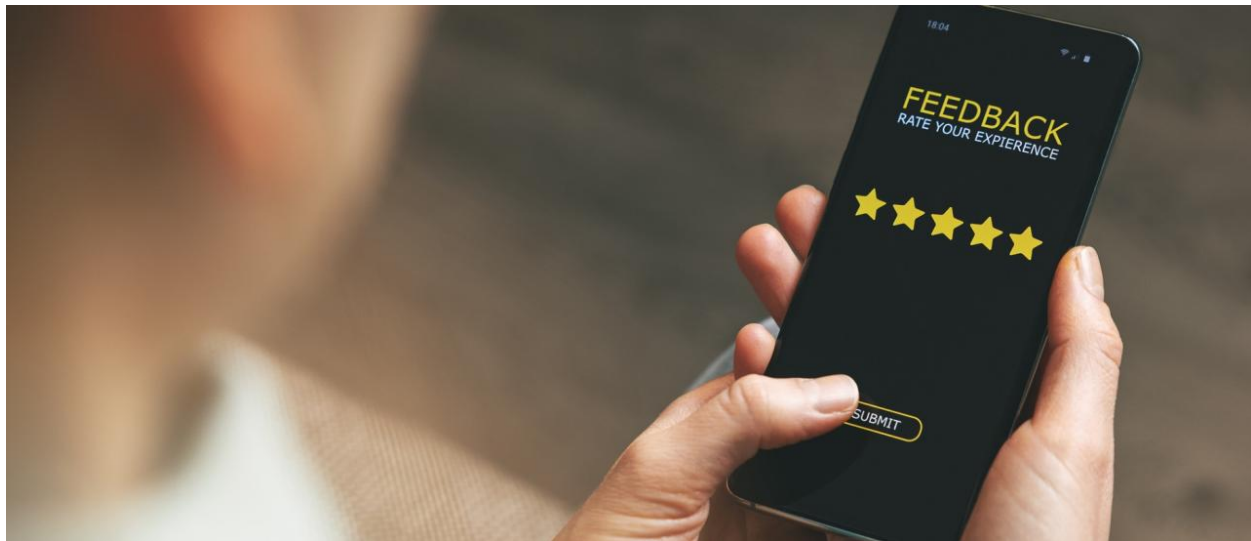


## Online Feedback Requests Are Effective, Even if Ignored



By Matthew Rubin , INSEAD; Dikla Perez , Bar-Ilan University; Gal Oestreicher-Singer and Lior Zalmanson , Tel-Aviv University

**Requesting feedback from online users can influence their behaviour, even when the requests go unanswered.**

Most of us consult reviews and ratings religiously before buying anything online. However, despite our reliance on others' reviews, we are highly unlikely to leave our own review of a product or service.

Indeed, **prior research shows** that the vast majority of people are likely to ignore requests for feedback by clicking "no thanks" when asked to "rate their experience" online. If most users do not reply, what is the point in asking them for feedback?

In our study on **how feedback requests affect consumer behaviour**, we found that users who refused to rate a website when prompted were more likely to upgrade from free to paid services than those who were not asked

to provide feedback.

Moreover, those who declined to give feedback were as likely to upgrade as those who took the time to leave a rating. This implies that sheer exposure to a feedback request influences consumer behaviour.

### **The real influence of rating requests**

To understand how requests for feedback influence consumers, we conducted two field experiments. These were done in collaboration with a leading international website that employs a “freemium” business model offering a basic, free service and additional, premium features for a fee.

Our first study focused on users in the US who had just started using the freemium website. We prompted 2,038 users in the treatment group to rate their experience (1–5 stars) and provide an optional comment, and compared their behaviour with the 2,064 users who were not asked to rate the website (control group).

The rating request appeared as a pop-up window after a user in the treatment group showed initial interest in the website’s services. Users had the option to dismiss the request by clicking a “no thanks” button or the “x” button at the upper right corner of the pop-up window to close it.

Eight days after exposure, we calculated the number of users who had converted from free to premium membership. The user conversion rate was 29.3 percent higher in the treatment group that was exposed to the request than in the control group. The result indicates that the overall effect of a rating request on conversion was positive.

### **What about users who ignore rating requests?**

In the first study we did not distinguish between users who responded to the rating request and those who did not. It could be argued that the users who upgraded to the premium service intended to convert anyway, and the rating request simply expedited the process.

To explore the behaviour of those who ignored the rating request, and to ensure that the effect of exposure did not just expedite the user’s decision, we extended the experiment over a longer period with a wider pool of participants. We translated the prompt into 46 languages and observed approximately 90,000 users from 190 countries for a period of 90 days.

We took note of each user's subscription (free or premium) at three intervals: 30, 60, and 90 days after the treatment group was first exposed to the rating request. At all three points in time, we observed that the conversion rate was significantly higher for those exposed to the request than those who were not exposed.

Furthermore, the conversion rate of those who were exposed and chose not to respond (non-compliers in the treatment group) was significantly higher than the conversion rate of those who did not receive the rating request.

### **The “No Thanks Effect”**

Next, we compared the conversion rate of those who rated the website and those who chose not to leave feedback. At all three points in time, users who did not respond were as likely to upgrade as those who rated the site.

This alludes to the existence of what we call a “No Thanks Effect” – simply asking for input influences a person's behaviour, even when they do not respond. Put differently, mere exposure to an online feedback request may be just as powerful as the act of reviewing. This is noteworthy considering most consumers ignore feedback requests.

Our research aligns with theories of attitude accessibility, which suggest that merely exposing people to a question can activate their attitudes associated with it and **affect behaviour**, regardless of whether they respond. When an attitude is more accessible, less thinking is required to act in accordance with that attitude.

Although we did not investigate why we see this willingness to upgrade among “No Thanks” users, we surmise that asking users for their input could have triggered them to reflect on their enjoyment or positive attitude towards the website.

Indeed, 91.1 percent of users who did provide feedback rated the website positively (4–5 out of 5 stars), which affirmed the website's reputation as a high-quality platform.

### **Why companies mustn't stop asking for feedback**

It is important that companies understand the significance of asking for feedback. Users can offer insights on how they are interacting with the services provided and help companies increase engagement and improve

services.

More importantly, feedback requests are a subtle way of signalling that a company cares. Even if the request is automated, consumers are more likely to believe that someone is listening and that the company wants to provide a positive experience.

One of the main challenges for freemium models is getting users to commit and pay for the premium service, since most users are content using the free version. Companies that show they care about user experience and effectively prompt users to recall their positive perceptions have a greater chance of attracting loyal customers.

#### **Find article at**

<https://knowledge.insead.edu/marketing/online-feedback-requests-are-effective-even-if-ignored>

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#### **About the research**

["No, Thanks': How Do Requests for Feedback Affect the Consumption Behavior of Non-Compliers?"](#) is published in *Marketing Letters*.

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