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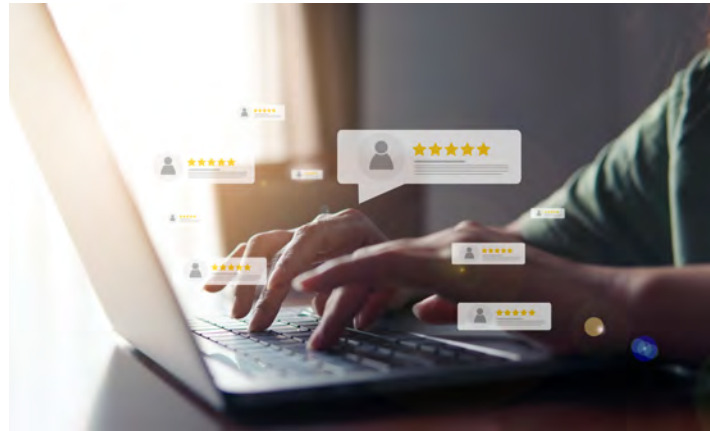
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Wait Just a Minute: When to Ask for Online Reviews

Miyeon Jung, PhD, Sunghan Ryu, PhD, Sang Pil Han, PhD, and Daegon Cho, PhD

It is hard to overstate the importance of online reviews. In today’s world where most product experiences start and/or end online, the experiences of others are more visible and more important than ever when a customer is determining which company (or agent) to give their business. According to a study conducted in 2021, 91% of respondents read at least one review before making a purchase decision and report that a high review score significantly influenced the purchasing decision.¹



There is ample research demonstrating the effectiveness and necessity of online reviews and the use of reminders to prompt customers to complete them.

Previous research has examined how asking for a review is influenced by financial incentives, consumers’ memory, and the way in which reviews are requested. What has not been thoroughly researched, however, is the most effective time to ask customers for reviews following a product experience.

The Study

In this study, we conducted two different experiments, each seeking to answer the question: when is the optimal time after a product experience to remind customers to leave a review? Our hypotheses were that 1) immediate review reminders would decrease review posting likelihood and review quality based on customer perception of lost autonomy and that 2) delayed review reminders would increase review posting likelihood and review quality due to reviving intentions and to better customer recall.

For the first of the two experiments, we worked with a major online marketplace specializing in tours and activities that we refer to as “MyTrip.” By utilizing an in-app push notification system, we randomly assigned whether customers would receive a review reminder or not, at varied time intervals, after their experience. The time intervals were next-day, 5-days, 9-days, and 13-days after the experience. Our total sample size was 8,123 consumers after six rounds of data collection, with 4,038 in the control group (not receiving notifications) and 4,085 in the treatment group (receiving notifications). The goal of this experiment was to determine in which time period the review reminders had the greatest effect.

Our second experiment aimed to replicate the results of the first as well as gain a more comprehensive insight into review quality with a larger subject pool. To conduct this experiment,

we partnered with a major e-commerce fashion company we refer to as “MyFashion.” Like MyTrip, MyFashion uses push notifications as their primary method of feedback to customers, which is how we requested reviews throughout the experiment. For this experiment, our requesting time periods were after-16-to-30-hours, after-30-to-40-hours, after-7-days, and after-14-days. In total, we had a sample size of 291,954 customers divided between control groups (no reminder) and treatment (reminders) in those four groups.

The Results

What we found from each of these experiments is that immediate review reminders, contrary to common wisdom and practices, actually decrease the likelihood of review postings, whereas delayed review reminders increase the likelihood of review postings. In addition, we found that in highly experience-based settings (travel, entertainment, etc.) and among young consumers, quick reminders are particularly detrimental to the likelihood of receiving a review. Regarding quality, we found no evidence that an early review reminder decreased the quality of those received, but that a delayed reminder did slightly increase the quality of later reviews.

The exact time periods which constitute immediate and delayed review periods will vary depending on the business requesting reviews, but in general, it is safe to say that reminders will have a much more positive effect when delayed. It is important to note that consumers are still likely to post a review soon after their experience, but the delayed reminders are far more effective in increasing the proportion that write reviews at that point. We found in our second experiment that 7.78% of customers in the earliest review group that did not receive a reminder left a review, while only 1.32% of those in the latest time group did. For those who did receive reminders, we saw those numbers change to 7.31% and 2.16% respectively, reflecting a 63.6% increase in review posting likelihood at the latest stage and a 6% decrease at the earliest.

Real Estate Implications

The online review landscape is going to look a bit different for real estate professionals than it will for other industries. Since real estate is such a heavily service-based field, it will fall into a similar category as the travel company, where delayed review reminders were significantly more effective. Give your clients time to settle into their new homes, sit with their decisions, and reflect on their experiences, so they are more likely to leave an honest and high-quality review when asked.

As a real estate agent today, your online presence is your first impression, and client opinions are often formed before you even meet. A major component of your brand is your online feedback, and knowing when to ask for client reviews may be instrumental to your success.

Recommended Reading

Jung, Miyeon, Sunghan Ryu, Sang Pil Han, and Daegon Cho (2023), “Ask for Reviews at the Right Time: Evidence from Two Field Experiments,” *Journal of Marketing*, 87(4), 528-549.

Reference

1. Bizrate Insights (2021), “The Impact of Customer Reviews on Purchase Decisions,” (April 8), <https://www.bizrateinsights.com/resources/the-impact-of-customer-reviews-on-purchase-decisions>.

About the Authors

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Dr. Miyeon Jung’s (PhD – Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology) research interests include mobile analytics, healthcare IT, the ethics of AI, blockchain, and cryptocurrency. Dr. Jung has been published in *the Journal of Marketing*, *Production and Operations Management*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, among others. Her research has also gained recognition in well-known media like *The Wall Street Journal*. She has spoken at conferences across the United States and in South Korea, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands and has served as an Ad-Hoc Reviewer for numerous publications and workshops including the *MIS Quarterly*, *Production and Operations Management*, *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, International Conference on Information Systems, the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, and more. In the classroom, she teaches subjects from business analytics methods to advanced data mining with Artificial Intelligence and has been awarded many grants and recognitions, including the Business and International Education Grant from UNLV and the Research Excellence Award from KAIST. Dr. Jung has also worked as a consulting researcher for multiple firms in both South Korea and the United States.

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