

The brand manager's guide to

# User-generated content best practices



bazaarvoice™

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# Introduction

As a brand manager, you're not only responsible for developing a brand strategy. You're also managing how that plan is implemented across various communication channels and marketing initiatives.

In other words, you've got a lot to juggle.

There's one aspect of your brand's marketing strategy in particular that you can't afford to drop: user-generated content (UGC). UGC is any type of content — from a product review to a selfie in a recently purchased outfit — created and shared by actual customers. Why is it important? Because the success of your brand depends on what people say about your products and company.

And it's incredibly effective. In fact, 79% of people say UGC guides their purchasing decisions, and consumers find that it's nearly 10 times more effective than influencer content.<sup>1</sup>

User-generated content helps companies drive sales, scale their brand, and build customer loyalty. This foolproof guide to UGC best practices will empower you to do just that.



BRAND  
STRATEGY

UGC





# Do your homework

Brand managers need to understand their customers, competition, and challenges to effectively implement a UGC strategy. Use this comprehensive checklist to set your brand up for success.



# Understand your customers and their relationship with UGC

You need to really know your customers — both current and potential ones — so you can reach them with UGC.













Stay on top of the content your followers and customers tag you in on social, such as the example below from a fan of direct-to-consumer home goods brand Parachute.<sup>2</sup> Also, look at the product reviews customers leave and the questions they commonly ask about your products.



## Put on your detective hat and figure it out:

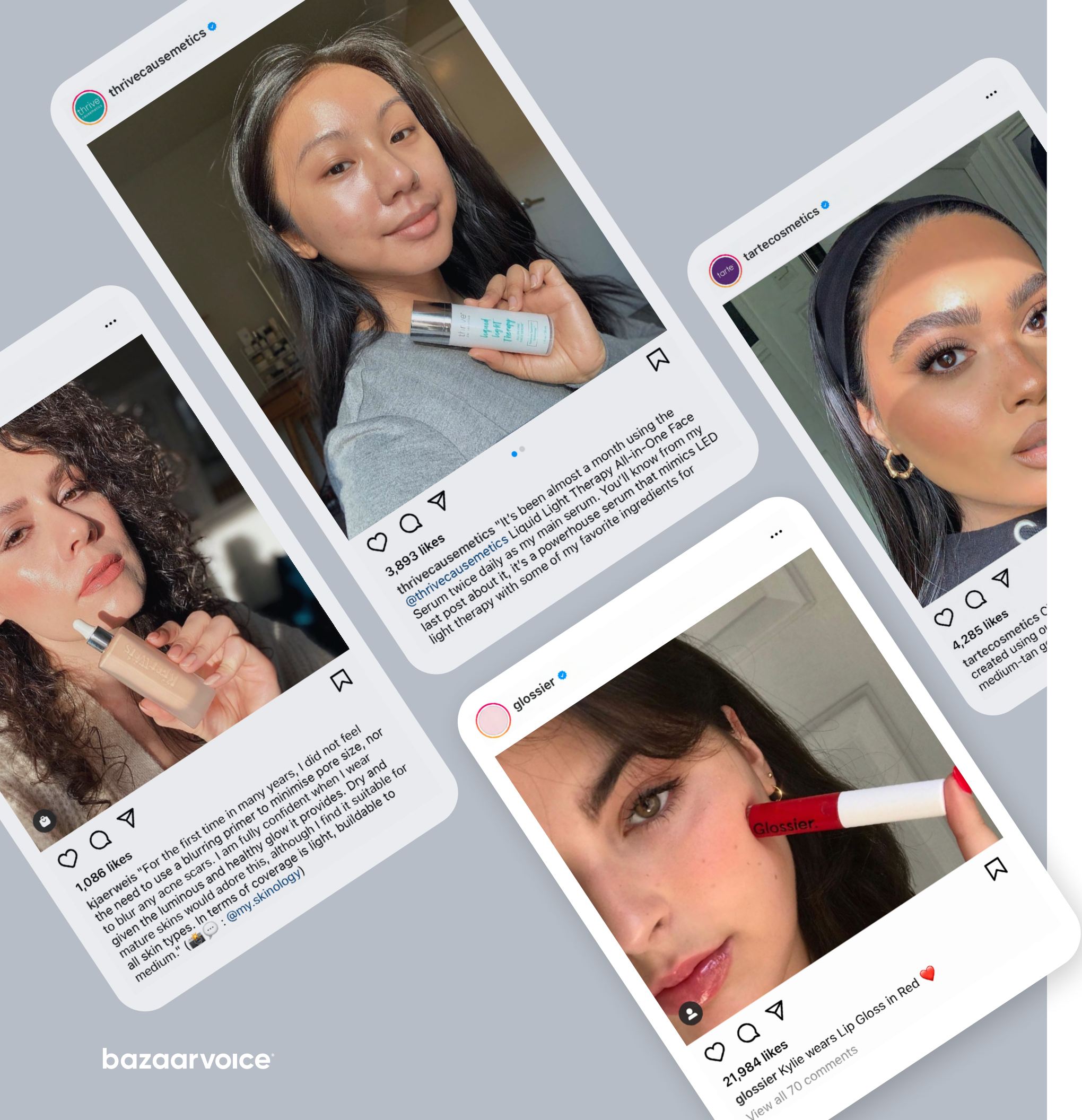
- What kind of UGC are customers sharing?
- What are the common themes in their UGC?
- How are they using your product in UGC?
- What inspires customers to share UGC?
- What kind of UGC do they respond to?
- What questions do customers often ask about your products?

“If you don’t know who your shoppers are or what resonates, find out by digging into who’s engaging now and what they’re saying,” said General Manager of Influenster Colby Smith.

b: Recommended Actions			
PRODUCT	REVIEW VOLUME	AVERAGE RATING	ANSWER VOLUME
			
			
			

Getting these customer insights is important because you have to know your customers well to understand how to communicate with them and give them exactly what they want. Learn even more about your customers with Bazaarvoice’s Insights and Reports.





## Know your peers and how they use UGC

Not everything's a competition. But some things definitely are. That's why you need to be aware of competitors in your space, so you can assess how your brand fits, how it stands out, how you can improve your offerings, what competitive advantage you may have — and how you can showcase all of this with UGC.

**Familiarize yourself with your competitors, as well as anyone else who's killing it with UGC, so you can answer the following questions:**

- What are competitors doing well with UGC?  
Where are they failing?  
What do you do better than them?
- Whose UGC inspires you?
- Who is doing a great job with UGC (even if they're not in your market) and why?  
How can you emulate this?

These insights will help you identify ways to improve your UGC strategy and take it to the next level.



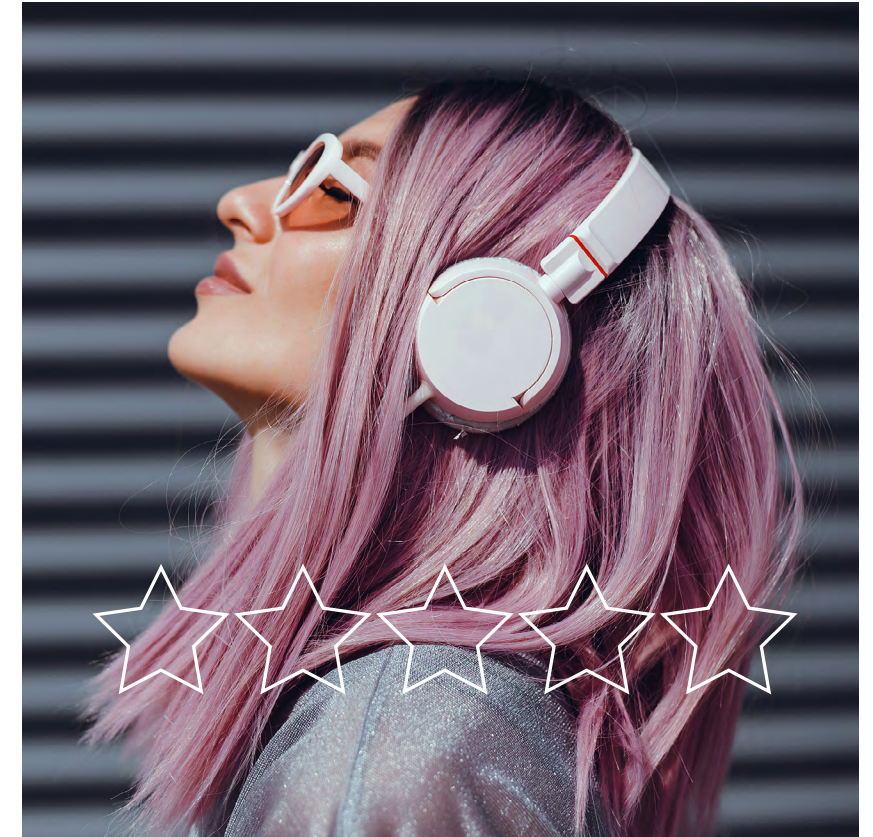
## Understand your challenges and how UGC can help you beat them

Finally, you need to determine what challenges your brand faces and strategize ways to overcome them with UGC.

### Here are a few questions to get you started:

- What are your current marketing challenges?  
How can UGC help solve some of these issues?
- What have you tried and failed with UGC?  
What's worked?
- How can you iterate and expand on your UGC successes?
- What message do you wish your brand communicated better?
- How will you define success, and how will you measure it?

Now that you've got a clearer picture of your current UGC strategy and how you'd like it to grow, let's take a look at how to expertly implement it.





# Drive revenue and scale your brand

User-generated content is essential to boost sales and grow your business. In fact, customers who interact with UGC are twice as likely to convert.<sup>3</sup> But you need the right tools and tactics to get the most out of your UGC.







### Create customer-driven campaigns

UGC-based advertising can lead to a 400% increase in click-through rates.<sup>4</sup> But that improvement doesn't happen unless the content resonates with shoppers.

Customer feedback is key to every element of your business. It influences how products are positioned, the copy on product pages and packaging, campaign messaging, what your brand shares on social media, and more. And UGC is the ticket to that steady stream of customer feedback.

Make sure the UGC you spotlight resonates with your audience by continually collecting customer feedback on campaigns and assessing how that UGC is performing.

# Inspire reviews, social buzz, and engagement around new products for launch success

An average of 30,000 new products launch every year, and 95% of them fail.<sup>5</sup> But a savvy brand manager can help avoid product-launch disaster by taking advantage of UGC.

Before you launch, send samples to targeted consumer groups to gather product feedback. Learn what people like most (or least) about the product, so you can emphasize the features that excite them — and populate your product page with UGC, like high-quality customer photos and ratings. This is essential for product launch success because shoppers rely on this content to make purchasing decisions.

CONSUMER SENTIMENT

31.2k

Products with highlights


Waterproof


Accurate


Comfortable

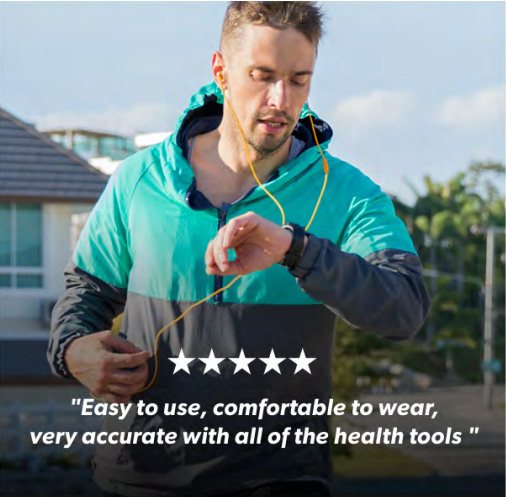
NOTABLE QUOTES FOR MARKETING

"Not only does this tracker work well, it fits perfectly and is extremely comfortable all day"










★★★★★

"Easy to use, comfortable to wear, very accurate with all of the health tools "

232



In fact, 93% of people<sup>6</sup> read product reviews before making a purchase, and reviews can increase conversions by 74%.<sup>7</sup> Plus, 78% of shoppers trust online reviews, while only 33% trust brand messaging.<sup>8</sup> So gather that valuable UGC before your product even goes live.

That’s exactly what JBL did when it launched new headphones with more than 100 reviews and a 4.5 average rating, resulting in one of the brand’s best-selling pre-orders.<sup>9</sup>

You can even take your UGC efforts a step further by transforming them into custom ads and social content. Plus, you can maximize impact by syndicating that UGC across Bazaarvoice’s network of 1,750+ retail channels, so your most influential UGC will reach customers no matter where they shop.







## Grow trial and awareness at home

Generate buzz, collect valuable UGC, and drive revenue by getting your products into the hands of consumers who'll love them.

Sampling has never been easier or more effective than it is today. Influencer, Bazaarvoice's product discovery and reviews platform, has more than 6 million members. It matches your product to its ideal audience, resulting in quality photos, reviews, and influencer content.

Cosmetics brand Maybelline experienced this firsthand when it launched its Tester Squad community, which resulted in a 1,000% increase in review volume.<sup>10</sup>



When consumers share positive feedback about samples they try, it often entices other shoppers to make a purchase. FOMO, anyone? Sampling usually encourages orders from the consumers who sample, too. The numbers speak for themselves — after participating in Bazaarvoice product sampling, 63% of participants purchased the product they sampled. Of those, 97% purchased at least one additional product from the brand.<sup>11</sup>

# Win in-store and on the digital shelf with your top shoppers

Give shoppers what they want — reviews, ratings, recommendations, and high-quality photos — no matter where they shop, online or in-store.

Bring UGC into your retail space by creating in-store displays, like Nordstrom did when it placed Pinterest signage beside its most-pinned products. Many other brands — including Whole Foods, Nine West, and World Duty Free — showcase UGC on in-store screens to inspire people while they shop.



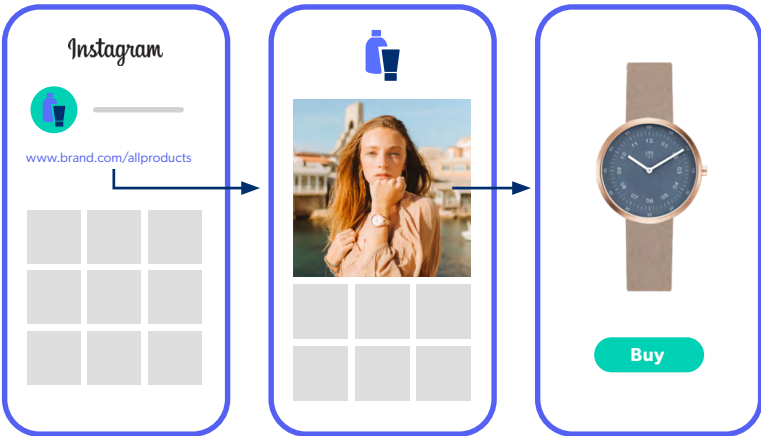
Ensure customers interact with your UGC no matter where they shop by also distributing your top-performing content across leading retailers’ sites.

You can even enable consumers to shop from Instagram and other social platforms — and capture the 42% of online shoppers who rely on social media for product research.<sup>12</sup> Use Bazaarvoice to make your brand’s Instagram truly shoppable.

## Here’s how it works:

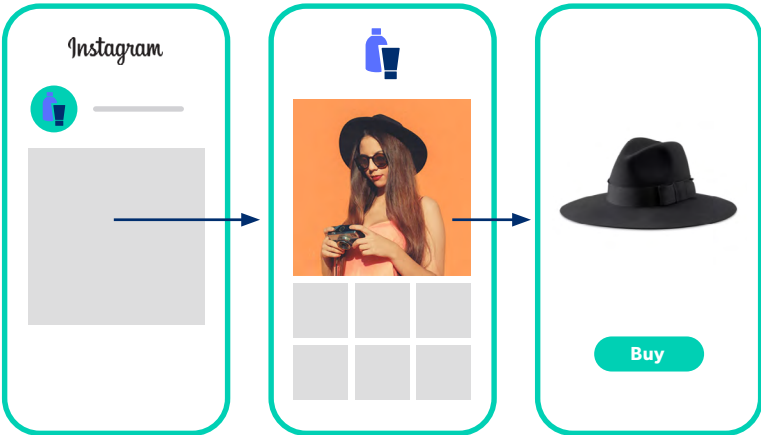
### Like2Buy

Like2buy is a link-in-bio solution that allows customers to browse your Instagram feed and quickly and easily make purchases directly from the app.



### Showroom

Showroom enables you to transform any photo or video on Instagram into a shoppable storefront. In addition to making in-app purchases, consumers can also browse your other offerings and discover new products.







**20%**

of your current  
customers will be  
responsible for...

**80%**

of your brand's  
future revenue



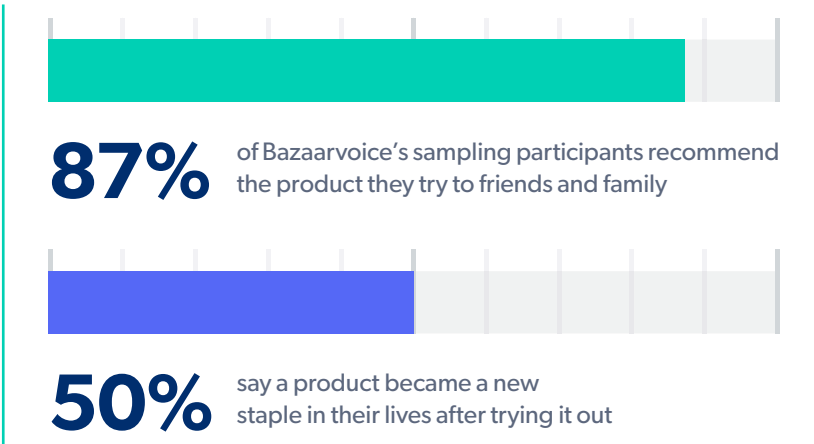
# Build shopper loyalty and reduce shopper acquisition costs

Maintaining customer loyalty doesn't just save your brand money with lower acquisition costs — it also makes money. In fact, 20% of your current customers will be responsible for 80% of your brand's future revenue,<sup>13</sup> and a 5% increase in customer retention grows profits by up to 95%, according to Harvard Business School.<sup>14</sup>

# Take advantage of at-home focus groups

Deliver profitable growth for your brand and reduce customer acquisition costs by getting your products to the very people who crave them and winning their loyalty.

Run a focus group at any time and win fans before a product even launches with sampling. A successful sampling program not only results in valuable UGC, but it also helps retain buyers and hook new ones. In fact, 87% of Bazaarvoice’s sampling participants recommend the product they try to friends and family, and 50% say a product became a new staple in their lives after trying it out.<sup>11</sup>



# Bazaarvoice provides numerous sampling solutions, so your products reach the right people:



## VoxBoxes

Send a custom box of products to an engaged, targeted audience or engage in shared sampling with Co-op boxes that promise category exclusivity. Boxes reach a community of more than 6 million engaged members who deliver high-quality photos, reviews, and social buzz.



## CashBack

Participants purchase your products in-store or online, and they’re reimbursed after they post a review, for example. This makes it a cinch to gather UGC even if your product is bulky, heavy, or difficult to ship, such as alcohol or frozen foods. Keep in mind, not every product is ideal for this type of sampling, but you can still get your products to the right people and inspire UGC with CashBack sampling.





## **Sampling isn't just for new products — it can also help your brand transform a failure into a win**

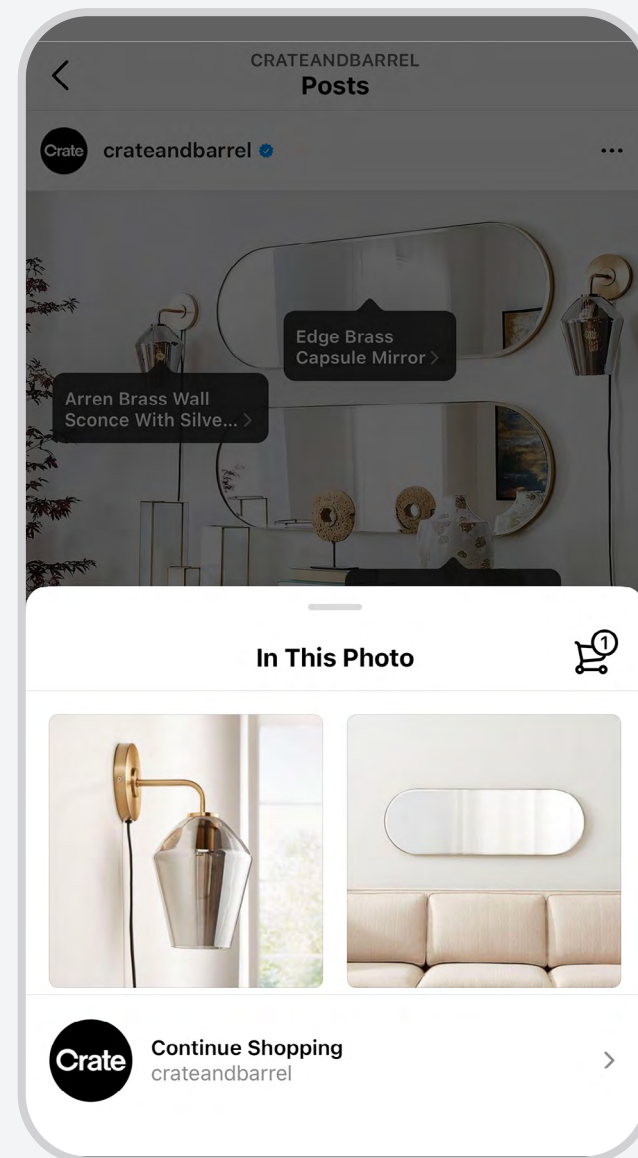
When skincare brand Sol de Janeiro launched a new body lotion, customers didn't care for the scent. The brand reworked the lotion and ran a sampling campaign with Influenster, specifically targeting people who didn't like the product. The results? 79% of samplers reported they liked the reformulated lotion better, and the brand improved its star rating.

"Sampling to people who gave you low ratings feels really counterintuitive on the surface, but shows what a transparent and trusted brand Sol de Janeiro is," Smith said. "They leaned into authenticity and it paid off. Not only did they get the formula right, but they built a strong community of supporters. Taking that misstep and turning it into a strategic move helped keep propelling that line forward."





## Crate & Barrel uses Showroom on Instagram



## Partner with your social media manager

Your brand's social media manager is your ticket to collecting quality UGC and fostering customer engagement across your brand's social channels.

Social media managers are often the first to lay eyes on the content that customers and influencers tag your brand in. They can find and collect the best UGC, as well as foster relationships with its creators. This results in not only killer content but also two-way communication with customers and even potential influencer relationships.

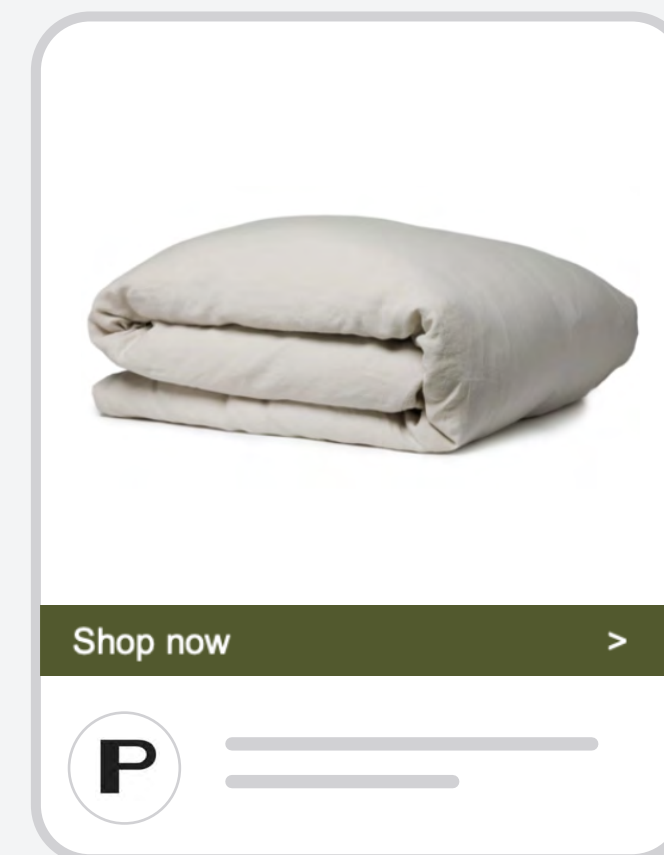
The social media manager can use UGC for social commerce, which creates a shopping experience that more closely resembles browsing in a physical store. With tools like Bazaarvoice's Showroom, illustrated on the left, people can make both discoveries and purchases from within a social app. This means the entire customer journey — from finding to wanting and buying — occurs within just a few clicks.



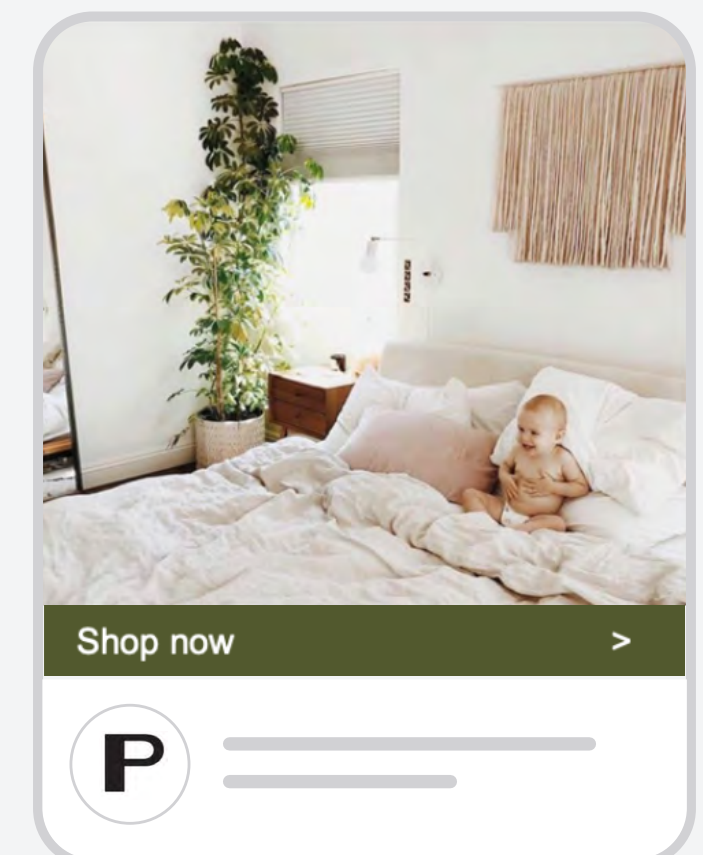
## Parachute leverages UGC in ads to increase conversions

This is exactly the kind of shopping experience that consumers want. Half of shoppers say social media influences their purchases, and this number is even higher among 18- to 34-year-olds, with more than 60% saying it affects their decision to buy.<sup>15</sup> And 64% of consumers say they prefer it when brands feature customer photos on social media vs. professional product pictures. Why? Because they consider this type of content more authentic and trustworthy.<sup>16</sup>

And that killer UGC the social media manager collects isn't just for Instagram and Pinterest. It can be used to create more engaging retargeting campaigns like Parachute did on the right. And it can be used for in-store displays and on ecommerce product pages. Featuring UGC on product pages and in on-site galleries lets shoppers make discoveries, helps them determine how items will fit into their lives, and fosters brand loyalty.

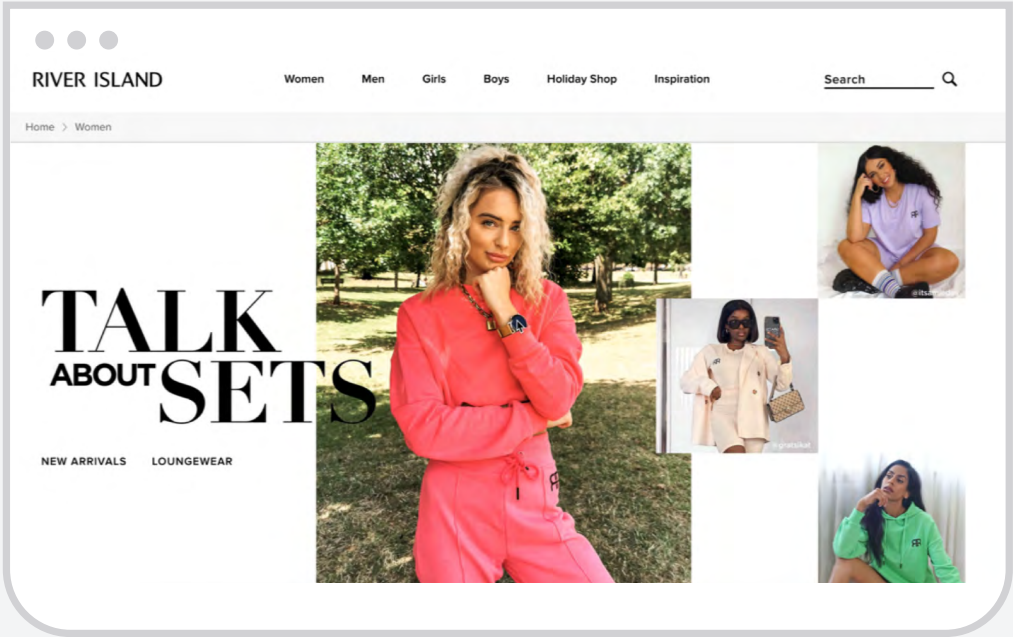


**BEFORE:** Ad with brand photography



**AFTER:** Ad with UGC

After adding UGC to its website, River Island experienced increases in:



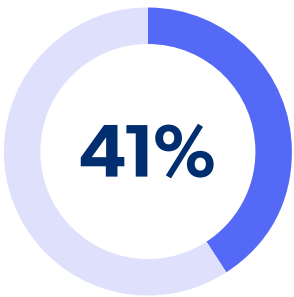
**+184%**  
CONVERSION RATE

**+45%**  
AVERAGE ORDER VALUE

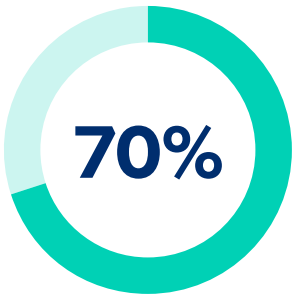
Plus, it helps your bottom line. When clothing brand River Island added UGC to its website, the apparel company saw visitors double their time on-site, and it experienced a 184% lift in conversion rate and a 45% increase in average order value.<sup>16</sup> And drinkware brand Takeya grew its Target sales by 30% when it added UGC from social media to its product pages.<sup>17</sup>

“By bringing social content to all of the channels in which you engage consumers, you have the opportunity to provide people the joy of discovering things they never knew they needed in their lives,” said Vice President of Social Content Revenue at Bazaarvoice Apu Gupta.

Finally, social media managers enable two-way communication with customers because they respond to publicly posted customer complaints and answer their questions. This is an important job because 41% of shoppers view brands that respond to customers more favorably, and up to 70% of dissatisfied customers will buy from a company again if their complaint is resolved.<sup>18</sup>



of shoppers view brands that respond to customers more favorably



of dissatisfied customers will buy from a company again if their complaint is resolved



# Learn more about your products and customers

90% of companies say their industry has become more competitive.<sup>19</sup> That's why it's more important than ever for brand managers to understand both their products and the customers who use them, so their UGC campaigns can continually improve.

**90%**

of companies say their  
industry has become  
more competitive



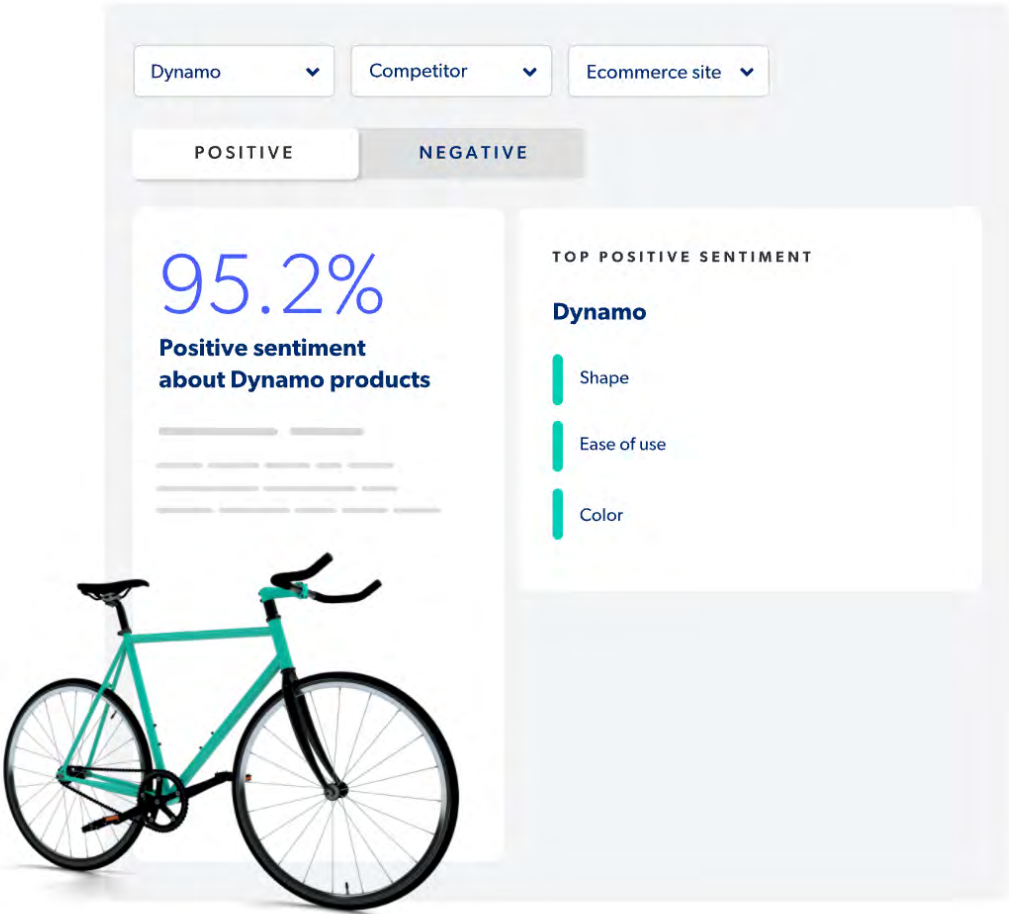
# Gather UGC data

UGC enables you to take the pulse of what customers are saying about your brand and its products. It’s essentially a perpetual focus group.

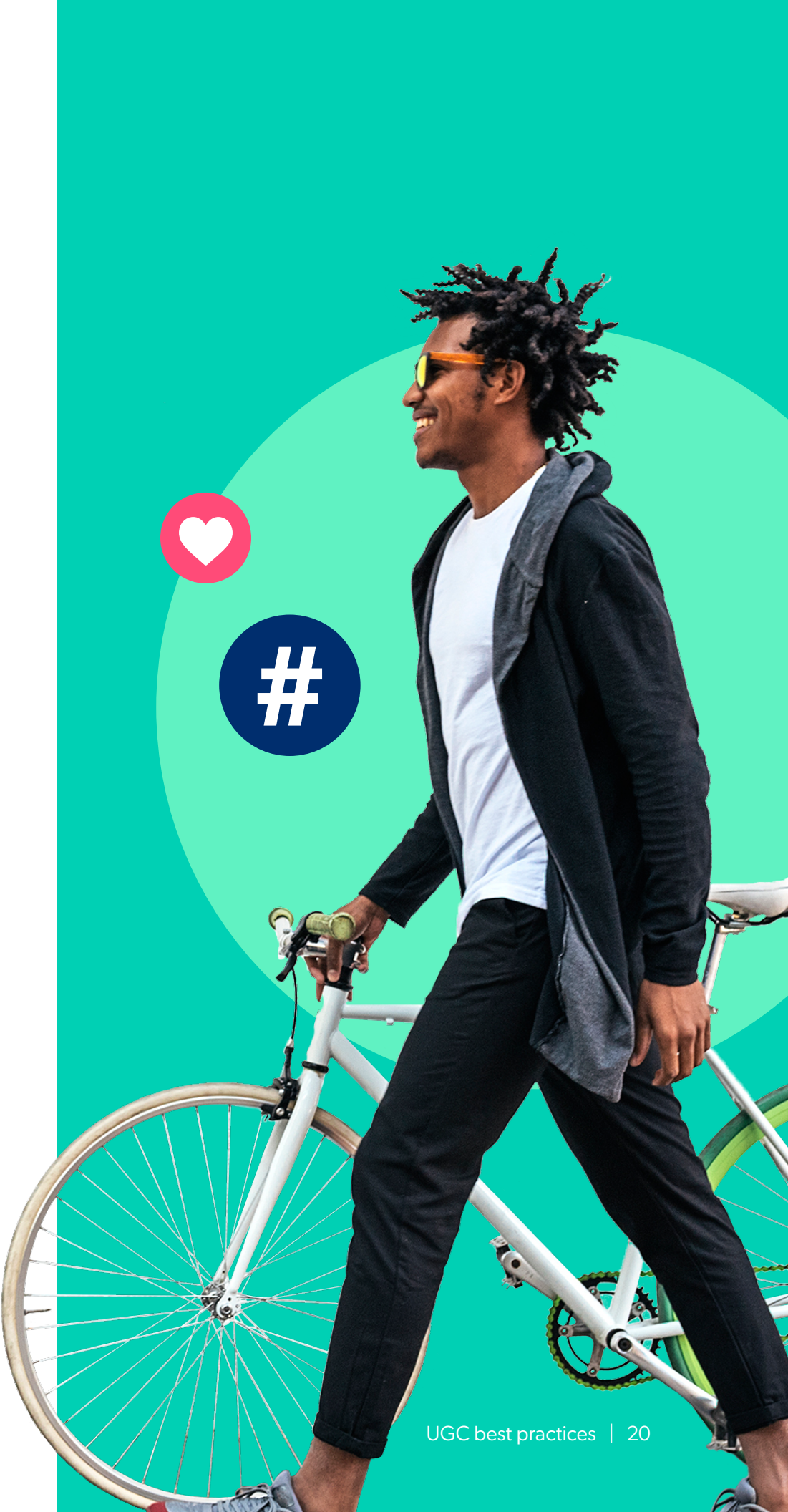
Check out the social posts your company is tagged in, or see what’s being said with your branded hashtag for real-time insights on how customers perceive your brand. You can also look at the product reviews customers leave or the questions they post on your site or on social media to learn how they feel about your offerings.

Take these qualitative learnings a step further by comparing them with your sales data. What’s selling? What’s not? And how might UGC affect these numbers?

“More data means more opportunities to get creative while still staying true to your brand,” Smith said. “You have ...[to] test and collect data, and continually look for ways to delight, inspire, and connect with your people.”



Dive deep into the data with Influenster reporting and Bazaarvoice’s Network Insights tool. These provide UGC performance tracking and sentiment analysis and help you better understand what customers are saying about your brand and its products through advanced machine learning and natural language processing.







## Submit updated brand exposure reports to management each month

Keep the company up to date on UGC campaign progress, gain insights from your team, and showcase your UGC wins with regular reporting.

Bazaarvoice makes it easy to do all this and more with its Premium Network Insights, which rolls all that data and insights into a single dashboard. You can download comprehensive reports to share with your team. Bazaarvoice even provides specific, actionable recommendations to improve your UGC efforts.

## Communicate with vendors and distributors to gain insights on how product design can be improved

UGC gives you insights into how products perform and how customers interact with them, providing you with valuable information you can use to communicate with vendors and retailers.

Not only does this improve your relationships with vendors and distributors, but it also sparks conversations about what their various audiences want from your products and messaging.





# Implement industry-specific UGC best practices

Featuring UGC in marketing campaigns is a proven way to drive brand awareness and increase conversions, no matter what industry you're in. But some industries are particularly effective at utilizing UGC. Let's take a look at which sectors are killing it with UGC.



# Beauty

From exquisitely packaged products to eye-catching palettes, the beauty industry has no shortage of incredible UGC opportunities.

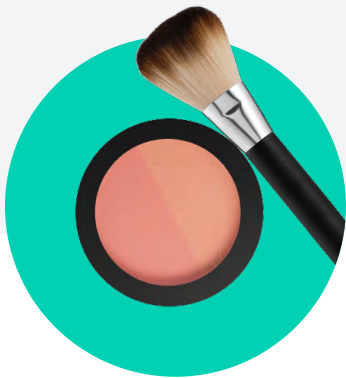
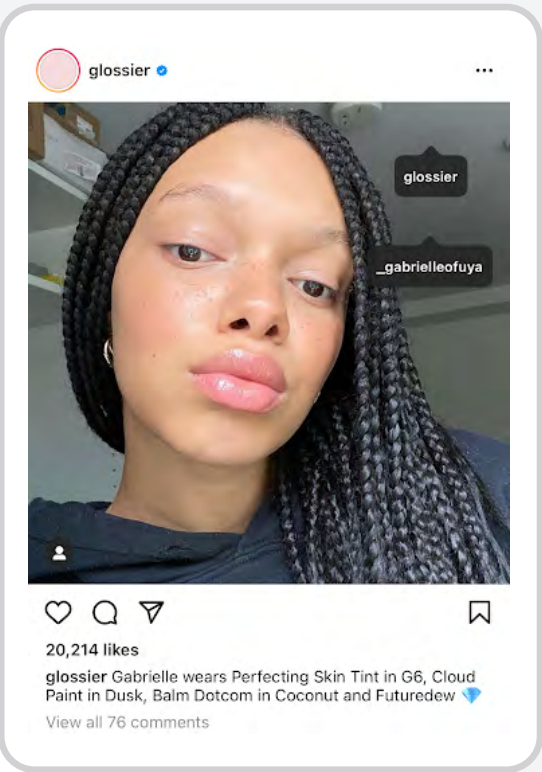
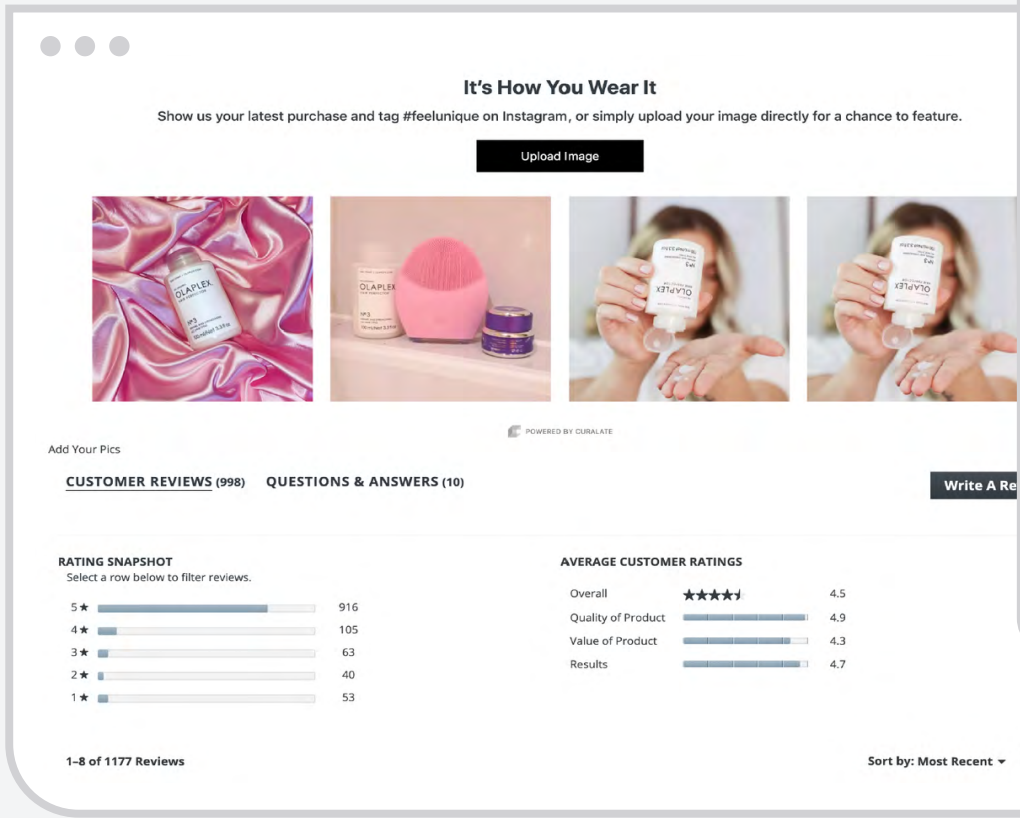
## Benefits of UGC

- + It shows how products look on and perform for real people.
- + It can demonstrate progress. For example, UGC is a great way to showcase actual customers' before-and-after shots.

## How to utilize UGC

- ✓ Collect and share customers' unboxing videos.
- ✓ Repost product tutorials from beauty bloggers.
- ✓ Highlight testimonials and product reviews on product page.

## Brands that do it well



## FEELUNIQUE

When Feelunique teamed up with Bazaarvoice to utilize reviews and social content from customers, it generated an additional \$10 million in e-commerce revenue.<sup>20</sup>

## Glossier.

Glossier built its brand on UGC and features it on social media, on product pages, and in marketing campaigns. It attributes 90% of its revenue to fans.<sup>21</sup>

# Apparel

The apparel industry is a natural fit for UGC since countless people are already sharing their unique looks and #OOTD (outfit of the day) ensembles on social media.

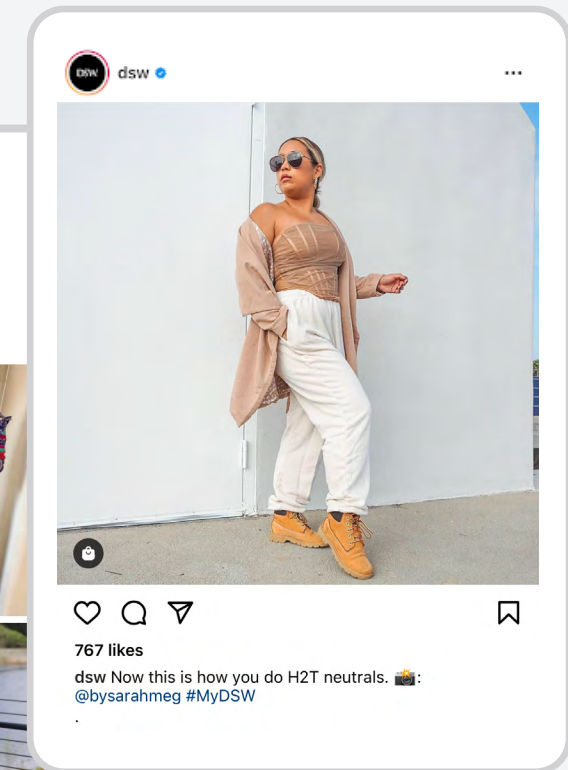
## Benefits of UGC

- + Shoppers can see how items look on real customers, which helps them determine sizing and fit, increases customer satisfaction, and reduces returns.<sup>22</sup>
- + Customers can be inspired, discover new products, and learn how to use and style products.

## How to utilize UGC

- ✓ Feature UGC on product and checkout pages. This results in a 5-7% increase in conversion rate and increases average order value by 2%.<sup>22</sup>
- ✓ Showcase it on on-site galleries. Conversion rates increase up to 150% when shoppers interact with photos in galleries.<sup>23</sup>

## Brands that do it well



Tuckernuck experiences a 140% higher conversion rate and a 164% increase in time on site when visitors interact with its on-site gallery of UGC.<sup>24</sup>



With thousands of customers posting on social media with the #MyDSW hashtag, DSW has no shortage of UGC to choose from. And shoppers who interact with visual UGC on the company's website are twice as likely to make a purchase.<sup>25</sup>



# Food and Beverage

40% of diners post photos of their food online, resulting in heaping helpings of delicious UGC for brand managers to serve to audiences.<sup>26</sup>

## Benefits of UGC

- + 76% of people say they’ll share content on social media after a great food or beverage experience.<sup>27</sup>
- + 58% of millennials say that photos they see on social media influence their food-and-drink purchases.<sup>28</sup>

## How to utilize UGC

- ✓ Host a hashtag contest to inspire and collect UGC and raise brand awareness.
- ✓ Give away new products to generate buzz on social media.
- ✓ Design a dedicated website for fans of the brand to create UGC.

## Brands that do it well

★★★★★ Seaeric · 3 months ago

Not really soft and spreadable anymore

We've been buying this product for years. We love it. Lately, not so much. What's going on? Also, it seems like the price has sky rocketed. This is less of a concern to me than the decline in quality. Why is the product so hard to spread now?

No, I do not recommend this.


Helpful? Yes · 1 No · 0 REPORT

Response from Land O'Lakes:  
Consumer Affairs · 3 months ago

Thank you for your email. We are sorry that you found the butter is harder to spread. We have not made any intentional changes to the texture of this product. We will share your comments with our product team. Please watch for an email from us.

QUALITY OF PRODUCT

doritos



3,350 likes

doritos It's a salad...a nacho salad. 🌮: Chris Vail from DoritosLegionoftheBold.com



Reviews are essential to Land O’ Lakes’ success. The brand has syndicated more than 30,000 reviews to various retail sites with Bazaarvoice, and its representatives frequently respond to customer complaints, increasing buyer loyalty.<sup>29</sup>



Doritos’ Legion of the Bold website allows visitors to create their own Doritos-centric content, which the brand shares on its social accounts. Doritos regularly launches new UGC challenges for its fans to participate in.<sup>30</sup>

# Auto

A Think With Google report on the car-buying process reveals that the average consumer's auto research during a three-month period includes more than 900 digital interactions.<sup>31</sup> Make sure engagement with your brand's UGC accounts for 899 of those interactions.

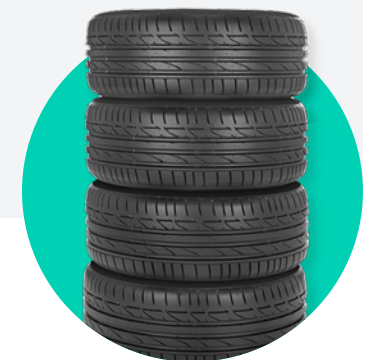
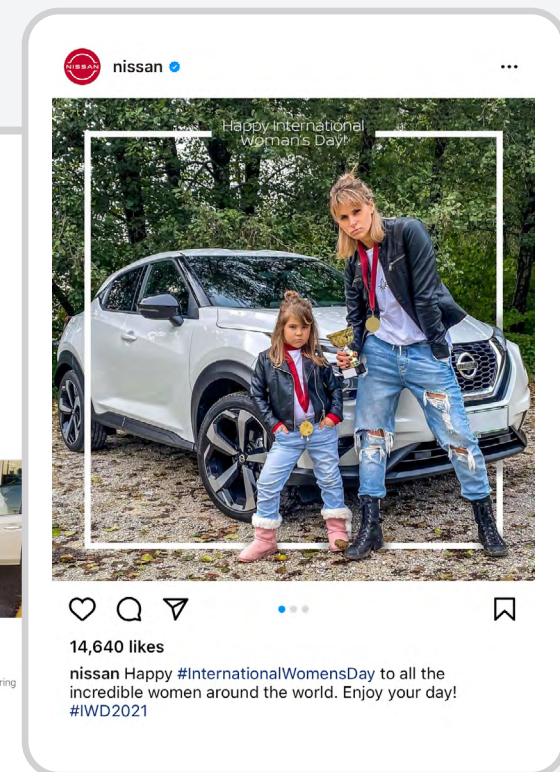
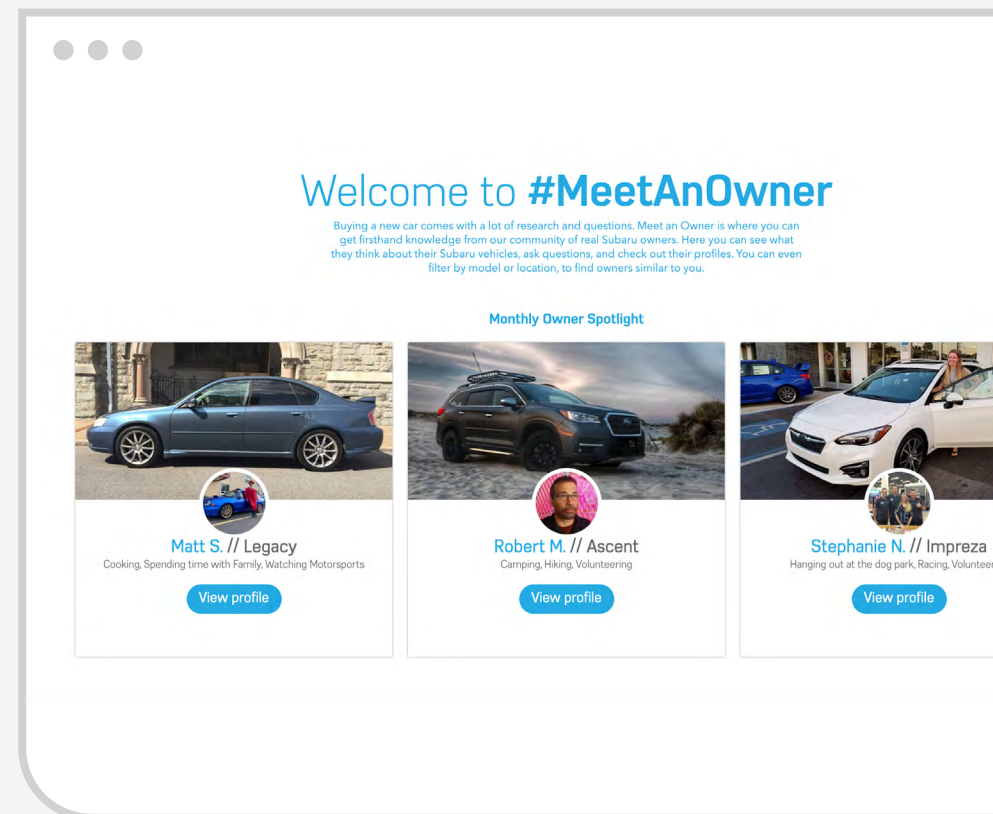
## Benefits of UGC

- + Social media strongly influences which cars people purchase. In fact, 45% of people say UGC is the most influential type of content when they're deciding which car to purchase, and 68% of auto buyers have purchased a vehicle they saw on social media.<sup>31</sup>
- + It establishes trust in an industry that has a long history of distrust among consumers. 80% of car shoppers say they'll turn to social media for car-buying advice instead of a salesperson.<sup>32</sup>

## How to utilize UGC

- ✓ Feature UGC on websites since 28% of car buyers say they want to see other people's reviews on makes and models of vehicles.<sup>33</sup>
- ✓ Host contests on social to inspire customers to share UGC of their cars.

## Brands that do it well



Subaru's MeetAnOwner website allows consumers to see what actual Subaru owners have to say about their experience.<sup>36</sup>



Nissan regularly identifies micro-holiday opportunities to showcase its customers on social media.<sup>37</sup>



# Home and Hardware

Consumers are constantly looking for inspiration for home, hardware, and DIY projects, so UGC-savvy brands know to give shoppers what they want.

## Benefits of UGC

- + This type of UGC is ideal for discovery shopping because it sparks ideas and shows shoppers what other people are designing and creating.
- + It allows consumers to see how products look in homes and the results they can get.

## How to utilize UGC

- ✓ Make it shoppable. Reshare UGC on social media and use products like Showroom and Like2Buy, so customers can make in-app purchases.
- ✓ Add UGC to all aspects of your marketing campaigns, including retargeting ads, packaging inserts, and more.
- ✓ Feature it on product pages and **on on-site galleries**, and be sure to syndicate that content across retail sites. Bazaarvoice found that syndication in the hardware industry accounted for a 259% increase in total content, which led to an 18% increase in product coverage.<sup>38</sup>

## Brands that do it well



★★★★★ **Very surprised**

July 22, 2020

I got this weed eater since mine died and I hated having to haul a cord around on my old one, so I opted for a battery powered trimmer; and let me tell you I'm ecstatic about it ! I love the trimmer keys (what I call it) they are very strong and super easy to replace instead of messing with string ! This thing has some serious power ! I stay in the middle of a field so weeds happen a lot and this thing cuts through them like it's nothing ! It's very light weight my arm doesn't get tired easy either which is a huge plus ! The battery holds a good decent long enough charge for me to get everything done with no issues, the pole is a telescope type and it's great for short people like me ! Also has a compartment to store spare blades ! I love this thing ! Also yes assembling is required but it was super simple and fast to do ! Even without directions! [This review was collected as part of a promotion.]



Rucker

Written by a snowjoe.com customer.



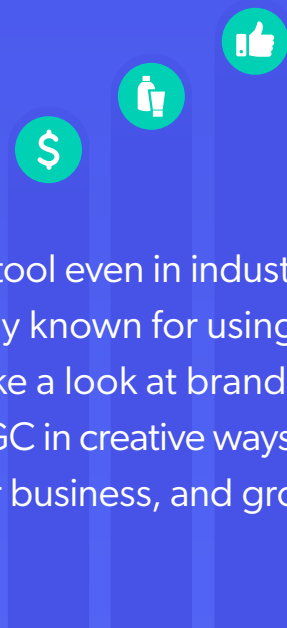
German power- and garden-tool manufacturer Einhell relies on product reviews from its customers to showcase the quality of its products and entice more shoppers to click “add to cart.”<sup>34</sup>

## PARACHUTE

Parachute employs UGC in much more than just its website and its social campaigns. The brand uses it in retargeting ads, direct mail, and more. And it pays off: It's seen a 35% higher click-through rate on its UGC ads and a 60% lower CPC.<sup>2</sup>

## Other

UGC is an invaluable tool even in industries that aren't traditionally known for using it in marketing. Let's take a look at brands that are employing UGC in creative ways to drive sales, scale their business, and grow customer loyalty.



**The Swedish Tourism Board** launched an incredibly successful word-of-mouth UGC campaign that let anyone call a phone number and randomly be connected to a Swede to discuss any topic that came to mind.<sup>35</sup>

**Kärcher**, the top manufacturer of cleaning technology, uses Bazaarvoice TryIt sampling to generate high-quality reviews before a product launch so that the item goes up on its website with plenty of social proof.<sup>36</sup>

★★★★★ Kikimarie38 · 5 months ago

Wow!

Wow! This thing is awesome!!! Just push it and it sweeps everything away! Easy to put together too! I use this for my garage a lot to keep the floor clean but when the weather gets nicer here I'll be using it on my patio and sidewalk. It's lightweight so the kids can even push it. I love this thing!! Highly recommend!!

Received free product Yes

☒ Yes, I recommend this product.

Helpful? Yes · 0 No · 0 Report

Quality of Product



Ease of use



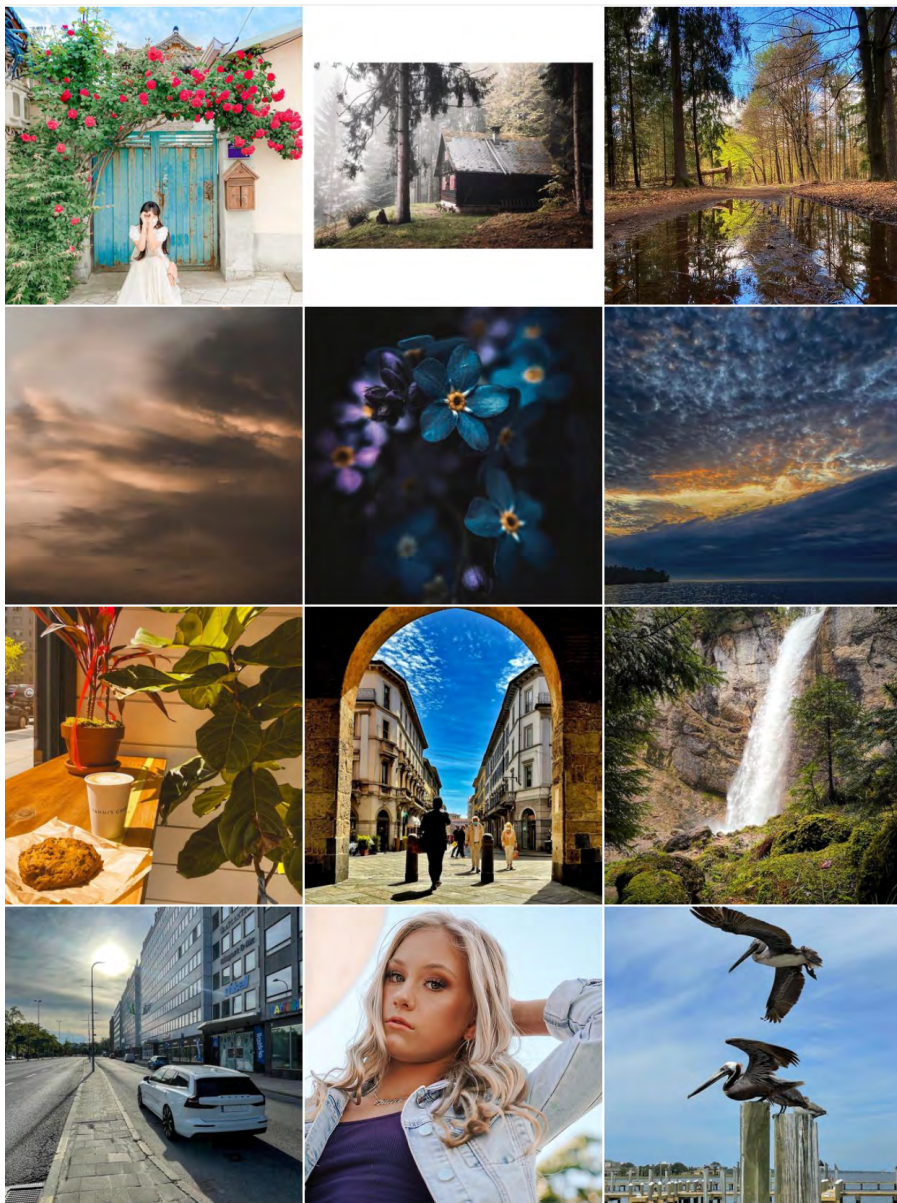
Price performance ratio



Cleaning result

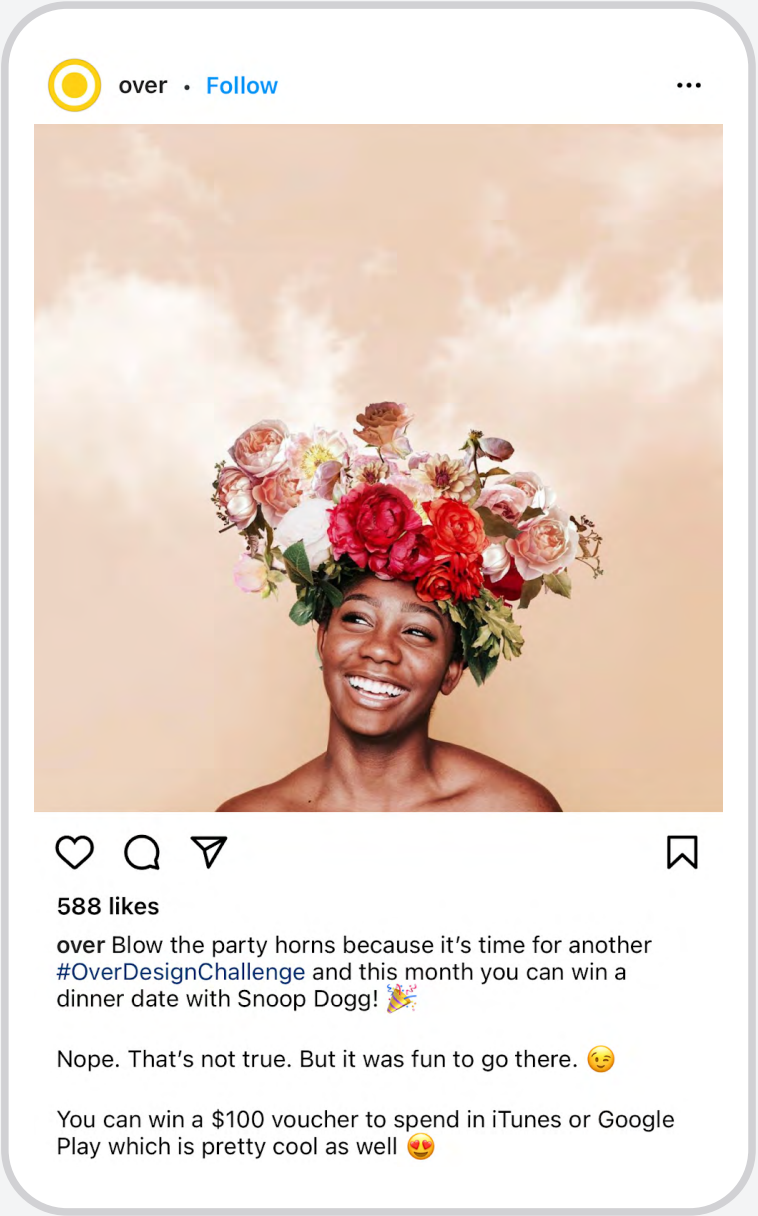






## #Shotoniphone

**Apple** highlights both its customers and its iPhone camera with its UGC #shotoniphone campaign.<sup>37</sup>



Design app **Over** frequently issues challenges to its followers who leap at the chance to create epic designs and have them featured on the brand’s Instagram.<sup>38</sup>



**GoPro** showcases what its product does best with video footage and photos from its users. In fact, a minimum of 6,000 GoPro-tagged videos are uploaded to YouTube daily.<sup>39</sup>



# Simplify UGC management for your brand with Bazaarvoice

People are already talking about your brand. They're sharing their shopping experiences, taking selfies with your products, posting product reviews that influence potential buyers, and more. In other words, they're creating UGC and engaging in modern-day word-of-mouth marketing.

You may not be able to control what they say about your brand and its products as a brand manager. But it's your responsibility to influence this narrative and identify ways to employ valuable UGC in a way that benefits the brand.

And UGC will certainly benefit your brand. It's authentic, establishes trust among consumers, engages shoppers, and drives conversions, so it's no surprise that 86% of marketers say they have incorporated UGC into their campaigns.<sup>40</sup>

Bazaarvoice is here to help. It has the tools you need to find, manage, and distribute the best UGC so that you can get the most out of it — and so that your customers can market your brand for you.





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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.

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