The power of

visual content:
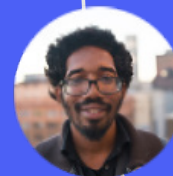
How UGC strengthens
customer relationships
to grow your brand

b:
bazaarvoice

What's Inside

Introduction

It all begins with a moment of discovery, something catches your eye. Maybe it's something you've always wanted or perhaps it's something you didn't know about until that moment.

Today's consumer is relying more heavily on social channels to provide shopping inspiration, and the emergence of visual content is forever changing the way consumers discover products.

User-generated content is more important than ever. Shoppers trust other shoppers. Real users. People like them. Who are sharing their honest feedback and images of products they love, weaved into their everyday lives. Your challenge? Getting that rich content everywhere your consumers are browsing, discovering, and purchasing.

It's no small feat. But, don't worry! We can help. Bazaarvoice provides brands more power than ever with the only full suite of solutions specifically designed to leverage user-generated content in commerce. The result is what we call smarter shopping: more product discovery, increased sales, fewer returns, improved products, and more loyal customers.
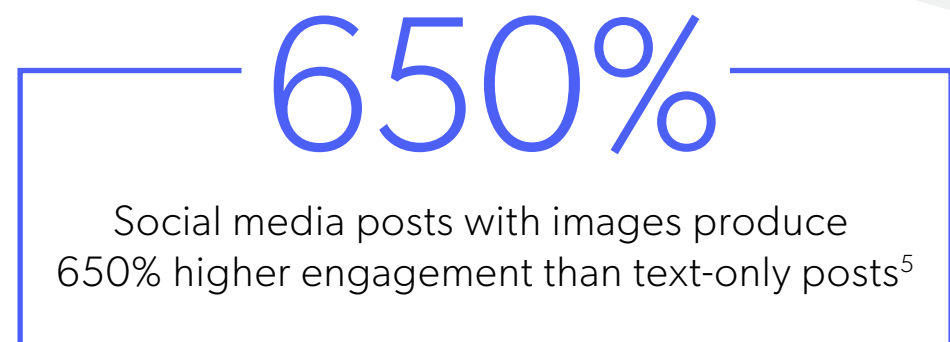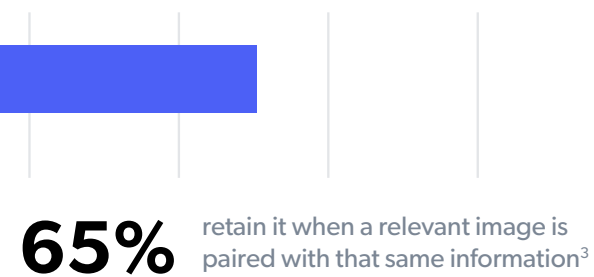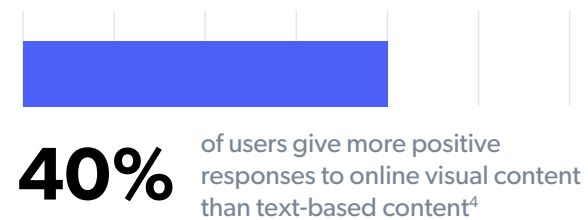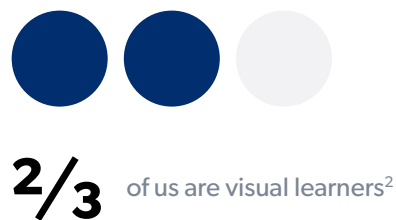
Suzin Wold

Senior Vice President, Marketing

The psychological reasons we respond to visual content

Ah, dopamine. It washes over us any time we hear our favorite song, smell freshly baked cookies, or experience anything we associate with pleasure. It also happens when we see visuals. And in today's digital world, that translates into hundreds of dopamine releases a day.[1]

That's because dopamine is a neurotransmitter made in the brain that gets released every time your brain expects a reward.[1]

Online communication is more visual than ever before, not because it's trendy, but because it's psychological. Here's the deal:

2/3 of us are visual learners[2]

40% of users give more positive responses to online visual content than text-based content[4]

10% of people who are told something can retain that information three days later[3]

65% retain it when a relevant image is paired with that same information[3]

A constant flow of new content = reward

650%

Social media posts with images produce 650% higher engagement than text-only posts[5]

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In this e-book, we'll dive into the role of visual content in brand building, especially as it relates to one of our favorite topics at Bazaarvoice: shopping. After all, visuals make people happy. Shopping increases that feeling. And visual content while shopping? Now that's the ultimate retail therapy!

Let's dive into which types of visuals are most effective in nudging shoppers towards that dopamine jackpot. (Hint: It might not be what you, as a brand, create).

What is user-generated content?

You're at a family barbecue. It's a perfectly clear and sunny June day and the smell of sizzling burgers punctuates the air. Everyone is getting along and you're feeling so elated that you snap a candid picture to capture the moment. Before posting the photo on Instagram, you tag @heinz because the Heinz Ketchup bottle is as much a part of the photo as your smiling family members. Later, you're delightfully full, lazing on the couch, scrolling on social media. Suddenly, you pause. Heinz Ketchup reposted your photo, which they refer to as user-generated content (UGC).

Let's explore why and how this type of content better enables brands to tap into human behavior and develop meaningful relationships with their audiences.

People trust the voices of visual content creators

Today's consumers are empowered. They know brands want their attention and won't instantly like, comment, or share a new visual just because a brand uploads it. Shoppers want to see content that's for them and by them, so they feel connected to what they're viewing. UGC is that link. Nearly 80% of consumers say user-generated content significantly influences their purchase decision.[6] Why is that?

As demonstrated time and again, in research report after report, people trust people more than brands. In a global study, 93% of respondents said that friends and family are the most trusted sources of information on brands and services.[7] As a brand operating in today's marketing landscape, it's important to realize that "friends and family" extends to online and social media communities. Digital and mobile technology have made it possible to connect with anyone, anywhere, with the swipe of a finger. Armed with the knowledge that your audience speaks to each other about your brand, you can unlock the gates to successful social visual strategy.

93%
of respondents said that friends and family are the most trusted sources of information on brands and services[7]

Let's look at an example from Tito's Vodka. Recognizing that man can have two best friends, his dog and his vodka, Tito's released branded dog bandanas and chew toys. Then, they invited customers to share pictures of their dogs and homemade cocktails as part of a UGC marketing campaign. Tito's effectively harnessed the psychology behind people's emotional connection with their pets and transformed social solidarity (people posting their own photos) into a shared identity (people posting their own photos with the brand).

Since visual content has the potential to enable brands and brand advocates to connect with consumers at lightning speed, it's also helpful to understand what drives people to post in the first place. Remember that moment at your family barbecue? Why did you share it? Similar to how our positive response to visual content is psychological, our desire to post is also found in science. People crave social interactions because of our innate desire to belong.[8] Sharing photos from your life, and the brands and products that help shape your day, is yet another way to enhance that notion of community.

Want to find out how to collect more UGC?

▶ Watch our webinar **here.**

titosvodka ✓

❤ 💬 ➤   🔖

5,864 likes

titosvodka Chill out... it's time to pawty! 🐾

📸 : @titothefrenchburrito

View all 140 comments

Picture perfect: Anatomy of a thumb-stopping photo

With so many people taking and sharing photos, spotting a winner may seem challenging; but all it takes is learning some basic photographic principles. Don't worry, you'll get this in a flash!

For brands looking to build quick wins through a visual UGC strategy, a great photo taken by a member of your audience is the best place to start. Let's take a look at apparel brand Tuckernuck, a Bazaarvoice partner. Despite the UGC featured on their Website being created by different people, the images have a lot in common.

Real voices

Photos feature someone from the brand's audience using the product from their own perspective. Seeing how someone else integrates a brand product into their daily life can inspire others to do the same (not to mention, purchase).
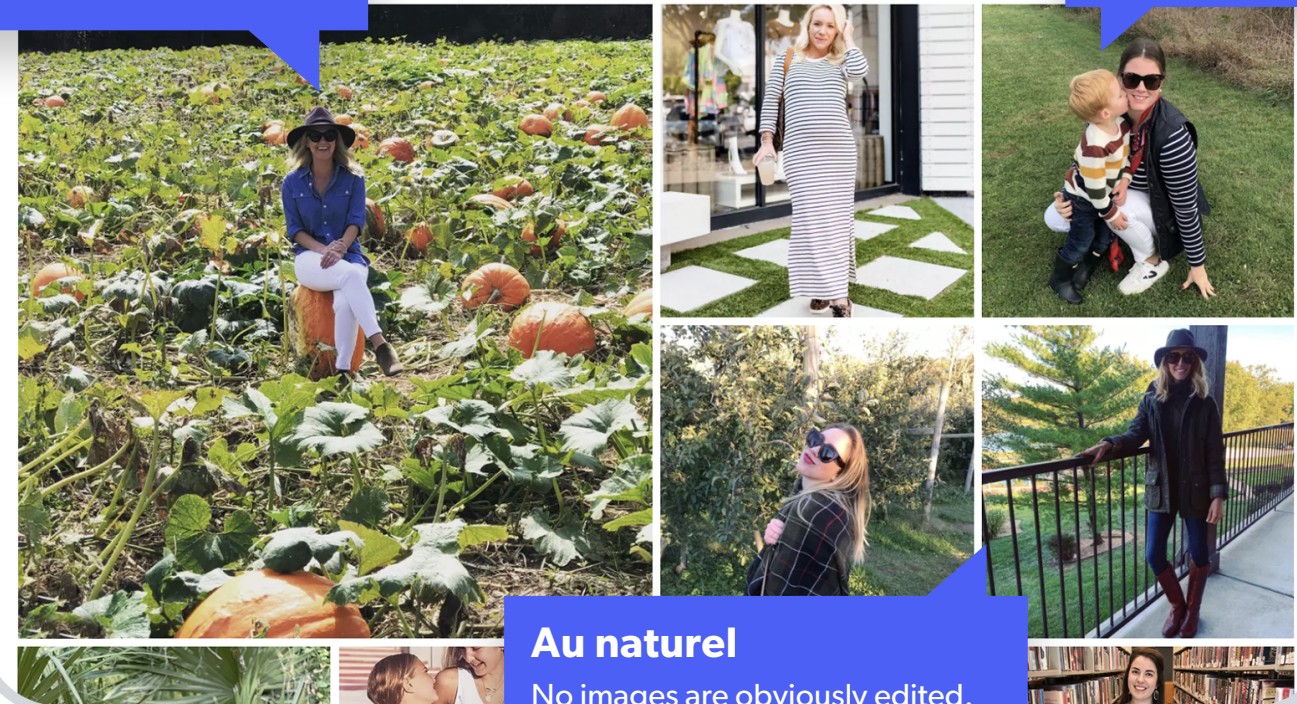
Authenticity

Stay away from stock photography, which can feel generic and lackluster.

Au naturel

No images are obviously edited. Images are meant to express the uniqueness of your brand, and over-editing or using filters is inauthentic.

#TUCKERNUCKING

We love seeing how you #findthefun. Share your #tuckernucking moments with us and join the movement.

UPLOAD MEDIA

Tips to keep in mind

STAY ON THE SUNNY SIDE

If it hasn't jumped out to you already in the examples in this e-book, notice how well-lit the photographs are. Light adds an overall feeling of warmth, with can help elicit positive feelings about your brand. But don't let your photos get washed out! Find the sweet spot for your lighting – natural light is preferred.

KEEP IT SHARP

Focus and clarity should always be top-of-mind when assessing photos. In evaluating UGC, ensure the product is in focus, and that no competing products are in the shot. Photos shouldn't look blurry or grainy.

MAKE IT ABOUT YOUR BRAND

While the inclusion of lifestyle elements from your audience are important to authenticity, spotting UGC worth repurposing is ultimately still about you. The products in the shot should be recognizable as your own. In the case of apparel, that could be a popular item from your seasonal line or a long-term bestseller. In terms of consumer products, your logo or easily identifiable packaging elements or product features should be clearly visible.

Now that you know what to look for in high-quality UGC, let's dig into where these images will show up.

Make magic with visual UGC

Brands can and should re-purpose UGC content to strengthen their marketing materials and e-commerce experience, including but not limited to ratings and reviews, product description pages, and—of course—social media.

UGC + ratings and reviews

Ratings and reviews are essential to motivate confident purchases. For us, it's not enough that your products be discovered, we want people to daydream about them to the point of necessity. That's the power of a positive review. Add a photo to that review and you've achieved the 'wow factor.'
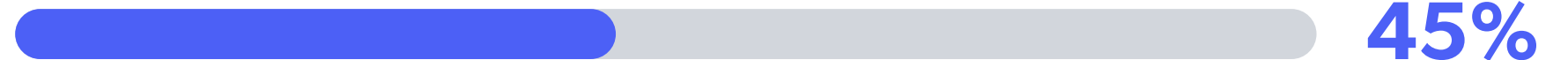
According to a survey conducted by Influenster*, 53% of consumers say they consider reviews with photos more credible than those without.
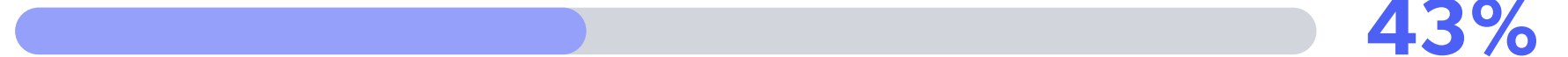
Here's why:

I like to see the product in a real-life context[9]

57%

It shows me that people are actually buying the product[9]

45%

It reassures me that the person who wrote the review is real[9]

43%

I am a visual person[9]

29%

It tells me more about how the product works[9]

29%
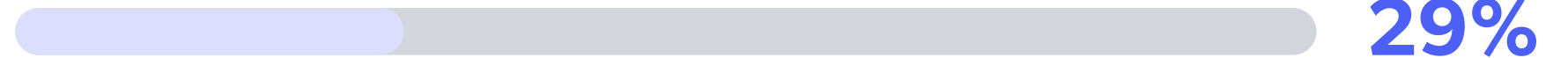
*Influenster is a product discovery platform used by more than 6M+ shoppers. It was acquired by Bazaarvoice in 2018 and has since been an effective tool for brands and retailers. Businesses can connect with shoppers who come organically to discover, review, and share products they use in their everyday lives and seamlessly integrate UGC into brand awareness campaigns, product launches, and more.

Adding UGC to your website

Remember Tuckernuck? Well, when they tapped into Bazaarvoice Galleries to display UGC on their site, they reported an astonishing 62X ROI! And River Island, an international clothing brand with 350 stores worldwide, concluded that visitors who engaged with visual UGC on their Website helped drive a 184% lift in the conversion rates.

But don't just listen to them. Across a variety of industries, the stats speak for themselves.

On behalf of our clients, we've conducted research that shows:

+45%
Revenue per visit[10]

+31%
Conversion rate[10]
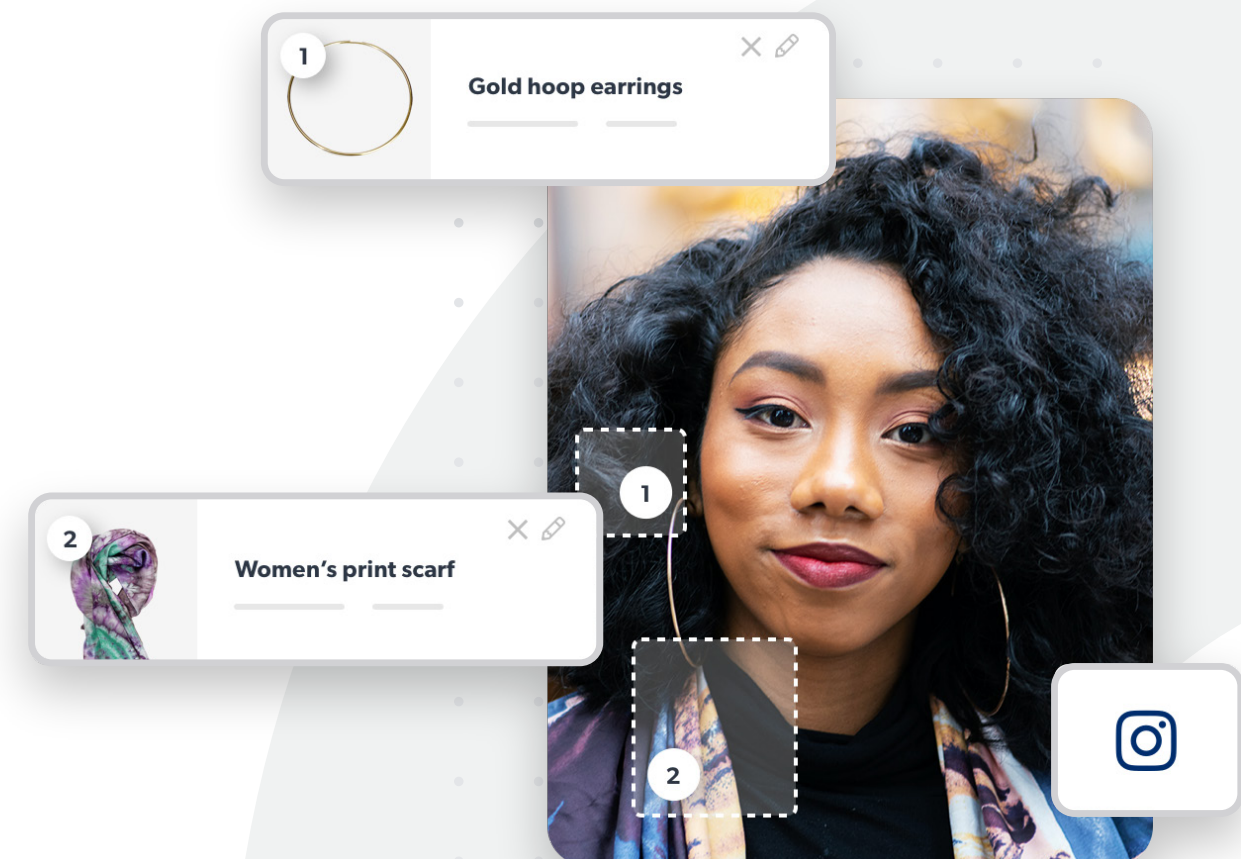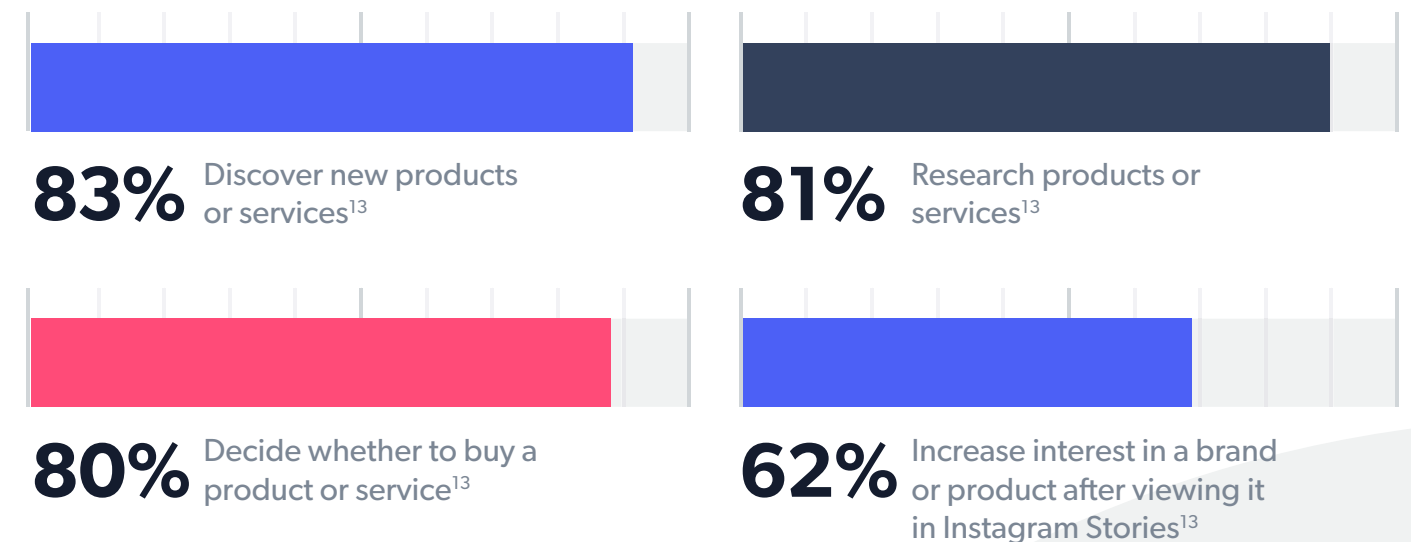
+16%
Average order value[10]

UGC in social media

One of the most obvious places to consider finding, leveraging and amplifying UGC is social media. According to one study, 90% of consumers will buy products from a brand they follow on social media, and 75% will increase their spending with that brand. This can be especially potent on a highly visual platform such as Instagram, which has a potential advertising reach of 849.3M users. In a survey conducted by Ipsos called "Project Instagram," all participants said they use the social platform at least once a week.[11,12]

Spotlight on Instagram

Brand content on Instagram helps potential shoppers:

83% Discover new products or services[13]

81% Research products or services[13]

80% Decide whether to buy a product or service[13]

62% Increase interest in a brand or product after viewing it in Instagram Stories[13]

Gold hoop earrings
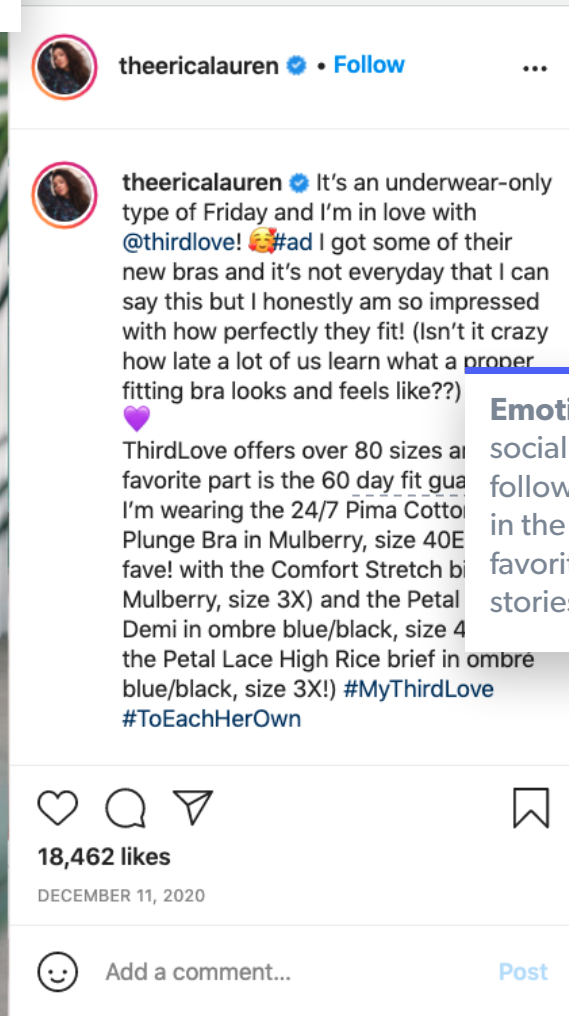
Women's print scarf

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One brand we applaud for their use of UGC is ThirdLove—the lingerie company that aims to enforce the brand message that lingerie is for women of all ages, shapes and races. Let's look at an example of a ThirdLove Instagram post and assess the components that make it effective:

UGC and me—Inclusivity is so important, and this user, in connection to the brand, is showing others that body positivity can have a powerful impact!

theericalauren ✔ • Follow

theericalauren ✔ It's an underwear-only type of Friday and I'm in love with @thirdlove! 🥰#ad I got some of their new bras and it's not everyday that I can say this but I honestly am so impressed with how perfectly they fit! (Isn't it crazy how late a lot of us learn what a proper fitting bra looks and feels like??) 💜

ThirdLove offers over 80 sizes a[nd] favorite part is the 60 day fit gua[rantee] I'm wearing the 24/7 Pima Cotto[n] Plunge Bra in Mulberry, size 40E[ ] fave! with the Comfort Stretch b[rief in] Mulberry, size 3X) and the Petal [Lace] Demi in ombre blue/black, size 4[ ] the Petal Lace High Rice brief in ombre blue/black, size 3X!) #MyThirdLove #ToEachHerOwn

Emotional emoticons—Fellow social media fans and followers respond favorably in the comments with their favorite emojis and inspiring stories of their own.

18,462 likes

DECEMBER 11, 2020

Add a comment...   Post

Positively real—It shows how their product is used by women in bodies of all shapes and sizes.

Ready to level up?
Let's talk about video.

• People are 85% more likely to buy a product after viewing a product video[15]

• 66% of millennials engage with brands after watching videos on social media[15]

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4 things to have in your digital bag
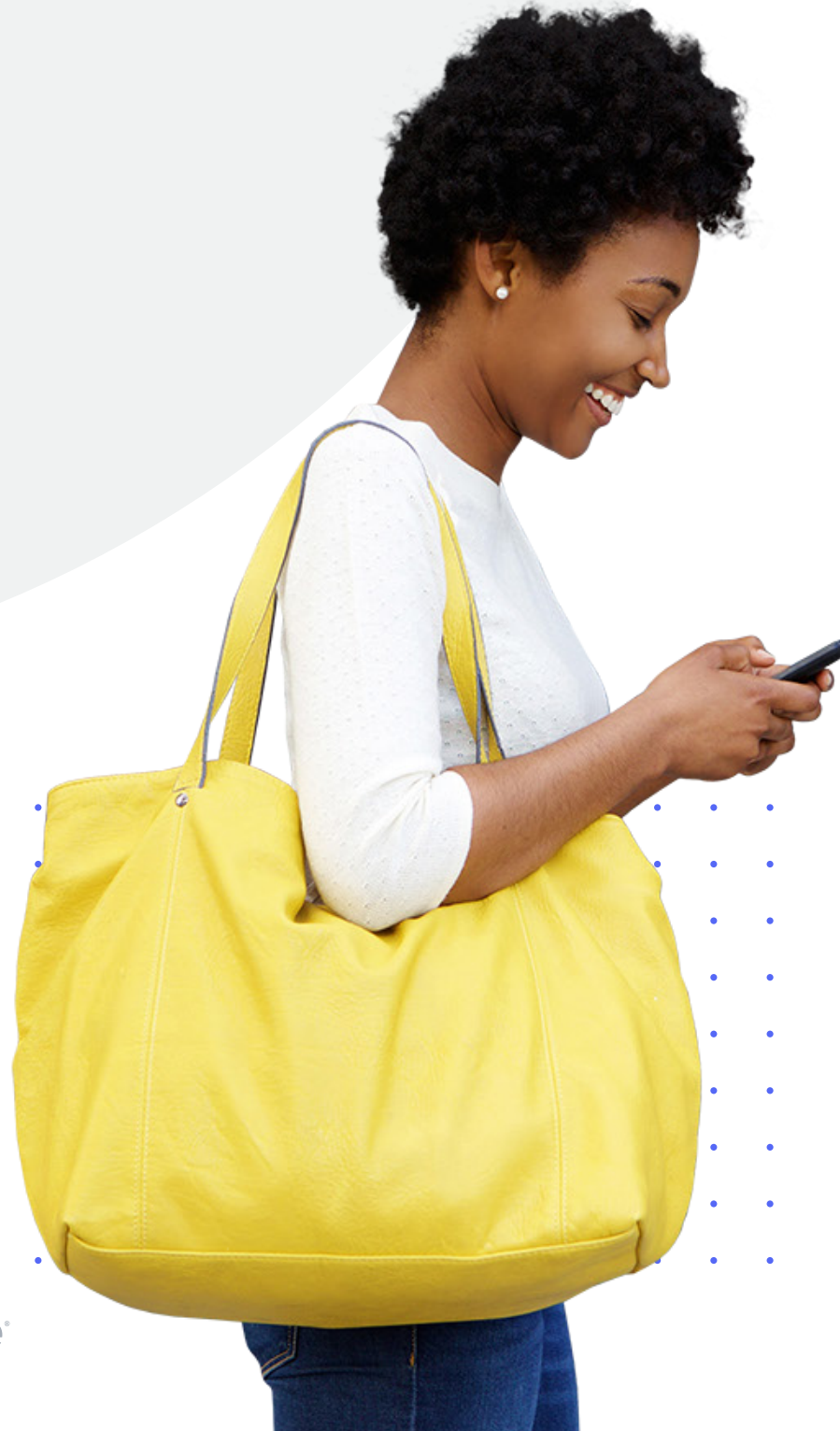
1 Find consumers who are already posting imagery about your products. You can search your brand handle or a hashtag, or work with a partner like Bazaarvoice to start collecting and curating them for you. (That's what friends are for!) We can help you navigate shoppable content options and turn any social channel into a shoppable storefront to bring an incredible discovery and shopping experience to your audience.

2 Find a way to reach and stay in touch with these people. Encourage them to try your new products and share their authentic photos. With permission to leverage their images (they'll be excited to grant it!), consider featuring them in your marketing materials, on your social channels, and at e-commerce point-of-sale.

3 Keep yourself educated and up-to-speed. For example, read or listen to a book on the topic or tune into a webinar from a thought leader. (We love the 'Hidden Persuasion' audiobook, which discusses how visual means are constructed to influence behavior and decision-making on an unconscious level.) It could also be as simple as joining an emerging platform like TikTok or Twitch and seeing how consumers engage and talk about brands there.

4 Be inclusive (with UGC, influencers, voices, unedited photos, etc.) This means not only ensuring the content you feature is reflective of the people who buy your products, but that your teams are, too. Diversity "behind the camera" – that is, amongst those you entrust with helping to select great photos – will help ensure those photos are truly authentic. And while you most popular products might have mass appeal, consider featuring other products designed for more niche audiences, who also want to be seen and heard.

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Conclusion

UGC is a source of discovery. It helps users become aware of products and deepen relationships between people and brands, and consumers and brand advocates. When a product feels personal to consumers, they are more likely to feel compelled to share that experience.

And this is how personal experience can drive purchase: when people see people like themselves using the same products.

Combine this phenomenon—consumers heightened trust in content created by people like them—with the power of the brain's response to visual content, and you have a winning case for visual UGC as a powerful brand-building tool.

When you're ready, we're ready

Contact us today.

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About us

Each month in the Bazaarvoice Network, more than a billion consumers create, view, and share authentic user-generated content including reviews, questions and answers, and social photos across more than 6,200 global brand and retailer websites. From search and discovery to purchase and advocacy, Bazaarvoice's solutions help brands and retailers reach in-market shoppers,personalize their experiences, and give them the confidence to buy.

Founded in 2005, Bazaarvoice is headquartered in Austin, Texas, with offices in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

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