

2022

Shopper Experience Index

Where brands and retailers should lean in next



bazaarvoice™

There's no doubt that change is everywhere for brands and retailers.

Millennials are rising to become the most influential segment. Consumers are now connected to each other all the time. And they're communicating with each other on many fronts.

This has led to rising shopper expectations and heightened consumer demand. And over the past few years, we've seen a drastic shift in power to consumers, adding a layer of complexity to an already-complex and fast-moving industry.

We're also facing new challenges and identifying new trends—from the birth of the metaverse, to supply chain issues, to a drive toward corporate social responsibility. Navigating the changing retail landscape can feel like an uphill battle.

It's an exciting battle, to be sure—but where do we lean in?

This year's Shopper Experience Index (SEI) helps us hone in on what shoppers truly care about. Amidst all of the rapid changes, where are shoppers looking for us to evolve and innovate?

The findings in this SEI report highlight that consumers crave experiences that show them, convince them, and inspire them. Consumers want to feel like you know them, and that you understand them. They want you to personalize their experience—not just online, but across all of your channels.

It's easy for us to get lost in the noise of the new buzzwords and the pressure to implement the next big thing. The findings in this report remind us that simple is the new complex, to change with the pace of consumers, and to focus on providing customers with great experiences.

After all, as shoppers ourselves, isn't that what we're also looking for?

Zarina Stanford, CMO, Bazaarvoice



While “consistent” isn’t the word we’d choose to describe the past two years, one common learning we can agree upon is the rapid shift in what it means to be a brand.

High-quality products alone aren’t enough. Nor is an excellent shopping experience.

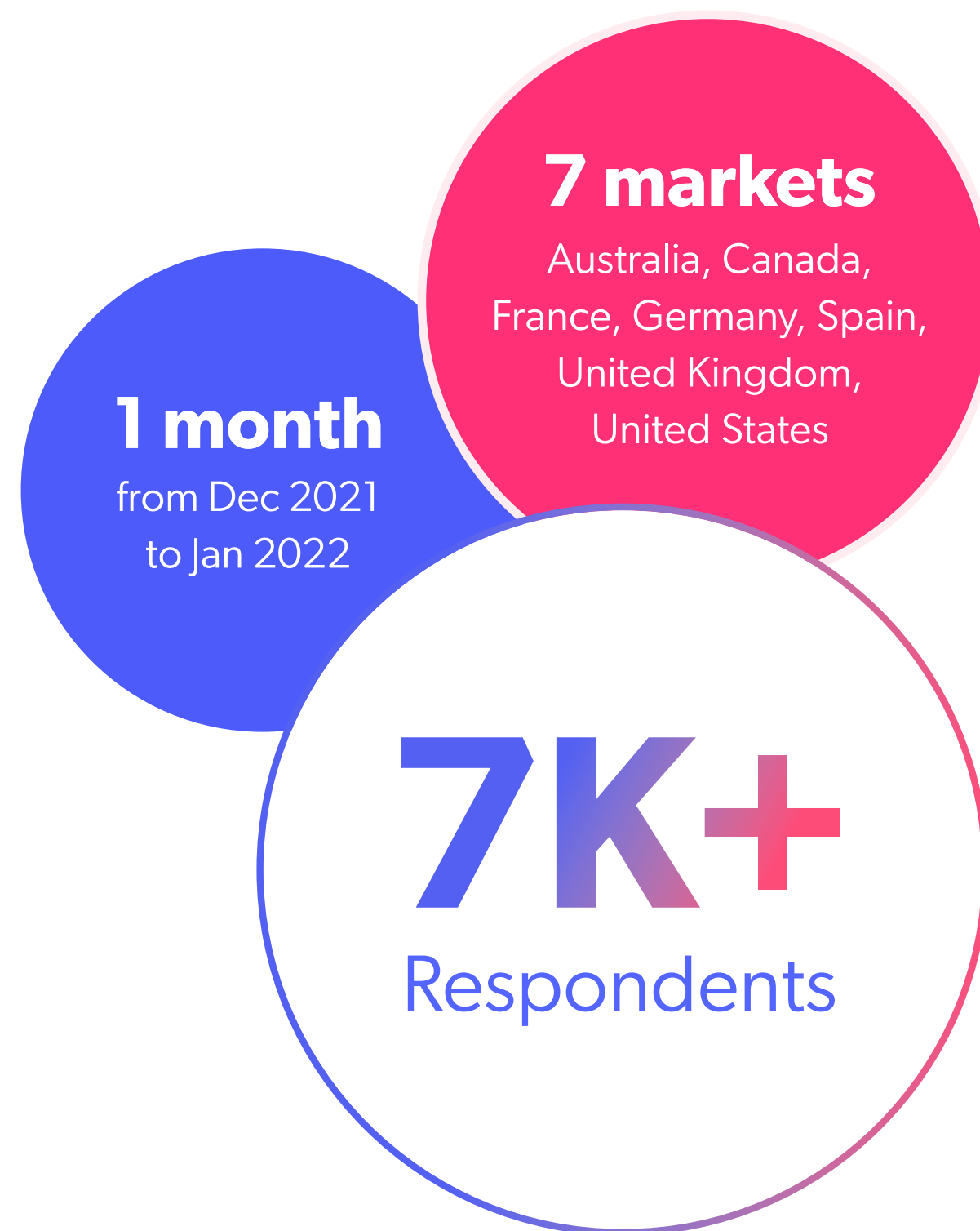
And you’re not even in control of your brand’s identity anymore—your customers are.

Staying on top of rapidly changing consumer behavior is a full-time job in itself. The only thing that’s consistent about change is that it’s constant (which explains why we’re able to release this report every year).

So, what’s new for 2022?

In this special report, we explore five trends marketers must stay on top of:

1. Shoppers are your new salespeople
2. Authenticity is your most important asset
3. Friction is your worst enemy
4. Pandemic-inspired shopping behaviors are sticking around
5. The metaverse is here. How do we capitalize on it?



The 2022 Bazaarvoice Shopper Experience Index reveals how shopper behaviors and expectations have shifted in the past calendar year. Gathering insights from 7,167 respondents in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

#1

Shoppers are your new salespeople

The B2C industry might as well start calling itself C2B—because consumers are officially in charge of how businesses interact with and sell to them. Heck, in some sectors, the dynamic is completely morphing into C2C as everyday influencers have more impact on sales than the brand itself.

But brands can use this to their advantage, serving up exactly the kind of content shoppers are looking for.



40%

of shoppers say UGC, like shopper reviews and photos, makes them most likely to buy a product from an ad

User-generated content inspires confidence

Our shopper experience data tells us that user-generated content (UGC), like reviews, images, and video, is the most effective content retailers and brands can use to get shoppers to the digital register.

Two of the top five factors shoppers say improve their confidence online are based on UGC from other shoppers:

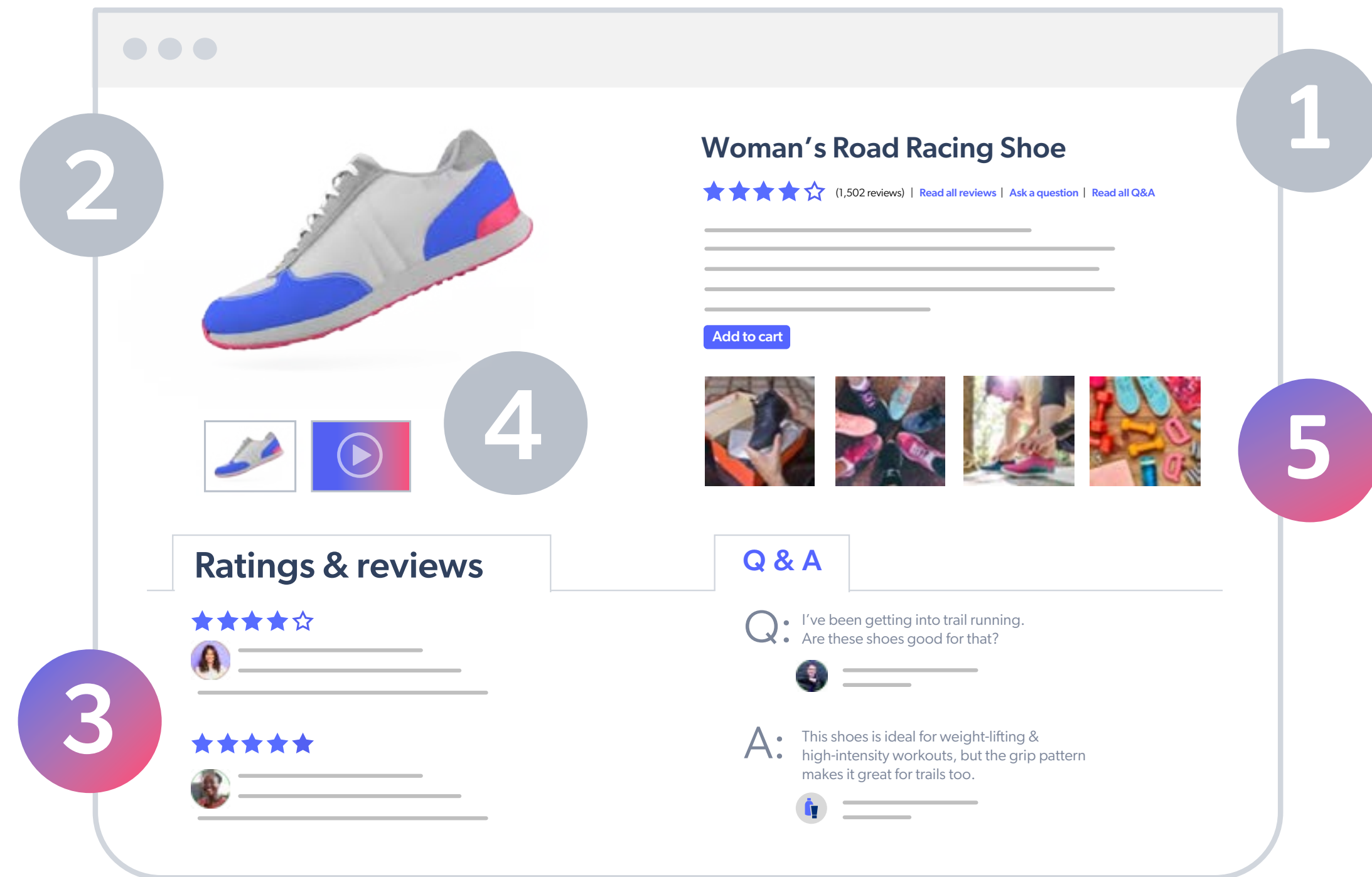
#1 Comprehensive product description

#2 Professional product photos

#3 Shopper ratings and reviews

#4 Professional product videos

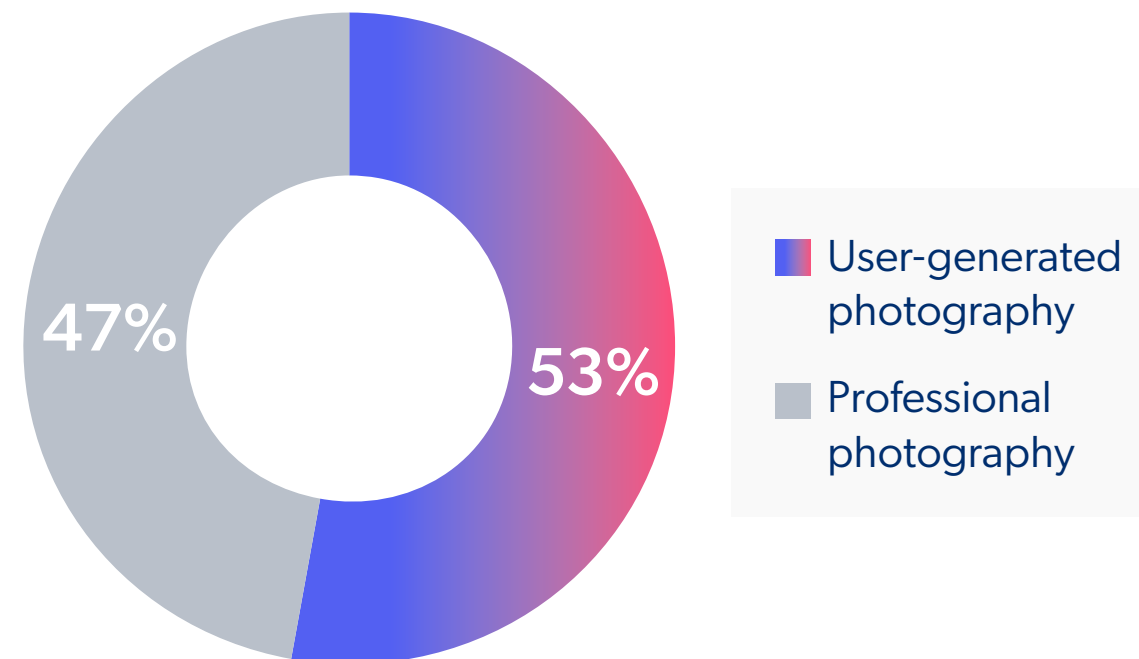
#5 Shopper product photos



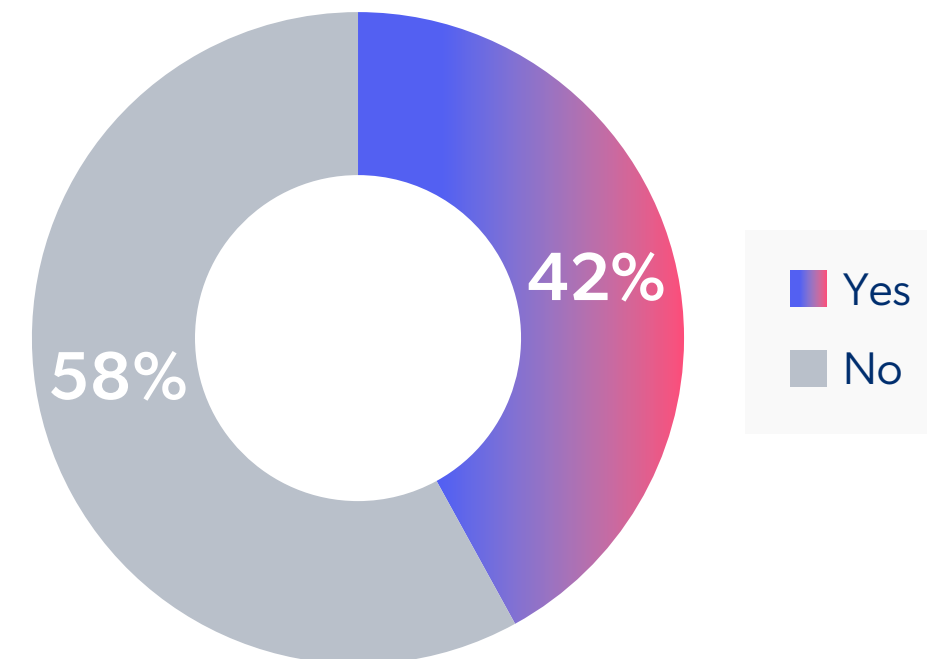
User-generated images gain importance

When asked specifically about images, user-generated images continue to gain importance. 74% of shoppers agree that shopper photos increase their likelihood of buying a product. Over half (53%) say UGC—like social images from customers—makes them more confident in their purchase decision than professional photography. And 42% would buy a product with no professional photos.

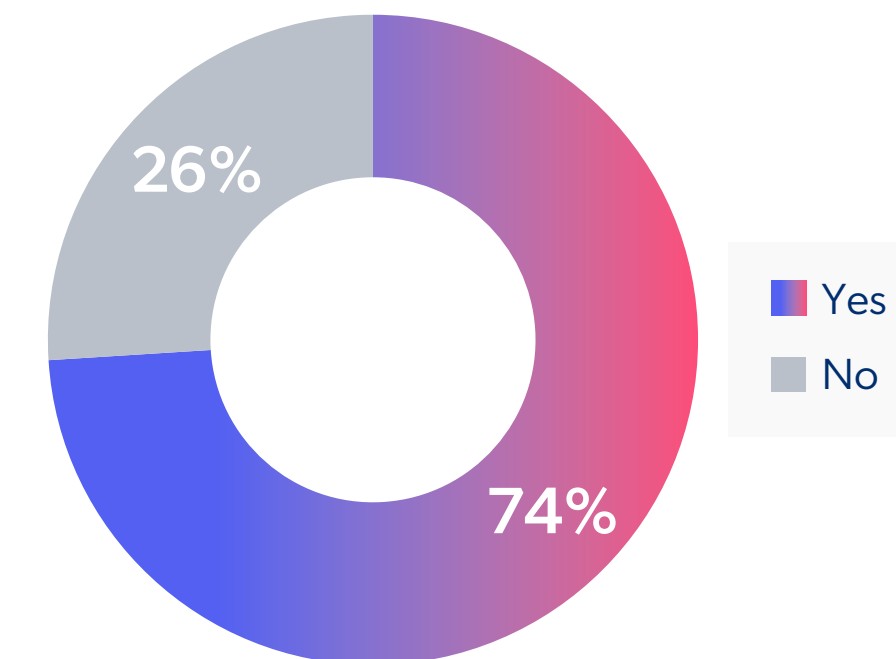
What makes you more confident in your purchase decision?



Will you buy a product if there are no professional product photos?



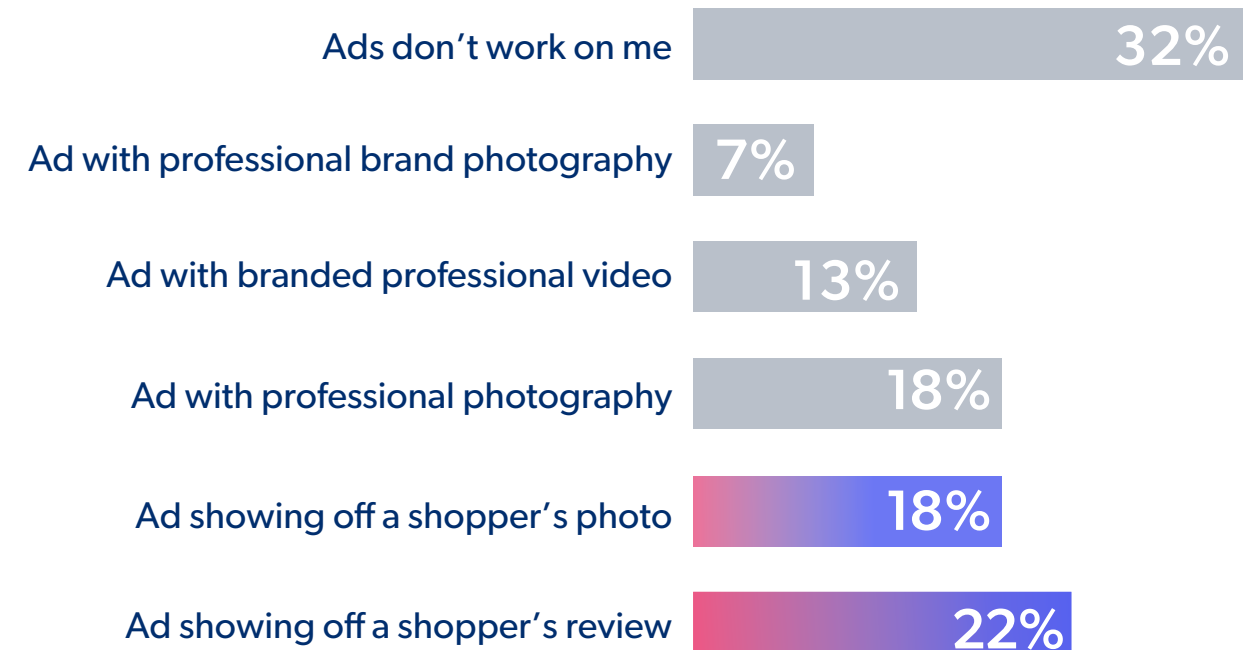
Do shopper photos increase the likelihood of you purchasing?



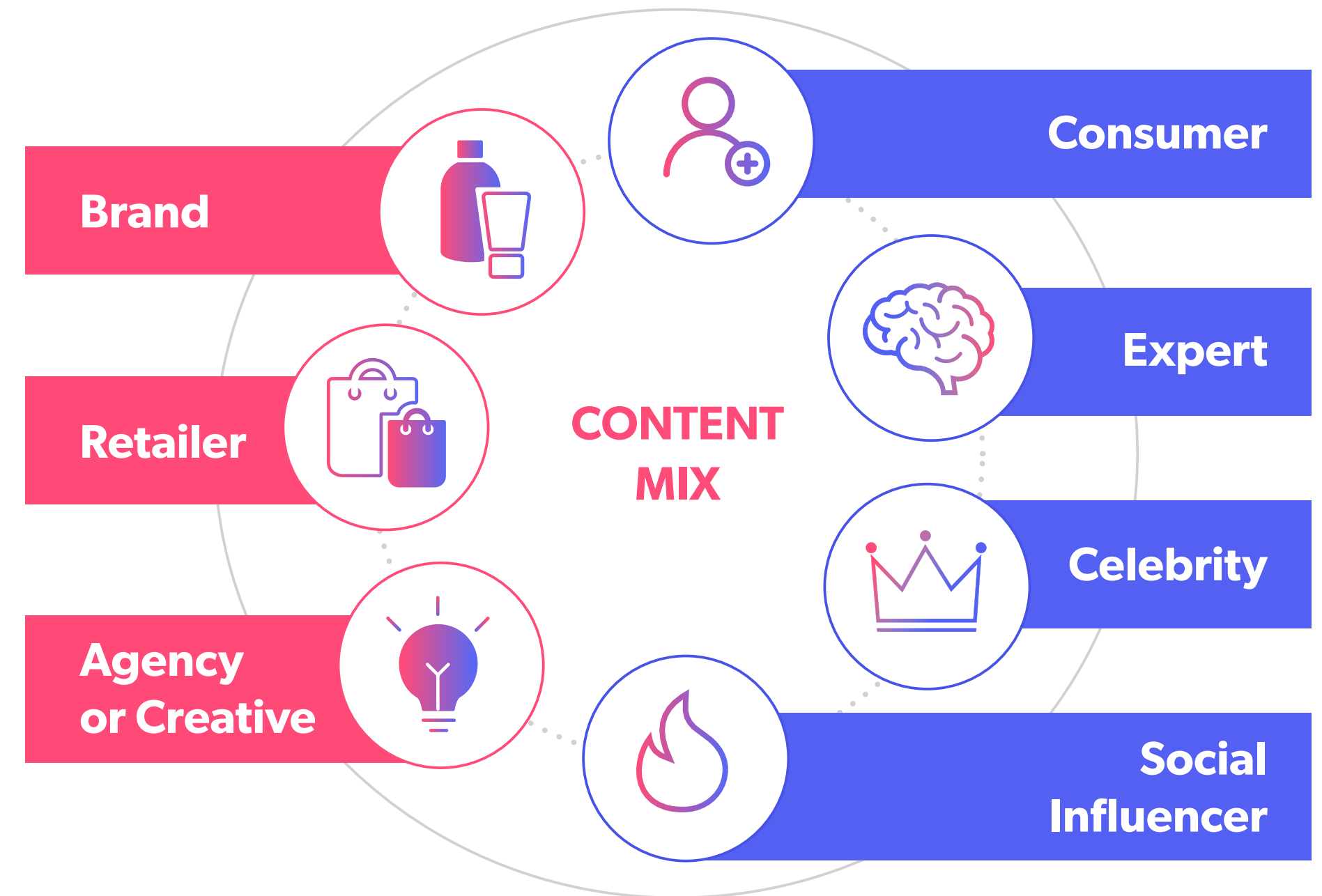
UGC even improves ad performance

UGC even improves ad performance, with about 22% of shoppers saying shopper review ads make them most likely to buy a product from an ad.

What advertisement would compel you most to purchase a product?



When it comes to photography, the data shows that it's more important than ever to create a good mix of content from a wide variety of 'internal' and 'external' content creation sources.



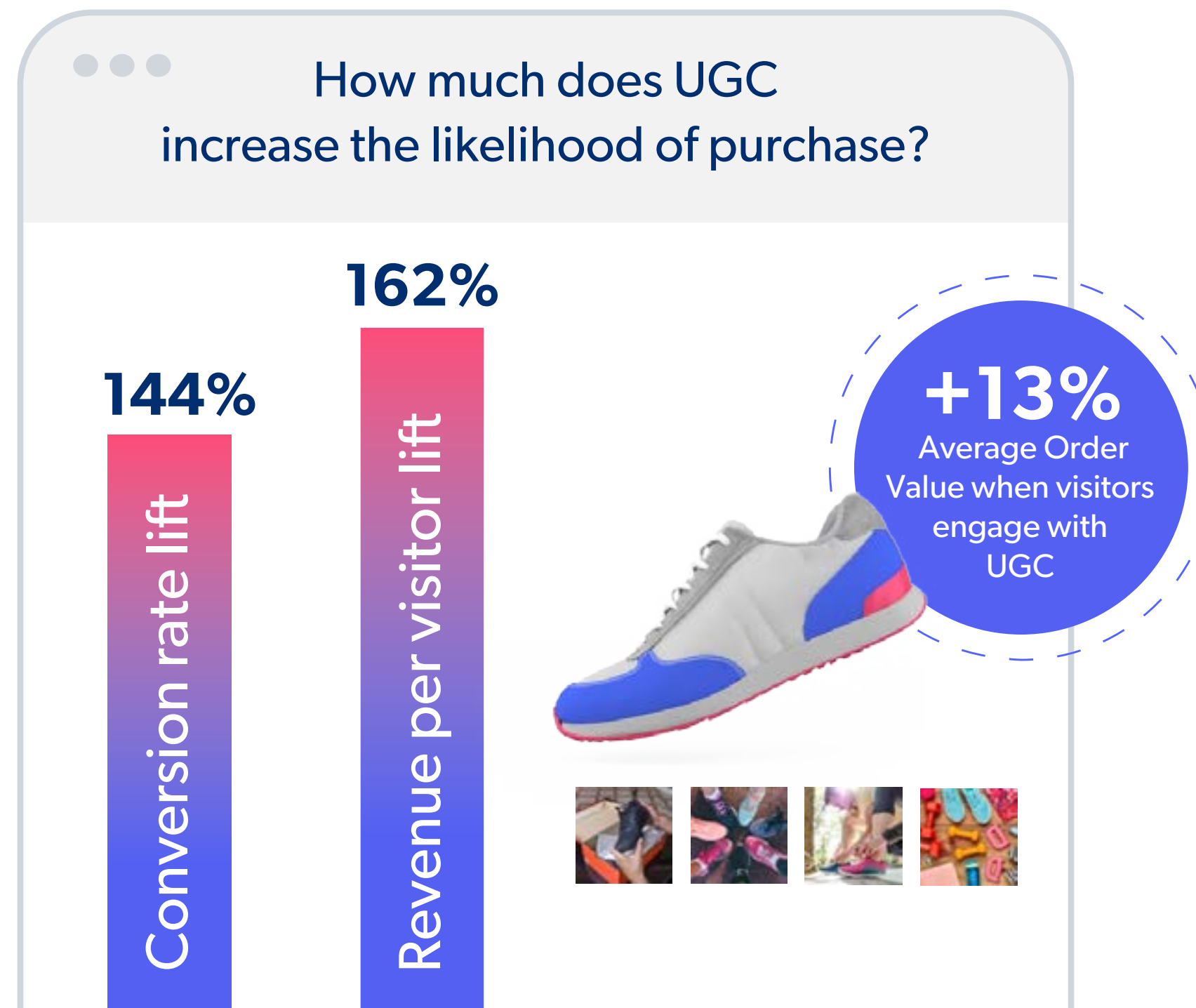
UGC even improves ad performance

Brands and retailers themselves also ranked reviews (64%) and customer photo and video content (43%) as the most influential elements of their sales and advertising efforts.¹

And there's no wonder why.

Using data from our Bazaarvoice Network of over 11,500 brands and retailers, we found a 144% lift in conversion rate when shoppers engaged with UGC—and a 162% lift in revenue per visitor.²

The phenomenon may be particularly pronounced when it comes to millennials. Brands and retailers believe millennials to be the most powerful group of consumers in terms of purchasing power (56%), as well as the most powerful group of consumers in terms of influencing how other consumers shop (60%).¹



“

Your brand is no longer yours.

Keith Nealon,
Bazaarvoice CEO



Keith Nealon, Bazaarvoice CEO,
sums it up well:

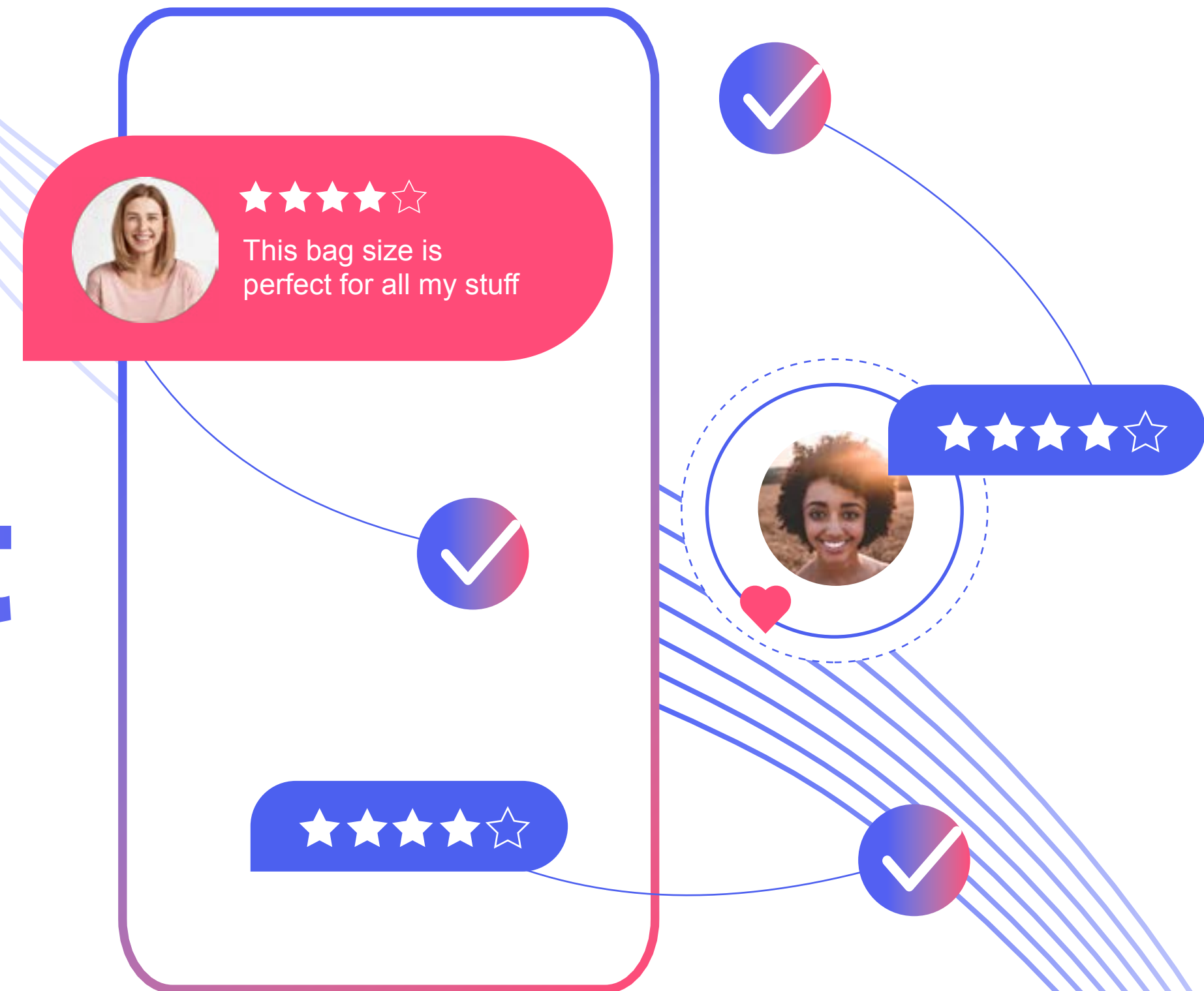
“Your brand is no longer yours. Virtually anyone can get online and share their experience with your brand, products, and services — and in today’s e-commerce environment, that’s the content that drives how other shoppers perceive your brand.”

#2

Authenticity is your most important asset

Your brand is what shoppers say it is. And people are more likely to trust content from their peers than from a brand. But not all content is equal. If your content isn't authentic and relevant, you'll not only lose your audience—it may even backfire to produce negative attention.

Authenticity (or lack thereof) can impact brands in a couple of key areas.



Protect your brand



“Deceptive review practices cheat consumers, undercut honest businesses, and pollute online commerce. Fashion Nova is being held accountable for these practices and other firms should take note.”

Samuel Levine, Director, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission

When used by brands and retailers to help consumers find and purchase products, UGC (ratings and reviews, visual and social content, and questions and answers) is a form of advertising. As such, use of this content is subject to consumer protection laws prohibiting fraudulent, misleading, or deceptive advertising. Violations of these laws can be very painful and include expensive monetary fines or damages, injunctions, attorneys’ fees and defense costs, and adverse publicity and reputation damage.

Cherry-picking is the practice of rejecting or suppressing negative reviews and only selecting positive reviews for publication. This is what recently cost Fashion Nova \$4.2M to settle charges brought against it by the United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Processes shouldn’t screen out negative reviews. Negative reviews are an opportunity for engaging with consumers and identifying potential product improvements. Brands who respond to, and take action on, negative feedback will build trust with their customers and improve future products.



UGC is your always-on focus group

Our shopper experience data shows that almost 1 in 3 shoppers view a brand as trustworthy if online reviews are positive.³ However, there's also an expectation to see some level of negative content. Over half of consumers (60%) say that negative reviews are just as important as positive reviews in their decision to buy a product, giving consumers a true feel for a product or service. Not having negative reviews could actually devalue all the positive reviews.

We have countless stories about ways brands and retailers have improved products and processes based on the feedback they've received from UGC. In fact, 72% of our clients use UGC to improve customer service, 66% use it to improve products, and 50% use it to improve marketing tactics and messaging.⁴

UGC covers a wide variety of useful content that your loyal customers and critics share with you online. Reviews are your always-on focus group.



Walmart recognizes the high value of authentic content:

“One of the things that we are not willing to sacrifice is authenticity. So, one of the really important parts of customers reading ratings and reviews is that they trust that they're authentic and relevant to the item. Otherwise, we potentially lose that trust that customers were looking for from reviews in the first place.”

Alyssa Thomas, Director of Product, Content as Commerce, Walmart.com



Fake reviews are worse than no reviews

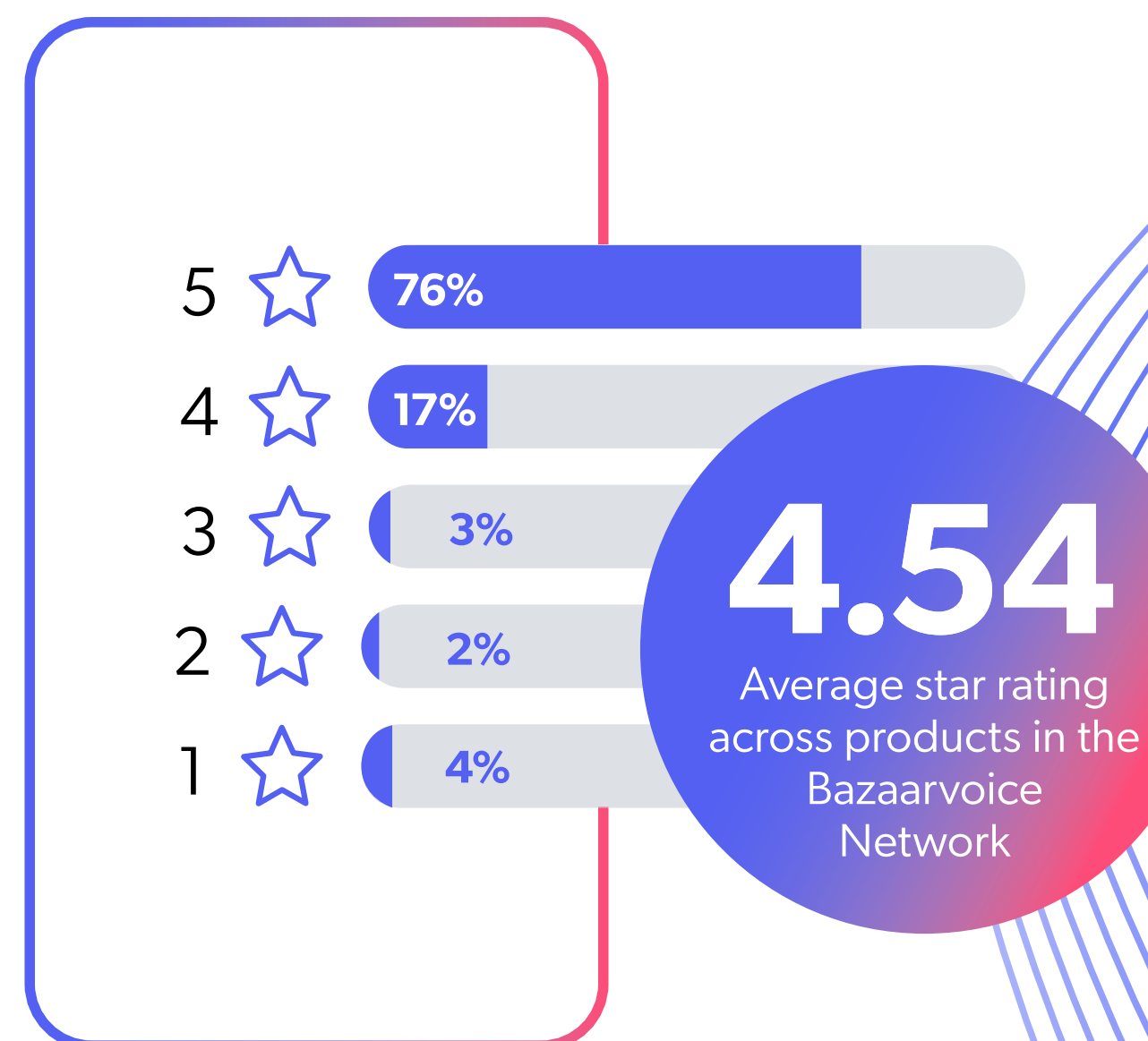
It's critical to ensure reviews are authentic and relevant—the good and bad ones.

Work with a provider that champions removing fraudulent content and takes steps to make it difficult for a fake reviewer to leave content again. Of the content we moderate coming into the Bazaarvoice Network, we typically reject 6% for being inappropriate or irrelevant to the product, and about 2% of content is found to be fraudulent.

In 2019, the FTC charged Sunday Riley Modern Skincare, and its CEO, with misleading consumers in violation of the FTC Act by posting numerous fake reviews. The complaint alleged that Sunday Riley managers, including its CEO herself, posted reviews using fake accounts created to hide their identities.

Hold authenticity as sacrosanct. Because great content, especially when it comes from genuine and relatable people, builds trust, loyalty, and accelerates conversion. And it does so at scale, with an almost unimaginable efficiency. Fake reviews aren't even needed.

The great news is that genuine reviews on average are overwhelmingly positive. The average star rating on the Bazaarvoice Network is 4.54, with 76% awarded a 5-star rating.⁶ Focus on an authentic reviews program and you'll reap the business benefits.



#3

Friction is your worst enemy

With so many people shopping digitally, it's time to finally work out the kinks. The process of buying things should be easy. Smooth. Seamless. Any friction takes away from the experience and makes it more likely your shopper will jump ship.

In fact, 78% of shoppers value convenience more now than ever.⁷ And it's not just about the transaction. Shopping is an experience. It spans discovery, search, purchasing, and beyond. Harvard Business Review actually found that, on average, customers who used 4+ channels spent 9% more in a given retailer's store when compared to those who used only a single touchpoint.⁸

From email and social media content to window displays and aisle end caps, to product inserts and direct mail, your customer expects a seamless, consistent experience across all mediums. And trust us, they're using all of the mediums.

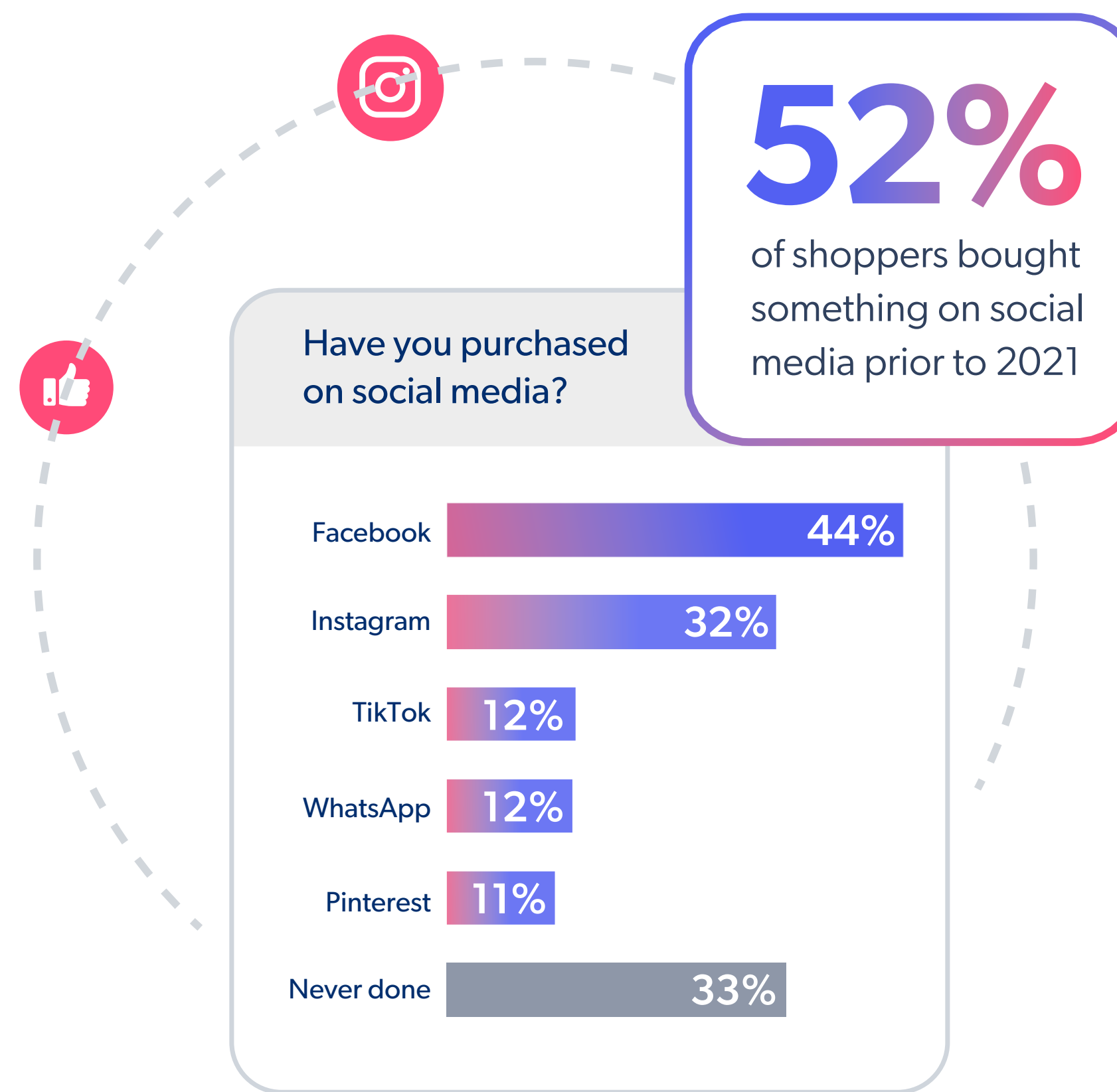


Social commerce simplifies the shopper journey

Social commerce offers the convenience consumers are after—and they're taking advantage. Over half (52%) of shoppers bought something on social media prior to 2021, with Spanish shoppers leading the social buying (68%), followed by French (56%).

Facebook has been the most popular social commerce platform thus far—2 in 5 shoppers say they've made a purchase on Facebook before. Instagram is not far behind, with 1 in 4 shoppers reporting they've bought something on the 'gram.

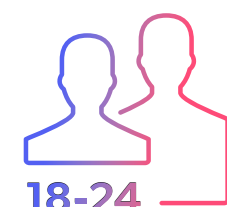
Shoppers aged 18 to 24 are most likely to have bought on Instagram (55%), Facebook (30%), and TikTok (23%) compared to other generations.



Social commerce goes beyond social platforms



Facebook (45%) and Instagram (33%) most popular globally



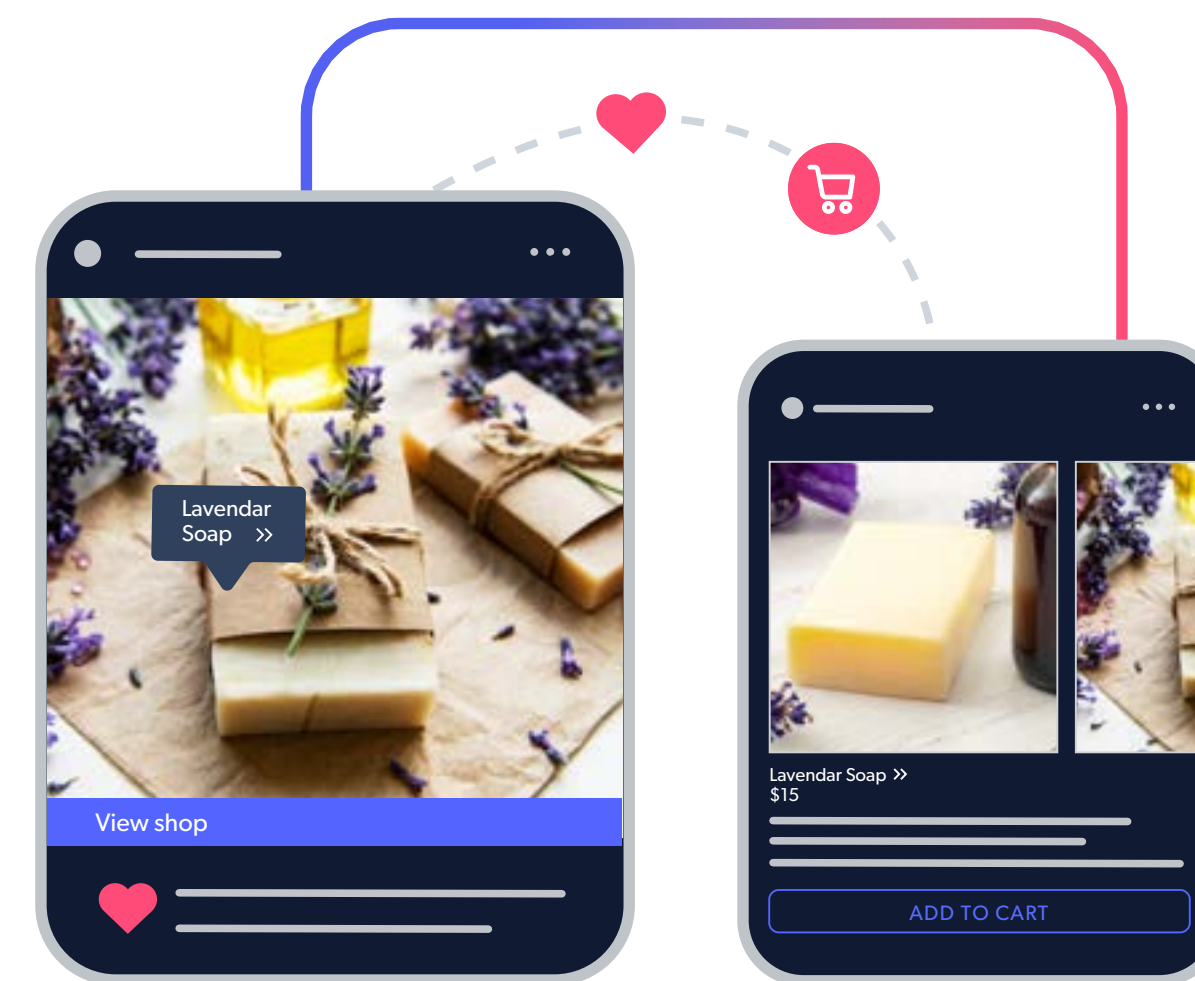
18-24
Instagram (65%) and TikTok (35%) most popular with shoppers 18-24

Beyond social transactions, 69% of shoppers have been inspired by social media to make a purchase through another channel. Facebook (45%) and Instagram (33%) were most popular globally, but Instagram (65%) and TikTok (35%) are most popular with shoppers in the 18 to 24 age group. While Instagram and TikTok inspiration decreases with age, Facebook's ability to inspire shopping peaks with shoppers 35 to 44-years-old.

Why all the social shopping? Shoppers report ease as the top reason they've made a purchase on social media (23%), followed by liking how the product looked (20%).

Want to get people shopping on social more often? Make it easier for them!

Over half (54%) of shoppers say they'd be more likely to buy a product on social media if they could click the post and get product info right on the platform. Even more shoppers (58%) would be more likely to buy on social if they could read a shopper review directly on the social post.



54%

say they'd be more likely to buy a product on social media if they could click the post and get product info directly there

Shoppers want UGC in store

Speaking of simplifying the shopping process. It's up to your brand to bridge the gap between the virtual and the IRL—and one key way to do that is to bring the coveted UGC into brick-and-mortar stores.

When consumers were asked what technologies they'd like to see integrated into the in-store experience, three of the most popular responses were:

1. Virtual displays showing customer reviews, photos, and videos
2. QR codes that can be scanned to read reviews
3. Availability of live/up-to-date star ratings in-store feedback

Making digital UGC prominent in-store simplifies the process of in-person shopping, allowing consumers to make more confident decisions without extensive research on their mobile devices.

#1

36% want to see virtual displays showing customer reviews, photos, & videos

#2

34% want to see QR codes that can be scanned to read reviews

#3

33% want to see live/up-to-date star ratings in-store feedback⁹



#4

Pandemic-inspired shopping behaviors are sticking around

The pandemic forced shoppers online—and they've stayed there. In fact, they're shopping on social media more than ever, too, with 80% of shoppers agreeing their time on social media has increased significantly over the past year.¹⁰

Even when shoppers do venture back in-store to make a purchase, they're still relying on product research they've done online to guide their purchase decisions.

In short, very few of today's purchases happen without a digital touchpoint.

And with endless products available at their digital fingertips, consumers are more willing than ever to try out new brands when they face shortages, stockouts—or just a lack of inspiration from brands they were once loyal to.



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Online shopping... didn't suck

While the circumstances that sent people online in search of toilet paper and pasta sauce were less than optimal, the digital shopping experience had enough perks to keep people coming back (even when toilet paper was back on grocery store shelves).

Almost a third (30%) of global Shopper Experience Index respondents say that they shop online once a week or more—even now that lockdown has been lifted in most places.

Plus, 64% of shoppers say a hybrid method of shopping has been their primary way of shopping for the past six months, with 63% of consumers researching online before entering a store.



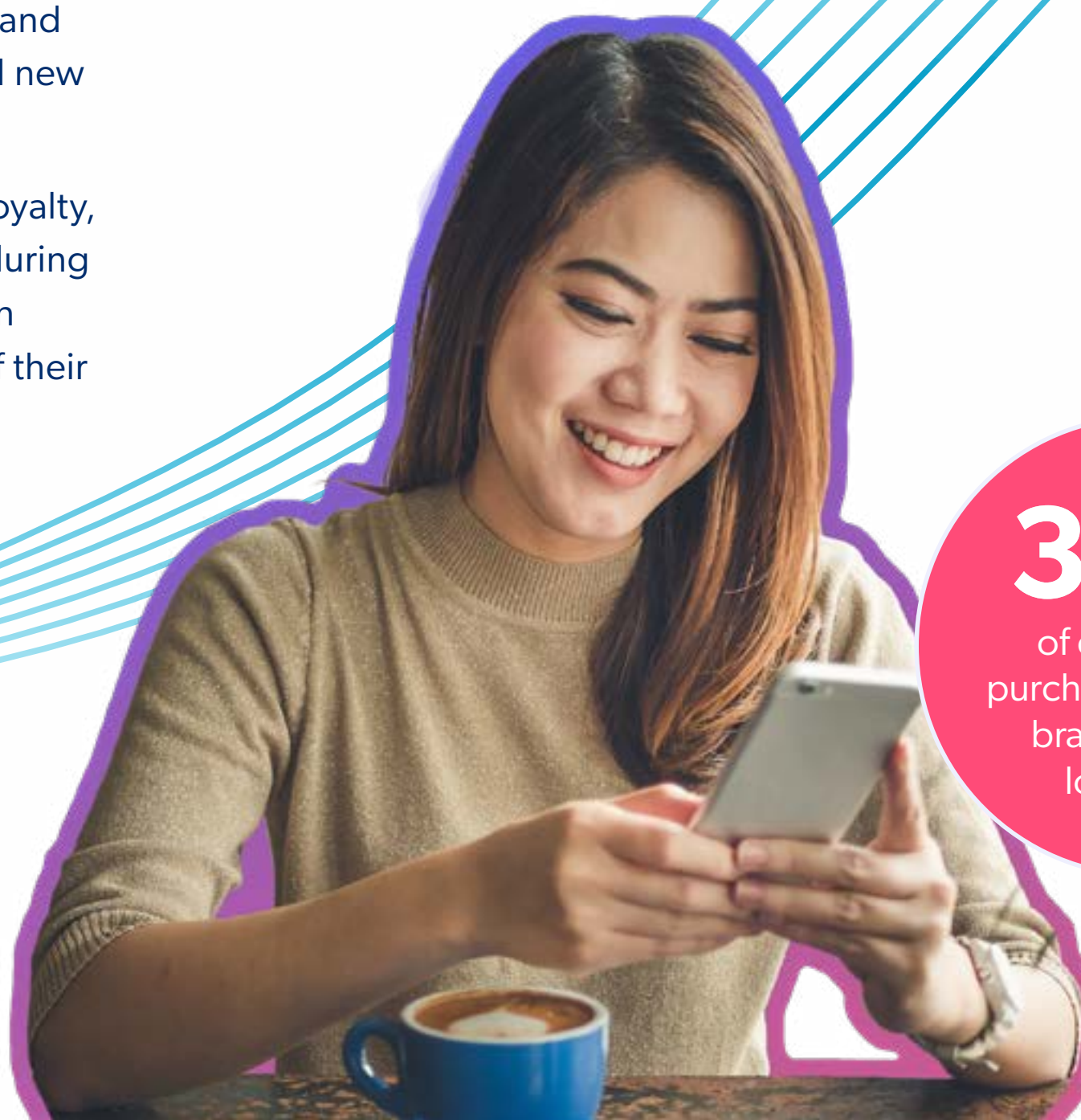
Brand loyalty is more elusive

While there probably weren't too many shoppers happy with the single ply TP trials of early 2020, the forced trade-offs left many people with new favorite brands.

Over a third (39%) of global respondents purchased from different brands than usual during lockdown, as well as brands they hadn't heard of before. And 83% of shoppers will continue to buy from newly discovered brands.

Spending more time online often inspires these new brand trials, with 29% of respondents reporting they've found new product recommendations through Facebook.

COVID-19 response may play a role in ongoing brand loyalty, with 73% of consumers saying how a brand responds during the crisis will impact their brand loyalty.¹¹ And more than 40% of shoppers started using a new brand because of their Coronavirus response.



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#5

The **META**verse is here. How do we capitalize on it?

Bloomberg
predicts
\$800 billion
global metaverse
revenue by 2024

Digital content continues to evolve to improve the shopper experience, allowing more enjoyable shopping instead of just transacting. And the metaverse will play a key role in the shopping experience—Bloomberg predicts that by 2024, the global metaverse revenue opportunity could approach \$800 billion.¹²

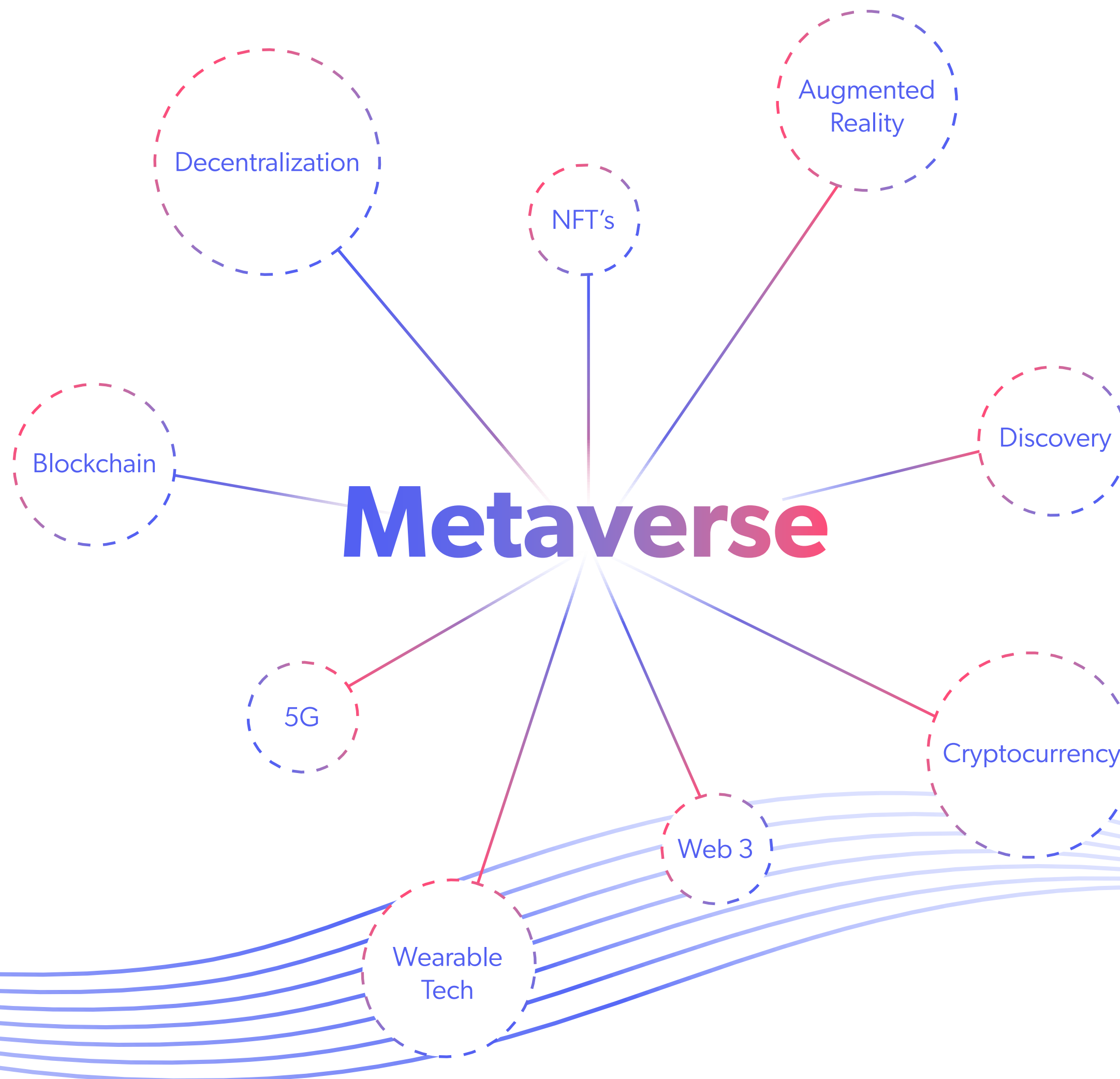
The metaverse goes beyond Facebook's rebrand to Meta. It's a network of virtual worlds focused on bringing people together—digitally and physically. The metaverse asks the big "What if?" about combining virtual reality, Zoom meetings, social networks, crypto, online shopping, wearable tech, artificial intelligence, 5G, NFTs, and so much more.

Building blocks of the metaverse

While the term has dystopian roots, the reality of the metaverse is a lot more pleasant. It makes our lives easier and more connected through the convergence of physical and digital. The metaverse is the next evolution of the internet and social networks, using real-time 3D software. The metaverse is basically the modern day shopping mall—just with fewer soft pretzels.

It's hard to grasp the metaverse as it doesn't fully exist yet. Some of the basic building blocks are here and others are starting to emerge. We're starting to get a feel for what it could look like.

But neither brands nor their shoppers know quite what to do with this ambiguous "metaverse" yet.



AR/VR isn't all that important to purchase decisions (yet?)

Only about one in 10 brands has a defined metaverse strategy—and that's probably because consumers haven't quite caught on yet.¹³

Only 12% of respondents count augmented reality in their top five must-have factors when making a confident purchase, but that breakdown varies a bit by country. Germany leads the pack at 22%, followed by France (16%), the United States (14%), Spain (14%), Canada (13%), Australia (11%), and the UK (11%).

Only
1 in 10
brands
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metaverse strategy

While there's significance for some shoppers, the following factors all ranked higher:

- Comprehensive product description
- Professional photos of the product
- Professional videos of the product
- Shopper ratings and reviews
- Shopper photos of the product
- Shopper videos of the product
- Expert reviews
- "Recommended by retailer" badge
- Questions and answers
- Sustainability/environmental information
- Ingredients/materials listed

Still, the experts say these high-tech metaverse experiences will grow quickly.

IDC predicts that by 2023, 45% of all B2B and B2C customers will seek engagement and experiences that not only mirror, but also augment in-person interactions—making these experiences more important to the decision-making process. And by 2027, the research firm says 40% of U.S. internet users will use augmented reality, with, "sweeping changes for advertising and marketing."

Mordor Intelligence, a research firm in India, agrees, explaining:

"Spending on virtual reality alone is expected to expand from its \$17 billion value in 2020 to as much as \$184 billion by 2026."

At the end of the day, the growth of the metaverse is just more evidence of the shift from buying online to shopping online. Consumers want experiences that show them, convince them, and inspire them.

In 2021 and early 2022, we saw continued growth across e-commerce and social commerce. We witnessed brands and retailers grapple with the omnichannel experience and supply chain issues. And we even watched from the sidelines as shopper expectations soared to new heights.

But what was different about the previous year is that all of the trends circling in our periphery seemed to finally converge.

This report highlights that consumers now value what other shoppers say about a brand and its product more than what they hear and see from branded content.

That authenticity and purpose are essential to keeping your brand afloat.

And the time is now to create frictionless, omnichannel experiences—that lay the foundation for continued technological advancement and the future of shopping.

Are you ready? Let's lean into the constant change, and make 2022 the year you level up your digital transformation.

Key takeaways

HOW BRANDS AND RETAILERS SHOULD REACT

What can you do with all of this data? Keep a few points in mind as you move forward in 2022.

1. Plan with a consumer-first mindset

You no longer own your brand, remember? With consumers at the wheel, you must consistently put them first.

2. Create the seamless experience shoppers expect

One of the ways to put your shoppers first is creating the experiences they crave—and those experiences will continue to converge across channels. Social commerce will no doubt play a growing role as shoppers look for easy, convenient shopping experiences in places they already hang out.

3. Build your brand on authenticity and trust

Your shoppers want to hear from the everyday Joe and Jane—not so much from your brand. It's their peers they trust, and the best way to build that trust is to help shoppers create and share reviews, photos, and other feedback about your products.

1. [Bazaarvoice: Future of retail and 2022 webinar](#)
2. Bazaarvoice: ROI Benchmark Best in Class 2021 study
3. [Bazaarvoice: Fake Reviews research, March 2020](#)
4. [Bazaarvoice: Why ratings and reviews are important for you business](#)
5. [Bazaarvoice: Shopper Experience Index 2018](#)
6. Bazaarvoice: Network benchmark data
7. [Linnworks: Effortless economy whitepaper](#)
8. [Harvard Business review: A Study of 46,000 Shoppers Shows That Omnichannel Retailing Works](#)
9. [Bazaarvoice: The State of Retail](#)
10. [Bazaarvoice: Social Commerce insights](#)
11. [Bazaarvoice: Why ratings and reviews are important for you business](#)
12. [Bloomberg: Metaverse may be \\$800 billion market, next tech platform](#)
13. [Bazaarvoice: Webinar poll, Jan 2022](#)



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