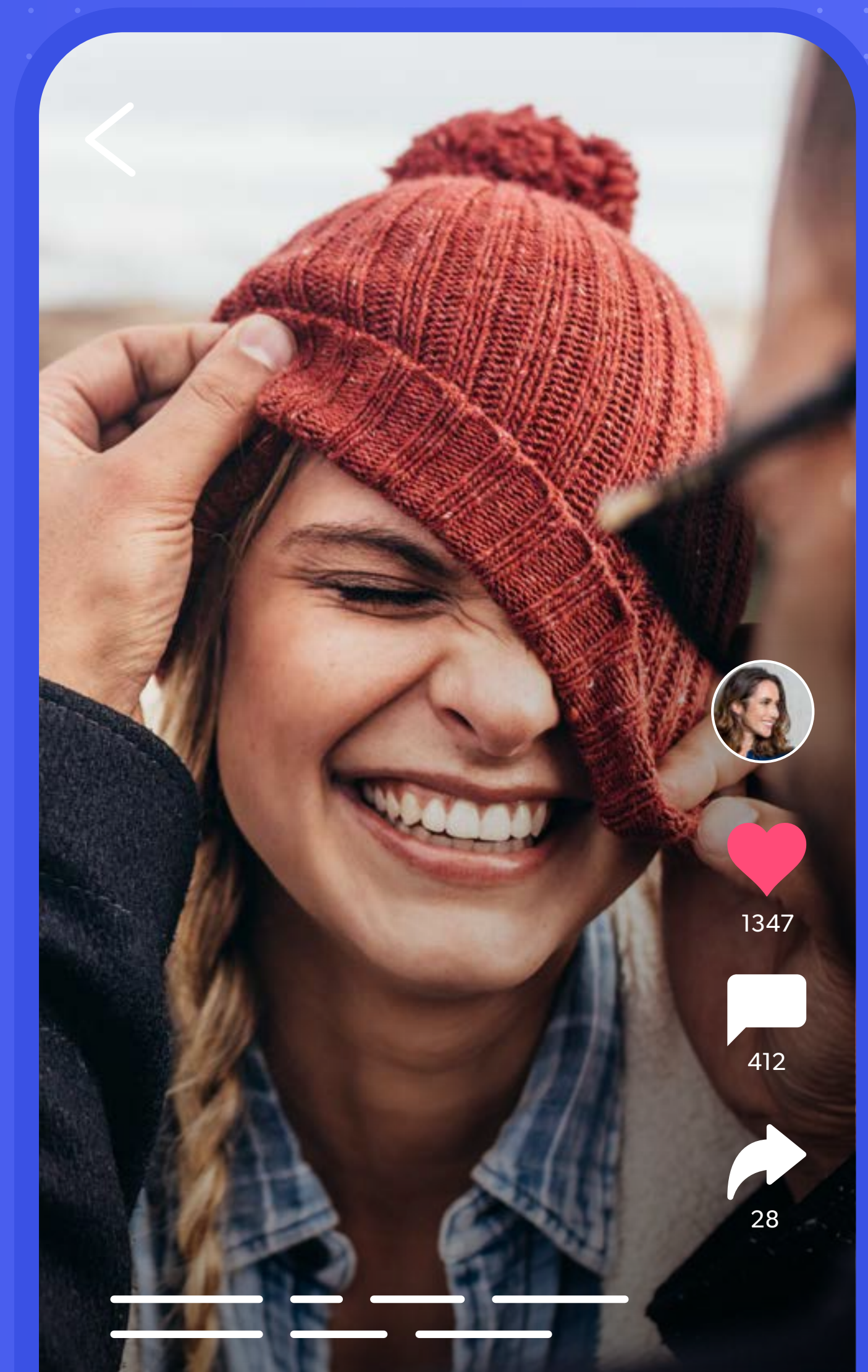


# From the Kardashians to the girl next door

How influencer marketing has evolved—  
and what your brand needs to do about it



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# Introduction

The “influencer” role as we once knew it is changing (again). As Sprout Social reports:<sup>1</sup>

“The last five years should show how influencer marketing’s only constant is change.”

Gone are the days that shoppers only cared about huge follower counts and household-name celebrities.

Shoppers no longer want to be told how to view a brand and its products by listening to the likes of Kendall Jenner or Cristiano Ronaldo. Similarly, sponsored content has lost a lot of its sparkle—and its inauthenticity can rub people the wrong way.

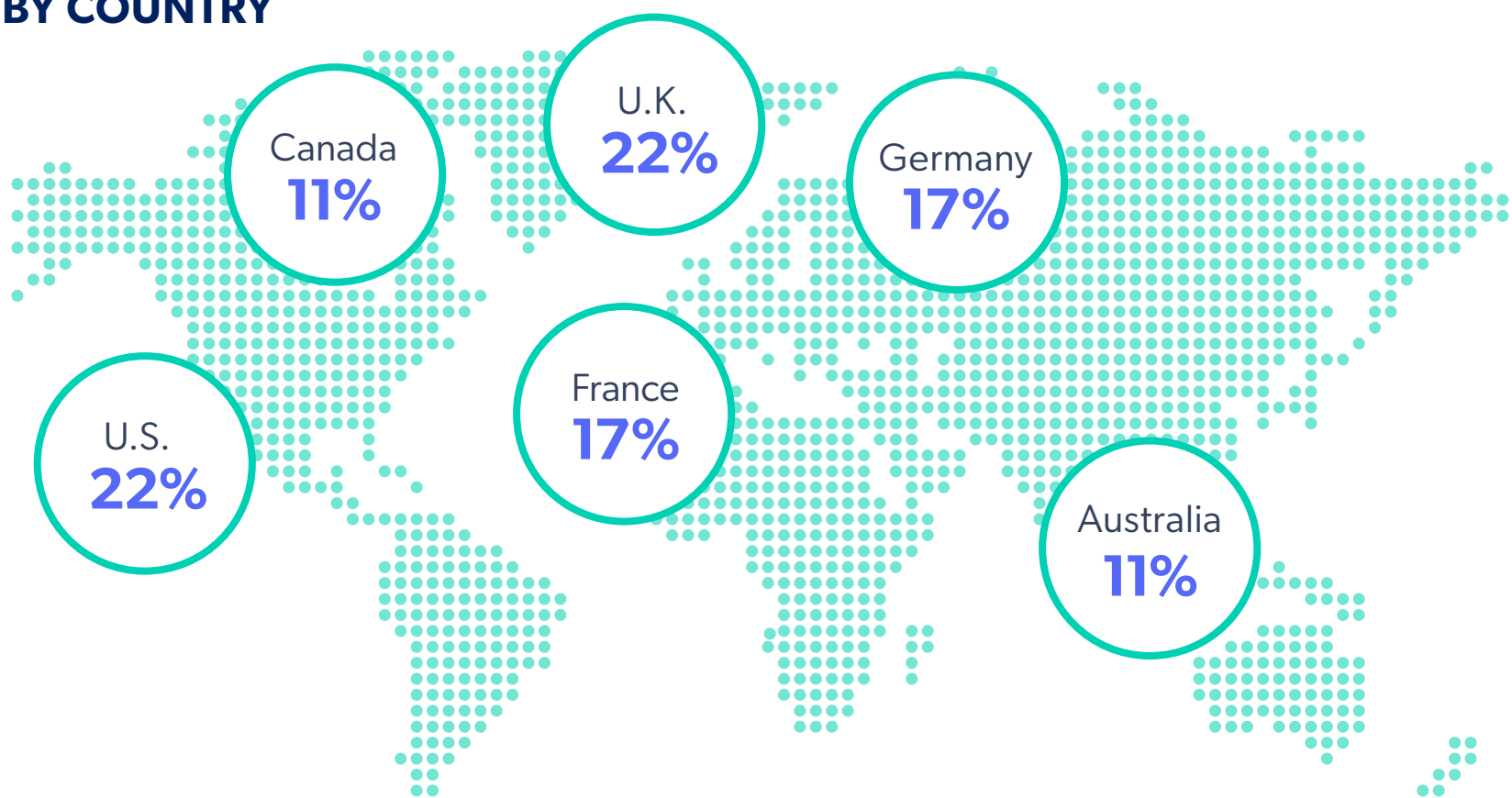
So, who do shoppers want to hear from?

And more importantly, who do they find the most authentic?

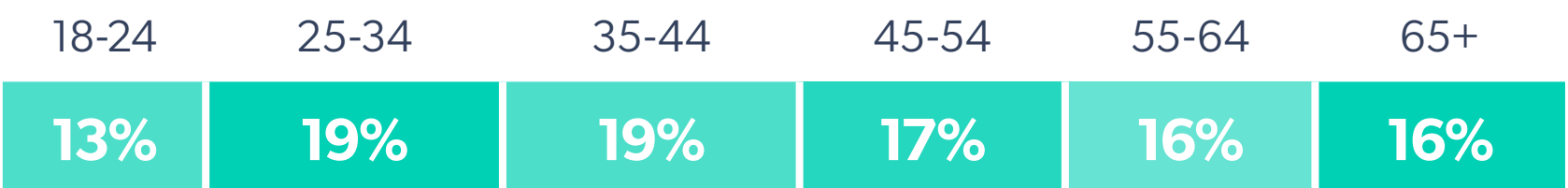
To answer these questions, we surveyed over 9,000 shoppers across Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the U.K., and the U.S.<sup>2</sup> This report explores what these shoppers had to say—and how brands should respond to these evolving influencer trends.

## SHOPPERS SURVEYED

### BY COUNTRY



### BY AGE





# Social media influencers defined

Before we dive into results, let's take a quick spin through how we've categorized social media influencers for this survey.



## THE SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Beauty gurus to fashionistas. Chefs and DIYers to stay-at-home moms. These influencers are an expert in a subject, post primarily or exclusively about it, and teach you how to do it, too. They often recommend, sell, or post sponsored content for products that have to do with their subject matter.



## SOCIAL MEDIA STARS

These influencers are famous solely because of their internet presence. They are not necessarily an expert on anything—except perhaps offering a very pleasing aesthetic, creating interesting content, or executing internet trends well (such as TikTok dances or funny memes). Sometimes they became famous due to a viral moment, and the fame just never faded. They often are paid to promote products or will promote something they are selling themselves.



## CELEBRITIES

Celebrity influencers have become famous for something other than social media and offer a behind the scenes look at their extravagant lives. They can be actors, reality TV stars, musicians, artists, athletes, businesspeople, etc. They often promote or recommend products that fit in with their lifestyle/aesthetic—or even a product or service they are selling themselves.



## EVERYDAY SOCIAL MEDIA USER

This may be your friends, family members, peers—or even people you are connected to but have never met IRL (in real life). They simply share day-to-day content—like ratings, reviews, photos, and videos—that they are genuinely interested in. They don't have an agenda to promote or highlight certain products.



# The everyday influencer reigns supreme

More than any other social media accounts, shoppers trust input from the everyday influencer.

While celebrities and social media stars once held significant sway over consumer purchasing, shoppers now look more to input from the everyday influencer and subject matter expert.

Shoppers are more likely to:

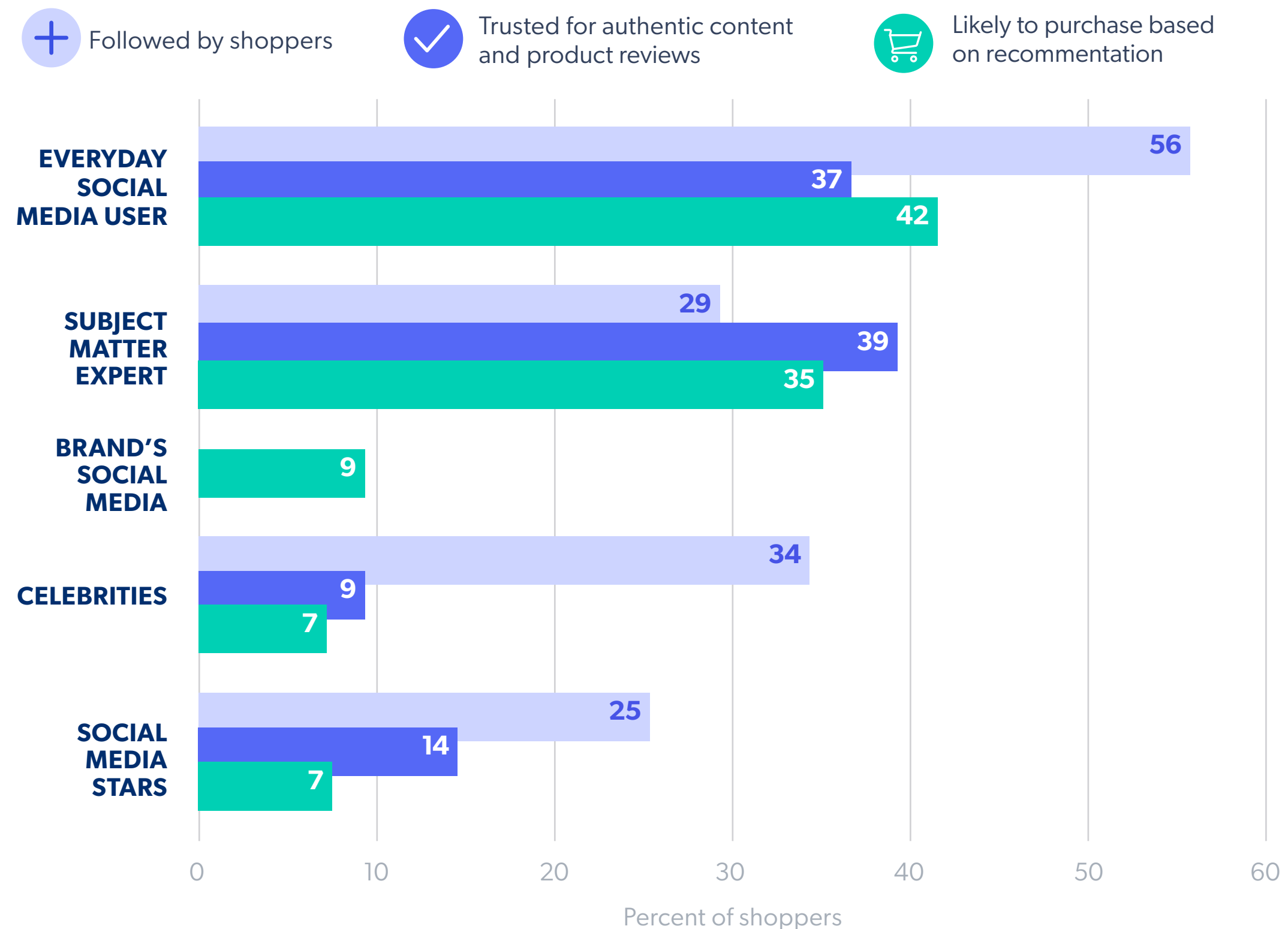
- **Follow** these accounts
- **Trust** them to share authentic content and product reviews
- **Purchase** recommended products shared by these accounts

Shoppers are most likely to purchase a product based on recommendations from everyday social media users (42%), followed by the subject matter expert.

Only 9% will act on a brand's recommendation by making a purchase.

**The big takeaway here is that your social media efforts will be far more effective if they include user-generated content (UGC) from everyday influencers and subject matter experts—rather than relying solely on brand-generated content.**

## TRUSTED INFLUENCERS IMPACT PURCHASES



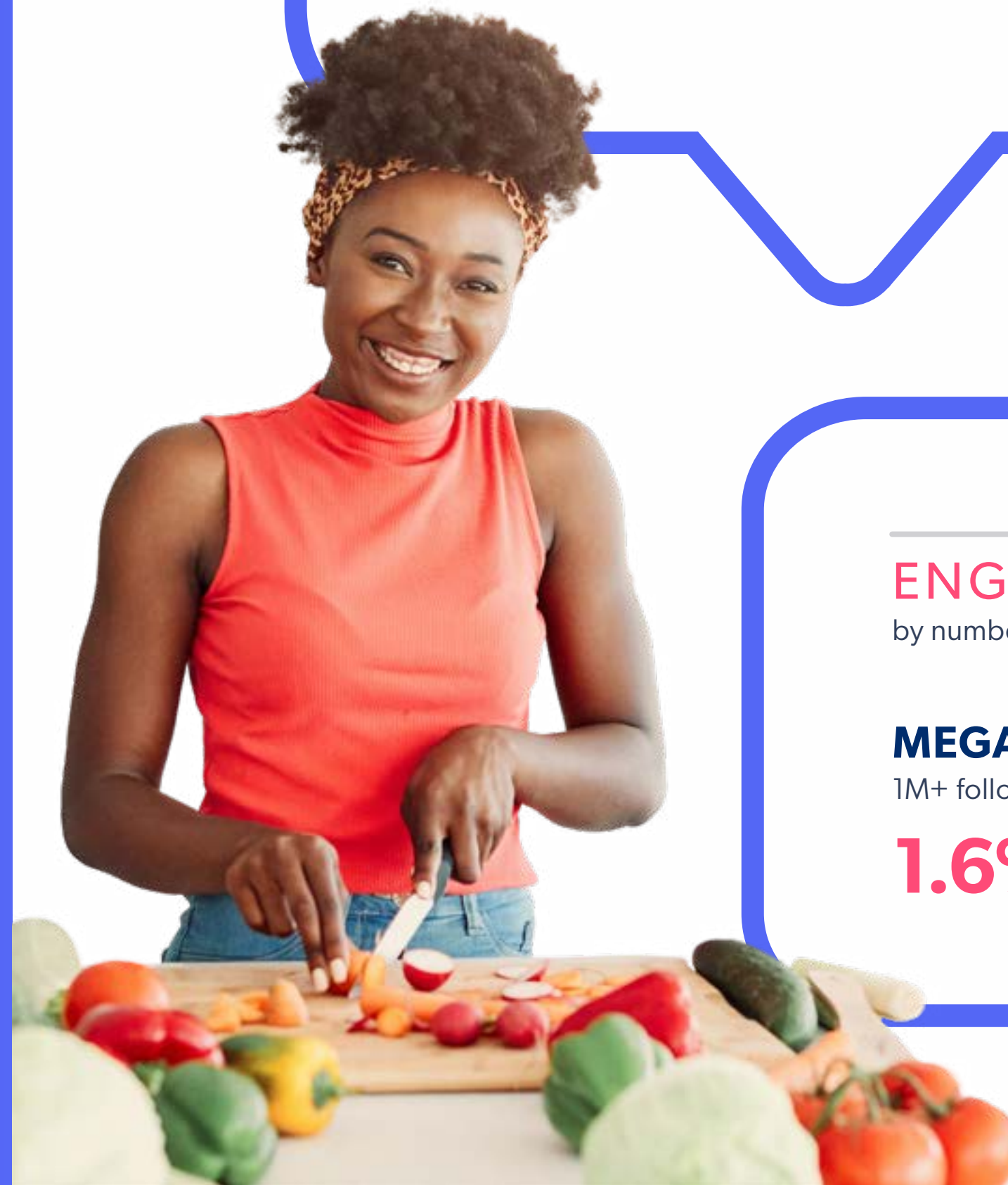
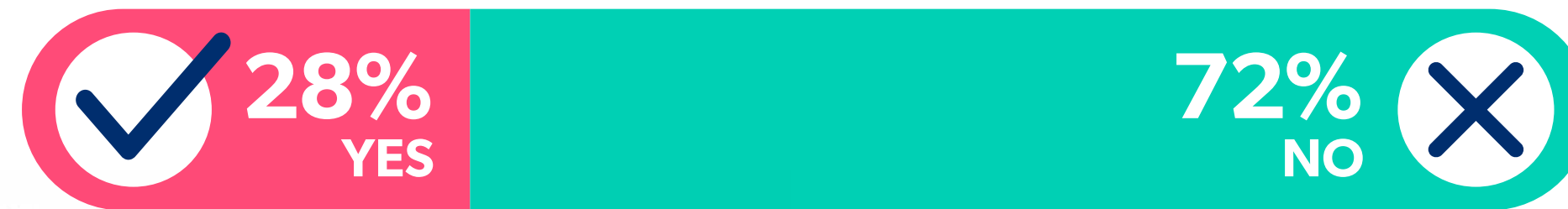


Even more of a surprise is the fact that the vast majority of shoppers do not care about how many social media followers an influencer has. Nearly three quarters of respondents (72%) reported they did not care about follower count. For them, it's all about the content.

Research of over 800,000 Instagram accounts supports these findings, indicating that shopper engagement with a given influencer varies inversely with the influencers' follower count.<sup>3</sup> "Mega-influencers" with over a million followers only see an engagement rate of about 1.6%. Contrast that to 8.8% engagement for "nano-influencers" (1,000 to 10,000 followers).

The millions of users who follow celebrity influencers should not be underestimated, with over a third of U.S. consumers mostly following celebrity influencers (31%)—but there is now a significantly lower level of trust associated with celebrities.

## DO YOU CARE HOW MANY FOLLOWERS AN INFLUENCER HAS?



## ENGAGEMENT RATE

by number of followers

### MEGA-INFLUENCERS

1M+ followers

**1.6%**

### NANO-INFLUENCERS

1K-10K followers

**8.8% (5.5x)**



# Shoppers have a trust issue with influencers

It's no secret that shoppers have developed a trust issue with influencers. Advertising authorities brought in standards in an attempt to tackle the issue head on—but have they really made any difference to influencers' perceived authenticity?



Recent changes to advertising rules seem to have made little difference to increase trust in influencer content. The most shocking revelation is that, **despite new advertising rules, 42% don't think that influencers are any more authentic than they were five years ago.**<sup>4</sup>

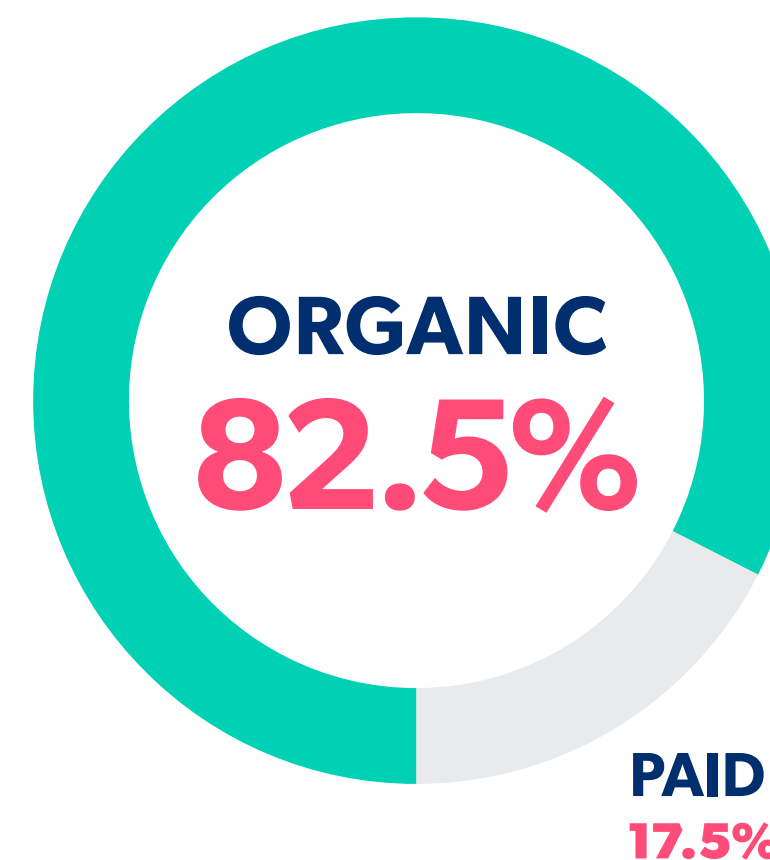
In an effort to instill greater trust, regulations from The Federal Trade Commission have made it compulsory for influencers to declare “#ad” when a post has been paid for.

But shoppers still trust sponsored posts from influencers a lot less than they trust posts that they are not paid to promote—such as ratings, written reviews, and user photos and videos.

It also seems shoppers are calling out for harsher punishments for influencers who break the advertising rules, up to and including permanent banishment from the social platforms.



### Which type of influencer content do you trust most?



## SHOPPERS WANT ACCOUNTABILITY

Shoppers want to see consequences for influencers who violate advertising regulations:

- 23% Want influencers banned permanently
- 23% Want influencers banned for a limited time
- 21% Want influencers banned from monetizing their social media presence going forward
- 15% Want influencers fined
- 7% Want influencers forced to publicly apologize

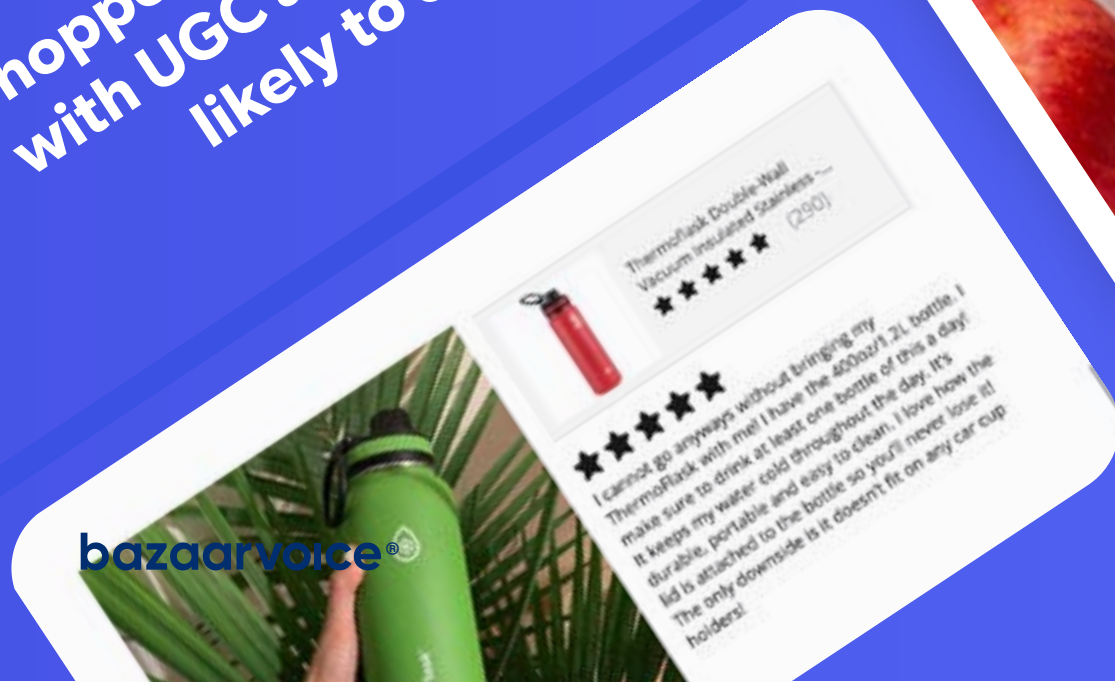
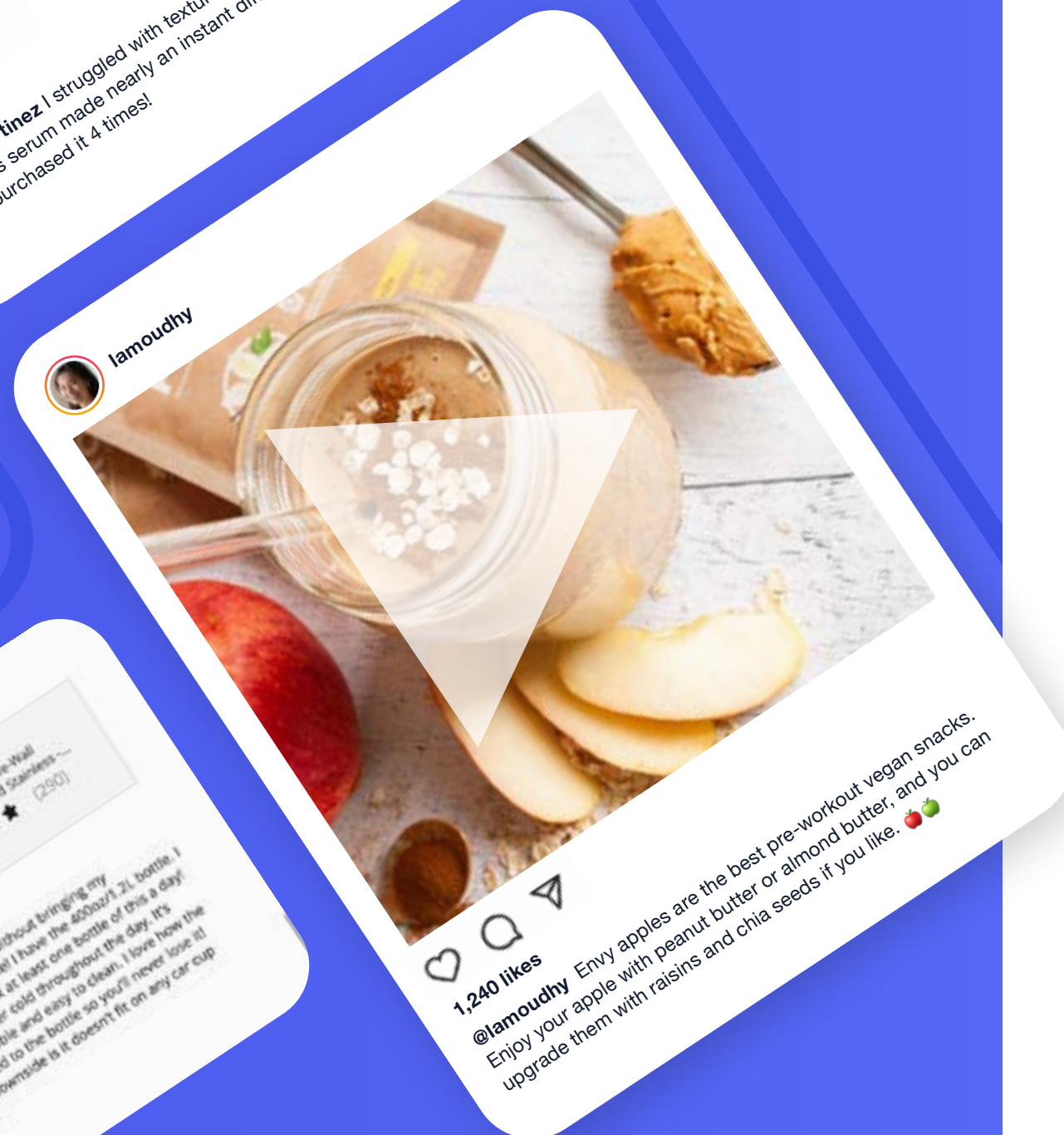




# How to adjust your influencer strategy

If celebrity influencers are yesterday's news, how do you adjust your influencer strategy to harness the power of the Everyday Joe or Jane?





**2X**  
Shoppers who interact  
with UGC are 2X more  
likely to convert.

# It's all about UGC.

UGC includes text-based reviews, social media posts, photos, and video—and it inspires confidence, drives discovery, increases your conversion at retail, and engages shoppers on your product pages.

**In fact, shoppers who interact with UGC are 2X more likely to convert.**

And UGC is not just important for new products. 75% of people frequently or sometimes seek out UGC when deciding to buy a product they have tried before.

And, about two-thirds (67%) look to UGC to give them new tips and ideas for how to use products they already own.

This shows the importance of fresh content on even the best-known products.

So, if UGC from everyday influencers and subject matter experts is so important, how do you encourage them to create it—and amplify it in the places your customers are shopping?

## SHOPPERS DEMAND UGC

Shoppers told us they seek UGC when:

**RESEARCHING  
NEW PRODUCTS**

**86%**

**DECIDING WHETHER  
TO BUY A PRODUCT  
THEY'VE TRIED**

**75%**

**LOOKING FOR TIPS  
AND IDEAS ON  
PRODUCTS THEY OWN**

**67%**





# Create and amplify UGC with product sampling

You can generate UGC with exactly the right influencers by sending them product samples in exchange for content. Here's how.

# 1 Find the right influencers

Finding influencers for your campaigns typically requires a tool that allows you to tap into a large network of product reviewers. You'll need to hone in on those influencers that best suit your products and audience.

## MAKE SURE TO CONSIDER

### ➔ IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE

The more you can match your influencer to your customers, the more likely your influencer is to resonate with your target audience. Age, gender, ethnicity, location, education, household income...you get the idea.

### ➔ FOLLOWER COUNT

Remember, lower follower counts often mean more engagement. You'll likely find a sweet spot between 1,000 and 25,000 followers.<sup>5</sup>

### ➔ NICHE

Mommy bloggers will have a different effect than outdoor or technology enthusiasts, for example.



- **Braelynn Baker**
- **Location: Montreal**
- **Followers: 8,212**
- **Niche: Fitness, clean beauty**
- **Engagement rate: 12.07%**



# 2 Sample your products with them

The next step is to get your product in your everyday influencers' hands. This is where sampling comes in.

## A WELL-TARGETED SAMPLING PROGRAM

### ➔ POWERS PRODUCT LAUNCHES

By collecting reviews and imagery from your community pre-launch.

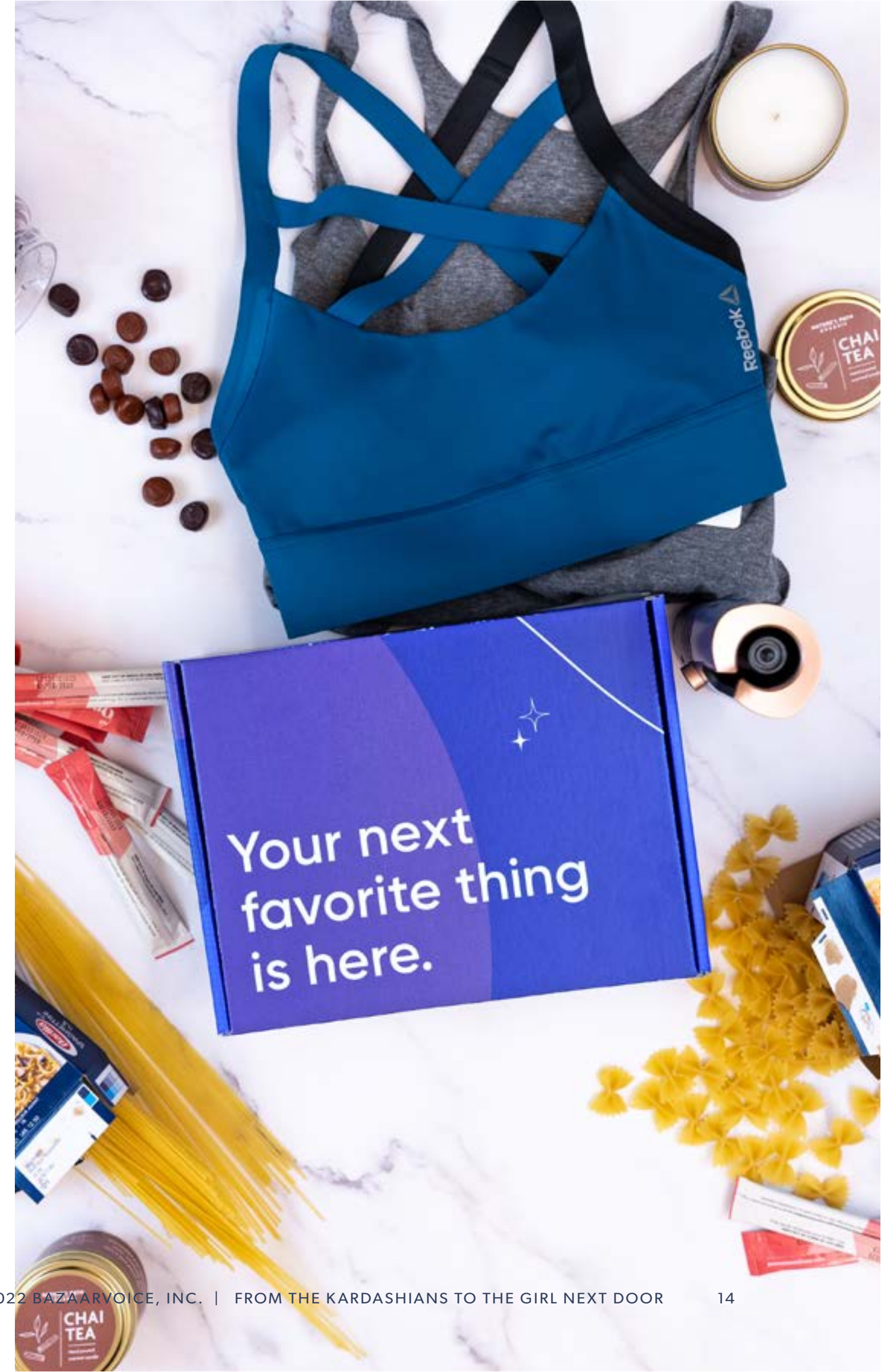
### ➔ REVITALIZES CORE PRODUCTS

By generating fresh reviews.

### ➔ PROVIDES VALUABLE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

To improve messaging, inform product development, and identify new market opportunities.

Make sure your program includes a mix of both new and well-known products.





# 3 Amplify their content

Once your influencers have had the chance to experience your product, you need to make sure you capture and amplify their UGC in all the places your customers are shopping (if they didn't see it, it didn't happen). Hint: Don't just share on social and call it done. You can use UGC to increase conversions on your website, on retailer websites—even in stores.

## IDEAS FOR INSPIRATION

### ➔ ENHANCE PRODUCT PAGES

Create visual galleries on your product pages. It's a great way to add social proof while also freshening up stale PDPs.

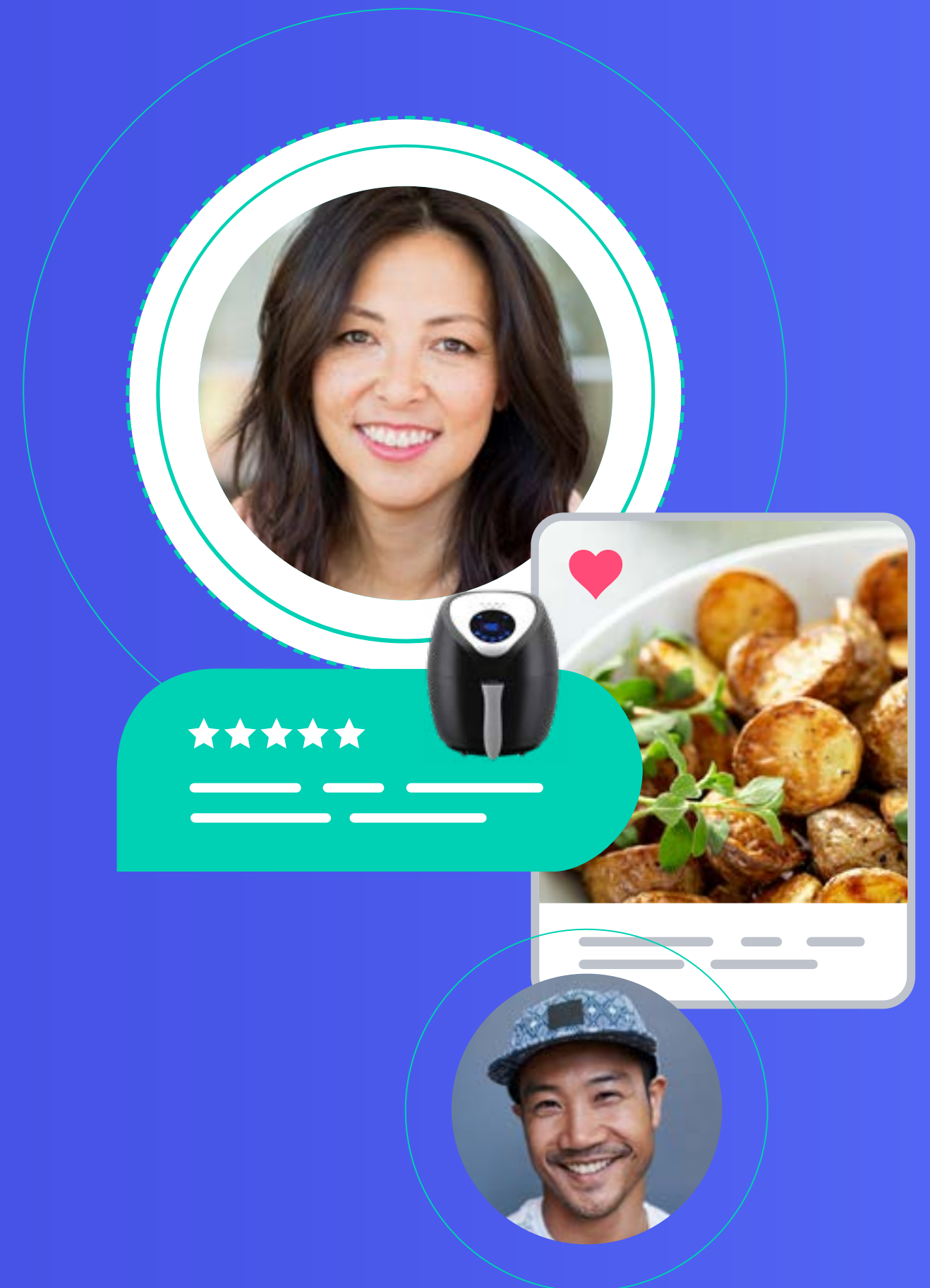
### ➔ SYNDICATE TO RETAIL

Get your UGC on your retailers' pages. This is possible through a visual syndication network that serves your content to thousands of retailers.

### ➔ EMPOWER SHOPPERS

Help people research online, buy in store (ROBO). Over 80% of shoppers research products online before going in store—and over a third read a product's reviews on their mobile phones while looking at the same product in-store.<sup>6</sup>

Make sure your UGC is easily accessible.





# A final word on influencer marketing campaigns

Shopper behavior is constantly changing. It can be daunting at best for brands to keep on top of changing needs and preferences.

But when it comes to social media influencers, the data is clear—some of the smallest influencer voices have the biggest brand impact.



# Key takeaways

**Shoppers trust the everyday influencer and the subject matter expert** over celebrities and social media stars for product recommendations. They value authenticity and trust that these influencers share more authentic, unbiased content.

**A well-targeted sampling program is an effective way to encourage everyday influencers to generate their own content.**

**Follower count holds little sway** over purchase decisions and may be an outdated marketing metric.

Despite changes in advertising rules, **shoppers still distrust influencer content.** They want stronger rules on disclosing use of photo editing—and harsher punishments for those that break them.

**The best influencer marketing campaigns also amplify UGC** throughout the channels which shoppers frequent to increase conversions across the board.

## BAZAARVOICE SAMPLING

With Bazaarvoice, connecting with everyday influencers is easy. Access our community of more than 6.5 million shoppers, send them samples of your product, and collect the high-quality influencer content you need to turn shoppers into loyal customers.

[Learn more](#)



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