

Professor Stephen Littlechild

In October, Ofgem decided that energy suppliers should publish the Citizens' Advice ratings of their customer service so the public can see how suppliers compare on issues such as call wait times and quality of responses. It was certainly sensible to alert customers to how suppliers' service quality issues, rather than focus simply on price, and Citizens Advice seems to discharge its statutory role well. But will customers know what the rating means, without explanation of whether the scores are good or bad, and without comparison with other suppliers?

Also, other respectable bodies rate energy suppliers on criteria that they consider important to customers, and the ratings differ somewhat. Figure 1 shows the latest rankings. Citizens Advice ranks Outfox the Market, Shell and EDF Energy as first, second and third. But Ofgem's own complaints statistics (according to the OCS average of them) imply that E, Outfox the Market and Utility Warehouse are the best three suppliers. Which? magazine's own survey puts Octopus Energy and Utilita first and second ahead of Utility Warehouse, while customers' own rankings on Trustpilot agree that Octopus Energy is top, ahead of E and Outfox the Market. Meanwhile, comparison experts USwitch also put Octopus Energy top, followed by Utility Warehouse and – a newcomer – So Energy.

Figure 1: Various rankings of energy suppliers as of late-2023

| Ranking/Source | Citizens Advice | Ofgem (OCS average) | Which? | Trustpilot | Uswitch |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| First | Outfox the Market | E | Octopus Energy | Octopus Energy | Octopus Energy |
| Second | Shell | Outfox the Market | Utilita | E | Utility Warehouse |
| Third | EDF Energy | Utility Warehouse | Utility Warehouse | Outfox the Market | So Energy |

Source: Professor Stephen Littlechild

Evidently some suppliers' names crop up repeatedly: three of them three times, one of them twice, four of them once. Since views are bound to differ, I have suggested for some time that there is merit in looking at a wider range of assessments than just that of Citizens' Advice.

The Overall Customer Service (OCS) League calculates the average of four ratings of energy suppliers – in fact, the first four in Figure 1. (Uswitch provides interesting results of its customer survey but names only the top three suppliers in each category.) So let us look at how the suppliers are ranked according to the latest set of OCS inputs. Ofgem recently issued its customer complaints statistics for Q323.

On average, ratings were up by 7.6 percentage points (here written +7.6%). The most improved were Boost Power, up by a welcome 29%, after a poor score last quarter, followed by So Energy (+13%), Utilita (+9%), Scottish Power (+7%) and Utility Warehouse (+6%). Practically the only supplier to decline was Ovo Energy (-12%), presumably as it incorporated the final tranche of SHE customers.

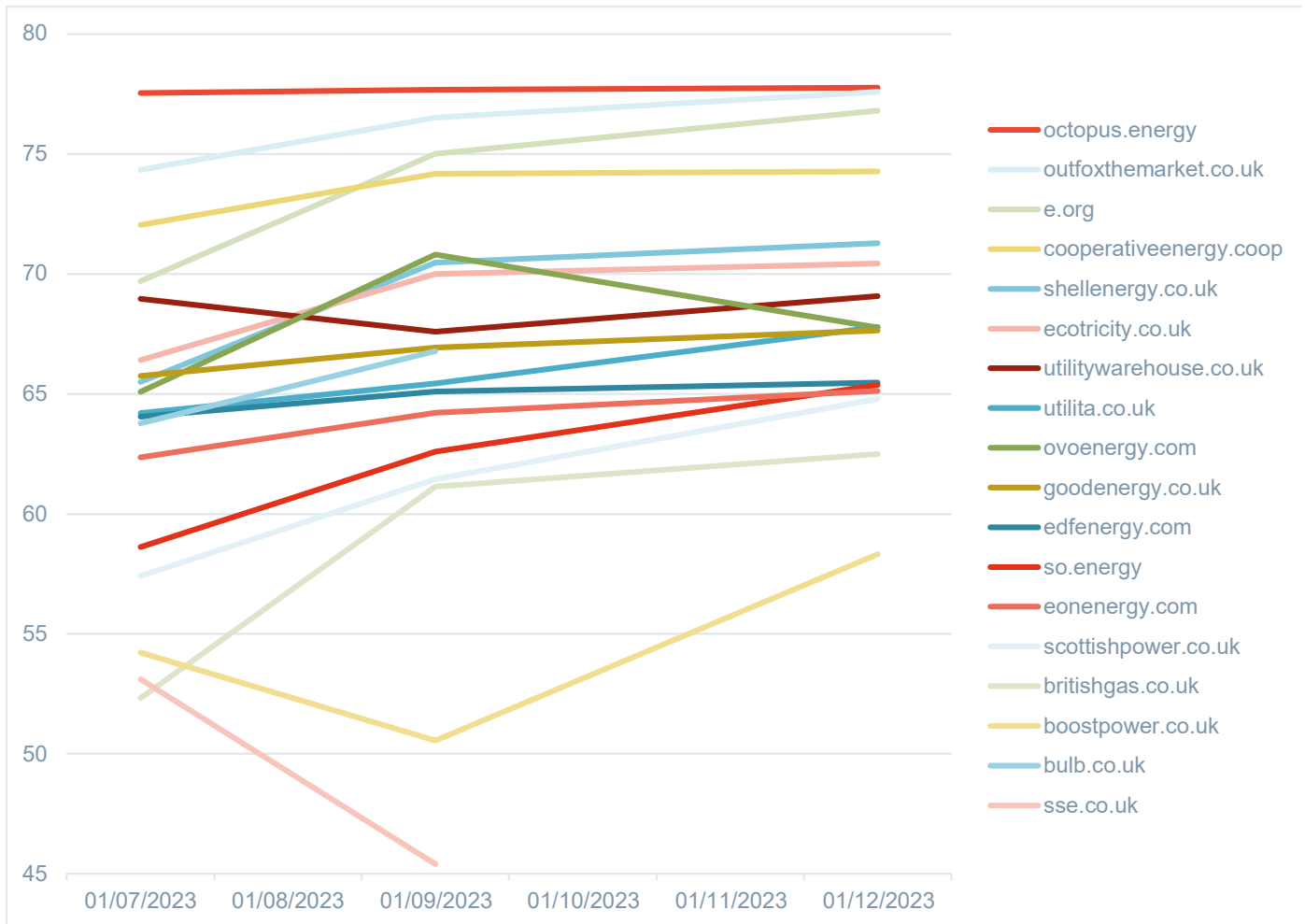
As always, some suppliers were more active than others in encouraging customer reviews on Trustpilot. Over the last three months or so, those suppliers recording the greatest increases in number of reviews were E (20%), Octopus Energy (15%), Scottish Power (13%) and Ovo Energy (11%). Scottish Power achieved the greatest increase in TrustScore, by a remarkable 6 percentage points (here written 6%), with British Gas, E and E.ON rising by 4% and Boost, EDF Energy and Shell up by 2%. So Energy fell by 2%. Note that SSE and Bulb were finally discontinued as suppliers and Trustpilot is accepting no further reviews.

What was the net impact on the Overall Customer Satisfaction scores? Figure 2 shows how the OCS league has evolved over the last six months. Octopus Energy remains at the top of Division One, challenged

increasingly strongly by Outfox the Market and E. A triple slightly different from any in Figure 1. It contains only one supplier from the Citizens Advice top three. Octopus Energy associate Cooperative Energy maintains its fourth place.

Shell Energy and Ecotricity now head Division Two, followed by Utility Warehouse, Utilita and Good Energy, and by Ovo Energy which has fallen markedly from the top of that Division. In Division Three, EDF Energy, E.ON, So Energy and Scottish Power are neck and neck, the last two companies having risen significantly since the autumn. British Gas is recovering still, and Boost Power particularly so, but both are somewhat off the pace at present.

Figure 2: OCS League 21 July - 17 Dec 2023



Source: Professor Stephen Littlechild