

Best practice guide:

# 5 ways to launch your product with a bang



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# Introduction

Launching a product is a delicate moment. Months and even years of work culminate in a single moment – will customers love this product, or will it flop? A great launch can generate a flood of positivity, as consumers rush to investigate the hype and leave their own enthusiastic reviews. The better the launch, the stronger the reviews, leading to sustained product success for years to come.

A flop, however, may be impossible to recover from.

Naturally, successful brands leave nothing to chance – even at a time where the product launch playbook had to be rewritten.

Traditionally, product launch campaigns included real-world action – in-store sampling, expos, and splashy end caps, but COVID-19 changed that. The scale turned, and product launches are no longer an online versus offline balancing act. A gentle trend became a wholesale shift. McKinsey & Company estimates COVID-19 accelerated the adoption of e-commerce by 10 years inside 90 days in Q1 2020 alone<sup>1</sup>. Now, the main launch focus for global brands is online.





At 3M, Erica Schiebel, Brand Communications Supervisor, says the shift is dramatic.

“Our team has tried to prioritize e-commerce content even more than before. People are becoming more e-commerce driven, and it has happened a lot faster than anyone anticipated due to the pandemic. It has prompted a greater focus on e-commerce and how we can get quicker at getting content online,” she said.

Launches are now seeded online, with details given to influencers pre-launch. The “reveal” is done on YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram. And ad spend is now shifting online. GroupM estimates online advertising rose from 40% of overall spend to 49% in 2020 and will hit 60% in 2024<sup>2</sup>.

And frankly, life has some semblance of pre-COVID-19 normalcy, online will be the only way to successfully launch.

Since online stands to play a massive role in global brands’ product launch strategies this year and beyond, we sat down with masters of the art – like 3M, River Island, and Canon – to discuss the formula for a world-class product launch.

Here’s our guide to dazzling your customers from day one.

**\$794.5B**    **32.4%**

Expected US e-commerce  
sales for 2020<sup>3</sup>

E-commerce grew 32.4%  
year-over-year<sup>3</sup>



## Step 1

# Start planning early

A good rule of thumb is to anticipate — and indeed, expect — delays during your planned launch. COVID-19 exposed the vulnerabilities of many organizations when it comes to manufacturing and supply chains. Businesses that prepared flexibility, or buffer zones, were mostly able to pivot and adapt to keep plans on track despite the pandemic.

While every industry has its own nuances, the below timeline can be used to check against your plan and identify opportunities.







## Step 2

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# Sample before your launch date

Now that you've worked backwards with time to spare, ensure that at the moment of launch, your product detail page (PDP) – the stage for your new product – is full of robust and thoughtful user-generated content (UGC).

The secret to launch day success? Product sampling.

3M says it's crucial there are reviews before a product launch.

"It is ideal so that when a web page goes live, we'd have reviews there," says Schiebel. "We need to do things in advance."

And consumers agree having reviews on the page pre-launch is important. When asked what's most important to them on a product page, the largest portion of shoppers said reviews (39%). Coming in second was the product description and professional photos (22%)<sup>4</sup>. Even more telling, a third of shoppers won't buy a product without any reviews on the product page.

Just one review has the ability to increase sales by 10% and 50 reviews? A 30% increase<sup>5</sup>.



# Take Burt's Bees.

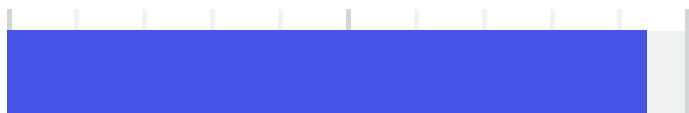
The well-respected natural health and beauty brand was keen to expand on its success with chapsticks and moisturizers and try their hand at cosmetics<sup>6</sup>.

“We knew reviews could be insurance for new products, and that early qualitative feedback and star ratings would ensure a smooth transition into a new market, said Taylor Steele, Assistant E-commerce Manager at Burt’s Bees.

To collect plenty of high-quality reviews early ahead of launch, Burt’s Bees partnered with Bazaarvoice to get pre-released products into the hands of consumers and collect feedback.

Taking this step yielded advance insights about how the products were received and gave them reviews in place as the products became available at retail stores.

Within just two weeks, 94% of those who received a sample submitted a review, resulting in more than 300 reviews (37-41 reviews per product) with a 4.48 average star rating.

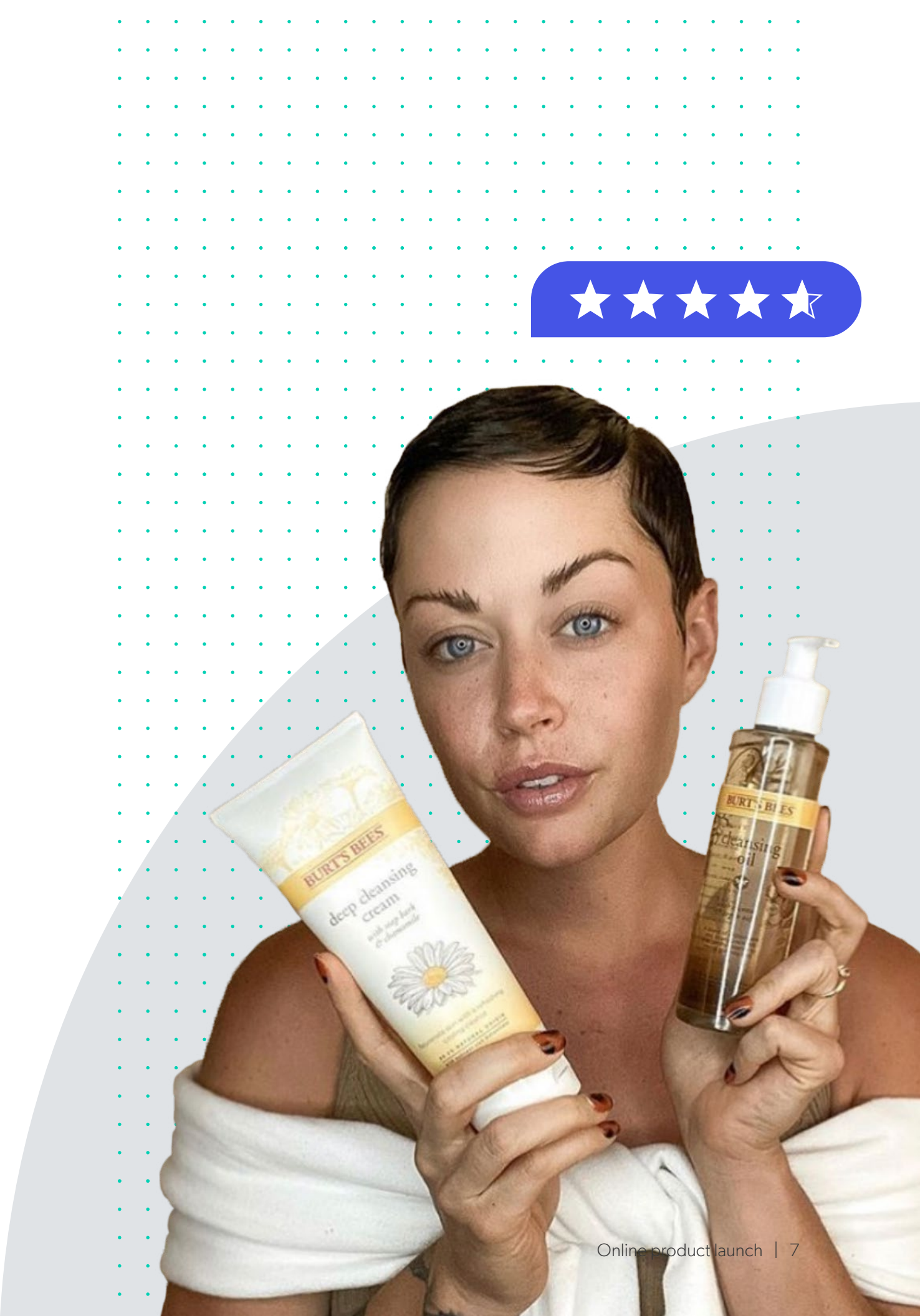


**94%** of people who received a sample submitted a review

And the payoff was huge at launch.

“The greatest thing was that when lights went on with cosmetics, our reviews were syndicated to 15 key retailers, said Steele.

Sampling ahead of your product launch will give you a page full of UGC, leading to shoppers filling their carts with your new product.



## Step 3

# Listen to consumer feedback

Ratings and reviews offer critical insight for brands. Those who don't dissect and digest the feedback are missing a huge win in plain sight.

3M sees reviews as an opportunity to innovate and improve ahead of launch. Its brands, such as Post-it® Brand, rely heavily on review content to introduce new products. Due to the importance of UGC, 3M, in partnership with Bazaarvoice, developed a program called Discover 3M, which feeds live reviews directly to its product pages.

3M's Erica Schiebel says that the voice of the consumer provides valuable insight into how a new Post-It product is being perceived by consumers.

"Sometimes reviews reinforce our key uses, and sometimes it's a surprise in terms of how people use it. We also hear some negative things too, but that is an opportunity for our product development team to re-evaluate and incorporate that feedback."

Feedback is critical to ensuring launches focus on the features that will resonate most strongly with consumers.



And it can improve the product itself.

EZVIZ, a Chinese company with little to no U.S. brand awareness, enlisted Bazaarvoice to sample their new HD wireless security camera to collect feedback ahead of the product's launch. Their objective was to drive content to fuel awareness and conversion on retail sites. However, early reviews indicated there was a serious product issue.

Review content was provided to EZVIZ's R&D team, who quickly identified a firmware fix that could easily be updated on in-market units. Bazaarvoice used the Sampling portal's email capability to instruct samplers to update their firmware, re-try the product, and submit a new review. Prior to sending the update email, the average approved rating was 3.8 vs. 4.0 after. Several reviews suggested that anyone with an issue first update their firmware – helpful, public advice for other consumers.



## Success story: Rael

Product sampling gave Rael<sup>7</sup> an easy and impactful way to mine customer sentiment about its new products, identify ways to refine marketing messaging, and turn feedback into action.

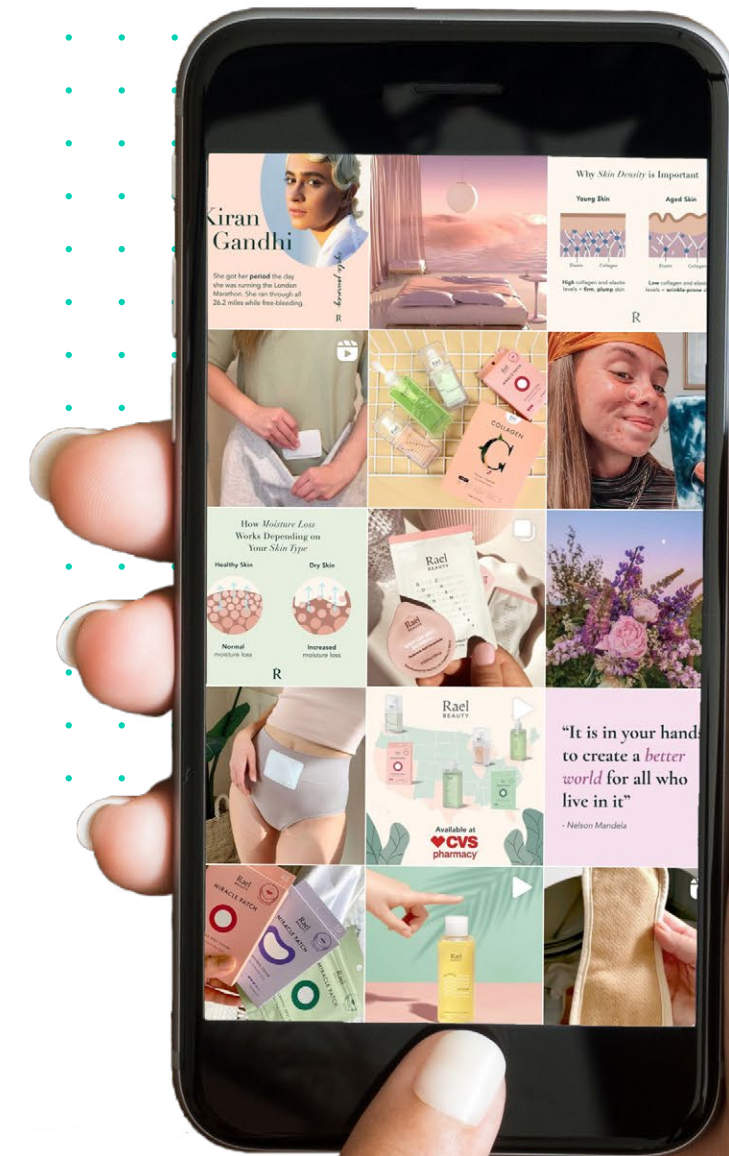
“Broadening our range from natural period care products to beauty has been a major hit,” said Sorah Park, CMO at Rael.

Rael used Bazaarvoice’s turnkey sampling solution that generates high-quality reviews and social advocacy by sending products to select members of Bazaarvoice’s Influencer community of 6 million highly engaged consumers. Through two sampling campaigns, Bazaarvoice curated and sent a total of 2,000 Custom VoxBoxes with Rael’s skincare products to a hyper-targeted audience of ideal buyers.

The campaigns also encouraged consumers to share their experiences on social platforms, generating 9.8 million impressions from tens of thousands of social posts, shares, likes, and comments. It also armed Rael with a repository of powerful content to utilize across other marketing channels.

“UGC guides essential parts of overall marketing strategy by showing us how to speak about each product and position them based on what consumers like. Sometimes your customers tell you things that you didn’t consider on our own,” said Park. “From a learning perspective, Bazaarvoice sampling lets us get much more granular information on our products compared to other sampling providers.”

Want to launch your own sampling campaign?  
**Connect with us here.**







## Step 4

# Build social buzz

Every brand wants to go viral. The mechanics are complex – but the only way to play the game is to share content your shoppers want to see and maximize its impact.

Video content works brilliantly online. Canon, naturally, is a genius-level user of it. For its most recent products, the Canon EOS R5 and EOS R6, the launch event in July 2020 live-streamed using a 4K camera, followed by a live Q&A. The videos were posted on the Canon site and YouTube for 10 days after launch, they continued to attract viewers and drive demand.

“This was new and we had two targets — people who had watched the launch video and those who had watched the Q&A — and we exceeded,” says Vishal Patel, Digital Interactions Specialist at Canon Europe. “We also ran out of stock on our own web store within hours — the demand was crazy.”



Offering exclusives to fans can generate buzz. River Island launched one of the dresses from its 2019 collection exclusively via Instagram a few days before the full collection, taking inspiration from Burberry's similarly successful approach of its B Series.

"Instagram has become more of a conversion driver and trend spotter, so we felt it was the right place to preview product launches," says Chloe Bebbington, River Island Social and Community Lead in the UK. "We are hoping to move more towards that in the future. That exclusivity gives the community a reason to be there to follow you and to keep engaging."

And sometimes just paying for ads can give a launch the push it needs to attain lift-off.

3M's Schiebel says paid social paid off for a limited-edition launch.

"When we launched a limited-edition pack of Post-it® Notes in a gift box, we promoted it with paid social. Amazon ran out of stock, and there was a lot of engagement and buzz about when it would be available again. Social engagement is a meaningful measure of success that we can track."

Use social to inspire FOMO before and during your product launch, and you can watch the orders roll in.

Step 5

# Share content others create

Social media is a user-driven medium. The best launches harness this principle and put users in charge.

“You can’t just talk to your audience,” warns River Island’s Bebbington. “It needs to be a conversation. Our social media accounts constantly chat to customers and share their images of their clothes. It’s why we’ve got 2.4 million followers on Instagram!”



♥ @riverisland

The latest River Island campaign called #ImWearingRI offers customers the chance to take selfies which are shared on River Island’s official account.

“There’s no better advertisement than a customer proudly wearing your new line and looking stunning,” says Bebbington. “The campaign has been a smash hit for us.”



♥ @canonusa

Canon’s also very familiar with this strategy. The brand uses its popular Instagram to share images taken by customers. The identity and full setup of each photographer is included in the caption. New cameras, lenses, and accessories can thus be marketed in the most organic way possible.

“Customers will be your best advocates,” says Canon’s Patel. “If you want to launch with the maximum impact, it’s them, the people who matter, not your company, who should be leading the charge. Put their images, their reviews, and their views in the forefront and let them do the talking.”



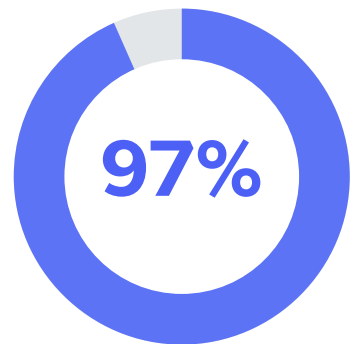
# Looking forward

COVID-19 has triggered a tangible shift in mindset for organizations. As companies accelerate the implementation of online strategies in response to a sharp shift in consumer behavior, “digital transformation” is top of everyone’s agenda again.

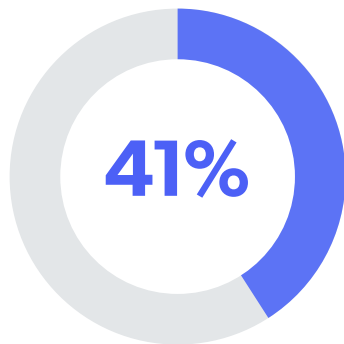
Post it is one of those companies that has also seen a marked growth in the importance of e-commerce.

“There has been an increased desire and appetite from consumers, and the team has tried to prioritize e-commerce content even more than before as a result,” says Schiebel.

Product marketers and e-commerce professionals should be the driving force for this innovation. They can lead conversations on their transformation roadmaps. Whilst uncertain, the next 12 months look to be exciting for brands.



of brands believed the COVID-19 pandemic had accelerated their digital transformation



of brands saying the crisis had hastened their digital rebirth by one to four years<sup>8</sup>



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## About Bazaarvoice

Thousands of the world's leading brands and retailers trust Bazaarvoice technology, services, and expertise to drive revenue, extend reach, gain actionable insights, and create loyal advocates. Bazaarvoice's extensive global retail, social, and search syndication network, product-passionate community, and enterprise-level technology provide the tools brands and retailers need to create smarter shopper experiences across the entire customer journey.

**[www.bazaarvoice.com](http://www.bazaarvoice.com)**

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