



## Higher review volume and average rating correlate with order increases, according to a Top Internet retailer's data

It's well established among Bazaarvoice clients that the presence of consumer ratings and reviews on an ecommerce site plays a powerful part in converting shoppers to customers. Now, we're seeing indications that review volume and average rating are also significant factors in conversion, based on data from a Top 25 Internet retailer. The findings suggest that retailers already benefiting from the presence of reviews could see even more positive results by applying best practices to increase review volume and ratings.

### Measuring the effect of review volume and average rating on conversion

Our analysis of a Top 25 Internet retailer's data focused on review volume and average rating as predictors of online orders. By examining samples of historical data, and holding constant other potentially influencing factors such as item price and product page views, we were able to predict the effect of review volume and average rating on online orders.

We specifically investigated the effects of changes in review volume and average rating across a variety of product categories. We determined that both are statistically significant drivers of orders, and we were able to predict approximately 10-50% increases in orders, depending on category, based on increasing both the number of reviews and the average rating. The data tracked single session orders – users coming to the site once, interacting with reviews and immediately purchasing online (it does not account for multiple visits).

## Calculating the results across product categories

Here are some example interpretations of the data we analyzed. In each of these examples, the projected increase in orders is predicated on going from one review to 15 reviews and increasing the product rating from 3.5 to 4.5 stars.



The analysis also showed that the impact of more reviews tends to be greater in the early stages of volume growth. The increase in orders that results when volume increases from one review to 15 reviews is likely to be greater than when volume increases from, say, 150 to 165 reviews.

## Applying best practices to get more reviews, higher average ratings

The encouraging results from this research have highlighted the importance of Bazaarvoice's recommendation that clients take steps to elicit more reviews, which typically leads to an increase in review rating. Based on the experience of Bazaarvoice clients, one of the best practices for increasing review volume is instituting a post-interaction email (PIE) program.

(And based on the research, for the maximum impact on orders, the sooner the company institutes such a program, the better.)

In PIE programs, retailers send emails soliciting reviews at established times post-purchase and then methodically follow up with customers who don't respond initially. Two PIE best practices that Bazaarvoice recommends are tying the emails to in-store purchases and mobile enablement. PIE programs have traditionally been implemented with online orders only, but retailers are now seeing further success by contacting customers who make in-store purchases. This can be done in a variety of ways including using loyalty programs that can connect purchases to email addresses. According to Litmus, 38 percent of email is opened on a mobile device. Having a PIE program with responsive emails that can be viewed on mobile, tablets and computers along with a responsive website that allows consumers to easily write reviews no matter what device they are using can contribute to a better user experience, higher click through rates and increased reviews.

PIE programs have led to triple-digit increases in daily review volume for several clients; another reports that its PIE program drives the vast majority of all customer reviews. Results like these can help marketers garner support for funding PIE programs when marketing dollars are limited.

Other avenues to pursue for increased review volume include soliciting reviews at events and conferences that customers are likely to attend, and inviting customers to participate in contests and sweepstakes where they submit reviews. Clients can also encourage review volume by displaying online reviews in social media, shopping portals, physical stores and other channels. Seeing that a retailer values customer feedback can inspire customers to share their thoughts.

In addition to increasing review volume, Bazaarvoice clients report a strong product rating increase from collecting customer feedback in reviews, using it to make product improvements and then inviting customers to re-review the improved product.