

Fuel e-commerce growth during economic uncertainty

Double down on core hero products to stay ahead and reach more customers



bazaarvoice™



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Introduction

Convincing shoppers to buy when the economy is shaky is harder than in times of boom. Your best bet is to double down on your core hero products. These products are the ones your customers love and why your brand exists.

But even still, not just any marketing will do.

Creating a marketing strategy around user-generated content can help you connect with your customers and inspire them to buy those hero products. And authentic content from your fans is your fuel for e-commerce growth.



Data from our Bazaarvoice Network of over 12,000 brands and retailers found:

- **A 135% increase** in conversion rate and a 164% increase in revenue per visitor when shoppers engaged with content from their peers.
- **A 300% increase** in conversions when shoppers engage with content specifically from Bazaarvoice Sampling campaigns.

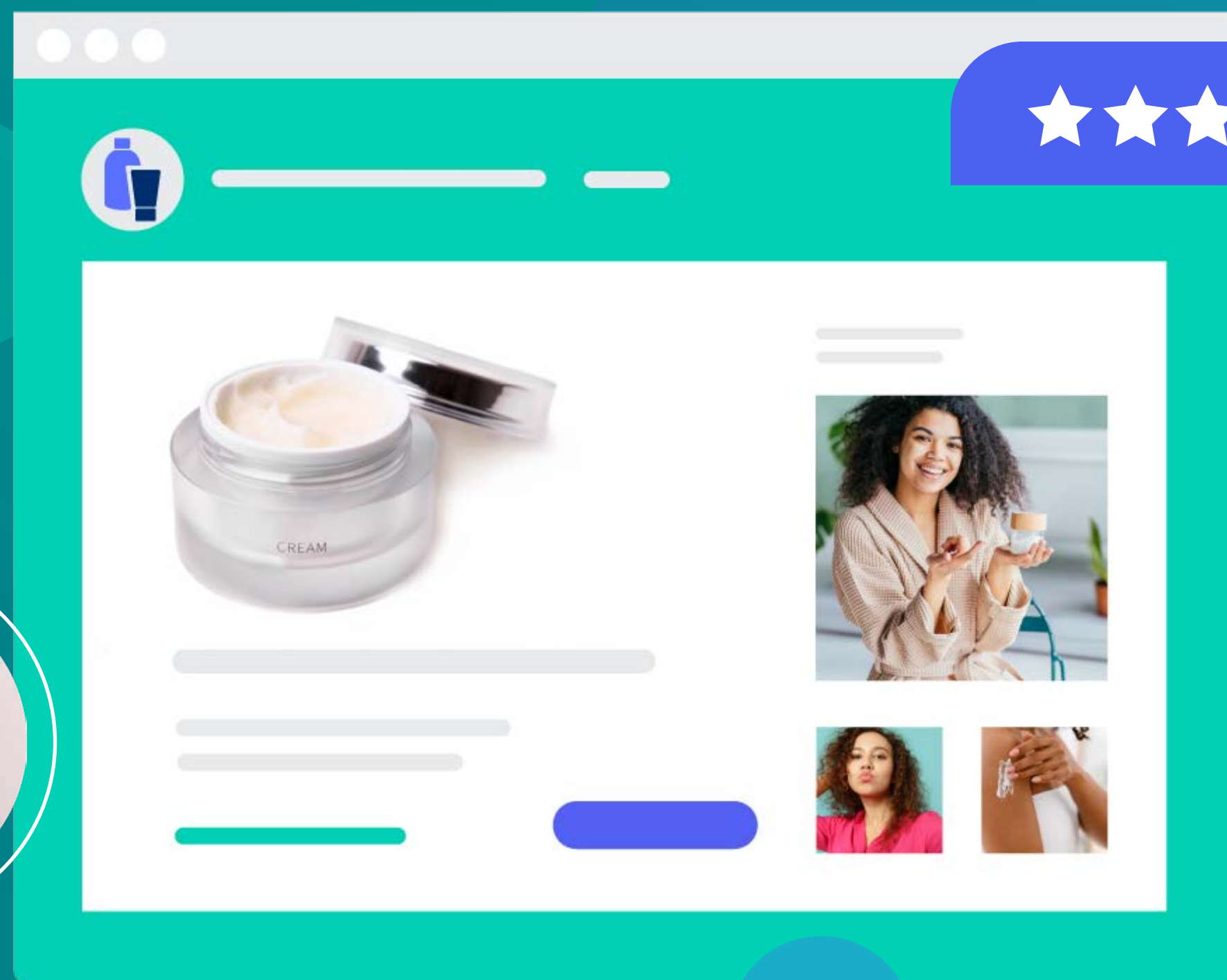
Not sure how to keep your hero pages fresh and engaging, content-rich experiences? We've got you covered.

Read on for three strategies to kick start growth for your hero products.

1

Optimize your hero product's landing page

A successful landing page must attract customers and encourage them to buy. Your hero product's landing page must therefore be optimized for search (SEO), as well as user experience and conversions. Let's take a look at both.

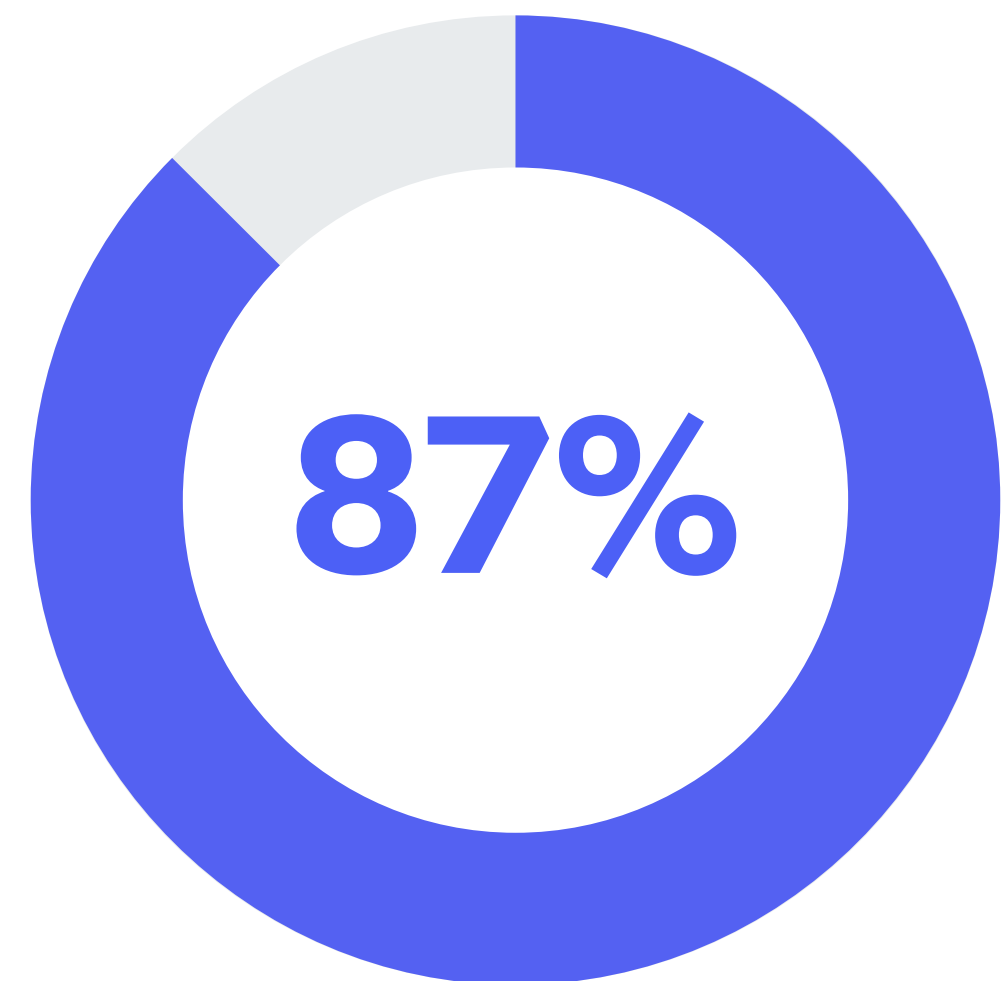


Optimizing your pages for search (SEO)

The first aspect of hero product page optimization is getting more people to find it, which is where SEO comes in. Optimizing your product page for search engines can reduce the cost of customer acquisition by 87%. Your ROI on these efforts can be as high as 12:1.

But how do you get your core hero products at the top of search results?

Since Google focuses on how your product page matches a user's intent, keywords are critical. Talk about your products and the problems they solve using the words and phrases your customers use in user-generated content.

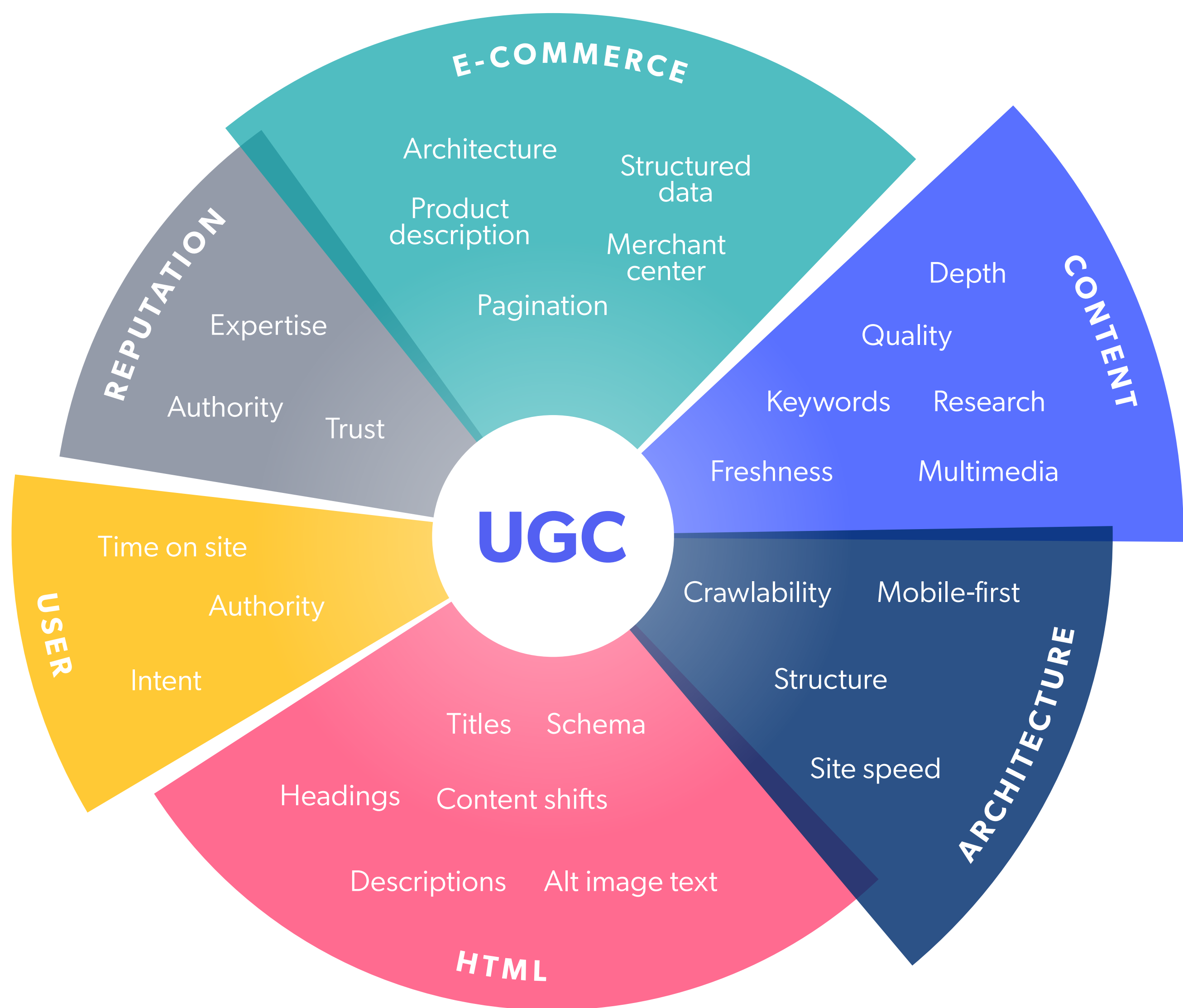


Optimizing your product page for search can reduce the cost of customer acquisition by 87%

Some of our favorite ways to use keywords naturally:

- Include your targeted keywords in your page's title tag and meta description
- Make sure the page's actual copy matches what you promise in your title tag
- Use headings to break up copy and organize your page. Include a keyword in at least one of the headings, but only if it makes sense
- Use keywords throughout the page, in product names, descriptions, and reviews
- Include keywords in image alternative (alt) text
- Link to other related content on your site
- Write keyword-rich image file names and SEO-friendly alt text

In addition to keywords, fresh content from reputable sources is also a component of Google’s ranking criteria. One of the best ways to add new content to your hero product page is through user-generated content, like product reviews and Q&As.



When it comes to products or services, your customers are the experts. Google recognizes this and rewards product pages with authentic customer reviews. Customers also naturally use valuable keywords in their content, boosting your page’s potential to rank as search engines crawl the new content.

Optimizing your on-page experience

In addition to optimizing your hero product's page for search, a well-optimized page should also meet customer needs and achieve company goals (e.g., generate conversions). A few key components must come together for a positive page experience.

1. Gives shoppers the information they need

First and foremost, your product page must give shoppers the information they need to make a decision.

Most customers want to know:

- Is this product good quality or value?
- Is this a reputable company to buy from?
- What do other people think about this product?
- Is there anything else I need to buy to make this product work?
- How are other shoppers using this product?
- What are the product dimensions or fit?

The best way to help answer customers' questions is to incorporate user-generated content—reviews, Q&A, images, and videos—on product pages. Research shows 70% of shoppers would pick a product with more reviews over an identical product with fewer reviews, even if it had a lower star rating.

But not just any user content will do. Quality, recency, and volume matter to conversions. In fact, 75% of shoppers look for reviews with three or more sentences, while 85% consider how recently a review was written to inform their purchase decision.

In addition to populating your product pages with content from your shoppers, you should also:

- Write clear and engaging product descriptions that accurately describe the product and the benefits shoppers will get from buying it.
- Put social proof front and center. Place your hero product's star ratings and review count by the product's name at the top of the page.
- Allow shoppers to sort reviews based on need. For example, swimsuit brand Andie allows shoppers to filter by everything from product rating to age to skin tone.
- Make sure your shipping and return policy is clear. Clarity goes a long way toward building trust and minimizing risk.

Product reviews and other user-generated content should be a core component of your hero product pages. If you don't have enough user-generated content to populate your pages well, consider running a sampling campaign.

2. Improve your site speed

Don't just optimize your pages for search engines. Optimize for speed. Consumers won't wait on a page to load—it has to be fast, or all those new visitors will likely bounce.

70% of consumers say page speed impacts their willingness to buy online.

But page speed not only impacts the user experience (which ultimately affects engagement and conversions). It also impacts your search ranking—in a big way. Google knows site speed matters to your shoppers, and the search engine will deprioritize your pages if they take too long to load.

To improve your site speed, make sure to:

- Compress image files (big images are a huge culprit for slow pages)
- Ensure third-party plugins aren't slowing down your site with excessive code
- Enable browser caching on static content to reduce page load time for repeat visitors

3. Optimize the mobile user experience

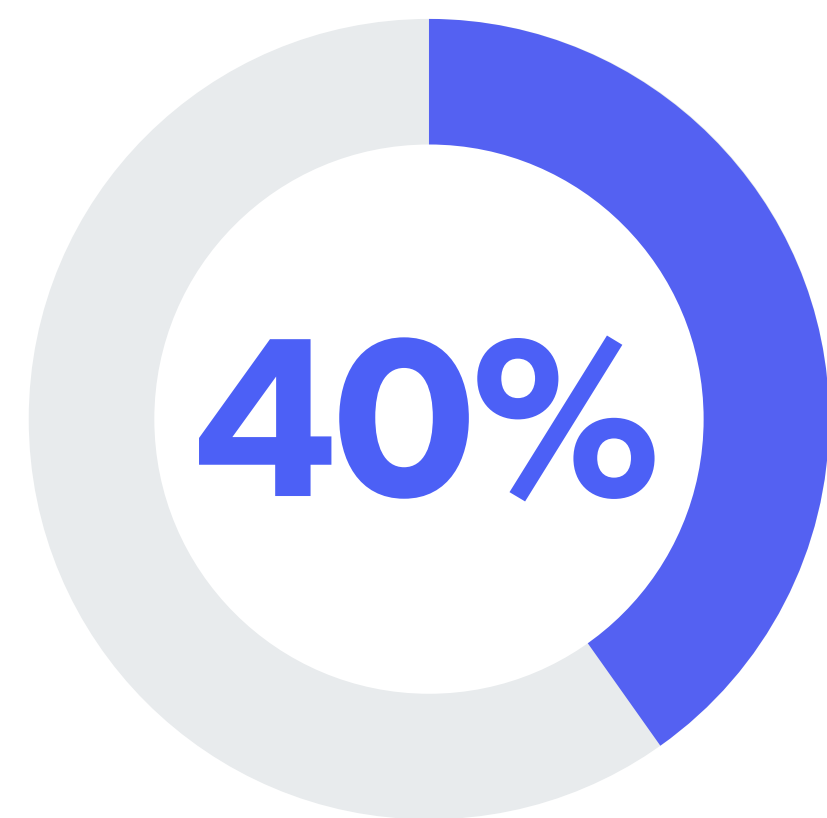
Retail mobile commerce (m-commerce) sales are expected to reach \$621 billion (43% of all ecommerce) by 2024. And 40% of consumers will head to your competitors after a bad mobile experience.

Get your mobile product pages up to snuff with design improvements that encourage visitors to convert.

- **Simplify your navigation.** Streamline your site menu and try to keep everything visible without having to zoom in to read (nobody likes pinching or scrolling to read something on the page).
- **Remove friction.** Keep calls to action and “Buy Now” buttons front and center. If you can, pre-populate existing account information to limit data entry for your customers.
- **Support a multi-device purchase process.** Let people who start shopping on a mobile device return to their shopping cart and complete their transactions on their desktop computers (and vice versa).

\$621B

**predicted retail
m-commerce sales
for 2024**



**consumers will try a
competitor after a bad
mobile experience**

DSW doubles conversions with on-site experience

DSW, a retail chain known for its wide selection of brand-name and designer shoes and accessories, faced a challenge common in the retail space: how to give online shoppers the confidence to purchase.



Our customers have been asking for more on-the-foot photography, more style guidance, more 'how to wear' kind of content.

Alison Wagner | Digital Product Specialist



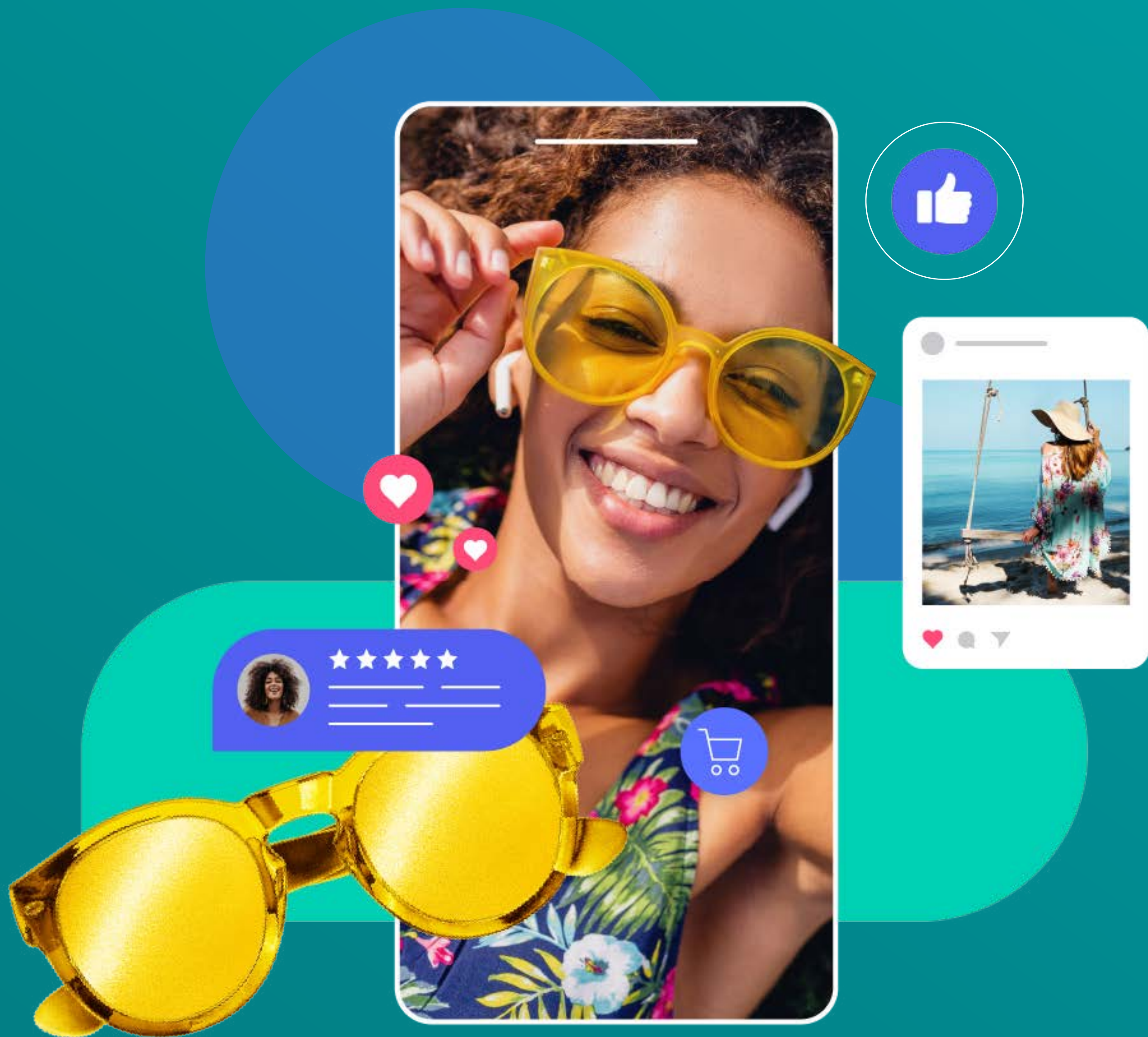
The answer to this customer demand? Visual user-generated content.

A website redesign presented a prime opportunity for DSW to improve the customer experience by placing shoppers' content at the center of its digital strategy. DSW implemented Bazaarvoice's visual content solution to collect and display user-generated images from various social platforms on its homepage, product pages, and brand-level pages. DSW shoppers can now browse 'how-to-wear' inspirations showcasing products in the real world.

Within six months of launch, most DSW site visitors were engaging with the visual content. And the shoppers who did were more than twice as likely to purchase than those who did not. Bonus—they also spent substantially more money per order.

2

Level up your social commerce strategy



Consumers are quickly and dramatically shifting how they discover, research, and purchase products. In 2020, social commerce sales topped \$27 billion and are projected to grow to \$80 billion by 2025 (almost 200% growth in five years).

Your social media channels and the content you bring to your brand sites (and other experiences) are increasingly important to selling your core products.

\$27B

**social commerce sales
in 2020**

\$80B

**projected social commerce
sales in 2025**

This social content plays a role throughout the many stages consumers move through as they make purchase decisions:

- **Show me** the product features. Highlighting features such as sizing and fit allow product photos and videos to shine.
- **Convince me** this is the right product for me. Show customers your products in context from other people like them.
- **Inspire me.** Ever heard of the hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt? Social media content can inspire shoppers to buy your products.

How can you collect more quality content for your core products to show, convince and inspire your customers to buy?

Start by empowering and incentivizing your existing community—then expand your community by diversifying your influencer strategy.

Empower and incentivize your existing community


Make the most of the assets you already have at your disposal, including your existing community of brand enthusiasts. Here are a few best practices for empowering and inspiring your community to generate content that will help sell your core products.

1. Don't assume customers know what to create


Chances are, you have existing customers who love your brand and would happily spread the word. But they may need some guidance on what to do. 50% of consumers indicate they want a brand to tell them what type of content to create. Unfortunately, only 16% of brands have a system to initiate and manage user-generated content.

Activating your community starts with clear inspiration on exactly how they can show off your brand.

Retailer Mark & Graham provides a perfect example. Its user-generated content gallery provides clear, simple, and achievable instructions on how to get featured: use natural lighting, ensure the photo is focused, and make your Mark & Graham product the star of the image.




tips and tricks to be featured
ON MARKANDGRAHAM.COM



1. NATURAL LIGHTING

Good lighting makes a great photo! If you are inside, be sure to get close to a natural light source such as a window. If you are taking your photo outside, remember that the light is most flattering around dawn and dusk.



2. GET FOCUSED

Make sure you tap the screen of your smartphone to focus in on your subject before you take the picture. Keeping a steady hand or resting your phone on a stable surface will help make sure your photo isn't blurry.

2. Empower customers to submit content across multiple channels

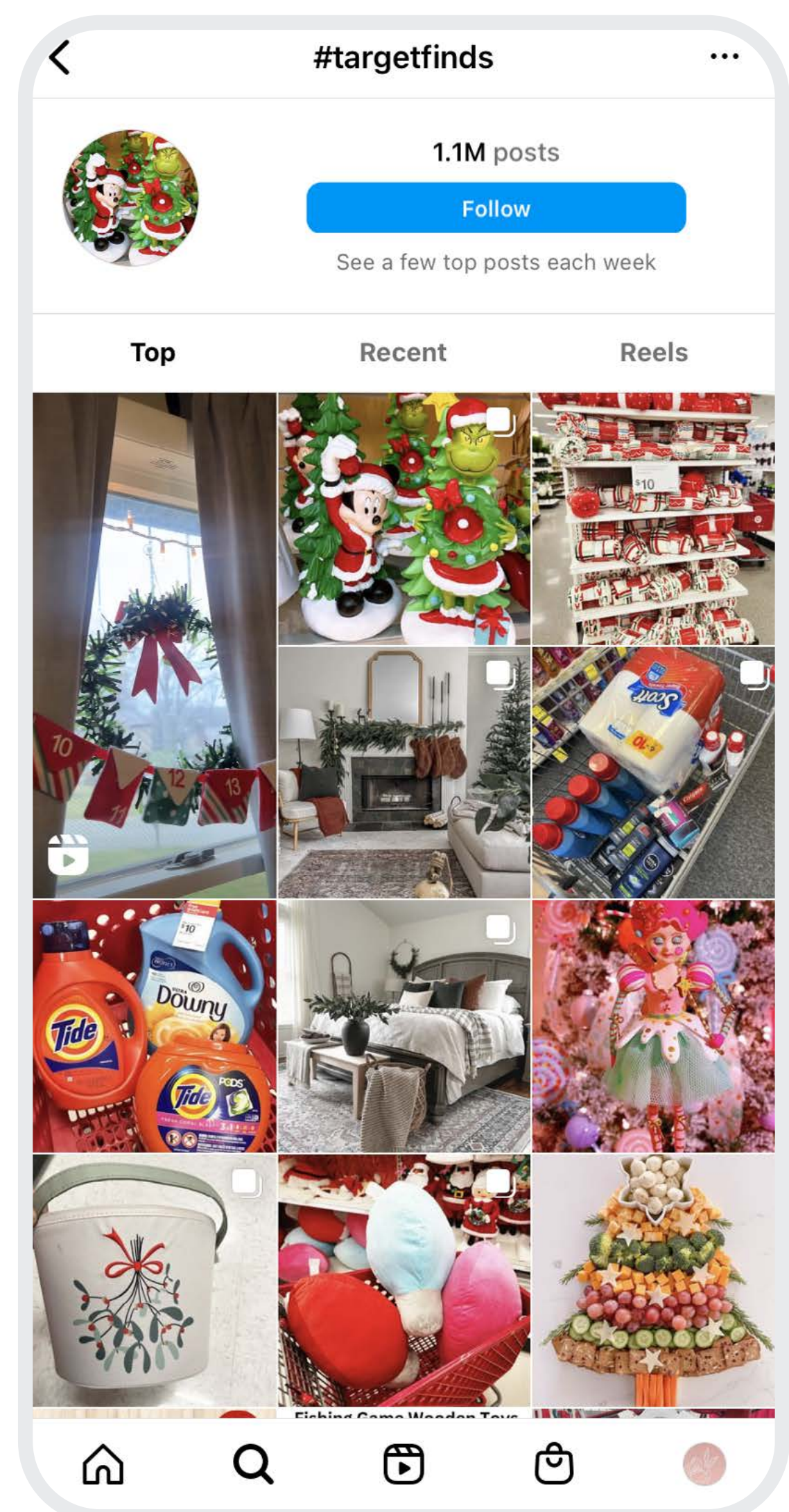
Another way to make it simple for your consumers to post content featuring your core products is to allow them to post—wherever they want. Depending on your audience, this could be Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, or Snapchat. Be present on the social platforms your customers are most active on.

Sometimes this means allowing them to submit content outside of social media entirely. Mark & Graham, for example, diversifies its tactics and enables consumers to submit images directly to its site.

3. Lean into TikTok

TikTok may not be for every brand—but it's for a lot more of them than you might think. TikTok has 1 billion monthly active users and is still growing. And while we know Gen Z and young millennials love TikTok, they aren't the only age group on the platform. As of April 2022, 24% of users were at least 35 years old.

Cosmetic brand e.l.f. has done a fantastic job leveraging TikTok for social commerce. In 2019, e.l.f. became the first brand to create a custom song for a TikTok challenge, Eyes Lips Face. The challenge resulted in 5 million user-generated videos.



4. Fuel always-on content campaigns with an evergreen hashtag

It doesn't matter that shoppers post content for your brand if you don't know where to find it. Enter the evergreen hashtag—a hashtag your shoppers should be able to remember alongside your brand name (think #shotoniphone or #targetfinds).

When it comes to picking an evergreen hashtag:

- Make it something easy to remember
- Check the hashtag ahead of time to ensure it's untapped social real estate
- Share your hashtag with customers often (on packaging or in your social bios, for example)

Diversify your influencer strategy

Once you've activated your brand fans, you should be on your way to maximizing content creation from your existing community. But sometimes, your existing pool of consumers isn't enough for your content creation ambitions—so let's talk influencer strategy.

The best influencer strategies rely on several tiers of influence, especially micro-influencers, nano-influencers, and everyday consumers.

Engaging a range of shoppers is a great way to collect diverse content types and quality.

- Micro-influencers (10K-100K followers) tend to be best for creating more difficult content formats, like video. If you've grown your audience to this size, you've likely invested in the cameras, editing tools, and skill set needed to make this content shine.
- Nano-influencers (1K-5K followers) are up-and-coming influencers. They offer an economical way to drive high-quality visual content because they don't yet have the reach to command higher fees. Their niche, loyal audiences also generate high engagement rates.

- Everyday shoppers (fewer than 1K followers) typically don't produce content as polished as influencers but don't discount them as a source of social content. What these posters lack in ultra-crisp imagery, they make up for in authenticity. Never doubt the power of featuring real consumers on your social channels and experiences—it makes your brand relatable and shows consumers they have a voice as a part of your community.

3 key factors to consider when choosing an influencer

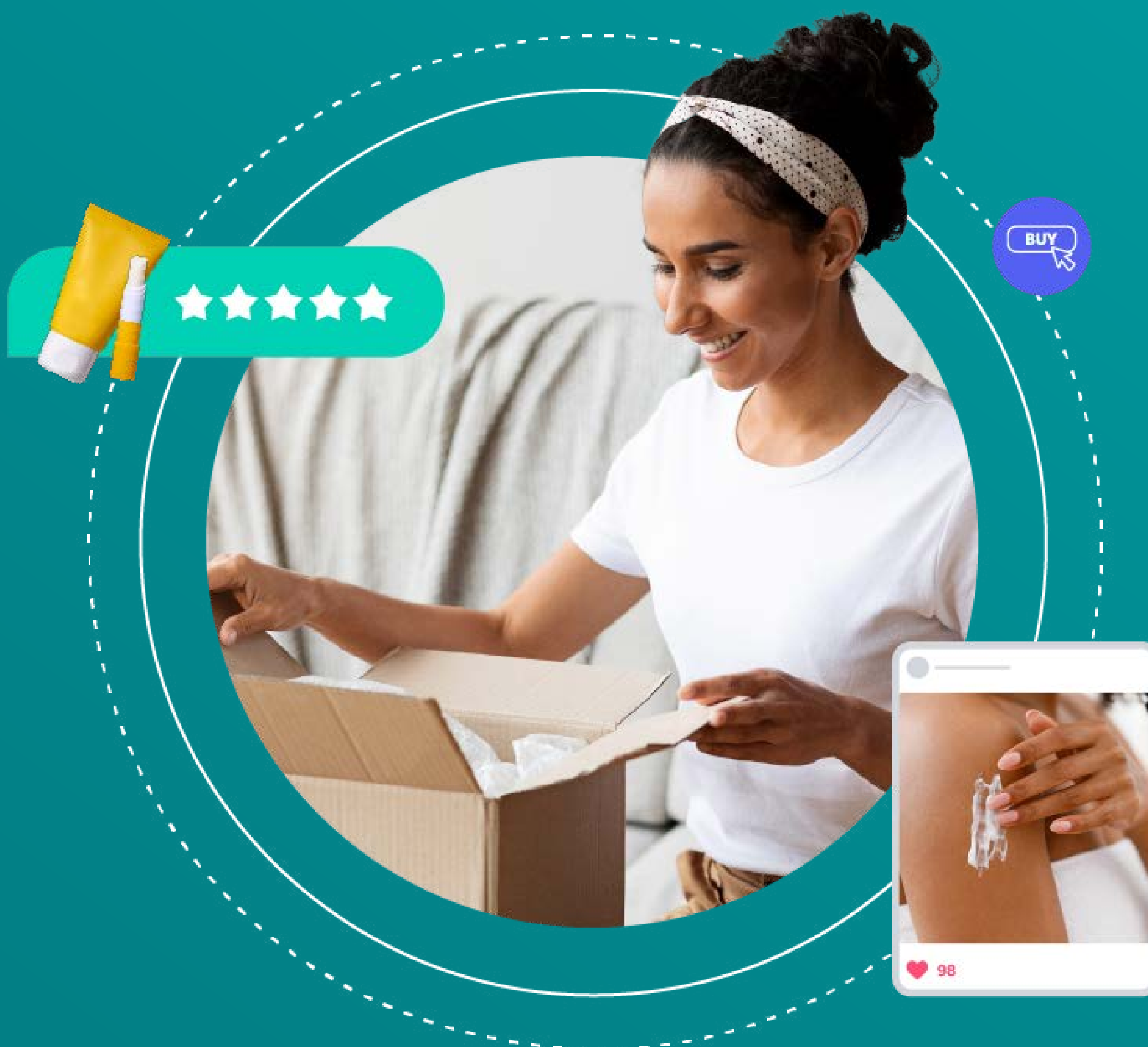
Diverse content allows you to engage with a broader audience, helps strengthen brand storytelling, and drives word of mouth on social media.

You'll need to hone in on influencers that best suit your products and audience. Finding influencers for your campaigns typically requires a tool to tap into an extensive network of product reviewers. Make sure to consider:

1. **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).
2. **Follower count.** Lower follower counts often mean more engagement. You'll likely find a sweet spot between ~1,000 and 25,000 followers.
3. **Niche.** Mommy bloggers will have a different effect than outdoor or technology enthusiasts.

3

Use product sampling to collect quality content at scale



You've optimized your hero product pages and empowered your communities. The next step is to get your hero product in your fans' hands through a sampling campaign and encourage them to create content.

Most brands recognize product sampling as a way to drive trial, but it can also be a key vehicle to drive the collection of user-generated content. Product sampling is one of the surest ways to **collect quality content at scale**—but not all sampling campaigns are equally effective.

When sampling to drive user-generated content:

- **Invest in a full-size product.** Your core products are hot sellers for a reason. Make sure your samplers can check out and show off full products and packaging in their images and videos rather than a sample size.
- **Deliver an Instagrammable unboxing experience.** The best campaigns send more than a sample—they send an experience. Consider boosting your unboxing experience using tactics like brand-forward box design, customized swag, and custom postcard inserts.
- **Provide an explicit request and instructions for delivering.** You want to ensure the consumer has clear expectations on what you're expecting in return for your product so they can opt in according to their preferences. After your product is delivered, provide clear next steps for the consumer.
- **Build a library of content for your core products.** Make sure to monitor the content your samplers create (remember that hashtag?) to engage consumers and repurpose the content for your social commerce strategy. After requesting permission, share this content widely across your experiences, including on your social media channels, product pages, and other content galleries.

Depending on the size of your organization, you may have different teams managing sampling activations, social media channels, and website content. Before your campaign launches, bring relevant stakeholders to the table to make the most of the program. Include your brand, social, ecommerce, and consumer insights team to maximize the impact of your program and build a robust library of content that will fuel social commerce for your hero products.

Sampling campaign planning calendar

If you want to push your hero product with authentic shopper content during the back-to-school season, you can't wait until July or August to start sampling. Your samplers need product in hand by June, so you'd have to book your campaign around April.

The same goes for all retail seasons and holidays—creating an effective sampling campaign requires some planning. Follow this calendar as a general rule of thumb.

Winter

	December	January	February
Holidays / events	New Year's Christmas Hanukkah	Back to school Chinese New Year New Year's resolutions	Spring season Valentine's Day
Receive your content	November	December	January
Design your campaign and get your products into your samplers hands	October	November	December
Book your Sampling campaign before	August	September	October

Spring

	March	April	May
Holidays / events	St. Patrick’s Day Mother’s Day (UK)	Easter World Environment Day April Fool’s Ramadan	Mother’s Day (NA) Memorial Day Cinco De Mayo

Receive your content	February	March	April
Design your campaign and get your products into your samplers hands	January	February	March
Book your Sampling campaign before	November	December	January

Summer

	June	July	August
Holidays / events	Summer season Father’s Day Pride Month Juneteenth	Black Friday in July Summer holiday	Back to school Family Fun Month

Receive your content	May	June	July
Design your campaign and get your products into your samplers hands	April	May	June
Book your Sampling campaign before	February	March	April

Fall

	September	October	November
Holidays / events	Fall season Labor Day	Halloween Diwali	Winter holidays Black Friday / Cyber Week Veterans Day / Remembrance Day

Receive your content	August	September	October
Design your campaign and get your products into your samplers hands	July	August	September
Book your Sampling campaign before	May	June	July

Petco's Spotted sampling program drives 48% revenue increase

Petco's Wholehearted and Reddy brands weren't generating the number of reviews Petco wanted, so they set out to increase awareness, SEO traffic, and conversions with user-generated content.

The pet care giant activated its Bazaarvoice team to develop the new Spotted Sampling Program, which kicked off in early 2021.

This sampling program puts products in the hands of Petco shoppers in exchange for honest reviews on Petco.com. While the sampling shipments mainly contain Petco's private label products, like food, treats, crates, kennels, bowls, and collars, national brands work with the Bazaarvoice team to get space in the Spotted boxes as well.

"Brand awareness for both national brands and private brands has been a huge part of why we like doing Spotted," said Logan Steele, from the e-commerce team at Petco.

There are also themed Spotted boxes around holidays, like Halloween, because seasonal products are only on the shelves for a short time. Sampling seasonal products allows brands like those owned by Petco to maximize sales during peak shopping seasons by having valuable UGC at the beginning of the season.



Being able to get the products into more reviewers' hands has given us higher quality reviews with images for new products... We've really seen a positive impact on visits, conversions, and improving the discoverability of new products.

Hannah Kredich | Category Specialist, Petco

Spotted has been extremely successful in generating fresh, new reviews for products, with results like:

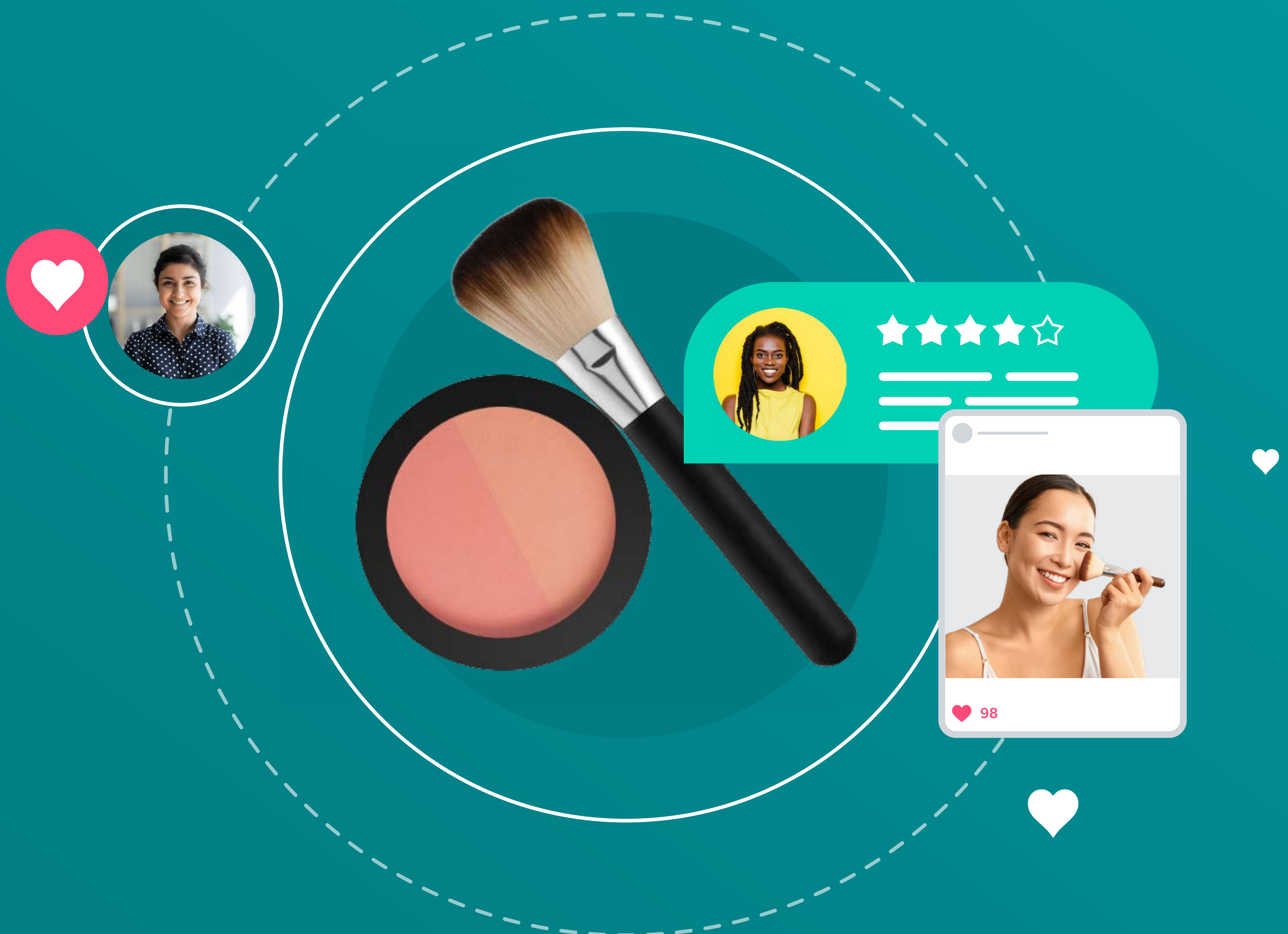
- 90%+ response rate for reviews
- 405% lift in review volume
- 9% lift in average ratings
- 48% increase in revenue per visit for sampled products



Along with Ratings & Reviews, Questions & Answers, Galleries, and Syndication, the Spotted Sampling Program completes a full-funnel user-generated content solution for Petco. The program generates better reviews and images that can be used in galleries across category pages and social media.

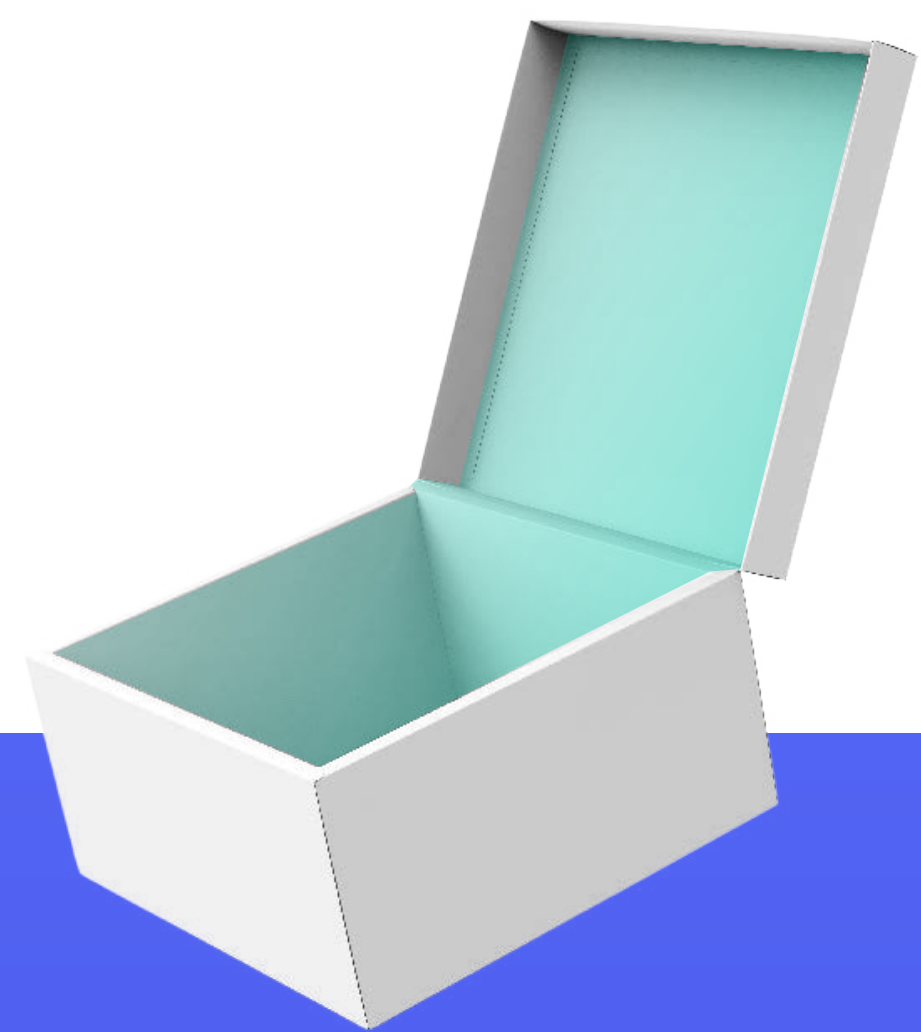
Bazaarvoice's sampling community is your content engine

In times of economic uncertainty, your marketing strategy matters more than ever. To encourage consumers to buy, focus on the products they love most—your core hero products—and create fresh, engaging, content-rich experiences for each.



Key takeaways

- Optimize your hero product's landing page for search and experience to help shoppers find your product and increase their purchase likelihood. Make sure to provide shoppers with all the information they need to make confident purchase decisions.
- Drive social commerce by empowering your existing fans and diversifying your influencers. Make it easy for all these shoppers to create and share content for all stages of the buyer's journey.
- Scale high-quality, user-generated content with a sampling program.



Bazaarvoice Sampling

Ready to kickstart growth for your hero products? Access our community of more than 8 million shoppers and collect the targeted, high-quality content you need to inspire your customers—and drive conversions.

[Learn more](#)