, was used

as a source of information. The respondents were people using both traditional shops and e-shops who wanted to share their experience in writing reviews on the Internet.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Internet marketing is the use of Internet-related services to implement and support marketing activities. The most expressive marketing activities on the Internet include: promoting the company's image, marketing research, bar advertising, public relations, online distribution (Kot and Grabara, 2008; Štefko et al., 2011). It allows to gain new customers, to promote products and services by the enterprise, but also to contact customers. One of the factors influencing its functioning is the quality of the offered products and services.

In the literature of service quality assessment methods (Ingaldi, 2018). It should be remembered that shopping is also a service process, where the shop is an intermediary between the manufacturer or wholesaler and the customer. Therefore, when evaluating the purchases, one should use tools typical for services. In this case, however, the research can be extended to include the quality of the product.

One of the factors allowing to shape safety and quality of any service is an review of its customer (Kowalik, 2020). They can be used both to evaluate the service itself and the offered products. So it has a very wide application.

Along with the increase in the purchasing trend, customer feedback on products and services appropriately influenced purchasing decisions when shopping. This can be explained by the fact that customers have no other likely way of verifying the actual products or services. However, so far there are no common standards for assessing customer feedback as each customer has a different sense of value. In such cases, after taking into account another customer's review about a product we are currently using, we may change our own assessment of the current product compared to the other product (Kuromi et al., 2018).

Every day, numerous product reviews are published on the Internet, differentiated in terms of quality, and great importance is attached to assessing the quality of these reviews (Min and Park, 2012). They can be viewed as a positive advertising instrument, but often, negative advertising can cause many customers to turn away from a particular enterprise, and go to the competition.

Review research and sentiment analysis are useful for extracting subjective information from bulk text documents. Predicting customer feedback on products has several advantages, such as reducing customer turnover, agent monitoring, multi-customer support, overall customer satisfaction tracking and up-selling opportunities. While conducting sentiment analysis is a difficult task for researchers to identify user sentiment from big data, it is inherently unstructured and also includes slang, spelling errors, and abbreviations. To address this problem, the study developed a new proposed system (Mandhula et al., 2020). It can be said that the reviews are some kind of advertising, or in the case of negative reviews, anti-advertising of the evaluated product. 47% of shoppers read product reviews before buying online, and 63% are more likely to shop from online review or rating websites (Gogoi 2007). Many studies (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2003; Godes and Mayzlin 2004) have found a link between online reviews and product sales. Therefore, this topic cannot be ignored.

Product reviews have great commercial value for the online shopping market. Identifying customer feedback from product reviews is helpful in streamlining the marketing decisions of customers, sellers and manufacturers (Hong and Wang, 2021). This customer's voice should be taken into account. Often, customers in ordinary research are not able to express their real feelings about a product or service. Therefore, reviews are a very good solution that may allow the collection of information specific for this instrument.

However, we should be aware of certain phenomena that occur with this type of instrument. First, they are fictitious reviews that some enterprises publish on their own or through paid individuals to increase the credibility of the products and services they offer. On the other hand, negative reviews published by competitors in order to discredit a given enterprise and make customers give up shopping in that enterprise. That is why the subject of customer feedback is so important and fast reaction is so needed.

Bernatowicz and Małyszko in their paper (2014) indicated the main reasons for publishing reviews by customers:

- willingness to help or harm a given product or service provider through a positive or negative review, depending on the reviewer's satisfaction,
- altruistic motives - willingness to help other consumers (recommendation of a good product or advice to avoid a bad one) who may potentially be buyers of a given product or service,
- pleasure derived from the very fact of sharing their experiences,
- publishing reviews is sometimes rewarded with various incentives, e.g. participation in a competition or vouchers,
- willingness to persuade a given product or service provider to take specific actions related to the product, for example by publishing a negative review of the product on the entity's website, indicating the defects found.

For many customers, reviews published on the Internet are the primary source of knowledge about a product or service, therefore this subject should be analyzed.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the study was to analyze the respondents' approach to publishing reviews on the products and services they buy on the Internet. Due to the research, it was possible to indicate whether the respondents are willing to publish such reviews, what are the reasons for their publication and what forms of publication the respondents most often use.

The research was conducted with use of a short online survey form. This survey was published on various types of social media. It consisted of 6 basic questions concerning directly publishing an review and second part with respondents' characteristics. The questionnaire contained closed questions or two semi-open questions, where the answer "other" was taken into account. In case of three questions, the respondents could choose more than one answer.

The survey was conducted in the period January 2021 - June 2021. The respondents were people using both traditional shops and e-shops who wanted to share their experience in writing reviews on the Internet. 387 respondents from southern Poland took part in the survey.

First, the reliability of the results were analyzed. However, due to publication limitations, the results of this part of the analysis were not presented in the paper. However, the reliability analysis confirmed that the results can be further analyzed. Percentages of answers to individual questions were calculated, and then the data was presented in the form of pie charts (single-choice questions) or bar charts (multiple-choice questions).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning, the structure of respondents participating in the study was analyzed (Fig. 1-4). Women (59%) more often took part in the study than men (41%). When it comes to the age of the respondents, the most frequent participants were people aged 21-30 (29%) and 31-40 (21%). It is noteworthy that people aged 61-70 only accounted for 3% of the respondents and there was no one over the age of 70, which means that the elderly accounted for a very small percentage of the respondents. As far as education is concerned, the study covered mainly people with higher (46%) and secondary education (38%). There were no persons with primary or lower secondary education. Most of the respondents participating in the survey are people who work (62%). Students constituted 27% of all respondents. It is worth noting that the unemployed, pensioners or retired constituted a small percentage of the respondents. From this analysis, a statistical figure of the person participating in the internet research emerges.

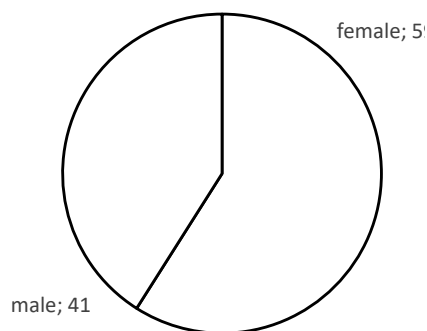


Fig. 1. Gender [%]

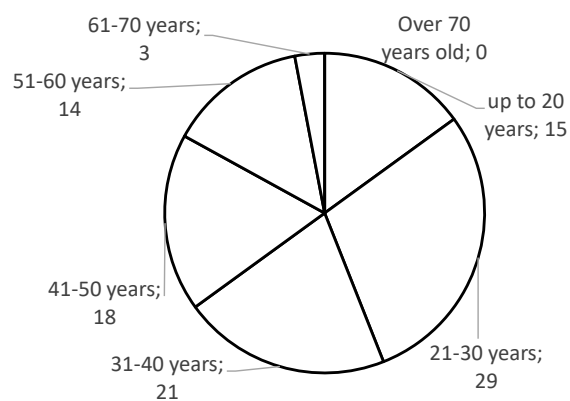


Fig. 2. Age [%]

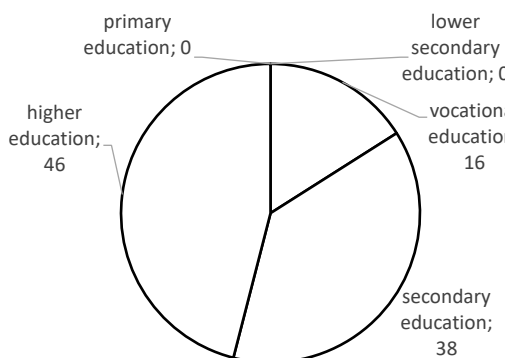


Fig. 3. Education [%]

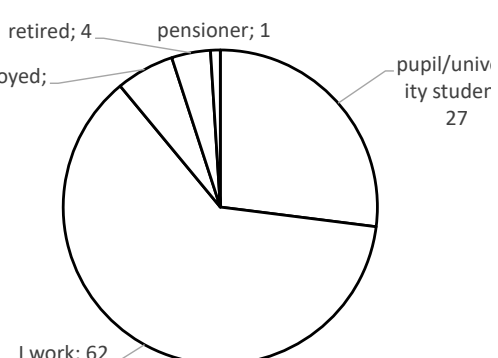


Fig. 4. Social status [%]

At the beginning, the respondents were asked if they read reviews about products or services on the Internet (Fig. 5). Most people do it often (53%), some say they always do it (29%). These people want to read the reviews of other people before buying products and services, they look for additional information about the products they order. Only 3% of respondents declared that they did not do it, and 1% did not remember. This is a hint for companies that many people nowadays treat the Internet as a source of knowledge about products and services, so it is important to appear on the Internet in order to give the opportunity to publish reviews to the customers.

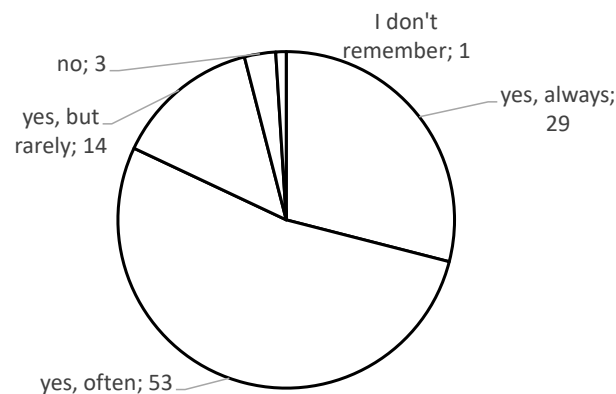


Fig. 5. Do you read reviews about products / services on the Internet?

Then the respondents were asked if they published their reviews on products or services on the Internet (Fig. 6). Most respondents do it often (47%) or always (24%). 6% of the respondents declared that they did not do it. When buying products or ordering services, they do not always need to share their experience or describe the level of their satisfaction. It may also be related to the lack of such a request from the enterprises selling their products or services to them. However, it should be emphasized that the percentage of people publishing their reviews is very high. It was not asked in the survey whether the review concerned traditional or online products and services. Perhaps most of the responses concern the second type of products and services, where a request for review is often sent automatically by companies. This area should be examined in more detail in the next study.

People who did not publish their reviews on the Internet or do not remember about it, ended their participation in the survey at this point. On the other hand, people who even rarely did it were asked to answer further questions. First of all, it was asked whether their reviews were more often positive or negative (Fig. 7). In case of this question, a fairly even distribution of answers can be observed. Most often, however, the respondent publishes negative reviews (39%). 22% of the respondents could not answer this question. Here, attention should be paid to a very serious problem that can be encountered while surfing the Internet, namely the ubiquitous "hate". People who are polite on a daily basis, express themselves well about others, on the Internet can change dramatically. Often, negative reviews may not result from the low quality of the purchased products or services, but from the willingness to show dissatisfaction or superiority on the part of the customer. On the other hand, if the respondent is not

directly observed, sometimes he can open up more and describe his actual feelings towards the purchased products or services.



Fig. 6. Do you post product / service reviews on the Internet? [%]

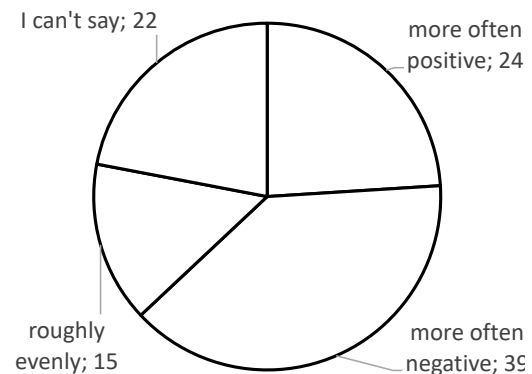


Fig. 7. Are there positive or negative reviews more often? [%]

Respondents were asked how they present their review on the Internet (Fig. 8). They most often evaluate products or services using various types of scales (points). Such scales are used on many websites where people can publish their reviews, and almost 80% of respondents declared this answer. The use of the scale alone does not always allow others to obtain the appropriate amount of information on the quality of products or services, but only in the scope of the used scale. Respondents often describe their experience with a product or service (almost 60%). Here people can get a lot of unusual information that the review makers have decided to describe. Sometimes it relates directly to the assessed products or services, in other cases the respondents describe their feelings. Unfortunately, sometimes in such situations we can find offensive or vulgar sentences or phrases. Only some of the respondents also add a video with reviews or photos (both answers were indicated by less than 20% of the respondents). But it should be remembered that due to videos and photos people can document their reviews, emphasizing its truthfulness and reliability, but also pointing out details important to potential customers.

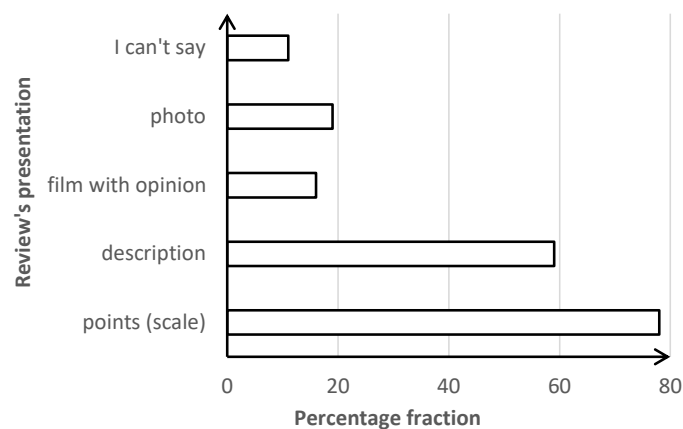


Fig. 8. How do you present your reviews (more answers possible)? [%]

Respondents decide to publish their reviews due to various factors (Fig. 9). They the most often respond to an email asking for an review (almost 60%). These are probably people who buy products and services on the Internet. It is standard practice for service providers to ask their customers for feedback in the email. Over 40% of respondents indicated a flyer or business card asking for an review (similar to a response to an email), but also publish their review because others do it. Perhaps it is a pressure from the other people. If other people post their reviews, why they can't do it.

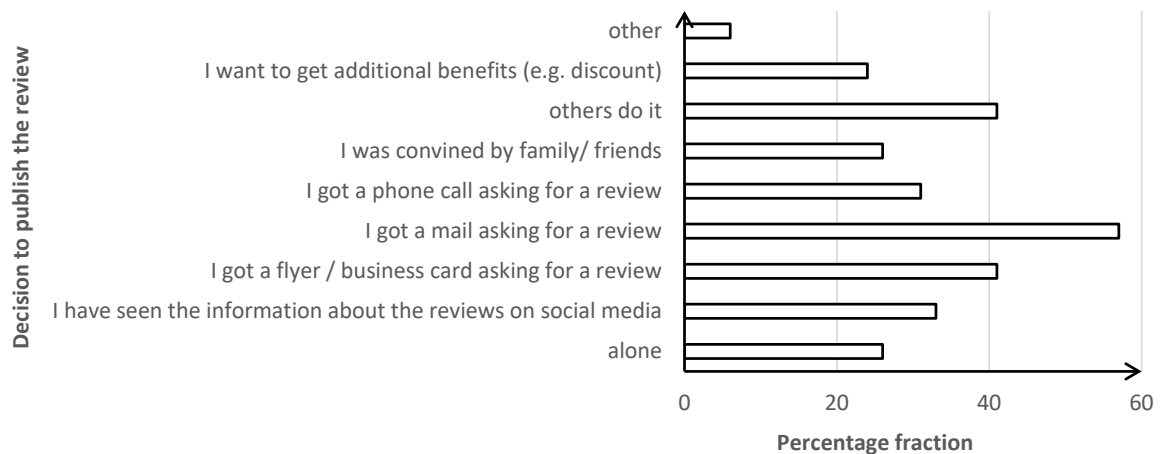


Fig. 9. What determines that you write reviews (more answers possible)? [%]

The reason for the publication of the review on the Internet was also asked (Fig. 10). The respondents most often indicated the willingness to express their satisfaction / dissatisfaction, the willingness to share their experience and the willingness to describe their impressions. It can be assumed that many respondents are guided by their emotions and want to express their feelings about the purchased product or service. The review is not always related to the willingness to help others in choosing a product or service (less than 40% of responses) or to force the enterprise to improve the quality of the offered products and services (approx. 30% of responses). Less than 5% of respondents write their reviews to destroy or harm the assessed enterprise and its products, which unfortunately must be indicated as a threat to the enterprise. These types of reviews can be published by competing enterprises that want to destroy the good name of a given enterprise and influence customers' purchasing decisions.

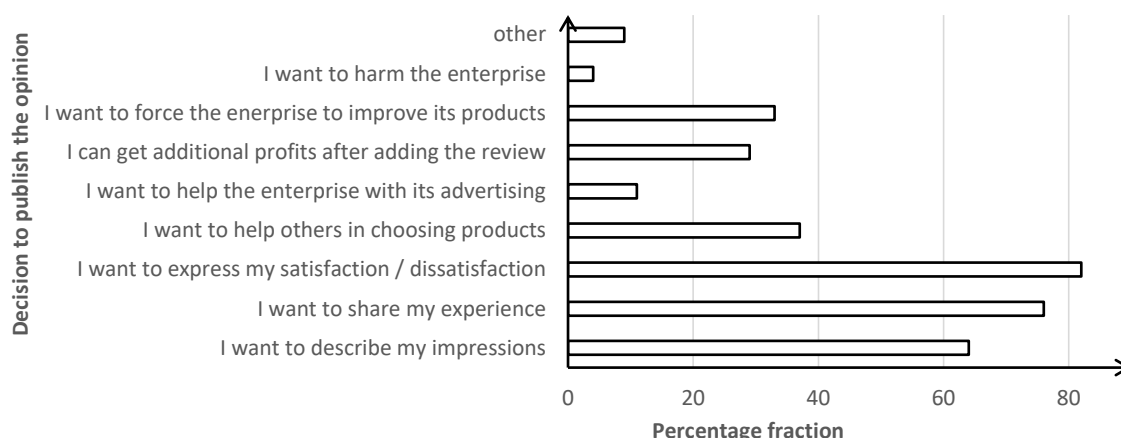


Fig. 10. Why do you choose to write a review (more answers possible)? [%]

The respondents, despite selecting the answer "other", practically did not use the possibility to add their own answer.

From the analyzed results, it can be concluded that customers are eager to write reviews about the products or services they have bought, they want to share their feelings, but they do not do it every time. Many respondents want to share their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, experiences and impressions about product and services. Many respondents do this to help others to make a choice, some of them want to force enterprises to actions, to improve the quality of their products and services, but do not do it to harm these enterprises. The conducted research showed that the respondents' reviews more often are an opportunity for promotion for enterprises than a threat.

3. CONCLUSION

Reviews published by customers regarding the products or services they buy are a rich source of information about the product or service itself, but also about how the order is conducted. Due to the development of the Internet and the widespread digitization of people's lives and enterprises' operations, publishing reviews has become even easier. Many companies ask their customers for such feedback after their order has been delivered. Many people decide to take this step by describing their impressions of the purchase and the product or service itself.

The research presented in this paper analyzed the respondents' approach to publishing reviews on the products or services they purchased, expressing their experiences, pointing to their advantages and disadvantages, and the reasons for their publication. The survey among the respondents from the south of Poland was chosen as the research method.

These reviews have various forms, customers often evaluate the product or service using a scale, describe them, and post photos or videos. It should be emphasized that some of the reviews are positive. It can be used to promote an enterprise and make the customer who reads it decide to make a similar purchase. So it is a form of promotion or advertisement for the enterprise. As the research presented in the work has shown, many customers publish their reviews for this purpose. However, some reviews are negative in nature, they are to warn customers about the products or

services of a given enterprise. Importantly, the research showed that people who write such reviews do not want to hurt the enterprise itself, but force it to act in order to improve the quality of the product and service or the purchasing process itself and show others to think about it before deciding to buy from a particular enterprise. Based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that these reviews are more often an opportunity for promotion for the enterprise, but also a reason for striving for improvement.

The research was not free from limitations. The questionnaire form was created on the basis of the author's experience and literature research, so it can be subjective. The number of respondents who took part in the survey was also limited. The author had no influence on the research group due to the fact that the questionnaire was shared via social media, and only those people who found such information on the Internet and expressed their willingness to participate in the study took part in the study.

There was no question in the study as to whether the reviews relate to traditional or online products and services. Therefore, it was not possible to indicate whether the respondents wrote reviews about traditional or online products more often, and in which group there were more positive or negative reviews. Therefore, this question can be treated as a starting point for the next study.

This paper can be treated as a starting point for further research on the question of whether the reviews published by customers on the Internet about the products and services they purchase should be treated as a promotion opportunity for enterprises, or rather as a threat related to negative advertising and the possibility of losing customers.

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