BrightEdge Point of View:
SEO Value of Review Content

Reviews are extremely valuable for the commerce user experience, an experience that usually begins at a general or vertical search engine. Research shows that 93% of users report that reviews influence their purchasing decisions. And 3.3 stars is a minimum breakpoint users look for to trust and engage with a business or a product. As many as 84% of shoppers said they trust reviews as much as recommendations from family and friends. 68% of consumers say they read 4 or more reviews before they make a buying decision. Stats and data from Shopify reviews article.

1st party reviews support healthy SEO
1st party reviews are those that are collected and hosted on your site, are unique content, and they have the following SEO benefits:
- Reviews + Content > Better Rank
- Reviews + Freshness > Better Rank
- Reviews + Rich Snippet Stars > More Clicks > Better Rank
- Reviews + Content Language Diversity > Better Rank
- Reviews + Social Shopping + User Satisfaction - Bounce Rate > Better Rank

Identify the most important 3rd party review sites for your industry:
- Amazon and Wal-Mart for Commerce
- AngiesList for Services
- AppStore and GooglePlay for Mobile Apps
- Avvo and Lawyers.com for Legal Services
- Bazaar Voice for Business and Online Services
- Doctor.com for Doctors and Hospitals
- Facebook.com for products and services
- Gartner's SoftwareAdvice and GetApp and G2Crowd and Trust Radius for Sotfware and Technology
- Glassdoor for Companies and Employment
- Google My Business for Other Industries
- Rotten Tomatoes for Movies
- TripAdvisor for Hotels, Restaurants, and Vacation Activities
- Trivago, Expedia, Orbitz, Booking.com for Hotels
- Yelp and OpenTable for restaurants

Driving engagement for multiple 3rd party review sites requires ongoing attention and investment. The common practice is to encourage happy customers to write reviews, but it is important not to offer any incentives for doing so as this usually violates the review sites' terms of service.

Extracting, embedding, or referencing 3rd party reviews helps the user experience but does not directly help SEO because the content is not unique and original. To the degree that they improve bounce and engagement, reviews can affect SEO.

John Mueller of Google states that 3rd party reviews embedded in a site should not be marked up with schema.

Industry focus – Hospitality and Dining: review-related points and best practices to consider.
- An optimal review is 180 words long.
- In the hospitality industry, reviews have a half-life of 30 days. Therefore, assume that their relevance rapidly decreases with age – there cannot be too many fresh reviews in hospitality.
- There should be 8 reviews visible on each property page without requiring a click to view.
- Each property should have 8 reviews that are less than 60 days old.
- Review date with year should be included in the page adjacent to each review. While schema.org has a spec for reviews, there is little evidence that it provides any direct search rank value.
- Within the hotel schema markup, aggregateRating must be used to get rich snippet stars.

Industry focus – Hospitality and Dining: Execution and Benefits:
- By proactively asking customers for reviews, average ratings will trend higher than reviews that are passively collected.
- By incorporating 8 reviews at ~180 words each into the DOM of each property page, those pages will average an additional 1400+ words of relevant, dynamic social content.
- Review content will contain nouns and adjectives that better-represent long-tail search phrases. This can translate into a significant growth in long-tail search traffic.
- By keeping the reviews fresh with dates, Google algorithms will be delighted by the constant freshness. This increases crawl frequency because the Googlebot identifies that the pages are a source of new content every few days.
- Proper structured markup will provide additional exposure opportunities

Recent changes from older review SEO practices:

- Paginating through all review content is no longer recommended. Years ago, pagination led to long-tail search traffic. It's no longer recommended as the strategy burns crawl budget and yields very little additional search traffic.
- When using microdata for structured markup for 1st party hosted reviews, both aggregateRating and Review schema should be used and nested within the Hotel schema. If using JSON-LD, only use aggregateRating. Including each review in JSON-LD adds much to page weight and there is no evidence that it becomes part of the Web Search index.
- Separate reviews pages or microsites are NOT recommended. The technique was common around 2010 because review vendors didn't know how to get reviews into the property pages - it was never a good idea because it creates parallel pages that compete against the pages that are optimized for conversion with current rates and content.

The Takeaway

Yes. Reviews are great for customer experience, great for universal content SERPs, and great for SEO. Business should invest ongoing attention and resources to generating legitimate reviews from customers.

If you would like to discuss the topic, please call your Customer Success manager or call us at 800-678-8023.

About BrightEdge

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