

# How to use reviews in product development

A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a dark plaid shirt, holding a smartphone with both hands. They are sitting at a desk with a computer monitor and a keyboard. The monitor displays some text, and the keyboard is on a green grid mousepad. The background is slightly blurred, showing a typical office or workspace environment.

# Intro

Research shows that more than 90 percent of consumers consult reviews before making a purchase – so it goes without saying that all brands should be paying attention to their contents. In this guide, Whispr Group will outline the ways companies can get an edge on their competitors by harnessing insights gathered from open review data.

We'll start by looking at why and when you should harness consumer review analysis, then outline how Whispr Group gathers and derives insights from the data with some examples of insights that can be produced, before summing it all up in our essential takeaways. Regardless of whether your products are physical or digital, there's huge potential to benefit.



## Consumer Review Analysis: When

Consumer review analysis is particularly suitable when you want to find & solve problems with your products. Being able to compare data to that of adjacent products is also an advantage for the method.

The method excels at showing trends in the features or product aspects that are driving consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Want to learn from your competitors? Start with review analysis.

Is a new player growing in your sphere and you want to know why? An incumbent doing something well that you can learn from?

Not being locked into using solely your own data makes review analysis a fruitful means of understanding your product in the context of its competitive landscape.

All of that insight can ultimately then be used to help us work to offer our consumers more of what they appreciate, and expand upon the features they like.

That's something taken as a given by consumers these days – changes and updates to better suit their needs are a base requirement for consumer loyalty, something every brand wants more of.



## Consumer Review Analysis: Why?

One major advantage consumer review analysis has over other research methods is the plentiful amount of data. Huge volumes of reviews are available in any product category, and not only consumer products. Insights on B2B services and software can also be gained, and the wide pool of data allows us to dig deep in the analysis and create truly granular insights.

There is also huge potential for predictive insights, with review data analysis making it possible to anticipate changes in consumer attitudes. The booms in robot vacuum cleaner and drone sales are two examples: both were initially seen as novelties, but today are considered problem-solving products many consumers love.

Ongoing consumer review analysis allows us to monitor attitudes towards products, see the changes coming, and adapt accordingly to get ahead of the competition. And the potential for detailed analysis means we can have a high level of confidence in the insights gained from the data.



## Gathering the Data: Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them

Challenges like limited metadata, irrelevant data in our set and the presence of auto-created reviews by bots can spoil data sets and render an analysis void if they are not filtered out accordingly.

Custom data-gathering solutions harnessing algorithms like those used by Whispr Group's Varys platform can eliminate those issues, weeding out low-value reviews that for example may contain a sentiment ("I like this product") but not a reason for it ("I like this product because..."). Skilled analysts meanwhile will be able to make calculated estimations to provide metadata where it is initially lacking and improve the analysis process.

All of these steps ultimately ensure that the analysis is genuinely actionable and provides a true reflection of the aspects of the product you seek to draw conclusions about.



## Example: Consumer electronics (Blenders)

	Quality	Price	Performance	Design	Installation	Usage
Product 1	4.14	4.78	4.81	4.70	4.65	4.69
Product 2	4.60	4.66	4.72	4.62	4.55	4.71
Product 3	5.00	4.88	3.21	4.63	4.50	4.57
Product 4	4.50	4.56	4.72	4.51	4.31	4.63
Product 5	3.99	4.27	4.60	3.40	4.29	2.00
Product 6	3.02	4.19	4.52	4.31	4.15	4.17
Product 7	3.61	4.02	4.31	4.01	3.65	4.11

■ Top 25%   
 ■ Top 50%   
 ■ Average   
 ■ Bottom 50%   
 ■ Bottom 25%   
 ■ No reviews

## Deriving Insights from Review Analysis

Here's how it works in practice. In the example above we analysed reviews of seven competing blenders, breaking the results down according to key features. It's clear from the analysis that Product 5 scores unusually low in the "design" & "usage" categories in particular, showing a need to analyse the review contents in more depth. Which produced the following example, illustrated in the comment bubble below:

	Quality	Price	Performance	Design	Installation	Usage
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Product 2	4.60	4.66	4.72	4.62	4.55	4.71
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Product 4	4.50	4.56	4.72	4.51	4.31	4.63
Product 5	3.99	4.27	4.60	3.40	4.29	2.00
Product 6	3.02	4.19	4.52	4.31	4.15	4.17
Product 7	3.61	4.02	4.31	4.01	3.65	4.11

*"The main thing I did not like about this blender was the removable insert, you have to take it out and wash it. This inset is dangerous and has 3 sharp prongs attached to it. The prongs cut my finger while I was trying to remove it."*

## The Next Step

Now that the details of the problem have been identified (in this case a poor quality removable insert) we have to analyse further reviews to corroborate that it is a recurring issue. If that proves the case, there are several possible additional steps:

- Carry out an extensive sentiment analysis of reviews of the product to determine how much of an inconvenience it is for consumers. Is it provoking returns or potentially dissuading purchases?
- Analyse the other products in the category in detail to determine if this issue is entirely unique to product five, or a recurring one in the category in general.
- Based on the above, weigh up how much of our budget it's worth directing towards ensuring our own product avoids or indeed improves upon the issue in question.







## Insight Example A: Revealing hidden issues

More often than not, review analysis reveals problems that are simple to solve with a high potential reward. One example is an analysis we carried out on car seats for children – a product category where safety is clearly of the utmost importance for parents who place their trust in brands to make sure their children are well secured, and expect that faith to be repaid.

The analysis revealed a contradiction: the product that experts had reviewed best for its safety turned out to be among the worst reviewed by consumers. Why?

While the expert reviews focused on how the product was highly durable in a crash scenario, the consumer reviews instead revealed a recurring annoyance: that the seat provided no confirmation when it was secured properly, leading to constant concerns over whether it was safely fastened that had a negative impact on reviews (and likely a negative impact on purchase decisions as a result).

The solution was a simple one: adding a small light that provides feedback when the seat is connected. The review analysis quickly and clearly identified this lack of a key feature that could be simply resolved.



## Insight Example B: Revealing Untapped Potential

Even a product that looks perfect on paper can have room for improvement. Our analysis for a manufacturer of tractor attachments (think everything from forklifts to shovel extensions) showed many people using one brand's product felt it had the best steering functionality in the industry. But there was more than meets the eye.



Deeper analysis revealed one specific subgroup was not satisfied, and didn't recommend others in their field to purchase. Agriculture workers working with animal waste found the steering implement did not provide the close control they needed in order to 'shake off' excess manure – a basic facet of their day to day work. The solution was straightforward: the manufacturer added a button that triggered the 'shake' functionality, thereby making the product perfect for an even larger group of potential customers!

## Key Takeaways

- Review analysis has a wide scope. The data exists and can be analysed on a large or small scale. It tells you what consumers think of your product as well as competitors. What do they appreciate that we can mimic, or dislike that we can capitalise on?
- It's possible at scale and allows granular insights. Other research methods cost more in order to achieve similar detail.
- It's flexible. We can always add more data to find a new angle, and are not limited to outdated answers to questions like with surveys.
- It allows us to quantify pain-points and purchase triggers. The vast volume of data lets us hone in on the big pain points in a product category, thereby providing direction for what you need to solve. The same applies with identifying purchase triggers in the form of desired features etc.
- It's dangerous to neglect! As we noted in the introduction, contemporary consumers expect companies to take their concerns into consideration and act upon them. If you don't, someone else will, and remember: the vast majority read reviews before purchasing.



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