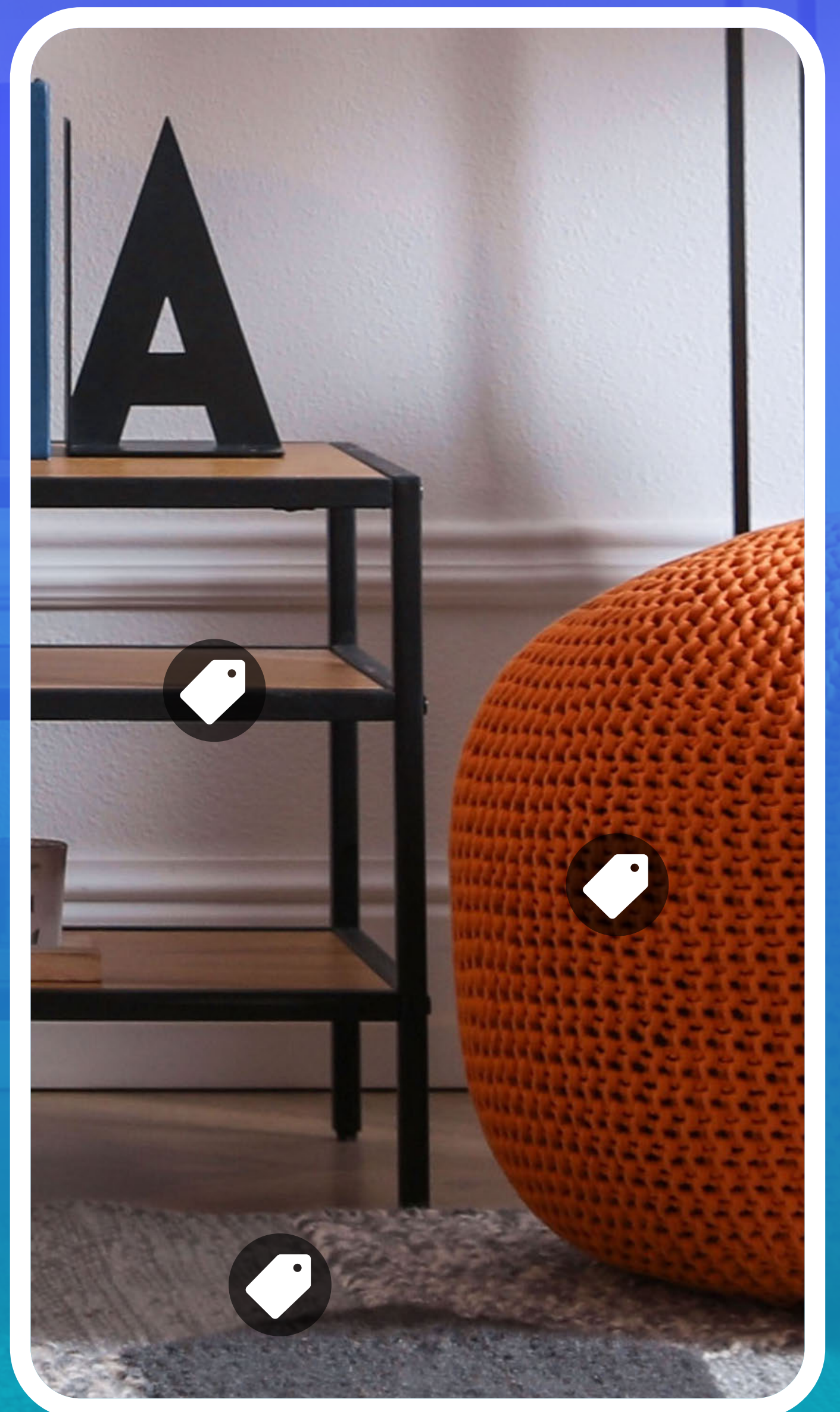


A practical guide for social media professionals to drive commerce

How to turn social content into shoppable experiences that drive sales – wherever shoppers are.



bazaarvoice™



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Introduction

It's highly likely that at some point you've been in the market for a new product but didn't know which one to choose. You probably looked at multiple options and searched on Google, retailer sites, or on social media. And then you delved into customer reviews or even asked your friends and family for recommendations. We often rely on this kind of social proof and trust for opinions of others on what to buy.

It's clear that word-of-mouth marketing is valuable. In today's age of social media and ratings and reviews, we don't even need to know someone personally to put stock in their opinion. Product pages are packed with this user-generated content (UGC). A scroll through social media can uncover a new product and inspire us to make a purchase, even for something we didn't know we wanted.

This persuasive and inspiring content is often featured on product pages and social storefronts. Why? Because nearly 80% of people say shopper content from social media highly impacts their buying decisions², and shoppers are 6x more likely to purchase an item if the product page contains photos from social media.

When international clothing brand River Island wanted to captivate its audience, motivate them to shop, and, of course, boost sales, it turned to UGC. Adding customer photos on social, product pages, and on-site galleries led to a 184% conversion rate lift and a 45% increase in average order value⁴.

184%

River Island conversion rate

45%

River Island average order value lift

As a social media professional, you know that to stand out at retail you need to extend the reach of your most influential social content to improve conversion and drive more purchases. There's no better way to do this than by collecting inspiring UGC from your own customers and redistributing it on your social media and product pages.

This comprehensive guide will teach you how to do just that.

Why user-generated content is essential to your brand's social strategy

First of all, what do we mean by user-generated content? [UGC](#) is any type of content created and shared by real customers. It's modern-day word-of-mouth marketing that can take the form of a product review, a selfie, a video of a consumer using a product, and so much more.

Sharing this content from your communities is central to e-commerce success — and here's why.

Shopping today is easy with always-on digital marketing and e-commerce offerings. Selling and buying are no longer confined by store hours or agents' availability to take calls. And with the rise of the \$1 trillion social commerce industry⁵, the voice of the customer is returning in full force, creating a different and radically transparent commerce environment.

We call it the ***New Connected Bazaar***.

In this new connected marketplace, personal human connections and communications are back (see you later, mass marketing!). Channels are blended and commerce is everywhere. It's where authenticity is practiced and shoppers have lots to say. Brands must now engage with real voices in real terms, in real-time, in a consumer-to-consumer world.

So, what works in this New Connected Bazaar? Content from fellow shoppers. Over a third (36%) of the 8,000+ shoppers surveyed in our [2022 Bazaarvoice Shopper Experience Index](#) said “brand advertisement” does nothing for them when it comes to making a purchase decision. Unsurprisingly, 83% of those shoppers trust organic posts from influencers more than brand posts⁶.

Shoppers want to buy from other shoppers because peer recommendations, photos, and videos are viewed as more authentic and trustworthy than traditional advertising — which makes UGC much more effective.

Plus, shoppers are actively seeking out content from other shoppers — like reviews. Nearly a third (29%) of shoppers turn to social platforms to research products⁷, and 78% of people say product reviews from other customers are most influential to their purchase decisions⁶.

Reviews are an essential type of social proof for modern consumers, which is why Bazaarvoice sends VoxBoxes — curated collections of free, full-sized products — to everyday, engaged consumers in exchange for honest reviews, photos, and social media posts. It’s an effective way to get products into the hands of everyday influencers and collect social proof that’ll inspire shoppers to click “buy.”

UGC is especially important for e-commerce brands because online shoppers can’t compare products firsthand like they would in stores. In a brick-and-mortar store, you can pick up two different jackets, compare their look, feel, and quality, and even try them on to see which one fits best. Online, though, you must rely on others’ reviews and the product photos.

The latter is especially important, with 74% reporting that shopper photos increase their likelihood of making a purchase. Over half (50%) of consumers say these shopper photos make them more confident in a purchase than a brand’s professional photos⁶.



#MyModCloth

For a chance to be featured, share your favorite ModCloth outfit photos on Instagram and mention @ModCloth with the tag #MyModCloth.



That's why online retailer ModCloth not only features customer reviews on its product pages but also photos of actual customers wearing the items. This enables customers to buy the right product the first time, [reducing your return rates](#). (This helps your bottom line — e-commerce returns can cost your business billions of dollars yearly⁸.)

Lifestyle brand Oliver Bonas also relies on shopper content from social to give its customers a clearer picture of its offerings.

"This content works as a 'visual review,' allowing customers a better idea of how products look by showing how they're used or styled in a real-life setting or on a real person," said Alice Lewin-Smith, the brand's digital marketing manager.

The addition of UGC to Oliver Bonas' homepage, product pages, and marketing resulted in a 176% increase in time on site, a 188% lift in conversions, and a 26% boost in average order value⁹.

Clearly, your brand needs authentic shopper content.

Bazaarvoice's Ratings & Reviews tool helps you collect and manage this valuable content. It ensures that your most compelling UGC is displayed so that shoppers discover the products they want and click "add to cart." It also helps grow your brand's presence because review content helps product pages rank higher in search results. Just ask Total Wine, which used the feature and experienced an 80% year-over-year increase in organic traffic to its product pages¹⁰.

Social commerce is a key component to scaling your brand

Social commerce sales in the U.S. alone were estimated to be nearly \$52 billion in 2022 and are expected to reach \$145 billion by 2028¹⁷. As McKinsey reports, “social commerce is already too big for U.S. brands to ignore.” Thanks to this significant growth in shopping via UGC, jumping on board gives you the opportunity to supercharge your commerce engine.

And we’re not just talking about the ability to purchase a product within the native social media experience (like shoppable Instagram). Social commerce is actually much more than that.

Social commerce extends to anywhere that social content has influence — which means just about everywhere in this New Connected Bazaar.

So when UGC from social is featured on-site, on a product page, or in retargeting ads, for example, this is social commerce. And it can play a role at various steps of the customer journey.

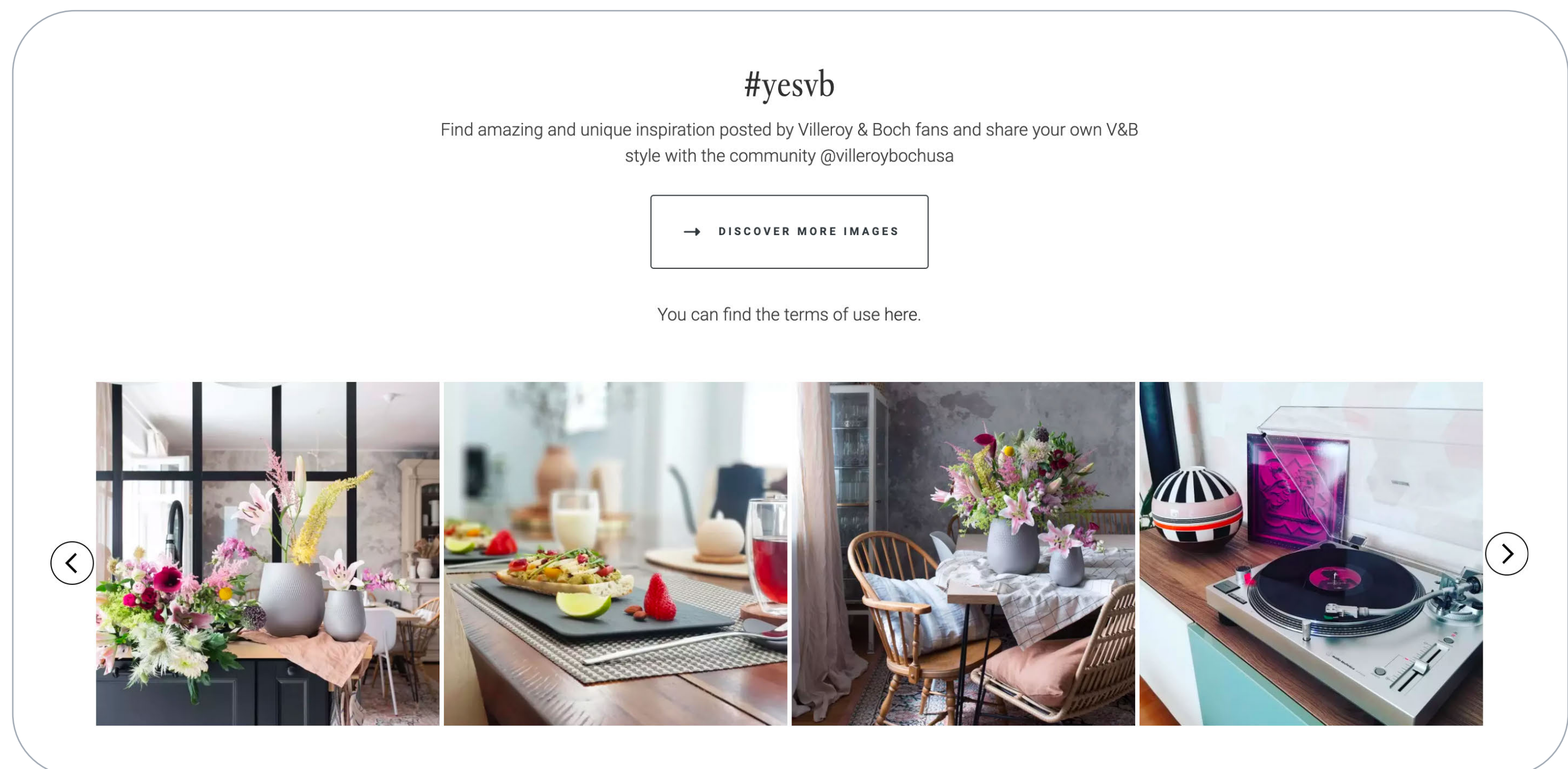
\$51.8B
Social commerce
sales value¹⁷

4.4%
Social commerce
share of online
retail sales³⁴

Facebook
is the main social
network used to
make purchases³⁵

A consumer may discover a product in a user-submitted photo on a brand's Instagram and later buy the item on-site or even in-store. Or, a customer may browse shopper-created looks featured in a brand's on-site shoppable gallery, like the one on Villeroy & Boch's website.

This kind of shopper content captures shoppers' attention and drives sales by giving consumers exactly what they crave: radically transparent imagery of real people using the product.



UGC is key to social commerce because it's authentic, trustworthy content made by actual product users, fans, and influencers — which makes it more likely to engage and convert shoppers.

For example, brand sites that incorporate visual UGC (e.g. photos or videos) see a 275% increase in time on site¹⁸. Product pages with visual shopper content see nearly a 1.5x lift in conversion rate (144%)⁶, as well as a 14% increase in average order value¹⁸. And when product pages incorporate social media content alongside ratings and reviews, that conversion lift jumps to 200%¹⁹.

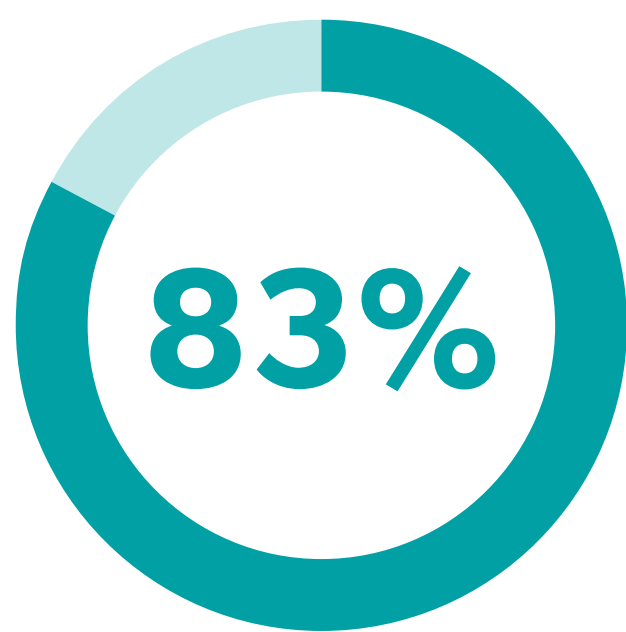
Let's take a look at Villeroy & Boch again. Since adding that UGC gallery to their website (and beyond), the brand has experienced a massive 275% increase in conversion rate and a 29% increase in average order value²⁰.

In fact, when brands take advantage of Bazaarvoice's Galleries tool and customers interact with that content, brands see conversion rates grow by nearly 170%²¹.

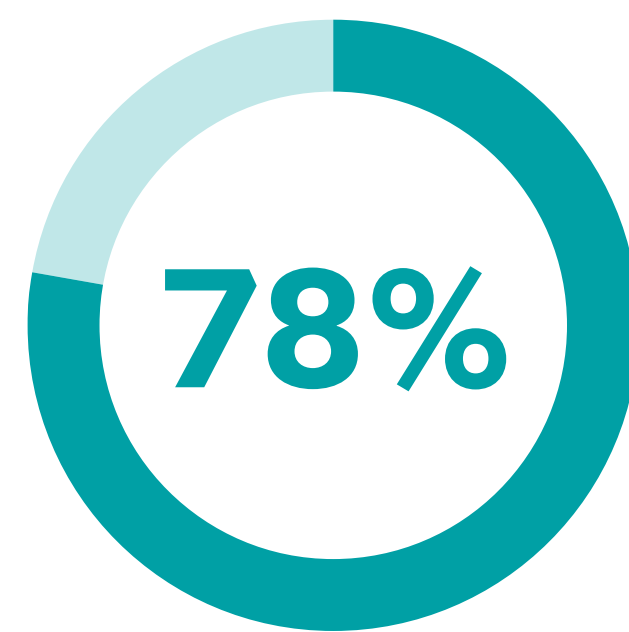
Shopper content also drives organic product discovery. Brands and products are becoming an increasingly important part of the social experience. 90% of Instagram users follow at least one brand on the social network²², and 90% of people buy from the brands they follow online²³.

With so many people inviting brands into their feeds, it's no surprise that product discovery has skyrocketed on social media.

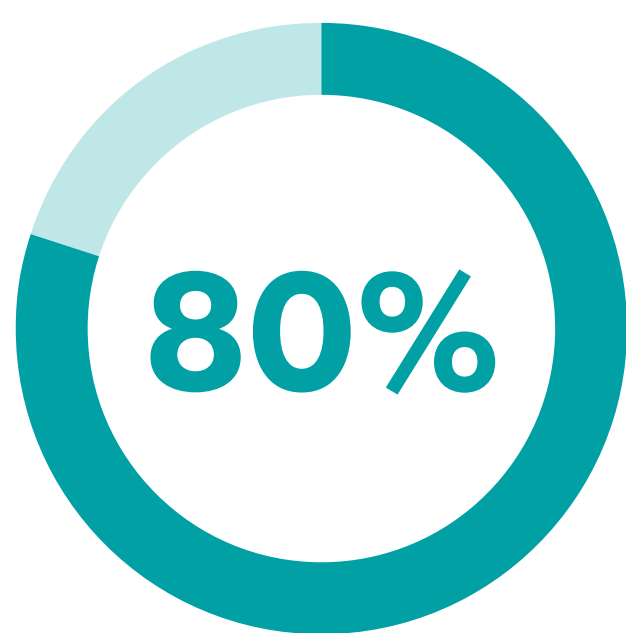
Just take a look at the numbers:



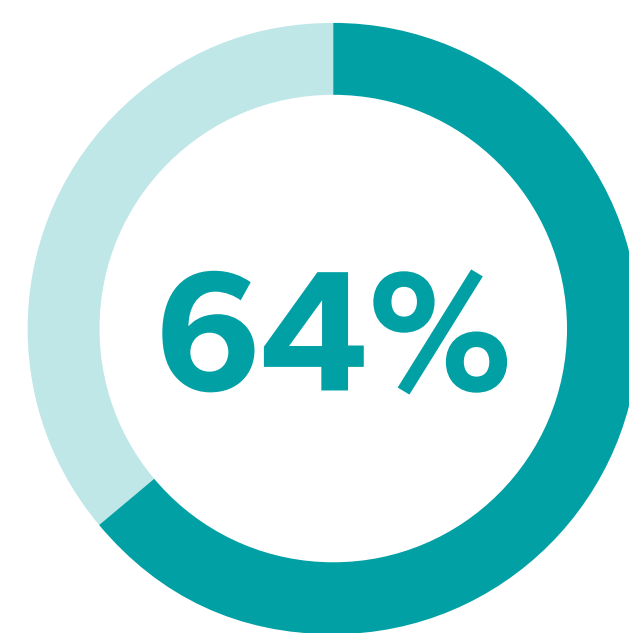
**of Instagram users say
they discover new
products on the network²⁴**



**of consumers have discovered
products on Facebook²⁶**



**of weekly Pinterest users have
discovered a new brand or
product on the platform²⁵**



**want to see visual and social
shopper content shared on
social media²⁷**

How to source shopper content and put it to work for your brand

Gather all the UGC you need — and that valuable social proof — by cultivating an online community that inspires people to do more than just click “follow.” Here’s how.

Use branded hashtags

Not only do hashtags increase social media engagement and brand awareness, but they also establish another way for consumers to tag your business on social, making them a great way to source UGC.

Furniture and décor brand Urban Barn encourages customers to post images of its product using the hashtag #rightathome — and it works. To date, there’s nearly 45,000 instances of the hashtag on Instagram alone. The team identifies the most on-brand content and showcases it in galleries on their website.

“Customer images show the diverse styles of interiors and different angles of the products that are not often captured by our in-house photographers,” said Ainslie Fincham, Director of Marketing at Urban Barn. #Winning

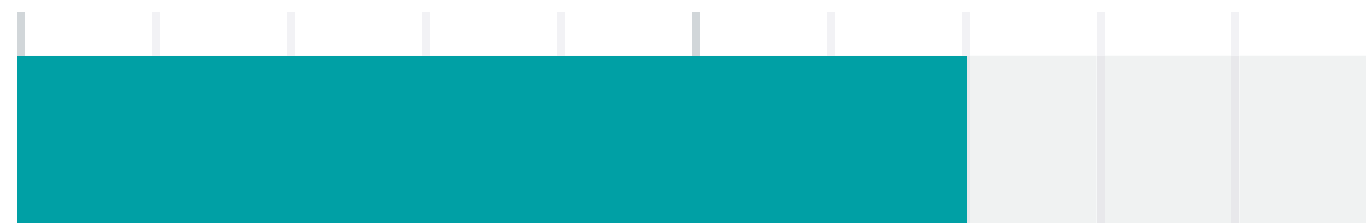
Engage with shoppers on user-generated posts

People want to interact with brands that engage with them, so regularly like and comment on customers’ posts.

Almost half of shoppers say they’re more likely to buy when they see a brand or retailer respond to reviews, and 41% of consumers view brands that respond to customers’ questions and complaints more positively¹¹. Plus, brands that respond to customers experience an incredible 98% average conversion lift. You can see this in action with cybersecurity company Webroot, which stands out from its competitors — and, in the process, strengthened its brand equity — by responding to 70% of its reviews¹².



98% is the average conversion lift for brands that respond to customers



70% Webroot strengthened its brand equity by responding to 70% of its reviews¹⁵

Reshare content

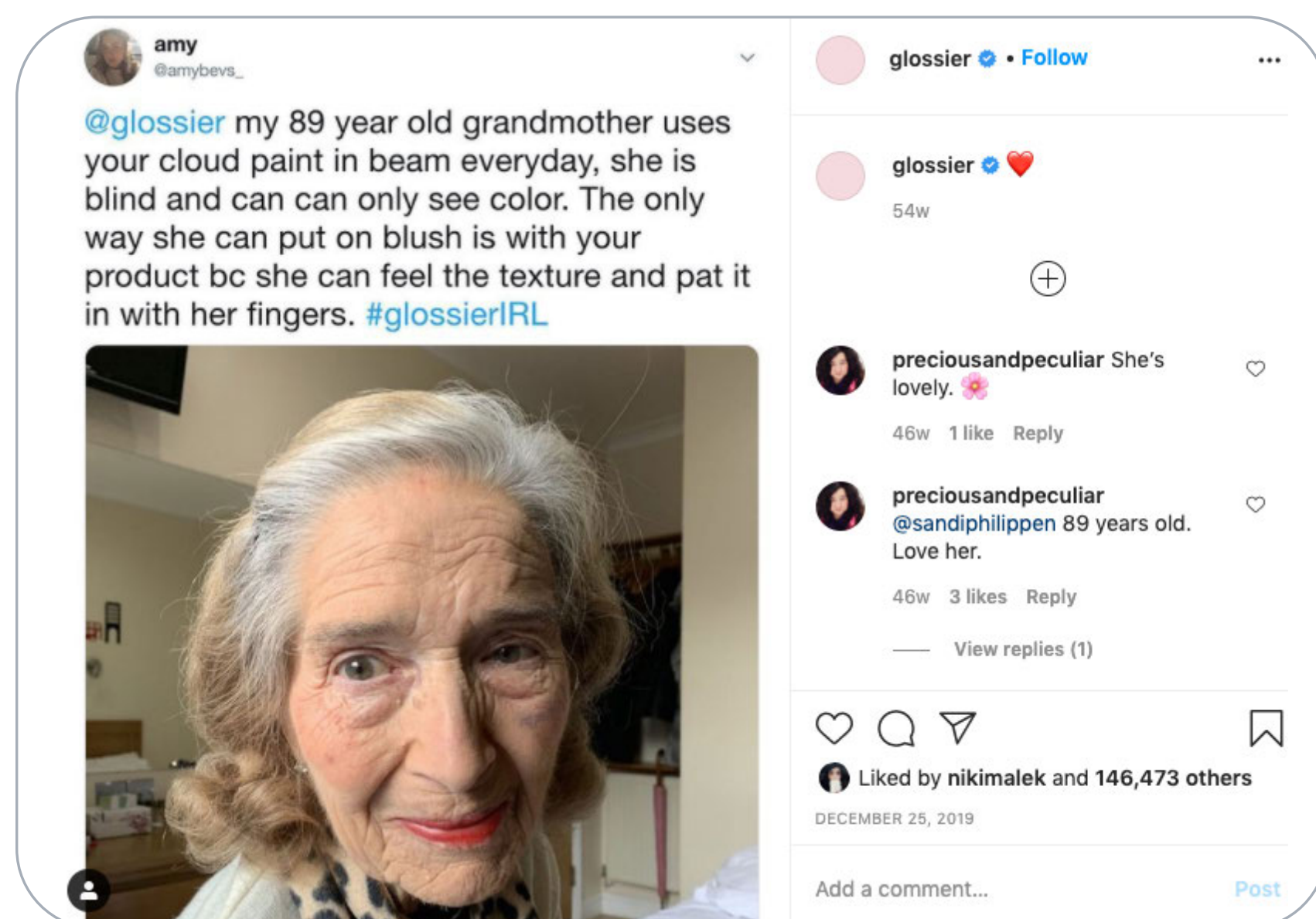
Show support for your fans and do a little product promotion in the process by posting UGC on your brand's social accounts. No one does this better than beauty brand Glossier, which shares users' selfies, stories, product reviews, and more across its social channels.

In fact, Glossier credits its customers' authentic content with helping it build a billion-dollar brand.

UGC has the power to touch us emotionally in a way a brand couldn't do on its own. Intangible, yet powerful stuff when looking to get closer to customers.

Plus, when you share shopper content, it'll inspire customers to create great social content of their own for a chance to get featured on your page.

Bazaarvoice makes it a cinch for your brand to respond to customer reviews — and drive revenue — with its Questions & Answers and Connections tools. The user-friendly portal allows you to quickly and easily answer customer questions across more than 1,750 retail sites, and you can even display your logo with each response, increasing your brand's presence online.



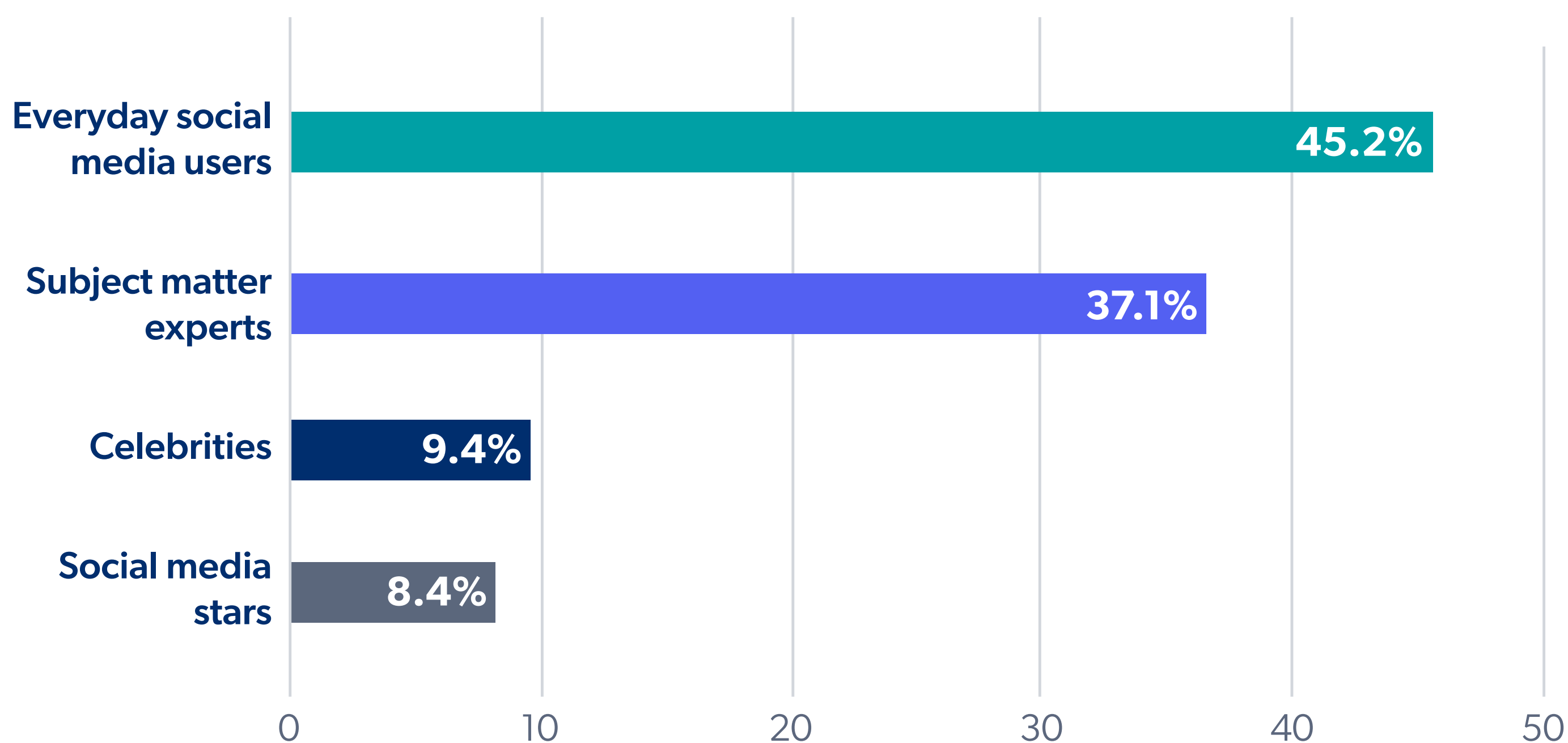
Partner with content creators to generate content

There's a reason why the influencer market is valued at about \$16.4 billion¹³. It works.

But 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 — its inauthenticity can rub people the wrong way.

So, who *do* shoppers want to hear from? We surveyed over 9,000 shoppers to find out¹⁴.

While celebrities and social media stars once held significant sway over consumer purchasing, shoppers are now most likely to make a purchase based on recommendations from:

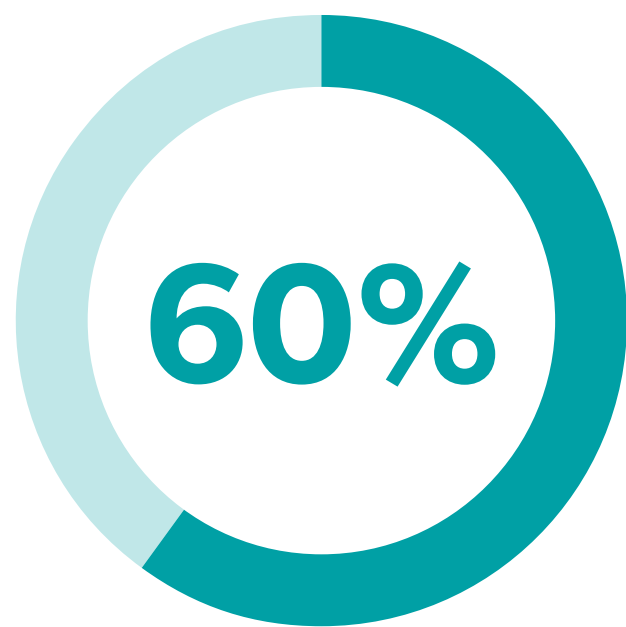


That's good news — it means you don't need a celebrity or a massive budget to engage in influencer marketing.

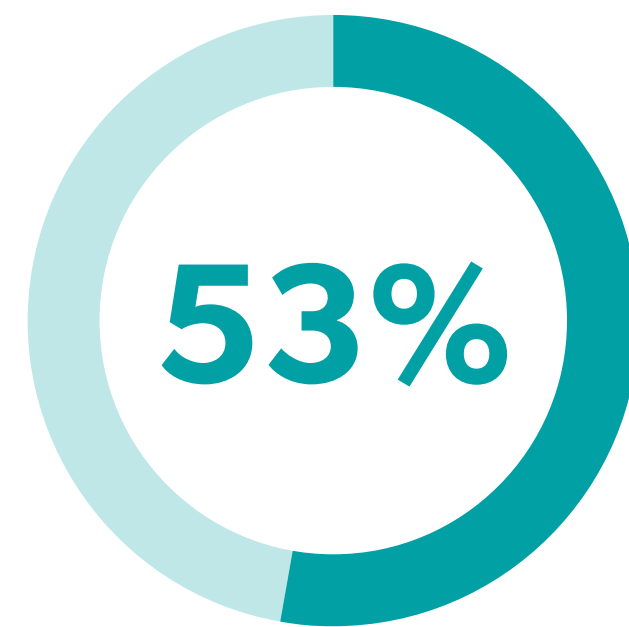
It's better to identify and engage people like your customers, with a genuine passion and fit for your brand's product category or ethos. Micro-influencers, those with 1,000 to 100,000 followers, are ideal for this. They get higher engagement rates and more conversions, and they enable your brand to tap into niche markets. Because they're experts in specific subjects, such as beauty or travel, they've amassed a highly engaged audience that trusts their recommendations.

Ask for shopper content

You've got a social following of people who love your brand and want to engage with it, so give them the opportunity to do so by asking for the kind of social content you want to see and share. But make sure to be specific. Activating your community starts with clear inspiration on exactly how they can show off your brand.

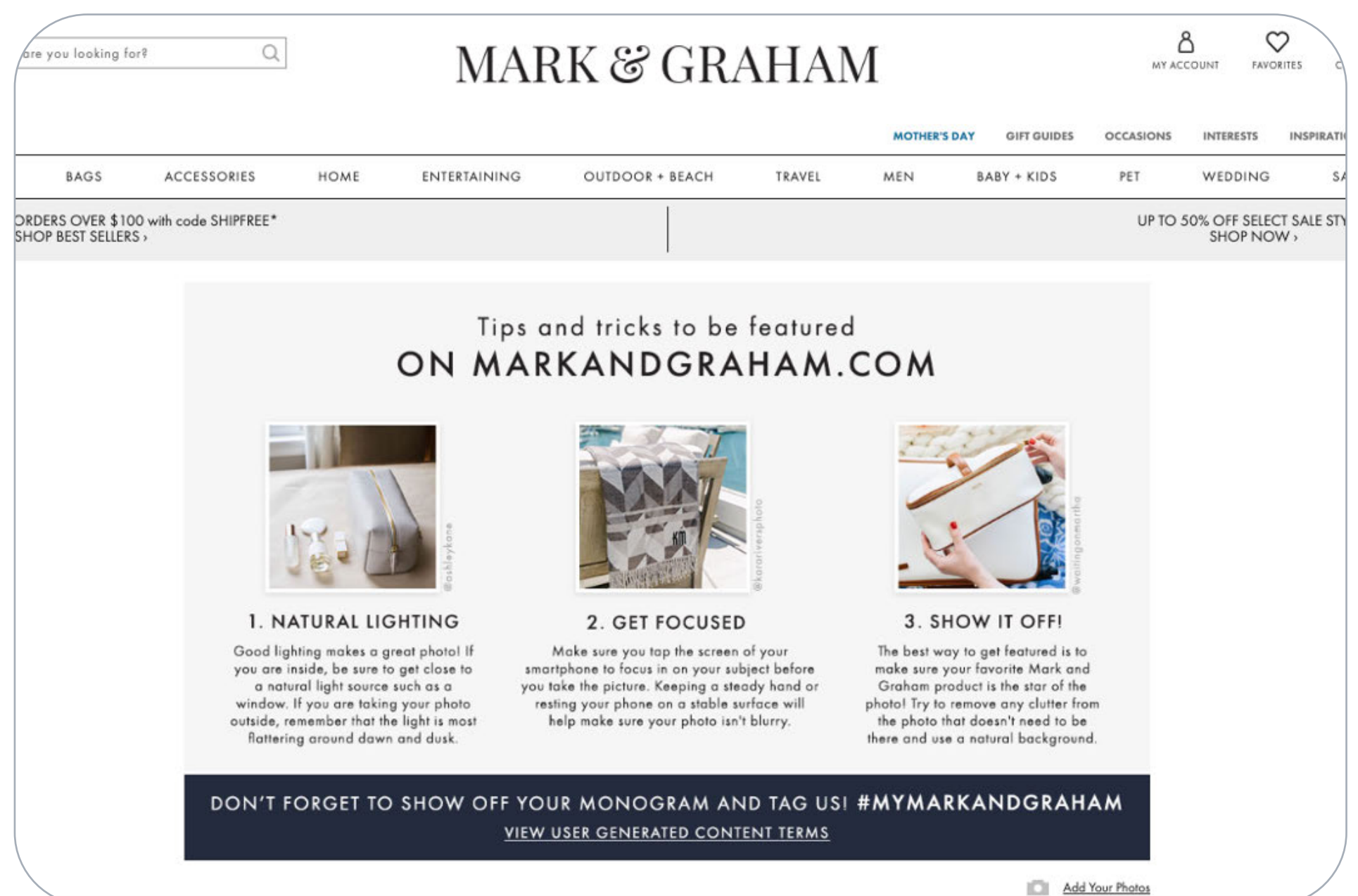


**of people will take a picture
if you ask them¹⁵**



**of consumers want brands to
tell them exactly what kind of
content they're looking for¹⁶**

Retailer Mark & Graham provides a perfect example. Their UGC 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.



Consider a product sampling program

Whether you're introducing a new product or relaunching one, running a product sampling campaign is a proven way to get the word out about the product and generate authentic customer content — from photos and videos to ratings and reviews.

For example, when L'Oreal brand Redken launched a sampling campaign to generate buzz for a haircare product, the brand received³³:

7.7M
impressions

1,700
product reviews

84,000
posts, shares,
and likes

\$567,000
estimated earned
media value

The key to an effective sampling program is to get your brand's products into the right hands. Bazaarvoice makes this easy. Its unparalleled targeting capabilities and its more than **7M+ Influencer community members** ensure that your products are distributed to engaged consumers who deliver quality reviews, inspiring visuals, and social buzz.

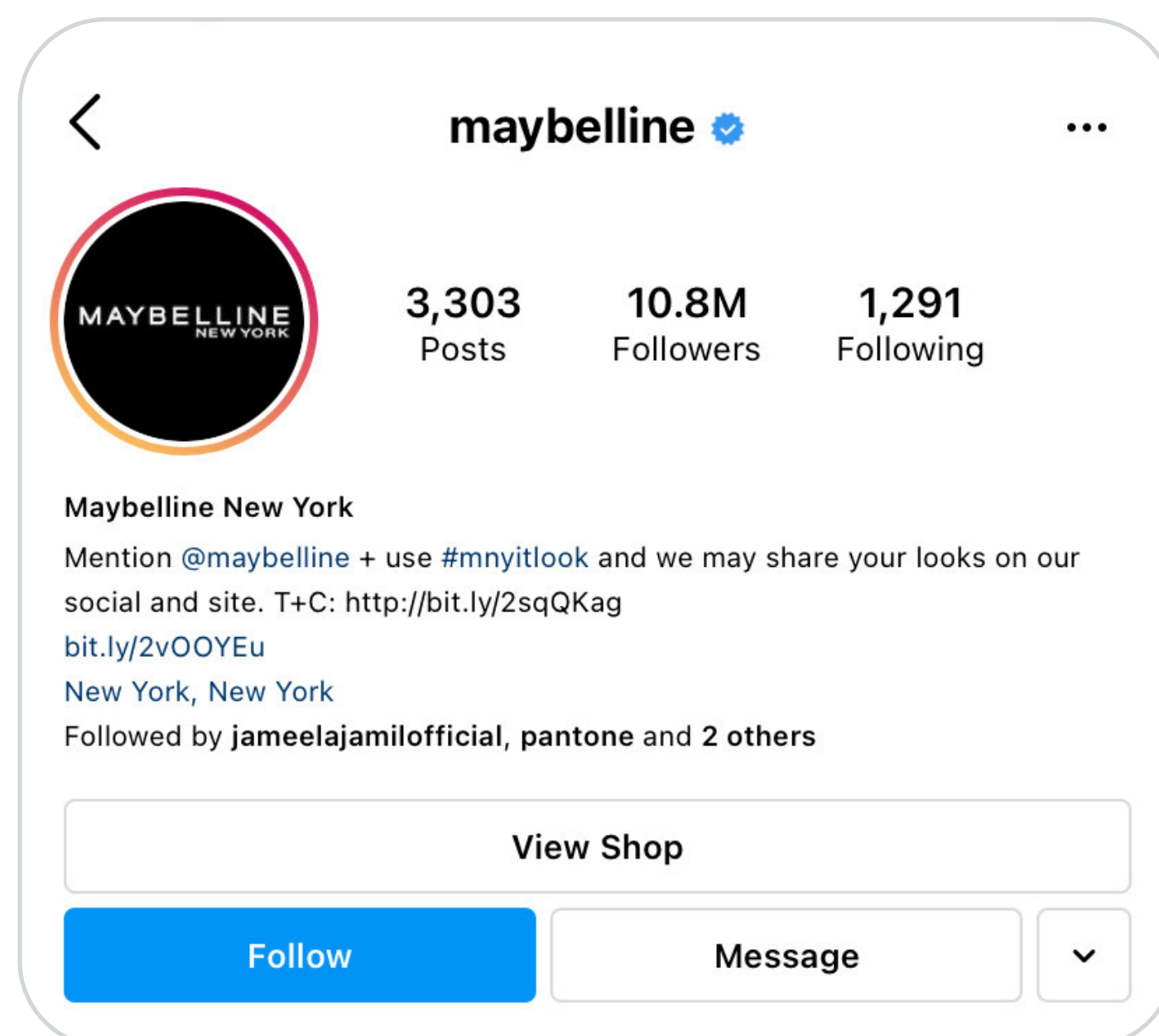
Make the most out of each social channel

Use platform-specific sourcing tactics

Your customers are already posting about your brand on social media, but to get captivating shopper content, you need to know where to look for it and how to inspire it on each platform.

Instagram

Feature your branded hashtag in your bio, and direct fans to use it for a chance to be featured like Maybelline does.



Look at tagged photos and mentions

See what shopper content already exists about your brand by checking out the content you're tagged or mentioned in.

Host a hashtag contest

Ask participants to share content on social media with a specific hashtag as an entry into your contest. Not only does this flood social with marketing for your products, but it also allows you to collect a wealth of UGC.

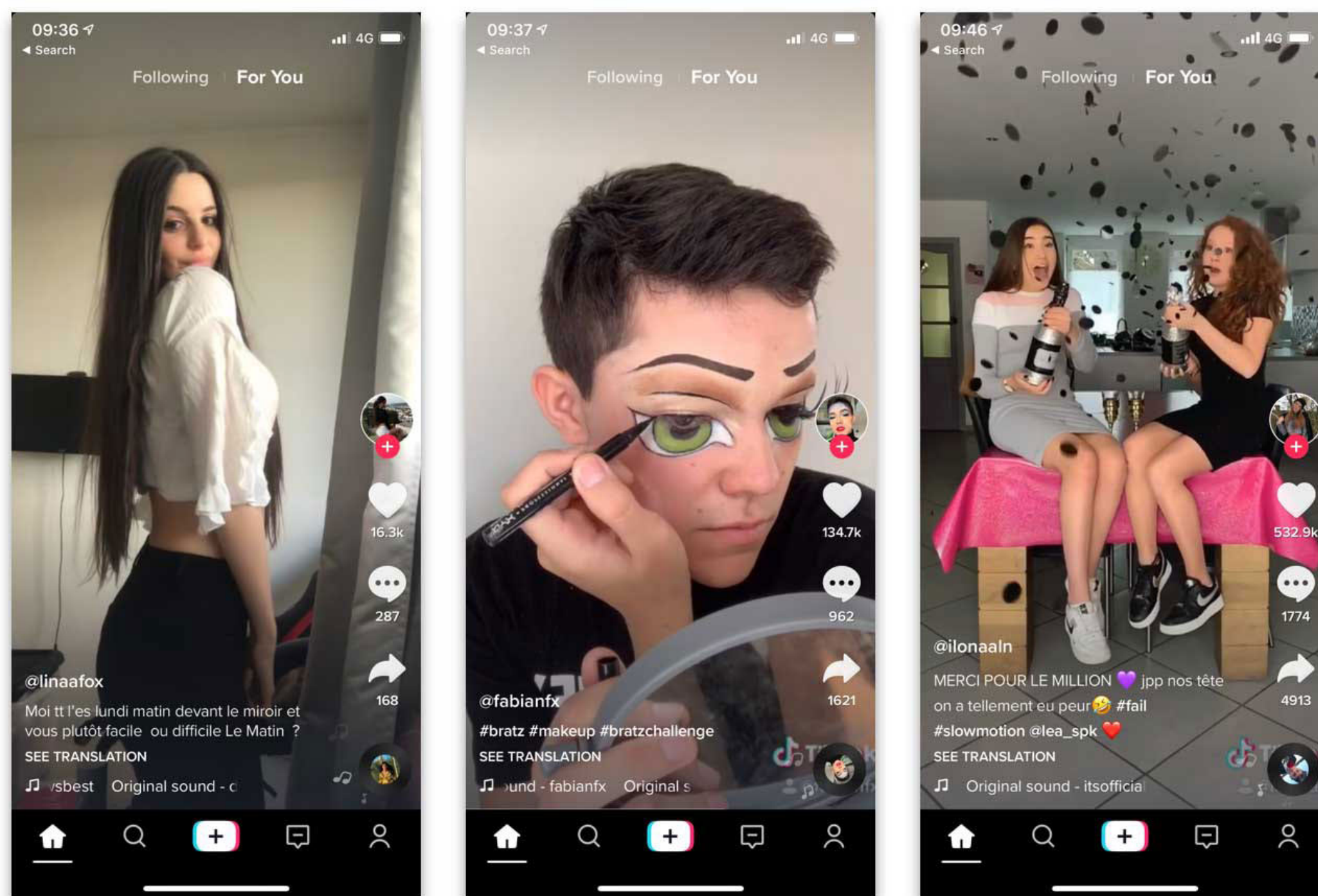
Reshare UGC in posts and stories

People are more likely to create content about your brand and share it when they know there's a possibility that you might feature their creations on your account.

Source and organize existing shopper content

Bazaarvoice makes it easy to find and categorize shopper content from social. And the process of getting permission to use that killer content is fast and simple when you make bulk rights requests.

TikTok



Identify trends

Trends are central to TikTok, so take a look at what's currently popular and brainstorm ways your brand can jump on board and start inspiring users.

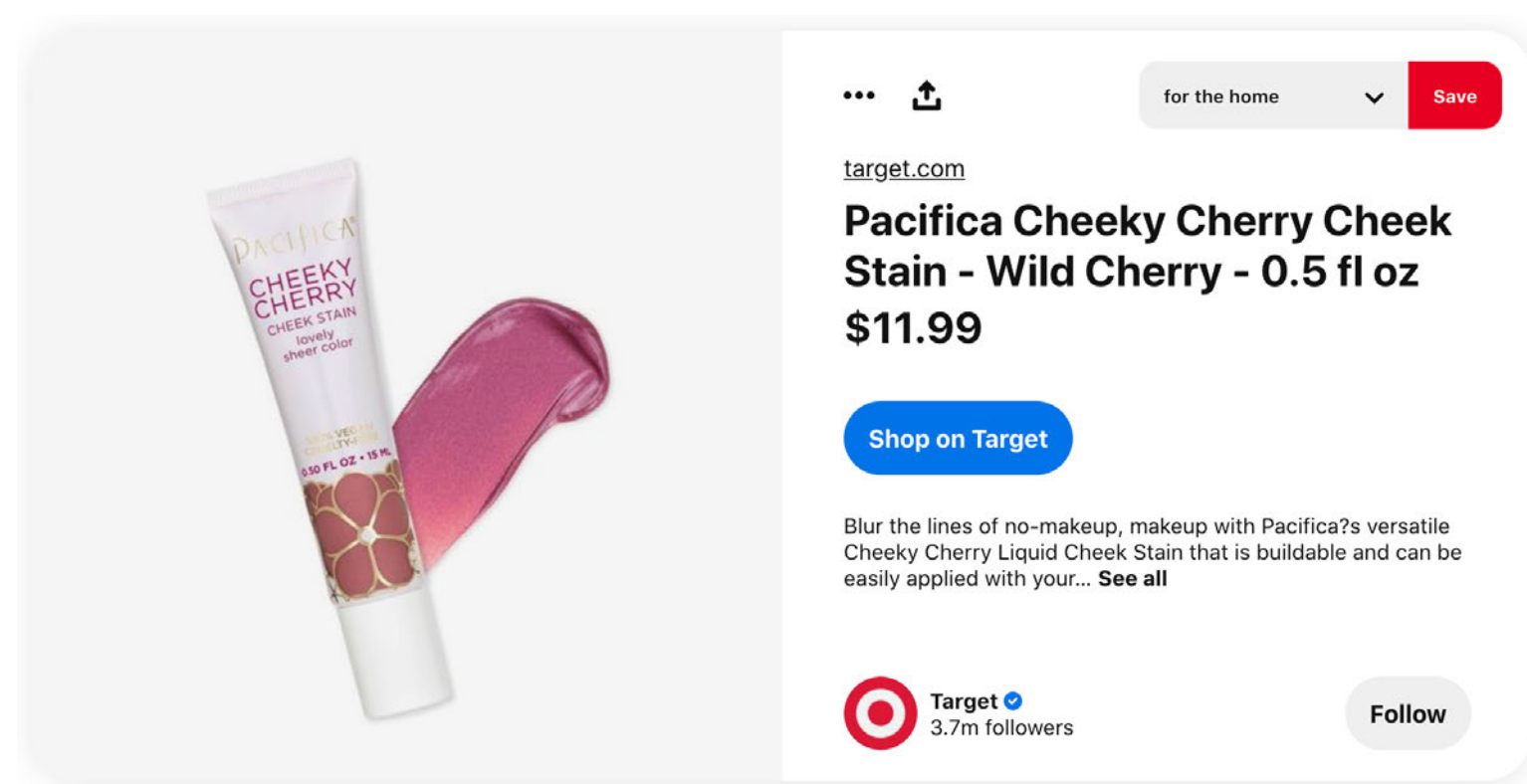
Create a hashtag challenge

Challenges are huge on TikTok because they allow users to get creative and showcase their own take on a particular trend. So get people excited about your challenge and amass some engaging content, just like Love Beauty and Planet did when they teamed up with Ellen DeGeneres for the #recycletrickshotcontest. This contest asked people to make videos of themselves tossing a recyclable item into a bin in a creative way.

Incorporate music

TikTok is all about music. In fact, the platform is responsible for launching numerous viral songs. Identify ways your brand can incorporate music into your videos like e.l.f. Cosmetics did when its original song and engaging video became the most viral campaign in TikTok history.

Pinterest



Crowdsource content with contests

Ask participants to submit original pins or even entire boards to enter your contest to generate a lot of high-quality content.

Pin content to branded boards

Show your followers that you appreciate their content by repinning their content on your own boards.

Pin reviews

Pinterest is a visually-focused platform, but you can still showcase those rave product reviews by creating a pinnable image like Pacifica Beauty does.

Add a “Pin it” button

Make it easy for Pinterest users to pin shopper content from your website and product pages by adding a button to your site that allows them to pin with just one click.

Want to learn more about social media e-commerce news?

Check out our monthly news update - The Bazaarvoice social commerce news bulletin is a monthly roundup of the best and most exciting social media news we've seen.



Develop an effective strategy

UGC needs to be a core part of your brand's social media strategy in order to build brand loyalty among consumers, so follow these best practices.

Create a content calendar to decide when you'll share shopper content

A calendar keeps you organized, ensures you don't miss important days and events in your industry, and helps create a unified brand voice²⁹. However, 63% of businesses lack a content strategy³⁰. So don't follow the masses — set up a calendar that works for your brand.

Consider how your social channels work together

Consistency is key in branding, so your various social channels need to make use of shopper content in a way that fits with your overall brand.

Share UGC on the mediums each type is best suited for to give your fans a reason to follow you on various platforms — and inspire followers to create content for you. For example, take a look above at how cosmetics brand Rimmel uses UGC in various ways on Instagram vs. Twitter.



Be a good content partner

There's a few unwritten rules you should follow to get the most out of UGC — and encourage others to create and share content with your brand.

1. Ask for permission

Even though a user tagged you in a photo, still take the time to get permission to share their creation before sharing it on your website or reposting it on your brand account.

2. Give credit

Always credit the creator and tag them if you can.

3. Create content from a variety of users

Social media users come from myriad backgrounds, and they expect brands to acknowledge that in the content they share. Be inclusive when sourcing user content and share content from a variety of different people.

Allow consumers to shop, not just buy

There's a difference between shopping and buying. Shopping is about gathering information, searching for inspiration, and making discoveries. Buying, on the other hand, is intent-driven — it's about purchasing a product you already know you want.

UGC has the potential to help consumers (and drive business outcomes) throughout the many stages consumers move through as they make purchase decisions. However, brands must use it correctly to get the most out of it.

Show, convince, and inspire your shoppers

Brand websites are often designed with conversion in mind instead of discovery. Often, e-commerce sites are built from catalogs, so they consist of product detail pages (PDPs) that contain specs and sterile product photos, not lifestyle content.

PDPs can be particularly problematic when they act as e-commerce landing pages. Many of these shoppers bounce because PDPs are so focused on driving conversions for a single product that they offer little to no value for customers at the top of the funnel. In other words, they're built for buying, not shopping.

But shoppers look to content from other shoppers to:



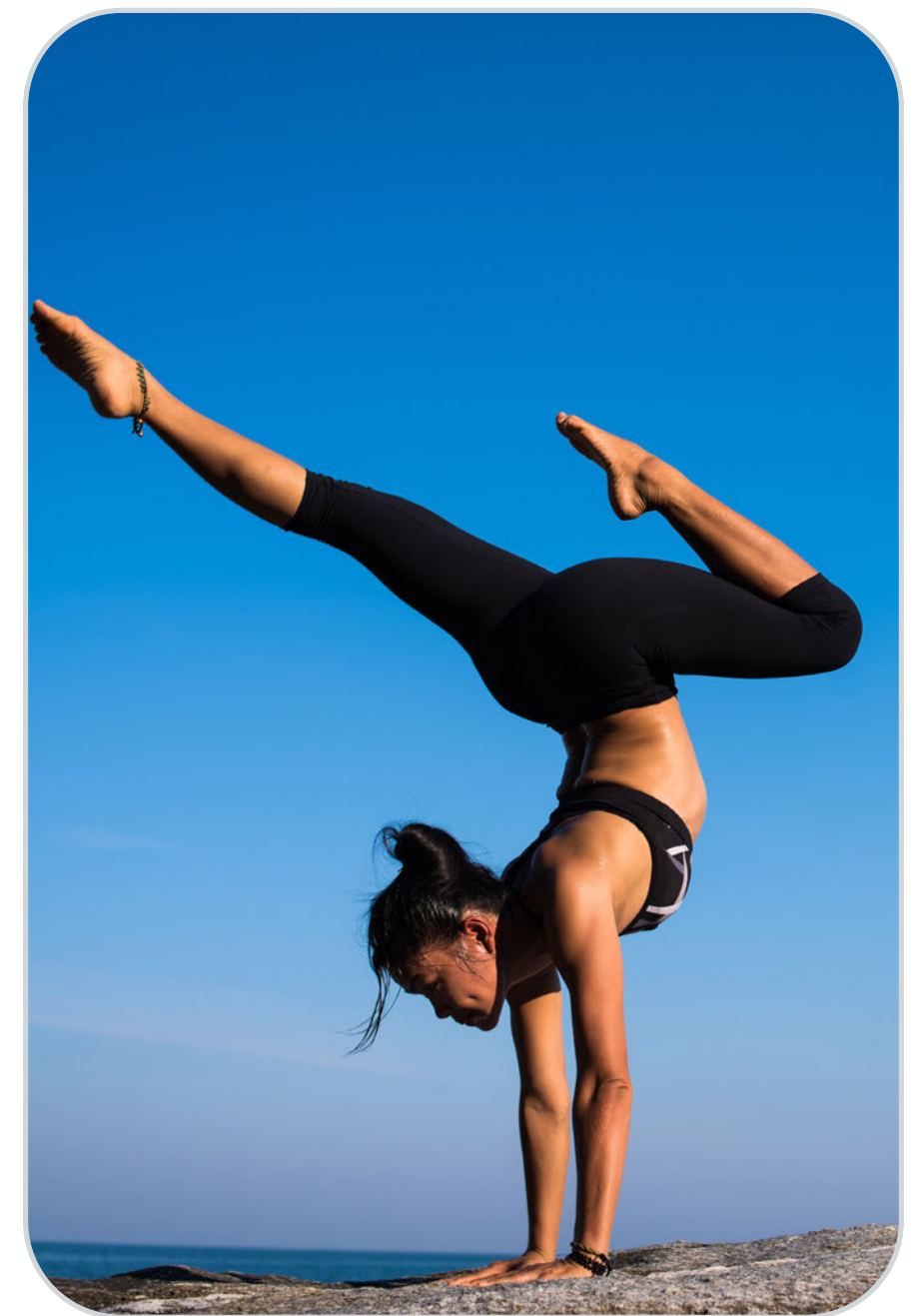
Show them

the product features, size, and fit, etc, with stellar product photos and videos from other customers.



Convince them

that this is the right product. Consumers want to see products in context, from consumers they can relate to. Will this chair fit nicely in a space like mine? How does this dress look on a petite body frame? Does this stain remover really work on toddler messes?



Inspire them

Shoppers might not know exactly what they're looking for. Social media content can inspire shoppers to buy things they didn't know existed. Ever heard of the hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt? That's social commerce inspiration at its finest.

When you take full advantage of UGC, you'll better engage and convert shoppers AND buyers — not only on your PDPs, but also directly in your shoppable social profiles and even in retail locations.

User-generated content encourages people to browse and shop

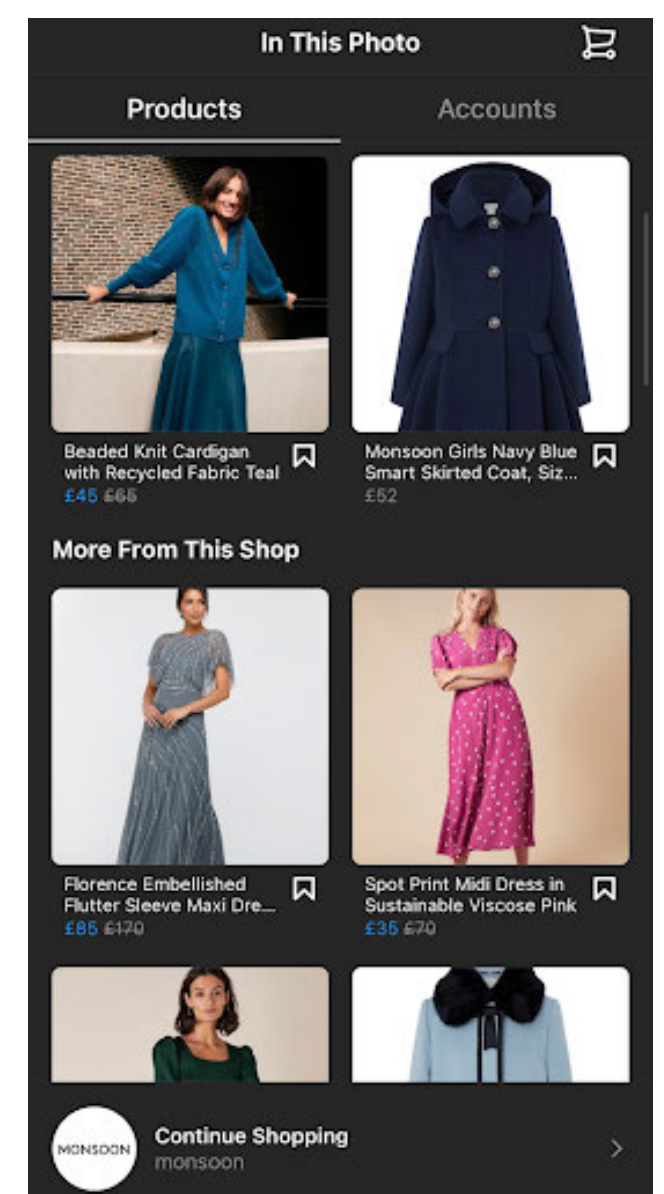
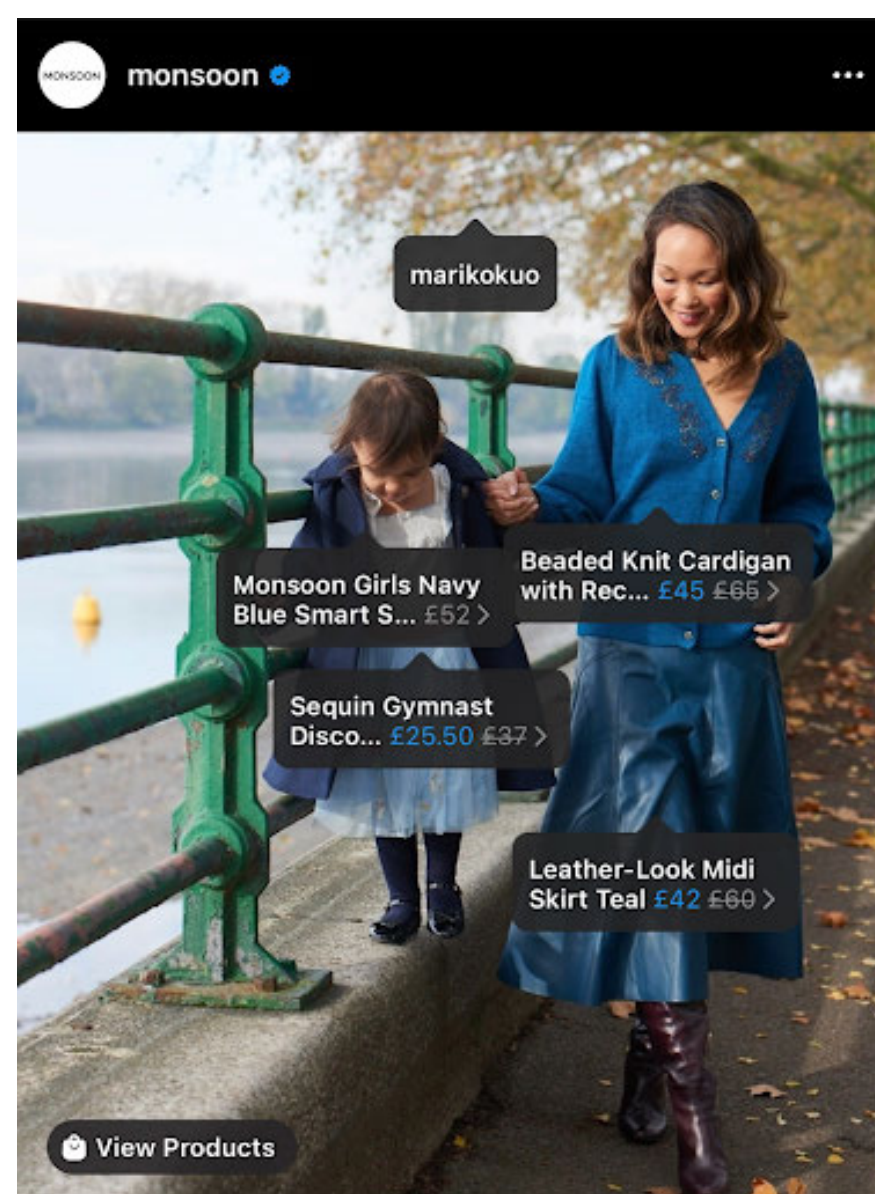
When product pages, social accounts, and every touchpoint of a brand feature social content, consumers are presented with a different experience. This content brings a sense of discovery to e-commerce, and even customers at the top of the funnel can explore your inventory and truly shop.

“The shift that social commerce requires is not only thinking about ways to drive more engagement and more traffic from social, but also taking those highly engaging videos and images from social and reusing them to inspire consumers,” says Liz Griffin, Vice President of Social Commerce at Bazaarvoice²⁸.

Start by making your brand’s social pages more than simply a collection of products. First, gather and share inspiring UGC from your fans and followers so that social can become a discovery engine for your products. Then, take advantage of tools like Bazaarvoice’s Showroom and Reveal to take that shopper content to the next level.

Showroom lets you transform any photo or video into a storefront so customers can, “browse the aisles of your store,” which lowers bounce rates, boosts time on site and entices consumers to view more products.

Reveal, on the other hand, turns any photo into a shoppable experience by allowing customers to hover over any item in the image and learn more about it or make a purchase.



You can take the social commerce experience even further by sharing your shopper content outside of social, too. Adding lifestyle content and shoppable galleries to your website and individual product pages invites customers to sit back and browse, instead of bounce.

Plus, syndicating your content across a network of retail and brand sites has never been easier, thanks to Bazaarvoice.

Evaluate and scale your brand's shopper content efforts

While you can't control what consumers are saying about your brand and its products, you can encourage good content and use it to your advantage on your own channels.

You'll get the most out of UGC on social media by continually assessing your efforts. Gathering information, setting goals, and identifying new opportunities for growth will help you prove the ROI of your investment in shopper content and provide you with invaluable data-driven insights.

Analyze how shopper content affects sales

Compare the number of purchases driven by shopper content versus the content your brand creates when it's shared on social, on-site galleries, and product pages. Here's what to track.

Syndicate thumb-stopping visuals to retail websites

Did you know shoppers are up to 6x more likely to buy from a product detail page with photos from social? With Bazaarvoice's Visual Syndication Network, you can collect and syndicate your social shopper content across retail channels like Target, Kohl's, Argos, Petco and Michael's — elevating the look and feel of your PDPs and giving shoppers a delightful experience with your brand (no matter where they are).

Here's what to track:

Revenue: Accurately attribute revenue to on-site social commerce experiences and click throughs to site from social commerce experiences.

Conversion rate: Tag products in shopper content and track click-throughs to the product page or cart.

Average order value: Use product tags to determine if customers interacted with shopper content before making a purchase, and group together the total spend for those who have.

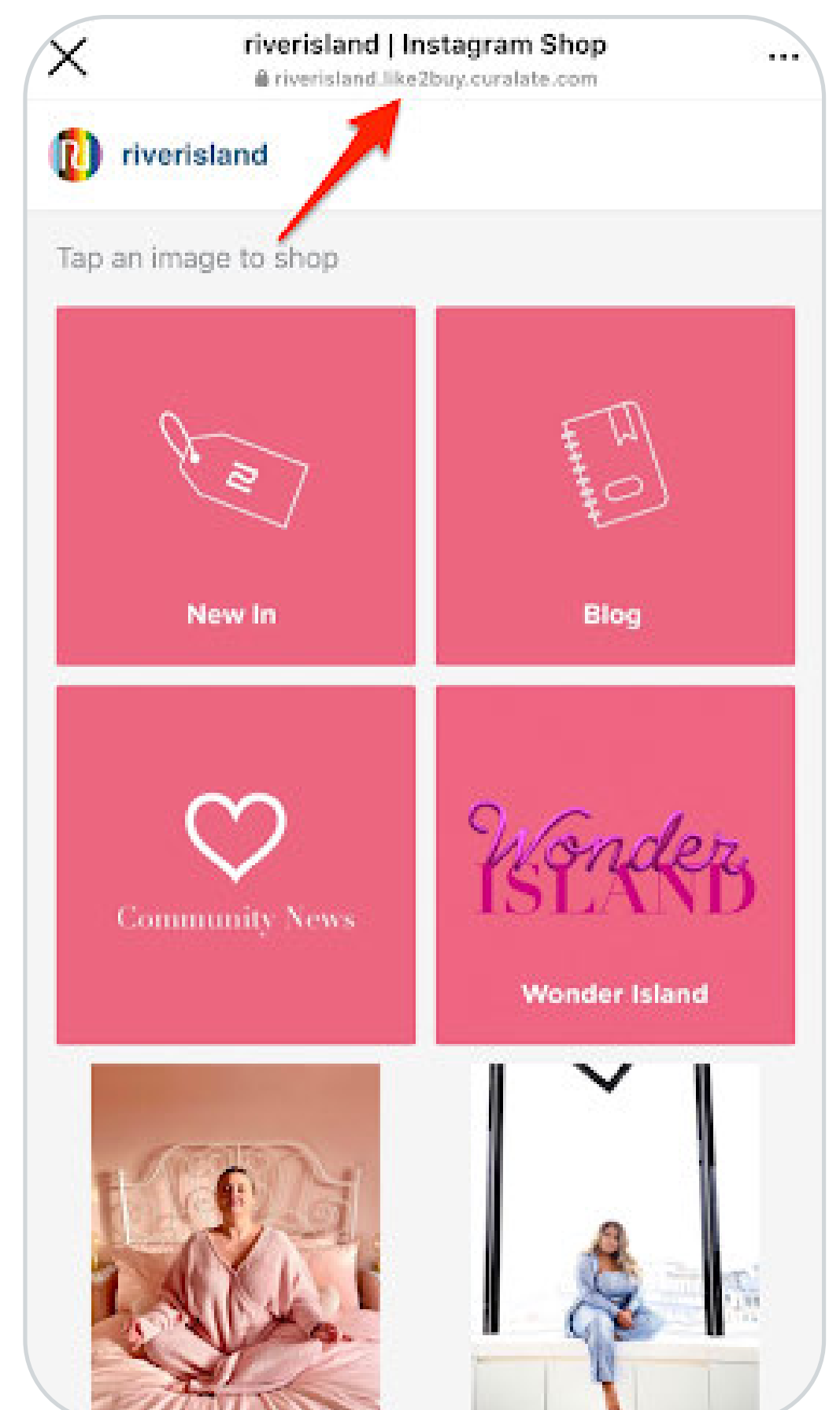
Time on site: Analyze the time users spend on the pages of your website that feature shopper content and compare it with time spent on pages that don't have any.

Bounce rate: Compare the bounce rates of pages with and without UGC.

Reach: Calculate the total number of users who engaged with UGC.

Make evaluating the ROI of your UGC even easier with Like2Buy, Bazaarvoice's link-in-bio solution that lets people shop products, make purchases, and more from Instagram.

With Like2Buy, referred visitors spend more time browsing on site, view more pages, and have a greater average order value than the average mobile consumer. Plus, you can track what shoppers buy through social channels and what they purchase after viewing social content.



Assess how user-generated content influences engagement

It's also important to determine how engagement with UGC compares against social media benchmarks, especially on Instagram, which is a social commerce powerhouse.

On Instagram, engagement rate refers to the percentage of followers who interact with your posts, and it includes likes, comments, and saves. It's particularly important because the social network's algorithm displays highly engaged posts to more users, giving them greater organic reach.

However, it's important to keep in mind that engagement differs depending on the account's number of followers — brands with followings of fewer than 50,000 tend to have higher engagement rates²⁹.

Analyze how posts containing UGC compare with your brand's other Instagram posts to see which content has the greatest engagement. You can calculate this rate by dividing the number of likes, comments, and saves your posts receive by your number of followers and multiplying this value by 100.

Make tracking and analyzing this data easier than ever with Bazaarvoice's Social Analytics and Insights features.

How do I calculate my engagement rate?

You can calculate this rate by dividing the number of likes, comments, and saves your posts receive by your number of followers and multiplying this value by 100.

#Findyourbazaarvoice

Remember, 83% of shoppers trust organic posts from influencers more than brand posts, so it's no surprise that social media marketers should rely on shopper content⁶. But there's much more to employing UGC effectively than simply resharing it.

Buying and selling in the New Connected Bazaar requires authentic content and continuous, radically transparent communication. You must show up in all the ways and places your customers expect, with content that both inspires them to shop and convinces them to buy.

UGC fits the bill and should be part of your brand's overall social media marketing strategy, making an appearance not only on your brand's social accounts like Instagram and TikTok — but also on your website, product detail pages, and more.

To get the most out of your shopper content, you need tools that will truly make social sell — and more than 12,000+ brands (76% of the Top 100 retailers) entrust that job to Bazaarvoice³⁰. In fact, customers on G2 rated Bazaarvoice as the #1 UGC provider³¹, after seeing results like a 169% increase in conversion and 14% increase in average order value with Bazaarvoice Galleries³². Forrester even found a 300% increase in conversions when shoppers engage with content from Bazaarvoice Sampling campaigns¹⁹.

So turn your social channels — and every user-generated photo and video on them — into shoppable storefronts that enable product discovery. Then, publish that compelling user content in all the places shoppers want to see it. With Bazaarvoice's unique tools, you'll not only increase engagement and grow brand loyalty, but you'll also boost sales.

Plus, you'll prove to your team that there's more to being a social media marketer than just liking posts and crafting hashtags. After all, you've got the data to prove that your shopper content efforts directly impact the bottom line.

#LikeABoss

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