



Online reviews and customer satisfaction: The use of Trustpilot by UK retail energy suppliers and three other sectors

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Abstract Online consumer reviews are now widely used and influential. Trustpilot is a relatively new but rapidly growing consumer review website. It is by far the most used review website in UK retail energy supply sector. This paper provides some background and insight into how Trustpilot works, how it is used in that sector, and for comparison in three other sectors (supermarkets, banking and mobile phones), and how this usage has evolved over 2019 and 2020. There is great variation in usage of Trustpilot both within and between sectors. Trustpilot was least used by supermarkets and their customers, and most by energy suppliers and customers. Many aspects of usage, including numbers of Trustpilot domains claimed by companies, invitations to review, reviews and responses to reviews, have increased over 2019-20, although not evenly. Former incumbent companies typically make less use of Trustpilot in all four sectors, and have lower TrustScores than entrants. However, five of the six Large energy suppliers have made significantly increased use of Trustpilot over 2019-20, and their TrustScores have increased. Detailed examination of Trustpilot use by ten energy suppliers explains how inviting Trustpilot reviews enables them to improve customer service as well as increase TrustScores. A final pair of comparisons shows that companies advising UK customers on energy supply score highly on Trustpilot, and make active use of it. In contrast, voluntary and regulatory organisations in the UK energy sector and their customers make little use of it, and these organisations have very low TrustScores.

Keywords online reviews, customer satisfaction, customer feedback, Trustpilot, retail energy market, supermarkets, banks, mobile phone providers

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