

# Ask for customer reviews at the right time: In many cases, sooner may not be better

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Researchers from University of Nevada Las Vegas, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Arizona State University, and KAIST College of Business published a new *Journal of Marketing* article that examines when is the right time for businesses to send review reminders to customers. The study is titled "Ask for Reviews at the Right Time: Evidence from Two

Field Experiments" and is authored by Miyeon Jung, Sunghan Ryu, Sang Pil Han, and Daegon Cho.

Popular websites such as TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, and Booking.com send notifications to customers immediately following checkout, requesting reviews about their recent experience and other feedback. Many firms send automated emails or mobile push notices after a purchase to learn about customers' recent experiences with the product. This raises the important question: When should companies send out review requests?

The research team examines how the timing of review reminders affects the likelihood and quality of product review postings. Issuing review reminders immediately or shortly after purchase of a product or vacation experience may threaten a consumer's freedom and prompt an adverse reaction. Therefore, some companies send review requests at a later point to revive customers' memory of their experience.

"Consumers' reactions and memories are influenced by the temporal distance between a product experience and reminder. The likelihood of writing a review decreases as time passes because consumers' recall becomes blurry. This is more of a reason for companies to find the fine balance between asking for reviews too soon and waiting too long, both of which affect the quality of reviews," says Jung.

## **Sooner is not necessarily better**

The researchers performed two randomized [field experiments](#) with over 300,000 consumers from online marketplaces offering different types of products. The first experiment involved consumers from South Korea's largest online travel marketplace where consumers can book flights, hotels, and guided tours using the company's website or mobile app.

Four distinct timing classifications for review reminders were used: next day, five-day, nine-day, and 13-day intervals after the product experience. Consumers were randomly assigned to the treatment group (which received a review reminder) or [control group](#) (which did not receive a reminder) for each timing classification.

The second field experiment studied consumers in a major South Korean online apparel marketplace. Four distinct timing classifications were again used, but with different time intervals than the first experiment. Across both experiments, the team investigated the temporal effects of review reminders on the quality of the reviews.

Ryu states that "Our findings demonstrate that requesting a review as soon as possible is not the best strategy. We find that reminders cause problems when they are sent faster than the number of days it takes, on average, for customers to write a review." For example, if a customer orders clothing online, it is too early to send a review reminder the day the product is delivered because people need sufficient time to try the item on and evaluate its quality.

## **Lessons for chief sales officers**

1. Even though the standard for when it is too early may vary by product type and customer heterogeneity, it may be acceptable to send an early reminder in the case of search goods (e.g., paper towels, [bottled water](#), and canned soups) because consumers have a clear understanding of the products and a high degree of certainty that it will be useful after an initial trial. In contrast, for experience goods (e.g., restaurants, beauty salons, travel), it may be prudent to provide consumers enough time to evaluate the product before sending a review reminder.
2. "Our results indicate that overly quick reminders are particularly detrimental for businesses with young consumers," says Han. For

example, Generation Z has always used digital platforms and is independent and pragmatic. In this sense, prompt reminders may be prone to violating their autonomy and freedom. In other words, the negative impact of an immediate review reminder may be disproportionately greater for younger individuals.

3. Cho explains that "As for the impact of review reminders on review content, we find delayed review reminders can alleviate the poor quality of delayed reviews. However, except for review specificity, the timing of review reminders has a negligible effect on review content such as ratings, sentiment, or length." In other words, the content of reviews does not change between those who wrote them after the reminder and those who wrote them without the reminder.

The lesson for online marketplaces is that it is counterproductive to blindly adopt "faster is better" or "one-size-fits-all" approaches. Instead, companies should reevaluate their current practices and adjust the timing of review reminders to specific consumer target groups in order to elicit more consumer feedback.

**More information:** Miyeon Jung et al, EXPRESS: Ask for Reviews at The Right Time: Evidence from Two Field Experiments, *Journal of Marketing* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/00222429221143329](https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429221143329)

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