

A woman with dark hair in a bun and extensive tattoos on her arms is working on a mannequin in a clothing store. She is adjusting a piece of white fabric on the mannequin's shoulder. The background shows a rack of clothes.

The Guide to Reviews for Apparel Brands and Retailers

The Importance of Reviews for Apparel



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About PowerReviews

Introduction

It's no secret that the majority of consumers today turn to ratings and reviews to help them make informed purchase decisions. PowerReviews research found that 95% of shoppers consult reviews, and 86% consider them an essential resource when making a purchase decision.¹

Reviews are important for a variety of different product categories. But they're becoming increasingly important for apparel brands and retailers. Today, according to Forrester Research, only 15% of apparel is purchased online.² But this number will only continue to grow as more and more consumers crave the convenience of browsing and shopping for just about anything online.

Additionally, the growth of online apparel retail will likely accelerate now that Amazon has ramped up its apparel offerings. In addition to featuring online “boutiques” for established, popular apparel brands such as Kate Spade, CCBG, Hugo Boss, and 7 for All Mankind, Amazon has

recently launched seven of its own clothing brands for men, women, and children, threatening to take market share from other apparel retailers. According to a report from Morgan Stanley, Amazon currently has 7% market share of the apparel industry, but by 2020 that number is predicted to climb to 19%.

Now is the time for apparel brands and retailers to think about how they can leverage user-generated content—like ratings and reviews, questions and answers, and user-submitted images and video—to provide a differentiated experience for online and offline shoppers. Based on 10 years of experience partnering with apparel, accessories, and shoe brands and retailers, the following report explores the ways ratings and reviews can help companies in these industries meet the needs of today's information hungry consumers. By effectively delivering the product information consumers are looking for, apparel brands and retailers can increase conversion, reduce returns and generate insights.

1. PowerReviews, Proven Power of Ratings and Reviews.

2. The Wall Street Journal, Amazon Struts Its Fashion Sense, Challenging Traditional Stores.

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Driving Traffic



According to a PowerReview study, more than 35% of shoppers are starting the purchase journey on Google or another search engine, which points to the importance of having a strong presence on search.¹ Ratings and reviews help boost your presence on search engines, increasing the likelihood that shoppers will click through to your product pages after conducting their search.

Impact of Collecting Reviews

Generating and displaying reviews for a product will impact the amount of traffic to that product page. We've found that once an apparel product in the PowerReviews network starts collecting and displaying reviews, that product will experience a 49.36% increase in traffic.

Impact of the First Review

Generating and displaying just one review for a product can have a big impact on traffic. In the PowerReviews network, we've found that after an apparel product receives its first review, the product will see a 9.75% average increase in traffic.

Impact of Visual Content

Images are an often overlooked way to improve a website's visibility. Encouraging your shoppers to add images to their reviews will result in your product pages being more visible to consumers who start their shopping journey with an image search.

1. PowerReviews, Mapping the Path to Purchase.

A person with a tattooed arm is adjusting a garment on a mannequin. The mannequin's neck has a label that says "FIT". The person is wearing a light-colored shirt. The background shows a clothing store with racks of clothes.

Driving Conversion



Driving Conversion

There are some product categories that consumers don't think twice about purchasing online; but apparel is a highly personal purchase. Many factors are considered when making a clothing or shoe purchase decision, such as size and fit, style, and quality. And it's more challenging for shoppers to access these qualities when shopping online.

That's where reviews come into play. The feedback from past customers gives your future shoppers the confidence they need to convert. For example, a shopper can use reviews to determine if a pair of shoes runs a size large or if a blouse holds up nicely in the washing machine, before she commits to a purchase.

If you don't feature reviews on your site, shoppers are likely to leave in search of a brand or retailer that will provide them with the information they're looking for. PowerReviews research¹ found that nearly half (45%) of shoppers will turn to a search engine if there aren't reviews (or aren't enough reviews) on a brand or retailer site, 25% will head to Amazon, and 20% will leave for another brand or retailer site.

As our data shows, adding reviews to your apparel website will keep shoppers on your site—and significantly increase conversion for the products that have reviews.

1. PowerReviews, Mapping the Path to Purchase.



Impact of Collecting Reviews

We've found that apparel products in the PowerReviews network that start generating and displaying reviews will see an average 14.48% increase in conversion rate.

We've also found that after an apparel product starts generating reviews, that product will be ordered, on average, 43.83% more often than before it had reviews. That's because traffic to that product page increases and shoppers are converting at a higher rate.

Impact of the First Review

The impact of ratings and reviews is apparent as soon as you generate your first review for an apparel product. In the PowerReviews network, we've found that when an apparel product receives and displays its first review, that product will see an 11.81% average increase in conversion.



Impact on Offline Sales

Reviews are an important tool for shoppers, regardless of whether they're shopping online or in-store. In fact, PowerReviews research¹ found that 70% of shoppers want to access product ratings and reviews while shopping in-store. By making reviews accessible wherever consumers shop, you'll also boost in-store conversion.

Impact of Visual Content

Allowing customers to submit photos and videos as part of their reviews can play a significant role in building shopper confidence, which will lead to a higher conversion rate.

Previous PowerReviews research² found that 40% of Centennials (age 13-18) won't purchase a product if there are no photos of people using the product.

1. PowerReviews, The Retail Revolution Report.
2. PowerReviews, Centennial Shopper Study.

A close-up, side-profile photograph of a woman with long dark hair and visible tattoos on her left arm. She is wearing a white shirt and is focused on writing in a small, open notebook with a black pen. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a desk with papers and a window with light coming through. The overall mood is professional and diligent.

Supporting Changing Inventory



Supporting Changing Inventory

In the world of apparel retail, merchandise turns over quickly. Seasons change, and styles go in and out of fashion. For example, in most parts of the United States, consumers are only searching for swimwear for a few months out of the year.

Since reviews play such a powerful role in driving traffic and conversion, it's key for apparel brands and retailers to generate quality reviews as quickly as possible. After all, if a shopper waits too long to write a review, the product may no longer be available.

Post Purchase Emails Encourage Reviews

One of the best ways to generate more reviews quickly is to send post purchase emails asking shoppers to review products they've recently purchased. PowerReviews data has found that around 60% of reviews are written as a result of a post purchase email.

Optimizing for Mobile Increases Completion Rates

Today's consumers are using their phones for just about anything—including checking email and browsing for products. In fact, many studies have found that more than half of emails are opened on a mobile device.



Consumers are also using their phones to write reviews, so it's important to make sure the entire process is mobile-friendly, starting with the post purchase email. evo, an outdoor gear and fashion apparel retailer, experienced a 203% increase in reviews written on mobile by switching to a mobile-friendly post-purchase email.

In addition, make sure your write-a-review form is also easy for consumers to complete on a mobile device so you're more likely to generate a large volume of reviews, quickly.

Collect Quick Feedback at Checkout

Ratings and reviews matter—regardless of their length. While longer reviews often provide valuable insights for shoppers and businesses alike, there's great value in shorter reviews, especially for products with a short shelf life. Simply asking “Why Did You Buy?” will provide you with additional content to drive traffic, sales, and insights.

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is walking through a forest. She is wearing a blue and white patterned jacket over a black and white geometric patterned dress. She is carrying a black leather bag with a strap over her shoulder. The background is a dense forest with green foliage.

Reducing Returns



Reducing Returns

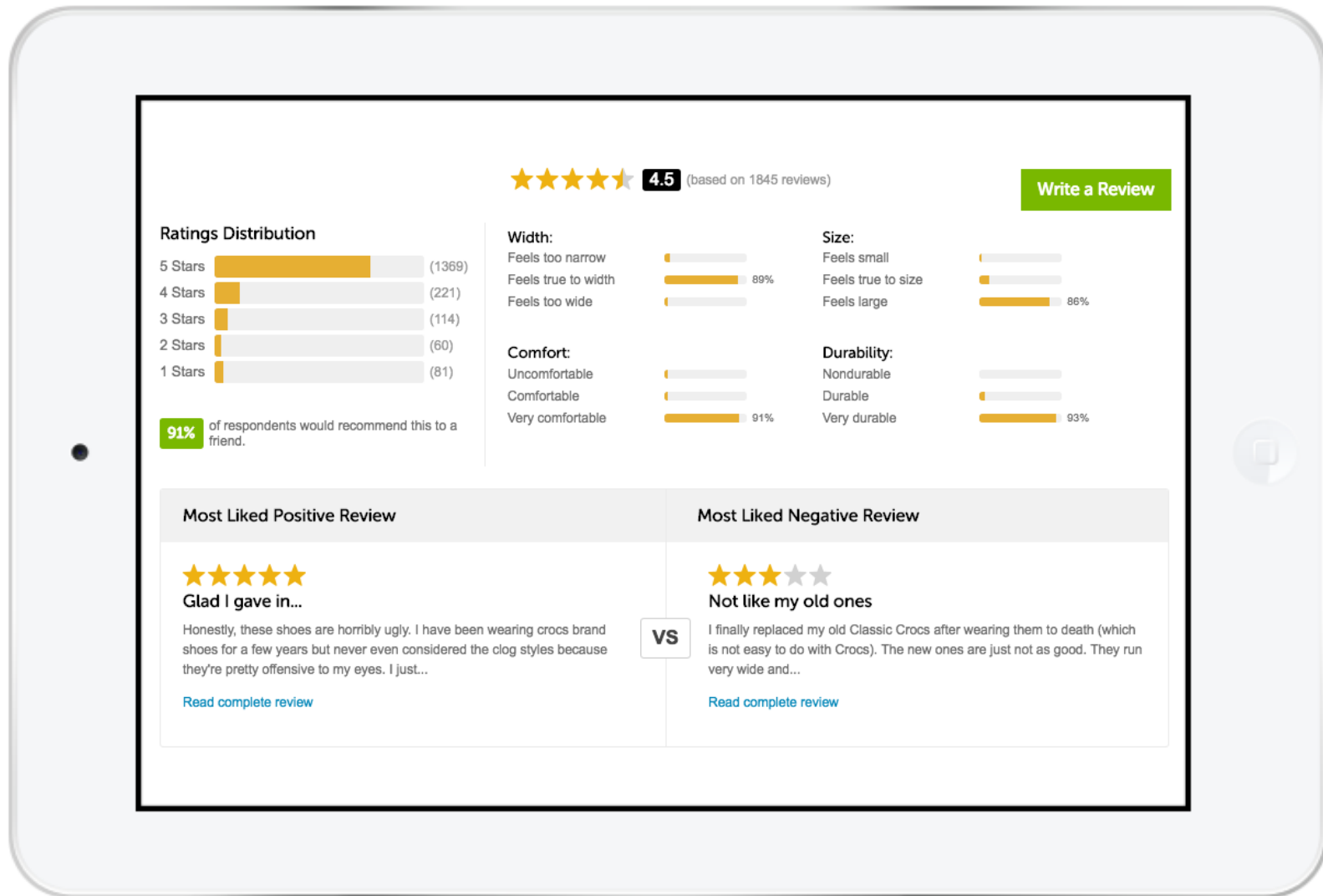
One of the biggest challenges apparel companies face is the large volume of returns. According to a survey from Body Labs, 23% of all clothing gets returned, and 64% of consumers say incorrect fit is the primary reason they return clothing.¹

Apparel brands and retailers will never be able to completely eliminate returns, but one of the most effective ways for apparel companies to reduce return rates is to make sure shoppers know exactly what to expect from a product. Your product descriptions and photos have their part to play, but consumers can get great insights from the reviews of past customers.

Size and Fit Information Helps Customers Find the Best Product

Shoppers can turn to the size and fit information in reviews to make sure they're purchasing the size that will work best for them. For example, if they see that a pair of shoes runs large, they can confidently order the shoe in a size smaller than they typically wear. The shoes will fit correctly and the retailer will avoid an unnecessary return.

1. Body Labs. Apparel & Footwear Retail Survey Report

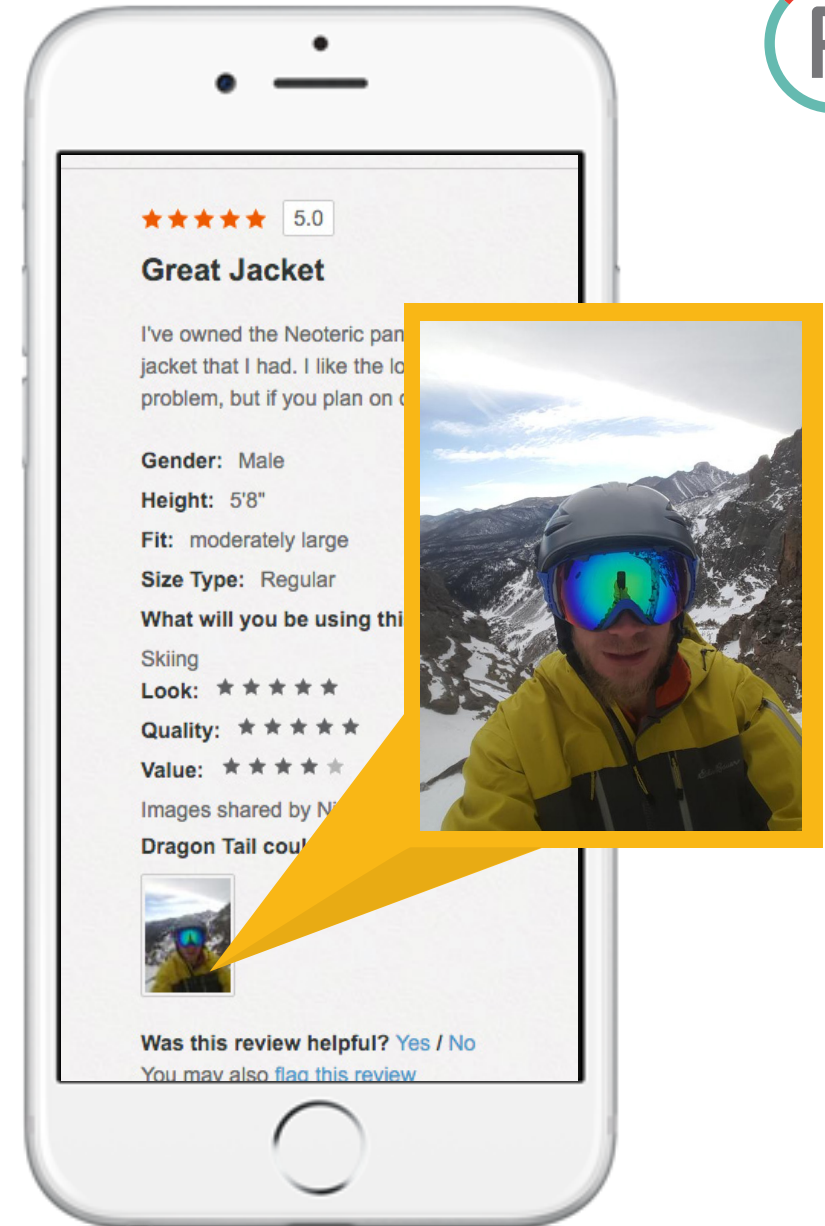


Reviews provide size and fit information at a quick glance.



Visual Content Sets Expectations

Photos and videos also provide shoppers with an accurate picture of what to expect from a purchase so there are fewer surprises when the item arrives in the mail. The professional photos on your site are a great start, but allowing reviewers to submit their own photos allows future shoppers to see what a product looks like “in real life.” Armed with this visual information, the shopper can make a well-informed purchase and be less likely to return the product.





Generating Insights



Generating Insights

Faulty clasps, broken zippers, and mis-sewn seams are all too common for apparel brands and retailers—and their customers. But fortunately, reviews serve as an additional layer of quality control, allowing brands and retailers to quickly identify trends and areas for improvement. And improving your products will, in turn, improve your bottom line.

In addition, after making a change to your product, reviews help you determine if an issue is resolved in the minds of your customers. For example, if you change the zipper on a pair of pants and notice that shoppers no longer mention the faulty zipper in reviews, you can rest assured the issue has been resolved.

Using Reviews to Improve Products

For Soft Surroundings, a leading women’s clothing and bedding retailer and PowerReviews customer, reviews are a key way the company identifies product issues. The company makes and designs all of their apparel in-house, and they consistently use the feedback from reviews to improve their products.

“When we get feedback, it goes directly to our technical design team,” said Gail Buffington, eCommerce Manager at Soft Surroundings. “The quicker we get feedback, the quicker we can resolve issues.”

5 Recommendations for Apparel Brands and Retailers

It's clear that ratings and reviews play a key role in helping apparel brands and retailers better attract and convert apparel shoppers. Here are five ways apparel brands and retailers can start leveraging reviews in order to provide a differentiated experience to today's information-hungry shoppers and avoid losing market share to Amazon.

1

Capture the Voice of the Consumer.

Allowing apparel shoppers to hear from other consumers gives them the confidence they need to make smart purchases. Be sure you're sending post purchase emails to shoppers asking them to write reviews for purchases, since PowerReviews data¹ has found that about 60% of reviews originate from these emails. In addition, make it easy for shoppers to review all products they've purchased within a single page, rather than requiring them to navigate to individual pages to write reviews for each product.

2

Highlight Size and Fit Feedback.

Apparel shoppers want to understand size, fit, and quality of a product before committing to an online purchase. Ask your ratings and reviews provider if they offer an easy way to capture size and fit information from your consumers and display it on the product page to increase buyer confidence and help consumers make the right purchase decision.

1. PowerReviews Internal Data

3

Allow Consumers to Submit Photos and Videos.

Apparel is visual category, and items look different on different people. If you're not already, start asking your shoppers to submit photos and videos as part of their reviews. That way, future shoppers can see what your products look like on various body types and get ideas for different ways to accessorize.

4

Optimize for Mobile.

Be sure shoppers can easily access product information—including reviews—regardless of the device they're using. In addition, make sure the entire process for writing a review, from the post purchase email to the write-a-review form, is easy to complete on a mobile device. If a shopper gets hung up on any part of the process, they're likely to abandon it completely.

5

Generate Reviews Quickly.

Since apparel items move on and off the shelves quickly, it's key for apparel brands and retailers to generate reviews as quickly as possible. Consider collecting information at the time of checkout by asking the customer a simple question: "Why did you buy this item?" This makes it easier for your customers to provide feedback while they're still in your ecosystem and provides you with additional content to help drive traffic, sales, and insights.



About PowerReviews

PowerReviews works with more than 1,000 global brands and retailers to increase conversion and improve products and the customer experience with ratings and reviews and Q&A software. Ratings and reviews solutions from PowerReviews are essential for consumers as they search and shop online and in-store, and they are proven to increase online site-wide sales up to 17%.

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