Anatomy of a Helpful Review

Generating and displaying the content most helpful to your consumers

POWER REVIEWS

Contents

Introduction

By now, it's largely understood that reviews are a key part of the path to purchase. 95% of consumers consult customer reviews and 86% consider them an essential resource when making a purchase decision.

There's no longer any doubt that reviews are a helpful tool for consumers. But not all reviews are created equal. While one review may be full of great insights, another may fall short. At PowerReviews, we allow consumers to give individual reviews "helpful" or "not helpful" votes to indicate how useful the review was during the shopping experience.

What makes one review more helpful than another? To shed light on this question, we analyzed 7.8 million reviews from the past year in the PowerReviews network to determine the common features of reviews that have been voted by consumers as "helpful." We explored the impact of various review characteristics—including review length, sentiment and recency, just to name a few—as well as the types of products that are most likely to have helpful reviews.

This report summarizes our analysis of this data and provides practical recommendations for businesses looking to generate and effectively display the review content that consumers find most helpful.

★★★★☆ [4] **Cool hat for the season**

I like this hat so far. It covers my ears and keeps my head warm even when it's windy outside. I don't think this will be a hat that I can wear for multiple seasons, but it's perfect right now. The pom pom is really cute and it turns out my dog likes it too. She keeps thinking it's a toy. I have also received a few compliment on the pattern

More Details ∨

Submitted 8 months ago
By Lauren
From Denver, CO

✓ Verified Buyer

Was this review helpful to you?   👍 2   👎 0   Flag this review

★★★★★ [5]   **My favorite winter hat!**

I wear this hat pretty much everyday in the winter for my train commute from the 'burbs to downtown Chicago. It's attractive but not too bulky, I love it!!

More Details ∨

Bottom Line Yes, I would recommend to a friend

Was this review helpful to you?   👍 2   👎 2   Flag this review
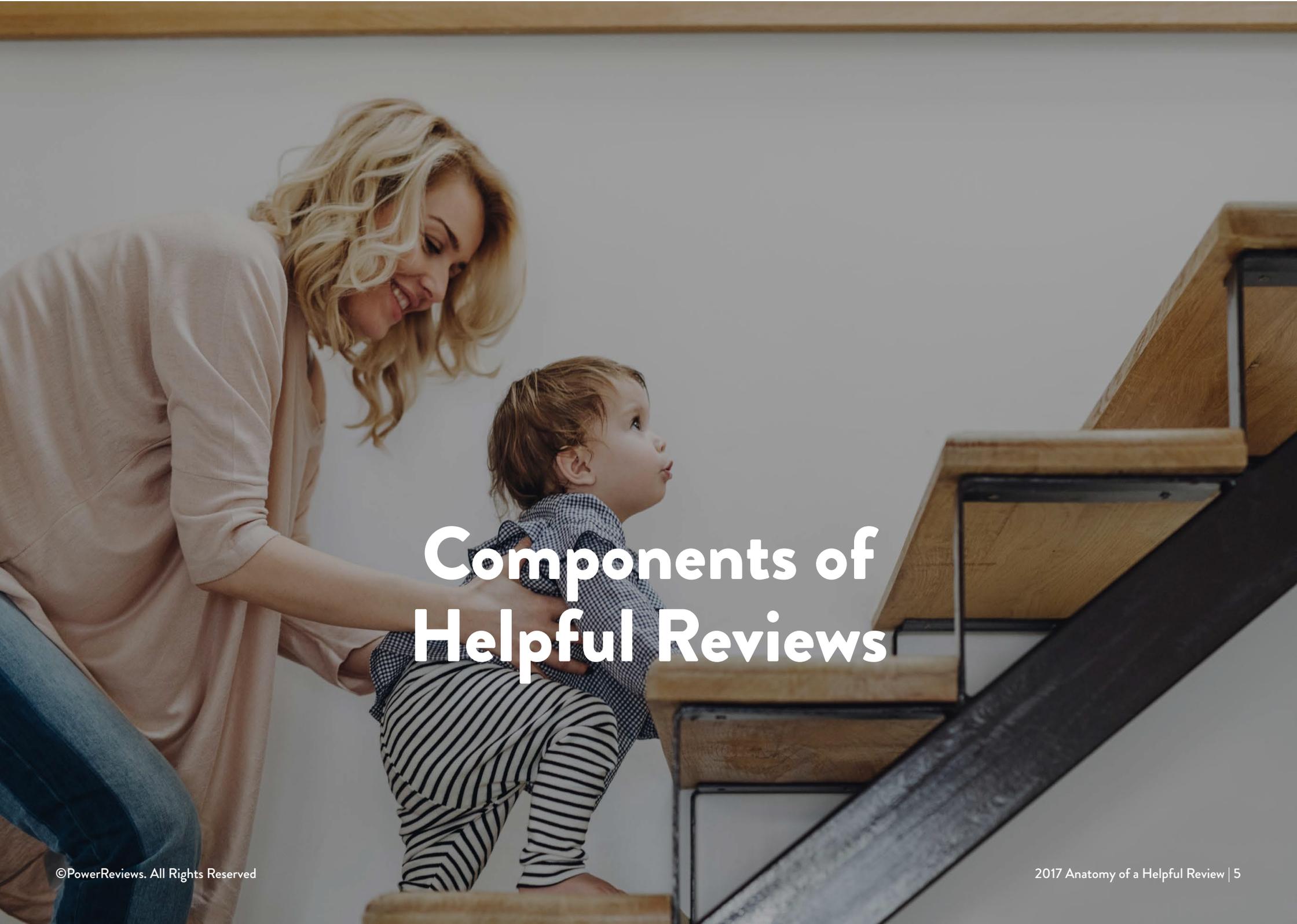
Components of Helpful Reviews

Components of Helpful Reviews

In the PowerReviews Open Network, approximately 13.5% of reviews from the last year have at least one helpful vote. And a quarter (24.6%) of products reviewed in the past year have at least one review with one helpful vote. To better understand what makes a review helpful to consumers, we took a close look at the common characteristics of these reviews.

Longer Reviews Aid Consumers

Review length is the characteristic most correlated with helpful votes. The longer the character count of a review, the greater its average number of helpful votes.

While a review that's under 20 characters has an average of 2.3 helpful votes, a review with 500 or more characters has an average of 5.3 helpful votes.

Longer reviews provide greater detail, which makes them more helpful to future shoppers. Tie in review generation with your existing rewards program and award points for longer reviews, regardless of the star rating.

13.5% of reviews from the last year have at least one helpful vote.

The Longer the Better

Detailed reviews are more helpful to consumers

Character count	Average Helpful Votes
1-20	2.3
21-40	
41-60	2.4
61-80	
81-100	2.5
101-150	
151-200	2.8
201-250	
251-300	3.1
301-350	
351-400	3.4
401-450	
451-500	3.7
500+	5.3
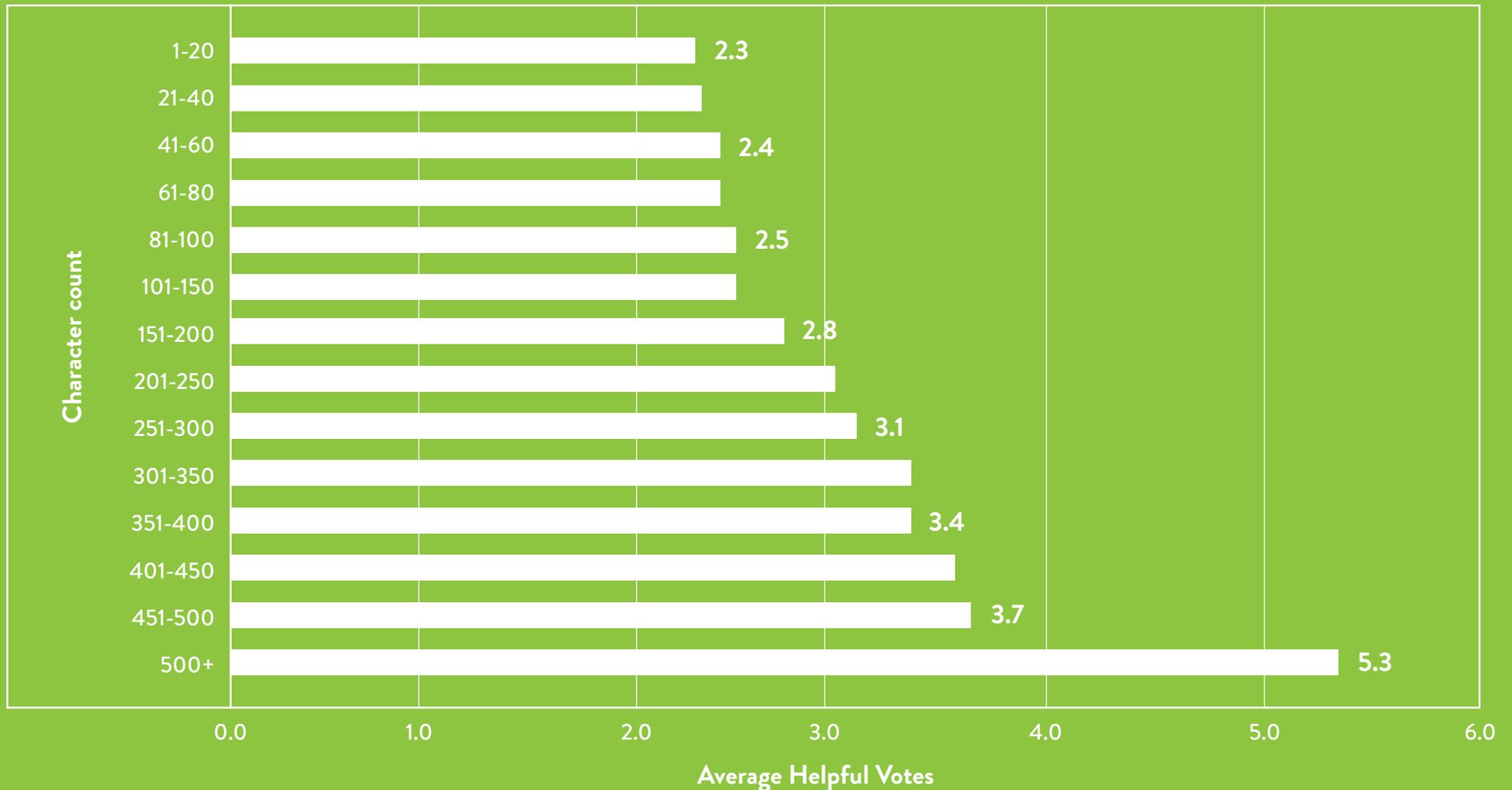
One-Star Reviews Have the Most Helpful Votes

Our analysis also found that one-star reviews, on average, generate more "helpful" votes than any other star rating. Why? Because—in addition to adding a level of authenticity to your review content, negative reviews steer consumers towards products that best fit their needs.

Consumers want to hear the worst thing someone has to say about a product. In fact, 82% of consumers seek out negative reviews. Reading negative reviews helps a consumer determine if negative elements are relevant to their needs.

For example, let's say you're a brand that sells running shoes. One particular style of shoe has a one-star rating, with a review that notes that the shoe doesn't work well for trail running. A future shopper finds this review helpful because she does all of her running on a treadmill. The previous consumer's comment about trail running is irrelevant to her.

Visual Content Boosts Helpfulness

A growing number of consumers are seeking out reviews that include user-submitted visual content, such as photos and videos. In fact, recent research on the role of visual content found that 88% of consumers look for visual content—such as photos and videos—submitted by other consumers prior to making a purchase. And a product experiences a 69% conversion rate lift, on average, when that product adds at least one user-generated image.

Since consumers are actively seeking out this content, it makes sense that reviews with helpful votes include more photos and videos than those without. Reviews with helpful votes have 16% more videos and 13.8% more photos than those without visual content.

More and more consumers depend on user-generated visual content to inform their purchases. Ensure you're making it easy for your shoppers to submit photos and videos as part of their reviews.

Reviews Receive Helpful Votes Early

When a consumer leaves a review for a product they've recently purchased, that review has the potential to be helpful to other consumers almost immediately. In fact, on average, a review generates more than half (58.6%) of the helpful votes it will receive within the first 30 days. And a third (33.1%) of helpful votes are generated within the first 10 days.

This points to the importance of generating a steady stream of helpful reviews, so future shoppers can easily find the most helpful user-generated content for your products.

A Rapid Impact

Helpful votes arrive quickly

Days since displaying review

	Percentage of helpful votes
0-10	33.1%
11-20	15.5%
21-30	10.0%
31-50	12.5%
51-100	15.2%
100-200	10.3%
201+	3.5%
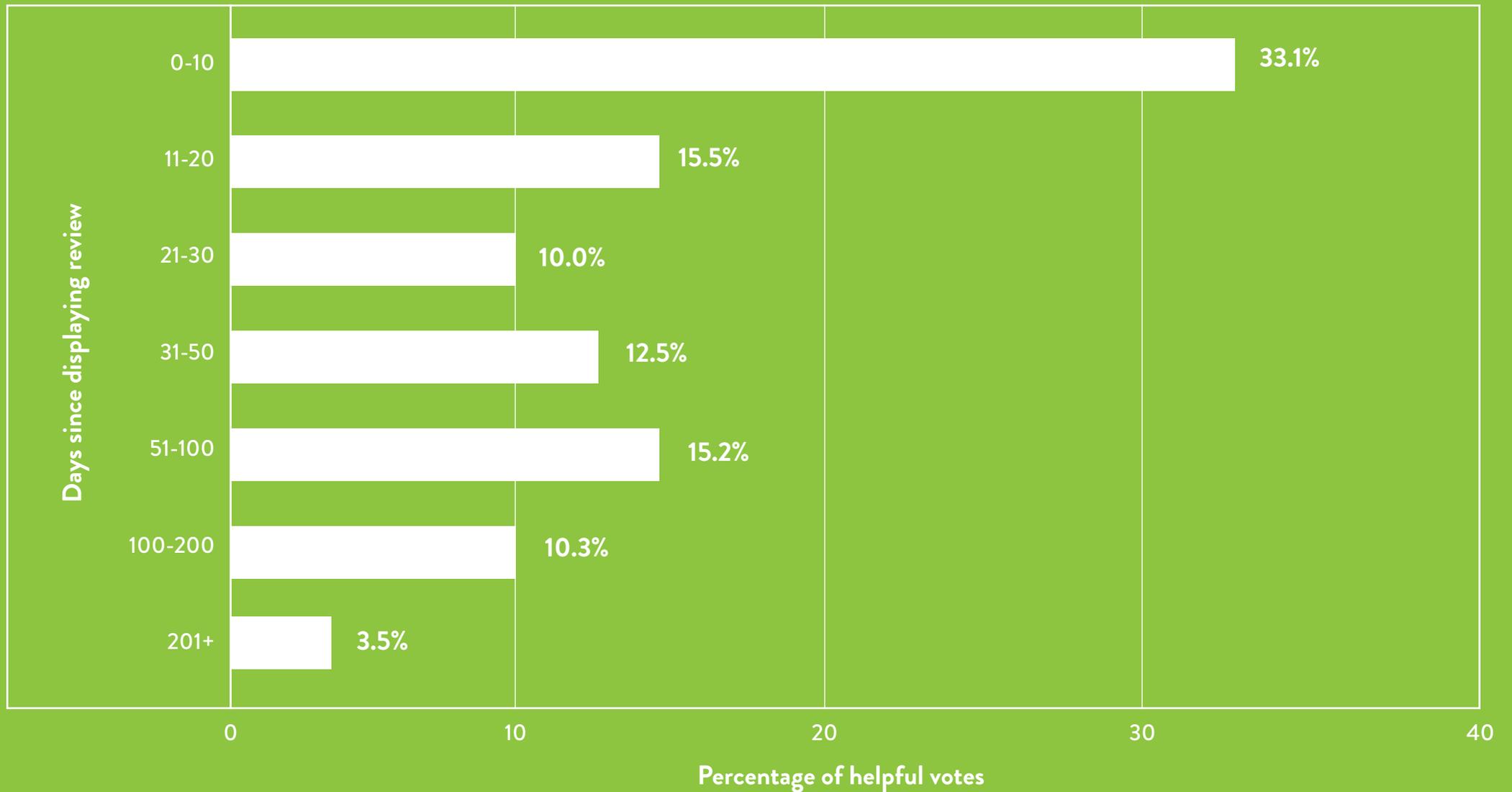
Higher Prices for Reviews With Helpful Votes

Previous research with Northwestern University found that reviews are especially impactful for products that are high priced in their category. There is a certain risk involved when purchasing a higher priced product, and consumers likely spend more time reading reviews in order to mitigate that risk.

Our most recent analysis supports this previous research. We found that reviews with helpful votes tend to be on higher priced items. This is likely because consumers are spending more time reading reviews for more expensive products, and are taking the time to indicate when a review is particularly helpful.

Six Recommendations for Brands and Retailers

Reviews are a key tool for helping consumers make smart purchase decisions. But not all reviews are created equal. Read on for six recommendations for brands and retailers to generate more helpful reviews—then make this content easy for future shoppers to find.

1

Identify and Leverage Helpful Reviewers

Identify contributors of helpful content. For example, look at the number of reviews consumers have written, as well as the components of those reviews—including helpful votes, visual content and length.

2

Reward Reviewers for Optimal Content

Once you've identified helpful reviewers, ask them to contribute additional content. Tie in your existing loyalty program and award points to reviewers whose content meets certain criteria—such as a specific character count.

3

Focus on High Priced Items

We know from previous research that reviews are more impactful for items that are higher priced in their category. And our most recent analysis found that reviews with helpful votes tend to be on higher priced items. This is likely because consumers are spending more time consuming reviews for more expensive items. Identify higher priced items in your product catalog, and prioritize generating reviews for these products.

4

Allow Consumers to Sort By Review Helpfulness

Most likely, your website allows consumers to sort reviews for a given product by a number of different factors, such as star rating and recency. Be sure you're also allowing consumers to sort reviews by the number of helpful votes they've received. This allows shoppers to easily identify the content that has been most helpful to others like them.

Reviewed by 19 customers

Sort by: *Most Helpful*

★★★★★ 5 **Pleasantly surprised**

I have used the same brand of lip balm for over 5 years and I'm glad I was able to try something new! I loved the smell and it helped my chapped lips. This tube is a little bigger than your typical lip balm, but I found that it was much easier to find in my backpack. I hope they add more flavors (maybe something fruity?) in the future!

Submitted 8 months ago
By Exeter, NH
From Kathryn K

Submitted as part of a free sample program

More Details ⌄

Bottom Line Yes, I would recommend to a friend

Was this review helpful to you? 👍 3   👎 0   Flag this review

★★★☆☆ 3 **Not the best lip balm**

I was looking forward to trying this lip balm, but I was a little disappointed. The color of the tube and the tube itself are cute and different, but the actual lip balm was less than ideal. It didn't last very long on my lips and I didn't really see a change after using it for a couple days. I also don't have time to reapply this lip balm 20 times a day. I'll keep this tube and finish it out, but I'll probably not buy this for myself.

Submitted 8 months ago
By Tess
From Detroit, MI

Submitted as part of a free sample program

More Details ⌄

Bottom Line No, I would not recommend to a friend

Was this review helpful to you? 👍 2   👎 1   Flag this review

5 Prominently Feature Helpful Reviews

Once you've generated plenty of reviews, make it easy for shoppers to find the most helpful review content for each of your products. Ask your ratings and reviews provider if they offer a review "faceoff" that provides consumers with an at a glance summary of the most helpful positive and negative reviews for each product.

Most Liked Positive Review

Can never go wrong with Duracell!

★★★★★

I love Duracell! They last longer than any other battery I've ever tried and they make my kids toys sound louder and light up brighter! They even last longer in my t.v. remote. I received these batteries for free from Duracell for my honest review and as soon as I received them,

VS

Most Liked Negative Review

Hope they last

★★★☆☆

In past years I have truly began to dislike the quality of batteries, due to having to change them out so often. I am a daily user of airwick automatic sprayers and I have to change batteries every 2-3 months. My husband and I started saving the batteries and reciept recently just

6 Embrace Negative Reviews

Though you certainly don't want to aim for negative reviews, this content is a helpful tool that allows consumers to identify the products that best fit their needs. In addition, negative reviews provide a level of authenticity to your content and allow you to identify insights to improve future iterations of your products.

About the Research

This report is based on an analysis of 7.8 million reviews written by consumers for products in the PowerReviews Open Network. The goal of this analysis was to better understand what makes a given review helpful to consumers, and what brands and retailers can do to more effectively collect and display the reviews that are most helpful to future shoppers.

About PowerReviews

PowerReviews works with more than 1,000 global brands and retailers to deliver cloud-based software that collects and displays ratings and reviews and questions and answers on websites. 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.

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