The smart marketer's guide to finding and using customer insights

How to build relationships with your customers to find out what they care about

What's inside

Introduction

From launching new products to building marketing campaigns, savvy businesses develop plans and take action based on feedback from customers.

At their core, insights derived from customers meld market research with shopper behavior and customer sentiment around a brand or product category. Harnessing this information provides visibility into what motivates a buyer, what aspects of your brand or products resonate most, the competitive landscape, and where your business can take action.

Building long-term relationships with your audience is the most important step in setting the foundation to hearing from customers. That trust can be established or lost at any point, and those who fail to earn or maintain it will struggle to succeed in a time when consumer opinions are shared on a massive scale and heavily influence buying decisions.

You want your customers to trust you enough to feel comfortable telling you more about themselves — their customer journey, their pain points, and their experiences with your products.

A vast majority (86%) of customers are more likely to share their experiences if they trust the company, and 95% of customers are more likely to be loyal to a company they trust[1].

In the following pages, you'll find strategies on how to:

- Actively solicit the honest opinions of your customers
- Leverage reviews and other user-generated content (UGC) to mine customer sentiment about your brand and products
- Use customer insights to help improve products, refine marketing messaging, and stand out among the competition

Ask your customers for feedback

The ability to listen to consumers doesn't need to be a high-budget affair. With the rise of social media platforms and the ease of answering questions through questions and answers (Q&A) sections on product pages, today's marketers are more empowered than ever to be responsive and attentive to their customers.

> *We aim to deliver the best products, services and personnel to get direct feedback from customers, understanding what works for them and what doesn't. Our customers feel that we're listening and we can learn from what they tell us.*
>
> **Fanny Janiaczyk**
> Boulanger

For many marketers, getting a feel for how shoppers use their products, how they talk about them, and how they interact with your brand consists of simply scrolling through comments on their brand's social media pages or relying on anecdotal information.

However, leading companies understand it takes a lot more than a quick scroll to get substantial feedback on products and branding – be straightforward and ask customers what they think. Most consumers won't feel bothered by the request. In fact, they'll likely be happy to know their opinion is valued.

> *Online survey platforms, direct emails, customer interviews, social media polls, and focus groups are all **tried-and-true methods for learning more about customers**.*

Advocates and detractors both have something equally important to tell you. Collecting and engaging with feedback from both is crucial to really understand the strengths and weaknesses of your products and brand.

THE BOTTOM LINE: When you know more about what your customers care about, you're in a position to address their needs. Taking their feedback into consideration and engaging with them also showcases your company's commitment to their satisfaction.

Turn user-generated content insights into action

Consumers today are more empowered than ever before, and their reliance on the opinions of one another to guide their purchasing decisions continues to grow exponentially. That's why brands and retailers win when they make it easy for shoppers to submit and read reviews, questions, and other forms of trusted UGC.

In a global survey of 5,500 consumers, the largest portion of shoppers (39%) said reviews are what's most important to them on a product page. Coming in second was the product description and professional photos (22%)[2].

Reviews offer value in other ways, too. The best marketers understand UGC is one of the most impactful ways to get insights straight from the source.

Real-time customer feedback offers you a lens into what your business is doing well and where it needs to get better. But why stop there? The secret is turning those insights into action.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Asking your customers for their thoughts on your products helps them feel more connected to your brand as a stakeholder. Taking their feedback into consideration and engaging with them shows that you care about what they have to say, which helps further build trust.

Getting customer feedback provides an ongoing way to gather information about how a product is doing and where there's room for improvement.

Jenna Spivak Evans
Unilever

Use insights to hone your marketing tactics

Your marketing team can take advantage of UGC in a couple of ways, including showcasing positive customer reviews, images, and videos across your marketing channels.

> *Only **33% of shoppers** believe and **trust information and advertising directly from the brand**[3].*

That's why incorporating this compelling content into email campaigns, digital ads, social media posts, and even offline and in stores, drives more marketing effectiveness. This includes higher open rates, click-through rates, and engagement. You are building awareness and consideration, and giving shoppers the confidence they need to make purchase decisions wherever they are.

Our customers are basically writing our marketing copy for us.

David Cluka
Briggs & Stratton

UGC also supplies your marketing team with insights into where you're missing the mark in product positioning and how you promote your brand or products.

KidKraft, a manufacturer of children's products, conducts a quarterly evaluation of what customers are saying and leverages the learnings to improve messaging.

The brand recently noticed customers commenting in reviews on how much they loved the storage feature of its Building Bricks Play N Store Table. KidKraft didn't originally consider the storage to be a major selling point of the product, so the brand edited the features section of the product page and promotional copy to highlight the table's storage. The brand saw an increase in sales after tailoring the marketing messaging.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Why make a positive claim about your brand, products, or services when you can let a satisfied customer say it on your behalf by amplifying reviews? Additionally, not only can you strengthen your marketing efforts by leveraging the third-party validation of reviews, but the content also presents you with opportunities to refine how you talk to shoppers.

From a marketing standpoint, I think it's really important to lean on your reviews to do some of the heavy lifting for you, particularly if you have a bit of a scrappy marketing budget.

Taylor Herrero
KidKraft

Explore insights to make better products

Targeting the right products for improvement is a critical early step in letting customers inform your product decisions.

> Start by looking at your **most popular products with less than 4 stars. This is the leading indicator that something is wrong** with the product.

You can take this one step further by identifying products with quality sentiment below their category and by digging into product lowlights. Though keep in mind — even positive reviews often mention product suggestions, letting you turn a good product into an excellent one.

Nestlé Canada recently made changes to the ingredients of one of its iced tea products. Within a month of the new formula hitting shelves, the company saw a slew of negative reviews and customer complaints — then sales dropped.

The customer experience team identified this issue and shared the reviews with the brand team and other departments. The company took quick action to revert back to the original formula, and the average customer rating for the beverage increased from 1.7 to 4 stars.

There was so much quality information provided by the consumer that it added a lot of power to the decision making around reversing the formula.

Lee Beech
Nestlé Canada

Feedback can also spark new ideas. When Oliso, a maker of irons and other home appliances, recently designed a new iron with a long power cord, high wattage, and extended automatic shut-off time. This innovative iron came in response to customers in the craft community who wanted features that make it more convenient to use their iron every day.

These changes ultimately helped revive the company by getting more retailers to carry the product and existing retail partners to sell more.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Reviews make it increasingly easy to learn about consumer perceptions and react accordingly, especially in retail and e-commerce channels that were historically hard to analyze.

We used to sell a couple irons a week and now sell dozens a day at one retailer since launching. We're up $40,000 at that store in just weeks, which is a lot of money for a small company. Retailers are taking notice, as more and more are carrying our products.

Kyle Koenig
Oliso

Tap into the positive power of negative feedback

Seeing complaints about your products is never fun. But despite the unpleasantness, this kind of feedback is where you can find some of your most powerful customer insights. A powerful customer reaction — whether seemingly undeserved or not — is often a sign that something is amiss.

You might uncover discrepancies between the descriptions of your products and the perception of those products by customers or need to set realistic expectations with shoppers. Regardless of what you find, how customers talk about their experience through product reviews shows how buying products from you is perceived at scale.

When you invest time paying attention to customer pain points, you are given the opportunity to fix issues before your products earn a negative reputation and win back customers before losing them entirely. Consumers will like your products better and will see your company as being responsive.

Land O'Lakes, one of the most successful food brands, knows the value of all reviews — even the negative ones. For example, reviews helped Land O'Lakes spot an issue with a recipe, as customers called out the fact that a cinnamon roll wasn't turning out correctly. Land O'Lakes investigated and found an error with the recipe, and the development team quickly jumped into action to revise the recipe and lift sentiment.

By giving the customer a voice, Land O'Lakes not only remedies issues that arise, but also continues to build trust with consumers.

> *Negative reviews can be a gift. They give us a chance to learn more about a consumer's experience with our product or recipe, and we can turn around a negative experience to end up with a more loyal fan.*

Vicky Cherne
Land O'Lakes

THE BOTTOM LINE: See criticism as an opportunity for growth. By understanding your customers' pain points through negative feedback, you have an opportunity to address them head-on. Listening to your detractors can turn them into enthusiasts.

Stand out in an increasingly competitive landscape

Insights into your own business is only part of the story. If you know how you stack up against your competitors, you can ensure you gain or maintain an edge. To stay in tune with what customers are seeing when they shop, it's helpful to aggregate benchmarks or layer data from key competitors to compare against your business' performance.

For example, compare your products to others in your space to see who:

- Holds the top positions on retail search results pages and category pages
- Has the most compelling images and videos
- Provides shoppers with the most detailed product description and feature bullets
- Has the largest volume of reviews, most reviews per product, and most products with at least one review
- Has the highest average rating
- Has the highest percentage of questions answered

Your own shoppers will tell you your advantages and selling points, and their feedback provides extra intel for setting your brand apart. You can then develop strategies to accentuate your strengths, address your gaps, and effectively prioritize where and how to make improvements.

THE BOTTOM LINE: In an increasingly crowded marketplace, differentiation is critical. But being the leader requires a deep understanding of where and how you are winning or losing.

Conclusion

Consumer insights identified through market research, shopping behaviors, and customer sentiment help you discover exactly what shoppers think about your brand and products. These insights should serve as the foundation for every business decision you make, whether you're launching a new product, reworking your messaging, or designing new packaging.

Key takeaways to keep in mind when developing a consumer insights strategy:

Buying decisions are complex.

Try building upon your knowledge of the consumer by combining sources of insights, including data, direct customer observation, face-to-face interviews, and UGC.

Customer insights give way to business success.

Let customers inform your decisions. There is no one better to listen to and learn from than your customers.

Insights can benefit your entire organization.

The opinions of your customers provide an impactful way to help your product team make improvements, your customer support team provide better service, your ecommerce team improve the online experience, and support the goals of many others across the company.
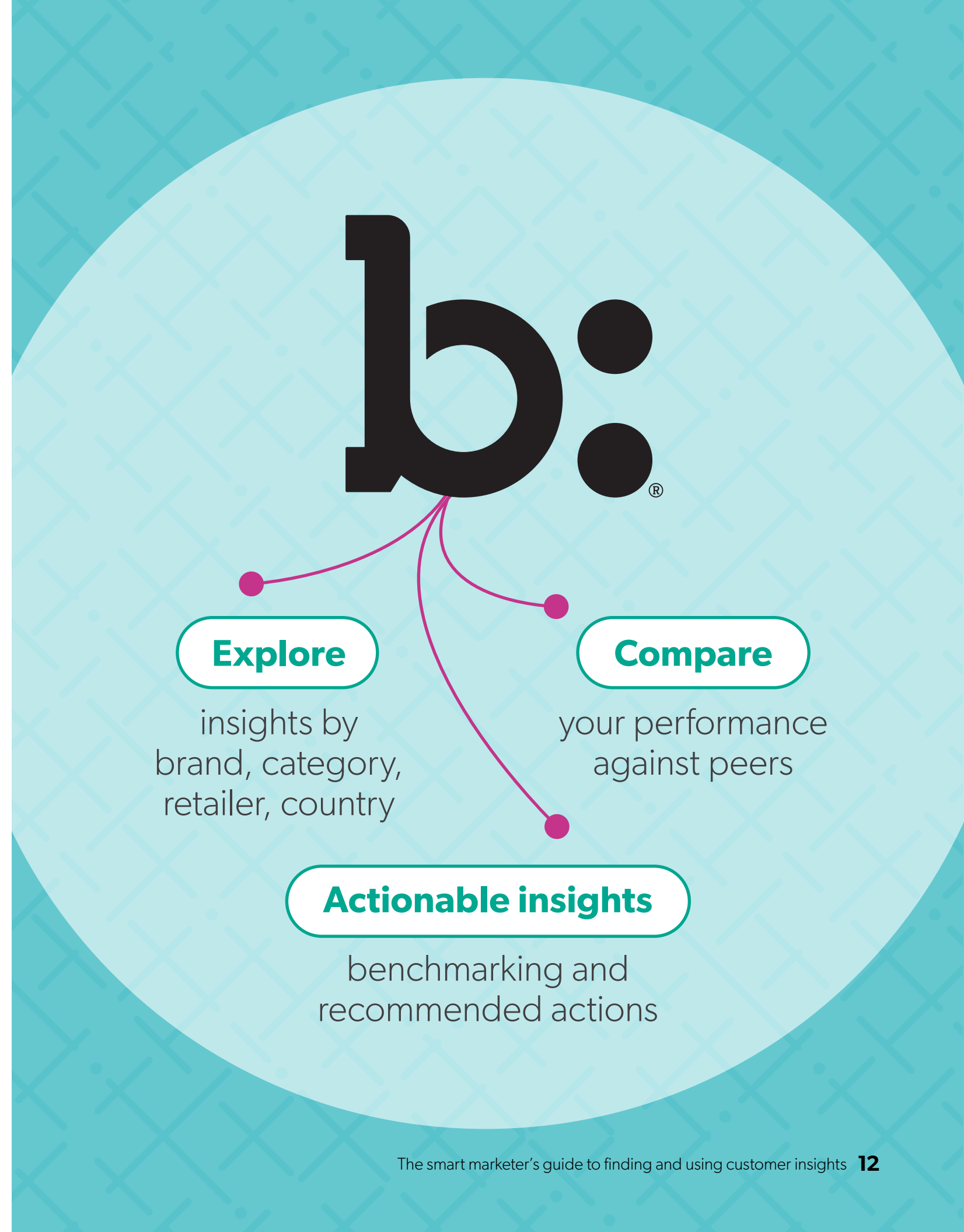
Gain an edge.

When you know what makes your products different or better, you can take action to become the industry leader.

How can Bazaarvoice help with insights?

Bazaarvoice Network Insights looks at data across 2,000+ retailer websites in our network, surfaces the relevant information, and consolidates it into a holistic, easy-to-understand dashboard. Brands can see where they need to improve review coverage and product ratings, understand common areas of praise and complaints from customers, and compare their performance against competitors.

In addition to our advanced Insights and Reports, Bazaarvoice can conduct quantitative and qualitative research with the Influenster community of 6.7 million consumers to better understand your current and desired consumer sentiment, their behaviors, and exactly what shoppers are gravitating towards with up and coming trends.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Take the effort out of collating and prioritising insights to act on by working with a partner like Bazaarvoice who does this for thousands of international clients every day.

Explore
insights by brand, category, retailer, country

Compare
your performance against peers

Actionable insights
benchmarking and recommended actions

References

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About Bazaarvoice

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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.

For more information, **visit www.bazaarvoice.com**.

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