5 ways UGC can solve your brand's biggest problems

b: bazaarvoice™

What's Inside

Introduction

UGC CAN UNLOCK SOLUTIONS FOR COMMON PAIN POINTS WITHIN YOUR BRAND EXPERIENCES

In the current commerce climate, user-generated content (UGC) is essential for brands – now more than ever. Customer ratings, reviews, photos, videos, questions, and more offer clearer insight into your customers' minds, enabling your brand to make better, informed business decisions. Through UGC, you'll see how customers are using your products, what they love about them, and how they make them their own through various suggestions or improvements.

These are crucial insights for your brand to have. Whether you're selling on your own site, at a retailer's brick-and-mortar, a third party e-commerce platform, or a combination of these and more, UGC can unlock solutions for common pain points your brand experiences.

Why are customers so reliant on UGC? Because it's authentic. It's straight from their peers' mouths. It's not brand copy full of sales-y terms or staged product photos. UGC offers future customers insight into how others really feel about a product and how it fits into a person's real life. And that, in itself, can already solve many of the problems brands experience on a regular basis.

We'll explore how UGC can solve some of the problems that keep you up at night, the impact of those solutions, and action items for implementing UGC tactics.

How to collect more UGC

It's clear. UGC is a must for brands today. In fact, 95% of users rely on reviews to learn more about products.[1] That's almost all of today's customers! And it's not just reviews. 81% of brands and retailers agree that featuring visual UGC in the shopping experience increases conversion.[2] That's why photos, videos, Q&As, and social media content are all just as important.

If you don't have any UGC, start building it today. And if you don't have any recent UGC on your product pages, these tactics will work for your brand too.

Need help collecting UGC?

Download our guide to building a review collection strategy.

▶ **Get the guide**

We recommend these collection strategies as a starting point:

POST-INTERACTION EMAILS
Do you know which customers have recently made a purchase? Whenever someone buys a product, send out an automated post-interaction email to ask for their feedback. These emails can also be triggered by non-transactional actions, like product registrations and coupon downloads.

PRODUCT PACKAGING
Include a call for reviews on product packaging, inserts, or on the product registration card. The URL should be short and simple. This tactic is especially useful for brands without a direct way to connect with customers.

GENERAL EMAIL REQUESTS
Send an email to contacts in your CRM list to request ratings and reviews for products they've purchased in the past. If you're not sure exactly what item they purchased, direct them to a generic review submission form with a product picker.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS
Meet your customers and advocates where they are by running a promotion through social media for the chance to win a prize or free product in exchange for submitting honest product reviews. You can also do this over email.

PRODUCT SAMPLING
A sampling campaign is a quick and reliable way to accelerate review collection and get authentic customer feedback in exchange for complimentary sample products. Launch new products with reviews on day one, boost your review volume, and get insights into your products, all while building customer engagement and loyalty.

Painpoint #1

My brand is having trouble maximizing the power of digital UGC, in-store

UGC generally happens online. Customers leave reviews on a brand's website or post photos to social media, like Instagram and Twitter. The online benefits of UGC range from increased SEO and keyword targeting, to increased engagement and conversion. But, offline benefits might not be as clear.

Many brands find it challenging to bring that online, engaging UGC experience to their brick-and-mortar stores. But it's not impossible – in fact, we highly recommend it.

Over half (53%) of best-in-class brands and retailers consider ratings and reviews a key value driver of in-store sales.[2]

About 62% of in-store shoppers already use their phones to look up online reviews before making a purchase.[3] Why not display customer photos and reviews clearly in-store to save them a step?
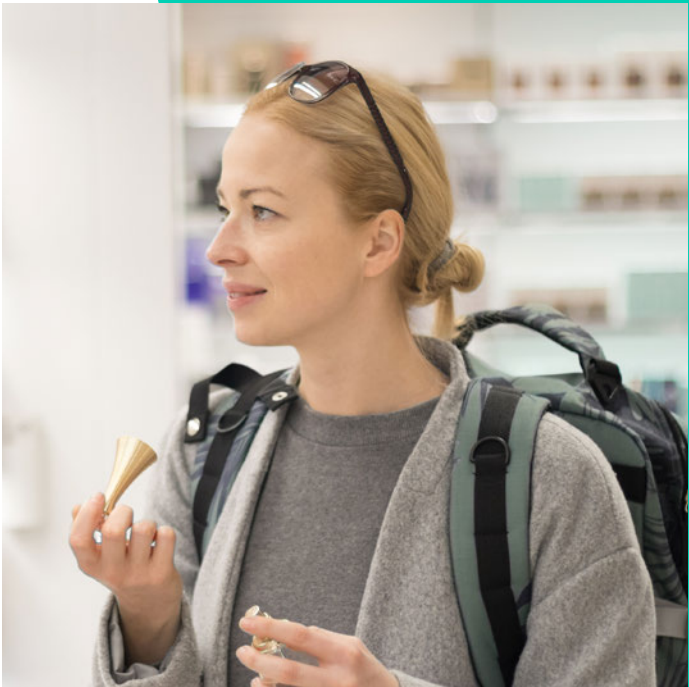
62%
of in-store shoppers use their phones to look up online reviews before making a purchase[3]

#MYBRAND

How to bring UGC in-store

Get comfortable leveraging UGC in your offline marketing plans, whether that's in the form of photos, reviews, tweets, comments, or all of the above. You can include this content in on-shelf signage and promotions, billboards, TV ads, and more. The inclusion of UGC in mass communications like this helps create a brand image that is actively listening and proactive – it can also surprise and delight potential customers and boost trustworthiness.

Another way to display UGC in your brick-and-mortar stores is to create a digital display of real-time social media content somewhere in the store. Yes, it might be a little more of an investment, but it will pay off.

How does it work? When a customer posts UGC on social media and tags your brand or uses a branded hashtag, the post would then be picked up by you (the brand) or the retailer, and then approved and displayed in real-time on an in-store screen. This content inserts customers into your brand story. For other customers-to-be walking around the store, it inspires their own shopping behaviors. You'll see higher conversion rates and get more social assets for your brand in the process!

UGC used in this way can extend the amount of time customers are in your store, increase brand engagement, and encourage peer-to-peer purchasing. It also gives shoppers a similar browsing experience as though they were shopping through your digital storefront – your UGC will be present as they're in the final stages of their buying decision, helping them confirm your product is the right choice.

Takeaway

UGC isn't just for your online store. For your brick-and-mortar customers, UGC can surprise, delight, and ultimately help them make the right purchase. Invest in showcasing UGC in ads, in-store signage, and digital displays.

Painpoint #2

My brand is struggling to launch new products and generate enough buzz

From ideating the product and conducting market research, to building the product itself and flushing out a marketing plan, product launches have a lot of moving parts that need to be executed properly for a product to be successful.

The above list doesn't even include some of the biggest digital components of a product launch – Google Ads, SEO, and social media. Because of shoppers' digital-first tendencies, it's crucial for your brand to create buzz about your product before it launches. About 57% of online shoppers said that they've purchased a product they heard about on social media.[4]

Instead of waiting for the press to showcase your product, brands need to proactively reach out to their loyal customers and influencers to collect their feedback on new products before they launch and make sure building a customer-centric digital presence for the product is at the top of the product plan. A product page for a new product full of customer reviews and photos will convert significantly better than an empty product page. We found that when shoppers engage with reviews on a product page, there is a 138% lift in conversion on best-in-class sites.[5] One of the best ways to collect critical customer feedback ahead of launch is through product sampling.
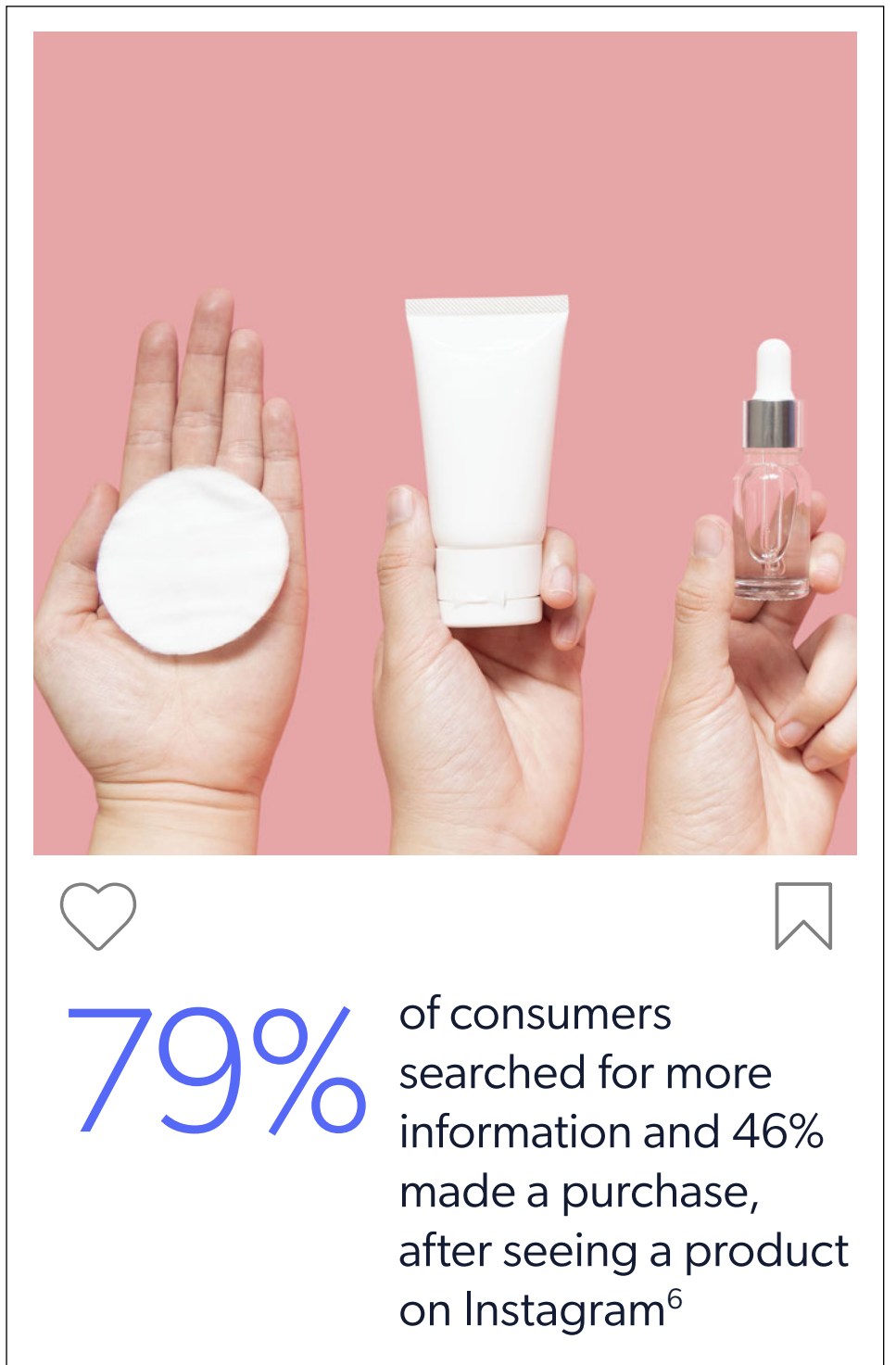
Sample new products ahead of launch

Customers love trying new products and sharing feedback with brands. Sampling refers to when brands offer product samples to a community of consumers in exchange for authentic product reviews, social media posts, or both. It also provides valuable insights into shopper sentiment and potential sales. Sampling programs are a way to get your product into the right customers' hands, drive trial and awareness, get helpful feedback from real people, build demand for a product launch, and increase key UGC volume, like photos, reviews, and Q&A.

Product sampling also increases social awareness, which can turn into new customers.

So how does it work? First, determine what you're hoping to get out of a sampling campaign. Maybe you want to generate reviews or social buzz ahead of launch or maybe you want to drive traffic to an in-person or virtual product launch event. Then, you need to figure out how much time you need to run your campaign and create buzz before your product launches. Work backwards and think about how you're going to get the product into customers' hands. Will you ship it to them? Have them pick it up from one of your locations? Do white glove delivery? You'll also need to give customers time to create UGC.

The next step is the most important. The key to a successful sampling program is finding the right customers. You don't want to send your new product to just anyone. You'll get higher engagement if you just send it to the audience it was intended for.

79% of consumers searched for more information and 46% made a purchase, after seeing a product on Instagram[6]

Bazaarvoice can help you tap into an existing, hyper-targeted sampling community. We vet everyday customers to understand their preferences and if they'll be the right fit for the sampled product. This offers a unique way to sample your product to a group of brand advocates who are eager to write honest reviews.

And while you're sending your product off to the right customers, don't forget about influencers. Approval from the right influencer during a sampling campaign can mean big numbers for your product launch.

But remember, authenticity should be of the utmost importance for your business. Check that the influencer has a high engagement rate, not just a large number of followers, and examine the type of engagement the influencer receives. For example, are the comments on a product post actually relevant to the content?

If people find your brand to be working with untrustworthy influencers or if an influencer touts your product when they probably wouldn't actually use it, customers will lose trust for your business and it can cost you.

Takeaway

Get your product into customers' hands! Product sampling can help you quickly build brand loyalty, get critical product feedback, and increase UGC before a product launch.

How we support your product launch through sampling

CO-OP BOX

In a Co-op box, you'll share space with 4-7 other brands in a themed, monthly box reaching a large audience. Co-op boxes help you drive awareness, generate high-quality social content and reviews for a single product, and provide new product introductions and promote awareness for hero products. This is popular in the food and beverage industry where samples are placed alongside other snacks and in the beauty industry where samples are included with other non-competitive products.

CUSTOM SAMPLE BOX

A custom sample box is dedicated to highlight your brand and products. Custom boxes are ideal for showcasing your brand to your ideal buyer and collecting insights about new products, customizing the volume and the audience for your campaign, and generating high-quality reviews and social advocacy for one or several products.

TRYIT BOX

TryIt sends individual samples to community members who fit brands' target demographics. This allows customers to easily try a new product at no cost to them and drives content that influences other shoppers. It can help you quickly collect reviews for new products, build brand loyalty, drive traffic to your website, and create buzz among the marketplace.

My brand finds it difficult to develop and maintain brand loyalty

You want your new customers to become repeat customers for many reasons – repeat buyers cost your business less, they spend more money, and they spread the word about your business to their friends and family – to name a few.[7]

Because of this, building brand loyalty is important. Brand loyalty means that the customer is committed to using your products and buying from your brand. The competition may be cheaper or have a different feature, but the customer loves what you offer. They will always consider your brand first.

Loyalty is a two-way street – show your customers you're listening

One of the best ways to build and strengthen your relationship with customers is to show them that you're listening by responding to customer UGC, repurposing the content, and making improvements based on customer feedback.

By engaging with customers when they submit a Q&A, review, or tag you in a social media post, people see that their feedback is heard and valued. Over time, they'll reward you with their loyalty.

The next step is sharing customer UGC across your digital platforms to reinforce the importance of your relationship with your customers. For example, share a customer photo on your social media and write a nice blurb about the customer and how they use your product. This shows that you value your customers and the time they're taking to create and share content with you.

75%
of consumers will share
a positive experience
with a brand[8]

You can also showcase a customer's content on your product pages. Customer photos allow shoppers to see how your product looks in real life, rather than a stylized set. When asked what type of UGC shoppers wish they had more access to, photos from real customers was the top request[5].

Finally, take what your customers say to heart. It's not enough to respond to customer feedback by saying "Thanks, we'll pass that along to our team!" (especially if you never pass it along). Show customers that their voices are actually being heard by implementing their feedback.

If you're planning to make a change to one of your products based on customer feedback (and you should!), send the new version to the customers who left a negative review at no cost to them. You may be able to boost positive reviews of the product, increase sales, and lower returns.

DON'T FORGET!
Before reposting any content, remember that you need to ask the customer for permission. Send them a quick note about how much you appreciate the content and ask if you can use it in branded materials.
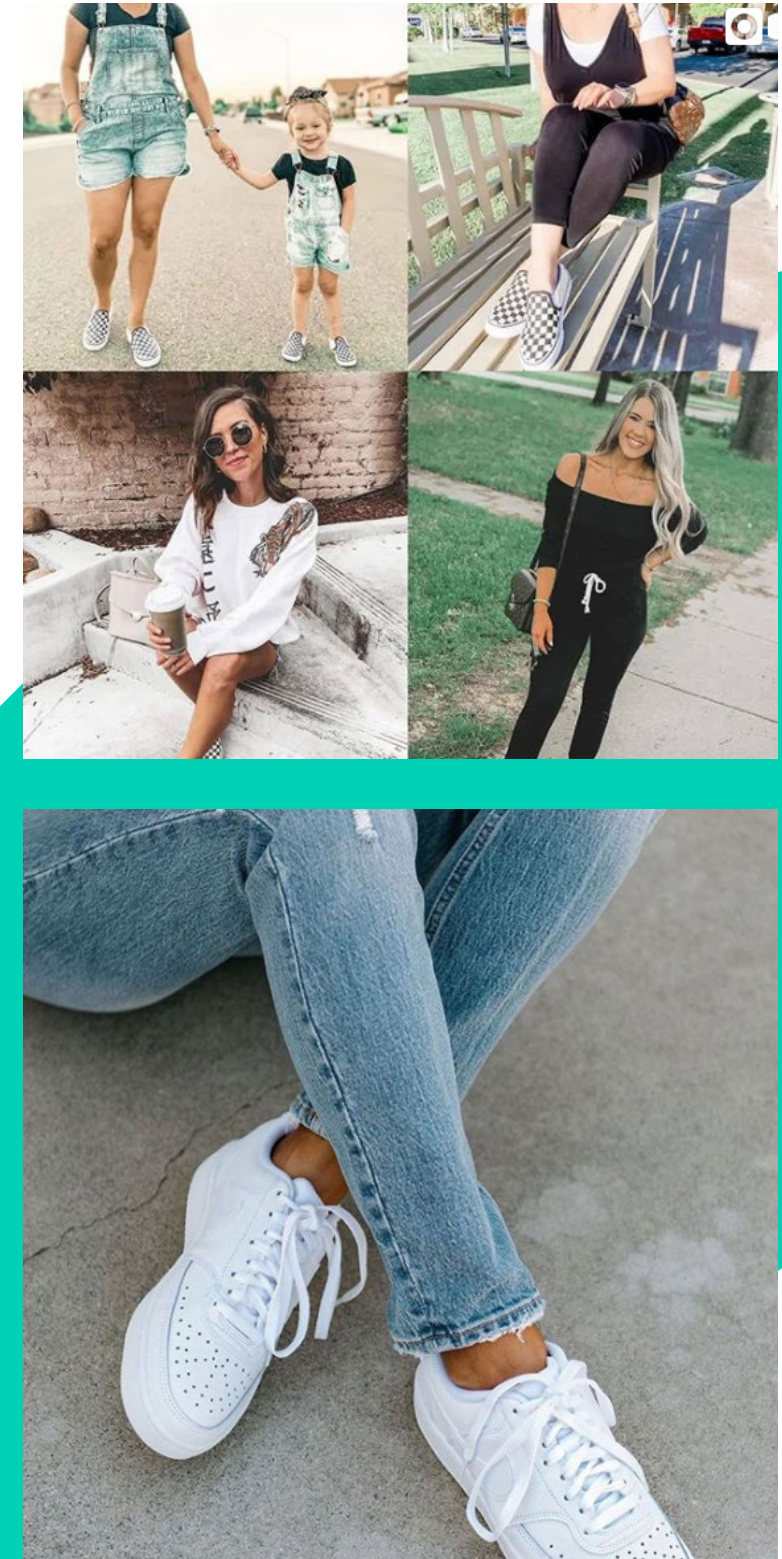
DSW

Shoe retailer DSW knows the benefits of digital UGC. Once they started providing online shoppers the same visual style guidance they experience in stores, DSW found that customers were more likely to convert and spend more money.

SEE HOW THEY DID IT

KIDKRAFT

KidKraft, a manufacturer of children's products, recently learned the importance of listening to customers. Reviews and customer photos showed the company that many customers were DIYing one of their popular playhouses by painting it white and giving them more modern touches. After spotting this new use case in their UGC, KidKraft developed a white version of the playhouse, which makes it easier for customers to customize the look. The team has seen significant sales success of the new version.

SEE HOW THEY DID IT

NESTLÉ CANADA

Similarly, Nestlé Canada, subsidiary of the world's largest food and beverage company, also used UGC to improve a product. A few years ago, the company made some changes to one of their customers' favorite iced tea products. Nestlé tweaked the ingredients of the formula, and within a month of it hitting shelves, they saw a slew of negative customer complaints and reviews — then sales dropped.

Nestlé's CX team shared these reviews and sales numbers with the brand team, and within several months, Nestlé reverted back to the original iced tea formula. The average customer rating increased from 1.7 to 4 stars.

SEE HOW THEY DID IT

Takeaway

Reviews aren't just to help other customers. Show customers you're listening by turning their feedback into action items for your brand.

My brand needs to stand out to retailers more

The retail world can be difficult for individual brands to stand out and thrive in because there's so much competition – this is a pain point that both small and bigger brands face. The key to rising above the noise? Amplify the voices of your customers. While brands may collect UGC on their own, when they share this content to different retail channels, the value multiplies.

Just about anyone can start a brand and sell products online these days. It's easier than ever to enter the playing field — and harder than ever to win customers' (and retailers') attention, consideration, and trust. Earning a place on retail shelves isn't just about providing the best products. For brands, it's about understanding what retailers want and need to compete.

Driving reviews to retail sites not only helps brands to expand their reach and stand out in the digital aisle, but it's also the most effective way for retailers to amass more content and compel more shoppers to buy.

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Syndicate reviews to retail sites

When brands in the Bazaarvoice Network syndicate reviews to retailers, the median increase in product pages with reviews on retail sites is 37%, resulting in a median of 83% more reviews per product than those without syndication[2].

In order for brands to win the attention and trust of retailers, they need to show that shoppers are, well, buying what they're selling. Brands need to earn their place on retailers' shelves.

In order to get a retailer's attention, you have to show them that you have what they want and that the addition of your brand will help the retailer be successful. This means that you need to prove that you can gain shoppers' attention and get them to make confident purchases. And you can do that with UGC.

Many retailers collect UGC, but more and more of them are relying on brands to come to the table with their own for converting shoppers. About half of Bazaarvoice retailers source 65% or more of their reviews directly from brands.[2]

When brands collect their own UGC, they can prove to retail channels that they sell high-quality products customers love. Brands can also prove that they offer real business value to retailers looking to hit their sales and inventory goals and gain a competitive edge. And customers see big benefits too. They'll get a more seamless, multichannel shopping experience that matches their shopping preferences — and gives them the information they need to make a confident decision — no matter where they choose to buy.

Takeaway

The voice of your customers is a powerful way to show retailers your brand deserves a space on their shelves – syndicate your brand's content to retailer site.

Painpoint #5

My brand isn't able to connect with shoppers who buy outside of our brand site

Not every shopper will be purchasing from your brand site. Even if someone buys your product in-store at a retailer, on social media, or on another website, there's an opportunity for you to connect with them through digital or in-person UGC. Other customers can tell your brand story through quotes, images, and videos that they've created, and you can show you're a brand that cares by engaging with reviews, photos, and Q&As anywhere your products are sold.

Be active and engaged where your customers are

Many customers might find your product on a different retailer's site. And no matter which site they're on, they want to connect with you.

Online shopping still needs to feel like a human-to-human interaction. You can facilitate this by engaging with reviews and Q&A on retailer websites. Seeing helpful Q&A exchanges between a brand and other shoppers signals that your customers' voices are heard and respected, which can translate to real value.

In 2018, best-in-class Bazaarvoice clients saw a 114% lift in conversion and a 120% lift in revenue per visitor or higher when shoppers engaged with Q&A.[2]

Retailers expect the brands they partner with to directly engage with customers by responding to customers who have taken time to offer valuable feedback. When retailers see this kind of customer loyalty and engagement, it reinforces the value of putting your products on their shelves.

Additionally, another place customers might be engaging with your products besides your website is on social media. In 2019, 1 in 5 consumers said it's important or very important to be able to discover products and purchase directly from social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest — a 17% increase over 2018[2]. And, customers buy once they discover products on social media. In a global survey, 45% of respondents said they had purchased a product through a social media platform this past year[5].

With branded hashtags and reposting UGC content from customers, you can let your brand loyalists tell your story for you on social media.

And finally, don't forget to reach out to customers who are picking up your products in-store. Connect with brick-and-mortar customers by including UGC on product packaging, paper inserts, thank you cards, or even product samples.

Takeaway

Meet your customers where they are, and engage with them. Stay current with where your customers are conducting their research and making purchases.

Conclusion

UGC can help you maintain relationships with current customers, build awareness among potential ones, and help you stand out to retailers.

Once your UGC starts rolling in, take the time to respond to customers and engage with them, and do regular evaluations of your reviews to see if any common themes jump out. Is there a feature many people wish a product had? Are people using a product for something other than it's main use? These analyses can help you improve your product line and make better strategic decisions.

With high-quality UGC, your brand's value increases to both retailers and customers alike, alleviating many of the common pain points brands like yours are facing.

Want to learn more about responding to customer reviews and the impact it can have for your business?

▶ **Contact us today.**

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About us

Each month in the Bazaarvoice Network, more than a billion consumers create, view, and share authentic user-generated content including reviews, questions and answers, and social photos across more than 6,200 global brand and retailer websites. From search and discovery to purchase and advocacy, Bazaarvoice's solutions help brands and retailers reach in-market shoppers, personalize their experiences, and give them the confidence to buy.

Founded in 2005, Bazaarvoice is headquartered in Austin, Texas, with offices in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

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