

Visual content strategies to supercharge the buyer journey

How to use visual CGC to optimize all stages in the path to purchase

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Preface



*Hear a piece of information, and three days later you'll remember 10% of it.
Add a picture and you'll remember 65%.*

John Medina

Developmental Biologist

60% of marketers believe visual content is essential to their marketing strategy.² Despite that, half of marketing departments are allocating 20% or less of their budget towards producing pictures and videos.

That isn't surprising; it's really expensive to create compelling visual content across your product catalog.

But it doesn't have to be. Today's social media platforms offer a rich sea of authentic product- and brand-focused social content from every marketer's best friend: their customers.

And when you leverage a mix of visual customer-generated content (CGC) programs and in-house design work, you're in a position to supercharge the customer journey from top to bottom.

In our guide, you'll find strategies on how to:

- Break through the noise and get discovered
- Stop the scroll on social and your site
- Seal the deal with visual social proof





1 Break through the noise — get discovered

Meet Jack, a 28-year-old urbanite who is above average in his social media consumption (the average person spends about two hours a day on social platforms — Jack spends between five and six hours a day).

But a month ago, Jack needed new shoes. “I had a weekend trip planned out, and a business trip right after — I wanted something that’d work for both,” he says.

Here’s where Jack smirks. “Well, I guess I didn’t really need new shoes.” So, why the newfound want?

“I just kept seeing them on Instagram,” he says. “My friends and bloggers I follow kept posting pictures and I was seeing ads — it seemed like everyone had them. After a while, I ended up clicking on a picture to see what brand it was and then followed it.”

A week later, Jack had a new pair of shoes.

Stories like this reinforce a key social media strategy: These platforms are a magnifying glass for word-of-mouth recommendations from peers and aspirational figures, like celebrities and fashion bloggers. This gives brands a meaningful way to foster intrigue and discovery.

At Bazaarvoice, we've found that 61% of people will post a picture if you ask them to. For marketers, that means you can build out powerful discovery campaigns using customer content to fill in the gaps your branded content leaves behind.

And there are gaps. Most branded content centers around product shots, leaving the more authentic lifestyle content on the sidelines

Make no mistake: Product shots work at the bottom of the buyer journey — 56% of shoppers say product shots catch their attention.⁵ But real-world lifestyle content has the ability to inspire people. And inspiring content is the secret ingredient to any discovery campaign.

Read our [**7 best practices for using real pictures from real people to improve the customer experience**](#) for tips on empowering your customers to share authentic experiences with your brand.



64% OF PEOPLE
say they use social media to discover new products.

— Bazaarvoice Survey of 250 Consumers, December 2017³



61% OF PEOPLE
will take a picture if you ask them to

— Bazaarvoice Survey of 1000-plus Consumers, July 2017⁵

A COGNITIVE BIAS EVERY MARKETER SHOULD KNOW:

First devised by the social psychologist Robert Zajonc in the 1960s, the mere-exposure effect explains how repeated exposure to a person, product, brand, place, or just about anything else makes people associate the thing in question with positive feelings.⁴

In other words, the more often you expose consumers to your brand and product, the more disposed they are to like it.

So, how can you win with visual consumer-generated content (CGC)? Easy. Inspire, recognize, and incentivize your customers to share their experiences with your brand and product. Consider the following:



Sometimes all you have to do is ask. Inspire your customers with themed hashtag campaigns that focus on the aspirational and imaginative. Whether you focus on the unboxing moment or look to what innovative ways people are interacting with your brand and products, the right campaign focuses on a specific ask and inspires people to engage with you.



Your biggest advocates are already out there talking about you. With tools like Bazaarvoice Curations, it's easy to find and recognize these advocates and share their best shots with a wider audience. We've found that when a company asks consumers if it can use their pictures and videos, 75% of people say yes. All you have to do is ask.



When it comes to filling in the gaps in your content strategy with social content, a favorite expression of ours is "give a penny, get a pound." Incentivize customers to share content by offering up prizes for the best submissions. From giving out samples to gifting products to your best advocates, consider setting up a sweepstakes to incentivize your most vocal customers to help tell your story.



2 Stop the scroll — on social and your site

The best visual strategies close the gap between social and shopping. Between hashtag galleries on social platforms to shoppable layers that let shoppers easily jump from an inspirational picture to a product page, marketers have a few tricks to play here.

But the first step is stopping the scroll on social and your site. Once someone's jumped from passive consumption to interest, they want to learn more about your brand and your products — and that's your opportunity to fuel the consideration stage and lead them to your site.

Nearly 25% of shoppers actively search for pictures and videos of real people using a specific product or brand.⁵

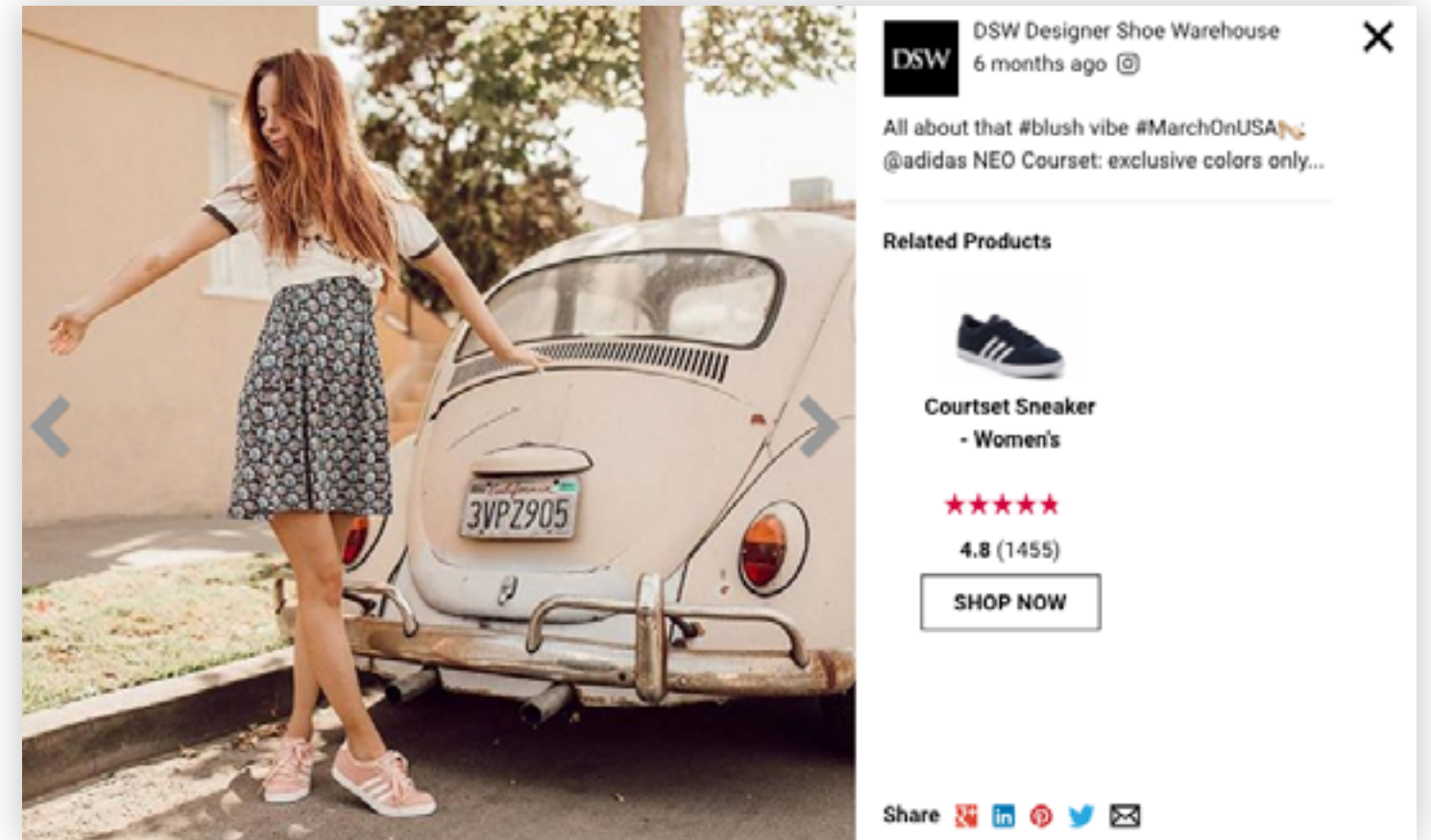
To make a truly frictionless experience that connects your social and e-commerce properties, the whole of your efforts is greater than the sum of the parts. With that, here are two winning strategies to drive success.

Make social content shoppable

From shoppable Instagram posts to videos that take you directly to a product page, shoppable content is one of the more recent developments in visual commerce that lets people jump directly from inspirational social content to a product page.

In simple terms, shoppable content is anything from videos to images to articles that links a shopper directly to a product page, or lets them place a product in their shopping cart.

Social platforms such as Instagram and Facebook — as well as visual commerce providers like Bazaarvoice — have been aggressive in developing shoppable layers that give shoppers a clear path from inspiring content to the purchase page.



Savvy social strategists use shoppable content to integrate their brand and products directly into the social space. This makes it easy for shoppers to discover more about a product, and then seamlessly jump back into the social experience.

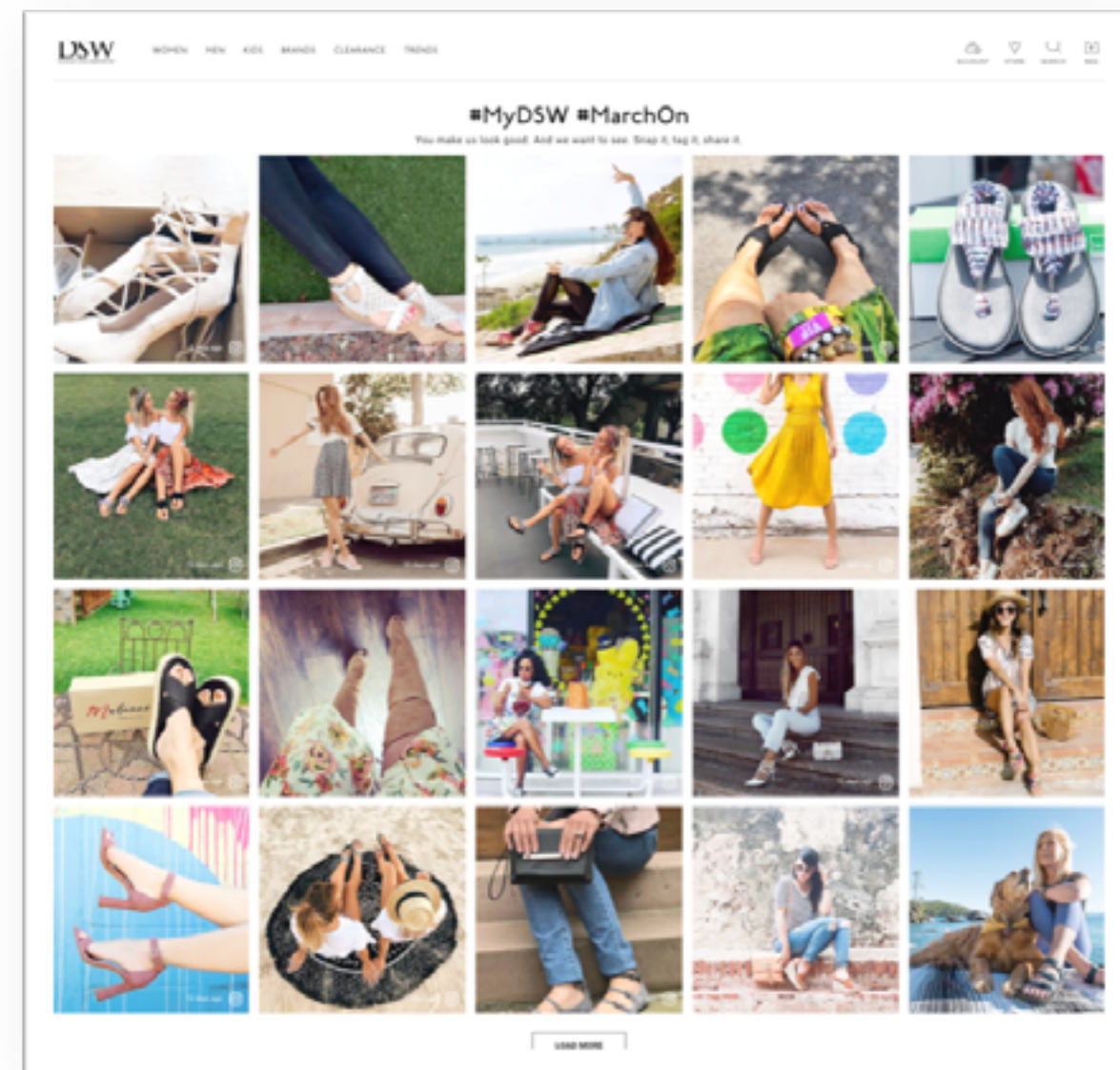
Show off your best side with social content galleries

When pictures and videos succeed in stopping the scroll, it's because they inspire and intrigue. At this point, shoppers want more content and more inspiration.

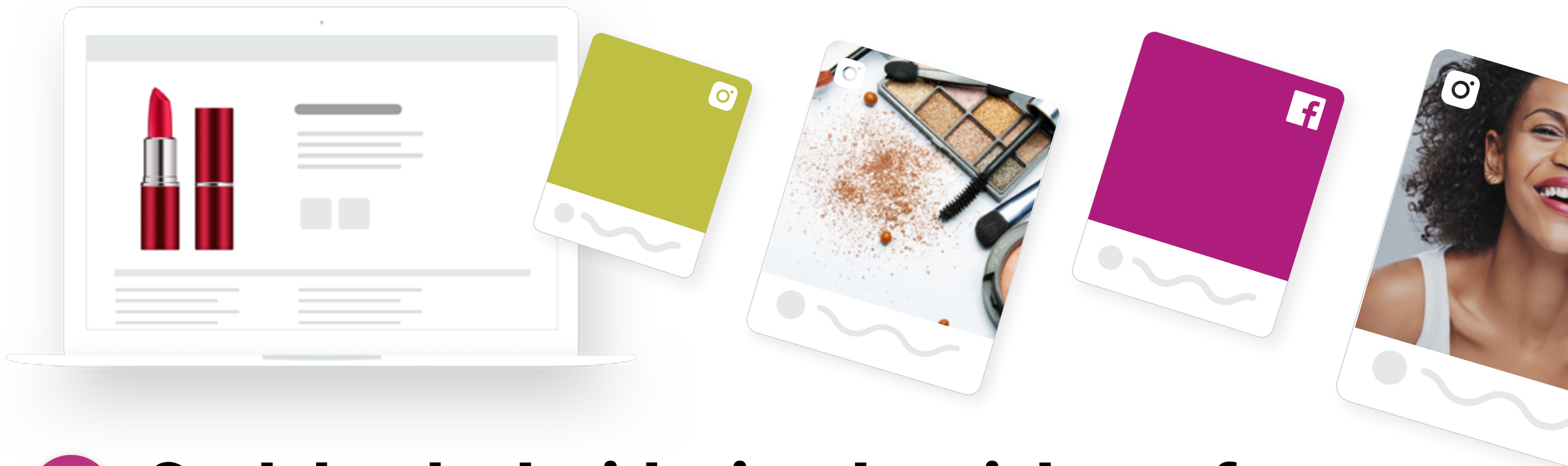
That's where galleries of social content come into play. From aligning social content under a specific hashtag, to letting shoppers search through more content directly on a platform like Instagram, to building out galleries directly on your e-commerce site, creating a single space where shoppers can explore your brand and products is a powerful play.

Take it from the fashion retailer DSW, which has leveraged visual galleries to great effect.

"One of the digital team's main strategies is bringing DSW's assortment to life," says Alison Wagner, a digital product specialist at DSW. "Having more lifestyle photography and 'how-to-wear' information from consumer-generated content increases customer confidence and drives conversions."



This is where galleries that feature visual CGC excel: They help marketers and brands fill in the gaps in their messaging strategies and do it in a way that shows off authentic, high-quality imagery from real people. It's your customers, telling your story.



3 Seal the deal with visual social proof

All of this, of course, leads us to the final place where visual content improves the buyer journey and customer: your product pages.

56% of online shoppers say pictures and videos from other consumers give them the most accurate depiction of what they expect from a brand. What's more, 85% of consumers say they use pictures and videos from other customers as the tie-breaker when considering multiple brands.⁵

What's going on here?

Simple. It all comes down to social proof, a psychological phenomenon where people turn to the actions of others to reinforce their own decisions. In simple terms, social proof gets at that feeling where "if everyone else is doing something, it's probably the right thing to do."

The facts back this up

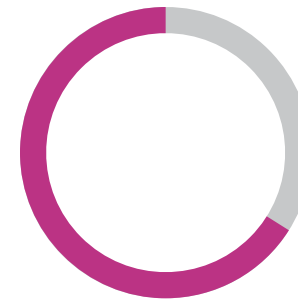
In our research, we've found that 74% of millennials say they buy something after they've seen it on social media.⁵

And this strikes at the heart of social proof: The actions of others often inform our own. We pay attention to what others say, think, and do. While today's shopper may never be 100% sure about what they want, they almost always want to know what other people want.

Weaving visual social proof into the final stage of the journey turns shoppers into customers. Visual social proof isn't just for online — it's an omnichannel play.

*In our research, we've found that **45% of in-store buyers engage with CGC, such as consumer pictures and reviews, before purchase.***⁷

Social proof works at all levels — and research shows that visual content inspires shoppers, helps them discover new brands and products, and gives them the confidence they need to make purchasing decisions.



65% OF SHOPPERS
say they trust a brand more when
they see real pictures from real people
on the product page



66% OF SHOPPERS
say they are more likely to purchase
a product when they see visual CGC
on the product page⁶

Take this with you

No one separates out buying decisions from social media from billboards from advertising from your website. They see it all. The right content strategy helps you connect all of these worlds in a way that other tools don't — it's your connective tissue between your social and e-commerce strategies.

Here are three key takeaways to keep in mind when developing a winning content strategy:

1

From discovery to consideration to purchase, visual content matters. Put it to work at every touchpoint in the buyer journey.

2

Don't kid yourself into thinking studio product shots alone compel today's shopper — they don't. Photos and videos from real people fill a critical gap in how you present yourself.

3

Recognizing your advocates and putting their storytelling to work makes you authentic and relatable, which are critical traits in today's noisy shopping world.

TALK TO US — WE CAN HELP.

About Bazaarvoice

Bazaarvoice helps brands and retailers find and reach consumers, and win them with the content they trust. Each month in the Bazaarvoice Network, more than one-half billion consumers view and share authentic consumer-generated content (CGC), including ratings and reviews, as well as curated visual content across 5,000 brand and retail websites. This visibility into shopper behavior allows Bazaarvoice to capture unique first-party data and insights that enable our targeted advertising and personalization solutions.

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

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

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