

The Oracles of Online Reviews

We identify a segment of online reviewers, who systematically review successful products in early stages of the product's life. Using two large data sets of reviews for movies and books and their gross profits or sales ranks (respectively) we create a reviewer score that measures a reviewer's tendency to review successful products. We find that the higher the proportion of oracle reviewers in the crowd of reviewers, the more successful the product is. We also find that oracles do not necessarily like successful products but their mere appearance in the first week after product release can significantly increase the prediction of future success of the product. We show that the phenomena of oracle reviewers is robust across platforms in predicting various measures of product success. Finally, we identify text characteristics in the writing style of oracle reviewers that enable platforms to identify them in the absence of reviews' history.