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FEATURE

## **Feedback Driven Consumerism: Growing the Review Culture in Fiji**

As consumers, we all rely on the experiences of others to guide our decisions. From trying a new restaurant to buying a new gadget, reviews play a crucial role in shaping our perceptions and purchasing decisions. However, in Fiji, the review culture is not as vibrant as it should be, leaving consumers vulnerable to fly-by night operators, substandard products and poor service. In this article, we will explore the importance of a robust review culture in Fiji and how it can benefit consumers.

### **What is a Review and How Does it Shape Our Decisions and Experiences**

A review is a written evaluation of a product or service provided by a customer who has experienced it. Typically found online, customer reviews are either positive, negative or aimed at providing valuable insight into the quality, usability, and overall satisfaction of a product or service.

Reviews have become an integral part of worldwide consumer culture. They help us make informed decisions about where to spend our money and time. By reading about other people's experiences, we can learn about the pros and cons of a product or service before making a purchase. Reviews also provide us with valuable insights that we may not have considered, helping us to make the best possible choice.

According to the Danish consumer business review website 'Trustpilot,' reviews help inform and narrow down a consumer's choice to the most likely or pertinent options. They help consumers navigate the sea of alternatives. Online reviews are now perceived to be more trusted than advertising campaigns, with 84% of consumers globally trusting reviews as much as personal recommendations from people they know. This indicates buyers have a high level of confidence and faith in peers' opinions. Trustpilot's study highlighted that digital advertising is met with indifference or suspicion by most consumers, unless it is backed by the social proof of online reviews.

### **Reviews as a Tool for Accountability: How Feedback Shapes Business Practices**

Reviews are not just helpful for consumers; they are also an essential tool for businesses. By collecting feedback from customers, businesses can identify areas for improvement and make changes to their products and services accordingly. When businesses respond to customer



feedback, they show that they care about their customers and are willing to take action to address their concerns.

Here are 4 ways a robust review system may help businesses:

- (i) A better understanding of customers: Product feedback, positive or negative, helps a business learn a lot about its customers. Everything from who the customers are, where they live, their preferences, and product experiences can be understood just by collecting product feedback. This information can be gained through online surveys, social media monitoring, web analytics.
- (ii) Improve customer satisfaction: Customer satisfaction is an important metric to keep track of because happy customers are likelier to be loyal and generate more repeat business over time. Satisfied customers are likely to make more purchases and act as promoters of the company.
- (iii) Boost loyalty: Adding on from (ii) above, reviews and feedback can indicate what works with customer service experience and what is preventing them from being loyal. Loyalty is equally important as satisfaction, if not more, because loyal customers are likelier to make repeat purchases and are less likely to head toward the competition.
- (iv) Informed business decisions: Every business decision should be based on solid facts and backed by data. When a business bases its' decisions on proven insights and data, it can easily make improvements & changes that will be useful to customers and improve their overall product experience.

### **Case Study: The Evolution of Review Culture in Australia**

Australia has developed a vibrant review culture, with consumers actively leaving reviews for businesses. Consumers here have recognized the importance of reviews in shaping consumer experiences and have developed systems to encourage feedback.

According to global management consulting firm McKinsey and Company, emerging from the pandemic, Australian consumers are expressing a deeper need to exercise control in their purchasing decisions to align with their personal values, indicating an emergence of a 'more considered, more mindful, and potentially less spontaneous consumer.' This is where personalized product reviews come in.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission also plays an important role in this by providing general guidance to businesses on their responsibilities relating to online reviews. It



provides guidance to consumers on using online reviews and accepts reports about fake or misleading online reviews as well as review manipulation to inform its' education, compliance and enforcement work. If a business misleads people in relation to online reviews, the ACCC can investigate and take some form of compliance or enforcement action.

By studying Australia, Fiji can learn from their experiences and develop a review culture that benefits both consumers and businesses.

### **Why Should Consumers Read Reviews Before Buying?**

US based software company 'Weave Communications' explains that since reviews are generally qualitative rather than quantitative, they capture the feeling a customer had after visiting a business. 'These emotional responses, when encountered in an online setting, can dramatically affect the opinions of other potential customers.'

Customer reviews can be very helpful for consumers in several ways:

- (i). Product quality: Reviews can provide valuable insight into the quality of a product. By reading reviews, consumers can get a sense of whether a product is worth purchasing or if there are any quality issues to be aware of.
- (ii). User experience: Reviews can also provide insight into the user experience of a product. Consumers can get a sense of how easy or difficult a product is to use, how well it performs, and any potential problems or limitations.
- (iii). Social proof: Seeing that other consumers have purchased and reviewed a product can provide social proof and increase confidence in the purchase decision.
- (iv). Price comparison: Reviews can also help consumers compare prices and find the best deals. By reading reviews from multiple retailers, consumers can find the best price for a particular product.

Overall, customer reviews can provide valuable information and insight for consumers, helping them make informed purchasing decisions and avoid potential pitfalls. Remember that authenticity is key when it comes to reviews. Consumers need to be able to trust the reviews they read, and businesses need to be able to trust the feedback they receive. Genuine reviews help to build trust between businesses and consumers, as they provide an honest and transparent account of the customer experience.



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[www.consumersfiji.org](http://www.consumersfiji.org)



Mobile App

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### **Conclusion: A Message to Consumers**

Leaving helpful feedback is an essential part of developing a vibrant review culture. By providing specific details about your experience, you can help other consumers make informed decisions. When writing reviews, it's important to be constructive and provide feedback that is helpful to both the business and other consumers.

In summary, a robust review culture can benefit both consumers and businesses in Fiji. Consumers can make informed decisions about where to spend their money, while businesses can use feedback to improve their products and services. By developing a review culture, Fiji can encourage feedback-driven consumerism and create a more transparent and accountable business environment. Let's start leaving reviews and sharing our experiences with others.

For queries consumers can contact the Consumer Council of Fiji on the toll-free number 155 or lodge a complaint via the Consumer Council of Fiji mobile app.

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